

Report 2696



nps archaeology

Archaeological Evaluation at Goulder's Lane, Felmingham, Norfolk

ENF128892

Prepared for

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Location:	Goulder's Lane, Felmingham, Norfolk
District:	North Norfolk
Grid Ref.:	TG 1234 5678
Planning Ref.:	2007/1437/PF
HER No.:	ENF128892
OASIS Ref.:	125545
Client:	J.S Hay Ltd
Dates of Fieldwork:	10 April 2012

Summary

An archaeological evaluation was conducted for J.S Hay Ltd ahead of a proposed new housing development on the north side of Felmingham in north Norfolk.

Two trenches were opened. A single north to south orientated ditch of probable medieval date was observed in Trench 1, which was situated on the eastern side of the plot. The ditch was probably a field boundary or drainage ditch which became redundant and silted up during the 14th century.

A thick subsoil apparent at the site appeared to pre-date the medieval ditch. There were no other archaeological features present.

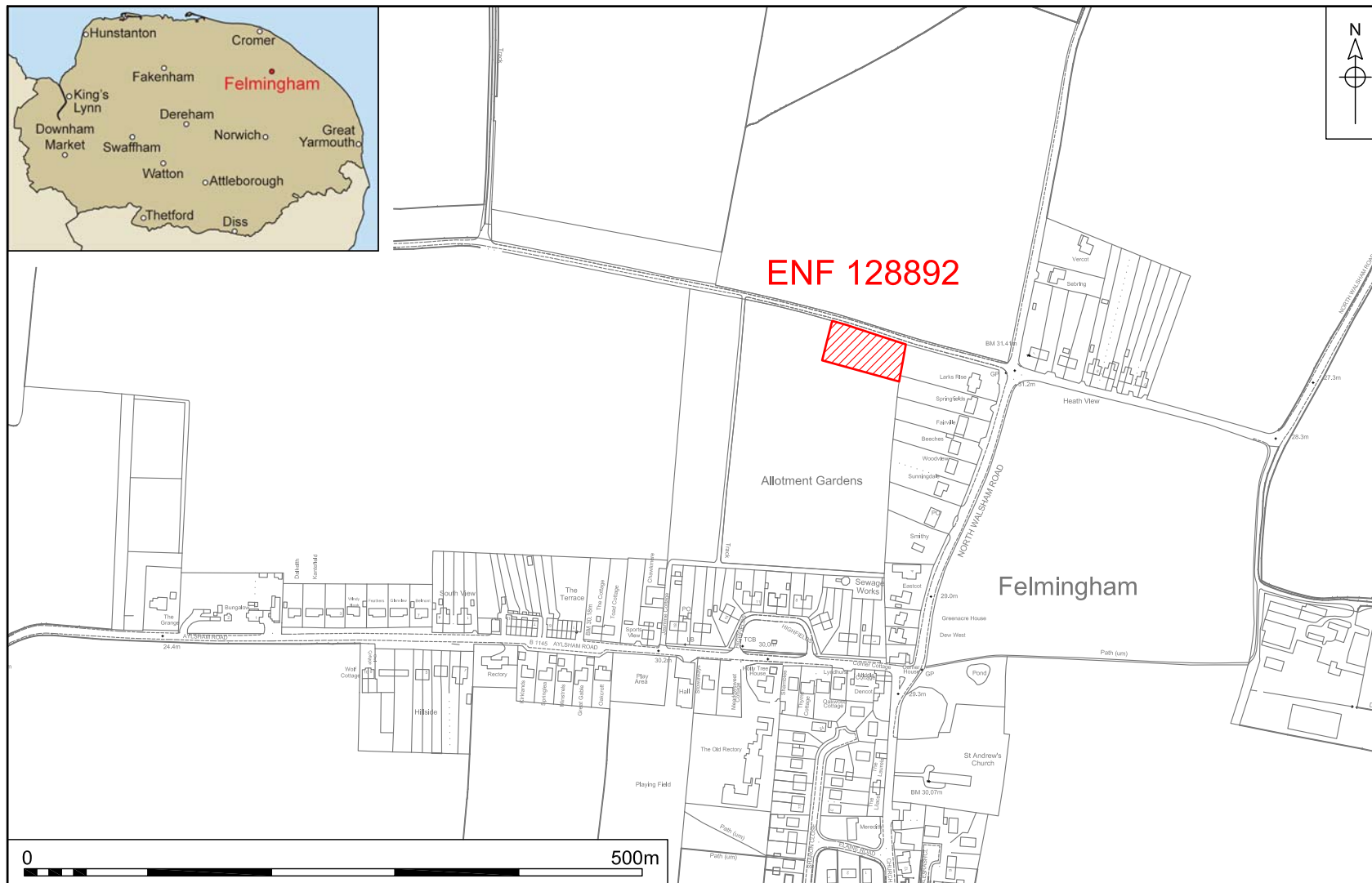
1.0 INTRODUCTION

This archaeological evaluation was situated on Goulder's Lane on the north side of the village of Felmingham (Fig. 1) and was undertaken prior to the proposed construction of eight new dwellings including a bungalow. The plot covered one third of a hectare and had been cultivated as allotments until relatively recently.

This work was undertaken to fulfil planning requirements set by North Norfolk District Council (2007/1437/PF) and a Brief issued by Norfolk Historic Environment Service (Ref. James Albone 19 March 2012-CNF41464). The work was conducted in accordance with a Project Design and Method Statement prepared by NPS Archaeology (Ref. NAU/BAU2696/NP). The evaluation was commissioned and funded by J.S Hay Ltd.

This programme of work was designed to assist in defining the character and extent of any archaeological remains within the proposed redevelopment area, following the guidelines set out in *National Planning Policy Framework* (Department for Communities and Local Government 2012). The results will enable decisions to be made by the Local Planning Authority about the treatment of any archaeological remains found.

The site archive is currently held by NPS Archaeology and on completion of the project will be deposited with Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service (NMAS), following the relevant policies on archiving standards.



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Figure 1. Site location. Scale 1:5000

2.0 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

The underlying solid geology consists of Wroxham crag formation - sand and gravel, a sedimentary bedrock which formed up to 2 million years ago in the Quaternary and Neogene Periods in an environment dominated by swamps, estuaries and deltas. The superficial geology is one of glaciofluvial deposits which were laid down in the Quaternary Period where an Ice Age environment predominated (Open Geoscience (online)).

The topsoil on the site was a dark greyish brown sandy silt which ranged in thickness between 0.40m and 0.30m in depth. There was also a thick subsoil consisting of a mid brown slightly silty fine sand which contained occasional flints and very occasional charcoal flecks. It was around 0.30m thick in Trench 1 and was 0.60m thick in the vicinity of Trench 2, possibly due to earlier agricultural activity. The natural substratum was a mottled slightly silty fine orange sand with patches of cream coloured sand, coarser sand and gravel and firm clayey orange sandy patches.

The site was reasonably flat and open with housing to the east and the remaining area of allotments to the west. The River Bure runs past the village close by on its western side. The sandy substratum probably allowed for good drainage however this was not tested during the duration of the work due to the fine and sunny conditions throughout.

3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

A search of entries held in the Norfolk Historic Environment Record (NHER) was undertaken and the most relevant entries are reproduced below. This data has been supplemented by information derived from the Victoria County History (online) and from An Historical Atlas of Norfolk (Ashwin and Davison 2005).

Prehistoric to Roman

The chapters on the early history of Norfolk in An Historical Atlas of Norfolk (*ibid*) appear to show little evidence for activity in the area of Felmingham parish. There are concentrations of activity to the north around Roughton parish and south of Felmingham (Ashwin 2005a and 2005b). This 'gap' around Felmingham parish appears to continue through the Neolithic into the Iron Age, and appears to be borne out by the scarcity of findspots close to the present site. The generally poor nature of the land for agriculture must have been a contributing factor to this 'gap' (Hutcheson and Ashwin 2005).

There is a possible Roman Road which runs just to the south of the parish from Brampton towards the coast (Gurney 2005).

To the west of the site, metal detecting during 2002-3 recovered nine Roman coins (MNF 42268). Also to the west of the site further metal detecting from 2001-8 found a further twenty one Roman coins and a Roman knife along with a few finds from other periods (MNF40805).

Cropmarks (MNF 7555) observed further away from the site to the south are thought to represent a Roman site.

Anglo-Saxon to Medieval

The ancestor of the Earls of Norfolk, Roger Bigot, is recorded as holding a carucate¹ of land here at the time of the Domesday survey. This land supported seven borderers² and four socmen³. There was an acre and half of meadow. There was also land of two carucates (80 acres) held by four freemen with four borderers. This land contained two acres of meadow, and a mill. There was a small tenure of six acres owned by the crown which had belonged before the conquest to a freeman called Offert. The land was administered by Godric, a steward.

Much of the land had passed to a family that derived its name from the holdings by the time of King Henry II. At this time Abraham de Felmingham was the holder - his name suggests that he was of Jewish origin. The land was passed to his son Isaac and his son William. There is a detailed history of the land holdings preserved in the 'Tunstede Hundred: Felmingham'. In the reign of Edward I Roger Bigod Earl of Norfolk held the assize.

In 1381 at the time of the Peasant's Revolt a dyer called Geoffrey Litster, a resident of Felmingham, became a local leader of the revolt attempting to seize Norwich. The Bishop of Norwich led his forces out from the city and defeated the rebels at the battle of North Walsham which took place on heathland just to the south of that town. On being captured, Litster was hung, drawn and quartered and his four parts displayed at Norwich, Great Yarmouth, King's Lynn and at his house at Felmingham (Victoria County History (online)).

Post-medieval to Modern

The village appears to have stayed quite small throughout the medieval and post-medieval periods. There is evidence of several historic farms held on the NHER. South of the current site there was a farm complex consisting of a barn, stables with granary, a workshop, a bullock yard, sunken bullock boxes and a cart shed. The farm is post-medieval and all of the buildings were constructed out of brick. (MNF29965). To the north there was a similarly historic farm complex which had a farmhouse constructed in 1834 and the usual barns, granary and cart sheds. A further post-medieval farm also lay to the north of the existing site. Of particular note was a brick barn and attached stable which was built in 1720. There was also a cart shed and carriage house of 19th-century date (MNF 49363).

There is a single post-medieval findspot close to the north of the site. It consisted of a post-medieval coin of James I which was found with a metal detector (MNF 42472)

The most recent NHER entry was situated just to the north-east of the site (MNF12632). Two United States Army Air Force planes collided at Felmingham or North Walsham during the Second World War. One is recorded as crashing at the locations recorded as MNF12632 and NHER 12633.

¹ The area a team of (8) oxen could plough in one year

² A peasant who held more land than a cottager but less than a villain

³ Those who held feudal tenure of land for agriculture – no military service was involved

Multi period

Metal detecting has been undertaken around the village which has resulted in the collection of a considerable number of finds of various periods and which are recorded on the NHER. The NHER entries are presented below in their entirety.

MNF62757 - situated just to the north of the site beyond Goulder's Lane. It refers to metal-detecting undertaken in 2009 which recovered medieval and post-medieval coins, a Roman brooch of Colchester type, a fragment of Early Saxon cruciform brooch and medieval to post-medieval metal objects including a medieval buckle and belt mounts, medieval/post-medieval hooked tag, vessel leg and sword or dagger pommel and post-medieval copper alloy vessel repair patch and vessel rim, purse bar and lead weight.

MNF62928 - further metal-detecting in 2009 just to the east of the evaluated site recovered Roman, medieval and post-medieval coins as well as other metal finds including part of a blade from a Bronze Age socketed axe, a Late Saxon strap-end, medieval and post-medieval dress accessories, a medieval ring; medieval and post-medieval copper alloy vessel feet and medieval/post-medieval and post-medieval coin weights.

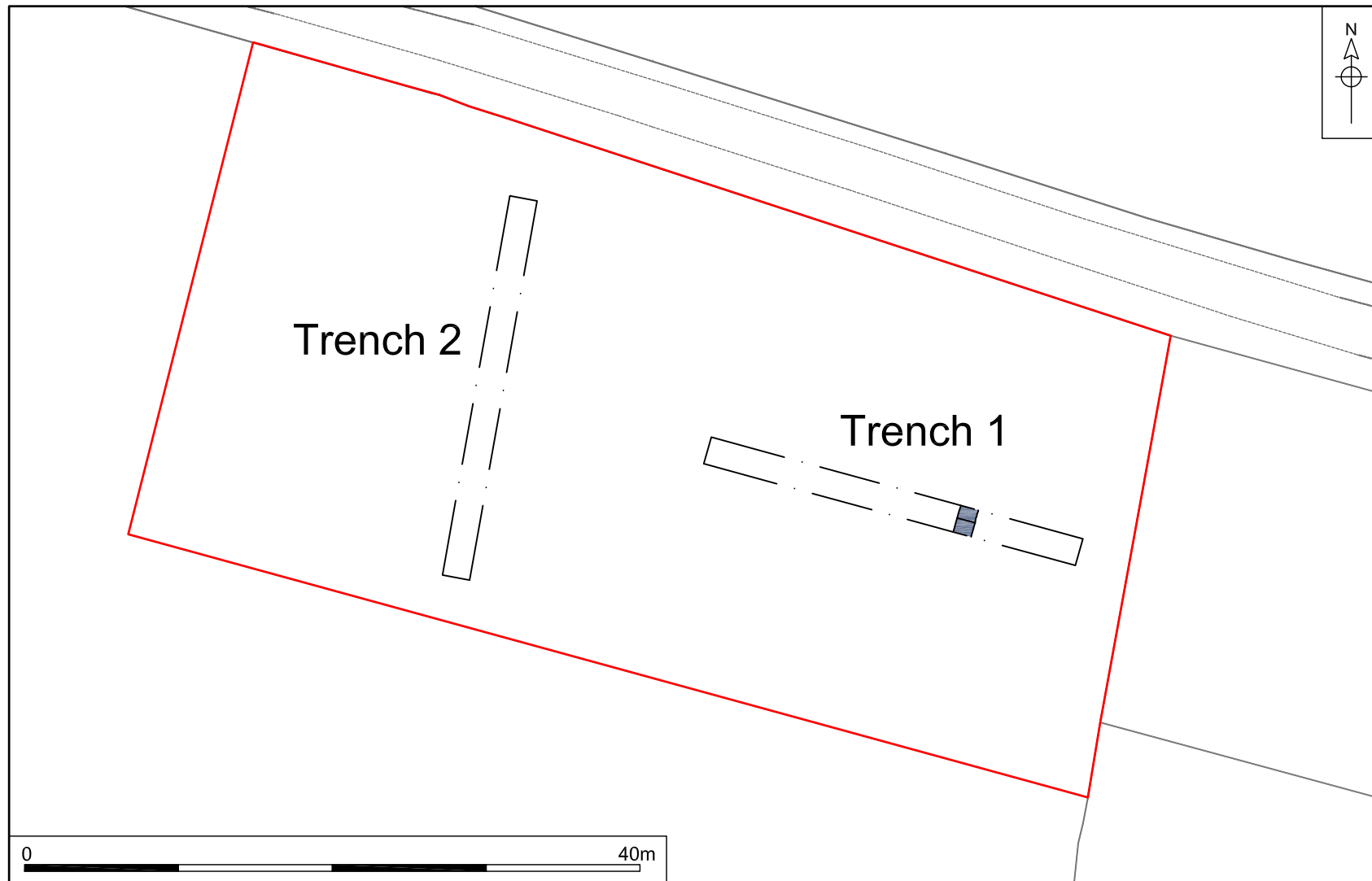
To the south-east of the development site beyond the village, metal-detecting in 2009 recovered Iron Age to post-medieval metal finds including Iron Age, Roman, medieval and post medieval coins, a Late Saxon stirrup strap terminal, medieval, medieval/post-medieval and post-medieval dress accessories, lead weights and copper alloy vessel fragments; a medieval seal matrix; medieval/post-medieval knife end stop and a post-medieval finger ring, book clasps and mount, a powder measure, thimble and cloth seals.

MNF24243 - metal-detecting in the field just to the south of the village in 1987 found various items including a medieval nail, a medieval strap fitting and a post medieval button. In addition, sherds of Roman, Middle Saxon, medieval and post medieval pottery were retrieved from this site.

MNF42365 - to the north of the development site, metal detecting in 2003 recovered a Roman steelyard weight, two medieval coins and a post-medieval buckle.

MNF42269 - in the same area to the north of the site metal-detecting during 2002-04 recovered further objects which included an Iron Age lynch pin, a medieval Venetian coin and a post-medieval key.

MNF29476 - metal detector activities in 2003 which recovered a Roman steelyard weight, two medieval coins and a post medieval buckle.



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Figure 2. Location of trenches. Scale 1:400

4.0 METHODOLOGY

The objective of this evaluation was to determine as far as reasonably possible the presence or absence, location, nature, extent, date, quality, condition and significance of any surviving archaeological deposits within the development area.

The Brief required that two trenches each measuring 25m by 1.80m be excavated across the development plot in order to sample excavate 5% of the plot (Fig. 2).

Machine excavation was carried out with a wheeled JCB-type excavator equipped with a toothless ditching bucket and operated under constant archaeological supervision. The machine was supplied by GB Digger Hire and driven by Barry.



Plate 1. Machining, looking south

Spoil, exposed surfaces and features were scanned with a metal-detector. There were no metal finds found through this process.

An environmental sample was taken from the fill of ditch [4] | Trench 1.

All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using NPS Archaeology pro forma. Trench locations, plans and sections were recorded at appropriate scales. Monochrome and digital photographs were taken of all relevant features and deposits where appropriate.

A known height of 32.0m, situated on the road adjacent to the site, was used in the creation of a temporary bench mark with a value of 31.80m which was used for the duration of the project.

Site conditions were excellent and the work took place in warm and sunny weather.



Plate 2. The site, looking west

5.0 RESULTS

Trench 1



Plate 3. Trench 1, looking west

Figs 2 and 3; Plates 3, 4 and 5

Location

Orientation	East to west
East end	625099.9977 329596.1192
West end	625075.7760 329602.7919

Dimensions

Length	25.00m
Width	1.80m
Depth	0.64m

Levels

East end top	31.80m OD
West end top	31.75mOD

Context	Type	Description and Interpretation	Thickness	Depth BGL
1	Deposit	Topsoil	0.40m	0.00-0.40m
2	Deposit	Subsoil	0.24m	0.40-0.64m
3	Deposit	Natural Substratum	-	0.40m+
4	Cut	Ditch	0.54m	0.40-0.94m
5	Deposit	Fill of Ditch [4]	0.54m	0.40-0.94m

Discussion

A single archaeological feature, a ditch, was located within Trench 1.

Ditch [4] was orientated north to south and crossed the trench at right angles; it extended beyond the northern and southern limits of the trench.

The ditch was 1.20m wide with slightly curving sides and a rounded base. The single fill ([5]) consisted of a mid greyish brown slightly silty fine sand which contained occasional flints. It was probably of natural origin and contained one sherd of 14th-century pottery.

Ditch [4] appeared to truncate subsoil [2], although the edges towards the top of the feature were less distinct.

Trench 1



Plate 4. Trench 1, ditch [4], looking south



Plate 5. Trench 1, ditch [4] (oblique angle), looking south-west

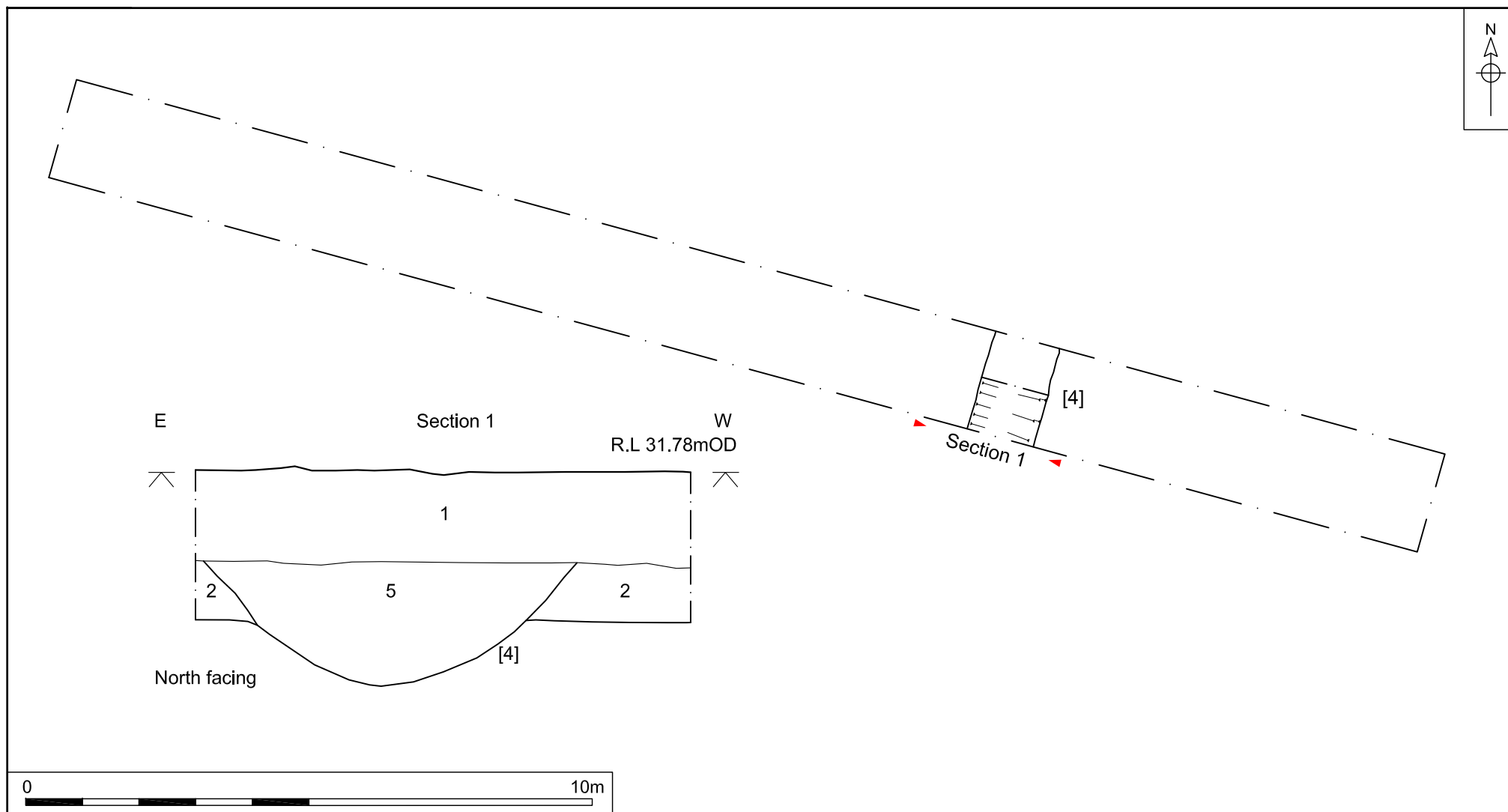


Figure 3. Trench 1, plan and section. Scale 1:100 and 1:25

Trench 2




Plate 6. Trench 2, looking south

Fig. 2; Plate 6

Location

Orientation

North to south

North end

625063.8441 329619.1910

South end

625059.4217 329594.5353

Dimensions

Length

25.00m

Width

1.80m

Depth

0.90m

Levels

North top

31.82m OD

South top

31.76mOD

Context	Type	Description and Interpretation	Thickness	Depth BGL
1	Deposit	Topsoil	0.30m	0.00-0.30m
2	Deposit	Subsoil	0.60m	0.30-0.90m
3	Deposit	Natural Substratum	-	0.90+

Discussion

There were no archaeological features or finds recovered from Trench 2.

6.0 FINDS

by Rebecca Sillwood

A single artefact – pottery was recovered from the site. The find was processed and recorded by count and weight, and the information was entered on to an Excel spreadsheet. The table showing finds by context can be found in Appendix 2a.

6.1 Pottery

A single rim sherd of pottery weighing 33g was recovered from ditch [4] (fill (5)) in Trench 1.

The piece is unglazed and of bright orange fabric, similar to Late Medieval Transitional ware, however, the form makes it more likely to be from a medieval bowl of probable 14th-century date (Sue Anderson *pers. comm.*).

7.0 ENVIRONMENTAL EVIDENCE

by Val Fryer

7.1 Plant Macrofossils

7.1.1 *Introduction and method statement*

A single sample for the evaluation of the content and preservation of the plant macrofossil assemblage was taken from ditch fill (5) in ditch [4].

The sample was processed by manual water flotation/washover and the flot was collected in a 300 micron mesh sieve. The dried flot was scanned under a binocular microscope at magnifications up to x 6, and the plant macrofossils and other remains noted are listed below in Appendix 3. All plant remains were charred. Modern seeds and fibrous roots were also recorded.

The non-floating residue was collected in a 1mm mesh sieve and will be sorted when dry. Any artefacts/ecofacts will be retained for further specialist analysis.

7.1.2 *Results*

The recovered flot is small (<0.1 litres in volume) and is very limited in composition, containing little other than charcoal/charred fragments, all of which are very abraded. The high density of mineralised soil concretions may indicate that ditch periodically held standing water.

7.1.3 *Conclusions*

In summary, the few remains which are recorded within the assemblage are all very fragmentary and abraded, possibly indicating that they were exposed to the elements for some considerable period prior to inclusion within the ditch fill.

As plant remains are so scarce, it is difficult to make firm recommendations for additional sampling should any further interventions occur within this area of Felmingham. However, it is suggested that samples of approximately 20 – 40 litres in volume could be taken from any contexts which are securely dated, or which appear to contain charred remains, although this should be done solely at the discretion of the excavator.

8.0 CONCLUSIONS

Limited archaeological remains were recovered from the site during the evaluation.

The sherd of probable medieval pottery was found deep within the fill of ditch [4], and though it could be residual or intrusive, it is unlikely to be so. The sherd is a little abraded, although its size suggests that it has not 'travelled far'. Often sherds can be moved about through activities such as ploughing however such sherds tend to be smaller and abraded. Evidence obtained during the fieldwork indicates that the ditch has silted up slowly over time. There were no tip lines or obvious dumps of material in the feature and the environmental evidence suggests that the plant macrofossils are abraded and fragmentary in keeping with a slow build up where particles are exposed to the elements.

The general lack of finds (e.g. dumping of domestic hearth waste into the ditch) suggests that there are no dwellings immediately adjacent to the ditch and therefore it seems to be more rural in character, possibly a field boundary rather than the edge of a croft or toft. The ditch may also have operated as a drainage ditch as there was a high degree of mineralised soil concretions which suggested that at different times the feature may have held standing water. The ditch appears to have become redundant sometime in the 14th century and would have most likely silted up fairly rapidly without regular maintenance.

It is interesting to suppose that this abandonment may have happened around the same time as the dwindling of medieval settlements and field systems which can often be seen in the later medieval period - often as a result of depopulation due to plague in the 14th century, though this was not the only factor. 'The Black Death was only one among a number of factors causing rural depopulation and the dissolution of the later medieval landscape' (Steane 1985). The fact that the ditch was orientated at right angles to Goulder's Lane and parallel to the modern boundary to the east implies that these boundaries have existed since at least the medieval period.

The thick subsoil present on the site appears to pre-date the ditch and may be the result of farming practices, leading to the tentative suggestion that the site was situated in the area of the arable fields around the medieval village.

The fact that the ditch does not appear on the Tithe map of c.1840 suggests that it had already ceased to be a landscape feature and this also lends some supporting evidence to its reasonably early date (E-map explorer (online)).

The presence of a single feature and the paucity of material evidence indicate that there has been little activity at the proposed development site in the past.

Recommendations for further mitigation work (if required based on the evidence presented in this report) will be made by Norfolk Historic Environment Service.

Acknowledgements

The fieldwork was undertaken by the author who would like to thank the following:
J. S. Hay Ltd who funded the work.

The finds were washed, recorded and reported on by Rebecca Sillwood. Sue Anderson identified the pot sherd. This report was illustrated by David Dobson following initial digitising by the author. It was edited by Jayne Bown and produced by David Dobson.

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Appendix 1a: Context Summary

Context	Category	Cut Type	Fill Of	Description	Period	Trench
1	Deposit			Topsoil	Unknown	1, 2
2	Deposit			Subsoil	Unknown	
3	Deposit			Natural	Unknown	
4	Cut	Ditch		Ditch	Medieval	1
5	Deposit		4	Ditch fill	Medieval	1

Appendix 1b: OASIS Feature Summary

Period	Feature	Total
Medieval	Ditch	1

Appendix 2a: Finds by Context

Context	Material	Qty	Wt	Period	Notes
5	Pottery	1	33g	Medieval	14th-century

Appendix 2b: Oasis Finds Summary

Period	Material	Total
Medieval	Pottery	1

Appendix 3: Plant Macrofossils

Sample No.	1
Context No.	5
Feature No.	4
Charcoal <2mm	xx
Charcoal >2mm	x
Charred root/stem	x
Indet.seed frag.	x
Mineralised soil concretions	xxx
Small coal frags.	x
Sample volume (litres)	42
Volume of flot (litres)	<0.1
% flot sorted	100%

Key to Table

x = 1-10 specimens xx = 11–50 specimens