

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING REPORT

SCCAS REPORT No. 2012/099	Parish: Bury St Edmunds
Abbey Gardens, Removal of the aviary flowerbed BSE 393	Planning Application No.: SMC S00035631
	HER Event No.: BSE 393
Address: Abbey Gardens, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk.	Grid Reference: TL 856 643
	Number of Site visits: 5
	Date of visits: 28-30 June 2012
<p>Introduction</p> <p>A continuous monitoring was carried out in the Abbey Gardens of Bury St Edmunds during the excavation of a brick lined flower bed. The work took place over the 28-30th of June 2012. The work was carried out to a brief issued by Abby Antrobus and approved by the regional commissioner of English Heritage. The work was carried out by staff of Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service (SCCAS) Field Team.</p> <p>A condition was placed on these ground works as the site lies within the precinct of the former Abbey of St Edmunds and a protected Scheduled Monument (BSE 010, SF2). The site is located within the Great Court and close to the remains of the late 12th-early 13th service buildings that once lined the north side of the court (Fig.1). The site rises to the north and the south end is thought to be at, or very close to, the original medieval ground surface.</p> <p>Prior to being a flower-bed the monitored area was the site of one of the aviary cages.</p>	

Groundworks

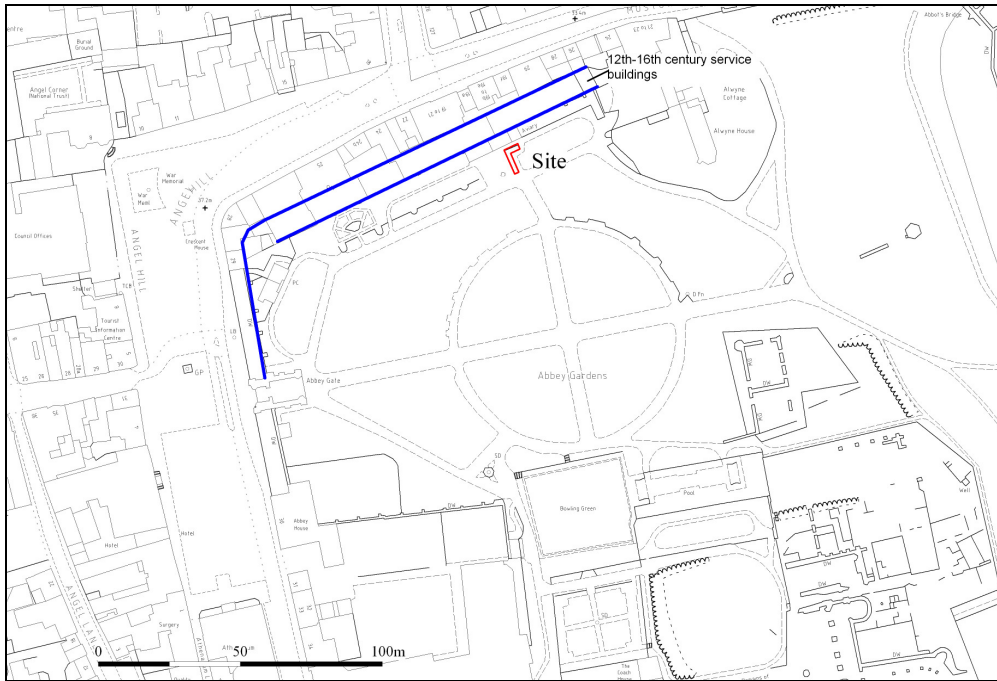
The flower bed was L-shaped in plan, running east to west along the line of the northern precinct wall, at its western end it turned to the south down a gradual slope. The entire area was excavated to an approximate depth of 300mm and covered an area of approximately 22.32sqm. The site was monitored while this area was hand excavated with shovels and the removed soil was checked for archaeological finds. At the southern end and at the trenches lowest point the excavation reached the level of archaeological deposits and at no point was the natural geology reached. The stones removed from the rockery were large sandstone boulders and not part of the Abbey ruins.

Results

At the southernmost limit of the excavation were uncovered what appeared to be mortar and gravel rough cobbled surfaces 0004 and 0005 (Fig. 2). These surfaces were found under a dark silty deposit 0001 and a dark gravelly deposit 0003. There was also an east to west aligned bonded brick wall (0002) that was probably related to the aviary buildings.

Mortar and cobble surface 0004. This was uncovered in the south west corner of the trench at a depth of 0.32m, it extends 0.9m to the north and 1.3m to the east and beyond the trench to the south and west. The eastern edge is possibly not the true extent of the surface and may have been caused by root disturbance from the surrounding trees. This surface is made of yellow lime mortar and rounded flint cobbles, a construction technique used in late medieval and early post-medieval yard surfaces. It butts up against the rough cobbled surface of 0005, which appears to be contemporary, although the distinct line between the two and their differing construction indicate either a difference in function or a possible repair.

Flint gravel surface 0005. This surface was uncovered butting up against 0004 to the south. It was not fully uncovered as the depth of the trench, as it rises up the slope to the north, did not reach this level and only a small area was visible before it ran under the deposits 0001 and 0003. It was constructed of various sized flint cobbles and gravels and was covered with an extensive layer of oyster shell. This



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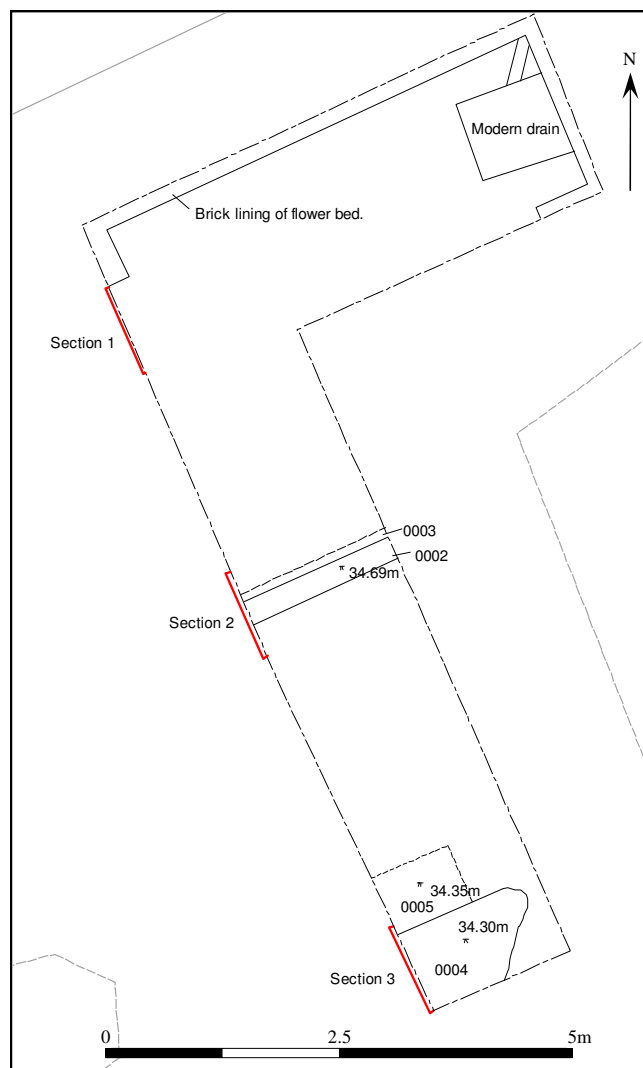


Figure 1 (top): Site location. Figure 2 (bottom): Site plan.

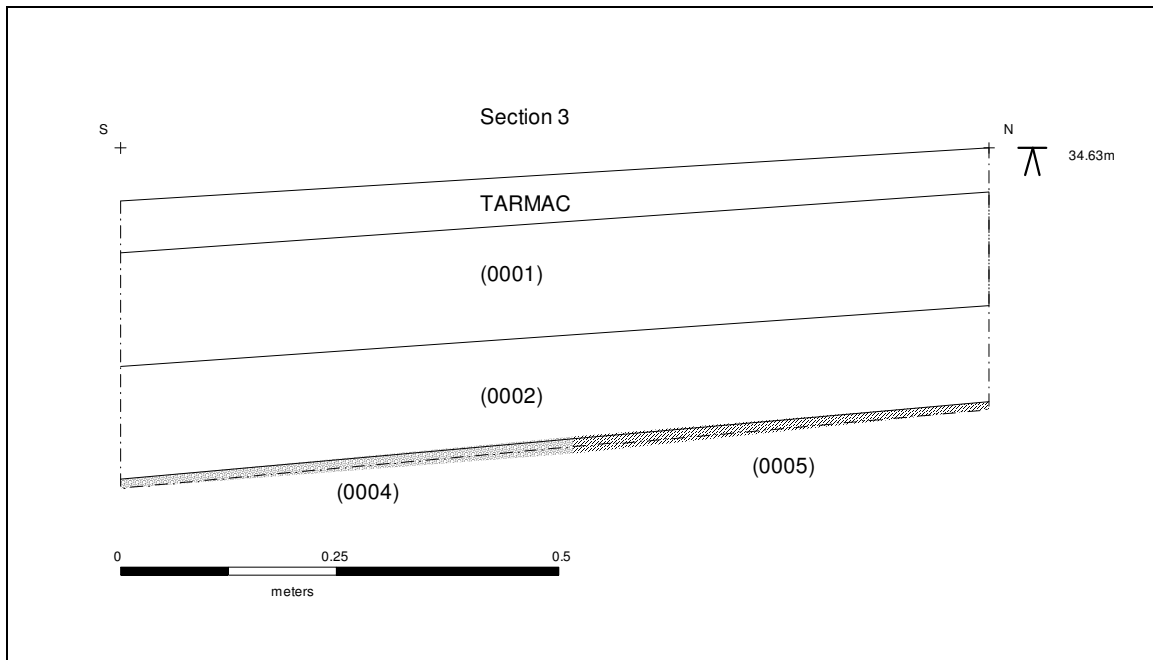


Figure 3: Section 3 showing overburden on top of surfaces 0004 and 0005



Plate 1: Section 3 with surfaces 0004 and 0005 in the foreground.

rough cobbling and the deposits of oyster shell are very consistent with similar late medieval/early post medieval yard style surfaces.

Aviary wall 0002. This wall was uncovered approximately 4.5m from the southern limit of the trench. It is aligned east to west and extends beyond the limit of the trench in either direction. It was made of red brick and bonded with a lime mortar and was discovered at a depth of 0.24m. It appears to be under the dark silty deposit 0001 but cutting through the gravelly deposit 0003 suggesting it was built in-between these two events, almost certainly at the time of the aviary buildings in the 19th century.

Discussion

The monitoring results confirm that the medieval ground levels lie close to the surface and there are well-preserved archaeological deposits within 300mm of the current ground surface in the area of the Great Court. There is a shallow overburden which increases towards the north of the monitored area which offers limited protection to these deposits close to the aviary buildings.

Recorded by: John Sims

Date: 20/07/2012

