

Report 2015/1010



nps archaeology

**Gazebo Farm, Newman Road, Rackheath, Norfolk:
Archaeological Watching Brief**

ENF 136116



Prepared for

Mott MacDonald
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March 2015

PROJECT CHECKLIST		
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Draft Completed	Steve Hickling	27/02/2015
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<i>Issue 1</i>		

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Plate 2 Excavation of Pond 2, facing southwest

Location: Gazebo Farm, Newman Road, Rackheath
District: Broadland
Grid Ref.: 627670, 312805
HER No.: ENF 136116
OASIS Ref.: 205451
Client: Mott MacDonald
Dates of Fieldwork: 9–10 February 2015

Summary

An archaeological watching brief was conducted by NPS Archaeology for Mott MacDonald during the construction of two newt ponds at Gazebo Farm, Newman Road, Rackheath, Norfolk.

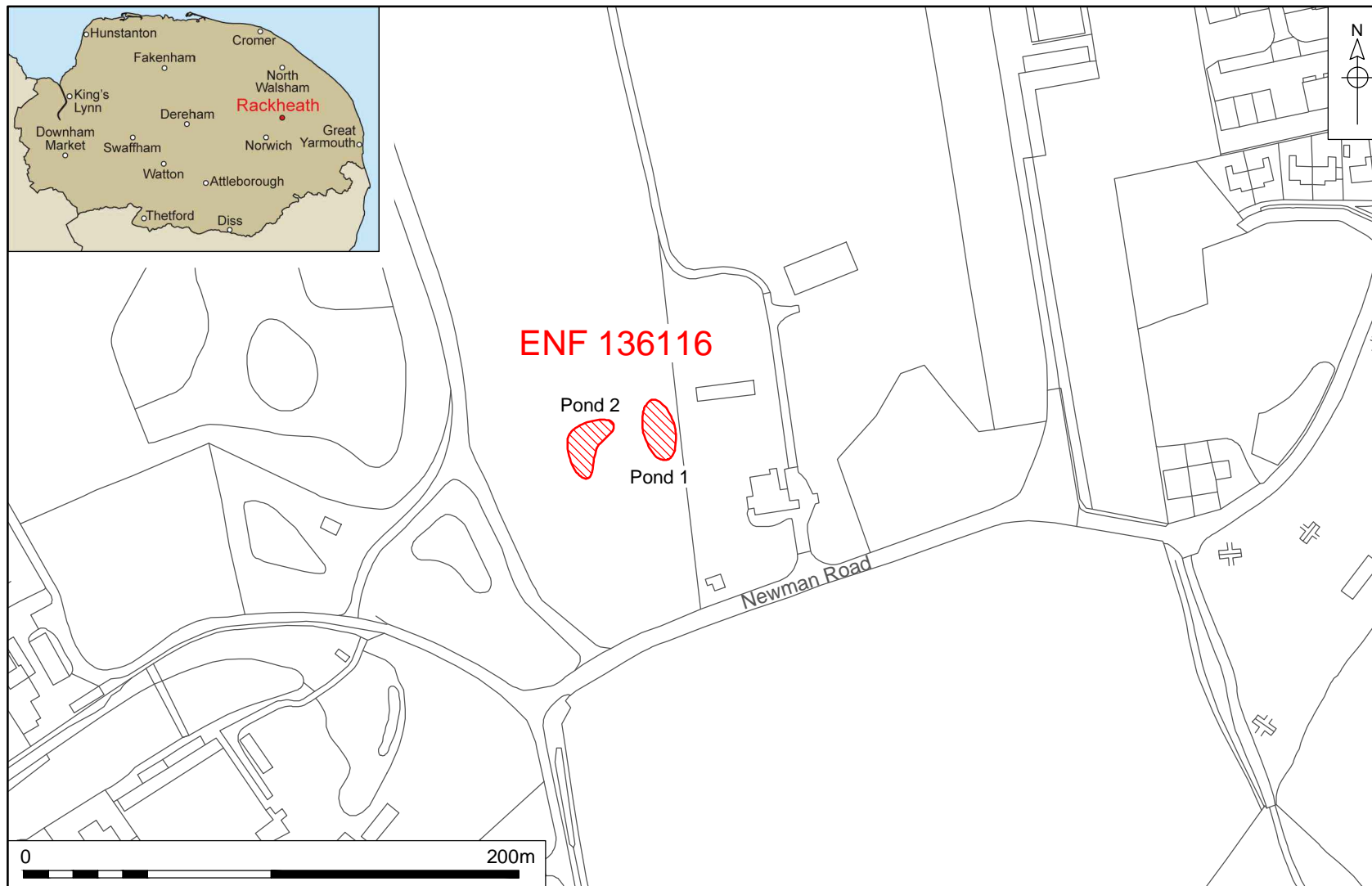
No significant archaeological features or artefacts were identified during the watching brief on the groundworks. This is likely to be because the area was severely truncated in the mid–late 20th century by quarrying.

The east boundary of the site, between the newt ponds and a bungalow to the southeast, was a steep escarpment of modern form, incorporating a change in ground level of c. 1.50m between the original ground surface to the east and the lower, truncated surface in the area of the ponds. Groundworks can be seen nearby on aerial photography of the 1980s.

INTRODUCTION

Figure 1

- 1 NPS Archaeology were commissioned by Mott MacDonald to undertake a programme of archaeological watching brief on groundworks associated with the construction of two newt ponds at Gazebo Farm, Rackheath, Norfolk. The combined area of the two ponds totalled 509m², and the work was connected to construction of the Norwich Northern Distributor Route trunk road.
- 2 The programme of work was designed to assist in defining the character and extent of any archaeological remains in the area encompassed by the newt ponds, 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.
- 3 The site archive is currently held at the offices of NPS Archaeology and on completion of the project will be deposited with Norfolk Museums following relevant policies on archiving standards.



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Figure 1. Site location. Scale 1:2500

GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

- 4 The underlying geology in the area of Gazebo Farm consists of Quaternary period Glacial Sand and Gravel, superficial deposits formed up to 3 million years ago in a local environment dominated by ice age conditions (British Geological Society 2015). These rocks were formed in cold periods with ice age glaciers scouring the landscape and depositing moraines of till with outwash sand and gravel deposits from seasonal and post-glacial meltwaters.
- 5 Below the superficial deposits are Neogene and Quaternary period rocks—Gravel, Sand, Silt and Clay—sedimentary bedrock formed up to 23 million years ago (British Geological Society 2015). These rocks were formed in local environments dominated by shallow seas, with mainly siliciclastic sediments (comprising of fragments or clasts of silicate minerals) deposited as mud, silt, sand and gravel.
- 6 The site of the watching brief is situated on flat land at a height of c. 28m OD and at the time of the work was pasture.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 7 The site containing the newt ponds lay within two areas recorded by the Norfolk Historic Environment Record (NHER) (Norfolk County Council 2015a), sites 30518 and 50740). The information presented below that is sourced from NHER remains copyright of Norfolk Historic Environment Service/Norfolk County Council.
- 8 Rackheath Park, which probably began as a deer park by the 16th century, became the parkland attached to Rackheath Hall upon its construction in the late 18th century (NHER 30518).
- 9 World War Two-era huts and tents provided accommodation for 2900 USAAF personnel stationed at Rackheath airfield (NHER 50740).
- 10 Filed-walking and metal-detecting along the proposed line of the Norwich Northern Distributor Route trunk road, to the north of the watching brief site, produced a post-medieval coin and an undated buckle (NHER 50501).
- 11 The First Edition Ordnance Survey map (c. 1885) and the Tithe Award map (c. 1840) both show the area of the newt ponds as open ground within the park of Rackheath Hall (Norfolk County Council 2015b).

METHODOLOGY

- 12 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.
- 13 Machine excavation was carried out by a wheeled hydraulic 360° excavator equipped with a toothless ditching bucket. Spoil, exposed surfaces and features were scanned with a metal detector operated by an experienced detectorist.
- 14 Monochrome and digital photographs were taken of all relevant features and deposits where appropriate.
- 15 Site conditions were good, and the work took place in fine weather.

RESULTS

- 16 Both ponds were dug to a depth of 1.50m below ground level (bgl). Pond 1 was excavated on 9 February 2014, Pond 2 on 10 February.



Plate 1: Excavation of Pond 1, facing north



Plate 2: Excavation of Pond 2, facing southwest

- 17 The stratigraphy recorded in both ponds was very similar, consisting of dark brown gravelly sand topsoil containing rare modern ceramic building material fragments, metal, and plastic, to a depth of between 0.50m and 1.50m bgl.
- 18 No archaeological features or artefacts were identified in the excavations or spoil.

CONCLUSIONS

- 19 No archaeological features or artefacts were identified in the groundworks for the newt ponds. This is considered likely to be the case because the area was severely truncated by quarrying in the mid–late 20th century. The east boundary to the site, between the newt ponds and a bungalow to the southeast, was a steep escarpment of modern form, incorporating a change in ground level of c. 1.50m between the original ground surface to the east and the lower, truncated ground surface in the area of the newt ponds.
- 20 The change in ground level is not visible on the 1946 aerial photograph, but the 1988 aerial photograph shows what appears to be groundworks occurring just to the north of the development area (Norfolk County Council 2015b). It is difficult from this alone, however, to ascertain whether groundworks had already occurred in the newt pond area at this time.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Mott MacDonald for commissioning and funding the archaeological watching brief. The project was monitored on behalf of Norfolk Historic Environment Service by Ken Hamilton.

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

Bibliography and Sources

British Geological Society 2015 *Geology of Britain Viewer* [online] Available at: <http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>. [Accessed: 24 February 2015]

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

Norfolk County Council 2015a *Norfolk Heritage Explorer* [online] Available at: <http://www.heritage.norfolk.gov.uk/>. [Accessed: 24 February 2015]

Norfolk County Council 2015b *Historic Map Explorer* [online] Available at: <http://www.historic-maps.norfolk.gov.uk/mapexplorer/>. [Accessed: 24 February 2015]

Appendix 1: OASIS Report Summary

OASIS DATA COLLECTION FORM: England

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OASIS ID: norfolka1-205451

Project details

Project name	Gazebo Farm Newt Ponds
Short description of the project	An archaeological watching brief was conducted by NPS Archaeology for Mott MacDonald during the construction of two newt ponds at Gazebo Farm, Newman Road, Rackheath, Norfolk. No archaeological features or artefacts were identified in the groundworks for the newt ponds. This is considered likely to be the case because the area was severely truncated by quarrying in the mid-late 20th century. The east boundary to the site, between the newt ponds and a bungalow to the southeast, was a steep escarpment of modern form, embracing a change in ground level of c. 1.50m between the original ground surface to the east and the lower, truncated ground surface in the area of the newt ponds. The change in ground level is not visible on the 1946 aerial photograph, but the 1988 aerial photograph shows what appears to be groundworks occurring just to the north of the development area (Norfolk County Council 2015b). It is difficult to identify whether groundworks have already occurred in the newt pond area at this time.
Project dates	Start: 09-02-2015 End: 10-02-2015
Previous/future work	Not known / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	136116 - HER event no.
Type of project	Recording project
Current Land use	Grassland Heathland 5 - Character undetermined
Monument type	NONE None
Significant Finds	NONE None
Investigation type	"Watching Brief"
Prompt	National Planning Policy Framework - NPPF

Project location

Country	England
Site location	NORFOLK BROADLAND RACKHEATH Gazebo Farm Newt Ponds, Rackheath, Norfolk
Study area	509.00 Square metres
Site coordinates	627670 312805 627670 00 00 N 312805 00 00 E Point

Height OD / Depth Min: 28.00m Max: 28.00m

Project creators

Name of Organisation NPS Archaeology

Project brief originator Unknown

Project design originator none

Project director/manager Steve Hickling

Project supervisor NPS Archaeology

Project archives

Physical Archive Exists? No

Digital Archive recipient NPS Archaeology

Digital Contents "other"

Digital Media available "Images raster / digital photography", "Text"

Paper Archive recipient Norfolk Museums Service

Paper Contents "other"

Paper Media available "Report"

Project bibliography 1

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