

**An archaeological evaluation at  
Bulmer Brick Works  
Bulmer,  
Essex**

**September 2011**

**report prepared by  
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**on behalf of  
Peter Minter  
(The Bulmer Brick and Tile Company Ltd)**

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Braintree Museum accession code: pending (applied for)  
HEM site code: BUBW11  
NGR: TL 83305 38204



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## 1 Summary

*An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by CAT at Bulmer Brick Works, Hedingham Road, Bulmer, Essex on 14th September 2011. The work consisted of stripping around the top of existing quarry face (referred to here as Trench 1 (T1)) where the quarry pit was to be extended and the excavation of an evaluation trench (T2) in the field a short distance northeast of the quarry pit. All that was found along the top of the existing face was a ditch containing finds of post-medieval or modern date. No significant archaeological features or layers were encountered in Trench 2 although a single later prehistoric flint flake was recovered from the spoil.*

## 2 Introduction

- 2.1 This report describes the archaeological work carried out by the Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) on behalf of the Bulmer Brick & Tile Company Ltd on 14th September 2011.
- 2.2 The work consisted of the machine stripping of an area on the east side of the quarry pit ('Trench 1') where it was to be extended (centre NGR TL 83324 38204) and the machine excavation of a separate thirty metre-long evaluation trench (T2), located just to the northeast of the existing quarry pit (centre NGR TL 83284 38264) (Fig 1).
- 2.3 The work was carried out in accordance with in accordance with the Historic Environment Management (HEM) Essex County Council brief and a corresponding Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) prepared by CAT (CAT 2011) and agreed with the HEM team.
- 2.4 All fieldwork and reporting was done in accordance with CAT's *Policies and procedures* (CAT 2008), the Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (IfA 2008a), *Standard and guidance for an archaeological excavation* (IfA 2008b) and *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (IfA 2008c). The guidance contained in the documents *Management of research projects in the historic environment* (MoRPHE) and *Standards for field archaeology in the East of England* (EAA 14) was also followed.

## 3 Archaeological background

- 3.1 Bulmer brickworks is a rare example of a working brickworks manufacturing bricks using the traditional hand-made methods. The site has probably been making clay products, albeit intermittently, for several centuries and is still in production.
- 3.2 Objects from various periods including Bronze Age, Iron Age, Roman and Anglo-Saxon have been found near the site together with a medieval or Tudor kiln containing roof peg tiles ready for firing. The present brickworks has been in continuous use for at least 160 years.
- 3.3 In 1958, the adjacent field was ploughed to a depth of c 300 mm producing patches of dark soil and black ash upon the surface with pottery (Blake 1959). Fragments of Late Bronze Age cinerary urns were recovered with Roman and Anglo-Saxon pottery. Spreads of large flint and stones lay nearby suggestive of a building but excavation did not reveal any features. The conclusion of the excavator was that an Anglo-Saxon hut site had existed on top of the hill close to the site of a Bronze Age urnfield. Alternatively, the remains may have been associated with the nearby villa site at Gestingthorpe to the north where timber structures have been found above 4th-century Roman levels.
- 3.4 The Gestingthorpe Romano-British villa is situated on the sloping crest of a southwest facing promontory in gently undulating hills, overlooking a tributary of the Belchamp Brook (Draper 1985). The villa lies less than 400 m to the northwest of the application site. Finds recovered from the site indicate that the monument was occupied from the 1st to the 4th century AD.

- 3.5 There are no records of significant archaeological finds having been found in the immediate area of the brick works quarry.

#### 4 Aim

The aim of the archaeological work was to record the location, date, character, and significance of any surviving archaeological remains encountered.

#### 5 Results (Figs 1 -3)

- 5.1 The results from the stripping around the quarry edge (T1) and the evaluation trench (T2) are described separately below in sections 5.2 and 5.3 respectively.

##### 5.2 The quarry extension area Trench 1

The topsoil (ploughsoil) around part of the east edge of the quarry pit was stripped by machine under supervision by an archaeologist from CAT. This consisted of the area within which the quarry pit was to be extended for the further extraction of clay and is referred to as Trench 1 (T1) (Fig 1). The stripped area was approximately 31 m long. It varied in width from approximately 2 m at the north end to 4 m at the south end (Figs 1 & 2) because of practical reasons to do with the machine stripping. The sequence of soil deposits (topsoil and disturbed subsoil) was very similar to that recorded in the evaluation trench (T2) (described below). However, the subsoil in T1 consisted of mottled, predominantly brown sandy silt-clay.

A shallow ditch (F1) was located towards the south end of the stripped area (Figs 2 & 3). This was aligned southeast-northwest. The ditch was filled with a medium brown sandy clay (Fig 3). It had been cut at right angles (approximately) by a modern ceramic land drain (Fig 2). Another ceramic land drain pipe was located in the ditch fill itself close to the northeast edge (Fig 3). This closely followed the line of the ditch such that its positioning within it appeared to be more than coincidence. The ditch did not appear to be a cut for the drain but rather the drain may have been inserted in the lower ditch fill to maintain drainage when the ditch was no longer in use. Two sections, one hand-dug - the other machine-excavated, both produced finds of ceramic building materials including pieces of pantile (including one nib piece), peg-tile and ?brick (seven pieces weighing 174g). Pantiles can be dated in England to the late 17th century or after so that, although the alignment of the ditch (F1) is different to that of the surrounding existing field boundaries, the ditch fill can be dated to the post-medieval period or later. The land drain set within it is made from machine-extruded pipes which are probably of mid-late 19th-century date or later.

No other significant archaeology was recorded in T1 although it can be noted a modern blue plastic water-main (disused) was located midway along the stripped area. The same pipe was also encountered in T2.

##### 5.3 The evaluation trench T2

The evaluation trench (T2) was located to the northeast of the existing quarry pit (Fig 1). The trench, which was 1.8 m wide, was excavated by machine for a total length of 30 m under the supervision of an archaeologist from CAT. The trench deviated from a straight line, on a slight curve towards the south, with an overall deviation of approximately 1.5 m over its entire length (Fig 2).

The topsoil (ploughsoil) was approximately 330 mm thick and consisted of a dark brown, sandy clay-loam. This sealed a disturbed(?) subsoil approximately 80 mm thick of medium to pale brown sandy-silt with some manganese. Below this, at the base of the trench, was a pale sandy-silt with common patches of sand, some stony areas with flints and manganese. In total, the trench was excavated to a depth of about 450 mm (Fig 3).

The only archaeological find was a small, prehistoric flint flake found in the spoil at the west end of the trench. It can be described as follows:

Small flint cortex flake (8 g), not patinated. Thick flake, cortex covering one face. Hard hammer strike and small chip or break on flake adjacent to striking area. Flake tapering to a point. No secondary working. Prehistoric, Neolithic-Bronze Age, probably Mid-Late Bronze Age.

Otherwise no significant archaeological remains or deposits were encountered.

## 6 Archive deposition

The paper and digital archive is held by the Colchester Archaeological Trust at 12 Lexden Road, Colchester, Essex CO3 3NF, but it will be permanently deposited with Braintree Museum, Manor Street, Braintree (accession code pending, applied for 08/11/2011) in accordance with their guidelines for the preparations and transfer of archaeological archives.

## 7 Acknowledgements

The Trust would like to thank Peter Minter of Bulmer Brick & Tile Company Ltd for commissioning and funding the work and for providing the machine and driver for the evaluation

## 8 References

Note: all CAT reports, except for DBAs, are available online in pdf format at <http://cat.essex.ac.uk>

Blake, B	1959	'An Anglo-Saxon site at Hole Farm, Bulmer Tye, Essex' in <i>Medieval Archaeology</i> , <b>3</b> , 282-5
CAT	2008	<i>Policies and Procedures</i>
CAT	2011	<i>Written Scheme of Investigation for archaeological evaluation on a proposed mineral site at Bulmer Brick Works, Hedingham Road, Bulmer, Essex.</i>
EAA <b>14</b>	2003	<i>Standards for field archaeology in the East of England</i> , Gurney, D, ed, EAA, Occasional Papers, <b>14</b>
IfA	2008a	<i>Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief</i>
IfA	2008b	<i>Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials</i>
IfA	2008c	<i>Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials</i>
MoRPHE	2006	<i>Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment</i> (English Heritage)
Draper, J	1985	<i>Excavations by Mr H P Cooper on the Roman site at Hill Farm, Gestingthorpe, Essex, EAA <b>25</b></i>

## 9 Glossary

EAA	East Anglian Archaeology
EHES	Essex Historic Environment Record, held by the ECC
feature	an identifiable cut or construction such as a pit, ditch, wall or floor
IfA	Institute for Archaeologists
modern	period from the 19th century onwards to the present
NGR	National Grid Reference
post-medieval	after Henry VIII to around the late 18th century

**Distribution list:**

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Braintree Museum, Manor Street, Braintree, Essex

Essex Historic Environment Record, Essex County Council, Chelmsford, Essex



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**Appendix 1: contents of archive**

**1 Site Archive**

Digital photo record (on CD)

Rough site notes

Copy of the risk assessment document

It should be noted that none of the small quantity of finds was retained

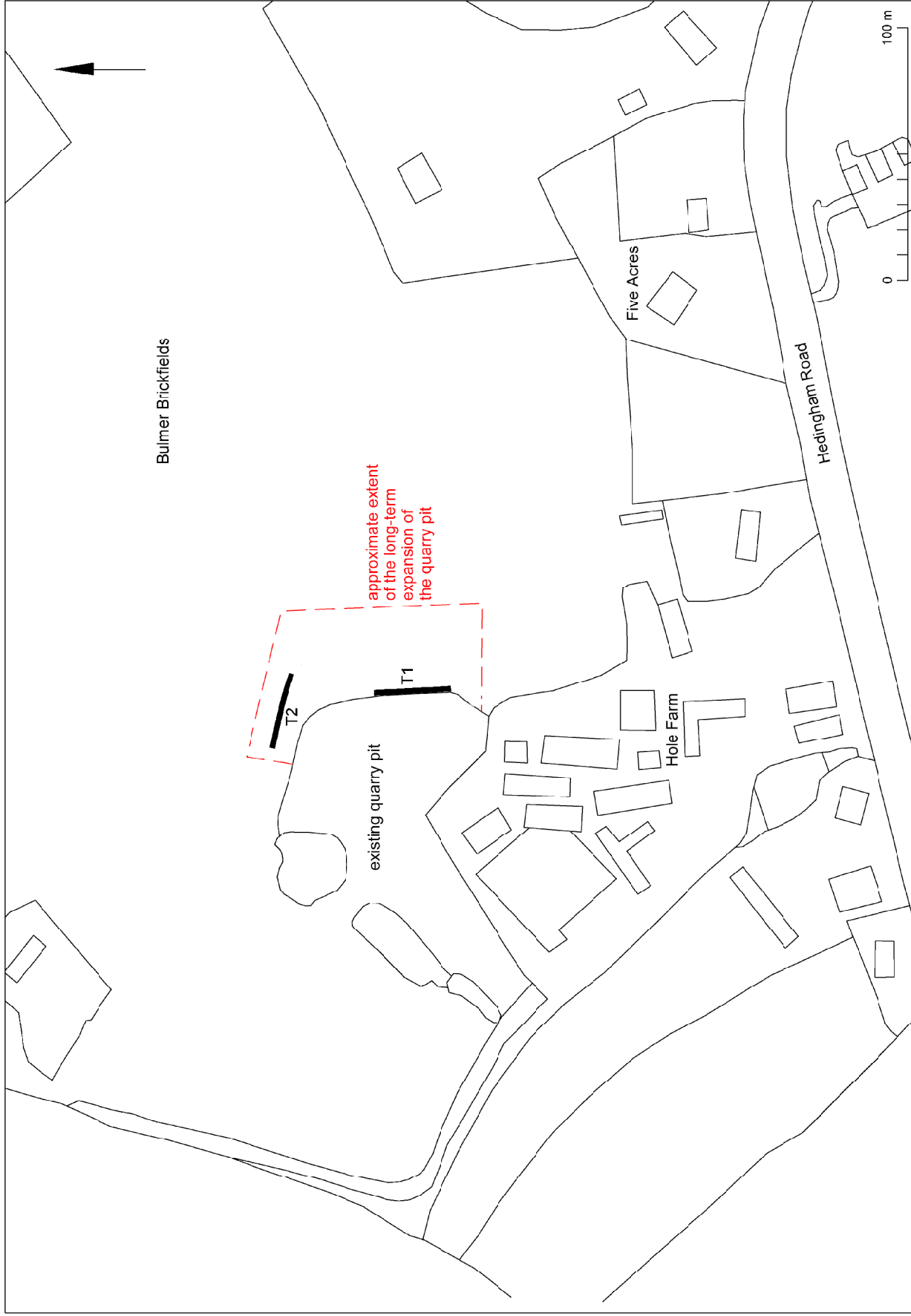


Fig 1 Site location plan

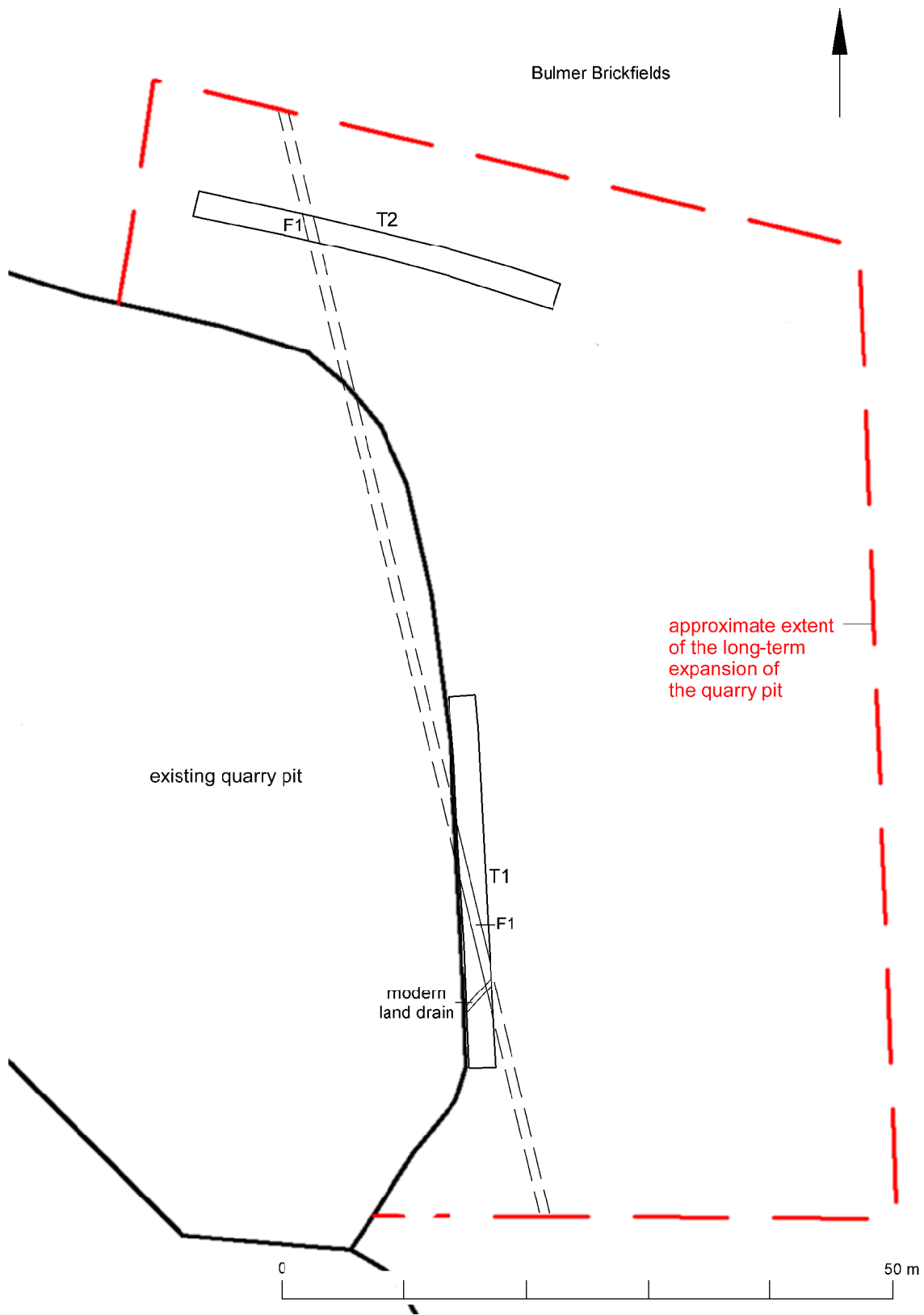
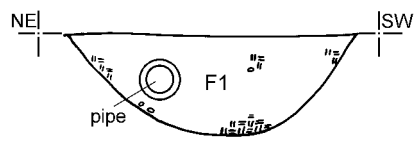


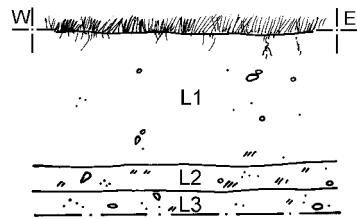
Fig 2 Site plan.



Trench 1: F1



Trench 2



- sand
- small stones
- == clay
- /// iron stone
- √ roots



Fig 3 Trench 1: section across F1. Trench 2: representative section.

**Essex Historic Environment Record/  
Essex Archaeology and History**

**Summary sheet**

<b>Site address:</b> Bulmer Brick Works, Hedingham Road, Bulmer, Essex	
<b>Parish:</b> Bulmer (St Andrew)	<b>District:</b> Braintree
<b>NGR:</b> TL 83305 38249 (centre)	<b>Site code:</b> <i>HEM</i> BUBW11 <i>CAT</i> 11/9b
<b>Type of work:</b> Evaluation	<b>Site director/group:</b> Colchester Archaeological Trust
<b>Date of work:</b> 14th September 2011	<b>Size of area investigated:</b> approximately 147 sq m
<b>Location of finds/curating museum:</b> Braintree Museum (accession code applied for (08/11/11) and pending)	<b>Funding source:</b> Developer
<b>Further seasons anticipated?</b> Yes	<b>Related EHER nos:</b> 9299, 9300, 9301, 9302, 9304, 9459, 9458, 9460, 9461
<b>Final report:</b>	CAT Report 619 and summary in <i>EAH</i>
<b>Periods represented:</b>	post-medieval, modern
<b>Summary of fieldwork results:</b> An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by CAT at Bulmer Brick Works, Hedingham Road, Bulmer, Essex on 14th September 2011. The work consisted of stripping around the top of existing quarry face (referred to here as Trench 1 (T1)) where the quarry pit was to be extended and the excavation of an evaluation trench (T2) in the field a short distance northeast of the quarry pit. All that was found along the top of the existing face was a ditch containing finds of post-medieval or modern date. No significant archaeological features or layers were encountered in Trench 2 although a single later prehistoric flint flake was recovered from the spoil.	
<b>Previous summaries/reports:</b> none	
<b>Keywords:</b> -	<b>Significance:</b> none
<b>Author of summary:</b> Stephen Benfield	<b>Date of summary:</b> November 2011