

COURT KNOLL

The name Nayland is of Anglo Saxon origin, meaning "at the island", referring probably to the earthwork to the south of the present village and known as Court Knoll. The site is scheduled as an Ancient Monument and is considered to be of national importance. It is therefore protected by the Secretary of State. The site is inspected from time to time by English Heritage and the condition of the field and any changes are recorded.

The Suffolk County Sites and Monuments Record in 2001 stated that:

"Court Knoll, ring work or possible motte and bailey castle. Situated on flood-plain of River Stour, consists of a D-shaped earthwork with a mound in the NE corner. Defences comprise a low-faint rampart separated from the outer ditch by a berm. The mound, which is very vague, but appears to be near circular, measures about 40m in diameter and has a maximum height of 1.0m. There are faint traces of a ditch around the W side. Main ditch is 50 feet wide 5 feet deep, a gap in the NW corner is possibly an original entrance. A building of Roman tile and Kentish rag in the N part of the enclosure was excavated by Major Dick in 1924. A scatter of tile and Kentish ragstone was visible in the ditch E of the Mound in 1960. The mound marks the site of the building. Two photographs of 1924 excavations exist" [See copies below].

Morant's History of Essex (1768) states

"The Mansion house of the Lordship of Neyland or Eiland as it is called in Domesday book was at Neyland in a pasture ground called the Court but no foundations of any part of it are to be seen except the chapel."

Victoria County History of Essex (1903)

"The great Lordship of Eiland which belonged to Suain of Essex, lay on a cheval on the river and was surveyed in Domesday partly under Essex and partly under Suffolk. It derives its name from the present Nayland, where the site of Court Knoll is still marked by earthworks on the Suffolk side of the stream".



EXCAVATIONS 1924
COURT KNOLL



Court Knoll Archaeological Field Walking



Friday and Saturday
28 and 29 September 2001
9.00am to 4.30pm

Come for an hour or the whole two days!

- ▶ Come along to an introductory talk and 'hands on' session on:
FRIDAY 21 SEPTEMBER at 7.00pm
in NAYLAND VILLAGE HALL
- ▶ If you have any finds or old photos of Court Knoll bring them along!
- ▶ Anyone can try-Experienced field walkers will show you how!
- ▶ You will be looking for man made items such as pieces of pottery/china, brick and tile, glass, worked flints, clay pipes etc.

There will be a chance to celebrate the day by creating an artistic representation of any finds. Come along to find out more!

This field walking is part of an archaeological study into Court Knoll funded by a Local Heritage Initiative grant from a successful bid by the Nayland with Wissingington Conservation Society with assistance from the Dedham Vale and Stour Valley Countryside Project. For more details contact Simon on 01473 583176

2001 Archaeological Survey of Court Knoll

This work was undertaken after a successful application for a Local Heritage Initiative Grant. Professor Jules Pretty was co-opted onto the Committee and led the project, assisted by Simon Amstutz of the Dedham Vale Project and our then Chairman, Barry Wakefield.

A geophysical survey was followed by a topographical survey, both carried out by a specialist firm from York. An exciting weekend of **Fieldwalking** by Enthusiastic volunteers was the next step. Over 50 people took part on the Saturday and 40 on the Sunday. June and John Wallace and other members of the Stoke-by-Nayland Fieldwalking Group acted as tutors to those of us whose first outing it was.

About 2 tons of brick and tile were found in the area where an old manor was thought to have stood. This was all stored in the Carver's Barn pending removal for washing, sorting and analysis by the Suffolk Archaeological Unit.

Other items collected included pieces of smoker's clay pipe, decorative bowls, Roman tiles from heating flues, 15th century pot handles and several examples of worked flint, indicating a very early use of the site.



Simon Amstutz and son



Brick, tile and other finds stored in the Carvers' Barn



Volunteers are briefed about the Court Knoll Survey



John Wallace
June Wallace with Andora



COURT KNOLL PROJECT

2015 TO DATE

1

The Society's interest in Court Knoll (a scheduled ancient monument comprising a d-shaped earthwork near the Anchor Bridge) extends back to 1978 when it paid for the creation and erection of the information sign which still exists today. Thereafter in 2001 the Society organised a geophysical survey and extensive field walking of the site when approximately 1.5 metric tonnes of ceramic building material were found including a large amount of Roman tile. It was concluded that the tile had been re-used in the construction of a medieval building which had subsequently been demolished.

A further geophysical survey carried out in 2015 revealed a chapel-type structure and consent was obtained from the Tendring Hall Estate and Historic England to conduct an excavation limited to seven trenches the location of which was prescribed by Historic England.

The dig commenced on the 2nd of September 2016 and work continued for six days every week until the 16th of October. Suffolk Archaeology ("SA") were commissioned by the Society to run the project and they appointed lead archaeologist Jo Caruth whilst Linzi Everett of SA supervised the excavations. Volunteers from the local community in Nayland and Wiston participated in the dig, supported by volunteers from the Colchester Archaeological Group and Stour Valley Community Archaeology.

2

Trench 1 revealed a rectangular stone structure located just to the north of the centre of the eastern end wall comprising a stepped base suggesting it may have been the remains of an altar. Very close to it, some glazed polychrome relief tiles were found which date stylistically to the late Anglo-Saxon period. It was also noted that a rounded structure appears to have been built at a later period. This suggested that following a fire which may have destroyed the church a look-out tower may have been built on the same site.

Trench 2 revealed a rammed chalk floor, similar to one revealed in Trench 1, suggesting the continued width of the church building.

Trenches 3 and 5 were located a significant distance from any of the areas of interest revealed by the geophysical survey and it is assumed that Historic England wanted us to not concentrate only where we expected to find anything. The poor souls who had the thankless task of digging these trenches yet not expecting to find anything named both trenches as Siberia.

Trench 4 had been chosen as it was thought it might have been the location of a possible hall. However, the location of an area of burning had no distinct cut or structure and accordingly it was not possible to deduce anything from it.



3

Trench 6 revealed a probable oven type feature and in another part of this trench robbed out remains of two walls were discovered.

On the final day of the dig a volunteer discovered human remains lying on an east west alignment strongly suggesting this was a Christian burial. A tiny piece of bone was sent for radio carbon analysis which dated the bone to the period of 942 to 1023; namely a pre-conquest Anglo Saxon burial.

The substantial quantity of Roman ceramic building material recovered during the excavation supports the view that a high-status building was constructed in the late Anglo-Saxon period using material robbed from a Roman site. The discovery of the human remains tends to confirm the strong likelihood that a church was a significant feature of Court Knoll.

Over 500 volunteer hours were worked during the 38 days of the dig and 250 rubble bags of Roman and Medieval brick and tile fragments were stored for analysis and weighing.

As the excavation finished the task of re-filling the trenches started but not before a layer of fine sand (17) was placed over the excavated areas so that any future archaeologists would be able to readily recognise those areas which had already been subject to excavation.

4

The second phase of the project started immediately after the conclusion of the excavation and involved the analysis of the finds recovered from the excavations. Volunteers were still playing their part in the project as a huge amount of the brick and tile fragments needed to be inspected and graded with appropriate examples being retained. However much of the analysis had to be undertaken by experts with the consequent cost.

The pandemic has played a significant part in delaying the analysis of the huge number of finds but it is hoped that by the end of 2024 the final report will be available and the Society will arrange a public meeting to celebrate the completion of the Court Knoll Project.

The expenditure on this project by the Society to date has reached £33,645. We have been fortunate that so many organisations and individuals have kindly donated funds and we thank The Dedham Vale National Landscape Sustainable Development Fund, The Suffolk Institute of Archaeology & History, the Scarfe Trust, Nayland Community Council, the Tendring Hall Estate and many private donors for their support.



Figure 2. Proposed trench location and geophysics

A chalk floor at one end of trench 2



QUOTATIONS FROM REPORTS ON THE ANALYSIS OF FINDS FROM COURT KNOLL

Below are some extracts from reports prepared by experts following analysis of the many finds obtained from the excavations.

CERAMIC BUILDING MATERIAL REPORT

Roman, medieval and post-medieval tile and brick form the bulk of this assemblage and provide some evidence for the types of structures present on or near the site during these periods. However, there is evidence that the Roman material had been re-used in later structures and it is thought to have been imported to the site specifically for this purpose. Reuse of Roman material, reflected by the presence of mortar on breaks and other surfaces, sometimes forming a second layer over the pink pozzolanic mortar of the Roman period, was common practice during the Late Saxon and early medieval periods, and standing examples can be seen in Colchester (e.g. the Castle, St Botolph's Priory, Holy Trinity Church).

FAUNAL REMAINS REPORT

Overall, the assemblage is typical of a medieval urban assemblage that relies largely on domestic stock for the bulk of the meat and supplementing with wild caught or purchased foods. The age of the sheep suggest provision of wool for the demanding wool trade in the Medieval period. The range of species, which includes higher status wild bird consumption, fish and deer, suggests high status foods.

SMALL FINDS REPORT

The small finds assemblage reflects continued activity on the site of Court Knoll from the Late Saxon period through to the post-medieval and later periods. The artefacts that date to the late Saxon/Norman period are those associated with a place whose occupants had access to education in the form of the styli, SF1060; commercial activity and wealth, evidenced by the balance arm, SF1016, and the casket mount, SF1056. Daily activities are represented by two iron knife blades, SF1015 and SF106, and a fish hook, SF1089; elite modes of transport shown by the small lobed horseshoe, SF1082. These objects were primarily recovered from trenches associated with the apsidal building.

POTTERY REPORT

Together with the pottery recovered from fieldwalking, this assemblage represents a very large quantity of material from a medieval rural site, albeit one of known high status. It is one of few such sites to have been excavated in this part of the county in recent years, and it is of significance in adding to our knowledge of the fabrics and forms in use in this part of Suffolk in the medieval period. It is clear that the majority of the pottery from this site has parallels in the corpus for Colchester and the surrounding district (Cotter 2000) and that much of the pottery was sourced from kilns in Essex, with little material from the known kiln sites in Suffolk appearing in this assemblage. Again, this may in part be due to the period of activity, as the Hollesley and Ipswich potteries are currently dated to the later 13th and 14th centuries. However, Nayland is closer to Colchester than Ipswich and presumably this has been the market of choice for the inhabitants for centuries.

GLASS REPORT

In conclusion, despite the small quantity of poorly preserved glass, we are certainly able to say that a building at Court Knoll had glazed windows in the medieval period; the appearance suggests they probably date to the 13th century or earlier. The compositional type does not have an exact match with any comparators, but has some similarities with 12th/13th-century or earlier glass (Paynter 2019). Potash window glass was being used certainly by the 11th century in England. It is possible that the glazing scheme included differently shaped quarries, and that some quarries were coloured glass (ibid.). No painted decoration can be seen, but the poor condition of the glass means that this cannot be ruled out. Any building glazed at this period was of high status.

WOOD CHARCOAL REPORT

The charcoal came from two deposits (0131 and 0165) located to the north of the altar (0162), containing heat-damaged window glass, decorative plaster and glazed tiles, and a charcoal layer (0096) over-lying rammed chalk floor (0112) in the southern part of the building. The evidence from the burnt layers indicates structural elements in the chapel building were made of oak. This is unsurprising as oak was commonly used in construction in churches. The absence of evidence for beetle tunnels in the charcoal examined (including the sapwood from context 0096) indicates that the wood was not heavily decayed at the time of burning; implying that the chapel was not deliberately demolished due to age or poor condition.



A fragment of glazed polychrome tile



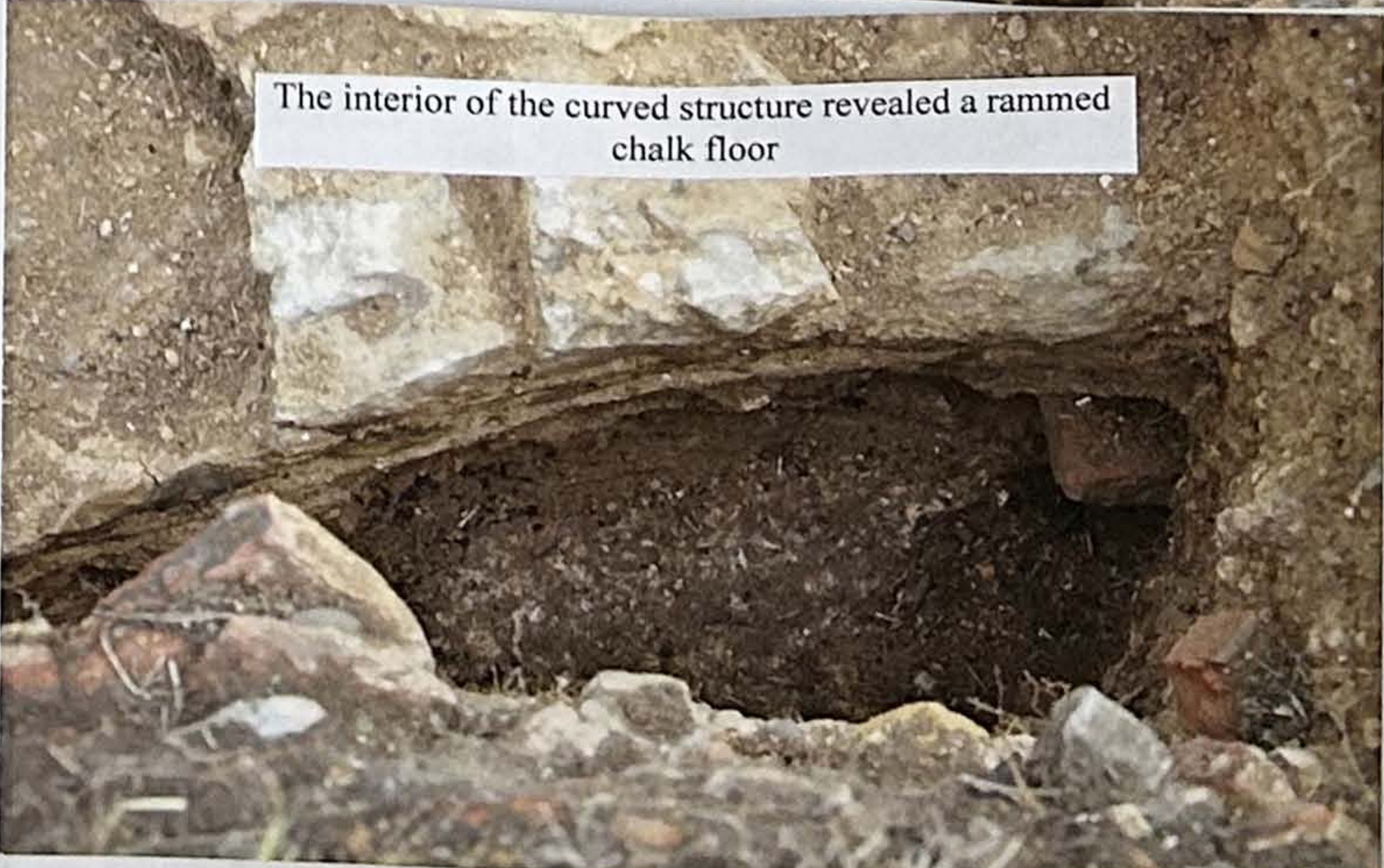
The skeleton remains discovered in trench 7 in the last hours of the excavations



The rectangular area (with tape measure) may be the base of an altar



An oven feature in trench 6



The interior of the curved structure revealed a rammed chalk floor

NAYLAND TEST PIT DIGS

5th – 7th October 2012
20th – 21st September 2014

Managing a
Masterpiece:

The Stour Valley
Landscape Partnership



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CAMBRIDGE
Discover something new

Are you interested in finding out more about
YOUR property in the past

which will help piece together
the early history of Nayland

while at the same time
helping the local community
come together to develop new skills and make new discoveries?

As part of the HLF-funded Managing a Masterpiece scheme, in October Access Cambridge Archaeology (ACA) will be giving Nayland residents the chance to carry out their own small archaeological 'test pit' excavations to find out how the village developed over hundreds – even thousands – of years in the past.

Would YOU like to find out what's underneath YOUR garden?



Friday 5th – Sunday 7th October 2012

The project will be run by Dr Carenza Lewis, well-known from Channel 4's *Time Team* and BBC's *Story of England* and *The Great British Story*. Test pits are just 1m², create a minimum of disturbance, and can be sited anywhere you wish (on unscheduled land). The digging can be done by you, your family and friends, or by interested members of the public from elsewhere.

For more information contact Andora Carver on
carversnayland@tiscali.co.uk

or ACA on 01223 761519 or access@arch.cam.ac.uk

NAYLAND TEST PIT DIG by Pat Bray

A community project which involved digging test pits to discover more about Nayland's early history drew an enthusiastic response over the weekend of October 5-7.

The archaeological event was run by Dr Carenza Lewis, formerly of Channel 4's *Time Team*, and her team who were on hand to advise diggers. Thirty-four pits were dug at sites all over the village and over three days a huge range of objects was unearthed.

On October 7 a tea party was held at Carvers' Barn, Mill Street, to display the finds which included medieval pottery, coins, brick and tile fragments, animal bones, metal and a range of bottles. Dr Lewis said there were very little prehistoric and no Roman or Anglo-Saxon materials. She added: "Nayland was a new town in the 13th century and went on from there. A fantastic range of people have been involved this weekend and it gives us a much clearer idea of the village."

She thanked Andora Carver, who co-ordinated the whole project, her own team and everyone who took part. Mrs Carver, secretary of Nayland with Wissington Conservation Society, said: "It's been a wonderful experience for everyone involved and a great community event. There was a buzz about the village all weekend and people really enjoyed working together."

The finds will be washed, recorded and retained for analysis before being returned to the owners, if requested. The event is part of the lottery-funded Managing a Masterpiece scheme.

Clockwise from top: Dr Carenza Lewis at the briefing meeting at Nayland Primary School on Friday 5th October; Site 24 at Mill House; Site 7 at Parkers; Dr Carenza Lewis giving the Saturday briefing at Carvers' Barn; visitors viewing the finds that had been unearthed; aerial view of the tea party at Mill House at the end of the weekend.



Volunteers take a quick break for lunch on the first day



Some ancient finds are unearthed!

Summary and Results Review Dr Carenza Lewis

2012

The evidence clearly suggests that in the prehistoric period people were living at the western end of the present village, where test Pit 1 (105 Bear St.) found very fresh-looking flint flakes from tool-making, probably in the Neolithic period. So this area may have been the first permanent settlement at what is now Nayland.

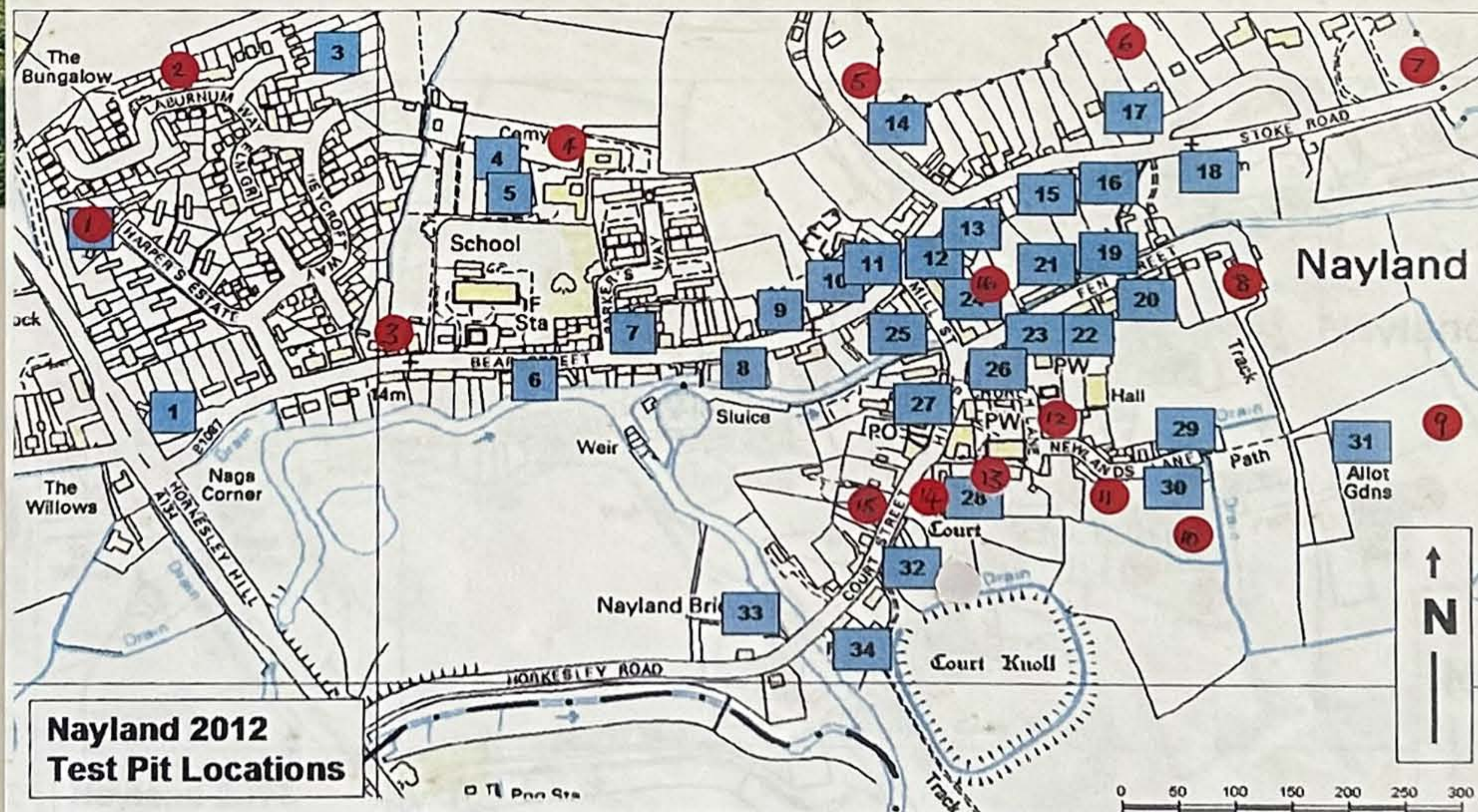
There is evidence of Roman activity in the form of sherds found in undisturbed layers on the west side of the village, near to the A134/Bear Street junction and then on the Stoke Road in the east but nowhere in the village centre.

There were only 2 sites in the village showing evidence of late Anglo Saxon period (Thetford Ware), one of which was not far from Court Knoll, which is thought to be a Norman moated site. It is not typical to find Roman and early medieval ware on the edge of a village. This is something which could be explored in future test pit digs.

There is no evidence for any settlement continuing after that for a very long time, until about 1200, when the village appears to be founded.

It is quite unexpected that the village doesn't appear to have its roots in the late Anglo-Saxon period. Most of our villages do originate with settlement in this period, although it is less common in South Suffolk and Essex. Newlands Lane and Fen Street may have been slightly later extensions to the settlement.

What is really remarkable is the amount of later medieval pottery found – although we'll need to wait for the final assessment, at the moment it looks as if Nayland is a member of the minority of settlements which didn't see some severe contraction in the post- Black Death era – in this it is similar to Long Melford, but very different to Clare."



Follow-up pits 2014

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Nayland with Wissington
Conservation Society

DEDHAM VALE
RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECT
& LANDSCAPE PARTNERSHIP

Nayland with Wissington
Community Council

What's under the gardens of Nayland?

Find out by joining in Nayland's community
archaeological excavations!

"Great fun, fascinating and good community activity."
(GR, Test Pit Excavation Volunteer)



Saturday 20th – Sunday 21st September 2014



- Run by Dr Carenza Lewis of Cambridge University, well-known from Channel 4's *Time Team* and BBC's *The Great British Story*
- Small-scale 'test pit' excavations completed over two days
- People of all ages, with or without experience, welcome

To volunteer to take part in the excavations
please contact Andora Carver
E-mail: carversnayland@talktalk.net
Phone: 01206 262970

Nayland Follow-Up Test Pit Dig 20-21 September 2014

Preliminary Report

Follow-Up Dig was a very successful event. Over 80 people attended Dr. Carenza Lewis' briefing on Saturday morning before dispersing to the 16 test pits round the village. They were later joined by more volunteers during two day project.

Pits produced worked flints of the Neolithic (Stonehenge) era in undisturbed ground.

Two pits contained Roman sherds and 1 pit, at Alston Court, produced a sherd of Age Pottery (400-100BC), which is a first for Nayland.

The evidence in the pits close to the village centre Dr. Lewis is confident that a late Anglo Saxon Settlement existed, tightly clustered around the church and to the south of Newlands Lane which is now farmland.

There were lots of high medieval finds, including pieces of Hedingham Ware (10-1300), showing how and where the larger village came to grow. Late medieval (1300-1550) pottery was again widely distributed in centrally located areas.

76% of pits in the 2012 analysis of finds contained late medieval pottery. The average found in the Eastern Region is 21%. It will be interesting to see if the finds found in the latest Pits confirm this trend.

End of Dig Tea Party in the garden of Mill House was an opportunity for everyone involved to share the results of the dig. About 100 people, of all ages from the village and beyond, gathered to hear Dr. Lewis's initial summary.

The story of how the village evolved has definitely moved on another chapter thanks to the dig and funding from our sponsors, the Dedham Vale AONB & the Stour Valley Sustainable Development Fund, the Nayland with Wissington Community Council and the Conservation Society; but it would not have been possible without the hard work and commitment of a great many volunteers.

Preliminary results and pottery report are available to see on Access Cambridge Archaeology's website

<http://www.access.arch.cam.ac.uk/reports/suffolk/nayland>

We hope that Carenza Lewis will come to Nayland next April and give her final report and analysis of the dig. Further information on our website.

Andora and the Nayland Dig Team



Finds are sorted in the Carvers' Barn according to Pit Number and Context before being taken to Cambridge for analysis.