

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT

Land to the rear of The Dun Cow, School Lane, Bardwell BAR 071

A REPORT ON THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION, 2006
(Planning app. no. SE/06/1923)

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Acknowledgements

This project was funded by the landowner Mr R Dorling and was monitored by Mr. R.D. Carr (Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service, Conservation Team).

The excavation was carried out by David Gill, Jonathan Van Jennians and Alan Smith all from Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service, Field Team and finds were identified by Richenda Goffin and Faye Minter.

Summary

A section of a large ditch fronting School Lane in Bardwell was excavated as part of an evaluation of the site in advance of development. Bardwell is laid out around a pattern of streets that form a square and the ditch was possibly part of a circuit that followed the inside edge of the roads. The ditch is fed by a rising spring so would have always contained water and glazed earthenware pottery found in the lower fill indicated that the ditch was still open in 16th-18th century.

A Roman coin, a Numis of the House of Constantine dated 318-324AD, was also found.

SMR information

Planning application no.	SE/06/1923
Date of fieldwork:	18/09/2006
Grid Reference:	TL9429 7388
Funding body:	Mr R Dorling
OASIS Ref	Suffolk c1-18371

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Introduction

An archaeological evaluation was carried out on a site off School Lane, Bardwell (Fig. 1). The evaluation was a condition of planning application SE/06/1223 to construct a single dwelling with garage. The work followed a brief and specification issued by Suffolk County Council Archaeological Officer Mr R. D. Carr and was completed by members of Suffolk County Council's Archaeological Service on 18th September 2006. The investigation was funded by the developer and landowner Mr. R. Dorling.

The development site lies at TL9429 7388 and within the medieval settlement (Fig. 1). The settlement is laid out around a pattern of streets, which form a square with a supposed green lying outside the square to the east. The majority of the surviving medieval houses within the village are situated on the east and the southern sides of the street pattern and the site fronts the street that makes up the north arm of the square. The village is sited above the 30m contour above the floodplain of the River Blackbourne and the subsoil is river gravels and clay. The site was formerly part of the garden of one of the cottages fronting Up Street and had at one time been an orchard in the near past.

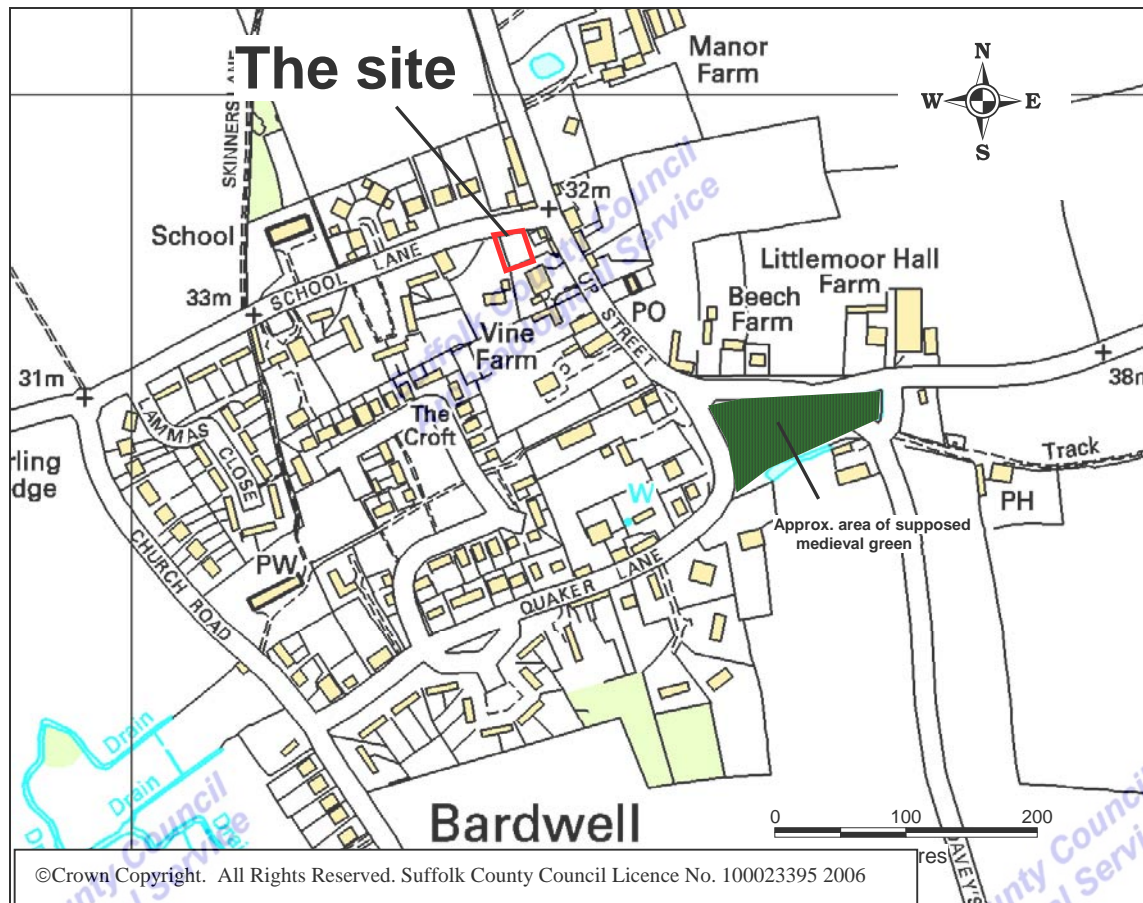


Figure 1. Site Location plan

Methodology

Two trenches were initially excavated using a mini digger fitted with 1.5m wide toothless bucket and under the constant supervision of an archaeologist. The trenches ran from the street frontage to the rear of the plot and were designed to sample all areas of the site. A third trench was excavated to sample more fully a large ditch exposed in the initial trench plan. A total of 62.25 sq metres were excavated, just over 12% of the application area.

The machine removed the topsoil to expose the surface of the subsoil. All possible archaeological features were sampled by hand excavation and the trenches and upcast spoil were scanned using a metal detector. Plans and sections were recorded at 1:20 and the positions of the trenches and features were plotted against the national grid.

Digital photographs were taken and levels were related to a spot height (31.8m) on the road, as the benchmark shown on the OS on a neighbouring house had been removed.

All pre-modern finds were retained for analysis and the site data has been input onto an MS Access database. The finds and site records have been archived in the small and main stores of Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service at Bury St Edmunds and with the County Sites and Monuments Record under the parish code BAR 071. A copy of the report has also been lodged with the OASIS on-line database (ref. suffolk c1 18371).

Results

The trenches ran from the street frontage across the full width of the site. Each trench showed a deep soil profile of between 0.7-1.0m overlying the glacial gravel. This depth of soil was made up of two distinct layers; a well worked garden soil of dark fine textured silt/loam over a paler brown and stony silt/loam. The upper soil layer may have been augmented by an imported soil and the ground level in the plots was slightly higher than that of the neighbouring gardens and 0.5-0.6m above the level of the road. The upper layer contained a large amount of post 19th century domestic rubbish throughout its depth whereas the lower layer produced no cultural material at all. Metal detecting of the trench spoil produced a Roman coin; a Numis of the House of Constantine dated 318-324AD, and part of a copper alloy spoon which was tentatively dated as late medieval or early post medieval.

Two parallel linear features running NW-SE were recorded cut into the gravel in Trench 1. These were 0.3m wide, 0.1m deep and 0.5m apart and interpreted as possible ploughmarks but did not extend into Trench 2.

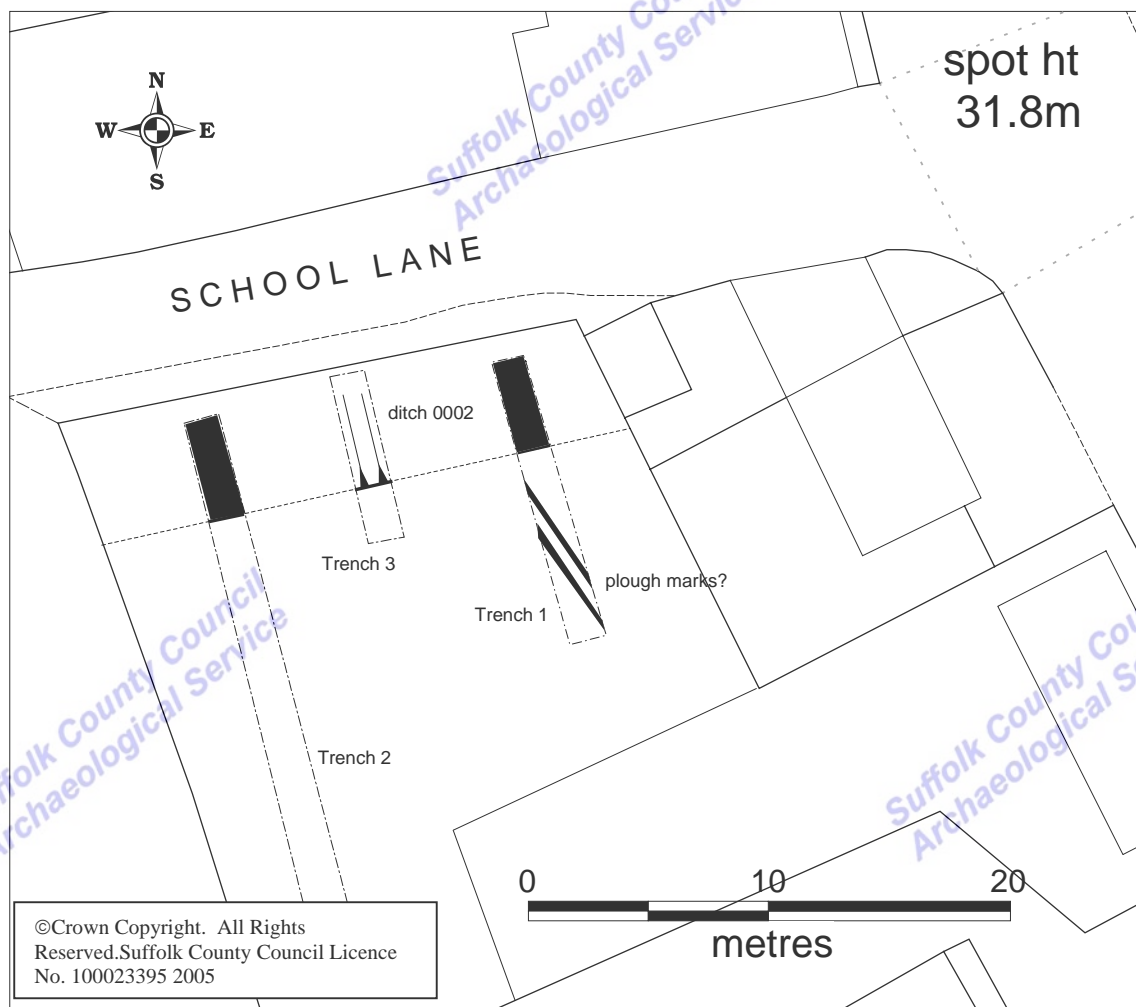


Figure 2 Site plan

A large ditch, 0002, fronted the road and this was recorded in plan in all of the trenches. The upper fills were sampled within a hand-excavated section in Trench 1, which produced no finds, and a full depth section was excavated using the machine in Trench 3 (Figs 2 and 3). The ditch was 1.60m deep and the profile, which could only be excavated to midpoint, suggested that the ditch was 3.5 - 4m wide, which would have put the northern edge into the road. The natural subsoil is gravel but at the base of the ditch was a band of clay. It was unclear if this was a natural seam or a layer within the ditch; the clay was clean and stained with natural iron. The ditch was deep enough to cut into a rising spring and it quickly filled with clean water. The base of the ditch had infilled with accumulated dark muddy silts, 0003, and this produced large sherds of Glazed red earthenware dating to 16th-18th century and a similarly dated fragment of pantile. Above the silt the ditch had been backfilled with a deep layer of clean chalk and capped off with clay.

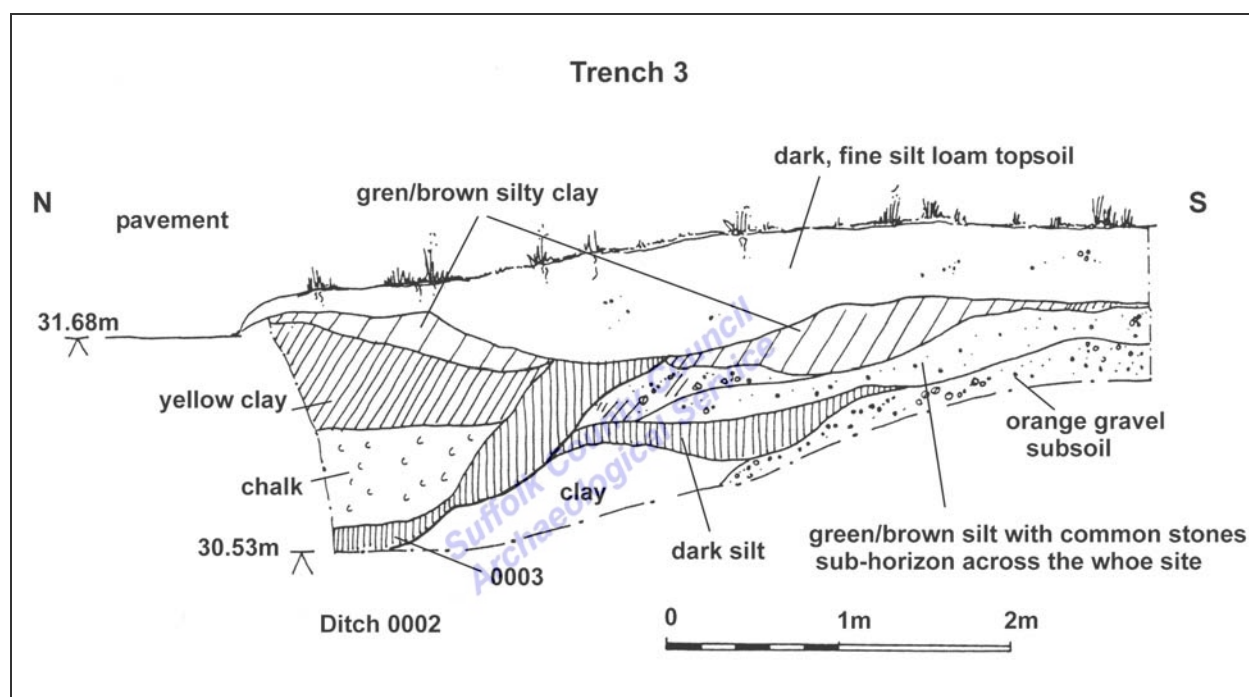


Figure 3. Section of ditch 0002

Discussion

The evaluation has demonstrated that a large ditch once ran along the south edge of School Lane which was possibly part of a circuit that followed the roads and which still exists as an open ditch along Up Street at the corner with Quaker Lane. The ditch is fed by a rising spring so would have always contained water and it is notable that Up Street becomes Spring Road beyond the junction with School Lane. There was no evidence of buildings or medieval occupation material on the site. This corresponds with evidence elsewhere in the village where the standing medieval buildings inside the square of streets are all set back 25-40m from the street frontage (Fig 4). It is unknown whether this pattern continued along School Lane but the whole of the site would fall within this interval.

The finds from the ditch suggests that it was filled in before the 18th century. There are late 18th-early 19th century houses built over the projected line of the ditch within the village but none are earlier than the suggested infilling date.

The use of chalk to infill the ditch is interesting. Chalk out-crops quite nearby to the south of Bardwell towards Ixworth but this still suggests that the chalk was specifically imported to infill the ditch. This may have been done to preserve the spring, the chalk may act as a filter and

because it is porous, a vein through which the water could pass through the underlying clay. It is possible therefore that although the ditch had been infilled, the spring could still be directed across the village through the ground.

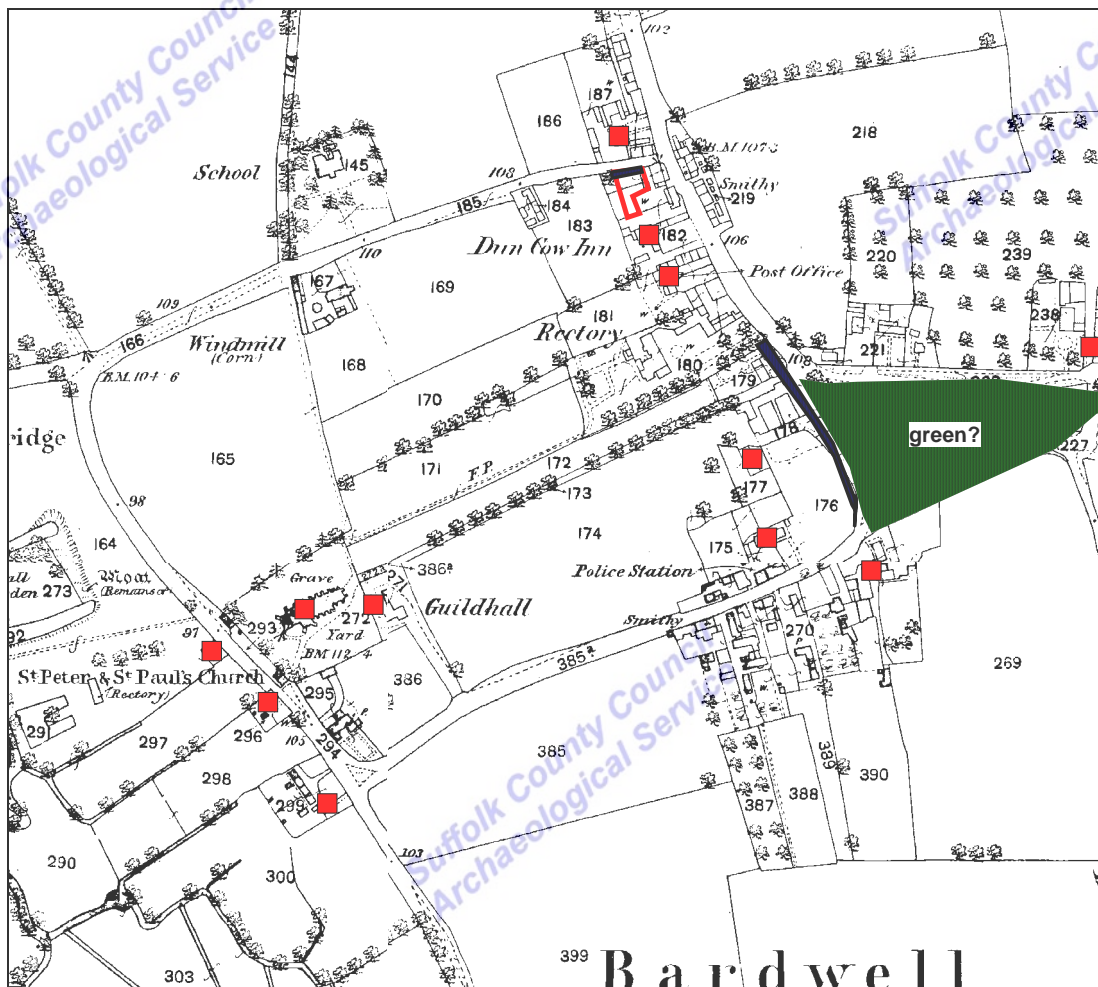


Figure 4.

1st Edition Ordnance Survey Map 1880 showing positions of medieval buildings

The layout of the village, based round the roads laid out in a square is an interesting one and suggests that the village was planned rather than allowed to evolve organically (Fig 4). In this respect it shares similarities with Walsham le Willows, and the long narrow plots shown on the early OS map are typical of medieval tofts. The ditch excavated in the evaluation however is outside the size range of an ordinary roadside ditch or property boundary. If the spoil from the original excavation of the ditch was banked up on the inside of the ditch this might explain why the medieval houses are set well back from the street and because of this it is tempting to speculate that the village is based on a fortified enclosure - it also sits on a strategic spot on a plateau over looking the river valley and close to the ancient Peddars Way.

A study of the village as a whole would be worthwhile to determine the origins of this layout but this is beyond the scope of work that could be expected of the condition on this development. The work completed so far has achieved plan and section of the ditch and produced evidence of its date. The trenching has already opened up a large percentage of the site and it is believed that additional excavation work would not significantly further the understanding of the site.

David Gill
Sept 2006

Disclaimer

Any opinions expressed in this report about the need for further archaeological work are those of the Field Projects Division alone. 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 service cannot accept responsibility for inconvenience caused to clients should the Planning Authority take a different view to that expressed in the report.

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