

CHANTRY BARN, ORFORD, SUFFOLK

ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION -

WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

1 Summary

An Archaeological watching brief was carried out on construction work during the redevelopment of disused buildings on the site of Chantry Barn, Orford, Suffolk. Two phases of work took place on site. No archaeology was observed in the Phase 1 drainage trench but several pits and a ditch were recorded in Phase 2, which were likely to date to the medieval period.

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Site Location (Fig 1)

2.1.1 The site is centred on National Grid Reference TM 42085 49690. The site lies just to the south of the junction of Gedgrave Road and Broad Street in the small town of Orford.

2.2 Planning and Archaeological Background

2.2.1 Proposals have been made by John Crane Property Developments to redevelop four redundant farm buildings on Chantry Farm and convert them into new houses. Planning permission (REF: C02/1067) for this development, has been granted by Suffolk Coastal Planning Department (05/02/03) subject to a condition requiring an archaeological watching brief during all ground-penetrating works, in order to ensure that the archaeological interests of the site were protected.

2.2.2 The site lies within an area of regional archaeological importance, as defined in the County Sites and Monuments Record. Orford Castle lies to the north-west of the site and dates to the 12th century. Recent excavations at Castle Hill revealed structural post holes and clay ovens dating to the 12th century when the town itself was founded, (*Suffolk County Council Archaeology Service Annual Report 2000-2001*)

2.2.3 The site also lies a short distance from the River Ore which may have been used during the medieval period for the local fishing industry.

2.2.4 The extent of medieval occupation on the south side of Broad Street is unknown. The eastern end was occupied by the Austin Friary, founded in 1295 and it may be that occupation continued westward to Chantry Farm.

3 STRATEGY

3.1 Aims of the Investigation

3.1.1 The general and specific aims of the evaluation are as laid out in the brief issued by Suffolk County Council and the Written Scheme of Investigation issued by AOC Archaeology. They are:

- To provide a record of archaeological deposits which would be damaged or removed by any development (including services and landscaping) permitted by the current planning consent.
- To record any evidence of medieval occupation that is present on the site.
- The final aim will be to make public the results of the archaeological work.

3.2 Methodology

3.2.1 A watching brief was carried out during all intrusive groundwork. The scale and scope of the work was reviewed in consultation with Keith Wade, of the Environmental and Transport Department, Suffolk County Council.

3.2.2 A unique SMR code, (ORF-105) was obtained prior to commencing the watching brief works. The code was also used as a site code and the archive reference.

3.2.3 Site procedures were as defined in the Written Scheme of Investigation.

3.2.4 Standard AOC Archaeology techniques were employed throughout, involving the completion of written context records for each deposit, and cut encountered, with scale plans and/or section drawings recorded where appropriate and a photographic record produced.

3.2.5 The work was carried out in accordance with the standard specified by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (1994) and was monitored by Keith Wade of Suffolk County Council.

4 RESULTS

4.1 Phase 1 (See Fig 2)

4.1.1 The watching brief took place in two separate phases of work. The first phase took place at the back of the house where a drainage run was being excavated with a 1m cubic soak away at the southern most end. The results are displayed in the table below:

Context	Description	Width	Length	Depth
1/001	Garden soil / Made ground	Trench	Trench	0.35-0.85m
1/002	Shell midden / domestic dump	Trench	4.10m	0.30m
1/003	Worked soil / dirty natural	Trench	2.20m	0.25m
1/004	Dirty natural / natural dump layer	Trench	7.50m	0.75m
1/005	Natural sand	Trench	2.30m	0.25m NFE

4.1.2 No archaeology was observed in this trench. The shell midden contained no dateable finds.

4.2 Phase 2 (See Figs 2 & 3)

4.2.1 The second phase of watching brief took place at the front of the property during drainage excavations. A trench was machine excavated 20m long, 1.10m wide to a depth of approximately 1m.

The lowest deposit in the trench was the natural sand (2/013), which was recorded as dark pink and was compact and moist. Cut into the natural sand was a series of three intercutting pits and ditches. The earliest of the features was cut [2/012], which contained two fills. Only the western edge of the cut was seen in due to truncation by later features on its eastern edge. The upper fill (2/011) consisted of a sequence of small layers of ash and silty charcoal with interwoven layers of clean yellow sand and silty charcoal and ash. The secondary fill (2/010) was a clean deposit of yellow and orange sand. The lower fill (2/011) was suggestive of a sequence of small scale dumping possibly associated with localised domestic burning activity.

4.2.2 To the west of [2/012] was a large circular pit cut [2/008]. Half of the pit was recorded in plan and the other half continued into the southern bulk. The semi circular cut was filled with pinkish brown clayey sand, which contained occasional fragments of brick material and oyster shell. No pottery was recovered. The pit measured 1.90m long and 0.50m wide.

4.2.3 Cutting into the above pit was a modern service trench extending out from the current building into the trench on its southern edge, [2/009].

4.2.4 Cutting through both features mentioned above, was a later ditch running north-east/south-west. The ditch [2/006] measured 2.10m wide and was approximately 1.10m in depth. The ditch contained three fills. The lowest fill was orange brown

clay with occasional fragments of charcoal, oyster shell and chalk that may have been natural infill. The second fill (2/004) was 0.27m thick and was mid grey brown sandy clay with occasional shell, charcoal, flint and brick material. Medieval pottery was recovered from the fill. Above this was plastic green grey sandy clay upper fill (2/003) 0.6m thick. No pottery was recovered from the fill but it contained occasional pieces of brick material, charcoal, oyster shell and chalk.

- 4.2.5 The above ditch may be part of the enclosure boundaries to the Austin Friary, which is known to exist to the west of Chantry Barns. However more conclusive evidence would be needed to confirm this.
- 4.2.6 Overlying the entire trench was layer 2/002, dark brown clay sand which formed a layer of modern made ground. Overlying this was 2/001 which was modern yellow and orange builder's sand.

5 FINDS

- 5.1 Several pieces of pottery were recovered from ditch [2/006]. These were dated to the 13th/14th century. Except for one piece of jar rim, they were all body sherds typical of assemblages found on other archaeological sites excavated locally. The pottery recovered from ditch/pit 2/012, was dated to the same period as the above. The pottery was covered in burnt food residue and was probably deposited with hearth debris recorded as ash and burnt sand.

6 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 The watching brief was successful in identifying areas of archaeological interest on the site. Medieval activity was recorded in Trench 2, a the majority of which will be preserved *in situ*, due to the limited scale of intrusional works on site. Two pits and a ditch were identified dated to the medieval period.

This limited watching brief is the first phase of archaeological work associated with the redevelopment of the existing buildings on this site. These initial findings will help expand our understanding of the village of Orford.

7 BIBLIOGRAPHY

AOC Archaeology, (2004) *Archaeological Watching Brief at Chantry Barns, Orford, Suffolk.*

Institute of Field Archaeologists, (1994) *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations.*

English Heritage London Region, (1998) *Archaeological Field Guidance Papers 2, 3 and 5*