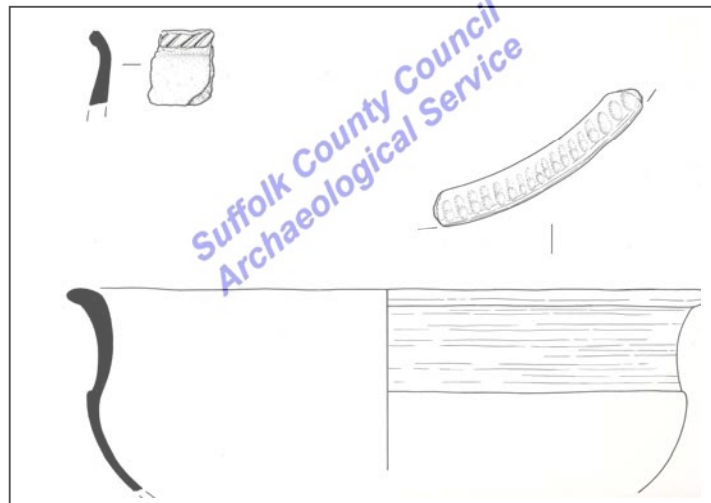


ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT

Reservoir Adjacent to Keen's Farm, Covehithe COV 121

A REPORT ON THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION AND
MONITORING, 2004 - 2005
(Planning app. no. W/18680)
Oasis ID. Suffolkc1-6876



Illustrations of Neolithic Carinated Bowls from features 0024 & 0036

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Suffolk C.C. Archaeological Service

© May 2005

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Acknowledgements

This project was funded by the Benacre Water Company and was monitored by Jude Plouviez and Bob Carr (Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service, Conservation Team).

The evaluation was carried out by Phil Camps and Rob Atfield and was directed by Rhodri Gardner and the monitoring phase was carried out by Rob Atfield and Clare McLannahan, all of Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service, Field Team.

John Newman managed the project. The report was written by Clare McLannahan with advice provided by Rhodri Gardner and John Newman.

Finds processing was carried out by Gemma Adams and Richenda Goffin, who also wrote the specialist finds report in conjunction with Edward Martin (Prehistoric Pottery) and Colin Pendleton (Worked Flint). Finds illustrations are by Donna Wreathall and Julia Park carried out X-rays of metal small finds.

Summary

Covehithe (COV 121, TM 509 809)

An evaluation was undertaken prior to the construction of a new reservoir on the land adjacent to Keen's Farm, Covehithe. The site had not been the subject of any systematic archaeological work previously and had no known archaeological sites on it, although it is close to various flint scatters. Despite this, the sheer size of the development and the potential for prehistoric, Roman and later settlement meant that it was deemed necessary to evaluate the land. 24 trial trenches were excavated in November 2004 and the area was subsequently monitored during February 2005 by the Field Team of Suffolk County Council's Archaeology Service (SCCAS). A number of ditches were revealed in the evaluation which were mostly undated and were probably old field boundaries or landscape features. A group of medieval quarry pits were also seen, in and surrounding trench 8 and another was uncovered during the monitoring phase, also dated to the medieval period. Two pits with abundant early Neolithic pottery were recorded possibly suggesting Neolithic activity near the development site.

(Clare McLannahan, SCCAS, for the Benacre Water Company, report no.2005/13).

SMR information

Planning application no. W/18680
Date of fieldwork: 22-24 November 2004, 16 & 18 February, 2005
Grid Reference: TM 5095 8095
Funding body: Benacre Water Company

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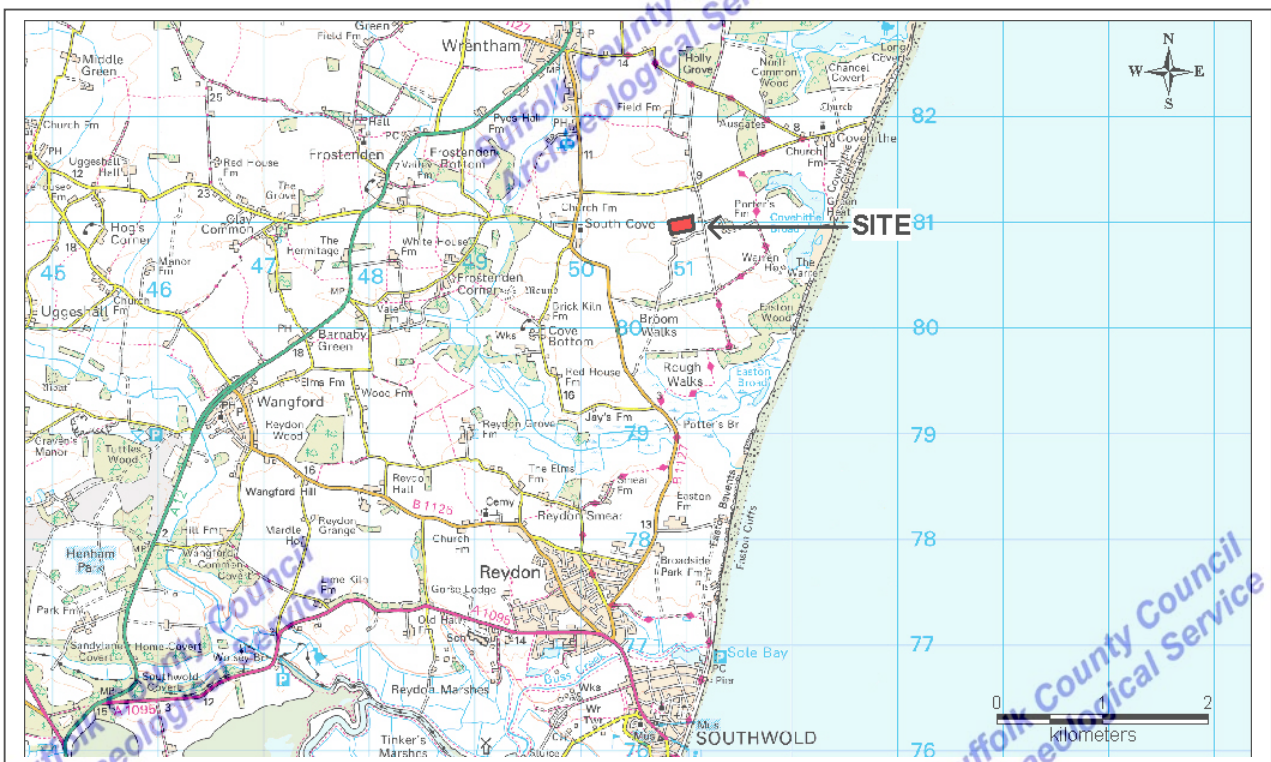
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1. Introduction

An application has been made to create three irrigation reservoirs on the Benacre Estate. This report covers the construction of the third reservoir, located in a field immediately to the north of Keen's Farm in Covehithe, centred on TM 5095 8095. The site lies on generally level ground at c.8.5m OD on underlying boulder till geology and is bounded by open farmland to the west, north and east, and a farm track and buildings to the south.

Prior to this project the site had not been subjected to any systematic archaeological work and no known sites were located in the development area. A number of scatters of Neolithic and Prehistoric worked flints have been found in the surrounding fields to the north and east (Fig. 2) but no other significant features are known in the vicinity. Covehithe village itself, less than a mile from the development site, has been a settlement since at least Domesday. It had a probable quay or hithe during the 13th century; a small dock built for loading and unloading vessels, and still has a fine 14th-15th century church, probably ruined during the civil war in 1643 (Goult, 1990). This suggests a settlement of a reasonable size throughout medieval and later times and so the likelihood of evidence from this period in the surrounding area is quite high. Covehithe common, an open area of land likely to have been created in the 12th or 13th centuries, also extended this far (Fig 11) suggesting that activity relating to this may also be discovered.

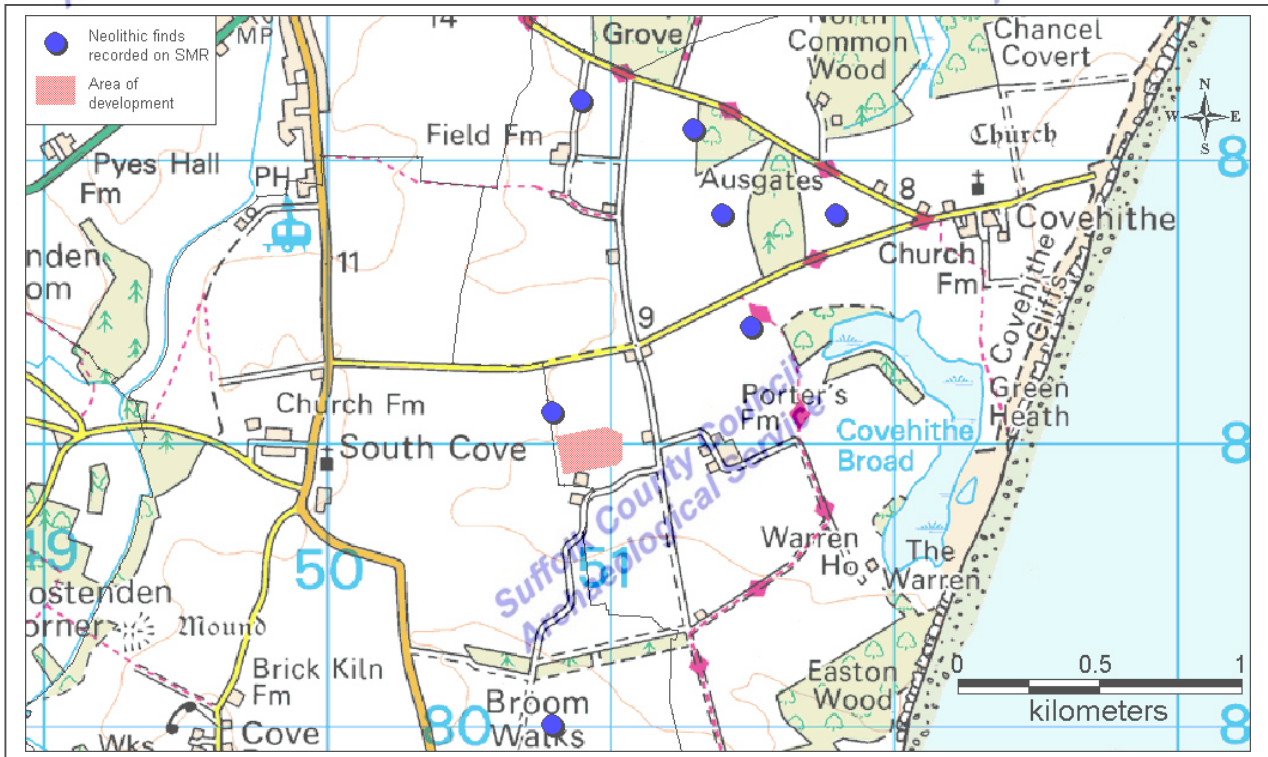


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Figure 1: Site location plan

The reservoir will affect 3.8ha of land and as its location suggests reasonable potential for prehistoric, Roman or later settlement, it was recommended that a programme of archaeological works should be undertaken prior to development. Jude Plouviez of the SCCAS Conservation Team subsequently produced a brief and specification for archaeological works (Appendix D), recommending that trial trenching be undertaken in the first instance.

This evaluation was undertaken in November 2004 and subsequent monitoring was carried out during February 2005. The work was funded by the Benacre Water Company.



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Figure 2: Location of Neolithic finds recorded on County Sites and Monuments Record

2. Methodology

Twenty-four trial trenches, of approximately 720m in total length, and two stripped areas of roughly 100m² and 50m² were excavated over an area of around 38,750m² (Fig. 3), using a 360° mechanical excavator equipped with a 2m wide, toothless ditching bucket. The locations were agreed by the Jude Plouviez and Bob Carr of the Conservation Team (SCCAS), and all machining was observed by an archaeologist. Topsoil was removed to the depth of the naturally occurring subsoil and was kept separate from subsoil for subsequent backfilling. Both the excavated topsoil and the exposed surfaces of the trenches and the stripped area were examined visually, and subjected to a metal detector search, for artefactual evidence.

Subsequent monitoring of the site was undertaken after the initial trenching. The entire area of the reservoir was stripped to the level of the natural subsoil in February 2005 by three box scrapers. The stripped area was examined visually and targeted areas (based on the results of the evaluation) were metal detected.

Where features were revealed, they were cleaned manually for definition and each allocated 'observed phenomena' numbers within a unique continuous numbering system under the Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) code COV 121

(Appendix II). A sample of features were then partially excavated in order to recover dating evidence as well as to observe their form and possibly determine any function. Where features were present, plans were drawn at 1:50 (Figs. 5-7) and excavated sections drawn at 1:20 (Figs. 8 & 9). Features and finds found during the monitoring phase were plotted using a hand held GPS system.

Features were also recorded photographically, using both monochrome prints and colour slides, to form a part of the site archive. The site 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 (see section 4. The Finds).

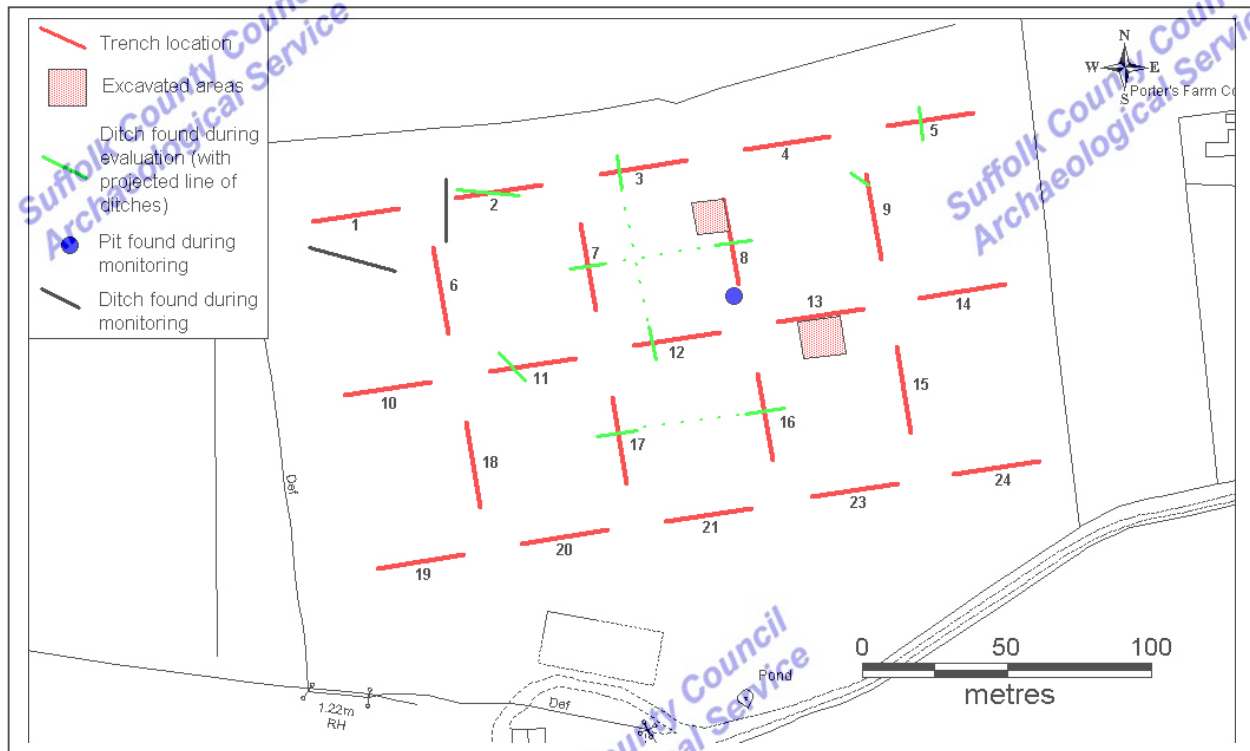
The site and subsequent results are recorded on OASIS, the online archaeological database, under the code Suffolkc1-6876.

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3. Results



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Figure 3: Monitored features, excavated areas and trench location plan

Trenches 1, 4, 6, 10, 14, 15, 17, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23 and 24 had no archaeological finds or features in them. They were backfilled immediately after excavation as a safety measure for the surrounding machinery. All the trenches were 30m in length and had an average depth of 700mm.

0001 was allocated to unstratified finds from the whole site. Four sherds of medieval pot were recovered from this context.

Topsoil 0002 consisted of a mid greyish brown sandy loam with very rare small flint pebbles. It varied in depth between 200-400mm over the site. Small finds 1001 and 1002 (see section 4. The Finds) were found within this layer during the monitoring phase. 1001, recovered whilst metal detecting, is a nearly complete iron axehead, likely to be medieval in date. 1002 is also iron and may be part of a blade but is heavily corroded. Both objects will be the subject of x-rays in an attempt to determine their precise size, shape and possible function.

Subsoil also occurred over the whole site, at a depth of between 100-500mm. This consisted of a mid orange brown sandy loam with very rare small flint pebbles. No finds were discovered within this.

Plans of the trenches and sections of the features can be seen in figures 5 – 9.

Trench 2

Ditch 0003 was NW-SE aligned and was filled by 0004, a mid brown silty sand.

Ditch 0005 was N-S running filled by 0006, a light brown silty sand, loosely compacted with occasional pebbles and larger flints.

Both these features were undated but appeared to be contemporaneous.

Trench 3

Pit 0007 was a shallow bowl-shaped feature filled by 0008, a reddish mid brown silty sand with frequent small pebbles and occasional flints. The fill was loosely compacted and contained heat altered stones and charcoal as well as two heat altered flint fragments. It is probable that this pit was used for burning.

Ditch 0009 was N-S aligned and was filled by 0010, a light brown silty sand loosely compacted with regular small pebbles. It is possible that this is the same as ditch 0027 in trench 12. They are on the same alignment and have similar fills but neither had any finds and so it is not possible to date them.

Trench 5

Ditch 0011 was N-S aligned and was filled by 0012, a mid brown silty sand, darkening towards the base. The fill had occasional small pebbles and was loosely compacted.

Trench 7

Ditch 0013 was E-W aligned and was filled by 0014, a mid brown silty sand fairly loosely compacted with regular small stones and occasional larger pebbles. It is likely that this is the same as ditch 0017 in trench 8 as they are on the same alignment and have similar fills.

Trench 8

This trench was initially excavated revealing a number of pits. Consequently, the trench was extended into a small area of roughly 50m² to hopefully reveal more features.

Pit 0015 was medium sized, very steep sided and flat-bottomed. It was filled by 0016, a mid brown orange silty sand, fairly compacted with occasional pebbles. A single fragment of a sooted medieval cooking vessel was recovered from the fill.

Ditch 0017 was W-E aligned with gently dished sides and a flattish base and was filled by 0018, a mid/dark brown silty sand with regular small stones and occasional larger pebbles. The fill was loosely compacted and contained another sherd of medieval cooking vessel and an iron nail. It is

likely that this is the same as ditch 0013 in trench 7 as they are on the same alignment and have similar fills.

Pit 0033 was sub-rectangular in plan with rounded corners. It had smooth steeply sloping slightly concave sides with a gradual break of slope at the bottom and a flat base. It was filled by 0034, a softly compacted dark greyish brown silty sand with small/medium flint pebbles. It contained six sherds of medieval courseware, two perhaps from the same cooking vessel. This pit was the westernmost feature in the pit complex in trench 8 and was stratigraphically later than the adjacent pit [0035] next to it and so cuts it.

Pit 0035 was sub-rounded with varied, irregular sides and a flattish base. It was filled by 0036, a softly compacted mid brown silty sand with moderate medium to large pebbles/cobbles. An impressive single Neolithic decorated bowl sherd was recovered from this feature (Fig. 10). This pit is also part of the large pit complex found in trench 8 although the pottery would suggest it was Neolithic rather than Medieval. This sherd could be residual however, suggesting that this could be contemporaneous with the other pits in this complex and certainly, its fill is similar to theirs. It does though, appear to be cut by the surrounding pits [0033] and [0041].

Pit 0037 was large, oval in shape, with gently sloping sides and an imperceptible break of slope at the base. It was filled by 0038, a dark brown silty sand with occasional medium flint pebbles, particularly towards the base and pottery fragments throughout. 17 sherds of medieval courseware were found in this pit, including several large and heavily sooted pieces and two glazed ware fragments, which can be accurately dated to the 13th-14th century. It is likely that this is another pit in part of the same complex although its relationship to adjacent pit [0039] could not be determined but the pottery found within them appears to be of a similar date.

Pit 0039 was only partially revealed and had been truncated but it is still likely to be part of the quarry pit complex in trench 8. It appeared to be oval and had smooth gently sloping sides with an imperceptible break of slope at the base. It was filled by 0040, a very softly compacted dark brown silty sand with moderate small to medium flint pebbles. A single fragment of medieval courseware bowl, likely to be a Waveney Valley or East Suffolk product dating to the late 12th-14th century was found in the fill. This pit appears to cut [0041] adjacent to it, but its relationship with [0037] is unknown.

Pit 0041 was sub-rounded with smooth, gently to moderately sloping sides and an imperceptible break of slope at the base. The base was gently rounded and it was filled by 0042, a softly compacted dark brown silty sand with occasional small to medium flint pebbles and cobbles and six sherds of medieval pottery. This was also part of the same pit complex and appears to cut pit [0043] but is cut by [0039].

Pit 0043 was irregular ovoid in plan with gently to moderately sloping sides and an imperceptible break of slope at the base. The base was flattish, slightly undulating and the pit was filled by 0044, a softly compacted dark brown silty sand with occasional small to medium flint pebbles and cobbles. This pit also contained medieval pottery ranging from 12th-14th century and was probably part of the quarry pit complex. It is cut by both pits [0033] and [0041] but the relationship with [0035] is unclear.

Pit 0045 was sub-rectangular in plan with only one corner (SW) exposed. It had irregular gently sloping sides and an imperceptible break of slope at the base. It had a flattish base and was filled by 0046, a very softly compacted mid brown silty sand with very rare small flints pebbles and three medieval pot fragments. This is another probable quarry pit at the east limit of trench 8. Its relationship to [0035] is unclear although finds would suggest it is considerably later than it.

Pit 0056 was also within this pit complex in trench 8. It was filled by 0057 and was not originally numbered in the evaluation.

Trench 9

Ditch 0019 was a SE-NW running feature extending beyond the SE edge of Trench 9 (S end). It is probably a ditch butt end or possibly the end of an elongated pit. It was filled by 0020, a light/mid brown mottled silty sand with occasional small pebbles and produced no finds.

Trench 11

Ditch 0021 was NW-SE running and was filled by 0022, a pale/mid brown silty sand with regular small pebbles and occasional large pebbles. The fill was fairly compact and contained a sherd of Neolithic pottery similar to that found in pit 0023, which this feature cut.

Pit 0023 was probably ovoid in shape and was filled by 0024, a dark brown/black silty sand fill of 0023 with small stones and large pebbles included as well as charcoal and heat altered pebbles. The fill was fairly compact and contained a significant quantity of Neolithic pottery. Several large fragments of early Neolithic carinated bowl (Fig. 10) and 15 fragments of hand-made thick-walled pottery from a number of vessels was recovered from here. The pit had been heavily disturbed by animal action and was difficult to define in terms of profile and plan but was cut by ditch 0021.

Trench 12

Ditch 0027 was N-S running and was filled by 0028, a mid brown orange silty sand with regular pebbles throughout. It is possible that this is the same as ditch 0009, in trench 3. They are on the same alignment and have similar fills. Neither had any finds and so it is not possible to date them.

Trench 13

This trench was initially excavated revealing a pit with abundant finds. Consequently, the trench was extended into a small area of roughly 100m² to hopefully reveal more features.

Pit 0029 was oval in shape with straight, very steep sides. Its upper fill was 0030, a light greyish brown slightly silty sand with rare small sub-angular flints/pebbles. 0031 was a dark grey silty sand and was the secondary fill of this pit. It contained a significant quantity of Neolithic pottery including nine sherds of carinated bowl and 16 of a coarse fabric similar to that in pit 0023. Fired clay fragments, some with shallow concave impressions suggesting they came from a wattled structure of some kind were also found in this layer. A collection of heat altered flint fragments

including a probable blade fragment and various snapped flakes or blades, likely to also be Neolithic in date, were also recovered from this fill. It is likely that this was the primary fill in terms of backfilling. Fill 0032 was pale brownish yellow medium to fine sands with moderate amounts of small sub-angular flints with soft compaction. It is likely that this was the primary fill but probably settled as a consequence of collapse into the open feature rather than deliberate backfilling.

Trenches 16 & 17 (Trench 17 unplanned)

An E-W aligned ditch 0025 was seen in both of these trenches. It was a smooth 'U' shape in plan and had a flattish base. It was filled by 0026, a very soft light brown very slightly silty sand with very rare small flint pebbles.

Monitoring

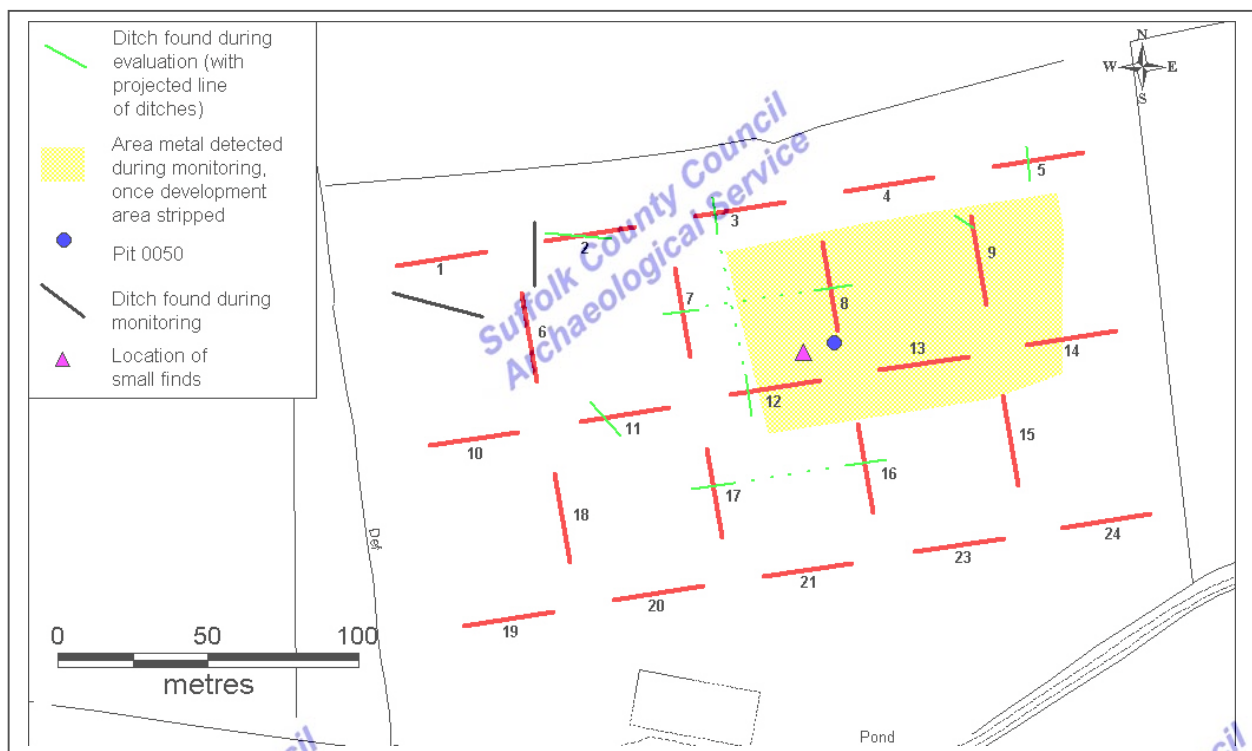


Figure 4: Features found and area metal detected during monitoring

The area was monitored intermittently throughout stripping and a targeted area was metal detected (Fig. 4). The stripping was carried out with box scrapers and so surface visibility throughout was poor. However, various features and finds were discovered and their locations can be seen on Fig. 4.

Truncation of features can often be determined by flint scatters in the top and subsoil; the finds mixing from the fill of features into the overlying layers during agricultural works and such like.

No obvious flint scatters were seen in the monitored area suggesting that the features that existed were relatively undisturbed.

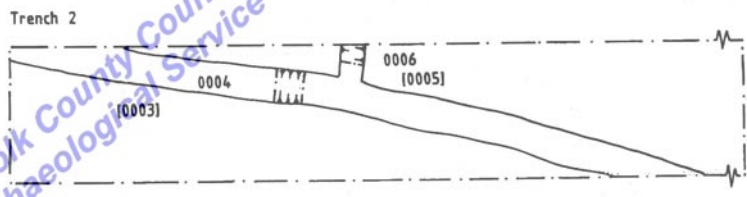
Pit 0050 was a large pit, c.4.5m x 2.5m, and approximately 0.7m deep. It was heavily disturbed by machinery and so the full extent was unknown. It was also not excavated fully due to machinery advancing. A test hole was dug to determine the depth and it was noted that the pit had the same fill throughout. This was 0051, a dark brown silty soft sand with occasional stones spread evenly through the fill. It was loosely compacted on the surface, very tight towards the base. Three sherds of pottery dating from 12th-14th century were found on the surface of this pit. It should be noted that this pit was close to the pit complex in trench 8.

Ditch 0052 was ESE-WNW aligned and was filled by 0053, a pale yellow sand. The ditch was not excavated fully but was seen to be c.0.4m deep with gently sloping sides and the same fill throughout.

Ditch 0054 was N-S aligned and was filled by 0055, a pale brown sand. Again, this was not excavated fully but was seen to be x.0.2m deep with gently sloping sides and the same fill throughout.

These two ditches do not seem to correlate with any found in the initial evaluation and so are likely to have been different features to the ones already noted. The pit is likely to be part of the same pit complex as those in trench 8, suggesting this complex is perhaps larger than initially thought. The medieval axe 1001 was also found near to this feature, providing more medieval evidence.

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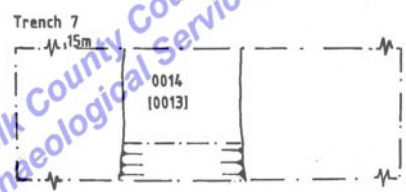
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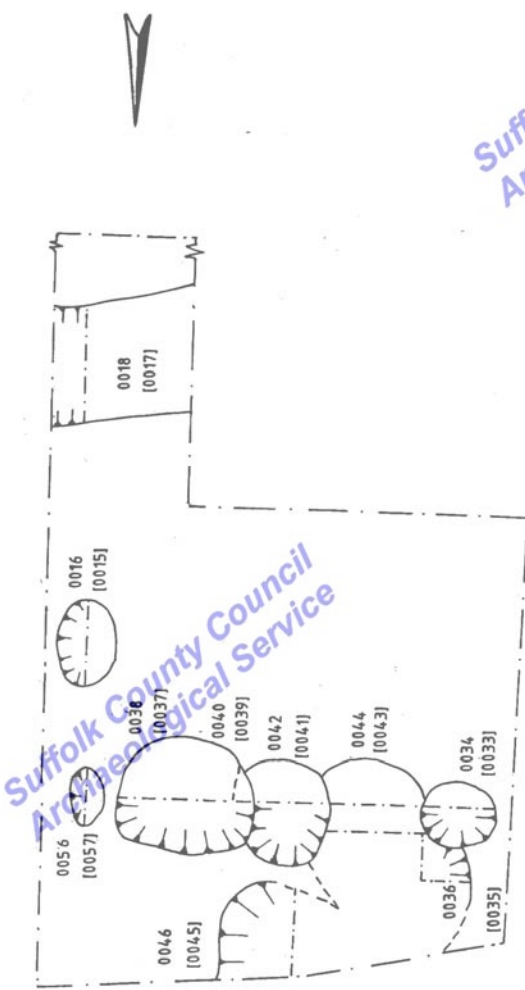


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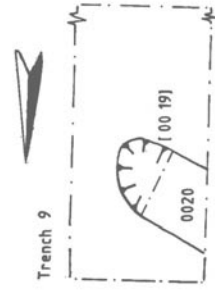
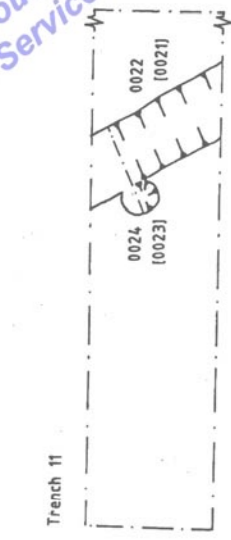
Figure 5: Trenches 2, 3, 5 and 7

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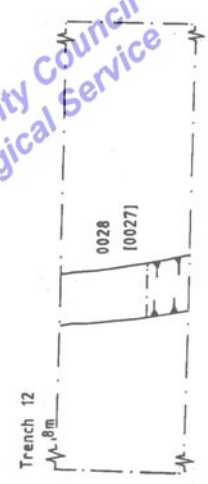


Figure 6: Trenches 8, 9, 11 and 12

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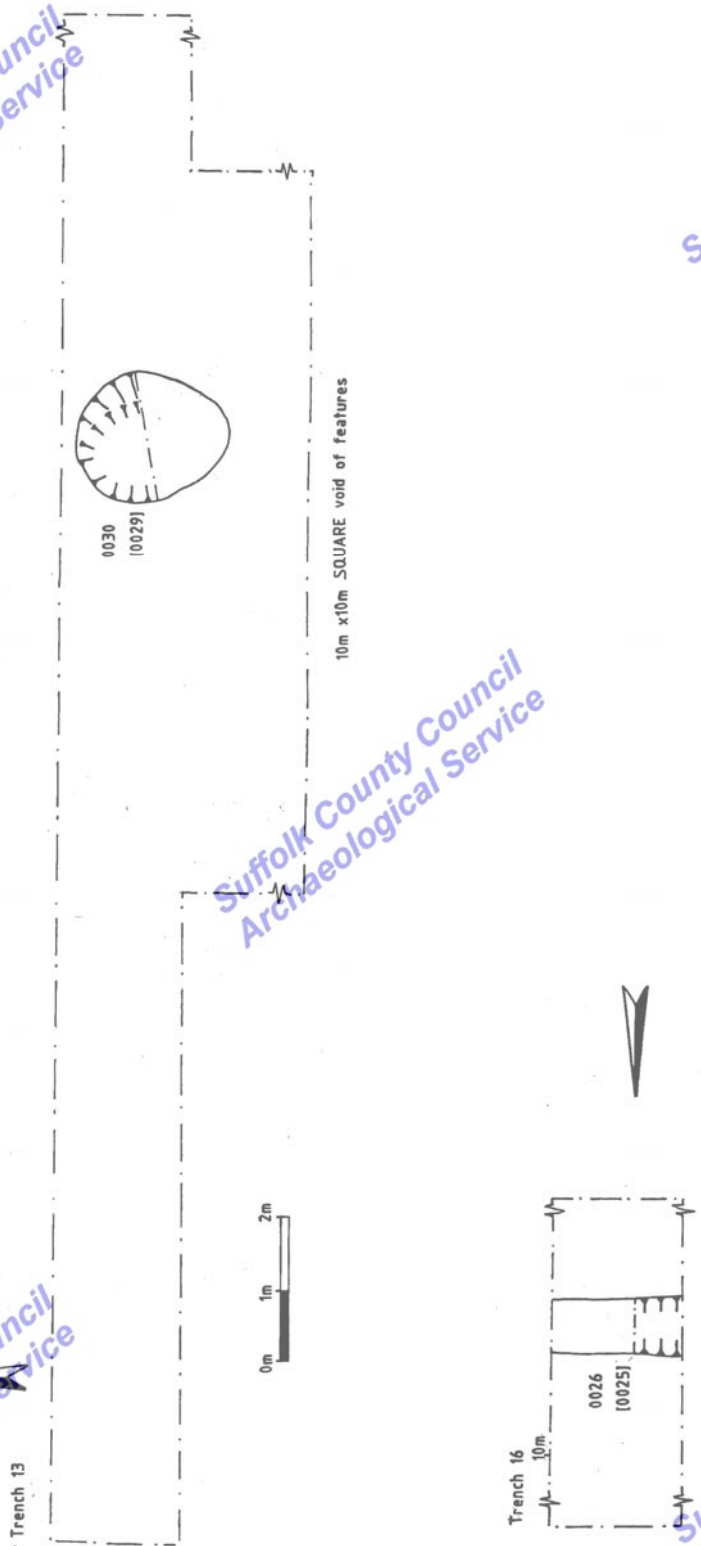
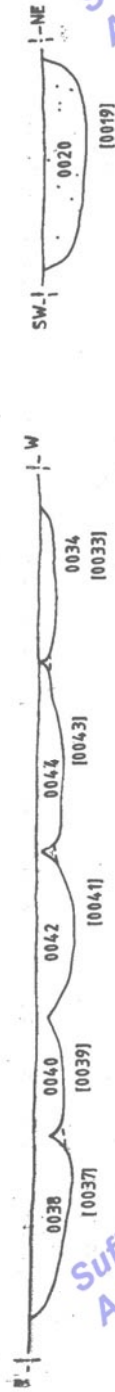
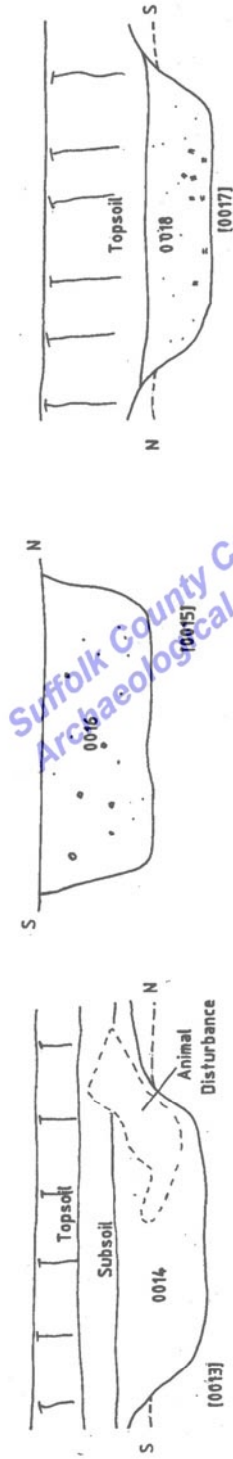
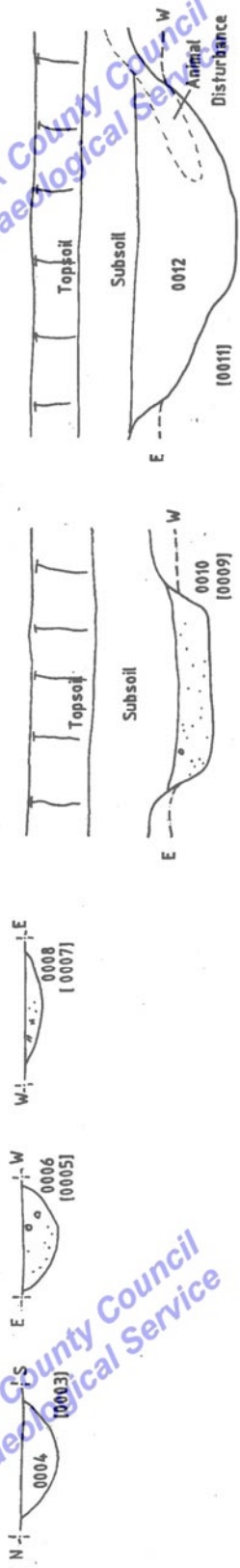


Figure 7: Trenches 13 and 16

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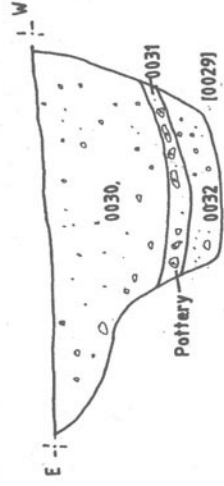
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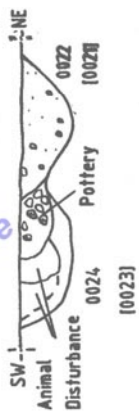
Figure 8: Sections of features

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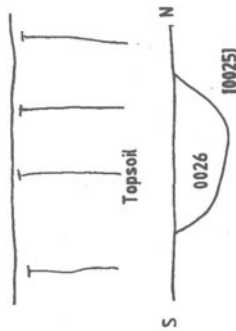
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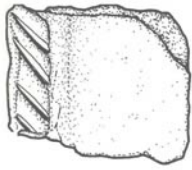


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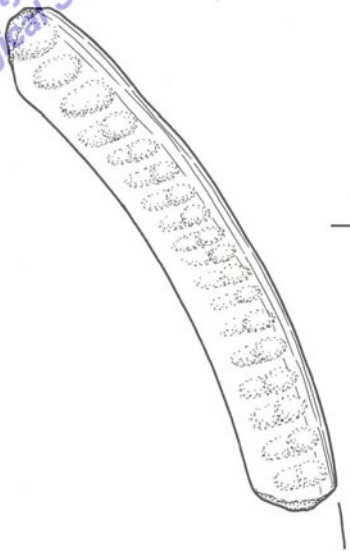


Figure 9: Sections of features

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Sherd from 0036 (scale 1/1)



Reconstructed bowl and sherd from 0024 (scale 1/1)



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Figure 10: Illustrations of Neolithic Carinated Bowls from features 0024 and 0036
(Donna Wreathall)

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4. Finds and environmental evidence (Richenda Goffin)

Introduction

Finds were collected from 15 contexts, as shown in the table 1 below.

Context	Pottery		Burnt flint/stone		Fired clay		Flint		Iron	Spotdate
	No.	Wt/g	No.	Wt/g	No.	Wt/g	No.	Wt/g		
0001	4	40								Unstratified, med pot
0002									Axehead SF1001, SF1002	Medieval
0008			3	24						
0016	1	8								Medieval
0018	1	8			1	8			Nail x 1	Medieval
0022	1	6								Neolithic
0024	24	560	1	24	1	5				Neolithic
0031	25	236	29	605	6	135				Neolithic
0034	6	70								Medieval
0036	1	6								Neolithic
0038	17	244			4	26			Nail frags x 2	Medieval
0040	1	30							Nail frags x 2	Medieval
0042	6	90								Medieval
0046	3	17								Medieval
0051	3	31					1	3		Medieval
Total	93	1346	33	653	12	174	1	3		

Table 1: Finds Quantities

Pottery (prehistoric sherds identified by Edward Martin)

93 fragments of pottery were recovered from the evaluation and monitoring weighing 1.346kg. Ceramics of prehistoric and medieval date were recorded.

A significant assemblage of Neolithic date was present (51 sherds weighing 0.808kg). The largest group of ceramics was collected from the fill 0024 of a pit in Trench 11. Several large fragments of a carinated bowl were recovered, dating to the early Neolithic period (Fig. 10). The vessel is made of a fine fabric with frequent small flint inclusions up to 1mm in length. The bowl is patchily oxidised and has a diameter of 250mm. It has been lightly tooled horizontally on both the interior and exterior surface. A second pot made of a similar fabric was present in the same pit, and may even be part of the same vessel. In addition a further 15 fragments of hand-made thick-walled pottery from several vessels were also recovered from fill 0024. The wares are crudely made in a fine fabric which contains moderate medium to large fragments of flint up to 6mm in length. A small body sherd, similar to the fine flint-tempered fabric was found in ditchfill 0022 in this trench, and is of a similar date.

Pottery dating to the Neolithic period was also recovered from a second pitfill 0031 in Trench 13. Nine fragments of a fine flint-tempered carinated bowl were present, and 16 sherds of a coarse, heavily flint-tempered fabric similar to the one identified in pitfill 0024.

A single decorated bowl sherd present in the fill 0036 of a pit in Trench 8 is also of Neolithic date. It has an impressed 'cable' pattern on the exterior facet of the rim (Fig. 10).

Two fragments of residual prehistoric pottery were recorded in 0038, a pitfill in Trench 8 which contained mainly medieval pottery. Two joining thick-walled sandy sherds containing small but frequent flint inclusions could also be Neolithic.

The remainder of the pottery is medieval in date, and consists largely of medieval coarsewares. Many of these are sandy and micaceous and have been given the broad term of Waveney Valley coarsewares. Some fragments have been catalogued as Hollesley-type coarseware.

A single fragment of a sooted cooking vessel was present in pitfill 0016 in Trench 8, and a similar sherd was recovered from ditchfill 0018. Six further sherds of medieval coarseware were present in pitfill 0034 of the same trench. Two fragments, perhaps from the same cooking vessel are made from a fine micaceous fabric with sparse flint inclusions. The jar has a slightly developed everted rim and is heavily sooted on the outside. A fragment of a sagging base from another vessel is also present.

Further fragments of medieval date were found in pitfill 0038 in Trench 8. Several large and heavily sooted body sherds of fine walled coarseware were recovered. In addition two sherds of a glazed ware were recorded. The vessel is made from a coarse sandy fabric with occasional shell inclusions. It has a grey core with oxidised margins, and a partial lead-glaze on the outside and on the inside of the rim. Although it resembles certain shelly glazed wares from the Cambridgeshire region, it is possible that it is a more local product. The vessel can be dated to the 13th -14th century.

A single fragment of a medieval coarseware bowl was recovered from pitfill 0040, and from other pits in Trench 8. The vessel is sandy and micaceous and is probably a Waveney valley or East Suffolk product dating to the late 12th-14th century. Similar wares were present in pitfill 0042. In addition a small and abraded sherd of Yarmouth-type ware, dating to the 11th and 12th centuries was also identified as a residual element. Further fragments of coarsewares of a general 12th-14th century date were present in pitfills 0044 and 0046.

Three additional fragments of medieval coarseware were recovered from a pitfill 0051 excavated during the monitoring. All three sherds were made of sandy micaceous fabrics dating to the 12th-14th century.

Fired clay

12 fragments of fired clay were recovered with a total weight of 174 grammes. The largest group consists of six pieces that were found in pitfill 0031. The fired clay fragments are made from a sandy fabric with occasional flint inclusions up to 2mm in length. Three of the pieces have shallow concave impressions measuring c12mm, 18mm, and 28mm. These may be fragmentary rod impressions from a wattled structure of some kind.

Four pieces of fired clay were found in the pitfill 0038. The fragments are much softer and are made from a sandy fabric with occasional organic inclusions. No impressions were observed on this material. A further well-heated fragment of fired clay was recovered from ditchfill 0018, and another featureless piece made in a sandy fabric was found in 0024.

Flint (identified by Colin Pendleton)

Fragments of worked flint were present in the collection of heat altered flint fragments recovered from pitfill 0031 of the evaluation. The group includes a probable blade fragment with cortex which is snapped in two places, and a snapped flake or blade which has been struck with a soft hammer. Other fragments of heat altered flint include a possible fragment of a core, a large flake with several earlier flake scars with hinge fracture, a flake and five snapped flakes or blades. The assemblage is probably Neolithic in date.

A single piece of worked flint was recorded from the monitoring. A fragment of a snapped blade or flake with edge utilisation was present in pitfill 0051, and is probably of Neolithic or Early Bronze Age date. It was found with sherds of medieval pottery.

Heat altered stone and flint

33 fragments of heat-altered stone and flint were recovered overall, weighing 0.653kg. The material was almost exclusively recovered from the pitfills which also contained pottery which is of Neolithic date. The flint from pitfill 0031 includes some worked pieces which have been described above. Two heat altered flint fragments and a single heat altered pebble were retained from pitfill 0008, a shallow bowl-shaped feature which also contained heated stones and charcoal.

Metalwork

Two iron artefacts recovered from metal detecting in topsoil 0002 were allocated individual numbers 1001-2. The nearly complete axehead SF1001 measures 105mm in length, with the widest part of the blade measuring 70mm. The axe has a wide splayed blade, which has a slightly deeper projection on the lower edge, but is broken off towards the socket. It is likely to be medieval in date, and is closest to a Type IV axehead, based on the Medieval catalogue of the London Museum (Ward Perkins Fig 14 No 3, 62-63). The second iron object SF 1002 is heavily corroded, but may be part of a blade.

Fragments of iron nails were recovered from ditchfill 0018, and in the fills 0038 and 0040 of two pits. A further probable iron nail was recovered from metal detecting.

Discussion

The presence of a considerable quantity of medium and large fragments of relatively unabraded pottery of Neolithic date from several pits is of considerable significance. Few other artefacts which are contemporary appear to be present, apart from small quantities of fired clay and possibly some of the worked flint. In addition there is a small amount of heat-altered stone and flint, in particular from pitfill 0031. The lack of other types of finds such as animal bone may be due to the nature of the soil conditions on the site.

Other pits contained pottery of medieval date. The range of wares is restricted mainly to coarsewares which were made locally, although there is one vessel which is glazed, and has not been closely provenanced. This small group of pottery is typical of rural assemblages of this date

and may reflect settlement in the vicinity during the 12th to 14th century. The fragmentary axe-head may also be medieval.



Figure 11: Hodkinson’s Map of Suffolk, c.1783

5. Discussion

The Neolithic assemblage on this site was unexpected and appears to be of some significance, especially as evidence of Neolithic pottery is very sparse in this area of Suffolk. The county SMR records the nearest pottery find some 4.5km away in Wangford Quarry, to the south-west of the development area. There are Neolithic flint scatters in the vicinity however (Fig. 2) which does suggest that activity of this date did occur within the general area of the site. Neolithic sites are generally rare throughout the county and so are often difficult to interpret. Structural evidence is particularly uncommon, maybe because shallow post-holes related to buildings have been ploughed out leaving the deeper features remaining. Small groups of pits like the ones found on this site are more widespread however, for example at Flixton Quarry near Bungay. Their function is unclear; some may be rubbish pits, others structured deposits with deliberately placed artefacts in the fill. The lack of other finds usually associated with a settlement, such as animal bone, may be due to the acidic soils on site which decompose bone and such like at a fairly rapid rate. The site was also stripped by a box scraper during the monitoring meaning surface visibility was poor.

The medieval archaeology discovered on this site was fairly typical of a rural settlement; scattered features over a large area with small groups of associated finds. The features were to be expected to some degree due to the proximity of the development area to the medieval settlement of Covehith

and because the site is within Covehithe Common (Fig. 11). There were few activities allowed on commons but small scale quarrying was one of them. The pit complex surrounding trench 8 was likely to have been an example of this, perhaps for extracting sand for use in mortar and such like. The size of the quarrying would have been heavily controlled and restricted, giving reason to the small number quarry pits discovered during the works. Pit 0050, seen during the monitoring phase, was probably part of this pit complex as its appearance, fill and finds were similar to those in trench 8. It is therefore reasonable to assume that there were more pits present between this one and trench 8 that weren't seen during the monitoring, meaning this complex was of a modest size. The location on the common could also go towards explaining the lack of building evidence on the site as structures would not have been allowed directly on this area of common land. The medieval pottery recovered was mostly local wares and was typical of an assemblage of this type, possibly reflecting settlement outside of the core of Covehithe, round the common edge.

The undated features, mostly ditches, are likely to have been previous field boundaries or landscape features associated with farming in the area.

6. Bibliography

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