

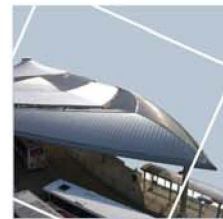
Report 2013/1293



nps archaeology

Archaeological Watching Brief at Land off Low Road, Narford, Norfolk

ENF131703



Prepared for
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July 2013



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Location:	Land off Low Road, Narford
District:	Breckland
Grid Ref.:	TF 7766 1160
Planning Ref.:	3PL/2012/1036/F
HER No.:	ENF131703
OASIS Ref.:	154666
Client:	Solarcentury
Dates of Fieldwork:	29 January – 22 March 2013

Summary

An archaeological watching brief was conducted for Savills on behalf of Solarcentury ahead of the installation of a large number of solar panels at Low Road, Narford in Norfolk.

Two possible ditch features were recorded during monitoring works. No artefacts were recovered.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken during the excavation of small cable trenches that will service the array of solar panels installed at the Burntstark Plantation, off Low Road at Narford, Norfolk (Fig. 1).

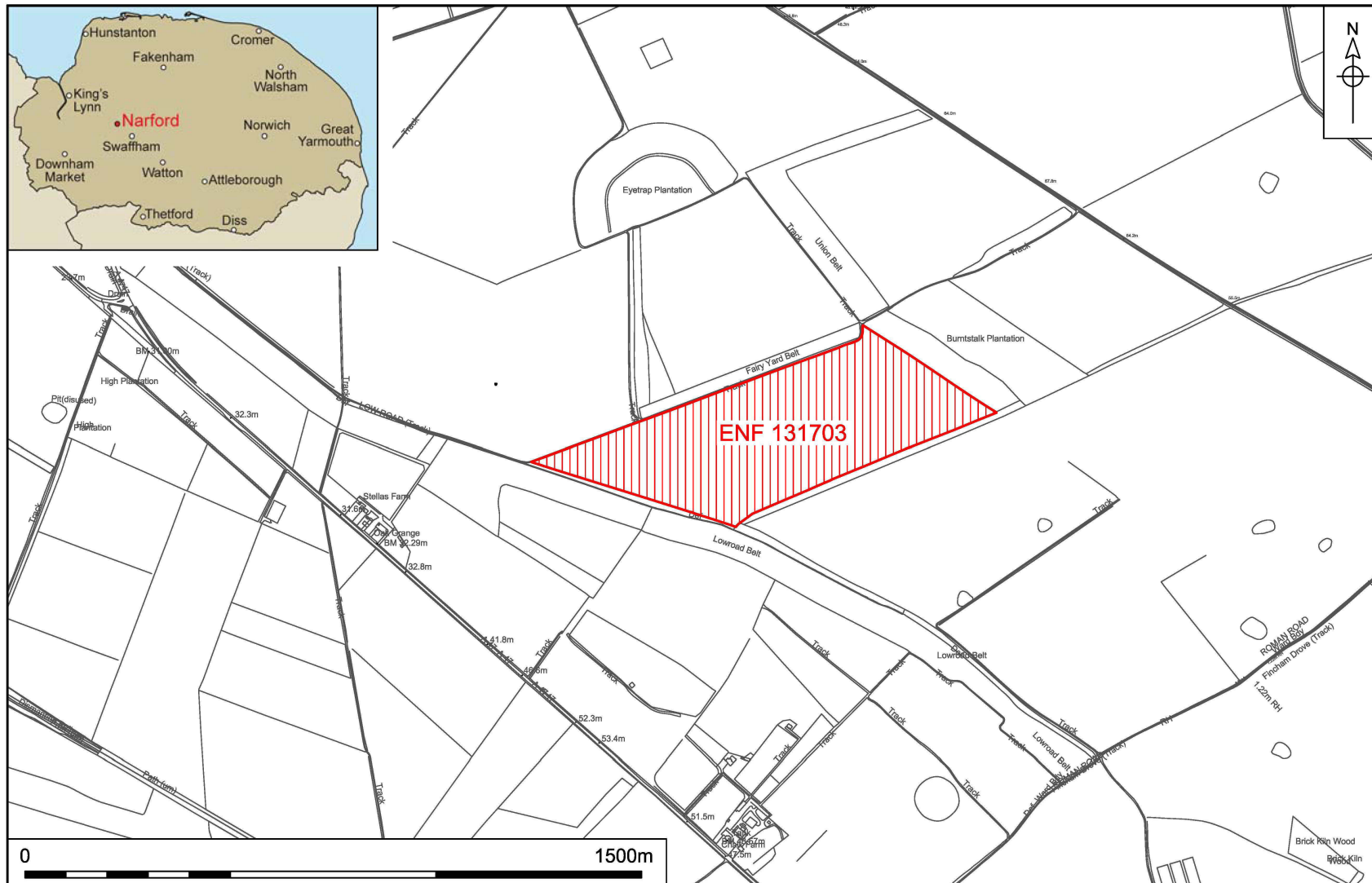
This work was undertaken to fulfil planning requirements set by North Norfolk District Council (3PL/2012/1036/F) and a Brief issued by Norfolk Historic Environment Service (CNF44640_1). The work was conducted in accordance with a Project Design and Method Statement prepared by NPS Archaeology (Ref. 01-04-13-2-1293). This work was commissioned by Savills and funded by Burnstark Plantation Solar Park 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.

2.0 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

The site off Low Road in Narford is located on a bedrock of chalk from the White Chalk Subgroup. This sedimentary bedrock formed approximately 65 to 99 million years ago in the Cretaceous Period when the local environment was dominated by warm chalk seas. The area has superficial deposits of glacial sand and gravel formed up to 2 million years ago in the Quaternary Period (<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>).



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Figure 1. Site location. Scale 1:15,000

The site specific topsoil ([8]) is approximately 0.15m deep and is formed of mid to dark brown sandy silt of moderate compaction, with frequent inclusions of flint pebbles. No subsoil layer is present on this site. Once this rather thin layer of topsoil is removed, the underlying sandy chalk natural layer ([9]) can be seen.

The site itself is located on the side of a gentle hill that slopes downwards to the south. It is situated relatively close to the river Nar and is well drained.

3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Norfolk Historic Environment Records (NHER) show that this site off Low Road in Narford lies close to two historic trackways - the Icknield Way and The Fen Causeway.

The Icknield way (NHER 1398) where it passes the site runs in a north-south direction alongside the field immediately to the west of the current site. The NHER records state that

‘A possible prehistoric trackway that is thought to have linked Norfolk to southern England. The Norfolk section ran from Thetford north to the sea, somewhere in the vicinity of Hunstanton and Holme-next-the-Sea. Evidence of its existence is fragmentary and the subject of long standing discussion. The trackway may have been a series of shorter linked routes.’

However, some doubt has recently been cast upon its possible prehistoric origins (Harrison 2003).

The Fen Causeway (NHER 2796) is recorded as a Roman Road which lies immediately south of the current site. The NHER records state that ‘The Fen Causeway runs from a junction with Ermine Street and King Street near Peterborough across Cambridgeshire and the Norfolk fens. It was first recorded by Dugdale in 1772. In places the road is known to run along the crest of a roddon of a natural watercourse and is therefore quite sinuous, while straighter alignments may follow an artificial canal. In Norfolk, the Fen Causeway runs between Upwell and Denver, but in places there is more than one possible route. East of Denver, the road then probably divides into two, with one route heading due east to the Roman town of Venta Icenorum at Caistor St Edmund (NHER 9786) and the other heading northeast towards the Roman town at Brampton (NHER 1006 and 1124). The upland continuation of the Fen Causeway between Denver and Brampton is included under NHER 2796. In a number of places the road is visible as a cropmark on aerial photographs, whilst in several places it survives as a landscape feature. Sections of the road have been excavated on a number of occasions, revealing a cambered metalled surface and side ditches. At Denver, it is dated to the 1st century AD, and there is evidence of extensive settlement and salt production beside it (NHER 4240). Excavations at Downham West in 1993 examined a complex sequence of deposits, including the roddon of a natural watercourse into which a canal had been dug, probably in the early 2nd century AD. The first road surface was found to predate the canal, while a second road surface probably ran beside the canal.’

Narford Park (NHER 30473) is located nearby, to the north-west of the current site. It was an early 18th-century formal garden of Narford Hall, with an impressive

north-south avenue that runs for over a kilometre. By the late 18th century the formal, geometric gardens had been removed and the planting 'de-formalised' and by the end of the 19th century a large lake had been created. There is also an archway (NHER 15001) located to the north of the current site that is thought to be associated with Narford Park.

A disused railway line (NHER 13600) is located to the south and west of Burnstalk Plantation. It formed part of the line that operated between Dereham and King's Lynn. The railway opened to nearby Narborough in 1846 and was closed in 1968 except for trains that serviced nearby quarries. Today, most of the line has been removed and many of the station buildings that remain have been converted into houses.

The largest World War One aerodrome in Britain (NHER 13621) was located to the south-west of the current site. It housed four airship stations and covered 908 acres of land. At its peak it serviced over 1,000 personnel and was the base for several squadrons flying sorties to France and the defence of the east coast from zeppelin attack. There was also a small Prisoner Of War camp on the site but it is thought that this was removed before 1918. One hanger survived on the airfield until it was blown down in 1977. Today only one small building remains, currently used by the YMCA.

The following locations of finds also surround the current site.

NHER 3965 – located to the north-west in the field adjacent to Burnstalk Plantation; fragments of Roman pottery, some Roman coins and a Roman brooch were recorded here during metal detecting in 1957.

NHER 50546 – located in a field to the immediate south of the current site; a medieval musket ball was recorded here during metal detecting in 2007

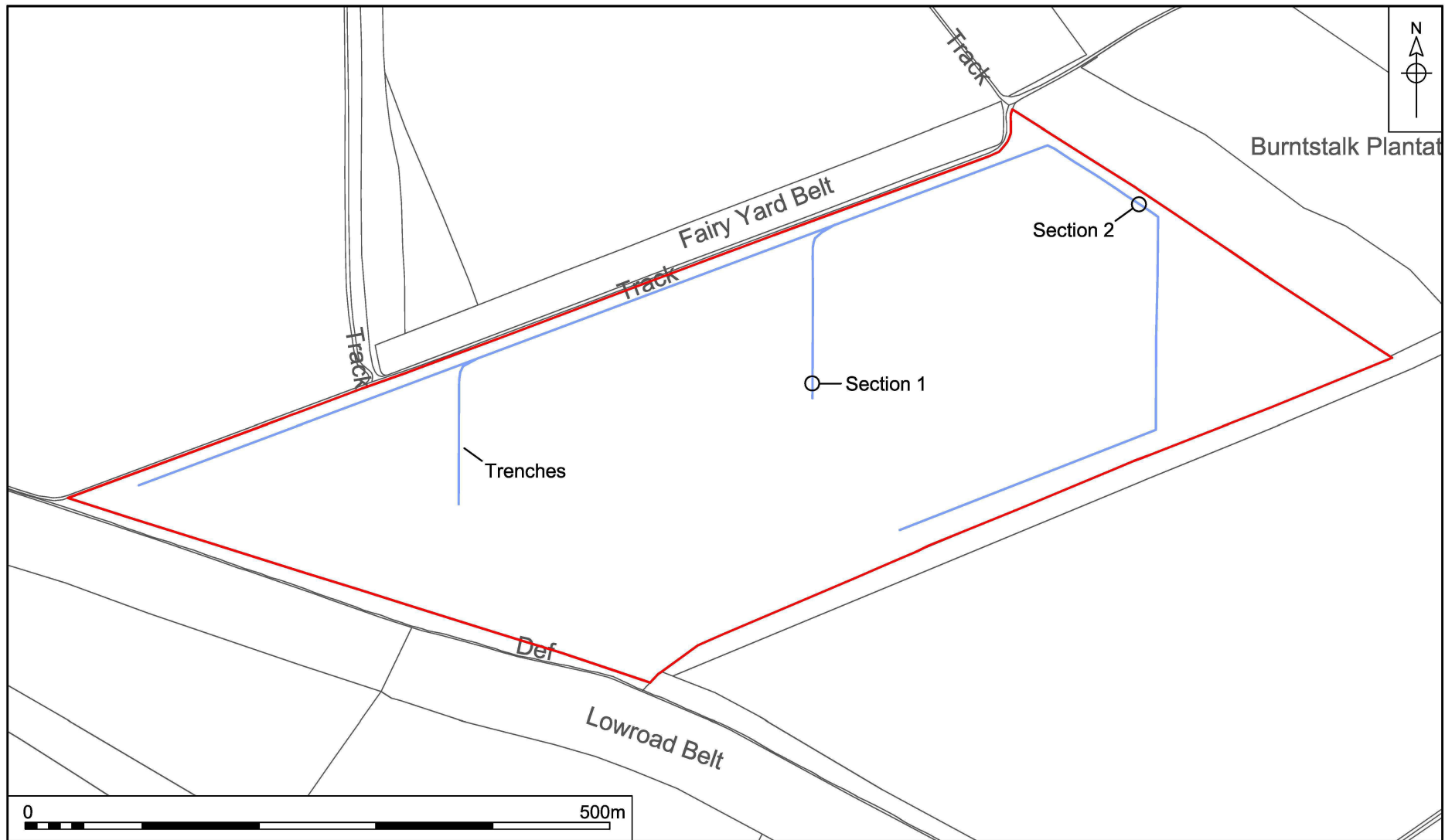
NHER 58276 –metal detecting here in 2010 recovered Late Iron Age, Roman and medieval coins; post-medieval jettons and Roman, Roman/Early Saxon, Late Saxon, medieval, post-medieval and undatable metal objects. The metal finds comprise Roman brooches, a finger-ring, the shank of a hair pin, a nail cleaner and a military scabbard slide; part of a Roman/Early Saxon rectangular military buckle plate; a Late Saxon strap-end and bridle bit link; a medieval pilgrim badge and part of a mirror case; a post-medieval buckle frame and gilt harness mount and an undatable casting jet.

4.0 METHODOLOGY

The objective of this watching brief was to record archaeological remains that may be disturbed by groundworks associated with construction of the solar farm.

The Brief required that all ground disturbance works be monitored by an archaeologist. If previously unrecorded archaeological features and deposits were encountered deemed to be of significance, appropriate levels of excavation and recording was required.

Machine excavation was carried out with a wheeled JCB-type excavator equipped with a small toothed bucket suitable for digging cable trenches and operated under constant archaeological supervision.



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Figure 2. Site plan. Scale 1:5000

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.

Environmental samples were not taken because no suitable deposits were encountered.

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

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



Plate 1. The site looking south

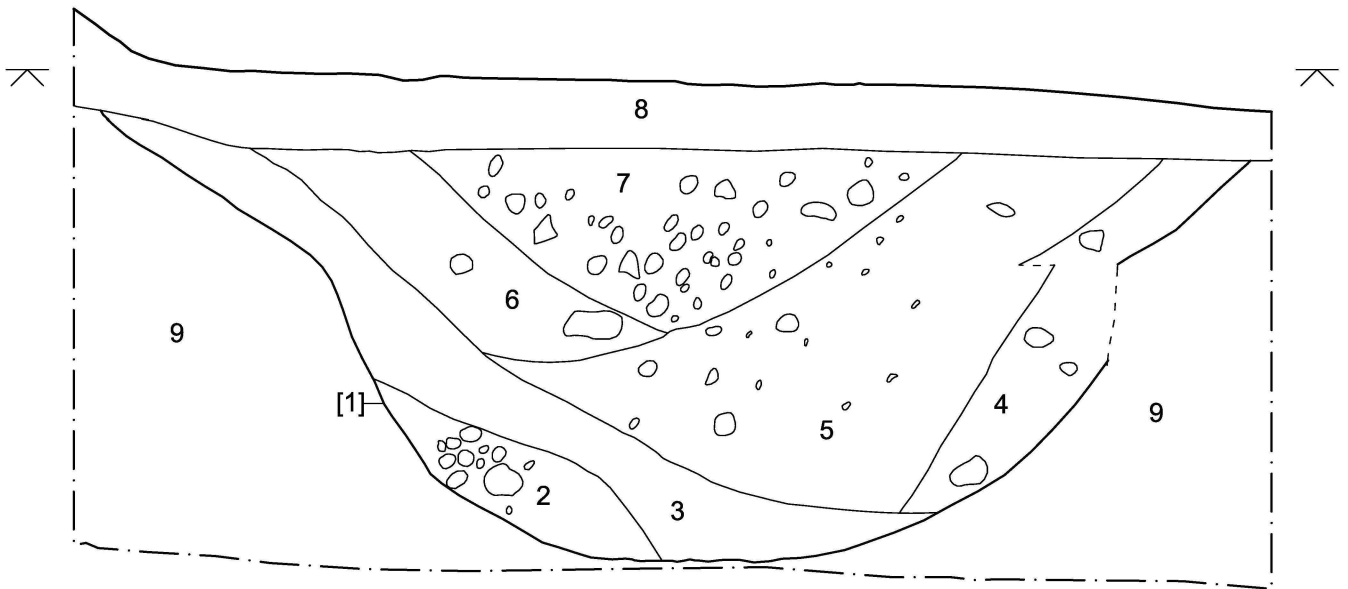
5.0 RESULTS

Despite monitoring being undertaken over two months, just two features were encountered during these works (Figs 2 (location) and 3). The trenches ranged from 0.60m wide to 1.60m wide and were between 1.00m and 1.20m deep.

One long trench ran the entire length of the site alongside the site's access track. Three further trenches adjoining the first ran across the site in a north-south direction (Fig. 2). Another of the trenches extended across the site and turned to follow the boundary at the bottom of the hill in a north-east to south-westerly direction. The vast majority of the trenches were archaeologically sterile along their length. Two possible features were identified, both putative ditches.

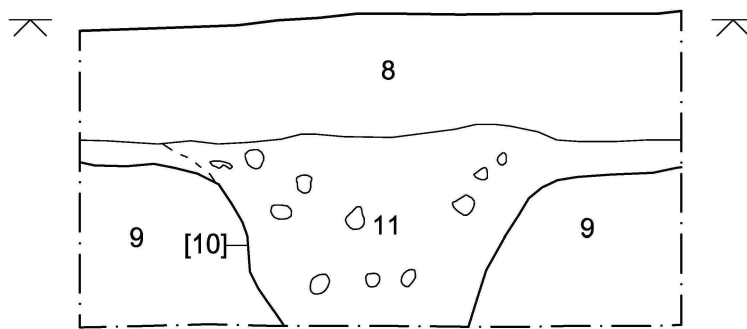
Feature [1] appeared to be linear, probably a ditch, and was located in the central trench, 10.50m from its southern end (Fig. 2 'Section 1'). The cut of this feature can clearly be seen in section, however, the section itself was stepped (Plate 2) which slightly distorted the drawn section (Fig. 3 Section 1). The feature appeared to be approximately 3.00m across and 1.00m deep. Six fills have been identified within the cut. Primary fill [2] consisted of creamy re-deposited chalk with a

Section 1



East facing

Section 2



South-west facing



Figure 3. Sections 1 and 2. Scale 1:20

moderate amount of medium sized flint pebbles. The secondary fill ([3]) was a mid to dark brown silty-sand with a clear horizon above (2) but with diffuse horizons with the later fills above. Fill [4] was again re-deposited chalk with some sandy-silt mixed in. Fill [5] was pale creamy brown sandy silt with frequent chalk flecks and occasional flint pebbles. It had a diffuse horizon with fills [6] and [7]. Fill [6] was a mid to dark brown sandy-silt with a moderate amount of flint pebbles and diffuse horizons. Uppermost fill [7] was a similar mid to dark brown sandy silt containing very frequent angular flint nodules and flint pebbles.



Plate 2. Possible ditch [1]



Plate 3. Possible ditch [10]

Feature [10] appeared to be linear in nature, most likely a ditch, located along the north-west to south-east arm of the easternmost trench (Fig 2 'Section 2'). It seemed to be aligned on a north-east to south-westerly axis and was approximately 1.10m wide and more than 0.49m deep. The base was not reached as the feature continued below the bottom of the trench (Fig. 3 Section 2).

The fill of feature [10] ([11]) was recorded as a mid-brown 'soil-like' deposit with abundant flint stones.

6.0 CONCLUSIONS

The two linear features recorded during the archaeological monitoring have been interpreted as possible ditches although apart from the sections recorded there is little additional information that can be added. Apart from the features, there is no other explicit evidence of human activity on the development area. It is possible that because of the nature of the topography of the area, any evidence that may have existed has been washed downslope or has been ploughed away – a very thin layer of topsoil sits directly on top of the chalk natural giving little protection to any potential archaeological remains that may have been present. It is feasible that this particular area has been subject to agricultural activity for hundreds of years and evidence of this would be difficult to detect within the limited scope of the trenches on the site.

It is worth noting that Faden's Map of Norfolk (Barringer 2004), first printed in 1797, clearly shows what was described as a 'Roman Camp' close to Narford Hall but no evidence of such Roman presence has been recorded in the Norfolk Historic Environment Record near to Burntstall Plantation. However evidence from findspots nearby point to activity in the immediate area during the Roman period supplemented by the presence of a Roman road nearby.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Solarcentury for commissioning and funding the work.

The fieldwork was undertaken by Rachel Cruse and Fran Green.

This report was illustrated by David Dobson and edited by Jayne Bown.

Bibliography and Sources

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Appendix 1a: Context Summary

Context	Category	Cut Type	Fill Of	Description	Period
1	Cut	Linear		Ditch?	Unknown
2	Deposit		[1]	Fill of Ditch [1]	Unknown
3	Deposit		[1]	Fill of Ditch [1]	Unknown
4	Deposit		[1]	Fill of Ditch [1]	Unknown
5	Deposit		[1]	Fill of Ditch [1]	Unknown
6	Deposit		[1]	Fill of Ditch [1]	Unknown
7	Deposit		[1]	Fill of Ditch [1]	Unknown
8	Deposit			Topsoil Layer	Modern
9	Deposit			Natural Layer	--
10	Cut	Linear		Ditch?	Unknown
11	Deposit		[10]	Fill of Ditch [10]	Unknown

Appendix 1b: OASIS Feature Summary

Period	Category	Total
Unknown	?Ditch	2

Appendix 2: OASIS Report Summary

OASIS DATA COLLECTION FORM: England

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OASIS ID: norfolka1-154666

Project details

Project name	Land off Low Road, Narford WB
Short description of the project	An archaeological watching brief was conducted for Savills on behalf of Solarcentury ahead of the installation of a large number of solar panels at Low Road, Narford in Norfolk. Two possible ditch features were recorded during monitoring works. No artefacts were recovered.
Project dates	Start: 29-01-2013 End: 22-03-2013
Previous/future work	No / No
Any associated project reference codes	ENF131703 - HER event no.
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	None
Current Land use	Cultivated Land 2 - Operations to a depth less than 0.25m
Monument type	DITCH Uncertain
Significant Finds	NONE None
Investigation type	"Watching Brief"
Prompt	National Planning Policy Framework - NPPF

Project location

Country	England
Site location	NORFOLK BRECKLAND NARFORD Burnstalk Plantation, Off Low Road
Study area	22.50 Hectares
Site coordinates	TF 7766 1160 52 0 52 40 21 N 000 37 40 E Point

Project creators

Name of Organisation	NPS Archaeology
Project brief originator	Norfolk Historic Environment Service
Project design originator	NPS Archaeology

Project director/manager	Nigel Page
Project supervisor	Rachel Cruse
Project supervisor	Stuart Calow
Type of sponsor/funding body	Utility
Name of sponsor/funding body	Solarcentury

Project archives

Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive recipient	NPS Archaeology
Digital Contents	"other"
Digital Media available	"Images raster / digital photography", "Images vector", "Spreadsheets", "Text"
Paper Archive recipient	Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service
Paper Contents	"other"
Paper Media available	"Context sheet", "Plan", "Report", "Section"

Project bibliography 1

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