
**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF
ON GROUNDWORKS AT
OXNEAD HALL FARM,
OXNEAD, BRAMPTON,
NORFOLK
(ENF123745)**

**Work Undertaken For
Crane & Sons (Farms) Ltd**

January 2010

Report Compiled by
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Report No: **3/10**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL
PROJECT
SERVICES**



**Quality Control
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Oxnead, Norfolk
(ENF 123745)**

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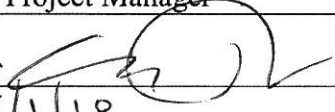
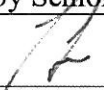
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1. SUMMARY

A watching brief was undertaken during groundworks at Oxnead Hall Farm, Oxnead, Brampton, Norfolk. The watching brief monitored reduction of ground associated with the construction of a new agricultural building.

The work was required due to the site's location within an area of archaeological potential. Approximately 100m to the southeast of the site are cropmarks of an undated trackway and enclosures. Fieldwalking and metal detecting in the area has produced a significant amount of Roman to medieval finds.

However, archaeological remains were limited to a pit that although undated, was sealed beneath thick deposits of subsoil and topsoil, suggesting the pit may be early. The subsoil and topsoil deposits were also undated and extended throughout the site.

No finds were retrieved during the investigation.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 Definition of a Watching Brief

An archaeological watching brief is defined as “a formal programme of observation and investigation conducted during any operation carried out for non-archaeological reasons. This will be within a specified area or site on land, inter-tidal zone or underwater, where there is a possibility that archaeological deposits may be disturbed or destroyed.” (IFA 1999).

2.2 Planning Background

Archaeological Project Services was commissioned by Crane & Sons (Farms) Ltd to undertake an archaeological watching brief during groundworks

associated with the construction of a new agricultural building at Oxnead Hall Farm, Oxnead, Brampton, Norfolk. Approval for the development was sought through the submission of planning application 20091132. The watching brief was carried out between the 15th and 17th of December 2009.

2.3 Topography and Geology

Oxnead is located 14km north of Norwich and 8.5km southwest of North Walsham in the parish of Brampton, Norfolk (Fig. 1). The site lies within the grounds of Oxnead Farm situated on agricultural land at c. 13m OD sloping down from the north towards the River Bure at National Grid Reference TG 2332 2406 (Fig 2).

The underlying geology is Wroxham Crag Formation sand and gravel (British Geographical Survey South Sheet, Fourth Edition Solid, 2001), overlain by Wick 2 typical brown earths. These consist of well drained, often stoneless, coarse, loamy soils (Soil Survey of England and Wales, Sheet 4 Eastern England).

2.4 Archaeological Setting

Finds of prehistoric date are sparse in the area, however, a Mesolithic or Neolithic flake was retrieved 450m to the north of the site and a second prehistoric flake was recovered 650m to the north-west. A Bronze Age socketed axehead made of copper alloy was found approximately 460m to the north-west of the site along with a Roman coin and Roman pottery (NHER 7613).

A Roman metal working site, located c. 500m south-west of the site (NHER 1124), was excavated in 1984 and revealed foundations for a building, a timber lined well and hearth along with coins, pottery and metal working evidence.

Approximately 100m to the south-east of the site, bricks and pottery, which may

date to the Roman period, have been found close to the cropmark of a possible trackway. There are also traces of enclosures (which are perhaps more recent). The trackway is described as more like a medieval drove than a Roman road (NHER 52550).

The possible site of a Roman building, suggested by Roman bricks, coins, and brooches, was found during fieldwalking and metal detecting (NHER 22457), however, the only grid reference given for this location is the kilometre square TG 2300 2400 (the same square in which the site is located).

Other finds recovered during fieldwalking and metal detecting recorded within the TG 2300 2400 kilometre square include Roman brooches, coins, hair pins, harness fittings, nails, pottery, a key, a copper mount (dress component), a palette (cosmetic), steelyard weight and a bowl. Saxon finds comprise a hooked tag, strap end, comb and pottery. Medieval finds include a buckle, bell, coins, harness mount, harness pendant, leash, spindle whorl, pottery, strap fitting, a seal, a spur and a stud.

Oxnead is first mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086 where it is referred to as '*Oxenedes*' (Williams & Martin 1992). The name is derived from the Old English '*oxna*' '*edisc*' meaning pasture for oxen (Ekwall 1989).

The only extant medieval remains in the village comprise St. Michael's Church, a medieval parish church dating to the 13th century with 17th and 19th century alterations (Pevsner & Wilson 1998). A church is also recorded at the time of Domesday suggesting St. Michael's had an earlier antecedent.

Oxnead Hall today comprises the remaining service wing of the late 16th century country house (with major 19th century additions). It is constructed from

red brick and has a steeply pitched plain tile roof. There is also a much altered 16th century barn on the property.

3. AIMS

The aim of the archaeological investigation was to ensure that any archaeological features exposed during the groundworks were recorded and, if present, their date, function and origin determined.

4. METHODS

A roughly rectangular area of ground measuring approximately 45m in length by 37m in width was reduced to a suitable level using a machine. Topsoil and subsoil were removed with a toothed bucket then the area was cleaned using a toothless ditching bucket. Selected deposits were excavated further to retrieve artefactual material and to determine their function. Each deposit was allocated a unique reference number (context number) with an individual written description. A list of all contexts and their descriptions appears as Appendix 1. A photographic record was compiled and sections were drawn at a scale of 1:10 and 1:20. Recording was undertaken according to standard Archaeological Project Services' practice.

Following excavation the records were checked and a stratigraphic matrix produced. Phasing was assigned based on the nature of the deposits and recognisable relationships between them.

5. RESULTS

Following post-excavation analysis two phases were identified;

Phase 1	Natural deposits
Phase 2	Undated deposits

Archaeological contexts are listed below and described. The numbers in brackets are the context numbers assigned in the field.

Phase 1 Natural deposits

The earliest natural deposit recorded on site occurred c. 1.07m below the ground surface at the north-western edge of the excavated area. This deposit consisted of soft mid reddish brown clayey sand and gravel (004), at least 0.14m thick (Fig 4, Section 1) (Plate 2).

This was overlain by a 0.36m thick natural deposit of firm light yellowish brown clay (003) with bluish grey streaks (Figs 3 & 4, Section 1) (Plates 2-4). The surface of this deposit occurred at 0.81m below the ground surface in Section 2.

Phase 2 Undated deposits

Cut through natural deposit (003) was an ovoid feature [006] measuring 1.58m wide by 1.66m long with concave sides and base (Figs 3 & 4, Section 2) (Plate 3). This feature was filled with a friable mid greyish brown clayey silt.

A 0.41m thick layer of soft mid reddish brown clayey sandy subsoil (002), containing frequent pebbles overlay this feature and extended throughout the site (Figs 3 & 4, Section 1) (Plate 2).

The subsoil was sealed by a 0.41m thick soft dark brown sandy clay topsoil deposit (001) containing frequent pebbles and flints and occasional straw (Fig 4, Section 1) (Plate 2).

6. DISCUSSION

The sand and gravel and clay deposits observed at the base of Section 1 represent the underlying geology in the area.

A single undated ovoid pit cut through the natural and contained no material or inclusions of anthropogenic origin.

However, this feature was sealed beneath thick deposits of subsoil and topsoil suggesting the possibility of an early date. This was the only feature revealed during the groundworks and its purpose remains unclear.

This feature was overlain by a thick subsoil layer, which perhaps implies an extended period of development, followed by a layer of topsoil containing organic straw due to ploughing.

7. CONCLUSION

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken at Oxnead Hall Farm, Oxnead, Brampton, Norfolk, during groundworks associated with the construction of a new agricultural building.

The work was required due to the site's close proximity to cropmarks of an undated trackway and enclosures in an area where fieldwalking and metal detecting have produced a significant amount of artefacts ranging in date from the Roman to medieval period.

The investigation revealed an undated, though possibly early, ovoid pit cut into the natural and overlain by a thick sequence of undated subsoil and topsoil. However, no finds were retrieved during the investigation.

8. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Archaeological Project Services wishes to acknowledge the assistance of Crane & Sons (Farms) Ltd for commissioning the fieldwork and post-excavation analysis. The work was coordinated by Gary Taylor who edited this report along with Tom Lane. Dave Start kindly allowed access to the library maintained by Heritage Lincolnshire.

9. PERSONNEL

Project Coordinator: Gary Taylor
Site Supervisor: Andrew Failes
Photographic reproduction: Sue Unsworth
Illustration: Andrew Failes
Post-excavation analysis: Andrew Failes

10. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Fourth Edition Solid, 2001

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IFA, 1999, *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*

Pevsner, N. and Wilson, B., 1998, *Norfolk I: Norwich and North-East*, The Buildings of England (2nd edition)

Soil Survey of England and Wales, Sheet 4
Eastern England

Williams, A. & Martin, H. G., 1992
Domesday Book: a complete translation
Penguin Books: London

11. ABBREVIATIONS

APS Archaeological Project Services

IFA Institute For Archaeologists

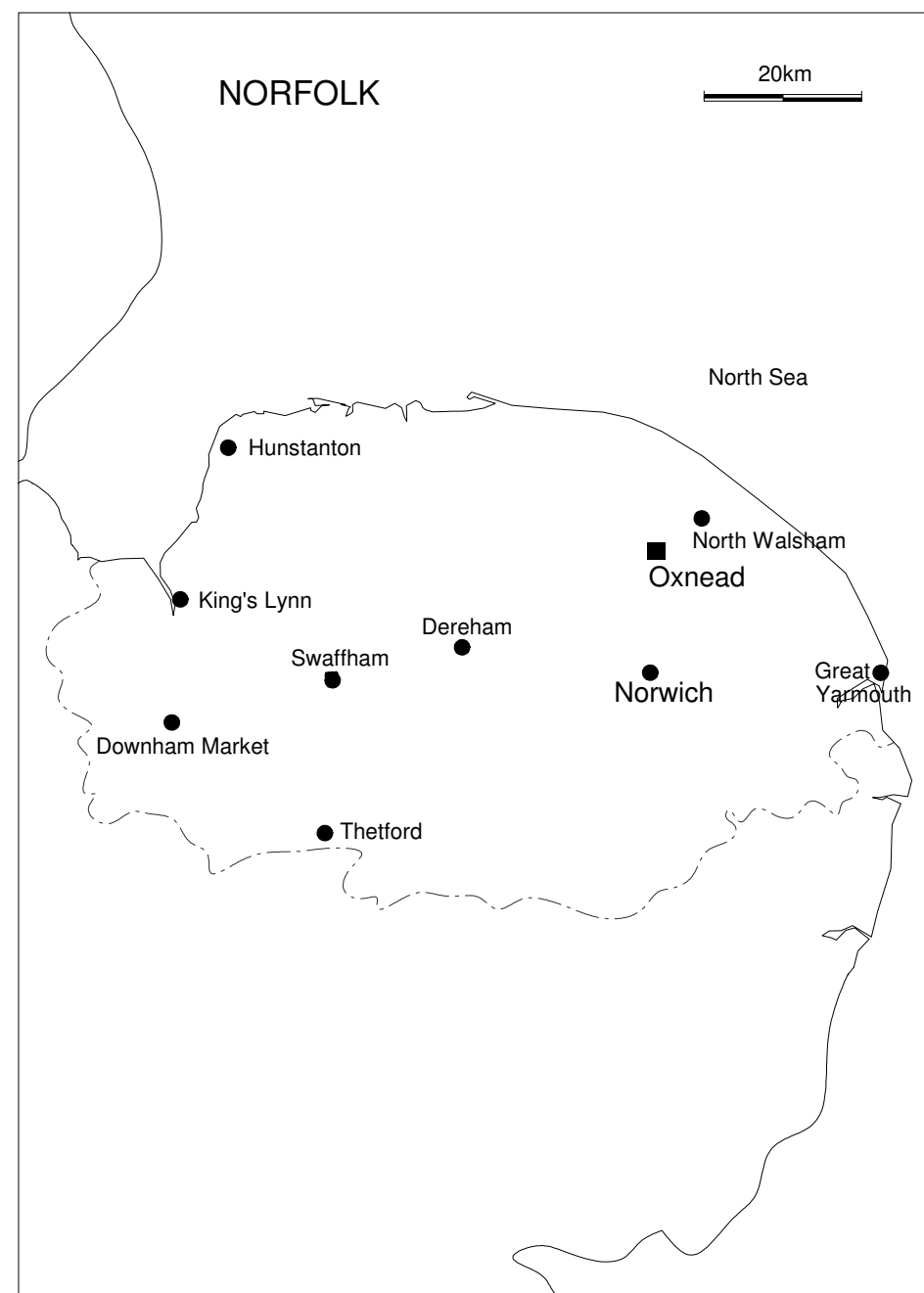


Figure 1 General Location Plan

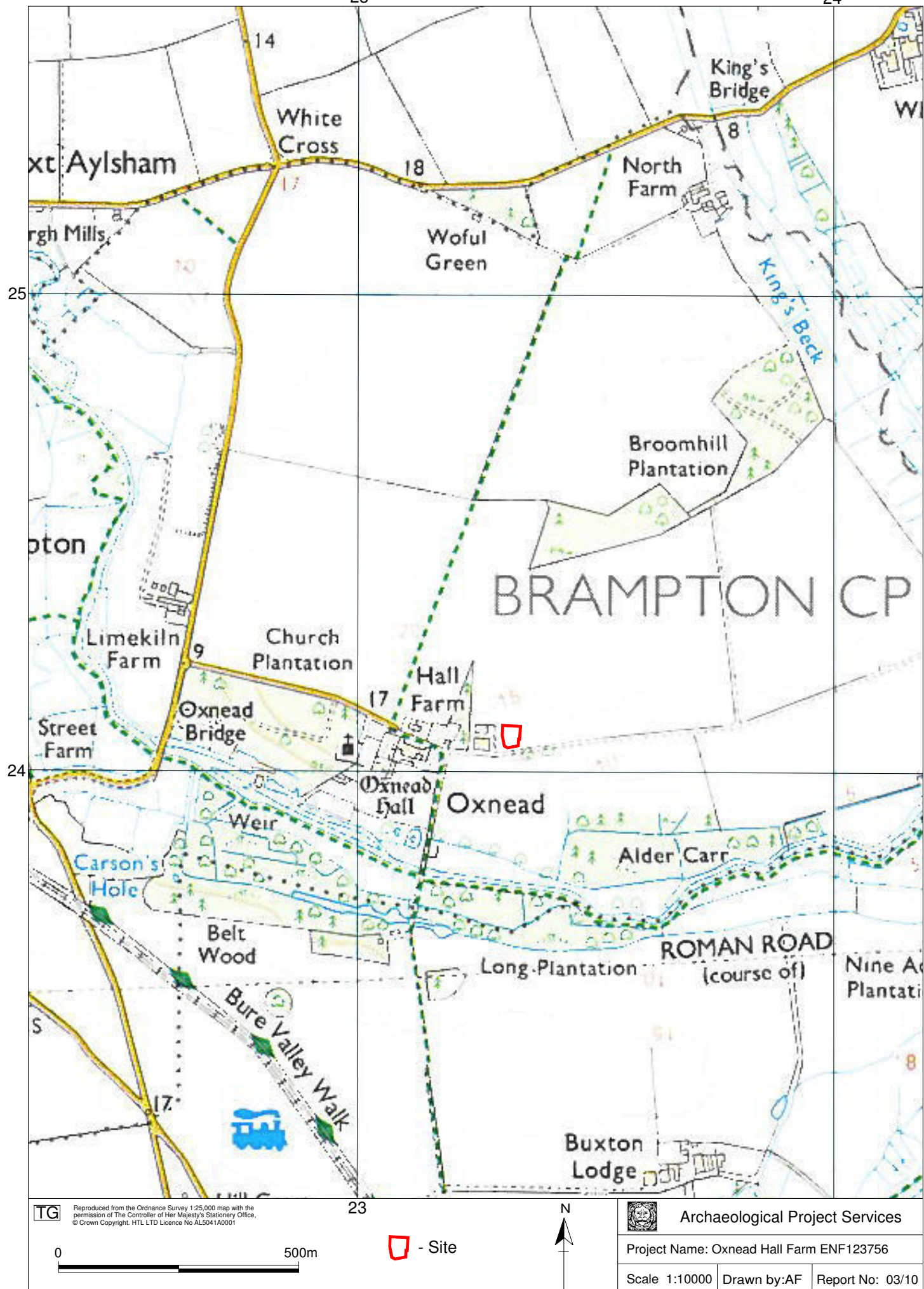


Figure 2 - Site location plan

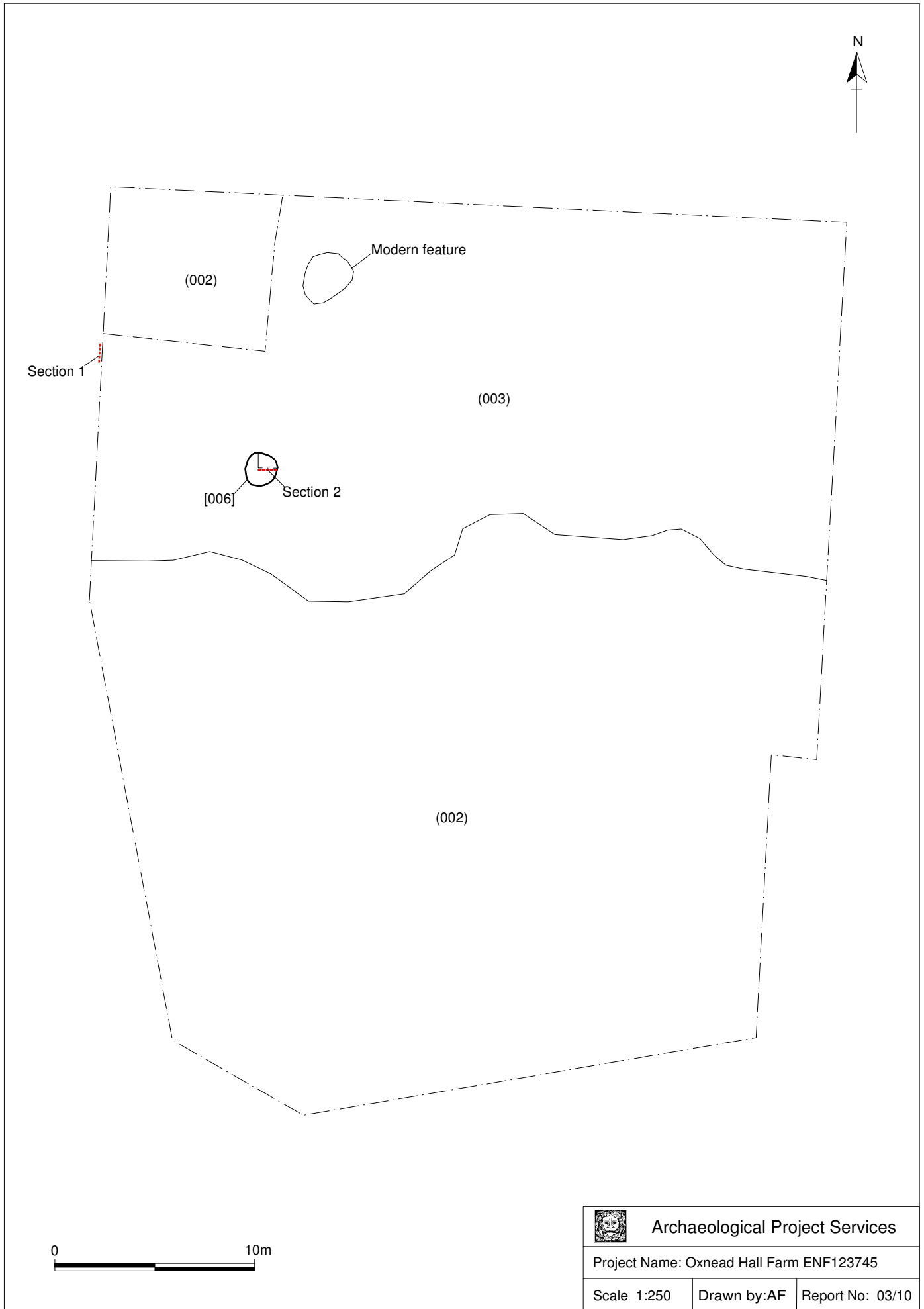
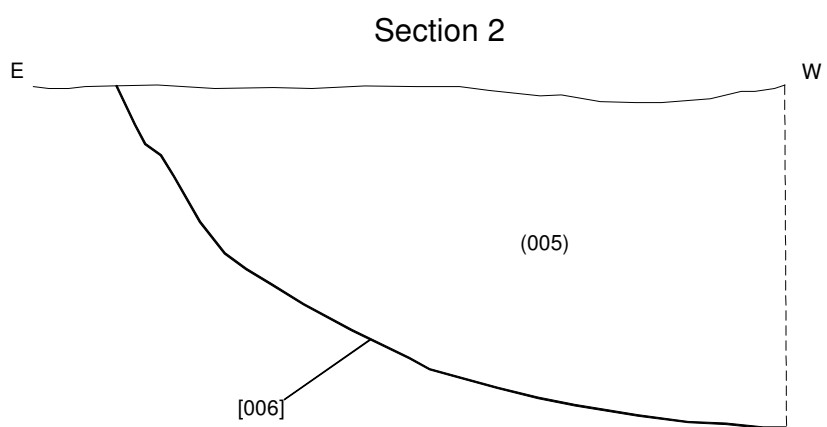
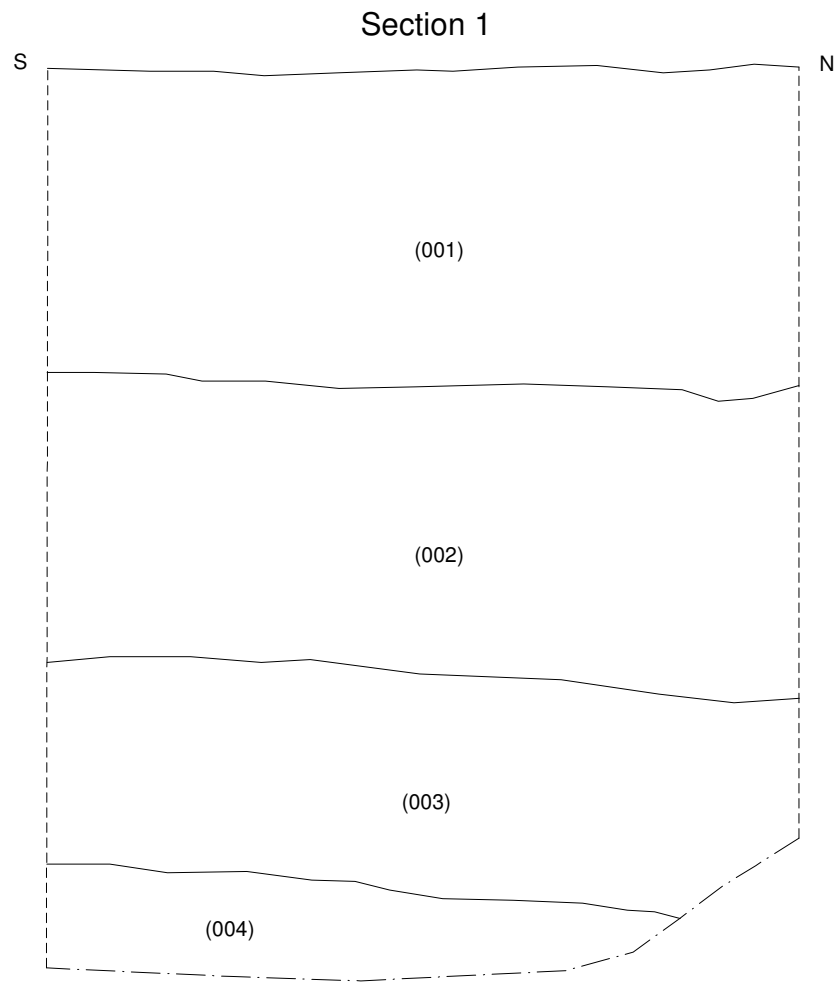


Figure 3 - Site Plan




 Archaeological Project Services		
Project Name: Oxnead Hall Farm ENF123745		
Scale 1:10	Drawn by:AF	Report No: 03/10

Figure 4 - Sections 1 and 2



Plate 1 – Stripping in progress, looking northeast



Plate 2 - Section 1



Plate 3 – Pit [006], Section 2



Plate 4 – Stripping to natural looking southeast

Appendix 1

CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

No:	Description	Interpretation
001	Soft dark brown sandy clay with frequent pebbles and flints and occasional organic remains, 0.41m thick	Topsoil
002	Soft mid reddish brown clayey sand with frequent pebbles, 0.41m thick	Subsoil
003	Firm light yellowish brown clay with bluish grey streaks, 0.36m thick	Natural deposit
004	Soft mid reddish brown clayey sand and gravel, 0.14m thick	Natural deposit
005	Friable mid greyish brown clayey silt	Fill of pit [006]
006	Ovoid cut, 0.46m deep with concave sides breaking imperceptibly to a concave base	Pit cut

Appendix 2

GLOSSARY

Bronze Age	A period characterised by the introduction of bronze into the country for tools, between 2250 and 800 BC.
Context	An archaeological context represents a distinct archaeological event or process. For example, the action of digging a pit creates a context (the cut) as does the process of its subsequent backfill (the fill). Each context encountered during an archaeological investigation is allocated a unique number by the archaeologist and a record sheet detailing the description and interpretation of the context (the context sheet) is created and placed in the site archive. Context numbers are identified within the report text by brackets, e.g. [004].
Cropmark	A mark that is produced by the effect of underlying archaeological or geological features influencing the growth of a particular crop.
Cut	A cut refers to the physical action of digging a posthole, pit, ditch, foundation trench, etc. Once the fills of these features are removed during an archaeological investigation the original 'cut' is therefore exposed and subsequently recorded.
Domesday Survey	A survey of property ownership in England compiled on the instruction of William I for taxation purposes in 1086 AD.
Fill	Once a feature has been dug it begins to silt up (either slowly or rapidly) or it can be back-filled manually. The soil(s) that become contained by the 'cut' are referred to as its fill(s).
Layer	A layer is a term used to describe an accumulation of soil or other material that is not contained within a cut.
Medieval	The Middle Ages, dating from approximately AD 1066-1500.
Mesolithic	The 'Middle Stone Age' period, part of the prehistoric era, dating from approximately 11000 - 4500 BC.
Natural	Undisturbed deposit(s) of soil or rock which have accumulated without the influence of human activity
Neolithic	The 'New Stone Age' period, part of the prehistoric era, dating from approximately 4500 - 2250 BC.
Old English	The language used by the Saxon (q.v.) occupants of Britain.
Prehistoric	The period of human history prior to the introduction of writing. In Britain the prehistoric period lasts from the first evidence of human occupation about 500,000 BC, until the Roman invasion in the middle of the 1st century AD.
Romano-British	Pertaining to the period dating from AD 43-410 when the Romans occupied Britain.
Saxon	Pertaining to the period dating from AD 410-1066 when England was largely settled by tribes from northern Germany and adjacent areas.

Appendix 3

THE ARCHIVE

The archive consists of:

6	Context records
1	Photographic record sheet
1	Section record sheet
1	Plan record sheet
3	Daily record sheet
2	Sheets of scale drawings
1	Stratigraphic matrix

All primary records are currently kept at:

Archaeological Project Services
The Old School
Cameron Street
Heckington
Sleaford
Lincolnshire
NG34 9RW

The ultimate destination of the project archive is:

Norfolk Museums Service
Union House
Gressenhall
Dereham
Norfolk
NR20 4DR

Norfolk Historic Environment Record Site Code: ENF123745

OASIS Project Identity Code: archaeol1-70439

The discussion and comments provided in this report are based on the archaeology revealed during the site investigations. Other archaeological finds and features may exist on the development site but away from the areas exposed during the course of this fieldwork. *Archaeological Project Services* cannot confirm that those areas unexposed are free from archaeology nor that any archaeology present there is of a similar character to that revealed during the current investigation.

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