

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING REPORT

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SCCAS REPORT No. 2009/114

# Barnham Cross Common, Thetford ENF122866

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## HER Information

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**Date of Fieldwork:** 01/04/2009 and 03/04/2009

**Grid Reference:** TL 865 812

**Funding Body:** Butterfly Conservation

**Curatorial Officer:** David Robertson

**Project Officer:** Rob Brooks

**OASIS Reference:** suffolkc1-60135

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<http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/catalogue/library/greylit>

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## Summary

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An archaeological monitoring was carried out on land adjacent to the A134 road on Barnham Cross Common, Thetford. Four plots aligned SSW-NNE were rotavated to depths of 0.05-0.1m. No archaeological features or finds were observed. The stratigraphy appeared to be slightly disturbed, perhaps as a result of works associated with the road, or bioturbation.



# 1. Introduction

An archaeological monitoring was carried out on land at Barnham Cross Common, immediately to the south of Thetford, in conjunction with an experiment run by Butterfly Conservation into encouraging the growth of heathland flora. This involved the rotavation of four plots (Fig. 2). As part of this process an archaeological monitoring was required in order to record any archaeological features and recover any finds that could otherwise be uncovered or destroyed by the rotavation. However, it was thought to be unlikely that any features would be uncovered at the shallow depths achieved by the machining. The work was carried out to a Brief issued by David Robertson (Norfolk Landscape Archaeology). Butterfly Conservation funded the work that was carried out on the 1st and 3rd April, 2009. Further plots may be rotavated in the autumn of 2009 as an extension of the same project and may require further monitoring.

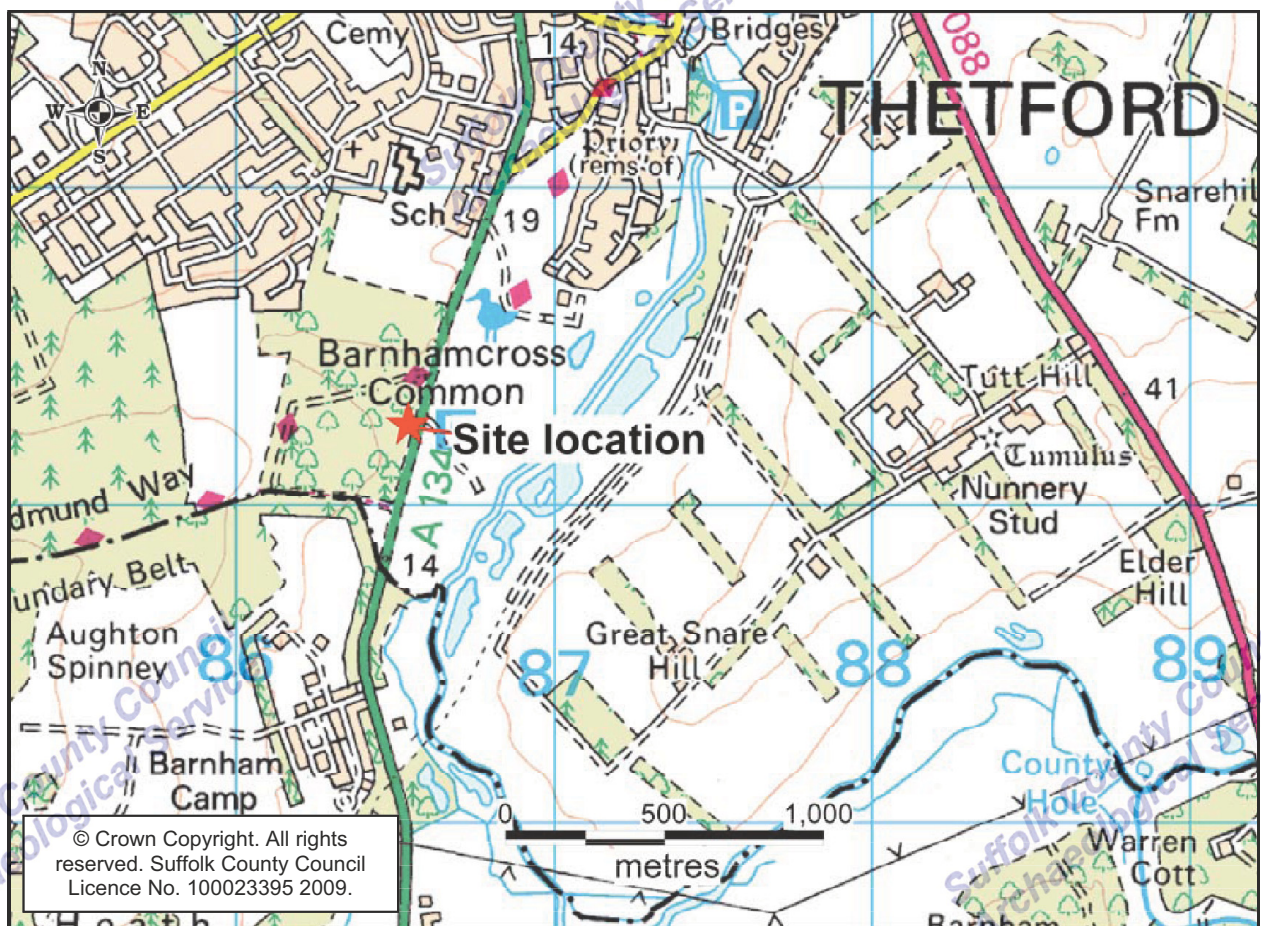


Figure 1. Site location

## **2. Geology and topography**

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The geology of the area was not fully revealed, although patches of orange sandy subsoil 0003 were occasionally uncovered amongst mid-dark brown sandy topsoil 0002. The plots lay at c.15m above the Ordnance Datum, with the ground level undulating, but rising overall towards the central area of the common, west of the stripped areas. The height of the plots was often equivalent to, or below that of the A134 road directly to the east. There was also a drainage ditch following the line of the road and these factors may indicate that the levels in the area may have been truncated or disturbed.

## **3. Archaeological and historical background**

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Various artefacts have been found on the common, including prehistoric flints, Roman coins, a Middle Saxon brooch and a late Saxon key. This demonstrates the potential for the rotavation to uncover archaeology and the need for the programme of archaeological monitoring.

## **4. Methodology**

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A tractor-mounted unit was used to rotavate the turf and topsoil to depths of 0.05m, 0.075m and 0.1m. Plots 1 and 4 were 0.1m deep, Plot 2 was 0.05m deep and Plot 3 was 0.075m deep. The four plots were of differing sizes (Table 1).

The areas were located around grid reference TL 865 812 (Fig. 1). The rotavation was constantly monitored. The work was plotted against the national grid using a RTK GPS and recorded using a single continuous numbering system (Table 2 and Fig. 2)

Digital colour JPEG format photographs at 72 x 72 dpi were taken of Plots 1 and 2. No sections of stratigraphy were visible to be recorded.

| Plot | Width (WNW-ESE) | Length (SSW-NNE) | Area   |
|------|-----------------|------------------|--------|
| 1    | 7.5m            | 84m              | 616sqm |
| 2    | 7m              | 82m              | 570sqm |
| 3    | 7m              | 52m              | 360sqm |
| 4    | 5.3m            | 93m              | 430sqm |

Table 1. Plot measurements

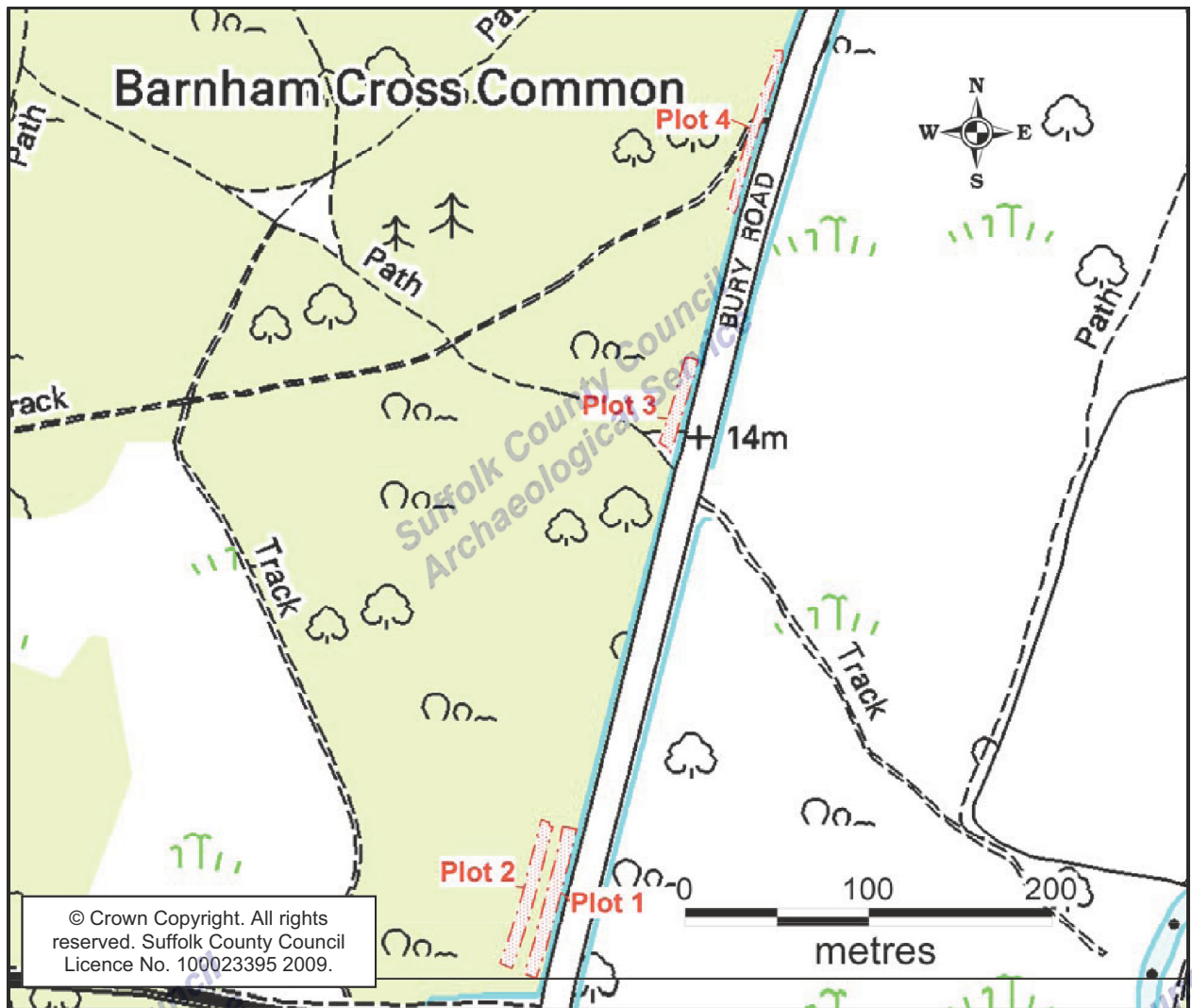


Figure 2. Plot plan

## 5. Results

None of the plots revealed any archaeological features. One piece of flint was recovered from Plot 1, although the potential strike marks were thought to resemble

machine damage (rather than deliberate striking), possibly from a plough or from the rotavator, although the scars did not appear to be particularly recent.

Apart from this, topsoil 0002 was revealed, which was a mid-dark brown sandy deposit. In places, patches of mid orangish-brown sandy material appeared, which was assumed to be a disturbed subsoil and numbered 0003. In Plot 4 the supervising archaeologist removed a small area of the disturbed turf and topsoil to examine the soil horizon below. Generally this revealed a similar distribution as on the surface, with 0002 predominant and occasional patches of 0003.

| Context | Description  | Over | Under |
|---------|--|------|-------|
| 0001    | Unstratified find. One piece of flint collected but appeared to have not been deliberately struck when examined.                 |      |       |
| 0002    | Topsoil layer seen in all plots. Mid-dark brown sandy topsoil. Occasional sub-angular flints (c. 0.04-0.06m diameter).           | 0003 |       |
| 0003    | Subsoil layer seen sporadically in all plots. Mid orangish/brown silty-sand. Also contained occasional small sub-angular flints. |      | 0002  |

Table 2. Context list

## 6. Discussion

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Rotavation of the four plots revealed neither archaeological features nor finds. The presence of 0003 in some places is perhaps indicative either of subsoil disturbed by bioturbation, or that the natural subsoil lies at a shallow depth and that the rotavator may have disturbed this. The latter option seems less likely as 0003 was only seen sporadically and the depth of penetration achieved by the rotavator was unusually shallow to reveal natural subsoil. However, the potential to disturb the subsoil would perhaps be greater in the higher parts of the common to the west of these plots.

## 7. Conclusions and significance of the fieldwork

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Whilst the monitoring of the four plots did not reveal any archaeological features or finds this may be the result of disturbance relating to the road which flanked the plots. It did appear that there may have been a degree of truncation and mixing of the soil stratigraphy, although this was not certain as the rotavated surface was difficult to interpret. Alternatively, the lack of cut features or artefacts may represent an area with

little archaeology and that the irregular appearance of subsoil 0003 may have shown truncation of the archaeological levels. If this is the case, it would be very important to closely monitor any further rotavation in the central area of the common, which is elevated and thus may have a thinner layer of protective topsoil.

## **8. Archive deposition**

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The paper, photographic and digital archive will be deposited with the Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service. A further digital archive and paper copy of the report will be kept at SCCAS Bury St Edmunds, T:\Arc\Archive field proj\Barnham\Barnham Cross Common ENF122866

## **9. List of contributors and acknowledgements**

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The monitoring was carried out by Rob Brooks from Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service, Field Team.

The project was directed by Rob Brooks, and managed by Joanna Caruth, who also provided advice during the production of the report.

Specialist flint identification and advice was provided by Colin Pendleton.

### **Disclaimer**

Any opinions expressed in this report about the need for further archaeological work are those of the Field Projects Team alone. Ultimately the need for further work will be determined by the Local Planning Authority and its Archaeological Advisors when a planning application is registered. Suffolk County Council's archaeological contracting services cannot accept responsibility for inconvenience caused to the clients should the Planning Authority take a different view to that expressed in the report.

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