

**OCKENDON SCHOOL
ERIFF DRIVE
SOUTH OCKENDON
ESSEX**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION



**Essex County Council
Field Archaeology Unit**

APRIL 2008

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Prepared By: Trevor Ennis Position: Project Officer	Signature: Date:
Checked By: Adrian Scruby Position: Project Manager	Signature: Date:
Approved By: Mark Atkinson Position: Unit Manager	Signature: Date:

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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. Please contact the Archaeological Fieldwork Manager, at the

Field Archaeology Unit,
Fairfield Court, Fairfield Road, Braintree, Essex CM7 3YQ.
fieldarch@essexcc.gov.uk
Tel: 01376 331470
Fax: 01376 331428

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**OCKENDON SCHOOL
ERIFF DRIVE
SOUTH OCKENDON
ESSEX
ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION**

Client: Atkins Global

NGR: TQ 58090 81914

Site Code: THSOS 07

Oasis No.: essexcou1- 39674

Dates of Fieldwork: 30th April to 10th May 2007 and 11th to 13th February 2008

SUMMARY

Excavation was undertaken in advance of the construction of a new fitness suite and fire access track at Ockendon School, Eriff Drive, South Ockendon, during Spring 2007.

Contained within the 387 square metre excavation area were the remains of part of a Middle Iron Age occupation site. This comprised of at least three, possibly four, inter-cutting ring gullies, representing the demolition and re-building of a single roundhouse over time. Two door support post-holes were identified and an external three-post structure that may be the surviving remains of a granary. Inter-mixed with the successive roundhouse remains were several phases of north-east/south-west aligned boundary ditch of broadly similar date.

One Roman ditch, two medieval ditches and two probable post-medieval ditches were also identified and are probably the remnants of former agricultural field systems. A subsequent evaluation undertaken in 2008, to the south-west of the excavation area, in advance of the construction of a new assembly hall, revealed a single boundary ditch of 19th century date.

The results of the combined fieldwork indicate that Roman settlement remains previously excavated at Little Belhus Farm (HER 5068), to the north of the site, do not extend into the school grounds in any quantity and that many of the recorded cropmark ditches (HER 14665) within the grounds are likely to be of post-medieval date. It appears that the focus of settlement shifted north to Little Belhus Farm, in the Later Iron Age or Early Roman period, and that subsequent land use was of an agricultural nature until the modern development/expansion of South Ockendon.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This report describes the results of archaeological excavation undertaken at Ockendon School, South Ockendon, prior to the construction of a new fitness suite and fire access track. The fieldwork was carried out by the Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit (ECC FAU) on behalf of Atkins Global, in accordance with an archaeological brief prepared by the ECC Historic Environment Management team (ECC HEM 2007) and a written scheme of investigation prepared by ECC FAU (2007). The project was monitored by ECC HEM.

This report also incorporates the results from an evaluation undertaken in 2008, in advance of the construction of a new assembly hall. The evaluation results were first circulated in March 2008 as an HER Summary.

The site archive will be deposited in Thurrock Museum. 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 new fitness suite and fire access track are located to the rear of Ockendon School, immediately north of the sports hall (TQ 58090 81914). The development site consisted of an area of landscaped amenity grassland, parts of which had been reduced in level in the recent past. The Assembly Hall evaluation was located in a tarmac car park to the immediate west of the sports hall entrance (TQ 58066 81862).

The underlying geology comprised sand and gravel of the Lynch Hill Gravel Formation overlying London Clay.

2.2 Archaeological and Historical Background

This background makes use of the Essex Historic Environment Record (EHER) held and maintained at County Hall, Chelmsford.

The development site lies in an area of high archaeological potential, with a number of sites/features having been identified in the immediate vicinity of the school. A series of cropmarks (HER 14665), including a number of linear features, an enclosure and a range of pits have previously been identified in the school grounds, elements of which extend into the footprint of the proposed fitness suite and fire access track. Prior to the current fieldwork these

features were undated, although Roman settlement remains, including an oven, possible latrine pits and ditches, have been excavated immediately to the north, at Little Belhus Farm (HER 5068), initially suggesting a possible context for the cropmark features identified within the school grounds.

3.0 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

3.1 General aims

The aim of the work was to preserve by record any archaeological deposits that would be truncated or destroyed by the construction of the new building and access track.

Specific attention was paid to:

- Identifying the nature and date of the below-ground remains indicated by cropmarks
- Relating identified features by nature and date to other known remains in the area

3.2 Research objectives

Research objectives for the project were undertaken with reference to those laid out in *Research and Archaeology: a Framework for the Eastern Counties, 2. research agenda and strategy* (Brown and Glazebrook 2000). Specific Iron Age research topics that might be addressed include 'Chronology', 'The development of the agrarian economy' and 'Settlement chronology and dynamics' (Bryant 2000, 16); and the contribution of the project to the development of these is considered in Section 8.

4.0 METHOD

The excavation areas were stripped of overburden, under archaeological supervision, using a 360° excavator fitted with a flat-bladed bucket. The overburden consisted of dark grey clay silt (1) overlying dry mid-grey sandy clay silt (2) and varied between 0.5m to 0.7m in depth. The presence of a north-south aligned pipe trench restricted the depth of machining to just above the archaeological horizon along the north-eastern edge of the site. After the removal of the overburden the surface was hand-cleaned prior to investigation. Modern disturbance was apparent in the south-west of the main excavation area (Fig. 2) and as an area of compacted and stained subsoil in the south-east. Feature visibility was extremely poor in the centre of the main excavation area despite repeated hand-cleaning.

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 excavation, artefact collection and recording methodologies were employed throughout.

5.0 FIELDWORK RESULTS

The results of the investigation are presented below, in sections 5.1 and 5.2. Section 5.1 covers the results of the main excavation area and Section 5.2 the results from the Y-shaped fire track extension to the east. Individual context numbers are cited in brackets and further context information is included in Appendix 1.

5.1 Main Excavation Area

It is likely that most of the features within the main excavation area date to the Middle Iron Age and are contemporary with the small quantity of pottery of this date that was recovered from them. Four possible roundhouse structures were identified and are discussed in chronological order below. A number of post-holes may represent the position of internal posts and an external three-post structure. No internal floor surfaces or hearth positions were present within the roundhouses inferring that truncation has taken place across the site. A series of parallel ditches also appear to be broadly contemporary, with one ditch on a different alignment possibly later.

5.1.1 Roundhouses 1 and 2 (Fig. 4)

Roundhouses 1 and 2 appeared on limited stratigraphic evidence to be the earliest structures within the excavation area. Roundhouse 1 was represented by a curving gully (contexts 76, 104, 107 and 122) approximately 13m diameter and in excess of 15m in length. It had a concave profile (Fig 3, Section 1) and ranged in width from c.0.6 to c.0.9m, and in depth from 0.28m to 0.41m. The fill (contexts 77, 105, 106 and 121) which consisted mainly of sandy silt, varying in colour from a pale greyish brown to mid orange-grey, contained four sherds of probable Middle Iron Age pottery and one burnt flint.

Roundhouse 2 was represented by a curving gully (contexts 70, 72, 81 and 109), approximately 12m in diameter, located to the immediate east of the gully of Roundhouse 1. It was also in excess of 15m in length, with a concave profile (Fig 3, Section 1) ranging in width from 0.4 to c.0.7m and depth from 0.15m to 0.41m. The sandy silt fill (contexts 71, 73, 80 and 108) varied in colour from pale greyish brown to mid orange-grey and produced one sherd of probable Middle Iron Age pottery.

Post-holes 3, 7, 17, and 21 potentially mark the position of internal timber uprights within either Roundhouse 1 or 2. The two largest post-holes (3 and 17) both showed clear evidence for a post-pipe (Fig 3, Sections 3 and 4) (Plate 4) and may indicate the position of an internal entrance porch. Post-hole 21 contained 126g of pottery all from the same vessel. A truncated post-hole (32), only visible in section (Fig. 3, Section 7), may also be associated with this phase of the structure.

5.1.2 Roundhouse 3 (Fig. 4)

Roundhouse 3 was located within the arc of Roundhouses 1 and 2 but had no stratigraphic relationship with these structures. Roundhouse 3 was semi-circular in plan, with an approximate diameter of 10m, and comprised of two lengths of curving gully (contexts 66/100 and 85). Gully 66/100 was approximately 6.6m long and up to 0.48m wide by 0.2m deep. Three deeper post-settings (contexts 30, 68 and 102) were recorded in the base of the gully where excavated (Fig. 3, Section 6) (Plate 3). Two sherds of probable Middle Iron Age pottery were recovered, one from the mixed-brown sandy silt fill of gully 66 and one from the fill of post-hole 102. Gully 85 was visible for a length of 1.7m (but probably continued for longer) and was 0.38m wide by 0.12m deep. The southern end of the gully was rounded and fractionally (10mm) deeper, perhaps indicating the former position of a post. Gully 85 was filled with an orange grey sandy silt that produced four sherds of probable Middle Iron Age pottery and a fragment of baked clay.

5.1.3 Roundhouse 4

Roundhouse 4 (Plate 1) was the best-preserved within the main excavation area, comprising a pennanular gully in excess of 26m in length and c.11.5m in diameter, and on stratigraphic evidence appeared to be the latest of the circular structures. Two phases of construction were evident. The earlier phase consisted of gully contexts 26, 62, 96, 117 and 131, which had a concave profile (Fig 3, Section 2) and ranged in width from 0.8m to 0.46m and depth from 0.32m to 0.08m. It became noticeably narrower and shallower to the south-west, perhaps as a result of truncation. The fill (contexts 27, 63, 97, 118 and 130) comprised sandy silt that varied in colour between light grey, greyish brown and orange brown; three sherds of probable Middle Iron Age pottery were recovered from contexts 27 and 97.

The second phase of construction involved a deeper V-shaped re-cut (Fig 3, Section 5) (Plate 5), c.1m wide by 0.33m to 0.63m in depth, along the eastern half of the gully. This consisted of gully contexts 23, 57, 59 and 94 and was filled with a mixture of greyish brown to orange brown sandy silt (contexts 24, 58, 60, 61 and 95). No finds were recovered.

Both phases of gully appeared to form a rounded terminus to the south-east, marking one side of the entrance-way into the roundhouse, the opposing side was probably located just beyond the edge of the excavation area. Pit 87, although extremely shallow, could mark the position of a truncated post-hole associated with this entrance.

5.1.4 Possible external structure

Three post-holes (28, 38 and 40) in the north-east of the excavation area, cutting an earlier ditch (34/90), may constitute an external structural group associated with Roundhouse 4 (Fig 3, Section 6) (Plate 2). It is possible that they represent three corners of a four-post granary structure, the missing post-hole being shallower or not visible within the ditch fill. Post-hole 38 contained 132 sherds of Middle Iron Age pottery all from the same vessel, presumably deliberately deposited after the structure went out of use.

5.1.5 Other pits and post/stake-holes

A few other scattered post and stake-holes (contexts 51, 53, 119 and 126) were probably contemporary with one or other phase of roundhouse. Post-hole 98 was a clearly later feature as it cut the infilled gully of roundhouse 4. Little can be said of pit/gully 83 which was poorly defined, truncated and, judging by its position, appeared unassociated with any of the roundhouses. Pit 133, and probably also pit 128, appeared to be of natural origin.

5.1.6 Linear features

A series of four, north-east/south-west aligned, parallel linear features were excavated, along with one on a north-west/south-east alignment (Fig. 5).

Ditch 47/55 was visible for approximately 4m. It was truncated to the west by the gully of Roundhouse 4 and cut by a modern pipe trench to the east. The ditch was up to 1.1m wide by 0.2m deep and filled with pale greyish-brown sandy silt, which produced no dating evidence. The ditch was not observed emerging on the west side of the roundhouse gully; however this was an area of very limited visibility. Further to the west, a small section of ditch (114), sandwiched between two areas of modern disturbance, was recorded on a similar alignment and may constitute its further extent.

Also on a similar alignment, and located approximately 3.5m to the north, was a second ditch (11/135) some 13m in length which continued into the adjacent fire track before being truncated by modern disturbance. No dating evidence was recovered from this ditch, which

appeared in plan to be cut by the gully (66/100) of Roundhouse 3 and, though unclear in plan, by implication also Roundhouse 4.

The largest linear feature, ditch 34/90/112, ran along the north side of the main excavation area for an exposed length of some 21m. It comprised two lengths of ditch (34/90 and 112) separated by an access gap 4m wide. The eastern ditch was approximately 12m long, by up to 0.62m wide and 0.5m deep with a concave profile and contained three fills (Fig 3, Section 6) (Plate 2). It had a rounded western terminal (90) and its eastern end must have been in the vicinity of the modern pipe trench, as the ditch was not observed extending into the fire track trench. A small number of burnt flints and worked flint flakes, a large Neolithic flint scraper (residual or re-used) and one sherd of Middle Iron Age pottery were recovered from its fills. The western length of ditch (112) was of comparable width, but shallower at only 0.15m deep and contained one undated fill (113). Stratigraphically, ditch 34/90/112 was earlier than Roundhouse 4 and post-holes 28, 38 and 40, though probably later than Roundhouses 1 and 2, as these did not show in Section 6 (Fig. 3).

Ditch 15/74/78/88 was over 10m long and stratigraphically one of the later of the Middle Iron Age features, as it appeared to cut the gullies of roundhouse 1 and 2 in section and clearly cut the gully of roundhouse 4 in plan. It was at its widest and deepest (1.2m x 0.33m) to the west and became progressively shallower and narrower to the east. The east-end appeared to cut gully 72 (Roundhouse 2) but not extend beyond it. Ditch segment 15 (Fig. 3, Section 8) also cut an earlier deeper feature (13) that may be the remains of a pit or post-hole, or the end of a narrower section of ditch. The fill (14) of this earlier feature contained two sherds of probable Middle Iron Age pottery.

In the south-west corner of the excavation area was a ditch (49/64) on a different, north-west-south-east, alignment to the other Middle Iron Age linear features to its north. This ditch was in excess of 15m long and up to 1.44m wide by 0.56m deep. A large proportion of the ditch was truncated by modern disturbance, which also obscured the intersection with roundhouse 4. No dating evidence was recovered, although its differing alignment suggests the feature post-dates the Middle Iron Age and could potentially be as late as post-medieval.

5.2 Fire Access Track

Five linear features were identified in the fire access track trench, one of which (135) was the probable continuation of Middle Iron Age ditch 11. Two features, ditch 42 and gully 123, were aligned roughly north-south. Ditch 42 was over 8m long by 1m wide and 0.6m deep, and contained two sandy silt fills (43 and 44) that produced a variety of finds including part of

a clay loom weight, Middle Iron Age and Roman pottery. Only a short length of gully 123 was exposed in the trench and it was truncated by a modern pit to the north. The gully was only 0.65m wide and 0.15m deep but did contain joining medieval pottery sherds from a large bowl dating to the 12th to early 13th century. The two other linear features, 45 and 110, were undated. Gully 45 was orientated east/west and in plan aligned with ditch 47 in the main excavation area. However, it was recorded (Fig. 3, Section 9) as truncating the top of ditch 42 and must therefore be of Roman or later date. Unstratified pottery (context 125) recovered during machining from above the intersection of ditch 42 and gully 45 may suggest that gully 45 was of medieval date. Ditch 110 was 1.4m wide by 0.27m deep and aligned on a similar north-west/south-east alignment to ditch 49/64 in the main excavation area, suggesting it is also likely to be of later date. It contained a single fill (111) which produced no finds.

6.0 FINDS REPORT by Joyce Compton

6.1 Introduction

Finds were recovered from a total of twenty-three contexts. All of the material has been recorded by count and weight, in grams, by context. Full quantification details can be found in Appendix 2. The largest component is pottery, amounting to 181 sherds, weighing 1154g, recovered from seventeen contexts. Pottery of prehistoric date, from fifteen contexts, comprises the highest proportion and this forms the subject of a separate report. The remainder of the finds are described by category following the prehistoric pottery report. The medieval pottery was examined by Helen Walker and the flints by Hazel Martingell.

6.2 Prehistoric pottery by Nick Lavender

A small quantity of prehistoric pottery, 177 sherds, weight 779g, was recovered. This was recorded according to a system devised for prehistoric pottery in Essex (Brown 1988; details in archive). The pottery was recorded by fabric, class (after Barrett 1980), form, decoration, surface treatment and condition. The assemblage was quantified by sherd count and weight.

The fabrics present are:

Fabric	Description	Sherds	Weight	%sherds	%weight
C	Flint, S-M with occasional L 2	2	17	1	2
D	Flint, S-L 2 poorly sorted	3	19	2	2.5
E	Flint and sand, S-M 2	6	45	3	6
G	Sand, S 3	18	189	10	24.5
I	Sand, S-M 2-3	1	9	1	1
J	Sand with veg. voids particularly on surface	147	500	83	64

where

Size of inclusions: S = less than 1mm diameter
 M = 1-2mm diameter
 L = more than 2mm diameter

Density of inclusions: 1 = less than 6 per cm²
 2 = 6-10 per cm²
 3 = more than 10 per cm²

The condition of the pottery is generally quite poor; 23% by sherd count (46% by weight) is both heavily abraded and affected by a thick ferromanganiferous encrustation, which is probably indicative of a fluctuating water table. The remaining 77% came from three contexts, fills 39, 44 and 67, shows very little sign of abrasion and has no encrustation. The average sherd weight is 4.4g.

The bulk of the material (94% by sherd count, 89.5% by weight) comprises sherds in sand-tempered fabrics, suggesting a Middle Iron Age date. This is confirmed by the few diagnostic sherds, all from round-shouldered jars with short, upright necks and rounded rims (Little Waltham Form 8; Drury 1978) that were recovered from the fills of post-holes 21 and 38, and fill 44 of ditch 42. All bases are flat and well-formed with few finger marks left from vessel formation.

There is no evidence of decoration on any of the pottery, apart from a single burnished sherd from the fill of gully segment 66. It is possible that some of the remaining sherds carried decoration on surfaces that have been rendered invisible by the ferromanganiferous encrustation that is common throughout the assemblage. None of the 135 sherds from the fill of post-hole 38, by far the largest individual context assemblage, is decorated; though the surfaces had been well smoothed (similarly evidence for surface treatment and manufacturing techniques is hidden on most of the assemblage). No handles or perforations were noted and the assemblage appears to be completely plain.

The pottery appears to form part of a Middle Iron Age domestic assemblage associated with one or more of the sequence of circular buildings, though the assemblage is too small to form any definite conclusions. The abraded condition of the material suggests that it has been disturbed and, with the exception of the jar sherds from fill 39, was not recovered from primary contexts. The absence of later material in any significant quantities, however, suggests that most of this disturbance occurred during the Middle Iron Age rather than later.

6.3 Worked and burnt flint by Hazel Martingell

A total of seven worked flints and fourteen burnt natural flints were recovered. Of the worked flints, two came from post-hole 7, three came from ditch 34 and two were unstratified.

The only retouched artefact is a scraper (fill 37 of ditch 34), which is made on a flake of light grey-brown-black flint with retouch around the distal end. It is probably middle to late Neolithic in date. This is suggested because scrapers of this type have been found on sites with large flint assemblages and pottery of this date. The date for manufacture and the context in which worked flints are found may not always be the same. It is possible that this scraper was found during the late prehistoric period and used for a variety of casual activities, such as cutting plant materials or as a strike-a-light, and is thus residual or reused in this context.

6.4 Baked clay

Five contexts produced fragments of baked clay, amounting to seven pieces, weighing 366g. All of the baked clay is associated with Middle Iron Age pottery, but only one piece, from ditch 42, has any diagnostic features. This piece probably derives from a triangular loom weight of Iron Age date.

6.5 Roman pottery

The top fill of ditch 42 produced two joining base sherds (76g) from a buff ware vessel. The sherds are abraded, but probably derive from a mortarium, unfortunately not closely datable within the Roman period.

6.6 Medieval pottery by Helen Walker

A very small amount of pottery, five sherds, weight 248g, was recovered from two fire access track trench contexts. It comprises four fragments from a large bowl (gully 123) and a sagging base sherd, perhaps from a cooking pot (125, unstratified). Both are in shell-tempered ware, although the shell has been leached out during deposition, leaving only shell-shaped vesicles. The bowl is 400mm in diameter and has straight sides, a flared neck, and the rim has been folded over to create an external bead. It is unabraded and shows sooting on the sides and the lower edge of the rim. Shell-tempered wares are common at sites in south Essex close to the Thames, where they continued in production well into the 13th century. The beaded rim and the evenness of the vessel walls indicate a 12th to early 13th century date for the bowl and the sooting indicates it was most likely used for cooking.

6.7 Comments on the Assemblage

The finds form a small but cohesive group of predominately prehistoric material. The pottery, baked clay and burnt flint are all suggestive of an occupation site. It is interesting that the only Roman and medieval material came from the area of the fire track. The lack of metalwork, and any recent finds, should also be noted. No further work is required on any of the material and all of the finds should be retained.

7.0 DISCUSSION

7.1 Middle Iron Age

This investigation has revealed several phases of occupation represented by a series of at least three, possibly four, inter-cutting roundhouse structures and a similar number of parallel, north-east/south-west aligned linear features. No internal floor surfaces or hearth positions were identified and these have probably been removed by later truncation. The recovery of a small quantity of Middle Iron Age pottery, combined with a complete absence of later material, suggests that the occupation is all of Middle Iron Age date. Later features were recorded in the fire track but did not extend into the main excavation area.

The roundhouses are broadly similar to others excavated in Essex, including examples at Little Waltham (Drury 1978), St Osyth (Germany 2007) and also along the route of the new A120 between Stansted and Braintree (Timby et al 2007). Roundhouses typically consist of one or two concentric ring-gullies interpreted as either wall foundation trenches or eaves drip gullies (Drury 2007, 118-124). Entranceways usually face east, as excavated at Little Waltham (Drury 1978) and St Osyth (Germany 2007), although those angled more to the south-east are not uncommon and have been found at Great Dunmow (Lavender 1997) and at Mucking (Clark 1993). Door supports, set back from the entrance and indicated by a pair of post-holes, are also a common feature of Middle Iron Age roundhouses in Essex (Germany 2007, 116), with examples identified at all of the above mentioned sites.

The chronological sequence of roundhouses 1 to 3 is uncertain, as none had direct stratigraphic relationships with each other, although all appeared to be truncated by roundhouse 4. The ring-gully of roundhouse 1 formed a probable structure of c.13m in diameter and the ring-gully of roundhouse 2 one of c.12m diameter. The closeness of the gullies (less than 0.4m apart) and the fact that the outer gully was the deepest suggest two phases, with one replacing the other, rather than a double gullied structure comprising inner wall trench and outer eaves-drip gully. Both gullies showed some variation in depth and width but no post-settings were identified. An exploratory sondage (Fig. 2) on the south-east

of the projected circumference failed to locate either ring-gully, suggesting the likely position of an entranceway. This was further indicated by two post-holes (3 and 17) probably representing the positions of door supports. The fact that the ring-gullies were not observed in the north-east part of the site can be explained by the presence of the pipe trench and poor visibility to the north of ditch 34.

Roundhouse 3 was the least well preserved and differed from the others in constructional technique. It consisted of two sections of curving gully with possible post-positions at its ends and along its length. This was the slightest of the ring-gullies and may have been all that survived of a small roundhouse of approximately 10m diameter, with the remainder of the circumference having been truncated or obscured. Alternatively, the structure could have been some form of semi-circular post and hurdle windbreak or shelter. A range of possible reconstructions for semi-circular structures have been suggested by Pryor (1984).

Roundhouse 4 had a diameter of c.11.5m. It appeared to be the latest structure and was the most substantial and best preserved. Two phases of construction were identified, the latter phase in part having a distinct V-shaped profile that was suggestive of a wall foundation trench. This roundhouse did have a slightly squarer appearance than the others and in shape and diameter has some similarity, though not necessarily in date, with the latest hut (C5) at Little Waltham, which dated to the third quarter of the 1st Century BC (Drury 1978, 36).

The overlapping positions of the individual roundhouses indicate that only one could have been in existence at any one time. The roundhouses represent the successive replacement and repair of the same structure over a considerable length of time and the gradual migration of this house about the chosen building site. The absence of any Middle Iron Age features in the adjacent fire track or recent Assembly Hall evaluation, c.40m to the south-west, suggest that the Middle Iron Age activity may be fairly localised and relate to a small community, rather than a larger settlement as excavated at Little Waltham (Drury 1978).

The purpose of the linear north-east/south-west aligned ditches is unclear. First impressions might suggest that they are associated with later strip farming and are the bases of furrows. However, the ditches vary considerably in width and depth and are proven archaeologically to be of different phases (Fig. 5). They are most likely a series of boundary ditches which shift with successive phases of settlement. Ditches 11 and 47/114 (Fig. 5) are probably some of the earliest features on site and may mark either side of a track-way that pre-dates the later two phases of roundhouse construction, if not all of them. Ditch 34/90 and 112 was

the largest of the ditches and appears to form a major interrupted boundary that separated two distinct areas of land use. Stratigraphically this ditch is later than roundhouses 1 and 2 and earlier than roundhouse 4 and could conceivably be contemporary with roundhouse 3. East-west ditch 15/74/78/88 was the latest feature as it clearly cut roundhouse 4 in plan and roundhouses 1 and 2 in section. Concealed beneath this ditch was an earlier post-hole or ditch terminal (13) perhaps associated with the westward continuation of former track-side ditch 11.

7.2 Roman and later periods

Surprisingly, given the amount of Roman remains known in the general vicinity, only one Roman field boundary ditch (42) was encountered (Fig. 5). This suggests that the settlement activity identified at Little Belhus Farm did not continue as far south as Ockendon School, although clearly the area may have been used for agricultural purposes in the Roman period.

There is a perceived hiatus until the medieval period, when two ditches (123 and 45), that might join to form the corner of a small field or enclosure, were dug, again potentially for agricultural purposes. The unabraded nature of the small quantity of pottery recovered might suggest the presence of a near-by 12th-13th century occupation site.

Ditch 49/64 in the main excavation area and ditch 110 in the fire track were on similar north-west/south-east alignments that differed from the alignment of the other ditches and suggest a probable later date. The position of ditch 110 corresponds with that of a ditch identified from the cropmark plot (Fig. 1) to the north of the main excavation area. This ditch is shown linking with a north-east/south-west aligned ditch (201), which was investigated in the Assembly Hall evaluation; it contained modern (19th-20th century) pottery and is also depicted on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map (c.1876). Accordingly, if ditch 110 does link with a 19th century ditch it too is likely to be of similar date, as, more tentatively, may be the undated but similarly aligned ditch 49/64.

8.0 CONCLUSIONS

The excavation has revealed the remains of part of a Middle Iron Age settlement site comprising of at least three, possibly four, inter-cutting roundhouse structures, a number of associated linear features denoting a trackway and possible field systems, and elements of a possible granary structure. Whether this settlement comprised a single dwelling, or was enclosed has not been conclusively established.

Evidence of Middle Iron Age activity has been found elsewhere in the Ockendon area, for example at Ardale School, North Stifford, where occupation evidence included roundhouses and enclosures (HER 5019), and at Belhus Park where Early-Middle Iron Age pottery was recovered from an enclosure ditch (HER 5104). Both sites are located within 2km of the school and form elements of a wider landscape containing multi-period settlement on the Thames river terraces and along the A13 corridor (Wilkinson 1988).

One of the objectives of the excavation was to identify the nature and date of the cropmarks (HER 14665) within the school grounds and relate these to other known deposits in the area. The results of the fieldwork, both excavation and evaluation, would suggest that the linear cropmarks ditches to the immediate west and north of the excavation area, and probably also those to the south-east of the school, indicate the below-ground remains of field boundary ditches of post-medieval date. The more westerly of the cropmarks within the school grounds remain undated, but in part may also be post-medieval. However, the possibility that some of these cropmark features may be of an earlier, Roman or Late Iron Age date cannot be completely ruled out. That they may be of Middle Iron Age date is perhaps less likely as none of the ditches or ring-gullies within the excavation area showed as cropmarks.

The fieldwork has contributed to our understanding of the Iron Age in Essex in that a hitherto unknown Middle Iron Age Settlement site has been identified. The site does not appear to continue into the Late Iron Age/Early Roman period, which may indicate discontinuity or a localised shift of settlement foci to the north. This accords with possible Iron Age settlement trends identified as a potential regional research project under the heading 'Settlement chronology and dynamics' (Bryant 2000, 16). However, the contribution to other Iron Age research topics (Bryant 2000, 16-17) is limited due to the small size of the pottery assemblage, lack of environmental remains and the restricted extent of the excavation area.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The archaeological fieldwork was funded by Atkins Global and undertaken by Trevor Ennis with Tony Blowers, Bradley Brooker, Chris Down, John Hewit, Dave Smith and Adrian Turner of the ECC Field Archaeology Unit. Survey and illustration was by Andrew Lewsey. Finds were processed by Phil McMichael and analysed by Joyce Compton, Nick Lavender, Hazel Martingell and Helen Walker. The project was managed by Adrian Scruby of ECC FAU and monitored by Richard Havis of ECC HEM.

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APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT DATA

All dimensions given in metres.

Context	Type	Description	Date
01	Topsoil	Dark grey clay silt, 0.5m thick	-
02	Subsoil/Cleaning	Mid grey sandy clay silt, 0.2m thick	-
03	Post-hole	Sub-circular, 0.58m x 0.53m x 0.28m deep	Middle Iron Age
04	Fill of 3	Greyish brown sandy silt	Middle Iron Age
05	Post-pipe	Circular, 0.32m x 0.32m x 0.28m deep (within 3)	Middle Iron Age
06	Fill of 5	Dark greyish brown sandy silt	Middle Iron Age
07	Post-hole	Circular, 0.35m x 0.35m x 0.13m deep	Middle Iron Age
08	Fill of 7	Greyish brown sandy silt	Middle Iron Age
09	Post-hole	Square depression, 0.14m x 0.24m x 0.03m deep	Middle Iron Age
10	Fill of 9	Pale greyish brown sandy silt	Middle Iron Age
11	Ditch	Linear, 1m+ x 0.86m x 0.21m deep	Middle Iron Age
12	Fill of 11	Greyish brown sandy clay	Middle Iron Age
13	Ditch	Linear, 1m+ x 0.42m x 0.28m deep	Middle Iron Age
14	Fill of 13	Dark greyish brown sandy clay	Middle Iron Age
15	Ditch	Linear, 1m+ x 1.2m x 0.3m deep	Middle Iron Age
16	Fill of 15	Light greyish brown sandy clay	Middle Iron Age
17	Post-hole	Oval, 0.56m x 0.48m x 0.15m deep	Middle Iron Age
18	Fill of 17	Pale greyish brown sandy silt	Middle Iron Age
19	Post-pipe	Square, 0.15m x 0.15m x 0.29m deep (within 17)	Middle Iron Age
20	Fill of 19	Dark greyish brown sandy silt	Middle Iron Age
21	Post-hole	Circular, 0.4m diameter x 0.18m deep	Middle Iron Age
22	Fill of 21	Greyish brown sandy silt	Middle Iron Age
23	Ditch	Linear, 1m+ x 1m x 0.67m deep	Middle Iron Age
24	Fill of 23	Dull brown grey with orange patches, 0.31m thick (top fill)	Middle Iron Age
25	Fill of 23	Mixed light brown/grey/orange silty sand, 0.43m thick (lower fill)	Middle Iron Age
26	Gully	1m+ x 0.7m x 0.16m deep	Middle Iron Age
27	Fill of 26	Brownish grey/orange sandy silt	Middle Iron Age
28	Post-hole	Circular, 0.48m diameter x 0.32m deep	Middle Iron Age
29	Fill of 28	Light greyish brown sandy clay	Middle Iron Age
30	Post/stake-hole	Circular, 0.45m diameter x 0.21m deep	Middle Iron Age
31	Fill of 30	Light greyish brown sandy clay	Middle Iron Age
32	Post-hole	Circular? 0.3m wide x 0.2m deep	Middle Iron Age
33	Fill of 32	Pale grey silty sand	Middle Iron Age
34	Ditch	Linear, 1m+ x 1.5m x 0.5m deep	Middle Iron Age
35	Fill of 34	Mid yellowish brown silty sand, 0.10m thick (bottom fill)	Middle Iron Age
36	Fill of 34	Pale grey sandy silt, 0.17m thick (middle fill)	Middle Iron Age
37	Fill of 34	Mid greyish brown sandy silt, 0.25m thick (top fill)	Middle Iron Age
38	Post-hole	Oval, 0.63m x 0.5m x 0.23m deep	Middle Iron Age
39	Fill of 38	Mid yellowish brown silty sand	Middle Iron Age
40	Post-hole	Circular, 0.45m diameter x 0.3m deep	Middle Iron Age
41	Fill of 40	Mid yellowish brown silty sand	Middle Iron Age
42	Ditch	Linear, 2.2m+ x 1m x 0.6m deep	Roman
43	Fill of 42	Dark to mid grey sandy silt, 0.2m thick (top fill)	Roman

Context	Type	Description	Date
44	Fill of 42	Dark to mid grey brown sandy silt, 0.3m thick (primary fill)	Roman
45	Gully	Linear, 1.35m+ x 0.8m x 0.19m deep	Medieval?
46	Fill of 45	Mid grey brown sandy silt	Medieval?
47	Gully	Linear, 1m+ x 0.7m x 0.08m deep	Middle Iron Age
48	Fill of 47	Pale greyish brown sandy silt	Middle Iron Age
49	Ditch	Linear, 0.76m x 1.15m x 0.48m deep	Post-medieval?
50	Fill of 49	Mid grey and brown clayey sand	Post-medieval?
51	Post-hole	Circular, 0.28m diameter x 0.13m deep	Middle Iron Age
52	Fill of 51	Light greyish brown sandy clay	Middle Iron Age
53	Post-hole	Circular, 0.28m diameter x 0.21m deep	Middle Iron Age
54	Fill of 53	Light greyish brown sandy clay	Middle Iron Age
55	Gully	Linear, 1m+ x 1.1m x 0.2m deep	Middle Iron Age
56	Fill of 55	Pale greyish brown sandy silt	Middle Iron Age
57	Ditch	Ditch terminus, 1.6m+ x 1.22m x 0.27m deep	Middle Iron Age
58	Fill of 57	Pale greyish brown sandy silt	Middle Iron Age
59	Ditch	Linear, 0.6m+ x 1.1m x 0.53m deep	Middle Iron Age
60	Fill of 59	Dull grey/orange brown sandy silt, 0.27m deep (top fill)	Middle Iron Age
61	Fill of 59	Dull grey/yellow brown sandy silt, 0.27m deep (bottom fill)	Middle Iron Age
62	Gully	Linear, 0.6m+ x 0.47m x 0.19m deep	Middle Iron Age
63	Fill of 62	Grey brown sandy silt	Middle Iron Age
64	Ditch	Linear, 0.74m+ x 1.44m x 0.56m deep	Post-medieval?
65	Fill of 64	Orange brownish grey clayey sand	Post-medieval?
66	Gully	Linear, 1.5m+ x 0.38m x 0.16m deep	Middle Iron Age
67	Fill of 66	Mixed light-dark brown sandy silt	Middle Iron Age
68	Post-hole	Oval, 0.2m+ x 0.4m x 0.24m deep	Middle Iron Age
69	Fill of 68	Light-mid orange brown sandy silt	Middle Iron Age
70	Gully	Curvilinear, 0.5m+ x 0.4m x 0.15m deep	Middle Iron Age
71	Fill of 70	Pale greyish brown sandy silt	Middle Iron Age
72	Gully	Curvilinear, 0.24m+ x 0.4m x 0.12m deep	Middle Iron Age
73	Fill of 72	Pale greyish brown sandy silt	Middle Iron Age
74	Ditch	Linear, 0.21m+ x 0.5m x 0.13m deep	Middle Iron Age
75	Fill of 74	Pale greyish brown sandy silt	Middle Iron Age
76	Ditch	Curvilinear, 0.65m+ x 0.7m x 0.28m deep	Middle Iron Age
77	Fill of 76	Pale greyish brown sandy silt	Middle Iron Age
78	Ditch	Linear, 0.75m+ x 0.65m x 0.15m deep	Middle Iron Age
79	Fill of 78	Pale greyish brown sandy silt	Middle Iron Age
80	Fill of 81	Mid orange grey sandy silt	Middle Iron Age
81	Gully	Curving, 0.6m+ x 0.45m x 0.21m deep	Middle Iron Age
82	Fill of 83	Mid grey to orange grey sandy silt	Middle Iron Age
83	Gully/pit	2.2m+ x 0.9m x 0.2m deep	Middle Iron Age
84	Fill of 85	Mid orange grey sandy silt	Middle Iron Age
85	Gully	Curving, 1.7m+ x 0.38m x 0.12m	Middle Iron Age
86	Fill of 87	Mid orange grey sandy silt	Middle Iron Age
87	Pit	Sub-circular, 0.7m x 0.55m x 0.07m deep	Middle Iron Age
88	Ditch	Linear, 0.6m+ x 1.1m x 0.25m deep	Middle Iron Age
89	-	-	-

Context	Type	Description	Date
90	Ditch	Rounded terminus, 0.7m+ x 1.62m x 0.36m deep	Middle Iron Age
91	Fill of 90	Bottom fill, mid yellowish brown silty sand, 0.06m thick	Middle Iron Age
92	Fill of 90	Middle fill, pale grey sandy silt, 0.10m thick	Middle Iron Age
93	Fill of 90	Top fill, mid greyish brown sandy silt, 0.10m thick	Middle Iron Age
94	Ditch	Curvilinear, 0.7m+ x 1.02m x 0.33m deep	Middle Iron Age
95	Fill of 94	Mid brown sandy silt	Middle Iron Age
96	Ditch	Curvilinear, 1m+ x 0.8m x 0.32m deep	Middle Iron Age
97	Fill of 96	Mid greyish brown sandy silt, 0.32m deep	Middle Iron Age
98	Post-hole	Sub-circular, 0.4m x 0.4m x 0.19m deep	Middle Iron Age
99	Fill of 98	Pale yellowish brown sandy silt	Middle Iron Age
100	Gully	Curvilinear, 1.45m+ x 0.48m x 0.2m deep	Middle Iron Age
101	Fill of 100	Mid to dark patchy greyish brown silty sand	Middle Iron Age
102	Post-hole	Sub-circular, 0.27m x 0.31m x 0.11m deep	Middle Iron Age
103	Fill of 102	Mid brown silty sand	Middle Iron Age
104	Gully	Curvilinear, 1m+ x 0.7m x 0.28m deep	Middle Iron Age
105	Fill of 104	Light greyish brown sandy clay	Middle Iron Age
106	Fill of 107	Mid orange grey sandy silt	Middle Iron Age
107	Gully	Curvilinear? 0.4m+ x c.0.9m x 0.41m deep	Middle Iron Age
108	Fill of 109	Mid orange brown sandy silt	Middle Iron Age
109	Gully	Curvilinear? 0.4m+ x c.0.7m x 0.28m deep	Middle Iron Age
110	Ditch	Linear, 2.8m+ x 1.4m x 0.27m deep	Post-medieval?
111	Fill of 110	Dark to mid grey brown sandy silt	Post-medieval?
112	Ditch	Linear, 5m+ x 1.41m x 0.15m deep	Middle Iron Age
113	Fill of 112	Pale grey sandy silt	Middle Iron Age
114	Ditch	Linear, 2m+ x 1.1m x 0.3m deep	Middle Iron Age
115	Fill of 114	Orange grey sandy clay	Middle Iron Age
116	Fill of 88	Dark greyish brown sandy silt	Middle Iron Age
117	Gully	Curvilinear, 0.5m+ x 0.6m x 0.13m deep	Middle Iron Age
118	Fill of 117	Orangey mid brown sandy silt	Middle Iron Age
119	Stake-hole	Oval, 0.25m x 0.2m x 0.07m deep	Middle Iron Age
120	Fill of 119	Mid grey brown sandy silt	Middle Iron Age
121	Fill of 122	Mid orange grey sandy silt	Middle Iron Age
122	Gully	Curvilinear? 0.6m+ x c.0.55m x 0.38m deep	Middle Iron Age
123	Gully	Linear, 1.36m+ x 0.65m x 0.15m deep	Medieval
124	Fill of 123	Dark grey brown sandy silt	Medieval
125	Finds	Finds from above 43	Middle Iron Age
126	Stake-hole	Circular, 0.2m x 0.2m	Middle Iron Age
127	Fill of 126	Greyish brown sandy silt	Middle Iron Age
128	Pit	Sub-circular, 1.4m+ 1.35m x 0.5m deep	Middle Iron Age
129	Fill of 128	Light greyish brown sandy clay	Middle Iron Age
130	Fill of 131	Light grey sandy silt	Middle Iron Age
131	Gully	Curvilinear, 0.6m+ x 0.46m x 0.08m deep	Middle Iron Age
132	Fill of 133	Greyish brown sandy silt	Nat
133	tree bowl	Sub-circular, c.1.5m x 1.2m x 0.19m deep	Nat
134	Fill of 135	Unexcavated fill	Middle Iron Age
135	Ditch	Linear, 1.8m+ x 0.6m wide	Middle Iron Age

Assembly Hall Evaluation Context Data

Context	Type	Description	Period
201	Ditch	17.5m+ x 2.87m x 0.9m	Post-med/Modern
202	Fill of 201	Dark greyish brown silty sand, 0.2m thick (primary fill)	Post-med/Modern
203	Fill of 201	Dark brownish grey silty sand, 0.3m thick (secondary fill)	Post-med/Modern
204	Fill of 201	Dark greyish brown silty sand, 0.40m thick (top fill)	Post-med/Modern

APPENDIX 2: FINDS DATA

All weights in grams

Context	Feature	Count	Weight	Description	Date
2	u/s	2	30	Flint flakes	-
		2	78	Burnt flints	-
		1	18	Baked clay	-
		13	84	Pottery; body sherds, some encrusted	Prehistoric
8	7	2	1	Unworked flints	-
12	11	1	74	Burnt flint	-
16	15	2	4	Pottery; body sherds	Prehistoric
22	21	10	126	Pottery; rim, base and body sherds, encrusted, all same vessel	Prehistoric
27	26	1	2	Pottery; body sherd	Prehistoric
29	28	1	14	Burnt flint	-
37	34	3	34	Flint flakes and large scraper	Prehistoric
		2	58	Burnt flints	-
39	38	132	398	Pottery; rim, base, body sherds and crumbs, all same vessel	Prehistoric
42	Cut No	1	136	Baked clay, loom weight fragment, with shallow groove on upper surface of corner	IA
43	42	6	312	Burnt flints	-
		1	150	Baked clay	-
		2	76	Pottery; joining base sherds, buff ware, abraded, possibly once a mortarium	Roman
		1	24	Pottery; lower wall sherd	Prehistoric
44	42	3	48	Baked clay	-
		1	22	Pottery; shoulder sherd	Prehistoric
46	45	1	42	Burnt flint	-
67	66	1	6	Pottery; body sherd	Prehistoric
80	81	2	1	Charcoal (Discarded)	-
		1	8	Pottery; body sherd, encrusted	Prehistoric
84	85	1	14	Baked clay	-
		4	40	Pottery; body sherds	Prehistoric
93	90	1	8	Pottery; body sherd	Prehistoric
97	96	2	4	Pottery; body sherds	Prehistoric
103	102	1	6	Pottery; body sherd	Prehistoric
104	Cut No	1	6	Pottery; body sherd	Prehistoric
106	107	1	82	Burnt flint	-
		3	92	Pottery; body sherds	Prehistoric
124	123	4	224	Pottery; shell-tempered ware, joining sherds from large bowl, unabraded	Medieval
125	Finds	1	24	Pottery; shell-tempered ware, sherd from sagging base, unabraded (different vessel from above)	Medieval

Assembly Hall Evaluation Finds Data

204	201	3	22	Pottery; joining body sherds, modern stoneware (Discarded)	19th-20th C
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APPENDIX 3: FLINT CATALOGUE

<i>Context</i>	<i>Feature</i>	<i>Count</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Date</i>
2	u/s	2	Flake, secondary Flake, secondary, cortex platform	
8	7	2	Chippings	
37	34	3	Scraper on flake, tertiary, retouch around distal end Blade, tertiary Flake, trimming, tertiary	?Neolithic

APPENDIX 4: CONTENTS OF ARCHIVE

SITE NAME: Ockendon School

SITE CODE: THSOS 07

Index to Archive:

1. Introduction

- 1.1 ECC HEM Brief (2007 Excavation)
- 1.2 ECC FAU WSI (2007 Excavation)
- 1.3 ECC HEM Brief (2008 Evaluation)
- 1.4 ECC FAU WSI (2008 Evaluation)

2. Research Archive

- 2.1 Client Report
- 2.2 Finds Reports
- 2.3 HER Summary (2008 Evaluation)

3. Site Archive

- 3.1 Context Record Registers
- 3.2 Context Records (1 to 135 + 201 to 204)
- 3.3 2 Trench sheets
- 3.4 Plan Register
- 3.5 Section Register
- 3.6 Levels Register
- 3.7 Trench location plans
- 3.8 Photographic Registers
- 3.9 Site Photographic Record (1 set of Black & White prints, 1 Set of digital images on disk)
- 3.10 Miscellaneous notes/plans

Not in File

Five large plans and two large section sheets (Excavation) + one large plan and one large section (Evaluation)

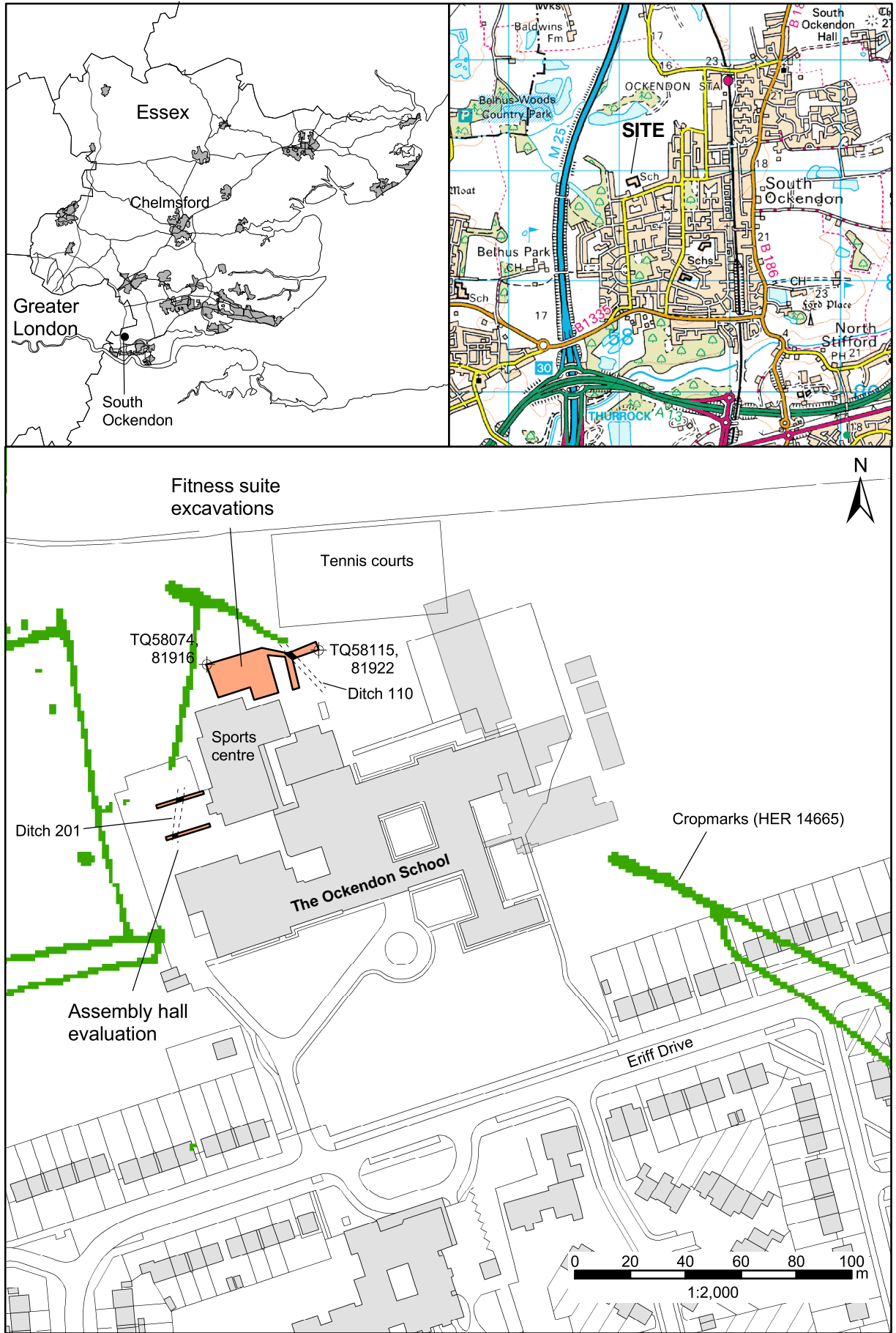
Finds

The finds occupy one box.

APPENDIX 5: EHER SUMMARY SHEET

EHER SUMMARY SHEET

Site name/Address: Ockendon School, Eriff Drive, South Ockendon, Essex	
Parishes: South Ockendon	District: Thurrock
NGR: TQ 58090 81914	Site Code: THSOS 07
Type of Work: Archaeological Excavation and Monitoring	Site Director/Group: T. Ennis, ECC Field Archaeology Unit
Dates of Work: 30th April to 10th May 2007 and 11th-13th February 2008 (Eval.)	Size of Area Investigated: 387 sq m and 42 sq m (Eval.)
Location of Finds/Curating Museum: Thurrock	Funding source: Atkins Global
Further Seasons Anticipated?: No	Related HER Nos.: 14665
Final Report: EAH round-up	OASIS No.: essexcou1- 39674
Periods Represented: Middle Iron Age, Roman, medieval, post-medieval	
SUMMARY OF FIELDWORK RESULTS:	
<p>Excavation was undertaken in advance of the construction of a new fitness suite and fire access track at Ockendon School, Eriff Drive, South Ockendon, during Spring 2007.</p> <p>Contained within the 387 square metre excavation area were the remains of part of a Middle Iron Age occupation site. This comprised of at least three, possibly four, inter-cutting ring gullies, representing the demolition and re-building of a single roundhouse over time. Two door support post-holes were identified and an external three-post structure that may be the surviving remains of a granary. Inter-mixed with the successive roundhouse remains were several phases of north-east/south-west aligned boundary ditch of broadly similar date.</p> <p>One Roman ditch, two medieval ditches and two probable post-medieval ditches were also identified and are probably the remnants of former agricultural field systems. A subsequent evaluation undertaken in 2008, to the south-west of the excavation area, in advance of the construction of a new assembly hall, revealed a single boundary ditch of 19th century date.</p> <p>The results of the combined fieldwork indicate that Roman settlement remains previously excavated at Little Belhus Farm (HER 5068), to the north of the site, do not extend into the school grounds in any quantity and that many of the recorded cropmark ditches (HER 14665) within the grounds are likely to be of post-medieval date. It appears that the focus of settlement shifted north to Little Belhus Farm, in the Later Iron Age or Early Roman period, and that subsequent land use was of an agricultural nature until the modern development/expansion of South Ockendon.</p>	
Previous Summaries/Reports: HER Summary – Archaeological Evaluation of New Assembly Hall, Ockendon School, Eriff Drive, South Ockendon, March 2008	
Author of Summary: T. Ennis	Date of Summary: April 2008



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Fig.1. Location plan

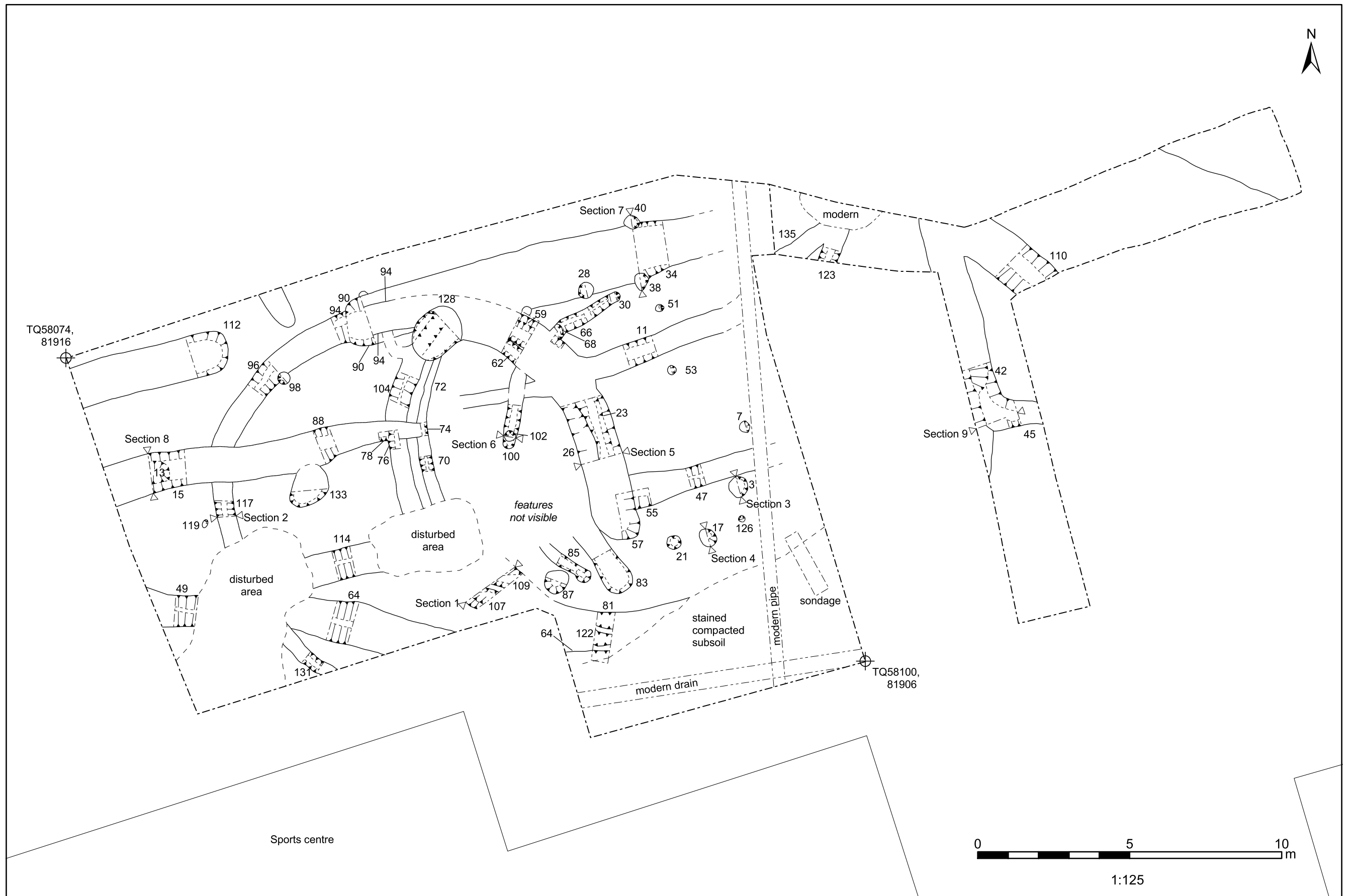


Fig.2. Site plan

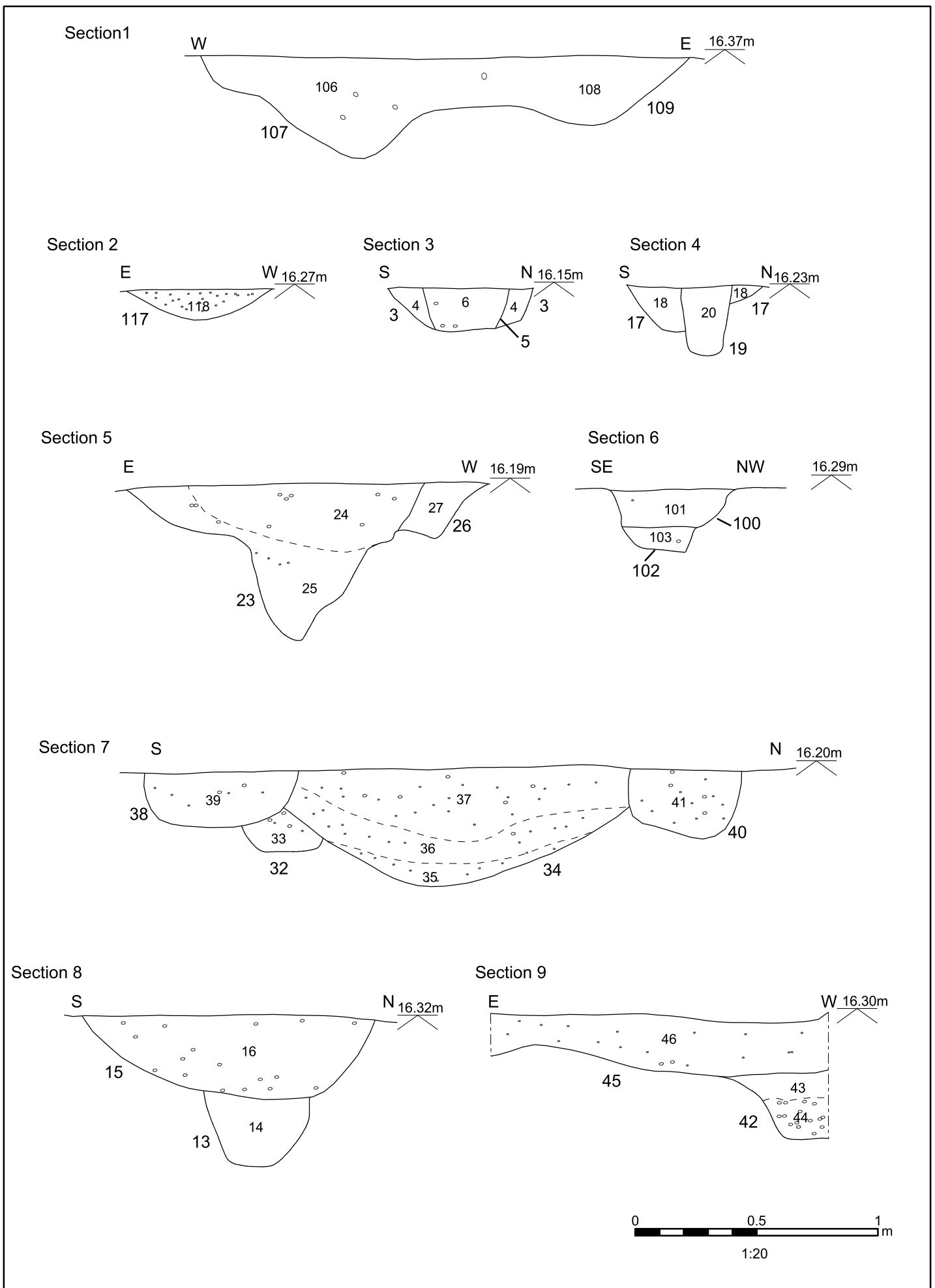


Fig.3. Sections

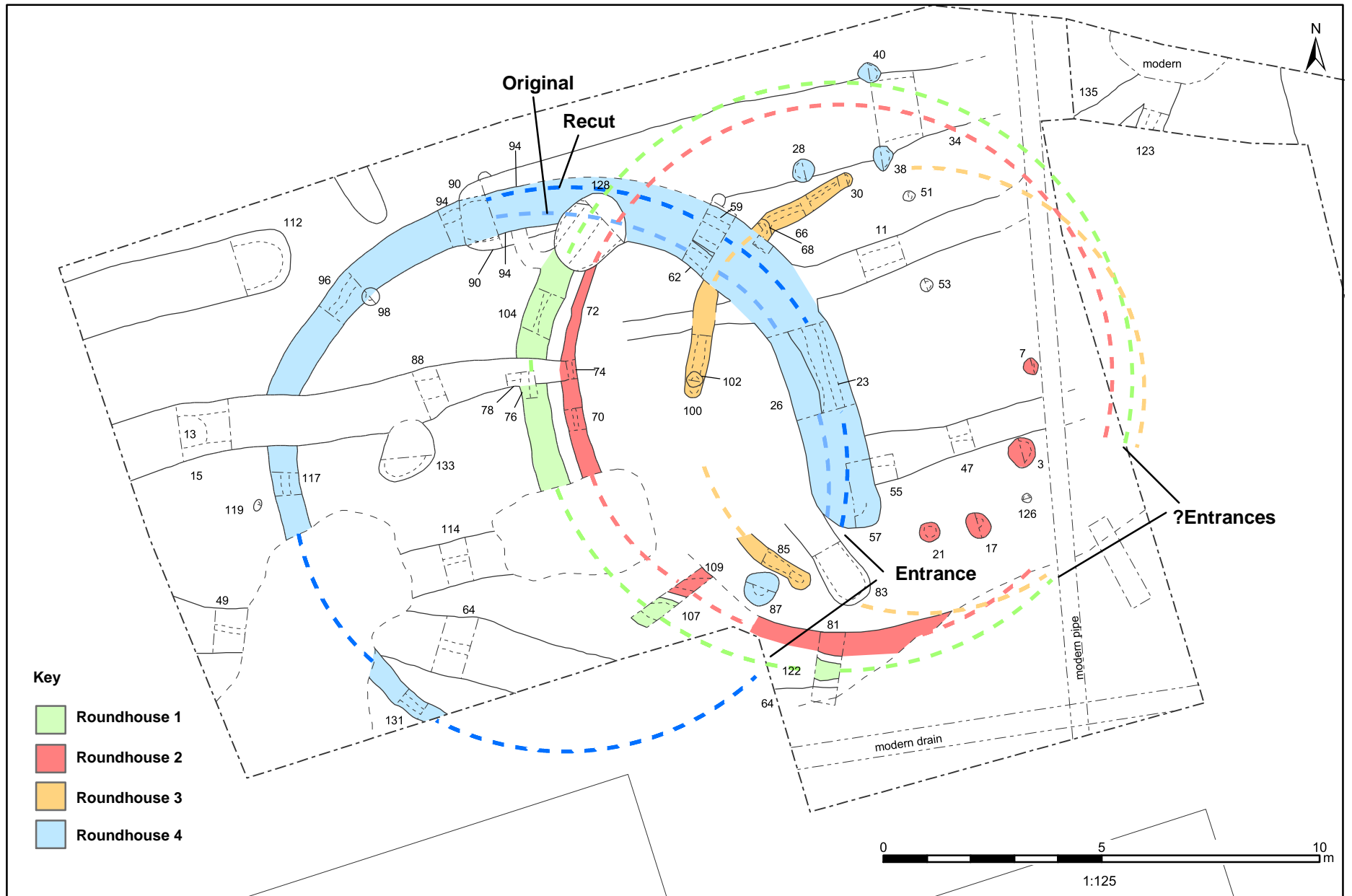


Fig.4. Roundhouse interpretation



Fig.5. Linear interpretation



Plate 1 Roundhouse 4 (looking east) after initial cleaning



Plate 2 Ditch 34 and post-holes 38 and 40



Plate 3 Gully 100 and post-hole 102



Plate 4 Post-hole 17



Plate 5 Gully 23