

Report 2650



nau archaeology

**Archaeological Evaluation at
Bury Road, Thorpe Morieux, Suffolk**

TMX 020



Prepared for
Orwell Housing Association
Crane Hill Lodge
325 London Road
Ipswich
IP2 0BE



Peter Eric Crawley BA AIfA

April 2011



www.nps.co.uk

| PROJECT CHECKLIST | | |
|--------------------------|---------------|------------|
| Project Manager | Nigel Page | |
| Draft Completed | Peter Crawley | 07/03/2011 |
| Graphics Completed | David Dobson | 14/03/2011 |
| Edit Completed | Jayne Bown | 04/04/2011 |
| Signed Off | Nigel Page | 04/04/2011 |
| <i>Issue 1</i> | | |

NAU Archaeology

Scandic House
85 Mountergate
Norwich
NR1 1PY

T 01603 756150

F 01603 756190

E jayne.bown@nps.co.uk

www.nau.org.uk

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Location: Bury Road, Thorpe Morieux, Suffolk
District: Babergh
Grid Ref.: TL 941 536
HER No.: TMX 020
Client: Orwell Housing Association Ltd
Dates of Fieldwork: 3-4 February 2011

Summary

An archaeological evaluation was conducted for Orwell Housing Association ahead of a new housing development on the east side of Thorpe Morieux in Suffolk. Three trenches were excavated to provide a 5% sample of the area.

The project recovered evidence of several archaeological features located within each of the three trenches. The features consisted of two gullies and three ditches, one of which was observed to run between Trenches 2 and 3. Finds were scarce however the pottery that was recovered was of prehistoric date. Nonetheless the prehistoric artefacts are likely to be residual and the features are probably of medieval or later date; the features on the whole were observed to truncate the subsoil.

The few finds represent a small concentration of prehistoric material in the western side of the site.

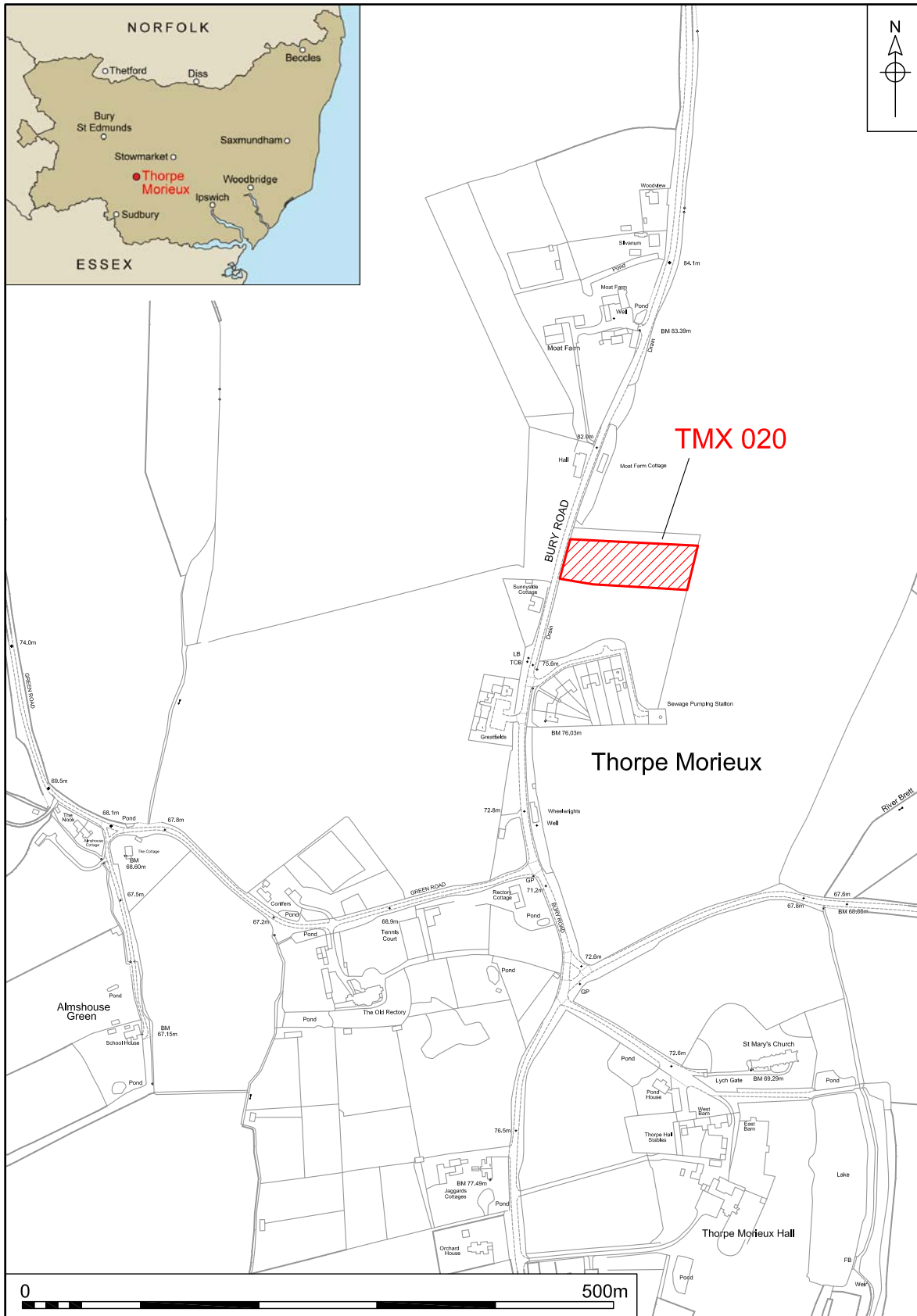
1.0 INTRODUCTION

The development site was located on the east side of Thorpe Morieux in central south Suffolk and was undertaken prior to the creation of six new affordable homes. The plot measured half a hectare and is on land that is currently an unploughed field (Fig. 1 and Plate 1).

This work was undertaken to fulfil a planning condition set by Babergh District Council (Ref. B/10/00947) and a Brief issued by Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service Conservation Team (Ref. Thorpe Morieux/2011-00947). The work was conducted in accordance with a Project Design and Method Statement prepared by NAU Archaeology (Ref. NAU/BAU2650/NP). This work was commissioned by and funded by Orwell Housing Association.

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 (2010)*. 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 Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service Conservation Team, following the relevant policies on archiving standards.



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Figure 1. Site location. Scale 1:5000



Plate 1. The site, looking west

2.0 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

The underlying geology consists of Upper Chalk, surmounted in places by Neogene to Quaternary rocks (undifferentiated) gravel, sand, silt and clay. The superficial geology is one of Chalky Till of the Melford and Ashley Series (British Geological Survey). The upper deposits are described as deep clay over chalky till (Antrobus 2011)

The site is located at a valley side location, immediately north of the village of Thorpe Morieux, at around 75m OD in an area of gently rolling hills. The River Brett lies to the south-east, closer to the centre of the village. The sandy nature of the soils aided the drainage of the site.

On site the natural substratum ([3]) was observed to be a light brownish grey clay which contained frequent small fragments and flecks of chalk averaging 1-10mm in size. The topsoil ([1]) was a dark greyish brown slightly clayey sandy silt which had a maximum depth of 0.42m. There was also a thin and patchy light brown subsoil ([2]) which had an average depth of 0.05m to 0.10m.

3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

A search of the Historic Environment Record (HER) for Suffolk was undertaken and the most relevant entries recorded below supplemented by background information gathered from the Suffolk Historical Atlas (Dymond and Martin 1999).

Prehistoric to Roman

For most of early earlier prehistoric period there is little activity recorded around the area of the site and this is probably due to its position near the harder claylands of central Suffolk. (Martin 1999a, 1999b)

There are only a few find spots of prehistoric date recorded on the HER in the vicinity of the site which includes TMX 011 and TMX 012 (below).

A late Iron Age silver coin (TMX 011), was found whilst metal detecting almost immediately to the west of the current site. The obverse of the coin bore the crude impression of a head and on the reverse there was a horse with straight legs and a wreath. Further away from the current site, metal detecting unearthed a blade end fragment of a socketed axehead of Bronze Age date (TMX 012).

During the Iron Age the tribal boundary of the Trinovantes is postulated to lie somewhere to the north of the area, although the area appears to be closer to the Icenii heartland rather than that of the Trinovantes (Martin 1999c). However there appears to be little activity in the Iron Age period close to the site generally.

In the Roman period the main thoroughfare between the settlements at Pakenham and Long Melford appeared to run through the parishes of Bradfield Combust and Stanningfield, which lay just to the north and north-west of the site. Again, the position of the site on the claylands of central Suffolk meant that there was generally less activity in the Roman period. 'The greatest density of settlement is, as previously, along the gravel terraces of river valleys' (Plouviez 1999).

Some Roman artefacts have been found, despite the area being less attractive for settlement. An artefact scatter (TMX 008) was found reasonably close to the site (500m to the west) consisting of about 20 Roman coins of which the earliest was minted for Marcus Aurelius; they were accompanied by several sherds of grey ware pottery and a fragment of a bronze terret ring. Further Roman pottery was found over 500m to the west of the site in 1959 (TMX 007).

Anglo-Saxon to medieval

The nearby large Anglo-Saxon settlement of Bury St Edmunds continued to expand in the Middle and Later Saxon periods where a royal vill, a market, and a minster were present (West 1999). There is also a large Saxon cemetery at Bury St Edmunds which contained both cremations and inhumations. Two further burial sites have been found closer to the present site consisting of inhumation burials.

There was a single Saxon find, found to the south of the site (TMX 009). This consisted of a metal detected bronze disc brooch 2.8cm in diameter with a central lozenge surrounded by interlace. The brooch belongs to a group of Anglo-Scandinavian brooches ornamented in a debased variant of the Borre style and dates to the 10th to 11th centuries. Around this time, the Domesday survey indicates that the village was known as 'Torp' or 'Torpa' and it appears to have been relatively small in size.

TMX 010 refers to the parish church St Mary's to the south of the site. Much of the structure of the church is of 13th-century date and some of the decoration is Early English foliage in cusp termination; the chancel arch is typically 13th-century for example. Interestingly the rood loft stairs still remain outside on the north side; the nave was built around 1320. In 1869 the church was thoroughly restored and seating constructed which involved the removal of the west gallery.

Thorpe Morieux Hall (TMX 016) lay immediately to the south of the church. This half timbered hall is believed to date from c.1525. It was enlarged around 1690 and the hall belonged to the Risby family (1500-1780). The Thorpe Hall barns (early 20th century) were built on the site of former agricultural buildings dated to 1650.

Several moated sites are located around the area of Thorpe Morieux and were recorded by survey in 1958. They attest to the useful qualities of clayey ground for the creation of moats. Directly to the north of the site a fragmented square moat with associated fragments of Tudor brick built into an outbuilding point to the presence of an historic site (TMX 002). Manor Farm (TMX 004) is described as the mutilated remains of a homestead moat, originally measuring about 100m by 60m. Part of the moat was water-filled and part was infilled through tipping. There was no trace of a building within the enclosure. A similar moated site was recorded at the former Water Hall (TMX 006) around 500m to the west of the current site. TMX 005 is another moated site described during the survey thus 'the remains of a probable homestead moat are visible at Malting Farm'. Other historic moats have been recorded as TMX 003 and TMX 001. Here moat-like features were identified as probable medieval or later drainage ditches.

There have been several medieval findspots in the vicinity of the site. Medieval coarseware sherds have been located at TMX 013 and TMX Misc (MSF6258) refers to a medieval lead seal found with a metal detector which incorporated an incised star design and the words "S'WILELMI FIL' NEVVLA'.

Post medieval

Another TMX Misc entry (MSF21420) refers to a landscape feature which was shown on a pre 1800 map. TMX Misc (17739) records a possible brick kiln, in "Kiln Field" to the south of Brick Kiln Cottages. This was observed on the Thorpe Morieux, tithe map dated 1843. The same tithe map indicated that there was a post-medieval windmill situated to the north of the site. There was also a possible dovecote suggested by field name 'Dovehouse Close' recorded as TMX Misc (17740).

There are several historic properties located close to the site. DSF 1847 records Moat Farm Cottage which lay just north of the site. It is a Grade II listed building which was constructed in the 17th to 18th century. The structure consists of a timber framed and plastered building with a thatched roof.

Immediately across Bury Road from the site is site DSF 2756, a listed cottage known as Sunnyside. The building is a small 17th to 18th timber framed cottage with a thatched roof.

The Wheelwrights (DSF2622), closer to the centre of the village, is also a Grade II listed building. It consisted of a timber-framed and plastered structure and it is located further south along Bury Road.

There is a Grade II listed property towards the centre of the village known as Pink Cottage (DSF627). It was constructed in the 17th to 18th century and was similarly plastered with a thatched roof. There are several other historic properties within the village of Thorpe Morieux, though they lay further to the west and are less relevant to the present fieldwork.

Unknown Date

There are several ancient woods to the east of the site. TMX 015 and TMX 014. They have been identified as ancient woods according to the criteria outlined by the Suffolk Wildlife Trust, English Nature, the County Council Countryside section and Oliver Rackham. They also extend into the next parish (Brettenham) recorded as BTT 014 and BTT 015.

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.

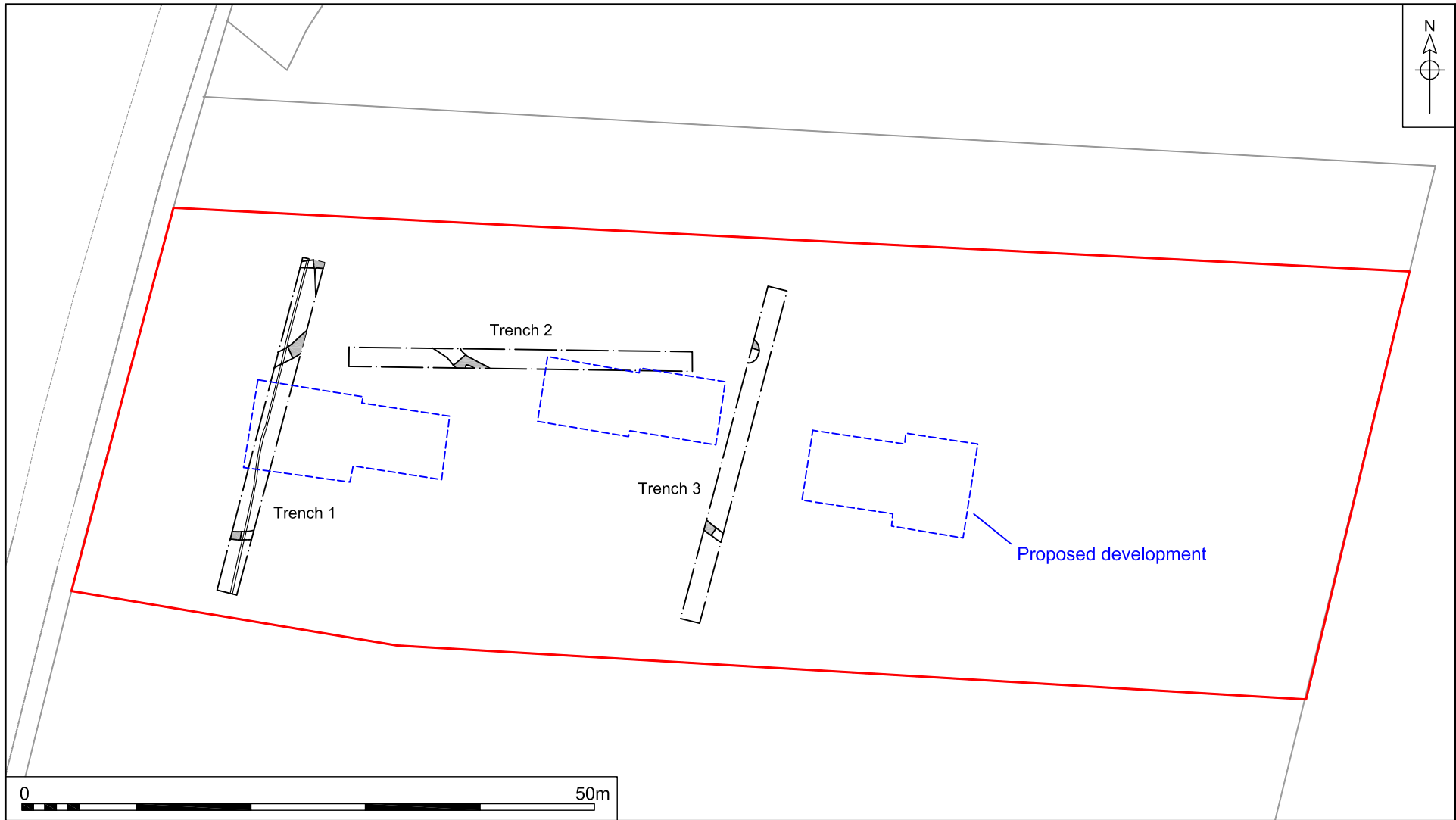
The Brief required that 5% of the development plot be sample excavated through trial trenching; three 30m-long trenches were excavated (Fig. 2).

Machine excavation was carried out with a wheeled JCB-type excavator equipped with a toothless ditching bucket and operated under constant archaeological supervision (Plate 2). The machine was supplied by GB Digger Hire.



Plate 2. Machining, looking east

Spoil, exposed surfaces and features were scanned with a metal-detector. There were no finds found during metal detecting.



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Figure 2. Trench locations. Scale 1:500

No environmental samples were taken due to an absence of well-sealed or dated features.

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

The temporary benchmark used during the course of this work was transferred from a known surveyed height of 79.59m OD located at the entrance to the field.

Site conditions were good, with the work taking place in fine yet overcast weather.

5.0 RESULTS

Trench 1



Plate 3. Trench 1, looking south

Trench 1 was orientated roughly north to south, parallel with Bury Road to the west. The trench was located on the western side of the development plot (Figs 2 and 3, Plate 3). Two gullies and a ditch were found within the trench and all were observed to truncate subsoil [2] except for gully [8] which appeared to be sealed by the subsoil, although later ploughing may have disrupted this relationship.

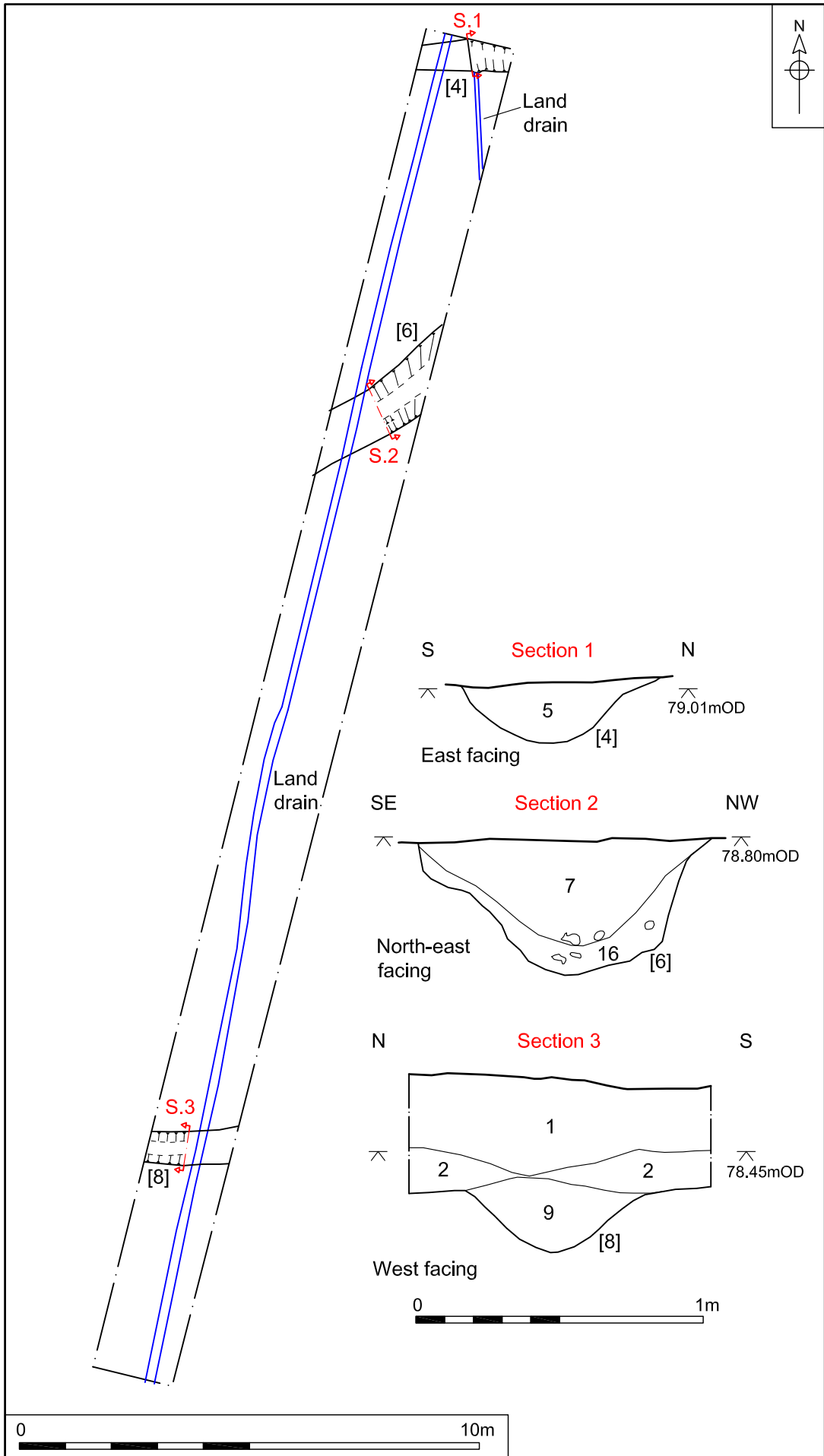


Figure 3. Trench 1, plan and sections. Scale 1:125 and 1:20

At the northern end of the trench was gully ([4]). It was orientated east to west and extended at least 1.80m in length with a width of 0.67m and a depth of 0.21m (Plate 4). It had curved sides and base and was filled with a firm pale brown silty clay ([5]) with occasional chalk flecks and appeared to have accumulated naturally. The feature was truncated by two field drains, a recent gravel drain and an older red ceramic drain. The gully was parallel to gully [8] (at the south end of the trench) and they shared virtually the same alignment as the modern field system.



Plate 4. Gully [4], looking west

Closer to the centre of the trench was ditch ([6]) which was orientated north-east to south-west and had an observed length of 3.80m. It was 1.25m wide and 0.46m deep with irregular sides (steep on the north-west side) and a curved base (Plate 5). The feature contained two fills. The first ([16]) was a firm light yellowish brown slightly silty clay which contained moderate chalk flecks and had a maximum depth of 0.16m and had probably built up through natural deposition. The thicker secondary fill ([7]) consisted of a light brown silty clay which contained occasional chalk flecks. It was 0.36m thick at the centre of the ditch and its appearance also suggested that the feature had been infilled via gradual silting processes rather than deliberate backfilling.

Towards the south end of the trench was a gully ([8]) which was parallel to gully [4]. It had an observed length of 1.80m and was 0.75m wide and 0.26m deep with curved concave sides and base (Plate 6). The fill ([9]) was composed of a firm light orangey brown silty clay which had probably formed due to natural silting up processes.



Plate 5. Ditch [6], looking south-west



Plate 6. Gully [8], looking west

Trench 2



Plate 7. Trench 2, looking east

Trench 2 was orientated roughly east to west, towards the centre of the development plot (Figs 2 and 4). It appeared that a single ditch was located at the centre of the trench (Plate 7) however hand-excavation showed that there were two intercutting ditches present ([10] and [14]) both of which truncated subsoil [2].

The earliest ditch ([14]) was orientated north-west to south-east and was truncated by ditch [10]. It had an observed length of 5.34m and was 0.76m wide. The depth was 0.36m and the sides and base were concave (Plates 8 and 9). The single fill ([15]) was formed from a light brown clayey silt which contained occasional chalk and charcoal flecks. The presence of charcoal in the fill may suggest that it was at least partly composed of material that had been deliberately deposited although there was no sign of any tip lines. The ditch appeared to be the same feature as ditch [12] observed in Trench 3.

The later of the two features (ditch [10]) was orientated closer to a north-south axis. The ditch had a maximum observable length of 1.70m, a width of 1.15m and a depth of 0.36m (Plates 8 and 9). The sides were convex and the base roughly flat. It was filled with deposit [11] which consisted of a light brown clayey silt which contained occasional chalk flecks and fragments and charcoal flecks. A field drain aligned with ditch [10] was observed within the fill of this feature.

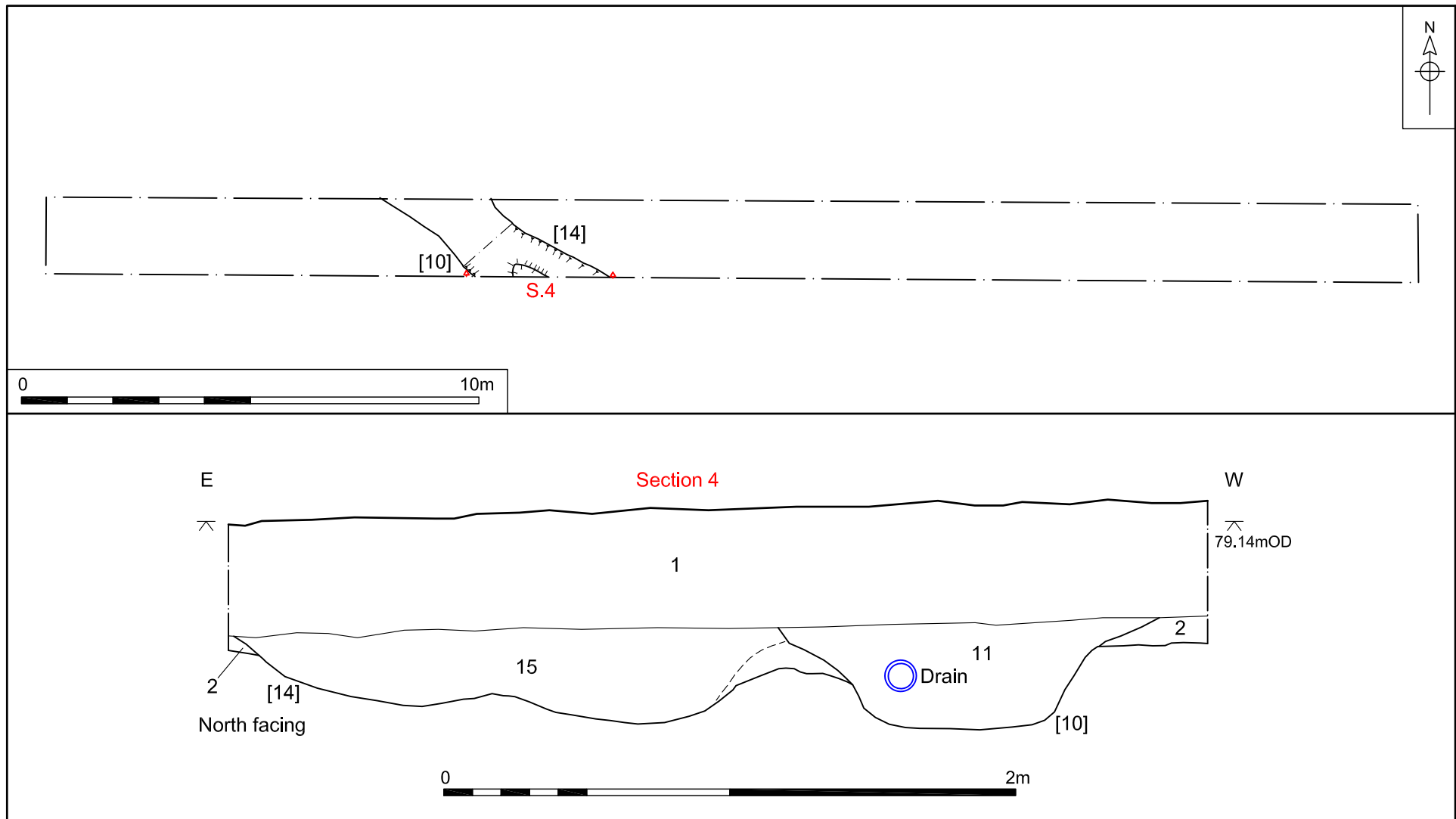


Figure 4. Trench 2, plan and section. Scale 1:125 and 1:20



Plate 8. Ditches [10] and [14], looking west



Plate 9. Ditches [14] and [10], looking south

Trench 3

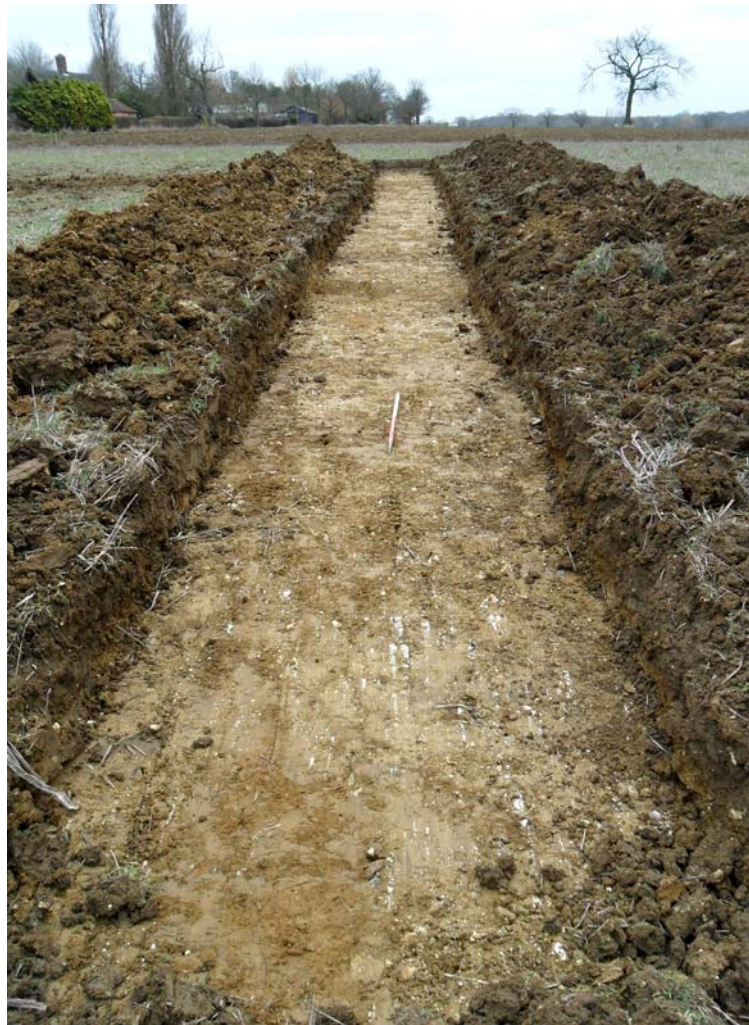


Plate 10. Trench 3, looking north

Trench 3 was situated at the eastern side of the development plot. It was orientated roughly north to south, parallel with Trench 1 and Bury Road to the west (Figs 2 and 5, Plate 10). There was a single ditch present within the trench and a natural hollow towards the north. The ditch truncated subsoil [2].

Ditch [12] was at least 1.83m long, 0.77m wide and 0.38m deep (Plate 11). The sides and base of the ditch were slightly irregular though generally curved. The single fill ([13]) was composed of a friable mid brown silty clay which had probably accumulated through natural processes.

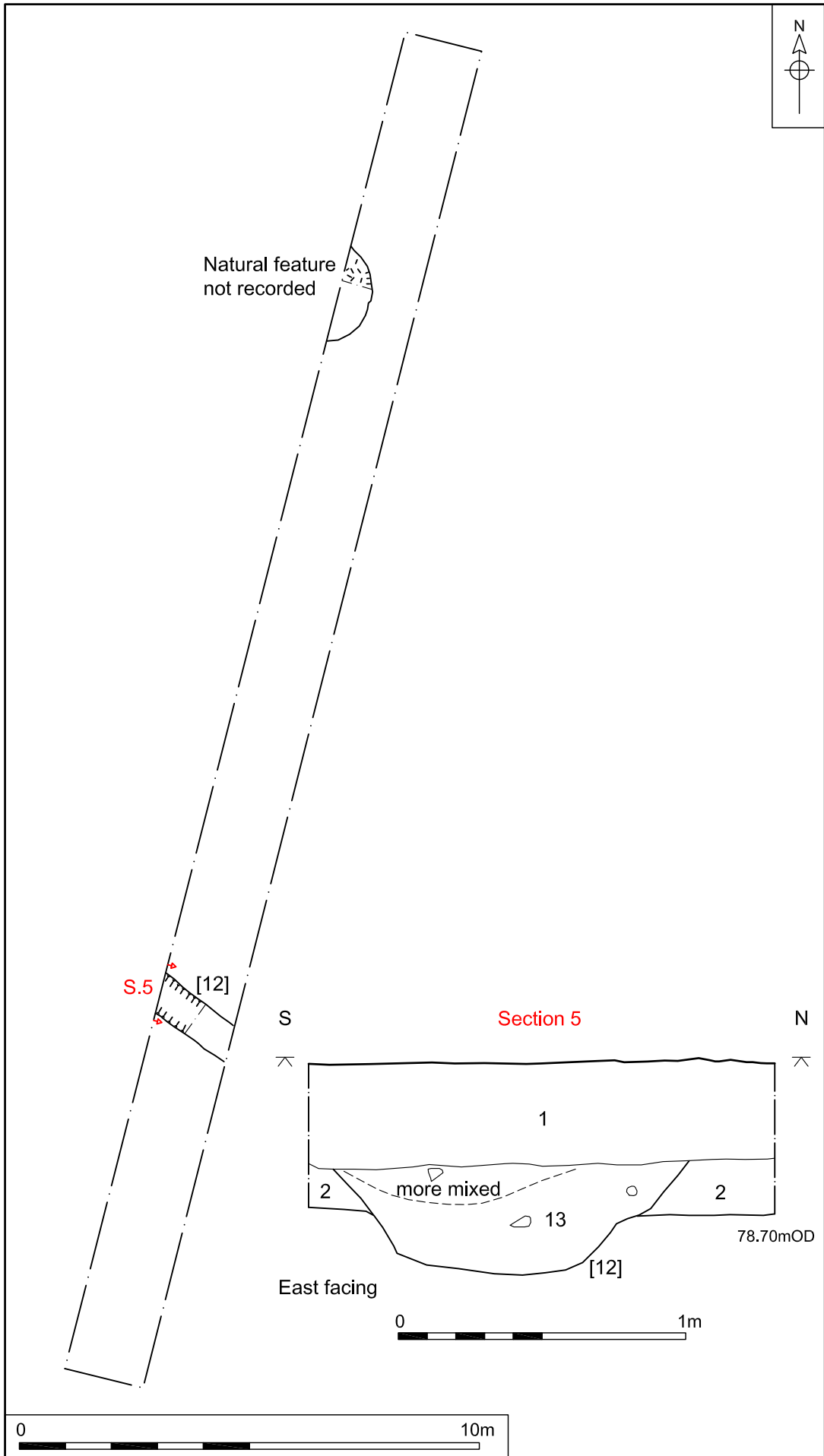


Figure 5. Trench 3, plan and section. Scale 1:125 and 1:20



Plate 11. Ditch [12], looking west

6.0 THE FINDS

by Sarah Percival

6.1 Pottery

A small sherd of five joining scraps weighing 1g was found in the fill of gully [4]. The sherd is flint-tempered suggesting an earlier Neolithic, later Bronze Age or earlier Iron Age date for the pottery.

6.2 Fired Clay

A single fragment of fired clay weighing 1g came from the fill of gully [4]. The undatable fragment is in a clean silty fabric with one surviving flat surface.

6.3 Flint

A single struck flint weighing 1g was recovered from the fill of gully [8]. The flint is not closely datable.

6.4 Animal Bone

by Julie Curl

Two pieces of an adult cattle pelvis weighing 13g were found within the fill of gully [4]. They represent butchering/food waste.

7.0 CONCLUSIONS

This evaluation has demonstrated that there is historic activity at the site although the lack of evidence of material culture suggests that the features are most likely connected with rural practices and are situated away from any settlement centres. The church, probably at the centre of the medieval village, is located a fair distance away, to the south of the present site.

There was insufficient dating evidence present to establish a clear date for the archaeological features, though it is reasonable to suggest that although a prehistoric date for the features cannot be ruled out, they are most likely to be of medieval date or later.

The two parallel gullies ([4] and [8]) within Trench 1 appear to be related due to their orientation and form. The observation that gully [8] appears to be sealed by the subsoil [2] whereas gully [4] cuts through it may not reflect a problem with the phasing as the subsoil above gully [8] is uneven suggesting that it may have been mixed and altered by subsequent ploughing. The alignment of the two parallel gullies in Trench 1 (with the prevailing direction of the modern fields) appears to suggest that they are of post-medieval date although they could conceivably represent part of a medieval plot of land (burgage plot) adjacent to Bury Road. However the gullies do not appear on the 1st Edition of the Ordnance Survey map (late 19th century) and this may suggest that they are actually part of an earlier system of smaller fields which were later combined in the 17th-18th centuries eventually to form the large modern fields we see today.

The fragment of prehistoric pottery found within gully [4] is likely to be residual, although it does point to some activity of that date taking place reasonably nearby. Along with the flake from ditch [6] this does point to a small focus of prehistoric material on the western side of the site which may be associated with find spots (e.g. the Iron Age coin from TMX 011) located in fields on the opposite side of Bury Road.

The alignment of the three ditches on the site ([6], [10] and [12]=[14]) is of some interest as they do not share the same alignment as either Bury Road or the orientation of the modern fieldsystem. It is considered that both the small flint flake within ditch [6] and the pottery fragment within gully [4] are likely to be residual and the fact that the ditches truncated the subsoil probably suggests a later rather than earlier date. The ditches may have been drainage channels possibly carrying water from the higher (western) part of the field towards the east. The need for effective drainage in the area is evidenced by the presence of the many field drains in the field today. The prevailing direction of ditch [12]=[14] may be influenced by the River Brett to the east, although it is approximately 500m away. This ditch also appears to share its orientation with the modern entrance into the field and this may be significant although it could equally be coincidental.

On balance it is suggested that the ditches are medieval or early post medieval in date, though an earlier date cannot be ruled out.

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

Acknowledgements

The evaluation was undertaken by the author with Lilly Hodges, to whom thanks are expressed. Thanks also to Greg Dodds of Orwell Housing Association for his interest in the project and his help in completing it. GB Digger Hire supplied the JCB with driver Paul.

Thanks also to the following: the finds were washed by Lucy Talbot and analysed by Sarah Percival; Julie Curl kindly identified the small amount of animal bone; the illustrations were prepared by David Dobson after initial digitising by the author; Jayne Bown edited the report.

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Appendix 1a: Context Summary

| Context | Category | Cut Type | Fill Of | Description | Period |
|---------|----------|----------|---------|--------------|-----------|
| 1 | Deposit | | | Topsoil | Uncertain |
| 2 | Deposit | | | Subsoil | Uncertain |
| 3 | Deposit | | | Natural | - |
| 4 | Cut | Gully | | Gully | Uncertain |
| 5 | Deposit | | 4 | Fill of [4] | Uncertain |
| 6 | Cut | Ditch | | Ditch | Uncertain |
| 7 | Deposit | | 6 | Fill of [6] | Uncertain |
| 8 | Cut | Gully | | Gully | Uncertain |
| 9 | Deposit | | 8 | Fill of [8] | Uncertain |
| 10 | Cut | Ditch | | Ditch | Uncertain |
| 11 | Deposit | | 10 | Fill of [10] | Uncertain |
| 12 | Cut | Ditch | | Ditch | Uncertain |
| 13 | Deposit | | 12 | Fill of [12] | Uncertain |
| 14 | Cut | Ditch | | Ditch | Uncertain |
| 15 | Deposit | | 14 | Fill of [14] | Uncertain |
| 16 | Deposit | | 6 | Fill of [6] | Uncertain |

Appendix 1b: OASIS Feature Summary

| Period | Cut Type | Total |
|-----------|----------|-------|
| Uncertain | Ditch | 4 |
| | Gully | 2 |

Appendix 2a: Finds by Context

| Context | Material | Qty | Wt | Period |
|---------|----------------|-----|-----|-------------|
| 5 | Pottery | 1 | 1g | Prehistoric |
| 5 | Animal Bone | 2 | 13g | Unknown |
| 5 | Fired Clay | 1 | 1g | Unknown |
| 9 | Flint – Struck | 1 | 1g | Prehistoric |

Appendix 2b: OASIS Finds Summary

| Period | Material | Total |
|-------------|----------------|-------|
| Prehistoric | Flint – Struck | 1 |
| | Pottery | 1 |
| Unknown | Animal Bone | 2 |
| | Fired Clay | 1 |