

An archaeological trial-trenching evaluation on land west of Manfield Lane, Halstead, Essex

April 2012



commissioned by Mr Phil Neal

report prepared by Ben Holloway and Howard Brooks

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Braintree Museum accession code: awaited

NGR: TL 8163 3079 (c)



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CAT Report 646

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1 Summary

An evaluation trench within the footprint of a proposed new build on the western side of Manfield Lane, Halstead, revealed seven late medieval and post-medieval features including a boundary ditch, pits, and post-holes.

The boundary ditch aligned well with an extant boundary dividing properties on the Head Street frontage to the west, and confirms that the same boundary originally ran to the Manfield Lane frontage (as shown by OS maps of 1876 and 1923). The 1876 OS map shows that the property boundary was now marked by the southern edge of a building overlying the position of the former ditch, which had clearly been infilled before that date (finds indicate a backfilling date of the 16th/17th century, although an earlier origin is possible).

OS maps show the gradual clearing of the site between 1876, when it and the Manfield Street frontage were built-up, to 1956, when the Manfield Street frontage was completely clear, but a few small structures remained at the rear (on the western side) of the site. Of the six other features, two may predate the 16th/17th century infilling of the boundary and may be the result of domestic waste disposal from adjacent houses, but the others are probably contemporary with the gradual clearance of the site between 1876 and the later 20th century (although related finds need not be later than the 19th century). The site has recently been terraced.

Finds of Roman material in Halstead have previously been concentrated south of the river. However, the discovery of two Roman potsherds and two pieces of Roman tile were (residual in later contexts) shows that a Roman site may be located nearby, and may have included a structure with a tiled roof.

2 Introduction (Fig 1)

The site (NGR TL 8163 3079) was used until recently as car parking for offices on Head Street.

The Historic Environment Management (HEM) team of Essex County Council (ECC) were consulted by Braintree District Council in January 2011 about a planning application for the construction of a terrace of four new dwellings (10/01285/FUL). HEM made the following recommendation to the LPA in line with advice given in *Planning Policy Statement 5*:

"No development, or preliminary groundworks, of any kind shall take place until the applicant has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work and recording in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted by the applicant, and approved by the planning authority."

A brief detailing the required archaeological work (an evaluation by trial-trenching) was written by Teresa O'Connor (HEM 2012).

CAT carried out the required fieldwork in April 2012, in accordance with a WSI (Written Scheme of Investigation) produced by CAT in response to the HEM brief and agreed with HEM (CAT 2012).

In addition to the WSI, all fieldwork and reporting was done in accordance with the Colchester Archaeological Trust's *Policies and procedures* (CAT 2008), the Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (IfA 2008a) and *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (IfA 2008b). The guidance contained in the documents *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment* (MoRPHE: English Heritage 2006), *Standards for field archaeology in the East of England* (EAA 14) and *Research and archaeology revisited: A revised framework for the East of England*, East Anglian Archaeological Occasional Papers 24 (EAA 24) were also followed.

Post-excavation work was carried out in May 2012.

3 Archaeological and historical background

This section is based on records held by the Essex Historic Environment Record (EHER), and on Medlycott 1998.

The site is located in an area of archaeological potential, within the area of post-medieval settlement and immediately outside the medieval settlement at Halstead (EHER 9249; Medlycott 1998). The site is close to the Grade I listed medieval church (presumed to have replaced a late Saxon predecessor: EHER 9431-2), and to the 'old' medieval market-place at Chipping Hill (EHER 18689). Immediately to the south of the site (adjacent to the historic market place), is a 15/16th century timber-framed house (EHER 26126), and 15th- to 17th-century buildings survive along Head Street to the west.

Cartographic evidence indicates that at least part of the main street frontages were built up by the early 17th century. However, it is likely that these frontages are medieval, and have not changed significantly since then. The 1st, 2nd and 3rd edition Ordnance Survey maps show now-demolished buildings which represent 19th century infilling along Manfield Lane and on the site of the proposed development.

On the basis of information derived from sites in the immediate vicinity it was presumed that soil conditions would be conducive to the preservation of faunal remains and organic materials in waterlogged deposits or deeper features such as wells and cess-pits (Medlycott, 1998).

4 Aim

The aim of the evaluation was to record the character, extent, date, significance and condition of any remains and deposits likely to be disturbed by the proposed works. Specific attention was paid to evidence for the medieval and post medieval development of Halstead.

5 Results (Figs 1-3: Plates 1-2)

This section gives an archaeological summary of the evaluation trench (T1), with context and finds dating information.

At the time of the evaluation, the site was an area of gravel hard-standing used as a car park. A 16m-long evaluation trench was excavated within the footprint of the proposed new terrace, using a tracked excavator under archaeological supervision.

An archaeological summary of the trench with a tabulation of context and finds dating information follows below.

Trench 1: summary (Figs 1-3: plates 1-2)

Layer 1 (modern gravel, and hard-standing 250mm thick) was removed by machine. This revealed L2 – natural clay and gravel in which seven archaeological features were visible. These were pits F1, F6 and F7, ditches F2 and F3, and post-holes F4 and F5.

Ditch F2 aligned neatly with the boundary between two properties fronting onto Head Street (to the west). Finds in F2 were no later than the 16th/17th century – perhaps the date when the boundary was infilled on the current site. Ditch F3 was not closely dated (it contained peg-tile).

Based on their size, both F4 (undated) and F5 (post-medieval) appear to have been post-holes (although F4 is somewhat ephemeral). Brick and peg-tile packing in F5 confirms its structural nature, but it is not clear whether it and F4 belong to the same structure.

Pit F1 contained pottery of the 15th/16th century. The two pits at the southern end of the trench (F6, F7) contained brick and tile and floor-brick fragments, and a thin spread of mortar (F6). The finds in F7 were 19th century in date.

The site appears to have been subject to some degree of terracing in the recent past, because the archaeological features were directly sealed by L1 (gravel hard-standing and its sub-base).



Plate 1: view north along T1 (from S to N: F6; boundary ditch F2, pit F1)

Trench 1 – contexts and dating information.

italics = finds residual in this context

Feature no	Type	Dated finds	Phase
F1	pit	<i>Roman pottery and brick</i> ; medieval pottery 15-16C(?).	late med (15-16C?)
F2	ditch	<i>Roman pottery</i> ; post-medieval pottery (Fabrics 21a, 40); Post-Roman brick and peg-tile; clay-pipe (L16-E18C?); Glass (16-E17C)	post-medieval (L16-17C?)
F3	gully	post-Roman peg-tile	med-post-med/mod
F4	post-hole	--	undated (post-med?)
F5	post-hole	<i>Roman(?) brick/tile</i> , post-Roman peg-tile and brick	post-medieval
F6	pit	post-medieval pottery (Fabric 46), probably 17C; post-Roman peg-tile and brick	post-medieval (17C or later)
F7	pit	post-medieval peg-tile and floor bricks	19C



Plate 2: boundary ditch F2 (view north)

6 Finds

by Stephen Benfield

Bulk finds of Roman, medieval, post-medieval and modern date from F1-F3, and F5-F7 in T1 consist of pottery, ceramic building material (CBM), clay-pipe, glass and animal bones.

The finds are listed in Table 2 below, and a spot date is provided for each finds number. The Roman pottery fabric types refer to the Essex Roman fabric series (Going 1987). The medieval and post-medieval pottery fabric types refer to the Essex post-Roman fabric series (Cunningham 1985; *CAR 7*). The pottery fabrics present here are listed in Table 1. The bricks have been dated following the typology for Essex bricks (Ryan 1996).

Pottery fabrics:

Fabric code	Description	Date
<i>Roman:</i>		
47	sandy grey wares	M1-4C
<i>post-Roman:</i>		
20	Medieval sandy grey wares (general)	L12-14C
21A	Colchester-type ware	13-16C
40	post-medieval red earthenwares (general)	16/17-18C
46	Netherlands, Anglo-Netherlands and English tin-glazed earthenwares	M16-M18C

Table 1 Pottery fabrics recorded showing period/common date range

context no.	finds no	ctxt type	finds	spot date
F001	001	pit	<p>Pottery Roman 1@8 g, Fabric 47, grey ware, sandy body sherd, probably Roman</p> <p>CBM post-Roman brick 2@64, one rounded edge piece, one red; sandy, irregular broken lump; peg-tile 4@220 g (small-medium size pieces)</p> <p>Animal bone 16@199 g, medium and large size mammals, including mandible, ribs, scapula and part of horncore; identified elements are sheep mandible & horncore; cow radius; domestic fowl radius</p>	late med (14-15C?) (with residual Roman)
F001	002	pit	<p>Pottery medieval 1@27 g Fabric 21A, base edge, orange fabric with white slip, internal white kettle scale deposit, later Colchester type(?)15-16C(?) (CAR 7, 108-09).</p> <p>CBM Roman(?) imbrex, 1@60 g, end of tile, sanded interior; post-Roman peg-tile 9@701 g (mostly moderately large pieces) one with peg hole; glazed tile 1@127 g, large flake from surface, even black glaze</p> <p>Iron nail 1@58 g, corroded, large, probably a nail</p> <p>Animal bone 22@343 g, small, medium and large size mammals, skull, scapula, mandible, rib vertebrae and long bone pieces identified elements are sheep mandible, humerus & tibia; cow humerus & molar, there also a metatarsal probably from a pig and some bones from a small bird(s)</p>	late medieval (with residual Roman?)
F002	003	ditch	<p>Pottery Roman Fabric 47 1@22 g (M1-4C) post-Roman Fabric 20 3@18 g includes cooking pot(?) base edge with external sooting, Fabric 21A, 1@25 g, piece from a handle, brownish-red fabric with grey core; Fabric 40 14@132 g, glazed, includes thick base sherd with small pre-firing hole and internal white (scale) deposit (possibly a strainer or press) and two pieces from handles</p> <p>CBM post-Roman brick 1@421, 25-30 mm thick, red, one edge, slightly rounded, shaped brick(?) with change of angle one face knife-trimmed(?) other sanded (14-15C?); peg-tile 22@1254 g (small-medium pieces)</p> <p>Clay-pipe 1@3 g, stem, bore 3 mm (L16-E18C?)</p> <p>Glass rim section from flask, rim diam. approx. 25 mm, surfaces degraded and flaking, possibly originally pale green coloured glass, probably from a plain pedestal flask (Willmott, 2002, Type 22.1) dated 16-E17C</p> <p>Iron nail 1@11 g, corroded</p> <p>Animal bone 8@361 g, medium and large mammal (some clearly butchery waste) pieces identified</p>	post-medieval (L16-17C?) (with residual Roman)

context no.	finds no	ctxt type	finds	spot date
			elements are sheep mandible & metatarsal; cow tibia, humerus & molar	
F003	004	ditch	CBM post-Roman peg-tile 4@232 g	med-post-med/mod
F005	005	post-hole	CBM Roman(?) brick/tile, 1@1738 g, corner, 40 mm thick, min, surviving length 160 mm, red, sandy fabric (no darker core), sanded base, slight traces of pale mortar on one edge of base, upper surface crazed and with dark grey marks/staining, possibly heated from above, possibly used as hearth base; post-Roman peg-tile 1@32 g; brick, 2@50 g (one with grey surface) Iron nail 1@16 g, corroded	post-medieval (with residual Roman?)
F006	006	pit	Pottery post-medieval 1@14 g Fabric 46, part base from bowl, copying Chinese porcelain, probably 17C (CAR 7 243) CBM post-Roman peg-tile 3@92 g; brick 4@173 g, one with grey surface similar to F5(5) and two with traces of white mortar also similar to F5 (<i>finds number 5</i>) Iron nail 1@10 g, corroded Animal bone small mammal or bird 2@3 g	post-medieval (17C or later)
F007	007	pit	CBM post-medieval peg-tile 1@190 g; floor bricks 3@1882 g, pale yellow with sparse red, sandy ferrous or possibly crushed CBM fragments 115 x 3.3 mm; pale greenish-yellow with common red-dark red sandy ferrous inclusions 42 mm thick, pinkish-cream with sparse red, sandy ferrous or possibly crushed CBM fragments 115 x 40 mm (all 19C following Ryan 1996)	19C

Table 2 Spot dated list of finds by context and finds number

Two pottery sherds and two pieces of CBM (ceramic building material) can be dated to the Roman period. All were residual from later dated contexts. The two pottery sherds, from F1 (*finds number 1*) & F2 (*finds number 3*), are both greyware (Fabric 47) while the CBM consists of one large piece of brick (which may have been used in a hearth base), from F5 (*finds number 5*) and a small piece of *imbrex* roof tile, from F1 (*finds number 2*). None of these finds are closely dated within the Roman period (c 43-410 AD). They can be added to the pattern of a small quantity of finds of Roman date that have previously been recorded from Halstead, most coming from the area to the south of the river (Medlycott 1998, 5).

Closely-dated medieval finds consist of a small quantity of pottery and possibly one piece of CBM. The pottery consist of three sherds of sandy greyware (Fabric 20) and a sherd of Colchester ware (Fabric 21A) which are residual from the ditch F2(3). One piece of brick from the same context is possibly also of late medieval (14th-15th century) date, although a later date may also be possible. It appears to be part of a shaped brick as the one surviving edge retains parts of a sanded face and a knife-trimmed face set at a slight angle to each.

The latest closely-dated find from the pit F1 is a sherd of late Colchester ware, F1(2). This suggests a possible late medieval or early post-medieval date for its abandonment. A piece of glazed floor tile from the same context is also of late medieval or more probably post-medieval date. A late medieval or early post-medieval date for the fill of this feature is also supported by an absence of closely dated post-Roman pottery (especially of Fabric 40) and by the very small quantity (just a few fragments) of brick among the moderate quantity of CBM recovered. A quantity of animal bone, some with butchery marks, was also recovered from the fill of the pit. The species represented are primarily sheep and cow, with domestic fowl and possibly pig also present.

The largest quantity of post-medieval finds are associated with ditch F2. The pottery includes a number of sherd of Fabric 40 (dated late 16/17th-18th century), one of which is probably from a strainer pot, and a single piece of a clay-pipe stem whose wide bore

suggests a date of late 16th-early 18th century date. Of interest is a single piece of glass. This is a rim sherd which is probably from a plain pedestal flask (Willmott, 2002, Type 22.1) and can be dated to the 16th-early 17th century. Overall, finds indicate a late 16th-17th century date for the infilling of ditch F2. The small amount of animal bone recovered from this feature includes sheep and cow. Some of the bones have butchery marks on them. One of these had probably also been gnawed by a dog.

A single sherd of pottery (Fabric 46) recovered from pit F6 (*finds number 6*) is of post-medieval 17th century date and is the latest closely dated find associated with this feature. Although not closely dated, a post-medieval date is also indicated for post-hole F5 (*finds number 5*) as pieces of brick were recovered from the fill.

Three pieces of yellow/cream coloured floor bricks from pit F7 (*finds number 7*) are probably of 19th century date.

7 Discussion

The remains of boundary features, pits and post-holes on the Manfield Lane site are consistent with what would be expected to the rear of a post-medieval street frontage.

Cartographic sources (Ordnance Survey (OS) maps of 1876, 1923, 1954) show that the site coincides with two plots divided by a property boundary. The discovery of an east-west boundary ditch (F2) in the appropriate position supports the cartographic evidence, and it may reasonably be deduced that this boundary once linked Head Street with Manfield Lane (as the maps indicate).

OS maps show up to six properties along the Manfield Lane frontage in 1876 and 1923. By 1954, only two or three remained, and by 1967 the frontage was clear. Regarding the boundary between the two plots, there was a building along the line of the ditch on the southern edge of the northern plot in 1876 and 1923. This implies that F2 must have been infilled before the late 19th century, before the building was erected over it. In fact, Stephen Benfield gives a 16th/17th century date for the infilling of the ditch, which allows the possibility that the disposition of buildings shown on the 1876 map was actually two or three hundred years old – in other words, pressure on land rear of the head street frontage had led to the infilling of an older (late medieval?) boundary ditch by the 16th/17th century, and the erection of buildings on the plot in the configuration shown in 1876.

Other site features can be viewed in relation to these two plots. The position of the two features in the northern plot, pit F1 and ditch F3 makes it clear that they were underneath the structure shown occupying the Manfield Lane frontage in 1876. Stephen Benfield notes the absence of any finds later than 16th/17th century in this pit, which may mean it contained domestic debris (ash, pottery, animal bone, tile, etc) from an adjacent but unidentified property prior to the building up of the Manfield Lane frontage shortly thereafter.

Ditch F3 was positioned slightly too far to the east to have been a property boundary (it does not match the line of the back of the properties to the north). Nor was it closely dated, containing only peg-tile fragments. It is therefore unclear whether it dates prior to the erection of the Manfield Lane frontage properties, or to the time of their demolition (after 1954).

In the southern plot were pits F6 and F7, and post-holes F4 and F5, all of them underneath the Manfield Lane frontage properties. While the finds in pit F6 (17th century or later) mean that it may predate the erection of the Manfield Lane frontage properties, those in pit F7 (19th-century or later) clearly show that must be associated with the demolition of the structures shown there after 1923, and the CBM debris and floor brick fragments in F7 support this. Post-holes F4 and F5 are of unknown use.

Of particular interest are the four residual Roman finds - two sherds and two brick/tile fragments. Finds of Roman material in Halstead have previously been concentrated south of the river (Medlycott 1998, 5). However, the discovery of this material shows that a Roman site may be located nearby, and the imbrex (roof tile) fragment from F1 implies a structure with a tiled roof.

The site appears to have been terraced in the recent past, because the features were directly sealed by modern gravel L1. This terracing must post-date 1967, when the maps still show a few structures (now gone) on the western edge of the site.

8 Acknowledgements

The Trust would like to thank Mr Phil Neal for commissioning and funding the work. The project was managed by B Holloway, and fieldwork was carried out by BH and C Lister. The project was monitored for the ECC HEM team by Teresa O'Connor.

9 References

- | | | |
|--------------------------|-------|--|
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10 Abbreviations and glossary

CAT	Colchester Archaeological Trust
CBA	Council for British Archaeology
context	specific location of finds on an archaeological site
CBM	ceramic building materials (brick, tile, etc)
ECC	Essex County Council
EHHER	Essex Historic Environment Record, held by Essex County Council
feature	an identifiable thing like a pit, a wall, a floor; can contain 'contexts'
fill	the soil filling up a hole such as a pit or ditch
HEM	Historic Environment Management (ECC)
IfA	Institute for Archaeologists
layer	distinct or distinguishable deposit of soil
medieval	period from AD 1066 to Henry VIII
modern	period from the 19th century onwards to the present
natural	deposit undisturbed by human activity
post-medieval	after Henry VIII to around the late 18th century
NGR	National Grid Reference
residual	a find which predates its context (eg, a Roman coin in a Victorian pit)
Roman	the period from AD 43 to around AD 430

11 Archive deposition

The paper and digital archive is currently held by the Colchester Archaeological Trust at 12 Lexden Road, Colchester, Essex CO3 3NF, but will be permanently deposited with Braintree Museum under accession code PENDING (requested May 2012).

12 Contents of archive

Finds

1 x museum box (all finds)

Paper record

1 A4 wallet containing:

- copy of report
- original site record sheets
- photo. log
- brief, WSI, sundry papers
- CD with digital images

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Distribution list:

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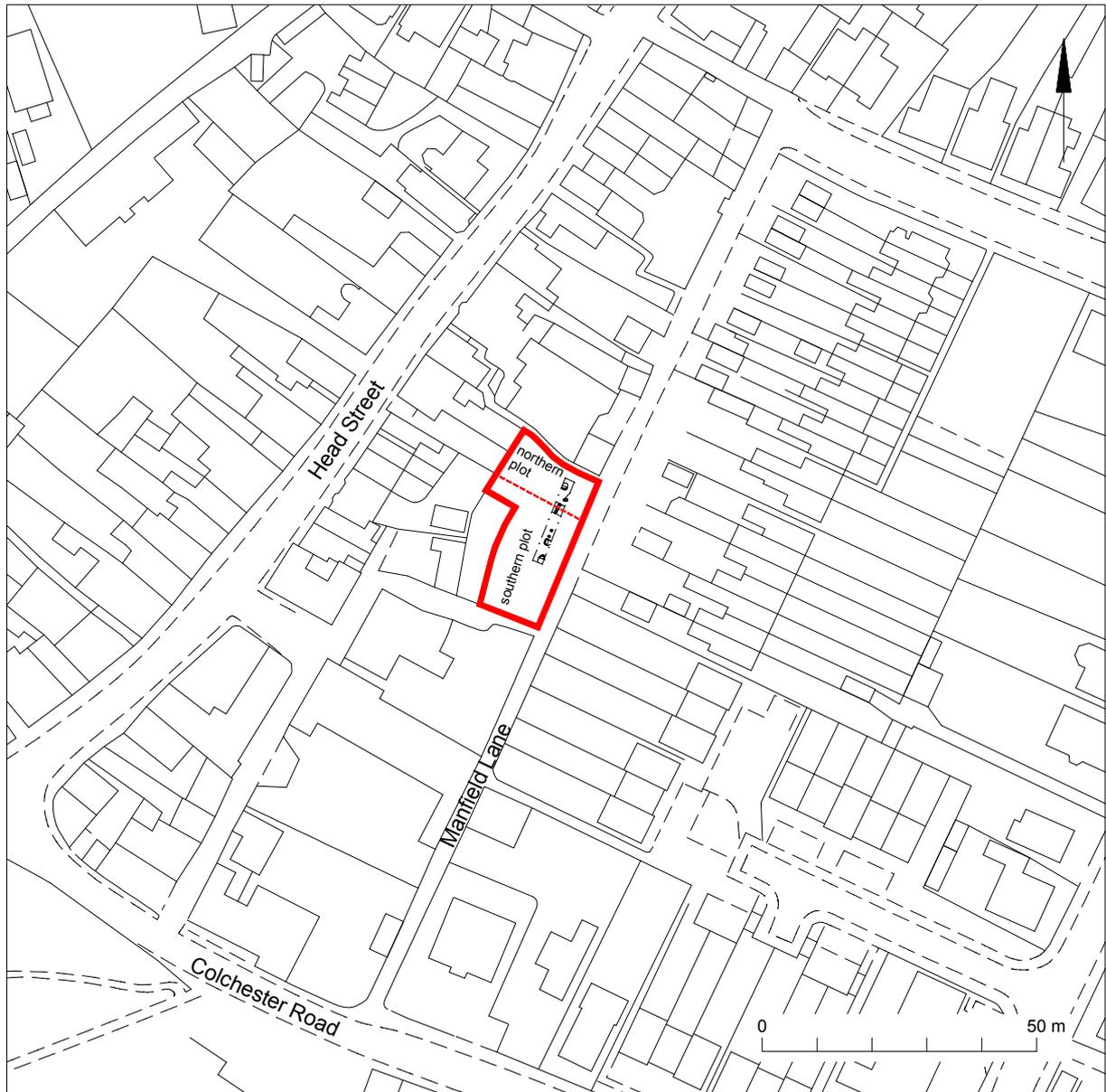
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Fig 1 Site location, showing northern and southern plots

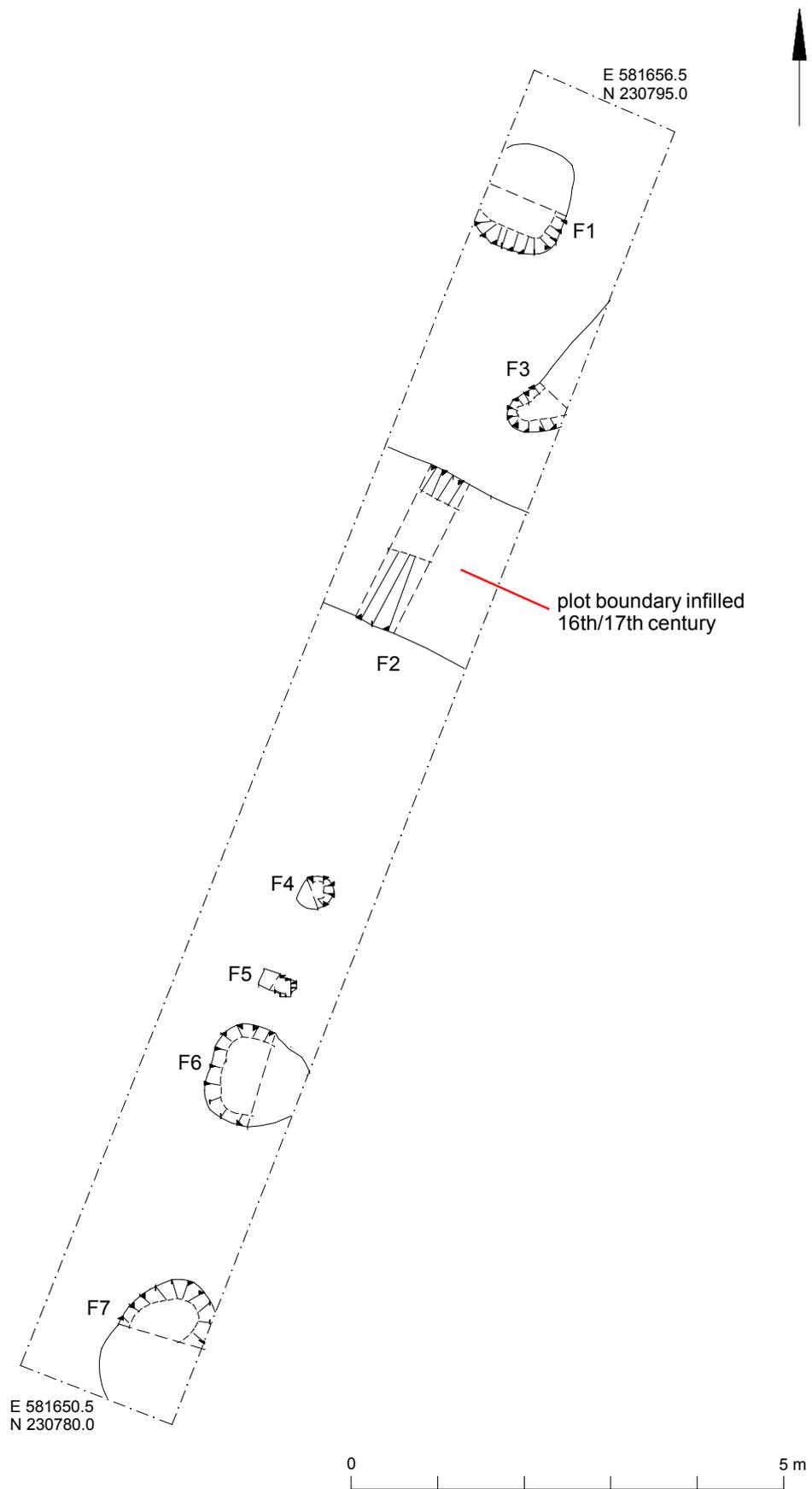


Fig 2 T1: plan

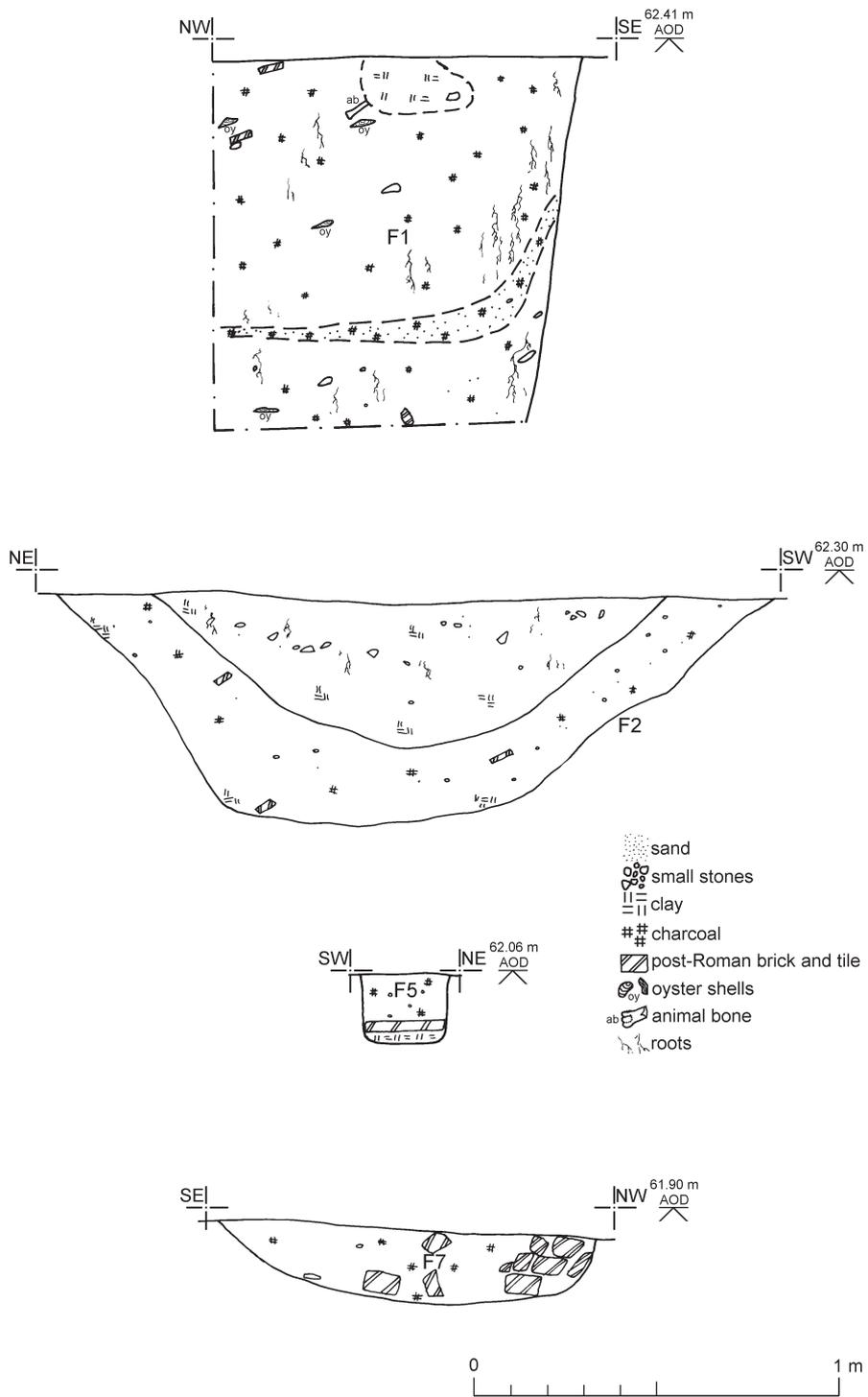


Fig 3 Sections.

Essex Historic Environment Record/ Essex Archaeology and History

Summary sheet

Address: land west of Manfield Lane, Halstead	
Parish: Halstead	District: Braintree
NGR: TL 8163 3079(c)	Site codes: CAT project – 12/4e HEM code : H56
Type of work: Evaluation	Site director/group: Colchester Archaeological Trust
Date of work: April 2012	Size of area investigated: One trench, length 16m.
Location of curating museum: Braintree Museum	Funding source: Developer
Further seasons anticipated? No	Related EHER numbers: 9249, 9431-2, 18689, 26126
Final report:	CAT Report 646 and summary in <i>EAH</i>
Periods represented:	medieval, post-medieval, modern
Summary of fieldwork results: <i>An evaluation trench within the footprint of a proposed new build on the western side of Manfield Lane, Halstead, revealed seven late medieval and post-medieval features including a boundary ditch, pits, and post-holes. The boundary ditch aligned well with an extant boundary dividing properties on the Head Street frontage to the west, and confirms that the same boundary originally ran to the Manfield Lane frontage (as shown by OS maps of 1876 and 1923). The 1876 OS map shows that the property boundary was now marked by the southern edge of a building overlying the position of the former ditch, which had clearly been infilled before that date (finds indicate a backfilling date of the 16th/17th century, although an earlier origin is possible). OS maps show the gradual clearing of the site between 1876, when it and the Manfield Street frontage were built-up, to 1956, when the Manfield Street frontage was completely clear, but a few small structure remained at the rear (on the western side) of the site. Of the six other features, two may predate the 16th/17th century infilling of the boundary and may be the result of domestic waste disposal from adjacent houses, but the others are probably contemporary with the gradual clearance of the site between 1876 and the later 20th century (although related finds need not be later than the 19th century). The site has recently been terraced. Finds of Roman material in Halstead have previously been concentrated south of the river. However, the discovery of two Roman potsherds and two pieces of Roman tile were (residual in later contexts) shows that a Roman site may be located nearby, and may include a structure with a tiled roof.</i>	
Previous summaries/reports: none	
Keywords: boundary ditch	Significance: *
Author of summary: Ben Holloway and Howard Brooks	Date of summary: May 2012