

Report 2859



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**Archaeological Watching Brief at
20 Roman Way, Caister-on-Sea, Norfolk**

ENF127649



Prepared for
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Location:	20 Roman Way, Caister-on-Sea
District:	Great Yarmouth
Planning Ref.:	06/11/030/F
Grid Ref.:	TG 5182 1235
HER No.:	ENF 127649
OASIS Ref.:	121129
Client:	Mrs K. Bowden
Dates of Fieldwork:	20 September 2011

Summary

An archaeological watching brief was conducted for Carlton Builders East Anglia Limited on behalf of Mrs Bowden; ahead of the construction of a new extension and conservatory at. 20 Roman Way, Caister-on-Sea, Norfolk.

The work yielded a few pieces of Roman pottery, ceramic building material, some disarticulated animal bone fragments and a modern rubbish pit.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken on the excavation of footings for a new conservatory and extension to the rear of the property at 20 Roman Way, Caister-on-Sea. The development site is located within a housing estate immediately east of Caister Roman Fort. The property lies towards the centre of Roman Way in the corner of the north-south road as it turns east-west (Fig. 1).

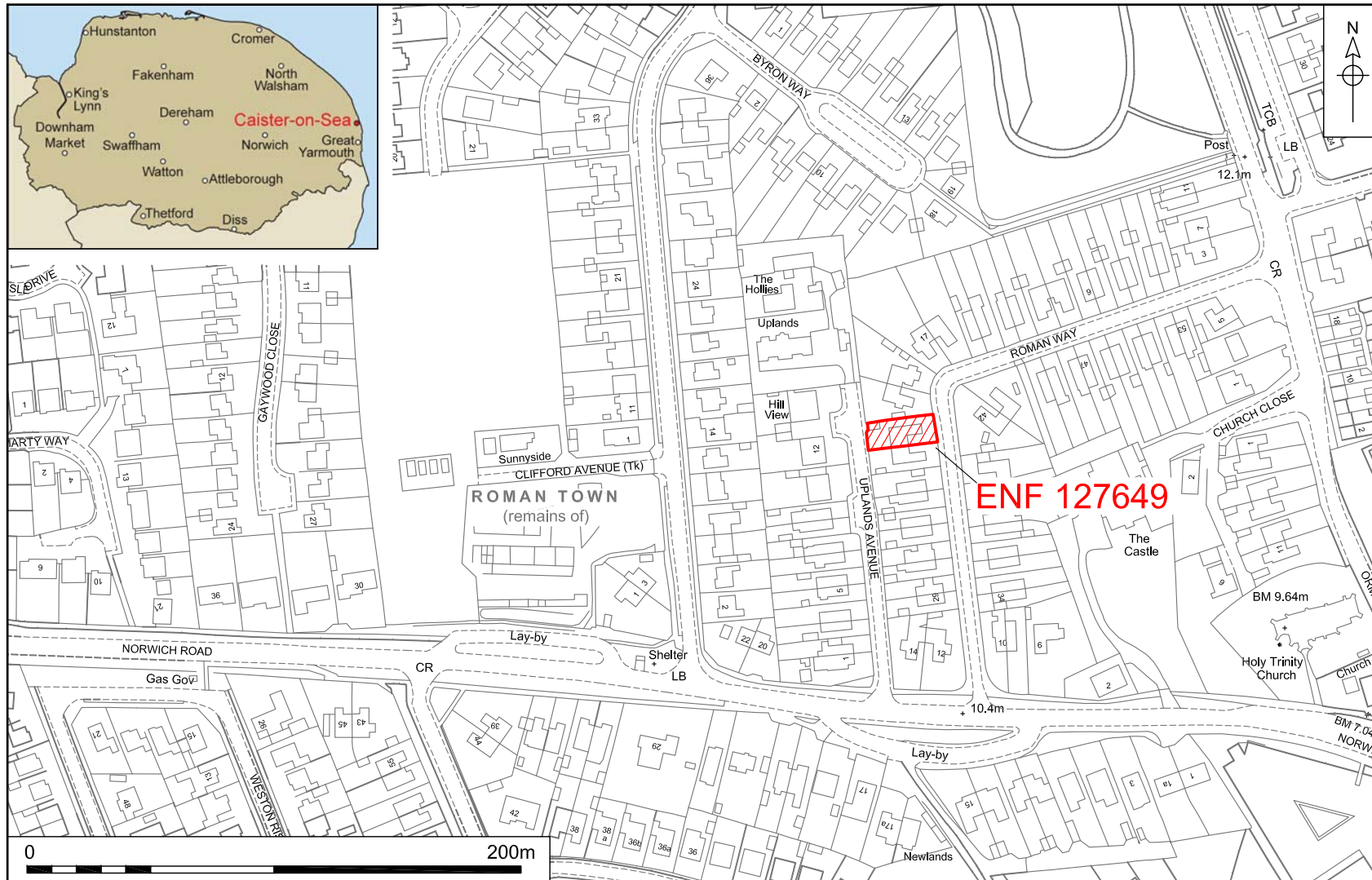
This work was undertaken to fulfil a planning condition set by Great Yarmouth Borough Council (Ref. 06/11/0301F) and a Brief issued by Norfolk Historic Environment Service (Ref. CNF43550). The work was conducted in accordance with a Project Design and Method Statement prepared by NPS Archaeology (Ref. NAU/BAU2859/NP). This work was commissioned by Carlton Builders (East Anglia) Limited and funded by Mrs Bowden.

This programme of 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 Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment* (Department for Communities and Local Government 2010). The results will enable decisions to be made by the Local Planning Authority about the treatment of any archaeological remains found.

The site archive is currently held by NPS Archaeology and on completion of the project will be deposited with the Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service (NMAAS), following the relevant policies on archiving standards.

2.0 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

Topsoil ([1]) on the site consisted of 0.35m of very compacted mid-grey silty-sand with the occasional flint and brick pieces with heavy root disturbance, which isn't surprising considering that this site is a garden at the rear of the property. The subsoil ([2]) was very firmly compacted pale brown and pale grey mixed chalky



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Figure 1. Site location. Scale 1:2500

clay. It contains large chalk pieces and the occasional nodules of flint.

The site lies on a bedrock of sand and gravel belonging to the Crag group with superficial deposits belonging to the Lowestoft formation, consisting of an extensive sheet of chalky till, together with outwash sands, gravels, silts and clays. The till is characterised by its chalk and flint content (<http://www.bgs.ac.uk>).

The site lies at around 16.50m OD and appears to be relatively well drained.

3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In 2008 NPS Archaeology (formerly NAU Archaeology) conducted a series of archaeological investigations (including evaluation and excavation) at Uplands, on Uplands Avenue, Caister-on-Sea, approximately 200m to the north-west of the current site at 20 Roman Way (Fig. 1). These investigations shed further light on the development of the nearby Caister Roman Fort, revealing an early road surface, previously unrecorded Late Roman/Middle Saxon boundaries and two (disturbed) Middle Saxon burials (Crawley 2011).

Caister-on-Sea has a rich archaeological and historical background and the following is an extract from Crawley's report.

Caister began life as a harbour regulating sea trade on the coastline probably beginning in the late 2nd–3rd centuries, perhaps associated initially with the *Classis Britannica* supply system. In its style the fort bears a strong resemblance to Brancaster (Norfolk) and Reculver (Kent) whose construction also dates from a period of naval and general military reorganisation. It has been argued that Caister was a civilian port, but this seems unlikely on a number of grounds (Darling with Gurney 1993, 240).

Prehistoric pottery has been recovered from the vicinity of the fort. Three Bronze Age ring-ditches have also been identified in the vicinity. In terms of later prehistory there are a number of Iron Age pottery sherds from the area of the fort. There is also some evidence for earlier Romano-British activity consisting of a few coins and some early Roman pottery, including earlier Samian styles (NHER 8675).

Construction of the fort does not seem to have begun much before the late 2nd century and it remained in use until sometime in the final third of the 4th century (Darling with Gurney 1993, 240–2). The defences seem to have been relatively simple, consisting of a wall-topped rampart with corner turrets and two ditches to the exterior. In total an area of 3.5 hectares was enclosed. Dumping of refuse on the rampart began soon after the fort's construction, although the process behind this is not well understood (Darling with Gurney 1993, 243). Only two buildings of Roman date have been uncovered during archaeological investigations of the interior. These formed a quadrangle around parts of the southern and eastern sides of a courtyard. Flue tile fragments suggest that some of the buildings were heated. Outside the buildings a possible corn drying kiln and a water tank are the only other excavated structures.

Twelve large coin hoards have been found within the fort's interior, all dating from the 4th century (Darling with Gurney 1993, 62–4). Much of the artefact assemblage is paralleled on military sites of the later 2nd and 3rd

centuries; some is suggestive of occupation by a cavalry unit. Women and children were present within this institution, if not during the 3rd century, then certainly in the 4th century. The fort appears to have become disused in the late 4th century AD.

Middle Saxon coinage and other finds strongly suggest high-status occupation within the fort and in its vicinity. It has been postulated that Caister was *Cnobheresburgh*, the site of Fursa's monastery described by Bede, although an equally strong case can be made for Burgh Castle. A large Middle to Late Saxon cemetery was excavated by Green immediately exterior to the southern defences (Darling with Gurney 1993, 44–61). Two ephemeral structures of Middle Saxon date were also discovered in the interior of the fort in close proximity to the Roman buildings (Darling with Gurney 1993, 37).

The fort wall appears to have stood in part at least until the time of Spelman (1564–1641), but by 1726–7 no trace of the wall remained visible (Darling with Gurney 1993, 1).

4.0 METHODOLOGY

The objective of this watching brief was to mitigate the impact of the development on any archaeological deposits present within the development area.

The Brief required that a provision be made for monitoring the development, including, where appropriate, all areas of below-ground disturbance, including excavations, foundation trenches, service trenches, drains and soakaways.

Machine excavations were carried out with a tracked hydraulic 360° mini-digger excavator equipped with a toothed bucket and operated under constant archaeological supervision.

Spoil, exposed surfaces and features were scanned with a metal-detector. All metal-detected and hand-collected finds, other than those which were obviously modern, were retained for inspection.

No environmental samples were taken as no suitable deposits were encountered.

All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using NPS Archaeology pro forma. Trench locations, plans and sections were recorded at appropriate scales. Colour, monochrome and digital photographs were taken of all relevant features and deposits where appropriate.

Site conditions were good, with the work taking place in fine weather.

5.0 RESULTS

Two interconnecting trenches were dug in the garden and in the area of a demolished garage for the new conservatory and extension (Fig. 2).

These trenches measured approximately 0.60m wide and 0.80m deep. The only deposits disturbed during these excavations were the topsoil ([1]) and the subsoil ([2]). The subsoil especially was very hard and compacted and contained a large amount of clay - as evident from the shiny nature of the sides of the sections revealed (Plates 1-3). Even with a mini-digger equipped with a toothed bucket, the work was slow and hard going.



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Figure 2. Plan of excavation. Scale 1:150

A few fragments of animal bone, and what appeared to be a piece of worked flint was recovered from this subsoil layer.

No archaeological features or deposits were encountered during these excavations; however the middle baulk of the new extension had to be levelled slightly to remove the remains of a concrete pad where the garage had once stood. Directly underneath this slab a number of Roman pottery sherds and pieces of ceramic building material were found, although no feature relating to these finds could be identified (see Figure 2 for location).



Plate 1. End of foundation trench for the new conservatory, looking east



Plate 2. West facing section of foundation trench for new conservatory

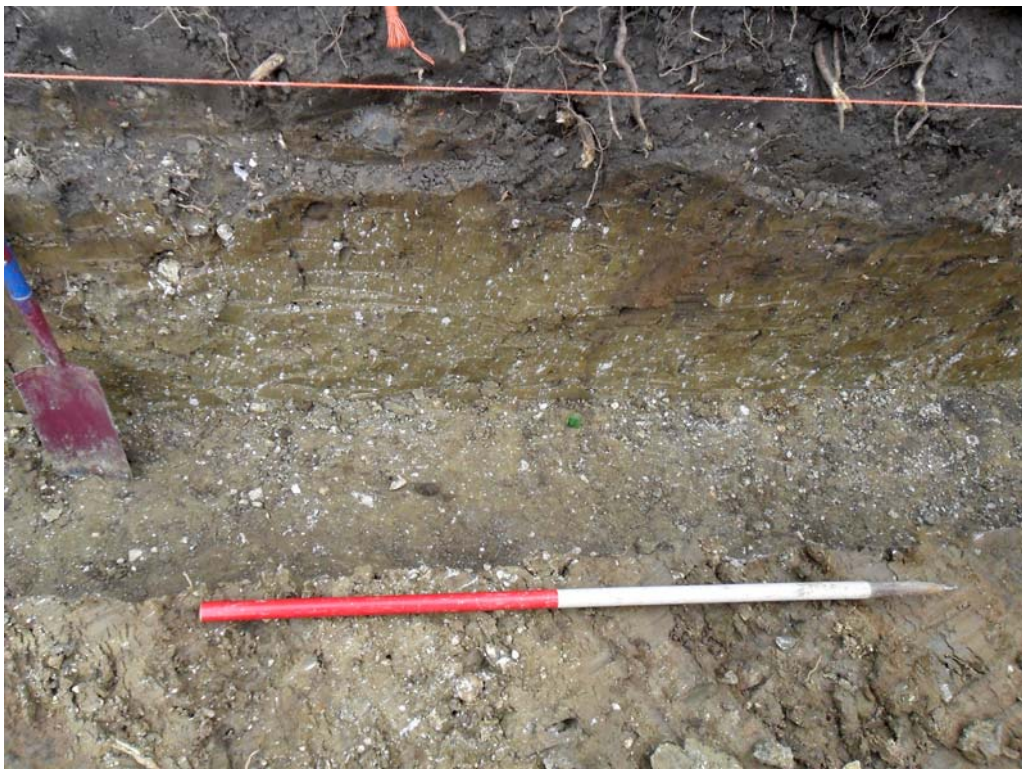


Plate 3. South facing section of foundation trench for new extension

A soakaway measuring 1.30m x 1.30m and 1.00m deep was excavated at the rear of the property (Fig. 2).

One pit-like feature ([3]) was disturbed during the excavation (Plate 4). The pit contained fill [4] and a number of modern glass jars and broken crockery, most of which were discarded on site. A complete dish was retained for identification.



Plate 4. West facing section of new soakaway, showing pit [3]

6.0 THE FINDS

by Lucy Talbot

The finds were processed and recorded by count and weight, and an Excel spreadsheet was produced outlining broad dating. Each material type has been considered separately and is described below within those categories in date order. A list of finds in context order can be found in Appendix 2a.

6.1 Pottery

Five sherds of Roman pottery and a complete modern dish, weighing 442g were collected from two contexts. The assemblage was recorded by count and weight and fabrics and forms identified.

6.1.1 Roman Pottery

by Andrew Peachey

Watching brief excavations recovered a total of 13 sherds (206g) of Roman pottery from subsoil [2] in a slightly abraded condition Appendix 3). The Roman sherds (Table 1) do not form a homogeneous group and include central Gaulish samian ware dating to the second half of the 2nd century AD and a coarseware dish with a bead and flange rim that dates to the late 3rd to 4th century AD.

6.1.1.1 Methodology

The pottery was quantified by sherd count, weight and R.EVE. Fabrics were examined at x20 magnification and assigned a code from the National Roman Fabric Reference Collection (Tomber and Dore 1998), or assigned an alphanumeric code based on this system. Samian forms reference Webster (1996). All data was entered into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet that will be deposited as part of the archive.

6.1.1.2 Fabric Descriptions

LEZ SA2 Lezoux samian ware 2 (Tomber and Dore 1998, 32)

LNV CC Lower Nene Valley colour-coated ware (Tomber and Dore 1998, 118)

COL BB2 Colchester black-burnished ware 2 (Tomber and Dore 1998, 131), may also include black-burnished wares produced in central Norfolk that cannot be differentiated.

GRS1 Sandy grey ware. A moderate to hard mid to dark grey fabric with inclusions of common quartz (0.1-0.5mm, occasionally larger), sparse fine mica, sparse iron rich inclusions (<0.5mm) and occasional flint (<2.5mm). The ubiquitous type of Romano-British sandy grey ware produced throughout the region.

BSW1 Black-surfaced/Romanizing grey wares. Black/dark grey surfaces fading to a red-brown core. Inclusions comprise common moderately-sorted quartz (0.1-0.5mm), sparse iron rich grains (<1.5mm) and occasional flint (<5mm). A local product.

Fabric Type	Sherd Count	Weight (g)	R.EVE
LEZ SA2	1	9	0.00
LNV CC	1	8	0.00
COL BB2	2	61	0.00
GRS1	3	37	0.00
BSW1	6	91	0.10
<i>Total</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>206</i>	<i>0.1</i>

Table 1: Quantification of Roman fabric types

6.1.1.3 Commentary

The LEZ SA2 sherd comprises a burnt, mould-decorated body sherd, probably from a Dr.37 bowl. The decoration comprises large, square, double-bordered ovolo with, to the right, a corded tongue that widens towards the tip and is flat-ended. The ovolo is above a large, flat, bead row border, which is above a free-style design that includes the partial figure of a lion. These types of decoration are characteristic of the work of Doeccus I of Lezoux, dated to c.AD160-190 (Stanfield and Simpson 1958, 251 and pl.148.21). A possible fragment of a bowl by Doeccus I has previously been recorded at Caister-on-Sea (Dickinson 1993, 157).

In contrast to the date of the samian ware, the BSW1 dish with a bead and flange rim dates to the late 3rd to 4th centuries AD. This type of dish is a common occurrence in late Roman deposits at Caister-in-Sea (Darling and Gurney 1993, 188: fig.154.564-5). The remaining Roman pottery a body sherd of LNV CC probably from a beaker, basal sherds of a COL BB2 dish with a chamfered base, and body sherds of several GRS1 vessels with slightly varying fabrics. Overall, the

fabrics and forms in this small group are consistent with Roman pottery previously recorded at Caister-on Sea, predominantly later 2nd to 4th century AD (Darling and Gurney 1996, 216-8).

6.1.2 Modern Pottery

Modern pit fill [4] produced a complete, shallow, straight-sided dish. Undamaged, it is impossible to identify the fabric, although both the inner and outer surfaces are covered in a brown, buff and pale orange, salt-type glaze.

6.2 Ceramic Building Material

The assemblage was recorded by count and weight.

Subsoil [2] produced four pieces of Roman Ceramic Building Material (CBM) weighing 2953g. The assemblage consists of three fragments of Tegula a type of flat roof tile with upright lip and one slightly thicker piece, possible diagnostic of a bonding tile. All have coarse inclusions of grog and ferrous pellets and are of 1st- to 4th-century AD date.

6.3 Flint

A single, fresh, dark grey, primary flake, with some possible retouching down one side was collected from the subsoil (2), weighing 22. and is likely to have derived from a river cobble.

6.4 Faunal Remains

6.4.1 Methodology

The assessment was carried out following a modified version of guidelines by English Heritage (Davis 1992). All of the bone was examined to determine range of species and elements present. A note was also made of butchering or other modifications. When possible a record was made of age and any other relevant information, such as pathologies. Counts and weights were noted for each context. As this is a very small assemblage from one context, the information was input directly into a table in this report (Appendix 4).

6.4.2 The assemblage

A total of 881g of faunal remains, consisting of twenty-six pieces were collected. The remains are in good condition, although they are fragmented from butchering and wear. There is some variation in the colour and condition of the bones in this one fill. Some remains are showing a much darker colour suggesting they have lain in richer and more organic soils than other bones in the same fill; some pieces are also more worn. The variation in colour and wear would suggest that at least some of the bone has been disturbed from its original place of deposition. The bone was found in subsoil, in association with Roman ceramics.

The vast majority of the remains are from cattle, with the butchered remains of adult and juvenile bones, including metapodial, femur, humerus, tibia, mandible and rib fragments. The elements present, particularly the number and range of metapodials, suggest a minimum number of three individuals - one adult and two juveniles.

Butchering was seen throughout in the form of chops caused by the initial dismemberment of the animal and division of the carcass through to cuts for removal of the meat.

6.4.3 Conclusions

The bones in this assemblage represent butchering and food waste predominately from a range of cattle, but also of sheep. The remains include the waste from primary butchering and the bones from good quality cuts of meat. The assemblage is small and the remains are likely to have been disturbed from their original place of disposal hampering any further conclusions.

The assemblage is similar to other small assemblages locally in that it consists of two of the main domestic food animals – cattle and sheep. The dominance of cattle is common in most periods as these animals provided the greatest quantities of meat and had secondary uses for traction, milk, hides and other by-products. The dominance of cattle remains was also seen in an excavated assemblage from nearby Caister First School (Curl 2009).

7.0 CONCLUSIONS

The finds from these works would appear to form a typical albeit small assemblage from Roman Caister from close the site of Caister Roman Fort.

No archaeological features were encountered however this may be because the footings for the conservatory and extension at 20 Roman Way were not deep enough to disturb any archaeological remains. (One modern feature was present.)

The Roman pottery from the site was found underneath a concrete pad for the former garage and all other finds were recovered during the excavation of the footings and came from the same subsoil layer [2]. It is feasible that the finds may not be in a primary context and may be residual, possibly deriving from features located elsewhere that had been disturbed during the construction of the garage or the property itself.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Mrs Bowden for funding the work and Carlton Builders (East Anglia) Limited who carried out the groundworks on site.

The author would also like to thank Pete Crawley for his earlier work at Uplands, Caister-on-Sea and all those that were involved in that project.

The project was managed by Nigel Page. Fieldwork at 20 Roman Way was undertaken by the author.

The finds were washed and recorded by Lucy Talbot who also reported on the modern pottery, ceramic building material and flint. The Roman pottery was analysed by Andrew Peachey and the faunal remains by Julie Curl.

The figures were produced by David Dobson and Jayne Bown edited the report.

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Appendix 1a: Context Summary

Context	Category	Cut Type	Fill Of	Description	Period
1	Deposit			Topsoil	Modern
2	Deposit			Subsoil	Unknown
3	Cut			Pit	Modern
4	Deposit		[3]	Fill of Pit	Modern

Appendix 1b: OASIS Context Summary

Period	Material	Total
Modern	Pit	1

Appendix 2a: Finds by Context

Context	Material	Qty	Wt	Period	Notes
2	Pottery	13	206g	Roman	
2	Ceramic Building Material	3	140g	Roman	Tegula frags
2	Ceramic Building Material	1	66g	Roman	? Bonding tile frag
2	Animal Bone	26	881g	Unknown	
4	Pottery	1	236g	Modern	

Appendix 2b: OASIS Finds Summary

Period	Material	Total
Roman	Ceramic Building Material	4
	Pottery	13
Modern	Pottery	1
Unknown	Animal Bone	26

Appendix 3: Roman Pottery

Context	Desc	Fabric	Vessel Type	Form Comparison	d	R.EVE	Vessel Date	Comments
2	Subsoil	BSW1	Dish	Caister 564-565 (Darling and Gurney 1993, 188: fig.154)	11	0.1	Late 3rd-4th C AD bead and flange rim dish	
2	Subsoil	LEZ SA2	Bowl	?Dr.37	\	\	c.AD160-190	burnt, mould-decorated body sherd with ovolo, border and partial lion in free-style design. Ovolo is large square, double-bordered type with, to the right, a corded tongue that widens towards the top and is flat ended. The border is a large, flat bead row. Typical of work of Doeccus I of Lezoux (Stanfield and Simpson 1958, 251 and pl.148.21).

Appendix 4: Faunal Remains

Context	Ctxt Qty	Ctxt Weight	Species	Comments
2	26	881	Cattle	X15 adult and juvenile metapodials, tibia, femur, humerus, ribs and jaw
			Sheep/goat	X1, chopped and cut tibia
			Mammal	X10