

**BROOKSIDE
THE STREET
TAKELEY
ESSEX**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRENCHING



Essex County Council

FIELD ARCHAEOLOGY UNIT

October 2005

**BROOKSIDE
THE STREET
TAKELEY
ESSEX**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRENCHING

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	2 Saffron Walden Museum

As part of our desire to provide a quality service, we would welcome any comments you may have on the content or the presentation of this report.

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BROOKSIDE, THE STREET, TAKELEY, ESSEX

ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRENCHING

Client: Ricklin Limited

NGR: TL 5482 2115

Planning Application No: UTT/0989/05

Site Code: TABS 05

ECC FAU Project Number: 1544

Date of fieldwork: 10/10/05

SUMMARY

The excavation of an archaeological trial-trench in advance of residential development alongside the Pincey Brook has uncovered a ditch, perpendicular to nearby Stane Street. The primary fill of the ditch contained animal bone and a small amount of 1st-century AD Roman pottery, probably all from the same vessel. It is surmised that the ditch is Roman, and that it formed one side of an enclosure or plot alongside Stane Street (the B1256), the Roman road from Braughing to Colchester. No other archaeological features or finds were found.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report contains the results of the excavation of an archaeological trial-trench at Brookside, The Street, Takeley, Essex (Fig. 1). The trenching was undertaken in advance of residential development and was carried out by Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit on behalf of Ricklin Limited. It took place in accordance with an archaeological brief (ECC HEM 2005) and a written scheme of investigation (ECC FAU 2005) and was monitored by the Essex County Council Historic Environment Management team.
- 2.2 Copies of this report will be supplied to the client, ECC HEM, and Essex County Council Environment Record. The report will become part of the OASIS online record (<http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/project/oasis>). The site archive will be held at Saffron Walden museum.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The site comprises c. 0.5ha of rough grassland and is part of the garden of a house named Brookside. The B1256 (Stane Street) is to the north, the Pincey Brook to the west, and the disused Witham to Bishops Stortford railway line to the south (Fig. 1).
- 2.2 The underlying geology comprises layers of brownish grey clay, and brownish yellow clay and silt clay above Chalky Boulder Clay. The overlying topsoil is dark greyish brown silt clay and is c. 0.3m thick.
- 2.3 The site development lies within an area of archaeological potential on the western outskirts of the medieval village of Takeley. There is a possibility of Roman and/or medieval ribbon development along Stane Street, which is the former Roman road from Braughing to Colchester. Archaeological excavations at Stansted Airport have revealed Bronze Age, Iron Age, Roman and medieval remains along the western side of Pincey Brook (Havis and Brooks 2004).
- 2.4 The development area was previously used as a builder's yard.

3.0 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 3.1 The general aim of the trenching was to assess and record the nature of and complexity of any surviving archaeological remains.
- 3.2 The specific research objective was to look for evidence for ribbon development along the south side of Stane Street and within the vicinity of the Pincey Brook.

4.0 METHOD

- 4.1 The ECC FAU recording system was used to record all uncovered deposits and features, with plans being drawn at 1:20 and sections at 1:10 (ECC FAU 2003). The minimum sample sizes were 50% for self-contained features (e.g. pits and post-holes), and 10% for linear features (e.g. gullies and ditches). Two cameras were used to take a photographic record – black and white prints and colour transparencies – of work in progress. The work was carried out in accordance with the by-laws and guidelines of the Institute of Field Archaeologists.
- 4.2 The investigation consisted of a single trench, which was located in the area of the proposed access road for the residential development (Fig. 1). The plots of the proposed new houses were not investigated. The construction method of the intended housing - piling with raft foundations less than 0.15m deep – will result in minimal disturbance to any underlying archaeological remains. The trench measured 1.8m x 18m and was dug under archaeological supervision by a mechanical excavator with a broad toothless bucket. Restriction of space entailed that the trench was 2m less than that stipulated in the archaeological brief.

5.0 FIELDWORK RESULTS

- 5.1 Towards the west end of the trench was a ditch (4), on a near north-south alignment (Figs 2 and 3). The ditch was 0.92m deep, and had moderately sloping sides and a slightly concave base. It contained two deposits (5 and 6). The top fill of the ditch was similar to a surrounding natural deposit (10), and was inadvertently truncated by c. 0.3m during machining.

- 5.2 The primary fill of the ditch comprised yellowish brown clay. It lay in the lower third of the feature and contained thirteen sherds of 1st-century AD Roman pottery, probably all from the same vessel. It also contained twelve molars from a horse, and a small amount of bone from a large mammal. The top fill of the ditch was similar to the primary fill, but slightly darker in colour.
- 5.3 Overlying the ditch, and immediately below much of the topsoil in general, was a layer of builder's gravel (7).
- 5.4 Layers of clay (3) and silt clay (10) were present beneath the ditch. It is possible that layer 10 is an alluvial deposit associated with the adjacent brook.
- 5.3 The trenching identified no other archaeological features, deposits or finds.

6.0 FINDS by Joyce Compton

- 6.1 Archaeological artefacts were recovered from a single context, representing the primary fill of a ditch section. All of the material has been recorded by count and weight, in grams; details can be found in the table in appendix 2 below.
- 6.2 Two categories of find were recorded, both in small quantities. Animal bone fragments, weighing a total of 480g, comprise twelve much worn horse molars, plus a number of other small fragments, mainly unidentifiable. Several skull fragments were recognised, however, along with three fragments from a vertebra. These were probably derived from a large mammal.
- 6.3 Thirteen sherds of Roman pottery weighing 26g were recorded. These are likely to belong to a single vessel, an everted-rimmed beaker in fine grey ware (ECC FAU fabric code GRF) of late 1st-century date. This type of vessel was manufactured locally in some number during the early Roman period.
- 6.4 The finds are too few to enable firm conclusions to be drawn. The presence of Roman pottery would not be unexpected from a site in the vicinity of Stane Street, which was an important routeway from prehistoric times onwards and formed the main Roman road between *Verulamium* (St Albans) and *Camulodunum* (Colchester).

6.5 Further work is not warranted on such a small amount of material. All of the finds should all be retained.

7.0 CONCLUSIONS

7.1 The single ditch located by the work is likely to be of early Roman date, although it is possible that the material it contained is wholly residual. It is conceivable that the ditch could be medieval or later.

7.2 The ditch is almost perpendicular to Stane Street and is probably one side of a former roadside enclosure or plot.

7.3 The pottery and bone from the ditch are viewed as evidence for associated occupation, either within or near to the conjectured roadside enclosure.

7.4 The density of archaeological remains is low, and the proposed development is likely to result in only minor disturbance. It may prove possible to confirm the course and date of the ditch if further archaeological work is requested.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit would like to thank Rick and Craig Jenkins of Ricklin Limited for their help and co-operation. The fieldwork was carried out by Mark Germany and Dave Smith. The finds were processed by Phil McMichael and analysed by Joyce Compton. Figures 1 to 3 were produced by Andy Lewsey. The project was monitored by Richard Havis from the Essex County Council Historic Environment Management team.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- ECC FAU 2003 *Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit: Site Recording Manual.*
Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit, Fairfield Court, Fairfield
Road, Braintree
- ECC FAU 2005 *Written Scheme of Investigation: Archaeological Trenching, Brookside,
The Street, Takeley, Essex.* Essex County Council Field Archaeology
Unit, Fairfield Court, Fairfield Road, Braintree, Essex
- ECC HEM 2005 *Archaeological Trench on Land at Brookside, The Street, Takeley.*
Essex County Council Historic Environment Management, County Hall,
Chelmsford.
- Havis, R. and 2004 *Excavations at Stansted Airport 1986-91.* E. Anglian Archaeol. 107,
Brooks, H. volumes 1 and 2

Appendix 1: Fieldwork data

Context	Category	Description	Date
1	Deposit	Natural brownish grey and yellowish brown clay	-
2	Deposit	Natural brownish yellow clay	-
3	Deposit	Natural yellowish brown clay	-
4	Cut	Ditch.	?Roman
5	Deposit	Primary fill of ditch 4 – yellowish brown clay	?Roman
6	Deposit	Top fill of ditch 4 – yellowish brown clay	?Roman
7	Deposit	Layer – yellowish brown silt clay and gravel	Modern
8	Deposit	Layer – yellowish brown silt clay	Modern
9	Deposit	Topsoil – dark greyish brown silt clay	Modern
10	Deposit	Natural – yellowish brown silt clay (?Alluvium)	-

Trench Location	X (TL)	Y (TL)
NW corner	554905.8187	221171.5618
NE corner	554923.3727	221173.9745
SE corner	554923.6170	221172.1995
SW corner	554906.0622	221169.7469

Appendix 2: Finds data

Context	Feature	Count	Weight	Description	Date
5	4	54	480	Animal bone; horse molars x 12; fragments, including skull and vertebra	-
		13	26	Pottery; rim and shoulder sherds, fine grey ware beaker, probably all same vessel	Late 1st C

Appendix 3: Contents of archive

In one A4 folder:

- 2 Copies of the client report
- 1 Copy of the archaeological brief
- 1 Copy of the written scheme of investigation
- 1 Finds report and catalogue
- 1 Context register sheet
- 10 Context recording sheets
- 1 Section register sheet
- 1 Plan register sheet
- 2 Photographic record sheets
- 7 Monochrome prints and negatives
- 7 Colour transparencies
- 2 Site plans
- 1 Section drawing

Not in A4 folder:

- 1 Bag of Roman pottery
- 1 Bag of animal bone

Appendix 4: Essex Historic Environment Record Sheet

Site Name & Address: Brookside, The Street, Takeley, Essex	
Parish: Takeley	District: Uttlesford
NGR: TL 5482 2115	Site Code: TABS 05
Type of Work: Trial-trenching	Site Director/Group: Mark Germany, Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit
Date of Work: 10/10/05	Size of Area Investigated: Development area: c. 0.5ha Trench area: 33m ²
Location of Finds/Curating Museum: Saffron Walden museum	Funding Source: Developer
Further Work Anticipated?	Related HCR Nos:
Final Report: Essex Archaeology and History (Summary)	
Periods Represented: Roman	
SUMMARY OF FIELDWORK RESULTS: <p>The excavation of an archaeological trial-trench in advance of residential development alongside the Pincey Brook uncovered a ditch, perpendicular to nearby Stane Street. The primary fill of the ditch contained animal bone and a small amount of 1st-century AD Roman pottery, probably all from the same vessel. It is surmised that the ditch is Roman, and that it formed one side of an enclosure or plot alongside Stane Street (the B1256), the Roman road from Braughing to Colchester. No other archaeological features or finds were found.</p>	
Previous Summaries/Reports: None	
Author of Summary: M. Germany	Date of Summary: October 2005



Fig.1. Site location

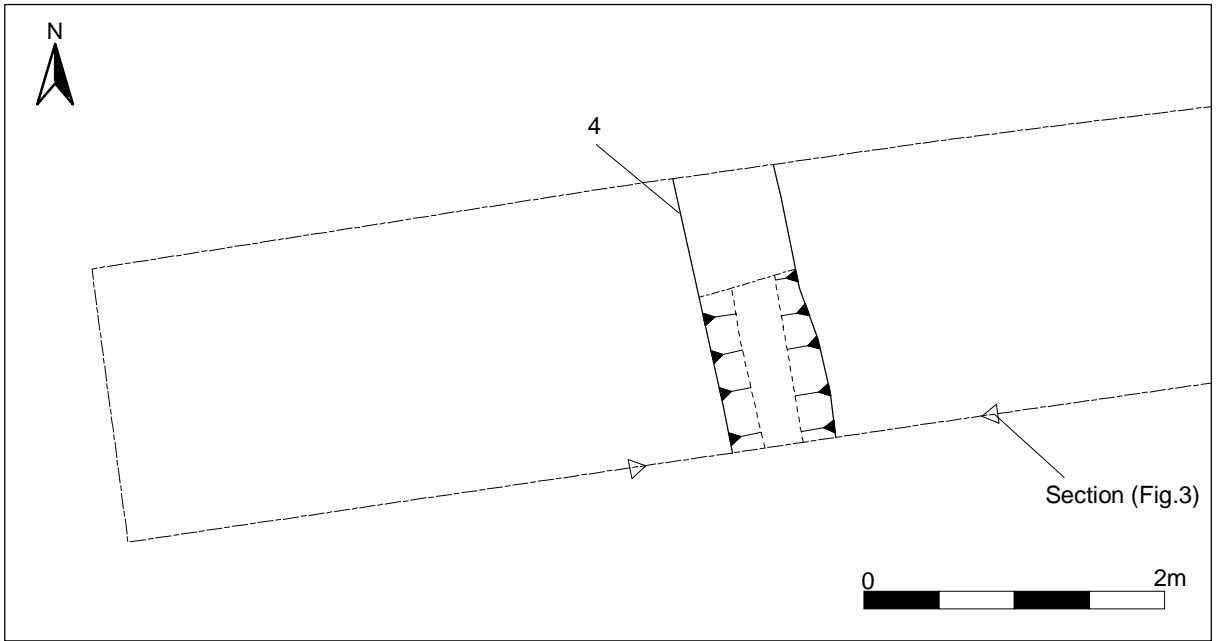


Fig.2. Evaluation trench plan

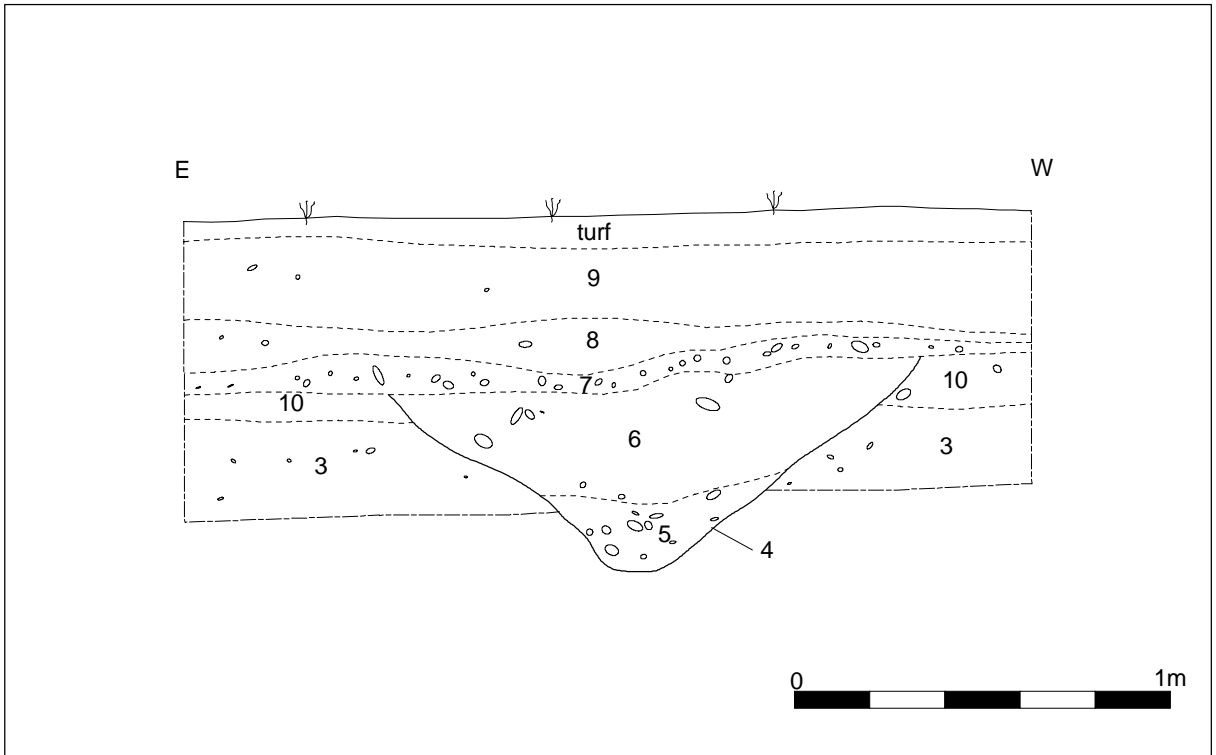


Fig.3. North facing section through ditch 4