

Mayton Wood, Buxton With Lammas, Norfolk, 39833BVX/03

A “Strip, Map and Sample” Excavation



Jacqui Hutton

CAMBRIDGE ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT
UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE



Mayton Wood, Buxton With Lammas, Norfolk

A 'Strip, Map and Sample' Excavation

39833BVX/03

Jacqui Hutton

©Cambridge Archaeological Unit
University of Cambridge
Department of Archaeology

Report No. 841
July 2008

An archaeological 'strip, map and sample' excavation and watching brief was undertaken by a team from Cambridge Archaeological Unit on behalf of Frimstone Ltd on a 1ha site at Mayton Wood, Buxton With Lammas in April 2008. The results of the excavation revealed pits similar to those recorded in previous excavations, and provided additional information to a landscape utilised during the Early Medieval Period.

Contents

Introduction.....	1
Topography, Geology and Archaeological Background	1
Methodology	4
Results.....	4
Discussion	7
Bibliography	8
Appendix 1	9
Feature Descriptions	9

Introduction

An archaeological 'strip, map and sample' excavation was undertaken by from the Cambridge Archaeological Unit at Mayton Wood, Buxton with Lammas, Norfolk (NGR: 624045 321431), from 16th to 29th April 2008. Frimstone Ltd commissioned the excavation in response to a brief set out by Norfolk Landscape Archaeology (Gurney 2003).

Archaeological evidence at Mayton Wood comprised one undated pit and twelve shallow pits that were similar in profile, dimension and depositional sequence to those previously recorded in earlier investigations that formed part of an ephemeral landscape dated to the Saxon period.

Topography, Geology and Archaeological Background

The development area (DA) comprises in total 9.3ha, and this phase of excavation covered 0.64 ha within the northern part of the area. The highest point within this phase was at 16.50m OD and the lowest point to the south was 15.50m OD. The underlying geology consisted of glacial sand and gravel (Institute of Geological Sciences 1977).

The development area's archaeological background has been fully presented in the field survey report (Beadsmoore & Hall 2003). Archaeological evidence previously discovered within the DA has been covered by earlier reports and will therefore only be summarised here (Patten 2004, Bishop 2005, Beadsmoore 2006).

A series of ring ditches, a rectilinear enclosure and a linear feature identified from crop marks outside the DA (HER No. 12786) provide evidence for possible prehistoric activity nearby, whilst more ephemeral evidence within the DA is supplied by the earlier Neolithic and later prehistoric flint recovered during the field survey. A single sherd of Roman pottery, one bronze 3rd century AD Roman coin and a piece of potentially Roman metalwork recovered during the field survey provided limited evidence for Romano-British activity in the DA (Beadsmoore & Hall 2003). This evidence was complimented by the identification of six probable Romano-British ditches exposed during the 2004, 2005 and 2006 excavations (Patten 2004, Bishop 2005, Beadsmoore 2006).

The preceding excavation phases also exposed previously unidentified evidence for Anglo Saxon activity in the DA. A series of burnt pits, comparable in form, dimension and fill types were exposed; 27 were revealed during the 2004 excavation (Patten 2004), 11 during the 2005 excavation (Bishop 2005) and 22 during the 2006 excavation (Beadsmoore 2006). Radiocarbon analysis of charcoal from two of the pits yielded calibrated dates of 690 to 900 AD (Patten 2004).

Traces of medieval activity in the nearby area were comparatively abundant prior to the survey and excavation, consisting of a deserted medieval village and a 15th century house on a moated site (HER No. 7649), a nearby market and several wells (HER No. 25747). The field survey nevertheless yielded only one medieval artefact and no further evidence of medieval activity was exposed in the 2004 and 2005 excavations (Beadsmoore & Hall 2003, Patten 2004, Bishop 2005).

In contrast, during the 2006 excavation, four large pits of varying profiles and fills were recorded. One of the pits (F.128) contained four sherds of 14th century pottery, and another (F.117) contained two Grimstone Type sherds, firmly dating them to the Medieval period. The features probably represent quarrying pits or wells for gravel or water extraction, and were enclosed by a substantial ditch (F.111). This probably defined the area of activity rather than forming part of a field system (Beadsmoore 2006), and it is possible that it continued (on a northwest-southeast alignment) into the current area of investigation.



Figure 1. Location map

Methodology

The area was stripped to the archaeological level using a 360° tracked excavator with a toothless ditching bucket under careful supervision of an experienced archaeologist. In advance of the stripping of overburden, a survey with a metal detector was undertaken to locate and recover any metallic objects; none was recovered during this exercise. A surface survey was also undertaken to locate any possible flint artefacts; none was recovered.

The Cambridge Archaeological Unit-modified version of the MoLAS recording system was used; base plans were drawn at a scale of 1:50, with sections at 1:10. Small pits were hand excavated half sectioned, and sampled at appropriate intervals. Archaeological features were assigned a unique number (e.g. **F.001**; in bold when first mentioned within the text) and each stratigraphically distinct episode (e.g. a cut, a fill) was recorded with a unique context number (e.g. [001]). All work was carried out in strict accordance with statutory Health and Safety legislation and with the recommendations of SCAUM. Safety regulations pertaining to wearing of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) were also followed. The site was surveyed into the Ordnance Survey Grid and Ordnance Datum by means of a RTK GPS unit.

Results

The current DA was on the highest point in the immediate landscape, and the depth of the topsoil was shallow (c. 0.20m). Consequently machine tracks and plough scars were scored into the natural surface below. There was no evidence of subsoil upon the summit; however, in the north-western corner, traces of subsoil were apparent 0.07m thick, with an overall depth of overburden being 0.37m.

A total of thirteen burnt pit features were documented and nine were sampled and recorded. Eight of the pits had similar forms, dimensions and morphologies (**F.138**, **F.139**, **F.141**, **F.142**, **F.143**, **F.145**, **F.146**, **F.147** and **F.148**). The dimensions varied between 0.61m and 1.24m wide and 0.13m and 0.35m deep and the fills were fairly consistent, with mottled sandy silt and frequent inclusions of charcoal. The pits were mostly spatially isolated apart from F.144, F.145 and F.146 which were clustered together.

F.140, however, had a slightly different profile and fill. It was 1.60m wide and 0.56m deep with a highly mottled fill and had no dateable artefacts. There was evidence of burning; charcoal and burnt clay were in the central area of the fill, forming no definitive horizons or interfaces between contexts. This pit probably relates to the rest of the features in the area, although it was much more substantial in size.

Medieval features that were located in the north-western part of the 2006 excavation, including the large linear F.111 on a northwest-southeast alignment should have continued into this current phase. However, due to quarry workings and subsidence at the edge of the area, the continuing ditch was not evident. It is highly likely that the linear turned 90° to the west just north of the 2006 excavation. There was evidence of scraping from a toothed ditching bucket along the edge, probably from previous work, and compounded by erosion and subsidence, the ditch has been lost.

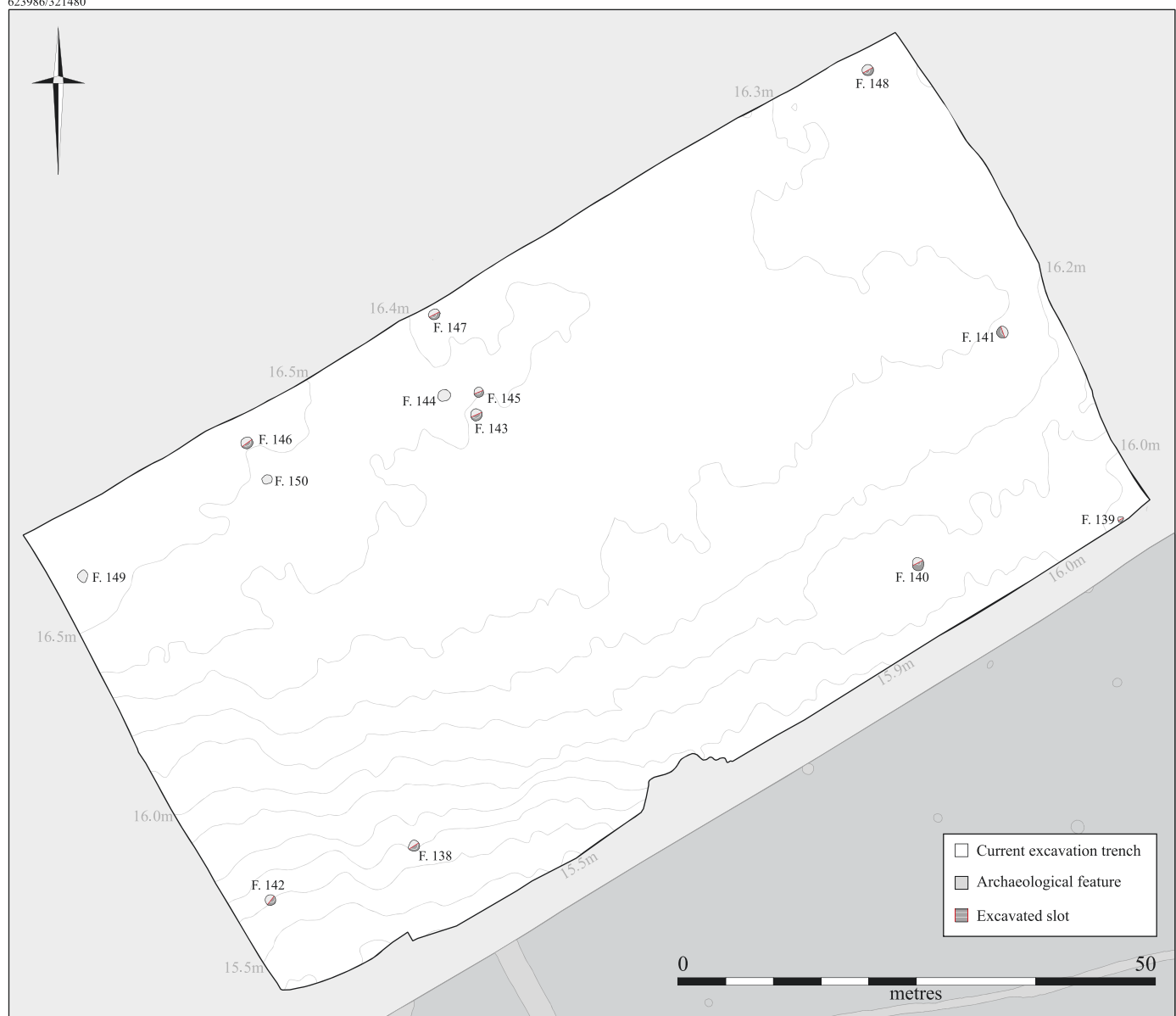


Figure 2. Plan of features.



Figure 3. 2004, 2005, 2006 and 2007 excavation phases

Discussion

There was no evidence for prehistoric activity during this phase of excavation either in the form of features or recovered artefacts. The small medieval enclosure (F.19) that was recorded during the 2006 excavation did not continue into this current phase. The limited size of the enclosure suggests small-scale activity was taking place in the area.

The burnt pits recorded during the excavation provide further evidence of Saxon activity in the area. The fills of the pits only produced charcoal with burnt natural sand at the base suggesting burning in situ. There were no pits on the very summit of the hill, and there was a slight clustering towards the northwest of the area, suggesting that the scatter of pits continues towards the north. The purpose of these features was evidently for the production of charcoal and suggests coppicing and woodland management was taking place nearby. The lack of material culture suggests that no settlement activity was taking place in the immediate vicinity. The small and shallow nature of the features may be the result of truncation by ploughing, especially in this current area, or they may represent small scale production.

The production of charcoal would imply a wooded landscape in the immediate vicinity during the Middle Saxon period. This may reflect a period of secondary woodland growth following the end of agricultural activity evidenced by the Romano-British field systems. Saxon pits have been recorded throughout Norfolk, including at Kilverstone; although these probably represent cooking pits as they contained burnt flint (Garrow et al 2006).

Bibliography

- Allen, J. L. & Holt, A. 2002. *Health and Safety in Field Archaeology*, SCAUM
- Beadsmoore, E. and Hall, A. 2003. *Mayton Wood, Buxton With Lammas, Norfolk; An Archaeological Evaluation by Field Survey 39833BVX*. Cambridge Archaeological Unit Report No. 586
- Bishop, B. 2005. *Mayton Wood, Buxton With Lammas, Norfolk: A 'Strip, map and sample' excavation*. Cambridge Archaeological Unit Report No. 693
- Garrow, D., Lucy, S. & Gibson, D. 2006. *Excavations at Kilverstone, Norfolk, 2000-02*. EAA Report No. 113
- Gibson, D. 2004. *Mayton Wood, Buxton With Lammas, Norfolk Planning ref: C/5/2002/5007 Project Specification for Strip, Map and Sample' excavation* Cambridge Archaeological Unit
- Gurney, D. 2003. *Brief for 'Strip, Map and Sample' Archaeological Excavation at Mayton Wood, Buxton with Lammas, Norfolk*. Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service
- Institute of Geological Sciences 1977. *Geological Survey Ten Mile Map South Sheet First Edition (Quaternary)* Scale 1:625000
- Patten, R. 2004. *Mayton Wood, Buxton With Lammas; A Strip, Map and Sample' Excavation*. Cambridge Archaeological Unit Report No. 649
- Spence, C. 1990. *Archaeological Site Manual*. MOLAS

Appendix 1

Feature Descriptions

F.138 was a shallow sub-oval pit, 1.00m x 1.10m wide and 0.17m deep, with convex sides and slightly uneven flat base [400], and consisted of one single fill; [399] medium to loose compaction mottled grey/brown silty sand with orange/yellow sand patches with occasional gravel and frequent charcoal inclusions.

F.139 was a shallow sub-circular pit, 0.50m x 0.61m wide and 0.19m deep, with convex and concave sides and irregular base [402], and consisted of one single fill; [401] medium to loose compaction mottled grey/brown sandy silt with dark grey/yellow sand patches with occasional gravel and frequent charcoal inclusions.

F.140 was a sub-circular pit, 2.00m x 1.60m wide and 0.56m deep, with moderately steep straight sides (convex at top of feature) and concave base [406], and consisted of three fills;

[403] firm light brown/grey silty clay with occasional gravel inclusions

[404] medium to firm compaction mottled and highly variable heterogeneous fill with western and eastern extents light red brown silty clay with moderate gravel and rare charcoal inclusions and root disturbance, central section patchy mid to dark brown/grey silty clay with occasional gravel and charcoal inclusions and firm red/orange sandy clay with rare gravel inclusions and firm dark grey charcoal stained silt

[405] loose light grey/yellow sand with moderate gravel inclusions from natural matrix

F.141 was a shallow circular pit, 1.17m x 1.24m wide and 0.18m deep, with gradual concave sides and concave base [410], and consisted of three fills;

[407] firm mid brown/grey sandy silt with moderate burnt stone and frequent gravel inclusions

[408] dark grey sandy silt with frequent burnt stone and charcoal inclusions

[409] firm red/orange silty sand with moderate charcoal inclusions

F.142 was a shallow circular pit, 1.00m x 1.03m wide and 0.13m deep with gradual concave sides and flat base [412], and consisted of one single fill; [411] firm mottled dark grey/brown sandy silt with moderate gravel and frequent charcoal inclusions.

F.143 was a shallow circular pit, 1.15m x 1.05m wide and 0.19m deep with gradual concave sides and flat base [414], and consisted of one single fill; [413] firm to friable mottled dark brown/grey sandy silt and orange sand with occasional gravel and moderate charcoal inclusions.

F.145 was a shallow circular pit, 1.08m x 1.05m wide and 0.15m deep with gradual concave sides and concave base [424], and consisted of one single fill; [423] soft mottled mid to dark grey/brown silty sand with occasional gravel inclusions and moderate fragments of charcoal.

F.146 was a circular pit 1.15m x 1.18m wide and 0.35m deep with moderately steep concave sides and concave base [417], and consisted of two fills;

[415] firm mid mottled orange/brown and grey sandy silt with rare gravel and moderate charcoal inclusions

[416] firm light to mid grey/brown sandy silt with occasional gravel inclusions and frequent charcoal fragments

F.147 was a shallow circular pit 1.15m x 1.14m wide and 0.15m deep with gradual concave sides and flat/concave base [419], and consisted of one single fill; [418] soft mottled and patchy yellow sand and light brown sandy silt with rare gravel inclusions and patches of charcoal.

F.148 was a shallow circular pit, 1.10m x 1.14m wide and 0.18m deep with gradual concave sides and concave base [422], and consisted of two fills;

[420] soft mottled grey/brown silty sand and yellow sand and patches of orange silty sand with rare gravel and charcoal inclusions

[421] soft mid brown/grey silty sand and patches of orange sand with occasional gravel and charcoal inclusions