



# Chapelfield Road, Stalham

## Archaeological Evaluation Report

January 2017

**Client: Overton and Sons**

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SAFETY  
SCHEMES IN  
PROCUREMENT

## Chapelfield Road, Stalham

### *Archaeological Evaluation Report*

*Written by Ashley Pooley*

*With illustrations by Charlotte Walton BA MCIfA*

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## Summary

An evaluation comprising a single trial trench was carried out on 10th January 2016 at land approximately 300m to the northwest of Chapel Field Farm, Stalham, Norfolk.

The presence of a ring-ditch, previously discovered through aerial photography, was confirmed. As a result of limited excavation by hand and by machine, it is thought that this is of Neolithic or Early Bronze Age date, a small quantity of burnt flint and worked flint was recovered from its single fill. No features were encountered within its interior.

## Acknowledgements

Oxford Archaeology would like to thank Overton and Sons, particularly Richard Overton, for commissioning this project. Thanks is also extended to James Albone who monitored the work on behalf of Norfolk Historic Environment Service for their advice and guidance.

The project was managed for Oxford Archaeology by Aileen Connor. The fieldwork was carried out by Ashley Pooley. Survey and digitizing was carried out by Daveid Brown.



## **1 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Scope of work**

- 1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA) was commissioned by Overton and Sons to undertake a trial trench evaluation at land approximately 300m to the northwest of Chapel Field Farm, Stalham, Norfolk.
- 1.1.2 The work was undertaken as a condition to inform the Planning Authority in advance of a submission of a Planning Application to erect a light agricultural building. A specification was set by James Albone (Norfolk Historic Environment Service) and a written scheme of investigation was produced by OA detailing the Local Authority's requirements for work necessary to inform the planning process/discharge the planning condition. This document outlines how OA implemented the specified requirements.

### **1.2 Location, topography and geology**

- 1.2.1 The site lies to the northwest of Chapel Field Farm, Stalham, Norfolk (NGR TG 3640 2459).
- 1.2.2 The area of proposed development consists of the southeastern corner of an arable field with an area of hard standing and a light agricultural building to the north and an access road to Chapel Field Farm to the east.
- 1.2.3 The geology of the area is mapped as Crag Group sands and gravels overlain by Happisburgh glacial sands and gravels (Connor 2016, 2).

### **1.3 Archaeological and historical background**

- 1.3.1 The wider archaeological and historical background of the site is discussed in the desk-based assessment (Connor 2016, 2) and will not be repeated here. The area immediately to the north (now occupied by the hard standing and building mentioned above) was subject to an archaeological watching brief with negative results in May 2010 (Fletcher 2010).
- 1.3.2 More particular to this evaluation, a substantial circular ring-ditch (with a width of up to approximately 4.50m) of suspected Neolithic or Early Bronze Age date had been identified in this area from aerial photography conducted in 1976 (NHER36104). This appeared to have had an entrance to the north, and delimited an area with a diameter of approximately 36m. Within this area, remains of a further smaller penannular ditch were also visible (Fletcher 2010, 7-8).
- 1.3.3 The proposed development can be estimated to cover approximately the southeastern quarter of the area delimited by the ring-ditch.

## 2 EVALUATION AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Aims

2.1.1 The project aims and objectives were as follows:

- To determine or confirm the general nature of any remains present.
- To determine or confirm the approximate date or date range of any remains, by means of artefactual or other evidence.
- To examine the ring-ditch itself and part of the internal area. In stipulating an evaluation, the possibility of cremations and/or burials within the ditch itself or within the interior of this area was also considered. These might be contemporary with or much later than the ring-ditch.

### 2.2 Methodology

2.2.1 A single trench was excavated using a tracked 360-degree excavator with a toothless ditching bucket. This trench was aligned east-west and measured 20m in length, with a width of 1.80m and an average depth of 0.50m. It was situated to cross the eastern part of the ring ditch and examine an area of approximate 15m by 1.80m of the interior.

2.2.2 In addition, further careful reduction by machine (in approximately 50mm to 0.10m increments) of part of the ditch fill was undertaken to examine rapidly the nature of the fill. Two further sondages were excavated by hand on the inner and outer edges of the ring ditch to recover finds. Excavation of these stopped at a safe working depth of 1.20m.

2.2.3 The interior area of the ring-ditch within the trench was also cleaned by hand.

## 3 RESULTS

### 3.1 Introduction and presentation of results

- 3.1.1 The results of the evaluation are presented below, and include a stratigraphic description of the trenches which contained archaeological remains. The full details of all trenches with dimensions and depths of all deposits for the content of Appendix A. Finds data and spot dates are tabulated in Appendix B.

### 3.2 General soils and ground conditions

- 3.2.1 The overburden layers and natural deposits were fairly uniform, with the exception of an asphalt sub-surface base in the extreme eastern part of the trench. The natural geology of Happisburgh sands was overlain by a mid to light greyish brown silty sand subsoil, which in turn was overlain by topsoil.
- 3.2.2 Ground conditions throughout the evaluation were generally wet, although the trenches remained dry throughout, despite heavy rain the night before. Those Archaeological features, where present, were easy to identify against the underlying natural geology. With these ground conditions, and the sandy (occasionally friable) character of the deposits in mind, it was decided to excavate no deeper than 1.20m.
- 3.2.3 Ground conditions throughout the evaluation were generally good, and the trenches remained dry throughout. Archaeological features, where present, were easy to identify against the underlying natural geology.

### 3.3 General distribution of archaeological deposits

- 3.3.1 The trench revealed a single archaeological feature (5) in the eastern half of the trench.

### 3.4 Trench 1

- 3.4.1 Trench 1 targeted located a substantial ring-ditch discovered by aerial photography. The ditch (5) exposed within the trench was 4.80m wide (east-west), and at least 0.80m deep. The full depth was not established due to its depth from the modern land surface (over 1.30m including 0.50m of topsoil). The full depth of the ditch is estimated to be approximately 1.5m based on its profile.
- 3.4.2 The ditch was stepped in profile with moderately gradually sloping sides towards the top before descending more steeply towards the base. Its profile to the west (the inner edge) appeared to have a more pronounced stepped shape than the outer edge.
- 3.4.3 Only a single homogeneous fill (4) was present, this comprised a mid yellowish brown sandy silt occasionally flecked with charcoal that had probably derived from the natural sand. Despite close examination, no trace of a slumped or collapsed bank was visible within this deposit. The only finds were seven fragments of burnt, but unworked flint. Burnt flint can be an indicator of prehistoric activity. No potential for environmental evidence was found.
- 3.4.4 No further archaeological features were encountered

### 3.5 Finds summary

- 3.5.1 The only finds recovered from the evaluation were seven burnt (unworked) flints, all came from the fill of the ring-ditch. Whilst not datable in themselves, burnt flints can be an indicator of prehistoric activity such as “burnt mounds” or “pot boilers” associated with boiling water for cooking.

## 4 DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Reliability of field investigation

- 4.1.1 Weather and ground conditions had no negative bearing on the evaluation. The excessive depth of the ring-ditch meant that only a limited section of it was exposed. Although the width has been ascertained, its full depth and lower profile remain unknown.
- 4.1.2 A limited area of the interior was examined and this was devoid of features, although this cannot be extrapolated with any certainty for the whole of the interior space. Features might be concentrated in particular areas, for instance around the presumed entrance.
- 4.1.3 The finds (both in terms of the small amount recovered and, more particularly, their durability within an acidic sandy sedimentary matrix) might be misleading as to character and date. More organic finds (particularly bones and organically-tempered fragile pottery) are likely not to have survived on this site as a result of the soil conditions.
- 4.1.4 Subsequent land-use (particularly sub-soiling and ploughing) might have removed or damaged shallow features.

### 4.2 Evaluation objectives and results

- 4.2.1 The evaluation has confirmed that the ring-ditch monument known from an aerial photograph is an archaeological feature. Its dating is not confirmed but the evidence provided by its character and the small number of worked flints found suggests it is most likely prehistoric, probably Neolithic or Early Bronze Age. Additionally, the ditch profile, comprising a moderately sloping cut becoming much steeper with depth, would also be in keeping with similar monuments of this date.
- 4.2.2 The interior might be devoid of archaeological features (this is common with monuments of this presumed date) or, equally plausibly, they might be unevenly distributed across this space (particularly if they are structural).
- 4.2.3 The fill of the ditch was very pale in colour and difficult to distinguish from the adjacent natural sand suggesting it is heavily leached and lacking and any organic matter originally incorporated has long since decayed.

## APPENDIX A TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS AND CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench 1						
<b>General description</b>					<b>Orientation</b>	E-W
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of topsoil and subsoil overlying natural geology of silty sand.					<b>Length (m)</b>	20
					<b>Width (m)</b>	1.8
					<b>Avg. depth (m)</b>	0.50
<b>Context No.</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Width (m)</b>	<b>Depth (m)</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Finds</b>	<b>Date</b>
1	Layer	-	0.30	Topsoil	-	-
2	Layer	-	0.20	Subsoil	-	-
3	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-
4	Fill	4m+	0.8m+	Fill of ditch 5	Burnt flint	
5	Cut	4m+	0.8m+	Cut of ditch 5		
-	-	-	-	-	-	-

## **APPENDIX B      BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Connor, A. 2016. **Written Scheme of Investigation. Archaeological Evaluation. Land at Chapel Field Road, Stalham, Norfolk.** Oxford Archaeology East unpublished report. December 2016.

Fletcher, T. 2010. **Land at Chapel Field Road, Stalham, Norfolk. Archaeological Watching Brief Report.** Oxford Archaeology East unpublished report. July 2010.

**APPENDIX C**
**OASIS REPORT FORM**
**Project Details**

OASIS Number	Oxfordar3-273735		
Project Name	Land off Chapelfield Road, Stalham		
Start of Fieldwork	09/01/2017	End of Fieldwork	09/01/2017
Previous Work	Yes	Future Work	Yes

**Project Reference Codes**

Site Code	ENF141628	Planning App. No.	16/01401/FUL
HER Number	ENF141628	Related Numbers	NHER36104, ENF124569

Prompt	Direction from local planning authority
Development Type	Agricultural
Place in Planning Process	After full determination (eg. As a condition)

**Techniques used (tick all that apply)**

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Aerial Photography – interpretation | <input type="checkbox"/> Grab-sampling          | <input type="checkbox"/> Remote Operated Vehicle Survey         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aerial Photography - new                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Gravity-core           | <input type="checkbox"/> Sample Trenches                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Annotated Sketch                               | <input type="checkbox"/> Laser Scanning         | <input type="checkbox"/> Survey/Recording of Fabric/Structure   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Augering                                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Measured Survey        | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Targeted Trenches           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dendrochronological Survey                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Metal Detectors        | <input type="checkbox"/> Test Pits                              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Documentary Search                             | <input type="checkbox"/> Phosphate Survey       | <input type="checkbox"/> Topographic Survey                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental Sampling                         | <input type="checkbox"/> Photogrammetric Survey | <input type="checkbox"/> Vibro-core                             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fieldwalking                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Photographic Survey    | <input type="checkbox"/> Visual Inspection (Initial Site Visit) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Geophysical Survey                             | <input type="checkbox"/> Rectified Photography  |   |

Monument	Period	Object	Period
Ring-ditch	Late Prehistoric ( - 4000 to 43)	Struck flint	Late Prehistoric ( - 4000 to 43)
	Choose an item.	Burnt flint	Uncertain

**Project Location**

County	Norfolk	Address (including Postcode) Land off Chapelfield Road, Stalham, Norfolk
District	North Norfolk	
Parish	Stalham	
HER office	Norfolk	
Size of Study Area	2500 sq metres	
National Grid Ref	TG 3640 2459	

**Project Originators**

Organisation	Norfolk Historic Environment Service
Project Brief Originator	James Albone
Project Design Originator	Oxford Archaeology East
Project Manager	Aileen Connor
Project Supervisor	Ashley Pooley



## Project Archives

	Location	ID
Physical Archive (Finds)	NMAS	ENF141628
Digital Archive	Oxford Archaeology East	ENF141628
Paper Archive	NMAS	ENF141628

Physical Contents	Present?	Digital files associated with Finds	Paperwork associated with Finds
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 Remains	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Industrial	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Leather	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Metal	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Stratigraphic		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Survey		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Textiles	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wood	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Worked Bone	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Worked Stone/Lithic	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
None	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### Digital Media

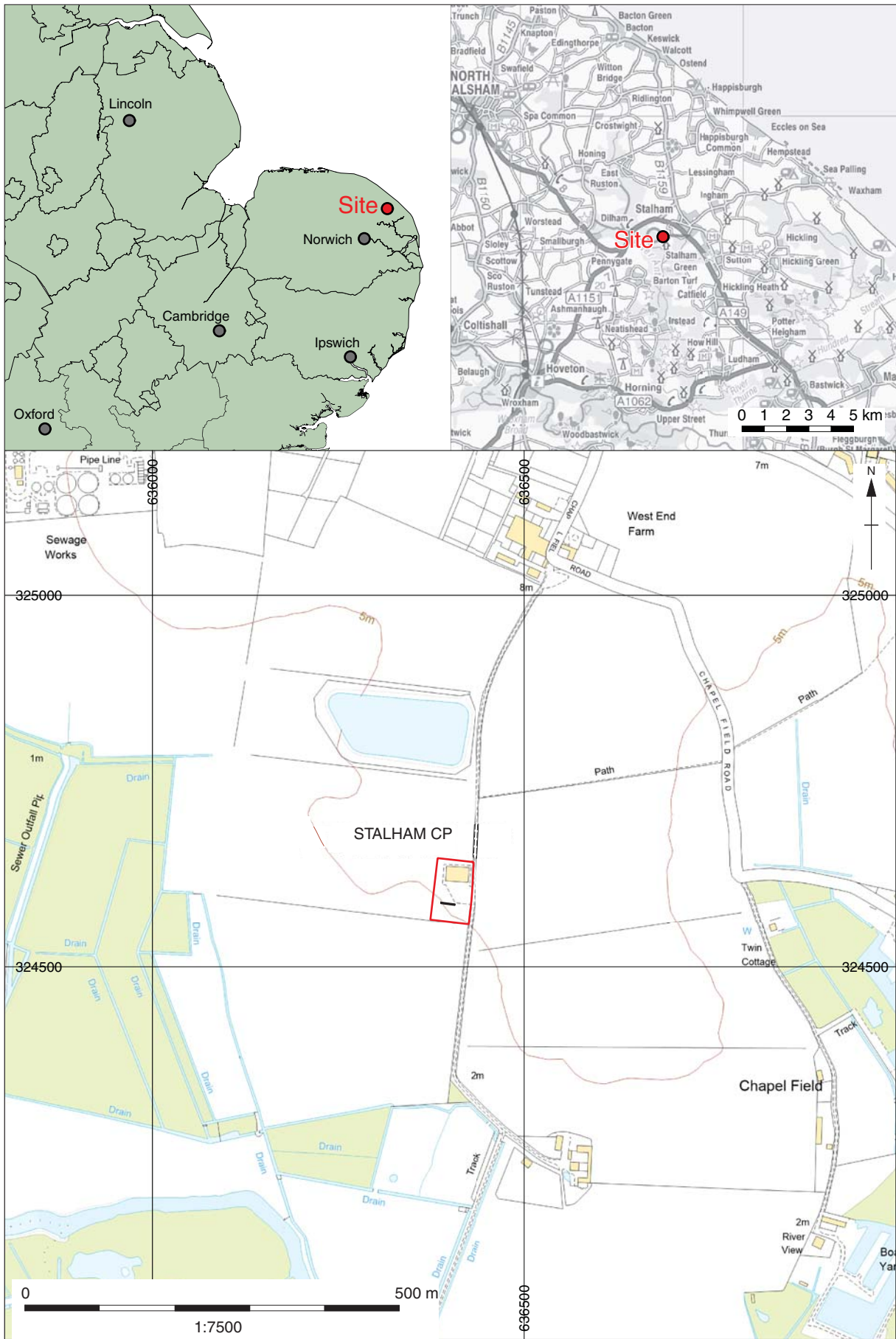
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GIS	<input type="checkbox"/>
Geophysics	<input type="checkbox"/>
Images (Digital photos)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Illustrations (Figures/Plates)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Moving Image	<input type="checkbox"/>
Spreadsheets	<input type="checkbox"/>
Survey	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Text	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Virtual Reality	<input type="checkbox"/>

### Paper Media

Aerial Photos	<input type="checkbox"/>
Context Sheets	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Correspondence	<input type="checkbox"/>
Diary	<input type="checkbox"/>
Drawing	<input type="checkbox"/>
Manuscript	<input type="checkbox"/>
Map	<input type="checkbox"/>
Matrices	<input type="checkbox"/>
Microfiche	<input type="checkbox"/>
Miscellaneous	<input type="checkbox"/>
Research/Notes	<input type="checkbox"/>
Photos (negatives/prints/slides)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Plans	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Report	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Sections	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Survey	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Further Comments





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Figure 1: Site location showing archaeological trench (black) in development area (red)



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Figure 2: Trench location plan and selected section



Plate 1: General view of trial trench, looking east.



Plate 2: Ring-Ditch 5, looking south-east.



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