

NAU Archaeology

Report № 1856

**An Archaeological Evaluation at the
West Winch Flood Alleviation Scheme**

NHER 3374 WHW

Steve Hickling

October 2008

BAU1856

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Location:	West Winch
District:	King's Lynn and West Norfolk
Grid Ref.:	TF 6285 1555
HER No.:	3374
Dates of Fieldwork:	3 June 2008

Summary

This report presents the results of an archaeological evaluation carried out on the site of a proposed flood alleviation scheme at Hall Lane, West Winch, Norfolk, during which a medieval furrow and two undated pits were discovered.

The presence and depth of the subsoil, the presence of ridge and furrow cropmarks in aerial photographs and the discovery of a furrow in two of the trenches prove that this area was under some form of open-field cultivation during the medieval period. Finds of 12th–14th-century pottery within the topsoil were probably a result of manuring the open field. The furrow in Trenches 2 and 3 also contained a fragment of 12th–14th-century pottery. The two pits in Trench 1 may have predated this subsoil, but they remain undated.

1.0 Introduction

The site was in an area of proposed development at Hall Lane, West Winch, Norfolk. The works involve the installation of a new sewer. Three trenches measuring 10m by 1.8m (totalling 54m²) were excavated, providing a 5% sample of the total area (1080m²).

This evaluation and report was commissioned and funded by Joseph Collins of Anglian Water.

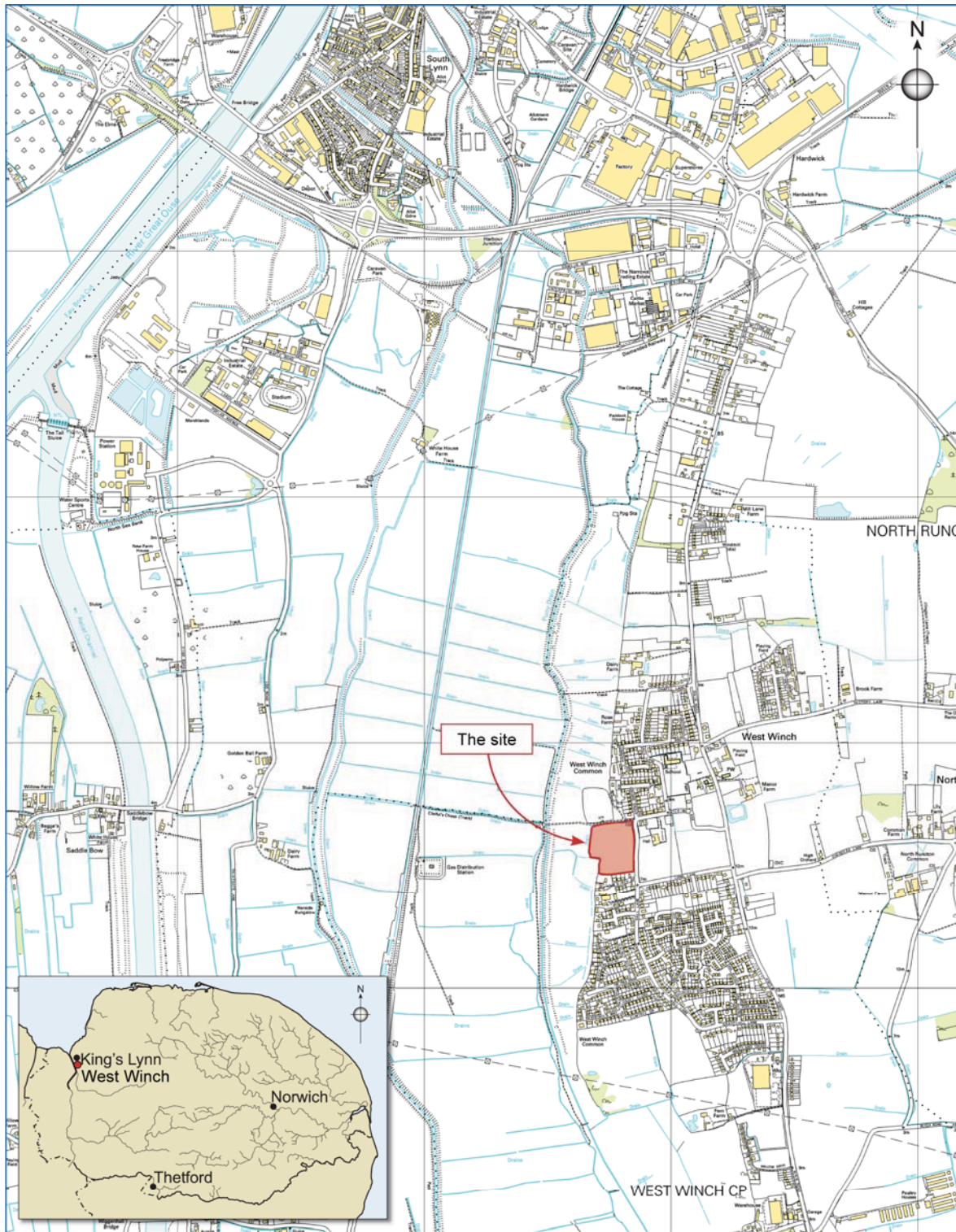
This archaeological programme was undertaken to fulfil a planning condition set by King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council and a Brief issued by Norfolk Landscape Archaeology (Ref. CNF41720). The work was conducted in accordance with a Project Design and Method Statement prepared by NAU Archaeology (Ref: BAU1856).

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 regarding 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.

2.0 Geology and Topography

Although it is not possible to map the exact edge of the fen (Silvester 1988, 140), the excavation revealed that the development site is situated on sands and gravels, probably of glacial origin. The site lies on the eastern edge of West Winch



0 2000m

Figure 1 Site location

Local Authority No.100019340

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Common, an area of former marsh formerly known as The Lenn and now drained by the Puny Drain. The River Nar flows south to north c.1km to the west of the village. The site is slightly elevated from the level of the Common, at a height of c.6m OD.

3.0 Archaeological and Historical Background

3.1 Prehistoric

Prehistoric finds are rare in this area, but what there is seems to be concentrated along the fen-edge. A possible Paleolithic flint waste flake was found 675m north-north-west of the present development during ditch clearance works in 2002 (NHER 37328). A Neolithic flint axehead was found 560m to the north (NHER 3352), a polished flint chisel 450m to the north (NHER 3353) and a Neolithic or Bronze Age scraper 110m to the north-east (NHER 15483). A possible Bronze Age ring-ditch has been identified from a cropmark 1km to the north-west, in the fen (NHER 22505).

3.2 Roman

Roman evidence is more common in the vicinity of the present development, again concentrated along the fen-edge. Roman coins have been found 520m to the north-west (NHER 3354), 110m to the south (NHER 17306) and 675m to the east (NHER 25760) of the present development. Finds of Roman brooches and other metalwork are also common in the area (NHER 25760, 25465 and 25983). Roman pottery has been found 450m to the east of the site (NHER 17305).

3.3 Anglo-Saxon

Domesday Book lists saltpans for the parishes surrounding The Lenn, but it is clear that only those parishes to the north of West Winch were still visited by salt water. Jerry's Dam (along a line represented by Watering Lane and Clarke's Chase) may have been a sea wall defining the northern extent of reclaimed and drained land in the 11th century. This is further suggested by the location of the parish boundary along this feature (Higgins 1988, 24–25) and by the possibility that an old bridge where the Dam crosses the Puny Drain, mentioned in a 14th-century document, may be of Anglo-Saxon origin (NHER 32166). An earthwork bank running north from the eastern end of Jerry's Dam may also be Late Saxon (NHER 21806). A concentration of late 11th–12th-century pottery was found close to the development area during fieldwalking for the Fenland Survey (Silvester 1988, 141).

A Middle Saxon coin was found 675m north-east of the site (NHER 25465) and an Early Saxon brooch was found 560m to the east (NHER 25983). A Late Saxon stirrup strap was found 1.1km to the north-east of the site (NHER 35895), a Late Saxon disc brooch was found 560m to the north-east (NHER 25155), a Roman coin reused as an Early Saxon pendant was found 585m to the east (NHER 25291) and a Late Saxon strap-end was found 470m to the east (NHER 25068).

3.4 Medieval

The oldest surviving building in the parish is St Mary's Church (NHER 3372), which was primarily constructed c.1300, possibly incorporating a late 11th-century

north wall, and has Perpendicular details encasing the older structure. Other medieval monuments include a moated enclosure (NHER 3373) adjacent to the south of the church, and the site of a windmill (NHER 21805) 340m north of the present development area.

Individual medieval objects have also been recovered from the parish, including a large number of pottery sherds (NHER 2277, 23173 and 23612), coins (NHER 37346 and 41332), a 13th-century lead seal matrix (NHER 3358), a late medieval finger-ring (NHER 3354) and a harness pendant (NHER 25068).

The present development site is located in an area which may have formed a part of a westward extension of the Southfield, a component of the open fields of West Winch (Higgins 1988, 25). The National Mapping Programme has noted evidence for ridge and furrow (the remains of medieval open-field agriculture) running north-south within the development area (NHER 27996). Fieldwalking for the Fenland Survey revealed a concentration of medieval pottery within the present development area (NHER 3374).

3.5 Post-medieval

The present development site is in an area known as Southgate Street Furlong in c.1800 (Higgins 1988, 22). The field is on the eastern edge of the common, while to the north and south, along the common edge, were long, thin plots backing onto Hall Lane and fronting onto the Common. These plots had houses at their western ends, as can be seen on the Tithe Map of c.1840. This probably represents a move of population from the core of the village (around the church) to the Common edge, perhaps by people taking strips out of the common open field and settling on them. Ivy Farm, 200m south-west of the development site (NHER 23872), is a 17th-century example, as is Old Dairy Farmhouse to the north (NHER33853).

The site of an early 20th-century shale mine lies 900m south-south-west of the site. This supplied shale for an oil refinery at Setchey (NHER 12556).

3.6 Cartographic

All the maps examined were found on www.historic-maps.norfolk.gov.uk. The earliest map consulted, the Tithe Map (c.1840), shows the development area as a field with similar boundaries to the present field. There is a pond on the western side of the field. To the west of this field is a common, while to the south are a series of small enclosures with houses fronting onto the common. Hall lane is in existence on the eastern edge of the development site. The Ordnance Survey First Edition Map (c.1880) shows a very similar situation to that on the Tithe Map.

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.

The Brief required that 5% of the development site be sampled.

Machine excavation was carried out with a wheeled JCB-type excavator using a toothless ditching bucket under constant archaeological supervision.

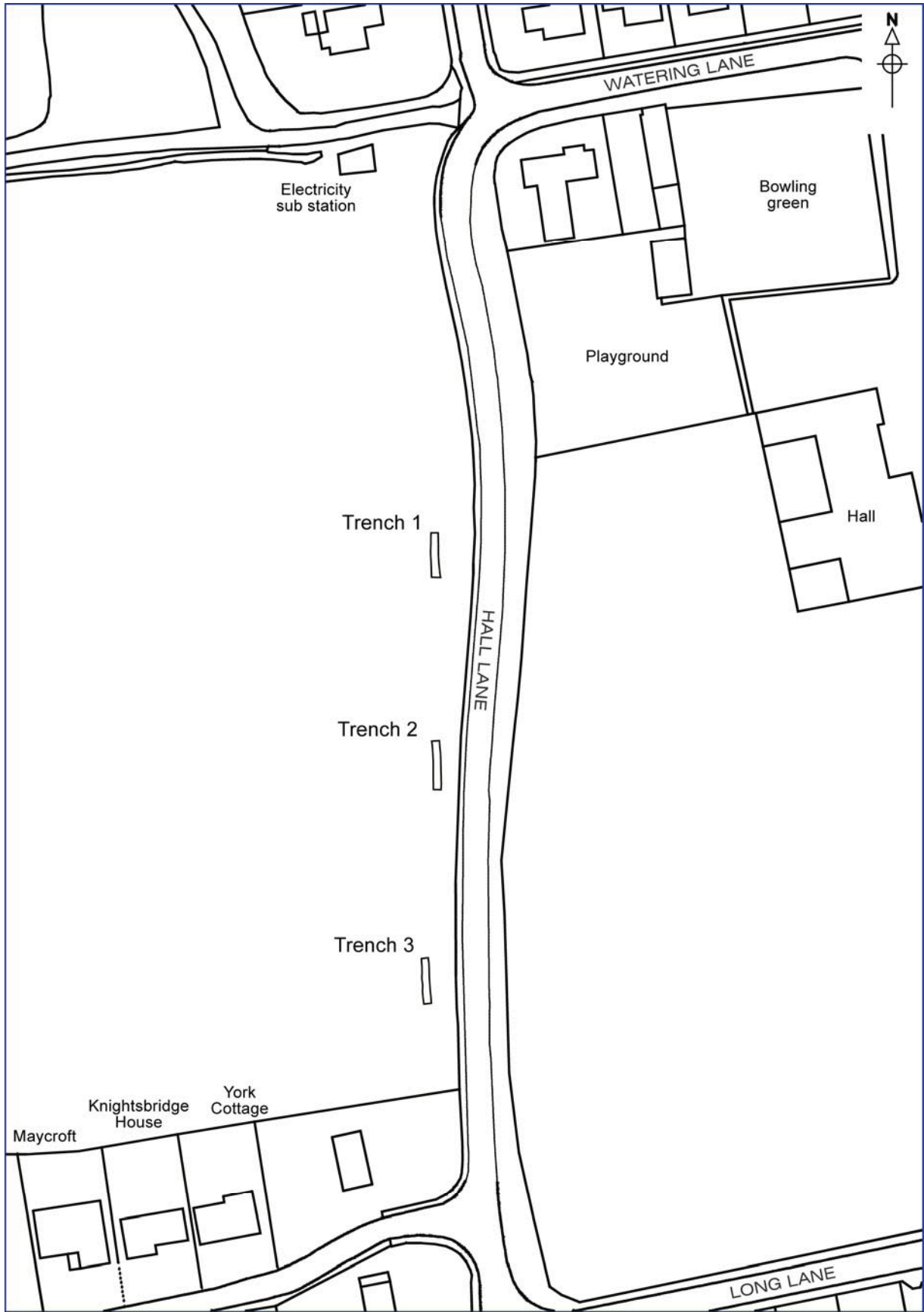


Figure 2 Trench location

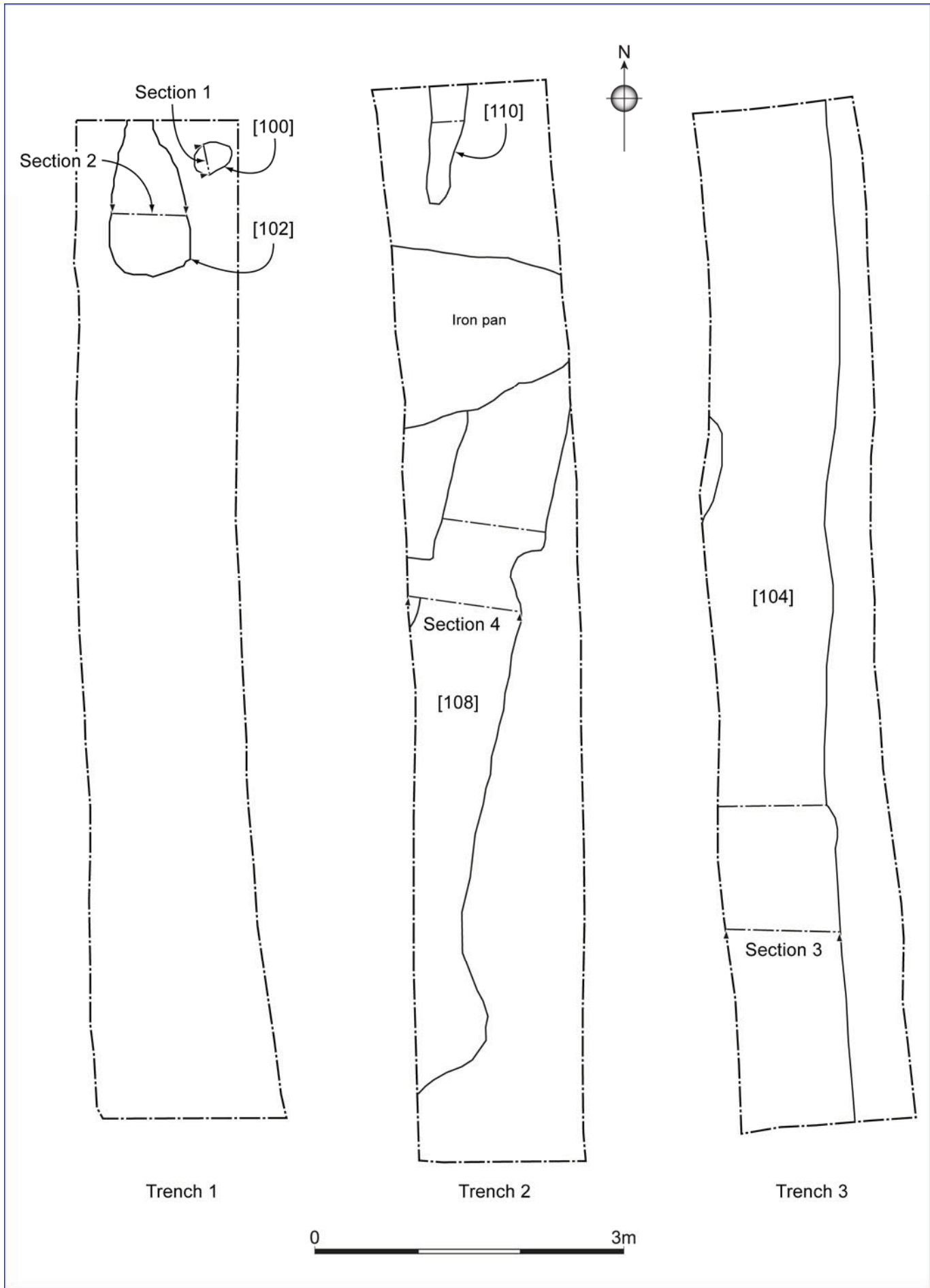


Figure 3 Plan of trenches

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 Archaeology pro forma. Trench locations, plans and sections were recorded at appropriate scales and colour and monochrome photographs were taken of all relevant features and deposits.

The temporary benchmark used during the course of this work was transferred from an Ordnance Survey spot height at the junction of Hall Lane and Long Lane with a value of 7m OD.

No environmental samples were taken.

Site conditions were good, with the work taking place in wet and overcast weather.

5.0 Results

The results of the evaluation are outlined below. Deposits are given in round brackets (), while archaeological features are given in square brackets []. Plans of the trenches are given in Figures 2 and 3, and the sections through features are given in Figure 4.



Plate 1 Trench 1, looking north

Scale bar = 2m

5.1 Trench 1

This trench was aligned north–south, was 10m long, 1.8m wide and 0.7m deep (Figs 2 and 3). The natural subsoil was found to be a mixed pale grey gravelly sand with frequent iron panning at the interface of the natural subsoil and the agricultural subsoil (107). Two archaeological features were encountered: pit [100]

was oval, 0.4m long, 0.38m wide and 0.14m deep with vertical sides and a flat base. Its fill (101) was a mid-greyish-brown sandy gravel with no cultural artefacts (Fig.4, Section 1). Pit [102] was oval, at least 1.55m long, 0.75m wide and 0.24m deep with steep sides and a concave base. Its fill (103) was a brownish-grey sandy silt with no cultural artefacts (Fig. 4, Section 2). Sealing these features was a layer of mid-brown silty sand with frequent gravel subsoil (107) 0.4m deep. Above this was the topsoil (106), a dark brown silty sand with moderate gravel 0.3m deep, containing a small amount of prehistoric material and medieval pottery.

5.2 Trench 2

Trench 2 was orientated north–south, was 10.5m long, 1.70m wide and 0.7m deep (Figs 2 and 3). The natural subsoil was found to be mixed sands and gravels with frequent iron panning at the interface of the natural subsoil and the agricultural subsoil (107). One archaeological feature was encountered, a furrow [108], 1m wide and 0.32m deep. Its fill (109) was a dark brown silty sand containing occasional gravel, one prehistoric flint waste-flake and one sherd of 12th–14th-century pottery (Fig. 4, Section 4). Feature [110] may have been a natural lens of dark brown gravelly sand, but its shape and orientation suggests that it may have been another furrow. Sealing these features was a layer of mid-brown silty sand with frequent gravel subsoil (107) 0.4m deep. Above this was the topsoil (106), a dark brown silty sand with moderate gravel 0.3m deep.



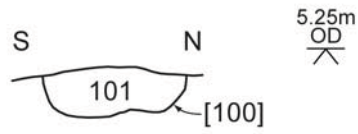
Plate 2 Trench 2, looking south

Scale bar = 2m

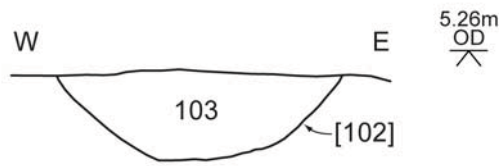
5.3 Trench 3

This trench was aligned north–south, was 10m long, 1.7m wide and 0.7m deep (Figs 2 and 3). The natural subsoil was found to be pale brown sandy clay with

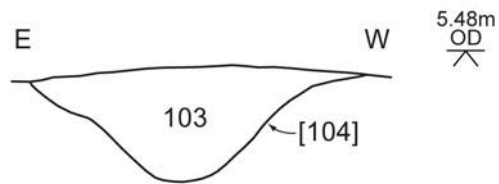
Section 1, east facing



Section 2, south facing



Section 3, north facing



Section 4, north facing

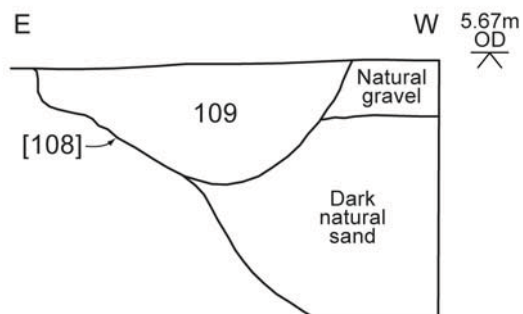


Figure 4 Trench sections

frequent iron panning. One archaeological feature was found, a furrow [104]. This was 0.89m wide and 0.31m deep, with gently sloping sides and a concave base (Fig. 4, Section 3). Its fill (105) was a mid-brownish-grey gravelly sand with no cultural artefacts. This may be a continuation of furrow [108] in Trench 2. Sealing this feature was a layer of mid-brown silty sand with frequent gravel subsoil (107) 0.4m deep. Above this was the topsoil (106), a dark brown silty sand with moderate gravel 0.3m deep.



Plate 3 Trench 3, looking south

Scale bar = 2m

6.0 The Finds

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

6.1 Pottery

by Sue Anderson

Four sherds of pottery weighing 106g were collected from two contexts. The four sherds are all medieval, although those in topsoil [106] show signs of abrasion and are probably residual.

Context	Fabric	No.	Wt/g	Description	Spotdate
106	MCW	1	8	Wheel-finished everted jar rim, sooted	12th–13th c.
	GRCW	1	54	Large jar rim, everted with inturned edge, abraded	12th–13th c.
	GRIM	1	42	Rod-shaped handle, abraded	13th–14th c.
109	MCW	1	2	Sooted body sherd	12th–14th c.
<i>Total</i>		<i>4</i>	<i>106</i>		

Table 1. Pottery by context. Key: MCW – medieval coarseware; GRCW – Grimston-type coarseware; GRIM – Grimston-type glazed ware.

6.2 Flint

by Sarah Bates

A very small irregular flake, quite shattered in appearance, and a small fragment of burnt flint were recovered from the site. The flint is undiagnostic and not closely datable.

Context	Category	Type	Quantity
106	Burn	Burnt fragment	1
109	Flak	Flake	1

Table 2. Flint by context.

7.0 Conclusions

The presence and depth of the subsoil, the identification of ridge and furrow cropmarks in aerial photographs and the presence of a furrow in two of the trenches prove that this area was under some form of open-field cultivation during the medieval period. Finds of 12th–14th century pottery within the topsoil were probably a result of manuring the open field. The furrow in Trenches 2 and 3 contained a fragment of 12th–14th-century pottery. The two pits in Trench 1 may have predated this subsoil, but they remain undated.

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

Acknowledgements

Thanks must be given to Joseph Collins of Anglian Water for commissioning and funding this project. Thanks must also be given to Ken Hamilton of Norfolk Landscape Archaeology (NLA) for monitoring the work and to Alice Cattermole (NLA) for providing the NHER data. The fieldwork was carried out by the author assisted by John Boothroyd. The finds were processed and commented upon by Sue Anderson and Sarah Bates. The trenches were located by John Percival and Lilly Hodges. The illustrations were by Michael Feather and the report edited by Richard Hoggett.

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Appendix 1a: Context Summary

Context	Category	Description	Period
100	Cut	Small pit	Unknown
101	Deposit	Fill of [100]	Unknown
102	Cut	Pit	Unknown
103	Deposit	Fill of [102]	Unknown
104	Cut	Furrow	
105	Deposit	Fill of [104]	
106	Deposit	Topsoil	Modern
107	Deposit	Subsoil	Medieval?
108	Cut	Furrow	
109	Deposit	Fill of [108]	
110	Feature	Possible furrow	

Appendix 1b: OASIS feature summary table

Period	Feature type	Quantity
Unknown	Pit	2
Medieval (1066 to 1539AD)	Furrow	2–3

Appendix 2a: Finds by Context

Context	Material	Quantity	Weight (g)	Period
106	Pottery	3	104	13th–14th century
106	Flint	1		Prehistoric?
109	Pottery	1	2	12th–14th century
109	Flint	1		Prehistoric?

Appendix 2b: NHER Finds Summary Table

Period	Material	Quantity
Prehistoric (500,000 BC to AD 42)	Flint	2
Medieval (1066–1539)	Pottery	4

Appendix 3: Pottery

Context	Total sherd count	Total sherd weight (kg)	Fabric	Form	Quantity	Ceramic date
106	1	0.008	Medieval courseware	Jar	1	12th–13th century
106	1	0.054	Grimston type courseware	Jar	1	12th–13th century
106	1	0.042	Grimston type glazed ware	Flagon	1	13th–14th century
109	1	0.002	Medieval courseware		1	12th–14th century

Appendix 4: Flint

Context	Type	Quantity
106	Burnt fragment	1
106	Flake	1