

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION REPORT

Elveden Estate coin hoard (2005 T434) ELV 065

A REPORT ON THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION, 2005



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Field Team
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© February 2006

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Acknowledgements

This excavation was funded by the Portable Antiquities Scheme and was carried out by a number of archaeological staff, (Phil Camps, John Craven and David Gill from the Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service, Field Team. A preliminary study of the finds was carried out by Judith Plouviez.

Thanks go to Mr Paul. T. Flack for his prompt reporting of the coin hoard and to the Elveden Estate for allowing the excavation upon their land.

Summary

Following the discovery of a Roman bronze coin hoard by Mr Paul. T. Flack, on arable land at Elveden, a small excavation centered on the findspot recovered a total of 621 coins, deposited during or after the reign of Allectus (AD293-296). The coins had been placed in a pottery vessel, and buried upon the edge of a ditch, with the site possibly being marked by a few large flints.

SMR information

Planning application no.	N/A
Date of fieldwork:	11 th - 12 th October 2005
Grid Reference:	TL 8130 7993
Funding body:	Portable Antiquities Scheme

1. Introduction

On the 11th October 2005 Mr Paul. T. Flack reported his discovery of a Roman coin hoard whilst metal detecting on farmland owned by Elveden Estates, Elveden (Fig. 1), to the Suffolk Archaeological Service. A small archaeological excavation of the findspot was subsequently carried out by Phil Camps, John Craven and David Gill of the Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service Field Team on the 11 and 12th October. The work was funded by the Portable Antiquities Scheme.

Part of the field had recently been evaluated by the Norfolk Archaeological Unit as it lay on the proposed new route for the A11 (ELV 059 – report in preparation) and evidence of Roman activity had been identified near to the hoard find spot (C Pendleton *pers comm*).

2. Methodology and Results

The find spot was located in the middle of an arable land and at the time was covered in stubble. Mr Flack, who had been systematically detecting the field, had, after his initial signal, excavated a small hole in the ploughsoil, c.0.15m wide and c.0.2m deep, and recovered about 30 coins. Leaving further coins still visible *in situ* he then contacted the archaeology service.

The archaeological excavation consisted of a 2m² sondage, 0001. This was excavated by hand and was centred upon the find spot. The whole trench was initially excavated to a depth of c.0.25m, removing the initial hole excavated by Mr Flack, whereupon the top of a broad spread of coins and scattered pieces of pottery could be seen in the base of the ploughsoil. Scattered finds found in the ploughsoil, generally from just above the subsoil, were numbered as 0002.

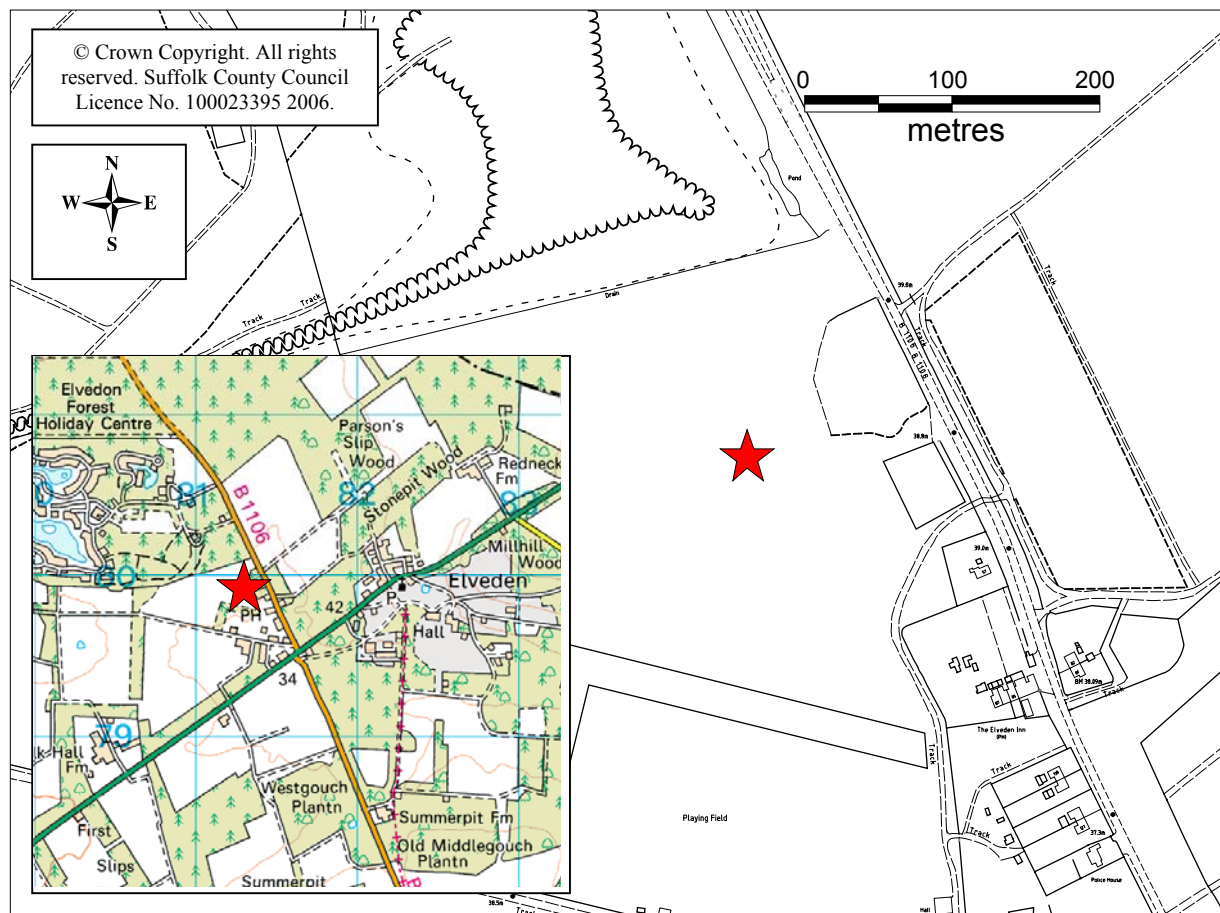


Figure 1. Site location plan

The trench was then lowered to a depth of 0.35m around the central coin hoard, and was photographed (Fig. 2). At this level the natural sand/gravel subsoil was visible in between deep modern ploughlines. These were aligned north-south and reached a depth of 0.42m. The coin hoard itself lay above the surviving subsoil surface, at a depth of 0.25m-0.35m and was situated between two of these deep ploughlines, but still within the base of an older ploughsoil. In the eastern part of the trench the ploughlines appeared to be cutting across a possible feature.



Figure 2. Coin hoard, facing north-west, with trench excavated to a depth of 0.35m.



Figure 3. Dense cluster of coins, prior to final excavation and removal

At this point it could be seen that the dense scatter of coins, 0004, was broadly surrounded by fragments of a pottery vessel, 0003. Further cleaning of the hoard identified the base of the vessel, 0005, which contained coins still *in situ*, and dense clusters of coins still closely associated with pottery sherds (Fig. 3). The trench was then planned (Fig. 4), photographed, and removed, coin by coin.

With the final removal of the coins, the trench was excavated to undisturbed subsoil, and a feature was clearly visible on the eastern side of the trench. This was fully excavated and was identified as a ditch, 0006. Aligned north to south, it had moderate sloping sides and a concave base, 0.68m below ground level. The top of the ditch had been truncated by ploughing. The bottom of the eastern edge of the ditch just appeared at the edge of the trench. Its fill, 0007, was a fine dark brown sand with small scattered flints. A group of six large flints lay directly on the western slope of the ditch, adjacent to the hoard. A section and profile of the ditch were recorded (Fig. 5).

An unrelated coin, 0008, was recovered from the ploughsoil 2m to the north of the hoard.

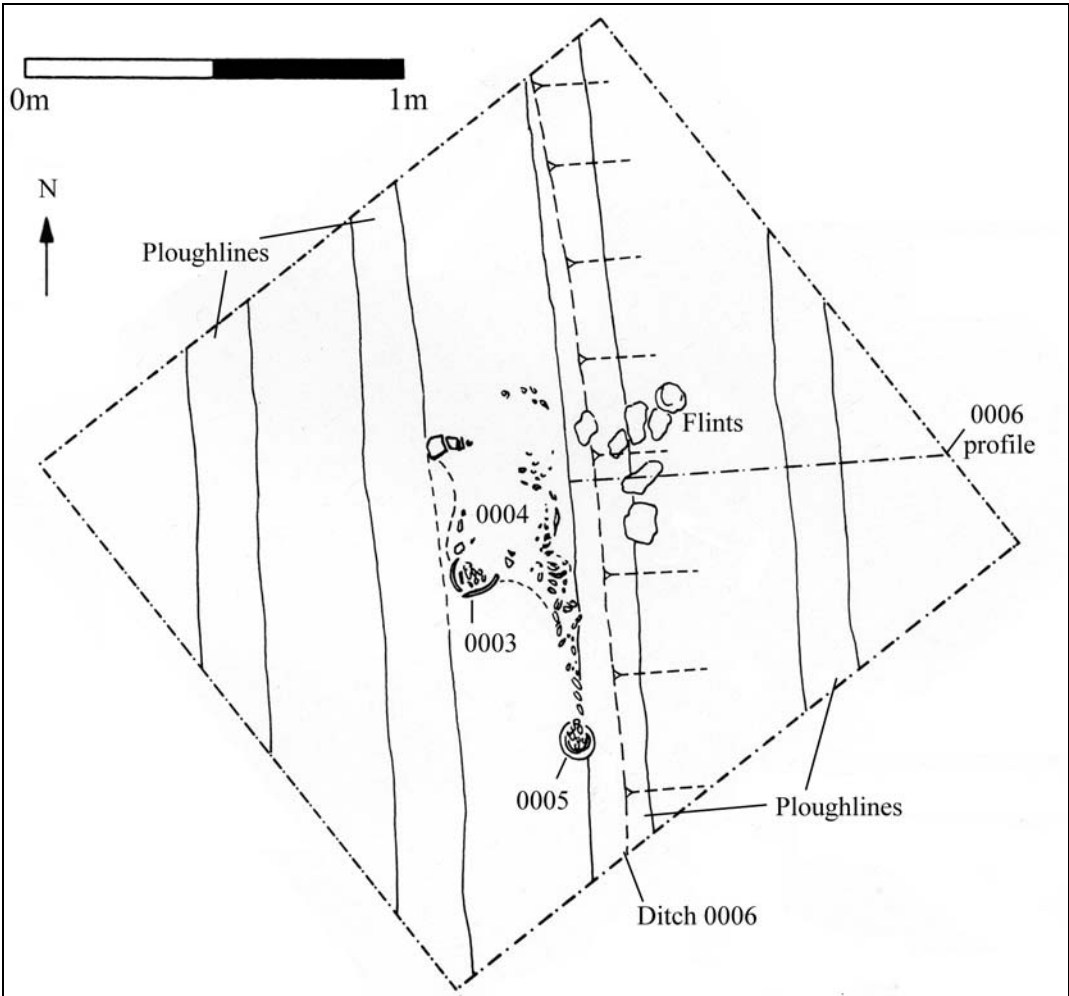


Figure 4. Trench plan

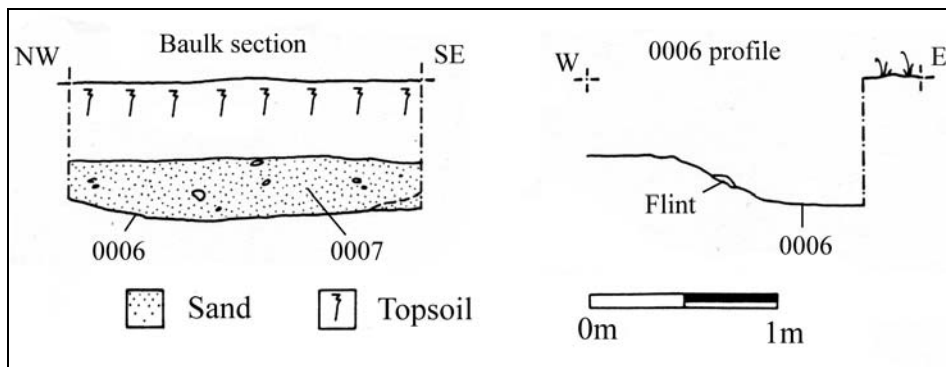


Figure 5. Sections

3. The Finds

by Judith Plouviez

3.1. Pottery

3.1.1. Prehistoric

A single body sherd (2.3gms) of late Bronze Age or Iron Age pottery tempered with calcined flint was recovered from 0007, the fill of ditch 0006, in which a single sherd of probably Roman sandy coarse ware was also found.

3.1.2. Roman

The range of fabrics represented is wide for a small collection, including Nene Valley colour-coated ware, a buff-white fabric, an oxidised ware and predominantly micaceous grey wares of the type produced in the Wattisfield area. The bulk of the pottery derives from 0002, the ploughsoil and subsoil interface and probably spans the Roman period.

The pottery of interest is the hoard container (Figs. 6-9), a semi-complete small, slender, narrow mouthed jar (0003, 0005). A fairly hard mid grey fabric with a moderate amount of silver mica in it, and a moderate amount of variable sized white sand grains (including at least one piece over 5mm across). The pot has been reconstructed from numerous (about 60) fragments which show extensive very recent damage, presumably from the plough. The only older fractures are possibly two chips on the base and at the neck where the rim is completely absent, suggesting it was removed in an earlier phase of agricultural activity. The form is a narrow mouth on a globular body with a central panel of decoration and a flat pedestal base. The exterior surface is burnished, the burnishing extending over the underneath of the base.

The decoration consists of an upper band of upright fingernail type impressions between single grooves, and a main area of burnished acute lattice with horizontal burnished lines and with a single (in places double) groove at the bottom. The upper two-thirds of the pot has a pale grey surface which is shown to be an applied slip as it has dribbled over the lower part in one area. The pot is a slight waster in that it was dented before firing on one area of the lower groove. Both fabric and form suggest local manufacture, probably in the Wattisfield area – for example the fingertip cordon is relatively common on Wattisfield decorated jars. The coins have left circular discoloured areas on the inside of the pot up to the level of the fingertip cordon (Fig 7.) showing that it was upright and not completely full when buried.

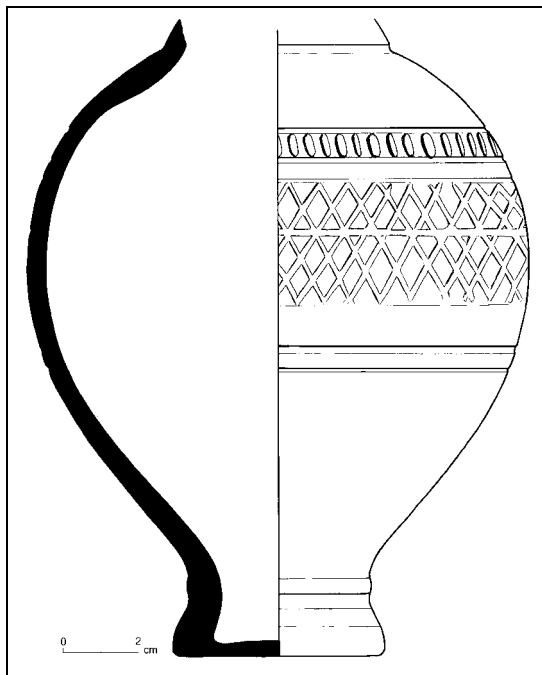


Figure 6. The pottery container (Scale 1:2)



Figure 7. The pottery container during reconstruction, showing coin stains

Context	Pottery	Animal bone	Flint	Lead	Cu alloy	Notes and spot dating
0002	14	15	1	1		Finds include Post medieval (sherd, lead fragment) but large Roman sherds, cattle and sheep bones probably contemporary and from occupation deposits .
0004						621 Coin hoard
0003 and 0005	6 + c. 65 pieces					Pottery container
0007	2	2	2			Fragmentary, Roman or later.
0008						1 Coin mid 4th century

Table 1. Finds by context

Context	Preh	GM	GX	WF	RX	NVCC	MCW	Pmed	Notes
0002		10		1	1		1?		1 Some probably late 1st/2nd century but also GM coarse rouletted sherd
0003		3	2				1		Plus semi-complete vessel. NV sherd from a closed vessel, probably large beaker form.
0007	1		1						Flint gritted LBA/IA; coarse ware might be med rather than Rom.

Table 2. Pottery by context

3.2. Other finds

Small amounts of worked flint and animal bone (sheep and cattle) were recovered, mainly from context 0002.

A single bronze coin, 0008, is a contemporary copy (diam 13mm) of a nummus, probably Magnentius with two Victories holding shield reverse (Victoriae dd nn avg et caes type), Ad 350-353.



Figure 8. Reconstructed pottery container



Figure 8. Reconstructed pottery container showing dent which occurred prior to firing

3.3. Coin hoard

by Richard Abdy

(Provisional report at 9th Feb 2006, prior to cleaning of the coins for legibility.)

621 BI radiates to AD 296

BM ref.: 2005 T434

This large Carausius and Allectus hoard belongs to the class ‘which virtually exclude Allectan ‘quinarii’, the unmarked antoniniani of Carausius...and antoniniani struck before Aurelian’s reform’¹. In this provisional examination prior to cleaning Elveden appears to contain one, three and none of these types respectively.

PROVISIONAL CATALOGUE SUMMARY

Probus (Ticinum, RIC 550) 1

Carausius (258):

No mintmark 3

<i>London m.-m.</i> (144)	<i>qty.</i>	<i>‘C’ mint m.-m.</i> (107)	<i>qty.</i>
ML	1	C	4
L –//ML	2	MC	1
F O//ML	6	SMC	–
B E//MLXXI	41	CXXI; MCXXI	1
S C//MLXXI	1	S C/C; SC; SP	6; 21; 31
S P//MLXXI	79	S P/C	43
S P//ML	14		

mintmark illegible: – –//[] 1

mintmark illegible: S P//[] 3

mintmark illegible 8

obverse brockage 1

Carausius for Diocletian (9):

<i>London m.-m.</i>	<i>qty.</i>	<i>‘C’ mint m.-m.</i>	<i>qty.</i>
S P//MLXXI	3	S P//C	1

Carausius for Maximian (6):

<i>London m.-m.</i>	<i>qty.</i>	<i>‘C’ mint m.-m.</i>	<i>qty.</i>
S P//MLXXI	3	S P//C	2

mintmark illegible 1

Allectus (347):

<i>London m.-m.</i> (230)	<i>qty.</i>	<i>‘C’ mint m.-m.</i> (100)	<i>qty.</i>
S P//ML	49	S P//C	98
ML	1	SPC	1
S A//ML	141	QC	1
S [A or P]//ML	25		
S A//MSL	14		

mintmark illegible (S P//[]) 13

fused by the reverse 2

obverse brockage 2

Total 621

¹ Bland, R., ‘A Hoard of Carausius and Allectus from Burton Latimer’ in *British Numismatic Journal* 54 (1984), 41. See also Burnett, A. ‘The Coinage of Allectus: Chronology and Interpretation’ in *British Numismatic Journal* 54 (1984), 27.

4. Discussion

Excavation of the trench recovered scattered fragments of pottery from the topsoil, dating from throughout the Roman period. Together with the presence of a ditch containing late prehistoric and Roman pottery, and the hoard itself, this excavation has provided further evidence of the Roman activity in the area that was seen during the evaluation by the Norfolk Archaeological Unit.

A total of 621 coins were recovered, in a dense spread, from the excavated trench with an additional, unrelated coin, metal detected in the ploughsoil to the north. Very few coins lay more than 0.1m away from the main scatter and, as the pottery vessel was almost completely recovered, it is thought likely that the vast majority of coins lay within the 2m² sondage and have been retrieved. The tight distribution of the hoard is due to its initial burial within the pottery vessel, which was then buried on the edge of ditch 0006. The presence of a few large flints may indicate that a small cairn marked the exact spot.

Examination of the pot has shown that it was buried upright and that the rim had been totally removed by earlier damage, probably a phase of relatively shallow ploughing, which clipped the top of the vessel. As the vessel was not fully filled this seems to have meant that the coins remained relatively undisturbed and unscattered until the pot was broken by more recent damage. A phase of deeper ploughing appears to have broken the pot and scattered the coins in a northerly direction for 0.7m within the ploughsoil. Despite this damage however coins and pottery sherds still maintained a dense distribution, with coins remaining in situ in the pot base. This is probably due to the sheer coincidence that the deepest ploughlines, which extended to a depth well below the base of the hoard, passed by immediately to either side. If one of these ploughlines, had hit directly, it seems likely that the hoard would have been spread over a much larger area.

John Craven, February 2006