

**81 LAINDON ROAD
BILLERICAY
ESSEX**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING



**Essex County Council
Field Archaeology Unit**

DECEMBER 2010

81 LAINDON ROAD

BILLERICAY

ESSEX

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING

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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

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81 LAINDON ROAD

BILLERICAY

ESSEX

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING

Client: Mr and Mrs Colfer

NGR: TQ 67469372

Site Code: BLLR 10

Planning Ref: 10/00470/FUL

Oasis No.: essexcou1- 81993

Date of Fieldwork: 18th – 20th August 2010

SUMMARY

Archaeological monitoring was carried out at 81 Laindon Road, Billericay during groundworks for an extension and new garage to the rear and side of the existing house. The footprint of the new building covered approximately 73 square metres.

Archaeological remains dating to the Roman period were identified that are believed to be part of the Roman settlement previously excavated beneath Billericay School. No features of earlier or later date were observed, other than disturbances of a clearly modern nature.

The Roman features consisted of a rubbish pit, a pebble surface probably forming part of a yard or track and an overlying layer. The recovered stratified pottery suggests that these broadly date to the 2nd or 3rd century, although un-stratified pottery indicates that activity may have continued into the 4th century. Finds from the pit included several large pieces of slag/clinker that indicate that metalworking was taking place in the vicinity.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This report describes the results of archaeological monitoring carried out on land at 81 Laindon Road, Billericay, Essex, during groundworks for the construction of a new house extension and garage. The archaeological work was undertaken by the Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit (ECC FAU) on behalf of Mr and Mrs Colfer.

As the site is located within an area of some archaeological potential, a condition was placed on planning consent (planning application ref: 10/00470/FUL) requiring that a programme of archaeological works be undertaken in advance of development, following advice given by the Essex County Council Historic Environment Management team (ECC HEM), based on guidance contained in Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment.

The investigation was carried out in accordance with an archaeological Design Brief issued by ECC HEM (2010) and a Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by the ECC FAU (2010).

Copies of this report will be supplied to Mr and Mrs Colfer, ECC HEM and the Essex Historic Environment Record. 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>). The site archive and copies of the report will be deposited at Southend Museum.

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 Topography and Geology (Fig. 1)

The development site comprises a residential property and garden at 81 Laindon Road, Billericay (TQ 67469372). The plot is located on the east side of Laindon Road and is bounded to north and south by other residential properties, and to the east by Billericay School. A conservatory adjoining the north-east corner of the building and a garage located to the south-east of the building were both removed prior to the commencement of the archaeological work.

The underlying surface geology consists of sand and gravel of the Stanmore Gravel Formation overlying Bagshot Formation sand at depth.

2.2 Archaeology and History (Fig. 1)

This archaeological and historical background is based on the Essex Historic Environment Record (EHER) held by Essex County Council at County Hall, Chelmsford and the Historic Towns Assessment Report for Billericay (Medlycott 1999).

Roman material has been recovered from an area of approximately eight hectares lying to the south of the modern town. Rescue excavations in advance of construction in and around Billericay School in the 1970s (EHER 5392-5403) revealed Late Iron Age and Roman settlement on both sides of a road that curved east-west, to the south of the school. Further settlement remains were excavated prior to the construction of a new extension to the school in 1987 (EHER 16074-5). The settlement probably originated as a ditched enclosure of Late Iron Age date and grew into a village in the Roman period. It appears to have been centred on the point where the east-west road crosses a ridge, and there is some suggestion that there was a second route-way which ran north-south, to the west of the school. Settlement evidence included features such as pits, post-holes, gullies, cobbled surfaces and gravel spreads, of which some may be indicators of former timber buildings. Both pottery kilns and corn-dryers have been found, providing some evidence for the local economy. In addition, there are antiquarian reports of two possible masonry structures, one with a cement floor and one with a hypocaust, to the north of the school (EHER 5406).

Cremation burials were found throughout the area, but the main cemetery focus appears to have been around the edges of the settlement, to the north-east and south. Those to the north-east at Windmill Hill are reported as being grouped in threes or fours, suggesting family groupings within the cemetery itself, one cemetery to the south may have been enclosed (EHER 5400, 5402, 5406).

While there has been a degree of disturbance to the archaeological deposits, due both to modern development in the area and to piecemeal 18th century gravel and brickearth extraction, excavation has however established that pockets of undisturbed archaeology survive, particularly in the area of the school playing-fields.

3.0 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

3.1 Aims

The general aim of the archaeological work was to identify and record any remains that were likely to be damaged or disturbed by groundworks associated with the development.

3.2 Objectives

More specific objectives of the investigation were to:

- Identify surviving evidence relating to the Roman settlement and the nature of that occupation.
- To define the longevity of the settlement.
- To examine the economy of the Roman settlement including industrial, domestic and commercial production.

In the event of significant discoveries research objectives would be identified/ reviewed in line with those laid out in *Research and Archaeology: a Framework for the Eastern Counties, 2. research agenda and strategy* (Brown and Glazebrook 2000).

4.0 METHOD (Fig. 1)

The new extension and garage was located on the south and east sides of the existing house. The footprint of the new building extended some 3.5m out from the sides of the house and measured 13m (north/south) by 11.5m (east/west), covering an approximate area of 73 square metres. Archaeological monitoring was undertaken on the machine excavation of the foundation trench around the edge of the footprint. This trench was 0.6m wide and generally about 1.5m deep when measured from the exterior ground level. Proposed ground reduction within the footprint was not observed as at c. 0.20m it was unlikely to disturb/reveal any archaeological remains.

Potential archaeological features were cleaned and hand excavated where practical. Standard ECC FAU excavation, artefact collection and recording methodologies were employed throughout. ECC FAU is a Registered Archaeological Organisation with the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) and all work was carried out in accordance with IfA by-laws and guidelines (IfA 1997; 2001) and complied with Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England (Gurney 2003).

5.0 FIELDWORK RESULTS (Figs 1 and 2)

A large pit and two deposits of probable Roman date were present within the foundation trench, along with areas of disturbance of more recent date. Detailed context information is presented in Appendix 1.

The overburden consisted of up 0.30m of root-disturbed dark greyish brown topsoil generally overlying 0.35m of sandy brown subsoil. Directly above pit 3 (see below) the subsoil was nearly twice as deep and included a lens of gravel. Surprisingly deep concrete foundations for the side walls of the removed conservatory were exposed and removed from the length of the northern east-west arm of the trench and again some 2m further south, where they crossed the north-south arm of the trench. Shallower concrete footings associated with the former garage were encountered in the south-east corner of the trench. Heavy root disturbance from the adjacent hedge was noted in the southern east-west arm of the trench. The underlying natural consisted of orange and orange-brown clayey sand.

Partly exposed in the north-east corner of the trench was a large pit (3) measuring in excess of 2.8m north-south by 1.7m east-west. The pit was over 0.45m deep and continued below the base of the trench (Plate 1). It contained two sandy clay silt fills (2 and 3) and produced six sherds of pottery of probable 2nd-3rd century date and eight fragments of slag/clinker. Located to the south and west of the pit was an extensive compacted pebble surface (Plates 2 & 3) composed of common small to medium pebbles in a matrix of dark brown clay (4). This surface varied in thickness from 0.05m in the north to a maximum of 0.14m in the south where it appeared to consist of two layers of pebbles.

Sealing the pebble surface was a layer of mid to light greyish brown sandy clay silt (5), up to 0.32m thick, which contained a further five sherds of Roman pottery of similar date to that from pit 3, fragments of tile and a concreted fragment of slag. The layer continued to the edge of pit 3 but the exact relationship between the two was uncertain. It is possible that the pit cut the layer but definition in the crucial part of the section was particularly poor due to the intrusive concrete above.

A few additional finds including a pottery rim sherd from a flask dating to the late 3rd or 4th century and a fragment of *tegula*, a type of Roman roof tile, were recovered un-stratified from the topsoil and spoil.

6.0 FINDS by Helen Walker

Finds were recovered from four 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 finds are described by category below.

6.1 Roman Pottery by Stephen Benfield

Only a small quantity of Roman pottery was recovered. In total this consists of fourteen sherds together weighing 221g. This was recovered from pit 3 (fills 1 and 2), a layer (5) and as unstratified sherds (US). The pottery has been quantified by number of sherds, weight and Eve (estimated vessel equivalence) for each pottery fabric type. The pottery fabrics and vessel forms recorded follow those of the Essex Roman fabric and vessel type series (Going 1987). The quantity by fabric and by context is tabulated in Appendix 2.

The pottery consists almost entirely of local or regionally produced coarse wares in reduced fabrics, together with one sherd of imported Central Gaulish samian (Fabric CGS). Although a range of differences in fabric can be seen among the coarse wares, most could only be classified either as sandy grey wares (Fabric 47) or as pieces in fabrics distinctive of large storage jars (Fabric 44). One sherd from pit 3 (1) is probably from the chamfered base edge of a Black-Burnished ware type bowl and has been classified as Fabric 41. Another unstratified sherd might possibly be a black surfaced ware produced by the Hadham potteries, but as this is not clear the sherd has been classified more generally as Fabric 47.

The most securely dated of the pottery is the sherd of Central Gaulish samian from pit 3 (1) which is of 2nd century date. The coarseware body sherds are more difficult to date closely. A probable Black Burnished ware sherd from the same context as the samian sherd almost certainly dates to after the early 2nd century and most probably is of 2nd-3rd century date. These suggest a date in or after the 2nd century for the fill of pit 3. A similar dating of 2nd century or later could be suggested for Layer 5. There is also an unstratified rim sherd which is from a narrow necked flask, probably of Form 40 which can be dated to the period of the late 3rd-4th century.

Overall, while some sparse, burnt black organic fragments were noted in some of the coarse ware fabrics none of the pottery can be clearly identified as Early Roman and it would seem that, based on the few diagnostic pieces, the Roman pottery probably dates to the period of the 2nd-4th century. The abrasion to some sherds and wear to surfaces noted (Appendix 2)

suggest that some of the sherds at least were not freshly broken when they became part of the contexts from which they were recovered.

6.2 Tile

A fragment of *tegula* (wt 154g), a type of Roman roof tile, was found unstratified. It is very abraded, but shows the remains of a cutaway and has a rounded flange (of type 1 according to ECC FAU's typology of *tegulae*). In addition several tiny fragments of ceramic which appear to be from a *tegula* were recovered from layer 5. .

6.3 Slag

A total of nine fragments of slag and clinker were excavated from the upper fill of pit 3 and from layer 5. Most pieces are iron rich (i.e. they are rust coloured) and indicating iron working was carried out here. This is more likely to be smithing rather than smelting as Essex is a county with little iron ore.

6.4 Comments on the assemblage

This modest assemblage shows there was Roman activity of 2nd to 4th century date in this part of Billericay with the presence of domestic pottery and iron slag potentially indicating an industrial site with probable occupation. All the finds have been retained and no further work is required.

7.0 DISCUSSION

Archaeological remains dating to the Roman period were identified that are believed to be part of the Roman settlement previously excavated beneath Billericay School. No features of Iron Age date were observed, nor any of post-Roman date, other than disturbances of a clearly modern nature.

The Roman features consisted of a rubbish pit, a pebble surface and an overlying layer. The recovered stratified pottery suggests that these broadly date to the 2nd or 3rd century, although un-stratified pottery indicates that activity may have continued into the 4th century. Finds from the pit included several large pieces of slag/clinker that indicate that metalworking, most likely smithing, was taking place in the vicinity. The pit was quite large and might have been originally excavated as a quarry before being subsequently backfilled with rubbish. The pebble surface was probably part of a track or yard, perhaps associated with a near-by dwelling or industrial building, while the overlying layer may have accumulated

as mud through use of the surface. Similar cobbled surfaces were recorded during the Billericay School excavations to the east of the site (e.g. EHER 5395).

8.0 ASSESSMENT OF RESULTS

The monitoring of the groundworks has successfully preserved by record a number of features that would otherwise have been destroyed by the development and has revealed that the Roman settlement previously excavated beneath Billericay School continues westwards at least as far as Laindon Road. The recovered pottery suggests that this part of the settlement was occupied roughly between the 2nd and 4th centuries AD. Whilst the pottery points towards domestic activities, the recovery of smithing slag indicates that craft activity was also taking place in the vicinity.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ECC FAU would like to thank Mr and Mrs Colfer for commissioning the work. The archaeological monitoring was undertaken by Trevor Ennis and Mark Germany of the ECC Field Archaeology Unit. Finds were analysed by Helen Walker and Stephen Benfield. The report was prepared by Trevor Ennis with illustrations by Andrew Lewsey. The project was managed by Adrian Scruby and monitored on behalf of the Local Planning Authority by Richard Havis of ECC HEM.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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- Gurney D. 2003 *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England*, E. Anglian Archaeol. Occ. Paper **14**
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- IfA 2001 *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Evaluation (revised)*. Institute for Archaeologists
- Medlycott M. 1999 *Historic Town Assessment Report for Billericay*. ECC

APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT DATA

All dimensions given in metres

Context	Type	Description	Period
1	Fill of 3 (top)	Mid greyish brown sandy clay silt, some brown sand speckles. Occasional small-med. pebble inclusions. 0.20m deep	Roman
2	Fill of 3 (lower)	Light grey sandy clay silt. 0.25m+ deep	Roman
3	Pit	Large feature, partly exposed in corner of trench, not bottomed. 2.8m+ (N-S) x 1.7m+ (E-W) x 0.45m+ deep.	Roman
4	Surface	Dark brown clay with common small-med. pebbles. 0.05-0.14m thick	Roman
5	Layer	Mid-light greyish brown sandy clay silt, occasional pebbles. 0.32m thick	Roman

APPENDIX 2: FINDS DATA

Roman pottery fabrics by context

All weights in grams

Context	Fabric	Sherd type	Form	No.	Wt(g)	Abr.	Comments	Date
1	CGS	b		1	2	*	small abraded sherd	2nd C
1	44	b		1	29			1st-2nd/3rd C
1	47	b		2	26			Rom
1	41	b		1	6	*	edge of chamfered base, soft BSW	2nd-3rdC
2	47	b		1	27		some burnt black organic matter, BSW	Rom
5	44	b		1	60	*	some burnt black organic matter	1st-2nd/3rdC?
5	47	b		1	8			Rom
5	47	ba		2	22	*	prob from a bowl	2ndC+
5	47	b		1	3		grey ware	Rom
U/S	47	ba		1	16		grey ware	Rom
U/S	47	r	G40	1	12		grey ware, rim dia 70mm	L3rd-4thC
U/S	47	b		1	10		poss Hadham BSW	2nd-4thC

The Roman pottery: quantity by fabric types

Fabric name	Fabric	No.	Wt(g)	Ev
Central Gaulish samian (Lezoux)	CGS	1	2	
Black-Burnished 2	41	1	6	
Storage jar fabrics	44	2	89	
Sandy grey wares	47	10	124	0.25
<i>Total</i>		<i>14</i>	<i>221</i>	<i>0.25</i>

Other finds

All weights in grams

Context	Feature	Count	Wt(g)	Description	Date
1	3	8	571	Slag and clinker, includes some large pieces of iron-rich slag	Rom
5	Layer	10	40	Small ceramic fragments, some joining probably from a <i>tegula</i>	Rom
		1	44	Slag/iron concretion	
U/S	-	1	154	Ceramic <i>tegula</i> fragment with cut out	Rom

APPENDIX 3: CONTENTS OF ARCHIVE

Site Name: 81 Laindon Road, Billericay

Site Code: BLLR 10

Index to Archive:

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Brief
- 1.2 Written Scheme of Investigation

2. Research Archive

- 2.1 Client Report
- 2.2 Finds Reports

3. Site Archive

- 3.1 Context Record Register
- 3.2 Context Records (1 to 5)
- 3.3 Plan Register
- 3.4 Section Register
- 3.5 1 x A4 plan sheet
- 3.6 Trench location plan
- 3.7 Photographic Register
- 3.8 Site Photographic Record (1 set of B/W and colour prints + 1 set of digital images on disk)
- 3.9 Miscellaneous notes/plans

Not in File

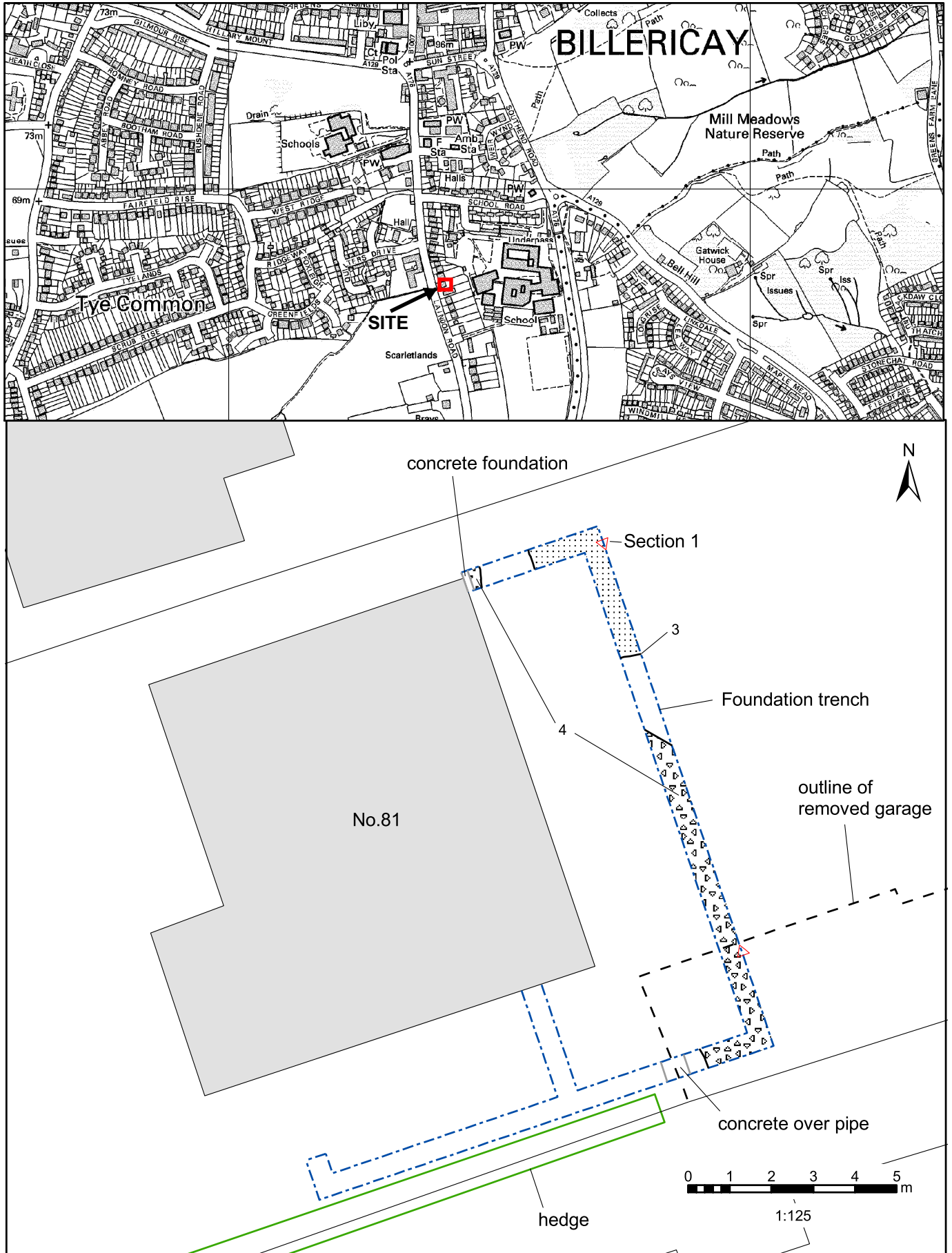
- 1 large section sheet

Finds

The retained finds occupy less than one box.

APPENDIX 4: ESSEX HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT RECORD SUMMARY SHEET

Site name/Address: 81 Laindon Road, Billericay, Essex	
Parishes: Billericay	District: Basildon
NGR: TQ 67469372	Site Code: BLLR 10
Type of Work: Archaeological Monitoring	Site Director/Group: T. Ennis, ECC Field Archaeology Unit
Dates of Work: 18th – 20th August 2010	Size of Area Investigated: c. 73 sq m
Location of Finds/Curating Museum: Southend	Funding source: Client
Further Seasons Anticipated?: No	Related HER Nos.: 5392-5403, 16074-5
Final Report: EAH summary	Oasis No.: essexcou1- 81993
Periods Represented: Roman	
SUMMARY OF FIELDWORK RESULTS:	
<p>Archaeological monitoring was carried out at 81 Laindon Road, Bilericay during groundworks for an extension and new garage to the rear and side of the existing house. The footprint of the new building covered approximately 73 square metres.</p> <p>Archaeological remains dating to the Roman period were identified that are believed to be part of the Roman settlement previously excavated beneath Billericay School. No features of earlier or later date were observed, other than disturbances of a clearly modern nature.</p> <p>The Roman features consisted of a rubbish pit, a pebble surface probably forming part of a yard or track and an overlying layer. The recovered stratified pottery suggests that these broadly date to the 2nd or 3rd century, although un-stratified pottery indicates that activity may have continued into the 4th century. Finds from the pit included several large pieces of slag/clinker that indicate that metalworking was taking place in the vicinity.</p>	
Previous Summaries/Reports: none	
Author of Summary: T. Ennis	Date of Summary: December 2010



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Fig.1. Location of area of archaeological monitoring

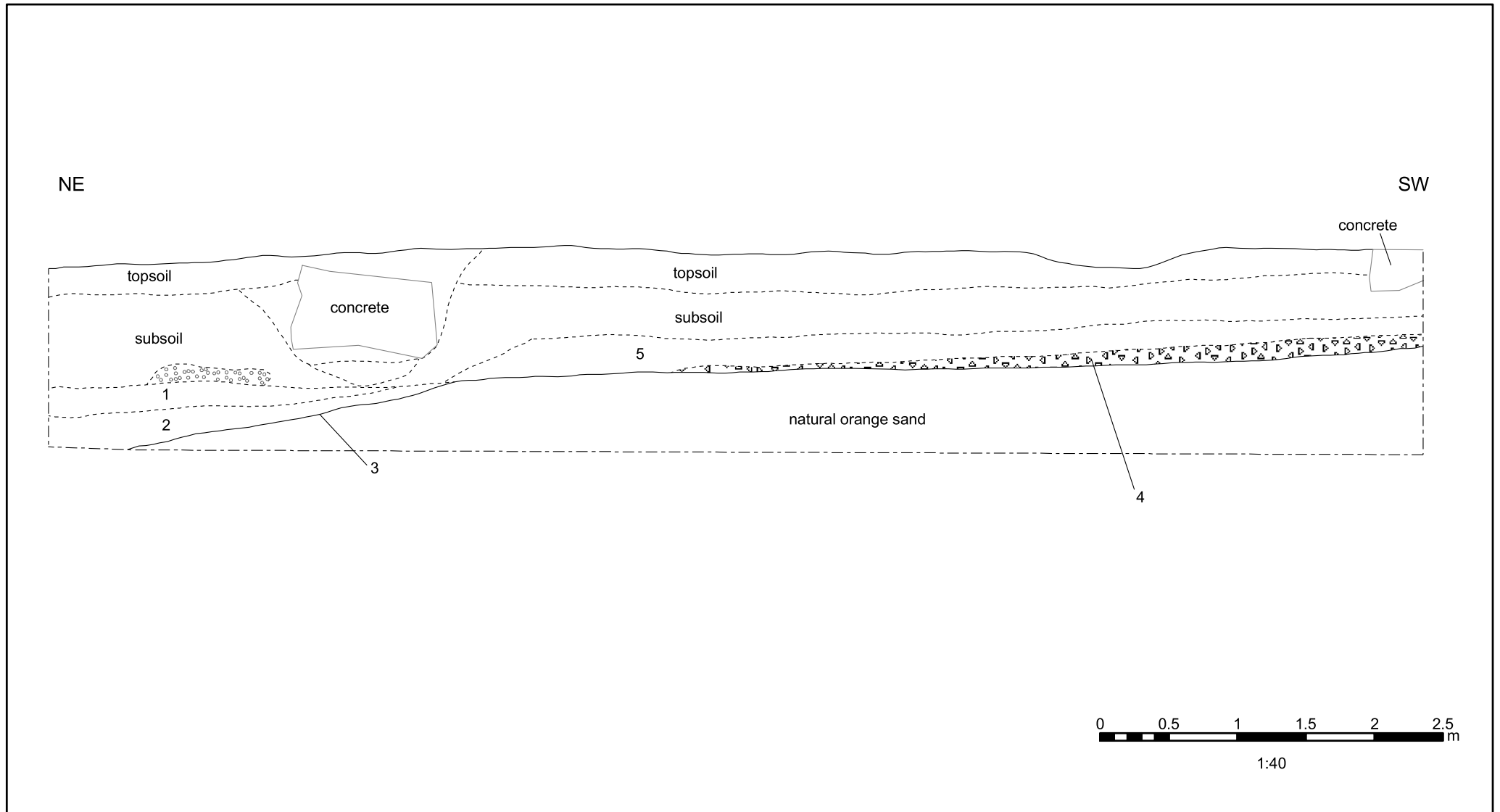


Fig.2. Section 1



Plate 1. Section 1 (north) showing pit 3 (1m scale)



Plate 2. Section 1 (centre) showing surface 4 (1m scale)

Plate 3. Surface 4 detail
(0.5m scale)

