

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING REPORT

RAF Lakenheath, Emergency Airfield Access Road LKH 256

A REPORT ON THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING, 2006
(Planning app. no. Pre-emergency)

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List of Contributors

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Acknowledgements

This project was funded by MOD Defence Estates (USF) and the archaeological work specified by Jude Plouviez (Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service, Conservation Team). The fieldwork was carried out by Jo Caruth from Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service, Field Team..

Summary

Archaeological monitoring during the reconstruction of the airfield emergency access road demonstrated that whilst archaeological deposits existed at the south end of the site these lay below the formation levels of the road and were therefore unaffected by the development.

SMR information

Planning application no.	Pre-emergency
Date of fieldwork:	16th-27th January 2006
Grid Reference:	TL 7328 8117
Funding body:	MOD Defence Estates (USF)
Oasis reference.	Suffolkc1-12381

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Introduction

Archaeological monitoring was carried out during the reconstruction of the airfield emergency access road (Fig. 1) as a condition on the planning application (pre-emergency). The work was undertaken by Jo Caruth, Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service (SCCAS), Field Team, according to a Brief and Specification issued by Jude Plouviez, SCCAS, Conservation Team (Appendix 1). The road lies at TL 7328 8117 just inside the airfield perimeter fence in an area of known Roman and Early Saxon settlement (Fig. 2). The reconstruction was to take place within the same limits as the existing road but excavation levels for the sub-base were expected to be slightly deeper than those of the existing road, however it was not clear from adjacent archaeological works whether this would be deep enough to affect archaeological deposits. The southern 100m of the road were most likely to produce intense archaeological evidence although isolated remains could be expected at any point along it.

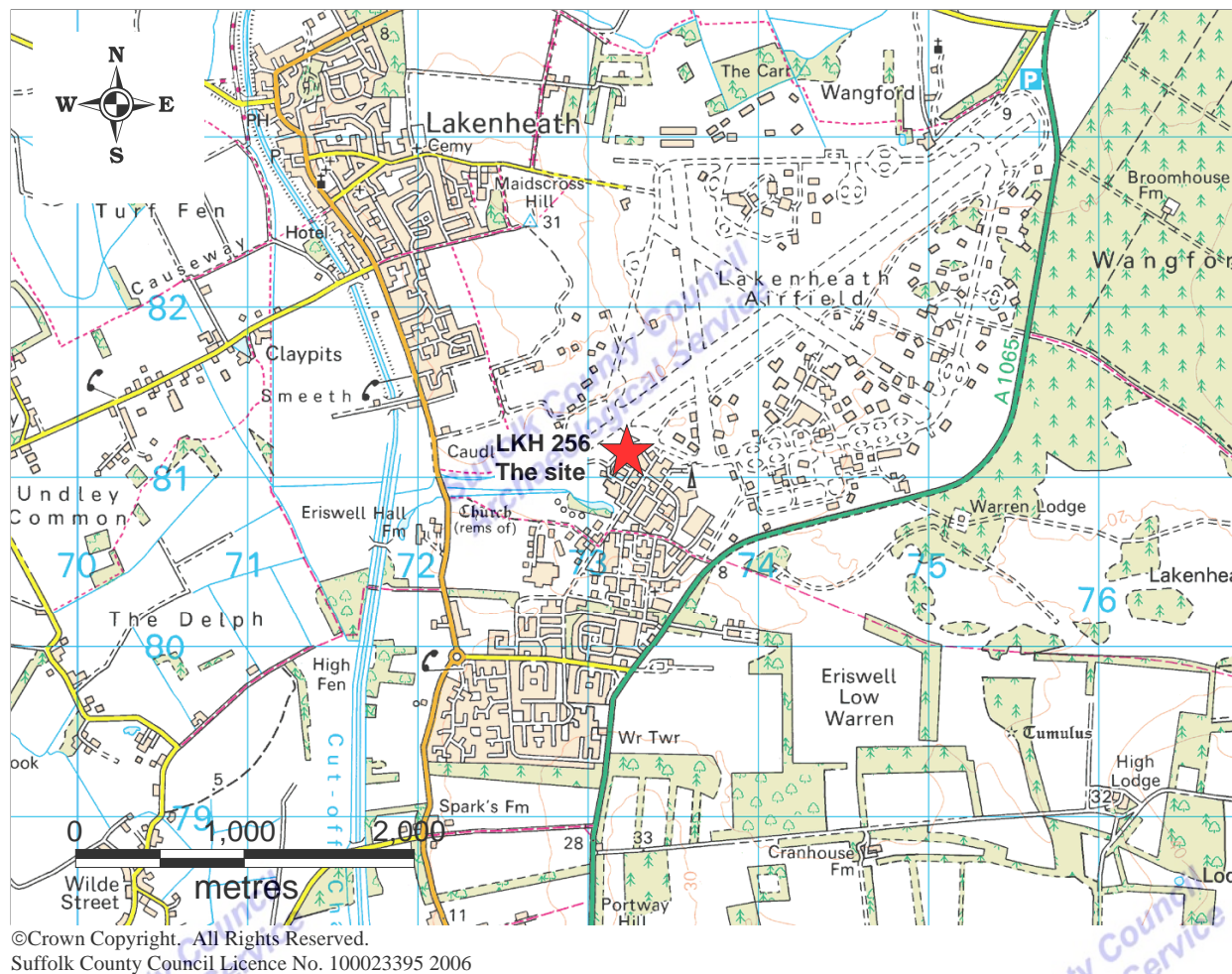


Figure 1. Site location

Methodology

Monitoring visits were made from the start of the project and after the contractors had removed the concrete road surface a 1.6m wide trench was excavated under archaeological supervision down the centre of the road-line. This was taken down to the road formation level and hand-dug holes inserted to establish the depth to archaeological and natural subsoil levels as necessary. This established that in general the construction levels were unlikely to penetrate into the archaeological deposits although at times the very upper limits of a Roman-Saxon buried soil was likely to be exposed. There were to be no drainage works or other deep holes associated with the road construction. In consultation with Jude Plouviez, the SCC Conservation Team Officer for the project, it was agreed that the archaeological requirements could be adequately discharged by a continuous monitoring of the sensitive areas to ensure that the archaeology was preserved *in situ* under the new road.

Results

Trial trench

The trial trench showed that whilst archaeological deposits certainly survived, generally these were below the construction levels and were only occasionally vulnerable to exposure (but not removal) during the excavation works. The results are detailed below.

Length from southern end	Description
0-4m	Mottled orange-brown sand, one fragment of animal bone, no defined features visible. Pinky orange sand natural c. 10cm below this level.
4-8m	Hogging and modern deposits still partially present. Orange-brown sand (0002) darker than in first 4m, visible underneath modern. Shovel hole through this shows probably redeposited banded chalk at 4cm and definite Roman dark soil at 8cm.
8-10m	Modern deposits largely still present.
10-18m	Intensely dark soil with charcoal flecks just exposed (0003). The upper 10cm of this is loose but becomes very compacted below this depth. A single sherd of pottery was recovered from this.
18-22m	Mid grey-brown sand exposed, probably archaeological. 3cm below this is a dense dark soil definitely archaeological.
22-34m	Mid grey-brown sand up to 5cm above the formation level. This is laminated and probably disturbed, flecks of charcoal and iron pan are visible to the north. Shovel hole shows undisturbed dark soil at 130mm. This is probably disturbed archaeological material.
34-42m	Some possible small patches of natural amongst grey-brown sand and modern disturbance.
42-47m	Grey-brown sand with charcoal flecks exposed, natural at c. 10cm.
47-52m	Modern disturbance.
52-57m	Mixed grey-yellow sand, archaeological deposits of dense brown sand found 8cm below this.
57-70m	Some hogging left on, lying onto grey sand with natural orange sand at 8cm.
70-75m	Grey sand (0004) overlying rusty coloured natural sand at 12cm. The grey sand seems fairly sterile here, with fewer charcoal flecks although a sherd of grey ware was recovered from it.
75-80m	Modern disturbance.
80-92m	All modern redeposited soils.

Table 1. Results of monitoring

Monitoring

Monitoring was carried out throughout the excavation work and the whole of the road-line was observed – the N-S length continuously and the E-W by frequent short visits. At no point were the levels reached in the trial trench exceeded, in fact the construction of a camber in the road meant that for most of the road-line levels were higher than those of the trial trench. The site strip showed that the ground had been built-up and levelled and the natural topography at the southern end appeared to be a gentle slope down to the west, which meant that the western side of the north-south length tended to have a greater depth of made-up ground than the eastern side. Geotextile membrane was laid on the stripped surface and this was quickly covered with Type 1 hardcore. Lorries had to drive on the stripped surface and some wheel rutting was inevitable, but this was kept to a minimum and damage to archaeological levels was avoided by the co-operation of the contractors who ensured that the lorries passed along the better protected west side of the road-line.

Throughout the monitoring the excavated levels remained above the archaeological horizons and natural subsoil was not seen at any time; in some places the previous road sub-base was not fully removed. Where intact soil levels were exposed these were generally homogeneous brown sands, possibly representing original topsoil levels prior to the airfield construction. The topography of the surrounding area suggests that much of this is made-up ground. A summary of the surface descriptions at the excavated levels is included on the plan below (Fig. 3).

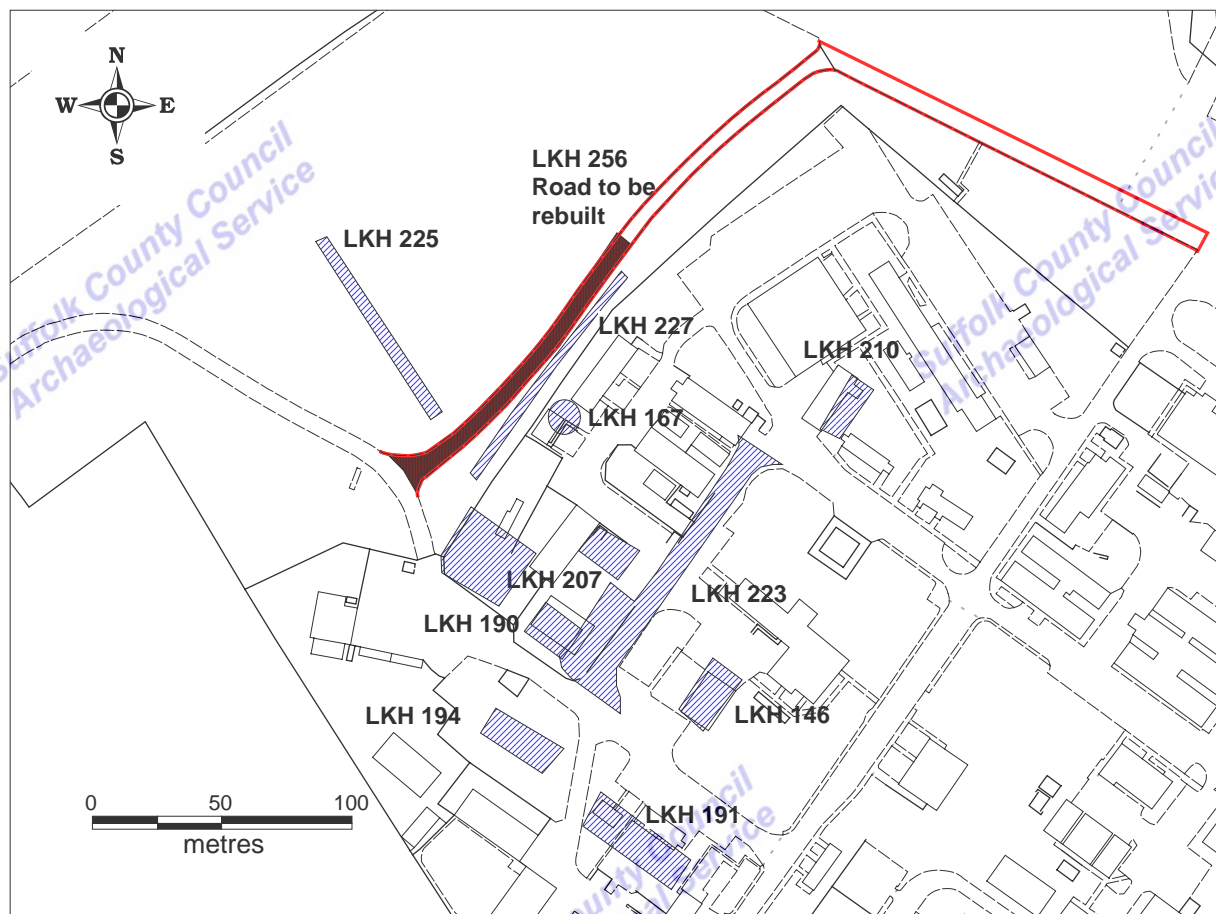


Figure 2. Site in relation to nearby archaeological sites

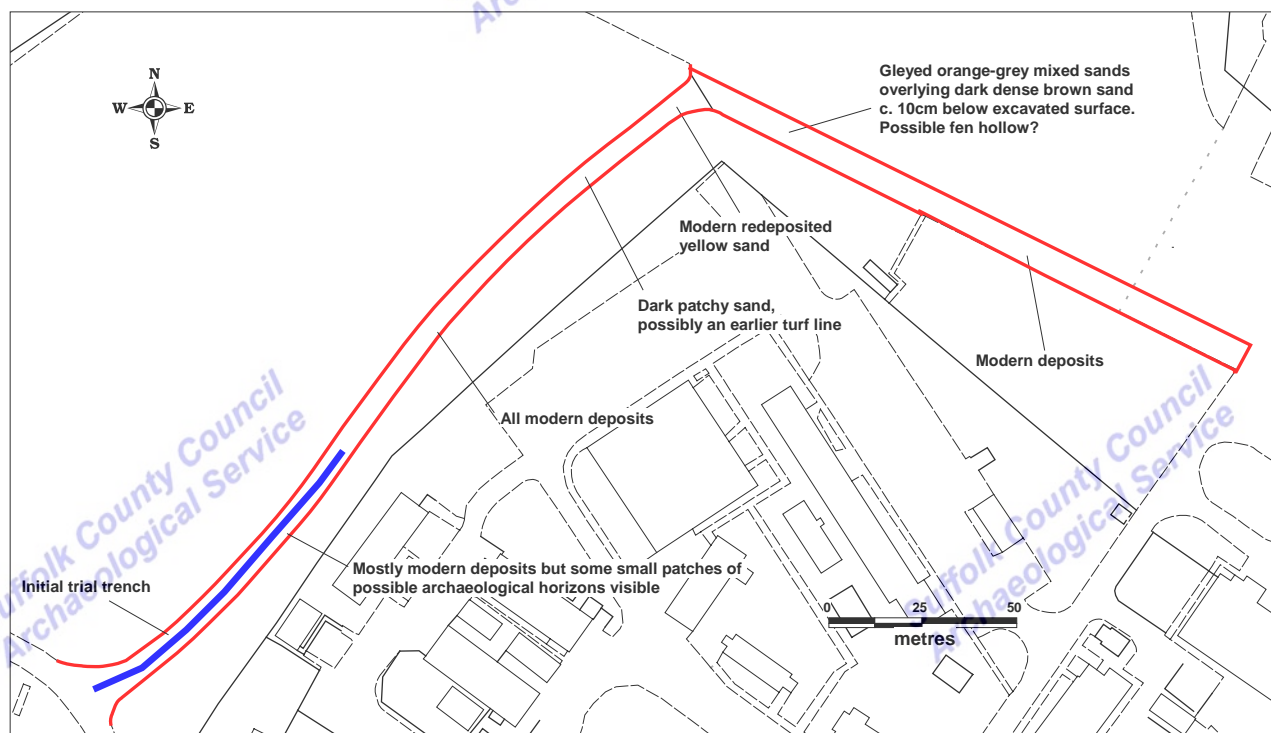


Figure 3. Summary of monitoring results

The Finds by Cathy Tester

Finds were recovered from five contexts, all surface collections, as shown in the table below.

OP	Pottery		Animal bone		Miscellaneous	Spotdate
	No.	Wt/g	No.	Wt/g		
0001	1	13				Rom
0002	1	3			Flint 1-8g; Burnt flint 1-36g	IA
0003	4	28	1	86		Rom
0004	1	4				Rom
0007			7	93		
Total	7	48	8	178		

Table 2. Finds quantities

Pottery was found in four contexts. The earliest is a hand-made sand and organic tempered bodysherd, 0002, which probably belongs to the later Iron Age. The remaining sherds are Roman coarsewares, all bodysherds so not closely datable, although a black-surfaced ware sherd is most likely Early Roman, 0003.

Animal bone was collected from two contexts, 0003, 0007. Fragments of cow long bone, skull and horncore and sheep metacarpal and scapula as well as other unidentified large and medium mammal bones were found.

A worked flint flake with a hinge-fracture and slight edge retouch or use-wear and a fragment of burnt flint 'potboiler' were found in 0002. The flake is probably Later Bronze Age or even Iron Age and the potboiler is also prehistoric.

The finds assemblage is limited but indicates activity in the vicinity during the later prehistoric and Roman periods.

Conclusion

The excavated levels for this new road construction did not penetrate to archaeological levels, however hand-dug shovel holes demonstrated the presence of features in the southern 100m length. The pottery found suggests activity dating to the Iron Age and Roman periods, but the results of nearby excavations (LKH 225 and 227) show that Saxon occupation is also likely.

Jo Caruth
February 2006

Appendix 1

EMERGENCY ACCESS ROAD, RAF LAKENHEATH

OUTLINE SPECIFICATION FOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORK

Introduction

1. Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service has been consulted by Defence Estates about a proposal to remove nearly 400m of roadway and re-make it; it is believed that this will involve excavation to at least 100mm below the present road base. The total area affected is described as about 3,000 sq. m.
2. Archaeological deposits are known to exist adjacent to the west part of the road. Recording at LKH 207, LKH 225 and LKH 227 (Base Water Supply project) demonstrates that for the first 130m of the western road Roman and early Anglo-Saxon domestic activity is present. Evidence to the south (LKH 192, LKH 210, Building 1155 area) suggests there may be scattered late Iron Age and early Roman activity beyond this. No recording has been done in the near vicinity of the north-east section of the road; the general pattern would suggest that prehistoric deposits are likely to occur.
3. The Roman and early Anglo-Saxon deposits are important to our understanding of the archaeology of the area, particularly in the context of the Anglo-Saxon cemeteries elsewhere on RAF Lakenheath.

Archaeological Work

1. The most sensitive area, c.130m length from the west end of the road, will require archaeological supervision of the removal of existing make up, followed by full recording according to standard SCCAS excavation specification, before further works damage the deposits.
2. The remaining area (c.270m long) will require archaeological monitoring during removal of the road and adequate time allowed for recording as per standard SCCAS monitoring specification.

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