

A MEDIEVAL GREEN-EDGE SETTLEMENT AT CHERRY TREE FARM, MELLIS ROAD, WORTHAM

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Summary

Archaeological excavation in Wortham revealed evidence for medieval green-edge settlement, providing new information about the possible evolution of the village. Five putative properties dating from around the late eleventh to thirteenth century fronted onto what is now Mellis Road. These may represent part of a planned expansion of the village, possibly by the manorial landowners. Much of the site was adapted into a single plot in the thirteenth to mid fourteenth centuries before becoming pastoral farmland. It was reoccupied in the late sixteenth century.

INTRODUCTION

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION by Oxford Archaeology East took place in 2010 on land at Cherry Tree Farm, Wortham (Fig. 147; TM 0846 7708). The excavation, 0.16ha in area, followed two trial trench evaluations.¹ The site lies within the southern part of the parish of Wortham, adjacent and to the east of a minor routeway (Mellis Road), and *c.* 300m to the west of a putative Late Saxon church and later manor located during pipe laying operations in 1955 by Basil Brown, although these identifications are somewhat tenuous.² It lies on relatively flat land at *c.* 55m AOD with a surface geology of glacial tills and sands and gravels, *c.* 70m to the south of the main road (now the A143) with Long Green extending further to the north-west. The work took place in advance of a residential development for eleven houses.

This article is designed as a synthesis of the excavated findings and is supplemented by the full analytical report³ which can be freely accessed at: <http://library.thehumanjourney.net/822/>.

WORTHAM: THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Wortham is a large sub-square parish, measuring *c.* 3.5km north to south and *c.* 3.2km east to west (Fig. 147). On its northern side it has a broad frontage along the River Waveney, which forms the boundary between Suffolk and Norfolk. The name Wortham is Anglo-Saxon in origin and means ‘enclosed homestead’ with the first recording of the name *Wrtham* dating to *c.* AD 950,⁴ but it is not certain where this original farmstead was located and there is little evidence for Early or Middle Saxon activity in the vicinity. The Suffolk Historic Environment Record (SHER) notes the presence of a possible Early Saxon structure found by Basil Brown in 1955, 600m to the east of the subject site (SHER WTM 010). Finds including a Saxon *sceat* and other metalwork were discovered by metal detectorists some distance to the east (SHER WTM 020).⁵

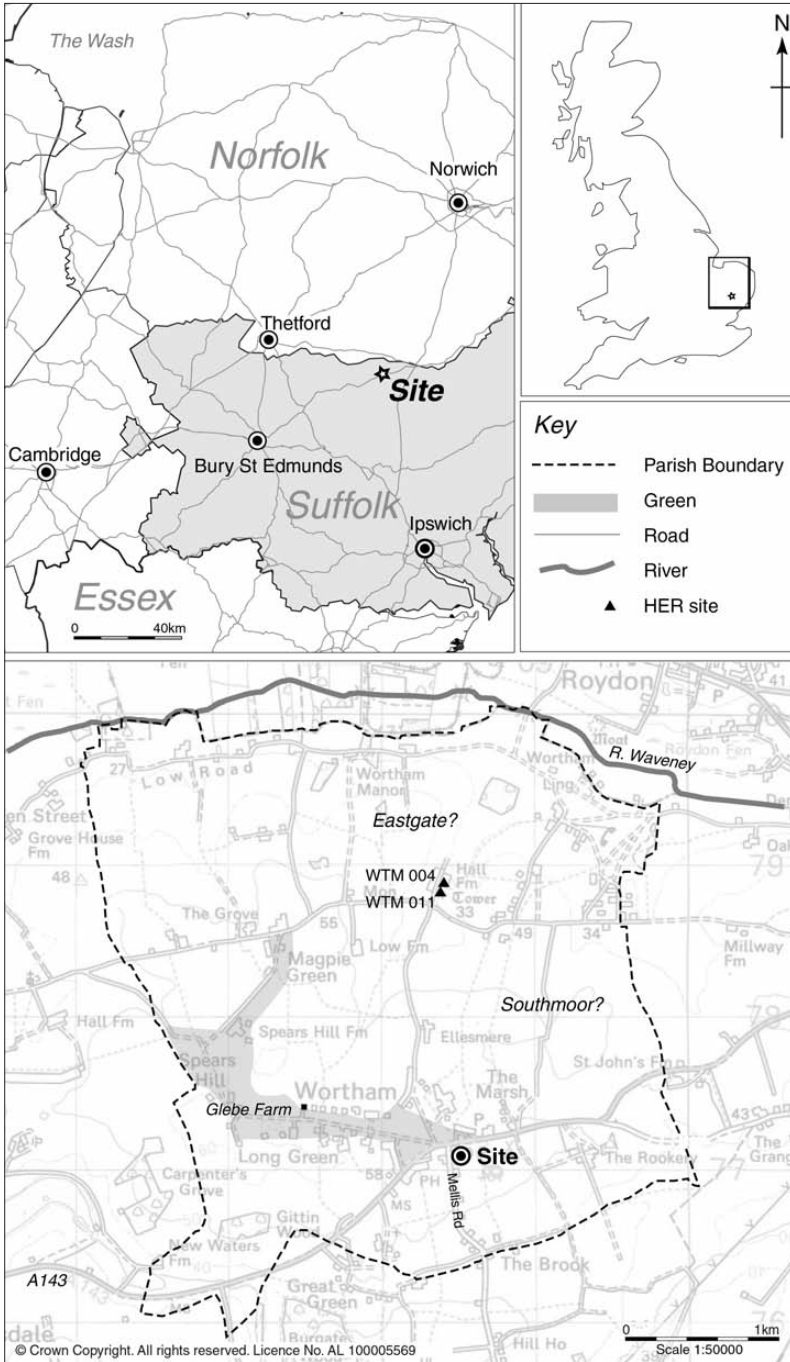


FIG. 147 – Site location, showing the suggested locations of Eastgate and Southmoor parishes.

The Domesday survey records Wortham, within Hartismere Hundred, as consisting of six landholdings in 1066, held mostly under patronage by freemen. These landholdings had largely coalesced by 1086 under either the abbot of Bury St Edmunds or Ralph de Bellafago.⁶ Ralph de Bellafago had a manor of 80 acres (which included two churches with 40 acres of land) and collectively there were three further ‘manors’ of 90 acres belonging to the abbot of St Edmunds.⁷ These holdings were the forerunners of the later two manors in Wortham – Wortham Hall and Wortham Abbots (also called Eastgate or Everard and Southmoor or Jervis respectively).

Ralph de Bellafago (or Beaufou) was a tenant-in-chief in Suffolk and Norfolk at the time of Domesday.⁸ His holding passed to his wife’s second husband, Hubert de Rye, and became known as the Barony of Rye.⁹ The Wortham part of the barony was subinfeudated to the Wachesham family of Wattisham in Suffolk as the result of the marriage, in c. 1170, of Osbert de Wachesham to a sister of Hubert (IV) de Rye. Confusingly, the de Wacheshams also held a substantial holding in Wortham under Bury Abbey – Osbert’s father, Richard, was sometimes referred to as Richard de Wortham and in 1166 he held three parts of one knight’s fee of the abbot of Bury. In 1200 Osbert’s grandson, Sir Osbert, is recorded as holding one knight’s fee of the abbey in Marlingford (Norfolk) and Wortham. Sir Osbert’s son, Sir Giles, is recorded as holding, at his death in 1268, Wortham manor ‘part held in chief of the abbot of St Edmund by service of 12d and $\frac{1}{4}$ knight’s fee, and the residue of the barony of Le Ry by service of $1\frac{1}{4}$ knight’s fee’.¹⁰ The inquisition post mortem of Sir Giles’s son, another Sir Giles, in 1273, gives an even more complex picture: ‘the manor ... with the advowson of a moiety of the church, one part being held of the barony of Ry..., by service of the $1\frac{1}{4}$ knight’s fee, and the other part held of the abbot of St Edmund by service of $\frac{1}{4}$ knight’s fee; and 36a land held of the said abbot in socage by service of 12d yearly’.¹¹ The position after this date is less clear – the Wacheshams continued to hold a substantial manor in Wortham, but it may only have been the barony of Rye part – there are, however Bury St Edmunds Abbey manorial documents for Wortham from c. 1302,¹² and in 1316 both the abbot and Gerard de Wachesham are listed as lords in Wortham.

Only one of the two churches recorded for Wortham still survives and it was dedicated to St Mary (now called St Mary and St Thomas). This church has the largest round tower (in terms of diameter) of any similar church in England. Although Pevsner originally hinted at a possible Anglo-Saxon construction date, the recently updated edition of this work suggests that none of the round church towers in west Suffolk predate the Norman Conquest.¹³ The church lies nearly 2km to the north of the subject site (SHER WTM 011; Fig. 147), with a moated site directly to its north (SHER WTM 004). Various medieval artefacts have been found in the vicinity.

The definite location of the second church remains uncertain, and it is not known how long it remained standing.¹⁴ The existence of a church in two halves (moieties) is recorded as early as 1200,¹⁵ which indicates that the second church at Wortham disappeared very early. Basil Brown’s excavations in 1955 may have found the remains of what he called Southmoor’s manor and church c. 300m to the east of the subject site, close to Wortham Green (SHER WTM 008; Figs 148, 149 and 150). The results of these excavations have never been published, although Brown’s copious notes are held by the SHER at Bury St Edmunds, the main elements of which are summarised in Fig. 149. Brown thought the earliest remains, comprising wall foundations, pillar bases and a possible clay floor, may have been related to this second documented church. Possibly supporting this theory was the presence of pottery, including sherds of Norman date, and architectural stone from an arch or window, although the absence of any burials casts some doubt on an ecclesiastical interpretation. Overlying the remains of the postulated church was a large rectangular hall aligned east to west, with a

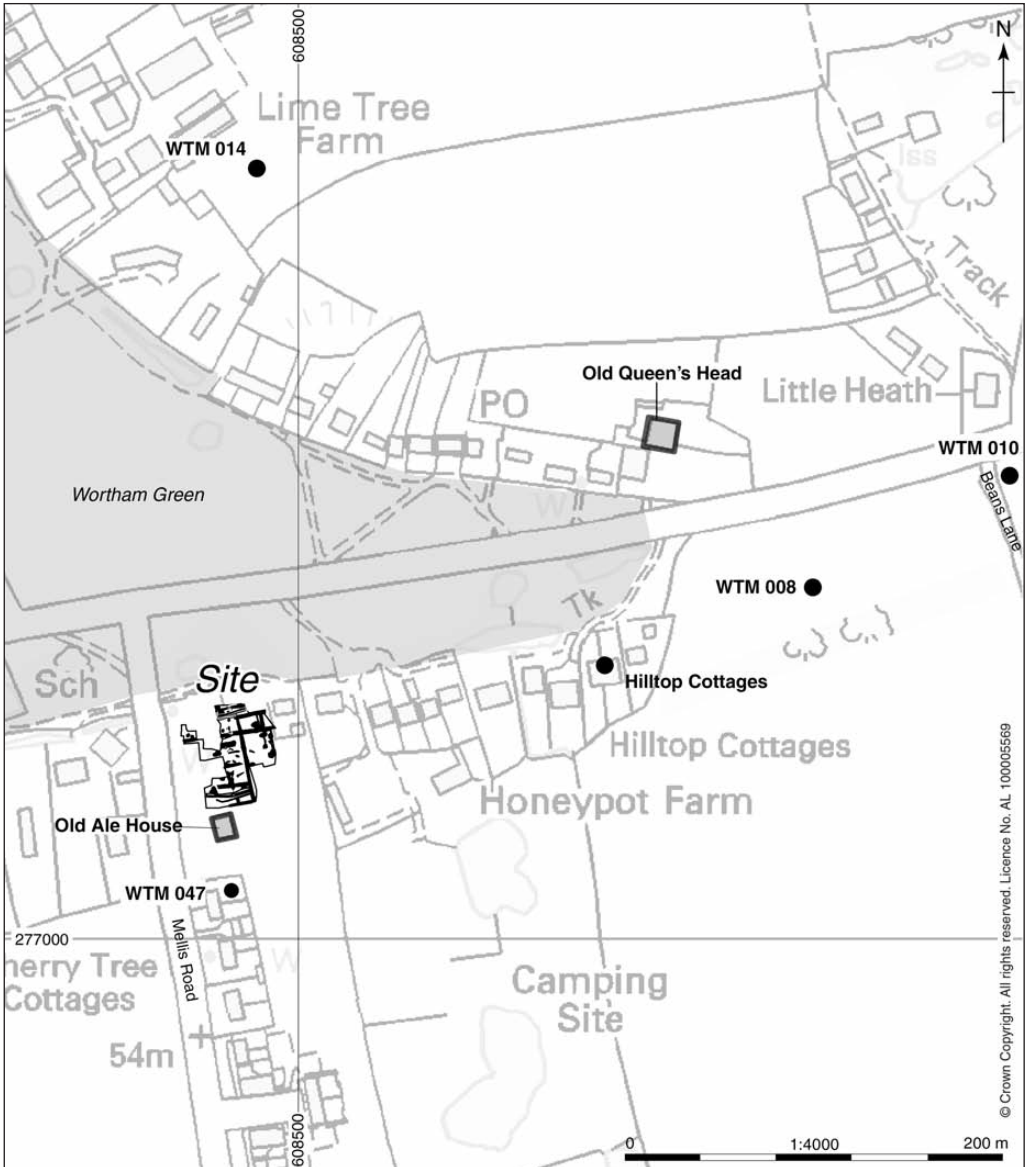


FIG. 148 – Site location, showing relevant surrounding sites.

courtyard to the north surrounded by east, west and north wings. Associated pottery recovered from this site dates to between the tenth to eleventh and the fifteenth centuries.¹⁶

By *c.* AD 1200 the parish of Wortham had the curious situation of two rectories (church livings), with names of the rectors known for both from the late thirteenth century/early fourteenth century, but only one church.¹⁷ What is unclear is the division of the Wortham parishioners between the two rectories. In the fourteenth century the patronage of Eastgate belonged to the Wachesham family and that of Southmoor to Bury Abbey, and presumably each rector served the tenants of their patron. Many Suffolk manors are complex in their

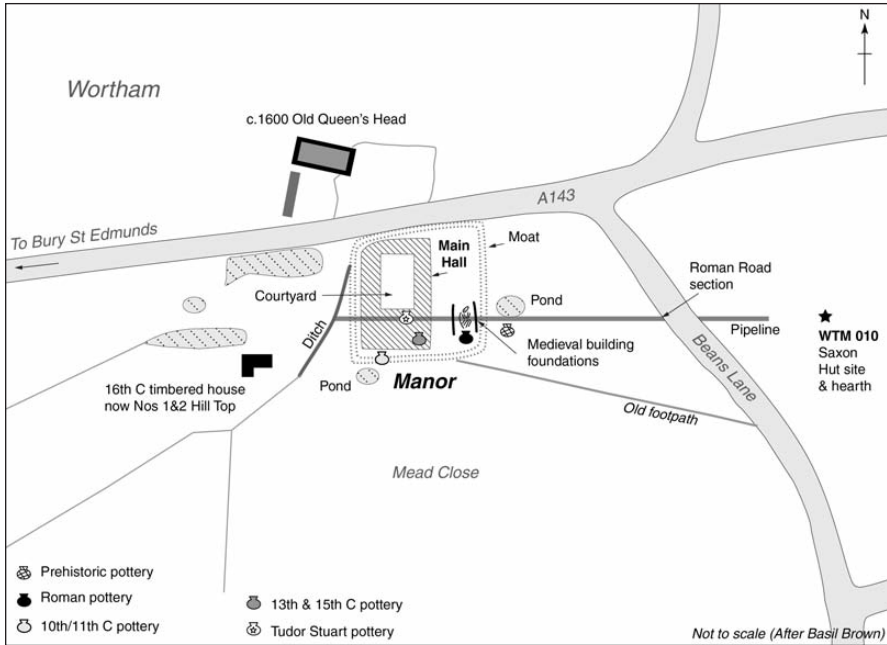


FIG. 149 – Location of the putative church and manor, based on Basil Brown’s 1995 archive.

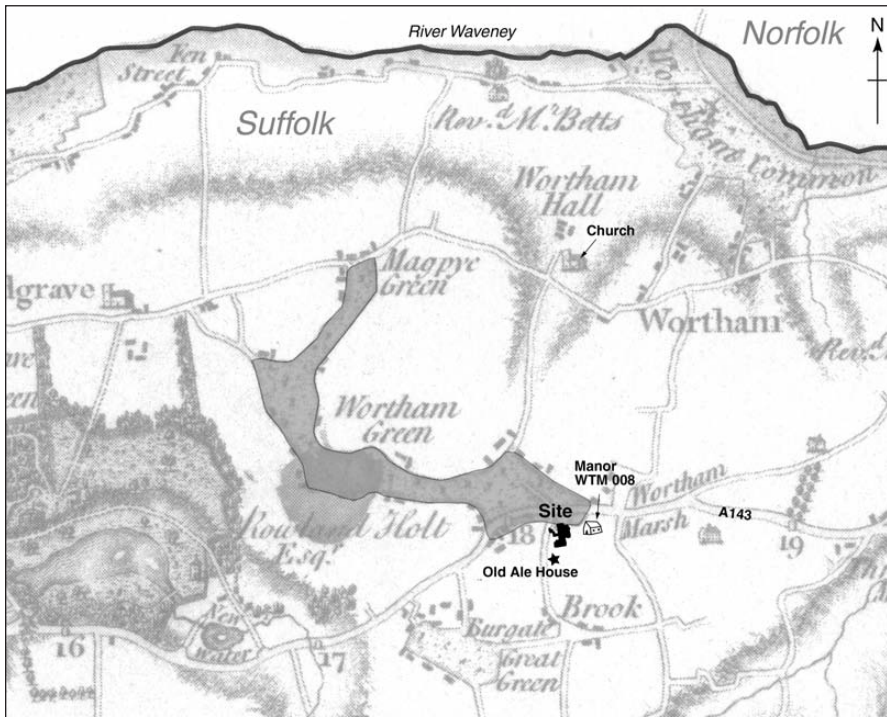


FIG. 150 – Detail from Joseph Hodkinson’s map of Suffolk (1783).

geography, often interdigitating with the lands of other manors in the same parish. There is therefore a high likelihood that both manors had holdings around Long Green (also known as Wortham Green) and that there may not have been clearly demarcated 'parishes'. The two Wortham rectories remained separate until 1769 when they were merged under William Evans, rector of Eastgate.¹⁸ The Southmoor rectory remained for some time, but in February 1785 a faculty was granted by the bishop of Norwich to Rowland Holt, patron, and Henry Patterson, rector, for 'taking down and excusing the rebuilding of one of the parsonages belonging to the rectory of Wortham Everard w. Jervis annexed'.¹⁹ The Southmoor parsonage was stated to have been located above one mile from the Eastgate church. The exact location of this former rectory is uncertain and it has been suggested that it was possibly near Glebe Farm *c.* 1km to the north-west of the subject site.²⁰ Alternatively, this distance of more than a mile might also fit with Basil Brown's discovery of the possible church and later courtyard house in 1955 (WTM 008; Fig. 148 and see above) to the east of the subject site.

Mellis Road, directly to the west of the subject site, is probably of some antiquity given the presence of a surviving three-unit timber-framed house dating to the mid to late sixteenth century or earlier (the extant Old Ale House). This building stands *c.* 20m to the east of the road, adjacent to, and to the south of, the excavation area (Fig. 148).²¹ The limit of the settlement that fronted onto the road probably lay *c.* 100m to the south of the excavation area, where a fifteenth- to sixteenth-century ditch was found, with no evidence of settlement to its south (SHER WTM 047).²² Previous evaluations within the subject site itself found undated post-holes, east to west aligned medieval ditches perpendicular to Mellis Road, and pits dating from the twelfth to fourteenth centuries, which were interpreted as settlement-related.²³ A few sherds of eleventh- to thirteenth-century pottery were found in 1968 *c.* 350m to the north of the site, just to the east of Wortham Green (SHER WTM 014).²⁴ The green itself is recorded in a document referring to common land in Wortham dated 1272 which describes a 'dede of giffit' that Sir Gerard de Wachesham gave, consisting of 160 acres, to the township of Wortham.²⁵

The earliest map of the area is Hodskinson's map of Suffolk of 1783 (Fig. 150), which shows settlement ranged around a green of linear form (Wortham or Long Green). Although very small-scale, this map shows Mellis Road and another minor route which ran from Mellis Road, parallel to Bury Road some distance further to the north. At the junction of Mellis Road and this minor routeway, the map records an east to west aligned building just within the development area. This building, known as Cherry Tree Cottage, was extensively altered in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries so that no earlier features survived;²⁶ it has since burnt down. Interestingly, a second building within the development area but outside the excavation trench (the extant Old Ale House) is not shown on the map but has been dated by English Heritage to the mid to late sixteenth century or earlier.²⁷ Further east, Basil Brown's archive records two additional structures (Fig. 148), which are now Grade II Listed Buildings: the Old Queen's Head public house to the north of the main road and a timber-framed building (Nos 1 and 2 Hill Top) to the south, which date to *c.* 1600 and the mid sixteenth century respectively.

The 1838 tithe map records that by this date the subject site lay within parts of two land holdings/fields (one not numbered), with the majority being within land of Burgate parish (to the south of Wortham).²⁸ This was one of three holdings that Burgate held within Wortham in the nineteenth century.²⁹ The 1838 map and the 1886 1st Edition Ordnance Survey map show both the Old Ale House and Cherry Tree Cottage surveyed by English Heritage, but no other structures within the present site.

THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SEQUENCE

Phase 1 (late eleventh to thirteenth century)

Five possible settlement plots (Plots 1–5) were tentatively identified during the excavation, defined by ditches broadly aligned east to west, which enclosed pits and a few post-holes (Fig. 151). These ditches may have formed plot boundaries fronting onto and extending back from Mellis Road to the west. Some of the pits were clustered together or laid out in lines, and some may have served as quarries.

Perhaps the best-defined plot was Plot 2, bounded by ditches that created an 8m-wide property, with a further ditched subdivision and possible associated pedestrian access within its eastern part. The main boundary ditches survived to between 0.7m and 1.1m wide and 0.30m to 0.43m deep and do not appear to have been maintained or recut. Although the evidence was fragmentary at best, there was some suggestion that a structure (Structure 1) lay close to the property frontage in this plot, *c.* 7.5m east of the current road edge. The structure comprised just four undated post-holes measuring up to 0.55m wide and 0.31m deep, all containing similar fills. The alignment of this possible structure appears to have been at odds with the property ditches (and the road), and as such its identification remains tentative. Plot 3 to the immediate south appears to have been wider at 16m but contained no structural remains. Plots 4 and 5 were both approximately 10m wide and, like Plot 2, also appear to have been subdivided, but closer to their road frontages.

Few features contained dating evidence, although some yielded pottery classified as early medieval: many of the handmade fabrics from rural East Anglia appear to have continued in production between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries, thus overlapping with the end of the Late Saxon period and the first half of the medieval period proper. The small assemblage of 61 sherds from this phase includes residual Roman and Late Saxon pottery, but is dominated by early medieval ware and 'Waveney Valley coarsewares' (WVCW), similar (in fabric) to the later medieval wares produced in villages along the valley. The group also contains several sherds of Hollesley-type glazed ware. The kilns at Hollesley have been dated to the later thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, but some of the forms found on consumer sites in the county suggest that production probably started earlier than this.

Phase 2 (thirteenth century)

Some reorganisation was evident in this phase, represented by the insertion of a number of new ditches in the northern and eastern parts of the site (Phase 2.1). The more northerly of these was aligned broadly east to west to the immediate north of the boundary between Plots 1 and 2, and separated from a north to south aligned ditch by a possible entranceway. Together, these may have formed a new, much larger, property (Plot 6) in the western part of the site. Further east another north to south ditch (with a possible entrance part way along its length) ran parallel to this latter ditch, perhaps indicating the presence of a route leading towards what is now the A143 (Bury Road), or the green. Alternatively it may represent the boundary of a *c.* 9.5m-wide plot extending back from the green-edge to the north.

At some point the ditches were recut (Phase 2.2), making the boundaries progressively larger, while also cutting across the suggested former route and reducing or removing the entrance into Plot 6. The eastern part of the site may have been used as a field by this time, although it contained the fragmentary remnants of minor ditches, as the easternmost ditch appears to have been infilled in the latter part of this phase.

By this phase the putative property plot to the west (Plot 6) now housed a range of features including a possible post-built structure (Structure 2) (Fig. 152). This structure comprised thirteen shallow post-holes and small pits extending across an area measuring *c.* 6m by 4m in



FIG. 151 – Excavated features, by site phase.

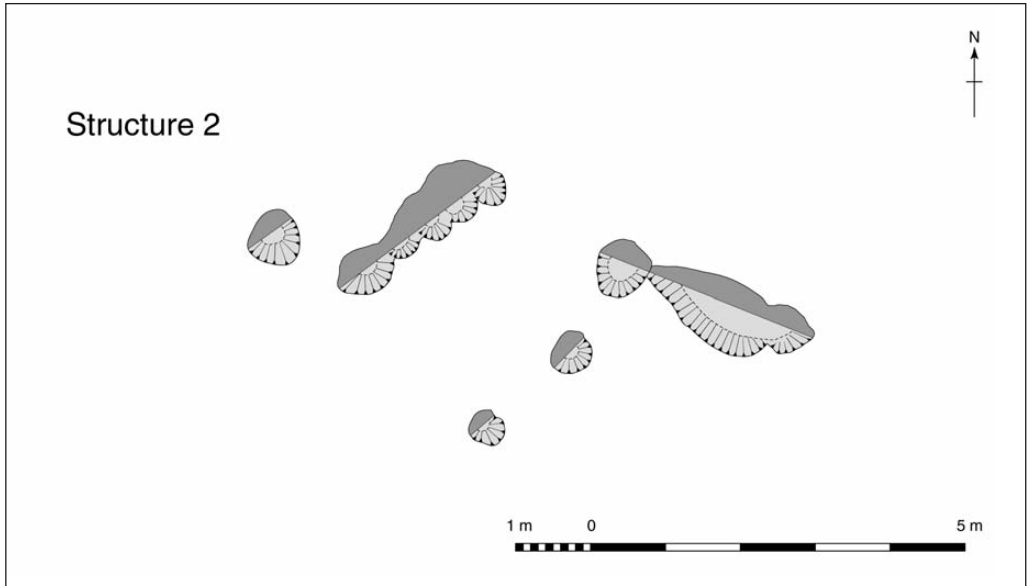


FIG. 152 – Detail of Phase 2 Structure 2 (1:100).

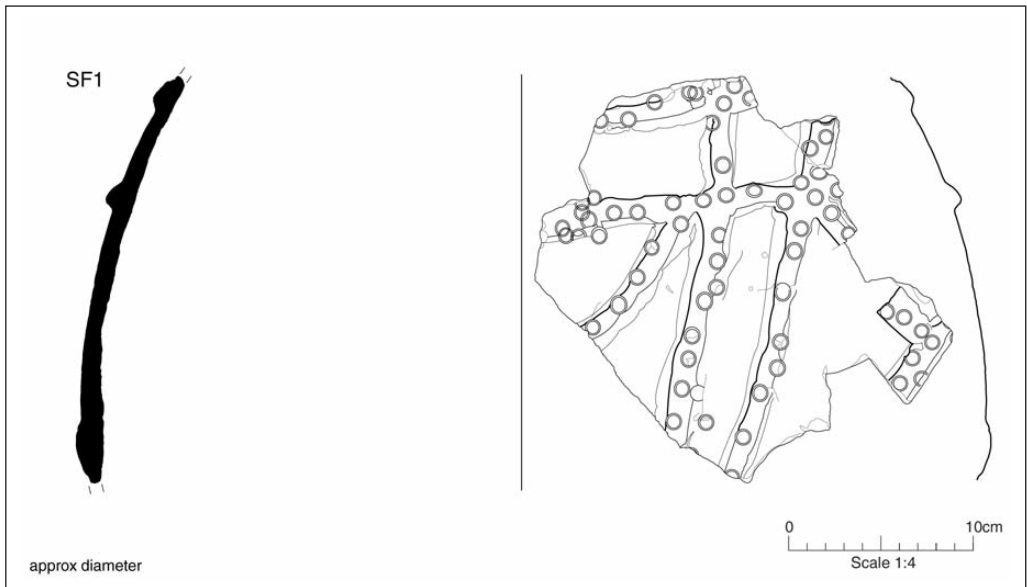


FIG. 153 – Thetford-type ware storage jar.

the northern part of the plot. Aligned roughly north-west to south-east the orientation of Structure 2 is similar to that of Structure 1, but again is at odds with that of the major boundaries. Dating evidence from the post-holes was limited to four sherds of pottery dating to the thirteenth to fourteenth centuries.

Several fragments of possible ditches were found within the plot, but did not form a

coherent pattern. Two possible wells or waterholes located in the southern part of the plot both became filled with water during the archaeological investigations. One, which lay *c.* 12m to the south of Structure 2, measured 2.1m by 1.8m in plan and was 0.72m deep. It had evidently been rapidly backfilled. Its fills contained the remains of a large storage vessel in Thetford-type ware with applied strips and circular stamp decoration (Fig. 153), along with other Saxo-Norman and medieval pottery including parts of two vessels dating from the late thirteenth century. It also yielded the burial of a pig of less than two years old. An environmental sample from one of the well fills contained cereal grains (barley, wheat and rye), in addition to a few legumes and weed seeds. The second well lay further south, near the site's western baulk. It had a diameter of 3.25m and was more than 0.75m deep, having been backfilled with four separate and sterile deposits. Scattered across the western part of the site were numerous other pits of uncertain date and function.

Pottery from features assigned to this phase (81 sherds) consists of a similar range of fabrics to those of the preceding phase, with an increase in the proportion of early medieval wares and Hollesley-type glazed ware. A thirteenth century date is suggested.

Phase 3 (late thirteenth to mid fourteenth century)

The long-standing east to west boundary in the northern part of the site was recut in this phase, with a new broadly parallel boundary being created *c.* 40m to the south. Both of these boundary markers were successively recut. Fills of the ditches were generally devoid of finds, although the northern boundary ditch contained the remains of four vessels comprising Hollesley-type glazed ware, Waveney Valley Coarseware, a possible Medieval Coarseware Micaceous jug and an Early Medieval Ware vessel, all dating to the twelfth or late twelfth to fourteenth centuries. A recut contained two small sherds of Waveney Valley Coarseware vessel.

Areas of quarrying were evident in the north-western and eastern parts of the site. The pits, which were of modest size, had largely vertical/undercutting sides. Their fills were generally relatively sterile, with the exception of two intercutting pits which collectively produced 151 pottery sherds largely dating to the thirteenth/late thirteenth to fourteenth centuries (1.573kg) and a copper alloy buckle tongue which cannot be closely dated. These two pottery groups consisted of relatively small sherds and are likely to have derived from middens. An environmental sample from one pit fill contained charred cereals (barley, wheat and rye) and a few weed seeds.

Pottery from this phase includes Roman (2 sherds) and early medieval wares (34 sherds), out of a total of 214 sherds, indicating a fairly high level of residuality or reworking of deposits. This phase, however, produced a much larger quantity of identifiable forms in contemporary fabrics, including nine jars, seven bowls and three jugs. The rims are all developed forms, mainly everted with square-beaded edges. With the exception of the increase in glazed wares (18 sherds), the wheelmade fabrics are largely unchanged from previous phases, although the fine micaceous wares were noticeably more common by this period and may represent the earliest development of a medieval pottery industry in the Wattisfield–Rickinghall area. In this phase, more pottery was recovered from pits than ditches.

Phase 4 (mid fourteenth to late sixteenth century)

The few features of possible late medieval date comprised a large waterhole, a small fragmentary ditch and two pits (not illustrated). As in the earlier phases, the waterhole lay in the extreme south-western part of the site, *c.* 10m to the east of Mellis Road. It measured 5.1m long and more than 3.6m wide and 0.92m deep, with steep sides on the south-east becoming more gentle to the north-east. The latter slope was probably intended to allow livestock to

drink from this side. The upper backfill deposit produced a fragment of slag, derived from primary iron production (probably the production of a bloom) as well as a few sherds of late medieval and transitional pottery, dating to the fifteenth to sixteenth centuries.

The pottery included vessel and fabric types which are typical of both the Hopton and the Rickinghall production sites.³⁰ The glazed red earthenwares are all in pale orange fabrics with occasional soft red inclusions. The fabric is similar to Rickinghall Late Medieval/Transitional ware and may have been produced in the Rickinghall or Wattisfield area, although the forms are paralleled in the Norwich series.³¹

Phase 5 (late sixteenth to mid eighteenth century)

A single north- to south-aligned ditch (and its recut) ran northwards from the southern baulk (not illustrated). This ditch extended for at least 40m and almost certainly relates to the sixteenth-century building (the Old Ale House) which still stands just beyond the southern edge of the excavation area. The fill of the original ditch was sterile, while the slightly larger recut contained a moderate quantity of domestic waste, largely dating from the late seventeenth to mid eighteenth centuries. The finds included a copper alloy scissor handle and a thimble, a few sherds of post-medieval pottery, brick and roof tile fragments, and a few pieces of vessel and window glass. The thimble is large and is likely to have been used by a tailor rather than a seamstress. Its two-piece construction is matched by late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century examples from Aldgate in London.³² The scissors are also similar to a pair from the same site found in a mid to late seventeenth-century or early eighteenth-century context.³³

Phase 6 (mid eighteenth to twentieth century)

The few more recent features within the excavation area included a brick well in the middle of the site. Modern pits and post-holes within the north-western part of the excavation area lay within the curtilage of a former early nineteenth-century or earlier building which had stood directly to the north-west of the excavated area, within the development site boundaries. An industrial building was inserted in the northern part of the site in the mid twentieth century.

POTTERY

by Sue Anderson

A total of 418 sherds of pottery weighing 5.985kg was collected from the site. Of this assemblage, the small quantities of Roman and Late Saxon pottery recovered were all found residually. Most of the assemblage is of early and high medieval date, spanning the later eleventh to fourteenth centuries. Both handmade and wheelmade wares appear to have been in use during the twelfth to thirteenth centuries, but the handmade wares had probably ceased production by the end of the thirteenth century. Very few glazed wares are present, and this is a common finding on rural sites in the region. A similar range of wares was recovered during evaluations on the site.³⁴

A high proportion of the medieval assemblage was probably made locally, but there is also evidence that some was being brought in from coastal areas to the south-east, and some material is likely to be from the south of the county. Currently the only kilns of high medieval date to have been excavated in Suffolk are in Hollesley and Ipswich, but several production sites of Roman and late medieval date are known in the Waveney Valley and it is likely that the area was also involved in pottery production during the medieval period. The similarity of Hollesley wares to other pottery in slightly different fabrics from other parts of the county

indicates that there was a Suffolk-wide tradition in terms of vessel forms, but that potters were working in several areas with different clay sources.

Apart from glazed Grimston-type ware, there were no positively identified medieval Norfolk wares despite the village's proximity to the border. However, this may partly be due to the limited fieldwork which has been carried out in south-east Norfolk in recent years, meaning that there are few medieval assemblages from either rural or urban assemblages from this area with which to compare the north Suffolk groups.

The range of fabrics and forms of medieval date from this site is comparable with many other rural assemblages in East Anglia, in being largely locally sourced with few glazed wares and a limited range of vessel types. Although bowls and jugs are present, jars and cooking pots are more frequent. Large bowls are thought to be associated with dairying, and whilst it is likely that this was practised here, it does not appear to have been the main activity for which ceramics were required. Overall, this is a largely domestic assemblage. There is evidence for some trade links with other parts of Suffolk and Norfolk, but nothing from further afield. The condition of the sherds, together with their wide dispersal, may indicate that the site was not intensively ploughed during the medieval period and that rubbish was being disposed of in middens, with large parts of vessels eventually being distributed beyond the settlement area on surrounding fields during manuring.

Catalogue of illustrated pottery

SF 1: Large Thetford-type ware storage jar, with applied strips and circular stamp decoration (of Dallas' Type AG.³⁵) The example is best paralleled by an example from Cambridge,³⁶ and it is also like a fragment published from Thetford.³⁷ Fill of well 2069, Phase 3.

PLANT REMAINS

by Rachel Fosberry

Environmental samples were taken from a range of features including ditches, wells/waterholes, pits and post-holes. Cereal grains occurred in all of the samples. Barley (*Hordeum* sp.) grains predominate. Wheat (*Triticum* sp.) and rye (*Secale cereale*) grains are common and oat (*Avena* sp.) occurs occasionally. Barley was often used for animal fodder but may have been used for human consumption in the form of stews and soup, and it was also used for the brewing of beer (albeit that no germinated grains were recovered here to suggest brewing activities). Rye became more common from Phase 2 onwards.

Chaff elements are extremely rare in these samples – the lack of such evidence for crop processing usually implies that clean grain has been imported onto the site. Additional food plants include a few legumes in the form of peas. Weeds include possible crop contaminants such as brome (*Bromus* sp.), rye-grass (*Lolium* sp.), clover (*Trifolium* sp.) plantain (*Plantago* sp.), dock (*Rumex* sp.) and cleavers (*Galium* sp.).

DISCUSSION

The origins of the green-edge settlement

Suffolk greens vary in size and shape with 'small, medium and large greens defined as less than 2 hectares, between 2 and 20 hectares and greater than 20 hectares respectively'.³⁸ At c. 28ha, Wortham Green – now known as Long Green – is a very large elongated green, its scale being typical of this part of north Suffolk.³⁹ Warner noted that north Suffolk had the largest greens and he highlighted Mellis, Wingfield and Wortham but he stated that no good historical explanation for the size of these greens has ever been given.⁴⁰ The Wortham green lies on clay

within a fairly elevated part of the county (at 55m AOD) and conforms with Martin's evidence that suggests a link between greens (which were essentially common land) and clayland areas, with greens tending to be located on the high, heavy land with poor natural drainage.⁴¹

There has been a long-running debate on the date of Suffolk's greens. Warner suggested that they originated at the later end of the ninth century or in the tenth century.⁴² His dating has, however, been questioned since it 'rests too heavily on a couple of associations with Late Saxon metalwork. It also confuses the evidence for settlements on the peripheries of parishes (or actually straddling the boundaries) some of which were certainly in existence by 1086, with the evidence for undoubted greens'.⁴³ Martin himself suggests a twelfth-century origin for many of the settlements around Suffolk greens, asserting that this is consistent with place-name evidence.⁴⁴

In the neighbouring counties of Cambridgeshire and Norfolk, different dates are suggested for the origins of greens and commons. In Cambridgeshire a Middle Saxon origin is suggested for greens of varying sizes but usually of sub-oval shape: it has been argued that the formation of such greens may suggest centralised planning. In southern Cambridgeshire, the greens are generally large and sub-oval in plan.⁴⁵ At Haslingfield, for example, it has been postulated that an ovoid green of 48ha was used as a very large, poorly drained meadow.⁴⁶ At a later date, greens were encroached on. Fieldwalking around greens in Norfolk has suggested origins in the late eleventh or twelfth century.⁴⁷ The presence of Saxo-Norman Thetford-type ware on some green-edges elsewhere in Norfolk has led to the suggestion that fringing settlement was already taking place by the time of Domesday.⁴⁸ Haslingfield's eleventh-century parish church was built just within the green.⁴⁹ Other fieldwalking in Norfolk suggests a gradual start of such settlement in the eleventh century, the number of greens increasing in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.⁵⁰

Warner stated that nearly all east Suffolk parishes contained two types of settlement, with primary settlement comprising scattered farms on the valley gravels. The location of the surviving Wortham church of Eastgate is in the northern part of the parish relatively near to the River Waveney (Fig. 147). Eastgate may have been the older and more important centre, and appears to have been quite wealthy given the scale of its surviving church. There is perhaps a reasonable possibility that Eastgate has its origins as an earlier minster church serving the parish. Warner suggested that a number of parishes had only very small primary cores, often in the corner of the parish, while the bulk of the settlement is predominantly of a secondary green-side type.⁵¹ Eastgate church, located to the north of a surviving road, appears to occupy an area that amounts to just roughly one third of the parish, whilst the green occupies a much larger area, abutting the road and extending to the parish boundary to the west and beyond the Bury Road (A143) on its southern side (Fig. 147).

The other manor in Wortham was called Abbots or Southmoor from at least the medieval period. The 'moor' element suggests unenclosed, poor land, perhaps indicating that this was a secondary settlement colonising an area of common grazing (the green). The name Southmoor also suggests that most, if not all, of the manor's holdings were on the south side of the parish(es). This is relevant as Warner gives the secondary settlements within east Suffolk as being distributed around the clay commons and states that many were sub-divisions of more ancient mother-church territories.⁵² The Eastgate manor is very likely to have had land and/or rights around the green in this middle/southern part of the parish. In the nineteenth century, Burgate parish also held three different landholdings here, including one within part of the subject site, which may suggest that in the medieval period this long green was created out of a resource over which several communities once held rights. It is tempting, therefore, to suggest that Eastgate largely or entirely relates to this (smaller) northern part of the parish, while Southmoor manor's holdings lay largely (but not exclusively) to the south. It is also

worth noting that there were six different landholding entries in the Domesday survey for Wortham, with many freemen recorded. This seems to tie in with Warner's statement that the social background of clayland colonisation in Suffolk, based on the Domesday survey, seems to be one of loose manorial control.⁵³

Church, manor and green

The definite location of the second church at Wortham recorded at Domesday, which seems to have gone out of use by AD 1200, remains unknown. Basil Brown suggested that he may have found the remains of this church and a later manor adjacent to the Bury Road (A143), c. 300m to the east of the subject site. The lack of a clear plan, graves and other important details means that this identification of a church in this location is tentative at best. It is possible that this documented second church may have been located within the same churchyard as the surviving St Mary's church, but such arrangements are uncommon. The two rectories recorded at Wortham were clearly owned by the two main manors, with the Southmoor rectory recorded as being located more than one mile from Eastgate in 1769, possibly at or near Glebe Farm, by the green. On balance this second church is more likely to have been in the southern area of the parish, where a secondary settlement had become established around the green, at some distance from Eastgate's (presumably older) church.

According to Brown, Southmoor's 'church', together with the putative manor, lay to the south of the main Bury Road (the present A143), at its juncture with the southern edge of the green. If this is correct, the placing of the church, manor and green adjacent to each other reflects the often close relationship between lordly centres and churches.⁵⁴ A similar association is evident at Eastgate between the manor and church, although no green is recorded here. Although this tripartite relationship has been demonstrated at a number of settlements in Cambridgeshire,⁵⁵ it is not common in Suffolk.

A recent overview of Greater East Anglia suggests that by the eleventh century there was a widespread tendency for people to drift away from early (Middle Saxon) 'villages' to greens and commons on the interfluves.⁵⁶ Settlement respecting the outer edge of the green at Southmoor was clearly present in the late eighteenth century (Fig. 150) and may reflect an earlier pattern of settlement. There is circumstantial evidence in the form of pottery scatters to suggest that the Saxo-Norman and medieval settlement at Southmoor may indeed have respected the edge of the green. Medieval pottery has been found at the extreme western extent of the green (WTM 006 and 025, not illustrated), and to its east (WTM 014).

Settlement development

The fairly regular probable plot boundaries laid out on the subject site during the late eleventh to thirteenth centuries (Phase 1) were generally c. 10m wide, although the narrowest (Plot 2) was 8m wide and the largest was 16m (Plot 3). Burgage plots of similar size have been found at Bury St Edmunds.⁵⁷ The plots ranged along Mellis Road would presumably have had houses at their frontage ends, although archaeological evidence for this was limited. The plot boundaries extended eastwards from the road for at least 50m. No such plot boundaries were found during excavations c. 100m to the south of the subject site,⁵⁸ suggesting a possible limit to the settlement here.

The regularity of the layout suggests that these plots were part of a planned expansion. Landownership of the plots is uncertain in this period, although the site's location on the south side of the green, at some distance from Eastgate, may suggest that this land was more likely to have been part of the manor of Abbots/Southmoor. If this was the case, however, any direct influence that Bury Abbey may have had on its manor is difficult to ascertain, particularly as it was subinfeudated to the Wacheshams until c. 1300. There are several

examples of long-standing demesne manors of the abbey being planned in this period – indeed the abbey is known for its early town planning activities.⁵⁹ Abbot Baldwin (AD 1065–97) was proactive in administering the monastic and abbatial estates, and the town of Bury St Edmunds was itself replanned under Baldwin between AD 1066 and 1086, a process which largely erased the previous settlement and also saw the rebuilding of the abbey church.⁶⁰ Another landholding of the abbey was Worlingworth, where deliberate settlement planning was indicated by the regularity of the landholdings on the former Great Green. Settlement regularity is also apparent at two other greens owned by Bury St Edmunds Abbey: at Melford Green, Long Melford, and The Green, Palgrave.⁶¹ Although a direct monastic influence may not be demonstrable at Wortham, it is quite feasible that individual manors may have copied and adapted the general policy of planned settlement instigated by the abbey.

By the twelfth century the abbey of Bury St Edmunds had become one of the richest and most important monasteries in the country.⁶² Under Abbot Hugh I (1157–1180), the abbey had allowed its manors to be farmed out, with tenants exercising considerable independence. Under Abbot Samson (1182–1211), however, all but two of the manors were taken back into direct control: ‘since most of the abbey’s income came from its landed property, to manage it directly and efficiently was obviously the wiser policy rather than farming it out to tenants, some of whom were in any case inefficient, at fixed uneconomic rents’.⁶³ The recovered manors were placed under the management of a monk or a layman, whom Abbot Samson considered more competent than the dispossessed farmer.⁶⁴

At Wortham it is difficult to characterise the activities undertaken within the individual properties as the excavated area largely fell within the back plots and did not reach the frontages. Fragmentary remains of a single possible structure (Structure 1) were identified in the westernmost part of Plot 2, relatively close to the Mellis Road frontage. The remains are unfortunately too fragmentary to enable any further interpretation, for example whether it had a domestic, agricultural or industrial function. Hammerscale found within bulk samples may suggest that iron working was taking place in the vicinity, although no hearths or features relating to this practice were found. At least one of the back plots (Plot 2) was subdivided by a ditch. The pits found within several of the plots were generally sterile, which is perhaps uncharacteristic for domestic plots. Some may have served as quarry pits, presumably extracting the natural gravels and sands for construction nearby.

Perhaps during the thirteenth century (Phase 2), the regular east-to-west aligned plot boundaries fronting onto Mellis Road went out of use, to be replaced by a large plot in the western part of the excavation site, with a narrower plot or route/droeway to the east. The reasons behind this change are uncertain, especially since the thirteenth century was a period of sustained population growth.⁶⁵ By this phase the western part of the site housed at least one structure (Structure 2) (Fig. 152), surrounded by pits and wells or waterholes. The structure, although not well defined, appears to have been on a similar alignment to Structure 1; both being at odds to the orientation of the major boundaries. Given the location and small size of this structure, which was located at some distance from the road frontages, an agricultural function seems most likely. The easternmost element, which measured *c.* 9.5m wide, was defined by north-to-south aligned ditches and may represent a plot or routeway extending down from the green to the north. By the latter part of this phase (2.2) the main northern ditch had been extended eastwards, effectively blocking off the route/subdividing the eastern plot. The relative lack of features (a pit and a ditch) in this part of the site seems to suggest that it may have been in agricultural use.

Later reorganisation (Phase 3) saw the northern boundary being recut and a new southern boundary being inserted. This phase included a group of several relatively large quarry pits, partly within the north-western part of the site, and other quarry pits on the far eastern side.

The moderate quantities of domestic waste found within two of the pits suggest that occupation lay nearby, with domestic building(s) perhaps continuing to front onto Mellis Road to the west of the site.

The presence of a large later medieval waterhole (Phase 4) may suggest that the site reverted to pastoral farming in this phase. Very few finds came from this period. This decline in activity may relate to the famine and pestilence which substantially reduced the population within England. In Suffolk, Bailey has estimated the population was around 225,000 during the 1320s but the figure from the Poll Tax returns of 1377 suggests that this had fallen to 120,000 by this time. At Wortham the population may have declined for a further 150 years, since England's general population probably fell by roughly 20 per cent between 1377 and 1524.⁶⁶

The possible transition from arable to pastoral farming echoes changes in other areas, as less land was needed for intensive cereal production. The surviving Suffolk documents reflect these events, and it is no coincidence that 'cattle from Northern England appear increasingly on Suffolk pastures'.⁶⁷ Suffolk became known for cheese-making, exporting to urban and overseas markets. Nearby Diss (*c.* 5km from Wortham) had a notable fair which supplied places such as Framlingham Castle in 1386.⁶⁸ Settlements such as Wortham may have supplied this market.

Construction of the sixteenth-century Old Ale House, which still stands directly to the south of the excavation area, may reflect the impact of the Dissolution, when monastic land was sold off to private individuals. The plot of land around the house may have been defined to the south by a ditch (SHER WTM 047).⁶⁹ To the north, its boundary is likely to have been formed by the small routeway running east to west directly to the north of the excavation area. This routeway may conceivably have delineated the original southern extent of the green as this forms the edge against which the later properties abut.

By the late eighteenth century the core of the village had coalesced around Wortham Green (Fig. 150). Hodskinson's map shows the green as extending slightly southwards beyond the road into the area directly to the north of the subject site, which might imply that the current line of Bury Road is a later (post-medieval) modification. A number of post-medieval properties fronted onto the southern edge of the green, including a domestic building (Cherry Tree Cottage) which formerly stood in the north-western part of the site. Later maps suggest gradual encroachment by further properties into this area.

CONCLUSIONS

This excavation is the first archaeological investigation of any size within Wortham and the results have given new insights to the creation and development of the village and its green. Excavation of such sites is rare, although some rural excavations have taken place in Suffolk in recent years, with the study of rural settlement plans being largely the province of landscape historians and historical geographers.⁷⁰ At Wortham, settlement appears to have commenced in the late eleventh or twelfth century, consistent with Martin's date for green-edge settlement. The period of organised settlement was apparently short lived (*c.* twelfth to late thirteenth or mid fourteenth century) and abandonment was doubtless linked to depopulation, perhaps after the well-documented mid fourteenth-century famine and pestilence. Evidence for pastoral, rather than arable, farming is consistent with late medieval to early post-medieval trends, whilst the eighteenth- to nineteenth-century occupation close by appears to have evolved around the southern edge of the green, as seen on Hodskinson's map (Fig. 150).

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NOTES

- 1 Everett 2008; Hodges 2009.
- 2 Brown 1956.
- 3 Atkins 2011.
- 4 Ekwall 1960, 536.
- 5 West 1998, 105.
- 6 Page 1911, 490, 497.
- 7 Goult 1990, Wortham parish section.
- 8 Cooke 1989, 31.
- 9 See Martin and Satchell 2008, 87–88, for details.
- 10 Inquisition post mortem, Sir Giles Wachesham 1268: *Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem, vol. I, Henry III* (London 1904), 210–11, no. 676.
- 11 Inquisition post mortem, Sir Giles Wachesham 1273: *Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem, vol. II, Edward I* (London 1906), 10–11, no. 10.
- 12 Thomson 1980, 76.
- 13 Pevsner 2002, 507; Bettley and Pevsner 2015, 23.
- 14 Munro Cautley 1982, 436.
- 15 Chronicle of Jocelyn of Brakelond: see Butler 1949, 63.
- 16 Brown 1956, 118.
- 17 Hancock 2001, 3.
- 18 Hancock 2001, 3.
- 19 Quoted in Hancock 2001, 3.
- 20 Suffolk Record Office, Ipswich (SROI), FB 131/A4/2.
- 21 Jeffries 2006a.
- 22 Ames and Morgan 2009.
- 23 Everett 2008; Hodges 2009.
- 24 Brown 1968.

- 25 Doughty 1912, 7.
- 26 Jeffries 2006b.
- 27 Jeffries 2006a.
- 28 SROI, FB 131/C5/1
- 29 Dymond 2007, 11.
- 30 Anderson *et al.* 1996.
- 31 Jennings 1981, nos 1117, 1154, 1161, 1269.
- 32 Grew 1984, 114, Fig. 57, 90–91.
- 33 Grew 1984, 98, Fig. 50, 29.
- 34 Goffin 2008; Anderson 2009.
- 35 Rogerson and Dallas 1984, 121.
- 36 Hurst 1957, 57; Fig. 8, no. 7.
- 37 Rogerson and Dallas 1984, 162, Fig. 181, no. 430.
- 38 Martin and Satchel 2008, 51–54.
- 39 Martin 1999, 62.
- 40 Warner 1987, 30.
- 41 Martin 1999, 63.
- 42 Warner 1987, 17–18.
- 43 Martin and Satchell 2008, 17.
- 44 Martin 1999, 62.
- 45 Taylor 2002, 60–64; Oosthuizen 2006, 51–59.
- 46 Oosthuizen 1996, 14; Taylor 2002, 62.
- 47 Wade-Martins 1980, 86–8; Davidson 1990, 71–72.
- 48 Williamson 1993, 169.
- 49 Oosthuizen 2006 Fig. 3.6, 54.
- 50 Rogerson 1996, 62.
- 51 Warner 1987, 17.
- 52 Warner 1987, 17.
- 53 Warner 1987, 25.
- 54 Lewis *et al.* 2001, 87–88.
- 55 Oosthuizen 1993, 100; Atkins 2010, Fig. 3.
- 56 Rippon 2008, 194.
- 57 Dr Abby Antrobus, pers. comm.
- 58 Ames and Morgan 2009.
- 59 Fernie 1998, 12–13; Gauthiez 1998, 94–95.
- 60 Gauthiez 1998, 93.
- 61 Martin and Satchell 2008, 17.
- 62 Thomson 1980, 1.
- 63 Gransden 2007, 24–25.
- 64 Gransden 2007, 25.
- 65 Bailey 2007, 67–73.
- 66 Bailey 2007, 183.
- 67 Bailey 2007, 172.
- 68 Bailey 2007, 172.
- 69 Ames and Morgan 2009.
- 70 Wade 1997, 52.

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