

Well Cottage, Mallets Lane, Orford
(ORF 110)
Planning Application No. C/03/1046
Archaeological Monitoring Report No. 2004/166
OASIS ID No. 5372

Summary

Orford, Well Cottage, Mallets Lane (TM/421498; ORF 110). Archaeological monitoring of the footprint of a proposed new dwelling to the rear of Well Cottage, Orford (Fig. 1), was carried out in order to sample and record any surviving archaeological deposits. The area lies within the area defined for the medieval town of Orford and had been subject to previous evaluation owing to the sites potential for the survival of archaeological deposits. Medieval evidence identified during the evaluation was confirmed by monitoring in the form of an assemblage of medieval pottery, oyster shell and animal bone recovered from an exposed subsoil layer. However, the nature of the soil strip and a degree of disturbance over the site resulted in no features being identified.

(Linzi Everett for Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service and R. Hipwell; report no.2004/166)

1. Introduction

An application (C/03/1046) has been made to construct a single dwelling to the rear of Well Cottage, Mallets Lane, Orford (Fig. 1). The site lies at TM 4212 4984, within the medieval town centre, just south of Market Hill. The monitored area lies within a terraced garden, on land which would naturally occupy a gentle south to north slope between the 5m and 10m OD contours. The natural subsoil comprises a bright yellow sand. Monitoring was required following the excavation of a single evaluation trench across the building footprint. This identified a significant quantity of medieval artefacts but the depth of overburden (up to 1.8m in total) and shadows cast into a deep, narrow trench, limited visibility and interpretation of the exposed deposits. In order to better understand the origins of the finds assemblage recovered, monitoring of the soil stripping for the new building was required. The monitoring work was carried out by the Field Team at Suffolk County Council during October and November 2004, and was commissioned by O. Seaman and Son Ltd and funded by the owner, Mr. R. Hipwell.

2. Fieldwork Methodology

Various visits were made to the site while the building footprint was stripped of overburden to its required formation level.

Where features were revealed, they were cleaned manually for definition and each allocated 'observed phenomena' numbers within a unique continuous numbering system under the SMR code ORF 110 (Appendix I), continuing the sequence used during the evaluation. Exposed surfaces were cleaned for definition and a photographs taken as a part of the site archive. The monitoring archive will be deposited in the County SMR at Shire Hall, Bury St Edmunds.

All finds were washed and marked before being quantified, identified and dated by the finds management staff of the Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service.

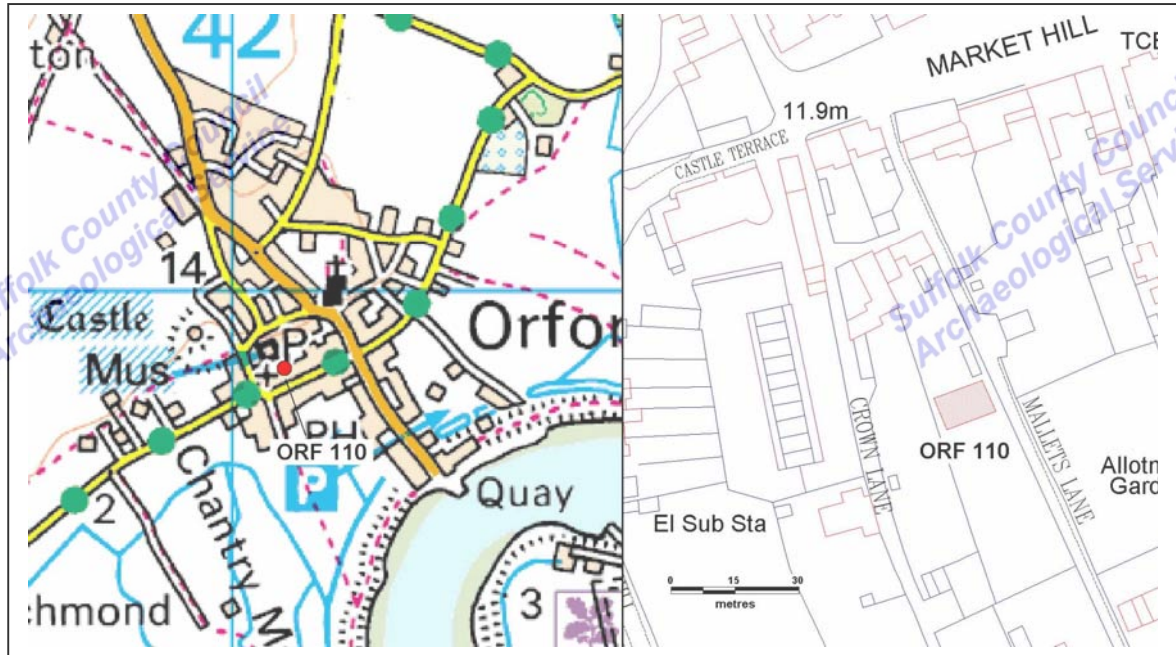


Figure 1: Site location

3. Results

Immediately in front of the existing building, an east to west service trench cut through the natural subsoil. In the south east corner of the site, a large pit, 0009, had disturbed an area c. 5m in diameter. Natural subsoil was only exposed in about two thirds of the stripped footprint, immediately in front of the existing building. Elsewhere, the formation level revealed subsoil layer 0003, areas of which were hand cleaned but no features were seen cutting this layer. Medieval pottery, shell and an iron fishing hook were recovered during cleaning.

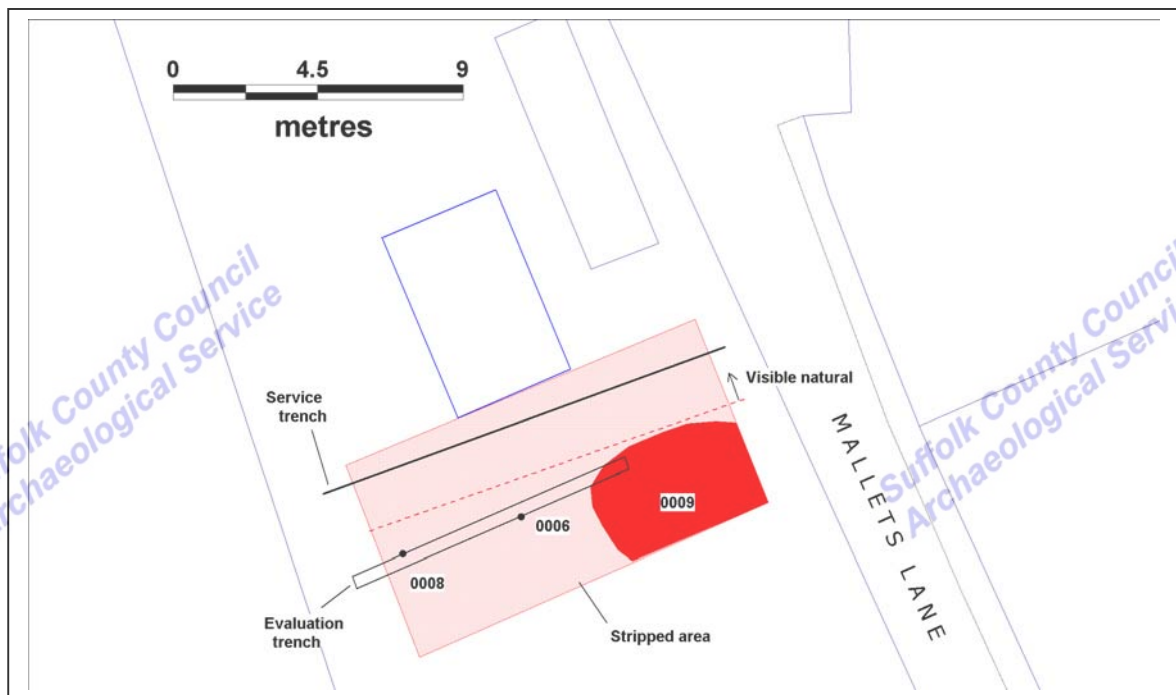


Figure 2: Plan of stripped area

4. The Finds

Mallets Lane, Orford (ORF 110): evaluation and monitoring finds

Sue Anderson, November 2004.

Introduction

Finds were collected from two contexts, as shown in Table 1.

OP	Pottery		CBM		Clay pipe		Miscellaneous	Spotdate
	No.	Wt/g	No.	Wt/g	No.	Wt/g		
0004	97	1260	11	465	2	11	3 Fe nails (35g) 1 Fe hook (5g) 1 lava quern (1215g) 12 animal bone (105g) 29 shells (305g)	13-14th c. (or 18th c.)
0007	2	48					2 stone (172g) 1 limestone (2905g) 2 animal bone (40g)	13th-14th c.
Total	99	1308	11	465	2	11		

Table 1. Finds quantities.

Pottery

The majority of pottery came from spoilheap collection (0004), but may be related to subsoil layers 0003 and 0005. Only two sherds were collected from a feature, pit fill 0007. Table 2 shows the quantities by fabric and a full list is appended to this report. The following refers to finds from 0004 unless otherwise stated.

Fabric	Code	No.	Wt/g
Unidentified handmade	UNHM	1	3
Medieval coarseware gritty	MCWG	1	5
Medieval coarseware	MCW	76	955
Hollesley glazed ware	HOLG	10	133
Ipswich glazed ware?	IPSG	1	6
Unprovenanced glazed ware	UPG	1	14
Saintonge ware	SAIN	3	20
Late medieval and transitional	LMT	2	29
Glazed red earthenware	GRE	1	21
Frechen stoneware	GSW4	1	30
Iron-glazed blackware	IGBW	1	3
Unidentified	UNID	1	8

Table 2. Pottery by fabric.

One abraded sherd in a soft, orange fairly fine sandy fabric (UNHM) had lines of finger-nail impression decoration and may be prehistoric.

The majority of pottery collected from the site was of high medieval date. Most of the medieval coarseware was typical of the Hollesley industry and included two jar and two jug rims, several base sherds and a large handle with a very deep thumb impression. Hollesley glazed wares included a jug rim, a twisted rod handle and a narrow strap handle. An unprovenanced body sherd is likely to be an Essex redware and was decorated with white slip and clear glaze. One sherd of possible Ipswich glazed ware was identified based on the fabric, but the glaze was thick and dark green, and it is possible that the vessel was an import, or of later date. Three fine whiteware sherds in micaceous fabrics with copper green glaze were probably from Saintonge in south-west France, although they could be

North French products. Most of this assemblage is likely to date to the 13th/14th centuries.

Two sherds of late medieval pottery, both unglazed, were probably local products from the Waveney Valley area. A few post-medieval sherds were collected, including a cordoned jar rim in GRE, a Frechen stoneware bottle or jug handle, and a body sherd of iron-glazed blackware (possibly a late product). One unidentified sherd in a fine buff fabric with a reddish slip externally may be an Iberian import of post-medieval date.

Ceramic building material (CBM)

All CBM was from 0004. Four fragments of plain roof tile and two pieces of ridge tile of late/post-medieval date were in medium sandy red fabrics. Four pieces of probable floor tile were also found, including one piece of Flemish tile with clear glaze on the edges and a nail hole in the corner, and a burnt fragment with knife trimmed edges. The other two pieces were both worn and abraded. Flemish tiles are usually of 14th/15th century date and were used for flooring in medium to high status secular buildings and churches. A very abraded fragment of CBM in a dense, fine pink fabric may be a piece of Roman tile.

Iron

Four iron objects were recovered from 0004, three hand made nails and one fishing hook. The hook appears unbarbed but the barb may have simply corroded away. It is similar to examples found during excavations in Norwich which are known to date from around the high to late medieval period (Margeson, 1993).

Animal bone

By Rhodri Gardner, SCCAS

12 fragments of mostly unidentifiable large and medium-sized mammal bone were collected from 0004.

This included the following: 3 fragmentary cattle vertebrae, 1 proximal end of a sheep metacarpal (unfused - indicating that the animal was a new-born lamb at time of death), 1 pig phalanx showing signs of burning.

Only 2 fragments of bone were recovered from 0007. 1 large-sized mammal rib fragment and 1 fragment of cattle tibia with a fused proximal epiphysis (indicating that the animal was at least 3.5 years old at time of death) which had been transversely chopped.

Miscellaneous

Two clay pipe stems with large bores were recovered from 0004 and may be of 18th century date. A lump of lava quern, with one pecked grinding surface was also recovered.

Two pieces of a stone from 0007 were probably natural mudstone. A piece of broken limestone from the same context is most likely to be masonry but had no worked surfaces.

Discussion

One sherd of possible Bronze Age pottery was recovered and was probably residual in a later context (although it was recovered from the spoilheap). It may indicate prehistoric activity on the site.

One fragment of a heavily abraded possible Roman tile was recovered. Roman artefacts have been identified at Orford Castle, suggesting a possible site of this date there. However Roman CBM was often re-used in the early medieval period.

The majority of pottery was of high medieval date and most of it was probably manufactured locally. It included the normal range of vessels for the period. Some imports of French origin were present, and these have also been found on other sites in Orford, possibly related to the presence of the royal castle. Imports are generally more common on coastal sites, however, and are not necessarily indicators of high status here.

A few later finds included roof and floor tile of late or post-medieval date, some clay pipes and a few sherds of late and post-medieval pottery.

In terms of the faunal remains, no significant conclusions about species representation, butchery patterns or husbandry patterns can be drawn as the assemblage is too small.

From the artefactual evidence, the main period of activity on this site would appear to be from the 13th to the 15th centuries. However, rubbish may have been disposed of elsewhere in later periods and the lack of finds does not necessarily indicate a hiatus of use.

5. Discussion

Much of the site had been disturbed by an existing east to west service trench and by a large pit, excavated fairly recently for the disposal of waste building materials. No features were seen cutting the little natural visible.

It was possible to study the finds-rich subsoil layer 0003 in more detail than had been feasible during the evaluation. It was seen to comprise a homogenous layer, quite loose and with pottery, bone and shell well distributed throughout. This is most likely to represent a general occupation layer, generated as a result of activity or rubbish disposal on the site during the medieval period. It was very similar in nature and content to subsoil layer 0390 observed during excavations at Castle Hill, Orford, just 70m south west of this site (Everett, 2001). Had bulk sampling of this layer been possible, it is likely that further evidence of activity, such as small fish bones and other environmental evidence, would have been recovered.

References

Everett, L., 2001, *Land at Castle Hill, Orford (ORF 032)*, SCCAS Excavation Report no. 2001/32

Everett, L., 2003, *Well Cottage, Mallets Lane, Orford (ORF 110)*, SCCAS Evaluation Report no. 2004/153

Margeson, S., 1993, *Norwich Households: The Medieval and Post-Medieval Finds From Norwich Survey Excavations 1971-1978*, EAA Report no. 58

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Appendix I: Context list

OP	Context	Description	Cuts / overlies	Cut by / under
0001	0001	Topsoil- dark brown loamy sand, 340-400mm thick. Contains modern rubble.	0002	
0002		Subsoil- dark brown loamy sand, 800mm thick, containing chalky lumps and post-med/modern building rubble, clay pipe, glazed china etc.	0003	0001
0003		Subsoil- mid brown sand, c.200mm thick. Contains v. occasional stones and shell	0005	0002
0004		Finds- unstratified finds recovered from spoil heap, believed to come from interface of 0003 and 0005. May be slight contamination from 0001/0002		
0005		Subsoil- pale yellow brown sand, c.150mm thick, appearance of dirty natural. Noticeably stoneless.	natural	0003
0006		Pit cut- small, steep sided pit in S edge of trench, only partially excavated. Relationship with 0005 unclear.	0005	
0007	0006	Pit fill- mid brown sand, gradually paler towards base. Pottery, bone and worked stone recovered.	0005	
0008		Pit- small pit exposed at base of northern trench section. Trench depth prevented access to excavate. Possibly cuts 0005 but relationship unclear.	0005	
0009		Pit- large, deep pit /soakaway filled with modern building waste	0002, 0003, 0005, natural	

Appendix II: pottery catalogue

Context	Fabric	No.	Wt.	Abr.	Notes	Date
0004	UNHM	1	3	+	orange, fairly fine fabric, FNI dec, soft, poss prehistoric	BA??
	MCWG	1	5	+		12-13
	MCW	69	802		body and base sherds, mainly Hollesley type	13-14
	MCW	4	33		2 jar rims, 2 jug rims, developed forms, Hollesley type	13-14
	MCW	1	72		large WS handle with deep thumb impression, Hollesley type	13-14
	HOLG	10	133		incl. jug rim, twisted rod handle, narrow strap handle, spots CG and GG	13-14
	IPSG?	1	6		fabric is OK, but looks late, thick GG, IWL/IHL dec	15-16??
	UPG	1	14		poss Essex redware, reduced core, white slip dec, CG	13-15
	SAIN	3	20		1 with applied strip, CuGG, could be NFRE	13-14?
	LMT	2	29		1 base, 1 body	15-16
	GRE	1	21		cordoned rim, jar	16-18
	GSW4	1	30		handle	16-17
	IGBW	1	3		body sherd, fine, may be late	17-18
	UNID	1	8		fine buff fabric with reddish ?slip ext, prob import, Iberian?	PMed?
0007	MCW	2	48		body sherds = 1 vessel, Hollesley type	13-14
Total		99	1227			