BUXTON HEATH, HEVINGHAM
(Part)

Archaeological Earthwork Rapid Identification Survey

For The Norfolk Wildlife Trust

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January 2009
Buxton Heath, Hevingham (part)

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1 Introduction

Areas of the heath are in the process of restoration under a Countryside Stewardship scheme funded by Natural England. Approximately 15.5 hectares have been cleared of trees, gorse and other scrub, and await further work including litter/humus scraping. These areas, shown on Appendix A, were to be inspected under this survey, which was commissioned to provide information on potential archaeological earthworks for consideration in the future management.

It was undertaken using the agreed guidelines of a brief provided by The Historic Environment Countryside Adviser of Norfolk Landscape Archaeology (NLA), and a subsequent method statement by the contractor.

The fieldwork methods were to perambulate the area by systematic transects at c.50m intervals where vegetation and topography allowed. Features of note would be identified, located on maps provided and given a brief analytical description. Hand held GPS equipment would assist in the siting of features. In practice, the shape of the areas meant a more pragmatic approach with some additional area inevitably included in the inspection. See Para 3, Fig 1.

Natural England provided copies of the relevant Ordnance Survey (OS) 1:10,000 map and extracts from the management plan, as well as a copy of a 2000 vertical air photograph. NLA provided a copy of the existing archaeological information, see Appendix B, and allowed inspection of their copies of the 1946 RAF and later OS air photos.

In 1779 the area was part of Hevingham Common, although Faden’s Map of 1797 calls it Heveringland Heath! It was granted to the Hevingham Fuel Allotment Charity by the Enclosure Award of 1801. Bryant’s Map of 1826 omits it completely, but it is shown of similar extent to now on the OS 1st Edition 1” map.

2 Summary

The major features identified are related to military activity of the 2nd WW when the heath was used as a training area. An existing archaeological entry includes a pill box just to the west of the inspected area, but as various other features extended into this area, the whole area of military activity in the south was inspected. The additional military features include trenches, one circular banked enclosure and more amorphous depressions, in one case seemingly making use of a former extraction pit.
Within this area, a rather sinuous bank and ditch looks of considerable age, but does not correspond to the parish boundary alignment nearby. Another linking, but probably later, substantial bank and ditch of E-W orientation, seems to separate this area from a lower part to the north. In the north of the heath, further more scattered military features are noted.

3 Results, referenced to Fig 1

Site 1 TG17022151 to 17102133
A well defined sinuous bank and ditch which has its southern end at the point where the parish boundary with Haveringland crosses the public road. However, the line heads northwards to the west of the current boundary. The bank is up to 0.8m high and spread up to 3m, with a ditch up to 4m wide to its west. At the northern end, a 20m length turns north-eastwards. Also towards the northern end there is a short (c.20m) length of less prominent bank and ditch c.6-8m to its east.

The major feature is shown on the 1st Edition OS 6” map of the 1880s. Its prominence suggests an important and probably medieval landscape feature, possibly a former parish boundary line or at least a heathland boundary.

It lies within the area of Site 3, and has been heavily scarred by military activity.

Site 2 TG17052145 to 17642157
A substantial bank of 4m spread and up to 0.8m high, with a variable ditch to its south, its western end linking to Site 1. The ditch is the sole feature for the easternmost 120m. The bank is not perfectly straight, with a gentle bend c.70m from the east end.

Its western end is within the military activity area of Site 3 and shows considerable scarring, with more scattered disturbance further east. Some breaks occur where tracks cross the line.

It is seen on 1946 RAF, 1971 OS and 2000 Natural England air photos, but has not been mapped.

Its straightness does not suggest a date contemporary with Site 1. It would seem to pre-date 1946, as there is no obvious recent disturbance on the air photo, but it is possibly of that date, subdividing the extensive military activity of the southern part of the heath. Otherwise it is a probable sub-division of the heath for management purposes, of unclear date.

Site 3 HER 32499 TG17052141
A c.2.5 hectare area of military activity, in part already recorded. The pill box has an updated NG Ref TG17042133, and is positioned on a raised area with a near surrounding ditch, c.6m from the structure. 60m to the north (TG17044239) is a circular banked enclosure of c.11m diameter,
with banks up to 0.7m high and spread up to 3m. It has a break on its southern flank, accessed by a slightly hollowed path. It has a flat interior. This would seem to be a likely gun emplacement. In arable land to the west, (TG16982134) outside the NWT area, but logically part of the complex, the RAF air photo shows a trefoil-like structure of circular features which is the likely anti-aircraft or searchlight battery site. It is now partly straddled by the garden boundary of a dwelling, but gentle undulations appear in the arable land to its north.

The remainder of this area shows considerable surface disturbance, including trenches, and more amorphous, often near circular depressions. These have considerably degraded the banks of Sites 1 & 2 as noted above. A roughly E-W north-facing scarp c. 0.4m high, links to Site 1, c.45m N of the road, and heads east, cut by the present access track. This would seem to correspond to a defensive feature on the RAF photo which extended eastwards and then south to encompass a series of indeterminate features, possibly including an L-shaped structure of max dimensions 5m by 4m. The features extend to what would seem to be a former extraction pit in the south-east corner of this complex, but is this some specific military excavation?

Site 4 TG17242143
A c.0.3h area of military features comprising a U-shaped bank up to 0.4m high, max dimensions 4m, a series of part-infilled slit trenches to the east and south-east, and a 7m by 3m depression, 1m deep with slight banks, and sub-divided into 5m and 2m compartments in the south.

Site 4 TG17292139
A series of part-infilled zig-zag slit trenches, c.40m SE of Site4.

Site 5 TG17482146
A c.1.5 h area of irregular depressions which are in part former extraction pits, of which one is marked on the 1st Edition OS 6” map as a sand pit. They are mostly heavily clothed in gorse, and are up to 1.5m deep. Some narrower linking trenches suggests some military adaption, and on the north-eastern flanks are a series of definite part-infilled slit trenches mostly on open ground. The RAF photo indicates recent disturbance in the south-west of this area, but this could be further extraction or military use.

Site 6 TG17702145
Small area of amorphous depressions, up to 1m deep, probably remnants of shallow extraction pits. Small group of part-infilled trenches to the north, showing evidence of military activity.
Site 7 TG17682155
Small area of irregular depressions, part infilled. Probable extraction pits, but one adjacent c.6m diameter banked depression indicates adjacent military activity. The eastern edge of this area is a N-S shallow depression of c.60m length, c.3m wide and c.0.4 deep. It extends further north than the other depressions and is interpreted as a former trackway, pre-dating the other features. See also Site 8.

Site 8 TG17642180
A c. 30m length of linear depression of similar dimensions to Site 7. It is 5m from the boundary of the heath, and has a slight bank to its west. This is a probable continuation of the track noted in Site 7.

Site 9 TG17502183
Small extraction pit, c.8m diameter cut into the natural south-west-facing slope.

The remaining sites are scattered elements of the military activity in the northern part of the heath. Considerable areas of explosion craters are apparent on the RAF air photos, few are convincingly noted in the survey area.

Site 10 TG17162175
Slight evidence for a U - shaped banked enclosure, 8m by 6m, the longer side being the closed end, with slight slit trenches within. The banks are 0.25m high, terraced to the south.

Site 11 TG16962195
A 3m diameter, 0.3m deep circular depression with a mature oak tree inside. Probably military, possibly an explosion crater.

Site 12 TG17392208
A group of at least 4 partially infilled slit trenches, with maximum length of 4m.

Site 13 TG17552186
A 2.5m circular depression with spoil to the north-east, interpreted as an explosion crater.

Site 14 TG17542189
One slit trench, up to 1m deep and 3m long.

Site 15 TG17602200
Three slit trenches up to 1m deep and 5m long.
**Site 16 TG17632192**
An L-shaped slit trench, the longer arm of 6m, aligned E-W, the shorter arm 2.5m long

**Site 17 TG17802198**
A 10m by 3m shallow (0.2m) rectangular depression adjacent to former track. A sub-circular depression c.3m diameter and 0.2m deep is 15m to the north-east. Both possibly of military origin, the latter probably an explosion crater, the former possibly more modern.

**Site 18 TG17762209**
A group of three sharply-edged trenches up to 1m deep with others partially infilled. Another mostly infilled group 20m to the east.

**Site 19 TG17782214**
A group of partially infilled trenches.

Other banks which bound the existing site, including those of the roadside are probably mostly 19thC features, not uninteresting, but not thought worthy of special mention due to their straightness and consistent cartographic representation.
The only one meriting special note is outside the specific remit and is that in the extreme NW corner. Here a more sinuous bank with an outer ditch could be a continuation as a heathland boundary of Site 1.

### 4 Conclusions

The military features comprise the most extensive group of earthworks, those in the SW at Site 3 being the most impressive. These will almost certainly recorded more completely by the National Mapping Programme currently under way at NLA. However, Site 1, the impressive bank, although in places very degraded, is potentially the most interesting and earliest of the identified earthworks. The bank of Site 2 is intriguing, but as noted probably not of great age.

### 5 Bibliography


Ordnance Survey 1st Edition 1" map Sheet 66 initially published 1838, but reprinted with later additions by David & Charles 1968.
Hevingham Tithe Award Map NRO DN/TA 231, 1838.

Ordnance Survey 1st Edition 6” maps 1880s.

1946 RAF Air Photograph 106G/ UK/1636 9JULY46 F20//541SQDN No 4264

1971 Ordnance Survey Air Photograph E.Norfolk Blk No 014

2000 Air Photograph courtesy of Natural England.

Buxton Heath Management Plan, Norfolk Wildlife Trust 2008

Brief for Archaeological Earthwork Rapid Identification Survey, NLA 2008

6 Acknowledgements

Thanks to Dave Weaver of Natural England for supplying extracts from the management plan and for the copy of the air photo and 1:10,000 maps of the area. Thanks to NLA staff for giving access to the RAF & OS air photos and providing the existing archaeological information.

7 Appendices

A NWT map showing litter stripping extents

B NLA of Archaeological data