

Archaeological evaluation on land adjacent to Endway Farm, Southminster Road, Asheldham, Southminster, Essex, CM0 7DZ

July 2020



by Dr Elliott Hicks

figures by Chirs Lister, Ben Holloway and Emma Holloway

fieldwork by Ben Holloway with Alexander Smith and Bronagh Quinn

commissioned by Mr Adam Smith

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Colchester Archaeological Trust

Roman Circus House,
Roman Circus Walk,
Colchester,
Essex, CO2 7GZ

tel.: 01206 501785

email: eh2@catuk.org

CAT Report 1581

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1 Summary

An archaeological evaluation (two trial-trenches) was carried out on land adjacent to Endway Farm, Southminster Road, Asheldham, Southminster, Essex, in advance of the construction of a new dwelling. The site lies just to the north of Asheldham Camp, a univallate Iron Age hillfort, and in the midst of cropmarks indicating the presence of ring ditches and linear features. Excavations revealed two pits and a ditch dating to the Late Bronze Age, a pit dating to the Late Bronze Age or Early Iron Age, and a ditch dating to the Early Iron Age at the latest. Previous excavations of Asheldham Camp indicated that the site had witnessed a phase of activity prior to the construction of the hillfort. The present investigation provides further evidence of an earlier phase of activity here.

2 Introduction (Fig 1)

This is the report for an archaeological evaluation by trial-trenching on land adjacent to Endway Farm, Southminster Road, Asheldham, Essex which was carried out on 16th July 2020. The work was commissioned by Adam Smith in advance of the construction of a new dwelling, and was undertaken by Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT).

In response to consultation with Essex County Council Place Services (ECCPS), Historic Environment Advisor Maria Medlycott advised 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 the *National Planning Policy Framework* (MHCLG 2019).

All archaeological work was carried out in accordance with a *Brief for archaeological trial trench evaluation*, detailing the required archaeological work, written by Maria Medlycott (ECCPS 2020), and a written scheme of investigation (WSI) prepared by CAT in response to the brief and agreed with ECCPS (CAT 2020).

In addition to the brief and WSI, all fieldwork and reporting was done in accordance with English Heritage's *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 standards and practices contained in the 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 following archaeological background draws on the Brief and the Essex Historic Environment Records (EHER) held at Essex County Council, County Hall, Chelmsford, Essex (accessible to the public via <http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk>).

The proposed development site is located in the village of Asheldham in the Dengie Peninsular. The area is characterised by small isolated farms scattered throughout flat, open fields laid out over land reclaimed from the Dengie and Tillingham marshes during the 19th century.

Significant archaeological remains lie within the area. The Scheduled Monument of Asheldham Camp, a univallate Iron Age hillfort, is located to the south of the development site (EHER 12051-12060; Scheduled Monument reference 1014142). Excavations conducted in 1985 established that the hillfort was built during the Early Iron Age, but also uncovered evidence of a phase of activity at the site prior to its construction, during which the area was apparently utilised for cereal cultivation or as pasture (Bedwin, 1991). Cropmarks of ring-ditches, linear features and pits lie to the east (EHER 12185). An excavation carried out on land further to the east uncovered a Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age ring-ditch and a Romano-British rectilinear system of

agricultural enclosures (EHER 12183). To the west of the site are cropmarks of a penannular ring-ditch and various linear features (EHER 16003).

The early 14th-century Church of St Lawrence lies to the southeast of the development site. Excavations undertaken at the church in 1976 determined that it was constructed in nine phases commencing during the Anglo-Saxon period, evidenced by a timber structure located slightly to the north of the present church. A Roman ditch which had been re-cut multiple times, a medieval stone dwelling for the priest and numerous burials were uncovered in the churchyard (EHER 12150-7).

Cropmarks on land south of the church indicate the presence of a large rectilinear enclosure with a smaller rectilinear enclosure in one corner, as well as a number of linear features and pits (EHER 12184). Road names and early mapping suggest this may be the location of a deserted medieval village (EHER 12088). Archaeological monitoring during the construction of a new crop storage building at Dengie Crops Ltd revealed a ditch containing Early Iron Age, Roman and Anglo-Saxon pottery (EHER 48921).

In 2017, CAT carried out an evaluation on land adjacent to 1 Pitt Cottages, opposite the proposed development site, but the only remains encountered were two modern refuse pits (CAT Report 1179).

4 Aim

The aim of the archaeological evaluation was to record the extent of any surviving archaeological deposits, and to assess the archaeological potential of the site to allow the ECCHEA to determine if further investigation is required.

5 Results (Figs 2-3)

Two trial-trenches, each measuring 10m long by 1.8m wide, and arranged to form a T-shaped trench, were machine-excavated under the supervision of a CAT archaeologist.

The trenching was excavated through modern topsoil (L1, c 0.17-0.41m thick, firm, dry dark grey/brown sandy-silt) and subsoil (L2, c 0.27-0.51m thick, firm, dry medium grey/brown sandy-silt) onto natural (L3, firm, dry medium yellow/orange sandy-silt, encountered at a depth of c 0.7m below current ground level).

Trench 1 (T1): 10m long by 1.8m wide

Late Bronze Age pit F1 lay at the northern end of the trench. The feature extended beyond the limit of excavation (LOE) and so its full dimensions could not be determined, but its exposed extent was 0.99m wide and 0.35m deep.

Late Bronze Age pit F2 was uncovered at the mid-point of the trench. It too extended beyond the LOE and so its full dimensions could not be ascertained, but its exposed extent was 0.51m wide and 0.38m deep.

F2 cut Late Bronze Age ditch F3. F3 was 1.08m wide and 0.43m deep, and lay on a NE-SW alignment.



Photograph 1 T1 trench shot – looking west southwest

Trench 2 (T2): 10m long by 1.8m wide

Late Bronze Age or Early Iron Age pit F4 lay at the eastern end of the trench. The feature extended beyond the LOE and so its full dimensions could not be ascertained, but its exposed extent was 1.86m wide and 0.31m. It cut ditch F5, only the base of which remained. It was aligned NNE-SSW and was 0.62m wide and 0.12m deep. While the feature produced no dating evidence it was cut by F4 and must have been Early Iron Age in date at the latest. It may have represented a continuation of ditch F3.



Photograph 2 T2 trench shot – looking north northwest

6 Finds

6.1 Ceramic finds

by Dr Matthew Loughton

Seventy-two sherds of handmade prehistoric pottery were recovered during the evaluation. They had an overall weight of 601g with a mean sherd weight of only 8g. There were rim sherds from only 0.06 vessels (rim EVE). This material was recovered from four features, although most came from ditch F3 and pit F4 (Table 1).

Cxt	Description	no.	weight/g	MSW/g	EVE
F1	Pit	1	3	3	0.00
F2	Pit	1	1	1	0.00
F3	Ditch	17	132	8	0.00
F4	Pit?	51	437	9	0.06
Total		72	601	8	0.06

Table 1 Quantities of pottery from specific features

Prehistoric pottery

The bulk of the pottery is handmade and tempered with varying quantities of fine, medium and coarse flint (fabric HMF). Two sherds from the ditch F3 were tempered with rare very coarse flint. Most of the fabrics are oxidized while some sherds have darker brown coloured surfaces while others are smoothed and burnished. There was very little in the way of diagnostic and decorated sherds to aid the dating of this material. The only vessels are two possible jars (EVE: 0.06) with upright rims which came from pit F4. These are similar to Post-Deverel Rimbury jars, which date to the Late Bronze Age and the early 1st millennium BC (Brown 1995, 78-80). The presence of rare sherds tempered with fine sand and organic material (fabric HMSO), including some organic temper impressions of straw and/or chaff, in ditch F3 and pit F4 could indicate the possibility of some Early Iron Age material (?). To summarise, the bulk of the prehistoric pottery from all four features is broadly similar, suggesting that they all date to the same period, likely the Late Bronze Age.

6.2 Late Bronze Age perforated clay slabs

by Laura Pooley

Two fragments of perforated clay slab came from ditch F3. Perforated clay slabs have been found on a number of Late Bronze Age sites in Britain, with those in Essex including North Shoebury (Barford 1995, 125-7), Mucking (Bond 1988, 39) and Springfield, Chelmsford (Tyrell 1999, 19; Major 2013, 123). Despite being a well-recognised element of the material culture of the Late Bronze Age, their function(s) has yet to be established but could include cooking, ventilation or some form of industrial process such as metalworking or salt-production (Champion 2016, 220).

SF1 Ditch F3, finds no. 6:

a) **Fig 4.1** Fragment of perforated clay slab. Flat on one side, convex on the other. Includes an original curved edge which has been smoothed and rounded and two perforations. Measurements: 57.7mm long, 52.7mm wide, 21.5mm thick (which tapers to c 14mm towards the curved edge), 60.4g. Made from a flint-tempered reddish-brown sandy-clay.

b) **Fig 4.2** Fragment of perforated clay slab. Flat on one side, convex on the other, with two perforations. Measurements: 64.9mm long, 49.1mm wide, 19.5mm thick, 45.9g. Made from a flint-tempered reddish brown sandy-clay.

Three fragments of fired clay also came from pit F4. Two of the fragments have curved edges and are made from the same flint-tempered fabric as the pieces of perforated clay slab from F3.

SF2 Pit F4, finds no. 3:

a) **Fig 4.3** Possible fragment of perforated clay slab. Flat on both sides with a curved indented edge. One of the sides appears to have been heat-affected with the surface discoloured brown. Measurements: 40.9mm long, 33.7mm wide, 16.5mm thick, 28.2g. Made from a flint-tempered reddish brown sandy-clay.

b) **Fig 4.4** Possible fragment of perforated clay slab. Only one flat surface and part of a smoothed curved edge has survived. Measurements: 45.2mm long, 30.0mm wide, 20.4mm thick, 23.0g. Made from a flint-tempered reddish brown sandy-clay.

c) Irregular lump of abraded fired clay made from a dark greyish-brown sandy-clay. Measurements: 28.6mm long, 28.2mm wide, 22.3mm thick, 14.7g.

6.3 Non-ceramic finds
by Laura Pooley

Six pieces of burnt (heat-altered) stone came from ditch F3 and pit F4. There were four pieces of flint and two of sandstone. The burnt flints were small- to medium-sized irregular broken pieces which had been cracked and crazed from the heat and discoloured various shades of white (calcified), grey and pink. The pieces of sandstone were also small cracked fragments discoloured a pinkish-orange.

Burnt stones are commonly associated with prehistoric occupation, often occurring as groups in pits. Created when in close proximity to heat, notably ovens, hearths and cremations, deliberately heated stones could also have been used as an indirect method for heating water and are often referred to as 'pot boilers' (although their precise use is debated). The types of stones utilised here, flint and sandstone, occur in the underlying gravel deposits and would have been available to be collected from the surrounding area.

A fragment of carbonised wood/twig also came from pit F4 and a lump of metalworking debris/slag from ditch F5.

Context	Finds no.	Description
F3	5	Two pieces of burnt (heat-altered) flint, cracked and crazed, one burnt white and grey, the other burnt a dark grey, 76.9g. Discarded.
F4	3	Two pieces of burnt (heat-altered) flint, cracked and crazed, burnt grey with a pink tinge, 28.0g. Discarded. Two pieces of burnt (heat-altered) sandstone, cracked, burnt a pinkish-orange, 29.7g. Discarded. Fragment of carbonised wood/twig, 0.4g
F5	4	One fragment of metalworking debris/slag, 71.5g.

Table 2 Non-ceramic finds by context

7 Conclusion

Excavations at this site revealed three pits and two ditches. Two pits and one ditch were dated to the Late Bronze Age, and one pit to the Late Bronze Age or the Early Iron Age. A further ditch yielded no dating evidence but was cut by the Late Bronze Age or Early Iron Age pit described above, and so dated to the latter period at the latest.

The site lies in a known area of prehistoric activity. Most notably, it is located approximately 30m north of Asheldham Camp, a univallate Iron Age hillfort. During

investigation of the site in 1985, part of the bank which forms the eastern boundary of the fort was excavated, revealing a buried land surface which yielded a single sherd of Early Iron Age pottery, showing that the origins of the hill fort lay in this period. Pollen analysis of a sample taken from this land surface indicated that prior to the construction of the hillfort, the site had been utilised for cereal cultivation or pasture. Late Neolithic flints and pottery possibly dating to the Late Bronze Age were also recovered from topsoil and later features (Bedwin 1991, 17, 23, 25).

In the present investigation, the clustering of features within a quite limited area, and the recovery of a finds assemblage consisting of pottery, heat-affected stones and the clay slab fragments suggest intensive activity here in the Late Bronze Age. The fragment of slag recovered from ditch F5 indicates that metal-working was also occurring here during this period. These findings provide further evidence for a pre-fort phase of activity within the area.

8 Acknowledgements

CAT thanks Adam Smith for commissioning and funding the work. The project was managed by C Lister, fieldwork was carried out by B Holloway with A Smith and B Quinn. Figures are by C Lister, B Holloway and E Holloway. The project was monitored for ECCPS by Maria Medlycott.

9 References

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

- | | | |
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		(EAA 24)
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10 Abbreviations and glossary

Anglo-Saxon	period from c 500 – 106
Bronze Age	period from c 2500 – 700 BC
CAT	Colchester Archaeological Trust
ClfA	Chartered Institute for Archaeologists
context	specific location of finds on an archaeological site
ECC	Essex County Council
ECCHEA	Essex County Council Historic Environment Advisor
ECCPS	Essex County Council Place Services
EHHER	Essex Historic Environment Record
feature (F)	an identifiable thing like a pit, a wall, a drain: can contain 'contexts'
Iron Age	period from 700 BC to Roman invasion of AD 43
layer (L)	distinct or distinguishable deposit (layer) of material
medieval	period from AD 1066 to c 1500
modern	period from c AD 1800 to the present
natural	geological deposit undisturbed by human activity
Neolithic	period from c 4000 – 2500 BC
NGR	National Grid Reference
OASIS	Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations, http://oasis.ac.uk/pages/wiki/Main
prehistoric	pre-Roman
Roman	the period from AD 43 to c AD 410
section	(abbreviation sx or Sx) vertical slice through feature/s or layer/s
ws	written scheme of investigation

11 Contents of archive

Finds: part of one box (pottery, clay slabs)

Paper record

One A4 document wallet containing:

The report (CAT Report 1581)

ECC evaluation brief, CAT written scheme of investigation

Original site record (trench sheets, sections)

Site digital photos and log

Inked sections

Digital record

The report (CAT Report 1581)

ECC evaluation brief, CAT written scheme of investigation

Site digital photographs, thumbnails and log

Graphic files

Survey data

12 Archive deposition

The paper and digital archive is currently held by the Colchester Archaeological Trust at Roman Circus House, Roman Circus Walk, Colchester, Essex CO2 7GZ, but will be permanently deposited with Colchester Museum under project ref. AMEF20.

Distribution list:

Adam Smith
ECC Place Services Historic Environment Advisor
Essex Historic Environment Record, Essex County Council



Colchester Archaeological Trust

Roman Circus House,
Roman Circus Walk,
Colchester,
Essex, CO2 7GZ

tel.: 01206 501785
email: eh2@catuk.org

Checked by: Philip Crummy
Date: 22.09.2020

Appendix 1 Pottery list

Cxt	Feature type	Find no.	NR	GR	M SW	Discard	Rim	Handle	Base	Dec.	Stamp	Graf Pre-F	Graf Post-F	Wind	soot	pitting	Burn	Overfired	Residue	Abraded	Modif.	Mark	Repair hole	Hole	Disc.	Polishing	Fabric Grp	Typology	Vessel function	EVE	Diam.	Comments	Date
F001	Pit	1	3	31	10																					HMF					MEDIUM-COARSE FLINT, OXIDIZED ORANGE FABRIC WITH BROWN SURFACES	Late Bronze Age	
F002	Pit	2	1	1	1																					HMF					FINE-MEDIUM FLINT, OXIDIZED ORANGE FABRIC	Late Bronze Age	
F003	Ditch	5	1	10	10												X									HMF						Late Bronze Age	
F003	Ditch	5	1	6	6																					HMF					VERY COARSE FLINT, OXIDIZED	Late Bronze Age	
F003	Ditch	5	3	11	4																					HMF					FREQUENT FINE TO COARSE FLINT, OXIDIZED ORANGE FABRIC	Late Bronze Age	
F003	Ditch	5	3	24	8																					HMF					FREQUENT MEDIUM-COARSE FLINT, SOME BURNT FLINT	Late Bronze Age	
F003	Ditch	5	3	25	8																					HMSO					FINE SAND & ORGANIC IMPRESSIONS, BLACK CORE, BROWN/ORANGE SURFACES	LBA/EIA?	
F003	Ditch	5	1	33	33										X											HMF					FREQUENT FINE TO MEDIUM FLINT	Late Bronze Age	
F003	Ditch	5	5	23	5		0	0	1																	HMF					FREQUENT FINE TO MEDIUM FLINT, OXIDIZED DARK BROWN SURFACES	Late Bronze Age	
F004	Pit?	3	18	187	10		2	0	1																	HMF	JAR		0.02 ?		FREQUENT FINE TO COARSE FLINT, OXIDIZED ORANGE FABRIC	Late Bronze Age	
F004	Pit?	3																								HMF	JAR		0.04	180	FINGER NAIL IMPRESSION TOP OF RIM	Late Bronze Age	
F004	Pit?	3	1	25	25																					HMF					FREQUENT FINE TO COARSE FLINT, OXIDIZED ORANGE FABRIC	Late Bronze Age	
F004	Pit?	3	1	6	6												X									HMF					FREQUENT FINE TO COARSE FLINT, OXIDIZED ORANGE FABRIC	Late Bronze Age	
F004	Pit?	3	21	150	7																					HMF					FREQUENT FINE TO COARSE FLINT, BLACK TO DARK BROWN SURFACES	Late Bronze Age	
F004	Pit?	3	4	17	4																					HMSO					FINE SAND, BLACK CORE, ORGANIC TEMPER?	LBA/EIA?	
F004	Pit?	3	6	52	0										X											HMF					FREQUENT FINE TO MED FLINT, BLACK TO DARK BROWN SMOOTHED BURNISHED EXT SURFACE	Late Bronze Age	

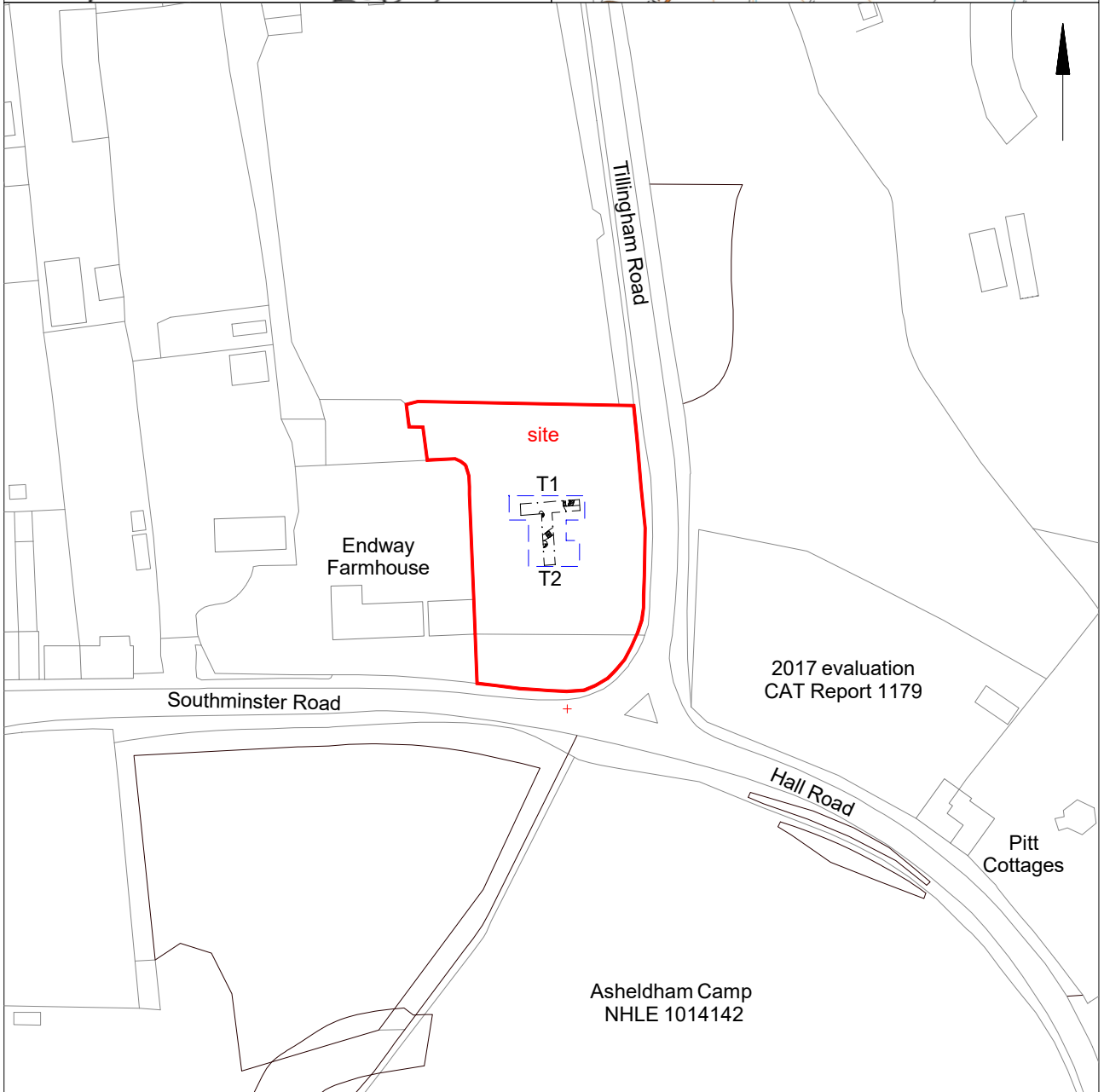
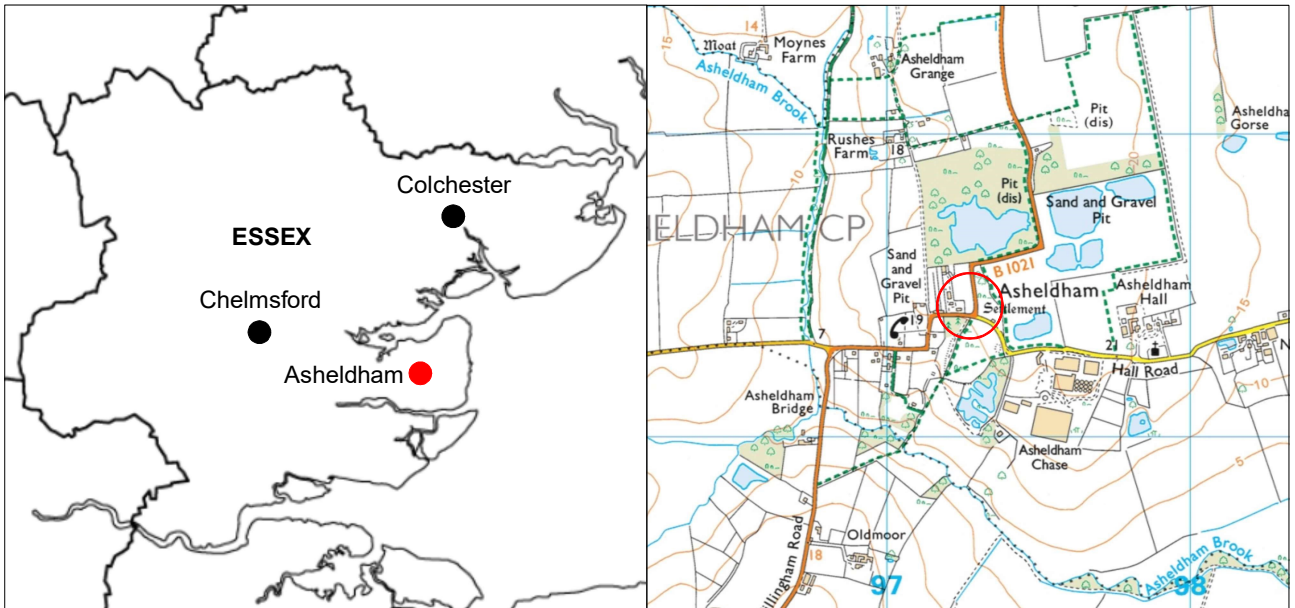
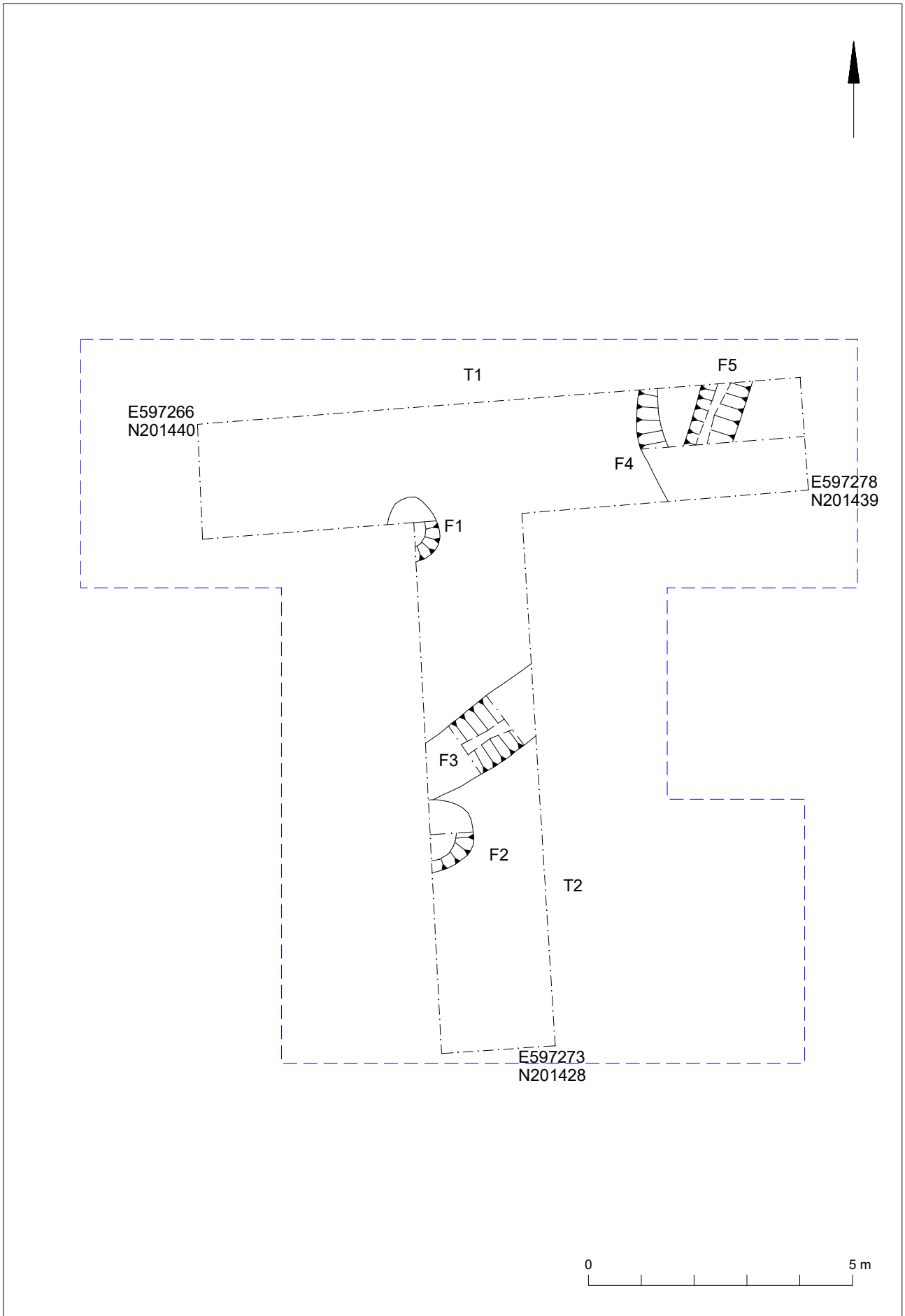


Fig 1 Site location, with proposed development dashed blue.

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Fig 2 Evaluation results.

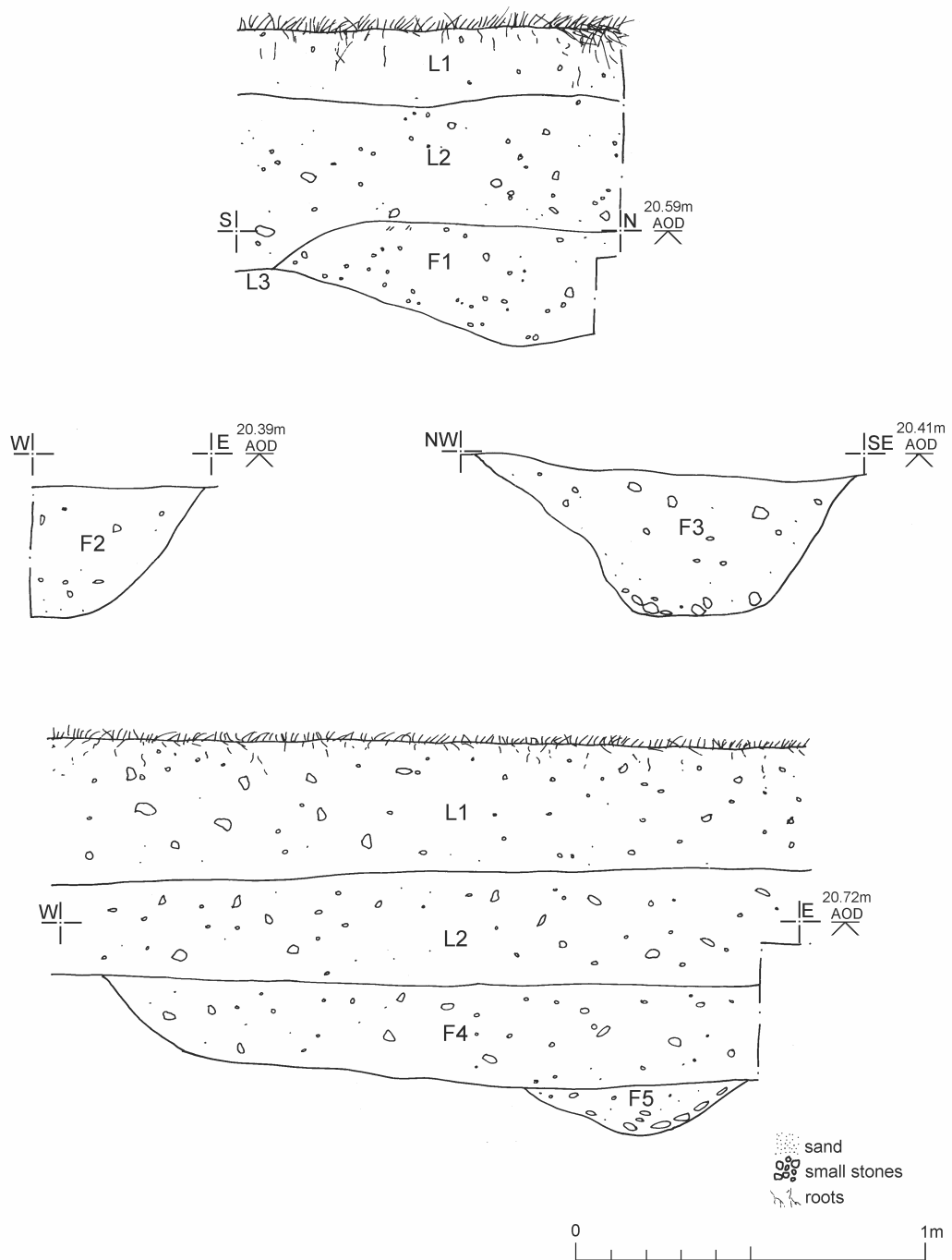


Fig 3 Sections.



Fig 4 Late Bronze Age perforated clay slabs.

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Project details

Project name	Archaeological evaluation on land adjacent to Endway Farm, Southminster Road, Asheldham, Essex, CM0 7DZ
Short description of the project	An archaeological evaluation (two trial-trenches) was carried out on land adjacent to Endway Farm, Southminster Road, Asheldham, Southminster, Essex, in advance of the construction of a new dwelling. The site lies just to the north of Asheldham Camp, a univallate Iron Age hillfort, and in the midst of cropmarks indicating the presence of ring ditches and linear features. Excavations revealed two pits and a ditch dating to the Late Bronze Age, a pit dating to the Late Bronze Age or Early Iron Age, and a ditch dating to the Early Iron Age at the latest. Previous excavations of Asheldham Camp indicated that the site had witnessed a phase of activity prior to the construction of the hillfort. The present investigation provides further evidence of an earlier phase of activity here.
Project dates	Start: 16-07-2020 End: 16-07-2020
Previous/future work	No / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	2020/06m - Contracting Unit No.
Any associated project reference codes	MAL/18/01273 - Planning Application No.
Any associated project reference codes	AMEF20 - Sitecode
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	None
Current Land use	Vacant Land 2 - Vacant land not previously developed
Monument type	PIT Late Bronze Age
Monument type	DITCH Late Bronze Age
Monument type	PIT Early Iron Age
Monument type	DITCH Uncertain
Significant Finds	POTTERY Late Bronze Age
Significant Finds	POTTERY Early Iron Age
Significant Finds	CLAY SLABS Late Bronze Age
Significant Finds	HEAT-ALTERED STONES Late Prehistoric
Significant Finds	CARBONISED TWIG Uncertain
Significant Finds	SLAG Uncertain
Methods & techniques	"Sample Trenches"
Development type	Rural residential
Prompt	Planning condition
Position in the planning process	Not known / Not recorded

Project location

Country	England
Site location	ESSEX MALDON ASHELDHAM Land adjacent to Endway Farm, Southminster Road
Postcode	CM0 7DZ
Study area	0.19 Hectares
Site coordinates	TL 97272 01420 51.676306796658 0.853588693816 51 40 34 N 000 51 12 E Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 20.3m Max: 20.51m

Project creators

Name of Organisation Colchester Archaeological Trust

Project brief originator HEM Team Officer, ECC

Project design originator Laura Pooley

Project director/manager Chris Lister

Project supervisor Ben Holloway

Type of sponsor/funding body Owner

Project archives

Physical Archive recipient Colchester Museum

Physical Archive ID AMEF20

Physical Contents "Ceramics","other"

Digital Archive recipient Colchester Museum

Digital Archive ID AMEF20

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Paper Archive ID AMEF20

Paper Media available "Context sheet","Miscellaneous Material","Photograph","Report","Section"

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