

**THE WARRENER, THETFORD, NORFOLK**  
**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION 1996**

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**SUMMARY**

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Mr Paul Chadwick of Lawson-Price Environmental on behalf of their client, Ryan Elizabeth Holdings Plc, to undertake an archaeological evaluation of the site of proposed housing development on land at The Warrener, Thetford, Norfolk (NGR TL 859832).

Six trenches representing *c.* 4% of the development area were machine excavated, hand cleaned and subject to sample excavation. This revealed the former edge of the floodplain of the River Little Ouse running north-west to south-east across the site. The topography of the area has been somewhat altered by subsequent infilling (in the post-Roman period) by natural windblown sand and construction of The Warrener public house and car park.

A thin scatter of worked flint, largely of probable Mesolithic date, was recovered overlying natural on the edge of the floodplain. On the rising ground to the south of this was a network of shallow ditches interpreted as Romano-British field or plot boundaries. These are likely to have been associated with a settlement immediately to the south.

No Early Saxon or Middle Saxon features or finds were present, and it is assumed that the limits of these known settlements lay immediately to the south of the evaluation site, with occupation strung out along the terrace above the floodplain covering much the same area as earlier, Romano-British settlement.

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The project was commissioned by Lawson-Price Environmental Ltd on behalf of Ryan Elizabeth Holdings Plc. Wessex Archaeology are grateful to Mr Paul Chadwick of Lawson-Price Environmental Ltd for the provision of his archaeological desk-based assessment of the site and other background material.

The evaluation was carried out by Phil Andrews, Jez Fry and Andrew Bates, and Derek Woollestone undertook the metal detecting. This report was prepared by Phil Andrews and Jez Fry, with the illustrations by Karen Nicholls. The finds description was written by Lorraine Mephram, with flint identifications provided by John Wymer.

The project was managed for Wessex Archaeology by Phil Andrews and monitored for Norfolk Landscape Archaeology by Andrew Rogerson.

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# **THE WARRENER, THETFORD, NORFOLK ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION 1996**

## **1. INTRODUCTION (Fig. 1)**

### **1.1 Project background**

- 1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology was invited by Paul Chadwick of Lawson Price Environmental Ltd to tender for an archaeological evaluation of an area of land on the west side of Thetford proposed for housing development.
- 1.1.2 The site falls within the scope of Norfolk County Council's *Norfolk Structure Plan* relating to archaeology (Policy's A1 - A3), and the Consultation Draft of the *Breckland District Council Local Plan* relating to archaeological and heritage features (Env. 21 - 24).
- 1.1.3 Conditional Planning Permission (Planning Application Ref. 3/94/380/0) was granted for the development and, in view of the site's archaeological potential and in line with *Planning Policy Guidance No. 16: Archaeology and Planning* (Department of the Environment, November 1990), one of these conditions related to archaeological matters.
- 1.1.4 This condition required that a programme of archaeological works be undertaken prior to the development process.
- 1.1.5 A rapid desk-based assessment and specification (Lawson-Price 1995) for such a programme of archaeological work was prepared by Lawson-Price Environmental Ltd on behalf of Ryan Elizabeth Holdings Plc. Subsequently Wessex Archaeology was commissioned to undertake the work, and this was carried out between the 5th and 9th February 1996.

### **1.2 Site Location, Topography and Geology (Fig. 1)**

- 1.2.1 The site (centred on TL 859832), on the west side of Thetford, comprises a trapezoidal-shaped area of up to 150m by 72m (approximately 0.9 hectares). It is bounded by low lying marshy ground to the north, Brandon Road to the south, Canterbury Way to the east, and housing to the west. 'The Warrener', a former public house, now derelict, lies towards the centre of the site, with an associated tarmac-surfaced car park immediately to the east.
- 1.2.2 The site occupies in part the edge of the floodplain of the Little Ouse (approximately 100m to the north), and rises gradually from 8.63m OD in the north-east to c. 12.00m OD in the south-west on the gravel terrace occupied by the Brandon Road. Towards the north-eastern edge of the site an artificial break in slope marks the edge of a car park and the boundary of the floodplain, whilst along the north-west edge a small break in slope along the floodplain edge is emphasised by a clear change in vegetation type (from grass to reeds).

- 1.2.3 Within the floodplain, deposits of alluvium probably overlies sands and gravels. On the higher river terraces to the north and south, river gravels (up to 4.5m deep on the Brandon Road near Red Castle) overlie chalk. In places the gravels are covered by discontinuous spreads of fine to medium textured sand up to 0.3m deep, which may be wind blown deposits (Andrews 1995, 1).
- 1.2.4 At the time of the investigation the site, excluding the standing building and car park, was largely rough grass, with a small area of trees and scrub in the south-east corner.

### **1.3 Archaeological Background**

- 1.3.1 The archaeological background of the site is presented in the Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment (Lawson-Price 1995), and it is not intended to repeat that detailed information in this section of the evaluation report. However, reference will be made to relevant sites and finds in the discussion below, and a short summary is given here.
- 1.3.2 Late Upper Palaeolithic, Mesolithic and probable Neolithic struck flint has been recovered in small quantities from several sites nearby. The study site has a potential to contain a low density lithic scatter of prehistoric, perhaps Mesolithic date.
- 1.3.3 No Bronze Age and only a very small quantity of Iron Age finds have been recovered from the vicinity of the study site.
- 1.3.4 Exploitation and settlement of the gravel terrace to the south of the River Little Ouse during the Roman period was extensive. Excavations nearby have revealed features and finds indicating settlement from the mid 1st century AD, perhaps through to the 4th century. The study area therefore has a high potential for evidence of Roman date.
- 1.3.5 Evidence for Early and Middle Saxon settlement of the gravel terrace to the south of the River Little Ouse has also been revealed by excavation, covering or at least overlapping with the area occupied during the Roman period. The study area therefore has a high potential for evidence of Early and Middle Saxon date.
- 1.3.6 The study site lies to the west of the defensive circuit surrounding the Late Saxon town. This circuit enclosed a densely occupied settlement, but comparatively little Late Saxon and early medieval material has been found outside the defences in this area, and the study site has a low potential for Late Saxon and early medieval deposits.
- 1.3.7 During the mid-12th century a ring-work, Red Castle, was erected to command the western approach to Thetford and a fording point. Red Castle and an area around it are subject to statutory protection as Scheduled Ancient Monuments under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act

1979 (Norfolk County Number's 59 and 333). This protected land lies immediately to the east and south of the study site

- 1.3.8 There is evidence for medieval structures, probably farm buildings, along the gravel terrace of the east of the study site, but the study site itself is likely to have been part floodplain meadow and part cropped farmland. It therefore has a low potential for evidence of medieval date.
- 1.3.9 There may have been some gravel quarrying on the site during the post-medieval period, and a no/low archaeological potential is also identified for this period.
- 1.3.10 It was concluded in the Desk-Top Study that the *'site must be considered as being of high archaeological potential. Whilst the study site has a potential to contain a low density lithic scatter of prehistoric, perhaps Mesolithic date, it is the potential of the site to contain structural and artefactual evidence of Roman, Early and Mid-Saxon date which accords it particular potential'*.

## **2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

The overall aims and objectives of the investigation were as follows:

- The investigation aimed to determine, as far as was reasonably possible, the location, extent, date, character, condition and significance of any surviving archaeological remains within the site.
- It sought to clarify the nature and extent of existing disturbance and intrusions and hence assess the degree of archaeological survival of buried deposits and surviving structures of archaeological significance.
- Specifically, the evaluation sought to clarify the extent and chronology of Early, Middle and Late Saxon occupation on the site (if present) and relate this to investigations on neighbouring sites. The character of any Saxon occupation was to be defined and the relationship between occupation areas and floodplain established.
- Sufficient information was to be provided in order for a detailed specification to be prepared for further work, should this be deemed necessary.

## **3 METHOD**

- 3.1 The specification prepared for the site (Lawson-Price 1995) in response to the Norfolk Landscape Archaeology brief proposed an evaluation strategy based on machine trenches and hand excavation. Full details of the methodology are presented in the Methodology for Archaeological Evaluation (Wessex Archaeology Ref. T2935).

- 3.1.1 A sample of approximately 4% of the site was investigated by machine trenching. This comprised six trenches (Trenches 1 - 6) of varying length totalling 200m, each between 1.8 and 2m wide.
- 3.1.2 The trenches were laid out according to the specification though some minor variations were necessary. The north and south ends of Trench 2 were moved to take account of trees and a gas control station respectively; the presence of a public house sign and a manhole required short gaps to be left in Trench 3; and Trenches 5 and 6 were repositioned slightly to avoid existing trees in the south-east corner of the site and travellers' caravans parked in the area between Trenches 4 and 6. (This minor repositioning of trenches was made with the agreement of Norfolk Landscape Archaeology). All trenches were located on the ground using a compass and taped measurement from existing fixed landscape features.
- 3.1.3 All trenches were excavated under constant archaeological supervision using a large tracked excavator equipped with a 1.8m wide toothless ditching bucket. All undifferentiated topsoil, modern overburden and subsoil was removed in 0.1m spits. Where archaeologically significant horizons were not encountered, this was to a depth of 1.2m, or on to the subsoil, or on to the underlying 'natural' geological deposits, whichever was the shallower.
- 3.1.4 By the end of the evaluation, the entire lengths of Trenches 1, 2 and 3, and parts of Trenches 4, 5 and 6 had been excavated by machine or by hand down to natural sand. The remaining deposits in Trench 4 comprised peat (at the north end) and modern rubble make-up for a car park (at the south end). In Trenches 5 and 6 the remaining deposits, below 1.2m, comprised subsoil interpreted below as largely natural infill within the floodplain of the river valley.
- 3.1.6 All excavated soil was inspected closely for artefacts and any artefacts, other than obviously modern material, retained and recorded. All topsoil dumps and surfaces within the evaluation were scanned with a metal detector and resultant finds recorded.
- 3.1.7 All surfaces within the trenches were cleaned by hand and recorded, and a 1 - 1.5m long sample of each trench section was hand-cleaned and drawn.
- 3.1.7 Initially, 50% by volume of each pit and linear feature exposed within the trenches was hand excavated. However, all of the exposed lengths of linear features were eventually excavated in an effort to obtain sufficient dating evidence.
- 3.1.8 All finds recovered during hand excavation of features, with the exception of those from the few modern drains and service trenches, were retained.
- 3.1.9 No environmental samples were taken as none of the excavated contexts satisfied all of the sampling criteria: that they were dateable, well-stratified, and uncontaminated.

- 3.1.10 Heights were calculated in relation to ordnance datum using a spot height on the Brandon Road immediately adjacent to the site the value of which was 12.50m OD.
- 3.1.11 All trenches were backfilled on completion of the evaluation with the exception of Trench 3. This trench was left partly open at the verbal request of the site agent (8 February 1996) in order to restrict access to the site.

## 4 RESULTS

*A catalogue of trench descriptions, giving brief soil descriptions and dimensions can be found in Appendix 1. More detailed descriptions are available in the archive. Trench locations and features are shown in Figure 2, and sections of subsoil features in Figure 3. Context numbers are highlighted in bold below.*

### 4.1 The Natural Base

- 4.1.1 The natural base comprises medium - coarse windblown sand, varying in colour from pale yellow to orangey yellow to very pale brown across the site from south-west to north-east, downslope towards the floodplain. Some gravel was present mixed with the sand on the higher ground to the south (in Trench 3), and several patches/lenses of gravel were noted towards the north end of Trench 2.
- 4.1.2 A thick layer of peat (**405**) lay at the north end of Trench 4 in the lowest part of the site, within the present floodplain. This peat lay directly below the present, reed covered surface, and apparently overlay natural sand which in this area contained occasional patches or lenses of peat.
- 4.1.3 There was extensive evidence for animal burrowing in Trench 3, but little elsewhere in areas which were lower and damper. In Trench 3 the natural sand was 'cut' by a short, irregular gully filled with hard, dark brown sand. Similar features encountered at Redcastle Furze were initially thought to be of archaeological origin, but were subsequently concluded to be natural (Andrews 1995, 9).
- 4.1.4 The surface of the natural slopes down from the south-west to the north-east, and was encountered between 11.65m OD at the south end of Trench 1, and c. 8.00m OD at the north end of Trench 4. A 'step', probably the edge of a small terrace on the edge of the floodplain, was recorded in the natural at the south end of Trench 5 (see Figs 2 and 3). The projected line of the 8.5m contour on natural (marking the approximate southern edge of the floodplain) has been plotted on Figs 1 and 2 in order to provide an indication of the former topography of the area, prior to later infilling of the area by windblown sand and subsequent construction of the Warrener public house and car park. No evidence for any truncation or quarrying of the natural was noted in any of the excavated trenches. It is considered most likely that the area of apparent

quarrying shown on the 1928 Ordnance Survey map lies largely beneath the public house which is 'set into' the slope at this point.

## **4.2 Overlying Deposits**

- 4.2.1 Rough grass and sandy topsoil between 0.2 and 0.35m deep overlay very sandy subsoil. The subsoil varied in depth between 0.27m (in Trench 1) and 1.5m (in Trench 5), and occasionally contained layers of yellow, probably windblown sand (eg **101**). The relatively thick deposits of subsoil in Trench 5 probably reflect a combination of natural infill in the form of windblown sand (eg **505**) and subsequent deliberate infilling/levelling prior to the construction of the Warrener public house and car park (eg **501**). No finds other than modern ceramic building material and fragments of iron were recovered from the topsoil, and only two sherds of pottery, both Romano-British, came from the subsoil (from **301**).
- 4.2.2 At the north end of Trench 2 was a thin layer, up to 0.2m deep, of mottled brownish grey sand (**205**) interpreted as a natural, fluvial deposit resulting from overbank alluviation. This layer overlay apparently undisturbed natural (?windblown) sand, and sealed/filled two shallow Romano-British ditches (see Fig. 3).

## **4.3 Archaeological Features (Figs 2 and 3)**

- 4.3.1 No upstanding remains were encountered in any of the evaluation trenches, and the only surviving horizontal stratigraphy was encountered in Trench 2 (**205**) and Trench 5 (**506**), probably representing natural and dumped deposits respectively. Virtually all archaeological deposits were contained within negative features cutting natural.
- 4.3.2 Modern features were restricted to five pipe or service trenches in Trenches 1, 2 and 3, and a pit and the former entrance to the public house car park in Trench 3.
- 4.3.3 Archaeological features and deposits were encountered in Trenches 1, 2, 3 and 5. All of the features were insubstantial, with the deepest at 0.4m. All but one have been interpreted as ditches or gullies, of Romano-British date, and contained very small amounts of domestic waste. The remaining feature has been interpreted as a possible treehole.
- 4.3.4 *Trench 1:* Three shallow features comprising two north-south aligned linear features, both interpreted as ditches or gullies (**106** and **108**), and a probable treehole (**103**) were present. Ditch **106** was up to 0.77m wide and 0.28m deep, and was filled with a slightly darker fill than any of the other linear features. It produced a single sherd of late Romano-British pottery, and two copper alloy armlets also likely to be of late Romano-British date. Gully **108** towards the east end of the trench was up to 0.6m wide and only 0.15m deep. It contained a small quantity of burnt flint but no dating evidence. Feature **103** was an irregular, oval cut up to 0.15m deep with a very irregular base. It contained

two fills of dark grey to almost black charcoal-rich sand, but produced no dating evidence.

- 4.3.5 *Trench 2:* Three shallow, linear features aligned broadly east-west and interpreted as ditches (**212**, **213** and **215**) were present. Ditch **212** was at least 1.25m wide, up to 0.4m deep, and was cut along the north edge by a modern service trench (**206**). The fill of ditch **212** produced a single sherd of late Romano-British pottery. Towards the north end of the trench were two parallel ditches, **213** and **215**, aligned west-north-west - east-south-east. The larger, **213**, to the south was 1.05m wide, up to 0.38m deep, and showed evidence of a possible recut along the south side (see Fig.3). The earlier fill, **214**, contained a single sherd of early Romano-British pottery and a flint hammerstone probably of Neolithic date. The later fill, **218** which was noticeably darker, contained only two fragments of animal bone. Ditch **215**, parallel and less than 2m to the north of ditch **213**, was 0.8m wide, up to 0.25m deep and produced no finds. The relationship between ditches **213** and **215**, and layer **205** which covered the 20m at the northern end Trench 2 is uncertain. Layer **205**, a mottled brownish grey sand up to 0.2m deep (interpreted below as a layer of natural, redeposited fluvial sand), appeared to partly seal and fill both ditches though both could be seen to cut the lower part of layer **205**. No finds were recovered from layer **205**, but a thin scatter of undiagnostic worked flint (of probable Mesolithic date) and a small quantity of burnt flint were found at the interface of this layer and the underlying natural sand (**217**), and just within the natural layer itself. A small lead seal, possibly a clothier's seal, of medieval or post-medieval date, and a small fragment of iron sheet were recovered as metal detector finds from subsoil layer **203**.
- 4.3.6 *Trench 3:* No archaeological features were found within this trench, and the only finds other than modern material were two sherds of late Romano-British pottery from subsoil layer **301**.
- 4.3.7 *Trench 4:* No archaeological features and no finds other than modern material were found within this trench.
- 4.3.8 *Trench 5:* No archaeological features were found within this trench. However, fill/deposit **506**, to the north of and apparently 'filling' what has been interpreted as a step in the natural along the northern edge of the floodplain (see Figs 2 and 3), contained a relatively substantial quantity of late Romano-British pottery, animal bone, a fragment of possible quern and two iron nails. This material is interpreted below as a dump of what appears to be domestic debris.
- 4.3.9 *Trench 6:* No archaeological features and no finds other than modern material were found within this trench. A sondage down to natural sand at the east end of Trench 6 revealed a deposit similar to **506** in Trench 5, but no finds were recovered.

## **5 THE FINDS**

**5.1** A small quantity of finds was recovered on site, and retained for cleaning and cataloguing. This small assemblage includes both excavated finds and those recovered by metal detecting over excavated trench bottoms and spoil heaps. All finds thus collected have been quantified by material type, both by number and by weight, within each context. This information is presented in Table 1. In addition, broad details of the nature and potential date range of the finds were recorded, information which is summarised by material type below.

### **5.1.1 Animal Bone**

A small quantity of animal bone was recovered, most from context 506 which also produced the majority of the Romano-British pottery (see below).

### **5.1.2 Burnt and Worked Flint**

Worked flint was recovered from two contexts in Trench 2: a hammerstone probably of Neolithic date from linear cut 213, and a group of waste flakes from the surface of natural sand (context 217). The latter are in relatively fresh condition in good quality flint; although undiagnostic on their own, the dimensions of some of the flakes (long and narrow) would suggest a Mesolithic date. Burnt, unworked flint was recovered from the same context (217).

### **5.1.3 Glass**

The neck of a clear glass bottle with stopper of 20th-century date came from a modern pit (303) in Trench 3. This was discarded following quantification.

### **5.1.4 Pottery**

The small pottery assemblage is entirely of Romano-British date, and consists mainly of coarsewares, both sandy greywares and shelly wares. Jar rims from Trench 5, from a small group of sherds recovered from an apparent dump of domestic debris on the edge of the floodplain (context 506), would suggest a late Romano-British date (3rd or 4th century AD), a date supported by the presence of one piece of Nene Valley mortarium from the same context. However, it should be noted that one piece of samian (1st or 2nd century AD) was recovered from Trench 2 (linear cut 213).

### **5.1.5 Stone**

One piece of worked stone - a large fragment of coarse sandstone with one flat surface, possibly a quern fragment - came from Trench 5, from a context associated with Romano-British pottery.

### **5.1.6 Metalwork**

Six pieces of metalwork were recovered by metal detector. This comprised two objects of copper alloy, three iron objects, and one lead object. The two copper alloy objects are both thin strips. Both came from the same linear feature (106) in Trench 1, and both are bent into circular shapes (diameters of 35 mm and 49 mm respectively). One is plain with pointed terminals, and the other has 'snake's head' shaped terminals with some lines of incised decoration

visible. While the dimensions would seem rather small, these are likely to be armlets of late Romano-British date; examples from Colchester are of comparable size (Crummy 1983, 36). A small lead seal, possibly a medieval/post-medieval clothier's seal, came from Trench 2, together with a small piece of iron sheet of uncertain function. The remaining two iron objects are nails from Trench 5, from a context associated with Romano-British pottery.

**Table 1: All finds by context**

NB. Quantities are presented by number/weight in grammes, apart from metalwork, for which numbers only are given. Cu = copper alloy; Fe = Iron; Pb = lead

Trench	Context	Animal Bone	Burnt Flint	Worked Flint	Glass	Pottery	Stone	Metal
1	107					1/14		2 Cu
2	203							1 Pb; 1 Fe
	211					1/6		
	214			1/292		1/11		
	217		14/294	31/166				
	218	2/166						
3	301					2/14		
	305	2/18			1/74	1/48		
5	506	10/96				18/354	1/778	2 Fe
	<b>Total</b>	<b>14/280</b>	<b>14/294</b>	<b>32/458</b>	<b>1/74</b>	<b>24/447</b>	<b>1/778</b>	<b>6</b>

## 6 DISCUSSION (Fig.4)

### 6.1 Natural topography

6.1.1 The evaluation has demonstrated with reasonable clarity the former topography of the area. This has been obscured to some degree by post-Roman natural infilling (largely of ?windblown sand represented by layers **503**, **504** and **505**) towards the south-east corner of the site, and by the construction of the Warrener public house and associated car park in the central part of the site. The projected line of the 8.50m OD contour on natural has been plotted on Figs 1 and 2 in order to reflect the former topography as this line approximates to the boundary between the floodplain to the north (represented by, for example, layer **205** in Trench 2 and peat layer **405** in Trench 4) and the rise up to the higher sand-covered gravel terrace to the south. It shows the edge of the floodplain swinging southwards across the site, and this is also reflected in the southerly extent of the two field drains shown in Figs 1 and 2, and in the alignments of Romano-British ditches **213** and **215**. A 'step' in the natural sand towards the south end of Trench 5 has been interpreted as a natural feature along the edge of the terrace.

### 6.2 Prehistoric (before 54 AD)

6.2.1 A small quantity of undiagnostic (probably Mesolithic) worked flint from the surface of the natural sand towards the north end of Trench 2 probably represents a low level of activity along the southern edge of the floodplain. This is in keeping with finds made nearby at Site 24822 where a small pit containing an assemblage of Mesolithic worked flint was found, and a scatter of probable Mesolithic flints was recovered as residual finds in features elsewhere on the site (Andrews 1995, 7).

6.2.2 The flint hammerstone of probable Neolithic date from ditch **213** is considered to be a residual find in a later, Romano-British feature. A scatter of probable Neolithic worked flint was recovered from evaluations 150m to the west at Site 24849, and a low density of Neolithic worked flint has been found elsewhere in the vicinity suggesting exploitation of the riverside landscape in this period.

### **6.3 Romano-British (54 - 410 AD)**

6.3.1 The five ditches or gullies on the site have been provisionally assigned to this period although only three (**106**, **212** and **213**) contained dating evidence, in two cases only single sherds of pottery. Gully **108** contained a small quantity of burnt flint, not present in the other ditches, and this might suggest an earlier date for this feature. Ditch **215** lay adjacent and parallel to ditch **213** and appears to have been contemporary and associated with it.

6.3.2 There is some slight evidence from the pottery to suggest that the five ditches or gullies, interpreted as field or plot boundaries, represent two phases of activity. Ditches **213** and **215** (and possibly **108**) may have belonged to an earlier, 1st - 2nd century phase, with **106** and **212** attributed to a later, 3rd - 4th century phase. Possible treehole **103** may represent clearance of the area prior to the laying out of fields, but the feature remains undated.

6.3.3 The comparatively large quantity of pottery and other finds recovered from limited investigations at the south end of Trench 5 is interpreted as a dump of 3rd - 4th century domestic debris along the slope on the edge of the floodplain. A similar deposit, of medieval material, was found along the edge of the floodplain during excavations approximately 250m to the east at Site 24822 (Andrews 1995, 79).

6.3.4 The distribution of features and finds suggests that there was no occupation on the site during the Romano-British period, but that the area in the south-west half was covered with a rectilinear system of shallow ditches defining small fields or plots, of possibly two phases (1st - 2nd century and 3rd - 4th century respectively), on the rising ground immediately above the floodplain. However, the quantity of finds recovered from the south end of Trench 5 indicates that there was occupation close by to the south, and this is evidenced from several excavations in the vicinity. Excavations to the east at Site 5756 (Dallas 1993) and Site 24822 (Andrews 1995, 9-10) have revealed evidence for a mid-1st century AD settlement set within an extensive field system. In

addition to this, excavations and evaluations to the east at Red Castle (Knocker 1967, 121-2) and to the west at Site 24849 (Rogerson 1990) have produced evidence for occupation, probably farmsteads, from the late 1st to the 4th century strung out along the edge of the gravel terrace over a distance of perhaps 500m or more.

#### **6.4 Early - Middle Saxon (410 - 850 AD)**

- 6.4.1 No Early or Middle Saxon features or finds were located during the evaluation. This is most easily explained by occupation of these periods having been restricted to the slightly higher ground set back from the edge of the gravel terrace, away from the slope down to the floodplain to the north. However, the complete absence of finds of the Middle Saxon period in particular is perhaps slightly surprising.
- 6.4.2 Previous work in the vicinity at Sites 5756 (Dallas 1993), 24822 (Andrews 1995, 22-4) and Red Castle (Knocker 1967, 125 and 131) to the east, and Site 24849 (Rogerson 1990) to the west have demonstrated that Early Saxon occupation extended along the gravel terrace covering, it would appear, much the same area as the earlier, Romano-British settlement.
- 6.4.3 Similarly, previous work at the above-mentioned sites has shown that Middle Saxon occupation is also present in this area (Andrews 1995, 25-7), with an apparent increase in the density of features and finds to the west towards Site 24849. Middle Saxon finds were recorded at the west end of Site 24849 during construction of the Thetford by-pass in 1988-9, and evaluations in 1990 revealed features and finds of both Early and Middle Saxon date apparently concentrated on and around a spur of slightly higher ground projecting into the floodplain (Rogerson 1990).

#### **6.5 Late Saxon - Medieval (850 - 1500 AD)**

- 6.5.1 No Late Saxon features or finds were present. This is not surprising for the evaluation lay almost 200m outside the line of the defences, and several earlier excavations have shown that in most areas there would seem to have been very little spread of occupation, and indeed rubbish disposal, outside the town defences (Davis 1992, 429; Andrews 1993, 459). The topographic information revealed by the evaluation does however provide a further clue as to why the line of the Late Saxon defences swings north towards the river at the place they do: in addition to the ford across the river, it would seem also that the floodplain may have narrowed at this point so providing a convenient place at which to run the ditch and bank to meet the river and thereby close the defensive circuit.
- 6.5.2 The fording point and apparent narrowing of the floodplain suggested by the evaluation also provides further evidence for the strategic siting of Red Castle, built sometime between c. 1135 - 50. However, no features of medieval or post-medieval date and only a single lead seal were found, and it seems clear

that the land occupied by The Warrener remained as unoccupied, perhaps agricultural land throughout these periods.

## **6.6 Anticipated impact of development proposals**

- 6.6.1 It is considered that the layout of archaeological evaluation trenches was appropriate in determining the nature, location and extent of archaeological features, and also in determining the former topography of the area.
- 6.6.2 The evaluation has demonstrated that the north-east half of the site covers an area of former floodplain and is apparently devoid of archaeological features, though there is a scatter of prehistoric worked flint. The remainder of the site lies on sloping ground between the floodplain to the north and the gravel terrace to the south, and is covered by a network of shallow ditches representing field boundaries of Romano-British date. A dump of Romano-British domestic rubbish was found in the south-east corner of the site, but there was no evidence for occupation in the form of structural remains, rubbish pits etc, and no other pre-20th century features were found.
- 6.6.3 Possible small-scale quarrying activity indicated on the 1928 OS map is thought to be restricted to the area currently occupied by The Warrener public house.
- 6.6.4 It is anticipated that the proposed groundworks (principally building foundation and service trenches) associated with the development will have only a minimal effect on the buried archaeological remains which lie at depths of between 0.4 and 0.8m in Trenches 1 and 2, and below 1.4m in Trench 5.

## **7 PROJECT ARCHIVE**

**7.1** The project archive (Site Code W1400) including the finds is currently held at the offices of Wessex Archaeology in Salisbury. In due course the paper archive will be deposited with the Norfolk Museums Service. Subject to the prior approval of the landowner, it is also hoped that the finds will be deposited along with the rest of the archive.

**7.2** The project archive consists of:

### **In File 1:**

1.1	Archive Index	1 sheet
1.2	Report	26 sheets
1.3	Day Book	2 sheets
1.4	Number Record	1 sheet
1.5	Context Index	3 sheets
1.6	Trench Summary Sheets	6 sheets
1.7	Context Record	25 sheets
1.8	Photographic Record	6 sheets
1.9	A1/A3/A4 Graphics	15 sheets
1.10	Graphic Register	2 sheets
1.11	Object Record Index	1 sheet
1.12	Object Record	6 sheets
1.13	Context Finds record	9 sheets
1.14	Levels book	2 sheets

**In File 2:** The monochromatic negatives and contact sheets.  
The colour transparencies.

**The finds** 1 box

## 8 REFERENCES

- Andrews, P., 1993 'St George's Nunnery', Thetford, *Norfolk Archaeol.* (1993), 427-40
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- Davies, J.A., 1992 'Excavation of an Iron Age pit group at London Road, Thetford', *Norfolk Archaeol.* (1992), 441-61
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