

# ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING REPORT

## OLD BUILDER'S YARD, CHURCH STREET STRADBROKE (HER ref. SBK 032)

A REPORT ON THE RECORDING OF A SAWPIT  
(Application No. 661/02 & LB/124/02)

Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service Report No. 2009/079  
OASIS Ref. suffolkc1-56591

*Summary: As part of an archaeological condition attached to the planning consent for the construction of a new dwelling and garage within the old builder's yard, Church Street, Stradbroke (NGR; TM 2305 7388), a sawpit was revealed and recorded during January 2007. The brick-lined, sawpit had been exposed beneath the floor of an outbuilding that had been demolished as part of the re-development of the site. A measured survey of the sawpit was undertaken and a number of digital photographs were taken of the sawpit after it had been mechanically excavated by the on-site contractors. This event is recorded on the Historic Environment Record under the HER reference SBK 032. The archaeological monitoring was undertaken by the Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service, Field Projects Team, who were commissioned and funded by the applicant, Mr. M. Wisbey.*

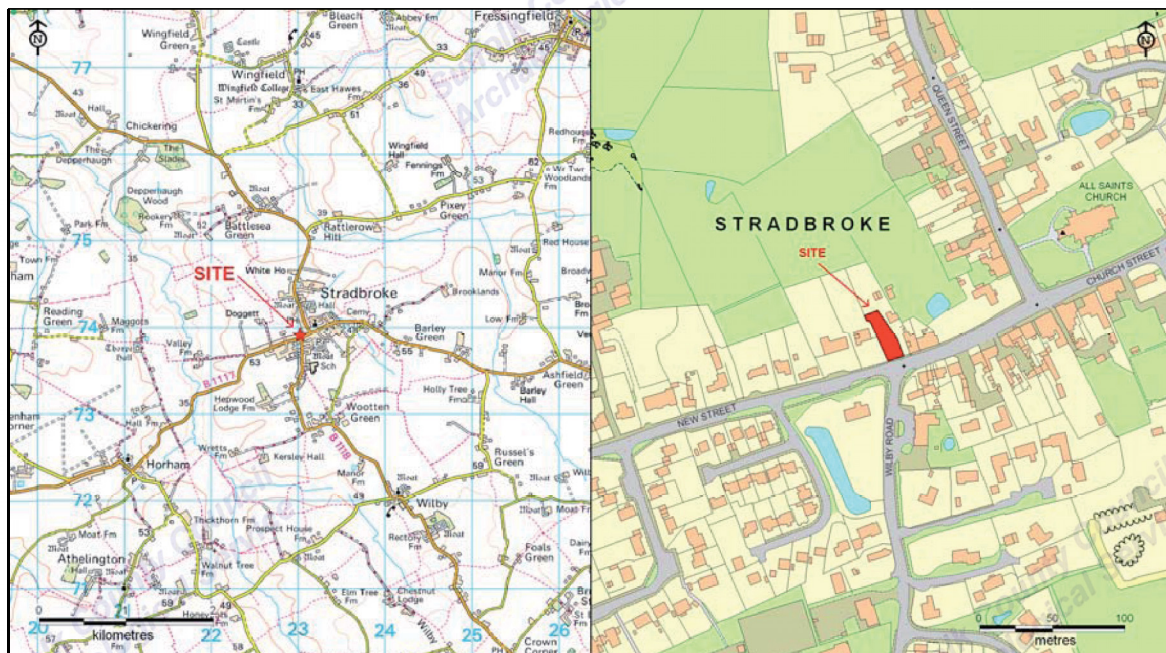


Figure 1. Location Plan

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### Introduction

It was proposed to build a single dwelling and detached garage block within the old builder's yard, Church Street, Stradbroke. Planning permission was sought and agreed (application nos. 661/02 and Listed Building Consent ref. LB/124/02) but with an attached archaeological condition. The site is situated within the medieval settlement core of the

small town of Stradbroke. At the time of the application a single storey, 'L'-shaped outbuilding stood on the street frontage and within this it was believed a sawpit, which had been in use up until the 1940s, existed beneath the floor. The archaeological condition called for the monitoring of all groundwork associated with the proposed construction, in order to retrieve any evidence for earlier occupation within the site, and the hand-excavation and recording of the sawpit by an archaeological contractor once the concrete floor slab of the outbuilding had been removed. To detail the archaeological works required a Brief and Specification was produced by Mr K. Wade of the Suffolk County Council Conservation Team (see Appendix). None of the buildings within the proposed development area are Listed structures; consent was required as the site lay within the cartilage of a listed building.

This report only details the recording of the sawpit as no archaeological monitoring of groundwork associated with the construction of the proposed dwelling or garage block was undertaken.

The old builder's yard had formerly been the site of the village carpenter and had been occupied by the Copping family for generations. Conversations between Mr Readman, chairman of the Stradbroke Local History Group, and Mr R. Copping from the family of carpenters revealed some of the background behind the believed existence of the sawpit. Mr Copping described the saw pit as being solidly built and brick lined and that when it fell out of use Mr Copping's father (the then carpenter) wished to see it preserved. In order to achieve this it is claimed that he backfilled the pit with an inert material and removed the top two courses of brickwork to enable a concrete cover to be formed with the remaining brickwork left *in situ*. Mr Copping states that he was present when this was carried out. He was then aged about 12 and that it happened sometime during the late 1930s or early 1940s.

A sawpit consists of a deep lined pit over which large baulks of timber or tree trunks would be placed in order for them to be sawn. This would be undertaken using a large saw handled by two people, one standing on the top of the timber, and one in the pit below. The timbers being sawn could be of great weight and the safety of the person down in the pit would rely heavily on the strength of the supporting timbers and that of the sawpit walls.



Plate I: a sawpit in use in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century  
(source: *Weald and Downland Museum website*)

The old builders yard is situated on the north side of Church Street, opposite the junction with the road to Wilby to the south and lies at a height of approximately 52m OD. The National Grid Reference for the centre of the site is TM 2305 7388 (Fig. 1). This recording event is entered on the Historic Environment Record under the reference SBK 032 and the site archive will be held under the same reference. The archaeological

monitoring was undertaken by the Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service, Field Projects Team, who were commissioned and funded by the applicant, Mr. M. Wisbey. A summary of this work has been entered onto OASIS, the online database, under the reference suffolkc1-56591.

## Methodology

Although it was proposed to hand excavate and record the sawpit the opportunity was not allowed as upon visiting the site in response to a telephone call from the on-site building contractors it was discovered that the sawpit had been completely emptied of its fill by machine and that it was now unsafe to enter. Consequently the recording was limited to measurement of its dimensions and the plotting of its location using hand tapes. A number of digital photographs were also taken.

## Results

The site was initially visited on the 9<sup>th</sup> September 2004 to investigate the layout of the site and to assess for any possible evidence for the sawpit. At this time the outbuilding was still standing (see Plates I-IV) although the northern arm of the 'L' shaped structure had been damaged by fire. The building was found to be constructed of a light timber frame clad with horizontal planking and roofed in a mixture of pan tiles and corrugated iron sheets. It was not possible to positively date this structure although an eighteenth century origin was suggested by the Buildings Conservation Officer.

The site was again visited, on the 4<sup>th</sup> January 2007 in response to a telephone call from the on-site building contractors when it was found that the outbuilding had been cleared and part of the concrete floor had been lifted to reveal the sawpit, which had been emptied of fill by a machine fitted with a toothed bucket only slightly narrower than the sawpit itself.

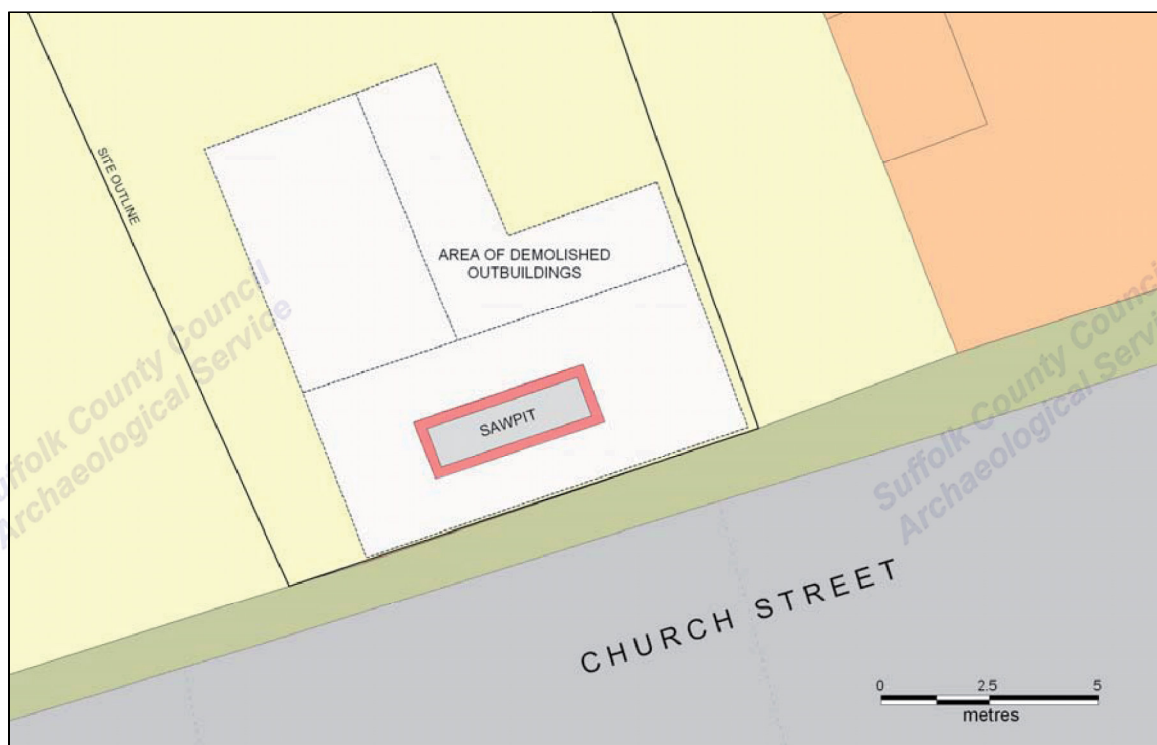


Figure 2: Location of Former Outbuildings and Sawpit

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The sawpit internally measured 3.63m in length and 0.94m in width, although this increased to 1.02m in the centre. The walls were constructed of soft red bricks laid two bricks wide (*c.* 0.23m) in a random mixture of stretcher and Flemish bonds (Plate X) and cemented with a lime mortar. The brickwork extended to a depth of 1.68m at which point a natural stiff grey boulder clay was encountered. The base of the sawpit had been removed by the machine during its excavation. Based on some examples remaining at the western end it is believed to have consisted of bricks laid flat across the base, the surface of which was probably at a depth of 1.54m.

No obvious internal features were noted other than what appeared to be a circular pipe set in the southeast corner. It was not entirely clear but it appeared to be located at a height of one course of bricks above the base (visible in Plate VII).

The sawpit was situated within the southern, approximately east-west aligned cell of the former outbuilding, but was not completely centrally located within this space. The location was plotted by measuring from the western and southern wall bases which at the time of the visit still remained.

The fill of the sawpit had been entirely removed and placed with other spoil from the site. It was briefly examined and appeared to consist of garden soil although this had become a waterlogged sludge towards the base. No artefacts were recovered.

## **The Finds**

Richenda Goffin, February 2007.

Two bricks were retrieved from the sawpit wall for further analysis and retention as a sample. As shown in the table below.

<b>Origin</b>	<b>CBM No.</b>	<b>Spotdate</b>
Upper edge of sawpit wall	2	L17th-18th C
Total	2	

### Ceramic building material

Two complete brick samples were retained from the wall around the sawpit. Both have a dense orange fabric and are covered on most surfaces with a buff sandy mortar which contains lime inclusions. One brick has a black surface coating on one face, which with the second brick is covered over with the mortar, suggesting re-use. The dimensions of these post-medieval bricks are closest to Drury Type LB3 which date from the late 17th into the 18th century (Drury 165).

### Discussion

The two bricks samples date to the later post-medieval period, and were possibly re-used in the sawpit, which may date to the nineteenth century.

## Conclusion

The sawpit was located within the outbuilding in precisely the manner and condition as suggested by Mr Copping although it is unfortunate that the floor had been destroyed by the time of the visit, something that could have been avoided if the pit had been carefully hand dug as originally intended.

No date for its construction could be ascertained. It is suggested that the bricks, which are possibly late seventeenth through to the eighteenth century in date, have been reused from an earlier structure although all appeared to be of a similar type and colour rather than a mix of types that could be expected if they had been salvaged from elsewhere. An eighteenth century date has been suggested for the structure that formerly covered the site and it is possible the pit dates from the same period.

No internal features were noted (some have recesses for storage of food, drink, etc. for the bottom sawyer). The pipe seen in the southeast corner, despite being situated slightly above the floor, is probably a drain although where it would drain to is not obvious.

The fact that the sawpit was slightly wider in the centre rather than at the ends could be a deliberate part of the original construction, either by design to resist ground thrust, or by accident. A more likely cause is that the walls have been pushed outwards by the weight of large timbers resting on cross members over the life of the sawpit.

The fate of the remains of the sawpit after recording is at present unknown although it is hoped they are preserved under the floor of the garage block that has since been built.

## References

- Drury, P., (1993) Ceramic Building Materials in Margeson, S., *Norwich Households: The medieval and post-medieval finds from Norwich Survey Excavations 1971-1978*, EAA Report No 58

**Plates:**



Plate I: View of former outbuilding, looking NE



Plate II: View of former outbuilding, looking NW



Plate III: View of former outbuilding, looking S



Plate IV: View of former outbuilding, looking SE



Plate V: View of Sawpit, looking E



Plate VI: View of Sawpit, looking W



Plate VII: View east end of Sawpit



Plate VIII: View west end of Sawpit



Plate IX: Plan view of west end wall of Sawpit



Plate X: Example of brickwork at east end, north wall



Plate V: General view of Sawpit, looking SW



Plate VI: General view of Sawpit, looking W

# APPENDIX

## SUFFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL

### ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICE - CONSERVATION TEAM

#### Brief and Specification for Archaeological Monitoring

#### THE OLD BUILDERS YARD, CHURCH STREET, STRADBROKE

#### 1. Background

1.1 Planning consent (661/02) and Listed Building Consent (LB/124/02) have been granted on this site for the demolition of existing barns and the erection of a new dwelling and two double garages. The planning consent is subject to two conditions:

- a) *Condition 8:* Provision shall be made for the Suffolk County Archaeological Officer, or such person as may be appointed or instructed by him for the purpose, to be present as considered necessary during building and engineering operations required in connection with the carrying out of the hereby approved development and that person shall be allowed to observe the operations and to record finds and items of interest.
- b) *Condition 9:* No development shall take place until the applicant has secured the implementation of a programme of investigations into the existence of a saw pit within the existing roadside barn including its preservation if found, in accordance with a written scheme of works which has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

1.2 The reasons for the conditions are:

- a) The site lies within the medieval small town of Stradbroke (market granted 1225), and likely Anglo-Saxon village, centred on All Saints Church, close to the site. There is, therefore, a high potential for the survival of medieval and earlier settlement features which would be damaged or destroyed by the new development.
- b) The barn adjacent to Church Street contained a saw pit which was in use until the 1930s/40s, when it was filled-in and covered over.

#### 2. Brief for Archaeological Monitoring

2.1 The aim of this brief is to specify the archaeological works necessary to satisfy the above conditions, and:

- a) record any archaeological features revealed during groundworks;
- b) locate and record the saw pit so that it can be preserved within the new development.

#### 3. Arrangements for Monitoring

3.1 The developer or his archaeologist will give the County Archaeologist (Keith Wade, Archaeological Service, Shire Hall, Bury St Edmunds IP33 2AR. Telephone: 01284 352440; Fax: 01284 352443) 48 hours notice of the commencement of site works.

3.2 To carry out the monitoring work the developer will appoint an archaeologist (the observing archaeologist) who must be approved by the Planning Authority's archaeological adviser (the Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service).

3.3 Allowance must be made to cover archaeological costs incurred in monitoring the development works by the contract archaeologist. The size of the contingency should be estimated by the



approved archaeological contractor, based upon the outline works in paragraph 2.1 of the Brief and Specification and the building contractor 's programme of works and time-table.

- 3.4 If unexpected remains are encountered, the County Archaeologist should be immediately informed so that any amendments deemed necessary to this specification to ensure adequate provision for recording, can be made without delay. This could include the need for archaeological excavation of parts of the site which would otherwise be damaged or destroyed.

#### 4. **Specification**

- 4.1 The developer shall afford access at all reasonable times to both the County Archaeologist and the 'observing archaeologist' to allow archaeological observation of:
- a) building and engineering operations which disturb the ground;
  - b) the demolition of the barns and removal of floor slabs.
- 4.2 The observing archaeologist should be present during the removal of the floor slab under the barn fronting Church Street. Once the infilled saw pit has been located it should be protected from accidental damage.
- 4.3 The saw pit should then be hand excavated by the observing archaeologist and recorded in plan and elevation at a scale of 1:20, and with black and white and colour photographs.
- 4.4 Opportunity should be given to the 'observing archaeologist' to hand excavate any discrete archaeological features which appear during earth moving operations, retrieve finds and make measured records as necessary.
- 4.5 In the case of footing trenches unimpeded access at the rate of one and half hours per 10 metres of trench must be allowed for archaeological recording before concreting or building begin. Where it is necessary to see archaeological detail one of the soil faces is to be trowelled clean.
- 4.6 All archaeological features exposed should be planned at a minimum scale of 1:50 on a plan showing the proposed layout of the development.
- 4.7 All contexts should be numbered and finds recorded by context as far as possible.
- 4.8 The data recording methods and conventions used must be consistent with, and approved by, the County Sites and Monuments Record.

#### 5. **Report Requirements**

- 5.1 An archive of all records and finds is to be prepared consistent with the principles of *Management of Archaeological Projects (MAP2)*, particularly Appendix 3. This must be deposited with the County Sites and Monuments Record within 3 months of the completion of work. It will then become publicly accessible.
- 5.2 Finds must be appropriately conserved and stored in accordance with *UK Institute of Conservators Guidelines*. The finds, as an indissoluble part of the site archive, should be deposited with the County SMR if the landowner can be persuaded to agree to this. If this is not possible for all or any part of the finds archive, then provision must be made for additional recording (e.g. photography, illustration, analysis) as appropriate.
- 5.3 A report on the fieldwork and archive, consistent with the principles of *MAP2*, particularly Appendix 4, must be provided. The report must summarise the methodology employed, the stratigraphic sequence, and give a period by period description of the contexts recorded, and an inventory of finds. The objective account of the archaeological evidence must be clearly distinguished from its interpretation. The Report must include a discussion and an assessment of the archaeological evidence. Its conclusions must include a clear statement of the archaeological value of the results, and their significance in the context of the Regional Research Framework (*East Anglian Archaeology*, Occasional Papers 3 & 8, 1997 and 2000).

- 5.4 A summary report, in the established format, suitable for inclusion in the annual 'Archaeology in Suffolk' section of the *Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology*, should be prepared and included in the project report.
- 5.5 County Sites and Monuments Record sheets should be completed, as per the county SMR manual, for all sites where archaeological finds and/or features are located.

Specification by: Keith Wade

Suffolk County Council  
Archaeological Service Conservation Team  
Environment and Transport Department  
Shire Hall  
Bury St Edmunds  
Suffolk IP33 2AR

Date: 14 April 2004

Reference: /Stradbroke04

**This brief and specification remains valid for 12 months from the above date. If work is not carried out in full within that time this document will lapse; the authority should be notified and a revised brief and specification may be issued.**

**If the work defined by this brief forms a part of a programme of archaeological work required by a Planning Condition, the results must be considered by the Conservation Team of the Archaeological Service of Suffolk County Council, who have the responsibility for advising the appropriate Planning Authority.**