

Report 2649



nau archaeology

**An Archaeological Evaluation at
Addaya, St Edmunds Road, Downham Market**

HER 125890

Prepared for
Janice Thompson
Addaya
St Edmunds Road
Downham Market
PE38 9LP



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March 2011



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Location: Addaya, St Edmunds Road
District: Downham Market
Grid Ref.: TF 6158 0320
HER No.: ENF 125890
Client: Janice Thompson
Dates of Fieldwork: 15th of February 2011

Summary

An archaeological evaluation was conducted for Janice Thompson ahead of a new residential development consisting of one detached house. As the development was situated reasonably close to the centre of Downham Market, in an area of high archaeological potential, an archaeological investigation was necessary as part of the planning requirements. Two trenches were excavated within the plot to give a 5% sample of the area.

Two shallow pits were observed during the fieldwork, which almost certainly represented localised sand extraction pits, backfilled around the turn of the 20th century.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

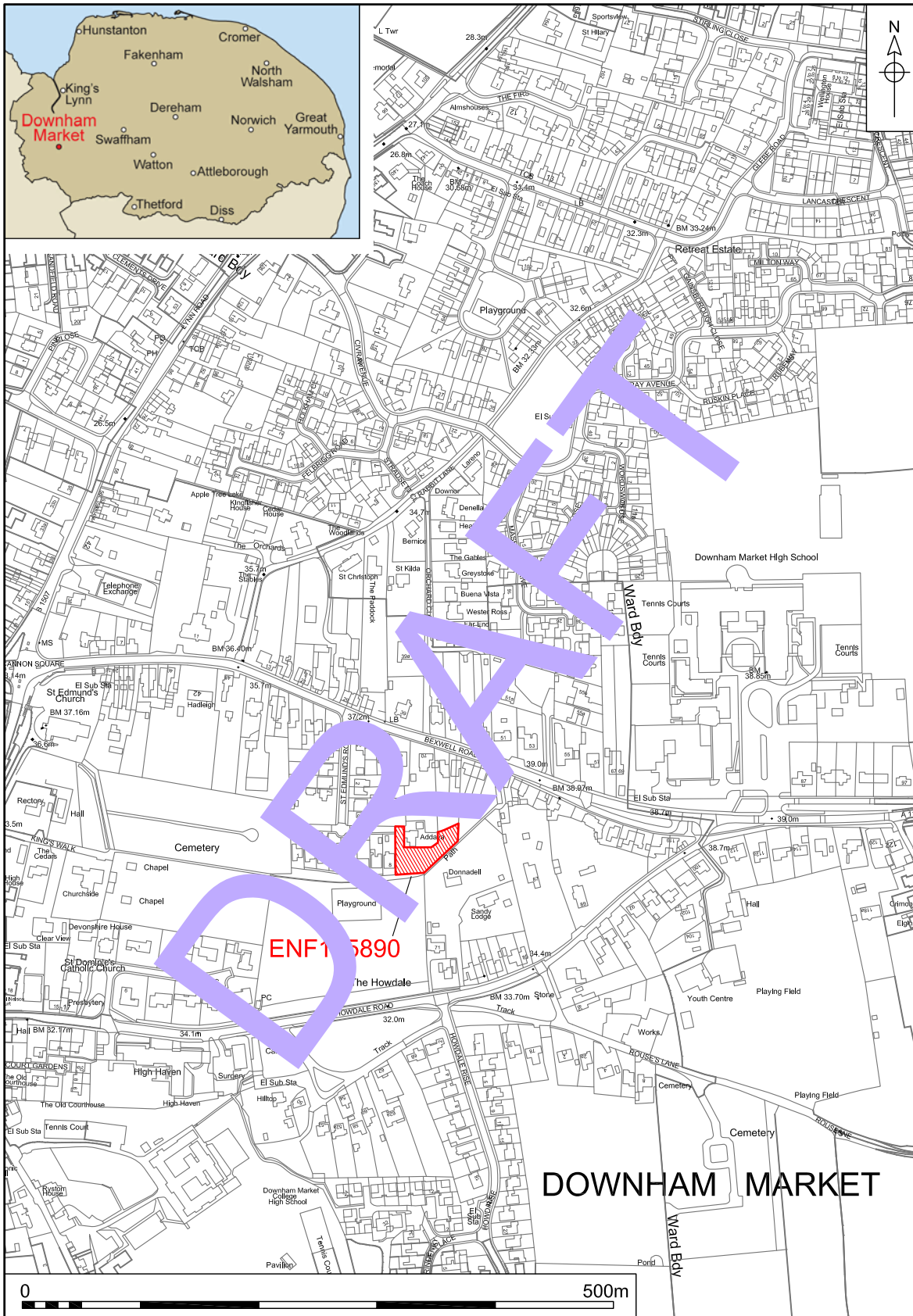
(Fig. 1)

The site is situated close to the centre of Downham Market, which is centred on the parish church of St Edmunds. The plot of land under investigation was 1142 square metres in area and currently the garden of a house known as Addaya situated on its northern side. An area of open ground known as The Howdale lay immediately to the south. The surrounding area was one of high archaeological potential and human remains had been found close to the site in the 1950's.

This work was undertaken to fulfil a planning condition set by The Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk (Ref. 10/01307/F) and a Brief issued by Norfolk Landscape Archaeology (Ref. CNF43034). The fieldwork was conducted in accordance with a Project Design and Method Statement prepared by NAU Archaeology (Ref. NAU/B/02469/NP) and was commissioned and funded by Janice Thompson.

This programme of work was designed to assist in defining the character and extent of any archaeological remains within the proposed redevelopment area, area, following the guidelines set out in *Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning For The Historic Environment (March 2010)*. The results will enable decisions to be made by the Local Planning Authority about 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 the Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service (NMAS), following the relevant policies on archiving standards.



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Figure 1. Site location. Scale 1:5000



Plate 1. The site, looking north

2.0 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

Downham Market is situated on the edge of the Norfolk peat fens, occupying an area of raised, dry land bounded by the River Great Ouse to the west and the River Wissey to the south (Watkins 2010). The development plot lies at an elevation of around 30m AOD and is located to the east of Church road and to the south of Bexwell Road, just to the east of the centre of Downham Market. It was a considerable distance from either of the rivers mentioned above.

Geologically Downham Market lies at the southern end of a north-to-south aligned outcrop of sands and clays, known as the Greensands region, which separates the chalk uplands to the east from the low-lying wetlands to the west. The Greensand was laid down in the pre-Quaternary epoch (Watkins 2010). The Greensand deposits are overlain by a superficial layer of glacial sandy, silty clay till (BGS 1991).

The topsoil ([1]) across the site was very loose dark brown silty sand which was 0.50m thick on average. The appearance of the soil as a well-graded garden soil suggested that it had been imported to the site and been subjected to some landscaping. The natural ([2]) was a mixture of loose bright yellow sand and the firm Greensand mentioned above. There was no subsoil present on the site which perhaps suggested that the area had never been subjected to ploughing or that any subsoil may have been removed as part of landscaping the site. The drainage, though untested during the fieldwork, was probably excellent due to the sandy nature of the soils.

3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

An HER search was undertaken and the most relevant results presented below.

Prehistoric to Roman

There have been numerous finds of prehistoric date found within the area of Downham Market. Find spots have included a Palaeolithic flint axehead (NHER 2435) and a Palaeolithic Levallois flake (NHER 18482). Activity continued through the Mesolithic period and some flints of this era have been found to the south-west of the current site (NHER 14056) and they included microliths and a burnt spall. A possible Mesolithic or Early Neolithic axehead (NHER 37558) has also been found in the vicinity. Further afield there are two possible ring ditches (NHER 16156 and 28054), which are probably the surviving elements of ploughed-out Bronze Age barrows. Further finds of this period include a Bronze Age spearhead (NHER 4230) and a Bronze Age rapier (NHER 2440). The majority of these finds, excepting the Mesolithic flints, were found a reasonable distance from the site (NHER 14056).

There are not a large amount of Roman period discoveries or concentrations of material in the general area, and nothing of this date close to the present site. The fen causeway (NHER 2796) which runs between Upwell and Denver to the south of Downham Market is thought to run just to the south of the site.

Further afield, to the west of the site, 19th century reports suggest complete Roman pots (NHER 2441) were recovered from a brickyard in the town. Metal detectorists have found individual Roman finds such as coins (NHER 2442, 28054 and 40783) and Roman brooches (NHER 30224 and 31110) around the parish more widely. There have also been Roman ditches (NHER 37093) and a possible Roman pit (NHER 40378) found during archaeological evaluations in the town. The closest find spot to the site was a Roman Sestertius coin of Faustina II (AD 161 to 175) which was found 100m to the north of the site (NHER 31136).

Saxon to Medieval

The town was mentioned in the Domesday survey, and it is thought that the name derives from the Old English for 'village on a hill'. The market suffix was probably added later as the earliest reference to a market dates to the 11th century.

There is little material surviving from the early medieval period. Over 300m to the north of the site an Early Saxon pottery bowl was found during the excavation of a drain for a new council house in 1955 (NHER 2443). More widely in the parish other find spots of early Saxon pottery do exist (NHER 2443 and 2444). A Late Saxon Borre style brooch (NHER 29716) was also found whilst metal detecting. A further item which had originally been described as a Bronze Age torc which was melted down but illustrations of the object have been reinterpreted as a possible Viking bracelet (NHER 2441).

There are some surviving medieval structures in the town. Two possible medieval undercrofts (NHER 12226 and 12227) appear to date to the 13th or 14th century, from their shape, though they could have been created up until as late as the 17th century due to continuations of older styles of building.

A short distance to the west of the site lay the parish church of St Edmund's (NHER 2471), which was the probable focus for the medieval settlement. The majority of the surviving structure is 15th or 16th century in date though parts of the Norman infrastructure also survive. This Norman structure was probably cruciform in shape.

Metal detecting has recovered several medieval finds from the parish. To the south west of the site a medieval signet ring was uncovered (NHER 15486) which was inscribed with a crowned W. Further afield a medieval dagger guard (NHER 12403) and a medieval silver annular brooch (NHER 30043) were added to the known corpus of material.

Post medieval to modern

A short distance to the south of the site the 18th century east wall of The Towers (NHER 47135) is a Grade II Listed Building. Also situated to the south of the site there was a stone obelisk in the form of a pyramid (NHER 8907) on a square base. It was located on the edge of the green known as the Howdale, although, it had formerly been situated on top of the tower pump and surrounded by a cross. It was removed to its present position around 1935. The Howdale is also thought to have been a landscaped park (NHER 11112).

Of most relevance for the present work was the churchyard of St Edmunds church (NHER 34303). The churchyard contains avenues of lime trees that were probably planted in the 19th century. In 1844 the churchyard was thought to be too small for purpose and further land was acquired. A new cemetery was laid out between 1856 and 1863 and further extended in 1867. The graveyard contains twin mortuary chapels and a curator's lodge with a central ornamental porch.

Map studies have indicated that there were two post medieval windmills close to the site. One lay half a mile to the north of the site (NHER 14518) and is marked on Faden's map of 1797 and the 1863 Ordnance Survey map. It was called Bexwell Road Mill and was last used in 1866 before being dismantled in 1881. Further to the north the second windmill (NHER 14517), called Lynn Road Mill, was burnt down in 1823 and had also been observed on Faden's map.

To the south east of the site a Post medieval milestone inscribed 'End of Lynn Southgate Turnpike Trust' is located at the junction of Lynn Road and Bexwell Road (NHER 12228).

There are many 18th and 19th century buildings surviving in the town including the Crown Hotel (NHER 12223) and Castle Hotel (NHER 12229) though they are not particularly relevant for the present fieldwork. The famous clock tower (NHER 12225) was built in 1878 by W. Cunliffe in London and presented to the town by James Scott. The Downham workhouse (NHER 12230) stood on the site of a modern old people's home and was designed by Donthorne and built in 1836.

There are sites of recent interest in the town. During World War Two pathfinder squadrons were based at Downham Market bomber airfield (NHER 2455). There are also several pillboxes (NHER 32371 and 32372) and a spigot mortar gun emplacement (NHER 32373) around the town. A Cold War Royal Observer Corps site (NHER 35399) was also located within the parish. It was still active until 1991 and in the event of a nuclear war it would have been used to measure fall out levels.

Undated

Highly relevant to the present work was the finding of human remains in 1954 immediately south east of the site. (NHER2445). They were possibly excavated by draglines from top soil adjacent to the large sandpit in December 1953. The discovery was reported to the police who concluded they were not recent.

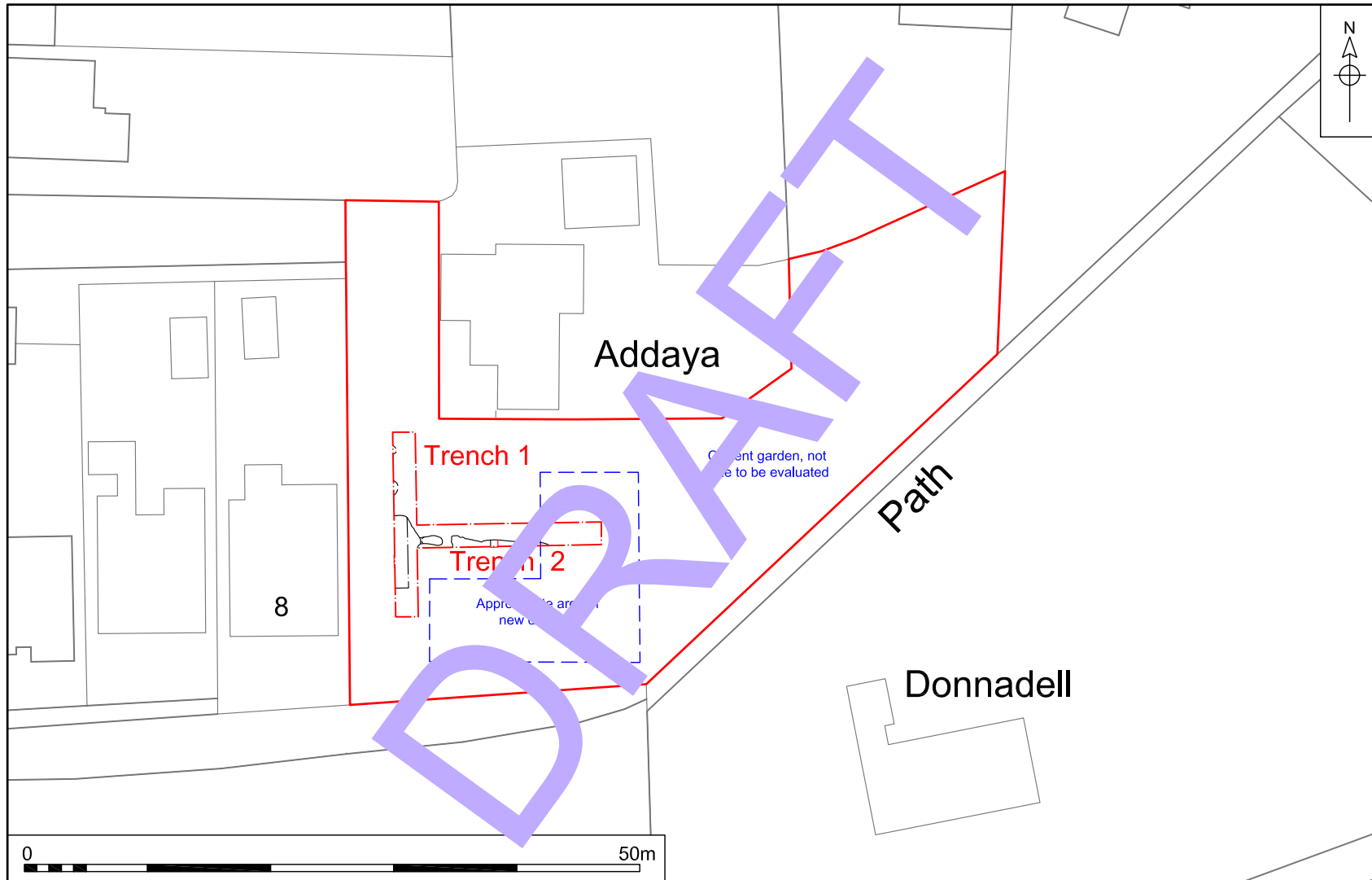


Plate 2. Trench 1, looking south

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 plot be sampled through trial trenching. The trenches were located in the centre and west of the site where the new building footprint was located and where they wouldn't disrupt the garden, which was to continue in use after the development (Fig. 2: Plate 1).



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Figure 2. Trenches location. Scale 1:500



late 3. [unclear], looking south

Machine excavation was carried out with a wheeled JCB-type excavator equipped with a toothless ditching bucket which was provided by the developer and operated under constant archaeological supervision.

Spoil, exposed surfaces and features were scanned with a metal-detector. There were no metal detected finds.

Environmental samples were not taken during the fieldwork.

All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using NAU Archaeology pro forma. Trench locations, plans and sections were recorded at appropriate scales. Monochrome and digital photographs were taken of all relevant features and deposits where appropriate.

The temporary benchmark with a value of 37.71m OD used during the course of this work was transferred from a known height with a value of 37.20m OD, located at the intersection of St Edmunds Road and Bexwell Road to the north. The temporary benchmark was located at the entrance to the site.

Site conditions were good, with the work taking place in fine weather.

5.0 RESULTS

Trench 1 was excavated down the western side of the plot. It was orientated north to south and was 15m in length by 1.80m wide. A single wide and shallow pit ([3]) was observed towards the southern end of the trench (Fig.3: Plates. 2, 3 and 4).

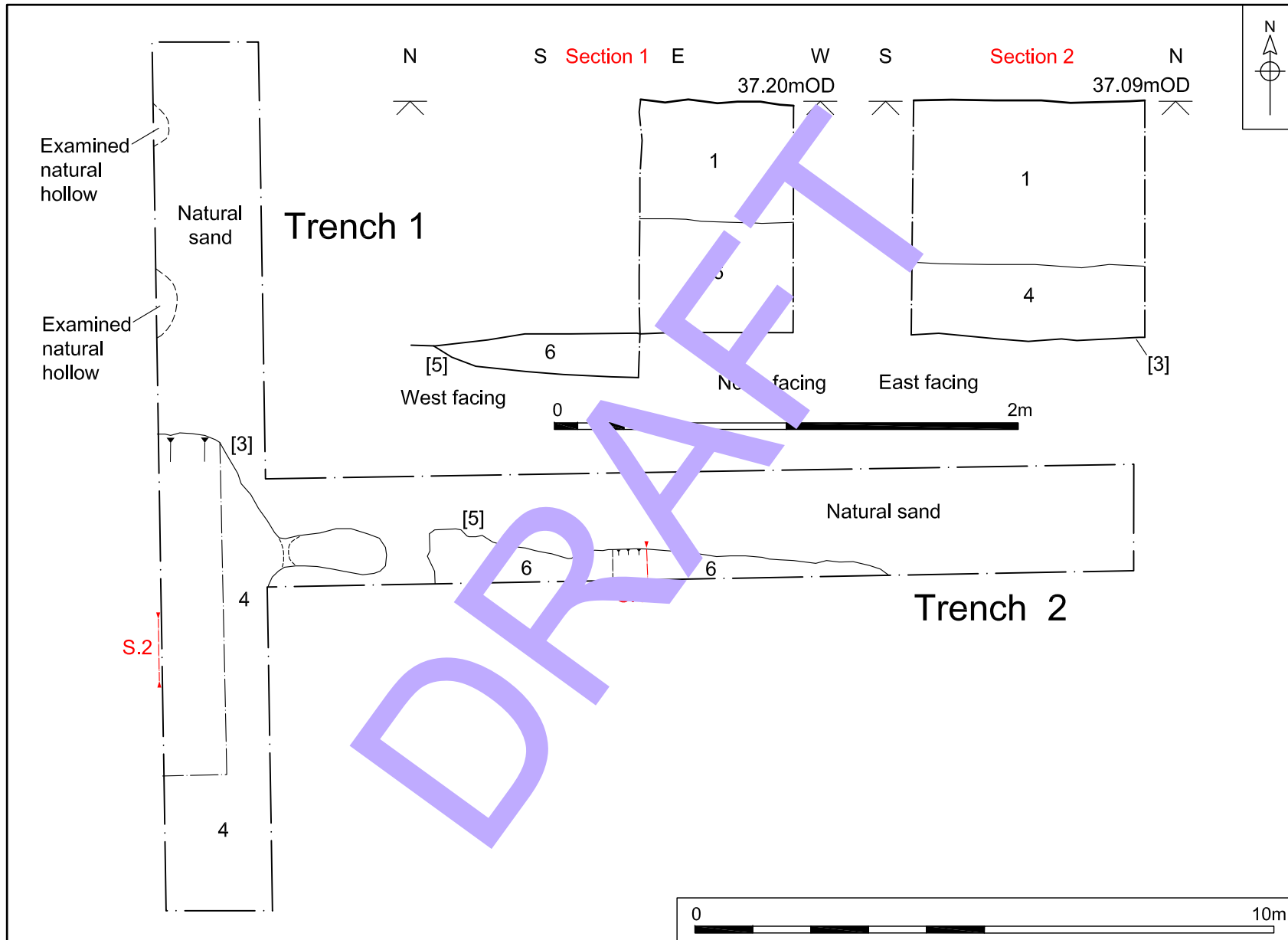
Pit ([3]) had an observed extent of 8.0m north to south by 1.80m east to west, although was probably more extensive. It had a roughly flat base and gently sloping sides. The maximum depth was 0.30m and the average depth was 0.20m. The homogenous fill ([4]) consisted of a mid slightly orangey brown coarse sand and silt which contained frequent angular and sub-angular stones and some fragments of carstone 50mm across on average. The fill also contained occasional coal fragments. The feature was sealed by the topsoil.



Plate 4. Section 2, looking west

Trench 2 was situated at the centre of the plot and for reasons of space was excavated eastwards from the centre of Trench 1. It was also 15m by 1.80m in size and was orientated east to west. A similar wide and shallow pit was observed at the centre of the trench (Fig. 3: Plates 5 and 6).

The pit ([5]) was also around 8.0m in length east to west and at least 0.80m wide north to south. The base was reasonably flat and the excavated edge gradually sloped. The maximum depth was 0.70m and the average depth was 0.60m. It was also filled with a mid slightly orangey brown coarse sand and silt which contained frequent angular and sub-angular stones. There were less fragments of carstone present in the fill.



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Figure 3. Plans and sections of Trenches 1 and 2. Scale 1:100 and 1:25



Plate 5. Trench 2, looking east



Plate 6. Shallow pit [5], Section 1, looking east

6.0 THE FINDS

(By Sarah Percival)

6.1 Pottery (Appendix 3)

A total of eight sherds of pottery weighing 55g was collected from the fills of two 19th century pits. The assemblage contains small sherds of domestic tableware and kitchenware and dates to the late 18th to 19th centuries.

6.2 Ceramic Building Material

A total of three pieces of late brick in dense silty fabric with no visible inclusions were found in the fill of pit [3]. Two pieces of plain roof tile in poorly mixed pink-cream fabric with sparse grog inclusions were retrieved from the same feature.

6.3 Clay Pipe

Six small pieces of clay tobacco pipe stem and a single fragment of late 17th century flat-based bowl were found dispersed through the fills of 19th century pits [3] and [5]. The bowl fragment is underfired and has a grey reduced core perhaps indicating poor firing.

6.4 Glass

A total of three pieces of glass weighing 30g were recovered. The assemblage comprises the rim and neck of an 18th century 'English' wine bottle (Shepherd 2009, fig.10.49, SF159) and two body sherds in pale green glass.

7.0 CONCLUSIONS

The fieldwork has indicated that there is virtually no evidence for historic activity within the bounds of the development plot. There are two shallow pits [3] and [5] which appear to have been excavated in the 19th Century and backfilled around the turn of the 20th century.

Although their original purpose is unknown, it is possible that the two pits were dug to extract sand and they were probably excavated to take advantage of the excellent quality sand on offer in the area. They probably represent localised sand extraction for building purposes rather than quarrying on an industrial scale such as that represented by a very deep sandpit (NHER 2445) just to the south of the site. That sandpit is recorded as a 'marl pit' on the 1st Edition of the Ordnance Survey, although it may have been used for the quarrying of carstone as well as sand. The tithe map and the 1st Edition of the Ordnance Survey show no other areas of pitting and this may confirm that the pits [3] and [5] post-date those maps, or else, were not extensive enough to warrant inclusion on the maps. The adjacent plot to the east of the site also has a very low garden which is suggestive of landscaping or quarrying.

A large amount of landscaping in general appears to have been undertaken on the plot. The thick layer of topsoil may have been imported to the site when houses were built in the area of St Edmunds Road in the 1950s, and this topsoil directly sealed pits [3] and [5].

The lack of historic development so close to the centre of Downham Market is probably explained by two factors. Firstly the plot is thought to have once belonged to St Edmunds Church and this may have kept it free from development throughout much of the medieval period. Secondly the plot lay a good distance to the south of Bexwell Road, where 'ribbon' development probably occurred into the post-medieval period along the road but not far from it. It is possible that the area may have been largely kept aside in the parish for quarrying due to good quality carstone and sand. There was no further evidence for human burials so unfortunately answers could not be supplied to the mystery of the human remains found in 1954 at the quarry pit to the south (NHER 2445).

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

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Acknowledgements

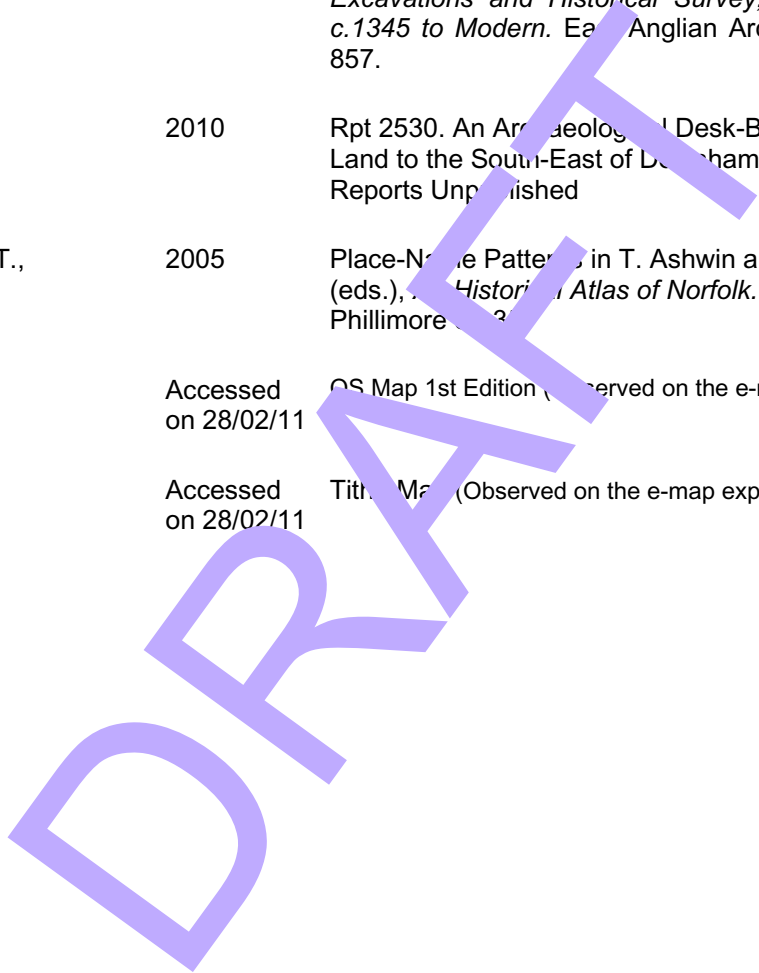
The fieldwork was undertaken by the author with Suzie Westall to whom thanks. Many thanks also to Alan and Janice Thomson for funding the project, their interest in it, and their help towards its completion.

Thanks also to the following:-The finds were processed by Lucy Talbot and examined by Sarah Percival. The illustrations were prepared by David Dobson after initial digitising by the author. The report was edited by Jayne Bown.

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Appendix 1a: Context Summary

Context	Category	Cut Type	Description	Period
1	Deposit		Topsoil	Modern?
2	Deposit		Natural	Unknown
3	Cut	Pit	Shallow Quarry Pit	19th Century
4	Deposit		Fill of [3]	19th Century
5	Cut	Pit	Shallow Quarry Pit	19th Century
6	Deposit		Fill of [5]	19th Century

Appendix 1b: OASIS Feature Summary

Period	Cut Type	Total
19th Century	Pit	2

Appendix 2a: Finds by Context

Context	Material	Qty	Weight	Period	Notes
4	Pottery	7	50g	Modern	
4	Ceramic Building Material	2	60g	Post-medieval	Roof tile. Discarded.
4	Ceramic Building Material	1	100g	Post-medieval	Brick. Discarded.
4	Clay Pipe	5	16g	Post-medieval	Stem
4	Glass	1	1g	Post-medieval	Bottle
6	Pottery	1	5g	Modern	
6	Glass	2	10g	Post-medieval	Bottle
6	Clay Pipe	2	6g	Post-medieval	Stem plus bowl fragment

Appendix 2b: OASIS Finds Summary

Period	Material	Total
Post-medieval	Ceramic Building Material	5
	Clay Pipe	7
	Glass	3
Modern	Pottery	8

Appendix 3: Pottery

Context	Fabric	Dsc	Qty	Wt	Form	AB	Period	Spotdate
4	LGRE	Base	1	32g	Dish		Modern	18th - 19th c.
4	LGRE	Body sherd	1	6g			Modern	19th - 19th c.
4	REFW	Rim	3	10g	Tea cup		Modern	L18th - 20th c.
4	REFW	Body sherd	1	1g		Y	Modern	L18th - 20th c.
4	REFW	Body sherd	1	1g			Modern	17th - 19th c.
6	REFW	Rim	1	5g			Modern	L18th - 20th c.

Key: *LGRE* Late glazed red earthenware; *REFW* Refined white earthenware

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