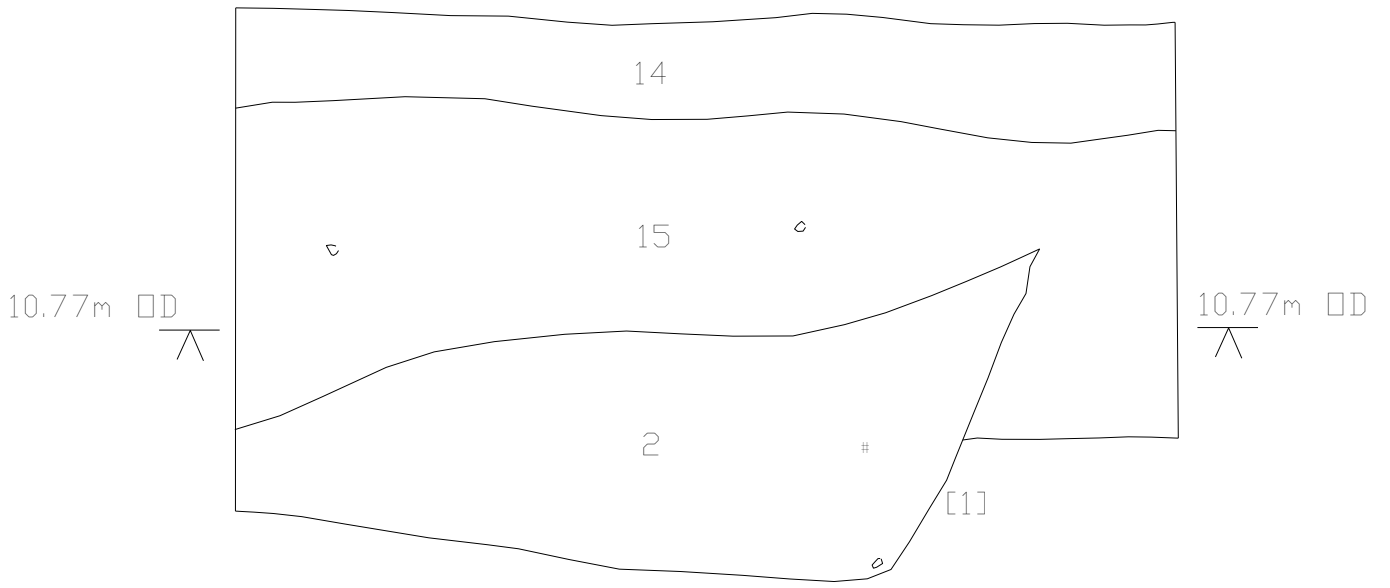


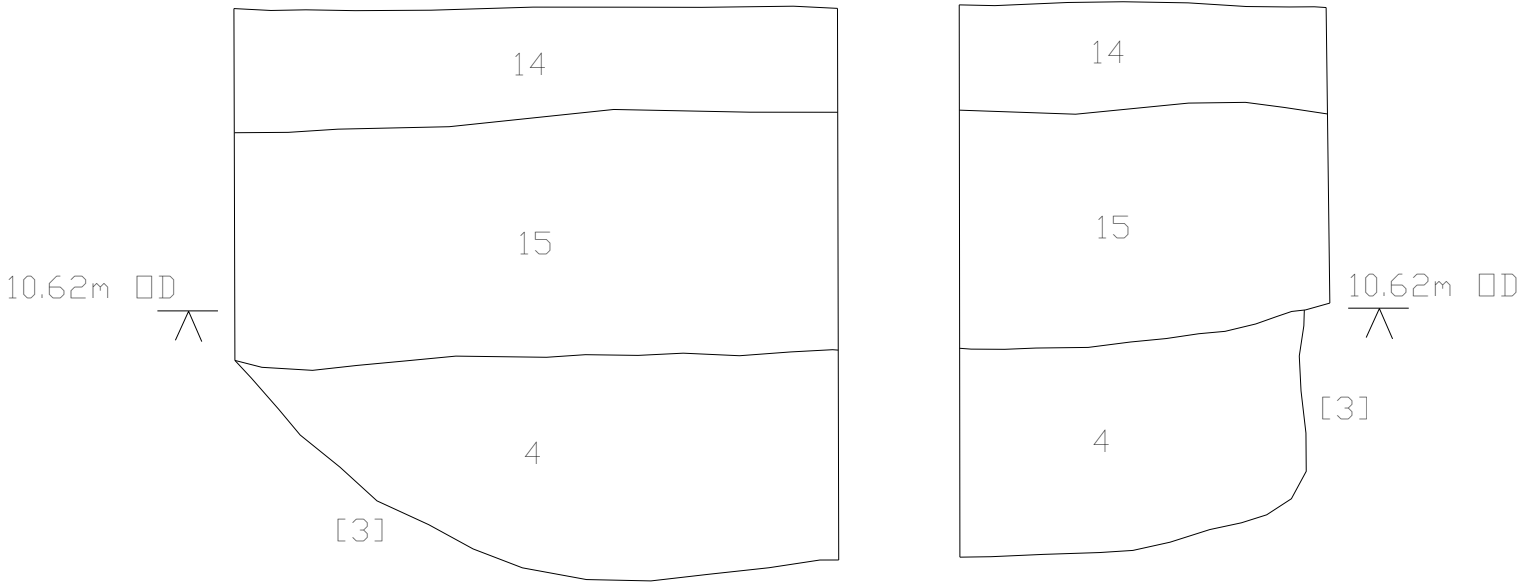
N Section 1 S



West facing section

Section 2

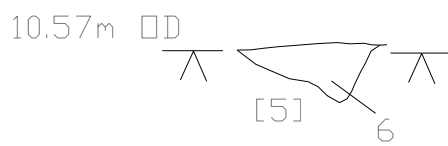
W E N S



Composite section

Section 3

S N



East facing section

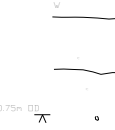
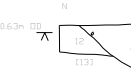
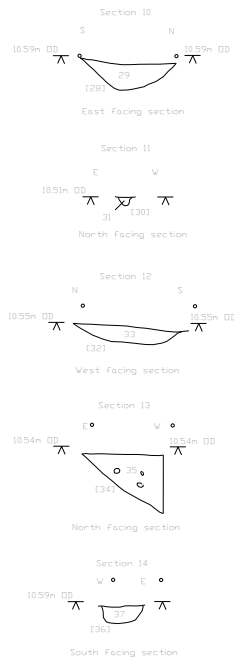
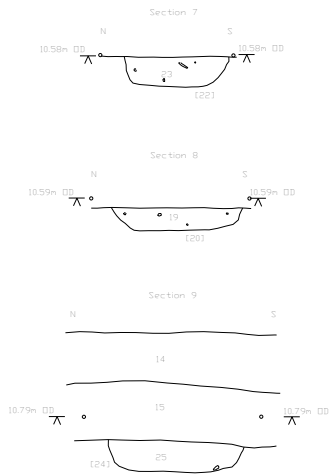
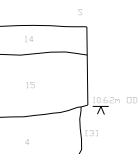
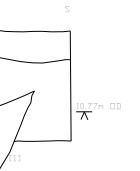




Figure 1. Site location. Scale 1:5,000

Local Authority No.100019340

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NORFOLK ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

Report No. 1081

**An Archaeological Evaluation at The Corner House, Staithe
Street, Wells-next-the-Sea**

41754 WNS

David A Robertson

June 2005

© Norfolk Archaeological Unit



Frontispiece: Semi-complete upper stone from an Iron Age rotary quern, found in pit [11], Trench 4.

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Location: The Corner House, Staithe Street, Wells-next-the-Sea
District: North Norfolk
Grid Ref: TF 91704 43495
HER No.: 41754 WNS
Date of fieldwork: 8th and 9th June 2005

Summary

In June 2005 the Norfolk Archaeological Unit carried out an archaeological evaluation at The Corner House, Staithe Street, Wells-next-the-Sea. Four trenches were excavated within a 21m by 18m plot due to have shops and flats built on it.

A later Iron Age pit containing fifteen sherds of pottery, a semi-complete rotary quern, fragments of salt-making briquetage and worked flint was found. This was an important discovery as not only do the feature and artefacts comprise the first Iron Age archaeology found in Wells, but Iron Age rotary querns, briquetage and flint artefacts are rare finds in Norfolk.

A medieval ditch, either a field or property boundary, was found in one trench.

Three pits, a ditch and six features of post-medieval date were discovered. The pits could have been dug as rubbish pits, quarries for clay or as garden features. Six parallel east-to-west features were most probably garden features.

1.0 Introduction

(Fig. 1)

The site was a roughly rectangular shaped plot measuring about 21m east-to-west by 18m north-to-south (378 sq. m). It was located on Staithe Street, close to the centre of the town of Wells-next-the-Sea (Wells). Sited on the eastern side of Staithe Street, towards the southern end of the street, it was directly to the north of the Corner House restaurant and public house.

A planning application for constructing shops and flats on the site has been submitted to North Norfolk District Council. The archaeological evaluation and report production was commissioned and funded by the landowners T.P. Keville Construction Limited.

On 8th and 9th June 2005 Norfolk Archaeological Unit (NAU) conducted an archaeological evaluation of the site. It was undertaken in accordance with a Project Design and Method Statement prepared by NAU (Ref: AS/1892) and a Brief issued by Norfolk Landscape Archaeology (NLA Ref: AH/21-05-02).

The work was designed to assist in defining the character and extent of any archaeological remains within the site, following 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 the Local Planning Authority with regard to the treatment of any archaeological remains found.

The generic aims of the project were:

- To determine, if possible the topographical land-use history of the site.
- To establish the presence or absence of archaeological remains with the defined area.

- To determine and characterise the extent, condition, nature, quality and date of any archaeological remains present.
- To establish the stratigraphical, artefactual and environmental potential of any archaeological deposits or features present.
- To provide, if possible, an updated account of the historical development of the area through recovered archaeological evidence and documentary research.
- To provide information useful to determining what measures are required to preserve any archaeological remains threatened by the development proposal.

The site archive is currently held by the Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service, following the relevant policy on archiving standards.

2.0 Geology and Topography

(Fig. 1)

The underlying solid geology at Wells is Cretaceous Upper Chalk, which rises to the west and forms cliffs at Hunstanton. This is overlain by a series of Quaternary deposits of glacial and periglacial origin (Bridges 1998). The clay and chalk natural encountered during the evaluation is one of these.

The site is located on the north-east facing side of a gently sloping hill that rises above buildings, the harbour and saltmarshes to the north and buildings to the east, south and south-west. The hill continues to slope upwards to the west of the site. The site itself was located at between 11.18m and 11.44m OD. Although Staithe Street slopes gently from south-to-north, the site sloped almost imperceptibly from west-to-east, following the gentle contours of the hill.

3.0 Archaeological and Historical Background

Introduction

A search of the Norfolk Historic Environment Record (NHER) focused on the site (with a radius of 250m) was carried out by the Records Officer at NLA. The documentary evidence and historic maps compiled by Ivan Ringwood (2003) as part of the Norfolk and Suffolk Rapid Coastal Zone Archaeological Survey were consulted. The Norfolk Record Office (NRO) holds at least forty historic maps of Wells and the surrounding area. A selection of these were studied (chosen to give a broad range of maps of different dates), along with a number available in published works.

The site

No archaeological sites, features or artefacts had been discovered on the site prior to the archaeological evaluation.

Historic maps of Wells (a selection of these are listed below) show the site. The maps indicate that there may have been buildings on the site during the 18th century. During the 19th century the plot was open with no buildings and by the early 20th century it was used as part of a garden.

- A Plan of Wells Harbour 1780, amended 1781 (Barney 2000, 3; NRO MS 486). Buildings are shown to the south of the site, possibly continuing north onto the site. The buildings front Staithe Street and Station Road.
- Plan of the Harbour and Haven of the Port of Wells, 1782 (Barney 2000, 9; NRO MS 486). Buildings appear to be shown on the site.
- Plan of Wells harbour April 1784 (NRO MS 21133 179X4). Buildings are shown on the site, fronting Staithe Street.
- Faden's Map of Norfolk, 1797 (Barringer 1989). The area of the site is shaded as if buildings stood on the site, but as Wells town is not shown in detail it is not possible to say for certain.
- Plan of the Town of wells 1813 (NRO Hayes and Storr 113). The site forms part of a large plot of land labelled '520'. It is not clear whether the large plot belonged to the buildings/houses shown to the north and/or south or not.
- Ordnance Survey 1st edition, Sheet 68-NW, 1838 (Barney 2000, 23). The site appears to have been open ground. Buildings are shown to the south, fronting both Staithe Street and Station Road.
- Plan of the Wells next the Sea, Norfolk, 1843 (Tithe Apportionment Map, NRO DN/TA816). The site is shown as part of a large empty plot labelled '308'. It is not clear whether this plot belonged to the buildings/houses shown to the north and/or south or not.
- 1906 Ordnance survey 1:2500 map, reproduction by R.F. Gerken, 1987 (NRO 1691/3). The site is shown as part of the garden of Mayshiel House, a large building to the north. Mayshiel House is not shown on the tithe apportionment map (NRO DN/TA816) and was presumably built between 1843 and 1906.
- North West Norfolk Joint Regional Planning Committee. Wells Draft Planning Scheme. Probably mid 20th century (NRO Hayes and Storr 115). It suggests that there were buildings on the Staithe Street frontage. However, as there is a continuous strip of buildings drawn along the road rather than individual buildings, it may be that the map is schematic rather than a true representation.

Archaeological and historical background

Little archaeological work has been carried out in Wells. Prior to this evaluation, evaluations had been conducted at Church Street (to the south of the site) and on Standard Road (top the north-west). The first discovered little and the second revealed a ditch (Trimble 2002; Wallis 1999).

Chance finds and observations provide the only glimpses of pre-medieval activity in Wells. In 1974 two Roman pottery grey ware bases were found on a building site (NHER 1849) immediately to the north-west of the site. During building operations in 1982 at Burnt Street (NHER 18177) soil was excavated and taken to a site on Polka Road (NHER 18176) for disposal. The soil was found to contain Roman grey ware pottery and ceramic building material, Middle Saxon pottery, Late Saxon Thetford-type ware sherds and medieval pottery. Thetford-type ware was also collected during the excavation of a sewer in 1988 (NHER 24734).

The Domesday Book of 1086 describes how Wells was divided into six manors (Brown 1984). It is thought that at that time, the settlement of Wells was a small

fishing village clustered around St. Nicholas's Church. The present St. Nicholas's Church is almost completely 19th century in date, having been built after a fire in 1879. It does contain 15th century elements (Pevsner and Wilson 2002, 711) and would have had a medieval predecessor.

A harbour or landing place of landing boats would have existed to the north and east of the church in an estuary and area of saltmarsh shown on historic and reconstruction maps as 'The Haven' and 'Church Marshes' (Barney 2000, 3 and 9; NRO 1763/1 & 2; NRO MC 1691/1; NRO MC 1691/2; NRO MS 486). Part of the area is currently open land and is shown on modern Ordnance Survey maps as having a drain passing through it. The excavation of a sewer in the area of the harbour was monitored in 1988 and medieval pottery was collected (NHER 24734).

During the late medieval the focus of Wells shifted northwards from St Nicholas's Church. The new settlement centred on the area north of the Buttlands and incorporated a formal gridded street system. Staithe Street was one of the north-to-south aligned streets in the grid and the site would have been close to the centre of the town. The dating of the street layout is based upon the survival of a mid 15th century timber-framed and jettied house to the rear of Black Horse Yard.

The laying out of the gridded streets may have coincided with change in the location of the harbour (although it need not). By 1663, changes in the estuaries and saltmarshes north and east of St Nicholas's Church forced the people of Wells to move the site of the harbour to its present location. In 2004 the Norfolk Rapid Coastal Zone Archaeological Survey recorded a series of timber quays, jetties and harbour structures in the present harbour (Robertson 2005). At least one of these appears on a map dating to 1782 (NHER 41494; Barney 2000, 9; MS 486) and the others are likely to be post-medieval in date (including NHER 41491, 41492, 41497 and 41498). A sherd of 17th to 18th century North Italian marbled slipware (NHER 41487) was collected from close to one (NHER 41491). It helps to date activity in the harbour and hints at Wells's trading connections. Documents show that during the medieval and post-medieval period the Wells was involved in coastal and international trade. In 1580 the harbour had nineteen ships and during the 1590s local merchants petitioned for a customs house (Rutledge 1994).

From the late 17th century onwards large landowners in north Norfolk began to drain and reclaim areas of saltmarsh. The process at Wells happened in a series of stages, with each involving the construction of large sea defence embankments. A bank built in 1719 by Sir Charles Turner passed across the mouth of the estuary leading to 'Church Marshes' preventing any re-use of the former harbour site (Barney 2000; NRO 486).

Within a 250m radius of the site are twenty-five post-medieval houses and shops that are recorded on the NHER. A windmill is marked on Faden's Map of 1797 to the south-west of the site, whilst a reconstruction map of Wells in 1780 suggests there may have been a second to the south-east (NRO MC 1691/2). In 1972 a post-medieval rubbish pit was found by in Croft's Yard (NHER 1816), whilst in 1983 construction workers revealed an ?18th century domed structure (NHER 18633), possibly a well.

4.0 Methodology

(Fig. 2 ; Plate 1)

The objective of this evaluation was to recover as much information as possible on the extent, date, phasing, character, function, status, quality, condition and significance of any surviving archaeological deposits within the site.

The Brief required that four trenches, each measuring 5m by 1.8m, be excavated within the property. As most machine excavators have ditching buckets 1.6m wide, the NAU Method Statement proposed adapting the size of the trenches to 5.6m by 1.6m which was approved by NLA. The trenches were located to provide the best coverage of the site possible, whilst making sure that they were well away from buildings and boundaries.

Before excavation begun the area of each trench was scanned with a CAT scanner. Service plans provided by Anglian Water/Geodesys and Norfolk County Council were consulted and a representative from British Telecom's *Dial Before You Dig* service visited the site.

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

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

All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using NAU *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.

A level was transferred from an Ordnance Survey benchmark of 8.66m AOD on the eastern perimeter wall of an Electric Substation located towards the northern end of Staithe Street. A temporary bench mark of 12.01m OD was established on the top of the low wall on the western edge of the site.

An environmental sample was taken from one feature in Trench 4. As the client required the report to be produced rapidly, it was not possible process and report on this sample. It is in storage and will be available for processing if future archaeological work on is undertaken at the site.

A wire fence delimited the western edge of the site, with wooden panel fences on the north and west and the northern wall of The Corner House on the south edge. To access the site part of the wire fence had to be removed. Once the work was complete orange fencing was put up along the full length of the western edge.

At the beginning of the evaluation the site was open, but slightly overgrown. The weather was warm, sunny and favourable.

5.0 Results

Trench 1

(Figs 3 and 5)

Trench 1 measured 5.6m by 1.6m by up to 0.7m deep and was aligned roughly east-to-west. It was located to examine the south-eastern part of site in an area along the gentle west-to-east slope.

The natural was a mid brown-orange sandy clay with occasional small patches of off-white chalk. It was located between 10.55m and 10.57m OD. Three archaeological features were recorded in the trench, two of which cut natural.

A possible post-hole ([5]) located at the western end of the trench cut the natural. It was circular in plan, had a diameter of 0.22m and was 0.08m deep. Contained within it was a mid brown silty sand ([6]) that held no dating evidence.

Directly east of the post-hole was a large pit ([3]) that extended beyond the eastern edge of the site. The pit cut the natural and was 1.6m long, at least 0.6m wide and up to 0.37m deep. Its dark grey-brown sandy silt fill ([4]) contained three sherds of 16th to 18th century Glazed red earthenware, a copper alloy disc (SF1), two iron bars (SF4-5), three pieces of medieval ceramic building material (CBM), three pieces of post-medieval CBM, three clay tobacco pipe stems, two pieces of slag and four fragments of mammal bone.

Both the post-hole ([5]) and pit ([3]) were sealed by a mid grey-brown sandy loam subsoil ([15]). The subsoil was up to 0.5m deep and contained occasional chalk flecks/fragments, occasional CBM fragments and flint pebbles.

At the eastern end of the trench a pit ([1]) appeared to cut through the subsoil, although this could not be determined for certain. If it did cut the subsoil, part of its fill had become mixed with the subsoil and was indistinguishable from it. The distinguishable fill ([2]) was a dark orange-brown silty sand from which a sherd of 18th century Staffordshire-type slipware, a clay tobacco pipe stem, a piece of window glass and a mammal bone fragment were collected. The pit continued beyond both the eastern and northern edges of the trench and measured at least 1.25m by 0.2m by 0.52m deep.

Above the subsoil was a dark grey-brown sandy loam topsoil ([14]). It had a maximum depth of 0.2m and contained occasional chalk flecks and flint pebbles and cobbles.

Trench 2

(Figs 4 and 6)

Trench 2 was located in the south-western part of site. It was situated to examine a strip across the gentle west-to-east slope, measured 5.6m by 1.6m by up to 0.9m deep and was orientated roughly north-to-south.

The natural was a mid orange sandy clay with patches of off-white chalk and was found between 10.53m and 10.57m OD. Five archaeological features were recorded, of which three cut the natural.

The earliest dated feature was a north-to-south aligned ditch ([34]). It was observed along the full length of the trench, although as it continued beyond the western edge of the trench, its full profile was not visible. The ditch had a straight and steep eastern side, was at least 0.8m wide, a minimum of 0.32m deep and contained mid brown clayey sand ([35]). A sherd of unabrased 12th to 14th century medieval coarseware and an irregular retouched flint flake were collected from the fill.

A pit and an east-to-west aligned ditch cut the fill of the north-to-south ditch ([34]). The pit ([28]) was located towards the southern end of the trench. Oval in plan, it measured 0.68m by 0.58m by 0.16m. It was filled by a mid brown silty sand ([29]), from which a piece of post-medieval CBM and an iron artefact (SF2) were recovered.

The east-to-west orientated ditch ([32]) was just to the north of pit [28]. It crossed the entire width of the trench and continued beyond both the eastern and western edges of the site. Measuring 0.6m wide and 0.1m deep, it had gently sloping concave sides. A dark grey-brown clayey sand ([33]) filled the ditch, from which a sherd of post-medieval Glazed red earthenware, a clay tobacco pipe stem and an mammal rib bone were collected.

A possible stake-hole ([30]) was located between the east-to-west aligned ditch and pit [28]. It was circular in plan, 0.1m in diameter and 0.06m deep. It's mid brown silty sand fill ([31]) contained no dating evidence.

Towards the northern end of the trench was a circular post-hole ([36]). With a diameter of 0.27m and a depth of 0.11m, it held a mid brown clayey sand ([37]). No dating evidence was present in the fill.

The fill of the east-to-west aligned ditch was sealed by a mid grey-brown sandy loam subsoil ([15]). This was between 0.46m and 0.58m deep and contained occasional chalk flecks and fragments, occasional CBM fragments and flint pebbles. Above the subsoil was a dark grey-brown sandy loam topsoil ([14]). It was a maximum of 0.4m deep and held a sherd of Cologne/Frechen stoneware, two tobacco pipe stems, occasional chalk flecks and flint pebbles and cobbles.

Trench 3

(Figs 7 and 9)

Trench 3 measured 5.6m by 1.6m by 0.72m deep and was aligned roughly north-to-south. It was located to examine the north-eastern and central parts of site and to look at an area across the gentle west-to-east slope.

The natural was a mid orange sandy clay with patches of off-white chalk. Recorded between 10.53m and 10.60m OD, it was cut by all of the archaeological features recorded. The six features were all similar in shape and form and shared the same east-to-west alignment. For these reasons, and after consultation with NLA, it was decided to only excavate a sample (three) of them.

The southernmost feature ([16]) was probably rectangular in plan and extended beyond the eastern edge of trench. It measured at least 1m by 0.84m, had rounded corners and was filled by a mid grey clayey silt ([17]). It was not excavated.

To the north was feature [18]. This lay fully within the trench and was excavated. It measured 1.13m by 0.84m by 0.14m deep. With steep sides, it contained a mid grey clayey silt ([19]) from which a sherd of ?16th century Glazed red earthenware, a piece of medieval brick and butchered cattle and mammal bones were collected.

North of feature [18] was unexcavated feature [20]. Rectangular in plan with rounded corners, it measured 0.7m by at least 1.46m. It was filled with a mid grey clayey silt ([21]), from the surface of which a piece of post-medieval pantile was collected.

Sub-rectangular feature [22] lay to the north of feature [20] and continued beyond the western edge of the trench. It was excavated, had rounded corners, steep sides and was 1.4m long by 0.72m wide by 0.18m deep. It was filled by a mid grey clayey silt ([23]) from which a sherd of 16th to 17th century Glazed red earthenware, three fragments of post-medieval roof tile, one clay tobacco pipe stem, a piece of mammal bone and two residual flint flakes were recovered.

Excavated feature [24] extended beyond the western edge of the trench and measured 1.10m by 0.84m by up to 0.34m deep. It had steep sides which sloped to a flat area, in the centre of which was a 0.2m deep circular hollow with near vertical sides. The dark grey clayey silt ([25]) within the feature held a sherd of 16th to 17th century Dutch slipware, two pieces of post-medieval CBM, mortar, an iron knife (SF3), a clay tobacco pipe stem, four pieces of mammal bone and oyster, cockle and mussel shells.

To the north was an unexcavated feature ([26]) that extended beyond the northern and western edges of the trench. It was at least 0.96m long by 0.3m wide and contained a mid brown clayey silt ([27]).

The fills of all six features were sealed by a mid grey-brown sandy loam subsoil ([15]). This was up to 0.37m deep and contained occasional chalk flecks and fragments, occasional CBM fragments and flint pebbles. Above the subsoil was a dark grey-brown sandy loam topsoil ([14]). It had a maximum depth of 0.37m and included occasional chalk flecks and flint pebbles and cobbles.

Trench 4

(Figs 8 and 10)

Trench 4 was located in the north-western part of site. It was situated to examine a strip along the gentle west-to-east slope, measured 5.6m by 1.6m by up to 0.8m deep and was orientated roughly east-to-west.

The natural, a mid orange sandy clay with patches of off-white chalk, was observed between 10.52m and 10.58m OD. Three archaeological features were recorded, two of which cut the natural.

Towards the eastern end of the trench was a large sub-rectangular pit ([11]). It measured 0.51m deep, 1.14m wide, at least 1.5m long and continued beyond the northern edge of the trench. The pit cut the natural, had near vertical sides, a rounded base and it contained two fills.

The lower fill was a dark brown clayey sand ([10]) with frequent patches of charcoal, ash and pale yellow sand, occasional chalk flecks and flint pebbles. Eight sherds of later Iron Age pottery, part of an Iron Age rotary quern, seven pieces of burnt stone, twenty-six pieces of burnt flint, four fragments of mammal bone and a small piece of intrusive medieval brick were recovered from it. The upper fill ([9]) was a mid brown sand with occasional chalk flecks and flint cobbles and pebbles. It contained seven sherds of later Iron Age pottery, twenty-one pieces of briquetage, a sharp flint flake, cattle, sheep/goat, mammal and duck bones and oyster shell.

Close to the western end of the trench was a possible gully ([13]) that cut the natural. As only small amount of the feature was visible in the trench – it was truncated on the south by pit [8] and continued beyond the northern edge of the trench – it was difficult to characterise. Having said this, it was up to 0.3m wide, 0.08m deep and contained a dark brown clayey sand ([12]).

Pit [8] cut gully [13]. The pit was probably roughly oval in shape, although as it continued beyond the southern edge of the trench it was difficult to tell. It had gently sloping undulating sides, a rounded base and measured at least 1.3m by 1.3m by 0.56m deep. It was filled with a mid brown clayey sand ([7]) from which cattle and mammal bones were gathered.

The fill of pit [8] and the upper fill of pit [11] were sealed by a mid grey-brown sandy loam subsoil ([15]). The subsoil was a maximum of 0.5m deep and contained occasional chalk flecks and fragments, occasional CBM fragments and flint pebbles. Above the subsoil was a dark grey-brown sandy loam topsoil ([14]). This was up to 0.36m deep with occasional chalk flecks and flint pebbles and cobbles.

6.0 The Finds

Introduction

The finds and environmental material from the site is presented in tabular form with basic quantitative information in Appendix 2: Finds by Context.

In addition to this summary, more detailed information on specific finds is included in separate reports below. These reports are ordered by artefact date. Supporting tables for these contributions are included in the Appendices.

6.1 Flint

(Appendix 3)

By Sarah Bates

A total of four struck flints were recovered from the site. Twenty-six sharp irregular fragments (weighing 0.394kg) were also found, although these have been discarded.

One very sharp flake came from the upper fill ([9]) of pit [11]. It was found alongside pottery of later Iron Age date and its condition suggests that it was quite fresh when it entered the pit. As a result, it is probably of Iron Age date. Twenty-six sharp irregular fragments (weighing 0.394kg) had shattered due to burning. They came from the lower fill ([10]) of the same pit.

Two small edge damaged flakes came from the fill ([23]) of a probable garden feature ([22]) of post-medieval date and one piece was from the fill ([35]) of a ditch ([34]) of medieval date. This latter piece is an irregular thick triangular flake with a hinge fracture. It has flakes struck from at least one edge and may have been use as a blunt point or as a rough scraper-like implement.

The flint, although mostly found residually, represents activity in the vicinity of the site during the prehistoric period. One piece seems likely to be of Iron Age date. Flint use during the Iron Age has been a subject of some controversy (Saville 1981) but increasingly evidence is being recorded from excavated sites (Young and Humphrey 1999).

6.2 Prehistoric pottery

(Appendix 4)

By Sarah Percival

A small assemblage of fifteen sherds, weighing 0.736kg, was recovered from two fills of a single pit ([11]). The sherds are from a single, incomplete vessel, a medium sized burnished jar with slack shoulders and flat everted rim in coarse sand tempered fabric. Smoke damage to the exterior of the jar indicates that it had been used for cooking over an open fire. Similar jars have been found at Park Farm, Silfield (Percival 1996, fig.17, P23) and date to the later Iron Age, the 3rd to 1st centuries BC.

6.3 Fired Clay

(Plate 2)

By Sarah Percival

Twenty-one pieces of fired clay, weighing 0.332kg, were recovered from the upper fill ([9]) of a pit ([11]), which also contained Iron Age pottery. Two fabrics are present. The majority of the assemblage is made of a hard, brittle silty quartz sand tempered fabric with no visible inclusions (Q1). Several of these pieces have a single flat surface surviving and some show impressions of rounded twigs indicating that they may have been pressed onto a wattle support. The second fabric exhibits elongated voids indicative of grass or chaff temper (O1). Only one piece of organic tempered fabric is present in the form of an irregular lump with no distinguishing features.

The fired clay pieces show a range of orange to dark lilac colouring characteristic of briquetage, the fired clay supports and superstructure associated with the production of salt. Pieces in the dense silty fabric Q1 are very similar to material used to line briquetage hearths at salt production sites such as Cowbit Wash, Lincolnshire (Lane and Morris 2001). Organic tempering is more commonly associated with supports used to hold the evaporating containers in place during the evaporation process.

Iron Age salt production has been identified at Cowbit dated to the 2nd century BC (Lane and Morris 2001). A similar date may be suggested for this assemblage and is confirmed by the pottery also found in the pit. The briquetage was not *in situ* and was only found in small quantities. However, the location of the site close to the coast and saltmarsh estuaries is one that would have been highly suitable for salt making. Therefore, the presence of both briquetage supports and superstructure may indicate a production site close by.

6.4 Worked Stone

(Frontispiece)

By Sarah Percival

A semi-complete upper stone from a rotary quern, weighing 15.6kg, was recovered from the fill ([10]) of an Iron Age pit ([11]). The quern has a diameter of 330mm across the grinding surface and a maximum height of 128mm. A short hole has been drilled into the side of the quern to allow a handle to be attached. The handle hole does not pierce the hopper, which is 'U' shaped, and feeds into a central eye or spindle hole which has a maximum diameter of 25mm. Rust stains within the eye

suggest that the quern may have had an iron spindle. A flattened lip or rim runs around the top of the stone. The upper surface of the quern is pecked whilst the grinding surface is smoothed through wear with faint concentric striations also indicating use.

The quern is of the Hunsbury style, initially defined by Curwen (1937) after the type-site at the Iron Age hillfort at Hunsbury, Northants. The stone is made of a coarse khaki green calcareous sandstone, almost certainly a Spilsby sandstone from the Lower Cretaceous or Neocomian beds of the Lincolnshire Wolds and quarried at Nettleton in Lincolnshire (Ingle 1990, 82). Examples of Spilsby querns are rare in Norfolk being more commonly found in Lincolnshire, South Humberside and Cambridgeshire (Ingle 1990, 99). It is probable that the quern was imported to Norfolk by sea. Recently excavated examples of Spilsby querns from Hinchbrook Country Park in Cambridgeshire are associated with pottery dating to the 3rd to 1st centuries BC.

6.5 Burnt Stone

By Sarah Percival

Seven pieces of burnt stone, weighing 5kg, were found in the basal fill of an Iron Age pit ([11]). Six of the pieces are of quartzitic sandstone and appear to be rounded beach pebbles. A seventh, large rectangular piece has a single flattened surface possibly of calcareous sandstone similar to a fragmentary quern also found in the pit. The entire assemblage exhibits signs of burning perhaps suggesting that the stones had been used as hearth lining and later dumped into the pit. The large rectangular piece may be a reused fragment from a quern, though this is uncertain.

6.6 Post-Roman pottery

(Appendix 4)

By Sue Anderson

Introduction

A total of ten sherds of pottery, weighing 75g, was collected from eight contexts, including topsoil, two pits, two ditches and three possible garden features.

Quantification was carried out using sherd count and weight. A full quantification by fabric, context and feature is available in the archive. All fabric codes were assigned from the Suffolk post-Roman fabric series, which includes Norfolk, Essex, Cambridgeshire and Midlands fabrics, as well as imported wares. Local wares and common imports were identified from Jennings (1981). Form terminology follows MPRG (1998). Recording uses a system of letters for fabric codes. Standard pottery quantification forms were used.

The assemblage

The majority of this assemblage was of 16th to 17th century date and included both local and non-local wares. Imports were from North Holland and Germany, the typical sources for East Anglia in this period, particularly in ports and coastal towns. One of the Glazed red earthenware vessels, a ?pipkin rim fragment from the fill ([19]) of ?garden feature [18], was similar to examples made at Fulmodeston (Wade-Martins 1983, fig. 7, nos. 21-23). There were three other Glazed red earthenware sherds

were not typical of this fabric in Norwich or other Norfolk towns, indicating either a source which only supplied the local market or a non-local origin. Only one sherd of medieval pottery was recovered, from the fill ([35]) of ditch [34], and again this was in a fabric which was atypical when compared with other assemblages from the county, but may simply indicate a local production site.

Discussion

The pottery from the evaluation indicates that there may have been activity on the site during the medieval period. The single sherd of this date was unabraded and had probably not travelled far before its deposition in ditch [34]. However, the assemblage is dominated by wares of post-medieval date from a variety of sources, suggesting a peak of activity during the 16th and 17th centuries.

6.7 Ceramic Building Material

(Appendix 5)

By Lucy Talbot

Introduction and methodology

The site produced fifteen examples, weighing 0.539kg, of medieval and post-medieval ceramic building material.

The assemblage was quantified (counted and weighed) by form and fabric. The fabrics were identified by eye and the main inclusions noted. Fabric descriptions and dates are based on the provisional type series established by Sue Anderson of CFA Archaeology.

Medieval

Ceramic building material dating from the 13th to 15th centuries was recovered (0.118kg). The assemblage consists of five fragments of brick and plain roof tile. The fabrics, made using estuarine clays are typical of the period, with coarse inclusions of grog and vegetable matter.

Post-medieval

The site produced ten pieces of post-medieval brick, plain roof tile and pantile, dating from the 16th to 20th centuries. The fragments are of a medium sandy fabric, fired to various shades of orange, with varying amounts of coarse inclusions consisting of mainly flint and ferrous pellets.

6.8 Faunal Remains

(Appendix 6)

By Julie Curl

Methodology

The bone was examined using a modified version of Davis (1992). The remains were scanned for basic information recording identifiable species, ages where possible and briefly noting butchery and pathological conditions. The total number of pieces identifiable to a species was recorded on the faunal remains record sheet along with

the number of measurable and 'countable' bones for each species following guidelines in Davis (1992). The total weight for each context was also recorded.

Results and conclusions

A total of 0.627kg of faunal remains, consisting of seventy-two pieces, was recovered from nine contexts. Fills producing bone ranged from Iron-age and post-medieval pit fills and garden features and one undated ditch. The bone was generally in reasonable condition, although fragmentary due to wear and butchering; some burnt bone was recovered from one pit fill.

Cattle and sheep/goat remains were found in equal quantities, most of which had been butchered. The ages of animals varied greatly. Mature sheep/goat were recorded, suggesting uses for wool, milk and breeding before being culled for meat and other by-products. The remains of cattle were all juvenile, including teeth from a calf of one to two months old; these juvenile remains may be part of an autumn/winter cull or simply culled to allow milking of the mother.

Four juvenile duck bones were recovered from a later Iron Age pit ([11]; fill [9]). These bones are probably from a mallard or similar species; the duck may have been eaten, although butchering marks were not evident. Also from this deposit some fragments of burnt bone (burnt to varying degrees, some at a low level of heat, and a couple of fragments at a higher temperature) were recovered.

This is a small assemblage and it is difficult to fully determine the full range of uses of animals at this site, although it would appear that most of the bone in this assemblage is from primary and secondary butchering and food waste.

6.9 Small finds

(Appendix 7)

By Julia Huddle

A total of five small finds were recovered on site. One was made of copper alloy with the remaining four made from iron. All were examined before any X-rays had been taken.

Three were recovered from a pit ([3]) in Trench 1, a feature dated to the post-medieval period. One of these is circular flat disc (SF1) thought likely to be a button cap or similar, rather than a coin. The other two items, both of iron, are badly corroded. One (SF4) is a possible knife blade fragment, bent at the tang. The other, a bar fragment (SF5), is undiagnostic.

Trench 2 produced two small finds. One (SF2) from a the fill ([29]) of a ?post-medieval pit ([28]) is a possible hook, perhaps a wall hook or similar. The other (SF3), from a post-medieval ?garden feature ([24]), is an incomplete whittle tang knife with handle missing.

6.10 Other finds

By Lucy Talbot

Nine fragments of clay tobacco pipe stem were recovered, weighing (0.029kg).

The site also produced two pieces of slag (0.048kg). The fragments are probably of post-medieval date, the waste product of blast furnace smelting.

7.0 Discussion

Later Iron Age activity

The discovery of a later Iron Age pit ([11]) containing fifteen sherds of pottery, a semi-complete rotary quern, fragments of briquetage and worked flint is of prime importance. Not only do the pit and artefacts comprise the first Iron Age archaeology found in Wells, but Iron Age rotary querns, briquetage and flint artefacts are rare finds in Norfolk. Their discovery about 4km to the north-west of the Iron Age fort at Warham also raises questions about the nature, function and associations of the site, the surrounding area and the use of coastal environments.

The briquetage would have been used in the making of salt, probably within the coastal environments which lay to the west, north and east of the site. The quern would have been used for grinding wheat and other crops to make flour. Once they had outlived their useful life, both the briquetage and quern were dumped into the pit along with domestic refuse (pottery, animal bone, shell and burnt material).

There has been much debate regarding the nature of deposition of material within Iron Age pits and whether it represents domestic and/or ritual activities (for example Davies 1996; Hill 1995). There was no evidence of ordered or structured deposition in the pit at Wells. It appears to have been dug primarily for rubbish disposal.

The quern, pottery and animal bone may well have been used within a settlement and the pit may have been one of a number of features within the settlement. On the other hand, the pit and finds may all represent a one off event or visit to the area, perhaps to make salt. The visit may have been tied to seasonal changes and activities and could have been made by people who knew or used the fort at Warham.

Later Iron Age pits have been found both in settlements and representing visits/events at a number of sites in Norfolk. These include those at Fincham, Harford Farm, Longham-Bittering, Methwold, Silfield, Spong Hill, Thetford, Trowse, Shropham and Snetterton (Ashwin 1996; Ashwin and Bates 2000; Ashwin and Flitcroft 1999; Davies 1993; Percival 1995; Rickett 1995, 5-12 and 147-151; Robertson 2004; Silvester and Northover 1991; Whitmore 2002).

A medieval ditch

The north-to-south ditch ([34]) found in Trench 2 contained a piece of unabraded 12th to 14th century pottery. This had not travelled far before it was deposited and, despite its small size, is good evidence that the ditch was in use in the medieval period. If the ditch was dug before the gridded street system was laid out, it was more than probably a field boundary. If it was dug after the street grid was put in place, it could have been a property boundary. If the second possibility were the case, the ditch would have been aligned roughly parallel with Staithe Street. This suggests that the two may have been associated, although their closeness (about 4m apart) means that the property would have been very narrow. This may suggest that Staithe Street has moved or that the ditch preceded the road.

Post-medieval activity

Historic maps of Wells suggest that there may have been buildings on the site during the 18th century. No evidence for these was discovered. This may mean that the

buildings were located in the areas of the site not examined by the trenches, such as up against the street frontage. Another possibility is that the buildings were shallow-founded and did not survive in the topsoil and subsoil. It is also possible that no post-medieval buildings were built on the site and that the maps are misleading.

Three pits, a ditch and six features of post-medieval date were discovered. The purpose of the two pits in Trench 1 and pit in Trench 2 was not clear. They may have been dug as rubbish pits, although the quantity of refuse in them was low. They could have been dug for another purpose, such as quarries for clay or as garden features, and had rubbish put into their fills as a secondary concern.

The six parallel east-to-west features found in Trench 3 were most probably garden features. They may have been dug as bedding trenches for rows of plants or, as possibly was the case with feature [24], for individual plants. They are relatively similar to garden and horticultural features found at Norwich Cathedral, Swannington Hall and Waxham Barn (Wallis 2004, 10; Whitmore and Robertson forthcoming and Robertson forthcoming).

The interpretation of the six features as garden features fits well with the 19th and 20th century map evidence. During the 19th century the plot was open with no buildings and by the early 20th century it was used as part of a garden for Mayshiel House. However, the pottery collected from these features was all 16th to 17th century in date. This suggests that they were earlier in date and that during the early post-medieval period the site was also a garden.

The 16th to 17th century date of the pottery in the garden features is later than the postulated 15th century date for the laying out of the gridded street system. This suggests that the street grid was in place before the garden features were dug. The pottery found in the east-to-west ditch in Trench 2 was 17th to 18th century in date. This could mean that it was a garden feature. Alternatively, if there were buildings on the site during the 18th century it may have been dug for a purpose associated with them.

The collective depth of the loamy top and subsoils ranged from 0.7m to 0.9m. The use of the site as a garden during the 16th, 17th and early 20th centuries, and possibly during the 19th century, explains the depth and nature of these deposits.

Undated features

Two undated post-holes were found in Trenches 1 and 2. An undated stakehole was recorded in Trench 2. Trench 4 had an undated gully that was truncated by an undated pit.

8.0 Conclusions

This evaluation uncovered the first *in situ* Iron Age archaeology to be discovered in the town and it also revealed more medieval and post-medieval sub-surface features than have been recorded before in Wells.

The landowner plans to build shops and flats on the site. It is likely that this will involve the stripping of all the topsoil and subsoil and its transportation off-site. If this does happen, all of the sub-surface archaeology within the c.21m by 18m plot will be exposed.

Recommendations for future work based upon this report will be made by Norfolk Landscape Archaeology.

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Appendix 1: Context Summary

Context	Trench	Category	Description	Period
1	1	Cut	Cut of pit	Post-medieval
2	1	Deposit	Fill of pit [1]	Post-medieval
3	1	Cut	Cut of pit	Post-medieval
4	1	Deposit	Fill of pit [4]	Post-medieval
5	1	Cut	Cut of post-hole	-
6	1	Deposit	Fill of post-hole [5]	-
7	4	Deposit	Fill of pit [8]	-
8	4	Cut	Pit	-
9	4	Deposit	Upper fill of pit [11]	Later Iron Age
10	4	Deposit	Lower fill of pit [11]	Later Iron Age
11	4	Cut	Pit	Later Iron Age
12	4	Deposit	Fill of ?gully [13]	-
13	4	Cut	Possible gully	-
14	1-4	Deposit	Topsoil across the site	Modern
15	1-4	Deposit	Subsoil across the site	-
16	3	Cut	?Garden feature	-
17	3	Deposit	Fill of feature [16]	-
18	3	Cut	?Garden feature	Post-medieval
19	3	Deposit	Fill of feature [18]	Post-medieval
20	3	Cut	?Garden feature	Post-medieval
21	3	Deposit	Fill of feature [20]	Post-medieval
22	3	Cut	?Garden feature	Post-medieval
23	3	Deposit	Fill of feature [22]	Post-medieval
24	3	Cut	?Garden feature	Post-medieval
25	3	Deposit	Fill of feature [24]	Post-medieval
26	3	Cut	?Garden feature	-
27	3	Deposit	Fill of feature [26]	-
28	2	Cut	Pit	?Post-medieval
29	2	Deposit	Fill of pit [29]	?Post-medieval
30	2	Cut	Possible stake-hole	-
31	2	Deposit	Fill of ?stake-hole [30]	-
32	2	Cut	East-to-west aligned ditch	Post-medieval
33	2	Deposit	Fill of ditch [32]	Post-medieval
34	2	Cut	North-to-south aligned ditch	Medieval
35	2	Deposit	Fill of ditch [34]	Medieval
36	2	Cut	Post-hole	-
37	2	Deposit	Fill of post-hole [36]	-

Appendix 2: Finds by Context

Context	Material	Quantity	Weight (kg)	Period
2	Pottery	1	0.011	Post-medieval
2	Clay pipe	1	0.005	Post-medieval
2	Glass - window	1	-	Post-medieval
2	Animal bone	1	0.004	-
4	Pottery	3	0.024	Post-medieval
4	Ceramic building material	6	0.188	Medieval/post-medieval
4	Clay pipe	3	0.009	Post-medieval
4	Metal working debris	2	0.048	-
4	Animal bone	4	0.004	-
4	Copper alloy (SF1)	1	-	-
4	Iron (SF4-5)	2	-	-
7	Animal bone	16	0.264	-
9	Pottery	7	0.294	Later Iron Age
9	Fired clay	21	0.385	-
9	Flint - worked	1	0.017	Later Iron Age
9	Animal bone	36	0.242	-
9	Shell - oyster	-	0.013	-
10	Pottery	8	0.442	Later Iron Age
10	Worked stone	-	-	Iron Age
10	Burnt stone	-	-	-
10	Ceramic building material	1	0.012	Medieval (intrusive)
10	Flint - burnt	26	0.394	-
10	Animal bone	4	0.021	-
14	Pottery	1	0.010	Post-medieval
14	Clay pipe	2	0.004	Post-medieval
19	Pottery	1	0.013	Post-medieval
19	Ceramic building material	1	0.018	Medieval
19	Animal bone	5	0.067	-
21	Ceramic building material	1	0.096	Post-medieval
23	Pottery	1	0.010	Post-medieval
23	Ceramic building material	3	0.055	Post-medieval
23	Clay pipe	1	0.003	Post-medieval
23	Flint - worked	2	-	Prehistoric
23	Animal bone	1	0.003	-
25	Pottery	1	0.003	Post-medieval
25	Ceramic building material	2	0.164	Post-medieval
25	Mortar	1	0.012	-
25	Clay pipe	1	0.004	Post-medieval
25	Iron (SF3)	1	-	-
25	Animal bone	4	0.021	-
25	Shell – oyster/cockle/mussel	-	0.088	-
29	Ceramic building material	1	0.006	Post-medieval
29	Iron (SF2)	1	-	-
33	Pottery	1	0.002	Post-medieval
33	Clay pipe	1	0.004	Post-medieval
33	Animal bone	1	0.001	-
35	Pottery	1	0.002	Medieval
35	Flint - worked	1	-	Prehistoric

Appendix 3: Flint

Context	Type	Quantity
9	flake	1
10	burnt fragment	26
23	flake	2
35	retouched flake	1

Appendix 4: Pottery

Context	Fabric	Description	Quantity	Weight (kg)	Date
2	Staffordshire-type slipwares	Body sherd, press-moulded flatware, brown slip stripes and yellow glaze internally, slight abrasion	1	0.011	18th century
4	Glazed red earthenware	Base sherd, flat, light green glaze internally, non-local?	1	0.009	16th to 18th century
4	Glazed red earthenware	Body sherd, light green glaze externally, non-local?	1	0.010	16th to 18th century
4	Glazed red earthenware	Body sherd, orange-brown glaze internally, slight abrasion or wear	1	0.005	16th to 18th century
9	Q1	Handmade, everted flattened rim	7	0.294	Later Iron Age
10	Q1	Handmade, from single vessel. Everted flattened rim, flat base	8	0.442	Later Iron Age
14	Cologne/Frechen stoneware	Body sherd, 'Tiger ware', but fabric is pale cream so may be an English or other German type	1	0.010	16th to 17th century+
19	Glazed red earthenware	?Pipkin rim sherd, thickened everted bifid, brown glaze all over	1	0.013	16th century?
23	Glazed red earthenware	Body sherd, pale orange fabric with yellow glaze internally, non-local	1	0.010	16th to 17th century
25	Dutch-type slipwares	Rim sherd with white slip vertical dashes inside and out, probably a North Holland 'cockerel' bowl	1	0.003	16th to 17th century
33	Glazed red earthenware	Body sherd, orange glaze internally, possibly late	1	0.002	17th to 18th century+
35	Medieval coarseware	Body sherd, medium sandy with occasional calcareous inclusions; brown surfaces, red margins, grey core	1	0.002	12th to 14th century

Appendix 5: Ceramic Building Material

Context	Form	Quantity	Weight (kg)	Period
04	Brick	2	0.081	Post-medieval
04	Roof tile	3	0.088	Medieval
04	Roof tile	1	0.019	Post-medieval
10	Brick	1	0.012	Medieval
19	Brick	1	0.018	Medieval
21	Pantile	1	0.096	Post-medieval
23	Roof tile	3	0.055	Post-medieval
25	Roof tile	1	0.066	Post-medieval
25	Pantile	1	0.098	Post-medieval
29	Pantile	1	0.006	Post-medieval

Appendix 6: Faunal Remains

Context	Total Quantity	Weight (kg)	Species	Species Quantity	Age	Butchering	Comments
2	1	0.004	mammal	1			
4	4	0.004	mammal	4			
7	16	0.264	cattle	4	Juvenile	cut/chopped	Metacarpal, femur fragments, tibia,
			mammal	12		butchered	Fragments
9	36	0.242	cattle	4	Juvenile	cut/chopped	Ulna with numerous cuts, scapula, tibia, juv tooth
			sheep/goat	8	Adult	cut/chopped	Jaw/mandible pieces, molars; est.age 4 yrs
			duck	4	Juvenile		Coracoid and other limb fragments, possible mallard
			mammal	20		butchered	
10	4	0.021	mammal	4		butchered	Burnt black and white
19	5	0.067	cattle	1	Juvenile	butchered	Mandible, juvenile, estimated age 1- 2 months
			mammal	4		butchered	
23	1	0.003	mammal	1			
25	4	0.021	sheep/goat	1	Adult	chopped	Scapula
			mammal	3			
33	1	0.001	mammal	1		chopped	Rib fragment

Appendix 7: Small Finds

Small Find	Context	Material	Object Name	Description	Ceramic spot date
1	4	Copper alloy	Disc	Circular flat disc, both faces covered in corrosive products..	Post-medieval
4	4	Iron	Artefact	Bent almost L-shaped 'bar' of rectangular section, one arm tapering the other wider and flatter. badly corroded	Post-medieval
5	4	Iron	Bar	Fragment, badly corroded. Undiagnostic	Post-medieval
2	29	Iron	Artefact	Bent rod of rectangular section, tapering to blunt point at hooked end; badly corroded.	Post-medieval
3	25	Iron	Knife	Blade with whittle tang; blade broken close to tang; badly corroded.	Post-medieval



Plate 1. The site during excavation, looking north-east. Trench 2 is in the foreground.



Plate 2 A selection of the Iron Age briquetage collected from pit [11], Trench 4.