

**WATER PIPELINE REPLACEMENT
THE STROOD CAUSEWAY
WEST MERSEA
ESSEX**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING



Essex County Council
Field Archaeology Unit

MARCH 2007

**WATER PIPELINE REPLACEMENT
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**WATER PIPELINE REPLACEMENT
THE STROOD CAUSEWAY
WEST MERSEA**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING

Client: May Gurney Ltd

NGR: TM 0139514057 – TM 0072515856

Site Code: COLEM.2007.14

Oasis No.: essexcou1-24934

Dates of Fieldwork: 24th January to 7th March 2007

SUMMARY

Archaeological monitoring of the excavation of a c.2.1km trench for water pipeline replacement works across the causeway of the Strood, West Mersea, uncovered no significant archaeological remains or deposits.

Piles associated with the Saxon causeway across The Strood, carbon-dated to c.700A.D, were previously identified during the laying of the water pipe in 1978. However, no Saxon piles were encountered during the current phase of work. This was probably due to the depth of the trench only being a maximum of 1.2m deep within the Strood Channel, whereas the 1978 work encountered the piles at a depth of 1.6m. Any surviving remains of the Saxon causeway were not therefore disturbed during the laying of the water pipe

Below the modern road was a series of make-up layers consisting of alternating bands of chalk and gravel. These deposits are likely to be associated with the modern road on the Causeway. Silt deposits were only identified in the base of the trench in a few locations, but were not significantly intruded into.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This report describes the results of archaeological monitoring of groundworks associated with the laying of a replacement water pipe along The Strood Causeway, West Mersea. The fieldwork was carried out by the Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit (ECC FAU) on behalf of May Gurney Ltd, under the terms of an archaeological condition placed on planning consent in accordance with Planning Policy Guideline note 16 (PPG16). The archaeological work followed a brief produced by Colchester Borough Council Museum Service (CBC) (CBC 2007) and a written scheme of investigation prepared by ECC FAU (2007).

The site archive will be deposited in Colchester Museum and a copy of the report sent to the Essex Historic Environment Record, Chelmsford. A digital version of this report will be submitted, along with a project summary, to the Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations (OASIS) (<http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/project/oasis>).

2.0 BACKGROUND (Fig. 1)

2.1 Topography and Geology

The land on either side of The Strood slopes down towards the channel. The causeway itself runs across the mudflats, known as Bonners Saltings, and is flooded by high tides. The observed geology on the land sides of the causeway is brown clay with the causeway itself lying on silt. The underlying geology of the area is London Clay (British Geological Society 2006).

2.2 Archaeological and Historical Background

A previous investigation of the Causeway (Crummy, Hillam and Crossan 1982) identified a number of wooden posts, associated with a Saxon causeway, which were dated by C14 and dendrochronology to between 684 and 702 A.D (EHER 2289 and 13288). Mersea Island is conjectured to have been the location of an important middle Saxon focus, perhaps a Minster. The Strood appears to have been the principal/only crossing to the island from the mainland and may have earlier origins. Roman remains such as a number of red hills, the Mersea Mount burial mound (EHER 1) and building remains in the vicinity of West Mersea church (e.g. EHER 2191, 2214-16, 12501) attest to earlier occupation within the western part of the island. Roman coins have been found in the vicinity of Wellhouse Farm, at the south end of the pipeline route (EHER 17644).

3.0 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The overall aim of the work was to determine the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any surviving archaeological remains within the development area. The specific aim of the project was to identify and record any wooden posts and/or other deposits likely to be associated with the Saxon causeway where it crosses the Strood Channel.

4.0 METHOD

The contractor's groundworks associated with the replacement of a c.2.1km-length of water pipeline was subject to archaeological observation on a more-or-less daily basis, subject to the vagaries of tide, weather and changing work programs/methods. The c.0.7m-wide pipe trench was primarily excavated using a 360 tracked excavator, although stretches were excavated with drainage cutting machinery. The nature and depth of the exposed stratigraphic sequence was recorded at intervals along the trench. Sections were recorded following standard ECC FAU methodologies. The trench was located by measuring off boundaries extant on the most recent OS map. No finds were collected or environmental samples taken. A photographic record consisting of digital images was maintained throughout the project.

All work was carried out in accordance with IFA (Institute of Field Archaeologists) by-laws and guidelines and complied with Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England (Gurney 2003). Standard ECC FAU recording methodologies were employed where practicable.

5.0 FIELDWORK RESULTS (Fig. 1)

No archaeologically significant features or deposits were identified along the observed length of the pipe trench. The depth of the trench varied from between 1.7m at the southern end on Mersea Island to as little as 1.0m at the northern end of the causeway across the Strood Channel.

On dry land, either side of the channel and its flanking marshes, mid-brown clay underlay approximately 0.6m of modern road make-up. On the causeway itself the depth of the road make-up was approximately 0.7m, with alternate consolidation layers of chalk and gravel below, to a depth of approximately 1.2m (Plates 1 and 2). At the southern end of the causeway dark grey/black gravel silts were noted immediately below the below the

stabilisation layers. However, these were not significantly intruded into by the works and were only observed along the base of the pipe trench.

7.0 FINDS AND ENVIRONMENTAL MATERIAL

No finds were recovered and no environmental samples taken.

7.0 CONCLUSIONS

The monitoring of the excavation of the pipe trench revealed no archaeologically significant features or deposits. The depth of the trench along the causeway across the Strood Channel was not sufficient to reach the Saxon wooden piles that were encountered during the course of laying the previous water pipe (Crummy, Hillam and Crossan 1982). Indeed, the majority of the deposits noted were associated with the construction of the modern road. On either side of the causeway only the undisturbed geology deposit was encountered below the road make-up.

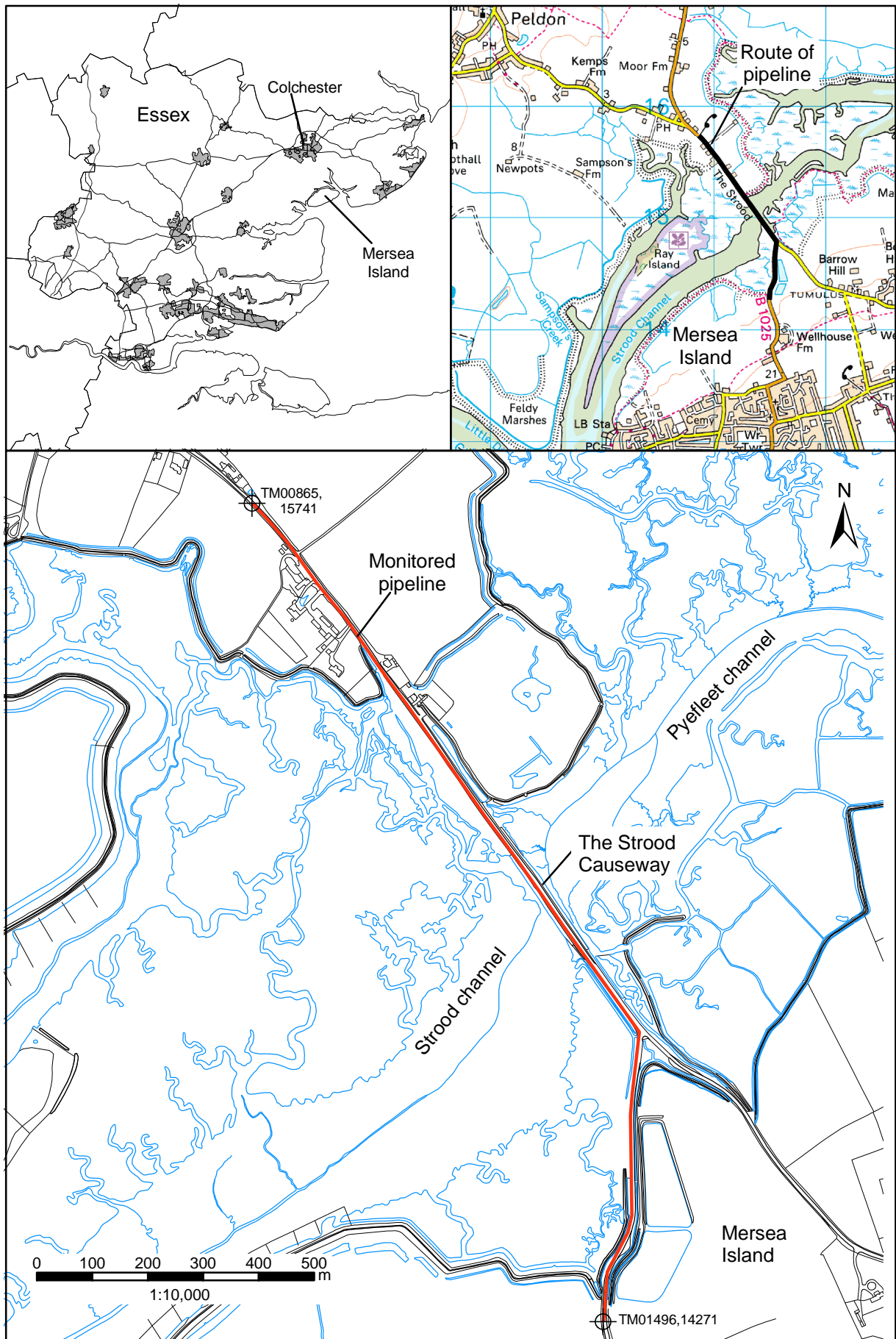
Although no archaeological remains were encountered during the excavation of the pipe trench this was due to the depth of the trench rather than to the absence of remains. The previous investigation encountered the piles at approximately 1.6m below the 1978 road level (which may have been lower than the present road level) while the maximum depth of the current pipe trench below the road surface was 1.2m.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks are due to Paul Salmon for commissioning the fieldwork on behalf of May Gurney Ltd. The archaeological monitoring was undertaken by the author. The project was managed by Mark Atkinson of ECC FAU and monitored by Martin Winter of CBC Museums Service.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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- ECC FAU 2007 *Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Monitoring The Strood, West Mersea, Mersea Island, Essex.* ECC FAU
- Gurney, D. 2003 *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England, E.* Anglian Archaeol. Occ. Pap. **14**
- IFA 1999 Standard and Guidelines for Archaeological evaluation (revised).



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Fig.1. Location plan

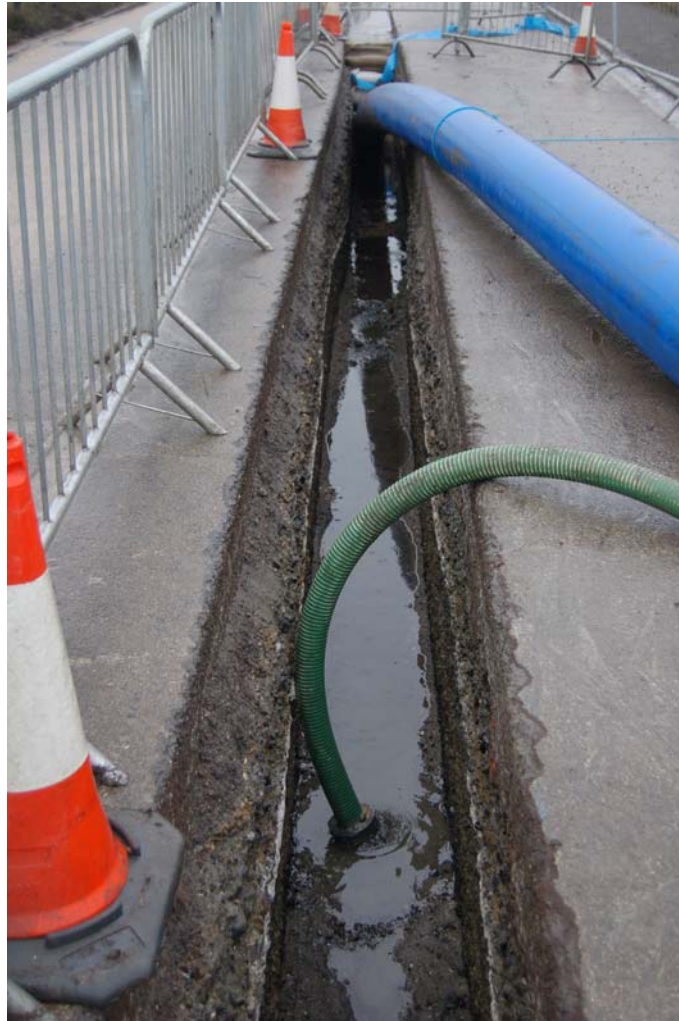


Plate 1. General view of pipeline trench



Plate 2. Detail of Causeway construction deposits

APPENDIX 1: CONTENTS OF ARCHIVE

SITE NAME: Water Pipeline, the Strood Causeway, West Mersea

SITE CODE: COLEM.2007.14

Index to Archive:

1. Introduction

1.1 CBC Museums Service Brief

1.2 ECC FAU WSI

2. Research Archive

2.1 Client Report

3. Site Archive

3.1 Site Photographic Record (1 set of colour prints and digital images on disk)

3.2 Miscellaneous notes/plans

No finds

APPENDIX 2: EHER SUMMARY SHEET

EHER SUMMARY SHEET

Site name/Address: Water Pipeline Replacement, The Strood Causeway, West Mersea	
Parishes: West Mersea	District: Colchester
NGR: TM 0139514057 – TM 0072515856	Site Code: COLEM.2007.14
Type of Work: Archaeological Monitoring	Site Director/Group: A Robertson ECC Field Archaeology Unit
Date of Work: 24th January to 7th March 2007	Size of Area Investigated: 2.1km (0.7m wide)
Location of Finds/Curating Museum: Colchester	Funding source: May Gurney Ltd
Further Seasons Anticipated?: No	Related HER Nos.: 2289, 13288, 17644
Final Report: EAH round-up	
Periods Represented: Modern	
SUMMARY OF FIELDWORK RESULTS:	
<p>Archaeological monitoring of the excavation of a c.2.1km-long trench for a replacement water pipe along the causeway across the Strood Channel, West Mersea, uncovered no archaeological remains or deposits.</p> <p>Wooden piles associated with the Saxon causeway across the Strood Channel, carbon-dated to c.700A.D, were previously identified during the laying of the water pipe in 1978. However, no Saxon piles were encountered during the current phase of work. This was due to the depth of the trench only being a maximum of 1.2m deep across the channel, whereas the 1978 work encountered the piles at a depth of 1.6m. Any surviving remains of the Saxon causeway were not therefore disturbed during the laying of the water pipe</p> <p>Below the modern road were a series of stabilisation layers consisting of alternating bands of chalk and gravel. The layers are likely to be associated with the modern road across the causeway. Silt deposits were only identified in the base of the trench in a few locations but were not intruded into by the works.</p> <p>No archaeological remains were identified on dry land either side of the Strood Channel either.</p>	
Previous Summaries/Reports: Crummy, Hillam & Crossan, 1982	
Author of Summary: A Robertson	Date of Summary: March 2007