

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT

NETHERGATE STREET GARAGE, CLARE CLA 043

A REPORT ON THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION, 2004
(Planning app. no. SE/04/3250/P)

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Field Team

Suffolk C.C. Archaeological Service

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List of Contributors

All Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service (SCCAS hereafter) unless otherwise stated.

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Acknowledgements

This project was funded by the Woodberry Group Limited and was monitored by Keith Wade of the SCCAS Conservation Division.

The project was directed by Rhodri Gardner and managed by John Newman, who also provided advice during the production of the report. The evaluation was carried out by Rhodri Gardner and Rob Atfield, both from the Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service Field Team.

Thanks are due to Graham Novell of the building contractors (Bulfords) for his assistance during the evaluation.

Summary

Clare, Nethergate Street Garage (TM 7693 4516; CLA 043). A trial trench evaluation was carried out at the above site in advance of a residential development comprising nine dwellings and associated access and services. Three trenches (with a total excavated area of *c.* 92m²) were excavated. The front 10m of the site along Nethergate Street frontage was found to have been heavily truncated and also saw significant hydrocarbon contamination. The remainder of the site was covered by between 0.6 and 1.2m of modern overburden overlying terrace gravels.

Occupation spanning the Roman through to Post-medieval periods was recorded. Perhaps the most significant finding was a large (4.6m wide and 1.5m deep) east to west aligned boundary ditch of Roman date recorded some 12m back from the Nethergate Street frontage. This, along with an isolated Roman-dated post-hole, represents the first clear evidence (in the form of incised features) of Roman occupation in the historic core of Clare. Medieval pitting was recorded in the centre of the site but it was unclear whether it was related to plots along the Nethergate Street or Malting Lane frontages. A single Post-medieval boundary ditch was also recorded, but was again unclear whether it was associated with Nethergate Street or Malting Lane occupation. A programme of Archaeological Monitoring was recommended in order to establish the full extent, alignment and date of the Roman boundary ditch, as well as to identify any further features across the site.

(Rhodri Gardner, SCCAS, for the Woodberry Group Ltd., report no: 2004/152)

SMR information

Planning application no.	SE/04/3250/P
Date of fieldwork:	19 th – 20 th October 2004
Grid Reference:	TL 7693 4516
Funding body:	Woodberry Group Limited

Introduction

An application (SE/04/3250/P) has been made for the erection of nine dwellings with associated vehicular and pedestrian access on the site of the former Nethergate Street Garage, Clare. The site is centred approximately on NGR TL 7693 4516 and encompasses an area of *c.* 2800m². The land slopes from *c.* 48m AOD along the street frontage to *c.* 45m AOD at the edge of the River Stour at the south-eastern end of the site. The site is bounded to the north-west by Nethergate Street, to the north-east and south-west by adjacent residential properties and to the south-east by the River Stour.

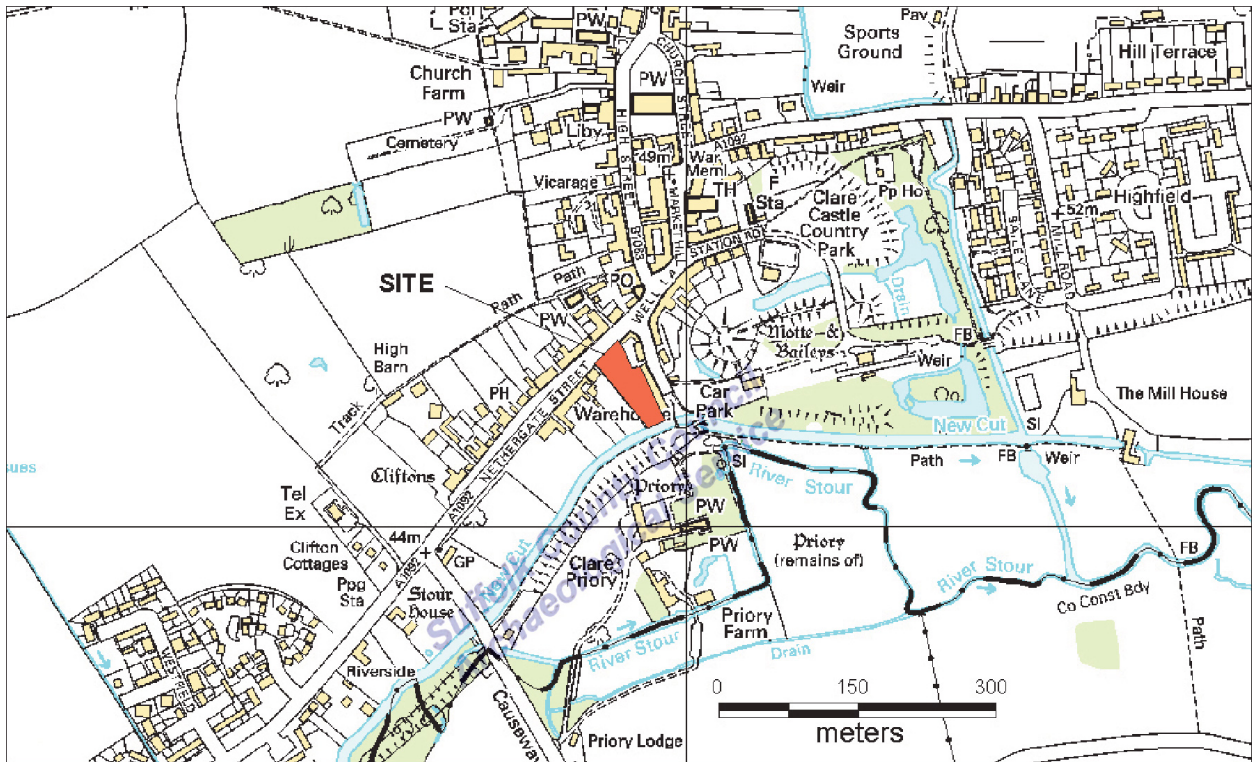


Figure 1. Site location

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The site has not been subject to any previous systematic archaeological work and no known sites lie within its boundaries. However its location, just 40m from Clare Priory (CLA 001) directly adjacent on the opposite bank of the river and *c.* 80m to the west of Clare Castle and its earthworks, means that it has high archaeological potential, particularly for remains of the medieval period. Consequently a trial trench evaluation was recommended by Keith Wade of the SCCAS Conservation Team. The SCCAS Field Team was subsequently commissioned by the client, the Woodberry Group, to carry out the work.

Methodology

The evaluation was carried out between the 19th and 20th of October 2004. Three trial trenches (a total length of *c.* 57m) were excavated using a 180° wheeled mechanical excavator (JCB) fitted with a 1.6m wide flat-bladed ditching bucket. The trench positions were recorded by triangulation from site boundaries. All mechanical excavation of topsoil and overburden was carried out under archaeological supervision until the top of the first appropriate archaeological horizon or undisturbed natural drift deposits were encountered. The surface of each trench and any relevant upstanding sections were then cleaned by hand where necessary to further define any archaeological features.

Whilst the total excavated area (c. 91m²) only represented some 3% of the site a large area (c. 800m²) at the south-eastern end of the site was to be landscaped for communal gardens, and any archaeological deposits in that area would therefore remain undisturbed by the proposed development. When this is taken into consideration, the area of trenching represents some 4.5% of the portion of the site threatened by development. The trench layout finally employed is shown in Figure 2, with a total trenched area of c. 91m².

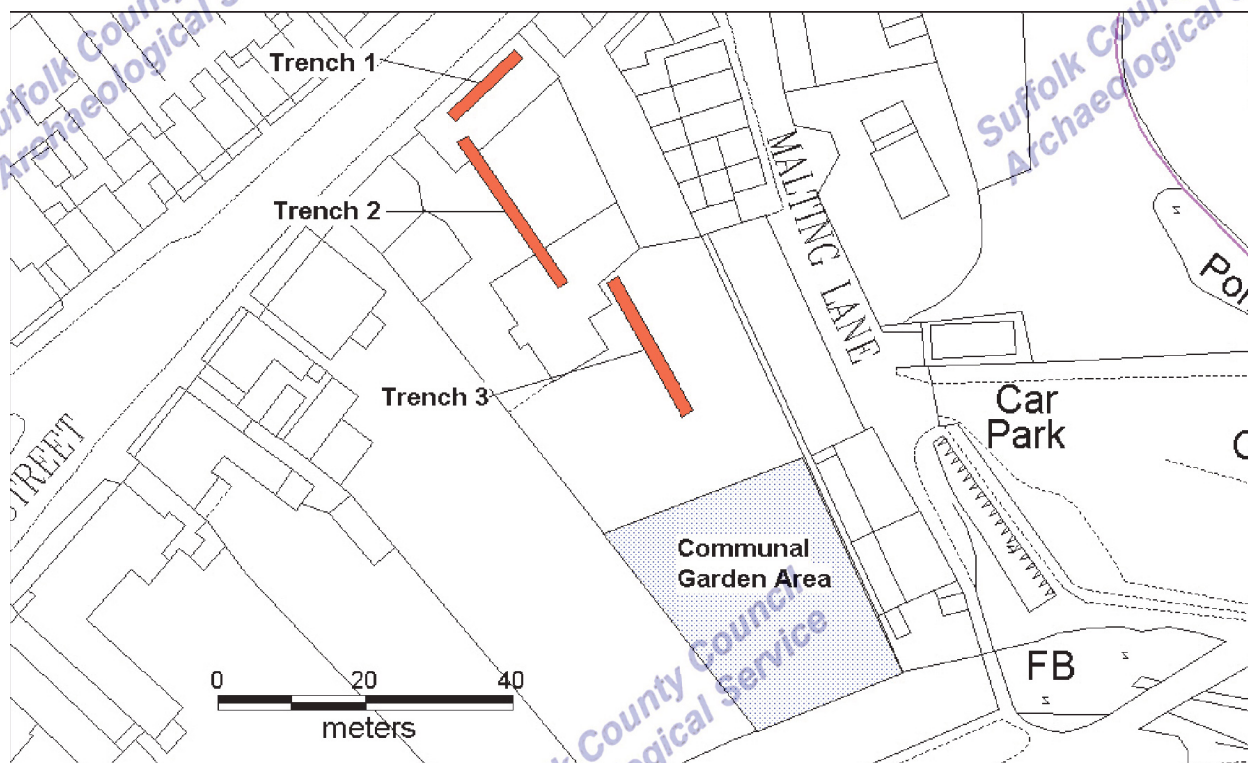


Figure 2. Trench locations

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The SMR reference number CLA 043 was allocated to the site and all the stratigraphic elements of the deposits were allocated context numbers within a continuous numbering system. This context information is shown in Appendix 1. All features were excavated and recorded in a series of 1:50 scale plans and 1:20 scale section drawings. Context records were entered onto an Access97 database, and inked copies of the drawings were prepared on archive quality drafting film.

Finds have yet to be analysed, but will be processed and quantified by in-house staff, with the data then input onto a Microsoft Access97 database. Subsequently the different finds were examined by the relevant specialists and their findings will be integrated into a later draft of this report.

Results

Basic details of each trench are given below in Table 1. A narrative account of the findings of each trench containing recorded archaeological features then follows. Plans and sections are shown in Figures 3 and 4 respectively.

Trench	Length (m)	Area (m ²)	Archaeological Features	Depth of Overburden (m)
1	12.5	20	None	1.4
2	24	38.4	Ditch 0017; Pits 0015 and 0016	0.6 - 1
3	20.5	32.8	Ditch 0007; Pits 0011 and 0013; Post-hole 0005	1 - 1.2

Table 1. Evaluation trench summary

A single context number (0001) has been allocated to the undifferentiated overburden, broadly described as a soft dark grey silty clay with frequent modern inclusions (brick/tile, concrete

lumps, glass *etc.*) with some hydrocarbon contamination, particularly toward the northern end of the site (see Trench 1).

Similarly, the Natural Drift deposits (see Appendix 1 for description) have also been allocated a single context number (0003).

Trench 1

This was 12.5m long and extended along the northern frontage of the site. Modern truncation was apparent throughout the trench and natural deposits were only encountered at a uniform depth of 1.4m below existing ground level (bgl. hereafter). Heavy hydrocarbon contamination was apparent throughout the trench.

No archaeological finds or features were encountered in this trench.

Trench 2

Modern truncation and hydrocarbon contamination was again recorded in the northernmost 4m of this trench. Otherwise natural deposits were encountered between 0.6m (toward the northern end of the trench) to 1m (at the southern end) bgl., overlain throughout by overburden 0001.

Some 6.5m south of the northern end of the trench (12m back from the modern street frontage) a large ditch was recorded on an east to west alignment, not quite parallel to Nethergate Street and running toward Clare Castle to the east. This substantial feature was 4.6m wide and 1.5m deep with smooth straight *c.* 45° sides that broke gradually to a narrow v-shaped concave base. A slight increase of slope was recorded on the southern side at a depth of *c.* 1m. Five fills were recorded (see Appendix 1 for detailed descriptions). No significant recuts or episodes of cleaning could be identified in the excavated section. Similarly, no sign of a bank survived on either side. Finds were very sparse throughout, although the primary fill, 0018, did produce pottery of and a tile fragment of Roman date.

Just 1m to the south of this pit 0015 was partially revealed extending beyond the eastern side of the trench. This was 2.15m long (north to south) by at least 1.2m wide and was in excess of 0.8m deep. It had smooth vertical sides but the shape of its

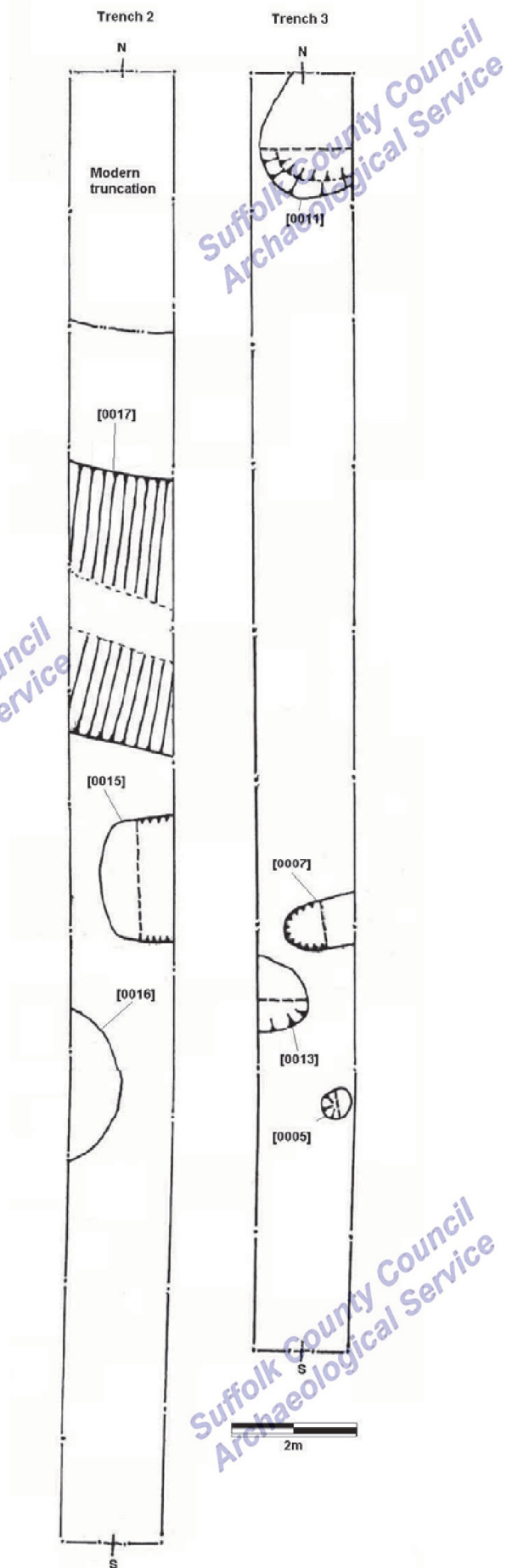


Figure 3. Trench Plans (Trench 1 not illustrated)

base is unknown as it could not be fully excavated due to Health and Safety considerations given the narrow confines of the trench. It contained a single fill of firm mid greenish grey silty clay that held 8 sherds of 13th to 14th-century medieval coarseware. Other domestic refuse-type finds were generally sparse in the excavated section, suggesting that the most likely interpretation of its function is that of a cess pit.

Some 1m to the south of 0015 another probable pit, 0016, measuring 2.5m long by at least 0.7m wide was recorded extending beyond the western side of the trench. Time constraints dictated that this was not fully excavated, but its upper fill was indistinguishable from that of 0015, leading to its tentative interpretation as another similar pit.

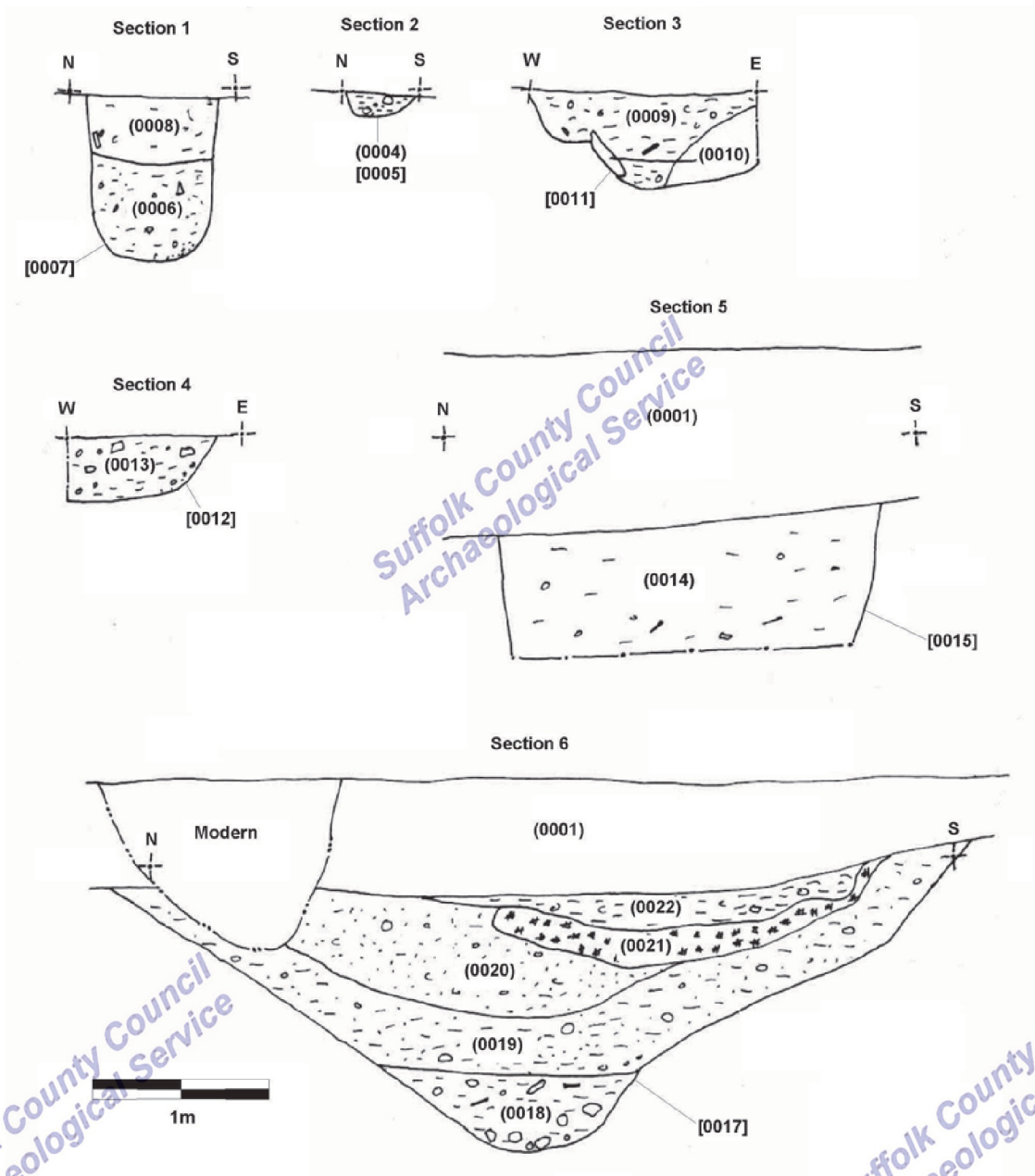


Figure 4. Sections

Trench 3

Natural deposits were recorded at between 1m (at the northern end of the trench) and 1.2m (at the southern end) bgl. in this trench. Below the general overburden (0001) a layer of probable garden or scrubland soil (0002) up to 0.5m thick was recorded in this trench, particularly toward its southern end.

At the northern end of the trench feature 0011 was partially revealed, where it extended beyond the northern and eastern limits of the trench. This most likely represents a pit and was at least 1.8m long (north-east to south-west) and at least 1.28m wide. It was 0.55m deep and its south-western side had a pronounced step before breaking sharply to a flat base. Its primary fill (0010) was a deliberately deposited layer of firm light olive-grey clay up to 0.4m thick which may represent an attempt at lining the pit. The secondary fill, 0009, of soft clayey silt yielded a single sherd of 13th to 14th-century medieval coarseware.

4m from the southern end of the trench post-hole 0005 was recorded. This was roughly circular, with a diameter of 0.4m, and had moderately sloping straight sides and a flattish base. Its single fill of clayey silt (0004) held some flint pebbles and a single potsherd of Roman date.

Some 5m from the southern end of the trench pit 0012 was partially revealed, where it extended beyond the western side of the trench. At least 0.86m long, it was 0.84m wide and 0.35m deep with smooth moderately sloping straight sides and a flat base. The single fill of silty clay (0013) produced no dateable finds.

The final feature recorded in this trench was ditch 0007, which was aligned east to west and was recorded 6.5m from the southern end of the trench. The ditch's blunt rounded western terminus lay within the trench. It was 0.72m wide and 0.98m deep with straight near vertical sides that broke sharply to a flattish base. It contained two fills: a primary fill of soft clayey silt (0006) which yielded a quantity of post-medieval roof tile fragments and a secondary fill of silty clay (0008) that produced no dateable finds.

Finds Evidence

A full finds report has yet to be produced. Finds were recovered from five contexts and simple spot-dating has been carried out. The results are summarised in Table 2.

Context	Feature	Spot date summary
0004	0005	1 sherd Roman pottery
0006	0007	8 Post medieval roof tile fragments
0009	0011	1 sherd medieval coarseware (13 th to 14 th century)
0014	0015	8 sherds medieval coarseware (13 th to 14 th century)
0018	0017	3 sherds Romano-British greyware and 1 fragment of Roman tile

Table 2. Spot dating summary

Although the quantity of finds is small, it is clear that multi-period occupation is indicated.

Discussion and Conclusions

Trench 1 and the northern end of Trench 2 demonstrated that modern truncation had taken place along the whole frontage of the site. Given that natural deposits were encountered elsewhere in Trench 2 as little as 0.6m bgl. the depth of modern overburden in Trench 1 (1.4m) suggests that up to 0.8m of deposits may have been removed, precluding the survival of all but the deepest of cut features. As the structural evidence (beam slots, post-holes *etc.*) that might be anticipated along the medieval street frontage tends to be somewhat ephemeral and rather shallow it is clear that the northernmost *c.* 10m of the site (Area A) has little or no archaeological potential.

The northernmost two-thirds of the site (Areas A and C in Fig 5) were level at the time of the evaluation. However, a slight slope toward the river could be noted at the archaeological horizon on the surface of the exposed natural drift deposits. These were encountered beneath *c.* 0.6m bgl. toward the northern end of Trench 2, falling to more than 1.2m bgl. at the southern end of Trench 3. The levelling of the site and the associated made ground deposits were of Post-medieval date.

Perhaps the most significant finding of the evaluation is the large ditch 0017. Although finds evidence was sparse a Roman date is indicated by finds recovered from the primary fill. This, along with the similarly dated post-hole in Trench 3, constitutes the first good evidence (in the form of incised features) for significant Roman occupation in the historic core of Clare. Clare (formerly 'Erbury') Camp *c.* 600m to the north (CLA 010; SAM No. 5964) is a large (enclosing *c.* 4.5 ha) multivallate earthwork of probable Iron Age date but it is not known for certain if there was any significant continuity of occupation into the Roman period. Scattered Roman evidence has been found around the town, including:

- A quern stone found *c.* 550m to the north-west at No. 14 Cavendish Road (CLA 003)
- A single coin found at 21 Mill Road *c.* 400m to the east (CIA 006)
- A scatter of metal-detected finds *c.* 570m to the west in an area of rectilinear cropmarks (CLA 018)
- A single coin found *c.* 500m to the north to the rear of Callis House (CLA 015)
- And, interestingly, an east to west aligned ditch found *c.* 500m to the south-west at the former Dalgety Granary site (CLA 029)

The features recorded during this evaluation could therefore indicate that Clare did see continuity of occupation into the Roman period, but perhaps with a shift in the focus of settlement from the area of Clare Camp to the south along at least the northern bank of the Stour.

Two quite securely dated medieval pits also indicate occupation in the 13th to 14th centuries. The limited evidence recovered does not make it possible to tell whether these relate to occupation along Nethergate Street or Malting Lane. It is likely that both street frontages would have been occupied during the medieval period.

The east to west aligned ditch 0007, although it produced post-medieval tile, could have been open in the medieval period or represent a later incarnation of an earlier boundary. If so, it is unclear whether it marked the rear of a plot on the Nethergate Street frontage or a side boundary to a plot on Malting Lane.

The location of the embankment known as the *Hawedych*, which formerly could be traced as an earthwork to the west of the houses on High Street, is the nearest thing to a formal western boundary to the medieval settlement at Clare. Its alignment is conjectured by Thornton (1930) and reproduced in Knocker (1959) and is shown in Figure 5. Although the line of the *Hawedych* to the south of Nethergate Street in this plan is uncertain it seems likely that the site lay within the main settlement. There was certainly no evidence for either the *Hawedych* itself or any ditch that may have originally accompanied it in this evaluation.

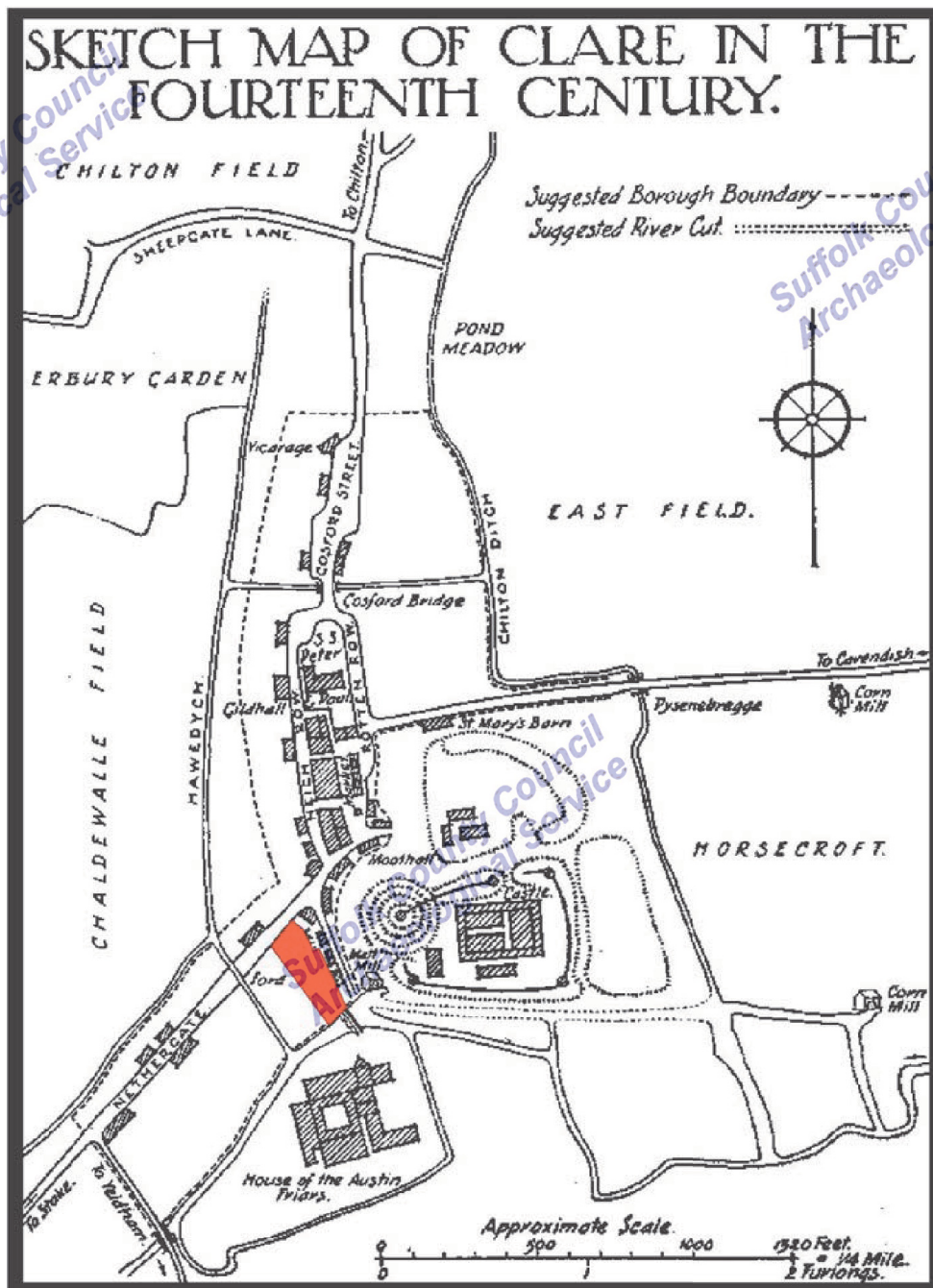


Figure 5. Thornton's map of Clare with probable site location

Recommendations for Further Work

Area A has seen substantial modern truncation and therefore no further work is recommended.

Similarly no work is recommended for Area B as it is not threatened by the proposed development.

Area C yielded evidence of significant Roman and medieval occupation in the form of pits, ditches and a post-hole. Of particular significance is large ditch 0017. It is recommended that any strip foundations dug for proposed house Nos. 3 – 9 should be subjected to a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording in order to identify any further features in the area and to confirm the date, extent and alignment of ditch 0017.

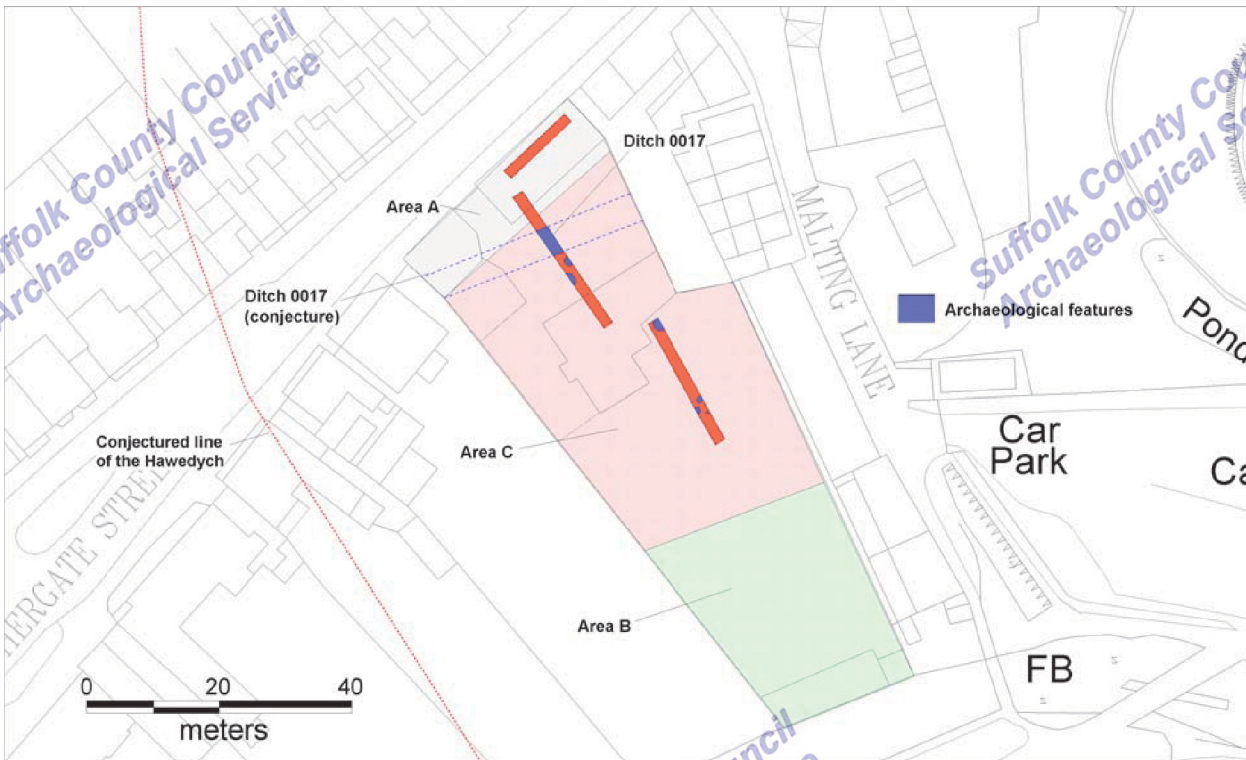


Figure 6. Areas of archaeological potential shown with principal archaeological features and the supposed line of the Hawedych

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Report No. **2004/152**

Rhodri Gardner, for SCCAS, July 2004.

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.

APPENDIX 1 Context List

Context No	Feature	Type	Identifier	Description	Dimensions (LxWxD) meters	Under	Over	Location	Section No	Date
0001		Deposit	Overburden	Single number allocated to undifferentiated overburden.				Whole site		
0002		Deposit	Garden/scrub and soil	Soft mid grey silty clay with rare chalk flecks, occasional small to medium sub-angular flint pebbles and flecks/fragments of brick/tile.		0001	0004, 0008, 0009 & 0013	Trench 3		
0003		Deposit	Natural drift	Firm orange-brown sands and gravels.		All	NFE	Whole site		
0004	0005	Fill	Post-hole	Single fill of post-hole 0005. Very soft light grey clayey silt with rare potsherds and chalk flecks, occasional clay lumps and small to medium flint pebbles.	0.44 x 0.4 x 0.16	0002	0005	Trench 3	2	
0005	0005	Cut	Post-hole	Isolated post-hole at southern end of Trench 3. Circular, with smooth moderately sloping straight sides (steeper northern side) with a sharp break to a flattish base.	0.44 x 0.4 x 0.16	0004	NFE	Trench 3	2	
0006	0007	Fill	Ditch	Primary fill/silting of ditch 0007. Soft mid brownish grey slightly clayey silt with occasional brick/tile fragments, rare animal bone fragments, potsherds and small flint pebbles.	1+ x 0.72 x 0.55	0008	0007	Trench 3	1	
0007	0007	Cut	Ditch	Western terminus of east-to-west aligned ditch. Straight smooth vertical (near vertical toward base) sides with a sharp break to a flattish base.	1+ x 0.72 x 0.98	0006	NFE	Trench 3	1	
0008	0007	Fill	Ditch	Secondary fill of ditch 0017. Soft to firm light grey silty clay with moderate chalk flecks, rare brick/tile flecks and oyster shell.	1+ x 0.72 x 0.43	0002	0006	Trench 3	1	
0009	0011	Fill	Pit	Upper fill of partially revealed pit. Very soft mid brownish grey slightly clayey silt with moderate flint pebbles; rare chalk flecks, brick/tile fragments, oyster shell and potsherds.	1.8+ x 1.28+ x 0.55	0002	0010	Trench 3	3	
0010	0011	Fill	Pit	Primary fill (possible lining) of pit 0011. Firm light olive grey clay with occasional charcoal and chalk flecks. Deliberately deposited, possibly as a lining.	1.8+ x 1.28+ x <0.4	0009	0011	Trench 3	3	
0011	0011	Cut	Pit	Partially revealed pit. Sub-rounded with steep smooth sides with a pronounced step on the western and southern edges and a flat base.	1.8+ x 1.28+ x 0.55	0010	NFE	Trench 3	3	
0012	0012	Cut	Pit	Partially revealed circular pit. Smooth moderately sloping sides with a sharp break to a flat base.	0.86+ x 0.84 x 0.35	0013	NFE	Trench 3	4	
0013	0012	Fill	Pit	Single fill of 0012. Soft mid grey silty clay with occasional small chalk pieces, flint pebbles, brick/tile fragments, potsherds and flecks of animal bone.	0.86+ x 0.84 x 0.35	0002	0012	Trench 3	4	
0014	0015	Fill	Pit	Single fill of 0015. Firm mid greenish grey silty clay with moderate chalk flecks; occasional small to medium flint pebbles and rare potsherds. Not bottomed.	2.15 x 1.2+ x 0.8+	0002	0015	Trench 2	5	
0015	0015	Cut	Pit	Partially revealed cess/rubbish pit against eastern edge of Trench 2. Western half is circular. Vertical sides to 0.8m depth, not bottomed due to H&S constraints.	2.15 x 1.2+ x 0.8+	0014	NFE	Trench 2	5	
0016	0016	Cut	Pit	Partially revealed pit against western edge of Trench 2. Not excavated due to time constraints, but fill is indistinguishable from that of 0015 - so assumed to also be a cess/rubbish pit.	2.5 x 0.7+ x ?	-	-	Trench 2	N/A	
0017	0017	Cut	Ditch	Large boundary ditch. Observed part was straight and parallel sided on identical alignment (broadly NE-SW) to Nethergate Street. Smooth 45 deg sides with gradual break to narrow v-shaped base.	1.8+ x 4.6 x 1.5	0018	NFE	Trench 2	6	
0018	0017	Fill	Ditch	Primary fill/silting of 0017. Soft dark grey clayey silt with frequent flint pebbles/cobbles, rare animal bone fragments and potsherds.	- x - x 0.4	0019	0017	Trench 2	6	
0019	0017	Fill	Ditch	Secondary fill of 0017. Very soft dark slightly greyish brown clayey sandy silt with rare small to medium flint pebbles.	- x - x up to 0.5	0020	0018	Trench 2	6	

0020	0017	Fill	Ditch	Tertiary fill of ditch 0017. Soft mid greyish brown slightly silty sandy clay with occasional chalk flecks and moderate flint pebbles.	- x - x up to 0.6	0021	0019	Trench 2	6	
0021	0017	Fill	Ditch	Upper fill of ditch 0017. Friable dark reddish grey ashy lens.	- x - x up to 0.2	0022	0020	Trench 2	6	
0022	0017	Fill	Ditch	Uppermost fill of 0017. Very soft dark brownish grey clayey silt with occasional chalk flecks and flint pebbles.	- x - x 0.15	0002	0021	Trench 2	6	

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