

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING REPORT

LAND AT BROOM HILL AND FOX'S CARR, NACTON, SUFFOLK (NAC 052)



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Suffolk C.C. Archaeological Service

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SMR information

Planning application no.	C97/0568
Date of fieldwork:	May 2004
Grid Reference:	TM 1986 4083
Funding body:	RMC Aggregates Ltd.

Summary

Archaeological monitoring was carried out during the third phase of works at Nacton Quarry, Nacton, Ipswich in order to observe and record any surviving archaeological deposits. Two previous phases had produced fairly negative results as it was clear that the area had been subjected to considerable quarrying in the past. The third area was stripped to the level of the natural subsoil, monitored intermittently by the observing archaeologist. It was clear that this area had been a wood for quite some time and had not been subjected to the quarrying of the previous two phases as evidence of tree holes was seen over the whole site. A few features were exposed and all were investigated, dated as prehistoric through to modern. These features were quite widely spread over the monitored area and included ditches and modern fog lifters. A large area of hillwash was seen which contained sherds of mainly late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age pottery. One ditch was dated as probably Middle Saxon and was likely to have been some kind of enclosure ditch.

1. Introduction

Planning consent for the third phase of mineral extraction at Nacton Quarry (Fig. 1) required a programme of archaeological monitoring to be undertaken. Two earlier phases were carried out in August 2000 and July 2003, monitored by Linzi Everett of the Suffolk County Council Archaeology Service (SCCAS) Field Team (SCCAS report number 2003/134). This produced limited results as it was clear that the area had been subject to considerable disturbance as a result of quarrying activity in the past. The third phase was to the west of the other areas, centred on TM 1986 4083.

A Brief and Specification for the archaeological work (Appendix 1) was produced by Edward Martin of SCCAS Conservation Team. A series of monitoring visits was made while soil stripping operations were in progress. The work was carried out by Clare McLannahan and Jezz Meredith and assisted by Roy Damant, all of the SCCAS Field Team, and was funded by RMC Aggregates Ltd.

2. Methodology

The area of proposed extraction (Fig. 2) was stripped to the level of the natural subsoil in May 2004, by a 360° mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket. Any interventions observed in the subsoil were allocated 'observed phenomena' (OP) numbers within a unique continuous numbering system under the SMR code NAC 052 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, recorded photographically and their locations plotted using a hand held GPS. The site was also subjected to a thorough metal detector search. The excavation archive will be deposited in the County SMR at Shire Hall, Bury St Edmunds.

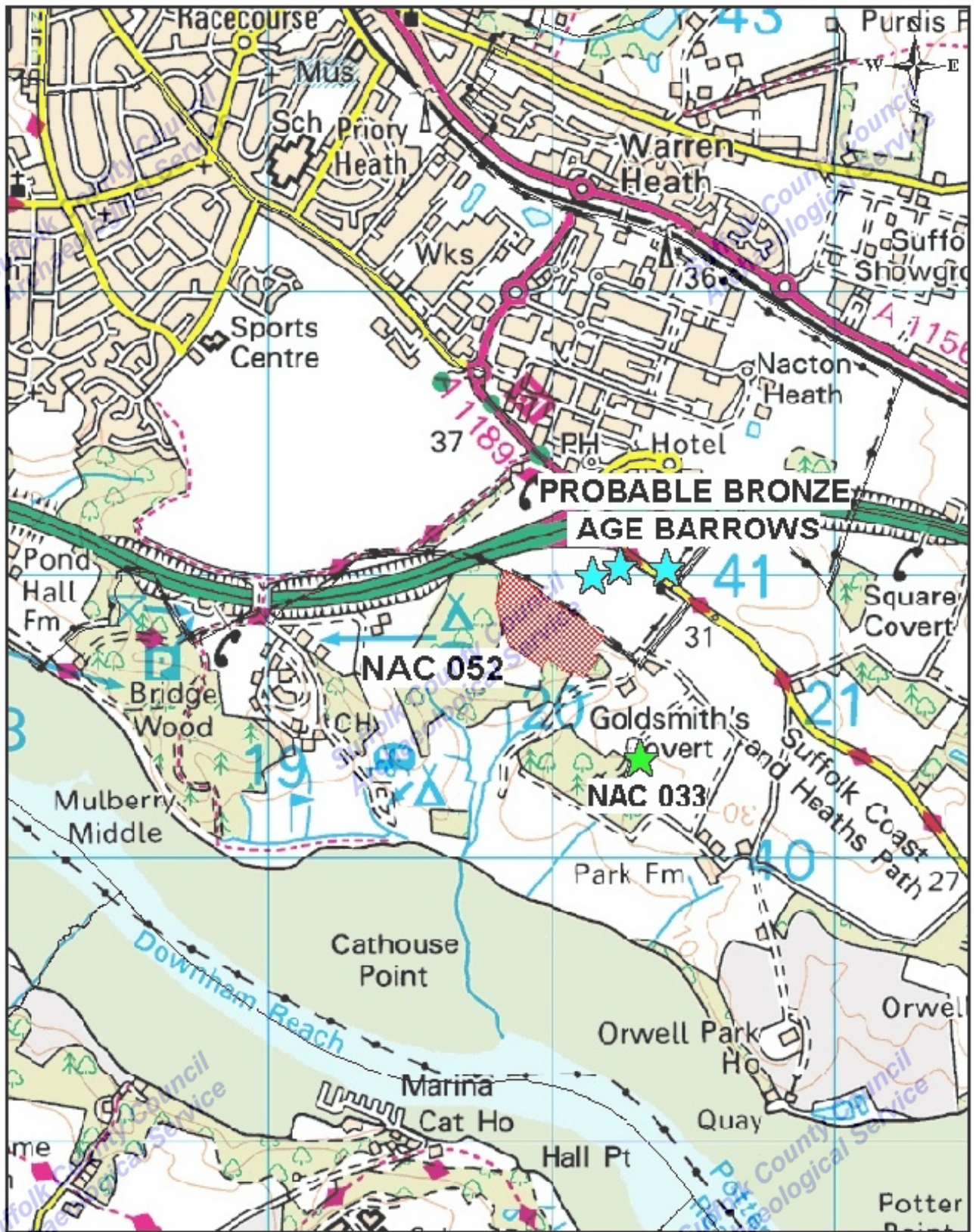


Figure 1: Site location and position of known archaeological sites



Scale 1:20000

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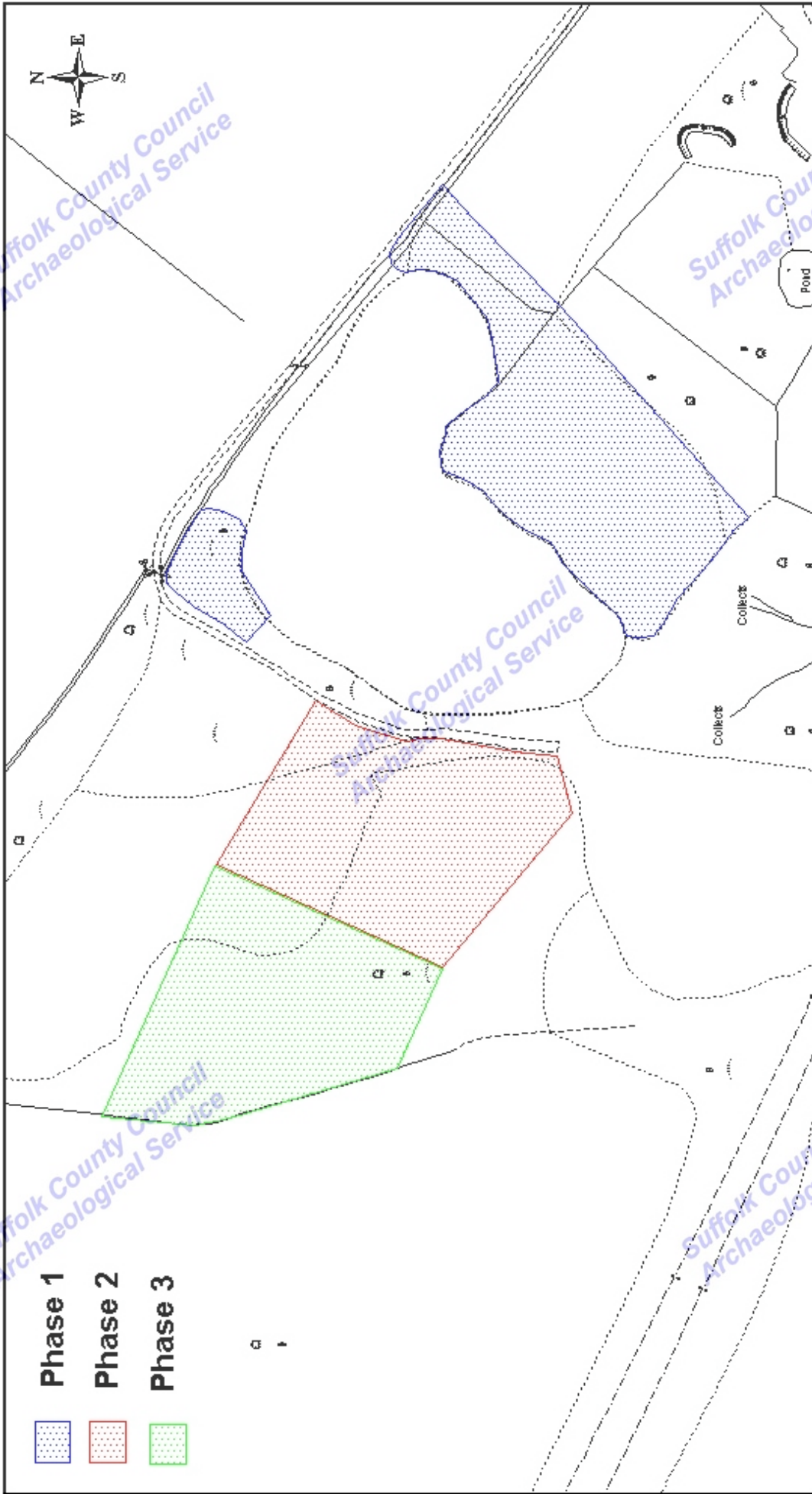
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-  Phase 1
-  Phase 2
-  Phase 3



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Scale 1:2250

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Figure 2: Phases of works on the Quarry

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3. Results

Approximately 8,460m² were stripped down to the level of the natural sand and gravel subsoil. The topsoil removed was a greyish brown sand some 200mm thick on average. Figure 3 shows the features identified in the stripped area.

Ditch 0010 was a NE-SW aligned ditch, turning at right angles to continue NW-SE, and was filled by 0011, a light brown silty sand with small/medium stones throughout. This was situated at the SW edge of the stripped area. Three small probably post-medieval iron nails were found in this ditch.

Ditch 0012 was a N-S aligned ditch filled by 0013, a mid orange brown silty sand with frequent stones and root disturbance throughout. Eight sherds of probable Middle Saxon pottery were recovered from this ditch, although it is possible that these are early Roman. It was thought that this was the same as ditch 0019 as they are on the same alignment and have similar fills and finds.

Ditch 0014 was a possible butt end of ditch or pit cut, seen in section only. An undefined 'dark' area was seen on the surface so a small section was machine excavated, revealing a clear open 'V' shaped ditch or pit in section. This did not continue through the stripped area. It was under the subsoil and apparently under the hillwash layer 0016. It was filled by 0015, a mid brown silty sand with frequent stones throughout.

Hillwash 0016 was seen in a 'dip' within the stripped area. It covered an area of approximately 4000m² within this area and consisted of a mid grey brown sandy silt. Two trenches were machine excavated through it, revealing a maximum depth of c.2.5m at the centre of the 'dip' but no obvious features within or underneath it. Finds of varying types and dates were found on the surface, including eight sherds of prehistoric pottery thought to be late Neolithic, a Middle Saxon gritty Ipswich Ware sherd, two fragments of heavily abraded lava quern and a small piece of peg tile. Ditches 0012/0019 and 0021 cut this hillwash but any further information could not be seen due to the nature of it. The hillwash was completely removed at a later date and no finds or features were found beneath it.

Foglifters 0017. Approximately eight foglifters were recorded in the stripped area. They were all circular and shallow with a gentle slope to the sides, filled with burnt material (0018). This was charcoal rich black silty sand with frequent burnt stones throughout. These are likely to be associated with the former Ipswich Airport, which is less than 0.5km away, and of Second World War date.

Ditch 0019 was a N-S aligned ditch filled by 0020, a mid orange brown silty sand with frequent stones and root disturbance throughout. A sherd of probable Roman date was found. The ditch meanders slightly in the section seen but it is likely that this was the same ditch as 0012 as they are on the same alignment and have similar fills and finds.

Ditch 0021 was a NE-SW aligned ditch filled by 0022, a mid brown silty sand with occasional small stones. Its relationship with 0012/0019 was unknown because of the hillwash.

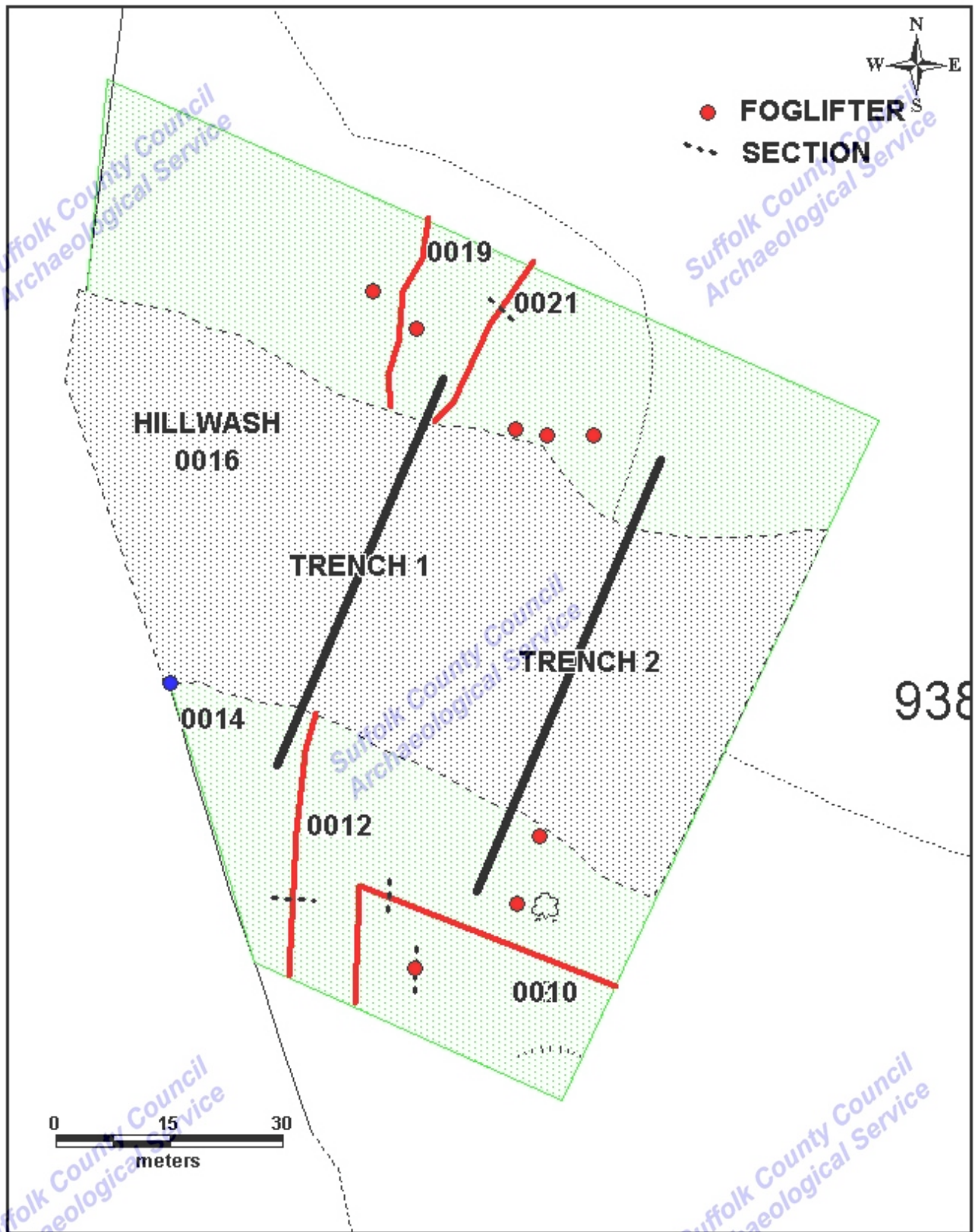
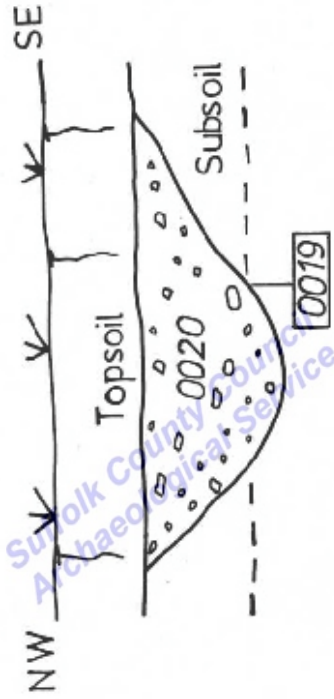
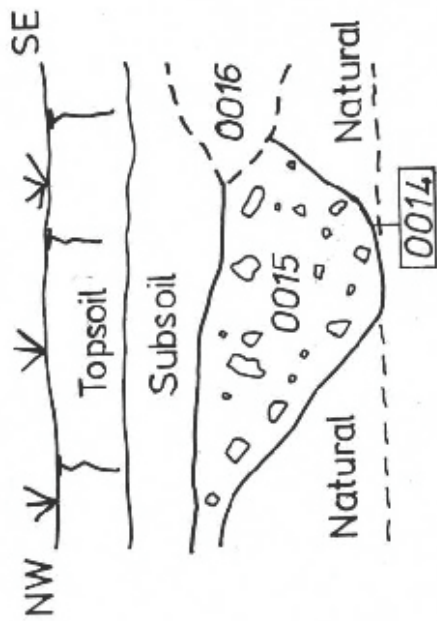
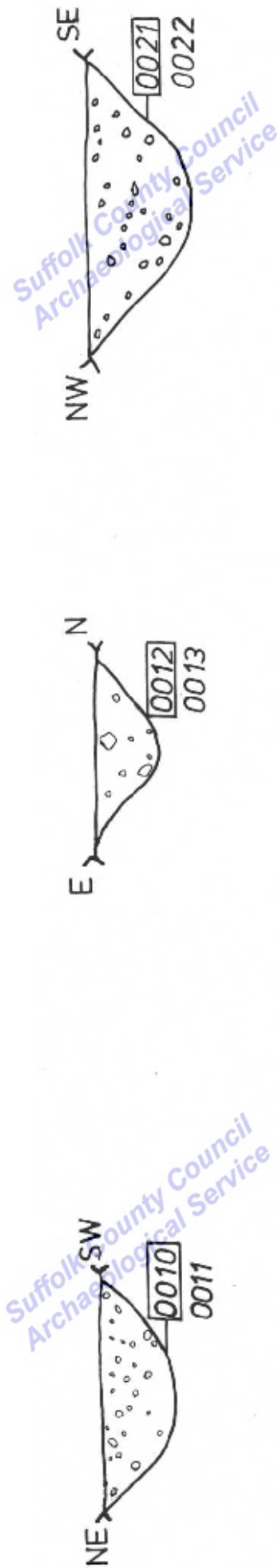


Figure 3: Features found during monitoring



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Figure 4: Sections of features. 1:20

The Finds

Sue Anderson

4.1. Introduction

Finds were collected from four contexts, as shown in the table below.

OP	Pottery		CBM		Lava		Flint		Misc	Spotdate
	No.	Wt/g	No.	Wt/g	No.	Wt/g	No.	Wt/g		
(0011) 0010									3 Fe (7g)	PMed?
(0013) 0012	8	50								MSax
(0016)	9	46	1	16	2	25	2	69		Preh-PMed
(0020) 0019	1	10								
Total	18	106	1	16	2	25	2	69		

4.2. Pottery

Eight sherds of a possible 7th century imported jar with girth grooving on the upper body were collected from ditch fill 0013. This vessel is in a similar fabric to two complete examples recovered from conversion period cemeteries in Hadleigh and Coddendam. These have been sourced to an area in Frankia, perhaps even the same kiln (Vince 2002). However, there is also a possibility that the vessel could be Roman (although the fabric and decoration would be unusual - C. Tester, pers. comm.), as one rimsherd in a shell-tempered fabric of probable Roman date was recovered from ditch fill 0020.

Eight sherds of prehistoric pottery came from hillwash layer 0016. Three had abundant coarse flint tempering (one was a flat base sherd), three had moderate coarse flint and grog (one of these may be decorated with impressed finger nails, but it is abraded), one had fine flint inclusions, and one small abraded fragment contained grog. These sherds are likely to be late Neolithic in date, although a Bronze Age date cannot be ruled out. The layer also produced one sherd of Middle Saxon gritty Ipswich Ware.

4.3. Ceramic building material

One piece of peg tile in a medium sandy red fabric, probably post-medieval, was found in layer 0016.

4.4. Miscellaneous

Three small nails were collected from ditch fill 0011. They are likely to be post-medieval.

Two fragments of heavily abraded lava quern were found in layer 0016. This context also produced two worked flints, a flake and an end scraper, which are probably late Neolithic or Bronze Age.

4.5. Discussion

There is evidence for prehistoric activity on the site, although the pottery and flint appear to have been redeposited. This is likely to centre on the late Neolithic or Early Bronze Age.

The presence of a Middle Saxon import is interesting, as these tend to indicate high status and are more common in cemeteries than settlements in rural areas. However, the site is close to the coast and near enough to Ipswich for the material to have arrived at the site for use in a domestic rather than funerary context. One other Middle Saxon sherd was also found, and Middle Saxon finds are known from the nearby site at NAC 033 (see fig.1). The lava quern may also belong to this period.

5. Discussion

Monitoring of this site produced limited evidence of archaeological features, as it did in the first two phases. Whereas they had been subjected to previous quarrying, Phase 3 was formerly a wood and the remains of trees (tree holes) were visible over the site. It is unlikely that any archaeological evidence was masked by these as there was relatively little evidence of past activity on the site.

It is likely that the ditches seen were field boundaries associated with a nearby settlement. Ditch 0012/0019 was probably Middle Saxon in date and as this was to the NW of the site, possibly associated with a settlement to the NW of the area. The other ditches were undated but were probably also field boundaries or boundaries of some sort.

Hillwash can collect due to increased ploughing and cultivation, more intense agricultural activities creating loose soil that runs off and collects in deeper areas. Arable cultivation increased in the Iron Age and Roman periods and it is likely that the majority of hillwash 0016 collected at this time. The finds found within the hillwash reflect this; Late Neolithic and early Bronze Age pottery indicative of the known archaeology in this area such as the Bronze Age round barrow sites in the adjacent field, marked now by ring ditches on aerial photographs (see Fig.1).

The Middle Saxon imported pottery vessel is an unusual find and may indicate the presence of a high status settlement or cemetery in the vicinity. However, the vessel is incomplete and therefore difficult to distinguish from early Roman forms with any certainty. Other finds of both dates are present, so only further work on the site can resolve this.

The presence of the hillwash and the evidence in ditch 0012/0019 suggests some Iron Age, Roman and Saxon activity in the vicinity and any further excavations in the adjacent area will hopefully reflect this, as the quarry moves into its final phases of extraction.

References

Everett, L., 2003, *Land at Broom Hill and Fox's Carr, Nacton*. SCCAS Report No. 2003/134. Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service.

Vince, A., 2002, *Characterisation of wheel-thrown Anglo-Saxon vessels from Coddanham and Hadleigh, Suffolk*. AVAC Report No. 2002/90 for Suffolk County Council (in archive).