

**An archaeological evaluation
at the
Lexden Wood Golf Club
(Westhouse Farm), Lexden,
Colchester, Essex**

January 2000

Archive report



on behalf of
Lexden Wood Golf Club



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CAT Report 59

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Contents

List of figures	3
1 Summary	4
2 Introduction	4
3 Archaeological background	5
4 Aim	5
5 The Trial trench	6
6 Finds	
6.1 Finds list	7
7 Discussion and interpretation	8
8 Acknowledgements	9
9 References	9
10 Glossary	9
11 Archive deposition	9
12 Site data	10
12.1 Context list	10
12.2 Soil descriptions	10
Appendix Geophysical Survey	after 11

List of figures

Cover	Excavation in progress
Figure 1	Geophysical grid and trench location
Figure 2	Section and plan of trench

An archaeological evaluation at Lexden Wood Golf Club (Westhouse Farm), Lexden, Colchester, Essex.

1 Summary

A geophysical survey has confirmed the position of a rectangular cropmark site west of Westhouse Farm (now the Lexden Wood Golf Club). A small trench was opened up within the footprint of the proposed new building inside the cropmark enclosure. This trench (covering less than 1% of the interior of the enclosure) failed to reveal any internal features, but finds of Middle Iron Age and Roman pottery confirm the general date range within which the cropmark site is likely to fall. As the proposed development lies within the cropmark enclosure, there is still the potential for prehistoric and/or Roman remains to be disturbed.

2 Introduction

- 2.1 This is the archive report on an archaeological evaluation by geophysical survey and trial trenching on the site of a proposed new building at the Lexden Wood Golf Club (Westhouse Farm), Lexden, Colchester, Essex. The cropmark site is centred on TL 973 261, and the evaluation trench was at TL 9727 2608.
- 2.2 A geophysical survey was carried out between 17th - 20th January 2000 by Peter Cott. Following discussion with the Archaeology Officer of Colchester Museums, trial trenching was carried out between 19th - 21st January 2000 by Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT). Post-excavation work took place between 24th - 31st January 2000.
- 2.3 All fieldwork was done in accordance with a specification agreed with the Archaeology Officer of Colchester Museums.
- 2.4 This report mirrors standards and practices contained in Colchester Borough Council's *Guidelines for the standards and practice of archaeological fieldwork in the Borough of Colchester*.

3 Archaeological background

The site is situated only 200m west of Moat Farm Dyke ¹, part of the extensive and complex earthwork defensive system of pre-Roman Colchester.

In September 1952, Lieutenant R.J. Appleby cut an exploratory trench across the ditch of a rectangular enclosure which had been seen as a cropmark in the field immediately east of Westhouse Farm ². This is the cropmark site which is the subject of this report. Apart from the main ditch enclosing an area of approximately 6,500 m², the cropmark site also includes smaller external ditches, and internal features, such as possible pits and post holes.

Appleby's trench is located a few metres east of the south-west corner of the enclosure (see figure 1). His site records consist of a typescript sheet and a section drawing. The ditch, which lies under a blanket of ploughsoil 9-12 inches thick (200-300mm), was 16 feet (4.9m) wide and 4 feet deep (1.2m). The top fill of the ditch is shown as *Gravelly Loam*, and the lower fill as *loam*. Large thick pieces of pottery were reported, and at the depths quoted they must be from the lower (loam) fill. Appleby describes the pottery as "*thick coarse and friable*", and it "*was thought to be Bronze Age*". The published note on the excavation (presumably written by Museum Curator Rex Hull) describes it in more detail as "*thick, soft, black ware with a rough drab surface*" and remarks that this was "*quite different from anything found in Colchester before*", and "*certainly not Roman nor yet of the period of Cunobeline, and it is unlikely to be Saxon*". The upper filling of the ditch contained a fragment of Roman tile, which shows that the earthwork was not levelled before the Roman period. It is slightly startling to hear Rex Hull say that he has never seen this type of pottery before.

The excavation report is enlarged upon by Hawkes and Crummy (1995, 137) who estimate the ditch at 3 feet 6 inches deep (1.1m), and 16 feet wide (4.9m). The upper fill of the ditch containing the Roman tile is probably the bank redeposited into the partially silted up ditch. Crummy dates the pottery, now lost, to between the 8th century and *circa* 50 BC, and the earthwork to Early or Middle Iron Age or earlier. Further work is required to establish the date of this enclosure, and to identify the date and function of the internal features - for instance, are they pits?

4 Aim

The aim of the evaluation was to locate, identify and assess the quality and extent of any surviving archaeological remains on the site, with particular reference to any features associated with the enclosure.

¹ A Scheduled Ancient Monument, which may not be touched in any way without the written consent of the Secretary of State.

² *Report of Colchester and Essex Museum* (April 1st 1950 to March 31st 1954), page 13.

5 The Trial trench (figure 2).

5.1 A single two-by-five metre long trial trench (T1) was dug in the location shown on figure 1, using hand tools. The turf was removed first and kept separate for subsequent re-laying. The topsoil L1 was removed in two spits of approximately 14cm each, and the remaining topsoil carefully cleaned off to reveal subsoil L2. The only features cutting L2 were a few shallow linear stripes, which were probably old plough stripes. This indicates that the land was once under arable cultivation.

5.2 The subsoil L2 exposed in the trench was the same level from which Appleby dug his section through the ditch in 1952. Therefore, features have previously been seen at this level on this site. Nevertheless, nothing was visible in L2 in this trench, and it was thought worthwhile to remove a little more soil and examine the trench at a lower depth. A strip one metre wide on the west side was hand dug down through L2 and L3 down to natural (L4) - a total depth of 65cm below the surface. Removal of the subsoil (L2, L3) revealed a fairly uniform deposit of sandy/gravelly loam with a thickness of 35cm. Layers 2 and 3 were only differentiated because L3 had a slightly higher percentage of gravel and stone inclusions, otherwise the layers were indistinguishable.

5.3 No features were visible in L2, L3 or cutting into L4. However, a number of finds were recovered. These are listed in section 6.1 below.

6 The finds

6.1 Finds list ³

Weights are grammes. Medieval and later fabrics are after Cunningham (1985), and Cotter (forthcoming). U/s = unstratified

Trench	Context	bag no	Qty	Wt	Description	Date
1	L1	1	3	10g	Clay pigeon fragments	20th century
1	L1	1	1	10g	Bottle glass	18th -19th century
1	L1	1	1	5g	Clay tobacco pipe stem	18th -19th century
1	L1	1	3	90g	Burnt flint	possibly prehistoric
1	L1	1	1	45g	Slate	
1	L1	1	1	10g	Iron nail	
1	L1	1	1	25g	Slag fragment	
1	L1	1	1	675g	Concrete lump (discarded)	modern
1	L1	1	3	115g	Tile fragments (2 small fragments discarded)	Roman
1	L1	1	6	85g	Peg tile fragments (discarded)	medieval/post-medieval
1	L1	1	6	260g	Indeterminate brick	
1	L1	1	1	120g	Modern tile (discarded)	
1	L1	1	1	30g	Pottery - glazed fabric 40	17th -19th century
1	L1	1	1	3g	Pottery - shelly ware	12th century
1	L1	1	1	15g	Pottery, early medieval type ware	11th - 12th century
1	L1	1	1	7g	Pottery - grey ware rim sherd	Roman
1	L1	1	1	3g	Pottery - abraded grog tempered	Late Iron Age
1	L2	2	1	10g	Peg tile	medieval/post-medieval
1	L2	2	1	5g	Indeterminate brick fragment	?
1	L2	2	1	190g	Roman tile	Roman
1	L2	2	1	20g	Burnt flint	possibly prehistoric
1	L2	2	1	20g	heavily abraded amphora sherd	Roman
1	L2	2	1	60g	heavily tempered storage jar fragment	LIA/Roman
1	L2	2	2	5g	Grey ware pottery sherds	Roman
2	L2	2	9	55g	Sand tempered dark fabric pottery - two sherds burnished foot/base.	Middle Iron Age, <i>circa</i> 350-50 BC
2	L3	3	1	10g	hard fired clay/tile	
2	L3	3	1	10g	Burnt flint	possibly prehistoric

³ Prehistoric pottery examined by Paul Sealey (Colchester Museums), Roman pottery by Stephen Benfield (CAT), medieval and later by Howard Brooks (CAT).

7 Discussion and interpretation

Finds recovered from the topsoil ranged from 20th century material to a fragment of Iron age pottery. The presence of plough stripes cutting into L2 confirms that the land was in arable cultivation for some time before the construction of the golf course.

The removal of the topsoil (L1) in the trial trench did not reveal any archaeological features in L2. This was surprising in view of the fact that Appleby's enclosure ditch was cut from this level.

Subsoil Layer 2 produced a mixture of prehistoric, Roman and medieval material. Judging by the position of Appleby's trench, the top of L2 was originally the old ground level on this site (or reasonably close to it). So why does it now contain a mixture of prehistoric, Roman and medieval material? The answer must be that the old land surface has been disturbed by ploughing, and later material has been introduced into it (hence the presence of peg tile in L2).

Generally speaking, it is reasonable to assume that the site was occupied at the periods suggested by the ceramics - that is in the Middle Iron Age and Roman periods. Unfortunately, this evidence only relates to the interior of the enclosure, and not to the ditch. None of the evidence recovered here contradicts Appleby's or Crummy and Hawkes' idea that the enclosure ditch (and site) was prehistoric, and that the ditch was filled in the Roman period.

No internal features were seen in this small trench (which covered less than 1% of the interior of the enclosure). However, the presence of the Roman and prehistoric material in the evaluation trench confirms that Roman and or prehistoric remains await discovery in the remainder of the enclosure.

8 Acknowledgements

- The geophysical survey was carried out by Peter Cott. Site work was supervised by Howard Brooks, and carried out Colin Austin and Nigel Rayner. The project was monitored by Martin Winter for Colchester Borough Council. Report text and figures by Howard Brooks and Colin Austin. Thanks to:
- Lexden Wood Golf Club for commissioning the work and for access and assistance

9 References

Hawkes C. F. C. and Crummy P. Colchester Archaeological Report **11**, 1995, No 69, 137

Colchester Archaeological Trust Ltd. 1999. *A Desk-based Assessment of the Archaeological Remains around Westhouse Farm, Lexden, Colchester*. CAT Report 47.

Cott P.J. Geophysics Survey Report, Lexden Golf Club, January 2000

10 Glossary

ceramics	pottery
context	specific location on an archaeological site, especially one where finds are made
ESMR	Essex Sites & Monuments Record
feature	an identifiable thing like a pit, a wall, a drain, a floor. Can contain "contexts"
IA	Iron age
intrusive	early material out of place in a later context (e.g. a Coca-Cola bottle in a Roman pit)
LBA	Late Bronze age
medieval	from AD 1066 to Henry VIII
NGR	National Grid Reference
natural	geological deposit undisturbed by man
post-medieval	after Henry VIII and up to Victorian
prehistoric	the years BC, before Roman
residual	an earlier object out of place in a later context (e.g. a Roman coin in a Victorian pit)
Roman	period from AD 43 to around AD 430
u/s	unstratified (no context)

11 Archive deposition

The finds and paper archive are held at Colchester Archaeological Trust, 12 Lexden Rd, Colchester, Essex C03 3NF, but both will be permanently deposited at Colchester Museum, under accession code 2000.6.

12 Site data

12.1 Site context list

Trench	Context	Description	Finds date	Context date
1	L1	Topsoil	Modern - prehistoric	Modern
1	L2	Subsoil	Prehistoric to medieval or later	Natural layer disturbed in medieval or later period.
1	L3	subsoil	Indeterminate	Natural layer disturbed in medieval or later period.
1	L4	natural gravels		Glacial/post glacial

12.2 Soil descriptions

Trench	Context	Description
1	L1	10 yr 3/3 Dark brown Sandy loam, common small/ medium stones; occasional large stones.
1	L2	10 yr 4/4 Dark yellow brown sandy silty loam, common small and medium stones.
1	L3	10 yr 4/4 Dark yellow brown sandy silty loam common -frequent small and medium stones. This layer was differentiated from L2 above only by the higher percentage of inclusions.
1	L4	Natural gravels - mix of sands, coarse gravels and small-medium stones, occasional large stones.

24th-31st January 2000

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Appendix

Geophysical Survey, by Peter Cott

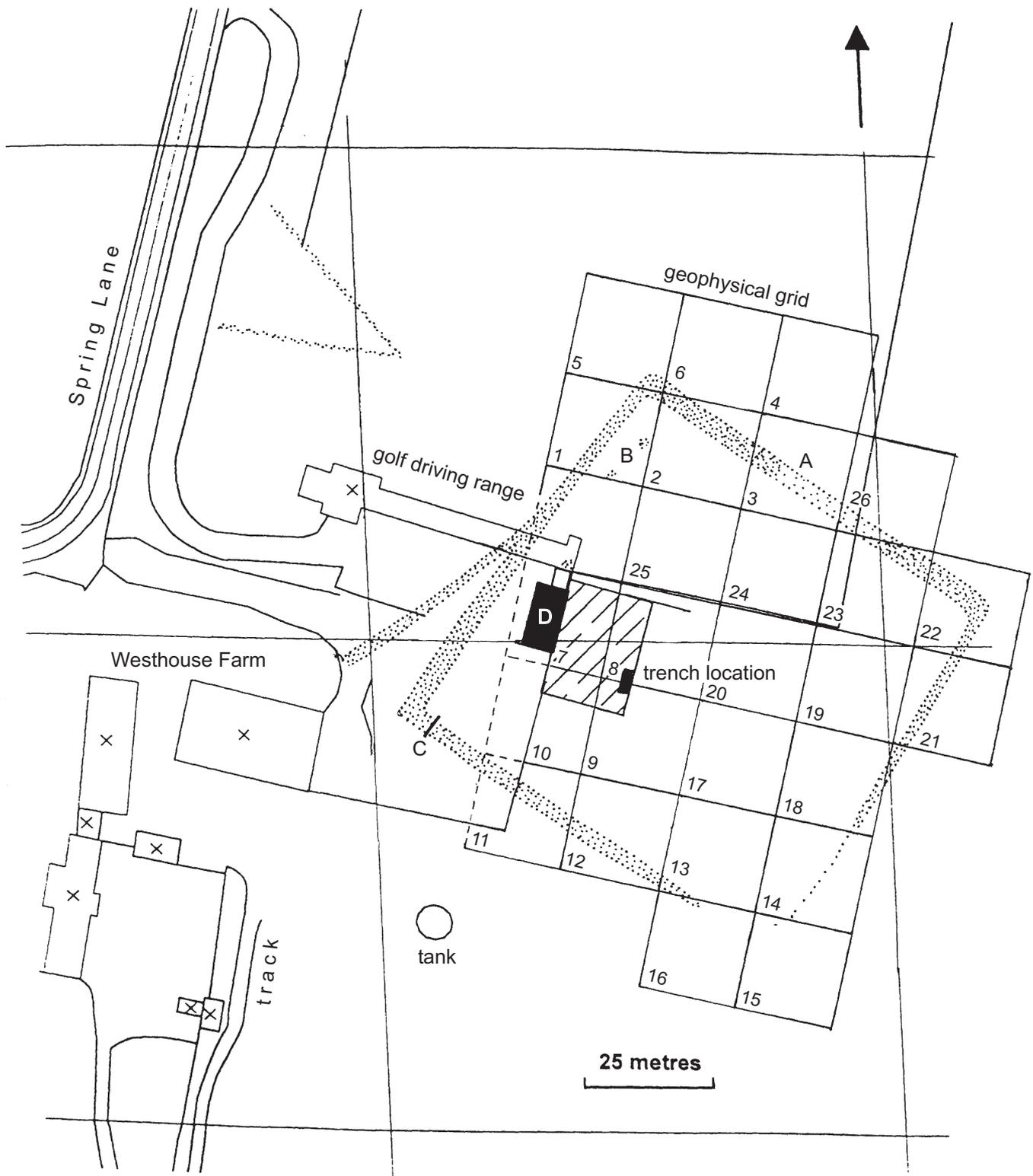


Fig 1 Geophysical grid and trench location.

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A = cropmark of enclosure B = internal features C = approximate position of Appleby's trench D = Portacabin

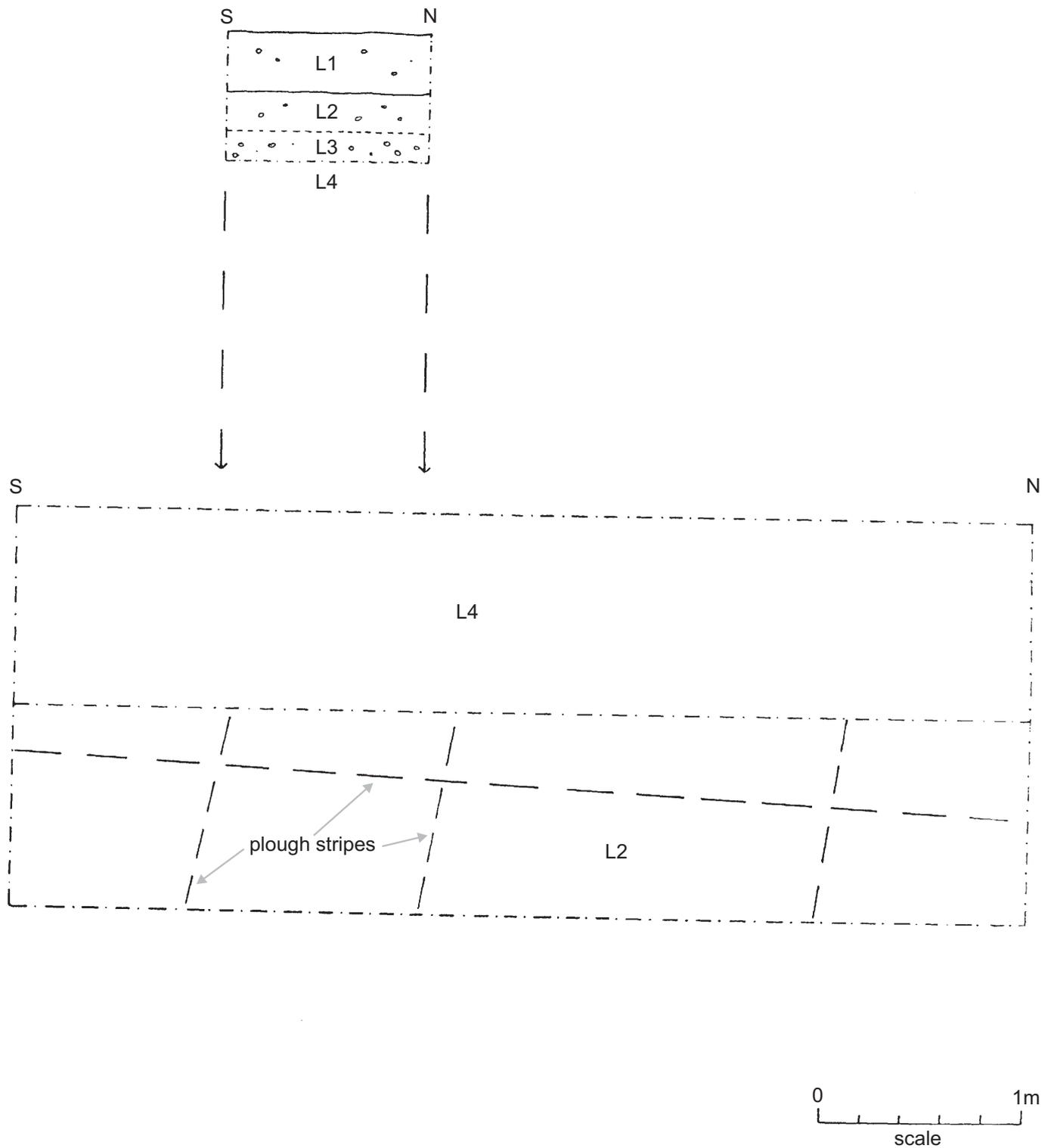


Fig 2 Trench section and plan.

GEOPHYSICS SURVEY REPORT

LEXDEN GOLF CLUB

Peter J. Cott

21st January 2000

1. Introduction.

A magnetometer survey was carried out on the Lexden Golf Course in January 2000 at the request of the Colchester Archaeological Trust. The Golf Course (TL 974263) lies 2.5 km to the west of the centre of Colchester.

The objective was to identify, if possible, any archaeological anomalies, and particularly to identify the exact position of a ditched enclosure which had been recorded on an aerial photograph in the past.

2. Site Description.

An area of about one hectare was marked out by the Trust. This area was adjacent to the club buildings, the sports shop and the driving range. Metal fences enclosed the driving range, and a chain link fence separated the sports shop from the playing area.

The site plan is shown in Figure 1.

3. Method Employed.

The instrument used was a Geoscan FM18 Fluxgate Magnetometer, set to its most sensitive scale which allows readings down to 0.1 nanoTesla.

This instrument detects the minute changes in the earth's magnetic field close to the surface of the soil caused by the presence of certain artefacts. These include man-made ditches, kilns, fired pottery and ferrous items of an archaeological nature. A response is also registered from other ferrous materials such as drainage systems, agricultural iron, metal fences and modern iron materials such as nails.

The area to be surveyed was divided into twenty-six squares, each with sides of 20m. Readings were taken with the FM18 instrument at 0.5m intervals in the North-South direction, and at 1m intervals in the East-West direction. There were thus 800 readings per square.

The readings were downloaded into a laptop computer on site, and finally processed in a desktop computer at base. The computer program employed was InSite, from GeoQuest of Durham. This permits the operator to change the contrast of the plot, to match the gain of each square to its neighbours, and to produce a final plot of the complete survey. The image can also be processed to simulate the action of a smoothing filter.

The raw data from the survey result is shown in Figure 2, and the smoothed data in Figure 3.

4. Discussion of the results..

The main anomalies have been identified in Figure 3.

The various golf club and driving range buildings cause a very large magnetic response along the left-hand side of the plot, and obscure any archaeological features in that area.

The ditched enclosure (A) is clearly seen on three of its sides, despite the interference caused by the metal fences. The enclosure is square, with sides of approximately 84m, and the magnetic response of the ditch indicates a width of 2m. The ditch is cut at B by a large anomaly caused by

random magnetic responses; this coincides with Tee No.1, and is thought to be due to the tee being artificially raised from the natural surface of the ground by the use of hardcore or clinker.

At C there is a faint anomaly showing that the enclosure might have had an internal division.

At D there is a small ditch running roughly E-W to the north of the enclosure.

Anomaly E is unusual, in that it represents a feature with a low magnetic response. This runs clearly for 30m in the E-W direction, and there is a suggestion that it continues for a further 25m. It is thought that this is caused by a drain laid in gravel, or perhaps it is a lost stone path associated with farm use. In any case, the response is not caused by a ferrous metal object.

Anomalies which might repay further investigation are as follows:

F is a small collection of responses beyond ditch D.

G is a large anomaly showing a high magnetic response, but larger than the usual piece of agricultural iron.

H is a series of small anomalies just outside the enclosure.

I is a collection of small anomalies within the ditch. Here it is almost possible to convince one's self that there is an oval response with its axis NE-SW, touching the south-western side of the enclosure.

5. **Acknowledgements.**

Thanks are due to the Colchester Archaeological Trust for setting out the site grid, and to Mr. M. Matthews for valuable help with the survey.

END

Lexden Golf Club

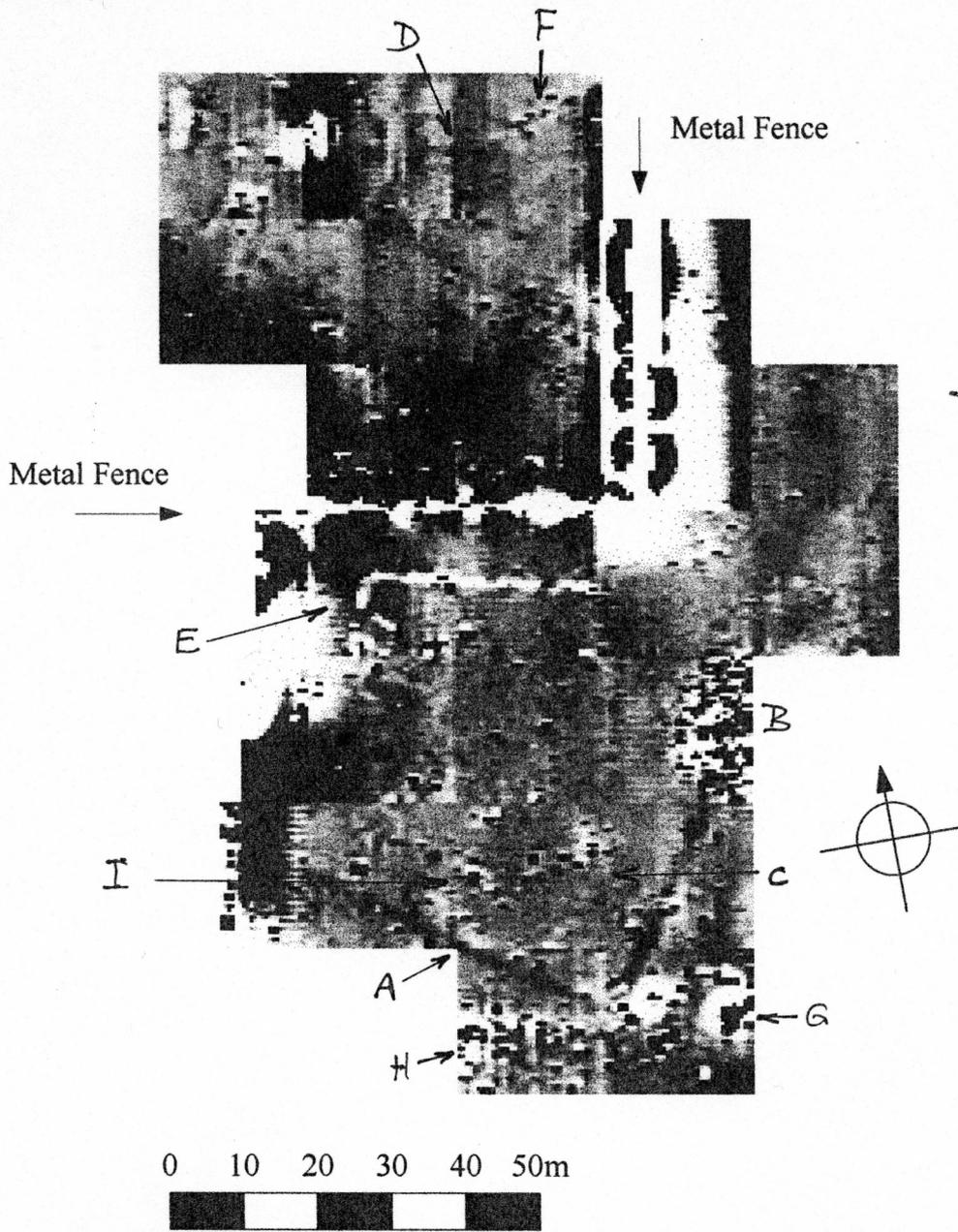


Figure 3 Smoothed Data