

NAU Archaeology

Report No. 1098

**An Archaeological Watching Brief at Caister-On-Sea,
Norfolk**

HER 8675 CBY

Michael J Boyle, March 2006

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BAU 1142

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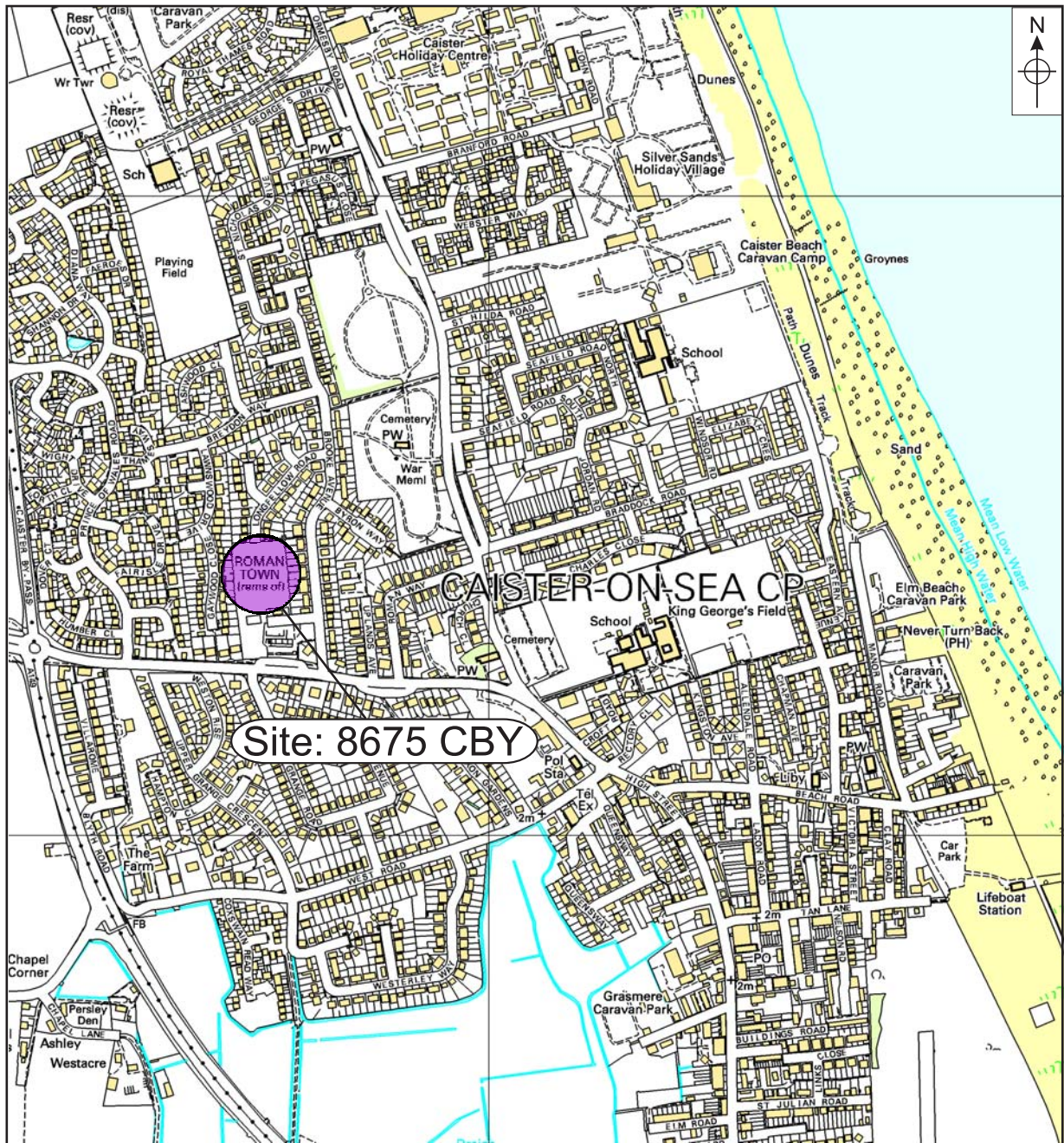
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0 1000m or 1km

Figure 1. Site location. Scale 1:10,000

Local Authority No.100019340

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Location: Caister-on-Sea Roman Fort, Caister-on-Sea, Norfolk
District: Great Yarmouth
Grid Ref: TG 5165 1235
HER No.: 8675 CBY
SAM No.: 21415
Date of fieldwork: 21st July 2005

Summary

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken at Caister-on-Sea Roman fort, in order to monitor and record any archaeological remains uncovered during groundworks associated with the installation of two bicycle stands adjacent to the south-eastern entrance of the site.

No archaeological remains or deposits were observed during the watching brief.

1.0 Introduction

(Figs 1 and 2)

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Norfolk Archaeological Unit (NAU) at Caister-on-Sea Roman fort, Norfolk in order to monitor groundworks associated with the installation of two 'Sheffield' type cycle stands adjacent to the south-east entrance to the site (Fig. 2). The objective of this watching brief was to record any archaeological evidence revealed during these works.

This report was commissioned and funded by Great Yarmouth Borough Council to meet the requirements of the Scheduled Ancient Monument Consent issued by English Heritage (Phillip Walker, 11 February 2005).

The Scheduled Ancient Monument Consent specified that a watching brief was required; observed by an archaeologist in constant attendance during the groundworks.

The ground works consisted of the excavation of four small trenches (Fig. 3) that were to be filled with concrete in order to provide bases for the new cycle stands. The trenches measured 0.25m square and were 0.35m in depth, all were excavated by hand and were arranged to form four corners of a rectangle measuring 1.54m north-to-south and 1.04m east-to-west.

The cycle stands themselves were 'U' shaped and constructed from 50mm external diameter steel tube with a 150mm by 150mm by 6mm plate welded to their ends to act as anchors when inserted into their concrete bases.

The Roman defended site at Caister-on-Sea is an early coastal fort (Gurney 1996, 30-32), probably contemporary with Reculver and Brancaster, both of which appear in the *Notitia Dignitatum* as forts of the Saxon shore. The initial foundation of these sites may be related more to a reorganisation of both army and naval forces than purely coastal defence.

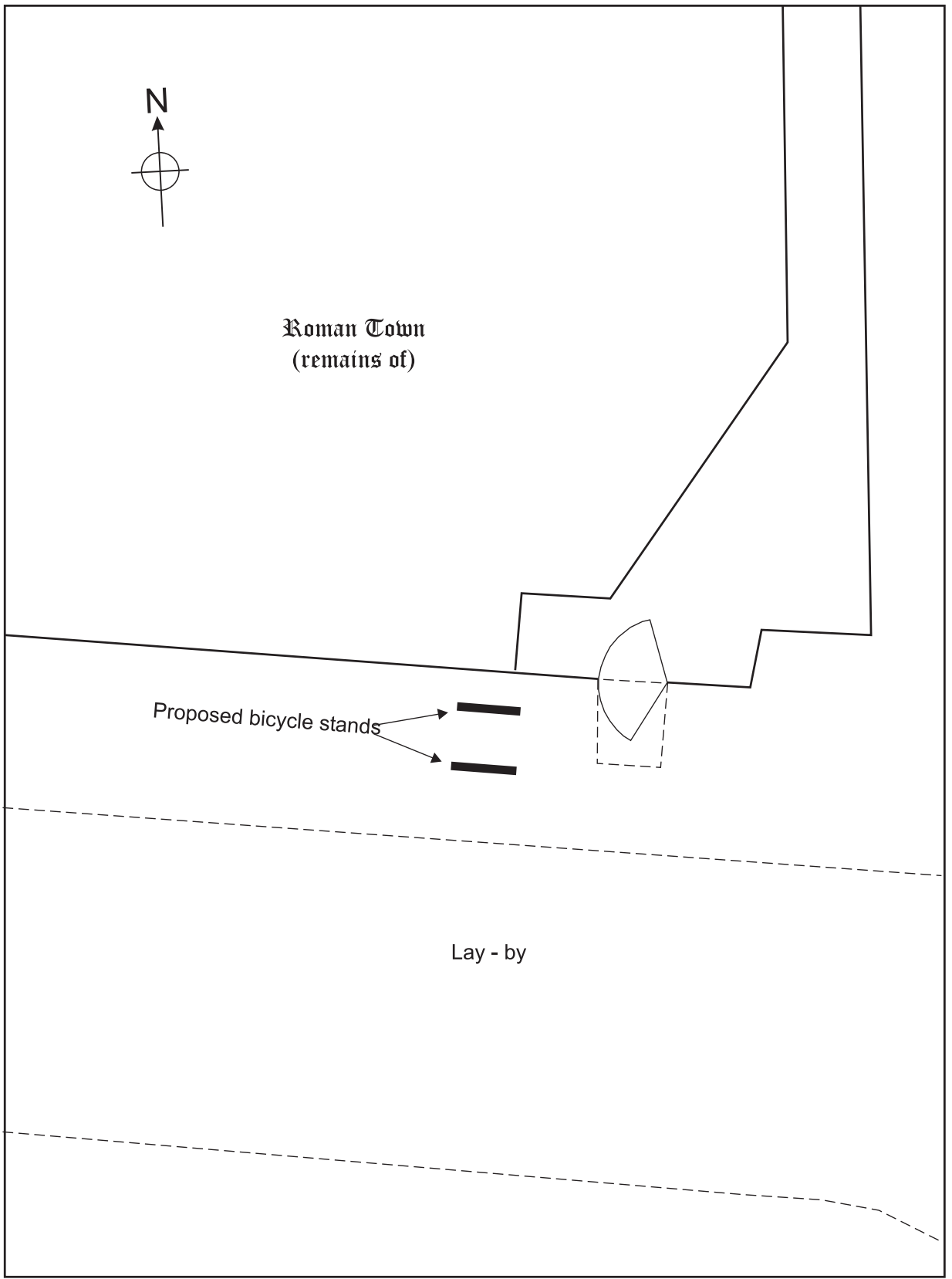


Figure 2. Location of proposed bicycle stands. Scale 1:100

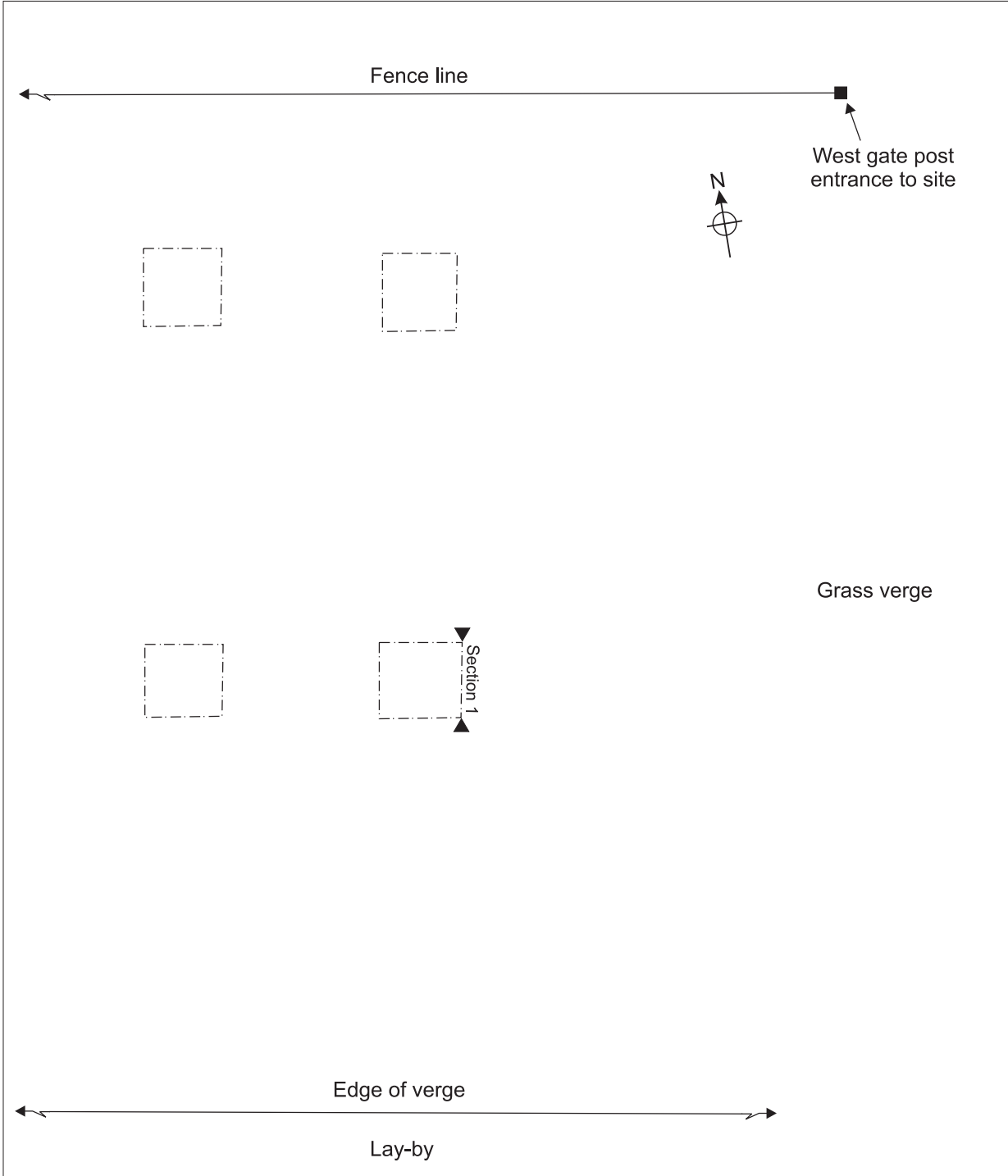


Figure 3. Trench location. Scale 1:20

The fort at Caister-on-sea appears to have been built on unoccupied ground in the early 3rd century on the south-east corner of the island of Flegg, that during the Roman period overlooked a wide estuary (Gurney 2005, 28-29). Although there was a mid 1st century settlement to the west, there is sparse evidence to suggest contemporary civilian occupation in the area. The design of the fort is of the earlier Roman type, with a defensive wall backed by an earthen rampart. There were probably internal towers at the corners, but no bastions. The wall enclosed an almost square area of approximately 8.75 acres (3.54ha), and this was surrounded by at least two ditches, the whole site covering some 12 acres (Darling 1993).

All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using NAU *pro forma* sheets. Plans and sections were recorded at appropriate scales and colour and monochrome photographs were taken of all relevant features and deposits.

The Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service currently hold the site archive, in accordance with the relevant policy on archiving standards.

Site conditions were good. Access and parking were by way of a lay-by adjacent to the south of the site and to the north of the A1064 road. The weather was warm and sunny.

2.0 Observations

(Figs 3 and 4)

All four of the trenches displayed a similar sequence of deposits in section and in plan. The upper deposit was a mid to dark brownish grey loam topsoil and had an average depth of 0.28m. This deposit overlay a pale to mid brown sandy silt subsoil that contained an occasional small rounded flint pebbles. The subsoil was observed to extend to the base of the trenches that was at a depth of 0.35m.

3.0 Conclusions

The four trenches observed during this watching brief were located on a slightly raised bank that formed a grass verge between the A1064 lay-by to the south and the presently exposed excavated area of the fort to the north. The trenches were relatively shallow (0.35m), and it is therefore likely that the absence of any archaeological deposits or artefacts within the trenches was due to their location on comparatively recently made-up ground. The limited depth and scope of the excavations examined during this watching brief precluded the examination of any undisturbed ancient deposits.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to Great Yarmouth Borough Council who commissioned this work. The author carried out the fieldwork. The Norfolk Historic Environment information was

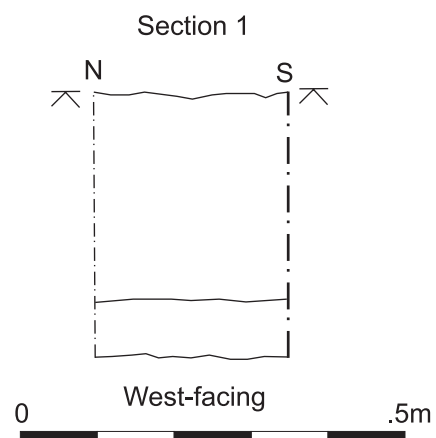


Figure 4. Section of south-eastern bicycle stand. Scale 1:10

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