

# ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY REPORT

Site of the proposed Community Woodland, Elmswell, Suffolk,  
EWL 025

A REPORT ON THE METAL DETECTOR SURVEY 2008

Planning Application No.: Pre-planning

NGR: 9835 6344

Oasis Ref. Suffolkc1-44297

Funded by: Elmswell Community Wood Group

SCCAS Report no. 2008/121

## Summary

A metal detector survey was carried out on an unploughed field as part of the evaluation of the site for a new Community Woodland at Elmswell, Suffolk. Most of the finds were medieval or early post medieval and attributed to casual loss but also included was a mount from an Early Saxon hanging bowl which may be indicative of a cemetery site nearby.

## Introduction

A metal detecting survey was carried out as part of an archaeological evaluation of the proposed site of the Community Woodland at Elmswell Suffolk. The survey was requested by Will Fletcher of Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service (SCCAS) Conservation Team and carried out on 19th May, 2008 by two experienced metal detectorists from SCCAS Field Team using high quality detectors. The evaluation also included a geophysical survey undertaken by Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd. and has been reported separately. The work was funded by Elmswell Community Wood Group.

The site lies at TL 5984 2634 and the NW corner of the field is less than 200m from the Church (Fig.1). The area is now one large dog-leg shaped field consisting of a total of 3.426 hectares, its length being aligned NE – SW. Earlier maps show that the area is made up of parts of three former fields and that the current boundaries are relatively recent (c1950's). It slopes down from the NE corner above the 70m contour, to the SW corner at c.60m OD. The field was formerly cultivated but has been set-aside for a number of years.

The County Historic Environment Record lists Roman and Saxon finds (EWL 014) and a Roman Kiln (EWL 003) and field system (EWL 013) located within 200m of the site (Fig 1). The apportionment for the Tithe Map (1843) describes the three former fields as arable but by the time of the first edition OS survey (1887) the northern end of the field was parkland within the grounds of the Rectory. Some field names in the Tithe apportionment are early sounding and may have medieval origins (Fig. 2).

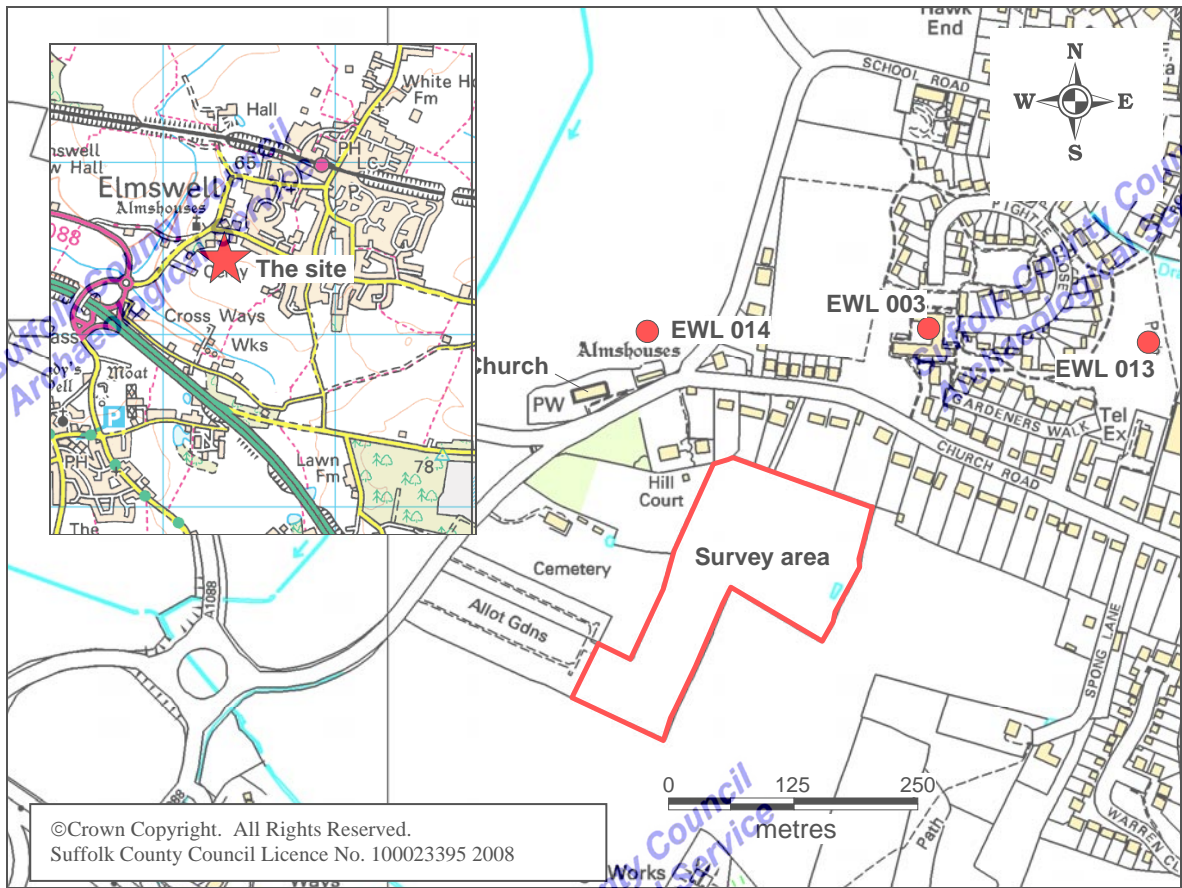


Figure 1. Site location plan

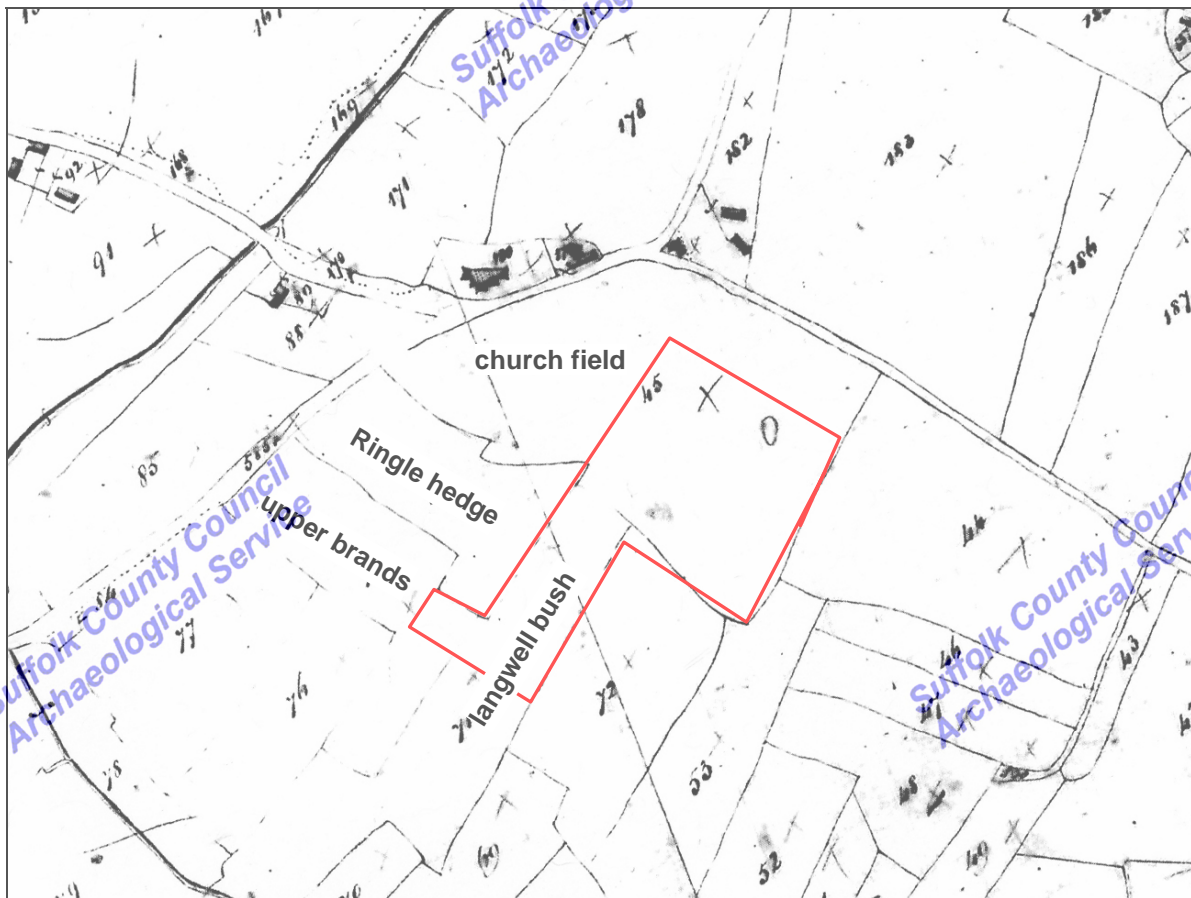


Figure 2. Tithe Map 1843 field name from the apportionment

## Methodology

The field had been roughly cut in advance of the survey but tussocks remained and had re-grown making close contact of the search head with the ground difficult, reducing the depth in the soil that the machines could reach.

The field was detected in non-ferrous mode, in NE – SW transects approximately 12 metres apart in order to cover all the area in the time allotted. A large number of spent .22 rifle cartridge cases were found, which took up a considerable percentage of detecting time; had it not been for these then the transects could have been closer and the number of finds would undoubtedly have been greater.

A number of pieces of waste lead were found generally, equally spread over most of the area, except for the NE block, which had less. Numerous modern finds such as silver paper, drinks cans and ring pulls were also found and together with the lead, were discarded.

The finds were located using a hand-held GPS and the results were downloaded and converted to Mapinfo tables to produce the distribution plot (Fig. 3). The site records have been archived in the main stores of Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service at Bury St Edmunds and with the County Historic Environment Record under the parish code EWL 025. A copy of the report has also been lodged with the OASIS on-line database (ref suffolkc1 44297) The finds have been returned to landowners (Elmswell Community Wood).

## Results

Nine archaeological objects were found. These are listed in the table below and the find spots are shown in Figure 3.

SF No	ID	Description	Date
1001	Ae escutcheon	Circular, hanging bowl mount. See detailed description below.	Early Saxon
1002	Ae Hinge	Small ornate hinge with a small iron rivet, 15mm wide, pierced, with ends missing beyond piercing.	L.Med./Early Post Med
1003	Ae Coin/Token	24mm diameter, very worn and illegible, possible 18th C. half penny token.	C18th
1004	Ae Buckle	Double frame type, D shaped, with central bar, 23mm wide, one end and pin missing.	Late Med
1005	Ae Buckle	Double oval framed type, O shaped with central bar, 19mm wide, one end and pin missing..	Late Med
1006	Pb Token	Lead Token, 15mm diameter. Raised cross with a pellet in each quarter.	Med
1007	Jetton	Nuremburg Jetton, 25 mm diameter, worn and corroded	Late Med
1008	Ae Bell	Complete crotal (animal) bell,	LMed/Early post Med
1009	Ae Buckle	Shoe buckle, double frame type with one straight and one curved elaborate end. 14mm wide, 25mm long.	16th C.

Table 1 Finds list

The most interesting of the finds is the hanging bowl escutcheon (small Find 1001), which is described in detail below. It was found in the SW corner of the field, notably on an area that is slightly raised from the remainder of that block.

### Small Find 1001

An enamelled copper alloy mount from a hanging bowl, dating to the Early Anglo-Saxon period. The disc-shaped mount is 31mm in diameter with a thickness of 2-3mm.

The decoration is worked in copper alloy on the convex side with a circular motif in the centre from which three peltae composed of two-stranded spirals emanate, which together form a

triskele motif. These are interlinked to make a circular border around the edge of the design. The decorative elements are inlaid with red and possibly blue enamel. Part of the dish-shaped mount is damaged and missing towards the outer edge. There is no sign of solder, but the surface on the reverse near the missing part is worn (Fig. 4).

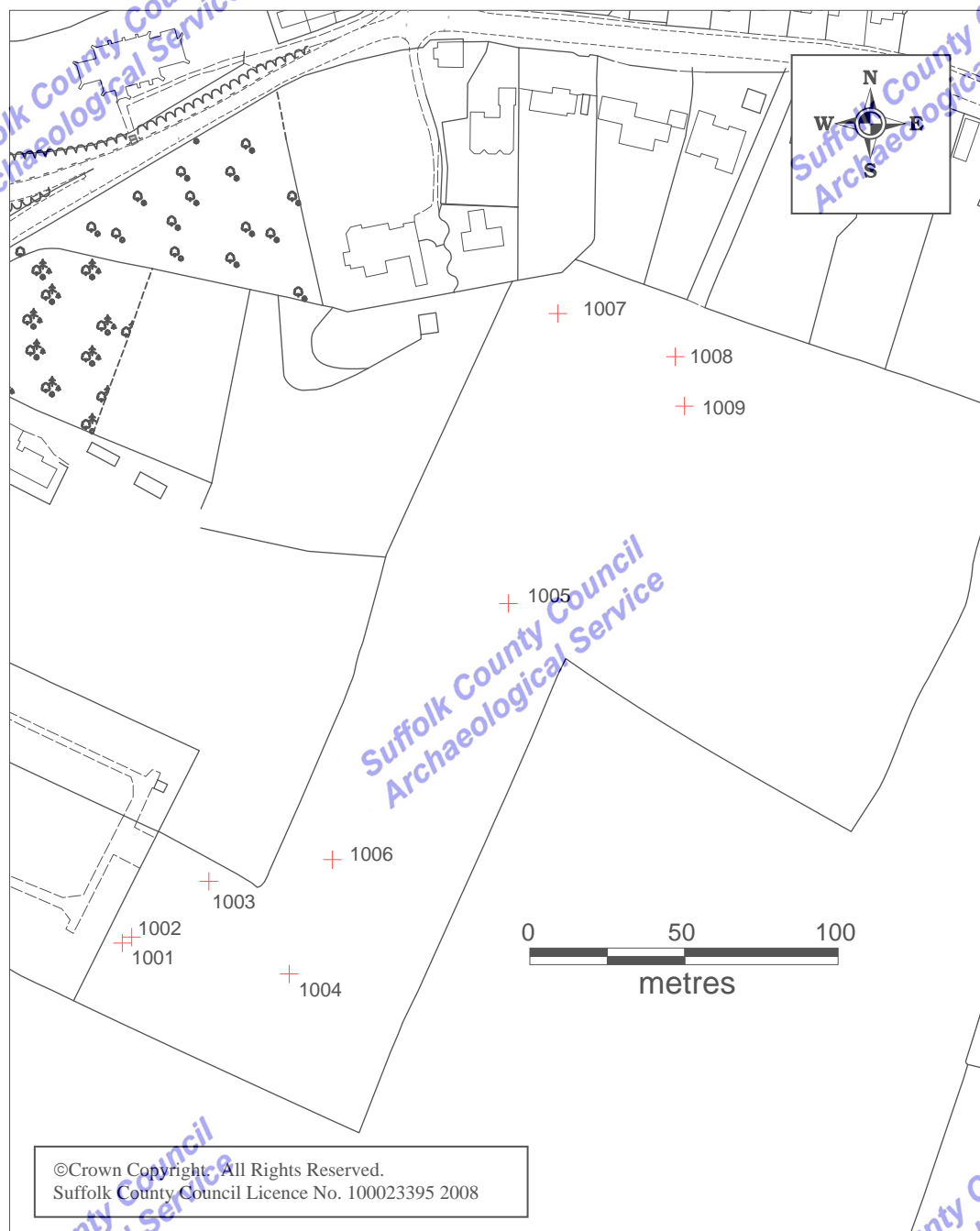


Figure 3. Plan showing small finds distribution

## Discussion

The majority of the finds date to the medieval and early post-medieval period. They represent a typical assemblage of material that would have found its way into the ground through casual loss. The proximity of the site to the church would indicate that it is close to the medieval settlement core and therefore likely to have been frequented by the villagers. The distribution of the finds occurred over the west side of the field, to the west of a former footpath and with a former long narrow field titled Lang(long)well Bush on the tithe map; the name and shape of this field would suggest that it is part of the medieval field pattern. The geophysical survey identifies no archaeological features within this field.

The escutcheon or mount from a hanging bowl fragment dates to the Early Saxon period. The archaeological context in which hanging bowls are found is within high status graves as part of the chattels that accompany the dead. These graves are invariably part of cemeteries. Early Saxon mounts with similar decorative elements have been found at Stoke Golding, Leicestershire, Woodbridge, Suffolk and Camerton, Somerset (Brenan, 1991).

The discovery of this fragment might imply that a grave has been disturbed by ploughing, and that the potential exists for further undisturbed graves. The suggestion of raised ground in the area of the find spot could suggest a possible ploughed out mound but the geophysical results and a study of aerial photographs held in the HER, have not supported this interpretation.



Figure 4: Early Anglo-Saxon hanging bowl mount (Scale 1:1)

### Conclusion.

The metal detector survey produced only a small assemblage of finds but this must be qualified by the intervals of the transects and the limitations inherent in detecting an unploughed field. Despite this the survey has identified the potential for an Anglo Saxon cemetery although this is not conclusive and not supported by other results. The implication that grave goods may have been lifted by the plough, suggests that any graves are shallow and would be threatened by tree roots. It is therefore recommended that trees are not planted in the proximity of the hanging bowl finds spot.

It is also recommended that the mount be cleaned and conserved by a professional conservator. This would reveal the coloured enamels and possibly other details that are at present obscured by dirt and stabilise the object, securing its future.

Roy Damant, Richenda Goffin and David Gill, June 08  
Illustration by Donna Wreathall

## References

Brenan, J., 1991, Hanging bowls and their contexts. BAR British Series 220

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