Evaluation at The Guides and Scouts Hut Soham



Archaeological Evaluation Report



December 2009

Client: Soham Guides and Scouts Hut Committee

OA East Report No: 1144 OASIS No: Oxfordar3-66876

NGR: TL 5910 7314



Evaluation at The Guides and Scouts Hut, Soham

Archaeological Evaluation

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Report Date: December 2009

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Report Number: 1144

Site Name: The Guides and Scouts Hut, Soham

HER Event No: 3297

Date of Works: 2nd and 3rd November 2009

Client Name: Soham Guide and Scout Hut Committee

Client Ref:

Planning Ref: 09/00385/FUL

Grid Ref: TL 5910 7314

Site Code: SOHGSH09

Finance Code: SOHGSH09

Receiving Body: CCC Stores, Landbeach

Accession No:

Prepared by: Louise Bush

Position: Fieldwork Supervisor Date: December 2009

Checked by: Richard Mortimer
Position: Project Manager
Date: December 2009

Signed:

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Summary

On the 2nd and 3rd of November 2009, OA East conducted an archaeological evaluation at The Guides and Scouts Hut, Soham, Cambridgeshire (TL 5910 731), in advance of the construction of a new guide and scout hut.

Within the development area, two small trenches were opened. A post-medieval to modern rubbish pit containing an abundance of glass bottles and ceramic jars was uncovered in the first trench. In the second trench a single Roman or Medieval ditch was located.

Two fragments of human skeletal remains were also recovered from the ditch and from the topsoil during the archaeological works.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 An archaeological evaluation was conducted at The Guides and Scouts Hut, the Recreation Ground, Soham.
- 1.1.2 This archaeological evaluation was undertaken in accordance with a Brief issued by Kasia Gdaniec of Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC; Planning Application 09/00385/FUL), supplemented by a Specification prepared by OA East (formerly Cambridgeshire County Council's CAM ARC).
- 1.1.3 The work was designed to assist in defining the character and extent of any archaeological remains within the proposed redevelopment area, in accordance with the guidelines set out in *Planning and Policy Guidance 16 Archaeology and Planning* (Department of the Environment 1990). The results will enable decisions to be made by CCC, on behalf of the Local Planning Authority, with regard to the treatment of any archaeological remains found.
- 1.1.4 The site archive is currently held by OA East and will be deposited with the appropriate county stores in due course.

1.2 Geology and topography

1.2.1 The village of Soham is located on an irregular peninsula of Bedford Lower Chalk and 3rd terrace river gravel, which projects northwest from Fordham into the Fens, between the Isleham embankment and the former Soham Mere (British Geological Survey, Sheet 188). The development lies at an approximate height of 8.5m OD.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The development area lies on the southwestern edge of the known Saxon core of Soham, close to, or perhaps within, the putative site of the monastery of St. Felix, the first Bishop of the East Saxons (Sites and Monuments Record no. MCB8593). The monastery was reputedly plundered and razed to the ground in the later ninth century AD by Danes, but as yet little evidence of any of its buildings has come to light.
- 1.3.2 There are both burials and stratified archaeological deposits which attest to Late Saxon and medieval settlement in the area around White Hart Lane, Market Street and the High Street to the east (e.g. HER refs. MCB13882, MCB8413 & MCB18185), however, further evidence of Late Saxon and Medieval settlement within the central area of the town defined by Fountain Lane, Gardener's Lane, Clay Street and High Street with the parish Church in its north-east corner, indicates that this was the focal core of early settlement in the town. Excavations at the Clay Street frontage of the former Lion Mills site (MCB17497) revealed medieval enclosure boundaries and pits, while contemporary evidence was found to the north in the area of the old Angel Inn at the corner of West Drive and Station Road (MCB15832).
- 1.3.3 Evaluations in this central area of the town, at St Andrew's House (Casa Hatton 2000), Market Street (Cooper 2004a) and Clay Street (Atkins 2004) have produced medieval (12th to 16th century) pits, ditches and posthole structures. A small evaluation at Ten Bell Lane produced one late medieval quarry pit and some undated ditches (Atkins 2004a) and another at Brook Dam Lane recorded a single medieval pit and a post-medieval ditch (Cooper 2004).



1.3.4 The area of the recreation ground was used for small fields, paddocks and orchards from at least the mid seventeenth century and had become a recreation ground by the late nineteenth century – as is shown on the first edition Ordnance Survey map. Not having been subject to repeated building episodes, good preservation of any early settlement remains was thought likely in this location.

1.4 Acknowledgements

1.4.1 The Author would like to thank Steve Taylor, the District Commissioner Newmarket and District Scout Council, who commissioned and funded the archaeological works. The main contractors were CJ Murfitt of Soham, who provided the JCB. The excavation and survey were undertaken by the author. Richard Mortimer managed the project. The brief for the archaeological works was written by Kasia Gdaniec,

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2 AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

2.1.1 The objective of this evaluation was to determine as far as reasonably possible the presence/absence, location, nature, extent, date, quality, condition and significance of any surviving archaeological deposits within the development area.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The Brief required that 5% of the 450sqm development area be subject to trial trenching. Two 7m trenches were opened, one of these being subsequently extended, which gave a total investigation area of 27.5sqm, a little over a 6% sample.
- 2.2.2 Machine excavation was carried out under constant archaeological supervision with a wheeled JCB-type excavator using a toothless 1.4m wide ditching bucket.
- 2.2.3 The site survey was carried out by the author using a Leica 1200 GPS system.
- 2.2.4 During machining the different soils (topsoil, subsoil, demolition/dumping etc.) were separated and a programme of 'bucket sampling' was undertaken on these soils at both ends of each trench to ascertain the levels of archaeological materials within them. 15 litres of soil was hand sorted for every 10cm depth of soil removed. All finds retrieved during machining were individually bagged, numbered and plotted within the trenches.
- 2.2.5 All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using OA East's *pro-forma* sheets. Trench locations, plans and sections were recorded at appropriate scales and colour, monochrome and digital photographs were taken of all relevant features and deposits.
- 2.2.6 One environmental sample was taken to investigate the possible survival of micro- and macro- botanical remains within the single non-modern feature excavated.
- 2.2.7 Site conditions were varied, from cold and sunny to very rainy. Due to the location of the site within the recreation ground, the trenches were fenced in with Heras Fencing.

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3 Results

3.1 Introduction

- 3.1.1 Limited archaeology was revealed at the Guides and Scouts Hut and appeared to be of a Medieval and post-medieval to modern date. Due to the small size of the evaluation, the archaeology will be discussed by trench. A comprehensive listing of trench depths, descriptions and related context data can be found in Appendix A.
- 3.1.2 The area available for evaluation was restricted by service pipes running both northwest and northeast from the rear of the Scout Hut.
- 3.1.3 Natural geology was encountered *c.* 0.8m below modern ground level. Topsoil was *c.* 0.25m deep and consisted of a dark brown-grey sandy clay which contained a moderate amount of post-medieval debris and a human finger bone. The subsoil was a mid yellow-grey sandy clay *c.* 0.2m deep, containing occasional chalk pieces and modern brick.

3.2 Trench 1

3.2.1 The whole length of Trench 1 revealed part of a post-medieval to modern rubbish pit, **14** (Fig. 2). The full extent of this feature, or features, were not found, but it was 1.14m deep and contained a minimum of 10 fills (Fig. 3). The most substantial fill (12) was 0.4m deep and consisted purely of glass bottles, ceramic pots and metal pans. The other fills also contained a moderate amount of domestic refuse. The whole pit was capped with a 0.1m thick layer of chalk (04).

3.3 Trench 2

- 3.3.1 Directly beneath the topsoil (01) was a brick surface (17) made up of a mixture of medieval, post-medieval and modern bricks.
- 3.3.2 A single ditch, **16**, running east-northeast to west-southwest was also uncovered (Fig. 2, Plate 4). The single fill (15) was a dark grey-brown silty clay with moderate medium-sized flint stones. The ditch was 1.54m wide and 0.4m deep with an open U-shaped profile. Three (residual) flint flakes and a single sherd of Roman pottery were recovered from the fill. Several animal bones and a human toe bone were also retrieved.

3.4 Finds Summary

- 3.4.1 A limited number of finds were retained from this evaluation. The only pottery sherd not found within the rubbish pit was a small and abraded sherd of Roman grey ware from ditch fill 15. Other finds from the ditch included one Neolithic struck flint waste flake, a small lump of well-fired clay, a piece of iron working slag, several animal bones and a human foot phalange.
- 3.4.2 Fifteen fragments of animal bone were produced from three contexts and two fragments of human skeletal remains were also retrieved from two of the contexts.
- 3.4.3 The topsoil (01) finds consisted of post-medieval tile, brick, glazed red earthen-ware, glass, clay pipe, ceramics and a human hand phalange. One fragment of late nineteenth/early twentieth century pottery was found in the subsoil (02).
- 3.4.4 Finds from the main fill (12) of rubbish pit **14** consisted of post-1910 glass bottles, a large ceramic jug and a ceramic hot water bottle, as well as post-medieval glass, early



twentieth century ceramics and painted wall plaster. A complete Tizer bottle was recovered, dating the final infilling of the pit to post 1924 - the year in which the drink was first produced.

3.5 Environmental Summary

3.5.1 One bulk sample was taken from the fill of ditch **16** in order to assess the quality of preservation of plant remains and artefacts and their potential to provide useful data as part of the archaeological investigations.

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4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1.1 The evaluation at The Guides and Scouts Hut, Soham, has revealed evidence for activity dating from the Neolithic through to the modern period. A Neolithic flint flake from the fill of ditch **16** may indicate no more than that the area was visited in prehistory.
- 4.1.2 Ditch **16** is thought to be of Medieval date, though a Romano-British attribution is also possible; the fill produced a single sherd of Roman pottery but no identifiable Medieval artefacts. The ditch is aligned parallel to Clay Street which runs *c.* 50m to the south. It is therefore possible that this ditch could have served as the back boundary to medieval housing plots along Clay St and which backed onto the recreation ground.
- 4.1.3 These houses may not have been long-lived as they do not appear on the 1656 Soham and Fordham Manor map (see Fig. 4). The period of the greatest expansion of development in both housing and agricultural land use would have been through the 12th to 14th centuries, with, in many cases, such occupation ceasing by the late 14th and 15th centuries. It would be possible to see plots here, fronting onto Clay St, of a similar size and design to those which line the edge of the recreation ground today, the back edges of which also run parallel to, and c. 50m back from, both Fountain Lane and Gardeners Lane.
- 4.1.4 The post-medieval to modern rubbish pit, **14**, shows that a communal town dump was in place on the recreation ground, presumably infilling the open pits of a small quarry. Unfortunately it is not clear from the limited size of this evaluation either how extensive this activity was or exactly what material was being quarried. Due to the pit having at least 10 very different fills, it is possible that it may have been open for quite some time. The main rubbish fill at the base (12), had been capped by a layer of pure clay, and the very top of the pit when it was finally closed was capped with a layer of chalk (04), thus implying at least two distinct phases of disposal activity within the pit.
- 4.1.5 Two human bones were retrieved during the evaluation, a hand phalange (finger bone) from the topsoil (01) in Trench 1 and a foot phalange (toe bone) from the ditch fill (15) in Trench 2. This may imply that the (presumably) Medieval activity has disturbed some earlier phase of occupation on the site.

4.2 Significance

4.2.1 This evaluation has made a limited contribution to the understanding of the Medieval development of Soham, beyond establishing the possible use of the area for housing plots. The location of a significant post-medieval to modern dump is of interest, as is the presence of the the quarries that the dump has infilled.

4.3 Recommendations

4.3.1 Recommendations for any future work based upon this report will be made by the County Archaeology Office.

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APPENDIX A. TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS AND CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench 1								
General o	description	1			Orientation	NE-SW		
The whole	e trench cor	ntained a	nost-medi	Avg. depth (m)				
Consisted	d of soil and				Width (m)	1.4		
chalky cla	ıy.				Length (m)	7		
Contexts	i					"		
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date		
1	Layer	-	0.25	Topsoil	Ceramic, brick, glass	Post-medieval		
2	Layer	-	0.2	Subsoil	Pottery	Post-Medieval		
3	Layer	-	0.3	Subsoil	-	-		
4	Fill	-	0.1	Chalk capping of 14	-	-		
5	Fill	-	0.02	-	-	-		
6	Fill	-	0.05	-	-	-		
7	Fill	-	0.23	-	-	-		
8	Fill	-	0.15	-	-	-		
9	Fill	-	0.07	-	-	-		
10	Fill	-	0.15	-	-	-		
11	Fill	-	0.1	-	-	-		
12	Fill	-	0.4	-	Glass, ceramic, metal	Post-medieval		
13	Fill	-	0.22	-	-	-		
14	Cut	-	1.14	Rubbish pit	-	-		
Trench 2								
General o	description	1			Orientation	NE-SW		
Trench co	ntained one	e ditch rur	ning FNF	-WSW	Avg. depth (m)	0.8		
Consisted	d of soil and				Width (m)	1.4		
chalky cla	ıy.				Length (m)	8.75		
Contexts	i					,		
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date		
15	Fill	1.54	0.4	-	Pottery, flint, HSR, daub	?Medieval		
16	Cut	1.54	0.4	-	-	-		
17	Layer	-	0.1	Brick surface	Brick	Post-medieval		
18	Layer	_	0.5	Subsoil	-	_		

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APPENDIX B. BONE REPORTS

By Chris Faine

Faunal Remains

4.3.2 Four contexts from the evaluation at The Guides and Scouts Hut, Soham yielded 15 fragments of animal bone of which 8 were identifiable to species (see table 1). Context 1 contained a fragment of butchered sheep/goat tibia. Context 12 contained a portion of sawn cattle femur with a partially fused proximal epiphysis. The largest number of identifiable fragments were recovered from context 15 (a possible Roman or Medieval ditch fill). These consisted of portions of large mammal ribs, distal pig tibia and sheep/goat metacarpal along with a complete red deer radius/ulna. This is an extremely small sample from which few conclusions can be drawn, most likely representing butchery/settlement waste.

	NISP	NISP%
Sheep/Goat (Ovis/Capra)	2	13.3
Cattle (Bos)	1	6.7
Pig (Sus scrofa)	1	6.7
Red deer (Cervus elaphus)	1	6.7
Large Mammal	10	66.6
Total:	15	100

Table 1: Species distribution for the assemblage

Human skeletal remains

4.3.3 Adult human remains were recovered from 2 contexts. Context 1 contained a proximal hand phalange. A proximal foot phalange was recovered from context 15.

APPENDIX C. ENVIRONMENTAL REPORTS

By Rachel Fosberry

Introduction and Methods

- 4.3.4 A single bulk sample was taken from a ditch fill within the evaluated area of the site in order to assess the quality of preservation of plant remains, bones and artefacts and their potential to provide useful data as part of further archaeological investigations.
- 4.3.5 Ten litres of the sample was processed by tank flotation for the recovery of charred plant remains, dating evidence and any other artefactual evidence that might be present. The flot was collected in a 0.3mm nylon mesh and the residue was washed through a 0.5mm sieve. Both flot and residue were allowed to air dry. The dried residue was passed through 5mm and 2mm sieves and a magnet was dragged through each resulting fraction prior to sorting for artefacts. Any artefacts present were noted and reintegrated with the hand-excavated finds. The flot was examined under a binocular microscope at x16 magnification and the presence of any plant remains or other artefacts are noted on Table x.

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Results

Sample No.	Context No.	Cut No.	Flot Contents	Residue Contents
1	15		Charred cereal grains, small bones, fish scales, snail shells	Animal bone

Table 1. Results

Preservation

4.3.6 The plant remains are preserved by carbonisation.

Plant Remains

Cereals

4.3.7 The sample contains charred cereal grains of wheat (*Triticum* sp.) and rye (*Secale cereale*). No chaff elements occur.

Weed seeds

4.3.8 No weed seeds are present

Ecofacts and Artefacts

- 4.3.9 Animal bone was recovered from the residue and reintegrated with the hand-excavated finds
- 4.3.10 Fish scales and small rodent bones were noted in the flot.

Contamination

4.3.11 Modern roots were present

Discussion

4.3.12 The plant remains recovered from these samples consist of the cereals wheat and rye which were both common crops during the medieval period. Although they are present in small quantities, they do indicate that cereals were being locally utilised, although possibly not to any great extent. These grains, along with other dietary remains of animal bone and fish scale, are probably derived from low-density deposits of domestic refuse and/or hearth waste.

Further Work and Methods Statement

- 4.3.13 The low density of charred plant macrofossils in this assemblage limits interpretation of the feature sampled. It is not considered that full analysis would add significantly to this and further work is not recommended.
- 4.3.14 If further excavation is planned, sampling should be undertaken as investigation on the nature of cereal waste and possible weed assemblages is likely to provide an insight into to utilisation of local plant resources, agricultural activity and economic evidence from this period.

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APPENDIX D. FINDS TABLE

Context	Find	Date	Retained/Discarded
1	Tile	Post-medieval	Discarded
1	Brick	Post-medieval	Discarded
1	Clay pipe	Post-medieval	Discarded
1	Glazed red earthenware (GRE)	Post-medieval	Discarded
1	Glass	Post-medieval	Discarded
1	Ceramic	Post-medieval	Discarded
1	Animal bone	?	Retained
1	HSR	?	Retained
2	Pottery	Late 19th/early 20th century	Discarded
12	Ceramics	Early 20th century	Discarded
12	Glass	Post-medieval	Discarded
12	Wall plaster	Modern	Discarded
12	Bottles	Post 1910	Retained
12	Ceramic jug	Post 1900	Retained
12	Ceramic hot water bottle	Post 1900	Retained
15	Flint waster	Neolithic	Retained
15	Fired clay	?	Retained
15	Iron working slag	?	Retained
15	Pottery	Roman	Retained
15	Animal bone	?	Retained
15	HSR	?	Retained

APPENDIX E. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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APPENDIX F. OASIS REPORT FORM

All fields are required unless they are not applicable.

Project De	<i>≥tails</i>												
OASIS Number Oxforda			ar3-66876										
Project Nam	ie	Evalua	tion at The	Guides and So	couts Hut,	Soham							
Project Date	es (field	(arowt	Start	02-11-2009			Finish	03-	-11-200	9			
Previous Wo	ork (by	OA Ea	ast)	No			Future	Wo	rk No				
Project Refe	rence	Code	s										
Site Code	SOHGS	SH09			Plannir	ng App.	No.		09/00385/FUL				
HER No.	ECB329	97			Related	d HER/	OASIS N	lo.	N/A				
Type of Proj	ect/Te	chniq	ues Use	d									
Prompt		Planni	ing conditio	n									
Developmen	t Type	Public	Building										
Please sele	ect all	l tech	niques	used:									
Aerial Photo	graphy	- interpr	etation	Grab-Sa	mpling				Remo	ote Operated	d Vehicle	Surve	/
Aerial Photo	graphy	- new		Gravity-C	Core			×					
Annotated S	3ketch			Laser Sc	Laser Scanning			Survey/Recording Of Fabric/Structure			cture		
Augering				Measure	ed Survey			eted Trenche	es				
Dendrochro	nologica	ıl Surve	y	☐ Metal De	Metal Detectors			Г	Test Pits				
☐ Documentar	ry Searc	:h		Phospha	ate Survey			☐ Topographic Survey					
	ital Sam	pling		Photogra	☐ Photogrammetric Survey ☐ Vibro-core								
Fieldwalking	j							☐ Visual Inspection (Initial Site Visit)			t)		
Geophysica	I Survey	r		Rectified	d Photograp	phy							
		_		nds & Their									
List feature type together with the	es using leir resp	the NM ective p	R Monume eriods. If n	ent Type Thesau o features/finds	urus and s were four	ignificant nd, please	finds using state "nor	g the ne".	MDA	Object t	ype Th	esau	rus
Monument			Period			Object				Period			
Ditch			Roman 4	3 to 410		Pottery			Roman 43 to 410				
Rubbish Pit			Post Med	dieval 1540 to 1	901	Glass & ceramic			Post Medieval 1540 to 1901		1		
N/A			Select pe	riod		N/A			Select period				
Project Lo	catic	วท											
County Cambridgeshire					Site Ad	ldress (in	ıclu	eluding postcode if possible)					
District East Cambs					Fountai	ition Ground in Lane , Cambridg		iro CRI	7 5ED				
Parish Soham					Sunam	, Callibriug	Jesin	re CD	ק אבט				
HER	Cambr	idge											
Study Area 450sqm						National Grid Reference TL 5910 7314							



Project Originators

Project Archives	
Supervisor	Louise Bush
Project Manager	Richard Mortimer
Project Design Originator	Richard Mortimer
Project Brief Originator	CAPCA
Organisation	OA EAST

Project Archives

Physical Archive	Digital Archive	Paper Archive
Cambs County Store	OA East	Cambs County Store
SOHGSH09	SOHGSH09	SOHGSH09

Archive Contents/Media

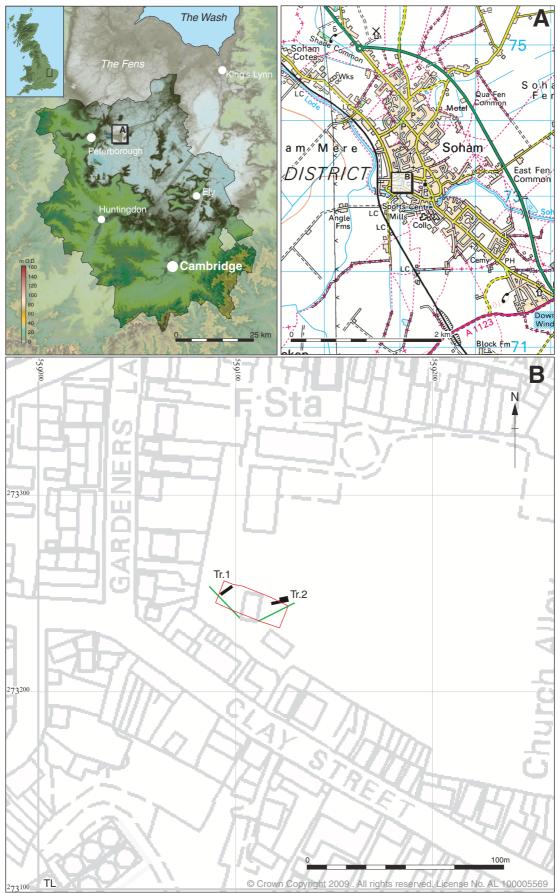
	Physical Contents		Paper Contents
Animal Bones	\boxtimes		
Ceramics	\boxtimes		
Environmental	\boxtimes		
Glass	\times		
Human Bones	\times		
Industrial			
Leather			
Metal			
Stratigraphic			
Survey		X	
Textiles			
Wood			
Worked Bone			
Worked Stone/Lithic	\times		
None			X
Other			

Digital Media	Paper Media		
□ Database	Aerial Photos		
GIS			
Geophysics	Correspondence		
	☐ Diary		
	☐ Drawing		
☐ Moving Image	Manuscript		
Spreadsheets			
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	Research/Notes		
	⊠ Photos		
	⊠ Plans		
	Sections		
	Survey		

Notes:

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Figure 1: Location of trenches (black) with the development area outlined (red) and modern service pipes (green)

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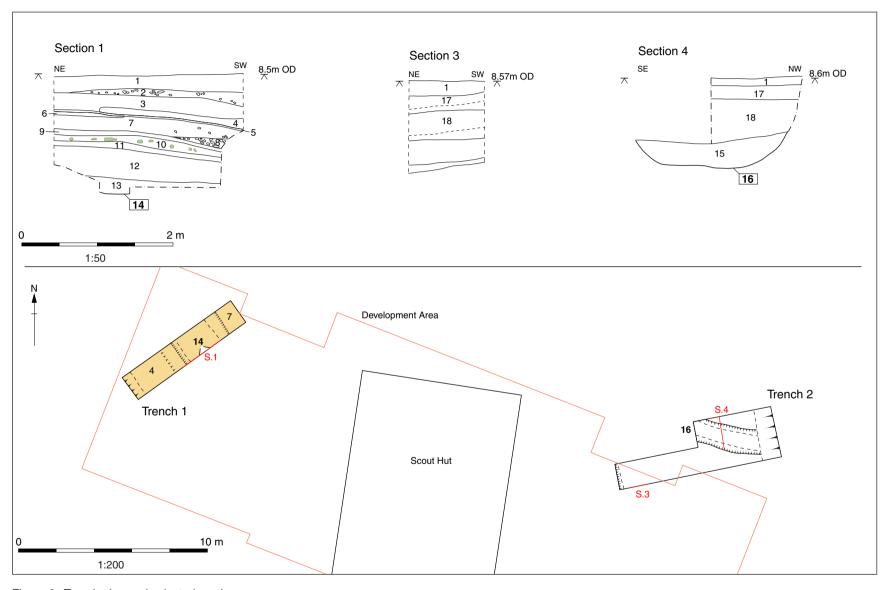


Figure 2: Trench plan and selected sections







Figure 3: Section 1

1:20



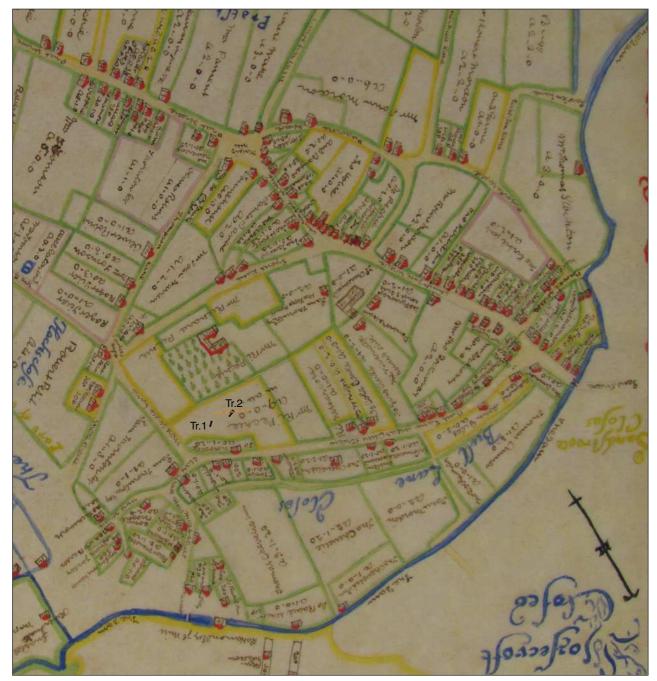


Figure 4: Historic map of Soham and Fordham Manor 1656 (with trenches shown in black and ditch 16 in orange)

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Plate 2: Trench 1, looking south-west



Plate 3: Deposit 12 from rubbish pit 14







Plate 4: Ditch 16 (before trench extension) looking north-east



Plate 5: Trench 2 looking north-east

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