

Essex Historic Environment Record/ Essex Archaeology and History

CAT Report 558

Summary sheet

Address: The Yard, Trenders Avenue, Rayleigh, Essex.	
Parish: Rayleigh	District: Rochford
NGR: TQ 8001 9321 (centre)	Site codes: CAT project –10/6c Museum accession – (pending) ECC HEM code– RLTA10
Type of work: Archaeological trial trenching and excavation	Site director/group: Colchester Archaeological Trust
Date of work: 29th June 2010	Size of area investigated: 0.565ha
Location of finds/curating museum: Southend Museum	Funding source: Developer
Further seasons anticipated? No	Related EHER numbers: 1363 and 13535
Final report: CAT Report 558	
Periods represented: modern	
<p>Summary of fieldwork results:</p> <p>Five trial trenches were excavated at the site of a former reclamation yard on Trenders Avenue, Rayleigh, by the Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) on the 30th of June 2010. Trenders Avenue is a small lane located in Green Belt land to the north of Rayleigh (Fig 1). Trial trenching was undertaken prior to the construction of 4 detached barn-style dwellings arranged around a central court. Quantities of Roman pottery had previously been recovered in two areas, one within the development site and another to the immediate south west, strongly indicating the former presence of a Roman settlement or cemetery within the immediate vicinity (EHER 1363 and 13535). The fieldwork was carried out as required in a brief issued by Essex County Council Historic Environment Management (ECC HEM) officer Adam Garwood and in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) produced by CAT.</p> <p>The investigation consisted of five trial trenches; one diagonally across the proposed central courtyard (Trench 5), three along the full lengths of the footprints of the proposed houses (Trenches 1,2 & 3), and one which was moved 11m to the east of the western most proposed footprint (Trench 4) (Fig 2). Trench 4 was moved to the east to avoid a large heap of crushed building material from the demolition of ancillary buildings and hard standing which had made up the former reclamation yard, and was undertaken after consultation with the ECC HEM officer.</p> <p>Machine stripping, using a toothless ditching bucket, was undertaken to remove a compact layer of modern crushed concrete, building debris and rubbish (L1). The modern material directly overlay natural clay (L2). No undisturbed soil accumulation was observed in any of the five trenches. There was no evidence on site of any soil having been removed during the demolition of the reclamation yard. Moreover, the construction of an area of yard surface and internal floor directly onto (and into) the natural clay which was observed in the east end of T4 (A1.1) suggests that any overlying soil had been removed from the area prior to the construction of the reclamation yard. Modern disturbance in the natural clay was identified</p>	

throughout the five trenches and included concrete foundations, floor surfaces and pits containing modern rubbish. The natural clay was a light orange/grey colour. However, across most of the site the clay had been badly stained green/black by modern contaminants, mostly oil. The natural clay was contaminated in all five trenches in varying degrees of severity. Trenches 2 and 3 had large dark grey patches of stained clay with black specks and a distinct aroma of hydrocarbons (A1.2 & A1.3). Roughly 75% of Trench 1 was contaminated and 55% of Trench 2. In the eastern half of Trench 1 substantial modern foundations and an associated floor surface cut deep into the natural clay. The clay exposed in the western half of the trench had been stained dark green/black by contaminants (A1.1). At this point a decision was made, in conjunction with HEM to decrease the width of the trenches from 2m to a single bucket's width (1.4m) to minimise the amount of contaminated ground exposed to the air. Roughly 90% of the natural clay exposed in Trench 4 was contaminated (A1.4), whilst Trench 5, which was the worst contaminated, was black with oil throughout the whole trench (A1.5).

Hand cleaning of the trenches was not undertaken due to the health and safety implications of working with contaminated ground. The identification of features by means of differentiating deposits based on colour was largely impossible due to the degree of staining across the trenches. However, where it was possible to observe clean clay no features were observed and, based on the absence of any changes in the consistency of the clay, no archaeological features cut into the natural clay in the five evaluation trenches. No finds were recovered from any of the trenches.

Despite the difficult conditions for the identification of archaeological features or deposits it is believed that nothing of archaeological significance was uncovered during the evaluation. Moreover, if any archaeological deposits do survive in the development area they are likely heavily polluted by contaminants associated with the land's former use as a reclamation yard. Whether any archaeological deposits were disturbed or removed from the evaluation area prior to the construction of the reclamation yard, or whether the development is close to any Roman activity area is uncertain.

Previous summaries/reports: None

Keywords: -

Significance: neg

Author of summary:
Adam Wightman

Date of summary:
July 2010

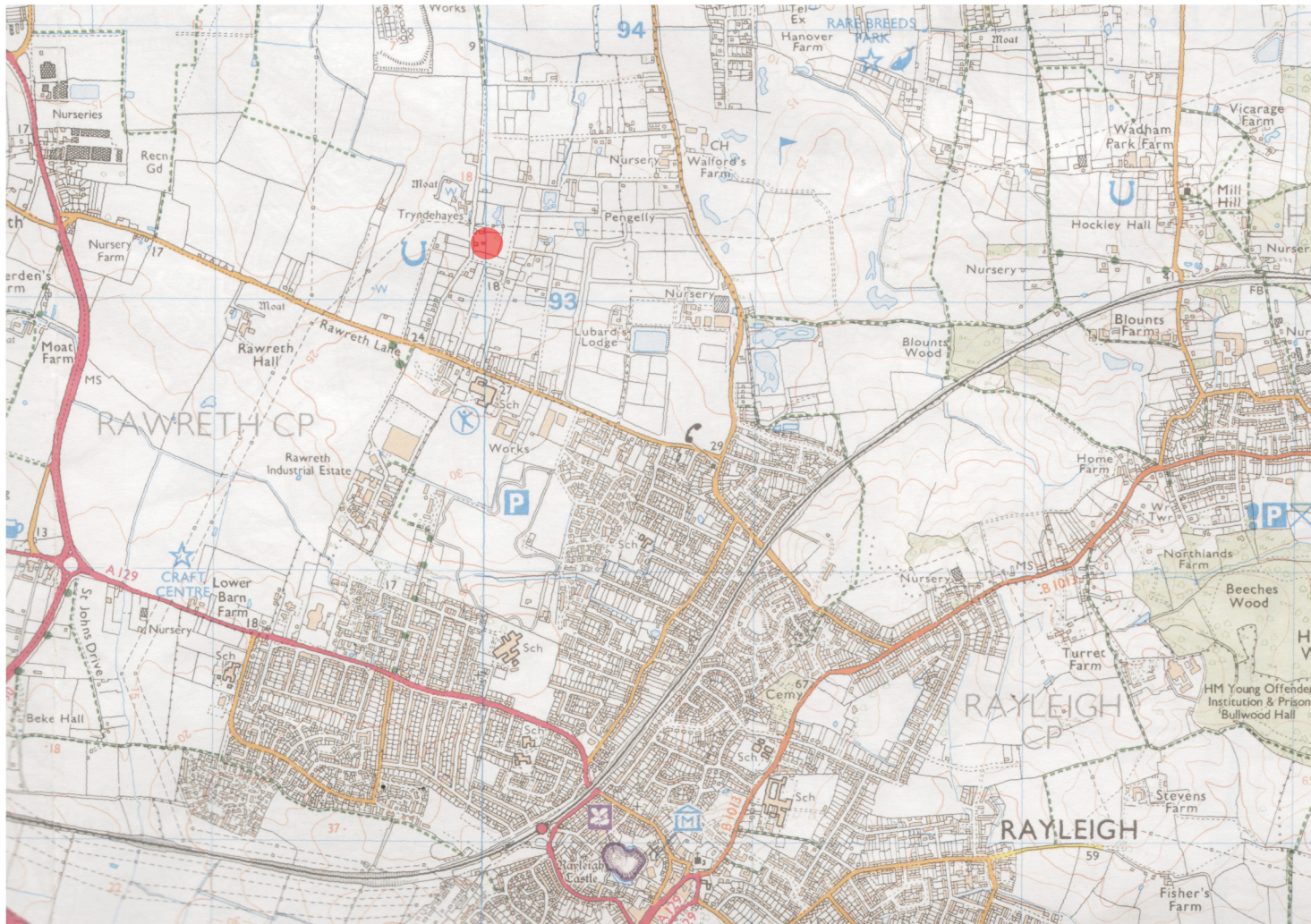


Fig 1 Site location, shown as red dot.

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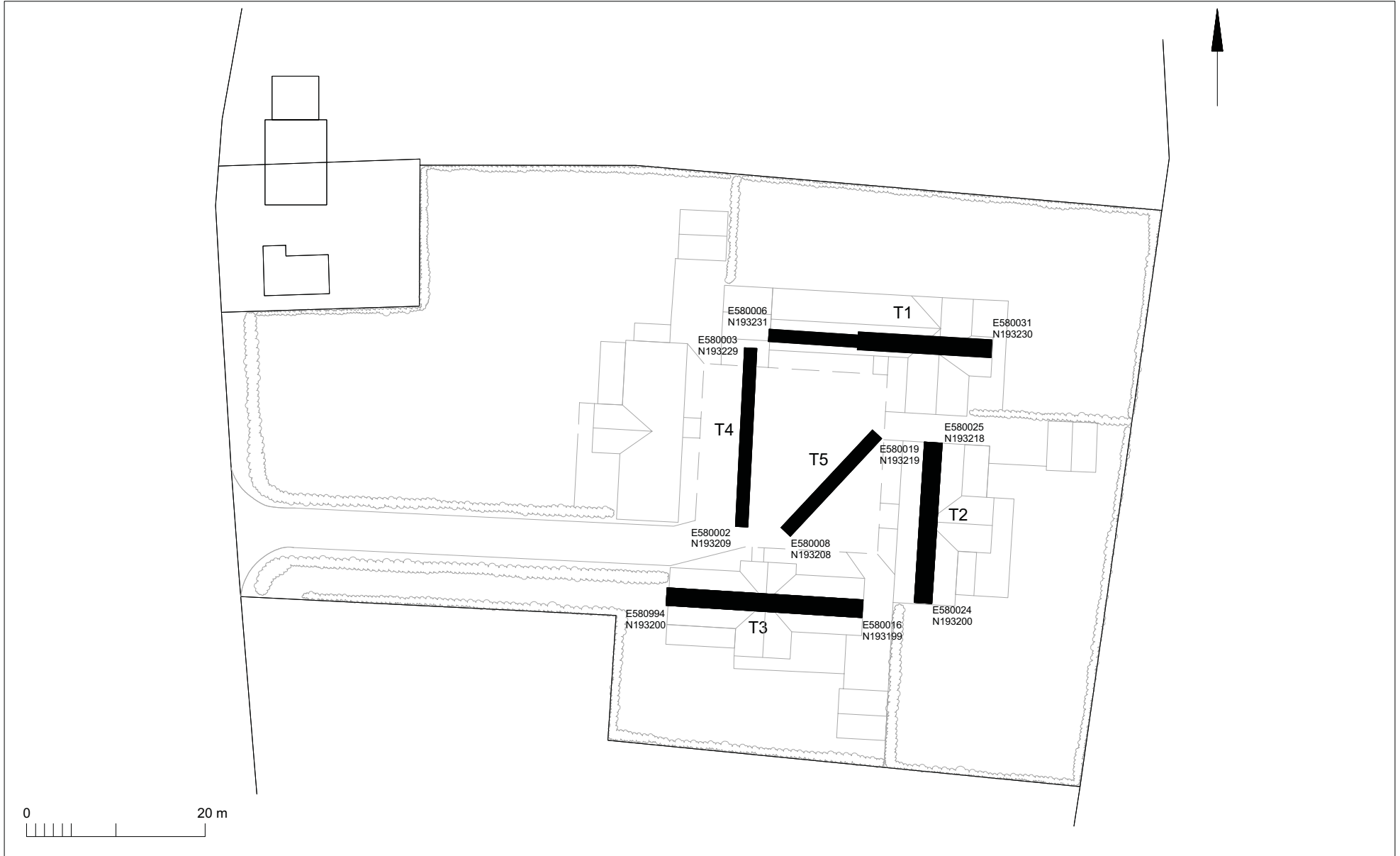


Fig 2 Trench locations in relation to proposed buildings

Appendix 1: Trench Photographs



A1.1 Trench 1 facing east.



A1.2 Trench 2 facing north.



A1.3 Trench 3 facing east



A1.4 Trench 4 facing north



A1.5 Trench 5 facing north-east.