

# Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service

## Archaeological Monitoring Report

### 3 High Street, Lavenham

(Planning Application B/05/02185/FUL & B/05/02186/LBC)

SMR- LVM 050

Oasis ID. No. suffolkc1-16485

Robert Atfield: Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service Field Team (Report)

Keith Wade: SCCAS Conservation Team (Brief and Specification)

John Newman: Field Officer/Contracts Manager



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Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service  
Field Projects Team

Lucy Robinson, County Director of Environment and Transport  
Endeavour House, 8 Russell Road, Ipswich IP1 2BX

SCCAS Report No. 2006/127

## Summary

Archaeological monitoring was carried out at 3 High Street, Lavenham as a condition of planning application B/05/02185/FUL & B/05/02186/LBC; the monitoring is funded by Mr. and Mrs. C. Jay. The site is centred on TL 9149 4920 where an extension to the rear of the listed property is proposed, in addition to adaptations to the existing building, this is to enable future use as a pharmacy. The building work includes the demolition of nineteenth century additions to the rear of the structure and lowering of ground levels. Three visits were made to the site, the first was by Stuart Boulter who recorded aspects of the building prior to the ground-works (see Figs.7 and 8). The second visit, after the soil levels had been reduced, was by Linzi Everett who found that conditions were too waterlogged to enable clear views of any ground characteristics. The third visit was by Robert Atfield on the afternoon of the 5<sup>th</sup> June 2006 when more favourable conditions prevailed. It was possible to examine most of the area of lowered and levelled ground in bright dry conditions, although some standing water remained on site. A quantity of the upcast soil was also available for inspection. However, in spite of a thorough examination of all deposits under the full co-operation of the landowners and contractors the monitoring produced only a single archaeological feature, a pit with associated finds. In addition, a single late medieval architectural element was observed and recorded. This was the remains of a mullion window seen when an original wall-plate was exposed as a result of creating increased access to the rear of the property.

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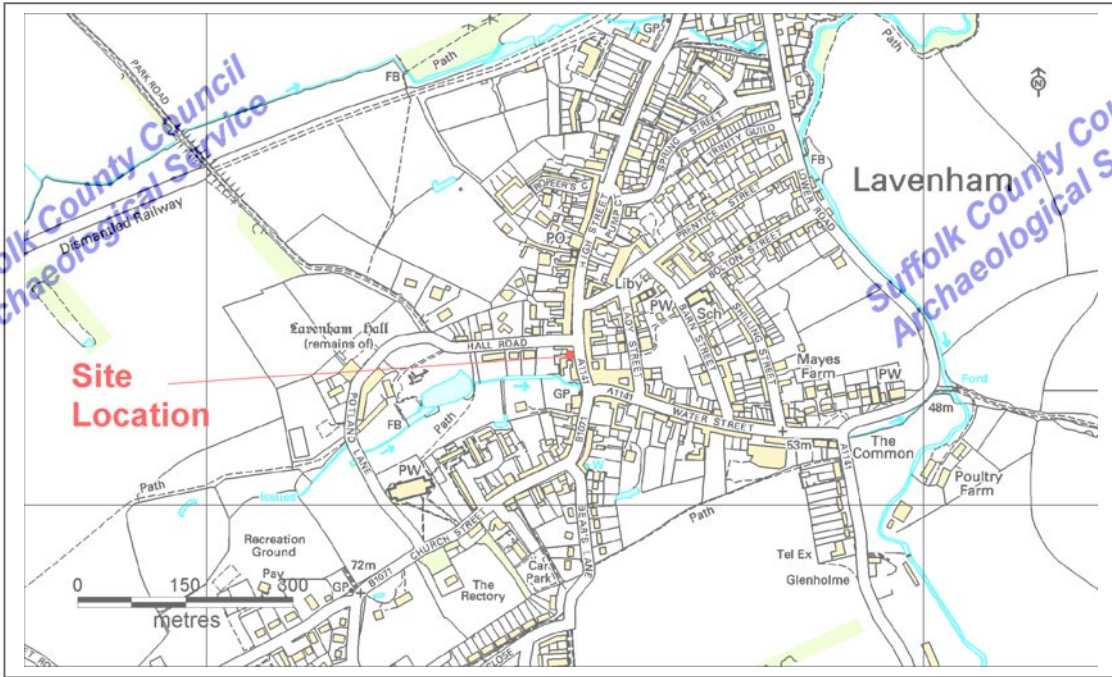
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**Fig. 1 Location of the Site**



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**Fig. 2 The Extent of the Site Area**

## Introduction

The Brief and Specification for the monitoring was designed and issued by Keith Wade of the Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service Conservation Team (dated 07-04-2006) (Wade 2006). The site lies within the Area of Archaeological Importance for medieval Lavenham as defined in the County Sites and Monuments Record. The building that occupies the site is a listed late medieval timber-framed structure, thought to date from the late fourteenth century. As a typical example of a timber-framed merchant's house of the late Middle Ages, the building would have had an open central hall between two gabled and jettied cross-wings. The central hall was heated by a simple bonfire-like open hearth and there is a possibility that the building may contain rarely found examples of a louver or other smoke-escape mechanism surviving among the rafters (Alston 2005)(see Appendix 2). To the rear of the building, a number of mostly nineteenth structures were removed and the ground level lowered to create a formation level around 0.65m. below the previously existing ground surface (Wade 2006).

## Methodology

The site area was recorded using a sketch plan in order to plot the extent of the ground disturbance, localised soil profiles and any features that were revealed. All faces of the edge of site sections were examined, aided by a small amount of hand cleaning. Details of soils and the depth of the deposits were recorded at a number of locations around the site. A search of the entire area of disturbed ground was made in order to try and locate any available datable finds; a quantity of the upcast soil was also searched. Mullion window mortises, which are probably early features of the timber-framed building, were also revealed as a result of the demolition of the later structures at the rear of the building. These were informally recorded using sketches and photographs.

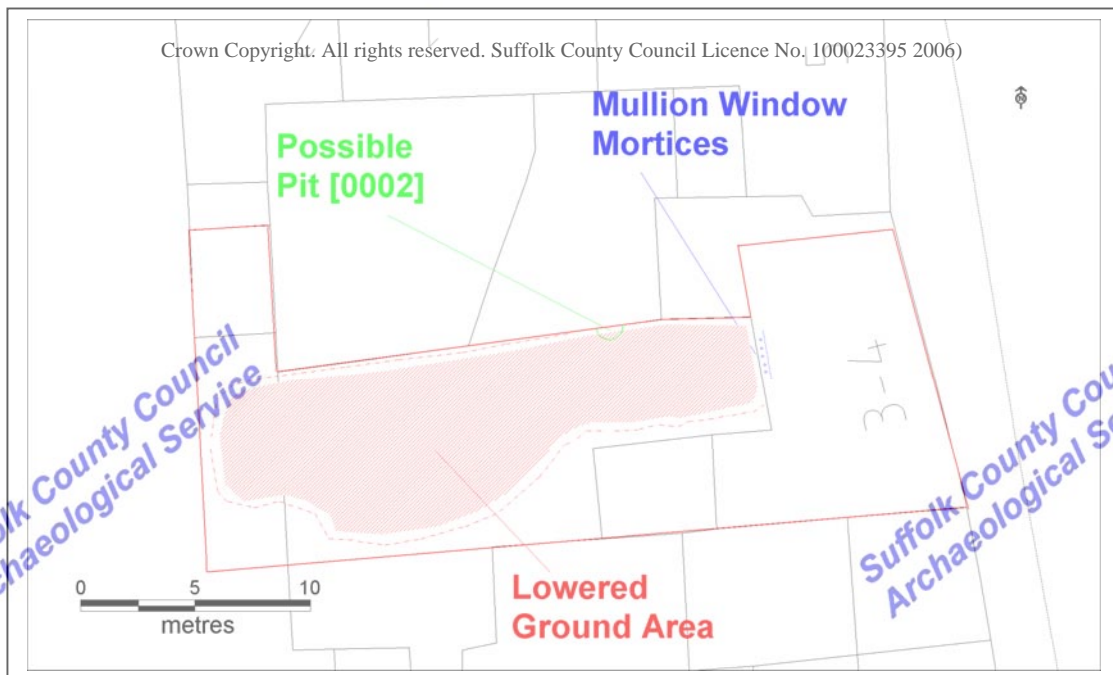


Fig. 3 Location of Recorded Features and Lowered Ground

## Results

By the time the monitoring visits took place, the area of ground to the rear of the property had been cleared of most of the later structural additions to the property and the ground level had been reduced by up to 1.30m. in relation to surrounding ground levels. Although the lowered ground surface continued to be waterlogged, it was sufficiently clean to allow a reasonable examination for features and finds. However, this entire surface was found to be devoid of archaeological features or finds and consisted of distinctive homogeneous soft brown clay, which was virtually free of stones. The only archaeological feature to be located lay partially revealed within the north edge of site section (possible pit 0002). The most intact profile of the soil deposits was also revealed in the north edge of site section. The topsoil (0004) was of dark clayey loam with a depth of around 0.35m.. Below this was a very mixed layer of chalky clay, which contained large quantities of ceramic building materials including brick, tile, flint rubble and fine lime mortar lumps. The primary general deposit (0006) may represent largely natural pale brown clay, but it did appear to contain occasional charcoal flecks.

Possible Pit 0002 Only one archaeological feature was observed during the monitoring. This was located within the north edge of site section (see Fig. 3-5), where a possible pit was recorded. The upper part of the pit may have been truncated and was sealed by a layer (0005) of mixed chalky clays, flint rubble and mixed ceramic building materials. This layer occurred along most of the north edge of site section. The pit cut a layer of pale brown, possibly natural clay (0006), before terminating just above the soft brown clay deposit. The feature had near vertical sides and a virtually flat base. A single fragment of a strap handle from a medieval jug was found securely stratified within the fill of the pit dating to the late 12<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> century. A fragment of an early post-medieval brick was located within the upper area of the fill (See Fig. 4 & page 6).

### Mullion Window Mortises

As a result of the demolition of later structures to the rear of the timber-framed structure, along with the removal of sections of walling, an early feature was revealed in the wall-plate of the central hall. A section of later in-filled wall was removed to improve access on the west side of the central hall. As a result, a series of five 'diamond' shaped mortises were exposed along the underside of the wall-plate. The mortises are additions to the two observed by Leigh Alston during the Historic Building Survey and indicate that a substantial west facing window existed within the rear wall of the open hall (Alston 2005: 2) (see Appendix 2).

## The Finds (Richenda Goffin)

### Introduction

Finds were collected from a single context, as shown in the table below.

OP	Pottery		CBM		Spotdate
	No.	Wt/g	No.	Wt/g	
0003	1	44	1	1191	Late med/early post-med
Total	1	44	1	1191	

### Pottery

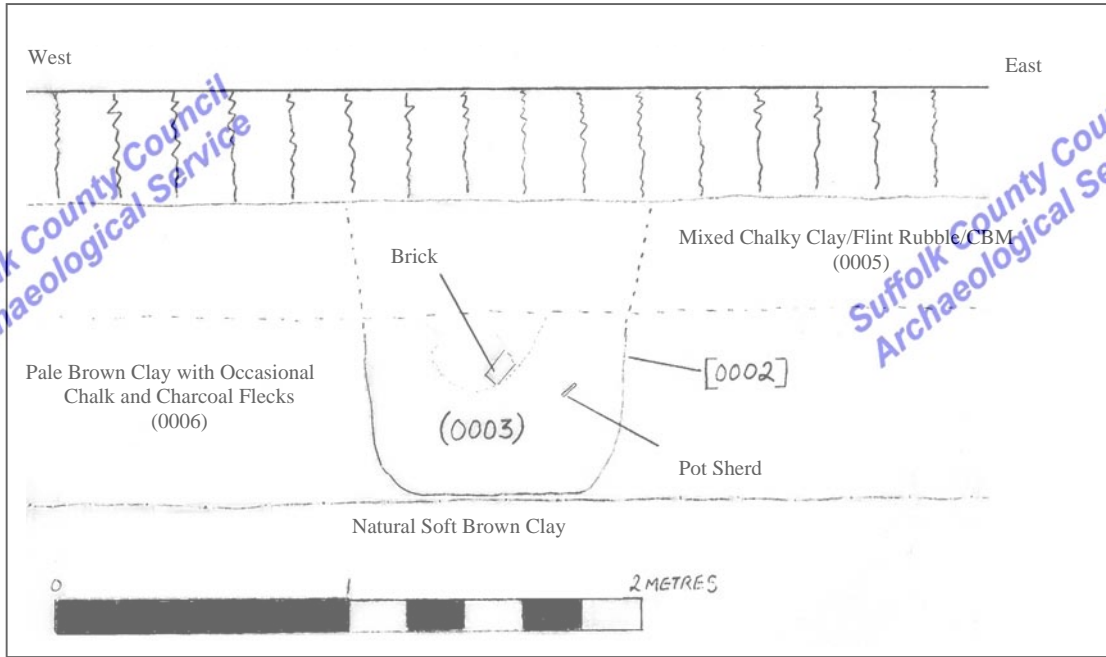
A single fragment of the strap handle of a medieval jug was recovered from 0003, the fill of a possible pit, located at the rear of the property. The handle is made in a coarse sandy grey fabric (MCW) dating to the late 12th-14th century, and is decorated with impressed lines along both of the outer edges of the handle.

### Ceramic building material

A fragment of a small handmade brick was also collected from fill 0003. The brick has a hard dark red fine fabric, which contains occasional flint inclusions and is sanded on four faces. The appearance and dimensions of the brick indicate that it is early post-medieval in date. Examples of similar bricks, (LB1) have been found in deposits dating to the sixteenth and seventeenth century (Drury 1993, 165).

### Discussion

The sherd of medieval coarseware was securely stratified within fill 0003, but the brick fragment was found in the upper part of the feature with small quantities of other types of building material such as mortar. It is possible that the medieval sherd is residual and redeposited with the later brick, but it seems more likely that the pit is medieval, although the upper part of the fill contained material which is more mixed in date.



**Fig. 4 North Edge of Site Section: Possible Pit 0002**



**Fig. 5 Possible Pit 0002 Seen in North Edge of Site**

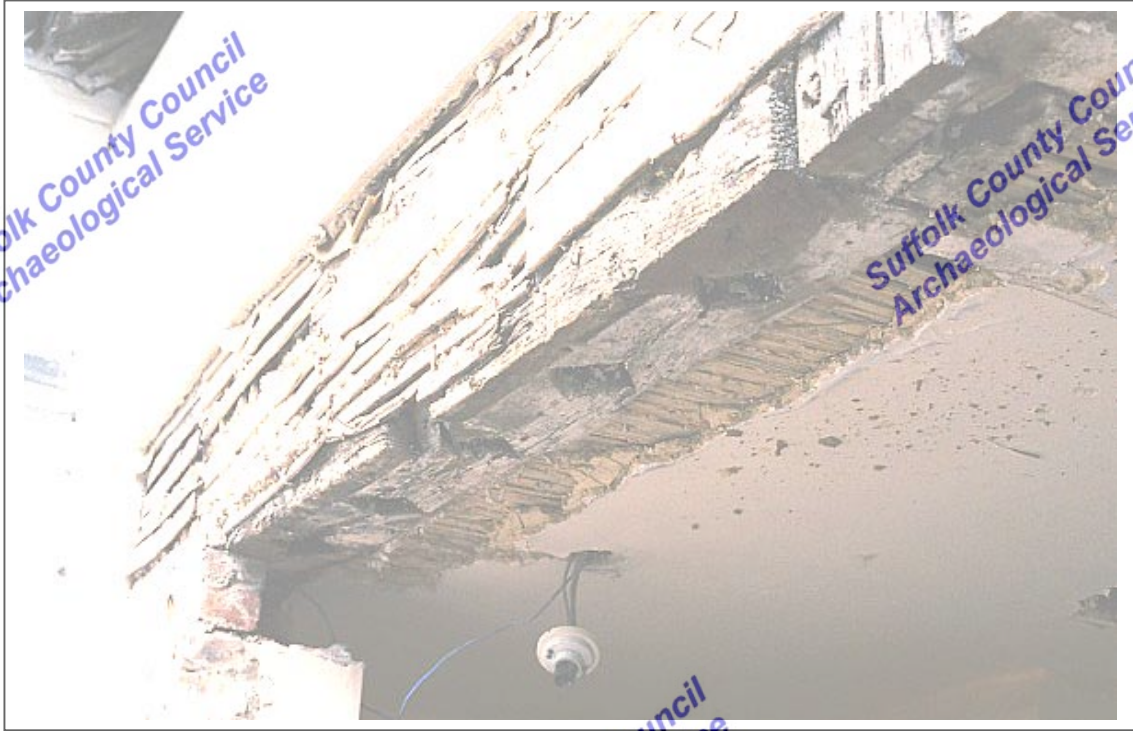


Fig. 6 Mullion window 'diamond' mortises (west wall of central hall)



Fig. 7 View of the site before ground-works took place (looking east)





Fig. 8 Western gable-end of the southern cross-wing (looking east)

## Conclusion

Although only one archaeological feature was observed as a result of groundworks to the rear of the building, it is likely that more existed within the deposits which were removed during ground lowering. However, it is equally likely that the upper 0.70m. of deposits had undergone considerable disturbance based on the evidence revealed within the edge of site sections. The mixed layer of material which was located below the topsoil contained large quantities of building debris including brick and tile rubble, flint with adhering lime mortar and re-deposited clay. It is most likely that the early post-medieval brick, found in the upper fill of possible pit 0002, is associated with this deposit.

The upper limit of the possible pit 0002, was initially thought to have been truncated, however, this level approximately corresponds with the floor levels within the late medieval building (see general site view on page 1). This may suggest that a ground build up of around 0.70m. may have occurred since the construction of the timber-framed structure. Equally, if this is the case, the total lack of any features within the lowered ground surface may indicate that the rear of the property had few substantial

additional structures during the early life of the building. There was no indication of any formal yard surfaces such as laid slabs, cobbles or bricks, although it is possible that layer (0005) represents a later roughly made post-medieval yard surface.

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Robert Atfield  
Archaeological Service  
Suffolk County Council  
July 2006

## References

Alston, L., 2005 'Outline Historic Building Survey and Impact Assessment: 3 High Street, Lavenham, Suffolk' Leigh. A. Alston, Architectural Historian, Bures St. Mary, Suffolk.

Wade, K., 2006 'Brief and Specification for Archaeological Monitoring: 3 High Street, Lavenham' SCCAS Conservation Team, Bury St. Edmunds.