

Land at Mill Road, Wissett
WSS 016
Planning Application no. W/18801/1
Archaeological Evaluation Report no. 2005/14
OASIS ID no. 6937

Summary

Wissett, Land at Mill Road (TM/380783; WSS 016) Evaluation within the limits of proposed fishing lakes at Mill Road, Wissett, was required to investigate the archaeological potential of the site. Deposits of peat, over 2m deep in places, represents a valuable environmental sequence but no archaeological features were revealed in the excavated trenches. A single medieval horseshoe was recovered from a subsoil layer overlying peat.

(Linzi Everett for Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service and B.E. Norman and Sons; report no. 2005/14)

1. Introduction

Planning permission for the construction of fishing lakes on land at Mill Road, Wissett, required a programme of archaeological works as a condition of the consent. The site lies at TM 380 783 (Fig. 1), below the 15m contour in a NW-SE orientated valley in the south east of Wissett parish and partially in the parish of Halesworth. To the south of the main stream, a scatter of Roman pottery and iron slag suggests the presence of occupation and/or industrial activity within 80m of the evaluation area (WSS 006). In addition, the valley location has the potential for prehistoric activity, possibly masked by later sediments.

A Brief and Specification for the archaeological work (Appendix I) was produced by Jude Plouviez of the Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service, Conservation Team.

Evaluation of the site was carried out by the Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service Field Team on 22nd - 23rd February 2005 and was funded by B.E. Norman and Sons.

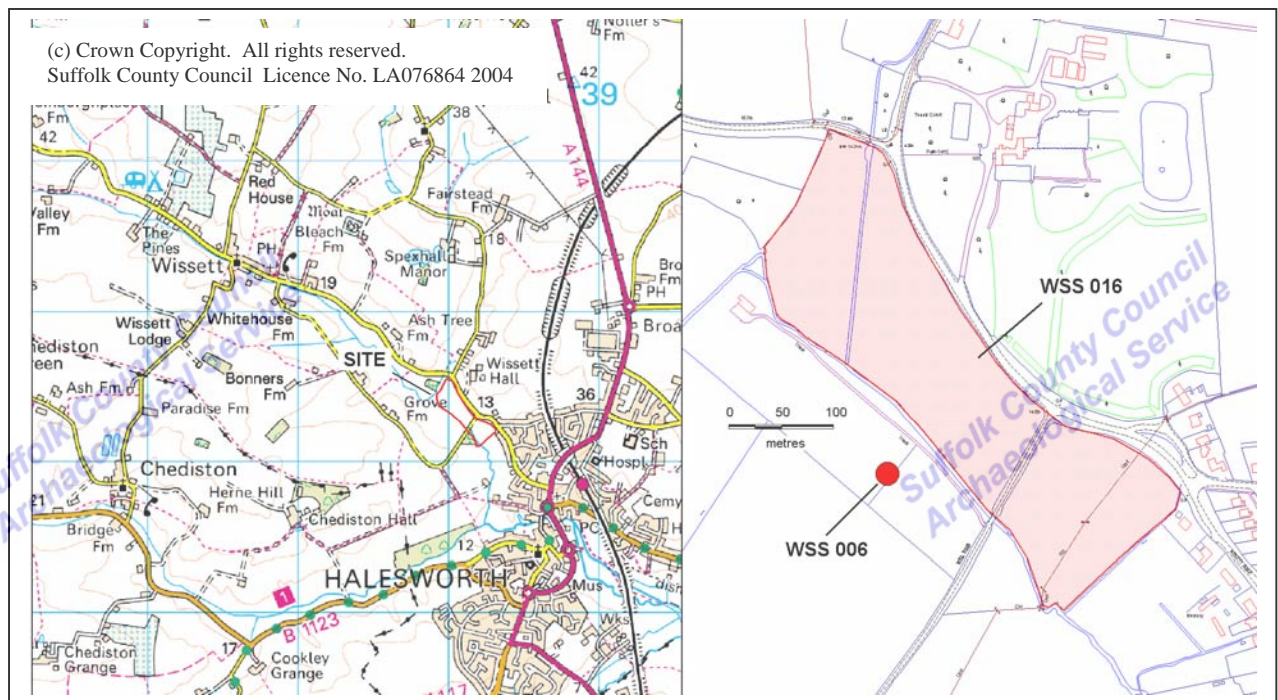


Figure 1: Site location

2. Methodology

The development area comprises 5.7 hectares, although only c.2 hectares will be affected by the lakes. Eight trial-trenches were opened in locations agreed by the Conservation Team at Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service (Fig. 2). This was carried out by a 360° mechanical excavator equipped with a 1.5 metre wide ditching bucket, under the supervision of an archaeologist. Overburden was removed from the trenches to the depth of the naturally occurring subsoil, where possible. In all, 350 metres of trench were opened over the evaluation area. Both the excavated topsoil and the exposed surfaces of trenches were examined visually for artefactual evidence. The site was recorded under the SMR code WSS 016. The evaluation 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.

3. Results

Trench 1 was excavated for 65m from SW-NE, removing on average 300mm of dark brown clay loam topsoil. This revealed black peat to a depth of over 2m in the southern part of the trench but shallowing out as the trench moved north. At approximately 33m from the south end of the trench, peat was removed onto a greyish yellow sandy gravel natural at a depth of c.1m. No archaeological features were observed in the trench, nor was any artefactual evidence recovered.

Trench 2 was excavated from SE-NW over a distance of 40m, removing an average of 300mm loamy peat topsoil throughout. This sealed a deep layer of peat, within which very straight lines of grey clay were present, each at a depth of approximately 600mm and measuring around 700mm wide. These clay features contained modern glass and metalwork and were not investigated any further.

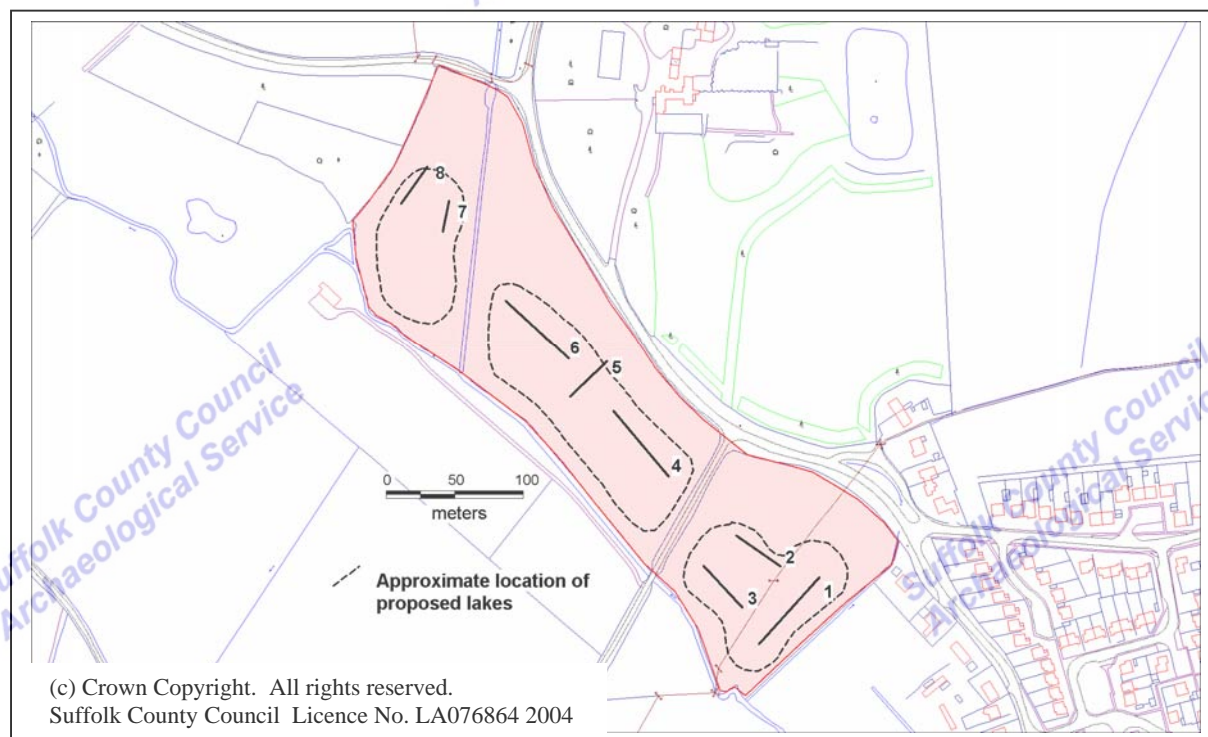


Figure 2: Trench locations

Trench 3 was excavated from SE-NW over a distance of 40m. The fill was the same as that observed in Trench 2 but this trench had not suffered the same modern disturbance. No features or artefacts were noted.

Trench 4 was excavated from SE-NW over a distance of 60m. 250-300mm of dark brown clay loam topsoil was removed, beneath which was a 300mm thick layer of a dirty yellow silty clay subsoil, from which a single horseshoe was recovered. This sealed a thin layer of peat which lay over the natural grey and orange sand subsoil.

Trench 5 was excavated from SW-NE over a distance of 35m. 300mm of dark brown clay loam topsoil sealed a 200mm thick layer of silty sand subsoil, beneath which was an orangey brown silty sand natural subsoil with orange gravel patches.

Trench 6 was excavated from SE-NW over a distance of 60m from which an average of 350mm of dark brown clay loam topsoil was removed. Beneath this was a thin layer of peat, c.120mm thick, below which was a 300mm thick layer of dirty orangey grey silty sand, which in turn sealed the orangey brown sandy gravel natural subsoil. No features or finds were recovered from the trench.

Trench 7 was excavated from SSW-NNE over a distance of 20m, removing 300mm of loamy peat topsoil which sealed pure peat to a depth of 2.15m. Wood was preserved towards the base of the peat layer but as randomly fallen branches rather than deliberately placed or worked fragments. Grey silty sand was visible in the base of the trench.

Trench 8 was excavated from SW-NE over a distance of 30m. 250mm of loamy peat topsoil was removed from the trench, revealing peat above the natural subsoil identical in depth and appearance to that in Trench 7.

4. Wissett Fishing Lakes (WSS 016): the finds

Richenda Goffin, March 2005.

Introduction

Only a single artefact was collected from the evaluation, as shown in the table below.

Context	Small find		Spotdate
	No.	Wt/g	
0000	1	121	14th-15th C

Metalwork

A single, nearly complete iron horseshoe was recovered from the subsoil. The shoe has a broad web (measuring 34mm at its widest point) and tapers slightly towards the heels. There is no evidence of a calkin on the one intact heel. In addition there are no signs of any nailholes visible before radiography.

Provisional investigation of the horseshoe suggests that it is likely to be a Type 4 shoe, according to the typology established by Clark (Clark 96), and that it may be late medieval in date (14th-15th century). However a more precise identification may be possible after radiography.

5. Discussion

Although no archaeological features were revealed by the evaluation, the trenches showed that a potentially interesting environmental sequence is preserved here within the peat layers. The excavation of the lakes will remove some of the peat but the nature of the development means that much will remain preserved in situ. In Trenches 4, 5 and 6, the composition of the soil suggested a drier environment, and topographically, these trenches occupy a slightly elevated position within the study area. The thin layer of peat in trench 4 is sealed by a silty sediment within which a medieval horseshoe was found. As such, this layer cannot have formed any earlier than the fourteenth century.

6. Recommendations

Due to the lack of archaeological material, but large scale movement of earth and peat proposed, intermittent monitoring of the groundworks for the lakes is recommended.

Linzi Everett
Field Team
Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service
March 2005

References

Clark, J., Horseshoes in Clark, J., (ed), The medieval horse and its equipment c1150-c1450, Medieval finds from excavations in London No 5, Museum of London