

**NEW POLICE STATION
SMITHS FARM
GREAT DUNMOW
ESSEX**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION BY
TRIAL TRENCHING**



**Essex County Council
Field Archaeology Unit
September 2005**

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**NEW POLICE STATION
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GREAT DUNMOW**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION
TRIAL TRENCHING**

SUMMARY

Client: Essex Police
FAU Project No.: 1518
NGR: TL 6367 2072
Planning Application No.:UTT/0669/04
Site Code: GDSF 05
Date of Fieldwork: 25th to 26th August 2005

An archaeological evaluation was carried out by ECC FAU on behalf of Essex Police on the site of a proposed new police station at Smiths Farm, on the south-eastern outskirts of Great Dunmow, Essex. The site was formerly rough pasture. The Chelmsford Road, which is thought to be the line of a Roman road, runs immediately to the east of the site.

Five 30m x 2m trenches were excavated within the footprint of the proposed building and the area of associated carpark. Only one archaeological feature was revealed, a ditch containing prehistoric pottery dating to the Late Bronze Age or Early Iron Age along with burnt flints and flint flakes. No other archaeological features were identified, although a number of prehistoric pottery sherds and flint flakes were discovered on the surface of the natural geology.

Although the results of the evaluation do not suggest intensive landscape use during the Late Bronze/ Early Iron Ages it is clear from this and other nearby investigations that a focus for the low level activity seen may well lie in the general vicinity. The absence of Roman or medieval remains indicates that this site was well outside the settlements of these periods. The low quantity and quality of the remains encountered on the site suggests that there is only a minor archaeological implication for the location of the proposed police station here.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

A planning application was made by Essex Police for the construction of a new police station at Smiths Farm, Great Dunmow. The Historic Environment Management (HEM) team of Essex County Council advised the local planning office that an archaeological condition be placed on the application, in line with PPG 16 (DoE 1990). Consequently, Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit (FAU) was commissioned to undertake an archaeological evaluation by trial trenching on the footprint of the building and the area of the associated car park. This report presents the results of the evaluation. The archive will be deposited with Saffron Walden Museum.

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 Location and Topography (Figure 1)

The proposed Police Station site comprises a roughly rectangular plot covering approximately 6000m² in the southeast corner of the field (NGR TL 6367 2072, centred). The east side of the site is bounded by the Chelmsford Road and the south by Hoblongs Industrial Estate, to the north and west is open scrub and grassland. Prior to the commencement of works the site was rough pasture with no signs of cultivation in the recent past.

In general the land around the site slopes down to the southeast, with the area of the site being the lowest part of the field lying at approximately 50.2m OD.

2.2 Geology

Topsoil to a depth of c. 0.2m covered the whole site; below this was a light brown silty sand subsoil which ranged in depth from c. 0.2m to c. 0.5m. The undisturbed natural was orangey brown silty sand. The drift geology of the area consists of Boulder Clay.

2.3 History and Archaeology

Great Dunmow is a known Roman 'small town' which was situated on the junction of Stane Street running east–west and the north–south Great Chesterford to Chelmsford road. It is postulated that the town covered an area of 10-12 hectares (Wickenden 1988; Havis 2005), most of which lies under the present town.

The site is located outside the probable limits of the Roman town, and an early Roman cremation cemetery has been excavated on the western side of the Roman Dunmow-Chelmsford road at Haslar's Lane approximately 0.5km to the north of the present site (Hickling 2003). While no archaeological investigation appears to have taken place in the immediate vicinity of the site there are a number of entries on the Essex Heritage Environment Record (HER) for the general area.

These primarily relate to the archaeological investigation associated with the construction of the new A120 road or to the Roman town of Dunmow. These are predominantly Roman, although HER 19149 is an unurned cremation that is thought to be prehistoric in date.

3.0 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The general aim of the project was to ‘...determine, the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality ...’ of the remains. More specific aims were to:

- Determine if any prehistoric evidence is located within the development area
- Determine if there is any Roman ribbon development or cemetery evidence alongside the Roman road
- Determine whether any evidence of medieval activity is located within the development area
- Examine the likely impact of the proposed development on the archaeological resource

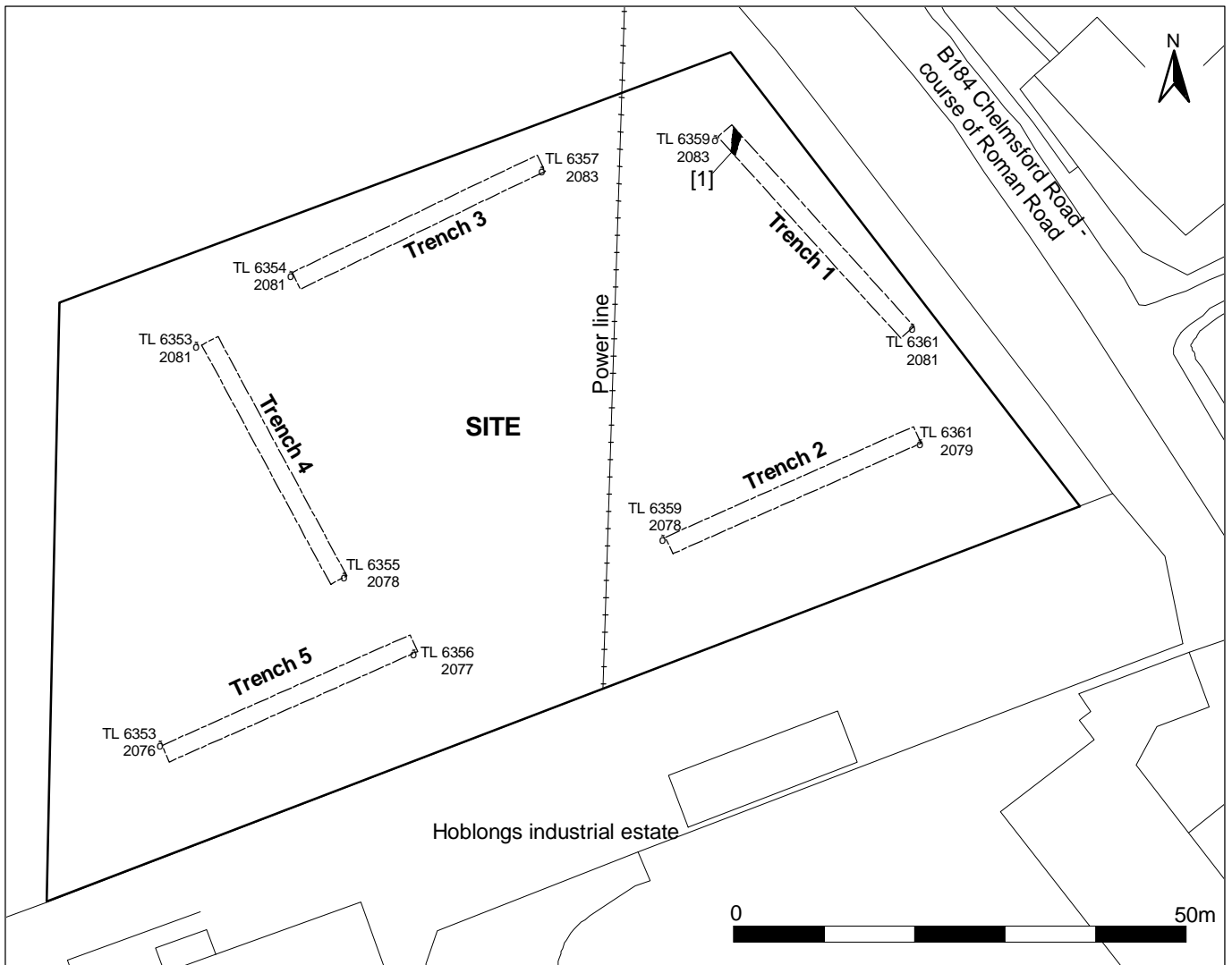
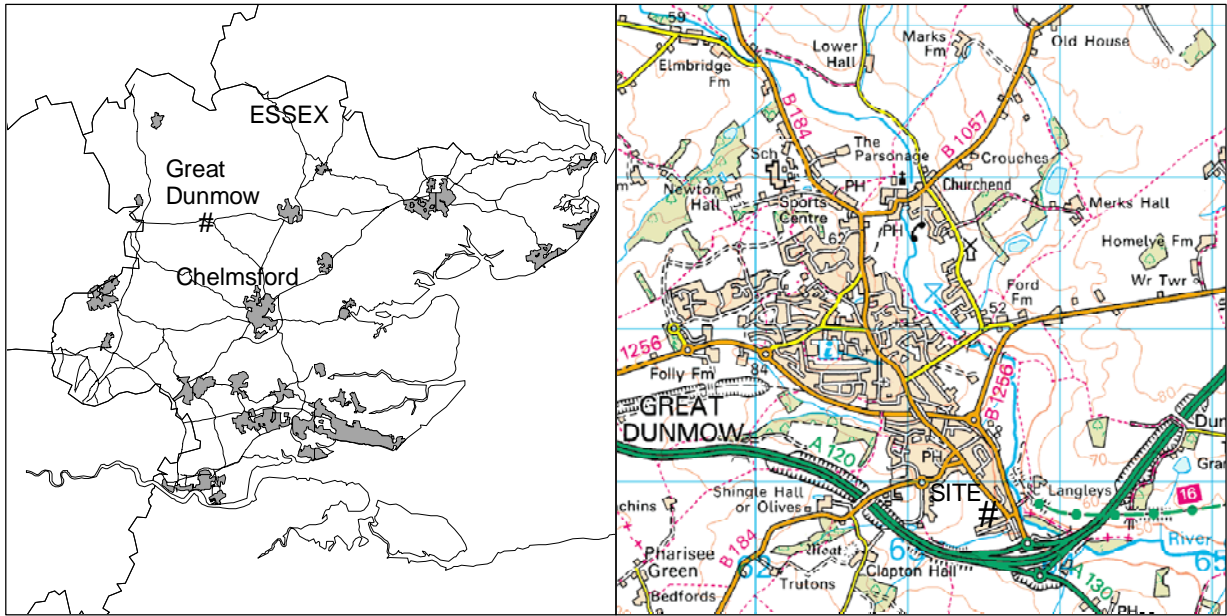
4.0 METHOD

The topsoil, and subsoil, was removed from the trenches using a JCB excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket, under archaeological supervision. All archaeological features and deposits were then excavated by hand using standard ECC FAU procedures, with plans being drawn at 1:20 and sections at 1:10. Finds were collected for dating and characterisation purposes. Sections of all features were recorded following standard ECC FAU methodologies. A photographic record, consisting of monochrome prints and colour transparencies, was maintained on selected individual features as well as general trench shots. Levels were taken of ground levels on and around each of the trenches as well as on individual features. The positions of the trenches were located using GPS.

IFA standards and by-laws and ALGAO’s Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England (Gurney, 2003) were adhered to during the fieldwork, which was monitored by Ms V Clarke of ECC HEM on behalf of the local planning authority.

5.0 FIELDWORK RESULTS (Figure 1)

Five trenches were excavated to the top of the undisturbed natural geology across the area. Trenches 2, 3, 4 and 5 were all devoid of archaeological features. All of the trenches were 30m long and approximately 1.7m wide. Each trench is described briefly below with further information located in Appendix 1. Trench and feature locations are shown on Figure 1.



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Fig.1. Site location

Trench 1

Running approximately northwest to southeast along the western edge of the Chelmsford Road, Trench 1 was c.0.85m deep. Below the topsoil were two subsoil layers. The upper, a mid-grey silty sand, was approximately 0.15m thick and was probably deposited recently, possibly during the construction of the modern road or one of the surrounding industrial estates. The lower light brown subsoil was 0.5m thick.

A single ditch [1] was identified at the northwest end of the trench (Fig.1). The ditch was approximately 0.85m wide and 0.42m deep and ran across the trench on a northeast-southwest alignment. Its single sandy silt pale yellow brown fill contained two flint flakes, two burnt flints and seven pottery sherds. Even though there were no diagnostic pieces of pottery, it is probable that they are Late Bronze Age or Early Iron Age in date (identified by N. Lavender). A further sherd of pottery and five more flint flakes were recovered from the surface of the undisturbed natural geology along the rest of the trench.

Trench 2

Trench 2 ran approximately east-west from Chelmsford Road along the boundary to Hoblongs Industrial Estate. Below 0.15m of topsoil was a light brown silty sand subsoil 0.35m thick, which was itself above the undisturbed natural geology. No archaeological features or finds were identified in this trench.

Trench 3

Orientated approximately east-west this trench was 0.55m deep. The topsoil was 0.15m thick and overlay the light brown silty sand subsoil, which was 0.4m thick. Although no features were identified, three sherds of prehistoric pottery and a single flint flake were recovered from the top of the undisturbed natural geology.

Trench 4

Trench 4 was aligned north-south along the western edge of the development site. It was excavated to a depth of 0.5m through 0.2m of topsoil and 0.3m of light brown silty sandy subsoil. No archaeological features were identified, although a single flint flake was recovered from the surface of the undisturbed natural geology.

Trench 5

No archaeological features or finds were identified in this trench. It ran approximately east-west along the boundary to Hoblongs Industrial Estate. Below 0.3m of topsoil was a light brown silty sand subsoil 0.2m thick, which was above the undisturbed natural geology.

6.0 FINDS AND ENVIRONMENTAL MATERIAL

Small groups of finds were recovered from a total of four contexts, three of which represent unstratified finds from three of the excavated trenches. The finds were recorded by count and weight, in grams, by context. Full details can be found in Appendix 2. All of the finds are prehistoric, comprising flint flakes, burnt flints and flint-tempered pottery.

Eleven sherds of pottery, weighing a total of 26g, were recovered, most of which came from fill 2 of ditch 1. Most of the pottery comprises featureless body sherds in Fabric D (identified by N. Lavender), indicating a probable Late Bronze Age or Early Iron Age date.

Nine flint flakes were recorded, most of which are likely to be working waste. In addition, two burnt flints came from the fill of ditch 1.

It is of interest that, although only small groups of finds were recovered, all of the material is likely to be prehistoric. Activity in the prehistoric period is recorded in the vicinity, although the nature and scale of the activity remains obscure.

All of the finds should be retained, although further work on the assemblage is not warranted.

7.0 CONCLUSIONS

Although only one archaeological feature was identified on the site, the number of unstratified finds recovered from the top of the natural geology indicates that there is prehistoric activity, probably of Late Bronze Age or Early Iron Age date, in the vicinity. Although no focus for prehistoric activity has been identified in this area, a single unurned cremation (HER 19149) was excavated to the south of the site, prior to the construction of the A120. This is likely to be prehistoric in date and may be contemporary with the feature and finds identified on this site. Also, the route of Chelmsford Road is thought to have origins as a trackway in the prehistoric period, and it is therefore unsurprising that finds and features of this date have been recovered from Smiths Farm.

The absence of features, deposits and even unstratified artefacts of Roman or medieval date indicates that this site lies beyond the limits of the settlement at Great Dunmow during these

periods. There is no evidence for roadside ribbon-development or cemeteries this far south alongside the Chelmsford road. Indeed, recent excavations further north into Great Dunmow appear to demonstrate that settlement was more-or-less confined to the top of the spur until the post-medieval period. The Roman cremation cemetery at Haslers Lane is a clear indication of the settlement periphery at this time (Hickling 2003).

The presence of a single prehistoric feature and the absence of later remains associated with either settlement at Great Dunmow or exploitation of its surrounding landscape suggests that there is little further archaeological implication for the proposed construction of the police station on this site.

Acknowledgements

This project was commissioned and funded by Essex Police. Especial thanks go to Pauline Dines of Essex Police and Julie Priess of Mantle Estates for their help throughout the project. The finds were processed by D. Smith, who also assisted the author during the fieldwork. The analysis of the finds was undertaken by J. Compton and the illustrations prepared by A. Lewsey. The project was managed by P. Allen and V. Clarke of ECC HEM monitored the fieldwork on behalf of the local planning authority.

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APPENDIX 1: FIELDWORK DATA

All dimensions are given in metres.

Context	Feature	Trench	Category	Details	Period
1	-	1	Ditch	NE-SW aligned; 1.7m long, 0.85m wide, 0.42m deep	Prehistoric
2	1	1	Fill	Fill of 1; Pale yellow brown sandy silt	
3	-	1	unstrat	Finds from top of natural geology	
4	-	4	unstrat	Finds from top of natural geology	
5	-	3	unstrat	Finds from top of natural geology	

Trench	Contexts	Length	Breadth	Depth	Height
1	[1]; (2); (3)	30	1.7	0.85	49.51mOD
2	-	30	1.7	0.5	50.30mOD
3	(5)	30	1.7	0.55	50.98mOD
4	(4)	30	1.7	0.5	51.54mOD
5	-	30	1.7	0.5	52.21mOD

APPENDIX 2: FINDS AND ENVIRONMENTAL MATERIAL

All weights given in grammes

Context	Feature	Count	Weight	Description	Date
2	1	2	8	Flint flakes	-
		2	22	Burnt flints	-
		7	20	Pottery; body sherds, flint-tempered (one may be baked clay)	Prehistoric
3	u/s (Tr 1)	5	26	Flint flakes	-
		1	2	Pottery; body sherd, flint-tempered	Prehistoric
4	u/s (Tr 4)	1	14	Flint flake	-
5	u/s (Tr 3)	1	4	Flint flake	-
		3	4	Pottery; body sherd and crumbs, flint-tempered	Prehistoric

APPENDIX 3: ARCHIVE INDEX

NEW POLICE STATION, SMITHS FARM, GREAT DUNMOW (GDSF 05)

Index to the Archive

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Brief for Evaluation
- 1.2 Specification for Evaluation

2. Research Archive (Material generated after fieldwork)

- 2.1 Evaluation Report
- 2.2 Finds Report

3. Site Archive

- 3.1 Context Register
- 3.2 Original Context Records 1 to 5
- 3.3 Levels Sheet
- 3.4 2 x Photographic Registers
- 3.5 5 x Black and White Prints
- 3.6 5 x Colour slides
- 3.7 1 Plan and section sheet (A5)

Not in Files:

- 1 box of finds

APPENDIX 4: EHER SUMMARY SHEET

Site Name/Address: New police Station, Smiths Farm, Great Dunmow	
Parish: Great Dunmow	District: Uttlesford
NGR: TL 6367 2072 (centred)	Site Code: GDSF 05
Type of Work: Evaluation by Trial trenching	Site Director/Group: Andrew Robertson ECC FAU
Date of Work: 25/08/2005 – 26/08/2005	Size of Area Investigated: Development area: 6000m ² Trenching: 5 trenches = 255m ²
Location of Finds/Curating Museum: Saffron Walden	Funding Source: Essex Police
Further Work Anticipated? No	Related EHER Nos: HER 19149
Final Report: EAH Summary	
Periods Represented: Prehistoric	
SUMMARY OF FIELDWORK RESULTS:	
<p>An archaeological evaluation was carried out by ECC FAU, on behalf of Essex Police, on the site of a proposed new police station at the southern end of Great Dunmow, Essex. The site was formerly rough pasture and known as Smith Farm. Immediately to the east of the site ran Chelmsford road, which is thought to be the line of a Roman road.</p> <p>Five 30m trenches were excavated within the footprint of the proposed building and carpark. Only one archaeological feature was revealed, a northeast–southwest aligned ditch containing prehistoric pottery, burnt flints and flint flakes. The pottery is undiagnostic but probably dates to the Late Bronze Age or Early Iron Age. No other archaeological features were identified although a number of prehistoric pottery sherds and flint flakes were discovered on the surface of the natural geology.</p> <p>Although the results of the evaluation do not suggest intensive landscape use during the Late Bronze/ Early Iron Ages it is clear from this, and other nearby discoveries, that a focus for the low level activity seen may well lie in the general vicinity. The absence of Roman or Medieval remains indicates that this site was well outside the settlements of these periods.</p>	
Previous Summaries/Reports: None	
Author of Summary: Andrew Robertson	Date of Summary: September 2005