

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT

LAND ADJACENT TO MANOR LODGE, ASHFIELD ROAD, LITTLE GREEN, NORTON NRN 017

A REPORT ON THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION, 2006
(Planning app. no. 1981/05/FUL)

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Summary

An evaluation at Little Green, Norton was completed in advance of the construction of a small housing development. The site is part of a medieval green of which the south edge was shown to be included within the development area. A ditch, pit and two slots were recorded; these were post medieval and the whole pottery assemblage was 17th century or later.

An extensive hollow possibly the result of clay extraction, meant that the ground level in the north east corner of the site was *c.*2m lower than the adjacent road. This was filled with silts indicating that the hollow was waterlogged. Pottery found at the base of the silts showed that it was being worked into the post medieval period.

The southern green edge is preserved in the existing field ditch and medieval pottery was recorded on the surface of the adjacent field but none on the green itself. The line of the south edge of the green can be traced by the position of the older houses that are set back from the current Ashfield Road. This suggests that the green was linear in plan and was probably originally a projection of the much larger Buttonhaugh Green to the west.

SMR information

Planning application no. 1981/05/FUL

Date of fieldwork: 8th August 2006

Grid Reference: TL 9750 6637

Funding body: Mr Terry Lucas, Landowner and developer

OASIS REF suffolk c1 17486

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Introduction

An archaeological evaluation was carried out on land adjacent to Manor Lodge, Little Green, Norton. The evaluation was a condition of the consent on planning application 1981/05/FUL to construct three houses with garages. The work was completed in accordance with the brief and specification set by Jess Tipper of Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service (SCCAS) Conservation Team, dated 7th October 2005. The evaluation was undertaken on 8th August 2006 by members of SCCAS Field Team and funded by the developer Mr Terry Lucas.

The site is centred at TL 9750 6637 (Fig. 1). It lies below the 60m contour and slopes from the north end of the site to a ditch on its southern edge, dropping by c.2m across a distance of c. 50m. The ground level at the northern end of the site is up to 1.5-2m lower than the surface of Ashfield Road and this change in level is achieved by a near vertical drop. The site is part of a medieval green with the south green edge included within the development area. Medieval greens were areas of common pasture and evidence suggests a 12th century origin for many of the settlements around greens.

The surface geology is clay and until recently the site has been down to pasture. The Ordnance Survey series of maps show the site as wooded, or an orchard, from the first (1880's) series (Fig.5) which suggests that it may never have been ploughed. Listed buildings front the site on three sides. On the north 'Manor Farmhouse' dates largely to the mid-16th century but has earlier medieval origins. 'Manor Lodge', situated on the east side, has a 16th century brick crows foot gable, similar to the gables on Manor Farmhouse but this is over an early timber framed building. On the west side is situated 'Pantiles' which has been dated to the 17th century or earlier (Fig. 2).

The aim of the evaluation was determine whether any archaeological deposits exist that would be affected by the proposed development, to provide sufficient information to construct an appropriate conservation strategy, and also to define the south edge of the green.

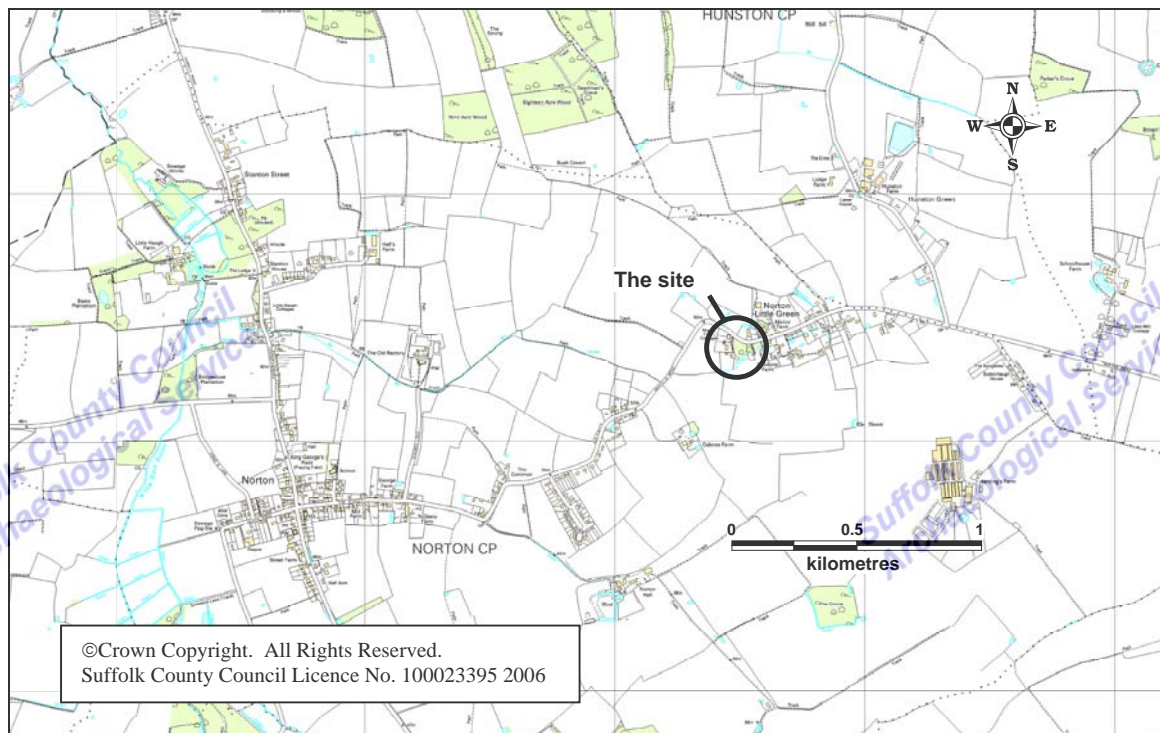


Figure 1 Site location plan

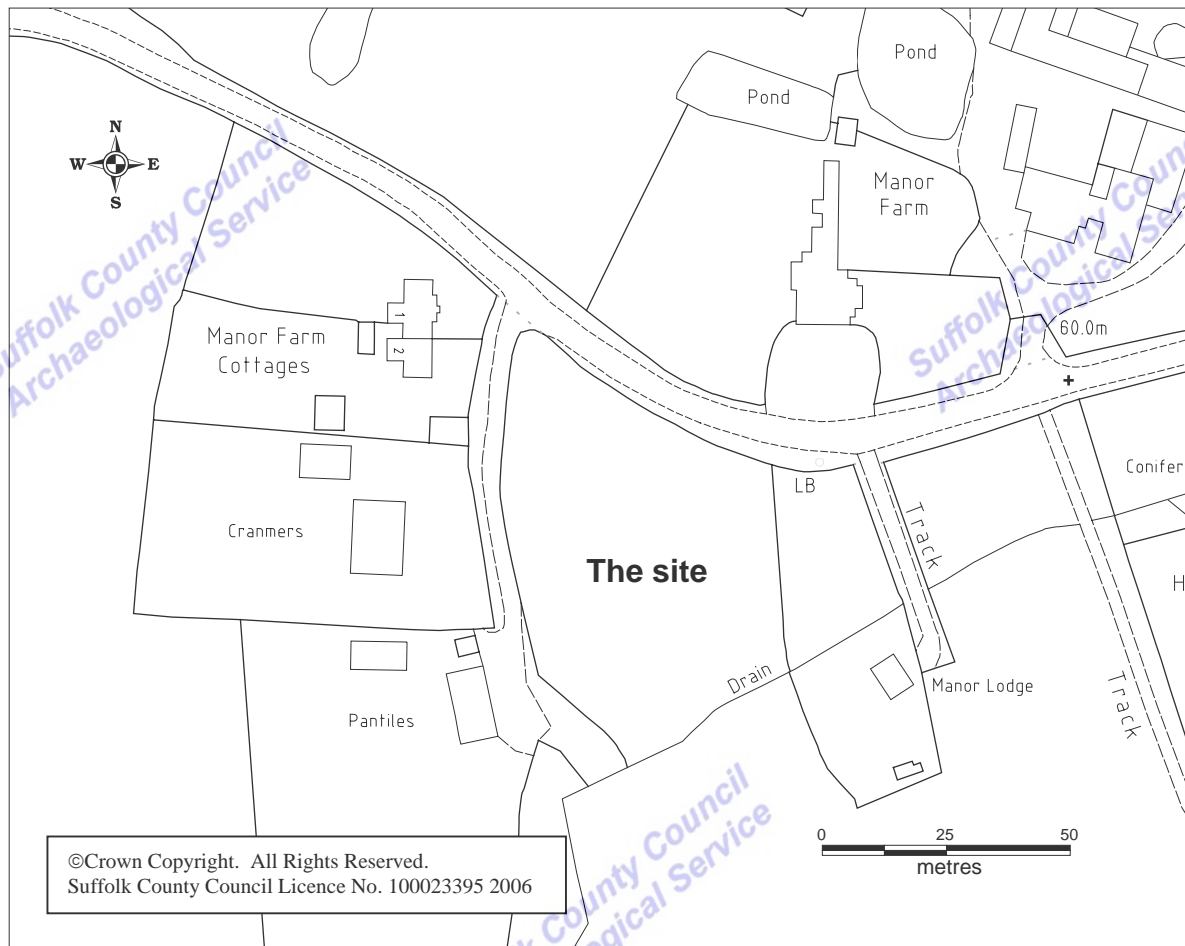


Figure 2. The site and surrounding listed buildings

Methodology

Five linear trenches were excavated by a back-acting wheeled digger fitted with a 1.8m toothless bucket and under the constant supervision of an archaeologist. 172sq metres were excavated, just over 5% of the application area and followed a trench plan designed to sample all areas of the site.

The machine removed the topsoil to expose the surface of the subsoil. All possible archaeological features were sampled by hand excavation to at least the minimum requirements of the specification (Appendix 1). Plans and sections were recorded at 1:20 and the positions of the trenches and features were plotted against the national grid using a Total Station Theodolite. Digital and film photographs were routinely taken and levels were related to a spot height (60m) on the road.

All pre-modern finds were retained for analysis and the site data has been input onto an MS Access database. The finds and site records have been archived in the small and main stores of Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service at Bury St Edmunds and with the County Sites and Monuments Record under the parish code NRN 017. A copy of the report has also been lodged with the OASIS on-line database (ref suffolk c1 17486).

Results

Five trenches were excavated across the site; the positions of these are shown on the plan in Figure 3 and they are described below. Restrictions on the positioning of the trenches included an overhead power line that ran over the middle of the site and large heaps of debris from the clearance of trees and vegetation from the site; this had been undertaken by machine causing a partial truncation of the topsoil. A slight hollow was observed covering the north-west quarter of the site; the plants within the hollow were distinct from the rest of the site and the machine driver reported that it had held water in the winter. The north-east corner of the site had been built up

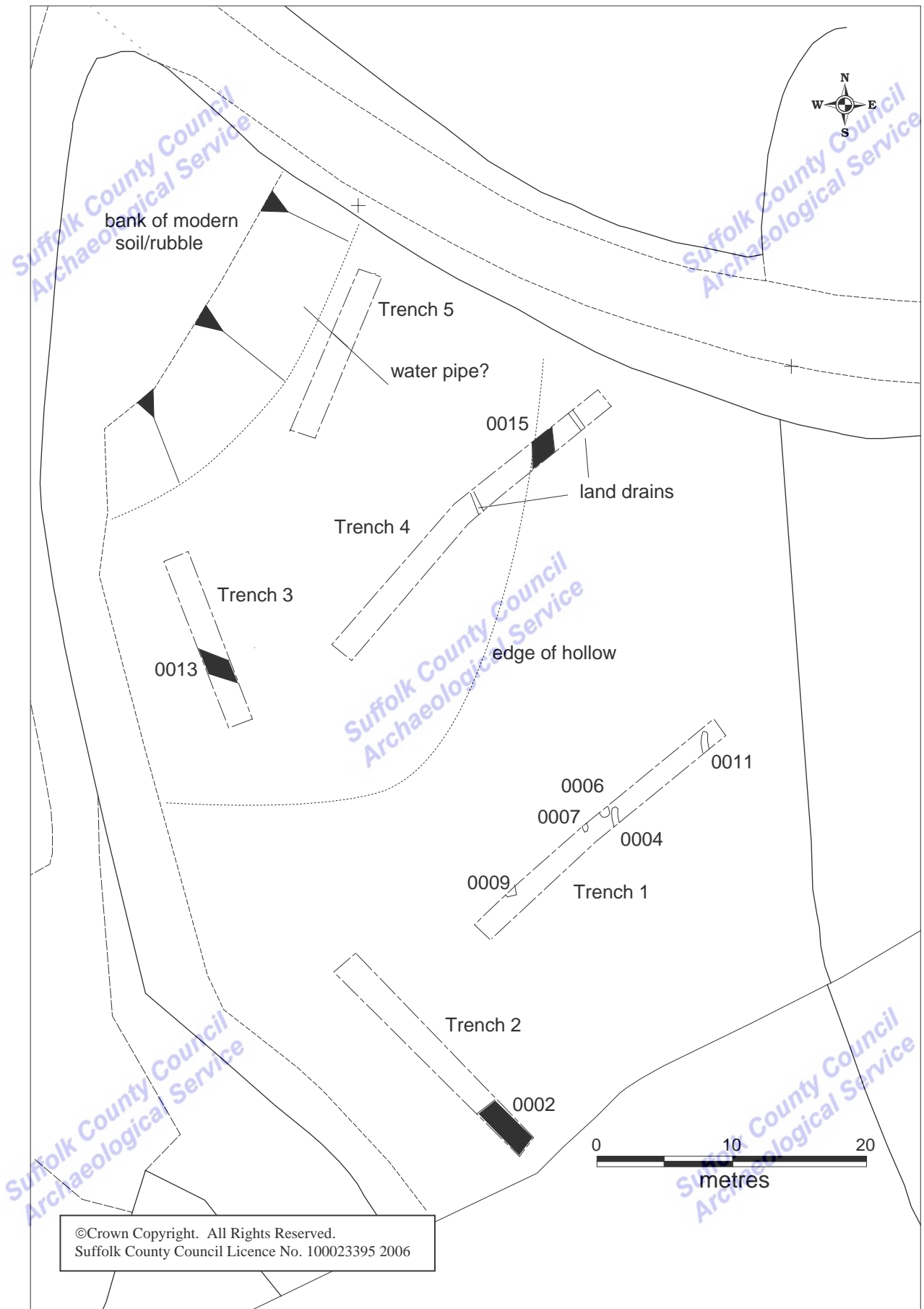


Figure 3 Site plan

with soil and modern building rubble to form or consolidate the neighbouring driveway/path.

Trench 1 (Figures 3 and 4)

Trench 1 was 23.5m long with the surface of the subsoil being exposed at 300-350 mm below the present ground surface. Below the topsoil was a horizon of completely reworked muddy brown clay-silt, 0012, that extended over the whole trench in a 150-200mm deep layer, and was recorded in all of the trenches to the north of Trench 1. 0012 was uniformly flecked with charcoal, burnt clay and finely crushed brick or tile throughout its spread. A number of features were sampled in Trench 1 and these could be identified only once 0012 had been removed. At the east end of the trench was a pair of small curving slots 0004 and 0011. These were 8m apart and parallel; they were similar in size and character and thought to be associated. Both were 500mm wide and 120mm deep, flat bottomed and terminating in a squared butt end and filled with silty clay similar to 0012. Finds were collected from 0004 and consisted of ironwork and a piece of decorated china suggesting a 19th century date. Alongside 0004 were two features, a shallow irregular pit 0006 and a small posthole, 0007. Both features were filled with clay silt similar to the fill of 0004 and indistinguishable from the overlying layer 0012. There was a shallow flat bottomed feature at the west end of the trench, possibly a square pit 0009 which produced a small assemblage of finds including fragments of decorated china dating to the 19th century.

Trench 2 (Figures 3 and 4)

Trench 2 was 20m long and extended north from the ditch on the southern edge of the site and was excavated in an effort to determine the green edge. The soil profile consisted of a 200mm of clean topsoil directly over the geological clay silt. At the southern end of the trench was a layer of dark silty clay, 0002 that shelved into the existing ditch and was an indication that it once had more gradual sloping sides. 0002 produced two sherds of post-medieval glazed earthenware pottery of an 18th/19th century date.

Trench 3 (Figures 3 and 4)

Trench 3 was 13m long and ran north-south sampling the hollow in the north-east corner of the site. The soil profile was deeper than in the other trenches. The topsoil was similar to 0012 in Trench 1 and included charcoal and crushed brick/tile, burnt clay and chalk. This sealed two layers of fine silt-clay; the upper one, 0016, was flecked with charcoal and the lower, 0017, stained with iron. The fine textured nature of these silts and the iron enrichment of the lower silt suggested that this had been an area of waterlogging or possibly a pond. A possible feature, 0003, crossed the trench at the south end cutting the lower silt layers. The edges of the possible feature were indistinct and the silt fill difficult to distinguish from 0016 and 0017. Two fragments of roof tiles, in a red firing clay with a grey core and probably medieval in date, and a sherd of post medieval pottery were recovered from along the line of this putative feature at the base of the silt. The subsoil below silt 0017 and at 1100mm below the ground surface was blue boulder clay, which towards the north-eastern end of the trench became more chalky similar to that observed in Trenches 4 and 5.

Trench 4 (Figures 3 and 4)

Trench 4 was 27.5m long and ran from the road edge across the edge of the eastern edge of the hollow. The topsoil was well-worked and flecked with finely crushed occupation and building material such as that was seen in Trench 3. Below this was a layer of dark silt-clay similar to 0012 seen in Trench 1. The subsoil was chalky clay, the surface of which was 550mm below the present ground surface. At the north-eastern end of the trench was a shallow ditch, 0015; this was 1800mm wide and 750mm deep. It was filled with grey brown silt-clay and produced no finds. Flint filled land drains were recorded running north-south across the trench in two places.

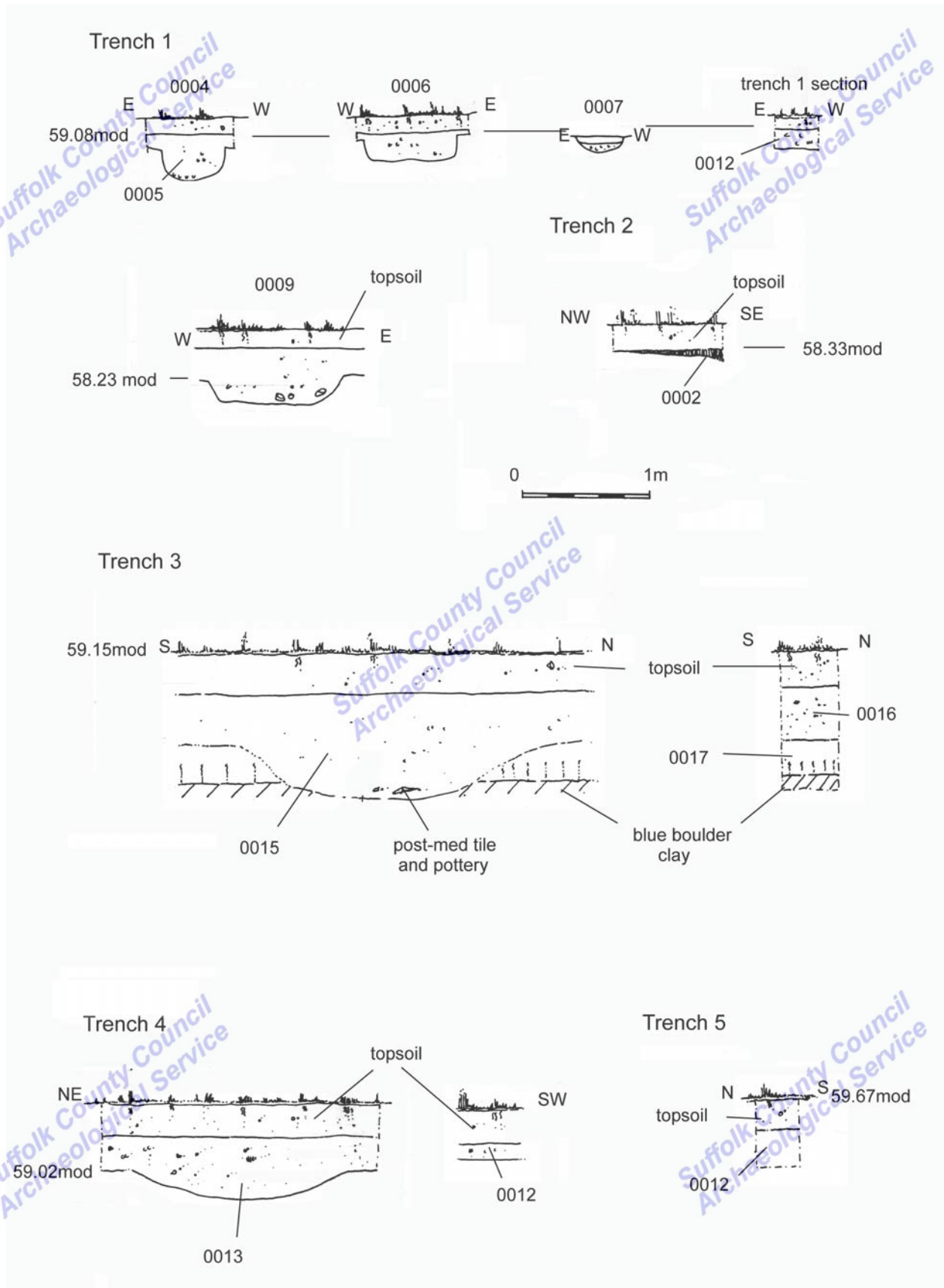


Figure 4. Trench and feature sections

Trench 5 (Figures 3 and 4)

Trench 5 was 13m long and ran south from the north edge of the site. The subsoil was chalky clay changing to darker silt at the southern end and the surface and was 400mm below the present ground surface. The topsoil was well-worked and flecked with fine fragments of occupation and building debris which overlay a fine silty clay, the same horizon that was recorded as 0012 in Trench 1.

Discussion and Conclusions

There were no features on the site that could be positively attributed to the medieval period. All of the features that produced datable finds, and the whole pottery assemblage is 17th century or later. The first edition Ordnance Survey Map (Fig. 5) shows the plot divided into three, and the second edition (1890) into two. Ditch 0015 in Trench 4 and the features in the centre of Trench 1 align with or are close to one of the boundaries shown on the early maps, suggesting that they are part of, or associated with, this network of post medieval divisions. The uniformity of fragments of burnt clay, charcoal and brick/tile throughout the depth of the topsoil, particularly over the northern half of the site, indicated that it has been well worked and that some degree of cultivation has occurred.

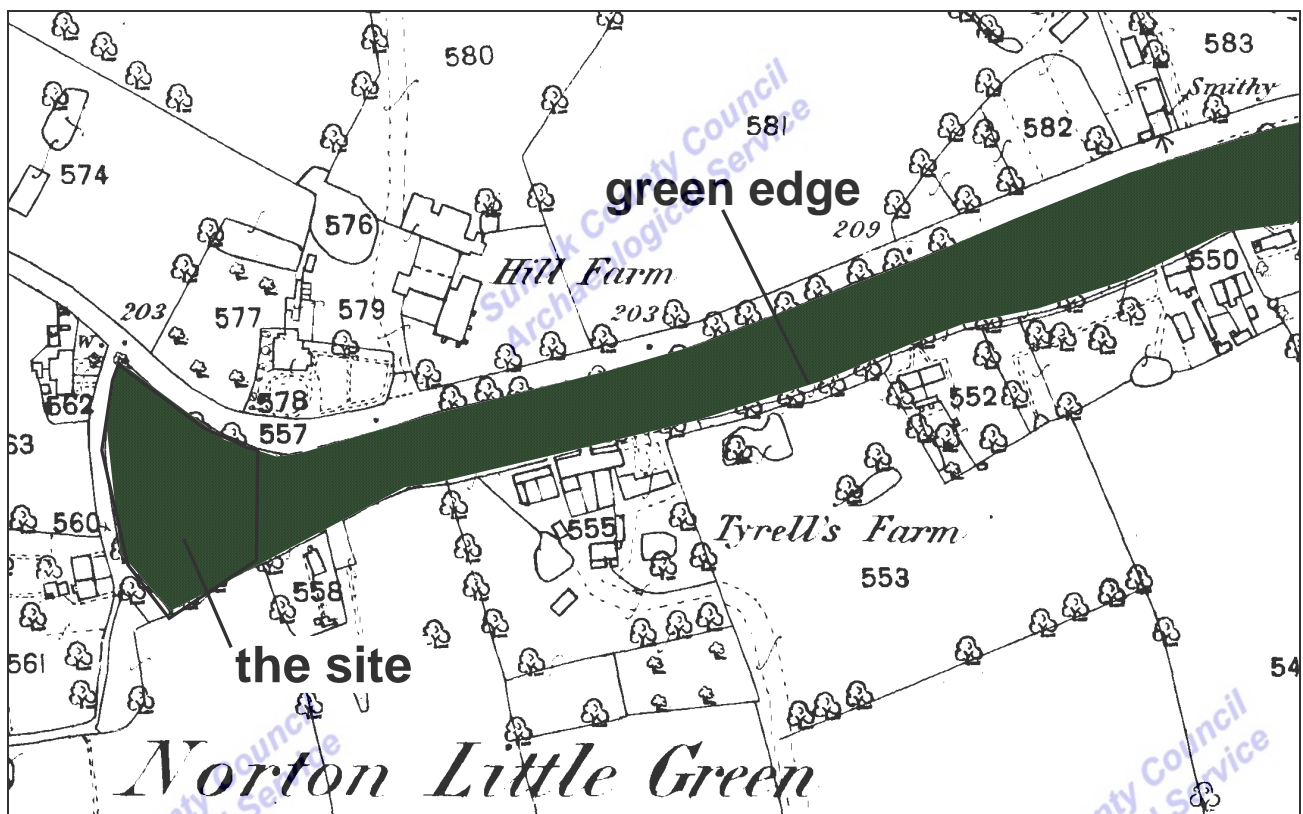


Figure 5. 1st Edition Ordnance Survey Map (1880)

The south edge of the green appears to have remained unchanged and is defined by the existing ditch that forms the current southern boundary. Medieval pottery was readily observed on the surface of the adjacent field to the south of the ditch but none found in the area of the green itself. The line of the southern edge of the green can also be traced by the position of the older houses which are set back from the Ashfield road and would have formerly fronted the green. Recent infilling has obscured this, but it is clear on the first edition OS and this also shows lengths of the green edge ditch still intact (Fig. 5). This demonstrates that the green was linear in plan and probably a projection of the much larger Buttonhaugh Green to the west (on which

'intercommoning' rights were shared by Norton with the parishes of Elmswell, Great Ashfield, Hunston. (Fig. 6)).

The hollow in the north east corner of the site and the deeper silt deposits seen in Trench 3 could be the result of the extraction of clay possibly for building. The ground level in the corner of the site is c.2m lower than the road and the near vertical drop from the road edge could be indicative of a quarry face or pit edge. The blue boulder clay evident in Trench 3 was more pliable and had a lower chalk content than the clay of the surface geology and it may have been this resource that was being exploited for making daub or floors. The digging for clay was often a right of common usage. The overlying silts are probably the result of waterlogging caused by the creation of this hollow and the presence of pottery at the base of 0013 suggests that it was being worked into the post medieval period.

The intention of the developer is that the ground levels are to be raised in the area of the proposed buildings and their foundations piled, this should ensure that the existing soil profile is preserved and the impact to the archaeological levels minimised.

David Gill
August 2006



Figure 6. Hodkinson's Map 1783

Disclaimer

Any opinions expressed in this report about the need for further archaeological work are those of the Field Projects Division alone. The need for further work will be determined by the Local Planning Authority and its archaeological advisors when a planning application is registered. Suffolk County Council's archaeological contracting service cannot accept responsibility for inconvenience caused to clients should the Planning Authority take a different view to that expressed in the report.