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ARCHAEOLOGICAL REPORT

STUSTON COMMON (SUS 023) MONITORING AND EVALUATION REPORT

for

Norfolk

~~Suffolk~~ County Council Highways Agency

95/41

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Archaeological Monitoring Report

A143 Road Improvements. Stuston Common
(TM13800 78400 SMR No.SUS 023)

Introduction

This report covers the evaluation and monitoring of the Scole-Stuston by-pass from the B1077 across the western half of Stuston Common during July '95. This length of the route was considered archaeologically sensitive as it crossed the projected line of a supposed Roman road (SUS 010), cut through a possible medieval earthwork (SUS 007) and through an area from which a large number of flint tools had been collected. Indeed commons themselves are ancient features of our landscape often with foundations in the Medieval period.

Archaeological background

The Roman road was identified by the archaeologist Basil Brown during the 1930's in an area just to the north of the common. Here a road-bed which consisted of 9cms of gravel and with ditches flanking each edge was recorded, one of many examples of the Roman occupation centred around the Roman small town which lies beneath Scole.

The possible earthwork was thought to be part of a rectangular enclosure which is shown on the first edition OS maps. Scatters of medieval pottery had been found to the east of and within the area of the enclosure (SUS 011). The shallow bank abutting the common may have been the surviving west side of this enclosure or a boundary delineating the eastern edge of the common.

An account by a Mr. A. Mayfield in the 1909 'Journal of the Ipswich Field Club' describes the finding of 169 Neolithic(?) flint implements, and waste flakes and cores from their fabrication as well as burnt flint and 'sun dried pottery'. No features are reported but the author suggests that some of the finds come from a discernible horizon.

Methodology

Prior to the soil stripping by the contractors the road route was evaluated with a series of hand dug trenches and 50 x 50cm test-holes. The trenches concentrated on the likely intersection with the Roman road and the medieval bank. The remainder of the route was investigated by the test holes which were dug along the centre-line between the B1077 and the B1118 at 10m intervals (see fig 1 for trench and test hole locations). The soil profile was recorded in the trenches as was the sub-soil depth in each of the test holes (see Fig.1).

Once the soil was stripped the exposed subsoil surface was examined for possible features; those found were sectioned and recorded.

Results

Evaluation

Three trenches and 15 test-holes were dug, opening in all 19.5 sq.m of ground to sub-soil depth. In these no evidence of the Roman road, the earth work or any other archaeology was found. Most of trench 1 and test-holes 1-10 were within a shallow

linear crater, the sub-soil here was a fine, yellow sand which differed from the orange sand over clay encountered elsewhere. It appeared that this was part of the extensive quarrying which had occurred in this area during the 19th century.

The supposed medieval earthwork, which could be seen from the surface as a shallow but definite bank was, it transpired, an undulation in the subsoil and therefore a geological phenomenon.

Soil strip monitoring

Monitoring of the stripping confirmed the absence of archaeology between the B1077 and B1118 and the non-existence of the medieval bank as suggested by the evaluation.

However a large N-S ditch and vestiges of a buried ancient soil horizon were discovered to the south of the old A143. The ditch (see Fig. 1) was 1.5m wide and 0.75m deep, the bottom filled with a dense charcoally sand in which was found burnt flint, fired clay/daub and a quantity of Roman and Bronze Age pottery (details of which are listed on the accompanying appendices).

Struck flint flakes and a fragment of prehistoric pottery were recovered from pale brown pockets of sand 0004; the base of the soil profile which had survived the machining within shallow hollows in the subsoil relief.

Conclusion

It appears from the evaluation and monitoring that the area of the common has been open, undeveloped heathland since the Roman period. The Roman ditch was filled with domestic debris and suggests occupation occurring on the periphery of the common. The ditch which approximately follows the eastern edge of the common suggests that the limits of the common which may have been established at that time have, on this side, altered little.

The discovery of Bronze Age pottery and struck flint both as residual finds within the ditch and within the base of the soil horizon furthers the earlier evidence of intense prehistoric activity.

Experience of the pre-agricultural topography of the area at the excavation at SUS 005 show that the landscape here had an undulating relief of hummocks and hollows. The apparent bank was a geological feature and is probably a survivor of this landscape.

D.Gill October 95

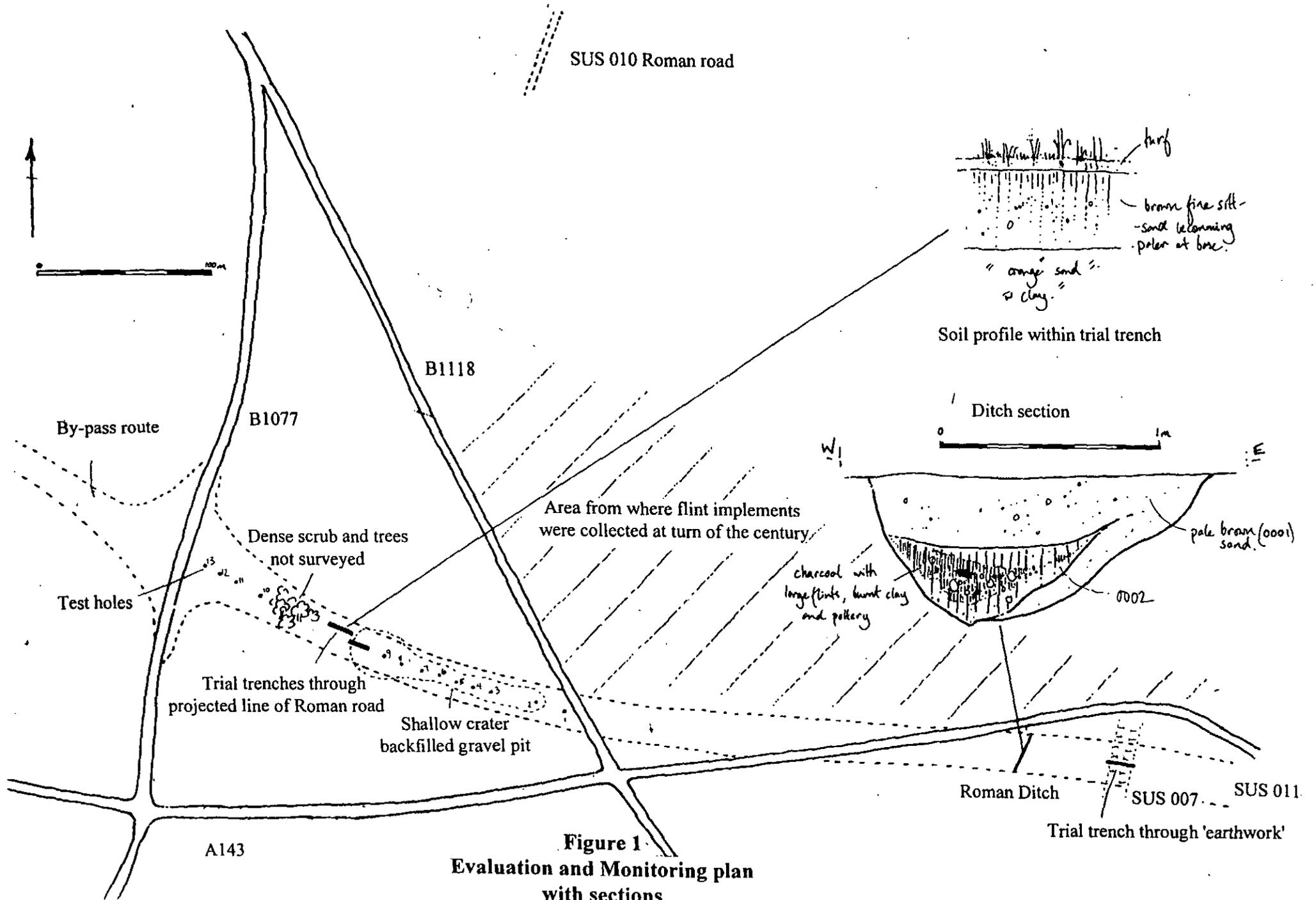


Figure 1
Evaluation and Monitoring plan
with sections

Appendix 1

Stuston Common (SUS 023) Finds List

POTTERY

Contexts	Comments	Date
Ditch layer 0001	GM fabric, 3 rims, 1 base, 21 body sherds. Various forms including large jar with rounded rim. Also 1 body sherd, sandy fabric (?+ vegetable temper) poor surface (?) Iron Age	Roman
Ditch layer 0002	GM fabric 1 base, 1 rim frag.	Roman
Ditch layer 0003	GM 2 rims, 1 base, 10 body sherds (rims v.form 5.4) LC1/C2 RX (buff fabric) 5 body sherds	Roman
Layer 0004	GM fabric, 2 body sherds 1 sherd, grog temper plus flint, Rusticated Beaker - Bronze Age	Roman

FLINT

Ditch layer 0001 1 flake, 2 burnt flints

BURNT CLAY

Ditch layer 0001 10 frags burnt clay, soft with (?)vegetable material voids
Ditch layer 0003 13 pieces of baked clay, soft, occasional flat burnt surfaces
Layer 0004 1 piece of burnt clay

OPNO	FEATURE	IDENTIFIER	DESCRIPTION	OVER	UNDER	FINDS?	SPOTDATE
0001	0003	Ditch Layer	Pale brown sand. Top fill of ditch	0002		y	Roman
0002	0003	Ditch Layer	Layer under 0001. Charcoal with large flints, burnt clay and pottery		0001	y	Roman
0003	0003	Ditch	N/S aligned ditch. Fills = 0001 and 0002. This number used for general finds			y	Roman
0004		Layer	Buried soil layer. Patchy. Pale brown sand surviving in pockets in subsoil.			y	Roman