HEATH HOUSE WOODS, HOLT

Archaeological Earthwork Rapid Identification Survey

For The Stody Estate

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# Heath House Woods, Holt

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1 Introduction

The area of survey consists of the eastern half of the named wood comprising c.13 hectares of mixed woodland, abutting to the east the B1149, the Holt to Norwich road.

The survey was commissioned to provide information prior to some felling in preparation of a project to recreate heath and wood pasture under a Higher Level Stewardship agreement, with advise from Natural England.

The survey 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 woodland by systematic transects at c.50m intervals where vegetation and topography allowed. Features of note would be identified, located on a map provided and given a brief analytical description. Hand held GPS equipment would assist in the siting of features.

Natural England provided copies of the relevant Ordnance Survey 1:10,000 map and a Management Plan by Helen Baczkowska of the Norfolk Wildlife Trust. NLA provided a map depicting the existing archaeological information.

Prior to 1854, all maps noted at the Norfolk Record Office or early published maps show the area as heath, see Bibliography, with no internal subdivision. In 1854 a map of the Sale particulars of the Holt Lodge Estate shows one enclosure, see Site1, whilst later Ordnance Survey maps show the cottage and garden in the south-east corner of the wood, not included in this project, and an extraction pit in the north-east corner, still marked on OS maps.

2 Summary

The one existing archaeological site (Site 1, HER 6507) is given an enhanced description. The extraction pit noted above and several small depressions are described, one with a well-defined encircling bank. Two short lengths of linear depressions are noted, as well as descriptions of the three boundary features.
Results, referenced to Fig 1

Site 1 TG08293700  HER 6507
Formerly noted as an undated probable gravel pit. It is now described as a banked and ditched enclosure with two internal depressions, the former gravel pits. The enclosure abuts the boundary with the B1149, being c.50m N-S and 40m E-W, the bank up to 0.7m high with internal flanking ditches. In the north-east are two steep-sided depressions, one oval of c.14m by 10m, the other of c.7m diameter, both c.2m deep. The larger has a possible access ramp on its north-west edge.

The Holt Lodge Estate Sale Particulars map of 1854 (NRO MS 18622/134) noted above shows this enclosure as belonging to or at least used by the Surveyors of Highways. It is thus considered to be of mid-19thC origin. It does not appear on the OS 1st Edition 6” map of 1891.

Site 2 TG08073724 to 08233721
The northern boundary of the wood, consisting of a 3m spread bank up to 0.6m high, with intermittent hedging. Internal to the area on Faden’s Map but shown on Bryant’s Map of 1826, thus likely to be less than 200 years old.

Site 3 TG08233721 to 08333692
The eastern boundary of the wood, flanking the B1149, consisting of a 2m spread bank up to 0.8m high, with an internal flanking ditch, incorporating the eastern boundary of Site 1. The road line is seen on all maps, thus the boundary would appear to be at least 200 years old.

Site 4 TG07953669 to 08303680
The southern boundary of the wood, forming to the parish boundary with Edgefield. A 2m spread bank up to 0.75m high with a flanking ditch to the south. Shown firstly on the Holt Enclosure Award map of 1810 (C/Sca 2/165). Although a parish boundary, its straightness does not convince of a medieval line, but given that this area was heath, it is a possibility.

Site 5 TG08203720
An irregular extraction pit up to 1.5m deep, with some spoil evident. It is first shown on the OS 1st Edition 6” map of 1891 as a gravel pit, and is still marked on OS maps as pit (disused).

Site 6 TG08183718 to 08223710
A slight linear depression, c.3m wide and up to 0.25m deep. A probable remnant of a former trackway of indeterminate date.

Site 7 TG08153709
A 7m diameter shallow circular depression up to 0.3m deep with no convincing evidence for a spoil bank. Probable natural origin.
Site 8 TG98263696
A near-circular flat-bottomed 0.3m deep depression of maximum 6m diameter with a narrow encircling bank up to 0.5m high, with a possible access from the north-west. It is located c.10m from the SW corner of Site 1, but is not thought to be associated. The bank is sufficiently well-preserved to suggest a post-medieval if not modern origin. Possibly of military origin, but other similar features might have been expected nearby, thus of unknown date and function.

Site 9 TG08273685
A small shallow roughly oval depression, 6m by 7m, showing evidence of use as a dump for rubbish from the nearby former Heath Cottage. Origin unclear, but could well be as above.

Site 10 TG08263679
A 4m diameter circular, steep-sided depression up to 1m deep, close to the southern boundary. Rather small for an extraction pit, rather steep-sided for a natural feature, but probably the former. Unknown date.

Site 11 TG08023685
A c.30m length of linear depression, c.3m wide and 0.25m deep. Roughly corresponds to part of a pathway shown heading west from Heath Cottage on the OS 1891 6" map.

Site 12 TG08043693 Surface finds
Within an area of c.0.7 hectares, but very possibly extending further, a thin scatter of flints showing considerable signs of cracking as with burnt flints or pot boilers. The flints noted are of larger than the contractor has normally seen, up to clenched fist size, rarely small fragments. They appear not to have the slightly darkened colour that is often seen on mounds or other scatters. Considerable leaf mould exists in this area, and thus the few seen have been disturbed by some means, possibly animals. Given the proximity to HER Sites 6508 & 35107, the chance of a more extensive spread is high.

4 Conclusions
Apart from the probable burnt flints, no evidence was noted for prehistoric activity in terms of earthwork survival. No completely convincing evidence was noted for medieval activity, although the parish boundary of Site 4 may have an early origin. Various depressions recorded are of uncertain date, possibly including some of natural origin, others of probable post-medieval date, although Site 8 is the most interesting because of its form. The enclosure of Site 1 has the most direct evidence for its origin, and thus of importance for the landscape history of the area. Site 6 is possible evidence for a former trackway across the heath, potentially of early origin.
5 Bibliography


Holt Enclosure Award Map, 1810, Norfolk Record Office, C/Sca2/165.


Holt Tithe Award Map 1839, Norfolk Record Office, DN/TA 594

Holt Lodge Estate, Sale Particulars 1854, Norfolk Record Office, MS 18622/134.

Ordnance Survey 1st Edition 6” Map 1891.

Edgefield Heath & Heath House Heath, County Wildlife Site 1098, Management Plan, Helen Baczkowska, Norfolk Wildlife Trust, 2008

Brief for Archaeological Rapid Identification Survey, NLA 2008

6 Acknowledgements

Thanks to Dave Weaver of Natural England for supplying the Wildlife Trust Management Plan, Archaeological brief and 1:10,000 site maps, and for facilitating access to the site.

7 Appendix

Map of NLA, HER Data.