

NORFOLK ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

Report No. 807

**Archaeological Excavation and Watching Brief at
Redcastle Furze Playing Field, Thetford**

38137 THD

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Local Authority No.076759

Fig.1 is based upon the Ordnance Survey 1:10,000 map with the permission of the Controller of H.M. Stationery Office © Crown Copyright 'Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings' Norfolk County Council, County Hall, Norwich (09/05/2003). **Reference copy: no further copies to be made.**

Location: Redcastle Furze Playing Field, Thetford
Grid Ref: TL 8627 8283
HER No.: 38137 THD
Date of Fieldwork: On non-consecutive days between 9th January and 24th February 2003

Summary

An archaeological 'Strip and Record' excavation and watching brief was undertaken by the Norfolk Archaeological Unit during development of the site at Redcastle Furze Playing Field, Thetford, within a scheduled area (SAM 291). No archaeological features were identified and a very small quantity of unstratified finds were recovered.

1.0 Introduction

This programme of archaeological works undertaken in accordance with a Brief issued by Norfolk Landscape Archaeology (NLA Ref: ARJH/19th February 2002) and Project Design by Norfolk Archaeological Unit (NAU Ref. 1313/March 2002). The work was commissioned by Mr D Green of Breckland District Council.

The site archive is held by the Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service, following the relevant policy on archiving standards.

2.0 Geology and Topography

Fig. 1

An area of 27m by 34m situated within the north-west corner of Redcastle Furze, currently used as a playing field associated with Thetford Grammar School, was the subject of an archaeological 'Strip and Record' excavation and watching brief. The sample area lay approximately 0.6km south-west of Thetford town centre.

A solid chalk geology with overlying alluvial and colluvial deposits underlies the site. Generally the area under examination was fairly level at c.15m OD and was well-drained.

3.0 Archaeological and Historical Background

The site lay within a scheduled area of Thetford where several large-scale excavations (Rogerson and Dallas 1984; Dallas 1993; Andrews 1995) have shown Saxon and medieval activity. Archaeological remains so far recorded (in close proximity to this site) include the probable line of the town defences immediately to the south-west, six Thetford-ware kilns to the north-east and evidence for streets, structures and domestic activities.

4.0 Methodology

The aims of this project were to record the presence or absence of archaeological remains within the proposed development to determine the extent, condition, nature, quality and date of any archaeological remains occurring within the area of the proposed development, most notably those associated with the Saxon and medieval occupation of the site.

The fieldwork consisted of two phases, 'Strip and Record' excavation and watching brief.

The 'Strip and Record' excavation was concerned with recording the condition, character and date of a sample of any subsurface archaeological features and deposits which may be present immediately below the turf. A triangular area measuring approximately 27m along the south-west axis and 15m along the south-east axis was machine excavated under constant archaeological supervision.

The objective of the watching brief was to monitor the works under archaeological supervision and to identify and record any archaeological evidence revealed during these works.

During both phases of fieldwork the level of monitoring provided constant attendance during the excavation of cable trenches and any other groundworks. Spoil, exposed surfaces and features were scanned with a metal detector (additional voluntary metal detecting was undertaken). All metal-detected and hand-collected finds were retained for inspection, other than those which were obviously modern.

The work was undertaken according to *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England* (Gurney 2002) using NAU *pro forma* sheets. Trench locations, plans and sections were recorded at appropriate scales and colour and monochrome photographs were taken of all relevant features and deposits. Context numbers were not allocated due to the lack of archaeological features or deposits.

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

A number of visits had to be made to site as the various phases of the development occurred at intervals.

In general site conditions were good and the weather varied between very wet and drier conditions. Access to the site was unproblematic.

5.0 Results

Fig. 2

5.1 'Strip and Record' Excavation

Where the development of the site involved exposure of deposits of potential archaeological interest below the turf, the brief provided for recording of any archaeological features under threat. The area affected measured c.27m along the south-west axis and c.15m along the south-east axis excavated to a maximum of c.0.65m in the south-west corner (shown as a shaded area on Fig. 2), reducing to c.0.10m in the north-west corner. This work was undertaken to level the ground for use as a playing field.

In the event no archaeological features or finds were present.

5.2 Watching Brief

The excavation of four holes for floodlights was monitored, as were the associated cable trenches, by watching brief. No archaeological features were present although a very small quantity of pottery and a single burnt flint was recovered from unstratified deposits in the south-east part of the cable trench.

The construction of an access path and steps to the north-west of the site, and two c.2m x 2m trenches for construction of entrances to the ballpark were also monitored. No archaeological features or finds were present.

6.0 The Finds (Appendix 1)

Seven small sherds of pottery were recovered unstratified from the cable trench to the south-east of the ballpark, between floodlight numbers 1 and 4, during the watching brief phase of this project. The material mostly constitutes Early medieval wares, including Thetford type ware, although an early Saxon sherd was also recognised. A single piece of burnt flint was recovered from the same trench.

A modern gin-trap was recovered from the cable trench close to the school. It was identified and discarded.

7.0 Conclusions

No archaeological features were observed during this project. A very small quantity of Late Saxon to Medieval Thetford type ware pottery was recovered which reflects the date of known domestic and industrial activity in the area. The single piece of burnt flint found is undiagnostic and probably residual, although it hints at human activity in the area during prehistoric period.

Acknowledgements

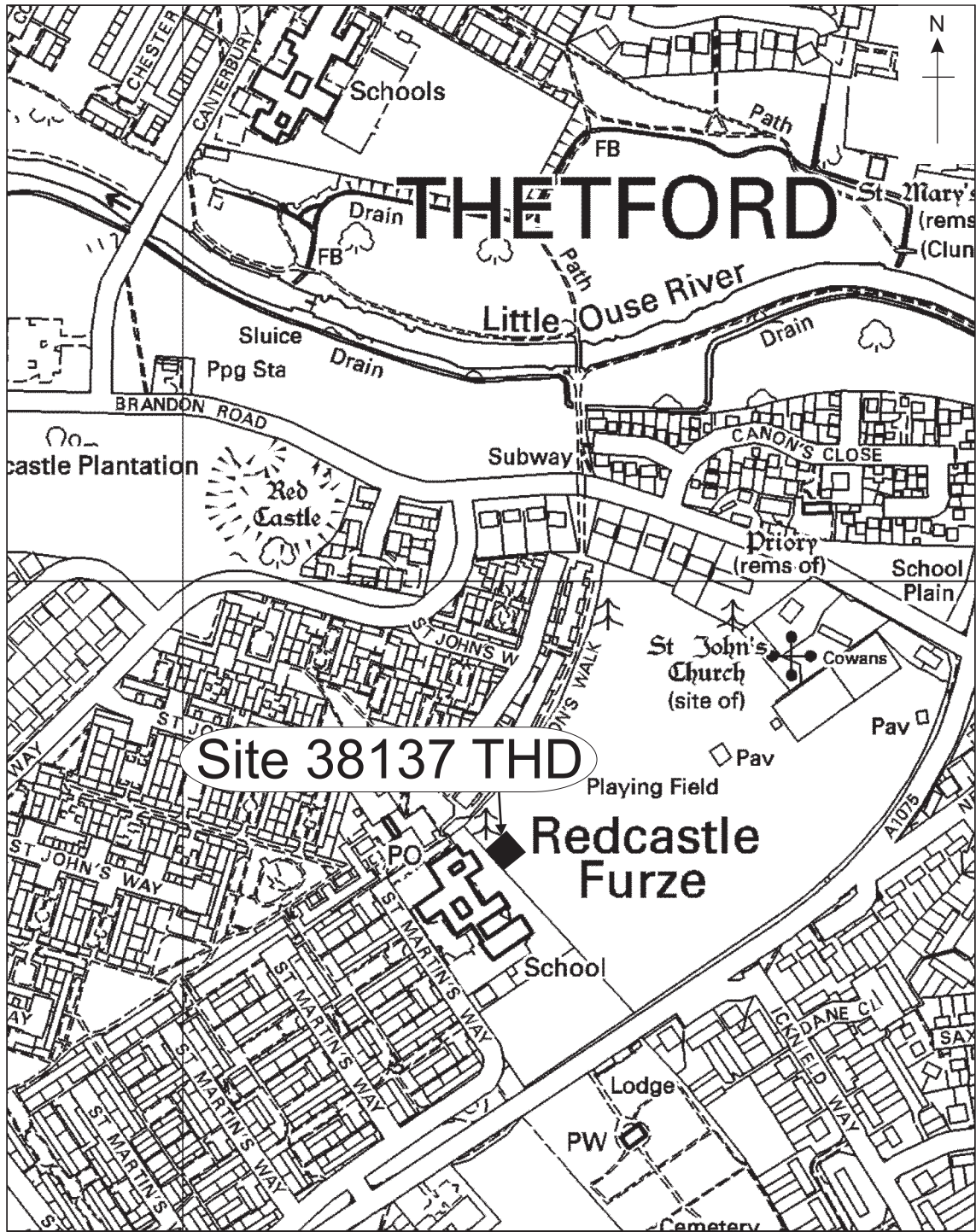
Fieldwork was carried out by the author and Ben Hobbs. The site record was digitised by the author. The finds were processed and catalogued by Lucy Talbot and reported upon by Richenda Goffin. Many thanks to Michael Aho and Andy Barnett for the additional voluntary metal detecting. This work was funded by Breckland District Council. The report was edited by Alice Lyons, illustrated and produced by Maggie Footitt.

Bibliography

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Appendix 1: The Pottery

Context	Fabric	Form	Quantity	Weight (kg)	Date
Unstratified	Miscellaneous grey ware	Body sherd	2	0.013	Not closely datable
Unstratified	Thetford type or Early medieval ware	Body sherd	1	0.005	10th to 12th century
Unstratified	Early medieval ware	Body sherd	2	0.002	11th to 12th century
Unstratified	Early medieval ware with shell	Body sherd	1	0.001	11th to 13th century
Unstratified	Early Saxon ware with shell	Body sherd	1	0.001	?Early Saxon



0 250m

Figure 1. Site Location. Scale 1:5,000

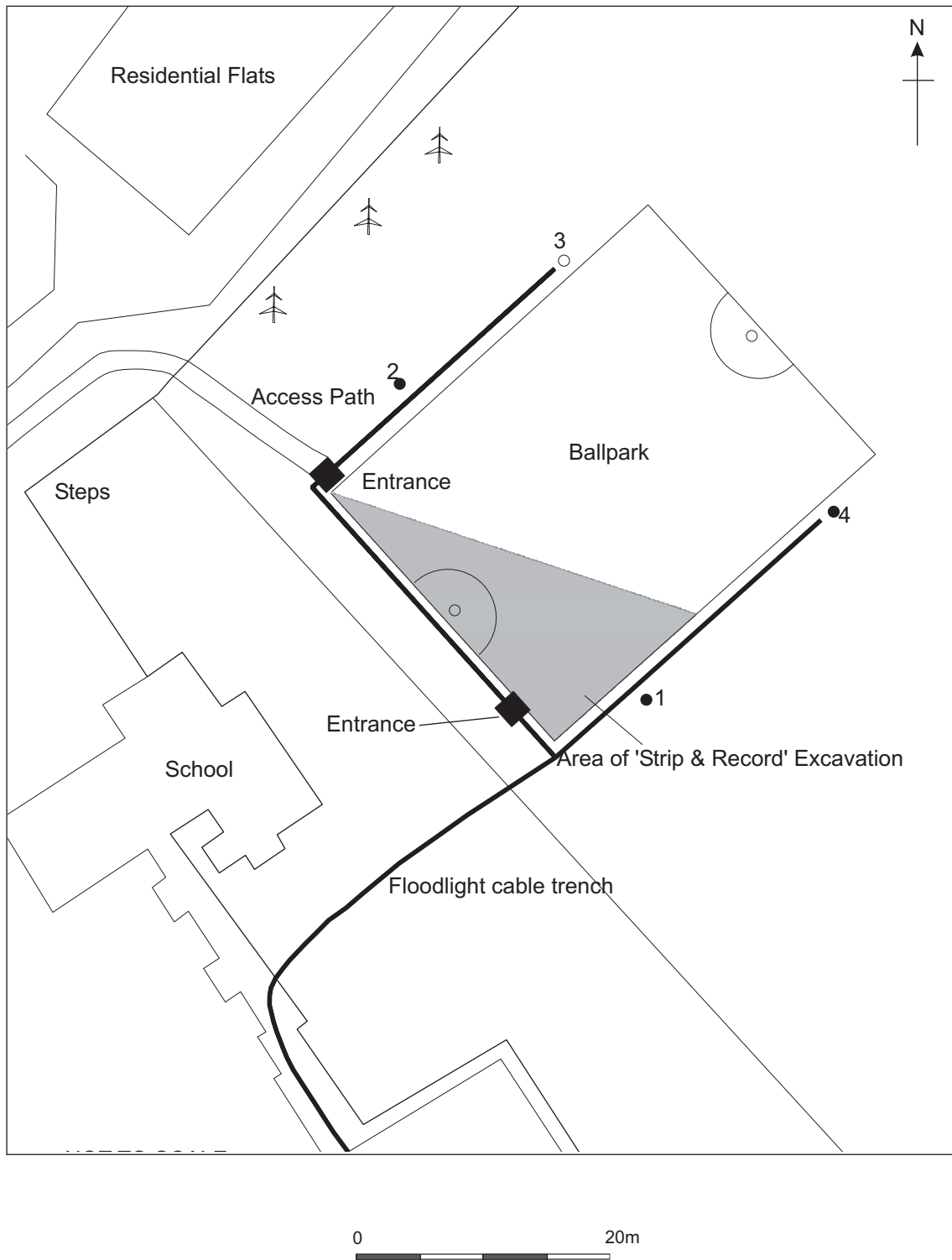


Figure 2. Trench Location. Scale 1:500