

9 Station Road, Clare CLA 044

Application No. SE/04/3767/P

TL 7705 4529

Oasis No. suffolkc1-6232

Report No. 2005/32

Summary

An archaeological monitoring of footing trenches at the rear of 9 Station Road, Clare, located a buried former topsoil sealing three possible features of uncertain type and date which may relate to occupation associated with Clare Castle and the medieval and post-medieval periods of the town.

Introduction

Two visits were made to the site on 1st February 2005 to monitor the excavation of footing trenches for a conservatory (Fig. 1). The work was carried out to a Brief and Specification issued by Keith Wade (Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service, Conservation Team) to fulfil a planning condition on application SE/04/3767/P. The work was funded by the developer, The Cambridge Conservatory Centre Ltd.

Interest in the site was based upon its general location within the area of archaeological interest of medieval Clare, as defined in the County Sites and Monuments Record and its specific location on the perimeter of the motte ditch of Clare Castle. Therefore there was potential for groundworks to disturb medieval and later deposits on the site.

The site was covered by an existing patio to the rear of the property, level with the garden. The garden itself was terraced, with a step down of approximately 0.6-8m, midway between the house and the castle motte.

Methodology and Results

The footing trenches were approximately a total of 10m in length and 0.5m wide. They were hand-excavated to a depth of 0.6m throughout, the base of the trench being the level of the subsoil. The trenches were seen when fully open, and the profiles and base of the trenches were cleaned by an archaeologist and subsequently recorded.

This showed a modern layer, 0.3m thick, of topsoil and patio bricks across the site. Beneath this was a general layer, 0002, of mid brown silt/clay loam and grit, also 0.3m thick. This layer lay above the natural subsoil, a mid brown/orange silt/gravel.

Three features were visible in the base of the trenches (Fig. 2), cut into the natural subsoil and below 0002. Due to the size and depth of the trenches only a small part of the surface of these features was exposed meaning specific identification of the form of the features was not possible.

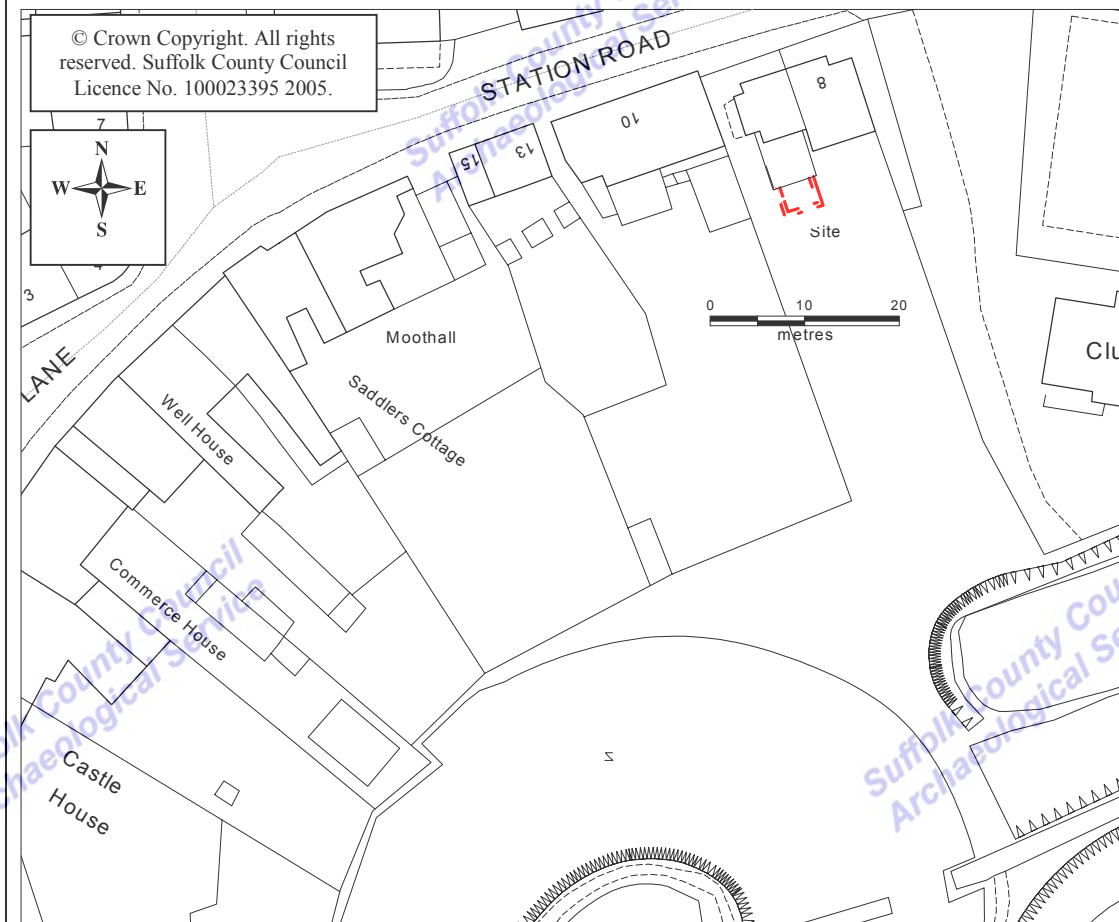
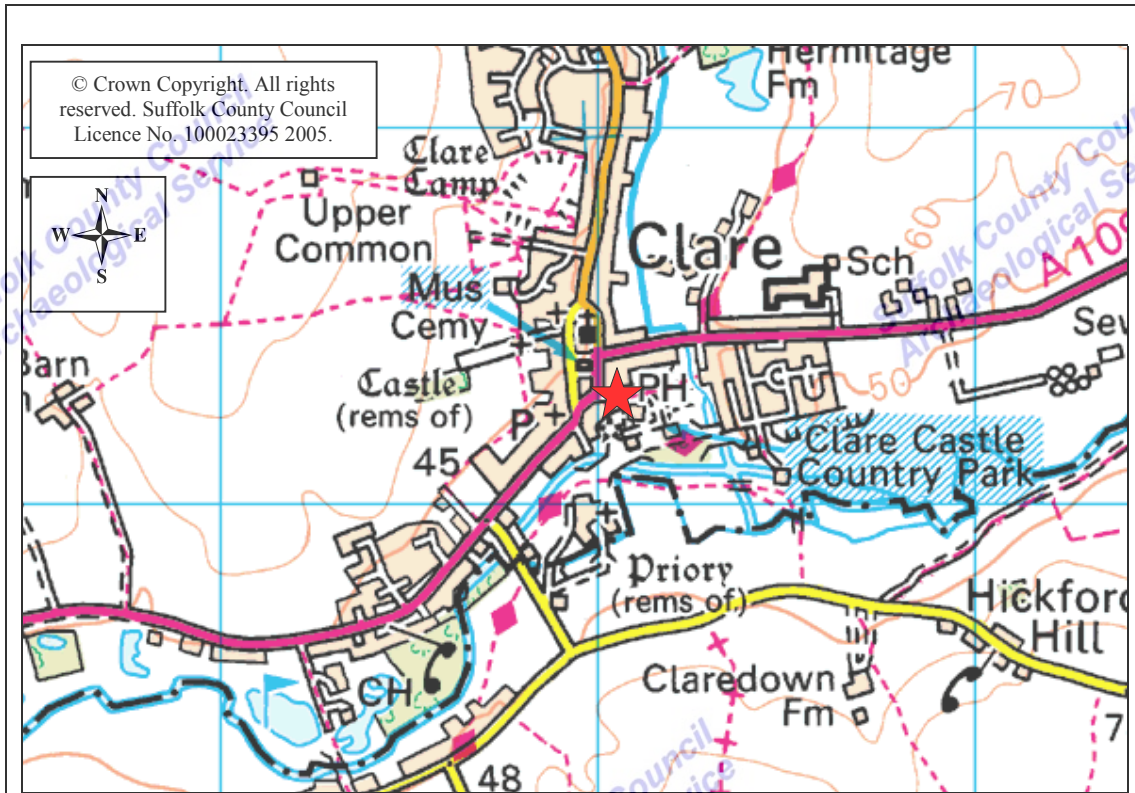


Figure 1. Site location plan

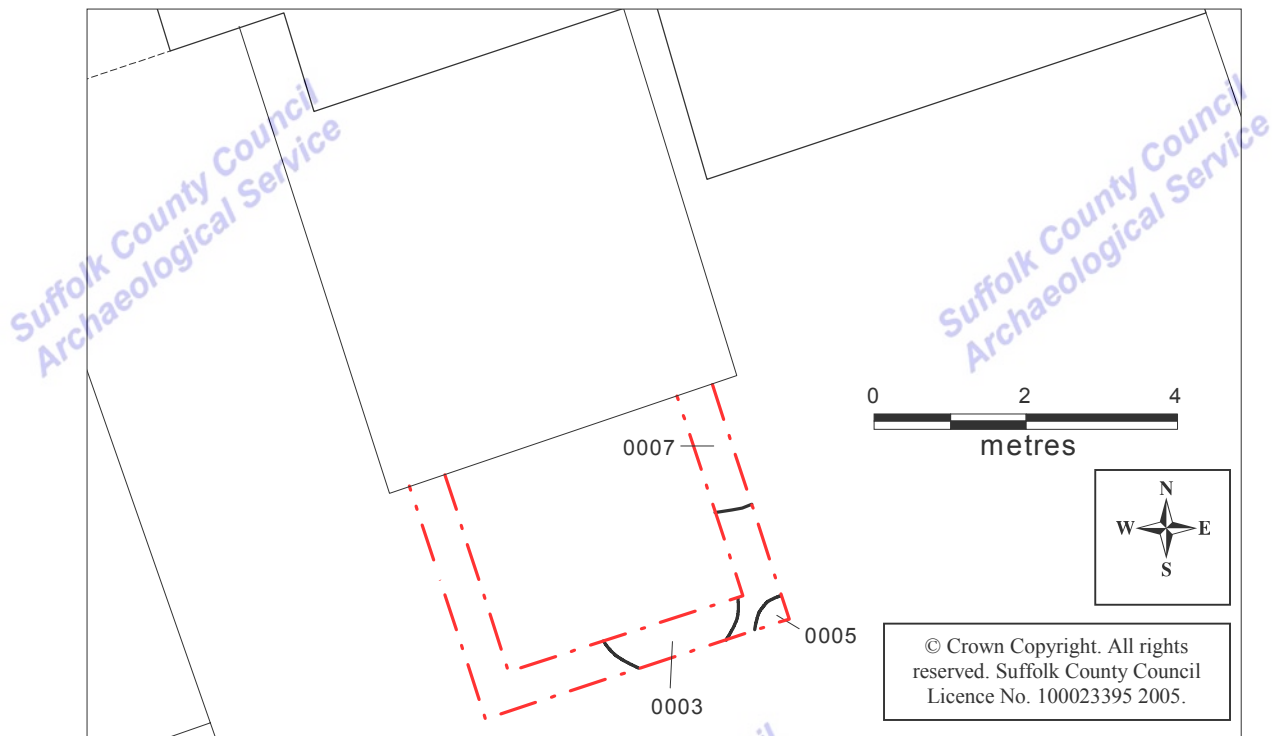


Figure 2. Site plan

0003 was a possible pit, approximately 2m in diameter. Enough of the feature was visible in plan to see that it was probably circular in shape. Its fill, 0004, was very similar to the above layer 0002, consisting of a clean mid brown silt/clay/loam.

0005 was a feature cut into the corner of the trench. Its fill, 0006, was the same as 0002 and 0004.

0007 was another large possible pit, at least 1.6m in length. Its fill, 0008, was the same as 0002 and 0004.

Discussion

The footing trenches were not of a significant depth but they showed that the ground to the rear of the property was undisturbed, with a topsoil covering an apparent buried former topsoil, 0002. The natural subsoil was seen at a relatively shallow depth, 0.6m, and was well preserved, with three archaeological features clearly cut into it and which are now preserved in situ beneath the conservatory foundations.

The date and function of these features is unclear as they were not excavated and so their shape could not be defined and no finds were recovered. All three appear to have been infilled by layer 0002. It is obviously possible that they may be of a medieval date, relating to activity associated with the castle.

These features however show that within the grounds of Clare Castle, beneath the gardens to the rear of properties fronting onto Station Road, the archaeological levels are well preserved, fairly shallow, and at risk of disturbance from future development.

John Craven, February 2005

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