

**HEYBRIDGE PRIMARY SCHOOL
ROWAN DRIVE
HEYBRIDGE
ESSEX**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION



**Essex County Council
Field Archaeology Unit**

NOVEMBER 2010

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HEYBRIDGE PRIMARY SCHOOL

ROWAN DRIVE

HEYBRIDGE

ESSEX

ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION

Client: Wernick Construction for Atkins Global on behalf of Heybridge Primary School

NGR: TL 86360 08450

Site Code: HYPs10

Planning Ref: MAL/00104/10

Oasis No.: essexcou1- 86150

Date of Fieldwork: 20th - 23rd September 2010

SUMMARY

Archaeological Investigation was carried out at Heybridge Primary School, Rowan Drive, Heybridge in advance of the construction of a new nursery unit. After the identification of archaeological remains in an initial evaluation trench a large part of the footprint of the new building was opened-up for area excavation on the recommendation of the ECC HEM monitoring officer. The area of excavation covered approximately 120 square metres.

No remains of early Prehistoric, Roman or Saxon date were identified. However, five Late Iron Age features were identified that probably date to the first half of the 1st century AD. The features comprised two adjacent east-west aligned boundary ditches, two shallow scoops and a pit containing re-deposited burnt material. A large quantity (2.6 kg) of pottery recovered from one of the ditches suggests the presence of domestic occupation, perhaps a farmstead, in the vicinity.

The position of the two ditches aligns almost exactly with linear cropmarks (EHER 16407) recorded to the immediate east of the site. Although some of the plotted cropmark ditches are inter-cutting and therefore likely to be of varying date, the investigation has shown that those closest to the site date to the Late Iron Age with the implication that others in the vicinity are probably contemporary and part of a widespread agricultural field system.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This report describes the results of an archaeological investigation carried out on land at Heybridge Primary School, Rowan Drive, Heybridge in advance of the construction of a new nursery unit. The archaeological work was undertaken by the Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit (ECC FAU) for Wernick Construction on behalf of Atkins Global acting for Heybridge Primary School.

As the site is located within an area of archaeological potential, a condition was placed on planning consent (planning application ref: MAL/00104/10) 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 PPS 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). The investigation commenced with the excavation of a 15m long evaluation trench down the centre of the proposed new building. Given the presence of a substantial ditch containing a considerable amount of un-abraded Late Iron Age pottery the ECC HEM monitoring officer requested that the trench should be widened out to encompass as much as possible of the footprint of the new building, to check for the presence of any further archaeological features. Revealed features were excavated and recorded.

Copies of this report will be supplied to Atkins Global, 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 Colchester Museum.

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 Topography and Geology (Fig. 1)

Heybridge Primary School is located outside of the historic core of Heybridge, on the edge of a modern housing estate and is surrounded by residential development on three sides, with sports pitches and open land to the east.

The new nursery site is located in the north of the school grounds, close to its fenced western boundary. The site was formerly occupied by a temporary classroom that was

demolished prior to the commencement of the archaeological investigation. Beneath the classroom was bare earth, with a tarmac play ground to the immediate north. The site was separated from the school grounds by a fence and hedge.

The school grounds are low-lying, at approximately 6m OD, and the underlying superficial geology consists of sand and gravel river terrace deposits associated with the rivers Chelmer and Blackwater, overlying London clay.

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.

Heybridge parish has a long and complex archaeological history with evidence of occupation from the prehistoric period onwards. There are extensive cropmark landscapes of prehistoric, Roman and Saxon date, comprising, fields, farmsteads, burial sites and trackways. Parts of this landscape were extensively excavated to the north and east of the site, at Slough House Farm and Chigborough Farm, in advance of gravel extraction in the 1980s (Wallis and Waughman 1998), while to the west of the proposed development, on the low-lying land on the western fringe of Heybridge at Elms Farm, was a small Roman town (Atkinson and Preston 1998). The proposed new building lies within the known extent of archaeological site EHER 16407, comprising cropmarks of field-boundaries and trackways of possible prehistoric or Roman date.

3.0 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

3.1 Aims

The initial aim of the archaeological evaluation was to determine the location, extent, date, character, condition and significance of any surviving remains within the development area and to provide information to determine the necessity for any further archaeological work, based on recommendations from the HEM monitoring officer. The aim of the subsequent area excavation was to further characterise the nature of the archaeological remains and to excavate and preserve by record those remains threatened by the development.

3.2 Objectives

A specific objective of the investigation was to establish the date and nature of the archaeological remains recorded as cropmark site EHER 16407. In the event of significant discoveries the report would also seek to identify appropriate research objectives, 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 initial evaluation trench was aligned north-east/south-west and measured 15m long by 1.6m wide and was up to 0.48m in depth. It was excavated under archaeological supervision by a machine fitted with a flat-bladed bucket. The subsequent area excavation was broadly rectangular in plan, measuring 8m by 15m at its widest point, and covered approximately 120 square metres. As much as possible of the new building footprint was exposed although some limitations were imposed by spoil-tip logistics and the presence of a thick concrete slab along the western side of the site.

Potential archaeological features were cleaned and hand excavated. 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 2 and 3)

A number of archaeological features were present within the excavated area, along with areas of disturbance and deposits of more recent date. Detailed context information is presented in Appendix 1.

The removed overburden was up to 0.50m deep. In the northern two thirds of the site was a tarmac and matting playground surface that overlay 0.25m of mixed brick and concrete hardcore with 0.20m of disturbed greyish brown silty clay subsoil below. In the south of the site, beneath the demolished temporary building, 0.14m of topsoil overlay a similar depth of brown gravel with further disturbed subsoil below. The disturbed subsoil contained modern inclusions and in places had been stained grey. Several patches of grey staining and modern

disturbance (containing plastic, slate, roofing felt etc.) were noted within the base of the excavation area, while two clearly modern linear disturbances might be evidence of wheel rutting. In the centre of the excavation area was a gravel-filled pipe run and a rectangular soakaway associated with the former temporary building. The underlying natural consisted of patchy deposits of orange-brown clay silt overlaying mixed brown gravel.

In the south of the excavation area were two broadly parallel, east/west aligned ditches (contexts 4 and 9 - Plate 1). Ditch 4 was the better defined of the two and measured 2.2m wide by 0.53m deep (Fig. 3, Section 1, Plate 2). It contained three fills (1, 2 and 3) that together produced over 2.6 kg of Late Iron Age pottery along with a few fragments of briquetage and baked clay. Ditch 9 was 1.95m wide by 0.49m deep (Fig. 3, Section 2, Plate 3) and contained two sandy clay fills (7 and 8). In contrast to ditch 4, the finds from ditch 9 were minimal consisting solely of a small sherd of Late Iron Age pottery.

To the north of the ditches was a sub-circular pit (15), 1m long by 0.20m deep, with gently sloping sides and a concave profile (Fig. 3, Section 3). It was filled with dark reddish brown silty clay containing common lumps of heat-reddened clay and flecks of charcoal (14 - Plate 4). Finds comprised eight sherds of Late Iron Age pottery and two burnt flints.

In the north-east corner of the excavation area were two shallow scoop-like features (11 and 13 - Fig. 3, Section 4) both continuing east beyond the limit of excavation. Feature 11 was over 2.4m long by 1.16m wide and was the better defined of the two. Its dark reddish brown sandy clay fill (10) contained seven sherds of Late Iron Age pottery. Adjacent feature 13 was more irregular in plan with an 0.08m deep rounded protrusion to the west. Its fill was similar in colour and consistency and contained a further two sherds of Late Iron Age pottery.

In the north-west corner of the trench was a poorly-defined feature (6) initially visible as a linear damp patch. A section was excavated through the apparent position of the feature but there appeared little difference between the fill (5) of the feature and the surrounding natural. However, two sherds of residual Late Iron Age pottery were recovered along with a fragment of later tile. The position of the linear damp patch coincided with the edge of the tarmac as well as that of the (removed) northern boundary hedge. Whilst it's possible that the feature is a poorly-defined elongated pit it could just as easily be a result of root disturbance and/or water run-off from the play ground. Excavation of an exploratory sondage further east found only natural clay and gravel.

6.0 FINDS

Finds were recovered from a total of eight contexts. All of the finds have 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 Pottery

A total of 153 sherds of pottery, weighing 2817g, were collected from the excavated features. All of the pottery is coarse ware of grog-tempered fabric and of Late Iron Age date. The vast majority (133 sherds, 2680g) was retrieved from the fills of ditch 4. The assemblage comprises rims, body sherds and bases of a range of vessels dominated by large jars but also including carinated bowl and smaller bead-rimmed jar fragments. Surfaces are degraded, but simple cordoned decoration is evident on a small number of sherds. There are also a number of pierced sherds present, mostly bases but some body fragments too.

The other investigated features (?pit 6, ditch 9, scoops 11 and 13, pit 15) yielded only very small quantities of pottery, comprising small featureless body sherds only, that are consistent in date and character with that from ditch 4.

6.2 Briquetage

Very small quantities of briquetage (4 sherds, 24g) were retrieved from the two upper fills of ditch 4. This distinctive vegetable-tempered baked clay material is associated with salt-making sites, generally being used to form evaporation tanks and related items such as pedestal supports and fire bars, and commonly occurs on late Iron Age sites at Heybridge due to its close proximity to the estuary and salt marsh where the salterns were located. The collected fragments bear no surviving surfaces or features.

6.3 Baked clay

Five small fragments (87g) of baked or burnt clay were collected from the bottom fill of ditch 4. While one fragment is blackened and the rest burnt red, all are non-descript and have no surviving surfaces or features from which to infer their nature.

6.4 Tile

A single fragment of tile (42g) was retrieved from the fill of tentatively-identified pit 6. Being of Roman, or possibly later, date its presence in this possible non-feature is not particularly significant.

6.5 Burnt flints

Two small fragments of unworked and burnt flint were collected from the fill of pit 15. Both are reddened and crazed due to heat. Charcoal flecks and burnt clay fragments were also noted to be present in the fill but were not retrieved.

6.6 Comments on the assemblage

The finds collected, comprising pottery, briquetage, baked clay and burnt flint, are typical for a late Iron Age site in the Heybridge area. The restricted range of artefact types and the lack of imported material probably reflect the distance of the site from the focus of settlement and consumption at the head of the Blackwater estuary, further southwest. Mostly deriving from ditch 4, the pottery is all Late Iron Age date and probably dates to the first half of the 1st century AD. Only the presence of a possible tile fragment in the fill of tentatively-identified pit 6 is potentially later.

7.0 DISCUSSION

Nearly all of the excavated features dated to the Late Iron Age. The only exception being poorly defined feature 6, which contained two residual sherds of Late Iron Age pottery and a fragment of later tile that may also be residual. The ditches are most probably field boundaries as they appear to diverge to the east of the site on the EHER cropmark plot (Fig. 1). The nearness of the excavated ditches suggests that they may be of different phases with one replacing the other, perhaps during a period of re-organisation. This may also be borne out by the distinct variation in amounts of recovered pottery between the two ditches as it is reasonable to assume that adjacent ditches open at the same time would be likely to accumulate similar amounts of rubbish. The large quantity of pottery recovered from ditch 4 and the presence of burnt material deposited in pit 15 strongly suggest that there may be a farmstead in the vicinity.

Although there is cropmark and excavation evidence for widespread multi-period activity in the Heybridge area, no remains pre-dating or post-dating the Iron Age date were identified.

8.0 ASSESSMENT OF RESULTS

The archaeological investigation successfully recorded a number of features that would otherwise have been destroyed by the development. The position of the two excavated boundary ditches corresponds with that of the linear cropmarks (EHER 16407) recorded to the immediate east of the site. Although some of the plotted cropmark ditches are inter-cutting and therefore likely to be of varying date, the investigation has shown that those closest to the site date to the Late Iron Age with the implication that others in the vicinity are probably contemporary. The ditches appear to form part of a wide-spread agricultural field system surrounding the Late Iron Age and Roman settlement at Elms Farm, with the large quantities of pottery recovered suggesting that some form of settlement, possibly a farmstead lies very close by. Although the area investigated is relatively small, the results of the evaluation/excavation further add to the growing body of evidence for land use and settlement in the Heybridge area during the Iron Age and Roman period.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ECC FAU would like to thank Wernick Construction and Atkins Global for commissioning the work on behalf of Heybridge Primary School. The archaeological investigation was undertaken by Trevor Ennis and Preston Boyles of the ECC Field Archaeology Unit. Finds were analysed by Mark Atkinson and Helen Walker. 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 Maria Medlycott of ECC HEM.

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APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT DATA

All dimensions given in metres

Context	Type	Description	Period
1	Fill of 4	Dark brown-grey sandy clay. Top fill of ditch	LIA
2	Fill of 4	Dark brown-grey sandy silt. Middle fill of ditch	LIA
3	Fill of 4	Dark yellow-grey silty clay, pebbly. Bottom fill of ditch	LIA
4	Ditch	Linear. 8m+ long x 2.2m wide x 0.53m deep. E-W aligned	LIA
5	Fill of 6	Dark reddish brown sandy clay, similar to natural. Damp & rooty	?
6	?Pit	Elongated, irregular. ?4m long x 1.3m wide x 0.30m deep	?
7	Fill of 9	Light grey-brown sandy clay, pebbly. Top fill of ditch	LIA
8	Fill of 9	Light brown-grey sandy clay, pebbly. Bottom fill of ditch	LIA
9	Ditch	Linear. 8m+ long x 1.95m wide x 0.49m deep. E-W aligned	LIA
10	Fill of 11	Dark reddish brown sandy clay. Single fill of shallow ?scoop	LIA
11	?Scoop	2.4m+ long x 1.16m wide x 0.14m deep depression, E-W aligned	LIA
12	Fill of 13	Dark reddish brown sandy clay	LIA
13	?Scoop	2.5m+ long x 1.3m wide x 0.15m deep depression, E-W aligned	LIA
14	Fill of 15	Dark reddish-brown silty clay, charcoal flecks & burnt clay frags	LIA
15	Pit	Sub-circular. 1.0m x 0.88m x 0.2m deep	LIA

APPENDIX 2: FINDS DATA

All weights in grams

Context	Feature	Count	Weight (g)	Description	Date
001	4	50 1	990 11	Pottery; GROG rim, body & base sherds Briquetage	LIA
002	4	57 3	1200 13	Pottery; GROG rim, body & base sherds Briquetage	LIA
003	4	26 5	490 87	Pottery; GROG sherds Baked clay	LIA
005	6	2 1	33 42	Pottery; GROG sherds Tile fragment?	LIA R+
007	9	1	8	Pottery; GROG sherd	LIA
010	11	7	51	Pottery; GROG sherds	LIA
012	13	2	11	Pottery; GROG sherds	LIA
014	15	8 2	34 14	Pottery; GROG sherds Burnt flints; reddened & crazed (discarded)	LIA

APPENDIX 3: CONTENTS OF ARCHIVE

Site Name: Heybridge Primary School

Site Code: HYCP10

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 15)
- 3.3 Plan Register
- 3.4 Section Register
- 3.5 Trench location plan
- 3.6 Photographic Register
- 3.7 Site Photographic Record (1 set of B/W and colour prints + 1 set of digital images on disk)
- 3.8 Miscellaneous notes/plans

Not in File

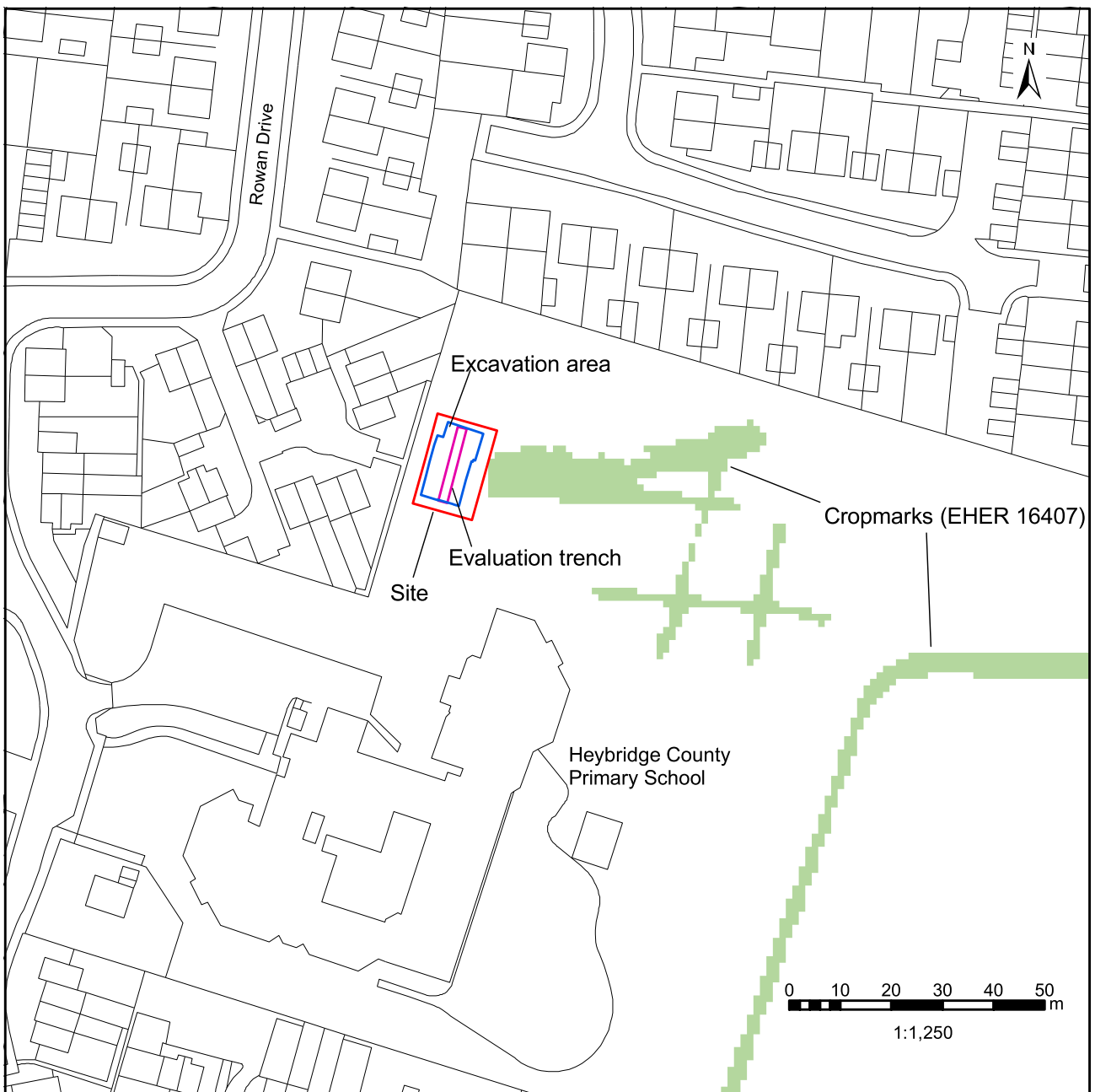
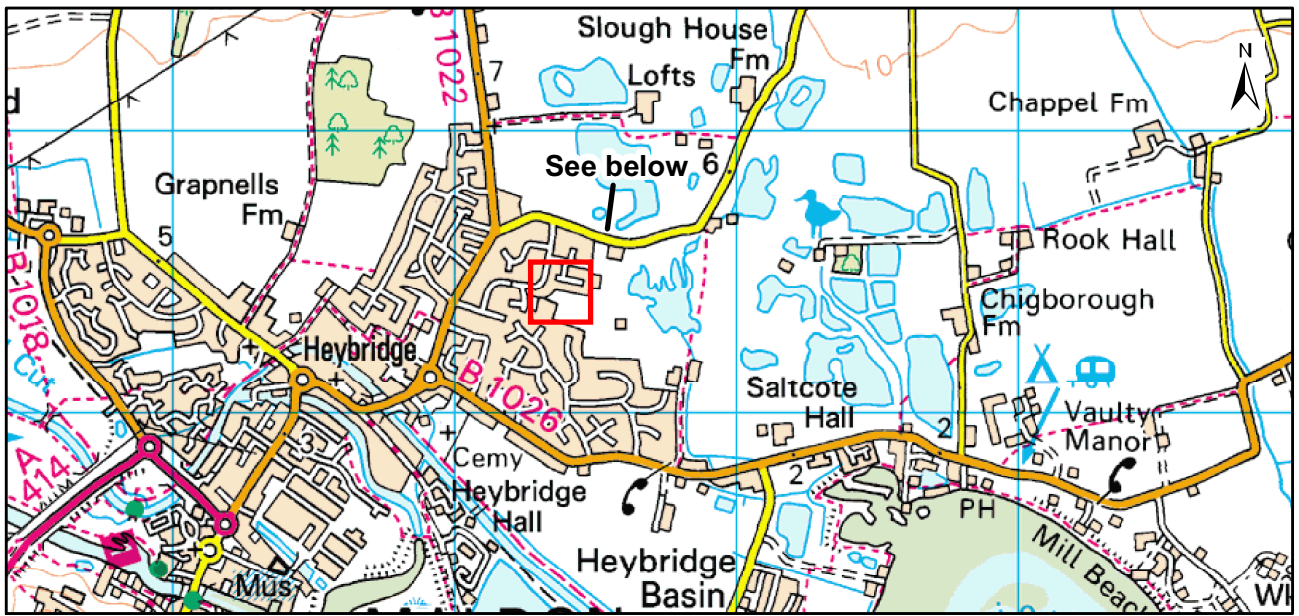
2 large plans and 1 large section sheet

Finds

The retained finds occupy one box.

APPENDIX 4: ESSEX HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT RECORD SUMMARY SHEET

Site name/Address: Heybridge Primary School, Rowan Drive, Heybridge, Essex	
Parishes: Heybridge	District: Maldon
NGR: TL 86360 08450	Site Code: HYCP 10
Type of Work: Archaeological Investigation	Site Director/Group: T. Ennis, ECC Field Archaeology Unit
Dates of Work: 20th - 23rd September 2010	Size of Area Investigated: c. 120 sq m
Location of Finds/Curating Museum: Colchester	Funding source: Client
Further Seasons Anticipated?: No	Related HER Nos.: 16407
Final Report: EAH summary	Oasis No.: essexcou1- 86150
Periods Represented: Late Iron Age	
<p>SUMMARY OF FIELDWORK RESULTS:</p> <p>Archaeological Investigation was carried out at Heybridge Primary School, Rowan Drive, Heybridge in advance of the construction of a new nursery unit. After the identification of archaeological remains in an initial evaluation trench a large part of the footprint of the new building was opened-up for area excavation on the recommendation of the ECC HEM monitoring officer. The area of excavation covered approximately 120 square metres.</p> <p>No remains of early Prehistoric, Roman or Saxon date were identified. However, five Late Iron Age features were identified that probably date to the first half of the 1st century AD. The features comprised two adjacent east-west aligned boundary ditches, two shallow scoops and a pit containing re-deposited burnt material. A large quantity (2.6 kg) of pottery recovered from one of the ditches suggests the presence of domestic occupation, perhaps a farmstead, in the vicinity.</p> <p>The position of the two ditches aligns almost exactly with linear cropmarks (EHER 16407) recorded to the immediate east of the site. Although some of the plotted cropmark ditches are inter-cutting and therefore likely to be of varying date, the investigation has shown that those closest to the site date to the Late Iron Age with the implication that others in the vicinity are probably contemporary and part of a widespread agricultural field system.</p>	
Previous Summaries/Reports: none	
Author of Summary: T. Ennis	Date of Summary: November 2010



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Fig.1. Location of archaeological field work

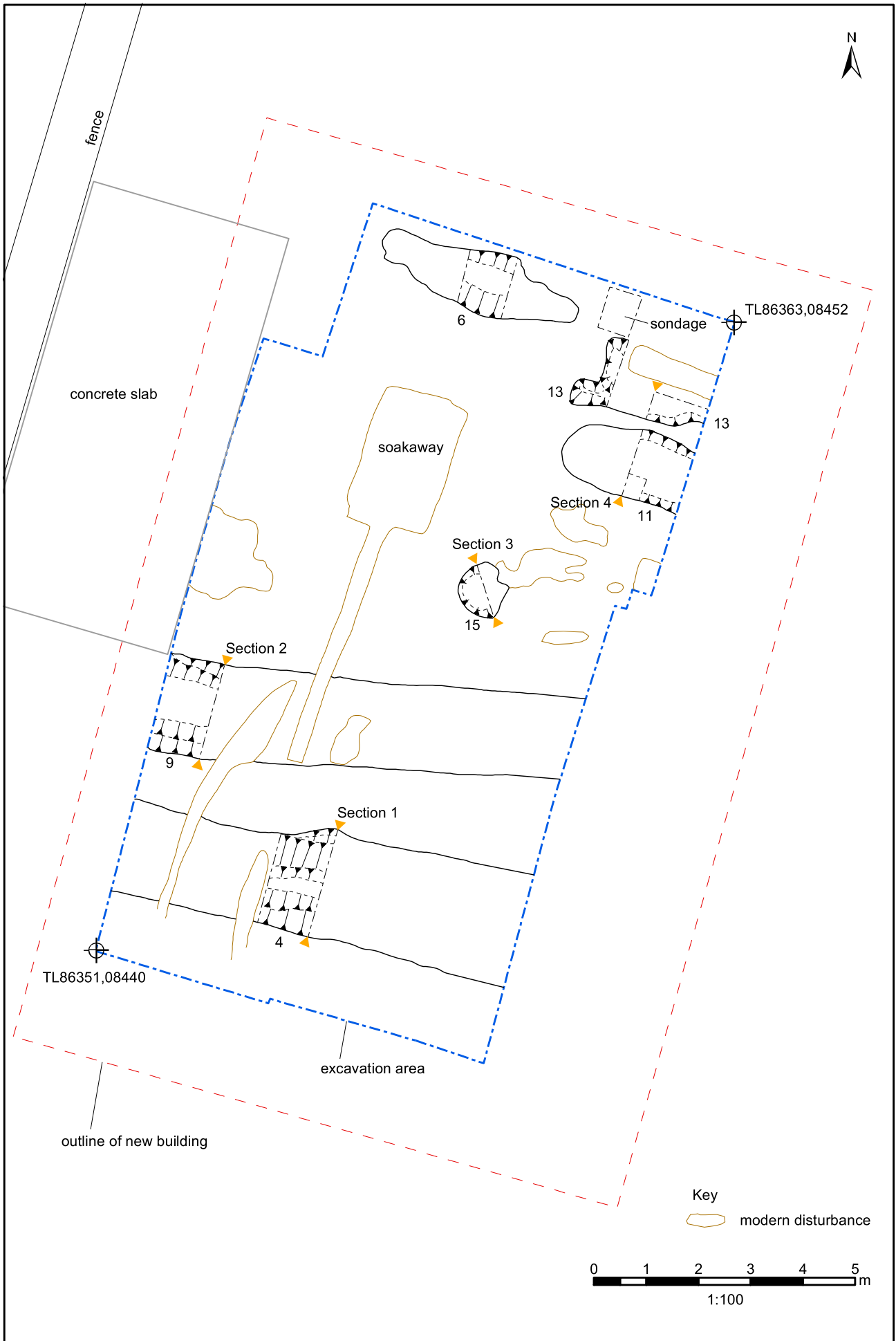
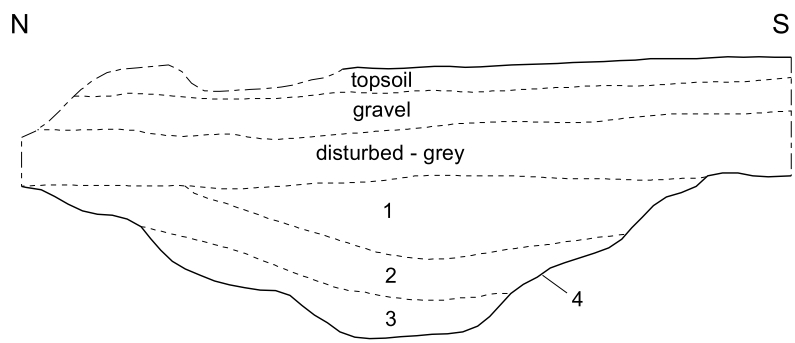
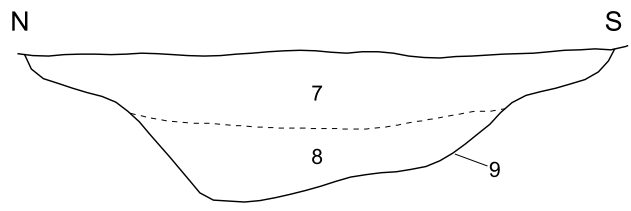


Fig.2. Plan of excavation area

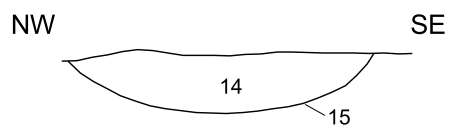
Section 1 (drawn at evaluation stage)



Section 2



Section 3



Section 4

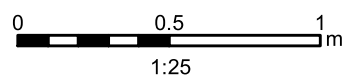
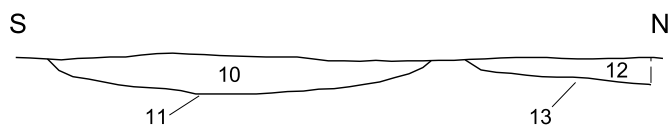


Fig.3. Sections 1 - 4



Plate 1. Ditches 4 and 9 looking east (1m scale)



Plate 2. Ditch 4 (1m scale)



Plate 3. Ditch 9 (1m scale)



Plate 4. Pit 15 (0.5m scale)