ROMAN LONG MELFORD, EXCAVATIONS AT THE PRIMARY SCHOOL: BURIAL RITES AND BRONZESMITHING

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INTRODUCTION

In 2012 Suffolk Archaeology (then Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service [SCCAS] Field Team) undertook an excavation in the grounds of Long Melford Primary School in a small area immediately west of the main school building (Fig. 119). The site, positioned on the projected eastern edge of the Roman settlement, recorded evidence of occupation and, most notably, three adult inhumations (and the partial remains of a child) and one cremation burial. Artefacts recovered from the graves and the non-funerary features provided significant evidence of the character of the settlement, suggesting that it was complex and semi-urban. The following report provides a detailed description of these burials and discusses their significance in terms of the extent and funerary aspects of the Roman settlement as a whole.

BACKGROUND

Long Melford lies close to the southern boundary of Suffolk, located on deposits of silt, sand, clay and gravel, and river terrace sand and gravel.[1] The site itself is positioned on an east to west slope down to the river Stour, whilst to the north the ground drops away slightly to Chad Brook, a tributary of the Stour.

The town has long been known to have been the location of a Roman settlement, but there have been relatively few excavations of any size within its centre, due mainly to the large number of extant medieval and early post-medieval buildings as a consequence of the growth of the woollen cloth industry. Modern housing has also had an impact, especially on the eastern edge of the town. Historically there have been keyhole excavations, which are insufficient to provide a coherent pattern of town development.

On the occasions when archaeological interventions have taken place, they have usually produced evidence of Roman activity found throughout the southern core of the village, including a number of burials (Fig. 119), the locations of which are summarised below. A broadly north-south aligned Roman road, sited roughly on the line of Little St Mary's and Hall Street, ran between Chelmsford and Pakenham. Although this was shown to diverge from the present road line towards the north-east at Chapel Green in 1970, recent excavation suggests that it turns again to run parallel to the present roads, and so approximately 120m west of the school excavation.[2] An east-west route also ran through the settlement, running from Wixoe to Coddenham; on present evidence this road crossed the northern edge of the Roman settlement.[3] A building, possibly a bathhouse, is recorded almost 400m west of the school (Fig. 119: LMD 017).

The origins of the town are uncertain and there is limited evidence for locating a forerunner to the early Roman settlement; late Iron Age finds are not uncommon, but they are typically

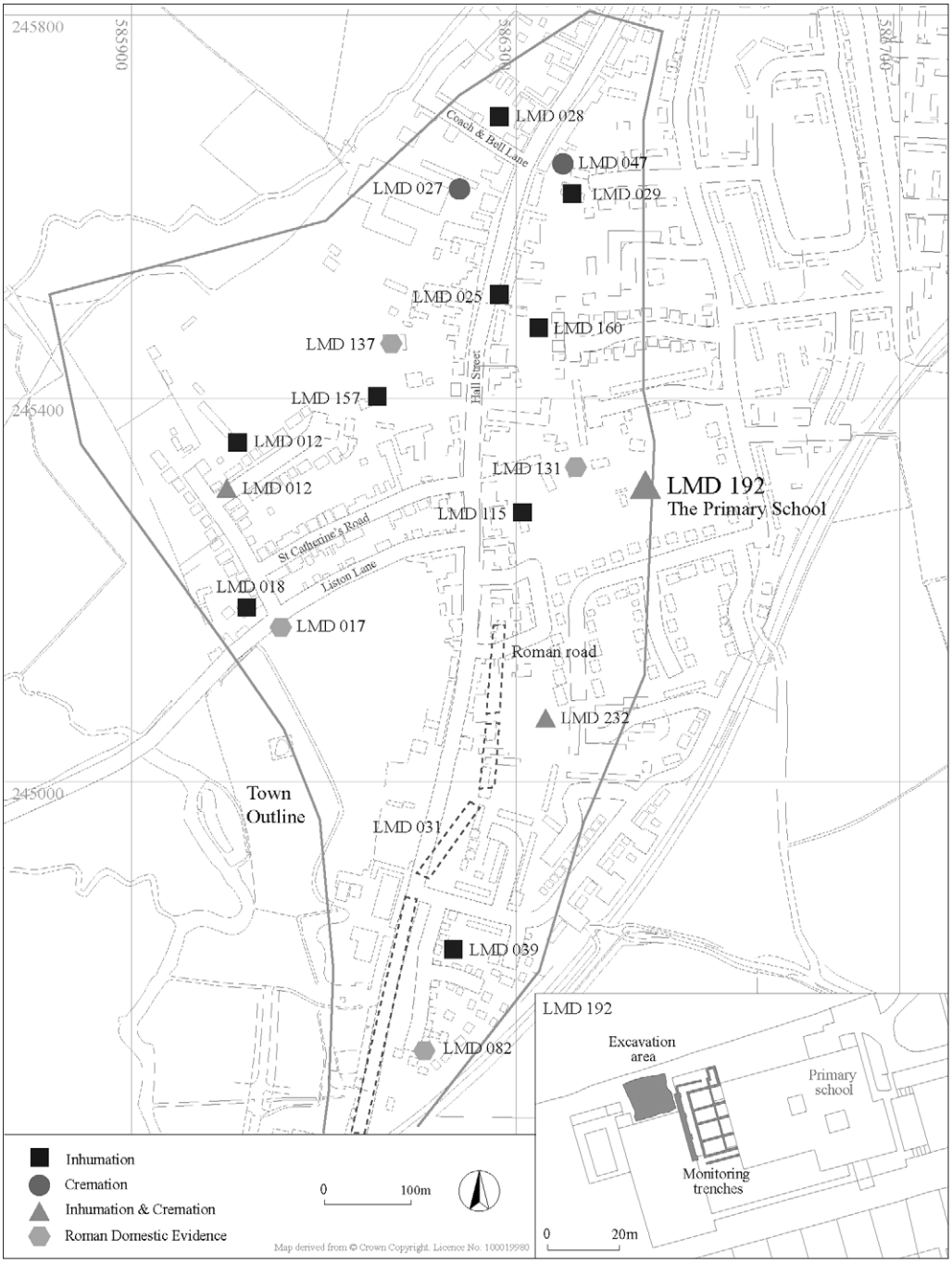

FIG. 119 – Location of site showing Iron Age/Roman burials in Long Melford and a selection of non-burial sites.

FIG. 120 – Phase plan showing location of graves.

residual and recovered in low quantities. An example of this is the copper-alloy unit of Cunobelin dating to the early part of his reign, probably *c.*AD 10–20 which was recovered from one of the ditches on the site of the primary school.[4] However, material characteristically associated with the Roman army, such as an iron sword (from LMD 115), first-century Lyons ware pottery and an early Roman spearhead, suggests that the settlement may have evolved from, or included, a garrison.[5] The focus of activity appears to be along the north to south Roman road.

THE EXCAVATION

The site was located within the centre of Long Melford, flanked by the medieval Little St Mary's to the west, and by the school and a modern housing estate to the north, east and south. Prior to the groundworks, the land had remained largely undisturbed as part of the school playing fields, although trees and a modern pond had slightly disturbed the archaeological horizons.

Domestic activity before the burials

The earliest recovered artefactual evidence consists of small quantities of residual Mesolithic to Early Bronze Age flint and further Iron Age struck flint and pottery which was redeposited within later features. The main phase of occupation, however, dates from the late Iron Age–Roman transition into the second century AD.

This period of activity is represented by part of a rectilinear alignment of ditches and a small number of pits and post-holes which produced early Roman pottery and other finds dating from the mid-first to the early or mid-second century. Interpreting the features on this site is difficult due to its small size, but they probably indicate property boundaries, perhaps the beginning of fields at the edge of the settlement, and a series of paddock or garden plot entrances. The shared alignments of the ditches and the presence of ditch *termini* that respected each other from different sub-phases tend to suggest that they were relatively long-standing features.

The artefactual and environmental evidence associated with these features is varied and wide-ranging. On the one hand, the finds reflect typical domestic refuse, usually in the form of pottery, animal bone and cereal waste, whilst there are also indications of activities which would perhaps have been better suited to being undertaken on the periphery of the settlement. An iron leatherworker's awl, and an object identified as an iron clamp or set of tweezers with large flared blades, were recovered from two of the ditches, supplementing the iron punch which was found within one of the graves (Grave 2). Evidence of bronzesmithing was identified, represented by fragments of crucible and tuyère. Residues on these fragments were subjected to analysis using a portable X-ray fluorescence spectrometer (pXRF).[6] This revealed the presence of concentrations of copper, tin and lead on the inner surfaces of the crucibles and on the outer surfaces of the tuyère fragments, showing that these finds were used in the process of melting bronze. In addition, pieces of spheroidal hammerscale were recorded in the environmental samples, indicating that iron-smithing had been taking place in the vicinity. Such activity, particularly the bronzeworking, might be expected in a large settlement and goes to reinforce further Long Melford's claim to be a reasonably substantial and important local centre.

The burials

Grave 1: cremation

A truncated cremation burial (Grave 1) was found near the northern edge of the site in an

open area which respected the ditch networks to the south and west. The burial was 1.8m from the nearest other feature which was a ditch, in marked contrast to the inhumations which cut ditches and pits. Perhaps the cremation burial was sited to respect the nearby features that may still have been in use or at least visible at the time of burial (Fig. 120).

The cremation consisted of a cinerary urn placed to the east, together with a ceramic table set made up of a further three vessels (Fig. 121). The urn itself was a Black-surfaced ware jar dating to the mid–late first to second centuries which contained the cremated remains of a middle-aged or older male (Fig. 124:1). In the western half of the grave was a Hadrianic Samian dish with barbotine leaves (AD 117–138), a barbotine dot-decorated beaker (late first–second centuries), and a buff ware flagon (mid-first–early third centuries), likely to have be made in Colchester (Fig. 124: 2–4). Each of the vessels had suffered extensive post-depositional damage, not all of it modern; both the handles of the Samian dish had been detached in antiquity prior to, or during, the burial rite. One of these handles was recovered from the fill of the cinerary urn. A significant quantity of the urn was missing, suggesting that the second handle may also have been buried within it and subsequently lost along with the remainder of the pot, or may have been retained in the funeral rite. The pots were placed upright and probably contained food and drink when interred. The vessels form a fairly typical dining set type assemblage and in terms of its style, the cremation follows a typically Romanised funeral rite as described by Taylor.[7]

The urn and other vessels may have been placed in a now decomposed wooden container, itself placed within the small pit that had a neat oblong cut and was clay lined around its edges, aligned east-west. The lining was a greyish-yellow clay that had been imported, albeit probably from a local source, as there were no pure clay deposits recorded on site. Within the clay, an oblong depression, 74cm by 50cm, showed where the suspected container had been positioned. Five nails were located around the inner edges of the hollow, indicating the possibility of box fittings; their positions and lack of burning suggest that they are unlikely to represent pyre debris.

A radiocarbon sample (SUERC 52052) obtained from the cremated bone gave a date of AD 141–346 cal at 95.4% probability, although there is a 68 per cent probability that the cremation dates to the mid-third or early fourth centuries (AD 234–329 cal). The latter date range is significantly later than the manufacturing of the pottery, placed as a 'dining set' with the burial. While the pottery appears somewhat early in relation to the statistically more probable third- or early fourth-century date obtained from the cremated bone, the overall date range would encompass the general currency of these vessels which may have remained in use into the early third century. This makes any apparent discrepancy between the pottery assemblage and the radiocarbon date less pronounced, while the presence of used, potentially heirloom, objects placed in the burial may also explain the broken handles of the dish. This may be an example of the use of older vessels, particularly Samian items, which is 'well attested in burial contexts'.[8] The reuse of a full set of contemporary vessels in a late third- or fourth-century context seems less likely.

Grave 2: inhumation

Two of the three inhumations (numbered Graves 2 and 3) had notably large cuts, each of similar dimensions (>2.16m–3.05m long by 1.55m–1.6m wide by 0.6m–0.7m deep) (Fig. 120). Although they were aligned differently, each was positioned in a way that cut ditches and sometimes pits, perhaps targeting the earlier occupation features. These ditches have been interpreted as marking possible access routes and the burials may have been deliberately placed to close off or mark the end of a liminal area, as well as being located towards the outskirts of the town. Both burials appeared to have had an internal timber structure that, in

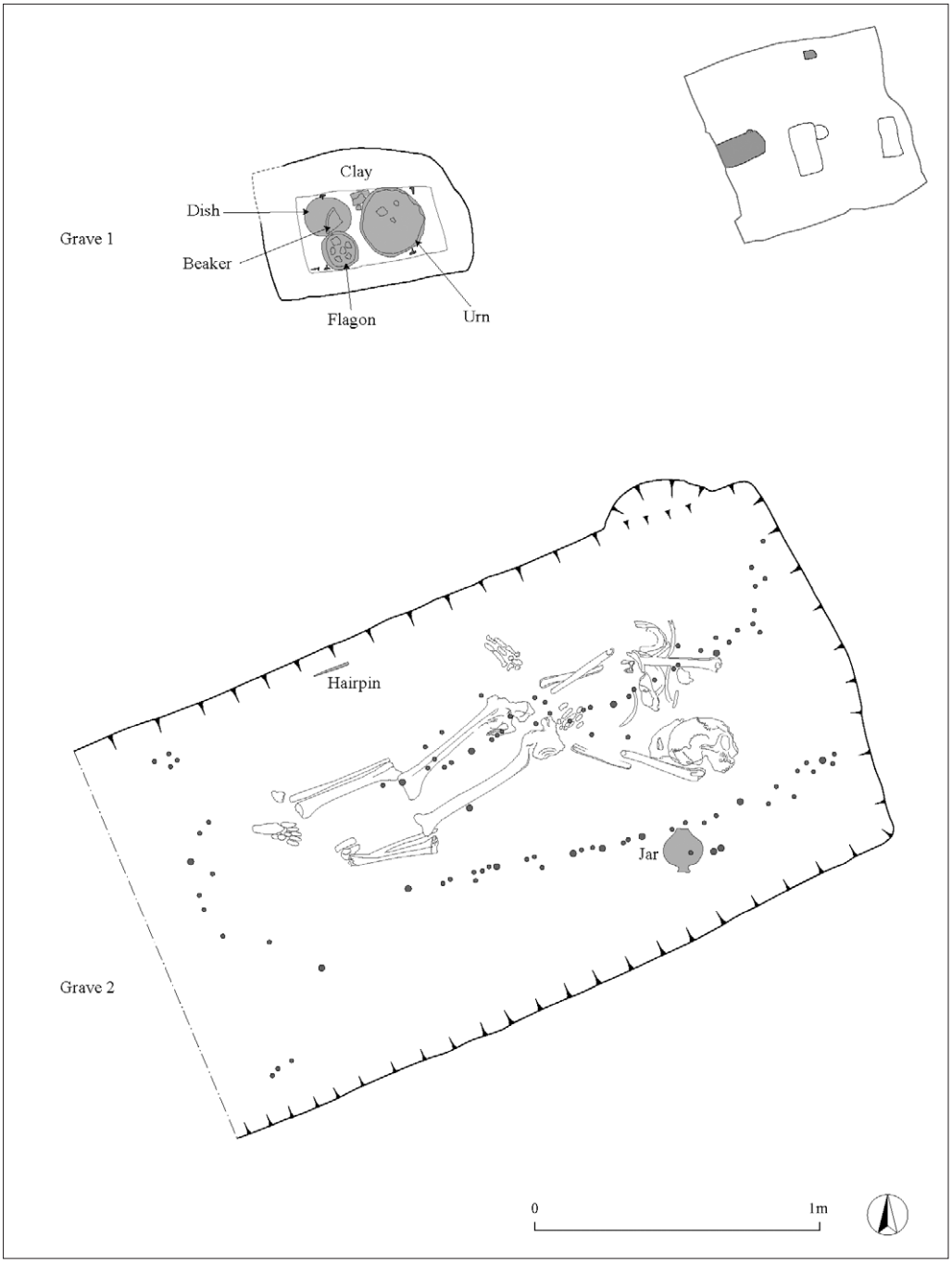

FIG. 121 – Plan of Graves 1 & 2.

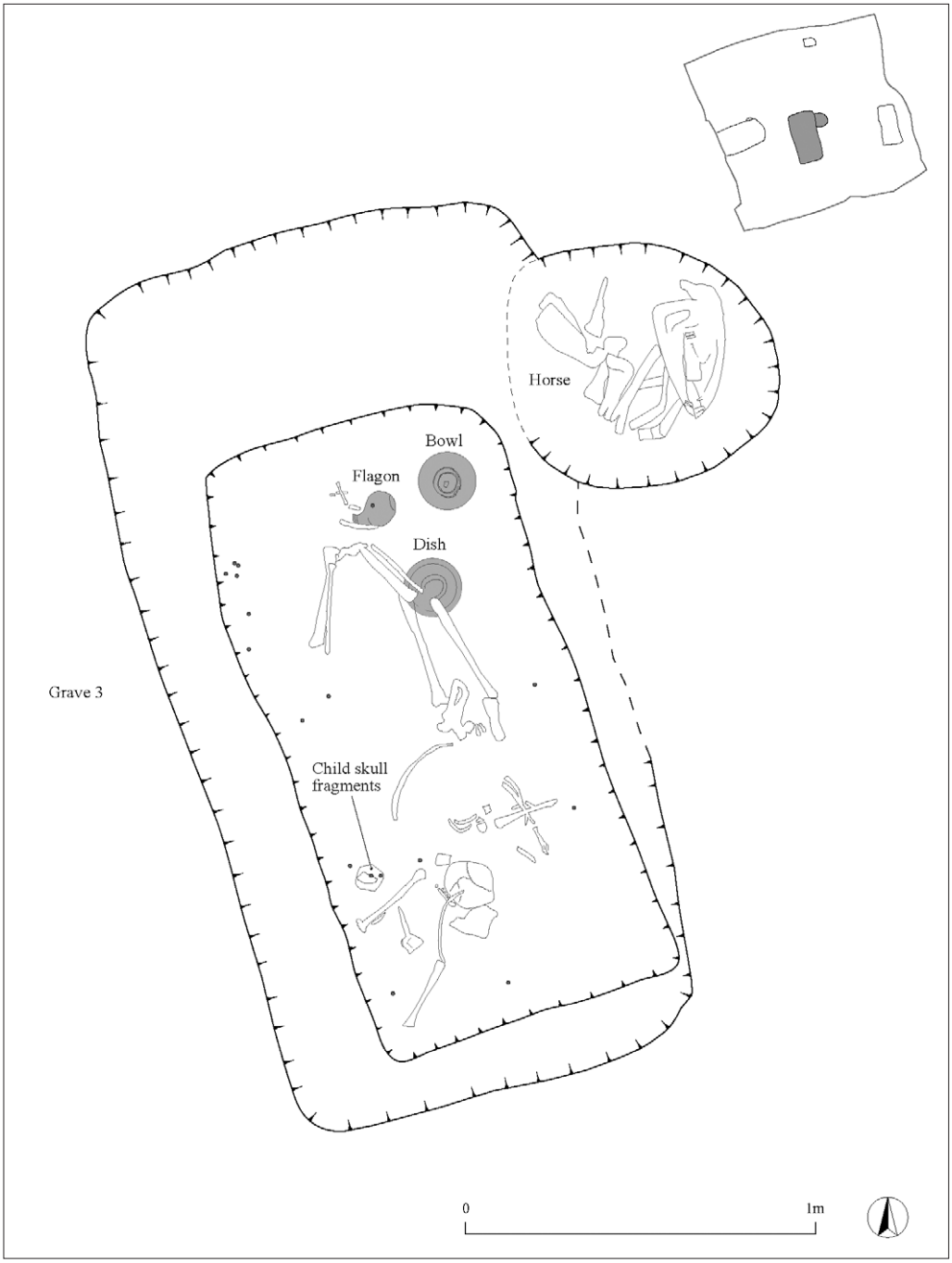

FIG. 122 – Plan of Grave 3 & horse burial in pit.

the case of Grave 2, was potentially quite complex given the number of nails recorded (Fig. 121).

Grave 2 was east-west aligned and contained a middle-aged male placed with the head to the east, lying supine. Its western limit extended beyond the edge of the site. The skeleton was largely intact, but various elements had moved, largely as the result of the collapse of the grave's structure, along with decomposition and natural disturbance. Forty-seven nails were recovered from the grave; these broadly described two lines at either side of the body and a rounded end beyond the feet. This is unusual; most nails in a coffin might be expected from the corners of a formed box rather than along its length and there is a notable absence of nails beyond the head. The nails all conformed to a similar type (Manning type 1B) and whilst possibly indicating a coffin, do not form a complete outline. There is no supporting evidence from soil stains or fill differentiation and so, alternatively, their presence could suggest a complex, possibly decorated wooden structure. Interpretation, however, is further complicated because the skeleton has been subject to post-depositional movement and is not contained within the northern line of nails, which might suggest something over the body rather than around it. The nails were found at a similar level to the body, but this does not rule out post-burial collapse of a rigid structure into a void.

A near-complete, mid first-, second- or third-century Black-surfaced ware narrow-necked jar was recovered from the upper fill, just above the skeleton (Fig. 124: 5). The vessel had a W-shaped chip broken from the rim in antiquity. Also recovered was a late first- to second-century copper-alloy hairpin and a small iron metal shaft thought to be a smith's punch. The latter was broken in two and might be related to other metalworking activity from the site. These two finds may be residual; the hairpin was recovered from very close to the northern limit of the grave and the punch was broken, but given the degree of disturbance to the grave, the hairpin could easily have become repositioned and the punch damaged, indeed it is not unknown for damaged and modified items to be included with burials.[9]

A radiocarbon date (SUERC 52053) of the skeletal remains of AD 135–380 at 95.4% is rather broad, but overlaps with that of the grave goods and residual earlier pottery; overall the likely date for the burial is late second or third century.

Grave 3: inhumation

The supine but disturbed remains of a young or middle-aged female and the partial remnants of a child (aged *c.* four years old) were recovered from Grave 3 (Fig. 120). The skull of the adult and a skull fragment from the child were both positioned at the southern end of the north-south aligned feature (Fig. 122). Further pieces of the child's skeleton (a femur and two teeth) were identified after excavation and it is unknown if it was *in situ*. The adult's skeleton was significantly more complete, but as with Grave 2, it had undergone quite a high level of post-depositional disturbance. Seventeen nails were recovered from this grave, found predominantly along the western side of the grave; these probably represent an internal grave structure, but there were no wood stains to indicate the position of organic remains and the level of post-depositional disturbance observed within the grave makes interpretation difficult once again.

This burial appears to have been formed of the outer larger grave cut (which contained redeposited orange sand), with a smaller oblong-shaped cut which was slightly off centre, cutting through the larger one. The later, smaller cut was marginally deeper, and it contained both skeletons, as well as the grave goods. It is interpreted as a secondary excavation of the grave, perhaps lined with a wooden structure to support the sides, explaining the presence of the nails. The profile of the two cuts is unusual, but may be similar to funerary practices seen in Colchester where large graves were interpreted as a way of reserving a family plot.[10]

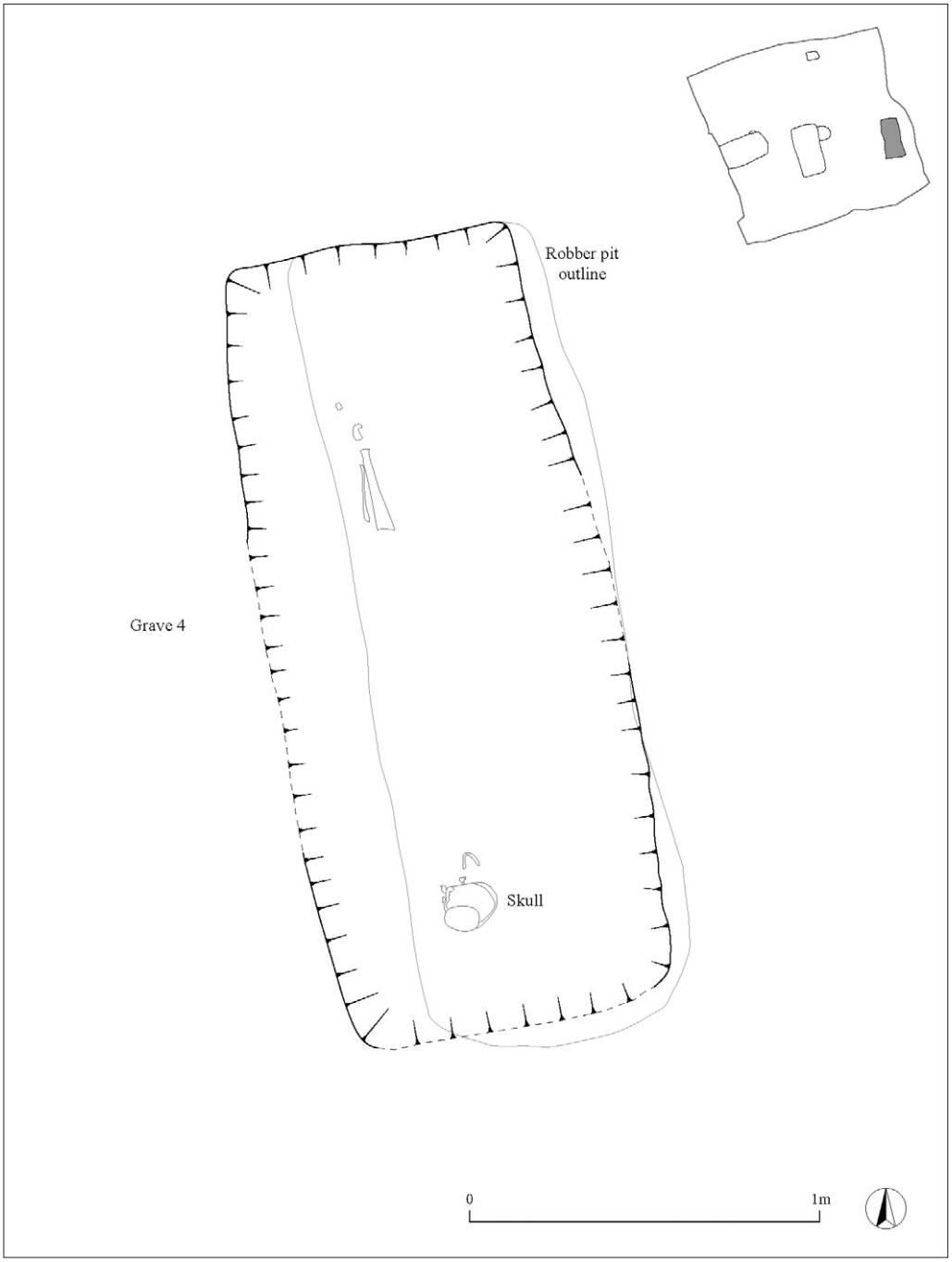

FIG. 123 – Plan of Grave 4.

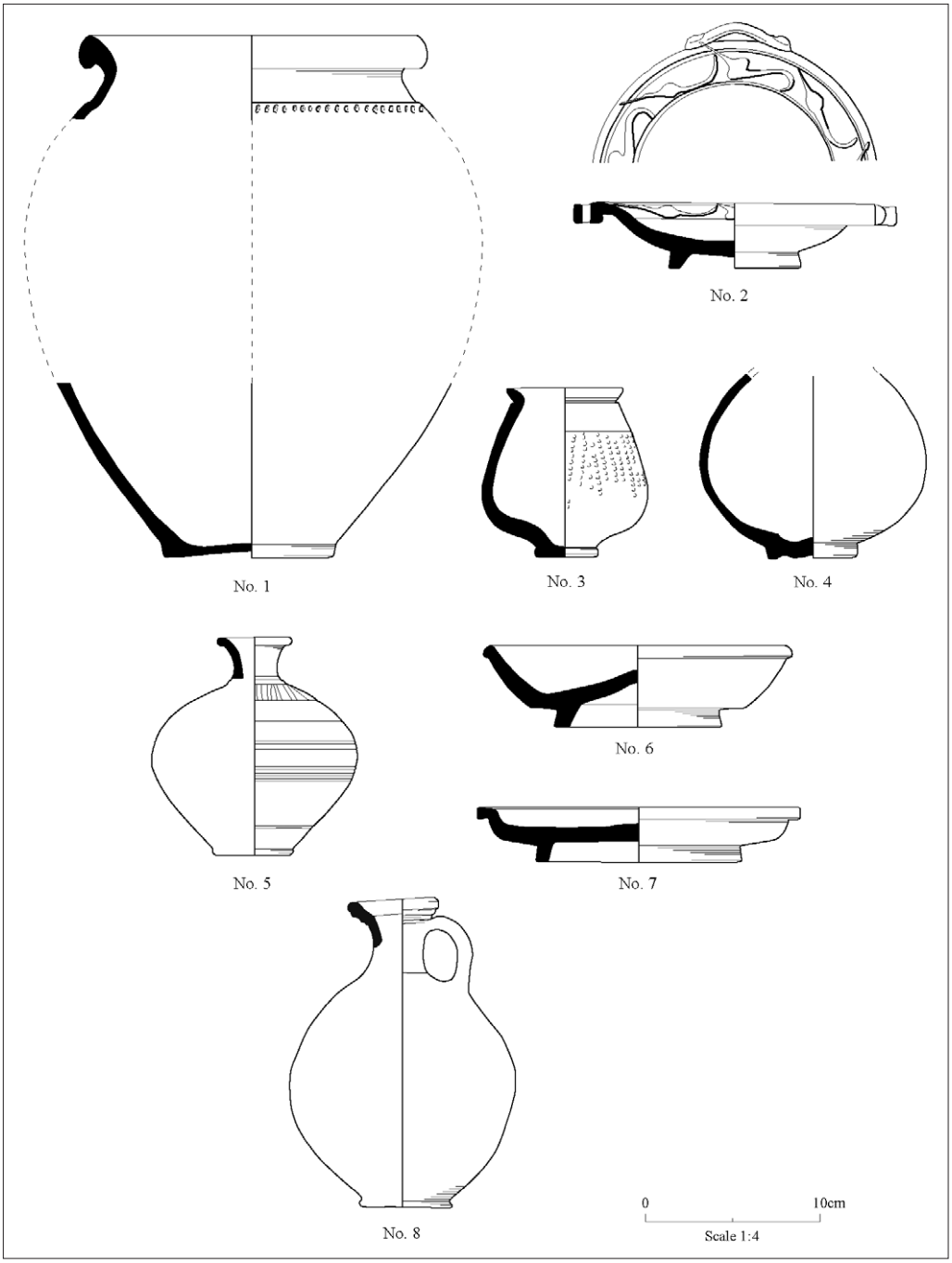

FIG. 124 – Pottery vessels from Roman burials
(Grave 1: Nos. 1-4; Grave 2: Nos. 5; and Grave 3: Nos. 6-8).
Details on opposite page

◀ Grave 1: Nos. 1-4

1. Jar/small storage jar, Black-surfaced ware (mid/late1st–2nd century).
2. Central Gaulish Samian dish (form Dr. 42) with barbotine decoration (*c.*AD 117–135).
3. Barbotine dot-decorated beaker, Grey micaceous ware (late 1st–2nd century).
4. Base from a flagon, Colchester buff ware (mid 1st–early 3rd century).

Grave 2: No. 5

5. Narrow-necked jar, Black surfaced-ware (mid 1st–2nd/3rd century).

Grave 3: Nos. 6-8

6. Central Gaulish Samian bowl (form Dr. 31) with potter's stamp (AD 150–175).
7. Central Gaulish Samian dish (form Ludowici Tg) with potter's stamp (AD 160–200).
8. Cupped ring-neck flagon, Colchester buff ware (early 2nd–early 3rd century).

Presumably, the two burials were therefore interred together, or the child was the first burial which was later disturbed and partially reinterred when the adult female was buried. There is the possibility that the secondary cut represents the grave being robbed, as suggested for Grave 4, but this would not explain why three complete pots were left *in situ,* or why much of the adult skeleton appears undisturbed. Included with this burial was a stamped Samian bowl (AD 150–175), a stamped Samian dish (AD 160–200), and a Colchester buff ware cupped ring-neck flagon of the early second–third centuries, positioned close to the feet and representing another dining set (Fig. 124: 6–8). The dish and bowl were upside down, with the dish beneath the knees of the adult. Whilst the bowl was in good condition, the others had small chips, possibly representing wear through use. The bowl's good condition, despite its earlier date, suggests that it was an heirloom object. The flagon was presumably originally placed upright, although it was discovered on its side as the result of post-depositional movement.

A small pit, possibly contemporary with Grave 3, contained a horse's skull, a few vertebrae and the parts of its two front legs. The remains were articulated in two groups and their positioning appeared to mimic a natural pose. The skeletal material was quite tightly packed within the pit, demonstrating that the feature was dug specifically to house them. The burial of the horse may have been a rite associated with the inhumation, as suggested by the location of the pit in close proximity to the grave, the similarity of fill to that of the grave, and its phasing (which puts it in a period where the majority of the features were funerary in nature), although it cannot be proved that it was not simply dug to dispose of part of a carcass.

A radiocarbon date (SUERC 52054) of the human remains overlaps with the pottery dating (AD 160–early third century), with a date of 35 BC–AD 210 cal at 95.4% probability. The horse (SUERC 52502) is not as clearly associated, dated as AD 74–131 cal at 68.2% probability, putting it earlier than the pottery, although a date of AD 56–214 cal at 95.4% probability does allow for an overlap in the late second or early third centuries.

Grave 4: inhumation

Grave 4 was poorly preserved, disturbed and with no surviving grave goods or evidence for a coffin (Fig. 123). The limited skeletal remnants appeared to be *in situ*, comprising the skull and pieces of the lower legs. The grave was modestly sized (2.32m by 1m by 0.43m deep) relative to the other inhumations and aligned roughly north-south with the skull to the south. The individual is believed to have been female and middle aged+, laid supine. The radiocarbon date (SUERC 52058) of 90–330 AD cal at 95.4% probability is quite broad and allows the burial to fall within the likely date range for inhumations, although it also allows scope for it to be early for inhumation. Low quantities of finds were recovered, all thought to be residual, including later Iron Age to Roman pottery.

Also observed was a probable robber pit that appeared to target the interment. This feature was as deep as the grave, mirrored it closely in size, shape and position in plan, and did not respect the earlier burial. Unlike the secondary cut recorded in Grave 3, the later cut here did not contain any skeletal remains. Grave robbing explains both the shortage of surviving bone and possibly also of grave goods from the inhumation.

DISCUSSION

Long Melford lies on the border of Suffolk and Essex, with the Roman town and provincial headquarters of Colchester/Camulodunum located less than twenty miles to the south-east. It was one of at least six large settlements or small towns known in Suffolk by the end of the first century (and very similar small towns exist in Essex), which appear to have functioned mainly as commercial and industrial centres. Like today, this part of East Anglia was largely characterised by its farming role, with most recorded sites of this date interpreted as being economically dependent on agriculture, from wealthy villas with associated large estates, to individual farmsteads.[11] The area covered by the county of Suffolk was culturally divided in the later Iron Age between the Iceni to the north and the Trinovantes, a tribe whose stronghold was in Essex and the southern part of Suffolk (including Long Melford). The latter were one of several groups in south-east Britain who shared trading and cultural ties with parts of the expanding Roman Empire, particularly northern Gaul. Following the invasion in AD 43, the Trinovantes, Colchester and the rest of their territory came under direct Roman rule. The Iceni retained a certain level of independence as a client kingdom until AD 60, when both tribes revolted and were defeated.[12]

Given this background, and the proximity of Long Melford to the legionary fortress and subsequent *colonia* of Camulodunum, the early history of the small town is particularly significant. A review of the burial patterns offers an opportunity to understand better the character and extent of the settlement, with the main importance of the primary school site relating to its four Roman burials. This group is particularly significant as it is one of only a few in the town which exhibit a variety of burial rites, and is the only one supported by radiocarbon dates.

Although cremation is traditionally considered to be the usual burial rite from the mid-first century, with the practice of inhumation starting in some places in the early second century, there is a considerable period of transition and overlap. Recent work on large cemetery areas in Colchester at the garrison site has shown the presence of a number of late Roman cremations and examples of both rites occur throughout the Roman period.[13]

As regards grave goods, these are usually rarer in inhumation burials compared to cremations, whilst in general the highest frequency is recorded in the south-east of the country, often consisting of pottery dining sets.[14] When encountered, the deliberate inclusion of items in inhumations tends to decline from the third century though there are notable exceptions, such as at Blood Hill, Bramford, in Suffolk.[15] Many Roman burials are aligned in relation to earlier or contemporary features, notably roads and boundaries. A shift to west-east alignments becomes more pronounced during the fourth century, sometimes reflecting the greater influence of Christianity over the treatment of the dead.

Whilst the number of burials recorded from Long Melford, at around twenty-three, is still low in comparison to the many hundreds from towns such as Colchester, they are significant given that we know relatively little of the origins and development of the small town. There is indeed a generally very low level of burial evidence throughout Suffolk and Norfolk, recorded as representing just 493 individuals in 1998 and only gradually increasing as archaeological excavation intensifies.[16] An appraisal of Suffolk's Historic Environment Record

by one of the authors in 2018 suggested that at least 325 Roman burials had been recorded in Suffolk (a figure which can only be approximate given the nature of antiquarian recording as well as the number of undated burials).

A plan of all the Iron Age and Roman burials found within the town is shown in Fig. 119, together with a selection of non-burial sites.[17] This excludes occurrences of stray pieces of human bone in non-funerary features and all infant remains which were sometimes treated separately in the Roman period and are also unlikely to have been identified in many of the investigations in Long Melford. At LMD 232, which also produced formal adult burials, there were the partial remains of at least twelve prenatal or neonatal babies and a six- to ten-year-old child, recovered from the later middle-upper fills of pits, which are mainly second to third century, plus a potentially earlier Roman example.[18]

There is little evidence for formal cemeteries of any size. The largest group recorded to date is at LMD 115 where six adults were recorded (buried with heads to the west in the fourth century and potentially part of a formal cemetery, but with quite widely spaced graves).[19] At LMD 012 at least five inhumations were recorded in the early twentieth century (with their heads to the east), in the same general area as a better located, probable cremation of the early second century.[20] At both the primary school site and at LMD 232 there are well-recorded groups of four burials of mixed rite. The burials recorded elsewhere are all isolated instances, probably mainly due to the circumstances of their discovery in small ground disturbances.

Of the total twenty-three burials in Long Melford, only seven are cremated and the remaining sixteen are inhumations. Again, this probably reflects the difficult circumstances of investigation, and it is notable that the small area excavations at LMD 192 and at LMD 232 contained one and two cremations respectively; an unknown number of the various finds of complete Roman pots from Long Melford probably held or were associated with cremations. Most of the cremated burials were found in pottery containers, one nineteenth-century record has a glass vessel container and one of the LMD 232 examples was in a small pit with no surviving container; the LMD 192 school excavation also showed that the burial assemblage was almost certainly within a wooden box. Many of the inhumation burials have evidence in the form of iron nails for wooden coffins; the group at LMD 115 also included a single stone coffin, a rare find and presumably suggestive of some status. In comparison, only two stone coffins have been found from all of the Colchester excavations, as summarised in 1993.[21] Whilst most of the burial rites seen on the site at Long Melford Primary School are not uncommon, the large grave cuts are unusual; as suggested previously, they may have been used by family groups to reserve a shared plot, the area marked and maintained with banks of soil from the grave's excavation until the burials had taken place.[22] The condition of the incomplete child's skeleton is possibly the result of post-interment degradation rather than some deliberate act, given that even the more robust adult skeletons had missing elements. It seems then that this may have been a burial of an adult and a presumably related child, particularly given the proximity of the skulls, though it is unclear where the other remains from the child were located. Another alternative is that, as with the baby and child skeletons recently excavated at the Chapel House site, the remains of the child may have been an earlier, less formal burial interred in a ditch or pit that subsequently became included within the adult burial by accident. Again though, the position of the skull in close proximity to the adult, and the presence of substantial bones from the child, suggest this to be unlikely. Another explanation for the two large cuts is that they allowed for the provision of now decomposed organic grave goods and/or easier access to the grave during the burial process, as proposed at Blood Hill, Bramford.[23] However, the apparent backfilling of both of the large graves with material that was often either mixed or naturally derived suggests that this was not the case here. A simpler explanation for the two large cuts may be that they represent the status of the

occupants, or were symbolically linked to the possible closing off/ending of the area.

The earliest burial, a cremation in a pot at the north end of the settlement area, is unlikely to date significantly later than the Roman conquest and is possibly pre-Roman Iron Age (LMD 047). Very close to this site, a record lists 'Two IA 'C' bowls found in conjunction with human skeletons', which is highly ambiguous and not included on the location map (Fig. 119). The other recorded cremations mostly span the second century, although the primary school radiocarbon date contradicts the pottery assemblage date for Grave 1, and at LMD 232 one is undated and one is late second century at the earliest. This demonstrates the chronological overlap with inhumation burials at Long Melford as several, including Grave 3 at the primary school, are likely to be late second century or early third century. On present evidence, a majority of the recorded inhumations are second or third century and only those at LMD 115 are fourth century, but the stratigraphic and artefactual evidence is often slight and radiocarbon dating has not been used except at the primary school.

While the normal Roman practice in an urban context would be for burial to be outside the settlement, often along the roads leaving a town, this does not seem to be the pattern shown by the distribution of burials at Long Melford as indicated in Fig. 119. Even at the north end of the settlement where there is a group of burials (LMD 027, 028, 029, 047), there is also evidence from the 1960 sewer trench of first- or second-century pits and of finds, such as pottery mortaria, unlikely to be part of a funerary assemblage.[24] It seems more likely that burial was in family plots lying immediately behind settlement along the Roman road(s). The route of the major road approaching the settlement from the south seems to follow the modern line of Southgate Street and Little St Mary's, but the road was shown to diverge to the north-east at Chapel Field in excavations in 1970 which would, if projected, have taken the line close to the primary school.[25] However, the 2015 work at LMD 232, less than 100m from Chapel Field, showed that the projected line did not cross the excavated areas and the probable road was identified in service trenching closer to Little St Mary's. This suggests that the road may continue parallel to, and about 20m east of Little St Mary's through the central part of the settlement. To the east of the road there is settlement activity at LMD 115 between the mid-first and mid-second centuries, potentially overlapping with the development of the burial area at the primary school about 50m to the west. The school site was probably around 120m west of the Roman road and the nature of the finds confirms that it was somewhat peripheral, but close enough to the main settlement to accumulate redeposited metalworking debris, environmental residues and domestic waste, as well as being used for the burials. The site is thought to have adjoined the main settlement area, perhaps on the edges of fields and paddocks, with light industry nearby.

To the west of the Roman road there is potentially a broader area of settlement activity incorporating the bathhouse at LMD 017 and much of the area around LMD 137 and LMD 157, with recorded burials on the west edge at LMD 018 and LMD 012. The late second- or third-century inhumation at LMD 157 is an anomaly within this distribution, particularly as non-funerary activity continues around it into the fourth century. Current excavation work on an area 150m to the north of LMD 137 and 157 may well further complicate what is clearly a very incomplete picture.

As well as supplementing the broad picture of settlement extent, the burials provide some information about how Long Melford evolved between the mid-first and fourth centuries. Often, burials seem to be a final phase in areas where there is earlier activity: on the primary school from the early to mid-second century; also during the second century at LMD 232 to the south; and (on a smaller scale) at LMD 160 further north a late second- or early third-century inhumation follows mainly first-century pit features. In all these cases, the funerary use probably ends before the fourth century. As early Roman activity appears to be very

widespread at Long Melford, these new burial areas might reflect some reorganisation or refocussing of the settlement in the second century. By the fourth century, there seems to have been another shift and perhaps a contraction of the settlement to a core area, including the area just west of Little St Mary's (LMD 157), where coinage of the late fourth and early fifth century was recovered from a topsoil layer, with a fourth-century cemetery area at LMD 115, close to the probable course of the road and just over 100m west of the primary school site.

Although it has not been possible to discuss the detailed evidence for the individuals present as burials in Roman Long Melford, particularly as no study was made of many of the earlier finds of human bone, it is worth noting that the impression gained from the material, including the primary school burials, has been that these people often suffered from a poor diet early in life and had extensive evidence for the impact of hard work later in life. The wealthy minority who controlled and profited from the settlement may well have lived just outside the small town, as several villas have been identified within a 5km radius, the closest just under a kilometre to the south-east near Rodbridge Hill.

CONCLUSIONS

It continues to be difficult to examine the topography, character and development of Roman Long Melford due to the lack of opportunity for extensive archaeological excavation. However, small excavations like that at the primary school and others carried out in recent years can, along with earlier records of finds and features, provide at least some working hypotheses that can be tested against future archaeological work within the village.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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NOTES

1 British Geological Survey 2016, Geology of Britain Viewer.
2 Pooley 2016, 48.
3 Smedley 1960, 270.
4 Crummy 2012.
5 Lyons ware pottery: Jude Plouviez, pers. comm. 2013; Roman spearhead: Pooley 2016, 39.
6 White 2014.
7 Taylor 2001, 88–91.
8 Thorne 2009, 44.
9 Timberlake, Dodwell and Armour 2007, 61.
10 Crummy, Crummy and Crossan 1993, 98–99.
11 Plouviez 1999, 42.
12 Moore, Plouviez and West 1988, 18–19.
13 Pooley *et al.*, 2011.

14 Philpott 1991, 32.
15 Crummy 2008, 1–5.
16 Gurney 1998, 1–5.
17 The plan of the Roman burials has been drawn on from a collation of Roman burial data prepared by F. Wildmun as part of her first degree course at Bradford University.
18 Pooley 2016, 9–12.
19 Boulter 1997, 1.
20 Sinclair Holden 1915, 267–69; Smedley 1960, 270–89.
21 Crummy, Crummy and Crossan 1993, 266.
22 Crummy, Crummy and Crossan 1993, 98–99.
23 Crummy 2008, 1–5.
24 Smedley 1960, 287.
25 Avent, 1980 229–50.

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