

NORFOLK ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

Report No. 883

**An Archaeological Watching Brief at
Shrublands Quarry, Aldeby,
Burgh St. Peter, Norfolk**

35652 BSP

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July 2004

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Location: Shrublands Quarry, Aldeby, Burgh St. Peter
District: South Norfolk
Grid Ref: TM 4720 9230
HER No.: 35652 BSP
Date of fieldwork: 16th to 23rd October 2003

Summary

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken during topsoil stripping prior to Phase 5 of proposed gravel and sand extraction at Shrublands Quarry, Aldeby. Five pits, a hearth, a ditch and a solution hollow were recorded. All of the archaeological features were truncated below the surface of the topsoil. One of the pits produced a sherd of 15th- to 16th-century pottery and another contained a piece of burnt flint. The fills of a solution hollow produced a sherd of ceramic building material and a scraper.

1.0 Introduction

(Fig. 1)

An archaeological watching brief was carried out by Norfolk Archaeological Unit (NAU) at Shrublands Quarry, Aldeby, Burgh St. Peter, on topsoil stripping prior to gravel and sand extraction from the Phase 5 extension to the quarry. Previous archaeological work (Ames 2001; Bates 1995; Gaffney 1998; Phillips 2002) reported evidence of prehistoric activity.

The site lies to the west of the current quarry-working area. It is located within Burgh St. Peter parish, south-east of the village of Burgh St. Peter on a south facing slope approximately 0.4km to the north of the River Waveney.

This archaeological watching brief was undertaken on behalf of Tarmac (Southern) Ltd in accordance with a Brief issued by Norfolk Landscape Archaeology (NLA Ref: 385-28/4/95/DG).

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 site overlies Quaternary till and Norwich Crag. The higher tracts of land in the parish consist of boulder clay and form the southernmost reaches of the north to south boulder clay plateau.

The site is situated on the southern slope of a peninsula overlooking the marshes of the Waveney valley. It lies on the higher relief of the open valley margins where there is a visible contrast with the rising arable land to the north and the low-lying grazing marshes to the south.

The northern elevation of the site lies approximately 20m OD, while the southern elevation slopes to about 12m OD. Although the southern elevation is relatively high, approximately 150m to the south there is a considerable drop until it meets the valley floor.

3.0 Archaeological and Historical Background

A desktop study of the archaeological implications of expansion of the Shrublands Quarry was carried out by NAU in 1995 (Penn). This section of the report is based on that research and upon results of archaeological work in the quarry since that time (Bates 1995; Gaffney 1998; Ames 2001; Phillips 2002). The sites discussed below are listed on the Norfolk Historic Environment Record (HER).

Shrublands Quarry lies almost entirely within the area of the former Burgh Common. Such tracts of heathland often seem to have their origins in prehistoric times, remaining as ancient grazing grounds until brought under the plough relatively recently. Faden's map of 1797 shows that the common occupied the larger part of the west side of Burgh parish. It was enclosed in 1811 leaving only the thirteen acres of Boon's Heath (named after local landowner William Boon) for the poor of the parish (White 1845, 807). Both the Burgh St Peter Tithe Map and the Ordnance Survey 1st Edition 1 inch Map show the enclosed common divided into fields and this picture has changed little down to the present day.

Within the area of the watching brief and continuing to the west of the quarry are crop-marks of ancient features discovered through aerial photography. One of these appears as a circular ditch, probably the ploughed-out remains of a prehistoric burial mound or barrow (HER Site 16003). Given its prominent valley-side position other funerary monuments or burials may await discovery in this area. The remaining features all show as linear marks. These most likely represent trackways and field boundaries. Whilst they are intrinsically more difficult to date, they might well relate to field division at the time of the Enclosure Acts.

Survey work and monitoring of topsoil stripping was undertaken in the area to the east of the site prior to four earlier phases of gravel extraction (Ames 2001; Bates 1995; Gaffney 1998; Phillips 2002). Two small spreads of worked flint, four sherds of unglazed medieval pottery and a quantity of metalwork were recovered from the field surface. Beneath the ploughsoil thirteen pits, a post-hole, two possible hearths, a ditch and a post-medieval feature, perhaps an agricultural enclosure, were located. Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age Beaker pottery was recovered from a number of the pits (one of which contained 199 sherds) and one of the hearths. Although mostly undiagnostic, the worked flint found at the site, both on the field surface and within the features containing the pottery, is not incompatible with a Neolithic or Bronze Age date.

Aside from an antiquarian find of a Roman pot to the west of Boon's Heath (HER 15125) there are no other known archaeological sites or finds spots in the vicinity of the quarry.

4.0 Methodology

The objective of this watching brief was to record any archaeological evidence revealed during topsoil stripping of the Phase 5 quarry extension.

Machine-excavation was carried out under constant archaeological supervision with a tracked 360° excavator fitted with a 2m toothless ditch bucket. Due to the compact nature of the topsoil the bucket was changed to a narrower and finer bucket. The topsoil stripping followed a north to south alignment taking off 2m to 4m strips. Spoil was placed immediately onto dump trucks. The total area stripped measured approximately 150m north-to-south and 62m east to west.

The site was field-walked prior to work starting and no surface finds were observed.

All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using NAU *pro forma* sheets. The site location, plans and sections were recorded at appropriate scales and colour and monochrome photographs were taken of all relevant features and deposits.

The access to the site was good, along the existing quarry road. The weather varied from bright and dry to wet and it was very windy.

5.0 Results

(Fig. 2; Appendix 1)

In the central part of the northern end of the site a hearth ([21]) was located. The feature was roughly circular, measured 1.14m by 1.04m and was 0.16m deep, with regular sides and a concave base. It contained a dark grey black ashy sand ([20]) with moderate small and medium charcoal flecks and occasional small rounded to sub-rounded flint pebbles. One piece of burnt flint was recovered. The underlying soil was scorched through contact with a heat source.

Towards the south-eastern part of the exposed area was a pit ([23]). It was sub-circular, measured 0.75m by 0.6m and was 0.08m deep and the base was uneven. There was a single fill ([22]); a dark grey brown sandy loam with moderate small charcoal flecks and occasional small and medium frost shattered flints. Plant roots had disturbed the deposit and no finds were recovered.

Mid-way along the eastern area of the site was feature [30]. Although it contained stratified deposits, on excavation it became clear that it was a naturally occurring solution hollow. It measured 4.68m by 4.32m and was excavated to a depth of 1.20m. The upper deposit ([24]) was yellow coarse sand with moderate small and medium rounded flints and the occasional large flint nodule which contained a small flint scraper. Below this deposit were five others; two were coarse yellow sands with occasional rounded flints and three were mid grey/brown sandy silts. These had occasional small rounded flint pebbles and the lowest one ([25]) contained a single sherd of tile.

Pit [32] lay along the eastern perimeter. The cut was sub-circular and measured 0.58m by 0.52m and was 0.13m deep. The profile had sloped sides coming to a pointed base. It contained a single deposit [31] of mid brown silty sand with occasional small rounded flint pebbles. No finds were recovered.

Towards the south-east corner of the site and was pit [34]. The cut was oval and measured 0.50m by 0.37m and was 0.10m deep. The profile was regular and had

concave sides with a concave base. It contained a single deposit ([33]) of mid grey silty sand with occasional small flint pebbles. No finds were recovered.

Pit [36] was in the south-east corner of the site. The cut was oval and measured 0.50m by 0.32m and was 0.09m deep. It contained a single deposit ([35]) of light brown grey ashy sand with occasional medium charcoal flecks, moderate small charcoal flecks and occasional small flint pebbles. No finds were recovered.

Along the central, western perimeter of the site was pit [38]. The cut was circular and measured 1.04m by 1m and was 0.17m deep. The profile had regular sloping sides and a concave base. It contained a single deposit ([37]) of dark grey ashy sand with moderate small and medium charcoal flecks and occasional small rounded flint pebbles. It contained a single sherd of 15th to 16th-century pottery.

Across the northern area of the site was a linear ditch [40]. It was traced for 62m and measured 1.40m by 0.35m deep. The profile changed slightly along the length of the ditch but was mostly regular with concave sides and a level base. It contained a single deposit ([39]) of light grey silty sand with occasional small and medium rounded flints. It contained no finds.

The topsoil ([41]) consisted of a homogenous mid to dark brown/grey sandy loam with moderate rounded stones. A sherd of 16th- to 18th-century pottery and seven pieces of post-medieval ceramic building material were collected from it. As the mechanical excavation headed south, it was anticipated that subsoil would be encountered. However, there was no definable subsoil and although the topsoil increased from 0.3m to 0.5m, it was more shallow (0.3m) towards the southern end of the site. The reason for the change in depth became clear air photographs were referred to, as they show a crop-mark, probably a field boundary or hedge, aligned east to west across the site at the location of the change in depth.

6.0 The Finds

The finds collected during this watching brief are listed in Appendix 2.

6.1 Flint

A single piece of worked flint was found in a fill ([24]) of a solution hollow ([30]). This is a small ovate cortical fragment of thermal origin which has had a number of small flakes struck from around its edges to form a scraper. Its non-cortical surface was already patinated prior to its utilisation. The piece is not closely datable.

A single fragment of burnt flint was also recovered and was discarded after recording.

6.2 Pottery

Two fragments of post-medieval pottery were recovered, weighing 0.008kg.

The ceramics were quantified by recording the number of sherds present in each context, the estimated number of vessels represented and the weight of each fabric. Other characteristics such as condition and decoration were noted, and an overall date range for the pottery in each context was established. The pottery was recorded on *pro forma* sheets by context using letter codes based on fabric and form.

The fabric codes used are based mainly on those identified in *Eighteen centuries of pottery from Norwich* (Jennings 1981), and supplemented by additional ones compiled by the Suffolk Unit (Anderson nd).

A single small fragment of Late medieval and transitional ware was present in the fill ([37]) of pit [38]. The surface of the sherd is worn. This fabric has an overall date range of 15th to 16th centuries.

A second extremely worn post-medieval fragment was found in the topsoil ([41]). It is a small sherd of a Glazed red earthenware rim which may be from a bowl. Hardly any of the external glaze now survives. It can be dated to between the 16th to 18th centuries.

6.3 Ceramic Building Material

The site produced a single fragment of pan tile and seven unidentified pieces weighing 0.059kg (from solution hollow fill [25] and topsoil [41]). All are of post-medieval date.

7.0 Conclusions

The results of the watching brief on the Phase 5 extension to Shrublands Quarry demonstrated limited evidence of prehistoric and more modern activity in this area. The prehistoric activity confirms the results of four earlier watching briefs to the east of the present extension. The recovery of the single worked flint from solution hollow [30] suggests a prehistoric date. However, as the feature also contained a piece of post-medieval pottery the flint is probably residual.

The more modern features relate to the land enclosure of the 19th-century. Ditch [40] was visible on the air photographs as a crop mark and to the north of it the ground had been scarred by many large tree boles. This suggests that the woodlands of Boon's Heath extended to this point and the ditch was used to demarcate the land-use after enclosure. Although no finds were present (in fill [39]) the ditch continued westwards roughly on a line of the present day field boundary.

The hearth ([21]) showed signs of repeated use as the ground underlying it had been scorched and burnt in places. The burnt flint is undiagnostic, but its presence could suggest the use of pot boilers. Equally likely though is that the flint was accidentally burnt since the site is flint covered.

The solution hollow, whilst being a natural feature did contain archaeological deposits, although this is likely to be residual.

Acknowledgements

The author, who conducted the fieldwork, would like to thank Graham Gumby (Senior Estates Surveyor) and Terry Roe (Quarry Manager) of Tarmac (Southern) Ltd. Lucy Talbot processed and reported on the finds. Sarah Bates examined the flint and Richenda Goffin looked at the pottery. The report was illustrated and produced by Maggie Footitt and was edited by David Robertson and Alice Lyons.

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Appendix 1: Context Summary

Context	Category	Description	Period
20	Deposit	Fill of pit [21]	Undated
21	Cut	Hearth	Undated
22	Deposit	Fill of pit [23]	Undated
23	Cut	Sub-oval pit	Undated
24	Deposit	Fill of [30]	Undated
25	Deposit	Fill of [30]	Undated
26	Deposit	Fill of [30]	Undated
27	Deposit	Fill of [30]	Undated
28	Deposit	Fill of [30]	Undated
29	Deposit	Fill of [30]	Undated
30	Cut	Solution hollow	Undated
31	Deposit	Fill of pit [32]	Undated
32	Cut	Sub-circular pit	Undated
33	Deposit	Fill of pit [34]	Undated
34	Cut	Oval pit	Undated
35	Deposit	Fill of pit [36]	Undated
36	Cut	Oval pit	Undated
37	Deposit	Fill of pit [38]	Undated
38	Cut	Circular pit	Undated
39	Deposit	Fill of ditch [40]	19th century?
40	Cut	Ditch	19th century?
41	Deposit	Brown/grey sandy loam topsoil	Modern

Appendix 2: Finds by Context

Context	Material	Quantity	Weight (kg)
20	Burnt flint	1	0.010
24	Flint	1	-
25	Post-medieval ceramic building material	1	0.030
37	Post-medieval pottery	1	0.003
41	Post-medieval pottery	1	0.004
41	Post-medieval ceramic building material	7	0.029

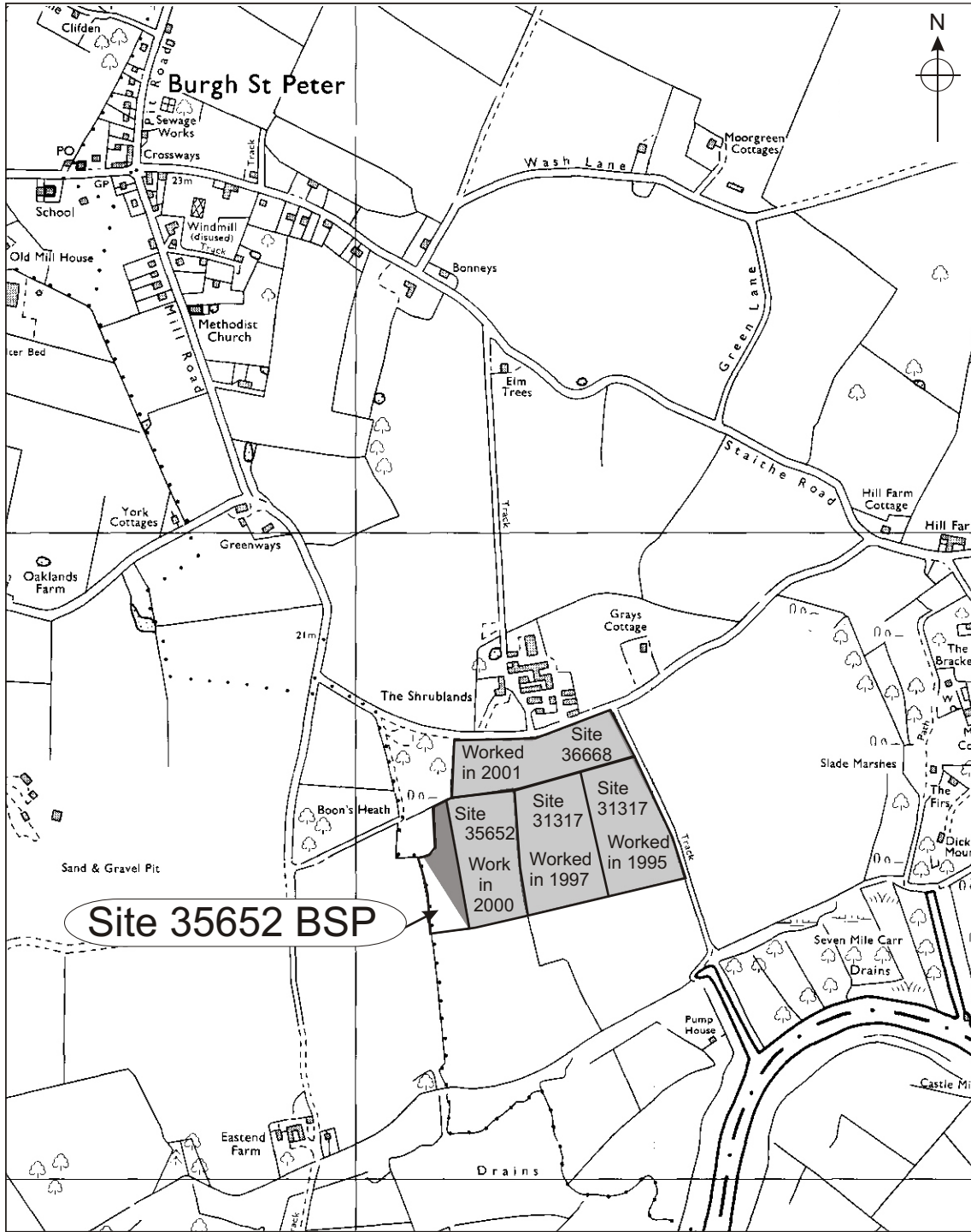


Figure 1. Site location. Scale 1:10,000

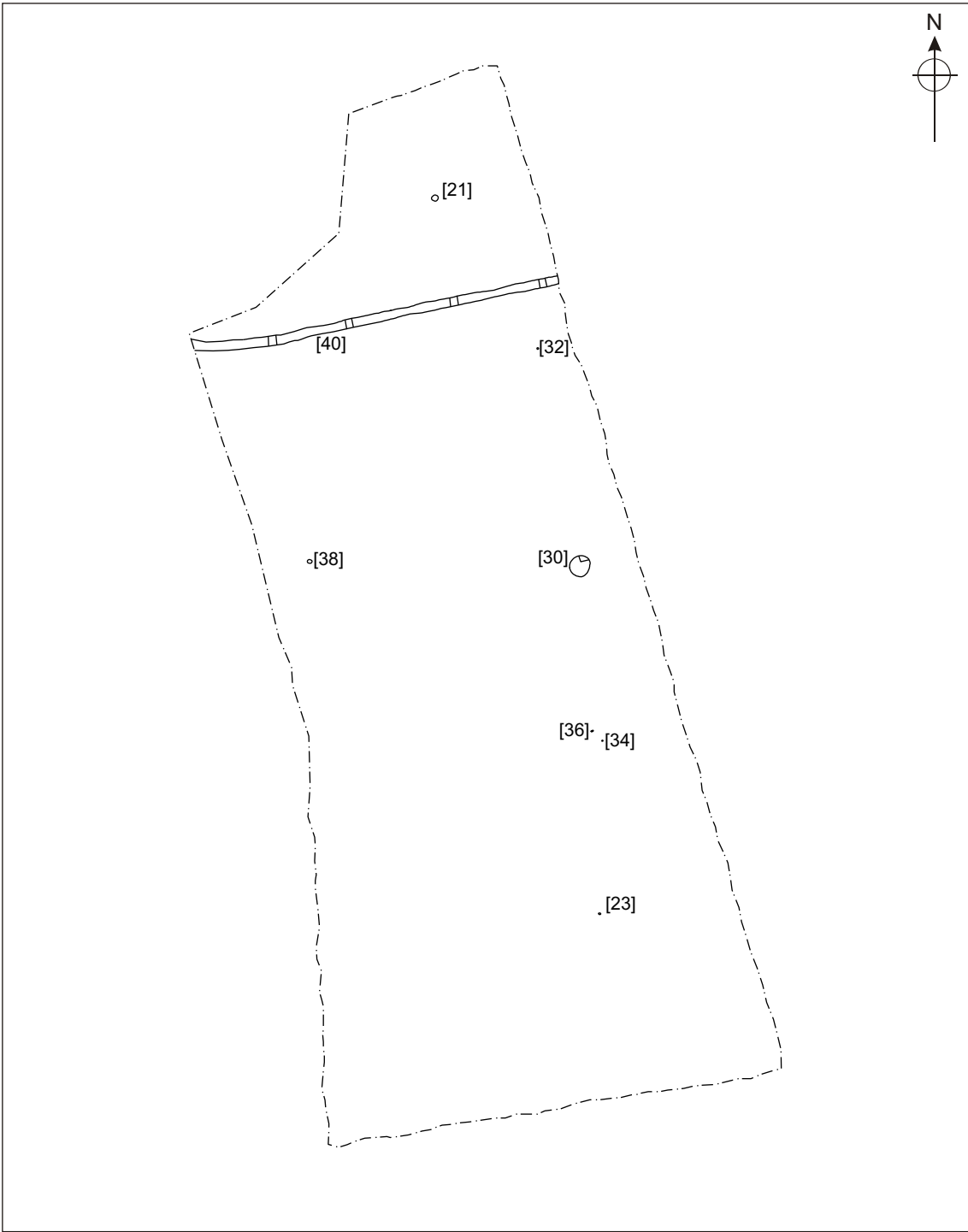


Figure 2. Location of all features. Scale 1:1000