

Martello Tower P, Langer Road, Felixstowe FEX 294

Archaeological Monitoring Report

SCCAS Report No. 2013/034

Client: Suffolk Coastal District Council

Author: M. Sommers

March 2013

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Martello Tower P, Langer Road, Felixstowe

FEX 294

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Editor: Dr. R. Gardner

Report Date: March 2013

HER Information

Site Code: FEX 294
Site Name: Martello Tower P, Felixstowe
Report Number 2013/034
Planning Application No: C/12/0068
Date of Fieldwork: 1st March 2013
Grid Reference: TM 2925 3308
Oasis Reference: suffolkc1-145505
Curatorial Officer: Dr. J. Tipper
Project Officer: M. Sommers
Client/Funding Body: Suffolk Coastal District Council
Client Reference: *****

Digital report submitted to Archaeological Data Service:

<http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/catalogue/library/greylit>

Disclaimer

Any opinions expressed in this report about the need for further archaeological work are those of the Field Projects Team alone. Ultimately the need for further work will be determined by the Local Planning Authority and its Archaeological Advisors when a planning application is registered. Suffolk County Council's archaeological contracting services cannot accept responsibility for inconvenience caused to the clients should the Planning Authority take a different view to that expressed in the report.

Prepared By: M. Sommers
Date: 25th March 2013

Approved By: Dr. R. Gardner
Position: Contracts Manger
Date: 25th March 2013
Signed:

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Summary

Archaeological monitoring of the excavation of a service trench on land adjacent to Martello Tower P, Felixstowe, was undertaken during March 2013. The tower dates from the early 19th century and is a Scheduled Monument. During this work a surface of pale mortar with small brick fragments and pebbles, c. 8.5 cm thick, was recorded at a depth of 0.6m below the present ground surface. A small area of brickwork, which may have been a wall base, was located crossing the trench at an angle approximately 2m to the west. It was sitting on a similar material situated at the same depth. These features have been interpreted as the remains of a structure. The surface was cut by a concrete anchor for a mast that was erected around 1900. An encircling ditch, as identified during an earlier evaluation, was seen in the area adjacent the tower.

1. Introduction

In order to renew the electrical supply to Martello Tower P, Langer Road, Felixstowe, the excavation of a service trench for a cable duct was undertaken during March 2013. Martello Tower P is one of a chain of defensive towers built along the Essex and Suffolk coast in the early 1800s and is a designated Scheduled Monument. Although the designated area of the Scheduled Monument only extends for a short distance around the tower, it is situated within a 'military compound' that was originally marked by boundary stones and, later, an iron railing fence, which is also deemed to be of archaeological importance. Scheduled Monument consent for the work was granted on the understanding that it would be subjected to continual archaeological monitoring. A Written Scheme of Investigation, detailing how this was to be achieved, was produced and approved by Dr. Jess Tipper of the County Conservation Team (Appendix 1).

The tower is situated at TM 2927 3308 in an open area of land to the southeast of Langer Road in Felixstowe (see figure 1 for a location plan). It is in a coastal location and is situated 95m from the normal high water mark. A concrete sea defence separates the area of the tower from the adjacent shingle beach. The immediate area to the north, west and southwest is currently being developed for housing.

The archaeological monitoring was undertaken by the Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service, Field Team, who were commissioned and funded by Suffolk Coastal District Council.

2. Geology and topography

The underlying geology of the Felixstowe peninsular comprises chalk overlain by London clay which is in turn overlain by deposits of crag. The area of the tower itself is formed from a sand and gravel ridge and a complex sequence of shifting shingle ridges and valleys. Since the construction of sea defences the shifting shingle has become stable and a poor thin sandy topsoil has developed which has enabled scrub/heathland grasses to become established.

The site lies at a height of c. 4.0m OD and as such is slightly higher than the adjacent inland area which consists of reclaimed marshland. The site itself is generally level with a barely perceptible slope down towards the north and west.

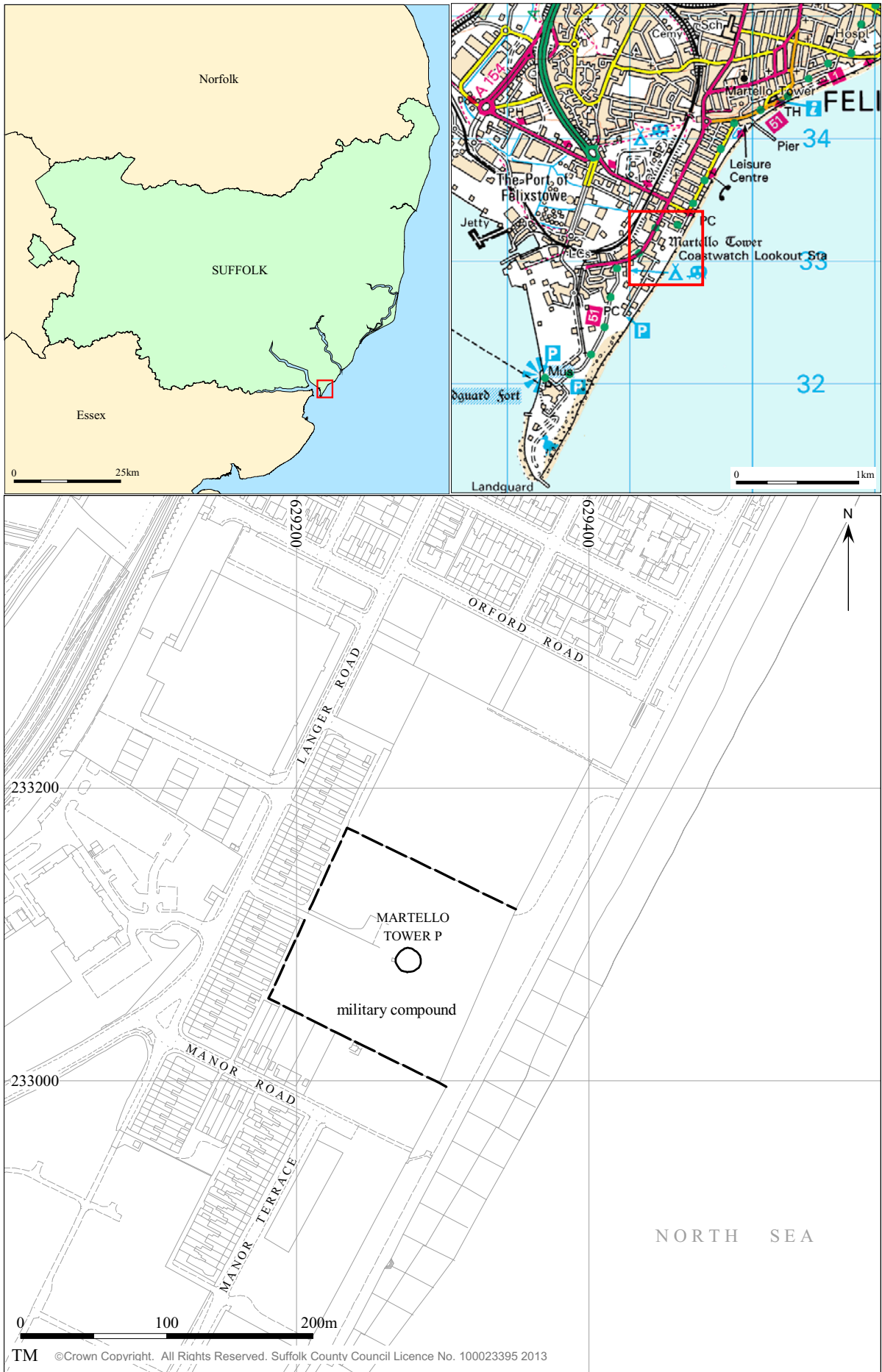


Figure 1. Location map

3. Archaeology and historical background

The background of the site has been detailed in a Desk-Based Assessment (Breen and Sommers, 2008). In summary, historical sources indicate that in 1734 the coastline lay just to the rear of the houses presently fronting Langer Road and that the tower and its military compound are situated on a shifting bank of sand and shingle that accrued during the 18th century. By the early 19th century this area of new land was clearly deemed stable enough for the construction of the tower in 1808, at which time the adjacent land was described as 'waste'.

Throughout the 19th and 20th century the area has been site of intermittent military use with occasional encampments by the Volunteer Force (later the Territorial Army) and the installation of temporary defences during World Wars I and II. The tower itself was virtually obsolete by the time it was completed as Napoleon and France had been defeated and was taken over by the coastguard service sometime in the early 19th century. A terrace of five houses, later known as 'Coastguard Cottages', were built adjacent the tower in c.1887 (demolished 2008).

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries the tower was used as a Naval Wireless Station and supported at least one large mast type antenna with cable stays. A machine gun emplacement was added to the top of the tower during World War I (Millward 2007).

The tower continued in use as a Coastguard Station and is now used by volunteers of the National Coastwatch Institution. It is in relatively good condition although it has lost the outer layer of brickwork, which has left the stonework surrounds of the windows and the door standing proud. Most of the outer surface has then been rendered with 'pebble-dash' whilst the lower section has been refaced in brick.

4. Methodology

The monitoring was achieved through the visual examination of the service trench during and after its excavation by machine in order to identify any significant archaeological features and/or deposits. The location of any features identified was then plotted and the stratigraphy recorded. The spoil was also examined in an attempt to recover datable finds. Digital photographs were also taken as part of the record. The trench's precise location was later recorded using GPS equipment.

5. Results

5.1 Introduction

A 25m length of the service trench, excavated for the installation of a cable duct, was archaeological monitored. It was located in the area adjacent the Martello Tower (fig. 2). It was cut in a straight line but with a slight kink to avoid a mast tether and a small, modern brick structure.

The service trench was to continue across the area then under development by Bloors Homes, the excavation of which was planned for a later date. Unfortunately, this work was done without archaeological monitoring due to an absence of communication.



Figure 2. Trench location

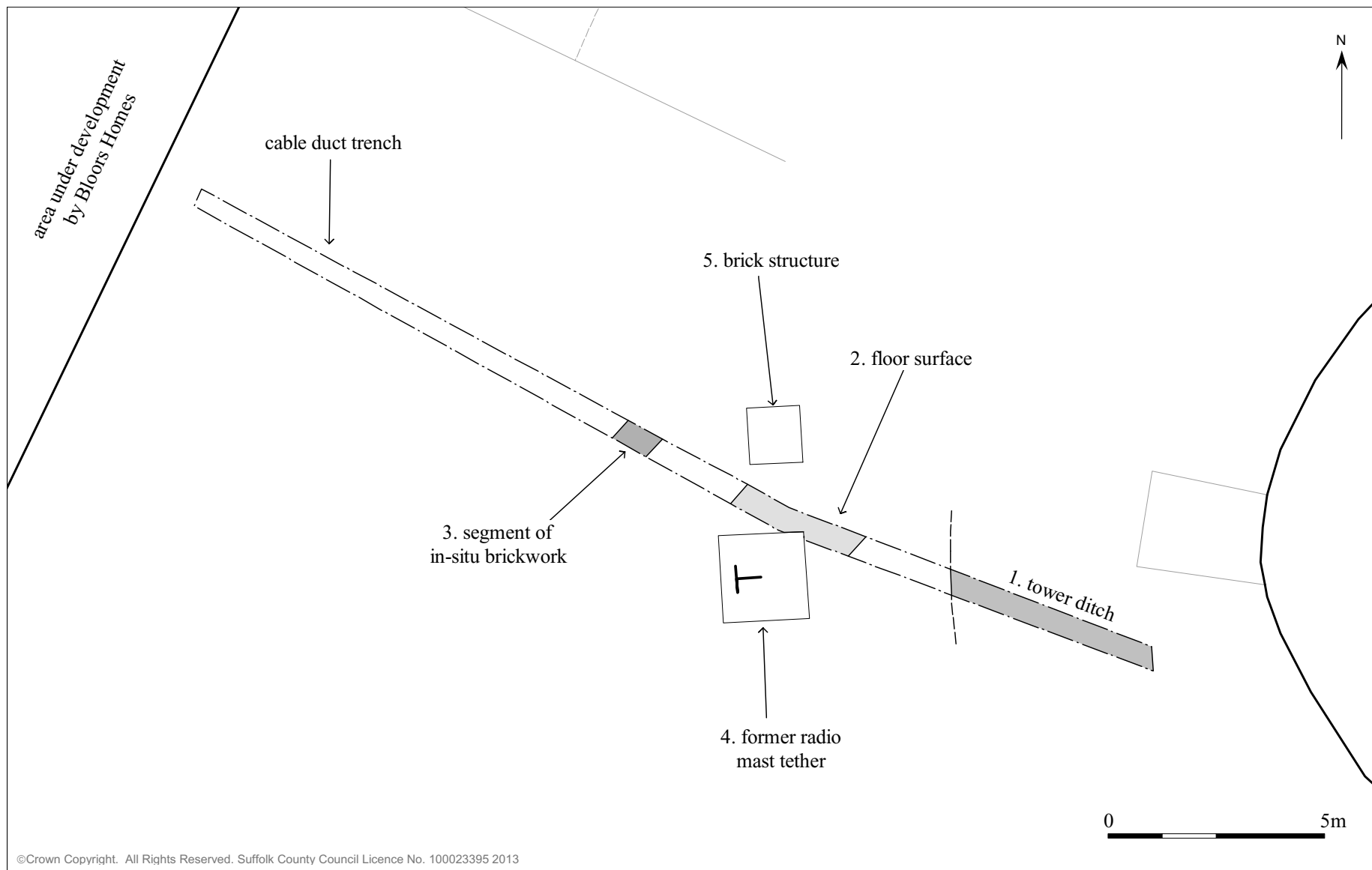


Figure 3. Results

5.2 Trench results

The trench measured c. 0.45m in width and was cut to depths of between 0.6m to 0.7m. It was cut through a 0.15m to 0.2m thick layer of turf and topsoil before encountering the loose sand and shingle that forms the naturally accrued sand and gravel ridge along this area of the coast.

Within the trench four features were recorded, the locations of which are plotted in figure 3. Descriptions of each follow below:

1. Adjacent the tower the tower a large cut was present, the base of which was below the bottom of the service trench. It was predominately filled with topsoil with a lens of dark grey-brown sand gravel towards the base of the service trench (plate 1). The north-west edge of the cut sloped up gently; the opposite edge was not seen as it lay beyond the end of the service trench. This was interpreted as a ditch which is known to circle the tower. It was recorded in series of evaluation trenches excavated recently where it found to be 7.8m wide 0.85m deep (Sommers, 2012).

2. A hard surface was noted at a distance of c. 8m from the tower. It comprised a layer of a fine white cemented material, possibly chalk mixed with lime, which formed a possible floor surface (plate 2). Inclusions within the material comprised occasional small fragments of dark red brick and infrequent pebbles, some quite large (plate 3). This surface lay at a depth of 0.6m below the present ground level, at c. 2.95m OD, and varied in thickness between 0.10m and 0.07m. It extended for a distance of 2.9m along the service trench and was clearly cut by the large concrete block that formed part of the radio mast tether.

3. A possible wall line was noted at a distance of 15m from the tower. It consisted of a single course of bricks resting on a surface similar to that described above (plate 4). It measured c. 0.8m in width and was situated at a depth of 0.60m below the present ground level. Although not conclusive, the similarity of the base material with the nearby surface suggested they were contemporary and associated. The alignment recorded in figure 3 is only approximate.

4. The service trench cut alongside a large concrete block into which a substantial steel bracket is set. It is one of four identical blocks that are regularly spaced around the tower. They have been interpreted as tether for hawsers that originally supported a radio mast that was mounted on the top of the tower in the late 19th/early 20th century (plate 5). The trench exposed the side of the block which revealed the edges to be regular and smooth, suggesting the concrete was poured *in-situ* against timber shuttering (plate 6). The full depth of the block was not ascertained as it continued beyond the base of the service trench. It clearly cut through the surface identified in the service trench.

5. A small brick built structure was situated immediately to the north of the service trench (plate 7). It is rectangular in plan with vertical, featureless walls and a concrete slab roof which overhangs the wall. A steel door is fixed on the eastern side, hinged and secured with a hasp and padlock. It is presumably related to services to the tower, the Coastguard Cottages that formerly stood on this site, or possibly the Royal Observer Corps bunker that lies to the northeast of the tower.

6. Discussion

The hard surface and the possible wall line contain similar materials and lie at identical depths below suggesting they are contemporary and are probably associated, being components of a single structure. The fact that the surface is cut by the tether mounting indicates it is pre c.1900 in date.

No structures are marked in this location on the 1866 plan of the tower and no obvious structures are visible in a sketch of 1837. A number of other early plans were examined for a Desk-Based Assessment (Breen and Sommers, 2008), none of which show a structure in this area. It is possibly that it is was a short lived structure or was just an area of hardstanding. Alternatively, it may in fact be related to the construction of the tower, such as a surface and possibly shelter for slaking and mixing lime for the production of mortar.

7. Archive deposition

Historic Environment Record reference under which the archive is held: FEX 294.

The digital archive will be stored on the SCC secure servers at the location:

R:\Environmental Protection\Conservation\Archaeology\Archive\Felixstowe\FEX294 Monitoring (Martello P cable duct)

Digital photographs are held under the references: HTA 07 to HTA 13

A summary of this project has been entered into OASIS, the online database, under the reference: suffolkc1-145505

8. Bibliography

Breen, A. and Sommers, M., 2008 *Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment: Felixstowe, South Seafront & Martello Tower 'P'* Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service Report No 2008/50

Sommers, M., 2012 *Archaeological Evaluation Report: South Seafront & Martello Tower 'P', Felixstowe* Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service Report No 2012/061

9. Plates



Plate 1. Tower ditch, camera facing east (ref. HTA 07)



Plate 2. surface, camera facing northwest (ref. HTA 08)



Plate 3. close up of the surface showing large pebble inclusion (ref. HTA 09)



Plate 4. brickwork - possible wall, camera facing northeast (ref. HTA 10)



Plate 5. radio mast tether (ref. HTA 11)



Plate 6. radio mast tether, side view, camera facing south (ref. HTA 12)



Plate 7. brick structure, camera facing northwest (ref. HTA 13)

Appendix 1. Written Scheme of Investigation

WRITTEN SCHEME OF INVESTIGATION FOR CONTINUOUS ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING

PLANNING STATUS: Scheduled Monument Consent

GRID REF: TM 2927 3308

Suffolk HER No: FEX 294

SCCAS JOB CODE: TBC

- The Field Projects Team of the Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service (hereafter SCCAS/FPT) have provided a Written Scheme of Investigation covering the archaeological monitoring and recording of the groundworks associated with the insertion of an electricity cable at Martello Tower P, south seafront, Felixstowe (see attached plan in red).
- The WSI has been produced at the request of the Richard Vest Architectural Design Ltd. and adheres to a Brief prepared by Jess Tipper of Suffolk County Council's Archaeological Service Conservation Team (hereafter SCCAS/CT).
- An allowance has been made to cover the projected cost of this work and the relevant estimate has previously been provided that will remain current for all work undertaken before the end of March 2013.

1. Project Aims

- To produce a permanent record of the site in an archive that will be deposited with Suffolk Heritage Environment Record (hereafter HER).
- The site will be recorded under a HER site code FEX 294. An OASIS form will be initiated prior to the start of fieldwork and a .pdf version of the report uploaded on to the website <http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/catalogue/library/greylit> for immediate release

2. Monitoring of Groundworks: method statement

- An experienced field archaeologist from SCCAS/FPT will be in constant attendance during groundwork excavations associated with the insertion of a new below. Contractors must allow time after their excavations for archaeological recording to be undertaken.
- Any archaeological features exposed during the work will be sectioned by hand with sampling at a normal standard for medieval and earlier deposits (i.e. 100% of structural features or graves/cremations, 50% of contained features e.g. pits, and 10-20% of linear features).
- Deposits will be sampled for environmental material as appropriate (and as suggested by EAA Occ. Paper Research Agenda- Environmental Archaeology). If thought appropriate and of archaeological benefit a metal detector search of exposed surfaces and spoil will be undertaken.
- Site records will be made on SCCAS/FPT pro forma context sheets under a continuous and unique numbering system and conventions compatible with the county Historic Environment Record will be used throughout the monitoring. Site plans will be drawn at 1:20 or 1:50 as appropriate and sections at 1:10 or 1:20 (all on plastic drawing film) and related to the OS map cover. A photographic record (high resolution digital shots) of the site and any archaeological features will be made where appropriate. The site will be registered within the OASIS system as is normal for the county, if the monitoring results merit it.
- A Ministry of Justice licence for removal of human remains will be obtained if necessary (any such find would require work in that part of the site to stop until the human remains have been recorded/removed). However, it is considered unlikely that this will happen on this site.

3. Report/Archive: method Statement

- Site and finds records will be entered onto Microsoft Access databases and will be archived in paper and electronic form. Site plans and sections will be inked up or digitised for report and archive purposes.

- All finds will be processed at Shire Hall, Bury St Edmunds, to minimum standards laid down by the relevant finds groups (e.g. Roman Pottery Research Group) and stored in archive stable bags/boxes. Metal finds will be x-rayed if appropriate and stabilised as necessary to ICON standards. Environmental samples will be processed and assessed by a recognised regional contractor. It is anticipated that finds will be deposited in the County Store for future reference.
- A full monitoring report summarising all the findings and containing a full assessment of all finds and samples will be produced and copies submitted to the client, SCCAS/CT and the county HER. The report will contain all appropriate scale plans and sections. The monitoring report will contain a recommendation for further analysis and publication of the results as appropriate and in accordance with regional research agendas and strategies (EAA Occ. Papers 3&8 & revised Regional Research Framework of 2008). The report will form the basis for full discharge of the relevant condition
- A full project archive will be submitted to the SCCAS/CT Archaeological Store and every effort will be made to ensure that the landowner agrees to the deposit of all the finds (the Field Team will take responsibility to report any finds which might qualify under the Treasure Act 1996). The archive will be in paper and electronic form. A summary of the project findings will also be produced. The landowner/developer will receive copies of the report with all finds fully listed.

4. On completion of the work:

- Hard copies and a single pdf file on CD of the report will be submitted to SCCAS/CT.
- The project archive will be submitted to the Suffolk HER (a fixed charge for the deposition of the archive is included in the costing).
- The Oasis Record will be completed and a pdf version of the report uploaded for immediate release.

5. Risk Assessment:

Work in a semi-urban location close to operating mechanical plant:

- For single person working Suffolk County Council operates a 'reporting-in' procedure at the middle and end of each day.
- Site staff will wear protective clothing at all times on site (hard hat, high visibility vest, steel-toe cap boots). The PO will report to the main contractor/developer at the beginning of each site visit. All staff hold CSCS cards
- Site staff will not enter the operating range of mechanical plant
- Vehicles will be parked in a safe location
- A fully charged mobile phone will be on site at all times.
- Site staff will be aware of the location of the nearest A&E unit and a vehicle will be on site at all times. It is likely that the relevant PO will be a qualified First Aider.
- Suffolk County Council holds full insurance policies for field work (details on request).

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