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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF  
ON LAND SOUTH OF THE MANOR HOUSE,  
WEREHAM, NORFOLK  
(NHER 50549)**

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**Work Undertaken For  
Mr. T. Hewitt**

April 2010

Report Compiled by  
Andrew Failes BA (Hons) MA

National Grid Reference: TF 6802 0158  
Planning Application No: 07/01120/F  
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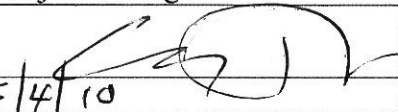
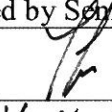
Report No: **22/10**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
PROJECT  
SERVICES**



**Quality Control  
The Manor House  
Wereham, Norfolk  
(NHER 50549)**

Project Coordinator	Gary Taylor
Supervisor	Andrew Failes
Illustration	Andrew Failes
Photographic Reproduction	Sue Unsworth
Post-excavation Analyst	Andrew Failes

Checked by Project Manager	Approved by Senior Archaeologist
Gary Taylor 	 Tom Lane
Date: 15/4/10	Date: 16.4.10

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## 1. SUMMARY

*A watching brief was undertaken during groundworks on land south of Manor House, Wereham, Norfolk. The watching brief monitored the excavation of footings for new terraced houses.*

*The work was required due to the site's location in an area of archaeological potential. Human skeletal remains are said to have been found in this area and imply the presence of an undated cemetery or perhaps a plague pit. A previous evaluation at the site produced no human remains, but uncovered possible late Saxon features including a ditch, a pit and a post hole. A large (probable medieval) pit was also recorded and may represent small scale quarrying for sand or gravel.*

*The watching brief revealed four features cut through natural deposits. A cluster of two pits and a possible linear/pit were recorded in the southern corner of the footings and a large rectangular pit to the north of the cluster. The relatively large size of these pits suggests they may represent gravel quarrying. No dating evidence was recovered from any of these features; however, the results of the previous evaluation suggest the possibility of a late Saxon or medieval date.*

*The features were sealed by a sequence of thick buried topsoil overlain by a thin layer of demolition rubble and a recent topsoil layer.*

*No human remains were uncovered during the investigation, however the possibility that they exist to the north of the footings still remains.*

*No artefacts were recovered 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 maybe disturbed or destroyed.” (IFA 1999).

### 2.2 Planning Background

Archaeological Project Services was commissioned by Mr. T. Hewitt to undertake an archaeological watching brief during groundworks associated with the construction of terraced houses on land south of the Manor House at Wereham, Norfolk. Approval for the development was sought through the submission of planning application 07/01120/F. The watching brief was carried out between the 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> of February 2010.

### 2.3 Topography and Geology

Wereham is situated 17km southeast of King's Lynn and 7km east of Downham Market in the district of South-West Norfolk (Fig. 1).

The site is located on unused ground to the south-east of the Manor House (Fig 2) at National Grid Reference TF 6802 0158. The ground slopes down to the south towards the road. The footings are located at the southern end of the development site (Fig 3).

The underlying geology of the area is Lower and Middle chalk with overlying sands and gravels.

### 2.4 Archaeological Setting

Wereham contains archaeological remains from a variety of different periods. Metal detecting to the south of the village (NHER 28133) has recovered a range of

artefacts from different time periods including a Roman dolphin brooch, an Early Saxon small long brooch, a medieval lead cloth seal and a post-medieval harness mount.

At 12 Queen's Close (NHER 39739), c. 200m south of the development site, an early Neolithic flint axehead was found, while an evaluation 330m south-east of the site recovered a single prehistoric flint scraper (NHER 31535). Approximately 300m east of the site, cropmarks of a possible Bronze Age ring ditch were identified using aerial photographs (NHER 35478).

In 1959 a Roman coin (a follis of Constantine I) was found in the garden of Wereham Hall (NHER 4409), 380m south-west of the site. According to a map held by King's Lynn Museum a number of Roman pottery sherds and loomweights were also found in the area.

The village green is located 100m north of the development site (NHER 4400). At sometime prior to 1892 a Bronze Age pottery vessel was recovered from here and is now held by the Cambridge Museum of Archaeology and Ethnography.

Documentary evidence shows that the village green was also the site of a well in the medieval period.

The village of Wereham is mentioned in the Domesday survey of 1086 where it is referred to as 'Wigerham' (Brown 1984, 21). The name probably means 'homestead on a stream called *Wigor* (the winding one)'; *Wigor* is a Celtic river name (Mills 1991, 352).

The medieval core of the village is defined by St. Margaret's church (NHER 4427), located 80m north-east of the development site. The church dates to the early 13<sup>th</sup> century, with 14<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century alterations. The church underwent a

'fierce' restoration in 1866 (Pesvner & Wilson 2000, 758).

A possible medieval moat (NHER 13563) is marked on the tithe map of 1840, located 150m west of the development site.

There are a number of listed buildings in the village, mostly of 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century date. The manor house (NHER 12527) lies immediately to the north-west of the development site and is described as the 'best house' in the village by Pesvner & Wilson (2000, 759). The building is built of red brick and has the dates 1722 and 1729 inscribed upon it. The date of 1722 refers to the earliest phase of construction, which used flint and carrstone, while the 1729 date refers to the brick-built phase.

It is thought that the development site itself may lie within a former cemetery or area of plague pits. During the excavation of sewer trenches in 1978 on the site of two cottages (now demolished), human skeletal remains were found (NHER 13565). However, the bones were discovered in a skip after the work was completed and the information comes second hand from the Downham Market Police. The Norfolk Historic Environment Record records the site as an undated cemetery based on conjectural evidence and gives a grid reference that falls within the development area. Three sherds of medieval pottery and several post-medieval sherds were also found at the same time.

A recent evaluation at the site (NHER 50549) produced no human remains in the excavated areas. However, the investigation did reveal possible late Saxon features including an east-west aligned ditch, a pit and a post hole. A probable medieval large pit was also recorded and may represent small scale quarrying for sand or gravel. Two fragments of Roman tile were retrieved from one of the pits and probably

represents re-use at some point in the post-Roman period (Crawford 2007). This is not necessarily evidence for Roman activity at the site but may indicate the presence of a Roman building somewhere in the vicinity.

### 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

Trenches for footings were excavated by machine to a suitable depth. Where possible, trench sides were then cleaned and rendered vertical. 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 three phases were identified;

Phase 1	Natural deposits
Phase 2	Undated deposits
Phase 3	Recent 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 deposit encountered at the site occurred in the base of the footings and consisted of firm to hard light yellowish brown and white clayey chalk (025) (Figs 4-5, Sections 1-3) (Plates 2-6).

The natural chalky deposit was overlain by a soft mid to dark orangey brown sandy clay (024) that was up to 0.27m thick (Figs 4-5, Sections 1-3) (Plates 3-4 & 6).

#### *Phase 2 Undated deposits*

Four features were recorded cut through deposit (024), three of which occurred in the southern corner of the footings. The first of these [027] looked to be ovoid in shape and at least 2.33m long by 0.80m wide with a sharp break of slope at the top and steep slightly concave sides (Figs 4-5, Section 1) (Plate 3). The ovoid pit was filled with a soft mid greyish brown sandy silt (026) with occasional chalk flecks and small pebbles.

A possible linear cut [033], only partially revealed in plan, was connected to pit [027] as well as pit [029] (Figs 4-5, Section 1) (Plates 2-3), although no stratigraphic relationships could be discerned due to the similarities of the fills. The possible linear was at least 1.27m in length and filled with a soft mid greyish brown sandy silt (032) with occasional chalk flecks and small pebbles.

Feature [029] was also only partially revealed and possibly ovoid in shape. This cut was at least 3.50m in length and had steep slightly concave sides (Figs 4-5, Section 1) (Plates 2-3). This feature was filled with a soft dark greyish brown sandy silt (028) with occasional chalk flecks and small pebbles. The north-western edge of this feature was truncated by a modern well.

Cut [031] also occurred in the southern corner of the footings and probably represents the other edge of feature [029] or [033] (Figs 4-5, Section 2) (Plate 2). The fill consisted of soft mid to dark greyish brown sandy clayey silt (030) with occasional chalk fragments and stone pebbles.

The fourth feature [037] that cut through deposit (024) occurred in the middle section of the easternmost footing (Fig 4). This cut was probably rectangular in shape, 3m in length by 2.13m in width, with at least one rounded corner (Figs 4-5, Section 6) (Plates 5-6). Unlike the three previous features, this cut had multiple fills. The earliest of these was a firm mid brown sandy clay (036) with occasional pebbles. This was sealed by a firm mixture of mid brown and light yellowish and grey sandy clay and clayey chalk (035). This deposit was at least 0.24m thick. The third and final fill overlay deposit (035) and was a 0.40m thick, firm mid brown sandy clay (034).

These four features and their fills were overlain by an up to 0.70m thick deposit of firm, mid brown sandy clay (023) with occasional chalk flecks and fragments (Fig 5, Sections 1-3) (Plates 3-4 & 6).

In the southern corner of the footings, deposit (023) was overlain by a 0.10m thick, loose mid yellow to dark orange deposit of sand and limestone (Fig 5, Section 1) (Plate 3).

A layer of soft dark greyish brown clayey sand (021) extended throughout the whole of the site and sealed deposit (023). This recent topsoil was *c.* 0.30m thick (Fig 5, Sections 1-3) (Plates 3-4 & 6).

## 6. DISCUSSION

The earliest deposits identified on site consisted of chalky natural clay overlain by clayey sand.

A cluster of two large pits and a possible linear was recorded cut through the natural sand in the southern corner of the footings. As no artefacts were recovered from these features, they remain undated. However, a previous evaluation at the site identified possible Saxon features, including pits and a ditch as well as a possible medieval pit which raises the possibility that these features may be of a similar date. Although the pits were only partially exposed in plan, they were relatively large which suggests they may be the result of small scale quarrying. The possible linear was identified from one straight edge and if it is indeed linear would be oriented north-west/south-east, however, it does not appear to continue to the south-east, nor does it appear in other footings to the north-west. This suggests it may be the straight edge of another pit that intercuts the other two in this area. A single fill was identified in each feature and although the features intercut, the similarity of the fills made it impossible to discern any stratigraphic relationship between them. However, the similarity of the fills may suggest the possibility that these features were open at the same time and thus belong to the same period, or that the fills have been subject to homogenisation through agencies such as earthworm disturbance or root infiltration.

A fourth feature was revealed cut through the natural sandy clay to the north of the cluster in the southern corner. This feature was also partially exposed, but looked to be even larger than the previous features and probably had a more regular rectangular shape. This pit also contained multiple fills, unlike the three features in the southern corner of the site. This raises the possibility that the rectangular pit may be from a different period than those to the south. Its large size also suggests the possibility that it is the result of small scale quarrying.

These features were sealed by a layer of sandy clay which extended throughout the

site. This deposit was extremely thick in some places (up to 0.70m) which suggests it is a former topsoil that has been added to at some point in order to raise the level of the ground.

In the southern corner of the site a thin deposit of demolition rubble overlay the buried topsoil.

The rubble deposit was overlain by a recent topsoil layer which extended throughout the whole of the site.

## 7. CONCLUSION

A watching brief was undertaken during the digging of footings for terraced houses on land south of Manor House, Wereham, Norfolk.

The site lies in an area of archaeological potential where human remains are said to have been found. A previous evaluation (Crawford 2007) at the site produced no human remains, but uncovered possible late Saxon features including an east-west aligned ditch, a pit and a post hole. A large (probable medieval) pit was also recorded and may represent small scale quarrying for sand or gravel.

The current investigation revealed four features cut through natural deposits. A cluster of two pits and a possible linear/pit in the southern corner of the footings and a large rectangular pit to the north of the cluster. No dating evidence was recovered from any of the features; however the results of the previous evaluation suggest the possibility of a late Saxon or medieval date for them. Their large size also implies that they may be former quarries.

The features were overlain by a sequence of thick buried topsoil overlain by a thin layer of demolition rubble and a recent topsoil layer.

No human remains were uncovered during

the investigation, however the possibility that they exist to the north of the footings still remains.

No artefacts were recovered during the investigation.

## 8. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Archaeological Project Services wishes to acknowledge the assistance of Mr. T. Hewitt 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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## 11. ABBREVIATIONS

APS Archaeological Project Services

IFA Institute of Field Archaeologists

NHER Norfolk Historic Environment  
Record



Figure 1 General Location Plan



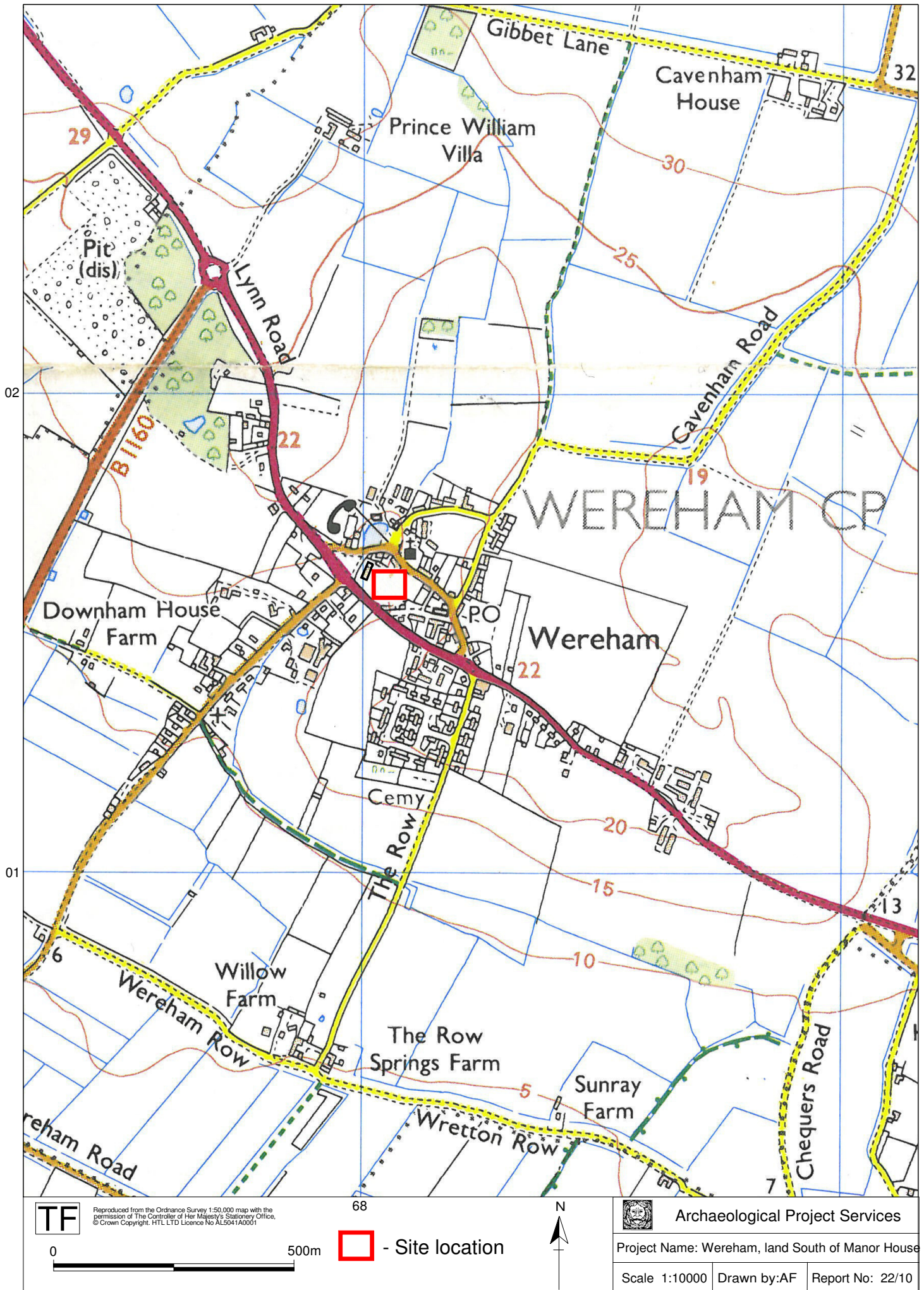


Figure 2 - Site location





Figure 3 - Site location plan

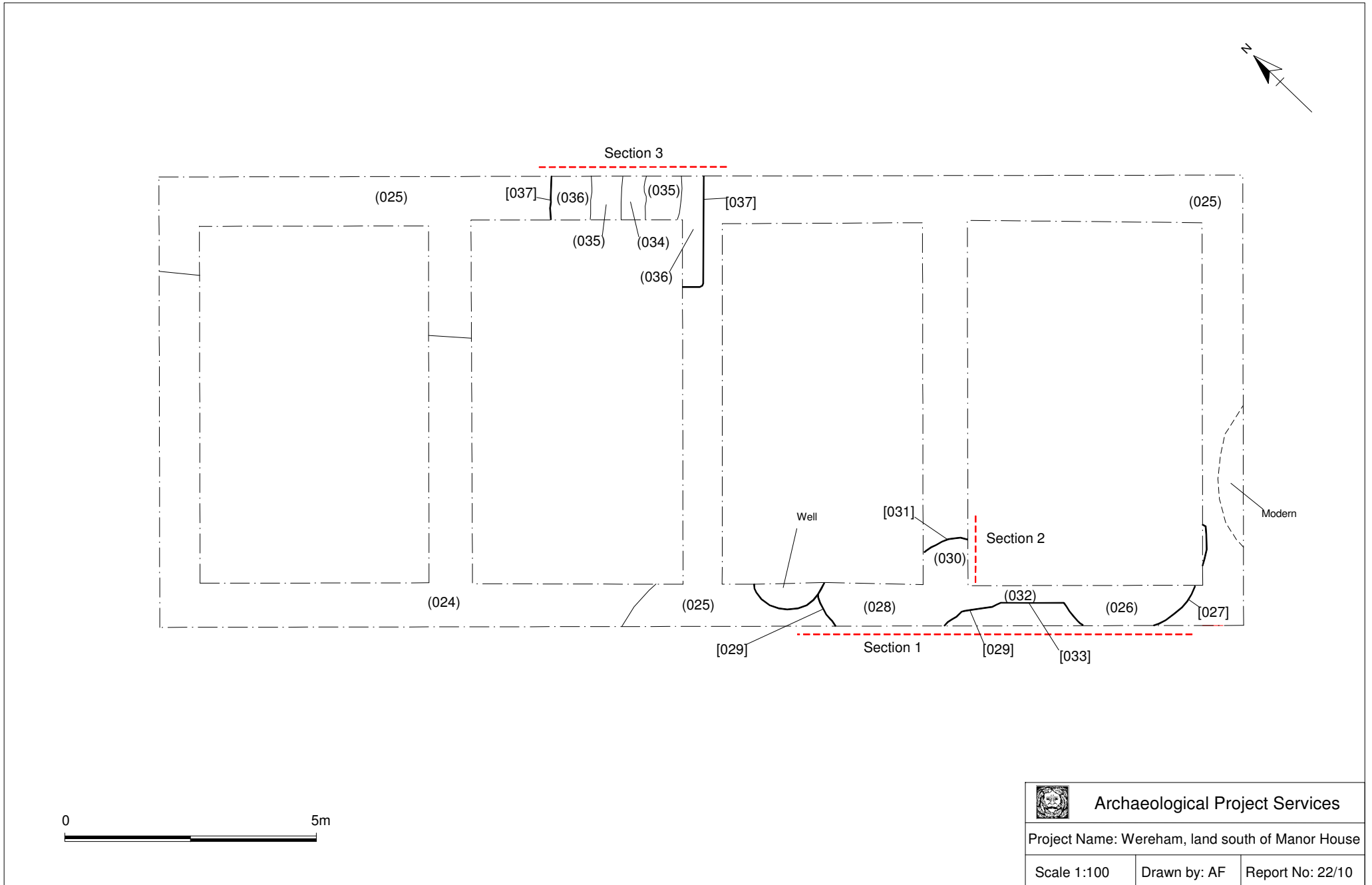
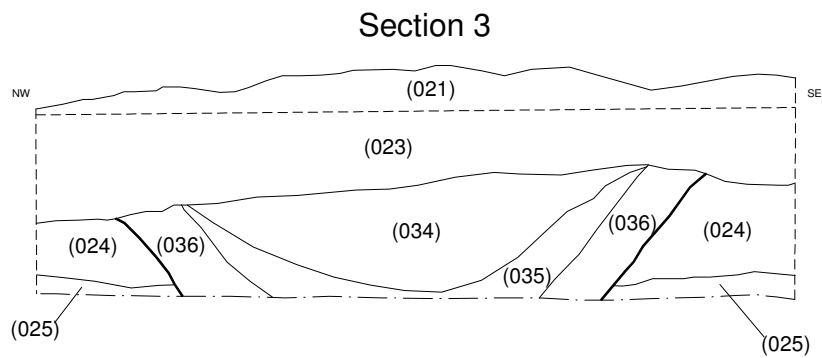
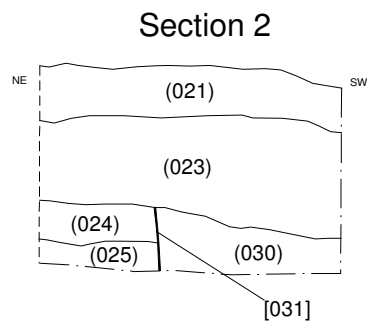
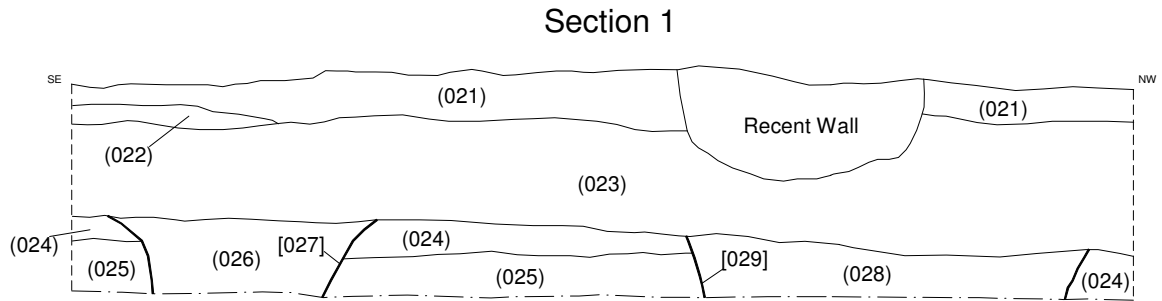


Figure 4 - Footings plan and Section locations




 <b>Archaeological Project Services</b>		
Project Name: Wereham, land south of Manor House		
Scale 1:50	Drawn by:AF	Report No: 22/10

Figure 5 - Sections 1-3



Plate 1 – General view of site with the manor house in the background



Plate 2 – Pits [029], [033] and [027]





Plate 3 – Section 1



Plate 4 – Section 2





Plate 5 – Pit [037]



Plate 6 – Section 3

## APPENDIX 1

### Context Descriptions

No.	Description	Interpretation
021	Soft dark greyish brown clayey sand with frequent small pebbles and roots, extending across the site up to 0.30m thick	Topsoil
022	Loose mid yellow to dark orange sand and limestone fragments up to 0.10m thick	Demolition/rubble deposit
023	Firm mid brown sandy clay with occasional chalk flecks and fragments, extending throughout the site with a thickness of up to 0.70m	Thick deposit, buried topsoil
024	Soft mid to dark orangey brown sandy clay extending throughout the site, up to 0.27m thick	Possible former subsoil, or natural deposit
025	Firm to hard light yellowish brownish white to white clayey chalk and chalk, at least 0.30m thick	Natural deposit
026	Soft mid greyish brown sandy silt with occasional chalk flecks and small pebbles	Fill of [027]
027	A cut with unclear shape, but likely to be ovoid, at least 2.33m long x 0.80m wide with a sharp break of slope at the top and steep slightly concave sides	Large pit cut
028	Soft dark greyish brown sandy silt with occasional chalk flecks and small pebbles	Fill of [029]
029	A cut with unknown shape, possibly ovoid and 3.50m in length with a sharp break of slope at the top and steep slightly concave sides	Large pit cut
030	Soft, mid to dark brown sandy clayey silt, with occasional chalk flecks and small pebbles	Fill of [031]
031	Cut with unclear shape, possibly ovoid, with a sharp break of slope at the top and straight vertical sides	Large pit cut
032	Soft mid greyish brown sandy clay with occasional chalk flecks and small pebbles	Fill of [033]
033	Possible linear cut, at least 1.27m long	Possible linear cut
034	Firm mid brown sandy clay with occasional pebbles, 0.40m thick	Fill of [037]
035	Firm mid brown sandy clay mixed with light yellow and light yellowish grey clayey chalk, 0.24m thick	Fill of [037]
036	Firm mid brown sandy clay with occasional pebbles	Fill of [037]
037	Probable rectangular cut with rounded edges, 3m long x 2.13m wide with a sharp break of slope at the top and concave sides	Probable rectangular pit

## Appendix 2

### GLOSSARY

<b>Bronze Age</b>	A period characterised by the introduction of bronze into the country for tools, between 2250 and 800 BC.
<b>Context</b>	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].
<b>Cropmark</b>	A mark that is produced by the effect of underlying archaeological or geological features influencing the growth of a particular crop.
<b>Cut</b>	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.
<b>Domesday Survey</b>	A survey of property ownership in England compiled on the instruction of William I for taxation purposes in 1086 AD.
<b>Fill</b>	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).
<b>Layer</b>	A layer is a term used to describe an accumulation of soil or other material that is not contained within a cut.
<b>Medieval</b>	The Middle Ages, dating from approximately AD 1066-1500.
<b>Natural</b>	Undisturbed deposit(s) of soil or rock which have accumulated without the influence of human activity
<b>Neolithic</b>	The 'New Stone Age' period, part of the prehistoric era, dating from approximately 4500 - 2250 BC.
<b>Post hole</b>	The hole cut to take a timber post, usually in an upright position. The hole may have been dug larger than the post and contain soil or stones to support the post. Alternatively, the posthole may have been formed through the process of driving the post into the ground.
<b>Post-medieval</b>	The period following the Middle Ages, dating from approximately AD 1500-1800.
<b>Prehistoric</b>	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.
<b>Romano-British</b>	Pertaining to the period dating from AD 43-410 when the Romans occupied Britain.
<b>Saxon</b>	Pertaining to the period dating from AD 410-1066 when England was largely settled by tribes from northern Germany.



## Appendix 3

### THE ARCHIVE

The archive consists of:

17	Context records
1	Photographic record sheet
1	Section record sheet
1	Plan record sheet
2	Daily record sheet
7	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  
NR204DR

Archaeological Project Services Site Code:

NHER 50549

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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