

NAU ARCHAEOLOGY

Report No. 1253

**An Archaeological Evaluation of Land North of Setch Road,
Middleton, Norfolk**

NHER 23040 MTN

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BAU 1498

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Location: Land North of Setch Rd., Middleton
District: West Norfolk
Grid Ref: TF 6472 1483 centred
HER No.: 23040 MTN
Date of fieldwork: 5th to 13th February 2007

Summary

NAU Archaeology was invited by Stephen M Daw Ltd to undertake an archaeological evaluation by trial trenching of an area proposed for clay extraction at land north of Setch Road, Middleton, Norfolk. A total of thirty-eight trenches were excavated across the development area.

Two trenches contained archaeological evidence. This took the form ditches which were on the same alignment and of similar size, suggesting that these two features may in fact have been part of the same ditch.

1.0 Introduction

An archaeological evaluation by trial trenching was carried out in the area of a proposed extension to an existing clay extraction quarry at Land North of Setch Road, Middleton, Norfolk. The work was commissioned by Stephen M. Daw Ltd. on behalf of Middleton Aggregates Ltd. and was funded by Middleton Aggregates Ltd. The proposed development was 5.4ha in area (Fig.1).

This archaeological programme was undertaken to fulfil a planning condition set by Norfolk County Council. The work was completed in accordance with a Project Design and Method Statement prepared by NAU Archaeology (Ref: BAU1498/DW) and a Brief issued by Norfolk Landscape Archaeology (NLA Ref: SP/C/2/2006/2032).

The 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 *Planning and Policy Guidance 16 — Archaeology and Planning* (Department of the Environment 1990). The results will enable decisions to be made by the Local Planning Authority with regard to the treatment of any archaeological remains found.

The site archive is currently held by NAU Archaeology and on completion of the project will be deposited with Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service, following the relevant policy on archiving standards.

2.0 Geology and Topography

The site is located upon deposits of Gault Clays (Williamson 2005) which overlie Lower Cretaceous Red Chalk (Funnell 2005). The topsoil consisted of greyish brown silty clay.

The local topography slopes to the south and east and the site lies at 5m to 15m OD. The north of the site is poorly drained and the south of the site is fairly well drained.

3.0 Archaeological and Historical Background

Prehistoric: A Neolithic axe-head and axe fragment (NHER 16242 and 16243 respectively) were found in the immediate vicinity of the site. To the south-west are two Prehistoric pot boiler sites (NHER 23011 and 23040), and finds of pot boilers and flints were also made to the west of the site during fieldwalking (NHER 23182 and 23592). Other finds of prehistoric pottery, flints and pot boilers have also been made to the north and south-east of the site (NHER 23008 and 24100 respectively). To the east, a possibly prehistoric ring ditch and a curvilinear ditch have been observed as crop-marks (NHER 42237).

Roman: Middleton lies to the north of an inlet on the probable Roman coastline (Murphy 2005), and saltworks found in the village dating to this period were excavated as part of the Fenland project (Crowson 2001). Finds of Roman pottery have been made to the north of the site (NHER 3363) and these may be associated with a nearby field system which has been observed as crop-marks (NHER 44485 and 44487).

Medieval: The village of Middleton is mentioned five times in the Domesday Book (Silvester 1988). Two references to Middleton mention salt-houses (Brown 1984, 19, 4 and 23, 11), suggesting that salt production was still important to the area's economy during the Medieval period. The medieval monastic establishment of Blackborough Priory lies c. 2km to the east of the site (NHER 3430). This priory was founded around 1150 and dissolved in 1538. The possible 12th century motte and bailey of Middleton Mount is located in the village of Middleton itself, approximately 1.5km to the north-east of the site (Ashwin 2001, NHER 3394).

Modern: Anecdotal evidence, given by a local quarry manager, suggests the presence of a Second World War decoy airfield to the south of the site, on the south side of Setch Road.

Finds of unknown period: A human skeleton of unknown date was found to the south-west of the site during peat cutting (NHER 17682).

4.0 Methodology

The objective of this evaluation 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 5% of the development area be sampled. This was achieved through the excavation of thirty-eight trenches which were 1.8m wide and 30m long (Fig. 2).

Machine excavation was carried out with a hydraulic 360° excavator using a toothless ditching bucket under constant archaeological supervision.

Metal detecting of spoil, exposed surfaces and features could not be carried out due to the possible presence of unexploded ordnances on the site.

All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using NAU Archaeology *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.

The context numbers for this evaluation started at [10] as numbers [01] to [09] had been previously used by the Fenland Survey.

A level was transferred from an Ordnance Survey benchmark of 2.80m on the north side of Setch Road. A non-permanent peg, situated in the central part of the site at a level 7.82m OD, was used as a temporary benchmark for this project.

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

Much of the site, particularly in the north part, was poorly drained and prone to water logging. Snow, rain and freezing conditions were experienced on this site during this project.

5.0 Results

The natural clays on this site consisted of either orange and blue grey sandy clays [11] or green clayey sands [12]. The topsoil consisted of greyish brown silty clay [10]. The location of all the trenches can be seen on Figure 2.

Trench 1

Trench 1, which was located in the south-western part of the site, was aligned north-north-west to south-south-east. This trench was excavated by machine down to natural sandy clay [11] at a depth of 0.34m. The topsoil [10] was 0.34m deep. No archaeological or modern features were observed.

Trench 2

Trench 2, which was located on the southern edge of the site, was aligned north-east-east to south-west-west. This trench was excavated by machine down to natural sandy clay [11] at a depth of 0.26m. The topsoil [10] was 0.26m deep. No archaeological or modern features were observed.

Trench 3

Trench 3, which was located on the southern edge of the site, was aligned north-north-west to south-south-east. This trench was excavated by machine down to natural sandy clay [11] at a depth of 0.25m. The topsoil [10] was 0.25m deep. No archaeological or modern features were observed.

Trench 4

Trench 4, which was located in the south-eastern part of the site, was aligned north-east-east to south-west-west. This trench was excavated by machine down to natural sandy clay [11] at a depth of 0.26m. The topsoil [10] was 0.26m deep. A modern field drain was found but no archaeological features were observed.

Trench 5

(Figs 2, 3 and 4)

Trench 5, which was located in the south-eastern part of the site, was aligned north-north-west to south-south-east. This trench was excavated by machine down to the natural sandy clay [11] at a depth of 0.26m. The topsoil [10] was 0.26m deep.

This trench contained ditch [15] which was aligned north-north-west to south-south-east (Fig. 3). This linear feature was at least 26.00m long, c. 0.70m wide and 0.21m

deep (Fig. 4). The fill of ditch [15] consisted of brown clayey sand [16]. It is likely that this feature was a former drainage ditch.

Trench 6

Trench 6, which was located in the central southern part of the site, was aligned north-east-east to south-west-west. This trench was excavated by machine down to natural sandy clay [11] at a depth of between 0.25m and 0.30m. The topsoil [10] was 0.25m to 0.30m deep. No archaeological or modern features were observed.

Trench 7

Trench 7, which was located in the central southern part of the site, was aligned north-north-west to south-south-east. This trench was excavated by machine down to natural sandy clay [11] at a depth of 0.30m. The topsoil [10] was 0.30m deep. No archaeological or modern features were observed.

Trench 8

Trench 8, which was located in the south-western part of the site, was aligned north-east-east to south-west-west. This trench was excavated by machine down to natural sandy clay [11] at a depth of 0.35m. The topsoil [10] was 0.35m deep. No archaeological or modern features were observed.

Trench 9

Trench 9, which was located on the western edge of the site, was aligned north-north-west to south-south-east. This trench was excavated by machine down to natural sandy clay [11] at a maximum depth of 0.48m. The topsoil [10] was 0.35m deep. No archaeological or modern features were observed.

Trench 10

Trench 10, which was located in the southern central part of the site, was aligned north-east-east to south-west-west. This trench was excavated by machine down to natural sandy clay [11] at a maximum depth of 0.44m. The topsoil [10] was 0.28m deep. No archaeological or modern features were observed.

Trench 11

Trench 11, which was located in the southern central part of the site, was aligned north-north-west to south-south-east. This trench was excavated by machine down to natural sandy clay [11] at a maximum depth of 0.46m. The topsoil [10] was 0.25m deep. No archaeological or modern features were observed.

Trench 12

(Figs 2, 5 and 6)

Trench 12, which was located in the southern central part of the site, was aligned north-east-east to south-west-west. This trench was excavated by machine down to natural sandy clay [11] at a depth of 0.35m. The topsoil [10] was 0.35m deep.

The eastern end of this trench contained ditch [13] which was aligned approximately north-north-west to south-south-east (Figure 5). This linear feature was of unknown length, c. 0.90m wide and 0.38m deep (Figure 6). The fill of ditch [13] consisted of brown clayey sand [14]. It is likely that this feature was a former drainage ditch and may well have been a continuation of ditch [15] which was observed in trench 5.

Trench 13

Trench 13, which was located on the western edge of the site, was aligned north-east-east to south-west-west. This trench was excavated by machine down to natural sandy clay [11] at a depth of 0.63m. The topsoil [10] was 0.63m deep. No archaeological or modern features were observed.

Trench 14

Trench 14, which was located in the western central part of the site, was aligned north-north-west to south-south-east. This trench was excavated by machine down to natural sandy clay [11] at a maximum depth of 0.40m. The topsoil [10] was 0.35m deep. No archaeological or modern features were observed.

Trench 15

Trench 15, which was located in the central part of the site, was aligned north-east-east to south-west-west. This trench was excavated by machine down to natural sandy clay [11] at a depth of 0.31m. The topsoil [10] was 0.31m deep. No archaeological or modern features were observed.

Trench 16

Trench 16, which was located in the central part of the site, was aligned north-north-west to south-south-east. This trench was excavated by machine down to natural sandy clay [11] at a depth of between 0.30m and 0.50m. The topsoil [10] was between 0.30m and 0.50m deep. No archaeological or modern features were observed.

Trench 17

Trench 17, which was located in the eastern central part of the site, was aligned north-east-east to south-west-west. This trench was excavated by machine down to natural sandy clay [11] at a depth of 0.38m. The topsoil [10] was 0.38m deep. No archaeological or modern features were observed.

Trench 18

Trench 18, which was located in the eastern part of the site, was aligned north-north-west to south-south-east. This trench was excavated by machine down to natural sandy clay [11] at a depth of 0.35m. The topsoil [10] was 0.35m deep. No archaeological or modern features were observed.

Trench 19

Trench 19, which was located on the eastern edge of the site, was aligned north-east-east to south-west-west. This trench was excavated by machine down to natural sandy clay [11] at a depth of 0.70m. The topsoil [10] was 0.70m deep. No archaeological or modern features were observed.

Trench 20

It was intended that trench 20 should be located on the eastern edge of the site. However, as this trench would have been too close to a foot path track it was not excavated for health and safety reasons. The Head of Archaeological Planning was made aware of this.

Trench 21

Trench 21, which was located in the eastern part of the site, was aligned north-east-east to south-west-west. This trench was excavated by machine down to natural

sandy clay [11] at a maximum depth of 0.35m. The topsoil [10] was 0.30m deep. No archaeological or modern features were observed.

Trench 22

Trench 22, which was located in the eastern central part of the site, was aligned north-north-west to south-south-east. This trench was excavated by machine down to natural sandy clay [11] at a depth of 0.30m to 0.40m. The topsoil [10] was 0.30m to 0.40m deep. No archaeological or modern features were observed.

Trench 23

Trench 23, which was located in the northern central part of the site, was aligned north-east-east to south-west-west. This trench was excavated by machine down to natural sandy clay [11] at a maximum depth of 0.40m. The topsoil [10] was 0.32m deep. No archaeological or modern features were observed.

Trench 24

Trench 24, which was located in the northern central part of the site, was aligned north-north-west to south-south-east. This trench was excavated by machine down to natural sandy clay [11] at a depth of between 0.30m and 0.35m. The topsoil [10] was between 0.30m and 0.35m deep. No archaeological or modern features were observed.

Trench 25

Trench 25, which was located in the north-western central part of the site, was aligned north-east-east to south-west-west. This trench was excavated by machine down to natural sandy clay [11] at a maximum depth of 0.50m. The topsoil [10] was 0.35m deep. No archaeological or modern features were observed.

Trench 26

It was intended that trench 26 should be located on the western edge of the site. However, as this trench would have been too close to an existing hedgerow it was not excavated. The Head of Archaeological Planning was made aware of this.

Trench 27

Trench 27, which was located in the north-western part of the site, was aligned north-east-east to south-west-west. This trench was excavated by machine down to natural sandy clay [11] at a depth of 0.48m. The topsoil [10] was 0.48m deep. No archaeological or modern features were observed.

Trench 28

(Trench 28, which was located in the north-western part of the site, was aligned north-north-west to south-south-east. This trench was excavated by machine down to natural sandy clay [11] at a depth of 0.35m with the topsoil [10] being 0.34m deep. A modern field drain was observed in the southern end of this trench. No archaeological were observed.

Trench 29

Trench 29, which was located in the northern central part of the site, was aligned north-east-east to south-west-west. This trench was excavated by machine down to natural sandy clay [11] at a depth of 0.55m. The topsoil [10] was 0.55m deep. No archaeological or modern features were observed.

Trench 30

Trench 30, which was located in the northern central part of the site, was aligned north-north-west to south-south-east. This trench was excavated by machine down to natural clayey sand [12] at a depth of between 0.20m and 0.40m. The topsoil [10] was between 0.20m and 0.40m deep. No archaeological or modern features were observed.

Trench 31

Trench 31, which was located in the north-eastern central part of the site, was aligned north-east-east to south-west-west. This trench was excavated by machine down to natural clayey sand [12] at a depth of 0.70m. The topsoil [10] was 0.70m deep. No archaeological or modern features were observed.

Trench 32

Trench 32, which was located in the north-eastern part of the site, was aligned north-north-west to south-south-east. This trench was excavated by machine down to natural clayey sand [12] at a depth of 0.50m. The topsoil [10] was 0.40m deep. No archaeological or modern features were observed.

Trench 33

Trench 33, which was located in the north-eastern part of the site, was aligned north-east-east to south-west-west. This trench was excavated by machine down to natural clayey sand [12] at a depth of 0.70m. The topsoil [10] was 0.70m deep. No archaeological or modern features were observed.

Trench 34

Trench 34, which was located in the north-eastern part of the site, was aligned north-north-west to south-south-east. This trench was excavated by machine down to natural sandy clay [11] at a depth of 0.35m. The topsoil [10] was 0.35m deep. No archaeological or modern features were observed.

Trench 35

Trench 35, which was located in the north-eastern part of the site, was aligned north-east-east to south-west-west. This trench was excavated by machine down to natural sandy clay [11] at a maximum depth of 0.50m. The topsoil [10] was 0.25m deep. No archaeological or modern features were observed.

Trench 36

Trench 36, which was located on the northern edge of the site, was aligned north-north-west to south-south-east. This trench was excavated by machine down to natural sandy clay [11] and natural clayey sand [12] at a depth of 0.40m. The topsoil [10] was 0.40m deep. No archaeological or modern features were observed.

Trench 37

Trench 37, which was located on the northern edge of the site, was aligned north-east-east to south-west-west. This trench was excavated by machine down to natural clayey sand [12] at a depth of 0.45m. The topsoil [10] was 0.45m deep. No archaeological or modern features were observed.

Trench 38

Trench 38, which was located on the northern edge of the site, was aligned north-north-west to south-south-east. This trench was excavated by machine down to the natural sandy clay [11] at a depth of 0.35m. The topsoil [10] was 0.35m deep. A modern field drain was located in the southern end of this trench. No archaeological features were observed.

Trench 39

Trench 39, which was located in the north-western part of the site, was aligned north-east-east to south-west-west. This trench was excavated by machine down to natural sandy clay [11] at a depth of 0.45m. The topsoil [10] was 0.45m deep. A modern field drain was located in this trench but no archaeological features were observed.

Trench 40

Trench 40, which was located in the north-eastern part of the site, was aligned north-north-west to south-south-east. This trench was excavated by machine down to natural sandy clay [11] at a depth of 0.45m. The topsoil [10] was 0.45m deep. Two modern field drains were located in this trench but no archaeological features were observed.

6.0 The Finds

Introduction

The finds and environmental material from the site is presented in tabular form with basic quantitative information in Appendix 2a: Finds by Context.

In addition to this summary, more detailed information on specific finds and environmental categories is included in separate reports below. Supporting tables for these contributions are included in the Appendices.

6.1 Flint

Sarah Bates

A single struck flint was found at the site. It is a large, neatly struck blade from a prepared core. Its distal edge is obliquely truncated by steep retouch and its left side is utilised from the distal point to just under halfway along its length. It is likely that this blade is Mesolithic in age. This blade was recovered on the ground surface between trenches 28 and 29, and is in very good condition. This suggests it had not been displaced far from where it was originally deposited (Adams pers.comm.).

7.0 Conclusions

Very few archaeological features or remains were encountered during the course of this evaluation. This would suggest that the evaluated area was not used for settlement at any time during the past. This is probably due to the nature of the natural clays in this area, which are heavy and poorly drained. It is likely that throughout much of its history the area evaluated in this project was common grazing land.

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

Acknowledgements

Work on this site was funded by Middleton Aggregates Ltd.

The site was managed by John Ames and the excavation and recording was carried out by John Cousins, Stephen Morgan and Matt Ratcliff. The surveying work was carried out by Sandrine Whitmore. The flint was examined by Sarah Bates and David Adams. Thanks are also due to Marshy who operated the mechanical excavator.

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Appendix 1a: Context Summary

| Context | Category | Description | Period |
|----------------|-----------------|---------------------|---------------|
| 10 | Deposit | Topsoil | |
| 11 | Deposit | Natural sandy clay | |
| 12 | Deposit | Natural clayey sand | |
| 13 | Cut | Ditch | Unknown |
| 14 | Deposit | Fill of ditch [13] | Unknown |
| 15 | Cut | Ditch | Unknown |
| 16 | Deposit | Fill of ditch [15] | Unknown |
| 17 | Find | Unstratified | |

Appendix 1b: OASIS feature summary table

| Period | Feature type | Quantity |
|---------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| Unknown | Ditch | 2 |

Appendix 2a: Finds by Context

| Context | Material | Quantity | Weight (kg) | Period |
|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|--------------------|---------------|
| 17 | Flint | 1 | 0.067 | Prehistoric |

Appendix 2b: NHER finds summary table

| Period | Material | Quantity |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Prehistoric (500000BC to 42AD) | Flint | 1 |

Appendix 3: Flint

| Context | Type | Quantity |
|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| 17 | Truncated blade | 1 |