EXCAVATIONS AT CHURCH LOKE, BURGH CASTLE, 1993-4

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SUMMARY

In response to a proposed churchyard extension at Church Loke, Burgh Castle, trial excavations (1993) were followed by full excavation of the entire affected area (1994). The excavation revealed evidence for activity in both the Romano-British and Late Saxon periods. Within both of these periods different phases of activity were identified. The majority of the archaeological features excavated were linear, and appear to have formed field boundaries or drainage channels. A post-built structure and an oven were also identified.

Introduction

The site at Burgh Castle became subject to archaeological investigation through the planning process when an application was made to extend the graveyard of the parish church. This proposed change of land usage provided the opportunity to investigate any Romano-British activity associated with the nearby Saxon Shore fort and any Saxon activity connected with the establishment of the church in its present position. The work, which comprised trial trenching followed by area excavation, was undertaken by the Norfolk Archaeological Unit on behalf of Burgh Castle Parish Council and was funded by a grant from English Heritage. The work was carried out in accordance to an archaeological Brief set by the Landscape Archaeology Section of the Norfolk Museums Service. The trial trenches were excavated in October 1993 under the direction of Kenneth Penn; the main excavation, directed by Heather Wallis, took place over a 4-week period during June 1994.

Topography and Geology

The site (SMR No.13227, TG 4765 0490) lies on the 10m contour and stands above and to the east of the River Waveney and associated marshlands which lie at c.0m OD. It is located immediately to the south of the former churchyard boundary of the church of SS Peter and Paul and c.250m to the north-east of the Roman Fort (Fig.1). Much of the area surrounding the fort forms part of the Scheduled Ancient Monument; although that status did not extend northwards to the churchyard boundary in May 1995. The excavated area, the fort and the church all lie in the north-eastern part of a tongue of higher land which is bounded to the east by the North Sea and the west by alluvial flatlands. The subsoil in this area is boulder clay with intercalated area the boulder clay was covered by c. 0.4m of sand at the west edge of the excavation, while at its east end some areas of the clay were visible at the surface of the natural subsoil horizon.

Previous Excavations

No excavation has ever taken place outside of the walls of the fort apart from antiquarian investigations in the field to the east. Much of the area around the fort, however (although not the site itself) has been subject to intensive metal-detector survey, with close co-operation between detectorists and the Norfolk Museums Service. Finds recovered from this fieldwork include a wide range of metal objects and a quantity of Romano-British pottery. The metalwork includes an Iron Age silver coin, almost one thousand Romano-British coins, a pagan Saxon

wrist clasp, Middle Saxon coins and brooches, a Late Saxon brooch and medieval coins and metalwork. This range of metal artefacts indicates that significant activity may have been taking place in the area over a considerable period of time.



Site Location



Fig.2 Plan showing all features and location of trial trenches

Aerial photography has also highlighted the extent of hidden features in the landscape. This is especially significant in the field to the east of Church Loke where a number of linear features are evident as crop-marks, although the variable distribution of these may partly be due to the varying nature of the subsoil and later disturbances. Most of these features are concentrated 0.75km away from the excavation area

The evaluation excavation of 1993 took the form of a series of three north-to-south trial trenches, each of them 1.6m in width and varying in length between 8m and 17m (Fig. 2). Each of the trenches revealed archaeological features, with a greater density being located in the western part of the site. These included post-holes and intercutting ditches, although the quantity of artefactual material recovered was insufficient to date them.

Research Aims

Three major areas of research were identified before the excavation began. The first of these was the possibility of locating evidence relating to pre-fort occupation in the area. At present nothing is known of this period, and any evidence of either a prehistoric or early Romano-British date would help greatly in the understanding of the settlement prior to the establishment of the Saxon Shore fort in the 3rd century AD.

The second main aim was to establish the nature and extent of any archaeological features which proved to be contemporary with the fort. It was hoped that information on the character of any settlement would offer a comparison with the outlying settlements (*vici*) at other Saxon Shore forts, and in particular Brancaster where a large *vicus* has been recognised and partially investigated (Hinchliffe 1985).

Finally it was hoped that evidence would be forthcoming to link the Saxon activity identified by excavation within the fort walls to the current church site. Early Saxon activity could be set in the context of debate on the decline of the fort. Middle Saxon evidence may help establish whether the settlement of *Cnobheresburg*, referred to by Bede, is to be found here or at Caister-on-Sea (Darling with Gurney 1993), while Late Saxon evidence may be connected with the establishment of the present church. It should be noted that the dedication, to SS Peter and Paul, is unusual in Norfolk and may hint at an early foundation.

The Excavation

Introduction

The trial work had shown that there was a depth of overburden in excess of 1.0m across the site, necessitating the removal of a large quantity of topsoil by machine. As there was no space available outside the excavation area for the storage of topsoil, this had to be undertaken in two separate stages. The initial phase of stripping commenced at the west end of the site and extended eastwards for c. 30m. During this process the ground was surveyed by metal-detector, and other non-metal finds were retrieved wherever possible. Once this first area had been cleared the excavation of features began, and continued over a week before the topsoil was replaced and the rest of the excavation area stripped. This second area was excavated over another week before being backfilled.

The topsoil-stripping revealed a greater depth of overburden at the west end of the site than had been anticipated, possibly resulting from soil deposition against an ancient boundary. The natural subsoil was seen at a depth of 1.2m in the south-west corner of the area. In the north-west corner it was not fully exposed for reasons of health and safety since it lay even deeper; a sondage encountered it 1.5m below the present ground surface. The natural subsoil gradually rose across the site to a depth of 0.9m at the east edge.

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The topsoil was removed in two thick spits. One feature (an oven) was identified 0.2m above the level of the natural subsoil. This was due to its distinctive nature; all other features, with their less exceptional fills, were only distinguished where they cut into the natural subsoil.

The majority of the features investigated were ditches (Fig. 2), probably forming field boundaries. Most were aligned north-to-south and east-to-west, and were identified as belonging to the Romano-British and Late Saxon periods. The same alignment appeared to have been maintained throughout the Romano-British period, despite recuts and alterations to the exact layout. The earliest Late Saxon feature, however, paid no regard to this and crossed the site from the north-west to south-east. The fills of all the ditches were very similar silty sands; the Late Saxon features were generally dark grey/brown in colour, while the earlier Romano-British features tended to be lighter.

The ditches probably formed enclosures, although these were difficult to define because of the limited size of the area excavated. They were seen to have undergone a series of rearrangements, redefinitions and subdivisions.

Through analysis of the horizontal stratigraphy sequences for the excavation of the ditches were established in different areas of the site, but it was not possible to link these together into a comprehensive overall sequence covering the whole site. Many episodes of reorganisation were clearly localised, and at no time during the Romano-British period does there appear to have been any wholesale re-planning or realignment of the boundaries. The dating evidence provided by the finds assemblage was not conclusive enough to refine this sequence, mainly due to the homogeneity and the small size of the collection.

There were no obvious instances of material having been deliberately dumped into the ditches; instead they had infilled by natural silting. These deposits therefore contained much residual material, mostly representing the most intensive period of occupation in the area. Late Saxon features also contained much Romano-British material.

Despite the difficulties in establishing dated phases of activity, it has been possible to establish a broad sequence for some of the features. There can be no clear and discrete division between the differing groups, however, and the overall development of the site must be seen as a continuous and evolving process.



Fig.3 Plan: Groups 1-3

Early Features

The earliest alignment of linear features identified consisted of two parallel ditches, 2.5m apart, located at the east edge of excavation and extending east beyond the edge of excavation (*Group 1*; Fig. 3). The average depth of the segments excavated was 0.14m; each contained a single fill, generally a mid-brown sandy silt with occasional iron pan. No finds were recovered, so it was not possible to establish a firm date for them. Stratigraphically, however, they were the earliest features excavated and could be Romano-British, or possibly earlier, in date.

Romano-British Features

All features which have been assigned to the Romano-British period were of 3rd-4th century date. No earlier artefacts were recovered. There appears to have been a general trend from large fields to smaller enclosures.

The first establishment of ditched field boundaries across the area was represented by a series of three ditches (*Group 2*; Fig. 3), two on the same east-to-west alignment and the third running broadly north-to-south. Those running east-to-west were separated by a gap of 10m, although this may have been accentuated by machining. An entrance did exist at the north-east corner of the enclosure. The overall dimensions of the enclosure were not established as the ditches extended beyond the west and south edges of excavation, but it exceeded 50m east-to-west and 15m north-to-south. Finds from this group included Grey Ware and part of a quernstone.

The limits of this enclosure to the north and east were subsequently redefined. A new ditch followed a similar northerly alignment, with its east end turning to the south and terminated to form an entrance here before the start of another north-to-south ditch which formed the east boundary (*Group 3*; Fig. 3). This new boundary was located c.13m to the west of the original alignment. Finds from these ditches included Romano-British Grey Wares and some fine wares.

Subsequently the pattern of ditches became more complicated, and activities at either end of the site cannot be related to each other securely. A north-to-south ditch crossed the centre of the site, with its north end curling slightly towards the east (*Group 4*; Fig. 4). This was truncated by other features to the south, but may once have spanned the full width of the excavation trench and extended beyond its southern limits.



Fig.4 Plan: Groups 4-7

Two rather sinuous ditches cut this feature. These were more-or-less parallel and extended southwards from the northern edge of the excavation on a north-north-west to south-south-east alignment (*Group 5*; Fig. 4). Part of a quern was recovered, along with some Grey Ware and fineware sherds. These ditches were noticeably less substantial than the other features in this area.

These features cannot be linked with any of those excavated at the west end of the site, where three north-to-south ditches have been grouped together (*Group* 6; Fig. 4) on the basis of their shared alignment and relationships to

surrounding features. Two of these ditches ran the full width of the site and lay c. 20m apart. The third was only seen to extend halfway across the site from south to north. The north end of this feature was somewhat confused by other ditches. Finds were few; the only pottery recovered was Romano-British Grey Ware, while small quantities of bone and brick and tile were also collected.

These three ditches were cut by a single east-to-west ditch which ran close to the south edge of excavation (*Group 7*; Fig. 4). The pottery recovered from this included both Romano-British Grey Ware and fine wares.



Fig.5



Fig.6 Plan of Oven (Group 8)

Located in the north-west corner of the site was a feature interpreted as an oven (Figs 5 and 6), which can with some certainty be dated to this period. It was made up predominantly of clay and flints and survived at a height of approximately 0.20m above the natural subsoil. This perhaps gives some indication of the level of the ground surface during this period. The feature was oval, measuring 1.6m x 1m with a maximum depth of 0.30m (Figs 6 and 7). The base was formed by a layer of olive yellow clay (206). A series of large flints were set within this clay deposit, and were probably part of the construction of the walls. Above this, and located on top of 206, was a pinky-red clay deposit (205).

Its distinctive colour was due to the effects of heat from the furnace, indicating that this was the internal floor. Surrounding the clay was a narrow band of loam (210). This build-up - accidental or possibly deliberate - around the sides appears to have occurred during its period of use. The stoke hole was located at the east end, and was represented by a deposit of charcoal which was probably represented raking-off of material from the fire.



Fig.8 Section through Pit Around these deposits was a layer of mixed olive yellow and pinky-red clay (207) probably resulting from the furnace's destruction. No pottery was found sealed within these deposits, although a few sherds of Romano-British Grey Wares and fine wares were recovered from the area immediately after machining. From the evidence recovered it has not been possible to establish the precise function of the oven.

Only one pit (255) was seen within the area of excavation. This was located midway along the southern edge of the site (Fig. 5) and was the most substantial feature recorded. It was ovate in shape, measured 2.2m x 2.9m, and was excavated to a depth of 0.95m (Fig. 8). All the fills were made up of sandy silts with charcoal fragments and clay patches. These inclusions, along with the animal bone recovered from the feature, suggests that the pit was used for refuse disposal before being abandoned to fill up naturally. Romano-British Grey Ware was found in the lowest excavated fill. The pit was also cut by the earliest Late Saxon ditch, 250 (Group 10).



Two other groups were thought to belong to the Romano-British period, although they have no stratigraphic link to any other features. The first was composed of three linear and parallel features, running north-to-south near the west

end of the site (*Group 8*; Fig. 5). These were 5m long on average and only 0.1m deep. No pottery was recovered from them although small quantities of brick/tile, bone and flint were collected.

The second was made up of a series of post-holes which appeared to form part of a rectangular structure (*Group 9*; Fig. 5 and Fig. 9) aligned east-to-west. The south row consisted of four post-holes; one of these had been recut and another had a square post-pipe. Their average depth was 0.16m. The north 'row' consisted of only two post-holes, one of which was so truncated that only a few millimetres of dark fill existed. The other was noticeably square in shape, however. The post-holes defined an overall area of 2.75 m x 1.30 m. Interpretation of this structure is difficult, although its location in a primarily agricultural landscape suggests that it may have served as a shed or barn.

Late Saxon Features

Two groups of features dating to the Late Saxon period were identified (Fig. 10). Their date was clear not only from their stratigraphic relationship to other features, but also from a distinctive finds assemblage which included Thetford-type Ware, significant quantities of fragmentary Romano-British brick and tile, and some fired clay with wattle impressions. They also contained Romano-British Grey Wares and fine ware sherds. This shows that a significant quantity of Romano-British debris occurred residually in the area.

The earliest group belonging to this period comprised a single ditch (*Group 10*; Fig. 10) which crossed the western half of the area on a north-west to south-east alignment. This orientation was in obvious contrast to most of the earlier features, which were broadly aligned on the compass points and with the fort. This re-alignment was not to persist, however; a later group (*Group 11*; Fig. 10) comprising three ditches located in the west part of the excavation reverted to the old north-to-south alignment.



Fig.10

Plan: Groups 10 and 11

Finds and Environmental Data

Introduction

The finds assemblage, while not large, was sufficient to date many of the features broadly. The artefacts from the site are primarily of Roman date, although a significant quantity of Late Saxon pottery and some later material was present. Much struck flint, including some tools, was also recovered.

Following the excavation, assessment reports were completed for each material type. These were compiled by Alice Lyons with the following exceptions: post-Roman pottery (Irena

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Lentowicz); animal bone (Trevor Ashwin); coins (John A. Davies); environmental data (Peter Murphy). Information from these reports has been edited by the writer, and is presented below.

-	(GW	OW	//WW	NV	'CC	SI	TW	OXI	RCC	OXV	VCC		BB
doorse en es	no	wt	no	wt	no	wt	no	wt	no	wt	no	wt	no	wt
Unstrat	55	675	4	20	-	-	7	136	13	292	1	14	-	-
Group 1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Group 2	9	338	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	_
Group 3	3	36	_	-	1	14	-	_	_	_	_	_	1	-
Group 4	2	72	-	-	-	_	-	-	-	1	_	-	-	_
Group 5	4	32	-	-	1	2	· · -	_	1	6	-	_	_	
Group 6	5	94	-	-	-	_	-	-	1	12	1	8	_	_
Group 7	3	32	1	36	1	16	5	34	1	2	_	_	_	_
Group 8	14	120	-	_	1	2	1	8	_	_	_	_	_	_
Group 9	2	20	_		_	-	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	_
Group 10	30	260	_	_100	5	70	3	20	_	1.00	_	_	_	1.10
Group 11	3	38	_	10.12 1.5	1	50	_		_	_	_	_	_	
Oven	9	246		_	1	_	1	5	_	_	_	_	1	50
Pit	4	26	_	_	-	_	_	-	_	_	_	7	-	50
Other	36	270	2	2	3	31	3	18	1	4	-	-	-	-
	M	МН		THET		EMW		LMT		GRE		MOD		
	no	wt	по	wt	по	wt	no	wt	no	wt	no	wt		11 211153
Unstrat	-	-	21	420	1	6	2	44	5	70	5	80		
Group 1	-	-	-	-	- 11	-	-	_	_	_	-	-		
Group 2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	_	-	_	-	_		
Group 3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	_	_	-		
Group 4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	_	-	-	-	_		
Group 5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	_	_	-	_			
Group 6	-	-	-	-	-	_	_	_	_					
Group 7	-	-	-	-	_	_	_	_	_	_				
Group 8	-	-	1	8	_	_	_	_						
Group 9	-	-	_	_	_	_	_					-		
Group 10	-	-	8	120		_								
					-		-			-	-	-		
Group 11	-	-	-	-	-	-	_							
Group 11 Oven	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-		
Group 11 Oven Pit	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-		

TABLE 1: pottery by group and fabric

List of Abbreviation BB Black Burnished Ware (unspecified) EMW Early Medieval Ware GRE Glazed Red Earthenware GW Grey Ware MED medieval MH Much Hadham LMT Late medieval/transitional MOD modern no number NVCC Nene Valley Colour Coat OW/WW Oxidized Ware/White Ware OXRCC Oxfordshire Red Colour Coat OXWCC Oxfordshire White Colour Coat STW Shell Tempered Ware (Romano-British THET Thetford-type Ware wt weight

Pottery (Table 1)

During assessment the pottery was divided into broad fabric types and quantified by sherd number, weight (g) and vessel type. All percentages given in this report were calculated by weight.

A total of 285 sherds (3.889kg) was recovered. Of the pottery 80.3% is Romano-British, 15.4% Late Saxon, 1.1% late medieval, 1.8% post-medieval and 1.4% modern.

Only thirteen sherds of pottery not of Romano-British or Late Saxon Periods were found; these comprised one Early Medieval Ware sherd, two Late Medieval Transitional sherds, five sherds of Glazed Red Earthenware and five modern sherds. All were unstratified.

Roman pottery

The most common type of Romano-British ceramic found were Grey Wares, which made up 72.2% of the Romano-British assemblage. This is not unusual as Grey Wares form the bulk of utilitarian domestic pottery on most sites. In total twelve jars, seven bowls and seven flanged bowls were recorded. In addition two unusual forms were noted, a Grey Ware mortarium and two miniature jars found within the topsoil. Grey Ware mortaria were only manufactured in Norfolk, and have been found at Burgh Castle (Johnson 1983, fig. 44, no.237) and at Caister-on-Sea (Darling with Gurney 1993). All the pottery indicates a date in the late 3rd-4th centuries. The Nene Valley Colour Coated vessel-forms recovered date to this period, as does the Shell-tempered Ware. Both Much Hadham Oxidised Red Ware and the Oxfordshire Red Colour Coat are thought not to have been traded in this part of the country until the 4th century.

Of the stratified Romano-British pottery, 35% was found within contexts also containing Late Saxon pottery. The Romano-British sherds from these later contexts were generally smaller in size and more abraded.

Late Saxon pottery

Of the Late Saxon pottery only 32% of the Thetford-type Ware was recovered from stratified contexts. The fabric is distinctive and differs from other Thetford-type Ware found in Norfolk in its unusual firing, which had left the pottery quite friable and orange in colour. It is of interest to note that no earlier Saxon pottery fabric was identified. This is in direct contrast to the finds from the excavations within the fort itself, which produced significant quantities of Ipswich-type Ware but no Thetford-type Ware.

Brick and Tile (Table 2)

A total of 185 fragments of brick and tile (9.699kg) was recovered. Of this weight 89% was Romano-British and 5.6% medieval, with 5.5% being post-medieval.

Of the 90 pieces (8.695kg) of Romano-British material the greatest individual proportion (41.8%) was floor tile, although fragments of *tegulae*, *imbrices* and flue tiles were also recovered. The quantity found within stratified contexts was small, with a noticeable increase associated with the Late Saxon Group 10 features. This may indicate re-use or dismantling of material robbed from the fort walls during this period, and complements the soil matrix itself which contained flecks of brick and tile.

Overall the small size of this assemblage may indicate a lack of buildings within the immediate area of the excavation. It is probable that the material came from structures located within or very close to the fort itself, or from its walls.

					RO	MAN					M	ED	POST	-MED	UN	IID
	Tegula		Im	brex	Flue		Floor		Unident							
	no	wt	no	wt	no	wt	no	wt	no	wt	no	wt	no	wt	no	wt
Unstrat	2	260	3	270	-	-	6	1537	26	1843	11	584	16	376	-	-
Group 1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Group 2	1	800	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Group 3	1	76	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Group 4	-	-	-	-	-	-	_	-	-	-	-	-	_	-	-	-
Group 5	1	114	-	-	-	-	3	392	1	16	-	-	-	-	-	-
Group 6	-	-	1	24	-	-	-	-	7	1558	-	-	5 -	- 10150	-	-
Group 7	1	152	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Group 8	1	50	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	692	-	-	-	-	-	-
Group 9	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Group 10	-	-	1	72	-	- 6	4	1013	.3	162	-	-	-	-	8	38
Group 11	-	-	-	-	1	202	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Oven	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pit	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other	1	56	3	102	-	-	2	662	7	238	-	-	-	-	2	10

TABLE 2: brick and tile by group

TABLE 3: list of coins

Small Find no.	description	source	date
2	House of Constantine	Follis	AD 335-40
	GLORIA EXERCITVS, 1 standard		
4	Constantine I	Follis	AD309
	SOLI INVICTO COMITI	Trier mint	
5	Gratian	AE3	AD 367-75
	GLORIA NOVI SAECVLI	Arles mint	110 501 15
6	House of Valentinian	AE3	AD 364-78
	GLORIA ROMANORVM	Lyons mint	110 501 70
13	Gratian	AE3	AD 367-75
	GLORIA NOVI SAECVLI	Arles mint	ND 507-75
14	Constantius II	Irregular AF2	AD 354 64
	FEL TEMP REPARATIO, falling horseman	megular ML2	AD 334-04
15	Probus	Antoninianus	AD 276 82
	LAETITIA AVGVST	rincommunus	AD 270-02
16	Magentius	AF2	AD 350 3
	GLORIA ROMANORVM	1102	AD 330-3
17	Crispus	Follis	AD 320 3
	BEATA TRANOVILLITAS	I vons mint	AD 320-3
18	Barbarous radiate	Lyons mint	AD 270.94
	SALVS AVG		AD 270-84
19	Claudius II	Antoninianus	AD 269 70
	Illegible	Antoninianus	AD 208-70
20	House of Constantine	Fallia	AD 216 20
	PROVIDENTIAE AVGG\CAESS	FOIIIS	AD 316-20
21	Henry V	Donny	AD 1412 00
		renny	AD 1413-22
31	House of Constantine	Eallia	10 224 0
	PROVIDENTIAE AVGG\CAESS	FOILIS	AD 324-8
38	House of Constantine	Fallia	AD 216 20
	VICTORIAF LAFTAF PRINC PERD	FOILIS	AD 316-20
41	Constantine I	Fallia	10.220.2
	BEATA TRANOVILLITAS	Follis	AD 320-3
46	Illegible	Trier mint	
	megiole	Dupondius/as	AD C2-C3

Coins (Tables 3 and 4)

The seventeen coins form an essentially late Roman group, restricted to issues from the most prolific periods of coin-loss in Roman Britain (Tables 4 and 5). The earliest is an *antoninianus* of Claudius II (AD 268-270). The latest Roman coins are those of the House of Valentinian (364-78). Percentages of the coins relating to the separate issue periods are shown in Table 5. Within the restricted chronological span represented, the most prolific period of loss is between 317-30. This overall chronological distribution is unusual as later Constantinian coins of Reece's Period 13b, and Valentinian coins of Period 15a, are normally more common on Romano-British sites than those of Period 13a (Reece 1987). This suggests that activity at this location was most intense during the 320s. This group is really too small for statistical analysis, however.

The coin assemblage from Green's excavations (Johnson 1983) comprised 1086 identifiable coins of which 98% were irregular copies of Constantinian coinage dated AD 330-48. Only eight were dated earlier, and eleven dated to the second half of the 4th century. They were largely assigned to sixteen hoards, with only a small number considered to be site finds.

By comparison, only one of the coins recovered from this excavation falls within the period AD 330-48; ten are earlier and five later. In recent years, however, large numbers of coins have been recovered from the extramural area by metal-detecting. Of these 1534 (including those from this excavation) are datable. Overall there is a peak of coin-loss in Reece's Period 13b (AD 330-48), with 57% of the recovered coins dating to this period. This figure might have been even higher if the illegible 4th-century coins could have been included (D. Gurney, *pers. comm.*).

Issue Period	по	%
10 (AD259-275)	1	6.7
11 (275-294)	2	13.3
12 (294-317)	1	6.7
13a (317-30)	5	33.3
13b (330-348)	1	6.7
14 (348-364)	2	13.3
15a (364-378)	3	20.0
2nd-3rd cent.	1	-
Post-Roman	1	-

TABLE 4: Roman coin-loss by issue period (Reece 1987)

TABLE 5: other finds

	BONE		FIF	RED	STO	ONE	LA	VA	IRON	LEAD	SLAG	COPPER	FLINT	
- Species Buches			CLAY									ALLOY	-	
	no	wt	no	wt	no	wt	no	wt	no	no	no	no	no	
Unstrat	2	120	-	-	2	405	8	40	12	5	1	27	5	
Group 1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Group 2	1	21	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	
Group 3	3	25	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Group 4	3	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Group 5	1	32	-	-	-	-	4	606	-	-	-		-	
Group 6	36	355		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Group 7	3	23	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Group 8	-	-	2	22	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	
Group 9	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Group 10	21	117	3	49	1	165	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	
Group 11	5	115	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	_	2	
Oven	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Pit	14	222	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Other	7	157	2	93	-	-	11	106		-	-	-	2	

Other Finds (Table 5)

Other finds from stratified contexts include animal bone, fired clay, stone (including lava) and flints. These are quantified in Table 3

Animal Bone

A total of 1.188kg of bone was recovered from 18 contexts. Bones of cattle, sheep/goat, horse and pig were identified. The condition of the bone was variable, much of it being of friable consistency. Traces of canid gnawing were seen on the ends of a small number of bones, but no butchery marks were identified. No detailed analysis was justified, on account of the collection's small size and variable condition.

Fired Clay

Fired clay weighing 0.164kg was recovered from stratified contexts. Of this only 71g came from phased contexts. Impressions of wattle were noted on four of these fragments.

Stone and Lava

Three pieces of worked stone were recovered. Two of these, a fragment of burnt granite and a piece of sandstone, were found during the machining process. A limestone fragment with a smooth, curved surface was found in a Late Saxon context. This was probably part of a quernstone. A further 23 fragments of lava quernstone (0.752kg) were recovered.

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Eight of these were found within the topsoil; the rest were found in stratified contexts which were either Romano-British in date or unphased.

Iron and Lead

A total of twelve iron artefacts was recovered during machining. Eleven of these were nails while the twelfth had a rectangular tapering shank with a hooked end. Five lead artefacts were also recovered from the topsoil. Four of these were pieces of metalworking debris, small irregular offcuts or spillage; the fifth was probably a weight, oval in shape with a flat base and curved upper surface. No date could be assigned to these objects, but they are probably late medieval.

Copper Alloy

A total of 28 copper alloy finds were recovered, all unstratified, of which seventeen were coins. Other artefacts, all post-Roman in date, included a fragment of metal-working debris, two buttons, a thimble, a horse buckle, a bronze disc, a fitting and four unidentified objects.

Flint

Seventeen worked flints were recovered during the excavation. Five flakes and one scraper came from the topsoil, while the remainder were residual finds from stratified contexts. Of these, five were blades and one was a horseshoe scraper, with the remainder flakes.

Environmental data

Sample collection was limited to small-scale bulk sampling on account of the dry, sandy and relatively clean nature of the fills. Generally they produced very little material, and had also been contaminated with more recent material via the numerous root channels and animal burrows which were evident in most of the features. No detailed examination was considered justified.

Conclusions

The small assemblage of Romano-British objects mainly dated to the late 3rd to late 4th centuries. No early Roman pottery fabrics were recovered. The Roman finds confirm the late date of the fort and the associated civilian activity in this area.

The discovery of substantial amounts of stratified Late Saxon Thetford-type Ware is important since the unusual firing it displays suggests that there may have been a previouslyunidentified kiln in the area. The Late Saxon ditches contained residual late Roman sherds (Nene Valley Colour Coat and Shell-tempered Ware) and Romano-British tile as well as contemporary Thetford-type ware.

Discussion

The unusual depth of overburden encountered was difficult to interpret. However the sandy nature of this material indicates that it was probably an accumulation of wind-blown deposits. Its depth also shows that modern agricultural activity could not have disturbed the archaeological features. Truncation of features from above was, however, witnessed during the excavation, and increasingly so towards the east end of the site. It was particularly noticeable in the case of Late Saxon ditch Group 10, 0.4m in depth at its west end but only 0.05m deep at its east end. This truncation had clearly not taken place recently, but had occurred some time after the Late Saxon period. The level of the Romano-British and Late Saxon topsoil thus was much lower than that today. The location of the Romano-British oven, which was identified at a level *c*.0.2m above any other features, gives some indication of the Romano-British ground level. The observation of such clay-built structures at a higher level than other features is not in itself unusual, and has been recorded in trial excavations at Snettisham, Norfolk (Flitcroft 1991).

The dating of the excavated features relies primarily on the pottery recovered from the site. The analysis of this assemblage has indicated two clear periods of activity, later Romano-British and Late Saxon.

No prehistoric features were located, although flints of Neolithic date were identified as residual artefacts in a few contexts. The earliest features on site (Group 1) produced no finds, and it is only possible to say that they pre-dated the later Romano-British period. They may have been prehistoric or early Romano-British in date. Their occurrence in the eastern part of the site is also of interest; the greater concentration of later features was further to the west, and it is possible that Romano-British disturbance in this latter area has destroyed some earlier features.

The majority of features were apparently of late 3rd- or 4th-century date. This is contemporary with the likely date of the foundation of the fort (Johnson 1983). Most features were ditches outlining enclosures and land parcels. The constantly-changing nature of these suggest that they defined areas of differing land usage rather than land ownership, since property boundaries might be expected to have remained more constant through time.

The features indicate a constantly changing landscape; since the majority appear to be later Romano-British, these changes took place over a relatively short period of time. The general trend appears to have been from large area enclosures towards smaller, less well-defined plots which seem to have gradually become more concentrated in the western part of the site. There was little evidence for structures; this, along with the paucity of domestic waste, suggests that these enclosures were away from the centre of settlement and probably agricultural. The one possible building identified gave no clue as its function. However its location within what appears to be primarily agricultural landscape suggests that it was not a domestic habitation but a barn or shed. It was not possible to establish with which enclosure this possible structure was associated.

The precise relationship between the enclosures and the fort was unclear. The artefactual dating of the features and their common alignment with the fort shows that they were probably contemporary. It is plausible to suggest that the excavation revealed enclosures associated with food production, either grain or animal products, supplying either the fort or *vicus* or both. The fort itself must either have imported its supplies along the river or cultivated the land on the higher ground around it.

Many of these details contrast with the results of the 1974 and 1977 excavations to the west of the fort at Brancaster (Hinchliffe 1985). Here the evidence also took the form of a complex network of ditches which divided the area into a series of enclosures with associated trackways. These were interpreted as possible house-plots of a settlement area which was originally carefully planned. They were not on the same alignment as the fort, but may have been associated originally with an earlier fort. In contrast the excavation at Burgh Castle suggests that the boundary ditches were not necessarily part of a planned layout, but rather were the result of a gradual expansion away from the immediate area of the fort itself. Their interpretation as field boundaries within an agricultural environment, rather than as house plots, is supported by the lack of finds from within the ditches, again a direct contrast with the excavations at Brancaster. The fort and the field system at Burgh Castle are on a similar alignment, and can therefore be seen as contemporary features in the landscape.

Discussion continues regarding the function of the Saxon Shore forts, and their effectiveness as a coastal defensive system. Recently it has been suggested that their two main functions may have been the supply of stores and materials and the transportation of troops (Cotterill 1993).

That the forts may have acted as a collection and shipment centre for supplies has been suggested for Burgh Castle on the evidence of the bone and antler assemblages from Green's excavations. Grant (Johnson 1983) suggested that the manufacture of bone and antler items may have provided a source of objects to trade. The present excavations can cast no light on these hypotheses.

The excavation itself produced no evidence of Early or Middle Saxon activity. This was perhaps somewhat surprising considering the quantity of metal-detected artefacts and pottery of this period recovered from around the fort and within the fort walls.

The final period of activity revealed by the excavation dated to the Late Saxon period. The earliest Late Saxon phase was represented by a single feature which did not respect the alignment of earlier features. This single ditch may have served as a boundary ditch and, like the Romano-British features, contained little domestic refuse. The second phase of activity belonging to this period re-established the former alignment of features on the site. This is perhaps not surprising in view of the standing remains of the fort c.300m away. No connection could be made with the founding of the church, or with the possibility that Burgh was Bede's *Cnobheresburg*.

The lack of any evidence from the Early Saxon period suggests that occupation of this period - if indeed there was any - may have been concentrated within and immediately around the fort. The many finds previously recovered by metal-detecting could easily have been dispersed by agricultural activities. The Late Saxon evidence, though fairly sparse, was significant in its location close to the church (no evidence relating to this period was found by Green) and may indicate either a hiatus of activity between the Early and Late Saxon periods or a movement of activity away from the fort towards the location of the church.

Conclusions

Most of the excavated features proved to be contemporary with the occupation of the Saxon Shore fort. There was no sign of any large or semi-formalised vicus in this area outside the fort, however. Indeed the evidence shows a landscape dedicated to agriculture and constantly changing, probably in response to the changing needs of the local community.

Post-Roman activity appears to have been limited to the Late Saxon period, when this area was once again enclosed agricultural land. No evidence was recovered linking the excavated area to the postulated early Christian settlement at Burgh Castle, nor was there any evidence associated with the foundation of the church in its present position. However the survival of subsoil features - which was primarily due to protection by the unusual depth of overburden - bodes well for the preservation of archaeology elsewhere in the area, particularly between the Church Loke excavation site and the fort. The depth of the topsoil explains why these features may not be seen as cropmarks.

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