

Figure 1. Site Location. Scale 1:5000

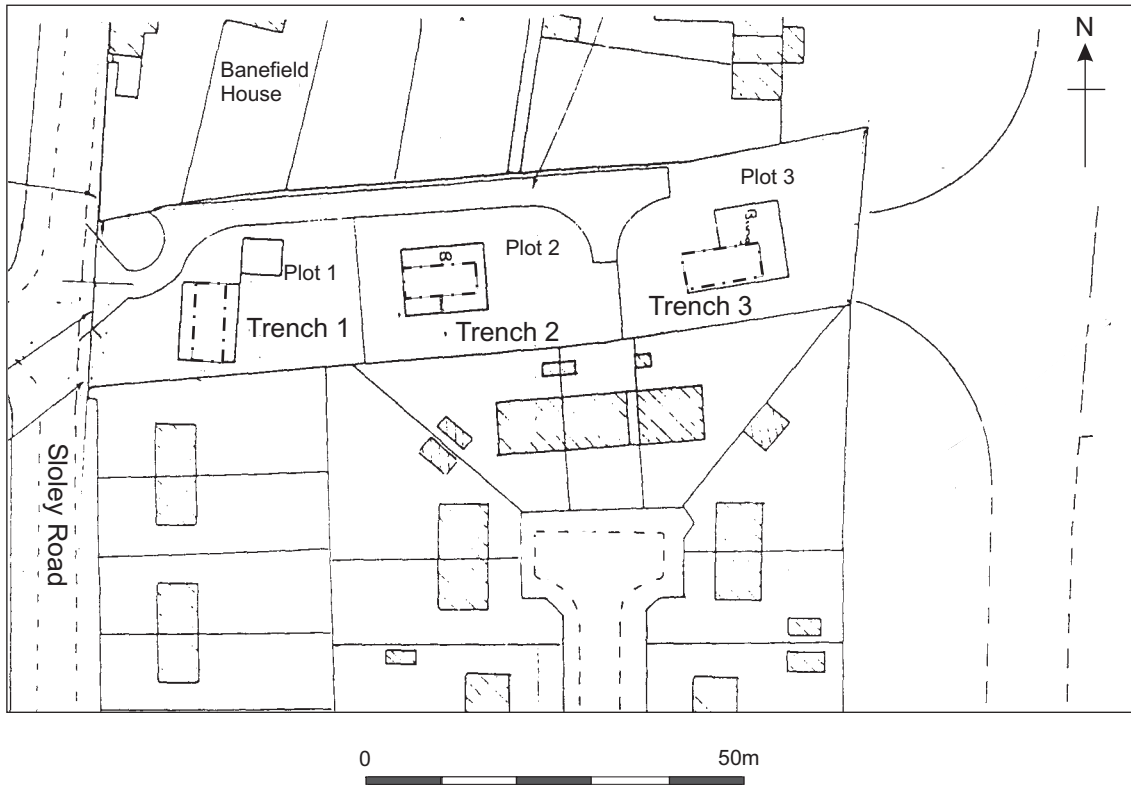


Figure 2. Trench Location. Scale 1:1000

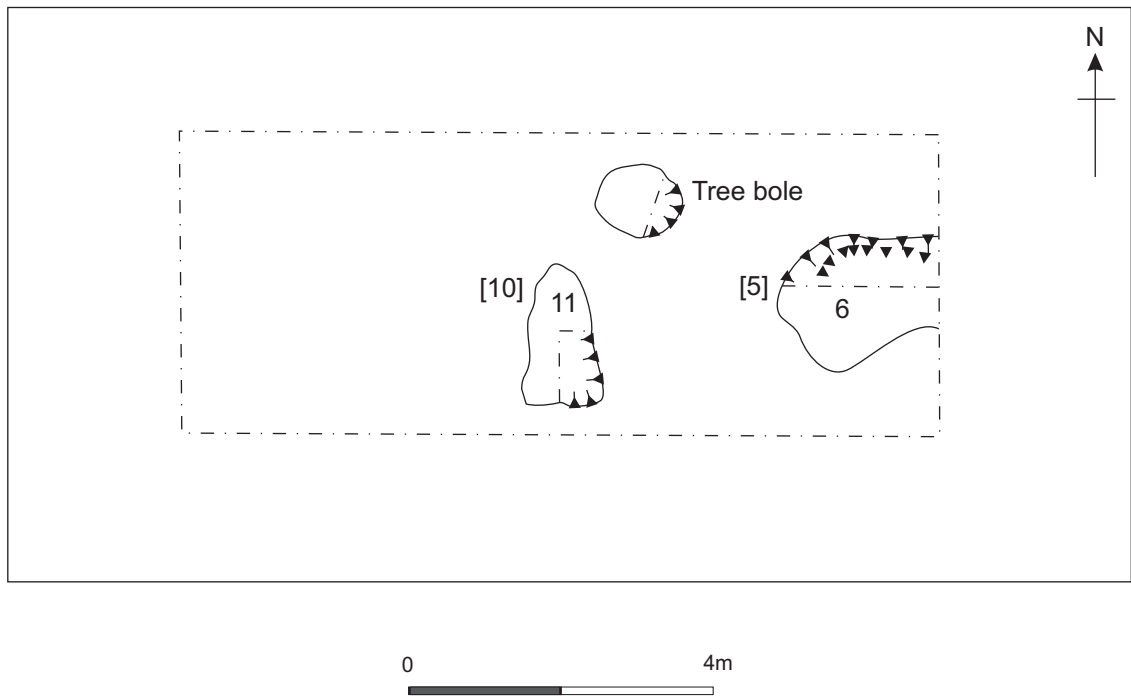


Figure 3. Plan of Trench 1. Scale 1:100

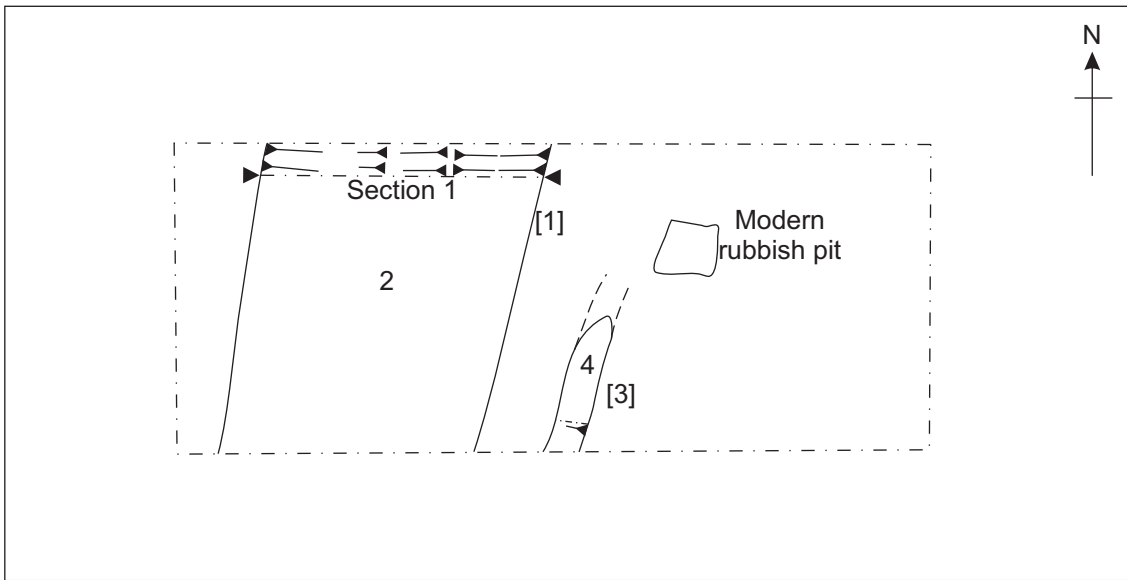


Figure 4. Plan of Trench 2. Scale 1:100

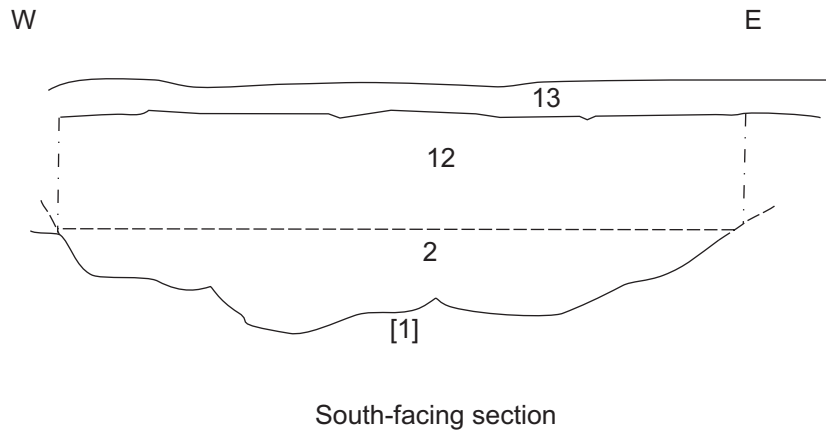


Figure 5. Section 1. Scale 1:50

NORFOLK ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

Report No. 812

**An Archaeological Evaluation at
land adjacent to Sloley Road, Worstead, Norfolk**

38050 WRS

B. P. Hobbs

March 2003

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Local Authority No.076759

Fig.1 is based upon the Ordnance Survey 1:10,000 map with the permission of the Controller of H.M. Stationery Office © Crown Copyright 'Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings' Norfolk County Council, County Hall, Norwich (11/04/2003). **Reference copy: no further copies to be made.**

Location: Land off Sloley Road, Worstead, Norfolk
Grid Ref: TG 3030 2587
HER No.: 38050 WRS
Date of Fieldwork: 27th and 28th March 2003

Summary

An archaeological evaluation on land off Sloley Road, Worstead comprised three trenches within the footprint of proposed dwellings. Two of the trenches exhibited no evidence of archaeological interest while Trench 2 contained a wide linear feature, possibly a boundary ditch, containing sherds of early and late medieval pottery and a lump of metal smithing slag. An ephemeral gully of unknown function was also located within this trench.

1.0 Introduction

Fig.1

The archaeological evaluation was carried out in advance of proposed development of the site for three residential properties on land off Sloley Road, Worstead within a total site area of 2309m². The work was commissioned by Mr G. Wright of Wright Properties E. A. Ltd, Winterton on Sea, Norfolk.

This archaeological evaluation was undertaken in accordance with a Brief issued by Norfolk Landscape Archaeology (NLA Ref: ARJH 19/07/02) and a Method Statement prepared by the Norfolk Archaeological Unit (NAU Ref: MS/Eval/JB/1413).

Three trial trenches were machine excavated within the footprint of each of the proposed dwellings to determine whether any surviving archaeological deposits would be affected by the development. This site was of known archaeological interest as human remains had been found to the south-east of the site (Norfolk Historic Environment Record (HER) Site 8184) and an abandoned medieval chapel is known to have existed to the north (HER Site 19461).

The main aims of the project were to establish the presence or absence of deposits of archaeological interest and to record any remains threatened by development proposals.

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

2.0 Geology and Topography

The natural geology of the site is sand over underlying coarse glacial gravels and deeper Upper Chalk. The subsoil is a mixture of silt and sand while the topsoil is a dark organic loam. The site is located on a rise and drainage appears to be good, the height of the land being approximately 15m OD, with the ground sloping away down to the south and east.

3.0 Archaeological and Historical Background

The village of Worstead was once an important centre of the medieval textile industry in Norfolk, at which time Flemish weavers are known to have settled in the area. The prosperity generated by this commercial enterprise is reflected in the size of the (surviving) parish church and market place.

The village possessed two churches at Domesday. The church of St. Mary (HER 8209) is still standing today but that of St Andrew (HER 8208 situated c.200m to the east of this site) is not precisely located. The church of St Mary predominated, while St Andrew's was probably a secondary parochial chapel built during the mid-13th and abandoned in the mid-16th century (Batcock 1991, 55).

Other sites of archaeological interest in the vicinity include a possible Late Saxon or early medieval inhumation c.65m to the south-east (HER 8184), a medieval undercroft or crypt (HER 19461) c.160m to the north-west of the site, a possible 16th century house 200m to the north (HER 17024), and several 17th century houses (HER 17023, 17025 and 30613) in the centre of the village, approximately 200m to the north-west.

Little archaeological work has previously been carried out in Worstead and consequently information is lacking concerning the early development of the village.

The evaluation site is presently waste ground, although up until recently it was in use as allotments, having been utilised as such for at least the last fifty years. Previous to that it was most likely used as farmland. The location of the site does not appear on Faden's map of 1797, which shows an L-shaped road running south and then west through the village from the Dilham Road, terminating just below St Mary's church. This may possibly equate to the present line of the site and of the adjacent Woodside Road, although it is more likely that the roadline ran further to the north, leading to the inn and has since been covered by housing.

4.0 Methodology

Fig. 2

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 a 5% sample of the total area was to be examined which worked out at 115m² which was interpreted as three trial trenches measuring 4m by 10m (a total of 120m²) across the centre of the footprint of each building.

Machine excavation removing 100mm spits of soil was carried out with a wheeled JCB-type excavator using a toothless ditching bucket under constant archaeological supervision.

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 *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.

A level was transferred from an Ordnance Survey benchmark of 13.67m on the south-east corner of 20 Sloley Road to a non-permanent benchmark on site.

Conditions were bright and clear with easy access to the site and no ground obstructions to the excavations.

5.0 Results (Appendix 1)

Trench 1

Figs 2 & 3

The first trench was excavated approximately 12m west from the east end of the site. The trench was methodically excavated by machine in 100mm spits removing the topsoil and subsoil until the underlying natural sand was reached at an average overall depth of 1.10m. The topsoil ([13]) had an average depth of 0.25m and was a dark loamy sandy silt containing moderate small flints and occasional brick fragments. The underlying subsoil ([12]) had a thickness of 0.85m and was a mid brown silty sand containing occasional small flints and root traces. The natural sand was very fine and pale yellow, in certain areas almost white in colour and was discoloured by root traces where the subsoil had leached down.

The base of the trench was then cleaned by hand to expose any potential features which comprised three main areas of interest at the east end of the trench. One oval feature measuring 1.10m by 1.00m was half-sectioned to a depth of 0.13m and contained the same soil colour and texture as the subsoil. This was interpreted as a tree bole, having no archaeological evidence within its fill and an irregular base with what appeared to be taproot holes.

Close to the south of this natural feature a sub-rectangular feature [10] was recorded. It was aligned north to south, measured 1.8m long by 1.0m wide tapering to 0.5m at its north end. This feature was half-sectioned along its east side to a depth of 0.15m, this excavation also revealed an irregular base with a number of small depressions along the length of the exposed natural sand. The fill ([11]) was a mid grey-brown silty sand with occasional small flints. No artefactual evidence was recovered from this feature and it was interpreted as a natural depression in the sand, perhaps the hole resulting from a fallen tree.

At the east end of the trench an irregular sub-rectangular shaped feature ([5]) measuring 2.1m long by 1.8m at its west end and 1.2m at the east end. This feature extended beneath the east edge of the trench so its full length was unknown. A half section was removed on the north side to a depth of 0.5m where the base was regular and slightly concave. The west edge up from the base of the feature was nearly vertical for approximately 0.3m which then became more shallow and gradually sloped up to the level of the base of the trench. The fill of this feature consisted of four compact bands of soil, different in colour and texture to that found in the other probable natural features to the west. The lowest of the deposits ([9]) was similar to the underlying sand natural but with a slight discoloration of grey silt, a proportion of roughly 80% sand to 20% silt, and had a thickness of 80mm. Above this was a 150mm thick band of silty sand ([8]) with very occasional small stones, the light grey-brown silt content of about 30% to 40% was more noticeable than in the primary fill below it. Above this was a 60mm thick layer of more sandy material with a slight silt content ([7]) similar to the primary fill. The upper fill ([6]) was a mid grey loose silty sand, with a proportion of approximately 50% silt and sand 50%, 0.25m

thick, with occasional small stones. No artefactual or organic environmental evidence was recovered from the fills of this feature. The variegated fills gave the impression that they were laid down gradually rather than by deliberate backfilling.

Trench 2

Figs 2, 4 & 5

Trench 2 was excavated approximately half way along the site, about 50m east from the west end of the site. In a similar manner to Trench 1 the topsoil and subsoil were removed under supervision until the natural sand was reached at an average depth of 1m. After hand cleaning the base of the trench two features and a modern rubbish pit were observed cut into the natural sand.

The smallest of the features ([3]) was a small linear feature at the south edge of the trench. The feature was visible running north to south for c.1.8m and was 0.48m wide on average, it may have continued northwards but the edges were unclear. When sectioned it was found to be 0.26m deep with a V-shaped base. This feature had a single fill ([4]) which was a mid to dark grey-brown compact silty sand with a slight amount of root material, occasional stones and charcoal flecks. No finds were retrieved from this feature.

The second feature ([1]) was also linear, running from north to south across the trench and extending beyond both the north and south edges of excavation. This appeared to be a large ditch of variable width, 3.8m wide to the north and 3.3m wide to the south. A section was cut into the north end of this feature which recorded natural at 0.60m. The uneven base of the ditch was slightly lower on the western side with a ridge in the centre. The fill of feature ([2]) was a mid to dark brown silt sand with some root traces, similar to that observed in the small nearby gully ([3]). It contained occasional small stones and was moderately compact. Twelve sherds of medieval pottery were retrieved from this deposit. It was not possible to distinguish any differences in the fill of the feature, although the profile suggested a series of cuts or re-cuts of the ditch. A single lump of metalworking debris was also recovered from the ditch fill with the use of the metal detector. The deposit resembled the subsoil in texture but appeared to have a slightly darker silt content.

Trench 3

Fig. 2

This trench lay to the west end of the site, approximately 15m east of the edge of Sloley Road. The same procedure was adhered to in machine excavating the trench, removing spits of topsoil and subsoil under supervision.

The base of the trench where natural sand was reached was hand cleaned but apart from two modern rubbish pits containing iron, bottles and several deep root traces, no features were observed.

6.0 The Finds

6.1 Pottery (Appendix 2)

The site produced fourteen sherds of pottery, twelve of these coming from the fill ([2]) of ditch [1] in Trench 2, the remaining two sherds being unstratified. The earliest sherds (from [2]) were of Late Saxon Thetford ware and two sherds of Grimston or Thetford-type ware dating between the 10th and 11th centuries. Later sherds from the feature include five sherds of local medieval unglazed ware dating from between the 11th to 14th centuries.

6.2 Metal Working Debris

The site produced a single fragment of hearth bottom weighing 0.253kg, associated with the smithing process, recovered from ditch fill [2]. This very small quantity of metal working debris however, is not conclusive evidence of the process having been carried out on the site.

6.3 Small Finds

A small find number was allocated to two small pieces of lead waste (SF1, [2]).

7.0 Discussion

Trench 1 contained only two natural features and the end of a possible ditch feature. This latter was speculatively interpreted as a drainage or boundary ditch which had been filled gradually by in-washed sediment, evidenced by the banding of deposits seen in the section of the feature. No evidence of root traces could be discerned in the fill so it was unlikely to have marked the line of a hedge row.

The large ditch observed in Trench 2 running north to south appeared to be unusually wide for a boundary ditch and even more so for a drainage ditch. The ditch had been recut at least once, and perhaps several times. The major cuts created a central ridge in the natural sand which may indicate a widening of an existing ditch rather than just making it deeper. The process of re-cutting the ditch may also have slightly altered its alignment. The pottery from the ditch fill consisted of early and later medieval wares. The fragment of iron metalworking debris was also recovered from this area and may be part of a hearth bottom, resulting from a process of smithing in the vicinity. The ditch can be dated, from the pottery, to a period between the late 14th- and early-16th centuries.

Also in Trench 2, the smaller linear feature to the east of the main ditch appeared to be the termination of a narrow gully. No artefactual evidence was retrieved from this feature, although it was noted that the fill of the gully was very similar to that of the large adjacent ditch and may therefore be of a similar date.

8.0 Conclusions

The primary objective in evaluating the site was to investigate the possibility of locating archaeological features that would provide information pertaining to the early settlement patterns of the village. The archaeological and historical background of the evaluation area (see 3.0 above) suggested the possibility of a cemetery in the area. No human remains were found within the three trial trenches however, and the distance from the known inhumation to the present site (65m) would have necessitated quite a large cemetery. The possibility that St Andrew's chapel might have had a burial ground some distance (c.165m) from the actual building is feasible, as a similar arrangement can be seen for the cemetery of St Mary's which is located 200m to the north-west of the church.

A substantial probable medieval boundary ditch, a possible undated ditch terminus, an ephemeral undated gully of unknown function and features of natural origin were recorded as the result of this evaluation.

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

Acknowledgements

The site was excavated and recorded by Chris Phillips and the author. The small finds and pottery were processed by Lucy Talbot and the sherds dated by Richenda Goffin. Historic Environment Record information was provided by Jan Allen of Norfolk Landscape Archaeology. The report was produced and illustrated by Maggie Footitt and edited by Alice Lyons.

Bibliography

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Wade-Martins, P., (ed.)	1994	<i>An Historical Atlas of Norfolk, Norfolk Museums Service</i>

Appendix 1: Context Summary

Context	Trench	Category	Description	Period
1	2	Cut	Ditch	Medieval
2	2	Deposit	Fill of [1]	
3	2	Cut	Gully	Unknown
4	2	Deposit	Fill of [4]	
5	1	Cut	?Ditch terminus	Unknown
6	1	Deposit	Fill of [5]	
7	1	Deposit	Fill of [5]	
8	1	Deposit	Fill of [5]	
9	1	Deposit	Fill of [5][
10	1	Cut	Probable tree bole	Natural
11	1	Deposit	Fill of [10]	
12	1-3	Deposit	Subsoil	
13	1-3	Deposit	Topsoil	

Appendix 2: Pottery

Context	Fabric	Form	Quantity	Weight (kg)	Date
Unstratified	Thetford-type	Body	1	0.009	10th to 11th century
Unstratified	Thetford-type	Body	1	0.028	10th to 11th century
2	Thetford-type	Body	1	0.002	10th to 11th century
2	Grimston or Thetford-type ware	Body	2	0.009	10th to 11th century
2	Miscellaneous	Body	1	0.001	-
2	Early medieval ware	Body	1	0.002	11th to 12th century
2	Local medieval unglazed ware	Body	5	0.019	11th to 14th century
2	Grimston	Body	1	0.007	Late 12th to 14th century
2	Late Medieval or transitional ware	Body	1	0.014	15th to 16th century

