



CCC AFU Report Number 839

Medieval Remains at the rear of No. 11a Lawn Lane, Sutton- in-the-Isle, Cambridgeshire

Archaeological Evaluation

Steve Hickling

October 2005



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Archaeological Evaluation

Steve Hickling BA MA

With contributions by Dr Paul Spoerry Phd, B. Tec
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Summary

An archaeological evaluation at No. 11a Lawn Lane, Sutton produced a wealth of medieval remains, characterised as backyard type activity throughout the medieval period. Of special interest are Late Saxon or Saxo-Norman remains in the northern part of the site, a large quarry pit with a potentially important assemblage of high medieval pottery and evidence which suggests the extension of Oates Lane towards the fen edge at the southern end of the site.

Working conditions were made extremely difficult by the deep accumulation of topsoil and the saturated nature of the soil, producing a great deal of flooding.

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



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Drawing Conventions

Sections

- Limit of Excavation -----
- Cut _____
- Cut - Conjectured -----
- Soil Horizon -----
- Soil Horizon - Conjectured
- Intrusion/Truncation -----
- Top of Natural _____
- Top Surface _____
- Break in Section -----
- Water Level
- Cut Number 118
- Deposit Number 117
- Ordnance Datum $\frac{18.45m}{\wedge}$ ODN
- Stones 

Plans

- Limit of Excavation _____
- Deposit - Conjectured -----
- Natural Features
- Intrusion/Truncation -----
- Sondages/Machine Strip -----
- Illustrated Section S.14
- Deposit 
- Excavated Slot 
- Service Trenches 
- Water 
- Cut Number 118

1 Introduction

This archaeological evaluation was undertaken in accordance with a Brief issued by Kasia Gdaniec of the Cambridgeshire Archaeology, Planning and Countryside Advice team (CAPCA; Planning Application 05/00280/FUL), supplemented by a Specification prepared by Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeological Field Unit (CCC AFU).

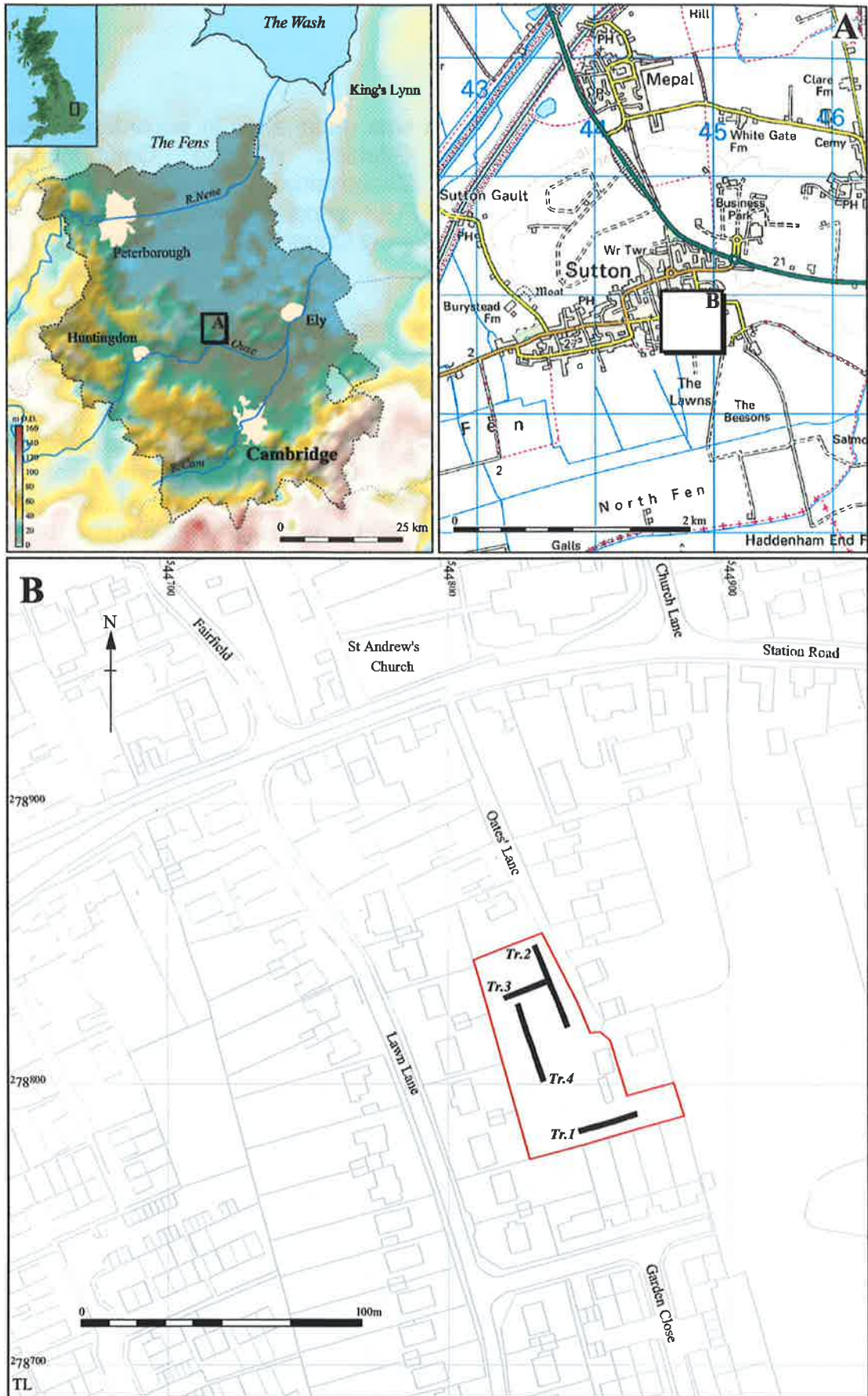
The development includes the construction of nine bungalows and associated services. The access will be through the plot presently occupied by 11a Lawn lane.

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 CAPCA, on behalf of the Local Planning Authority, with regard to the treatment of any archaeological remains found.

The site archive is currently held by CCC AFU and will be deposited with the appropriate county stores.



Plate 1: The site in relation to Sutton church



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Figure 1: Location of trenches (black) with the development area outlined (red)

2 Geology and Topography

The site overlies Kimmeridge Clay (British Geological Survey 1980). The village of Sutton lies on the east-west ridge of Kimmeridge Clay. The site lies on the 10m contour near the base of a steep slope down to the fen. In the past the river Eue is thought to have run at the base of this slope (Gray 1994). Its church lies at the highest point, at 23m OD. On the first edition Ordnance Survey map (1891) a farmyard covered the site. In recent years the site had been used as a market garden and orchard.

3 Archaeological and Historical Background

3.1 Prehistoric

Important prehistoric remains have been found in the parish of Sutton, most from the rises and islands of lighter soil in the fens, particularly North Fen and Sutton Meadlands to the west of the village. These sites include Mesolithic, Neolithic and Bronze Age period activity including a long barrow(?s) and round barrows

A recent evaluation CCC AFU at the Brook, Sutton (TL 4427 7916) identified the eastern part of a Late Iron Age and Roman settlement, with evidence of mixed farming (Atkins 2004).

3.2 Roman

Roman remains have been found in the vicinity of the village, including a cremation of probable 2nd-century date (CHER 05744) found whilst cutting a drainage channel along Oates Lane, which is approximately 50m north of the subject site. The ashes were contained in a large storage jar with another smaller jar placed inside. Other Roman remains have been found in the parish but these are largely unprovenanced. Tebbutt found pottery sherds in 1953 at TL 3929 7897 'on a roddon' (Hall 1996, 58). Hall notes that a site at that location is unlikely and the finds probably represent some outliers of the Roman complex in neighbouring Colne Fen to the west. A bronze statuette of Hercules was found before 1891 (Heichelheim 1937, 73) and a Christian hoard of six large platters and a pewter tazza of the 4th century were found in 1898 (Toynbee 1964, 176).

3.3 Anglo-Saxon

Archaeological work in the village has found dwellings (c.500m to the west of the subject area) dating from the 9th century to later medieval period (Abrams 2000; Hatton 2002). Anglo-Saxon remains including a gold ring (Albert 1849) have been recorded in the parish but these again are unprovenanced.

3.4 Medieval

The name Sutton means South Town and may relate to its position in the Isle of Ely. The medieval village probably clustered around the church and along the High Street. The village is L-shaped, more than a kilometre long, and runs along the former main road from Ely to Chatteris. Medieval pottery has been found in the village, as might be expected in a village which is listed in the Domesday survey.

An archaeological evaluation, comprising three trenches located approximately 40m down slope from the High Street, was undertaken to the rear of No. 31 High Street in 2004 (Fletcher 2005). This identified a number of ditches and inter-cutting pits in two of the three trenches, which produced pottery datable to the 12th to early 14th century, although the majority of features are securely dated to the 13th century. The location of these features set back from the Medieval High Street are representative of backyard activity including rubbish deposition and drainage.

Another small excavation at Red Lion Lane revealed 12th-to 14th-century pits, ditches and two hearths. Activity came to an end c.1350 (Hatton 2002)

4 Methodology

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.

The Brief required that at least 5% of the development should be subject to trial trenching.

Machine excavation was carried out under constant archaeological supervision with a wheeled JCB-type excavator using a toothless ditching bucket.

Spoil, exposed surfaces and features were scanned with a metal detector. All metal-detected and hand-collected finds were retained for inspection, other than those which were obviously modern.

All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using CCC AFU's *pro-forma* sheets. Trench locations, plans and sections were recorded at appropriate scales and colour and monochrome photographs were taken of all relevant features and deposits.

Environmental samples were taken from three features, ditch **40**, posthole **36** and pit **63**. Further samples were not taken due to flooding.

Site conditions were difficult with extensive flooding caused by saturated soil.

5 Results

(Figs 2-3)

A large amount of topsoil was found overlying the archaeology in all trenches. Gravel surfaces were frequent, perhaps relating to the farmyard shown here on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map (1891). These surfaces were overlain by c.40cm of topsoil, presumably imported when the farmyard was demolished and the area was put down to orchard and market gardens.

5.1 Trench 1

Trench 1 was the southern-most trench, aligned approximately east to west and was 21m long. It was truncated by two service trenches, but contained five ditches and three pits. It suffered heavily from flooding. A total of 1-1.2m of topsoil (layer 1), subsoil and farmyard surfaces (including gravel surfaces 75 and 80, and subsoil layers 2, 76, 77 and 79) had to be removed to reveal the archaeological horizons.

Ditch **7**, at the eastern end of the trench, was incompletely excavated due to flooding and truncation by service trenches. It was in excess of 2m wide and 0.45m in depth and contained two fills. The upper fill (78) was a greenish grey clay. The base fill (6) was a brownish grey silt. This feature may have been a hollow-way, perhaps forming an early extension of Oates Lane. The pottery found within this feature was dated to 1350-1500.

Ditch **66** was north to south aligned, 1.3m wide and 0.16m deep. Its fill (65) was a greenish mid grey silt.

Ditch **68** was north to south aligned, 1.1m wide and 0.36m deep. Its fill 67, was a mix of grey sand and brown clayey silt.

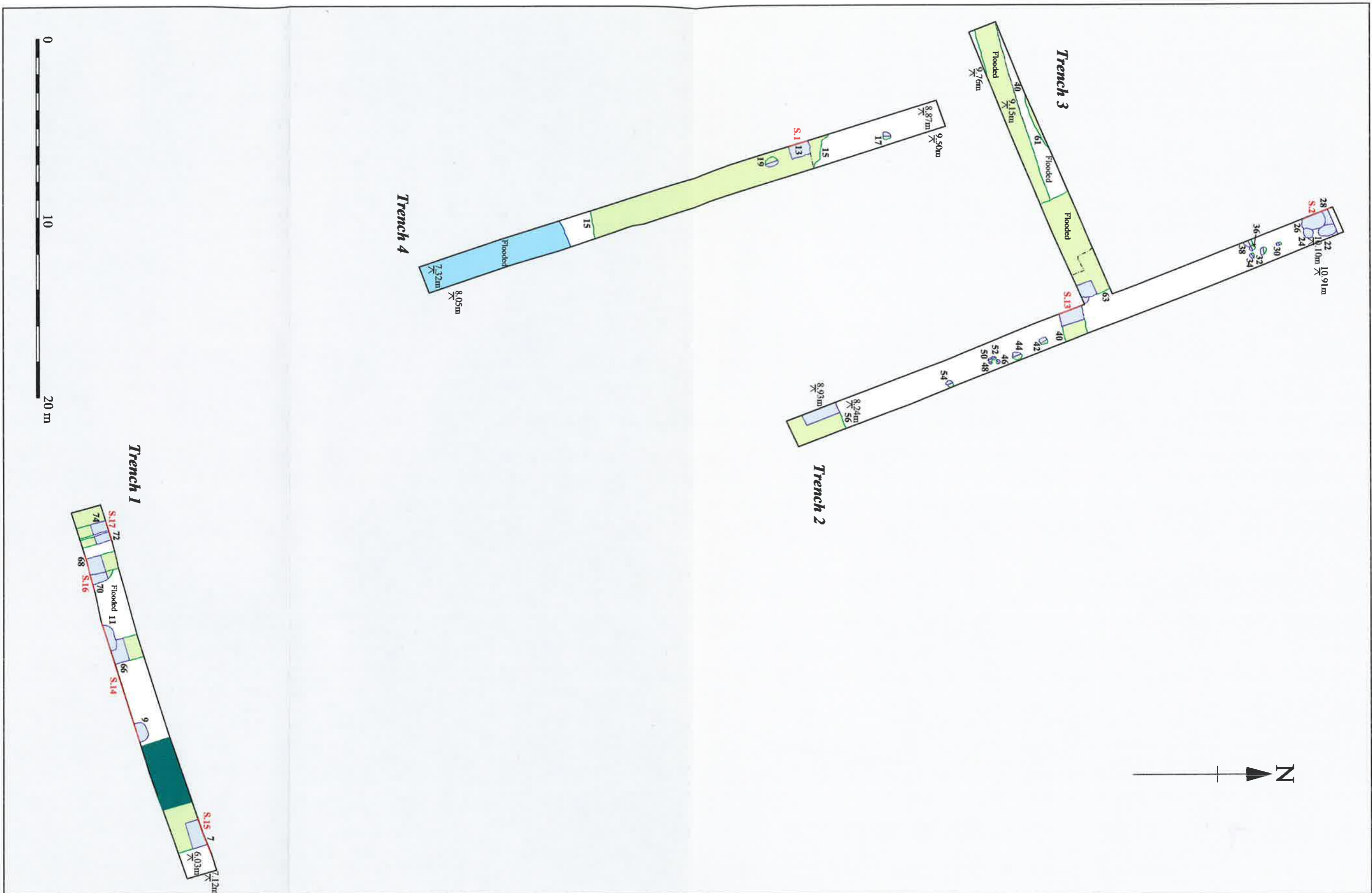


Figure 2: Trench plans

Ditch **72** was north to south aligned, 0.45m wide and 0.4m deep. Its fill, (73) was a mid grey sandy silt.

Ditch **74** was north to south aligned, truncated by the edge of the trench, but was 0.36m deep. Its fill (73) was a mid grey sandy silt.

Pit **9** was 1m wide and 0.14m deep. Its fill (8) was grey silt.

Pit **11**, was cut through ditch **66** and was 1.4m wide and 0.42m deep. Its fill (10) was a greenish grey sandy silt. The pottery found within this feature was dated to 1350-1500.

Pit **70** was truncated by ditch **68** and the edge of the trench. It was at least 0.14m deep and its fill (69) was a greyish brown sandy silt.



Plate 2: Trench 1

5.2 Trench 2

Trench 2 was 31m long and orientated approximately north to south. It contained one ditch, five pits and 12 possible postholes. It did not suffer initially from flooding, but any feature which was excavated immediately filled with water. Some 0.6-0.7m of topsoil (layer 1), subsoil and gravel surfaces (including gravel surface 58 and subsoil layers 59 and 60) had to be removed to reveal the archaeological horizons.

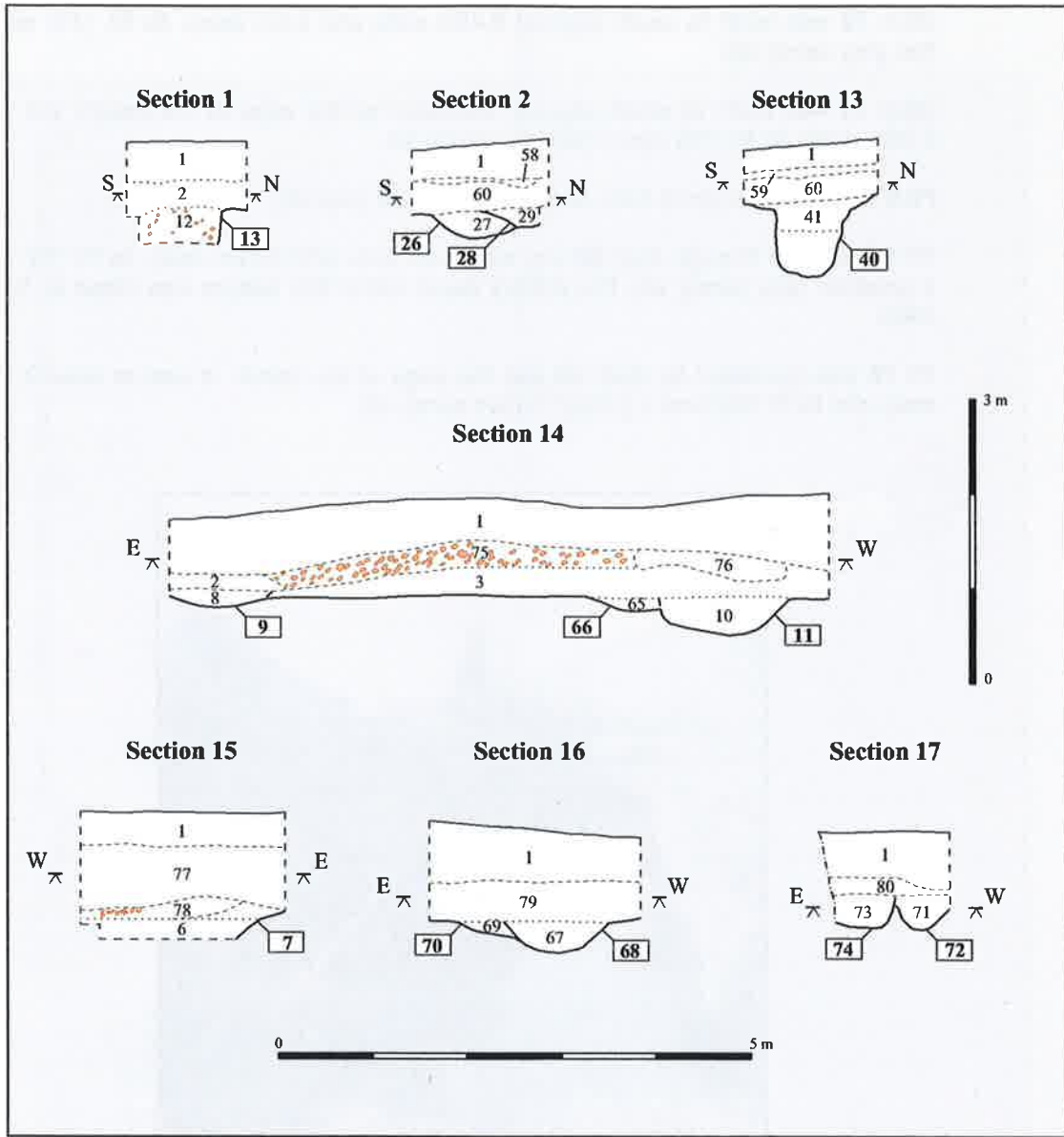


Figure 3: Section drawings

Ditch **40** was 1.3m wide and c.0.8m deep, east to west aligned and suffered heavily from flooding. Its fill (41) was a dark greyish brown sandy clay with occasional gravel and charcoal. The finds within this feature included a fragment of Neidermendig larva quern, a fragment of a hone and a fragment of pottery dated to 850-1150.

Pit **56** at the southern end of the trench suffered heavily from flooding. It was however thought to be quite shallow, c.0.15m. Its fill (57) was a dark brown sandy clay with lenses of black, charcoal rich material.

Pit **28** at the northern end of the trench cut into pits **22** and **26**. Too little of it was exposed to describe it fully, but its fill (29) was a dark brown sandy clay with frequent lumps of redeposited natural clay.

Pit **26** was oval in shape, 1.3m long and 0.3m deep, filled by 27, a mid-dark brown sandy clay with occasional gravel and charcoal. The pottery found within this feature was dated to 850-1200.

Pit **22** was oval in shape, 1m long and 0.2m deep. Its fill (23) was a dark brown sandy clay with occasional gravel. The pottery found within this feature was dated to 1050-1200.

Pit **24** was circular in shape, 0.55m in diameter and 0.3m deep. It may in fact have been a posthole. Its fill (25) was the same as 23. The pottery found within this feature was dated to 850-1200.

Posthole **30** was rectangular, 0.3m long, 0.15m wide and 0.13m deep. Its fill (31) was a dark brown sandy clay.

Posthole **32** was oval, 0.45m long, 0.35 wide and 0.12m deep. Its fill (33) was a dark brown sandy clay with rare gravel and charcoal.

Posthole **34** was circular, 0.23m in diameter and 0.07m deep. Its fill (35) was a mid to dark brown sandy clay with rare gravel and charcoal.

Posthole **36** was circular, 0.25m in diameter and 0.1m deep. Its fill (37) was a mid greyish brown sandy clay with frequent baked clay and moderate charcoal.

Posthole **38** was truncated by the edge of the trench, but appeared circular, 0.5m in diameter and 0.08m deep. Its fill (39) was a pale brown sandy clay with moderate baked clay and occasional charcoal.

Posthole **42** was square, 0.38m wide and 0.22m deep. Its fill (43) was a dark brown sandy clay with occasional gravel and charcoal.

Posthole **44** was circular, 0.55m in diameter and 0.25m deep. Its fill (45) was a mid brown sandy clay with rare gravel and moderate redeposited lumps of natural clay.

Posthole **46** was circular, 0.29m in diameter and 0.09m deep. Its fill (47) was the same as 45.

Posthole **48** was circular, 0.16m in diameter and 0.12m deep. Its fill (49) was a dark brown sandy clay with occasional gravel.

Posthole **50** was circular, 0.2m in diameter and 0.14m deep. It was cut into posthole **52**. Its fill (51) was the same as 45.

Posthole **52** was oval in shape, 0.25m long, 0.15m wide and 0.05m deep. Its fill (53) was the same as 45.

Posthole **54** was oval in shape, 0.4m long, 0.38m wide and 0.22m deep. Its fill (55) was a mid brown sandy clay with rare gravel.



Plate 3: Trench 2

5.3 Trench 3

Trench 3 was 16.5m long, aligned approximately east to west. It suffered heavily from flooding. It contained two pits and a ditch.

Pit **61** was unexcavated due to flooding. Only a small portion of it was visible at the northern edge of the trench. Its fill (62) was a very dark brown sandy clay.

Pit **63** was 5.75m wide and 0.7m deep. Again it suffered heavily from flooding and was impossible to excavate. Its fill (64) was a dark brown sandy clay with occasional gravel. A relatively large amount of pottery was found within this feature, dated to 1250-1400.

Ditch **40** was visible, despite the flooding, running the length of the trench. Its relationship with pit **63** could not be ascertained.



Plate 4: Trench 3

5.4 Trench 4

Trench 4 was 29.5m long, orientated approximately north to south. It suffered heavily from flooding at its southern end and contained one posthole and three pits. A total of 0.7-1m of topsoil (layer 1) and subsoil (layer 2) had to be removed to reveal the archaeological horizons.

Posthole 17 was circular, 0.37m in diameter and 0.18m deep. It was filled by 16, a mid brown silty clay with occasional gravel.

Pit 13 was of unknown dimensions, but was cut into the top of pit 15. Its fill (12) was a dark brown silty clay with frequent lumps of baked clay.

Pit 15 was possibly 13m wide, but unexcavated due to flooding. Its fill (14) was a mid brown silty clay.

Pit 19 was circular, 0.67m in diameter and 0.19m deep. It was cut into the top of pit 15. Its fill (18) was a mid brown silty clay with occasional gravel.



Plate 5: Trench 4

6 Discussion

The nature of the archaeological remains on this site can broadly be summarised as property boundaries and quarry pits. The postholes found in Trench 2 suggest that there may have been domestic occupation, (suggested by the environmental samples, Appendix 2) in the north-eastern corner of the site fronting onto Oates Lane. Feature 7 in Trench 1 may have been a hollow-way serving as an extension of Oates Lane, which probably fell out of use in the late medieval period. It is noticeable that the earliest material was found at the north end of the site, and the late medieval material at the southern end, implying a southwards pattern of colonisation through the medieval period.

A recent excavation to the rear of No. 31 High Street (Fletcher 2005) produced archaeological remains of a similar date and nature to that found here, namely quarry pits, ditches and possible structural elements.

6.1 Phase 1 Saxo-Norman 850-1200

Activity of this date was confined to the northern, uphill, part of the site and is composed of one east to west aligned ditch, probably marking the southern boundary of properties perhaps fronting on to the High Street. There are also a few small quarry pits. A number of undated postholes in this area may be of this phase. The sites' location close to the church (see Plate 1) lends credence to the theory that this phase may be genuinely Late Saxon in origin.

6.2 Phase 2 High Medieval 1250-1400

The only feature assigned to this phase was a large quarry pit in trench 3, which produced an interesting assemblage of pottery (see Appendix 1).

6.3 Phase 3 Late Medieval 1350-1500

The only features assigned to this phase were found in Trench 1 at the southern edge of the site. They consisted of a pit and a possible north to south aligned hollow-way. This hollow way was probably an extension of Oates Lane down to the fen to the south.

6.4 Post Medieval 1500+

Gravel surfaces probably belonging to the 19th-century farmyard on this site were identified, covered by a thick layer of topsoil probably imported when the farmyard was abandoned and the site reverted to horticultural use.

7 Conclusions

In conclusion the site appears to be characterised as backyard type activity throughout the medieval period. Of special interest are the Late Saxon or Saxo-Norman remains in the northern part of the site, the large quarry pit (63) with the potentially important assemblage of phase 2 pottery and the extension of Oates Lane towards the fen edge at the southern end of the site.

Working conditions were made extremely difficult by the deep accumulation of topsoil and the saturated nature of the soil, producing a great deal of flooding.

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

Acknowledgements

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The brief for archaeological works was written by Kasia Gdaniec. Adrain Scruby visited the site and monitored the evaluation.

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Appendix 1: Finds Data

by Dr Paul Spoerry

Context	Feature	Description	Date
1	Topsoil	Flint, probably natural	
6	Ditch 7	10 sherds of assorted Ely type wares, including one with an applied fingertip rosette, green glazed. Also one oyster shell, one brick/tile fragment, 2 bone fragments and one tooth, probably sheep.	1350-1500
10	Pit 11	Six sherds of a late Ely type ware large burnt jug	1350-1500
12	Pit 13	One locally made tile fragment	Post med.
16	Posthole 17	Unknown fired clay object fragment	
23	Pit 22	One Stamford ware sherd and two reduced sandy ware sherds	1050-1200
25	Pit 24	Lattice stamped Thetford ware sherd	850-1200
27	Pit 26	One Thetford ware sherd and one fragment of baked clay	850-1200
39	Pit 38	Fragments of burnt earth	
41	Ditch 40	One sherd of St Neots ware, one fragment of a burnt hone and one fragment of Niedermendig lava quern	850-1150
64	Pit 63	21 sherds of assorted Ely and Ely type wares. Wide variety of types including a jar and angled bowl rim, and a 'baluster jug' base, of a new form previously unseen.	1250-1400
9999	Unstrat.	Three sherds of Bourne D (1450-1650) and one fragment of Ely ware (1150-1400).	1450-1650

Appendix 2: Environmental Appraisal

by Rachel Fosberry

1 Introduction and Methods

Three bulk samples were taken from features within the excavated areas of the site in order to assess the quality of preservation of plant remains and their potential to provide useful data as part of further archaeological investigations. Samples were taken from a Saxo-Norman ditch, a medieval pit and an undated posthole.

Up to 10 litres of each sample were processed by bucket 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 0.5mm nylon mesh and the residue was washed through a 1mm 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 is noted in Table 1.

2 Results

The results are recorded in Table 1:

Sample Number	Context Number	Cut Number	Feature Type	Sample Type	Sample Size (L)	Cereals	Legumes	Weed Seeds	Modern Seeds	Charcoal <2mm	Charcoal > 2mm	Large animal bones	Fish bone	Marine molluscs	Pottery
1	37	36	post hole	flotation	5	++	+	+	+	++	++	0	0	0	0
2	64	63	pit	flotation	10	++	+	+	+	++	+	+	0	0	++
3	41	40	ditch	flotation	10	++	0	+	+	++	++	+	+	+	0

(+ = 1 – 10 specimens ++ = 10 – 100 specimens +++ = 100+ specimens)

Table 1: Environmental samples from SUT LAL 05

2.1 *Plant macrofossils*

Preservation is by charring and is generally poor to moderate. Charcoal fragments are present in all of the samples in varying quantities.

Modern contaminants in the form of rootlets and a few common seeds such as *Chenopodium* sp., *Euphorbia* sp. and *Lamium* sp. are present in all of the samples.

Charred seeds of common weed plants include cornflower (*Centaurea* sp), docks (*Rumex* sp), Medick/clover (*Medicago* sp./ *Trifolium* sp), vetches (*Vicia* sp) and stinking mayweed (*Anthemis cotula*).

Other plant macrofossils include nutlets and leaf fragments of Saw-sedge (*Cladium mariscus*)

2.2 *Cereals*

Cereal grains are present in small quantities in all of the samples and include barley (*Hordeum* sp.) wheat (*Triticum* sp.), oats (*Avena* sp.) and rye (*Secale cereale*) with wheat and oats being predominant.

No chaff elements such as culm nodes or rachis fragments were recovered.

2.3 *Other food plants*

Peas (*Pisum* sp) and beans (*Vicia* sp) are present in small quantities.

2.4 *Animal bone*

Small fragments of animal bone were present in two of the samples. A single fishbone and fragment of fishscale was recovered from Sample 3.

3 *Conclusions and Recommendations*

The range of foodstuffs recovered strongly suggests domestic activity on this site. The charred cereal grains and other dietary remains recovered are probably derived from the deposition of small quantities of burnt domestic refuse. The grains may have been accidentally burnt

while being dried prior to storage or during cooking over open fires. A piece of Niedermendig lava quern was recovered from pit 63 indicating that cereals were being ground for flour on site. The weed seeds present in this assemblage are typical cornfield weeds that would have been removed from the cereal grains prior to consumption. The lack of chaff elements suggest that the majority of the crop processing stages were not occurring in the vicinity although it is possible that such evidence may be present in an unexcavated area of the site.

The presence of fishbone and mussel shell from the Saxo-Norman ditch indicates that marine resources were being exploited during this period.

On the basis of only two dated samples, only tentative conclusions can be drawn about how the site changes over the Saxo-Norman to medieval period. The sample from the earlier feature suggests that there were a greater variety of foods being consumed at this time however the different types of features must be considered as it is probable that the assemblage recovered from a ditch is likely to have accumulated over a greater period of time than that dumped in a pit.

The presence of saw-sedge in the Saxo-Norman ditch could suggest exploitation of wetland resources at this time, although it could simply be that the ditch was wet enough for saw sedge to be growing within it.

The assemblage, although small, has shown the potential for the recovery of plant remains and if further excavations are planned for this area, environmental samples could have the potential for providing information about local agricultural practice.



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