

**Lincoln Road/Sewage Works Road  
RAF Mildenhall  
MNL 666**

**Archaeological Evaluation Report**

**SCCAS Report No. 2011/197**

**Client: Defence Infrastructure Organisation**

Author: Andrew Tester

November 2011



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## HER Information

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Any opinions expressed in this report about the need for further archaeological work are those of the Field Projects Team alone. Ultimately the need for further work will be determined by the Local Planning Authority and its Archaeological Advisors when a planning application is registered. Suffolk County Council's archaeological contracting services cannot accept responsibility for inconvenience caused to the clients should the Planning Authority take a different view to that expressed in the report.

Prepared By: Andrew Tester

Date: November 2011

Approved By: Judith Plouviez

Position: Conservation Officer

Date: 2011



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



## **Summary**




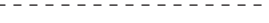







A series of evaluation trenches was excavated along the line of Sewage Works Road, Lincoln Road at RAF Mildenhall in order to establish the impact of road refurbishment on archaeological deposits. A total of fifteen trenches were opened up; these revealed a substantial layer of reworked agricultural soil beneath the existing tarmac in most of the trenches with chalk rising to the surface at the northern end of the road. Archaeological features were identified in Trench 9 but were c.1m below the existing road surface and below any construction works. The evaluation has provided a useful insight into the surface geology of an area which has seen little development since the construction of the airfield.

# Drawing Conventions

## Plans

- Limit of Excavation 
- Features 
- Break of Slope 
- Features - Conjectured 
- Natural Features 
- Sondages/Machine Strip 
- Intrusion/Truncation 
- Illustrated Section  S.14
- Cut Number 
- Archaeological Features 

## Sections

- Limit of Excavation 
- Cut 
- Modern Cut 
- Cut - Conjectured 
- Deposit Horizon 
- Deposit Horizon - Conjectured 
- Intrusion/Truncation 
- Top of Natural 
- Top Surface 
- Break in Section 
- Cut Number 
- Deposit Number 0007
- Ordnance Datum  $\overline{\overline{18.45\text{m OD}}}$

## **1. Introduction**

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A series of evaluation trenches was excavated in order to evaluate the archaeological potential of the site prior to the relaying and upgrading of Lincoln Road and Sewage Works Road. The work was not subject to formal planning consent but advice was sought from Judith Plouviez of the Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service Conservation Team. The verbal brief was to establish the presence or absence of archaeological deposits and whether a mitigation strategy would be required to record or protect archaeological deposits that might be disturbed by the road building. A series of fifteen trenches was dug along the length of the road in order to map the archaeological potential.

## **2. Geology and topography**

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The site is located on the edge of the fen basin, a large area of low-lying ground overlain by peat deposits that drain northwards into the Wash. The extent of open water and marsh has shrunk over the last few centuries due to a series of drainage schemes to reclaim the wetland for arable farming. The underlying geology of the site is the West Melbury chalk Formation (British Geological Survey 2009). The surface geology was hidden by the levelled road surface and adjoining airfield construction and the depth of the chalk and the nature of any overlying deposits were two of the objectives of this investigation.

## **3. Archaeology and historical background**

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The site lies within an archaeologically rich landscape with intense settlement recorded along the edge of the Fens from Late Bronze Age through to the Early Anglo-Saxon period (Fig. 1). Within the locale of the site, interventions recorded on the County Historic Environment record (HER) include MNL 491 where Iron Age and Roman remains were excavated with Iron Age burials in the new parking lots to the south east of the site; MNL 509 where Roman remains were found along Halifax Road, Wellington Road and Dakota Road during monitoring immediately to the west; MNL 532 where excavations uncovered a wide multi-period settlement from prehistoric through to the Early Anglo-Saxon period beneath the new baseball park to the south west ; MNL 639 Washington Square, which also revealed multi-period prehistoric to Roman settlement

remains to the north-east. The line of the road appears to be towards the eastern edge of dense multi period settlement.

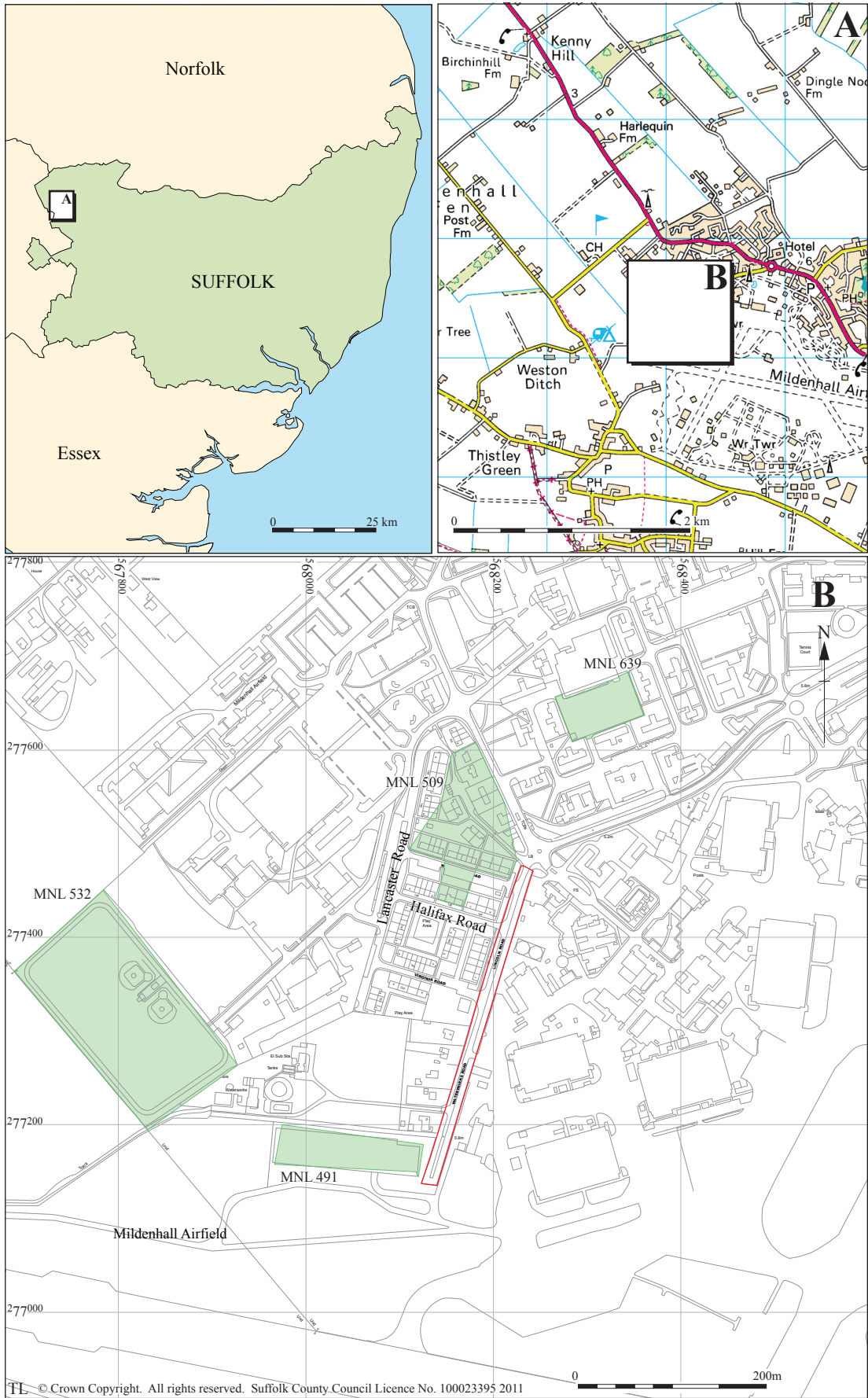


Figure 1. Location plan showing development area (red) and HER sites mentioned in the text (green)

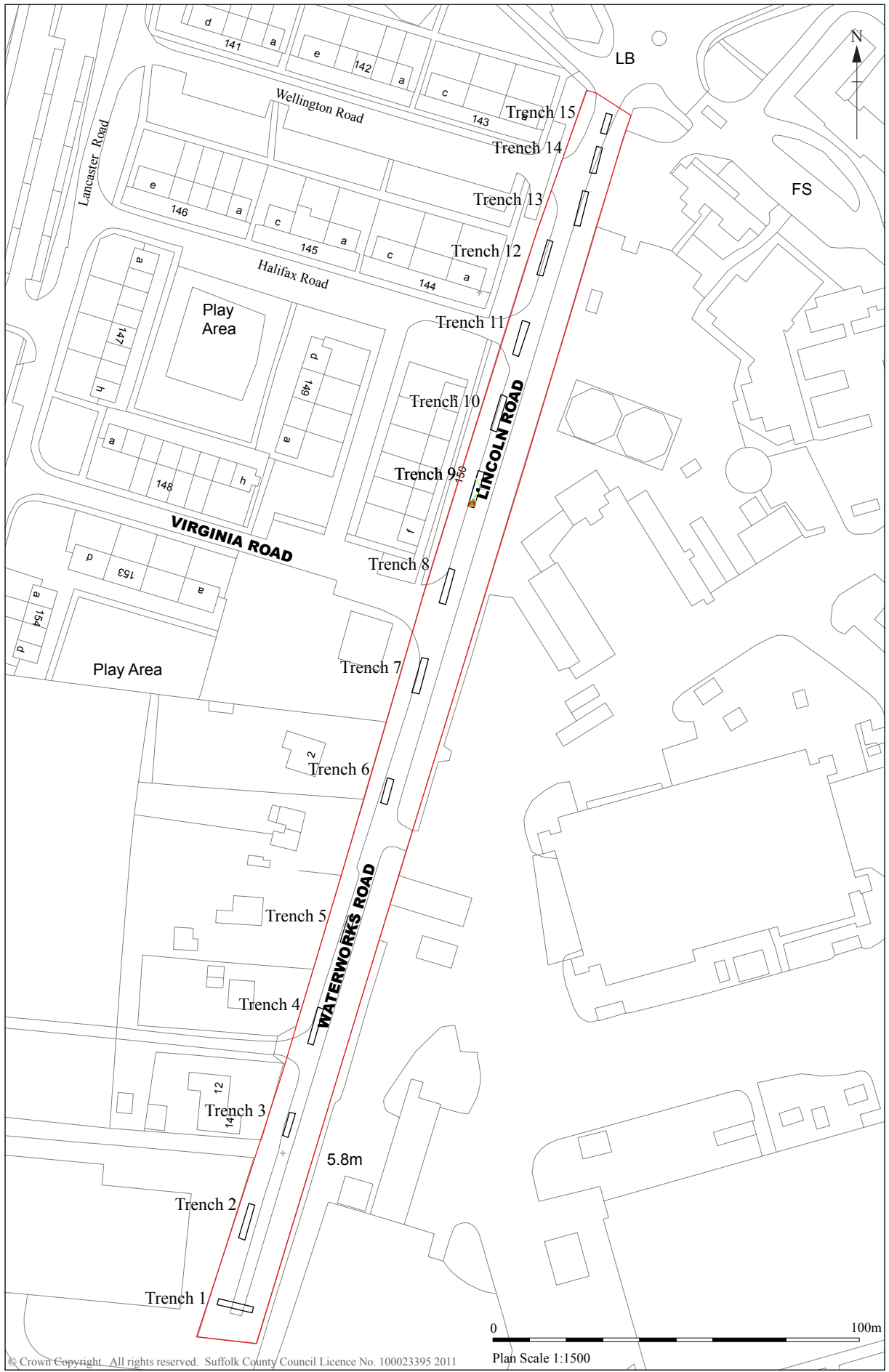


Figure 2. Trench location plan

## **4. Methodology**

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Following the breaking of the road surface and removal of tarmac over a marked series of c.10m trenches a JCB type excavator fitted with a 1.8m wide flat bladed bucket was used to excavate the trenches down to the first archaeological level (Fig 2). The trenches are described in Table 1 with a photographic archive included. Only Trench 9 recorded complex archaeology and this is illustrated separately. Plans were drawn at a scale of 1:50 and sections at a scale of 1:20. High resolution digital photography was used to record the trenches. A continuous numbering system was used for all features and the site was recorded under the HER No. MNL 666.

## **5. Results**

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### **5.1 Trench results**

#### **Trench 9**

Within Trench 9 there were two clear features 0002 and 0004: 0002 was 1.75m in length and 0.75m wide; it was only 0.1m deep and the fill, 0003, was of mid dark brown sand; although extending beyond the trench there is sufficient evidence to suggest that it was the truncated remains of a pit. It produced two sherds of Roman pottery. The extent of feature 0004 is less easy to determine as it went beyond the trench at its widest point; it was c.1.25m long and c.0.75m wide. It was also very shallow, c.0.12m deep, and probably truncated. It was filled with mid to dark brown sand. It produced four sherds of Roman pottery which was spot dated to the 4th century. Both features were cut into chalk and on the edge of a brown sand spread; a test hole in the base of the spread revealed yellow sand 0.15m deep in the centre of the trench.

Trench	Dimensions	Depth	Level OD	Natural subsoil	Trench fill	Finds
1	9.5m x 1.8m	Between 0.6m and 1.08m	5.68	Chalk	Tarmac overlay disturbed brown silt/sand; from c.0.4m the trench was filled with homogenous mid brown sand.	
2	9m x 1.6m	c. 1.1m	5.7	Chalk and sand	Tarmac and disturbed ground from 0.3m mid brown sand (more chalky towards the base).	
3	5.75 x 1.6m	c.1.1m	5.67	Chalk and sand	Tarmac and redeposited chalk; from 0.4m mid brown sand.	
4	9.8m x 1.6m	c.0.84m	5.56	Chalky sand	Tarmac and redeposited chalk over mid brown sand and mid brown sand and chalk mix.	X
5	7m x 1.6m	c.1.1m	5.63	Patchy chalk and sand	Tarmac and redeposited chalk over mid brown sand and mid brown sand and chalk mix.	
6	7m x 1.6m	c1.1m		Patchy chalk and sand	Tarmac and redeposited chalk over mid brown sand	X
7	8.7m x 1.6m	c.1.1m	5.66	Mid brown sand and chalk	Tarmac and hardcore; from 0.35m mid brown sand.	
8	8.75 X 1.6m	c.1.1m	5.78	Orange brown sand	Tarmac and hardcore; from 0.35m mid brown sand	
9	9.25m x 1.6m	c.1.1m	5.84	Chalk and brown silt/sand	Tarmac and hardcore; from 0.35m mid dark brown sand. Details of trench discussed below includes features	X
10	9.3m x 1.6m	c.1.1m	5.85	Chalk for 4m from north end	Tarmac and hardcore; from 0.35m mid brown sand changing to pale brown sand with chalk	
11	9.75m x 1.6m	Between 0.5 and 0.7m	5.62	Chalk and brown sand.	Tarmac and redeposited chalk; from 0.25m mid brown sand.	
12	9.75 x 1.6m	c1.1m	5.52	Mid brown sand and yellow - orange sand.	Tarmac, hardcore and redeposited chalk; from c.0.35m to 0.95m dark brown sand and below that grey brown sand over yellow sand.	X
13	9.2m x 1.6m	c.1.1m	5.55	chalk	0.4m of tarmac and hardcore already removed. 0.7m of brown sand (occasional animal bone fragments noted but not recovered) directly over chalk	
14		c.0.75m	5.54	chalk	Chalk immediately below modern disturbance	
15		c.0.75	5.46	chalk	Chalk immediately below modern disturbance	

Table 1. Trench descriptions



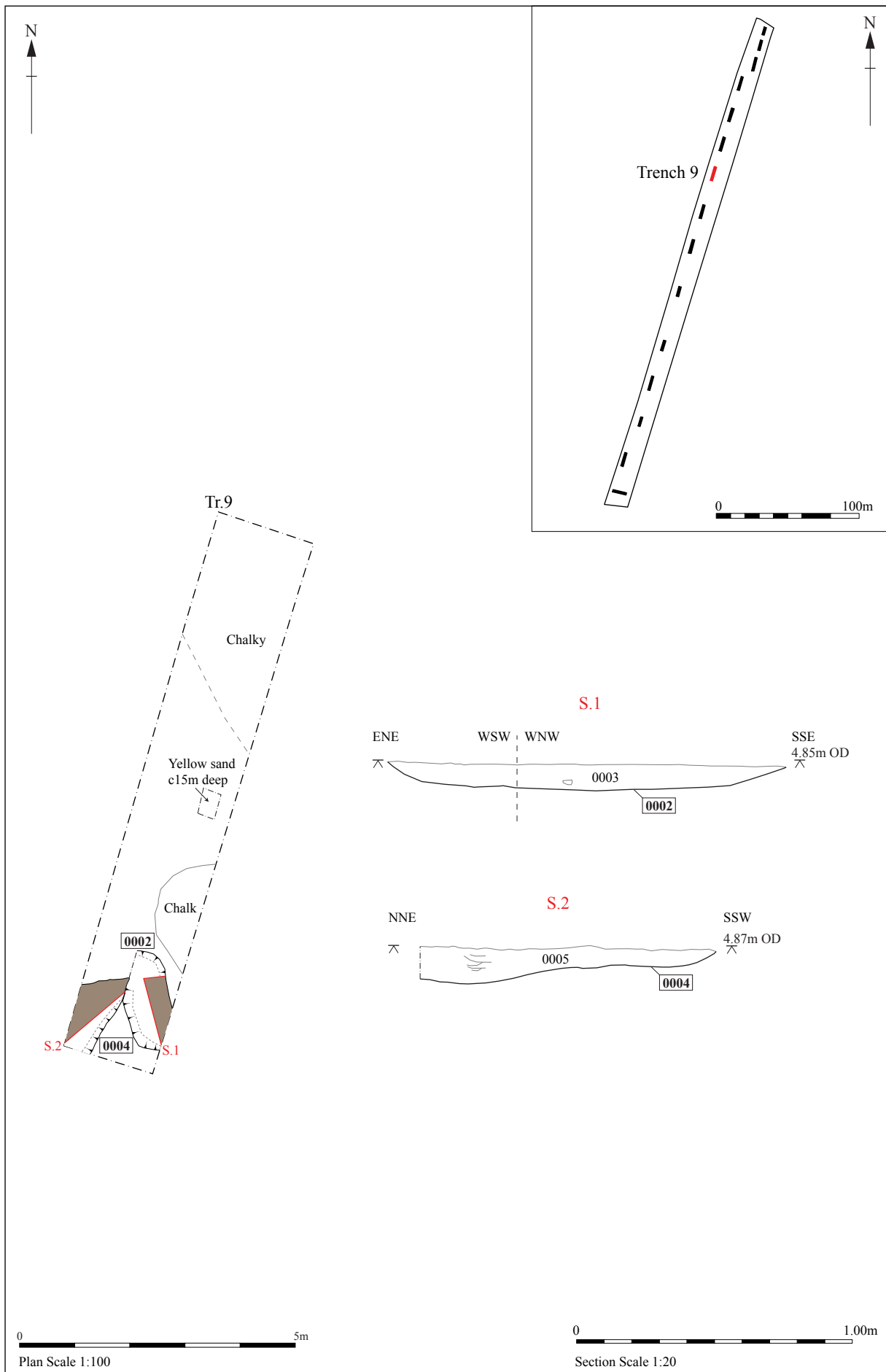


Figure 3. Trench 9, plan and sections

## 6. Finds and environmental evidence

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Andy Fawcett

### 6.1 Introduction

Table 2 shows the quantities of finds collected from the evaluation. Finds were retrieved from fills of pit (0003) and ditch/gully (0005) as well as two soil layers (0006 and 0007).

Context	Pottery		Animal bone		Miscellaneous	Spotdate
	No	Wt/g	No	Wt/g		
0003	2	6	3	10	Burnt stone 5 @ 318g	Roman
0005	4	29				Roman (?late)
0006	2	30	1	71	Worked flint 2 @ 40g	L3rd-4th C
0007	2	136				16th-18th C
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>201</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>81</b>		

Table 2. Finds quantities

### 6.2 The pottery

#### Introduction

A total of ten sherds of pottery with a combined weight of 201g was recorded in four contexts. With the exception of two sherds in context 0007, the remainder of the assemblage is dated to the Roman period.

#### Methodology

All of the pottery has been examined at x20 vision and allocated to fabric groups, a complete breakdown of these can be seen Appendix 1. Codes have been assigned to these groups using the Suffolk fabric series (SCCAS) and form types (where possible) have been catalogued using the Suffolk form type series (unpub).

#### Roman

The Roman pottery assemblage is chiefly made up of small and abraded body sherds. The only identifiable fabric is a Lower Nene Valley colour coated base fragment (NVC) in layer 0006, which is dated from the late 3rd to 4th century. Three joining sherds of Miscellaneous red coarseware (RX), in ditch/gully fill 0005, have some resemblances to OXRC (Oxfordshire red colour-coated ware) which is a late Roman fabric. The sherds

are fine and have the general appearance of this fabric and contain sparse gold mica as well as ?chalk. However, in this instance, the surface of the sherds has completely worn off and therefore their identification is uncertain. Two other fabrics have been recorded. These are Miscellaneous sandy greyware (GX) and Black-surfaced ware (BSW), both of which are long lived fabrics which are likely to have been produced in Suffolk. A beaker and jar rim are present (in fills 0003 and 0005) but both are too small to be identified beyond their general vessel class.

## Post-medieval

Soil layer 0007 contains two joining sherds (136g) of Glazed red earthenware (GRE). The sherds are only slightly abraded and are part of a bowl dated from the 16th-18th century. The form is similar to Jennings types 1141/55 (1981, 162; fig 66).

## 6.3 Worked flint

Identified by Colin Pendleton

Both examples of worked flint were recorded in fill 0006. The first of these is a small unpatinated irregular flake core. It has around ten percent of cortex remaining and displays three striking platforms. The second piece is an unpatinated flake with limited edge retouch. The dorsal face has parallel flake scars and displays around ten percent cortex. Both of the flints are likely to be dated to the Bronze Age although they are residual within the context which also contains Roman pottery.

## 6.4 Burnt stone

A total of five irregular and worn fragments of burnt clunch was noted in context 0003 (318g), which also contains Roman pottery.

## 6.6 Faunal Remains

Identified by Mike Feider

Two contexts (0003 and 0006) contained animal bone (4 fragments @ 81g) all of which are small and in a poor state of preservation. Fill 0003 contains a partial tibia from a juvenile sheep, a scapula fragment that is not identifiable to species as well an unidentifiable piece. The fragment in 0006 is a cow humerus. Roman pottery is present in both of the contexts.

## **7. Discussion**

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The majority of trenches contained substantial deposits of homogenous brown sand. From its uniformity and occasional finds it is suggested that this was a re-worked layer probably created by ploughing in the medieval and post-medieval period. In Trench 4 this layer produced two sherds of pottery dated to the 16th to 18th centuries. Natural chalk was immediately below the road surface at the north-eastern end of the road (although personal observation of a service trench c. 5m to the north of Trench 12 revealed a substantial depth of brown sand in that area, which suggests that the rising level of the chalk was running north-south). The two definite features, which are spot dated to the Late Roman period, were severely truncated, probably due to the ploughing. The few pottery finds and animal bones indicate the proximity of the Roman settlement although it appears that the Lincoln/ Sewage Works Road was located slightly to the east of the main occupation.

We do not as yet have a complete picture to explain the prehistoric to Early Anglo-Saxon settlement pattern on Mildenhall or the fen edge generally. Dense concentrations of activity occur, albeit with some gaps, but generally it resembles a winding ribbon that takes the 5m contour line (on the modern surface) as somewhere close to its higher limit. The truncated features in Trench 9 were at c. 4.86m OD with the present ground surface at least a metre higher, which suggests that this is the upper limit of settlement.

The exposed surface at Washington Square, albeit slightly truncated, was at c.4.2m OD. There are questions over survival as many sites have post-medieval plough damage but over and above this it seems that access to water, either groundwater for arable agriculture or the open wetlands was a decisive factor in driving settlement.

## **8. Conclusions and recommendations for further work**

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The evaluation has indicated the presence of a deep reworked soil below the tarmac in most of the trenches although the chalk rises somewhat towards the north end. Beneath the 'plough' soil the evidence for earlier settlement was insubstantial and it is suggested that the road roughly marks the eastern limit of the prehistoric to Roman settlement in this area. It is therefore recommended that no archaeological monitoring is required in

this area unless construction work or service trenching extends at least 0.75m below the present ground level.

## **9. Archive deposition**

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MNL 666 H/81/1Parish Box

## **10. Acknowledgements**

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The fieldwork was carried out by Andrew Tester and Jonathan van Jennians. The project was directed and managed by Andrew Tester. Illustrations were produced by Crane Begg and Ellie Hillen; Jonathan Van Jennians processed the finds and the report was prepared by Andy Fawcett and edited by Richenda Goffin.

## **11. Bibliography**

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Jennings, S., 1981, *Eighteen centuries of pottery from Norwich*, EAA 13, Norwich Survey/NMS

Tester, C., 2002, 'The finds' in A. Tester, Improve family housing, phase C. *A report on the archaeological monitoring*. SCCAS Report No 2002/17



Plate 1. Trench 1 facing west



Plate 2. Trench 2 facing north



Plate 3. Trench 4 facing north (scale bars at 0.5m)



Plate 4. Trench 4 section facing east (scale bars at 0.5m)



Plate 5. Trench 9 facing north (scale bars at 0.5m)



Plate 6. Trench 9 facing south (scale bars at 0.5m)





Plate 7. Trench 11 facing north (scale bars at 0.5m)



Plate 8. Trench 12 facing south (scale bars at 0.5m)



Plate 9. Trench 12 soil profile facing east (scale bars at 0.5m)



Plate 10. Trench 13 facing north (scale bars at 0.5m)



Plate 11. Trench 15 looking north



## Appendix 1. Pottery spot dates

Context	Fabric	Form	No	EVE	Wgt/g	State	Comments	Fabric date	Context date
0003	BSW	Beaker 3	1	0.07	3	Sli	Too small for id 3/6/8.	Roman	Roman
0003	GX	Body	1	0	3	Abr		Roman	
0005	GX	Jar 4/5	1	0.07	15	Sli	Bead rim too small for id	Roman	Roman (?late)
0005	RX	Body	3	0	14	Abr	All join, surfaces worn, micaceous (with sparse gold mica/?chalk) could be late, like OXRC	Roman (?late)	
0006	GX	Body	1	0	3	Abr		Roman	L3rd/4th C
0006	NVC	Base	1	0	27	Abr	0.07. White fabric with white pellets (not streaked)	L3rd/4th C	
0007	GRE	Bowl	2	0.07	136	Sli	Join with green glaze	16th-18th C	16th-18th C





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