

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING REPORT

The Manor House, Church Lane, Freckenham FRK 090

A REPORT ON THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING OF GROUNDWORKS

Planning Application No.: F/2006 0109/FUL

NGR: TL 6675 7179

Oasis Ref. Suffolkc1-46802

Funded by: Ms K. Stewart

SCCAS Report no. 2008/185

Summary

Two ditches were recorded during the monitoring of groundworks for an extension to The Manor House, Freckenham. Both ditches probably pre-dated the house, built in the 17th century, and one represented the former field boundary that was re-aligned to accommodate the building's construction. Finds from the ditch included fragments of glazed earthenware pottery dating to 16th-18th century and pieces of medieval roof tile, this supports the suggestion that the current building is on the site of an earlier manor house.

Introduction

Four visits were made to The Manor House, Freckenham to monitor the excavation of ground works associated with the building of a replacement extension at the rear of the building and a soil strip for the creation of a new driveway. The monitoring was a condition of the consent on planning application F/2006/00485/FUL and was completed in accordance with a brief and specification issued by Jess Tipper of Suffolk County Council's Archaeological Service Conservation Team dated 10th October 2006. The work was undertaken by members of SCC Archaeological Service Field Contracts Team during October and November 2006 and funded by the applicant Ms K Stewart.

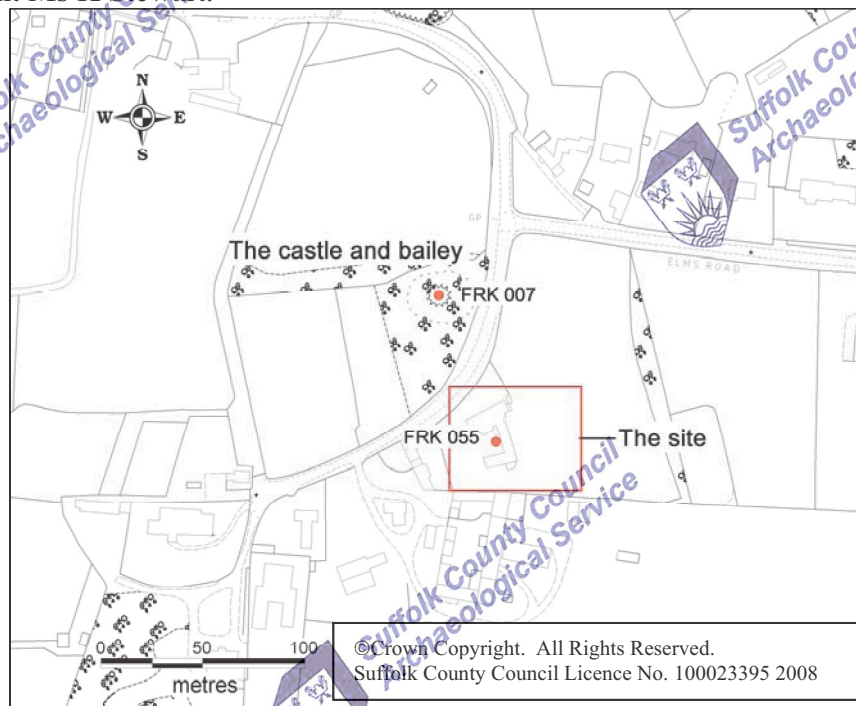


Figure 1. Site location plan

The site is located at TL6675 7179 above the flood plain of the River Kennet and within an Area of Archaeological Importance as defined in the local plan (Fig.1). The manor house is Grade II* listed (LB 275765). It is brick built beneath a plain tile roof and dates to the late 17th century. At the rear is a contemporary timber-framed and plastered wing and within the building much of the original panelling and joinery, including a fine staircase, remain intact. The long range at the rear was purportedly built in 1934 but the footprint of the current building is similar to that shown on the first edition Ordnance Survey map (1880) (Figs. 2 and 6).

The Manor House is probably on or close to the site of the original medieval hall (HER no FRK 0055) and lies within the core of the medieval settlement. In addition it lies immediately south of the bailey of the medieval castle (FRK 007) and within an area of Roman and Anglo-Saxon remains.

Results

Figure 2 shows the areas of ground disturbance that were observed by the monitoring archaeologist and the findings are described below. At the time of first visit an existing conservatory had been demolished and the slab footing on which it had stood had been carefully lifted. The works monitored included the excavation of footing trenches and service trenches associated with the extension at the rear of the house and the soil strip for a new access and driveway to the east.

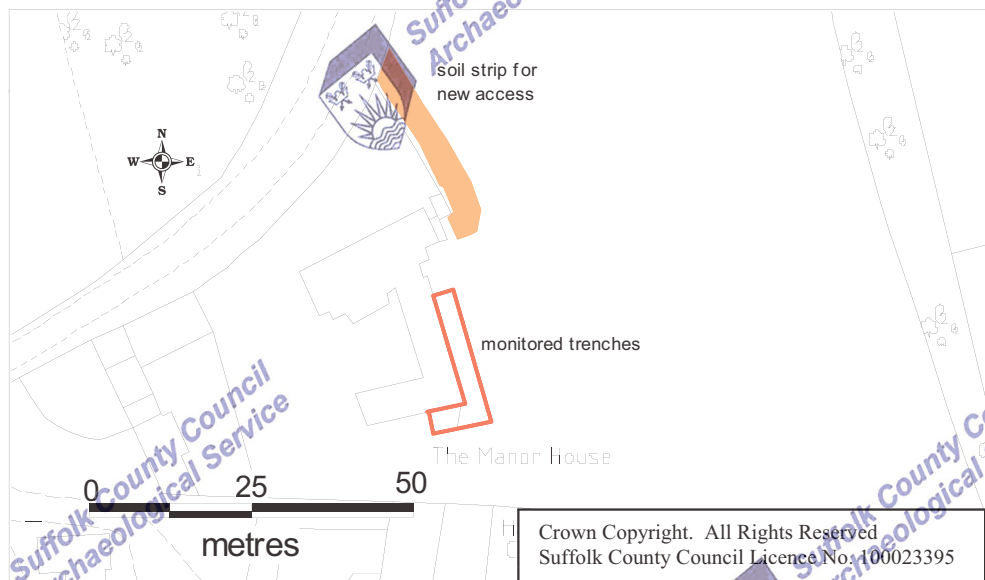


Figure 2. Monitored areas

Footing Trenches

Evidence for an earlier boundary, defined first by open ditches and then a chalk rubble or clunch-built wall, was recorded within the footing trenches to the rear and east of the existing building. In addition a further ditch and a relatively recent pit were also recorded (Fig. 3).

The wall footing, 0005, comprised a shallow trench infilled with chalk nodules and bonded with a dry, loose lime mortar (Figs. 3 and 4). The wall ran north-south from the corner of the existing building; it was not recorded in the footing trench for the east wall of the extension suggesting that it was connected to the corner of the house. The wall had been demolished a long time in advance of the current phase of work and the remains of the rubble from this lay in a 200mm deep spread to the east of 0005. The spread of rubble was extensive and recorded right into the south east corner of the footing and to a point level with the end of the house. The base of the rubble layer indicates the ground surface at the time of the demolition and this was 600mm below the present levels, this former ground level could also be identified within the trench section to the west of wall 0005 and shows that when built the footing for 0005 was no deeper

than 200mm. However the height of the cut on the west side of the wall suggests that at the time of the demolition the ground surface to the west of the wall was higher than the east.

Wall 0005 was built over two infilled ditches 0001 and 0004 (Figs. 3 and 4). The ditches paralleled each other and shared a common alignment with the later wall. The ditches however extended beyond the corner of the house and were recorded in the trench for the proposed east wall of the extension where it was sampled under the number 0003. The two ditches differed in character, 0001 was in excess of 1.7m wide with shallow sloping sides whilst 0004 had a narrow steep sided cut, but both ditches were similar in depth. The well defined interface with the ground level associated with 0005 suggests that the tops of the ditches had been truncated. The ditches were infilled with dark brown fine silt, this material filled both ditches and the adjacent ditch 0002 and it was impossible to discern the sequence in which these features were originally excavated. Ditch 0001 produced pottery sherds in the date range of 16th-18th centuries and ditch 0002 fragments of medieval and post medieval tile.

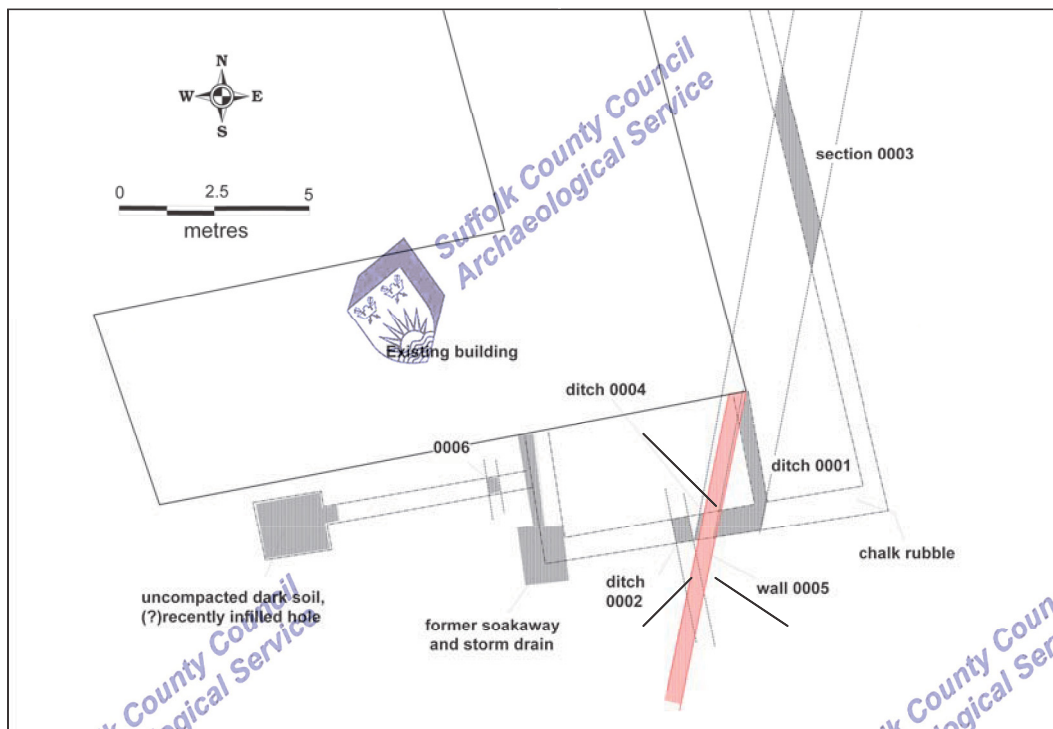


Figure 3. Site plan

Ditch 0002 was aligned differently from 0001 and 0004 but was probably orientated the same way as the house. The relation with the other ditches was unclear but it was cut by and predated the wall 0005.

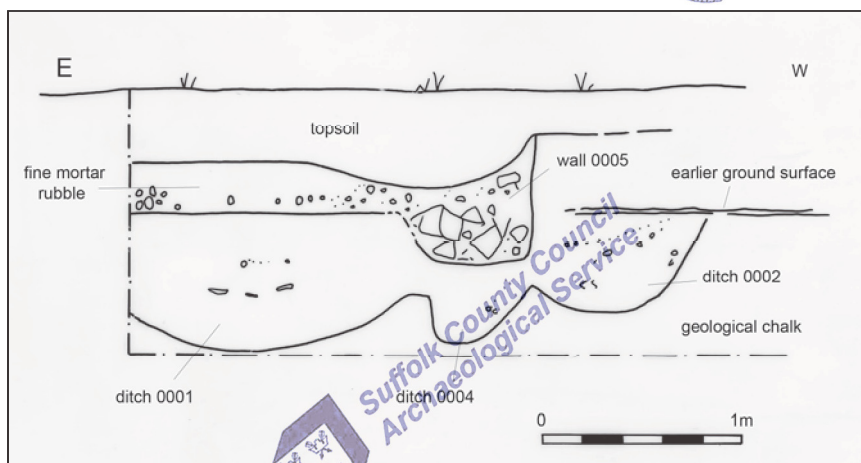


Figure 4. Section within extension south wall trench across wall and ditches

To the west of the ditches was a narrow undated chalk filled cut 0006 and a large hole infilled with soft uncompacted dark soil. This was undated by finds but due to the nature of the soil the deposit was not thought to be of any great age.

Soil strip

The soil strip for the access road removed little more than the turf and the reduced dig level was within the depth of the existing topsoil. At the time of the monitoring visit the whole of the access road had been recently stripped and all of the length was observed. Occasional small fragments of brick, china and other debris material were noted within this soil but all was relatively recent and none was retained.

The Finds Evidence by Richenda Goffin

Introduction

Finds were collected from three contexts, as shown in the table below.

OP	Pottery		CBM		Spotdate
	No.	Wt/g	No.	Wt/g	
0001	1	30			18th-19th C
0002			2	159	Post-medieval
0003	1	27			16th-18th C
Total	2	57	2	159	

Pottery

Two fragments of pottery were recovered from two different fills of a large ditch. A single fragment of a hard-fired Glazed red earthenware jar present in 0001 may be a plant container. It is likely to date to the 18th-19th century. A fragment of a Glazed red earthenware vessel with a strap handle from 0003 dates to the 16th-18th century.

Ceramic building material

Two fragments of pegtiles were recovered from 0002. One is made from an estuarine fabric with reduced core and cream/maroon external surfaces and dates to the 13th-15th century. The second tile is made from a fine pale cream fabric with silty bands and clay pellets is late or post-medieval.

Discussion and Conclusion

The remains of the wall recorded during the monitoring is shown on the first edition OS map (Fig. 6) and once connected the house with a range of brick and flint-built former out-buildings that were once part of the Manor House estate. These brick and flint buildings probably date to the mid 19th century and it is likely that the wall is contemporary with these.

The wall was built along the line of an earlier field boundary that was defined by a large open ditch. Pottery suggests that the infilling of the ditch occurred no earlier than the 17th century and therefore it was probably still in existence immediately prior to the building of, or during the early life of the current Manor House. The 1820's enclosure map (Fig. 5) shows neither a ditch nor the wall in this position suggesting that the ditch had been infilled for some time before the wall was built. The ditch recorded in the monitoring does however align with the field edge shown of the enclosure map to the south of the complex of buildings implying that the field edge may have once run straight through the development area and was moved to the curving line (also on the enclosure map but now gone) to accommodate the building of the manor house. The original ditch appears to have been re-cut at least once suggesting that the original field edge was an enduring land division.

The ditch 0002 is on a different alignment and part of a distinct set of boundaries, it predates the current house but is otherwise undated. The fragment of medieval roof tile found within this

ditch supports the suggestion that the current manor house stands on or is close to the site of a former medieval one.

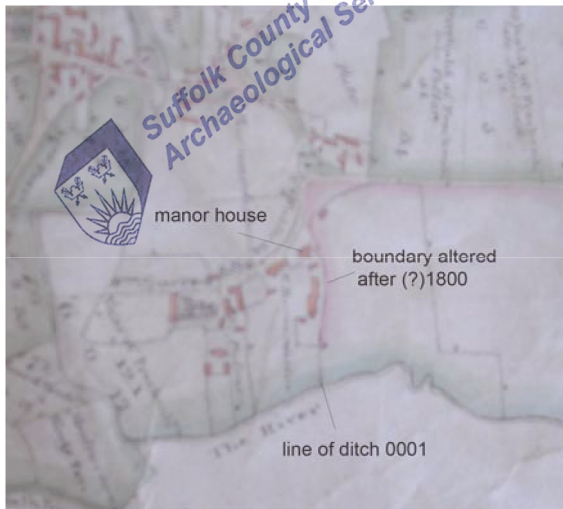


Figure 5. 1820's Enclosure map

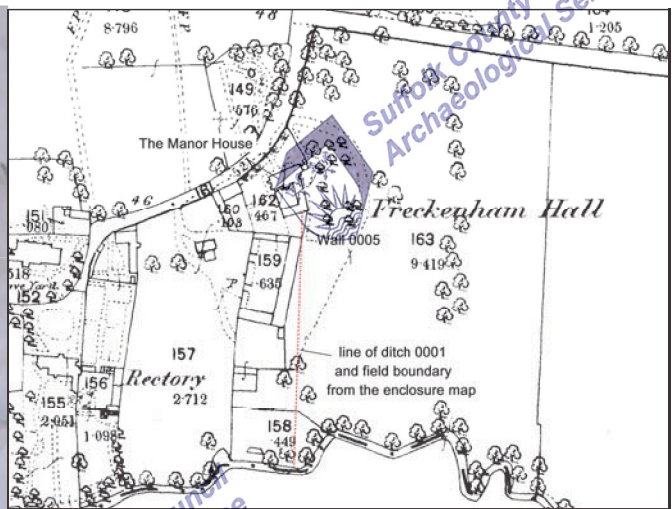


Figure 6. 1880's 1st Edition Ordnance Survey

David Gill
July 2008

