

Short Report:

A Romano-British village at Radwinter

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A geophysical survey alone is never sufficient to date any archaeological site, but can be useful in identifying the location of relevant features for corroborative excavation and the extent, or simply the existence, of a site. The purpose of this article is to alert the archaeological community to one particularly interesting site discovered by geophysical survey.

Ivan D. Margary (1955) delineated the line of many Roman roads in England. His road number 300 passed through Radwinter in Essex heading towards Great Chesterford. Although Church Hill, the road immediately south of Water Lane in Radwinter, is labelled

as a Roman road on current Ordnance Survey maps there is little evidence of how this continued north of the crossroads in Radwinter (Fig. 1). Another Roman road has been postulated running from Radwinter to Wixoe (National Monuments Register Linear 431). Archaeology RheeSearch Group were asked to carry out geophysical surveys in a field just north of Radwinter to see if there is subsurface evidence for a road which would support the hypothesis that the Roman roads in the area were laid out according to a predefined grid plan (Peterson 1990).

Radwinter is about 16 miles (25 km) from

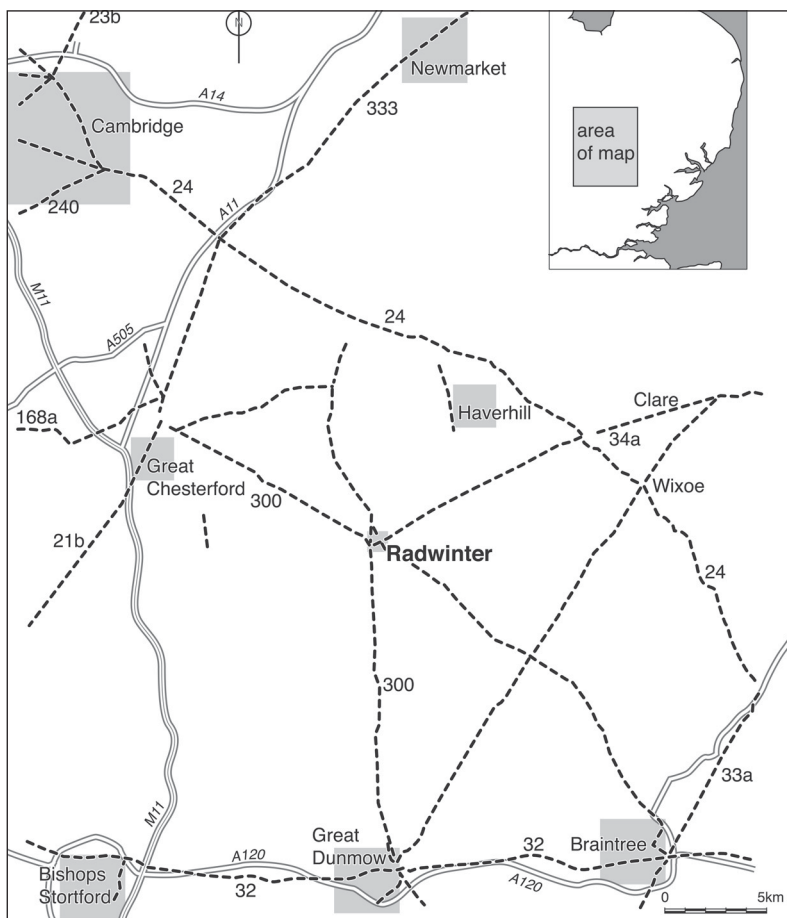


Figure 1. Location map. The Roman road network thought to be around Radwinter, derived from Allen et al, (2016) with numbers according to Margary (1955).

Cambridge, and 5 miles (8 km) from Saffron Walden. It is a typical village of the area with 54 listed buildings and 4 manors, clustered around a 14th century church and the river Pant. Within 250 m of the survey site, the archaeological records for Radwinter include discoveries in the 1960s that have been interpreted as evidence of late Iron Age or early Roman settlement (Hooper 1966). Excavations in 1998 found ditches and pits with pottery from the first two centuries AD (Havis 2001; Saunders and Winter 2008). A more recent archaeological evaluation stated that in the field abutting this survey to the south there was “extensive evidence for Early Roman settlement ... possibly relating to the site of a putative small Roman town located at Radwinter” (House 2013, 6; Fig. 2). This evidence is the basis for the identification of Radwinter as a Roman roadside settlement in the recent review of Roman rural settlement (Smith *et al.* 2016, 224). The survey reported here supports this identification.

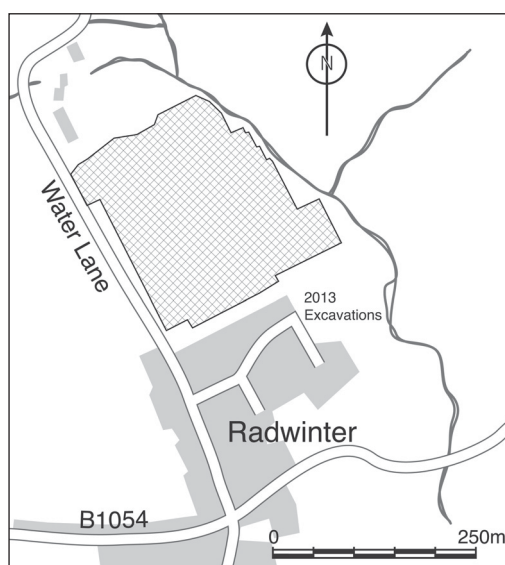


Figure 2. Area of magnetometry survey at Radwinter.

Resistivity and magnetometry surveys were carried out on the site (Fig. 3). The resistivity results were largely inconclusive and are therefore not considered further here, but the magnetometry results are presented below.

Magnetometry was carried out using a Bartington twin sensor 601 gradiometer with 1 m traverses reading at 8 per metre. The results seem to define a substantial part of a settlement abutting the River Pant along the eastern edge of the survey site (Fig. 4). This has a series of trackways and boundaries running broadly northeast. Running northwest on the western side of the survey parallel to Water Lane is a strip with almost no magnetic signal. This is interpreted as a road or way, funnelling to a single track in the northwest corner and dividing into two routes in the south around two market place enclosures. There are ladder-like enclosures on the west or southwest side of this way which are characteristic of other

Roman sites such as along Ermine Street at Arrington (Sanderson 2015). Arrow-like responses in the south-eastern corner suggest modern drainage.

The Radwinter survey shows features of more than one phase, which could be clarified through excavation. Numerous roadside settlements, and the overlapping category of complex farms, have been found across England (Smith *et al.* 2016, figs 2.17, 2.24). A good local parallel is the excavated complex of North West Cambridge (Smith *et al.* 2016, fig. 5.56; Cambridge Archaeological Unit webpage). Roman settlement numbers overall peak in the second century, declining in the late Roman period. This corresponds to the chronology of Roman finds so far in Radwinter. The network of roadside settlements is noted as a “significant factor” in the archaeology of the eastern region, raising key questions about the economy and social relations (Smith *et al.* 2016, 241). Further investigations of sites such as Radwinter could provide significant new insights on these themes, as well as more precise detail of the road system.

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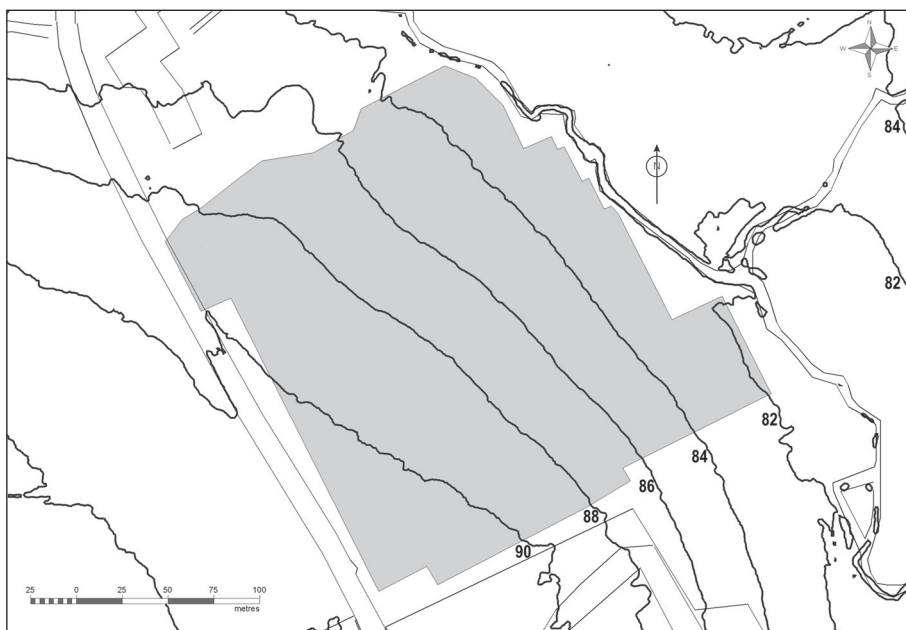


Figure 3. Contour survey of field.

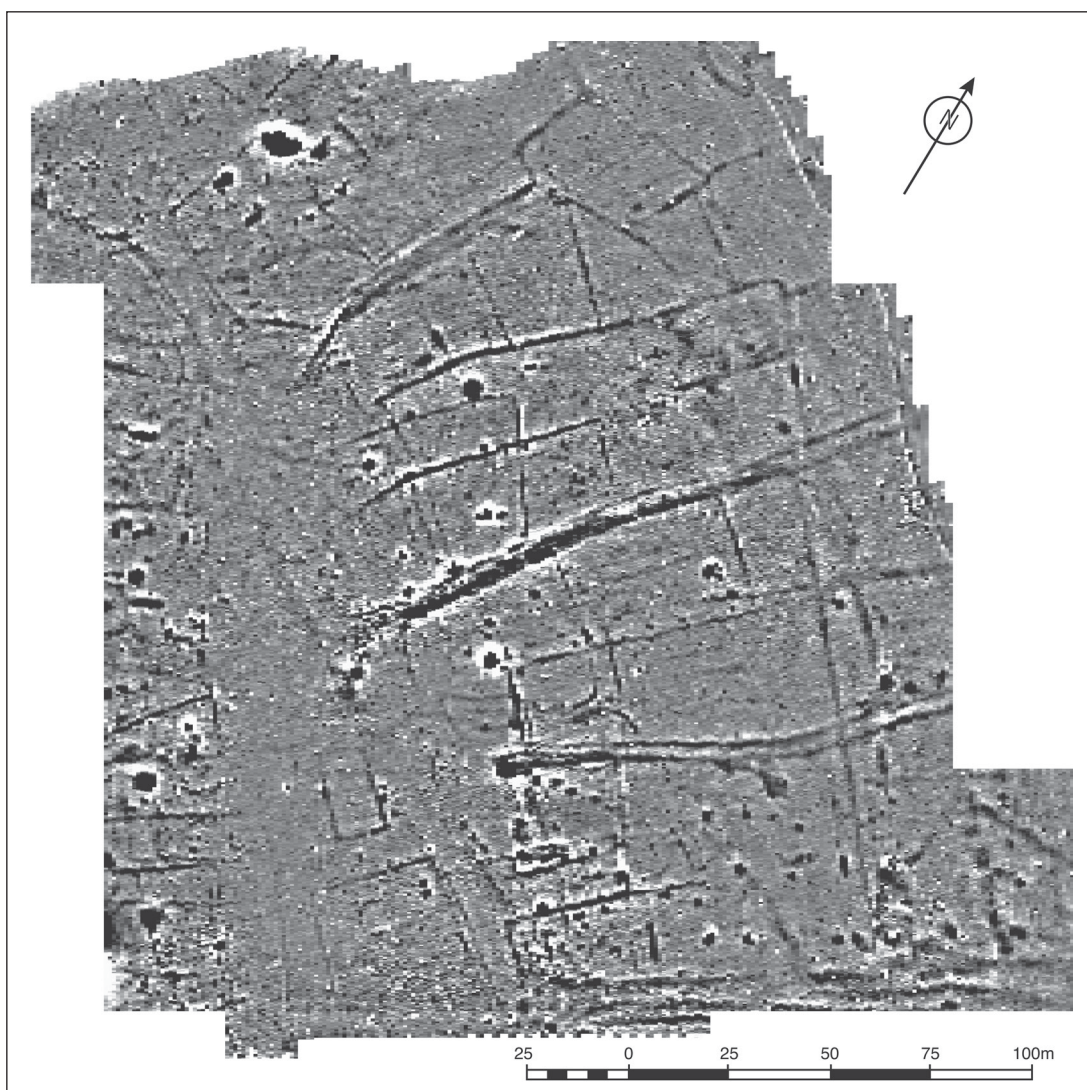


Figure 4. Results of magnetometry survey ± 4 nT.

