

**ELECTRICITY CABLE TRENCH AT  
SAXON WAY, BEHIND MAIN ROAD,  
BROOMFIELD, CHELMSFORD**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**



**Essex County Council**

**Field Archaeology Unit**

**February 2005**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF AT  
SAXON WAY, BEHIND MAIN ROAD,  
BROOMFIELD, CHELMSFORD**

FIELD ARCHAEOLOGY UNIT  
ESSEX COUNTY COUNCIL HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT BRANCH

**1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This report outlines the results of an archaeological watching brief on the excavation of an electricity cable trench in the area of Saxon Way, Broomfield, Essex.
- 1.2 The fieldwork was conducted on 7th – 14th January 2005.

**2. PLANNING BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The Heritage Advice, Management and Promotion Team were consulted by EDF. Due to the sensitive nature of the archaeological deposits in the area, a recommendation was made for an archaeological contractor to be present on site during the excavation of the cable trench between TL 71226 09736 and TL 71252 09197.

**3. LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION (Figs 1)**

- 3.1 The monitored segment of the cable trench ran North-South, 425m to the east of Main Road.
- 3.2 The area available for archaeological observation measured c.1.9m-wide by c. 550m long.
- 3.3 The cable trench was situated within the flood plain of the River Chelmer on land that was in use as pasture.

**4. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND**

- 4.1 The Essex Historic Environment Record (EHER) highlighted the following known sites in the area immediately adjacent to the monitored segment of cable trench:-
  - (EHER 5546/5548) – A Saxon burial was found during gravel digging in 1888 behind Clobb's Row (TL71050957). It contained the remains of a sword, spear, knife and other high status artefacts that suggested that it was a 'princely burial'.
  - (EHER 5551) – A watching brief at Broomfield Borrow Pit (TL71400950) in 1985 revealed traces of Saxon occupation, thought to be peripheral to the centre of a settlement.
  - (EHER 5777) - Cropmarks identified from aerial photographs suggest the presence of two ring ditches, possible pits and a sub-rectangular enclosure at TL713092.
- 4.2 The wider area of Chelmer Valley is an identified area of prehistoric exploitation, and as such it contains frequent cropmarks, and has produced many findspots of worked flint.

## **5. AIMS OF THE WORK**

- 5.1 The primary aim of the watching brief was to assess and record any surviving archaeological deposits that were identified by the topsoil strip.
- 5.2 A specific aims of the monitoring was to preserve, by record, any evidence of Saxon occupation associated with the burial behind Clobb's Row and other evidence.

## **6. METHODOLOGY**

- 6.1 A 1.9m-wide strip of topsoil was initially removed by a flat-bladed bucket, before a c. 1m wide trench was dug with a toothed bucket. The trench was immediately backfilled after the cables were installed, due to health and safety considerations.
- 6.2 In places, less than 0.15m of topsoil was removed from above subsoil, which varied along the cable trench route from sand and gravel to silty clay.

## **7. RESULTS**

- 7.1 The strip revealed no archaeological features or artefacts, other than that relating to modern disturbance or field boundary ditches that are present on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map.
- 7.2 The first leg of the cable trench (from TL 71255 09043 to TL71250 09190) ran a long the length of an old field boundary ditch and was highly disturbed.
- 7.3 Between TL 71255 09043 and TL 71868 09190 two east-west ditches were observed, but these were sterile and correlated with field boundaries observed on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey Map.
- 7.4 Between TL 71868 09190 and TL 71254 09552 the ground was heavily disturbed, with lumps of concrete present at a depth of 1m in no discernable cut. It is likely that this ground has been 'made-up'.
- 7.5 The cable trench to the north of TL 71254 09552 passed through land that had been heavily disturbed and is thought to have been used to bury scrap farm machinery/vehicles. This area was not monitored.

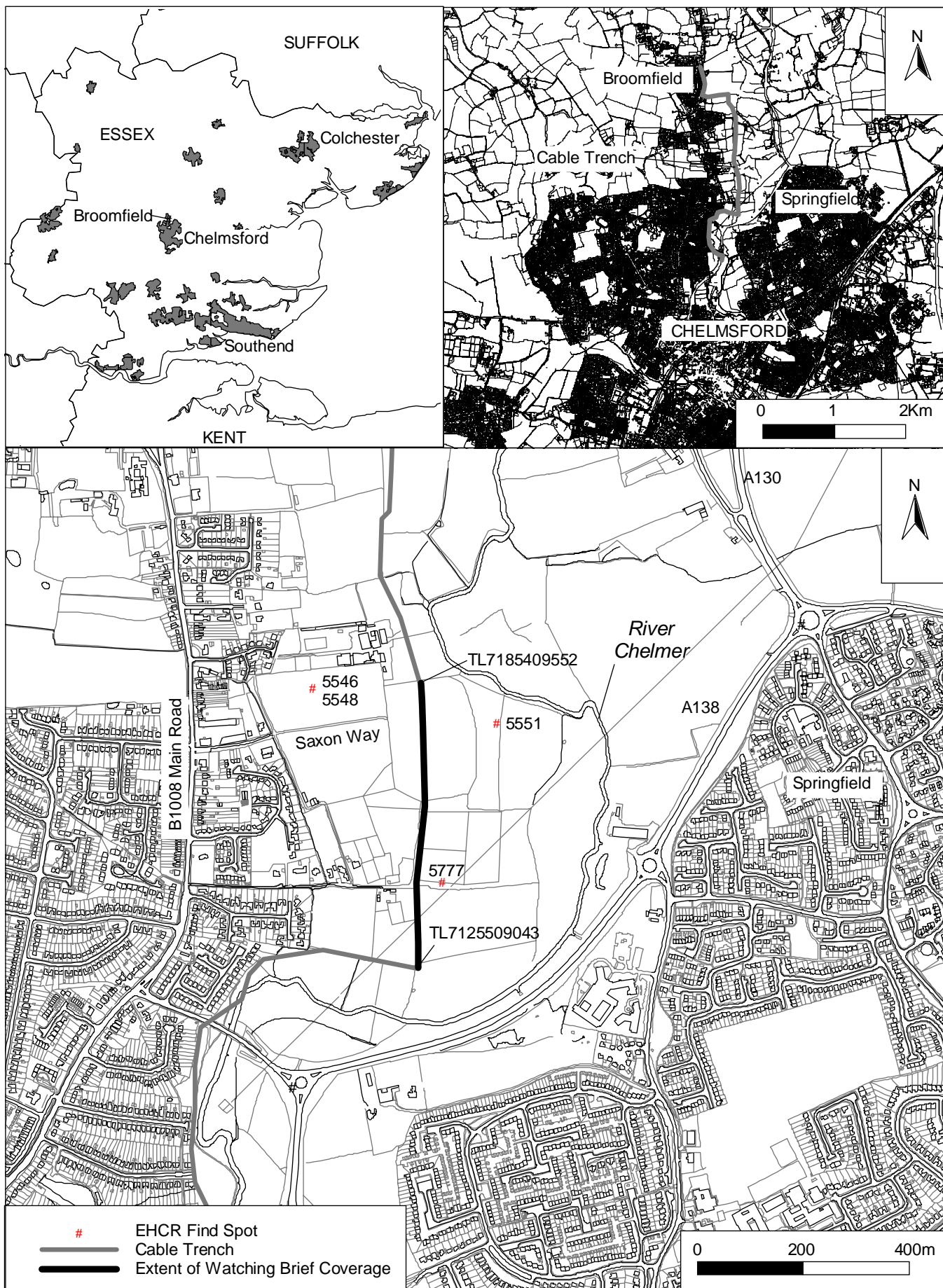
## **8. CONCLUSIONS**

- 8.1 The watching brief did not identify any significant archaeological remains or artefacts along the observed portion of the cable trench. No evidence of activity associated with the known Saxon burial behind Clobb's Row (EHER 5546) was identified.
- 8.2 Although it is possible that archaeological remains have been destroyed by previous activity, the agricultural nature of the area suggests that this is unlikely. Also, though the rapid backfilling of the trench and the use of a toothed bucket was not ideal for observation, the absence of any artefacts in the excavated material suggests that no significant or datable archaeological deposits were disturbed by this segment of the cable trench.

- 8.3 The proximity of the cable trench to the flood plain of the River Chelmer may account for the lack of archaeological deposits encountered.

## EHER SUMMARY SHEET

<b>Site name/Address:</b> Saxon Way, behind Main Road, Broomfield, Chelmsford, Essex.	
<b>Parish:</b> Broomfield	<b>District:</b> Chelmsford
<b>NGR:</b> TL 71255 09043 to TL 71254 09552	<b>Site Code:</b> None Given
<b>Type of Work:</b> Watching Brief	<b>Site Director/Group:</b> Ben Barker. Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit
<b>Date of Work:</b> 7 <sup>th</sup> - 14 <sup>th</sup> January 2005	<b>Size of Area Investigated:</b> c. 990 m <sup>2</sup>
<b>Location of Finds/Curating Museum:-</b> N.A.	<b>Funding source:</b> McAlpine/EDF
<b>Further Seasons Anticipated?:</b> No	<b>Related EHER Nos.:</b> 5546
<b>Final Report:</b> EAH Summary	
<p><b>SUMMARY OF FIELDWORK RESULTS:</b></p> <p>The Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit (FAU) carried out a watching brief on a topsoil strip and trench excavation, for an electricity cable installation to the east of Main Road at Broomfield, Essex. The monitored topsoil strip was c.1.8 m wide and ran for c.550m from TL 71255 09043 to TL 71254 09552, along the Chelmer Valley. Approximately 0.2m of topsoil was removed from above the mixed sand, and gravel and silty clay subsoil. A c. 1m wide trench was then dug to a depth of c. 1m within the stripped easement. The strip and trenching revealed no visible archaeological features or artefacts, earlier than those relating to modern disturbance of the agricultural landscape. No evidence of activity associated with the known Saxon burial behind Clobb's Row (EHER 5546) was identified.</p>	
<b>Previous Summaries/Reports:-</b> N.A.	
<b>Author of Summary:</b> Ben Barker (ECCFAU)	<b>Date of Summary:</b> 27th January 2005



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