

**An archaeological evaluation by trial-trenching
at 'Playgolf', Bakers Lane,
Westhouse Farm,
Colchester, Essex**

May 2012



**commissioned by Mr Stephen Belchem
on behalf of ADP Ltd.**

report prepared by Chris Lister

Planning reference: 120708
CAT project code: 12/05a
Colchester and Ipswich Museums accession code: 2012.33
NGR: TL 973 261 (c)



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

tel.: (01206) 541051
email: archaeologists@catuk.org

CAT Report 647
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1 Summary

Archaeological evaluation was carried out at 'Playgolf', Westhouse Farm, Bakers Lane, Colchester ahead of the construction of a coffee shop and new car parking. The site is located 2.5km to the north-west of Colchester, in the Lexden area, and is to the west of Moat Farm Dyke, part of the extensive and complex earthwork defensive system of pre-Roman Colchester. It lies within an enclosure known from cropmarks and believed to date to the Early Iron Age.

Two trial-trenches were excavated during the evaluation. One of these located the western side of the enclosure producing pottery sherds and finds dated to the Bronze Age and Iron Age. Roman activity, in the form of a field boundary, was also recorded on the site.

2 Introduction (Figure 1)

- 2.1 This is the archive report on the archaeological evaluation by trial-trenching carried out on behalf of Mr Stephen Belchem by the Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT), at 'Playgolf', Westhouse Farm, Bakers Lane, Colchester, Essex (site centre: NGR TL 973 261).
- 2.2 A planning application was submitted to Colchester Borough Council (LPA Ref. No. 120708) in April 2012 for the construction of a single storey coffee house adjoining the golf driving range, and an additional car parking area located to the south of the driving range.
- 2.3 'PlayGolf' is located 2.5km to the north-west of Colchester, in the Lexden area. The site is flat and lies at approximately 60m AOD.
- 2.4 Given the archaeological potential of the site, and following *Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment* (DCLG 2010), Colchester Borough Council (CBC) recommended that an archaeological evaluation by trial-trenching should be carried out. The recommended work was described in a brief written by Martin Winter, the Colchester Borough Council Archaeological Officer (CBCAO) in May 2012 (Winter 2012).
- 2.5 The archaeological evaluation was undertaken in May 2012 in accordance with the CBC brief and a corresponding Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) produced by CAT (CAT 2012) and agreed with the CBCAO.
- 2.6 In addition to the WSI, all fieldwork and reporting was carried out in accordance with CAT's *Policies and procedures* (CAT 2008), the Institute for Archaeologists *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (IfA 2008a), and *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (IfA 2008c), along with *Guidelines on Standards and Practices for Archaeological Fieldwork in the Borough of Colchester* (CIMS 2008a) and *Guidelines on the Preparation and Transfer of Archaeological Archives to Colchester and Ipswich Museums* (CBC 2008b). The guidance contained in the documents *Management of research projects in the historic environment* (MoRPHE), and *Standards for field archaeology in the East of England* (EAA 14) was also followed.

3 Archaeological background (Figure 1)

This section is based on records from the Essex Historic Environment Record (EHER) held at Essex County Council, County Hall, Chelmsford.

The site lies approximately 210m west of a Scheduled Ancient Monument (Essex SAM 10), Moat Farm Dyke (EHER 11627), part of the extensive and complex earthwork defensive system of pre-Roman Colchester.

In addition, the site is within a square enclosure that was first identified as a cropmark (EHER 11842). This cropmark has been the focus of several archaeological investigations. In 1952 Lieutenant-Colonel RJ Appleby cut an exploratory trench across the cropmark in the field immediately east of Westhouse Farm (Report of Colchester and Essex Museum 1954). This located the enclosure

ditch, which was recorded as 16 feet (4.9m) wide and 4 feet (1.2m) deep, containing pottery 'thought to be Bronze Age'. Crummy dates the pottery (now lost) to between the 8th century and c 50 BC, with the earthwork itself dating to the Early or Middle Iron Age (Hawkes & Crummy 1995, 137). Between 1999 and 2002, CAT carried out investigations that confirmed the enclosure as late prehistoric in date with archaeological deposits determined to be approximately 300mm below modern ground level (CAT Reports 47, 59, 167, 182).

4 Aim

The aim of the investigation was to establish the extent, character and date of archaeological deposits within the development area and to preserve by record any remains which would be destroyed by the construction of the new coffee shop and car park. A specific aim was to retrieve dating evidence for the western ditch of the enclosure.

5 Results (Figures 1-3)

5.1 Introduction

In fulfilment of the brief and WSI (Winter 2012; CAT 2012), two trenches totalling 30m in length (T1-T2) were dug using a mechanical excavator, equipped with a toothless bucket, under the supervision of a CAT archaeologist. One of the trenches (T1 - 10m long) was located in parking spaces to the south of the driving range. The second trench (T2 - 20m long) was located to the east of existing car parking, on the edge of the golf course (Fig 1). Trench 1 was excavated through tarmac and a layer of granite chippings 200mm thick (combined as L4). This sealed a compacted layer of brown sandy-silt soil (L5) that is interpreted as a topsoil remnant. L5 sealed an accumulation layer of disturbed plough soil (L2), greyish-brown sandy clay, which in turn sealed the natural geology (L3), a coarse orangey-brown sand and gravel mix. Trench 2, on the edge of the golf course, was excavated through turf and topsoil (L1), which sealed L2. As with Trench 1, L2 directly sealed the natural geology L3.

Excavation ceased in both trenches at L3, where archaeological features could be seen cutting the natural geology. These took the form of three pits and two ditches, which were excavated by hand to recover dating evidence. The finds recovered from these features provide good evidence for an analysis of the site. Archaeological activity on the site has been grouped as follows:

Period 1: Early to Late Iron Age

Period 2: Roman

Period 3: modern

5.2 Period 1: Early to Late Iron Age (Figures 1-3)

One of the features in Trench 1 was a substantial ditch, approximately 3.5m wide by 1.15m deep, aligned north-east to south-west (F1). This had two distinct fills: an upper fill of sandy silt, c 300mm thick at its deepest, which covered most of the width of the ditch but did not meet the edges, and a homogenous lower fill of silty sand and gravel. Both fills contained charcoal flecking throughout, but the lower fill had a much higher inclusion of stones. Finds recovered from the upper fill included pottery sherds dated to the Late Bronze Age or Iron Age, a worked flint flake and a burnt flint. Finds from the lower fill included pottery sherds ranging in date from the Early Iron Age through to the Late Iron Age, fragments of fired clay, several flint flakes and a burnt flint. A small undated pit (F4) may also be associated with this period.

5.3 Period 2: Roman (Figures 1-3)

Only one feature can be dated to the Roman period, a north-west to south-east aligned ditch (F1) located in Trench 2. This contained a large fragment of Roman *tegula* and pottery sherds dated to the Middle Iron Age, which must be residual in this context.

5.4 Period 3: modern (Figures 1-2)

The remaining feature from the evaluation was a large pit at the south end of Trench 2. This contained fragments of roofing slate, peg-tile and agricultural ironwork; consequently this feature was interpreted as modern and not excavated.

No evidence of Saxon, medieval or post-medieval activity was found during the evaluation.

A natural feature (F2) was also recorded in Trench 2.

6 The finds

by Stephen Benfield

Introduction

A small quantity of finds consisting of pottery, ceramic building material (CBM), fired clay, worked flints and heat affected (burnt) flints was recovered from ditch features (F1 & F2) located in two evaluation trenches (T1 & T2). All of the finds are listed and described by finds number for each feature in Table 2 and a date is provided for each finds number. The finds are dated to the later prehistoric (later Bronze Age to Iron Age), Late Iron Age and Roman periods. The pottery fabrics recorded are listed in Table 1.

Fabric code	Fabric name
HMF	Hand-made, flint-tempered
HMF/S	Hand-made, flint and sand-tempered
HMS	Hand-made, sand-tempered
GTW	Late Iron Age grog-tempered ware

Table 1 Pottery fabrics

Discussion

Although not closely dated, the prehistoric pottery, worked flints and probably also the burnt flints, indicate occupation in the later prehistoric (later Bronze Age to Iron Age) period. Some of the pottery can be dated to the Middle Iron Age (c 350-50 BC). However, the prehistoric pottery consists of small abraded sherds which are, or are likely to be, residual in the contexts from which they were recovered. A sherd of Late Iron Age grog-tempered pottery from the middle fill of the ditch F5(T1) shows that this was an open feature in the Late Iron Age period or later, and a large piece of Roman tile (probably of 2nd-century date or later) from the fill of the ditch F1(T2) shows that this was also at least a partly open feature in the Roman period or later.

Trench	ctxt	find	ctxt type	finds	finds date
1	F5	2	ditch (upper fill)	Pottery Prehistoric , Fabric HMF/S 1@2g, small abraded sherd with some quartz and burnt(?) flint-temper (Late Bronze Age(?)-Iron Age) Worked flint 1@7g, broad, squat flake with broad striking platform and large percussion bulb, not patinated, some edge damage from use wear or rough retouching (later Bronze Age/late prehistoric). (There are also two natural fracture pieces). Burnt flint 1@36g (prehistoric)	Late Bronze Age-Iron Age
1	F5	3	ditch (middle fill)	Pottery Prehistoric Fabric HMF 1@6g with common medium-large flint inclusions (Neolithic-Early Iron Age); Fabric HMF/S 1@22g, thick (18 mm) abraded sherd from a base(?), sparse flint and sand-temper (Iron Age?);	Late Iron Age (residual prehistoric, later Bronze Age?-Iron Age)

Trench	ctxt	find	ctxt type	finds	finds date
				Fabric HMS 3@6g, abraded small pieces (Middle Iron Age, c 350-50 BC). Late Iron Age Fabric GTW 1@4g (M1C BC-M1C AD). Fired clay 2@9g, abraded fragments Worked flint 4@27g, squat flakes, three with broad striking platforms, all with some cortex, none patinated, one with hinge fracture, some edge damage from use wear or rough retouching on two (later Bronze Age/later prehistoric) Burnt flint 1@66g (prehistoric)	
1	F5	4	ditch (lower fill)	Burnt flint 1@104g (prehistoric)	prehistoric
2	F1	1	ditch (middle fill)	Pottery Prehistoric , Fabric HMS 1@6g, abraded (Middle Iron Age, c 350-50 BC) CBM Roman 1@481g, <i>tegula</i> , orange-red fine sand fabric, slightly abraded, base thickness 17-20mm, flange height 45mm (probably 2nd-3rd century)	Roman (probably 2C+) (residual Middle Iron Age)

Table 2 List of finds with dates

7 Discussion

Archaeological activity on the development site appears to have started in the Early Iron Age and continued into the Roman period. The large ditch identified in Trench 1 must be the western side of the enclosure identified through cropmarks and previous investigations. Although the exposed section of the ditch was narrower than that excavated by Lieutenant-Colonel Appleby in 1952 (3.5m wide compared to 4.9m), the difference may be due to damage caused by the construction of the car park, or may just reflect variances in width. The cropmark would seem to suggest that parts of the enclosure are wider than others. The depth of the ditch (1.15m) was virtually identical to the depth observed in 1952. One difference to Appleby's excavation was in the ditch fill. Appleby noted a 'gravelly loam' in the upper fill, with a 'loam' for the lower fill. The section dug during the evaluation reversed this observation, with the lower fill having a significantly higher proportion of gravel and stones compared to the upper fill. This probably reflects a slightly different composition of the natural geology in the vicinity of this section of the enclosure ditch. Due to the size of many of the stones within it, this lower fill must represent the backfilling of the ditch rather than gradual silting up. The lack of silting at the bottom of the ditch may indicate maintenance of the enclosure at this particular point, particularly as a sherd of grog-tempered pottery dated to the Late Iron Age was recovered from the lower fill.

Although some of the finds recovered from the enclosure ditch date to the Bronze Age (two small sherds of pottery and five flint flakes), the presence of Iron Age pottery sherds in the same fill indicates that these are probably residual. It is highly likely that the Bronze Age finds came from prehistoric features destroyed by the digging of the Iron Age ditch. There is a small possibility that the ditch was cut in the Bronze Age and maintained until it was backfilled and that the finds found their way into the fill during this process, but there is little evidence to support this theory.

The undated pit to the east of the excavated section is likely to be of the same date as the enclosure. This is approximately the same distance in from the ditch as two cropmarks interpreted as large pits (CAT Report 47 1999, 14). The presence of the undated pit appears to confirm these cropmarks as archaeological features.

The Roman ditch in Trench 2 is quite interesting as it provides evidence for rural Roman activity, probably in the form of farming, and must represent a field boundary. The *tegula* may derive from a high status building in the vicinity or, perhaps more likely as it is slightly abraded, it may have been brought into the fields as a result of manuring. However, it is the orientation of the ditch that is most interesting. The Roman ditch is located parallel to, and 9m to the south of the southern side of the Iron Age enclosure ditch. This suggests the enclosure ditch may still have been in

use, or at least still visible, when the Roman ditch was dug, a theory supported by a fragment of Roman tile recovered from the upper fill of Appleby's trench.

The feature dated to the modern period is most likely associated with Westhouse Farm and probably dates to the early twentieth century.

Overall the evaluation has confirmed the findings from previous investigations and provided further evidence for Iron Age and Roman activity at Westhouse Farm. This can be broadly characterized as an enclosure, possibly dating to the Bronze Age, but probably dating from the Early Iron Age, that continued in use down to the Roman period, when it influenced the layout of the Roman field system, with a final phase when the enclosure was backfilled, probably in the first or second century AD. Further excavation, on a much larger scale, is needed to definitively date the enclosure.

8 Acknowledgements

Colchester Archaeological Trust would like to thank Mr Stephen Belchem of ADP Ltd. for commissioning and funding the excavation.

The fieldwork was conducted by Ben Holloway and Chris Lister. Plans and illustrations were produced by Chris Lister. The project was monitored by Martin Winter on behalf of Colchester Borough Council.

9 References

Note: all CAT reports, except for DBAs, are available online in .pdf format at <http://cat.essex.ac.uk>

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|------------------|-------|---|
| CAR 11 | 1995 | <i>Colchester Archaeological Report 11, Camulodunum 2</i> , by C F C Hawkes and P Crummy |
| CAT Report 47 | 1999 | <i>A desk-based assessment of the archaeological remains around Westhouse Farm, Lexden, Colchester.</i> |
| CAT Report 59 | 2000 | <i>An archaeological evaluation at the Lexden Wood Golf Club (Westhouse Farm), Lexden, Colchester, Essex.</i> |
| CAT Report 167 | 2001 | <i>An archaeological watching brief at Lexden Wood Golf Club (Westhouse Farm), Lexden, Colchester, Essex</i> |
| CAT Report 182 | 2002 | <i>An archaeological watching brief on an extension to the driving range at Lexden Wood Golf Club (Westhouse Farm), Colchester, Essex</i> |
| CAT | 2008 | <i>Policies and procedures</i> |
| CAT | 2012 | <i>Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological trial-trenching at 'Playgolf', Westhouse Farm, Bakers Lane, Colchester, Essex.</i> |
| CBC | 2008a | <i>Guidelines on Standards and Practices for Archaeological Fieldwork in the Borough of Colchester</i> |
| CBC | 2008b | <i>Guidelines on the Preparation and Transfer of Archaeological Archives to Colchester and Ipswich Museums</i> |
| DCLG | 2010 | <i>Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment.</i> Dept of Communities and Local Government |
| EAA 14 | 2003 | <i>Standards for field archaeology in the East of England</i> , East Anglian Archaeology, Occasional Papers, 14, ed by D Gurney |
| English Heritage | 2006 | <i>Management of research projects in the historic environment (MoRPHE)</i> |
| Hull, M R | 1954 | <i>Report of Colchester and Essex Museum for the period April 1st, 1950 to March 31st, 1954.</i> |
| IfA | 2008a | <i>Standard and guidance for archaeological evaluation</i> |
| IfA | 2008b | <i>Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials</i> |
| Winter, M | 2012 | <i>Brief for an archaeological evaluation: Playgolf, Bakers Lane, Westhouse Lane, Colchester, Essex</i> |

10 Abbreviations and glossary

AOD	above Ordnance datum
CAT	Colchester Archaeological Trust
CBA	Council for British Archaeology
CBCAO	Colchester Borough Council Archaeological Officer
context	specific location of finds on an archaeological site
ECC	Essex County Council
EHHER	Essex Historic Environment Record, held by the ECC
feature	an identifiable thing like a pit, a wall, a floor; can contain 'contexts'
HEM	Historic Environment Management Team
IfA	Institute for Archaeologists
layer	distinct or distinguishable deposit of soil
medieval	period from AD 1066 to Henry VIII
modern	period from the 19th century onwards to the present
natural	geological deposit undisturbed by human activity
post-medieval	after Henry VIII to around the late 18th century
Roman	the period from AD 43 to c AD 410
<i>tegula</i>	Roman roof tile
WSI	Written Scheme of Investigation

11 Archive deposition

The paper and digital archive is currently held by the Colchester Archaeological Trust at 12 Lexden Road, Colchester, Essex CO3 3NF, but it will be permanently deposited with Colchester and Ipswich Museums, accession code 2012.33.

12 Contents of archive

One A4 document wallet containing:

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Copy of the evaluation brief issued by ECC HEM team
- 1.2 Copy of the evaluation WSI produced by CAT
- 1.3 Risk assessment
- 1.4 Method statement
- 1.5 Safe system of work document

2 Site archive

- 2.1 Digital photographic record
- 2.2 Digital photographic contact sheet
- 2.3 Site photographic record on CD
- 2.4 Context sheets (F1-5; L1-5)
- 2.5 Finds register
- 2.6 Trench sketch sheets x 2

3 Research archive

- 3.1 Copy of the site report (CAT Report 647)

Not in file

The finds occupy 1 box
1 x A3 SX drawing sheets

Distribution list

Mr Stephen Belcher, ADP Ltd.
Martin Winter, Colchester Borough Council
EHER

checked by: Philip Crummy
date: 17.05.12

PC Projects/ 2012/Bakers Lane, Colchester/Report647.doc



Colchester Archaeological Trust

12 Lexden Road,
Colchester,
Essex CO3 3NF

tel.: (01206) 541051
email: archaeologists@catuk.org

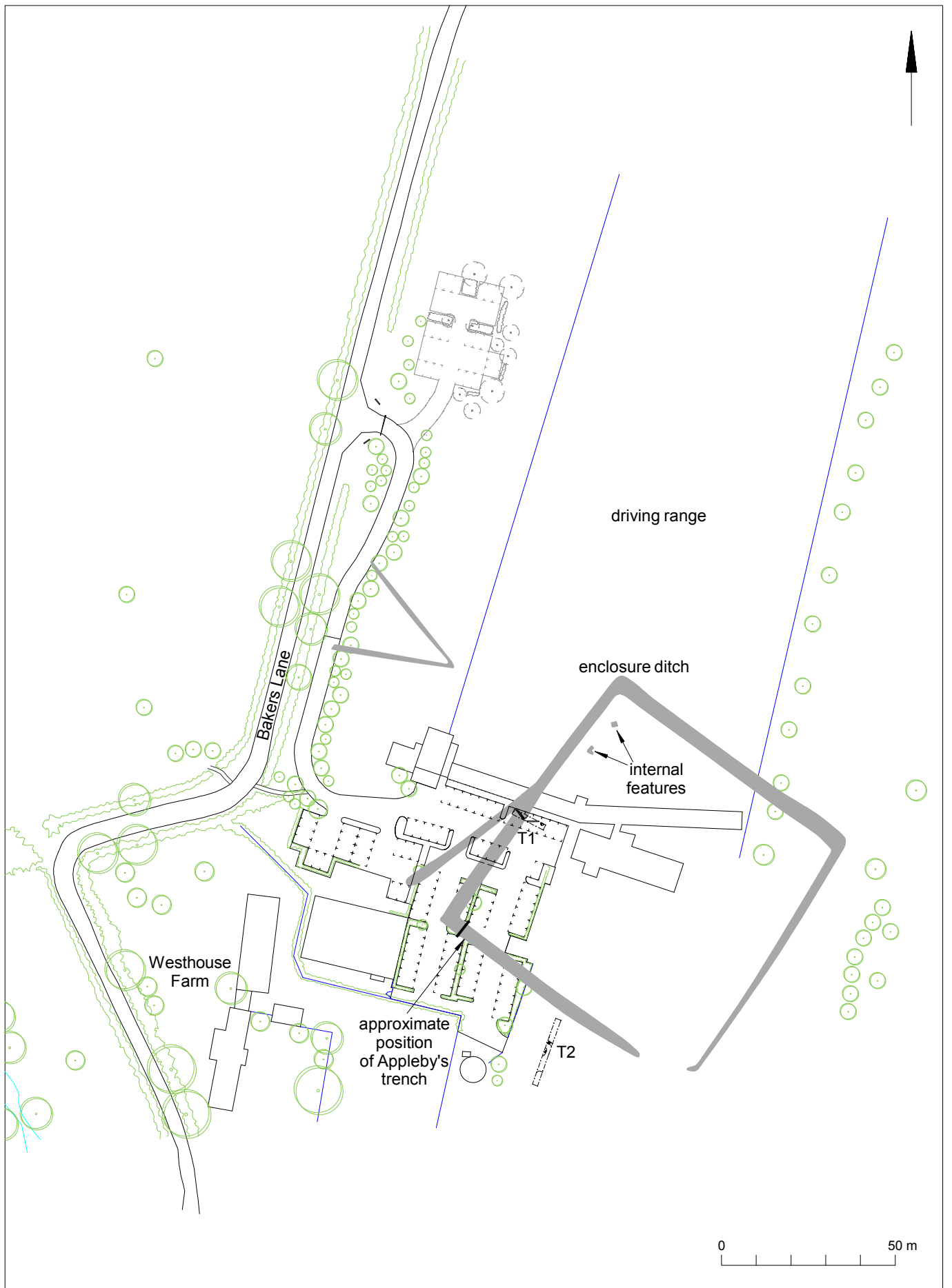


Fig 1 Site location.

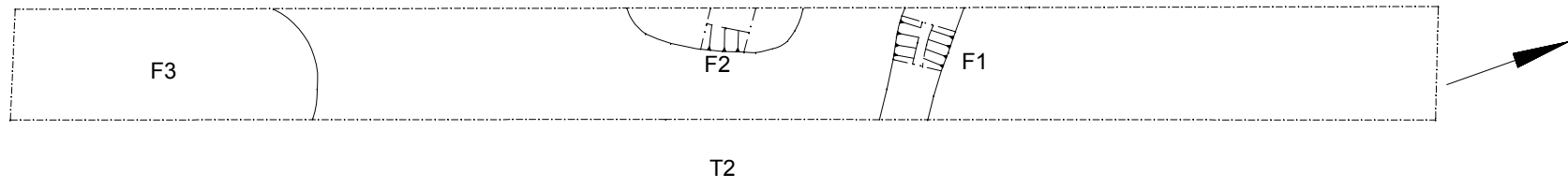
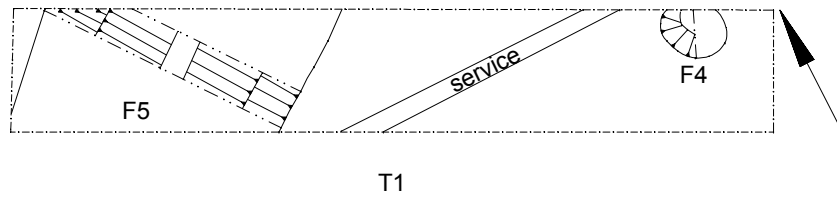


Fig 2 Trial-trenching results.

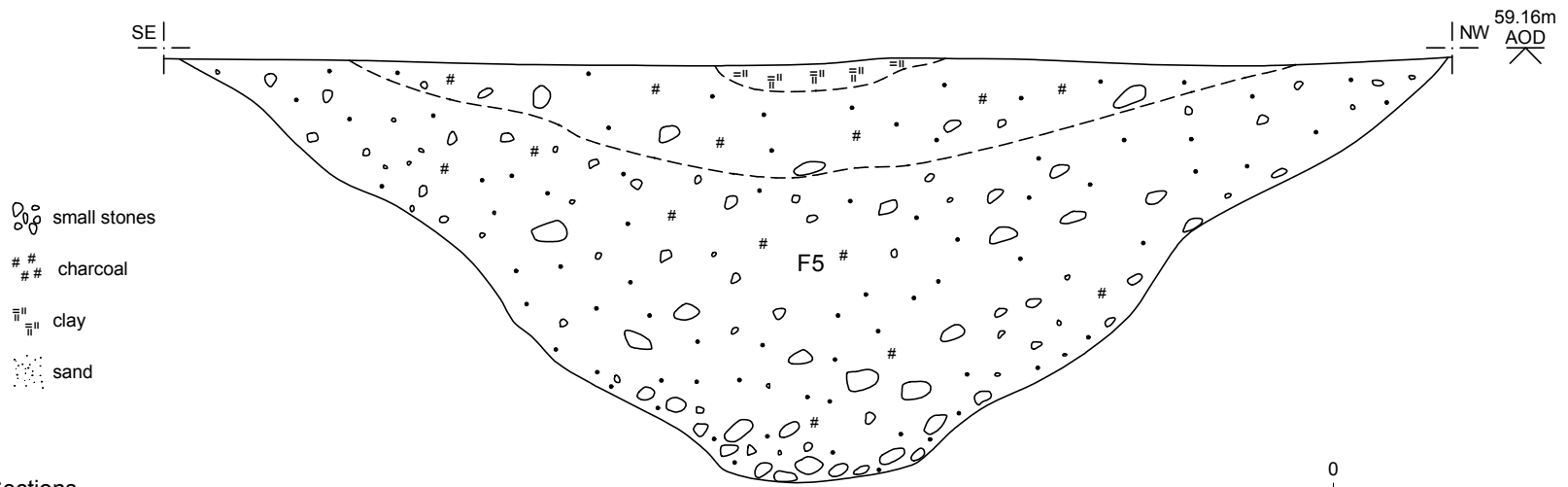
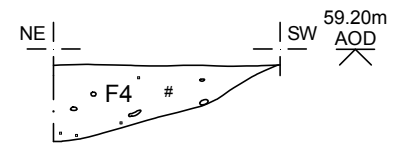
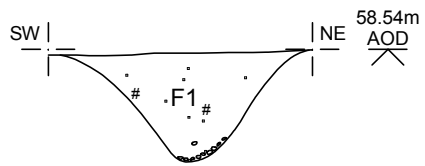
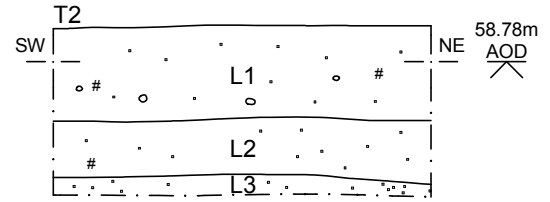
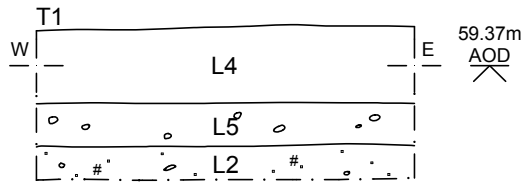


Fig 3 Sections.

Essex Historic Environment Record/ Essex Archaeology and History

Summary sheet

Address: 'Playgolf', Westhouse Farm, Bakers Lane, Colchester, Essex	
Parish: Colchester	District: Colchester Borough
NGR: TL 973 261 (c)	Site codes: CAT project code - 12/05a
Type of work: Evaluation	Site director/group: Colchester Archaeological Trust
Date of work: 10th May 2012	Size of area investigated: 30m (linear)
Location of curating museum: Colchester and Ipswich Museum accession code 2012.33	Funding source: Developer
Monitored by: Martin Winter, Colchester Borough Council Archaeological Officer	
Further seasons anticipated? Yes	Related EHER numbers: 11627, 11842
Final report:	CAT Report 647
Periods represented:	IA/Roman
<p>Summary:</p> <p><i>Archaeological evaluation was carried out at 'Playgolf', Westhouse Farm, Bakers Lane, Colchester ahead of the construction of a coffee shop and new car parking. The site is located 2.5km to the north-west of Colchester, in the Lexden area, and is to the west of Moat Farm Dyke, part of the extensive and complex earthwork defensive system of pre-Roman Colchester. It lies within an enclosure known from cropmarks and believed to date to the Early Iron Age.</i></p> <p><i>Two trial-trenches were excavated during the evaluation. One of these located the western side of the enclosure producing pottery sherds and finds dated to the Bronze Age and Iron Age. Roman activity, in the form of a field boundary, was also recorded on the site.</i></p>	
Previous summaries/reports: CAT Reports 47, 59, 167, 182	
Keywords: Iron Age/Roman enclosure	Significance: **
Author of summary: Chris Lister	Date of summary: May 2012