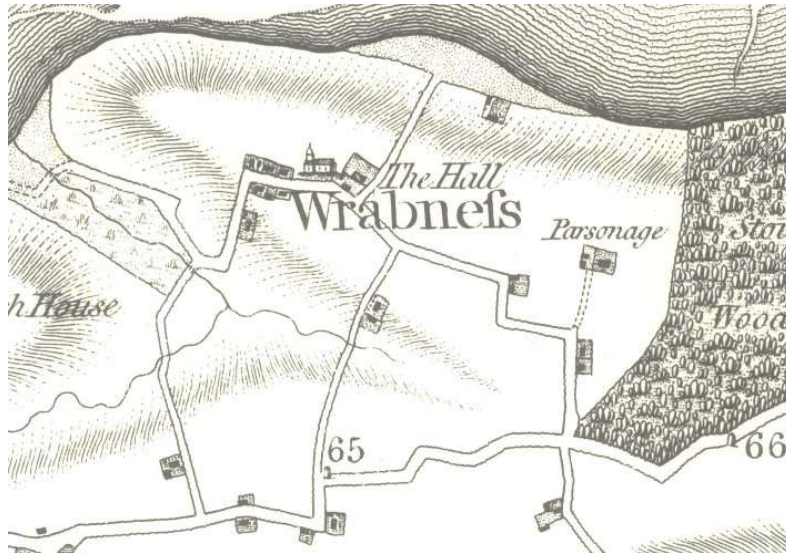


Archaeological excavation on land south of Station Road, Wrabness, Essex, CO11 2TH

March 2019



by **Dr Elliott Hicks**

with contributions by Dr Matthew Loughton
figures by Chris Lister, Ben Holloway and Emma Holloway

fieldwork by Nigel Rayner with Robin Mathieson and Bronagh Quinn

commissioned by Bennett Homes

NGR: TM 1775 3143 (centre)
Planning ref.: 15/01737/OUT
CAT project ref.: 19/02f
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March 2019

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1 Summary

An excavation was carried out on land south of Station Road, Wrabness, Essex in advance of the construction of a residential development. An 11th century ditch observed during the evaluation was further investigated and was determined to terminate a short distance to the northeast, and to have cut an earlier (but otherwise undatable) posthole. Two sherds of Roman pottery were also recovered from the ditch, evidencing some degree of activity on the site during this earlier period.

2 Introduction (Fig 1)

This is the archive report for an archaeological excavation on land south of Station Road, Wrabness, Essex which was carried out on 12th March 2019. The work was commissioned by Bennett Homes in advance of the construction of a residential development and was undertaken by Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT).

In response to consultation with Essex County Council Place Services (ECCPS), Historic Environment Advisor Teresa O'Connor advised that in order to establish the archaeological implications of this application, the applicant should be required to commission a scheme of archaeological investigation in accordance with the *National Planning Policy Framework* (MHCLG 2018).

All archaeological work was carried out in accordance with a *Brief for archaeological trial trenching*, detailing the required archaeological work, written by Teresa O'Connor (ECCPS 2018), and a written scheme of investigation (WSI) prepared by Lanpro Services in response to the brief and agreed with ECCPS (Lanpro 2018).

In addition to the brief and WSI, all fieldwork and reporting was done in accordance with English Heritage's *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE)* (English Heritage 2006), and with *Standards for field archaeology in the East of England* (EAA 14 and 24). This report mirrors standards and practices contained in the Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (CIfA 2014a), *Standard and guidance for archaeological excavation* (CIfA 2014b), and *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (CIfA 2014c).

3 Archaeological background

Initial archaeological assessment of the site was undertaken in March 2018. This recorded a single feature in the east side of the site comprising a shallow ditch with two sherds of Late Anglo-Saxon pottery within the fill. It was concluded that due to the lack of any other archaeological features the ditch was likely an isolated survival (CFA Archaeology 2018).

The site lies within an area rich in cropmarks. The field in which the excavation area is located contains a number of cropmarks of linear features (some of which correspond with ditches depicted on early OS mapping), pits, a small ring ditch and a possible enclosure (EHER3224). Immediately to the north of the site lies a cropmark complex located around Church Road (EHER3236) including three pennanular ring ditches, at least two small ring ditches, a double ditched trackway, a smaller trackway, the possible corner of an enclosure and a number of linear features. Further cropmarks of linear features lie to the northeast of Foxes Farm some 550m west southwest of the site (EHER17678). Another cropmark complex is situated to the east of Spinnells Farm (EHER3235), 860m southwest of site, and includes two ring ditches, trackways, a subrectangular enclosure, a rectangular enclosure and a possible subcircular enclosure. Cropmarks of a possible trackway have been recorded at Cooks Corner, 730m southwest of site (EHER48306), and cropmarks have indicated the presence of linear features, possible trackways, enclosures and ploughed out field boundaries to the west of Primrose Hall, 650m south southwest of site (EHER17744).

A handful of findspots of artefacts are to be found near the site. A medieval bronze seal matrix was discovered around 475m south southeast of site (EHER17743), while an assemblage of flints, consisting one core three unretouched flakes was uncovered some 195m to the east northeast (EHER3004).

Historic buildings within the area include the 17th- or 18th-century Bellhouse of All Saints' Church, around 630m northwest of site (EHER3246), the late 16th-century or early 17th-century timber-framed Foxes Farmhouse some 780m southwest of site (EHER34430), an early 20th-century Wesleyan chapel 660m to the south southwest (EHER40478) and The Firs, a late medieval timber-framed house which was extended in 19th century, located some 830m to the south southwest (EHER34428).

4 Aims

Archaeological excavation was carried out on this site to record any archaeological remains due to be destroyed by the proposed development.

5 Results (Figs 2-6)

An area measuring 111.3m² was machine excavated under the supervision of a CAT archaeologist. It was excavated through topsoil (L1, c 0.41-0.42m thick, firm, dry/moist light grey/brown loamy-clay) onto natural (L2, firm/hard, dry/moist light/medium orange-brown silty-sand with frequent manganese pieces).

Anglo-Saxon (11th-century) ditch F1 was aligned NE-SW and was 1.19-1.33m wide and 0.19-0.29m deep.

Undatable posthole F2 was observed in the base of F1, located towards the terminus of the feature, which appeared to cut the posthole. It was approximately 0.5m wide and 0.34m deep.



Photograph 1 Ditch F1 showing posthole F2 in the foreground – looking southwest

6 Finds

by Dr Matthew Loughton

The excavation produced only 13 sherds of pottery with a weight of only 96g. The Roman material was recorded according to the fabric groups outlined in CAR 10 (1999) and the post-Roman pottery using the fabric groups from CAR 7 (2000) and Cunningham (1985).

All of the pottery came from ditch F1 (1) and consisted of:

- Three sherds of Thetford-type ware (fabric F9), with a weight of 38g. The sherd surfaces are worn and slightly powdery to the touch, the fabric is hard and fine, with a grey surface with a slightly darker grey core (CAR 7, 28-32; Rogerson & Dallas 1984, 118).
- Six sherds of St Neots Ware (fabric F10), with a weight of 35g, from a cooking pot with a slightly everted rim (CAR 7, 32-33; CAR 10, 36, fig. 32 no. 19). These sherds are soft, with a soapy feel, the sherd surfaces are slightly oxidised and brown in colour while the core is black, and the shell temper has been heavily leached out either during firing or post-depositionally.
- One small Roman coarse grey ware (fabric GX) sherd with a weight of 2g.
- Three burnt sherds with very worn and eroded surfaces, with a weight of 21g. These sherds appear to be from a Roman thin-walled coarse oxidised vessel (fabric DJ?).

Thetford-type ware is dated from c AD 850-1150 and the St Neots ware, which appears to be of the earlier 'classic fabric', to the 11th century with the later sandier St Neots ware appearing at Colchester during the 12th century (CAR 7, 31, 33). All in all a date during the 11th century AD for the assemblage is proposed here.

7 Environmental assessment

by Lisa Gray MSc MA ACIfA Archaeobotanist

Introduction – aims and objectives

One sample (sample <1>, finds number 2) was presented for assessment, taken from F1, an 11th century ditch. The aims of this assessment are to determine the significance and potential of the plant macro-remains in the samples and consider their use in providing information about diet, craft, medicine, crop-husbandry, feature function and environment.

Sampling and processing methods

The sample was taken and processed by Colchester Archaeological Trust using a Siraf-type flotation device. Flot was collected in a 300 micron mesh sieve then dried.

Once with the author the flot was scanned under a low-powered stereo-microscope with a magnification range of 10 to 40x. The whole flots were examined. The abundance, diversity and state of preservation of eco- and artefacts in the sample were recorded. A magnet was passed across each flot to record the presence or absence of magnetised material or hammerscale.

Identifications were made using uncharred reference material (author's own and the Northern European Seed Reference Collection at the Institute of Archaeology, University College London) and reference manuals (such as Beijerinck 1947; Cappers *et al.* 2006; Charles 1984; Fuller 2007; Jacomet 2006). Nomenclature for plants is taken from Stace (Stace 2010). Latin names are given once and the common names used thereafter. Low numbers of non-charcoal charred plant macro-remains were counted. Uncharred plant remains, fauna and magnetic fragments were given

estimated levels of abundance unless, in the case of seeds, numbers are very low in which case they were counted.

At this stage numbers given are estimates but where only one item is present that has been noted. Identifiable charred wood >4mm in diameter has been described as that. Charred wood <4mm diameter are described as 'flecks'. Samples this size are easier to break to reveal the cross-sections and diagnostic features necessary for identification and are less likely to be blown or unintentionally moved around the site (Asouti 2006, 31; Smart & Hoffman, 1988, 178-179). Fragments smaller than this and larger than 2mmØ were scanned in case any fragments of twig or roundwood survived.

Results

The plant remains

Moderate quantities of well-preserved cereal grains were present. These were dominated by grains of oat (*Avena* sp.) and barley (*Hordeum* sp.). The barley grains were straight and possibly naked. One oat grain was still enclosed by a floret that may aid identification. A possible rye (*Secale cereale* L.) grain was also found among them. Moderate quantities of large sized legumes were present. One fragment of broad bean (*Vicia faba* L.) was found among others of pea (*Pisum* sp.) and vetch (*Vicia* sp.) size. Uncharred seeds of the grassland seed common fumitory (*Fumaria officinalis* L.) were also found.

Fauna

No faunal remains were found in this sample.

Artefacts

No artefactual remains were found in this sample.

Sample No.	Sample volume (L.)	Flot volume (L.)	Charred Plant Remains										Uncharred plant remains				
			Grains			Seeds			Chaff			>4mm charcoal fragments	<4mm charcoal flecks	Seeds			Root/rhizome fragments
			a	d	p	a	d	p	a	d	p	a	a	a	b	c	a
1	40	0.05	2	1	2	2	1	2	1	1	2	2	3	1	1	3	2

Table 1 Flot contents, Sample <1> from F1 (2) (estimated charred plant macro-remains per litre of sample excluding charcoal flecks, root/rhizome fragments and stem/leaf fragments)

Key to Table 1:

a = abundance [1 = occasional 1-10; 2 = moderate 11-100; and 3 = abundant >100];
 d = diversity [1 = low 1-4 taxa types; 2 = moderate 5-10; 3 = high];
 p = preservation [1 = poor (family level only); 2 = moderate (genus); 3 = good (species identification possible)]

Discussion

Biases in recovery, residuality, contamination

Nothing with regard to biases in recovery, residuality or contamination was highlighted for any of these samples at the time of writing. Modern root/rhizome fragments were present in this sample so bioturbation is possible meaning that the uncharred seeds are probably intrusive.

Quality and type of preservation

The plant remains in this sample were preserved by charring. Charring of plant macrofossils occurs when plant material is heated under 'reducing conditions' where oxygen is largely excluded (Boardman & Jones 1990, 2) leaving a carbon skeleton resistant to biological and chemical decay (Campbell *et al.* 2011, 17). These conditions can occur in a charcoal clamp, the centre of a bonfire or pit or in an oven or when a building burns down with the roof excluding the oxygen from the fire (Reynolds, 1979, 57).

No plant remains were preserved by mineralisation (Green 1979, 281) or silicification (Robinson & Straker 1990), which means that there is no archaeobotanical evidence for the cess disposal or slow-burning aerated fires.

Potential and significance

The charred plant remain assemblage is of moderate density and likely to be waste from activities happening nearby, possibly grain storage or parching prior to milling or malting given the absence of chaff or small weed seeds. The plant remains are typical for the region and date (Van der Veen 2013, 159).

The significance of these plant remains is difficult to ascertain because a query made in the Archaeology Data Service revealed no record of archaeobotanical work taking place near Wrabness (Archaeology Data Service 2019). If it is likely that no archaeobotanical work has yet been carried out in at the site or in the surrounding area then this sample has local and regional significance.

Recommendations for further work on this sample

If further excavation takes place at this site then bulk soil sampling is recommended because it is clear that charred plant remains survive here. The charred plant remains may be suitable for radiocarbon dating as may suitable charcoal taxa.

Aside from this, further work on this sample will not be necessary unless more samples are taken at the site that would allow comparisons with other charred plant remain assemblages and feature types.

8 Discussion

Excavations at this site sought to further investigate an 11th century ditch which was uncovered during the evaluation stage. This present phase of work established that this feature narrowed, and eventually terminated, as it extended to the northeast. As in the evaluation, several sherds of 11th century pottery were retrieved from the feature. An environmental sample taken from the fill of the ditch also yielded grains of oat, barley and a possible rye grain, as well as a fragment of broad bean, peas and vetch, suggesting that crop husbandry or food preparation took place nearby. Taken together, this artefactual evidence indicates that a site of domestic occupation stood in close proximity to the feature at some point during the 11th century. Two sherds of Roman pottery were also recovered from the feature, indicating that historic activity in the vicinity of the site spanned multiple periods hitherto unrepresented by archaeological investigations which have been conducted within this area.

9 Acknowledgements

CAT thanks Bennett Homes for commissioning and funding the work. The project was managed by C Lister, fieldwork was carried out by N Rayner with R Mathieson and B Quinn. Figures are by C Lister, Ben Holloway and Emma Holloway. The project was monitored for ECCPS by Teresa O'Connor.

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

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11 Abbreviations and glossary

Anglo-Saxon	period from c 500 – 1066
CAT	Colchester Archaeological Trust
CIfA	Chartered Institute for Archaeologists
context	a single unit of excavation, which is often referred to numerically, and can be any feature, layer or find.
ECC	Essex County Council
ECCHEA	Essex County Council Historic Environment Advisor
ECCPS	Essex County Council Place Services
feature (F)	an identifiable thing like a pit, a wall, a drain: can contain 'contexts'
layer (L)	distinct or distinguishable deposit (layer) of material
natural	geological deposit undisturbed by human activity
NGR	National Grid Reference
OASIS	O nline A ccess to the I ndex of A rchaeological I nvestigation S , http://oasis.ac.uk/pages/wiki/Main
Roman	the period from AD 43 to c AD 410
section	(abbreviation sx or Sx) vertical slice through feature/s or layer/s
wsI	written scheme of investigation

12 Contents of archive

Finds: Part of one box

Paper record

One A4 document wallet containing:
 The report (CAT Report 1399)
 CAT written scheme of investigation
 Original site record (section drawings)
 Inked section drawings
 Site digital photographic thumbnails and log

Digital record

The report (CAT Report 1399)
 CAT written scheme of investigation
 Site digital photographs, photographic thumbnails and log
 Graphics
 Survey data

13 Archive deposition

The paper and digital archive is currently held by the Colchester Archaeological Trust at Roman Circus House, Roman Circus Walk, Colchester, Essex CO2 7GZ, but will be permanently deposited with Colchester Museum under Essex Historical Environment Record code WSSR19.

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Distribution list:

Bennett Homes

Teresa O'Connor, ECC Place Services Historic Environment Advisor
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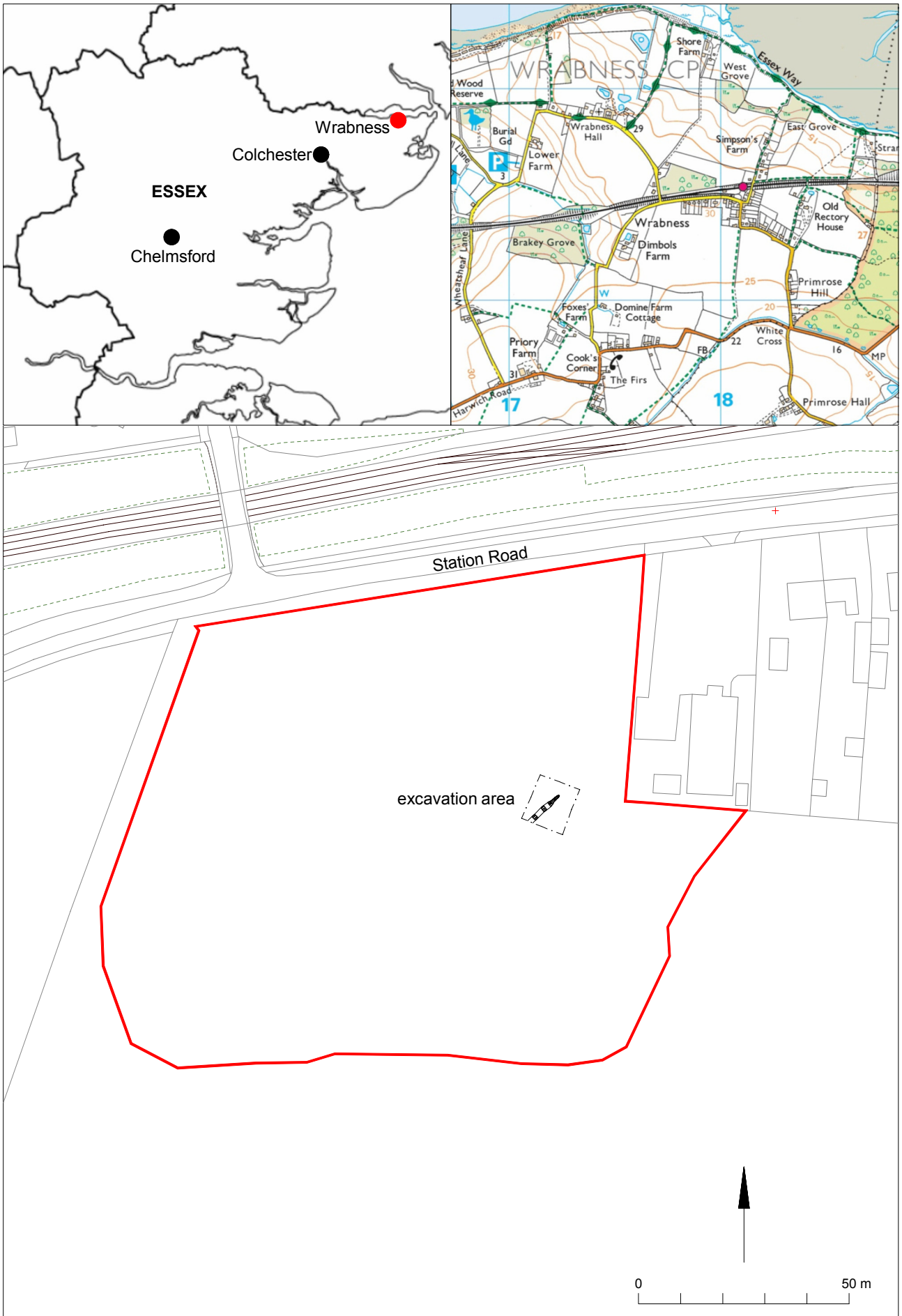
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Checked by: Philip Crummy
Date: 13.05.2019



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Fig 1 Site location.

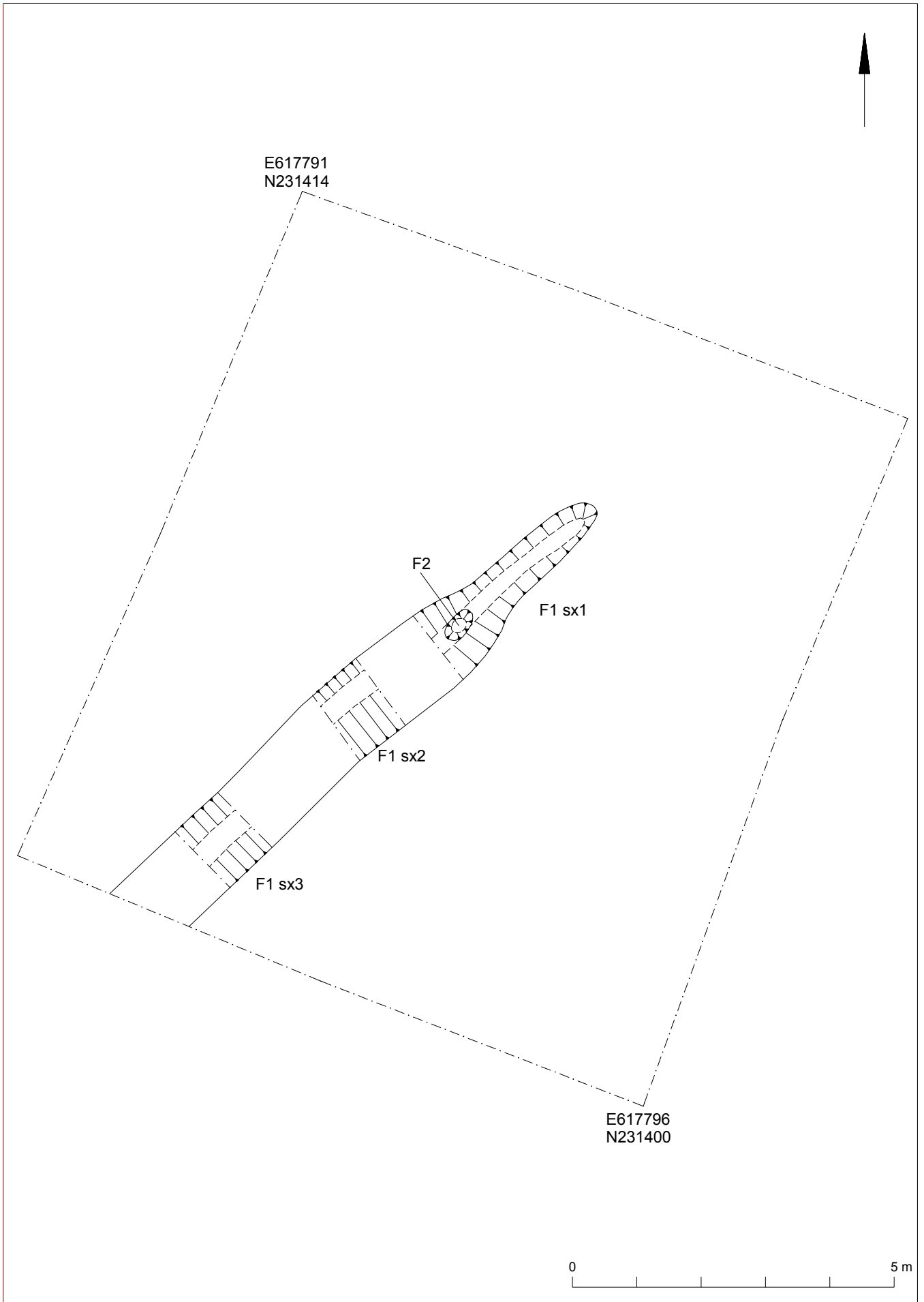


Fig 2 Excavation results.

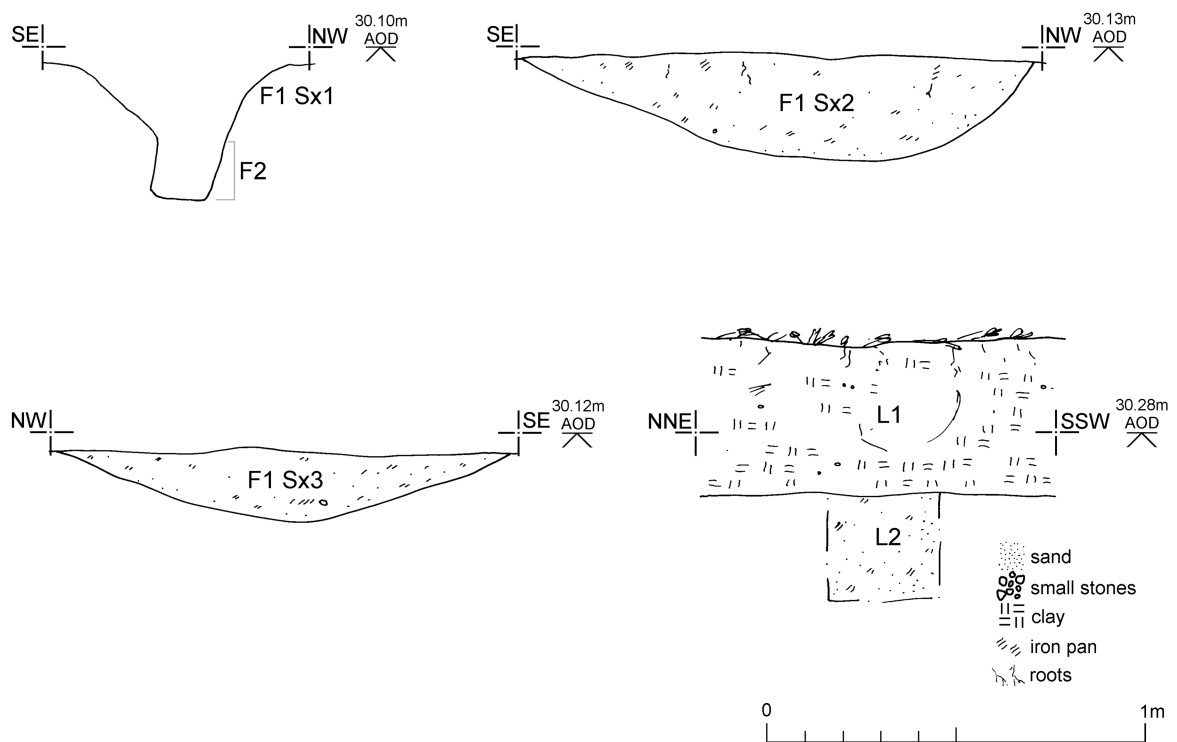


Fig 3 Feature and representative sections.

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OASIS ID: colchest3-348059

Project details

Project name	Archaeological excavation on land south of Station Road, Wrabness, Essex, CO11 2TH: March 2019
Short description of the project	An excavation was carried out on land south of Station Road, Wrabness, Essex in advance of the construction of a residential development. An 11th century ditch observed during the evaluation was further investigated and was determined to terminate a short distance to the northeast, and to have cut an earlier (but otherwise undatable) posthole. Two sherds of Roman pottery were also recovered from the ditch, evidencing some degree of activity on the site during this earlier period.
Project dates	Start: 12-03-2019 End: 12-03-2019
Previous/future work	Yes / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	19/02f - Contracting Unit No.
Site status	None
Current Land use	Cultivated Land 1 - Minimal cultivation
Monument type	DITCH Early Medieval
Monument type	POSTHOLE Uncertain
Significant Finds	POTTERY Roman
Significant Finds	POTTERY Early Medieval
Significant Finds	POTTERY Medieval

Project location

Country	England
Site location	ESSEX TENDRING WRABNESS Land south of Station Road
Postcode	CO11 2TH
Study area	1.37 Hectares
Site coordinates	TM 1775 3143 51.938141595962 1.168199049764 51 56 17 N 001 10 05 E Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 29.7m Max: 30.13m

Project creators

Name of Organisation	Colchester Archaeological Trust
Project brief originator	Teresa O'Connor
Project design originator	Elliott Hicks
Project director/manager	Chris Lister
Project supervisor	Nigel Rayner
Type of sponsor/funding body	Developer

Project archives

Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive recipient	Colchester Museum
Digital Archive ID	WSSR19
Digital Media available	"Survey","Text"
Paper Archive recipient	Colchester Museum
Paper Archive ID	WSSR19
Paper Media available	"Context sheet","Drawing","Photograph","Report"

Project bibliography 1

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