

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION REPORT

Erection of a Replacement Farm House, Meat Farm, Clopton Road, Otley (OTY 029)

A REPORT ON THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL DESKTOP STUDY,
EXCAVATION AND MONITORING, 2007
(Planning app. no. C/06/2300)

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Contents

List of Figures	1
List of Tables	1
List of Contributors	2
Acknowledgements	2
Summary	2
SMR information	2
1. Introduction	3
2. Methodology	3
3. Results	6
4. Finds and environmental evidence (Richenda Goffin)	7
5. Conclusion	7

Appendix 1: Brief and specification

Appendix 2: Moat Farm, Clopton Road, Otley. Documentary Report. Anthony Breen.

List of Figures

1. Site Location	5
2. Location of trenches, excavation area and contaminated ground within the proposed layout of the new property	5

List of plates

1. Picture showing north end of Trench 1, Trench 3 and extent of disturbance through former building footprint (looking west)	8
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List of Contributors

All Suffolk C.C. Archaeological Service.

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Richenda Goffin Finds Manager
Anthony Breen Documentary Historian

Acknowledgements

This project was commissioned by Mullins Dowse and Partners and funded by Mr and Mrs Chamberlain, and was monitored by Bob Carr (Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service, Conservation Team (SCCASCT)).

Assistant Project Officer Robert Atfield and Project Officer Clare Good, both from Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service, Field Team, carried out the excavation.

Clare Good directed the project which was managed by John Newman, who also provided advice during the production of the report.

Anthony Breen carried out the Record Office map and documentary search.

Finds processing was carried out by Gemma Adams and Richenda Goffin, both of whom contributed to the specialist finds report.

Summary

Otley. Replacement Farm House, Moat Farm, Clopton Road, Otley. (TM 2229 5635, OTY 029)
An archaeological excavation, monitoring and desktop study was undertaken in advance of the construction of a replacement farm house at Moat Farm, Otley, in order to characterise the nature of any surviving archaeological deposits. The former Moat Farm House was a late 16th century grade II listed building, of timber frame construction, completely destroyed by fire in 2006. Extensive oil contamination occurred after the fire and removal of this destroyed much of the surviving footprint of the building. The removal of this contaminated land was monitored, but no archaeological finds or features were seen. Three trenches and a small excavation area were excavated over the footprint of the new building, and were stripped to the level of the natural subsoil. These produced no archaeological evidence. A desktop study was undertaken to examine documentary evidence for a moat at this site but there appears to be no direct evidence for this. The name "Moat Farm" only appears in records from 1914 onwards and so it seems likely that there was no moat on this site and little evidence for any concentrated activity prior to the late 16th century.

(C. Good for SCCAS and Mr and Mrs Chamberlain; 2007/105)

SMR information

Planning application no. C/06/2300/FUL
Date of fieldwork: April 2007
Grid Reference: TM 2229 5635
Funding body: Mr and Mrs Chamberlain

1. Introduction

An application has been made to construct a new dwelling on the site of the former Moat House Farm, Otley, which was destroyed by fire in 2006. Planning consent was conditional on an archaeological excavation being undertaken. The plot is centred on TM 2229 5635 (Fig 1), on the parish boundary between Otley and Clopton, and is currently gardens, areas of contaminated ground, and building remnants from the former property.

The development covers an area of c. 400 square metres and lies at approximately 61m OD. The plot is flat with an underlying drift geology of heavy clay. It is surrounded by farm buildings to the south, a road to the west and open countryside to the north and east.

Moat Farm House was completely destroyed by fire in 2006, with surviving remains subsequently removed to ground level leaving very little on site of this former property. During the fire, 2 oil-fired boilers were destroyed, causing extensive contamination of oil over the plot. This contamination was cleared by a relevant specialist but during this process, a large portion of the site was disturbed through initial trenching across the building area, followed by extraction of two large areas of contaminated ground. Plate 1 gives an indication of the level of disturbance.

The former property was a grade II listed (Listed Building Number 286519) late 16th century (with 17th and 18th century additions) timber framed two-storey farmhouse. Many late medieval properties are constructed on the site of former buildings, and so an earlier origin is possible. The building footprint and associated floors have potentially survived the fire together with any earlier and underlying remains. The name of the property also suggests there may have been a moat on site and the small pond to the north and another a little further to the south may imply that this is the case.

Considering the late medieval origins of this site and the suggestion of a moat, it was deemed necessary to impose an archaeological condition. This consisted of archaeological monitoring during the removal of the contaminated ground, an excavation through the plot in an attempt to determine any earlier construction or remains of the former property and a desktop study (Appendix II) undertaken to establish the likelihood of a moat. A Brief and Specification for the archaeological work (Appendix I) was produced by Bob Carr of Suffolk County Council Archaeology Service (SCCAS) Conservation Division and the work was carried out by Clare Good of the SCCAS Field Team, commissioned by Mullins Dowse and Partners, and funded by Mr and Mrs Chamberlain.

2. Methodology

The plot was monitored throughout the removal of the oil contaminated ground (Fig. 2). This was removed using a toothed bucket and immediately taken off site for disposal. This monitoring was undertaken from a distance as the ground conditions were deemed to be unsafe.

Once this contaminated ground was removed, 3 trenches and a small area were excavated to the level of the natural subsoil in April 2007 using a wheeled JCB machine fitted with a 1.5m wide toothless ditching bucket. They were located in the areas least likely to be disturbed in locations agreed by SCCAS Conservation Team (Fig. 2). 15.14m of trench were excavated through the building and an area roughly 27m square was excavated in the former garden, under constant supervision from the observing archaeologist.

Both the excavated topsoil and the exposed surface of the trenches and area were examined visually for finds and features. Where features were revealed, they were cleaned manually for definition and each allocated 'observed phenomena' (OP) numbers within a unique continuous numbering system under the SMR code OTY 029 then partially excavated in order to recover dating evidence as well as to observe their form and possibly determine any

function. Features were drawn on site at a scale of 1:20, and recorded photographically using a digital and black and white camera. The trenches and area were planned at a scale of 1:50 and their locations within the development area determined manually using measuring tapes. The site archive will be deposited in the County SMR at Shire Hall, Bury St Edmunds.

All finds were washed and marked before being quantified, identified and dated by the finds staff of the Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service (see section 4. The Finds).

A desktop study (Appendix II) was undertaken by Anthony Breen (Documentary Historian) using sources from the Suffolk Record Office to examine documentary evidence for a moat at this site.

The site and subsequent results are recorded on OASIS, the online archaeological database, under the code Suffolkc1-27225.

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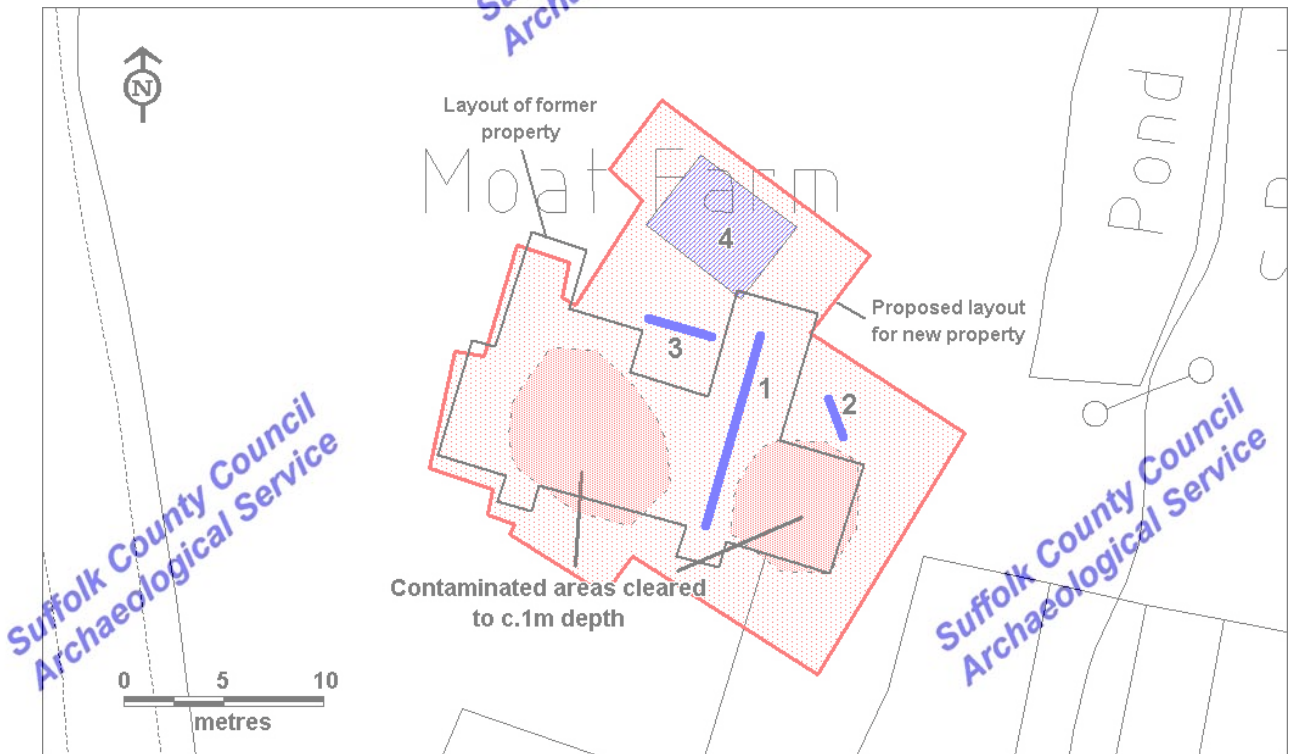
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Figure 1: Site Location



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Figure 2: Location of trenches, excavation area and contaminated ground within the proposed layout of the new property

3. Results

Monitoring

Archaeological monitoring was undertaken during the removal of the contaminated ground. A roughly 50 square metre area to the west, and a 35 square metre area to the east were removed with a toothed bucket, to a depth of c.1m, and immediately taken off site for disposal. This removal was monitored from a distance as ground conditions were deemed to be unsafe. Despite this, visibility was reasonable throughout this monitoring.

The material removed consisted of roughly 0.2m of subsoil 0003, a mid brown clay loam and the remainder was a mixed chalky grey clay and mid yellow brown clay, thought to be natural. Occasional sherds of 20th century pottery were seen within 0003, as well as occasional 2 inch bricks. No archaeological evidence was seen during this monitoring.

Excavation

Trench 1 was placed within the footprint of the former building in an attempt to locate and identify any previous structures. Trenches 2 and 3, and Area 4 were placed outside the former footprint, in potentially undisturbed ground, in an attempt to locate any previous structures and features. Their size and position was dependent on the potential for undisturbed ground whilst remaining within the footprint of the new building. As stated, the de-contamination process involved trenches through the existing footprint to determine the extent of the spill, then extraction of two large areas of fill. Consequently, only a small portion of the house footprint remained undisturbed.

0001 was allocated to unstratified finds.

Topsoil 0002 was similar over the whole site and comprised a dark brown clay loam with frequent brick rubble lumps throughout the house area. It was between 0.35m and 0.65m deep.

Subsoil 0003 was seen in trench 1 only and consisted of a mid brown clay loam. It was between 0.15m and 0.2m deep.

Visibility in all the trenches and area 4 was reasonably good.

Trench 1

Trench 1 was aligned roughly SSW-NNE and was 9.8m long. It was excavated to a depth of between 0.15m and 0.2m onto natural chalky clay. This trench was excavated through subsoil 0003 as there was no topsoil present under the former house. This subsoil was mixed with occasional brick rubble.

A dark grey brown stained pocket of clay (0005) was visible 1.9m from the south end of Trench 1. It had occasional reddened flints but no charcoal or finds and had no discernible cut. It was likely to be a stained area of natural, perhaps related to the adjacent contamination.

Trench 2

Trench 2 was aligned SSE-NNW and was 2m long. It was excavated to an average depth of c.0.55m, down to natural chalky clay

A modern pipe was evident at the south end but no other finds or features were seen in this trench.

Trench 3

Trench 3 was aligned WNW-ESE and was 3.3m long. It was excavated to an average depth of c.0.55m, down to natural chalky clay.

A contamination trench was seen at 1.5m from the E end but no other finds or features were noted.

Area 4

Area 4 was 4.5m NE-SW by 6m NW-SE. It was excavated to an average depth of c.0.35m, down to natural chalky clay.

Root disturbance was rife but visibility was still clear, and no archaeological finds or features were seen.

4. Finds and environmental evidence (Richenda Goffin)

All finds discovered were unstratified.

Pottery

Three unstratified fragments of pottery were recovered (0.025kg). Two sherds of medieval coarseware were present, (L12th-14th C), one of which is similar to Hollesley ware, although made in a slightly coarser fabric. In addition, a fragment of Dutch-type red earthenware was found, dating to the 15th-17th century.

Clay pipe

A small fragment from the stem of a clay tobacco pipe was recovered.

Shell

A fragment of oyster shell was collected, but was later discarded.

Discussion

The small quantity of unstratified medieval pottery may suggest an earlier presence on the site, before the construction of the Tudor cottage. The single fragment of Dutch-type redware is consistent in terms of dating with this building. Given the former presence of a house at least from the late 16th century, the overall lack of earlier post medieval finds is notable.

5. Conclusion

A map and documentary study by Anthony Breen (Appendix II) identified that there was no direct evidence for a moat at this site. The name "Moat Farm" only appears in records from 1914 onwards and therefore it seems unlikely that there was a moat around this site; the new name being a relatively recent invention to perhaps enhance the then existing property.

There was also no evidence of any previous buildings on this site. In fact, evidence for the building that existed until 2006 was very limited, mainly due to the extensive contaminated ground removal that occurred prior to the excavation. Despite this contaminated ground, Trench 1 in particular was likely to have been excavated through undisturbed ground but still no early evidence was seen. It is probable that during the site clearance after the fire, much evidence was removed allowing no conclusions to be drawn on the previous use of this site. The two sherds of medieval pottery that were found unstratified could be residual, or could be a small indication to the presence of an earlier building in the vicinity. The location at a point where a footpath

crosses the road between Clopton and Monewden is a likely location for at least a cottage of medieval date.



Plate 1: Picture showing north end of Trench 1, Trench 3 and extent of disturbance through former building footprint (looking west)

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