

**An archaeological evaluation  
on Kell Field,  
Petches Yew Farm,  
Finchingfield, Essex  
June-July 2005**

**report prepared by  
S Benfield**

**commissioned by  
Mr Alan O'Leary  
on behalf of  
Apol Silva & Orchards Ltd**



CAT project ref.: 05/6d  
Braintree Museums accession code: 2005.7  
HEM site code: FFHH05  
NGR: TL 7006 3060



**Colchester Archaeological Trust**  
12 Lexden Road,  
Colchester,  
Essex CO3 3NF

*tel.:* (01206) 541051  
*tel./fax:* (01206) 500124  
*email:* [archaeologists@catuk.org](mailto:archaeologists@catuk.org)

**CAT Report 329**  
July 2005

## Contents

1	Summary	1
2	Introduction	1
3	Archaeological background	2
4	Aim	2
5	Methods	2
6	Results	3
7	Finds	7
8	Discussion	12
9	Archive deposition	13
10	Acknowledgements	14
11	Abbreviations	14
12	References	14
13	Glossary	15
	Plates	17
	Figures	after p 18
	EHER summary sheet	

## List of figures and plates

- Fig 1 Site location and surrounding archaeology.
- Fig 2 Location of evaluation trenches in relation to the proposed excavation footprint (toned) of reservoir.
- Fig 3 Plan of evaluation trenches and features.
- Fig 4 Sections.
- Plate 1 (front cover) – T3: cleaning the foundation (F1) of the Roman building, view north-east.
- Plate 2 T3: Roman wall foundation F1, view south-east.
- Plate 3 T3: Roman demolition L1, south of Roman foundation F1 and cut by ditch F2 to left, with F3 in background, view north-east.
- Plate 4 Possible wall foundation (F4 in T4) with T5 in background, view east.
- Plate 5 T4: possible wall foundation F4, view west.

## 1 Summary

*An archaeological evaluation by trial-trenching was carried out on Kell Field, Petches Yew Farm, Finchingfield, Essex in June-July 2005 in response to the planned construction of a reservoir. Initially, five evaluation trenches were machine-excavated within the proposed footprint of the reservoir. Later, a sixth evaluation trench was excavated on another area of the site to evaluate an alternative location for the reservoir. A concentration of Roman flue tiles and roof tiles was observed on the field surface in the south-east part of the site. This proved to be the site of a Roman building with a mortared flint foundation. A spread of Roman demolition material, adjacent to the wall foundation and incorporating flue tiles and opus signinum mortar, may be filling the lowered area of a hypocaust base. The spread of Roman tiles and an absence of archaeological features east of the identified building probably indicates the site of another Roman building although probably of timber construction. A disturbed line of tile and flint nodules within this area could represent a wall line. One or two tile tessera cubes indicate a tessellated floor, though no floor levels were recorded other than the possible hypocaust base. Beyond the area of the Roman building and across the whole site were numerous ditches which suggest a long period of occupation. Only a limited amount of excavation was carried out; however, it is clear that the ditches are primarily of Roman date, and probably most if not all represent compounds around settlement rather than field ditches. Pottery from the ditches, mostly recovered from the surface of the features, spans the Roman period, and sherds of Middle Iron Age and Late Iron Age date demonstrate later prehistoric settlement on the site.*

## 2 Introduction (Figs 1-3)

- 2.1 This is the archive report on an archaeological evaluation by trial-trenching carried out by the Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) on Kell Field, Petches Yew Farm, Finchingfield, Essex.
- 2.2 The site is situated just north-east of Waltham's Cross, located between the villages of Wethersfield and Great Bardfield (Fig 1).
- 2.3 The archaeological evaluation was undertaken in relation to a planning application (no BTE/017/05) for the construction of a reservoir on the site.
- 2.4 The work was commissioned by Mr Alan O'Leary on behalf of Apol Silva & Orchards Ltd.
- 2.5 The proposed site of the reservoir is located on Kell Field of Petches Yew Farm, and the proposed reservoir itself covers an area of some 8250 square metres, centred on NGR TL 7006 3060 (Fig 2).
- 2.6 The site is a small field which is not cultivated at present. The land slopes gently down toward the north-east. The north-east end of the field flattens out onto the broad valley floor of the River Pant which is located only a short distance to the north-east.
- 2.7 The client has reported that the field which comprises the site is usually quite damp, although, following the dry winter and recent dry weather, the site is unusually dry. It is also reported by the client that there are several springs to the south of the site.
- 2.8 When the site was first visited by a CAT archaeologist, a dense spread of Roman building material (roof tiles, flue tiles and mortar fragments) with some Roman pottery was apparent, covering the south-east part of the site (Fig 3), and similar Roman finds could be easily recovered in smaller quantity from all parts of the site. The type and quantity of Roman finds immediately suggested that this was the site of a Roman building and that below-ground archaeological features were likely to be common across the site. However, with no other clear option for the location of the reservoir, the clients (Mr Alan O'Leary on behalf of Apol Silva & Orchards Ltd) decided to continue with the evaluation to see what the trenches would reveal.
- 2.9 The work was carried out by CAT between the 23rd June and 4th July 2005.

- 2.10** As expected, a large number of archaeological features was exposed by the evaluation trenches. In light of this, it was agreed with Vanessa Clarke of the Essex County Council (ECC) Historic Environment Management (HEM) group that only limited excavation need take place to provide characterisation for a few of the features (Trenches 1-5).
- 2.11** It was also agreed with the client that a further trench (Trench 6) should be opened on the north-east part of the site to evaluate that area with a view to relocating the proposed reservoir (Fig 2). This new trench revealed a similar density of features of Roman date in the north-east part of the site, though no structural remains were encountered.
- 2.12** All fieldwork was done in accordance with a written scheme of investigation submitted by CAT (Holloway 2005) which followed a brief which was supplied by the ECC HEM group. The project was monitored by Vanessa Clarke of the ECC HEM group.
- 2.13** This report mirrors standards and practices contained in the Colchester Borough Council's *Guidelines for the standards and practice of archaeological fieldwork in the Borough of Colchester* (CM 2002) and *Guidelines for the deposition of archaeological archives with Colchester Museums* (CM 2003), and the IFA's *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (IFA 1999) and *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (IFA 2001). Other sources are *Management of archaeological projects* (MAP 2), and *Research and archaeology: a framework for the Eastern Counties 1. Resource assessment* (EAA 3), *Research and archaeology: a framework for the Eastern Counties 2. Research agenda and strategy* (EAA 8), and *Standards for field archaeology in the East of England* (EAA 14).

### **3 Archaeological background** (Fig 1)

- 3.1** Prior to the evaluation, there were no recorded archaeological finds from Kell Field of Petches Yew Farm.
- 3.2** There are a few records of archaeological finds in the immediate surrounding area. There are extant earth banks (Essex Heritage Environment Record or EHER no 1506) running through Lodge Wood (TL 693 302), west of the site, which are thought to represent part of a Roman road. Also a stone coffin (EHER no 1505; TL 696 305), found west of the site, is thought to be Roman in date.
- 3.3** A little further away, to the east of the site, Roman pottery (EHER no 6833) is recorded from the west side of Wethersfield village (TL 709 312).

### **4 Aim**

The aim of the fieldwork was to establish and record the character, extent, date, significance and condition of any archaeological remains likely to be affected by the construction of the reservoir.

### **5 Methods** (Figs 1-2)

- 5.1** Five trenches (Trench 1 or T1-T5), each 1.7m wide, were excavated by machine, approximating to 220 m of trenching. This equated to 4% of the reservoir footprint. Another trench (T6), 55 m long, was opened to evaluate another area. A toothless ditching bucket was used. This work was carried out under archaeological supervision. The trenches were positioned to achieve an even spread across the site.
- 5.2** The trenches were excavated into the natural undisturbed soil below the modern cultivated topsoil, or just into the undisturbed soil to help to define any archaeological features.

- 5.3 Liaison was maintained with the ECC HEM group monitoring officer (Vanessa Clarke) to maintain an appropriate strategy to investigate deposits on the site.
- 5.4 All exposed subsoil features, archaeological deposits or negative features were photographed and examined in sufficient detail to allow their nature, date and importance to be assessed.
- 5.5 Each trench and any features located within it were planned using a total station, and a plan of the trenches and the surrounding boundaries was also made using the total station.
- 5.6 Individual records of features were entered on CAT pro-forma recording sheets. Section drawings of layers were made at a scale of 1:50 or 1:20 (depending on the archaeological importance of the context).
- 5.7 Finds were registered on CAT pro-forma record sheets and assigned find numbers according to context. Finds were washed, marked with the site code number, and bagged according to context. Roman pottery was examined by CAT archaeologist Stephen Benfield and Middle Iron Age pottery by Paul Sealey of Colchester Museums.
- 5.8 Colour photographs of the main features, sections, the general site and the site environs were taken with a digital camera.
- 5.9 Metal-detecting of the spoil heaps was conducted for T1-T5.

## 6 Results (Figs 3-4)

### 6.1 Trench 1: summary

The trench (40 m long) was located on the west side of the site. There were three features interpreted as being ditches (F25, F32, F33). F25 was aligned south-west to north-east, while F32 and F33 appeared to run approximately east-west. Of a group of features in the middle area of the trench, two (F27 & F29) appeared to be archaeological. A small number of finds recovered from the surface of these features were all of Roman date. The remaining features (F26, F28, F30, F31) appeared to be possibly natural in origin.

### 6.2 Trench 2: summary

The trench (25 m long) was located in the north-west part of the site. The ground at the north end of the trench was quite damp, and, on excavation, the north end of the trench began to fill with shallow water to about 8 m along its length from the north end. The topsoil at this north end of the trench also produced a number of modern finds (bricks and concrete) and was the only area of the site which produced any significant quantity of modern finds at all. Two features (F23 & F24) were located, both of which are interpreted as being ditches. Both were aligned south-west to north-east. A small number of finds recovered from the surface of these features were all of Roman date.

### 6.3 Trench 3: summary

The trench (55 m long) was located on the central part of the site. At the south end of the trench was part of a Roman wall foundation (F1) made of flint nodules in a very pale (whitish) mortar (Plates 1-2). Immediately south of the wall foundation was a spread of Roman demolition material (L1; Plate 3). That this survives below the modern cultivation level suggests that it is filling a feature sunk into the ground such as a hypocaust base. Three other features were located. Just north of the wall foundation F1 was a small pit or post-hole with a charcoal-flecked fill (F6). To the west of the foundation F1 was a ditch (F2) which appeared to have cut the Roman demolition layer L1, and probably the wall foundation F1 (Plate 3). A small section was excavated through this feature (Fig 4, Sx 1) which produced a small quantity of finds of Roman date including a small sherd of Dressel 20 amphora. Much of the north end of the trench was occupied by a large feature with a dark silt fill (F3), the surface of which was littered with fragments of Roman tile. This appears to be either a large ditch or possibly a quarry hollow. A piece of molten lead (find bag 35) was recovered from the upper surviving fill. Also an unusual tile with what appear to be ventilation holes came from spoil from the area of F3 (find bag 36). This unusual tile is undated but is thought to be post-medieval. A machine bore

(Fig 3, borehole 1) into the centre area of F3 (made by the client) indicated a base in the central area of the feature at about 0.7 m-0.8 m below the bottom of the evaluation trench. A second machine bore (Fig 3, borehole 2) confirmed that the feature became more shallow toward its north edge.

#### **6.4 Trench 4: summary**

The trench (85 m long) was located in the east part of the site. A number of features (F4 & F7-F22) were identified, all in the northern half of the trench, the south half being unusually quite devoid of any cut features. Across the central area of the trench was a narrow spread of Roman tile fragments and flint nodules (F4) which may be the remains of a wall foundation (Plates 4-5). All of the remaining features in the trench lay to the north of F4. There were approximately between four and six ditches (F7, F8, F9, F18, F21, F22). All of these features share a north-east to south-west alignment except for the large feature F22, the edge of which was aligned south-west to north-east. The size of F22 could indicate a quarry-pit or hollow. A sherd of Middle Iron Age pottery and a rim sherd of Late Iron Age pottery (both find bag 9) came from the surface of this feature. Three of the numbered ditches (F7, F8, F9) were all intercut on the same alignment. Limited excavation of F7 and F8 showed that these could be separate re-cuts on the line of a wider earlier ditch F9 (Fig 4, Sx 3). Only the base of F8 was reached, and the surviving feature was about 0.4 m deep below the bottom of the evaluation trench. Roman pottery of later 3rd- to 4th-century date and a sherd of blue-green Roman glass were recovered from the fill of F8. The small quantity of Roman pottery excavated from F7 was of 2nd- to 3rd-century date. Of four discrete pit-like features (F16, F17, F19, F20), only one (F19) appeared to be a certain archaeological feature as it contained oyster shell in its exposed surface. However, F16 had the visual appearance of a real archaeological feature with a medium brown silt fill. F17 and F20 both had the appearance of natural features.

#### **6.5 Trench 5: summary**

The trench (25 m long) was located on the east side of the site. Seven features were exposed in its base. There were three, possibly five, ditches (F5, F10, F11, F12, F13), and two possible pits (F14, F15). All of the ditches were aligned north-east to south-west except F10 which was aligned approximately east-west. A section was excavated through F5 (Fig 4, Sx 2). The feature proved to be about 0.7 m deep below the base of the evaluation trench and produced Roman pottery of later 2nd- to 3rd-century date. It was noted that the lower fill was damp, and some dark organic material appeared to be present. At the south end of the trench, F13 was an extensive feature containing common flint nodules, and the silt-filled linear feature on its north edge (F12) appeared to be associated with it. These features could represent a large ditch or two ditches, though the flint nodules in F13 could derive from a building.

#### **6.6 Trench 6: summary**

This trench (55 m long) was located on the north-east part of the site. This trench is outside the footprint of the proposed reservoir (Fig 2) and was opened to evaluate this area as a potential site for relocation of the reservoir following the archaeological results from T1-T5. The north-east part of the site is slightly lower-lying than the southern part, and the land flattens out to form the edge of the broad flood-plain of the River Pant. The upper part of the surviving archaeological features in this trench were found to be slightly obscured by the nature of the subsoil, which is a slightly stony silt with rare gravel patches, and lacked the definition of features which were observed cut into the natural on the southern part of the site. Archaeological features appeared as darker areas containing archaeological finds.

There were at least six ditches (F34, F35, F36, F37, F38, F39), and F43 should possibly be included with these. It should be noted that F36 may be two separate ditches. Except for F34, F35 and F42, all the ditches appeared to be aligned approximately north-south. None of the features was examined by excavation, though all contained finds of Roman date in their surfaces. Part of a Late Iron Age rippled pottery bowl (find bag 25) came from F36, and a sherd of Middle Iron Age pottery (find bag 32) was recovered from the trench spoil.

## 6.7 Summary table of contexts

Table 1: summary of contexts by trench number and associated finds.

Trench	Feature or layer	context type	comments	associated finds	context dated as
T1	F25	ditch			Roman
T1	F26		possibly natural	Roman tile fragment	
T1	F27		irregular feature, Roman pottery in surface	Roman pottery	Roman
T1	F28		possibly natural		
T1	F29		irregular feature, Roman tile in surface	Roman tile	Roman
T1	F30		linear feature with stony fill, possibly natural		
T1	F31		linear feature with pale brown silt fill, possibly natural		
T1	F32	ditch	stony dark fill		Roman
T1	F33	ditch	stony dark fill	Roman pottery	Roman
T2	F23	ditch	fill is noticeably dark	Roman tile	Roman
T2	F24	ditch	fill is noticeably dark	Roman pottery and tile	Roman
T3	L1	Roman demolition	Roman tiles and mortar south of wall foundation F1	building materials: yellow-brown mortar, <i>opus signinum</i> mortar, Roman roof tile and flue tiles (sampled)	Roman
T3	F1	wall foundation	flint nodules in white lime mortar		Roman
T3	F2	ditch	appears to cut demolition layer L1, small section excavated	Roman pottery, flue tile and roof tile, animal bone	Roman
T3	F3	large feature ?ditch	dark fill with common Roman tile pieces; see also F22 in T4	Roman tile, Pb object (melted lead)	Roman
T3	F6	pit/post-hole	located just north of F1, fill contains charcoal		
T4	F4	disturbed ?footing	linear spread of Roman tile pieces and fragments with some flint nodules, feature located at base of topsoil	Roman pottery	Roman
T4	F7	ditch	possible re-cut on south side of ditch F9, part section excavated	Roman pottery, tile and animal bone	Roman
T4	F8	ditch	possible re-cut on north side of ditch F9, part section excavated	Roman pottery, glass, tile and animal bone	Roman
T4	F9	ditch	broad ditch, appears to be cut by two possible separate ditch features (F7 & F8) which follow its alignment and may be later re-cuts	Roman pottery	Roman

Trench	Feature or layer	context type	comments	associated finds	context dated as
T4	F16	?pit	no finds seen in surface but looked like a real feature		Roman
T4	F17		small feature with no visible finds inclusions in surface, possibly natural		
T4	F18	ditch			Roman
T4	F19	pit		Roman pottery and oyster shell	Roman
T4	F20		mixed silty fill with chalk lenses, appeared to be a natural feature		
T4	F21	ditch			Roman
T4	F22		large feature	Middle Iron Age pottery, Roman pottery, tile	Roman
T5	F5	ditch	section excavated	Roman pottery, flue tile and roof tile, animal bone	Roman
T5	F10	ditch	small ditch		Roman
T5	F11	ditch		Roman pottery	Roman
T5	F12	?ditch	linear stone-free area on edge of F13, possibly a separate feature		Roman
T5	F13		large feature with common flint nodules in fill		Roman
T5	F14		probably a natural feature		
T5	F15		probably a natural feature		
T6	F34	ditch		animal bone	Roman
T6	F35	ditch	possibly part of F34	Roman pottery, tile and animal bone	Roman
T6	F36	ditch		Roman pottery and tile	Roman
T6	F37		probable linear feature which appeared slightly irregular	Roman pottery and tile	Roman
T6	F38	ditch		Roman pottery and tile	Roman
T6	F39	ditch		Roman tile	Roman
T6	F40		small feature with stony sandy fill, probably natural		
T6	F41		linear feature with stony sandy fill, probably natural		
T6	F42		linear feature with stony sandy fill, probably natural		
T6	F43		large feature, possibly south edge of a ditch	Roman pottery	Roman
T6	F44	pit	edges and extent of feature indistinct	Roman pottery	Roman



## 7 Finds

- 7.1** The finds are set out as two tables below; Table 2 list finds from archaeological contexts, and Table 3 lists finds recovered from spoil heaps and finds from the area of individual evaluation trenches.
- 7.2** There were two sherds of Middle Iron Age pottery. These were examined by Paul Sealey of Colchester Museums who commented: 'the sherds are typical of Middle Iron Age sand-tempered wares from Essex and East Anglia which contain silver mica in the fabric. Both sherds are of a size which suggests a Middle Iron Age settlement on the site and are probably not displaced away from the settlement by activity such as manure spreading on surrounding fields'.
- 7.3** For the Roman pottery described in Tables 2 and 3, pottery vessel form numbers follow those of the Camulodunum (Cam) Roman pottery type series (Hawkes & Hull 1947 and Hull 1958). Pottery fabrics follow those of *CAR 10*. Fabric descriptions for the fabric codes used in this report are as follows:
- AJ amphora, Dressel 20
  - BA plain samian
  - CZ Colchester and other red colour-coated wares
  - EA Nene Valley colour-coated ware
  - DJ coarse oxidised and related wares
  - DZ fine oxidised wares
  - GA BB1: black-burnished ware category 1
  - GB BB2: black-burnished ware category 2
  - GTW Late Iron Age grog-tempered ware
  - GX other coarse wares, principally locally-produced grey wares
  - HD shell-tempered and calcite-gritted wares
  - HZ large storage jars and other vessels in heavily-tempered grey wares
  - KX black-burnished ware (BB2) types in pale grey ware
  - TP Hadham mortaria (fine orange fabric)
  - TZ Colchester mortaria and mortaria imported from the Continent.

**Table 2: finds from numbered contexts.**

Feature or layer	Trench	find bag	context	find type	pot fabrics	pieces	wt (g)	date
L1	T3	16	also some us	<i>opus signinum</i> mortar		3	1,500	Roman
L1	T3	16	also some U/S	yellow-brown mortar		2	350	Roman
L1	T3	16	also some U/S	Roman flue tile		7	850	Roman
L1	T3	16	also some U/S	Roman roof tile		4	625	Roman
L1	T3	16	also some U/S	Roman pot	CZ	1	5	2nd-3rd century
L1	T3	16	also some U/S	Roman pot	GX	14	225	Roman
F2	T3	3	fill	Roman pot	AJ?	1	30	1st-2nd century
F2	T3	3	fill	Roman pot	GX	9	90	Roman
F2	T3	3	fill	Roman tile		2	20	Roman
F2	T3	3	fill	animal bone		1	5	
F3	T3	35	metal-detected in feature surface	lead (Pb) melted piece		1	45	

Feature or layer	Trench	find bag	context	find type	pot fabrics	pieces	wt (g)	date
F4	T4	4	feature surface	Roman pot	KX	1	40	2nd-3rd+ century
F5	T5	7	ditch fill	Roman roof tile		14	2,500	Roman
F5	T5	7	ditch fill	Roman flue tile		1	60	Roman
F5	T5	7	ditch fill	animal bone, piece with cut marks		quantity	500	
F5	T5	7	ditch fill	Roman pottery	CZ	1	3	2nd-3rd century
F5	T5	7	ditch fill	Roman pottery (Cam 304)	GA	1	5	later 2nd-3rd century
F5	T5	7	ditch fill	Roman pottery	GX	11	40	Roman
F5	T5	7	ditch fill	oyster shell		1	1	
F5	T5	7	ditch fill	Fe nail		1	10	
F5	T5	7	ditch fill	stone (sandstone piece)		1	250	
F5	T5	7	ditch fill	burnt flint		1	25	?prehistoric
F5	T5	37	U/S	Roman pot	HZ	1	200	1st-2nd/3rd century
F5	T5	37	U/S	Roman pot	GX	4	45	Roman
F7	T4	5	ditch fill	Roman tile		4	750	Roman
F7	T4	5	ditch fill	animal bone		small quantity	350	
F7	T4	5	ditch fill	Roman pot	HD	7	300	?1st-earlier 2nd century
F7	T4	5	ditch fill	Roman pot	GX	5	200	2nd-3rd century
F7	T4	5	ditch fill	Roman pot (Cam 40A)	GB	1	30	2nd-3rd century
F7	T4	5	ditch fill	oyster shell		1	1	
F7	T4	12		Roman pot	KX	1	5	2nd-3rd+ century
F8	T4	6	ditch fill	Roman tile		3	350	Roman
F8	T4	6	ditch fill	animal bone		small quantity	125	
F8	T4	6	ditch fill	Roman pot (Cam 279C)	GA	1	5	later 3rd-4th century
F8	T4	6	ditch fill	Roman pot (Cam 40A)	KX	2	50	2nd-4th century
F8	T4	6	ditch fill	Roman pot	DJ	1	5	1st-2nd/3rd century
F8	T4	6	ditch fill	Roman pot	GX	1	1	Roman
F8	T4	6	ditch fill	oyster shell		1	2	
F8	T4	6	ditch fill	glass – blue-green		1	2	Roman
F9	T4	11		Roman pot	GX	2	55	Roman ?3rd-4th century
F11	T5	8	feature surface	Roman pot	GX	3	25	Roman
F19	T4	10		Roman pot	GX	1	10	?1st-early 2nd century

Feature or layer	Trench	find bag	context	find type	pot fabrics	pieces	wt (g)	date
F19	T4	10		oyster shell		1	2	
F22	T4	9	feature surface	Roman tile		4	450	Roman
F22	T4	9	feature surface	Roman pot	HZ	3	90	1st-2nd/3rd century
F22	T4	9	feature surface	Roman pot (rim)	GTW	1	5	Late Iron Age
F22	T4	9	feature surface	pot, thick sandy sherd		1	20	Middle Iron Age
F22	T4	9	feature surface	stone, micaceous sandstone cobble (broken)		1	350	
F23	T2	13		Roman tile		3	600	Roman
F24		14		Roman tile		2	125	Roman
F24		14		Roman pot	GX	2	25	Roman
F24		14		Roman pot	GA	1	10	late 2nd-3rd/4th century
F26	T1	17		Roman tile		4	45	Roman
F27	T1	18	feature surface	Roman pot	GX	1	20	Roman
F29	T1	20	feature surface	Roman tile		1	200	Roman
F32	T1	21	feature surface	Roman pot	GX	1	35	Roman ?1st-2nd century
F32	T1	21	feature surface	Roman tile		2	50	Roman
F33	T1	22	feature surface	Roman tile		2	75	Roman
F33	T1	22	feature surface	Roman pot (small sherds)	GX	6	10	Roman
F34	T6	23	feature surface	animal bone		small quantity	120	
F35	T6	24	feature surface	Roman tile		4	375	Roman
F35	T6	24	feature surface	animal bone		small quantity	120	
F35	T6	24	feature surface	Roman pot	GX	1	10	Roman
F35	T6	24	feature surface	oyster shell		1	2	
F36	T6	25	feature surface	LIA pot, (rippled bowl)	GTW	1	20	Late Iron Age
F36	T6	25	feature surface	Roman roof tile		4	1,200	Roman
F36	T6	25	feature surface	Roman brick/tile		8	580	Roman
F36	T6	26	feature surface	Roman roof tile		10	300	Roman
F36	T6	26	feature surface	Roman pot	HZ	2	90	1st-2nd/3rd century
F36	T6	26	feature surface	Roman pot (mortaria flange)	TZ	3	10	1st-2nd/3rd century

Feature or layer	Trench	find bag	context	find type	pot fabrics	pieces	wt (g)	date
F36	T6	26	feature surface	Roman pot (large jar rim)	GX	1	55	Roman
F37	T6	27	feature surface	Roman tile		2	75	Roman
F37	T6	27	feature surface	Roman pot	GX	2	25	Roman
F37	T6	27	feature surface	Roman pot	DJ	2	10	1st-2nd/3rd century
F37	T6	27	feature surface	Roman pot	HZ	4	35	1st-2nd/3rd century
F38	T6	29	feature surface	Roman tile		3	150	Roman
F38	T6	29	feature surface	Roman pot	GX	1	10	Roman
F38	T6	29	feature surface	animal bone		3	15	
F39	T6	30	feature surface	Roman tile		1 + fragment	200	Roman
F43	T6	31	feature surface	fired clay ?tile/daub		1	5	
F44	T6	28	feature surface	Roman tile		1	25	Roman
F44	T6	28	feature surface	Roman pot (Cam 268 jar)	GX	3	20	mid 2nd-early 4th century
F44	T6	28	feature surface	Roman pot	DZ or CZ	3	2	Roman 1st - 2nd/2nd-3rd century

**Table 3: unstratified collected finds from spoil and proximity of numbered evaluation trenches.**

Trench	find bag	context	find type	pot fabrics	pieces	wt (g)	date
T1	19	U/S	Roman tile		4	250	Roman
T1	19	U/S	Roman pot	GX	1	5	Roman
T2	44	U/S	Roman pot	GX	7	75	Roman
T3		U/S (south end)	yellow-brown mortar		2	300	Roman
T3	2	U/S (south end)	Roman flue tile		5	530	Roman
T3	2	U/S (south end)	Roman tile		2	350	Roman
T3	2	U/S (south end)	Roman pottery	GA	1	60	2nd-4th?/ later 3rd-4th century
T3	2	U/S (south end)	Roman pottery (Cam 305 bowl)	GX	2	40	later 3rd-4th century
T3	2	U/S (south end)	metal or stone with black vitreous deposit on one side		1	110	
T3	2	U/S (south end)	stone, buff sandstone,		1	850	

Trench	find bag	context	find type	pot fabrics	pieces	wt (g)	date
			with mortared surface				
T3	22	U/S (south end)	<i>opus signinum</i> mortar		2	300	Roman
T3	36	U/S	Roman roof tile		4	180	Roman
T3	36	U/S	Roman pottery (rim)	GX	1	20	Roman
T3	36	U/S	brick with breather holes		2 (joining)	110	?post-Roman
T3	38	U/S	Roman flue tile		1	75	Roman
T3	38	U/S	animal bone		3	170	
T3	38	U/S	Roman pot (large storage jar + other sherds)	GX	8	300	Roman 1st-2nd/3rd century
T3	38	U/S	Roman pot	HZ	1	15	1st-2nd/3rd century
T3	41	U/S	Roman pot	GX	1	20	probably 2nd+ century
T3	41	U/S	Roman pot	AJ	1	20	1st-2nd century
T4	1	U/S	Roman pot (large storage jar rim)	GX	2	90	Roman 1st-2nd/3rd century
T4	15	U/S	Roman flue tile		1	130	Roman
T4	15	U/S	Roman tile <i>tessera</i> cube		1	45	Roman
T4	15	U/S	Roman tile		1	70	Roman
T4	15	U/S	Roman pot	GX	7	100	probably 2nd + century
T4	15	U/S	Roman pot (Cam 408-410)	EA	1	10	mid-late 3rd-4th century
T4	33	U/S	Roman pot	BA	1	5	2nd-early 3rd century
T4	39	U/S	Roman tile ? <i>tessera</i> cube		1	20	Roman
T4	39	U/S	Roman pot (mortaria)	TP	1	20	late 3rd-4th century
T4	39	U/S	Roman pot	GX	1	35	2nd+ century
T4	40	U/S	Roman pot (Cam 305)	KX	1	10	later 3rd-4th century
T4	40	U/S	Roman pot	GX	1	10	Roman
T4	42	U/S	Roman flue tile		6	850	Roman
T4	42	U/S	Roman tile		5	700	Roman
T4	42	U/S	Roman pot (Cam 305)	GX	8	230	later 3rd-4th century
T4	42	U/S	Roman pot (Cam 37)	KX	1	10	2nd-3rd century
T4	42	U/S	worked flint (accidentally broken flint flakes)		3	60	

Trench	find bag	context	find type	pot fabrics	pieces	wt (g)	date
T4	43	U/S	Roman flue tile		3	625	Roman
T4	43	U/S	Roman tile		2	1,000	Roman
T4	43	U/S	Roman pot	HD	1	20	1st-early 2nd? century
T4	43	U/S	Roman pot (Cam 108)	GX	2	20	1st-early 2nd century
T5	34	U/S	Roman pot	HZ	2	200	1st-2nd/3rd century
T6	32	U/S	Roman tile		1	270	Roman
T6	32	U/S	Roman pot (Cam 40B)	GB	1	25	2nd-3rd century
T6	32	U/S	pot		1	15	Middle Iron Age
T6	32	U/S	Roman pot	HZ	1	35	1st-2nd/3rd century
T6	32	U/S	Roman pot (mortaria flange)	TE	1	30	later 3rd-4th century

## 8 Discussion

Prior to the evaluation, there was no record of archaeological finds from the site, though a very small number of Roman finds and features were recorded for the surrounding area (Fig 1). The discovery of a Roman settlement site with evidence of preceding Middle and Late Iron Age occupation was quite unexpected.

Evidence of prehistoric (pre-Roman) activity consists of two sherds of Middle Iron Age pottery from T4 and T6, and two sherds of Late Iron Age grog-tempered ware also from T4 and T6. These sherds were unstratified or were residual in later (Roman) features. Though the site produced only a very small quantity of prehistoric pottery, it should be noted that almost no excavation of features took place, and there is little doubt that these sherds derive from Middle and Late Iron Age settlement on the site. Together with the Roman finds, these sherds indicate the possibility of continuity of occupation here from the Middle Iron Age through to the Roman period. Also possibly of prehistoric date are one piece of burnt flint from the fill of the ditch F5 and a few unstratified struck flint flakes. However, the flint flakes recovered consist of heavily-struck large flakes with cortex on one side. Such pieces are probably from accidentally broken flint nodules and not from prehistoric flint-working on the site.

The Roman occupation of the site is the period most evidenced by the features and finds, and Roman finds were associated with almost all of the features observed.

The Roman wall foundation of mortared flint nodules (F1) and the spread of demolition material (L1) at the south end of T3 demonstrate clearly the remains of a Roman building on this part of the site. That much of the flue tile appeared to be concentrated around the area of the wall foundation F1 indicates a masonry structure incorporating a heated room or rooms. The spread of Roman demolition material (L1) immediately south of F1 also incorporated flue tiles as well as roof tile, Roman brick (possibly fragments of *pilae* tiles from a hypocaust), and pink-coloured *opus signinum* mortar as well as pale-brown lime mortar. It can be noted that *opus signinum* mortar is used in areas where a good-quality mortar (water-, wear- and weather-resistant) is required. Here this probably represents either the remains of a mortar floor or the more general use of water-resistant mortar in a small bath-building or bath suite. That the spread of Roman demolition material L1 survives on the site also suggests a lowered area which this demolition is filling, possibly the base of a hypocaust.

The area occupied by this building is not known although a few observations can be made. F1 is almost certainly part of the north wall of the building, running east-west, and it probably extended west of T3, being cut away here by the ditch F2. This idea is supported by the extent of the demolition layer L1 which would appear to require F1 to have originally extended further west. The mortared footings did not extend to T4.

The main concentration of Roman tiles extends across the south-east corner of the site well beyond the immediate area of the wall foundation F1. While no other clear structural remains were located, a narrow spread of flint nodules and Roman tile fragments (F4) in T4 could represent a disturbed foundation for a wall line running approximately east-west. In support of this interpretation, it can be noted that, while in all the trenches the occurrence of ditches was very common, to the south of F4 there was no sign of any archaeological activity other than the spread of Roman building material in the topsoil. This absence of features could indicate a reserved area, either part of a compound or the site of a former building.

Overall, the spread of Roman building material and the structural remains observed suggest a heated room or rooms possibly associated with one or more extensive timber building(s). Apart from the spread of Roman demolition material L1 which suggests that there is a surface below it, there were no indications of any surviving floor levels. A very few tile *tessera* cubes from the area of T4 and T5 indicate that somewhere, associated with the Roman building(s), there had been areas of tessellated floor. A possible parallel for the type of building or buildings occupying this part of the site could be the Roman farm at Great Holts Farm, Boreham, near Chelmsford in Essex (EAA 105). Here a small bath suite with stone foundations and hypocausted rooms formed part of a complex with two timber-built barn-like buildings which it adjoined (EAA 105, figs 37, 26 & 34). The aisled barn-like buildings there would probably have had the dual function of dwelling and agricultural use (EAA 105, 220-21).

Around the area occupied by the Roman building(s), there are a large number of ditches. These range from small, probably relatively shallow ditches to what appeared to be much larger features, some of which could be broader quarry hollows. From the small areas of the ditches revealed in the archaeological trenching, none can be easily followed across the site running on the same alignment between trenches. This suggests that, rather than being extensive field ditches, they turned or joined other ditches forming a number of compounds. In this respect, it can be noted that many of the ditches in each trench followed a similar alignment. For example, most of the ditches on the north of the site (T6) are aligned north-south, those on the east (T4 & T5) are aligned north-west to south-east, and those on the west (T1 & T2) are aligned north-east to south-west. While this suggests a continuity within the ordering of the landscape, the number and density of ditches encountered and the proximity of some ditches to each other suggests that these represent a considerable time period over which ditches were being dug. This layout certainly represents a palimpsest resulting from activity certainly spanning the Roman period, while the Middle and Late Iron Age pottery recovered suggests that, overall, the ditches of this palimpsest probably span the Middle Iron Age to late Roman period.

## 9 Archive deposition

The paper and digital archive and finds are 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 BRNTM 2005.7.

## 10 Acknowledgements

The Trust would like to thank Mr Alan O'Leary and Apol Silva & Orchards Ltd for commissioning and funding the work, also Mr Graham Hall of Prime Irrigation Ltd. The fieldwork was carried out by S Benfield and Will Clarke.

## 11 Abbreviations

CAR	Colchester Archaeological Report
CAT	Colchester Archaeological Trust
CM	Colchester Museums
EAA	East Anglian Archaeology
ECC	Essex County Council
EHHER	Essex Historic Environment Record
HEM	Historic Environment Management
IFA	Institute of Field Archaeologists
NGR	National Grid Reference

## 12 References

- |                               |      |  |
|-------------------------------|------|--|
| CAR 10                        | 1999 | <i>Colchester Archaeological Report 10: Roman pottery from excavations in Colchester, 1971-1986</i> , by R P Symonds and S Wade, ed by P Bidwell and A Croom                                 |
| CM                            | 2002 | <i>Guidelines for the standards and practice of archaeological fieldwork in the Borough of Colchester</i>  |
| CM                            | 2003 | <i>Guidelines for deposition of archaeological archives with Colchester Museums</i>  |
| EAA 3                         | 1997 | <i>Research and archaeology: a framework for the Eastern Counties 1. Resource assessment</i> , East Anglian Archaeology, Occasional Papers, <b>3</b> , ed by J Glazebrook                    |
| EAA 8                         | 2000 | <i>Research and archaeology: a framework for the Eastern Counties 2. Research agenda and strategy</i> , East Anglian Archaeology, Occasional Papers, <b>8</b> , ed by N Brown & J Glazebrook |
| EAA 14                        | 2003 | <i>Standards for field archaeology in the East of England</i> , East Anglian Archaeology, Occasional Papers, <b>14</b> , by D Gurney   |
| EAA 105                       | 2003 | <i>Excavations at Greats Holts Farm, Boreham, Essex, 1992-94</i> , Eastern Anglian Archaeology, <b>105</b> , by Mark Germany   |
| Hawkes, C F C,<br>& Hull, M R | 1947 | <i>Camulodunum</i> , RRCSAL, <b>14</b>   |
| Holloway, B                   | 2005 | Written Scheme of Investigation for an archaeological evaluation at Clarendon House, New London Road, Chelmsford, Essex, Colchester (unpublished CAT WSI)                                    |
| Hull, M R                     | 1958 | <i>Roman Colchester</i> , RRCSAL, <b>20</b>  |
| IFA                           | 1999 | <i>Standard and guidance for an archaeological evaluation</i>  |
| IFA                           | 2001 | <i>Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials</i>  |
| MAP 2                         | 1991 | <i>Management of archaeological projects</i> , 2nd edition (English Heritage)  |



## 13 Glossary

context	either a feature, layer or a complex of layers/features
Fe	iron
feature	an identifiable thing like a pit, a wall, a drain, a floor; can contain 'contexts'
flue tile	tiles, usually in the form of a box-like tube used to conduct hot air as part of Roman hypocaust systems
hypocaust	a raised floor under which hot air can circulate
Late Iron Age	period from c 75 BC-43 AD
layer	distinct or distinguishable deposit of soil
Middle Iron Age	period from c 300 BC-75 AD
modern	period from the 19th century onwards to the present
mortaria	Roman bowl which incorporated small stone grits on the inside and which is normally used for mixing in the kitchen
natural	geological deposit undisturbed by human activity
Pb	lead
<i>pilae</i>	supports for a Roman hypocaust floor, often stacks of square tiles
post-medieval	after Henry VIII to around the late 18th century
Roman	period from AD 43 to c AD 410
U/S	unstratified (without a clear archaeological context)

© Colchester Archaeological Trust 2005

### Distribution list:

Alan O'Leary, Petches Yew Farm, Finchingfield, Braintree, Essex  
Grahame Hall, Prime Irrigation Ltd, Darsham, Saxmundham, Suffolk  
Vanessa Clarke, HEM group, Essex County Council  
Essex Historic Environment Record, Essex County Council



### Colchester Archaeological Trust

12 Lexden Road,  
Colchester,  
Essex CO3 3NF

tel.: (01206) 541051  
tel./fax: (01206) 500124  
email: [archaeologists@catuk.org](mailto:archaeologists@catuk.org)

Checked by: Philip Crummy  
Date: 19.07.05



**Plate 2 T3: Roman wall foundation F1, view south-east.**



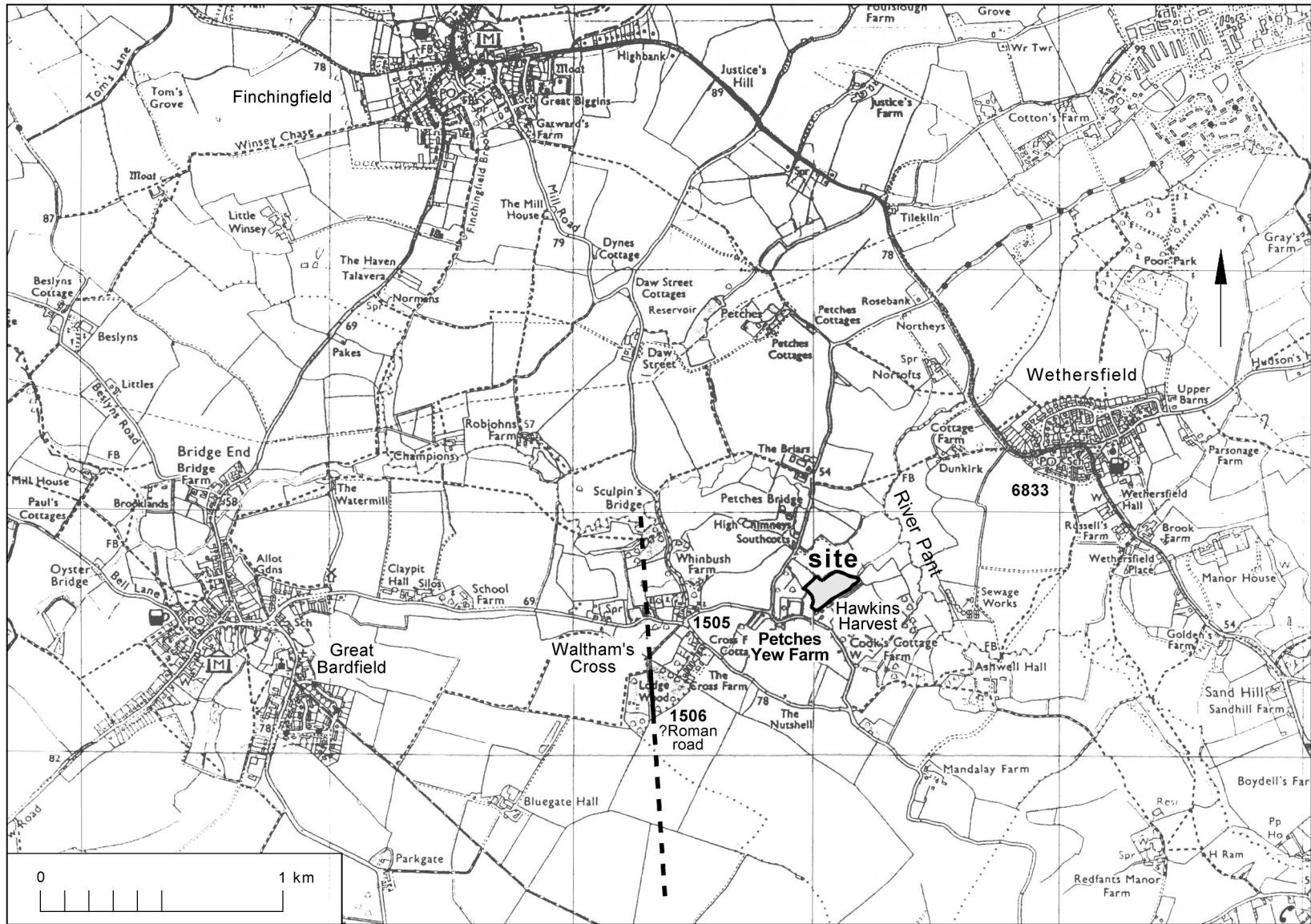
**Plate 3 T3: Roman demolition L1, south of Roman foundation F1 and cut by ditch F2 to left, with F3 in background, view north-east.**



**Plate 4 Possible wall foundation (F4 in T4) with T5 in background, view east.**



**Plate 5 T4: possible wall foundation F4, view west.**



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

Fig 1 Site location and surrounding archaeology.

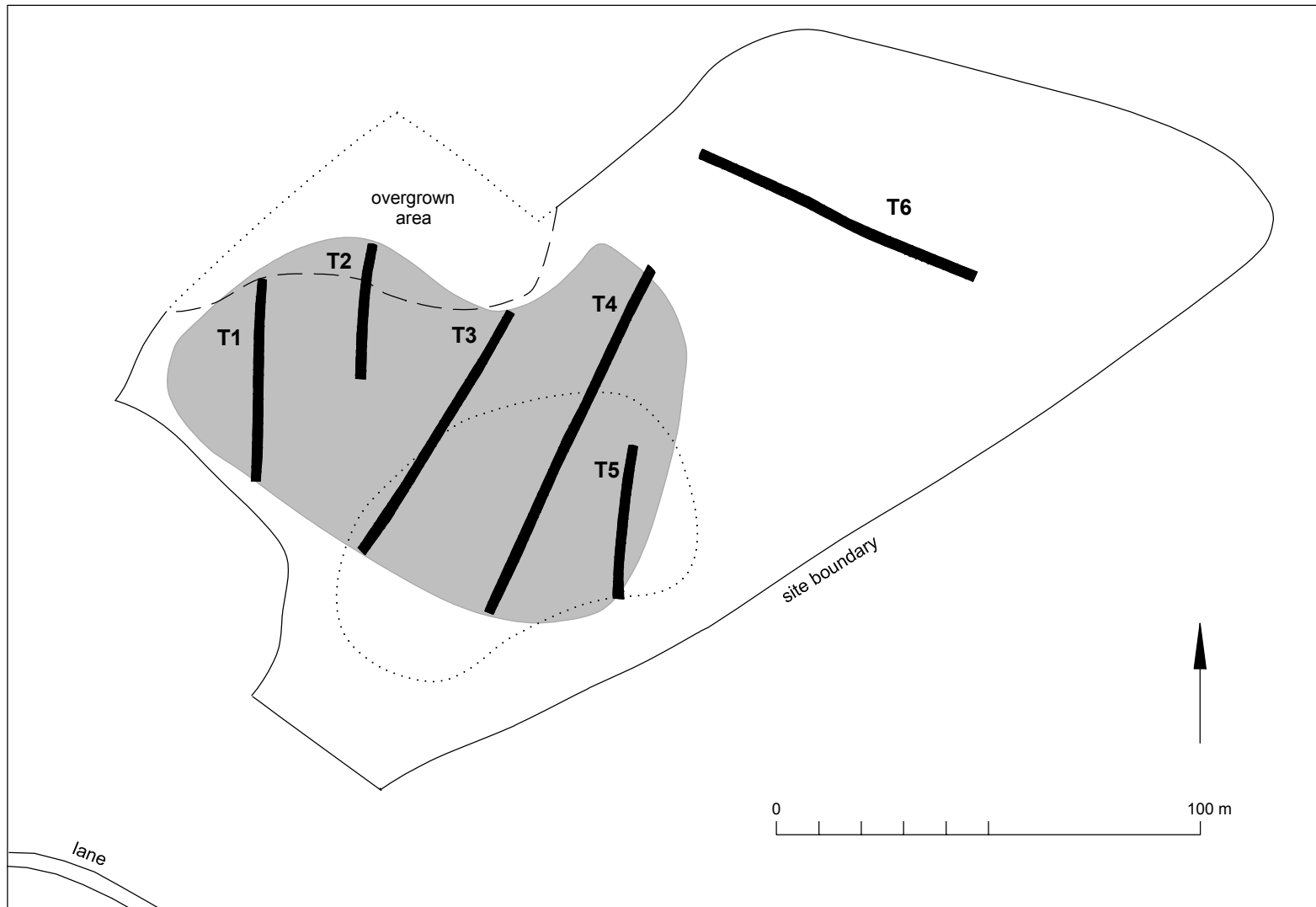


Fig 2 Position of evaluation trenches in relation to the location of the proposed reservoir excavation footprint (toned).

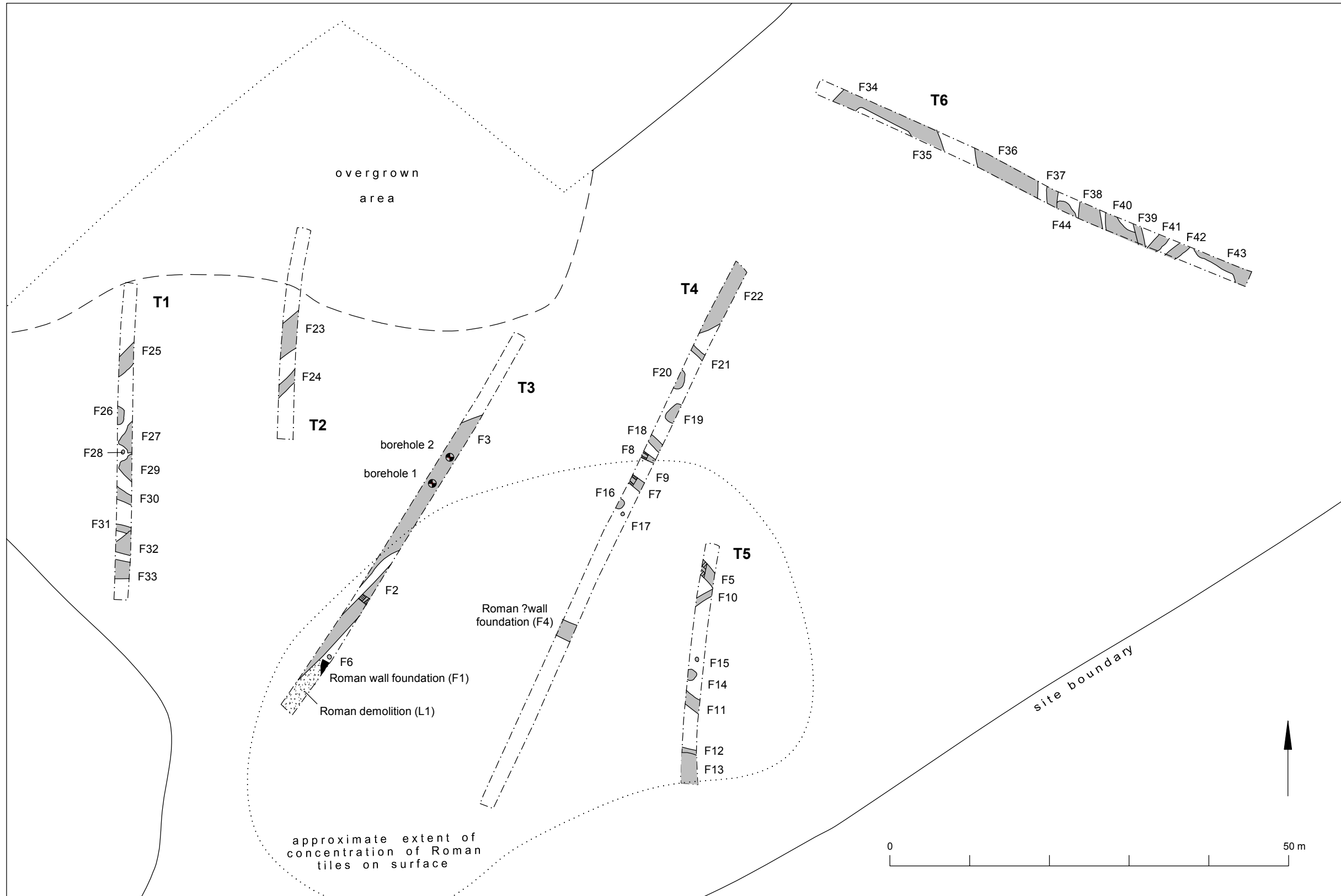


Fig 3 Plan of evaluation trenches and features.

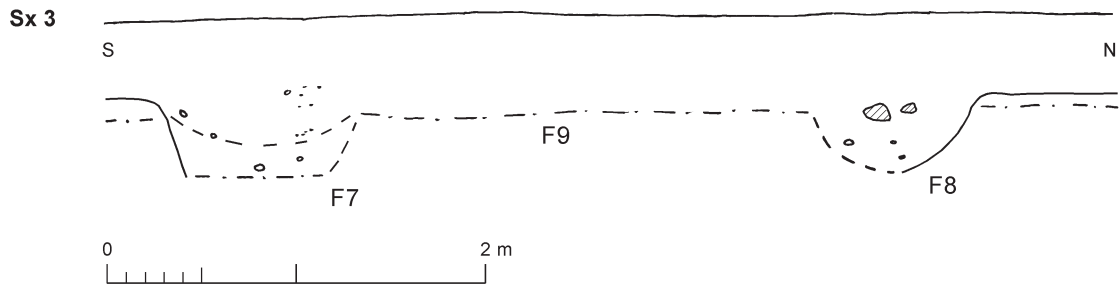
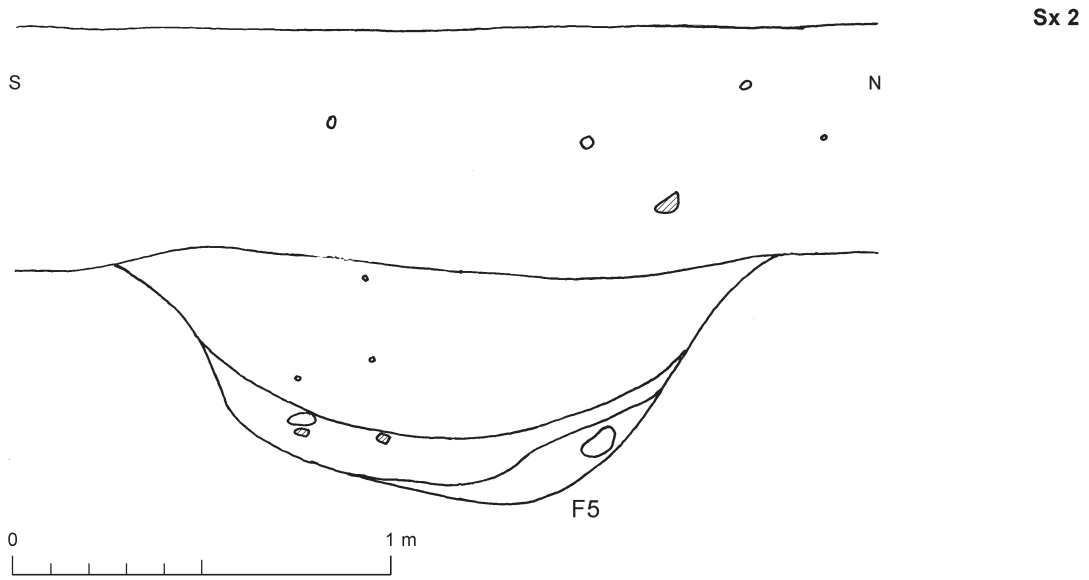
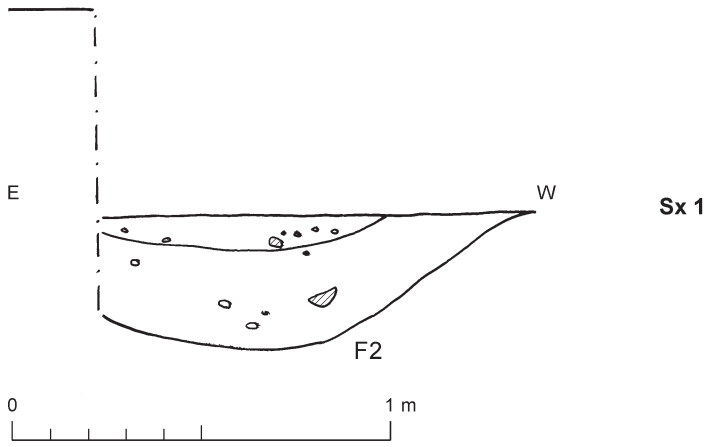



Fig 4 Sections.

 = Roman tile

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

**Summary sheet**

<b>Site address:</b> Kell Field, Petches Yew Farm, Finchingfield, Essex	
<b>Parish:</b> Finchingfield	<b>District:</b> Braintree
<b>NGR:</b> TL 7006 3060	<b>Site code:</b> ECC site code FFHH05
<b>Type of work:</b> Evaluation	<b>Site director/group:</b> Colchester Archaeological Trust
<b>Date of work:</b> 27 June-4th July 2005	<b>Size of area investigated:</b> 0.825 hectares (reservoir footprint) – approx 4% covered by evaluation trenches (plus 1 further trench)
<b>Location of finds/curating museum:</b> Braintree Museum (accession code BRNTM 2005.7)	<b>Funding source:</b> Developer
<b>Further seasons anticipated?</b> Possibly	<b>Related EHER nos:</b> 1505, 1506, 6833
<b>Final report:</b> CAT Report 329 and summary in <i>EAH</i>	
<b>Periods represented:</b> Middle Iron Age, Late Iron Age, Roman	
<p><b>Summary of fieldwork results:</b>  <i>An archaeological evaluation by trial-trenching was carried out on Kell Field, Petches Yew Farm, Finchingfield, Essex in June-July 2005 in response to the planned construction of a reservoir. Initially, five evaluation trenches were machine-excavated within the proposed footprint of the reservoir. Later, a sixth evaluation trench was excavated on another area of the site to evaluate an alternative location for the reservoir. A concentration of Roman flue tiles and roof tiles was observed on the field surface in the south-east part of the site. This proved to be the site of a Roman building with a mortared flint foundation. A spread of Roman demolition material, adjacent to the wall foundation and incorporating flue tiles and opus signinum mortar, may be filling the lowered area of a hypocaust base. The spread of Roman tiles and an absence of archaeological features east of the identified building probably indicates the site of another Roman building although probably of timber construction. A disturbed line of tile and flint nodules within this area could represent a wall line. One or two tile tessera cubes indicate a tessellated floor, though no floor levels were recorded other than the possible hypocaust base. Beyond the area of the Roman building and across the whole site were numerous ditches which suggest a long period of occupation. Only a limited amount of excavation was carried out; however, it is clear that the ditches are primarily of Roman date, and probably most if not all represent compounds around settlement rather than field ditches. Pottery from the ditches, mostly recovered from the surface of the features, spans the Roman period, and sherds of Middle Iron Age and Late Iron Age date demonstrate later prehistoric settlement on the site.</i></p>	
<b>Previous summaries/reports:</b> none	
<b>Author of summary:</b> S Benfield	<b>Date of summary:</b> July 2005