

Report 2332



nau archaeology

**An Archaeological Evaluation at  
Church Close, Hoxne, Suffolk**

HXN 048



**Prepared for**  
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February 2010



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Location: 1 Church Close  
District: Hoxne  
Grid Ref.: TM 182 774  
HER No.: HXN048  
Client: Mark Kenyon  
Dates of Fieldwork: 11 January 2010

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## **Summary**

*An archaeological evaluation was undertaken in January 2010 on the site of a proposed small residential development at 1 Church Close, Hoxne. The project was undertaken at the request of the developer, Mark Kenyon. The evaluation fieldwork revealed a series of intercutting and irregular, probable drainage features, extending across the two evaluation trenches. Three sherds of Romano-British pottery from one of the ditches suggest that the activity may date to the Roman period.*

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

The site was situated on a small plot of land at 1 Church Close (adjacent to Green Street) on the north side of Hoxne. The proposed development was for the construction of a single bungalow.

This work was undertaken to fulfil a planning condition set by Mid-Suffolk District Council (Planning Ref. 2729/08) and a Brief issued by Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service Conservation Team (Ref. Jess Tipper 16/11/2009). The project was conducted in accordance with a Project Design and Method Statement prepared by NAU Archaeology (Ref. NAU/NP/BAU2332). The fieldwork and this report were commissioned and funded by Mark Kenyon.

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 *Planning and Policy Guidance Note 16: Archaeology and Planning* (Department of the Environment 1990). 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 NAU Archaeology and on completion of the project will be deposited with the appropriate Suffolk County Council stores following the relevant policies on archiving standards outlined in Suffolk County Council Archive Guidelines 2008.

## **2.0 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY**

The natural substratum was a glacial till lying over Liocene and Pleistocene Crag, a marine deposit of shelly sands (Wymer 1988). The overlying soils were deep clay of the Hanslope series, derived from the underlying chalky till. (Tipper 2009)

The plot is situated at a height of 38m OD on reasonably flat land on the north side of Hoxne, within 100m of the church and 500m south of the river Waveney. The clay rich nature of the deposits on the site allowed for very poor drainage.



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Figure 1. Site location. Scale 1:10,000

### 3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The parish of Hoxne is located in the hundred of Hoxne, in Suffolk. It is an extensive parish, situated on the south side of the river Waveney, and contains the hamlets of Hilton and Thorpe Hall. At the time of the Domesday survey in 1086 the village was known as Hoxana which possibly meant a 'hock-shaped spur of land' (In OE hōhsinu). An Historic Environment Record search was conducted and the most relevant entries presented below.

The site is situated within 100m of the parish church of SS Peter and Paul, which had originally dedicated to St Ethelbert. The present church was built in the 13th century with the majority of the changes to the structure being made into the 15th century. The tower has a fine 15th-century square form. There are many interesting features within the church such as the four 15th-century paintings showing St Christopher, the Seven Deadly Sins, the Acts of Mercy and the Last Judgement. The chancel was rebuilt in 1853 and the church restored in 1879.

Site HXN018 is located in the vicinity of the church and was the likely position of a pre-Norman bishop's seat and monastery. Bishop Theodred of London and East Anglia refers in his will of c.950 to his bishopric at Hoxne and made a gift of land to 'God's community at St Ethelbert's church at Hoxne'. This refers to the king of East Anglia, Ethelbert, who was martyred in 794. The Domesday Book records that 'in this manor is a church, the episcopal see in Suffolk before 1066'. This pre-Conquest monastery is sometimes identified with the later Hoxne Priory, but it is more likely that it was on the site of the present parish church. The church was granted by Bishop Herbert Losinga to the Cathedral Priory of Norwich in 1101. A charter of confirmation by Henry III names it as St Peter's Church.

Immediately to the north of the church was the vicarage. The building consists of late 15th-century, early to mid-16th-century, 17th-century and 18th-century elements. The house was substantially reduced in size c.1960 by the demolition of rear extensions. Site HXN006 was located in the vicinity of the vicarage. The site consisted of a large (1.8 acres) rectangular moat, adjacent to the west side of the churchyard, thought to be the original site of the medieval palace of the Bishops of Norwich at Hoxne.

There are also a number of historic buildings located to the south-west of the site, including the Grade II Listed 'Dove Cottage and Penbryn' immediately to the west. The building was originally a row of five almshouses, now divided into two dwellings, and they date from 1844. They were constructed from knapped flint with white brick dressings. They were built by Sir Edward Kerrison for poor and aged persons of Hoxne village, close to the site of the old guildhall. Another historic property, 'The Firs' is located to the south-west on the opposite side of Green Street. This building had an 18th-century or earlier core, which was much altered in the mid- to late 19th century.

High House, a Grade II Listed building is also situated to the south-west of the site. This house was built c.1500 and consisted of two storeys and an attic with later additions, such as a 19th-century single-storey shallow-pitched gabled entrance. The house was built with an upper floor throughout, although the stack is clearly a later insertion into the cross-passage. At the right gable end there is evidence for an original two-light shop window and doorway.

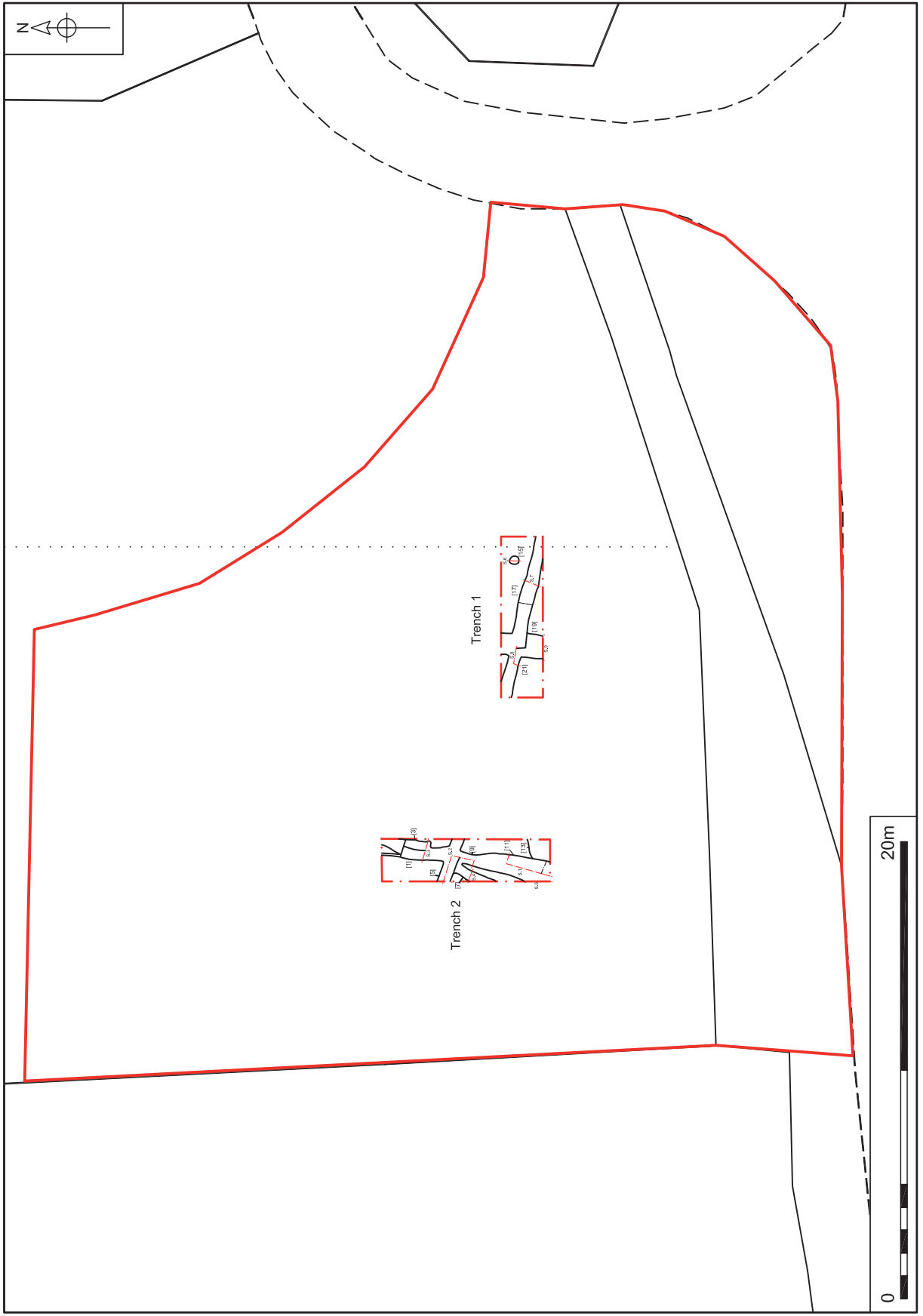


Figure 2. Trench location. Scale 1:250





Plate 1. The Site, looking north-west.

## 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 at least 5% of the development area be sample excavated via trial trenching. To achieve this, two 7m long by 1.80m wide trenches were machine excavated. Machine excavation was carried out with a wheeled JCB-type excavator using a toothless ditching bucket 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. No metal finds found through metal-detecting. There were no deposits suitable for environmental sampling.

All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using NAU Archaeology pro forma. Trench locations, plans and sections were recorded at appropriate scales. Colour, monochrome and digital photographs were taken of all relevant features and deposits where appropriate.

The temporary benchmark used during the course of this work was transferred from an Ordnance Survey benchmark with a value of 37.82m OD, located on the south-western corner of SS Peter and Paul's church immediately north-west of the site.

Site conditions were good with excellent access. The weather was cold and dry and there was snow on the ground.

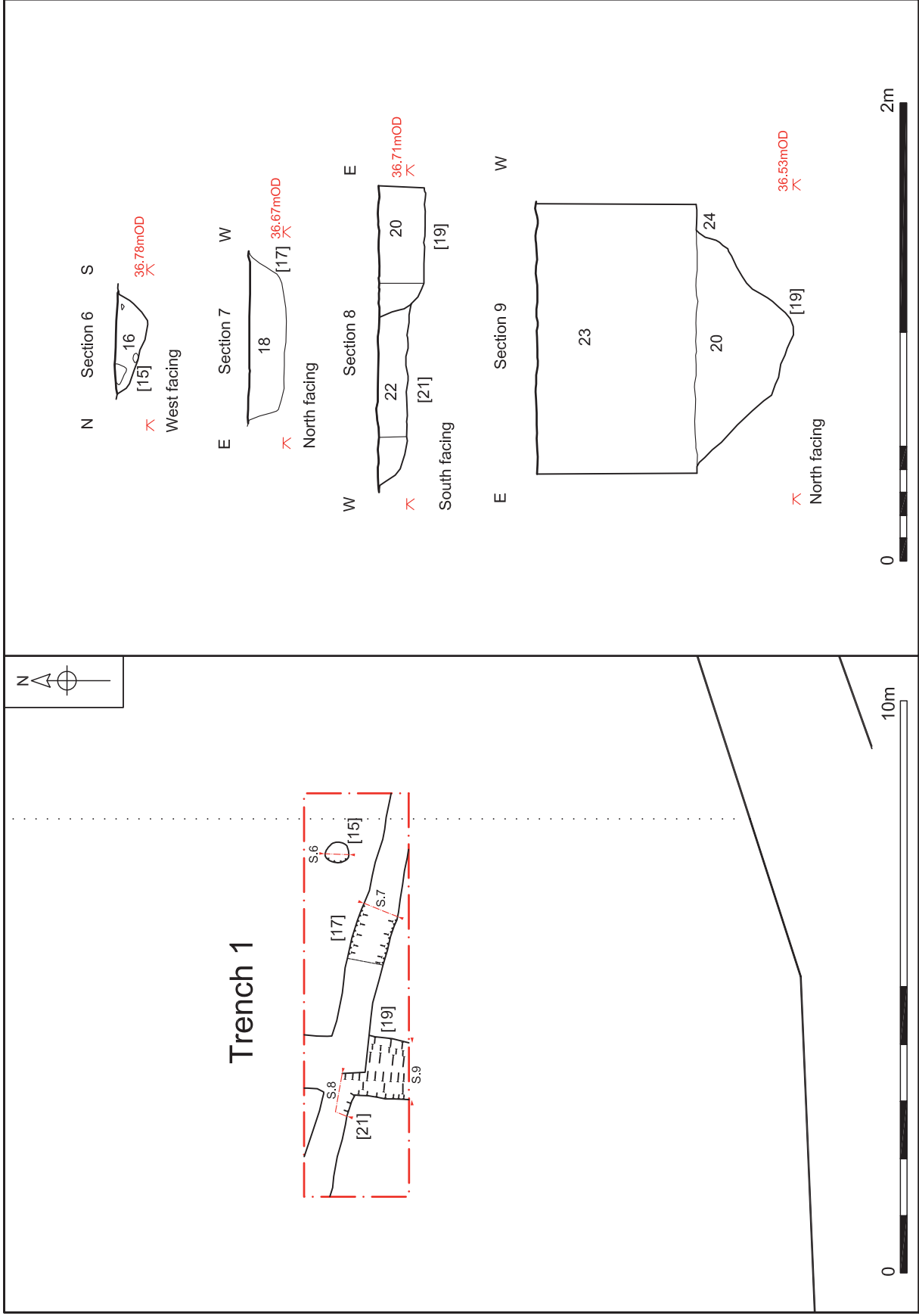


Figure 3. Trench 1, plan and sections.  
Scale 1:100 and 1:25



Plate 2. Trench 1, looking east.

## 5.0 RESULTS

### 5.1 Trench 1

This trench was oriented east–west and measured 7m by 1.80m (Fig. 2; Plate 1). There were two linear features and a small post-hole found within the trench (Fig. 3). At the eastern end of the trench a small post-hole ([15]) was observed. The post-hole measured 0.45m by 0.30m and had a depth of 0.14m. The single fill ([16]) was formed from a light grey slightly silty sand and contained occasional large lumps of charcoal which suggested that the fill may have been the result of deliberate dumping. There was no dating evidence within the feature.

A small ditch ([17]), oriented roughly east–west, ran down the centre of the trench. It was at least 7.0m long and had a width of 0.60m. The depth was 0.16m. The fill ([18]) was composed of a light grey slightly silty sand which contained no major inclusions, and had probably infilled through natural silting. The feature remained undated. The ditch appeared to continue through into Trench 2.

An approximately north–south oriented ditch ([19]) was also observed at the centre of the trench. This ditch was at least 1.80m long and had a width of 1.0m and a depth of 0.42m. The sides and base were slightly irregular and the section profile irregularly V shaped. The single fill ([20]) was formed from a light grey silty clay which had also probably built up through natural silting. A fragment of chopped cattle radius bone was recovered from the fill.



Plate 3. Ditch [11], looking west.



Plate 4. Trench 2, looking north.



Plate 5. Ditches [19] and [21], looking west.

## 5.2 Trench 2

This trench measured 7m by 1.80m, was oriented north–south and was situated at the western side of the plot (Fig. 2; Plate 4). There were five linear features and a shallow ‘scoop’ in Trench 2 (Fig. 4). At the southern end of the trench there was a very shallow ‘scoop’ of unknown purpose ([13]) which had been truncated by ditch [11] (Plate 3). It extended 0.90m in each direction and had a depth of less than 10mm. The fill ([14]) was a light grey brown silty clay. It was undated.

A north–south ditch or gully was examined in three separate slots ([01], [09] and [11]). It had an irregular appearance, was wider and deeper to the south and became narrower and shallower at its northern end. At its widest extent at the south end it was 1.0m wide and at its north end it had become 0.44m wide. At the south end the depth was 0.17m and at the north end 0.12m. The ditch or gully was truncated by ditch [05] at the centre of the trench and does not seem to have extended into the top half of the trench. The single fill ([02], [10] and [12]) was a pale greyish brown silty sand which had probably developed through natural silting processes. Three sherds of unabraded Romano-British pottery were recovered.

A further gully [07] was observed on the western side of the trench. It was at least 1.76m long and was truncated at its northern end by ditch [05]. It had a width of 0.44m and a depth of 0.18m. The fill ([08]) was probably naturally occurring and consisted of a light brown silty sand.

At the centre of the trench ditch ([05]) was observed, which ran in a roughly east to west direction and had cut through the north to south aligned gullies in this trench. The orientation and position of the ditch suggests that it was a continuation of the ditch [21]=[17] observed in Trench 1. The ditch measured 0.58m wide and had a depth of 0.26m. The single fill ([06]) was a naturally deposited pale greyish brown silty sand.

At the northern end of the trench there was a further short section of shallow gully ([03]) which had been truncated by ditch/gully [01]. This was 2.0m long and 0.38m wide. The fill ([04]) was a light grey silty sand which had probably naturally in-filled.

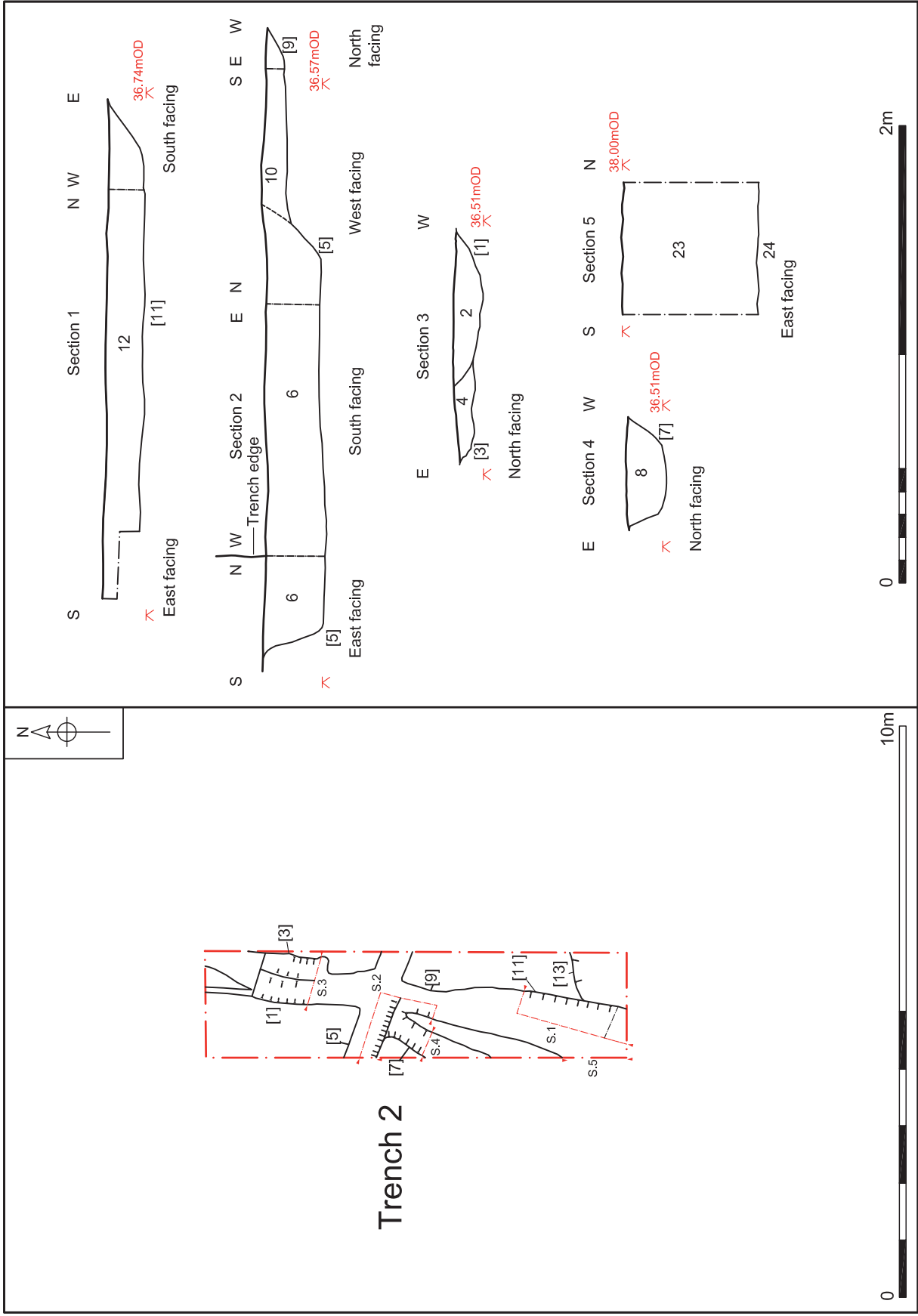


Figure 4. Trench 2, plan and sections.  
Scale 1:100 and 1:25

## **6.0 THE FINDS**

### **6.1 Pottery (Appendix 3)**

By Sarah Percival

A total of three sherds of pottery weighing 51g were recovered from a single context (12). The pottery is all Romano-British and represents the remains of two cooking jars in sandy and micaceous sandy greyware fabric. The fabric is unprovenanced but is almost certainly locally made. The assemblage is not closely datable.

### **6.2 Faunal Remains (Appendix 4)**

By Julie Curl

The assessment was carried out following a modified version of guidelines by English Heritage (Davis 1992). All of the bone was examined to determine range of species and elements present. A note was also made of butchering and any indications of skinning, hornworking and other modifications. When possible a record was made of ages and any other relevant information, such as pathologies. Counts and weights were noted for each context.

A single feature, ditch fill [(20)], produced a total of 0.038kg of faunal remains, consisting of a single fragment of bone. The remains are a fragment of shaft from a cattle radius, which has been chopped and cut.

This is a very small faunal assemblage and difficult to interpret from the available information. The remains have been clearly butchered and are likely to be from food waste.

## **7.0 CONCLUSIONS**

The evaluation of the plot revealed a relatively large amount of archaeological features. Though there were only three sherds of pottery were found, its reasonably un-abraded nature suggest that the infilling of ditch [11] dates to the Roman period. The pale and leached appearance of all of the archaeological deposits across the two trenches may indicate that they are broadly contemporary in date, in spite of evidence of some intercutting. The irregular and curving character of some of the linear features and the known clayey nature of the ground may suggest that most of the features were originally quickly excavated and non-permanent attempts at drainage. The straighter and deeper nature of ditch [05]=[21]=[17] could indicate that it was a property or field boundary.

The activity links in with what is known of this part of Suffolk in the Roman period. Hoxne is situated reasonably close to the known Roman road linking the Roman settlements of Scole on the Norfolk–Suffolk border and Coddensham in central Suffolk. The presence of the Hoxne hoard in the vicinity also confirms Late Roman activity in the area. It could be tentatively suggested that activity in the Roman period in this northern part of the village may have been a contributing reason for the location of a bishopric there in the Saxon period.

Recommendations for future work based on this evaluation report will be made by Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service Conservation Team.

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## **Acknowledgements**

The fieldwork was undertaken by the author with Suzie Westall.

The finds were processed by Lucy Talbot and the pottery was examined by Sarah Percival of NAU Archaeology. The animal bone was reported on by Julie Curl of Sylvanus. The illustrations were prepared by David Dobson after initial digitising by the author. The report was edited by David Whitmore and formatted by Richard Hoggett. Thanks to Mark Kenyon for his interest in the project and help on site.

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## Appendix 1a: Context Summary

Context	Category	Type	Fill Of	Description	Period
1	Cut	Gully		Gully	Unknown
2	Deposit		1	Pale Grey Silty Sand	Unknown
3	Cut	Gully		Gully	Unknown
4	Deposit		3	Pale Grey Silty Sand	Unknown
5	Cut	Gully		Gully	Unknown
6	Deposit		5	Pale Grey and Brown Silty Sand	Unknown
7	Cut	Gully		Gully	Unknown
8	Deposit		7	Light Brown Sandy Silt	Unknown
9	Cut	Gully		Gully	Unknown
10	Deposit		9	Light Brown Sandy Silt	Unknown
11	Cut	Gully		Gully	Unknown
12	Deposit		11	Pale Grey and Brown Silty Sand	Romano-British
13	Cut	Gully		Gully	Romano-British
14	Deposit		13	Light Brown Sandy Silt	Unknown
15	Cut	Post-hole		Post-hole	Unknown
16	Deposit		15	light grey slightly silty sand	Unknown
17	Cut	Ditch		Ditch	Unknown
18	Deposit		17	light grey slightly silty sand	Unknown
19	Cut	Ditch		Ditch	Romano-British
20	Deposit		19	Light Grey Silty Clay	Romano-British
21	Cut	Gully		Gully	Unknown
22	Deposit		21	Light Grey Sand	Unknown
23	Deposit			Topsoil	Unknown
24	Deposit			Natural	Unknown

## Appendix 1b: OASIS Feature Summary

Period	Type	Total
Unknown	Ditch	1
	Post-hole	1
	Gully	3
Romano-British	Ditch	1

### Appendix 2a: Finds by Context

Context	Material	Qty	Weight	Period
12	Pottery	3	51g	Roman
20	Animal Bone	1	38g	Unknown

### Appendix 2b: OASIS Finds Summary

Period	Material	Total
Roman	Pottery	3
Unknown	Animal Bone	1

### Appendix 3: Pottery

Context	DRAW	fab	dsc	qty	wt	spotdate	form	Dec	AB	SF	Comment
12	No	MSGW	R	2	34	Romano-British	Jar	incised band			
20	No	SGW	R	1	17	Romano-British	Jar				lid seated

### Appendix 4: Animal Bone

Material	Period	Context	No. of Contexts	Sum of Qty	Sum of Wt
Animal Bone	Unknown	20	1	1	38
	Unknown Total		1	1	38
Animal Bone Total			1	1	38