

Archaeological Field Unit

Late Saxon / Saxo-Norman Settlement Features at
38 Station Road, Soham: An Archaeological Investigation

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**Late Saxon / Saxo-Norman Settlement Features at 38 Station Road, Soham:
An Archaeological Investigation
(TL 5924 / 7340)**

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1997

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SUMMARY

Cambridgeshire County Council's Archaeological Field Unit has carried out an archaeological investigation at 38 Station Road, Soham (TL 5924/7340), in response to a brief issued by the County Archaeology Office (Development Control). The work was conducted in May 1997 for the Gifford Partnership in advance of the construction of two semi-detached dwellings and a single unit of sheltered housing. The site, immediately to the north of Station Road, had previously been occupied by sheds and garages to the front, and allotments to the rear. Prior to the 1970s, it had been used as an orchard. Two linear trenches and a series of smaller test pits were opened by machine so that archaeological features could be recorded and sample excavated by hand.

The investigation has produced evidence primarily for Late Saxon / Saxo-Norman remains dating from the tenth to twelfth centuries. At least five foundation trenches have been located, implying the presence of timber structures. These remains have been dated through study of the small pottery assemblage. Late Saxon or Saxo-Norman features have now been recovered from three sites in this area, perhaps suggesting settlement spanning at least 250m (from 38 Station Road to the site of earlier investigations at Soham County Infants' School (Bray 1991)). A ditch parallel to Station Road also showed that the line of this street has probably been an important landscape feature since the Late Saxon period.

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1 INTRODUCTION

In May 1997 the Archaeological Field Unit of Cambridgeshire County Council carried out an archaeological investigation at 38 Station Road, Soham (TL 5924/7340). The project was commissioned by the Gifford Partnership in advance of the construction of four semi-detached dwellings near the street frontage and a further unit of sheltered housing behind, with associated vehicular access and services. The fieldwork was designed to comply with a brief issued by the County Archaeology Office - Development Control (CAO-DC 29/4/97) to ensure the fulfilment of a planning condition. Archaeological trenches were targeted on the proposed building footprints, vehicular access, and car ports, areas which would be disturbed by construction work, but the precise line of the future foundation trenches was avoided to prevent potential foundation subsidence. The development area covers approximately 0.13 hectares, extending back for c 44m from the street frontage. Until recently the site had been occupied by garages and sheds at the front and by allotments to the rear; some of these structures remained at the time of the investigation, acting as a constraint on the placement of archaeological trenches. Until the mid 1970s, much of the site had been occupied by an orchard. At this time the fruit trees were grubbed out and a large quantity of additional topsoil was imported by lorry.

2 TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

Soham lies near the southern fen edge approximately 8km south of Ely, on an irregular peninsula of chalk marl, river gravels, and Lower Greensand. The development area is situated within an area of residential houses and gardens, in the north-eastern part of the town, some 200m north of St Andrew's Church. It lies between 9 and 10m OD, in an area of locally very mixed geology, which was found to vary between Lower Greensand and soft extensively weathered chalk and chalk marl.

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The fen edge around Soham and the nearby Snail valley has a long history of human occupation, and finds of flint tools recorded in the Cambridgeshire Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) attest to activity in the Mesolithic, Neolithic, and Bronze Age (SMR 7098, 7087, 11019, 7101). Possible Iron Age and Roman burials are known within Soham, and several sites including a probable villa lie to the east and south-east of the village (SMR 6971, 7086, 7100, 7578).

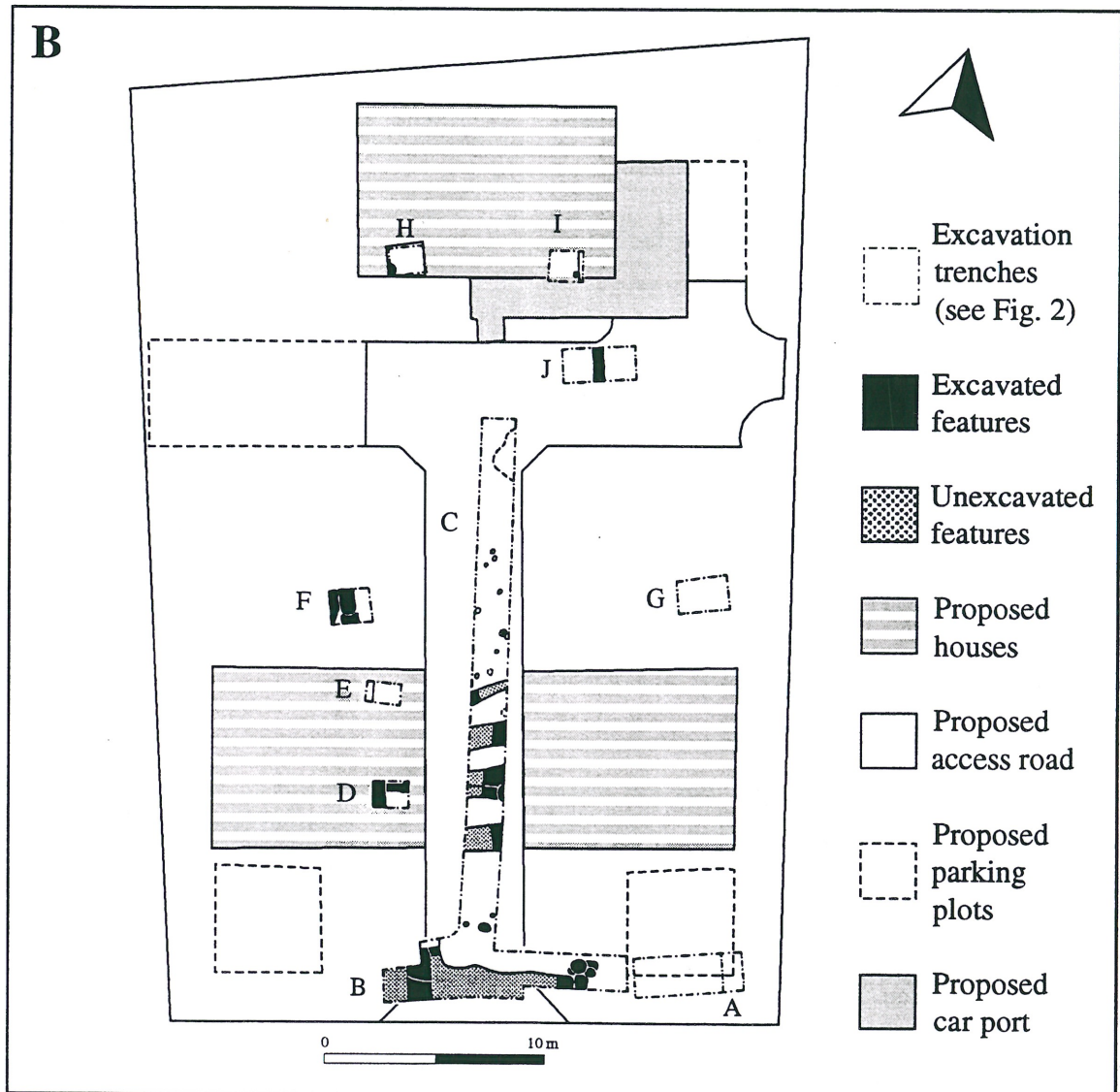
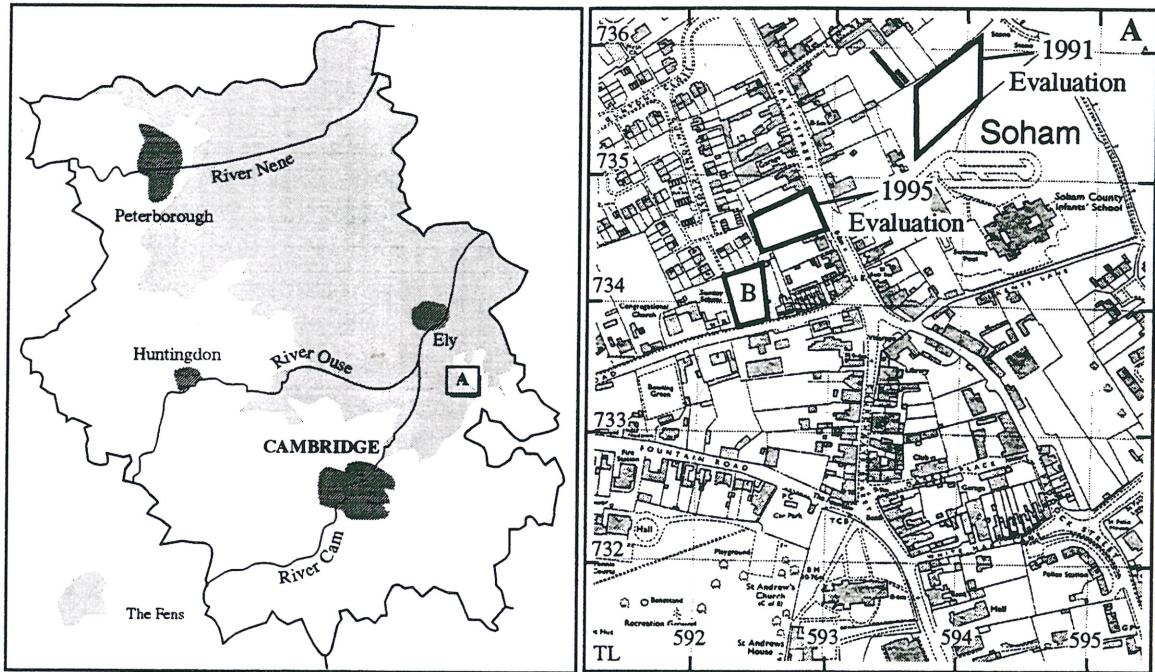


Figure 1 Plan Showing Site Location and Proposed Development

A number of Anglo-Saxon cemetery sites are concentrated in and around Soham. One probably lay in the vicinity of St Andrew's Church, c 220m south of the investigation area (SMR 7123a, Hatton and Last 1997). Soham is known to have been of some importance by the beginning of the Middle Saxon period, historical sources indicating that Felix, first bishop of the East Angles, based his episcopal seat here in the early seventh century (Hatton and Last 1997, VCH ii 141). Felix founded a monastery in Soham in which he was later buried: it probably survived until the late ninth century, and may also have been located close to the church of St Andrew. Several finds of human remains in the White Hart Lane area just east of the church may represent evidence of a major monastic burial ground (Robinson 1995).

There is evidence for settlement just north of the present town centre from the Late Saxon period onwards. At 9-13 Pratt Street, archaeological evaluation has revealed shallow gullies and a large pit containing eleventh or twelfth century sherds of Thetford ware pottery, and a post hole containing a vegetable tempered sherd that may have been slightly earlier (Hatton and Last 1997). Evaluation trenches extended to within 20m of the rear of the 38 Station Road site. An evaluation has also been conducted at Soham County Infant's School, between 150m and 225m to the north-east of 38 Station Road (Bray 1991). A number of ditches were revealed containing an assemblage of pottery of tenth to thirteenth century date, predominantly St Neots type ware and Thetford type ware. One of these ditches had a line of post holes at its base, thought to relate to a timber structure. It contained a spread of burnt sticks and clay which may have been a discarded panel of wattle and daub. A second ditch contained frequent inclusions of mortar and charcoal, again suggesting the presence of settlement in this location.

These remains correspond with a major phase of development in Soham in the Late Saxon and medieval periods. The twelfth century church attests to the prosperity of the village, and the line of the High Street and Pratt Street was probably established by this time. Station Road appears integral to a circular street pattern which may predate the medieval period and preserve the line of the earlier Saxon monastic enclosure (Sperry, pers comm). The Station Road street frontage area has high potential for the discovery of evidence relating to medieval buildings.

4 METHODS

Investigation trenches were opened using a JCB type excavator with toothless ditching bucket to excavate to the surface of the natural geological strata, or to secure archaeological deposits. The alignment and extent of the trenches was often determined by the physical constraints of operating in a small enclosed area containing sheds and a garage. Where possible trenches were placed to investigate the areas of proposed disturbance, but it was necessary to avoid the precise line of the foundation trenches to prevent potential foundation subsidence. All trenches were cleaned by hand to define archaeological features, and all features revealed were base planned at a scale of 1:50. All features were then excavated or sample excavated by hand, with the

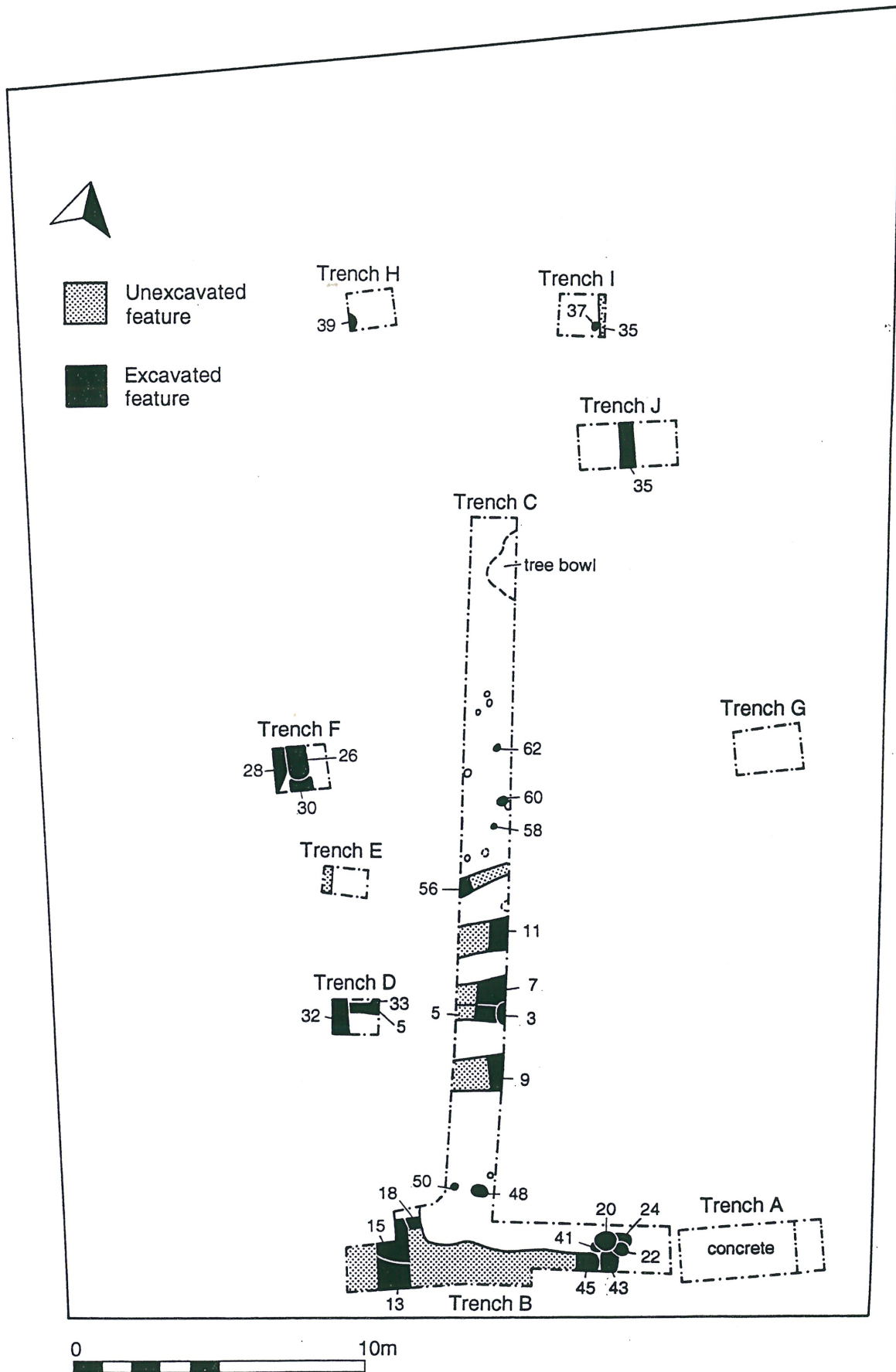


Figure 2 Plan of Archaeological Features

exception of a small number of post holes and two linear features which appeared to relate to excavated features in other trenches. Excavated features were recorded using the Archaeological Field Unit's standard single context recording system. The spoil was scanned for residual artefacts such as worked flints, but the value of this exercise was compromised by the fact that large quantities of topsoil were known to have been imported from off site

5 RESULTS

Trench A

Trench A was positioned close to the street frontage in the south-east corner of the site. It was intended that this should be the start of a long linear trench, but machining was severely constrained by the presence of a large concrete foundation. This varied in depth: it was at least 1.05m deep on its southern side but was stepped up so that it was only 0.27m deep to the north. As a result, Trench A was limited to a small test pit to the east of the concrete, measuring 1.66m x 1.00m.

The west facing section of the trench was recorded. The top 0.30m consisted of modern make up of dumped brick and mortar. Below was Deposit (53), 0.60m thick, composed of dark greyish brown sandy silt and containing a sherd of early post medieval redware. This overlaid Deposit (54), >0.20m thick, composed of greyish brown sandy silt, and containing a pot sherd in a fine sandy fabric thought to be Middle to Late Saxon at the latest. Two corresponding deposits, (51) and (52), were noted in the truncated east facing section, (51) containing early post-medieval pot and tile, and (52) a sherd of Late Saxon / Saxo-Norman Thetford Ware. These contexts appeared to be part of two dump deposits. The lower deposit was still visible in the base of the trench at a depth of 1.10m.

Trench B

Trench B was excavated as close to the street frontage as was practicable, to test for the presence of structures. It was 11.0m long and a maximum of 2.7m wide. Between 0.68m and 1.13m of overburden was recorded, sealing archaeological features cut into the natural deposits of Lower Greensand and weathered chalk. This overburden was largely homogeneous, and may have been formed by the grubbing out of the orchard and/or the dumping of topsoil.

At least two phases of an east / west ditch were revealed extending along the southern edge of the trench, parallel with the modern street. A short length of a north / south ditch was also present, intersecting with the east / west features. It was difficult to be certain of the precise line of these features because their fills were very similar and because it was only possible to excavate two slots across them. The sequence in which the ditches were cut is also tentative for the same reasons.

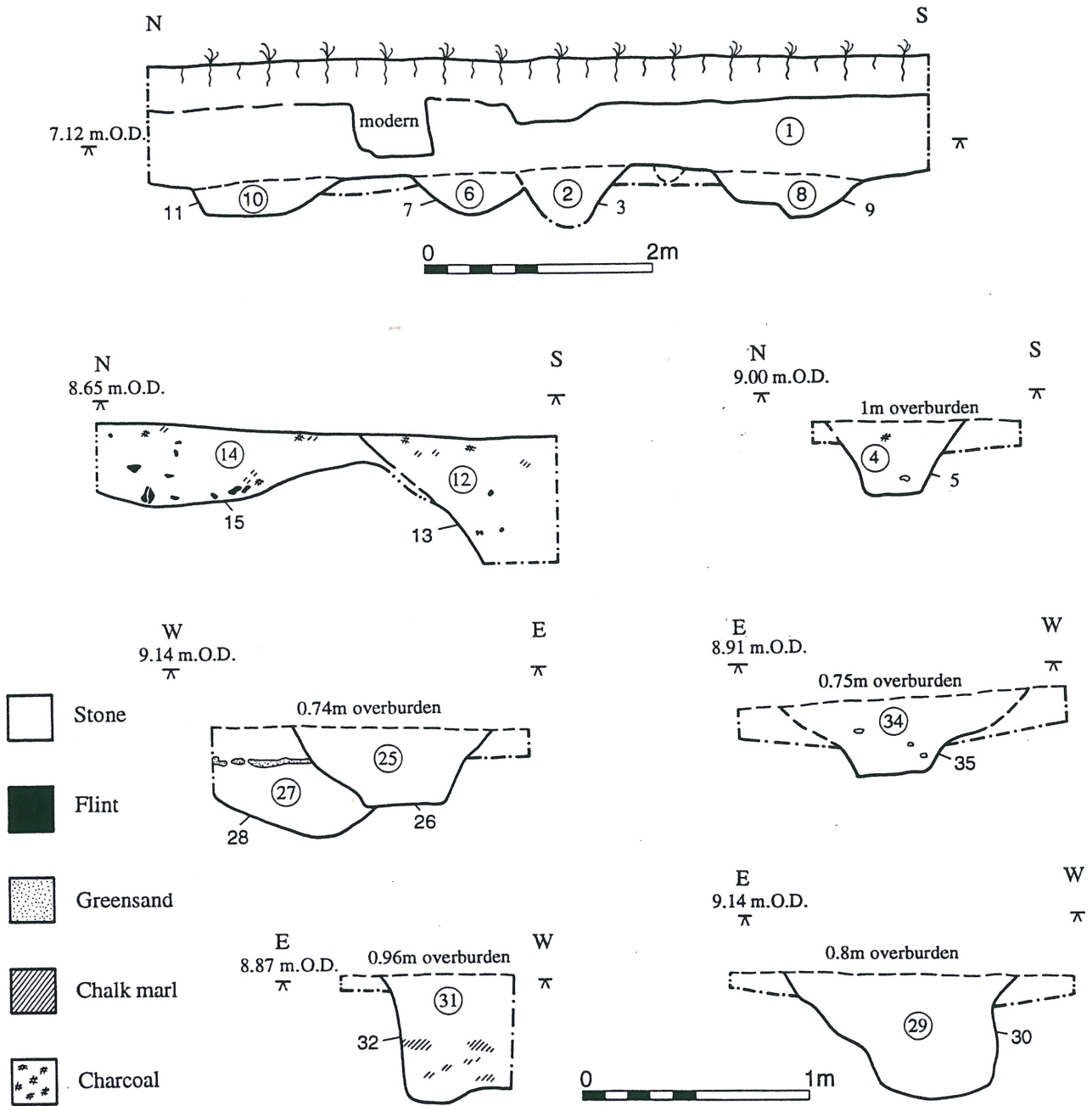


Figure 3 Sections of Selected Archaeological Features

The earliest feature in this sequence appeared to be the ditch oriented north / south, Cut 18. It measured at least 0.57m wide x 0.32m deep, with a concave east side with gradient *c* 1:1 and a gently rounded base. A sherd of shelly pottery of possible Roman date was recovered from the fill.

The western side of this feature appeared to have been truncated when Cut 15 was dug. Cut 15 was a ditch which extended for >7.5m on an east / west orientation, parallel with the line of the present Station Road, but turned to the north near the western end of Trench B. Lack of space for spoil disposal prevented the extension of Trench B in this area, so it is not clear exactly to which orientation Cut 15 was turning, nor whether the feature continued to the west beyond this junction. It was >1.2m wide and 0.39m deep, truncated on the southern side by a further ditch. The base was gently rounded, and the southern side gently angled, but where the feature turned to the north, the east side appeared in section to be much steeper. No datable finds were recovered.

A further slot was excavated at what appeared to be the eastern end of Cut 15. Investigation was limited by the trench edge, but the east / west ditch visible in plan appeared to come to a butt end. This butt end was recorded as Cut 45, and was found to be a maximum of 0.24m deep, with gently angled concave sides. A sherd of late medieval orange fine ware was recovered from the fill. It is unclear whether Cut 45 represents part of the same feature as Cut 15, or whether it derives from a later phase of activity.

The southern side of Cut 15 was truncated by a much deeper recut, Cut 13. This was a substantial ditch, again oriented roughly east / west, parallel with the line of the present Station Road. It was >6.2m long x >0.87m wide x >0.60m deep. Its base and southern side were not located as the feature extended beyond the limit of excavation and beneath the present pavement, but the profile of the excavated portion suggested a feature of considerable depth. One prehistoric pot sherd and two Late Saxon sherds were recovered from the fill. The limited available space within the development area, and the presence of the road immediately to the south, meant that it was not possible to establish how far the ditch continued to the east or west. It appeared to be turning slightly towards the north at the western end of Trench B, at roughly the point where Cut 15 had deviated, but the extent of this change of direction was not clear. The relationship between Cuts 13 and 45 was not established.

At the eastern end of Trench B, a small cluster of shallow pits was recorded. Some of these may have been post holes. The shallowness of these intercutting features suggests considerable horizontal truncation.

Cuts 24 and 41 appeared to be part of a shallow pit that had been truncated by later features. Together they indicate the former presence of a pit measuring *c* 1.25m x >0.25m x 0.17m deep, with concave sides of gradient *c* 1:1, and a flat base. The corner of Cut 41 appeared to be truncated by Cut 43, a later pit or the butt end of a linear feature. The latter extended beyond the limit of excavation, but appeared to be ovoid in plan, with gently angled sides and a flat base. It measured >0.90m x 0.60m x 0.22m deep, and the fill contained a single sherd of Thetford Ware (Late Saxon /

Saxo-Norman in date). The feature had a very slight intersection with Cut 45, described above, but it was not possible to determine any stratigraphic relationship.

Cut 22 was a small shallow pit truncating both 24 and 43. It was subcircular in plan with concave sides of gradient *c* 1:1, a near flat base, and dimensions of 0.50m x 0.45m x 0.08m. It in turn was truncated by Cut 20, subcircular, with gentle sides and a rounded base, and dimensions of 0.75m x 0.60m x 0.15m deep. Two handmade prehistoric or Early Saxon pottery sherds were recovered from the fill.

Trench C

Trench C was 24.5m long, and was excavated to reveal natural deposits of Lower Greensand mixed with pockets of naturally occurring weathered chalk, these being sealed by 0.69 - 1.13m of overburden. This overburden again appeared to be largely homogeneous and topsoil derived, though the top 0.4m of the deposit was slightly darker, perhaps reflecting recent garden cultivation.

Three small possible post holes were planned at the southern end of Trench C, and two of these were excavated. Cut 48 measured 0.51m x 0.47m x 0.06m deep, with very gentle sides and a near flat base. It could be tentatively suggested that a dark inner fill represented the very base of a post pipe. Cut 50 measured 0.25m in diameter x 0.14m deep, with concave sides of gradient *c* 2:1 and a gently rounded base.

To the north, a series of five linear features and a large probable post hole was revealed. Two of the linear features and the probable post hole formed an intercutting cluster of features. Here, the earliest feature was a ditch, Cut 7, with concave sides and a rounded base. It was oriented east-north-east / west-south-west and measured >0.50m wide x 0.36m deep. To the south, it was truncated by a second linear feature, Cut 5, the alignment of which was closer to east / west. The steep sides and flat base of the latter suggested a function as a structural beam slot. It measured 0.60m wide x 0.32m deep, and extended into Trench D to the west. Excavation of the feature here produced one sherd of Thetford ware and two sherds of coarse flint tempered pottery, the three sherds together probably comprising a Late Saxon group. At its eastern end, Cut 5 was truncated by Cut 3, a semi-circular pit or butt end extending beyond the trench, which may have been a large post hole.

Two linear features to the north and south of this group showed roughly the same alignment as Cut 7. Cut 11 measured 1.32m wide x 0.30m deep, with a steep northern side, gently angled southern side, and flat base. Two sherds of pottery of possible Roman date were recovered. Cut 9 measured 1.32m wide x 0.38m deep, with a relatively gentle concave southern side, and a steeper northern side with a horizontal steep. The base was flat and no datable finds were recovered.

Further north, Cut 56 was a linear feature aligned on an axis nearer to north-east / south-west than that of Cuts 7, 9, and 11. In profile, it resembled Cut 5, with steep straight sides inclined at a gradient of *c* 3:1 and a flat base. It measured 0.55m wide x 0.12m deep.

Elsewhere in the trench, ten possible post holes were recorded. Some of these may have been root holes. Three were excavated and found to be archaeological features, although they were very shallow and probably heavily horizontally truncated. Cuts 58, 60, and 62 varied in diameter between 0.10m and 0.18m, and in depth between 0.08m and 0.20m. No finds were recovered. It is possible that some of these features were associated and together form the foundations for a subrectangular structure, but certainty is impossible given the narrow width of the trench.

Near the north end of the trench, a tree bole was located in plan, measuring >0.85m x >0.35m. A flint blade of possible Neolithic date was recovered from the surface of the feature during cleaning.

Trench D

Trench D was a test pit measuring 1.6m x 1.2m. Here natural Lower Greensand was exposed at a depth of c 1.0m, sealed by overburden as described for Trench C. Cut 5, a probable beam slot, was revealed extending into the trench from Trench to the east. A stakehole of diameter 0.14m and depth 0.30m was recorded on the northern edge of Cut 5. Its fill appeared identical to that of the linear feature, and they may have been contemporary.

A probable linear feature aligned roughly north / south appeared to truncate Cut 5. Cut 32 measured >0.58m wide x 0.56m deep, its western edge lying beneath the limit of excavation. A steep vertical side was recorded at the southern edge of the trench, but it changed to become concave and more gently angled to the north. The base was near flat, but two shallow circular depressions were recorded which may have been the base of post settings, or simply irregularities in the shape of the cut. The function of the feature was uncertain, although the steep side and near flat base suggested a possible foundation trench.

Trench E

Trench E was a test pit located to the north of Trench D, and natural Lower Greensand was encountered at a similar depth. The test pit measured c 1.6m x 1.0m. It contained a single feature. It was thought that this was Cut 32 continuing north from Trench D, although the alignment appears slightly different. The feature was unexcavated.

Trench F

Trench F was a further test pit inserted to the north of Trenches D and E to determine whether Cut 32 continued north. It measured 1.8m x 1.6m, and natural Lower Greensand was encountered at a depth of 0.68 - 0.80m, beneath overburden again similar to that removed from Trench C. Three archaeological features were recorded.

Cut 28 was a linear feature aligned north-north-east / south- south-west, and alignment shared by no other feature on the site. It measured >0.70m wide x 0.48m deep, with the western side lying beyond the limit of excavation. The sides were concave with gradient *c* 2:3, and the base was gently rounded. The profile suggested a boundary or drainage ditch, and mottles of redeposited Greensand and a lens of degraded chalk suggested a feature that had been allowed to silt up. Some small handmade flint tempered pot sherds of prehistoric or Early Saxon date were found in the fill.

Cut 30 was subrectangular in shape. It extended beyond the southern limit of excavation, and may have been a pit, but its shape and correspondence with the line of Cut 32 in Trench D to the south suggested a linear feature. It measured 1.02m wide x 0.55m deep, with steep or undercut lower sides and a near flat base. Its function is uncertain, but aspects of its profile and the depth of its base resemble Cut 32. One sherd of Thetford ware (Late Saxon / Saxo-Norman) and some small handmade pot sherds of possible middle Saxon date were recovered.

These two features had no physical relationship, but both appeared to be truncated by the butt end of a linear feature, Cut 26. This measured 0.87m wide x 0.34m deep, and extended beyond the limit of excavation to the north. It was aligned roughly north / south, and its steep lower sides and flat base suggested a possible function as a beam slot. No datable finds were recovered from the fill.

Trench G

Trench G was a test pit towards the east of the site, measuring 2.3m x 1.6m. Natural Lower Greensand was encountered at a depth of *c* 0.95m, with similar overburden to Trench C. No archaeological features were revealed.

Trench H

Trench H was a test pit located towards the north-west of the site, measuring 1.6m x 1.2m. Natural Lower Greensand was encountered at a depth of *c* 0.70m, with similar overburden to Trench C. A single archaeological feature was revealed.

Cut 39 was semi-circular in plan, extending beyond the western limit of excavation. It measured >0.60m x >0.25m x >0.41 m deep, with concave sides with gradient *c* 1:1. The base lay beyond the trench, so it is not certain whether this cut is part of a pit, or the butt end of a linear feature. No datable finds were recovered.

Trench I

Trench I was a test pit located towards the north-west of the site, measuring 1.5m x 1.6m. Natural Lower Greensand was encountered at a depth of *c* 0.90m, with similar overburden to Trench C. Two archaeological features were revealed.

One of these was a probable linear feature which appeared to align with Cut 35 in Trench K. Only its western edge was present within this trench, so it was not excavated here. A sherd of micaceous thirteenth century pottery was recovered during cleaning and may be derived from this feature.

A probable truncated post hole lay immediately to the west. Cut 37 measured 0.12m in diameter x 0.09m deep, with concave sides of gradient *c* 2:1 and a rounded base.

Trench J

Trench J was excavated to determine whether the feature recorded in Trench I continued south, and to expose its full width if present. The trench measured 3.4m x 1.6m, being excavated through overburden similar to that in Trench C to reveal the natural Lower Greensand at a depth of *c* 0.80 - 0.90m.

Cut 35 was a linear feature which appeared to correspond with the feature seen in Trench I. It was 1.05m wide and 0.32m deep, with steep lower sides and a flat base. The profile suggested a possible function as a beam slot. A sherd of pottery from a handmade vessel in a thick, dark fabric, possibly a coarse version of Ipswich ware, was found in the fill.

6 DISCUSSION

Prehistoric

A small quantity of worked flint was recovered. A few flakes were found during hand cleaning of trenches. Features also sometimes contained worked flint, but the flint appeared to be residual because in several instances it was accompanied by pottery sherds of a later date. In the context of the rich flint scatters known to exist nearby on the Soham peninsular, it is thought that this material represents a background noise of lithics rather than a significant cluster, although post-depositional reworking through the cutting of later features clearly renders this interpretation tentative.

Late Prehistoric or Early Saxon

Linear Cut 28 in Trench F contained a number of small sherds of handmade flint tempered pottery thought to be of prehistoric or Early Saxon date. Its north-north-east / south-south-west orientation was distinctively different both to the alignment of the other linear features recorded on this site, and to present day land divisions, reinforcing the suggestion that this was an early feature. The rounded profile and the redeposited Greensand within the fill seems to imply that this was a drainage or boundary ditch which had been allowed to silt up at the end of the period of its use.

Cut 20, a truncated pit or post hole close to the modern street frontage, again contained small sherds of handmade prehistoric or Early Saxon pottery. This feature appeared to be stratified above Cut 43 which contained a sherd of Thetford ware (Late Saxon / Saxo-Norman). It is uncertain whether the early pottery in Cut 20 is residual, or whether the stratigraphic relationship, tentative because of the shallowness of these features, is unreliable. Nevertheless, the pottery raises the possibility that prehistoric or Early Saxon pits / post holes may be present, and that some of the undated pits / post holes may be from this period.

Roman or Saxon

These features may be boundary or drainage ditches recut several times in slightly different places. The orientation is similar but not identical to that of Linear Cut 5. Cut 11 contained two possible Roman sherds, whilst 7 was earlier than Cut 5 which contained Late Saxon pottery. A Roman or Saxon date thus seems probable. It may be that these features were cut at a time when the orientation of landscape divisions had shifted from the alignment represented by Cut 28 to an alignment close to that of Cut 5, and indeed of the modern boundaries.

Late Saxon / Saxo-Norman Features

Probable Beam Slots and Post Hole Cuts 5, 26, 35, and 56 were relatively shallow linear gullies with steep straight lower sides and flat bases. Cut 5 contained three pottery sherds thought to constitute a Late Saxon group, and Cut 35 contained a sherd of thick dark handmade pottery which may have been coarse Ipswich ware of Middle Saxon date. No pottery was recovered from 26 or 56, but the four gullies are regarded as a roughly contemporary group because of their common form and the shared alignment pattern of three of them.

It might be suggested that shape of these features resulted from the cleaning out of drainage ditches with a square implement. However, they had sharp lower interfaces without evidence that they had ever been dug and left open. Moreover, their sides were consistently steep and straight where they cut the clean Greensand; it seems likely that the apparently gentler upper profiles visible in section where the edges cut mottled deposits at the upper interface of the Greensand are more a product of later bioturbation mixing than of the original feature profile. The upper sides could also have been disturbed by robbing out. In addition, Cut 5 was interrupted by a possible post hole, 3, which was centred on the gully and may further suggest the presence of a structure. Thus, interpretation of the gullies as beamslots is preferred.

The type of structure supported by these features is uncertain, especially given the short lengths of feature exposed in the investigation trenches. Cut 5 was oriented east-north-east / west-south-west, parallel with the present street frontage, 26 and 35 lay at right angles, and 56 was on a slightly different alignment. It is possible that these gullies represent the wall foundations for timber buildings. Some may also represent fence lines or plot divisions, possibly holding horizontal timbers into which

timber uprights or panels of wattling were inserted. The evaluation to the north-east, at 9-13 Pratt Street (Hatton and Last 1997), on a plot of land extending to within 15m of the present site, produced evidence for a gully containing Thetford ware on the same alignment as 35. This extended for at least 20m and again may be some form of structural plot division. The evidence for structural features, whether relating to buildings or to plot divisions, seems to suggest that this location was within or close to an area of Late Saxon / Saxo-Norman settlement.

Possible Foundation Trench Cuts 30 and 32 appeared to be part of a linear feature on the same north-north-west / south-south-east alignment as two of the probable beam slots discussed above. In places, the sides were recorded as being near vertical or undercutting, unusual for a ditch profile, and the possibility of two post hole bases at the bottom of Cut 32 was noted. This feature may be part of a building foundation trench. The stratigraphic relationships of 30 and 32 suggest that this feature should be phased between two beamslots, but it is possible that the sequence has been disturbed by robbing activity.

Boundary / Drainage Ditches Cuts 15 and 13 appear to represent successive phases of a boundary or drainage ditch, extending parallel to, and partly beneath, the present Station Road. Cut 13 was the later ditch, and contained two sherds of Late Saxon pottery and one prehistoric sherd. This was the most substantial feature found on the site, and although its extent to east and west is not known, it is probable that it was delimiting the Late Saxon / Saxo-Norman structural features to the north on the same alignment pattern. Its position also supports the suggestion, outlined in the Archaeological Background above, that the line of Station Road was already an important landscape feature in the Saxon period.

Cut 15 presented some uncertainties which could not be resolved by the limited trenching conducted. It appeared to turn to the north at its western end, and to reach a butt end to the east. When a section was excavated through this eastern end, a single sherd of late medieval orange fine ware was recovered. It can be suggested that this sherd is intrusive, that it is from an intrusive feature not recognised in plan, or that the relationship with Cut 13 should be reversed.

Cut 18, of which only a very limited section was revealed, seems to have been an earlier north / south boundary or drainage ditch which Cut 15 may have been recutting where the latter appears to turn to the north.

Pits and Post Holes The only possible feature of this type containing artefactual dating evidence was Cut 43, which extended beyond the limit of excavation. A single sherd of Late Saxon / Saxo-Norman Thetford Ware was found in its fill. Post Hole Cut 37 and Stake Hole 33 may be attributable to this phase of activity because they lay immediately adjacent to linear features probably of this date. Other pits and post holes may be contemporary given that most of the datable features present on the site date to the Late Saxon / Saxo-Norman period. Many of the pits and post holes were very shallow, implying a considerable degree of horizontal truncation, but it is clear that there were no large, artefactually rich rubbish pits within the area of the investigation trenches.

Other The deposit recorded in the sections of Trench A as (52) and (54) may be a dump deposit but given the small size of the trench could equally be filling a cut feature.

Post-Medieval

A thick deposit containing post-medieval pottery and tile was recorded in section in Trench A. Its presence here suggests that this part of the site may not have been affected by a truncation episode which seems to have occurred elsewhere.

Undated

The remaining shallow pits and post holes have not been dated. It is unclear from the limited trenching how many of these may be Late Saxon / Saxo-Norman, or whether the foundations of any timber buildings might be present.

7 CONCLUSION

The investigation has produced evidence primarily for Late Saxon or Saxo-Norman remains dating from the tenth to twelfth centuries. It is suggested that four shallow linear features with steep sides and flat bases may have been beam slots, either for the walls of timber buildings or for substantial fences. Two other steep sided cuts may relate to a foundation trench. Given the limited excavation, it is not possible to propose ground plans for these structures.

Artefactual dating evidence was sparse in all the excavated features, and sherds of pottery were typically small and abraded. The possibility that the Saxo-Norman sherds might be residual to the features in which they occurred was considered. However, evidence of later activity is largely absent from the site, whilst the orientation of the probable Saxo-Norman features fits well with Saxo-Norman alignments known from the two earlier archaeological evaluations conducted in this part of Soham (Bray 1991, Hatton and Last 1997). It now seems clear that by the Late Saxon period, land divisions and probably structures were laid out parallel with, and at right angles to, the line of Pratt Street and Station Road. At all three sites, the predominant orientation of linear features was east-north-east / west-south-west, and at right angles, north-north-west / south-south-east. It remains unclear whether the present line of Pratt Street had already stabilised, and whether structures were built along the frontage. Certainly, the discovery of a deep linear feature containing Late Saxon pottery immediately adjacent to Station Road suggests that this landscape division was already in place by this time. The greatest volume of pottery and the largest sherds still derive from the Soham County Infants' School site (Bray 1991), where one ditch contained frequent mortar and charcoal inclusions and another a spread of fired clay with twigs, possibly burnt wattle and daub. This may indicate a focus of domestic occupation here, or simply be a product of rubbish disposal practices. Nevertheless, it now appears that relatively

dense Late Saxon / Saxo-Norman remains, in the form of ditches, shallow gullies (? beam slots), and some pits and post holes, occupy a considerable area at least 250m wide to the north of St Andrew's Church. This raises the further question of whether this represents an early secular settlement outside the former monastic enclosure close to the church, or the expansion of settlement along the road to Ely, beyond the main focus.

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APPENDIX A POTTERY SPOTDATING ASSESSMENT

Paul Sperry

Context	Trench	Assemblage Date-Range (All AD)	Description	No. Sherds
1 (u/s)	A	900-1150	Thetford ware	1
	A	1100-1400	? Ely ware	1
	A	900-1100	Shelly sandy ware	2
	B	pre 650	Handmade, flint tempered, late preh / early Saxon	1
	C	pre 650	Handmade, flint tempered, late preh / early Saxon	1
4	D	900-1100	Thetford ware	1
	D	-	Coarse flint tempered fabric	2
10	C	50-400	Unknown Sherds, ?Roman	2
13	B	900-1150	Prehistoric	1
	B	-	?Thetford ware with orange finish	2
16	B	pre 400	Shelly fabric, ?Roman	1
19	B	pre 650	Handmade, late preh / early Saxon	2
27	F	pre 650	Handmade, flint tempered sherds, late preh / early Saxon	4
29	F	900-1150	Thetford ware	1
		-	Handmade, sand tempered, ?middle Saxon	4
34	J	650-850	Coarse Ipswich type ware	1
	I	-	C13 micaceous Essex ware (Cleaning find poss u/s)	1
42	A	900-1150	Thetford ware	1
44	B	1350-1500	Late medieval orange fine ware	1
51	A	1500+	Early post medieval pot and tile	1+1
52	A	900-1150	Thetford ware	1
53	A	1500+	Early post-medieval redware	1
54	A	650-1066	Fine sandy ware	1

APPENDIX B CONTEXT LIST

No	Trench	Type	Description	Below	Above
1	All	Machined deposits	10YR 3/2 v dark greyish brown. Mostly topsoil derived overburden		
2	C	Fill of 3	10YR 3/2 v dark greyish brown clayey sandy silt	1	3
3	C	Cut	Post hole	2	4
4	C	Fill of 5	10YR 3/2 v dark greyish brown clayey sandy silt	3	5
5	C	Cut	Linear, ? beam slot	4	6
6	C	Fill of 7	10YR 3/2 v dark greyish brown clayey sandy silt	5	7
7	C	Cut	Linear, ?ditch	6	Natural
8	C	Fill of 9	10YR 3/2 v dark greyish brown clayey sandy silt	1	9
9	C	Cut	Linear, Ditch	8	Natural
10	C	Fill of 11	10YR 3/2 v dark greyish brown clayey sandy silt	1	11
11	C	Cut	Linear, ?ditch	10	Natural
12	B	Fill of 13	10YR 4/1 dark grey sandy clay silt	1	13
13	B	Cut	Linear, Ditch	12	14
14	B	Fill of 15	10YR 3/2 v dark greyish brown sandy silt	15	13
15	B	Cut	Linear, Ditch	14	16
16	B	Fill of 18	10YR 4/2 dark greyish brown sandy clay silt	15	17
17	B	Fill of 18	10YR 4/2 dark greyish brown sandy clay silt	16	18
18	B	Cut	Linear, ?ditch	17	Natural
19	B	Fill of 20	10YR 4/2 dark greyish brown sandy silt	1	20
20	B	Cut	Subcircular, pit / post hole	19	21
21	B	Fill of 22	10YR 3/2 v dark greyish brown sandy clay silt	20	22
22	B	Cut	Subcircular, pit / post hole	21	23, 42
23	B	Fill of 24	10YR 4/3 brown sandy silt	22	24
24	B	Cut	Truncated, pit / post hole	23	Natural
25	F	Fill of 26	10YR 3/2 v dark greyish brown clayey sandy silt	1	26
26	F	Cut	Linear, ? beam slot	25	27, 29
27	F	Fill of 28	10YR 3/2 v dark greyish brown clayey sandy silt		
28	F	Cut	Linear, ditch	27	Natural
29	F	Fill of 30	10YR 3/2 v dark greyish brown clayey sandy silt	26	30
30	F	Cut	?Linear, ?foundation trench	29	Natural
31	D	Fill of 32	10YR 3/2 v dark greyish brown clayey sandy silt	1	32
32	D	Cut	Linear, ?foundation trench	31	4
33	D	Stake hole	Circular (relp. with 5 unknown)	1	Natural
34	J	Fill of 35	10YR 3/2 v dark greyish brown clayey sandy silt	1	35
35	J	Cut	Linear, ?beam slot	34	Natural
36	I	Fill of 37	10YR 3/2 v dark greyish brown	1	37

No	Trench	Type	Description	Below	Above
			clayey sandy silt		
37	I	Cut	Circular, post hole	36	Natural
38	H	Fill of 39	10YR 3/2 v dark greyish brown clayey sandy silt	1	39
39	H	Cut	Semi-circular, ?pit	38	Natural
40	B	Fill of 41	10YR 4/3 brown sandy silt	43	41
41	B	Cut	Truncated, ?pit (=24?)	40	Natural
42	B	Fill of 43	10YR 3/2 v dark greysish brown sandy silt	22	43
43	B	Cut	Ovoid, ?pit / post hole	42	40
44	B	Fill of 45	10YR 4/2 dark greyish brown sandy silt	1	45
45	B	Cut	?Linear, ?ditch (=15?)	44	Natural
46	C	Fill of 48	10YR 3/2 v dark greysish brown sandy silt	1	47
47	C	Fill of 48	2.5Y 5/3 light olive brown silty clay	46	48
48	C	Cut	Ovoid, ?post hole	47	Natural
49	C	Fill of 50	10YR 3/2 v dark greysish brown sandy silt	1	50
50	C	Cut	Circular, ?post hole	49	Natural
51	A	Deposit	10YR 4/2 dark greyish brown sandy silt, ?dump	1	52
52	A	Deposit	10YR 5/2 greyish brown sandy silt, ?dump	51	NFE
53	A	Deposit	10YR 4/2 dark greyish brown sandy silt, ?dump	1	54
54	A	Deposit	10YR 5/2 greyish brown sandy silt, ?dump	53	NFE
55	C	Fill of 56	10YR 3/2 v dark greyish brown clayey sandy silt	1	56
56	C	Cut	Linear, ?beam slot	55	Natural
57	C	Fill of 58	10YR 3/2 v dark greyish brown clayey sandy silt	1	58
58	C	Cut	Circular, post hole	57	Natural
59	C	Fill of 60	10YR 3/2 v dark greyish brown clayey sandy silt	1	60
60	C	Cut	Circular, post hole	59	Unex ?p hole
61	C	Fill of 62	10YR 3/2 v dark greyish brown clayey sandy silt	1	62
62	C	Cut	Circular, post hole	61	Natural

APPENDIX C QUANTIFICATION TABLE

SOHAM, STATION ROAD 1997 - Finds Types By Context (in grammes and by count)													
Site Locations		Ceramics					Metals	Lithics				Organics	Totals
Trench/Location	Context	Pottery Weight	Pottery Count	Brick/Tile	Clay Pipe	Cement	Metals Cu	Flint Weight	Flint Count	Burnt Flint	Glass	Animal Bone	Total Weight by Context
	1							16	1				16
Tr A	1	15	4	5	3			37	1			21	81
Tr B	1	6	1			3		44	2			55	108
Tr C	1	16	1					3	1			28	47
Tr F	1							25	1				26
Tr D	4	10	3								1	9	20
Tr C	2							8	1			1	7
Tr C	4											45	45
Tr C	8							22	3			131	153
Tr C	10	14	2									56	70
Tr B	13	23	3					6	1	7		37	73
	14											7	7
	16	18	1										18
Tr B	19	12	2					23	3	74		32	141
Tr B	23						2	2	1			41	45
Tr F	26							4	2			57	61
Tr F	27	13	4										13
Tr F	29	13	5					3	1			17	33
Tr I	34	13	1										13
Tr J	34	48	1					20	3			53	121
Tr A	42	9	1							28		14	51
	44	4	1										4
Tr A	51	6	1	24									30
Tr A	52	2	1										2
Tr A	53	10	1										10
Tr A	54	12	1										12
Total Weights by Finds Type		244	34	29	3	3	2	213	21	109	1	604	1206
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