

Report 2606



nau archaeology

**An Archaeological Evaluation of land to the rear of  
Bay House, 22 Market Place, Saxmundham, Suffolk**

SMX 023



**Prepared for**  
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## Contents

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<i>Summary</i> .....	1
1.0 Introduction .....	1
2.0 Geology and Topography .....	3
3.0 Archaeological and Historical Background.....	3
4.0 Methodology .....	3
5.0 Results.....	5
6.0 The Finds .....	10
6.1 Pottery .....	10
6.2 Clay Pipe .....	10
7.0 The Environmental Evidence .....	10
7.1 Plant Macrofossils .....	10
8.0 Conclusions .....	11
<i>Acknowledgements</i> .....	12
<i>Bibliography</i> .....	12
Appendix 1a: Context Summary .....	13
Appendix 1b: OASIS Feature Summary .....	13
Appendix 2a: Finds by Context .....	14
Appendix 2b: OASIS Finds Summary .....	14
Appendix 3: Pottery.....	14
Appendix 4: Plant Macrofossils .....	15

## **Figures**

- Figure 1 Site Location
- Figure 2 Trench Locations
- Figure 3 Trench 1, plans and sections
- Figure 4 Trench 2

## **Plates**

- Plate 1 Excavated features in Trench 1, looking south, 1m scale
- Plate 2 Trench 2 after machining, looking north-west, 1m scale

Location:	(Land to the rear of) Bay House, 22 Market Place, Saxmundham, Suffolk
District:	Suffolk Coastal
Grid Ref.:	TM 38612 63253
HER No.:	SMX 023
OASIS Ref.:	94874
Client:	Mr and Mrs Skinner
Dates of Fieldwork:	17-18 December 2010

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## **Summary**

*An archaeological evaluation was conducted by NAU Archaeology on behalf of Mr and Mrs Skinner in December 2010 ahead of an application for planning permission to develop the site for residential purposes.*

*The site is situated within an area of previously known medieval and post-medieval activity. The work involved the excavation of two trenches placed within the footprint of two proposed dwellings, both of which contained features and deposits of archaeological interest, especially in the southern half of the site. These included evidence for a structure, a pit and a probable capped well. The archaeological evidence indicates that the site of medieval to post-medieval settlement extends into the proposed development area.*

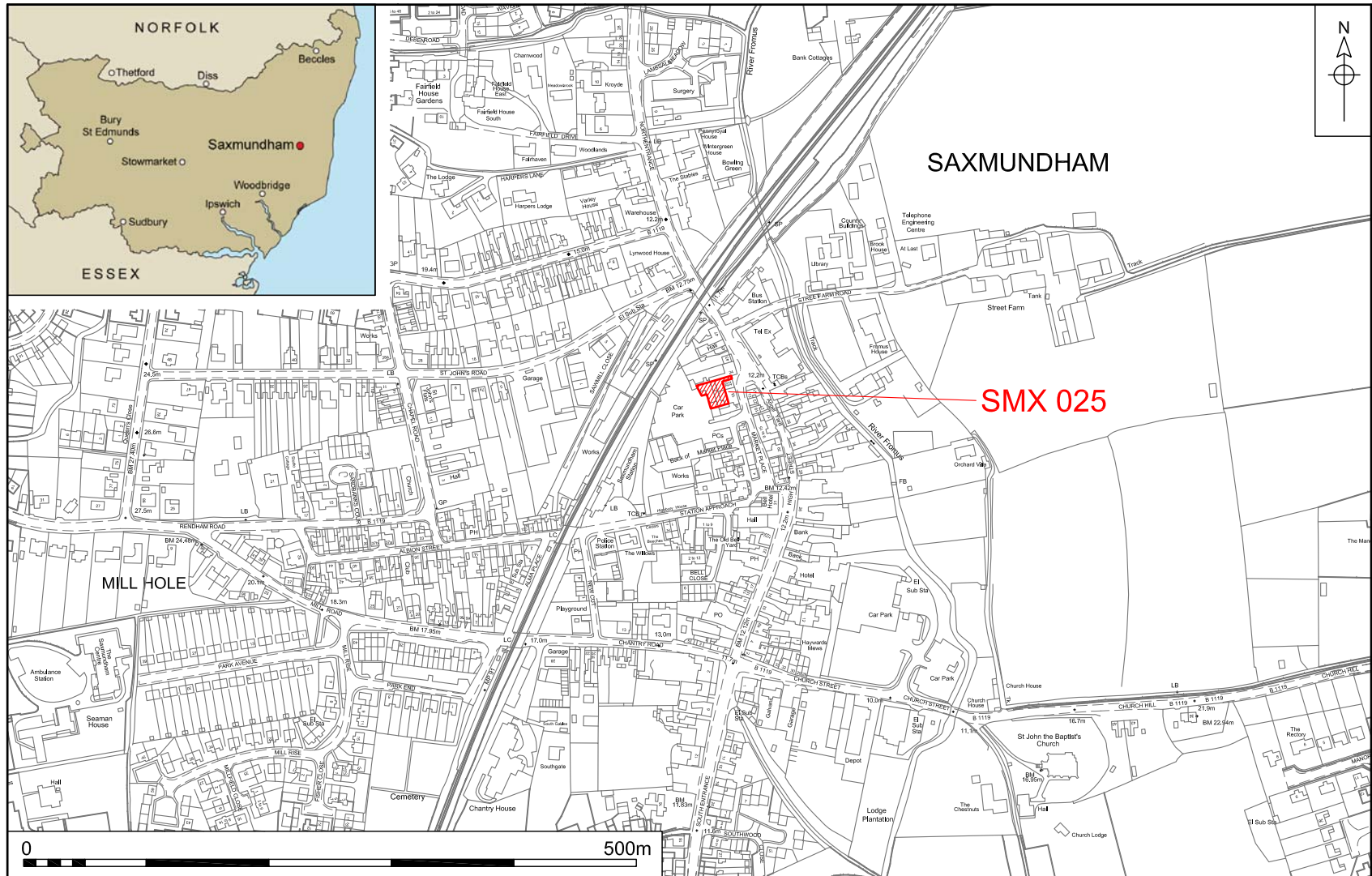
*The structural evidence comprised a number of post-holes from which sherds of medieval and post-medieval pottery and a clay pipe bowl were recovered. Although, the features yielded integrated dating evidence it is tentatively suggested here that they are post-medieval in date. A deposit of chalky clay till which was also partially revealed may represent part of a capped well.*

*The evaluation work has shown that well-preserved archaeological features and deposits are present within the proposed development area. These features constitute good potential for furthering an understanding of the nature of medieval and post-medieval settlement.*

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by NAU Archaeology on land to the rear of Bay House, 22 Market Place, Saxmundham, Suffolk, on a site encompassing 237m<sup>2</sup> of land (Fig. 1). The work was carried out in advance of a proposed housing development and involved a programme of trial trenching undertaken in accordance with a brief and specification issued by Suffolk County Council Archaeological Services (Ref: SpecEval(KW)\_Rear of Bay House) and a Project Design prepared by NAU Archaeology (Ref. NAU/BAU2606/NP). The works were commissioned and funded by Mr and Mrs Roger and Wendy Skinner

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 results will enable decisions to be made by the Local Planning Authority about



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Figure 1. Site location. Scale 1:5000

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 museum store following the relevant policies on archiving standards outlined in SCC Archive Guidelines (2008).

## **2.0 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY**

The underlying solid geology consists of estuarine or marine shelly sands known as Crags which are overlain by clayey loams derived from chalky boulder clay.

Saxmundham is situated approximately 20 miles (30km) north-east of Ipswich and 5 miles (8km) west of Sizewell in the Suffolk Coastal District. The site is situated at approximately 12.5m OD and is set on the western valley of the River Fromus, a tributary of the River Alde. The River Alde flows in a south-easterly direction, north of Aldeburgh connecting onto the River Ore before discharging into the North Sea at Hollesley Bay.

## **3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

A search of the Suffolk Historic and Environmental Records has demonstrated that there are 47 Listed Buildings, 3 Events, 9 SHER entries and a record of a former windmill within a 500m radius of the proposed development site. Only the most relevant entries are discussed below:

The earliest recorded spot find within Saxmundham was a site where three sherds of Iron Age pottery were found in the garden of Park House between 1968 and 1969. Also recovered from the same garden were sherds of Roman pottery including five sherds of samian ware (SMX 005).

To the east of the site a Roman lamp in red ware (SXM 001) was recovered in 1967 at a depth of one metre from a garden.

The Domesday Survey of c.1086 recorded a church (the church of St John the Baptist) plus 15 acres of land (SMX 008).

The medieval town of Saxmundham (SMX 020) shows a linear arrangement along the High Street and South Entrance, which includes the proposed development area of Market Place.

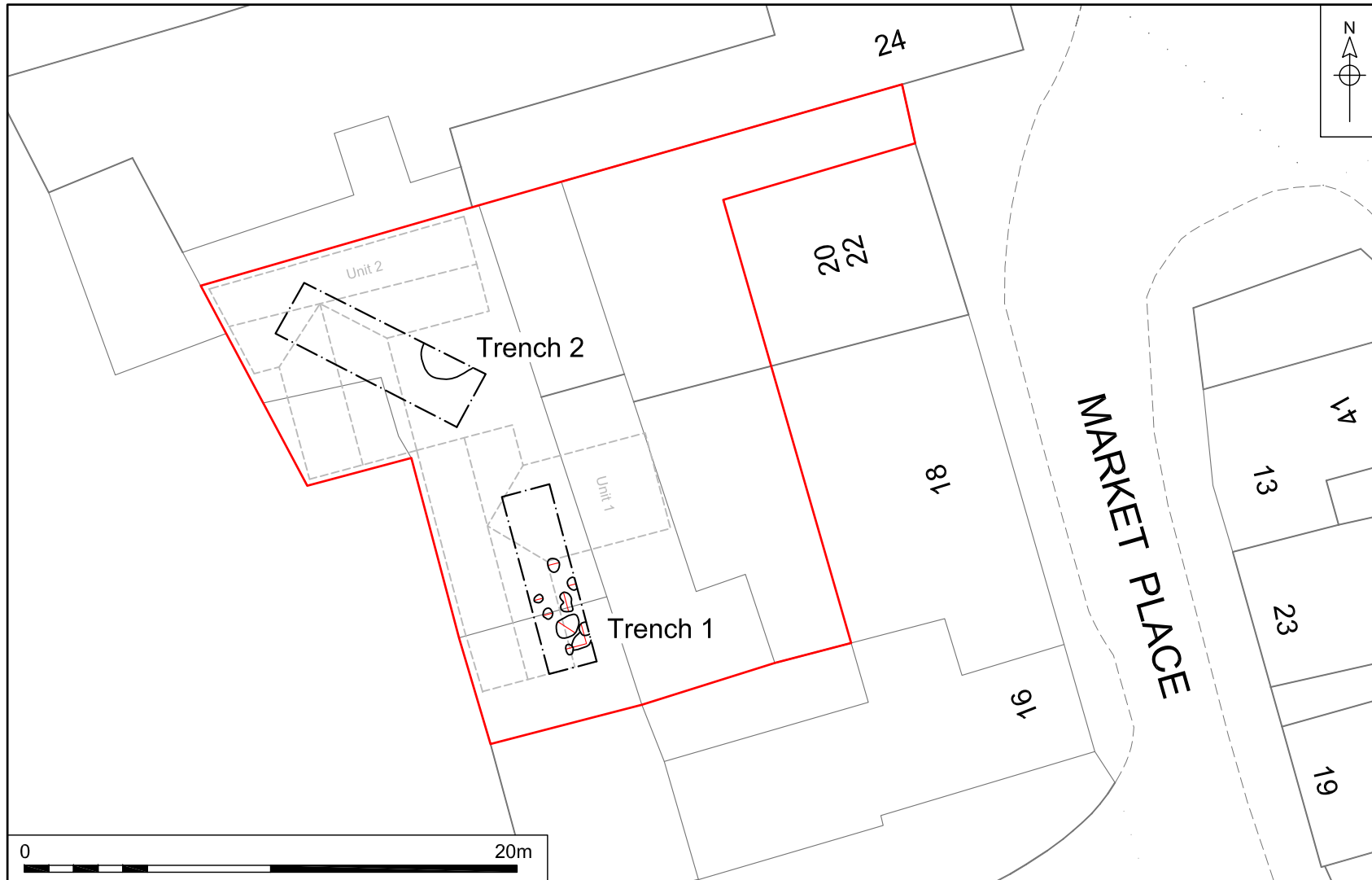
To the south of the proposed development area a 16th-century horse bit was found beneath a hearth at Priory House (SMX 002).

A bridge over the River Fromus was mapped in 1736 and in 1783, although the construction form and date are unknown (SMX 016).

## **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 a 5% sample of the development area of (237m<sup>2</sup>) was required to be examined for archaeological features and deposits which could not be preserved *in situ*, and may be damaged or destroyed by the proposed development. The 5% sample area amounted to 2 trenches measuring between



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Figure 2. Trench locations. Scale 1:250



7m and 8m by 2m (Fig. 2). The two trenches were located adjacent to the existing boundary walls along the northern and western boundaries of the site.

Machine excavation was carried out with a wheeled JCB-type excavator using a toothless ditching bucket under constant archaeological supervision. All machining was carried in 100-150mm spits until archaeological significant deposits or natural soil horizons were encountered.

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.

Two environmental samples for the extraction of the plant macrofossils (Samples <1> and <2>) were taken from the fills of post-holes [1] and [17] respectively.

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

Site conditions were difficult with heavy snow fall and freezing conditions; however this did not hamper the observation and recording of features and deposits. Site access was good.

## 5.0 RESULTS

Two trenches were opened and examined for archaeological features and/or deposits and each contained features of archaeological interest. Topsoil depths averaged around 0.50m to 0.60m around the site and the interface between topsoil and natural sands and gravels was diffuse with a horizon (generally of around 0.10-0.15m deep) of mixed topsoil, sand and gravel.



Plate 1. Excavated features in Trench 1, looking south, 1m scale

## Trench 1

Trench 1 was situated within the location of proposed Unit 1 (Fig. 2). The trench measured 7.5m in length by 2m wide and was excavated to a depth of 0.70m. The topsoil (21) measured in the region of 0.50m

A total of ten archaeological features were located in the southern half of the trench. They consisted of eight post-holes [1], [5], [9], [11], [13], [15], [17] and [19], a pit or post-pit [7] and an amorphous spread of material [3]. Three of the features were intercutting ([1], [3] and [5] - two of the post-holes and the shallow 'spread') were located at the south-eastern end of the trench (Fig. 3).

Post-hole [1] measured 0.40m in length by 0.30m wide by 0.10m deep and contained a single deposit consisting of mid ginger brown silty sand (2) (Fig. 3). Recovered from deposit (2) was a single Grimston-type body sherd with a mottled brown green glaze dating to the later 12th to 14th century. Environmental evidence recovered from this feature (Sample <1>) produced barley grains, bone, fish bone, fired clay, plaster/mortar and charcoal.

Post-hole [5] was located to the south-west of post-hole [1]. It measured 0.40m in length by at least 0.40m wide by 0.12m deep and contained a single deposit of mid ginger brown silty sand (6) (Fig. 3). This post-hole produced a sherd of unglazed micaceous Waveney Valley coarse ware and as with post-hole [1] dated to the later 12th to 14th century. No dating evidence was recovered from amorphous spread [3] through which both features were cut and it is suggested that this spread probably represents an in-filled undulation into the natural.

Between post-holes [1] and [5] and post-holes [9] and [11] was pit or post-pit [7] (Fig. 3). This feature measured 1.1m long by 0.80m wide by 0.30m deep and contained a single fill (8) which consisted of an orangey brown clayey sand. The feature is larger than the surrounding post-holes, which have relatively consistent size and shape, and no artefactual evidence was recovered.

Two inter-cutting post-holes [11] and [13] (Fig. 3) were located in the midst of the features in trench 1. They are similar in size and shape, measuring 0.40m in diameter by 0.15m deep. They both contained fills ((12) and (14) respectively) that appeared to be alike - a dark brown silty sand - and it was not possible to establish a relative sequence. An unstamped clay pipe bowl which had a distinctive mid-17th-century middle bulge and milling beneath the rim was recovered from the fill of post-hole [11].

To the west of the inter-cutting post-holes was post-hole [9] (Fig. 3) which measured approximately 0.45m in diameter by 0.40m deep and contained a single fill consisting of dark brown clayey silty sand (10). No finds were recovered.

Post-hole [15] was a similar size shape and had a similar fill to post-hole [9] and was located just to the north-west it (Fig. 3). No finds were recovered.

Post-hole [17] (Fig. 3) was located on the eastern side of Trench 1 close to post-hole [13]. It measured 0.50m long, 0.30m wide and 0.40m deep and contained a single fill (18) consisting of mid brown silty sand from which a single sherd of 16th- to 18th-century Glazed Red Earthenware was recovered. Environmental evidence from Sample <2> taken from the fill of this feature produced barley grains and possible pea seed, cereal grains, bone, fired clay, plaster/mortar and charcoal.

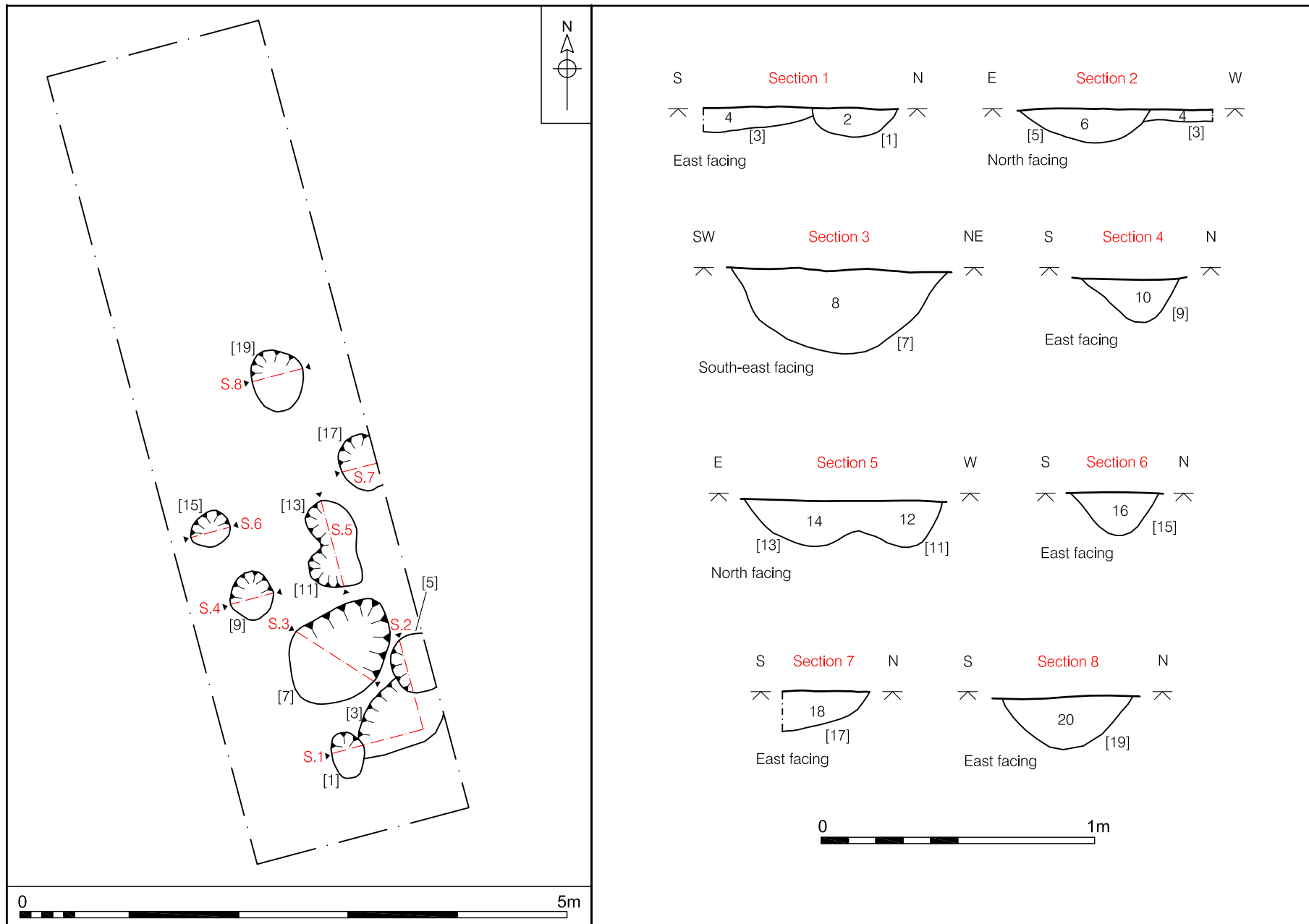


Figure 3. Trench 1, plan and sections. Scale 1:50 and 1:20

The northernmost post-hole of the group was [19] (Fig. 3) which was 0.50m in diameter and 0.50m deep. It contained a single fill consisting of mid to dark brown clayey silty sand (20). No finds were recovered from this feature.

It is possible that the post-hole group may have formed part of a structure although no coherent plan could be ascertained within the limited extent of the evaluation trench.

Located in the interface between the subsoil and natural were two sherds of post-medieval pottery (22) which were recovered towards the eastern end of the trench.

## **Trench 2**

Trench 2 was positioned in the location of Unit 2 (Fig. 2). The trench measured 8.23m in length by 2.20m wide and was excavated to a depth of 0.80m. The topsoil (21) was roughly 0.6m deep with an intermixed horizon of subsoil and topsoil measuring 0.20m.



Plate 2. Trench 2 after machining, looking north-west, 1m scale

Only one feature was present in Trench 2, a sub-circular feature that measured at least 1m (north-east to south-west) and 2.30m (north-west to south-east) and which extended beyond the north-eastern limit of the trench. The feature was identified as a possible in-filled or capped well and hence no further excavation

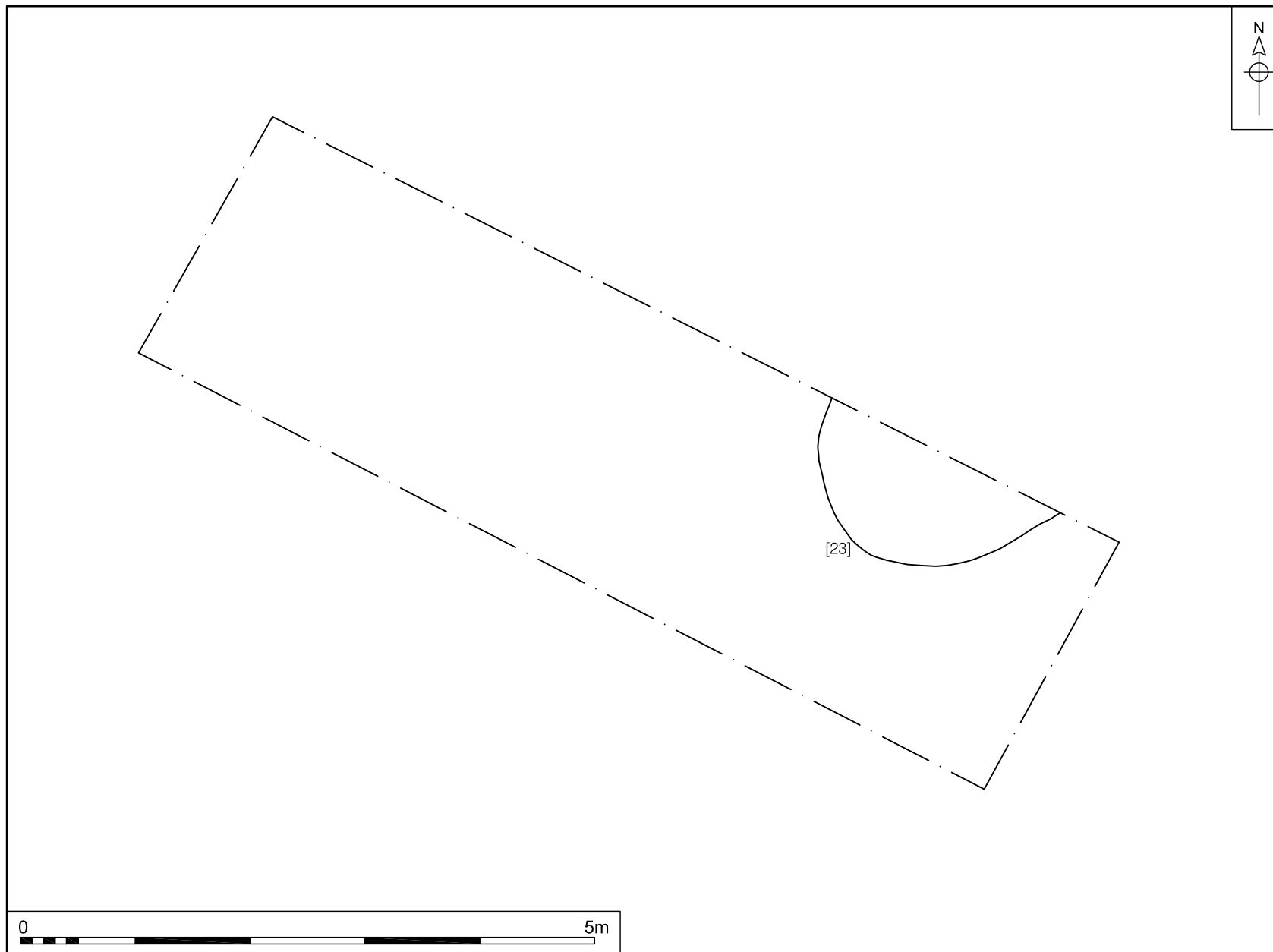


Figure 4. Trench 2, plan. Scale 1:50

was undertaken because the nature of such features is such that unstable material and voids may be present within the feature.

The upper horizon consisted of mixed chalky clayey till (24). Unstratified post-medieval pottery was recovered from a deposit in a similar manner to that collected from Trench 1.

## **6.0 THE FINDS**

by Sarah Percival

### **6.1 Pottery**

#### **6.1.1 Medieval**

A total of two medieval sherds weighing 11g were recovered from the fills of two postholes [1] and [5]. A Grimston type body sherd with mottled brown green glaze was found in posthole [1] and a sherd of unglazed micaceous Waveney Valley coarse ware came from the fill of posthole [5]. Both sherds date to the later 12th to 14th centuries.

#### **6.1.2 Post medieval**

A small post medieval assemblage of four sherds weighing 297g was recovered. A single sherd of 16th- to 18th-century Glazed Red Earthenware was found in the fill of posthole [17]. The remainder of the sherds were retrieved from deposits [22] and [25] which produced base sherds from an English Stoneware blacking bottle, a jug or tankard in blue and white transfer printed earthenware and a Staffordshire salt-glazed stoneware mug similar to examples from Norwich dated to 1740 -1760 (Jennings 1981, fig.100, 1576).

### **6.2 Clay Pipe**

An unstamped clay pipe bowl, found in the fill of posthole [11], has a distinctive middle bulge and milling beneath the rim characteristic of mid 17th-century pipes (Atkin 1985, 127).

## **7.0 THE ENVIRONMENTAL EVIDENCE**

### **7.1 Plant Macrofossils**

by Val Fryer

Samples for the evaluation of the content and preservation of the plant macrofossil assemblages were taken from fills within two post-holes (post-holes [1] and [17], Samples <1> and <2> respectively).

#### **7.1.1 Methodology**

The samples were processed by manual water flotation/washover and the flots were collected in a 300 micron mesh sieve. The dried flots were scanned under a binocular microscope at magnifications up to x16 and the plant macrofossils and other remains noted are listed in Appendix 4. Nomenclature within the table follows Stace (1997). All plant remains were charred. Modern roots and seeds were present within both assemblages.

The non-floating residues were collected in a 1mm mesh sieve to be sorted when dry. Any artefacts/ecofacts were retained for specialist analysis.

### **7.1.2 Results**

Plant macrofossils were very scarce, with both assemblages being largely composed of coal fragments and pieces of black porous material. However, individual barley (*Hordeum* sp.) grains were noted within both assemblages along with a possible pea (*Pisum sativum*) seed and small pieces of charcoal/charred wood. Preservation of the remains was moderately good, although some grains had become puffed and distorted during combustion.

As previously stated, coal fragments (some of which were moderately large) were predominant along with a number of porous and tarry residues, the latter almost certainly being bi-products of the combustion of the coal. Other remains occurred less frequently but did include pieces of bone (some of which were burnt), fragments of burnt or fired clay, ferrous globules and vitreous concretions.

### **7.1.3 Conclusions**

In summary, the remains recorded would all appear to be consistent with materials commonly found within, or adjacent to, a hearth. The grains and pulses are probably derived from foodstuffs, which were accidentally charred during culinary preparation, with other possible dietary refuse including the bone and fish bone fragments. Coal would appear to have been the fuel of choice, possibly indicating a requirement for high temperatures of combustion. As the assemblages, which are probably from features of different dates, are very similar in composition, it is assumed that intrusive/residual materials are present in both.

Although the current assemblages are somewhat limited, they clearly illustrate that reasonably well-preserved plant macrofossils are present within the archaeological horizon at Saxmundham. Therefore, if further interventions are planned, it is suggested that additional plant macrofossil samples of approximately 20 litres in volume are taken from all well-sealed and dated contexts recorded during excavation.

## **8.0 CONCLUSIONS**

Archaeological features, deposits, artefact and ecofacts of archaeological significance were recorded during the evaluation works at the rear of Bay House, 22 Market Place, Saxmundham.

The trial trenching showed that medieval and/or post-medieval activity extends into the evaluated area. The post-holes suggest that a structure of some form was located in the southern half of the site. Although the features themselves produced mixed dating evidence (medieval and post-medieval pottery) the evidence gained from the environmental samples of combustible substances such as coal gives a strong suggestion of post-medieval activity opposed to medieval. However, the medieval origins of Saxmundham as a market town are well attested and the presence of medieval pottery of later 12th- to 14th-century date recovered during the evaluation suggests that medieval activity was within close proximity of the site at least.

## **Acknowledgements**

The author would like to thank Roger and Wendy Skinner for commissioning and funding the works. These thanks are also extended to Roger Skinner for his attention to detail during machining of the trenches and to Wendy Skinner for supplying the architect's drawing of the proposed development.

Lucy Talbot undertook the finds processing and Sarah Percival identified and reported on them. Environmental processing was undertaken by Rob Fryer and the analysis of the samples was by Val Fryer

The author would like to thank Keith Wade of Suffolk County Council Archaeological Services and Colin Pendleton also of Suffolk County Council Archaeological Services for supplying the HER information and continued support.

This report was illustrated by David Dobson and edited by Jayne Bown. Nigel Page oversaw the project.

## **Bibliography**

- |                                  |      |                                                                                                                           |
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## Appendix 1a: Context Summary

Ctxt No	Category	Cut Type	Fill of	Description	Trench
1	Cut	Post-hole			Trench 1
2	Deposit		Fill of 1	Dark brown silty sand with charcoal	Trench 1
3	Cut	Post-hole			Trench 1
4	Deposit		Fill of 3	Mid brown clayey sand	Trench 1
5	Cut	Post-hole			Trench 1
6	Deposit		Fill of 5	Dark brown silty sand with charcoal	Trench 1
7	Cut	Pit			Trench 1
8	Deposit		Fill of 7	Light to mid brown clayey sand	Trench 1
9	Cut	Post-hole			Trench 1
10	Deposit		Fill of 9	Dark brown silty sand	Trench 1
11	Cut	Post-hole			Trench 1
12	Deposit		Fill of 11	Dark brown silty sand	Trench 1
13	Cut	Post-hole			Trench 1
14	Deposit		Fill of 13	Mixed mid brown and orange clay	Trench 1
15	Cut	Post-hole			Trench 1
16	Deposit		Fill of 15	Mixed mid brown and orange clay	Trench 1
17	Cut	Post-hole			Trench 1
18	Deposit		Fill of 17	Dark brown-black silty sand with charcoal	Trench 1
19	Cut	Post-hole			Trench 1
20	Deposit		Fill of 19	Mixed mid brown and orange clay	Trench 1
21	Deposit			Topsoil	Trench 2
22	Deposit			Post-medieval pot between subsoil and natural	Trench 1
23	Cut	Well		?Capped over well	Trench 2
24	Deposit		Fill of 23		Trench 2
25	Deposit			Post-medieval pottery	Trench 2

## Appendix 1b: OASIS Feature Summary

Period	Feature	Total
Medieval/post-medieval	Post-hole	9
	Pit	1
Modern	Well	1

## Appendix 2a: Finds by Context

Context	Material	Qty	Wt	Period	Notes
2	Pottery	1	5g	Medieval	Grimston (glazed)
6	Pottery	1	6g	Medieval	Unglazed Waveney Valley coarseware
12	Clay Pipe	1	16g	Post-medieval	Bowl
18	Pottery	1	21g	Post-medieval	Glazed Red Earthenware
22	Pottery	1	94g	Post-medieval	Stoneware
22	Pottery	1	80g	Post-medieval	Transfer-printed earthenware
25	Pottery	1	102g	Post-medieval	Salt-glazed stoneware

## Appendix 2b: OASIS Finds Summary

Period	Material	Total
Medieval	Pottery	2
Post-medieval	Clay Pipe	1
	Pottery	4

## Appendix 3: Pottery

Context	Fabric	Form	Dsc	Qty	Wt	Period	Spotdate	Comment
2	Grimston		Body sherd	1	5g	Medieval	L12th - 14th c.	Glazed
6	Unglazed Waveney Valley coarseware			1	6g	Medieval	L12th - 14th c.	
18	Glazed Red Earthenware			1	21g	Post-medieval	16th - 18th c.	
22	English Stoneware	Blacking bottle	Base	1	94g	Post-medieval	17th - 19th c.	
22	Transfer-printed Earthenware	Jug or tankard	Base	1	80g	Post-medieval	18th - 20th c.	
25	White salt-glazed stoneware Staffordshire type	Mug	Base	1	102g	Post-medieval	18th c.	

#### Appendix 4: Plant Macrofossils

Sample No.	1	2
Context No.	2	18
Feature No.	1	17
Feature type	ph	ph
Date	Medieval	Post-med
<b>Plant macrofossils</b>		
<i>Hordeum</i> sp. (grains)	x	x
Cereal indet. (grains)		x
<i>Pisum sativum</i> L.		xcf
Fabaceae indet.	xcfcotyfg	
Charcoal <2mm	x	x
Charcoal >2mm		x
Charred root/stem	x	
<b>Other remains</b>		
Black porous 'cokey' material	xxxx	xxx
Black tarry material	xx	xx
Bone	x xb	x xb
Burnt/fired clay	x	x
Ferrous globules	x	
Fish bone	x	
Mortar/plaster	xcf	xcf
Small coal frags.	xxxx	xxxx
Vitreous material	x	x
<b>Sample volume (litres)</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Volume of flot (litres)</b>	<b>0.1</b>	<b>0.1</b>
<b>% flot sorted</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

#### Key to Table

x = 1–10 specimens    xx = 11–50 specimens    xxx = 51–100 specimens    xxxx = 100+ specimens  
 ph = post-hole    cf = compare    coty = cotyledon    fg = fragment    b = burnt