

# ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT

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## FORNHAM HALL, FORNHAM ST GENEVIEVE FSG 021

A REPORT ON THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING, 2009  
(Planning app. SE/04/2743)



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## Contents

List of Figures  
List of Contributors  
Acknowledgements  
Summary  
HER information

1. Introduction
2. Methodology
3. Results
4. The Finds
5. General Discussion

Appendix 1: Context List

## List of Figures

1. Site location plan
2. Overall plan of the site
3. Disturbed length of section where human remains were found
4. Cess tank with Fornham Church in the background
5. Feature 0034 exposed in the side of the cess tank pit
6. Sections
7. New footings on the left superimposed on the remains of Fornham Hall on the right
8. Sections
9. Profile of the topsoil and surface debris strip over the site of the Hall
10. Clay surface 0005
11. Spread of chalk 0006
12. Pit 0012 filled with brick rubble and exposed in a new footing trench
13. Garage 3 during excavation
14. Service trench through walled garden

## Tables

1. Finds quantities

Front cover; ruined outbuildings were all that remained of Fornham Hall.

‘My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:  
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!’  
Nothing beside remains: round the decay  
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare,  
The lone and level sands stretch far away.  
(‘Ozymandias’ Percy Shelley 1817)

## List of Contributors

All Suffolk C.C. Archaeological Service unless otherwise stated.

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## Acknowledgements

This project was funded by Culford Construction Ltd and we would like to thank Adrian Frost and Darren for all their help during the project. It was monitored by Robert Carr (Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service, Conservation Team). The sections were prepared by John Sims.

## Summary

The monitoring of construction and service trenches during the building of houses and garages exposed evidence for the village of Fornham St Genevieve. Surfaces of chalk, clay and soil layers with medieval pottery which are likely to be the remains of buildings were found below a destruction layer from the north end of Fornham Hall. These surfaces survived between brick foundations for the Hall. An undated ditch on a separate alignment to the hall was probably from the redundant village and a gravel surface may be evidence of the NW-SE road through Fornham that was later diverted when the hall was built. The reopening of an iron sewage pipe unearthed human skeletal remains within the redundant churchyard and these were reburied.

## HER information

Planning application no.	SE/04/2743
Date of fieldwork:	2006
Grid Reference:	TL 8402 6841
Funding body:	Culford Construction Ltd
Oasis reference	Suffolkc1-50525



# 1. Introduction

An archaeological evaluation and monitoring was carried out during the conversion of the surviving buildings of Fornham Hall, Fornham St Genevieve into houses. The work was carried out according to a series of Brief and Specifications by Robert Carr (Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service, Conservation Team) and was funded by Culford Construction Company. The development lies at TL 8402 6841 on the north side of the floodplain of the River Lark at a height of c. 33m OD. Interest in the site is centred on the ruined medieval church and cemetery and on the possibility of evidence for the lost village that occupied the site until the 18th century when it was replaced by the huge estate centred on Fornham Hall. Historically Fornham is best known for the battle which took place there in 1173 between the forces of King Henry II and those of a coalition of his offspring, disaffected nobles and Flemish mercenaries. The battle is said to have taken place close to the river but that a last stand was made by the rebels lead by the Earl of Leicester around the church. It was suggested that human remains found on the estate during the 19th century came from the battle but this is unsubstantiated and the remains are lost.

The massive Hall was used by the army during both world wars and Italian prisoners of war were housed there. Eventually it was demolished by the military who disposed of the furniture and the contents of the wine cellar! The ruined mansion was levelled and only the outbuildings were left standing.

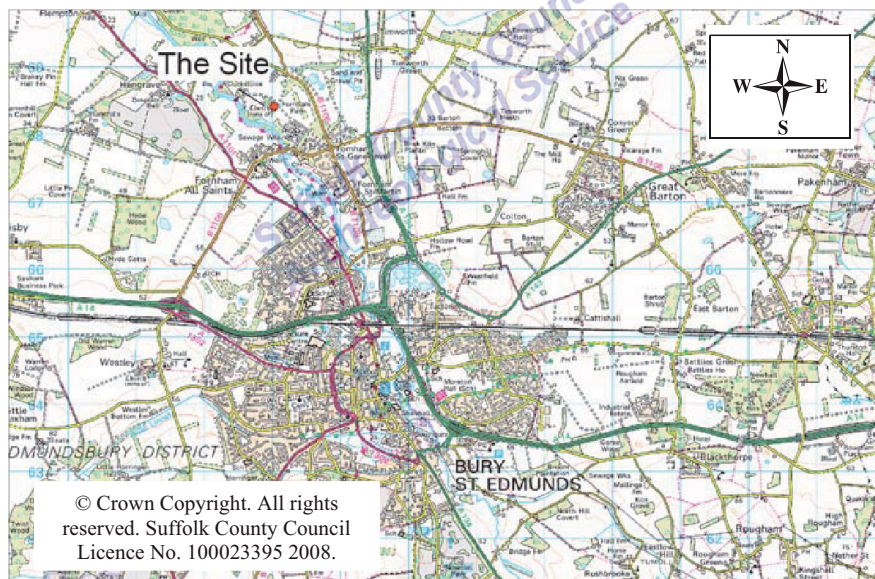


Figure 1. Site location plan

# 2. Methodology

Numerous visits were carried out to this site between December 2005 and August 2006 evaluating and monitoring the excavation of footing and services trenches. No single brief covered this project but a series of outline briefs were prepared as the work progressed, for example, the decision to re-excavate the iron pipe through the churchyard (see below). One of the most sensitive archaeological areas requiring mitigation was judged to be the sewage channel attached to one of the plots that ran through the churchyard that lay to the south of the development. This was evaluated by excavating a small trench under archaeological supervision and an existing iron pipe was located. It was decided to re-excavate this run to minimise any fresh ground disturbance. This length was constantly monitored during excavation and recorded with photographs and sections. The excavations for a new house on the site of the demolished hall were also closely monitored. Further visits were made when garage footings were excavated and to examine various service trenches across the site. Sample profiles were recorded at a scale of 1:20. digital colour photographs were taken during the fieldwork, and are included in the archive. Inked copies of section drawings have been made. An OASIS form has been completed for the project (reference no. suffolkc1-50525) and a digital copy of the report submitted for inclusion on the Archaeology Data Service database (<http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/catalogue/library/greylit>). The site archive is kept in the main store of Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service at Bury St Edmunds under HER No. FSG 021.

### 3. Results

The main areas of monitoring are shown in Figure 2. This shows the outline of the standing remains that were ancillary to the Hall, which was to the south-west of the site. The positions of the new garages are highlighted along with the locations of trenching that was monitored (this includes a new building that was partly over the site of the demolished Hall (Fig. 7).

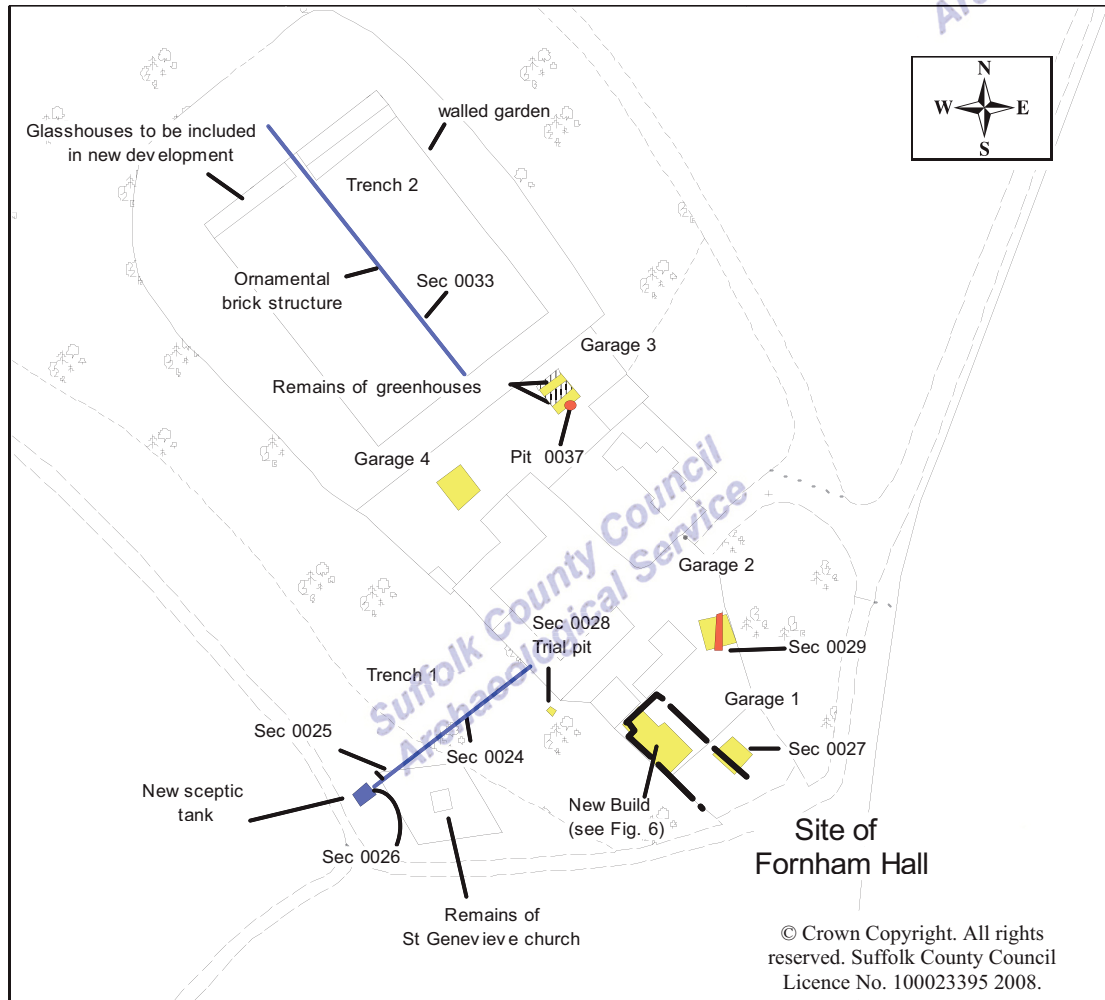


Figure 2. Overall plan of the site

An extensive network of service trenches, particularly soakaways were also excavated and examined where open and these are not shown. Similarly the ground works included alterations to the main building, including improved footings and property walls that are not shown.

A trial pit (Fig. 2 Section 0028) was excavated in the woods between the rear of the Hall buildings and St Genevieve Church. Beneath c.0.1m of topsoil was a 0.3m thick deposit of gravel, below this was brown loam. Because the drains in this area were to be quite shallow nothing further was excavated from the pit; the results of this trial excavation showed that beneath a gravel yard or road surface further archaeological deposits lay undisturbed. To the west of the Trial pit Trench 1 was excavated following the line of an iron sewage outflow installed during the Second World War. The iron pipe was lifted and the trench deepened (Fig. 2 Section 0024 and also Figs. 3, 4 and 5). The northern section of trench revealed it to be disturbed to a depth of 1.2m with natural orange sand and gravel below. Where the trench cut the enclosure for the church a skull was found, loose in the backfill. It was analysed and is recorded in the finds list below. Further bones were unearthed in the same area and are briefly listed in the finds report. It was concluded that these remains were from



the redundant cemetery and after the new pipe had been laid the bones were reburied close to where they were found. At the south end of the trench an existing pit was enlarged for the new settling tank (Figs 4-5).



Figure 3. Disturbed length of section from where human remains were found.



Figure 4. Sewage treatment unit with Fornham Church in the background.



Figure 5. Feature 0034 exposed in the side of the cess tank pit.

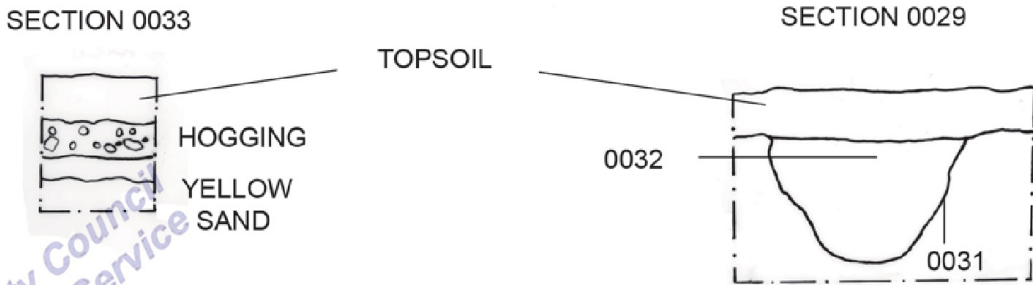
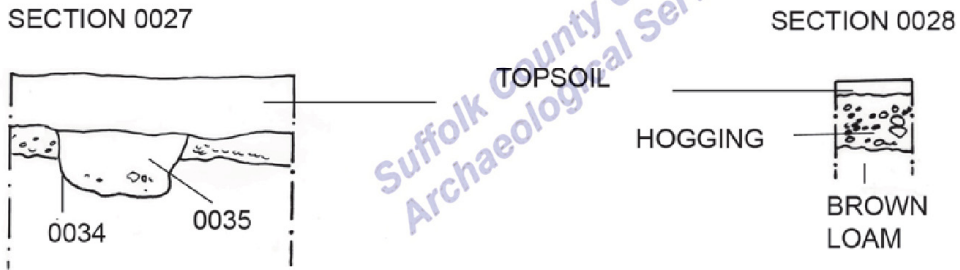
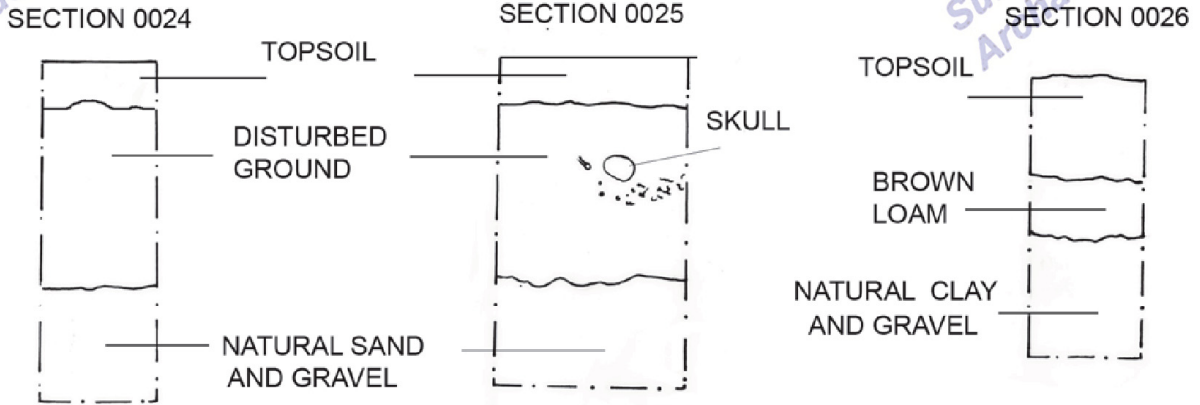


Figure 6. Sections

A single section was recorded; it shows natural sand and gravel c.0.35m from the surface. It also reveals a brown sand filled feature, which was cut from below the topsoil, 0034. The general appearance of this feature tended to suggest it was quite old and might have been a grave. No bones were visible in the section and to avoid unnecessary disturbance, it was not cleaned.

A new house was built over the site of the north end of Fornham Hall (Figs. 2, 6-9). The plan on the right in Figure 7 shows the surviving footings that were exposed after topsoil and made ground to a depth of c.1m had been cleared from the plot of the new building. Between the footings a spread of clay 0005 and a spread of chalk 0006 (Figs. 8 and 9) were exposed. Spread 0005 was overlain by a buried soil layer 0003 and 0006 was overlain by 0004; a single sherd of medieval pottery dated 12-14th century was recovered from each layer. Two sherds of similar pottery were recovered from layer 0002.

The plan on the left shows the outline of the new footing trenches, it also shows the position of a brick culvert that was exposed (Fig.7). Three lengths of footing section have been drawn. Section 0008 shows that the footings were excavated to a depth of c0.3m to remove a backfilled pit, 0012; the full extent of the pit was not visible but it appears quite shallow in the corner of sections 0020 and 0021. It did not extend as far as surface 0006 or 0005 which overlay natural subsoil.

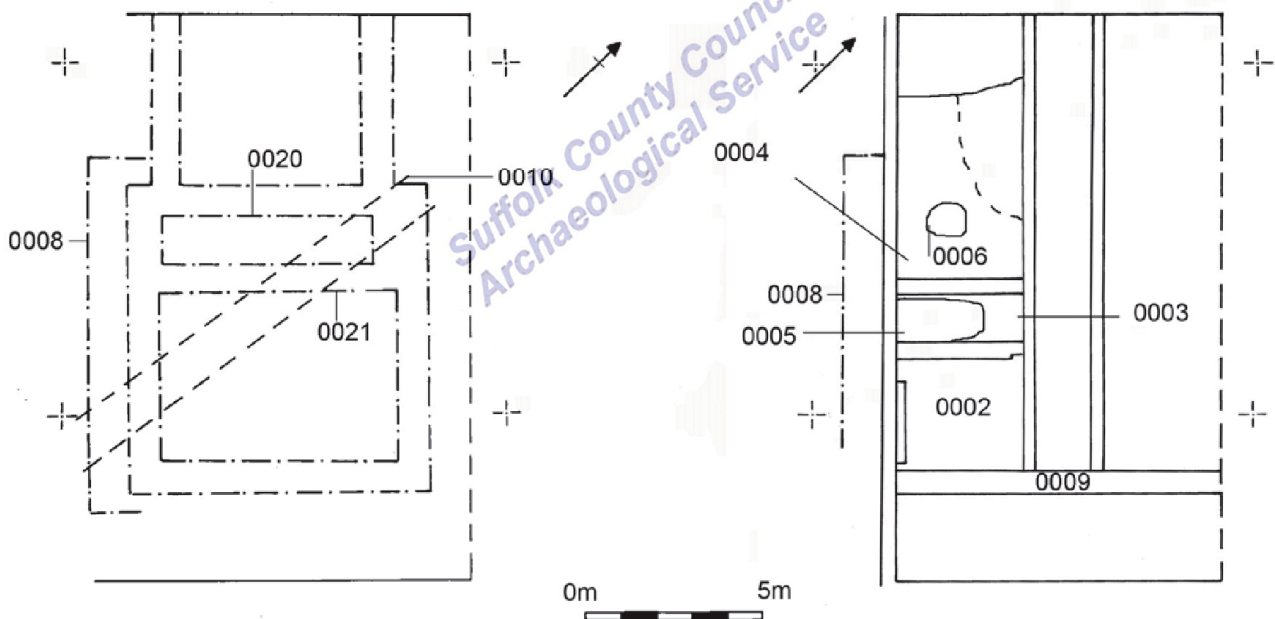


Figure 7. The new footings on the left were superimposed on the remains of footings for Fornham Hall on the right.

Sections 0020 and 0021 (Fig. 7) were largely excavated through undisturbed orange sand with culvert 0010 appearing in section 0021 and 0008. A brick sample has been dated between the late 17th–18th centuries.



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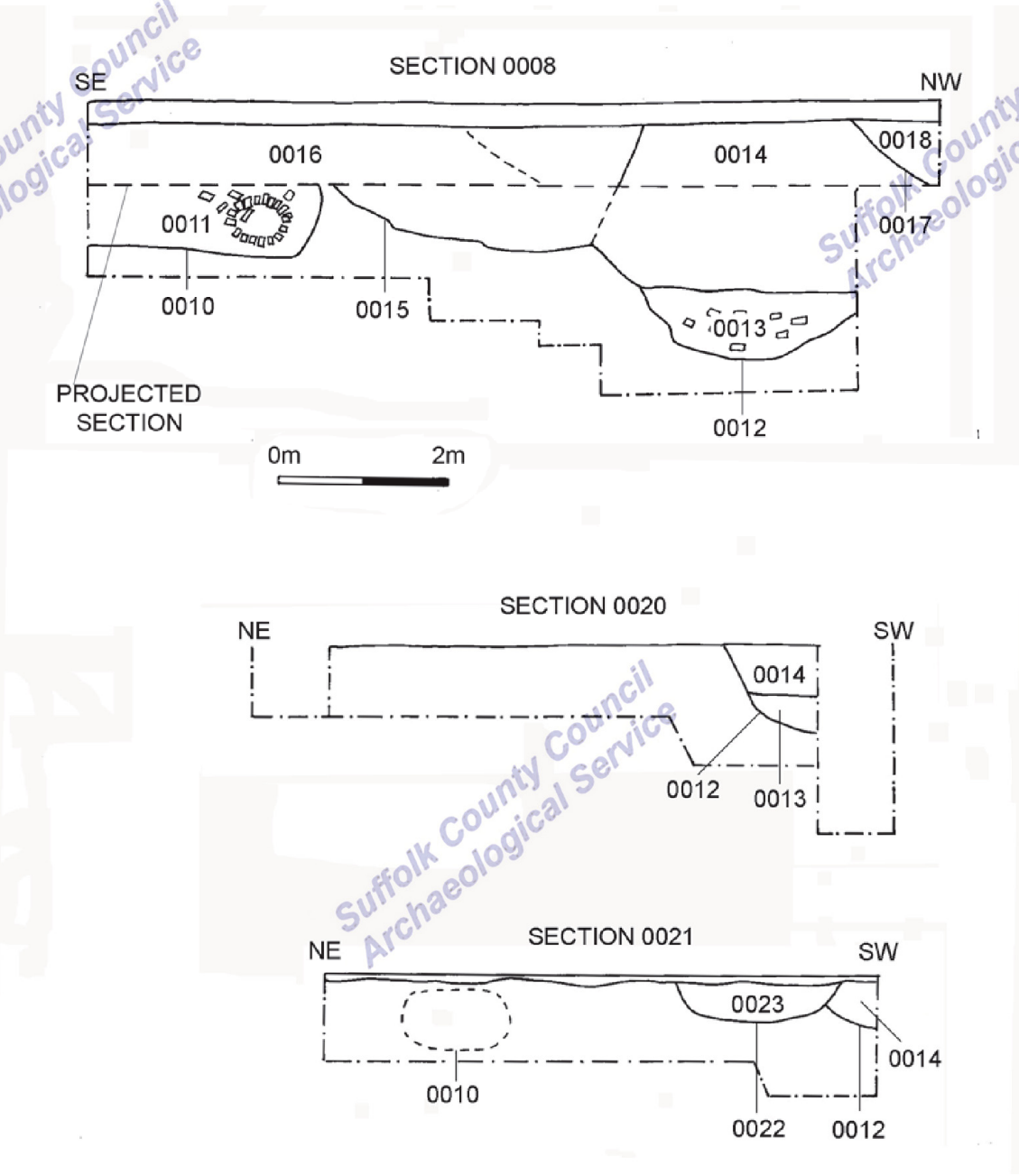


Figure 8. Sections

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Figure 9. Profile of the topsoil and surface debris strip over the site of the Hall



Figure 10. Clay surface 0005



Figure 11. Spread of chalk 0006

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Figure. 12 Pit 0012 filled with brick rubble and exposed in a new footing trench

Garage 1 was monitored when the footing trenches were open. These were 1.3m deep with c.0.5m of topsoil with natural orange sand and clay at 0.8m. The southern half of this trench included a large disturbance because it overlaid the location of Fornham Hall which has now been completely demolished.

Garage 2 was monitored while the footings were excavated. The topsoil was disturbed with brick and charcoal. A ditch was exposed, 0031, which appeared in both the footings for the north and south walls (Fig. 6 Section 0029). The fill was of brown sandy loam and no finds were recovered. The lack of recent finds, the consolidated state of the fill and the alignment of the trenches that was at odds with the surviving outbuildings of the Hall lends to the interpretation that this feature was earlier. Garage 3 was monitored during the excavation of footings. The trench was excavated to a depth of 1.3m. Crossing the footings from northeast-southwest were brick and flint foundations that were identified as the remains of glass houses associated with the garden. A vertical sided pit 0037 was exposed but not bottomed. The fill contained fragments of flint with mortar and was almost certainly associated with the Hall complex (this section has not been illustrated). Natural comprised yellow silt and sand. Garage 4 was monitored after the footings had been excavated to a depth of c1.3m and no features were identified. A service pipe was monitored through the walled garden (Figure 6, section 0033). It was c.0.6m deep; natural subsoil of sand with some gravel was beginning to appear in the base of the trench.





Figure 13. Garage 3 during excavation



Figure 14. Service trench through walled garden.

## 4. The Finds

### Introduction

Finds were collected from 7 contexts, as shown in the table below.

OP	Pottery		CBM		Miscellaneous	Spotdate
	No.	Wt/g	No.	Wt/g		
0001	2	47				Post-medieval (unstratified)
0002	2	8				L12th-14th C
0003	1	8				L12th-14th C
0004	1	30				L12th-14th C
0011			1	3080		17th-18th C
0013			1	3402		17th-18th C
0024					HSR – see below	Prob medieval
Total	6	93	2	6482		

Table 1. Finds quantities

## **Pottery**

Six fragments of pottery were collected (0.093kg). Two unstratified sherds are post-medieval, but the remainder of this small group is earlier.

Fragments of medieval pottery were recovered from surface cleaning of the ground between the base of the footings. These are medieval coarsewares including sherds of Bury wares dating to the Late 12th-14th century. The base of a Late medieval and transitional ware vessel found in disturbance layer 0007 dates to the 15th-16th century.

## **Ceramic building material**

Two bricks were collected from the evaluation and monitoring. A complete unmortared brick measuring 230mm (L), 110mm (W) and 65mm (D) was removed from the infill 0011 of a drain. This dates to the second half of the seventeenth into the 18th century. A second brick which is heavily encased in pebbly cream mortar with large chalk inclusions up to 8mm in length is also of a similar date.

## **Human skeletal remains (Sue Anderson)**

Fragments of a single skull, consisting of part of the frontal, the right parietal and part of the occipital bones, were recovered from fill 0024 of a pipe trench. The skull appears small and the presence of a parietal tuberosity is indicative of a female. The cranial sutures are still patent, which suggests that the individual may have been a young adult at the time of death. A large wormian bone, which is a relatively common developmental or congenital anomaly, was present in the right lambdoid suture.

Further monitoring of the pipe trench in August 2006 produced more fragments of human bone. Brief details were recorded, and the bones were subsequently reburied on the site. A maximum of 4 individuals were estimated, but there were probably three. The remains include:

1. An adult female, skull (both maxilla and mandible), right humerus and right femur, right tibia and fibula and 2 foot bones, and the left tibia.
2. The right humerus, right radius and ulna and right femur of a juvenile.
3. An adult mandible
4. An adult right and left tibia.

Workmen also found more bones in the trench representing 1 or 2 further individuals. These included an adult female skull (with not many teeth) and upper vertebrae, a right tibia and fibula and foot bones.

## **Discussion**

The small quantity of medieval pottery recovered from the footings bears witness to the area being originally the site of a medieval village and church, before the construction of Fornham Hall during the 18th century. Fragments of redeposited human skeletal remains recovered from Trench 1 are likely to have originated from burials in the churchyard nearby and are therefore likely to date to the medieval period.

## **5. General Discussion**

During the monitoring at Fornham a substantial part of the development was seen. The main building work concerned the conversion of outbuildings into houses with only one completely new building and 4 new garages. The majority of the extensive network of service trenches and

soakaways failed to produce interpretable evidence or add anything new to the records from the main footings.

### *The Village of Fornham St Genevieve*

Evidence for the former village was limited. The most obvious association was through the skeletal remains uncovered in the churchyard. Because they came from the backfill of the sewer trench dug during the Second World War their archaeological value was limited and following brief recording they were reinterred on the site. A possible burial revealed in the side of the pit for the new septic tank may suggest that burials extend beyond the enclosed monument but this is unproven. The ditch found beneath Garage 2 was undated but the position and alignment, which are at odds with the remains of the Hall outbuildings are evidence that this was probably an enclosure or roadside ditch from the lost village. A more complex picture emerged from the monitoring for the new house. The clay and chalk surfaces between earlier footings are from floors or tumbledown structures that predate the hall and were much simpler in construction. The pottery may provide a clue to the date but lacks a firm stratigraphic sequence and is too small a quantity to provide secure dating. These surfaces could be medieval, however, and contemporary with the pottery. Although some buildings were demolished when the Hall was built the village was in decline and many more may have lain abandoned beneath the turf. Further evidence of the village may be interpreted from the hogging and buried soil found within the test hole (Section 28). This probably corresponds to the site of the northeast-southwest road that ran more or less parallel to the River Lark above the floodplain before it was diverted when Fornham Hall was built.

### *Fornham Hall*

The evidence from the monitoring has shown that the outline of the hall is probably preserved as footings. Almost a metre of topsoil and rubble was cleared from over the north end of the Hall; wall lines, including some that must have been internal, were preserved below. This suggests that demolition involved simply levelling the site.

Shelley. P.B., 'Ozymandias of Egypt' in F.T., Palgrave 'The Golden Treasury' London 1891

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October 2008

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