

**NORTHEY ISLAND, MALDON,  
ESSEX.**

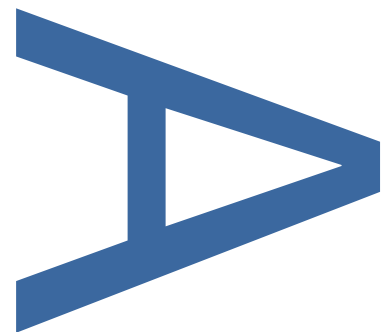
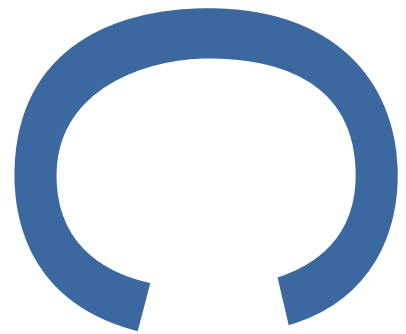
**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING  
BRIEF AND METAL DETECTING  
SURVEY**

**LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY:  
MALDON DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**PLANNING APPLICATION NUMBERS:  
FUL/MAL/18/01365**

**PCA REPORT NO: R13870**

**OCTOBER 2019**



**PRE-CONSTRUCT ARCHAEOLOGY**

## Northey Island, Maldon, Essex. Archaeological Watching Brief and Metal Detecting Survey

**Local Planning Authority:** Maldon District Council

**Planning Reference:** FUL/MAL/18/01365

**Central National Grid Reference:** TM 87540 05962

**Site Code/Accession no:** MDNI19

**Oasis reference no:** preconst1-369030

**Report No.** R13870

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**October 2019**

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## ABSTRACT

*Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd was commissioned by The National Trust to undertake a metal detecting survey and watching brief during works to deliver adaptation of an existing embankment for nature conservation management at Northey Island, Essex. The works were carried out between 14 and 23 August 2019.*

*The investigations at Northey Island revealed no archaeological features or deposits. The embankment was constructed entirely of clay with no apparent structure or layering to it.*

*Finds recovered from the topsoil show a mixture of accidental losses dating from the Elizabethan period to the present day. These are everyday items and show the traffic of people to and from Northey throughout the ages.*

*The sea walls may date to 1200 but their first definite record is on the Chapman and André map of 1777. The Elizabethan coins were sixpences of Elizabeth I's Second Issue and date from 1560s-1570s. The presence of the Elizabethan coins in the topsoil on the landward side of the sea bank could indicate that the structures were in place in the 16th century. Alternatively the coins could have been lost by visitors to the island prior to the construction of the sea defences and simply be re-deposited.*

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd was commissioned by The National Trust to undertake a metal detecting survey and watching brief during works to deliver adaptation of an existing embankment for nature conservation management at Northey Island, Essex (Figure 1).
- 1.2 The flood prevention embankment subject to the works is located at the south-western tip of Northey Island opposite the causeway to the mainland. It is centred on national grid reference NGR TL 87540 05962. (Figure 1, Plate 1).
- 1.3 Due to the high archaeological potential of the site, condition (4) for a heritage impact assessment, and condition (5) for a programme of archaeological recording, were placed on the planning consent for the works (Planning application no: 19/05084/DET). The works were carried out in accordance with National Planning Policy Framework 2019.
- 1.4 The heritage impact assessment was prepared by Essex Place Services (Saunders 2019). A geophysical survey of Northey Island was undertaken in March 2019 (Magnitude Surveys 2019). Shannon Hogan, Archaeologist for The National Trust East of England subsequently issued a brief for the archaeological recording (Hogan 2019), comprising a metal detecting survey and watching brief, and the work was carried out according to a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) produced by PCA (Revell 2019) and approved by the Local Planning Authority.
- 1.5 The metal detecting survey and watching brief were undertaken between 14 and 23 August 2019.
- 1.6 This report describes the results of the investigations.

## **2 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY**

### **2.1 Geology**

2.1.1 The underlying bedrock geology comprises London Clay Formation (clay, silt and sand) overlain by superficial beach and tidal flat deposits of clay, silt and sand (BGS 2019).

### **2.2 Topography**

2.2.1 The proposed development is located on the southern edge of Northey Island. The island sits within the Blackwater Estuary, approximately 2.5km southeast of Maldon and is cut off from the mainland during high tides.

2.2.2 Beyond the development area the remaining land is predominantly saltmarsh.

### **3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The following has been taken from the project brief (Hogan 2019) and the Heritage Impact Assessment produced by Essex Place Services (Saunders 2019). Numbers in brackets in the following text refer to heritage asset numbers as listed in the Essex Historic Environment Record (EHER).
- 3.2 Prehistoric land surfaces, finds and features have been recorded on the south side of the island (EHER 13620; 13651; NT HBSMR 00517). The finds include some prehistoric pottery from the foreshore, fired clay and burnt flints as well as a fragment of an Early Neolithic polished stone axe found from an unstratified context (NT HBSMR 00518), however there are no finds recorded within the planning red line or the immediate area surrounding the proposed works based on the National Trust HBSMR search. Two tumuli or mounds have been recorded on the Island at the north end and at the south-east corner although the date and purpose of these are not known (NT HBSMR 00116; 00117).
- 3.3 Northey Island lies close to the Essex Red Hills, where extensive Iron Age and Roman salt production has been recorded (EHER 13621). Thorough investigation of the Red Hills has not yet been undertaken, and the relationship of Northey Island to the industrial activity is not clear although to date, no briquetage or contemporary pottery has been found at Northey.
- 3.4 Perhaps the most significant historical association for Northey Island is its possible use for the Viking Camp during the Battle of Maldon in 991AD. Although to date, no evidence for a Viking Camp has been found at Northey, a geological survey to investigate the causeway in 1973 found that the topography of the island had changed considerably within the last 1500 years and that the existing causeway would have been half its current length. The 10th century land surface is predicted to be some 1.25m below the present saltings meaning that any evidence of Viking occupation or activity may be inaccessible. There is speculation that the camp was located on an alternative island, however Northey remains a strong contender for this activity.
- 3.5 A manor at Northey is recorded in the Domesday Survey although it is not known if the population was contained on the island or if any of the seven

households were located on the mainland. Documentary evidence suggests that parts of the Essex marshlands were embanked by the end of the 12th century. Maldon was established as a large urban centre by the late Saxon period although there is no information on the contemporary activity on Northey Island.

- 3.6 Much of the reclamation of the Essex marshland occurred during the 17th century and it is possible that the majority of the sea walls were constructed at this time. If any were built in the earlier medieval period, these were likely strengthened and reinforced during the reclamation. The 1777 Chapman and Andre map shows the sea wall, borrow dyke and several drainage ditches on Northey and it is possible that several drainage ditches identified in a recent geophysical survey (Magnitude Surveys 2019) are broadly contemporary.
- 3.7 The geophysical survey of the areas of pasture identified new potential rectilinear enclosures as well as a couple of other possible archaeological anomalies to the north and south-east. Probable drainage features were noted along the southern edge of the Island where the development occurred (ibid 2019).



## **4 METHODOLOGY**

- 4.1 The construction work of the coastal adaptation project comprised the removal of existing concrete blocks facing the embankment above the saltmarsh level, the lowering of the embankment to just above present saltmarsh level and infilling of the borrow ditch with that sediment to allow for saltmarsh habitat creation across the works area and to the rising land behind (approx. 0.17ha) (Plates 2-4).
- 4.2 A new 18-20m closing bank was constructed to the eastern end of the works area to prevent flooding to the field in the east and a short section of the embankment remained in-situ to the west end.
- 4.3 Ground reduction was carried out under archaeological supervision using a 360° mechanical excavator with toothless ditching bucket.
- 4.4 All works were monitored by an attendant archaeologist and the metal detecting survey was undertaken on all exposed ground surfaces and generated spoil.
- 4.5 High-resolution digital photographs were taken at all stages of the work.

## 5 QUANTIFICATION OF ARCHIVE

### 5.1 Paper Archive

Context register sheets	0
Watching Brief record sheets	2
Plan registers	0
Plans at 1:50	0
Plans at 1:20	0
Plans at 1:10	0
Plans at 1:5	0
Section register sheets	0
Sections at 1:10 & 1:20	0
Trench record sheets	0
Photo register sheets	3
Small finds register sheets	1
Environmental register sheets	0

### 5.2 Digital Archive

Digital photos	16
Access database	1

### 5.3 Physical Archive

Small Finds (coins)	3
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5.4 All finds have been returned to and will be retained by the National Trust.

## **6 ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS**

- 6.1 No archaeological features were revealed during any of the groundworks. The metal detecting survey recovered three Elizabethan coins (Plate 5) and a collection of modern metalwork (Plate 6). A single sherd of pottery was retrieved by hand (Plate 6). All finds were unstratified within the topsoil (100). The coins were found on consecutive days scattered along the area of the flood bank facing the island side. They represent chance losses. The finds are described in Section 7.
- 6.2 Topsoil (100) comprised a dark, yellowish brown clayey silt that was c. 0.20m thick. The exposed bank material was a mid yellowish brown clayey silt with occasional gravel inclusions. Where natural geological deposits were exposed in the base of the borrow ditch they comprised a mid blueish grey clay.
- 6.3 The embankment was constructed entirely of clay with no apparent structure or layering to it.

## **7 THE FINDS**

### **7.1 Pottery**

#### **Chris Jarrett**

- 7.1.1 A single sherd (127g) of pottery was collected by hand from the archaeological work and was found in context (100). The sherd consists of the base of a Staffordshire-type white earthenware (Essex Fabric 48D) cylindrical jar measuring 85mm in diameter. The underside of the base has a moulded mark of 'MALING AVERAGE' around the edge. The cylindrical jar base is most likely to represent a Dundee marmalade jar made for James Keiller & Son by Robert Maling's Ouseburn Bridge Pottery, Tyneside, which operated from 1817–1963 (Bell 1986).
- 7.1.2 The Maling pottery, however, did make containers for other processed food manufacturers, such as Frank Cooper of Oxford, another marmalade producer. The pottery made Keiller marmalade jars certainly during the late 19th century (although the start date is uncertain) and continued to produce these vessels as late as 1928 when glass jars were introduced for retailing the product in the UK. Ceramic jars continued to be used for export sales (Farrell 2016). The cylindrical jar base found in deposit (100) is therefore more likely to date to between c. 1850–1928.
- 7.1.3 The cylindrical jar base is of no significance as Keiller marmalade jars made by the Maling pottery are fairly frequent archaeological finds in 19th-century dated deposits, although the stamp incorporating the word average is unusual. The jar does have the potential to date the context it was found in. There are no recommendations for further work on the pottery and as it has been fully recorded the item can be discarded.

### **7.2 Coins**

#### **Murray Andrews**

- 7.2.1 Ten coins were recovered by the metal detecting survey. All objects consist of 'single finds' deposited individually, probably resulting from accidental loss, and are described in Appendix 2.

- 7.2.2 The earliest coins from the site are three silver sixpences of Elizabeth I's Second Issue (small finds <1>, <2> and <3>), produced at the Royal Mint in the Tower of London in the 1560s and 1570s and found distributed across a wide area along the sea wall.
- 7.2.3 Struck in large quantities on the restored sterling standard, sixpences of Elizabeth I's Second Issue formed a significant component of the English silver currency from the late sixteenth to mid-seventeenth centuries (Andrews and Ghey 2019, 264-266), when they were frequently employed as a means of payment for wages, debts, and mid-value commercial transactions.
- 7.2.4 By merit of their longevity and widespread use, numerous examples are known from excavated early post-medieval sites in eastern England, including St Giles' Church, Colchester, and Botolph Street, Norwich (Archibald 1987, 66; Margeson 1993, 207); others are known from metal-detected sites in Essex, including Tolleshunt D'Arcy (PAS SF-673132) and Tolleshunt Major (PAS HESH-2D2470).
- 7.2.5 One of the sixpences, small find <1>, bears traces of edge clipping, a widespread medieval and post-medieval criminal practice in which thin slivers of precious metal were illicitly removed from coins for private profit (Challis 1978, 275-277).
- 7.2.6 The seven remaining coins relate to twentieth-century activity at the site, and are all 'small change' denominations consistent with cumulative casual losses; these include two pennies <7>, <14> of George VI, and a pound <16>, fivepence <6>, and three pennies <8>, <11> and <15> of Elizabeth II.
- 7.2.7 The coins from Northey Island are key elements of the archaeological data from the site, providing insights into site chronology and independent material evidence for monetary and economic activity in the Blackwater Estuary in the post-medieval and modern periods. In addition, the clipped sixpence of Elizabeth I provides a significant illustration of a widespread criminal practice that is frequently attested in contemporary historical sources.

## **7.1 Metalwork**

### **Ruth Beveridge**

- 7.1.1 Thirteen metalwork objects were recovered from the metal detecting of the topsoil (100). They have been recorded in full in the catalogue (Appendix 3). The most recognisable objects are a handle from a piece of pewter cutlery of 19th century or later date; a modern furnishings stud and a modern textile eyelet. The remaining objects are fragments of copper alloy and lead waste, and pieces of what could be modern machinery.
- 7.1.2 The assemblage as a whole is of recent date and of limited archaeological value. It is recommended that they are not retained for the archive

## **8 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

- 8.1 The investigations at Northey Island revealed no significant archaeological remains. No prehistoric features, similar to those discovered in other areas of the foreshore the vicinity were present on the site. There was also no evidence for any 'red hill' denoting prehistoric or Roman saltmaking, or any evidence for a Saxon or medieval field system. It is likely that the works were situated too closely to the foreshore for field ditches to be present.
- 8.2 Finds recovered from the topsoil show a mixture of accidental losses dating from the Elizabethan period to the present day. These are everyday items and show the traffic of people to and from Northey throughout the ages.
- 8.3 The sea walls may date to 1200 but their first definite record is on the Chapman and André map of 1777 (Saunders 2019). The presence of the Elizabethan coins in the topsoil on the landward side of the sea bank could indicate that the structures were in place in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, although the sea level was lower then. The coins could have been lost by visitors to the island prior to construction of the sea defences and simply re-deposited or it may be tempting to imagine that they were lost by people undertaking some form of work for payment on the island, as the coins were often used as a means of payment for wages (Murray, above).

## **9 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

9.1 Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd would like to thank The National Trust for commissioning the project and Land and Water for their professionalism and cooperation when carrying out the work. PCA are also grateful to Maria Medlycott of Essex County Council Historic Environment Team for monitoring the work on behalf of the Local Planning Authority. The project was managed by Christiane Meckseper and the fieldwork and metal detecting was carried out by Dave Curry who also contributed to this report. Figures accompanying this report were prepared by Rosie Scales of PCA's CAD Department.



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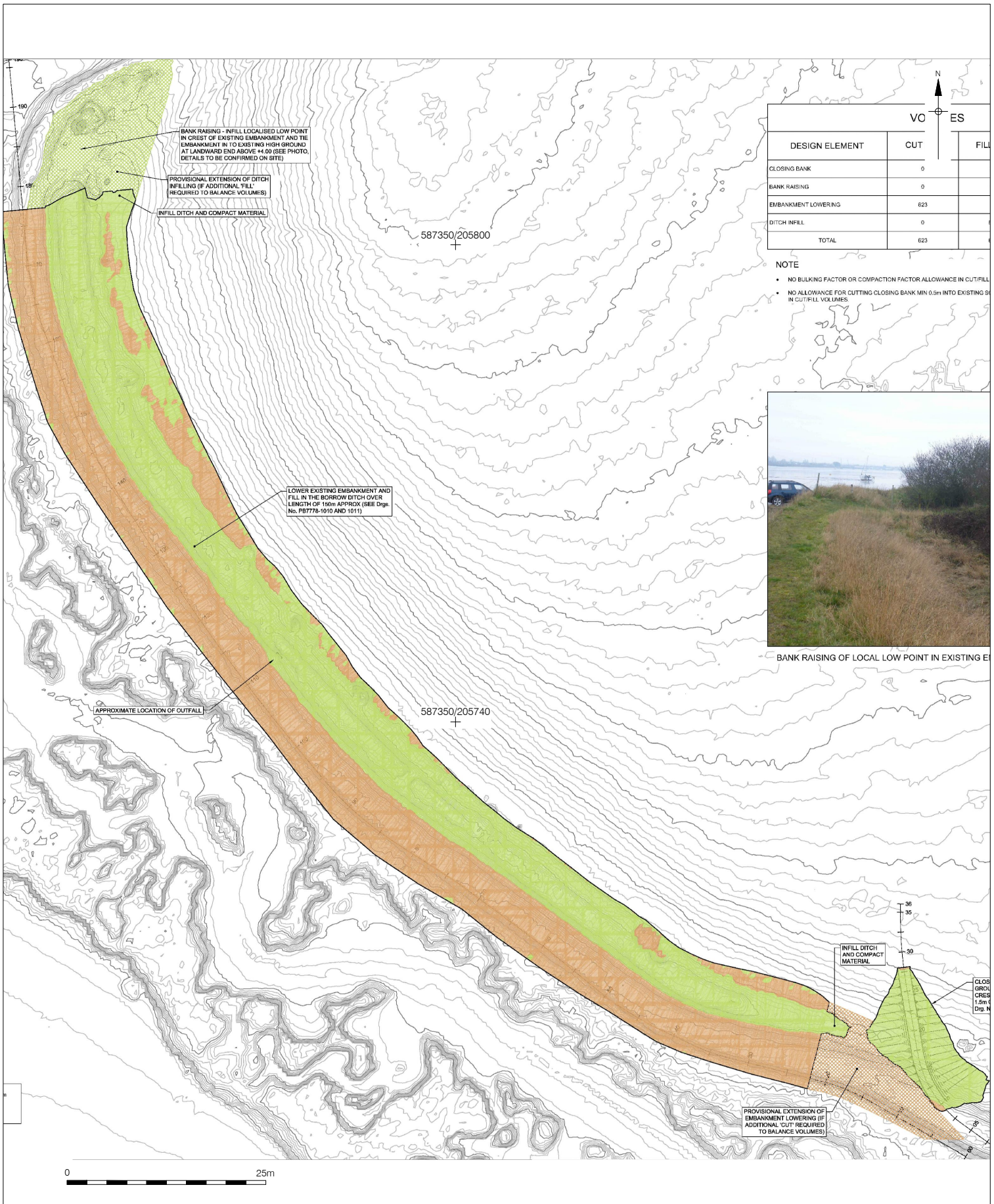
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## **11 FIGURES**









## 12 APPENDIX 1: PLATES



Plate 1: The development site seen from the seaward side (causeway)



Plate 2: Lowering of sea bank and clearing out of borrow ditch





Plate 3: Landscaping of borrow ditch and landward bank. Natural clay visible at base of ditch



Plate 4: Infilled borrow ditch





Plate 5: Elizabethan Coins



Plate 6: Finds assemblage from topsoil



### 13 APPENDIX 2: COIN CATALOGUE

Context	SF No.	Description	Date
100	1	Silver sixpence of Elizabeth I. 1573. Second Issue (North 1991, 134, no. 1997). Obverse: ELIZABETH D G ANG FR ET [HI] REGINA, Crowned bust left with rose behind. Reverse: POSVI DEV AD IVTORE M MEV//1573, Shield on long cross fourchée. I.M. Acorn. Mint of London. Die axis 300°, weight 3.44g. Moderate wear. Moderate corrosion. Clipped.	1573
100	2	Silver sixpence of Elizabeth I. 1563. Second Issue (North 1991, 134, no. 1997). Obverse: ELIZABETH D G ANG FR [ET H] REGINA, Crowned bust left with rose behind. Reverse: POSVI [DEV] AD IVTORE M MEV//1563, Shield on long cross fourchée. I.M. Pheon. Mint of London. Die axis 330°, weight 2.67g. Moderate wear. Moderate corrosion. Broken	1563
100	3	Silver sixpence of Elizabeth I. 1565. Second Issue (North 1991, 134, no. 1997). Obverse: ELIZA]BETH D G ANG FRA E[T HI REGINA], Crowned bust left with rose behind. Reverse: POSVI DEV AD [IVTO]RE M [MEV]//1565, Shield on long cross fourchée. I.M. Pheon. Mint of London. Die axis 300°, weight 2.51g. Moderate wear. Moderate corrosion. Broken	1565
100	6	Copper-alloy fivepence of Elizabeth II. 1970. Decimal Issue. Obverse: ELIZABETH II D G REG F D 1970, Crowned bust right. Reverse: NEW PENCE//5, Crowned thistle. Mint of Llantrisant. Die axis 0°, weight 5.47g. Slight wear. Moderate corrosion.	1970
100	7	Copper-alloy penny of George VI. 1945. First Issue. Obverse: GEORGIVS VI D G BR OMN REX F D IND IMP, Bare head left. Reverse: ONE PENNY//1945, Britannia seated right. Mint of London. Die axis 0°, weight 9.34g. Moderate wear. Slight corrosion.	1945
100	8	Copper-alloy penny of Elizabeth II. 1976. Decimal Issue. Obverse: ELIZABETH II D G REG F D 1976, Crowned bust right. Reverse: NEW PENNY//1, Crowned portcullis. Mint of Llantrisant. Die axis 0°, weight 3.60g. Moderate wear. Slight corrosion.	1976
100	11	Copper-alloy penny of Elizabeth II. 1990. Decimal Issue. Obverse: ELIZABETH II D G REG F D 1990, Crowned bust right. Reverse: ONE PENNY//1, Crowned portcullis. Mint of Llantrisant. Die axis 0°, weight 3.57g. Moderate wear. Moderate corrosion.	1990
100	14	Copper-alloy penny of George VI. 1937. First Issue. Obverse: GEORGIVS VI D G BR OMN REX F D IND IMP, Bare head left. Reverse: ONE PENNY//1937, Britannia seated right. Mint of	1937

Context	SF No.	Description	Date
		London. Die axis 0°, weight 9.24g. Moderate wear. Slight corrosion.	
100	15	Copper-alloy penny of Elizabeth II. 1971. Decimal Issue. Obverse: ELIZABETH II D G REG F D 1971, Crowned bust right. Reverse: NEW PENNY//1, Crowned portcullis. Mint of Llantrisant. Die axis 0°, weight 3.46g. Slight wear. Slight corrosion.	1971
100	16	Nickel-brass pound of Elizabeth II. 1985. Decimal Issue. Obverse: ELIZABETH II D G REG F D 1985, Crowned bust right. Reverse: ONE POUND, Diademed leek. Mint of Llantrisant. Die axis 0°, weight 9.52g. Moderate wear. Slight corrosion.	1985

## 14 APPENDIX 3: METALWORK CATALOGUE

Small finds No.	Deposit	Material	Object	Description	Date	Width (mm)	Length (mm)	Depth (mm)	Dia. (mm)	Weight (g)
4	100	Copper alloy	Bar	Solid, machine made, rectangular shaped bar, rectangular in cross-section. In profile wedge shaped - at the widest point the end is hollow/slotted for attachment.	Modern?	18.1	64.5	10.9		67.5
5	100	Copper alloy	Tube?	Cast, cylindrical object, oval in cross section. Truncated at both ends with longitudinal ridges along the body. May originally have been hollow but now solid.	Modern?	9.1	31.3	6		13.1
9	100	Copper alloy	Stud	Cast dome-shaped stud, circular in plan. Reverse is hollow with central shank, square in section and truncated. Probably from furniture or furnishings.	Modern?			6.5	14.1	1.5
10	100	Pewter	Spoon	Truncated cutlery handle with rounded terminal. In cross section lenticular. The flat surface of the handle has an incomplete makers mark '----SMAN'S/BE METAL'	Modern	22.4	77.9	3		16.6
12	100	copper alloy/lead	Waste	Amorphous piece of casting waste, sub-triangular in plan. Flattened underside smooth; upper surface rough.		20.1	21.3	4.7		5.3

Small finds No.	Deposit	Material	Object	Description	Date	Width (mm)	Length (mm)	Depth (mm)	Dia. (mm)	Weight (g)
13	100	Copper alloy	Collar/ferrule	Cast/machine made ferrule. Cyindrical with cut ends - file marks visible on edges.	Modern?	15.1	17.7	6.9		3.1
	100	Lead	Waste	Five pieces of lead waste; three are pieces of waste from roof flashing; two are casting spills. Example measured.		29.3	38.5	5.1		57.2 (total weight)
	100	Iron	Ring	Iron ring with central perforation measuring 21mm diameter; rectangular in cross section. Spacer or washer.	Modern?			8	42.5	32
	100	Copper alloy?	Eyelet	Two part textile eyelet; circular in plan with central perforation of 11mm diameter. One edge bent inwards.	Modern			4.5	19.7	1.5
	100	Iron	Object	Elongate shank, sub-square in section. Tapers towards both ends. Corroded.		8.2	50.2	6.3		8.5
	100	Copper alloy	Sheet	Strip of sheet metal with perforations for attachment. Folded in on itself. Likely to be strip binding.	Modern?	44.9	63.4	2.7		49
	100	Copper alloy	Object	Cast circular ring with three projections - only one survives. Screw thread on interior of central perforation. Likely a fixture/fitting.	Modern?			20.3	17.9	5.9
	100	Copper alloy	Sheet	Cut piece of cast sheet; rectangular in plan. One corner rounded; one has a slight projection for	Modern	22.8	36.7	0.9		4.1

Small finds No.	Deposit	Material	Object	Description	Date	Width (mm)	Length (mm)	Depth (mm)	Dia. (mm)	Weight (g)
				attachment.						

## 15 APPENDIX 4: OASIS FORM

**OASIS ID: preconst1-369030**

### Project details

Project name	Northey Island, Essex, Metal Detecting and Watching Brief
Short description of the project	<p>Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd was commissioned by The National Trust to undertake a metal detecting survey and watching brief during works to deliver adaptation of an existing embankment for nature conservation management at Northey Island, Essex. The works were carried out between 14 and 23 August 2019. The investigations at Northey Island revealed no archaeological features or deposits. The embankment was constructed entirely of clay with no apparent structure or layering to it. Finds recovered from the topsoil show a mixture of accidental losses dating from the Elizabethan period to the present day. These are everyday items and show the traffic of people to and from Northey throughout the ages. The sea walls may date to 1200 but their first definite record is on the Chapman and André map of 1777. The Elizabethan coins were sixpences of Elizabeth I's Second Issue and date from 1560s-1570s. The presence of the Elizabethan coins in the topsoil on the landward side of the sea bank could indicate that the structures were in place in the 16th century, although the sea level was lower then. Alternatively the coins could have been lost by visitors to the island prior to the construction of the sea defences and simply be re-deposited.</p>
Project dates	Start: 14-08-2019 End: 23-08-2019
Previous/future work	No / No
Any associated project codes	MDNI19 - Sitecode reference
Any associated project codes	FUL/MAL/18/01365 - Planning Application No. reference
Any associated project codes	MDNI19 - Museum accession ID reference
Type of project	Recording project
Monument type	FLOOD DEFENCES Post Medieval

Significant Finds COIN Post Medieval

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### Project location

Country England  
Site location ESSEX MALDON MALDON Northey Island, Essex  
Site coordinates TM 87540 05962 51.677839235074 2.159954640164 51 40 40 N 002 09  
35 E Point

---

### Project creators

Name of Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited  
Organisation

Project brief National Trust  
originator

Project design Pre-Construct Archaeology  
originator

Project Christiane Meckseper  
director/manager

Project supervisor Dave Curry

Type of National Trust  
sponsor/funding  
body

---

### Project archives

Physical Archive Colchester Museum  
recipient

Physical Contents "Metal"

Digital Archive Colchester Museum  
recipient

Digital Contents "Ceramics","Metal"

Digital Media "Images raster / digital photography","Spreadsheets","Text"  
available

Paper Archive Colchester Museum  
recipient

Paper Contents "other"

Paper Media "Diary","Miscellaneous Material"

available

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**Project**

**bibliography 1**

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
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