

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING REPORT

Willow Park, Beck Row, Mildenhall MNL 554

A REPORT ON THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING OF GROUNDWORKS ASSOCIATED AT
WILLOW PARK, ROOKERY DROVE, BECK ROW, MILDENHALL.

Planning Application No. F/2003/065

NGR: TL 683 784

OASIS Ref. Suffolkc1-7823

Funded by: The Community Law Partnership

Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service Report No. 2005/168

Summary

An archaeological monitoring of trenches at Willow Park, Beck Row, Mildenhall, located a single undated ditch and preserved soil deposits from the original natural landscape.

Introduction

A series of visits was made to the site from 20th April to 9th August 2005 to monitor the excavation of a series of trenches for the installation of cess pits. The work was carried out to a Brief and Specification (T:\arc\sandy\document\jp\2002-2004 specifications\mildenhall-willowpark03.doc) issued by Judith Plouviez (Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service, Conservation Team) to fulfil a planning condition on application F/2003/065. The work was funded by the developer, The Community Law Partnership.

The site was c.4ha in size and was divided into twelve plots, occupied by a varied range of mobile and permanent housing, gardens and other light usage. The land was flat and level, at a height of just under 5m OD, and was previously used as arable land.

Interest in the site was based upon its general location within the dense band of prehistoric and Roman activity that extends along the edge of the fens (Fig. 1). A substantial scatter of prehistoric and probably high status Roman finds (MNL 065) has been found immediately to the east and partially over the site. Excavations at MNL 502 (Bales 2004) and MNL 536 (Craven in prep), 400m and 500m to the south-east respectively, have identified evidence of Early Bronze Age, and Iron Age settlement, Roman enclosures and structures, and the remains of a post-medieval building. MNL 536 also identified several large peat hollows, part of the natural fenland landscape that survives beneath the modern fields.

Therefore there was potential for trenching to disturb further multi-period archaeological deposits and so a program of archaeological monitoring was required to identify and record any archaeological material.

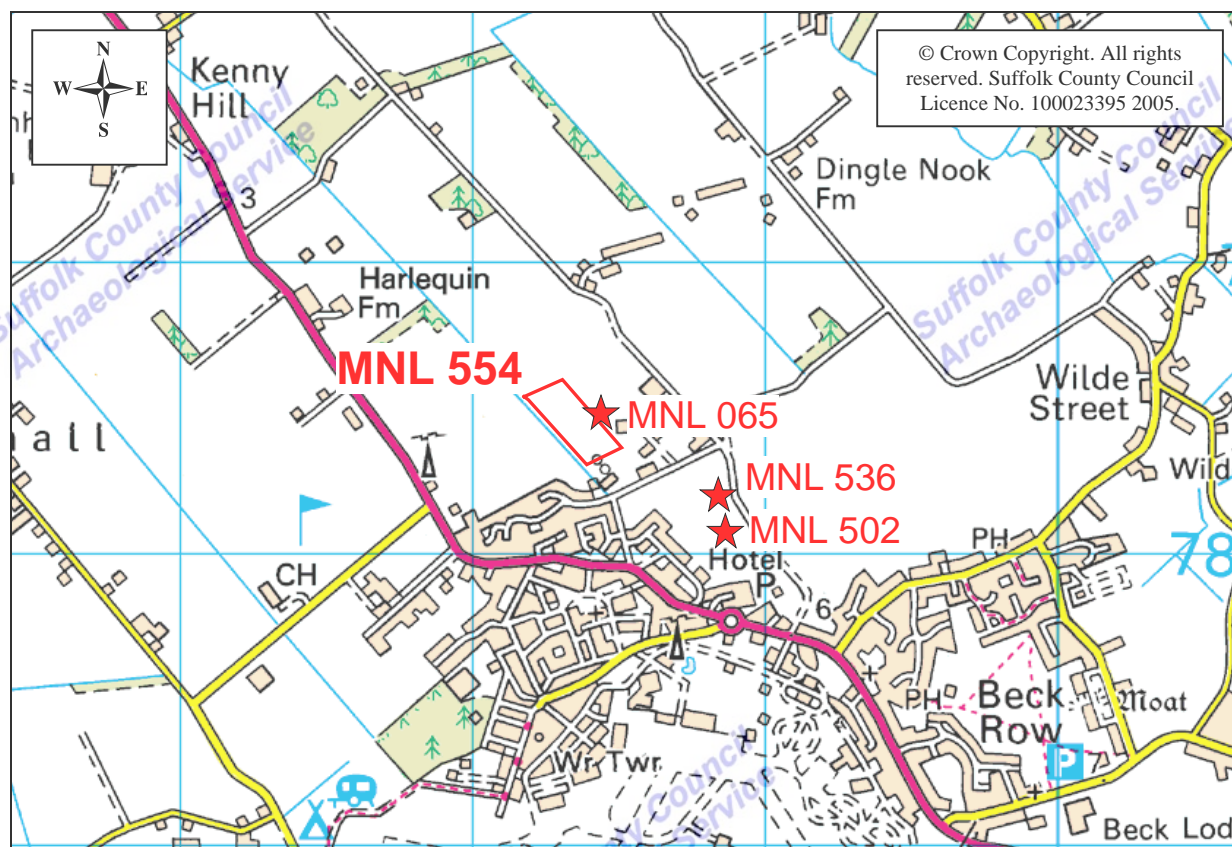


Figure 1. Site location plan

Methodology and Results

The trenches were situated within, or around the perimeter, of eight of the twelve plots (Fig. 2). Each trench was excavated by a mini-digger, under the observation of an archaeologist. Due to the limitations of the small trenches, and the general lack of identifiable archaeological deposits, the Conservation Officer approved that further observation was not required on trenching in the remaining four plots.

Plot 1	A 3m by 2m trench showed 0.3m of topsoil overlying a 0.1m thick layer of chalky silt. This in turn overlaid a 0.4m thick layer of orange clay beneath which was a lens of peaty sand. The natural sand subsoil was at a depth of 0.9-1m.
Plot 2	A 3m ² trench showed 0.3m-0.4m of topsoil overlying a natural yellow sand subsoil. A series of trenches to the south-west measured 0.6m wide and showed 0.5m of modern material overlying a patchy layer, 0.2m thick, of mid grey sand with traces of peat and blackened sand. Under this layer was the natural yellow sand subsoil.
Plot 3	A 2m ² trench showed a 0.3m thick topsoil overlying a 0.4m thick layer of chalk/clay deposits, under which was the natural sand subsoil.
Plot 4	A 3m ² trench showed 0.4m of topsoil overlying the sand subsoil. A single ditch, 0001, aligned north-west to south-east, ran along the western edge of the trench and was 100% excavated. The cut was 0.5m wide and 0.3m deep with steep sides and a flat base. The fill, 0002, was a mix of mid grey/brown/yellow sands. No finds were recovered and the feature is undated.
Plot 5	A 2.5m ² trench showed 0.4m of topsoil overlying the natural sand subsoil. A 0.5m wide trench to the north showed the same soil profile while a similar trench to the south-east showed traces of a thin layer, 0.1m thick, of dark grey sand overlying the natural sand subsoil.
Plot 7	A 3m ² showed 0.5m of topsoil overlying the natural sand subsoil.
Plot 9	A 3m ² trench showed 0.4m of topsoil overlying a 0.2m thick layer of peaty sand, beneath which was the natural sand subsoil.
Plot 10	A 3m ² showed 0.4m of topsoil overlying the natural sand subsoil. A 0.3m wide trench extending to the south showed a similar profile.

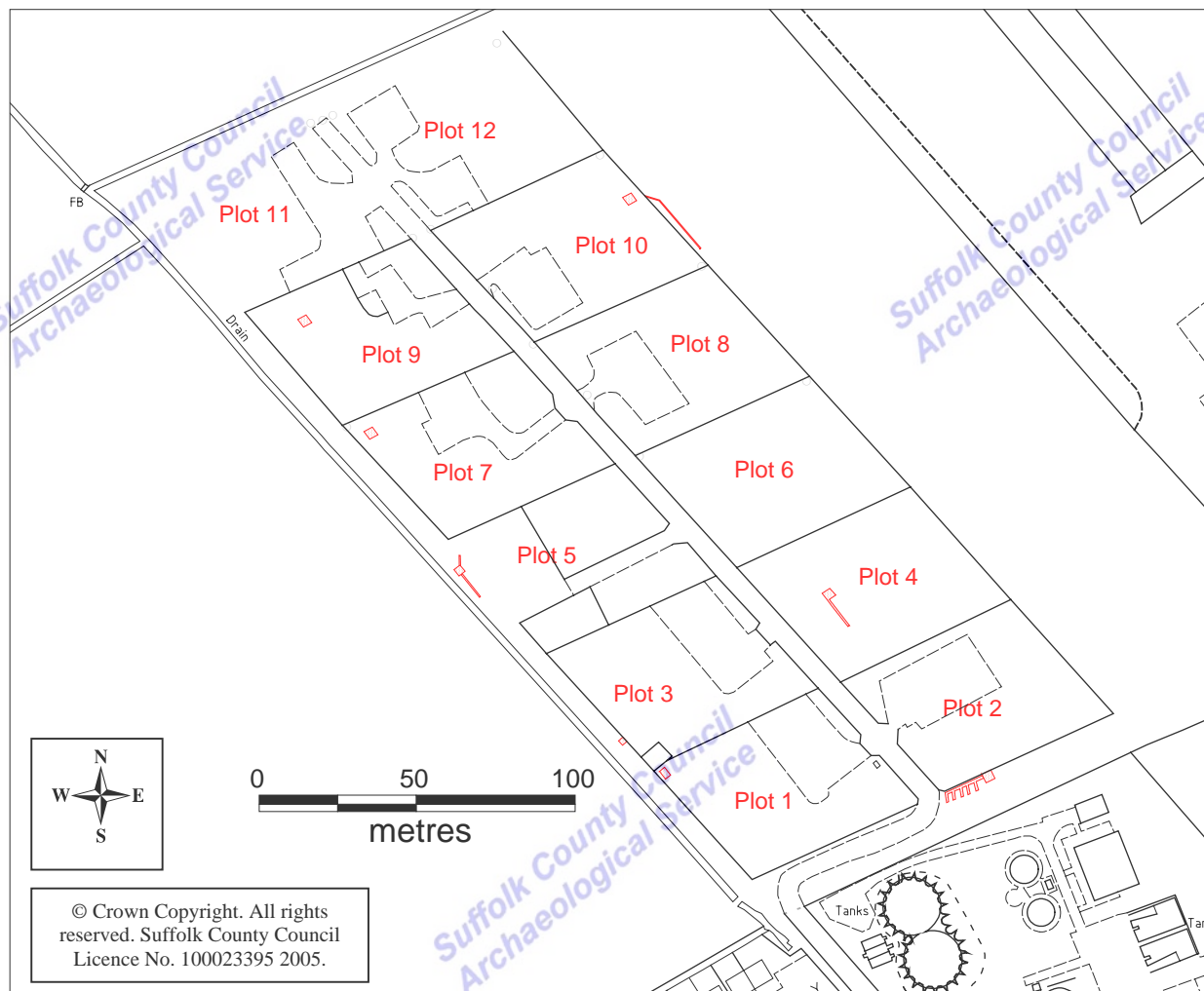


Figure 2. Site plan

Discussion

The trenches were limited in size, totalling only c.70sqm in total, and were widely scattered across the 4ha site. The single ditch, 0001, that was identified was undated although its mixed fill is indicative that it is not modern and probably relates to the known prehistoric or Roman occupation within the wider area.

The grey sand layers and deposits of peat, clay and chalk, seen in plots 1, 2, 3, 5 and 9 appear to be surviving remnants of former soil horizons from the original fenland landscape of undulating sand dunes and waterlogged, peat filled hollows. Despite the levelling and truncation caused by modern farming these deposits, together with the ditch, demonstrate that potential archaeological levels may survive. However the very limited trenching cannot give a firm indication on the density, geographical spread or extent, or date of any potential archaeological deposits.

References

Bales, E., 2004, *A Roman Maltings at Beck Row, Mildenhall, Suffolk*. East Anglian Archaeology, Occasional Paper No. 20.

Craven, J, A., *Phase 2, Rear of Smoke House Inn, Beck Row, Mildenhall, MNL 536*. In prep.

J, A, Craven, November 2005