

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING REPORT

Land adjacent Main Gate and Search Barn, RAF Mildenhall MNL 558

A REPORT ON THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING OF ROADWORKS ON LAND ADJACENT
THE MAIN GATE AND SEARCH BARN, RAF MILDENHALL.

Planning Application No. F/2005/0301/GOV
NGR: TL 7063 7676
OASIS Ref. Suffolkc1-8672

Funded by: MoD Defence Estates

Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service Report No. 2006/029

Summary

An archaeological monitoring of the site strip for a new road at the main gate and search barn, RAF Mildenhall, did not locate any archaeological evidence.

Introduction

The site was visited on the 16th and 17th June 2005 to monitor the stripping of areas for a new road system. The work was carried out to a Brief and Specification issued by Judith Plouviez (Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service, Conservation Team) to fulfil a planning condition on application F/2005/0301/GOV. The work was funded by the developer, MoD Defence Estates.

Although only limited archaeological work had been carried out in this part of the airfield, previous monitoring of roadworks in the area had identified a post-built structure of possible late Saxon date immediately to the east and a ditch to the north (MNL 513, Gill 2003). There was potential therefore for the development to disturb archaeological deposits, possibly associated with this building, and so a program of archaeological monitoring was required.

Methodology and Results

The site strip was carried out by a Hi-Mac with a ditching bucket, monitored at intervals by an archaeologist. Three areas were surveyed whilst fully open before further groundworks.

In the eastern observed area the road was stripped to a depth of 0.25m-0.35m. This showed a thin topsoil overlying 0.15m-0.2m of fine mid brown silt/sand, beneath this layer was the solid chalk natural. At the end of the strip, closest to the location of structure 0005, seen in MNL 513, the chalk was not exposed as it fell below the developers formation level. A hand excavated slot trench at this point showed that the chalk gradually descended a slight slope, reaching a total depth of 0.5m at the far eastern end, underlying 0.4m of the silt/sand layer and 0.1m of topsoil.

In the central observed area the chalk had risen to a depth of 0.15m-0.2m, lying beneath the topsoil and the thinning layer of mid brown silt/sand. The chalk at this point was mixed with occasional patches of natural orange gravel.

In the western observed area the chalk again dropped away below the formation level of 0.3m-0.4m and was not seen for the final 25m to the west. At this point the topsoil overlaid a layer, 0.3m+ thick, of mid brown/orange silt/sand.

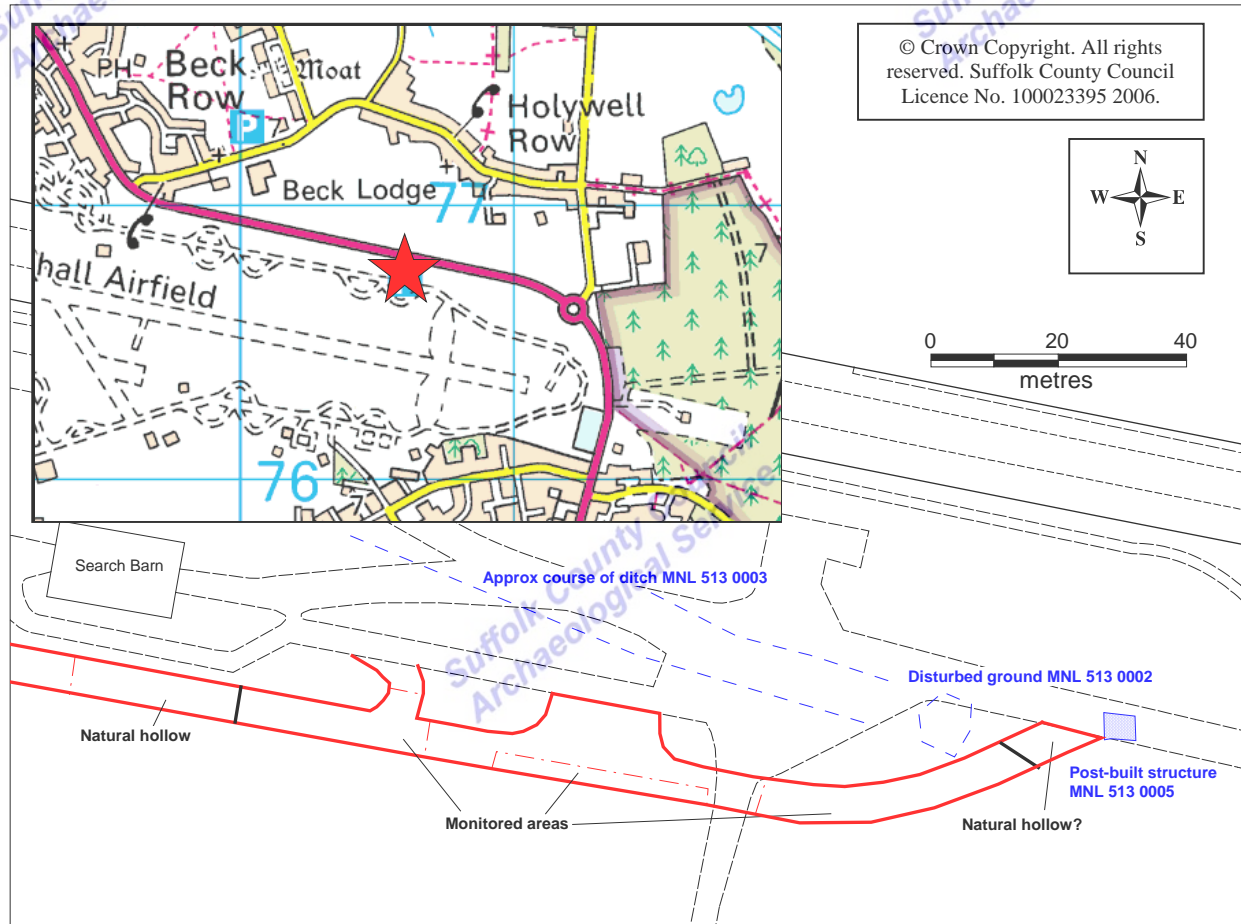


Figure 1. Site location plan

Discussion

The monitoring has not identified any archaeological features or deposits to add to the results from MNL 513. At the point with the highest potential for archaeological evidence, next to the site of the post-built structure, the natural subsoil level dropped below the formation level. This appeared to be due to a natural, silted up, hollow in the chalk, although it may possibly represent the edge of either of two features seen in MNL 513, ditch 0002 or the large post-medieval pit disturbance 0003.

Through the majority of the site the natural chalk was clearly exposed, and was totally devoid of archaeological features. The presence of a layer of mid brown sand layer, which is probably a former soil horizon, lying above the chalk indicates that the subsoil surface has not been significantly truncated.

To the west there appears to be another natural silt filled hollow in the chalk subsoil, where again it descended below the formation level for a significant length.

These hollows are an indication of how the original natural landscape would have been gently undulating with shallow hollows and chalk ridges. Their survival, despite the shallow depth of the subsoil and the levelling which occurred during the creation of the airbase, indicates that any archaeological deposits in the vicinity are also likely to survive.

J. A. Craven, January 2006

References

Gill, D., 2003, *RAF Mildenhall Airfield, Southern Taxiway and Perimeter Road (MNL 513)*, SCCAS Report No. 2003/44.

Appendix 1

SUFFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICE - CONSERVATION TEAM

Brief and Specification for Archaeological Monitoring of Development

ROAD IMPROVEMENTS, ADJACENT MAIN GATE, RAF MILDENHALL

Although this document is fundamental to the work of the specialist archaeological contractor the developer should be aware that certain of its requirements are likely to impinge upon the working practices of a general building contractor and may have financial implications, for example see paragraphs 2.3 & 4.3. The commissioning body should also be aware that it may have Health & Safety responsibilities, see paragraph 1.5.

1. Background

- 1.1 Planning permission to develop on this site has been granted conditional upon an acceptable programme of archaeological work being carried out (application F/2005/0301/GOV). Assessment of the available archaeological evidence indicates that the area affected by development can be adequately recorded by archaeological monitoring.
- 1.2 The application affects an area around TL 703 768 in the north-east part of the airfield where little archaeological investigation has taken place. However, previous road investigation revealed evidence for a post-built structure immediately east of the proposed works; this structure is of later Saxon type but no dating evidence has yet been recovered. The current works may affect related settlement features.
- 1.3 In accordance with the standards and guidance produced by the Institute of Field Archaeologists this brief should not be considered sufficient to enable the total execution of the project. A Project Design or Written Scheme of Investigation (PD/WSI) based upon this brief and the accompanying outline specification of minimum requirements, is an essential requirement. This must be submitted by the developers, or their agent, to the Conservation Team of the Archaeological Service of Suffolk County Council (Shire Hall, Bury St Edmunds IP33 2AR; telephone/fax: 01284 352443) for approval. The work must not commence until this office has approved both the archaeological contractor as suitable to undertake the work, and the PD/WSI as satisfactory. The PD/WSI will *provide the basis for measurable standards* and will be used to establish whether the requirements of the planning condition will be adequately met.
- 1.4 Detailed standards, information and advice to supplement this brief are to be found in "Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England" Occasional Papers 14, East Anglian Archaeology, 2003.
- 1.5 Before any archaeological site work can commence it is the responsibility of the developer to provide the archaeological contractor with either the contaminated land report for the site or a written statement that there is no contamination. The developer should be aware that investigative sampling to test for contamination is likely to have an impact on any archaeological deposit which exists; proposals for sampling should be discussed with this office before execution.

2. Brief for Archaeological Monitoring

- 2.1 To provide a record of archaeological deposits which are damaged or removed by any development permitted by the current planning consent.
- 2.2 The main academic objective will centre upon the potential of this development to produce evidence for earlier occupation of the site.

2.3 The significant archaeologically damaging activities in this proposal are likely to be the site preparation works involving topsoil stripping, the stripping process and the upcast soil are to be observed whilst they are excavated by the contractor.

3. Arrangements for Monitoring

3.1 To carry out the monitoring work the developer will appoint an archaeologist (the archaeological contractor) who must be approved by the Conservation Team of Suffolk County Council's Archaeological Service (SCCAS) - see 1.3 above.

3.2 The developer or his archaeologist will give the Conservation Team of SCCAS five working days notice of the commencement of ground works on the site, in order that the work of the archaeological contractor may be monitored. The method and form of development will also be monitored to ensure that it conforms to previously agreed locations and techniques upon which this brief is based.

3.3 Allowance must be made to cover archaeological costs incurred in monitoring the development works by the contract archaeologist. The size of the contingency should be estimated by the approved archaeological contractor, based upon the outline works in paragraph 2.3 of the Brief and Specification and the building contractor's programme of works and time-table.

3.4 If unexpected remains are encountered the Conservation Team of SCCAS must be informed immediately. Amendments to this specification may be made to ensure adequate provision for archaeological recording.

4. Specification

4.1 The developer shall afford access at all reasonable times to both the County Council Conservation Team archaeologist and the contracted 'observing archaeologist' to allow archaeological observation of building and engineering operations which disturb the ground.

4.2 Opportunity must be given to the 'observing archaeologist' to hand excavate any discrete archaeological features which appear during earth moving operations, retrieve finds and make measured records as necessary.

4.3 In the case of topsoil stripping unimpeded access to the stripped area at the rate of one hour per 100 square metres must be allowed for archaeological recording at the interface between topsoil and clean sub-soil surface before the area is further deepened, traversed by machinery or sub-base deposited.

4.4 All archaeological features exposed must be planned at a minimum scale of 1:50 on a plan showing the proposed layout of the development.

4.5 All contexts must be numbered and finds recorded by context. The data recording methods and conventions used must be consistent with, and approved by, the County Sites and Monuments Record.

4.6 Developers should be aware of the possibility of human burials being found. If this eventuality occurs they must comply with the provisions of Section 25 of the Burial Act 1857; and the archaeologist should be informed by 'Guidance for best practice for treatment of human remains excavated from Christian burial grounds in England' (English Heritage & the Church of England 2005) which includes sensible baseline standards which are likely to apply whatever the location, age or denomination of a burial.

5. Report Requirements

5.1 An archive of all records and finds is to be prepared consistent with the principles of *Management of Archaeological Projects (MAP2)*, particularly Appendix 3. This must be deposited with the County Sites and Monuments Record within 3 months of the completion of work. It will then become publicly accessible.

5.2 Finds must be appropriately conserved and stored in accordance with *UK Institute of Conservators Guidelines*. The finds, as an indissoluble part of the site archive, should be deposited with the County SMR if the landowner can be persuaded to agree to this. If this is not possible for all or any part of the

finds archive, then provision must be made for additional recording (e.g. photography, illustration, analysis) as appropriate.

- 5.3 A report on the fieldwork and archive, consistent with the principles of *MAP2*, particularly Appendix 4, must be provided. The report must summarise the methodology employed, the stratigraphic sequence, and give a period by period description of the contexts recorded, and an inventory of finds. The objective account of the archaeological evidence must be clearly distinguished from its interpretation. The Report must include a discussion and an assessment of the archaeological evidence. Its conclusions must include a clear statement of the archaeological value of the results, and their significance in the context of the Regional Research Framework (*East Anglian Archaeology*, Occasional Papers 3 & 8, 1997 and 2000).
- 5.4 A summary report, in the established format, suitable for inclusion in the annual 'Archaeology in Suffolk' section of the *Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology*, must be prepared and included in the project report.
- 5.5 County Sites and Monuments Record sheets must be completed, as per the county SMR manual, for all sites where archaeological finds and/or features are located.
- 5.6 At the start of work (immediately before fieldwork commences) an OASIS online record <http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/project/oasis/> must be initiated and key fields completed on Details, Location and Creators forms.
- 5.7 All parts of the OASIS online form must be completed for submission to the SMR. This should include an uploaded .pdf version of the entire report (a paper copy should also be included with the archive).

Specification by: Judith Plouviez

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Date: 17 June 2005

Reference: /RAFMildenhall-RoadImp06

This brief and specification remains valid for 12 months from the above date. If work is not carried out in full within that time this document will lapse; the authority should be notified and a revised brief and specification may be issued.

If the work defined by this brief forms a part of a programme of archaeological work required by a Planning Condition, the results must be considered by the Conservation Team of the Archaeological Service of Suffolk County Council, who have the responsibility for advising the appropriate Planning Authority.