



Archaeological Field Unit

**Evidence for Akeman Street Roman Road at  
New Farm, Green End, Landbeach:  
An Archaeological Evaluation**

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September 2003

**Cambridgeshire County Council**

Report No. A237

Commissioned by Mr James Matthews

**Evidence for Akeman Street Roman Road at  
New Farm, Green End, Landbeach:  
An Archaeological Evaluation**  
(TL 4683 6646)

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## **SUMMARY**

*On the 22nd and 23rd of September 2003 staff of the Archaeological Field Unit of Cambridgeshire County Council (AFU) conducted an archaeological evaluation at New Farm, Green End, Landbeach (TL 4683 6646). The work was carried out in advance of re-development of former farm-buildings proposed by Mr James Matthews who also commissioned the work.*

*The development site is c.1km to the north of the historic village of Landbeach on the line of the Roman road, Akeman Street, and west of the Roman Car Dyke. The evaluation aimed to establish the presence/absence, nature and degree of preservation of archaeological remains in an area of high archaeological potential, with particular reference to Akeman Street.*

*Two trenches were excavated. The length of trenching was 28m giving a 10.8% sample of the 0.03ha development area. Both trenches contained archaeological remains associated with the Roman road.*

*The evaluation revealed the remains of Akeman Street, known from cropmarks visible on aerial photographs. The road had been severely damaged by modern farming practices which had caused the almost entire obliteration of the agger (raised causeway which served as the foundation for the construction of Roman roads). The roadside ditches were still preserved underneath a layer of debris from the recent demolition of the farm buildings.*

*Three main phases of activity were identified. The earliest phase dated to the Roman period and was characterised by the presence of Akeman Street. Two undated/post-Roman? shallow features may have represented the remains of small quarry pits associated with later repairs to the agger.*

*The latest phase of activity was represented by remains of an early 20th century post-built structure (fence or shed) associated with the farm buildings which had been demolished before the archaeological evaluation.*

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**1 INTRODUCTION**

On the 22nd and 23rd of September 2003 staff of the Archaeological Field Unit of Cambridgeshire County Council (AFU) conducted an archaeological evaluation at New Farm, Green End, Landbeach (TL 4683 6646). The work was carried out in advance of re-development of former farm-buildings proposed by Mr. James Matthews who also commissioned the work.

The development site is c.1km to the north of the village of Landbeach (Fig. 1). It comprises an 'L-shaped' area of 0.03ha which was formerly occupied by recently demolished pigsties. The northern and western sides of the area are flanked by farm-tracks. At the time of the archaeological work the site was covered by rubble and debris from the demolished pigsties.

The proposal is for re-development of former pigsties and tractor barn into a residential unit at land to the north-west of New Farm. Given the archaeological background of the proposed development site (below), the Cambridge Archaeology Office (CAO) made recommendations to the District Planning Authority for an archaeological evaluation to be undertaken.

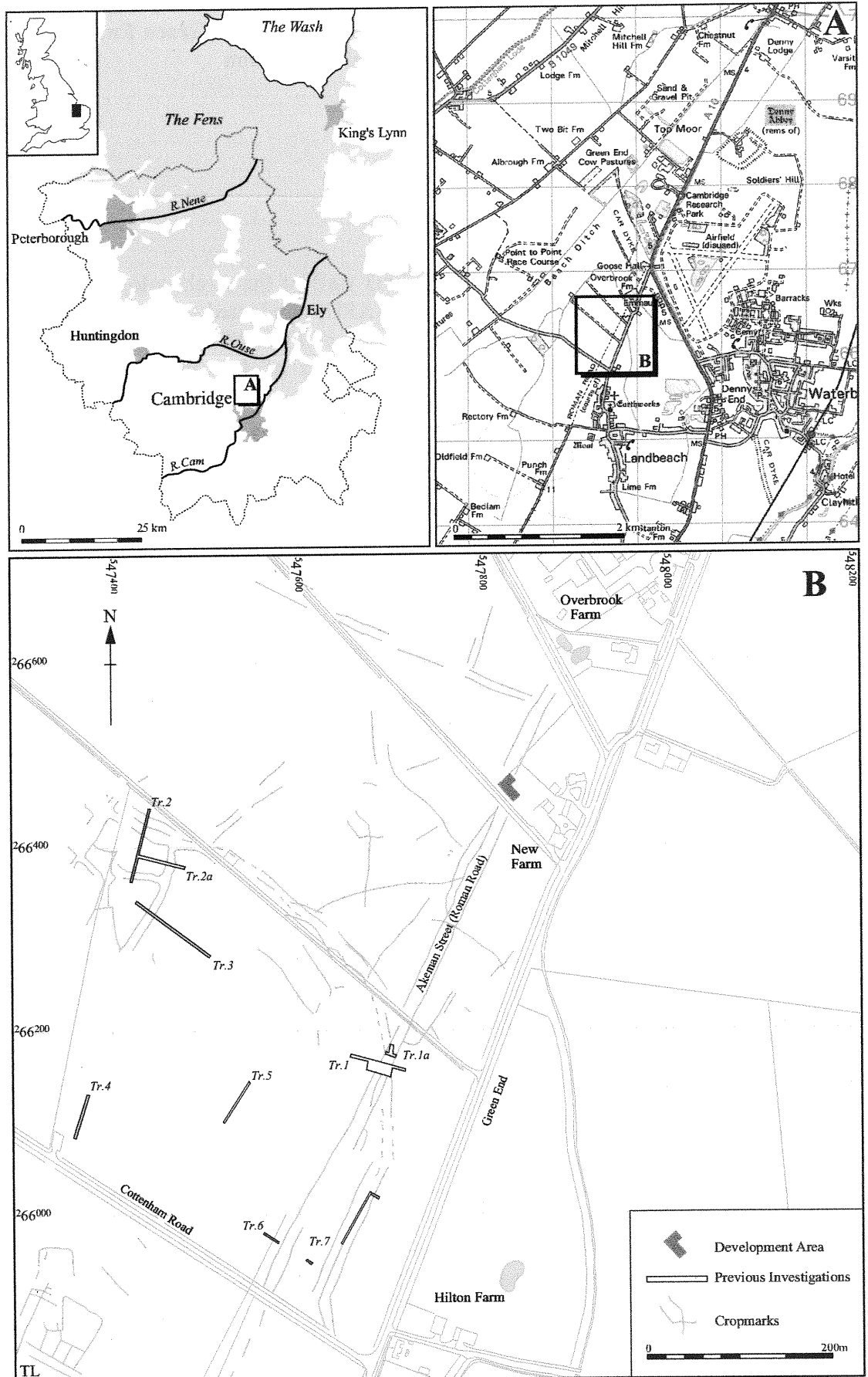
A Design Brief was issued by Kasia Gdaniec, Development Control Archaeologist of the CAO (Gdaniec 2003). In response a Specification was produced by Judith Roberts, Project Manager of the AFU (Roberts 2003).

**2 BACKGROUND**

**2.1 Site Location, Topography and Geology**

The development site is c.1km to the north of the historic village of Landbeach on the line of the Roman road, Akeman Street, and west of the Roman Car Dyke (Fig. 1).

The site lies at an average height of 5m OD, on fen alluvium over Second Terrace Gravels of the Cam catchment system. The ground slopes down gradually towards Frith Fen to the north-west and towards High Fen to the north. The ground was dry until the medieval period. High Fen has now mostly been quarried away for gravel (Hall 1996, 127).



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**Figure 1** Location of Development Area.

Early Ordnance Survey maps of the area show that the proposed development site was used for arable agriculture until the 1930s when the New Farm complex was built.

## 2.2 General Archaeological and Historical Background

### Prehistoric

There is very little early prehistoric activity documented for Landbeach, with only two Neolithic axes (SMR 5234 and SMR 5347) recorded. SMR 5347 was found some 350m to the east of the proposed development site. Later prehistoric activity is also poorly represented. Besides a few Iron Age pottery sherds (SMR 8594a), evidence for Iron Age activity was uncovered during excavations at Limes Farm in 1999 as part of a Training Excavation (Connor 2003). The site contained features representing timber structures, pits, and a complex of inter-cutting ditches, which produced a large Middle Iron Age pottery assemblage. The earliest phase of activity was characterised by a complex sequence of undated ditches which were stratigraphically earlier than the Middle Iron Age occupation phase. This latter included at least one timber building, possibly associated with several pits, containing domestic rubbish. A phase of Late Iron Age ditches replaced the Middle Iron Age occupation site. To the south, there was evidence for Roman ditches. The inhumation of an infant was also found associated with this late phase of activity.

### Roman

To the west of the village is Roman Akeman Street (SMRs 8834, 8838, 8856 and 5346) and to the east is the Car Dyke (SMR 9823), a Roman canal which has had a number of sections excavated across it (Macaulay and Reynolds 1994). The nearby parish of Horningsea is the location of a large number of 2nd to 3rd century kilns (SMR 5546) which also occur on the west bank of the Cam in the parishes of Waterbeach and Milton.

Akeman Street and Car Dyke meet some 700m to the north-east of the proposed development site. The close location of these transport routes and the well-drained gravels would have made the northern portion of the parish of Landbeach particularly attractive to settlement in the Romano-British period.

Roman occupation in the area is part of the wider pattern of settlement in the Cam valley and associated fluvial catchment system. Here occupation is consistent with a pattern of dispersed small hamlets and associated field systems and track ways, which was probably established in the course of the Iron Age and continued into the Roman period. The economy appears to have been predominantly mixed and based on farming and pastoral activities, as suggested by excavations in neighbouring parishes and, more recently, at Car Dyke Farm, Landbeach, to the south of the present development site (Macaulay 1997). The produce from the fen north of Cambridge supplemented the local economy. The exploitation of the fen resources was further stimulated by the construction of Akeman Street and Car Dyke and by systematic drainage of the fens during the Hadranic period (Philips 1970).

## Saxon and Medieval

Besides the stray find of an Anglo-Saxon brooch (SMR 5357), there is very little documented Saxon activity at Landbeach.

Documentary evidence would suggest a Late Saxon origin for the village. Landbeach is first mentioned in Domesday as *Utbeche*, *Ut* meaning the outlying part from the main settlement (Waterbeach), and *beche* meaning a stream, probably referring to Car Dyke (Reaney 1943). The names Landbeach and Waterbeach were established when the fens became wetter and the higher pastures of Landbeach may have first been used for winter grazing by the people of Waterbeach.

The documentary evidence for a Saxo-Norman presence at Landbeach was further substantiated by a recent excavation conducted at New Cross Farm, to the north of Cock Fen Lane, in advance of development. The excavation revealed Saxo-Norman ditches and a single posthole beneath an eroded gravel layer interpreted as a possible track way or courtyard surface dating to 1150-1350 (Macaulay 2002). The remains might have been associated with the two main medieval manors, Chamberlains and Brays (Worts Meadow). Both are scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAM 82).

The development of medieval Landbeach has been the subject of a in-depth study by Ravensdale (1974). The historic village stretches along one long street known in medieval times as Kings' Highway or Church Way from the south. Further north it was known as Green End and sometimes Land End. The earlier nucleus developed around the manorial sites and the church, and formed an approximate square. The Manor of Brays once lay in a square moat north-west of Worts Farm. A holloway called Brays Church Path crossed the present recreation ground and led from the manor to the church. The Manor of Chamberlains stood to the east of the church and this site is still marked by an impressive complex of mounds and moats. Ribbon development to the south probably started in the 13th century with houses on the western side of High Street being superimposed on an earlier furlong. By the 15th century the settlement had shrunk, probably as a result of a drop in the size of the population caused by the Black Death. The green beyond the church was created by Corpus Christi College before 1439 from a vacant property. Chamberlains was acquired in 1359 by Corpus Christi College. The Manor of Brays was acquired in 1702 by Sir William Worts.

The documented three (later four) open fields of the parish survive as ridge and furrow in a few pasture paddocks and in modern arable fields immediately east and west of the village. The field pattern seems to have been based on Akeman Street. The fields were enclosed in 1813. The fen further north continued to be exploited for grazing throughout the medieval and post-medieval period until the implementation of drainage schemes from the middle of the 17th century.



## Undated

There are several undated cropmark sites recorded in the parish. Based on the distribution of stray finds and finds scatters identified during the Fenland Survey (Hall 1996, 127-130), these areas of cropmarks have been tentatively dated to the Roman period. However, a recent excavation at Limes Farm has uncovered evidence for a Middle Iron Age settlement on what was presumed to have been a Romano-British site (Connor 2003). The excavation at Limes Farm has also shown that the area was occupied throughout the Iron Age into the Roman period. It is therefore possible that many cropmark sites and associated field systems might have originated in later prehistoric times and continued well into the Roman period.

Less than 0.5km to the south-west of the present development site a series of undated small enclosures (huts?) (SMR 8835 and 8596) has been associated with a dark midden comprising domestic rubbish, namely sherds of Roman pottery and fragments of animal bone (Hall 1996, 127, Site 9). A driveway runs from Site 9 towards Akeman Street. Immediately to the north of New Farm are the cropmark remains of a track way branching off Akeman Street, together with a short stretch of a further track way parallel to it. Based on the dating evidence from the midden at Site 9, together with similarities in the alignments of boundary ditches and track ways which appear to conform to the course of Akeman Street, it is likely that the cropmarks to the south-east of the development site are Roman in date. Some of them, however, could have originated in the Iron Age period.

### 2.3 Akeman Street

Unless otherwise cited the content of this section draws upon the evaluation report by Stephen Macaulay who excavated a section of Akeman Street at Car Dyke Farm, less than 0.5km to the south of the present development (Macaulay 1997).

The proposed development site appears to lie on the route of the Roman Akeman Street (SMR8834 and 8838), also known as Mere Way along part of its length, which has formed the boundary between the parishes of Landbeach and Waterbeach since the 13th century.

Akeman Street (Margary 1967, 16a) stretched from *Verulamium* (St Albans) to Alchester. From Alchester it continued to Cirencester (Margary 1967, 16b). Recent excavations at Wilcote have produced Claudian pottery and a coin from a pit alongside the road, the construction of which was tentatively assigned to the middle of the 1st century AD (Davies 2002, 28).

Akeman Street joined Ermine Street (Margary 1967 2b) and then branched off Ermine Street at Wimpole Lodge (Margary 1967 23a) linking Arrington with Cambridge. From Cambridge it ran across the fen to Littleport (Margary 1967 23b), meeting the Fen Causeway to Peterborough.

The Cambridge–Littleport stretch of the road runs north from Cambridge Castle to the outskirts of the city following the modern streets: Stretton Avenue, Carlton Way and Mere Way. Past Kings Hedges it runs to Butt Lane (Milton) as 'Mere Way'. Here it survives as a green lane. North of Butt Lane it runs as a farm track to Cock Fen Lane in Landbeach beyond which it is visible as a double-ditched cropmark running north-eastwards. It crosses Car Dyke at Goose Hall Farm north of the village of Landbeach and continues on the same alignment as the A10 to Ely. The road disappears at Chittering and reappears at Stretham as a slightly raised *agger*. From Ely it follows the A10 to Littleport (Margary 1967). The stretch from Arrington has been the subject of several investigations (Fox 1923, 165).

Several sections have been excavated across the road as it crosses the parishes of Landbeach and Milton, including a section dug by Mr. J Bromwich in 1950 (SMR 5346) to the north of the present development site. Immediately to the south an evaluation was conducted at Car Dyke Farm (Macaulay 1997). Here, the Roman road had undergone extensive erosion caused by modern farming practices. Nonetheless a small portion of the *agger* survived, together with the roadside ditches. An earlier track way with associated ditches was allowed to silt-up or was back-filled, and sealed by a soil deposit predating the construction of the later road. To the west of Akeman Street there were the remains of a round timber-built house surrounded by a ditch and metalled track ways running between parallel enclosures dating to the 2nd-4th century. The track ditches were 8m apart, each ditch being 2m wide and 0.6m deep with a broad flat 'U-shaped' profile. The ditches were generically dated to the Roman period based on undiagnostic sherds of pottery from the ditch fills. Between the ditches were remains of a gravel surface (metalling?). The later road consisted of an *agger* of compacted silty sand and gravel, some 0.3m high and 10m wide. Gravel quarrying predated the construction of the *agger*. Roadside ditches were probably excavated at a later stage (as the quarry pits were by then silted-up) possibly to provide further gravel for road repairs. The ditches were 14m apart between centres, 0.6m deep and between 1.65 and 1.95m wide, with flat 'V'-shaped profiles. The ditches were allowed to silt-up and went out of use. Later (post-Roman?) quarry pits had been dug through both the *agger* and the eastern roadside ditch. Pottery recovered from the western side ditch was undiagnostic and generically dated to the Roman period. The eastern roadside ditch contained residual Iron Age pottery.

A recent excavation was also carried out near Mereway Farm, south of Butt Lane at Milton (Ozanne 1991). A machine-excavated section was opened and recorded in advance of the construction of a water main by Cambridge Water Company.

The section showed that the line of the green lane (discussed above), originally assumed to follow the course of Akeman Street, was slightly off course to the west of the Roman road. The road consisted of an *agger* some 10m wide surviving to a height of 0.45m. It consisted of hard-packed clayey silt overlain by 0.15m of compacted sand and gravel metalling.

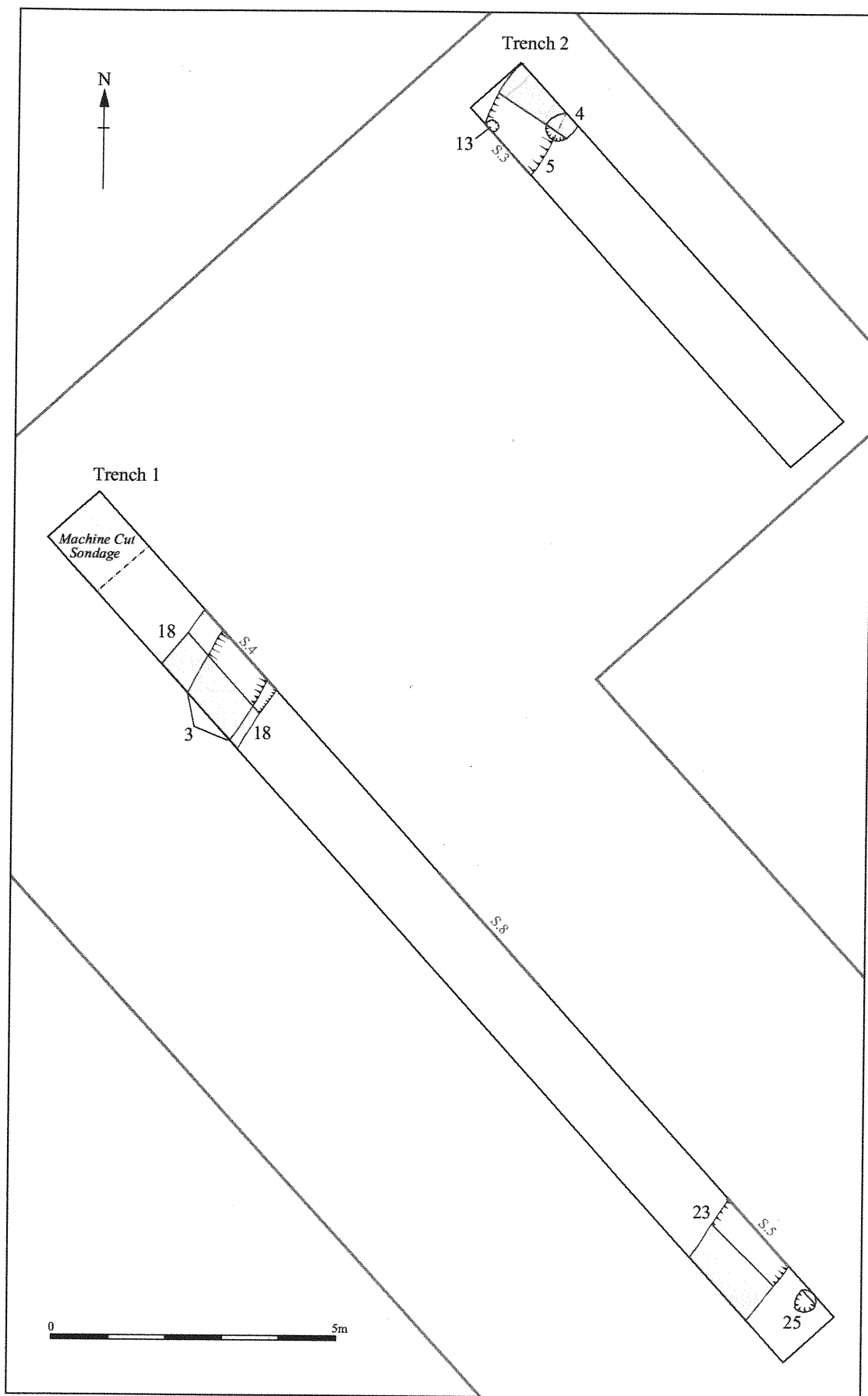


Figure 2 Trench plan

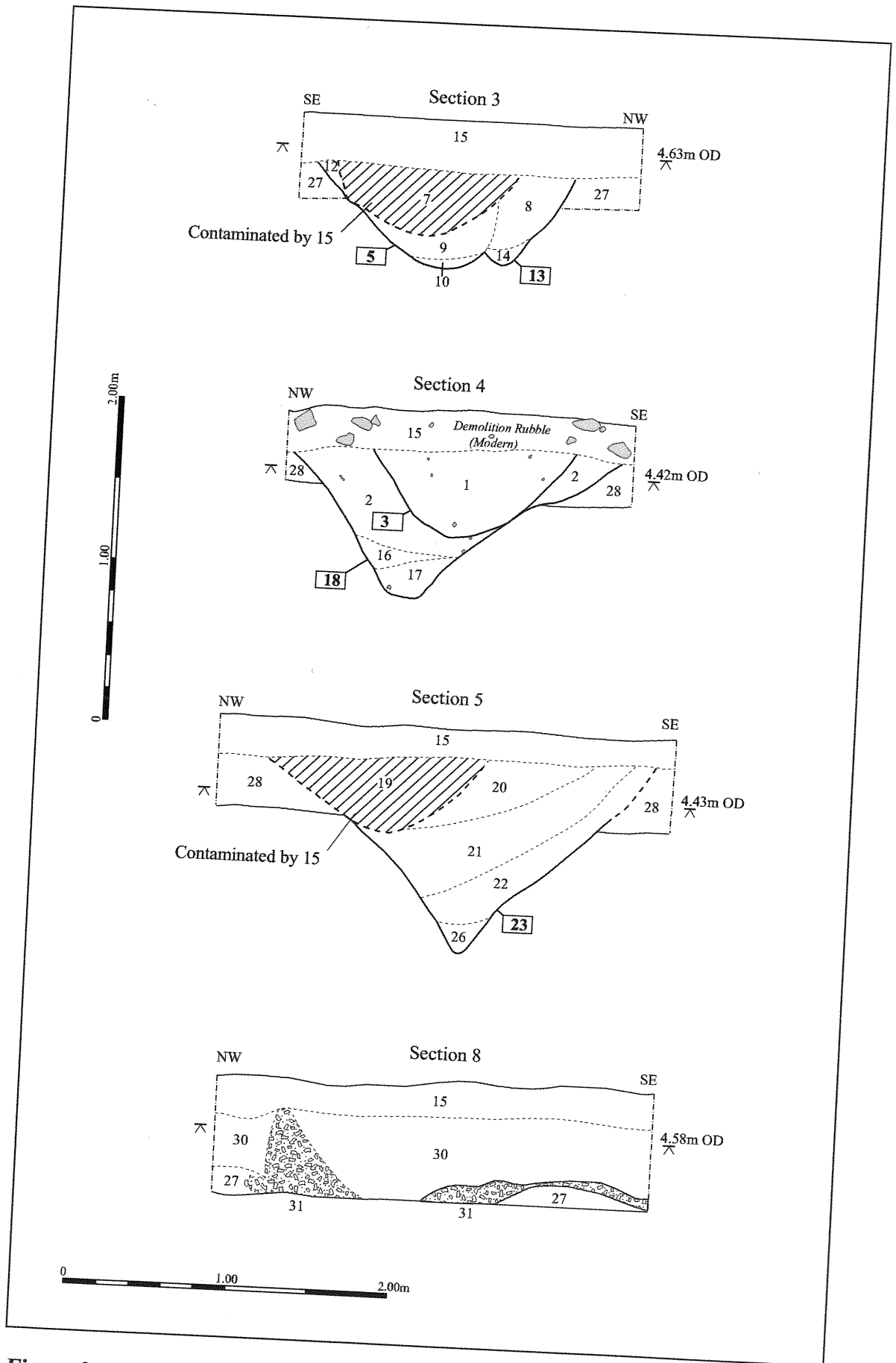


Figure 3 Section Drawings

The gravel was probably derived from the excavation of roadside ditches which were 16m apart between centres, up to 1.4m wide and 0.7m deep. No dating evidence was retrieved during the investigation.

### 3 AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

The evaluation of the site aimed to establish the presence/absence, nature and degree of preservation of archaeological features and deposits in an area of high archaeological potential for remains of the Roman period.

Two trenches were excavated using a mechanical excavator with a 1m wide toothless ditching bucket. The trenching was 28m by 1.20m, totalling 33.6sqm, *i.e.* a 10.8% sample of the 0.03ha development area. The trenches were located across the site in order to obtain maximum coverage of the cropmark remains of Akeman Street.

The modern ground surface and silty clay alluvium were removed to a depth where archaeological features could be identified against the natural deposits of gravel and silty sand. The depth of excavation ranged between 0.62m (maximum) in Trench 2 and 0.30m (minimum) in Trench 1.

A general plan of the site was produced to show the location of the evaluation trenches within the development area, and a photographic record compiled as part of the documentary archive.

All trenches excavated during the evaluation were described, giving details of the modern deposit and natural geology visible in sections and plans. All features and deposits were cleaned and excavated by hand, in accordance with the Brief and Specification.

No environmental samples were collected, as the excavated deposits did not appear to contain organic matter.

The recording system and the post-excavation procedures followed the standard AFU practice.

### 4 RESULTS

The stratigraphic sequence of the site consisted of a recent demolition layer (15) and a thick geological deposit of sandy-silty-clay alluvium (27) on mixed gravel (28) through which all archaeological features had been cut. The layer of modern disturbance was thicker in the northern portion of the site where the underlying geological deposits gradually sloped from 4.53m OD to 4.62m OD.

The levelling and compaction of layer 15 had caused some degree of disturbance and contamination in the upper fills of the cut features, as well as in the upper deposits.

Modern postholes associated with the former farm buildings were cut into the geological deposits. However, they had not disturbed the earlier archaeological features.

### **Trench 1 (Figs. 2 and 3)**

Trench 1 (18.5m x 1.2m) ran north-west to south-east. It was located at the centre of the north-west/south-east axis of the 'L-shaped' plot. The removal of the layer of rubble and debris (15) to an average depth of 0.22m exposed a deposit of silty clay alluvium (27) some 0.27m thick. The natural geology consisted of a mixed deposit of sand silt and gravel in varying concentrations (28).

Trench 1 contained four cut features: a shallow pit/posthole (25) and two parallel ditches (23 and 18) re-cut by ditch 03, which had been cut through the natural alluvium 27 and the gravel deposit 28, and were sealed by the layer of rubble 15.

**Pit/posthole 25:** oval with wide 'U'-shaped profile and flat base, some 0.40m in diameter and 0.22m deep from the base of the trench. It contained one fill, 24.

Fill 24 was a light greyish brown clayey sandy silt which contained no finds.

**Ditch 23:** north-east to south-west oriented, with a 'V'-shaped profile, 1.24m long (visible length), 1.56m wide and 1.20m deep, below the layer of modern disturbance 15. It contained five fills, 19, 20, 21, 22 and 26.

Fill 19 was a light brown sandy silty clay deposit that produced no finds. It represented the most recent fill of the ditch. It had been contaminated by 15.

Fill 20 was a light yellowish brown silty sandy clay deposit that produced no finds.

Fill 21 was a light yellowish brown silty clay deposit that produced an oyster shell.

Fill 22 was a light grey silty clay deposit that produced no finds.

Fill 26 was a light greyish brown silty clay deposit that produced no finds. It represented the basal fill of the ditch, resulting from the interface between fill 22 and the natural gravel deposit 28.

**Ditch 18:** north-east to south-west oriented, with a 'V'-shaped profile, 1.24m long (visible length), 1.94m wide and 1.10m deep below the layer of modern disturbance 15. It contained three fills, 02, 16 and 17.

Fill 02 was a light brown silty clay deposit that produced no finds. It represented the most recent fill of the ditch.

Fill 16 was a light grey silty clay deposit that produced no finds.

Fill 17 was a light greyish brown silty clay deposit that produced no finds. It represented the basal fill of the ditch.

**Ditch 03:** north-east to south-west oriented, with a round and wide 'U'-shaped profile, 1.24m long (visible length), 1.10m wide and 0.42m deep below the layer of modern disturbance 15. It represented the re-cut of ditch 18, and continued in Trench 2 as 05. It contained one fill, 01.

Fill 01 was a light greyish brown silty clay deposit that produced two sherds of shell-tempered Romano-British pottery (undiagnostic).

In addition to the cut features, Trench 1 contained three deposits (29, 30 and 31) of which 30 and 31 were only visible in the south-west facing section of the trench, between ditches 23 and 18/3.

Deposit 29, was a thin layer of compacted sand and silt with occasional small-medium size gravel visible at the north-western end of the trench to the east of ditch 18/3. It was sealed by rubble 15 and sealed the natural mixed gravel deposit 28. The lower horizon boundary of this deposit was diffuse. It contained no finds. A sondage was excavated through deposit 29 to a depth of 0.63m to establish variations in the underlying geological layers.

Deposit 30 was visible between ditches 23 and 18/3 as a thick dark yellowish brown clayey silty sandy deposit between 0.30 and 0.52m high, and c. 3.0m wide. It was sealed by rubble layer 15 and sealed deposit 31. It contained no finds.

Deposit 31 was also visible between ditches 23 and 18/3. It consisted of very compacted, almost cemented small-size gravel between 0.40m and 0.05m thick. It was sealed by deposit 30 and sealed the natural alluvium 27. It contained no finds.

### **Trench 2 (Figs. 2 and 3)**

Trench 2 (8.5m x 1.2m) ran north-west to south-east, parallel to, and north-east of Trench 1. The removal of the layer of rubble and debris (15) to an average depth of 0.30m exposed the same deposit of silty clay alluvium (27) recorded in Trench 1. This was some 0.22m thick. As in Trench 1, the natural geology consisted of a mixed deposit of sand silt and gravel in varying concentrations (28).

Trench 1 contained two cut features, a shallow pit/posthole (04) and one ditch (05) which represented the continuation of ditch 03 in Trench 1 and was associated with a small posthole (13) which had been cut at the basal break of the northern side. Both the pit/posthole and the ditch and associated posthole had been cut through the natural alluvium 27 and the gravel deposit 28, and were sealed by rubble layer 15.

**Pit/posthole 04:** oval shape with wide 'U'-shaped profile and flat base, some 0.55m in diameter and 0.22m thick from the base of the trench. It contained one fill, 06.

Fill 06 was a light greyish brown clayey sandy silt which contained no finds.

**Ditch 05:** north-east to south-west oriented, with a round and wide 'U'-shaped profile, 1.24m long (visible length), 1.20m wide and 0.58m deep below the layer of modern disturbance 15. It represented the re-cut of ditch 18, and continued in Trench 2 as 05. It contained four fills, 07, 08, 09 and 10.

Fill 07 was a dark greyish brown sandy silty clay deposit which produced no finds. It had been contaminated by deposit 15. It represented the most recent fill of the ditch and had been severely contaminated by deposit 15 and roots' action.

Fill 08 was a light greyish brown silty clay deposit which produced no finds.

Fill 09 (=11=12) was a greyish sandy silt deposit which produced no finds

Fill 10 was a brownish grey silty sandy clay deposit which produced no finds. It represented the basal fill of the ditch and also filled posthole 13 associated with it.

**Posthole 13:** circular shape, 0.24m in diameter and 0.28m deep from the base of the ditch. It contained one fill, 14, equivalent to fill 10 at the base of ditch 05, which contained no finds.

## 5 DISCUSSION

The evaluation produced evidence for three main phases of activity, as follows:

- Roman
- Undated/Post-Roman
- Modern

### **Roman (Figs. 2 and 3)**

The only datable feature on site was ditch 3 in Trench 1, assigned to the Roman period. It continued in Trench 2 as ditch 5 and represented the re-cut of ditch 18 which, although undated, is likely to be Roman.

Ditch 23, further south, ran parallel to 18. The two ditches showed similarities in terms of width, depth, profile and composition of the main fills, and were probably contemporary. The ditches were 16.5m apart between centres.

Between the two ditches was an undated deposit (31) of compacted gravel between 0.30 and 0.52m thick and some 3m wide which survived between ditches 3/18 and 23. The fact that this deposit was confined between these two ditches would suggest that it was associated with them. Finally, to the north of ditch 3/18 was a compacted thin layer of silt and loose gravel (29). As with deposit 31, the location of this layer would suggest a possible association with the ditch.

### *Akeman Street*

The excavated remains are consistent with the presence of Akeman Street, visible as cropmarks, running across the development site on a north-east to south-west alignment.

Features 18 and 23 in Trench 1 would have represented the western and eastern roadside ditches, respectively. Ditch 18 did not continue in Trench 2 further north. However, its re-cut (3) did continue as ditch 5. This evidence would suggest that there might have been stretches of the early phase of Akeman Street with no roadside ditches, and that in some instances these were



added at a later stage. It is generally assumed that material for the *agger* was derived from the excavation of the roadside ditches. However, there is evidence for quarry pits having been dug for gravel extraction associated with the phase of road construction, as at Car Dyke Farm, Landbeach (Macaulay 1997).

At New Farm there was no conclusive evidence for gravel extraction. However, given the small extent of the investigation area, which was almost entirely occupied by the width of the Roman road and associated ditches, it is possible that quarry pits associated with the phase of construction of Akeman Street existed nearby.

At some stage, the western roadside ditch (18) was re-dug as a shallower feature and extended northwards as ditch 5. It is possible that the original ditch had silted up. Alternatively, gravel was required to repair the *agger*, or drainage of the area had begun to deteriorate as the water-table rose towards the end of the Roman period.

The distance, width and profile of the roadside ditches excavated at New Farm are consistent with the data from the excavated portions of the road at Car Dyke Farm, Landbeach (Macaulay 2002), and at Mereway Farm, Milton (Ozanne 1991). At the former site the roadside ditches were 14m apart between centres, 0.6m deep and between 1.65 and 1.95m wide, with flat 'V'-shaped profiles. The ditches were allowed to silt-up and went out of use. At the latter site the roadside ditches were 16m apart between centres, up to 1.40m wide and 0.70m deep. No dating evidence was retrieved during the investigation.

Deposit 31 in Trench 1 consisted of compacted small gravel between the two ditches 18 and 23. It represented the only surviving portion of the *agger*. It had been truncated by ploughing which had also caused the gravel to become mixed with the overlaying layer (30).

At Car Dyke Farm, Landbeach (Macaulay 2002), the road consisted of an *agger* of compacted silty sand and gravel, some 0.30m high and 10m wide. At Mereway Farm, Milton (Ozanne 1991) the *agger* was some 10m wide surviving to a height of 0.45m. It consisted of hard-packed clayey silt overlain by 0.15m of compacted sand and gravel metalling.

Finally, deposit 29 to the east of ditch 18/3 in Trench 1 could have been the remains of a relief side track for lighter transport (animals and pedestrians) as opposed to wagon traffic. The presence of side lanes is a fairly common feature of the major Roman roads (Davies 2002, 70 ff.). Unfortunately, due to the small extent of the evaluation area, there was insufficient evidence to corroborate the interpretation of layer 29 as representing a road surface.

### **Undated/Post-Roman (Figs. 2 and 3)**

Undated/Post-Roman activity consisted of layer 30 in Trench 1 which probably represented a phase of levelling of the *agger*, following the disuse of the Roman road.

In addition, pit 4 in Trench 2 was cut through ditch 5, *i.e.* the re-cut of the western roadside ditch. Pit 25 in Trench 1, although discrete and undated, was probably contemporary with 4, based on similarities in terms of shape, profile and fill composition. The function of these pits is uncertain. They could have represented small-scale quarrying post-dating the complete infilling of the roadside ditches, being associated with either a phase of disuse or with a very late phase of repair of Akeman Street.

### **Modern Activity**

Modern activity was represented by remains of an early 20th century post-built structure (fence or shed) associated with farm buildings (not recorded). These had been demolished prior to the evaluation. Modern activity had caused some degree of contamination of the upper fill (07) of ditch 5 in Trench 2 (Fig. 3).

## **6 CONSTRAINTS TO THE INVESTIGATION: CONFIDENCE RATING**

- The limited extent of the evaluation area has hampered the understanding of potential sequences of road construction, use and disuse.
- Given the small number of exposed features, the chance for finds retrieval was reduced.

## **7 DEPOSIT MODEL**

- All the archaeological deposits and cut features are sealed by the layer of debris (15) to a depth of between 0.20m and 0.30m. The variable degree of contamination of the upper deposits and fills of the cut features had been caused by this demolition layer, particularly fill 19 of roadside ditch 23 (Trench 1) and fill 7 of roadside ditch 5 (Trench 2).
- Truncation has been caused by medieval/post-medieval and more recent farming practices (*i.e.* ploughing), with particular reference to the *agger* of the Roman road (31) and to the possible side-lane surface (29).
- The boundary between the deposit of alluvial clayey silt (27) and the fills of the cut features was very diffuse. As a result, deposit 27 had to be

removed by the mechanical excavator to allow the recognition of the cut features against the underlying natural gravel deposit 28.

## 8 CONCLUSIONS

The objective of the project was to establish the character, date, state of preservation and extent of any archaeological remains within the site in advance of development, with particular reference to potential remains of the Roman Akeman Street.

In spite of some degree of disturbance and severe truncation affecting the preservation of the buried remains (above), the evaluation was successful in achieving its primary aims, *i.e.* the identification of Akeman Street, and the assessment of its degree of preservation.

The site had been farmed until the earlier part of the 20th century when the New Farm complex was built. The evaluation revealed the remains of Akeman Street, as known from cropmarks visible on aerial photographs. The road had been severely damaged by modern farming techniques which had caused the almost entire obliteration of the *agger*. The roadside ditches were still preserved underneath the layer of debris from the recent demolition of the farm buildings.

In synthesis, three main phases of activity were identified. The earlier phase dated to the Roman period and was characterised by the presence of Akeman Street. The nature of the evidence did not allow the excavators to understand sequences of construction, repair, use and disuse of the road.

Two undated shallow features may have represented the remains of small quarry pits associated with later repairs to the *agger*.

The latest phase of activity was represented by remains of an early 20th century post-built structure (fence or shed) which had been demolished before the archaeological evaluation.

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**Appendix 1: Context List**

Context	Cut	Type	Description	Below	Findings
1	3	fill	light grey brown silty clay	15	2 sherds of RB pottery
2	18	fill	light brown silty clay	3	
3	3	ditch	ne-sw, U-shaped, 1.1m wide	1	
4	4	pit/posthole	oval, U-shaped profile, 0.55m diameter	6	
5	5	ditch	ne-sw, U-shaped profile, 1.2m wide	10	
6	4	fill	light grey brown clay sandy silt	15	
7	5	fill	dark grey brown sandy silty clay	4	
8	5	fill	light grey brown silty clay	9	
9=11=12	5	fill	grey sandy silt	7	
10	5	fill	brown grey silty sandy clay	8	
13	13	posthole	circular, 0.24m diameter	14	
14	13	fill	brown grey silty sandy clay	8	
15	/	deposit	modern demolition rubble		modern debris
16	18	fill	light grey silty clay	2	
17	18	fill	light grey brown silty clay	16	
18	18	ditch	ne-sw, V-shaped profile, 1.94m wide	17	
19	23	fill	light brown sandy silty clay	15	
20	23	fill	light yellow brown silty sandy clay	19	
21	23	fill	light yellow brown silty clay	20	oyster shell
22	23	fill	light grey silty clay	22	
23	23	ditch	ne-sw, V-shaped profile, 1.56m wide	26	
24	25	fill	light grey brown clay sandy silt	15	
25	25	pit/posthole	Oval, U-shaped profile, 0.4m diameter	24	
26	23	fill	light grey brown silty clay	22	
27	/	natural deposit	sandy silty clay natural alluvium		
28	/	natural deposit	mixed gravel	27	
29	/	road surface?	compacted sand, silt and gravel	15	
30	/	deposit	dark yellow brown clay silty sand	15	
31	/	agger	compact small gravel	30	

### ***Appendix 2: Specialist Reports:***

No specialist reports were commissioned as only two fragments of undiagnostic Romano-British pottery and a fragment of oyster shell were recovered.

### ***Appendix 3: Archive***

The paper and material archive is stored in the short term at the Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeological Field Unit's office in Fulbourn, Cambridgeshire. In the long term the archive will be transferred to Cambridgeshire County Archaeology Office. The archive is stored under the site code LANNF03.

The archive consists of:

2 sherds of Romano-British shelly ware  
1 fragment of oyster shell

Project Brief

Project Specification and Risk Assessment

Correspondence

Site Records:

context list

drawing list

A3 sheets of original pencil drawings

Context sheets

Photographic list

Photographs

Final report

### ***Appendix 4: Finds Catalogue***

2 sherds Romano-British shelly ware  
1 fragment of oyster shell



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County Council

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and Heritage

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