

Post-Medieval Ditches
Land off
Norwich Common Road
Wymondham
Norfolk.



Excavation



November 2013

Client:

OA East Report No: 1546
OASIS No: oxfordar3-163105
NGR: TG 12770 02684

**Post-Medieval Ditches at Land off Norwich Common Road,
Wymondham, Norfolk.**

Archaeological Excavation

By Patrick Moan BA

Editor: Richard Mortimer MfA

Illustrator: Lucy Gane BA

Report Date: November 2013

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Date of Works: October 2013
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Grid Ref: TG 12770 02684
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Accession No:

Prepared by: Patrick Moan
Position: Acting Supervisor
Date: 31/10/13

Checked by: Richard Mortimer
Position: Senior Project Manager
Date: 11/11/13
Signed:

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Oxford Archaeology East,

15 Trafalgar Way,
Bar Hill,
Cambridge,
CB23 8SQ

t: 01223 850500
f: 01223 850599
e: oaeast@thehumanjourney.net
w: <http://thehumanjourney.net/oaeast>

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Summary

Between 28/10/13 and 30/10/13, Oxford Archaeology East carried out a small excavation (820 sqm) on land to the south of Norwich Common Road, Wymondham, Norfolk. A large boundary ditch was uncovered along with a subsidiary ditch running perpendicular to the main boundary. Similarly, a small gully ran off the main boundary. All features were dated to the post-medieval period by the presence of a field drain tile found at the base of the larger boundary ditch. The boundary ditches may represent the enclosure of Wymondham common by the local manor. No other features of archaeological interest were recorded on the site and no earlier residual finds were recovered.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 An archaeological excavation was conducted at land south of Norwich Common Road, Wymondham, Norfolk
- 1.1.2 This archaeological excavation was undertaken in accordance with a Brief issued by Mercedes Langham-Lopez & Ken Hamilton of Norfolk County Council Historic Environment Service (NCC; Planning Application pending), supplemented by a Specification prepared by Myk Flitcroft of CgMs.
- 1.1.3 The work was designed to preserve by record (by excavation and recording) the archaeological remains within a specified part of the proposed redevelopment area, as defined by the County brief. The work was undertaken to address a planning condition (ref 20110128, condition 18) and in accordance with the guidelines set out in *National Planning Policy Framework* (Department for Communities and Local Government March 2012).
- 1.1.4 The site archive is currently held by OA East and will be deposited with the appropriate county stores in due course.

1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The site is located on boulder clay geology (Geological Survey of Great Britain (England and Wales), Sheet 161, 1:50,000 series, Norwich). The geology observed upon excavation was a firm orange sandy clay with common flint, gravel and chalk inclusions. Above this was a topsoil with an average depth of 0.35m.
- 1.2.2 The site was located in a field with a gentle rising slope from north-west to south-east at a level of approximately 45m OD to 47m OD.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 A thorough background to the site was recently written for the evaluation of the development area undertaken by NPS Archaeology (Ames 2013) and is replicated below.

Prehistoric to Roman

- 1.3.2 Numerous Prehistoric worked flints have been recovered around the area of development which appear to be dominated by flints of Neolithic and Bronze Age date. To the north-west of the site, a number of Neolithic and Bronze Age flint scrapers and flakes were found in 1979 (NHER 18264). A Neolithic flint axe head and core were found to the north of site during fieldwalking in 1986 (NHER 22754) and in the same general area fieldwalking recovered more worked flints (NHER 21587). A possible Neolithic or Bronze Age flint working site is located just west of the site (NHER 33779). Other finds include a flint hammer stone and Bronze Age chisel (NHERs 22752 and 29286 respectively). Fieldwalking and evaluation of the area of these two finds prior to development recorded a concentration of prehistoric pot boilers and worked flint, as well as a small pit containing burnt flint and Middle Bronze Age pottery (NHER 30872).
- 1.3.3 A linear cropmark seen on aerial photographs (NHER 19725) runs close to the development area and is thought to represent a Roman Road running between the Roman settlements of *Venta Icenorum* (at Caistor St Edmund) and Watton where the

feature joins a second Roman road. Roman pottery has been recovered along the feature's route. To the east of the development area Roman coins have been recovered (NHERs 30070 and 43109), whilst Roman pottery sherds have been found to the south of site (NHER 28410). Other Roman finds in the vicinity include brooches (NHERs 15765, 31300 and 31270) and greyware pottery sherds at NHER 36988.

Saxon to Medieval

- 1.3.4 The development site is situated on land known to have been part of Wymondham Common during the Medieval period before becoming arable farmland in the post-medieval period.
- 1.3.5 Finds from the Saxon to Medieval period are sparse in the vicinity of the development area. One sherd of unglazed 13th century pot was found during fieldwalking near to site (NHER 21588). In the same vicinity NHER 31269 records a late medieval buckle, strap end buckle, five brooches, and two coins recovered during metal detecting.
- 1.3.6 To the south of site Medieval pot sherds were recovered near the A11 bypass (NHER 22827). In the same area NHER 31270 records a Nuremberg jetton, Medieval brooch, ring, vessel, two strap fittings and a box being recovered along with finds of other periods. The adjacent field to the southwest of site has Medieval finds including a thimble, strap end and pottery sherds (NHER 22752). To the east of the development area, along Norwich Common Road, NHER 29286 records a medieval spur fragment. NHER 33080 and 33081 record Medieval coins and metal objects along with other post-medieval finds.
- 1.3.7 To the northwest of site NHER 36988 records a Late Saxon bridle cheek piece, four sherds of Medieval pottery, two early post-medieval buckles and Medieval coins including one of Henry I along with 15th and 16th Century belt mounts, all recovered during metal detecting.

Post-Medieval to Modern

- 1.3.8 There are many post-medieval findspots in the vicinity of the development area, though they have little bearing on interpretation of the area. Cartographic work suggests that a post-medieval windmill may have been located on the southern side of Norwich Common Road, with it being seen on a 1797 map situated within the middle of Wymondham Common. Post-medieval finds from nearby include one sherd of red earthenware glazed pottery recovered during construction of the A11.
- 1.3.9 To the east of the development area, NHER 9151 records the tree known as "Kett's Oak" which is reputed to be the tree where, in the mid 16th century, Robert Kett addressed rebels defiant of the enclosure of common lands.
- 1.3.10 Several historic buildings are found nearby to the development, including a 19th Century brick farmhouse (NHER 40319) to the east of site. The building was dated to 1806 during survey before demolition. Also nearby, NHER 9455 records the position of Downham Grove House, dated to the 17th or 18th Century. The house is thought to have originally been a late Medieval moated farmstead of manorial complex.

Evaluation

- 1.3.11 In June 2011 an archaeological evaluation was conducted by NPS Archaeology ahead of an application for planning permission to develop on the site. Out of a total of 86 trenches excavated, eighteen recorded archaeological features, mostly of undated ditches and pits (Ames 2013).

- 1.3.12 The ditches excavated during the evaluation were on the whole undated, although the alignment of some were thought to possibly indicate a pre-medieval landscape. Similarly, three potential fire pits were excavated, although their use or function remains unclear.
- 1.3.13 A total of ten Early Neolithic flints were recovered from the topsoil of seven trenches. Despite being unstratified they do contribute to the understanding of the location and nature of prehistoric activity around Wymondham. Other finds recovered from the evaluation were two sherds of pottery and five fragments of ceramic building material, all from ditch fills. These finds were dated to the post-medieval period, apart from one sherd of micaceous fine sandy coarseware pottery, which was dated to the 13th to 14th century.

1.4 Acknowledgements

- 1.4.1 The author would like to thank Persimmon Homes Ltd who funded the archaeological works, and Myk Flitcroft of CgMs Consulting who liaised with the developer and visited the site.
- 1.4.2 The site was monitored and visited by James Albone, Planning Archaeologist for Norfolk County Council and managed by Richard Mortimer and Paul Sperry. Excavation and recording of the archaeology was undertaken by the author and Robin Webb. Machine excavation was carried out by Holmes Plant Hire.

2 AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 The original aims of the project were set out in the Brief (Hamilton & Langham-Lopez 2013) and Specification (Flitcroft 2013).
- 2.1.2 The main aims of this excavation were
- To mitigate the impact of the development on the surviving archaeological remains. The development would have severely impacted upon these remains and as a result a full excavation was required, targeting the areas of archaeological interest highlighted by the previous phases of evaluation.
 - To preserve the archaeological evidence contained within the excavation area by record and to attempt a reconstruction of the history and use of the site.

2.2 Site Specific Research Objectives

- 2.2.1 The excavation of a 40m x 20m area was centred on a ditch located during the evaluation in trench 23 (see Ames 2013 for trench plan). This was to establish the continuation and form of the feature. The main objective was to confirm if this feature was a pre-medieval enclosure or boundary that was not seen within other evaluation trenches.
- 2.2.2 The area was to be excavated and extended accordingly to fully define and record the ditch and any associated archaeological features.

2.3 Methodology

- 2.3.1 The methodology used followed that outlined in the Brief (Hamilton & Langham-Lopez 2013) and detailed in the Specification (Flitcroft 2013).
- 2.3.2 Machine excavation was carried out by a 13 tonne tracked excavator using a 2m wide flat bladed ditching bucket. The machine was under the constant supervision of a suitably qualified and experienced archaeologist.
- 2.3.3 Spoil, exposed surfaces and features were scanned with a metal detector. All metal-detected and hand-collected finds were retained for inspection, other than those which were obviously modern.
- 2.3.4 All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using OA East's *pro-forma* sheets. Plans and sections were recorded at appropriate scales and colour and monochrome photographs were taken of all relevant features and deposits.
- 2.3.5 The site and all features were located and recorded by the author using a Leica 1200 GPS.
- 2.3.6 Site conditions were generally overcast and wet, with some sunny spells. Machine excavation was undertaken during heavy rain and strong winds, with hand excavation of ditches undertaken during a sunny and dry period. However, it was still possible to identify and characterise the surviving archaeological features and deposits within the site more than adequately.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Introduction

- 3.1.1 Due to the paucity of archaeological evidence from the site, results will be presented on a feature by feature basis with context descriptions.
- 3.1.2 A total area of 820 square metres was excavated to define the large ditch recorded at evaluation. Once open, part of a boundary ditch system was recorded, with the main boundary aligned northeast to southwest, running parallel with the nearby Norwich Common Road. One subsidiary ditch was seen, on a perpendicular alignment with the main boundary.

3.2 Ditch 6

- 3.2.1 Boundary ditch **6** (plates 1 and 3, fig. 2) (**6** filled by 5, 3, 2 and 1, **10** filled with 11, 12 and 13) was aligned northeast to southwest. The feature varied in width from 1.95m to 2.66m and had a depth of between 0.94m and 0.98m. The profile of the feature varied from a wide U to a stepped U shape. A recut (**4**) was observed in one intervention. The secondary fills (2, 3, 4, 11 and 12) were a mid yellowish brown silty clay with common angular flint inclusions from which CBM, a metal artefact and fragments of animal bone were recovered. The tertiary silting in the top of the feature (fills 13 and 1) was a dark yellowish brown loamy clay with moderate charcoal inclusions, from which pottery, an iron artefact and CBM were recovered.

3.3 Ditch 7

- 3.3.1 Subsidiary boundary ditch **7** (filled by 8 and 9) was aligned perpendicular to ditch **6** on a northwest to southeast alignment (plate 2). The feature was 1.2m in width and 0.58m deep with a U shaped profile. The fills were a mid to dark yellowish brown silty clay with moderate angular flint inclusions from which CBM was recovered.

3.4 Gully 14

- 3.4.1 Gully **14** (filled by 15) was perpendicular to Ditch **6** and aligned northwest to southeast, terminating within the excavation area. The feature was 0.28m wide and 0.3m deep with a flat bottomed U profile. The fill was a mid brownish yellow silty clay with moderate chalk and angular flint inclusions from which no finds were recovered.

4 FINDS SUMMARY

4.1 Pottery

4.1.1 One sherd of pottery (7g) was recovered from the tertiary silting of ditch **6**. The highly abraded sherd was a black glazeware, dated late 17th to 18th century, which was possibly part of a dish.

4.2 Ceramic Building Material

4.2.1 Three fragments of CBM with a total weight of 499g were recovered from the fills of ditch **6**. The table below shows the quantification by context.

<i>Context</i>	<i>Fabric</i>	<i>Form</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>wt(g)</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Spot-date</i>
1	msc	Field Drain	1	48	Curving fragment	p-med.
5	msc	Field Drain	1	449	Straight fragment of Horseshoe drain	p-med.
8	msc	Field Drain?	1	2	Highly abraded	p-med.

4.2.2 All fragments of field drain had a medium sandy fabric with streaks of white clay (msc). This fabric is typical of post-medieval CBM from the region (Ames 2013). The horseshoe style of field drain also dates to between the early 18th to mid 19th century, supporting the other spot-dates based on fabric type.

4.3 Metal Artefacts

4.3.1 Two iron artefacts were recovered from ditch **6** with a total weight of 147g. The first artefact, from fill 13, was 120mm in length with a triangular cross section and weighed 101g. It is unclear what purpose the artefact had although it is most likely part of some post-medieval farming equipment, possibly a harrow.

4.3.2 The second artefact, from fill 2, was 70mm in length with a flat rectangular profile and weighed 46g. The artefact was too highly oxidised to be diagnostic.

4.4 Faunal Remains

4.4.1 Two small fragments of animal bone (1g) were recovered from fill 2 in ditch **6**. Due to the small size and highly fragmented extent of the assemblage, nothing of diagnostic use can be inferred from the remains.

5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Post-Medieval Field Boundaries

- 5.1.1 The finds recovered from the base of ditch 6, and the ditches alignment with Norwich Common Road to the northwest, demonstrate that this field boundary system is post-medieval in date.
- 5.1.2 Looking at historic maps of the area, the boundary ditches recorded on site must have fallen into disuse and a new system of ditches been cut prior to 1882, as the Ordnance Survey map of that date shows a field with boundaries that are very similar to the current field.
- 5.1.3 The ditch system uncovered during excavation appears to be part of the initial boundaries for the post-medieval field systems put in place during the enclosure of Wymondham common lands, likely during the 17th and 18th century. A more accurate date for the enclosure of the land is not able to be discerned as reclamation of land took place prior to Parliamentary enforcement, and even during the use of private Acts of Parliament in the 18th century, it has been noted that reclamation of village land could take many decades due to landowners' protestations (Crossley 1990).

5.2 Significance

- 5.2.1 Overall, despite the lack of archaeological evidence from this site, it still gives some insight into the development of agricultural land around Wymondham during the post-medieval period. The evidence also suggests that prior to the medieval/post-medieval period, the immediate vicinity of the site had seen very little, if any, human activity or habitation.

APPENDIX A. CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Context</i>	<i>Cut</i>	<i>Master Number</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Feature Type</i>
1	4	6	Fill	Ditch
2	4	6	Fill	Ditch
3	4	6	Fill	Ditch
4	4	6	Cut	Ditch
5	6	6	Fill	Ditch
6	6	6	Cut	Ditch
7	7	7	Cut	Ditch
8	7	7	Fill	Ditch
9	7	7	Fill	Ditch
10	10	6	Cut	Ditch
11	10	6	Fill	Ditch
12	10	6	Fill	Ditch
13	10	6	Fill	Ditch
14	14	14	Cut	Gully
15	14	14	Fill	Gully

APPENDIX B. BIBLIOGRAPHY

- | | | |
|---------------------------------|------|---|
| Ames, J. | 2013 | Archaeological Evaluation at Land South of Norwich Road, Wymondham, Norfolk. |
| Crossley, D. | 1990 | Post-Medieval Archaeology in Britain |
| Hamilton, K & Langham-Lopez, M. | 2013 | Generic Brief for Archaeological Excavation |
| Flitcroft, M. | 2013 | Specification for Archaeological Excavation, Land South of Norwich Road, Wymondham. |

APPENDIX C. OASIS REPORT FORM

All fields are required unless they are not applicable.

Project Details

OASIS Number	oxfordar3-163105		
Project Name	Post Medieval Boundary Ditches at Land South of Norwich Common Road, Wymondham, Norfolk		
Project Dates (fieldwork) Start	28-10-2013	Finish	30-10-2013
Previous Work (by OA East)	No	Future Work	No

Project Reference Codes

Site Code	XNFNRW13	Planning App. No.	
HER No.	ENF132616	Related HER/OASIS No.	ENF126711

Type of Project/Techniques Used

Prompt

Please select all techniques used:

<input type="checkbox"/> Field Observation (periodic visits)	<input type="checkbox"/> Part Excavation	<input type="checkbox"/> Salvage Record
<input type="checkbox"/> Full Excavation (100%)	<input type="checkbox"/> Part Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Systematic Field Walking
<input type="checkbox"/> Full Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Recorded Observation	<input type="checkbox"/> Systematic Metal Detector Survey
<input type="checkbox"/> Geophysical Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Remote Operated Vehicle Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Test Pit Survey
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Open-Area Excavation	<input type="checkbox"/> Salvage Excavation	<input type="checkbox"/> Watching Brief

Monument Types/Significant Finds & Their Periods

List feature types using the [NMR Monument Type Thesaurus](#) and significant finds using the [MDA Object type Thesaurus](#) together with their respective periods. If no features/finds were found, please state "none".

Monument	Period	Object	Period
Ditch	Post Medieval 1540 to 1901	CBM	Post Medieval 1540 to 1901
	Select period...	Pottery	Post Medieval 1540 to 1901
	Select period...		Select period...

Project Location

County	Norfolk	Site Address (including postcode if possible)
District	South Norfolk	Land South of Norwich Common Road Wymondham Norfolk
Parish	Wymondham	
HER	Norfolk HER	
Study Area	820 sqm	National Grid Reference TG 12770 02684

Project Originators

Organisation	OA EAST
Project Brief Originator	James Albone (Norfolk CC)
Project Design Originator	Myk Flitcroft (CgMs)
Project Manager	Richard Mortimer (OA East)
Supervisor	Patrick Moan

Project Archives

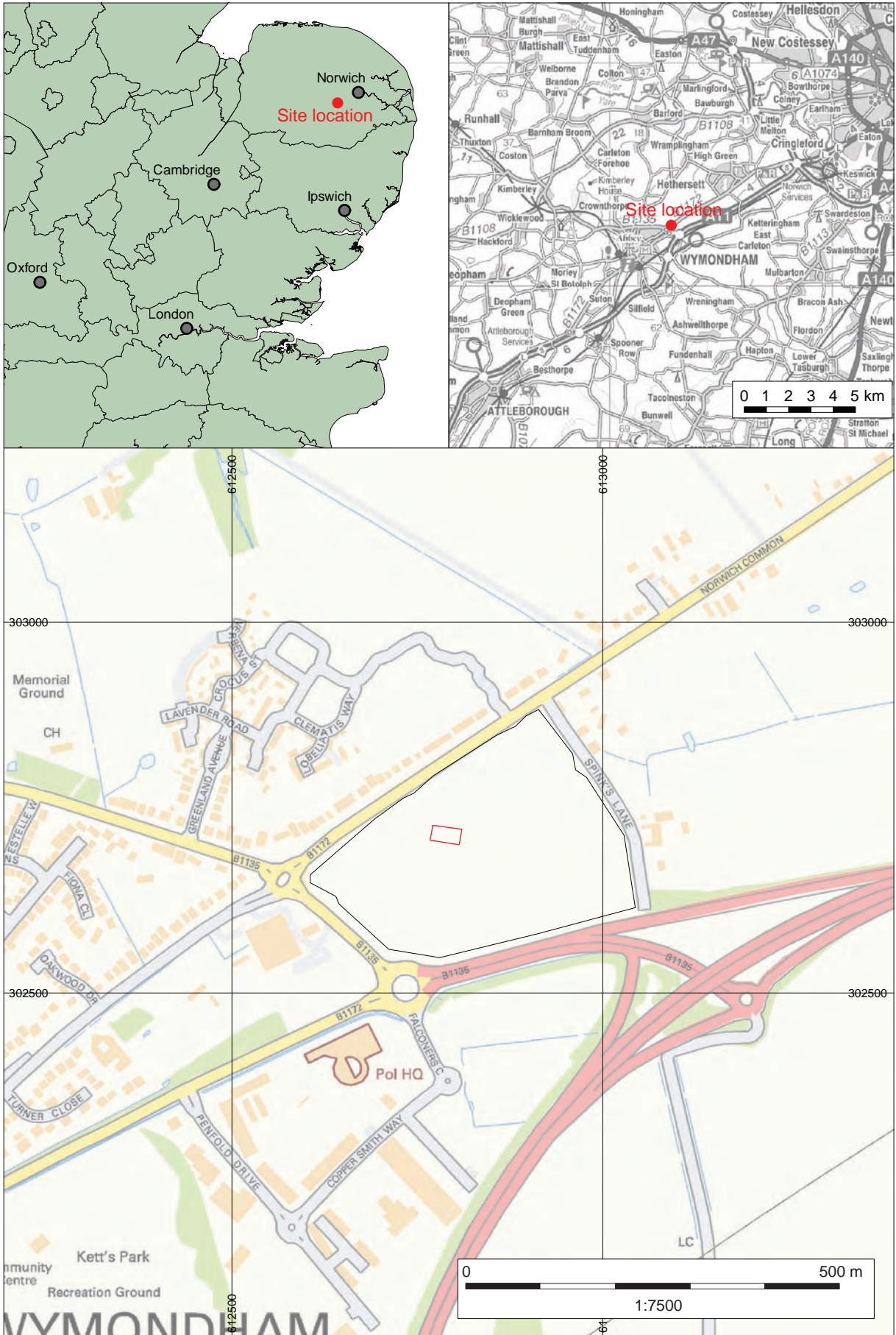
Physical Archive	Digital Archive	Paper Archive
Norfolk Museum & Archaeology Services	OA East	Norfolk Museum & Archaeology Services
ENF132616	XNFRW13	ENF132616

Archive Contents/Media

	Physical Contents	Digital Contents	Paper Contents
Animal Bones	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ceramics	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Environmental	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Glass	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Human Bones	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Industrial	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Worked Bone	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Worked Stone/Lithic	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
None	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Digital Media	Paper Media
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<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Text	<input type="checkbox"/> Microfilm
<input type="checkbox"/> Virtual Reality	<input type="checkbox"/> Misc.
	<input type="checkbox"/> Research/Notes
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Photos
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Plans
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Report
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sections
	<input type="checkbox"/> Survey

Notes:



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Figure 1: Site location showing excavation area (red) within land boundary (black).

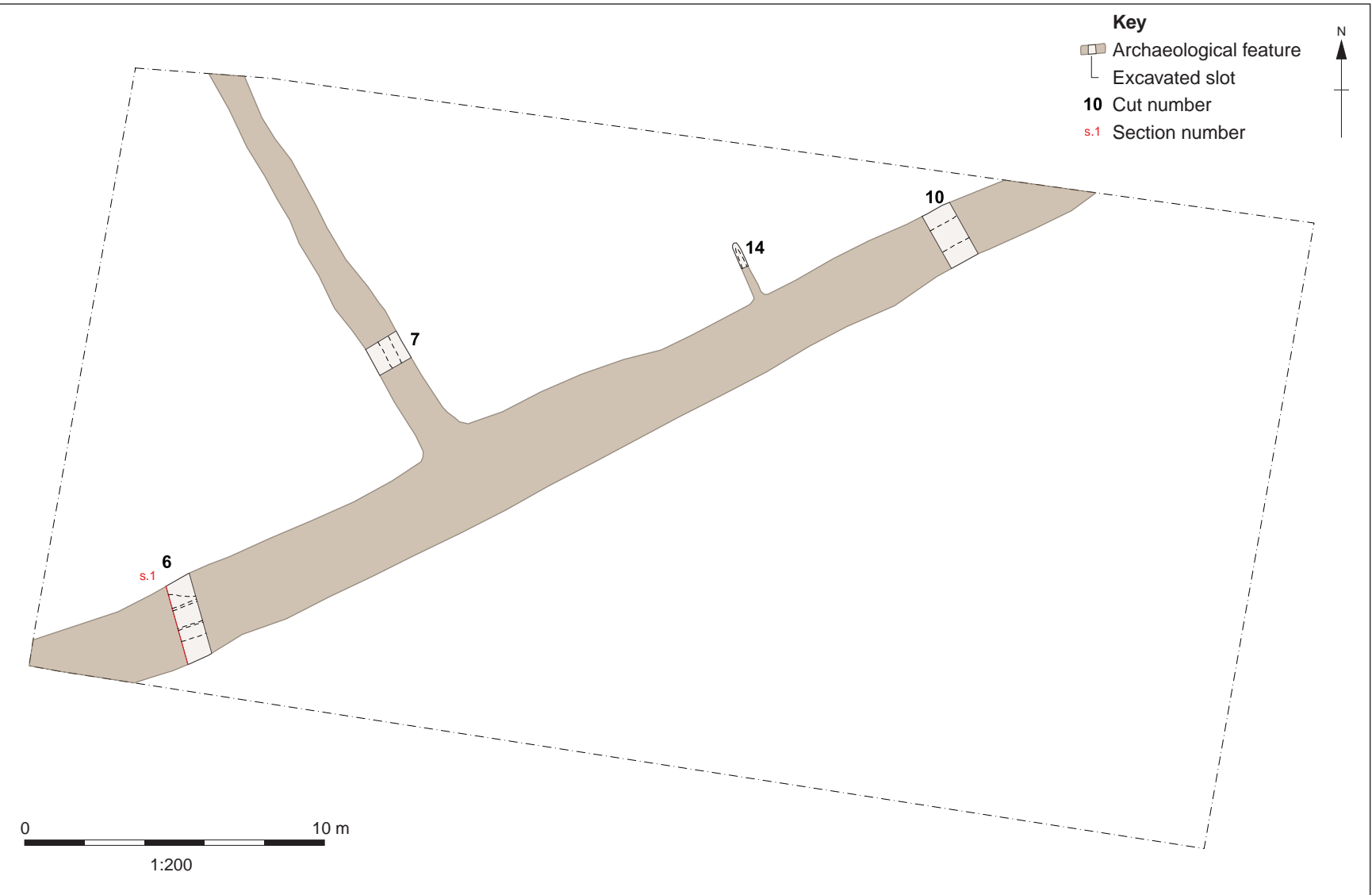


Figure 2: Site plan

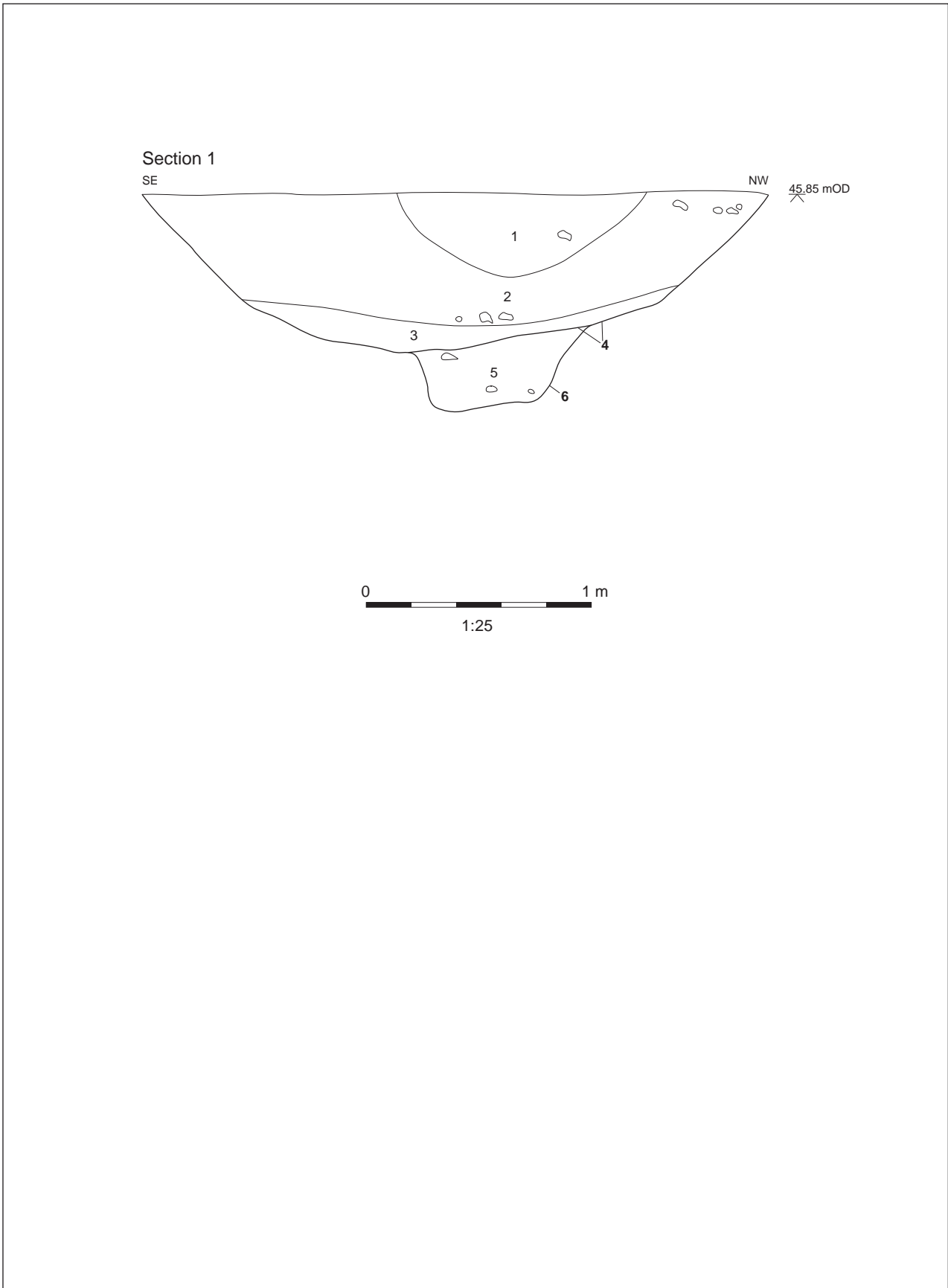


Figure 3: Section 1



Plate 1: Section of ditch 6



Plate 2: Section of ditch 7



Plate 3: Section of ditch 10



Plate 4: Area under excavation