

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING REPORT

Street Sweeper Dump Site, RAF Lakenheath ERL 160

A REPORT ON THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING, 2006
(Planning app. no. F/2006/0021/GOV)

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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, John Craven and David Gill from Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service, Field Team. Finds processing was carried out by Gemma Adams and Anna West and the specialist finds report was carried out by Cathy Tester. SCCAS is grateful to main contractors Brehenys for their co-operation during the archaeological work.

Summary

Archaeological monitoring in advance of the construction of a Street Sweeper Dump Site at RAF Lakenheath identified ditches and a Roman buried soil containing pottery dating from the 2nd to 4th centuries AD. These finds represent a continuation of the Roman settlement identified to the east and south of this site and on the north side of Caudle Head Mere. The features and soil layer were sealed by windblown sand which appeared to have been worked, probably in the medieval or post-medieval period. The eastern end of the site had been truncated by levelling for a heavy vehicle compound, but evidence from the monitoring suggests that archaeological horizons on this side may have been previously truncated by the ploughing.

SMR information

Planning application no. F/2006/0021/GOV
Date of fieldwork: September and October 2006
Grid Reference: TL 7278 8081
Funding body: MOD Defence Estates (USF)
Oasis reference. Suffolkc1-18372

1. Introduction

An archaeological monitoring was carried out in advance of the construction of a new Street Sweeper Dump Site at RAF Lakenheath (Fig. 1). The archaeological work was carried out according to an outline brief issued by Jude Plouviez, SCCAS, Conservation Team to satisfy a condition on planning application F/2006/021/GOV.

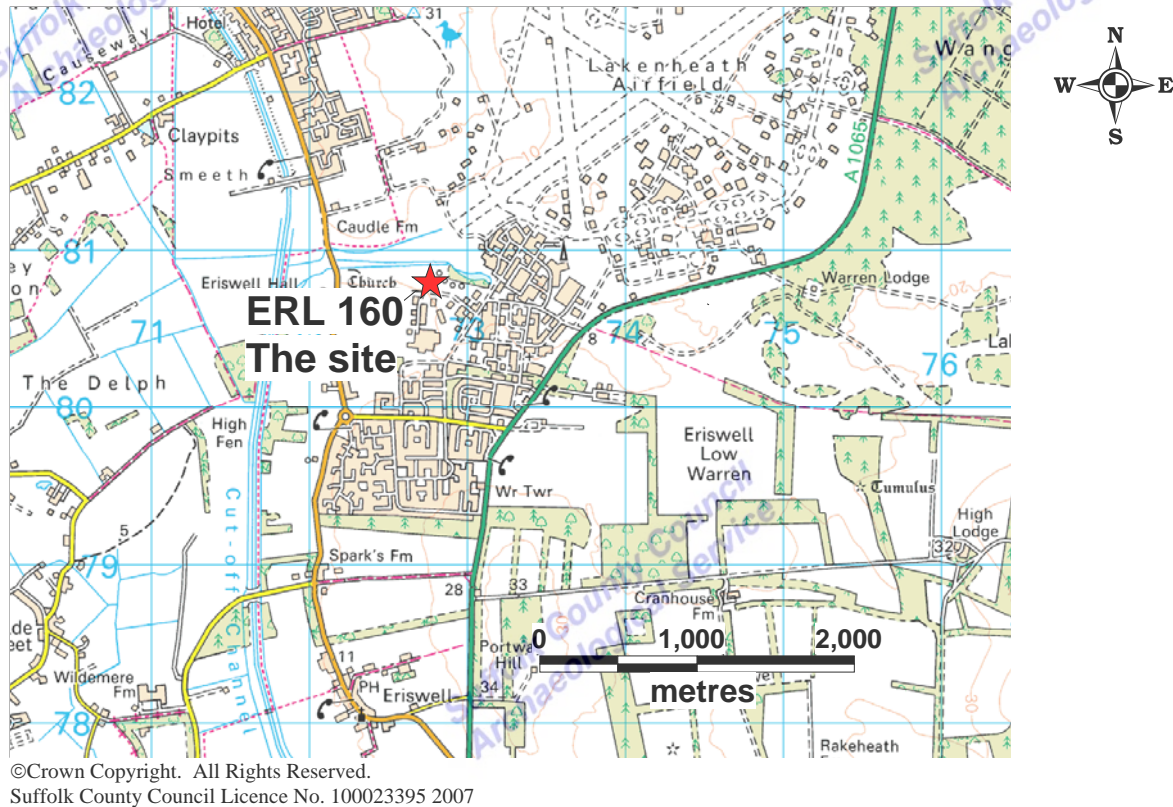
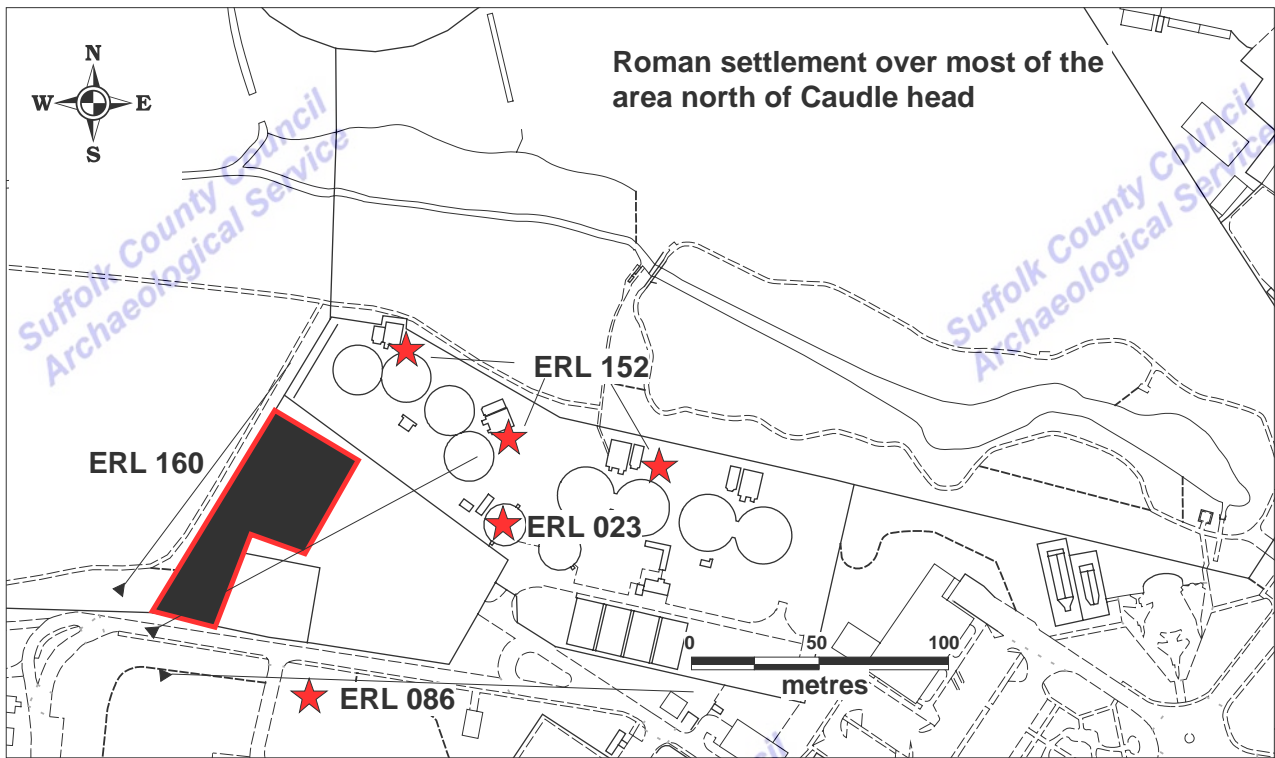


Figure 1. Site location

The site lies at TL 7278 8081, 240m west of Cauldle Head Mere (Fig. 2) on a slight northeast-southwest facing slope between 7m and 9m OD. The underlying geology is chalk with blown sand over, but around Cauldle Head this is overlain by peat deposits and further blown sand events. Previous archaeological work in the Sewage Works immediately to the east of the site (Fig. 2), has identified intense Roman occupation including a burial (ERL 023, Tester 1993 and ERL 152, Caruth, 2006) and work to the north of the site demonstrated deep waterlain deposits, but with no evidence for archaeological features. Evaluation in 1995, (ERL 086, Gill 1995), 50m south-east of the site also demonstrated evidence for Roman occupation and further extensive Roman settlement has been identified north of Cauldle Head.

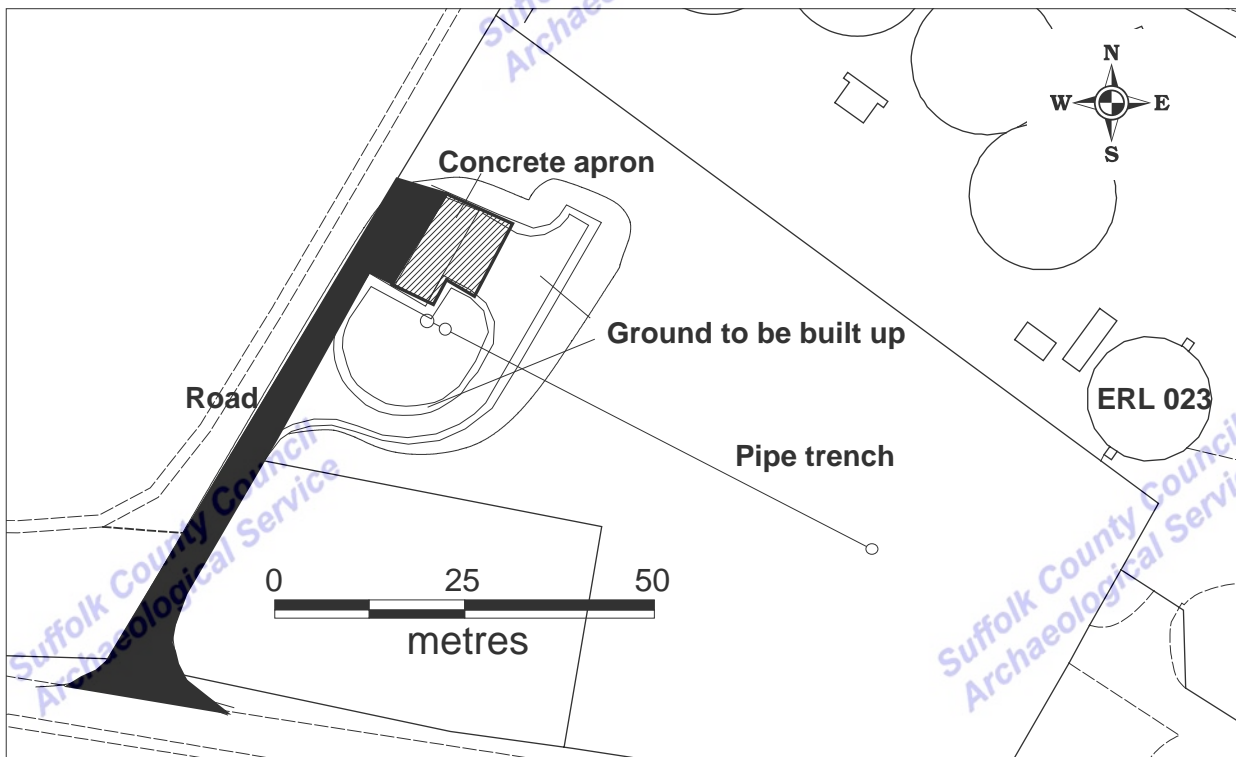
2. Methodology

Monitoring visits were made at regular intervals during the development. The strip for the concrete apron was seen after excavation but the strip for the road and the excavation for the E-W water main were monitored throughout the excavation work (Fig. 3). Sections of soil profiles and features were recorded at 1:20 and feature locations recorded on 1:200 and 1:500 construction plans. All finds were kept. The site was recorded under the new SMR number ERL 160 and context numbers from 0001-0033 issued. The site archive is kept in the archaeological stores of the SCCAS in Bury St Edmunds and a digital copy of the report is lodged with the OASIS on-line database.



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Figure 2. This project in relation to nearby archaeological sites



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Figure 3. Plan of the development

3. Results

A number of features, soil layers and some finds were recovered during this work. A detailed list of contexts is included in Appendix 1.

3.1. Concrete apron

The strip for this was seen after excavation. It covered an area of c.14m x 10m and was c.0.5m deep (Fig. 3). This did not penetrate natural sand or chalk but cut through topsoil and a blown sand, partially exposing the top of a layer of grey-brown sand. No finds were seen within this.

3.2. Road

The excavations for the road were monitored as they were excavated and were c.78m long by 5m wide, with a greater width of 7m for the northern 14m west of the concrete apron (Fig. 3). The excavation was c.0.6m deep and followed the existing topography which sloped down from southwest to northeast, towards Caudle Head Mere. Two sections of the soil profiles (Fig. 4) show modern deposits and topsoil overlying pale brown blown sand, over a dark grey-brown buried soil. The base of this was not found and natural sand was not seen. Section 0031 appears to show two episodes of windblown sand deposits overlying the buried soil. Finds were recovered from the surface of the dark soil layer, 0005, as seen in section 0032.

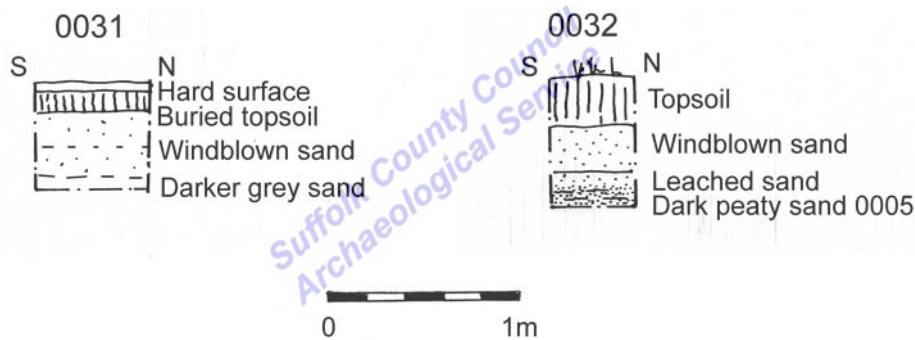


Figure 4. Sections recorded during road excavations

3.3. Pipe trench

This was 0.8m wide x 1.1m deep and ran for c.67m (Fig. 3). The soil profile changed from east to west, at the west end it was generally well preserved although there was a single large modern disturbance but at the east it was severely truncated. Section 0027 (Figs. 5 and 8) through the side of the hole excavated for the interceptor showed a buried turf line, windblown sand and a possible occupation soil surviving under modern deposits. The next 10.4m of trench eastwards was completely destroyed by a large modern disturbance, but beyond this a number of north-south and northeast-southwest aligned ditches filled with dark and pale sands were visible (Figs. 6 and 7). Some of the ditches had the slumped remains of an overlying dark brown sand layer in the top, from which finds, 0002, 0003 and 0004, were recovered, but this layer was not apparent over some of the paler features. These ditches could be seen over c.14m length of pipe trench and over the next c.13m to the east a dark sand layer was visible to a depth of c.0.3m under the modern and windblown sand on the south side of the trench. This is interpreted as a longitudinal section through an east-west aligned ditch. Modern deposits of c.0.4m overlying pale mottled brown windblown sand, 0012, could be seen throughout the central length. The depth of the windblown sand varied as it slumped over the larger ditches and the presence of ploughlines

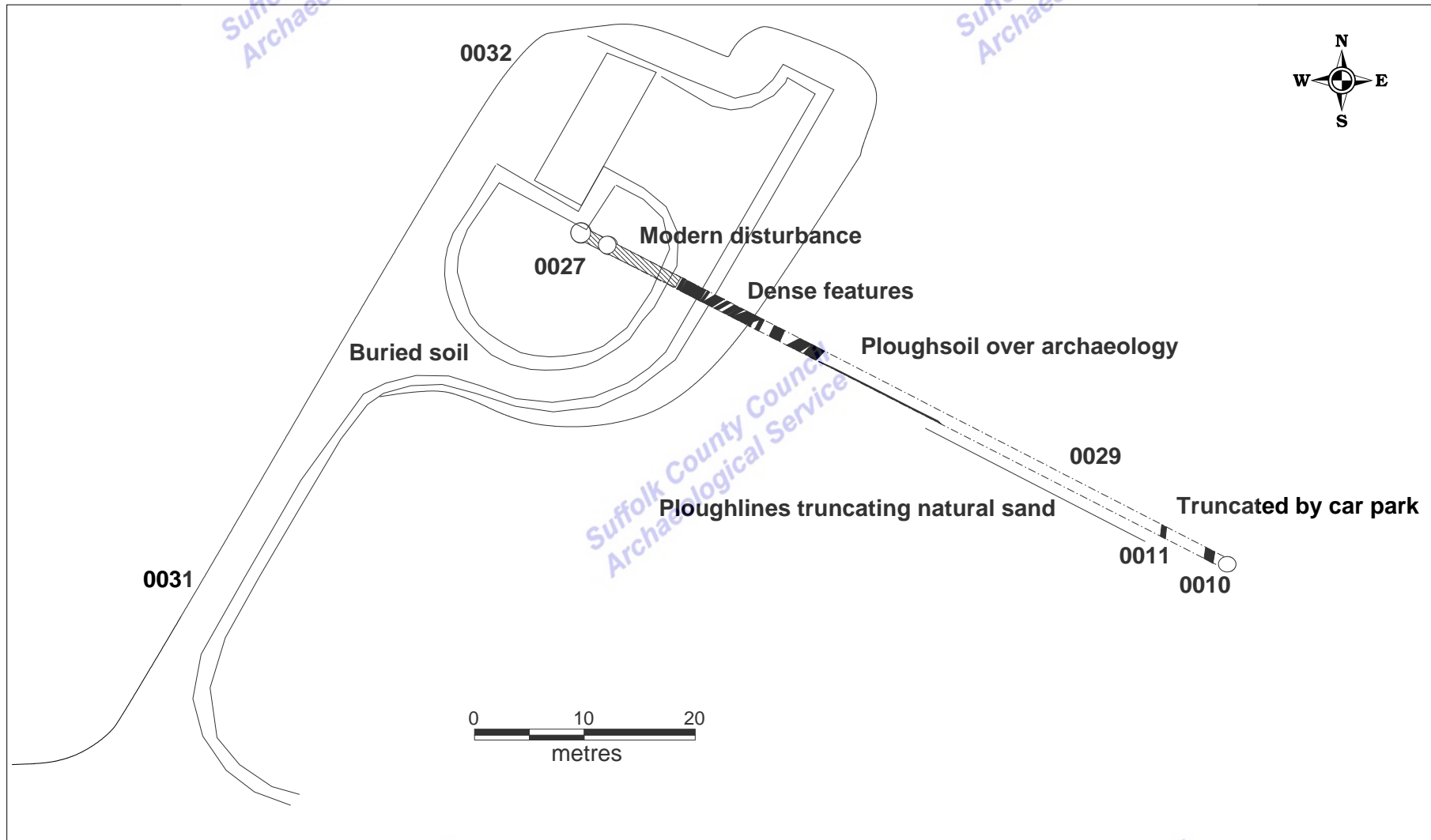


Figure 5. Overall site plan

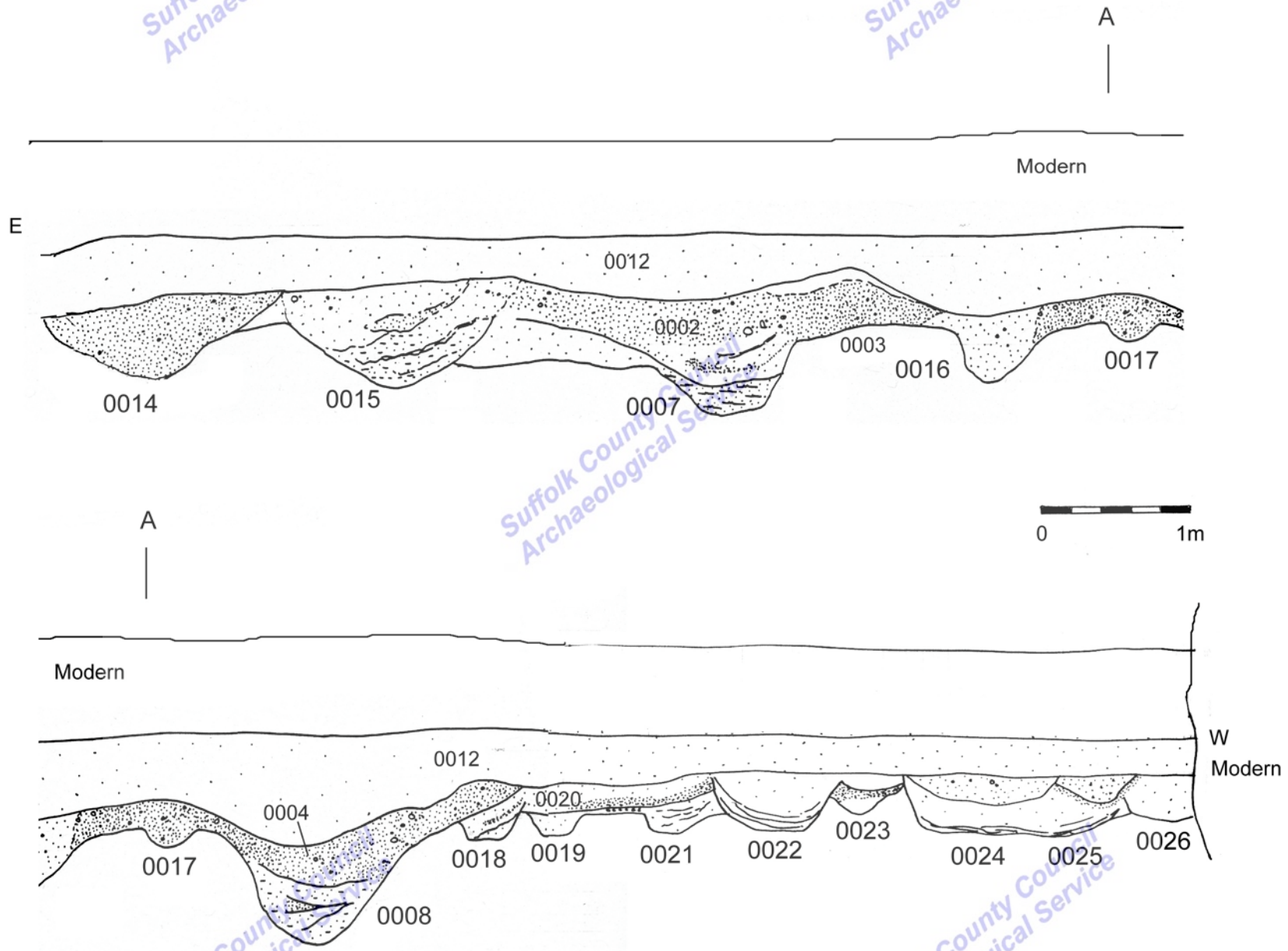


Figure 6. Section of central length of pipe trench

within it suggests arable cultivation (Fig. 8, section 0029). East of the ditches the windblown sand became thinner and the ploughlines cut into the top of natural sand. Two ditches, 0010 and 0011 (Figs. 5 and 8), were present in the eastern 10m of the trench, but only the base of the easternmost of these survived and here all buried and windblown deposits had been truncated by the modern carpark.

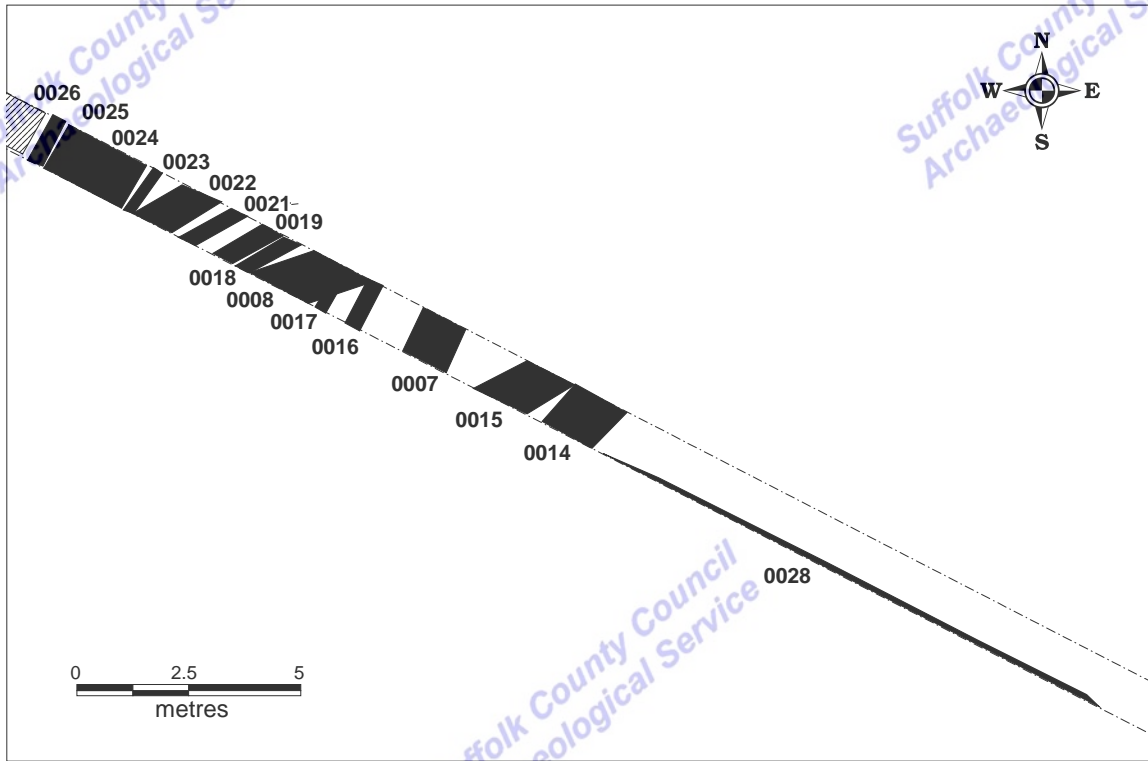


Figure 7. Plan of central length of pipe trench

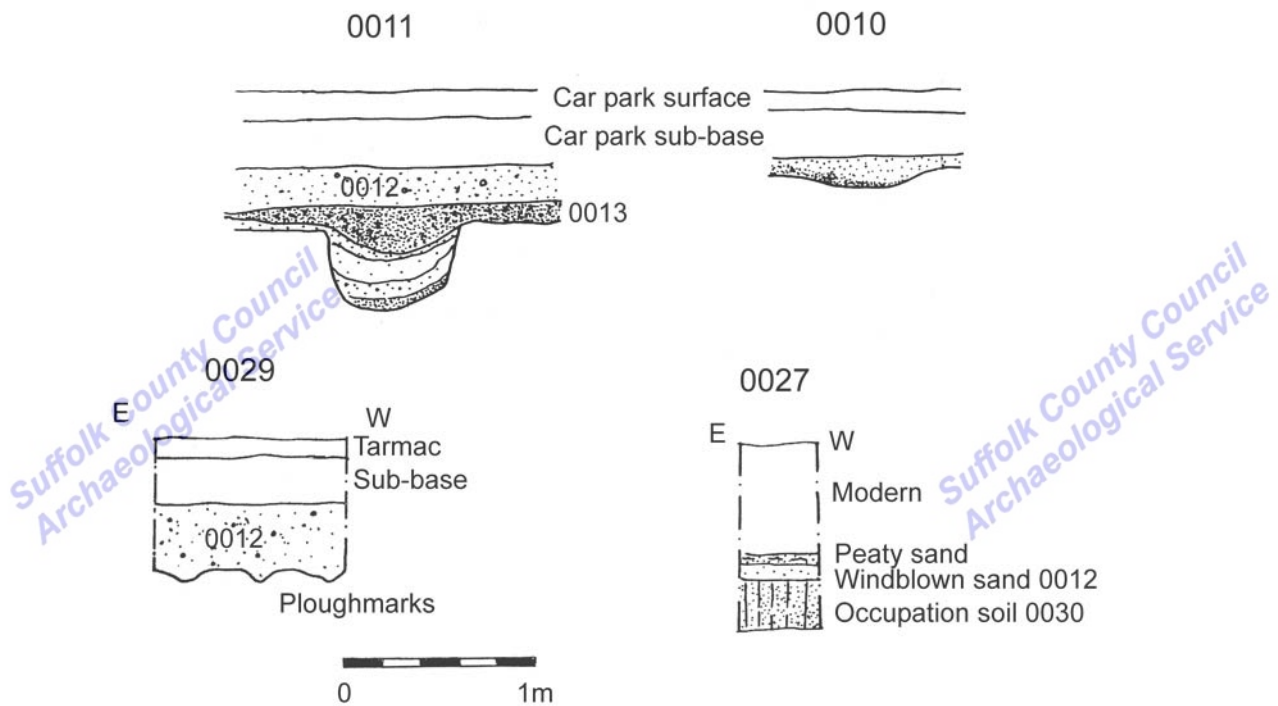


Figure 8. Other pipe trench sections

4. Finds and environmental evidence by Cathy Tester

4.1. Introduction

Finds, consisting entirely of pottery, were collected from four contexts during the monitoring. The quantities by context are shown in the table below.

OP	Pottery		Spotdate
	No.	Wt/g	
0002	5	63	Rom
0003	1	4	Rom
0004	1	22	Rom
0005	6	85	LC3/4; IA or ESax
Total	13	174	

Table 1. Finds quantities

4.2. Pottery

Thirteen sherds of pottery weighing 174g were collected from four layers. Details of fabric, form and quantities by context are shown below.

OP	Fabric	Sherd	No	Wt/g	Form	Notes	Date
0002	GMG	rb	2	40	2 NJar	Njar rim (120mm, 21%) C2+?	Rom
	GMG	b	2	18	Jar	Jar soot ext. V abundant mica	Rom
	GX	b	1	5		Abraded	Rom
0003	GMG	b	1	4		Abraded	Rom
0004	GMG	b	1	22	Jar		Rom
0005	HMS	b	1	5		Abr. Medium-coarse quartz sand	IA or ESax
	BSW	b	1	5			Rom
	HAX	b	1	2	1 flagon	Grey core	LC3/4
	HOGB	b	1	31	SJar	Shoulder	MC2+
	LSH	b	1	41	SJar	V thick	LC3/4
	LSH	r	1	1	Jar	Standard jar	LC3/4

Table 2. Pottery

(Key: b= bodysherd; ba = base; r = rim;

A single hand-made sand tempered (HMS) sherd was found in layer 0005. The piece is abraded and non-diagnostic so cannot be certainly identified as Iron Age or Early Saxon.

Six wheel-made fabrics or fabric groups of certain Roman date were identified. They include local and regional coarsewares and late specialist wares.

Grey micaceous wares (GMG) are represented by a narrow mouthed bottle or flask and a less certain jar form. Neither are closely datable but are most likely 2nd century or later. Sandy grey wares (GX) are represented by a single non diagnostic bodysherd. A single Horningsea ware black-surfaced variant (HOGB) storage jar sherd can date from the mid 2nd century onwards.

Provincially-traded late specialist wares which characterise Late Roman assemblages include a Hadham redware (HAX) flagon and one late shell-tempered ware (LSH) storage jar and a standard jar. All belong to the late 3rd or 4th century.

4.3. Discussion of the finds evidence

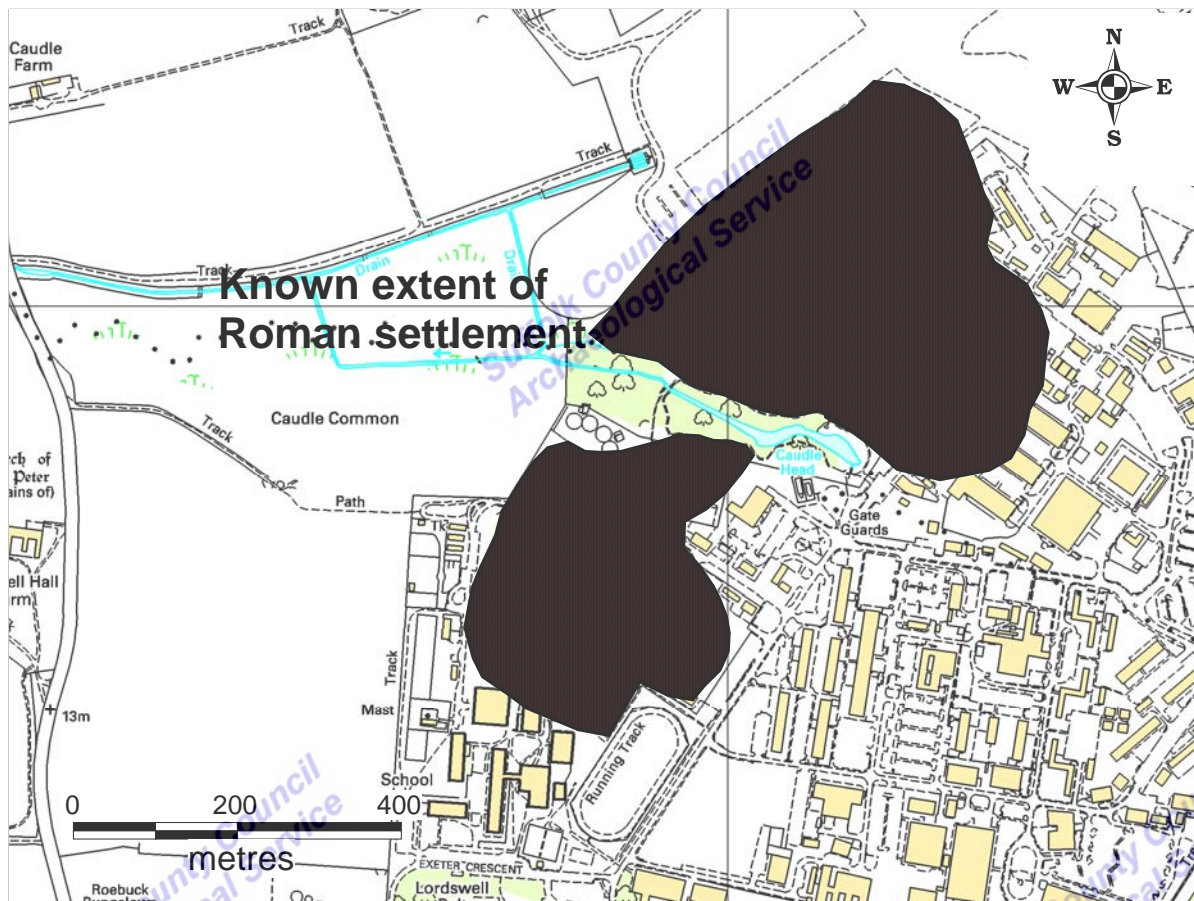
Roman pottery, which probably represents the disposal of domestic waste resulting from occupation in this vicinity includes material of mid and later Roman date. Although the assemblage is small, the fabrics present are typical of rural sites in this part of the county.

A single sherd of hand-made sand tempered pottery could not be certainly identified as Iron Age

or Early Saxon. Because of its association with late Roman material, the possibility that it is Early Saxon is slightly more likely, but the possibility that it is Iron Age cannot be ruled out entirely.

5. Discussion

The results of this monitoring show that the Roman occupation seen to the east and south-east of the site continues into this area. The intensity of features from the centre of the pipe trench westwards suggests that the occupation is focussed at this end of the site, however the obvious truncation, (probably as a result of levelling for the existing compound and earlier plough damage) seen at the east end of the pipe trench allows the possibility that all but the deepest features here may have been completely destroyed during previous works. Evidence from other work carried out this year, ERL 152 (Caruth 2006), shows that north of the site, towards the outflow from Caudle Head, there is peat growth, indicating that this area was wetter and lies within the flood plain of the Mere. No features have so far been seen in this lower area and therefore it is probable that the Roman settlement is confined to the slightly higher, drier ground.



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Figure 9. Known extent of the Roman settlement around Caudle Head

Throughout the monitoring the presence of an intermittent dark grey-brown sand was noted, and it was from this that all the finds were recovered. This is comparable with dark buried soil layers seen elsewhere within the Roman settlement and probably represents the same worked Roman occupation seen within the settlement. A layer of fine pale brown sand seen in all but the extreme eastern end of the pipe looks like a windblown deposit and the presence of ploughlines within this shows that it has been worked, although possibly for only a limited period. There is no dating evidence for the ploughing but the windblow deposit is probably the result of

numerous events, all of which post-date the Roman period. The ditches represent a sequence of activity and the dark soil layer can only be seen in the top of some of them. It is possible that the absence of the dark layer indicates the presence of later ditches cutting through it and largely filling with sand from above. This is comparable to results from ERL 023 (Tester 1993), where later ditches (one, at least, possibly Saxon) had upper fills of windblown sand as opposed to darker, organic fills of the earlier features.

The finds recovered fit the pattern of pottery found in the larger assemblages from the nearby sites and represent domestic waste typical of rural Roman settlement. The pottery was all recovered from the possible occupation layer and was dated as mid-late Roman, comparable with dates recovered from the occupation layers elsewhere within the Roman sites.

The density of features and finds assemblage, albeit small, both indicate that this area represents domestic settlement rather than agricultural or transient occupation.

6. Conclusion

This monitoring identified evidence of Roman settlement over the whole of the development area which is a continuation of evidence recovered within the Sewage Works to the east and evaluation trenching to the south. This has made a significant contribution to the tracing of the limits of the Roman settlement on the south side of Caudle Head and has added to the overall knowledge of the Roman occupation at RAF Lakenheath.

Although the groundworks for the road were not deep enough to impact on the archaeological layers the monitoring demonstrated that the Roman occupation layer was well preserved and extensive and therefore it is likely that the density of features seen in the pipe trench continues across the wider area.

Jo Caruth
February 2007

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