

Archaeological Field Unit

**Kettlebrig, Wretham:  
Archaeological Monitoring**

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**Cambridgeshire County Council**

Report No. N25

*Commissioned by Mr. A Witton*

**Kettlebrig, Wretham:  
Archaeological Monitoring**

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## **SUMMARY**

*Archaeological monitoring was undertaken on land to the north-west of Kettlebrig, Wretham, by staff of the Archaeological Field Unit of Cambridgeshire County Council in advance of development on the 30th of October 2003*

*A Roman road - Peddar's Way - is thought to run close to the site and the excavation hoped to locate its agger. No archaeological remains were uncovered during the groundworks and it is thought that post-medieval activity may have destroyed any evidence of the Roman road.*

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**1 INTRODUCTION**

Following submission of a planning application for construction of a driveway and a new dwelling on land to the north-west of Kettlebrig, Wretham, a condition requiring a programme of archaeological work was placed on the planning permission. The project was commissioned by Mr. A. Witton. The work was carried out in accordance with a Brief issued by Edwin J Rose, Development and Control Officer of the Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service.

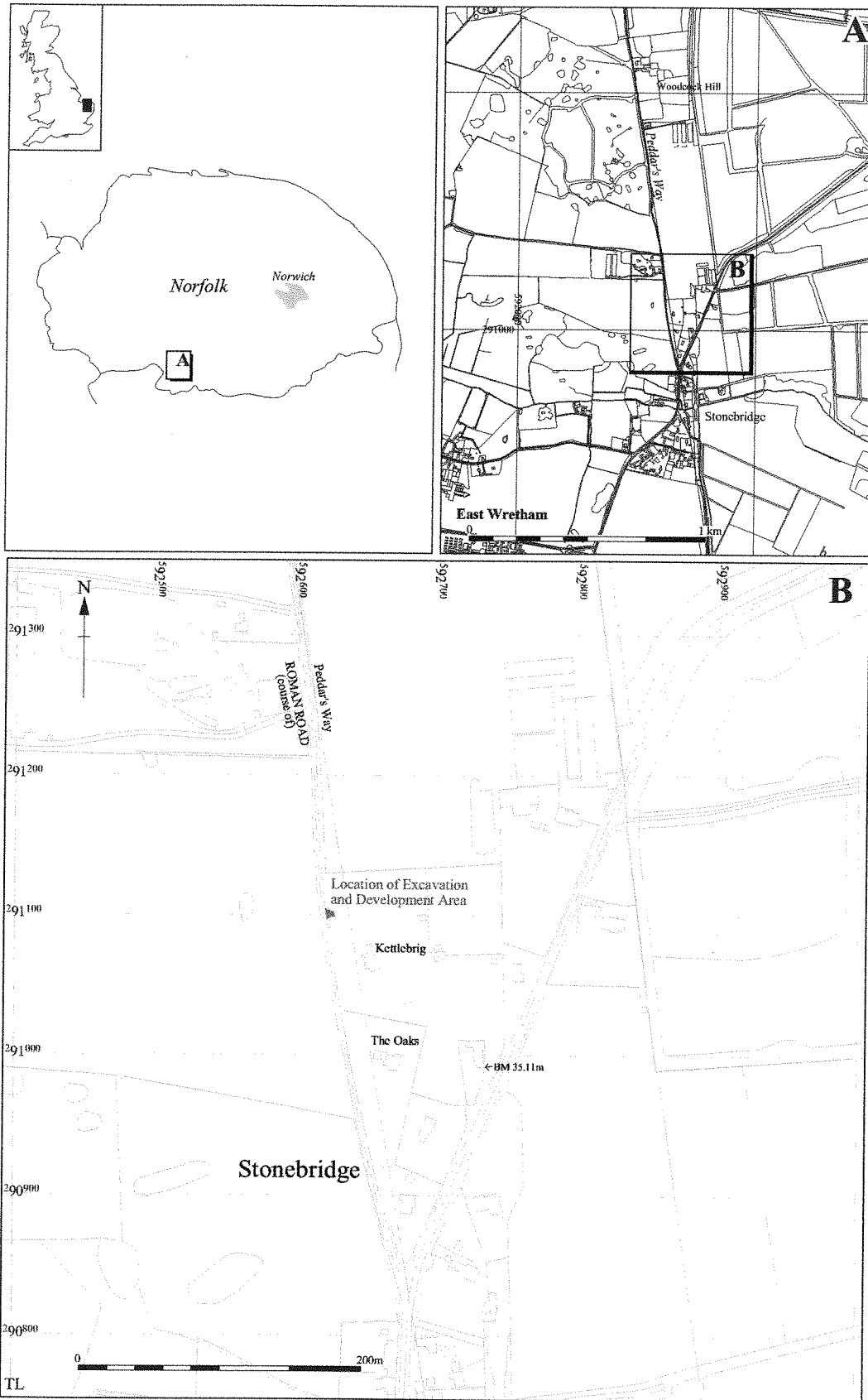
On the 30th of October 2003 archaeological monitoring was undertaken by staff of the Archaeological Field Unit of Cambridgeshire County Council.

**2 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY**

The site is approximately 1km north of the tributary of the river Thet, close to Stonebridge, on property surrounded by gently undulating farmland. The geology is fine blown sand derived from the underlying Greensand and sealed by free-draining sandy sub-soil and topsoil. The spot height on the adjacent road is 34.1mOD. The land slopes gently down to the south where the river runs approximately west-east through Stonebridge.

**3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

The proposed development lies close to the Roman road, Peddar's Way, and it was expected that the entrance of the drive would cut the agger of Peddar's Way. Peddar's Way runs through the eastern 'uplands' of Norfolk in a south-south-easterly direction for approximately 40 miles. Its northern end appears to be close to Holme-next-the-Sea although it has been suggested it was a route to the fort at Brancaster (a few miles to the east). Peddar's Way appears to take a more north-south direction close to the development site and from here it heads towards the Suffolk border. Towards the northern end of Peddar's Way, at Fring, the road is reported as being paved with stone.



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**Figure 1** Location of Excavation with Development Area (red)

#### **4 METHODOLOGY**

The proposed development includes construction within an area of modern disturbance caused by quarrying and there was no requirement to monitor excavation of the house foundations but the entrance of the drive was monitored during groundwork. The area was excavated using a mini-digger with a toothless bucket under archaeological supervision.

Some substantial tree stumps adjacent to the existing road were removed during the excavation. They proved to be well rooted and had the potential to have caused massive disturbance to any underlying archaeological remains.

Once the area was cleared of topsoil and vegetation it was carefully stripped down to the appropriate depth. This depth (at least 300mm below the present road surface) was below the level of potential archaeological remains.

Following soil stripping the resultant footprint was recorded, drawn and photographed to the standards of the Archaeological Field Unit. Vertical soil profiles were cleaned and recorded along the southern limit of excavation. Recording conditions were generally good, with the exception of heavy shadows from standing trees.

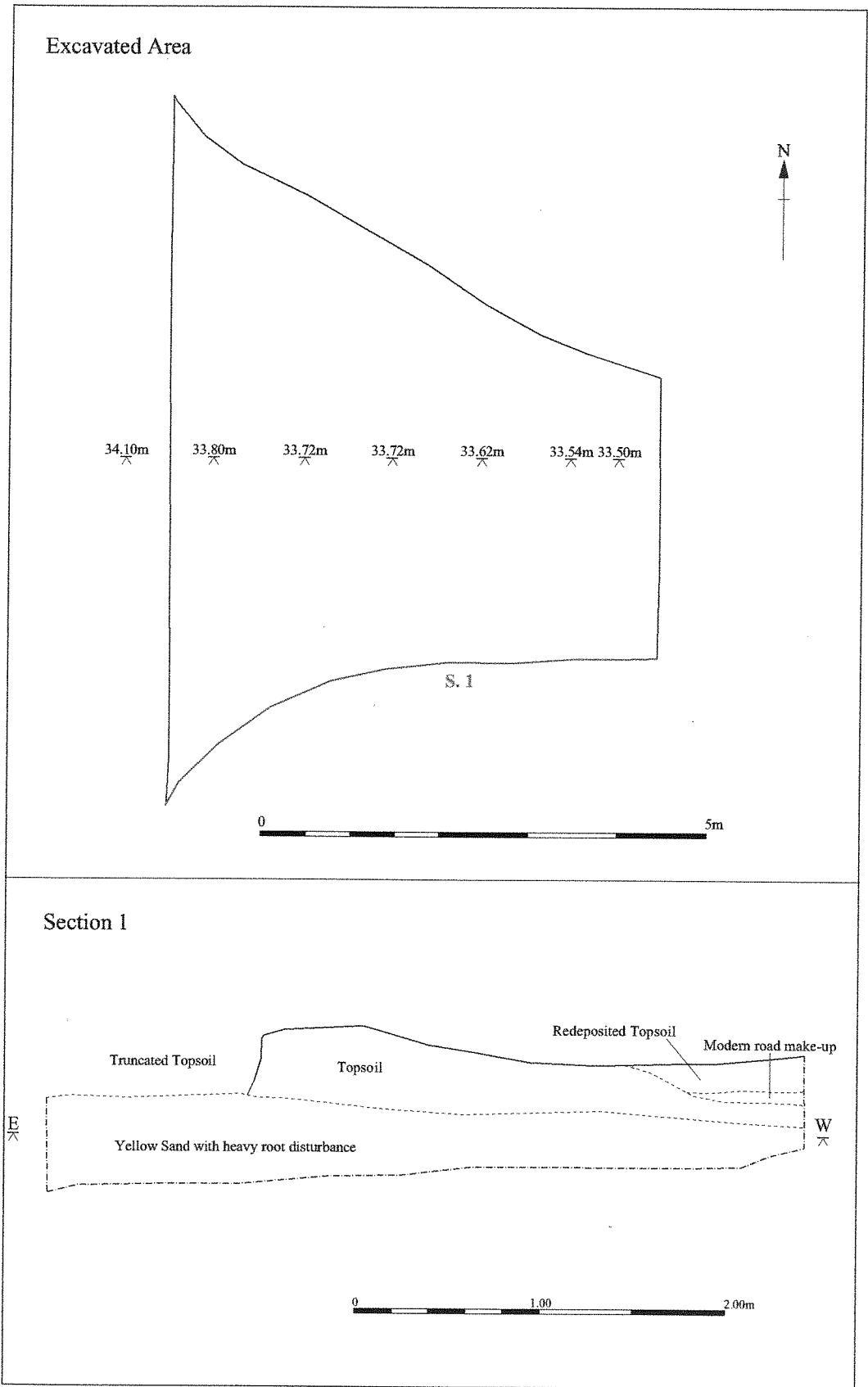
#### **5 RESULTS**

The removal of topsoil and tree stumps was continuously monitored as the footprint of a new driveway entrance was excavated. The land closest to the existing tarmac road was the highest point (approximately 34mOD), falling off dramatically to the east. The drop-off was a result of cutting an access route to the extraction pit. The resultant depression was noticeably lower than the potential Roman road level. Whilst this was only speculative before excavation, it proved conclusive following excavation.

#### **6 DISCUSSION**

Peddar's Way was presumed from maps of the area (Doubleday, H. Arthur, 1975) to follow a similar route to the modern road. North of Wretham Peddar's Way was parallel to the modern road but several metres to the east. The line of this ancient highway was thought to correspond to the raised "platform" evident for the length of the property, adjacent to the modern road, south of the excavation area. This high ground had an avenue of large trees on it.

The disturbance which this area has undergone may have destroyed any evidence of the Roman road. It is somewhat surprising though to find no evidence at all of the roadway.



**Figure 2** Area of Excavation and Section Drawing



As no archaeological remains were uncovered, it may be speculated that the avenue of trees was responsible for the "platform's" shape and height rather than any underlying road surface. In addition to the intrusion of their roots the trees also acted as a windbreak, promoting the build-up of wind-blown sand around roots and trunks. One tree that had been cut down had its trunk covered to a depth of around 0.50m by windblown sand. The edge of the modern road was also inundated by windblown sand for a distance of over 0.50m. This unusually high level of deposition lends support to the "platform" being naturally formed rather than necessarily a result of any underlying archaeology.

## **7 CONCLUSION**

There was no archaeological evidence to support the existence of the Peddar's Way at this excavation. One of two reasons may explain this lack of evidence. Firstly, all remains of the road's existence may have been destroyed by the access road to the quarry to the east. Secondly, the route of Peddar's Way may lie ten to twenty metres further to east (outside the remit of this evaluation) and may have been destroyed by deep quarrying.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The author would like to thank Mr. Alec Witton who commissioned and funded the archaeological work. The project was managed by Judith Roberts and recorded by the author. Thanks also to the illustrator Emily Oakes.

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Doubleday, H. Arthur. 1975. The Victoria History of the Counties of England. A History of Norfolk. Vol. I, 279-323. University of London Institute of Historical Research, London.

## APPENDIX

### Appendix 1 – Context List

Context No.	Context Type	Context Description	Finds
1	Topsoil	Mid grey sand with minor organic element	None
2	Subsoil	Mid yellow sand	None
3	Modern Road Material	Pale yellow mix of consolidated sand and gravel overlain by Asphalt	None



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