

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION

Land off Station Road, Long Melford, Suffolk

Site Code: LMD 273

Planning Ref: DC/18/00606

JAC27226
June 2021

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ABSTRACT

Between the 11th and 12th of May 2021, Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd carried out an archaeological excavation on Land off Station Road, Long Melford, Suffolk. The work was commissioned by RPS Consulting.

The excavations identified a single pit, which did not contain any finds assemblages and hence could not be dated. However, the pit identified contained a similar fill and was located nearby to another pit, that was uncovered during the evaluation. Due to these factors, it is plausible that the pit relates to the same phase of activity as this example, although this cannot be conclusively stated. The pit investigated in the evaluation dated to the Neolithic period and contained a relatively large amount of Late Neolithic, Grooved Ware tradition pottery which may have derived from one vessel.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 General Background

- 1.1.1 Pre-Construct Archaeology (PCA) was commissioned by RPS Consulting to undertake a programme of archaeological excavation on Land off Station Road, Long Melford, Suffolk (NGR Ref. TL 8637 4469; Fig. 1) between Tuesday the 11th of May and Wednesday the 12th of May 2021.
- 1.1.2 The archaeological work was commissioned by RPS Consulting in response to a planning condition attached to the proposed development of residential dwellings (Planning reference DC/18/00606) outlined in an email written by James Rolfe of the Conservation Team of Suffolk County Council's Archaeological Service (SCCAS/CT). This was in line with National Planning Policy Framework 2019, Section 16 'Conserving and enhancing the historic environment'. The excavation was carried out in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) prepared by PCA (Ivanova 2021).
- 1.1.3 The initial stage of the investigation was an archaeological evaluation, undertaken by PCA during August and September 2018. The evaluation, which consisted of the excavation of sixty trial trenches across the site, identified a Late Neolithic pit in Trench 50, located near the south-eastern border of the development area (Pullen 2019; Report number R13418). The archaeological features uncovered were deemed significant enough to warrant further work.
- 1.1.4 The primary focus of the excavation was to determine the full extent of the Late Neolithic occupation in the area. The site also had the potential to contribute to other research objectives outlined in the Regional Agenda for Eastern England (Medlycott 2011).
- 1.1.5 This report describes the results of the excavation, places the site and identified remains in their local landscape and archaeological context, and assesses their significance against relevant regional research agendas. The archive will be deposited at the Suffolk County Council Archive Store.

2 SITE BACKGROUND

2.1 Site location

2.1.1 The site, which covers an area of 8.23ha, is located on the southern edge of Long Melford, a small town that lies off the A134, c.19km to the south of Bury St Edmunds (Figure 1). It comprises parts of two agricultural fields and is bounded to the northwest by a public footpath that follows the route of a dismantled railway, to the north by a track that runs along the bank of a small stream, to the south and east by agricultural land and to the southwest by the gardens of houses fronting on to Station Road.

2.2 Geology

2.2.1 The bedrock geology of the development site consists of undifferentiated Cretaceous rocks of the Lewes Nodular Chalk Formation, Seaford Formation, Newhaven Formation and Culver Formation (BGS 2021). The chalk is overlain by superficial glacial deposits of the Lowestoft Formation (diamicton), consisting of chalky till with outwash deposits of sand and gravel, with Head deposits of clay, silt, sand, and gravel occurring along the western edge of the site.

2.3 Topography

2.3.1 Topographically, the development site is situated on the lower, north-west facing slope of a hill that overlooks the valley of the River Stour to the west. The ground descends from approximately 45m above Ordnance Datum (aOD) at the eastern edge of the site to 33m aOD at its western edge.

2.3.2 There is an abrupt change in ground level at the south-eastern edge of the northern field (approximately between Trenches 22 and 24 of the evaluation) which is presumed to be the result of modern activity, possibly associated with the construction of the nearby railway embankment.

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The archaeological and historical background of the site has been presented in detail in the heritage desk-based assessment (HDBA) prepared by Pegasus (Pegasus 2018). Further relevant information the site has been subject to a geophysical survey (PCG 2017).
- 3.2 The HDBA concluded that there are no designated heritage assets within the site and the only undesignated heritage asset relates to a cropmark of a possible ring ditch, which may represent a Bronze Age barrow. However, no evidence was encountered by the evaluation for any cut feature in the area of this cropmark; similarly, the cropmark was not detected by the geophysical survey, suggesting that it probably relates to superficial changes or disturbance to the plough soil or surface vegetation.
- 3.3 Although there is evidence for a large amount of prehistoric and Roman activity in the surrounding area, including two Roman villas and a nearby Roman settlement at Long Melford, the results of the geophysical survey indicated that the potential for intensive remains of these periods within the site was low.
- 3.4 Evidence for medieval activity within the wider area is plentiful, although this is predominantly focused to the north of the site, within the historic core of Long Melford. During the medieval period, the land within the site was likely to have been part of the agricultural hinterland to this medieval settlement. On this basis, the potential for significant medieval archaeology within the site was also considered to be low.
- 3.5 There was a good correlation between the anomalies identified by the geophysical survey and features encountered in the trial trenches, supporting the conclusions of the geophysical survey in relation to the low potential of the site for archaeological remains.

4 METHODOLOGY

4.1 General

- 4.1.1 The excavation comprised a square area measuring 20 x 20 metres (approx. 0.1 acre) in the south-east corner of the site, covering the location where the trial trench evaluation had identified a Neolithic pit, which contained a substantial assemblage of Late Neolithic Grooved Ware pottery.

4.2 Excavation methodology

- 4.2.1 Ground reduction during the excavation was carried out under archaeological supervision using a 14 ton 360° tracked mechanical excavator fitted with a 2m wide toothless ditching bucket (Plate 1). Topsoil and subsoil deposits were removed in spits down to the level of the undisturbed natural geological deposits where potential archaeological features could be observed and recorded.
- 4.2.2 Exposed surfaces were cleaned by trowel and hoe as appropriate, and all further excavation was undertaken manually using hand tools.

4.3 Recording and Finds Recovery

- 4.3.1 The limits of excavations, heights above Ordnance Datum (m OD) and the locations of archaeological features and interventions were recorded using a Geomax GPS rover unit with RTK differential correction, giving three-dimensional accuracy of 20mm or better.
- 4.3.2 Deposits or the removal of deposits judged by the excavating archaeologist to constitute individual events were each assigned a unique record number (often referred to within British archaeology as 'context numbers') and recorded on individual pre-printed forms (Taylor and Brown 2009). Archaeological processes recognised by the deposition of material are signified in this report by round brackets (thus), while events constituting the removal of deposits are referred to here as 'cuts' and signified by square brackets [thus]. Where more than one slot was excavated through an individual feature, each intervention was assigned additional numbers for the cutting event and for the deposits it contained (these deposits within cut features being referred to here as 'fills'). The record numbers assigned to cuts, deposits and groups are entirely arbitrary

and in no way reflect the chronological order in which events took place. All features and deposits excavated during the evaluation and excavation are listed in Appendix 3. Artefacts recovered during excavation were assigned to the record number of the deposit from which they were retrieved.

4.3.3 Metal-detecting was carried out during the topsoil and subsoil stripping and throughout the excavation process. Archaeological features and spoil heaps were scanned by metal-detector periodically. Only objects of modern date were found and were not retained for accession.

4.3.4 High-resolution digital photographs were taken of all relevant features and deposits and were used to keep a record of the excavation process.

4.4 Sampling Strategy

4.4.1 Discrete features were half-sectioned, photographed and recorded by a cross-section scaled drawing at an appropriate scale (either 1:10 or 1:20). Features were subsequently 100% excavated for finds recovery.

5 QUANTIFICATION OF ARCHIVE

5.1 Paper Archive

Context register sheets	1
Context sheets	1
Plan registers	0
Plans at 1:50	0
Plans at 1:20	0
Plans at 1:10	0
Plans at 1:5	0
Section register sheets	1
Sections at 1:10 & 1:20	1
Trench record sheets	0
Photo register sheets	1
Small finds register sheets	0
Environmental register sheets	0

5.2 Digital Archive

Digital photos	18
GPS survey files	1
Digital plans	0
GIS project	0
Access database	1

5.3 Physical Archive

Struck flint	0
Burnt flint	0
Pottery	0
Ceramic building material (CBM)	0
Glass	0
Briquetage	0
Small Finds	0
Slag	0
Animal bone	0
Shell	0
Environmental bulk samples	0
Environmental bulk samples (10 litre buckets)	0
Monolith samples	0
Other samples (specify)	0
Black and white films	0
Colour slides	0

6 ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS

6.1 Overview

6.1.1 One pit was uncovered, which contained no dating evidence.

6.2 Undated (Figure 2, Plate 2)

6.2.1 The excavation area contained one pit. Pit [183] was sub-circular in plan with moderately sloping sides, had sharp breaks of slope leading to a flat base and was aligned SSE-NNW. It contained a single fill (184), which was a mid-brownish-grey clayey silt, with a loose compaction, containing moderate large flint inclusions.

7 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

- 7.1.1 During the evaluation previously undertaken on the site, one late Neolithic pit was uncovered in Trench 50, located in the south-east of the wider site area (Pullen 2019). The subsequent excavation area, described in this report was then located in order to investigate whether the pit was isolated or part of a wider spread of activity.
- 7.1.2 During the excavation only one other pit was identified, located c.10m to the south-east of the previous example. This pit did not contain any finds assemblages and therefore could not be assigned a conclusive date. However, the excavation pit did possess a fill of similar character to that present in the pit identified in the evaluation and was located in proximity to it. These factors suggest that it may possibly relate to the same phase of activity, although this cannot be stated with any confidence.
- 7.1.3 During the medieval period, the land within the site was likely to have been part of the agricultural hinterland to the medieval settlement at Long Melford, therefore the potential for significant medieval archaeology within the site was deemed to be low. The evaluation uncovered evidence of Post-medieval to Modern quarrying and field boundaries, as well as one small possibly medieval quarry pit. The pit uncovered in the excavation was sealed by the subsoil and is therefore unlikely to be of Post-medieval to Modern date. Therefore, it is also possible that the pit could represent medieval activity, although this is also unlikely.
- 7.1.4 The primary focus of the excavation was to determine the full extent of the Late Neolithic occupation in the area and to improve our understanding of the chronological development of pottery by the application of traditional methodologies of stratigraphic succession and typological comparison, supported by radiocarbon and/or thermoluminescence dating (Ivanova 2021; Medlycott 2011). However, as no further Neolithic pottery or Neolithic features were uncovered, these aims could not be pursued further.
- 7.1.5 The evidence of the excavation indicates that the Late Neolithic activity in the

area was sporadic, with the pit identified in the excavation probably representing a 'one-off', isolated event as opposed to more sustained activity.

8 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

8.1 Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd would like to thank RPS Consulting for commissioning and funding the work. PCA are also grateful to James Rolfe of Suffolk County Council Archaeological Services for monitoring the work on behalf of the Local Planning Authority. The project was managed for PCA by Mark Hinman. The project was supervised by Romy McIntosh. The author would also like to thank site assistant Brenna McIntosh for their hard work. Figures accompanying this report were prepared by Rosie Scales of PCA's CAD Department.

9 BIBLIOGRAPHY

9.1 Printed Sources

Ivanova, P. 2021. Written Scheme of Investigation for a Program of Archaeological Excavation at Land off Station Road, Long Melford, Suffolk. PCA (unpublished).

Medlycott, M. 2011. (ed.) Research and Archaeology Revisited: A revised framework for the East of England. East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Paper 24.

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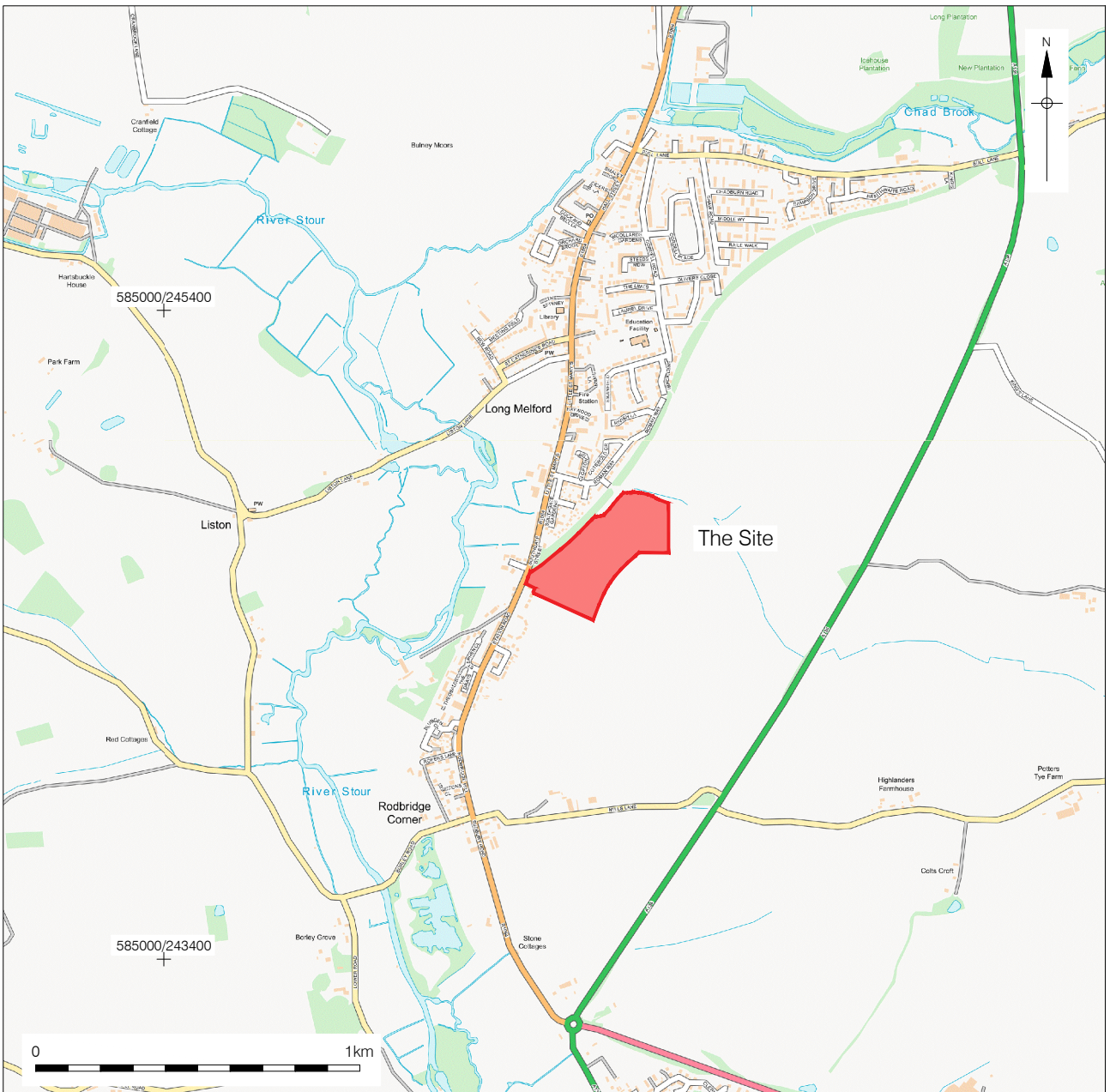
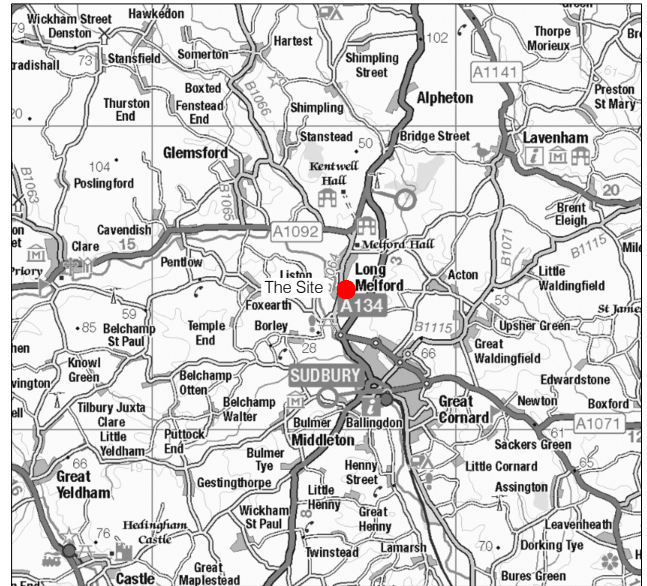
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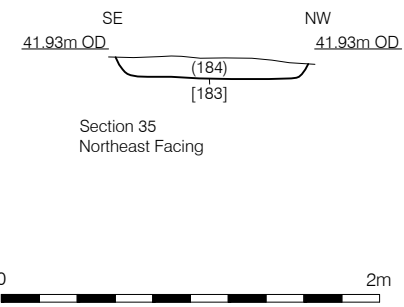
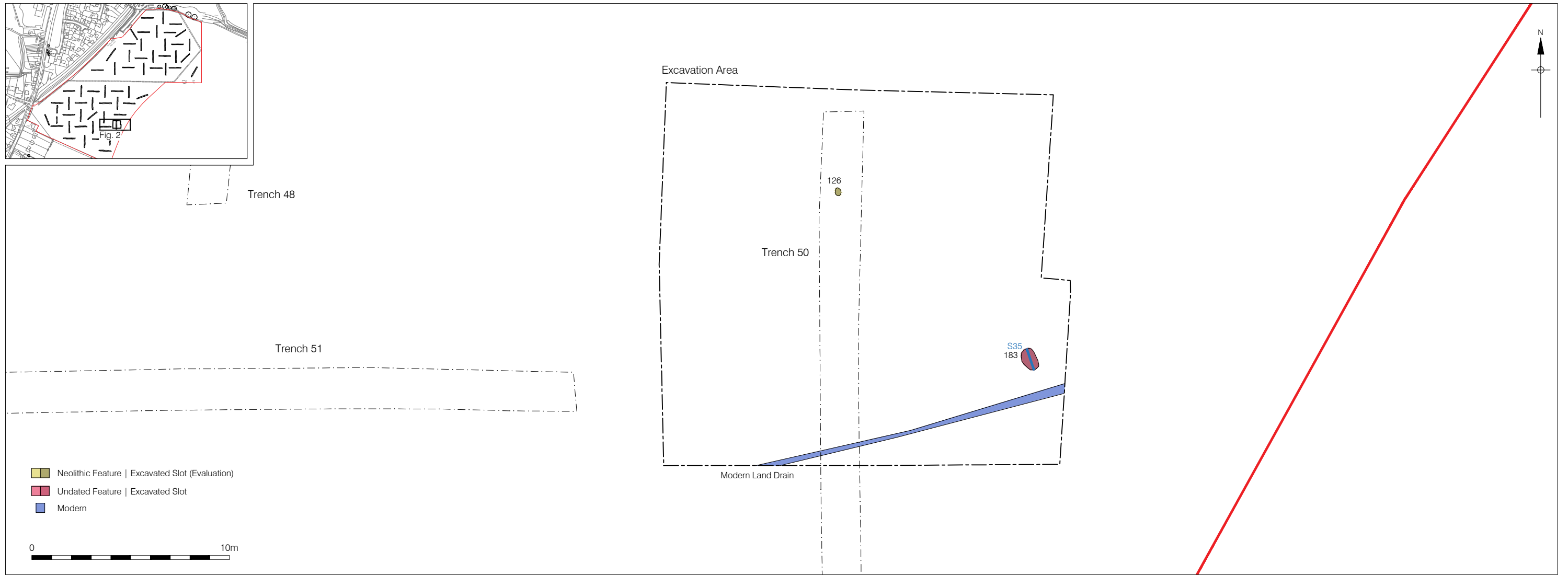
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Taylor, J and Brown, G. 2009. Operations Manual I: Fieldwork Induction Manual. PCA unpublished document.

9.2 Websites

- 1) British Geological Survey 2021 Online Viewer. Available at: <http://www.bgs.ac.uk/data/mapViewers/home.html>. [Accessed 13/5/21].





APPENDIX 2 PLATES



Plate 1: Working shot of site, view east.



Plate 2: Section 35 of Pit [183], view south-west

APPENDIX 3 CONTEXT INDEX

Context List											
Context No	Site Code	Cut	Type	Category	Length (m)	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Plan	Section	Description	Other Comments
183	LMD273	183	Cut	Pit	1.11	0.65	0.11		35	Sub circular in plan with moderately sloping sides and sharp breaks of slope leading to a flat base. Aligned SSE-NNW.	Contained no dating material.
184	LMD273	183	Fill	Pit	1.11	0.65	0.11		35	Mid brownish-grey clayey silt, with a loose compaction containing moderate large flint inclusions.	Contained no dating material.

APPENDIX 4 OASIS FORM

OASIS ID: preconst1-421387

Project details

Project name	Land off Station Road, Long Melford, Suffolk
Short description of the project	20x20m square excavation to investigate the extent of Neolithic remains uncovered during the evaluation.
Project dates	Start: 11-05-2021 End: 12-05-2021
Previous/future work	Yes / Not known
Type of project	Recording project
Current Land use	Cultivated Land 4 - Character Undetermined
Monument type	PIT Uncertain
Significant Finds	NONE None
Investigation type	"Full excavation"
Prompt	National Planning Policy Framework - NPPF

Project location

Country	England
Site location	SUFFOLK BABERGH LONG MELFORD Land off Station Road, Long Melford, Suffolk
Study area	0.1 Hectares
Site coordinates	TL 8637 4469 52.068689721201 0.719442779113 52 04 07 N 000 43 09 E Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 40.93m Max: 42.03m

Project creators

Name of Organisation	Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd.
Project brief originator	James Rolfe
Project design originator	Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd
Project	Mark Hinman

director/manager

Project supervisor Romy McIntosh

Project archives

Physical Archive No
Exists?

Digital Archive recipient Suffolk County Council

Digital Contents "Survey","other"

Digital Media available "Database","Images raster / digital photography","Survey","Text"

Paper Archive recipient Suffolk County Council

Paper Contents "Survey","other"

Paper Media available "Context sheet","Drawing","Miscellaneous Material","Section"

Project bibliography 1

Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)

Publication type

Title Land off Station Road, Long Melford, Suffolk: An Archaeological
Excavation

Author(s)/Editor(s) McIntosh, R.

Date 2021

Issuer or publisher Pre-Construct Archaeology

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publication

Entered by Romy McIntosh (rmcintosh@pre-construct.com)

Entered on 13 May 2021



rpsgroup.com