

Archaeological trial-trenching evaluation, Home Farm, Howbridge Hall Road, Witham, Essex

February 2015



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commissioned by the John Finch Partnership
on behalf of the Granville Group

CAT project ref: 14/12a
HER Event code: WHHF15
NGR: TL 81931316



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CAT Report 826
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Contents

1	Summary	1
2	Introduction	1
3	Archaeological background	1
4	Results	1
5	Finds	2
6	Discussion	2
7	Acknowledgements	2
8	References	2
9	Abbreviations and glossary	3
10	Contents of archive	3
11	Archive deposition	3

Figures after p 3

EHER summary sheet

List of plates, figures and tables

Cover plate: view of site

Fig 1: Site plan showing the location of trial-trenches in relation to the proposed development

Fig 2: Details of trenches and features

Fig 3: Sections

1 Summary

Archaeological trial-trenching carried out at Home Farm in advance of the construction of five dwellings and associated garages revealed ten post-medieval to modern pits and post-holes, none of which are of archaeological significance.

2 Introduction

This report presents the results of archaeological trial-trenching at Home Farm, Howbridge Hall Road, which was carried out in February 2015 (Figs 1, 2). The work was commissioned by the StephFinch Partnership in advance of the construction of five dwellings and associated garages, and was undertaken by Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT).

Essex CC Historic Environment Advisor Teresa O'Connor advised that the proposed site lay in an area of high archaeological importance, and that, in order to establish the archaeological implications of this application, the applicant should be required to commission a scheme of archaeological investigation in accordance with paragraphs 128, 129 and 132 of the *National Planning Policy Framework* (DCLG 2012).

All archaeological work was carried out in accordance with a *Brief for Archaeological Excavation* detailing the required archaeological work written by Teresa O'Connor (ECCPS 2014), and a written scheme of investigation (WSI) prepared by CAT in response to the ECC brief and agreed with ECCPS (CAT 2015).

In addition to the brief and WSI, all fieldwork and reporting was done in accordance with *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE)* (English Heritage 2006), and with *Standards for field archaeology in the East of England* (EAA 14 and 24). This report mirrors the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (ClfA 2014a) and *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (ClfA 2014b).

3 Archaeological background

The proposed development site was within an area of high archaeological importance. Recent investigations at the Maltings Lane residential development, immediately to the north and west of the proposed development, revealed highly significant multi-period deposits dating from the Bronze Age to medieval periods. Iron Age and early Roman activity comprised a large sub-circular enclosure, with possible barn and crop processing area. This enclosure (and surrounding field systems) was modified in the mid- to late-Roman period (EHER 18504). Activity in the early Saxon period consisted of six sunken-featured buildings, a rectangular post structure and various pits and post-holes. These features completely disregard the Iron Age/Roman activity, suggesting that by this point the previous field system had fallen out of use. Most of the Anglo-Saxon artifacts were associated with weaving and textile working (EHER 18505). Independent of the investigation at the Maltings Lane residential development, trial trenching immediately southwest of the proposed development site revealed a single Saxon inhumation.

In the 16th century, a medieval farmstead comprising house/byre, corn-drier, post-barn, animal pen and pond was replaced by the still extant Jacksons Farm, is situated c 100m to the east of the proposed development site (EHER 18506). The building now known as Home Farm can be seen for the first time on a 1920s OS Map. An evaluation at 2 Home Farm, immediately north of Home Farm, revealed no archaeological remains.

4 Results (Figs 2 and 3)

Five trial-trenches (T1 – T5) were excavated across the area of the proposed development. The topsoil which covered the site (L1) was a medium grey clayey-silt with very few inclusions. Some modern finds were present in the topsoil, but were not retained. Beneath L1, a light orange/grey soil interface (L2) overlaid the natural orange/cream silty-clay (L3). The same soil stratigraphy was observed in all five trenches. The only exception was the presence of an additional layer of modern soil/gravel/rubbish (L4), which had been deposited

on top of the topsoil in T3 and T4. Two sondages were excavated (one in T1 and one in T3) to confirm that the silty-clay identified as the natural geology was not a masking deposit.

Ten features were recorded. Seven were probable post-holes (F3 and F4 in T2, F7 to F10 in T3 and F1 in T5). Post-hole F3 contained a later prehistoric worked flint (an un-retouched flake) as well as small fragments of coal. F4 was shallow and could have been a small pit. Post-holes F7 to F10 were all very small and shallow and had a medium grey clayey-silt fill that was very similar to the topsoil (L1). T5 contained seven modern post-holes with dark grey fills (not individually numbered) and one sub-square posthole with a distinctly lighter fill (F1) (Figures 2 and 3). This post-hole also contained a fragment of coal and is also probably late post-med/mod in date.

Two small pits (F2 in T5 and F5 in T2) contained small mammal skeletons (not retained); both appeared to be infantile dogs, which were probably associated with occupation at Home Farm. One undated pit with a possible post-hole in the base (F6) was recorded in T2 (Figure 2). Two pits (not individually numbered) were identified in T4, both contained modern pottery and concrete.

It is thought that all ten of the features revealed by evaluation were late post-medieval/modern in date, and were associated with the agricultural activities of Home Farm.

5 Find

A residual prehistoric worked flint was recovered from post-hole F3 in trial trench 2.

6 Discussion (Figs 2 - 3)

Evaluation at Home Farm revealed ten features dating to the post-medieval/modern periods. None of these features are thought to be of archaeological significance.

7 Acknowledgements

CAT is grateful to the Stephen Finch Partnership for commissioning and funding this project. Site work was managed by Ben Holloway, and undertaken by B Holloway and A Wightman. Figures are by E Holloway. The project was monitored by Teresa O'Connor for ECCPS.

8 References

Note: all CAT reports, except for DBAs, are available online in PDF format at <http://cat.essex.ac.uk>

CAT	2015	Written Scheme of Investigation for an archaeological trial trenching and excavation at Home Farm, Howbridge Hall Road, Witham. By B Holloway, January 2015
CIfA	2014a	Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation
CIfA	2014b	Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials
DCLG	2012	National Planning Policy Framework. Dept of Communities and Local Government.
EAA 14	2003	Standards for field archaeology in the East of England, East Anglian Archaeology, Occasional Papers, 14. Ed. D Gurney
EAA 24	2011	Research and archaeology revisited: A revised framework for the East of England, East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Papers 24, by Maria Medlycott
ECCPS	2014	Brief for Archaeological Trial Trench and Excavation at Home Farm Howbridge Hall Farm, Witham
English Heritage	2006	Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (English Heritage)

9 Abbreviations and glossary

Anglo-Saxon	after Roman period and up to AD 1066
CAT	Colchester Archaeological Trust
context	specific location of finds on an archaeological site
feature (F)	an identifiable thing like a pit, a wall, a drain: can contain 'contexts'
IfA	Institute for Archaeologists
layer (L)	distinct or distinguishable deposit of soil
medieval	period from AD 1066 to Henry VIII
modern	period from c AD 1800 to the present
natural	geological deposit undisturbed by human activity
NGR	National Grid Reference
post-medieval	from Henry VIII to c AD1800
prehistoric	pre-Roman
Roman	the period from AD 43 to c AD410
ECCPS	Essex County Council Place Services
EHHER	Essex Historic Environment Record
WSI	Written Scheme of Investigation

10 Contents of archive

Paper and digital record

One A4 document wallet containing:

The report (CAT Report 825)

ECCPS Brief for Archaeological Trial Trench and Excavation

CAT Written Scheme of Investigation

Original site record (Feature and layer sheets, Finds record, Trench record sheet)

Attendance register: Benchmark data: Risk assessment

11 Archive deposition

The paper archive and finds are currently held by CAT at Roman Circus House, Roman Circus Walk, Colchester, Essex, but will be permanently deposited with Braintree Museum under project code WHHF15.

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Distribution list:

The John Finch Partnership

Teresa O'Connor, ECCPS

EHHER



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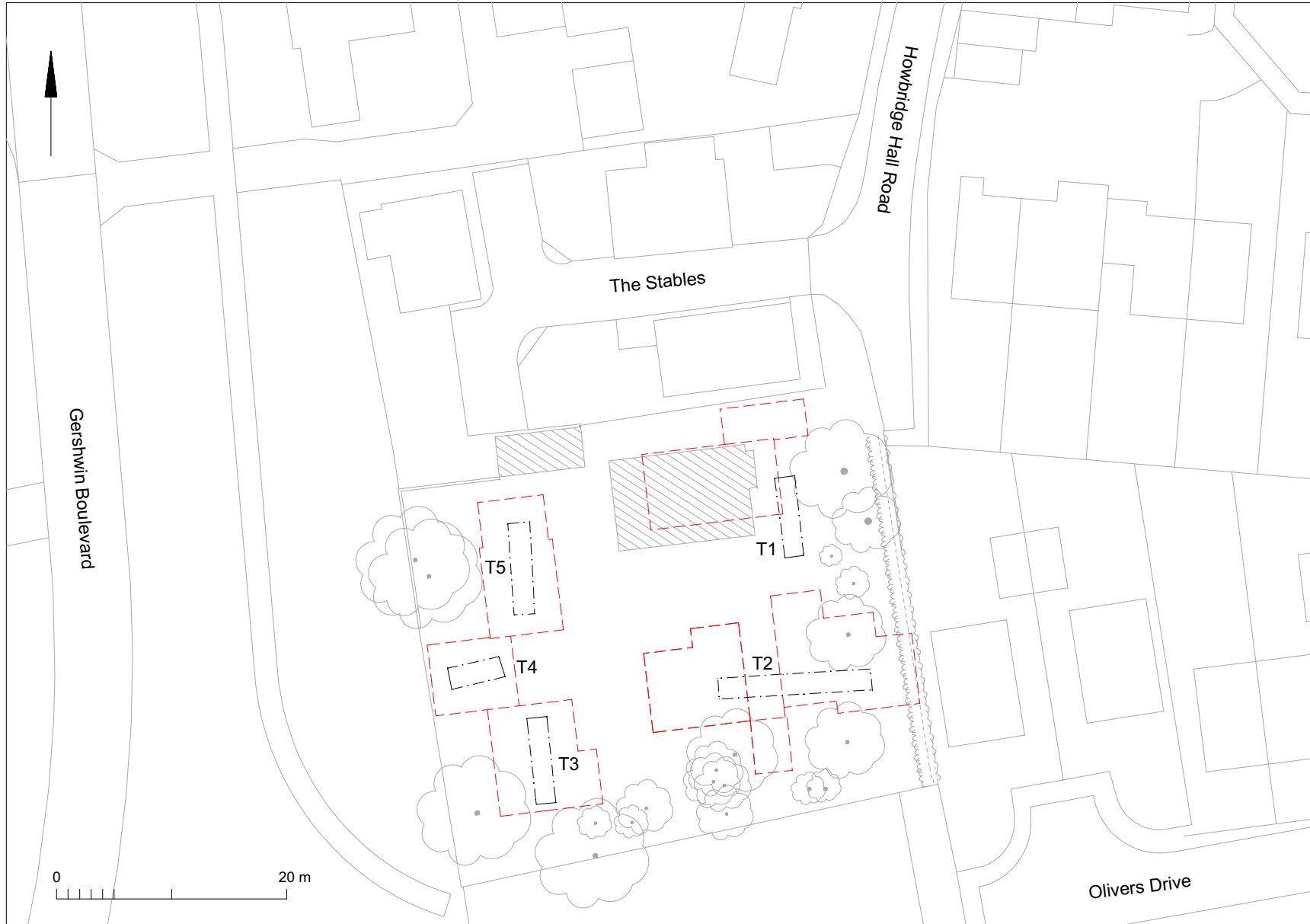
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checked by: Howard Brooks

date: 14/04/15



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Fig 1 Site plan showing the location of the trial-trenches in relation to the proposed development (shown as dashed red lines).

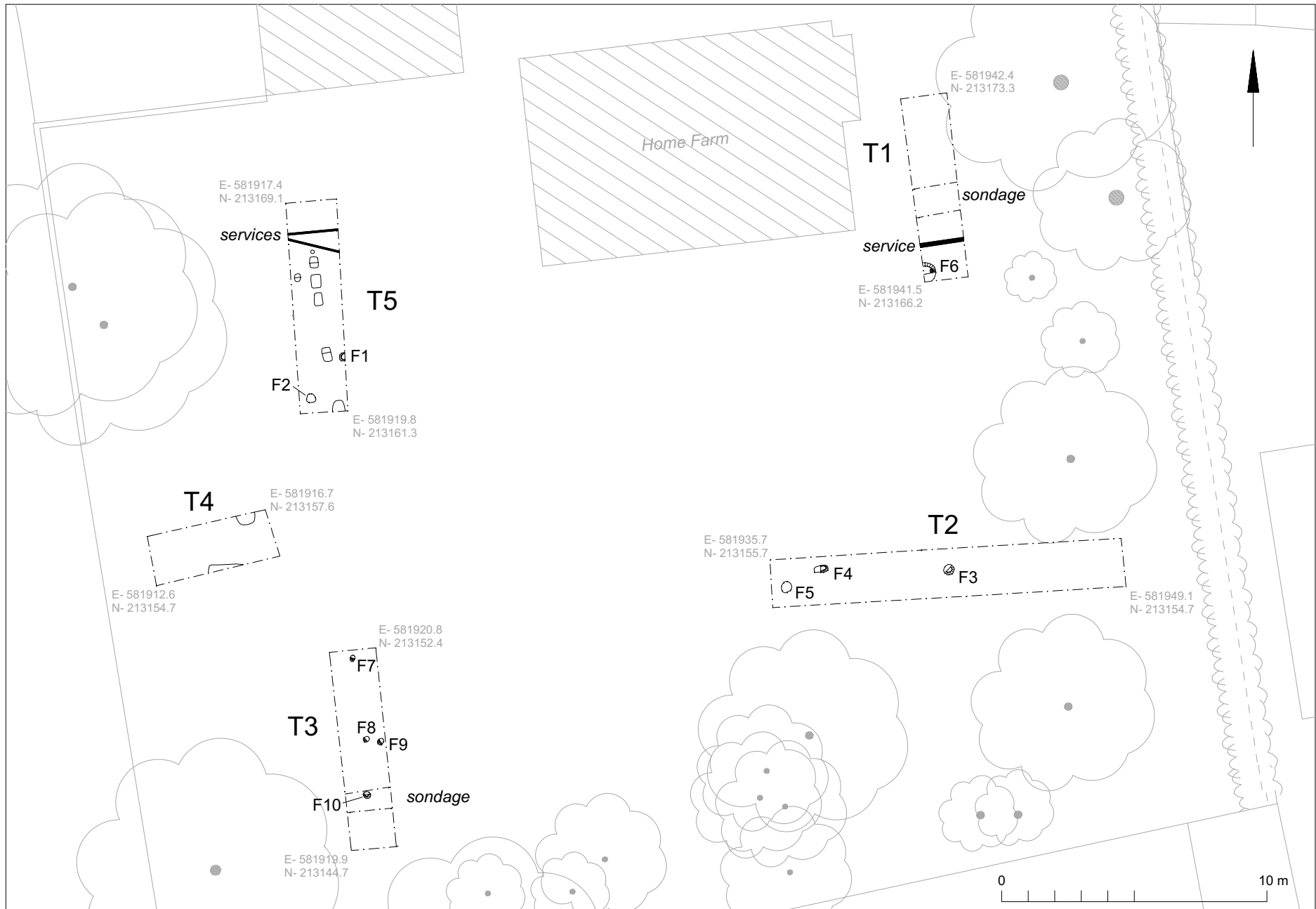


Fig 2 Details of trenches and features

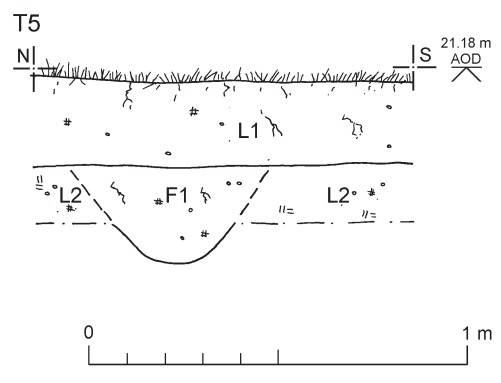
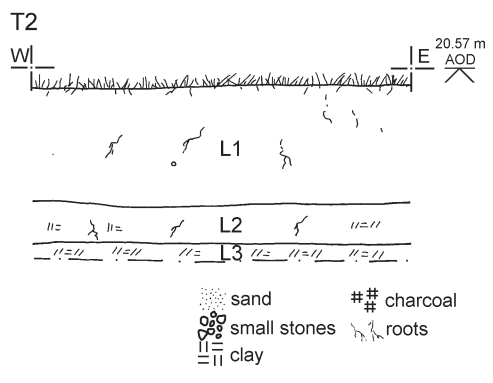


Fig 3 Sections.

Essex Historic Environment Record/ Essex Archaeology and History

Summary sheet

Address: Home Farm, Howbridge Hall Road, Witham, Essex	
Parish: Witham	District: Braintree
NGR: TL 8193 1316	Site code: CAT project code – 14/12a
Type of work: evaluation	Site director/group: Colchester Archaeological Trust
Date of work: 2nd February 2015	Size of area investigated: c 40 x 40m
Location of curating museum: Braintree Museum: WHHF15	Funding source: Developer
Further seasons anticipated? no	Related EHER numbers: 18504-6
Final report: CAT Report 826	
Periods represented: post-medieval and modern	
Summary of fieldwork results: <i>Archaeological trial-trenching carried out at Home Farm in advance of the construction of five dwellings and associated garages revealed ten post-medieval to modern pits and post-holes, none of which are of archaeological significance.</i>	
Previous summaries/reports: None	
ECC monitor: Teresa O'Connor	
Keywords:	Significance: neg
Author of summary: Howard Brooks	Date of summary: April 2015