

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION REPORT

ST BARTHOLOMEW'S WHARF, COLLEGE STREET, IPSWICH

IAS 6303
IPS 587

A REPORT ON THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION, 2007



Rhodri Gardner
Field Team
Suffolk C.C. Archaeological Service

© October 2007

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List of Contributors

All Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service (SCCAS hereafter) unless otherwise stated.

Rhodri Gardner Senior Project Officer

Acknowledgements

This project was funded by Braceforce Ltd., and was monitored by Keith Wade of the SCCAS Conservation Team.

The project was directed by Rhodri Gardner and managed by John Newman, who also provided advice during the production of the report. Rhodri Gardner carried out the evaluation.

Summary

Ipswich, St Bartholomew's Wharf, College Street (TM 1639 4407; IAS 6303; IPS 587)

An excavation was carried out at the above site in advance of residential development. An area of c. 110m² was subjected to open area excavation. In the event the site was found to be almost entirely occupied by a single cellared room of late 19th century date; almost certainly associated with the former St Peter's Iron Works. The depth of this cellaring was such that it had truncated the majority of earlier evidence for any occupation of the College Street frontage. This depth and difficulties with groundwater in the enclosed space also meant that it was difficult to relate the earlier foreshore deposits to those seen elsewhere on other sites. No evidence of the well-preserved *in situ* hurdles of the earlier medieval period were seen here. Although by no means certain, the deposits below the water table here, and the levels at which they were encountered (below 1m AOD), suggests that the excavation was to the south of any such occupation of the foreshore associated with the Anglo-Saxon settlement. Given the depth of the cellaring and the fact that the proposed development was to be piled no further work was recommended.

(Rhodri Gardner, SCCAS for Braceforce Limited, report no: 2007/69)

SMR information

Planning application no.	IP/06/00288
Date of fieldwork:	6 th to 9 th of February 2007
Grid Reference:	TM 1639 4407
Funding body:	Braceforce Limited
Oasis reference:	Suffolkc1-34362

1 Introduction

A Planning Application (IP/06/00288/FUL) was made for development on a site on the south side of College Street, just to the south east of Wolsey's Gate and immediately opposite the Burton, Son and Sanders building on the other side of College Street. The site is centred on TM 1639 4407 and comprises c. 110m². The development area lies on level ground at approximately 3m AOD.

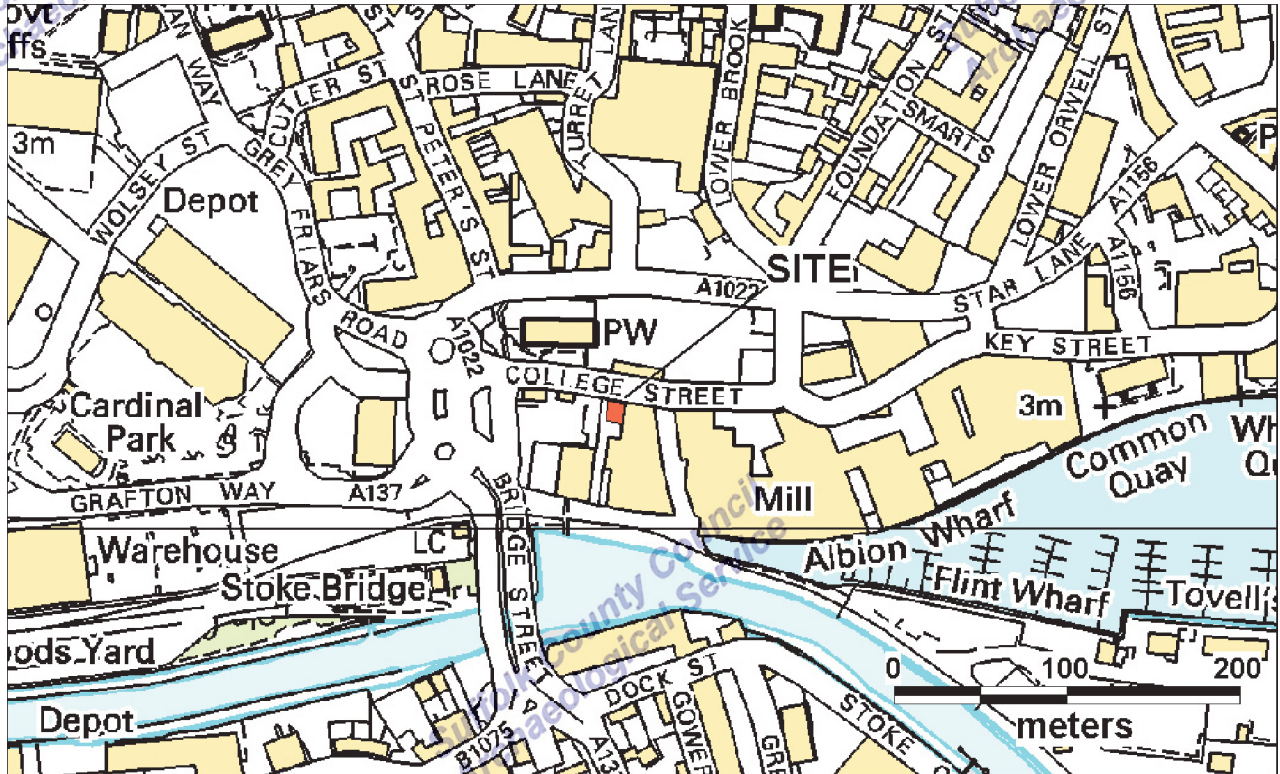


Figure 1. Site location

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The site lies within the Area of Archaeological Importance defined for the Anglo-Saxon and medieval town of Ipswich in the Ipswich Local Plan. The proposed development involved significant ground disturbance in the form of piling.

No known archaeological sites lie within the precise area of the proposed development, although extensive well preserved archaeological deposits of medieval and Anglo-Saxon date have been recorded on the opposite side of the road at the Cardinal Works site. At the site of the former Cranfields Mill c. 70m to the east there was excellent preservation of waterlogged remains, including *in situ* hurdles along the Anglo-Saxon/early medieval waterfront. The alignment of these along with other current knowledge of the waterfront topography suggested that similar remains could be present within the proposed development area.

Given the intrusive nature of the proposed development and the potentially important archaeological deposits found in the site's immediate environs it was decided by Keith Wade of the SCCAS Conservation Team that an archaeological evaluation would be required. The SCCAS Field Team was subsequently commissioned by the client, Braceforce Limited.

2 Methodology

In the event it was decided (after consultation with the client and Keith Wade) that given the small size of the site trenching would be impractical, particularly if it lead to delay in determining the need for further work. In this instance the client decided to proceed to further investigation and omit the evaluation stage. The project therefore proceeded straight to full excavation.

The excavation commenced on the 5th of February and continued until the 9th. A small tracked mechanical excavator (minidigger) fitted with a flat bladed ditching bucket. All mechanical excavation was carried out under close archaeological supervision until the top of the first undisturbed archaeological deposit or natural subsoil was revealed.

Once excavation began, it became clear that almost all the site was occupied by a substantial cellar (c. 4.5m wide east-to-west by 8.9m north-to-south). This was cleared to a depth of just over 1.5m below existing ground level, where the floor was encountered at a height of 1.50m AOD. Mechanical excavation ceased at this point and the remaining fill of the cellar was cleared by hand.

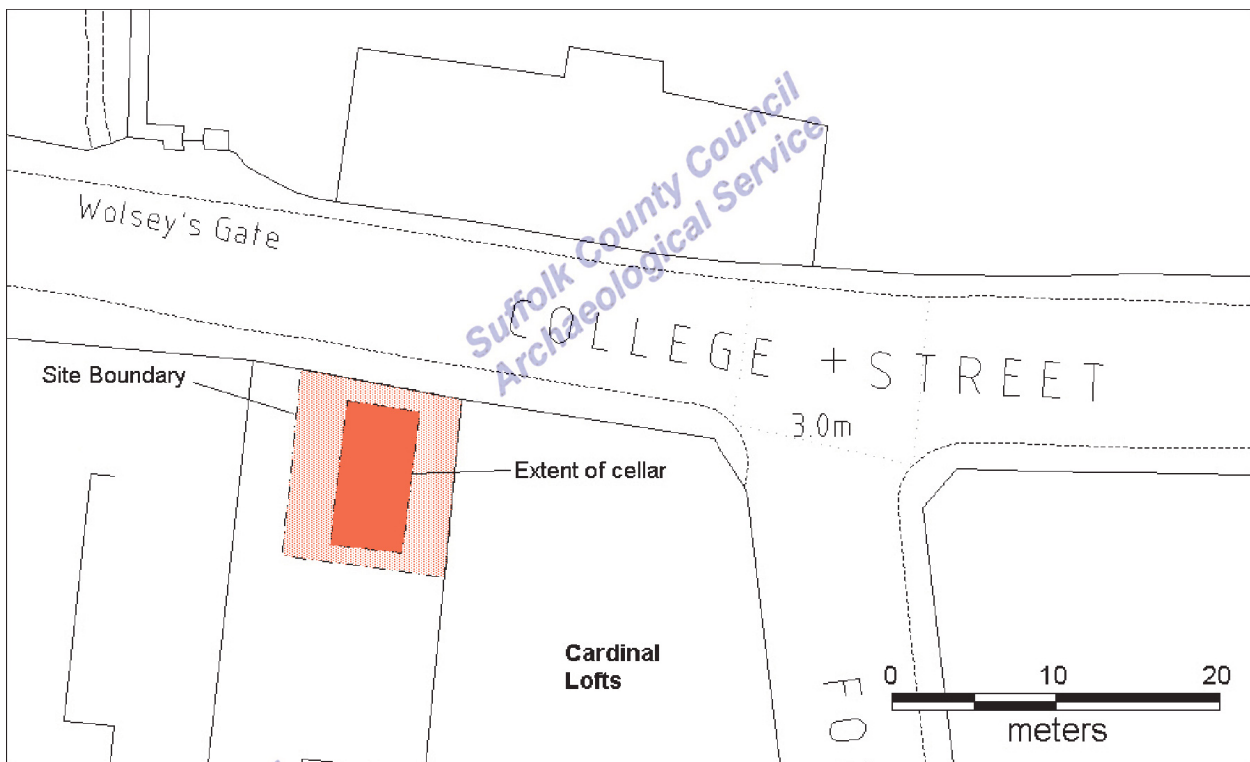


Figure 2. Site detail showing overall site limit (shaded red) and eventual area of excavation (solid red).

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The site was allocated the SMR numbers IAS 6303 and IPS 587 and all observed archaeological features and deposits were allocated OP (observable phenomena) numbers and recorded on *pro forma* context sheets. This context information is shown below. All features were excavated and recorded in a series of 1:50 or 1:20 scale plans and 1:20 scale section drawings. Context records were entered onto an Access97 database, and inked copies of the drawings were prepared on archive quality drafting film.

3 Results

The cellar had been deliberately backfilled with demolition rubble (0002), and although several layers could be discerned within this deposit (see Plate 1, below), no attempt was made to separate them for the purposes of this report.

The cellar itself [0003] was at least 9.5m long, extending beyond both the northern and southern limits of the excavation, and 4.5m wide (see cover illustration). The top of its floor stood at 1.50 AOD and a maximum surviving height of its walls was recorded at 1.65m. Its individual components are described below.

The western wall [0004] of the cellar was constructed of red unfrogged bricks (114mm broad, 70mm thick and 225mm long) bonded with very hard slightly greyish white lime mortar (see Fig 3 and Plate 2). They were very competently laid in a simple stretcher bond and survival is sufficient on this side to show the beginning of a vaulted top/ceiling. This takes the form of six courses angled to the south at 45°. There were only two course surviving above this, making further speculation about the form and height of the cellar's ceiling difficult. The lower 0.3m or so of the wall had traces of the thick bituminous layer of waterproofing that was present over much of the floor (see below).

The eastern wall [0005] was in much poorer condition (see Fig 3 and Plates 3 and 4). There was heavy damage caused apparently by the construction of the wall fronting College Street, as well as a second substantial (up to 3m wide) truncation (with associated cracks) starting c. 2.5m from the street front. This wall was also constructed using red unfrogged brick (115mm broad, 75mm thick and 235mm long) bonded with a very hard slightly greyish white lime mortar. This appeared slightly less well made, with a different bond (predominantly English Garden Wall). In addition to this, a shallow buttress was recorded, along with a blocked arched opening (0.84m high and 1.15m wide). As with wall [0004] remnants of the bitumen 'tanking' was recorded at the base.

The cellar floor [0006] was entirely covered with a 50mm thick (on average) layer of a very hard black bitumen/cement mix. This was clearly an attempt to waterproof the cellar floor. There was no evidence of any later surfaces and it seems likely that this was the surface at the time of the cellar's final occupation. It is interesting to note that the was quite well cleaned to this level prior to backfilling, suggesting an organised pattern of disuse/abandonment. The floor's extent (4.5m wide by 9.5m+ long) is illustrated in Figure 4. There was a very thin sand skim visible in places before the principal layers of make-up beneath were revealed.

Once the floor had been lifted the uppermost make-up layer beneath (0008) was revealed, covering the whole of the cellar. This comprised firm very clean white crushed chalk with very rare flint pebbles but no other inclusions of note and was very uniformly laid, being up to 0.1m thick.

Once layer 0008 was removed two simple box drains [0007] were revealed (see Figure 4). These were near identical and were at least 9.5m long, extending beyond the southern LOE. Each run in the centre was just 110mm wide. They were constructed using red unfrogged bricks (110mm broad, 70mm thick and 230mm long) with no discernible bonding material. They were simply laid in two parallel rows of single bricks just one course deep.

These drains were set into a further foundation/make-up layer (0009). This was up to 0.4m thick and consisted of a compact mid grey sandy matrix (30%) with mixed

CBM/flint/concrete rubble inclusions (70%). This was the earliest consolidation layer associated with the cellar floor. Its depth (with surface at c. 1.3m AOD) suggests that considerable truncation would have been caused during the construction of the cellar.

Water ingress was quite severe at this point, with the chalk consolidation layer holding back groundwater quite successfully. It was decided to proceed with two 1.25m metre wide sondages (see Figure 3 for locations) rather than try large-scale removal of deposit 0009.

Immediately beneath the make-up layers deposit 0010 was encountered. This was up to 0.6m thick and consisted of a soft dark grey silty sand matrix with poorly sorted small to medium sub-rounded to sub-angular flint pebbles/cobbles. It has been interpreted as natural foreshore deposits (being similar in character to those encountered on other recent waterfront sites).

Slightly different sequences of deposits were recorded beneath this in the northern and southern sondages.

At the northern end of the site (Figure 4, Section 3) 0010 was seen to overlay a sand and gravel deposit (0011). This was up to 0.3m thick but was only seen in the eastern part of the section, petering out to the west. It was a compact light yellowish brown medium sand (c. 50%) with poorly sorted small to medium rounded/sub-rounded flint gravels.

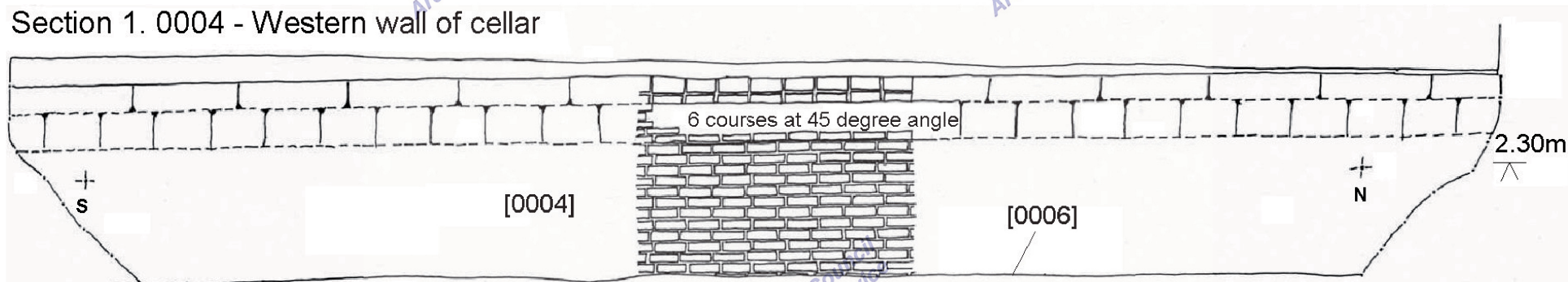
This overlay deposit 0012 – a loose black silty sand with frequent small to medium angular and sub-angular flint pebbles/gravels. This was at least 0.3m deep, and at that point (0.38m AOD) excavation ceased due to extreme groundwater saturation.

At the southern end of the site (Figure 4, Section 4) layer 0010 overlay a slightly different deposit (0013). This was a loose mid brownish grey silty sand with moderate poorly sorted small to medium rounded to sub-rounded flint gravel and occasional very small roundwood/brushwood fragments. It was at least 0.35m thick, with excavation again ceasing due to water ingress.

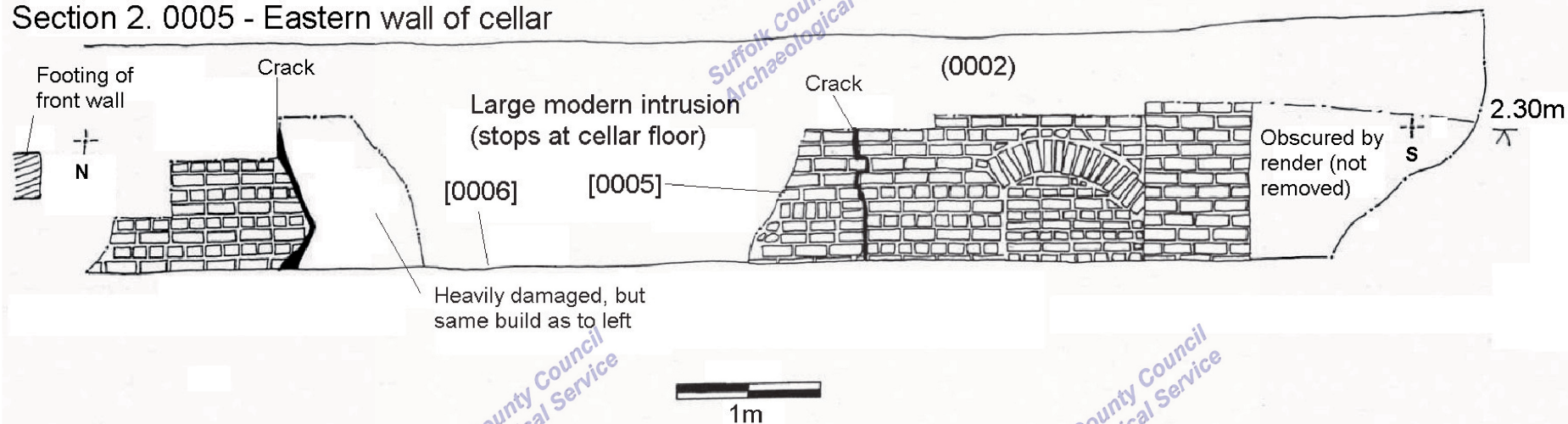
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Section 1. 0004 - Western wall of cellar



Section 2. 0005 - Eastern wall of cellar



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Figure 3. Cellar wall elevations

Plan 1. Base plan showing cellar limits and eventual limit of excavation

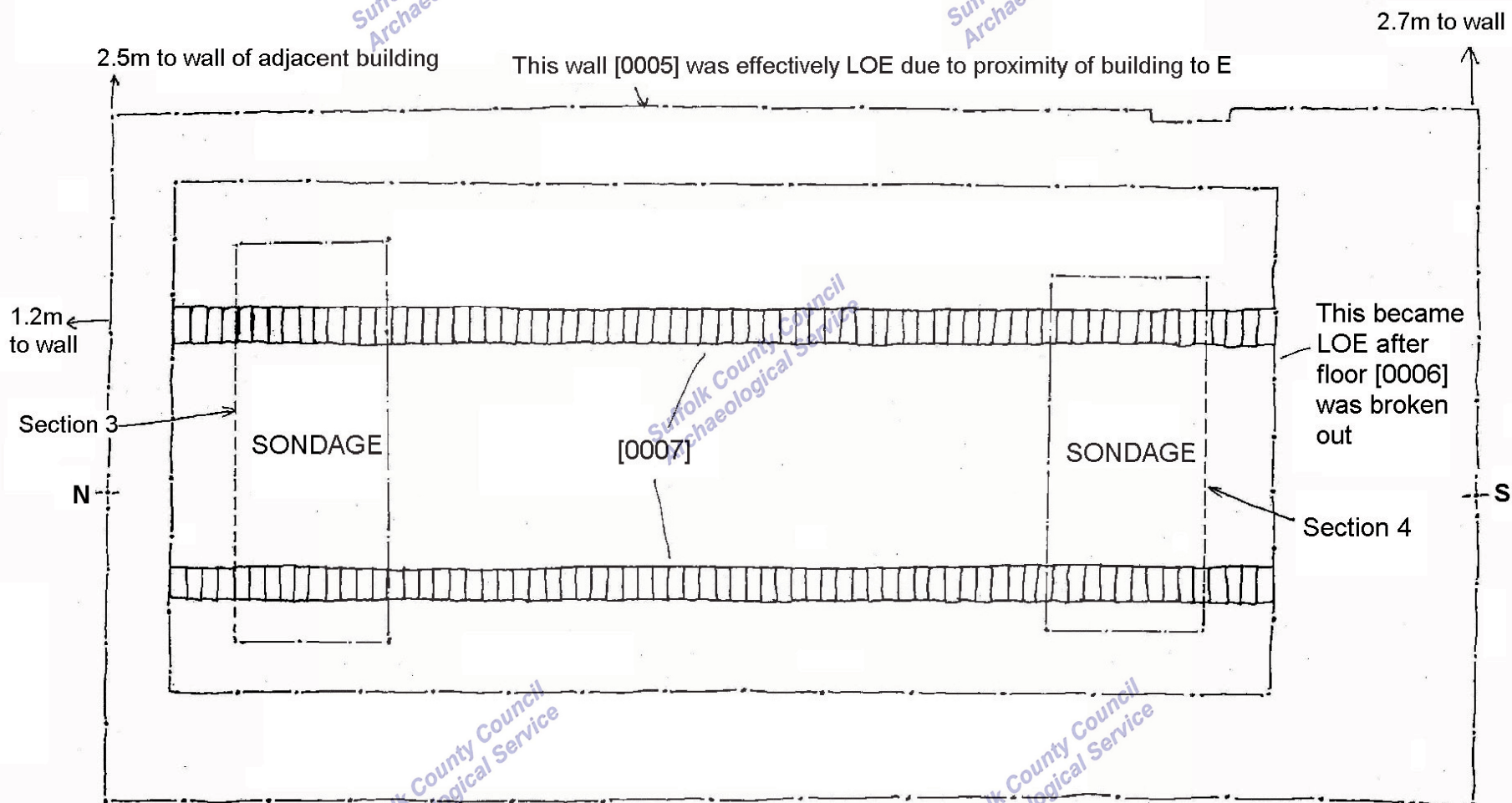


Figure 4. Cellar plan

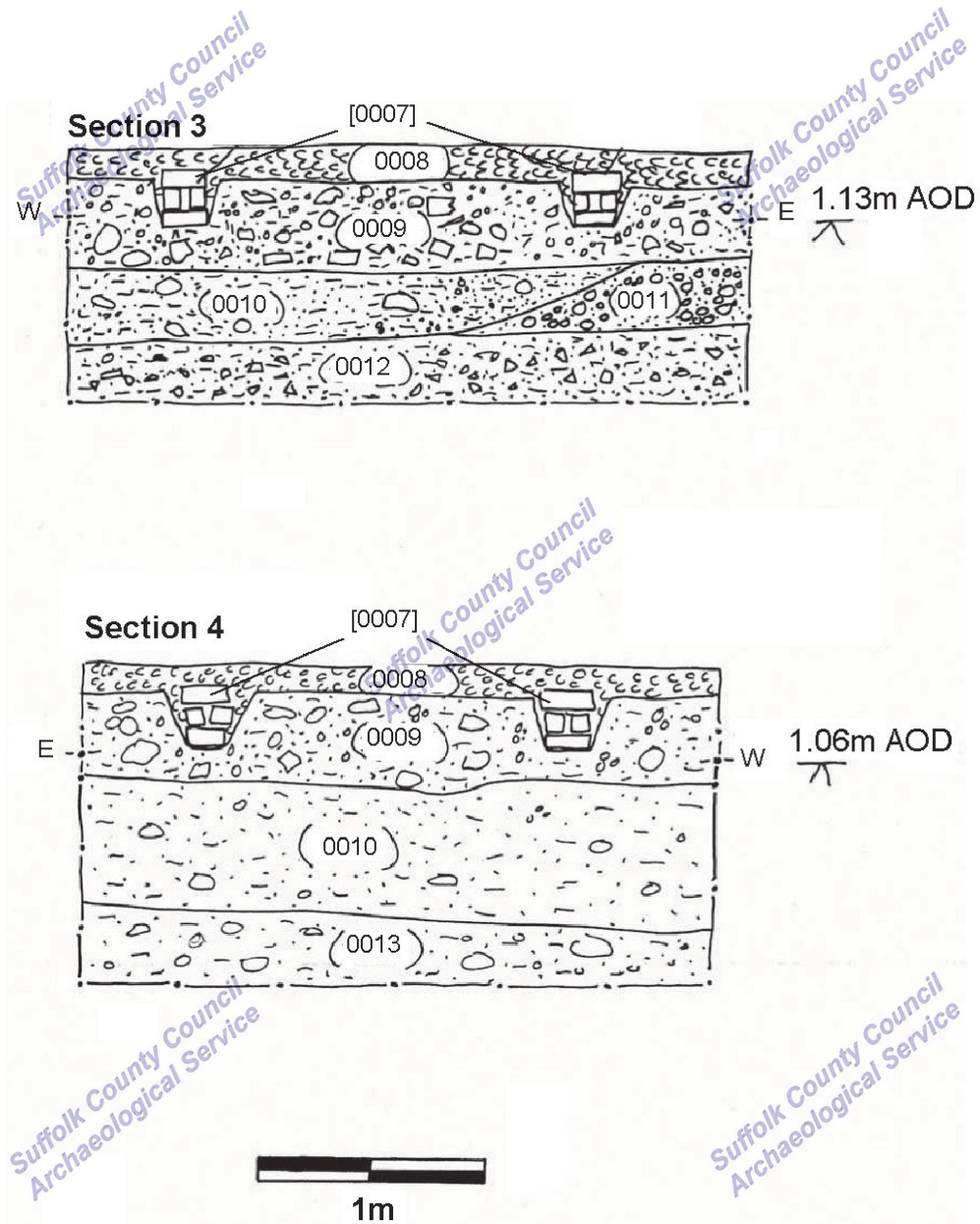


Figure 5. Sondage sections

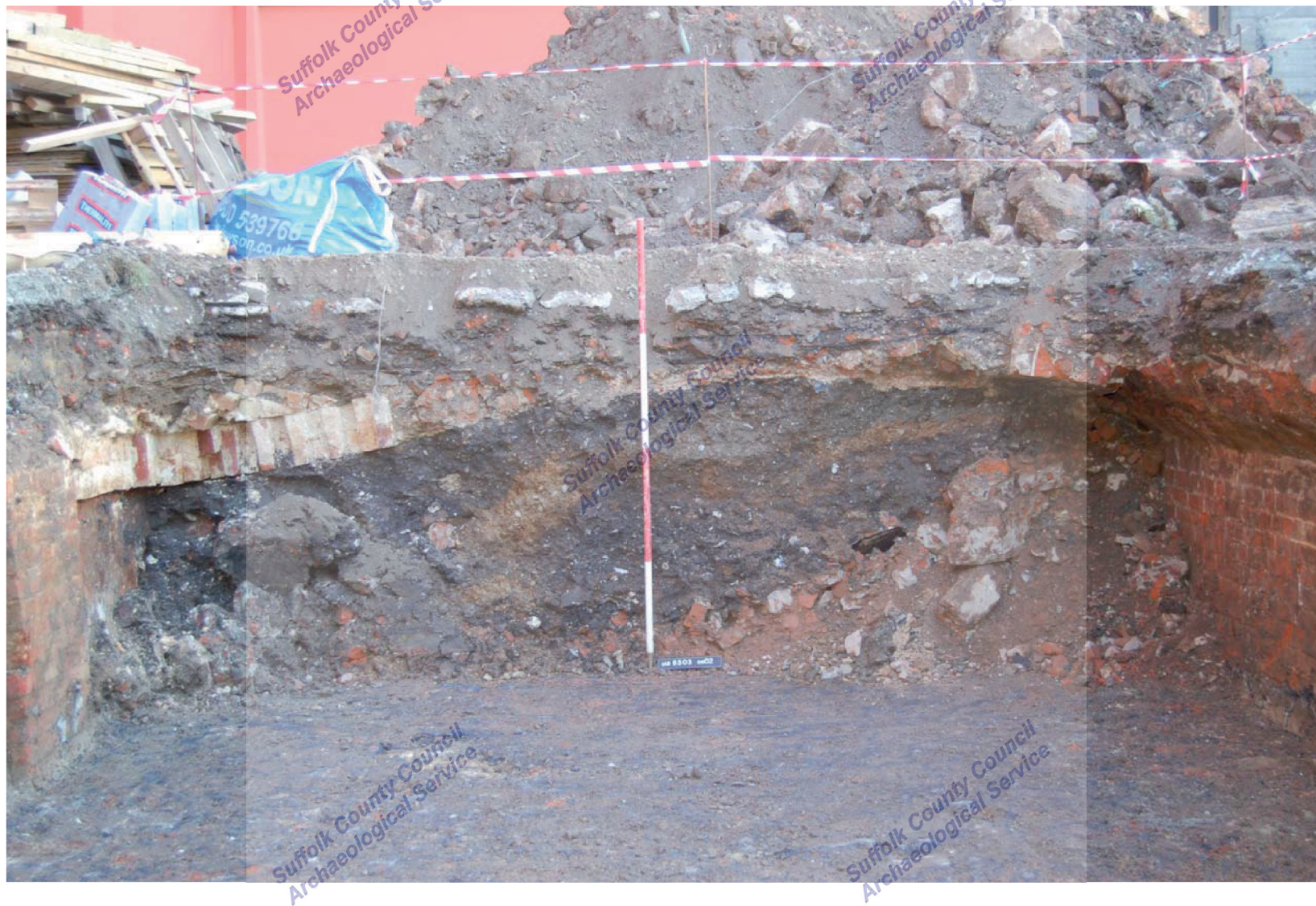


Plate 1. Southern limit of excavation showing cellar fill.



Plate 2. Western wall [0004]



Plate 3. Eastern wall [0005]



Plate 4. Detail of eastern wall [0005]

4 Discussion

The site was completely dominated by a single feature – a substantial post-medieval cellar. This had been comprehensively cleared prior to demolition and backfilling, so no evidence of its final use was recorded. However, there can be little doubt that it was associated with the extensive St Peter's Iron Works, which dominated the site at the end of the 19th Century (see Figure 6).



Figure 6. Site boundary overlain on Second Edition Ordnance Survey Map (1902)

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The depth of this cellar precluded the survival of the majority of earlier remains, particularly those of later medieval or earlier post-medieval buildings occupying the College Street frontage, as had been seen at the neighbouring Cranfields Mill site. It is highly likely that the area would have been occupied at that time, as indicated on the maps of Speede (1610), Ogilby (1674), Pennington (1778) and White (1867). However, in this case any such evidence has clearly been lost to truncation.

Other important evidence from nearby sites has included well-preserved waterlogged deposits including a series of long *in situ* hurdles found at Cranfield's Mill and similar possible hurdle structures at Bridge Street to the west. Although post-excitation work is still ongoing it is thought likely that these are of Late Saxon/early medieval date. Such features have typically been encountered at the level of the contemporary foreshore, typically at between 0.5 to 0.9m AOD. Although the sondages excavated here examined the deposits at that depth no significant waterlogged remains were encountered within them. However, the area exposed is too small to

definitively rule out any continuation of the relatively narrow linear hurdle features mentioned above.

Similarly, the degree of exposure was so small and the ingress of groundwater so great that interpretation of the various gravel deposits was difficult. Consequently it remains unclear whether the excavated area lies to the north of any alignment of earlier waterfront features; or is too far south, within the unoccupied area of the river channel. The levels and superficial grey/wet/loose nature of the gravels seem more likely to suggest that the location is too far to the south, but that is by no means certain.

5 Conclusions and Recommendations

The initially high potential of the site was not realised due to the heavy truncation caused by the construction of the 19th century cellar that dominated the site. All possible evidence of previous medieval or later buildings on the College Street frontage was absent.

Conditions made it impractical to expose the earlier alluvial gravels throughout the entire site and two relatively small sondages had to be used. These provided insufficient exposure to enable any significant conclusions about earlier (Anglo-Saxon/earlier Medieval) exploitation of the waterfront.

The proposed construction involved piling and excavation to the cellar floor had exceeded the depth of the pile caps and ground beams. Given that the only further damage would be breaking out small areas of cellar floor for pile insertion it was decided that further investigation (necessitating shoring, pumping, groundwater disposal etc.) would be prohibitively expensive and was not justified in the circumstances. Therefore no further work is recommended.

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Rhodri Gardner, for SCCAS, November 2007

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.