

# ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

91 Abbey Road,  
Leiston.

Sites and Monuments Record No: LCS 142

N.G. REF: TM 44329 63539

Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service Report No: 2004/143



Fig.1: view of excavated kiln

## Introduction

A site visit was made to the rear garden of 91 Abbey Road, Leiston, on Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> September, 2004, at 5.30pm.

This is the property of Mr. Andrew Culpeck and the garden consists of nearly 1 hectare.

In the south-west corner of the garden (TM 44329 63539), 10m from the western boundary and 10.5m from the south boundary of the garden was a small excavation. This excavation was c.3m long and c.1m wide, of varying depth and aligned north to south.

The excavation had been carried out by the owner's nephew and a friend as a result of metal detecting. A modern metal find had been uncovered, under which was a large pot sherd. Immediately below that, further excavation had produced a considerable number of sherds in a 'very dark soil'. All sherds had been removed from the excavation, washed and boxed prior to the site visit.

## Results

Centrally in the excavation and at 95cm depth to the base was part of a charcoal blackened clay structure which appeared to have been mostly removed in antiquity. The structure was situated on natural yellow sand. Above this was mid brown silty sand topsoil to a depth of 10cm. Under this was 35cm of light brown silty sand subsoil.

The remaining flat, burnt clay base, 5 to 7cm thick, was roughly triangular in shape. From its curved western side a similarly thick wall of burnt clay rose vertically for 15cm before curving slightly inwards for a further 20cm. At this level, 45cm below ground level, the structure appeared to have been removed in antiquity. The surviving base extended 60cm from the wall eastwards.

The majority of the pot sherds were collected from where the southern quarter of the structure would have been, from the top of subsoil almost down to the base of the structure. A few sherds, including the Samian, were from outside the immediate kiln area.



Fig.2: pottery vessel from excavation

## Finds (by Jude Plouviez)

### Roman Pottery (with Samian identifications by Cathy Tester)

The pottery included two sherds of samian ware (weight 11g), both Central Gaulish in origin and Antonine in date; one was from a Drag 31, the other an unidentifiable dish form fragment.

All other pieces seen (82 rims and 40 base sherds) were grey ware. The fabric was consistent with a single source, mainly mid grey (but with more oxidised colour variations and also occasionally dark surfaced) with a moderate amount of mixed rounded medium/fine quartz sand and a moderate amount of silver mica flecks visible (in a hand specimen). The kiln origin was confirmed by the presence of a few cracked, blown and warped pieces, surfaces were often sooty and some pieces have a white-ish deposit on both interior and exterior surfaces. The commonest forms are medium mouthed jars (SCCAS vforms 4.1, 4.5, 4.6), with a rounded body, some neck (generally less neck than typical of 1<sup>st</sup> century types) and an everted rim with the end folded over to make a slightly undercut oval bead. Rim diameters of the jars range

from 11 to 18 cms, with a majority around 14-15 cms. The bases are turned but only to give a flat form; only one complete profile was recorded. There were also a few example of the wide mouthed jar/bowl with single groove at the maximum girth point (vform 5.4) and several pieces, probably from a single vessel, of a bowl/dish with inturned rim (vform 6.21) - this form most comparable to Burgh (EAA 40) no.343 but with an external groove as well as internal angle. The bowl sherds included dark surfaced pieces with burnish, probably the intended style. There are burnished areas also on the jars, mainly bands on the exterior and rim.

The date range for the grey ware forms is roughly later 1<sup>st</sup> century to mid 2<sup>nd</sup> century. It is not possible to be certain if the material represents a final firing or a deliberate backfill post-use or a combination; the relative scarcity of complete profiles and the Samian sherds indicate some general debris rather than a single kiln group.

### **Fired clay**

Two pieces of kiln walling, with one hard fired surface, 30 to 40mm thick.

### **Copper alloy**

by Faye Minter (PAS database ref SF-AF02D1)

A copper-alloy Roman hair pin of Cool Group 1, knob headed pins (Cool 1990, 151-154 fig 1). The head is globular with a circular cross-section and a flat underside. It measures 7mm in height and 6.9mm in width. The shaft is complete apart from its tip, it measures 73.4mm in length, has a circular cross-section and a swollen middle, it measures 5mm in width across this and 3mm in width elsewhere. This type of pin was used throughout the Roman period but was perhaps most popular in the later part of the Roman period.

(The pin was found in topsoil c.30m north-east of the kiln area)

### **General Comments**

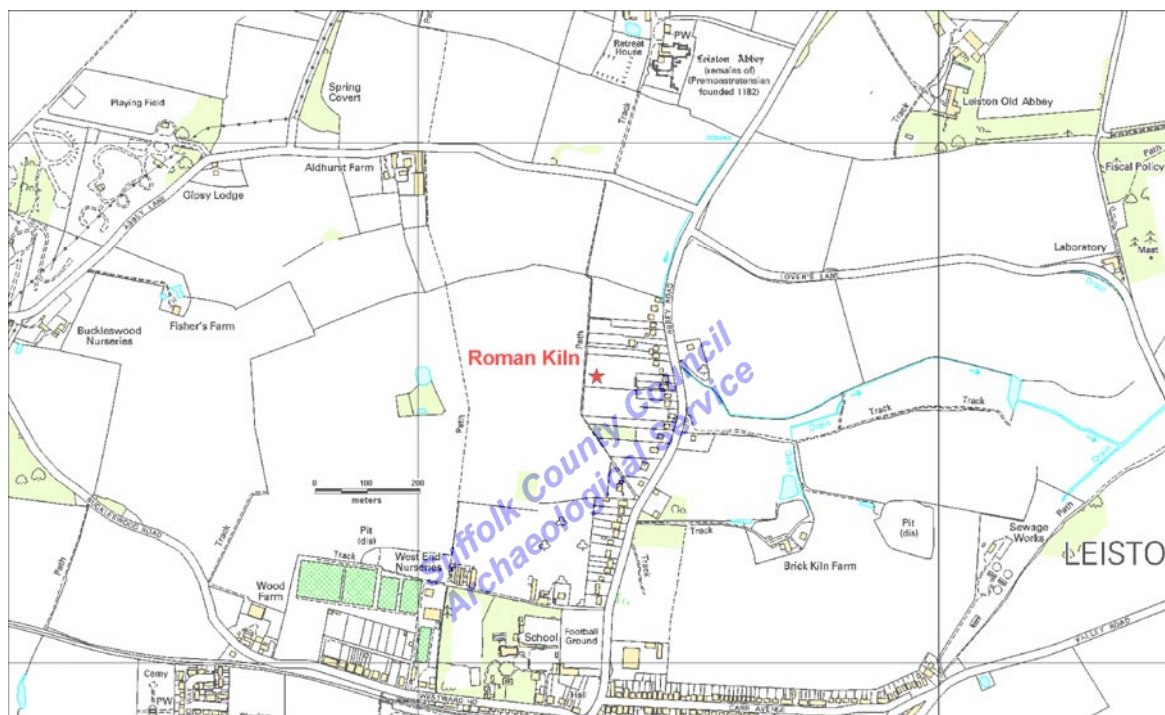
This limited investigation provides good evidence for Roman pottery production, most likely in the first half of the second century AD. Although very damaged the projected size of the kiln oven is fairly typical. The products are largely kitchen wares, utilitarian jar forms, though the dish can be described as table ware. Relatively small scale pottery production for a very local market seems to be a common pattern in the earlier Roman period, although few of these sites have been examined extensively.

The non local finds from the near vicinity (samian ware, copper alloy pin, coins – minims found c.40m north of the kiln) suggest other activity, perhaps domestic, which may be continuing later in the Roman period than the individual kiln group. There are other finds of Roman coins recorded from nearby (SCC SMR refs LCS 013, two sesterii to the north and LCS Misc, one third century to the south).

## Conclusions

This structure appears to be part of a kiln, which if the horizontal curvature of the 'wall' was reconstructed would produce a base of about 1.1 to 1.2m in diameter. There was no evidence of a central pedestal. The excavation was not extensive enough to show a stokehole. Only the inner face and edges of the wall were visible.

The finds evidence suggests a kiln producing predominantly kitchen wares for the local market during the earlier part of the second century AD. Other finds recovered from the vicinity suggest settlement during the Roman period, possibly dating from a later period than the kiln.



Location of Kiln

Five pottery rim sherds and one base sherd have been donated to the archives of the Sites and Monuments Record and are held in the store of the Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service in Bury St Edmunds.

Photographs supplied by Mr Martin Culpeck.

**Roy Damant,**  
Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service,  
September 2004