

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING REPORT

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SCCAS REPORT No. 2010/116

### EDF Cable Trench, Leiston Abbey, Leiston LCS 155

#### HER Information

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<b>SAM No:</b>	<b>21405</b>
<b>Date of Fieldwork:</b>	<b>14th-21st June 2010</b>
<b>Grid Reference:</b>	<b>TM 4449 6718</b>
<b>Funding Body:</b>	<b>English Heritage</b>
<b>Project Officer:</b>	<b>Linzi Everett</b>
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## Summary

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Archaeological monitoring of the excavation of a 0.4m deep trench for a new electricity cable revealed a series of disturbed and re-deposited layers. In the north-south trench running immediately east of the farmhouse, a bonded flint and mortar wall and capped well were recorded, but not damaged by the excavations. The northernmost east-west trench run contained evidence of a cobbled surface likely to be associated with the farmhouse complex. Further west, under the tarmac road, layers of demolition rubble may represent the re-use of materials from the abbey and post-dissolution buildings which existed within the site as hardcore for tracks and yard surfaces.

### 1. Introduction

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Archaeological monitoring of the excavation of trenches for the installation of a new electricity cable at Leiston Abbey, Leiston, was undertaken on the 16th, 17th and 18th June 2010, in order to record any archaeological deposits encountered. The National Grid Reference for the approximate centre of the monitored area is TM 4449 6417.

The site is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (no. 21405) under the guardianship of the Secretary of State and is managed by English Heritage, who commissioned the archaeological work.

### 2. Geology and topography

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The site is located on the northern fringe of the parish of Leiston at approximately 15m OD. Topographically, it lies on the edge of a plateau area overlooking a shallow river tributary valley to the south and falling away to the coastal marshes to the east.

The underlying drift geology comprises glaciogenic boulder clays of the Lowestoft Till Formation.

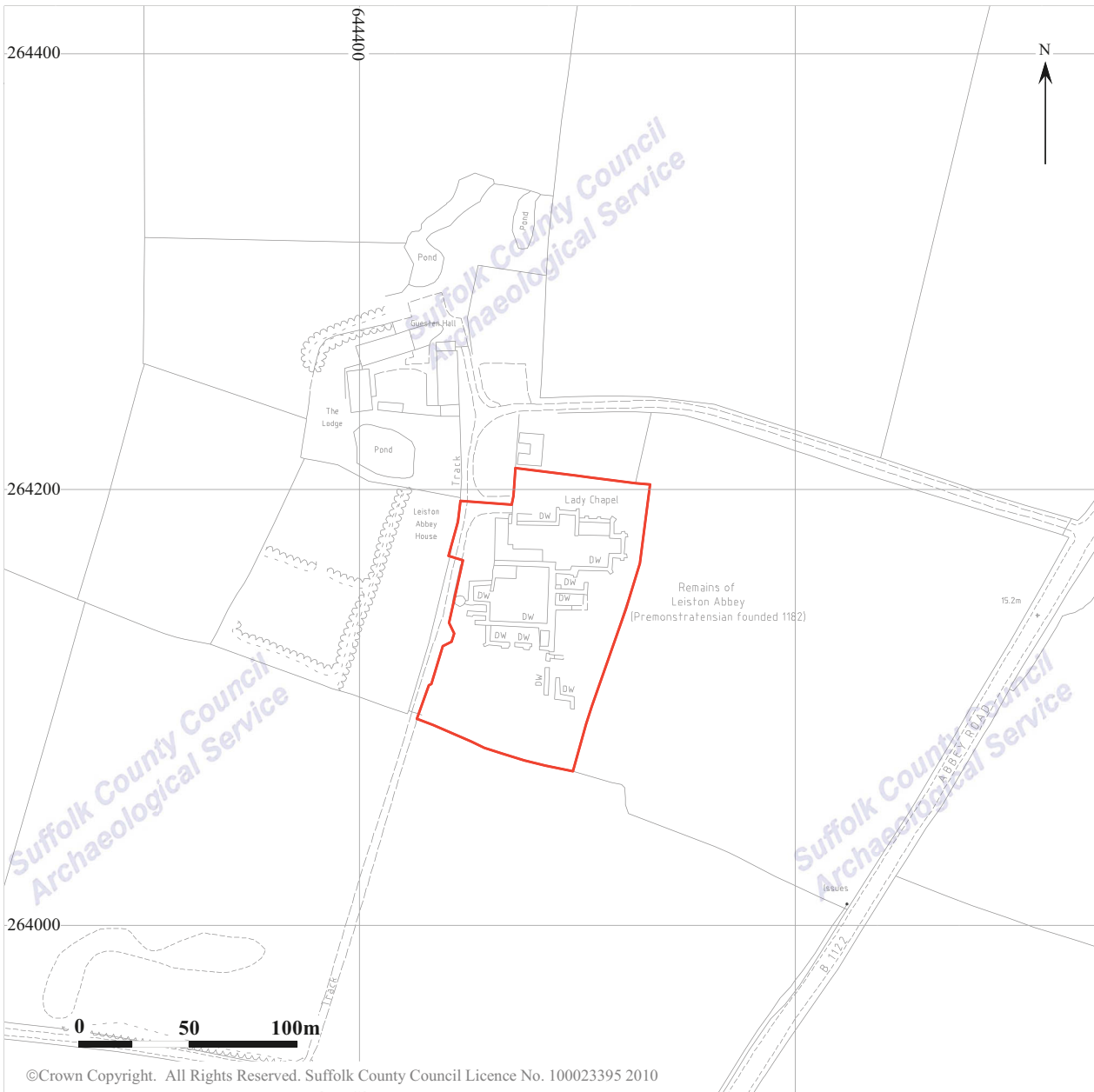
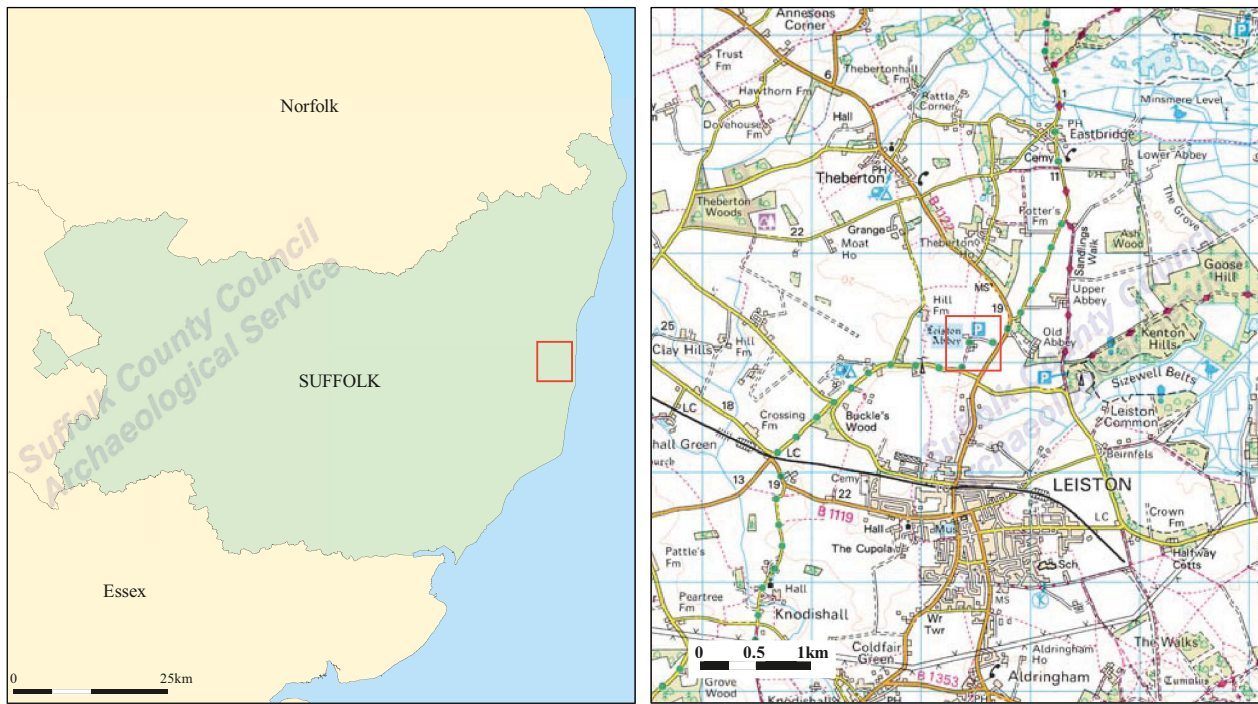


Figure 1. Site location

### 3. Archaeological and historical background

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The Abbey was founded in 1182 at Minsmere by Ranulf de Glanville, Lord Chief Justice to King Henry II, but transferred to its current location in Leiston in 1363 and rebuilt after a fire in 1382. Extensive standing remains of the church and monastic range survive despite the site being used as a farm after the Dissolution Act in 1536, with farm buildings incorporated within the ruins. The main 17th century farmhouse survives, with a Georgian front added to the house and a 1920's extension.

Recent archaeological investigation within the abbey complex and close to part of the proposed trench revealed two burials outside the north wall of the nave which are assumed to be from the monastic period (LCS 136).

### 4. Methodology

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The monitoring was undertaken through observation of the trench as it was excavated, recording any cut features and significant deposits revealed. The spoil kept adjacent to the trench was also examined for artefacts. The trench location and depths were recorded and the revealed soil profile was noted.

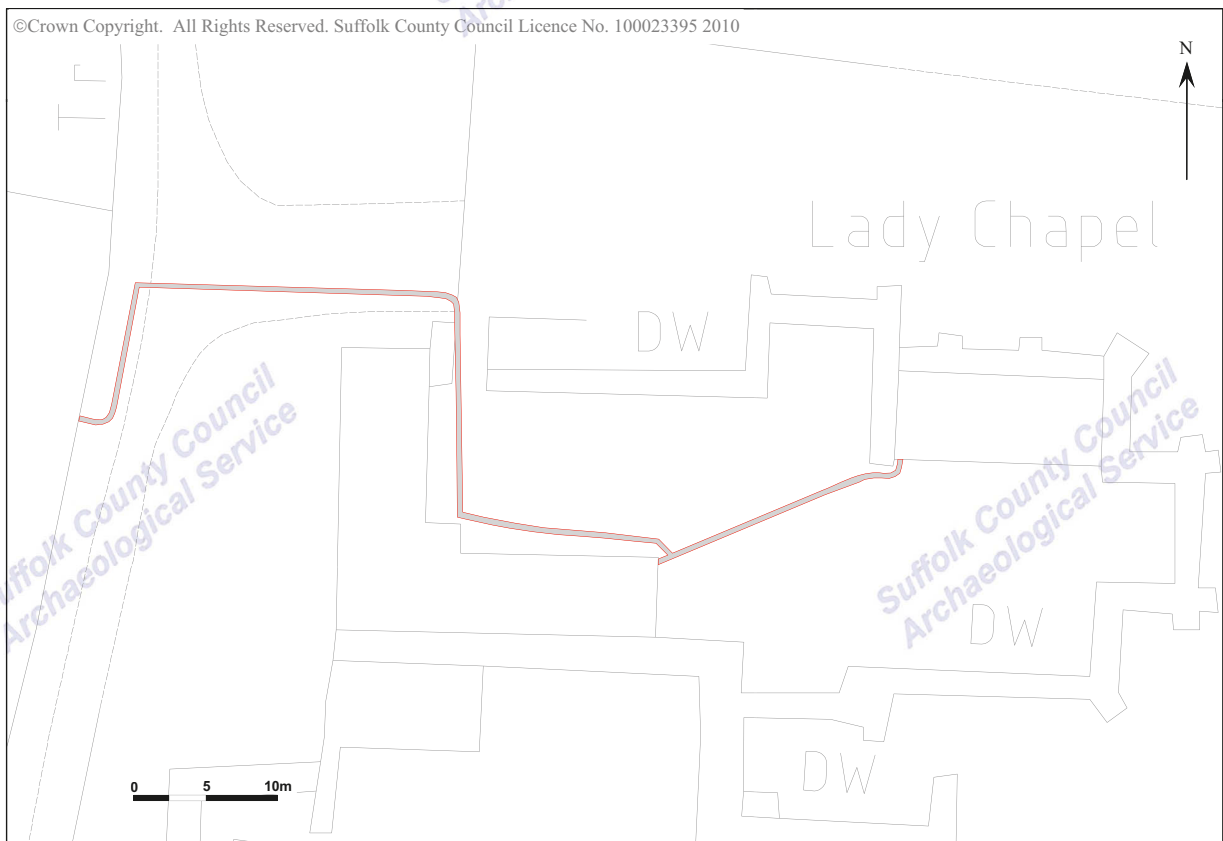


Figure 2. Location of monitored groundworks within the abbey complex

The trench was excavated by hand by a professional building contractor. Where it cut through solid surfaces, including a tarmac road, a pneumatic breaker was used to loosen the surface before continuing to excavate by hand. The archaeological monitoring was undertaken by the Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service, Field Projects Team who were commissioned and funded by English Heritage. This monitoring event has been recorded under the HER code LCS 155. Context information was recorded on Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service 'pro-forma' recording sheets. Digital photographs were taken as part of the record of the works carried out, a selection of which are reproduced as Plates 1-7. The monitoring archive is held in the County HER in Bury St. Edmunds.

### 5. Results

The trench was excavated 0.35m wide and to a depth of 0.45m. The various deposits encountered are described in detail in the context list (Appendix I) and their locations shown on Figures 3 and 4.

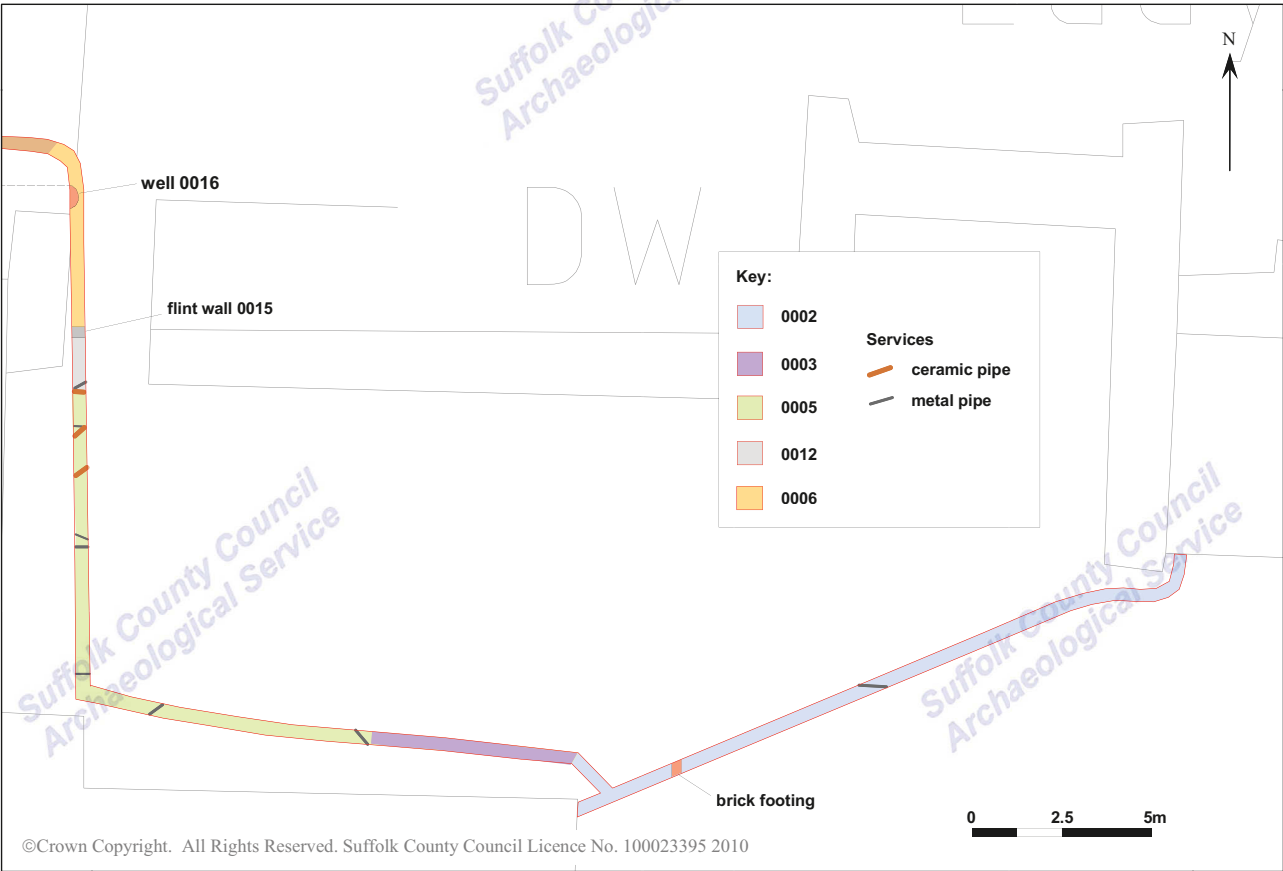


Figure 3: Detail of deposits and features in the eastern part of the trench



As the trench was quite shallow, much of the excavated material consisted of topsoil, which was a dark brown friable silty loam, c.0.15m - 0.2m thick where it was present, and various disturbed layers associated with episodes of construction and modern services. 0002 was the backfill of a known service trench and was very similar in character to the topsoil, but included regular post-medieval and modern artefacts. This layer was still evident in the base of the trench. 0003 was very similar to 0002 but lacked modern finds. It was clearly disturbed and contained ashy patches as well as CBM, mortar flecks, occasional charcoal lumps and tile. At the base of the trench, a compact mid yellowish brown silty clay sand, 0004, was revealed. This was a deposit observed through the majority of the base of the trench but it was not clear whether this represented a subsoil layer or the natural subsoil. 0005 was a mixed deposit, heavily disturbed by services, consisting of mid brown sandy silty clay with regular flints, CBM and mortar flecks to the full depth of the trench (0.4m).



Plate 1. General view of the trench under excavation. Located within the church nave, looking west.

0015 was an east-west aligned section of bonded flint and mortar masonry (Plate 2). It measured 0.3m wide and the top was 0.23m from the ground surface. Whilst it was reasonably well faced on its north side, the south side was less even. For c.1m immediately south of this wall fragment, and at a depth of 0.36m, the base of the trench was extremely solid. Hand cleaning revealed fragments of flint and mortar set in a mid-pale yellow brown clay matrix, and this was allocated the context number 0012. 0015 and 0012 align with the north nave wall. It is likely that these represent the westerly continuation of this wall. This may explain the uneven southern side of 0015 as the result of cutting through part of the wall for construction of a modern footing, leaving the top of the nave wall footing exposed as 0012. A scar in the brickwork of the farmhouse to the west implies that a wall once extended over the location of 0012 (Plate 3).



Plate 2. Wall fragment 0015, looking approximately east. 0012 is adjacent to, and south of, the wall, but cannot be seen clearly in the photo.



Plate 3. Signs of a former modern wall which would align with 0012, 0015 and the north nave wall.



Plate 4. Brick capping of well 0016 visible in the western trench section. Looking south.

0016 was a probable brick capped well or pump, partially exposed in the western side of the trench (Plate 4). Two courses of bricks were visible creating a dome, on top of which was a metal plate, subsequently sealed by 0.26m of overburden 0006. The bricks were lined externally by a 0.12m thick mid grey brown clay layer which was itself cut into 0004, the clean trench base. No well or pump is represented in this location on the 1st-3rd edition Ordnance Survey maps and whilst the visible brick is clearly modern in origin, not enough of the feature was revealed to determine if it is entirely recent or an older feature, recently capped.

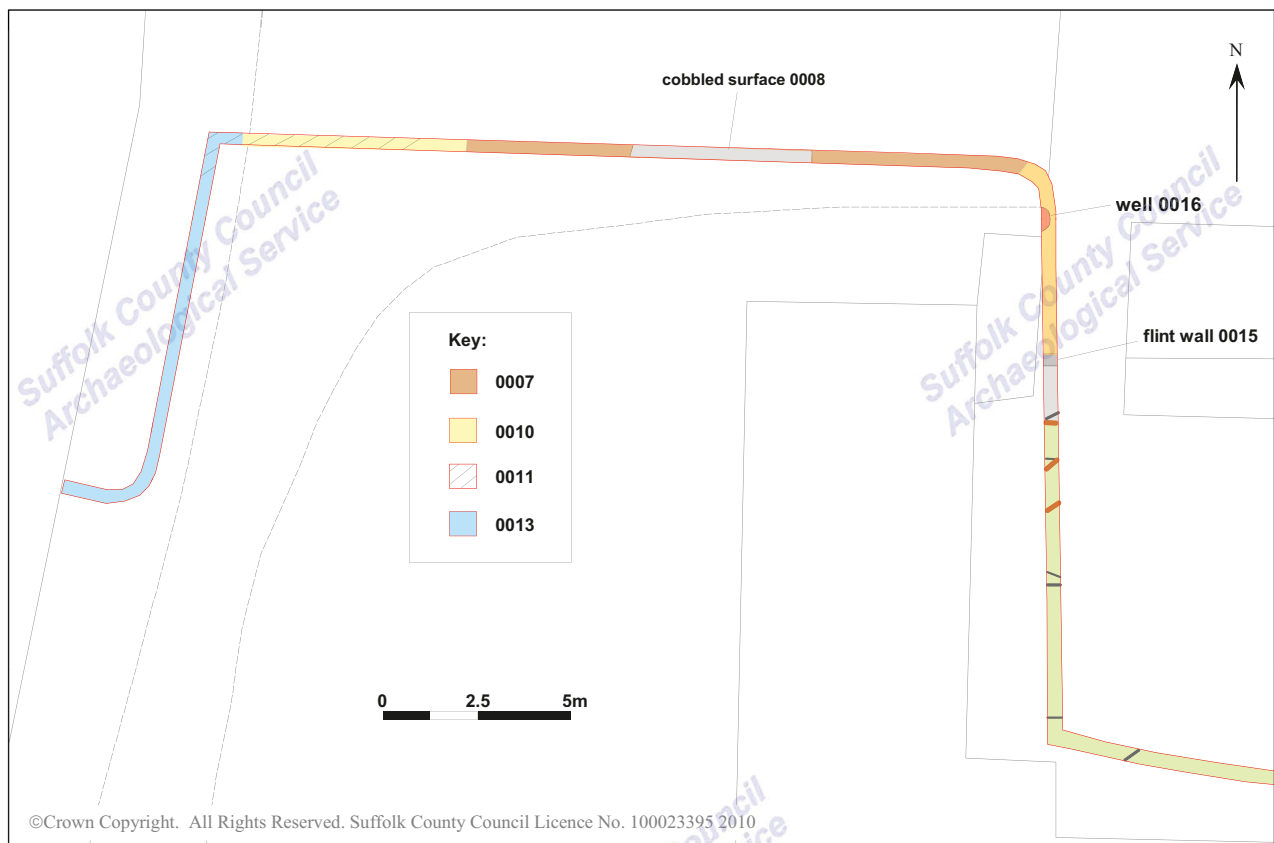


Figure 4: Detail of deposits and features in the western part of the trench

0007 was a mid brown sandy silty clay layer of subsoil sealed by the topsoil. It contained regular flints and CBM fragments as well as occasional oyster shells, charcoal fragments and glazed pot. Two partial floor tiles of 14th-15th century date were recovered from this layer, along with various post-medieval finds.

0008 was a cobbled surface visible over c.5m at a depth of 0.28m-0.35m, set into a stiff clay matrix (Plates 5 and 6). During hand cleaning, a thin but distinct layer of mid brown silty sand was identified directly over the cobbles and allocated the context number 0009. Finds from this layer were sparse, but included fragments of post-medieval peg tile, an unidentified iron object and a



Plate 5. Cobbled surface



fragment of copper alloy sheet which may be of medieval date but could equally be post-medieval.

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Plate 6. Cobbled surface, looking west.

0010 was a mid-pale yellowish brown sandy clay with occasional chalk lumps, very compact in places, overlying 0004. Incorporated into this matrix under the gravel car park area and the north-south tarmac road west of the abbey complex was 0011, comprising dense demolition rubble, particularly CBM, and worked masonry fragments. The CBM was abraded, and of mixed date, including early brick, medieval floor tile and post-medieval brick. 0011 continued c.2m through into 0013 (Plate 7) which was a dark brown friable silty loam, essentially topsoil, to the full depth of the trench and overlying 0004.



Plate 7. Rubble layer 0011 merging into 0013 west of the tarmac road. Looking south west.

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The majority of deposits excavated from the trench were disturbed or re-deposited layers. Any stratigraphic relationships between these layers were difficult to discern, particularly as the trench was so narrow.

## 6. Finds evidence (Andy Fawcett)

### Introduction

A total of 64 finds with a weight of 8727g was collected from five contexts, as shown in the table below.

Context	Pottery		CBM		Stone		Animal bone		Miscellaneous	Spotdate
	No.	Wt/g	No.	Wt/g	No.	Wt/g	No.	Wt/g		
0002	3	279	3	140			2	23	Glass 2 @ 29g Iron nails 2 @ 38g	16th to 18th C
0005									Glass 1 @ 1g	Post-medieval
0007	2	53	2	919			5	186	Shell 11 @ 79g	15th to 19th C
0009	1	6	2	85			2	16	Shell 3 @ 70g	?Late 12th to 14th C+
0010					1	1072				
0011	1	100	13	1396	6	4221			Shell 1 @ 13g	16th to 18th C
0013									Glass 1 @ 1g	
<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>438</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>2540</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>5293</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>225</b>		

Table 1. Find quantities

### Pottery

Just seven sherds of pottery (438g) have been retrieved from four contexts, as Table 1 demonstrates. A full contextual breakdown of fabrics forms part of the site archive.

Overall the pottery is abraded, and is dated to the post-medieval period. The first three sherds (279g) are located in deposit 0002. Two of these are abraded English stoneware handle fragments (ESW), dated from the 17th to 19th century. The third piece (246g) is a glazed red earthenware (GRE) body sherd which is dated from the 16th to 18th century. Deposit 0007 contains two sherds, the first of which (28g) is an abraded late medieval transitional base fragment (LMT) and is dated from the 15th to late 16th century. The second is a plate fragment (25g) belonging to a late slipped red ware (LSRW) dated from the 18th to 19th century. Layer 0009 contains a single considerably abraded ceramic fragment (6g). It is not clear if this is pottery or CBM, but the fabric has some similarities to medieval coarseware (MCW), dated from the late 12th to 14th century. Finally, a single sherd of post-medieval red ware (PMRW) is present in layer 0011 (100g). This is a glazed handle fragment and is dated from the 16th to 18th century.

The pottery assemblage as a whole is quite small and abraded indicating that it has been considerably disturbed. However, as a whole the assemblage is dated to the post-medieval period, with a single sherd dated to the early part of that era.

## **Ceramic building material**

In total 20 fragments of CBM with a weight of 2540g have been recovered as Table 1 demonstrates. The assemblage as whole is divided between early and late brick (EB & LB), roof tile (RT) and floor tile (FT). A full contextual breakdown of form and fabric types can be seen in Appendix II. In general however the assemblage is highly fragmented and often abraded.

### *Early brick*

Two examples of early brick have been noted (211g) in layer 0011. Both of these are considerably abraded and are in 'estuarine' fabrics (est). Only one of these fragments had a measureable depth (50mm), and both are dated from the 13th to 15th century.

### *Late brick*

Late brick has been noted in layer 0011. This post-medieval piece (651g) is quite abraded and occurs in a medium sandy fabric (ms). It is deep red, partially over-fired and has a depth measurement of 66mm which fits into Drury's LB1-2 category (1993, 165).

### *Roof tile*

This is the largest find category within the CBM assemblage (13 fragments @ 639g) and is divided between medieval and post-medieval. Medieval roof tile is only present in layer 0011 and is represented by fragments belonging to two different tiles. They are both only slightly abraded and are in medium sandy fabrics (ms) with oxidised surfaces and thick grey cores. Their depth measurement is between 12-13mm and they have some similarities to Drury's RT4 category (1993, 166). They are dated from the high to later medieval period. The remainder of this assemblage is mostly made up of post-medieval peg tile, recorded in deposit 0002 and layers 0009 and 0011. Two fragments of black glazed pan tile are present in deposit 0002 (59g) and are in a medium sandy fabric. These types are modelled on Dutch imports, though were not produced in this country until after 1701; black glazes were a speciality in Norfolk (Clifton-Taylor 1972, 279).

### *Floor tile*

Four pieces of floor tile were noted (1036g), the best examples occurring in deposit 0007 (918g). These two pieces display only slight abrasion and are in fine red fabrics with the additional presence of clay pellets (fscp); only faint traces of glaze survive. They are likely to be Flemish and are comparable with Drury's FT6-10 category (1993, 165) and are dated from the 14th to 15th century. The remaining two examples of floor tile are located in layer 0011 (118g), however these are in poor state of preservation in comparison to the previous two, being small and quite abraded. Nonetheless, glaze survives on both of these, the first being brown/green. A single nail hole on the surface is also present, which was probably part of the hanging process undertaken during the trimming of the tile. The second tile is again in the Flemish style of fabric and has a yellow glaze. Both of the tiles are in a medium sandy fabric (ms) and are dated from the 14th to 15th century, although the first example may have a slightly earlier start date.

Overall the CBM assemblage is in a poor state of preservation and is often mixed in terms of dating. Furthermore, nearly all of the pieces have varying amounts of mortar attached to them, in some cases on all sides, indicating that the CBM had been reused at a later date. However, the CBM assemblage represents both medieval and post-medieval activity.

### **Stone**

The stone was recovered from two contexts, layers 0010 and 0011. The entire collection is made up of Caen limestone (Edward Martin pers.comm.) which would have been imported from the Normandy region of France. A number of pieces join and clearly display signs of being worked, and were probably originally part of a window or door area. Indeed imported limestone for the surrounds of doors and windows has been documented at the second Leiston Abbey site by English Heritage (1996).

### **Animal bone**

Identified by M. Feider

Animal bone was recorded in three contexts as Table 1 indicates. Overall this assemblage is small, quite fragmented and very worn. Deposit 0002 contains two fragments of a hare/rabbit scapula and a large mammal scapula. This latter piece displays eburnation which is indicative of osteoarthritis. Deposit 0007 contains several large mammal fragments which include distal humerus, cervical vertebrae, pelvis and a

metacarpal. A single possible cow phalange was also recorded. The final context, layer 0009, has a single metacarpal fragment belonging to either goat or sheep, as well as a large mammal metapodial.

## Shell

In total fifteen pieces of oyster shell weighing 162g was recorded in three contexts, deposit 0007 as well as layers 0009 and 0011. As a whole the condition of the shell may be described as variable, the best preserved pieces being present in layer 0009.

## Glass

Four small fragments of glass (31g) have been noted in three deposits. Two of these, recorded in deposit 0005 and layer 0013, are pieces of post-medieval window glass; no other finds are present in these contexts. The remaining two examples are present in deposit 0002 and are both instances of post-medieval bottle glass. This last context also contains post-medieval pottery, nails and CBM.

## Iron objects

Two corroded iron nails (38g) are present in deposit 0002. Both of the examples are whole exhibiting flat tops and are dated to the post-medieval period.

## Small finds

Identified by Jane Carr

SF1001 From 0006

Iron ?latch lifter                      Length 147mm, width 40mm

This item is heavily corroded and covered with encrustations (awaiting radiography).

SF1002 From 0009

Iron fragment                              Length 67mm, width 35mm

This fragment is heavily corroded and unidentified (awaiting radiography).

SF1003 From 0009

Copper alloy edging/sheet repair                      Length 127mm, width 46mm

This is very bent and strap like in shape, but it still retains sharp edges. It either represents the remains of edging, such as that found on buckets, or sheet metal used



for mending; a number of variable sized rivets can also be observed. Although it is likely to be dated from AD1300 to 1600, a later post-medieval date cannot be entirely ruled out.

SF1004 From 0010

Copper alloy token                      Diameter 23mm

This is a worn and slightly corroded Nuremberg token dated between 1500 and 1550. The obverse has three crowns and three fleur-de-lys round a central rose, all within an inner circle. The reverse depicts an imperial orb within a double stranded trefoil. There is also an amulet within each external angle of the trefoil. The lettering around the token is fictitious. These types of token are fairly common and parallels can be seen in Mitchiner's work on the subject (1988).

## **7. Discussion**

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At 0.4m deep, the excavated trench was relatively shallow and for much of its length, this depth failed to reach archaeological levels. The majority of deposits exposed by the trench excavation were re-deposited, representing various phases of construction, excavation of modern services and other disturbance. This is reflected by the finds from the various layers documented, which are overall quite fragmented and abraded, with little consistency within individual contexts in terms of dating. The abbey and later farm was no doubt the original source of much of the material recovered but none of the deposits recorded can confidently be assigned a medieval date.

Several archaeologically significant features or deposits were identified during the monitoring, including the westerly continuation of the abbey's north nave wall. A cobbled surface was of uncertain date but and may be associated with the post-dissolution farm complex. Equally, the dense rubble below the modern tarmac road and its sub base may be an informal track and precursor to the existing road, created from material sourced from the redundant 14th century abbey buildings and later Tudor additions. The presence of the assumed well is also of note as whilst the visible capping structure was not of any antiquity, it is possible that an older structure exists below what little was exposed.

## References

Clifton-Taylor, A., 1972, *The pattern of English building* Faber & Faber, London

Drury, P., in Margeson, S., 1993, *Norwich households: The medieval and post-medieval finds from Norwich survey excavations 1971-1978*, East Anglian Archaeology Report No 58

English Heritage., 1996, *Leiston Abbey (second site) and moated site*, Suffolk Coastal, Suffolk, Monument Number 21405

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## Appendix I

CONTEXT	IDENTIFIER	DESCRIPTION	CUTS	OVER	CUTBY	UNDER	FINDSYN
0001	Topsoil	Dark brown friable silty loam, c.0.15-0.2m thick throughout the trench, where present					N
0002	Deposit	Mid yellowish brown silty sandy clay, heavily disturbed and including ashy patches, regular flints, occasional CBM frags, mortar, charcoal flecks and glazed china.				0001	Y
0003	Deposit	Mid yellowish brown silty sandy clay, heavily disturbed and including ashy patches, regular flints, occasional CBM frags, mortar, charcoal flecks and glazed china.					
0004	Deposit	Compact mid yellowish brown silty clay sand. Seen through the majority of the base of the trench but it was not clear whether this is a subsoil layer or natural subsoil				0003;	
0005	Deposit	Heavily disturbed, mixed deposit consisting of mid brown sandy silty clay with regular flints, CBM and mortar to the full depth of the trench (0.4m). Dense services through this stretch of the trench	0006	0004			Y
0006	Deposit	Pale yellowish brown sand, friable-loose, with regular flints and occ. CBM. Overlies 0015 and 0016		0015	0005; 0014		Y
0007	Deposit	Mid brown silty sandy clay with regular flints and CBM, occasional glazed china, charcoal and oyster frags		0004; 0009		0001	Y
0008	Cobbled surface	Spread of tightly packed rounded flint cobbles set in a mid olive brown sandy clay with some lime mortar. Lies 0.28-0.35m below the ground surface. May be associated with the 18thC farm complex within the abbey ruins				0009	
0009	Layer	Thin, mid brown sandy silt layer immediately above cobbles, only c.0.01m thick		0008		0007	Y
0010	Layer	Mid-pale yellowish brown sandy clay, compact, with frequent flints, CBM, mortar and occasional limestone masonry frags.		0004			Y
0011	Layer	CBM rich layer under sequence of modern road surface and extending into 0013. Dense CBM, flints and mortar set in a mid-pale yellowish brown sandy clay. Suggests hard surface of a track in place before modern road.		0013		0001	Y
0012	Footing?	Solid flint and mortar frags in a mid-pale yellow brown clay matrix, immediately S of 0015 and 0.36m deep. Likely related to 0015, may be the base/footing remaining from where a modern footing cut through N nave wall, with which this and 0015 aligns				0005	
0013	Layer	Dark brown silty sandy loam topsoil matrix. 0.36m thick. Overlies clean orangey brown clay natural subsoil with occ. chalk flecks		0004			Y
0014	Footing (mod)	Modern footing cut visible in full depth of trench, relates to a former red brick wall, the scar of which survives on the 20thC building to the west of the trench.	0006				
0015	Footing (flint)	0.4m wide, aligned E-W, top is 0.23m below the ground surface				0006	
0016	Well?	Just visible in the western edge of the trench, what appears to be the domed capping of a well or pump with a thin concrete layer above it and a ?galvanised metal sheet above that. A circular cut into the natural subsoil is lined with redeposited clay into which the bricks are set. From brics to edge of clay lined feature is 0.25m	0004			0006	

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## Appendix II CBM quantities

<b>Context</b>	<b>Fabric</b>	<b>Form</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Weight (g)</b>	<b>Height (mm)</b>	<b>Abrasion</b>	<b>Mortar</b>	<b>Notes</b>
002	MS	PAN	2	59	12-14	ABR	NONE	Roof tile
0002	MSFE	PEG	1	81	12	SLI	NONE	Roof tile
0007	FSCP	FT	1	537		24-26	YES	Drury FT6-10 Flemish. Fabric red fine with mica and shell
0007	FSCP	FT	1	381	24	SLI	YES	Drury FT6-10 Flemish. Mortar on four sides
0009	MS	RT	1	75	13	ABR	YES	Mortar trace on one side, oxidised throughout
0009	MS	?RT	1	10	7	ABR	NONE	Ill sorted inclusions mica, clay pellets bio. Oxidised
0011	?MS	LB	1	651	66	ABR	NONE	Deep red and partially over-fired, Drury LB1-2
0011	MS	PEG	3	282	13	ABR	YES	One has mortar traces, all are oxidised
0011	MS	FT	1	37	>22	ABR	NONE	Brown/green glaze, one nail hole from trimming process
0011	MS	FT	1	81	29	ABR	YES	Yellow glaze, mortar on two sides. Fabric not fine also with voids. ?FT6-10 ?Flemish
0011	MS	RT	2	85	12	SLI	YES	Oxidised, thick grey core, overfired, mortar on two sides, ?RT4 variant
0011	MS	RT	3	47	13	SLI	NONE	Oxidised, thick grey core, voids with sparse bio. ?RT4 variant
0011	EST	EB	1	129	50	VERY	NONE	Oxidised, pink with most of the fabric (calcitics) leached out
0011	EST	EB	1		82	ABR	YES	Oxidised, pink, grey core, fabric leached out