

+

**Lincoln Road, East of Gate 3
RAF Mildenhall
MNL 678**

Archaeological Evaluation Report

SCCAS Report No. 2012/098

Client: Defence Infrastructure Organisation

Author: Andrew Tester

July 2012

© Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service

Lincoln Road East of Gate 3, RAF
Mildenhall
MNL 678

Archaeological Evaluation Report

SCCAS Report No. 2012/098

Author: Andrew Tester

Illustrator: Gemma Adams

Editor: Richenda Goffin

Report Date: July/2012

HER Information

Site Code: MNL 678
Site Name: Lincoln Road East of Gate 3
Report Number SCCAS Report No. 2012/098
Planning Application No: N/A
Date of Fieldwork: February 2012
Grid Reference: TL 684 775
Oasis Reference: suffolkc1-133089
Curatorial Officer: Judith Plouviez
Project Officer: Andrew Tester
Client/Funding Body: Defence Infrastructure Organisation

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: *****

Date: *****

Approved By: *****

Position: *****

Date: *****

Signed: *****

Contents

1. Introduction	1
2. Geology and topography	1
3. Archaeology and historical background	2
4. Methodology	2
5. Results	5
5.1 Trench results	5
7. Discussion	15
8. Conclusions and recommendations for further work	16
9. Archive deposition	17
10. Acknowledgements	17
11. Bibliography	17

List of Figures

Figure 1. Location of site showing trenches(black) and HER entries (green)	3
Figure 2. Trench plan (illustrated trenches in red)	4
Figure 3. Trench plans and sections	7

List of Tables

Table 1. Trench descriptions	5
Table 2. Context List	6

List of Plates

Plate 1. Trench 1 facing east, individual scale bars at 0.5m	8
Plate 2. Trench 2 facing east, individual scale bars at 0.5m	8
Plate 3. Trench 3 facing west, individual scale bars at 0.5m	9
Plate 4. Trench 4 facing east, individual scale bars at 0.5m	9
Plate 5. Trench 5 facing east, individual scale bars at 0.5m	10
Plate 6. Trench 5 feature 0011 facing west, individual scale bars at 0.5m	10
Plate 7. Trench 6 facing east, individual scale bars at 0.5m	11
Plate 8. Trench 6 feature 0004 facing south	11
Plate 9. Trench 7 facing west, individual scale bars 0.5m	12
Plate 10. Trench 8 facing east, individual scale bars 0.5m	12
Plate 11. Trench 9 facing west, individual scale bars at 0.5m	13
Plate 12. Trench 9 facing west, individual scale bars at 0.5m	13
Plate 13. Trench 10 facing east, individual scale bars at 0.5m	14
Plate 14. Trench 11 facing west, individual scale bars at 0.5m	14
Plate 15. Trench 11 facing east, individual scale bars at 0.5m	15

Summary

An archaeological evaluation along Lincoln Road, Mildenhall between Gate 2 and Gate 3 found scattered evidence of the Roman settlement previously identified immediately to the north of the site. No features were completely exposed within each trench but the excavated remains appear to consist mostly of ditches that were generally aligned more towards east-to-west than north-to-south. The features were heavily truncated by medieval/post medieval ploughing, which was visible against the surface of the natural chalk. The features were all deeper than 0.65m from the surface of Lincoln Road and therefore below the level of road rebuilding works.

1. Introduction

A series of evaluation trenches was excavated between Gates 2 and 3 at RAF Mildenhall in order to assess the archaeological potential of the site prior to the relaying and upgrading of Lincoln 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 eleven trenches was dug along the length of the road in order to map the archaeological potential.

2. Geology and topography

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 establishing 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

The site lies within an archaeologically rich landscape with intense settlement recorded along the edge of the Fens from the Late Bronze Age through to the Early Anglo-Saxon period (Fig. 1). The westernmost length of the road (MNL 666) was evaluated in an earlier report (SCCAS Report No. 2011/197). Recorded interventions on the county Historic Environment Record (HER) include:

- MNL 491 where Iron Age and Roman remains were excavated along with Iron Age burials in the new parking lots to the south east of MNL 666
- MNL 509 where Roman remains were found along Halifax Road, Wellington Road and Dakota Road during monitoring 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 was a multi-period prehistoric to Roman settlement to the north of the site
- MNL 610, which adjoined the site to the north

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

4. Methodology

A series of trenches were set out and the road surface broken and removed in these locations before a JCB type excavator fitted with a 1.75m 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 the context list as Table 2 and further detail on selected trenches discussed and illustrated. 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 and a photographic archive is included. A continuous numbering system was used for features and the site was recorded under the HER No. MNL 678. No finds were recovered

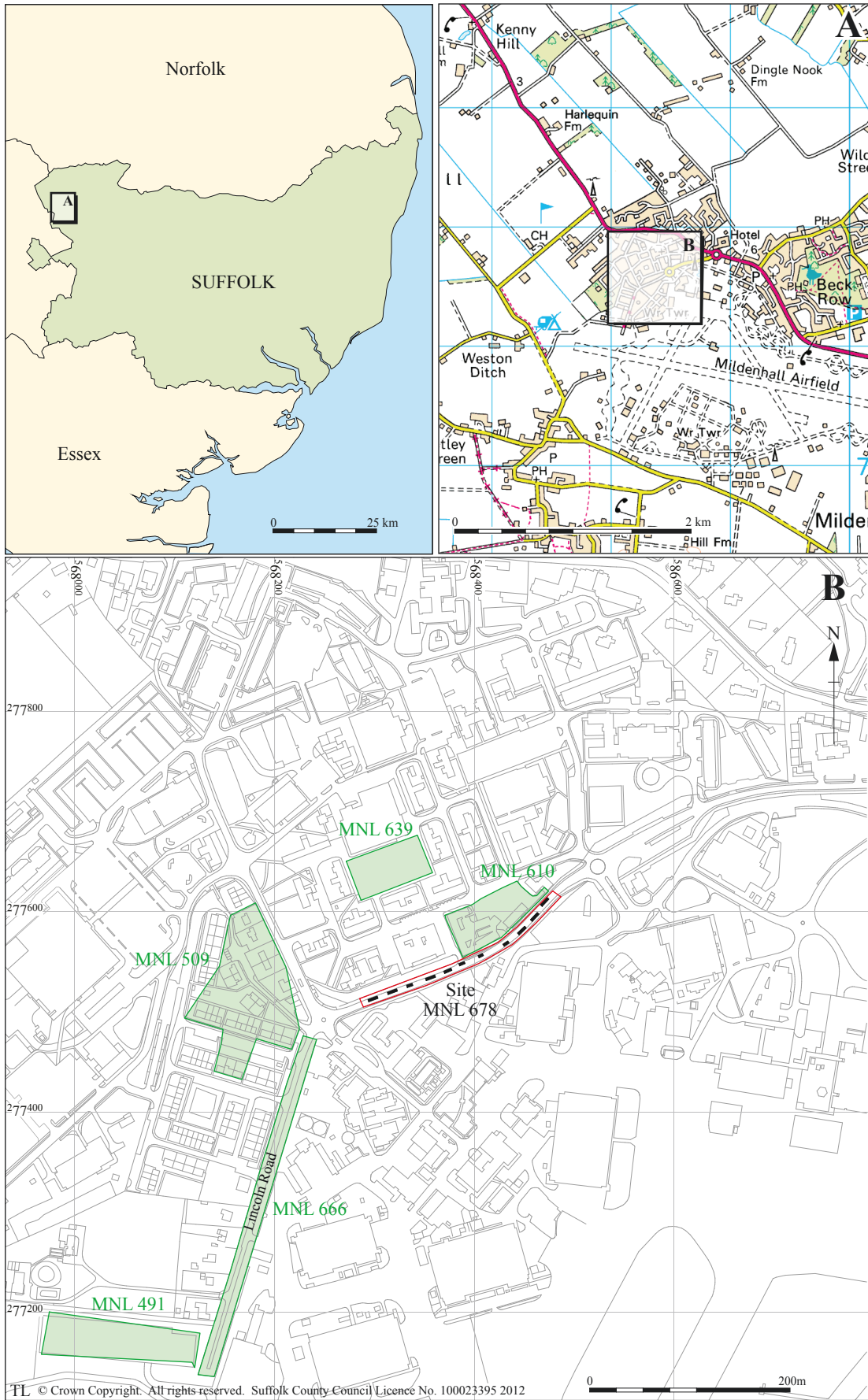


Figure 1. Location of site showing trenches (black) and HER entries (green)

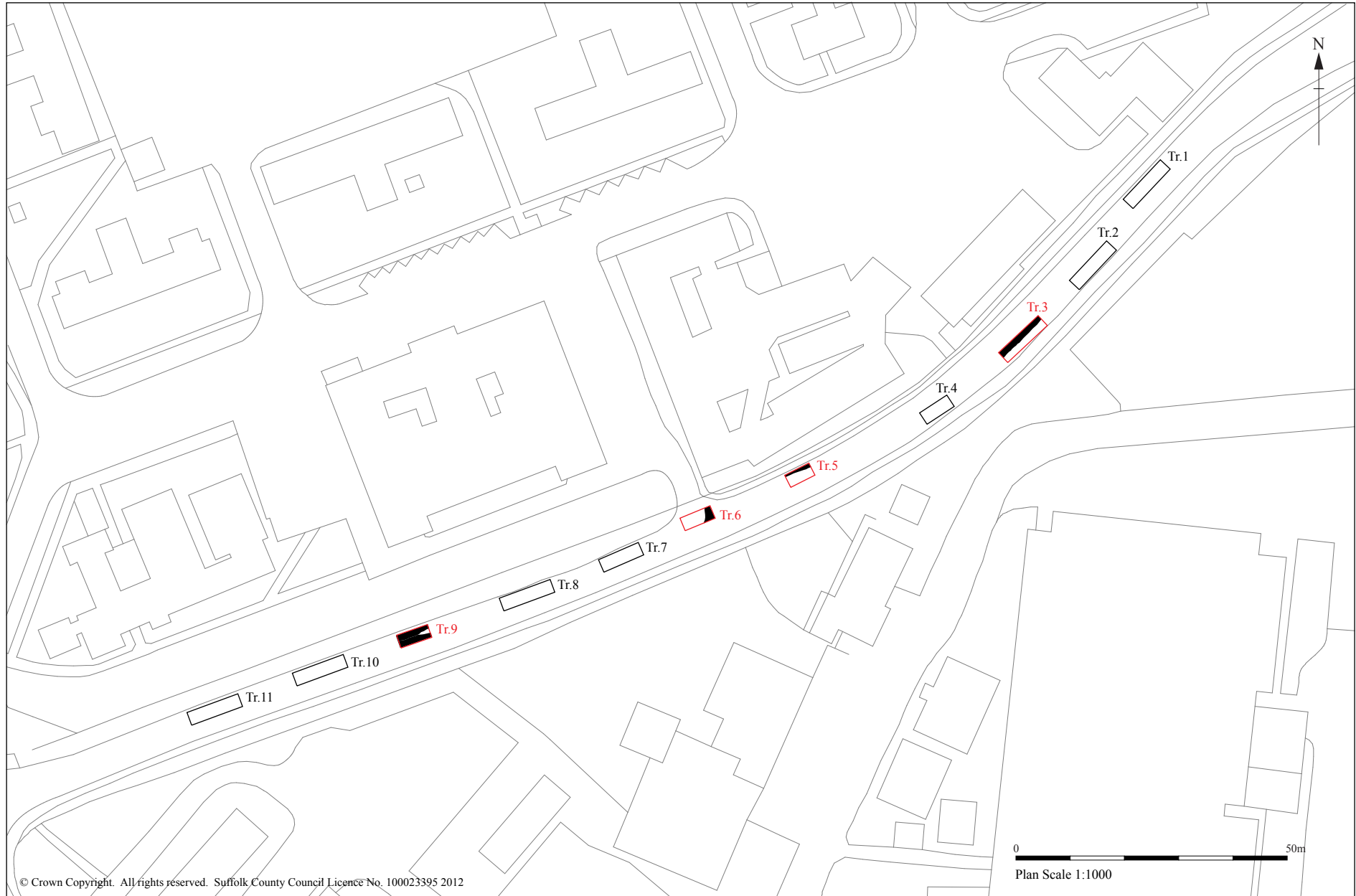


Figure 2. Trench plan (illustrated trenches in red)

5. Results

5.1 Trench results

A summary description of the trenching is provided below in table form with detailed plans of those trenches with features.

Trench	Dimensions	Depth	Natural subsoil	Trench fill
1	10m x 1.8m	Between 0.6m and 1.08m	Chalk	Tarmac overlay disturbed brown silt/sand; from c.0.4m the trench was filled with homogenous mid brown sand, 0008.
2	10m x 1.75m	c. 0.9mm	Chalk and sand	Tarmac and modern disturbance to 0.4m 0.5m of brown silt 0008. Below this natural chalk. Occasional charcoal on surface of chalk.
3	7m x 1.75m	c.0.9mm	Chalk and sand	Tarmac and hardcore to 0.4m. below this successive layers if chalk and clay and redeposited chalk; from 0.4m mid brown sand, 0008. An east-west ditch, 0002, is discussed below.
4	9m x 1.75m	c.0.95m	Chalky sand	Tarmac and redeposited chalk over mid brown sand, 0008 with natural chalk appearing at 0.95m.
5	5m x 1.75m	c.0.75m	Chalk	Tarmac and redeposited chalk to 0.5m. Mid brown sand, 0008, to 0.7m onto natural chalk. Probable ditch 0011, aligned east west, with grey brown silt fill. Further details below.
6	6m x 1.75m	c.0.6m	Chalk	Tarmac and redeposited chalk to 0.4m over mid brown silt 0008. Feature cut 0004, fill 0005 at eastern end of trench, grey brown silt fill. Further details below
7	8m x 1.75m	c.1.1m	Weathered chalk	Tarmac and hardcore; from 0.35m with 0.35m of mid brown silt 0008.
8	7m x 1.75m	c.0.9m	Weathered chalk	Tarmac and hardcore; from 0.35m mid brown silt, 0008. Linear marks in chalk with khaki brown fill, probable plough marks.
9	6m x 1.75m	c.0.65m	Yellow silty sand with chalk showing through	Tarmac and hardcore; from 0.35m mid dark brown silt, 0008, to 0.65m. Feature 0007 grey brown silt with some iron staining from podsolisation.
10	10m x 1.75m	c.1.1m	Chalk interspersed with grey brown silt/sand.	Tarmac and modern levelling to c.0.5m over c. 0.5m of brown silt, 0008. no obvious features at this depth but archaeology possible at deeper levels.
11	10m x 1.75m	1.1m	Chalk.	Tarmac and hardcore; from 0.35m mid brown sand, 0008, to 0.9m natural chalk with distinct plough marks.

Table 1. Trench descriptions

Context	Category	Trench	Description
0002	Fill	3	Fill of linear feature 0003. Grey/brown sand with occasional flecs of charcoal. Overlain by homogenous fill 0008
0003	Cut	3	Ditch(?) cut; base of ditch c. 0.4m deep from the top of the natural chalk.
0004	Cut	6	Curving edge of shallow feature cutting chalk.
0005	Fill	6	Grey/brown sandy fill of 0004 with flecks of charcoal and animal bone of large ungulate. Sealed by layer 0008
0006	Cut	9	Cut of probable ditch aligned east-west. C.0.25m deep with flat base, truncated below layer 0008 and cut by post-medieval ditch 0010.
0007	Fill	9	Fill of possible ditch 0006. Grey brown sand with some red staining due to podsolisation, which suggests former 'B' horizon developed over time. Included fragment of animal bone and sherd of Horningsea Grey ware pottery dating from the 2nd century (Cathy Tester personal comm.). Cut by ditch 0009. Sealed/cut by layer 0008.
0008	Layer	1 - 11	This layer was consistently present across all the trenches albeit of varying thickness. It was mid-brown silt/sand with occasional flecks of charcoal animal bone and tile fragments. It usually extended below modern disturbances and extended to the top of the natural chalk. It also made up the fill of the plough lines in Trench 11.
0009	Cut	9	Cut of possible ditch. Cuts ditch 0006, cut into silty sand and chalk.
0010	Fill	9	Fill of ditch 0009. Brown silt with some bands of chalk. Fragments of brick and charcoal. Similar to the overlying layer 0008 and suggested to be of a similar date and therefore post-medieval?
0011	Cut	5	Cut of possible ditch although relationship with natural chalk uncertain as natural yellow sand appears below the ditch. It is possible that the brown sand fill marks a localised edge between sand and chalk. The possible cut is steep sided
0012	Fill	5	Mid brown silty sand, below layer 0008 and natural yellow sand.
0013			

Table 2. Context List

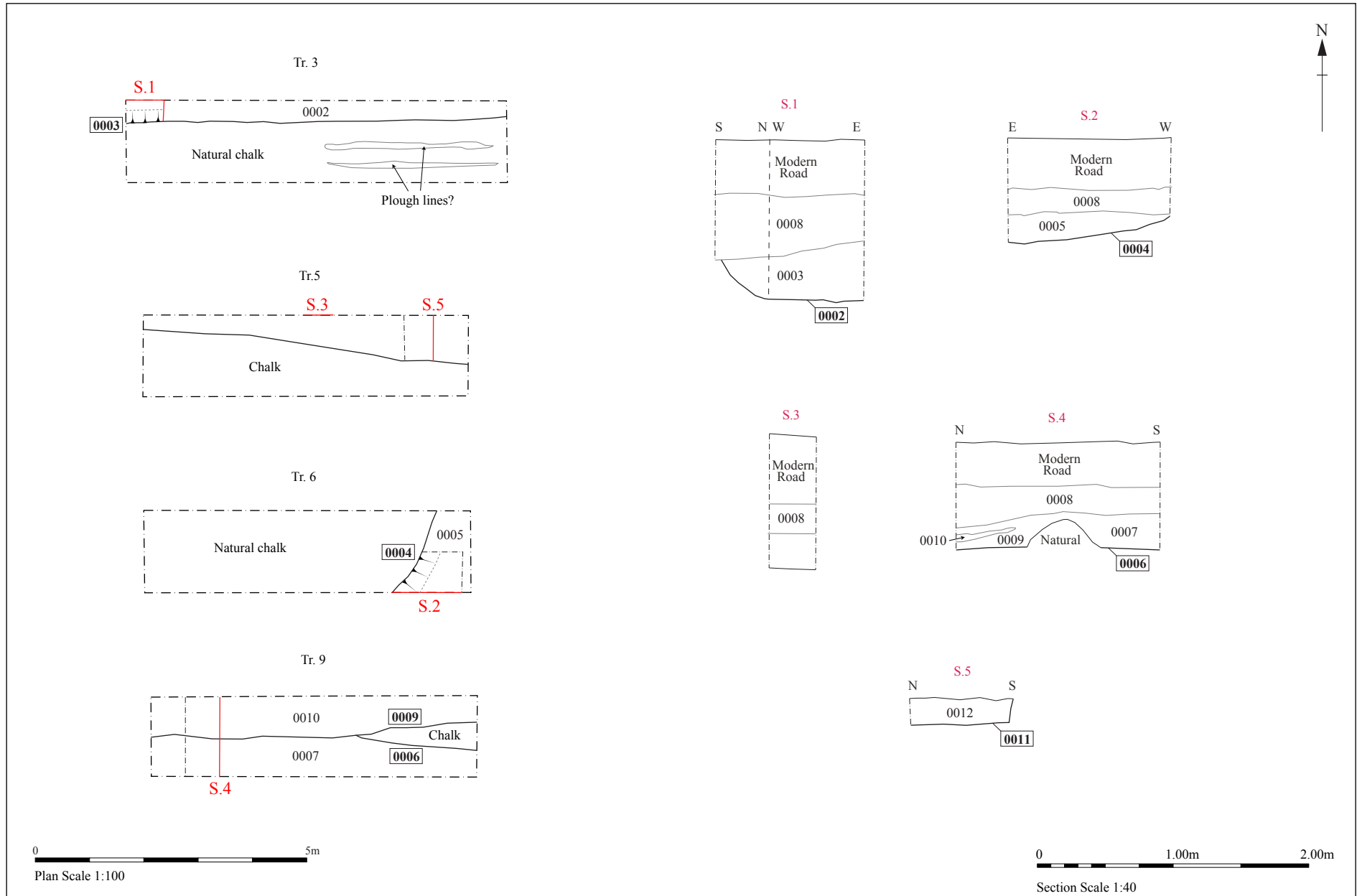


Figure 3. Trench plans and sections



Plate 1. Trench 1 facing east, individual scale bars at 0.5m



Plate 2. Trench 2 facing east, individual scale bars at 0.5m



Plate 3. Trench 3 facing west, individual scale bars at 0.5m



Plate 4. Trench 4 facing east, individual scale bars at 0.5m



Plate 5. Trench 5 facing east, individual scale bars at 0.5m



Plate 6. Trench 5 feature 0011 facing west, individual scale bars at 0.5m



Plate 7. Trench 6 facing east, individual scale bars at 0.5m



Plate 8. Trench 6 feature 0004 facing south



Plate 9. Trench 7 facing west, individual scale bars 0.5m



Plate 10. Trench 8 facing east, individual scale bars 0.5m



Plate 11. Trench 9 facing west, individual scale bars at 0.5m



Plate 12. Trench 9 facing west, individual scale bars at 0.5m



Plate 13. Trench 10 facing east, individual scale bars at 0.5m



Plate 14. Trench 11 facing west, individual scale bars at 0.5m



Plate 15. Trench 11 facing east, individual scale bars at 0.5m

7. Discussion

The results of the trenching reveal a consistent pattern across the site with c. 0.4-0.5m of modern road and sub-base with redeposited chalk, which was also modern, immediately below. In all the trenches there was a mid brown homogenous layer of silt with occasional chalk that varied in thickness between 0.25m-0.7m. This material also appeared in the plough marks that are so clearly visible in the base of Trench 11 (PLs. 14-15). Layer 0008 came onto weathered chalk except where archaeological features could be seen cutting the chalk (Trenches 3, 4, 6 and 9). No complete features were seen in any of the trenches but they were sufficiently exposed to support the suggestion

that they were all ditches. None of the features were deep and it is clear that the site was truncated above the surface of the natural chalk.

8. Conclusions and recommendations for further work

The evaluation has established the presence of archaeological features along most of the length of Lincoln Road between Gate 2 and Gate 3. Dating evidence was sparse but it seems likely that these features represent a continuation of the prehistoric and Roman settlement evidence that was identified immediately to the north, on the site of the former CES building, (Brookes 2010), and to the west of Gate 2 beneath Lincoln Road (Tester 2011). A striking feature of the evaluation was homogenous brown soil layer 0008, which is interpreted as evidence of medieval/post medieval ploughing (amply demonstrated in Trench 11, pls. 13 and 14). This layer seems to represent the re-working of everything above the level of the chalk. In terms of the archaeological profile on Mildenhall base it has been suggested that the 5m contour represented a guide to the limits of settlement, (Tester 2011) and that the contour signified a position close to the fen edge; it is presumed that from that position the wetlands of the fens could be accessed without the risk of flooding as well as the soils bordering the fens. Ground water would allow crops and forage to be grown and there was access to the drier Breckland beyond where livestock could be grazed. The strong link to the fen edge remains but the synchronicity with the 5m OD contour may be influenced by the pattern of later agricultural truncation resulting in a more closely defined limit to the sites than was originally the case.

The shallowest of the trenches was at c.0.65m and therefore well below the level of destruction to be caused by the rebuilding and resurfacing of the road between Gates 2 and 3 (at a maximum depth of 0.45m below the present road surface). It is therefore advised that no further archaeological work is required in this area.

9. Archive deposition

Paper and photographic archive: SCCAS Bury St Edmunds

Digital archive: SCCAS R:\Environmental Protection\Conservation\Archaeology\

Archive. Finds archive: SCCAS Bury St Edmunds parish boxes.

10. Acknowledgements

The Project was entirely managed by Andrew Tester who also carried out the fieldwork with Jonathan van Jennians. The pottery was identified by Cathy Tester and the report illustrations were created by Gemma Adams. The report was edited by Richenda Goffin.

11. Bibliography

British Geological Survey online 2012. Geology of Britain viewer.

Brookes, R., 2010, *Former CES building RAF Mildenhall MNL 610; An Archaeological Monitoring RAF Mildenhall*. SCCAS Report No. 2010/048

Tester, A., 2011, *Lincoln Road/Sewage Works Road, MNL 666; An Archaeological Evaluation RAF Mildenhall*. SCCAS Report No. 2011/197

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

Contact:

Rhodri Gardner

Tel: 01473 581743 Fax: 01473 288221

rhodri.gardner@suffolk.gov.uk

www.suffolk.gov.uk/Environment/Archaeology/