

# Archaeological evaluation by trial-trenching at the former Ridley's Brewery, Mill Lane, Hartford End, Essex

November 2015



report prepared by **Ben Holloway and Howard Brooks**

with a contribution by Stephen Benfield, and  
illustrations by Emma Holloway and Chris Lister

on behalf of **Stockplace Investments Ltd**

Planning reference: 15/0726/FUL

CAT project ref.: 15/10g

HET code: FLRB15

NGR: TL 6878 1747

Saffron Walden Museum accession code: 2015.63

OASIS reference: colchest3-230120



**Colchester Archaeological Trust**

Roman Circus House,  
Roman Circus Walk,  
Colchester,  
Essex CO2 7GZ

tel.: 01206 501785

email: [archaeologists@catuk.org](mailto:archaeologists@catuk.org)

**CAT Report 897**  
December 2015

## 1 Summary

*A map of 1724 shows an earlier building on the site of the Victorian Ridley's Brewery. An evaluation by nine trenches on the brewery site and three in arable land to the north found very little of archaeological significance. There were no traces of pre-Victorian brewery infrastructure. Apart from modern features, all that was found was a late medieval pit, and a natural pit with a group of prehistoric flints.*

## 2 Introduction and planning background (Fig 1)

This is the report on the archaeological trial-trenching evaluation at the former Ridley's Brewery, Mill Lane, Hartford End, carried out by Colchester Archaeological Trust in November 2015, on behalf of Stockplace Investments Ltd. Proposed work is residential development.

The site is mostly the yard and hard-standings of the former brewery. A 30m-wide strip along the northern site edge is arable land. Site centre: TL 6878 1747.

Following consultation by Uttlesford District Council (March 2015) for planning application UTT/15/0726/FUL, ECC Historic Environment Branch made the following recommendation, in line with *National Planning Policy Framework* (DCLG 2012):

### **L1 Archaeological Assessment**

*No development including any site clearance or groundworks of any kind shall take place within the site until the applicant or their agents; the owner of the site or successors in title has submitted an archaeological assessment by an accredited archaeological consultant to establish the archaeological significance of the site. Such archaeological assessment shall be approved by the local planning authority and will inform the implementation of a programme of archaeological work. The development shall be carried out in a manner that accommodates such approved programme of archaeological work.*

### **L2 Implementation of Archaeological Fieldwork Programme**

*No development including any site clearance or groundworks of any kind shall take place within the site until the applicant or their agents; the owner of the site or successors in title has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work from an accredited archaeological contractor in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The development shall be carried out in a manner that accommodates the approved programme of archaeological work*

A brief detailing the required archaeological work (as reported here) was written by the ECC Historic Environment Officer Richard Havis (ECC 2015). All archaeological work was carried out in accordance with a CAT *WSI (Written Scheme of Investigation)* produced by CAT in response to the Brief and agreed with the ECC (CAT 2015).

In addition to the WSI, all fieldwork and reporting was done in accordance with normal industry standards as detailed in ClfA 2014a, ClfA 2014b, EAA 14, and EAA 24.

## 3 Archaeological background

The following archaeological background utilises the Essex Historic Environment Record (EHER) held at Essex County Council, County Hall, Chelmsford.

The EHER shows that the proposed development lies on the site of the historic Ridley's Brewery, dating to 1842 (EHER 15139). Historic building recording was undertaken in 2008 on the upstanding buildings. However, there may have been surviving below-ground remains, relating both to the development of the brewery and the previous occupation of the site as

evidenced by the historic cartography. A map from 1724 (*A New and Correct Mapp of Middlesex, Essex and Hertfordshire*) does show a earlier building on the site of the brewery.

Pastscape ID 762148 - Hartford End Brewery

*A tower brewery built in 1842 by Thomas Dixon Ridley with additions of 1875. The business had greatly expanded by 1882 when Thomas died. It has since passed down through succeeding generations of the Ridley family and T D Ridley and Sons Limited was formed in 1906. Recently, it was the only working brewery in Essex until it was bought by Greene King and closed in 2005. Plan of brewery is roughly rectangular with the bottling plant originally a separate rectangular building to the rear, north-west corner of the brewery. There is a late-20th century warehouse and office block on the site and a 1930s cold store and bottling plant. The earliest buildings were constructed in red brick laid in Flemish bond. Ridley's also constructed workers houses, most of them are not within the confines of the brewery complex. To the rear of the warehouse there are two pairs of semi-detached houses built of yellow stock brick with red brick dressings and slate covered gable roofs. They are contemporary with the brewery*

#### 4 Aim

The aim of the evaluation was to establish the character, extent, date, significance, of any remains and deposits likely to be disturbed or damaged by the proposed works.

#### 5 Results of the evaluation (Figs 2-3)

This section gives an archaeological summary of the evaluation trenches (T1-T12), with context and finds dating information.

T1-T12 were excavated under archaeological supervision using a tracked excavator. In T-T3, in the arable field, L1 ploughsoil directly overlay natural boulder clay L2. T4-12, in the brewery yard, had a variety of surfaces, described below. All trenches were 1.8m wide.

The excavated remains consisted of a 'natural pit' with a group of prehistoric flints (F13), a medieval pit (F4), a modern ditch (F2), two modern pits (F3, F8), a modern brick drain hub (F12). The other features - two post-holes (F5, F6), two pits (F10, F11), and three ditches (F1, F7, F9) were undated, but are probably modern and brewery-related.

##### Trench 1: summary

T1 (30m long), on in the west site edge and in the arable field, contained three archaeological features: ditches F2 and F7, and pit F3. F2 and F3 were post-medieval or modern, and F7 probably so.

The ditches may represent old field boundaries. At the northern end of the trench was a modern service trench which can be seen running north across the field.

##### Trench 1: contexts and finds dating

context	description	dated finds	date
F2	ditch	modern glass, post-medieval pot	modern
F3	pit	medieval/post-medieval brick or peg-tile	modern
F7	ditch	-	modern

##### Trench 2: summary

T2 (30m), on the northern site edge and in the arable field, contained modern ditch F1.

##### Trench2: contexts and finds dating

context	description	dated finds	date
F1	ditch	-	modern

### Trench 3: summary

T3 (30m), on the northern site edge and in the arable field, contained no archaeological material or features, but showed signs of damage by plough-scarring.

### Trench 4: summary

T4 (30m), on the western site edge, contained no archaeological material or features other than a modern service (also seen in T1).

T4 was excavated through modern topsoil L1 (although this was very thin and had been partially removed and replaced with crushed concrete L4 at the southern end of the trench). L1/L4 sealed natural boulder clay L3.

### Trench 5: summary

T5 (30m), in the south-western part of the site, contained a medieval pit (F4), and two undated post-holes F5 and F6. Two modern field drains crossed the western side of the trench.

T5 was excavated through modern topsoil L1 (although this was very thin and had been partially removed and replaced with crushed concrete L4 at the southern end of the trench). L1/L4 sealed natural boulder clay L3.

### Trench 5: contexts and finds dating

context	description	dated finds	date
F4	pit	medieval pottery	medieval
F5	post-hole	-	undated
F6	post-hole	-	undated

### Trench 6: summary

T6 (30m), in the centre of the site, contained two archaeological features: modern pit F8, and 'natural feature' F13. F13 is of particular interest. Though its fill and profile appear to indicate a natural origin, its fill contained an assemblage of worked flints.

T6 was excavated through tarmac hard-standing (L3), its associated sub-base (L4), and onto natural boulder clay (L2).



**Trench 6, view west. F8 foreground, F13 centre.**



**Sample stratigraphy: trench 6.**

**Trench 6: contexts and finds dating**

context	description	dated finds	date
F8	pit	modern glass	modern
F13	natural pit	prehistoric flints	prehistoric

**Trench 7: summary**

T7 (30m), in the centre of the site, contained two undated but probably modern pits F10 and F11.

T7 was excavated through topsoil (L1), accumulation horizon (L2), and onto natural boulder clay (L3).

**Trench 7: contexts and finds dating**

context	description	dated finds	date
F10	pit	-	modern
F11	pit	-	modern

**Trench 8: summary**

T8 (10m), in the centre of the site, contained a modern gully (F9) and modern service. T8 was excavated through tarmac hard-standing (L3), its associated sub-base (L4), and onto natural boulder clay (L2).

**Trench 8: contexts and finds dating**

context	description	dated finds	date
F9	gully	-	modern

**Trench 9: summary**

T9 (15m), in the centre of the site, contained a modern brick drain hub associated with the brewery, and a modern service. T8 was excavated through tarmac hard-standing (L3), its associated sub-base (L4), and onto natural boulder clay (L2).

**Trench 9 contexts and finds dating**

context	description	dated finds	date
F12	brick drain hub		modern



**Trench 9, view east**

#### **Trench 10: summary**

T10, (10m), on the eastern site edge, contained no archaeological material. However, this area seems to have been reduced in the recent past, probably likely during the construction of the brewery office building.

T10 was excavated through block paving (L6), its associated sub-base (L4), and onto natural boulder clay (L2).

#### **Trenches 11, 12: summary**

T11 (8m), and T12 (6m), on the eastern and southern site edges, contained only modern services.

T11 and T12 were excavated through tarmac hard-standing (L3), its associated sub-base (L4), and onto natural boulder clay (L2).

## **6 Finds**

*by Stephen Benfield*

### **Introduction**

A small quantity of finds of prehistoric, medieval-post-medieval, post-medieval and modern date were recovered from five contexts, F2 & F3 in Trench 1 (T1), F4 in Trench 5 (T5) and F8 & F13 in Trench 6 (T6). There is one individually numbered metal small find of modern date (SF1) which came from F3. All of the finds are listed and described by context in Table 1. The pottery fabrics referred to follow the Essex post-Roman fabric series (Cunningham 1982 & CAR 7)

Trench	Ctxt	Find no	Form/ description	Spot date
T1	F2	1	<p><i>Pottery:</i> Small, slightly abraded sherd, moderately thin, orange-red, sandy fabric with some small red ferrous sand inclusions, slightly reddish-buff surface (2 g) (not closely dated, poss late med-early -post-med - see F4)</p> <p><i>CBM (medieval) -post-medieval:</i> small piece of peg-tile in hard, red, fine sand fabric (28 g); large flake from a brick/tile, sanded underside, moderately hard, orange fine sand fabric, possibly peg-tile (6 g) (not closely dated)</p> <p><i>Glass modern:</i> Small piece of dark emerald green vessel glass (bottle/jar) (7 g)</p>	modern (19-20C)
T1	F3	2	<p><i>CBM :</i> piece from the surface of a tile/brick in orange-red fine sand fabric (max surviving thickness 10 mm), possibly peg-tile (28 g) (dated (?medieval)-post-medieval)</p>	(?medieval-post-medieval)
T1	F3	4	<p><b>SF1</b> copper alloy(?) mount (complete) in the shape of a shield with a tri-pointed top and waisted sides, base rounded base with centre point, florid letter <b>R</b> on face, shallow hollowed back with stubs from three attachment points (max height 38 mm, max width 28 mm, max thickness 2 mm, weight 13 g)</p>	modern (M/L19-20C)
T5	F4	3	<p><i>Pottery medieval:</i> Fabric 21, body sherd in orange, sandy fabric with some darker red inclusions of ?ferrous sand, traces of white paint decoration and clear splash glaze spots/speckles (2 g) (dated probably 14/15-16 C)</p>	13/14-15/16C
T6	F8	5	<p><i>Pottery modern:</i> piece from a flower pot (Fabric 51B) (11 g)</p> <p><i>CBM :</i> piece from a frogged red-brick (67 g) (dated 19-20C); abraded brick piece in coarse vesicular fabric with some small stones (dated post-medieval -early modern)</p> <p><i>Glass modern:</i> base and sherd from a pale green glass octagonal, mould formed bottle, <b>51.42</b> in relief moulded figures on base (60 g) (M19-20C)</p> <p><i>Animal bone:</i> rib piece from medium size mammal and small piece of bird bone (3 g)</p>	modern (M/L19-20C)
T6	F13	6	<p><i>Flint prehistoric:</i> Quantity of flint (19 pieces) includes rough core pieces in a dark flint with some cortex, non-structured flake removal and evidence of hinge fracture, medium size flakes in dark flint with some cortex, large striking platforms, some hinge fractures, also some irregular spall pieces, all with little indication of any modification or use. This type of flint working is typically later prehistoric (Bronze Age/Early Iron Age). With this are a lightly patinated flake in dark flint, a thin, blade-like flint with parallel flake scars on the dorsal face, a narrow crested blade/bladelet with signs of platform preparation, a narrow thin crested blade/bladelet taken from a flint core piece with a battered edge (forming one half of the dorsal face) and a small thin bladelet/blade-like flake (Mesolithic-Early Neolithic).</p>	later prehistoric, prob. Later BA-EIA but inc. some Mesolithic/E Neolithic flints

## **Finds discussion**

### **Prehistory**

The earliest dated finds come from a shallow, irregular shaped pit F13 in T6. This is a group of prehistoric worked flints - a significant assemblage (19 flints) from one feature. This assemblage is rather unusual, and can be divided into two distinct groups:

- The first group consists of three, small narrow blades and a blade-like flake with parallel flaking scars on the dorsal face. These show evidence of platform preparation and may have been struck with a soft hammer. There is some chipping or use wear on some edges. They are typical of Mesolithic-Early Neolithic flint working. A lightly patinated, thicker flake with a small amount of cortex on one edge is also probably of similar date.

- The second group comprises flakes and core pieces in a dark flint (3 irregular core pieces, 1 large thick flake/core, 5 medium-large thick flakes, 2 small thin flakes, 3 irregular spall/small flake pieces). Several retain cortex from the surface of the flint nodule(s). The flakes are mostly irregular and thick with large striking platforms, distinct percussion bulbs and some hinge fractures. The core pieces are also irregular with various flake removals (including hinge fractures) and give the appearance of some shattering from heavy blows. There are also a few thinner small flakes which appear to belong with this group. These do not necessarily suggest any fine control to the flint working as there are also a number of irregular spall/small flake pieces so that these may have been produced together, but may be part of the earlier group. There is very little indication of any modification or use-wear on the edges. This type of working is typical of late prehistoric flint assemblages broadly dating to the Bronze Age/late Bronze Age-Early Iron Age.

The occurrence of these two different types of flint working, some pieces dating as much as two millennia or more apart in time, is unusual from the one feature. The cohesiveness of the early dated group might be slightly misleading as it includes one thicker flake whose early date is indicated by the patination and there are also two small, thin flakes in dark flint that have been placed with the later group. However, in terms of the flint working the small blades are certainly typical of the Mesolithic-Early Neolithic and are very distinct from the, coarse heavy working technique seen among the later group which is typical of the later prehistoric period. The later material suggests possible fresh working waste within fill of the pit/hollow and the earlier material may have been residual in the soil or disturbed from an earlier feature and incorporated with it. However, the absence of any other worked flint or prehistoric finds from the evaluation does not suggest a wider concentration of flint working on this area, leaving the material from this feature as an isolated assemblage that is not easily explained in terms of its composition.

### **Medieval/post medieval-modern**

The two small sherds, from F4 (T5) and F2 (T1), are difficult to date, but likely to be of late medieval or possibly early post-medieval date. One (F4) has an orange sandy fabric with traces of a white slip or painted slip and small isolated splashes of glaze. Although relatively thin it is within the broad tradition of medieval sandy-orange wares (Fabric 21) current from the 13th-mid 16th century and a 14th-15th/16th century date might be appropriate. The other sherd (F2) is not closely dated other than as of Roman or later date, but the fabric is not dissimilar to that of the sherd with the splash glaze and may be of similar medieval-early post-medieval date.

Apart from a small piece of peg-tile (F2) dated as only medieval-post-medieval/modern, the other finds are of post-medieval or modern date - a piece of modern glass from F2 and the base of a modern glass bottle from F8 (T6). A potsherd probably from a modern flower-pot and a piece from a frogged brick came from F8. This feature also produced the only animal bone from this evaluation.

Of interest is a modern copper-alloy mount or badge in the shape of a shield (SF1) which came from F3. The front displays a single, large, florid letter R and is presumably connected with the former Ridley's brewery when it occupied the site.

## 7 Discussion

This evaluation has produced results of limited archaeological significance. Its principal aim was to look for early brewery infrastructure, of which none was detected, and any signs of earlier use of the site, evidence for which was limited to a single medieval pit.

However, there was one significant find - the group of flints from F13. There are two points here. First, it was in a feature which otherwise looked like a 'natural pit'. Second, the date range of the flints is unusual - from Mesolithic/early Neolithic, to Bronze Age or Iron Age. If conventional flint dating is correct, then this must be a Bronze Age or Iron Age group with residual mesolithic/Neolithic flints. This, of course, is highly unlikely. It is more likely that the group is all Bronze Age/Iron Age, with some pieces made in what appears to us to be an earlier fashion.

## 8 Acknowledgements

CAT thanks Stockplace Investments Ltd for commissioning and funding the work. The project was managed by Ben Holloway, with fieldwork carried out by BH, Sarah Carter, Robin Mathieson, and Alec Wade. Figures by Chris Lister and Emma Holloway. The project was monitored for ECC by Richard Havis.

## 9 References

- |                  |       |   |
|------------------|-------|---|
| CAR 7            | 2000  | <i>Colchester Archaeological Report 7, Post-Roman pottery from excavations in Colchester, 1971-85</i> , by John Cotter  |
| CAT              | 2015  | <i>Written Scheme of Investigation for archaeological trial-trenching and excavation at the former Ridley's Brewery site, Mill Lane, Hartford End, Essex</i> , by L Pooley.     |
| 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 |
| ClfA             | 2014a | <i>Standard and Guidance for archaeological field evaluation</i>  |
| ClfA             | 2014b | <i>Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials</i>   |
| DCLG             | 2012  | <i>National Planning Policy Framework</i>   |
| ECC              | 2015  | <i>Brief for archaeological trial-trenching and excavation at the former Ridley's Brewery site, Mill Lane, Hartford End</i> . Richard Havis                                     |
| Gurney, D (ed)   | 2003  | <i>Standards for field archaeology in the East of England</i> . East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Papers 14 (EAA 14).   |
| Medlycott, Maria | 2011  | <i>Research and archaeology revisited: A revised framework for the East of England</i> , East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Papers 24 (EAA 24).                                |

## 10 Abbreviations and glossary

Bronze Age	after Neolithic, <i>circa</i> 2,500 to 700 BC
CAT	Colchester Archaeological Trust
ClfA	Chartered Institute for Archaeologists
context	specific location of finds on an archaeological site
feature (F)	an identifiable thing like a pit, a wall, a drain: can contain 'contexts'
HER	(Essex) Historic Environment Record
Iron Age	after the Bronze Age and before the Romans – 700 BC to AD 43
layer (L)	distinct or distinguishable deposit of soil
medieval	period from AD 1066 to Henry VIII
mesolithic	after the melting of the ice sheets, <i>circa</i> 10,000 - 4,500 BC
modern	period from <i>c</i> AD 1800 to the present
natural	geological deposit undisturbed by human activity
Neolithic	New Stone Age – the earliest farming ( <i>circa</i> 4,500-2,500 BC).
NGR	National Grid Reference
post-medieval	from Henry VIII to <i>c</i> AD1800
prehistoric	pre-Roman
residual	something out of its original context, eg a Roman coin in a modern pit
section	(abbreviation sx or Sx) vertical slice through feature/s or layer/s
WSI	Written Scheme of Investigation

## 11 Contents of archive

### Finds

1 museum box containing all finds.

### Paper and digital record

One A4 document wallet containing:

This report (CAT Report 897)

Original site record (Feature and layer sheets, Finds record, Trench record sheet)

CBC Brief and CAT Written Scheme of Investigation

Site digital photographic log, site photographic record on CD

Attendance register, Benchmark data, Risk assessment

## 12 Archive deposition

The paper archive and finds are currently held by CAT at Roman Circus House, Roman Circus Walk, Colchester, Essex, CO2 7GZ, but will be permanently deposited at Saffron Walden Museum (accession code 2015.63).

© Colchester Archaeological Trust 2015

### Distribution list:

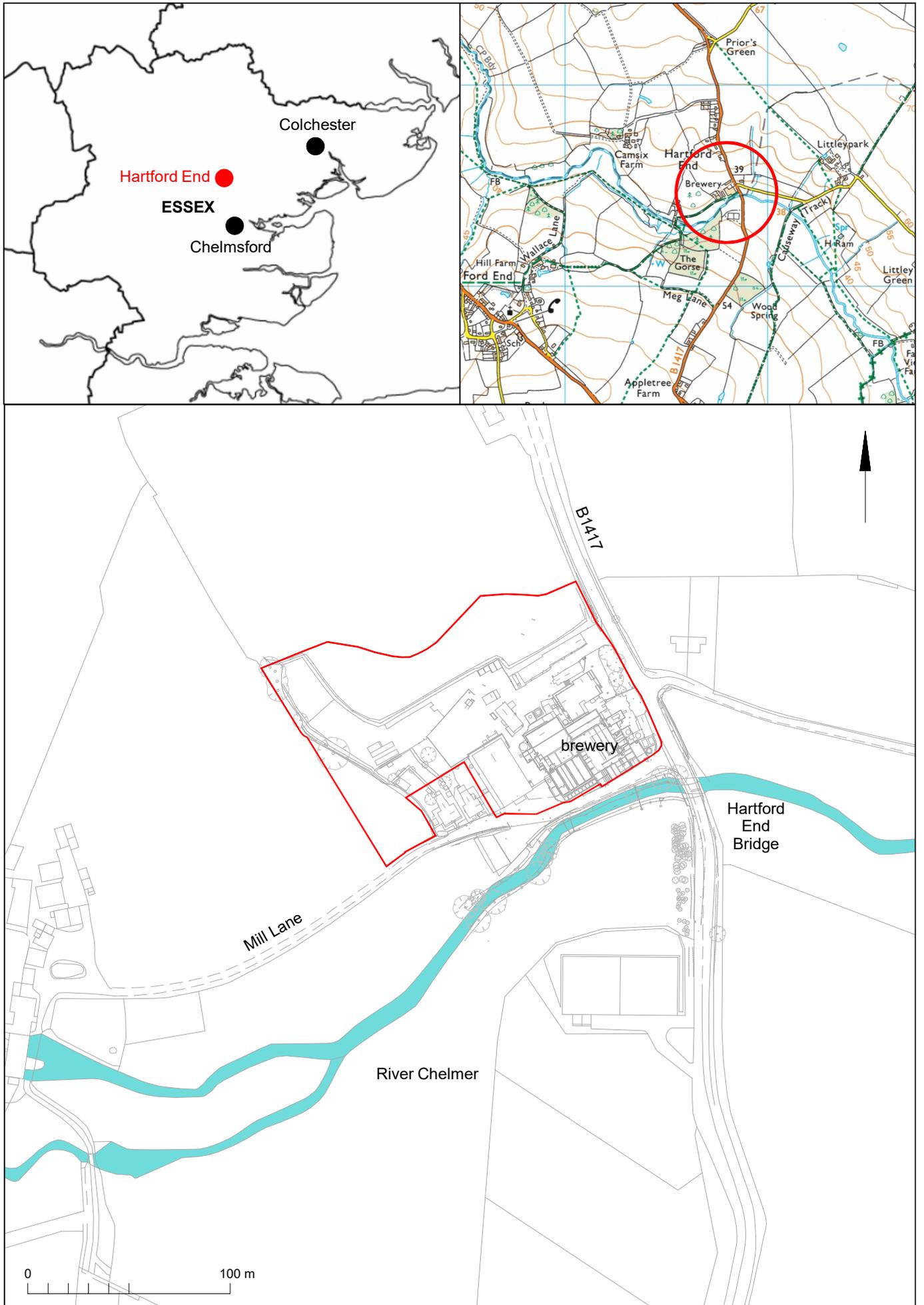
Stockplace Investments Ltd  
Richard Havis, Essex County Council Place Services  
Essex Historic Environment Record, Essex County Council



**Colchester Archaeological Trust**  
**Roman Circus House**  
Circular Road North,  
Colchester,  
Essex CO2 7GZ

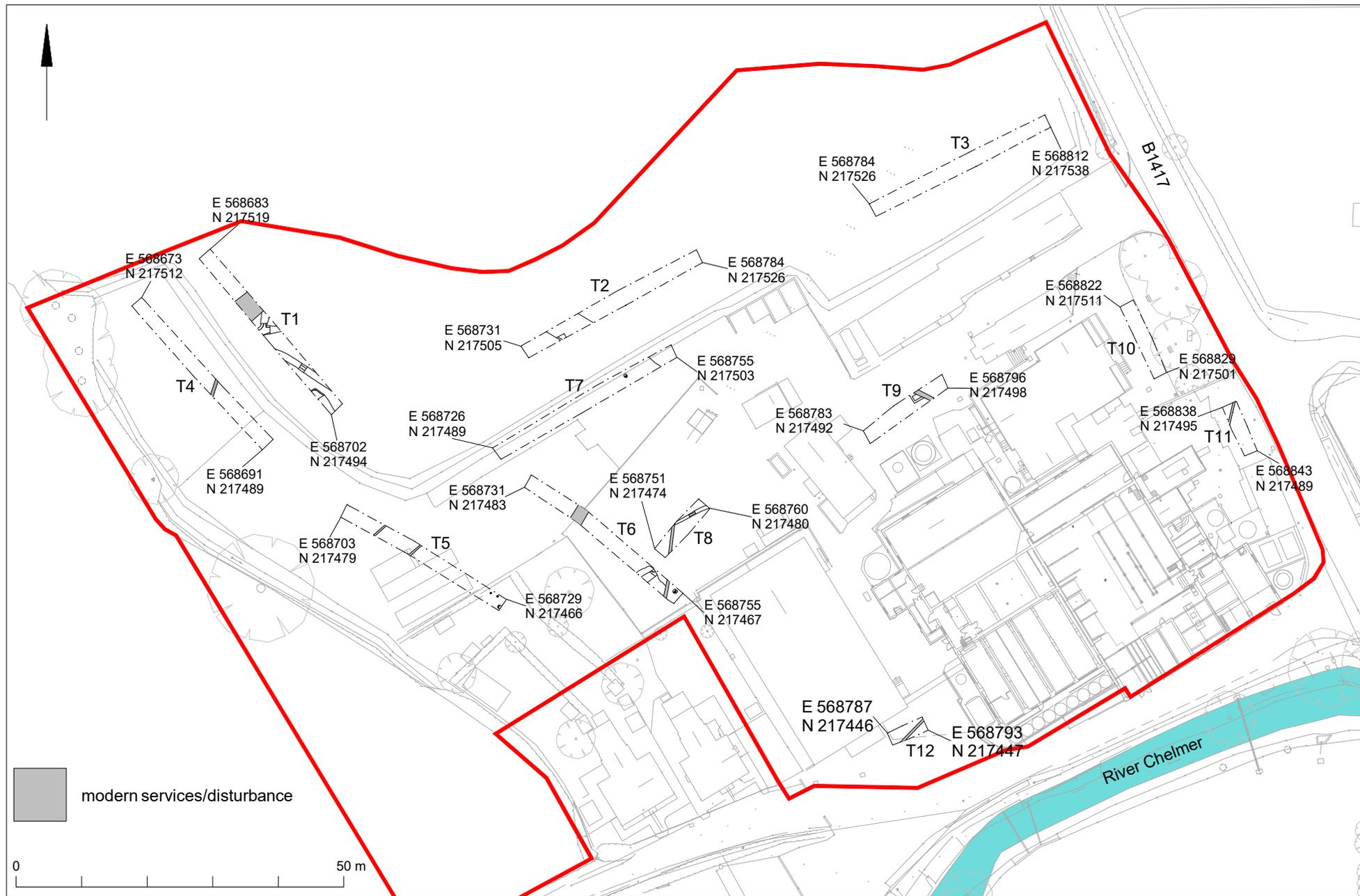
tel.: 01206 501785  
email: [archaeologists@catuk.org](mailto:archaeologists@catuk.org)

Checked by: *Howard Brooks*  
Date: 21.12.2015



© Crown copyright. All rights reserved. Licence number 100039294.

Fig 1 Site location.



© Crown copyright. All rights reserved. Licence number 100039294.

Fig 2 Evaluation results.

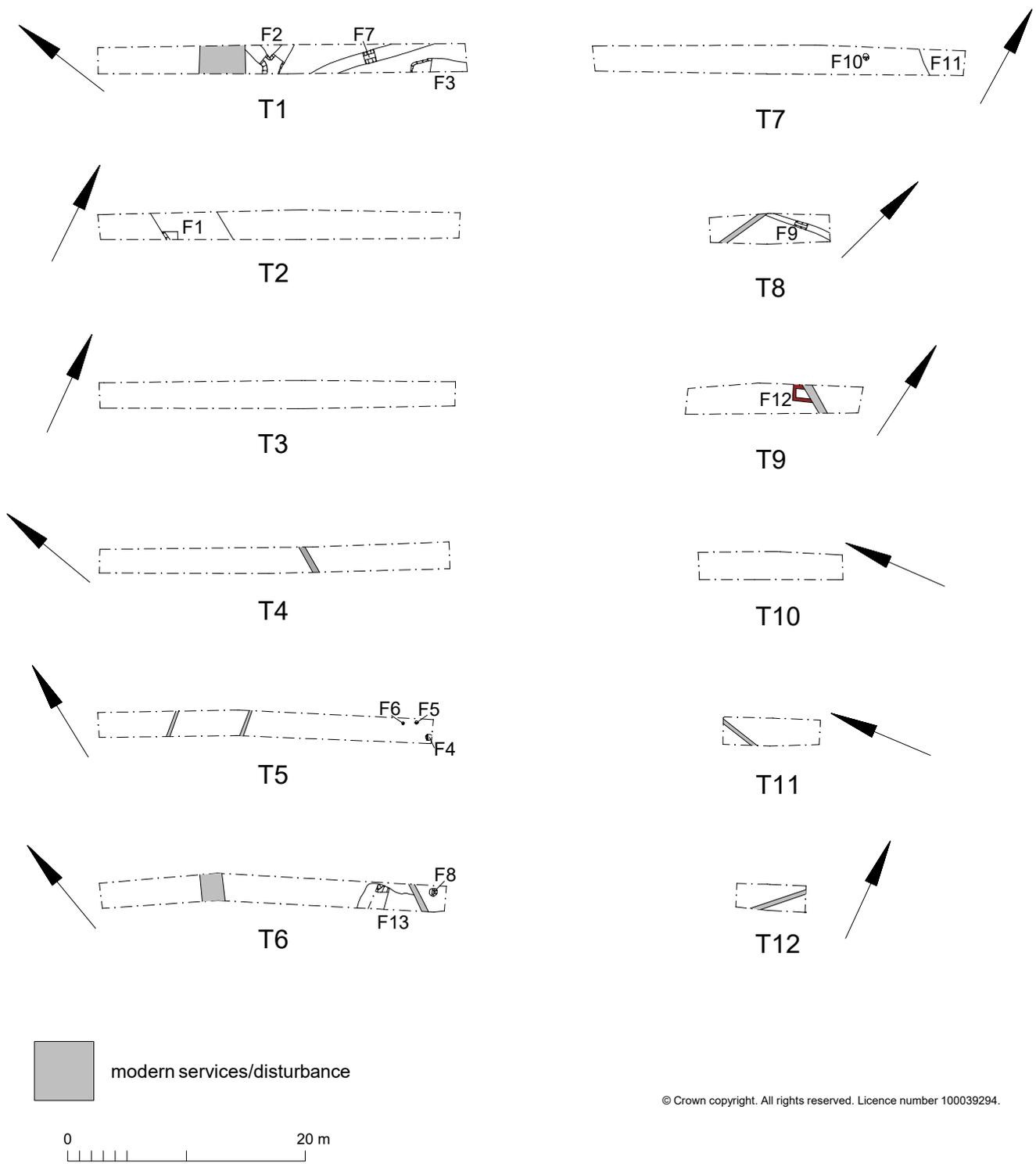


Fig 3 Detailed trench plans.

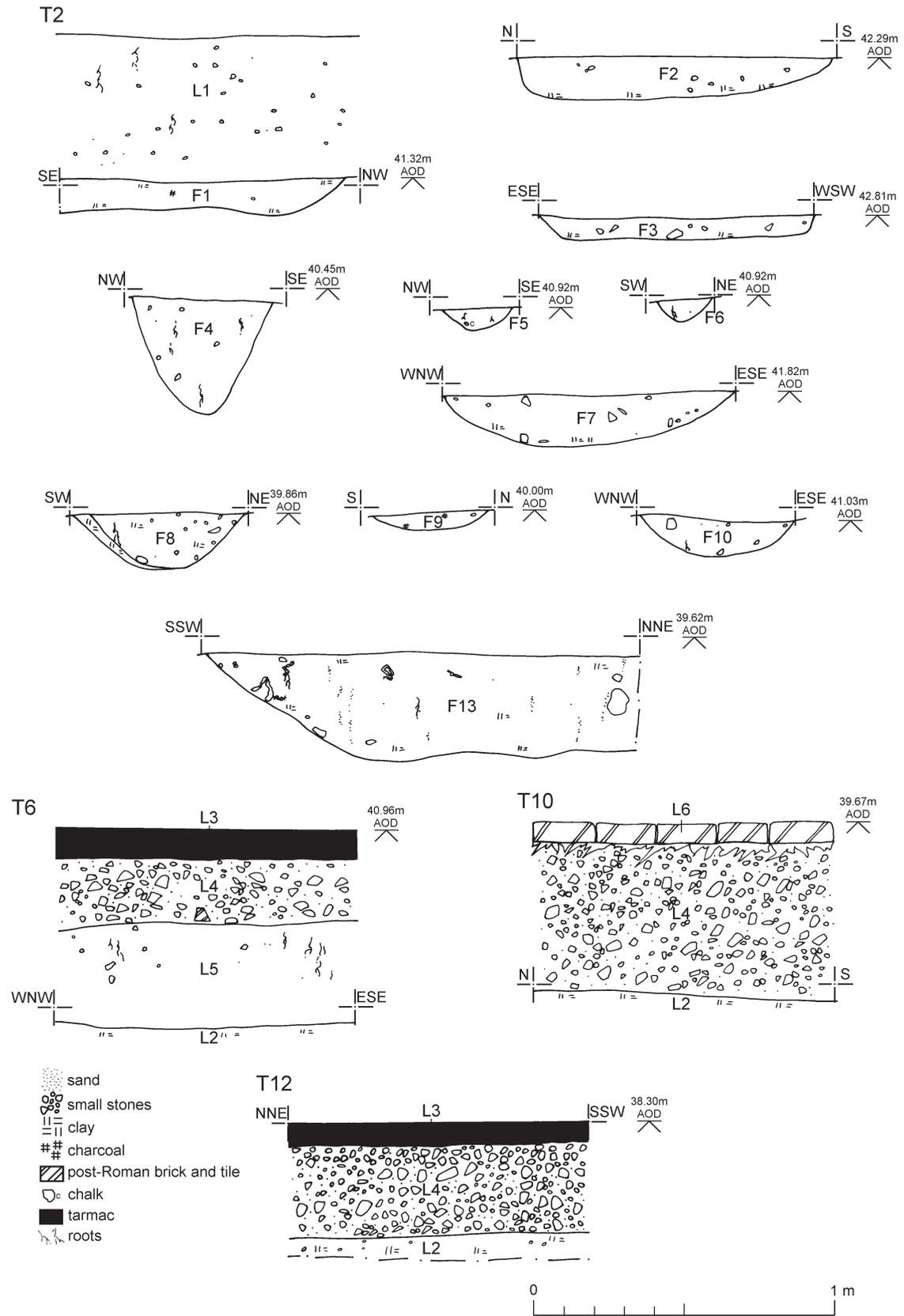


Fig 4 Feature sections (F1-10 and F13) and representative trench sections (T2, T6, T10 and T12).

# Essex Historic Environment Record/

## Summary sheet

<b>Address:</b> former Ridley's Brewery, Mill Lane, Hartford End, Essex	
<b>Parish:</b> Felsted	<b>District:</b> Uttlesford
<b>NGR:</b> TL 6878 1747	<b>Site code:</b> CAT project code – 15/10g HET Code – FLRB15
<b>Type of work:</b> Evaluation	<b>Site director/group:</b> Colchester Archaeological Trust
<b>Date of work:</b> 23-25 November 2015	<b>Size of area investigated:</b> 260m of trenches 1.8m wide
<b>Location of curating museum:</b> Saffron Walden Museum accession code : 2015.78	<b>Funding source:</b> Developer
<b>Further seasons anticipated?</b> No	<b>Related EHER number:</b> 15139
<b>Final report:</b> CAT Report 879	
<b>Periods represented:</b> prehistoric, medieval, post-medieval/modern	
<b>Summary of fieldwork results:</b> A map of 1724 shows an earlier building on the site of the Victorian Ridley's Brewery. An evaluation by nine trenches on the brewery site and three in arable land to the north found very little of archaeological significance. There were no traces of pre-Victorian brewery infrastructure. Apart from modern features, all that was found was a late medieval pit, and a natural pit with a group of prehistoric flints.	
<b>Previous summaries/reports:</b>	
<b>ECC Monitor:</b> R Havis	
<b>Keywords:</b> prehistoric flints, medieval pit	<b>Significance:</b> *
<b>Author of summary:</b> Howard Brooks	<b>Date of summary:</b> December 2015