

Archaeological Evaluation on Land south of Gate
Marsh House, Church Road, North Fambridge,
Essex CM3 6LU

Site Code: NOFCR17

NGR: TQ 85076 97226



**Touchstone
Archaeology**

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1. Summary

Touchstone Archaeology carried out an archaeological evaluation on land south of Gate Marsh House in North Fambridge. Outline Planning (OUT/MAL/14/00623) to develop the site for residential use was submitted to Maldon District Council, whereby the Council requested that an Archaeological Evaluation (condition 9 & 10) be undertaken in order to determine the possible impact of the development on any archaeological remains. The work was carried out in accordance with the requirements set out within an Archaeological Specification (ECC 2017) and in discussion with the Archaeological Heritage Officer, Essex County Council. The results of the excavation of two evaluation trenches revealed one archaeological feature present within the trenches, a pit containing pottery from the medieval and post-medieval period (c.11th century to 17th century). The natural geology of London Clay was reached at an average depth of between 1.0m and 1.3m below the modern ground surface with archaeological features cutting into the natural geology. The Archaeological Evaluation has therefore been successful in fulfilling the primary aims and objectives of the Specification.

2. Introduction

Touchstone Archaeology was commissioned by _____ on behalf of their client to carry out an archaeological evaluation at the above site. The work was carried out in accordance with the requirements set out within an Archaeological Specification (ECC 2017) and in discussion with the Archaeological Heritage Officer, Essex County Council. The evaluation was carried out on the 28th June 2017.

3. Site Description and Topography

The proposed development site comprises of a field of c.573sqm situated on the east side of Church Road, south of Gate Marsh House, northwest of Trinity Church and the former North Fambridge Hall, in the village and civil parish of North Fambridge. The site lies on London Clay with superficial deposits of Head and is fairly flat with an average height of about 14.00m OD.

4. Planning Background

Maldon District Council gave outline planning permission (OUT/MAL/14/00623) for a single dwelling with associated access driveway and landscaping.

On the advice of the Archaeological Officer for Essex County Council, a programme of archaeological works in the form of an initial archaeological evaluation was attached to the consent:

L1 Archaeological Assessment

No development including any site clearance or groundworks of any kind shall take place within the site until the applicant or their agents; the owner of the site or successors in title has submitted an archaeological assessment by an accredited archaeological consultant to establish the archaeological significance of the site. Such archaeological assessment shall be approved by the local planning authority and will inform the implementation of a programme of archaeological work. The development shall be carried out in a manner that accommodates such approved programme of archaeological work.

L2 Implementation of Archaeological Fieldwork Programme

No development including any site clearance or groundworks of any kind shall take place within the site until the applicant or their agents; the owner of the site or successors in title has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work from an accredited archaeological contractor in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The development shall be carried out in a manner that accommodates the approved programme of

archaeological work.

5. Archaeological and Historical Background

North Fambridge is located on the north bank of the River Crouch, 6.5 miles south of Maldon and is recorded in the Domesday survey as *Fanbruge*. The name is thought to derive from *Fambregg*, *Fam* meaning 'fen' or 'marsh' and *bregg* meaning 'bridge' - 'bridge by a fen or marsh' or 'causeway across a fen or marsh'. In the c19th the name was thought to be a corruption of *Foambridge* derived from the Saxon *Fam* or *Fem* meaning 'foam or froth' and *Brigg* or *Brieg* meaning 'bridge', possibly relating to a river crossing at a point where the water was particularly frothy or an ancient bridge that raised foam in the current. The modern river spans 300m at this point.

A Red Hill is recorded adjacent to the Fleet and archaeological deposits of Mesolithic flints, a prehistoric land- surface and submerged forest have been recorded on the foreshore. The Manor, which included the church, was owned by the Beauchamp family, the Earl of Warwick, until 1450 when the Earl of Warwick lost his life fighting for Henry VI. Edward IV took the throne and gave the manor to the Queen's sister, Anne Woodville, daughter of the Earl of Rivers. On her death it went to her son Henry Bouchier and then after changing hands several times was owned by Robert, Earl of Essex until he was killed for treason, at which point it came under the ownership of the crown. It has changed hands many times and some of the families that have owned it are the Burgh, Mortimer and Langley families. The parish was in the southwest corner of the Hundred of Dengie; two creeks crossed the village, which was made up of some 1200 acres, 300 of which were marshland and a ferry joined the north and south banks of the river. The parish was small with only 147 inhabitants in 1821 and 34 houses recorded in 1870 and the land owned by a very small number of people.

The parish church of the Holy Trinity was built in the early C18th on the site of an older church. The new church is red brick with round-headed windows, a tiled roof and a bell. The base of the font is late C12th, the font bowl carved with roses or shields C15th. Brasses carved with figures of a man and woman, dating to 1590 and 1607AD, commemorate William Osborne, his wife Anne and their eight sons and eight daughters.

North Fambridge Hall (SMR38535/47429) is located east of the church. It is a Grade II listed, two storey, timber-framed and plastered house with tiled roof and cross-wings at the east and west ends. It dates to c. C16th but has been extensively altered.

In the Chapman and Andres map of 1769 North Fambridge is located within a rural landscape of sporadic settlement and a riverbank landscape of marshland (SMR48436/48437). The parish is represented as a small cluster of dwellings that include the church and the hall with one road leading east to the main road to Maldon and the other to a second cluster of dwellings on the river that include the ferry house and the ferry to south Fambridge. In the OS map of 1873 the PDA is within a large rectilinear field (110). The Church with graveyard, the Rectory with ornamental/kitchen garden, pond and orchard, the Hall with several outbuildings and pond and two small dwellings are present. Footpaths lead from the church west to West Wick and south to the river settlement and Ferry Boat Public House (SMR38537). Two roads lead from the church and hall south to the river and east to the main road to Maldon. By 1896 the PDA is within field (108 – 3.982), one pair of semi-detached dwellings have been constructed in the southeast corner of the field, a school has been constructed on the road between the church and the river settlement and the railway has arrived to the north. From this point the village begins to develop; In 1922 there has been significant field division (SMR18794) and several small dwellings (Hall cottages) have sprung up along the roads; in 1971 the west of the village has seen low density residential development; between 1991-94 Gate Marsh House is constructed within the field in which the PDA lies.

Google Earth images show that buildings have been added to the adjacent southern plot between 1994 and 2000 but that the PDA has not changed from 2000 to the present date.

6. Aims and Objectives

According to the Archaeological Specification, the aims and objectives for the archaeological work were to ensure that *“The archaeological work will comprise the excavation of two trial trenches, targeting the house-plot and the access road”* (ECC 2017).

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Heritage Assets clarifies a developers responsibilities in paragraphs 128 and 141.

Paragraph 128 states:

In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary. Where a site on which development is proposed includes or has the potential to include heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation.

Paragraph 141 states:

Local planning authorities should make information about the significance of the historic environment gathered as part of plan-making or development management publicly accessible. They should also require developers to record and advance understanding of the significance of any heritage assets to be lost (wholly or in part) in a manner proportionate to their importance and the impact, and to make this evidence (and any archive generated) publicly accessible. However, the ability to record evidence of our past should not be a factor in deciding whether such loss should be permitted.

The aims set out in the ECC Specification (2017) for the site required a phased approach to the mitigation of the development site commencing with an evaluation, with the results influencing the possibility of further work on the site depending upon the amount and significance of any possible archaeological remains.

7. Methodology

The Archaeological Specification called for an evaluation by trial trenching comprising two trenches across the footprint of the proposed dwelling and access road. Plans of the site

confirmed electricity cables and drainage pipes to the west and the trenches were laid out to avoid this area. Despite this archaeological activity was uncovered within the trenches.

A 2.5 ton 360° tracked mechanical excavator with a flat-bladed ditching bucket was used to remove the topsoil and subsoil to expose the natural geology and/or the archaeological horizon. All archaeological work was carried out in accordance with the specification. A single context recording system was used to record the deposits, and context recording numbers were assigned to all deposits for recording purposes. These are used in the report and shown in **bold**. All archaeological work was carried out in accordance with Touchstone Archaeology and IFA standards and guidance.

8. Monitoring

Historic Environment monitoring was available during the course of the evaluation.

9. Results

The evaluation has identified the presence of archaeological remains, which appear to be confined to the Medieval and Post-Medieval periods (c.1066 - 1900AD). The evaluation has succeeded in mapping (and where appropriate, sample excavating) the medieval pit.

Trench 1

9.1 The plan and sections are recorded in Figures 2 and 3 (see also Plates 2 and 3). The trench lay on an east-west alignment and measured approximately 15.2m by 1.20m.

Undisturbed natural geology (**103**) was identified across the trench as an orange brown sticky clay of the London Clay formation, at a continuous depth of approximately 1.0m – 1.1m (12.0-13.0mOD) below the present ground surface at 14m OD.

Trench 1 began 2m from the east boundary. Cut into the natural geology to the western end of the trench was a pit 2.2m in length running north south, 0.48m in breadth and 0.10m to 0.60m. The cut [**108**] had concave sides and sloped to its deepest point to the west of the trench. It was not present in the south section but continued into the north section. The fill (**104**) consisted of a compact and dark, silty clay with inclusions of CBM, pottery, animal

bone, charcoal and one large dressed stone characteristic of a rubbish deposit.

The deposit was hand excavated and pottery of 11th-14th century was retrieved.

This feature was sealed by a layer of light orange brown silty clay and small stones **(107)** 0.20m - 0.40m thick. Within this layer, deposits of shell and medium sized gravel in an orange brown clay silt **(102)** of between 0.50m in width and 0.10m and 0.30m thick (thicker towards the western end of the trench), were found to the east, centre and west of the trench and were interpreted as a leveling/drainage layer. It was reported by a neighbour that the field had at one time contained a pond or watering hole and the shells and gravel were laid down to prevent it become too boggy for the livestock that were watered there.

Above this was a dark layer of topsoil **(101)** 0.10m thick, dark brown to black in colour and containing small stones and roots, but otherwise relatively clean.

Trench 2

9.2 The plan and sections are recorded in Figures 2 and 3 (see also Plates 4 and 5). The trench lay on a north-south alignment and measured approximately 8.1m by 1.20m.

The trench began at the western end of Trench 1. Undisturbed natural geology **(203)** was identified across the trench as an orange brown sticky clay of the London Clay formation, at a continuous depth of approximately 1.0m – 1.3m (13.0-12.7mOD) below the present ground surface at 14m OD.

The pit from the western end of Trench 1 continued into the southern end of Trench 2 **[209]** and into both the east and west section beginning at a thickness of 0.60m at the southern end of the trench and rising to 0.30m. The infill of the pit **(205)** was black brown compact silty clay with inclusions of pottery, shell and bone. The deposit was hand excavated and pottery of 11th-mid 13th century was retrieved.

The pit met with a greenish silty clay with inclusions of stones, pottery, shells, bone and CBM, interpreted as the pond base **(206)** that was previously mentioned. Pottery of 15th-16th century was recovered.

The features were sealed by a layer of light orange brown silty clay with inclusions of small stone, pottery and CBM **(207)** 0.20m - 0.40m thick. Pottery of 17th – 19th century was found. Within this layer, a deposit of shell and medium sized gravel in an orange brown clay silt **(202)** of between 0.50m in width and 0.30m thick, similar to that found in Trench 1 was found to the centre of the trench and was again interpreted as a leveling/drainage layer.

A burnt lens **(208)** of perhaps 0.03m was found towards the centre of the trench, possibly the site of a modern fire.

Above this was a dark layer of topsoil **(101)** 0.10m thick, dark brown to black in colour and containing small stones and roots, but otherwise relatively clean.

10. Discussion

The 12th century font base and 15th century font bowl and the 16th and 17th century brasses at the Holy Trinity Church and the 16th century North Fambridge Hall (SMR38535/47429) suggest that there was a medieval and post-medieval village within the vicinity of the PDA. The shallow geology of the site suggests that the land was used for farming or grazing. A neighbour confirmed that an aged inhabitant of the village claimed that the land had been used for the watering of livestock, that a pond had once existed there and that levelling material had been bought in to stop the ground become too boggy for the animals to walk on. This may explain the shell and gravel deposits as they were commonly used for drainage on farmland. Imported material may also explain the mixture of dated finds in the pond layer. The site has produced a stratigraphic layer of dating evidence beginning in the lower levels at the 11th -13th century and ending in the upper levels with the 17th-19th century. This is concurrent with the evidence from the church and surviving historic buildings.

11. Finds

Artefacts retrieved from this evaluation have been processed and the pottery sent to our specialists.

Helen Walker analysed 16 sherds of pottery and despite the close proximity of the site to the river crouch and the sea, confirmed a local domestic assemblage with no evidence of trade.

The fill of the pit **(104 & 205)** produced shell-tempered ware and shell-and-sand-tempered ware both spanning 11th to earlier 13th centuries. Medieval coarseware produced the largest number of sherds and ranged from 12th to 14th centuries and some large pieces showed no signs of wheel-throwing and appeared to be coil built indicating a date not beyond mid/late 13th century. The latest find was a H1 cooking-pot rim in Mill Green ware which is a mid to late 13th century type.

The pond base **(206)** produced a single sherd of Tudor red earthenware from a jug or cistern dating to the 15th to 16th centuries.

The silty clay layer **(207)** that overlies the pit and the pond features contained a single sherd of post-medieval red earthenware dating to 17th to 19th centuries.

Helen concludes that “All of the pottery from layers **(104 and 205)** could have been current during the mid-13th century, but it may be more likely that the pottery represents a mixture of dates spanning the later 12th to end of the 13th century”.

In addition to the pottery, three fragments of roof tile were retrieved from (205), one of which also dated to the 13th century and another slightly later. A fragment of possible Roman brick or tile and late medieval to post-medieval roof tile was recovered from (206) and one fragment of roof tile dating to the late medieval to post-medieval period (207).

An assemblage of nine pieces of bone were analysed by our specialist Carol White, M.A. Cattle, dog, indeterminate bird, pig and sheep were represented. The cattle and pig had both been butchered. The sheep, which was also butchered, exceeded 3 years in age and was also butchered.

12. Conclusion

The evaluation trenches at the proposed development site have revealed two features, a pit [108 & 209] and the possible remains of a pond (206). Pottery retrieved from the fill of the pit (104 & 205) suggest a medieval date ranging from the 11th century through to the 14th century and the pond suggested 15th to 16th century.

The archaeological evaluation has been successful in fulfilling the primary aims and objectives of the Specification. A common stratigraphic sequence was recognised across the site comprised of topsoil (101 & 201) sealing the subsoil (107 & 207) and shell and gravel deposits (102 & 202), which overlay the natural geology of London clay (103 & 203). All features were planned in relation to the trenches, and the excavated features were drawn in section at a scale of 1:50. Therefore, this evaluation has been successful in fulfilling the aims and objectives as set out in the planning condition and the Archaeological Specification.

13. Acknowledgements

Touchstone Archaeology would like to thank the client, **SMALL PLANNING LTD** for commissioning the project. Thanks are also extended to Maria Medlycott, Historic Environment Officer, Essex County Council. Illustrations were produced by Jonny Madden for Digitise This. The fieldwork was supervised by Zoe Schofield, and the project was managed and report written by Zoe Schofield.

Zoe Schofield

Touchstone Archaeology

9th August 2017

14. References

Institute for Field Archaeologists (IfA), Rev (2008). *Standard and Guidance for archaeological field evaluation*

The Historic Environment Department, Place Services, ECC (May 2017) *Brief for trial trenching and excavation: Land south of Gate Marsh House, Church Road, Burnham on Crouch*

ECC HER data 2017

H, Walker (June 2017): *NOFCR17 Pottery report 6.07.17*

H.Walker (July 2017): *NOFCR17 Pottery Data 14.07.17*

C.White (July 2017): *NOFCR17 Bone report 9.7.17*

584985.0mE
197305.0mN

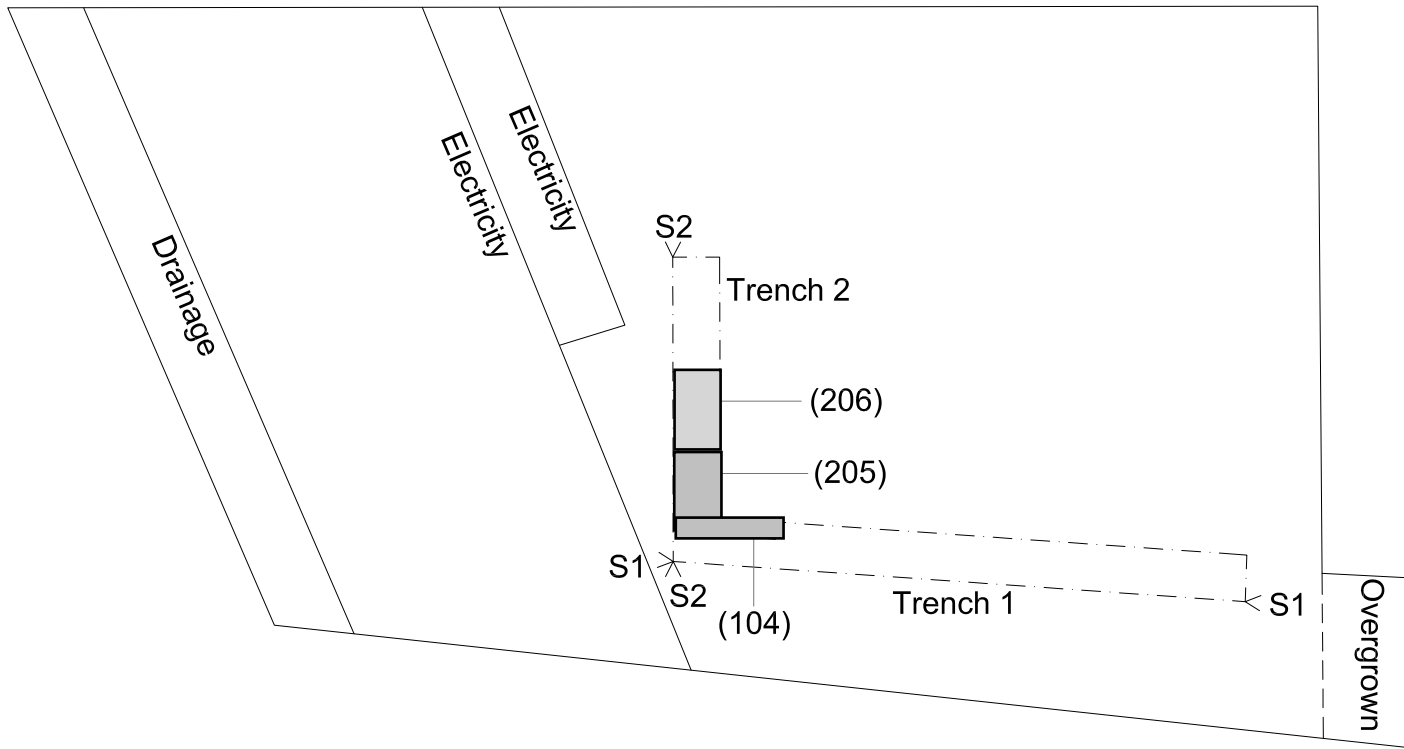


585245.0mE
197130.0mN

1:1250@A4



Figure 1: Location of evaluation trenches

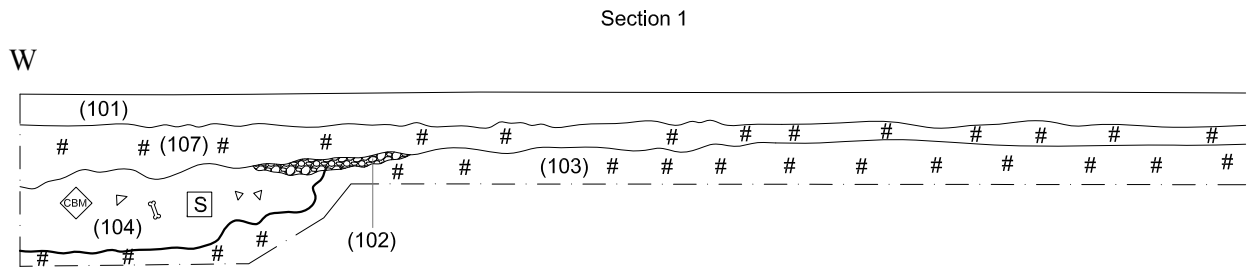


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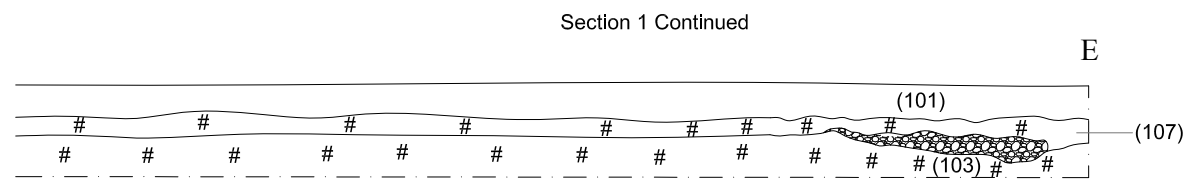


Figure 2: Evaluation trenches

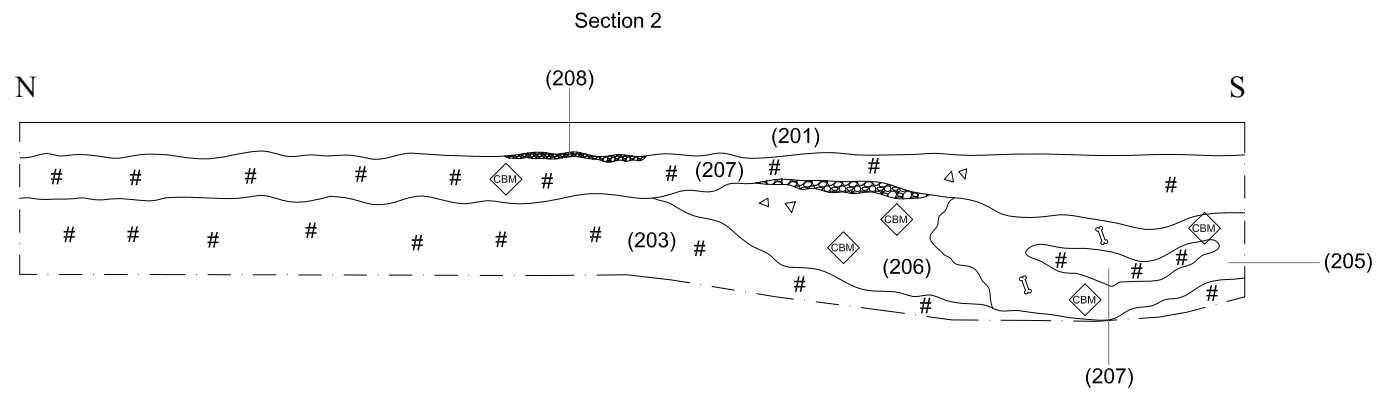
Trench 1



- ⊙ Occasional Stones
- ⋯ Frequent Small Stones
- # Clay
- ⚔ Flint
- ⚓ Bone
- ◊ CBM Ceramic Building Material
- ⋯ Sand
- ▨ Road Scalpings
- ▩ Gravel Pocket



Trench 2



1:50@A4



Figure 3: Sections



Plate 1 - Aerial Image of site



Plate 2 - View of Trench 1 facing west



Plate 3 - Trench 1 north section [104]



Plate 4 - View of Trench 2 facing south



Plate 5 - Trench 2 east section [205]