

**LAND ADJACENT TO 255 VICTORIA AVENUE
SOUTHEND-ON-SEA**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION
BY TRIAL TRENCHING**



Essex County Council

Field Archaeology Unit

April 2006

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**LAND ADJACENT TO 255 VICTORIA AVENUE
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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION BY
TRIAL TRENCHING**

SUMMARY

Client: Tudor Estates

NGR: TQ 87628674

Planning reference no: SOS/05/01113/FUL

Site Code: A2006.10

Project No: 1587

Date of Fieldwork: 27th, 30th and 31st of January

Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit carried out an archaeological evaluation by trial trenching on behalf of Tudor Estates under an archaeological condition placed on a planning application for a mixed commercial and residential development of land adjacent to 255 Victoria Avenue, Southend-on-Sea, in the centre of the medieval village of Prittlewell. A single trial trench was excavated immediately to the south of no. 255, a restored medieval timber-framed house dating to the early 15th century. The main aim of the evaluation was to establish whether or not the 15th-century house originally extended further to the south, incorporating a second cross-wing.

A flint tool of the Mesolithic (Middle Stone Age) to Neolithic (New Stone Age) or Early Bronze Age and a Roman coin were recovered as residual finds in medieval deposits. These finds reflect the general background of prehistoric and Roman remains in the surrounding area.

The trial trench did not recover any further evidence of the 15th-century house, as the relevant levels had been extensively disturbed by a succession of later ground clearances, but it did identify at least one phase of earlier medieval occupation. The earliest features were undated and could belong to either the medieval or earlier periods. Although undated, a large ditch parallel to Victoria Avenue (and its medieval predecessor North Street) may have been the original medieval street-side ditch. It was cut by a timber building with a shallow sunken floor surface and hearths. The early medieval pottery recovered from the building has a broad date range, but most likely dates to the 12th or 13th centuries. Analysis of samples from the hearths and floor surfaces yielded evidence of cereal processing waste and fish bones. A rubbish pit of uncertain relationship to the building is dated to the first half

of the 13th century. This evidence appears to relate to the early development of medieval Prittlewell and its market in the area opposite the parish church of St Mary.

Any potential remains of the 15th-century house would have been removed by a large area of ground reduction in the south-west of the trench during the post medieval period. Above this, a short length of greensand-and-tile foundation with a related brick floor was aligned with the back wall of the 15th-century house, and probably represents the rear wall of Deeds Cottages, thought to have been built in the 17th century. Further remains of the cottages were comprehensively removed by later ground clearances.

The evaluation trial trench has demonstrated that earlier medieval deposits, including evidence of timber structures, survive to the south of the standing 15th-century building. Comparison with the results of trenching carried out by the Essex CC Field Archaeology Unit along the rear wall of the standing building in 2001 suggests that earlier medieval levelling layers may extend beneath the construction and floor levels of the standing building itself. Overall, this suggests that there is potential for medieval strata to survive on the few sites in the historic centre of Prittlewell that have escaped cellaring or modern redevelopment.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Planning Background

The Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit (ECC FAU) carried out an archaeological evaluation on behalf of Tudor Estates under the terms of a condition placed on planning consent (planning ref. SOS/05/0113/FUL) in accordance with Planning Policy Guidance note 16 (PPG16). The condition was placed on the advice of the Southend Museum Service Archaeological Officer under Southend-on-Sea Borough Development Plan Policies, in particular, policy C1 of the Local Plan (Ancient Monuments and Archaeological sites). The archaeological work followed a brief produced by Southend-on-Sea Borough Council (2005) and the written scheme of investigation (WSI) prepared by ECC FAU (2006).

The new development consists of a three-storey extension to be attached to the south of the existing no. 255, consisting of a shop with flats above.

1.2 Report and Archive

Copies of this report will be supplied to Tudor Estates, Southend-on-Sea Borough Planning Department, Southend-on-Sea Borough Museum, and the National Monuments Record. A version will be uploaded to the Online Access Index of Archaeological Investigations (OASIS) (<http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/project/oasis>). The project archive will be deposited at Southend-on-Sea Borough Museum.

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 Location, Topography and Geology

The development site is located in the centre of the medieval village of Prittlewell, on the south side of the Prittle Brook, 1km north of Southend town centre (TQ 87628674) (Fig. 1). The village was related to a medieval priory located on the north side of the Prittle Brook, in the area of the modern Prittlewell Priory Park. Prittlewell was originally the main settlement in the area and has since been absorbed into the wider urban area of Southend-on-Sea.

The site is located on the corner of Victoria Avenue (A127) and West Street, opposite the parish church of St Mary, on a crossroads in the centre of the medieval village. The northern, western and eastern arms of the crossroads are presumed to be medieval in origin, but the southern arm of Victoria Avenue, linking Prittlewell with Southend, was not built until the late Victorian period. The existing 255 Victoria Avenue, in the north-east of the site, is a

restored late medieval timber-framed house, used as an estate agent's office, with roughly surfaced yard areas to the south and west currently used for car parking.

The uppermost geological strata in the area consist of River Terrace gravels overlying London Clay.

2.2 Historical and Archaeological Background

The Southend area is rich in archaeological remains of all periods, and Prittlewell and the Prittle Brook valley in particular have been a focus for human activity and settlement from prehistoric times. An overview of the archaeological background to settlement of the Southend and Shoebury areas has been published by Wymer and Brown (1995, 151-73).

2.2.1 Prehistoric

Palaeolithic (Old Stone Age) flint hand axes and other tools have been recovered from the Roots Hall gravel pit 100m to the west of the site (Historic Environment Record (HER) 9593) and from the area of St Mary's Church immediately opposite it (HER 9785, 9789 and 9597). A perforated Neolithic (New Stone Age) or Early Bronze Age stone macehead and a perforated 'axe-hammer' have been recovered from the Prittle Brook in the vicinity of Priory Park (HER 9505 and 9625). The corner of a Late Bronze Age settlement enclosure has been found at Eastwood, 2km to the north of the site, while Prittlewell Camp, a circular earthwork believed to date to the Early Iron Age, is still partly visible near Eastern Avenue 1km to its north-east (Wymer and Brown 1995, 157). A large group of Late Iron Age jars found at Roots Hall gravel pit 100m to the west of the site (HER 9591 and 9594) may represent a cremation cemetery.

2.2.2 Roman

Roman remains are known generally along the Prittle Brook. A concentration of Roman pottery and other remains has been found around the Roots Hall gravel pit (HER 9592 and 17621), while Roman bricks were reused in the construction of the parish church (HER 9638).

2.2.3 Saxon

Evidence tentatively suggests a settlement in Prittlewell in the Middle and Late Saxon periods. An arch in the parish church of St Mary is tentatively dated to the 7th century, which has led to a suggestion that the church may have been a Saxon minster, a centre of ecclesiastic authority and ministry for the surrounding area. Of particular significance is the 7th-century cemetery located at Priory Park (Tyler 1988; Wymer and Brown 1995), and the

recent discovery of an exceptionally rich, probably royal, burial, also dated to the 7th century (Hirst *et al.* 2004). A Saxon loomweight has been found just north of the parish church (HER 9642), while settlement evidence has been recorded in the area of Temple Farm industrial estate, where remains included a sunken-floored building (Wymer and Brown 1995, 163).

2.2.4 Medieval

The medieval village of Prittlewell was centred on the 12th-century parish church of St Mary's at the T-junction of East Street, West Street and North Street (now the north end of Victoria Avenue). Prittlewell rose in importance in the 12th century with the founding of the Cluniac priory of St Mary (Prittlewell Priory) in c. 1110 and the establishment of a market, presumably at the junction of the main streets opposite the parish church. The settlement achieved a peak of prosperity in the second half of the 15th century. A tower and other embellishments were added to the parish church, and new buildings facing the market encroached onto the churchyard. Late medieval timber-framed buildings (HER 9637 and 17982) survive at 255 and 269-275 Victoria Avenue (Fig. 1).

2.2.5 Post-medieval

After the 16th century Prittlewell appears to have had little outward expansion until the 18th/early 19th century when new buildings were erected, as are evident in surviving properties along East Street and West Street. In the late 19th and the 20th centuries, Southend's rapid expansion absorbed Prittlewell. The 1st edition Ordnance Survey of 1876 still shows Prittlewell as a small village separate from Southend, but by the 2nd edition OS of 1897-8 it had been linked to Southend by the construction of Victoria Avenue. This resulted in the demolition of many former medieval and post-medieval timber buildings, which were replaced by Victorian, Edwardian and later developments such as the Golden Lion (c. 1890) and the Spread Eagle (1925).

2.2.6 The 15th-Century Building at 255 Victoria Avenue

No. 255 Victoria Avenue is thought to be the surviving wing of a timber-framed building, dated by dendrochronology to around 1407, with a further wing possibly having been lost (Menuge and Hilsden 1999). It was a high-status building facing onto Prittlewell's medieval market place and its first floor may originally have been the market hall, the ground floor functioning as shop and dwelling. The original building was gabled at the front, with jetties on each level. Early alterations include the creation of a cellar beneath the eastern half of the wing, and an out-shot at the south-west corner of the building, possibly dating to the 17th century. In the mid-19th century it was converted to a bakery. Immediately to the south of 255 Victoria Street is open land where once stood Deeds Cottages, a twin-gabled, timber-

framed, weather-boarded structure probably dated from the 17th century, but demolished in 1948 to widen the junction of West Street and Victoria Avenue

A small trench excavated inside the rear wall of no. 255 by Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit in February 2001 (Fig. 1), recorded a sequence of archaeological deposits 0.8m deep beneath the modern floor level (Essex CC FAU 2001). This consisted of levelling deposits, probably originating from the late medieval and early post-medieval periods, with the uppermost 0.25m made up of Victorian and modern deposits and disturbances. Archaeological remains predating the medieval build-up comprised a series of small pits or post-holes cut into the natural sandy gravels. Although undated, they were sealed by a layer that produced a single sherd of abraded prehistoric pottery.

3.0 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Generally, the aim of the work was to determine the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any surviving archaeological remains to the south of no. 255 Victoria Avenue.

The specific objectives of the investigation were to:

1. Determine whether the surviving building was part of a more extensive structure, and if so, the possible extent and nature of that building;
2. Record archaeological evidence of such a building, and any predecessors or successors;
3. Assess the significance of any such evidence in relation to the medieval and post-medieval development of Prittlewell.

4.0 METHODS

The archaeological evaluation was carried out according to regional standards in field archaeology (Gurney 2003), and all fieldwork methods and recording conformed to the codes of practice and guidance issued by the IFA. Standard ECC FAU recording and excavation methods were used.

The archaeological evaluation consisted of a single trench aligned northeast/south-west adjacent to the southern wall of 255 Victoria Avenue (Fig 1). The trench measured 8m by between 1.6m and 1.8m, comprising an area of 14 sq m within the footprint of the proposed new building. The hard-standing and the modern rubble overburden were removed to a

depth of up to 0.25m by a mini-digger fitted with a toothed bucket, and a series of modern soil layers below this level were stripped using a toothless bucket. Initially, machine-excavation was stopped at c. 0.5m to record a post-medieval wall line and related deposits, but since no other significant features were visible, and this level was extensively disturbed by modern intrusions, excavation by machine continued to a depth of c. 0.7-0.8m. At this level medieval surfaces and features were identified; these were cleaned by hand, and recorded and excavated in detail.

All surfaces were sufficiently cleaned to ensure that any features present were visible. Archaeological features and deposits were excavated using hand tools and finds were collected and bagged by context. A full photographic record documented the investigation. Plans and sections were drawn at the appropriate scale. All spoil heaps were examined for archaeological material.

Bulk soil samples were taken from three contexts, consisting of sealed hearth deposits and floor surfaces, with the aim of providing evidence of plant or other remains related to domestic occupation.

5.0 RESULTS

5.1 Undated Early Features (Figs 2 and 5)

The natural deposit exposed at the base of the trench consisted of firm sandy gravels and grits. The surface of the natural gravels was recorded in the northeast of the trench at 27.05m OD, 0.75m below modern ground level, but was truncated to 26.9m OD, a depth of around 0.9m, over the southwestern half of the trench. The earliest archaeological features cut the natural gravels, but contained no datable finds and so cannot be confidently assigned to any specific period. All these early features were partially or wholly truncated by later features dated to the medieval period (see 5.2 below).

Ditch 64 towards the north-eastern limit of the trench was aligned south-east to north-west, butt-ending to the north-west. It was 0.18m deep, but had been extensively truncated by later ditches 3 and 1. To the southwest, ditch 62 was aligned east-west, butt-ending to the east. It was 0.21m deep and had been entirely truncated by the later sunken feature 30. No datable finds were retrieved from either feature.

A large ditch, 3, cut ditch 64 and was aligned south-east to north-west, parallel with the frontage onto Victoria Avenue, with a V-shaped profile 0.9m deep. This ditch clearly defined

a major boundary, but contained no datable finds, although it was cut by medieval features and must be medieval or earlier in date. It contained a series of gravelly fills, with the upper fills possibly showing evidence of tipped material eroded from a feature such as a bank or a road at the ditch's eastern edge. Unfortunately, truncation has removed all evidence of any such feature, and the edges of the ditch itself have suffered some truncation. The piece of septaria in fill 18 is not intrinsically datable, and although this was used as a building material in the Roman period, it also appears in medieval buildings, including the parish church immediately opposite the site.

5.2 Medieval Features (Figs 3 and 5)

Succeeding the large ditch was a group of features containing pottery with a broad date range of 10th to 13th century, but probably datable to the end of the date range, the 12th or 13th century. These features are interpreted as a timber structure with a sunken floor and hearths. A rubbish pit was also recorded.

At the northeast end of the trench, between the eastern edge of ditch 3 and the street frontage, was a linear feature interpreted as the robber trench of a wall aligned south-east to north-west. The interpretation of a robbed wall line is reinforced by the regular form and profile of the feature, which had a squared base which could have taken a timber foundation, either in the form of a sleeper beam or a row of posts. Unfortunately the relationship between ditch 3 and robber trench 1 was masked by a later gully, 53 (see 5.3 below). From the initial fill of the robber trench came a single sherd of pottery broadly dated to the 10th to 13th century.

The south-western edge of ditch 3 was cut by a large sunken feature, 30, c. 0.3m deep, with a near-vertical side and a flat base, and evidence of a trampled surface, 6, across the base suggests it represents the construction cut for a sunken floor. A large undated post-hole, 7, lay below the floor surface and may have been contemporary with robber trench 1, especially since it had a similar square-cut profile. The relationship of post-hole 7 with the sunken area 30 is uncertain. It could either be earlier than the sunken area, having been truncated by it, or could have been cut from its base. If the latter, the post would have been removed while the sunken area was still in use as the post-hole was sealed by occupation deposits.

Post-hole 7 was cut by a hearth, 24, within the sunken floor surface 6, against the north-western edge of the trench. The hearth had two stages of use, 25 and 5, represented by heat-reddened stone linings and debris radiated from its centre across the floor surface. The later hearth surface, 5, had a clean clay base, 26, separating it from the earlier hearth lining.

A smaller hearth, 68/70, was recorded against the south-eastern limit of the trench. Floor 6 represented the latest definable surface on the base of the sunken area 30, and was derived from trodden hearth debris and occupational rubbish. It contained pottery broadly dating to the 10th to 13th centuries, and a residual 4th-century Roman coin. Although only very small amounts of datable artefacts were recovered, the similar pottery dating for the sunken area 30 and robber trench 1 towards the street frontage suggests they might have been contemporary, forming different parts of the same structure. Unfortunately, later features have truncated the sunken floor towards the south-western end of the trench. Sunken area 30 was backfilled with an homogenous grey-green clay containing broken flecks and fragments of oyster shell, charcoal and small grits and gravels (37). No artefacts were recovered from backfill 37 that could date the disuse of the sunken area, although it did contain a residual prehistoric flint tool.

A large pit, 8, was recorded in the area where the sunken floor 6 had been truncated by a probable post-medieval cut, 38 (see below). The fill of pit 8 contained pottery dating to the first half of the 13th century, as well as pottery of similar date to that found in sunken floor surface 6. In addition, pit 4 cut floor surface 6 and also contained 10th-13th century pottery.

5.3 Post-medieval and Modern Features (Figs 4 and 5)

A large cut feature, 38, extended across the south-western 3m of the trench. It cut the backfill of sunken area 30, cutting down to about the same level, and disturbed the upper levels of hearth 5. Its fill, 39/47, was more mixed than backfill 37 of the earlier sunken area 30, and feature 38 appears to represent a second episode of ground reduction. The backfill of feature 38 levelled the surface at 27.5-27.6m OD. No finds were recovered from the fills of 38, apart from a few fragments of post-medieval brick and tile which are thought to have been deposited as a result of later disturbance of the surface of hearth 5.

A short length of a foundation, 42, aligned north-east to south-west, cut the levelled backfill of feature 38. The foundation comprised greensand and tile fragments in a yellow sandy mortar, and was butted on its north-east side by successive floor layers and/or bedding layers, the latest of which appears to have formed the base for a floor of unfrogged bricks, 46. These remains are thought to represent the rear wall of Deeds Cottages (see 2.2.6 above). The foundation was not substantial, and probably formed a sleeper wall for a timber-framed superstructure. At the north-east end of the trench, a shallow, heavily truncated gully, 53, cut a medieval feature, but unfortunately contained no datable finds and its precise phasing is uncertain.

Any further remains of the cottages have been truncated by successive clearance cuts, 74, 61 and 71, filled with dumped deposits containing general household waste and debris, including tile and oyster shells, 48, 56, 57 and 58. The uppermost deposit, 48, sealed the structural remains. Cut into fill 48 were rubbish pits 33 and 35, dated to 19th-20th century, but containing some residual earlier material. At the same stratigraphic horizon was a small stake hole, 69, filled with a similar dark rich material fill. Construction debris and successive spreads of dumped material, 59 and 60, containing modern artefacts comprised the overburden varying in thickness across the trench between 0.10 and 0.24m.

6.0 FINDS AND ENVIRONMENTAL MATERIAL

By Joyce Compton

Small groups of finds were recovered from nine contexts and include material recovered from bulk soil samples taken from three contexts. All of the material has been recorded by count and weight, in grams, by context. Full details can be found in Appendices 2 and 3. The assemblage is medieval and post-medieval in character; residual flints and a Roman coin were also recovered. Two contexts (fill 18 of ditch 3 and fill 25 of hearth 24) produced material which cannot be closely dated. The finds are described by category below.

6.1 Pottery

Six contexts produced a total of 13 sherds of pottery, weighing 154g. The pottery has been examined by Helen Walker and full descriptions are provided in Appendix 3. Seven body sherds, weighing 20g, are broadly dated to the 10th to 13th centuries, and two rim sherds, 28g, from fill 32 of pit 8, date more closely to the first half of the 13th century. A Victorian rubbish pit (33) produced three sherds of white earthenware/stoneware, along with a skillet handle which is a 16th or 17th-century type. In addition, two small flint-tempered sherds of probable prehistoric date were retrieved from soil sample 3 (layer 6).

6.2 Brick and tile

Three large post-medieval brick and tile fragments were recovered from fill 5 of hearth 24. These must be intrusive from the overlying fill, 39, which truncates the feature.

6.3 Copper Alloy

Two items of copper alloy were recorded. A Roman coin of the emperor Constantius (AD 337-61) was collected from layer 6. A small section of undatable copper alloy wire was retrieved from the soil sample taken from the same context.

6.4 Glass

A curious glass object was recovered from fill 36 of Victorian pit 33. This comprises what appears to be part of a thick crown window pane, perhaps never used as such, which has been carefully trimmed into a circle measuring 110mm in diameter. The central pontil scar is very prominent, and the object may have been opportunistically trimmed to function as a lid.

6.5 Clay Tobacco Pipes

Fill 36 of Victorian pit 35 also produced most of a clay pipe bowl, with spur and a short length of stem, and several clay pipe stem fragments. Three small fragments of stem are burnt. The pipe bowl has moulded decoration along the front and back seams, in the form of alternating leaves. This was a popular type during the Victorian period.

6.6 Baked Clay

A quantity of baked clay fragments, weighing 256g, was retrieved from the soil sample taken from fill 5 of hearth 24. The fragments are in a fine reduced fabric with few inclusions; some have a flat surface and may represent the remains of the hearth lining. A further small oxidised fragment, which could be tile, was found in fill 20 of ditch 1. This is too small for full identification and comment.

6.7 Stone

Four small fragments of septaria were recovered from fill 18 of ditch 3. This was used as a building stone, mainly in wall foundations, from the Roman period onwards.

6.8 Worked Flint

Two pieces of flint were recorded. A piece of struck flint was found in fill 20 of ditch 1 and a good example of an early implement in fill 37 of sunken area 30. The implement has been examined by Hazel Martingell, who reports:

“The flint implement is a rod/fabricator, dated Mesolithic to Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age and made on a flake, bifacially worked, and worn at both ends through use. This type of artefact can be found in graves, and the Prittlewell example may have derived from a burial in the vicinity.”

Its location in a medieval feature may indicate use as a tool in fairly recent times, but the implement may be merely residual.

6.9 Animal and Fish Bone

Small fragments of indeterminate mammal bone and a number of fish bones were collected from the soil samples taken from layer 6 and fill 25 of hearth 24 (see 6.10 below). In addition, a single fish bone was hand-collected from layer 6. The fish bones have been studied by Rebecca Nicholson, as follows:

“The fish bones were identified to taxon and anatomical element using the author’s comparative bone collection. Bone preservation was good in both samples.

Sample 3, Layer 6

Nine bone fragments were identified and included the following:

A single dermal denticle from a ray (Rajidae), probably thornback ray (*Raja clavata*); four small right-sided flatfish (Pleuronectidae – plaice, flounder or dab) vertebrae, from fish of 15-20cm long. In all cases the bones were very slightly charred, possibly during the cooking process. Three herring (*Clupea harengus*) vertebrae; a single spine, possibly from sea bass (*Dicentrarchus labrax*).

Sample 2, Hearth fill 25

Six identified bones, all from small flatfish, mainly identified as Pleuronectidae. Three small vertebrae appeared crushed or possibly chewed and slightly charred. A single pharyngeal bone and post-temporal represented head elements from small Pleuronectidae. A single more heavily charred vertebra was from a larger fish, probably also a flatfish of around 25cm.

Discussion

Although this assemblage was very small, it has several interesting features. Almost all the bones appeared slightly charred, which could result from rubbish disposal but also may have been a result of over-cooking. The fish bones derived from contexts probably dated to the 12th or 13th century, and it is tempting to interpret the bones as table waste. The preponderance of bones from small flatfish is perhaps not surprising for a site situated at the mouth of an estuary and may represent local fishing at the mouth of the Thames, since such small fish are unlikely to have been marketed far from the point of capture. Sea bass also frequent large estuaries, and so again may represent a locally caught fish. Herring too may have been caught close to Southend, since herring fisheries were prosecuted around south-eastern England from at least early medieval times (Cutting 1955, 54). Herring could be marketed fresh, pickled in brine or smoked. Thornback ray are commonly

represented in medieval fish assemblages, since their bucklers or dermal denticles are numerous, distinctive and robust. They can be found around the British coastline in waters of 20-100m, particularly where the grounds are muddy (Muus and Dahlstrøm 1964).”

6.10 Environmental Material

Bulk soil samples were taken from three contexts, for the purposes of environmental analysis. Full details can be found in Appendix 2. All samples were processed by wet-sieving with flotation using a 0.5mm mesh and collecting the flotation fraction (flot) on a 0.5mm sieve. The residue was then dried and separated into coarse and fine fractions using 2mm and 4mm sieves. The material in the coarse fraction (>4mm) was sorted by eye and artefacts and environmental material extracted and bagged separately. The flots were also dried and bagged by context. Retrieved artefacts were recorded by count and weight, where practicable, and these details added to the finds table in Appendix 2.

The presence of fish bones has been noted above. All of the dried flots contained small amounts of charcoal, and the presence of carbonised seeds was also noted, especially in sample 2 (the fill of hearth 24). The flots have been examined by Val Fryer who reports:

“Cereal grains, chaff and seeds of common cereal crop weeds were recorded at a low to moderate density within two of the three assemblages. Most were poorly preserved, being severely puffed and distorted, probably as a result of combustion at very high temperatures. Oat (*Avena* sp.), barley (*Hordeum* sp.), rye (*Secale cereale*) and wheat (*Triticum* sp.) grains were recorded along with a number of other grains, which were too severely puffed and fragmented to be identified. Chaff was extremely rare, but both a barley rachis node and a barley/rye type node were noted within sample 2 (hearth fill 25).

With the exception of a single specimen, weed seeds were only recorded from sample 2. All were of common segetal taxa including stinking mayweed (*Anthemis cotula*), goosegrass (*Galium aparine*), sheep’s sorrel (*Rumex acetosella*), chickweed (*Stellaria media*), scentless mayweed (*Tripleurospermum inodorum*) and vetch/vetchling (*Vicia/Lathyrus* sp.). Indeterminate heather (Ericaceae) florets were also common within sample 2. Charcoal fragments were present in all three samples, but other plant remains were very scarce.

In summary, the low density of material within samples 1 (hearth fill 5) and 3 (layer 6) precludes the accurate interpretation of these assemblages, but as they share common material with sample 2, it is assumed that they are derived from a similar source. Sample 2 would appear to be derived from a small quantity of burnt cereal processing waste. However, in the absence of further corroborative samples, it is not possible to state whether this waste was generated by the processing/cleaning of grain on site, or whether it may have been imported for use as kindling within the hearth. In either case, the predominance of stinking mayweed seeds within the weed assemblage probably indicates that cereals were largely being produced on the local heavy clay soils. The heather florets are almost certainly a fuel residue; heather was greatly valued throughout the medieval period as it was easy to ignite and it maintained a high temperature throughout combustion.”

6.11 Recommendations

Most of the finds are in too small a quantity for further work to be meaningful. The flint implement, however, merits a publication note. The coin is well-patinated and will remain in a stable condition for the short term. Surface details are somewhat obscured by corrosion products, though, and the coin may require cleaning in the future. All of the finds should be retained, except for some of the undatable material and the post-medieval brick, tile and pottery. The charred grain and fish bone evidence also merit short publication reports.

7.0 CONCLUSIONS

The archaeological evaluation was unable to establish whether or not the 15th-century timber-framed house in the north of the site originally extended further south, incorporating a second cross-wing, as has been suggested. No definite evidence of 15th-century levels was identified, but the sequence recorded in the evaluation trench consisted largely of extensive areas of ground reduction and clearance of earlier features, and the relevant levels have most likely been truncated. However, despite this the evaluation was able to establish at least one phase of medieval occupation pre-dating the 15th-century house. Unfortunately, the earliest features are completely undated, but a second phase of activity is dated by shell-tempered early medieval pottery with a broad date range of the 10th to 13th centuries, but probably dating to the end of the date range, the 12th or 13th century. The evaluation apparently also recorded the rear wall of Deeds Cottages, built to the south of the 15th-century house, probably in the 17th century, and demolished in 1948.

The earliest, undated features consisted mainly of ditches. Wider interpretation is difficult, not only due to the absence of dating evidence, but also because of the limited area of the trench. However, one ditch followed a completely different alignment from Victoria Avenue (and its medieval/post-medieval predecessor, North Street) and it is possible that one or more of these early features predated the laying out of the street and the establishment of the medieval village of Prittlewell. Late Iron Age, Roman and Saxon remains are known in the immediate area, and the undated features could relate to activity of any of these periods.

Ditch 3 is the earliest feature which was definitely aligned parallel to the street, and although it is undated this was probably the original street-side ditch. The evidence for early medieval occupation is not closely dated, but it is likely that it was related to the establishment of medieval Prittlewell in the form that we recognise today, in the 12th century. The evidence recorded in the evaluation suggests a simple timber structure with a slightly sunken floor fronting onto Victoria Avenue/North Street. A pit dated to the first half of the 13th century was also recorded, although its relationship with the structure is unknown. If ditch 3 was indeed the street-side ditch, the front of the structure, represented by foundation trench 1, encroached a short distance beyond the original street edge, but was still some 5m short of the frontage of the 15th-century house in the north of the site.

A small quantity of carbonised seeds from hearth surface 25 provides evidence of crop-processing, although it is impossible to tell whether this would actually have taken place on

the site or whether crop-processing waste was merely being used as kindling. Either way, the evidence suggests close links with agriculture and a generally rural setting. Fish bones were also recovered from hearth surface 25 and floor surface 6, including flat fish, herring and sea bass. This indicates consumption of a variety of fish caught in the Thames estuary, both in the coastal mudflats and in deeper water.

As Prittlewell's market developed and the settlement grew in prosperity, these simple timber structures appear to have been superseded in the later medieval period by high-status timber-framed houses like the surviving 15th-century example in the north of the site. No structural evidence of the 15th-century house has survived in the evaluation trench, probably because of extensive later truncation. If the 15th-century house had extended further south, any evidence of related levelling deposits or footings on the line of its rear wall would have been truncated by cut 38, which removed all earlier deposits in the south-west of the trench and disturbed the top of hearth deposit 5. The purpose of this ground reduction is not clear, but brick and tile finds at the base of cut 38 confirm that it must have taken place in the post-medieval period. It may have been related to the demolition and clearance of a southern wing of the 15th-century house, although this has not been positively proven.

The greensand-and-tile foundation 42 aligns with the rear wall of the 15th-century house to the north, but is completely unlike the chalk underpinning of that wall that was carried out in the 19th century. Instead, the foundation is thought to represent the rear wall of Deeds Cottages, probably built in the 17th century, although the foundation can only be broadly dated to the post-medieval period. Due to later disturbances only a small area of foundation and a floor of unfrogged bricks survived. The foundation would have formed a sleeper wall for a timber-framed superstructure, but any further remains of the cottages seem to have been comprehensively removed by shallow clearance cuts filled with dumped rubbish, forming a build-up of material over the uppermost 0.5m of the strata in the evaluation trench.

Comparisons can be drawn between the results of the current evaluation and the trenches excavated along the rear wall of the standing 15th-century building in 2001 (Essex CC FAU 2001). The 2001 report suggests that 0.3-0.4m of medieval levelling layers survive beneath the standing building, although these deposits contained no datable finds and a sherd of early medieval pottery that was recovered came from a residual context. The dating of these levelling layers depends entirely on a medieval key in a pit (38) cut from their surface, and late 16th-century pottery from layers sealing them (29, 35). Archaeological features recorded in 2001 include several pits similar to pit 8 in the 2006 evaluation trench.

8.0 ASSESSMENT OF RESULTS

The evaluation trial trench has demonstrated the survival of earlier medieval deposits, including evidence of timber structures, overlying or cut into the natural gravels at a depth of up to 0.9m below present ground level. The preservation of archaeological deposits is quite good at the bottom of the sequence, and includes several possible surviving surfaces from which features had been cut. However, much of the archaeological sequence had been disturbed or truncated by successive ground reductions, especially towards the south-west end of the trench. The uppermost 0.5m of the sequence appears to have been entirely disturbed ground, probably from recent demolition of Deed's Cottages and the establishment of the current car park surface.

Although the evaluation was unable to establish the southern extent of the 15th-century house, it did demonstrate the survival of earlier medieval timber structures and other features to the south of the standing building. These probably relate to the establishment of Prittlewell's medieval street plan and market in the 12th century. Comparison with the results of small-scale trenching along the south wall of the 15th-century house in 2001 (Essex CC FAU 2001) suggests that earlier medieval strata survive beneath the standing building as well. The undated early features at the base of the evaluation trench and the residual prehistoric and Roman artefacts suggest that there is some potential for finding pre-medieval remains in the area.

It is unlikely that further fieldwork will provide any further evidence of the full extent of the 15th-century house due to the extensive ground disturbance over the area to the south. Successive ground reductions, especially over the upper 0.5m of the sequence, mean that not only potential evidence of wall footings has been lost, but also evidence of related levelling deposits. However, it is clear that despite the later disturbances there is potential for finding earlier medieval, and possibly also pre-medieval, remains in the historic core of Prittlewell, on sites which have not been affected by cellaring or modern development.

Although the evaluation trial trench represents only a small-scale investigation, the results justify publication of a shorter note in *Essex Archaeology and History*. This would outline the potential for earlier medieval remains in the centre of Prittlewell, relate the evaluation work to the 15th-century house to the north and the deposits recorded beneath it in 2001, and summarise the post-medieval development of the house and Deed's Cottages to its south. The finds do not require further analysis and can be summarised in a short report, although the flint tool merits publication in its own right. Similarly, no further analysis is needed of the

environmental material, although again the results of the carbonised seeds and fish bone assessments need to be presented in short reports.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Essex CC Field Archaeology Unit thanks Tudor Estates for commissioning and funding the archaeological work, especially Mr Alan Kirkman for his assistance and interest. Thanks are also due to Martin Scott of Southend Borough Council Planning Department, and Ken Crowe, the Southend Museum Service Archaeological Officer, who monitored the work on behalf of the local planning authority. Matthew Pocock and Dave Smith carried out the fieldwork; Andrew Lewsey produced the digital illustrations; and the finds were processed by Phil McMichael and assessed by Joyce Compton. Specialist reports were provided by Helen Walker (medieval pottery), Val Fryer (carbonised seeds) and Rebecca Nicholson (fish bones). The project was managed by Patrick Allen.

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APPENDIX 1: FIELDWORK DATA

Context	Type	Category	Description	Period
1	Cut	Ditch	Robbed foundation trench	Medieval
2	Cut	Post hole		Medieval or earlier
3	Cut	Ditch	Boundary or street-side ditch	Medieval or earlier
4	Cut	Pit/ Post hole		Medieval
5	Deposit	Fill of 24	Hearth surface	Medieval. Post-medieval disturbance
6	Deposit	Surface	Trampled floor surface	Medieval
7	Cut	Post hole		Medieval or earlier
8	Cut	Pit		Medieval
9	Deposit	Fill of 2		Medieval or earlier
10	Deposit	Fill of 4		Medieval
11	Deposit	Fill of 7		Medieval or earlier
12	Deposit	Fill of 7		Medieval or earlier
13	Deposit	Fill of 3		Medieval or earlier
14	Deposit	Fill of 3		Medieval or earlier
15	Deposit	Fill of 3		Medieval or earlier
16	Deposit	Fill of 3		Medieval or earlier
17	Deposit	Fill of 3		Medieval or earlier
18	Deposit	Fill of 3		Medieval or earlier
19	Deposit	Fill of 3		Medieval or earlier
20	Deposit	Fill of 1		Medieval
21	Deposit	Fill of 1		Medieval
22	Deposit	Fill of 1		Medieval
23	Cut	Stake-hole		Post-medieval/modern
24	Cut	Hearth		Medieval
25	Deposit	Fill of 24	Hearth material	Medieval
26	Deposit	Fill of 24	Clay lining	Medieval
27	Deposit	Layer	Spread of burnt material	Medieval or post-med?
28	Deposit	Layer	Spread of burnt material	Medieval or post-med?
29	Deposit	Layer	Spread of burnt material	Medieval
30	Cut	Construction	Sunken area	Medieval
31	Deposit	Fill of 8		Medieval
32	Deposit	Fill of 8		Medieval
33	Cut	Pit	Rubbish pit	Modern
34	Deposit	Fill of 33		Modern
35	Cut	Pit	Rubbish pit	Modern
36	Deposit	Fill of 33		Modern
37	Deposit	Fill of 30		Medieval?
38	Cut		Clearance cut?	Post-medieval
39	Deposit	Fill of 39	Levelling over 38	Post-medieval
40	Deposit	Layer	Natural	
41	Cut	Linear cut	Foundation trench	Post-medieval
42	Structure	Foundation	Foundation aligned NE/SW	Post-medieval
43	Deposit	Fill of 41	Foundational packing	Post-medieval
44	Deposit	Fill of 41	Foundational packing	Post-medieval
45	Deposit	Layer	Bedding layer for brick floor 46	Post-medieval
46	Deposit	Layer	Disturbed brick floor	Post-medieval
47	Deposit	Layer	= top of 39	Post-medieval

Context	Type	Category	Description	Period
48	Deposit	Layer		Modern
49	Deposit	Layer	Floor surface	Post-medieval
50	Deposit	Layer	Floor surface	Post-medieval
51	Deposit	Fill of 52	Floor surface	Post-medieval
52	Cut	Stake-hole		Post-medieval
53	Cut	Ditch		Post-medieval?
54	Deposit	Fill of 53		Post-medieval?
55	Deposit	Layer		Post-medieval?
56	Deposit	Layer		Post-medieval
57	Deposit	Layer		Post-medieval
58	Deposit	Fill of 61		Post-medieval
59	Deposit	Layer		Post-medieval
60	Deposit	Layer	Modern overburden	Modern
61	Cut	Unknown	Clearance	
62	Cut	Ditch	Aligned E-W	Medieval or earlier
63	Deposit	Fill of 62		Medieval or earlier
64	Cut	Ditch		Medieval or earlier
65	Deposit	Fill of 64		Medieval or earlier
66	Cut	Post hole		Medieval or earlier
67	Deposit	Fill of 66		Medieval or earlier
68	Deposit	Fill of 70	Burnt material	Medieval
69	Deposit	Fill of 37		Medieval
70	Cut	Hearth	Small hearth	Medieval
71	Cut	Robber cut	Clearance	Post-medieval/modern
72	Deposit	Fill of 73		Post-medieval
73	Deposit	Fill of 72	Demolition debris	Post-medieval
74	Cut	Unknown	Clearance	Post-medieval

APPENDIX 2: FINDS AND ENVIRONMENTAL DATA

Finds by Context

Context	Feature	Count	Weight	Description	Date
5	24	106	256	Baked clay fragments from sample 1, probable hearth lining	-
		3	370	Brick and tile fragments; one brick corner, one pantile edge, mortared, one tile fragment with the remains of a peg-hole	Post med.
		1	8	Pottery; body sherd from sample 1	Medieval
6	Layer	1	-	Copper alloy coin SF1 (Constantius)	337-61
		1	-	Copper alloy wire fragment from sample 3	-
		3	<1	Animal bone fragments from sample 3	-
		11	<1	Fish bones, inc 10 (one a denticle) from sample 3	-
		3	2	Pottery; body sherd, shell-tempered, and crumbs from sample 3	Medieval
		2	2	Pottery; crumbs from sample 3, one may be baked clay	Prehistoric
10	4	1	6	Pottery; body sherd, shell-tempered	Medieval
18	3	4	42	Stone fragments (septaria)	-
20	1	1	14	Struck flint piece	-
		1	6	Tile/baked clay (no surfaces)	-
		1	2	Pottery; body sherd, shell-tempered	Medieval
25	24	3	<1	Animal bone fragments from sample 2	-
		33	<1	Fish bones from sample 2	-
32	8	3	30	Pottery; rim sherds, one pierced, and body sherd	Medieval
36	33	1	220	Glass; object (trimmed to form a lid?)	Post med
		7	24	Clay pipes; bowl and part of stem with moulded leaf decoration along the seams; stem fragments, three are burnt	Victorian
		1	51	Pottery; handle sherd	Post med
		3	55	Pottery; white earthenware and stoneware, rim and handle sherds	Modern
37	30	1	60	Flint implement; bifacial rod/fabricator	Meso/late Neo

Bulk Soil Sample Data (presence/absence of environmental material)

Sample	Context	Feature	Bulk weight	Bone	Fish bone	Charcoal	Seeds
1	5	Hearth 24	11kg			X	X
2	25	Hearth 24	16kg	X	X	X	X
3	6	Layer overlying hearth	7kg	X	X	X	X

APPENDIX 3: MEDIEVAL AND LATER POTTERY

Context	Feature	Count	Weight	Description	Date
5	24	1	8	Early medieval ware, body sherd from sample 1	10th to 13th C
6	Layer	1	1	Shell-tempered ware, body sherd	10th to 13th C
		2	1	Shell-tempered ware, crumbs from sample 3	10th to 13th C
10	4	1	6	Shell-tempered ware, body sherd	10th to 13th C
20	1	1	2	Shell-tempered ware, body sherd	10th to 13th C
32	8	1	2	Shell-tempered ware, body sherd	10th to 13th C
		2	28	Sand-with-sparse-shell-tempered ware comprising an H2 cooking pot rim (similar to rim forms at North Shoebury, e.g. Walker 1995, fig.75.19) and a B2 ?bowl rim showing a post-firing hole drilled just below the rim (perhaps to secure a lid), both sherds are fire-blackened	Early to mid 13th C
36	33	1	51	PMRE, internally glazed with straight pipkin/skillet-type handle, very thin-walled in places with glaze on breaks, a waster or a semi-waster	Most likely later 16th to 17th centuries
		1	32	English stoneware, broad strap handle with salt-glaze	18th to 20th C
		2	23	Modern white earthenware, including fragment of dish or saucer with pale blue transfer print	19th to 20th C

APPENDIX 4: CONTENTS OF ARCHIVE

SITE NAME; Land adjacent to 255 Victoria Avenue (A2006.10)

Index to the Archive

File containing:

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Brief for Evaluation/Watching Brief
- 1.2 Specification for Evaluation/Watching Brief.

2. Research Archive

- 2.1 Published Report
- 2.2 Client Report
- 2.3 Analytical Reports
 - 2.3.1 Finds Report
 - 2.3.2 Environmental Reports
- 2.4 Catalogues
 - 2.4.1 Context Finds Record
 - 2.4.2 Finds Catalogue
 - 2.4.3 Environmental Catalogue
- 2.5 Computer Disk

3. Site Archive

- 3.1 Context Index
- 3.2 Context Record Register
- 3.3 Original Context Records 1 to 74
- 3.4 Soil Sample Register
- 3.5 Soil Sample Record Sheets
- 3.6 Drawing Registers
 - 3.6.1 Plans Register
 - 3.6.2 Sections Register
- 3.7 Levels Register
- 3.8 Sample Register
- 3.9 Survey Data
- 3.10 Photographic Register
- 3.11 Site Photographic Record
- 3.12 Miscellaneous maps and plans

One box of finds

One box of Processed Environmental Samples

APPENDIX 5: EHER SUMMARY

Site name/Address: 255 Victoria Avenue, Southend-on-Sea	
Parish: Southend-on-Sea	District: Southend-on-Sea
NGR: TQ 87628674	Site Code: A2006.10
Type of Work: Archaeological evaluation by trial trenching	Site Director/Group: M.Pocock ECC FAU
Date of Work: 27th, 30th and the 31st of January.	Size of Area Investigated: Single trench 8 x 1.8m - 14 square metres
Location of Finds/Curating Museum: Southend-on-Sea	Funding source: Tudor Estates
Further Seasons Anticipated?: No	Related HCR Nos.: N/A
Final Report: Essex Archaeology and History shorter note	
Periods Represented: Prehistoric, Roman, medieval and post-medieval	
<p>SUMMARY OF FIELDWORK RESULTS:</p> <p>An archaeological evaluation by trial trenching was carried out on behalf of Tudor Estates under an archaeological condition placed on a planning application (SOS/05/0113/FUL) for a mixed commercial/residential development of land adjacent to 255 Victoria Avenue, Southend-on-Sea, in the centre of the medieval village of Prittlewell. A single trial trench was excavated immediately to the south of no. 255, a restored medieval timber-framed house dating to the early 15th century. The main aim of the evaluation was to establish whether or not the 15th-century house originally extended further to the south, incorporating a second cross-wing.</p> <p>A flint tool of the Mesolithic (Middle Stone Age) to Neolithic (New Stone Age) or Early Bronze Age and a Roman coin were recovered as residual finds in medieval and post-medieval deposits. These finds reflect the general background of prehistoric and Roman remains in the surrounding area.</p> <p>The trial trench did not recover any further evidence of the 15th-century house, as the relevant levels had been extensively disturbed by a succession of later ground clearances, but it did identify at least one phase of earlier medieval occupation. The earliest features were undated and could belong to either the medieval or earlier periods. Although undated, a large ditch parallel to Victoria Avenue (and its medieval predecessor North Street) may have been the original medieval street-side ditch. It was cut by a timber building with a shallow sunken floor surface and hearths. The early medieval pottery recovered from the building has a broad date range, but most likely dates to the 12th or 13th centuries. Analysis of samples from the hearths and floor surfaces yielded evidence of cereal processing waste and fish bones. A rubbish pit of uncertain relationship to the building is dated to the first half of the 13th century. This evidence appears to relate to the early development of medieval Prittlewell and its market in the area opposite the parish church of St Mary.</p> <p>The trial trench revealed no surviving archaeological remains of the 15th-century building, though it is possible to speculate that there would have been a further wing whose south</p>	

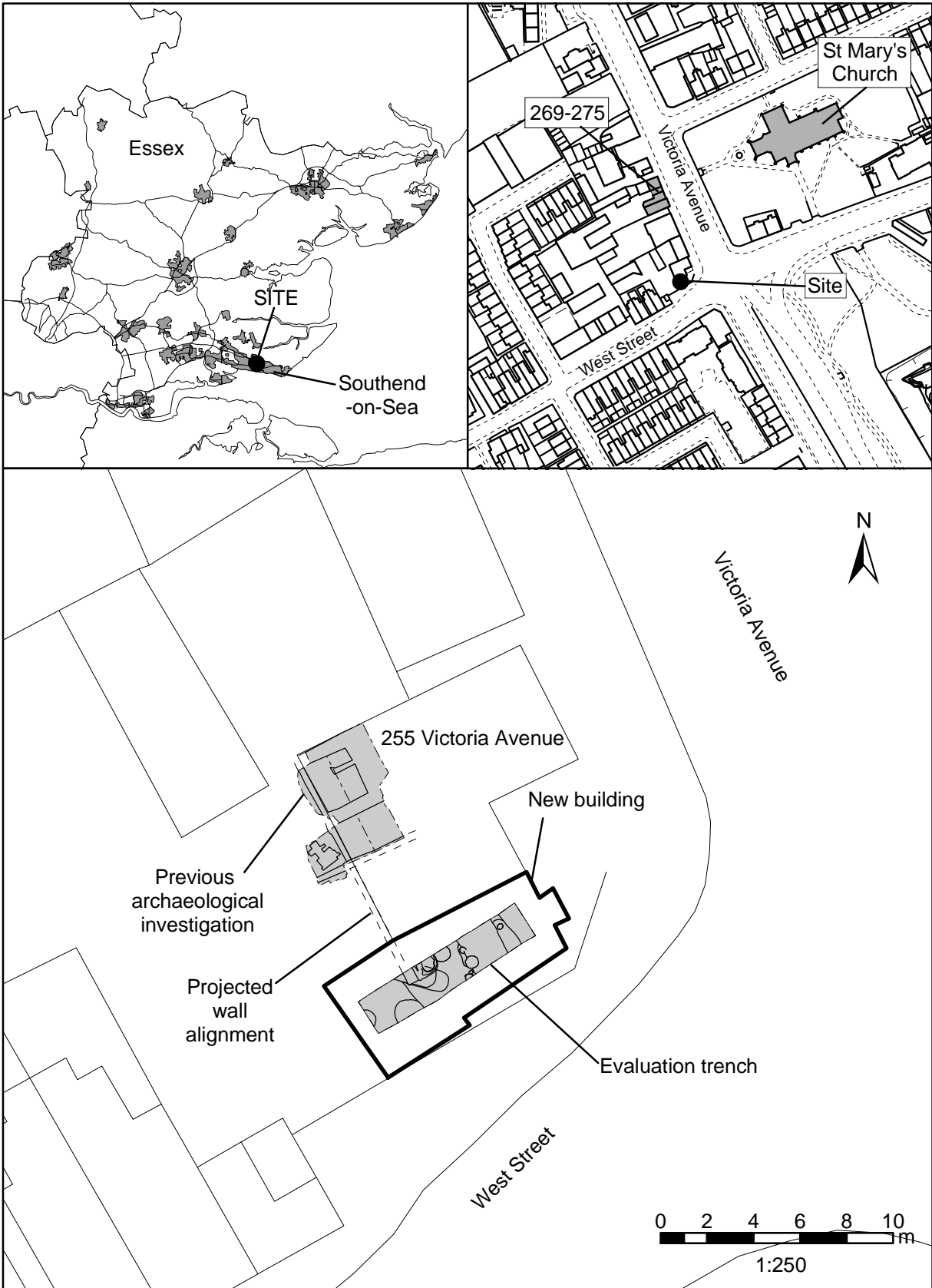
wall had been removed by a large area of ground reduction in the south-west of the trench during the post medieval period. Above this, a short length of greensand-and-tile foundation with a related brick floor was aligned with the back wall of the 15th-century house, and probably represents the rear wall of Deeds Cottages, thought to have been built in the 17th century. Further remains of the cottages were comprehensively removed by later ground clearances.

The evaluation trial trench has demonstrated that earlier medieval deposits, including evidence of timber structures, survive to the south of the standing 15th-century building. Comparison with the results of trenching carried out by the Essex CC Field Archaeology Unit along the rear wall of the standing building in 2001 suggests that earlier medieval levelling layers may extend beneath the construction and floor levels of the standing building itself. Overall, this suggests that there is potential for medieval strata to survive on the few sites in the historic centre of Prittlewell that have escaped cellaring or modern redevelopment.

Previous Summaries/Reports: Essex CC FAU 2001 fieldwork report 844

Author of Summary: Matthew Pocock

Date of Summary: February 2006



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Fig.1. Proposed trench location

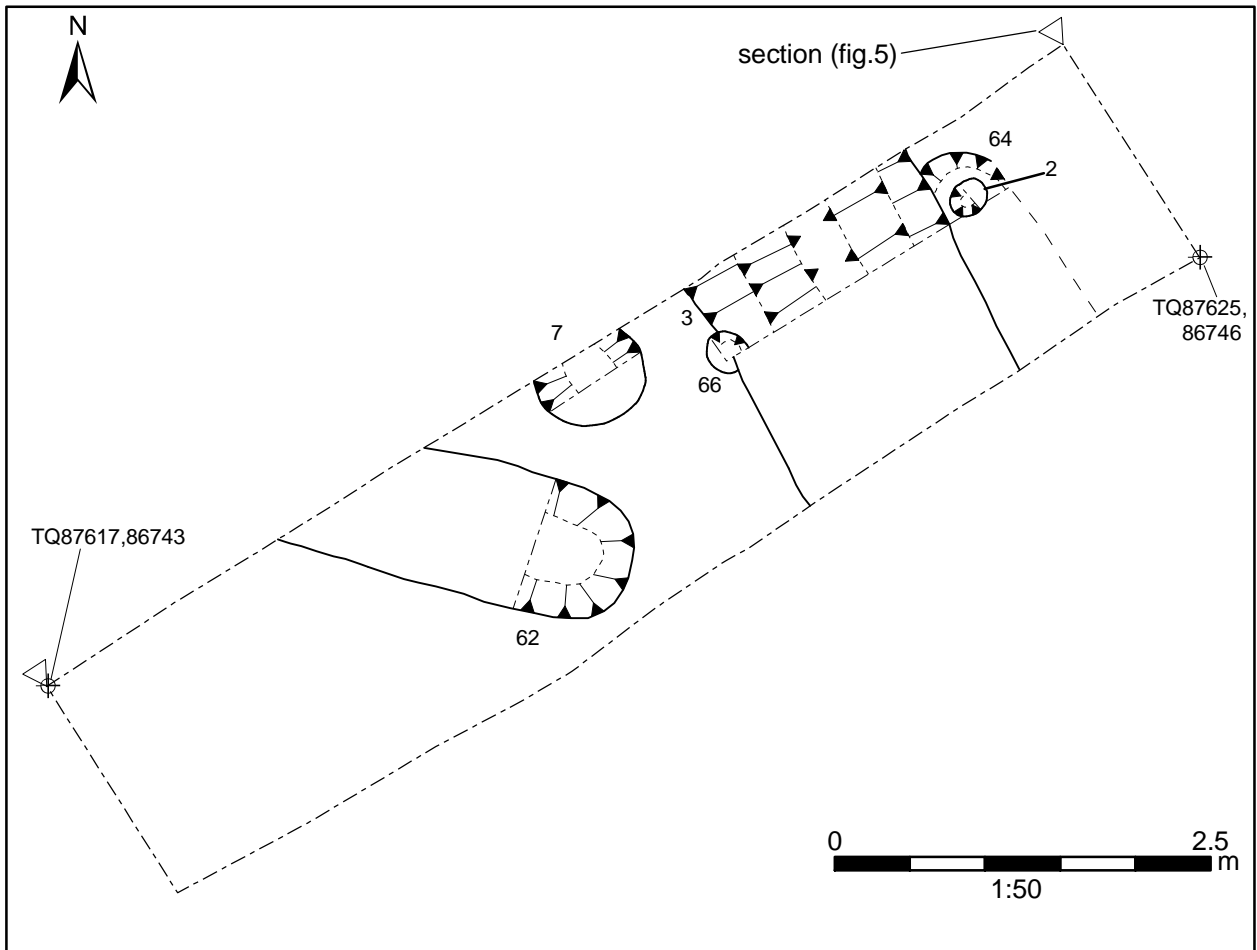


Fig.2. Phase 1 - early undated

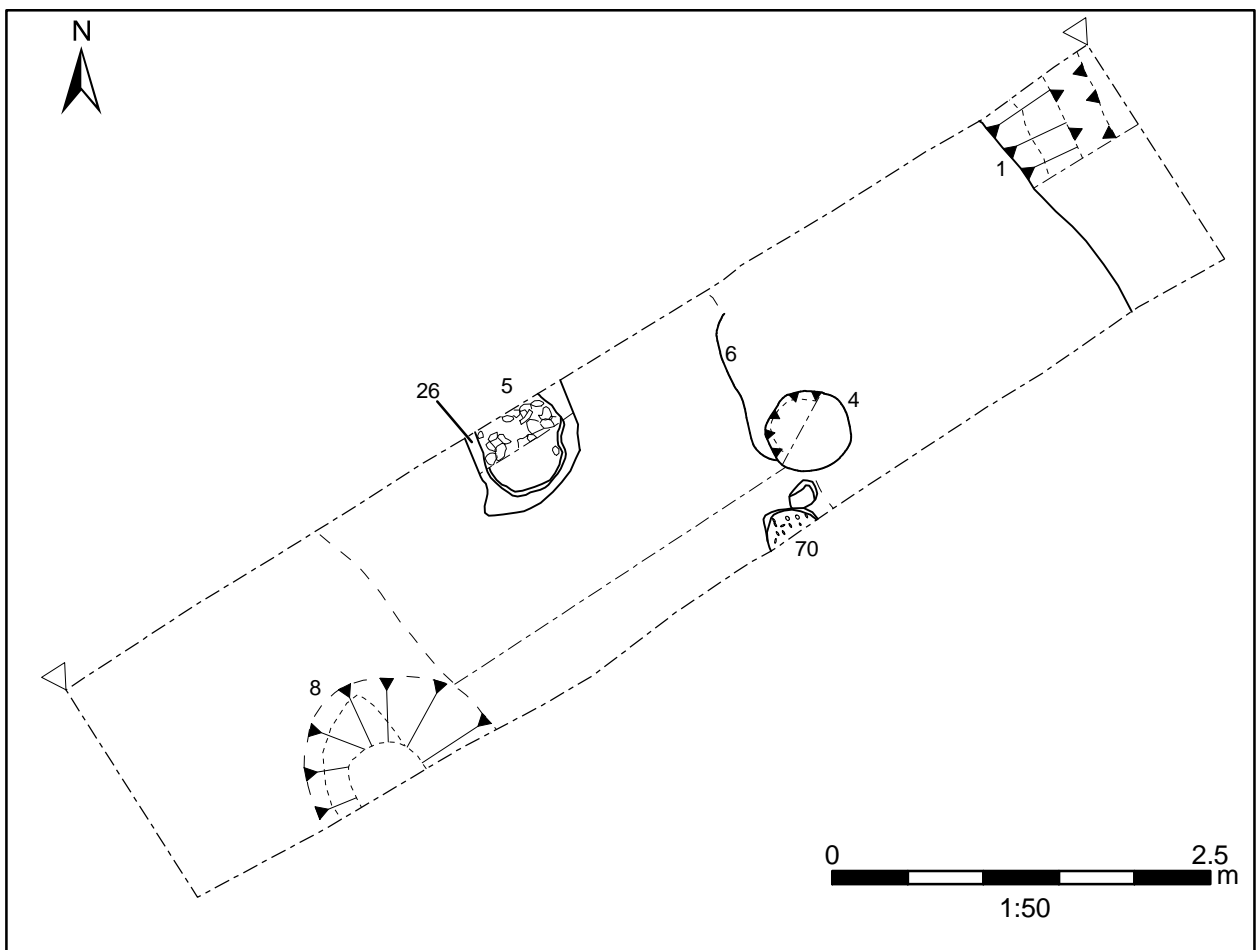


Fig.3. Phase 2 - medieval

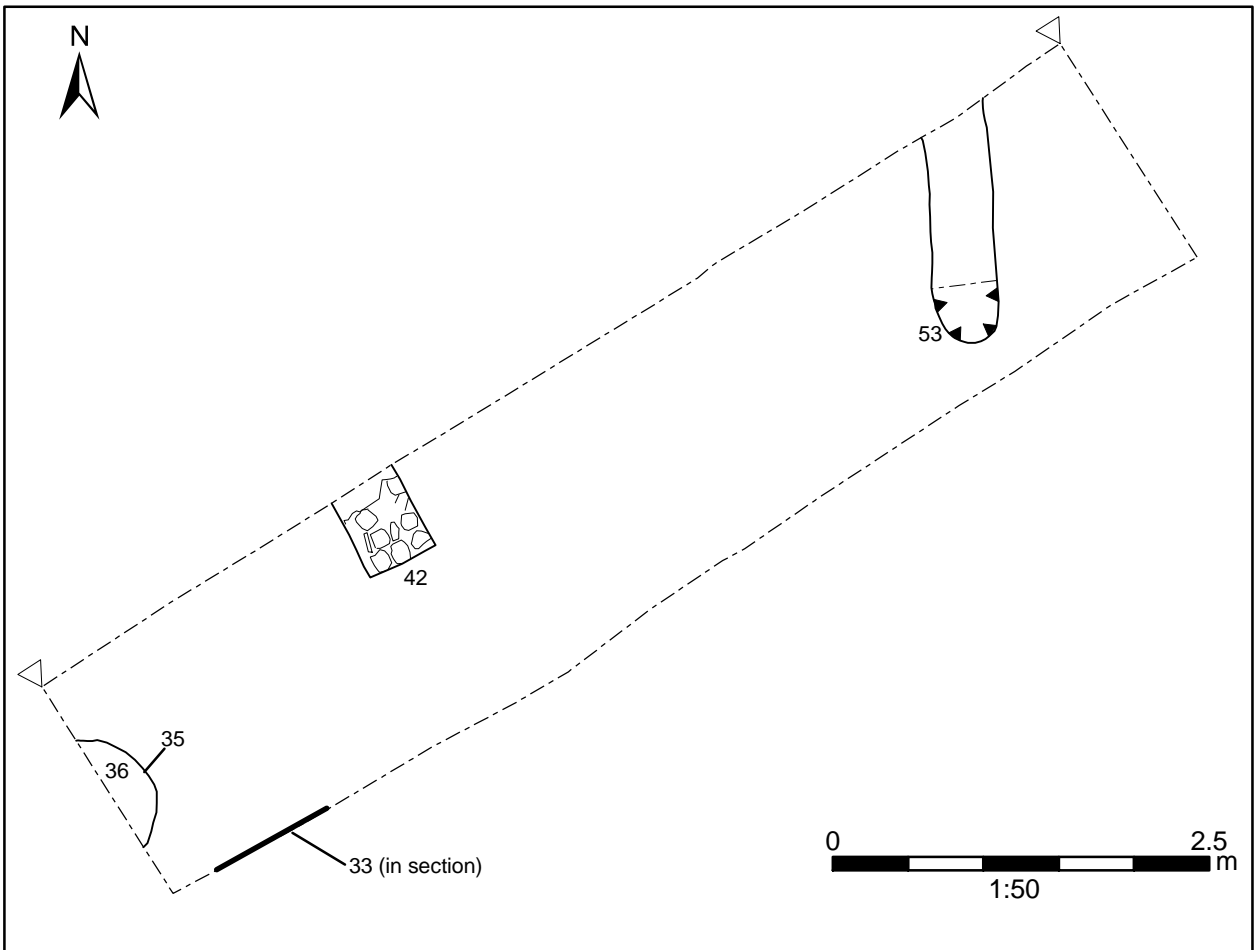


Fig.4. Phase 3 - post-medieval/modern

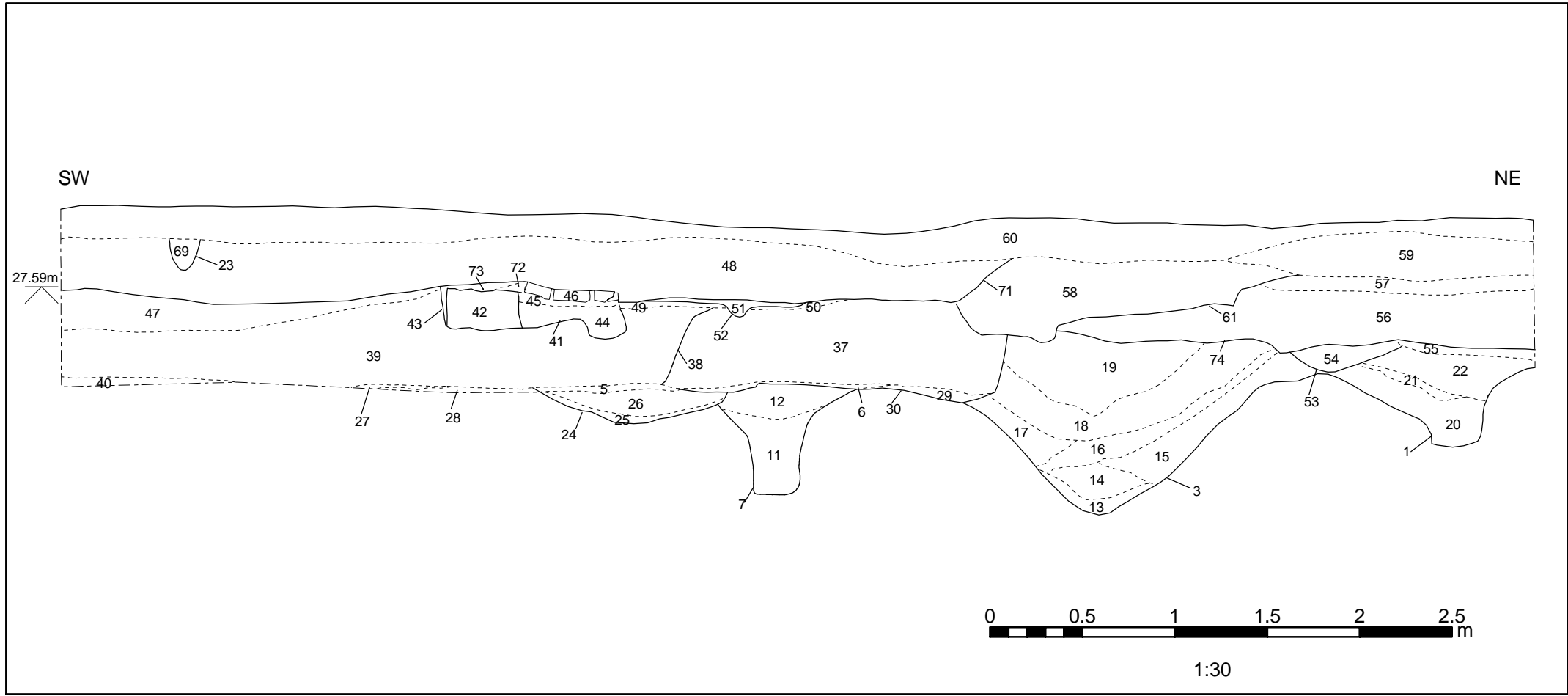


Fig.5. South-east facing section