

NORFOLK ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

Report No. 929

**An Archaeological 'Strip and Sample' Excavation at
Black Dyke Farm,
Hockwold Fen, Norfolk**

40201 HCW

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Location: Black Dyke Farm, Hockwold Fen, Hockwold-cum-Wilton
District: West Norfolk
Grid Ref: TL 68915 88423
HER No.: 40201 HCW
Date of fieldwork: 8th March 2004

Summary

An archaeological 'strip map and sample' excavation was undertaken to monitor the stripping of topsoil on the site of a proposed farm building. A single sub-circular pit was recorded, of probable prehistoric date, from which a small number of burnt flints were retrieved.

1.0 Introduction

(Fig. 1)

An archaeological 'strip map and sample' excavation was undertaken by Norfolk Archaeological Unit (NAU) in a field adjacent to Blackdyke Farm, Hockwold Fen, Hockwold-cum-Wilton. This work was carried out in the 'footprint' of a proposed new farm building which measured 32m x 13m (416 sq. m).

This report was commissioned and funded by Mr Brian Rutterford.

This excavation was undertaken in accordance with a Brief issued by Norfolk Landscape Archaeology (NLA Ref: DG/23/09/03) and a Project Design prepared by NAU (Ref: 1696/KJP).

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

This site lies in south-west Norfolk on the east edge of the peat fen with sandy uplands to the east. Aside from the Lower Cretaceous sands and clays in the west of the parish, the solid geology of Hockwold is predominantly the Upper Cretaceous Lower white chalk (Funnell 1994, 12).

3.0 Archaeological and Historical Background

The proposed development lies within an area of considerable archaeological interest. Hockwold-cum-Wilton, close-by to the east, has been the subject of previous NAU projects, including a metal detector survey (Percival 1997) and two evaluations (Crowson 1999; Underdown 2002). While Hockwold Fen and the Little Ouse valley bottom and slopes have been subject to detailed archaeological survey over the past twenty years (Silvester 1991; Healey 1996).

The Norfolk Historic Environment Record (HER) documents a number of finds in the vicinity of Blackdyke Farm, including Neolithic and Beaker period flints and Iron Age, Roman and medieval pottery sherds (HER 14737).

4.0 Methodology

(Fig. 2)

The aim of this 'strip, map and sample' excavation was to recover information relating to the extent, date, phasing, character, function, status and significance of the site.

The Brief required that close and continuous supervision of the soil stripping by an archaeologist was required.

Contractors used a tracked excavator (360°) fitted with a ditching bucket to removed topsoil from the site, to a depth of approximately 0.31m. The spoil was placed around the edge of the excavated area.

Spoil, exposed surfaces and features were scanned with a metal detector. All metal-detected and hand-collected finds were retained for inspection, other than those which were obviously modern.

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

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

5.0 Results

(Fig. 2)

A single sub-circular pit ([1]) that measured 1.58m x 1.24m wide and 0.29m deep was observed within the stripped area. The pit had relatively steep sides and a concave base. It contained a single deposit of mid-brown highly compacted silty clay ([2]). Several burnt flint ('pot-boilers') were retrieved from the spoil associated with this feature.

6.0 Conclusions

The stripped area contained only one feature of archaeological interest. This small sub-circular pit contained a small number of burnt flints, which may suggest a prehistoric date. Prehistoric activity is well documented in the area (Healey 1996) and it is probable that this feature could be associated with human habitation within the immediate vicinity.

It is proposed to publish a brief summary of the results of this excavation in the Recent Archaeology section (Excavations and Surveys in Norfolk) of *Norfolk Archaeology*, the annual journal of the Norfolk and Norwich Archaeological Society.

Acknowledgements

Thanks are due to Mr Brian Rutterford who commissioned and funded this project. The excavation and post-excavation was undertaken by the author. The report was illustrated by Steve Tatler and produced by Maggie Foottit and edited by Alice Lyons.

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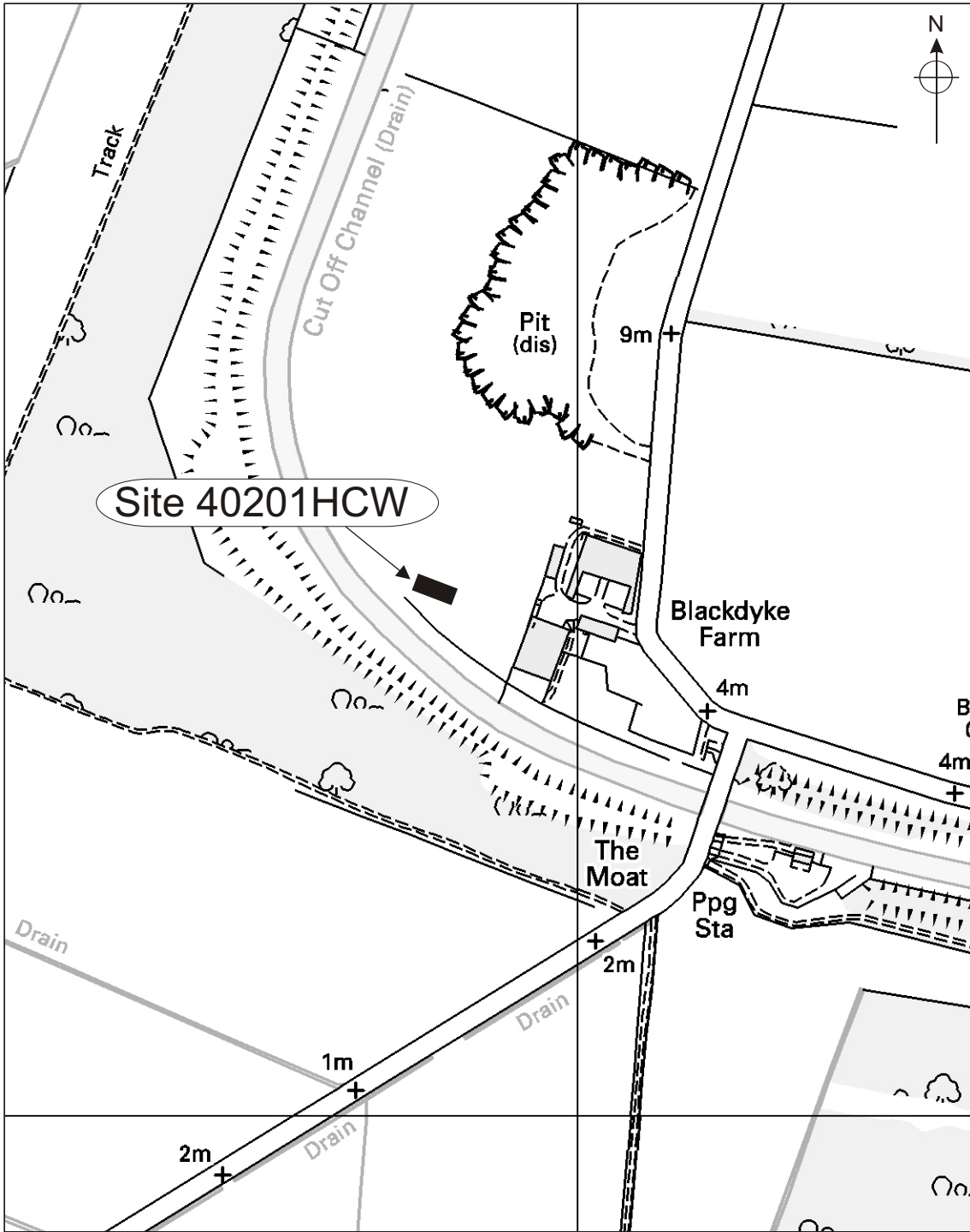


Figure 1. Site location. Scale 1:5000

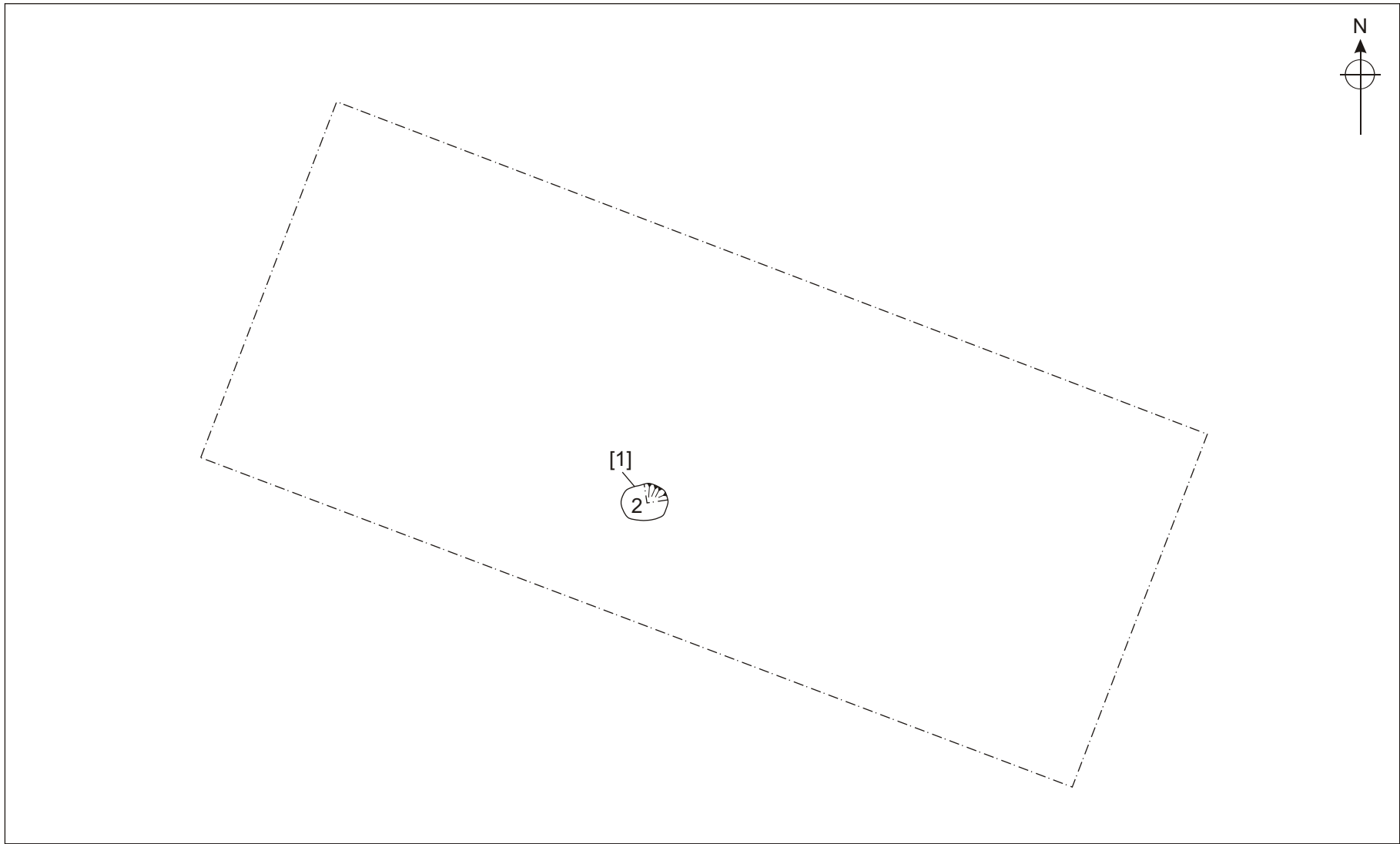


Figure 2. Plan of trench. Scale 1:200