

Transco Pipeline, Withersfield

WTH 033

TL 6546 4704

Report No. 2004/119

Oasis No. suffolkc1-3800

Summary

An archaeological monitoring of the excavation of a pipeline trench where it passed under the Stour Brook, Withersfield Road, Withersfield, showed a complete absence of archaeological features.

Introduction

Three visits were made to the site from 26th August- 20th September to monitor the excavation of a c.30m length of trench of the pipeline where it crossed the Stour Brook, a small, north-south aligned, stream. The work had been requested by R.D. Carr (Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service, Conservation Team) and was funded by the developer, Transco PLC.

Interest in the site was based upon its location at the base of an east-facing slope on the west side of the brook. This slope was an arable field from which scatters of Iron Age, Roman, Saxon, medieval and post-medieval finds (WTH 020, Fig. 1) have been recovered within c.120m of the site. On the east side of the brook the site lay in a level pasture field, with an east-west field ditch lying c.40m to the north. Therefore there was potential during the excavation of the trench, particularly on the west side of the brook at the base of the slope, to identify further finds scatters or associated archaeological features from a wide range of periods.

Methodology and Results

Of the 30m section of trench, only the eastern part was observed as on the western side the trench was backfilled before the final site visit. However trenches for the pipeline, as it continued westwards up the slope, were open at this time and were subsequently observed (Fig. 1).

The streambed was at a depth of approximately 1-1.2m below the level of the adjacent fields and measured c.3m in diameter. On the east side of the brook, Trench A was excavated from the centre of the brook, through its bank and into the pasture field. Originally c.15m in length, 0.50m wide and 2m+ deep it was subsequently stepped, due to problems with collapsing sides, creating a trench 3m wide, 4m long and 0.8m deep.

The trench showed a thin topsoil, 0.1-0.2m deep, overlying a clean mid brown clay/loam, c.0.4m thick. Both these layers thickened and slumped into the brook and the clay/loam layer contained increasing amounts of grit and fine gravel as it slumped into the stream. Beneath this layer was the natural subsoil, a mid orange/brown clay/loam. Beneath the actual streambed the natural subsoil changed to a mix of clay

and gravel deposits. There were no signs of disturbance and there was a clear absence of archaeological features or finds within this trench.

Within the arable field, approximately 15m west from the brook, Trench B measured 6m by 2m and over 1.2m deep. It clearly showed the topsoil directly overlying the natural orange clay/silt and no archaeological features were observed.

A c.70m length of trench, 0.2m wide and 1m+ deep, heading west up the slope was also monitored. Observation was difficult as the trench was very narrow but no archaeological features were seen and again the topsoil was directly on top of the natural subsoil. The spoil from the trench was rapidly examined but no archaeological material was observed.

Discussion

The trench on the east side of the stream showed a complete absence of archaeological features or modern disturbance, consistent with the use of the field as open pasture.

Similarly on the western side the trenches showed an absence of archaeological features with the modern ploughsoil directly overlying the natural subsoil.

John Craven, August 2004.

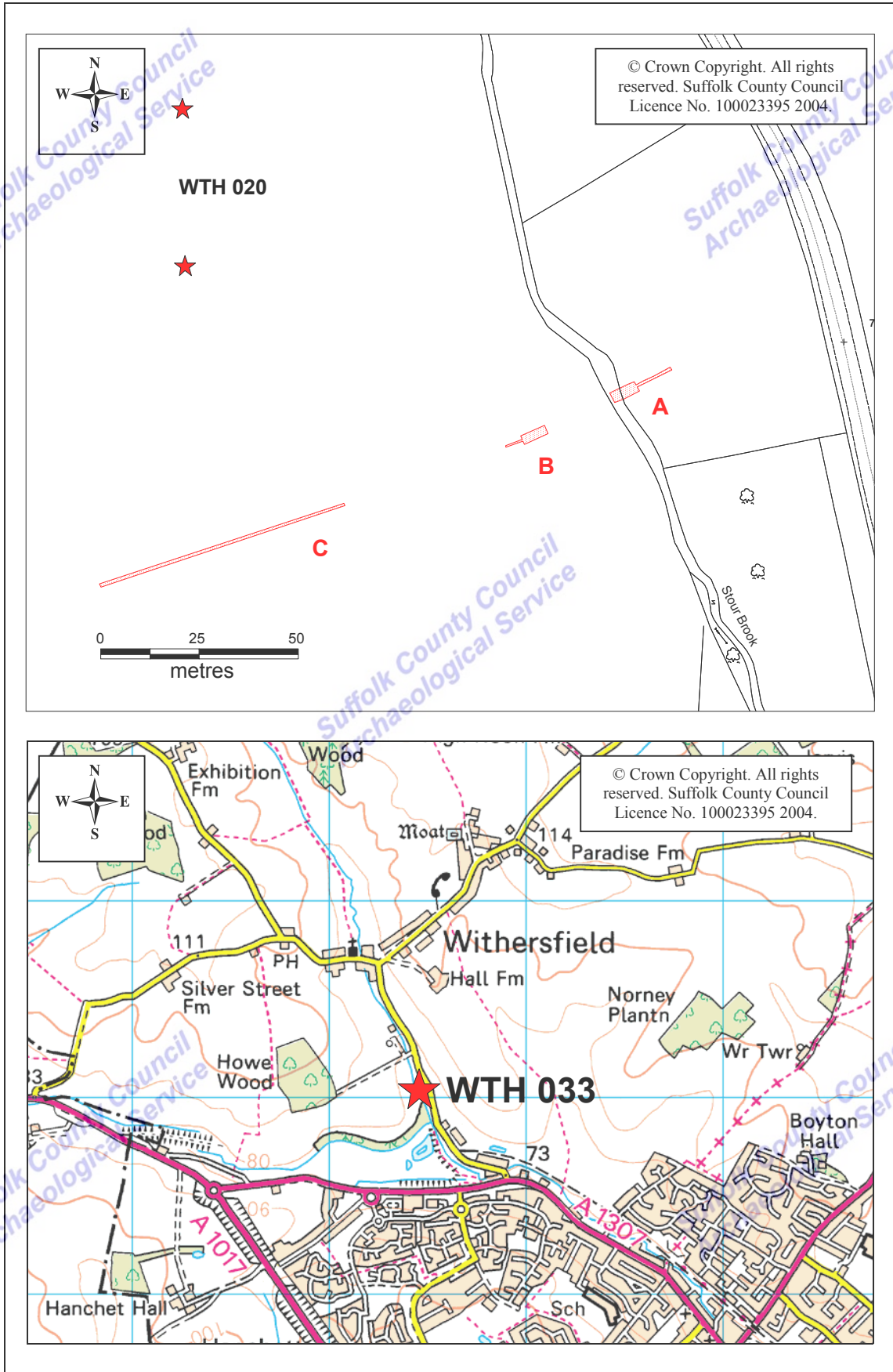


Figure 1. Site plan and location