

Archaeological Field Unit

Roman Occupation on the Fen Edge at Camel Road, Littleport

Judith Roberts

1997

Cambridgeshire County Council

Report No. A114

Commissioned by Construct Reason Limited

Roman Occupation on the Fen Edge at Camel Road, Littleport

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Report No A114

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SUMMARY
Camel Road, Littleport: An Archaeological Evaluation
 (TL 5660 8715)

Date of site - Roman

Main features - Ditches and gullies

Between the 14th and 22nd May 1997 a team from the Archaeological Field Unit of Cambridgeshire County Council carried out an evaluation excavation on the site of the proposed residential development at Camel Road, Littleport. The work was commissioned by Construct Reason Limited.

The site lies near the town centre of Littleport, to the west of Camel Road (which follows the course of the Old Croft River), occupying an area approximately 0.7h at a height of approximately 1.5mOD. The underlying geology is peat and alluvium overlaying Kimmeridge clay. Four trenches and a test pit were dug across the site (using a JCB with a 1.6m wide toothless ditching bucket). The trenches were between 22.4m and 56.4m long, the test pit was approximately 1.5m x 1.5m.

The site was covered in a degraded peat topsoil (0.3m deep) which overlay a series of alluvial deposits (<0.7m deep) which in turn overlay a narrow band of degraded peat (0.2m deep) over a light grey/brown clay.

A tree belt covered the southern part of the site with a narrow band of trees along the northern boundary of the site in recent years. A modern foul drain runs along the western boundary of the site.

In Trench 1, below the level of the lower peat, shallow irregular patches were noted. A sample of these was dug and they were thought to be caused by natural agents (e.g. trees or animals). Trench 2 had a shallow, straight sided, ditch or drain running north-south across its western end. This contained no artefactual material and appeared to have been cut relatively recently.

In Trenches 3 and 4 a significant density of archaeological features was noted, at approximately 0.5m below the present ground surface. A sample of these features was excavated and a considerable quantity of relatively large, unabraded Roman pottery sherds were recovered, together with a smaller quantity of animal bone (mainly cattle) and occasional nails and iron fragments. The features were cut through the alluvium but only one appeared to penetrate the basal peat. Most were linear - ditches and gullies - and there was evidence for disturbance of some features by trees.

This evaluation suggests that the Roman settlement, noted to the north of Blackbank Drain on the Sites and Monuments Record, is concentrated along the edge of the rodden of the Old Croft River at the north-eastern end of the site. The settlement does not appear to extend to the west and features may reduce in density towards the southern part of the site.

Judith Roberts
 27.05.97

SUMMARY

During May 1997 the Archaeological Field Unit of Cambridgeshire County Council carried out an evaluation excavation on the site of the proposed residential development at Camel Road, Littleport. The work was commissioned by Construct Reason Limited. Two trenches revealed ditches and gullies containing a considerable quantity of Roman pottery. The frequency of features and the specific nature of the ceramic and faunal assemblages imply domestic and other activities related to the proximity of the Old Croft River.

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Roman Occupation on the Fen Edge at Camel Road, Littleport (TL 5660 8715)

1 INTRODUCTION

From 14th to 22nd May 1997 a team from the Archaeological Field Unit of Cambridgeshire County Council carried out an evaluation excavation on the site of the proposed residential development at Camel Road, Littleport. The work was commissioned by Construct Reason Limited in response to a brief for an archaeological evaluation supplied by Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeology Section (Development Control).

The site lies near the town centre of Littleport, to the west of Camel Road (which follows the course of the Old Croft River), occupying an area of approximately 0.7h at approximately 1.5mOD. The underlying geology is peat and alluvium overlying Kimmeridge Clay. Four trenches and a test pit were dug using a mechanical digger. The trenches were between 22.4m and 56.4m long, the test pit approximately 1.5m x 2m.

The site was covered by a degraded peat topsoil (0.3m deep) over a series of alluvial deposits (c. 0.7m deep) which in turn overlay a narrow band of degraded peat or organic clay (0.2m deep) over a light grey/brown clay.

A tree belt and an orchard covered the southern part of the site in recent years with a narrow band of trees along the northern boundary of the site (see Appendix I). A modern foul sewer runs along the western boundary.

The preliminary desktop study and an air photographic assessment (by Air Photo Services) was carried out in advance of the evaluation.

2 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

The site is near the former course of the Old Croft River, which is followed by the line of Camel Road along the northern edge of the highland at Littleport to Station Road, meeting the Holme River to the east. The land slopes gently upwards from 0mOD to the north of Blackbank Drove and Drain to over 20m along Littleport High Street to the south.

The Littleport highland comprises an area of Kimmeridge Clay, capped with glacial sand and gravel surrounded by fen. The fen is traversed by The Old Croft River, formerly the main river channel in the area, which collected the waters of the south-eastern fen basin. Over the years a roddon formed, and came to stand up to 3m higher than the adjacent fen. The surrounding area has experienced peat development and periods of inundation leading to deposition of alluvium and clays. During Saxon and medieval times peat continued to form uninterruptedly (up to around the 3.5m contour) and was only checked by drainage in the late medieval and post-medieval period (Hall 1996, 19).

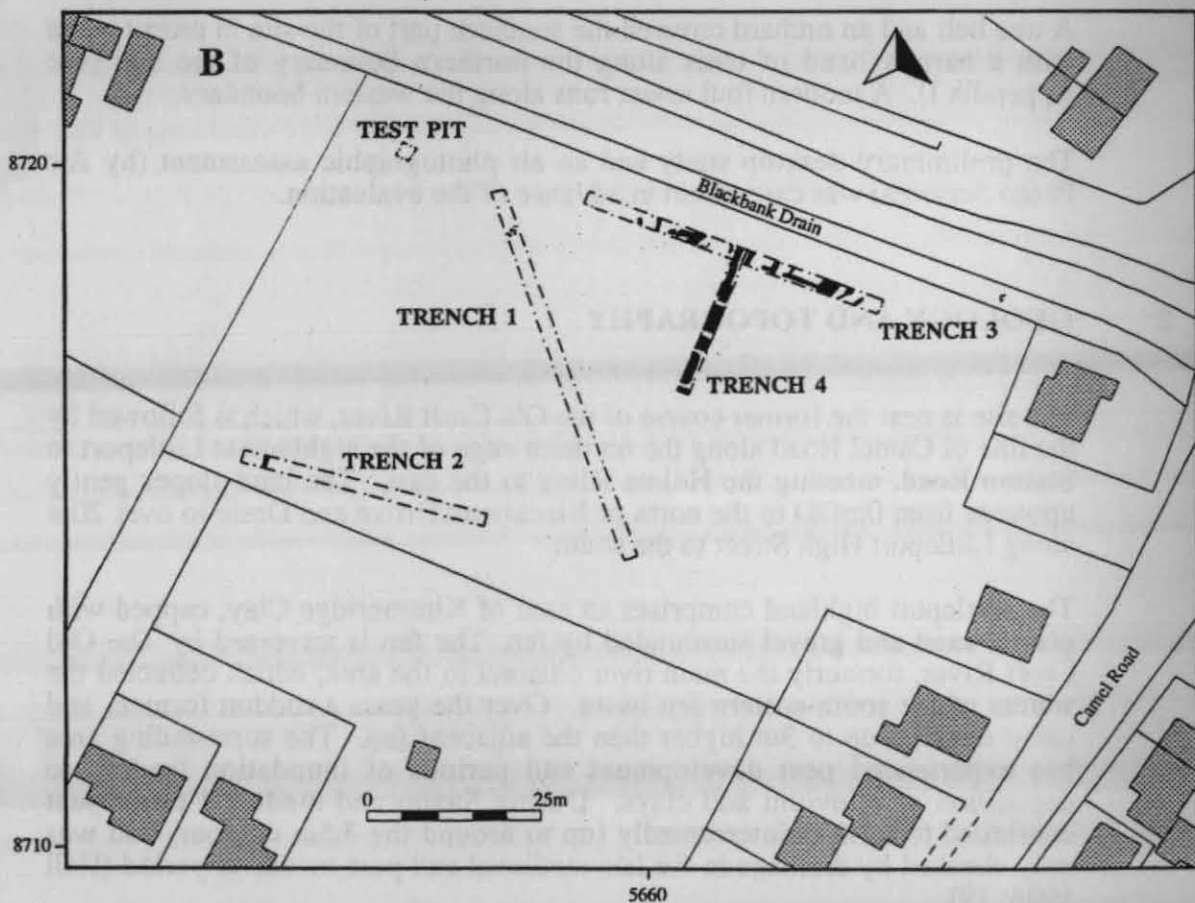
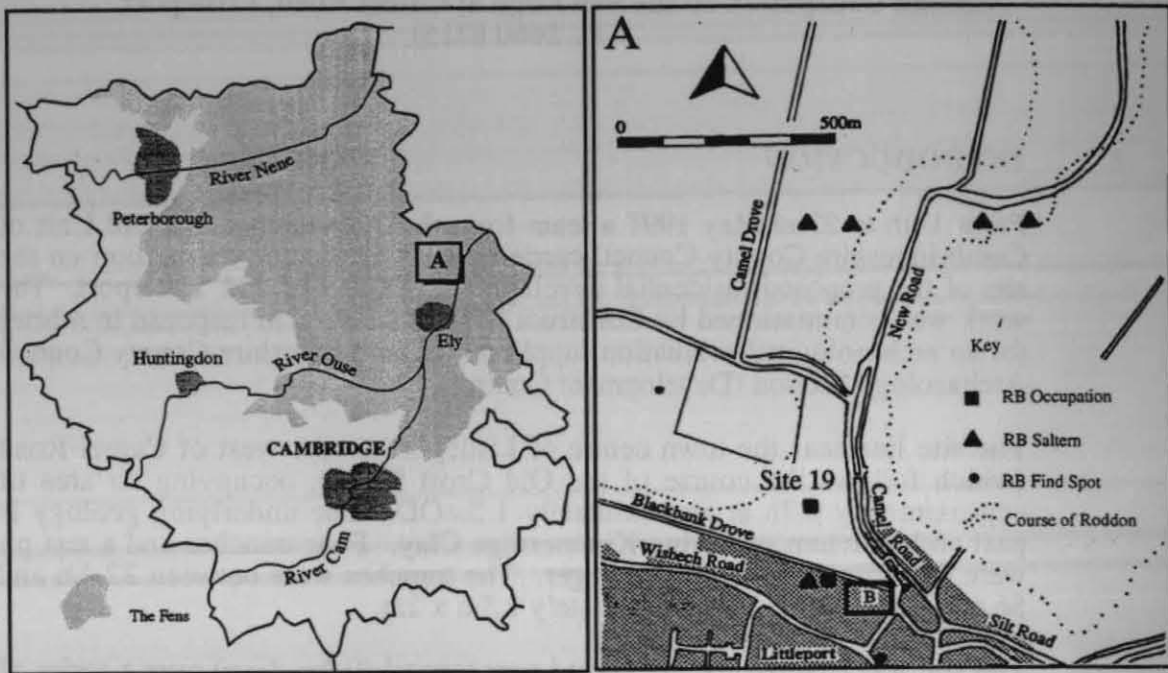


Figure 1 Site location plan

3 **ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

Prehistoric and Roman remains are recorded in the Cambridgeshire County Council Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) at various points in and around Littleport. Fox (1923) locates Neolithic finds on the edge of the Old Croft River, to the east of the site and reports early bronze or copper axes (*ibid.*, quoting Crawford 1912, British Museum collection and CUMAA) to the south east of site, on the highland of Littleport. The most important early prehistoric remains lie in the south-east of the parish on small rises or islands in the fen. Two sparse flint scatters on the main Littleport island are assigned to the Bronze Age with a thin background scatter of worked flint over the higher sandy ground of the highland. The surrounding Bronze Age landscape consisted of peat fen for most of the time, covering the minor roddons though the roddon of the Old Croft River and those nearby remained exposed and active (Hall, 1996, 25). Roddon silts were deposited along the edge of the channel during the Iron Age

Waterways were used for transport and communication from the Roman period. Quantities of broken pottery (including Horningsea wares) and stone are reported along the banks of the Old Croft River north of Littleport. There is an 'inferred' Roman road across the Littleport highland along the route of the present High Street to north of the site (Fox 1923). Roman settlement evidence has been found immediately to the north of the Blackbank Drain (SMR Nos. 07221, 07261 and 08425). Roman occupation around Littleport appears concentrated mainly between the 0m and 5m contours rather than on the higher land to the south. The main activity in the area appears to be related to saltern sites and transport along the Old Croft River. The salterns exploited the roddon where brackish water penetrated the small central channel. Site 19 (to the north of Blackbank drain) (Hall 1996, fig. 13) is the farthest inland of any of the known local saltern sites.

Saxon settlement at Littleport was probably based around a hithe where the Old Croft River ran close to the island, although there is at present no archaeological evidence for Saxon settlement on the island. Domesday Book records a vill and it is assumed that the present town covers part (if not all) of the medieval centre. Littleport was allotted to the Bishop of Ely on the formation of the see of Ely in 1109. The church of St. George, to the south of the site, dates from the 14th century and was almost entirely rebuilt in the 15th century and restored in 1857.

The population of Littleport in 1086 is recorded as 31. This rose during the intervening centuries and by the 1563 census the village had 80 householders. By 1676, 556 persons of communicant age lived there. The 1851 census records 3832 inhabitants of whom 2622 were natives of the parish.

During the medieval period the island of Littleport was ploughed in ridge and furrow and the whole area (except the settlement) was given over to arable farming with summer pasturing along the fen edge. Inclosure at Littleport was gradual. 1500 acres were enclosed in early 17th century and 1000 more were ready for inclosure, but final inclosure of the common fields did not take place until 1840. By the 19th century Littleport was a very large village (larger than some of the surrounding market towns) and had non-agricultural industry (Pugh 1967). There are few old secular buildings surviving in Littleport, many of the older properties date to the late 18th/early 19th century.

Drainage of the fens in the post-medieval period considerably increased the level of agricultural productivity and intensive arable farming is currently carried on in the surrounding fen.

4 METHODOLOGY

A small test pit was excavated by machine in the north-western part of the site to clarify the stratigraphy. Three trenches were then opened, using a JCB with 1.5m wide toothless ditching bucket and a fourth trench was dug following initial investigation. The overburden was removed in all the trenches until the upper interface of alluvium was exposed into which archaeological features had been cut (Trenches 3 and 4) or until the clay beneath the basal peat was encountered (Trenches 1 and 2).

A sample of archaeological features was partially excavated and recorded using the pro-forma recording sheets of the Archaeological Field Unit. Fill numbers are shown in plain text and cut numbers in bold. Vertical sections and plans were drawn of the main features and photographs taken. All site levels are above Ordnance Datum, taken from the 5.72m benchmark on the church of St. George. Conditions for excavation and recording were good, being for the most part dry and bright.

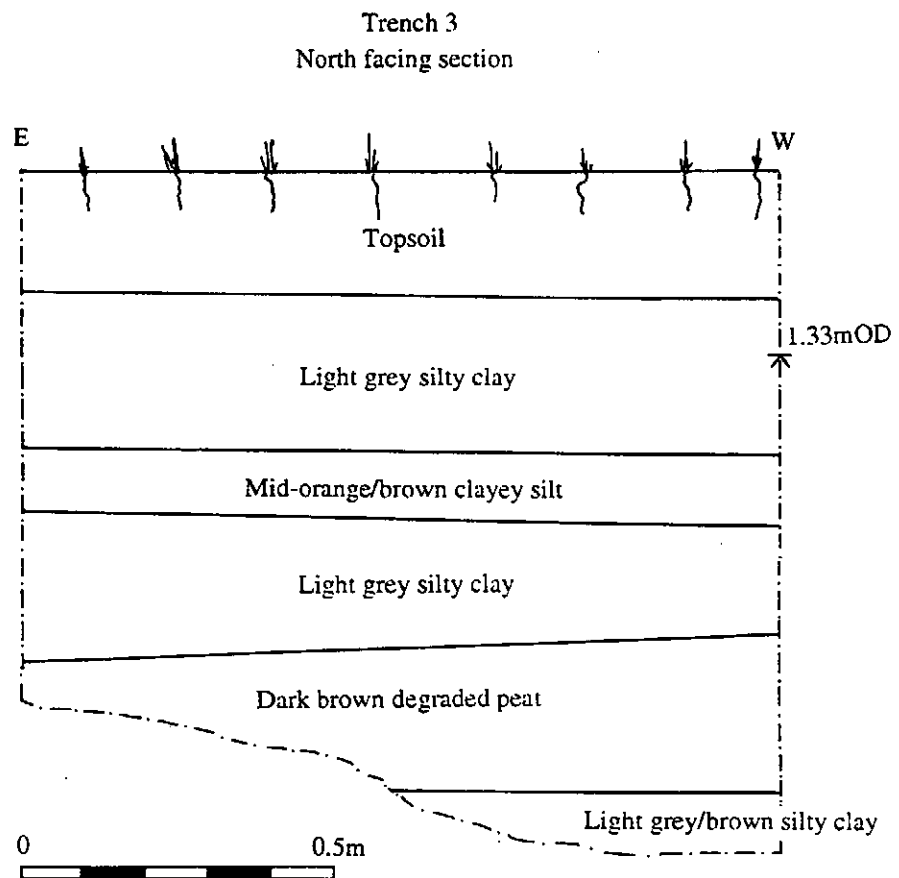


Figure 2 *Schematic section of site stratigraphy*

5 RESULTS

Trench 1 crossed the site in a northwest-southeast direction and was 56.4m long. No archaeological features were noted in the alluvial layers but seven sub-circular features (1004) were revealed in the underlying clay, sealed by the basal peat, approximately 5.5m from the northern end of the trench. A sample of these was dug. The hollows varied in depth from 0.02m to 0.15m and had identical fills of dark greyish-brown sandy silts (similar to the overlying degraded peat). The irregular nature of the hollows and the similarity of their fills suggests they were created by natural agents (e.g. tree roots).

Trench 2 crossed the southern part of the site in an east-west direction and was 35.5m long. There was obvious tree root disturbance along its length. The alluvium noted in the northern part of the site (in the northern end of Trench 1 and the test pit), was here rather shallower and mixed. The underlying peat was more degraded and mixed, presumably through tree root activity. A shallow, straight sided ditch or drain (1037) running north-south crossed its western end. The fill (1036) was indistinguishable from the topsoil and contained no artefacts. This feature appeared, from the section, to have been cut from the present ground surface and was thus relatively modern.

Trench 3 ran parallel to the northern boundary of the site for approximately 44.5m. Features were noted along its entire length, cut into the upper interface of alluvium, and most of these were of archaeological significance. All features had relatively heavy modern root contamination.

1010 was a square ended, steep sided, gully (0.3m wide at the base) running in an approximately north-south direction, extending 0.85m from the southern trench edge and cut through the alluvium and into the underlying peat (at 0.43mOD). In the overlying alluvial layers the edges of this feature had sloping sides and it was over 1m wide at the top. In the peat, the sides were cut vertically. The maximum depth was 0.7m and it contained a dark grey clayey silt fill (1009) with occasional small pebbles and flints and one or two larger (0.1x0.1m) angular stone fragments. The fill contained a virtually complete Roman pot and other sherds, animal bone and a non-metallic slag-like material (see Appendix II).

To the east of **1010** was another linear feature, cut into the alluvium, with a dark grey silty fill and sherds of Roman pottery on its surface. This feature was not excavated. To its east was a group of irregular dark silty features, one of which was partially excavated. Feature **1017** was a shallow, irregular, hollow caused by a tree root (or possibly animal activity), its fill contained a considerable quantity of pottery, daub (with straw and grain impressions, including possibly barley) and some animal bone, suggesting the original presence of a feature which had been largely destroyed by later root activity.

Approximately 3m to the east was an oval hollow (**1027**), 0.58m long, 0.32m wide and 0.12m deep with a steep western edge and a more gently sloping eastern edge and flat base. The single fill (1026) was a very dark grey clay silt with ashy patches but the edges and base showed no evidence of heat. The fill contained sherds of pottery and occasional pebbles.

Along Trench 3, to the east, was a group of three parallel linear features (**1019**, **1008** and **1006**). The westernmost (**1019**) was 0.96m wide and 0.35m deep, crossing the trench in a north-south direction. Its sides were steeply sloping with a sharp break to a flat base. This feature cut through the

alluvium but did not penetrate the basal peat. The single fill (1018) was a dark grey clay silt with irregular patches of dark brown silty clay. There were very infrequent angular stone blocks (0.15x0.2m) and occasional pebbles. The fill contained relatively large, unabraded pottery sherds, oyster and mussel shells, animal (mainly cattle) bones and small fragments of briquetage.

The central feature of this group (1008) was a narrow, shallow, gully, 0.26m wide and 0.07m deep with a steep western edge and more gently sloping eastern edge. The base was concave and slightly irregular. The fill (1007) was a very dark grey clay silt with ashy patches and fragments of charcoal. There were very rare small pebbles and angular flints. The fill contained Roman pottery, bone, oyster shell, daub and very occasional small pieces of coal.

The easternmost of these features (1006) was only partially excavated but had a steeply sloping western edge and a flat base. It appeared to be approximately 0.9m wide (although the eastern edge was not exposed) and 0.36m deep. The single fill (1005) was a dark grey clay silt containing Iron Age/Romano-British pottery sherds, oyster and mussel shells and animal bone (including a bovine skull). It also contained daub and angular fragments of stone.

To the west of this group of features was an area that covered the width of the trench and extended for 3m. This appeared to be a surface of fine, compact alluvium with small fragments of pottery and animal bone pressed into it.

1014 was a shallow gully, 0.12m deep, and 0.54m wide, with sloping sides to a concave base running east-west, and joining **1016**. The two features appeared to have identical fills, 1013 and 1015. Fill 1013 was a dark grey clayey silt with occasional patches of orange clay. It contained charcoal fragments, occasional pebbles, Roman pottery and oyster shell.

1016 was a U-shaped ditch, 0.42 deep, 0.67 wide, oriented north-south. This feature appears to be a re-cutting of the earlier, much deeper **1029** (see below). The fill (1015) was a dark grey clayey silt with occasional orange clay patches, pebbles, and water-worn flints, Roman pottery, glass, charcoal, coal, briquetage, daub, bone and oyster shell.

Ditch **1029** cut through the alluvium but did not penetrate to the basal peat. It had very steep sides with a flat base (0.7m wide at the top, 0.58m wide at the base, and 0.54m deep). Its fill (1028) was a compact mid dark grey silty clay with orange/brown clay mottling, very occasional small stones and no artefacts.

Ditch **1022** was oriented approximately southwest-northeast with near-vertical sides and a sharp break of slope to a flat base (0.43m deep and 0.4m wide). Its upper fill (1020) was a firm dark grey clayey silt (0.18m deep) with occasional charcoal flecks angular stones containing Roman pottery sherds and animal bone. The primary fill (1021) was a firm light grey slightly silty clay (0.25m deep) with dark orange clay mottles and occasional rounded stones, containing frequent charcoal flecks, daub and fragments of animal bone.

Ditch **1025**, cut by ditch **1022**, runs approximately east-west for over 5m and then appears to turn northwards. It was 0.25m deep and 0.6m wide with steep sides and a sharp break of slope to a slightly concave base. There were two fills. 1023 was a dark grey firm silty clay (0.15m deep) with occasional olive grey mottles, small sub-angular flints and one small pot sherd. Fill 1024 was

a light to mid grey clayey silt (0.10m deep) with angular flints, charcoal flecks, and no artefactual finds. 1025 runs up, to but doesn't appear to cut, 1012.

Ditch 1012 (which is a recut of ditch 1031: see below) was 0.37m deep, 2.35m wide at the top of the alluvium and 0.65m wide at the top of the gully. The upper part of this feature had gently shelving sides through the upper part of the alluvium (which appeared to be trampled), but the central gully had sloping sides and a concave base. The fill (1011) was a dark greyish brown clayey silt with orange/brown clay patches, occasional pieces of charcoal, angular sandstone fragments and small pebbles, and contained Roman pottery, bone and oyster shell.

Ditch 1031 was very steep sided with a flat base (0.53m deep, 0.62m wide at top and 0.39m wide at base). The fill (1030) was a compact mid-grey silty clay with orange/brown clay patches with occasional small stones and one piece of Roman pottery.

At the eastern end of the trench was a linear feature (1033) which extended in a north-westerly direction 0.8m from the southern trench edge. It was 0.25m wide and 0.14m deep. The single fill (1032) was a mid-grey clayey silt which contained daub, stone, coal, bone mussel shell and Roman pottery. Adjacent to this feature was a posthole (1035), with a diameter of 0.17m and 0.19m deep. The fill (1034) was a dark grey clayey silt and contained large river pebbles which had presumably been used as post-packing material. Evidence for the post-pipe was missing, suggesting it had not rotted *in situ*.

Trench 4 extended south from Trench 3 and followed the line of 1019. This ditch continued approximately 4m where it appeared to be cut by an east-west running ditch (1041), approximately 0.6m wide. Surface finds from this context (1040) include bone, daub, briquetage and a fragment of box flue. Immediately to the south was a further east-west running ditch (1043), approximately 3m wide, cut through the alluvium to the basal peat, but did not cut into the peat. Parallel to ditch 1043 was a similar ditch (1045), some 2.5m wide. Less than 0.5m to the south was a sub-rectangular feature (1047) which extended 1m from the western edge of the trench. The surface finds from this context (1046) included fragments of pottery and bone. At the southern edge of the trench the northern edge of a ditch (1049) was encountered, but its southern edge was not revealed.

All the features in Trench 4 cut into alluvial deposits and contained a similar dark grey clayey silt fill. The surface of the trench was cleaned and surface finds were recovered but none of the features was excavated. The density of artefacts fell off dramatically towards the southern part of the trench.

6 CONCLUSIONS

The ditches (1012) and (1016) appear to be recuts of 1031 and 1029 respectively. The homogeneous nature of the latter's fills suggests silting up over a short period of time when there was little or no activity in the immediate vicinity. 1014 may have been a drainage channel which emptied into the larger ditch 1016, and was perhaps contemporary with it. Similarly, the three ditches 1019, 1008 and 1006 appear to be contemporary and drain northwards into the fen. The east-west ditches in Trench 4 did not appear in

Trench 1 and it must be assumed that they either turned northwards or terminated in the intervening area.

Most of the ditches in Trench 4 were wide and did not cut into the basal peat. The smaller quantity of finds visible on the surface and in the sections suggests that this area was on the edge of the settlement.

Many of the features relate to drainage and may also have acted as property boundaries. The posthole 1035 adjacent to 1033 and quantities of daub suggest there were structures in this area. The features and artefacts appear to be concentrated in the northeastern part of the site, close to the roddon.

Occasional pieces of worked flint indicate prehistoric activity in the area. The presence of dense Roman features in Trenches 3 and 4 prevented the examination of basal layers for prehistoric material. In Trenches 1 and 2 no concentrations of worked flint were noted during excavation or during the examination of trench spoil.

7 DISCUSSION

In Trench 1 the edge of the Littleport highland was recorded, with the basal peat and alluvial layers thinning towards the southeast where they abutted the highland. There was no occupation evidence in the southern and western part of the site, but many features in the north-eastern part of site had been cut into the roddon silts.

The evaluation suggests that the Roman occupation, noted to the north of Blackbank Drain on the Sites and Monuments Record, is concentrated along the edge of the roddon of the Old Croft River and continues on to the development site. The finds indicate domestic activities, with transport vessels, storage jars, food preparation vessels and table wares. From the presence of glass vessels, and tile and box flue we may deduce that a high status Roman dwelling was located nearby. Small fragments of briquetage (and possibly the angular stones and river pebbles, Daire 1991) suggest salterns in the vicinity, but no evidence for hearths was found on the subject site. Despite metal detecting by members of the AFU very little metalwork was recovered. The absence of coins implies that trading was not carried out on the site. This reinforces the domestic nature of the site, which may have supported less permanently occupied saltern sites in the fen. Roman activity (judging from the recovered pottery) spans the late third to late fourth centuries.

In post-Roman times the site was subject to inundation and peat development. It was not used during the medieval period, other than perhaps for pasture. Drainage of the fens made the land available for agriculture in the later medieval and post-medieval periods. The tree cover (mainly orchard) shown on Ordnance Survey maps in the earlier part of this century has greatly disturbed the upper levels of this site and root penetration was visible in all features. Nevertheless, possible trampled surfaces had survived and the basal peat/organic mud was in a semi-waterlogged state at the northern edge of the site. Deep Roman features may well preserve waterlogged deposits.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to thank Reason Construct Limited who commissioned the work, the landowner Mr. R. Eastwood, and the Development Control Office of Cambridgeshire County Council which prepared the brief.

Thanks are also due to Tony Austin, Simon Bray, Dave Curry and Chris Montague who worked on site. Ben Robinson was the Project Manager and edited this report. The illustrations are by Carole Fletcher and the pottery identification by Phil Copleston.

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**BLACKBANK DRAIN, TL56608717,
LITTLEPORT,
CAMBRIDGESHIRE:**

AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHIC ASSESSMENT

REPORT No: R118

JUNE 1997

COMMISSIONED BY

ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD UNIT
CAMBRIDGESHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
FULBOURN COMMUNITY CENTRE
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Archaeological consultants for aerial photographic interpretation, accurate mapping and oblique aerial photography

**BLACKBANK DRAIN, TL56608717, LITTLEPORT,
CAMBRIDGESHIRE:
AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHIC ASSESSMENT**

SUMMARY

This assessment of aerial photographs examines an area of some 0.7 hectares (centred TL56608717) to identify and accurately map archaeological and natural features as an adjunct to field evaluation.

Land use within the assessment area has been such that there has been little likelihood of archaeological features being visible from the air. However, this assessment mapped ditches and probable saltern activity immediately to the north and suggests it possible that features of similar kind may lie within the assessment area.

Mapping is provided at 1:2500.

**BLACKBANK DRAIN, TL56608717, LITTLEPORT,
CAMBRIDGESHIRE:
AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHIC ASSESSMENT**

Rog Palmer MA MIFA

INTRODUCTION

This assessment of aerial photographs was commissioned to examine an area of some 0.7 hectares (centred TL56608717) in order to identify and accurately map archaeological and natural features and thus provide a guide for field evaluation. Mapping was to be at 1:2500.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND NATURAL FEATURES FROM AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHS

In suitable soils, sub-surface archaeological features – including ditches, banks, pits, walls or foundations – may be recorded from the air in different ways in different seasons. In spring and summer these may show through their effect on crops growing above them. Such indications tend to be at their most visible in ripe cereal crops, in June or July in this part of Britain, although their appearance cannot accurately be predicted and their absence cannot be taken to imply evidence of archaeological absence. In winter months, when the soil is bare or crop cover is thin (when viewed from above), features may show by virtue of their different soils. Upstanding remains are also best recorded in winter months when vegetation is sparse and the low angle of the sun helps pick out slight differences of height and slope.

Grass rarely shows such marks but instead may reveal sub-surface features through the withering of the plants above them. These may occur towards the end of very dry summers and usually indicate the presence of buried walls or foundations. Such dry summers occurred in Britain in 1949, 1959, 1975, 1976, 1984, 1989 and 1990 (Bewley 1994, 25) and more recently in 1995 and 1996. This does not imply that every grass field will reveal its buried remains on these dates as local variations in weather and field management will affect parching. However, it does provide a list of years in which photographs taken from, say, mid July to the end of August may prove informative.

Natural deposits can cause similar differences in crops and appear as startling colour changes in bare winter soils. The edges and extents of such features tend to vary from year to year with the amount of ground moisture content. Mapping of former watercourses for this assessment indicates their approximate widths, sometimes recorded as a soil change, elsewhere as a change in slope. Only the darkest (possibly archaeological) patches of deeper soil have been shown.

The most informative aerial photographs of archaeological subjects tend to be those resulting from specialist reconnaissance. This activity is usually undertaken by an experienced archaeological observer who will fly at seasons and times of day when optimum results are expected. Oblique photographs, taken using a hand-held camera, are the usual product of such

investigation and record those features noticed by the observer and thought to be of archaeological relevance. To be able to map accurately from these photographs it is necessary that they have been taken from a sufficient height to include surrounding control information.

Vertical photographs cover the whole of Britain and can provide scenes on a series of dates between (usually) 1946-7 and the present. Unfortunately these vertical surveys are not necessarily flown at times of year that are best to record the crop and soil responses that may be seen above sub-surface features. Vertical photographs are taken by a camera fixed inside an aircraft and adjusted to take a series of overlapping views that can be examined stereoscopically. They are often of relatively small scale and their interpretation requires higher perceptive powers and a more cautious approach than that necessary for examination of obliques. Use of these small-scale images can also lead to errors of location and size when they are rectified or re-scaled to match a larger map scale. All mapping for this assessment is derived from vertical photographs.

PHOTO INTERPRETATION AND MAPPING

Photographs examined

Cover searches were obtained from the Cambridge University Collection of Aerial Photographs (CUCAP) and the National Library of Air Photographs (NLAP), Swindon. Photographs included those resulting from specialist archaeological reconnaissance and routine vertical surveys.

Photo interpretation was begun on the Cambridge photographs. The information mapped was then compared against photographs at NLAP and amended as appropriate.

Photographs consulted are listed in the Appendix to this report.

Base maps

Digital and paper base maps at a scale of 1:2500 were provided by the client.

Photo interpretation and mapping

Photographs were examined by eye and under slight (1.5x) magnification, viewing them as stereoscopic pairs when possible. All vertical photographs were examined stereoscopically using a 1.5x magnification stereoscope. Interpretations were marked on overlays to individual prints following procedures described by Palmer and Cox (1993). All rectification was computer assisted and carried out using AERIAL 4.2 software (Haigh 1993).

AERIAL computes values for error of control point match between the photograph and map. In all rectifications prepared for this assessment these were less than $\pm 2.5\text{m}$. Rectified and plotted output was combined to form the basis of the digital plan that accompanies this assessment (Figure 1).

COMMENTARY

Soils

The Soil Survey of England and Wales (SSEW 1983) shows the area to be at the junction of marine alluvium and peat fen (series 85 1a) and the chalky till-over-clay island (series 572q above 872a) on which Littleport lies. Field work by David Hall for the Fenland Survey identified a capping of glacial sand and gravel over much of Littleport island (Hall 1996, 19). The roddon of the Old Croft River is likely to pass through the eastern part of the assessment area.

Archaeological features (Figure 1)

No archaeological features have been identified within the assessment area from examination of aerial photographs. In the field to the north there is evidence of archaeological ditches and dark splotches that may result from salt making activity. This corresponds with a Roman site, Littleport 19 (Hall 1996, 27, Figure 13, Gazetteer 1), and features of similar appearance extend north of the mapped area. Other roddon-side ditches have been identified on the east side of the Old Croft roddon (area TL566873). In view of this density of Roman activity, and its known concentration on this major roddon, it would be surprising if finds of this date were not located within the assessment area.

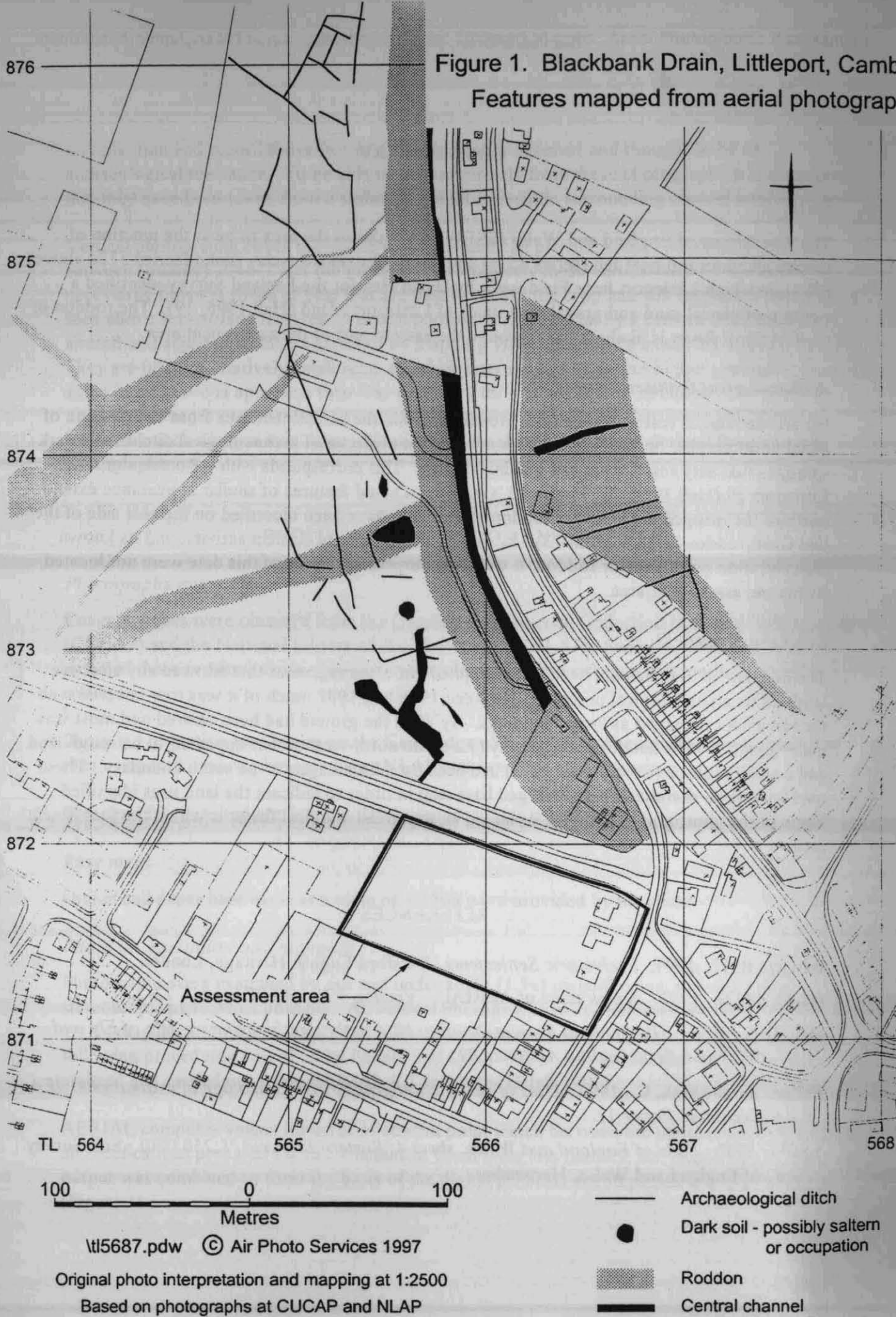
Land use (Figure 2)

The assessment area has not been photographed under management that allowed any effective study of its archaeological potential. Between 1946 and 1982 much of it was tree-covered with the remainder managed as small holdings. By 1988 the ground had been cleared and most was under grass. At the date of photography (June) the north-west corner appeared to be rough land and a small orchard (or soft fruit trees) had been established against the south boundary. These uses have been sketched on an enlarged base map in order to indicate the land uses identified. None of the photographs showed, or hinted at, any archaeological features within the assessment area.

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- Haigh, J.G.B., 1993. A new issue of AERIAL – Version 4.20. *AARGnews* 7, 22-25.
- Hall, D.N., 1996. *The Fenland Project, Number 10: Cambridgeshire Survey, Isle of Ely and Wisbech*. *East Anglian Archaeol.* 79.
- Palmer, R. and Cox, C., 1993. *Uses of aerial photography in archaeological evaluations*. *IFA Technical Paper* 12.
- SSEW, 1983. *Soils of England and Wales: sheet 4: Eastern England (1:250,000)*. Soil Survey of England and Wales, Harpenden.

Figure 1. Blackbank Drain, Littleport, Camb
Features mapped from aerial photograph

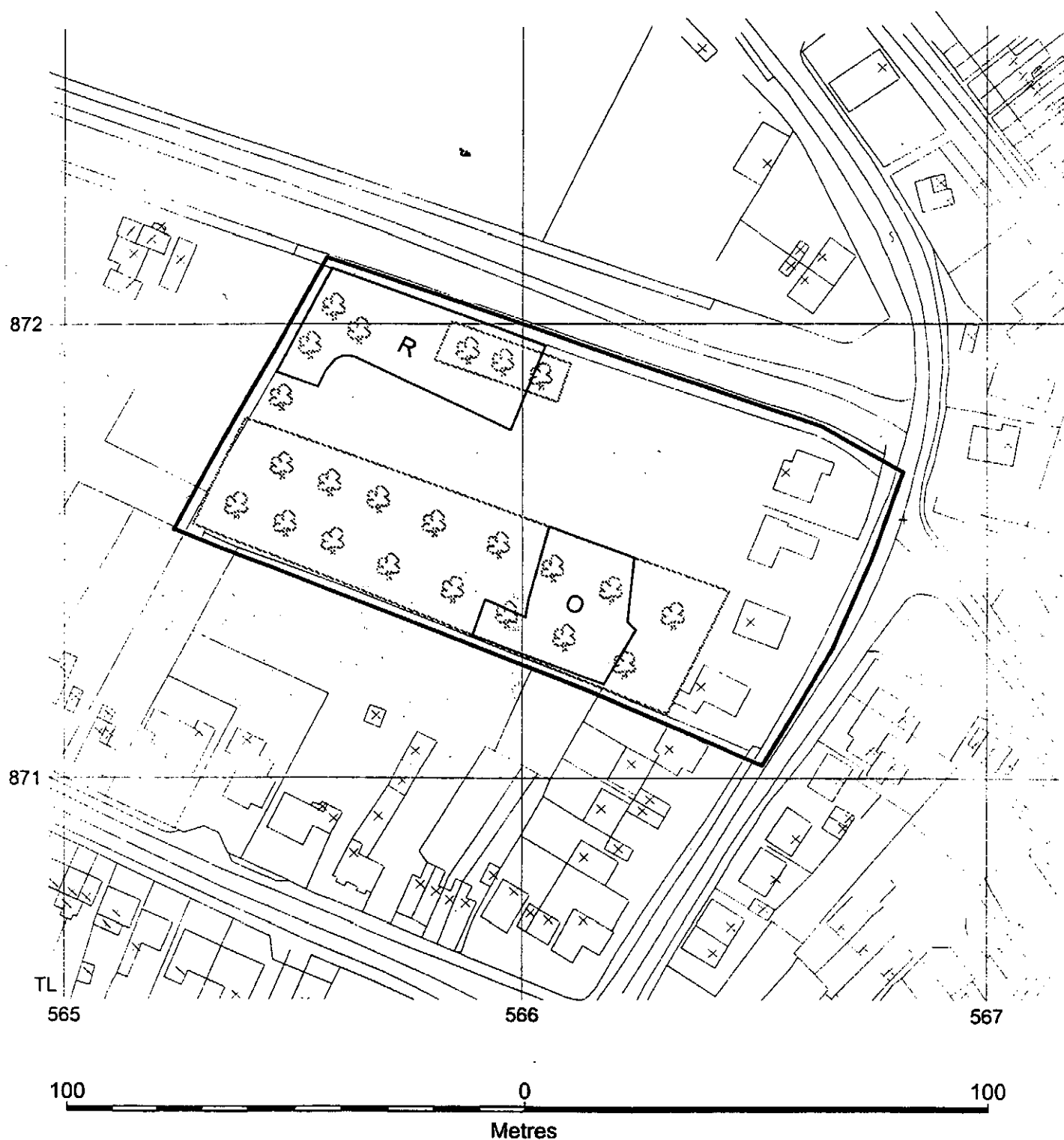


tl5687.pdw © Air Photo Services 1997

Original photo interpretation and mapping at 1:2500
Based on photographs at CUCAP and NLAP

Figure 2. Blackbank Drain, Littleport, Cambs

Landuse summary: 1946 to 1988



- Landuse 1946 to 1982 with trees (shown) and ?small holdings
- Landuse by 1988: O= orchard , R= rough ground. Remainder as grass

Vipuse.pdw © Air Photo Services 1997
Enlarged from 1:2500 original

APPENDIX

Aerial photographs examined

Source: Cambridge University Collection of Aerial Photographs

Vertical photographs

RC8-EB 194-195	23/24 March 1982	1:10000
RC8-KnBJ 214, 216	13 June 1988	1:10000
RC8-KnBK 10, 12	13 June 1988	1:10000

Source: National Library of Air Photographs

Vertical collection

106G/UK/1557: 6048-6050	7 June 1946	1:9800
106G/UK/1634: 2437-2439	9 July 1946	1:10000
F21.58/2688: 438-439	25 January 1959	1:9600
2F21.543/2409: 71-73	16 September 1963	1:10000
MAL/68019: 131-132	8 April 1968	1:10500
MAL/68019: 141-143	8 April 1968	1:10500
MAL/69057: 94-96	10 June 1969	1:10500
OS/71214: 43-45	14 May 1971	1:7500

Most informative photographs

None of the assessment area.

APPENDIX II Finds Assessment by Phil Copleston

Methodology

The artefacts have been inspected, whilst still in the finds drying trays, enabling the whole assemblage to be examined together, context by context, and commented upon. Artefacts from each context have been divided into finds types, listed, described and dated (where possible). No attempt has been made to quantify these groups at this stage, but appears as part of the overall site quantification. Terms are explained in the Discussion at the end.

Catalogue by Context

1000 – surface cleaning

Roman Pottery:

Finewares

Samian flanged-rim bowl, small cup, large bowl (Dr. 37), all probably
Central/Eastern Gaul, *3rd/4th century*
NVCC carinated jar with rouletted and barbotined decoration – possibly a dog
or hare, *before mid 3rd century*
NVCC flagon with roulette decoration
NVCC greyware jar
Grog tempered flagon
Buff fabric flagon

Greywares

Large storage jars with internal and external comb decoration, Horningsea ware,
3rd/4th century
Storage jars – self-coloured and fumed, plain and combed decoration and lattice
decoration, Horningsea ware, *3rd/4th century*
Bowl, Horningsea ware, *3rd/4th century*

Other Greywares

Jars and bowls, some decorated, some cooking jars; micaceous colour coated
greyware, small jar with lid seated rim

Shell tempered wares

Large storage jar, Harrold ware, *4th century*
Small bowl
Large jar

Amphorae

Shoulder and body sherds from 2 separate vessels – probably Dress. 20

Post-Roman Pottery:

Late Medieval/Post-medieval wares

Other Ceramic:

Tile and brick (probably Roman)

Organic:

Animal bone, oyster, mussel

Lithic:

Sandstone, limestone, mudstone and flint

Metalwork:

Nails (possibly from coffin?)

1004

Other Ceramic:

Daub

Lithic:

Flint

Organic:

Bone and oyster shell

1005

Roman Pottery:

Finewares

Samian bowl – Dr. 37

NVCC jar

2 sherds, metallic finish jar with dot barbotine decoration – probably overfired

Greywares

Small colour coated greyware jar

Other greyware jars and bowls

Other coarsewares

Handmade cooking vessel with flared rim in tradition of late Iron Age/RB, with cooking residues, *possibly 1st/2nd century*

Other Ceramic:

Daub

Organic:

Bone and mussel shell

Lithic:

Stone

1007

Roman Pottery:

Finewares

Samian – small bowl

NVCC small jar

Small flagon, creamy/buff fabric

Greywares

Large storage jars, Horningsea greyware, *3rd/4th century*

Other Greywares

Various vessels

Oxidised wares

Narrow-necked jar with soot/food residues

Other Ceramic:

Daub

Organic:

Bone (some burnt) and oyster shell

1009

Roman Pottery:

Greywares

Overfired narrow-necked jar
Greyware jar

Reduced wares

Medium sized jar, with zoned stabbed decoration with accretions, almost complete. Nar Valley ware, *3rd century*

Organic:

Bone and teeth

Lithic:

Stone and coal

1011

Roman Pottery:

Finewares

Flagons, two sherds in Oxford fabric, *3rd century*

Greywares

Bowls and jar (including jar base)
Greyware jar, Horningsea ware, *3rd/4th century*
Greyware bowl, kiln waster

Reduced wares

Jar

Oxidised wares

Various sherds

Amphora

1 with graffito
Burnt amphora sherds

Other Ceramic:

Daub

Organic:

Bone, mussel and oyster shell, and charcoal

Lithic:

Coal, glass

1013

Roman Pottery:

Shell Tempered wares

Small jar, handmade – late Iron Age/earlyRB type, *probably pre-2nd century*

Organic:

Shell

1015

Roman Pottery:

Finewares

Bowl, Oxford fabric, *3rd century*

Greywares

NVGW, 1 overfired sherd

Other bowls and jars

Other Ceramic:

Daub

Briquetage

Organic:

Bone and shell

Lithic:

Coal

1017

Roman Pottery:

Finewares

Samian, chip of base sherd

Flagon, base sherd, cream fabric

NVCC, 1 small barbotine jar, 1 small jar with roulette decoration, *2nd-3rd century*

Greywares

Jars

Other Ceramic:

Daub

Organic:

Bone

Lithic:

Stone and coal

1018

Roman Pottery:

Finewares

Storage jar in cream/pink fabric

Greywares

NVCC flanged-rim bowl, *4th century*

Horningsea wares, *3rd/4th century*

Large greyware jar, with burnished decoration and graffito on shoulder

Other greyware jars

Reduced wares

Carinated jar

Amphora

Other Ceramic:

Briquetage

Organic:

Bone and oyster shell

Lithic:

Coal and ash

Metalwork:

Fe nail head

1020

Roman Pottery:

Finewares

NVCC ring-necked flagon – very abraded

Greywares

NVGW jar – abraded

Organic:

Bone and shell

Lithic:

Coal

1021

Other Ceramic:

Daub

Organic:

Bone

Lithic:

Coal

1026

Roman Pottery:

Greywares

Horningsea ware jar, with burnished decoration, *3rd/4th century*

Jar, with lattice and painted decoration, *probably 4th century*

Bowl

Oxidised Wares

Large jar or flagon

1030

Roman Pottery:

Greywares

Jar, body sherd, external burnishing
Very overfired sherd – possible kiln waster

1032

Roman Pottery:

Finewares

Samian cup or bowl, small fragment
Flagon

Greywares

NVGW
Horningsea ware, *3rd/4th century*
Jars, some with lattice decoration

Oxidised wares

Bowls and jars

Shelly wares

Harrold wares, *4th century*

Other Ceramic:

Daub

Organic:

Bone and mussel shell

Lithic:

Stone and coal

1040

Other Ceramic:

Daub
Briquetage

Tile & Brick:

Box flue – shelly fabric, *4th century*

Organic:

Bone

1046

Roman Pottery:

Greywares

NVGW jar

Organic:

Bone

Discussion

This assemblage is representative of domestic refuse, typified by broken domestic-type pottery and butchered animal remains.

Range

A full range of vessel types that might be expected from a domestic assemblage, is represented here. These include amphorae (transport vessels); Horningsea ware (coarse greyware from South Cambridgeshire), Harrold ware (shellyware from north west Bedfordshire) and other large storage jars (storage vessels); greywares and Nene Valley Greywares (NVGW) and smaller jars and bowls (food preparation and cooking vessels); Samian ware (from Gaul), flagons and Nene Valley Colour Coat (NVCC) wares and possible Oxford-type wares (all fine table wares). These, together with a few fragments of a glass vessel, add emphasis to the likely higher general status of this group. Mortaria (gritted mixing bowls) might also have been expected, but this marked absence may be explained by the small size of the recovered assemblage.

Condition

Overall, the assemblage was in generally good, but with some contexts containing abraded sherds. The degree of fragmentation was average.

Items of Note

Kiln Wasters

These were from different vessels, and suggest either novelty importation, or more likely a nearby kiln site. Two other sherds have a (supposedly intended) metallic effect due to overfiring, fashionable by the 4th century.

Briquetage

Probably indicates salterns in the vicinity.

Building Materials

- Roof tile – 1 possible tegula
- Box flue
- Daub

Coal

Presumably intrusive.

Food Remains

Sheep and cattle bone, oyster and mussel shell.

Period:

This assemblage is Romano-British in date, having a date range generally late, 3rd-4th century, with a few possible earlier elements (probably residual). The presence of Harrold ware, Nene Valley Colour-coated wares with painted decoration, together with flange-rimmed bowls all suggest a later, 4th century, date.

LITTLEPORT, CAMEL ROAD 1997 - Finds Types By Context (in grammes or by count)																
Site Locations		Ceramics					Metals	Lithics			Organics			Other Materials		Totals
Trench/ Location	Context	Pottery	Pottery Sherds	Tile & Brick	Daub	Briquetage	Metals Fe	Stone	Flint	Flint Fragments	Animal Bone	Shell	Wood	Charcoal/ Coal	Accretion	Total Weights by Context
	ufe	165	15			19	118	27	25	3	19	97				470
	1000	669	73					808			228	12				
	1004				7			100	25	2	34	2	1			169
	1005	236	20		65			5			139	1				445
	1007	49	5								7					56
	1008	2244	7								96	15		3	549	2807
	1011	1283	82		53				2	1	137	65		6		1648
	1013	5	1									1				6
	1016	233	19		4						80	2		27		346
	1017	841	40		183						163	13		8	9	1317
	1018	2915	62		2	56	8				587	71		43		3682
	1020	48	3								63	1		4		116
	1021				1						42			2		46
	1026	181	13					22								203
	1030	10	1													10
	1032	194	25		22			161			10	44		25		456
	1040	117	4	99	45	10					57					323
	1046	3	1								4					7
Total Weights by Finds Type		8283	371	99	382	86	126	1123	62	6	1848	324	1	118	668	12110
Cambridgeshire County Council - Archaeological Field Unit						Compiled by: Lorraine Gardner, Phil Coppleston					Supervised by: Phil Coppleston				Issue: 11/7/97	

APPENDIX III Context List

Context No.	Description	Above	Below	Finds
1000	Peaty topsoil	-	-	
1001	Alluvium	1002	1000	
1002	Basal peat	1003	1001	
1003	Clay	-	1002	
1004	Hollows	1003	1002	
1005	Dark grey clayey silt	1006	1000	Pot and bone
1006	Ditch	1001	1005	
1007	Very dark grey clayey silt	1008	1000	Pot, bone and coal
1008	Gully	1001	1007	
1009	Very dark grey clayey silt	1010	1000	Pot and bone
1010	Ditch	1001	1009	
1011	Dark grey brown clayey silt	1012	1000	Pot, bone and shell
1012	Ditch	1030	1011	
1013	Dark grey clayey silt	1014	1000	Pot and shell
1014	Gully	1001	1013	
1015	Dark grey clayey silt	1016	1000	Pot, glass, bone, shell
1016	Ditch	1028	1015	
1017	Natural hollow	1000	1001	Pot, daub, bone
1018	Dark grey clayey silt	1019	1000	Pot and bone
1019	Ditch	1001	1018	
1020	Dark grey clayey silt	1021	1000	Pot and bone
1021	Light grey silty clay	1022	1020	Bone
1022	Ditch	1001	1021	
1023	Dark grey silt clay	1024	1000	Pot
1024	Light-mid grey clayey silt	1025	1023	None
1025	Ditch	1001	1024	
1026	Dark grey-brown clay silt	1027	1000	Pot
1027	Hollow	1001	1026	
1028	Mid-dark grey silty clay	1029	1000	None
1029	Ditch	1028	1000	
1030	Mid-grey silty clay	1031	1000	Pot
1031	Ditch	1001	1030	
1032	Dark grey clayey silt	1032	1000	Pot, bone and shell
1033	Ditch	1001	1032	
1034	Dark grey clayey silt	1035	1000	Stone
1035	Posthole	1001	1034	
1036	Mid-brown peaty silt	1037	1000	None
1037	Drain	1001	1036	
1040	Dark grey clayey silt)		
1041	Ditch)		
1042	Dark grey clayey silt)		
1043	Ditch)	Unexcavated features	
1044	Dark grey clayey silt)		
1045	Ditch)		
1046	Dark grey clayey silt)		
1047	Sub-rectangular pit)		
1048	Dark grey clayey silt)		
1049	Ditch)		