

Report 2786



nps archaeology

## An Archaeological Watching Brief at the site of a Visitors' Centre at Park Farm, Snettisham, Norfolk.

ENF127635



**Prepared for**  
Stanton Farms Ltd  
Park Farm  
Snettisham  
King's Lynn  
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Location:	Visitors' Centre, Park Farm, Snettisham, Norfolk
District:	King's Lynn and West Norfolk
Grid Ref.:	TF 69086 33793
HER No.:	ENF127635
Client:	Stanton Farms Ltd
OASIS Ref.:	127953
Dates of Fieldwork:	26-27 September 2011

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## **Summary**

*Archaeological monitoring (a watching brief) was conducted for Stanton Farms Ltd during the construction of a visitors' centre at Park Farm, Snettisham in Norfolk. The site is set within an area of high archaeological interest.*

*The footings for the visitors' centre and trenches for the buildings' drainage were monitored over a two day period during which no archaeological features were uncovered. All upcast spoil was metal detected and surveyed visually and all below-ground excavation was examined. No archaeological features or deposits were encountered and just three sherds of pottery and two fragments of ceramic brick material were recovered.*

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

This work was undertaken to fulfil planning requirements set by King's Lynn and West Norfolk District Council at the behest of Norfolk Historic Environment Service. The work was conducted in accordance with a Project Design and Method Statement prepared by NPS Archaeology (Ref: NAU/BAU2786/NP). This work was commissioned and funded by Stanton Farms Ltd.

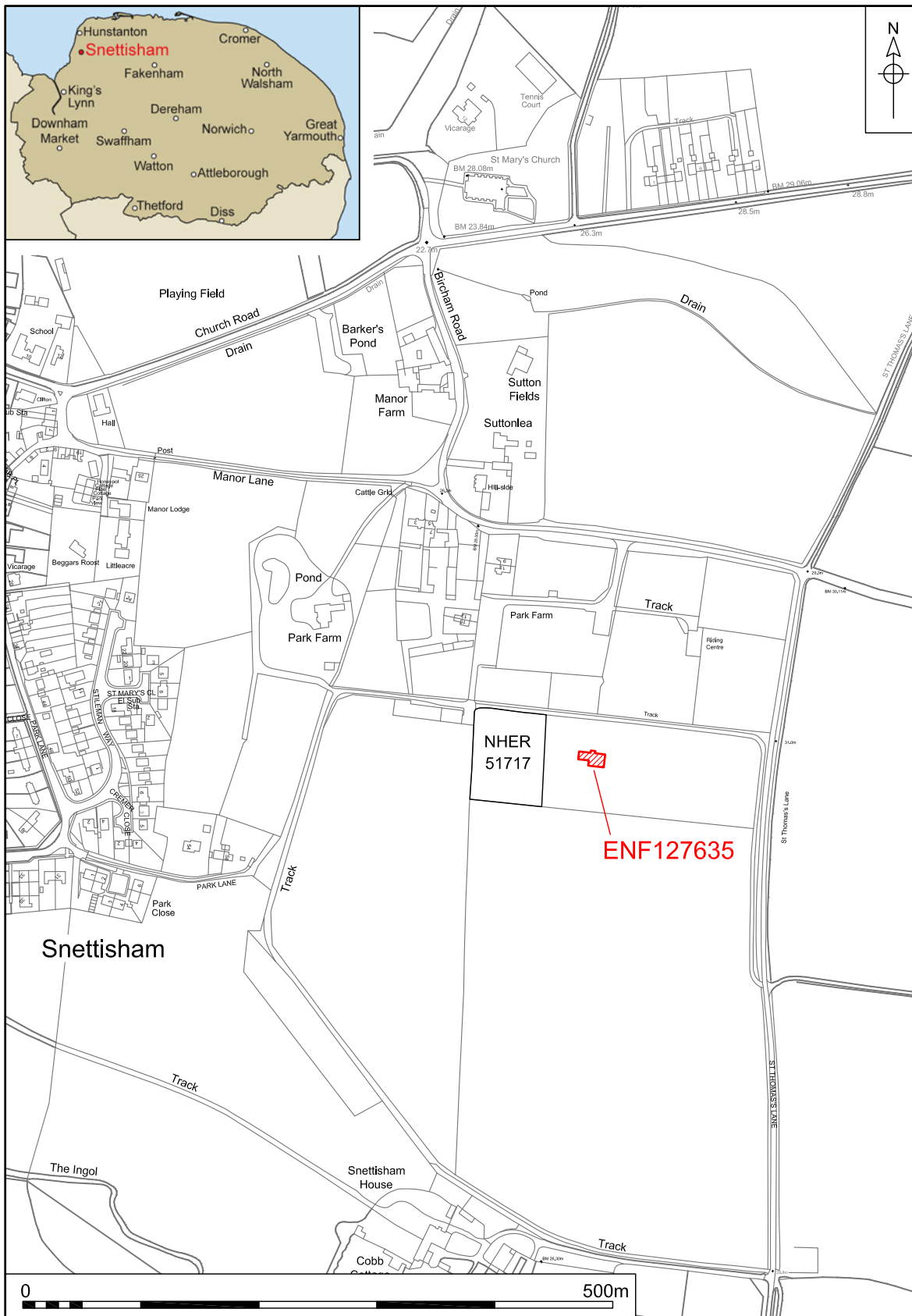
This programme of work was designed to assist in defining the character and extent of any archaeological remains within the proposed redevelopment area, following the guidelines set out in *Planning Policy Framework 5* (Department for Communities and Local Government 2010). The results will enable decisions 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 the Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service (NMAS), following the relevant policies on archiving standards.

## **2.0 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY**

Park Farm in Snettisham lies off of Bircham Road, approximately 500m east of Snettisham village. The site itself sits on the 25mOD contour on a gentle east sloping, in a former arable field on the southern edge of the Park Farm complex and to the west of St Thomas's Lane.

The geology of the site is drift deposits (BGS 1991) overlying chalk (West Melbury Marly formation) (<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyOfBritain/home>).



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Figure 1. Site location. Scale 1:5000

The site is covered a well-drained mid-grey/brown sandy silt topsoil to an average depth of 0.30m and a thinner layer of subsoil to an average depth of 0.10m.

### **3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

A 500m radius search of entries held by the Norfolk Historic Environment Record (NHER) produced a number of records that are summarised below.

It would appear that no new findspots or monuments have been added since 2008 when a four-trench evaluation, for an earlier phase of work at the site, took place to the west of the development area (NHER 51717 - Fig. 1 for location). In light of this, the majority of the archaeological and historical background information produced below has been extracted from that report, (Stocks 2008). The findings of the evaluation are included at the end of this section

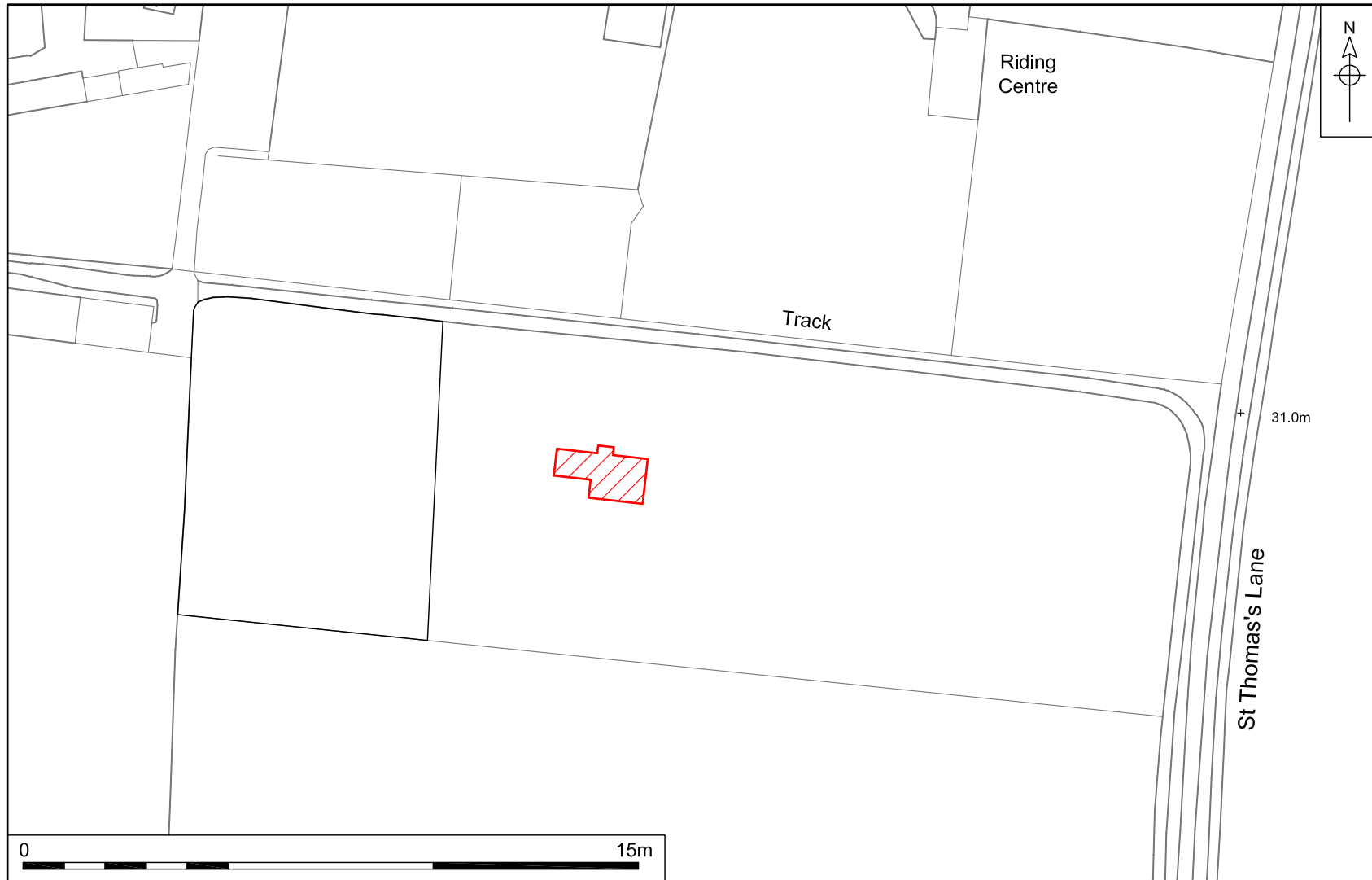
‘The most significant archaeological monument in the vicinity of the development site is the Park Piece Roman villa, a scheduled monument which lies 200m to the south-west (NHER 1514). A small excavation carried out in 1931 revealed wall foundations and yard surfaces, hearths and large amounts of iron-smithing slag. Further excavations in 1972 revealed the collapsed remains of a substantial house, including a mosaic floor. A geophysical survey conducted in 1995 revealed further evidence for a yard and evidence for metalworking, as well as revealing boundary ditches – perhaps relating to field-systems – and a triple-ditched defensive boundary to the villa plot’ (Stocks 2008, 3).

The area of the 2008 evaluation contains site NHER 12547 where a scatter of some 40 sherds of Middle Saxon Ipswich Ware was recovered in 1976. ‘Such surface scatters are particularly numerous in north-west Norfolk and provide a strong indication of Middle Saxon settlement. Few such scatters have been excavated and when they have the underlying archaeological evidence is often very ephemeral’ (Stocks 2008, 3). A smaller scatter of Ipswich Ware (NHER 1528) has been recovered 250m to the south, suggesting more Middle Saxon activity in the vicinity.

‘The fields to the south and east of the present site have been extensively fieldwalked and metal-detected, revealing evidence for multiple periods of activity. The fields to the east have produced sherds of prehistoric, Roman, Middle Saxon, medieval and post-medieval pottery (NHER 1503 and 25799). NHER 1503 has also produced an array of medieval and post-medieval metalwork, including jettons and a seal matrix, as well as an Early Saxon wrist clasp and annular brooch. This field has also been surveyed by the Norfolk National Mapping Programme, revealing the crop-mark of a probable Bronze Age ring-ditch 200m to the east of the site (NHER 39824). The feature is ‘hengiform’, with gaps in the ring to the north and south, although this may be a geological phenomenon.

Fieldwalking in the fields to the south of the site has produced sherds of prehistoric, Roman, Early, Middle and Late Saxon, and medieval pottery, while metal-detecting has recovered Roman, Late Saxon and medieval artefacts (NHER 25796). In addition to these systematically recovered finds, additional scatters of Late Saxon and medieval pottery have been recovered within the same area from NHER 1533, 1540 and 12950.

The fields to the north-west, west and south-west of the present site have not been extensively fieldwalked, but have been surveyed by the Norfolk National Mapping



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Figure 2. Trench location. Scale 1:1500



Programme. All of these fields contain (or have contained) evidence for medieval and post-medieval earthworks: NHER 1534 contained linear earthworks, two or three sub-rectangular enclosures and, possibly, floated water-meadows; NHER 26619 contained north–south land boundaries or drainage ditches; NHER 26621 contained a continuation of these earthworks and also an ovoid enclosure’ (Stocks 2008, 3).

Three linear features and two pits were exposed during evaluation in 2008 of an adjacent area to the west of the current development site. No dating evidence was recovered from any of the features but they were thought to have most likely been associated with either the Roman villa (NHER 1514) to the south-west or nearby Middle-Saxon settlement (Stocks 2008).

## **4.0 METHODOLOGY**

The objective of this watching brief was record any archaeological remains exposed within the development area.

Machine excavation was carried out with a wheeled JCB-type excavator operated under constant archaeological supervision. Spoil, exposed surfaces and features were scanned with a metal-detector. All metal-detected and hand-collected finds, other than those which were obviously modern, were retained for inspection.

No environmental samples were taken as no suitable deposits were encountered.

Site conditions were good, with the work taking place in fine weather.

## **5.0 RESULTS**

No archaeological features were apparent during the excavation of footings and drain trenches for the visitors’ centre. The only features present were scars left in the surface of the underlying subsoil and chalk as a result of modern agricultural operations

Conversation with the JCB driver on site, who had undertaken farming operations in the same field for several years revealed that due to the underlying chalk a ‘pan-buster’ had been used to break up subsoil and also the natural chalk.

Three sherds of pottery and two fragments of ceramic building material (described below) were recovered from the upcast spoil.

## **6.0 FINDS**

by Lucy Talbot

Finds were processed and recorded by count and weight, and an Excel spreadsheet was produced outlining broad dating. Each type material was considered separately and has been described below in date order. A list of finds in context order can be found in Appendix 2a.

### **6.1 Pottery**

Three sherds of pottery weighing 7g were collected from two contexts – subsoil (2 sherds) and unstratified (1 sherd). The assemblage was recorded by count and weight and fabrics and forms identified.

### **6.1.1 Prehistoric**

A single body sherd of flint-tempered prehistoric pottery, weighing 1g, was recovered from subsoil (2). The form is undiagnostic.

### **6.1.2 Roman**

Subsoil (2) produced a single, Roman Greyware body sherd of undiagnostic form weighing 1g. Greyware pottery was produced throughout the Roman period and dates broadly from the 1st to 4th century.

### **6.1.3 Post medieval**

A single undiagnostic body sherd of Glazed Red Earthenware (GRE), weighing 5g, was recovered and is unstratified. GRE is of 16th- to 18th-century date.

## **6.2 Ceramic Building Material**

The watching brief monitoring produced three fragments of Ceramic Building Material (brick and tile) which weighed a total of 277g. They were collected from two contexts – topsoil and ‘unstratified’. The assemblage was recorded by count and weight and forms and fabrics identified.

### **6.2.1 Roman**

A single fragment of Roman roof tile, in the form of an imbrex and weighing 33g, was recovered from topsoil (1). Imbrices are elongated roof tiles, curved in section, which are interlocked with the upright flange of aligned tegulae (also roof tiles).

### **6.2.2 Post medieval**

The site produced two unstratified fragments of late brick, weighing 244g, which are of 17th- to 19th-century date. The fabric is a medium sandy type with coarse inclusions of grog, crushed and burnt flint and ferrous pellets.

## **7.0 CONCLUSIONS**

Being located so close to the site of a Roman villa and within such an historic landscape it is perhaps surprising that no archaeological remains were encountered during the watching brief monitoring of groundworks associated with the construction of a visitors’ centre at Park Farm in Snettisham.

It is possible that agricultural practices have destroyed features located within the development area; the deep scars left by the pan-busting technique adopted at the site would have had an adverse impact on remains that may have been present.

Furthermore the finds evidence is extremely limited. A single sherd of both prehistoric and Roman pottery and a single fragment of Roman imbrex were collected along with scarce post-medieval remains.

## **Acknowledgements**

The project was commissioned by A Squared Architects and funded by Stanton Farms Ltd.

The finds were washed, recorded and analysed by Lucy Talbot.

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## Appendix 1: Context Summary

Context	Category	Cut Type	Fill Of	Description	Period
1	Deposit			Topsoil	Modern
2	Deposit			Subsoil	Uncertain

## Appendix 2a: Finds by Context

Context	Material	Qty	Wt	Period	Notes
1	Ceramic Building Material	1	33g	Roman	Imbrex frag
2	Pottery	1	1g	Prehistoric	
2	Pottery	1	1g	Roman	Greyware
3	Pottery	1	5g	Post-medieval	Glazed Red Earthenware
3	Ceramic Building Material	2	244g	Post-medieval	Brick frags

## Appendix 2b: Oasis

Period	Material	Total
Prehistoric	Pottery	1
Roman	Ceramic Building Material	1
	Pottery	1
Post-medieval	Ceramic Building Material	2
	Pottery	1