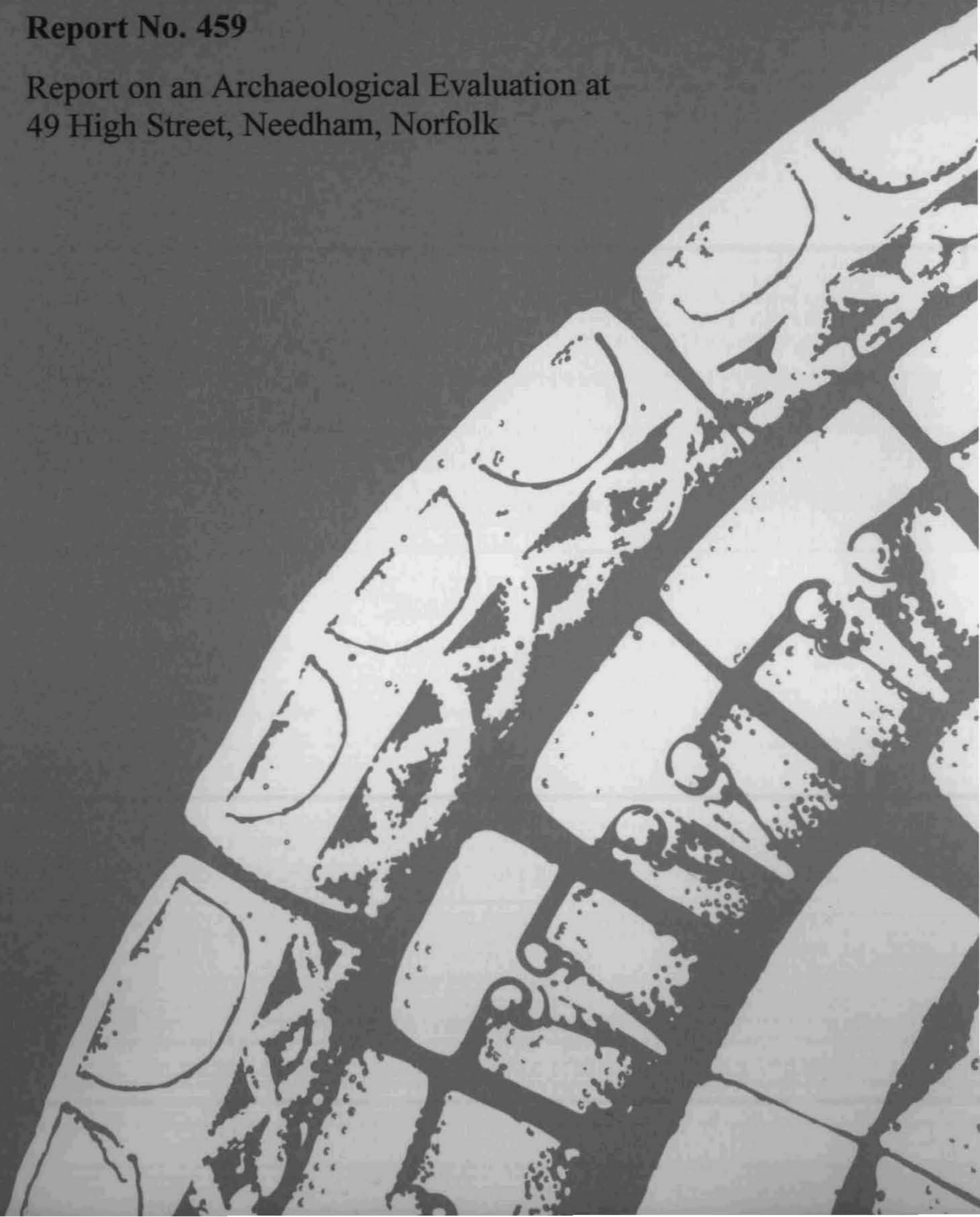


# NORFOLK ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

**Report No. 459**

Report on an Archaeological Evaluation at  
49 High Street, Needham, Norfolk



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Needham, Norfolk**

**John W. Percival**

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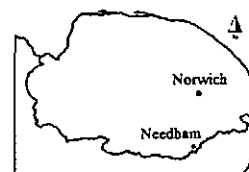
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Local Authority No.076759

Fig.1 is based upon the Ordnance Survey 1:10,000 map with the permission of the Controller of H.M. Stationery Office © Crown Copyright 'Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings' Norfolk County Council, County Hall, Norwich (01/06/98). **Reference copy: no further copies to be made.**

Location: Former Garage, 49 High Road, Needham  
Grid Ref: TM 2307 8176  
SMR No.: 24601  
Dates of work: 7–9 September 1999

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### **Summary**

*Two evaluation trenches were excavated to the rear of the former garage at 49 High Road, Needham. These revealed both linear and structural features of Romano-British date. These features were overlain by modern make-up deposits and ploughsoil which had built up from the medieval to early modern periods. The features undoubtedly represent Romano-British occupation and were probably an element of a dispersed roadside settlement. Pottery recovered by Mr. S Want during fieldwork in the field to the south-east of the proposed development area was also analysed.*

### **1.0 Introduction**

Two twelve-metre long trenches were excavated to the rear of the former Garage, 49 High Road, Needham in advance of a proposed housing development by A.C. Crockford and Partners (Figs 1 and 2). The Needham area has produced significant evidence over the years, both structural and artefactual, for settlement and industry during the Roman period. This archaeological evaluation was undertaken in accordance with a Brief issued by Norfolk Landscape Archaeology (NLA Ref: 8/9/98/DG), supplemented by a Method Statement prepared by the Norfolk Archaeological Unit (NAU Ref: MS/Eval/99/789).

The work was designed to assist in defining the character and extent of any archaeological remains within the proposed redevelopment area, following the guidelines set out in *Planning and Policy Guidance 16 — Archaeology and Planning* (Department of the Environment 1990). The results will enable decisions to be made by the Local Planning Authority with regard to the treatment of any archaeological remains found.

The site archive is currently held by the Norfolk Museums Service, following the relevant policy on archiving standards.

### **2.0 Geology and Topography**

The site overlies mixed glacial till deposits. These are mostly comprised of sands and gravels but with small irregularly distributed patches of sandy boulder clay. This 'natural' geological material can change from being pure sand or pure gravel to sandy boulder clay and back again in the space of a few metres.

The evaluation area lies on level ground at an elevation of around 25m above Ordnance Datum. It overlooks the quite steeply scarped valley of the River Waveney

to the south-east (Fig. 1). The site lies c.100m north-west of the top edge of the valley scarp.

### **3.0 *Archaeological and Historical Background***

by Sophie Tremlett

#### **3.1 *Prehistoric periods***

Limited evidence of prehistoric activity survives in the area surrounding the proposed development. Small numbers of worked flints of unspecified date (mainly flakes, blades and cores) and a single body sherd of prehistoric flint-gritted pottery were recovered in 1980 in an area to the north east of the site after topsoil removal during the construction of the A143 Harleston Bypass (Fig. 1: Sites 16630, 16631, 16632 and 16633). Fieldwalking carried out in 1992 prior to the construction of the A143 Brockdish-Needham Bypass (Penn 1993) also recovered small numbers of prehistoric flint artefacts (flakes and a scraper) from several areas to the north-west, south-west and north-east of the site (Fig. 1: Sites 29616, 29617, 29618, 29619 and 29621). Such a small, scattered assemblage was not believed to represent prehistoric activity of any great significance.

More substantial evidence of prehistoric activity was found at the site of the former Dean's Gravel Pit (Fig. 1), now disused (Site 11071). Observation and excavation at the site after 1921, initially undertaken by S.S. Frere and R. Clarke, saw the recovery of Mesolithic flints, a Neolithic axe, a Neolithic cremation and Bronze Age and Iron Age pottery.

#### **3.2 *Roman period***

Most archaeological evidence pertinent to the area to be developed dates the Roman period. It was once believed that a Roman road running from the south east to Weybread (Suffolk) continued in a north-westerly direction towards Needham where it crossed the River Waveney and presumably joined the main Pye Road near Pulham St Mary (Clarke 1952). Its course to the north-west of Weybread has never been traced, however. It was not seen during the monitoring of the construction of the A143 Brockdish-Needham Bypass (Penn 1993), perhaps because all trace of its course had been removed by centuries of ploughing.

A review paper by David Gurney surveying the evidence for 'lower order' Romano-British settlement in Norfolk (Gurney 1995a) identifies Needham as one of over twenty significant Roman settlement sites known from the county. Stray and excavated finds recovered from the area suggest a significant level of activity in the Roman period. Fieldwalking and metal-detecting in 1988 and 1991 in the field immediately to the south-east of the proposed development led to the recovery of Romano-British pottery, including samian ware dating from the late 2nd to early 3rd century. Eleven coins dating from the 1st to 4th centuries were found, 10 of them in the north corner of the area, along with an early Romano-British brooch.

Within the last six months fieldwalking has been carried out by Mr Steven Want in the same field. He collected samian ware of Flavian to late 2nd/mid 3rd century date and also excavated a small trench approximately 4.00m to the south east of the site

(Fig. 2). This excavation also produced pottery and Mr Want reported seeing what he interpreted as the foundations of a flint wall. The material recovered during these investigations was passed to Norfolk Archaeological Unit staff and has been analysed with the pottery from the NAU trenches (see below).

Observation and excavation at the aforementioned Dean's Gravel Pit provided evidence of a significant level of occupation and industrial activity in the Roman period. The archaeological remains at this site included a number of small ditches and refuse pits and three pottery kilns, two of which were probably functioning in the 2nd century (Clarke 1952; Frere 1941; Clarke and Frere 1947). A site so close to the Waveney was no doubt in an advantageous location for such kilns since transportation of ceramic products by water may have been preferred.

Further stray finds of Romano-British coins and pottery have been made to the north-east, north and north-west of the site (Sites 29617, 11080, 33200 and 16630). The most significant of these was made during fieldwalking carried out in 1992 prior to the construction of the A143 Brockdish-Needham Bypass (Penn 1993, appendix 3). Eight silver denarii were found at Site 29621, to the north east of the proposed development. These coins were dated by Dr John A. Davies to the years between 109 BC and AD 60/61. It is likely that they derived from a disturbed hoard and Dr Davies suggests that they were possibly hidden as a result of the unrest caused by the Boudiccan revolt of AD 61.

### 3.3 *Saxon and medieval periods*

A 6th-century Pagan Saxon cruciform brooch was found towards the south-western end of the A143 Harleston Bypass (Site 17787).

In general very few medieval artefacts have been found in the Needham area. Small amounts of medieval pottery were recovered from both the routes of the A143 Harleston Bypass (Site 16630) and the A143 Brockdish-Needham Bypass (Penn 1993). The field immediately to the south-east of the proposed development area (also part of Site 24601) has also yielded a few sherds of medieval pottery which had probably made its way onto arable land during manuring.

Needham is not mentioned at all in the Domesday book (Brown 1984). The modern village of Needham is probably medieval in origin. St. Peter's Church (Fig. 2) has a round tower (Pevsner 1962, 266), a feature which is often of 11th–13th century date.

### 3.4 *Post-medieval*

Needham still boasts a number of fine buildings dating to the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries (eg. Sites 16559 and 32914: Norfolk Sites and Monuments Record).

The plot on which the former garage building now stands is shown as an arable field on the 1904 Ordnance 25 inch map. The former garage itself is probably a 1950s structure with later additions. Underground fuel tanks constructed to the both south-east and north-west of the former garage building (Fig. 2) will have thoroughly destroyed any archaeological remains in these areas. The construction of the tanks and the dumping of modern material has caused low-level diesel and oil contamination across the whole of the proposed development area. Contamination

tests have been carried out on behalf of A.C. Crockford and Partners. Although the formal report from these tests was not seen by NAU staff verbal assurances were given that contamination levels were well within safe levels.

It is also likely that construction of the forecourt superstructure to the north-west of the former garage building has caused serious damage to archaeological deposits in that area.

The 1904 Ordnance Survey 25 inch map also marks what is presumably a disused gravel pit towards the south-east edge of the field, to the south-east of the proposed development area (Fig. 2). This pit has been infilled in recent years with modern agricultural debris (Mr. S. Want, *pers. comm.*).

#### **4.0 Methodology**

The objective of this evaluation was to determine as far as reasonably possible the presence/absence, location, nature, extent, date, quality, condition and significance of any surviving archaeological deposits within the development area.

The two trenches were initially machine-excavated using a wheeled JCB-type excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket under constant archaeological supervision. Machine excavation ceased at the first suspected significant archaeological horizon.

Spoil, exposed surfaces and features were scanned with a metal detector. It was soon apparent that all of the surface to the rear of the former garage and the spoil the trenches was full of modern metal debris, much of it non-ferrous and derived from the site's former use as a vehicle repair garage. This rendered impossible any attempt at effective metal-detecting.

All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using the Norfolk Archaeological Unit's *pro-forma* sheets. Trench locations, plans and sections were recorded at appropriate scales and colour and monochrome photographs were taken of all relevant features and deposits.

Due to the lack of suitable deposits, no environmental samples were taken.

In general conditions for the observation of archaeological phenomena were good. The weather was sunny and clement and no additional problems were encountered.

#### **5.0 Results**

##### **5.1 Trench 1**

Trench 1, aligned north-west to south-east, was 12.5m long and 1.6m wide (Figs 2 and 3). Initial machine excavation was carried out to a depth of 0.80–0.90m. It soon became apparent that in the last few decades the whole of the south-eastern half of the site had been covered with a series of dumps or make-up deposits containing garage waste (oil cans, paint pots, small car parts *etc.*). These dumps either consisted of sandy silt loams, containing fragments of modern brick and concrete (*eg.* [08]) or concrete and brick rubble (*eg.* [26]). At the base of this material in Trench 1 a layer of orange gravel 0.2m thick, [22], was seen. Whilst not conclusively modern this

layer had a modern ceramic pipe set in Portland cement sitting on top of it and apparently representing the same episode of construction. This deposit is probably modern, perhaps relating to the initial construction of the garage in the 1950s. These works would also have removed any traces of the old ploughsoil.

Below this gravel a layer of leached mid brown silty sand up to 0.4m thick, [09], was encountered. This material had been cut by an ill-defined ephemeral linear feature [10]; this ran east-to-west and was 1.9m wide and 0.4m deep. It yielded one sherd of Iron Age pottery and two sherds of local Roman pottery.

It seems likely that [09] is an early Romano-British cultivation soil or occupation surface and that [10] is either a cultivation or a minor boundary feature. Careful hand-excavation of [09] itself produced no finds or other dating evidence.

## **5.2 Trench 2**

Trench 2, aligned north-east to south-west, was 11.8m long and 1.6m wide (Figs 2 and 3). Machine excavation removed up to 0.4m of modern sandy loam make-up, [02], containing garage debris. Below this a thick deposit of ploughsoil, [03], was encountered. It is likely that similar material was not seen in Trench 1 due to removal during the construction of the modern surface [22] (above). This ploughsoil either lay directly upon the natural undisturbed geological material or on top of two thin (0.15m) patches of Romano-British cultivation soil [16] or occupation material characteristically similar to that seen in Trench 1 (context [09]).

Four features were seen cut into the natural sands and clays at the western end of the trench. The largest of these was a ditch, [05], 0.80m wide and 0.30m deep and aligned north-west to south-east. Parallel to this ditch on its eastern side were a gully, [07], and two post-holes, [13] and [15]. The fills of the ditch and gully contained sherds of local Romano-British pottery (see below).

The ditch may have divided plots within a settlement. The gully and post-holes are structural features. It is likely that they formed a wattle fence rather than a building since no further structural remains were found to the east of the ditch. These features probably represent a different (non-contemporary) or complimentary expression of the boundary represented by ditch [10].

Apart from the pottery (see below) three pieces of fired clay (82g) were recovered from ditch fill [4] and possible Romano-British cultivation soil [16]. Two fragments of animal bone were also recovered from ditch fill [4] and from [19], a fill of linear cut [10].

## **6.0 Roman Pottery**

by Alice Lyons

### **6.1 Introduction**

This report describes the material recovered from the excavated features by Norfolk Archaeological Unit staff, the samian ware found on the surface of the field south of the proposed development area by Mr S. Want, and the material found by Mr. Want in his small trench immediately to the south-east of the proposed development area.

A total of 40 sherds of pottery, weighing 1.188kg, was recovered. The majority of these were Roman, although Iron Age and post-Roman material was also retrieved.

Pottery type	Quantity	Weight (g)	% by weight
Iron Age	1	8	0.67
Roman	37	1166	98.15
Post Roman	2	14	1.18
Total	40	1188	100.00

*Table 1: Pottery by Era*

A total of six Roman pottery fabrics were identified, all in relatively small quantities. However (?)Brampton white ware mortarium is the best represented by weight, while samian and micaceous reduced wares are the most frequent by sherd count (Table 2).

## 6.2 Methodology

The pottery was analysed using the pottery recording procedure described in the Norfolk Archaeological Unit Pottery Recording manual, following guidelines recommended by the Study Group for Roman Pottery, and using the established form and fabric typologies used in current NAU research into Roman pottery. The assemblage was quantified by sherd count, weight and rim percentage. Evidence for manufacturing techniques (eg. decoration or cheese-wire marks on the base) and visual evidence for pre- and post-depositional processes, (including sooting and abrasion), were also recorded. All percentages are of weight unless otherwise stated. The pottery and archive are stored by the Norfolk Museums Service.

Fabric	Quantity	Weight (g)	Vessel Type	% of assemblage (by weight)
?Brampton white ware mortarium	3	422		36.19
Samian	15	350		30.02
Micaceous reduced ware	12	344	6.18	29.50
Visible clay relict grey ware	4	34		2.92
Black surfaced red ware	2	12		1.03
Sandy reduced ware	1	4		0.34
Total	37	1166		100.00

*Table 2: Roman Pottery Fabrics, listed in descending order of percentage of weight*

## 6.3 Pottery by Trench and feature

### 6.3.1 Trench 1, linear cut [10]

Three pieces of pottery were retrieved: one flint-tempered Iron Age sherd (8g) and two locally produced black surfaced red ware Roman sherds (12g). Unfortunately,

the Roman material is not closely datable, but the presence of quite fresh prehistoric material may suggest an early Roman (C1-MC2) date for this ditch.

#### 6.4.2 Trench 2, ditch [005]

Six sherds of Roman micaceous reduced ware (80g) and four sherds of visible clay relict grey ware (34g) were retrieved. Both of these fabrics were produced in the Waveney Valley throughout the Roman period: although typical of a Roman south Norfolk (north Suffolk) ceramic assemblage they are not closely datable.

Two sherds of post-Roman pottery were also identified. Both were heavily abraded and it is probable that they are intrusive pieces.

#### 6.3.3 Trench 2, gully [007]

A single sherd of locally produced Roman sandy reduced ware pottery (4g) was recovered from the fill of this gully. Unfortunately it is not closely datable.

#### 6.3.4 Unstratified pottery retrieved from the spoilheap

Three sherds of locally produced Roman micaceous reduced ware (48g) were recovered. Unfortunately no vessel types were identified so the material remains only broadly datable to the late 1st–4th centuries AD. This micaceous coarseware pottery is typical of any south Norfolk Roman ceramic assemblage.

#### 6.3.5 Pottery recovered by Steve Want: fieldwalking

This pottery was recovered from a field to the south of the main excavation. However, only samian was retrieved. It is assumed that this reflects selection by the collector: it would be very unusual indeed for only samian to be present on a Romano-British site. Fifteen sherds of samian were collected in this manner (350g) and their individual spot dates and vessel types can be seen in Table 3. They represent a wide range of vessels (both in terms of centres of manufacture, time and vessel design) and would be consistent with a Roman settlement of some duration and moderate status.

#### 6.3.6 Pottery recovered by Steve Want: excavation

The pottery recovered from this intervention is the most interesting collection of Romano-British coarse wares retrieved from this site. Although only three micaceous reduced ware sherds were recovered (216g) they are all of individual interest.

A straight-sided dish (type 6.18) was identified, along with the base of a beaker (type 3.10) and a medium-mouthed jar bearing a pre-fired 'X' graffito (probably a batch mark) on the surviving flat base. Also found was the base of a slightly micaceous white ware mortarium (422g). This was probably manufactured in Brampton (Norfolk), although no rim survives to provide a positive identification. All this material has been spot-dated to the mid 2nd century AD.

### 6.4 *Conclusions*

This is a small assemblage of Roman pottery consisting of fabrics typical of those present within the large ceramic assemblage from nearby Scole (Lyons and Tester forthcoming). The presence of some datable coarse wares, relatively large amounts of

samian and a lack of later Roman material suggests a date in the mid-later 2nd century AD. The pottery also indicates a settlement of moderate wealth where traded goods were in everyday use.

Origin of samian	Sherd Count	Sherd Description	Vessel Type	Date	Comment
South Gaulish	1	Rim	Dr 36	Flavian	
South Gaulish	1	Rim	Curle 11	Flavian	
South Gaulish	2	Base	Dish	Flavian	
South Gaulish	1	Base	Dr 18/31	85-110	
Central Gaulish Les Martres-de-Veyre	2	Base	Dr 18/31	Trajanic	
Central Gaulish	1	Body and base.	Dr 33	Antonine	
Central Gaulish	1	Base	Dr 18/31 or 31	Hadrianic-Antonine	
Central Gaulish	1	Base	Dr 18/31 or 31	Hadrianic-Antonine Had-Ant	Abraded
Central Gaulish	1	Body	Dr 37	Hadrianic-Antonine Had-Ant	Decorated Abraded
Central Gaulish	1	Rim	Dr 31	Antonine	
East Gaulish Rheinzbern	1	Body	Dr 37	LC2-MC3	Decorated
East Gaulish	1	Base		LC2-MC3	Very abraded
East Gaulish Rheinzbern	1	Body and base	Dr 31?	LC2-MC3	

*Table 3: Identification and spot dates for the samian recovered from fieldwalking.*

## 7.0 Conclusions

There is little doubt that the modern village of Needham overlies Romano-British settlement of some duration and prosperity. The presence of small amounts of Iron Age material and hints of early Roman military activity perhaps represent the origins of the settlement. Similarly the 6th-century cruciform brooch indicates early post-Roman activity in the area.

In general terms the evidence points towards a dispersed or disaggregated settlement straggling along side one or more routeways. As well as the possible continuation of the Roman road from Weybread it seems likely that there would have been another routeway linking the Needham Roman settlement to its larger neighbour at Scole to the south-west. This routeway may have been the Waveney itself or trackways north and/or south of the river running parallel to it.

Recommendations for future work based upon this report will be made by Norfolk Landscape Archaeology.

### ***Acknowledgements***

The authors like to thank the following people for their participation and help: Helen Evans and Lucy Talbot of the NAU; David Gurney of Norfolk Landscape archaeology; Mr Steve Want of Needham; Chris Reeve Digger Hire of Bressingham; and Mr. Bernard Crockford of A.C. Crockford and Partners.

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### Appendix 1: Context Summary

Context No.	Category	Description/interpretation	Upper level (m OD)	Period
01	-	Already used by SMR	-	-
02	Deposit	Dumping/make-up, Trench 2	25.13	Modern
03	Deposit	Plough-soil, Trench 2		Medieval to early modern
04	Deposit	Fill of ditch [05], Trench 2	24.16	1 <sup>st</sup> to 4 <sup>th</sup> Centuries AD
05	Cut	Ditch, filled by [04], Trench 2	24.16	1 <sup>st</sup> to 4 <sup>th</sup> Centuries AD
06	Deposit	Fill of gully [05], Trench 2	24.13	1 <sup>st</sup> to 4 <sup>th</sup> Centuries AD
07	Cut	Gully, filled by [04], Trench 2	24.13	1 <sup>st</sup> to 4 <sup>th</sup> Centuries AD
08	Deposit	Dumping/make-up, Trench 1	25.20	Modern
09	Deposit	Cultivation soil	24.64	1 <sup>st</sup> to 4 <sup>th</sup> Centuries AD
10	Cut	Linear cut, filled by [11] and [19]	24.71	1 <sup>st</sup> to mid 2 <sup>nd</sup> Centuries ?
11	Deposit	Fill of linear cut [11]	24.39	1 <sup>st</sup> to mid 2 <sup>nd</sup> Centuries ?
12	Deposit	Fill of post-hole [13]	24.20	1 <sup>st</sup> to 4 <sup>th</sup> Centuries AD ?
13	Cut	Post-hole, filled by [12]	24.20	1 <sup>st</sup> to 4 <sup>th</sup> Centuries AD ?
14	Deposit	Fill of post-hole [15]	24.21	1 <sup>st</sup> to 4 <sup>th</sup> Centuries AD ?
15	Cut	Post-hole, filled by [14]	24.21	1 <sup>st</sup> to 4 <sup>th</sup> Centuries AD ?
16	Deposit	Cultivation soil	24.22	1 <sup>st</sup> to 4 <sup>th</sup> Centuries AD ?
17	Deposit	Patch of ? re-deposited clay	24.20	1 <sup>st</sup> to 4 <sup>th</sup> Centuries AD ?
18	-	Unstratified finds form spoil heap of Trench 1	-	-
19	Deposit	Fill of linear cut [11]	24.39	1 <sup>st</sup> to mid 2 <sup>nd</sup> Centuries ?
20	Deposit	Layer of brick and concrete rubble	25.21	Modern
21	Deposit	Dumping/make-up, Trench 1	25.03	Modern
22	Deposit	Gravel layer, possible surface	24.78	Modern ?
23	Cut	? drainage feature	25.34	Modern
24	Deposit	Fill of [23]	25.08	Modern

25	Deposit	Fill of [23]	25.34	Modern
26	Deposit	Brick rubble	25.46	Modern
27	-	Unstratified samian sherds from filed south of site	-	-
28	-	Unstratified finds from S. Want Trench	-	-

## Appendix 2: Finds

### Finds by context

Context No.	Material	Quantity	Weight (g)	Spot date (century)
04	Pottery	11	128	1 <sup>st</sup> to 4 <sup>th</sup> Century
	Fired Clay	2	70	1 <sup>st</sup> to 4 <sup>th</sup> Century
	Animal Bone	1	28	1 <sup>st</sup> to 4 <sup>th</sup> Century
06	Pottery	1	4	1 <sup>st</sup> to 4 <sup>th</sup> Century
16	Fired Clay	1	12	1 <sup>st</sup> to 4 <sup>th</sup> Century ?
18	Pottery	2	48	1 <sup>st</sup> to 4 <sup>th</sup> Century
19	Pottery	3	20	1 <sup>st</sup> to Mid 2 <sup>nd</sup> Century
	Animal Bone	1	10	
27	Pottery	15	350	1 <sup>st</sup> to Mid 3 <sup>rd</sup> Century
28	Pottery	6	638	Mid 2 <sup>nd</sup> Century

### Non-pottery finds by material

Context No.	Material	Quantity	Weight (g)
04	Fired Clay	2	70
16	Fired Clay	1	12
	TOTAL	3	82

Context No.	Material	Quantity	Weight (g)
04	Animal Bone	1	28
19	Animal Bone	1	10
	TOTAL	2	38

### *Appendix 3: The Pottery fabrics*

#### *? Brampton white ware mortaria*

Description: Green 1977 p.31-32 and Tomber and Dore 1998 p.170.

Black surfaced red ware

Misfired micaceous reduced ware.

Micaceous reduced ware

Description: Gurney 1995b, p.102

Samian

Description: Webster 1983 p.7; Tomber and Dore 1998, p.25-41.

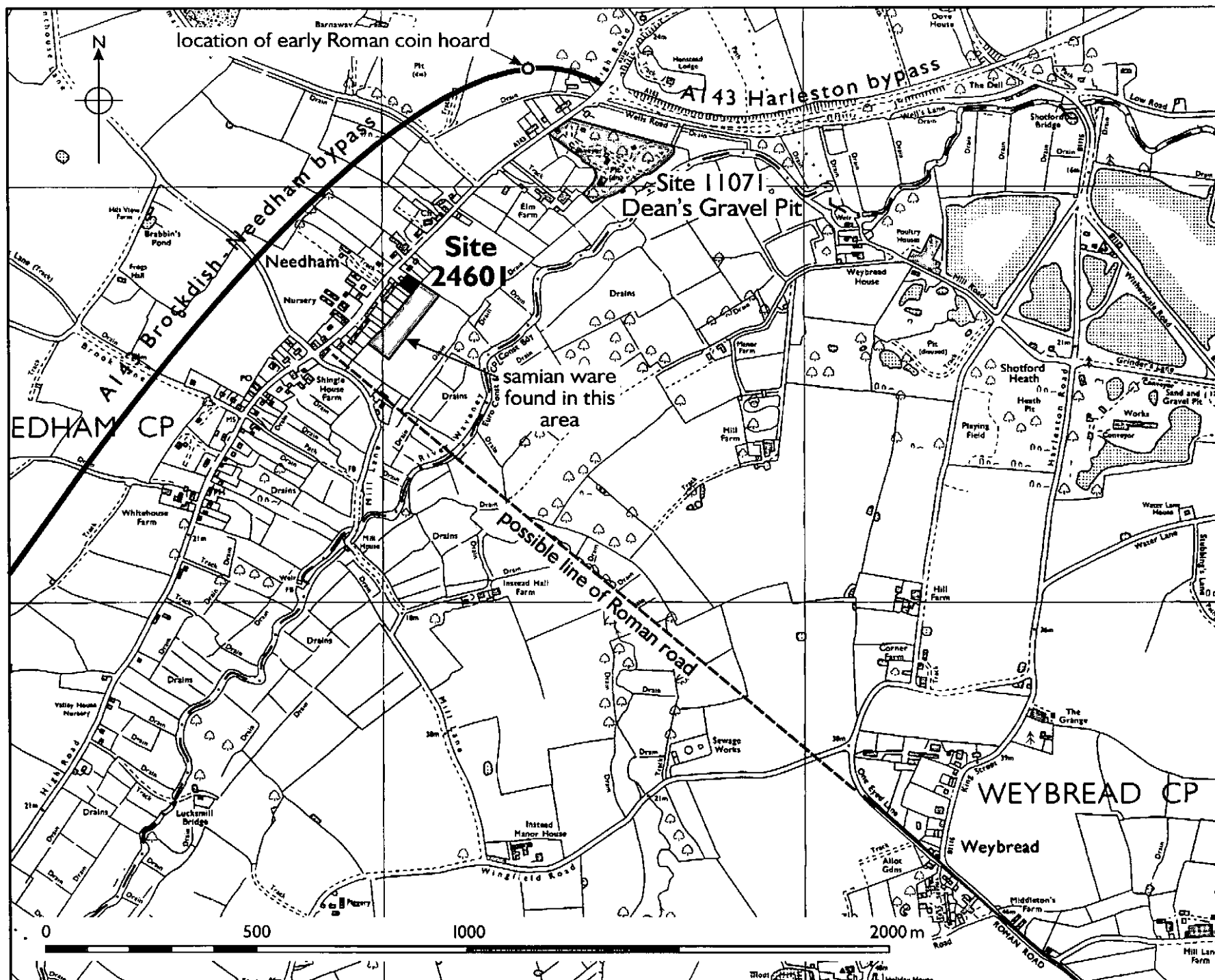
#### *Visible clay relict grey ware*

This is a quite hard light grey (10YR 7/2) wheel-thrown fabric with a smooth powdery texture and an irregular fracture. It contains common coarse clay relict inclusions and abundant mica that are both natural contaminants of the clay. Thin slice analysis (Vince forthcoming) has revealed that this fabric is chemically identical (although visually different) to micaceous reduced ware.

#### *Vessel Type*

6.18 A dish with straight sides, flat base and thickened everted triangular rim.

(Rogerson, 1973: 123, 129, 148 & 175)



**Fig. 1** Location of site, showing selected known archaeological sites. Scale 1:12,500

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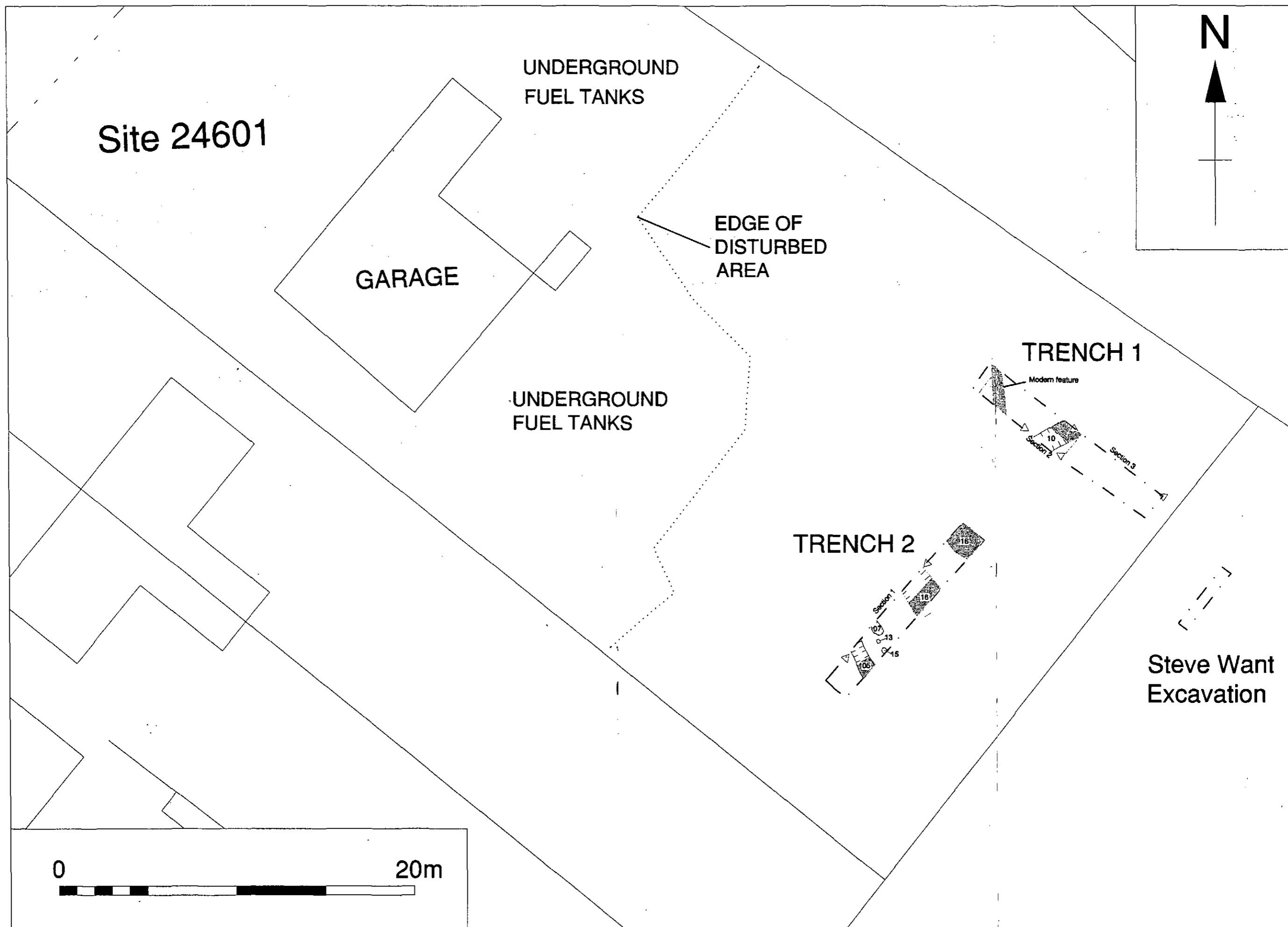


Fig.2 Location of Trenches showing locations of recent fieldwork by Mr S. Want. Scale 1:200

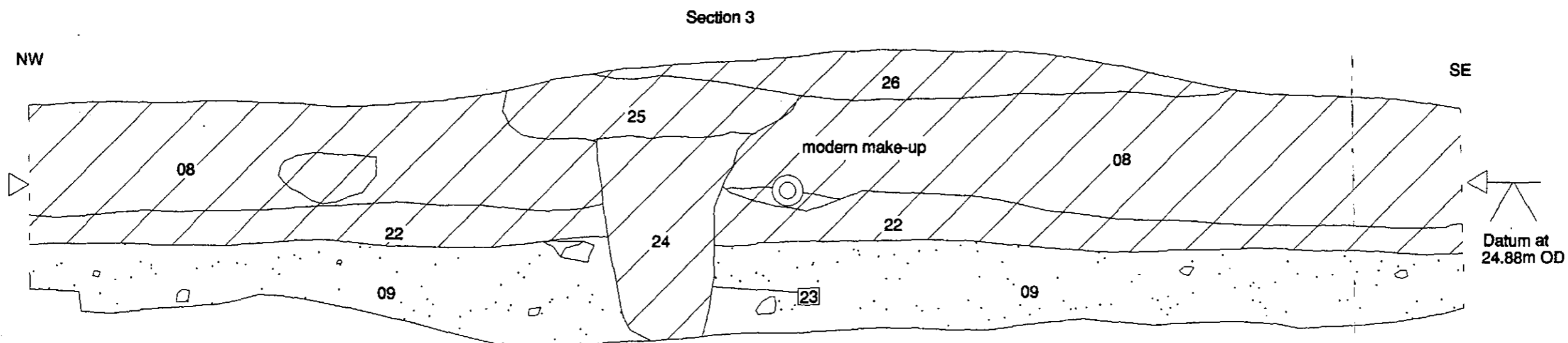
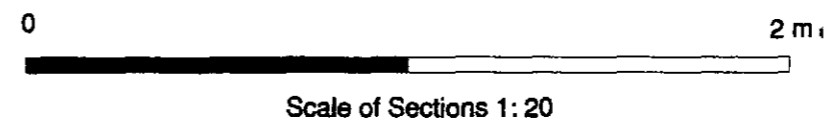
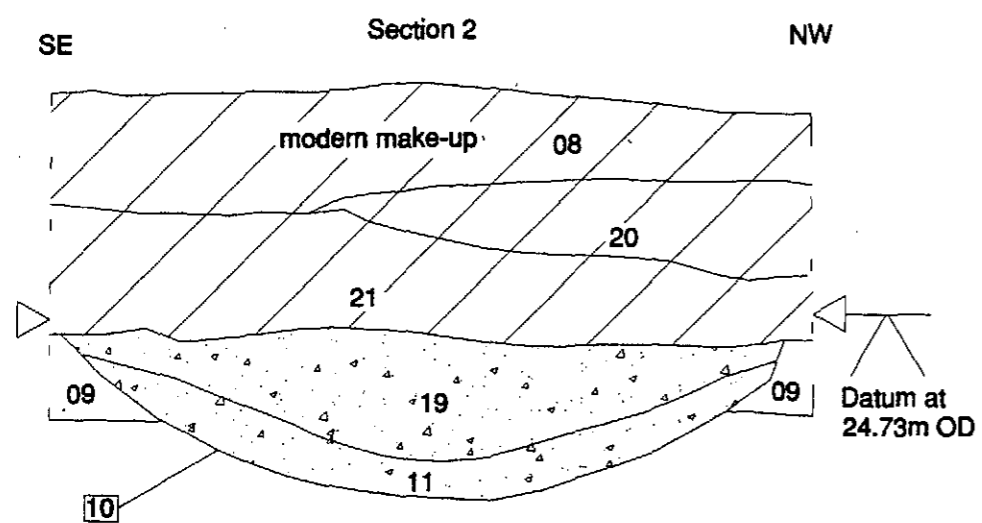
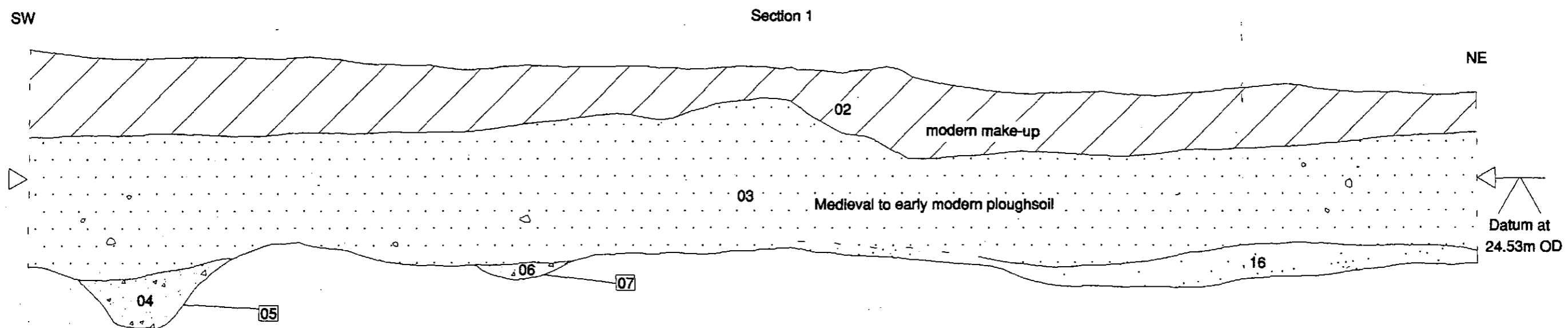


Fig.3 Sections of Trenches 1 and 2. Scale 1:20