

**An archaeological evaluation by  
trial-trenching at Holy Cross Catholic  
Primary Academy, Traceys Road,  
Harlow, Essex  
February 2014**



**report prepared by  
Adam Wightman with a finds report by Stephen Benfield**

**Commissioned by  
Roff Marsh Partnership on behalf of Essex County Council**

CAT project ref.: 14/02c  
Historic Environment code: HAHC14  
Museum accession code: HXP14  
NGR: TL 46561 08631



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**CAT Report 756**  
February 2014

## Summary

*Two trial-trenches and two test-pits were excavated by the Colchester Archaeological Trust at the Holy Cross Catholic Primary Academy in Harlow. The work was undertaken in advance of the construction of a new classroom block and two small extensions to the existing building.*

*Twelve sherds of medieval/post-medieval pottery were recovered during the evaluation. These probably derive from the Harlow pottery industry. No structural remains or deposits associated with pottery manufacture were identified within the development area.*

## Introduction (Fig 1)

This is the archive report on the archaeological evaluation by trial-trenching carried out by the Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) at Holy Cross Catholic Primary Academy, Traceys Road, Harlow, Essex (NGR TL 46561 08631) (Fig 1). The proposed development comprises the construction of a new classroom block, an external hard surfaced area for outside learning, and two small extensions to the existing school building.

The school is located in the southern half of Harlow on the northern side of the A1169 (Southern Way) and to the west of the A414. To the east of the school, at the junction of Southern Way and the A414 (at NGR TL 468 085), a post-medieval pottery kiln was uncovered in 1952-53 during the construction of the road (EHER 3768). The kiln is thought to be associated with the manufacture of Metropolitan Ware, an important local post-medieval pottery industry established by the 16th century in the area of Potter Street and its environs. The presence of a second post-medieval kiln further to the east (EHER 47051) raises the possibility that there was a string of pottery kilns along the lane that once linked Traceys Road (formerly Back Lane) with Potter Street.

Two trial-trenches (T1 & T2) and two test-pits (TP1 & TP2) were excavated around the school in areas which will be impacted by the construction of the new classroom block and the two extensions. The excavations were located in grassed areas and were situated to avoid known services and existing school equipment.

The trial-trenches were 11m long by 2m wide and were excavated under archaeological supervision using a tracked excavator equipped with a toothless ditching bucket. The two test-pits were 1m x 1m in size and were hand-excavated due to access difficulties and the presence of services.

The work was undertaken in accordance with a brief produced by the Historic Environment Officer Maria Medlycott (2013) and a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) produced by CAT (2014).

## Results (Figs 2 & 3)

### T1

T1 was located to the south of the school near the boundary with Southern Way (Fig 2). Modern topsoil (L1) overlay a layer of modern make-up (L2) consisting of redeposited natural clay mixed with a brown clayey-silt (Fig 3). L2 contained modern bottles, plastic and fragments of brick and tile. It is probable that L2 is the soil and clay which was excavated during the construction of the school in 1959-1960 and was subsequently spread across the site to raise the ground level and create a level playing field. Beneath L2, a medium grey/brown clayey-silt (L3) was identified. L2 is presumed to be the topsoil which pre-dates the construction of the school. Pottery sherds, peg-tile fragments and pieces of post-medieval brick were recovered from L3. Beneath L3, the natural geology, which was a mottled light

grey/orange clay (L4), was uncovered at a depth of 400mm below modern ground level (Fig 3).

## T2

In the north-western half of T2, the modern topsoil (L1) directly overlay the pre-1960 topsoil (L3), which, in turn, overlay the natural clay (L4). The natural clay sloped downwards to the south-east, where the same layer of modern make-up identified in T1 (L2) was observed between the two topsoil layers (Fig 3). More post-medieval pottery sherds were recovered from L3 in T2, but no archaeological features were identified.

## TP1 & TP2

TP1 and TP2 were located in the areas of the proposed extensions in close proximity to the existing school building (Fig 2). In TP1, a thin layer of modern topsoil directly overlay the natural clay (L4) (Fig 3). In TP2, the modern topsoil overlay a layer of modern make-up (L2), which, in turn, overlay the natural clay (L4). A modern electricity cable was uncovered in TP2, but no archaeological features or deposits were identified in either of the test-pits.



Plate 1: T1, facing east.



Plate 2: T2, facing north-west.

## Finds

*by Stephen Benfield*

A small quantity of pottery and ceramic building material (CBM) was recovered from two soil layers, L3 in trenches T1 & T2 and L1 in TP1. The types of finds are listed by material in Table 1 and are listed and described by context in Table 3. While one small piece of CBM appears probably to be Roman and one pottery sherd is probably medieval/transitional, the more closely-dated finds are of post-medieval and post-medieval/modern date.

**Table 1 Type and quantities of finds**

Finds type	no.	wt (g)
Pottery	12	322
Ceramic building material (CBM)	7	518

The pottery was recorded using the Essex post-Roman fabric series (Cunningham, 1985 & *CAR 7*) and the fabrics recorded are listed in Table 2.

**Table 2 Pottery fabrics list**

Fabric code	Fabric name
21	Medieval sandy orange wares (general)
21D	Medieval/transitional Harlow ware
40A	Metropolitan slipwares
40	Post-medieval red earthenwares (general)

**Table 3 Types of finds by context and find number**

Ctxt	T/T P	find no	description of finds	finds spot dating
L3	T1	1	<b>Pottery: medieval/transitional(?)</b> Fabric 21/21D (1@11g) <b>Post-medieval</b> (5@239g) Fabric 40A (1@33g) Fabric 40 (4@206g) <b>CBM</b> (total 7@518g) <b>Roman(?)</b> (1@19g) small piece of in a fine sand fabric from a brick/tile at least 20mm+ thick, the fabric suggests a Roman date. <b>Post-medieval/modern</b> Peg-tile (5@450g) red sandy fabric, pieces 10-13mm thick, some abraded, one corner piece only lightly so. Brick (1@49g) red, slightly coarse, open sandy fabric.	L16/17- M18C
L3	T2	2	<b>Pottery: Post-medieval</b> Fabric 40 (4@54g)	L16/17- M18C
L1	TP1	3	<b>Pottery: Post-medieval</b> Fabric 40 (2@18g)	L16/17- M18C

The earliest dated find is probably a small piece of CBM from T1(1) which appears more likely to be of Roman date than later.

One of the pottery sherds from T1(1) is in an abraded, relatively fine, slightly micaceous orange fabric and appears to be either a medieval sandy orange ware (c 12th/13th-14th century) or the finer variant of a medieval transitional fabric (c. 15th-16th century). A later dating rather than earlier in this broad period is possibly to be preferred.

The remainder of the pottery can be dated to the post-medieval period. The sherds consist of pieces which can be identified as post-medieval red earthenwares and are presumed to be pieces produced in the Harlow potteries which were most active in the late 16th to early/mid 18th century (Davey & Walker 2009, 102-03).

One abraded pottery sherd from T1(1) can be identified as Metropolitan slipware (Fabric 40A). This sherd is from a bead rim flanged dish and retains part of what is probably an S-shape pattern (Davey & Walker 2009, 81 & fig. 38).

The other pottery sherds (L1 & L3) can all be classified as Fabric 40. All are abraded, some quite heavily so. Two sherds are identifiable to particular vessel types. One is a rim sherd from a large bowl or pancheon with a beaded rim, decorated around the edge with shallow, spaced, angled slash incisions. The other is a perforated base sherd from a strainer pot or cheese press (*CAR 7*, fig 148) although the extant holes on this sherd are made through the pot wall just above the base rather than confined to the base itself. Both vessels are glazed on both sides, but the exterior glaze appears more limited and patchy than that on the outside.

A small quantity of CBM consisting of peg-tile and brick pieces was also recovered from L1(T1). The peg tile pieces are not closely datable, but peg-tiles were probably not in common use until the 14th century or later. The pieces here, which are primarily associated with post-medieval pottery, are probably also likely to date to the post medieval period or later. The same dating is likely also to apply to the small piece of brick.

## Discussion

The archaeological investigations identified two layers associated with the construction of the school and a topsoil layer which pre-dates the school in 1960. The latter contained post-medieval pottery sherds and peg-tile fragments. These probably derive from waste spread across the fields which covered this area prior to the construction of the school.

Almost all of the pottery sherds are of the same broad type (post-medieval red earthenware and metropolitan slipware) perhaps indicating that they are waste products derived from a nearby production site relating to the Harlow pottery industry. However, there is no clear evidence of heat damage to the pottery sherds as wasters or seconds from a kiln, and the CBM fragments show no evidence of heat discolouration or burning. Moreover, the quantity of pottery is relatively small and no structural remains or deposits associated with pottery manufacture were identified during the evaluation. Therefore, it is probable that the pottery assemblage simply represents a background scatter of Harlow-produced material from kilns located away from the proposed development area.

## Acknowledgements

CAT would like to thank the Roff Marsh Partnership for commissioning the project. The site work was undertaken by A Wightman and M Baister. The finds were identified by S Benfield and E Holloway illustrated the sections.

The project was monitored by Maria Medlycott for the Essex County Council Historic Environment team.

## References

**Note: all CAT fieldwork reports are available online in .pdf format at <http://cat.essex.ac.uk>**

- |                      |      |  |
|----------------------|------|--|
| CAR 7                | 2000 | <i>Post-Roman pottery from excavations in Colchester 1971-85</i> , Colchester Archaeological Report 7 by J Cotter  |
| CAT                  | 2014 | Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological trial-trenching at Holy Cross Catholic primary Academy, Harlow, Essex, by A Wightman  |
| Cunningham, C.       | 1985 | <i>A typology for post-Roman pottery in Essex</i> in Cunningham, C, & Drury, P, Post-medieval sites and their pottery: Moulsham Street, Chelmsford, CBA Research Report 54, 1-16 |
| Davey, W & Walker, H | 2009 | <i>The Harlow pottery industries</i> , Medieval Pottery Research Group, Occasional paper 3   |
| Medlycott, M         | 2013 | Brief for Archaeological trial-trenching at Holy Cross Catholic Primary Academy, Traceys Road, Harlow  |

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*checked by Philip Crummy 20th February 2014*

## **Appendix 1: contents of archive**

One A4 document wallet containing:

### **1 Introduction**

- 1.1 Copy of the evaluation brief issued by ECC
- 1.2 Copy of the WSI produced by CAT
- 1.3 Risk assessment
- 1.4 4 x A3 site plans provided by developer

### **2 Site archive**

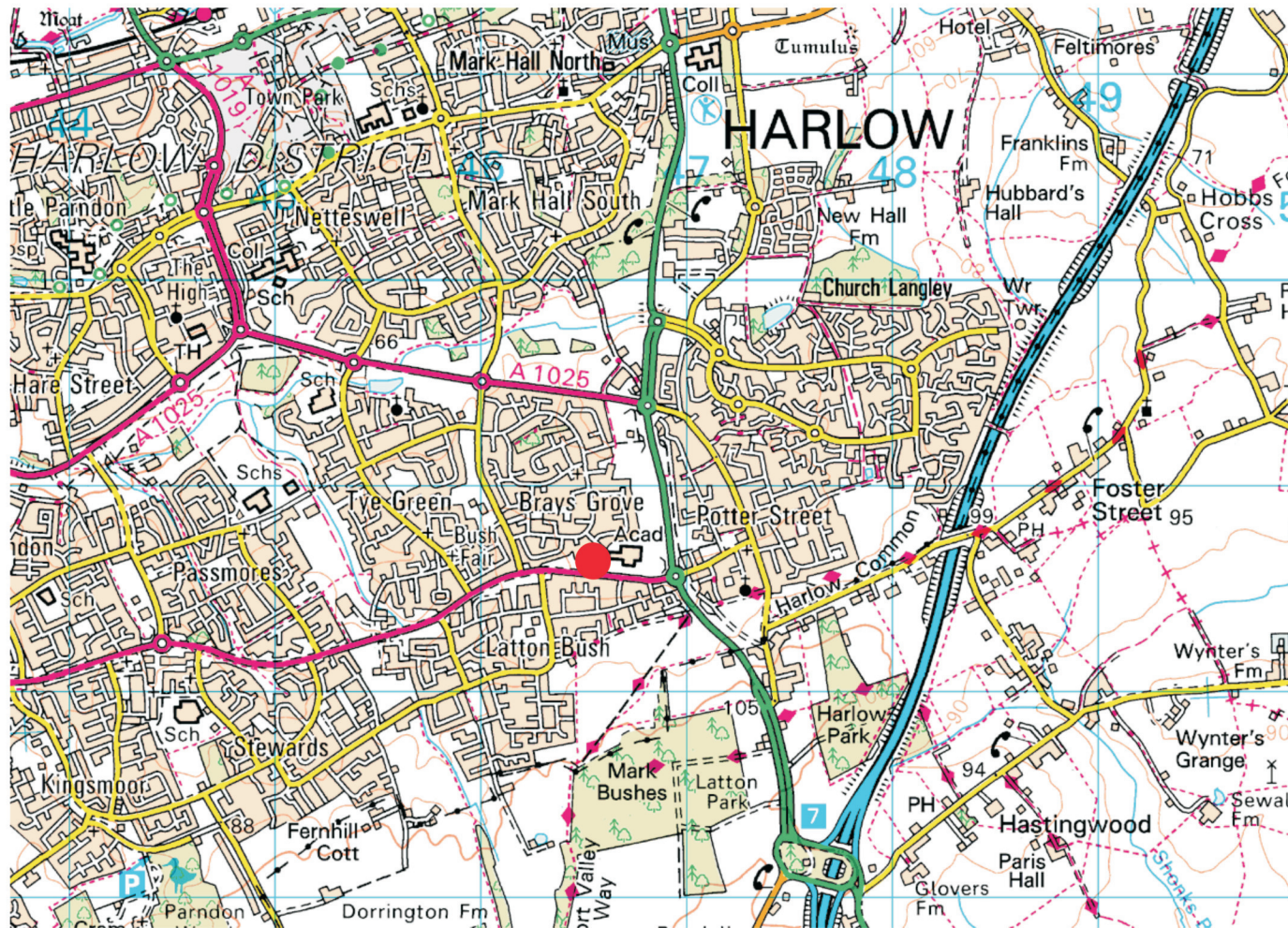
- 2.1 Site digital photographic record
- 2.2 Attendance register
- 2.3 Context sheets (L1-L4)
- 2.4 Finds register
- 2.5 Site photographic record on CD
- 2.6 OS benchmark information

### **3 Research archive**

- 3.1 Monitoring (client) report
- 3.2 Finds report

### **Not in wallet**

The finds (1 medium sized bag)



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Fig 1 Site location, marked by a red dot.





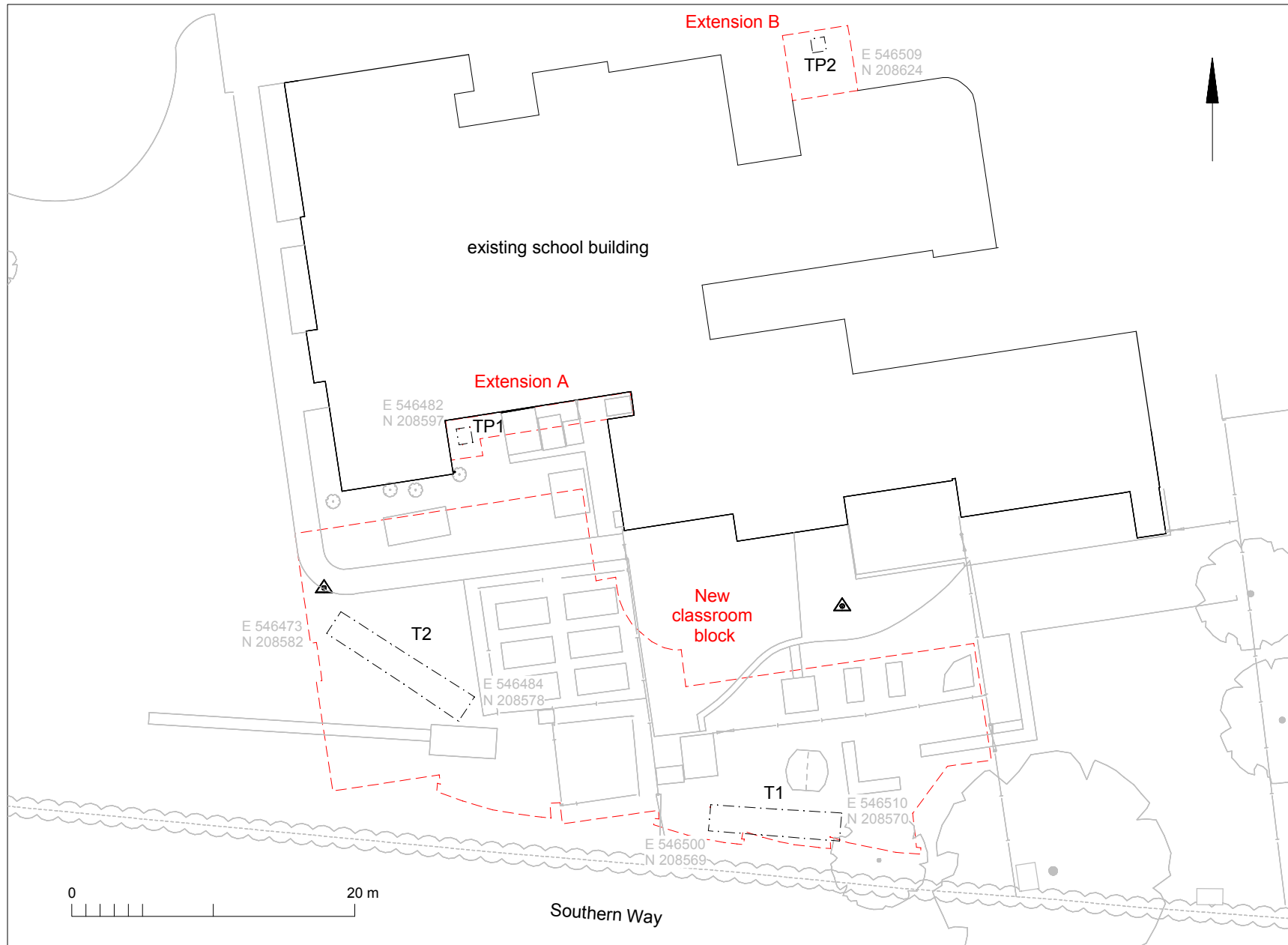


Fig 2 The locations of the trial-trenches (T1 & T2) and the test-pits (TP1 & TP2).

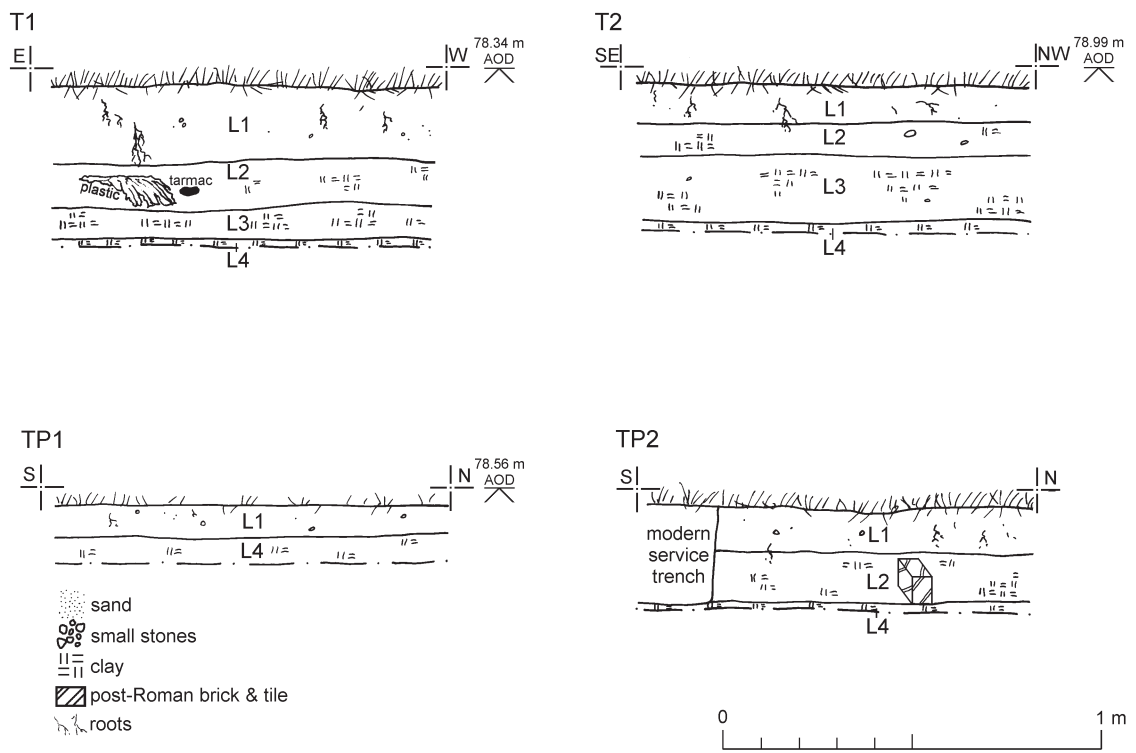


Fig 3 Representative sections.

# Essex Historic Environment Record/ Essex Archaeology and History

## Summary sheet

<b>Address:</b> Holy Cross Catholic Primary Academy, Traceys Road, Harlow, Essex	
<b>Parish:</b> Harlow	<b>District:</b> Harlow
<b>NGR:</b> TL 46561 08631	<b>Site codes:</b> CAT project – 14/02c ECC – HAHC14 Museum accession – HXP14
<b>Type of work:</b> Evaluation by trial-trenching	<b>Site director/group:</b> Colchester Archaeological Trust
<b>Date of work:</b> February 2014	<b>Size of area investigated:</b> Two 11m x 2m trenches and two 1m x 1m test-pits.
<b>Location of curating museum:</b> Harlow	<b>Funding source:</b> Essex County Council
<b>Further seasons anticipated?</b> No	<b>Related EHER numbers:</b> 3768, 47051
<b>Final report:</b>	CAT Report 756
<b>Periods represented:</b> -	
<p><b>Summary:</b></p> <p><i>Two trial-trenches and two test-pits were excavated by the Colchester Archaeological Trust at the Holy Cross Catholic Primary Academy in Harlow. The work was undertaken in advance of the construction of a new classroom block and two small extensions to the existing building.</i></p> <p><i>Twelve sherds of medieval/post-medieval pottery were recovered during the evaluation. These probably derive from the Harlow pottery industry. No structural remains or deposits associated with pottery manufacture were identified within the development area.</i></p>	
<b>Previous summaries/reports:</b> none	
<b>Keywords:</b> medieval/post-medieval pottery	<b>Significance:</b> neg
<b>Author of summary:</b> Adam Wightman	<b>Date of summary:</b> February 2014