

**NORFOLK ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT**

Report No. 1084

**An Archaeological Watching Brief at Punch Farm Quarry,  
Beeston with Bittering (Phase 3b)**

35173 BNB

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BAU 1138



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Fig.1 Site location



Location: Punch Farm Quarry, Beeston with Bittering (Phase 3b)  
District: Breckland  
Grid Ref: TF 899 167  
HER No.: 35173 BNB  
Date of fieldwork: 24th to 27th and 31st of May 2005

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## **Summary**

*An archaeological watching brief was undertaken at Punch Farm Quarry (Phase 3b) to monitor the stripping of topsoil in preparation for further quarrying. A number of hand-collected and metal detected finds were retrieved from the spoil, including worked flint, a single sherd of medieval pottery, some metal objects and metal working debris.*

*No archaeological features were observed.*

## **1.0 Introduction**

(Fig. 1)

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Norfolk Archaeological Unit (NAU) at Punch Farm Quarry to monitor the stripping of an area of land in preparation for quarrying. This work was undertaken as part of a programme of extraction at the site which comprises five phases.

Phase 1 (Adams 2000) and Phase 2 (Ames 2002) have previously been reported on by NAU. An archaeological field survey (Phase 3a) was carried out by NAU in 2004 (Crawley 2005). This watching brief (Phase 3b) completes that phase of work. The area surveyed measured approximately 80m by 90m (7200 sq. m).

This work was commissioned by Mr Simon Westway of Simon Westway Associates.

This archaeological watching brief was undertaken in accordance with a Brief issued by Norfolk Landscape Archaeology (NLA Ref: 18/2/00/DG). This brief was supplemented by a Method Statement prepared by the NAU (Ref: MS/Eval).

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

## **2.0 Archaeological and Historical Background**

Much archaeological work has taken place previously at both Longham and Beeston with Bittering before quarrying around Salter's Lane took place (Ashwin 1998), which found evidence of Neolithic and Iron Age occupation.

The Norfolk Historic Environment Record (NHER) lists three findspots located within the quarry area:

NHER 12066: worked flint and prehistoric pottery.

NHER 13923: a pit was exposed in the face of the quarry containing Iron Age pottery and slag.

NHER 7618: Iron Age or Saxon and medieval pottery and an Early Saxon annular brooch.

### 3.0 Methodology

The objective of this watching brief was to record any archaeological evidence revealed during the stripping of topsoil.

The Brief required that an archaeologist must be present during the stripping of topsoil, and that the area should be scanned with a metal detector.

Topsoil was stripped using a tracked 360° digger fitted with a 2m toothless ditching bucket. Spoil was removed from the site with large dumper vehicles and placed elsewhere on site.

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 the NAU *pro forma* sheets. Plans were recorded at appropriate scales and colour photographs were taken of all relevant features and deposits.

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

Access to the site was available *via* the tracks used by the quarry plant. Weather remained favourable for the duration of the work.

### 4.0 Results

The topsoil consisted of a mid-brown sandy soil measuring approximately 0.34m in depth, and contained a large amount of small rounded flints. There was no distinguishable subsoil. The natural ground consisted of mid-to-light orange sand and gravel, with occasional large flints.

No archaeological features were observed, although ploughmarks could be seen running east-to-west.

A number of finds were recovered from the spoil during the stripping of topsoil, including worked flint, a small sherd of very abraded pottery and some metal working debris.

A number of metal objects, mostly nails, were recovered during metal detecting, although thorough scanning of the area before excavation was inhibited by the growth of dense, rough grass.

### 5.0 The Finds

#### Introduction

The finds from the site are listed with basic quantitative information in **Appendix 2: Finds by Context**. In addition to this summary, more detailed information on specific finds are included in separate reports below with supporting tables for these contributions also included in the appendices.

## **Small Finds and Other Metal Objects**

(Appendix 3 and 4)

By Julia Huddle

Only three small finds were recovered on site (Appendix 3). One is a ?pewter spoon and is dated to the medieval period (SF1). The other two are post-medieval and include a thimble (SF2) and a hooked fitting (SF3). The remaining finds are either undiagnostic or are late post-medieval (Appendix 4).

## **Pottery**

By Lucy Talbot

A single unglazed body sherd of late 11th- to early 14th-century date was recovered, (0.004kg).

## **Ceramic Building Material**

By Lucy Talbot

The site produced a single fragment of post-medieval roof tile, weighing (0.027kg).

## **Metal Working Debris**

By Lucy Talbot

Two pieces of undated tap slag, associated with the process of smelting were retrieved, (0.029kg).

## **Flint**

(Appendix 5)

By Sarah Bates

Thirteen pieces of struck flint were recovered from the site. They were all from unstratified contexts.

There is one possible core; an irregular chunky fragment has had some flakes struck from one side and there are incipient percussion marks where it has been hit on one surface. A small cortical area is patinated white showing that the flint was weathered before use.

There are nine flakes, all of them quite irregular squat pieces. There is also a blade-like flake with possible slight retouch to its edge and a blade which may have been utilised as a knife. One steep cortical edge has been slightly retouched; possibly deliberately 'backing' or blunting of that edge. The opposite edge shows signs of chipping and wear.

The flints are not closely datable. The irregular nature and use of patinated raw material suggests a later prehistoric date (Later Neolithic onwards) is more likely for most of them.

## 6.0 Conclusions

The results of the watching brief were largely negative with few finds and no archaeological feature identified.

The worked flint recovered from the spoil indicates human activity in the area dating to prehistoric times. It is interesting that Phases 1 and 2 both produced worked and burnt prehistoric flint although it was lacking from Phase 3a. This variation in distribution of worked flint may reflect how the land was settled and used during the later prehistoric period (Later Neolithic onwards).

The recovery of metal-working debris is indicative of industrial activity within the vicinity, but since it was recovered in an unstratified context, and that no other items associated with metalworking were observed or retrieved, it is most likely that the debris was redeposited from another area. It is worth of note, however, that fragments of slag and sherds of Iron Age pottery were found at another site nearby (NHER 13923).

The presence of plough marks together with abraded medieval pottery and undated, medieval, post-medieval and modern metal finds indicate the use of this land for agriculture in recent times.

Recommendations for future work based upon this report will be made by Norfolk Landscape Archaeology.

### **Acknowledgements**

Thanks to Mr Simon Westway of Simon Westway Associates who commissioned this work.

The site work was undertaken by the author. Lucy Talbot processed and identified the pottery, ceramic building material and metal working debris. Sarah Bates contributed a report on the flint and Julia Huddle reported on the small finds.

The report was illustrated and produced by Julie Curl and edited by Alice Lyons.

### **Bibliography**

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| Ames, J.,       | 2002 | <i>Report on an Archaeological Watching Brief at Punch Farm Quarry, Beeston with Bittering</i> , NAU Report 674 (unpublished)               |
| Ashwin, T.,     | 1998 | 'Excavations at Salter's Lane, Longham: Neolithic and Bronze Age features and finds' <i>Norfolk Archaeology</i> 43 (1), 1-29                |
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## Appendix 1: Context Summary

Context	Category	Description	Period
72	Unstratified deposit	A mid-brown sandy soil	-

## Appendix 2: Finds by Context

Context	Material	Quantity	Weight (kg)	Period
72	Pottery	1	0.004	Medieval
72	Ceramic building material	1	0.027	Post medieval
72	Iron	16	-	-
72	Lead (including SF1)	3	-	Medieval
72	Copper Alloy (including SFs 2 and 3)	4	-	Post-medieval
72	Metal working debris	2	0.029	-
72	Flint - worked	13	-	Prehistoric

## Appendix 3: Small Finds

Small Find	Context	Quantity	Material	Object name	Description	Period/date
1	72	1	Lead/tin	Spoon	With four-sided short stem ?incomplete and damaged originally ?oval bowl. Stem length 35; max bowl width 26mm. <b>Discussion</b> Lead/tin spoons are well known from medieval deposits, see those for example listed in the museum of London's book on the medieval household (Egan 1998, 247-252).	Medieval
2	72	1	Copper alloy	Thimble	Machine-made with evenly punched dots around top half of sides, plain crown and broad border	c. 18th century
3	72	1	Copper alloy	Fitting	Rectangular plate with hooked end, opposite end has rounded expanded sides and is bent over at this end. <b>Discussion</b> This hooked fitting is similar to the early post-medieval book clasps described by Margeson (1993, 74-5) whereby one end was riveted into position on the cover of a book and at the opposite end the hook was fastened into a corresponding back plate in order to keep the book shut. This example must have been clamped rather than riveted into position and it is not certain whether it would have functioned as a book clasp or had a another function.	c. 18th century

**Appendix 4: Catalogue of Other Metal Objects not Small Found (either late post-medieval or undiagnostic)**

Context	Quantity	Material	Object Name	Description	Object date
72	1	lead	Waste	25g	Undiagnostic
72	1	lead	Artefact	Incomplete cup-shaped circular object with flange and broken ?stem through central hole. Some kind of fitting	Undated
72	3	Iron	Artefacts	Hooked strip fragment x 1; plate fragment, badly corroded x 1; V-shaped bar fragment x 1.	Undiagnostic
72	1	Copper alloy	Cap	Domed cap with internal screw thread.	Modern
72	1	Copper alloy	Sheet	Rectangular sheet, bent ?offcut	Undiagnostic
72	1	Iron	Artefact	C-shaped corroded bar fragment, possible horseshoe fragment.	Undiagnostic
72	12	Iron	Nails	-	Undated

**Appendix 5: Flint**

Context	Type	Quantity
72	Single platform flake core	1
72	Flake	9
72	Backed knife	1
72	Retouched blade	1
72	Scraper	1