

Report № 1954

An Archaeological Evaluation and Historic Building Recording at Lane Farm, Main Road, Little Fransham, Norfolk

NHER 51769

Produced for

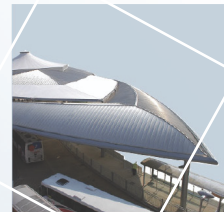
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Location:	Little Fransham, Norfolk
District:	King's Lynn and West Norfolk
Grid Ref.:	TF 9099 1222
HER No.:	51769
Dates of Fieldwork:	24–25 September 2008

Summary

An archaeological evaluation and historic building survey were undertaken by NAU Archaeology at Lane Farm, Main Road, Little Fransham, Norfolk. The soon-to-be-demolished farmhouse was found to be 19th century, but stands on a plot first occupied in the medieval period. Trial-trenching revealed the presence of a 13th–14th-century drainage ditch and a further undated drainage ditch.

1.0 Introduction

NAU Archaeology were commissioned to undertake an archaeological evaluation and historic building recording survey at Lane Farm, Main Road, Little Fransham, Norfolk (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mark Tarsey, who is currently redeveloping the site. The proposed development affects a farmhouse, visible on the early 19th-century tithe map and the 1st Edition Ordnance Survey map. Such buildings are disappearing from the Norfolk countryside as a result of development, and have been identified as a priority in the regional research frameworks for archaeology.

Two briefs were issued by Norfolk Landscape Archaeology in response to a planning application (ref. 3PL/2007/2062) submitted to the King's Lynn and West Norfolk Planning Authority. The briefs requested that a programme of archaeological works be carried out to mitigate the likely impact of the development on the archaeological resource. The first brief stipulated evaluation by trial trenching (NLA ref. KH 04/08/2008) and the second stipulated an historic building recording survey (NLA ref. KH 04/08/2008). The work was carried out in accordance with a Project Design and Method Statement prepared by NAU Archaeology (Ref. BAU 1954).

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.

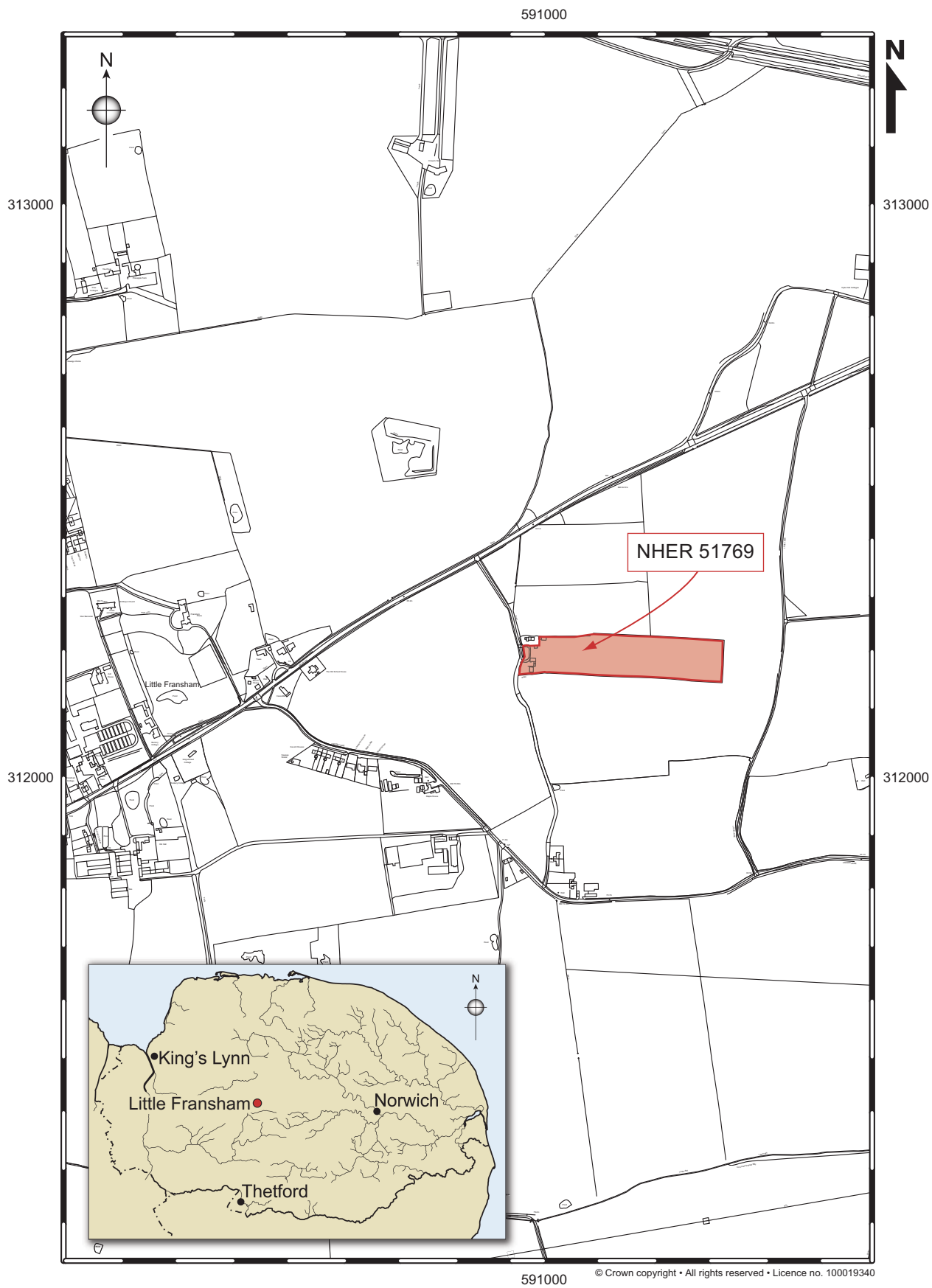


Figure 1 Site location

2.0 Geology and Topography

The parish of Fransham is situated on the Norfolk claylands plateau which dominates the central part of Norfolk. The underlying natural geology of the area is Upper Cretaceous chalk capped by boulder clay, consisting mainly of Lowestoft till and other Anglian tills (Funnell 2005). The site at Lane Farm lay at an elevation of c.65.0m OD, sloped gently from east to west (the farmhouse being situated on the lower ground at the western extent of the site) and, being situated on clay, was not well drained.

3.0 Archaeological and Historical Background

The modern parish of Fransham is an amalgamation of Great Fransham and Little Fransham. Andrew Rogerson's fieldwalking and documentary survey has provided valuable information concerning the archaeological development of the parish from prehistory into the post-medieval period (Rogerson, in prep.).

3.1 Prehistory

Palaeolithic objects found in the parish include a Lower Palaeolithic flake (NHER 20792), a scraper (NHER 23080), Upper Palaeolithic flints (NHER 20608), a small Palaeolithic flint handaxe (NHER 20651) and a large flint flake (NHER 21631). Two Mesolithic flint tools have been recovered: a blade (NHER 32076) and a blade core (NHER 23906). Evidence for Neolithic activity includes the discovery of three flint tools (NHER 20653, 24765 and 23081). Barbed-and-tanged arrowheads (NHER 20653, 24777 and 21629) and fragments of several flint axes (NHER 20508, 20604, 25554, 20623, 20651 and 24777) of Late Neolithic or Early Bronze age date have been recovered, along with a number of Beaker pottery sherds (NHER 4192, 20524, 20653, 21627, 23897, 25564 and 20824), the latter possibly indicating settlement or burial sites. A number of 'pot-boiler' sites have been located during fieldwalking and are probably the remains of prehistoric burnt mounds. Pottery scatters indicating the location of six discrete Iron Age settlements have been identified (NHER 20447, 20524, 20508, 20653, 20766 and 21622).

3.2 Romano-British

Eleven Roman settlements have been identified during fieldwork (NHER 20792, 20763, 20754, 20749, 15875, 20590, 20647, 20519, 23897, 24763, 23082, 25556, 24765 to 24767, 20824 and 20639). It is thought that the parish was almost exclusively agricultural during the Roman period and that the scatters of pottery found probably represent manuring of arable fields (NHER 20763, 20749 and 20519). Although most of the Roman settlements in Fransham probably consisted of only a few houses, several of them may have been hamlets (NHER 20763, 15875, 20590, 20647, 23847, 24763 and 23082). Evidence suggesting small-scale iron-working has been found at several of the settlement sites (NHER 20590, 20647, 20519, 20824 and 24765–7).

3.3 Anglo-Saxon

During the Early Saxon period the main centre of settlement was close to the former parish boundary between Great and Little Fransham (NHER 20587). Four

smaller Early Saxon settlement sites (NHER 20508, 23076, 20448 and 20639) have been identified. Early Saxon settlement does not appear to correspond with known Roman settlement sites and it is clear that there was a significant reduction in population following the end of the Roman period.

During the 7th century the focus of settlement shifted. The new settlement (NHER 20651 and 20653) was occupied throughout the Middle and Late Saxon periods, when there appear to have been two centres of settlement. These probably corresponded to the lands of two major landowners, William de Warenne and Ralph de Tosney, both recorded in Domesday Book. The parish had water mills, meadow and woodland which supported over one hundred pigs.

3.4 Medieval

During the 11th century the two main Saxon settlements were abandoned, giving way to the establishment of small isolated settlements situated along the edges of common pastures and greens. Open fields were laid out around this pattern of dispersed settlement and a system of ridge and furrow has been found to have surrounded one medieval settlement (NHER 33587). Finds of medieval pottery reveal that common-edge settlement expanded in Fransham during the 13th century.

During the 14th century many of the individual settlements were abandoned, but by the 16th century new common-edge settlements were being established. The commons in Fransham continued to play an important role in the landscape until they were enclosed in 1807.

The sites of several medieval manors have been identified in documentary sources and during fieldwalking (NHER 24783, 24771 and 7290). St Mary's Church (NHER 7297) in Little Fransham dates from the early 14th century, but contains reused Norman masonry and has a font dating from c.1200.

3.5 Post-medieval

Little Fransham boasts several notable post-medieval buildings including Little Fransham Old Hall (NHER 7293), a late 16th-century brick hall with 17th- and 18th-century alterations. Cooke's Meadows (NHER 13725) and The Thatched House (NHER 14166) are both 17th-century timber-framed buildings. Mill Farm (NHER 30840) is a 16th- or 17th-century timber-framed house which was subsequently encased in brick.

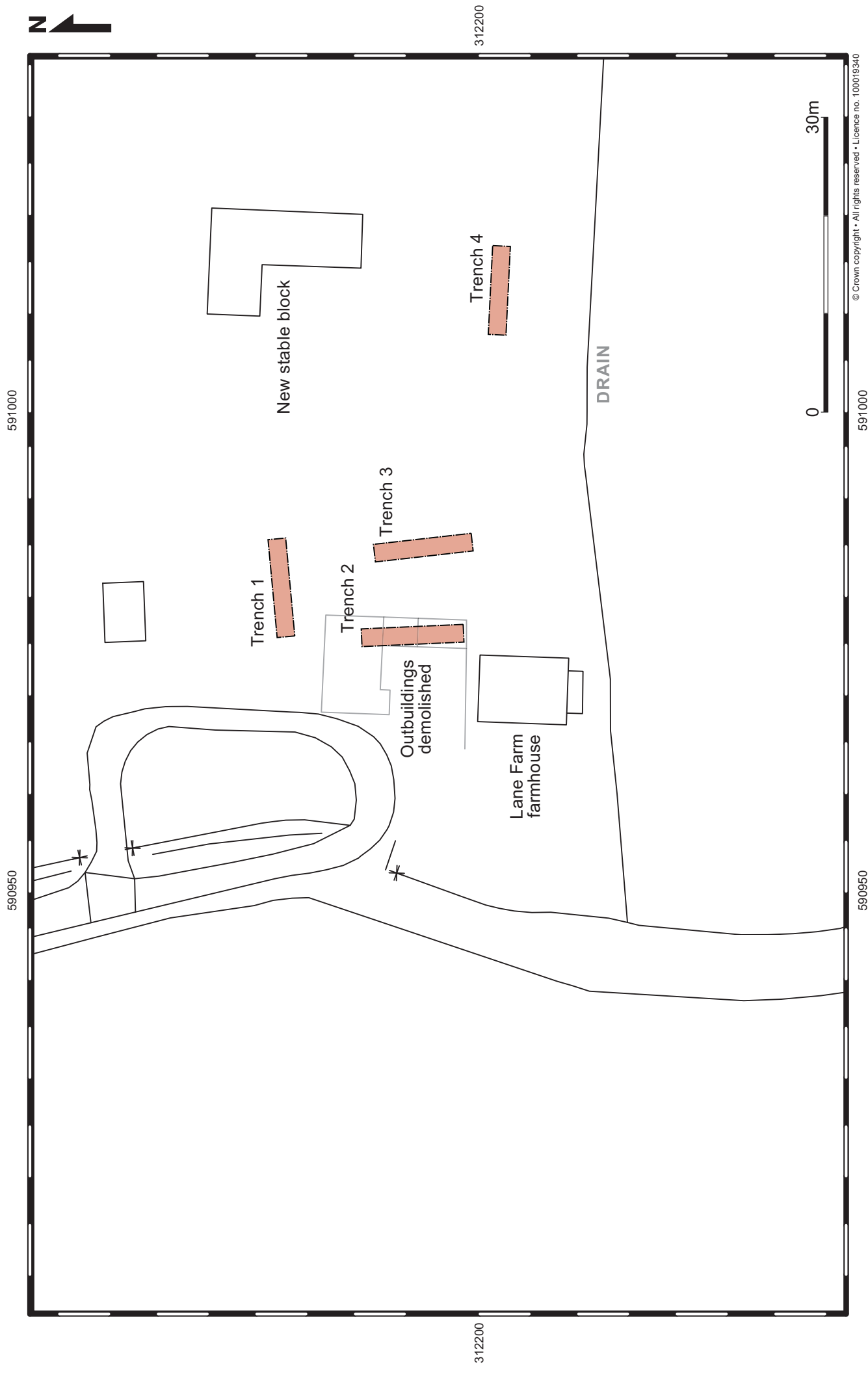


Figure 2 Trench location

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.

4.1 Trial Trenching

The trial trenching was concerned with establishing the condition, character and date of any subsurface archaeological features and deposits present. Guidelines set out in *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations* (Institute of Field Archaeologists 2001) and *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England* (Gurney) were followed.

Four trenches, each measuring 10m by 1.8m, were excavated to allow an approximate 5% sample (c.72 square metres) of the proposed development area (Fig. 2). The proposed trench locations were set out by NAU Archaeology in order to maximise the recovery of archaeological information, although, the final positions of the trenches were affected by surface or sub-surface obstructions.

Initial excavation was carried out using a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless grading bucket operated under archaeological supervision. This removed deposits of topsoil in 100mm spits until natural ground or archaeological features were identified. All exposed surfaces and spoil were screened with a metal-detector. Stripped surfaces were manually cleaned where required.

All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using NAU Archaeology pro forma. Trench locations, plans and sections were recorded at appropriate scales. Colour and monochrome photographs were taken of all relevant features and deposits. No environmental samples were taken.

Site conditions were good, with the work taking place in fine weather.

4.2 Historic Building Recording

The historic building record consisted of three elements: a drawn record, comprising floor plans of the ground and first floors of the building; a photographic survey, comprising a black and white and digital photographic survey; and a written description, including a history of the property.

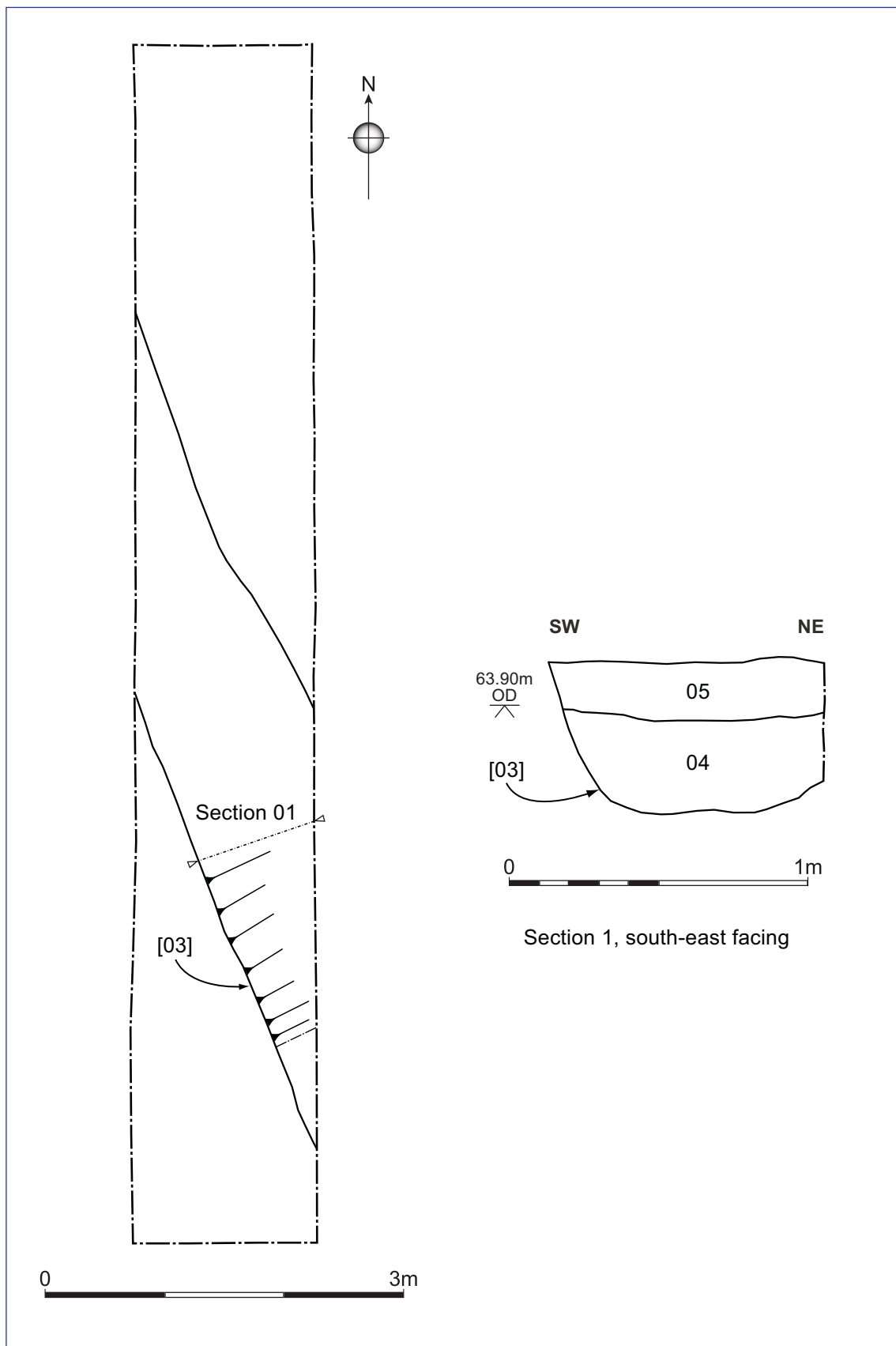


Figure 3 Trench 2, post-excavation - plan and section

5.0 Results

5.1 Trial Trenching

5.1.1 Trench 1

Trench 1 was situated in the north-western portion of the site, was aligned east–west aligned and measured 10m by 1.80m (Fig. 2). On excavation a natural deposit, consisting of a mid- to dark yellowish-orange clay with frequent chalk fragments and flints, was encountered at an average depth of 0.40m. The natural geology was sealed by a 0.10m thick pale brown silt clay sub-soil (06). A 0.30m-thick topsoil consisting of a mid-greyish-brown clay silt (07) completed the sequence. The trench was devoid of any archaeologically significant features or deposits.

5.1.2 Trench 2

Trench 2 was situated adjacent to the north-eastern corner of the farmhouse, was aligned north–south and measured 10m by 1.80m (Figs 2 and 3). On excavation a natural deposit of mid- to dark orange-grey clay with frequent flints and chalk fragments was revealed at an average depth of 0.35m. The natural was sealed by a dark grey clay silt garden soil (08) containing post-medieval brick fragments and some flints and pebbles. A quantity of obviously modern material was also evident within the deposit, which had been disturbed by cultivation (the trench was within the rear farmhouse garden). A north-west–south-east linear ditch (03) was observed cut into the natural in the base of the trench. The ditch was 1.30m wide and could be traced for a distance of approximately 7.0m within the trench (Fig. 3).

A 1.70m slot was excavated across the width of ditch (03), which revealed it to have been cut to a maximum depth of 0.51m below the natural. The ditch was steep sided with a flat base. Two deposits were identified filling the feature. The primary fill (04) was a wet and sticky mid- to dark bluish-grey silt clay with a moderate quantity of angular flints and occasional chalk and charcoal fragment. Five pottery sherds were recovered from the primary fill, suggesting a 13th/14th-century date for the fill. The deposit also yielded a single fragment of medieval brick and eleven fragments of animal bone.

The upper fill (05) of ditch (03) was a compact, soft, sticky, mid-bluish-grey silt clay containing occasional flints, charcoal and chalk fragments. It did not contain any artefacts.

5.1.3 Trench 3

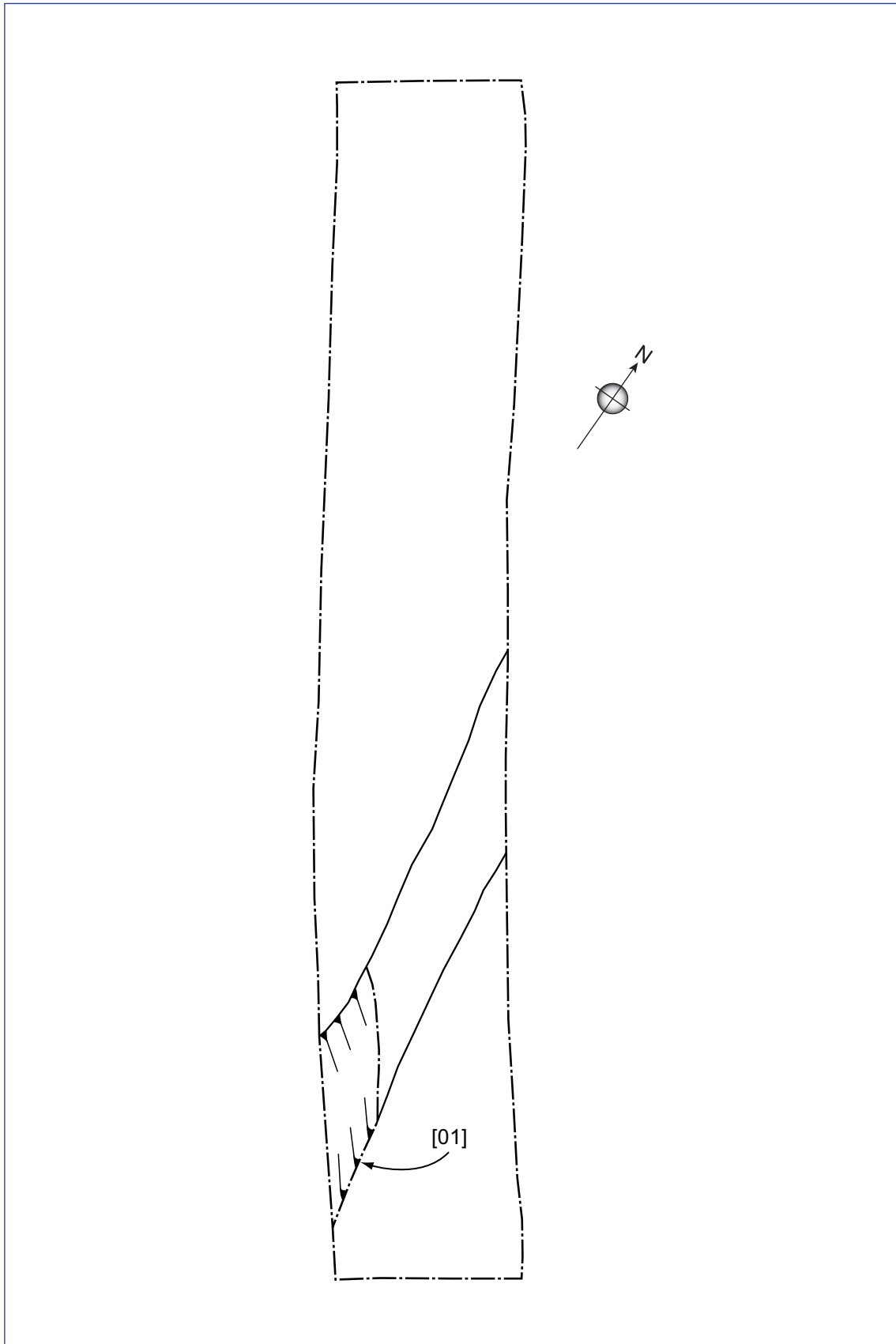
Trench 3 was situated approximately 15.0m to the east of the farmhouse in the south-western portion of the site (Figs 2 and 4). The trench was oriented north–west–south–east, measured 10m by 1.80m and lay within the rear garden of the farmhouse. The natural clay was exposed at an average depth of 0.65m below the current ground surface and was sealed by a 0.40m-thick pale brown silt clay subsoil (09), which was in turn sealed by a 0.35m-thick garden soil (08). A narrow linear feature (01) was observed to truncate the natural geology and could be traced for a distance of 4.0m within the trench (Fig. 4). The ditch was aligned approximately north–south and c.0.60m wide. A 0.50m slot was excavated

obliquely across the ditch adjacent to the north-east-facing section of the trench establishing a maximum depth of 0.18m below natural for the feature. Only the slightly concave base and lower sides of the feature survived, indicating that it had been originally excavated from higher in the sequence, the cut having been destroyed by later activity.

Ditch (01) was filled with an orange mottled mid-brownish-grey silt clay with occasional chalk and charcoal flecks (02). Three fragments of animal bone were recovered from this deposit. The feature lay on a similar alignment to the existing farmhouse and may have been an associated drainage ditch.

5.1.4 Trench 4

Trench 4 was situated 40m to the east of the farmhouse in the south-eastern portion of the site (Fig. 2). The trench was aligned approximately east–west and measured 10m by 1.80m. Excavation revealed a natural deposit consisting of a pale brown clay with frequent flints and a moderate quantity of chalk fragments, which was encountered at an average depth of 0.30m. The surface of the clay had been heavily disturbed by root action. A 0.05m-thick sub-soil (06) consisting of a pale brown silt clay containing flint pebbles sealed the natural geology and was in turn sealed by a 0.25m-thick mid-greyish-brown clay silt topsoil (07). The trench was devoid of any archaeologically significant features or deposits.



0 3m

Figure 4 Trench 3, post-excavation - plan



Plate 1 Northern and eastern aspects of the farmhouse.

5.2 Historic Building Record

Lane Farm, Little Fransham, is a modest two storey farmhouse (Plates 1 and 2). The ground floor consists of four rooms (Fig. 5). On entering the rear of the property (the eastern aspect) through a relatively recently added wooden porch there is a pantry/larder to the right and a kitchen to the left. Two sitting rooms occupy the western portion of the ground floor, both of which have fireplaces. The sitting rooms are divided by an east–west wooden staircase. The first floor also consists of four rooms off a central landing (Fig. 5). The south-western first-floor room has a fireplace, the south-eastern room is a bathroom.

The exterior north, west and east walls of the rectangular building have been pebble dashed, thus masking any architectural detail (Plates 1 and 2). The southern wall is not rendered and shows the farmhouse to be brick built using English bond. The two chimney stacks, also in brick, have been built using a stretcher pattern, implying that they may have been replaced. The slate roof varies in pitch, suggesting a possible extension of the building to the east, but the lack of any obvious breaks in the brickwork on the southern gable is at odds with this observation. A brick-built porch is situated centrally on the western wall. This is a modern addition.

The farmhouse is shown on the 1st Edition Ordnance Survey map and on early 19th-century tithe maps. The architectural style and building materials used in the construction of the building also suggest an early 19th-century date for its construction.

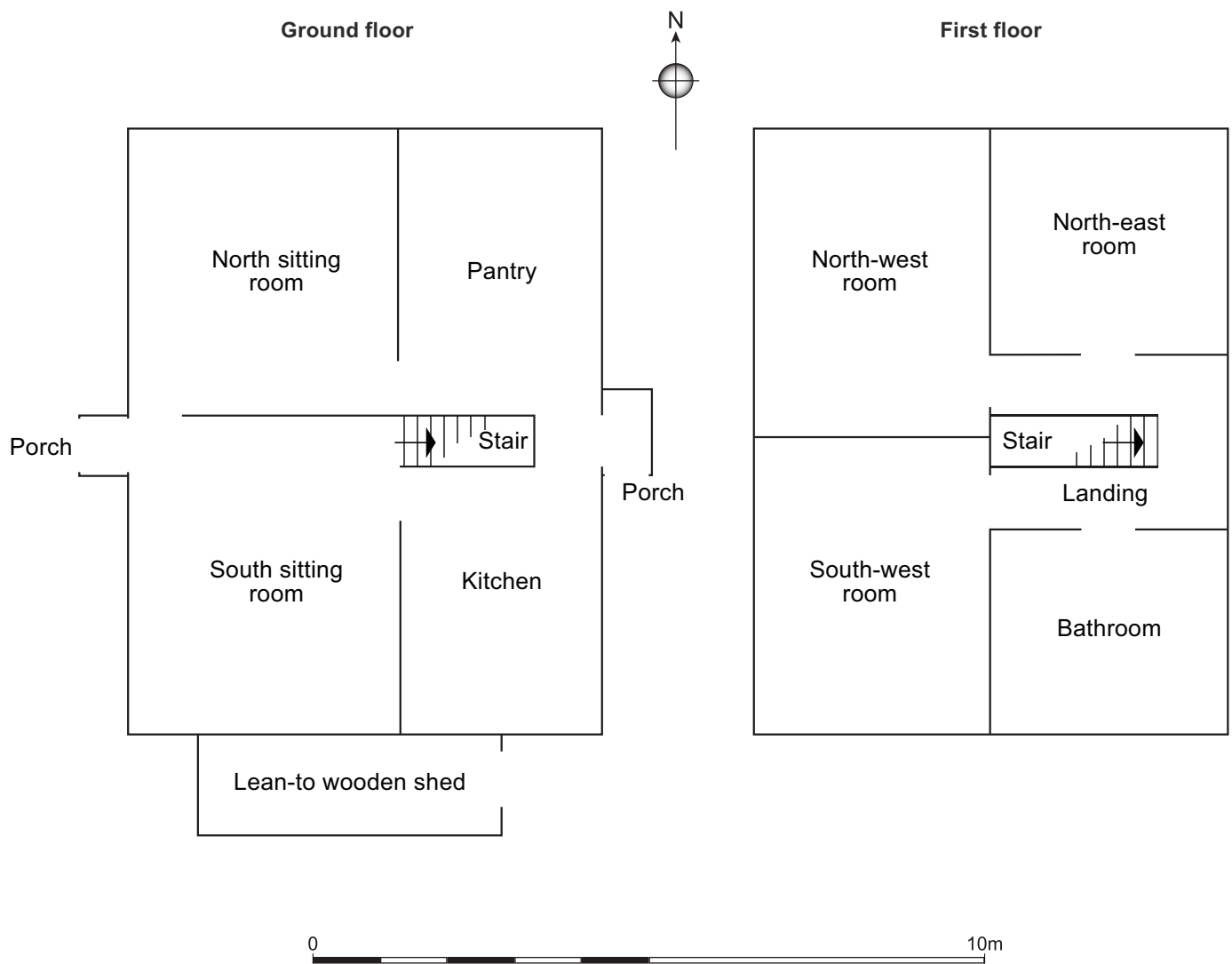


Figure 5 Ground- and first-floor plans of the farmhouse

A photographic record has been created using 35mm black and white film and digital images (Plates 1 and 2). The black and white archive, the digital images and relevant registers are included in the project archive and, on completion of the project, will be deposited with Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service, following the relevant policy on archiving standards.



Plate 2 Eastern aspect of the farmhouse.

5.2.1 Historical Background

Andrew Rogerson of Norfolk Landscape Archaeology has kindly supplied the following information pertaining to the history of the site of Lane Farm, taken from his forthcoming book on the parish (Rogerson, in preparation):

The site at Lane Farm was situated next to the eastern edge of the former 'Cannons Green' and lay on a medieval site, a Kirkhams customary holding, first occupied in the 12th century when there were four acres in the croft (NHER 23905). This site is inferred from a spread of pottery sherds in flowerbeds and in an arable field to the east of the farmhouse. The odd late Thetford-type sherd might suggest the site began in the 11th century, but ceramic evidence becomes prolific in the 12th.

The earliest documentary evidence pertaining to the site occurred in a Kirkhams manor court roll of 1351, when a customary messuage and 7 acres held of Kirkhams manor by Bartholomew and Margaret Andrews were granted to Roger Attcheys and his wife. In 1362, William Jordan surrendered a messuage and 5 acres in one parcel and 2 acres in another to the use of his wife and daughter. In 1363, the lord of Kirkhams granted to his villein William, son of Nicholas Jordan, a messuage and 7 acres, once of Adam Syger. The latter had been a free tenant

before the Black Death and this messuage had probably formed part of his 17-acre freehold.

In 1374, the holding was described as a messuage and 8 acres with 1 acre of meadow. In the rental of 1384 Peter son of William Jordan held a messuage, 9½ acres and 1 acre of meadow. The messuage and 4½ acres lay next to the common pasture on the west. The other parts of the holding comprised Redemedow in quarent. 18, ¾ acre in Churchfield (quarent. 8), ½ acre in Woodrowfield (quarent. 11), 1 acre in Eastmillfield (quarent. 23), 1 acre of soiled land in Hochesfield (quarent. 17), 1¼ acres in Millfield near Brounesmer (quarent. 19), and ½ acre in Millfield (quarent. 28).

The whole tenement was in the lord's hands by 1391–2, probably because of the tenant's death. In 1393, all except the soiled land in Hochesfield were granted to Thomas Pytecok. In 1502, all parts of the tenement were in the lord's hands and therefore described in the extent rather than the rental of that year. In 1504, a ruined cottage called Meriell with 8 acres of land and 1 acre of meadow were granted out to Robert Dabbe and his wife.

The tenement was split up in 1527 when the messuage and 4-acre croft were alienated by Robert Dabbe to Nicholas Wen. In 1566, John Large held these and they were listed as a tenement called Merielles alias Wennes in 1605. The rent for the cottage and 4 acres was 2s 10d in 1532–3. The same rent was paid for a tenement and land called Merriells between 1780 and 1792. The house was probably occupied by undertenants, William Plowright in 1664 and John Goodson in 1666. It had two hearths.

The tenancy of the house and croft can be followed throughout the 17th and 18th centuries to the admittance of George Watson, late of Little Dunham and now of Little Fransham, hosier, in 1794.

6.0 The Finds

The finds and environmental material from the site are presented in tabular form with basic quantitative information in Appendix 2. In addition, more detailed information on specific finds and environmental categories is included below. Supporting tables for these contributions are included in the Appendices.

6.1 Pottery

By Sue Anderson

Five sherds were recovered from fill (04) of ditch (03). They comprised three sherds of a Grimston-type jug rim and handle (93g), one sherd of green-glazed North Norfolk-type glazed ware (15g) and one sherd of local medieval unglazed ware (10g). The group suggests a date in the 13th/14th century for the fill.

6.2 Faunal Remains

By Julie Curl

All of the bone was examined primarily to determine range of species and elements present. The assessment was carried out following a modified version of guidelines by English Heritage (Davis 1992). A note was also made of butchering and any indications of skinning, hornworking and other modifications. When possible a record was made of ages and any other relevant information, such as pathologies. Counts and weights were noted for each context examined. A table giving a summary of the information is included with this report.

A total of 61g of faunal remains, comprising of fourteen pieces, was recovered from two contexts. Remains in this assemblage are relatively poor and fragmented. Bone in (04) showed dark staining in the bone and blackened teeth, characteristic of bone that has lain in a waterlogged and organic deposit for some time.

Remains in (02) consisted of a butchered fragment of cattle pelvis and two other unidentifiable fragments of mammal bone. Context (04) produced fragments of a pig mandible and isolated teeth along with other mammal bone fragments. There is little wear on the teeth of the pig, indicating a juvenile animal.

6.3 Ceramic Building Material

By Lucy Talbot

The site produced a single example of medieval brick weighing, 22g. The assemblage was quantified (counted and weighed) by form and fabric. The fabrics were identified by eye and the main inclusions noted. Fabric descriptions and dates are based on the provisional type series established by Sue Anderson.

The fragment was recovered from ditch fill (04) and has a fabric of poorly mixed estuarine clay with coarse inclusions of crushed burnt flint and grog.

7.0 Conclusions

The ditch (03) located in Trench 2 dated from the 13th/14th centuries and therefore undoubtedly predated the present farmhouse. It is known from documentary sources that the site was occupied throughout this period and it is therefore perhaps not surprising, considering the wet nature of the land there, that drainage ditches should be present. Although no direct evidence for an earlier structure was found during the evaluation the organic nature of the medieval ditch fill and the domestic waste and debris which it contained indicates the likelihood of occupation within the vicinity. The second ditch, identified in Trench 3, remains undated, but its similarity of alignment with the farmhouse might indicate that it is a drainage feature associated with the house.

The effectiveness of the building record was somewhat hampered by the rendering of much of the exterior of the building. Despite this, a written survey, ground plans and a photographic record were able to be produced. The house was probably built in the early 19th century and is of little architectural merit.

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

Acknowledgements

Thanks to Rebecca Crawford who carried out the fieldwork along with the author. The pottery was examined and reported on by Sue Anderson, the faunal remains by Julie Curl and the ceramic building material by Lucy Talbot. Thanks are also due to Andrew Rogerson of Norfolk Landscape Archaeology for providing historical information regarding the site. The report was illustrated by Michael Feather and edited by Richard Hoggett.

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Appendix 1a: Context Summary

Context	Category	Description	Period
01	Cut	Ditch	Undated
02	Deposit	Fill of (01)	Undated
03	Cut	Ditch	Medieval
04	Deposit	Fill of (03)	Medieval
05	Deposit	Fill of (03)	Medieval
06	Deposit	Sub-soil (Trenches 1 and 4)	Undated
07	Deposit	Topsoil	Undated
08	Deposit	Garden soil (Trenches 2 and 3)	Undated
09	Deposit	Sub-soil (Trench 3)	Undated

Appendix 1b: OASIS feature summary table

Period	Feature type	Quantity
Unknown	Ditch	1
Medieval (1066 to 1539)	Ditch	1

Appendix 2a: Finds by Context

Context	Material	Qty	Wt (g)	Period
02	Animal bone	–	11	Undiagnostic
04	Pottery	5	119	Medieval
04	Ceramic Building Material	1	22	Medieval
04	Animal bone	–	50	Undiagnostic
04	Shell – mussel/ cockle	–	15	Undiagnostic

Appendix 2b: NHER Finds Summary Table

Period	Material	Quantity
Unknown	Animal Bone	14
Medieval (1066 to 1539)	Pottery	5
	Ceramic Building Material	1

Appendix 3: Faunal Remains

Context	Ttl ctxt wt (g)	Ttl ctxt qty	Spp.	Spp. Qty	Comments
02	11	3	Cattle	1	Pelvis, butchered
			Mammal	2	Fragments
04	50	11	Pig	7	Mandible fragments, teeth, Dark staining
			Mammal	4	Fragments, dark staining

Appendix 4: Ceramic building material

Context	Form	Quantity	Weight (g)	Period
04	Brick	1	22	Medieval

