

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING REPORT

Land adjacent 1 Aspal Lane, Beck Row, Mildenhall MNL 579

A REPORT ON THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING OF GROUNDWORKS ASSOCIATED WITH
HOUSING DEVELOPMENT AT ASPAL LANE, MILDENHALL

Planning Application No. F/2006/0606/FUL
NGR: TL 7019 7733
OASIS Ref. Suffolkc1-35594

Funded by: Jaxmead Properties

Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service Report No. 2007/147

Summary

An archaeological monitoring of footing trenches at land at Aspal Lane Mildenhall, located two undated features, thought to be a further part of a low density scatter of prehistoric deposits identified in a previous evaluation of the site.

1. Introduction

A series of visits was made to the site from 17th to 26th July 2007 to monitor the excavation of footing trenches for seven houses at Aspal Lane, Beck Row, Mildenhall. The work was carried out to a Brief and Specification issued by Jess Tipper (Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service, Conservation Team) to fulfil a planning condition on application F/2006/0606/FUL. The work was funded by the developer, Jaxmead Properties.

The development of seven houses and associated separate garages lay at TL 7019 7733, at a height of 6-7m OD (Fig. 1). The site, an area of 4600sqm, largely consisted of open scrub grassland lying to the rear of the demolished No 1 Aspal Lane.

The site was of potential interest as it lay within the dense band of prehistoric and Roman activity that lies along the edge of the fens and 100m to the south of the medieval moated site of Aspal Hall, MNL 083. Archaeological evaluation of the site (Craven 2006) however had identified only a single prehistoric hearth pit, a post-medieval boundary ditch and preserved elements of the natural landscape. This meant that a further programme of archaeological monitoring was required to record any further scattered deposits that might be affected by the development.

2. Methodology and Results

The footing trenches, which were excavated by a machine with a toothed bucket, were observed whilst fully open and measured c.0.6m wide and c.1m deep. Trenching in Plots 1 and 2 was not observed. They showed the same soil profile as seen in the evaluation, a thin topsoil, c.0.1-2m thick, overlying a layer of homogenous brown sands, up to 0.3m thick, which directly overlaid

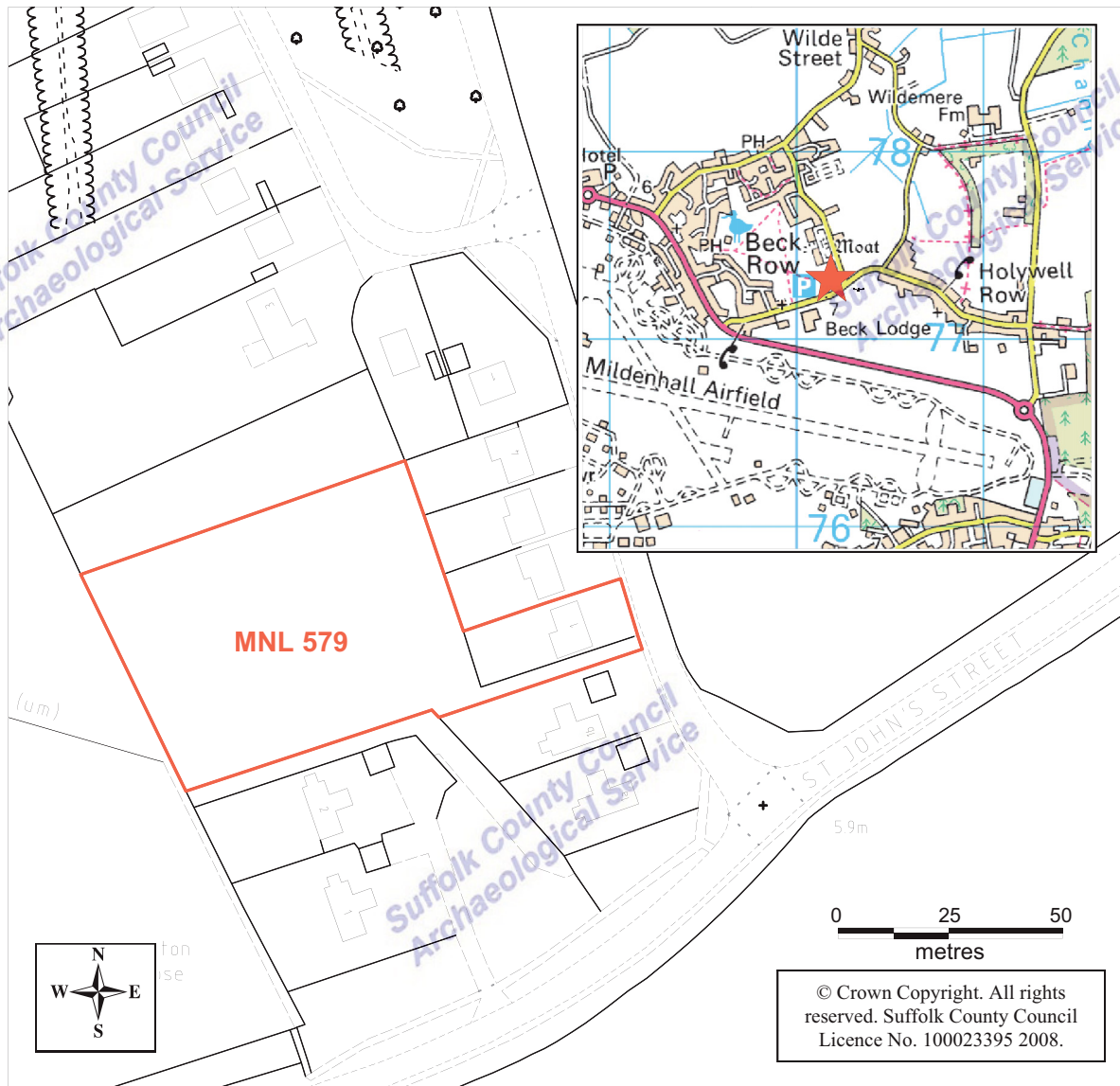


Figure 1. Site location

the subsoil surface of mixed yellow/orange sands. Only two further archaeological deposits were seen in addition to those identified in the evaluation (Fig. 2). The results from a bulk soil sample of the prehistoric pit, 0015, which was seen in the evaluation, are included below.

0032 was a small possible pit, seen only in section in Plot 4. It measured c.0.5m wide and cut 0.5m into the natural subsoil and had steep sides and a concave base. Its fill was a blackened sand with charcoal.

0034 was a spread of dark grey/brown sands, c.2m in diameter and 0.8m thick, sealed below the modern topsoil.

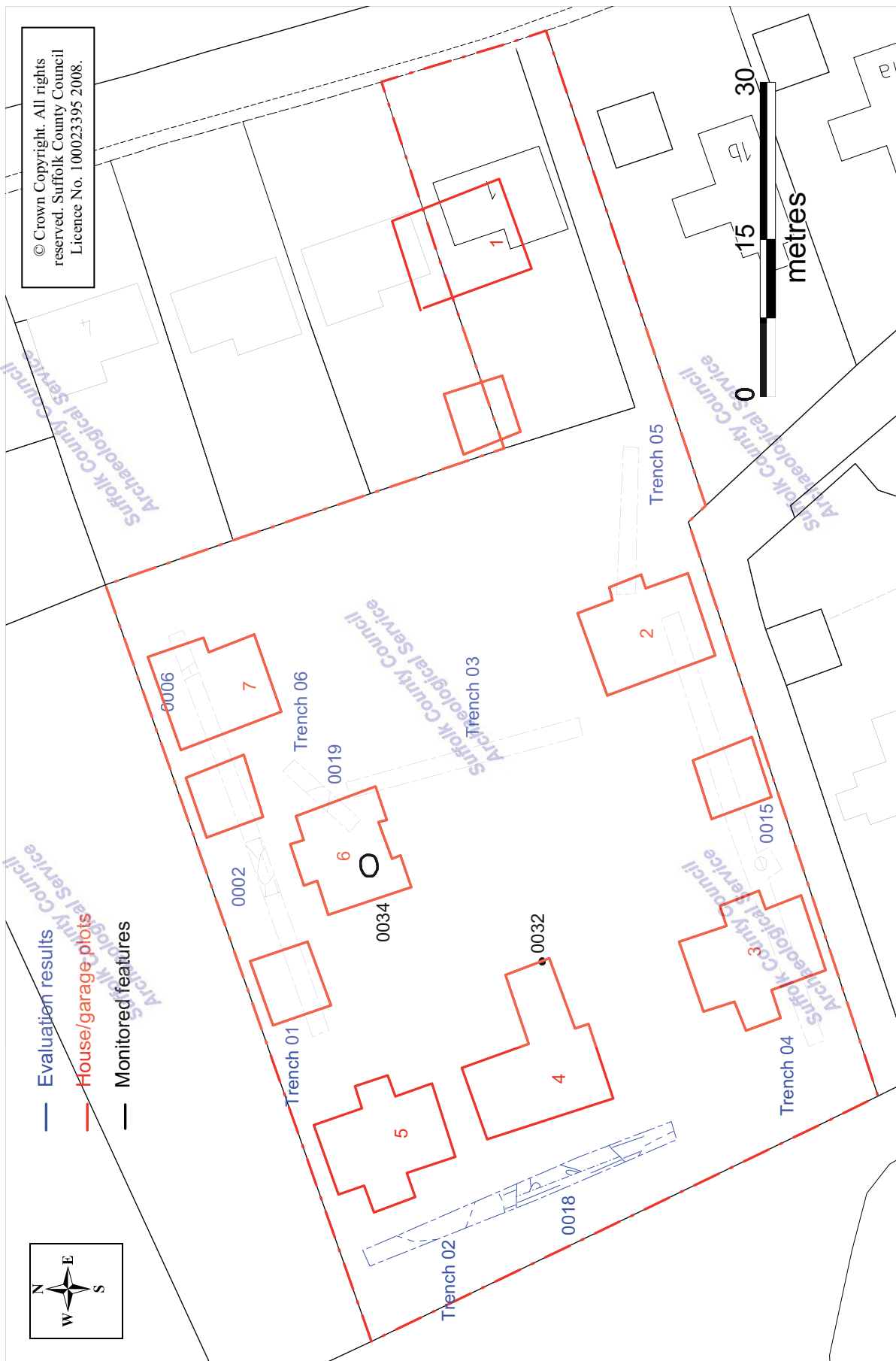


Figure 2. Site plan

3. Plant macrofossils

Val Fryer

3.1. Introduction and method statement

The previous evaluation of the site identified a pit, 0015, of probable prehistoric date. A single sample for the retrieval of the plant macrofossil assemblage was taken from the charcoal rich fill.

The sample was processed by manual water flotation/washover and the flot was collected in a 500 micron mesh sieve. The dried flot was scanned under a binocular microscope at magnifications up to x 16, and the plant macrofossils recorded are listed below on Table 1. The non-floating residue was collected in a 1mm mesh sieve and sorted when dry. All artefacts/ecofacts were retained for further specialist analysis.

3.2. Results

The assemblage consists entirely of charcoal/charred wood fragments, some of which are in excess of 2cm in length. Despite the presence of these larger fragments, most of the charcoal has a very flaked appearance, which may be indicative of very high temperatures during combustion. It is also of note that a high proportion of the charcoal fragments have tarry residues along the broken edges, these being another possible indicator of extreme heat during burning. Occasional black porous and tarry residues are also present within the assemblage.

Sample No.	1
OP No.	0016
Charcoal <2mm	xxxx
Charcoal >2mm	xxxx
Charcoal >5mm	xxxx
Charcoal >10mm	xxx
Black porous 'cokey' material	x
Black tarry material	x
Sample volume (litres)	16
Volume of flot (litres)	0.8
% flot sorted	12.5%

Table 1. Charred plant macrofossils

A proportion of the material present within this assemblage was thought suitable for identification and C14 dating. A sample was submitted to SUERC for AMS dating [Laboratory code SUERC-19657 (GU-17027)] which produced a radiocarbon age BP of 3795±30 and a calibrated age range of 2290-2190BC or 2170-2150BC (68.2% probability) and 2340-2130BC (95.4% probability). The radiocarbon dating certificate is included as Appendix 1.

4. Discussion

The minimal results of the monitoring, two undated features, are most likely to be further evidence of the scattered prehistoric evidence seen in the evaluation and wider vicinity. Radiocarbon dating of the fill of pit 0015, which was sampled during the evaluation of the site, confirmed it was a prehistoric deposit, dating to the Early Bronze Age.

Visibility limitations with the narrow trenching and loose sands are probably the reason why further evidence of ditch 0006 and hollow 0019 were not seen in Plots 7 and 6 respectively. It was clearly seen however that the large natural hollow, 0018, seen in evaluation Trench 02, did not extend as far east as Plots 4 and 5.

Although Plots 1 and 2 were not observed this is unlikely to have affected the results in any significant way. The construction and demolition of No 1 Aspal Lane is likely to have heavily truncated or destroyed any deposits that may have existed in the area of Plot 1.

References

Craven, J.A., 2007, Land adjacent 1 Aspal Lane, Beck Row, Mildenhall. SCCAS Report No. 2007/30 MNL 579.

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July 2008

Appendix 1



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RADIOCARBON DATING CERTIFICATE

31 July 2008

Laboratory Code	SUERC-19657 (GU-17027)
Submitter	Richenda Goffin Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service 9-10 The Churchyard Shire Hall Bury St Edmunds IP33 2AR
Site Reference	Aspal Lane, Mildenhall
Sample Reference	Sample 1, Context 0016
Material	Seed : cf. prunus sp.
$\delta^{13}\text{C}$ relative to VPDB	-24.0 ‰
Radiocarbon Age BP	3795 \pm 30

- N.B.**
1. The above ^{14}C age is quoted in conventional years BP (before 1950 AD). The error, which is expressed at the one sigma level of confidence, includes components from the counting statistics on the sample, modern reference standard and blank and the random machine error.
 2. The calibrated age ranges are determined from the University of Oxford Radiocarbon Accelerator Unit calibration program (OxCal3).
 3. Samples with a SUERC coding are measured at the Scottish Universities Environmental Research Centre AMS Facility and should be quoted as such in any reports within the scientific literature. Any questions directed to the Radiocarbon Laboratory should also quote the GU coding given in parentheses after the SUERC code.

Conventional age and calibration age ranges calculated by :-

P. Naynt

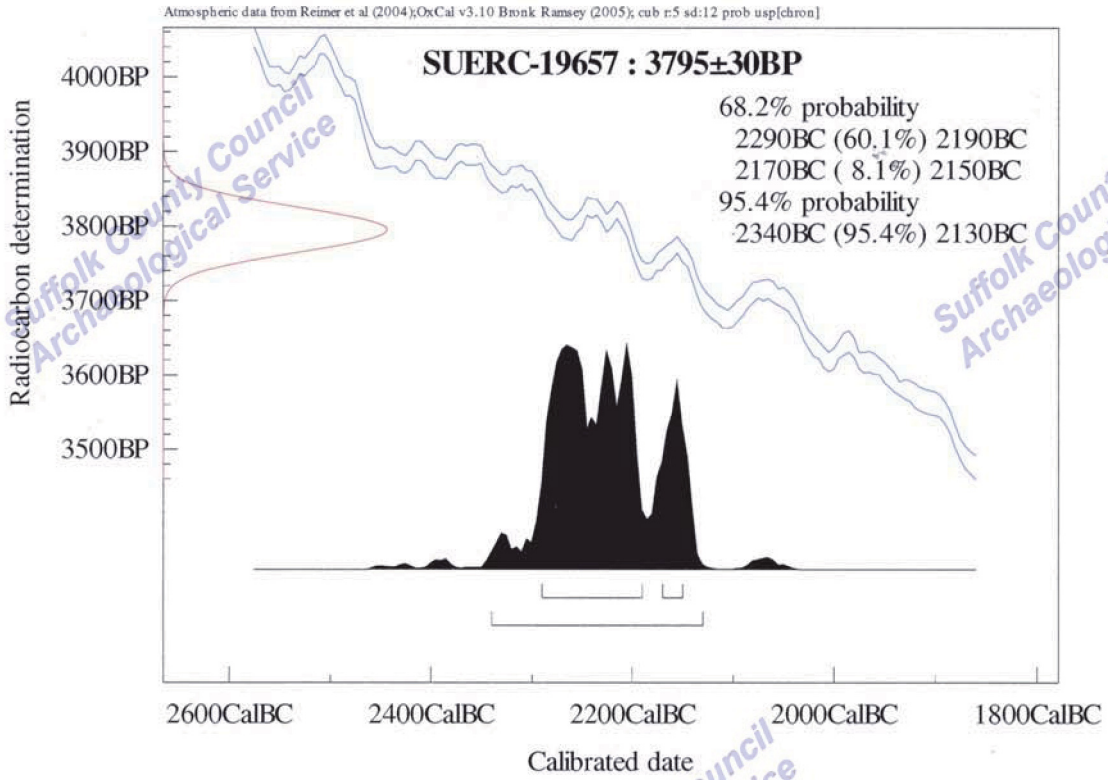
Date :- 31-7-08

Checked and signed off by :-

Gordon Book

Date :- 31-7-08

Calibration Plot



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