An archaeological watching brief at St Mary’s Church, Church Hill, Lawford, Tendring, Essex
February 2009

report prepared by
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commissioned by
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1 Summary
Archaeological remains uncovered during the installation of an underfloor heating system in the nave and north aisle of St Mary’s Church, Church Hill, Lawford, Tendring, Essex included medieval foundations, as well as several post-holes, a post-pad, and some disarticulated human remains.

2 Introduction (Fig 1)
2.1 An archaeological watching brief took place in St Mary’s Church, Church Hill, Lawford, Tendring, Essex, on behalf of the Parochial Church Council (PCC) of St Mary’s Church, during groundworks in advance of the installation of an underfloor heating system. The church is at National Grid Reference TM 0891 3157. The watching brief was carried out by the Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) in February 2009.

2.2 The excavation and recording methods used were outlined in the Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for the site, which was produced by CAT in February 2009, and followed a brief written by the Essex County Council’s Historic Environment Management (HEM) team officer in January 2009. The WSI also set out proposals for post-excavation work, the production of a report, an archive and, if necessary, publication texts.

2.3 This report follows the standards set out in the Institute for Archaeologists’ Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief (IfA 2008a) and Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials (IfA 2008b). The guidance contained in English Heritage’s Management of research projects in the historic environment (MoRPHE), and in the documents Research and archaeology: a framework for the Eastern Counties 1. Resource assessment (EAA 3), Research and archaeology: a framework for the Eastern Counties 2. Research agenda and strategy (EAA 8), and Standards for field archaeology in the East of England (EAA 14) was also followed.

3 Archaeological background
3.1 St Mary’s Church, Church Hill, Lawford, Tendring, Essex is a Grade I listed building and has a notable chancel of largely 14th-century work in the Decorated style with rich carvings (RCHM 1922, 151-2). Parts of the nave, south porch and tower also date from the 14th century (ibid). The tower was rebuilt in the 16th and 17th centuries following the partial collapse of an earlier tower.

A north aisle was added to the nave in 1826 (ibid). This had a gallery which has since been removed. The interior, the church walls and the roof were restored later in the 19th century. A large extension was built on the north side of the church in 1991.

3.2 The church, together with the churchyard, forms an important archaeological complex. It is sited on Church Hill, near Lawford Hall with which it was closely associated, and at some distance to the north of the main village.

4 Aims
The aim of the watching brief was to record the depth and extent of any archaeological remains uncovered during the installation of the new underfloor heating system, and to assess the date and significance of these remains in terms of the development of St Mary’s Church.

5 Methods (Fig 1)
5.1 The proposed installation involved lifting the existing floor in the nave and north aisle and lowering the underlying deposits to a depth of 350 mm below the floor-level. This
was done mainly by the contractors, partly by hand and partly by mini-digger. The existing floor-level is approximately at 31.9 m AOD.

The work also included partially dismantling the remains of the old heating system. A memorial stone at the east end of the nave was taken up and carefully set aside in order to incorporate it into the replacement floor.

5.2 The watching brief took place on the 11th-20th February 2009. The contractors gave CAT staff time to investigate, clean and record the archaeological remains uncovered during the lowering of the deposits under the modern floor. Only limited archaeological excavation was possible and this was constrained by the depth restriction of 350 mm.

5.3 Individual records of archaeological contexts, such as layers or features, as well as finds, were entered on CAT pro-forma record sheets. Plans were usually drawn at 1:20 and section drawings at 1:10. Standard record shots of the site and of individual contexts were taken on a digital camera. Further details of the recording methods used can be found in the CAT document Policies and procedures (CAT 2006).

6 Results

6.1 Earliest levels

The natural subsoil was not definitely reached during the groundworks. Traces of a light brownish-yellow clayey layer were observed in several holes in the nave, approximately 0.5 m below the modern floor-level. This could have been the top of the natural subsoil or alternatively a medieval make-up layer.

6.1.1 Following clearance of the modern deposits (L1) under the existing floor in the nave, an extensive dark greyish-brown layer (L3) was uncovered. This lay approximately 300-350 mm below the existing floor-level. From holes in the nave, L3 appeared to be 200-300 mm thick and sealed the brownish-yellow clayey layer referred to in section 6.1 (above). The surface of L3 was cleaned and found to be largely devoid of features. No traces of earlier floors survived in the nave. These had presumably been removed during successive episodes of restoration and re-flooring, notably in Victorian and modern times.

No dating evidence was recovered from L3, although it appeared to be cut by the medieval foundations F2 and F5. It was probably, therefore, a medieval make-up layer or possibly the remains of the land surface pre-dating the construction of the nave.

6.1.2 The deposits (L2) uncovered under the north aisle, following the removal of L1, were different from L3. They were also dark greyish-brown in colour but were more loamy in texture. Although largely unexcavated, L2 was probably the remains of a post-medieval topsoil pre-dating the construction of the north aisle in 1826. It appeared to survive at least 300 mm thick.

6.2 Medieval foundations (Figs 1-2; Plate 2)

6.2.1 The remains of an east-west foundation were uncovered in the north arcade between the nave and the north aisle. The eastern part of the foundation (F5), to the east of the stone column nearest the chancel, was 1-1.05 m wide. It was constructed of large unmortared septaria blocks set in brownish-yellow sand and gravel. It had been cut by a modern service trench, and the eastern end of F5 was further damaged during machining. Its upper surface lay 300-350 mm below the modern floor-level, but its depth was not established.

This was probably the lower part of the medieval foundation for the north wall of the nave, which was demolished when the north aisle was added in 1826. There were only slight traces of the mortared upper part of the foundation in this stretch of foundation.

Similar deposits of gravelly sand and unmortared septaria blocks were also observed in several holes dug by the contractors against the south and west walls within the nave. These deposits probably also represent the lower parts of the nave foundations. The nave walls are dated to the early 14th century (RCHM 1922, 151).

6.2.2 Between the two stone columns in the north arcade, the foundation was of more substantial stone-and-mortar construction (F2). This consisted of a friable pale brown mortar with septaria fragments. It was initially uncovered immediately west of
the eastern stone column only 220 mm below the modern floor-level. Further west and north it was more extensively robbed and lay approximately 320-400 mm below the modern floor-level. Sparse fragments of peg-tile, unfrogged brick and white wall-plaster were observed on the robbed surface of F2.

Plate 2: foundation F2, viewed from the north-west.

The foundation was 2.2 m wide and was uncovered for approximately 5m east-west. It was probably the remains of the upper part of the foundation for the former north wall of the nave. Why F2 was so much wider than F5 is unclear (see section 8.3). The foundation was only traced a short distance to the west of the western stone column. It did extend beyond this point but lay well below the depth limit of 350 mm and was left unexcavated.

Slight traces of the brownish-yellow sandy lower part of the foundation, similar to F5, were observed protruding out from under the stone-and-mortar upper part along the southern edge of F2. There was, however, no evidence of this along the northern edge or elsewhere.

6.2.3 A foundation (F4) extended south-north from F2. It was approximately 1.3 m wide and also consisted of pale brown mortar with septaria fragments and sparse pieces of peg-tile. The upper part of F4 had been robbed (F3; Fig 2). It was traced for 2.1 m north of F2 and appeared to extend under the north wall of the north aisle. The top of the foundation lay approximately 0.64 m below the modern floor-level.

This foundation was probably contemporary with F2 and thus medieval in date. It remained unexcavated and its interpretation is uncertain (see section 8.3).

6.2.4 Another deposit of brownish-yellow sand and gravel with large unmortared septaria blocks (L4), similar to F5, was observed at the east end of the nave, between F8 and the north side of the chancel-arch. It extended out for approximately 0.75 m from under the floor at the western end of the chancel. It lay 150-200 mm below the existing floor-level and was sealed in places by a thin layer of mortar rubble up to 100 mm thick. Although unexcavated, L4 appeared to be 200-250 mm thick and looked more like a make-up layer than a foundation.

The existing chancel-arch dates to 1853 (Pevsner & Radcliffe 1965, 260). The similarity of L4 to the foundation F5 suggests that it was also medieval in date. It could be a make-up layer for the chancel floor or alternatively part of the foundation for an earlier chancel arch.

6.3 Post-medieval and modern remains (Figs 1-2; Plate 2)
6.3.1 The robber trench (F3) for the north-south medieval foundation F4 was 1.3 m wide and 300 mm deep (Sx 1; Fig 2). It contained fragments of window glass, peg-tile and unfrogged brick, as well as a residual sherd of Roman pottery (see section 7.1). The robber trench was probably post-medieval in date.
6.3.2 Three shallow, undated post-holes (F6, F7, F9) were excavated immediately to the south of F2 and F5. They had loose, greyish-brown fills with white mortar flecks. The post-holes F6 and F7 looked roughly square-shaped and were 0.28 m deep and 0.22 m deep respectively, while F9 was more circular and was 0.2 m deep.

The posts in these post-holes could have provided roof supports or perhaps scaffolding for the 1826 or later work.

6.3.3 A rectangular setting of peg-tile (F1; Fig 2) was excavated in the north aisle. It measured 340 mm by 270 mm and consisted of a single, horizontal course of large, unmortared peg-tile fragments. These lay 300 mm below the modern floor-level and sealed a thin layer of greyish-brown fill (L1) which overlay F2.

The peg-tile setting was probably a post-pad, again possibly for scaffolding associated with the 1826 or later work.

6.3.4 A memorial stone (F8; Fig 1) at the east end of the nave was lifted and set aside (see section 5.1). The memorial was to Edward Turner and was dated 1750. The stone sealed a loose rubbly layer, from which a piece of Wedgwood pottery of probable 19th-century date was recovered (see section 7.1). This indicates that the memorial stone had been reset in the floor on at least one previous occasion. Presumably the memorial stone and rubble layer sealed a burial vault but this lay below the 350 mm depth limit.

6.3.5 A rectangular piece of dressed stone was uncovered in the south-east corner of the nave (Fig 1). It measured 480 x 360 x 80 mm and lay 180 mm below the modern floor-level. The stone was positioned directly beneath where the pulpit normally stands, although its purpose was unclear. It was retained at the church.

6.3.6 In the north aisle, immediately to the east of F3, a rectangular brick feature was uncovered (Fig 1). It was aligned east-west and lay 350 mm below the modern floor-level. The bricks formed a flat surface measuring approximately 0.9 m x 0.5 m. They appeared to be yellow or buff in colour and unfrogged, and were set in a white mortar.

Although unexcavated, the brick feature looked post-medieval in date. It was probably the remains of a feature in the pre-1826 graveyard; it could have been the top of a burial vault for a child, for example.

6.3.7 An extensive, loose, dusty greyish-brown layer (L1), 300-400 mm thick, underlay the existing floor in both the nave and north aisle.

Early on in the stripping of L1, a jumble of disarticulated human bones was uncovered in the north aisle (finds no 1; Fig 2). The bones lay 250-400 mm below the modern floor-level, and were confined to a fairly small area, approximately 1 m east-west by 0.6 m north-south. It seems likely that the bones derive from several individual burials which were disturbed during an earlier phase of building work, such as the construction of the north aisle in 1826.

Small quantities of human bone were recovered elsewhere from L1, along with fragments of pottery, floor tile, brick, iron nails, animal bone and oyster shell. Much of the animal bone and shell came from the western part of the north aisle, and this suggests that this deposit was imported onto the site from elsewhere, again probably in 1826.

6.3.8 The position of the western stone column in the north arcade was approximately 0.5 m to the west of the position where it is shown in the plan published in 1922 (RCHM 1922, 151). This suggests that the arcade was remodelled in the 20th century.

Immediately to the north of each of the two stone columns in the north arcade was a wooden column. These were probably associated with the former gallery. All four columns rested on shallow brick plinths. A brick plinth was also uncovered slightly to the east of the one for the western wooden column (see Fig 1 & Plate 2). This suggests that this column had also been moved at some point in the relatively recent past.

7 Finds

A quantity of finds was recovered during the watching brief and the more significant of these are described in sections 7.1-7.2. The identifiable human bones found during the work were re-buried on site. The remaining finds are listed in detail in the site archive and include small quantities of peg-tile, brick, iron nails and oyster shell, as well as a small unstratified copper-alloy pin.
7.1 Pottery, window glass and floor tile
by Howard Brooks

7.1.1 Pottery
Post-Roman pottery fabric descriptions are after CAR 7.

F3
Finds no 4
One Roman grey ware body sherd (CAR 10, Fabric GX), 6g.

F8
Finds no 6
Approximately half (spout end) of a Fabric 48d creamer, 63g. The impression WEDGW[ood] on base. This is not a high-quality piece. One suspects that it is a later 'Wedgwood', produced by Enoch Wedgwood & Co after 1860, or (less likely because of the fabric) by the Knottingley Pottery in 1790-1801. Both of these potters stamped their wares 'Wedgwood & Co' (web references below).

L1
Finds no 2
One body sherd in Fabric 21 (sandy orange ware), 11g. 13th-16th century.
Two internally-glazed body sherds in Fabric 40 (post-medieval red earthenware), 15g. 17th-18th century.

7.1.2 The window glass
F3
Finds no 4
Four pieces of ‘old’ (ie pre-Victorian) window glass, 2.4g. Edge of one piece is slightly nibbled or ‘grozed’, showing that it was made to fit into a lead came in a stained glass window. This type of window glass, originally transparent but no longer so, is a common find on church sites, and probably derives from an old window taken out during a phase of Victorian restoration.

7.1.3 The floor tile
L1
Finds no 2
One almost-complete floor tile in orange fabric, 105 x 105 mm, maximum 17mm thick, 302.9g. Worn surface, mortar adhering to one edge, no glaze. This looks like an earlier tile than the two described below. Medieval or early ?post-medieval.
One complete floor tile, 110 x 110 mm, 25mm thick, 543.7g. Brown glaze (showing dark brown on this fabric) partially over all four edges and patchily on surface. The surface is worn – only approximately 10% of the surface glaze survives. Post-medieval.
One small fragment of a floor tile, 22mm thick, with glossy pale brown glaze, 64.7g. Rather open, brick-like fabric. With glaze intact, this must have been away from footfall. Post-medieval.

7.2 Animal bone
by Adam Wightman

7.2.1 Introduction
In total, 26 pieces of animal bone were recovered (751.7g) from three contexts located beneath the internal floor surface of St Mary’s Church. The contexts were a layer of post-medieval/modern make-up (L1), a post-medieval robber trench (F3), and a post-hole (F6) which is also probably post-medieval in date.

7.2.2 Methodology
All of the bone was examined to determine range of species and elements present. Each bone was inspected to determine if bone-, horn- or antler-working was present in the assemblage. Evidence of butchering and any indications of skinning, horn-working and other modifications was recorded. When possible, a record was made of ages and any other relevant information, such as pathologies. Counts and weights were taken and recorded for each context. All information was input directly into a Microsoft Works Spreadsheet for analysis. Measurements were not taken for the bones as there would have been too little data for any meaningful interpretation.
Bones of sheep and goats were recorded as *ovis* based on the greater frequency of this species in this part of the world, but horn-cores, metapodials and deciduous fourth premolars (DPM4) of sheep or goat were distinguished between the two species. The side of the body from which the bones were derived was noted. The zones of the bone that were represented by the fragment (Z1-Z8 in Table 1 in Appendix) and the zone on which butchery marks occurred were recorded using the methodology devised by D Serjeantson (Serjeantson 1996). The freshness of the bone when it was broken was also recorded, based on an assessment of the fractures on the bone.

The analysis was carried out following a modified version of guidelines by English Heritage (Davis 1992). A catalogue of the assemblage is included as a table with this report (Table 1 in Appendix).

### 7.2.3 The assemblage

The degree of variation in the preservation of the bone from L1 is considerable. Some of the bones appear as if they are freshly butchered and others as if they have been buried for some time. This probably indicates the disturbance of older deposits sometime in the recent past. L1 contained mainly cattle (*bos*) bones, most of which were long bones. Many of these bones exhibited signs of butchery, including one scapula fragment which had been sawn square, and most likely represent table waste. The *bos* molars, however, probably originate from an earlier stage of the meat-processing sequence. Most of the bone became fragmented whilst fresh, suggesting rapid deposition, although a pig (*sus*) humerus had been gnawed by a dog (*canid*) at both ends. Other bones recovered from L1 included a sheep (*ovis*) femur, a large coracoid almost certainly from a swan (*cygnus*, based on the ridges on the distal portion of the bone that are typical of bones of anatidae), and the scapula from a small mammal. The larger *bos* radius appeared to have a pathology in the form of a deep groove or notch in the area of the bone where the ulna attaches. This is most likely indicative of a problem during the fusing of the ulna and the radius.

The post-medieval robber trench F3 contained the proximal end of a broken *bos* tibia. Also from this context was a small mammal rib fragment, a fragment of unknown bone from the axial skeleton and two fragments probably from a human skeleton. The human fragments were a canine from the maxilla and the proximal end of a third or fourth metatarsal. It is uncertain whether the two human bones could have come from the same individual.

A *sus* incisor was recovered from the post-hole F6.

### 7.2.4 Discussion and conclusions

This is a small assemblage of bone from post-medieval and modern contexts which probably comprises bone contemporary with these deposits as well as bone disturbed from earlier contexts. The latter is almost certainly true of the human bone found in F3 as well as the bone of notably worse condition in L1. Five species were identified in the three contexts. The pig, sheep and cattle remains are likely to represent the consumption of meat and the deposition of waste, either within the church or, more likely, in deposits which were brought into the church. Due to its location near an estuary, swans are common in the area of Lawford, and the coracoid recovered from L1 is most likely derived from a consumption event. Due to the probable mixed nature of the contexts and the possibility that some of the material could have been brought in from outside the church, little else can be extrapolated from this material.

### 8 Conclusions

#### 8.1

The scale of the archaeological investigation was limited, mainly due to the depth restriction of 350 mm below the floor-level, as well as by the extent of the disturbance caused during the installation of the earlier heating system. Nevertheless, despite this, significant archaeological remains were uncovered, including medieval foundations.
8.2 The east-west medieval foundation (F2, F5) for the former north wall of the nave, demolished in 1826, was revealed under the north arcade. This was constructed of an upper stone-and-mortar part sealing a lower deposit of large, unmortared septaria blocks set in sand and gravel. Septaria occurs naturally along the Essex and Suffolk coasts nearby. The foundation probably dates to the 14th century.

8.3 An architect's survey shows the layout of the church immediately prior to the construction of the north aisle in 1826 (Fig 3; web reference below). The north wall of the nave is of a uniform, moderate size all the way along and there is no north doorway or porch.

8.4 The unexpected width of F2 and the discovery of a foundation F4 extending off to the north (see sections 6.2.2-6.2.3) are not easy to explain. Possible interpretations include a side chapel, a north porch, an earlier phase of tower, or a monument in the graveyard outside the nave. However, none of these is particularly convincing. A side chapel might seem a plausible suggestion, but side chapels are usually located off the chancel rather than the nave.

The width of foundation F2 need not necessarily be medieval. The mortar was slightly loose, especially the northern part, and it had peg-tile and post-medieval brick on its surface. Perhaps F2 had been widened as part of the 19th-century or later alterations. However, this still does not explain the north-south foundation F4.

9 Archive deposition
The archive from the watching brief, including the site records, photographs and finds, will be permanently deposited with Colchester and Ipswich Museums, under accession code COLIM 2009.13, in accordance with Guidelines on the preparation and transfer of archaeological archives to Colchester and Ipswich Museums (CIMS 2008) and Archaeological archives: a guide to best practice in creation, compilation, transfer and curation (IfA 2007).

10 Abbreviations and glossary
anatidae biological family which includes ducks, swans, geese, etc
AOD above Ordnance Survey datum point based on mean sea level at Newlyn, Cornwall
axial bones from the head and trunk of the body
CAT Colchester Archaeological Trust
CBC Colchester Borough Council
CIMS Colchester and Ipswich Museums
context specific location on an archaeological site, especially one where finds are made; usually a layer or a feature
ECC Essex County Council
EHER Essex Historic Environment Record, held at Essex County Council, County Hall, Chelmsford, Essex
feature an identifiable context, such as a pit, a wall or a post-hole
HEM ECC Historic Environment Management team
IfA Institute for Archaeologists
medieval period from AD 1066 to c AD 1500
modern period from c 1850 onwards to the present
natural geological deposit undisturbed by human activity
peg-tile rectangular roof tile of medieval and later date
post-medieval period from c 1500 to c 1850
RCHM Royal Commission on Historical Monuments
residual finds that were deposited earlier than the context in which they were found
robber trench a trench left after the robbing of building materials from walls or foundations; eg Roman foundations were often robbed in the medieval period
Roman the period from AD 43 to c AD 410
septaria calcareous, clay concretions found on the Essex and Suffolk coast
U/S unstratified, ie without a well-defined context
Victorian 1837-1901
11 Acknowledgements
CAT is grateful to the following: Rev Pat Prestney and the PCC of St Mary’s Church for commissioning and funding the watching brief; the contractors, Rose Builders Ltd, for their help on site; and the Society of Antiquaries of London and Lambeth Palace Library for permission to reproduce the ground-plan and elevation of the Church of St Mary, Lawford in 1826. The work was monitored by Adrian Gascoyne, of the ECC HEM team.

12 References
Note: all CAT reports (except DBAs) are available online in .pdf format at http://cat.essex.ac.uk.

CAR 7 2000  Colchester Archaeological Report 7: Post-Roman pottery from excavations in Colchester 1971-85, by John Cotter
CAT 2006  Policies and procedures, Colchester Archaeological Trust
CIMS 2008  Guidelines on the preparation and transfer of archaeological archives to Colchester and Ipswich Museums (CBC)
Davis, S J M 1992  A rapid method of recording mammal bones from archaeological sites, English Heritage, AML report, 19/92
EAA 14 2003  Standards for field archaeology in the East of England, East Anglian Archaeology, Occasional Papers, 14, ed by D Gurney
IfA 2007  Archaeological archives: a guide to best practice in creation, compilation, transfer and curation
IfA 2008a  Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief
IfA 2008b  Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials
MoRPHE 2006  Management of research projects in the historic environment (English Heritage)
RCHM 1922  An inventory of the historic monuments of Essex. 3, North-east Essex, Royal Commission on Historical Monuments

Internet references
Wedgwood (see section 7.1.1)
http://www.antique-marks.com/wedgwood-marks.html
accessed 16/06/09
http://www.thepotteries.org/allpotters/1061.html
accessed 16/06/09
Ground-plan and elevation of St Mary, Lawford in 1826 (ICBS 00773a)
http://www.churchplansonline.org/
accessed 16/04/09
# Appendix

Table 1: catalogue of the faunal remains, listed by context.

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<thead>
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Fig 2 Detail plan of F1 and disarticulated human bone in north aisle (above) and Sx 1 (below).
Fig 3 Ground-plan and elevation of St Mary's Church in 1826.
**Essex Historic Environment Record/**
**Essex Archaeology and History**

**Summary sheet**

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<td><strong>Periods represented:</strong></td>
<td>medieval and post-medieval</td>
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<td><strong>Summary of fieldwork results:</strong></td>
<td>Archaeological remains uncovered during the installation of an underfloor heating system in the nave and north aisle of St Mary’s Church, Church Hill, Lawford, Tendring, Essex included medieval foundations, as well as several post-holes, a post-pad, and some disarticulated human remains.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Previous summaries/reports:</strong></td>
<td>None</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Keywords:</strong></td>
<td>church, listed building,</td>
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<td></td>
<td>medieval wall foundation,</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>robber trench, septaria,</td>
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<td></td>
<td>post-hole, human bone,</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>animal bone, pottery</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Significance:</strong></td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Author of summary:</strong></td>
<td>Donald Shimmin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Date of summary:</strong></td>
<td>August 2009</td>
</tr>
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