

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT

SCCAS REPORT No. 2010/222

Intermediate School Gym, RAF Lakenheath, Eriswell ERL 214

J. A. Craven
© December 2010
www.suffolk.gov.uk/environment/archaeology

Lucy Robinson, County Director of Economy, Skills and Environment
Endeavour House, Russel Road, Ipswich, IP1 2BX.

HER Information

Planning Application No: F/2009/0499
Date of Fieldwork: 11/11/2010
Grid Reference: TL 7267 8024
Funding Body: MoD Defence Estates (USF)
Curatorial Officer: Judith Plouviez
Project Officer: J. A. Craven
Oasis Reference: Suffolkc1-83295

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

Contents

Summary

	Page
1. Introduction	1
2. Geology and topography	1
3. Archaeological and historical background	1
4. Methodology	2
5. Results	4
6. Conclusions and recommendations for further work	4
9. Archive deposition	7
10. Contributors and acknowledgements	7
11. Bibliography	7
Disclaimer	7

List of Figures

1. Site location	3
2. Trench plan and sections	6

List of Plates

1. Trench 1, facing east	5
--------------------------	---

Summary

An archaeological evaluation carried out on land at the Intermediate School, RAF Lakenheath, identified a single undated ditch, indicating that the site lies in a peripheral area between two known areas of extensive Roman occupation at Thunderbird Way/Kennedy Street and Caudle Head.

1. Introduction

An archaeological evaluation was carried out in advance of the construction of a new Gym building at the Intermediate School, RAF Lakenheath, Eriswell (Fig. 1) The work was required to assess the impact of planning application F/2009/0499 on potential archaeological deposits and was subject to a Brief and Specification written by Judith Plouviez, Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service Conservation Team. The work was funded by the developer, MoD Defence Estates.

2. Geology and topography

The proposed development lies on the western edge of RAF Lakenheath, at TL 7267 8024, on a landscaped south-facing slope, at a height of c.10m AOD. The site consists of open grassland and a hard surface tennis court which is partially terraced into the slope. The site lies on deep sandy soils over glaciofluvial drift (Ordnance Survey 1983).

3. Archaeological and historical background

RAF Lakenheath lies within the dense band of prehistoric, Roman and Anglo-Saxon activity that is recorded along the margins of the fens in the Suffolk Historic Environment Record (HER). Within the airbase extensive redevelopment since the late 1980's has seen significant levels of fieldwork with some 175+ projects having previously been carried out by the SCCAS Field Team. In the immediate vicinity Bronze and Iron Age occupation and funerary evidence has been excavated alongside Lord's Walk, c.350m to the south. Extensive evidence of Roman occupation has previously been seen 70m to the south in small excavations and monitorings in Thunderbird Way (ERL 111, ERL 142 and ERL 211) and Kennedy Street (ERL 112, ERL 212) and to the east, under a previous extension to the Intermediate School (ERL 118) late Iron Age/early Roman features have been recorded. The main area of Roman settlement however lies further north, focused on the natural spring at Caudle Head, 700m to the north-east. Substantial Early Anglo-Saxon funerary activity consisting of three cemeteries, lies c.250m to the east.

Preservation of sites on the airbase has often been good. In particular this is probably due to low levels of agricultural erosion since the airbase was enclosed in the 1940's and to the fact that many of the original airbase structures were built of shallow foundations or above ground concrete pads. However this site was partially occupied by a tennis court, which was clearly terraced into the slope, and monitoring of the adjacent skate park to the south-east (ERL 145), had identified deep modern deposits implying significant landscaping which may have affected potential archaeological deposits.

An evaluation was therefore required to assess the sites potential for archaeological deposits and establish the impact of the development works upon them.

4. Methodology

A single trench, measuring 1.8m wide and 30m long, was placed across the footprint of the proposed gym (Fig. 2). The trench was excavated by a mechanical digger, equipped with a ditching bucket, to the top of the subsoil surface or archaeological levels, under the supervision of an archaeologist.

The depth of the trench varied from 0.35m to 0.8, depending upon the level of modern landscaping and the natural slope. Both the trench and spoilheaps were thoroughly examined and metal-detected for archaeological material.

The trench was cleaned as required to identify archaeological deposits and archaeological features excavated by hand. The site was recorded using a single context continuous numbering system. The trench location and features were recorded by an RTK GPS. Digital colour and black and white print photographs were taken of all stages of the fieldwork, and are included in the digital and physical archives respectively.

An OASIS form has been initiated for the project (reference no. suffolkc1-83295) and a digital copy of the report will be submitted for inclusion on the Archaeology Data Service database (<http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/catalogue/library/greylit>) upon completion of the project.

The site archives are kept in the main store of Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service at Bury St Edmunds under HER Nos. ERL 214.

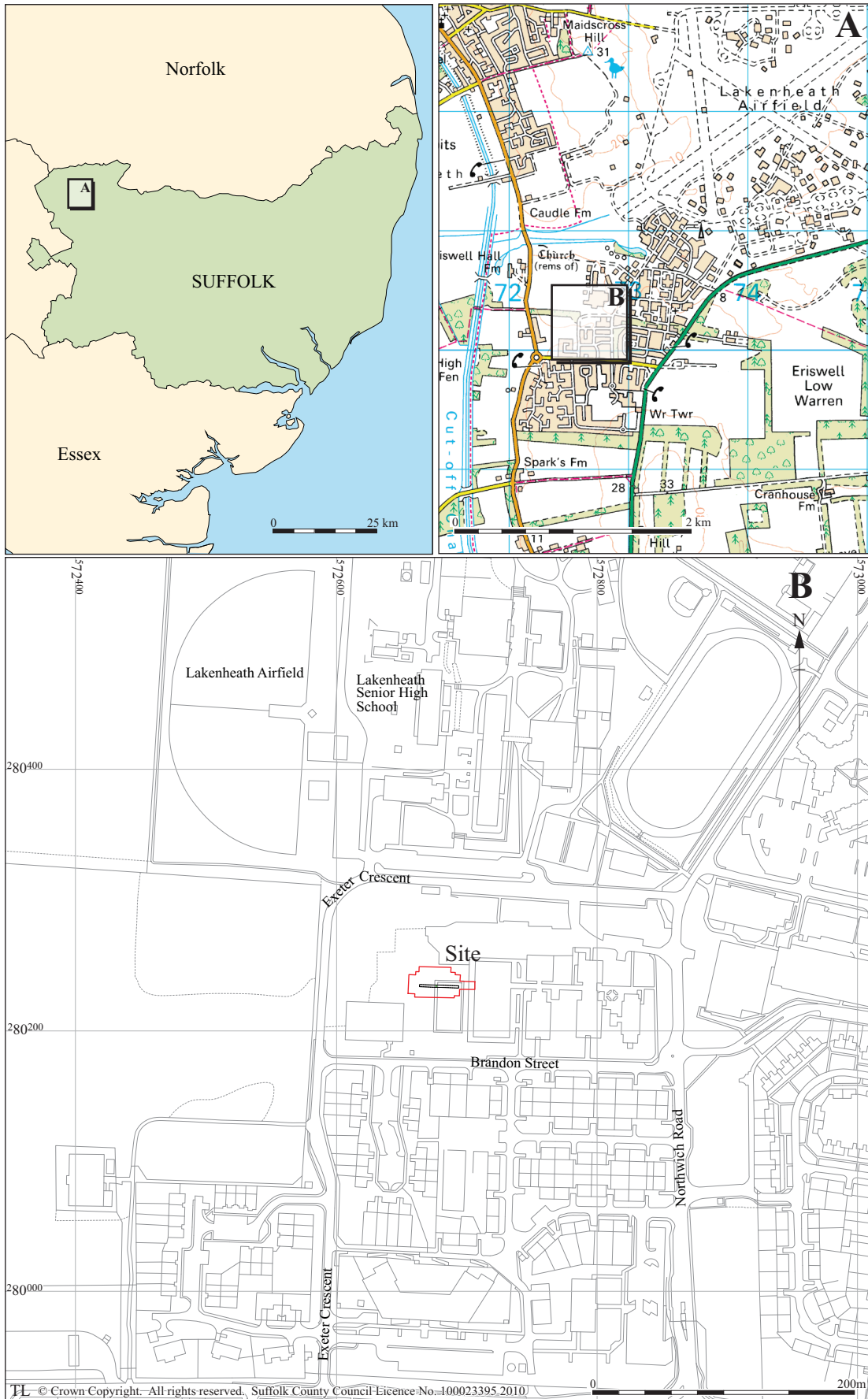


Figure 1. Site location, showing development area (red)

5. Results

The eastern 15m of Trench 1 was placed through the existing hard surface tennis court. The removal of 0.25m of modern tarmac and hardcore exposed a disturbed natural topsoil. This was reduced by a further 0.1m until the undisturbed natural of mid yellow sands was exposed. Several small areas of discrete modern disturbance were seen along the eastern half of the trench.

To the west ground levels rose sharply from the edge of the tennis court. The natural subsoil however was seen to rise only slightly, c.0.2m, and was sealed beneath a series of deposits, each gradually increasing in thickness, until, at the western end, the trench was 0.8m deep. Above the natural sands was a layer of mid yellow/brown sands, 0004, which gradually increased to 0.2m thick, and then a layer of mid/dark grey sands, 0001, which also reached 0.2m thick. Above this lay up to 0.4m of modern deposits.

A single archaeological feature was identified in the centre of the trench, 0002. This was a north to south aligned ditch measuring 0.7m wide and 0.25m deep, although it was partially truncated by the machining. Its fill, 0003, was a clean pale/mid grey sand. No material was recovered from its fill so the feature is undated.

6. Conclusions and recommendations for further work

The evaluation has demonstrated that, outside of the tennis court, the natural subsoil and potential archaeological horizon is well-preserved at depth below two buried soil layers and modern deposits. Within the tennis court these overlying protective layers have been removed and the natural subsoil has been slightly truncated.

The single feature identified is of uncertain date, but is most likely of prehistoric or Roman date, and is parallel to two ditches of similar appearance and Late Iron Age/early Roman date seen c.50m to the west at ERL 118. Here evidence of occupation was seen to decline as the slope rose to the north of Brandon Street and this new evidence also suggests that the site lies in a peripheral area, perhaps in agricultural use, between the two known foci of occupation at Thunderbird Way and

Caudle Head. The general absence of deposits is in sharp contrast to the results seen in monitorings immediately to the south at Thunderbird Way, where widespread Roman occupation deposits have been recorded.

The near complete absence of deposits within the trench indicates that the site is of low potential. However it has shown that the potential archaeological horizon and natural topography is well preserved, outside of the tennis court area, and so archaeological monitoring of groundworks is recommended to record any further evidence of the Iron Age/Roman activity that may disturbed by the site's development.



Plate 1. Trench 1, facing east.

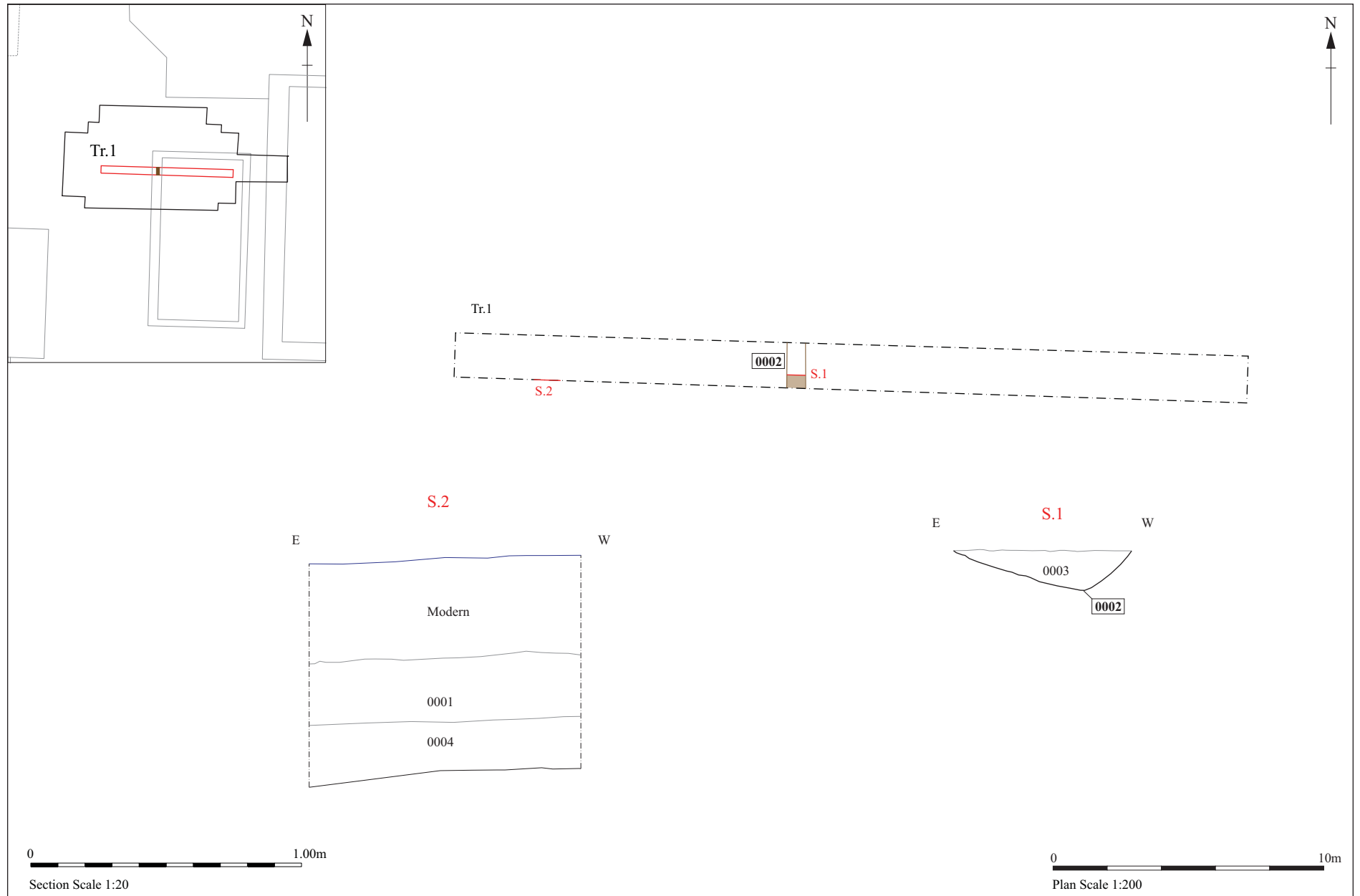


Figure 2. Trench 1, plan and sections

7. Archive deposition

Paper and photographic archive: SCCAS Bury St Edmunds

Digital archive: SCCAS Bury St Edmunds T:arc\archive field proj\RAF Lakenheath\ERL
214

8. List of contributors and acknowledgements

The evaluation was carried out by John Craven, Andrew Beverton and Alan Smith, all from Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service, Field Team.

The project was directed by John Craven and managed by Joanna Caruth, who also provided advice during the production of the report.

The production of digital site plans and sections was carried out by Gemma Adams.

9. Bibliography

Ordnance Survey, 1983, 'Soils of England and Wales': *Soil survey of England and Wales, sheet 4 Eastern England 1:250,000*. Harpenden.

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.