

**An archaeological evaluation by
trial-trenching at Orchard House, Main Road,
Howe Street, Chelmsford, Essex.
November 2014**



report prepared by Stephen Benfield

commissioned by Frank and Jane Siddle

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NGR: TL 6935 1506



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CAT Report 796

November 2013

Summary

An evaluation by trial-trenching undertaken by CAT at Orchard House, Main Road, Howe Street, Chelmsford produced a small quantity of finds of later prehistoric (later Bronze Age) and medieval (late 12th-14th century) date from a soil layer sealed below modern topsoil. The presence of pieces from flint cores indicates flint working on the site or in the immediate area. The small quantity of medieval pottery possibly relates to manure scatter away from the main settlement focus at that time. Apart from the base of a possible post-hole (undated) no significant archaeological features were present.

Introduction (Fig 1)

This is the archive report for the archaeological evaluation by trial-trenching carried out by the Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) on land at Orchard House, Main Road, Howe Street, Chelmsford, Essex (NGR TL 6935 1506). The archaeological work follows from a brief issued by Historic Environment Officer Alison Bennett on behalf of Essex County Council (Bennett 2014) and the following Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) drawn up by CAT (CAT 2014). The work was carried out in November 2014 on behalf of Frank and Jane Siddle (owner occupiers).

The proposed development comprises the construction of a new house and garage with an outbuilding in the grounds of Orchard house (Fig 1).

Archaeological background

The Essex Historic Environment Record (EHER) shows that the proposed development lies in an area of archaeological potential identified through cropmark evidence in adjacent land (EHER 1082). To the west cropmarks include a likely Bronze Age round barrow and other undated features. To the north other cropmarks (EHER 1083) indicate the presence of a further Bronze Age round barrow and other features possibly dating from the prehistoric period (HE 2014).

Archaeology (Figs 1, Plates 1-5)

Two evaluation trenches (T1 & T2), both 1.8m wide, were excavated by machine. In the event the proposed single trench T1 had to be excavated as two separate trenches (T1A & T1B) either side of a line of extant small trees (Fig 1). The work was carried out under archaeological supervision using a toothless ditching bucket.

Soil deposits and natural deposits

The sequence of soil deposits on to natural (undisturbed) soil was the same in all the trenches, although with some variation in the thickness of each deposit (Plate 1).

The upper part of the sequence consisted of modern, dark (humic) topsoil, Layer 1 (L1), generally about 300 mm thick, although recorded at 200 mm at one point in T1. This was observed to contain some pieces of ceramic building material (CBM) consisting of peg-tile pieces and sherds of modern (factory made) pottery dating to the late 18th/19th-20th century. None of this finds material was retained.

L1 sealed a developed soil Layer 2 (L2) which was lighter in colour than L1 and contained very few finds indicating an older, less disturbed deposit. The thickness of this soil was recorded at between 150 mm-200 mm.

Covered by L2 was a layer of subsoil interface with the natural, Layer 3 (L3), consisting of a medium orange-brown silty-clay approximately 50 mm-100 mm thick.

Underlying this was the undisturbed natural, Layer 4 (L4), consisting of deposits of glacial origin made up of sandy orange-brown clay with some gravel patches.



Plate 1 Representative trench section showing soil layers (L1-3) and natural (L4)

Trench 1A &1B

Trench 1 (T1) was orientated north-west-southeast central within the footprint of the proposed new house. It was planned as a single trench 13 m long (CAT 2014 fig 1). In the event T1 had to be divided into two smaller (shorter) trenches Trench 1A & Trench 1B (Fig 1). These were separated by a 3.5 m break either side of an extant line of small trees T1A (Plate 2) & T1B (Plate 3). T1A was 6.5 m long and T1B 5.5 m (total length 12 m).



Plate 2 Trench 1A (view southeast)



Plate 3 Trench 1B (view northwest)

A small, shallow feature (F1) cut into the natural (L4) was located approximately at the centre of Trench 1A at a distance of 3 m from its north end (Fig 1). A hand excavated half section of this feature (Plate 2) showed it to be filled with medium brown clay-silt but no finds were present within the excavated section. It is interpreted as the base of a possible post-hole, but is of uncertain date.



Plate 4 Feature F1 (view southeast)

A short distance to the north of F1 in Trench 1A the site of a modern bore-hole was noted.

No features of archaeological significance were located within area of Trench 1B.

Trench 2

Trench 2 (T2) was 13 m long and oriented southwest-northeast central within the footprint of the proposed new garage and outbuilding (Fig 1). No features of archaeological significance were located within this trench (Plate 5), the base of which consisted of undisturbed natural (L4).



Plate 5 Trench 2 (view northeast)

Finds

Introduction

Bulk finds, consisting of small quantities of medieval pottery, worked flints, dated to the later prehistoric (Bronze Age) period, together with a single piece of fired clay were recovered from a soil layer (L2) in two evaluation trenches (T1 & T2). The total quantities of these finds are listed by type in Table **1.

Finds type	no	wt (g)
Pottery	2	17
Fired clay	1	2
Flints	7	201

Table **1. Type and quantities of finds

Bulk finds

The medieval pottery fabrics recorded (Table **2) follow those used in the Essex post-Roman fabric series (Cunningham 1985, CAR 7). All of the finds are listed with a spot date in Table **3.

Fabric	Fabric description
20	Medieval sandy greyware (general)

Table **2 Pottery fabrics

Trench (T)	Ctxt	Find no	find type	no	wt/g	abr	Form/ description	Period	spot date
T1	L2	1	pottery	2	17	(*)	Body sherds in sandy grey fabric (Fabric 20)	med	L12-14C
T1	L2	1	fired clay	1	2	*	Soft, red-brown		Not closely dated
T1	L2	1	flint	1	4		Small, thick, secondary flake	Later preh	BA
T1	L2	1	flint	1	37		Large, thick flake with shoulder snapped away, retouched notch on one edge	Later preh	BA
T1	L2	1	flint	1	26		Thick flake with hinge fracture and edge damage/ use wear	Later preh	BA
T1	L2	1	flint	2	104		Core pieces with multi directional flake removal	Later preh	BA
T2	L2		flint	1	20		Broad secondary flake with retouch on distal edge	Later preh	BA
T2	L2		flint	1	10		Flake with some edge damage/ use wear and a notching (2) on one edge, one with poss retouch, lipped platform, poss soft-hammer(?) removal but has an impact point	Later preh (?)	BA(?)

Table **3 Finds by context

Discussion

Finds were recovered from a soil layer (L2) sealed by modern topsoil (L1) in both of the evaluation trenches (T1 & T2).

The largest group of finds consists of worked flints with seven in total, both flakes and core pieces. Flints were recovered from both evaluation trenches, the larger number (five) coming from T1. The flint working technique, involving primarily hard-hammer percussion, with large (unmodified) striking platforms producing thick, broad flakes, is typical of the later prehistoric (later Bronze Age) period. Notches with retouch were noted on two of the flint flakes. The presence of the core pieces indicates flint working on the site or the immediate area.

Two sherds of medieval pottery in dark sandy greyware (Fabric 20) were recovered from T1. The fabric type is current from the late 12th-14th century.

A single small, rounded (abraded) piece of fired clay was recovered from T1. This find is not closely dated.

Interpretation

Apart from a small, shallow feature (F1) in Trench 1A, interpreted as the surviving base of a possible post-hole of uncertain date, no features of any archaeological significance were present in the evaluation trenches.

Finds recovered from the earlier (lower) part of the topsoil indicate activity on the site in the Mid-Late (later) Bronze Age and medieval period.

Activity in the later Bronze Age is represented by worked flints and pieces of flint cores which indicate that flint working was taking place on the site or in the immediate area during that period. These may be connected with the prehistoric landscape known from aerial photographs which lie to the west and north of the site, although the features visible in these, consisting of ploughed out barrows, may themselves date slightly earlier to the Early Bronze Age.

The medieval presence here is represented by just two sherds of sandy greyware, broadly dated late 12th-14th century. This small quantity of lightly abraded pottery does not suggest occupation on the immediate site area and is more indicative of an off-site spread of material in the area of settlement, possibly from manuring fields.

Acknowledgements

CAT would like to thank Frank and Jane Siddle for commissioning and funding the project. The site work was undertaken by A Wightman (CAT). The project was monitored by Alison Bennett for Essex County Council.

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 1971-1985</i> . Colchester Archaeological Report 7, by John Cotter
CAT	2014	Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological evaluation by trial-trenching at Orchard House, Main Road, Howe Street, Essex
Cunningham, C.,	1985	'A typology for post-Roman pottery in Essex' in Cunningham, C., & Drury, P., <i>Post-medieval sites and their pottery: Moulsham Street, Chelmsford</i> , CBA Research Report 54
HE	2014	Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological evaluation by trial-trenching at Orchard House, Main Road, Howe Street, Essex County Council (Alison Bennett)

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Distribution list:

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Appendix 1: contents of archive

One A4 document wallet containing:

1 Introduction

- 1.1** Copy of the evaluation brief issued by the ECC HE team
- 1.2** Copy of the WSI produced by CAT
- 1.3** Risk assessment

2 Site archive

- 2.1** Site digital photographic record
- 2.2** Attendance register
- 2.3** Context sheets (L1-L4, F1)
- 2.4** Finds register
- 2.5** Trench locations plan and trench edge section drawings

3 Research archive

- 3.1** Finds report
- 3.2** Monitoring (client) report

Not in wallet

The finds (2 small bags)

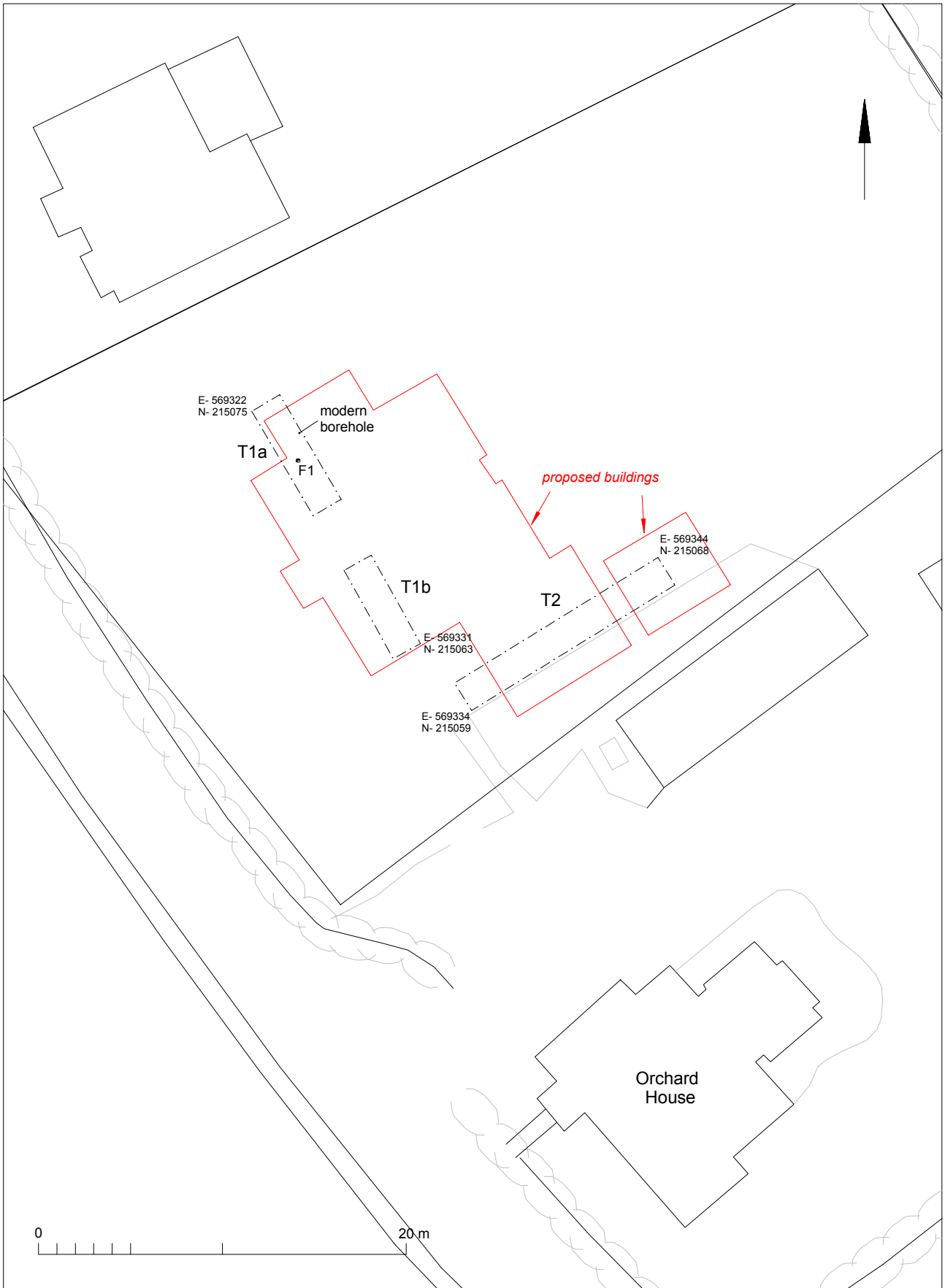


Fig 1 Location of trenches.

Essex Historic Environment Record/ Essex Archaeology and History

Summary sheet

Address: Orchard House, Main Road, Howe Street, Chelmsford, Essex	
Parish: <i>Great Waltham</i>	District: <i>Chelmsford</i>
NGR: TL 6935 1506	Site codes: CAT project code – 14/11d HEM code – OHHS14
Type of work: Evaluation	Site director/group: Colchester Archaeological Trust
Date of work: November 2014	Size of area investigated: 2 trenches (total length 25 m) in an overall development site of approximately 0.15 hectares
Location of curating museum: Chelmsford Museum accession – 2014.239	Funding source: Developer
Further seasons anticipated? No	Related EHER numbers: EHER 1082, EHER 1083
Final report: CAT Report 796	
Periods represented: <i>later prehistoric (Bronze Age), medieval</i>	
<p>Summary: <i>An evaluation by trial-trenching undertaken by CAT at Orchard House, Main Road, Howe Street, Chelmsford produced a small quantity of finds of later prehistoric (later Bronze Age) and medieval (late 12th-14th century) date from a soil layer sealed below modern topsoil. The presence of pieces from flint cores indicates flint working on the site or in the immediate area. The small quantity of medieval pottery possibly relates to manure scatter away from the main settlement focus at that time. Apart from the base of a possible post-hole (undated) no significant archaeological features were present.</i></p>	
Previous summaries/reports: <i>none</i>	
Keywords: <i>Bronze Age, flint, medieval, pottery</i>	Significance: <i>low-moderate</i>
Author of summary: Stephen Benfield	Date of summary: November 2014