

## **Must Farm 2009: Cut-Off Wall Monitoring**

### *Summary*

*This report represents the results of a watching brief (TL 4859 9743 and TL 4786 9720) carried out at Must Farm, Whittlesey, near Peterborough. Through 19<sup>th</sup> February to 26<sup>th</sup> March 2009 regular visits were made to monitor the machine excavated materials generated by the topsoil stripping and trench excavation of the repairs to a cut-off wall. These repairs focused on two areas of the wall that was constructed in 2007, where the required depth into the Oxford clay had not been reached. The work was commissioned by Bachy Soletanche.*

*The process of installing the wall involved the continuous cutting and immediate in-filling of a narrow trench up to 12m in depth. As with the 2007 investigation (Interim Report 2007), this meant that monitoring was focused on gathering potential archaeological material from the up-cast deposits of the spoil heap. The monitoring revealed no further worked timbers or other archaeological artefacts, but as with the 2007 investigation, it did identify the difference in deposits where the wall bisected the known Bronze Age palaeochannel.*

### **Introduction**

A second phase of monitoring was carried out by the Cambridge Archaeological Unit (CAU) at Must Farm, Whittlesey, which focused on two areas of repair following on from the initial construction of a cut-off wall in 2007 (Interim Report 2007) see Figure 1. The work was carried out over several separate visits (including 19<sup>th</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup>, 26<sup>th</sup> February and 2<sup>nd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup>, 26<sup>th</sup> March 2009) and involved the collection and recording of any significant archaeological items or palaeoenvironmental deposits exposed by the process.

The monitoring areas lay to the immediate north of Kings Dyke, west of Whittlesey and were approximately centred at TL 4859 9743 and TL 4786 9720. The length of trench excavated was approximately 700m in total. The line of the cut-off wall coincided with an area of deep fen deposits initially identified in the Must Farm evaluation (Evans *et al* 2005), comprised of interleaving layers of fen clay and early peat. The evaluation also identified the course of a Bronze Age river channel which survived as a pronounced roddon that curved along the southern edge of the excavation area (Interim Report 2007). This evidence was confirmed, and the course of the palaeochannel was plotted during the 2007 cut-off wall watching brief.

### **Methodology**

A shallow topsoil strip was excavated along the sections of cut-off wall that had to be repaired; this was used as the working easement. The cut-off wall trench was very narrow (approx. 0.7m), but very deep, (up to 12m in places), and because it was cut and in-filled simultaneously with bentonite slurry, a visual inspection of its section was never possible. The monitoring consequently involved periodic visits to inspect the accumulated excavated material. As with the original programme of monitoring,

(Interim Report 2007), special attention was paid to the area of wall which traversed the known course of the Bronze Age palaeochannel, in order to check for the occurrence of timber structures similar to those at the Must Farm Timber platform (Interim Report 2009). In between these visits, the engineers constructing the cut-off wall were instructed to keep aside any unusual objects or deposits to be inspected at the following monitoring visit.

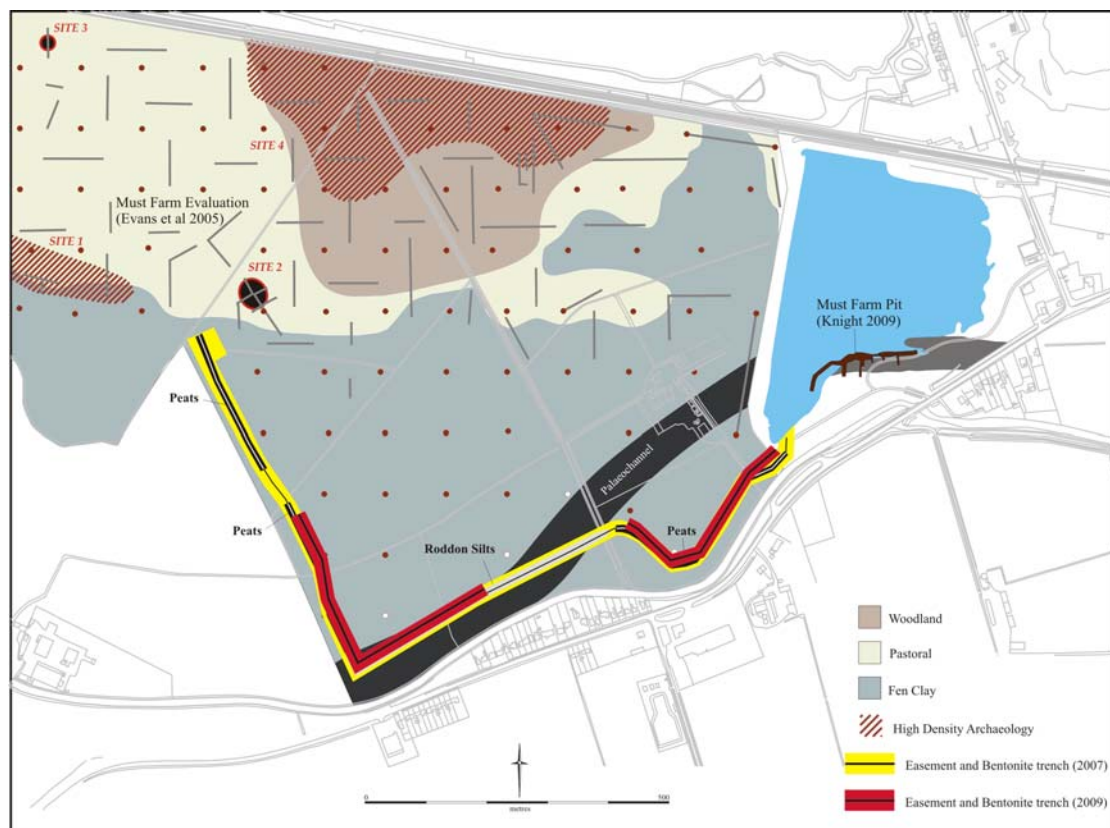


Figure 1: Plan Showing Cut-Off Wall and Location of Deposits

## Monitoring results

The shallow topsoil strip revealed no features, nor was it deep enough to reveal the course of the roddon. No further significant deposits (other than the expected roddon silts) were observed during the excavation of the cut-off wall and no archaeological objects, wooden or otherwise, were collected from the up-cast material. The presence of the roddon was again identified within the same east-west stretch of trench as observed in 2007 by the difference in up-cast deposits. The change in these deposits consisted of fen clays and detrital peats shifting to thick lumps of banded silts, this corresponds with the observations of the channel made along the old Must Farm Pit edge (Evans *et al* 2005). The majority of the up-cast deposits were covered in a layer of bentonite slurry (Figure 2).



Figure 2: Photograph of Cut-Off Wall and Up-Cast Deposits Covered in Bentonite Slurry.

### References:

Evans, C., Brudenell, M., Knight, M., & Patten, R. 2005. *Must Farm: Archaeological and Environmental Investigations (Must Farm Application 2005) – Enclosure 15/3*. CAU Report 667.

Interim Report. 2007. *Must Farm: Cut-Off Wall Monitoring*. CAU.

Knight, M. 2009. Excavating a Bronze Age Timber Platform at Must Farm Whittlesey, Near Peterborough. *PAST*, 63, 1-4.