

**An archaeological evaluation
at the site of the West Clacton
reservoir and pumping station,
Dead Lane, Great Bentley, Essex
November 2006**

**report prepared by
Howard Brooks and Ben Holloway**

**on behalf of
Tendring Hundred Water Services Ltd**

NGR: TM 117 186 (c)
CAT project ref.: 06/11a
Colchester Museums accession code: 2006.135



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1 Summary

An evaluation by thirteen trial-trenches revealed an area of prehistoric and Roman occupation dating from the Middle Iron Age to the Roman period (not necessarily continuously), which is probably marginal to cropmark sites to the east and west. Later, a field system defined by medieval and post-medieval ditches was laid out over the site. There is no strong evidence for medieval or later settlement here, and an origin for both the finds and the ditches may be found in the farms and areas of settlement to the west and north of the site.

2 Introduction (Fig 1)

- 2.1 This is the report on an archaeological evaluation on the site of a proposed reservoir and pumping station on land between Hollybush Hill and Dead Lane, Great Bentley, Essex.
- 2.2 The archaeological work was commissioned by Tendring Hundred Water Services Ltd, and was undertaken by the Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) between 22nd and 30th November 2006. Post-excavation work took place between 1st December 2006 and 11th January 2007.
- 2.3 The 2.4ha site is centred at NGR TM 117 186, and is located 3km south of Great Bentley, adjacent to the Dines Farm Holiday Park and between the converging roads Hollybush Hill and Dead Lane (Fig 1).
- 2.4 The site is currently under cultivation.
- 2.5 Descriptions of the excavation and recording methods used may be found in the Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for the site produced by CAT in November 2006.
- 2.6 This report follows the standards set out in the Borough Council's *Guidelines on standards and practices for archaeological fieldwork in the Borough of Colchester* (CM 2002) and *Guidelines on the preparation and transfer of archaeological archives to Colchester Museums* (CM 2003), and the Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (IFA 1999) and *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (IFA 2001). The guidance contained in the documents *Management of archaeological projects* (MAP 2), and *Research and archaeology: a framework for the Eastern Counties 1. Resource assessment* (EAA 3), *Research and archaeology: a framework for the Eastern Counties 2. Research agenda and strategy* (EAA 8), and *Standards for field archaeology in the East of England* (EAA 14) was also followed.

3 Archaeological background (Fig 1)

The Tendring peninsula is rich in archaeological cropmark sites, very few of which have been excavated. There are no cropmarks in the evaluation site, nor has there been any recorded archaeological activity here. However, there are cropmark sites to the east and west of the site (Fig 1). The largest area of cropmarks is to the east of Dead Lane (Essex Historic Environment Record or EHER no 2948). These cropmarks include ring-ditches, a number of sub-rectangular enclosures, an irregular oval enclosure, and ditches and trackways. They are all undated, although a prehistoric and/or Roman date is usually assumed for these.

To the west of the site are field boundaries, a possible trackway, and a ring-ditch site (EHER no 2958). Similarly, they are undated but probably prehistoric, and it seems probable that cropmark features from the east and west will continue into the site itself.

4 Aim

The aim of the evaluation was to establish the character, extent, date, significance and condition of any archaeological remains and deposits likely to be affected by the construction of a new reservoir and pumping station.

5 Results (Figs 1-6)

The thirteen, 1.8m-wide x 30m-long evaluation trenches (Trenches or T1-T13) were excavated using a 360° mechanical excavator with a toothless ditching bucket down to the first archaeological layers, after which all features were investigated by hand.

Trench 1

Two features were found in T1, ie pit F1 and linear feature F2. The leached-out fill and irregular profile of F1 plus a lack of datable material suggest that it is natural in origin.

Linear feature F2 was aligned north-south. It is dated by sherds of medieval sandy grey ware and Colchester-type ware to sometime between the late 13th and the 16th century. It also contained residual Roman tile and a residual Late Iron Age or early Roman potsherd.

This feature was probably a field ditch.

Trench 2

Two features were found in T2, ie pit F3 and linear feature F4. Pit F3 produced no datable material, and its irregularity and highly leached-out fill suggest that it is natural in origin. Minor charcoal flecks in its upper fill are likely to be intrusive from plough disturbance (plough striation marks are visible in L3 across the evaluation area).

Linear feature F4 produced Colchester-type ware datable to the 15th or 16th century, fragments of oyster shell, and a residual fragment of fired clay probably from a triangular loomweight of Middle Iron Age to Roman date.

This feature was probably a field ditch.

Trench 3

Two archaeological features were found in T3, ie linear feature F5 and a wide and shallow feature F6. F5 is dated to the late 15th-16th century by a body sherd of Colchester-type ware pottery.

F6 contained fragments of Mayen lava from a rotary quern which could date anytime between the Roman and the early post-medieval periods (although a Roman, Migration period or Saxo-Norman date is most likely), and small, undated fragments of daub.

These two features are likely to be field ditches.

Trench 4

Two archaeological features were found in T4, ie wide shallow feature F7 (possibly related to F6 in T3) and linear feature F8 (possibly linked with F5 in T3). Neither produced dated finds. These two features are likely to be field ditches.

Trench 5

Two archaeological features were found in T5, ie linear features F9 and F10. Modern disturbance had cut into the western end of F10. Both features produced prehistoric pottery in small quantities, most probably dating to the Late Iron Age or early Roman period. Neither feature produced dated finds.

These two features are likely to be field ditches.

Trench 6

One archaeological feature was found in T6, a linear feature F11. This is dated to the medieval or post-medieval period by the presence of peg-tile. This feature was probably a field ditch.

Trench 7

One archaeological feature was found in T7, ie a linear feature F12. This had a leached-out fill, and may be natural in origin.

Trench 8

One archaeological feature was found in T8, ie a linear feature F14. This had a leached-out fill, and may be natural in origin.

Trench 9

Three features were found in T9, ie natural pit F15, pit F16 which is dated to the post-medieval period by the presence of brick in its fill, and pit F17, the fill of which suggests a possible post-medieval date.

Trench 10

One archaeological feature was found in T10, ie a linear feature F18. F18 is undated, but is on roughly the same alignment as F17 in T9. They could be parts the same feature, probably a post-medieval field boundary.

Trench 11

Two archaeological features were found in T11, ie pit F19 and ditch F20. Neither is dated. F20 is aligned with F23 in T12. They could be parts of the same feature, probably a post-medieval field boundary.

Trench 12

Three archaeological features were found in T12, ie pit F21, and linear features F22 and F23, which are roughly parallel to one another. None of the features are dated. However, F23 is aligned with F20 in T11. They could be parts of the same feature, probably a post-medieval field boundary, and F22 could be a parallel field boundary of the same period.

Trench 13

One archaeological feature was found in T13, ie undated linear feature F13.

6 Finds

6.1 The small finds, loomweight and daub

by Nina Crummy

No close dating can be provided by these objects. A fragment of fired clay from T2 F4 probably comes from a triangular loomweight, a long-lived form found from the Middle Iron Age into the early decades of the Roman period, while a group of Mayen lava fragments from T3 F6 come from a rotary quernstone and could date to as early as the AD 40s to as late as the early post-medieval period, although a Roman, Migration period or Saxo-Norman date is most likely.

The only other finds consist of three small abraded daub fragments.

SF 1. (4) F6. T3. Comminuted fragments of Mayen lava from a rotary quern. Total weight 92 g. After the Roman conquest, querns of this type were imported from Germany at least until the late 2nd or early 3rd century AD. Fragments of broken querns were reused throughout the Roman and Migration periods in a variety of ways, such as polishing or rubbing stones or as hard core or building stone. Imports began again in the 8th century through ports such as Hamwic and London, and perhaps also Ipswich and Colchester, both of which provide a short sea crossing from the mouth of the Rhine. The trade continued into the late medieval and probably also the early post-medieval period, and millstones of the same stone were also imported. Given the wide date range of both import and reuse, close dating of small featureless fragments such as those from the site is not possible, but one of the peak periods of use is most likely, ie the 1st to 2nd centuries or the 9th to 12th centuries, or the peak period of reuse over the 5th to 7th centuries.

(4) F6. T4. Three very small abraded fragments of daub. Total weight 13 g.

(8) F4. T2. Fragment of fired clay loomweight in a sandy clay fabric with frequent small grits. Weight 97 g. The fragment is fired externally to orange-red, but internally has buff patches.

6.2 The prehistoric and Roman pottery

by Stephen Benfield

There are five small sherds of prehistoric pottery from the site. Four of the sherds are moderately thick (7 mm) and sand-tempered. Three of these sherds are from T5 F9 and appear to be all from the same pot. They are reddish-brown in colour, sand-tempered, with some small voids from burnt out organic matter. These three sherds do not appear to be significantly abraded. There is also a single sherd from F10. This is also sand-tempered, with red-brown surfaces, although the fabric is grey-brown and there is no indication of any organic temper. The sherd is slightly abraded. It is difficult to closely date these sherds with confidence. The sherd from F10 is clearly hand-made and the sand temper suggests a possible Middle Iron Age date. The three sherds from F9 could be wheel-turned, and a date in the Late Iron Age or early Roman period can be suggested.

The remaining sherd (T1 F2) is of Late Iron Age or early Roman date. It is very abraded and no surfaces survive. The fabric is brown-grey and is tempered with dark grog and some burnt organic matter.

6.3 The medieval and later pottery

by Howard Brooks

A small group of medieval and later pottery (10 sherds, 165g) was recovered from four site contexts. The pottery fabrics have been classified according to fabric descriptions given in *CAR 7*. Fabrics present were medieval sandy grey ware (Fabric 20) and Colchester-type ware (Fabric 21a). Fabrics are not quantified here, but a full list is given in the archive.

Finds no 1 (T1 F2). Body sherds of medieval sandy grey ware and Colchester-type ware only.
Group date: late 13th-16th century.

Finds no 2 (T3 F5). A body sherd of Colchester-type ware only. Date: late 15th-16th century.

Finds no 7 (T4 F7). A body sherd of post-medieval red earthenware (PMRE) or flowerpot (Fabric 51a). Date: 19th-20th century.

Finds no 8 (T2 F4). The Colchester-type wares include a handle, probably from a jug, which has deep incisions in a row down its long axis (for a parallel, see *CAR 7*, fig 65.44).

7 Conclusions

This site lies to the west of an area of unexcavated cropmark sites including several potential enclosures and a rectilinear field system. Since the field system is not aligned with the modern-day road and field boundaries, the expectation is that these cropmarks are of prehistoric and/or Roman date. To the west lies another cropmark site which includes ditches of a rectilinear field system and a ring-ditch (a possible ploughed-out burial mound).

The evaluation has revealed fourteen ditches, three pits and five natural features. Of the fourteen ditches, two are prehistoric, one is Roman or later, three are medieval, four are post-medieval, and four are undated. Two of the three pits are post-medieval. Figure 2 shows the spread of dated material from the ditches, and, where features excavated in separate trenches are probably one and the same, a broken line indicates this potential continuation. There are not enough of these joining ditches to allow a definite statement that they share or do not share the alignment of the cropmark ditches to the east or west, although, if anything, there are probably no relationships with either of them.

This leaves us with a dilemma, ie whether or not the features in the evaluation site are part of the cropmark sites to the east and west. If we think that they are the same settlement, then it is clear that the field system contains a much larger medieval and especially post-medieval element than would be allowed in the conventional interpretation of a prehistoric/Roman site. On the other hand, if we

think that they are a separate site, then that site is a multi-period site lying between presumed prehistoric/Roman cropmark sites. It is difficult to say which of the two interpretations is correct.

Leaving aside the above problems, the material from the excavation includes loomweight fragments which could date from the Middle Iron Age to the Roman period, and fragments of Mayen lava quern which could date from the Roman period to the post-medieval period. These finds imply an agricultural regime which included both a pastoral and an arable element (loomweight for weaving, quern for grinding corn). What is surprising is the small quantity of pre-medieval pot sherds (one Middle Iron Age sherd, three Late Iron Age or Roman), which might imply that this area lay close to settlements of that date range presumably represented by the cropmark sites to the east and west. This interpretation is supported by the few fragments of Roman tile, which imply a tile-roofed 'Roman' structure in the vicinity but not on the site.

In summary, this evaluation has probably revealed an area of prehistoric and Roman occupation dating from the Middle Iron Age, the Late Iron Age and Roman periods, but which was marginal to the larger sites to the east and west. The site was later overlaid by a series of medieval and post-medieval ditches. Despite the medieval sherds from the ditches and a few post-medieval pits, there is no strong evidence for medieval or later settlement here, and an origin for both the medieval and later finds and ditches may be found in the farms and areas of settlement to the west and north of the site.

8 Archive deposition

The evaluation archive, including the site records and finds, will be permanently deposited with Colchester Museums under accession code COLEM 2006.135.

9 Acknowledgements

The Colchester Archaeological Trust would like to thank Tendring Hundred Water Services Ltd for commissioning and funding the work. The project was monitored by Pat Connell, Essex County Council Historic Environment Management team officer. The site work was directed by Ben Holloway and carried out by Chris Lister, Will Clarke and Lawrence Driver.

10 References

- | | | |
|--------|------|--|
| CAR 7 | 2000 | <i>Colchester Archaeological Report 7: Post-Roman pottery from excavations in Colchester, 1971-85</i> , by J Cotter |
| CM | 2002 | <i>Guidelines on standards and practices for archaeological fieldwork in the Borough of Colchester</i> |
| CM | 2003 | <i>Guidelines on the preparation and transfer of archaeological archives to Colchester Museums</i> |
| EAA 3 | 1997 | <i>Research and archaeology: a framework for the Eastern Counties 1. Resource assessment</i> , East Anglian Archaeology, Occasional Papers, 3 , ed by J Glazebrook |
| EAA 8 | 2000 | <i>Research and archaeology: a framework for the Eastern Counties 2. Research agenda and strategy</i> , East Anglian Archaeology, Occasional Papers, 8 , ed by N Brown & J Glazebrook |
| EAA 14 | 2003 | <i>Standards for field archaeology in the East of England</i> , East Anglian Archaeology, Occasional Papers, 14 , ed by D Gurney |
| IFA | 1999 | <i>Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation</i> |
| IFA | 2001 | <i>Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials</i> |
| MAP 2 | 1991 | <i>Management of archaeological projects</i> , 2nd edition (English Heritage) |
| WSI | | Written Scheme of Investigation for an archaeological evaluation at the west Clacton reservoir and pumping station site, Dead |

Lane, Great Bentley, Essex, September 2006, by Ben Holloway

11 Glossary

AOD	above Ordnance Survey datum point based on mean sea level at Newlyn, Cornwall
CBCAO	Colchester Borough Council Archaeology Officer
CM	Colchester Museums
context	specific location on an archaeological site, especially one where finds are made, usually a layer or a feature
EHHER	Essex Historic Environment Record, maintained by Essex County Council
feature	an identifiable thing like a pit, a wall, a drain, a floor
IFA	Institute of Field Archaeologists
Late Iron Age	the period from the 2nd century BC to AD 43
medieval	period from AD 1066 to c AD 1500
Middle Iron Age	the period from approximately the 5th to the 2nd century BC
modern	period from c 1850 onwards to the present
NGR	National Grid Reference
natural	geological deposit undisturbed by human activity
PMRE	post-medieval red earthenware
post-medieval	period from c 1500 to c 1850
Roman	the period from AD 43 to AD 410 approximately
WSI	written scheme of investigation

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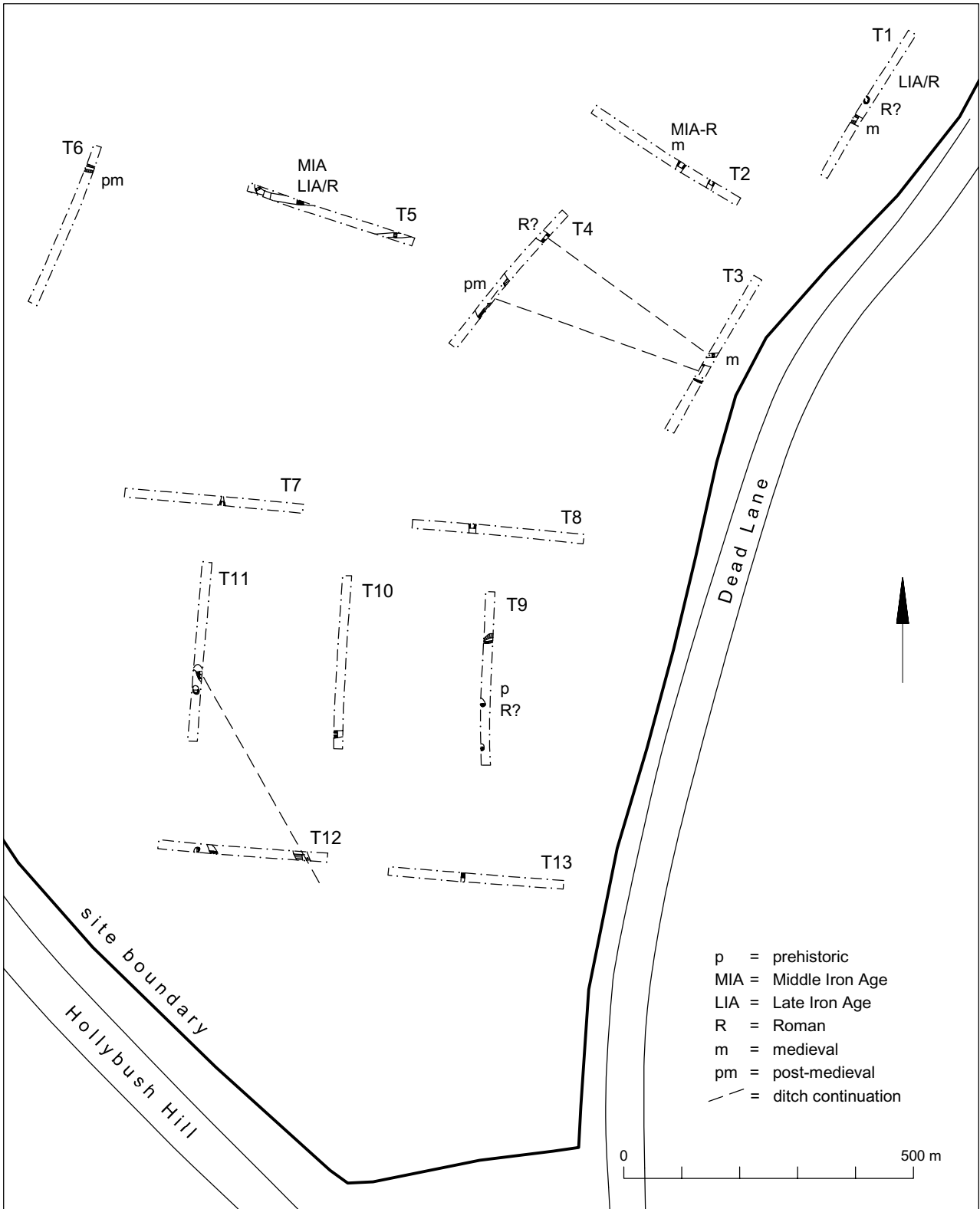
12 Appendix: list of finds by trench and context.

Context	Trench	Description	Date
F2	T1	7 medieval sherds	medieval
F2	T1	1 Late Iron Age or Roman sherd	Late Iron Age/early Roman
F2	T1	tile, possibly Roman	?Roman
F4	T2	loomweight fragments	Middle Iron Age to Roman
F4	T2	oyster shell	-
F4	T2	2 medieval sherds	medieval
F5	T3	1 medieval sherd	medieval
F6	T3	daub fragments	?
F6	T3	SF 1 lava quern	Roman to post-medieval
F7	T4	tile and brick fragments	post-medieval
F7	T4	1 sherd PMRE or Fabric 51b flowerpot	19th-20th century
F8	T4	tile, possibly Roman	?Roman
F9	T5	3 sherds Late Iron Age/Roman pottery	Late Iron Age/early Roman
F10	T5	1 Middle Iron Age sherd	Middle Iron Age
F11	T6	peg-tile	medieval or post-medieval
F16	T9	flint	?Bronze Age
F16	T9	tile, possibly Roman	?Roman



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Fig 1 Site location, showing cropmarks (in red).



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Fig 2 Trench locations, showing continuations of ditches and dates of material found in them.

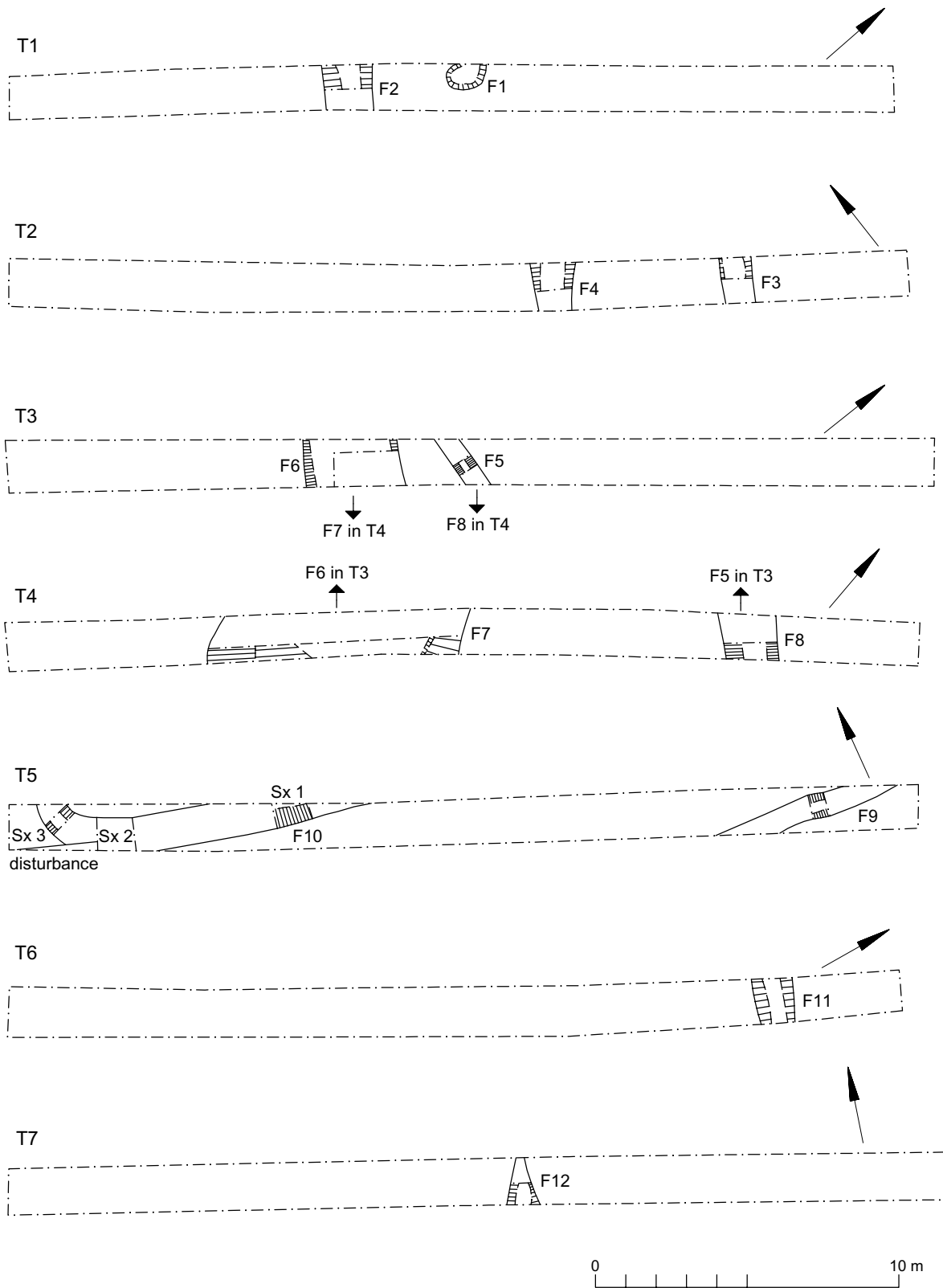


Fig 3 T1-T7: trench plans.

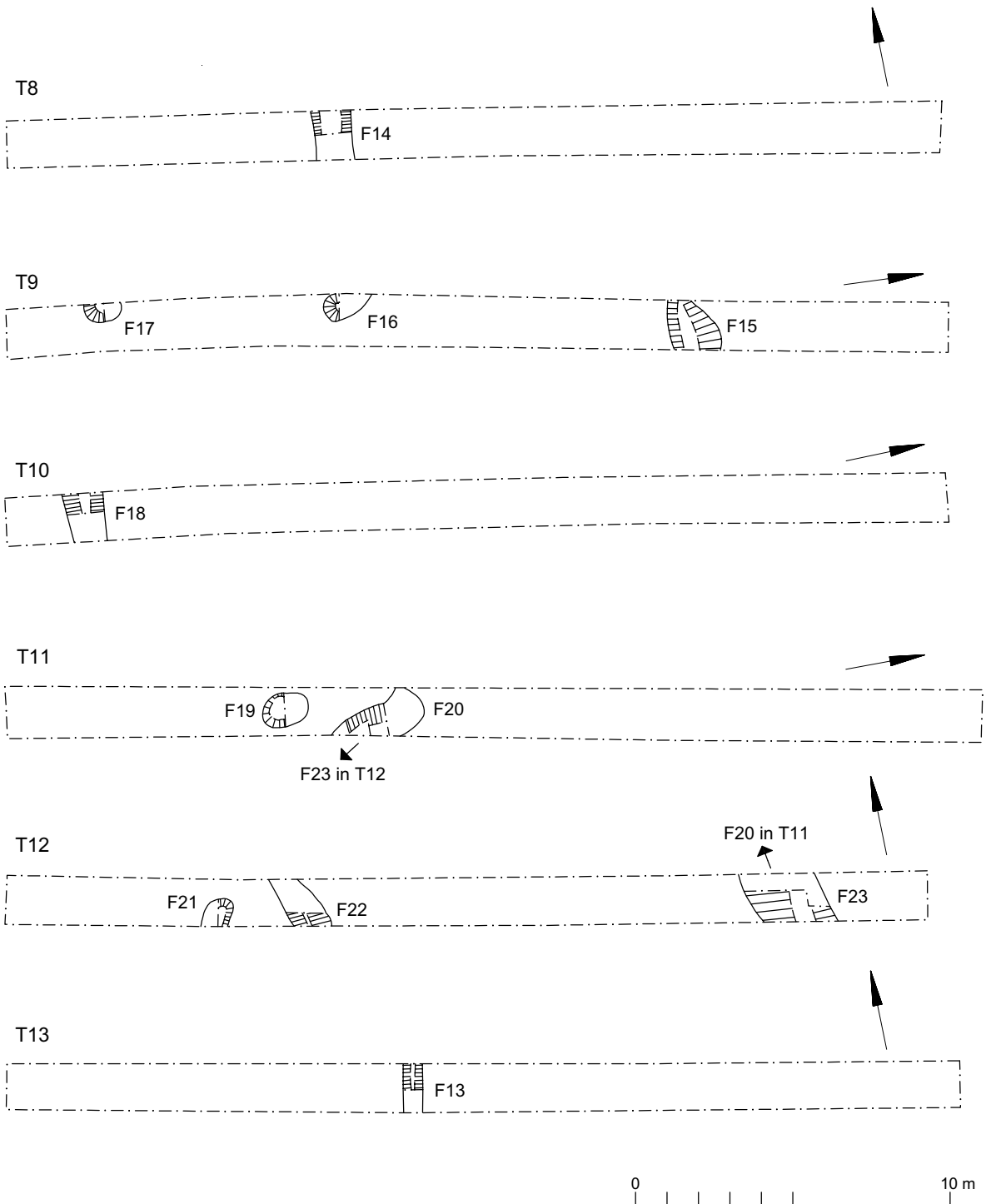


Fig 4 T8-T13: trench plans.

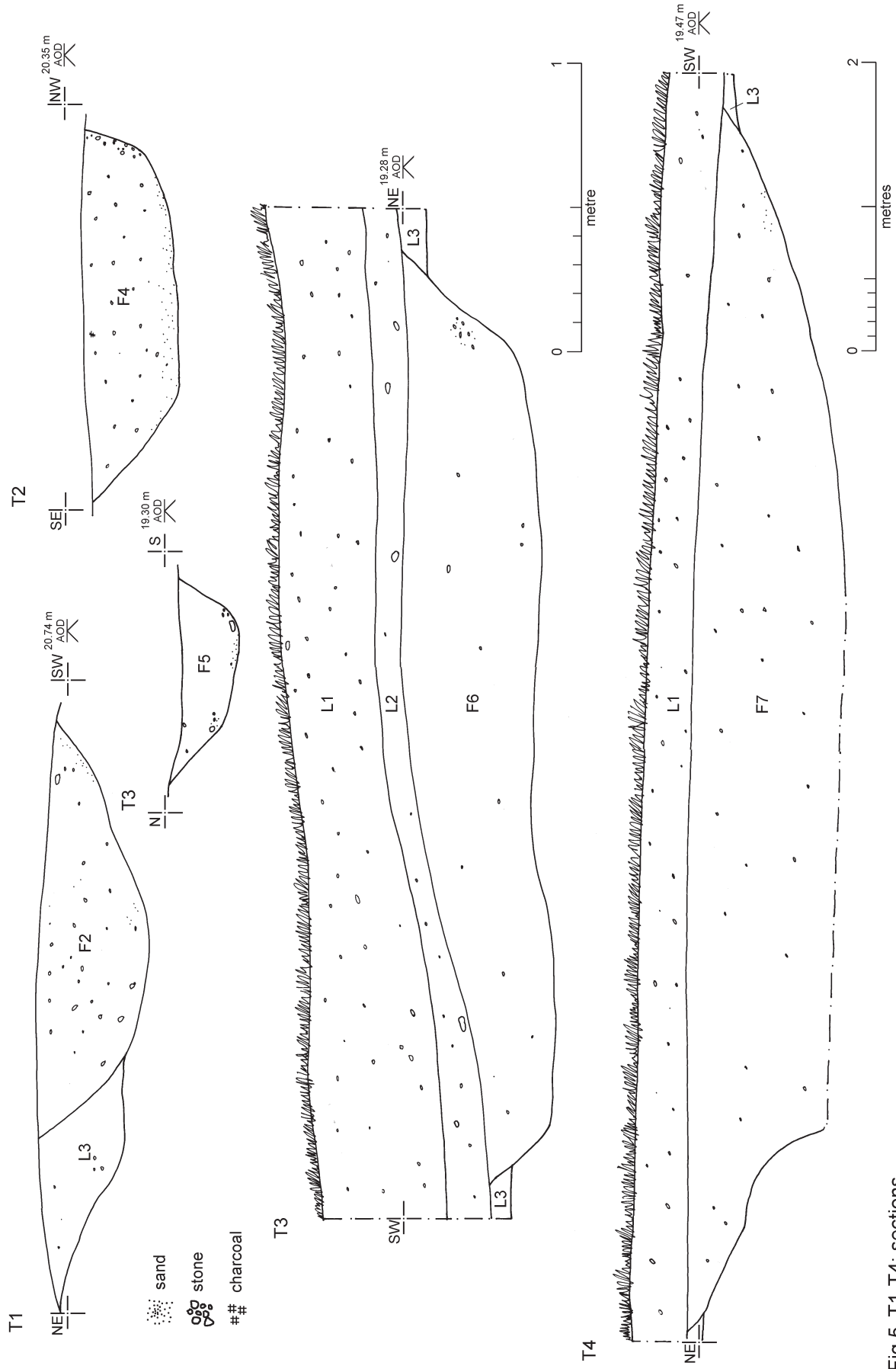


Fig 5 T1-T4: sections.

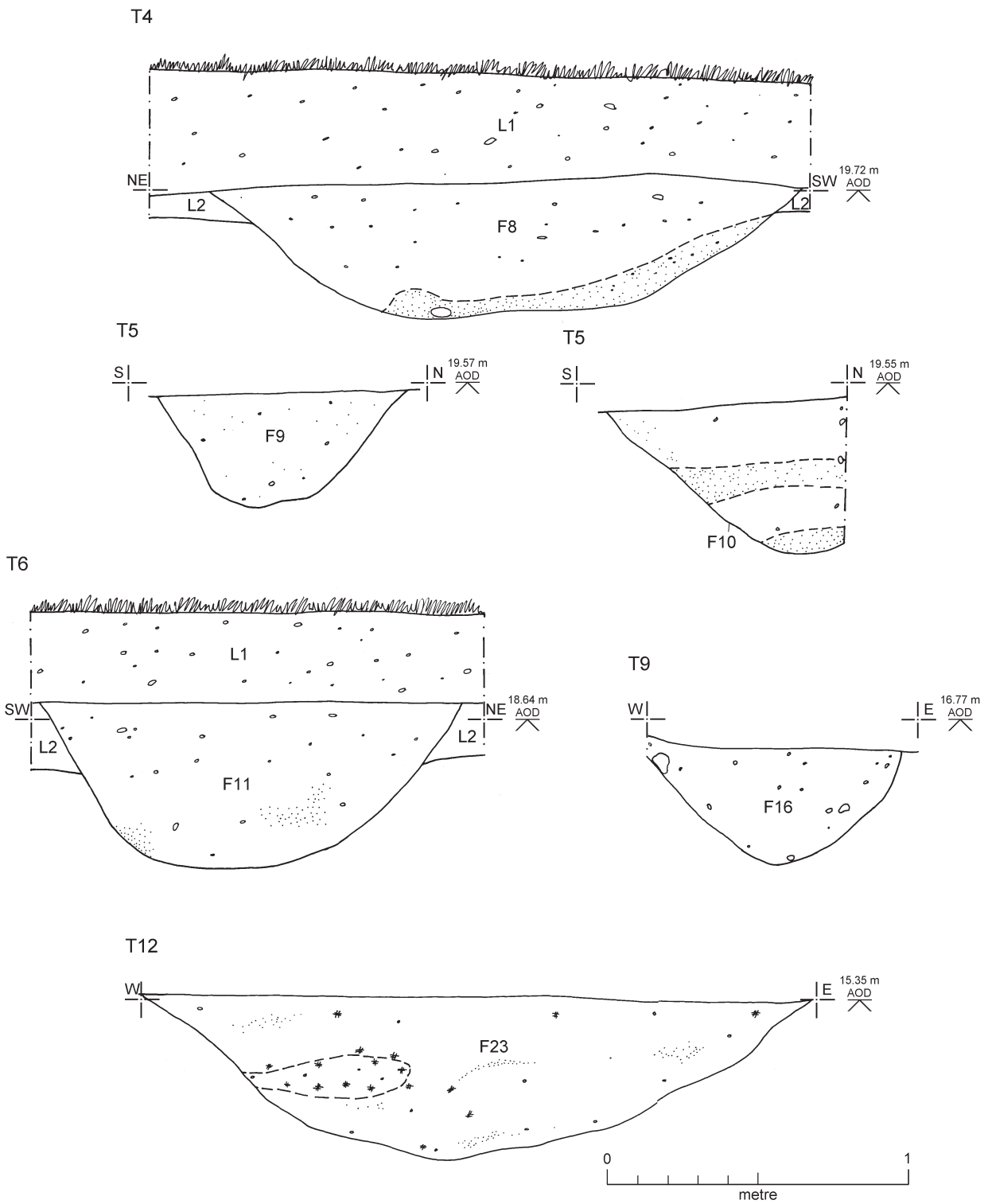


Fig 6 T4 (continued), T5, T6, T9, T12: sections.

**Essex Historic Environment Record/
Essex Archaeology and History**

Summary sheet

Site address: the site of the West Clacton reservoir and pumping station, Dead Lane, Great Bentley, Essex	
Parish: Great Bentley	District: Tendring
NGR: TM 117 186 (centre)	Site code: Museum accession code: 2006.135
Type of work: Evaluation	Site director/group: Colchester Archaeological Trust
Date of work: November 2006	Size of area investigated: thirteen trenches in a 2.4 ha site
Location of finds/curating museum: Colchester Museums	Funding source: Developer
Further seasons anticipated? Not known	Related EHER nos: 2948, 2958
Final report: CAT Report 401 and summary in <i>EAH</i>	
Periods represented: Roman, medieval, modern.	
Summary of fieldwork results: <i>An evaluation by thirteen trial-trenches revealed an area of prehistoric and Roman occupation dating from the Middle Iron Age to the Roman period (not necessarily continuously), which is probably marginal to cropmark sites to the east and west. Later, a field system defined by medieval and post-medieval ditches was laid out over the site. There is no strong evidence for medieval or later settlement here, and an origin for both the finds and the ditches may be found in the farms and areas of settlement to the west and north of the site.</i>	
Previous summaries/reports: None	
Author of summary: H Brooks and B Holloway	Date of summary: January 2007