

# ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING REPORT

## New Grain Store, Hall Farm, Nowton NWN 009

NGR: TL 8606 6054  
Oasis Ref. Suffolkc1-52559

Funded by: Tey Farm Systems Ltd

SCCAS Report no. 2008/272

### Summary

Monitoring of the groundwork associated with the construction of a new grain store at Hall Farm, Nowton recorded the soil profile within the infilled north arm of the former moat ditch. The depth of the moat ditch was not consistent and varied from 1.4m to 2.6m deep across the 36m length that was sampled. The bottom of the moat was infilled with black organic silts which had accumulated since sometime after the 18th century and contained fragments of tile and brick probably from the barn that formerly occupied the site. The backfilling of the moat was completed during the 1950's and the moat platform had been truncated during previous construction work, removing the archaeological horizon.

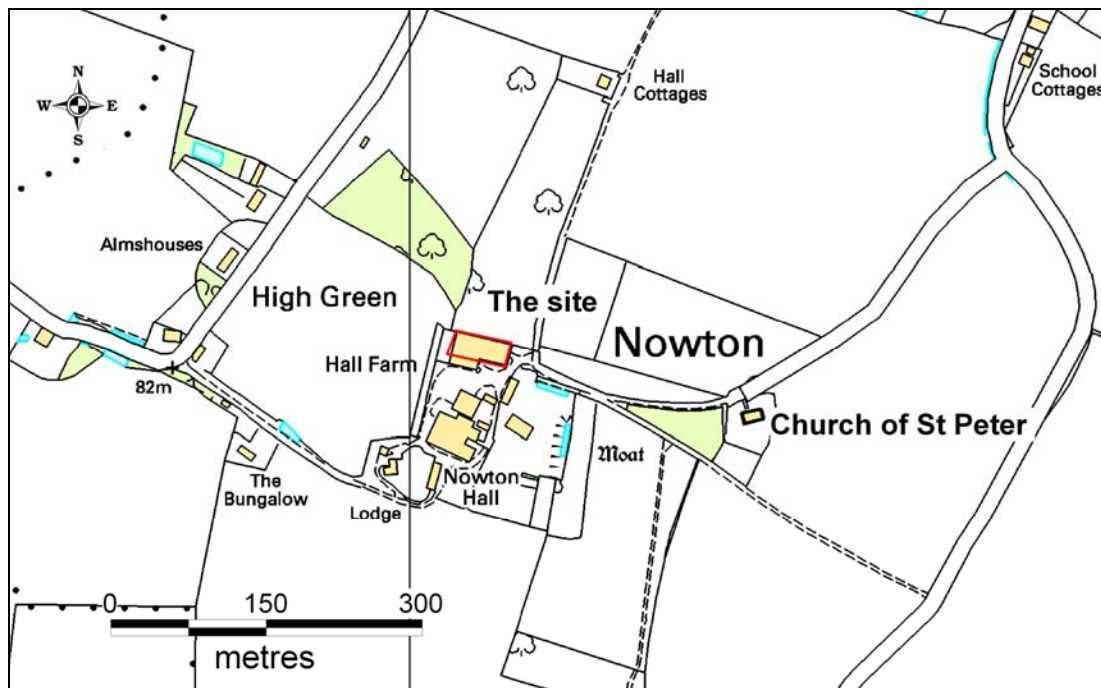
### Introduction

A site strip and the excavation of the footings for a new grain store were continuously monitored by members of Suffolk County Council's Archaeological Service Field Team during November 2008. The monitoring was a condition of the consent on planning application SE/08/1388 to construct a new grain store and was completed in accordance with a brief and specification issued by Will Fletcher (SCCAS Conservation Team). The work was commissioned by Paul Eccles of Tey Farm Systems Ltd.

Hall Farm lies at TL 8606 6054 within a moated enclosure (NWN 001). The site is central to the small isolated settlement of Nowton which is situated on a low hilltop above the 85m contour (Fig 1). Immediately to the west of the Hall is High Green, while 200m to the east is the church of Saint Peter; the earliest fabric of the church is Norman and a church here is recorded in Domesday.

The present Nowton Hall dates to around the 16th century, but the site is likely to have earlier origins as the great moat-building period within the county ran from the start of the 13th century through to the first half of the 14th century. The manor of Nowton was formerly held by the Abbey at Bury St Edmunds.

The moat ditch is now largely infilled with the north arm, closest to the development area, being infilled during the 1950's (landowner, pers comm.). The early Ordnance Survey maps (Fig. 2) suggest that the original platform was divided to create two islands suggesting a division between the main house and the service or farm buildings. The proposed new grain store is on the site of a former cattle barn which had been recently destroyed by arson. The cow barn was itself a replacement for a traditional timber barn that was pulled down in the 1970's (landowners pers. comm) and is probably part of the range of buildings shown on the first and second edition OS map.



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Figure 1. Site location plan

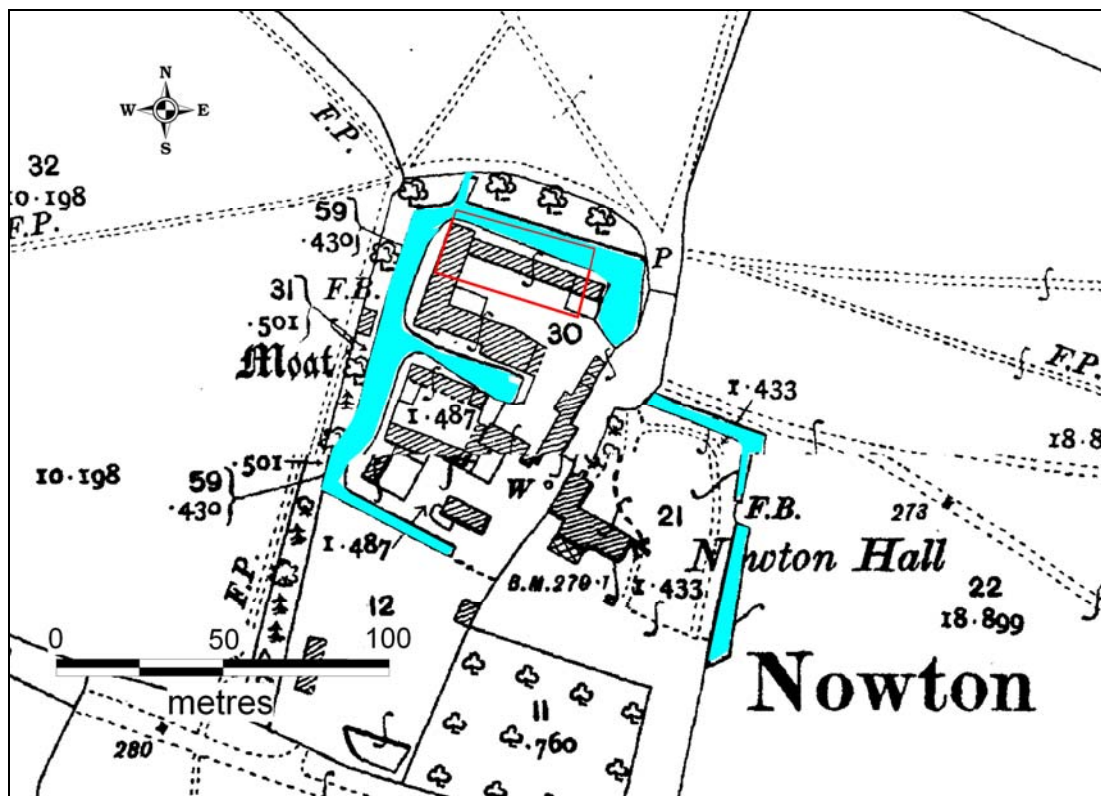


Figure 2. 2nd edition Ordnance Survey Map 1904

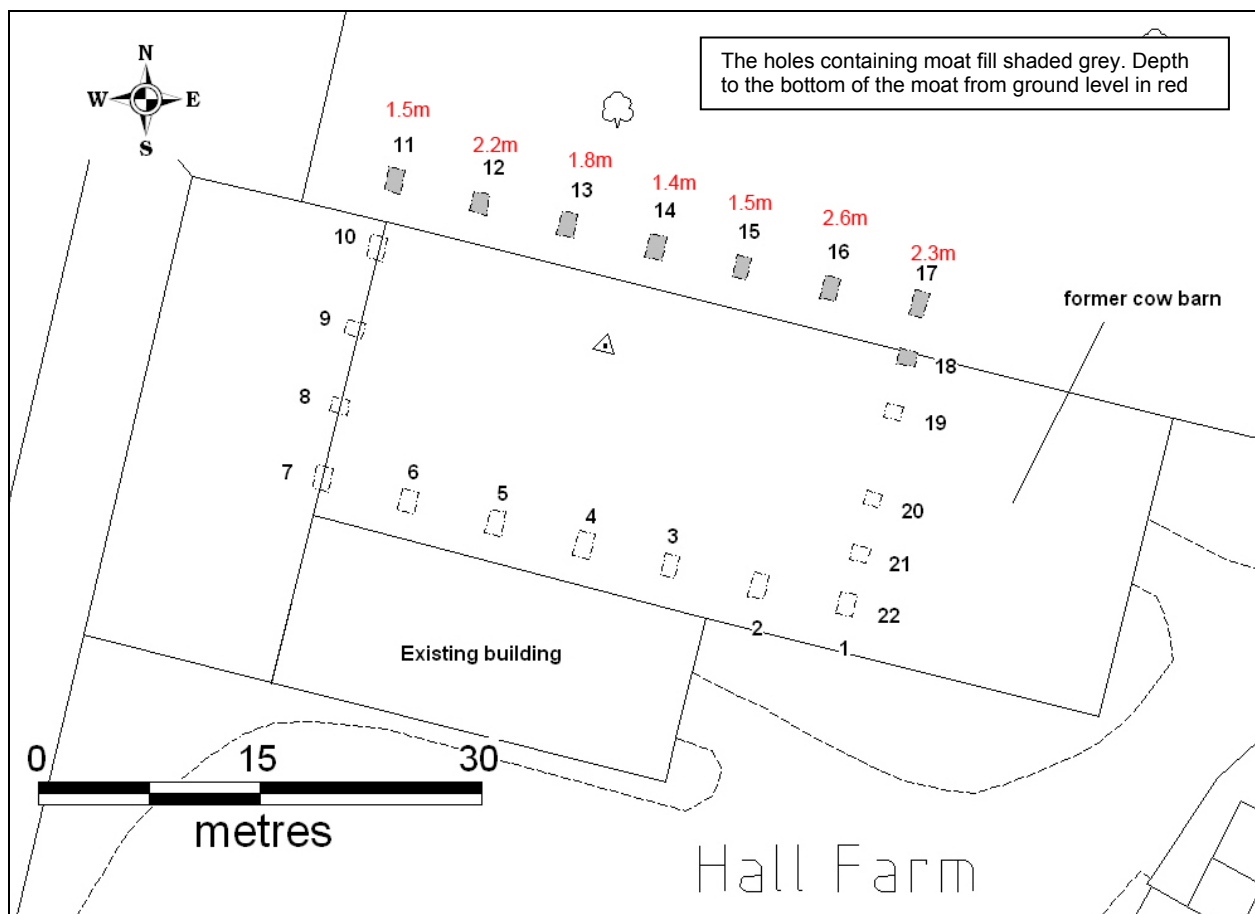
## Results

At the time of the monitoring the structure of the former cow barn had been removed from site but a floor of crushed and rammed chalk remained. The 'reduced-dig' height was slightly lower than the existing level but remained within the thickness of the rammed chalk floor. The chalk was a relatively recent deposit and, in Footing Holes 1 and 18, sealed post Victorian brick rubble.

The holes for the footing pads were excavated to the depth of the subsoil surface in the presence of the monitoring archaeologist. Twenty-one holes were excavated; the positions of which are shown on Figure 3. The development area is slightly lower than the general level of

the moat platform and the footing holes show that the area had been truncated in advance of the construction of the previous building. The footing holes on the south side of the proposed building all have a similar soil profile (Footing hole 19, Fig 5 is typical) and show the sub-base and floor of the former cow barn lying directly over the clay of the surface geology. A single wooden stake was recorded, driven into the clay, in Footing hole 1. It was broken off and sealed beneath a layer of brick rubble thought to be the sub-base for the former cattle barn floor. The stake was oak, round-sectioned and 80mm in diameter with a 230mm long multi-faceted point, and is undated.

The footings along the north side of the building were all excavated within the backfill of the moat ditch. All of the holes within the moat were too deep to enter safely and were recorded from the excavation edge. The ditch and the building were not aligned and the edge of the ditch would have run between Holes 18 and 19 at the east end of the building to between Holes 10 and 11 at the west. Footing Hole 17 was closest to the centre-line of the ditch and here the bottom of the moat ditch was recorded at a depth of 2.3m. The soil profile was the same in all of the footing holes; the majority of the ditch was infilled with homogenous black, organic silts, the result of natural silting processes and at the very base of the ditch these were interleaved with paler silts. The fill produced few finds and all of the recovered material consisted of building debris, including pantile and brick fragments dating from no earlier than the 18th century and a fragment of a sawn plank. The top of the ditch was filled with a thick layer of mixed dirty clay, similar to the natural clay which had been deposited as part of the deliberate backfilling process and above this were recorded rubble and chalk layers associated with the construction of the former cow barn.



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Figure 4. Site plan showing positions of footing holes

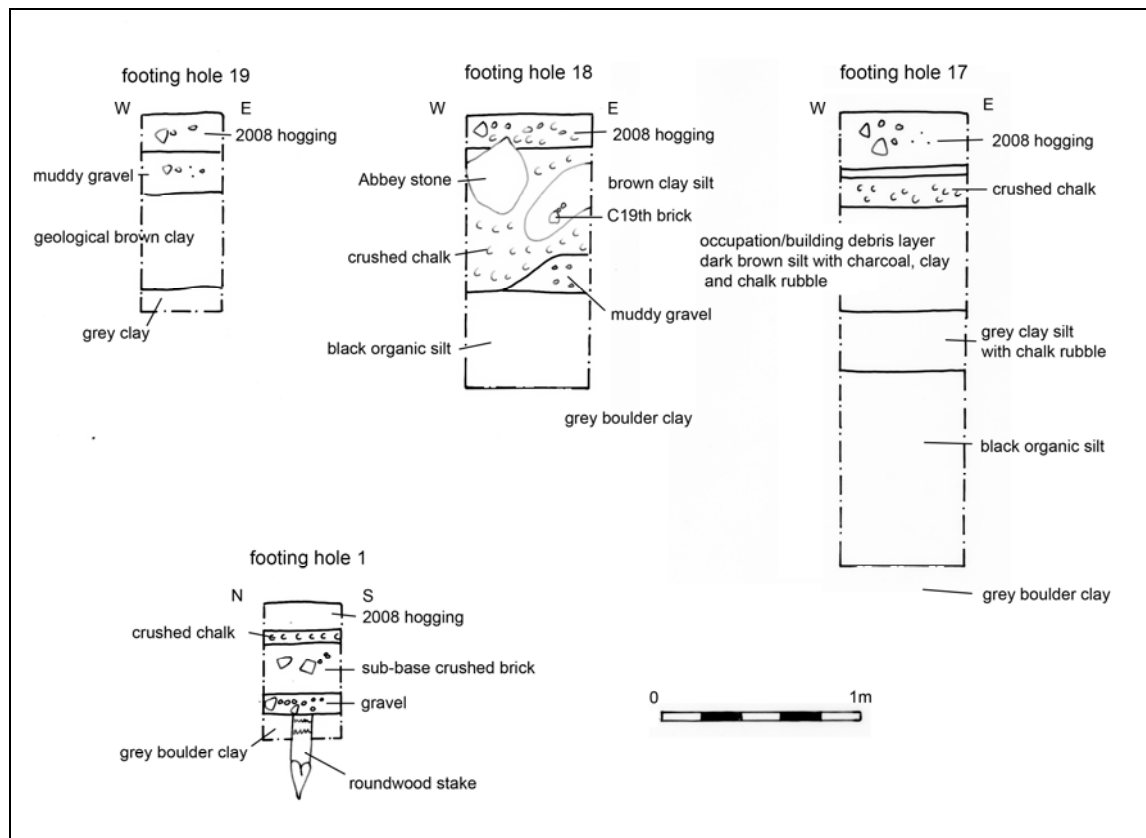


Figure 5. Sample of footing hole sections showing soil profile

The depth of the ditch in each hole was recorded and shown in red on the plan. The depth across the sample varied, and was at its shallowest in Holes 14 and 15. This variation may be explained by the fact that the footings are situated, progressively closer to the south edge of the moat towards the west end of the building. Alternatively it may suggest a constriction at this point, suggesting either the site of a crossing or a weir to control water distribution within the moat.

Several blocks of dressed 'Abbey stone' were collected from the site, which these were all found in secondary contexts and in association with modern building rubble. Whilst this was readily available building material in Bury St Edmunds after the dissolution, its presence on this rural site perhaps reflects Nowton's status as an Abbey manor. Abbey properties would certainly have access to stone released during the on-going repairs and re-building of the Abbey buildings prior to the Reformation and all the stones seen are Barnack and date to the earliest phases of the Abbey's construction.

## Discussion and Conclusion

The monitoring has confirmed the existence and position of the former moat. The recorded sections suggest that moat had largely infilled by natural silting before being deliberately infilled in the 1950's. The presence of 18th century tile and brick from near the bottom of the moat indicates however that the moat was still being cleaned out at least as recently as this date.

The monitoring also suggested that the moat platform within the development area had been truncated, removing any archaeological deposits.

David Gill  
December 2008