

Report on a negative watching brief

Site address: Tollesbury Wick Marshes
Date of fieldwork: 3-11 August 2005
NGR: TL 979 104
CBC brief?: no: brief from Pat Connell, ECC HEM group officer
Sketch attached?: yes (Fig 1)
Museum Accession: 2005.99

Archaeological background

The Essex Historic Environment Record (EHER) records a number of archaeological sites within Tollesbury Wick Marshes and in the vicinity of the counter wall. To the east lies a rectangular pond of unknown function and undetermined date (EHER no 16829); a low mound, approximately 18 x 15 metres, also of undetermined date and function (EHER no 16828); and a further possible enclosure and associated mounds (EHER no 16710). To the west of the counter wall is a ditched enclosure approximately 49 x 45 metres, of unknown function and date (EHER no 16827). This area of Essex is well known for its Iron Age and Roman salt-making sites known as 'red hills'. Red hills have been recorded in Tollesbury parish (EHER nos 1156 and 16192). Although numerous red hills have been flattened by ploughing, they are still recognisable by areas of red or burnt earth and by finds of briquetage or fragments of vessels and equipment used in the salt-making process. Up to 1990, some 300 red hills had been located on the Essex coast, some of which have been excavated (Fawn *et al* 1990, 6). As the Tollesbury Wick site is coastal, it is possible that other unidentified 'red hills' might be located.

Brief report

Observations were made during the course of additional soil-stripping in two places at the south-east end of the new counter wall. The stripping was undertaken to produce more clay and construction material to be used in the new counter wall sea defence. Two visits were made to the site; no archaeological material or features were recorded during the course of the watching brief, nor were any finds recovered. As previously stated in CAT Report 306, the report on the previous soil-stripping, the central area of the reserve (through which the counter wall is being constructed) was subject to machine levelling in the 1960s and 1970s, and although this would not necessarily have removed all traces of significant remains, it may account for the lack of archaeological material exposed during the course of this watching brief.

Finds

None.

References

CAT Report 306 Archaeological monitoring and recording at Tollesbury Wick marshes, Tollesbury, Essex, September-October 2004, unpublished CAT archive report, by Howard Brooks, 2005
Fawn, A J, Evans, K, McMaster, I, & Davies, G M R, 1990 *The red hills of Essex: salt making in antiquity*, Colchester Archaeological Group

Report author: B Holloway

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Distribution list:

Essex Wildlife Trust

Pat Connell, Essex County Council Historic Environment Management group officer

Essex Historic Environment Record, Essex County Council



Colchester Archaeological Trust

12 Lexden Road,
Colchester,
Essex CO3 3NF

tel.: (01206) 541051

tel./fax: (01206) 500124

email: archaeologists@catuk.org

Checked by: Philip Crummy
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