

**Report № 1938**

**An Archaeological Evaluation at  
land adjacent to School Road, Middleton, Norfolk**

NHER 51696

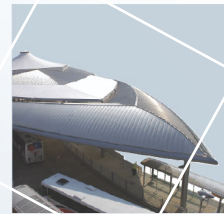
Produced for Anthony Skerry

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October 2008

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Location:	Land adjacent to School Road, Middleton
District:	King's Lynn and West Norfolk
Grid Ref.:	TF 6623 1588
HER No.:	51696
Dates of Fieldwork:	15–19 September 2008

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## **Summary**

*Proposals for the construction of new housing on a plot of land adjacent to School Road, Middleton, Norfolk, required a programme of archaeological evaluation to determine the presence or absence, date, extent, condition and significance of any archaeological features or deposits. The site is located close to the position of an Early Saxon inhumation, recorded on the opposite side of School Road, and it was possible that further burials may exist within the development area. Therefore, the information was required to allow an informed and reasonable planning decision based on the potential impact of the proposals on the archaeological resource.*

*Five trial trenches were excavated. One trench, nearest to School Road, could not be completed because of a large modern concrete slab and one trench contained only modern features. The others contained a pit of probable late medieval date, a post-medieval ditch and two 20th-century wells.*

## **1.0 Introduction**

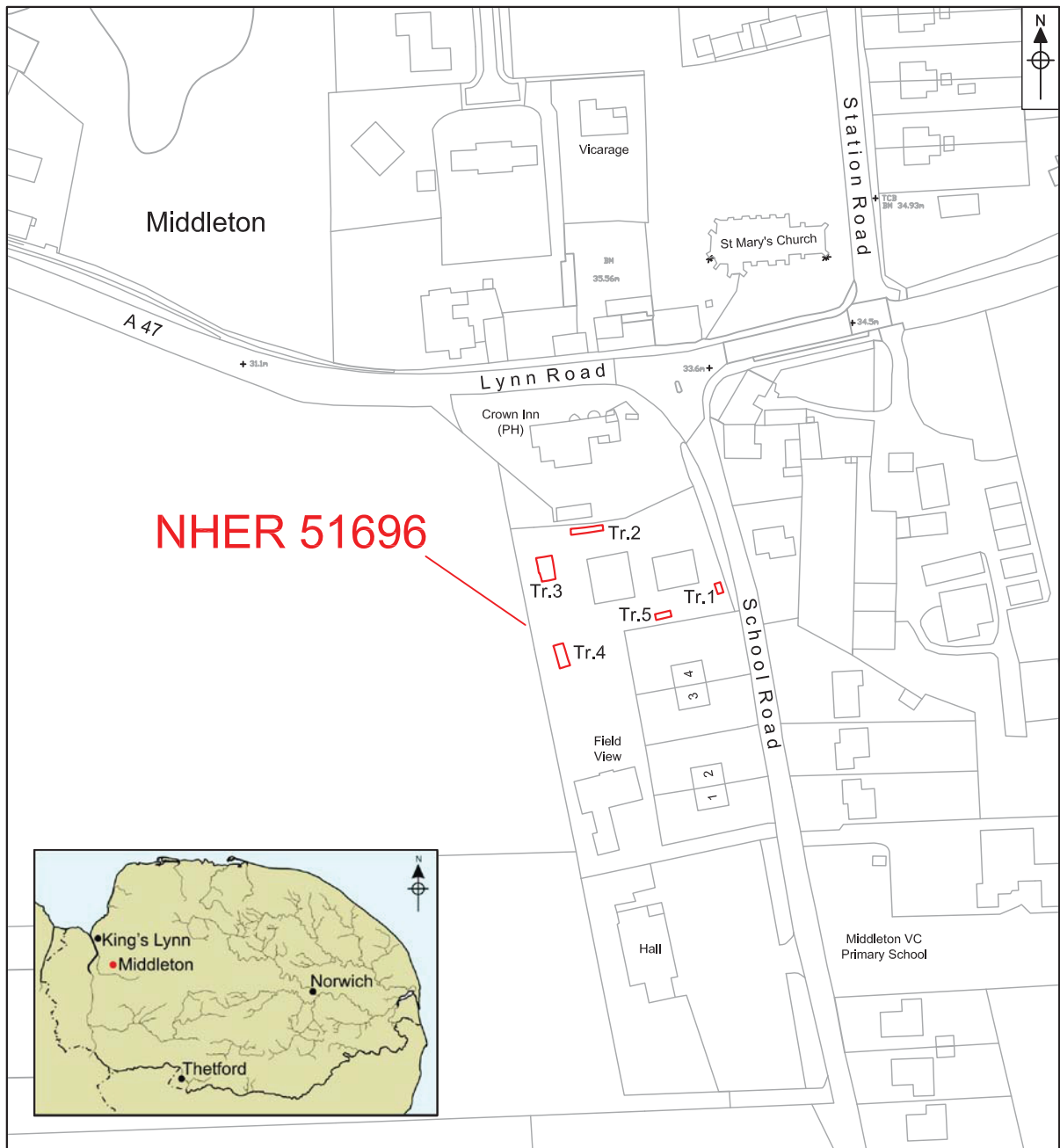
Private developers are currently progressing plans to construct eight new houses on a plot of land adjacent to School Road, Middleton. The site is located close to the known position of an Early Saxon burial, uncovered on the opposite side of School Road in 1967 (NHER 3392). It was considered possible that further burials may extend into the proposed development site and Norfolk Landscape Archaeology recommended that an archaeological evaluation be carried out so that 'an informed and reasonable planning decision can be taken when the results of the Evaluation have been considered' (NLA Ref.: KH 05/08/2008). At NLA's request the applicant has withdrawn their planning application (Planning Ref. 08/01233/F) in order to conduct an archaeological evaluation of the site. David Taylor Associates Ltd, acting on behalf of the developer, commissioned NAU Archaeology to carry out the evaluation.

## **2.0 Geology and Topography**

The site occupies a plot of land to the east of School Road, Middleton, and covers a total area of 2,700m<sup>2</sup> (Figs 1 and 2). The Middleton area is underlain by Upper Cretaceous White Chalk interspersed with glacial sands (Funnell 2005, 4), covered with superficial glacial deposits, which within the evaluation consisted of silty clay.

The site lies on a slight plateau, at an elevation of 33m OD.

The land is currently used as a car repair garage and consists of workshops, office and tarmac and gravel hardstanding. The site slopes down from its highest point adjacent to School Road to the rear of the plot.



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Figure 1. Site location. Scale 1:2000

### **3.0 Archaeological and Historical Background**

Middleton sits within a part of the landscape particularly rich in archaeological evidence, ranging from prehistory to the modern period. The following period summaries provide the background to the site.

#### **3.1 Prehistoric**

A number of prehistoric lithics have been recovered from the area surrounding the site, in particular a large group of material has been recovered to the south-west of the site. The material included Neolithic axe-heads and axe fragments (NHER 3388, 16242 and 16243), potboilers of probable prehistoric date (NHER 23011 and 23040), and other finds of prehistoric flint have been made. Interestingly all of the prehistoric material within 1km of the site lies to the south, with little or no material recorded within a similar distance to the north.

#### **3.2 Roman**

Middleton lies to the north of what may have been an inlet on the probable Roman coastline (Murphy 2005), in the vicinity of Blackborough End, where many Roman remains have been identified including salterns (NHER 23181), a wall (NHER 3465), a forge (NHER 17753) and a kiln (NHER 3391), suggesting a small industrial complex. Further Roman material is recorded to the west of the site (NHER 3363) and to the north (NHER 37638) of the site.

#### **3.3 Saxon**

A single inhumation (NHER 3392) was uncovered in 1967 while burying a pig. The burial was that of a male laid out with its head to the west. A piece of iron was found close to the ribs, although it is by no means certain if this was buried with the body deliberately. The HER record states that the body was a 50-year-old male with a well developed right femur and exhibiting heavy dental attrition. The burial has been dated to the Early Saxon period and it may form part of a larger cemetery, the extent of which is currently unknown. It was the possibility of a cemetery extending into the development area that necessitated this evaluation.

#### **3.4 Medieval**

The manor of Middleton is mentioned five times in Domesday Book (Silvester 1988). Two references to Middleton mention salt-houses (Brown 1984, 19, 4 and 23, 11), which, although not placing salt-works in Middleton itself, do suggest that salt production was still important to the area's economy during the medieval period.

There seem to have been two main foci of medieval settlement, one of them to the north of the A47 with records of a possible deserted medieval settlement located within the modern-day golf course (NHER 11834). Several rectangular enclosures have been located within the vicinity, possibly relating to moated sites or farming tofts (NHER 31613 and 18547). The possible 12th-century motte and bailey castle, Middleton Mount (NHER 3394), is located approximately 700m to the north of the site (Ashwin 2001).

The second focus of medieval settlement is further to the south at Blackborough End with a possible settlement site identified during fieldwalking (NHER 23621).

The site of Blackborough Priory, established by the Benedictines around 1150, lays c.2km south-east of the site (NHER 3430). The priory was dissolved in 1538.

### **3.5 Summary**

It is clear from the above summary that the proposed development site had the potential to contain significant archaeological remains, although it appeared to be located just to the north of the main focus of prehistoric and Roman activity and possibly between the two areas of medieval settlement.

## **4.0 Methodology**

The objective of the 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.

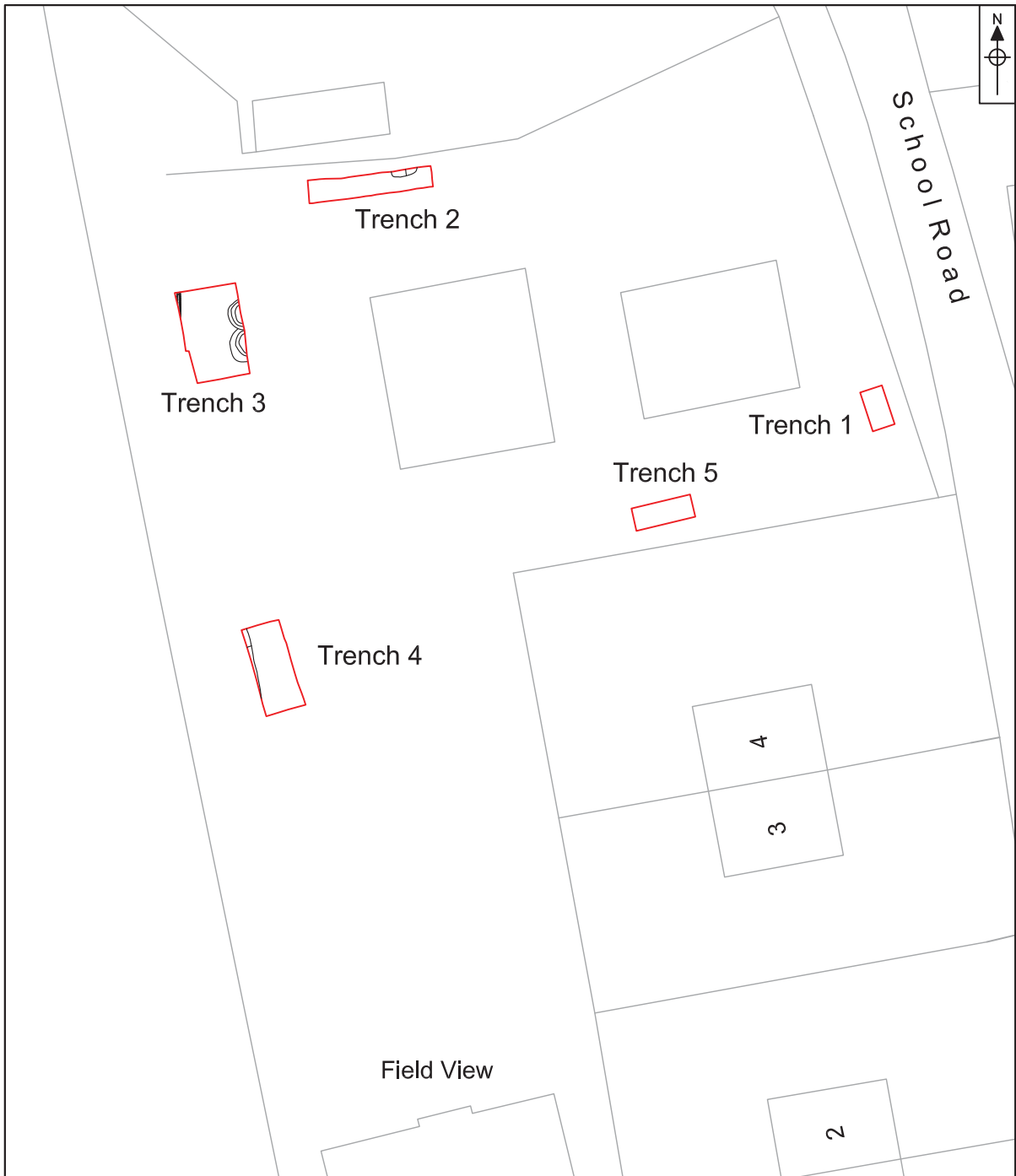
The brief required that 5% of the site should be evaluated. This was to be achieved through the excavation of five trenches measuring 15m by 1.8m positioned around the site in order to maximise the recovery of archaeological information, but, where possible, avoiding existing structures and hard surfacing required for the continued operation of the garage. The most significant location was along the eastern edge of the site, parallel to School Road, as this was considered the area most likely to contain further burials.

Machine excavation was carried out under constant archaeological supervision with a hydraulic 360° excavator equipped with 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 processing and analysis. No environmental samples were taken.

All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using NAU Archaeology pro forma. Trench locations, plans and sections were recorded at appropriate scales and colour and monochrome photographs were taken of all significant features and deposits.

Site conditions were suitable for evaluation and the field work took place in overcast weather.





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Figure 2. Trench location. Scale 1:500

## **5.0 Results**

### **5.1 Trench One**

Trench 1 was positioned along the eastern edge of the site parallel to the street frontage (Fig. 2). Excavation of this trench was abandoned after a large concrete pad was uncovered at a depth of between 0.1–0.3m along the whole length of the trench. The concrete ranged in depth from 0.1m to 0.4m. After consultation with Norfolk Landscape Archaeology it was agreed that continued evaluation may cause disturbance to the existing buildings and any further evaluation should be carried out during later ground works.

### **5.2 Trench Two**

Trench 2 was aligned east–west within an area of gravel hardstanding along the northern edge of the site (Fig. 2). Due to surrounding tarmac surfaces, the finished trench measured 12.5m by 2m. The trench was overlain by gravel and hardcore to a depth of 0.20m. Underlying this was a dark grey-brown silty clay topsoil (04), which was 0.40m deep.

A modern east–west wall was revealed in the north-western section of the trench, overlain by the topsoil. The southern face of this wall (10) was exposed to a length of 3.4m. It was constructed of yellow brick with occasional red brick, each brick measuring c.0.20m x 0.12m x 0.06m. The wall had seven unevenly laid courses. These bricks were bonded by a dense white chalky mortar that also formed a regular surface finish over parts of the wall. Underlying this wall was a mid-grey-brown silty clay subsoil (06), which extended to a depth of 0.80m.

At the eastern end of the trench a semi-circular pit (02) was partially exposed. The base and sides of this feature were concave. This pit was 1.20m long, its exposed width was 0.50m and it had a minimum depth of 0.50m. The fill of this pit consisted of a mid-orangey-grey silty clay (01). One sherd of abraded medieval pottery was recovered from this fill. The fill was homogenous and similar to the overlying subsoil, leading to the conclusion that this pit had infilled naturally and the pottery was probably residual.

### **5.3 Trench Three**

Trench 3 measured 7m by 5m, was aligned north–south and located towards the north-western corner of the site (Fig. 2). Hardcore covered the trench to a depth of 0.3m. Underlying this was a dark greyish-brown silty sand garden soil to a depth of 0.6m. This was underlain by a mid-greyish-brown silty clay subsoil [12] to a depth of 0.3m.

Two 20th-century wells were recorded at the eastern side of the trench (Fig. 4). Well (17) had a diameter of 1.5m at the top of the feature and a minimum diameter of 2.2m at the exposed base. This well was exposed to a height of 0.7m. The exposed portion was its domed capping, constructed of red brick laid in a header bond 10 courses high. The well was bonded by a greyish sandy lime mortar. The construction cut (16) for the well was circular, with a diameter of 2.8m. The cut had vertical sides and was filled by dark greyish-brown silty clay (18) (Plate 1). Cut into this well was a later well (20).



Plate 1. Trench 3, exposed wells (20) and (17).

Well (20) had a diameter of 1.4m at the top of the feature and a minimum diameter of 1.9m at its exposed base. This well had a domed capping constructed of red brick to a height of 1.2m. This was laid in a header bond 12 courses high bonded with a greyish sandy mortar, with a rough surface finish over portions of the brickwork. This well was constructed within construction cut (19), which was circular and had a diameter of 2.4m. This cut had vertical sides and was filled with mid-orangey-brown silty sand with frequent brick rubble (21).

To the western edge of the trench a culvert (13) was recorded running north–south and extending into the western edge of the trench. The culvert was exposed for a length of 2.2m. This culvert's overall width was 0.24m and its height was 0.18m. The interior width was 0.12m and its height was 0.12m. The culvert was built with 0.22m x 0.12m x 0.07m rectangular red bricks laid on their bed at the base and on top. The sides of this culvert were constructed of the same type of bricks laid on edge one course high. The bonding material was a greyish white concrete mortar. The interior of the culvert was empty of deposits where the brick cover was still in place. Where this covering brick had been removed the culvert was filled by the overlying subsoil.

The overlying topsoil and subsoil are recorded as having been heavily truncated by the present occupants when they remodelling the garage forecourt, however no evidence for truncation of potential archaeological features was noted.

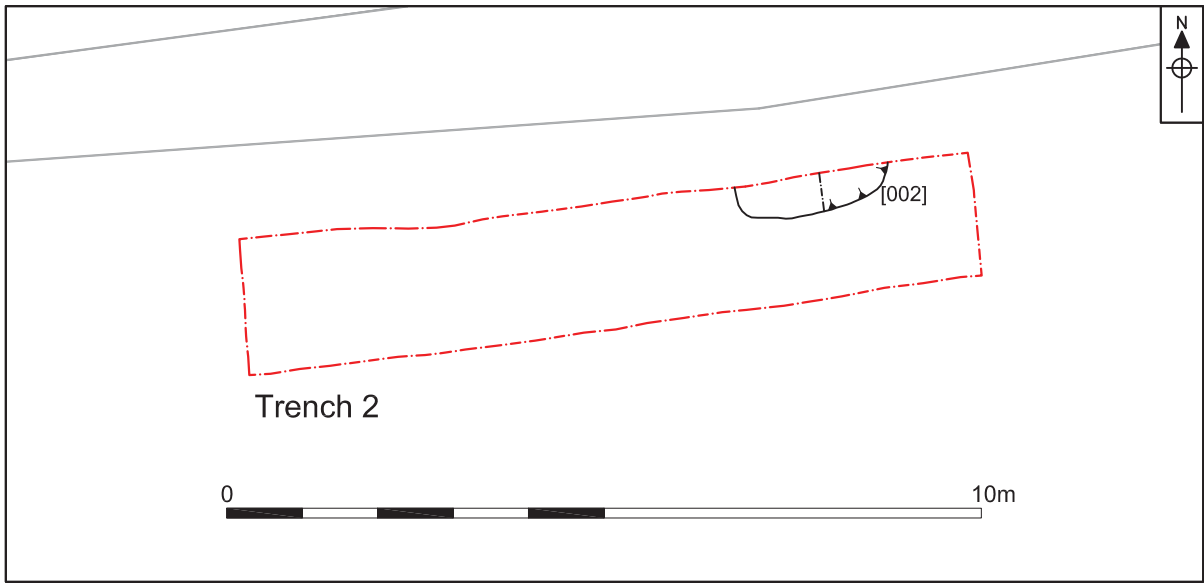


Figure 3. Trench 2, plan. Scale 1:100

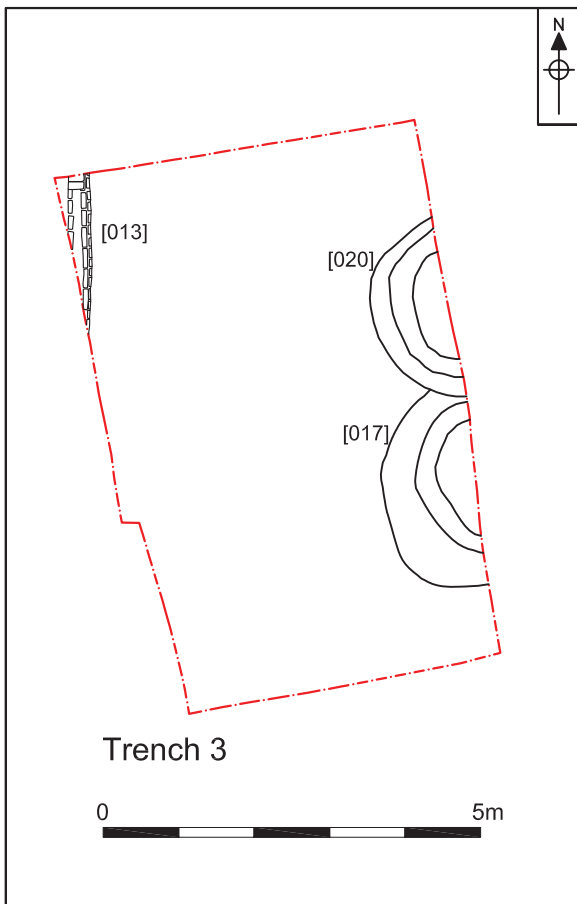


Figure 4. Trench 3, plan. Scale 1:100

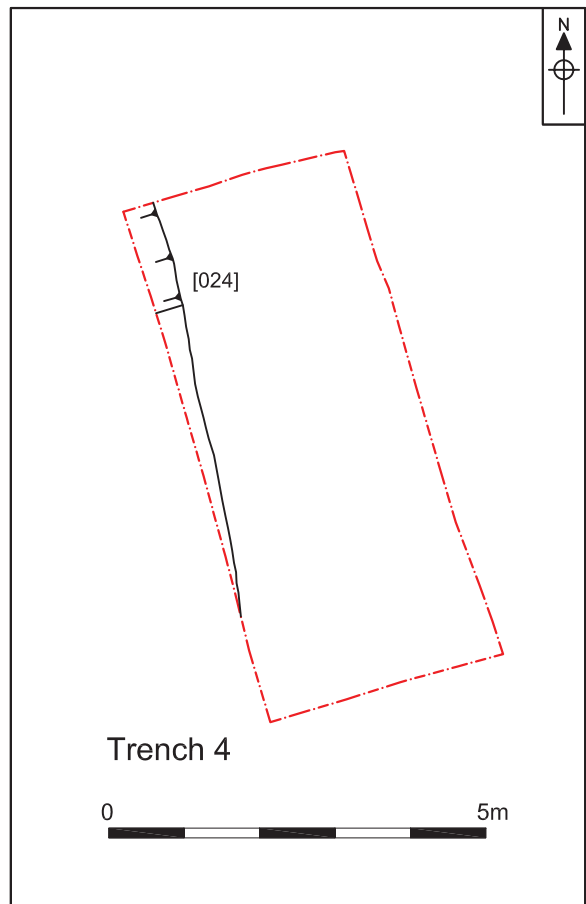


Figure 5. Trench 4, plan. Scale 1:100

## **5.4 Trench Four**

Trench 4 measured 7m by 3m, was aligned north–south and was located to the south-west of the survey area (Fig. 2). The trench was overlain by hardcore to a depth of 0.3m. Underlying this was dark greyish-brown silty clay topsoil (22) to a depth of 0.3m.

Cut into the natural chalk one ditch (24) was recorded running north–south and extending into the western and northern edges of the trench. This ditch had an exposed length of 6.5m and an exposed width of 0.4m. The ditch had a concave base with straight sides and had a maximum recorded depth of 0.2m. The ditch fill (23) consisted of an homogenous mid-brown sandy loam. Within this fill were a late medieval/early post-medieval brick and a cow's jawbone.

## **5.5 Trench Five**

Trench 5 measured 15m by 1.8m, was aligned east–west was positioned along the southern edge of the site (Fig. 2). The western 4m of the trench were excavated to a depth of 1.2m and uncovered vast amounts of modern brick and concrete rubble. Further to the east the trench revealed a concrete pad. This rubble is believed to result from the demolition of the telephone exchange building, known to have occupied the building before the present garage. After consultation with Norfolk Landscape Archaeology this trench was not excavated further.

## **6.0 The Finds**

### **6.1 Pottery**

By Becky Crawford

A single body sherd of local medieval unglazed (LMU) pottery, weighing 2g, was recovered from pit fill (01) (Appendix 3). Identification of the fabrics was based on the typology of Norwich ceramics established by Jennings (Jennings 1981).

### **6.2 Ceramic Building Material**

By Becky Crawford

The site produced a single incomplete brick fragment weighing 675g from ditch fill (23) (Appendix 4). The fragment is late medieval or early post-medieval. The brick has an incomplete length of 120mm, is 43mm thick and 106mm wide.

The fabric was identified by eye and the main inclusions noted. Fabric descriptions and dates are based on the provisional type series established by Sue Anderson. The fabric is of poorly mixed estuarine clay with occasional coarse inclusions of grog and sparse inclusions of ferrous pellets and vegetable matter.

### **6.3 The faunal remains.**

By Julie Curl

All of the bone was examined to determine range of species and elements present, with an estimation of ages where feasible. A note was also made of butchering and any indications of skinning, hornworking and other modifications. When possible a record was made of any other relevant information, such as



pathologies or gnawing. Counts and weights were noted for each context. All information was recorded directly into an Excel spreadsheet. The assessment was carried out following a modified version of guidelines by English Heritage (Davis 1992).

A total of 0.300kg of faunal remains, comprising of 24 pieces, were recovered from one context (23). The remains consisted of a large cattle mandible and associated fragments from this jawbone. The main jaw is in reasonable condition, although there is some fragmentation from butchering and wear.

The cattle mandible shows the third molar in full wear, indicating an animal of around eight years or older at death. Butchering was noted, showing the animal had been skinned and the tongue had been removed for meat. The jaw shows periodontal disease, resulting in the loosening of some teeth; this is typical and to be expected in an animal of this age.

This is a very small assemblage that can provide no further information and no further work is needed on these remains.

## **7.0 Conclusions**

The portion of the site most favourably placed to test whether or not the suspected Early Saxon cemetery extended into the current plot is situated nearest the street frontage. However, due to modern obstructions the trench located in this position (Trench 1) was unable to be completed. After consultation with Norfolk Landscape Archaeology a further work instruction will be needed for evaluation of this area to determine the extent of the cemetery.

To the north of the survey area a pit (02) containing a medieval sherd was recorded. A ditch (24) was recorded to the west of the survey area, this is most likely to have been part of a north–south boundary between properties, possibly a precursor to the present boundary. This ditch was likely to have fallen into disuse and gradually infilled over a long period of time, with ceramic building material and animal bones thrown in as refuse.

Trench 3 located two 20th-century wells (17) and (20), both of which had previously been located during groundworks by the present landowners and backfilled. The wall (10) located within Trench 2 is of a similar date to the wells and may have formed part of a larger building complex that still survives to the northwest of the site. These features may relate to an earlier phase in the history of the Crown public house, adjacent to the site to the north and known to have been a public house since the 18th century.

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

## ***Acknowledgements***

The fieldwork was conducted by Helen Stocks and Suzie Westall. The evaluation was generously assisted by Mark Wright, the current occupant, who generously gave his time to assist us with making provision for the trenches. Finds were processed by Becky Crawford. The animal bone was examined by Julie Curl. The report was illustrated by David Dobson and edited by Richard Hoggett.

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## Appendix 1a: Context Summary

Context	Category	Description	Period
1	Deposit	Fill of [002]	Medieval
2	Cut	Cut of oval pit	Medieval
3	Deposit	hardcore	Modern
4	Deposit	Topsoil	Modern
5	Deposit	Hardcore	Modern
6	Deposit	Subsoil	Modern
7	Deposit	Subsoil	Modern
8	Deposit	Fill of [9]	Unknown
9	Cut	Cut of natural feature	unknown
10	Masonry	Wall	Modern
11	Deposit	Topsoil	Modern
12	Deposit	Subsoil	Modern
13	Cut	Construction cut for drain	Modern
14	Masonry	Drain	Modern
15	Deposit	Fill of [13]	Modern
16	Cut	Construction cut for well	Modern
17	Masonry	Well	Modern
18	Deposit	Fill of [16]	Modern
19	Cut	Construction cut for well	Modern
20	Masonry	Well	Modern
21	Deposit	Fill of [19]	Modern
22	Deposit	Topsoil	Modern
23	Deposit	Fill of [24]	Post-medieval
24	Cut	Cut of ditch	Post-medieval

## Appendix 1b: OASIS feature summary table

Period	Feature type	Quantity
Unknown	Pit	1
Medieval (1066 to 1539 AD)	Pit	1
Post-medieval (1540 to 1900 AD)	Ditch	1
Modern (1900 to 2050 AD)	Well	2
Modern (1900 to 2050 AD)	Drain	1
Modern (1900 to 2050 AD)	Wall	1



### Appendix 2a: Finds by Context

Context	Material	Quantity	Weight (g)	Period
01	Pottery	1	2	Medieval
23	Ceramic Building Material	1	675	Medieval/Post-medieval
23	Animal Bone	-	300	Undiagnostic

### Appendix 2b: NHER Finds Summary Table

Period	Material	Quantity
Unknown	Animal bone	24
Medieval (1066 to 1539 AD)	pottery	1
Post-medieval (1540 to 1900 AD)	Ceramic building material	1

### Appendix 3: Pottery

Context	Fabric	Form	Quantity	Weight (g)	Period
01	LMU	Body sherd	1	2	Medieval

Key: LMU – Local Medieval Unglazed

### Appendix 4: Ceramic Building Material

Context	Form	Quantity	Weight (g)	Period
23	Brick	1	675	Late medieval/post-medieval

### Appendix 5: Faunal Remains

Ctxt	Ttl ctxt wt (g)	Ttl ctxt qty	Spp.	Spp. qty	Comments
23	0.3	24	Cow	1	The bone is in reasonable condition, some fragmentation from butchering and wear.