

NORFOLK ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

Report No. 916

**An Archaeological Watching Brief at
land adjacent to 5, Vong Lane,
Pott Row, Grimston, Norfolk**

39844 GRM

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Location: Land adjacent to 5, Vong Lane, Pott Row, Grimston, Norfolk
District: West Norfolk
Grid Ref: TF 7057 2191
HER No.: 39844 GRM
Date of fieldwork: 1st December 2003

Summary

An archaeological watching brief at Vong Lane, Pott Row, Grimston, observed footings for a proposed single residential building. However, no features of archaeological interest were found. Four unstratified fragments of medieval pottery and a single flint flake were retrieved from the spoil from the groundworks.

1.0 Introduction

(Fig. 1)

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Norfolk Archaeological Unit (NAU) on behalf of Mr R. Rudd, building contractors of Fen Lane, Pott Row. The location of the site was adjacent to 5, Vong Lane, Pott Row and was formerly an access way into a field to the rear of the site, previously under agricultural usage.

The site was approximately 40m in length and 10m in width with the footing trenches occupying an area of approximately 75 sq. m, including a small extension on the outside of the main footings for service trenches.

This archaeological watching brief was undertaken in accordance with a Brief issued by Norfolk Landscape Archaeology (NLA Ref: EJR 24/09/03).

The site archive is currently held by the Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service, following the relevant policy on archiving standards.

2.0 Geology and Topography

The underlying solid geology of the area is Lower Cretaceous chalk (Funnell 1994, 12) beneath an outcrop of blown sand, shingles and river gravels with patches of blue grey clay within sandy gravel nearer the surface. The subsoil of the site in question was a mid to dark brown sandy loam silt with occasional flint inclusions. The topsoil was a dark chocolate brown sandy loam, resembling garden soil or a well turned tilth.

3.0 Archaeological and Historical Background

The area of Grimston and Pott Row has long been recognised as a major centre of pottery production in the east of England during the 11th and 12th centuries with production continuing here up to the 16th century (Leah 1994). The pottery produced, Thetford/Grimston ware and Grimston ware, has been found on archaeological sites throughout Norfolk and surrounding counties.

The earlier pottery type was modelled on a popular dark grey unglazed ware made at Thetford mainly during the 10th and 11th centuries. The later Grimston ware, more apparent in the 12th century and later, was a relatively thick pottery, glazed with lead which produced a green colouration and which had a wide distribution in the region.

Several sites of archaeological interest have been located in the vicinity of the current site with reference to the Norfolk Historic Environment Record (HER).

To the east of the site a 16th-century Nuremberg jetton was located (HER 25587) and to the south and west several sites producing pottery, ceramic wasters and kilns have been located (HER 1016; 3588 and 22954). Approximately 100m to the west of the current site evidence of a Saxo-Norman dwelling was located as well as later medieval structures and indications that a hollow way was established in the 12th century along the line of the present Vong Lane.

Several programmes of archaeological work have taken place in the vicinity of Vong Lane in Pott row, notably a watching brief at the site of the former Post Office (Penn 1991) just to the west of the current site and watching briefs at Chapel Road (Donald 1999) further to the west.

4.0 Methodology

(Fig. 2)

The objective of this watching brief was to record any archaeological evidence revealed during the excavation of footing trenches prior to development of the site into a single dwelling.

The footings were excavated using a wheeled JCB-type machine with an 0.80m wide toothed bucket. The footings were started at the rear of the site and moved forward to the street frontage as access was limited in the area concerned. The work was monitored throughout the excavation process to ascertain whether any features of archaeological interest were disturbed.

The layout of the trenches was of a rectangular grid comprising four main exterior trenches, with central north to south and east to west spinal trenches with an additional short east to west partition trench.

Spoil, exposed surfaces and features were scanned with a metal detector. All metal-detected and hand-collected finds were retained for inspection, other than those which were obviously modern.

All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using NAU *pro forma* sheets. Trench locations, plans and sections were recorded at appropriate scales and colour and monochrome photographs were taken of all relevant features and deposits.

Due to the lack of suitable deposits, no environmental samples were taken.

Site conditions were fine with good light, relatively firm ground and stable trench sides. Access to the site was from the street frontage of Vong Lane.

5.0 Results

(Appendix 1)

The topsoil was a well-tilled dark brown sandy loam or garden soil containing small flints and post-medieval and modern mortar fragments. The depth of the footings at the north end of the site (0.56m) remained within the subsoil without disturbing the underlying natural. In the centre and south end (towards the road) the topsoil was slightly deeper but the depth of excavation (0.70m) remained within the subsoil and no natural was revealed.

Upon examination of the trenches, after excavation, post-medieval tile and glass was seen in the base and sides of the footings within the subsoil. No features of archaeological interest were observed within the subsoil within any of the trenches.

Examination of the spoil from the trenches recovered several finds, consisting of four sherds of medieval pottery, a lump of metal working waste and a single worked flint. No evidence of structures or other features associated with pottery production were located within the spoil.

6.0 The Finds

(Appendix 2)

6.1 *The Pottery*

(Appendix 3)

The site produced four fragments of medieval pottery: two sherds of glazed Grimston ware both from the late 12th to 15th century; one sherd of Grimston unglazed coarseware from the 11th to mid 13th century. Also one sherd of Thetford/Grimston ware dating from the 10th to the 11th century.

6.2 *Other finds*

Other finds comprised of one fragment of post-medieval pantile and a small fragment of undated smithing slag.

A single flint flake was recovered from the site. It shows evidence for having been struck by hard hammer. It is not closely dateable but indicates activity in the vicinity of the site during the prehistoric period, probably during the Neolithic period or Bronze Age.

7.0 Conclusions

The watching brief at Vong Lane, Pott Row, Grimston observed footings that were contained within the sub-soil levels and did not disturb archaeological deposits. So although being in an area of archaeological and historic interest, within the vicinity of well documented pottery production centre, no features of archaeological interest were observed.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank the building contractor Mr R. Rudd for his interest and assistance on site. The HER information was supplied by Jan Allen. The finds were processed by Lucy Talbot and pottery assessed by Richenda Goffin. The flint was identified by Sarah Bates. The report was illustrated, formatted and produced by Maggie Foottit and edited by Alice Lyons.

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Appendix 1: Context Summary

Context	Category	Description	Period
1	Deposit	Topsoil	Modern
2	Deposit	Subsoil	Post-medieval

Appendix 2: Finds by Context

Context	Period	Material	Quantity	Weight (kg)
1	Medieval	Pottery	4	0.120
1	Post-medieval	Ceramic building material	1	0.013
1	-	Metal working debris	1	0.050
1	Prehistoric	Flint	1	-

Appendix 3: Pottery

Context	Fabric	Form	Quantity	Weight (kg)	Date
1	Thetford/ Grimston type ware	Body, applied thumbled strip	1	0.048	10th to 11th century
1	Grimston unglazed coarseware	Body	1	0.006	11th to mid 13th century
1	Grimston ware	Body, oxidised-over-fired glaze	1	0.004	Late 12th to 15th century
1	Grimston ware	Base, oxidised-over-fired jug	1	0.059	Late 12th to 15th century

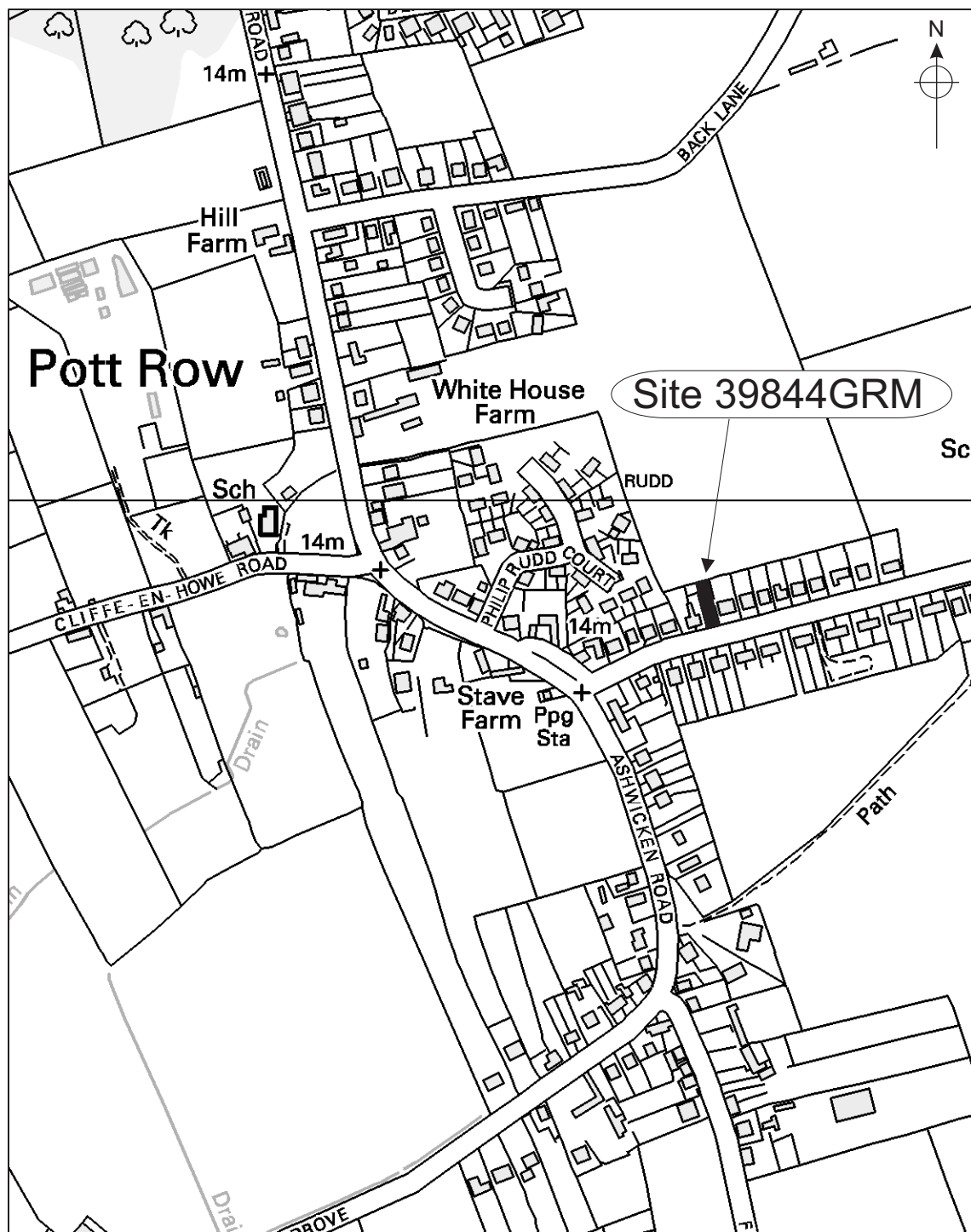


Figure 1. Site location. Scale 1:5000

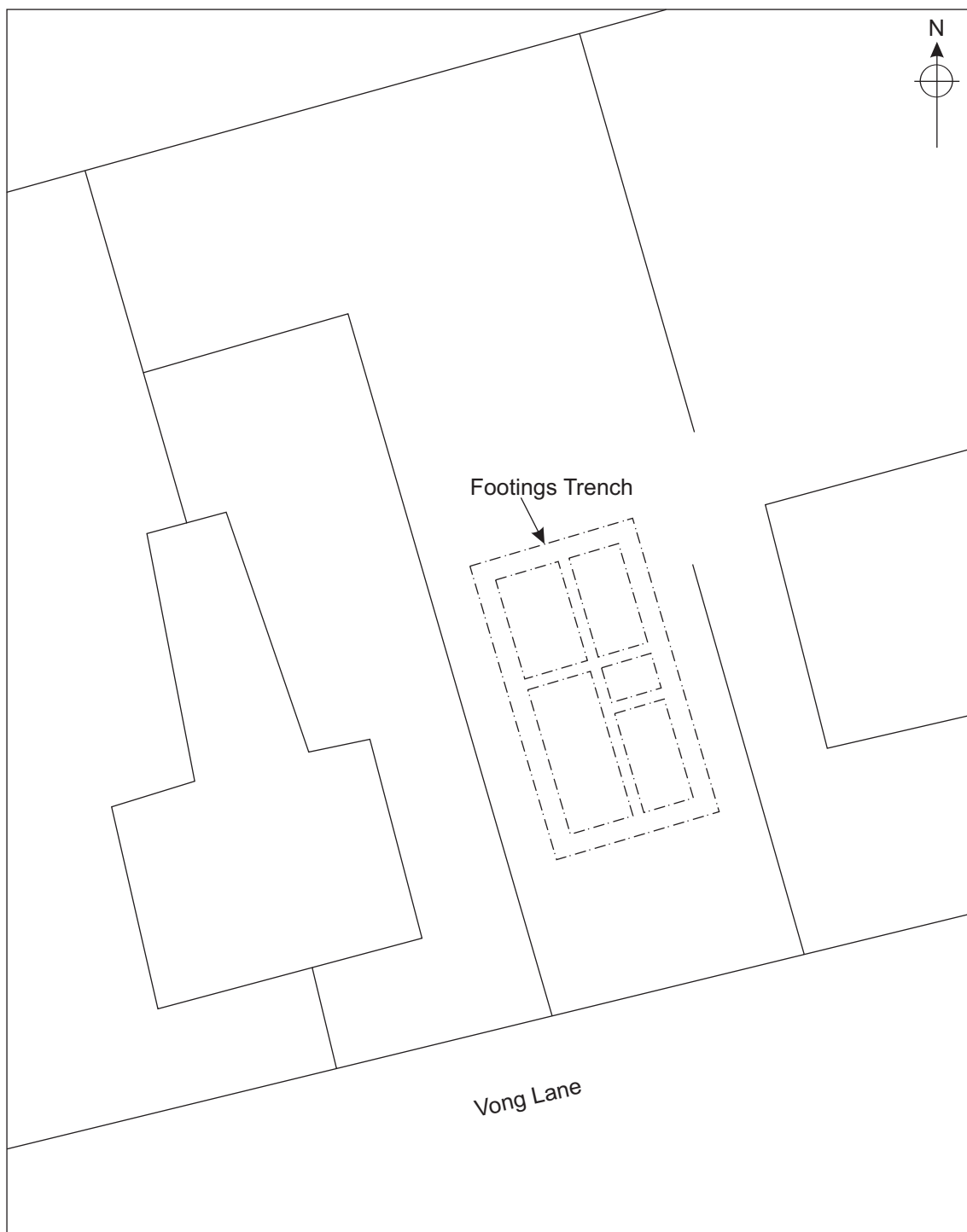


Figure 2. Trench location. Scale 1:250