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THE KILN AT READS BRICKWORKS ALDEBURGH SUFFOLK

HISTORIC BUILDING RECORDING AND MONITORING

Level 2/3

Authors: Lisa Smith BA	
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NGR: TM 449 569	Report No. 4378
District: Suffolk Coastal DC	Site Code: ADB199
Approved: Claire Halpin	Project No. 4398
MIFA	Date: 25 July 2013
Signed:	

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OASIS SUMMARY SHEET

Project name

The Kiln at Reads Brickworks, Aldeburgh, Suffolk. Historic Building Recording and Monitoring

Summary

In May 2013 Archaeological Solutions Limited (AS) carried out a historic building recording and monitoring on a 19th century kiln at Reads Brickworks, Aldeburgh, Suffolk (NGR TM 449 569). The work was required to comply with a planning condition attached to planning approval for a proposed residential development, based on advice from Suffolk County Council AS-CT prior to the structures demolition.

In November 2012 the entire site was the subject of a heritage asset statement which identified several buildings relating to the production of brick including the main factory, four updraught kilns, a small office and various storage buildings. Two buildings remain from the 19th century including a disused 'Suffolk'-type kiln and the small office building. All other buildings appear to be of 20th century date though the storage building may incorporate fragments of older structures.

A more detailed study of the 19th kiln revealed a remarkably well preserved example of a 'Suffolk'-type kiln complete with thick robust walls enclosing a lattice brickwork floor. Beneath three arched fire tunnels extend the width of the kiln given access from arched apertures piercing the wall on the south. External retaining walls extend to the south once forming a crude roofed shelter enclosing the stoking side of the kiln. Other fixtures and fittings including external doors hung on chains and fire rakes also survive.

Project dates (fieldwork)	2 nd , 9 th & 30 th	^h May 2013				
Previous work (Y/N/?)	Y	Future work (Y/N/?)	N			
P. number	4398	Site code	ADB199			
Type of project	Historic building recording and monitoring					
Site status	n/a					
Current land use	Derelict brick	Derelict brickworks now used as a builders yard				
Planned development	Demolition of the buildings prior to redevelopment for housing					
Main features (+dates)	19 th – 20 th century Brickworks					
Significant finds (+dates)	n/a					
Project location						
County/ District/ Parish	Suffolk	Suffolk Coastal	Aldeburgh			
HER for area	Suffolk Historic Environment Record (SHER)					
Post code (if known)	-					
Area of site	c.40,000m ²	c.40,000m ²				
NGR	TM 449 569	TM 449 569				
Height AOD (max)	c.5/10m AOD	c.5/10m AOD				
Project creators						
Brief issued by	Abby Antrobus (SCC AS-CT)					
Project supervisor/s (PO)	Archaeological Solutions Ltd					
Funded by	MS Oakes Securities Ltd					
Full title	The Kiln at Reads Brickworks, Aldeburgh, Suffolk. Historic					
		ording and Monitoring				
Authors	Smith, L. Her	nry, K.				
Report no.	4378					
Date (of report)	July 2013					

THE KILN AT READS BRICKWORKS ALDEBURGH, SUFFOLK

HISTORIC BUILDING RECORDING AND MONITORING

SUMMARY

In May 2013 Archaeological Solutions Limited (AS) carried out a series of visits in order to conduct historic building monitoring and recording on a 19th century kiln at Reads Brickworks, Aldeburgh, Suffolk (NGR TM 449 569). The work was required to comply with a planning condition attached to planning approval for a proposed residential development, based on advice from Suffolk County Council AS-CT prior to the structures demolition.

In November 2012 the entire site was the subject of a heritage asset statement which identified several buildings relating to the production of brick including the main factory, four updraught kilns, a small office and various storage buildings. Two buildings remain from the 19th century including a disused 'Suffolk'-type kiln and the small office building. All other buildings appear to be of 20th century date though the storage building may incorporate fragments of older structures.

A more detailed study of the 19th kiln revealed a remarkably well preserved example of a 'Suffolk'-type kiln complete with thick robust walls enclosing a lattice brickwork floor. Beneath, three arched fire tunnels extend the width of the kiln given access from arched apertures piercing the wall on the south. External retaining walls extend to the south once forming a crude roofed shelter enclosing the stoking side of the kiln. Other fixtures and fittings including external doors hung on chains and fire rakes also survive.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 In May 2013 Archaeological Solutions Limited (AS) carried out a series of visits in order to conduct historic building monitoring and recording on a 19th century kiln at Reads Brickworks, Aldeburgh, Suffolk (NGR TM 449 569; Figs. 1-2). The work was required to comply with a planning condition attached to approval for a proposed residential development (Suffolk Coastal DC Approval Ref. C/12/2573), based on advice from Suffolk County Council AS-CT, prior to and during the structure's demolition.

1.2 The work was conducted according to a written scheme of investigation (dated 26th April 2013) prepared by AS in response to a brief issued by Abby Antrobus of the Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service Conservation Team (SCC AS-CT, dated 23rd April 2013), approved by SCC AS-CT. The project conformed to the English Heritage document *Understanding Historic Buildings; A guide to good recording practice, 2006* and also conformed to the Institute for Archaeologists' (IFA) *Standard and Guidance for the Archaeological Investigation and Recording of Standing Buildings or*

Structures (revised 2008). The level of recording was conducted to Level 2/3 as defined in the RCHME/EH documents. The project also adhered to the document *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England* (Gurney 2003). It also followed the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) *Code of Conduct* and *Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief* (revised 2008).

1.3 Historic buildings have their own importance for study. As noted in the East Anglian regional research frameworks, structures of the Industrial Age (1750-1960) face a high rate of loss (due to renovation, conversion and redundancy).

1.4 The principal objectives of the historic building recording included:

• The archaeological recording of the existing standing structure (Suffolktype kiln) subject to the planning application, with additional recording/research undertaken as necessary to place the findings in the context of the buildings as a whole and as a group.

1.5 This was to be carried out prior to alteration, and specifically aim to provide a detailed understanding of the nature of the kiln, and to serve as an addendum to the existing survey of the brickworks. Further monitoring was also to be carried out during demolition in order to augment the record as required.

1.6 A heritage assessment of the site was conducted in November 2012 the results of which, along with the historical record of the site can be found in the following report:

Prosser, L. *et al.* 2012 '*Reads Brickworks, Aldeburgh, Suffolk Heritage asset statement.*' Archaeological Solutions Report No. 4189.

Planning context

1.7 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2012) states that those parts of the historic environment that have significance because of their historic, archaeological, architectural or artistic interest are heritage assets. The NPPF aims to deliver sustainable development by ensuring that policies and decisions that concern the historic environment recognise that heritage assets are a non-renewable resource, take account of the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits of heritage conservation, and recognise that intelligently managed change may sometimes be necessary if heritage assets are to be maintained for the long term. The NPPF requires applications to describe the significance of any heritage asset, including its setting that may be affected in proportion to the asset's importance and the potential impact of the proposal.

1.8 The NPPF aims to conserve England's heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance, with substantial harm to designated heritage

assets (i.e. listed buildings, scheduled monuments) only permitted in exceptional circumstances when the public benefit of a proposal outweighs the conservation of the asset. The effect of proposals on non-designated heritage assets must be balanced against the scale of loss and significance of the asset, but non-designated heritage assets of demonstrably equivalent significance may be considered subject to the same policies as those that are designated. The NPPF states that opportunities to capture evidence from the historic environment, to record and advance the understanding of heritage assets and to make this publicly available is a requirement of development management. This opportunity should be taken in a manner proportionate to the significance of a heritage asset and to impact of the proposal, particularly where a heritage asset is to be lost.

2 **DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE** (Figs. 1-2)

2.1 Aldeburgh is small town located on the east coast of Suffolk, on the northern side of the estuary of the river Alde. The town lies c.6km south of Leiston and c.30km north-east of Ipswich.

2.2 Read's Brickworks lies on the western periphery of the town, to the south of the main road (A1094) as it enters Aldeburgh from the west. An unmetalled track gives access to the site, past the old clay workings to the north-east. The meandering course of the river passes *c*.200m to the southwest of the site and from where bricks were once despatched from a jetty.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 The site was visited on 2nd, 9th, & 30th May in order to compile descriptions of the building and undertake the photographic work, prior to and during demolition. The written description, analysis and photographic survey were carried out by Lisa Smith while the drawing work was completed by Kathren Henry. Floor plans, sections and elevations are included with annotations (Figs. 3).

3.2 The photographic recording was conducted using medium format (4.5cm x 6cm) black and white film and included all external views and general internal shots. This utilised a Zenza Bronica ETRS camera and Ilford HP5 IOS 400 120mm film. Colour photographs were taken using a Canon 1000D (10 megapixels) digital camera, duplicating the black and white photography. Where necessary, architectural detail was captured using 35mm black and white film and supplementary colour photography used 35mm Ektachrome colour transparency. External lighting and weather conditions were good at the time of the survey. A scale was used wherever possible, and a flash was employed for internal shots. A pictorial index of the digital photography and selected colour plates are included below together with location plots (Fig. 3).

4 THE BUILDING (Fig. 3)

Exterior

4.1 As described in the original report the kiln stands neglected and in a ruinous condition, now surrounded by the demolished remains of the brickworks (Plate 1). The above-ground remains suggest a typical 'Suffolk'-type kiln however the functional aspects of its construction were an unknown quantity until now, its excavation and subsequent demolition providing an opportunity to investigate the extent of its survival.

4.2 The removal of fencing has allowed a closer inspection of the structure which comprises four robust walls approximately 1.3m thick, buttressed on the north for extra support (Plate 2). The brickwork is laid in English-bond bonded by a flinty lime mortar, capped by a single course in soldier-bond with overburnt headers and stretchers throughout. The damaged south-western corner reveals a shallow rounded frog to the bricks. The outer face of the brickwork to the soldier-course is bevelled. The condition of the brickwork is poor being heavily patched and repaired across all façades and partially collapsed in the south-western corner, the upper courses disturbed by vegetation. The south side in particular has undergone accelerated decay in the form of cracks throughout with heavy spalling to the brickwork and in places continuous episodes of extreme heat have caused the walls to bow.

4.3 There is a single point of access on the west via a doorway or wicket off-set to the south given a semi-circular arched head framed to either side by queen closers (Plate 3). As expected the kiln is without a roof; a make-shift one would be constructed with each new firing.

4.4 Excavations along the southern side of the building revealed most information. The wall descends four metres below the current ground surface to the base of the structure in two offsets to a brick paviour floor where three semi-circular arched apertures give access to internal fire tunnels running across the kiln (Plate 4). The central aperture is best preserved with a decorative upper arch in yellow brickwork while the eastern example has partially collapsed. Within each aperture a series of cast-iron rails supported on lateral members survive and would have carried the fuel pushed into the body of the kiln by long rake-like implements, a number of which where left *in situ* after the disuse of the kiln (Plate 5&6). The channels below the rails would then catch the spent remnants of the fire. At high level hooks embedded in the brickwork above each of the archways carried heavy cast-iron doors on chains to be raised and lowered as necessary. One example was found during the excavations (Plate 7).

4.5 Retaining walls at the eastern and western end of the building extend five metres to the south, the eastern wall having a stubby buttress to the rear and returning to the east for a short section. Evidence of a pitched roof can be seen on the interior of the eastern wall suggesting that this side of the kiln was probably partially enclosed (Plate 8). Squared timbers and corrugated sheeting unearthed during the excavation are likely to have formed the roof structure.

Interior

4.6 Internally, the firing chamber is formed of four walls all of which are blank apart from the western wall which as mentioned above is pierced by the wicket. All show signs of bowing both vertically and horizontally and there are severe signs of decay to the southern elevation where the mortar is almost completely eroded and the brickwork has become white through the effects of heat. The removal of large quantities of rubbish revealed the kiln floor almost two metres below the wicket formed of a network of vents $(121/2)^{2} \times 81/2)^{2}$ or 318mm x 216mm) comprising of a lattice of brickwork five courses deep (Plate 9). Beneath, larger vents formed in the same fashion are built directly above the three firing tunnels and here the majority of the brickwork is heavily vitrified clearly displaying the intense effects of the heating process.

4.7 The arched apertures seen on the exterior of the south wall continue to the interior where they are much larger in size giving way to three fire tunnels. The fire tunnels are constructed with pointed 'Gothic'-style arches alternating in a series of ribs with gaps approximately a headers width creating a venting system to the floors above whilst dealing with the huge weight of a fully loaded kiln (Plate 10). They extend the full width of the kiln where they are capped by the northern wall. The cast-iron rails and channels below also continue along the length of the tunnels.

5 DISCUSSION

5.1 The 19th century brick kiln at Reads Brickworks, unremarkable above ground has upon excavation been exposed as an excellent example of a 'Suffolk'-type kiln, a substantial structure preserving most if not all of its functional attributes. The structure has been built into the natural slope of the ground which falls away to the south, the earthen banks providing support to robust walls on the north, west and east against the forces of the heating process and helping contain the heat within the kiln.

5.2 The building is purely functional in appearance with slight decorative touches given to the arched apertures on the south. The firing chamber is almost entirely blank the walls bearing the scars of repeated firings warped and eroded and generally in a poor condition. The green or unfired bricks would have been loaded into the centre of the kiln via the doorway or wicket on the west approximately two metres above the kiln floor which features a pattern of vents allowing air flow from below. Rejected and damaged bricks would be packed between the unfired bricks and kiln walls for protection against the fiercest of the heat and to help ensure an even firing. In some cases a make shift roof was used to seal the kiln.

5.3 Firing of the kiln took place from the south where external retaining walls spanned by an ephemeral roof structure formed a shelter around three semi-circular arched apertures giving access to the fire tunnels. The fuel was pushed into the tunnels on cast-iron grates or rails by long rakes which may also have been used to clear the ash from the channels below. Cast-iron doors hung on chains enclosing the tunnels on the south. The heat then permeated the kiln via a series of vented floors directly above the tunnels baking the green bricks within the firing chamber.

5.4 The kiln is clearly shown on the OS map of 1882 (Prosser *et al.* 2011) where it stands with a second example as part of Hallfarm Brickworks. A tramway extending from the brickworks to the jetty was used to transport the fired bricks to the river where they were taken by boat to various destinations. A third kiln had been constructed by 1904 indicating growth in production and by 1968 the site has been significantly upgraded. However the earlier kiln is still in existence at this time while its counterparts have been demolished. The kiln is still visible on the map of 1991, but likely went out of use with the construction of the new updraught kilns in the mid-20th century and so was not subject to upgrading or alteration. This has resulted in the fine preservation of the kiln structure which includes a number of fixtures and fittings not commonly seen to survive.

DEPOSITION OF THE ARCHIVE

The requirements for archive storage will be agreed with the Suffolk HER and the archive deposited there. It will be deposited within three months of the conclusion of the fieldwork.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Archaeological Solutions would like to thank MS Oakes Securities for funding the works, and Paul Robinson Partnership (UK) LLP for their assistance.

AS is pleased to acknowledge the advice and input of Ms Abby Antrobus of the Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service Conservation.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

English Heritage's 'Understanding historic buildings: a guide to good recording practice '(2006)

Herne, J. 'Brickmaking in Bunwell' Bunwell Heritage Group (2011)

Institute for Archaeologists' 'Standard and guidance for the archaeological investigation and recording of standing buildings or structures' (IfA 2008).

Prosser, L. et al. 2012 '*Reads Brickworks, Aldeburgh, Suffolk Heritage asset statement.*' Archaeological Solutions Report No. 4189.

APPENDIX 1 HER SUMMARY SHEET

Site name and address:	The Kiln at Reads Brickworks, Aldeburgh, Suffolk.
County: Suffolk	District: Suffolk Coastal
Village/Town: Aldeburgh	Parish: Aldeburgh
Planning application	C/12/2573
reference:	011212010
Client name/address/tel:	MS Oakes Securities Ltd
Nature of application:	Construction of residential properties
Present land use:	Demolished brickworks
Size of application area:	Size of area investigated
	.
NGR (8 figures):	TM 449 569
Site Code:	ADB199
Site director/Organization:	Archaeological Solutions
Type of work:	Historic recording and monitoring
Date of work:	May 2013
Location of finds/Curating	Suffolk HER
museum:	
Related SMR Nos:	Periods represented: 19 th century
Relevant previous	Prosser, L. et al. 2012 'Reads Brickworks, Aldeburgh, Suffolk Heritage
summaries/reports:	asset statement.' Archaeological Solutions Report No. 4189.
Summary of fieldwork results:	In May 2013 Archaeological Solutions Limited (AS) carried out a historic building recording and monitoring on a 19 th century kiln at Reads Brickworks, Aldeburgh, Suffolk (NGR TM 449 569). The work was required to comply with a planning condition attached to planning approval for the proposed residential development, based on advice from Suffolk County Council AS-CT prior to the structures demolition. In November 2012 the entire site was the subject of a heritage asset statement which identified several buildings relating to the production of brick including the main factory, four updraught kilns, a small office and various storage buildings. Two buildings remain from the 19 th century including a disused 'Suffolk'-type kiln and the small office building. All other buildings appear to be of 20 th century date though the storage building may incorporate fragments of older structures.
Author of summary:	Date of Summary:
Lisa Smith	July 2013

APPENDIX 2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOLUTIONS BUILDING RECORDING ARCHIVE FORM

Site Nomer D		***		Details					
Site Name: F		rickwork	¥			TM 44			
County: Suffolk			Museum Collecting Area: Suffolk HER						
Site Code: ADB199			Project Number: 4398						
Date of Work: July 2013			Related Work:						
Brief/s	Brief/s			Specification/s					
Date		Prese	nt	Date				Present	
23 rd April 201	3	No		26th Ap	ril 201	3	3 Yes		
Site Records	s (Desc	ription)					-		
Notes taken of	on site (3 pages	s A4)						
Site Drawing									
Plans and ele			ts A4 – anno	otated					
1 x A3 sheet									
2 x A4 sheets									
2 x irregular s			lm						
Architect's	Drawing	js:							
n/a									
Digital Draw									
Printouts of	Drawin	gs	Printouts	of Data	ata Digital Data				
In report				Digital photographs					
					and drawings in				
						forma	t on C	D	
Reports		-1							
Report No			rt Type				Present		
4378		Histor	ric Recordin	g and Monito	ring		Yes		
Site Photogr					1				
Black & White			1		Colour Slides			1	
Film Film No Type		Vegs	Negs Present	Contacts Present	Film No		legs	Present	
1 120n		11-15	Yes	Yes	1	7	'-36	Yes	
2 120n		1-15	Yes	Yes	2	1	-17	Yes	
3 120n	nm í	1-15	Yes	Yes					
4 120n	nm í	1-15	Yes	Yes					
5 120n	nm í	1-15	Yes	Yes					
Photographi	c Loca	tion Pla	ns Present	? (Give Deta	ils)	•			
In report and									
Digital Photo Digital photog	ographs	s (Give	Details):		d in re	port. S	Separa	te printout	
				igitally on CD					

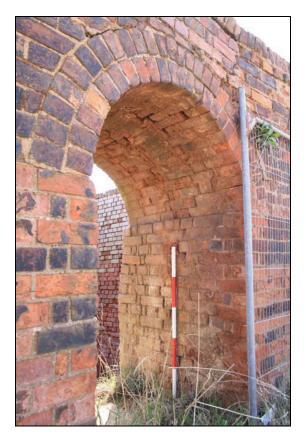
PLATES



Plate 1 19th century Suffolk kiln, taken from the north-west (DP 1)



Battered northern end of eastern elevation, taken from the east (DP 5)



Central wicket, internal construction, western elevation, taken from the northwest (DP 13) $\,$ Plate 3



External archways along the south wall of the kiln, taken from the south-west (DP 61)

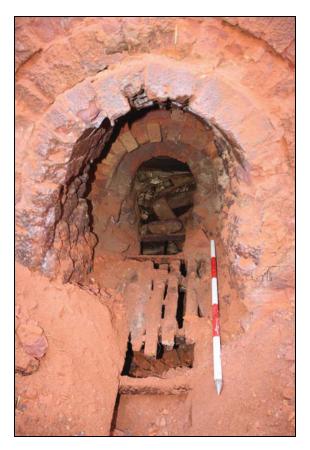


Plate 5 View through central arched aperture piercing the southern elevation with grille covered channel below, taken from the north (DP 30)



Plate 6 Fire rakes, found within the fire tunnels (DP 49)



Heavy metal door hung on a chain used to cover one of the archways (DP 53) $\,$ Plate 7



The remains of the roof line along the eastern retaining wall, taken from the south-west (DP 60) $\,$



Plate 9 Kiln floor constructed in brick forming a pattern of ventilation apertures, taken from the east (DP 24)



Plate 10 Detailed view of pointed arched aperture extending beneath the kiln floor, taken from the south (DP 34)

PHOTOGRAPHIC INDEX



19th century Suffolk kiln, taken from the north-west



Eastern and southern elevations, taken from the south-east





Battered northern end of eastern, elevation taken from the east



19th century Suffolk kiln, taken from the south-west



Eastern elevation, taken from the north-east





Southern elevation, taken from the south-west



Southern elevation, taken from the south-west



Battered northern end of western elevation, taken from the west



Decayed south-western corner, taken from the south-west



Battered northern elevation, taken from the north-west



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Western elevation with central wicket, taken from the north-west





Central wicket, western elevation, taken from the west

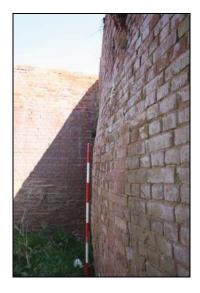


Central wicket, internal construction, western elevation, taken from the north-west



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Western elevation with central wicket, kiln interior, taken from the east





Bowing of western elevation, kiln interior, taken from the south



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Eastern elevation, kiln interior, taken from the west





Western and northern elevations, kiln interior, taken from the south-east





Commencement of demolition works, taken from the north-east



Demolition of the western and northern elevations, taken from the south-west



Demolition of the eastern elevation, taken from the west



Removal of detritus from the kiln interior, taken from the north-west



Northern elevation showing battered element as a later addition, taken from the south-west



Complete demolition of above ground portions of the kiln walls, taken from the north-east



Kiln floor constructed in brick forming a pattern of ventilation apertures, taken from the east



Detail of brick kiln floor, taken from the east



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Large apertures within the brickwork make-up of the kiln floor, taken from the east



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Central arched aperture piercing the southern elevation with grille covered channel below, taken from the north



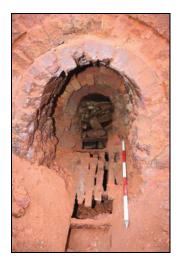
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Lower level brickwork with larger apertures situated directly above fire tunnels, taken from the south



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Western elevation revealed after partial removal of the kiln floor, taken from the east





View through central arched aperture piercing the southern elevation with grille covered channel below, taken from the north

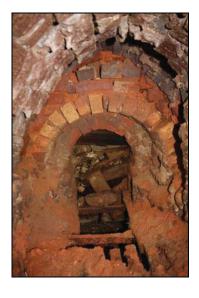


Pointed arched fire tunnels extending beneath the kiln floor, taken from the south-west



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Detailed view of central arched aperture with grille and channel below, taken from the north



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Arched aperture piercing the external face of the southern elevation now blocked with rubbish, taken from the north



Three semi-circular arched apertures piercing the southern elevation, taken from the north-west

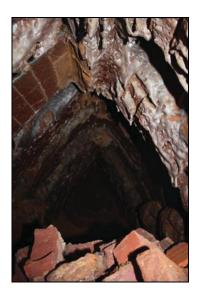


Detailed view of pointed arched aperture extending beneath the kiln floor, taken from the south

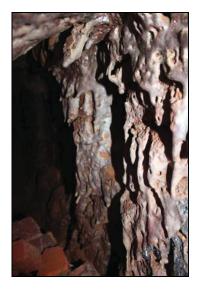


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Channel extending the length of the kiln beneath each of the fire tunnels bridged by a series of iron struts forming a grille, taken from the west



Fire tunnel construction, taken from the south

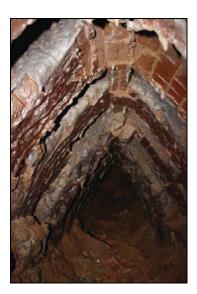


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Vitrification of the brickwork within the central fire tunnel, taken from the south



Three arched fire holes piercing the southern elevation, taken from the north



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Fire tunnel construction, taken from the south



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Removal of the internal floors and fire tunnels from the interior of the kiln, taken from the south-west



Blank northern elevation with evidence of the lower channels extending across the kiln base, taken from the south-west



Excavation immediately to the south of the kiln, taken from the south-east



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External southern elevation showing central aperture with white brick decorative arch and chain above to raise and lower a door, taken from the south-east



Retaining wall extending southwards before returning eastwards, taken from the east



Excavation to the south of the kiln, taken from the north-east



Southern elevation and retaining wall extending to the south, taken from the south-west



Fire rakes, found within the fire tunnels.



Fire rakes, found within the fire tunnels



Eastern retaining wall extending south before returning to the east, taken from the south-east



Heavy metal door hung on a chain used to cover one of the archways



Kiln excavated to the depth of the sand natural taken from the north



Kiln and southern retaining wall, taken from the south-east



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Detail of heavy metal door hung on a chain used to cover one of the archways



Detail of rear of heavy metal door hung on a chain used to cover one of the archways



Western retaining wall extending to the south, taken from the east



Detail of handles and long stems of the fire rakes



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Excavation to the exterior of the kiln, taken from the south-east



Handles and long stems of the fire rakes



The remains of the roof line along the eastern retaining wall, taken from the south-west



External archways along the south wall of the kiln, taken from the south-west



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Area to the rear of the kiln, taken from the south-west



External archways along the south wall of the kiln, taken from the south



Remains of the 19th century 'Suffolk' kiln, taken from the south-east

