

Archaeology Update
A Report by the County Archaeologist

Summary

This report describes recent work by Norfolk Landscape Archaeology, focussing upon work in Breckland.

1. NLA 2008 ANNUAL REVIEW

- 1.1 NLA has recently published an **Annual Review** on its work for 2008. Copies of the Review will be available at the meeting.

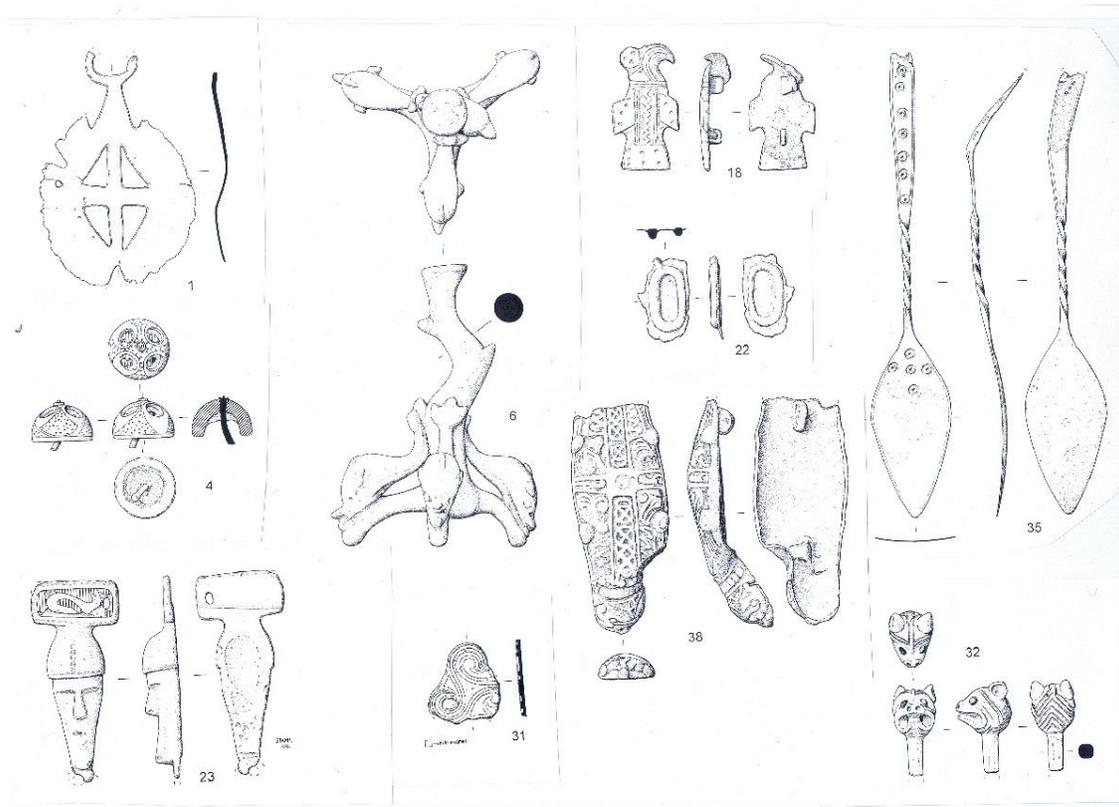
2. RECENT EXCAVATIONS AND FINDS

Recent Finds

- 2.1 Important artefacts identified and recorded recently include:-

1. An elaborate Late Bronze Age razor, from **Cranwich**
 4. An Iron Age hollow cast hemispherical 'button' with red enamel decoration, from **Holme Hale**. Of uncertain function, the closest parallels are from sword pommels.
 6. The base of a Romano-British lamp stand in the shape of a branch with three legs surmounted by dolphins, from **Oxborough**.
 18. An Early Saxon bird brooch, decorated with stamped dots and moulded details, from **Shropham**.
 22. An Early Saxon unfinished oval buckle frame, with casting sprue and a sheet of metal filling the inner space. Such evidence of manufacture is rarely encountered. Late 5th to 7th century. From **Beachamwell**.
 23. A flat-backed mount in the form of a bust with helmet or hat surmounted by a flat plate with an S-shaped serpent in a field of red enamel. Probably 7th century. From **Shipdham**.
 31. A small Middle Saxon trefoil mount, with a triskele in a white enamel field. Probably from a hanging bowl. From **Great Dunham**.
 32. Part of an elaborate 8th century gilt pin with an animal head (bear or cat?) from **Narford**.
 35. A Middle Saxon spoon, with twisted stem and cruciform ring-and-dot on the bowl. From Brandon Road, **Thetford**, and the second to be found on that site.
 38. A Scandinavian cast oval brooch with elaborate moulded decoration from **Great Dunham**. The first brooch of the type to be recorded in England, it dates from the 8th century, many decades before any Viking settlement.
- 2.2 An important coin find was a further 32 groats of Henry VII (1) and Henry VIII (31) from **Cranworth**. These were found by metal detecting topsoil

which had been removed from the same source as a pot containing around 300 groats found in 1996.



Recent Excavations

- 2.3 At **Arlington Way, Thetford**, work is underway excavating and recording a small area left undisturbed and not built upon previously as part of the 'Melford Meadows' development. This appears to be part of the focus of the Roman settlement in this area, with complex deposits including possible structures.
- 2.4 An Archaeological Watching Brief at **Thetford Priory** on new security fencing recorded part of a medieval wall aligned with a section of wall which forms a spur attached to the priory infirmary, and which must pre-date Miller's map of 1720. The animal bone assemblage included an unusually large number of bird bones, including a large sea bird such as a gannet.
- 2.5 At **Jubilee Close, Thetford**, excavation has examined and recorded the ditch and bank of the Saxon defences just to the west of London Road. The ditch was 8m wide and 3m deep, and the bank was 1.3m high. Dating of the basal fill of the ditch by OSL (optically stimulated luminescence) and C14 suggests a date in the late 10th century.
- 2.6 At **Church Close, Shipdham**, excavation has revealed and recorded Saxon and medieval settlement around the church. Of particular interest and importance is the evidence of Middle Saxon occupation, with two structures, coins, a pin, a brooch and pottery.

- 2.7 At **Riddlesworth / Garboldisham**, a section across the Devil's Ditch linear earthwork provided an opportunity for an OSL date of the ditch. This suggests that the original ditch was dug in the Iron Age and it was recut during the Middle Saxon period.
- 2.8 Historic Building Recording at Homestead Farm, **Ashill**, recorded an unusually complete, small and well-preserved clay lump cattle barn and yard complex of mid 19th century date.
- 2.9 At Norwich Road, **Watton** (Tesco site), evaluation trenching recorded medieval deposits including a buried soil, posthole and gully, and 19th century structures, postholes and animal burials.

3. THETFORD HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT SURVEY (THES)

- 3.1 The THES project is funded by Moving Thetford Forward, as part of the Thetford Growth Point project, with support from English Heritage and Norfolk County Council. It is currently in progress.
- 3.2 The survey will examine the entire parish of Thetford and is designed to inform on the Historic Environment to assist in the production and use of the Thetford Development Plan Document and the Thetford Area Action Plan. All of these documents will become part of the Thetford Urban Design Framework. The Extensive Urban Archaeological Assessment will utilise, inform and build on a sister survey being produced at the same time, the Thetford Historic Buildings Survey, which aims to produce a baseline survey of pre-1914 buildings and structures, conservation area and management plan. All of these documents will produce design guidance on the integration of new urban extensions into the existing townscape.
- 3.3 The survey aims to characterise and assess the character and value of Thetford's historic environment and its potential to contribute to a sustainable social and economic future for Thetford. The resultant GIS and assessment will provide information for archaeological assessments of specific development sites, master plans and strategic planning. The project will also provide an educational resource for public information and involvement.
- 3.4 The survey will aim to place the historic environment at the centre of an effective planning system and creates opportunities for local consultation and involvement. This survey will draw together available archaeological and historical knowledge about the historic development of the parish. This will also highlight gaps in knowledge and will provide guidance for future research and management.
- 3.5 The THES Project objectives are:-
 - To provide an assessed inventory of the archaeological and historical resources within the parish of Thetford.
 - To document the extent, character, quality and distribution of past antiquarian and archaeological work, and other sources of information relevant to archaeological interpretation and understanding within the historic centre.
 - To synthesise the archaeological and historical data by period.

- To assess the significance and potential of Thetford's archaeological resource with reference to national and regional research priorities.
- To categorise the nature and extent of Thetford's historic environment through the use, mapping and interpretation of historic maps and by utilising Historic Landscape Characterisation methodology.
- To provide an academic framework for the development of archaeological and planning guidance for Thetford.
- To produce a project archive and a publicly accessible report summarising the project.
- To produce appropriate outreach material publicising the project and its findings, including museum material and additional website material.

4. THE HERITAGE PROTECTION BILL

- 4.1 The Heritage Protection Bill did not feature in the Queen's Speech in December 2008 as the historic environment sector had anticipated, and it now seems very unlikely that this legislation will be progressed.
- 4.2 The Bill's aims were to streamline consent regimes by unifying the designation of historic sites, to make the maintenance of Historic Environment Records a statutory requirement and to delegate powers to local authorities to grant consent for works affecting archaeology.
- 4.3 Recognising that the Bill is unlikely to reappear in its current form in the foreseeable future, English Heritage has embarked upon a programme of reform which does not rely upon new legislation and which: -
- Widens public involvement
 - Creates an efficient system
 - Improves heritage protection
- 4.4 Thus, even without the Bill, some areas of reform can still be progressed. These include:-
- Developing a transparent system – English Heritage will make more information available on how decisions about designated sites are made.
 - Investing in training and capacity building within the historic environment sector in order to support local authorities and encourage best practise.
 - Completing a comprehensive assessment of local authority resources to help strengthen advocacy for a better-resourced sector.
 - Continuing to develop Historic Environment Records
 - Bringing together all separate registers for listing, scheduling and registration on the national online database the *Heritage Gateway* (members of the Advisory Committee may wish to note that the Norfolk Historic Environment Record is available through the *Heritage Gateway* as well as our own website the *Norfolk Heritage Explorer*).
- 4.5 Some of the proposed reforms that **cannot** now be implemented include:-
- A single statutory register of all designated sites (scheduled monuments, listed buildings, designated parks and gardens, battlefields and marine sites)
 - Replacing multiple consents by a single Heritage Asset Consent
 - Passing responsibility for designation from DCMS to English Heritage
 - A new right of appeal against designation

- Local authorities having powers to grant consent for works affecting archaeology
- Statutory status for historic environment records
- Merging Conservation Area Consent with Planning Permission
- Creating Heritage Partnership Agreements

5. A NEW PLANNING POLICY STATEMENT (PPS) FOR THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

- 5.1 Despite the absence of new legislation, many positive changes under Heritage Protection Reform can be delivered by a new policy framework. A new PPS for the historic environment will provide the overarching context of reform of the heritage protection system.
- 5.2 DCMS, CLG and English Heritage are working on a new PPS to replace PPGs 15 (Planning & the Historic Environment) and 16 (Archaeology & Planning), the current government planning policy guidance for the historic environment. DCMS, CLG and English Heritage are committed to producing a clear and up to date policy statement that brings together the various heritage protection regimes and underlines their essential place in the planning context.
- 5.3 The new PPS will be accompanied by a Good Practice Guide to fill out more detail.
- 5.4 The government has indicated that a 3-month consultation on the draft PPS will start in the summer of 2009.
- 5.5 The sector anticipates that the PPS will be a very high level statement, and that much of the very necessary and important detail will be found in the subsequent guidance notes.
- 5.6 It is considered imperative that the requirement for evaluation of development sites prior to determination of a planning application by a local authority should not be in any way diluted.
- 5.7 The PPS is also an opportunity for the inclusion of helpful statements about the post-fieldwork elements of any Programme of Archaeological Work, including assessment, analysis, report, publication and deposition of archive.

6. HERITAGE AT RISK

- 6.1 English Heritage has embarked on a project to contact all owners of scheduled monuments and historic landscapes at risk to find out how they can best help them to repair the national treasures in their care. This is in advance of the publication of this year's Heritage at Risk register on 23 June.
- 6.2 The 2008 Heritage at Risk Survey showed that 1 in 5 monuments is at high risk from threats such as tree and scrub growth, burrowing animals and ploughing.
- 6.3 HAR reports recognise, quite rightly, that most owners of heritage sites in England (and in Norfolk) do a fantastic job of looking after them. In Norfolk, this is greatly helped by the NM&AS' **Norfolk Monuments Management Project**,

which not only provides information and advice to farmers and landowners, but helps owners to secure English Heritage grants to help with proactive management of important sites.

7. ILLEGAL METAL DETECTING

7.1 Norfolk is one of the richest areas for archaeological finds, but it is also one of the worst areas in the country for illegal metal detecting according to a report published in February.

7.2 A 'Nighthawking Survey' by Oxford Archaeology for English Heritage has looked into the problem of illegal detecting or 'nighthawking' and, after Yorkshire, Norfolk is the county most affected, slightly ahead of Suffolk and Essex. Of 240 sites reported as being raided between 1995 and 2008, 23 are in Norfolk. These include a number of protected Scheduled Ancient Monuments.

7.3 The Norfolk Museums & Archaeology Service has been aware of this problem for many years, after a number of Roman sites around the county were targeted. In Breckland, the Roman site at **Saham Toney** was being raided on a regular basis. Liaison with local metal-detectorists, landowners and the police has resulted in a number of successful prosecutions, with looters being convicted of theft, attempted theft, going equipped or detecting on a protected archaeological site.



7.4 Due to under-reporting by farmers, landowners and responsible metal detectorists the full extent of the illegal activity in Norfolk is unknown. As well as being a serious problem for farmers and landowners, every object that is looted without being recorded means that another piece of vital information is lost forever.

7.5 A letter has been written to Norfolk's Chief Constable, suggesting that NLA, Norfolk Police and other countryside organisations should work together to combat this crime.

8. NORFOLK HEALTH, HERITAGE AND BIODIVERSITY WALKS

8.1 The aim of the Norfolk Health, Heritage and Biodiversity Walks project (by the Department of Planning and Transportation) is to encourage people to enjoy local walks on a regular basis. Using the guides, people will be able to discover a variety of local footpaths and explore their local environment, experiencing the wealth of heritage and wildlife Norfolk has to offer.

- 8.2 The project is in the process of developing 150 circular walks throughout the county in and around Norfolk's market towns and villages and surrounding countryside. These walks will provide people with opportunities for regular exercise on attractive and interesting routes of varying distance and challenge.
- 8.3 In liaison with P&T, NLA has been able to provide information about the 'heritage' aspects of these walks.
- 8.4 A walks booklet has recently been completed for **Thetford**, and a second is currently in preparation for **Dereham**.

9. THE NORFOLK HERITAGE EXPLORER

- 9.1 The online version of the Norfolk Historic Environment Record – the Norfolk Heritage Explorer – was Highly Commended at the 2008 British Archaeological Awards, held at the British Museum in November.
- 9.2 The biennial Awards are Britain's most prestigious archaeological awards, showcasing the very best in British archaeology and the Awards Ceremony is a central event in the archaeological calendar. Established in 1976, the BAAs have grown to encompass twelve Awards, covering every aspect of British archaeology.
- 9.3 The Norfolk Heritage Explorer was just one of three Finalists in the Best Archaeological Information Communication technology Project Award, supported by the Association for Industrial Archaeology.
- 9.4 Within the context of taking forward aspects of heritage protection reform (now probably without legislation), English Heritage has been looking for examples of unique or particularly successful areas of historic environment-based development achieved by local authorities. The aim is to enable Local Authorities to showcase areas of historic environment information development and function that could be used as exemplars to others across the sector.
- 9.5 The Norfolk Heritage Explorer website has been selected by English Heritage as a Local Authority SMR-HER Development Access and Outreach Case Study. This will lead to a publication featuring the Norfolk Heritage Explorer website, in hard copy and also available electronically, aimed at audiences including elected members, Heritage Champions and planners, the general public, and of course historic environment specialists.

10. NORFOLK HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT RECORD (NHER) AND NORFOLK AIR PHOTO LIBRARY (NAPL) (Alice Cattermole, Heather Hamilton and Hazel White)

- 10.1 In the last six months 610 new monument records have been added to the HER and 4819 records have been modified.
- 10.2 There have been 201 enquiries, 88 of which were commercial enquiries. Some of these have been requests for large amounts of HER data.
- 10.3 Alice Cattermole attended the **Breckland Geodiversity Day** which provided a useful opportunity to forge links with other organisations including members

of the Norfolk Geodiversity Partnership and the School of Earth Sciences at UEA. Alice also gave a presentation on the HER and the Archaeology of **Garboldisham** to the Garboldisham Local History Society. This is a relatively new local history group, and we hope to work closely with them in future while they investigate the history and archaeology of their parish. Alice also attended the **Wayland** Heritage Launch, which raised awareness of the resources available from the HER for local research groups. Several groups from this project will be visiting us over the next few months to consult records and aerial photographs for their local area.

11. ARCHAEOLOGY AND PLANNING and COUNTRYSIDE ADVICE (Ken Hamilton, David Robertson, James Albone)

Archaeology and Planning

11.1 The Section's **Development Control** work continues. This includes NLA's weekly planning meetings, work on planning cases, preparing briefs for archaeological work and monitoring archaeological contractors.

Norfolk Monuments Management Project

11.2 The project currently has fifty-one active Section 17 agreements. During the financial year 2008-2009, the project spent around £19,000 on these (this funding is provided by English heritage).

11.3 Twenty-six site visits have been carried out to examine the condition of archaeological sites covered by Section 17 management agreements. A further twelve visits are due to be carried out shortly.

11.4 At Hangour Hill barrow, **Beachamwell**, under a renewed Section 17 agreement, all the scrub has been cleared and a generous buffer zone has been established.



11.5 Ownership of **Thetford Castle** has recently been transferred from Breckland Council to Thetford Town Council. Discussions over future management of the site are in progress.

Higher Level Stewardship (HLS)

- 11.6 To date Norfolk Landscape Archaeology (NLA) has received 300 HLS consultations, one of the highest numbers of any county in the country. Norfolk remains the busiest county in the Eastern Region.
- 11.7 In the last six months thirty-eight consultations have been received. This represents a considerable increase in requests, compared to seventeen received between April and September 2008.
- 11.8 Twenty-nine consultation reports have been issued since October. Important and interesting holdings consulted on include:
- Rowley Farm, **Cockley Cley** – a small holding with a round barrow
 - **Swanton Morley** Farms – including a deserted village and moat.
 - **Cranwich** Heath – proposed heathland restoration, containing six possible barrows and part of the Fossditch.

12. NORFOLK NATIONAL MAPPING PROGRAMME (Sophie Tremlett, Sarah Horlock, Ellen Bales)

- 12.1 The Norwich, Thetford and A11 corridor project is now well underway. The first Steering and Liaison Group meeting for this project was held at the Great Hospital in Norwich in January. This comprised presentations from each team member, covering the background to the project and results so far, followed by questions and an opportunity to 'meet and greet'. The event was well-attended by a variety of individuals, including curatorial, commercial and aerial archaeologists, local planners, and representatives from parish councils and local interest groups. Feedback has been extremely positive.
- 12.2 At the current time, the project is focussing its efforts on the area around Norwich, and the Roman town at Caistor St Edmund, and the project will progress into the A11 Corridor and Breckland/Thetford during 2009.
- 12.3 Looking ahead, the NMP Team are liaising with English Heritage, the Forestry Commission and the Ministry of Defence with regard to a future project covering the rest of The Brecks (in Norfolk and Suffolk).

13. IDENTIFICATION AND RECORDING SERVICE FOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL FINDS AND PORTABLE ANTIQUITIES SCHEME (Andrew Rogerson, Steven Ashley, Erica Darch, Hazel White, Adrian Marsden)

- 13.1 In the last six months, 69 cases of Treasure were reported.
- 13.2 As well as 35 visits to five metal detector clubs and liaison with many individuals, I&RS staff have also been involved in artefact handling and training sessions (including NM&AS Interpreters) and talks on recent finds to local societies.

14. CONCLUSION

- 14.1 During the period covered by this report, Norfolk Landscape Archaeology has continued to work with Breckland Council and other agencies to protect and manage the historic environment, to maintain and enhance the Norfolk

Historic Environment Record and Norfolk Air Photo Library, to identify and record finds, to deal with enquiries and to engage in outreach. The National Mapping Programme, Portable Antiquities Scheme and Thetford Historic Environment Survey projects all continue to make excellent progress.

15. RECOMMENDATION

That the Report be noted.

Officer Contact

If you have any questions about matters contained in this paper please get in touch with:-

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