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**HEYBRIDGE CAUSEWAY MEADOW,
MALDON, ESSEX**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING & RECORDING



ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOLUTIONS LTD

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MALDON, ESSEX**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL
MONITORING & RECORDING**

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NGR: TL 849 077	Report No. 1590
District: Maldon	Site Code: HYM04
Approved: Claire Halpin	Project No. 1936
Signed: 	Date: May 2004

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING AND RECORDING

SUMMARY

Between February and May 2004 Archaeological Solutions Limited undertook an archaeological watching brief at Heybridge Causeway Meadow, Maldon, Essex (NGR TL 849 077). The monitoring was undertaken during groundworks associated with a green and community area. The site lies just to the south of the nationally-important archaeological site at Elms Farm, Heybridge, excavated in the 1990s. Here multi-period occupation was recorded with a major late Iron Age/Romano-British phase of settlement. A previous geophysical survey carried out on the current site revealed anomalies consistent with buried archaeological features. Whilst many of the groundworks for the proposed park are superficial, deeper excavations (such as that for a pond) had the potential to reveal archaeological features.

Monitoring and recording of the groundworks revealed little in the way of site-wide archaeological remains. The watching brief in the area of the new pond revealed two, or possibly three, substantial ditches containing large pieces of Roman tile and mid 2nd to early 3rd century pottery underlying two discreet occupation/abandonment layers also containing Romano-British pottery. Four post-holes with similar fills were also present but no finds were recovered. The archaeological evidence suggested a recut boundary ditch close to the site of a Romano-British building.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Between February to May 2004, Archaeological Solutions Limited (AS – formerly HAT) carried out a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording at Heybridge Causeway Meadow, Maldon, Essex (centred on NGR TL 849 077) (Fig.1). The work was commissioned Wynne-Williams Associates on behalf of their client, Doorstep Green Steering Group, and in advance of the construction of a new green and community area. The latter includes new planting and construction of paths, play area and a pond. The monitoring was undertaken as part of a requirement of Essex County Council Heritage Advice, Management and Promotion Section (ECC HAMP).

1.2 The monitoring was conducted in accordance with a brief issued by ECC HAMP (Pat Connell, dated 03/04/03) and a specification prepared by AS (dated 17/09/03). It also complied with the Institute of Field Archaeologists' (IFA) *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Excavations, and Watching Briefs* (both 1994, revised 1999). It was also undertaken in accordance with the *Code of Conduct* of the IFA and complied with *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England* (Gurney, 2003).

2 DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE

2.1 The site is an oval-shaped area bounded to the north by the A414 Maldon Bypass and to the south by the Chelmer and Blackwater Canal (Langford Cut). The river Chelmer lies further to the

south. It lies 350m north of the historic centre of Maldon, across the river Chelmer, and is a similar distance south-west of Heybridge. The site is currently used as a low-lying meadow, within an area of archaeological significance associated with the adjacent late Iron Age/Romano-British settlement.

2.2 It was proposed to turn the area into a community/landscape area.

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL / HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 The site is in close proximity to Elms Farm, Heybridge which, a multi-period site of national importance located on the western periphery of Heybridge to the north-west of Maldon. Here, excavations were carried out in 1993 and 1994-5 in areas adjacent to Crescent Road and Langford Road. Two pits containing large quantities of early Neolithic pottery attested the earliest evidence of human activity on the site. Further pits of late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age date, two containing beakers that possibly represent burials although no human remains survived in the gravel. A Middle Bronze Age ring ditch did contain human remains from a cremation burial in an inverted urn. Post-holes and another possible cremation burial were also present while eight or nine further subsidiary cremation burials were subsequently added to the ring ditch in the Late Bronze Age. Adjacent to the Bronze Age funerary activity, cropmarks (subsequently excavated) defined three fields, which were stratigraphically and morphologically dated to the Iron Age or possibly earlier. Several pits and post-holes were also attributed to this period (Atkinson & Preston 2001, 42-50).

3.2 In the late Iron and Roman period Heybridge was a major port, situated on the Roman road connecting the two major contemporary settlements of Chelmsford and Colchester. A substantial settlement was located here dating from the 1st century BC that probably included a Roman *mansion*. Roller-stamped box flue tiles found on the edge of the town suggest the presence of an important building. Copper alloy patera, ewer sets and wine amphorae are amongst finds from Heybridge, while an abraded strap end may indicate a military presence. A late Iron Age and Roman ritual complex was excavated approximately 200m north of the site. This comprised two Iron Age shrines and a larger circular Roman temple overlying Bronze Age pits (Atkinson & Preston 2001, 50). Located in the hinterland of the main settlement overlooking the Chelmer and Blackwater estuary was a late Iron Age cremation cemetery overlying a field system that went out of use in the first century BC. It comprised 19 pyre pits containing human bone and artefacts including brooches although the actual final burial pits were not located. Pottery in the layer above the primary pyre remains was dated to the 1st century AD (Atkinson 2002, 8-9).

3.3 Research topics for the Iron Age are set out by Bryant in Brown & Glazebrook 2000, 14-18) and Sealey (in Bedwin 1996, 64). These include further research into chronologies, precise dating and ceramic assemblages, further research into the development of the agrarian economy and devoting attention to houses and settlements at the eve of the Roman invasion. Research topics for the Roman period are set out by Going & Plouviez (in Brown & Glazebrook 2000, 19-22). These topics include analysis of early and late Roman military developments, further analysis of large and small towns, evidence of food consumption and production, further research into agricultural production, landscape research (in particular further evidence for potential woodland succession/regression and issues of relict landscapes, as well as further research into the road network and bridging points), and further research into rural settlements and coastal issues.

3.4 The late 4th century decline of Roman Heybridge was probably due to gradual economic and social changes rather than sudden Anglo-Saxon incursions (Wickenden 1986, 63-5). Archaeological evidence indicates that this site was not abandoned, but was occupied by Anglo-Saxon settlers for a short time until the early 5th century. Here a number of sunken-feature dwellings and pagan Anglo-

Saxon burials in the Roman cemetery were contemporary with the Roman town suggesting Saxon settlers were economically or militarily involved in town life (Drury & Wickenden 1982). The rapid decline of early Anglo-Saxon Heybridge saw an apparent shift in focus of activity across the river to Maldon. Middle Saxon activity has been recorded on the hill at Maldon including a sherd of Ipswich ware and an early 8th century *sceatta* discovered close to the site of the later church (Webster & Cherry 1973, 140-1 & Rigold & Metcalf 1984, 257).

3.5 Maldon was first mentioned in AD 912 in the *Anglo Saxon Chronicle* which stated that Edward the Elder stationed his fleet and army here while the *burh* defences were being built at Witham (Rippon 1996, 120). This suggests that it was a royal estate before the construction of the Maldon *burh* on the hill at the west end of town in 916, although the *burh* has not been located. Edward visited again in 916, when he had a forward garrison built as part of his defences against Viking raiders and the Danish settlers. The place-name of Maldon means 'hill with a (stone) monument or mark' or 'marked by a cross' leading Cooper (1993, ix) to suggest that it might also imply the presence of an early religious site, possibly a minister in a royal vill. The high status of Maldon at this time is indicated by the fact that there were only two *burhs* in Essex, the other being at Witham c.9 km to the north-west.

4 METHOD OF WORK

4.1 The programme of archaeological monitoring and recording was conducted in accordance with the brief and specification, and conformed to IFA guidelines.

4.2 An Archaeological Project Officer was present during all the principal phases of groundworks. These included excavation of tree planting pits, topsoil stripping for footpath construction, excavation of foundations for a new shelter and excavation of a shallow pond.

4.3 Exposed surfaces were hand cleaned as appropriate, and all further excavation was undertaken by hand. Deposits were recorded using *pro forma* recording sheets, drawn to scale and photographed as appropriate. Excavated spoil and exposed surfaces were scanned by metal detector, with excavated spoil searched for archaeological finds.

5 RESULTS

The majority of groundworks observed on the site were very shallow (tree planting pits and path construction), and were generally contained within the topsoil/subsoil.

5.1 Shelter excavation:

Foundation pads for the new shelter on the site revealed a common stratigraphy:

0.00 – 0.35m	L1000. Topsoil. Dark brown, slightly clayey sandy silt (with occasional rounded flint gravel increasing to frequent towards the base).
0.35m+	L1015. Natural Drift. Rounded flint gravel.

5.2 The Shallow Seasonal Pond

Excavation of the shelving base for the pond revealed the following stratigraphy:

0.00 – 0.10m	L1000. Topsoil. As above, though with occasional large fragments of modern brick/tile rubble.
0.10 – 0.30m	L1001. Subsoil. Very cohesive, mid orange silty clay with sparse charcoal flecks.
0.30 - 0.90m	L1015. Natural Drift. River terrace gravels. Dark yellow-grey silty gravel with loose, sub-angular to rounded flints (c.10-30mm dia).
0.90 – 1.00m+	L1016. Natural Drift. River terrace gravel underlying L1015, described as above but with more pronounced mineral panning.

Description A number of archaeological features of Romano-British date were sealed by mature subsoil L1001. They were subject to more intensive archaeological investigation, despite the intrusive presence of groundwater.

In the south east part of the pond was layer L1003 covering an area of at least 8 x 6m, with a depth of approximately 0.20m, comprising a dark grey-black flint gravel within a clayey silt. It overlay the natural drift and also ditch/pit F1017 and F1019 (described below) and contained much animal bone, Romano-British pottery and building material. The finds from the upper levels of L1003 were abraded. Similarly overlying the natural drift was layer L1006 covering an area of at least 11 x 6m in the north-west of the pond area. It contained a similar fill and range of finds as L1003, and might have been part of the same feature. Postholes F1011 (1m x 0.64m), and F1009 & F1013 (both 0.5m in diameter), were situated on the edges of L1006. F1011 and F1013 were located along its south-western edge and F1009 to the south, all three contained similar fills, a mid brown silty clay.

The largest feature cutting the natural drift, F1004, was a V-shaped ditch, 20m+ long, and varying from 1.8m in the west to 3m in width. It was at least 0.6m deep containing an organic, dark grey-brown, silty clay (L1005) and yielded much pottery and animal bone along with moderate amounts of building material. This linear, but slightly curving, ditch ran roughly on a NW-SE alignment, narrowing to the west. Two additional ditches, F1017 and F1019, were parallel and on a NW-SE alignment. F1017 was on the same alignment as F1004 and was almost certainly the same ditch. Its dimensions, 3.0m+ in length, 2.6m+ in width and 0.84m depth also broadly fit in with F1004 although the profile was more U-shaped with a concave base. Its fill, L1018, consisted of a dark grey-black, clayey silt with <15% gravel. It contained animal bone, pot, building materials and slag. Ditch F1019 was located adjacent and immediately to the north of F1017, although the stratigraphic relationship was uncertain. F1019 was similar in profile to F1017 being U-shaped with quite shallow sides and concave base and was 3.0m+ in length, 1.8m+ wide and 0.70m deep. The fill was also the same as F1017 and contained animal bone, large pieces of Roman tile and Roman pottery including white ware mortaria and samian ware.

A further rounded post-hole (F1007) was recorded in the northern part of the site, some 0.50m in diameter.

Possible beam slot F1021 was present in the north western part of the pond, clearly cutting L1005. It was some 2m long, up to 0.5m wide and 0.45m deep, with steep sides and a flattish base. It was filled with a dark greyish brown silty clay (L1022), which was sampled for the retrieval of environmental information.

It is possible that Ditch F1017 traversed the pond area (its fill becoming L1005 in the north western part of the site), though truncation during the excavation of the pond had made this very difficult to ascertain

6 CONFIDENCE RATING

6.1 It is not thought that any factors severely limited the project, though the presence of intrusive groundwater in the area of the seasonal pond hindered the excavation of underlying features in this area.

7 DEPOSIT MODEL

7.1 The site was sealed by some 0.35m of topsoil, above a mature subsoil in part of the site, and terrace gravels below. There also appears to have been associated evidence of the deposition of material from adjacent sites in the area, along with probable importation of spoil (as shown by the presence of brick rubble in the topsoil). This may have been due to the construction of the bypass road in the later 20th century.

8 DISCUSSION

8.1 The watching brief revealed two parallel ditches F1004 and F1019 (as ditch F1017 appears to be part of F1004) on a slightly curving alignment running effectively from the west/north-west to the south-east. (The only anomaly was F1004 was V-shaped and F1017 U-shaped, but one explanation might be that differential cutting occurred). Both were ditches were substantial with F1004 the larger varying from 1.8-3.0m across and F1019 1.8m across. It is probable that they were boundary ditches. The stratigraphic relationship was unclear but their contiguity suggests one to be a recut of the other to maintain the boundary over time. As F1004 was larger and could be traced more clearly across the site, it is possible it was the later of the two. Both ditches contained substantial amounts of Roman building material, pot and bone. The size of some of the finds, particularly the tile, indicates a primary context and that, tiled buildings must have been located in a close proximity. Samian ware in F1019 indicated a date of mid 2nd to early 3rd century AD. Ditches F1019 and F1004/F1017 were beneath L1003 interpreted as an occupation/abandonment layer also containing Romano-British finds. L003 entirely covered ditch F1019 but only partially and more thinly covered F1017 (F1004) supporting the idea that F1004 was a recut of F1019. F1006 was a similar layer to F1003 in fill and finds and might represent the same chronological episode that is likely to post-date the 2nd century. Four post-holes were also present on the site. Three of these (F1007, F1009 & F1013) were of the same size and form being circular and 0.5m in diameter. Two of these (F1009 & F1013) were adjacent to the southern edge of L1006 and therefore might have had an association with it. The fourth and larger oval post-hole F1011 was also located here between F1009 and F1013. Post-hole F1007 was more isolated at the north of the site. All four post-holes contained the same type of fill but no finds were recovered.

9 ARCHIVE

The archive is to be deposited with Colchester Museum.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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AS would also like to acknowledge the input and advice of Mr Pat Connell of ECC HAMP.

APPENDIX 1

Description of Archaeological features

Feature	Type	Dimensions	Fill	Finds
L1003	Layer	L 8.00m+, W 6.00m+, D 0.20m	Dark grey-black sticky silty clay containing 20% flint gravel <60mm	Animal bone, Pot, Building Materials
F1004 L1005	Ditch	L 20.0m+, W 3.00m, D 0.60m+	Organic, dark grey-brown silty clay with 30% flint gravel	Animal Bone, Pottery, Building Materials
L1006	Layer	L 11.00m+, W 6.00m+, D?	Dark grey-black sticky silty clay containing 15-20% flint gravel <50mm	Animal Bone, Pottery, Building Materials
F1007 L1008	Post-hole	L 0.50m, W 0.50m, D ?	Cohesive, mid grey-brown, silty clay with 15% moderate flint 30-60mm	
F1009 L1010	Post-hole	L 0.50m, W 0.50m, D?	Cohesive, mid grey-brown, silty clay with 15% moderate flint 30-60mm	
F1011 L1012	Post-hole	L 1.00m, W 0.64m, D?	Cohesive, mid grey-brown, silty clay with 15% moderate flint 30-60mm	
F1013 L1014	Post-hole	L 0.50m, W 0.5m, D?	Cohesive, mid grey-brown, silty clay with 15% moderate flint 30-60mm	
F1017 L1018	Ditch	L 3.00m+, W 2.60m+ D 0.84m	Sticky, plastic dark grey-black clayey silt with <15% flint gravel <40mm	Animal Bone, Pot, Building Material, Slag
F1019 L1020	Ditch	L 3.0m+, W 1.8m+, D 0.70m	Sticky, plastic dark grey-black clayey silt with <15% flint gravel <40mm	Animal Bone, Pot, Building Material
L1021	Beam slot	L 4.20m+, W 0.45m, D 0.35m	Plastic grey-brown clay-silt with <15% flint gravel <40mm, abundant charcoal and daub.	

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COLOUR PLATES



Plate 1 General view of pond, looking south-west

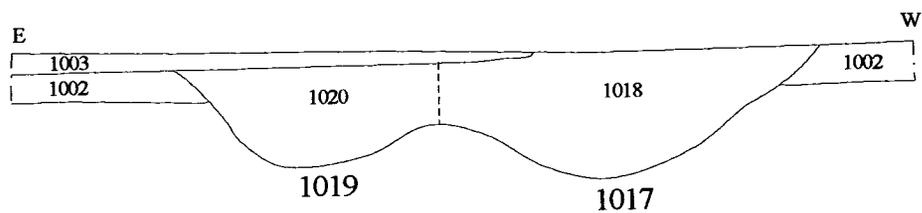
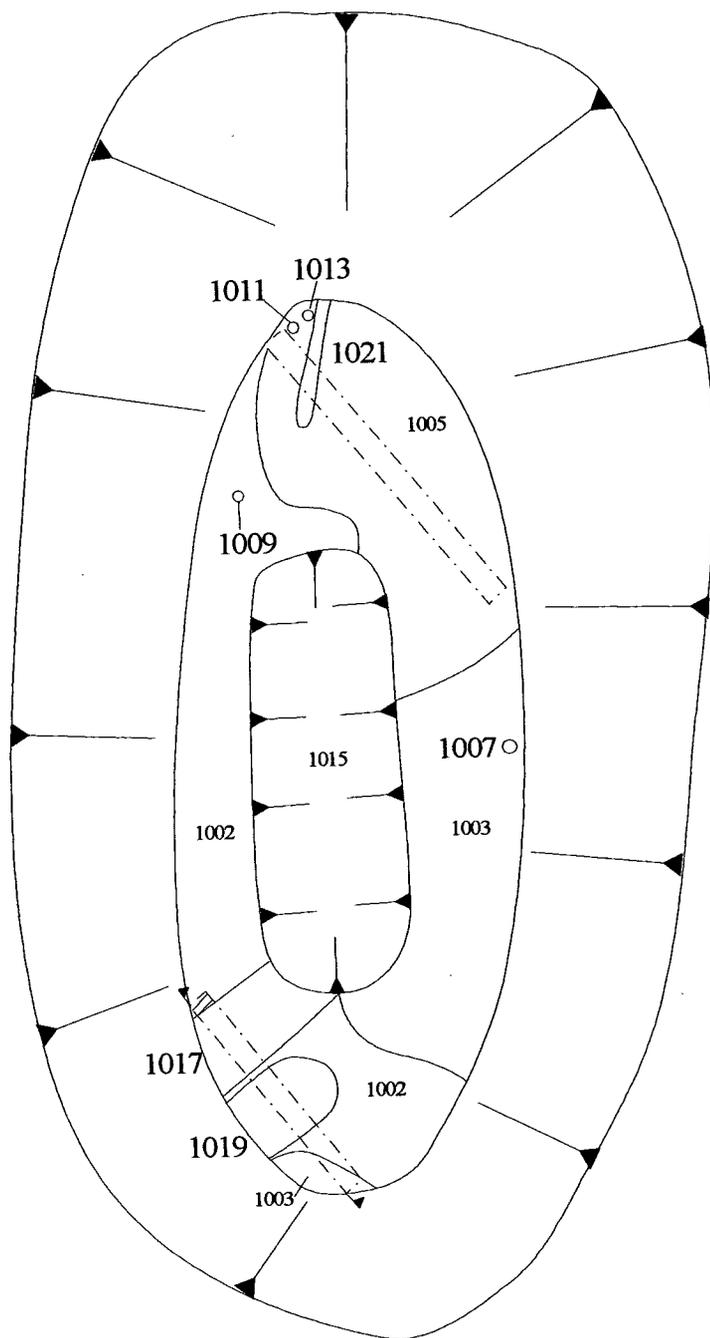


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Fig.1 Site location plan
 Scale: 1:25000



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Fig. 2 Site plan
 Scale: 1:1000



Plan scale 1:200



Section scale 1:50



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Fig. 3 Feature plan and section

Scale: 1:200 and 1:50