

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING REPORT

SCCAS REPORT No. 2010/104

The Old Post Office, Barnham BNH 065

Suffolk County Council
Archaeological Service

A. Tester June 2010
www.suffolkcc.gov.uk/e-and-t/archaeology

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HER Information

Planning Application No: SE/08/1709

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Grid Reference: TL 870 792

Funding Body: Mr A. C. Webb

Curatorial Officer: Jess Tipper

Project Officer: Andrew Tester

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Digital report submitted to Archaeological Data Service:
<http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/catalogue/library/greylit>

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1. Context List

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Summary

An archaeological monitoring was carried out during the excavation of footings for a single dwelling at Barnham during January 2010. The monitoring confirmed that a platform of clay, probably for a building of early post-medieval date survived towards the front of the property and that a layer of gravel below the clay sealed the top of what are interpreted as pits for the extraction of gravel. There were a number of pits across the site and these clearly represent a range of dates. The latest of these was c.3m deep and was infilled during the 20th century.

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1. Introduction

Archaeological monitoring was carried out during the construction of a new bungalow on the site of the Old Post Office, Barnham. This followed on from two stages of trial trenching, which exposed a series of terraces in the hillside and a layer of clay interpreted as a building platform (SCCAS Report No. 2009/121). The monitoring concludes the archaeological work that was set out in a Brief and Specification attached to planning application SE/08/1709. A verbal brief was added to cover the monitoring phase of the work. The work was commissioned and funded by A. C. Webb.

2. Geology and topography

The site lies at TL 870 792 and is located on rising ground overlooking the floodplain of the Little Ouse at a height of c.23m AOD (Fig.1). While the site frontage is fairly level, the site rises significantly a further 5m to the rear of the property. The geology comprises substantial deposits of gravel and sand.

3. Archaeological background

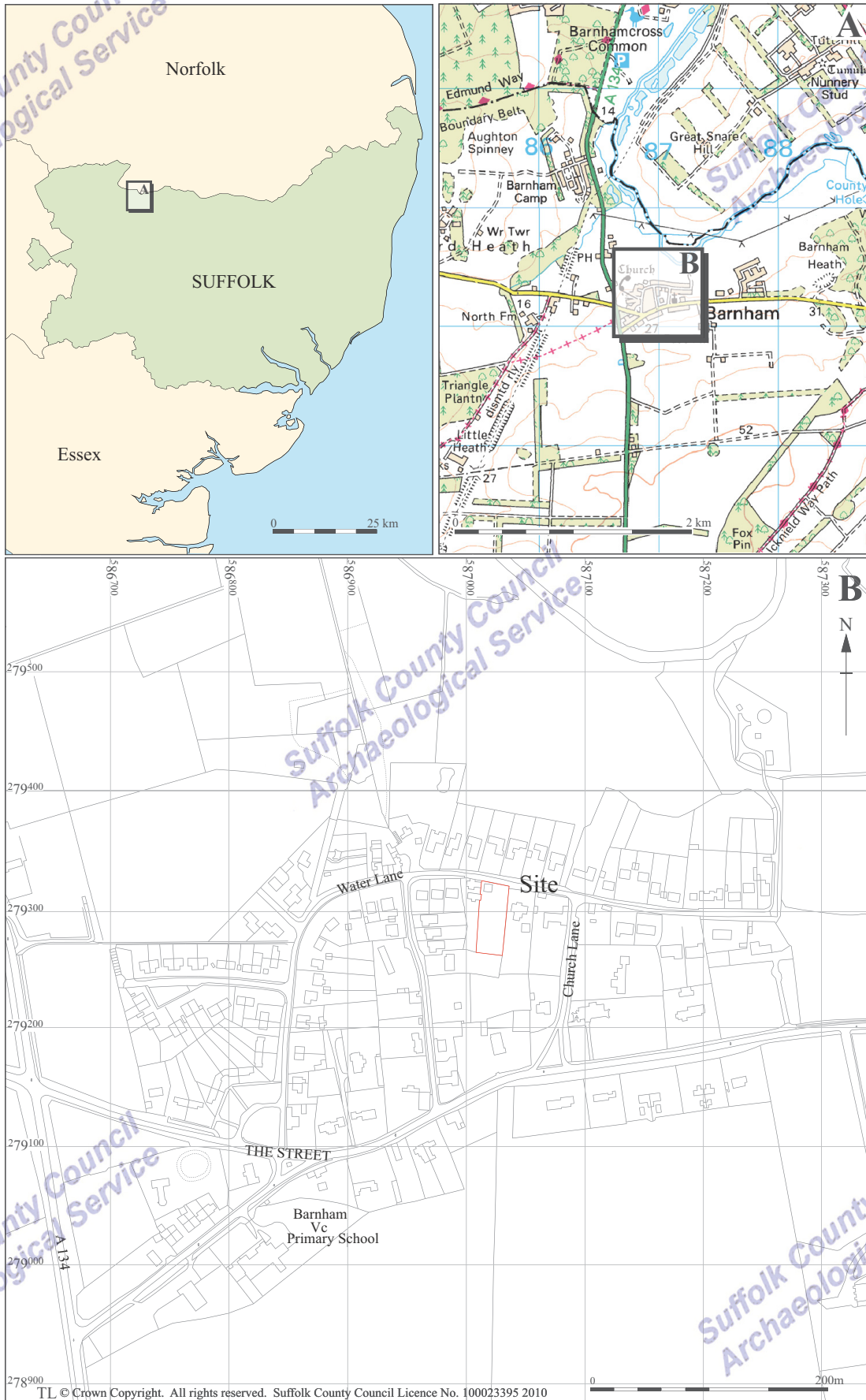
The site lies in an area of archaeological interest within the historic core of the settlement and close to two medieval churches (BNH 003 and BNH 046). The site is equidistant from St Gregory's Church and the redundant church of St Martin. Anglo-Saxon objects have also been recorded in the vicinity (BNH 003). Its topographic location overlooking the floodplain would have been favourable for settlement throughout the historic and prehistoric periods.

4. Methodology

The excavation of the footing trenches was constantly monitored. A single sequence numbering system was used (beginning with 0050). A small amount of hand excavation took place and particular sections were drawn to supplement the plan of the site that was superimposed on the architect's drawing. Digital images were taken where practical and these are stored within the site archive.

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Figure 1. Site Location, showing development area

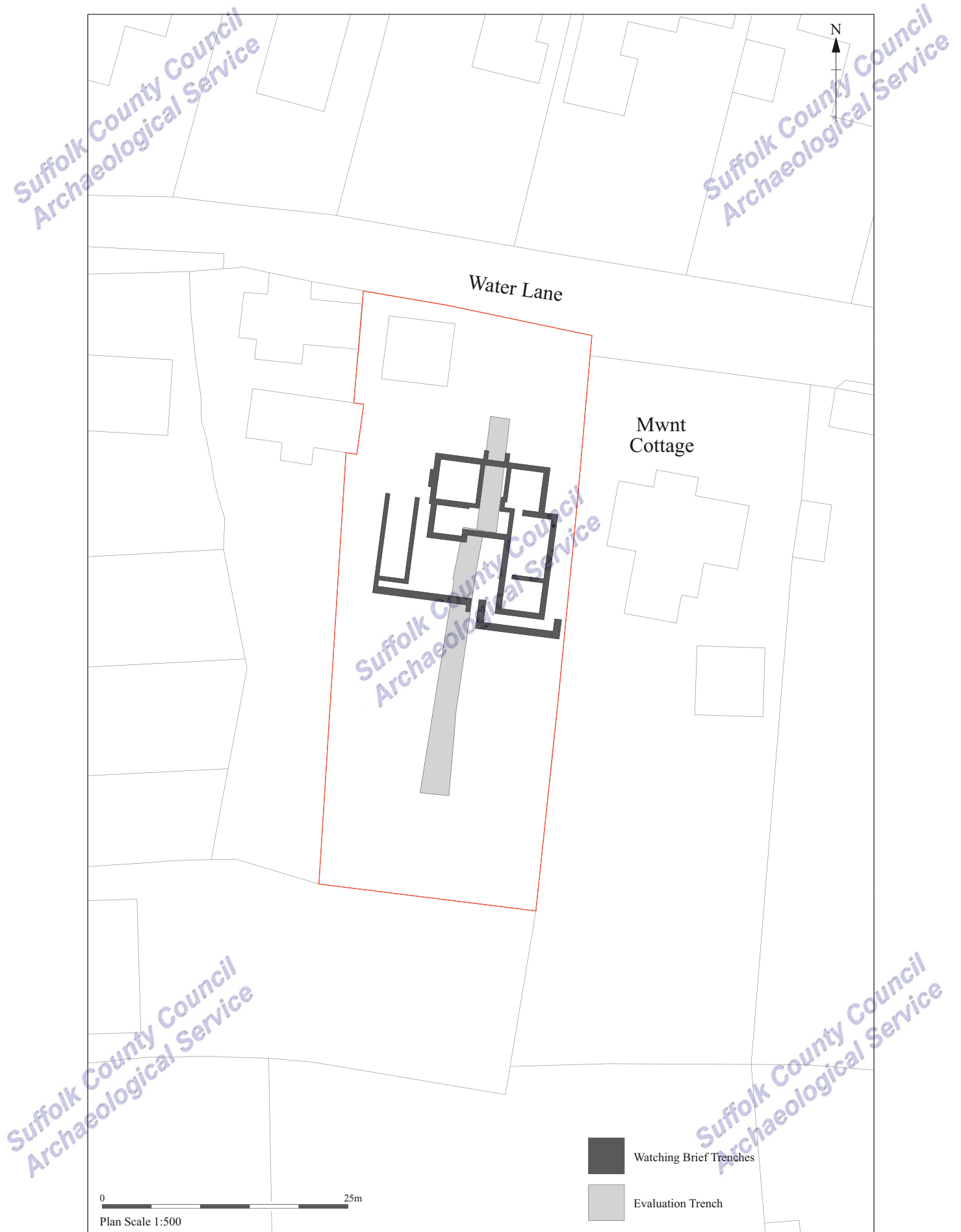


Figure 2. Trench Location

5. Results (Figs. 3 and 5)

The results from the monitoring will be described from south to north across the footings. Feature descriptions are included in the context list as Appendix 2.

Prior to the excavation of the footings, the surface of the site was stripped creating a level terrace into the slope at the south end of the site (both the slope of the site and the cut for Terrace 3 that was identified in the evaluation can be seen in Plate 1). A brick retaining wall has been built around the property to mitigate for the steep slope of the garden.



Plate 1. Terracing, south east corner of the property, looking east.

The location of the footings is indicated in Figure 3, which also shows where the terracing had removed the upper soil deposits and cut into the gravel hillside. Features in the easternmost footing are shown in Sections 1 and 2. In Section 1 two pits are indicated: 0051 and 0052. The former was irregular at the base and may have been re-dug but this is uncertain and seems unlikely as they are interpreted as quarry pits; they both contained dark brown silt and produced no finds. The pits were respectively 1.1m and 0.8m deep respectively. The natural subsoil around these features comprised sand and gravel.

Section 2 contained two areas where the ground may have been lowered but this was uncertain, 0054 and 0055 with a large deep pit, 0056, identified at the corner of the new building. Several large frogged bricks were observed in the fill suggesting that the pit was c.20th century. No relationship could be established between these features or the fill within the large pit.

A shallow pit 0053 up to 0.45m deep is indicated on the plan but the section has not been drawn. The sides were indistinct and no finds were recovered.

A single feature 0059 was identified in the westernmost trench (Section 3). It was exposed over a slightly wider area because of the shape of the footing which is why it is confidently interpreted as a ditch aligned east-west. It also had a square shape and a different fill to that of the pits with more gravel towards the base.



Plate 2 Ditch 0059 looking west

A large pit 0058 was identified in one of the central north-south trenches. The sides of the pit were vertical and, like the base, were solid chalk. The maximum depth was c.1.9m. The eastern side of this pit was unstable due to the proximity of the first evaluation trench. It is suggested that this feature was the continuation of pit 0008 from the evaluation.

The south-western section of the north east-west trench is recorded in Section 4. It comprises two large pits 0060 and 0061, which were 1.8m and 1.75m deep respectively (measured from the levelled ground surface) with sides of solid chalk. A layer of gravel up to 0.5m deep extended over pit 0061 and part of pit 0060 and this was sealed by a continuous surface of clay up to 0.1m thick. This layer is thought to be the continuation of clay surface 0012 that was identified in the first evaluation trench to the east; the gravel layer, 0063, equates to deposits 0003 and 0006 from the evaluation.

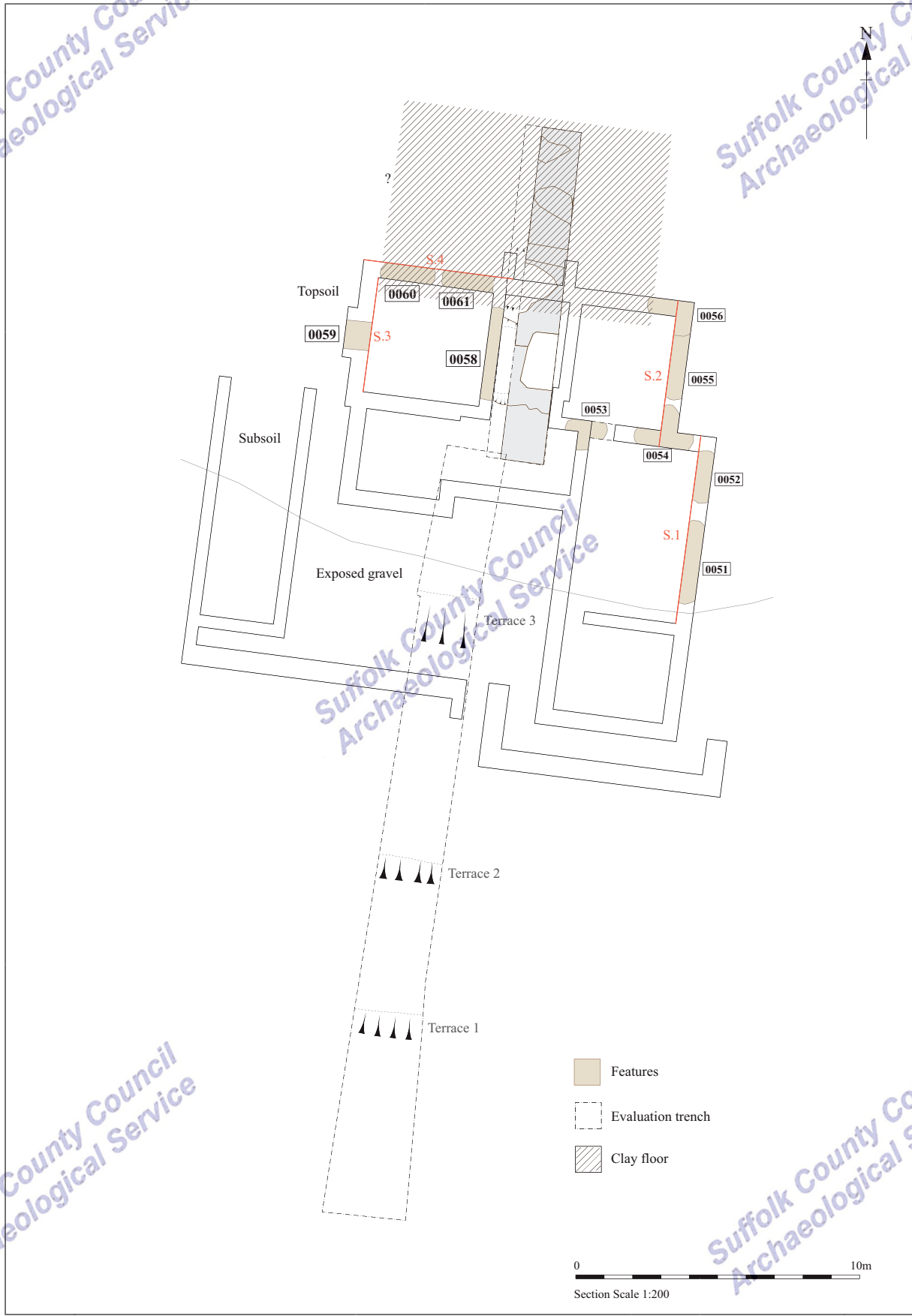


Figure 3. Watching brief and evaluation trench plans

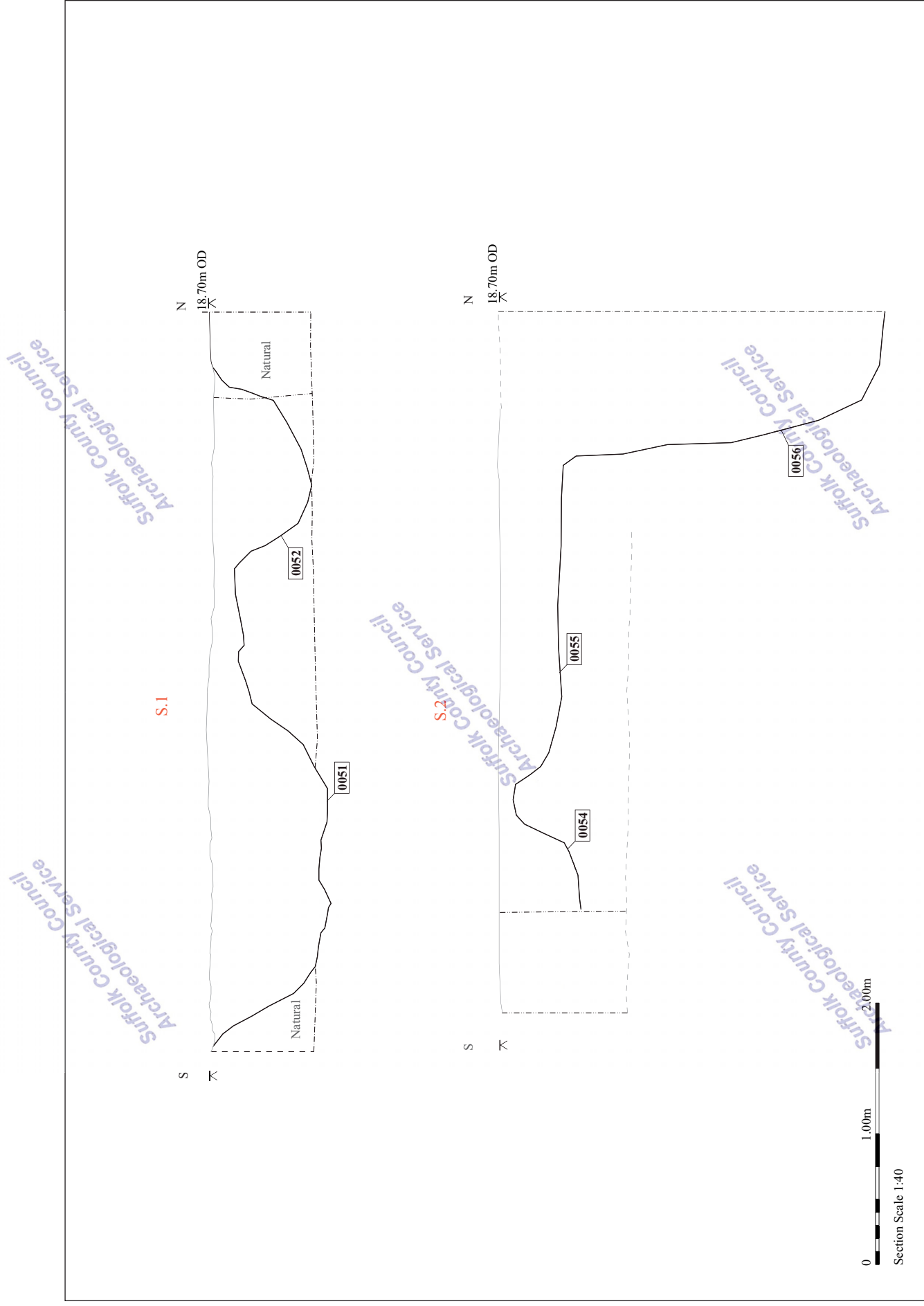


Figure 4. Sections

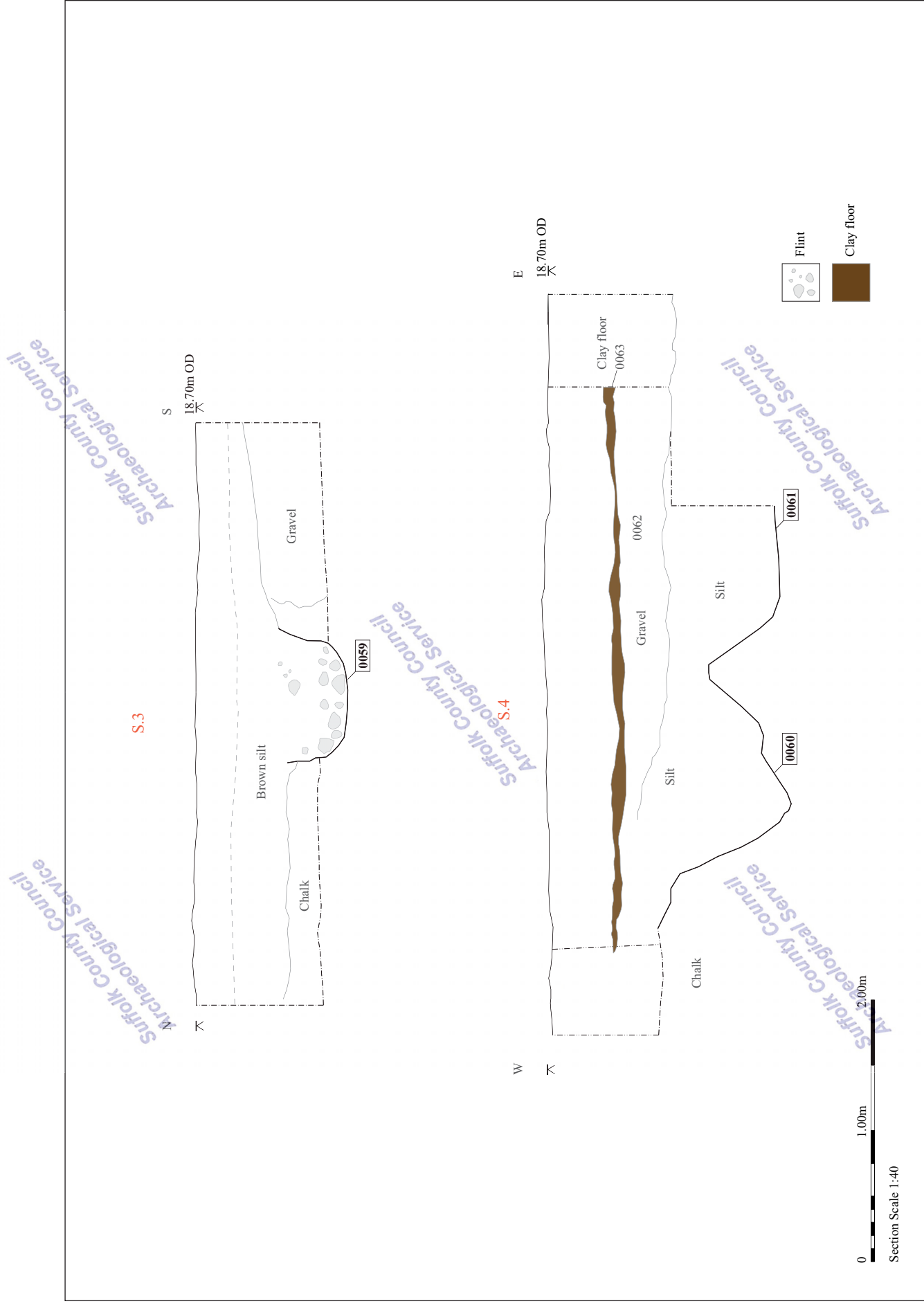


Figure 5. Sections

6. Finds

A single sherd of pottery was recovered during the monitoring from ditch 0059. It was a fragment of a sixteenth century chafing dish in a dark green glaze with a castellated rim. (Richenda Goffin pers. Comm.).

7. Discussion

The monitoring followed a site strip that created a level platform from which the house could be built. Because of this approximately one third of the footprint of the building was dug into clean sand and gravel; in this area no cut features were visible. This changed towards the north end of the site where several pits were exposed beneath dark silt. The pit fills were all very similar in having no finds with the exception of pit 0056 that contained some fairly modern bricks. The homogeneity of the fill types and the lack of finds would be consistent with the interpretation that these were quarry pits dug for the extraction of sand and gravel and filled with fairly sterile topsoil rather being used for domestic rubbish. Large pit 0056 was modern and of the others pits 0060, 0061 and pit 0058 (0008 from the evaluation) can probably be dated to the late medieval period or early post medieval period because they were stratigraphically below gravel 0062 and clay surface 0063 (0012 from the evaluation). It seems certain that the clay spread 0063/0012 was a clay building platform dating from the early post-medieval period; the full dimensions could not be recorded but it was at least 7m wide and 6.5m deep. The clay would have formed the internal floor of a building that would have been surrounded by a timber frame that may have rested either on the ground or on dwarf walls. Two similar platforms have recently been identified: one alongside Finningham Road, Walsham Le Willows and a second at Holly House Bardwell (Muldowney 2008). It was suggested from the evaluation trench that there may have been an earlier floor of medieval date but no evidence of this was found during the monitoring. No relationship could be established between the building platform and ditch 0059 although it is likely that they were contemporary with the ditch terminating before the end of the west wall.

8. Conclusions

The monitoring has provided compelling evidence for a post-medieval clay building platform towards the front of the property. It has also demonstrated a history of quarrying on the site with numerous pits, several of which predate the building platform while at least one is later. No evidence was found for either the Late Saxon or medieval occupation of the site for which there was evidence towards the rear of the property during the evaluation.

9. Archive deposition

Paper and photographic archive: SCCAS Bury St Edmunds

T:\Arc\ALL_site\Barnham\The Old post office. The finds are in the Parish Box.

10. List of contributors and acknowledgements

The monitoring was carried out by Andrew Tester, and Crane Begg and Ellie Hillen prepared the drawings and Richenda Goffin identified the pottery and edited the report.

11. Bibliography

- Muldowney, E., 2008 Land Adjacent to Holly House, Bardwell BAR 072, SCCAS Report 2008/226 (*in prep.*)
- Muldowney, E., Tester, A., 2009 Archaeological Evaluation Report. The Old Post Office, Barnham BNH 065 SCCAS Report 2009/121

Appendix 1

Context List

opno	feature	identifier	description	cuts	cutby	over	under
0050	0050	Layer	dark brown silt. Above sand layer and gravel			gravel	topsoil
0051	0051	Pit, cut and fill	Roundedv shape dark brown sil, two cuts1.1m deep.				
0052	0052	Pit, cut and fill	Rounded shape 0.75m deep. Dark brown silt.				
0053	0053	Pit, cut and fill	shallow pit 0.45m deep. Contained chalk and brown silt in fill.				
0054	0054	Pit, cut and fill	shallow pit 0.6m deep.dark brown silt				
0055	0055	Pit cut and fill	shallow cut 0.5m deep. Dark brown silt				
0056	0056	Pit, cut and fill	Steep sided pit c.3m deep. Dark brown silt included some 20th century brick towards the base. Distinction with 0055 not obvious. Drawn from surface.				
0057	0057	Uniused					
0058	0058	Pit, cut and fill	deep pit c.1.9m. C.3m long on surface withvertical sides of chalk. Not drawn. Difficuly of collapsing trench on west side from original evaluation trench. Suggest saame as 0008 from first evaluation				
0059	0059	Ditch, cut and f	1.2m deep square cut with flattish base. brown silt fill with coarser stones and gravel towards the base. Gravel on south side chalk on the north side. Single fragment of pottery recovered. Chafing dish in transitional ware (early post medieval)				
0060	0060	Pit,cut and fill	C. 2m wide and up to 1.9m deep with chalk on all sides.brown silt fill indistinguishable from fill of pit 0061.mPartially overlain by gravel 0062 and clay layer 0063.				0062 0063
0061	0061	Pit cut and fill	c. unknown width, not fully excavated on east side. Established. Dark brown silt fill. sealed by gravel 0062				0062
0062	0062	Layer	gravel up to 0.4m thick deposite. Suggest used to level top of extraction pits.			0061 0060 0063	
0063	0063	Layer	layer of clay. Possible building platform. Extends over pits 0061 and 0060. At least 4.5m wide. Suggest similar-identical-to layer 0012 from the evaluation trench, section 1 SCCAS Report No 2009/121			0062	