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# ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT

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## Little St. Marys Long Melford

LMD 115

Eval report only,  
no report completed  
on excavation (not  
fully funded).  
Stone Coffin etc.

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S.C.C. A.S. Report NO. 97/7  
**Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service**  
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# Archaeological Evaluation Report

## **Gardner Garage Site, Little St. Marys. Long Melford (LMD 115)**

### **Summary**

Two burials were found during an archaeological evaluation of the Gardners Garage site. The edge of a probable third grave was just caught by the edge of one of the trenches but this was not sampled. They were all aligned E-W, possibly in rows, the heads of the two known burials were at the west end facing east. A large pit containing first century, fine-ware pottery was also found.

### **Introduction**

An archaeological evaluation of the ex-Gardners garage site, Little St Marys, Long Melford was carried out as a requirement of planning applications B/95/1074 and B/96/1531. The aim of the evaluation was to establish whether any archaeological deposits existed in the area and determine the impact that the proposed building works might have on it; providing the necessary information so that the appropriate conservation strategy could be planned. The work was carried out on 21/1/97 by Suffolk County Council Archaeological Unit and funded by the developer Mr A Heighes.

The site lies at TL 8630 4527, 30m to the east of the present Little St. Marys frontage. It is likely to be within the major Late Iron Age and Roman settlement at Long Melford, which includes a Scheduled Ancient Monument (County No 90), 100m to the south west. Early Roman pottery sherds were found in a contractor's trench along this part of Little St Marys in 1962 (LMD 033) and pottery and coins spanning the first to fourth centuries were found in the fire station extension in 1984 (LMD 046), but there is no indication of how far to the east the settlement extends. At the fire station a Roman soil layer c. 30cms deep was noted and dark "occupation soil" layers have been observed elsewhere in the town.

### **Method**

Three trenches were dug in the areas required by the specification (See appendix 1), in addition to these, two test-holes dug were by the developer, opening a total of 24 sq m of the site. The trenches were dug by machine to the depth of the subsoil surface, the base and sides of the trenches were cleaned and recorded in plan and section at 1:20. All exposed features were sampled by hand, excavation was kept to a minimum removing only enough to establish the nature and date of the features. All disturbed soil was metal detected. Levels were taken on the surface of the uppermost surviving archaeological layers, the subsoil surface, the coffin lid and 'uncoffined' skull, there was no absolute level so the doorstep of the neighbouring property ("Near By") was used as a TBM.

### **Results**

#### **Developer's Test hole**

Grave 0007 (see fig 3), situated within the test hole, contained a stone coffin. The stone was limestone and tool marks where the stone had been worked could be seen on the lid. The lid had been pierced by the builders, affording a glimpse of the occupant. The space around the body had been packed with a white compacted

granular material, possibly gypsum, which was now stuck to the underside of the lid and sides of the coffin. The skeleton was that of a mature male. Although only one side and one end of the grave cut could be seen, it appeared to have been very large, 80cms longer at the west end than the coffin and along the north side 40cms wider. The top of the coffin was 1.15m below the present ground surface and the top of the grave cut, which could be followed cutting through both the buried Roman topsoil and occupation layer, at only 20cms below. Occupation debris, pottery, tile, oyster shell etc. were common amongst the grave backfill.

#### **Evaluation Trench 1 (see fig 4)**

Grave 0003 was uncovered in the first of the evaluation trenches. The grave was 2.28m long and up to 0.70m wide which tapered to a narrower rounded east end. The grave fill was a dark loam and finds were common throughout its depth. Only a small section at the west end was dug to confirm it was a burial and this exposed the skull, jaw and upper vertebrae of the individual, a mature male, 0.90m below the present ground surface. The skeleton lay within a smaller cut in the bottom of the grave, a large tile had been placed on edge against the west end of the grave on the step between the two cuts above the head. The body had probably been in a wooden coffin, a dark stain was observed around the edge of the inner cut and there had been space prior to the coffins collapse for the head to be able to roll back away from the neck and jaw. Finds from the grave backfill included large fragments of Roman roof tiles as well as pottery.

Alongside 0003 was another probable grave, numbered 0004, most of which fell outside the limits of the trench. This was a linear straight sided feature parallel to 0003 and filled with a similar loam. Finds were collected from the grave's surface but it was not excavated as this would have necessitated the expansion of the trench.

A large pit, 0005, filled with black loam and containing a large amount of C1st pottery had been discovered by the developer while digging a testhole. During the evaluation the test hole was re-excavated and expanded upon to find the curving edge of the pit. The pit extended beyond the evaluation trench and the 0.48m depth excavated was no more than a sondage into the feature top.

The north and west sections of the trench showed that areas of the Roman soil profile were still intact. A 20cm deep layer of brown loam similar to the grave fill and containing finds was recorded in the northern half of the trench buried beneath 25cms of overburden. On the south side this buried soil layer was not apparent with disturbed ground directly overlying the features. A fragment of human bone was found in an unstratified contexts in over pit 0005 suggesting that another burial on the site had already been disturbed

#### **Trench 2**

This trench ran E-W at the south end of the plot. The east end of the trench was disturbed by a large pit filled with clay and building debris including Medieval or later peg-tile fragment. At the west end was a 15cms deep layer of clean loam, a type of homogenous garden soil which was cut by two post medieval features. These were all buried beneath 35cms of concrete and rubble.

### **Trench 3**

Trench 3 was dug on the western side of the plot in front of the proposed site of the garage blocks. 15cms of hogging and modern debris covered a deep, homogenous layer of fine brown silt. This filled a narrow, flat bottomed E-W trench 0.85m wide and 1.32m deep. The silt contained few finds, animal bone, oyster shell and peg tile fragments, and these appeared to have been deposited in flat horizons. Trench 3 was extended southwards to try and find the genuine subsoil level. The subsoil here was recorded at 0.97m below the present ground level beneath 0.80m of silt there was no evidence of an earlier ground surface suggesting that the subsoil level here was also truncated.

### **Conclusion**

The evaluation demonstrates that there is surviving archaeology on the site. Across the northern half of the site the archaeological levels appear to be well preserved with buried 'occupation' deposits and the original topsoil layer, in some places, intact. Where surviving these deposits occur at only 25cms below present ground levels. Over the southern half of the site no Roman material was found and the area was more heavily disturbed.

The feature evidence suggests that there were at least two phases of Roman activity on the site; an early domestic occupation, which occurred during mid-late first century, when the pottery and other associated household rubbish was deposited in pit 0005, and later a cemetery, probably dating to the late third or fourth century. Finds from the backfill of the graves, however, also included mid-second and third-fourth century pottery, as well as 2.77 kg of roof tile and wall plaster indicating that occupation in this area was perhaps more continuous through the Roman period and that a substantial building of some status may have stood nearby.

The proximity of grave 0004 to 0003 suggests that there may have been a pattern of rows with burials as close as 0.5m apart. However this could imply that 0003 was at the southern edge of the probable cemetery as there were no burial in the 2m area opened to the south of 0003.

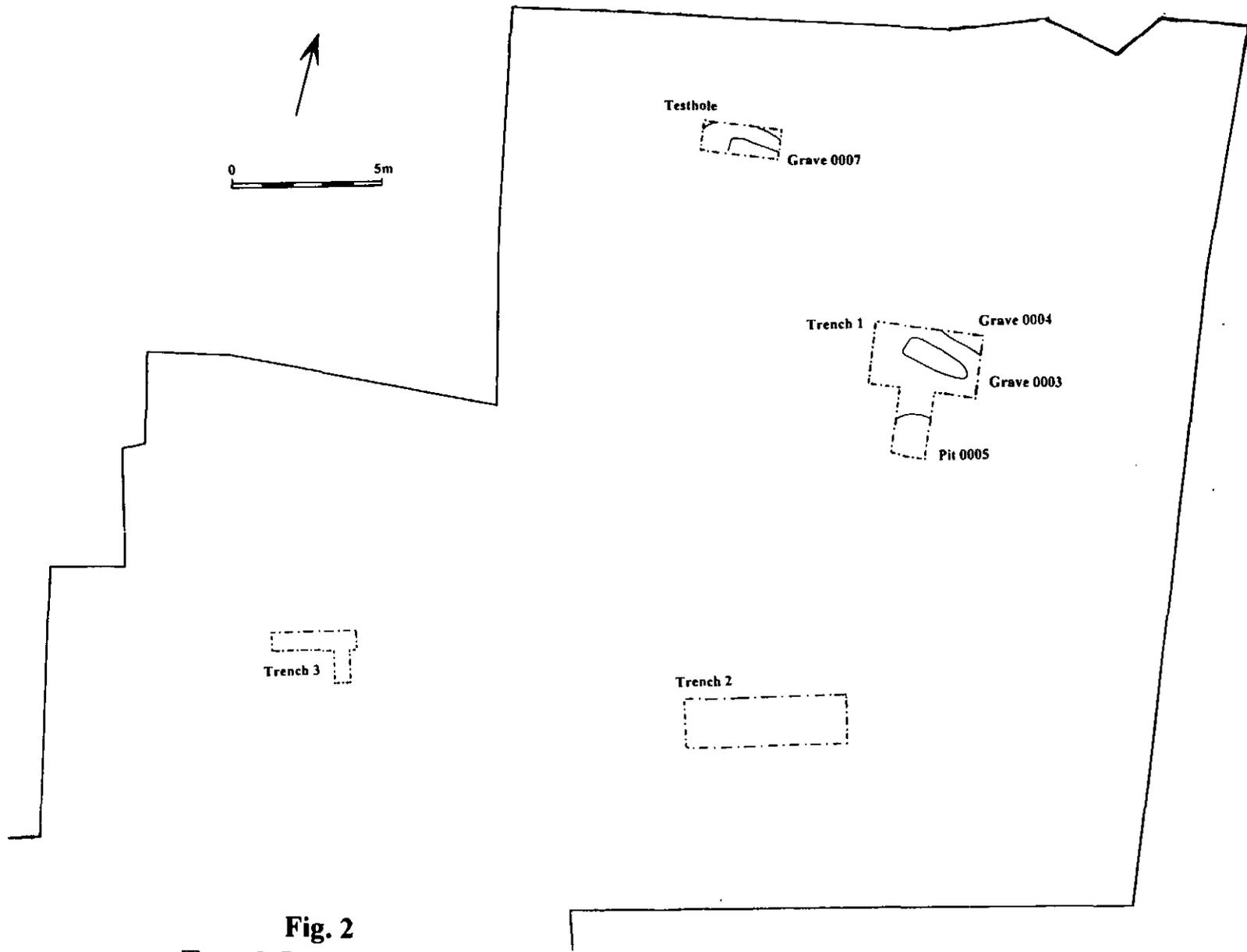
D. Gill 27/1/97

Any opinions expressed in this report about the need for further archaeological work are those of the Field Projects Division alone. The need for further work will be determined by the Local Planning Authority and its archaeological advisors when a planning application is registered. Suffolk County Council's archaeological contracting service cannot accept responsibility for inconvenience caused to clients should the Planning Authority take a different view to that expressed in the report.



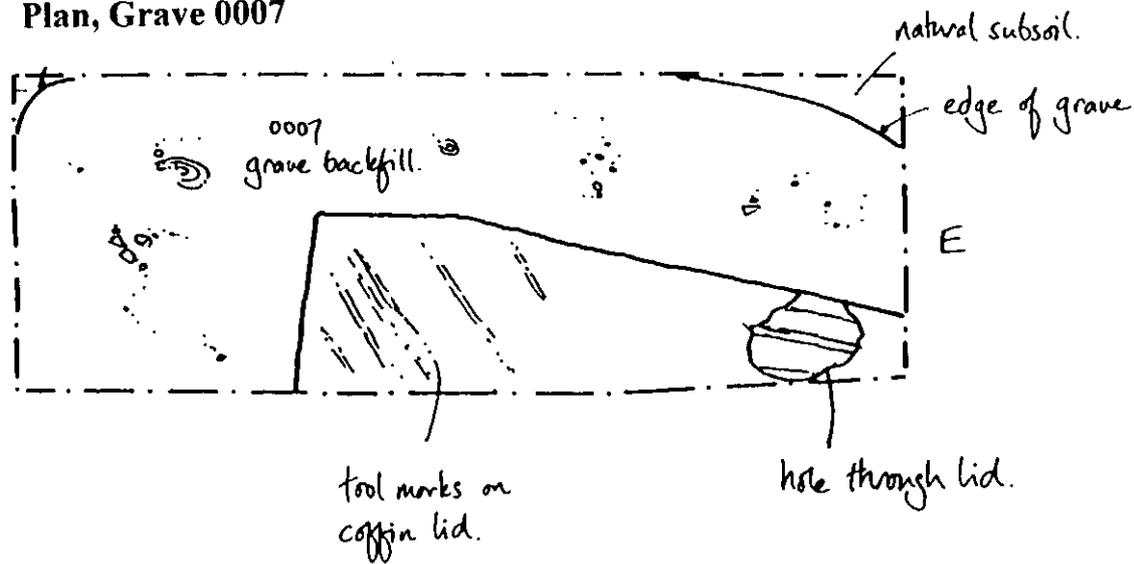
**Fig 1**  
**Site Location Plan**

Scale 1:1250

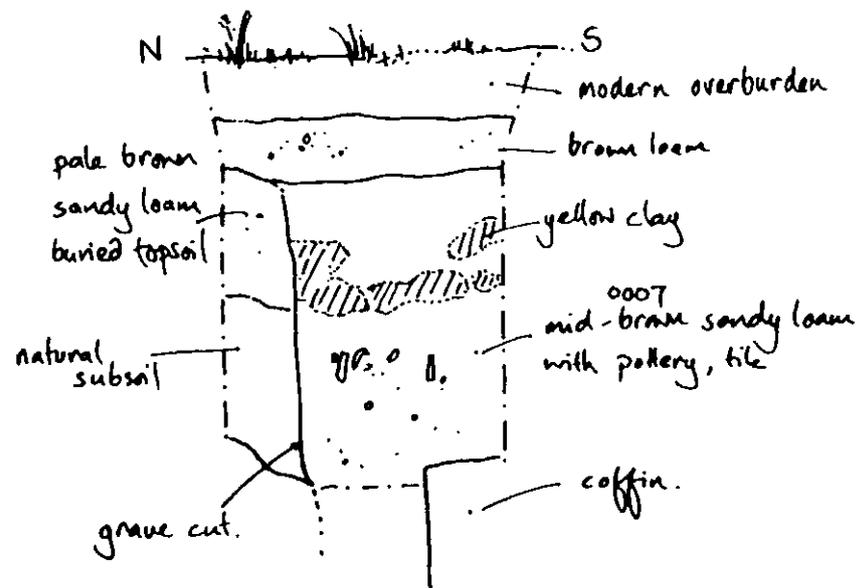


**Fig. 2**  
**Trench Location Plan**

Plan, Grave 0007



Eastern section



Northern section

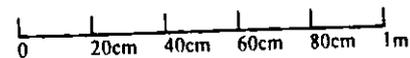
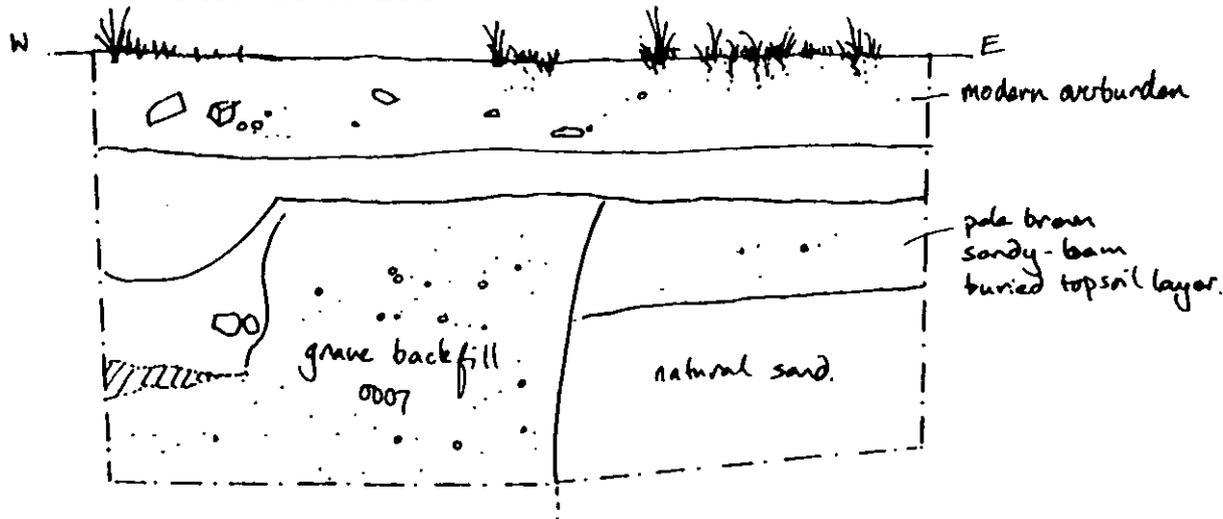


Fig 3  
Grave 0007 Plan and Sections

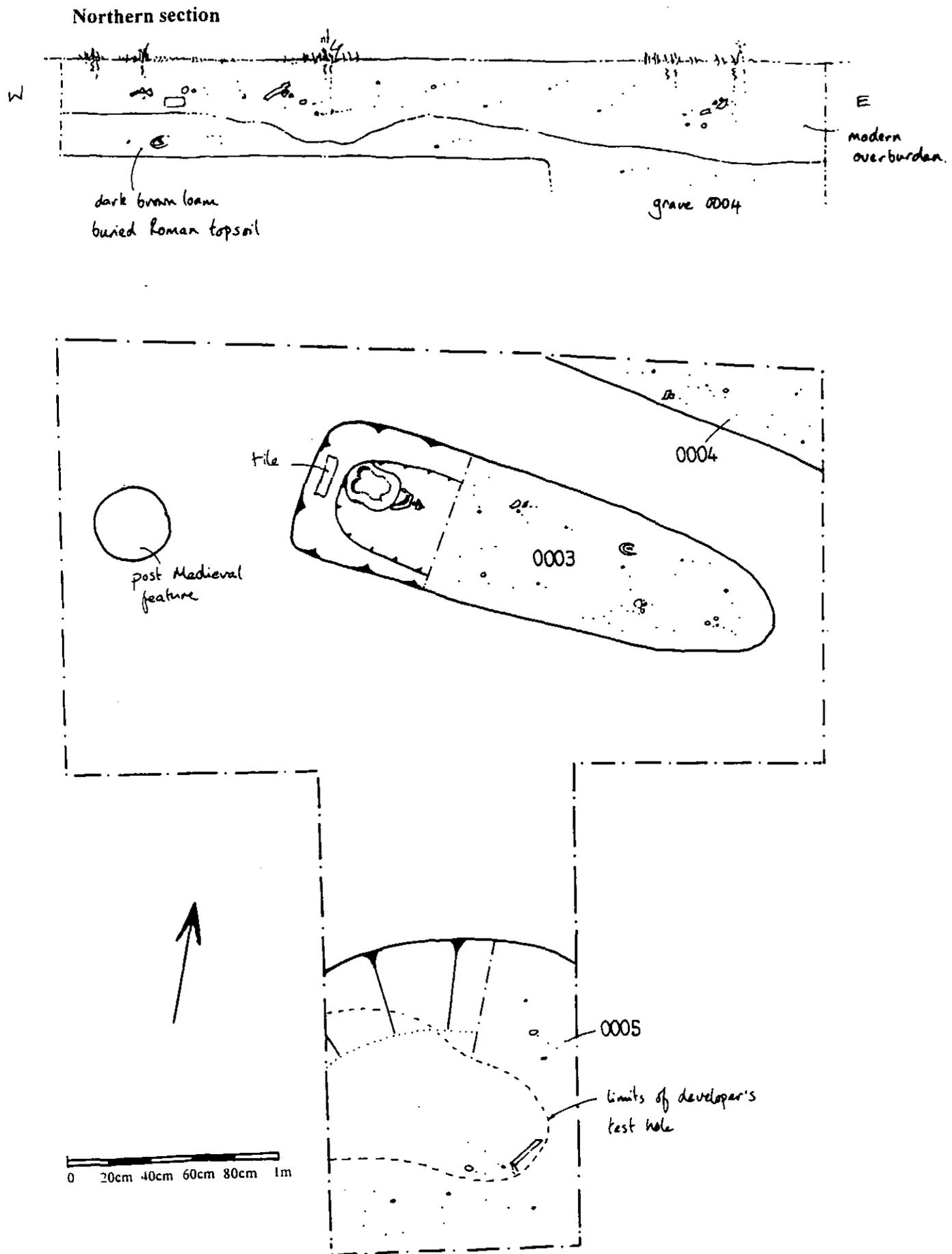


Fig 4  
Trench 1 Plan and Sections

## Brief and Specification for an Archaeological Evaluation

### LITTLE ST MARYS (EX GARDNERS GARAGE), LONG MELFORD

#### 1. Background

- 1.1 Applications B/95/1074 (outline) and B/96/1531 have been made to build at Little St Marys, Long Melford.
- 1.2 In order to establish the full archaeological implications of these applications the planning authority has been advised that an archaeological evaluation of the application area should be required of the applicant.
- 1.3 The site lies at TL 8630 4527, 30 metres to the east of the present Little St Marys frontage. It is likely to be within the major Late Iron Age and Roman settlement at Long Melford, which includes a Scheduled Ancient Monument (County No 90), 100m to the south west. Early Roman pottery sherds were found in a contractor's trench along this part of Little St Marys in 1962 (SMR No LMD 033) and pottery and coins spanning the first to fourth centuries were found in the Fire Station extension in 1984 (LMD 046), but there is no indication of how far to the east the settlement extends. At the Fire Station a Roman soil layer circa 30cms deep was noted and dark "occupation soil" layers have been observed elsewhere in the town.
- 1.4 All arrangements for the field evaluation of the site, the timing of the work, and access to the site, are to be negotiated with the commissioning body.

#### 2. Brief for archaeological evaluation.

The object of the evaluation is to:

- 2.1 Establish whether any archaeological deposits exist in the area.
- 2.2 Provide sufficient information to construct an archaeological conservation strategy, dealing with preservation, the recording of archaeological deposits, working practices, timetables and orders of cost.

#### 3. Specification: Field Evaluation

- 3.1 Trial trenches should be excavated to cover about 2% (20 sq m) of the site area and be positioned to sample all areas of the site. Linear trenches are thought to be the most appropriate sampling method. A plan showing suggested locations is attached.
- 3.2 The topsoil may be mechanically removed using an appropriate machine (fitted with a toothless bucket) and other equipment. All machine excavation is to be under the direct control and supervision of an archaeologist. The topsoil should be examined for archaeological material.
- 3.3 The top of the first archaeological deposit may be cleared by machine, but must then be cleaned off by hand. The decision as to the proper method of further excavation will be made by the senior project archaeologist with regard to the nature of the deposit; there is a presumption that excavation of archaeological deposits will be done by hand unless it can be shown that there will not be a loss of evidence by using a machine.
- 3.4 In all evaluation excavation there is a presumption of the need to cause the minimum disturbance to the site consistent with adequate evaluation; that significant archaeological features e.g. solid or bonded structural remains, building slots or post-holes, should be preserved intact even if fills are sampled.

- 3.5 There must be sufficient excavation to give clear evidence for the period, depth and nature of an archaeological deposit. The depth and nature of colluvial or other masking deposits must be established across the site.
- 3.6 Any natural subsoil surface revealed should be hand cleaned and examined for archaeological deposits and artefacts. Sample excavation of any archaeological features revealed may be necessary in order to gauge their date and character.
- 3.7 Metal detector searches should take place at all stages of the excavation.
- 3.8 All finds will be collected and processed (unless variations in this principle are agreed with the Conservation Team of SCC Archaeology Section during the course of the evaluation).
- 3.9 Human remains should be left in situ except in those cases where damage or desecration are to be expected, or in the event that analysis of the remains is shown to be a requirement of satisfactory evaluation of the site.
- 3.10 Plans of the archaeological features on the site should be drawn at 1:20 or 1:50, depending on the complexity of the data to be recorded. Sections should be drawn at 1:10 or 1:20 again depending on the complexity to be recorded. Any variations from this will need to be agreed with the Conservation Team.
- 3.11 A photographic record of the work is to be made, consisting of both monochrome photographs and colour transparencies.
- 3.12 Topsoil, subsoil and archaeological deposit to be kept separate during excavation to allow sequential backfilling of excavations.

#### **4. General Management**

- 4.1 A timetable for all stages of the project must be agreed before the first stage of work commences, including monitoring by the Conservation Team of Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service.
- 4.2 The composition of the project staff must be detailed and agreed (this is to include any sub-contractors).
- 4.3 A general Health and Safety Policy must be provided, with detailed risk assessment and management strategy for this particular site.
- 4.4 No initial survey to detect public utility or other services has taken place. The responsibility for this rests with the archaeological contractor.
- 4.5 The IFA's Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Desk-Based Assessments and for Field Evaluations should be used for additional guidance in the execution of the project and in drawing up the report.

#### **5. Report requirements**

- 5.1 An archive of all records and finds to be prepared consistent with the principle of 'Management of Archaeological Projects', English Heritage 1991 (particularly Appendix 3.1 and Appendix 4.1).
- 5.2 The data recording methods and conventions used must be consistent with, and approved by, the County Sites and Monuments Record.
- 5.3 The objective account of the archaeological evidence must be clearly distinguished from its archaeological interpretation. The conclusion should include a statement of the archaeological potential of the site.

- 5.4 An opinion as to the necessity for further evaluation and its scope should be given. A second phase will not be embarked upon until the primary fieldwork results are assessed and the need for further work is established. A second-phase can be neither developed in detail or costed at this stage.
- 5.5 Finds should be appropriately conserved (in accordance with UK Inst Conservators Guidelines). Every effort should be made to get the agreement of the landowner/ developer to the deposition of the finds with the County SMR.
- 5.6 The site archive should be deposited with the County Sites and Monuments Record within 3 months of the completion of work.
- 5.7 Where positive conclusions are drawn from a project (whether it be evaluation or excavation) a summary report, in the established format, suitable for inclusion in the annual 'Archaeology in Suffolk' section of the Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute for Archaeology journal, should be prepared and included in the project report.

Specification by: J Plouviez

Suffolk County Council  
Archaeological Service Conservation Team  
Environment and Transport Department  
Shire Hall  
Bury St Edmunds  
Suffolk IP33 2AR

Tel: 01284 352448

Date: 13 January 1997

Reference: /lmelford01

**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.**

**The results of this evaluation, if they are to be used as part of a planning application, will need to be considered by the Conservation Team of the Archaeology Service of Suffolk County Council, who have the responsibility for making the recommendation to the appropriate Planning Authority.**

## Appendix 2

## LMD 115 CONTEXT LIST

<u>OPNO</u>	<u>TRENCH</u>	<u>IDENTIFIER</u>	<u>DESCRIPT</u>	<u>FINDSY</u>	<u>SPOTDATE</u>
0001		finds	unstratified finds from whole site	y	
0002	1	layer	Roman occupation layer. 20cms of dark brown loam, contains animal bone pottery and oyster shell. Overlays features. Buried beneath 23cms of modern overburden.	y	MC2+, post Rom
0003		grave	Sub-rectangular with tapering and rounded east end. Aligned E-W filled with dark loam with common finds. Soil similar to 0002, below 0002	y	MC2+
0004	1	grave ?	Linear feature adjacent to and parallel with 0003, loam fill similar to 0002. Finds collected from surface 0004 not excavated as mainly outside the trench.	y	Rom
0005	1	pit	Large ?circular pit filled with black silty loam. Hole dug in top by developer prior to evaluation. Layer 0002 did not exist in this part of the trench disturbed ground directly over pit 0005		
0006	1	layer	Soil, re-deposited backfill from hole dug by developers in the top of pit 0005. Mixed context of pit fill and overburden.	y	
0007		grave	Large grave aligned E-W, contained stone coffin. Grave cut visible from high up cuts Roman occupation layer and buried topsoil. Grave fill dirty mixed layer with common finds mostly excavated by developer. Coffin carved from limestone tool marks visible on lid. Lid damaged by developers. Skeleton of an adult male body packed around with ?gypsum. L. femur length 473mm femur head 48mm.	y	LC3-4
0008	2	feature	Small circular pit filled with pale brown sandy loam cut clean brown loam. Probably modern, filled with same layer as post Roman horizon which covered this and other confirmed modern features	y	
0009	1	skeleton	Skeleton within grave 0003. Only head jaw and upper vertebrae exposed. Adult male with large brow ridges most of face missing		
0010	1	layer	Top fill of pit 0005 as excavated by the builders. Finds recovered prior to the start of the evaluation.	y	Mid - LC1
0011		AE object	Ae, Ring. Medieval purse bar loop. Unstratified context		
0012		AE object	Ae loop flat sided Unstratified context		
0013		Ae coin	As of Hadrian, Britannia on reverse, AD117-138. Unstratified context		AD117-138
0014		Ae coin	Antonine, Radiate HD- -Illeg, C3rd. Unstratified context		C3rd
0015		Ae coin	Antonine, AE3-- Illeg, C3rd. Unstratified context		C3rd
0016		Ag coin	Denarius of Clodius Albinus reverse Minerva, AD195-197. Unstratified context		AD195-197
0017		Ae coin	Antonine, Gallienus, AD 253-268. Unstratified context <i>Aianus of</i>		AD 253-268

Appendix 3

LMD 115 Finds Quantification List

<u>OPNO</u>	<u>POT</u> <u>NOS</u>	<u>POT</u> <u>KGMS</u>	<u>BON</u> <u>NOS</u>	<u>BON</u> <u>KGM</u>	<u>TILE</u> <u>NOS</u>	<u>TILE</u> <u>KGMS</u>	<u>PLASTER</u> <u>KGS</u>	<u>SLAG</u> <u>KGMS</u>	<u>LAVA</u> <u>KGMS</u>	<u>OYSTER</u> <u>KGMS</u>	<u>IRON</u> <u>KGMS</u>	<u>MISC</u>	<u>POTDATE</u>	<u>MODIDATE</u>
0001	2.00	0.03	1	0.00	1	0.04	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	3 Ae coins, 2 Ag coins, Ae ring, Ae purse frame loop.		
0002	13.00	0.15	1	0.02	1	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00			
0003	22.00	0.35	11	0.13	18	1.85	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.07	0.00	HSR: 1 frag adult ulna.	MC2+	
0004	1.00	0.01	1	0.00	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00		Rom	
0006	37.00	0.83	28	0.18	1	0.02	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.04	0.00	3 frags charcoal. HSR: 2 frags adult fibula.		
0007	26.00	0.27	3	0.01	13	0.92	0.04	0.00	0.00	0.08	0.01	Gypsum & limestone samples from coffin. 1 ?jet/shale frag.	LC3-4	
0010	93.00	5.29	35	0.34	4	0.68	0.00	0.08	0.37	0.09	0.00		Mid-LC1	
	94.00	6.92	80.00	0.68	8.00	3.52	0.05	0.08	0.37	0.28	0.01			