

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT

Base perimeter road RAF Mildenhall. MNL 600

A REPORT ON THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION
RAF MILDENHALL.

Planning Application. Pre planning 2007

NGR: TL 6781/7712

OASIS Ref. Suffolke1-37902

Funded by: DEFENCE ESTATES USAF

Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service Report No. 2008/008

Summary

An archaeological evaluation was carried out in advance of construction work on a new perimeter road. The evaluation uncovered a range of features with a particular concentration at the western end of the road. Only a single ditch was sampled as the appearance of the features alone was sufficient to establish a similarity with those found beneath the base sports field (MNL 532) that date from later prehistory and through the Roman period.

Introduction

An evaluation was carried out on the proposed route of a new perimeter road on the north west side of the runway at RAF Mildenhall. Primary interest in the area is based upon its location close to the settlement-rich fen edge, particularly the sports field built on 30 Acre Field, which has recently been subject to extensive excavations (Site Code MNL532). The work was funded by Defence Estates USAF (MILH004407).

Methodology

An evaluation was carried out on the 30 October 2007 using a 360 degree excavator with a 2m wide ditching bucket. A series of trenches were excavated along the length of the proposed new road and planned using a total station theodolite. Only a single sample section was excavated. A summary of the trenches is presented below. An OASIS form has been completed for the project (reference no. suffolke1-337902) and a digital copy of the report submitted for inclusion on the Archaeology Data Service database (<http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/catalogue/library/greylit>)

Results

Figs 2-3

With the exception of Trench 8 where an archaeological soil survived below dumped ploughsoil, the ground was truncated. In Trenches 2-7 tractor/machine track prints were visible in the surface of the sand. The recording of trench profiles was deferred until the site could be excavated during the next stage of works.

Trench 1

This trench was 25m in length. Following the removal of topsoil archaeological features ran continuously for the westernmost c 20.5m. Exposed soils were cut through chalk which appeared at the eastern end of the trench.

Trench 2
10 m in length. Two ditches impinged on the trench at either end.

Trench 3
8m in length exposing natural sand. A ditch crossed the trench.

Trench 4
8m in length. No features were observed.

Trench 5
5m in length exposing natural sand. A single small feature, possibly a posthole was observed.

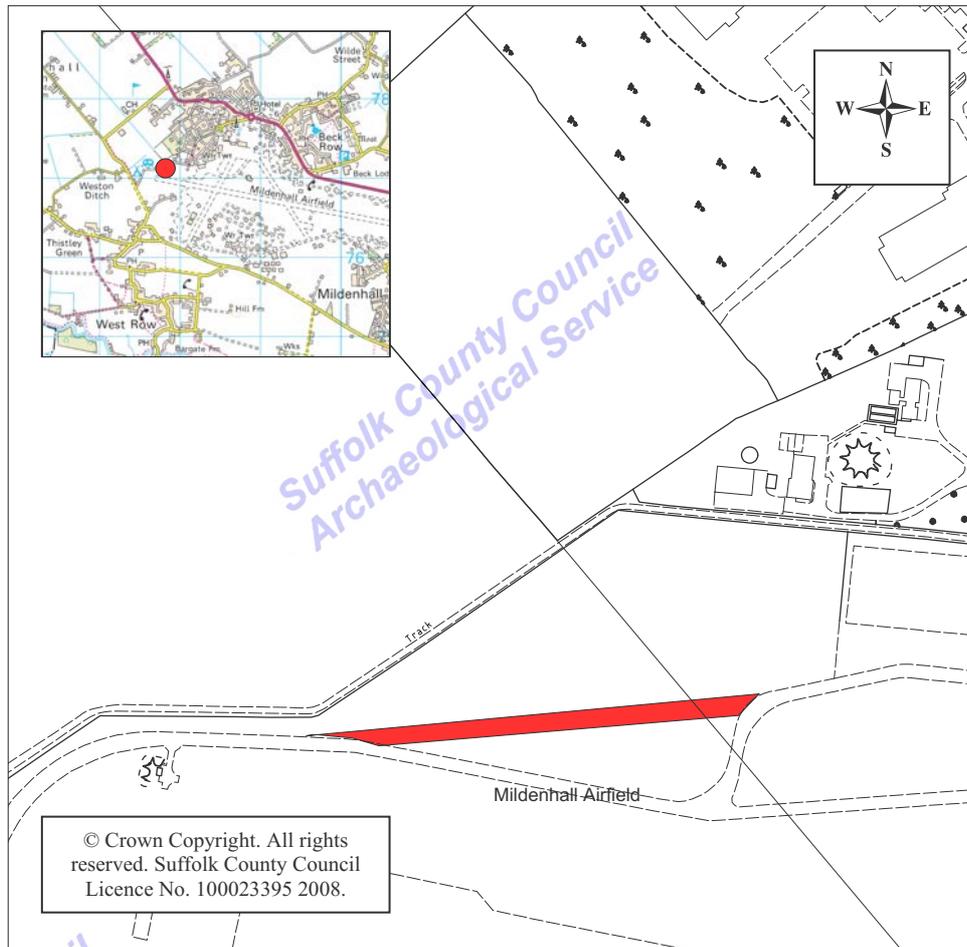


Figure 1. New road line

Trench 6
6m in length with a narrow ditch crossing it aligned NE-SW.

Trench 7
9m in length with at least three ditches crossing it with re-cuts. These were at right angles to each other aligned either NE-SW or NW-SE. A single ditch section was excavated (Figure 2 below).

Trench 8
4m in length. This trench was much deeper than the rest as the soil had been banked up. No features were observed but a sealed layer was recorded.



Figure 2. Section of ditch, Trench 7

Discussion and Recommendations

The evaluation uncovered evidence of ground truncation over most of the new road area (Trenches 1-7), whereas in Trench 8 the ground had been built up. This is undoubtedly the result of landscaping to create Mildenhall Airfield. The archaeological evidence survived in most of the trenches although it was strongest in Trench 7 and particularly Trench 1. In this trench very little natural ground was exposed suggesting a concentration of activity. No finds were retrieved from the site, which is probably due to the truncation of the ground whereby the topsoil over the features may have come from some distance away. The features themselves are typical of those identified during the excavation of the sports field and running track on 30 Acre field (MNL 532) and can reasonably be dated between the Later Iron Age and Roman periods.

In conclusion it is recommended that given the delicate nature of the site the roadline be stripped under archaeological supervision and that the exposed surface is subject to full excavation.

Andrew Tester
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February 2008

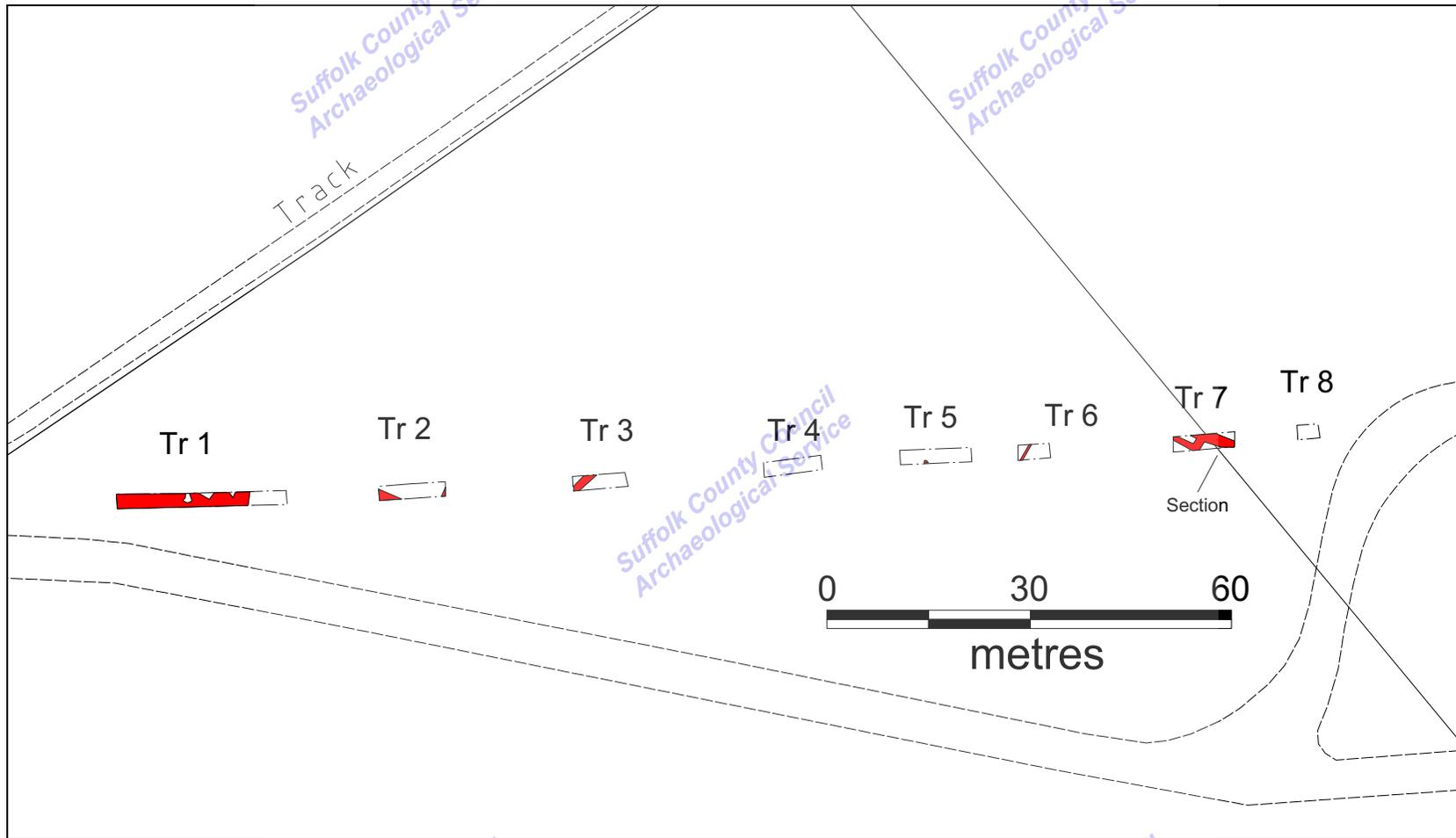


Figure 3. Trench plans