

**THE CHASE  
ELMSTEAD MARKET  
ESSEX**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION BY TRIAL-TRENCHING**



Essex County Council

**FIELD ARCHAEOLOGY UNIT**

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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.*

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# THE CHASE, ELMSTEAD MARKET, ESSEX

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION BY TRIAL-TRENCHING

**Client:** The Woodland Trust / Essex County Council

**Date of fieldwork:** 28/11/08 to 3/12/08

**NGR:** TM 606938 224583

**ECC FAU Project Number:** 2000

**Site Code:** ESWT 08

**Oasis Number:** essexcou1-53312

### SUMMARY

*An archaeological evaluation by trial-trenching was carried out in advance of a first phase of tree planting at The Chase, Elmstead Market, Essex. The trenching found five undatable ditches, a thin scatter of burnt flint, and a small sherd of medieval pottery. The trenching was preceded by a desk-based assessment and a geophysical survey (Wall 2008).*

*It is concluded from the results of the trenching that the evaluated area has never been intensively developed or settled, although a low level of activity across the site during prehistory is probably indicated by the presence of the burnt flint. Small enclosures belonging to a prehistoric farmstead are speculated to be represented by some of the ditches found by the trenching and by some of the linear features found by the geophysical survey. A dearth of medieval and post-medieval features and finds is thought to equate with the former use of the area for a medieval deer park and a post-medieval agricultural estate.*

*Difficulties in identifying individual features against the area's very varied, natural geology is thought to account for a lack of concordance between known cropmarks and the results of the trial-trenching and the geophysical survey.*



## **1. INTRODUCTION**

An archaeological evaluation by trial-trenching was carried out in advance of tree planting at The Chase, Elmstead Market, Essex. The trial-trenching was undertaken by the Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit and was commissioned by The Woodland Trust and Essex County Council. The archaeological work was monitored by and carried out on the recommendation of the Essex County Council Historic Environment Management team (ECC HEM). The tree planting is part of a scheme by The Woodland Trust to create a new forest on the north-eastern edge of Elmstead Market. It is envisaged that the planting will be carried out in two phases. The first of these two phases was partially investigated by the trial-trenching. The trial-trenching was preceded by a desk-based assessment and a geophysical survey (Wall 2008).

Copies of this report will be sent to the client, ECC HEM and the ECC Historic Environment Record. The site archive will be stored at Colchester Castle Museum. A copy of the report will be uploaded to the OASIS on-line website ([www.oasis.ac.uk/](http://www.oasis.ac.uk/)).

## **2. BACKGROUND**

### **Location, geology and topography**

The first phase of tree planting covers 21ha of arable land and is situated immediately east of Elmstead Market. The limits of the phase are broadly defined by a reservoir to the west, Bromley Road to the south, and the Tenpenny Brook and one of its tributaries to the north and east. The topography is largely flat, but falls steeply as it approaches the brook and its tributary.

The geology of the area consists of glacial deposits and is very varied. A patchwork of at least four different natural deposits was exposed during the course of the trenching, including pale brown sand silt, pale brown clay silt, brownish yellow silt sand, and brownish yellow silt clay. The deposits all contain varying amounts of gravel. The topsoil lies directly on top of the natural deposits and is about 0.3m thick. It comprises brown sandy clay silt and contains occasional gravel stones.

### **Archaeology**

The following information has been obtained from the desk-based assessment and geophysical survey (Wall 2008) and the Essex County Council Historic Environment Record (EHER) ([www.unlockingessex.essexcc.gov.uk](http://www.unlockingessex.essexcc.gov.uk)).

Prehistoric activity within the vicinity of the site is suggested by the presence of cropmarks of a ring-ditch and pits c. 150m north-west of the development site, and the discovery at Lodge Farm in the mid 19th century of a small Bronze Age axe made from poor-quality gold (EHER 2596 and 2482). The ring-ditch is probably a prehistoric round-house or a Late Neolithic or Bronze Age barrow. Further cropmarks imply that the development site is crossed by former ditches (EHER 17556 and Fig. 2).

The results of the geophysical survey suggest that the first phase of the tree-planting area contains numerous linear features and a possible ring-ditch (Fig. 3). The linear features are fairly irregular and are reminiscent of small enclosures. One of the enclosures is trapezoidal and is speculated to be of Iron Age date. The cropmarks and the results of the geophysical survey show little correlation, and this questions their reliability.

The former use of the area as a deer park is recorded in the local place names 'The Chase' and 'Lodge Farm' and by a reference in a deed of 1464 to the site as *Elmstede Park*. A plan of the area produced in 1655 records it as an agricultural estate with a mixture of pasture and arable fields and suggests that the disemparkment of the park predates the mid 17th century. The plan records a mill pond and water mill on the Tenpenny Brook, immediately north of Bromley Road.

### **3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

The objective of the trial-trenching was to investigate a representative sample of the cropmark and geophysical features. This included the putative ring-ditch and the conjectured Iron Age trapezoidal enclosure.

### **4. METHOD**

The trial-trenching was undertaken in accordance with the Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* and the Association of Local Government Officers' *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England* (IFA 1999; Gurney 2003). The ECC FAU is a registered archaeological organisation with the Institute of Field Archaeologists. The ECC FAU uses its own recording system to record all archaeological deposits and features (ECC FAU 2006).

The development area was sampled by ten 1.8m-wide trenches (Fig. 1, A to J). The archaeological horizon in each trench was revealed by using a tracked excavator equipped with a broad toothless bucket, working under archaeological supervision. The location of each trench was established beforehand by using a directional GPS with on-board map-based software. The error margin of the GPS varies, but is always less than 0.2m. The dimensions and co-ordinates of each trench are listed in Appendix 1.

## **5. TRIAL-TRENCHING RESULTS**

Archaeological remains were discovered in trenches F, G and H. There were no archaeological remains in trenches A to E and trenches I and J. The archaeological remains are summarised below. Further details can be found in Appendix 2. Ploughing had truncated all of the features by c. 0.3m. The water table occurred c. 0.6m beneath the surface of the topsoil.

Ditches were present in trenches F, G and H: two in F (4 and 6/8), one in G (12) and two in H (1 and 15) (Figs 4 and 5). The other trenches contained no identifiable archaeological remains. Four of the ditches ran perpendicular to each other (1, 4, 6/8 and 12) and two were represented by terminals (6/8 and 15). Some of the ditches broadly corresponded with some of the linear features detected by the geophysical survey. Unfortunately, there was no trace of the putative ring-ditch in trench E.

It is surmised that the fills in ditches 1 and 12 were not very old (*i.e.* post-medieval or modern), because they were distinctively dark and humic, similar to topsoil.

The trial-trenching found no finds apart from a small sherd of medieval pottery lying on the surface of ditch 1. During the trenching it was noted that the surface of the topsoil was covered in all areas by a thin scattering of burnt (*i.e.* fire-cracked) flint. No underlying features were identified and no attempt was made to locate or collect the material or identify possible concentrations.

## **6. FINDS**

A single small sherd of pottery dating to the 13th to 16th century was recovered as a surface find from ditch 1 in trench H. There were no other finds, apart from the burnt flint previously mentioned. Further details on the pot sherd can be found in Appendix 3.



## 7. CONCLUSIONS

The trial-trenching has found five undated ditches and has noted that the first phase of the tree planting scheme is covered by a thin scatter of burnt flint. Although the total amount of archaeological remains found by the trenching is small and possibly indicates that the evaluated area has never been intensively developed or settled, firm conclusions are difficult to draw because of the low level of sampling.

The presence of the burnt flint and the cropmark ring-ditch to the north-west (EHER 2596), and the discovery of the Bronze Age gold axe at Lodge Farm in the mid 19th century (EHER 2482) suggest light use of the general area during prehistory for the siting of barrows and/or non-intensive settlement and farming (*i.e.* farmsteads). Although burnt flint is not intrinsically datable, it is often found in close association with prehistoric remains. The axe is a high status object and is surmised to be a grave good or votive deposit. Small enclosures belonging to one or more prehistoric farmsteads are possibly represented by ditches 4, 6/8 and 15 in trenches G and H and by some of the linear features recorded by the geophysical survey, although no firm evidence has been found to support this.

The small number of medieval or later remains accords with the former low-intensity use of the area as a deer park and an agricultural estate. Ditches 1 and 12 in trenches H and G have recent-looking fills and are possibly the remains of post-medieval/modern field boundaries.

Difficulties in identifying individual features against the area's very varied, underlying natural geology probably account for the lack of concordance between the three different types of archaeological fieldwork: cropmarks, trial-trenching and geophysical survey. The trial-trenching has found no further evidence for the putative ring-ditch or the Iron Age trapezoidal enclosure. Nor has it found further evidence for the cropmark ditches which are thought to be present in the area of trenches A and D. The ditches in trenches F, G and H possibly accord with some of the features identified by the geophysical survey, although this presupposes that the geophysical survey area has been imprecisely located.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The work was carried out with the help and co-operation of the land owner Adrian Massink and Nick Sherriff of The Woodland Trust.

The fieldwork was carried out by Tony Blowers, Chris Down, Mark Germany, John Hewitt, Dave Smith and Adrian Turner. The project was managed by Adrian Scruby, and the surveying and illustration were undertaken by Andrew Lewsey. The medieval pot sherd was identified by Helen Walker and reported on by Joyce Compton. The project was monitored by Adrian Gascoyne of ECC HEM.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- |            |      |   |
|------------|------|---|
| ECC FAU    | 2006 | <i>Site Recording Manual (Version 2)</i>  |
| Gurney, D. | 2003 | <i>Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England</i> . East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Paper <b>14</b> |
| IFA        | 1999 | <i>Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Evaluations (Revised)</i> .<br>Institute of Field Archaeologists        |
| Wall, W.   | 2008 | <i>Land near Elmstead Market, Colchester, Essex: An Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment and Geophysical Survey</i> |

## APPENDIX 1: TRENCH DATA

The co-ordinates refer to each end of the longitudinal central axis. All trenches are 1.8m wide and 40m long.

Trench C, the one exception, is 1.8m wide and 20m long.

### TRENCH A

North	X = 606670.7	Y = 224686.7
South	X = 606665.3	Y = 224648.0

### TRENCH B

West	X = 606665.3	Y = 224648.0
East	X = 606704.0	Y = 224642.6

### TRENCH C

South-west	X = 606736.9	Y = 224667.3
North-east:	X = 606751.0	Y = 224681.5

### TRENCH D

West	X = 606749.9	Y = 224605.3
East	X = 606789.9	Y = 224605.0

### TRENCH E

South-west	X = 606938.5	Y = 224583.2
North-east	X = 606964.8	Y = 224613.4

### TRENCH F

South-east	X = 607087.9	Y = 224579.6
North-west	X = 607066.4	Y = 224612.3

### TRENCH G

South-west	X = 607066.4	Y = 224612.3
North-east	X = 607099.1	Y = 224633.8

### TRENCH H

South-west	X = 607081.9	Y = 224675.5
North-east	X = 607115.3	Y = 224695.8

### TRENCH I

North-west	X = 607115.3	Y = 224695.8
South-east	X = 607135.6	Y = 224662.4

### TRENCH J

West	X = 607160.6	Y = 224653.1
East	X = 607199.7	Y = 224661.5

## APPENDIX 2: CONTEXT DATA

All dimensions (length x width x depth) are in metres

No.	Trench	Description	Date
1	H	Ditch. 1 x 1.65 x 0.49. Stepped east side, moderately-sloping west side. Concave base. Filled by 2	Undated
2	H	Single fill of ditch 1. Brown friable silt sand with occasional gravel stones	Undated
3	H	Surface finds. Ditch 1	
4	F	Ditch. 1 x 1.65 x 0.39. Moderately-sloping north side, steeply-sloping south side. Flat base. Filled by 5, 10 and 11	Undated
5	F	Primary fill of ditch 4. Pale grey friable clay sand silt with infrequent gravel stones and occasional flecks of charcoal	Undated
6	F	Ditch. 0.5 x 0.7 x 0.25. Moderately-sloping sides. Flat base. Filled by 7	Undated
7	F	Single fill of ditch 6. Pale greyish brown friable sand silt with infrequent gravel stones	Undated
8	F	Ditch. 0.9 x 0.83 x 0.18. Moderately-sloping sides. Flat base. Filled by 9	Undated
9	F	Single fill of ditch 8. Pale greyish brown friable sand silt with infrequent gravel stones	Undated
10	F	Secondary fill of ditch 4. Greyish brown friable sand silt with infrequent gravel stones and occasional flecks of charcoal	Undated
11	F	Top fill of ditch 4. Pale grey friable sand silt with occasional gravel stones and flecks of charcoal	Undated
12	G	Ditch. 1.5 x 2 x 0.42. Stepped east side, moderately-sloping west side. Flat base. Filled by 13 and 14	Undated
13	G	Top fill of ditch 12. Dark brown friable silt sand with occasional gravel stones	Undated
14	G	Primary fill of ditch 12. Grey friable sand silt with frequent gravel stones	Undated
15	H	Ditch terminal. 0.5 x 0.84 x 0.11. Gradual sides. Flat base. Filled by 16	Undated
16	H	Single fill of ditch 15. Pale brown friable sand silt with infrequent gravel stones	Undated

### APPENDIX 3: FINDS DATA

Context	Feature	Count	Weight	Description	Date
3	1	1	2	Pottery; very abraded body sherd of Sandy Orange Ware, probably Colchester-type Ware (Discarded)	13th to 16th C

### APPENDIX 4: CONTENTS OF ARCHIVE

The following are contained in one A4 folder:

- 1 Copy of this report
- 1 Context register
- 16 Context sheets
- 1 Section register
- 1 Plan register
- 9 Trench registers
- 1 Finds note
- 1 Sheet of trench co-ordinates
- 5 Black and white prints and negatives
- 1 Computer disc containing one photo register and twenty-one digital photos

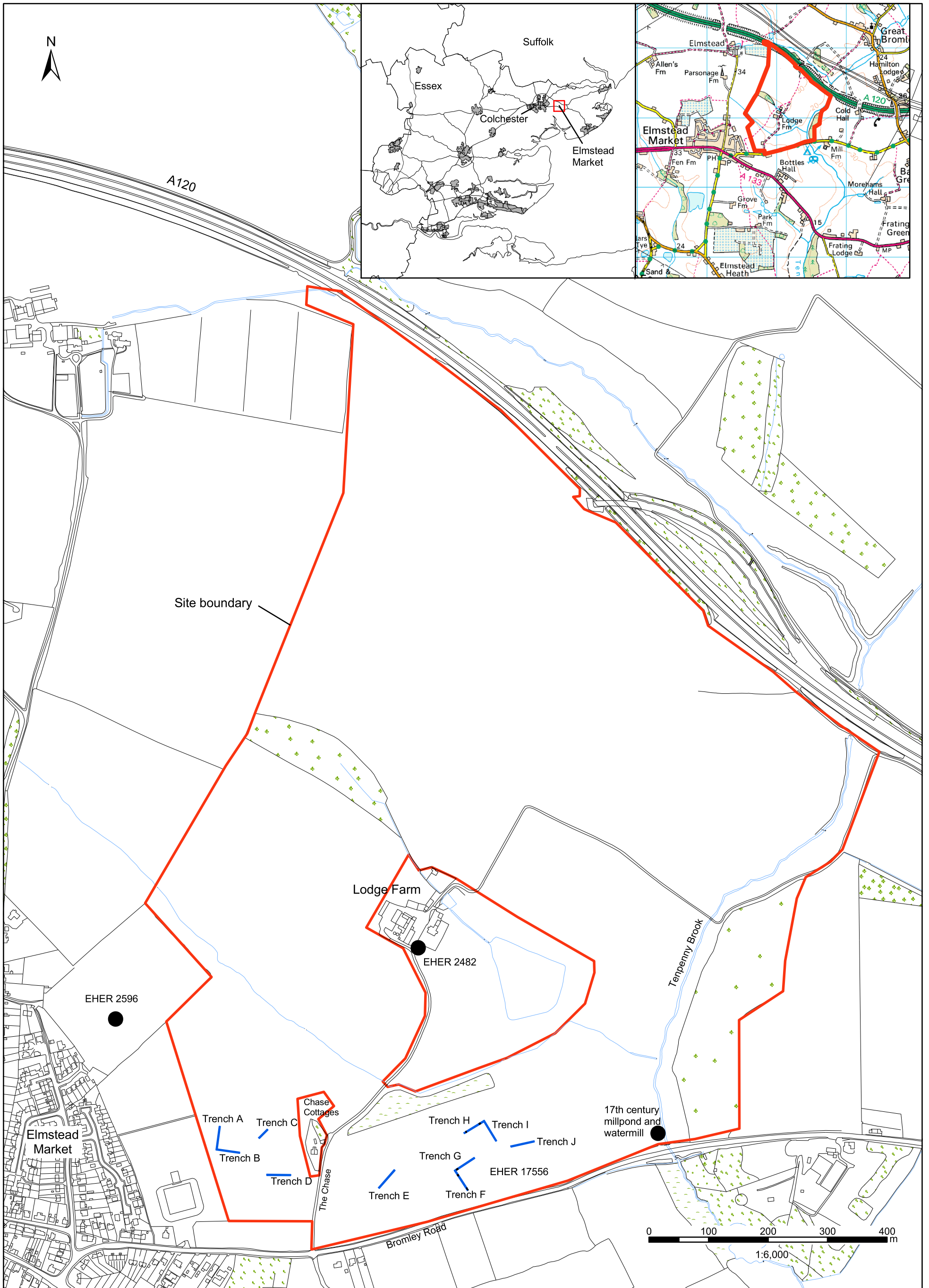
The following are held separately from the A4 folder:

- 1 Large sheet of section drawings
- 1 Large sheet of feature plans

No finds have been retained.

## APPENDIX 5: ESSEX HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT RECORD

<b>Site name/Address:</b> The Chase, Bromley Road, Elmstead Market	
<b>Parish:</b> Elmstead	<b>District:</b> Tendring
<b>NGR:</b> TM 606938 224583	<b>Site Code:</b> ESWT 08
<b>Type of Work:</b> Archaeological evaluation by trial-trenching	<b>Site Director/Group:</b> Mark Germany, Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit
<b>Date of Work:</b> 28/11/08 to 3/12/08	<b>Size of Area Investigated:</b> Ten trenches, totalling 684m <sup>2</sup>
<b>Location of Finds/Curating Museum:</b> Colchester	<b>Client:</b> The Woodland Trust and Essex County Council
<b>Further Seasons Anticipated?:</b> Yes	<b>Related EHR Nos.:</b> 2482, 2596, 17556
<b>Final Report:</b> Essex Archaeology and History (summary)	
<b>Periods represented:</b> Prehistoric Medieval Post-medieval	
<b>SUMMARY OF FIELDWORK RESULTS:</b>	
<p>An archaeological evaluation by trial-trenching was carried out in advance of a first phase of tree planting at The Chase, Elmstead Market, Essex. The trenching found five undatable ditches, a thin scatter of burnt flint and a small sherd of medieval pottery. The trenching was preceded by a desk-based assessment and a geophysical survey (Wall 2008). The archaeological work was recommended by the Essex County Council Historic Environment Management team and was commissioned by The Woodland Trust and Essex County Council.</p> <p>The dearth of archaeological remains found by the trenching is read as indicating that the evaluated area has never been intensively developed or settled. A low level of activity across the site during prehistory, however, is possibly implied by the presence of the burnt flint. Small enclosures belonging to a prehistoric farmstead are speculated to be represented by some of the ditches found by the trenching and by some of the linear features found by the geophysical survey. A dearth of medieval features and finds is thought to equate with the use of the area for a deer park and an agricultural estate during the medieval and post-medieval periods.</p>	
<b>Previous Summaries/Reports:-</b>	
Germany, M. 2009 <i>The Chase, Elmstead Market, Essex. Archaeological Evaluation by Trial-trenching.</i> Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit report number 2000	
Wall, W. 2008 <i>Land near Elmstead Market, Colchester, Essex: An Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment and Geophysical Survey.</i> Report produced for client by freelance archaeologist	
<b>Author of Summary:</b> Mark Germany	<b>Date of Summary:</b> January 2009



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Fig.1. Site location

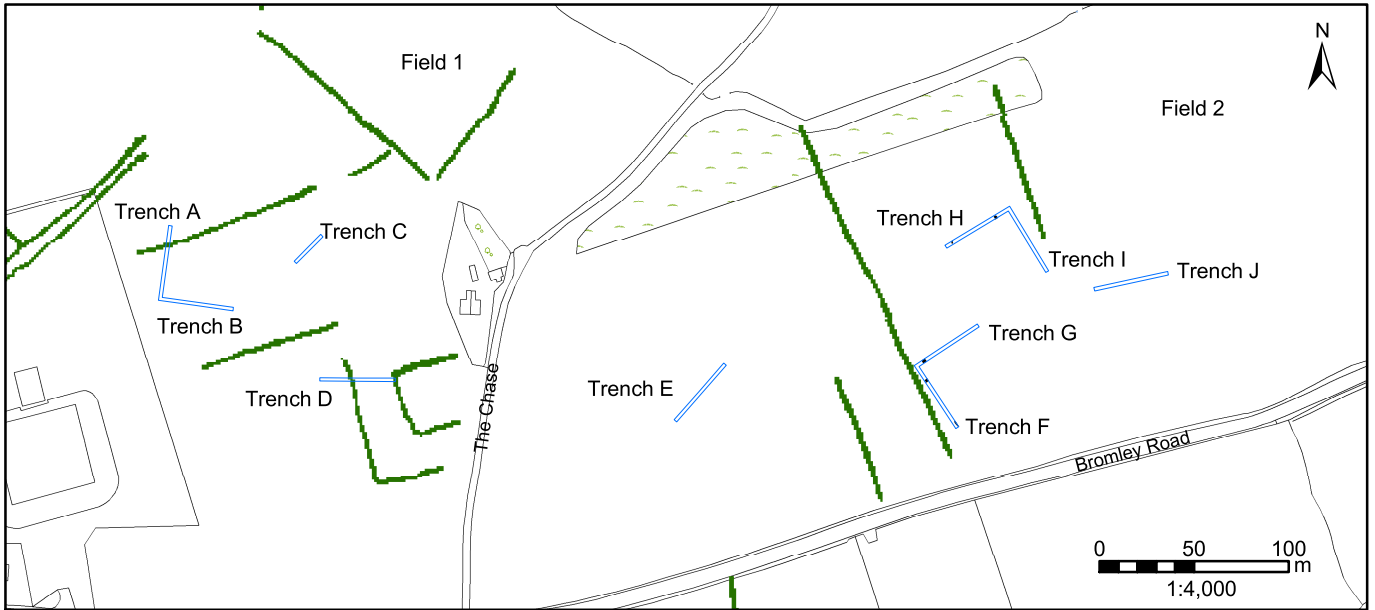


Fig.2. Evaluation trenches with cropmarks plotted from aerial photographs

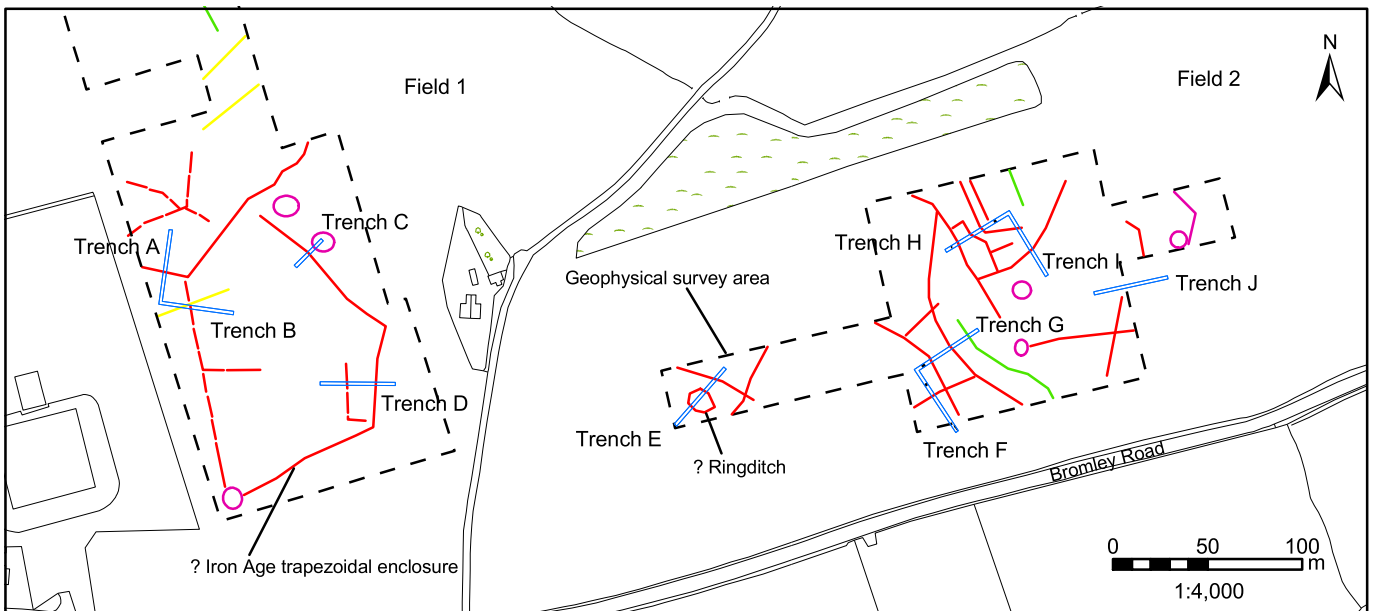
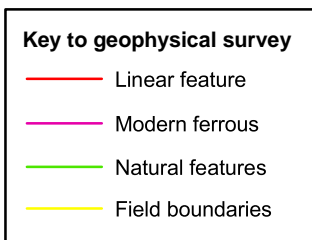


Fig.3. Evaluation trenches with geophysical survey





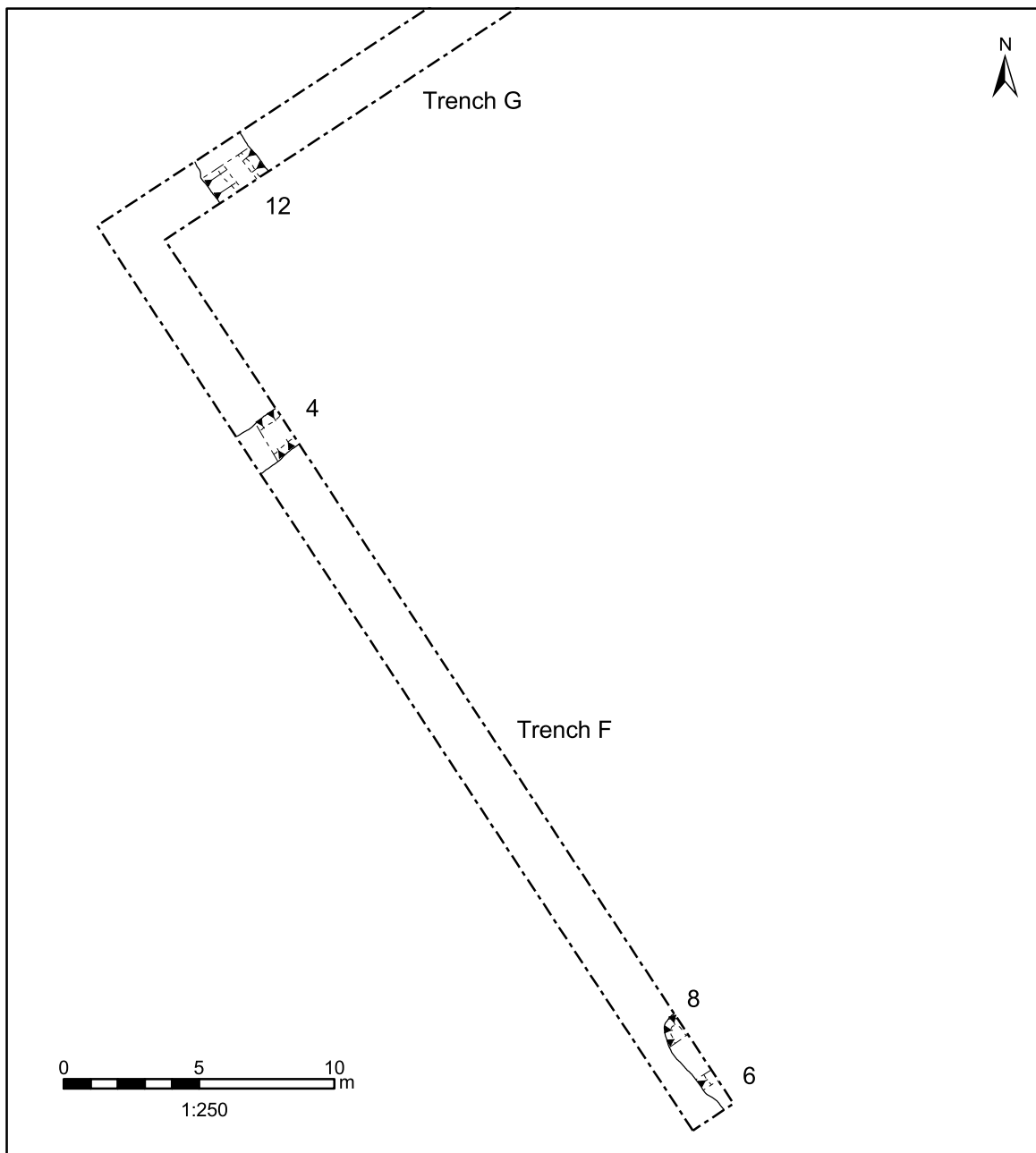


Fig.4. Trench F and G

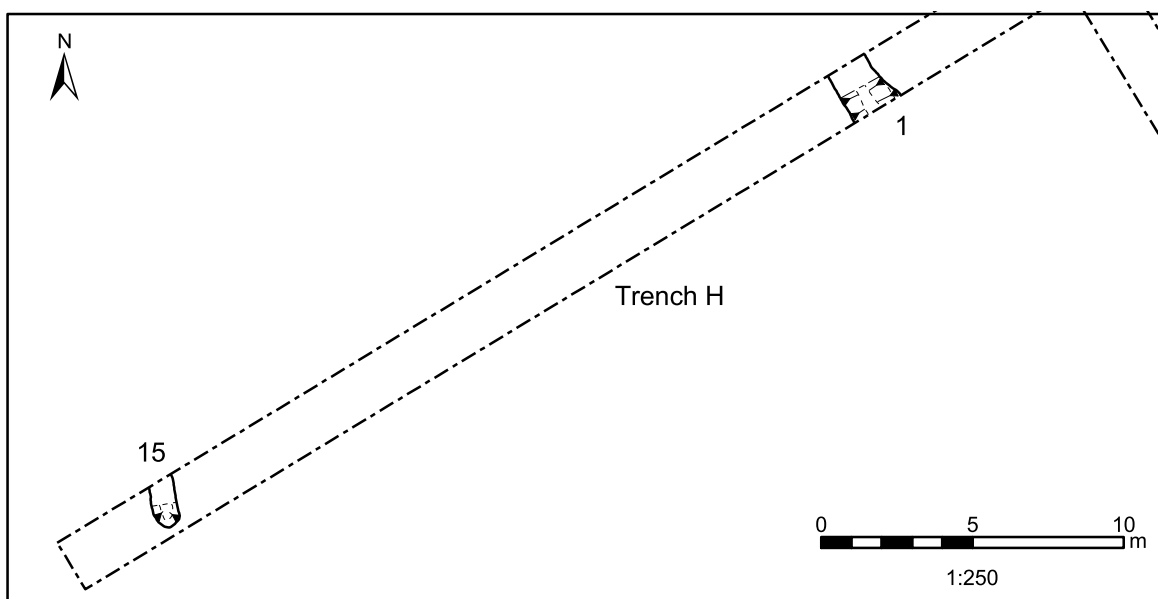


Fig.5. Trench H