

Southside Perimeter Road, RAF Lakenheath, LKH 333

Archaeological Monitoring Report

SCCAS Report No. 2011/204

Client: MoD Defence Infrastructure Organisation

Authors: Rob Brooks and Andrew Tester

December/2011

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HER Information

Report Number: 2011/204

Site Name: Southside Perimeter Road

Planning Application No: N/A

Date of Fieldwork: June – July, 2010

Grid Reference:

SW end	TL 7441 8078
Centre point	TL 7532 8108
NE end	TL 7548 8182

Client/Funding Body: MoD Defence Infrastructure Organisation

Curatorial Officer: Judith Plouviez (originally Robert Carr)

Project Officer: Rob Brooks

Oasis Reference: suffolkc1-115249

Site Code: LKH 333

Digital report submitted to Archaeological Data Service:
<http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/catalogue/library/greylit>

Disclaimer

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: Rob Brooks
Date: 05/12/2011

Approved By: Judith Plouviez
Position: Conservation Officer
Date:
Signed:

Contents

Summary

Drawing Conventions

1. Introduction	1
2. Geology and topography	1
3. Archaeology and historical background	1
4. Methodology	3
5. Results	4
6. Conclusions	5
7. Archive deposition	5
8. Acknowledgements	6
9. Bibliography	6

List of Figures

Figure 1. Location plan, showing road strip (red) and soakaway (black)	2
Figure 2. Soakaway plan and sections	4

List of Appendices

Appendix 1. Matrix	
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

Summary

Monitoring of road stripping along the south-east edge of RAF Lakenheath revealed one undated ditch, which may relate to the local rabbit warren, and one possible pit. No finds were recovered.

There were high levels of disturbance along much of the road strip relating to levelling works on the base and ploughing of the site.

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 $\frac{18.45\text{m OD}}{\times}$

1. Introduction

A programme of archaeological monitoring was carried out during the upgrading of the road inside the southern perimeter of RAF Lakenheath, Suffolk (Fig. 1). The project involved the removal of the surface to a depth of c.0.5m with deeper soakaway areas in places along the side creating a cut c.8m wide. One of these soakaways revealed the only archaeological deposits recorded on the site. An area at the north-east end of the road line was stripped in preparation for full excavation, but was heavily truncated/disturbed.

2. Geology and topography

The area is recorded as being largely devoid of superficial geological deposits, but the bedrock consists of Holywell Nodular, New Pit, Chalk Rock Member, Lewes Nodular, Seaford, Newhaven and Culver chalk formations (BGS, 2011). On site this presented itself as chalk overlain by windblown sands. This natural landscape, with light vegetation holding down drifting sand, was levelled when the airbase was constructed. The varying depth of sands and chalk across the base reflects the earlier natural landscape.

3. Archaeology and historical background

The airfield at Lakenheath includes numerous archaeological sites. Whilst the densest settlement evidence dating from the Iron Age and through to the Saxon period occurs to the west of this site, there is considerable evidence for more scattered earlier prehistoric occupation in the Breckland itself. Other features of archaeological interest include the warren banks (built to enclose and house rabbits) which date from medieval times and are known to have crossed the site in various places.

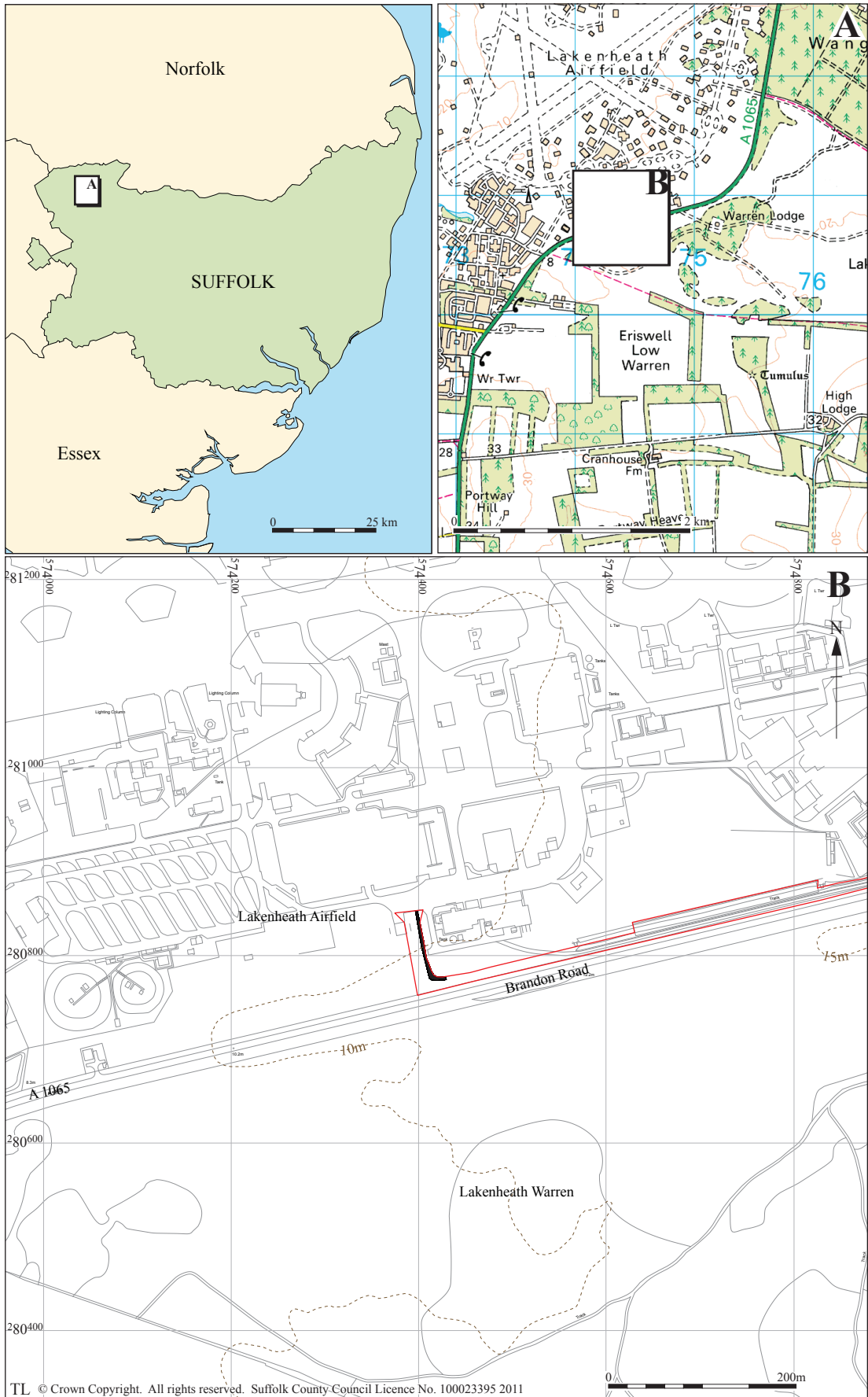


Figure 1. Location plan, showing road strip (red) and soakaway (black)

4. Methodology

This project can be broken down into three stages: the compound and access road strip, the main road strip, and the larger strip at the north-east end of the road. The access road was closely monitored during the soil strip. The road strip was monitored less closely although a complete 2m wide strip down the length of the road was observed. At the north end an evaluation trench was dug before stripping began and this established that the site was truncated and heavily disturbed. As a consequence no further work was carried out in this area.

When the excavations were finished features and soil profiles were cleaned. These were subsequently excavated as required and then recorded on SCCAS *pro forma* context sheets. Sections were drawn at 1:20, with hand plans being drawn at 1:50 and located from known OS points.

Site data has been input onto the MS Access database and recorded using the County Historic Environment Record code LKH 333. An OASIS form has been completed for the project (reference no. suffolkc1-115249) and a digital copy of the report submitted for inclusion on the Archaeology Data Service database (<http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/catalogue/library/greylit>). The site archive is kept in the main store of Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service at Bury St Edmunds under HER code LKH 333.

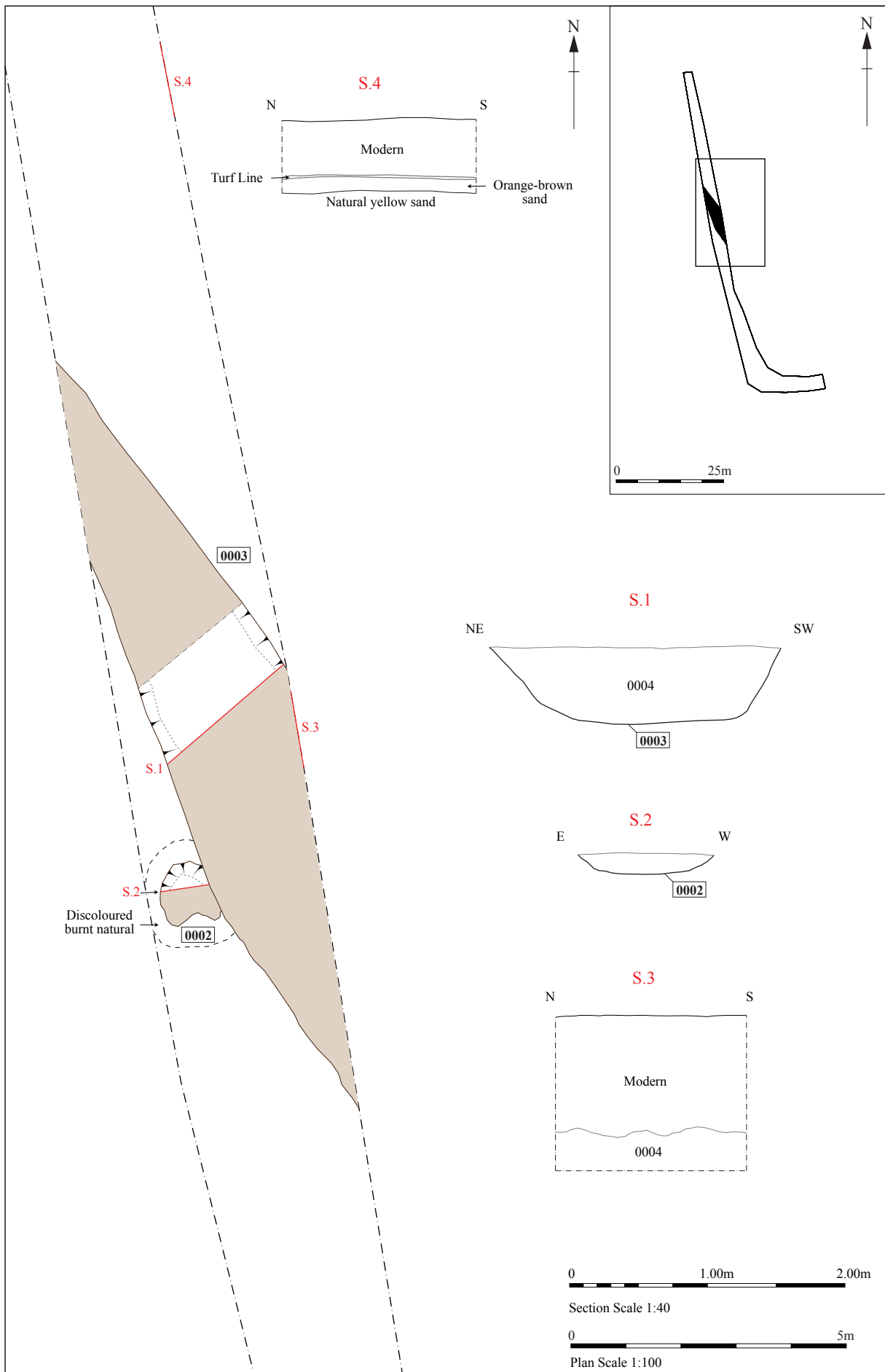


Figure 2. Soakaway plan and sections

5. Results

The initial soil strip was for the access road and builder's compound at the south-west end of the site. This revealed yellow sand visible almost immediately below the turf and it became clear that a large part of the access road was truncated, thus removing any evidence of superficial features and finds. The sand was yellow with intermittent darker areas indicating topsoil patches within the uneven ground surface. The close monitoring of this area was required because of the nearby discovery of two skeletons close to building 1346 in 1977 (HER Record No. LKH 145).

Along the main road strip near the south-west end, an area for a soakaway was excavated following the length of the road. This revealed a ditch and a possible pit (Figs. 1 and 2). Within the soil profile the top deposit was a modern very dark grey/black silt layer. In places this overlaid a buried turf line, as well as fill 0004. This was the only deposit within ditch 0003; a linear feature aligned north-west to south-east across the trench. It had fairly steep, straight sides and a flat base. Its width in plan varied quite significantly, but it was 1.5m wide in section 1 and 0.4m deep. Further along the trench (as recorded in section 4), a buried soil of orange-brown sand was also recorded below the turf line, overlying natural yellow sand (Appendix 1).

Pit 0002 was roughly circular/crescent-shaped and measured 0.7m wide x 0.1m deep. It was filled with coarse black sand 0005 with charcoal flecks and was surrounded by a layer of discoloured sand indicating that the burning indicated by the pit fill had occurred *in situ*. It produced no finds, appeared to be cut by ditch 0003 in plan and was interpreted on site as a possible tree root throw.

6. Conclusions

The low level of features and lack of finds uncovered in the monitoring make it difficult to interpret the area very clearly, particularly as so much of the length of the road strip appears to have been previously disturbed in relation to levelling of the airbase, as well as ploughing. However, it may be the case that the area was not frequently or intensively occupied in the past and that the recorded features accurately represent limited occupation, with the ditch possibly relating to the known rabbit warren. The pit may be a natural feature, although it could form part of the scattered prehistoric landscape.

7. Archive deposition

Paper and photographic archive: SCCAS Bury St Edmunds

8. Acknowledgements

The monitoring was carried out by Jo Caruth and Andrew Tester from Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service, Field Team.

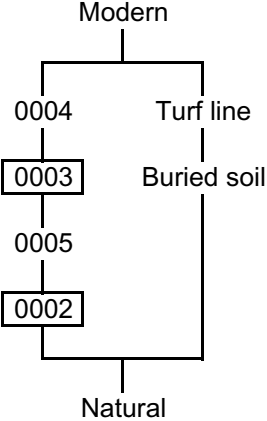
The project was directed and managed by Andrew Tester, who also provided advice during the production of the report. The report was written by Rob Brooks and the graphics produced by Ellie Hillen.

The report was checked by Andrew Tester and Richenda Goffin.

9. Bibliography

BGS, 2011 Information obtained from http://www.bgs.ac.uk/products/digital/maps/data_625k.html and reproduced with the permission of the British Geological Survey ©NERC. All rights Reserved

Appendix 1. Matrix



Archaeological services Field Projects Team

Delivering a full range of archaeological services

- Desk-based assessments and advice
- Site investigation
- Outreach and educational resources
- Historic Building Recording
- Environmental processing
- Finds analysis and photography
- Graphics design and illustration

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