

NAU ARCHAEOLOGY

Report No. 1312

**An Archaeological Evaluation at Land South of
The Manor House, Wereham,
Norfolk**

NHER 50549 WER

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August 2007

BAU 1640

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Location: Land south of The Manor House, Wereham
District: South-West Norfolk
Grid Ref: TF 6802 0158
HER No.: 50549 WER
Date of fieldwork: 2nd and 3rd August 2007

Summary

In early August 2007, NAU Archaeology undertook an evaluation of a site to the south of The Manor House, Wereham. Three trenches were excavated within the footprints of three of the five dwellings proposed for the site. Trench 3 contained no features of archaeological significance. Trench 1 contained a large pit, of a possible early medieval date, while Trench 2 contained an east–west aligned ditch, a pit and a post-hole, all of possible late Saxon origin.

1.0 Introduction

The proposed development area is to the south of the residential home The Manor House, on an area of wasteland measuring c.350m². Three trenches were to be excavated, each measuring 3m by 3m, giving a sample area of 27m². It was intended that these trenches would be located within the footprints of the five dwellings proposed for the area, with Trench 3 covering Buildings 3, 4 and 5, but the presence of utilities in this area meant that this trench was confined to the area of Building 3.

The project was commissioned by Trevor Hewitt.

This archaeological programme was undertaken to fulfil a planning condition set by King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council and in accordance with a Project Design and Method Statement prepared by NAU Archaeology (Ref: BAU1640/DW) and a Brief issued by Norfolk Landscape Archaeology (NLA Ref. Ken Hamilton/04/07/07).

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 underlying geology of the area is Lower and Middle Chalk. The natural deposits were encountered at a depth of c.1.0m from ground level and consisted of sands and gravels.



Figure 1. Site location. Scale 1:10,000

Local Authority No.100019340

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3.0 Archaeological and Historical Background

During the excavation of sewer trenches in 1978 on the site of two cottages (now demolished), human skeletal remains were found (NHER 13565). These remains have been variously interpreted as part of an earlier burial ground for an earlier church or as plague pits. The Norfolk Historic Environment Record records the site as an undated cemetery, based on conjectural evidence. This site is within the current proposal area, to the north-east of the area.

The village of Wereham is mentioned in the Domesday survey of 1086, where it is referred to as '*Wigreham*' (Brown, 1984, 21). The name probably means 'homestead on a stream called Wigor (the winding one)'; Wigor is a Celtic river name (Mills, 1991, 352). St Margaret's church (NHER 4427), located in the centre of the village, dates to the early 13th century, with alterations dating to the 14th century and the 16th century, and underwent a 'fierce' (Pevsner and Wilson 2000, 758) restoration in 1866.

The Manor House (NHER 12527) is a red brick building with the dates of 1722 and 1729 inscribed upon it, and is described as the 'best house' in the village by Pevsner and Wilson (2000, 759). The date of 1722 refers to the earliest phase of construction, which was of flint and carrstone, while the 1729 date refers only to the brick-built phase.

Wereham contains evidence from most time periods. The oldest recorded find within a 200m radius of Wereham village centre was made at 12 Queen's Close (NHER 39739), to the south of the village, where an early Neolithic flint axehead was found. Also south of the village several metal-detected finds were located (NHER 28133), ranging chronologically from a Roman dolphin brooch through to an early Saxon long brooch (dated to the 6th century) and ending with a medieval cloth seal and a late-17th- or early-18th-century harness mount. The village also boasts a green (NHER 4400), with a holy well, and a moat (NHER 13563). There are also a number of listed buildings, mostly of 17th- and 18th-century date.

Previous archaeological works in the Wereham area include several watching briefs, field surveys and an evaluation by NAU Archaeology. None of these sites were located in close proximity to the site under proposal at the present time, and therefore only represent background information.

The earliest of these interventions came in March 1994 (Penn 1994), when the area of a proposed borrow pit was investigated by fieldwalking (NHER 30568). The site lay at some distance to the south-east of the village centre, and recovered several prehistoric flints and a single sherd of Iron Age pottery.

At the same time there was also a major realignment of the B1160 road, bypassing the village centre (NHER 30442), which was also monitored by NAU Archaeology (Bates 1994). This phase of works included a fieldwalking and metal detector survey, but did not reveal any major concentrations of finds, although it gained a wide variety from most time periods.

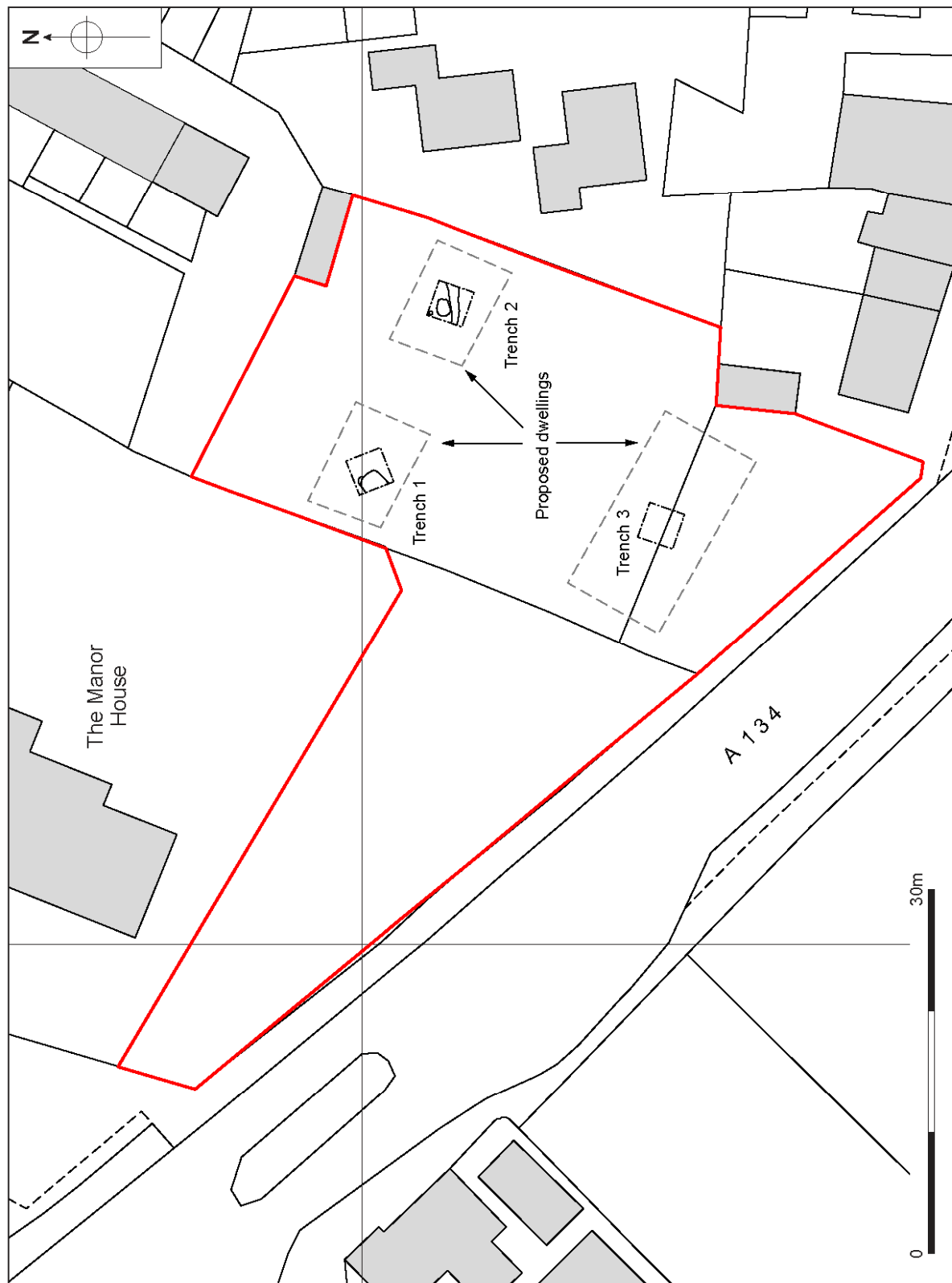


Figure 2. Trench location. Scale 1:500

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Later in 1994 a watching brief (Shelley 1994) was maintained on topsoil stripping in the area of the proposed borrow pit (NHER 30568). This phase of work revealed several features, although none were of definite archaeological significance. The finds recovered pointed to a prehistoric date for any occupation of the site.

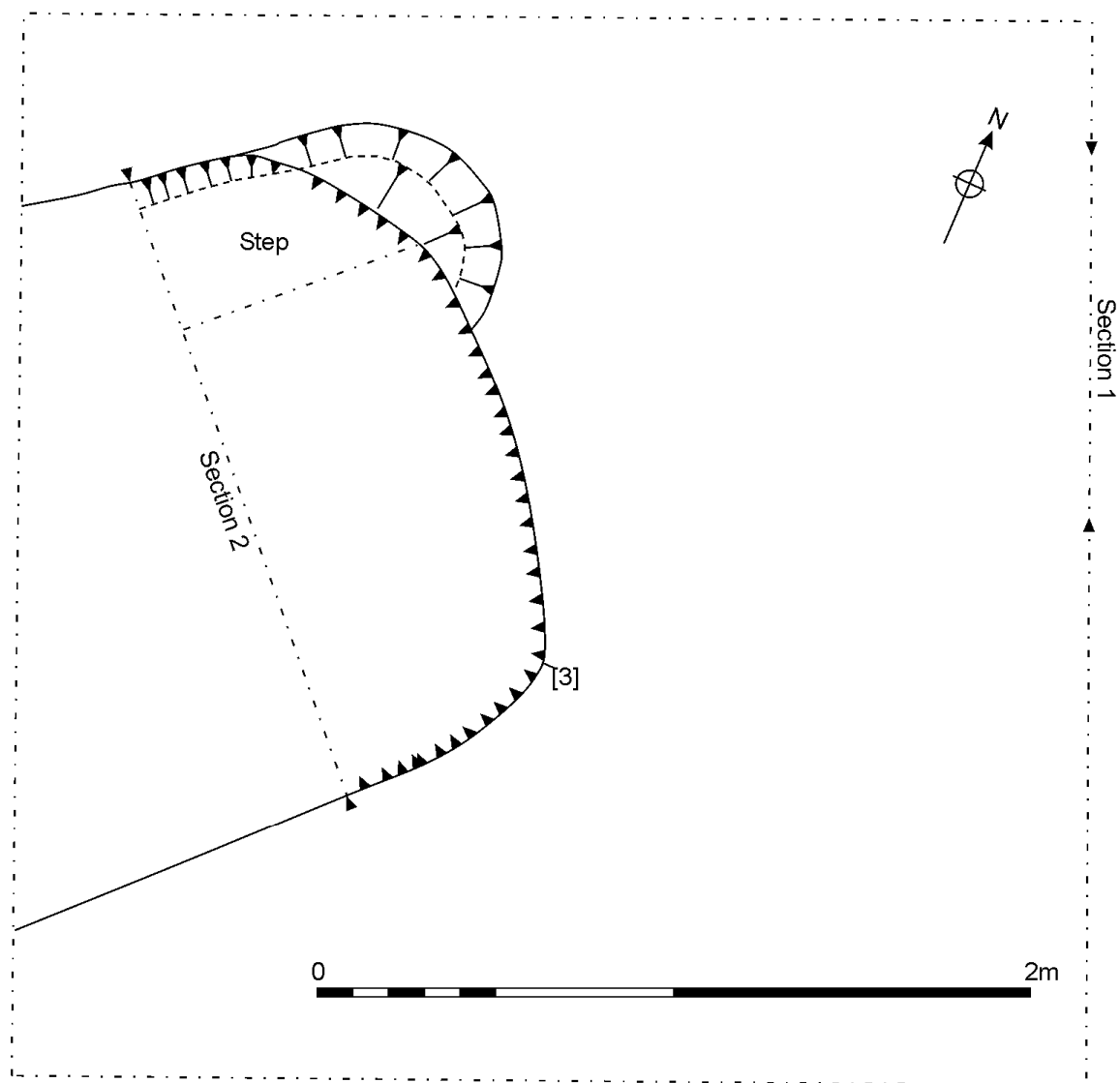


Figure 3. Plan 1. Scale 1:20

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 three trenches measuring 3m by 3m be excavated, providing a 7.5% sample of the site. Trench 1 was to be located within the footprint of Building 1, and Trench 2 within Building 2. Trench 3, as noted above, was to cover the area of Buildings 3, 4 and 5, but this was not possible due to the presence of utilities in the area of Buildings 4 and 5.

Machine excavation was carried out, under constant archaeological supervision, with a wheeled JCB-type excavator/hydraulic 360° excavator using 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 which were obviously modern, were retained for inspection.

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.

No benchmark was located during the works, which meant that no levels were able to be taken.

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

5.0 Results

Trench 1

This trench measured 3m by 3m and was located within the plan of Building 1. The natural deposits were sand and gravel and were encountered at a depth of c.0.95m below ground level.

Within this trench only one feature was discovered. A large pit ([03]) emerging from the eastern section of the trench was partially excavated, revealing steep, almost vertical, sides and a flat base. It measured more than 1.5m in length and 1.75m in width, and had a depth of 0.9m. The feature was very well defined and contained three fills [04], [05] and [06]. The primary fill [06] was a mid-brown sandy silt with rare medium-sized flint inclusions. The secondary fill [05] was a lens of orangey-yellow silty sand which was possibly a windblown deposit of natural sand. The final phase of infilling [04] was a mid-greyish-brown sandy silt with frequent small and medium-sized flint inclusions, and it was within this layer that the only find for this feature was found: a single sherd of Grimston-type ware, dating this phase of the pit at least to the 13th or 14th century.

Covering the trench was a layer of subsoil [02], which ran across the entire site. This soil is described as a pale brown sandy silt with frequent small, angular and sub-

rounded flints and rare medium-sized and large flints. Sealing this was the topsoil [01], which, again, covered the whole site. This was a mid-brown sandy silt with occasional small and medium-sized flints and occasional small chalk flecks.

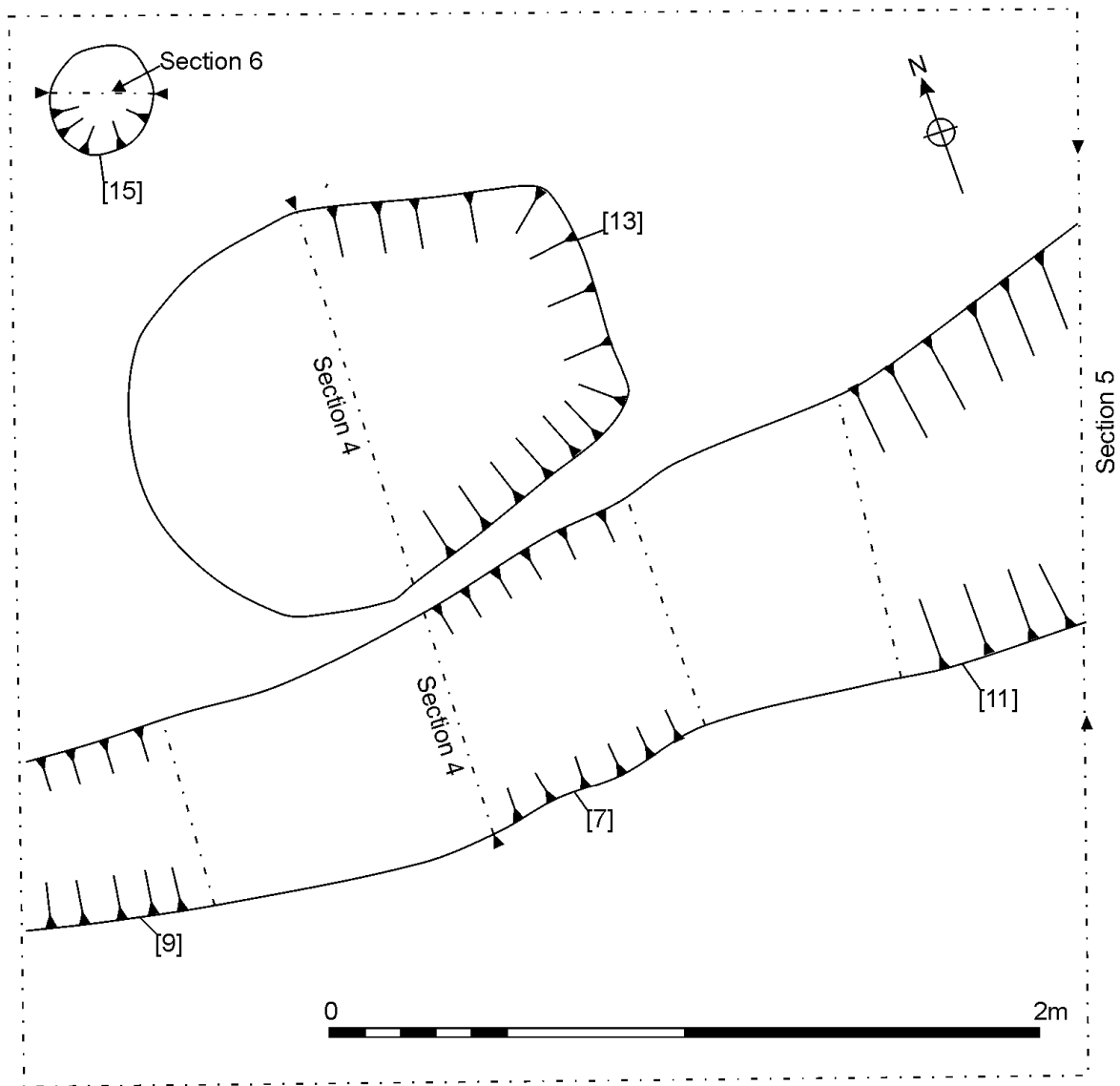


Figure 4. Plan 2. Scale 1:20

Trench 2

This trench also measured 3m by 3m, and was located within the footprint of Building 2. The natural deposits were sand and gravel, which were revealed at a depth of c.1m below ground level.

A ditch aligned roughly east–west was uncovered; this ran through the trench, and three segments of it were excavated ([07], [09] and [11]), showing a concave base

with gradually sloping sides. The form of the ditch remained fairly uniform within the trench. The fill of the ditch [8], [10] and [12] also remained fairly uniform throughout, being a dark brown-black silty sand with occasional sub-angular flint. The finds from the fill of the ditch all date to the 11th century and, therefore, suggest a late Saxon date for the feature.

Adjacent to and north of the ditch was a sub-circular pit ([13]) measuring 0.6m by 0.65 and 0.2m deep. This pit had sloping sides and a concave base, and contained a single fill [14], which was a dark brown-black silty sand similar to the upper fill of the adjacent ditch. Finds recovered from this feature suggest an early medieval date of around the 11th to the 12th century.

The only other feature within this trench was a post-hole of sub-circular shape, which was located in the north-east corner. This feature measured 0.3m by 0.3m and had a depth of 0.18m. Its sides sloped to a concave base, and its single fill [16] of ginger-brown silty sand contained no dating evidence.

Trench 3

This trench was located within the groundplan of Building 3 and measured 3m by 3m. No archaeological features were found within this trench.

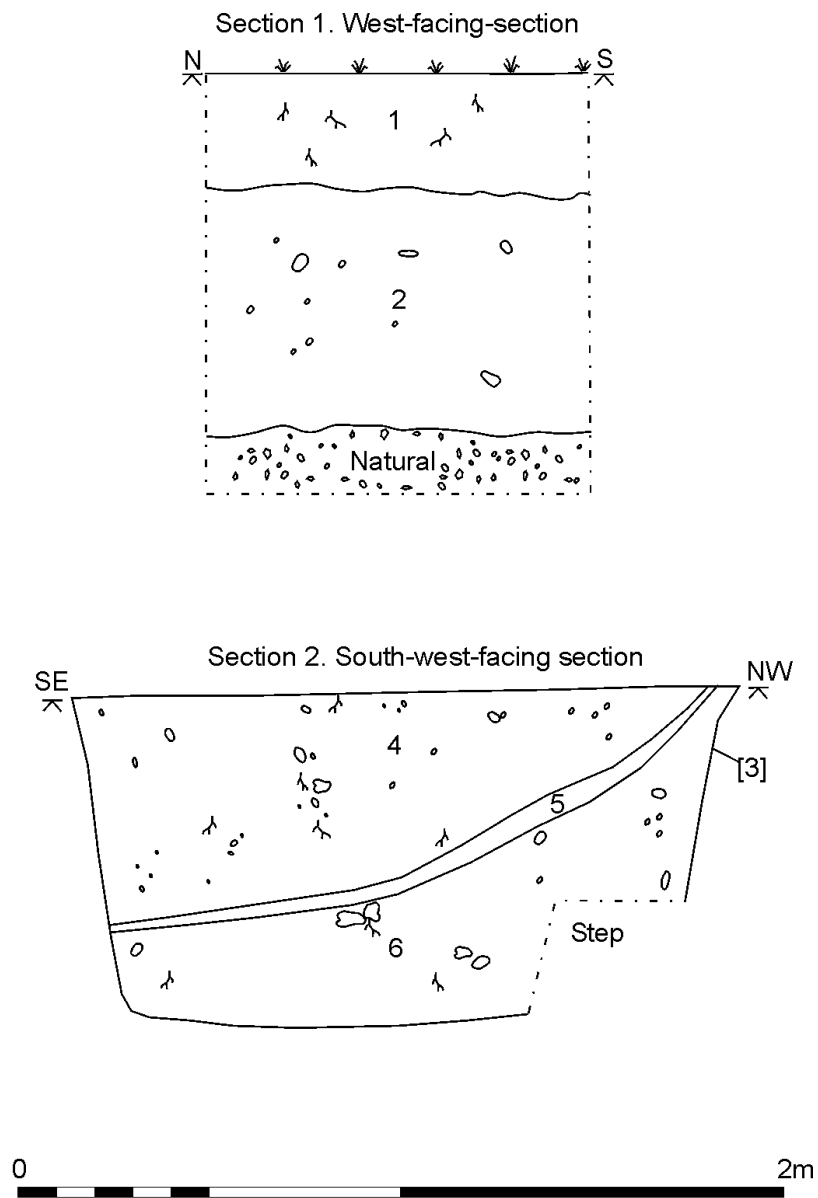


Figure 5. Sections 1 and 2. Scale 1:20

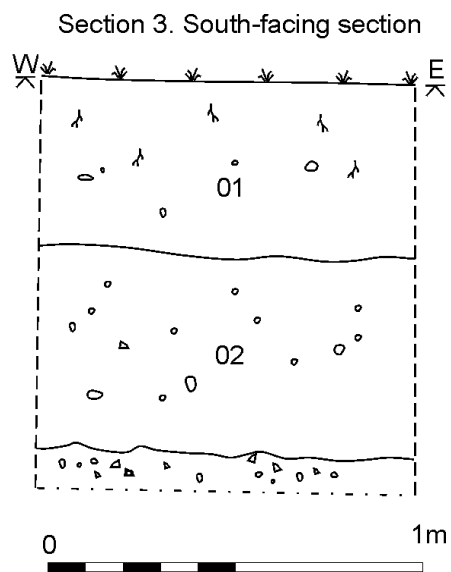


Figure 6. Section 3. Scale 1:20

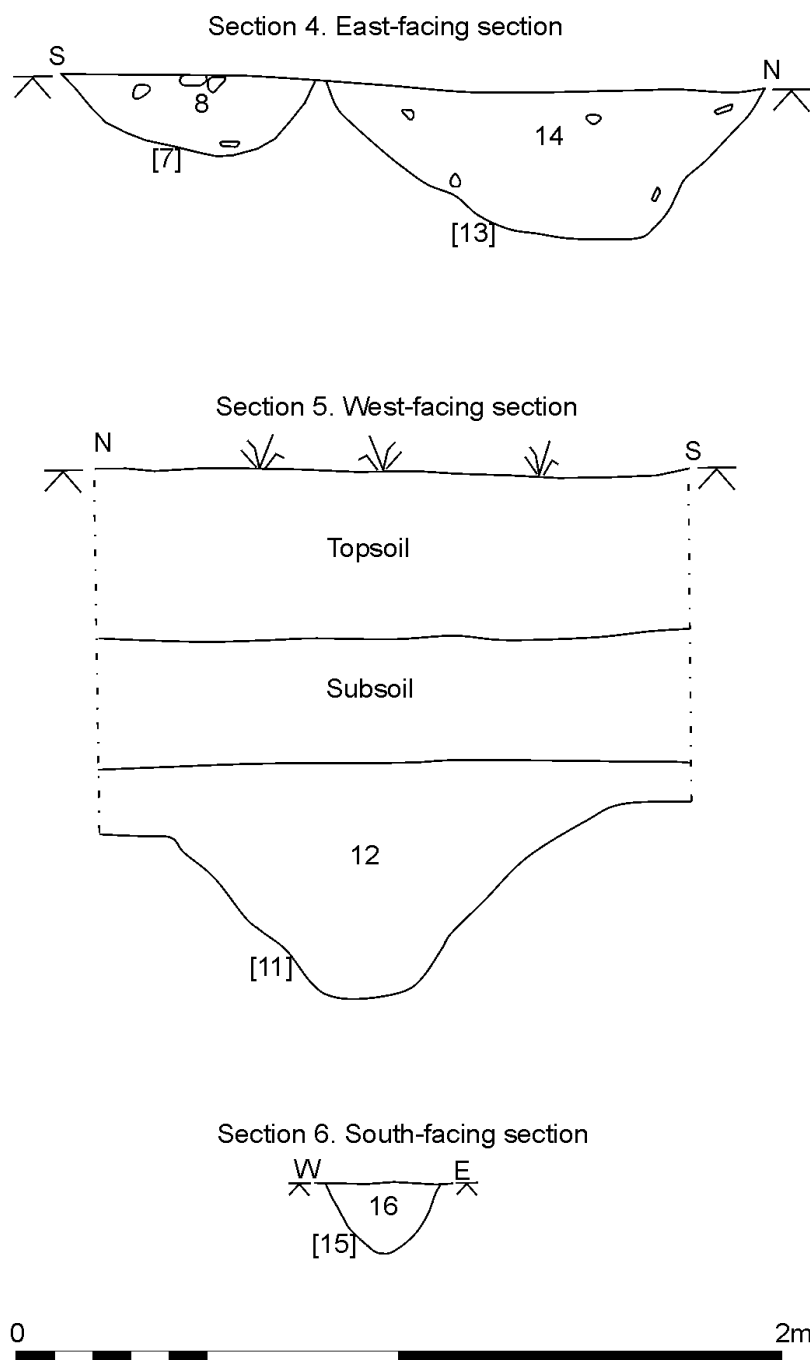


Figure 7. Sections 4, 5 and 6. Scale 1:20

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 Pottery (Appendix 3)

By Sue Anderson

Introduction

A total of nine sherds of pottery weighing 0.070kg was collected from three contexts. Quantification was carried out using sherd count and weight. A full quantification by fabric, context and feature is available in the archive. All fabric codes were assigned from the Suffolk post-Roman fabric series, which includes Norfolk, Essex, Cambridgeshire and Midlands fabrics, as well as imported wares. Local wares and common imports were identified from Jennings (1981). Form terminology follows MPRG (1998). Recording uses a system of letters for fabric codes.

The assemblage

Table 1 shows the quantification by context.

Context	Fabric	No.	Wt/kg	Description	Spot date
4	GRIM	1	0.004	Body sherd, applied white clay pellet	13th–14th century
12	THET	4	0.042	Body sherds, 1 thick, 2 sooted	10th–11th century
	STNE	1	0.006	Carinated bowl body sherd	11th century?
14	THET?	1	0.012	Type 6 rim? Could be a local MCW	11th century
	EMW	1	0.005	Body sherd	11th–12th century
	GRCW	1	0.001	Sooted body sherd	12th–13th century

Table 1. Pottery catalogue

Key: THET – Thetford-type ware; STNE – St Neot's Ware; EMW – early medieval ware; MCW – medieval coarseware; GRCW – Grimston-type coarseware; GRIM – Grimston-type glazed ware.

The assemblage consists of small quantities of late Saxon and early and high medieval pottery. Ditch fill [12] contained the earliest group, including sherds of four different Thetford-type vessels and a fragment of a St Neot's bowl, suggesting a probable 11th-century date. A rimsherd of possible Thetford-type ware was also recovered from pit fill [14] and was of late type, but was found in association with local coarsewares which may be of 12th-century date. A sherd of decorated Grimston-type ware came from pit fill [4], indicating a high medieval date for this feature.

Discussion

Three main archaeological periods spanning some four centuries are represented in the pottery assemblage and each of the three contexts in which they were found dates to a different one of these. The assemblage therefore provided evidence for activity throughout the late Saxon and medieval periods, but in such limited amounts that it can contribute little to the interpretation of the site as a whole.

6.2 Ceramic Building Material (Appendix 4)

By Sue Anderson

Two fragments of tile (0.321kg) were recovered from pit fill [14], which also contained pottery of medieval date. Both fragments were Roman. One was a large tile of uncertain type, which was 38mm thick and showed signs of burning; one surface had traces of cream lime mortar adhering to it, suggesting probable reuse at some point in the post-Roman period. The other fragment was a piece of box-flue tile with combed keying on one surface. Roman tiles were often reused in the Saxon period, at first to line hearths and ovens and later to construct masonry buildings. They were generally scavenged from nearby Roman sites, and are not necessarily evidence for Roman activity on the excavated site itself, but may indicate the presence of a large high-status Roman building somewhere in the vicinity.

6.3 Faunal Remains (Appendix 5)

By Julie Curl

A single bone, a metapodial weighing 0.094kg, was recovered from context [12]. The metatarsal is from an adult cow. The bone shows fine knife cuts that would have occurred when the animal was skinned; at both the proximal and distal ends there are numerous teeth marks that attest to the bone being gnawed by a dog. There are no butchering marks which might indicate that attempts were made to remove marrow from the bone and it is most likely that this skinning waste was given to a domestic dog.

7.0 Conclusions

The purpose of this evaluation was to learn more about the possibility of burials within the proposal area. The evaluation has determined that there are certainly no burials within the excavated regions of the site. The finds of late Saxon date are interesting in that they may point to early origins for the village. The east–west ditch ([07], [09] and [11]) may simply be a field boundary, or possibly a property boundary, with the pit ([13]) and post-hole ([15]) possibly representing animal pens or small-scale garden structures. The size of pit [03] (and possibly pit [13]) may indicate small-scale quarrying for gravel or sand.

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

Acknowledgements

This project was funded by Trevor Hewitt. Excavation was undertaken by John Ames and Matt Ratcliff of NAU Archaeology. The finds were processed and summarised by Lucy Talbot. The pottery and ceramic building material were reported on by Sue Anderson, the faunal remains by Julie Curl. The report was illustrated and produced by Julie Curl and David Dobson and edited by Sarah Harrison.

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Appendix 1a: Context Summary

Context	Category	Description	Period
01	Deposit	Topsoil	Modern
02	Deposit	Subsoil	Modern
03	Cut	Pit	Medieval
04	Deposit	Fill of [03]	Medieval
05	Deposit	Fill of [03]	Medieval
06	Deposit	Fill of [03]	Medieval
07	Cut	Ditch	Late Saxon
08	Deposit	Fill of [07]	Late Saxon
09	Cut	Ditch	Late Saxon
10	Deposit	Fill of [09]	Late Saxon
11	Cut	Ditch	Late Saxon
12	Deposit	Fill of [11]	Late Saxon
13	Cut	Pit	Late Saxon
14	Deposit	Fill of [13]	Late Saxon
15	Cut	Post-hole	Unknown
16	Deposit	Fill of [15]	Unknown

Appendix 1b: OASIS feature summary table

Period	Feature type	Quantity
Unknown	Post-hole	1
Late Saxon (851 to 1065 AD)	Ditch	1
	Pit	1
Medieval (1066 to 1539 AD)	Pit	1

Appendix 2a: Finds by Context

Context	Material	Quantity	Weight (kg)	Period
04	Pottery	1	0.004	Medieval
08	Shell – oyster		0.038	
12	Pottery	5	0.051	Medieval
12	Animal bone		0.094	
14	Pottery	3	0.022	Medieval
14	Ceramic building material	2	0.335	Roman/post-medieval

Appendix 2b: NHER finds summary table

Period	Material	Quantity
Unknown	Shell	1
	Animal bone	1
Roman (42 to 409 AD)	Ceramic building material	2
Late Saxon (851 to 1065 AD)	Pottery	6
Medieval (1066 to 1539 AD)	Pottery	3

Appendix 3: Pottery

Context	Fabric	Quantity	Weight (kg)	Ceramic date
04	GRIM	1	0.004	13th–14th century
12	THET	4	0.042	10th–11th century
12	STNE	1	0.006	?11th century
14	THET?	1	0.012	11th century
14	EMW	1	0.005	11th–12th century
14	GRCW	1	0.001	12th–13th century

Appendix 4: Ceramic Building Material

Context	Form	Quantity	Weight (kg)	Period
01	Brick	3	0.940	Post-medieval
08	Brick	1	0.632	Post-medieval
	Roof tile	2	0.064	Post-medieval
	Pan tile	1	0.066	Post-medieval
	Drain pipe	1	0.232	Modern
10	Brick	1	0.383	Post-medieval
	Roof tile	1	0.188	Post-medieval
	Floor tile	1	0.654	Post-medieval
13	Brick	1	1.150	Medieval
	Roof tile	3	0.367	Post-medieval
15	Brick	1	2.500	Modern
20	Pan tile	1	0.176	Modern

Appendix 5: Faunal Remains

Context	Total context weight (kg)	Total context quantity	Species	Species quantity	Comments
12	0.094	1	cattle	1	Metatarsal, gnawed by dog