

Report 2962



nps archaeology

Archaeological Trial Trench Evaluation, at The Manor House, Low Road, South Wootton, Norfolk

ENF128891



Prepared for
The Crown Estate
c/o Carter Jonas LLP



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Contents

<i>Summary</i>	1
1.0 Introduction	1
2.0 Geology and Topography	3
3.0 Archaeological and Historical Background.....	3
4.0 Methodology	7
5.0 Results.....	9
6.0 Finds	13
6.1 Pottery	13
6.2 Ceramic Building Material.....	14
6.3 Glass	14
6.4 Finds Conclusions	14
7.0 Conclusions	15
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	16
<i>Bibliography and Sources</i>	16
Appendix 1: Context Summary	17
Appendix 2a: Finds by Context	17
Appendix 2b: Oasis Finds Summary.....	17

Figures

- Figure 1 Site location
- Figure 2 Location of trenches
- Figure 3 Sample sections 1 and 2

Plates

- Plate 1 The site, looking east
- Plate 2 Machining Trench 1, looking east
- Plate 3 The site (Trench 2), looking north
- Plate 4 Trench 1, looking east
- Plate 5 Trench 1, sample section 1
- Plate 6 Trench 2, looking south
- Plate 7 Trench 2, sample section 2

Location:	The Manor House, Low Road, South Wootton, Norfolk
District:	King's Lynn and West Norfolk
Grid Ref.:	TF 6438 2246
Planning Ref.:	11/01789/F
HER No.:	ENF 128891
OASIS Ref.:	127728
Client:	The Crown Estate
Dates of Fieldwork:	12th April 2012

Summary

An archaeological evaluation was conducted for The Crown Estate ahead of a proposed residential development at The Manor House, Low Road, South Wootton in Norfolk.

Two trial trenches were excavated in the garden of The Manor House to examine the nature of any archaeological resource present within the development plot. There were no archaeological features evident in either of the trial trenches although the trenches did present a useful stratigraphic sequence which was composed largely of levelling layers. Several sherds of pottery of medieval to post-medieval date were recovered from these layers along with a fragment of medieval brick. These finds suggest that there is likely to be historically-significant activity relatively close by, associated with the presence of medieval settlement and perhaps the medieval forerunner to The Manor House.

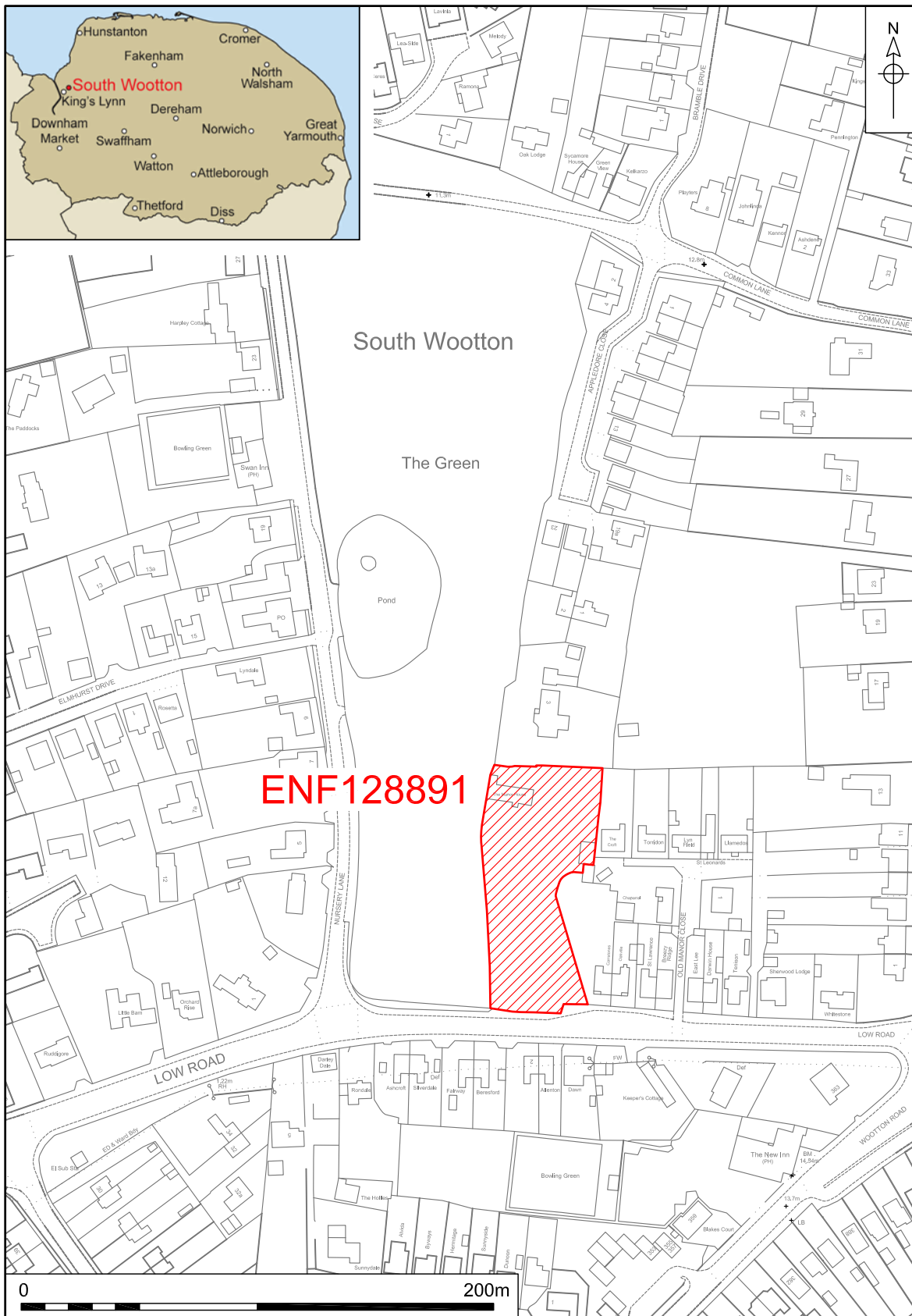
1.0 INTRODUCTION

The site covers an area of approximately 1,400m² and is currently the garden for the residential property known as The Manor House. The site is situated on the north side of Low Road, towards the centre of the settlement of South Wootton. The plot is known to have been situated close to the historic old green and hence is likely to be close to significant historic remains.

This work was undertaken to fulfil planning requirements set by the Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk (Ref. 11/01789/F) and a Brief issued by Norfolk Historic Environment Service (Ref. CNF43488). The work was conducted in accordance with a Project Design and Method Statement prepared by NPS Archaeology (Ref. NAU/BAU2962/NP) and was commissioned by Carter Jonas LLP and funded by The Crown Estate.

This programme of work was designed to assist in defining the character and extent of any archaeological remains within the proposed redevelopment area, following the guidelines set out in *National Planning Policy Framework* (Department for Communities and Local Government 2012). The results will enable decisions to be made by the Local Planning Authority about the treatment of any archaeological remains found.

The site archive is currently held by NPS Archaeology and on completion of the project will be deposited with Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service (NMAS), following the relevant policies on archiving standards.



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Figure 1. Site location. Scale 1:2500

2.0 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

The settlement of South Wootton lies within one kilometre of the River Great Ouse and the eastern edge of the wash. The site is reasonably flat, and is located on the 10m contour. The level of the natural substratum appeared to be coincident with the level of the water table. The clayey nature of many of the layers made drainage a problem during the archaeological works - the base of the trench immediately began to fill with water following machining.

The underlying geology at this site in South Wootton is sedimentary bedrock recorded as Roxham and Runcton Member Sand which formed approximately 132 to 142 million years ago in the Cretaceous Period in an environment previously dominated by shallow seas (<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/>). Superficial deposits are Till (mainly Lowestoft Till) (BGS 1991).

The site specific topsoil was dark brown humic clayey silt with occasional flints. It had a consistent depth of 0.24m, across the two trenches. There was no subsoil present at the site and the natural substratum consisted of mottled orange and grey sand and gravel with some patches of silty clay.

3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

A search of data held in the Norfolk Historic Environment Record (NHER) was commissioned and the most relevant entries are reproduced below in order to place the site in its overall context. This information is supplemented by information from the Historical Atlas of Norfolk (Ashwin and Davison 2005).

Monument (MNF) numbers are identical to the relevant NHER numbers unless shown otherwise.

Prehistoric to Roman

The Historical Atlas of Norfolk (Wymer 2005, 14) indicates that there was a concentration of Palaeolithic handaxe find spots in this area just to the north of King's Lynn. There are no obvious concentrations of artefacts in later prehistoric periods in the same area indicated within the Historical Atlas of Norfolk (Ashwin 2005 a and b).

Evidence for prehistoric activity in the vicinity of the site is provided by several find spots recorded on the NHER. Many of those Palaeolithic hand-axes noted on the Historical Atlas of Norfolk (Wymer 2005, 14) were found within one kilometre of the site. For example a Palaeolithic hand-axe was found at 49 Baldock Drive to the south-west (MNF14429) and to the north, a further Palaeolithic hand-axe was found in 1977 with Neolithic flint flakes (MNF13831). NHER entry 3283 MNF3286 also records the finding of a Palaeolithic handaxe in the 19th century. The location of this find was not satisfactorily recorded, and NHER entry MNF14416 provides an alternative location for it. It was found somewhere to the north-east of the development site and is now in Norwich Castle Museum.

Later prehistoric periods are represented by three find spots. To the south-east of the site, prehistoric flint flakes were said to have been found at an unknown date (MNF16831), and to the north-east, MNF3341 records the finding of a collection of prehistoric pot boilers with associated flint flakes. To the south of the site a barbed and tanged arrowhead of Bronze Age date was found in 1976 (MNF13828). There

are no Roman finds recorded close to the site and the focus of Roman activity appears to be closer to North Wootton.

There are no Roman Roads recorded in the vicinity of the development site (Gurney 2005, 29).

Anglo-Saxon to medieval

An evaluation was undertaken at Nursery Lane (Moss 1998) in the late 1990s which presented evidence of Middle Saxon and early medieval activity (MNF19715). There appears to have been little other archaeological fieldwork in the area.

At the time of the Domesday Survey there is no distinction made between the parishes of North and South Wootton and the settlement of Wootton was classed as the 11th richest village within the hundred of Freebridge - but only the 21st most populous. The village is thought to have declined (like many others) in the 14th century. (Leah 1994, 110-115)

The most intensive activity of this period recorded in the Historical Atlas of Norfolk (Williamson 2005, 43) is a concentration of salt pans compiled from a study of evidence in the Domesday Survey. The NHER holds evidence of salt making close to the development site; aerial photographs of an area to the north-west of the development site indicate the presence of four probable medieval salterns (NHER 27127 MNF42694), and to the west a possible saltern was observed on aerial photographs at NHER 27129 MNF42696.

The medieval church of St Mary (MNF3295) is located to the west of the site. It is thought to have been established in the Late Saxon period due to the long-and-short quoin work visible within the nave. The chancel dates to around 1300 and there are unusual stubby transepts which could be contemporary with the chancel. The present tower was added in the 18th/19th century. There is a carved Norman font within the church and Latin inscriptions (Adams 2000).

Other find spots of Saxon and medieval material have been found close to the site. A short distance to the west, a sherd of brown and yellow medieval slipware was found in 1969 (MNF16830) and in 2001 a Late Saxon pottery sherd and several medieval roofing tile fragments were found in a garden (NHER 36557 MNF40854) with further sherds being collected from here in 2010. Part of the rim from a Late Saxon Thetford Ware vessel was found a short distance to the north in 1977 (MNF17967) and a scatter of medieval pottery fragments was found in 1967 to the west of the site (MNF3296). Similarly dated sherds were also found in 1977-8 to the north of the site along with possible medieval features (MNF12946). Site MNF 11343 is situated just a short distance to the north where iron smelting debris and pottery wasters indicate that it was a production site perhaps with clamp kilns. Immediately north of the development site, several Saxon and medieval pottery sherds were found at site MNF3288. To the south-east of the area proposed for development a series of medieval/post-medieval earthworks have been observed (NHER 40175 MNF43384), and to the south a medieval jug handle was found in a garden in 1990 (MNF28386).

Post-medieval to Modern

There are several historic buildings close to the development site. Perhaps the most relevant entry is NHER 55653 MNF62016 which refers to the manor which

gives its name to the site. A building is first shown at this location on the 1844 Tithe map, described as 'House and buildings'. This complex was named as 'Manor Farm' on the 6" 1st edition Ordnance Survey map. The property is bounded by a 19th-century wall. The original building, the core of which survives, may have been the house of a Yeoman or Steward to the Manor and is likely to date from around 1650. It is thought that there may have been an earlier version of the manor, though there is presently little supporting evidence.

An early 18th-century cottage (MNF18628) is located a little further to the north of the development site and incorporates a large brick gable plaque depicting a rampant lion. Coins of George III and the skeleton of a pig have been found beneath the floor and medieval pottery recovered from the garden.

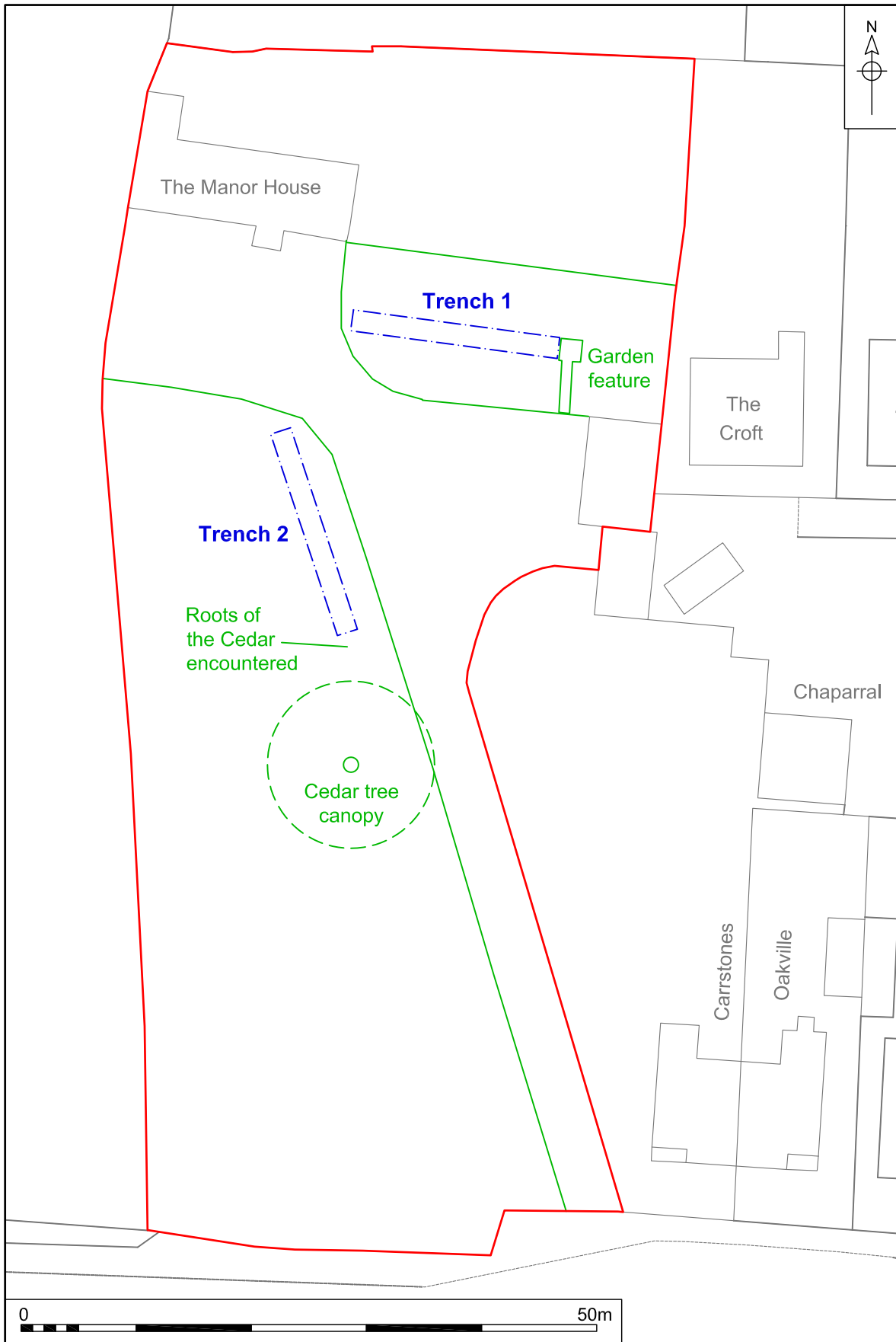
Further to the west of the site a railway carriage (MNF25687), which probably once belonged to the Great Eastern Railway, has been subsequently turned into a dwelling.

A brick windmill is thought to have existed to the south of the site (MNF32999). The windmill is shown on an early 19th-century Ordnance Survey map and it is thought to have been dismantled around 1920.

Several find spots are present in the vicinity of the development site. For example a post-medieval pottery skillet was found at MNF15698 and to the west of the site a 16th-/17th-century bronze/brass finger ring (MNF13830) was unearthed in 1977. A hoard of 16th- and 17th-century coins (MNF21301) was found by metal detecting to the south-east of the site. Undated human skeletal remains (MNF15697) were recovered during the laying of a pipe in 1974.



Plate 1. The site, looking east



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Figure 2. Location of trenches. Scale 1:500

4.0 METHODOLOGY

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

The Brief required that 5% of the development plot be sample excavated by two trial trenches each designed to be 20m in length by 1.80m wide (Fig. 2, Plates 1-3). The trenches (Trench 1 and 2) were located in two areas of lawn to allow for ease of excavation and to keep disruption to a minimum for the current tenants of the Manor House. Each trench was placed as close to the proposed focus of the development as possible and each of the trenches ended up being slightly shorter than originally planned. Trench 1 was 18m in length -it had to be shortened due to the presence of a garden feature at its eastern end. Trench 2 was also shortened to 18m due to the presence of the root system of the large cedar tree towards the southern end of the trench's projected length.



Plate 2. Machining (Trench 1), looking east

Machine excavation was carried out with a tracked hydraulic 360° excavator equipped with a toothless ditching bucket and operated under constant archaeological supervision. The machine was supplied by Bryn Williams Plant Hire.

Spoil, exposed surfaces and features were scanned with a metal-detector. There were no finds found by this method.

Environmental samples were not taken due to the lack of suitable deposits. The visible layers were not suitably well dated or free of later disturbance to negate the chance of contamination.

All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using NPS Archaeology pro forma. Trench locations, plans and sections were recorded at appropriate

scales. Monochrome and digital photographs were taken of all relevant features and deposits where appropriate.

A known height with a value of 10m derived from an Ordnance Survey contour was used during the course of the work. It was deemed to be suitably accurate as the fieldwork proved to be essentially negative.


Site conditions were good, although the work took place in damp weather. The heavy showers present in the King's Lynn area on the 12th April did not strike until the fieldwork was over.



Plate 3. The site (Trench 2), looking north

5.0 RESULTS

The results obtained from Trenches 1 and 2 are tabulated below

Trench 1				
		Figs 2 and 3 sample section 1; Plates 4 and 5		
		Location		
		Orientation	East to West	
		East end	564394.9804 322489.3693	
		West end	564376.9481 322491.9745	
		Dimensions		
		Length	18.0m	
		Width	1.8m	
		Depth	1.0m	
Levels				
East top	10.05mOD			
West top	10.05mOD			
Context	Type	Description and Interpretation	Thickness	Depth BGL
1	Deposit	Topsoil	0.24m	0.00-0.24m
2	Deposit	Lenses of dumped material	0.46m	0.24-0.70m
3	Deposit	Tenacious dark grey silty clay	0.30m	0.70-1.00m
4	Deposit	Natural – a mottled greyish and yellow sand and gravel substratum	-	1.00m+
Discussion				
<p>There were no archaeological features present in Trench 1 although a good stratigraphic sequence was visible within the trench.</p> <p>Natural substratum [4] observed at the base of the trench was a mottled grey and yellow sand and gravel with some patches of silty clay. It was essentially the same as layer [9] observed in Trench 2, although it had a yellower tone.</p> <p>The earliest deposit ([3]) in the sequence was a tenacious dark grey silty clay which held frequent amounts of sand and gravel. It appears to have naturally accumulated and had been deposited in a partially waterlogged environment. It contained occasional inclusions such as brick fragments and pot sherds indicating that some dumped material was finding its way into this deposit. This layer was the same as layer [8] observed in Trench 2.</p> <p>Next in the sequence were various lenses of dumped material including brick rubble and gravel held in a matrix of clayey silt ([2]). This deposit represented a layer of levelling presumably designed to raise the ground level. The layer was the same as layer [6] observed in Trench 2.</p> <p>Layer [2] was in turn sealed by topsoil [1] which was a humic dark brown clayey silt. The layer was the same as layer [5] observed in Trench 2.</p>				

Trench 1



Plate 5. Trench 1, sample section 1

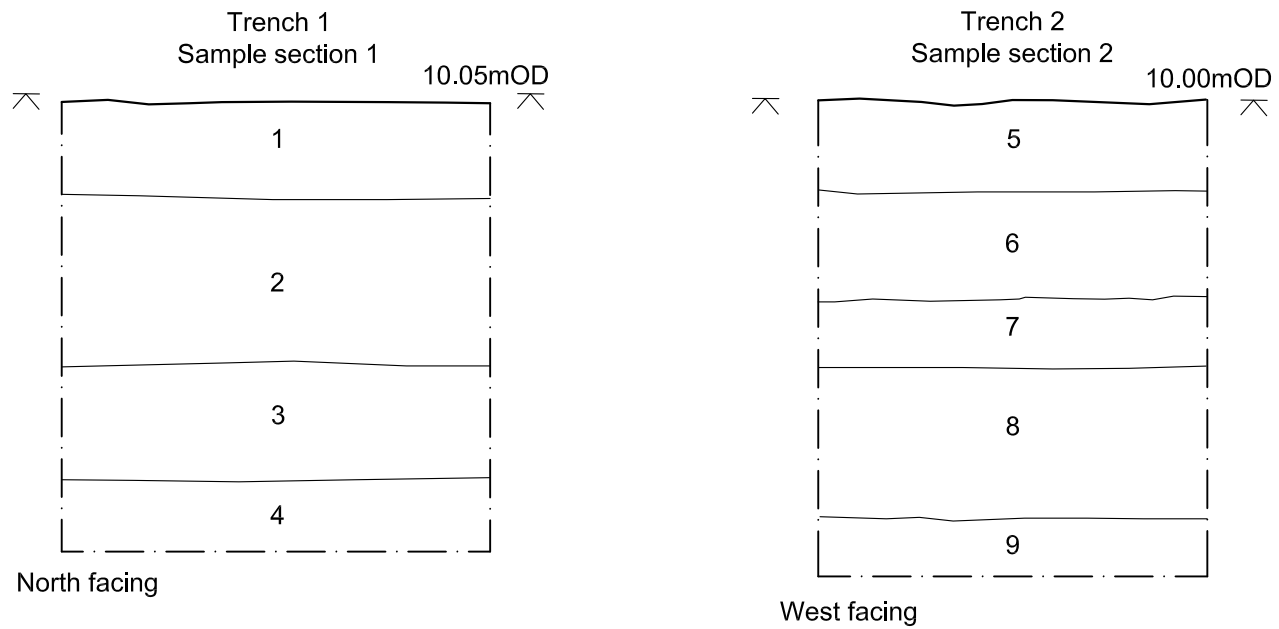


Figure 3. Sample sections 1 and 2. Scale 1:20

Trench 2



Plate 6. Trench 2, looking south

Figs 2 and 3 sample section 2; Plates 6 and 7

Location

Orientation	North to South
North end	564370.6491 322482.1469
South end	564376.5282 322464.7240

Dimensions

Length	18.0m
Width	1.8m
Depth	1.0m

Levels

North top	10.00m OD
South top	10.00m OD

Context	Type	Description and Interpretation	Thickness	Depth BGL
5	Deposit	Topsoil	0.24m	0.00-0.24m
6	Deposit	Lenses of dumped material	0.28m	0.24-0.52m
7	Deposit	Dumped sand and gravel	0.18m	0.52m-0.70
8	Deposit	Tenacious dark grey silty clay	0.40m	0.70-1.10m
9	Deposit	Mottled greyish and yellow sand and gravel substratum.	-	1.10m+

Discussion

There were no archaeological features present although a good sequence of stratigraphy was visible within Trench 2.

Natural substratum [9] observed at the base of the trench was a mottled grey and yellow sand and gravel with some patches of silty clay. It was essentially the same as layer [4] observed in Trench 1, although it had a greyer colour here.

The earliest deposit in the sequence ([8]) was a tenacious dark grey silty clay which held frequent amounts of sand and gravel. It seemed to have accumulated naturally and appeared to have been deposited in a partially waterlogged environment. It contained occasional inclusions such as brick fragments and pot sherds indicating that some dumped material was finding its way into this deposit. The layer was the same as layer [3] observed in Trench 1.

Above deposit [8] was a layer of deliberately-dumped loose sand and gravel ([7]) which was observed to lie more thickly on the western side of the trench.

Next in the sequence were various lenses of dumped material including brick rubble and gravel held in a matrix of clayey silt ([6]). This represented a layer of levelling presumably designed to raise the ground level. The layer was the same as layer [2] observed in Trench 1.

Layer [6] was in turn sealed by topsoil [5] which was a humic dark brown clayey silt. This layer was the same as deposit [1] observed in Trench 1.

Trench 2



Plate 7. Trench 2, sample section 2

6.0 FINDS

by Rebecca Sillwood

The finds were processed and recorded by count and weight, and an Excel spreadsheet was produced outlining broad dating. Each material type was considered separately and is reported on below organised by material. A list of finds ordered by context can be found in Appendix 2a.

6.1 Pottery

A total of four sherds of pottery, weighing 697g, was recovered from three contexts; two of the fragments were late medieval and transitional ware and two were of post-medieval date.

A possible fragment of pipkin was found in layer [8], and consisted of a large body sherd with remains of the circular hollow handle on the exterior surface. This piece is of dull orange fabric with a grey core and a speckled green glaze on the interior surface; there are also a few splashes of glaze visible on the exterior surface, probably nearer the base of the object. A smaller base sherd of a similar fabric was recovered from layer [3]. This piece also has a dull orange exterior with a grey inner core, although this piece has only one small remnant of green glaze on the exterior. Both of these pieces appear to be Late Medieval and Transitional ware (LMT) sherds similar to those found in Jennings (1981, 61); the probable pipkin has illustrated parallels (Jennings 1981, 65 no.424). This type of pottery spanned the period between 'true' medieval wares and later post-medieval wares, and can be found in deposits dating from the mid-14th century through to the later 16th century.

The two post-medieval sherds are both of glazed red earthenware (GRE) and come from the same dumped layer ([6]) and also are probably from the same bowl. One piece is a base fragment and the other is from the rim, providing a good idea of how the bowl would have appeared. The fabric is a pinkish-orange with a speckled orange glaze covering the interior. The rim is very similar an illustrated example of a large bowl in Jennings (1981, 164 no.1175). These types of wares cover a period from the 16th century through to the 18th century, with little to distinguish such wares produced early and late in the period.

6.2 Ceramic Building Material

A total of three fragments of ceramic building material weighing a total of 1,075g, were recovered from two contexts. The pieces consist of two pieces of brick (one fragment of medieval brick and one post-medieval) and a piece of post-medieval roof tile.

The fragment of medieval brick comes from layer [3] and consists of a pink and orange estuarine fabric, with hues of purple on the breaks. There are very few inclusions in the fabric, but the piece has many voids where vegetable matter was present before firing. The piece measures 120mm in (complete) width, with a thickness of around 45mm, placing it in Drury's Early Brick Group B, with this particular example being most similar to EB6 (Margeson 1993, 164). Early bricks are difficult to date in the medieval period, but span broadly the 13th to 15th centuries.

The post-medieval brick fragment came from layer [8]. The fabric of this piece is more orange than the earlier example with three original surfaces surviving - all highly sanded, giving a pink effect to these edges. This piece is around 42mm thick, but no other dimensions can be determined hence no more accurate dating than post-medieval can be attempted.

The small fragment of roof tile from layer [8] has one smoothed or wiped surface and a rougher surface on the opposite side, which also has traces of mortar. This piece is not diagnostic, and can only be given a broad post-medieval date.

6.3 Glass

A small fragment of probable bottle glass was also recovered, and came from dumped layer [6].

6.4 Finds Conclusions

The artefacts all come from layers (there were no features) and span the period from the 13th century to the 18th century.

The medieval bricks could have been re-used in later contexts - and frequently were - making the likelihood of this medieval brick fragment being an *in situ* find unlikely. It is more probable that the deposits that produced the pottery and brick are of a later medieval date, carrying through to the post-medieval period.

7.0 CONCLUSIONS

The sticky grey deposit towards the base of the sequence ([3]=[8]) contained several sherds of late medieval transitional ware and a fragment of early brick and though these finds should be interpreted as 'background noise' they perhaps indicate that this area of South Wootton was generally exploited in the later medieval period. South Wootton Green lay just to the east of the site and the area is shown on the Tithe map of c.1840 as containing several large elongated ponds which may indicate that the area was damp and perhaps prone to flooding in earlier periods. This may also suggest that the Green was ill-suited for building purposes and was exploited only when the pressure for space became more acute within South Wootton and also from King's Lynn, presumably towards the end of the medieval period. Common land with buildings along its boundary is depicted on Faden's map of 1797 (<http://historic-maps.norfolk.gov.uk>). These common-edge settlements are a characteristic feature of the Norfolk landscape and the focus of some regional research (Albone 2011). However in this instance there is no evidence from the site for early exploitation of the common edge.

Layers [2]=[6] and [7] above deposit [3]=[8] comprised levelling layers entirely made up of dumped material and the limited amount of finds within layer [6] for example tentatively suggest that this build-up happened between the 16th and 18th centuries. The Manor House shown on the c.1840 Tithe map is far larger than the current building and has a large wing extending to the south. The southern wing of the original building appears to lie just to the west of where Trench 2 was located and layer [7] (dumped sand and gravel) which is thicker on the western side of the trench may have been associated with the presence of that original wing.

Recommendations for mitigation work (if required based on the evidence presented in this report) will be made by Norfolk Historic Environment Service.

Acknowledgements

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The fieldwork was undertaken by the author who would like to thank the tenants of The Manor House Mr and Mrs Wake for their interest in the project and kind words on site. Thanks also to Pete of Bryn Williams Plant Hire for his enthusiasm on site and careful machining. Thanks to Nigel Page for his site visit and for providing extra information.

The finds were processed, recorded and reported on by Rebecca Sillwood. This report was illustrated by David Dobson after initial digitising by the author. David Dobson also produced the report which was edited by Jayne Bown.

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Appendix 1: Context Summary

Context	Category	Cut Type	Fill Of	Description	Period	Trench
1	Deposit			Topsoil	Post-medieval to modern	Trench 1
2	Deposit			Lenses of dumped material	Post-medieval to modern	Trench 1
3	Deposit			Tenacious dark grey silty clay	Unknown	Trench 1
4	Deposit			Natural sand and gravel	Unknown	Trench 1
5	Deposit			Topsoil	Post-medieval to modern	Trench 2
6	Deposit			Lenses of dumped material	Post-medieval to modern	Trench 2
7	Deposit			Dumped sand and gravel	Post-medieval to modern	Trench 2
8	Deposit			Tenacious dark grey silty clay	Unknown	Trench 2
9	Deposit			Natural sand and gravel	Unknown	Trench 2

Appendix 2a: Finds by Context

Context	Material	Qty	Wt	Period	Notes
3	Ceramic Building Material	1	693g	Medieval	Brick fragment
3	Pottery	1	23g	Med./Post-Med.	LMT; M14th-L16th-century
6	Glass	1	10g	Post-medieval	Bottle fragment
6	Pottery	2	548g	Post-medieval	GRE; 16th-18th-century
8	Ceramic Building Material	1	334g	Post-medieval	Brick fragment
8	Ceramic Building Material	1	48g	Post-medieval	Roof tile
8	Pottery	1	126g	Med./Post-Med.	LMT; M14th-L16th-century

Appendix 2b: Oasis Finds Summary

Period	Material	Total
Medieval	Ceramic Building Material	1
Med./Post-Med.	Pottery	2
Post-medieval	Ceramic Building Material	2
	Glass	1
	Pottery	2