

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING REPORT

NETHERGATE STREET GARAGE, CLARE (SMR ref. CLA 043)

A REPORT ON THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING OF GROUNDWORKS
ASSOCIATED WITH THE CONSTRUCTION OF A RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT
(Application No. SE/04/3250/P)

Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service Report No. 2005/113
(OASIS Ref. Suffolkc1-9344)

Summary: Archaeological monitoring of groundwork associated with the construction of a residential development on the site of a former garage in Nethergate Street, Clare (NGR TL 7693 4516), was undertaken during the spring and summer of 2005. The monitoring followed an earlier evaluation, which revealed a ditch and posthole of possibly Roman date, and two medieval pits. Archaeological monitoring of the excavation of footing trenches for the development failed to reveal any further significant archaeological features other than a single pit located c.20m back from the Nethergate Street frontage, which was discovered and excavated by the building contractors as it lay on the line of a main foundation. A complete medieval pitcher and two fragments of a decorated Hedingham fineware jug were recovered from the pit's fill. This monitoring event is recorded on the Sites and Monuments Record under the reference CLA043. The archaeological monitoring was undertaken by the Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service, Field Projects Team, who were commissioned and funded by the Woodberry Group Limited.

1. Introduction

An application for a residential development on the site of the former garage in Nethergate Street, Clare (application no. SE/04/3250/P), was approved but with an attached condition calling for a programme of archaeological works to be put in place prior to the commencement of construction work. The archaeological interest in the site was primarily due to its location close to Clare Castle (c.80m to the east) and Clare Priory (c.40m to the south) and the fact it fronted onto Nethergate Street close to the centre of Clare, both of which are believed to have medieval origins.

The site lies at a height of c.48m OD at its northern end, close to Nethergate Street. To the south, the site remained relatively level for a distance of approximately 70m before falling away to a height of c.45m adjacent the River Stour, which forms its southern boundary. The plateau area of the site had been partially extended towards the river through the dumping of material previously excavated on the site. The National Grid Reference for the approximate centre of the site is TL 7693 4516. For a location plan see figure 1 overleaf.

The first phase of the programme of archaeological works comprised a trenched evaluation of the site, which was undertaken in October 2004 (Gardner 2004) with the machine excavation of three linear trenches to the depth of the natural subsoil. These revealed that, at least, the front 10m of the site had been previously truncated and suffered from significant hydrocarbon contamination. Elsewhere within the site a large ditch and a single posthole, both tentatively dated to the Roman period, and a handful of pits dated to the medieval period were recorded.

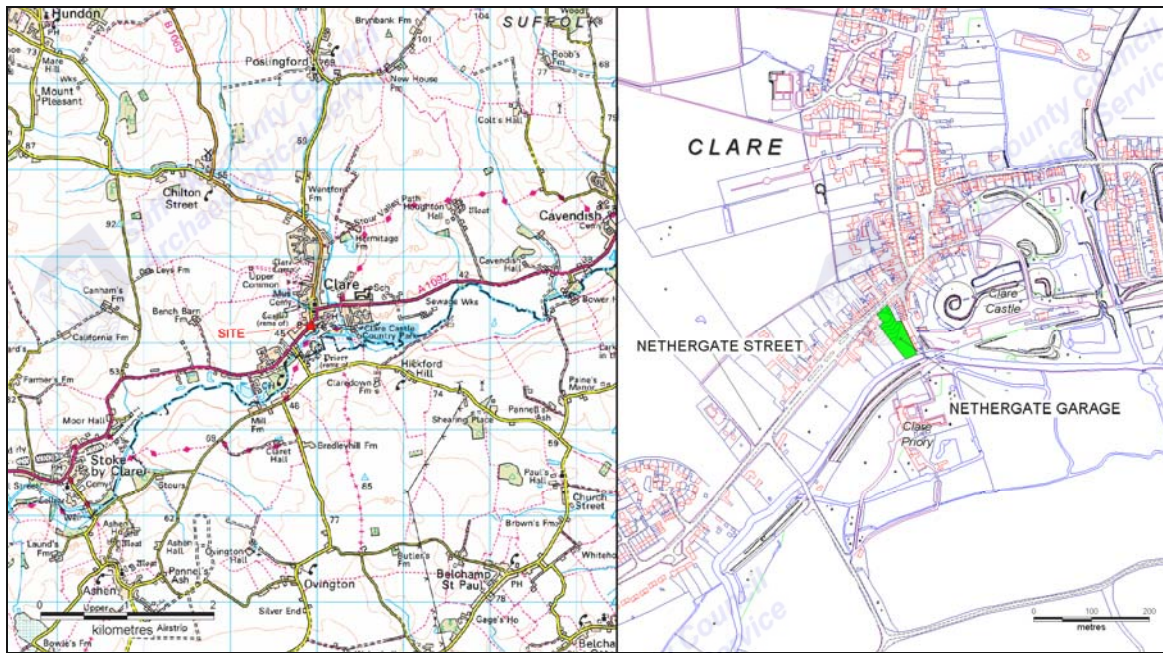


Figure 1: Site Location Plan
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The evaluation indicated that it was unlikely that significant archaeological remains requiring *in-situ* preservation or open area excavation were present within the development area. As only a relatively low level of archaeology was identified it was deemed by the Suffolk County Council Conservation Team that archaeological monitoring of groundworks would be sufficient to ensure no significant loss of archaeological evidence. For this a Brief and Specification was produced detailing the works required.

The proposed development was to comprise nine dwellings in two separate 'L' shaped blocks (see figure 2).

This monitoring event is recorded on the Suffolk County Sites and Monuments Record under the existing reference CLA043; it has also been entered onto the OASIS online archaeological database, reference suffolkc1-9344 (reference for the evaluation: suffolkc1-4544).

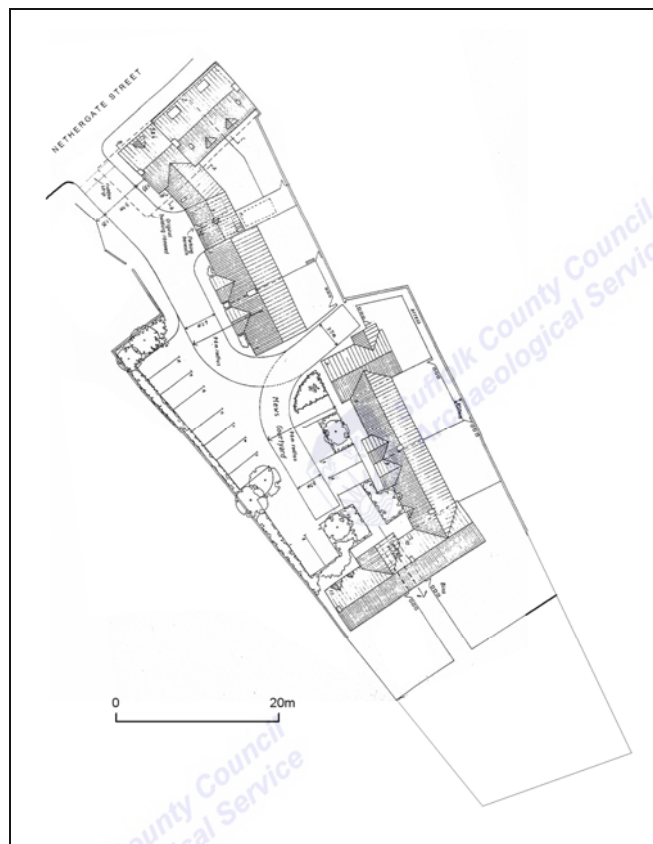


Figure 2: The Proposed Development

The archaeological monitoring was undertaken by the Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service, Field Projects Team, who were commissioned and funded by the Woodberry Group Limited.

2. Methodology

The monitoring was undertaken through examination of the footing trenches after they had been excavated by the building contractors and prior to them being filled with concrete.

The location of any features noted was marked on a plan of the development, its dimensions were measured and the nature of the fill described. Each feature was allocated a context number, starting at 0030 to avoid repetition of numbers issued during the evaluation. Any finds recovered from the feature fill were bagged and identified with the feature's context number. A small number of digital photographs were taken during the monitoring visits but these only illustrate the nature of the footing trenches.

The spoil from the footing trenches was stockpiled for use on site. During each visit the spoil heaps were walked over and the upper surface examined in order to recover datable or significant artefacts.

3. Results

(see section 4: 'The Finds' and figure 3 for further details relating to this section)

The site was visited on three occasions during the groundworks phase of the development. The first two visits were undertaken on the 5th and 7th of April 2005 to inspect the footings being excavated for the southern block of buildings. Generally these were excavated to a depth of c.1.3m and encountered the natural subsoil, which comprised yellow silty sand, at a depth of c.1.1m. The material removed comprised a clean, homogenous, brown sandy loam with no obvious layering. Towards the southern end of this block of buildings, where an east-west range was to be built, the overburden had become thicker as the natural subsoil fell away requiring the footing trenches to be excavated to a depth of c.2.5m. No significant archaeological features were noted although in one area the surface of the natural subsoil was truncated by c.0.6m over a c.3.5m length of the footing trench. This cut had the appearance of a large pit but no finds were recovered and the fill was indistinguishable from the overburden evident elsewhere on the site.



Figure 3: Monitoring Results

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A third visit was made on the 24th June 2005. By the time of this visit the area of contaminated soil at the northern, street frontage, end of the site had been removed and the footings for the building range that fronts onto Nethergate Street had been excavated and filled. This included the area over the possible Roman ditch identified during the evaluation.

During the visit the footings for the range to the rear of the northern block of buildings were being excavated revealing a similar soil profile to that seen in the footings previously monitored. A large pit, numbered **0030**, had been present although by the time of the visit it had been excavated by the building contractors in order to reach the underlying natural subsoil, as required for modern construction, and the resulting void backfilled with concrete to prevent subsidence. During its excavation the building contractors had recovered a large ceramic vessel from close to the base of this feature, which from their description was c.2.5m in diameter and 3m deep with near vertical sides. The spoil excavated from this pit, which was on the spoil tip, was examined. A large proportion of the fill comprised grey silt/clay (numbered 0031) as well as a small amount of brown peat, which appeared to have originally been in a layer c.0.1m thick. Two sherds of pottery were recovered from the grey silt/clay.

4. The Finds

Richenda Goffin, July, 2005.

Introduction

The following unstratified finds were collected during the monitoring at Clare, as shown in the table below.

Context	Pottery		Spotdate
	No.	Wt/g	
0030	1	1841	12th-14th C
0031	2	202	L12th-13th C
Total	3	2043	

Pottery

A complete medieval pitcher was recovered from 0030. The vessel is 240mm in height, and weighs 1.841kg. It is rounded in shape with a sagging base and has a short neck with a slightly collared rim. There are two strap handles on either side of the rim, a feature which is unusual, as such jugs usually have a single handle. In addition it has a small and slightly unevenly made pouring lip, at right angles to the two handles. The diameter of the rim is 120mm.

The wheelthrown vessel is made from a medium sandy fabric containing sparse mica, and is similar in appearance to Bury coarseware (Sue Anderson, pers. comm). It has been uniformly fired, although there is some variation in overall colour between mid grey to dark brown. The pitcher is knife-trimmed towards the lower part, near the base. The vessel dates to the 12th-14th century.

Two fragments of a highly decorated Hedingham fineware jug were recovered from 0031, (described as a grey silty clay). This glazed redware fabric can be dated overall from the middle of the 12th through to the first half of the 14th century, but seems to occur most commonly in Essex at least, from the later 12th to 13th century (Walker 129). The largest sherd features the bottom of the rod handle and the lower part of the neck. The fragment is decorated with a series of strips applied vertically but slightly obliquely in a North French

style. These strips are curved round in an inverted comma shape at the top end where the neck of the jug begins. The vessel is mainly covered with a lead glaze to which copper has been added, creating a mottled effect.

Although only the central part of the jug has been recovered, it is likely that the vessel is a stamped strip jug dating to the late 12th to 13th century (Cotter 81). These are often rounded in shape, and decorated around the neck with rows of stamped motifs on a red clay background. The main part of the vessel could also be coloured in areas of red slip with applied clay strips which are paler in colour, but applied strips were also used with a natural body clay background. Such jugs often had a twisted rod handle.

The jug is made from a sandy orange micaceous redware fabric, which is one of two fabric variants associated with Hedingham fineware. Production centres for this distinctive type of pottery have been identified at Sible Hedingham and near Gosfield and Halstead c24km west of Colchester (Cotter 75).

Fragments of probable Hedingham coarseware have been identified from a monitoring at the Playgrounds, Clare Castle (CLA 035), (Sue Anderson, archive report). Products of the Hedingham industry are common finds on Suffolk sites, but they also reach as far north as Norfolk and have been found in Cambridgeshire (Cotter 76).

Both vessels have been illustrated (see Appendix I) and photographed (see Plates I and II)

Discussion

Precise identification of the coarseware pitcher has not been possible, but it is likely that it is a product of an Essex kiln, such as Great Horkesley or Mile End (Drury and Petchey 33-60).

The highly decorated Hedingham jug is also a significant find and is likely to date to the late 12th to 13th centuries, which is compatible with the dating of the coarseware pitcher.

5. Conclusion

The results of the monitoring indicate that it is unlikely that any significant archaeological deposits or features have been completely destroyed by this development.

Pit 0030 is undoubtedly of medieval date and was presumably located within the backyard of a property that formerly fronted onto Nethergate Street. Medieval buildings tend to have slight foundations and evidence for such structures can be easily lost and the truncation of the street frontage zone, as recorded in the earlier evaluation, is likely to have destroyed any such evidence. The pit was probably excavated as a cesspit and the silty clayey nature of the lower fill combined with the occurrence of peat certainly indicates that it was waterlogged. The presence of the complete vessel, which was presumably an accidental loss which no one was prepared to recover, and the fact that very few other finds were found could be seen as further evidence that this feature was a cesspit.

The footings monitored were cleanly cut, exposed the natural subsoil and gave good opportunities to observe for archaeological features. Had any of the examined footings passed through an archaeological feature or deposit it is highly likely they would have been identified.

Bibliography

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- Drury, P. J., and Petchey, M. R., 1975 Medieval potteries at Mile End and Great Horkesley, near Colchester, in *Essex Archaeology and History* 7 (3rd Series) 33-60.
- Gardner, R., 2004 *Archaeological Evaluation Report: Nethergate Street Garage, Clare* SCCAS Report No. 2004/152
- Walker, H., 2003, 'The medieval and later pottery', in Crossan, C., *Excavations at St Mary Magdalen's Hospital, Brook Street, Colchester*, in *Essex Archaeology and History* Volume 34 (3rd Series) 127-141.

Mark Sommers
Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service
Field Projects Team

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Plates

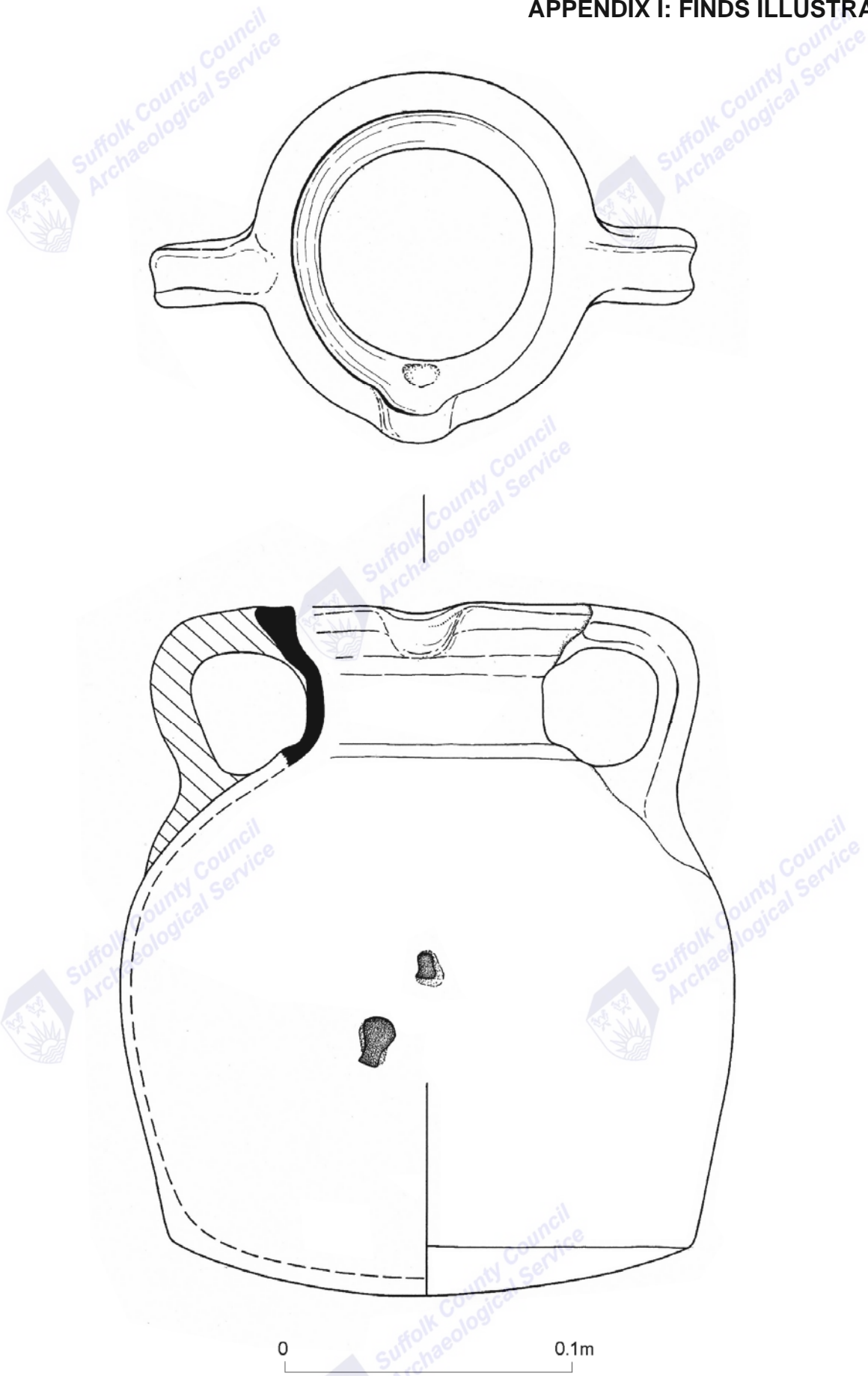


Plate I: Medieval pitcher
(context 0030)

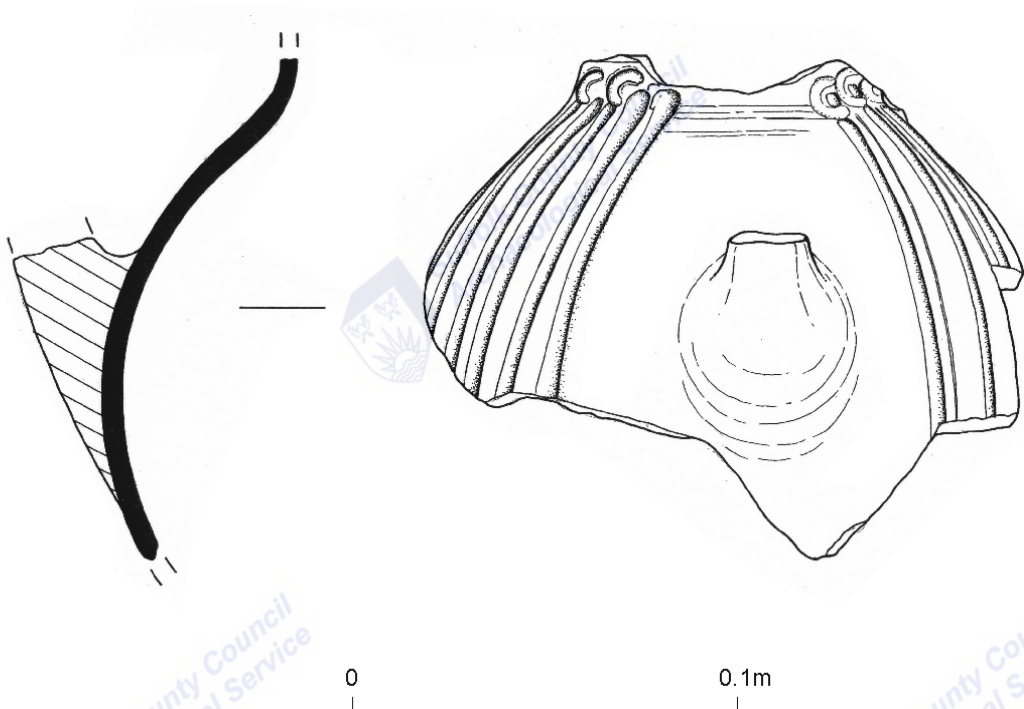


Plate II: fragment of Hedingham fineware
(context 0031)

APPENDIX I: FINDS ILLUSTRATIONS



MEDIEVAL PITCHER (CONTEXT 0030)



FRAGMENT OF HEDINGHAM FINEWARE JUG (CONTEXT 0031)