

Moat Farm, Alburgh, Norfolk

Archaeological Monitoring and Recording



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Moat Farm, Alburgh, Norfolk:
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Non Technical Summary

Archaeological monitoring and recording was undertaken at Moat Farm, Alburgh, Norfolk (NGR TM 26335 87657) on the ground works associated with the construction of a new access route. The monitoring was undertaken in accordance with a brief set out by Norfolk Landscape Archaeology. No archaeological activity was exposed during the ground works.

Introduction

Between 15th and 16th March 2010, archaeological monitoring and recording was undertaken at Moat Farm, Alburgh to observe the ground works associated with the construction of a new access route into the property. The monitoring was commissioned by Mrs. M. Banham (present owner), in response to a brief set out by Norfolk Landscape Archaeology (NLA; Robertson 2010). The ground works were on a Medieval moated site (NHER 12135). The new route was positioned to follow the line of an old pre-existing driveway, and did not encroach on the extant moat arms or the associated earthworks.

Location, topography and geology

Moat Farm is located toward the northern end of Alburgh village, on the ridge of a hill overlooking valleys to the east and west (Figure 1). The site is located at a height of approximately 46m AOD. The monitored area is bordered by The Street to the east, the house and farm buildings to the north, agricultural fields to the west and neighbouring properties to the south, whilst the underlying geology is Boulder clay (Geological Survey Ten Mile Map: South Sheet 1976).

Archaeological Background

The Moat Farm estate currently comprises a listed 17th century timber-framed farmhouse, faced with red-brick in the late 18th or early 19th century (NHER 44158), as well as later 20th century farm buildings and sheds located north and west of the main house. The majority of the farmland is located to the west, behind the house, with additional fields to the east of the village. The estate also includes a meadow to the south, containing the remnants of a Medieval moated site (NHER 12135). Cropmarks in the meadow recorded in the HER could relate to this Medieval moated site although they may be associated with later activity. The northeast and northwest arms of the moat still contain water. A series of earthworks and undulations are also visible either side of the northeast arm of the moat.

The northwest arm of the moat has been extended to partially enclose the house. This extension is very rectangular, suggesting that it was not part of the original moat system, and was potentially associated with the 18th and 19th century modifications to the house. The varying width of the northeast arm indicates it has also been modified. Although the northeast and northwest arms may never have formed a

continuous moat, the suggestion of a curve at the north end of the northeast arm implies the two were originally related. Draining of the moat is suggested by the partly in-filled curvilinear ditch extending from the south end of the northeast arm of the moat.

Metal-detecting and fieldwalking adjacent to the meadow have yielded a few fragments of Middle Saxon pottery, a Late Saxon metal harness piece and a significantly larger number of Medieval through to 20th century pottery sherds and metal finds (NHER 12135; 30399). Very little is known about the moated site; the finds imply that although the main phases of activity were Medieval, the site may have Saxon origins. Later Medieval and Post-Medieval activity is well attested to by the finds, and also by local accounts that suggest a farmhouse has existed on the site since the 1500s and that the large depression internal to the moat was formerly used as a retting-pit to soak hemp; a practice that began in the Medieval period and continued into the 19th century.

The present owners recall an unexploded WWII bomb crater on the east side of the east moat arm. Additionally, the owners also remember cleaning out the moats several times, and the creation of a swimming pool behind the house (now back-filled); the spoil from these events was put in the meadow. This suggests some of the earthworks and undulations may have been largely modified, or even completely created during the 20th century.

Methodology

The ground works involved the excavation of a curvilinear trench with an average width of 3.5m (Figure 1). The trench was cut using an eight ton tracked excavator with a toothless ditching bucket. The subsequent spoil was deposited at the west side of the meadow along the boundary hedge line. The trench varied in depth from 0.2m close to the house, to 0.25m toward the east moat arm and main road. The trench was then filled with crushed concrete hardcore in preparation for a new driveway surface. Where the trench depth was greater than the topsoil, the natural clay was exposed, indicting a lack of any subsoil layers.

Results

The trench did not reveal any archaeological features, and was largely void of any material culture, although remnants of the old driveway were continuously exposed along the northern side of the trench from the road to the house. This original drive constituted two distinct layers; a bright orange, coarse sandy matrix containing small, sub-angular gravels (Figure 2a), overlain by a layer of large flint cobbles, which survived only in two small patches adjacent to The Street and the existing house (Figures 2b and 2c).

Adjacent to the northeast moat arm, the ground had been disturbed by the construction of a drainage pipe leading in to the moat, confirmed by the present owners to date from the last 20 years. An area of mixed soils was noted just west of this pipe, identified as the by-product of cleaning out the moat (Figure 2d). The deposit was a soft, dark blackish-grey slightly sandy, silty clay (a combination of topsoil and silts

dredged from the base of the moat) and contained an assortment of late 19th century and early-mid 20th century material. The finds included brick, tile, ceramic and china fragments, scraps of foil, pieces of bitumen and a complete, but damaged, enamelled iron milk/water jug, (probably dating from the 1940s). The mixture of material demonstrates the moat's use as a natural rubbish pit over the last 150 years. Unfortunately, no material pre-dating the late 19th century was found in this deposit.

The present owners recall the old driveway existing in a state of decay when they bought the property approximately 50 years ago. When investigated, the abovementioned mixed deposit was seen to overlie the old drive, and thus must relate to dredging of the moat during the last 50 years.

Toward the house, a few small fragments of red brick were noted in the topsoil. The house itself was faced with red brick in the late 18th or early 19th century, and an adjacent wall was constructed abutting the house and leading to the northwest moat arm. This wall was probably constructed at a similar time, although a large segment was demolished in the last 50 years to make room for a summer house, which has also since been razed. Evidence for the wall's demolition is provided by small brick fragments seen in the topsoil adjacent to the house.

Discussion

No archaeological features were exposed during the ground works at Moat Farm, Alburgh. Material dredged from the moat implies the meadow and moat arms have been used for the occasional disposal of rubbish for at least 150 years. No finds were kept and the enamelled jug was returned to the present owners.

References

Institute of Geological Sciences. 1976. Geological Survey Ten Mile Map: South Sheet (Quaternary Edition)

Robertson. D. 2010. The Brief. Moat Farm, Alburgh. Norfolk Landscape Archaeology

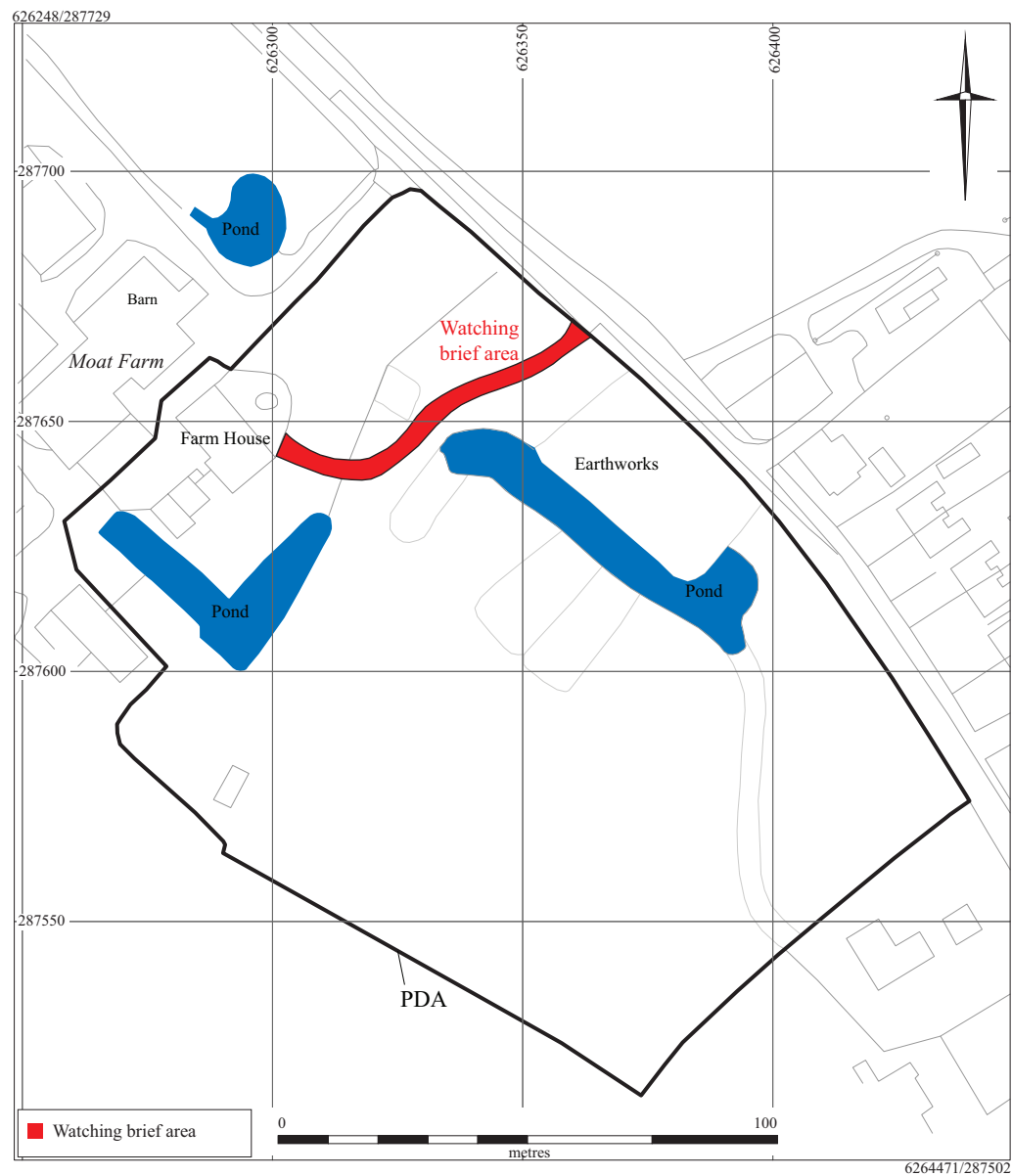
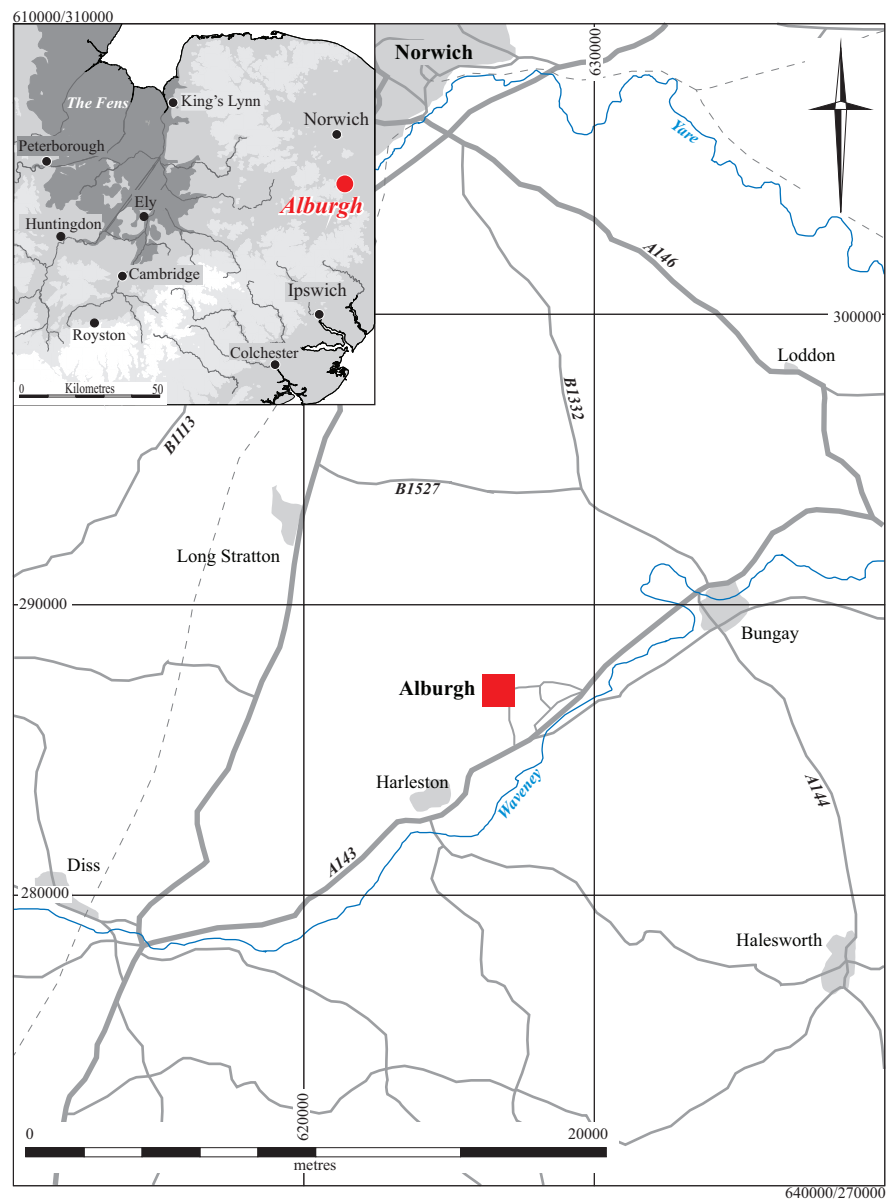


Figure 1. Location Plan



Figure 2a.



Figure 2b.



Figure 2c.



Figure 2d.

Figure 2a. Gravel layer associated with old driveway (natural clay can be seen in foreground)

Figure 2b. Remains of cobbles associated with the old driveway adjacent to the street

Figure 2c. Remains of cobbles associated with the old driveway adjacent to the farmhouse

Figure 2d. Deposit resulting from moat cleaning

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OASIS ID: cambridg3-74415

Project details

Project name	Moat Farm, Alburgh, Norfolk: Aa Archaeological Watching Brief
Short description of the project	A watching brief was undertaken at Moat Farm, Alburgh, Norfolk (NGR TM 26335 87657), to monitor the ground works associated with the construction of a new access route. The watching brief was undertaken in accordance with a brief set out by Norfolk Landscape Archaeology. No archaeology was exposed during the ground works.
Project dates	Start: 15-03-2010 End: 16-03-2010
Previous/future work	No / No
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	None
Current Land use	Grassland Heathland 1 - Heathland
Monument type	MOATED SITE Medieval
Monument type	LISTED FARM HOUSE Post Medieval
Significant Finds	POTTERY Post Medieval
Significant Finds	POTTERY, CBM Modern
Significant Finds	ENAMELLED IRON JUG Modern
Investigation type	'Watching Brief'
Prompt	Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPG16

Project location

Country	England
Site location	NORFOLK SOUTH NORFOLK ALBURGH Moat Farm, Alburgh
Postcode	IP20 0DP
Study area	260.81 Square metres

Site coordinates	TM 626335 287657 51.8947394526 1.817778065920 51 53 41 N 001 49 04 E Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 45.60m Max: 46.49m

Project creators

Name of Organisation	Cambridge Archaeological Unit
Project brief originator	Local Authority Archaeologist and/or Planning Authority/advisory body
Project design originator	Emma Beadsmoore
Project director/manager	Emma Beadsmoore
Project supervisor	Shannon Hogan
Type of sponsor/funding body	Landowner
Name of sponsor/funding body	Melanie Banham

Project archives

Physical Archive Exists?	No
Physical Archive recipient	Cambridge Archaeological Unit
Digital Archive recipient	Cambridge Archaeological Unit
Digital Contents	'Survey'
Digital Media available	'Images raster / digital photography'
Paper Archive recipient	Cambridge Archaeological Unit
Paper Contents	'none'
Paper Media available	'Map','Photograph','Survey '

Project bibliography 1

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
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