

Report 2014/1067



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Archaeological Watching Brief at Aylsham Football Club, Woodgate, Aylsham, Norfolk

ENF 133971



Prepared for
Chaplin Farrant Ltd.
51 Yarmouth Road
Norwich
Norfolk
NR7 0ET

Steve Hickling MA, ACIfA

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PROJECT CHECKLIST		
Project Manager	Nigel Page	
Draft Completed	Steve Hickling	04/11/2014
Graphics Completed	David Dobson	14/11/2014
Edit Completed	Andrew Crowson	06/01/2015
Reviewed	David Adams	12/01/2015
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NPS Archaeology

Scandic House
85 Mountergate
Norwich
NR1 1PY

T 01603 756150

F 01603 756190

E nau.mail@nps.co.uk

W <http://nau.nps.co.uk>

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Location:	Land adjacent to Woodgate Farm, Aylsham, Norfolk
District:	Broadland
Grid Ref.:	617817, 326367
Planning Ref.:	20110128
HER No.:	ENF 133971
OASIS Ref.:	196714
Client:	Chaplin Farrant Ltd for Youngs Farms Ltd
Dates of Fieldwork:	14 April–9 October 2014

Summary

An archaeological watching brief was conducted for Youngs Farms Ltd during groundworks associated with the laying of new football pitches for the Aylsham Football Club.

The only feature recorded on the site was an undated field boundary ditch seen in foundation trenches dug for a new pavilion. This may be a field boundary shown on the Ordnance Survey First Edition map (c.1885).

Although a small amount of prehistoric pottery and flint was recovered from unstratified contexts, no further archaeological features were observed; this may be because of the method of mechanical excavation.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Figures 1, 2

Proposals to create new football pitches for Aylsham Football Club on land adjacent to Woodgate Farm, Aylsham, required a programme of archaeological monitoring of the groundworks. The total size of the area to be developed was 0.07km².

The work was undertaken to fulfil planning requirements set by Broadland District Council (Ref. 20110128) and a Brief issued by Norfolk Historic Environment Service (Ref. CNF42442). The work was conducted in accordance with a Project Design and Method Statement prepared by NPS Archaeology (Ref. 01-04-15-2-1067). The work was commissioned and funded by Youngs Farms Ltd represented by Chaplin Farrant Ltd.

The programme of work was designed to assist in defining the character and extent of any archaeological remains within the proposed development area, following 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 Service following the relevant policies on archiving standards.

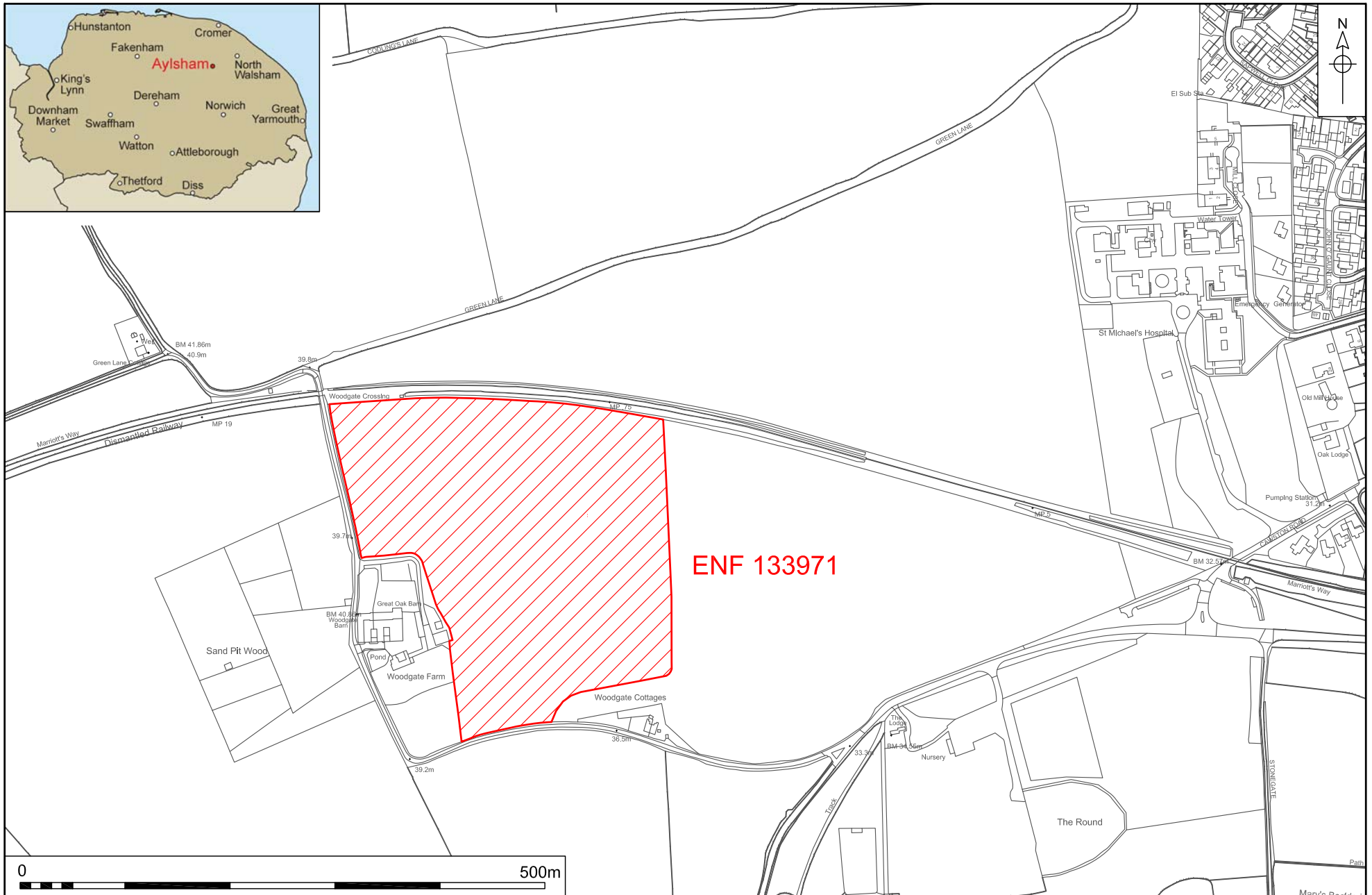


Figure 1. Site location. Scale 1:5000



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Figure 2. Site plan showing the location of football pitches and pavilion. Scale 1:2000

2.0 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

The underlying geology consists of mid-Pleistocene glaciofluvial sand and gravel deposits, which lie above Quaternary sands and gravels of the Wroxham Crag Formation (<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>).

The site is located 1.5km west–southwest of Aylsham town centre and it is surrounded by farmland. The site lies at a height of c. 39m OD and slopes gently down to the southeast.

3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Norfolk Historic Environment Record (NHER) and historic mapping sources were consulted during the preparation of the following section of this report.

Most of the NHER information is derived from metal-detecting of the surrounding fields. This activity produces a large number of artefacts that can rarely be taken as indicative of historical occupation, but instead suggest scattering with manure on arable fields.

3.1 Prehistoric

Despite the large amount of metal-detecting in the area, little prehistoric material has been found.

A Late Neolithic or Early Bronze Age barbed and tanged arrowhead (NHER 30893) was recovered amongst a wide range of artefacts during metal-detecting in a field 220m southeast of the development site.

Excavations at St Michael's Hospital in 2004 and 2008 (NHER 40920), 420m east of the present development, uncovered a number of archaeological features including a possible Iron Age pit.

3.2 Roman

Results of metal-detecting suggest a possible Roman occupation site (NHER 30893) 220m to the southeast of the development area. A 1st-century AD rear hook brooch and more than twenty Roman coins, mostly dating to the 4th century AD, have been found at this site.

Metal-detector searches of land 330m southeast of the development site recovered Roman pottery sherds, tile fragments, coins and a brooch (NHER 33095) from 1996–2013.

Roman metal objects (NHER 39985) were recovered by metal-detectorists from 2003–11, 630m southeast of the present development.

Excavations at St Michael's Hospital in 2004 and 2008 uncovered a number of archaeological features including a Roman/Saxon ditch and a post-hole (NHER 40920).

Metal-detecting within the development area and just to the east in 2006 and 2008 recovered Roman coins (NHER 50092).

3.3 Anglo-Saxon

A small amount of Anglo-Saxon material has been found by metal-detecting in the vicinity of the development.

Between 1996–2013, an Early Saxon brooch (NHER 12977) was found 40m northeast of the site, and a Late Saxon Borre-style brooch (NHER 33095) was recovered 330m southeast of the current development.

3.4 Medieval

A large amount of medieval material has been found by metal-detecting in recent years, including a penny of Henry VI (NHER 12977) 40m northeast of the development site.

A 14th-century seal matrix (NHER 30459) with a design of a falcon or hawk preying on a duck and inscribed ALAS IE SV PRIS (alas I am taken) was found 150m southeast of the development.

Another 14th-century find—a strap end—was recovered with medieval coins (NHER 30893) 220m southeast of the development site.

Metal-detecting from 1996–2013 recovered medieval pottery sherds, coins, a medieval token and a number of other metal objects (NHER 33095) 330m southeast of the development site.

Excavations in 2004 and 2008 at St Michael's Hospital, 420m east of the development site, uncovered a number of archaeological features relating to medieval enclosures, a field system, trackways, pits and a possible oven (NHER 40920).

A metal-detector search of the field 10m west of the development site in 2005 and 2006 recovered various medieval metalwork finds (NHER 42588).

Within the development area itself, and just to the east, medieval metal objects, including a horse harness mount (NHER 50092), were recovered in 2006 and 2008.

Metal-detecting in a field 210m northwest of the current development in 2006 retrieved medieval metal objects (NHER 50147).

A short iron sword or baselard (NHER 51329) dating to the 14th or 15th century was found by chance before 2005, 385m southeast of the development site.

3.5 Post-medieval

Most of the post-medieval finds from the immediate vicinity have also been discovered by metal-detecting, but there are also three important buildings—two houses and a barn—dating to the 18th century close by.

Two silver coins of Elizabeth I (NHER 30459) were found by metal-detectorists 150m southeast of the development site.

Several post-medieval lead cloth seals, coins and tokens including two Nuremburg jettons (NHER 30893) were found 220m southeast of the development site.

Metal-detecting 330m southeast of the development site from 1996–2013 recovered post-medieval pottery sherds, glass and clay pipe fragments, coins, a pin and a cloth seal (NHER 33095).

A metal-detector survey of the field 10m west of the present development in 2005 and 2006 recovered a post-medieval coin and various other metalwork finds including a corroded 16th-century book clasp (NHER 42588).

Post-medieval coins and a buckle (NHER 50092) were collected by metal-detecting in 2006 and 2008 from the site of the current development and the area to the east.

In August 2006, post-medieval coins and a rowel spur (NHER 50147) were discovered 210m northwest of the development site.

Woodgate House (NHER 12216), 310m southeast of the development site, is a Grade II Listed Building. Its construction began in 1706, but it was not finished until 1726. It was built on the site of a previous house of mid-17th century date.

Woodgate Farmhouse, 45m west of the present development, is a Grade II Listed 18th-century red brick farmhouse (NHER 45584). Its barn, immediately to the north (NHER 46110), is also a Grade II Listed Building. It dates from the 18th century and is a brick, timber-framed and weather-boarded barn with a thatched roof.

3.6 Modern

The route of the East Norfolk Railway, Aylsham Branch (NHER 13587), runs along the northern boundary of the development area. This line opened in 1881, was closed in 1952, and is now included as part of the Marriott's Way footpath and cycle path.

A brick kiln that is marked on the First Edition Ordnance Survey map of c. 1885 was sited 165m southeast of the development area (NHER 15883). The NHER records that it is marked in a slightly different location on Bryant's map of 1826.

Woodgate House Park (NHER 33530), 90m south and southeast of the present development site, was reorganised in 1870 and 1876, removing several roads and enlarging a pond to create a formal lake. A kitchen garden was also added. The formal layout of the gardens suggests that this reorganisation utilised surviving 17th-century landscape boundaries.

3.7 Undated

Undated field boundaries and a trackway (NHER 12977) have been recorded from aerial photographs of an area 40m northeast of the development site. The NHER records the results of a geophysical survey in December 2010–January 2011, which revealed a series of linear magnetic anomalies, some corresponding with known crop marks, indicating ditch features forming a field system.

A crop mark of an undated rectangular enclosure (NHER 12982) is visible on aerial photographs of an area 450m northwest of the development site.

A crop mark of an undated trackway or road (NHER 30289) can be seen on aerial photographs of an area 300m northwest of the current development.

3.8 Cartographic Evidence

The information in the following section is drawn from the website <http://www.historic-maps.norfolk.gov.uk/mapexplorer/>.

The Ordnance Survey First Edition map (c. 1885) shows the development area divided into three separate fields, with boundaries aligned approximately east–west and north–south. Woodgate Farm is shown, as is the building (Woodgate Cottages) on the southern edge of the development area.

Aerial photography of 1946 shows a similar picture, but one of the field boundaries (the north-most) has been removed.

4.0 METHODOLOGY

The objective of the watching brief 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 all groundworks be monitored.

Machine excavation of the football pitches was carried out by a grader, while the foundations for the pavilion were excavated by a 13-tonne hydraulic 360° excavator equipped with a toothless ditching bucket.

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

Environmental samples were not taken due to an absence of suitable deposits.

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 and weather were variable.

5.0 RESULTS

5.1 The Football Pitches

Plate 1

The football pitches were excavated and resurfaced using a grader from 14 April–11 June 2014. The use of a grader, instead of a 360° excavator made identification of archaeological features almost impossible.

Visible stratigraphy consisted of 0.40m of dark brown clayey sand topsoil with occasional flint gravel [1] over the eastern, down-slope part of the site, and a layer of reddish brown sandy clay subsoil [2] 0.10–0.30m thick. The natural geology was predominantly yellow sand with patches of gravel and clay.

No archaeological features were identified and the only artefacts recovered were unstratified worked flints and pottery of probable Iron Age and late medieval date.

The finished ground level was considerably higher at the east end of the area.



Plate 1. Grading the football pitches facing northeast

5.2 The Pavilion Foundations

Figure 3, Plate 2

The pavilion foundations were excavated using a 13-tonne 360° excavator from 8 September–9 October 2014.

The topsoil had been stripped during the grading of the football pitches described above, but the foundation trenches revealed a vestigial layer of subsoil [2] above yellow natural sand.

One feature was visible, a ditch [3] aligned east–west. It measured 1.20m wide and 0.50m deep, with a steeper southern edge suggesting that an associated bank and hedgerow had once flanked its south side. The fill [4] of the ditch was mid-greyish brown silty sand with occasional flint gravel, but no artefacts were recovered from it.

No other significant archaeological features or artefacts were identified.

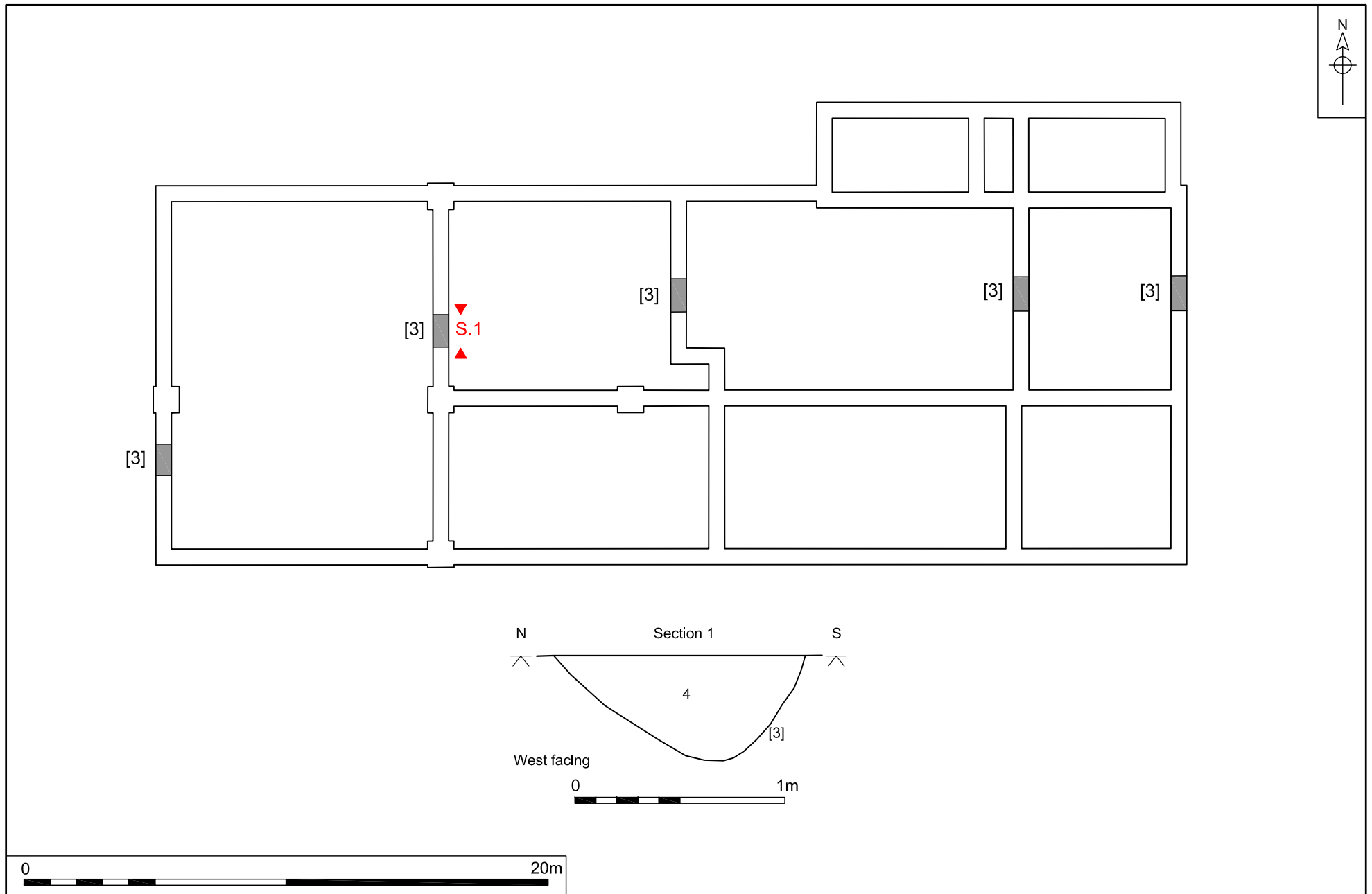


Figure 3. Plan of foundation trenches for pavilion and section 1. Scale 1:200 and 1:25



Plate 2. Ditch [3] facing southeast

6.0 FINDS

By Rebecca Sillwood

All finds were processed and recorded by count and weight, and a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet was produced outlining broad dating. Each category of material was considered separately and is included below organised by material. A full list of all finds by context can be found in Appendix 2a.

6.1 Pottery

Six pieces of pottery, weighing 32g in total, were recovered from unstratified context [5]. Five sherds are prehistoric in date, probably Iron Age. These fragments are considerably abraded, although it is possible that one piece is a rounded upright rim. The other four pieces are in the same fabric as the rim, but are too fragmentary to discuss further. The fabric is dark grey with slightly lighter margins, and contains coarse fragments of flint temper.

One fragment of probable late medieval/transitional pottery, which is also significantly abraded, was found. The piece is a base sherd in a pale orange fabric with a reduced grey core and ferrous and quartz inclusions.

6.2 Flint

The worked flint, in contrast to the pottery, is crisp and fairly sharp, although it was also recovered unstratified [5]. Three pieces, weighing 14g were recovered; all are of a similar raw material and could almost have come from the same knapping episode. The flint is dark grey and two of the three pieces retain a little cortex. The pieces are all flakes.

6.3 Finds Conclusions

All of the material from the watching brief was found unstratified. The pottery is abraded, although several sherds are seemingly from the same Iron Age vessel. The flint was rather crisper, and did not appear to have moved far from its place of deposition.

This material is of mixed origin, but does point to some activity in the area during the prehistoric period and the 15th–16th centuries.

7.0 CONCLUSIONS

The only archaeological feature recorded on the development site was an undated field boundary ditch seen in the foundation trenches for the new pavilion. This may represent a field boundary shown on the Ordnance Survey First Edition map (c. 1885).

Although a small amount of prehistoric pottery and flint was recovered from unstratified contexts, no further archaeological features were observed; this may have been due to the method of mechanical excavation, in using a grader rather than a 360° excavator. It seems possible that the finds represent limited prehistoric activity of some kind on the site.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Dave the grader driver, Jim Coleman the foreman for the football pitch groundworks, and Neil Williams the foreman for the pavilion foundations excavation for their help and cooperation during the fieldwork phase of the project.

The finds were processed, recorded and reported on by Rebecca Sillwood.

This report was illustrated and produced by David Dobson and edited by Andrew Crowson.

Bibliography and Sources

Department for Communities 2012 *National Planning Policy Framework*
and Local Government

<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.htm> Accessed 09.04.2014

<http://www.historic-maps.norfolk.gov.uk/mapexplorer/> Accessed 04.11.2014

Appendix 1a: Context Summary

Context	Category	Cut Type	Fill Of	Description	Period
1	Deposit			Topsoil	Modern
2	Deposit			Subsoil	Unknown
3	Cut	Ditch		Aligned east to west	Unknown
4	Deposit		3	Fill of [3]	Unknown
5	U/S Finds			Unstratified finds	-

Appendix 1b: OASIS Feature Summary

Period	Category	Total
Unknown	Ditch	1

Appendix 2a: Finds by Context

Context	Material	Qty	Wt	Period
5	Flint – Struck	3	14g	Prehistoric
5	Pottery	1	25g	Med./Post-Med.
5	Pottery	5	7g	Iron Age

Appendix 2b: OASIS Finds Summary

Period	Material	Total
Prehistoric	Flint – Struck	3
Iron Age	Pottery	5
Med./Post-Med.	Pottery	1

Appendix 3: OASIS Report Summary

OASIS DATA COLLECTION FORM: England

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OASIS ID: norfolka1-196714

Project details

Project name	Aylsham Football Club
Short description of the project	Watching brief. An archaeological watching brief was conducted for Youngs Farms Ltd during groundworks associated with the laying of new football pitches for the Aylsham Football Club. The only feature recorded on the site was an undated field boundary ditch seen in foundation trenches dug for a new pavilion. This may be a field boundary shown on the Ordnance Survey First Edition map (c.1885). Although a small amount of prehistoric pottery and flint was recovered from unstratified contexts, no further archaeological features were observed; this may be because of the method of mechanical excavation.
Project dates	Start: 14-04-2014 End: 09-10-2014
Previous/future work	No / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	133971 - HER event no.
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	None
Current Land use	Cultivated Land 1 - Minimal cultivation
Monument type	DITCH Uncertain
Significant Finds	POTTERY Iron Age
Significant Finds	POTTERY Post Medieval
Significant Finds	FLINT - STRUCK Late Prehistoric
Investigation type	"Watching Brief"
Prompt	National Planning Policy Framework - NPPF

Project location

Country	England
Site location	NORFOLK BROADLAND AYLSHAM Aylsham Football Club
Study area	70000.00 Square metres
Site coordinates	617817 326367 617817 00 00 N 326367 00 00 E Point

Project creators

Name of Organisation	NPS Archaeology
Project brief originator	Norfolk Historic Environment Service
Project design originator	NPS Archaeology
Project director/manager	Steve Hickling
Project supervisor	NPS Archaeology

Project archives

Physical Archive recipient	Norfolk Museums Service
Physical Contents	"Ceramics","Worked stone/lithics"
Digital Archive recipient	NPS Archaeology
Digital Contents	"other"
Digital Media available	"Images raster / digital photography","Images vector","Spreadsheets","Text"
Paper Archive recipient	Norfolk Museums Service
Paper Contents	"other"
Paper Media available	"Context sheet","Plan","Report","Section"

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