

Archaeological Field Unit

# Medieval and Later Occupation in Fowlmere: Features on The High Street frontage, and Adjacent to the Round Moat

Paul Spoerry 1994

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# Medieval and Later Occupation in Fowlmere: Features on the High Street Frontage, and Adjacent to the Round Moat

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#### **ABSTRACT**

Trenches to investigate the archaeology were located on two property frontages on the south side of Fowlmere High Street, in areas adjacent to the Round Moat Scheduled Ancient Monument, and also between the features described.

Significant archaeological deposits, in the form of upcast from cleaning/recutting of the Round Moat ditch, sealing earlier occupation were identified on the north-eastern edge of the moat. The occupation is not dated and is represented by evidence for a timber construction with deposits within its plan. The structure is close to a water channel, as well as being rather low-lying. This suggests a water-use function, as there are few other reasons for building in such a location. On the south-east edge of the moat some upcast deposits were found but these were much less substantial and of limited archaeological interest.

Some medieval features were shown to survive on the High Street frontage, although substantial areas have been lost and/or truncated. The archaeology that survives appears to be the base of features representing medieval village domestic life. To the rear of the frontage area a large chalk foundation or trackway is present.

The area between the Round Moat and the Brook appears to have experienced both standing water and stream activity. The 'canalisation' of the Brook line and the upcast around the Round Moat give the false impression that this area is low-lying; however it was still probably a 'wet area' in antiquity, and thus would have constituted an effective barrier to the approach to the Round Moat from the east.

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 The Site

Evaluation trenching was carried out between Wednesday 26th August and Tuesday 7th September 1993, on a proposed development site south of the High Street and east of the Round Moat in the village of Fowlmere.

The area evaluated is just under one hectare in size, the majority of which is currently undeveloped. The exception is one agricultural building standing on the street frontage at the north end of the site.

The site is within the historic core of the village of Fowlmere. It is adjacent to the Round Moat, one of the most important ancient monuments in terms of village/manorial development, in Cambridgeshire. The area evaluated also includes a section (originally two properties) of street frontage onto the south side of the High Street, plus the area between this frontage and the Round Moat. The part of the site to the east of the Round Moat appears comparatively low-lying, its morphology suggesting it may have had use as a fishpond.

# 1.2 The Proposed Development

The proposed development is for housing. An access road will be constructed, apparently joining the estate road at the south end of the site, and the High Street at the north end. It is thus apparent that the potential threat to any archaeological deposits will be most acute on the proposed house sites, less acute along the line of the access road and service trenches, and of minimal impact elsewhere. The density of proposed housing is such that there is considerable scope for re-design to avoid significant archaeological remains. It should be noted that associated works involving the conversion of the 'frontage' building will pose an immobile threat.

#### 2 TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

The site lies within the historic core of the village of Fowlmere. It covers a swathe of land on the west bank of the Fowlmere Brook, lying at about 23m OD at the northern end and close to 25m OD at the southern end. The 'fishpond' area appears to be in a hollow, but this is a visually accentuated impression, caused by its position adjacent to the higher Brook and Moat banks. Parts of the site may well have been wet land associated with the pre-canalisation Brook line, although this is not certain. The site is on Lower Chalk, although there may be some valley gravel and/or alluvium associated with the Brook line.

# 3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

# 3.1 Archaeological Potential in Areas Studied

Any sizeable area of ground lying close to the core of a historic village is likely to possess significant archaeological potential, most particularly in any street frontage and backyard areas. As already discussed, this particular site has a probable two-property frontage section on the High Street, and it

also includes all land to the rear of that area. Documentary evidence for recent use of this area is discussed below. In addition to that information, consideration was also given to the likelihood that, if the High Street line was similarly located in earlier centuries, occupation remains might be expected in the present frontage area, with refuse disposal and agricultural processing and/or crafts activity areas immediately to their rear. If, however, the High Street line had changed, and it originally ran, for example, south of the Church towards the Round Moat, then a different arrangement of early properties might be expected. Trenches were thus located to study both the current frontage area, and the area between this and the Round Moat (Figure 1). Trenches were also opened to determine whether any activity areas or occupation was apparent adjacent to the Moat, and also to test the real origin of the area that was identified as a possible fishpond in 1.1 above.

#### 3.2 Background

#### 3.2.1 The Village

The village of Fowlmere appears to have been a relatively prosperous medieval centre, growing from 36 'households' in Domesday Book to about 100 by 1279 (Hitch 1993). This growth, although not meteoric, was enough to warrant a Market Charter by 1207 (Keeling 1982,160). Population declined in the fourteenth century following the general pattern of economic hardship and disease in that century. Recovery, however, was good in Fowlmere, there being more than 70 households in several mid-late fifteenth century sources (Keeling 1982,155)

#### 3.2.2 The Round Moat: Previous Work

Although the Round Moat is believed to have experienced medieval occupation, its origins are likely have been in the pre-Conquest Saxon period. Round moats usually prove to be earlier than the peak moatbuilding phase of the late twelfth to early fourteenth centuries when 'moat' form was almost always rectilinear. Curvilinear property boundaries and enclosures are a feature of the more organic village development of the pre-Conquest period. The settlement layout at Fowlmere seems to suggest that the village focus was originally centred on the Round Moat and Church, but that the location of the Manor at the west end of the High Street from the early fourteenth century (Keeling 1982,157), and the increasing importance of the commercial activities along this road, resulted in a shift of focus to the north west, away from the Round Moat.

Yorke (1909) suggested that the entrance to the Round Moat was on the north west side, based on observation of existing earthworks at the turn of the century. If this were correct, the original access to this point from the east may have been more direct prior to the full establishment of the High Street, and therefore an earlier route way may have traversed part of the development site. Alternatively an eastern entrance to the Round Moat may have existed, for which a trackway might also be sought.

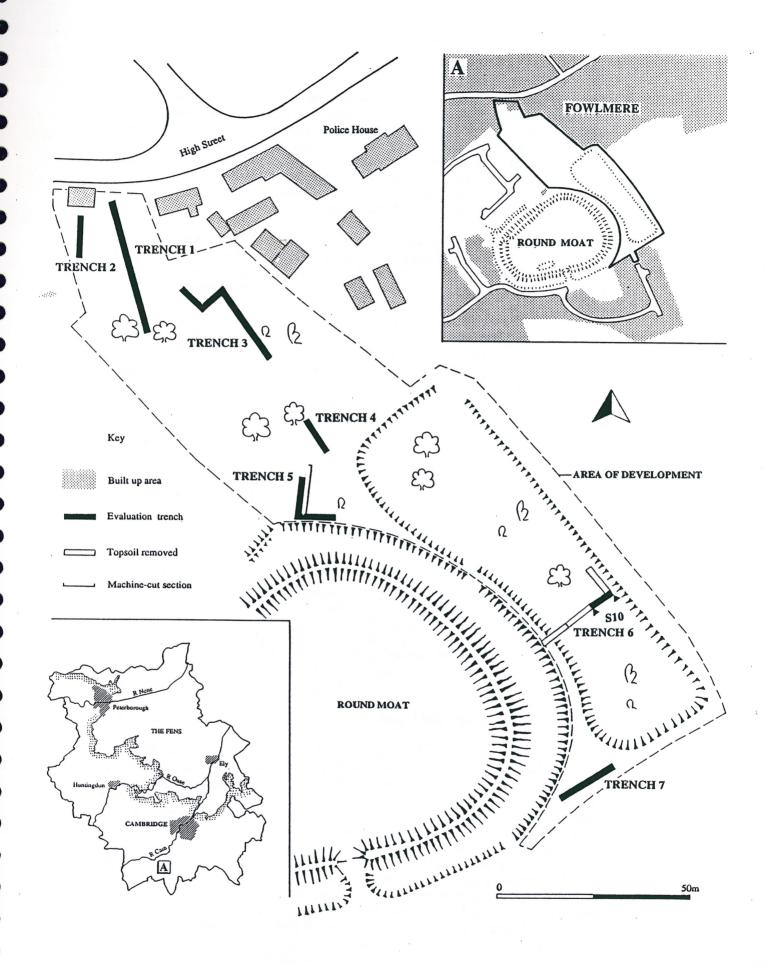


Figure 1 Site and trench locations

The large bank and ditch of the Round Moat undoubtedly provided effective protection during times of stress and conflict, although for whom is not certain. It is also likely that the Round Moat performed functions other than defensive. It was possibly originally an administrative centre, perhaps an earlier location for the Manor, and could have acted as a domestic site and agricultural store as well. If this were so then activity areas may well have been located quite close to the exterior of the bank and ditch, something that would be unlikely in a purely defensive/military site.

An early record of previous investigation of the Round Moat is the work of the Rev. A.C. Yorke, reported in the *Proceedings of the Cambridgeshire Antiquarian Society* for 1909 (Yorke 1909). In general terms, Yorke's paper informs us that the Round Moat is recorded on the Parish Enclosure Map (1848) as "White's Close", and that a Robert White had earlier appeared on the rent roll of AD 1447 (Addit. Charters 27338). He also writes that in 1887, when the then owner of the moat, Mr Edward Wedd, planted a number of trees on the platform of the site, a surface paved with cobblestones and a well containing a large amount of "broken drain pipes" were unearthed. It would also seem that around the turn of the century, the moat was cleaned out on its north side so that it could be used as a fishpond.

In the course of his own work, Yorke records that a hole was excavated across the entrance to the east side of the moat. It produced animal bones and horseshoes. The nature of the moat silts is not recorded; Yorke, however, noted that their thickness measured 6 feet. At this depth, the excavators reached the bottom of the moat, and also struck water. Although he also reports that Professor T McKenny Hughes indicated that the sherds of pottery recovered during these excavations may be early medieval in date, Yorke's work tells us little else with regards to the age and nature of the site.

More recently, Brendan P. J. Murphy undertook a small excavation in 1975 in the area adjacent to the moat, between its north-west side and the parish church, where houses now stand. This produced a large quantity of medieval pottery dating from between the eleventh to the fourteenth centuries, with the majority of the sherds belonging to the thirteenth century. Some Roman buff and grey ware bases, together with some sherds of Samian ware, were also recovered, although these are regarded as residual (Murphy 1975, 71).

# 3.3 Further Documentary Evidence

Apart from the rent roll of 1447, mentioned above, most other documentary sources that have been consulted are of fairly recent date. Maps and local documentary evidence have identified that both the frontage properties were occupied by buildings from at least the mid-nineteenth century onwards. The easterly property possessed a pair of cottages that constituted the western member of a group of two similar structures. This building was demolished in the middle part of this century, however, a wood cut, probably dating to the early part of this century, of a view of the whole High Street frontage of the site (Figure 2) illustrates the building excellently. It shows a pair of narrow thatched cottages, side-on to the road, with two doorways and windows at the front. The dwellings must have had a maximum frontage of about twenty feet each and, on the basis of the wood cut, a depth of perhaps fifteen feet at most. These cottages lie immediately adjacent to a more westerly property, which is the building that still stands.

This is shown with a tiled roof, (now corrugated iron), the pitch of which is less steep than that of the adjacent thatched property. This latter is known through local contacts to have been used as the stabling for the Manse during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and appears to have had a more general storage use (for the tennis equipment in the inter-war years) in more recent times (J. Ison pers. comm.). It is currently in a poor state of repair. The most likely construction date for the two structures discussed is sometime in the eighteenth century, although a more precise date is not presently possible. Prior usage of the frontages is likewise not apparent from sources that were accessed.

Early cartographic evidence for the presence, and use, of a fishpond to the east of the Round Moat has not been identified. In the absence of any land use information for this area, excavation remains the best tool to explain its morphology.



FOWLMERE VILLAGE

Sylvia A. Abram

Figure 2 View of the High Street frontage from the east (from an early twentieth century illustration)

#### 4 METHODOLOGY

#### 4.1 Trenches: Strategy, Location and Coverage

The locations of the trenches are shown in Figure 1. After scrub removal the trenches were opened by a tracked machine with a 1.6m toothless ditching bucket. Topsoil was removed and the subsoil and/or final archaeological horizons revealed. Cleaning of archaeological surfaces and part-excavation of discrete features proceeded next, whilst those locations where large areas of possibly recent deposition were identified, were investigated using contextual recording and selective test pitting.

The working assumption with regard to the 'threat' was that the normal depth of disturbance from foundations is usually about 1m plus compression damage, except where soft ground dictates that deeper foundations might be necessary. In this evaluation, deposits were investigated down to a depth of 1.5m from the current ground surface, which ensured that the potential threat was fully considered as well as enabling archaeological deposits to be adequately understood.

A total of about 165m of bucket-width linear trenching was opened. The following research aims dictated trench location;

Linear trenching at the rear of the current building on the frontage allowed assessment of any impact that renovation and enlargement works would make:

Linear trenching from the frontage into the main area of the site tested the 'fall-off' of occupation away from the High Street. This and other trenches in this central area attempted to locate any earlier access routes to the Round Moat, and also provided general area evaluation information;

Linear trenching adjacent to the Round Moat tested for activity on the immediate exterior of the bank and ditch;

Linear trenching across the area to the east of the Round Moat attempted to understand the area between the Monument and the Brook.

#### 5 RESULTS

Seven trenches were excavated, all of one bucket-width (1.6m). Their locations can be seen on *Figure 1*.

#### 5.1 **Trench 1** (*Figures 3 and 4*)

The topography of this frontage area was difficult to observe in advance because of vegetational cover. On clearance prior to trenching however, it became apparent that the property rose approximately 0.5m above the roadside.

Trench 1, approximately 31m in length, was excavated to provide information concerning the eastern half of the High Street frontage and the rear of the same property. In addition, any evidence of an earlier access to,

or past, the Church from the east was also sought. The northern end of the trench was located approximately 2m from the roadside on the south side of the High Street, with the trench orientated as shown in Figure 1. Nineteenth century maps identify that this frontage lot once contained a building; local information indicates that this was a pair of cottages, one latterly the dwelling of the owner of Cambridge's first bicycle shop (J. Ison pers. comm.). The building was demolished in the mid-twentieth century. It is not known how old this structure might have been, although it is apparent that a frontage site so close to the parish church and historic village core is liable to have had an occupation history of some considerable length. The extreme eastern edge of the frontage is said to contain a part-demolished Second World War air raid shelter. Although there is no reason to doubt this suggestion, there are no visible remains on the surface.

Trenching revealed a large modern rubble and rubbish deposit, 114, covering much of the northern most 3m of the trench (Figure 3). This lay in a deep cut (0.5m+, not bottomed) of apparently irregular shape. It is unlikely to have been a cellar and must be perceived as a pit dug for, or after, demolition. Into this pit were deposited a mix of soil, rubbish (including early bicycle parts), and building rubble (all context 114 in cut 113). It is probable that this exercise was carried out to enable the building foundations to be 'robbed out'. The extent of 113 is therefore likely to be a good indication of the extent of the cottage, which thus appears not to have extended more than 4m from the roadside. A small area of compacted chalk rubble, or clunch, floor was found preserved in the north-east corner of the trench 115. Below this floor were earlier floor make-up 118 and ground surface deposits 116. The extent of this survival beyond the trench cannot be easily estimated, however: the possible survival of pre-cottage deposits is indeed significant.

Apparently contemporary with the 'cottage', although not proven stratigraphically, is a brick wall 106, and associated features. This lies about 14m from, and approximately parallel with, the street frontage and appears to have formed the rear boundary for the cottage property. Context 106 is terraced into the natural, the ground surface being approximately 0.5m higher to the south of the wall than it is to the north. The wall thus appears to retain a terrace, the rear yard of the cottage being the lower member. The natural ground surface is visible as a silt and flint gravel mix south of 106, and as a degraded chalk surface, with flint gravel lenses, north of 106 where it has been reduced. The former silt and flint mix is only approximately 0.1m thick, with the degraded chalk found immediately below. It is thus apparent that the terracing operation has removed the silt/gravel mix and up to 0.4m of chalk. This has then provided a hard yard surface within the cottage property, as witnessed by the cemented posthole cut into it 111, fill 112. In the most recent period of use/demolition of this property, a midden of household rubbish 109, dating to the early twentieth century, accumulated on the yard surface and up against 106. This, extending northwards from 106 for about 2.2m, was 0.5m deep at its southern end, and sealed posthole 111.

Below the recent topsoil in the central part of the trench a lower cultivation soil 104, possibly resulting from back-garden activity, was found. This was cut by the demolition activity 113 and appears to be wholly to the rear of the demolished cottage. Context 104 is a sandy silt and contains chalk flecks and small amounts of post-medieval and medieval pottery, the latter perhaps dragged up from 117, which is located below it (Figure 4 shows a section through both). It covers the whole of the trench southwards for about 6m from 113 and slumps into a large depression in the weathered surface of the

chalk 110. This depression 105 may be an earlier cut, with garden activity having destroyed about 0.2m of its upper fill(s), while leaving the much harder chalk surround unaffected. The lower fill of 105 appears to be in situ 117. It is a compacted silty clay, with occasional flint and chalk, together with small amounts of animal bone and medieval pottery.

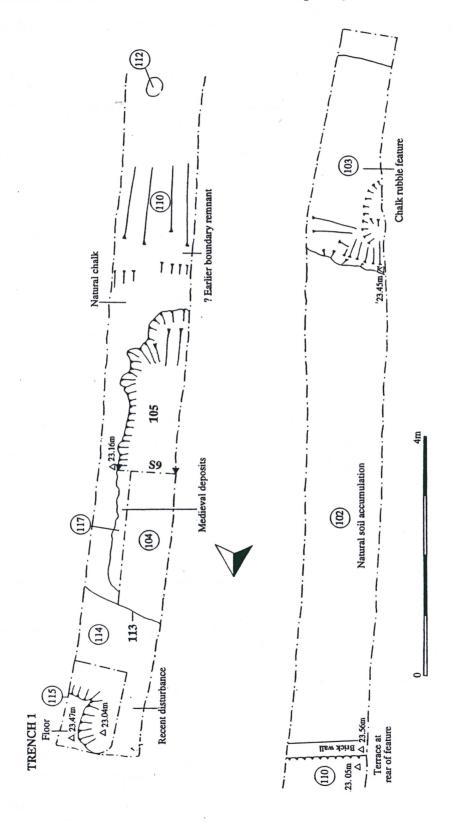


Figure 3 Plan of trench 1

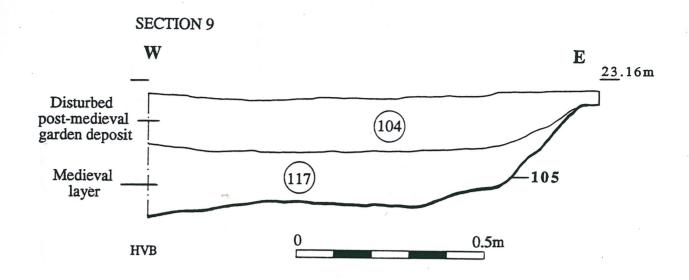
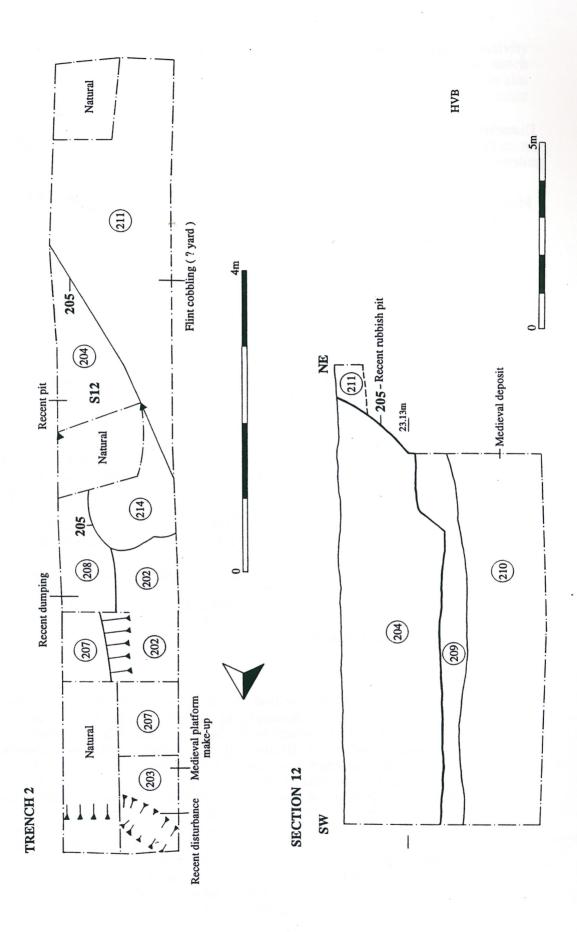


Figure 4 Section 9, located as on Figure 3, showing depth of medieval layer 117

At the southern end of Trench 1, a substantial compacted chalk-rubble feature 103, about 3.5m across was revealed but not excavated. This is mostly flat, except at its northern end where undulations, possibly from subsidence or wear, are very evident. There do not appear to be any definite 'cuts' in 103, although the largest hollow is filled with a much less compacted mix of chalk and flint. Interpretation of 103 is difficult without knowing its full extent. It may be a foundation raft for a wooden structure, or alternatively it may be a yard surface made for a specific purpose such as threshing. It has post-medieval brick and tile embedded in its surface, but this may offer evidence for the period of final use rather than the date of origin. It is possible that it represents a metalled road surface, perhaps the sought-after early road to the Round Moat and Church, although this must for the moment remain speculation.

# 5.2 **Trench 2** (*Figure 5*)

Trench 2 was located behind the more westerly frontage. This area possesses a surviving building, as already discussed. The trench was therefore positioned approximately 2m to the rear of this structure, running southwards for about 10.5m. It was located with the intention of investigating whether remains of earlier occupation were discernible immediately to the rear of the surviving structure. This building is said locally to have been the stables for the Manse (immediately west of the site) in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. More recently it acted as a store for equipment utilised in the tennis courts which were located further south within the proposed development site. The building itself has, in part, been discussed in 3.3 above. It is a timber-framed construction, probably at least 200 years old, now roofed in corrugated iron. It is likely that this structure was never intended to be inhabited, and no evidence of full-time occupation is recoverable from any available source.



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Figure 5 Plan of trench 2, and section 12

Trench 2 was machined to a depth of about 0.3 to 0.4m, at which level a number of anthropogenic layers were identified below the topsoil and wooddetritus (Figure 5). These layers were cleaned by hand and their edges defined. On sampling, the southern end was found to be a rough, compacted, flint cobble yard surface 211, whilst towards the building a more complex sequence of various layers was observed, specifically 202 builders sand, 207 - silt clay, 208 - fine sand and 209 - coarse sand. These probably derive from fairly recent (nineteenth to twentieth century) building works. In the centre of the trench most recently a refuse or demolitionrelated pit had been cut 205. Layers 204 and 214 within this were found to consist of a loose sandy silt containing various stone, brick and even early bicycle parts. This feature is undoubtedly similar to 113 in Trench 1 and probably dates to earlier this century. A number of sondages were cut through these and other recent layers, to look at the potential for survival of earlier archaeological features beneath them. The earliest layers, 203, 210 and 213 appear to represent platform make-up and/or compacted garden soil. Finds were only recovered from the first of these three contexts; however this small assemblage appears to be a secure thirteenth century group. The indications are therefore that within this High Street frontage property, as in Trench 1, a shallow horizon of medieval deposits (context 210 in Section 12, Figure 5, for example) exists below the upper layers that are for the most part relatively modern.

#### 5.3 **Trench 3** (No Figure)

Trench 3 was located to test for the presence of archaeological features in the general area between the frontage properties and the Round Moat. This 'dog-leg'-shaped trench proved to contain only one archaeological feature, that being a 1m wide, 0.3m deep, U-shaped ditch, located 5m from the northern end of the trench. This ditch appears to run in an approximately south-west/north-east direction and was found to contain two sherds, neither of which can be securely identified, but which are either Iron Age/Romano-British or early Saxon in date. The remainder of the trench was composed of the natural silt-flint gravel mix over chalk, with the topsoil deepening to a little less than 0.5m towards the south.

#### 5.4 **Trench 4** (No Figure)

The natural, as observed in Trenches 1 and 3 was found across the whole of this trench. The topsoil here deepened to about 0.8m maximum at the south end.

#### 5.5 **Trench 5** (Figures 6 and 7, Plates 1 and 2)

Trench 5 was located with the intention of elucidating moat-side activity. The trench was L-shaped, with one arm, about 11m long, located adjacent to the Round Moat, and the other, about 12.5m long, running perpendicular to the moat edge (cf Figures 1 and 6 for locational data). Initially the topsoil was removed by machine. This proved to be only a few centimetres deep close to the moat and up to 0.3m deep furthest north. Beneath this, large areas of make-up or dumped deposits were revealed across the whole trench.

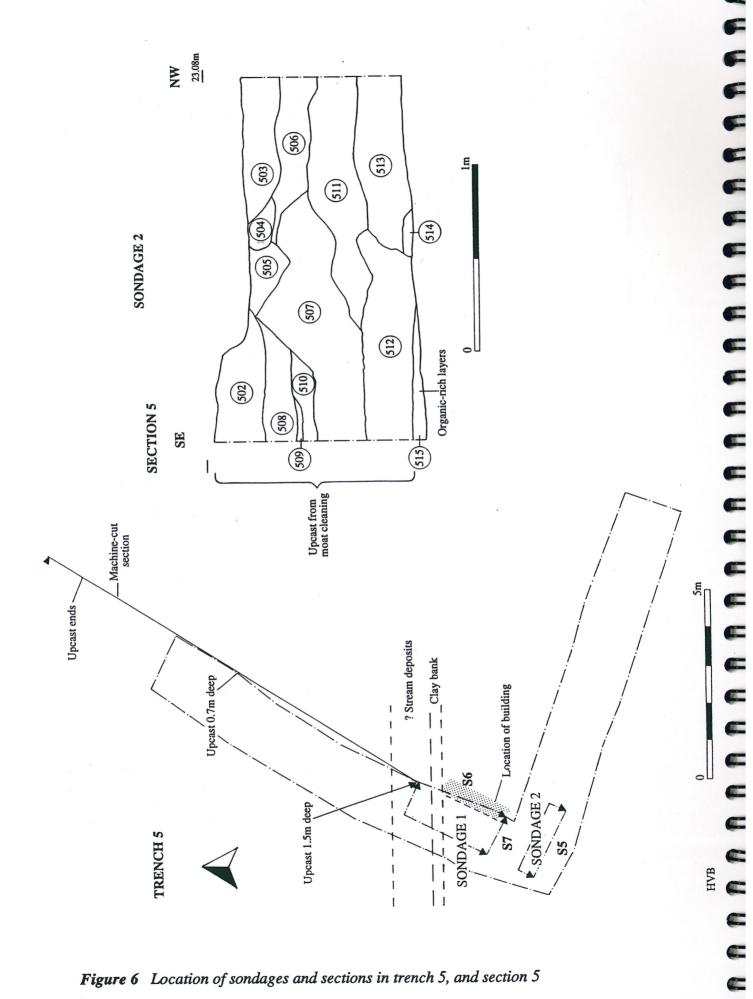


Figure 6 Location of sondages and sections in trench 5, and section 5

Once all surfaces had been cleaned and areas of tree-disturbance identified, two sondages were cut by hand through the deep dumped deposits (Figure 6). The intention was to ascertain quickly the nature and depth of this material. This was done with Sondage 2. Here patches of chalk visible below the topsoil at intervals across the whole arm of the trench were identified as discrete dumps, probably from moat clearance; as with context 502 in Section 5 (Figure 6). This represents the most recent episode in a complex sequence of dumping of mostly brown silt-sands, 502 to 511, which darken slightly with increasing depth. These overlie a sequence of earlier, dark grey-brown clay-silt layers, the lowest of which, 514 and 515, are very organic-rich. This whole sequence produced one piece of medieval pottery from 507. The upper part of the sequence probably relates to periodic moat clearance, but it is also possible that some or all of the deposits may derive from deliberate ground make-up or the creation of an external bank for the Round Moat. The organic-rich layers at the base of the sequence may either indicate occupation deposits, or may derive from vegetation decomposed in a low-oxygen environment in standing water in the moat bottom, which was subsequently thrown onto the bank. The sequence of layers in Sondage 1, starting with black silts and finishing with chalk debris, could indeed correspond to a single inverted bottom-most sequence from one massive clearance episode.

Sondage 1 proved more complex (Figure 7, with section locations on Figure 6). The upper layers were not dissimilar to those observed in Sondage 2. Contexts 516 and 518 are flinty layers with chalk and sandy silt, perhaps moat upcast and certainly similar to 502. Between these, context 517 is a brown silt-clay, again similar to deposits in Sondage 2, whilst beneath 518 an increase in grey colouration and clay content is again familiar. The dump lines mostly appear to indicate deposition up against the outer edge of the Round Moat, although at the very base of the sequence the upper surface of the probable natural 526 also dips away from the moat suggesting that this is the original lie of the land as well.

Below 520 the stratigraphy is more complex. Context 528 is a mid greybrown clay deposit that may be the surviving portion of a small clay bank that delimited a sequence of up to five layers on their northern side (the side furthest from the Round Moat). Plate I shows the western half of the base of Sondage 2. Context 528 can be observed as a grey-green clay layer in the base of the section. From here it passes in an east-north-east direction towards its location in Section 6. This plate, and Section 6 (Figure 7) (the opposite section in the sondage), show the sequence of delimited layers. Context 521, a greenish-grey silt, is the uppermost and largest of these. Below this, 522, is a compact mix of sandy silt and flint pebbles that may be the remnant of a surface which, from *Plate 1* appears to sit either side of 528. Below this are 524, 525 and 531, which are probable occupation layers and/or surfaces, mostly very rich in charcoal and organic material. Of these three, only 524 and 525 are present along the extreme south-east edge of the sondage, as a result of also being delimited on their western side by a posthole/beam slot 529 and associated fills 530 and 533. The former probably represents packing, whilst the latter appears to be the 'post-pipe', a later fill from the removal of the post. The edge formed on post-removal has been given a cut number 534. The western edge of 523, where it lies up against 531, a possible occupation deposit, is a boundary that is shared with the post-pipe/post-packing boundary in 529 below. This suggests that the post-built structure acted as a barrier preventing the spread of 531 into the space within the structure itself. Following the removal of the post, 523 was deposited up against the existing edge of 531. Posthole 529 and its position as a delimiting barrier for the dark occupation deposits to the north are well illustrated by *Plate 2*. The most likely interpretation for these features is that **529** represents part of the extreme western edge of a structure, with occupation material sealed within its ground-plan. Context 522, a sandy silt with frequent flint pebbles, may represent a yard surface laid across the whole area subsequent to the abandonment of this structure. This layer alone appears to sit either side of the clay bank 528 in the east-facing section (*Plate 1*). This latter feature may delimit the north side of the earlier structure, but this is not proven. It does, however, delimit the occupation layers 524 and 525 associated with the structure. The earliest layers in the Sondage 2 sequence are 526 inside the proposed structure and 532 outside and to the north-west of it. The former is a compacted sandy layer with flint which is either a layer of floor make-up or the top of the natural, whilst the latter is a sand of possibly fluvial and natural origin.

On the final day of fieldwork a machine bucket was used to study the extent of the upcast deposits to the north of Sondage 1 (cf Figure 1 for general location), and also to ascertain whether any further occupation deposits could be found below this upcast. The upcast, mostly a silty clay, was found to continue up to 15m from the moat-side. It was 1.5m deep at about 5m from the moat and became progressively shallower so that it was about 0.7m deep a further 5m to the north. Below this, a zone of naturally-derived stream silts with much shell content was found immediately to the north of the clay deposit 528. These silts have been interpreted as a stream channel, whilst 528, as suggested above, may be a bank that retained the occupation material and delimited the stream. This water channel may have been deliberately created, and, if contemporary with the building, may relate to the use of this structure and the possible yard found adjacent to it. The stream ran in a south-west/north-east direction and appears to have been little more than 1m across. It may have carried water from the Round Moat when the water table was higher than it is now.

The dating of this sequence is very uncertain. Of the three sherds found in the upcast, two are heavily abraded and of Roman date, whilst one is less abraded and perhaps dates to the tenth to twelfth century. In addition, one fragment, with sharp edges, of a glass vessel, was found in 518. This was well-made in a light blue-green metal., and could have been either of Roman (possibly late) or Saxon date. The only dateable artefact from the lower layers was one heavily abraded Roman sherd found in 523, the lower of the two 'surfaces' post-dating the occupation deposits.

# 5.6 **Trench 6** (Figure 8)

Trench 6 was located to study the area between the Round Moat and the Brook. No documentary evidence for the use of this piece of ground as a fishpond, or for anything else, could be found. The ground surface here does not lie substantially below the rest of the development area, however it is bounded on the north-eastern edge by the embankment of the Brook, and on the western side by the external banking around the Round Moat. The presence of these features results in the rather erroneous impression of a low lying piece of land, although the area is undoubtedly low enough, and enclosed enough, to be regularly rather wet.

Trench 6 was placed in the middle of the area in question, orientated in a north-east/south-west direction. It was in total about 25m long when first opened, however only that portion shown in *Figure* 8 was investigated fully; the remainder proved to be mostly devoid of archaeological features, and unlikely to produce further information.

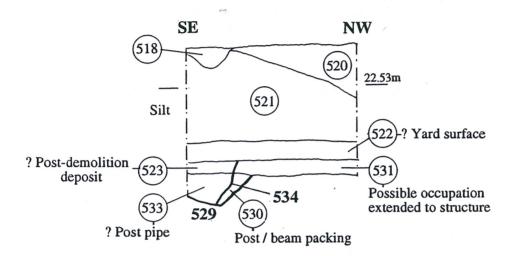
Below the thin topsoil a sequence of water-related layers was revealed, the upper of these being a brown silty-sand, 602, present across the whole trench. This may result from periodic flooding and/or slow-moving water deposition. Towards the middle of the trench it seals a well-compacted sandy clay, 609, which has a high organic content, particularly in two bands located towards the base of the layer. These are likely to represent degraded root-mass areas from water plants which at one time grew up from a muddy base into standing or slow-moving water; the banding probably represents two periods of such growth (D. Schlee pers. comm.). Context 609 appears to have been truncated at its north-eastern end by a complex sequence of water-derived sands and silts: chronologically 606 and 607, 605, 604 and 603. It is likely that these represent a former course of the Brook; they appear to be aligned to the general direction of flow, approximately northwest/south-east, and lie within a few metres of the current, canalised, Brook line. The dating of this earlier stream channel is not known, although it is pre-dated by the period of still water suggested by 609. The present location of 609 may have once formed a marshy 'riverbank', although it must be assumed that 609 has been truncated as its current upper limit lies below the upper sand 603 and sand-silt 604 of the stream deposits. Results from the western end of Trench 6 (not shown in detail, but located on Figure 1) indicate that upcast from the Round Moat was present here, lying on top of the presumed naturally-derived silt-sand 602 of the pond area.

## 5.7 **Trench 7** (No Figure)

As with Trench 5, Trench 7 was located close to the edge of the Round Moat with the intention of identifying any moat-side activity. A deposit of sandy silt loam, 703 and 705, deepening to over 0.5m thick about 3m from the south-west end of the trench but otherwise becoming shallower around 0.3m, was found over the natural subsoil. Context 705 continues below the topsoil at a thickness of about 0.3m for at least 20m beyond the moat edge and it must be interpreted as part of more deliberate raising of the ground level. At the south-west end of the trench, adjacent to the moat, about 0.2m of flinty gravel, 702 was found above this and below a very thin topsoil. This extends up to 2m into the trench, perhaps 7m from the Moat edge, and is either derived from moat-cleaning or represents the remains of an outer bank. Certainly it is not dissimilar to 503 in Trench 5, although the latter is mostly composed of chalk rather than chalk-derived flint gravel. topsoil deepens to about 0.2m across the rest of the trench, and here it seals a further extensive, but rather shallow sandy silt 704, this time with a clay component, which appears to post-date the gravel 702. The only dating evidence from this trench is one large thirteenth to fourteenth century glazed rope handle from a jug which was found in 705. Bearing in mind the large size of this piece it is unlikely to be residual and thus the first phase of accumulation, prior to the deposition of the possible moat-cleaning layer or bank, can be dated to the thirteenth to fourteenth centuries at the latest.

## **SONDAGE 1**

## **SECTION 7**



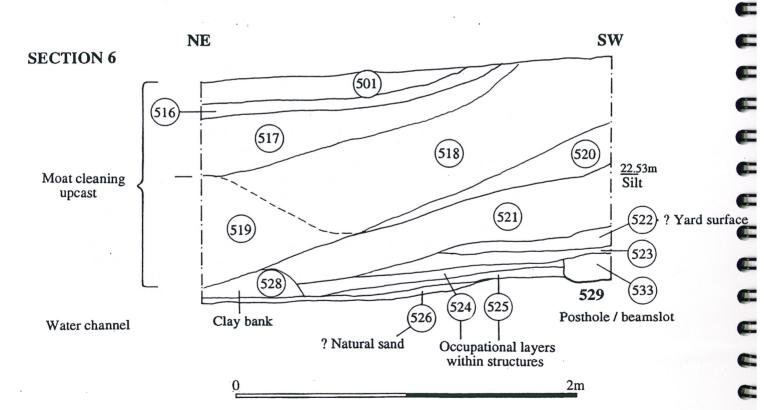


Figure 7 Sections 7 and 6, located as on Figure 6

# **6 SUMMARY OF INTERPRETATION**

## 6.1 The High Street Frontage

There is part survival of medieval layers up to 0.3m in depth in the area to the rear of the demolished old cottage on the eastern property, and similarly behind the current building on the western frontage. While other deposits above these layers are mostly of nineteenth to twentieth century date, there is some further piecemeal pre-cottage stratigraphy close to the road at the extreme north end of the site. Any early deposits on the eastern edge of the frontage are likely to have been substantially damaged by the construction of an air raid shelter.

No post-medieval layers dateable to the pre-nineteenth century were identified on the frontage area, a fact which supports the lack of cartographic evidence for earlier post-medieval structures on the site. Those features later than medieval in date that were found can be explained in almost all cases with respect to the structures and activities relating to the recent cottage shown in *Figure 2*.

# 6.2 Between the Frontage and the Round Moat

At the rear of the frontage (the southern end of Trench 1) a 3.5m wide chalk rubble feature was identified. Neither its full dimensions nor its construction date are known, although from associated finds it appears to have been used in recent centuries. This is likely to be a foundation for a non-domestic building or a substantial yard surface relating to agricultural practices. Alternatively it could be the former line of a metalled track or road running to the Round Moat from the east, and passing behind the Parish Church, rather than in front of it as the High Street now does.

A few metres east of this a shallow, presumably truncated, ditch of possibly late prehistoric date was identified running in a south-west/north-east direction. No other features were observed in this area.

# 6.3 Between the Round Moat and the Brook

It is unlikely that this area was ever an intentional fishpond. It has the impression of a deliberately embanked feature because it is surrounded by the embankments of other landscape features. It is delimited on its northeastern side, its western and its north-western sides by the Brook embankment, the Round Moat outer 'bank' or upcast zone and by its outfall channel, respectively. It is not a particularly low-lying location, this impression being mostly derived from its level which is relative to the adjacent raised areas as described. It does, however, appear from the stratigraphic data to have once been a wet marshy area. In a more recent period it has also contained a faster-moving water course on its northeastern side, presumably a previous line of the Brook, before canalisation, which was likely to have been a deliberate attempt to drain land close to the Brook. It is therefore likely that the eastern approach to the Round Moat was in earlier times very wet indeed, and perhaps impassable.

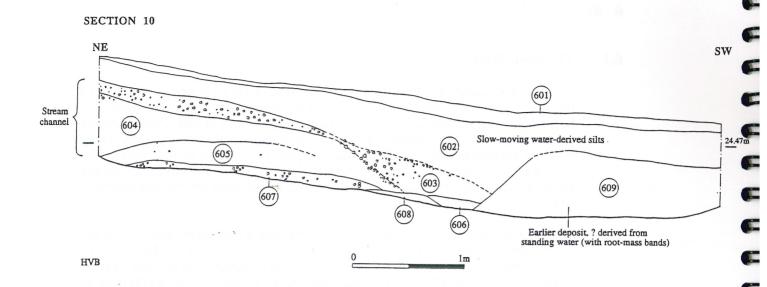


Figure 8 Section 10, located in trench 6 as shown on Figure 1



Plate 1 North-west section and base of sondage 2, trench 5. Note clay deposit 528 in lower part of section, with stony layer (possible surface) 522 respecting 528.

#### 6.4 The Edge of the Round Moat

The south-eastern edge of the Round Moat appears to have experienced some ground make-up (up to 0.5m), perhaps in late medieval times, and more recently some moat-cleaning upcast has been deposited here. It is just possible that the material that resulted in the latter statement could be reinterpreted as an outer bank, although this is rather unlikely. The make-up appears to continue for 20m or more beyond the moat edge, and it may well be that this represents attempts to raise the ground level in an area that has undoubtedly been rather wet at certain times in the past.

The north-eastern edge of the Round Moat similarly contains much made-up ground, up to 1.5m in depth, and including a variety of layers interpreted as moat-clearance upcast. Again an outer bank cannot be ruled out, although it must be deemed unlikely. The make-up appears to continue up to 15m from the moat-side, becoming shallower from 1.5m at about 5m from the moat, to about 0.7m a further 5m to the north. The very western edge of a post-built structure, which appears to have floor and/or occupation deposits rich in charcoal and other organic information, was found sealed beneath the very complex make-up layers towards the southern (moat) end of Trench 5. This structure may have been bounded on the north side by a clay bank. Two phases of a yard surface 522 and 523 sit above, and thus post-date, the occupation remains. The latter appears to sit either side of the clay bank 528 whilst also covering all of the structural and occupation remains. All these deposits are sealed beneath the base of the Round Moat upcast layers (0.6m to 1.4m below the current ground surface) and are likely to be of some antiquity. To the north of the clay bank are layers which, from brief observation, have been identified as naturally-derived stream silts.

It is difficult to explain why this low lying, and presumably fairly wet area would have been chosen for the construction of a building, unless it were for a specific purpose associated with the stream. Indeed the floor and occupation-type deposits offer evidence for the post hole being more than the remains of a revetment at the edge of a stream channel, suggesting, perhaps, that the evidence represents a building associated with milling and/or fulling. A more complete interpretation will only be possible if further excavation is carried out.

#### 7 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 7.1 The High Street Frontage

Many of the surviving deposits here are early modern and of little archaeological significance. In both Trench 1 and Trench 2, however, a horizon of medieval deposition is encountered below the later activity in the rear half of the frontage zone. Furthermore, although partially destroyed, some evidence for earlier structures may in fact exist at the north end of Trench 1. It is also likely that the survival of archaeological remains beneath and around the surviving building on the western frontage site is more complete.

The partial nature of all of these remains reduces their value, although excavation recording prior to development would still seem appropriate.

#### 7.2 Between the Frontage and the Round Moat

There is little of significance here except for the chalk 'foundation' or roadway found at the south end of Trench 1. The full extent and function of this feature need to be ascertained prior to development. In the absence of any other similarly dated features, the single prehistoric ditch does not warrant further record. If, however, it were apparent that a physical relationship existed between this ditch and elements of the Round Moat and associated features, it may help confirm or deny the possible prehistoric origins of the earthworks. Thus any area stripping of this area might fruitfully include observation to locate and record further prehistoric landscape features.

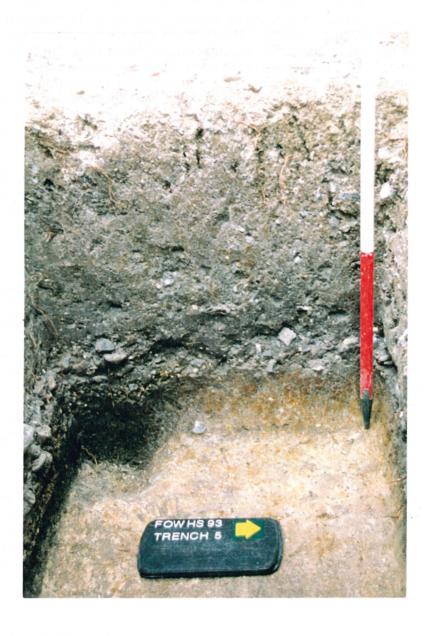


Plate 2 Posthole 529 in trench 5. Note dark occupation layers in left hand section

#### 7.3 Between the Round Moat and the Brook

This area is not fully understood, although it is apparent that both natural water-action and deliberate embankment for flood prevention are responsible for the earthworks and deposits. The degree to which the interface between this feature and the Round Moat has been re-worked is not known, nor is it certain whether occupation deposits survive adjacent to the moat in this area. It may be that this was always a marshy patch adjacent to the monument where few activities were carried out. This area does, however, represent the last surviving large area of pre-modern landscape adjacent to the Round Moat and on that basis has intrinsic historic and landscape value.

#### 7.4 The Edge of the Round Moat

The deposits sealed by the upcast on the north-eastern side of the Round Moat are the most important to have been found. They appear to represent the best-surviving interface between the Round Moat and its external environment. Excavation of this area is likely to reveal a great deal concerning the use, development and, perhaps, origins of the Round Moat. Preservation in situ may however be another alternative. With the hindsight gained from the results at Trench 5, it is possible to suggest that similar occupation/activity deposits, either earlier than the moat or concurrent to its use, may be present within the 30m-long arc on the north east side of the Round Moat. Those deposits found do not extend more than 6m from the moat side, however, the upcast that seals them is found up to 15m from the moat edge.

#### 8 SUMMARY OF CHRONOLOGICAL SEQUENCE

These dates are the most likely: in an evaluation of this size, with little artefactual material, dating must remain rather uncertain in most instances.

Late Prehistory/

Saxon

Ditch in Trench 3

Saxon/Medieval

Timber-built structure external to Round Moat ditch

(Trench 5)

Medieval

Gully fill in Trench 1. Lowest layers in Trench 2. Upcast from Moat clearance sealing structure in Trench 5. General upcast and/or make-up deposition

around Moat ditch in Trenches 5 and 7.

Medieval/Post-Med

Layers beneath floor deposit in Trench 1.

Post-Med/Recent

Upper deposit in gully in Trench 1. Floor deposit in

Trench 1. Yard surface in Trench 2.

Recent

Remains of, and robbing of, cottage in Trench 1. Rubbish pits in Trenches 1 and 2. Back-yard and wall in Trench 1. Dumping of sand in Trench 2.

Undated

Chalk-rubble feature at rear of Trench 1.

Full sequence of water-derived layers in Trench 6.

#### 9 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## APPENDIX A

## **Context List**

Context	Description	Nature	Below	Above
101	Topsoil	Sandy silt, organic-rich		102,
102	Topsoil base	Sandy silt	101	119
103	Chalk rubble deposit	Chalk	101, 119	101
104	Upper fill of cut 105; ? garden soil	Sandy silt	101, 113	117
105	Linear cut of medieval date	-	117	101
106	Rear property wall	Brick	108	107
107	Cut in midden for wall	-	106	102, 109
108	Packing around wall in cut 107	Sandy silt & ash	101	106
109	Modern rubbish dump	Sandy silt, ash, builders sand	101	110
110	Natural chalk used as yard surface	Compacted chalk	109	-
111	Posthole cut	-	112	110
112	Fill of posthole; as 109	Sandy silt, ash	109	111
113	Cut for modern rubbish pit	-	114	115
114	Fill of modern rubbish pit	Sandy silt, bricks, bicycle parts	101	113
115	Remnant of compacted chalk floor	Compacted chalk	113	118
116	Earthen floor or ?buried soil	Sandy silt	118	
117	Lower fill of 105; medieval	Silty clay	104	105
118	Make-up for floor remnant 115	Sand & silt	115	116
119	Chalk & flint rubble; upper part of 103?	Chalk lumps & flint cobbles	101	103
201	Topsoil	Silt	-	204, 214
202	Coarse builder's sand dump	Sand	205	207
203	Early dump layer	Clay silt	207	natural
204	Modern pit fill	Sandy silt	201	205
205	Modern rubbish pit cut	-	204, 214	202,208, 211
206	-	-		-
207	Clay-rich layer	Silty clay	202,208	203
208	Possible yard surface	Sand with flint cobbles	205	202,207
209	Sandy layer	Coarse sand	211	210
210	Loamy dump layer; probably medieval	Clay-silt	209	natural
211	Yard surface	Sand with flint cobbles	205	209,212
212	Stony layer; loamy	Sandy silt	211	213
213	Dump layer; modern	Sandy silt	212	natural
214	Orange fill of modern rubbish pit	Silty sand	201	205
301	Topsoil	Sandy silt; organic rich	302	302
302	Fill of ditch (?prehistoric)	Sandy silt	301	<b>303,</b> 304
303	Cut for ditch	-	302	304
304	Upper natural layer	Sandy silt with flints	301, <b>303</b>	-
501	Topsoil	sandy silt	-	502,503, 516
502	Moat cleaning upcast in Sondage 1: chalk	Chalk blocks and dust, with flint	501	508
503	Upcast in Sondage 1	Sandy silt with flint	501	504
504	Upcast in Sondage 1	Silty sand with flint	503	505
505	Upcast in Sondage 1	Silt with flint	504	506
506	Upcast in Sondage 1	Silt with gravel	505	507
507	Upcast in Sondage 1: dark grey/brown; organic-rich	Silty sand	506, 510	511

Context	Description	Nature	Below	Above
508	Upcast in Sondage 1	Chalk with silt	502	509
509	Upcast in Sondage 1	Sandy silt with flint	508	510
510	Upcast in Sondage 1	Sand and silt with flint	509	507
511	Upcast in Sondage 1: dark grey/brown; organic-rich	Sandy silt	507	512
512	Upcast in Sondage 1: very dark grey/brown; organic-rich	Silty clay	511	513
513	Upcast in Sondage 1: very dark grey/brown; organic-rich	Clay silt	512	514
514	Upcast in Sondage 1: black; very organic-rich	Silty sand	513	515
515	Upcast in Sondage 1: dark grey; organic-rich	Sandy silt with clay	514	natural
516	Upcast in Sondage 2: chalk	Chalk & flint with some sandy silt	501	517
517	Upcast in Sondage 2: grey/brown	Silty clay	516	518
518	Upcast in Sondage 2: flint & chalk	Flint pebbles, chalk lumps, sandy silt	517	519
519	Upcast in Sondage 2: brown/grey	Silty clay with chalk & flint	518	520
520	Upcast in Sondage 2: brown/grey	Clay silt with flint	519	521
521	Upcast or dump against clay bank (528): green/grey with charcoal	Silt with flint & chalk	520	522
522	Possible yard/cobbled surface: grey matrix	Sandy silt with flint	521	523, 531
523	Orange dump layer or surface deposited after post/beam removed	Silty sand	522	533, 524, 531
524	Occupation layer within structure: grey/brown with much charcoal	Sandy silt	<b>534,</b> 523	525, 528
525	Occupation layer within structure: grey with charcoal	Silty clay	524	526
526	Probably natural sand lens: grey	Sand	525	-
527	Natural	Silt sand with chalk grit	526, 532, <b>529</b>	-
528	Clay bank delimiting north edge of occupation deposits	clay with occ. chalk & oyster shell	524, 521, 519	526
529	Cut for posthole or beam slot; de-limits occupation	-	530	532(nat)
530	Grey clay packing in posthole/ beam slot	Clay	531	529
531	Possible occupation deposit external to structure	Orange silt mottled with grey silty sand	534, 522	530
532	Natural sand above natural gravel	Sand	<b>529,</b> 526	527
533	Fill of posthole/ beam slot after post/beam removal	Dark grey/ brown clay silt	523,	<b>534,</b> 524, 525
534	Re-cut of posthole to remove timber		533	531, 524, 525
601	Topsoil	Silty sand	-	602
602	Slow-moving water deposit	Silty sand	601	603
603	Faster stream deposit	Sand and flint pebbles	602	604
604	Slower stream deposit	Silty sand	603	605
605	Slower stream deposit	Sandy silt	604	607
606	Standing water deposit	Sandy clay	603	608 & 609
607	Slower water deposit	Sandy silt	605	608
608	Natural		606, 607	

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Context	Description	Nature	Below	Above
609	Standing water deposit; with two bands of root mass	Clay	606	nat
701	Topsoil	Sandy silt	-	702
702	Make-up, upcast, or bank remains	Flint gravel	701	703=705
703	Make-up or upcast; same as 705	Sandy silt, with organic mat.	702	nat
704	Make-up	Silty sand with clay	701	702, 705
705	Make-up or upcast; same as 703.  Medieval or later	Flint gravel, some silt	703	nat

## Appendix B

## **Pottery Spotdates**

# Pottery Type Codes used

I Olwiy	Type codes asset		
<b>Rpot</b>	Rom	an pottery	
DEST FREC MGCC PMR THET	PAR Fred Mill Post	eloped Stamford ware hen stoneware green (Essex) coarseware medieval redwares ford ware	
Trencl	11	7	
(101)	Topsoil 4 sherds recent English stonewa 2 sherds PMR, int glaze 1 sherd bone china	res	1800-1930 1600-1800 1830+
(103)	Chalk-rubble feature 1 sherd English stoneware 1 sherd Rpot, buff, grog-temper	ed	1690-1930 100-400
(104)	Medieval fill 1 sherd greyware; THET?, but p	ooss rather later	1000-1300
	3 other greyware 1 sherd MGCOAR-type 1 hard-fired brown base angle 1 sherd grog & quartz-tempered	l redware	1250-1400 1350-1500
	1 bowl rim, soft redware, wheel	-made,?late med	1350-1500
	Group date		1350-1500
(116)	?earth floor or buried soil remna 2 sherds modern slipware	ant	1780-1900
Trencl	n 2		
(203)	Early dump layer 1 sherd THET jar 1 sherd buff fineware; poss, dev 3 sherds assorted medieval eartl 2 sherds hard-fired greywares; 2 2 sherds coarse redware, int cleat 1 sherd fineware; orange fabric, clear glaze, unknown but poss. 2 2 sherds p-med hard-fired coarse	henwares ?medieval ar glaze; ?late med/p-med , ext buff slip lines, Essex slip-painted variant	950-1150 1150-1300 1000-1300 1450-1600 1250-1450 1450-1600
	group date		1450-1600
(207)	Clay-rich layer 1 sherd glazed, slipped, highly of (similar to ?Saffron Walden typ) 1 sherd med coarseware 4 sherds various PMR 1 sherd Frechen stoneware (FR) 1 sherd bone china  Group date; mainly but some later contamination are	es) EC)	1230-1350 1100-1300 1600-1800 1550-1700 1800+
(210)	Early dump layer 2 sherds same vessel, glazed, ha	ard-fired jug	1300-1450

## Trench 3

(302)	1 sherd, abraded, soft, smooth greyware; probably Rpot 1 sherd hand-made, flint-tempered. Fither unknown early-	<400
	middle Saxon or Iron Age  Trench 5	
(501)	Topsoil 2 buff, quartz-tempered bs, ?hand-made 1 grey quartz-tempered bs, ?hand-made:Roman or med	100-400
	1 rim, brown, quartz + grog; ?medieval 2 bs, orange fabric, quartz and shell temper 1 base angle	1100-1350 1100-1350
(507)	Silty sand upcast grog and shell-tempered Roman tile fragment	
(511)	Organic-rich upcast Quartz-tempered bs, ?late-med	1350-1500
(518)	Flint & chalk upcast 1 grey Roman bs	100-400
(523)	?Surface after post-beam removal Orange fabric bs; ?Roman	100-400
Trench	17	
(703)	Sandy silt upcast twisted rope handle, green glaze. Possibly Hedigham ware type fabric and probably later medieval	1350-1500

