

Report 2461



nau archaeology

**An Archaeological Watching Brief at
22 Bridewell St, Clare, Suffolk**

SHER CLA 067



Prepared for
Mr. Jack Gemmill
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January 2011

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<i>Issue 1</i>		

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Location: 22 Bridewell St., Clare, Suffolk
District: St. Edmundsbury
Grid Ref.: TL 770 458
HER No.: CLA 067
SM No.: CLA 010
Client: Mr J. Gemmill
Dates of Fieldwork: 24 June 2010

Summary

An archaeological watching brief was conducted for Mr Jack Gemmill of 22 Bridewell Street, Clare, Suffolk, during construction of an extension to his property at the aforementioned address. The property backs directly onto Clare Camp, a Scheduled Monument, and work on the site indicated that this and the adjacent houses had actually been built over the outermost defensive bank of the site and a backfilled defensive ditch.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The work involved monitoring the excavation of foundations and service trenches for a single storey extension to the rear and side of the existing building at 22 Bridewell St., Clare, Suffolk (Fig. 1).

The work was undertaken to fulfil a planning condition set by Suffolk County Council (Ref. SE/10/0310) and a Brief issued by Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service Conservation Team, Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk (Ref. 22BridewellStreetClare2010). The work was conducted in accordance with a Project Design and Method Statement prepared by NAU Archaeology (Ref. NAU/BAU2461/NP). This work was commissioned and funded by Mr Jack Gemmill.

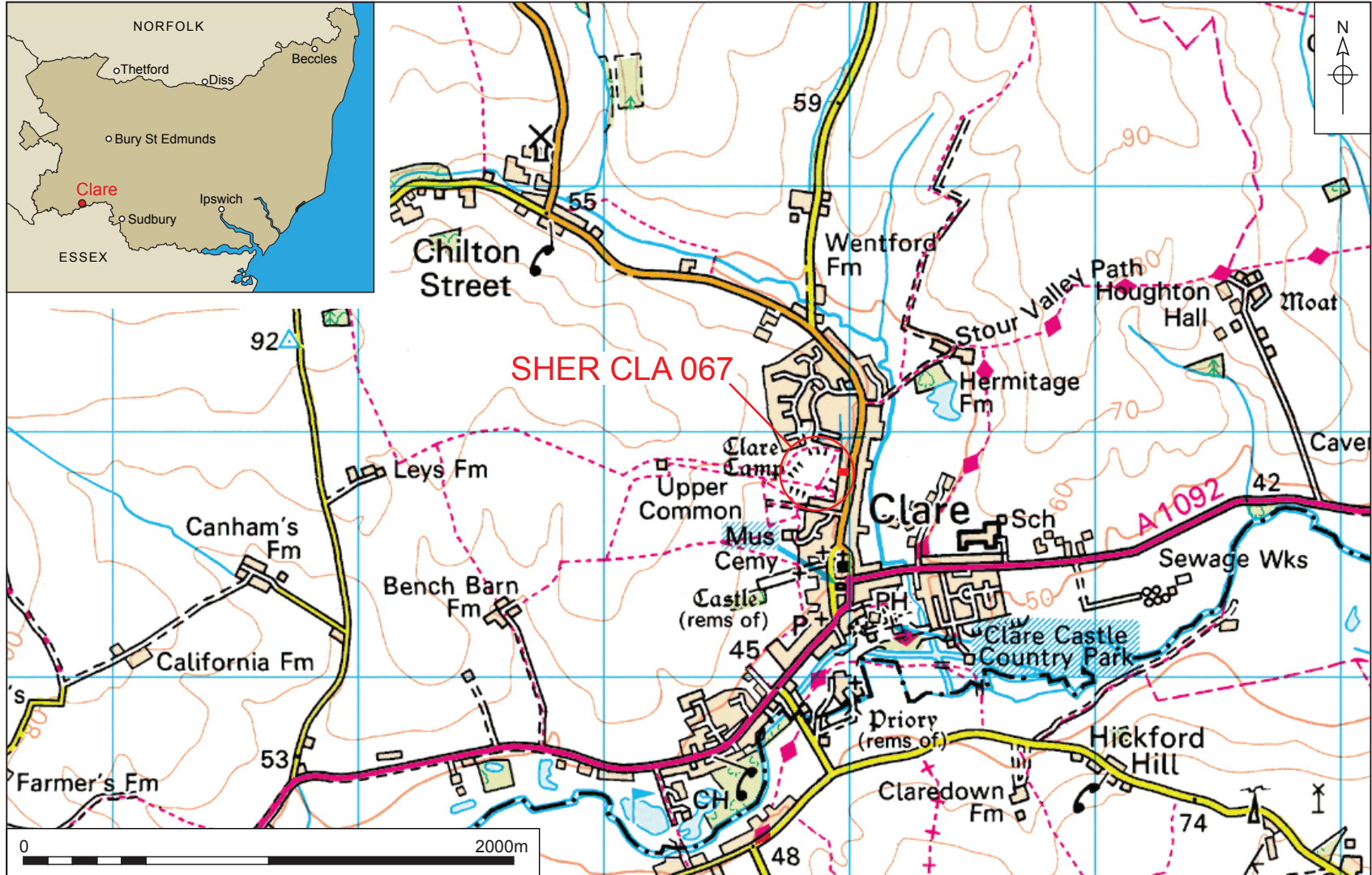
This programme of work was designed to assist in defining the character and extent of any archaeological remains within the proposed redevelopment area, following the guidelines set out in *Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment* (Department for Communities and Local Government 2010).

The site archive is currently held by NAU Archaeology and on completion of the project will be deposited with the Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service (SCCAS) following the relevant policies on archiving standards.

Excavation of services trenches and reduction of the interior floor level had been undertaken before the first visit for archaeological monitoring was made.

Demolition of an old garage had resulted in a deep layer of disturbed soil being present across part of the garden. The construction work that had taken place did not appear to have disturbed anything but modern deposits.

The foundation trenches were much deeper and were excavated with the archaeologist present.



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Figure 1. Site location. Scale 1:25,000

2.0 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

Clare lies in the Stour Valley, beside a tributary of the River Stour. The solid geology in this area is chalk, with overlying drift geology of Lowestoft Till, and glacial outwash and river gravels along river valley floors (Wymer 1989). Deposits observed in the trenches at the site were very clayey.

The site lies at c.50m above sea level but the clay soil means that the land is not particularly well drained, and the base of the foundation trenches quickly filled with water during the ground excavation works.

3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The property on its western side backs directly onto the inner defensive ditch of Clare Camp (CLA 010), a Scheduled Monument (54). This bi-vallate enclosure may originally have been constructed in the Iron Age, but it was reused and utilised in both the Saxon and medieval periods, and the majority of finds recovered from the site date are medieval.

Clare was an important town during the medieval period; half a mile south of Clare Camp is the site of Clare Castle (CLA 008). The castle mound dates from the Saxon period but was enlarged and developed following the Norman Conquest in the latter part of the 11th century. A stone castle was constructed in the 13th to 14th century (prior to this it would have been constructed of wood) and was occupied until late in the 15th century.

The church of Saints Peter and Paul, which lies just 200m south of 22 Bridewell Street, is one of the largest parish churches in East Anglia and dates from the 15th century.

Prior to the current houses being built along this stretch of Bridewell Street, there had been a row of post-medieval cottages set slightly further back, against the bank of the camp. These had burned down and were demolished.

There is good evidence of settlement in the town from the Saxon period onwards, with a strong possibility of earlier, Iron Age to Roman, occupation prior to that time.

4.0 METHODOLOGY

The objective of this Watching Brief was to record any archaeological remains exposed during ground disturbance within the development area.

The Brief required continuous archaeological recording during all groundworks. The service trenches and interior floor level had already been excavated prior to the archaeologist arriving on site). The reduction of the interior area had been carried out to a level of 0.6m below the existing ground surface of the site however the service trench was open and exposed sections were visible. The landowner stated that he had previously demolished a garage (from the 1970s) which had stood in this part of the garden, and that he had re-levelled the ground surface following that work.

Machine excavation was carried out with a tracked mini-digger using a toothed ditching bucket.

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.

No environmental samples were taken.

Site conditions were good, with the work taking place in hot, dry weather.

5.0 RESULTS

The work involved the excavation of foundation trenches to the rear and side of the existing building at 22 Bridewell Street, Clare (Fig. 2). The garden of the property backs directly onto the inner defensive ditch of Clare Camp, which stands approximately 2m high at this point (Plate 1). The foundation trench was 0.6m wide by about 1.8m deep. Due to poor drainage of the clay soil, the base of the trench quickly filled with water (Plate 2).



Plate 1. The inner defensive bank of Clare Camp visible from the garden of 22 Bridewell Street

The topsoil (1) and underlying layer (2) were modern deposits of loamy clay containing a mix of modern and redeposited residual material. Beneath deposit (2) at a depth of 0.8m below the modern ground surface was a layer of light to mid-yellowish-brown clay (3) approximately 0.7m thick. A sherd of local, unglazed medieval pottery and a sherd of late medieval transitional pottery were recovered from this layer. The deposit directly overlay a layer of cleaner, very yellowy-brown, waterlogged clay (4) 0.3m thick, which, in turn, overlay an undisturbed natural layer of sand and stones (5) (Fig. 2, section 1; Plate 2).

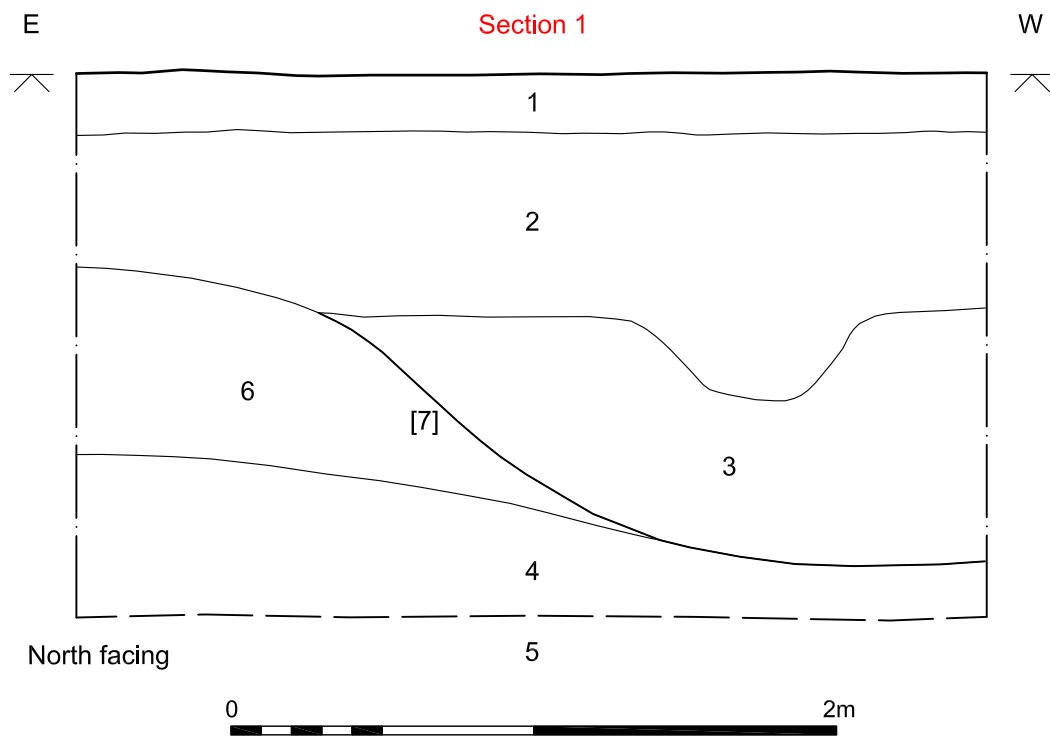
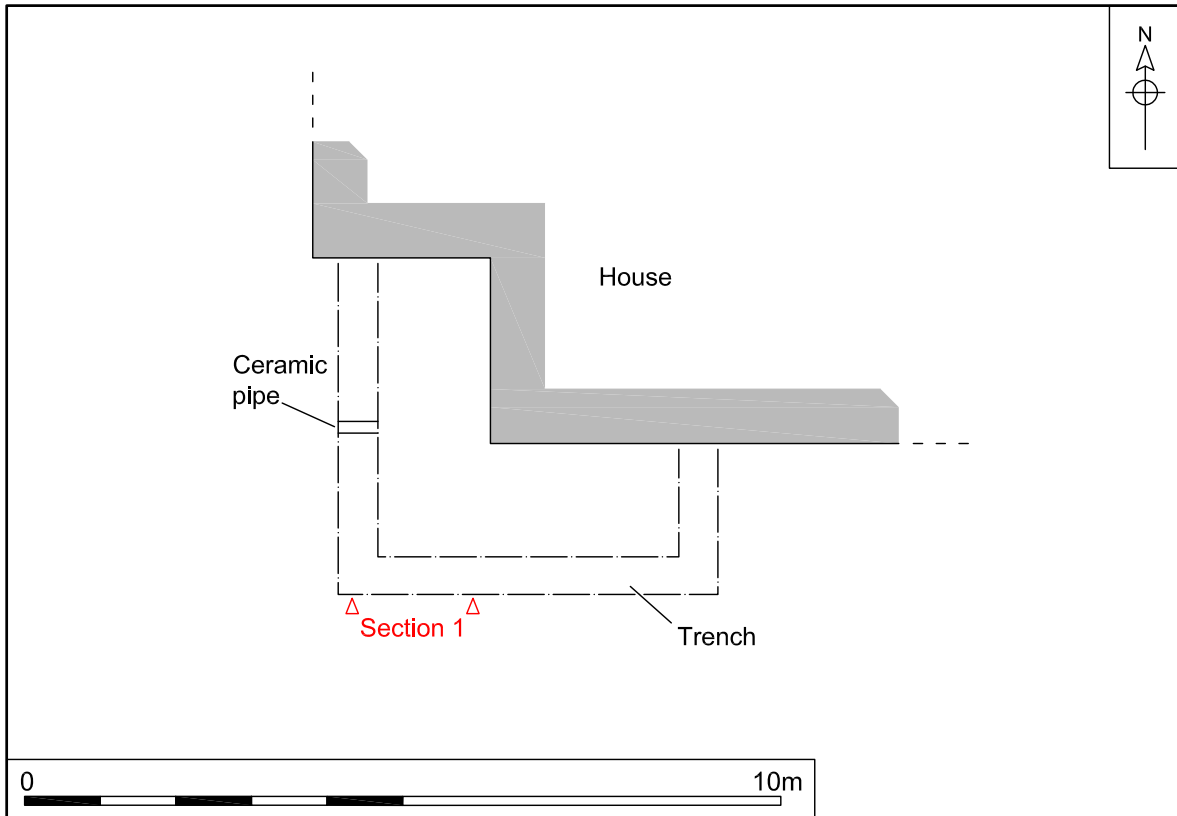


Figure 2. Plan of Site (1:100) and Section 1 (1:25)



Plate 2. Deposits (2) – (5) as seen in the east-facing section of the foundation trench

To the rear of the property, these deposits were all fairly level but where the trench turned a corner the level of the natural began to rise (Plates 3 and 4) and a new layer became visible between deposits (3) and (4). This was a clean, very yellowy clay with frequent chalk flecks (6) and measured up to 0.6m thick.



Plate 3. Trench at the south of the building where the base was particularly wet



Plate 4. Trench at the south of the building showing where the level of the natural rises



Plate 5. The double bank at Clare Camp

The edge of a feature (ditch [7]) was identified in the western side of the southern foundation trench and deposit (3) (originally identified as a general layer below

modern disturbance (2)) was observed to be infilling this feature (Fig. 3). It is quite likely that ditch [7] represents the outermost edge of the ditch between the two banks of Clare Camp. Layer (6) is thought to be a natural deposit which was truncated by ditch [7]; deposits (4) and (5) are also natural. No trace of any surviving bank was observed in the trenches. The distance between the probable outer bank and the extant inner bank at this point was approximately 11m (Plate 5).

Prior to the erection of the current houses along this stretch of Bridewell Street, a row of smaller cottages had stood slightly further back, in what is now the garden area – perhaps directly against the extant bank of Clare Camp (Plate 6). The outer bank is missing along this side of the monument



Plate 6. The rear of Bridewell Street as seen from Clare Camp

During the new foundation work, a ceramic pipe was uncovered running east-west from the south-west corner of the building out into the garden (Fig. 2) and this is likely to relate to the earlier properties.

Additional groundworks (excavation of a soakaway) may be undertaken at the site but it is not clear when, or if these works will proceed. Should these works go ahead then they will also require monitoring by an archaeologist.

6.0 THE FINDS

by Rebecca Sillwood

Introduction

The number of finds from the site was small, comprising only three sherds of pottery, three fragments of clay (tobacco) pipe, and three fragments of bone. The finds are presented in tabular form with basic quantitative information in Appendix 2a: Finds by Context.

6.1 Pottery

6.1.1 Medieval (11th to 14th centuries)

Two sherds of medieval pottery were recovered from two separate deposits; topsoil (1) and ditch fill (3). Both are fragments of unsourced local medieval unglazed ware.

6.1.2 Late Medieval-Transitional

A single sherd of late medieval transitional ware was recovered from ditch fill (3). It is a body sherd of pale orange fabric, with sparse inclusions of quartz. Decoration consists of combed horizontal and vertical lines, with an iron glaze of speckled green.

6.1.3 Discussion

The small assemblage of pottery from this site is not sufficient to make any meaningful interpretation possible, although it clearly places ditch [7] into the late medieval transitional period.

6.2 Clay Tobacco Pipe

Three fragments of clay tobacco pipe stem were recovered from two contexts, topsoil (1) and modern disturbance (2). Clay pipe stems are difficult to date, as it is through the bowl that any close dating is made, it is only possible to say that these fragments are post-medieval.

6.3 Human Skeletal Remains

A fragment of the cap of a human femur was recovered from modern disturbance layer (2).

6.4 Animal Bone

Two fragments of small mammal bone was recovered from topsoil (1); these show no signs of butchering.

7.0 CONCLUSIONS

The results of the work clearly indicate that the properties along this stretch of Bridewell Street have been built across what was once a defensive ditch and outer bank around Clare Camp. The precise date of Clare Camp is not known. It is thought to have Iron Age origins but finds from the Scheduled Monument have so far been of Saxon and medieval date.

The finds from this work relate to the infilling of a ditch around the camp, however, and may be much later than the construction of the camp itself. We can state that there was activity in this area in the medieval and late medieval to early post-medieval periods and that the ditch may have been at least partially infilled during these phases. No modern material was recovered from deposit (3), suggesting that this deposit does date from the late medieval to early post-medieval period (c.16th century).

The fragment of human femur recovered from layer (2) has evidently been redeposited and may well have come from a medieval or early post-medieval deposit which was disturbed during the building of the current properties along Bridewell Street or the cottages which previously stood along this row. As there was only one fragment of bone, it is unclear whether this represented relatively modern disturbance of a historic burial or simply redeposition of a fragment of bone already disturbed and redeposited at some point in the past. The latter seems most likely.

A view of the site from Clare Camp supports the conclusion that there was an outer defensive bank and ditch where No 22 and the neighbouring Bridewell Street properties now stand and that the features identified as part of this watching brief represent that bank and ditch.

Acknowledgements

Site work was carried out by the author. The finds were processed by Sarah Percival and analysed by Rebecca Sillwood. The report was edited by Jayne Bown and illustrated and produced by David Dobson.

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Appendix 1a: Context Summary

Context	Category	Type	Fill Of	Description	Period
1	Deposit	Layer		Topsoil	Modern
2	Deposit	Layer		Modern disturbance	Modern
3	Deposit	Layer	7	Clay layer filling ditch [7] (represents later levelling of outer bank and infilling of ditch)	Med./Post-Med.
4	Deposit	Layer		Natural	Unknown
5	Deposit	Layer		Natural	Unknown
6	Deposit	Layer		Natural	Unknown
7	Cut	Ditch		Middle defensive ditch for Clare Camp	Iron Age?

Appendix 1b: OASIS Feature Summary

Period	Type	Total
Iron Age?	Ditch	1
Med./Post-Med.	Layer	1
Modern	Layer	2
Unknown	Layer	3

Appendix 2a: Finds by Context

Context	Material	Qty	Wt	Period
1	Animal Bone	2	33g	Unknown
1	Clay Pipe	2	3g	Post-medieval
2	Pottery	1	1g	Medieval
2	Clay Pipe	1	4g	Post-medieval
2	Human Skeletal Remains	1	18g	Unknown
3	Pottery	1	68g	Medieval
3	Pottery	1	26g	Med./Post-Med.

Appendix 2b: OASIS Finds Summary

Period	Material	Total
Medieval	Pottery	2
Med./Post-Med.	Pottery	1
Post-medieval	Clay Pipe	3
Unknown	Animal Bone	2
Unknown	Human Skeletal Remains	1