

103 THE STREET, CAPEL ST MARY

CSM 025

Archaeological Monitoring Report

Planning Application No: B/04/01704/FUL
Grid reference: TM 0865 3821

Date of Fieldwork: 31st August 2005
Funding Body: Plan Build Services

Introduction

A Planning Application (B/04/01704/FUL) was granted for residential development at the site of 103 The Street, Capel St Mary. The site encompasses *c.* 675m² and lies at *c.* 40m AOD at the eastern end of a small east to west tributary valley that leads to a larger north to south valley approximately 350m to the west. Prior to demolition the site sloped fairly steeply down to the north. The site is bounded to the north by the main east to west aligned road through the village (The Street); to the east by the gardens of a neighbouring property; to the south by an area of currently open land known as 'The Driftway'; and to the west by a small lane providing access to the plot to the south.

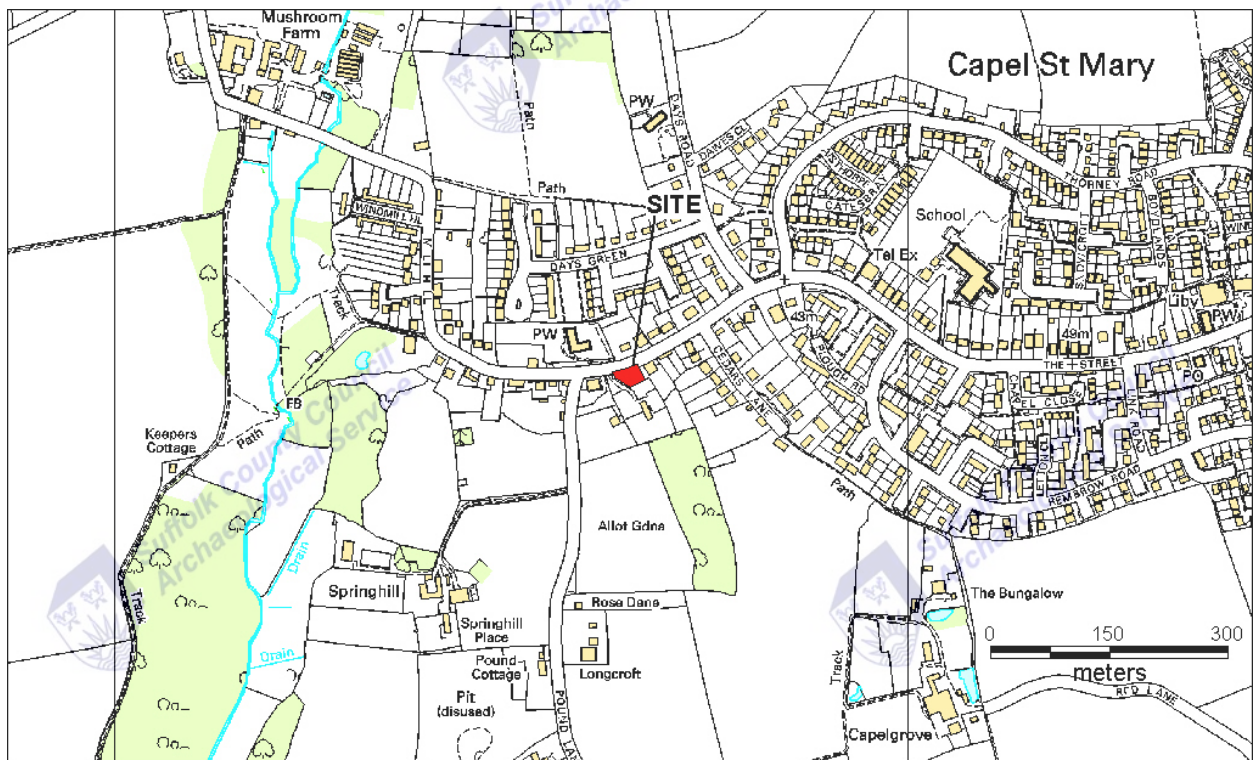


Figure 1. Site location

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The site lies on an ancient street frontage within the historic core of the village, with the medieval church of St Mary (CSM 013) just 65m to the north. The Roman road to Colchester lies less than a kilometre to the south and a villa was established in the Roman period in the nearby valley. Roman cremation burials have been recovered from the churchyard (during construction of a new meeting hall on the northern side of the church) just 75m to the north-west and also *c.* 100m to the north-north-west at No. 32 Days Green (CSM 010).

The site was therefore thought to have significant potential for the preservation of Roman and post-Roman deposits. The planning permission was therefore conditional upon a programme of archaeological work being carried out. Judith Plouviez of the SCCAS Conservation Team produced a Brief and Specification for Archaeological Monitoring and the SCCAS Field Team was subsequently commissioned to carry out the work by the client, Plan Build Services, who also funded the work.

Methodology

A single monitoring visit was made on the 31st of August to observe the open strip foundation trenches.

The trenches were excavated using a 180⁰ wheeled mechanical excavator (JCB) fitted with a 0.5m wide toothed bucket. This necessitated brief hand cleaning of the base of the trench and the faces of the upstanding sections in some areas in order to clarify the nature of the deposits.

The previous dwelling had been demolished and the site levelled at the time of observation, so it was difficult to ascertain the nature of the slope existing prior to the current redevelopment.

The site was allocated the SMR number CSM 025 and observed archaeological features and deposits were allocated OP (observable phenomena) numbers and recorded on *pro forma* context sheets.

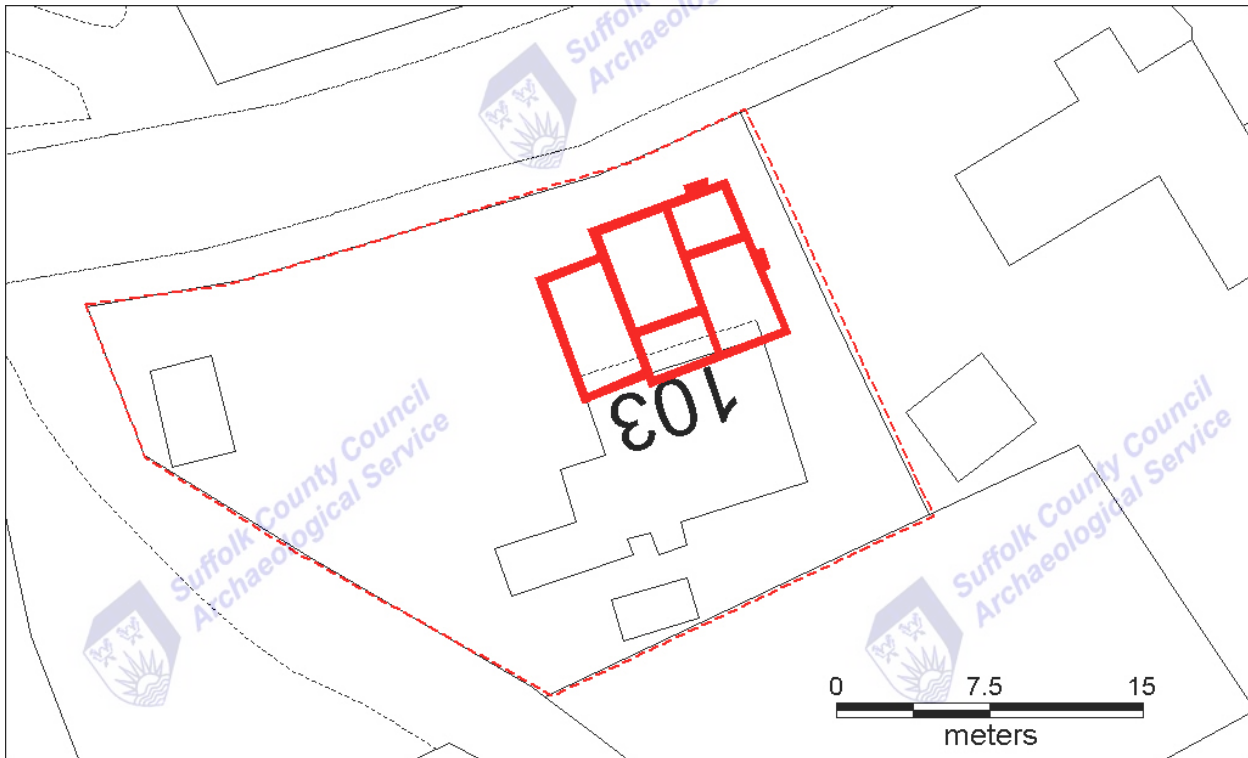


Figure 2. Location of strip foundations

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Results

The following common stratigraphy was observed throughout the site:

Context	Depth	Description
0002	0.4 – 1m	Topsoil. Soft mid grey sandy silty clay with moderate CBM fragments and small to medium sub-rounded flint pebbles.
0003	0.4 – 1m+	Natural drift (terrace gravels). Loose light yellowish brown medium sand matrix (40%) with small poorly sorted sub-rounded to sub-angular flint pebbles (60%).

The foundation trenches were excavated to just beyond the depth of clean natural, in this case 1.2m deep in the south-eastern part of the site and 1.4m deep in the north-western part of the site.

No archaeological finds or features were recorded.

Despite the demolition and levelling that had taken place prior to the monitoring visit some evidence of the former slope could still be discerned in the differing depth of the topsoil recorded across the site, which was notably thicker at the downslope (northern) end where some migration of soil by colluvial/hillwash action would be expected. However, it was not possible to ascertain when the site was first terraced or levelled.

Conclusions

Although the site lies in close proximity to the street frontage and the findspots of a number of Roman cremation burials no archaeological finds or features were recorded.

However, it seems likely that the site had seen significant terracing at the time of the construction of the previous dwelling or perhaps even earlier. It is not therefore possible to say definitively that the site lies outside the area of any possible Roman cremation cemetery.

Report No. **2005/134**

Rhodri Gardner, for SCCAS, September 2005

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