



Cropmarks of a Roman fort at Saham Toney

Early Roman Forts Resource Pack

AS and A2 Level
Classical Civilisations

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www.heritage.norfolk.gov.uk



Introduction

This Early Roman Forts Case Study Pack is designed to work with the syllabuses of the OCR and AQA AS and A level Classical Civilisation examinations. This compliments and extends the information available online on the Norfolk Heritage Explorer website:

www.heritage.norfolk.gov.uk

The Case Study Pack provides details from the website, copies of paper archives held by Norfolk Landscape Archaeology, excavation reports, aerial photographs and extracts from specialist journals and publications designed to help students develop an understanding of local examples of Roman forts. It provides an introduction to local sites that can be used as comparative material for case studies covered in textbooks and allows students to understand the Norfolk forts in their local, national and international contexts. It is designed for AS and A2 level students to use independently or as part of class exercises and the pack also includes suggestions for discussion points, research tasks, question sheets and suggested essay titles.

The pack is part of a series of AS and A2 Level Classical Civilisation Case Study Packs available from Norfolk Landscape Archaeology. See the Norfolk Heritage Explorer website for more details and to download the other packs.

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Background

The military played a big part in Roman Britain. A very large force, in relation to the rest of the empire, was based here, at times accounting for almost 10% of the total strength of the army. All soldiers need a base and the Romans were no exception. Forts were constructed across the country at strategic points to control civil disorder and military threats. They also acted as important logistic supply depots and centres for administration.

The original format of a Roman fort usually took the form of a temporary base. A perimeter ditch was excavated with the material removed piled up behind the ditch to form a bank on the inside of the enclosure. This was also a standard practice for marching camps when units were located in hostile territory overnight.

These base camps were often only maintained for a short period before the military unit would move on to another location. However, if the site was suitable these basic fortifications were adapted for a longer stay. It is not uncommon to find that a base camp has been re-cut and strengthened. The introduction of deeper ditches, higher banks, timber palisade walls and considerable gateways is a phase of development evident on many forts that have been excavated.

The next phase was often to consolidate earlier timber structures and replace them with stone. This became the standard method of construction by the early second century AD. Although early forts were of different designs, as construction became more established they tended to follow a standard layout.

The shape of a Roman fort was similar to a playing card with an entrance on each side. Inside the fort there were two main streets that divided the camp. The *Via Praetoria* led from the front gate to the headquarters building (*Principia*) in the centre of the fort. The *Via Principalis* joined the two side gates and passed in front of the *Principia*. The commanding officer's house (*Praetorium*) was next to the headquarters building, and the rest of the fort was filled with rows of barracks, workshops and stores.

A fort could hold anything up to 800 men and often had an associated civilian settlement outside called a *vicus*. Roman soldiers were one of the groups in society that had a regular wage and, as is often the case throughout history, these men with money to spend often attracted a range of people providing different civilian services who settled nearby and took advantage of their requirements.

The biggest *vicus* settlements are associated with the biggest forts, or fortresses. A Roman fortress could hold over 5,000 legionaries and be the base for a whole army group. This Resource Pack examines several Roman forts of different types within Norfolk. The Saxon Shore Forts Resource Pack covers the later Roman forts.

Information from

Channel 4, Time Team Roman Forts. Available:

http://www.channel4.com/history/microsites/T/timeteam/snapshot_romanforts.html

Roman Forts in the A Level Syllabus

AS and A level Classical Civilisation examinations give students the opportunity to study elements of the archaeology and architecture of the Classical world. It is often difficult for teachers to source extra material on local examples of Roman archaeological sites and it is for this reason that this series of Case Study Packs has been created.

This Case Study Pack includes information on Roman Forts in Norfolk and has been created with the OCR and AQA syllabuses but will be useful for teachers following other specifications. The packs give students a chance to interact with material evidence in a fresh and interesting way and provide comparative examples for case studies encountered in text books.

The pack contains 'Material Evidence Questions Sheets' that use the source material in the pack and require students to respond to this material and comment in detail on primary evidence. These questions are similar to those encountered in Section A of OCR Examination Papers and Section 1 of AQA Examination Papers. The 'Suggested Essay Questions' are similar to those used in Section B of OCR and Section 2 of AQA papers. The Roman Forts Case Study Pack may also be of use to candidates who are opting for coursework components and students may also benefit from visiting the Norfolk Historic Environment Record at Gressenhall to access further information.

Roman Forts in the OCR Syllabus

AS Module 2744: Archaeology 1—Approaches to Classical Archaeology

Roman forts may be used as case studies to illustrate key techniques of archaeological study especially method and practice, archaeological principles and the interpretation of archaeological evidence.

AS Module 2758: Roman Britain 1—The Occupation and Tacitus' Agricola

Roman forts should be included in the study of military sites and used to help evaluate the available literary source material.

A2 Module 2756: Roman Britain 2—Sites and Artefacts

Roman forts are part of the evidence for the Roman occupation of Britain. Information in the pack can be used to help students prepare to comment on plans and drawings of sites and interpret archaeological evidence.

Roman Forts in the AQA Syllabus

A2 Module 5 Roman History and Culture

Roman forts could be studied in the Roman Architecture and Town Planning topic.

A2 Module 6 Coursework

Roman forts should be studied in the Roman Britain topic.

Possible Teaching Activities

Research Tasks

1. Draw a plan of the post-Boudican fort at Saham Toney, the 1st century AD fort at Thornham (Case Study A), the Roman fort at Swanton Morley (Case Study C) or the possible fort at Cawston (Case Study D) from the details revealed in the aerial photographs. Label the component parts of the fort and write short sentences describing the function of each.
2. Make a list of the types of find encountered at each of the forts in the Resource Pack. You will find more details on the Norfolk Heritage Explorer website. How do these finds help archaeologists interpret the sites?
3. Think about the location of each of the forts—can this help to understand why they were built? Were they built to defend certain features, structures or communication routes?
4. Compare and contrast the archaeological evidence for the two forts at Saham Toney (Case Study B)—make a table that lists the evidence used by the archaeologists to interpret and date the two forts.
5. From the plan of Thornham Roman fort (Case Study A, Sheet VI) draw a cross section through the fort illustrating the ditch and rampart used to defend the space within. How is this cross section different to those for Roman forts?
6. Photocopy the plot of the distribution of Roman coins in Saham Toney Claudian fort (Case Study B, Sheet IV) and highlight the Claudian copied aes coins. Do you think that they are a clear indicator of the location of the fort?

Class Discussion Points

1. Why do you think that there are large numbers of finds from the Claudian fort at Saham Toney but so few from the post-Boudican fort (Case Study B)?
2. What do you think is the best way to identify a Roman fort? Can it be positively identified from an aerial photograph alone? Do you think D.R. Wilson is right to be cautious about the identification of the cropmarks at Cawston as a Roman fort (Case Study D)?
3. How can you differentiate between a Roman fort and a Celtic fort constructed in the 1st century AD (Case Study A)?
4. To what extent are native and military items mixed together on Roman forts? Are there any types of material that are found on Roman forts and not on native settlement sites? Why might this be? Are there finds that are found on native settlement sites and not forts? Why?
5. Do Roman forts all contain the same components? Why do the plans of Roman forts differ?
6. Are forts located for purely defensive purposes? Do the examples in the Resource Pack back up this hypothesis?

7. What happens to Roman forts after they are decommissioned or go out of use?

Material Evidence Questions

- 1) a) Identify the structure represented by the cropmarks on the aerial photograph Case Study B, Sheet IX of the Resource Pack. Explain what the structure was used for. (10 marks)
 b) How has the archaeologist been able to use the evidence gathered during fieldwalking and metal detecting in the surrounding area to create a chronology for the development of the site? (15 marks)
 c) It has been proposed to excavate the site. What would be the possible advantages and disadvantages of such a course of action? State, with reasons, whether or not you would support the excavation of the site. (20 marks)
- 2) a) Identify the structure represented by cropmarks on the aerial photograph Case Study A, Sheet II and identify two elements that are clearly visible. (10 marks)
 b) How has this site been dated? How does the difficulties encountered during the dating of this site illustrate the problems facing archaeologists who study 1st century AD sites? (15 marks)
 c) Using the excavation of this site as a case study consider the arguments for and against excavation for rescue rather than research purposes. (20 marks)
- 3) a) What site is shown on the aerial photograph on Case Study B, Sheet X of the case study pack? Identify four different features clearly visible on the photograph. (10 marks)
 b) What is the date of this site? In what way is this site unusual compared with other Roman forts of this period? (20 marks)
 c) What happened to this site and others like it after its abandonment? (15 marks)
- 4) a) What does the cropmarks shown on the aerial photograph Case Study D, Sheet II of the case study pack represent? (10 marks)
 b) How does the study of sites like this one inform about the process of the Roman military occupation of Britain? (15 marks)
 c) Give an account of the different features showing up as cropmarks on the aerial photograph and assign a date and function to these features giving your reasons. How would you obtain further information to strengthen your interpretations? (20 marks)
- 5) a) Examine the object no 206 depicted in Case Study B, Sheet VII of the Resource Pack. What is the object and where was it found? (10 marks)
 b) Is this a military or native piece of workmanship? Give reasons for your choice of attribution. (15 marks)
 c) Using this object, and the others found with it, as an example explain how archaeologists can interpret sites from the objects found on them. Is this group of objects typical of the

types of items you would expect to find on a Roman fort? (20 marks)

Suggested Essay Questions

1. Use the evidence from the Roman forts at Saham Toney, Norfolk (Case Study B) and Tacitus' Agricola to create an account of the political events of the first century AD in East Anglia. How did these events affect the everyday life of those living in the area and how is this reflected in the archaeological record at Saham Toney?
2. Using the discovery of the Roman forts at Saham Toney (Case Study B) as an example explain the different methods by which archaeologists find and interpret new sites.
3. Give an account of either the Thornham (Case Study A) or the Saham Toney (Case Study B) forts and assess their significance in understanding the archaeology and history of Roman Britain. You may find it helpful to illustrate your answer with sketch plans and to include comparison to other sites.
4. Referring to the material evidence found on Roman fort and vici sites consider to what extent native and Roman cultures were integrated during the first century AD. Without the aid of excavations or aerial photography would archaeologists be able to tell the difference between groups of objects found on the nearby civilian settlements? Use examples to illustrate your answer.
5. What priorities did the Romans have in planning and building their forts? How far did these priorities change to suit different sites and circumstances? Refer to particular examples in your answer.
6. How well are forts designed to suit their functions? Refer to specific examples in your answer.

Using the Images with an Interactive Whiteboard

You can find high quality images from this pack on the Norfolk Heritage Explorer Teachers' Resources gallery:

<http://gallery.e2bn.org/gallery772.html>

Use these to promote discussion and to identify features within the aerial photographs. They can also be used during revision sessions and practice questions.

Finding Out More

Books

Johnson, A., 1983. Roman Forts (London, A&B Black)

RCHME, 1995. Roman Camps in England. The Field Archaeology (London, HMSO).

Websites

Channel 4, Time Team—Roman Forts. Available:

http://www.channel4.com/history/microsites/T/timeteam/snapshot_romanforts.html

Accessed 21 May 2007.

Thornham Fort

NHER 1308

Summary

The cropmark remains of an Iron Age/Romano-British fort (possible signal station) are clearly visible on aerial photographs. These remains are within the confines of an enclosure. In the northeast area of the site (outside the fort, but within the enclosure) there are other cropmarks including linear features and a possible ring ditch/hut circle. Excavations in the 1950s and 1960s revealed that the fort was constructed in the 1st century AD, and it appears to post-date the Roman invasion of AD 43 although it was probably the product of native planning rather than Roman construction. The enclosure is undated. Several shallow graves containing human skeletons were found within the enclosure indicating that the site was re-used as a cemetery in the Early to Middle Saxon period. The NAU carried out an archaeological evaluation on part of the site in 1996 but no finds or features were recovered.

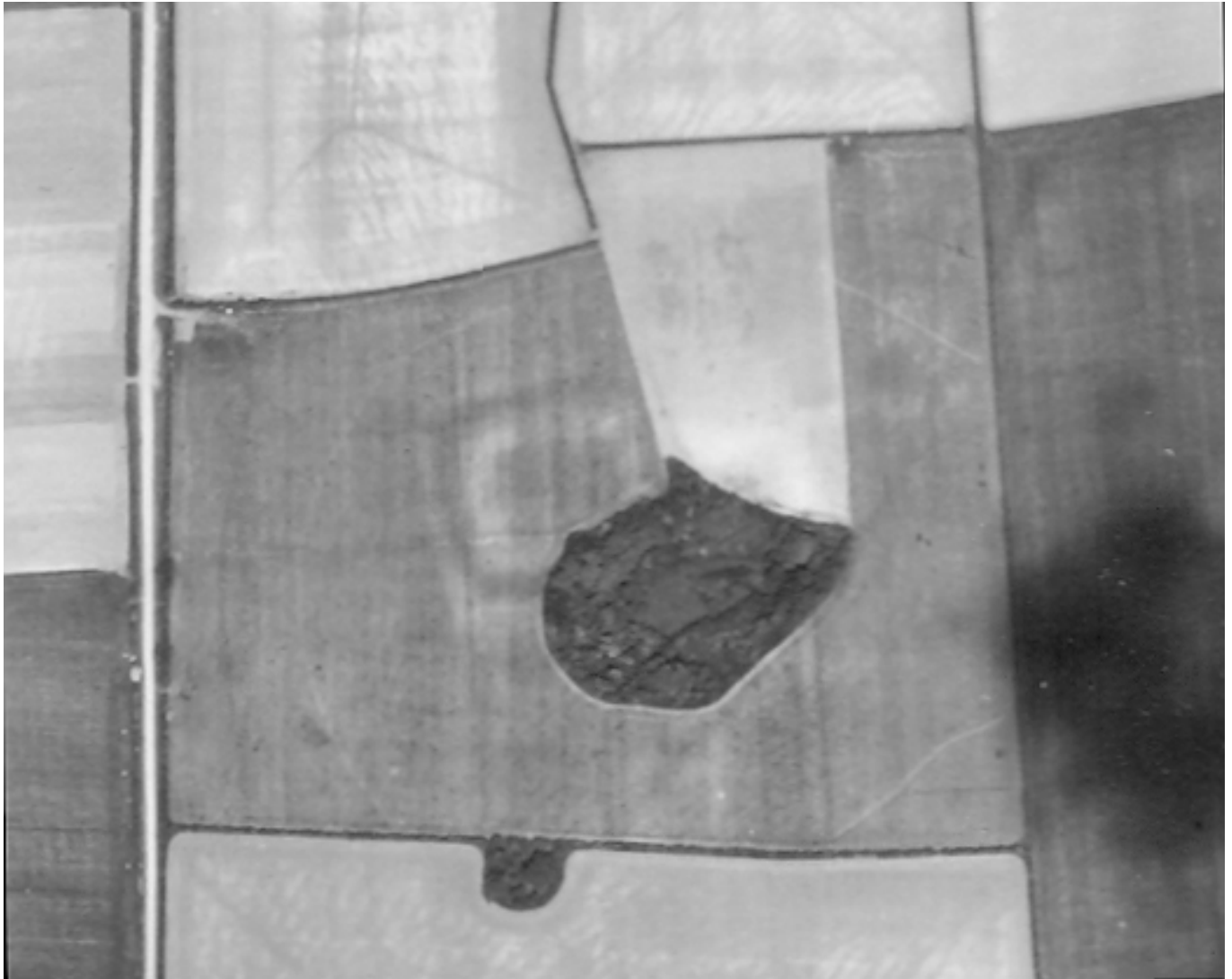
For more information see the Norfolk Heritage Explorer website:
www.heritage.norfolk.gov.uk

The Thornham fort is on private land and is not accessible to the public.

List of Resources

- Aerial photograph
- Gregory, T., 1986. 'An Enclosure of the First Century AD at Thornham' in Gregory, T. and Gurney, D. East Anglian Archaeology 30. Excavations at Thornham, Warham, Wighton and Caistor, Norfolk.
- National Mapping Programme plot of site

Aerial Photograph

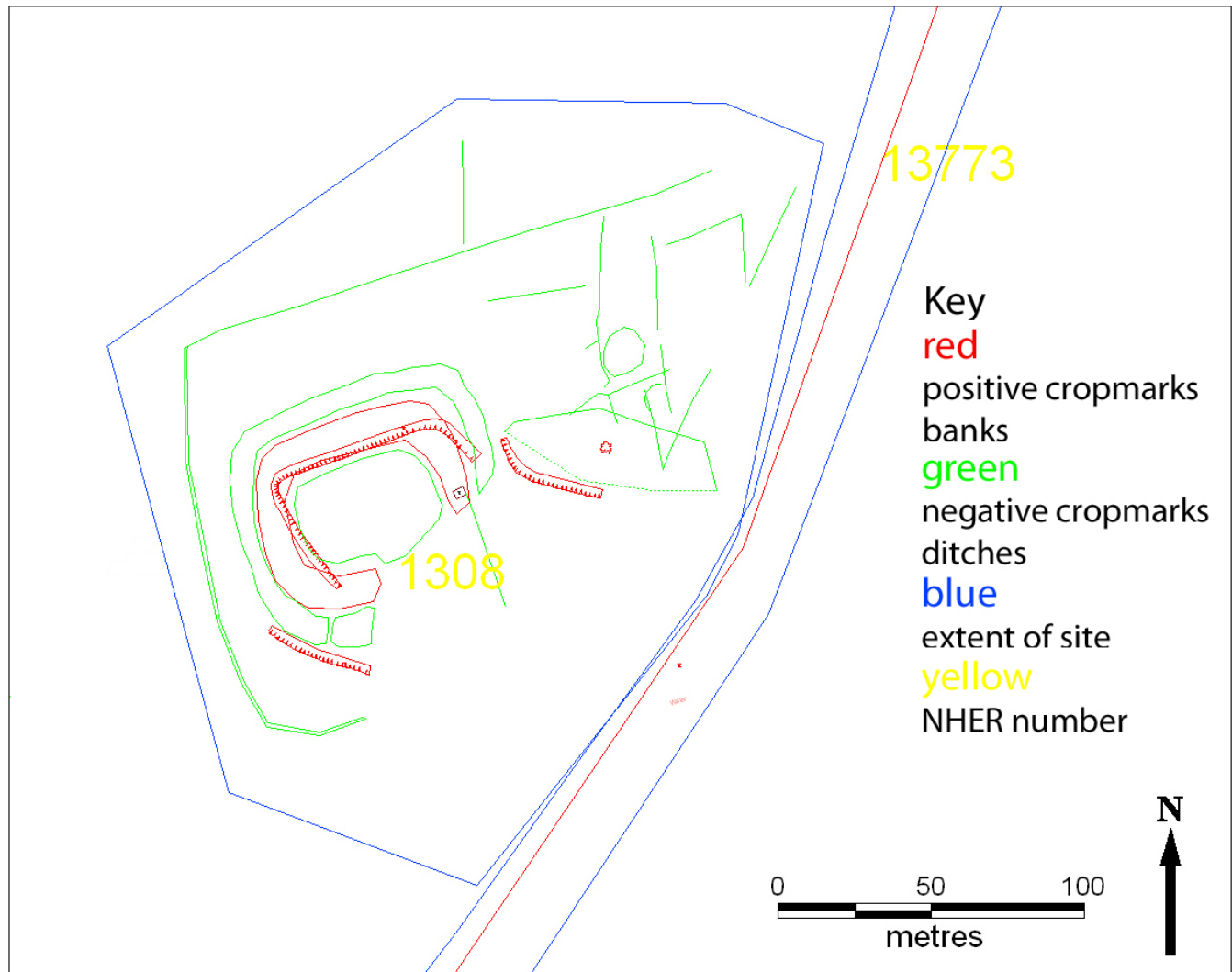


Taken by the RAF in June 1946 this photograph records the cropmark of the fort and surrounding enclosure at Thornham. The enclosure appears as a thin white line. For more information on aerial photography and cropmarks see 'Aerial photographs' in the Exploring More section of the Norfolk Heritage Explorer website.

Image available online at:
<http://gallery.e2bn.org/gallery772.html>

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National Mapping Programme Plot



This plot produced by the National Mapping Programme shows the identified cropmarks. Red lines indicate banks and green lines ditches. The Program is analysing aerial photographs of Norfolk to produce a digital county map of archaeological sites.

Image available online at:
<http://gallery.e2bn.org/gallery772.html>

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Case Study A—Thornham Fort

Sheet IV

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Extracts from Gregory, T., 1986. 'An Enclosure of the First Century AD at Thornham' in Gregory, T. and Gurney, D. *East Anglian Archaeology* 30. Excavations at Thornham, Warham, Wighton and Caistor, Norfolk.

Text in italic has been added or significantly altered from the original.

The full article is available in the library at Norfolk Landscape Archaeology.

Copyright © Norfolk Landscape Archaeology

Summary

A strongly-defended *fort* was built on the site of earlier occupation in the mid first century AD on a slope overlooking the North Sea. On historical and structural grounds it is thought to have been constructed by native rather than official, Roman authorities. The site was occupied again in the second century AD, and later used for an Anglo-Saxon cemetery.

Discovery

In 1948 R. Rainbird Clark...recognised the cropmark of a rectangular *fort* on a vertical aerial photograph...he tentatively interpreted the *fort* as a signal station serving the system of forts of the Saxon Shore. Further photographs...confirmed the original discovery and added further details *including an undated enclosure that surrounded the fort*. In 1952 a trial excavation was conducted at the fort...this was followed by further excavations in 1955, 1956 and 1960.

Site Description

The *fort*...is located...on the north slope of the chalk ridge that runs through west Norfolk. At present it has an uninterrupted view across the Wash to the coast of Lincolnshire (Figure 1)...Two and a half kilometres to the west is the Roman road known as the Peddar's Way, which reaches the coast at Holme next the Sea, while the prehistoric trackway, the Icknield Way, runs towards Hunstanton, a further two kilometres west...*Excavations enabled the reconstruction of this fort (Figure 2).*

Chronology and Interpretation

Apart from a small number of Beaker period sherds and flint scrapers occupation of the site begins with a scatter of coarse, hand-made sherds of Iron Age types...It is impossible to tell whether this 'Iron Age' pottery pre-dates the early Romano-British or whether it represents a native ceramic element surviving in the early years of Roman occupation. The early Romano-British material represents occupations of Claudio-Neronian date, possibly within a palisaded *fort*. *This fort had gone out of use by the second century AD.* On purely archaeological grounds the construction of the *fort* should be put between about AD 50 and AD 150. The political history of early Roman Norfolk suggests closer limits on the period in which this enclosure is likely

Early Roman Forts Resource Pack

Case Study A—Thornham Fort

Sheet IV continued

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to have been constructed. It is clearly defensive with a ditch of massive proportions enclosing an area of 1 acre...within which the rampart or wall encloses 0.5 acre. The proportions of the rampart and ditch are totally alien to standard Roman military practice. The Thornham *fort* should therefore be seen as the product of native planning.

Its construction stratigraphically must post-date the Roman invasion of AD 43; a native-style defence work is unthinkable between the Boudican Revolt (AD 62/63) and the late second century AD. We must therefore attribute its construction and use to the period AD 43-AD 61.

The fort seems to have been occupied...firstly by builders, within a temporary palisaded enclosure, producing large amounts of occupation debris because of the large size of the labour gang needed to dig such a ditch, followed perhaps by a few years occupation by a small number of people producing little dateable occupation debris. No excavations have been carried out on the larger enclosure or other cropmarks which remain undated and uninterpreted.

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Case Study A—Thornham Fort

Sheet V

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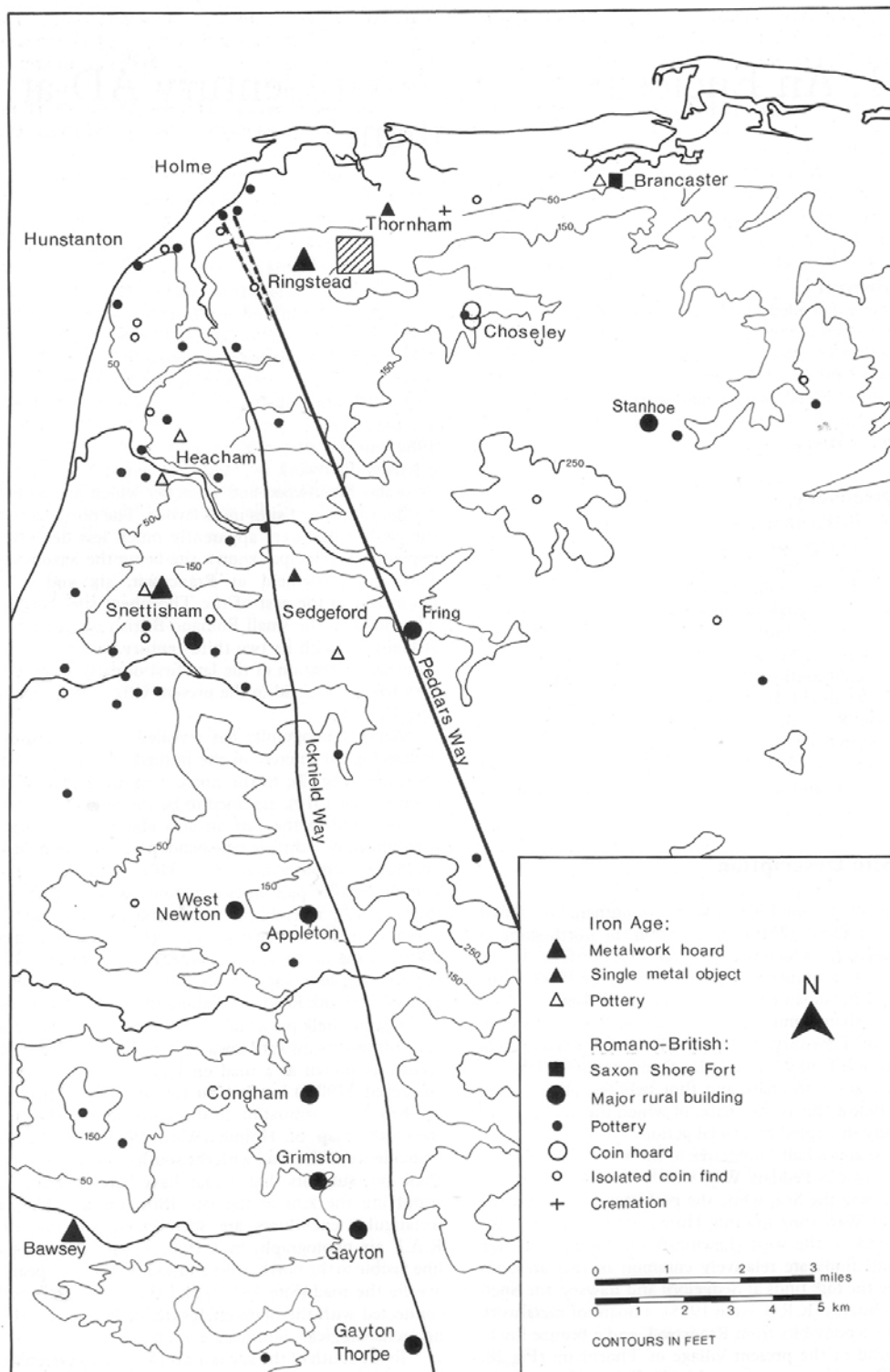
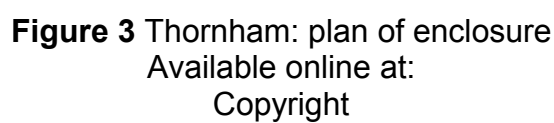


Figure 1 Iron Age and Romano-British sites and finds in north-west Norfolk.

Available online at:

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Saham Toney Roman Forts

NHER 4697

Summary

The Iron Age and Roman settlement at Woodcock Hall has been known since the mid 19th century. Systematic fieldwalking and metal detecting have recovered an enormous number of Iron Age and Roman finds including coins, pottery, building materials and metal objects. The dates of the objects indicate that this was an area of significant settlement from the Late Iron Age until the 4th century AD. The finds scatter is widespread between Threxton and Saham Toney. To the south of a stream that runs through the site the number of mid 1st century military finds recovered from a small plateau suggests this is the location of a Claudian fort built to guard the river crossing. The very hot summer in 1996 enabled the identification of cropmarks of a second later fort straddling the Peddar's Way (NHER 1289, a Roman road) where it crosses the stream. Traces of roads and structures within the large fort can also be seen on aerial photographs. A separate horse compound has been identified. The fort was the garrison for around 800 Roman legionaries and cavalry and was probably built in the second half of the first century AD on the site of an earlier Iron Age site. It may have been constructed in response to the Boudican revolt. No excavation has ever been carried out on the site.

For more information see the Norfolk Heritage Explorer website:
www.heritage.norfolk.gov.uk

The Saham Toney forts are on private land and are not accessible to the public.

List of Resources

- Aerial photographs
- Plan of site of the two forts
- Newspaper articles
- R. Brown, 1996, 'A Newly Discovered Fort at Woodcock Hall, Saham Toney, Norfolk', unpublished paper
- R. Brown, 1986, 'The Iron Age and Romano-British Settlement at Woodcock Hall, Saham Toney, Norfolk' in *Britannia*, Vol. XVII, 1-58

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Case Study B—Saham Toney Forts

Sheet II

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Extracts from Brown, R., 1986. 'The Iron Age and Romano-British Settlement at Woodcock Hall, Saham Toney, Norfolk' *Britannia* XVII, 1-58

Text in italic has been added or significantly altered from the original.

The full article is available in the library at Norfolk Landscape Archaeology.

Introduction

The Romano-British settlement at Woodcock Hall, Saham Toney, Norfolk has been known since the mid 19th century...The site has never been professionally excavated, either wholly or in part...The quantity of artefacts found during systematic fieldwalking suggests that much can be learned by the analysis of surface evidence without necessarily resorting to excavation.

The Site

The settlement lies on the Peddar's Way Roman road that runs north-west/south-east across west Norfolk (Figure 1)...it would appear that the settlement was established in the late Iron Age, probably by enlarging some form of habitation already there...Evidence for this lies in the spread of Icenian coins and the scatter of early brooches...suggesting a date for the foundation of the settlement in the first or possibly second quarter of the 1st century AD...The initial Roman presence is a military one, with the siting of a Claudian fort on high ground overlooking the river. Evidence for this fort, which appears to overlie earlier Celtic occupation, comes in the form of a scatter of mid-first-century military metalwork...The date for the occupation of the fort rests largely on coin evidence, both Icenian and Roman, and it would appear probable that this occurred in the aftermath of the first Icenian uprising of AD 47 rather than after Boudica's rebellion of AD 60/61. *There may also have been a vicus that attended the fort.*

The Finds

Roman Coins

A large group of Claudian aes 'copies' have been recovered from the Claudian fort site (Figure 2). The...Claudian copies were minted for and by the army. The presence of coins copied from issues of Agrippa, Germanicus and Augustus...suggests the fort was occupied between AD 46 to AD 54. Furthermore the absence of the late aes copies suggests a break in occupation from about AD 58 with regular monetary use not recommencing until the arrival of the regular issues of Nero, minted from AD 63, by which time the fort had long since been abandoned. The concentration of aes copies within the confined area *of the fort* suggests...circulation of these coins was confined effectively to military personnel. Either the local inhabitants were excluded from handling this currency or there were no locals in the vicinity to use it...The absence of Claudian aes copies in the area of the pre-

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Case Study B—Saham Toney Forts

Sheet II continued

sumed vicus, may imply a barter economy...Activity on the old fort site from AD 59 to the end of the first century seems sparse. The fort site was not reoccupied.

Bronze Objects

Bow brooches

The find spots of the earliest bow brooches illustrate the growth and extent of the settlement up to the period of the military occupation. Naturally pre-conquest brooches predominate with the later types associated with the arrival of the Roman army, notably the Hod Hill group (Figure 3)...It would be convenient for the argument for the placing of the fort-site if a group of Hod Hill types has been found there instead of only one. Possibly the military were more careful in ridding their site of old brooches, possibly deep pits still contain the evidence, or perhaps the group at the stream crossing is a clue to the method of disposal. The sole Hod Hill brooch from the fort site (no 111, Figure 3) *has been cut up* and seems to have been on its way to a bronze-smith's crucible when it was lost, possibly an indication of their normal fate.

The Fort

The existence of the fort was unsuspected until a group of military bronze and iron fragments was identified as being mid-first century AD Claudio-Neronian equipment...The small plateau, or bluff, that is bordered by the stream on two sides is in an ideal position from which to guard the river crossing and to establish a check-point where movement along the military road could be monitored. By being sited south of the river the garrison was less likely to be cut off from their base to the south, whether it was at Great Chesterford or Colchester. Observation was also possible (at least it is today) several kilometres upstream and about one kilometre downstream and the slope of the hill leading up to the plateau is sufficiently steep to make an uphill attack laborious for foot soldiers, although from the south a level neck of land would be a vulnerable sector.

Roman Military Items

The group of mid-first-century military metalwork comprises forty six objects, two of which are iron. All but five came from a group found on the plateau, an area that produced the Claudian aes copies discussed above...Most significant is the fragment of *military* patera handle (no 201, Figure 4)...with a punched inscription on the reverse '*C. PRIMI.*' translated as '*belonging to the centuria of Primus*'. The inference that the unit stationed at the plateau was auxiliary stems from item no 199, a small shield-shaped mount, identical to one from Niederbieber where it is there identified as being from auxiliary troops' equipment, and the iron lance head (No 241)...which also has auxiliary associations...Other military finds include lorica segmentata, buckles, mounts, fittings and an iron adze-hammer.

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Case Study B—Saham Toney Forts

Sheet III

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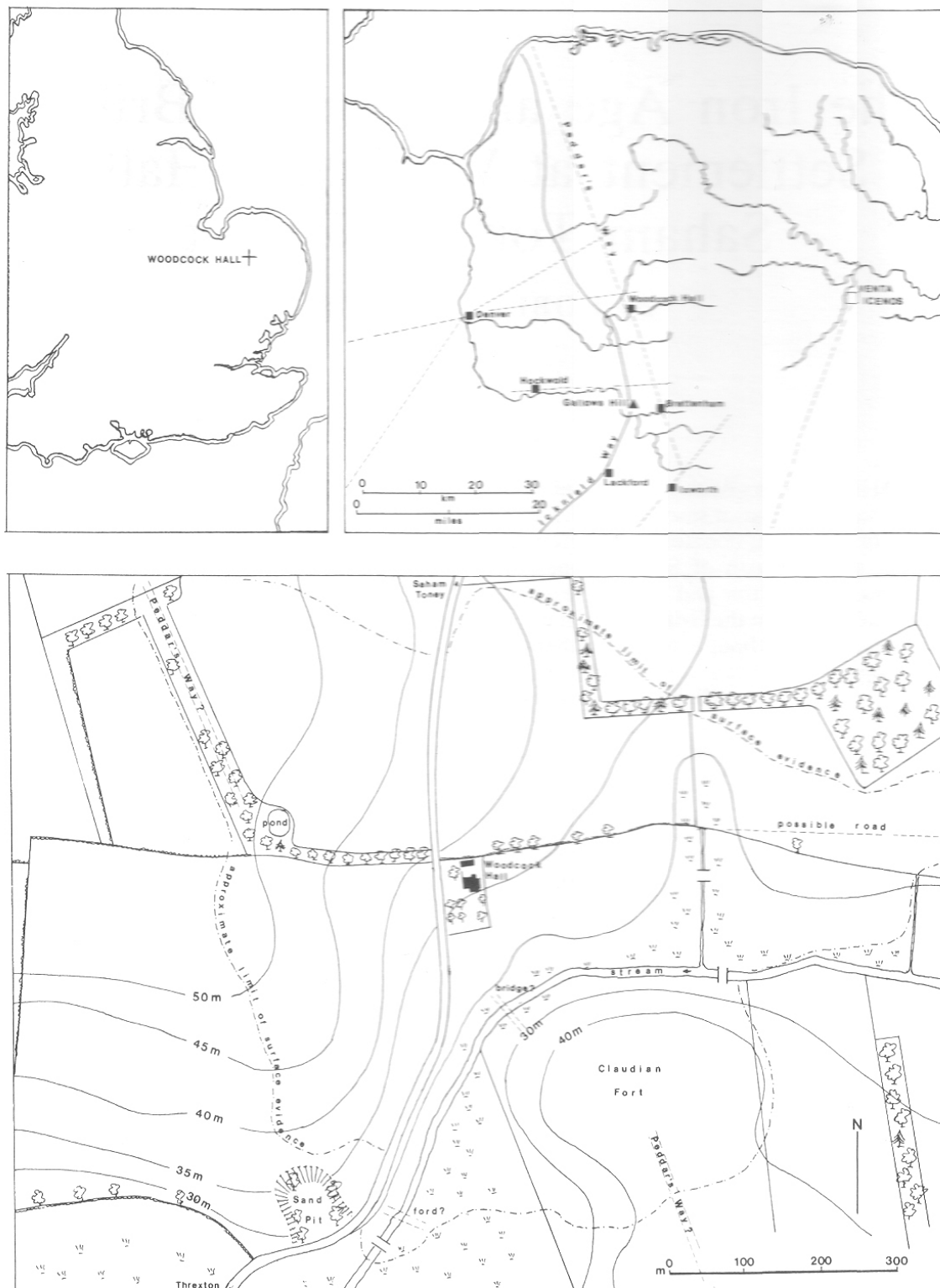


Figure 1 The Woodcock Hall settlement site

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Case Study B—Saham Toney Forts

Sheet IV

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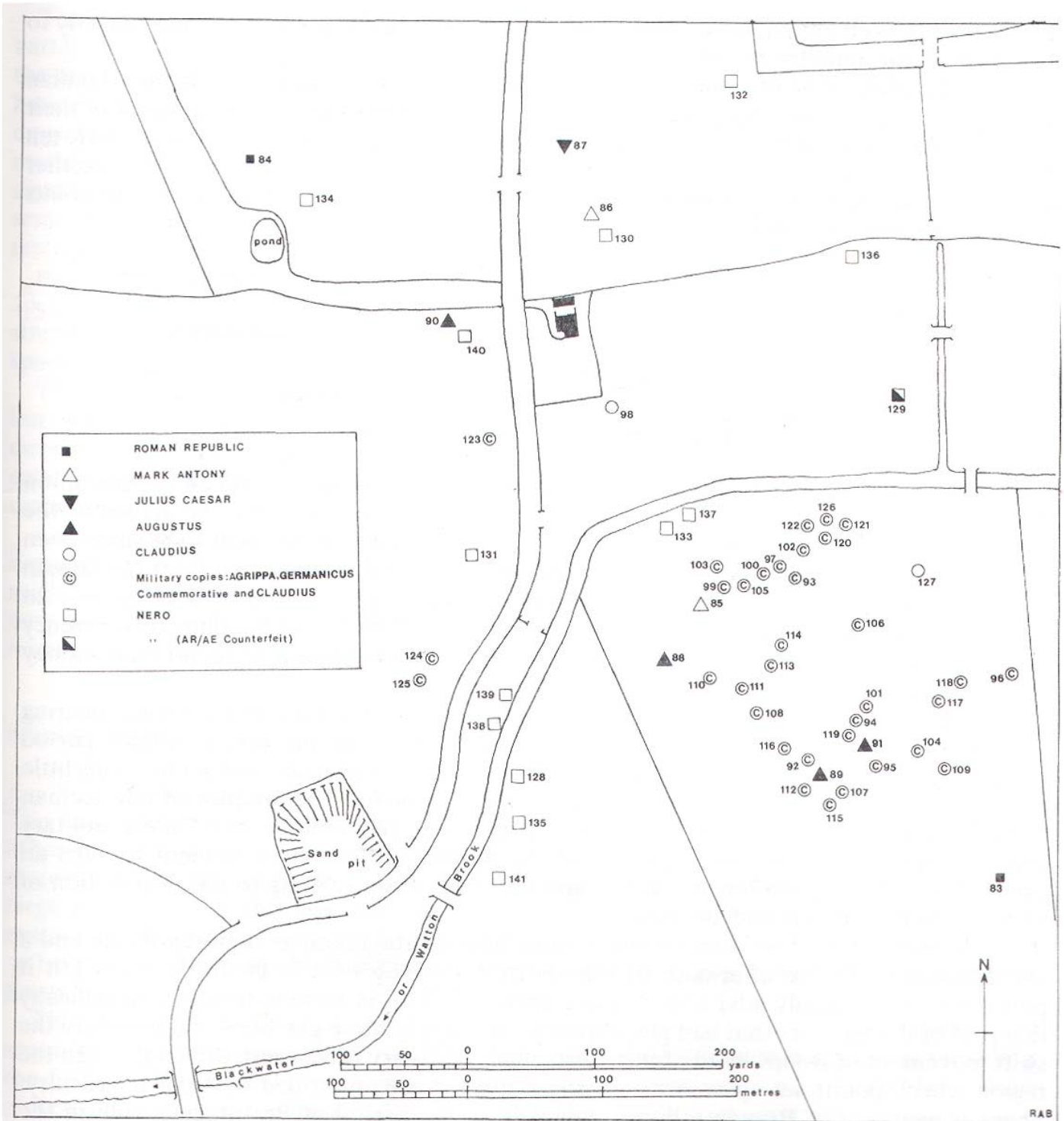


Figure 2 Find-Spots of Roman Coins: Republic to Nero

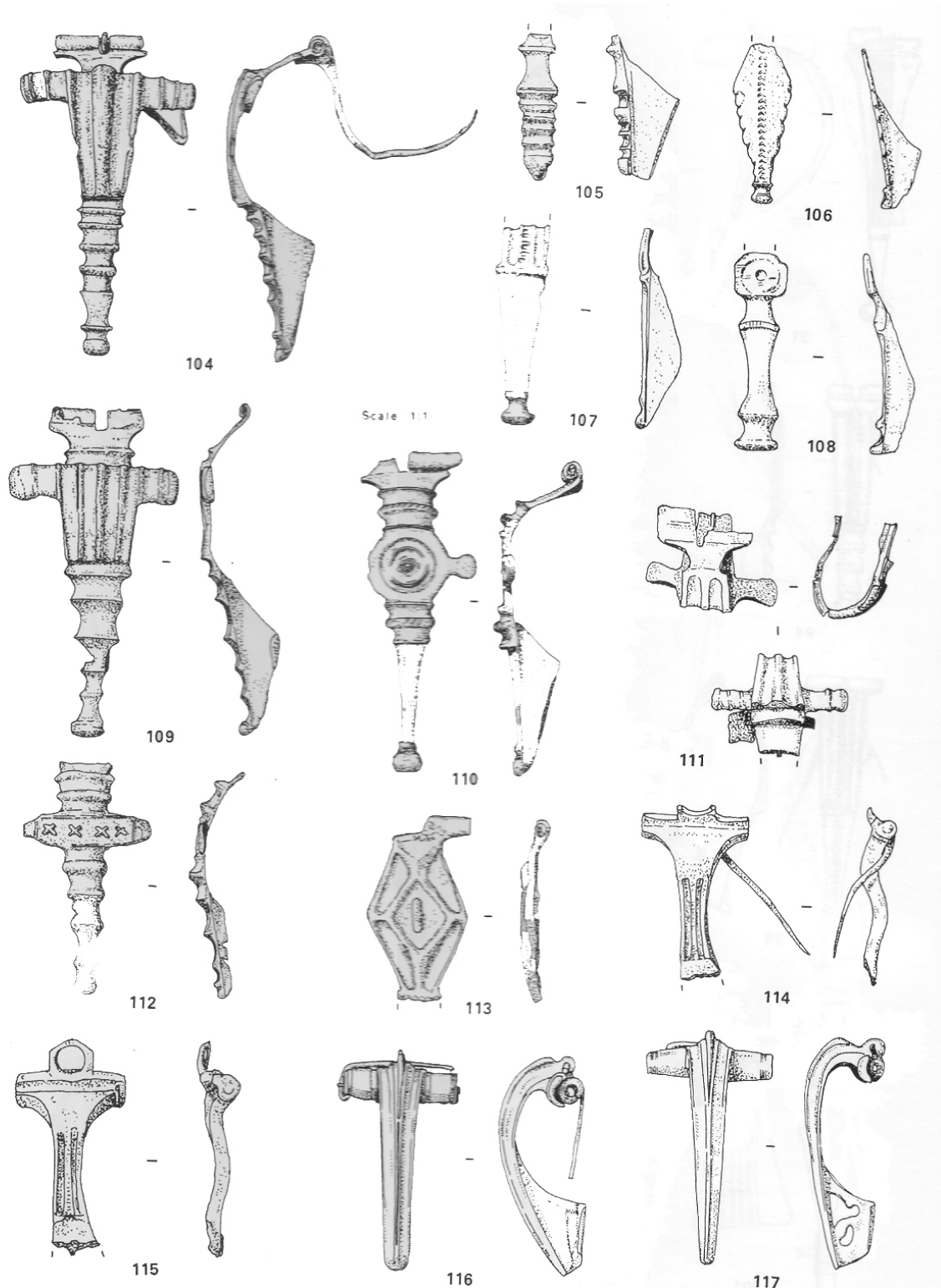


Figure 3 Some of the brooches recovered from the site

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Case Study B –Saham Toney Forts

Sheet VI

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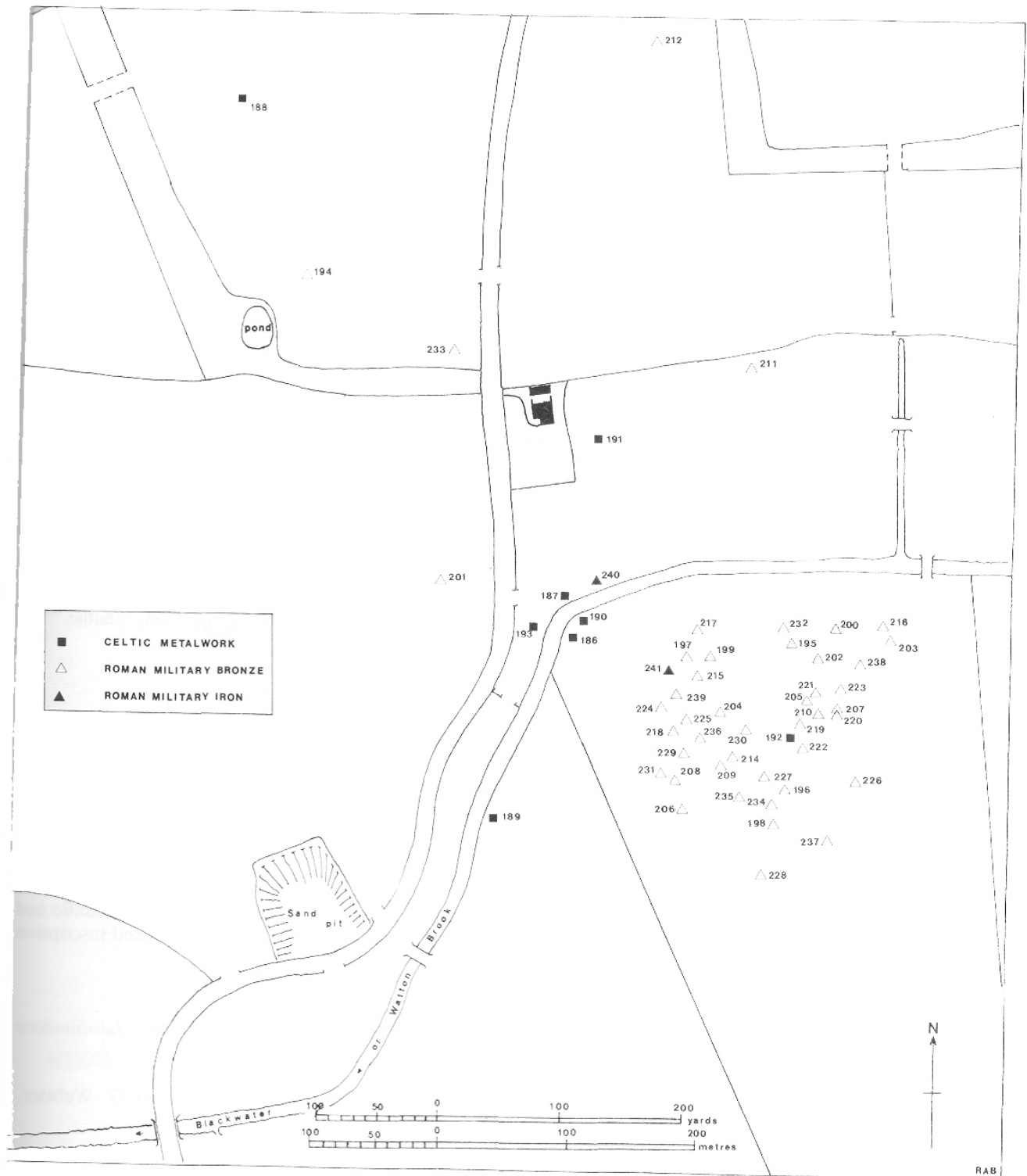


Figure 4 Find-Spots of Celtic metalwork and Roman Military objects

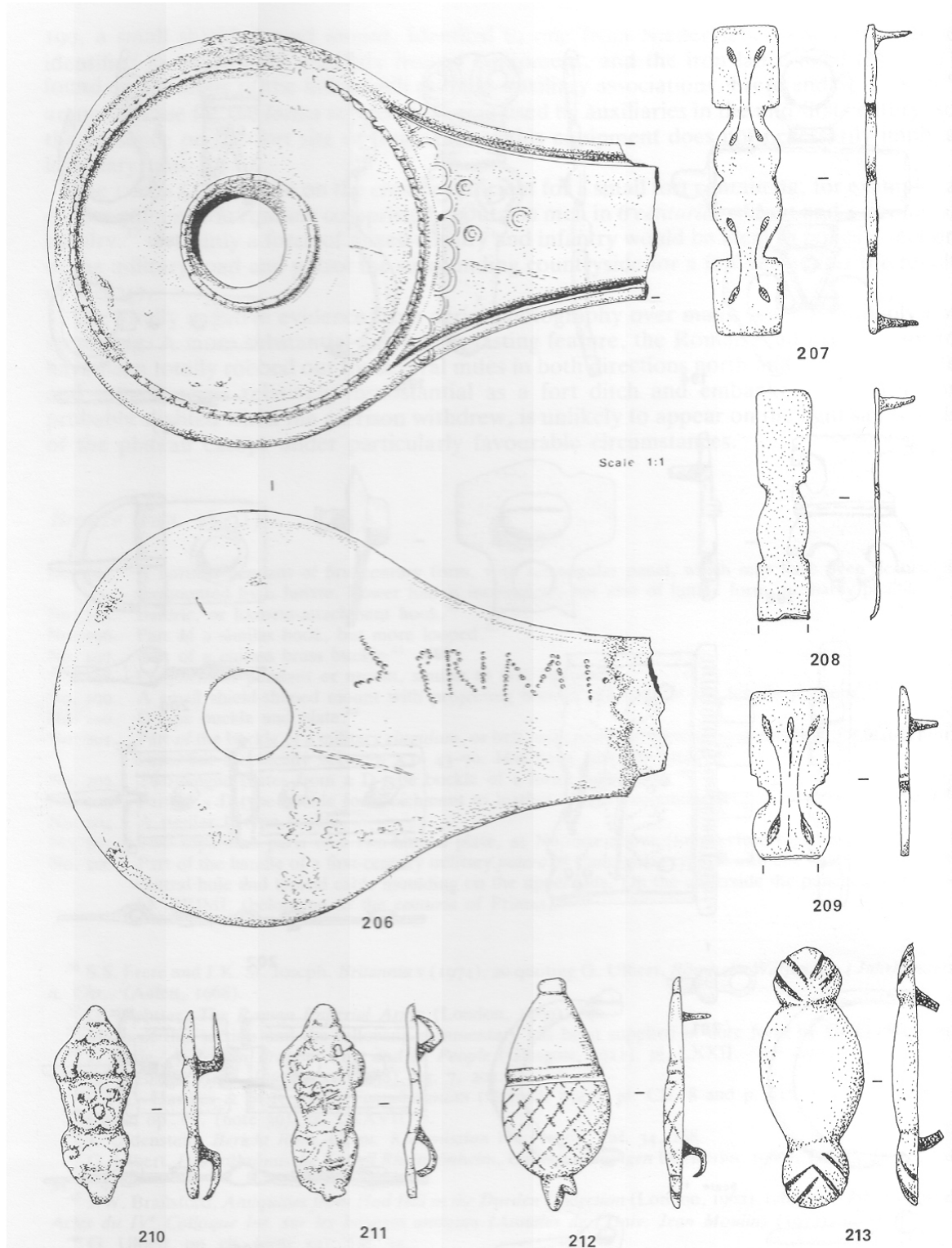


Figure 5 Roman Military Metalwork including patera handle (no 206)

Aerial Photograph



Taken in 1996 this photograph reveals the cropmarks of a second Roman fort at Saham Toney. For more information on aerial photography and cropmarks see 'Aerial photographs' in the Exploring More section of the Norfolk Heritage Explorer website.

Image available online at:
<http://gallery.e2bn.org/gallery772.html>

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Aerial Photograph



This colour print taken at the same time as the black and white photograph shows how the crops grow greener and more lushly over the ditches of the fort.

Image available online at:
<http://gallery.e2bn.org/gallery772.html>

Copyright Norfolk Museums & Archaeology Service.

Aerial Photograph



A more vertical shot allows us to understand the layout of the fort and clearly see the attached enclosure to the left of the photo which acted as a horse compound.

Image available online at:
<http://gallery.e2bn.org/gallery772.html>

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The Times, Wednesday, August 7, 1996

Early Roman fort unearthed by the long hot summer

BY PETER FOSTER

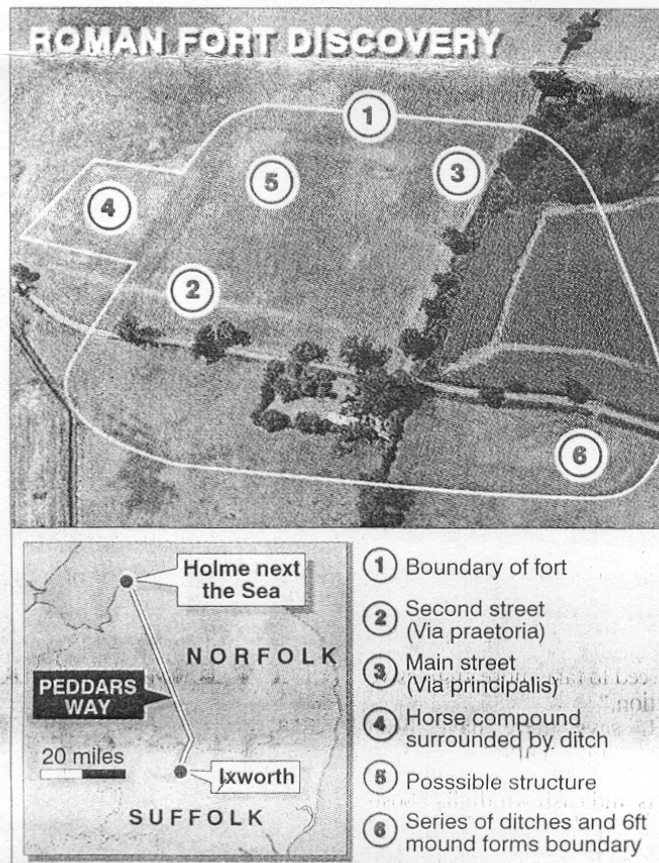
THE remains of an early Roman fort built to impose order on Boudicca and the marauding Iceni has been discovered in Norfolk.

The 16-acre site came to light in an aerial survey because of the dry summer. The remains, which straddle the 50-mile Roman road Peddars Way, were spotted as dark markings in a crop of potatoes.

David Gurney, principal landscape archaeologist at the Norfolk Museums Service, said he believed the fortification dated to the period of Boudicca's uprising against occupying Roman forces in AD 60-61. "This discovery is of national importance and will tell us much about early military activity in Norfolk and East Anglia," he said. "We knew a fort was established here after the Roman invasion in AD 43, but this is a second, larger site which we think was built by the Roman administration to exercise tighter control on the Iceni tribe.

"The spectacularly dry summer has meant that the ditches surrounding the fort have acted as a reservoir for plants. In the drought these plants grow higher than the rest, revealing the outline of the Roman remains.

"The fort is based on a



standard design common throughout the Roman Empire. The main defences included three deep ditches and a timber palisade. The outer ditch, 20-30ft wide, was designed to keep attackers at a safe distance and suggest the

use of artillery, probably in the form of catapults."

The fort is thought to have been built as a temporary structure populated by up to 2,000 soldiers housed in wooden barracks. As well as a military headquarters the

compound would have contained granaries, workshops and craftsmen needed to support the Roman force. The main gates are also thought to have been made out of timber, possibly flanked by two towers.

Mr Gurney, who specialises in the Roman period, said: "The fort was occupied for no longer than a decade. If it had lasted any longer then stone would probably have been used. The whole area would have been divided up by a grid street system with the headquarters building in the middle. Craftsmen would be employed to maintain the military equipment. Spear shafts were also in constant demand because Roman spears were designed to break on landing to prevent the enemy throwing them back."

Outside the main perimeter the survey reveals a smaller area surrounded by a ditch, possibly used as a corral for cavalry horses. The location of the find is being kept secret to stop an invasion of metal detector enthusiasts damaging the site.

The survey, funded by the Royal Commission for Historic Monuments of England, also revealed an Iron Age Long Barrow and a late Roman villa.

The Eastern Daily Press, Tuesday, August 6th, 1996

Secrets of Norfolk's history have been revealed by the drought.

A massive and previously unknown Roman fort has thrilled experts after being spotted in a potato field during an aerial survey.

It could help throw new light on the rebellion by Queen Boadicea (Boudicca) of the Iceni tribe, against the Roman invaders almost 2000 years ago.

An Iron Age long barrow and a superb example of a late Roman villa in east Norfolk have also been spotted from the air during the exceptionally dry summer, in what is proving the best year since 1976 for archaeologists.

The most significant find is the fort, which straddles a Roman road in central Norfolk and was the garrison for an estimated 800 legionaries and cavalry.

The aerial survey shows it is at least a third, or even half, the size of the great Roman fort at Chester. It was almost certainly built to repel the Iceni and reinforce Roman authority.

The discovery is regarded as of "potentially national significance" by principal landscape archaeologist David Gurney, of Norfolk Museums Service.

"It could help us to understand a key stage of history in the early years after the Roman invasion of Britain," he said.

The fort was built across the Peddars Way at the time of Boadicea's revolt around AD60 or AD61.

It had formidable defensive features and ditches – essential against the fast-moving Iceni cavalry – and, unusually for the 1st century, was probably defended by troops armed with artillery.

The size and detail of the 40-acre

By **MICHAEL POLLITT**

Roman fort is breathtaking and it was spotted by the county's air photography officer Derek Edwards during the first summer photo-reconnaissance.

"It is the most exciting find that I've made in 22 years and it was only visible for two days, then it disappeared again," he added.

Mr Edwards, who has taken about 3500 photographs for the Norfolk Air Library in the past few weeks, was thrilled by the legionary fortress.

"The pictures show the full extent of the fort and its defensive features," he said. "We have also spotted signs of another encampment outside the main fort, possibly used for housing horses for the cavalry."

"The main entrance is also very obvious as is the Via Principalis, the main road through the fort. There are other signs of settlement, possibly the headquarters or commander's house and offices," he added.

The drought helped Mr Edwards spot the defensive features, including signs of ditches in a potato crop.

The site was identified as a Roman settlement in the middle of the last century, but the size and scale was not recognised until now.

Mr Gurney said buckles, coins and other artefacts had been found on the site. "Metal detectors have been used and have turned up some useful finds. We did not know that there was such a large fort on the site."

"We think the fort was built as a semi-permanent structure in the heart of Iceni territory, possibly after the Boudiccan revolt around AD61," he added.

The fort would have had an outer defensive ditch, maybe 20-30ft wide, then two narrower inner ditches, and finally a wooden palisade on the mound.

The aerial survey, which is funded by the Royal Commission for Historic Monuments of England, is a cost-effective method of recording. All the information is logged on the county's Sites and Monuments Record.

The EDP has been asked not to identify the precise location of the sites to prevent potential damage by illegal use of metal detectors.

■ **COMMENT – Page 10**



FINDER:
Derek
Edwards,
who
spotted
the
fortress
from the
air.

TOMORROW – MORE OF NORFOLK'S HIDDEN PAST

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Case Study B—Saham Toney Forts

Sheet XIII

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Extracts from Brown, R., 1996. 'A Newly Discovered Roman Fort at Woodcock Hall, Saham Toney, Norfolk' unpublished article.

Text in italic has been added or significantly altered from the original.

The full article is available in the Norfolk Historic Environment Record at Norfolk Landscape Archaeology.

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Introduction

Surface finds *at Saham Toney* revealed not only the extent of settlement and the period of its occupation but the existence of a previously unreported 4 acre Roman fort of the Claudian period south of the Blackwater stream on a bluff known as Sand Hills. From the military artefacts and the coins found there was reason to believe that this small fort was built to guard the river crossing overlooking a small late Iron Age village in the period following the first Iceni revolt of AD 47. The fort seems to have been abandoned after about 10 to 12 years occupation, presumably at a time when the Iceni appeared to be in a more placid frame of mind...Surface finds over approximately a 90 acre site north of the Blackwater suggested at that time that the settlement was re-built towards the 3rd quarter of the 1st century AD and that it then continued as a small market town until the end of Roman rule in Britain.

The Evidence from the New Aerial Photography

The new aerial photographs have produced evidence of a larger (14 acre) fort north of the Blackwater stream on what had hitherto been regarded as the post-Boudican civilian settlement. This fort was almost certainly constructed in the immediate period after the defeat of Boudica, at the time of the 'clades Icenorum' in AD 60/61. Triple ditches, the outer one being 7-10m wide and about 3m deep, suggest that the fort was built with a possible counter-attack in mind. *The fort straddles the Roman road The Peddar's Way.* Entering the fort from the south the Peddar's Way would have met the via Principalis at a T-junction and travellers proceeding north would doubtless have been checked before being allowed to continue on their way, exiting the fort area. Traces of the via Praetoria are visible to the naked eye at certain times of the year...For some reason the northern defences seem not to be parallel with the southern walls but are sited so that the western side of the fort is shorter than the eastern. This gives the whole fort a curiously asymmetrical ground plan. Within the defences insubstantial traces on the ground appear to suggest the sites of permanent structures, although these most likely date from after the evacuation of the fort. A rectangular enclosure can also be seen immediately to the south of the southern defences and this has been suggested as a compound for the horses that were mounts for the cavalry of the garrison. Indistinct and rather uncertain evidence from the aerial photography perhaps shows an area of occupation immediately to the east of the fort. This may have been the site of the *civilian settlement*, judiciously located downwind of the fort itself.

Evidence on the Ground

No certain traces of the fort's ditches remain at ground level, and only the annual appearance of the via Praetoria after spring ploughing shows up to confirm the aerial photography. Evidence of iron working in the form of fragments of iron slag can be found along the line of the via Principalis, but whether this shows that ironworking was carried on...is impossible to

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Case Study B—Saham Toney Forts

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decide without further investigation. *Slag has been used to provide a hard road surface on Roman roads and may have been imported for this purpose.* The coin evidence for the period AD 61 to AD 100 is also curiously unrevealing. Neronian and Flavian coins account for only a small portion of the total 2 500 coins found on the settlement site...Of this total only 4 Neronian, 8 Vespasian, 4 Domitian and 1 coin of Nerva were found within the confines of the fort...No single item of identifiable Roman military equipment has been found within the site of the new fort, unlike the Claudian fort which produced many items dating from the mid 1st century AD. The absence of military objects from the later period may suggest a short period of occupation, or perhaps a more efficient method of *recycling* scrap bronze.

Conclusions

The area of the fort indicates a garrison of perhaps some 800 troops, presumably several auxiliary units that included cavalry. The conclusion that is suggested by the absence of surface finds is that the fort existed only for a short time. Following the defeat of Boudica's revolt, retribution was once again swift and devastating on *the* small Iceni sttlement at Woodcock Hall. *After this* the fort may have been occupied for no more than 5 years, perhaps being evacuated when the presence of the garrison was needed elsewhere in the province. Buildings within the fort's defences would probably have been of wood and these would have been dismantled when the garrison departed. The wooden palisade would likewise have been taken down but the earth embankments and ditches would have been left in case a hasty return was required at a later date. While the strategic imperative must have determined the fort's precise location right on top of the destroyed Iceni settlement, tactically the location left a lot to be desired. The *Claudian fort* was well sited with steep approaches on two out of its four sides and a line of retreat to the southwards if necessary. The new fort, with its triple ditches and larger garrison, nevertheless lay in a hollow without the advantage of height to allow observation in all directions. The horizon is relatively close on three sides which could have allowed an enemy to approach undetected. Perhaps it is this tactical disadvantage that resulted in the short life of the fort. Over the next 300 years the defences no doubt decayed and were not renewed even in the troubled 3rd century as by then the settlement had grown well outside the fort's small confines. Substantial brick buildings were built, some with hypocaust systems and tiled roofs, evidence of the prosperity of the inhabitants at this well-sited market town.

Swanton Morley Roman Fort

NHER 17486

Summary

Cropmarks of a Roman temporary camp defended by three parallel ditches can be seen on aerial photographs. Marks of the camp entrance, a possible outer enclosure and a second enclosure to the south of the main camp can also be seen. Fieldwalking and metal detecting have recovered large numbers of finds dating from the Neolithic to the post medieval period. These include over 250 Iron Age and Roman coins including 150 Claudian copied coins, over forty brooches, seventy six Roman military objects and native metalwork.

For more information see the Norfolk Heritage Explorer website:
www.heritage.norfolk.gov.uk

The Swanton Morley Roman fort is on private land and is not accessible to the public.

List of Resources

- Aerial photograph
- Gurney, D., 2006. 'Swanton Morley Fort 17486 Interim Report'
- Coins report
- Brooches report
- Military objects report
- Finds drawings
-

Early Roman Forts Resource Pack

Case Study C—Swanton Morley Fort

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Extracts from Gurney, D, 2006. 'Swanton Morley Roman Fort 17486 Interim Report'. Unpublished document.

Text in italic has been added or significantly altered from the original.

The full article is available in the library at Norfolk Landscape Archaeology.

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The site of an early fort at Swanton Morley, overlooking the River Wensum, is known from cropmarks on aerial photographs taken between 1977 and 1996, and a scatter of metal finds recovered from intensive metal detecting between 1984 and 1989.

The cropmarks show three sides of a rectangular enclosure with rounded corners, representing part of the typical 'playing card' shape of an early Roman fort. This enclosure measures around 110m across and at least 140m long, with triple ditches and an entrance on the eastern side. To the east there are further cropmarks, which may or may not be associated with the fort. The cropmarks have yet to be examined in detail by the Norfolk National Mapping Program.

Around 250 coins have been found on the site, including seven Iron Age coins, an aureus of Tiberius, 27 Republican and early Roman silver denarii, and 150 Claudian irregular asses of various types. These irregular asses are contemporary copies of the types they imitate, and were produced by and for the army in the Claudio-Neronian period. Swanton Morley is thought to be the most productive site of this period in East Anglia, followed by Saham Toney. The coin evidence suggests that Swanton Morley was occupied by the Roman military in the early years of the reign of Nero, i.e. the period of the Boudican uprising of AD 60/61.

More than 40 brooches were recovered. There is no such thing as a specifically military brooch, and the army used ordinary brooches made locally, so the brooch assemblage does not demonstrate unequivocally a Roman military site and some may derive from a civilian site nearby. The brooches range in date from the pre-conquest period through the rest of the first century AD and into the second century.

Seventy six Roman military objects have been recovered from the site, including hinges from lorica segmentata armour, a dolabrum (pickaxe) sheath fitting, cuirass mounts and fasteners, harness fittings, horse pendants, belt fittings and a pioneer's axe sheath. Most of these finds can be compared to finds from early Roman military sites elsewhere.

The site has also produced up to twenty fragments of native metalwork (including a number of terrets (rein guides) and assorted Iron Age enamelled discs, plates and fittings) which raises the interesting possibilities that the Roman army unit here might be recycling pieces of Icenian military hardware or ornaments recovered from battle sites (or the final Boudican battle site), that they might be using it themselves or perhaps the soldiers were wearing pieces of native metalwork as trophies?

The fort is most likely to belong to the Boudican period (AD 60 /61) than to the conquest period (AD 43) or uprising of AD 47.

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Case Study C—Swanton Morley Fort

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Extracts from Mackreth, D.F. 'Swanton Morley, The Brooches'. Unpublished document.

Text in italic has been added or significantly altered from the original.

The full article is available in the library at Norfolk Landscape Archaeology.

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Had this collection come from the usual anonymous rural site, it would point to a site running from before the Conquest to a much reduced occupation in the second century. However, the knowledge that there is a Roman fort, moreover one deep in Icenian territory, presents a problem in interpretation: does the collection reflect a military presence, if so what date?

The first point to be made is that there is no such thing as a specifically military brooch; the army used ordinary brooches which, in the Conquest period, tended to be largely types made on the Continent, but it happily used brooches it came across in newly conquered territories. The second is that the present collection still reflect a pre-Conquest presence on this site and that, without excavation, nothing is specifically tied to a military context. Further, a collection gathered from the surface of a site may not adequately reflect the actual dating of features beneath.

As the Iceni were a client kingdom until the death of Prasutagus, it could be assumed that there was not a regular Roman military presence in their territory until then. The suppression of the Boudican Revolt would certainly have been accompanied by a determined presence. The lack of a large collection of Aucissas and Hod Hill brooches points to the fort here not having been founded at an early date, but it is hard to see which brooches should have been brought in c. 60-65. The large number of rearhook brooches would be normal on an ordinary site in Icenian lands and could have derived from the suspected purely native site. There are only a few brooches which might suggest a foreign presence. These continued to be used after 60 and, on a site, which could have run through uninterrupted through into the second century, would not be unexpected. However, four at least is a fairly large number for a Norfolk site, although not exceptional. The number of Hod Hill brooches is in line with the proportions found on other Norfolk sites and would support wither the view that few were imported into the tribal lands in the first fifteen years of the Roman occupation or, if they came with the army around 60, or that the type was already passing out of use. In short the brooch spectrum cannot be used unequivocally a Roman military site let alone a particular date-range within which one might be expected.

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Case Study C—Swanton Morley Fort

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Extracts from Kenyon, R., 1990. 'Roman Coins from Swanton Morley, Norfolk'. Unpublished document.

Text in italic has been added or significantly altered from the original.

The full article is available in the library at Norfolk Landscape Archaeology.

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Aureus. Tiberius/Pontif Maxim. Battered Condition.

Finds of early imperial aurei are rare occurrences in Britain. This is the only example from Norfolk that I have record of. It is even more unusual to find these rare coins in a battered condition such as this. If the battering took place during the coin's circulation it is possible that it was a means of testing suspect coins for plating.

Denarii. 11 Republic, 2 Julius Caesar, 3 Mark Anthony, 7 Augustus, 3 Tiberius, 1 Gaius.

The high number of denarii found at this site is also unusual. All were individual finds and there is nothing to suggest that the coins were a hoard or part of one. It is worth noting that finds of denarii of Gaius are extremely rare in Britain.

"Claudian Copy" coins. 145 coins.

Many of the coins were in a very worn state or have suffered from corrosion. By far the most commonly occurring Claudian copied coin is the as with a reverse design of Minerva advancing, holding shield and spear. The coins are all contemporary copies of the types they imitate...Three of these coins were found corroded together. It is likely that they were lost together and may have been the contents of a purse...This small group of asses was worth the equivalent of less than half a day's pay for a legionary soldier. Eight of the coins are intentionally buckled over. The purpose of bending these coins over is not known but the effect must have been to take these asses out of circulation. It may be that this was a way of demonetising worn or useless coins.

The high numbers of Claudian and pre-Claudian coins found at Swanton Morley make it the most productive Claudio-Neronian site in East Anglia. Saham Toney is the next most productive but it has only a third of the number of Claudian coins. The conspicuous lack of dupondii and sestertii from Swanton Morley and Saham Toney highlights the significant role that the as played in the circulation pool of military camps in general and in Iceni territory in particular. The absence of Neronian or Vespasian aes would seem to suggest that the military had abandoned Swanton Morley before this new coinage reached the troops in Britain. The coin assemblage suggests that Swanton Morley was operational in the early part of the reign of Nero. The combination of an unusually large number of Claudian coins, a high number of pre-Claudian denarii and an aureus of Tiberius found at Swanton Morley may be accounted for by unrecovered and scattered hoards or money left hurriedly neglected or a combination of both. The absence of any indication of the coins coming from hoards suggests that a hurried abandonment of the site may be the most likely cause for coin-finds such as these. The exceptional nature of this coin-list may be explained by similarly exceptional circumstances. The Boudican Revolt of AD 60/61 may provide just such a circumstance for the enforced abandonment of Swanton Morley.

Aerial Photograph

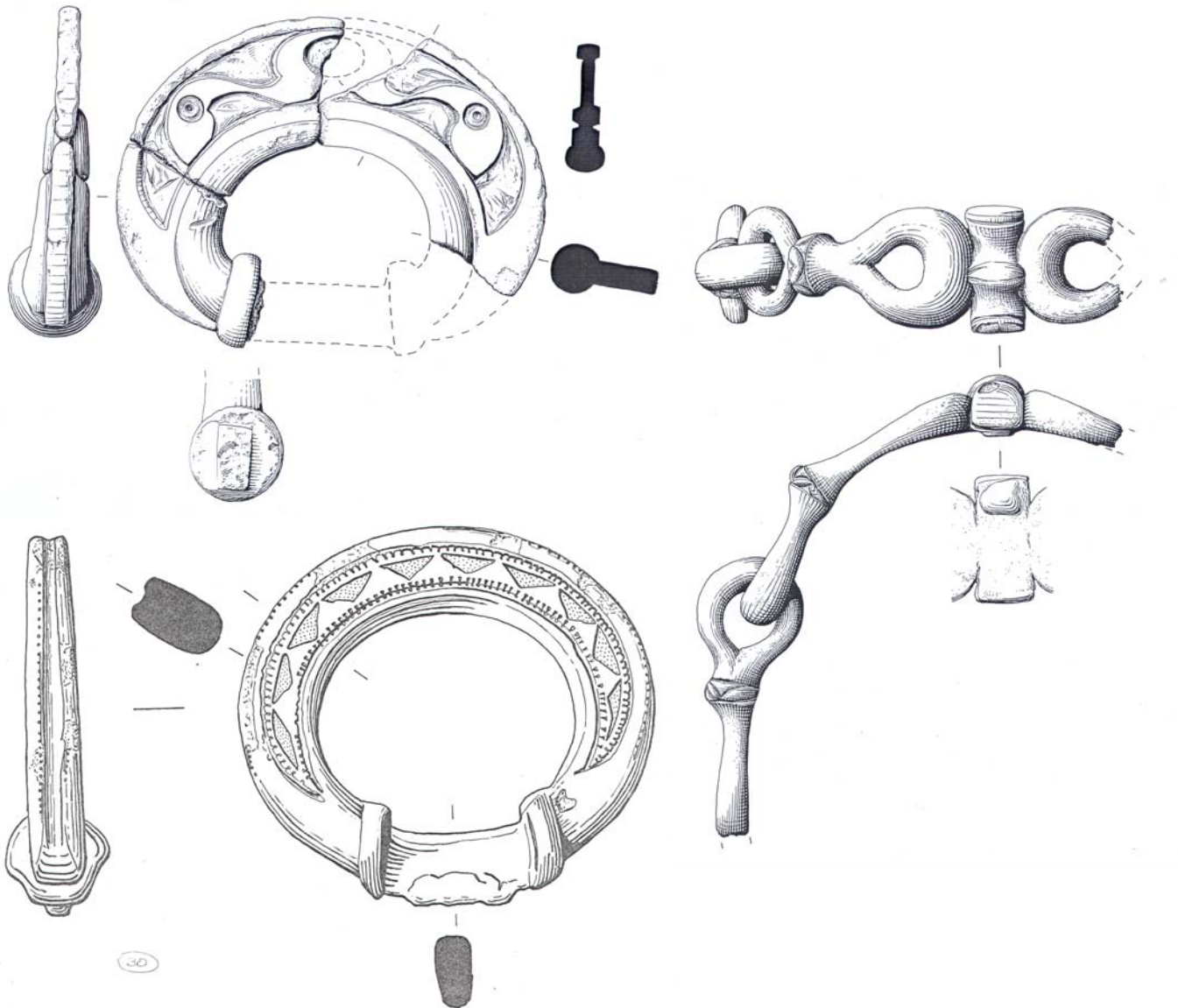


The three parallel ditches of the fort and the possible outer enclosure ditch can be seen on this aerial photograph of the fort at Swanton Morley. For more information on aerial photography and cropmarks see 'Aerial photographs' in the Exploring More section of the Norfolk Heritage Explorer website.

Image available online at:
<http://gallery.e2bn.org/gallery772.html>

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Native Objects from Swanton Morley

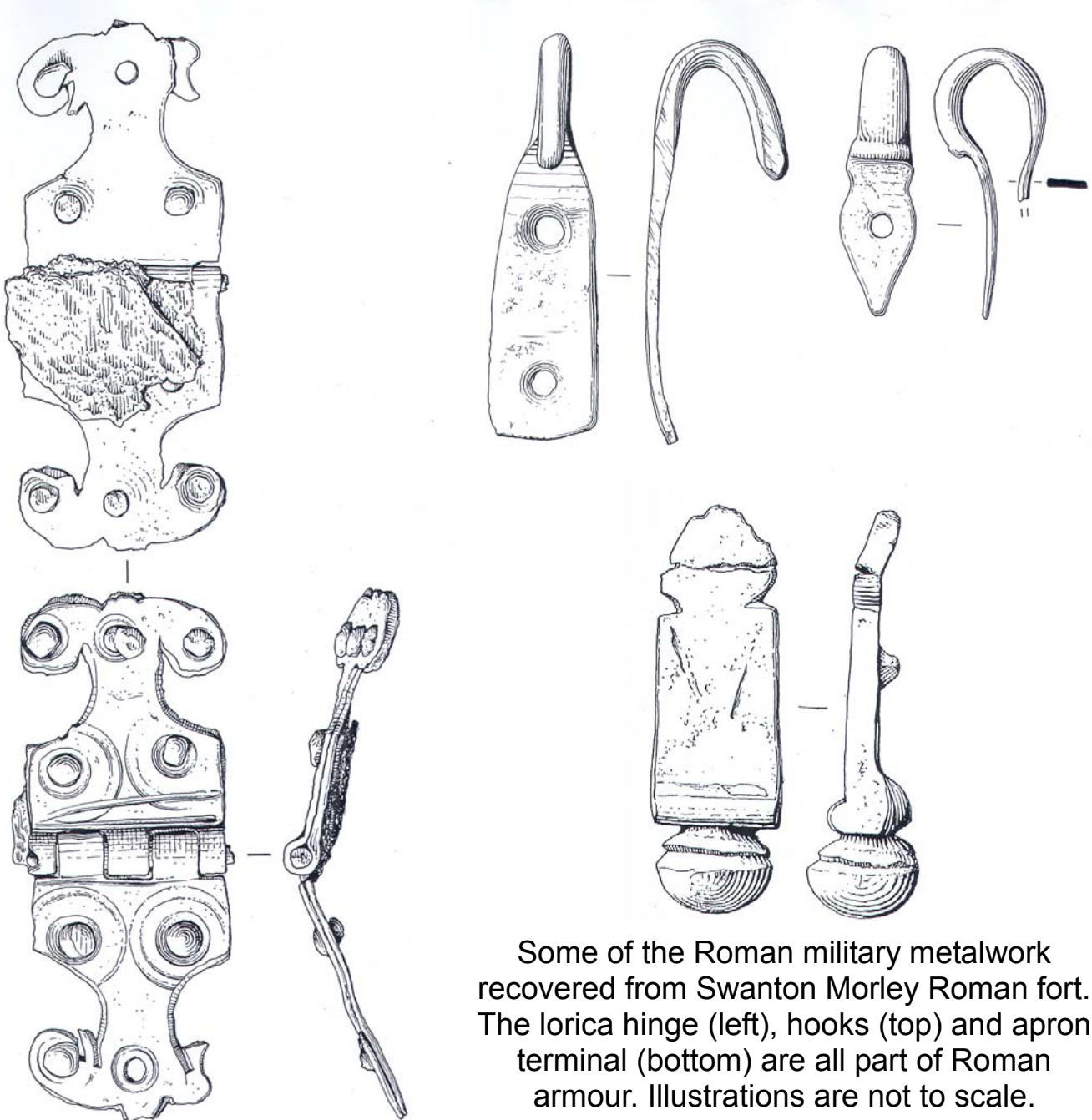


Some of the native metalwork recovered from Swanton Morley Roman fort. The terrets (rein guides) shown to the left are highly decorated with enamel. On the right are more pieces of horse harness. Illustrations are not to scale.

Image available online at:
<http://gallery.e2bn.org/gallery772.html>

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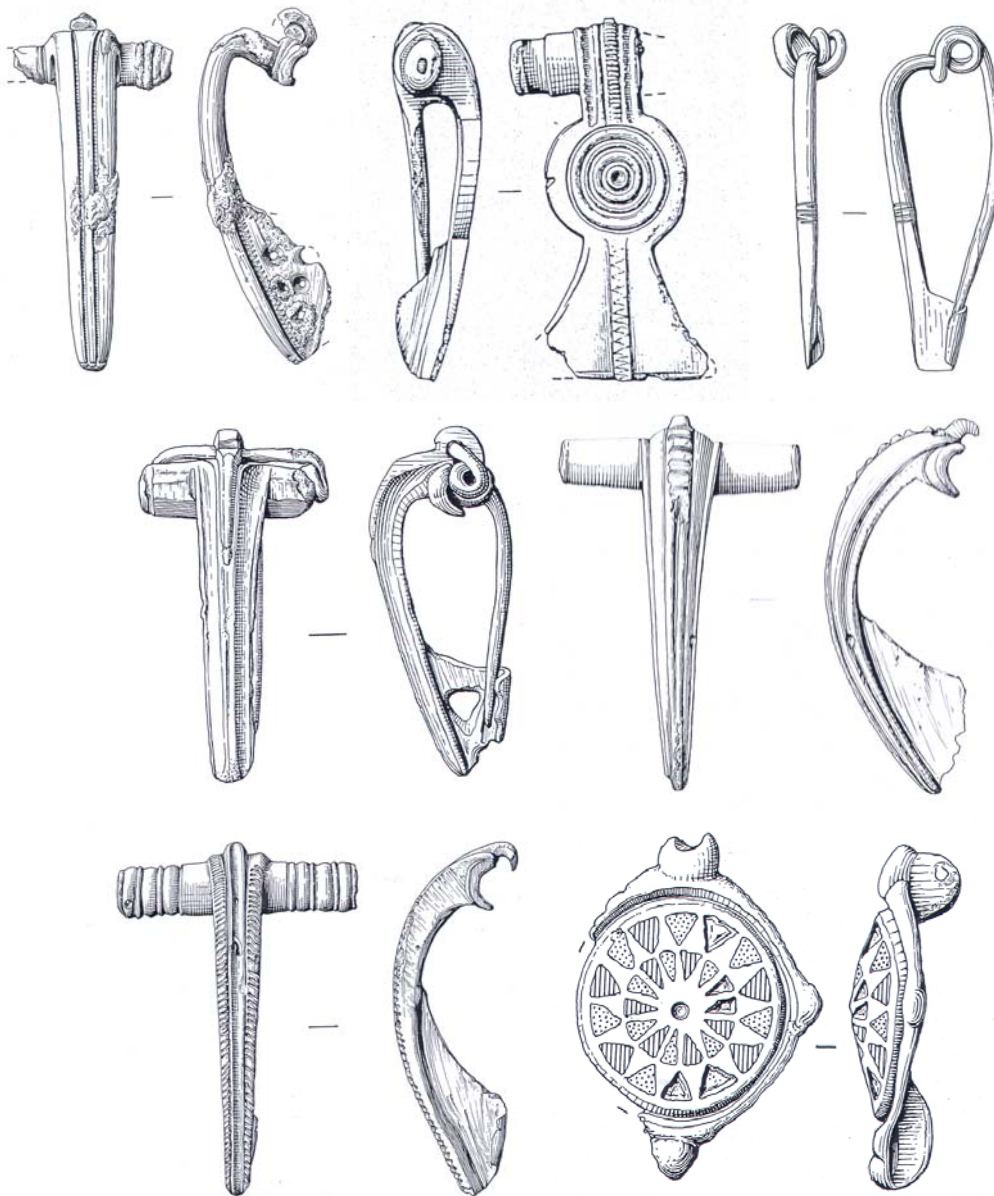
Roman Military Objects from Swanton Morley



Some of the Roman military metalwork recovered from Swanton Morley Roman fort. The lorica hinge (left), hooks (top) and apron terminal (bottom) are all part of Roman armour. Illustrations are not to scale.

Image available online at:
<http://gallery.e2bn.org/gallery772.html>

Brooches from Swanton Morley



Some of the brooches recovered from Swanton Morley Roman fort. These date from the beginning of the first century BC to the second century AD. Illustrations are not to scale.

Image available online at:
<http://gallery.e2bn.org/gallery772.html>

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Cawston Roman Fort

NHER 21849

Summary

Aerial photography from 1981 to 1996 recorded the cropmarks of a probable Roman triple ditched fort, with other confusing, possibly associated, cropmarks. A Bronze Age perforated mace head was found in 1968, and metal detecting between 1987 and 1995 recovered Roman and medieval coins.

For more information see the Norfolk Heritage Explorer website:
www.heritage.norfolk.gov.uk

The Cawston Roman fort is on private land and is not accessible to the public.

List of Resources

- Aerial photograph
- Wilson, D.R., 1986. 'Cawston Fort'. Unpublished letter.

Aerial Photograph



The entrance and ditches of the fort and other confusing cropmarks outside the fort can be seen on this aerial photograph of Cawston Roman fort. For more information on aerial photography and cropmarks see 'Aerial photographs' in the Exploring More section of the Norfolk Heritage Explorer website.

Image available online at:
<http://gallery.e2bn.org/gallery772.html>

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Case Study D—Cawston Fort

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Extracts from Wilson, D.R., 1986. 'Cawston Fort'. Unpublished letter.

The full letter is available in the Norfolk Historic Environment Record at Norfolk Landscape Archaeology.
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It is indeed very impressive, with its well-cut square-ended ditch, straight sides, rounded angles, internal palisade trench and external outwork; but despite all this I would have reservations about identifying the site as a Roman fort on present evidence.

The first problem is the shape on plan. Of course, Roman forts can have irregular plans, but it is not normal. What can be seen of the fourth side and adjoining angles in the neighbouring field does not help the Roman military interpretation, though the marks are not distinct and may therefore be misleading me. More important is the lack of entrances. You would have to argue that this is one of the Claudian forts with no porta decumana (like Hod Hill and Stanway) unlikely in Norfolk, that one entrance is under the farm, and that the third is invisible in the other field. All of this is admittedly possible, but I should need some less ambiguous evidence before accepting the site as a Roman fort, even provisionally.

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