

**An archaeological watching brief at
'Foxborough', Halstead Road,
Sible Hedingham, Braintree, Essex
February-March 2008**

**report prepared by
Ben Holloway**

**on behalf of
Charles Britton Equestrian Construction**

CAT project ref.: 08/2b
NGR: TL 7963 3222 (c)
Museum accession code: pending from Braintree Museum
HEM code: SHFO 08



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CAT Report 461
March 2008

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1 Summary

No archaeological features or deposits were observed during a watching brief held on the construction of a new outdoor riding arena at 'Foxborough'. Peg-tile and post-medieval brick fragments were observed in the initial topsoil strip, but no finds were retained.

2 Introduction (Fig 1)

- 2.1** This is the archive report on an archaeological watching brief carried out by the Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) on the site of a new equestrian arena at 'Foxborough', Halstead Road, Sible Hedingham, Braintree, Essex. The watching brief was carried out on behalf of Mr Charles Britton of Charles Britton Equestrian Construction between the 28th February and 3rd March 2008.
- 2.2** Site location is NGR TL 7963 3222 (centre).
- 2.3** A brief for the project was written by Teresa O'Connor of the ECC Historic Environment Management (HEM) team. CAT submitted a written scheme of investigation (WSI) for the project which received approval from the ECC HEM team officer.
- 2.4** This report mirrors standards and practices contained in the Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (IFA 1999) and *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (IFA 2001). Other sources used were *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 Aim

The aim of the watching brief was to establish the character, extent, date, significance and condition of any archaeological remains and deposits affected by the construction project.

4 Archaeological background

- 4.1** The area surrounding the site has archaeological potential. Various local findspots and sites are recorded in the Essex Historic Environment Record (EHER).
- 4.2** Roman or medieval pottery has been found in close proximity to 'Foxborough' (EHER nos 6843, 6856, 6857).
- 4.3** In the field to the south-west of the site, a dark soil layer containing Roman pottery and roof tile was identified at a depth of 1m when a sand-pit was being dug. These finds suggest settlement and the proximity of the site of a Romano-British building.
- 4.4** Cropmarks to the north of the farm (on the far side of the River Colne) indicate the possibility of prehistoric activity in the form of enclosures and a trackway (EHER no 9353).
- 4.5** To the south of the site lies the possible course of the Roman road which formed part of the route between Chelmsford (*Caesaromagus*) and Ixworth in Suffolk. Ivan Margery, an expert in Roman roads, defined this as his route 33a (EHER no 7354).
- 4.6** Prehistoric finds have also been dredged up from the nearby River Colne. In addition, patches of river-terrace deposits associated with a once-larger Palaeolithic river system indicate that Pleistocene deposits could survive in this area.

5 Results (Figs 1-2)

An area measuring 40 x 30m was monitored during the initial topsoil and subsequent subsoil strip to form the basis of a new outdoor equestrian arena. The stripping was done using a 360° mechanical excavator, first removing 0.10m of topsoil (L1) and creating a bund on the north-western edge of the site. On completion of the topsoil removal, 0.15m of subsoil (L2) was removed from the south-eastern half of the site to expose geological material (L3) at 0.25m below ground-level. This material was used to build up the north-western half of the site, creating an even formation level.

No archaeological features were observed during the watching brief. There was, however, evidence of post-medieval activity in the form of plough scars visible in the subsoil surface, and in cuts for field drains on the eastern side of the stripped area.

6 Finds

No archaeological finds were recovered. Fragments of post-medieval brick, peg-tile, and coal (and a modern horse-shoe) were observed in the initial topsoil strip and in the plough-scarring, but none of these were retained.

7 Discussion

No archaeological features were identified. The only activity identified was datable to the post-medieval/modern period, and consisted of shallow plough scars which crossed the stripped area. These would appear to relate to agricultural activity, ie deep ploughing and soil preparation.

Conversations with the site owners and their contractors, in addition to observations of the surrounding area, indicate that the site has been under pasture for some time and was used in general cultivation prior to that. This is supported by the results of the watching brief which provide evidence of activity consistent with agricultural practice in the post-medieval and modern periods.

8 Acknowledgements

The Colchester Archaeological Trust would like to thank Charles Britton Equestrian Construction for commissioning and funding the work. The project was monitored by Teresa O'Connor, Essex County Council Historic Environment Management team officer. The site work was directed by B Holloway and carried out by A Wightman.

9 References

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| EAA 3 | 1997 | <i>Research and archaeology: a framework for the Eastern Counties 1. Resource assessment</i> , East Anglian Archaeology, Occasional Papers, 3 , 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, 8 , ed by N Brown and J Glazebrook |
| EAA 14 | 2003 | <i>Standards for field archaeology in the East of England</i> , East Anglian Archaeology, Occasional Papers, 14 , ed by D Gurney |
| IFA | 1999 | <i>Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief</i> |
| IFA | 2001 | <i>Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials</i> |

10 Glossary and abbreviations

AOD	Above Ordnance Datum, ie height above sea level
ECC	Essex County Council
EHHER	Essex Historic Environment Record, ECC
feature	an identifiable thing like a pit, a wall, a drain, a floor
HEM	Historic Environment Management team, ECC
IFA	Institute of Field Archaeologists
modern	the period from the mid 19th century to the present
natural	geological deposit undisturbed by human activity
NGR	National Grid Reference
post-medieval	period from c 1500 to the mid 19th century

11 Archive deposition

The finds and the digital and paper archive are held by the Colchester Archaeological Trust at 12 Lexden Road, Colchester, Essex CO3 3NF, but both will be permanently deposited with Braintree Museum under an accession code not yet granted.

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Distribution list:

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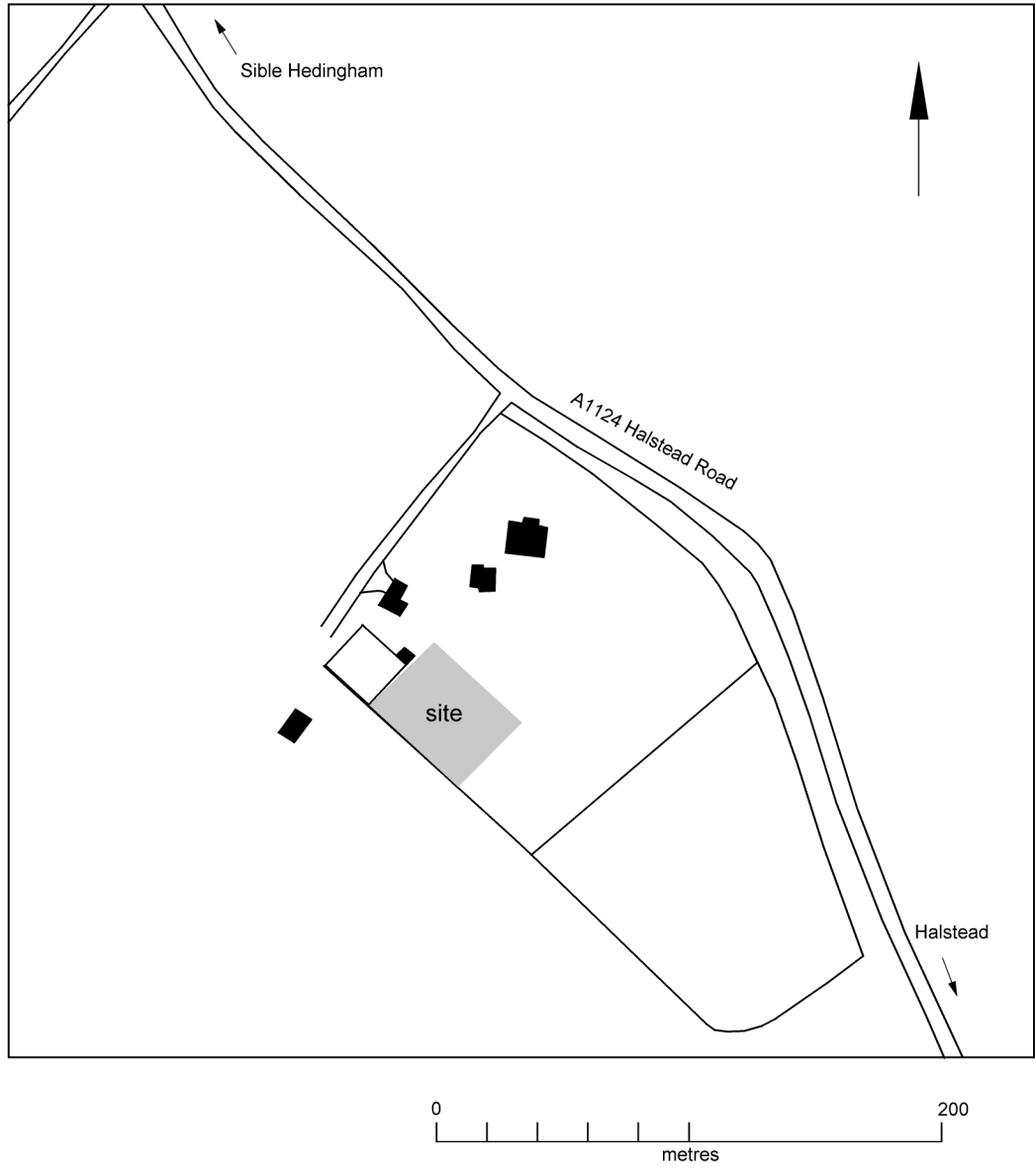


Fig 1 Site location.

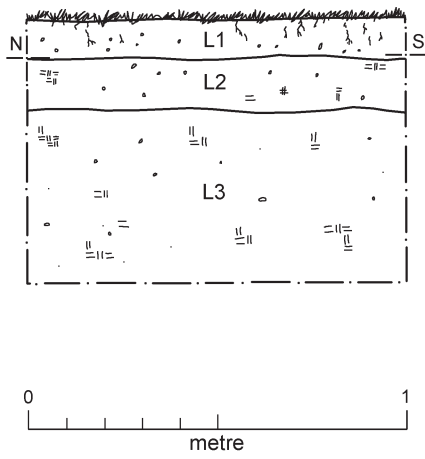


Fig 2 Representative section.

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

Summary sheet

Site address: 'Foxborough', Halstead Road, Sible Hedingham, Braintree, Essex	
Parish: Sible Hedingham	District: Braintree
NGR: TL 7963 3222 (c)	Site code: HEM site code SHFO 08 CAT project code: 08/2d BRNTM accession code pending
Type of work: Watching brief	Site director/group: Colchester Archaeological Trust
Date of work: February-March 2008	Size of area investigated: 30m x 40m
Location of finds/curating museum: Braintree Museum	Funding source: Developer
Further seasons anticipated? No	Related EHER nos: 6843, 6856, 6857, 9353, 7354
Final report: CAT Report 461	
Periods represented: post-medieval, modern	
Summary of fieldwork results: <i>No archaeological features or deposits were observed during a watching brief and recording project held on the construction of a new outdoor riding arena at 'Foxborough'. Peg-tile and post-medieval brick fragments were observed in the initial topsoil strip, but no finds were retained.</i>	
Previous summaries/reports: None	
Authors of summary: Ben Holloway and Howard Brooks	Date of summary: March 2008