

**Archaeological monitoring and recording  
at Tollesbury Wick Marshes,  
Tollesbury, Essex  
September-October 2004**

**report prepared by  
Howard Brooks**

**on behalf of  
the Essex Wildlife Trust**



CAT project code: 04/9c  
NGR: TL 979 104 (centre)  
HAMP group code: TOCW 04  
Planning reference: MAL/0688/03  
Colchester Museums accession code: 2005.9



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**CAT Report 306**  
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Fig 2 Location of counterwall.

Front cover: topsoil strip, with Bradwell power station in the background.

## 1 Summary

*Nothing of archaeological significance was revealed while monitoring the construction of an 875m-long counterwall and associated earthworks at Tollesbury Wick Marshes in Essex.*

## 2 Introduction

- 2.1 This is the archive report on detailed archaeological monitoring and recording carried out during the construction of a counterwall between NGR TL 9740 1067 and TL 9798 0999 at Tollesbury Wick Marshes, Tollesbury, Essex (Fig 1).
- 2.2 A planning application was submitted by Essex Wildlife Trust to Essex County Council in January 2003 for the construction of a counterwall to restrict the impact of any possible future breaches of the existing sea wall. The proposed excavation of borrow pits and topsoil strip over the footprint of the wall itself were potentially destructive of any surviving archaeological deposits. Since the site lies in an area of archaeological potential, the Essex County Council (ECC) Heritage Advice Management and Promotion (HAMP) group recommended that a full archaeological condition should be attached to any planning consent (planning application no MAL/0688/03).
- 2.3 The monitoring and recording were carried out by the Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) between September 15th and October 15th 2004 (Fig 2).
- 2.4 All fieldwork was done in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) agreed with the HAMP group team officer.
- 2.5 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* (1999).

## 3 Archaeological background

- 3.1 The Essex Heritage Conservation Record (EHCR) records a number of archaeological sites within Tollesbury Wick Marshes and in the vicinity of the counterwall. To the east lies a rectangular pond of unknown function and undetermined date (EHCR no 16829); a low mound, approximately 18m x 15m, also of undetermined date and function (EHCR no 16828); and a further possible enclosure and associated mounds (EHCR no 16710). To the west of the counterwall is a ditched enclosure approximately 49m x 45m, of unknown function and date (EHCR no 16827).
- 3.2 This area of the Essex coast is well known for its Late Iron Age and Roman salt-making sites known as 'red hills'. Red hills have been recorded in Tollesbury parish (EHCR nos 1156 and 16192). Although numerous red hills have been flattened by ploughing, they are still recognisable by areas of red or burnt earth and by 'briquetage' or fragments of vessels and equipment used in the salt-making process. Up to 1990, some 300 red hills had been located on the Essex coast, some of which have been excavated (Fawn *et al* 1990, 6). As the Tollesbury site is coastal, it is possible that other unidentified 'red hills' would be located.

## 4 Aim

The aim of the investigation was to identify and record any surviving deposits or features exposed during groundworks for the proposed counterwall, and to excavate and record any which would be destroyed.

## 5 Report

A watching brief was maintained on the stripping of a corridor for the new counterwall, and also on excavations (mainly around the edges of nearby creeks) to gain extra material for constructing the wall. In some instances, there was a little remnant topsoil left behind after the strip, but, on the whole, the ground surface was clear enough for the purposes of monitoring.

No archaeological remains or features were exposed by the topsoil strip or subsequent earthworks. A record of digital photographs was produced during the work.

## 6 Finds

Finds consisted of the following finds from the topsoil:

5 fragments of post-medieval peg-tile (86 grammes); 2 fragments of ceramic field drain (123g); 1 brick fragment (11g); 17 sherds of modern ironstone (Cunningham fabric 48d, 197g); 4 fragments of post-medieval glass (31g); 5 oystershells (120g); three fragments of iron horse shoe (210g). None of this material was kept. Pottery fabrics are after Cunningham 1985.

## 7 Discussion and interpretation

No archaeological features were revealed during the fieldwork. The potential of this watching brief was mainly for the discovery of previously unknown red hills. Given the route of the counterwall, it was slightly more likely that red hills would have been located on the coast edge, ie at each end of the new counterwall.

According to the warden of the reserve, the central part of the reserve had been levelled by machine in the 1960s and 1970s. This may explain why so little of archaeological significance was observed during the watching brief. However, unless that destruction were particularly severe, it would not have completely erased all traces of any red hills. It seems likely, therefore, that no previously unknown red hills existed here.

## 8 Acknowledgments

The project was managed by Howard Brooks and the site work was carried out by David Ross of CAT. The project was monitored for HAMP by Pat Connell.

The Trust would like to thank the staff of the Essex Wildlife Trust for their assistance with this project and for funding the work.

## 9 References

Fawn, A J, Evans, K, McMaster, I, & Davies, G M R, 1990 *The red hills of Essex: salt-making in antiquity*, Colchester Archaeological Group

Cunningham, C M , 1985 'A typology for post-Roman pottery in Essex', in *Post-medieval sites and their pottery: Moulsham Street, Chelmsford*, by C M Cunningham and P J Drury, Chelmsford Archaeol Trust Report 5 and Council British Archaeol Res Report 54, 1-16

## 10 Glossary

context	specific location on an archaeological site, especially one where finds are made
EHCR	Essex Heritage Conservation Record

feature	an identifiable thing like a pit, a wall, a drain, a floor; can contain 'contexts'
NGR	National Grid Reference
natural	geological deposit undisturbed by human activity
red hill	Late Iron Age or Roman salt-making site

## 11 Archive deposition

The paper and digital archive is held by the Colchester Archaeological Trust at 12 Lexden Road, Colchester, Essex CO3 3NF, but it will be permanently deposited with Colchester Museums under accession code 2005.9.

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### Distribution list:

Essex Wildlife Trust  
Pat Connell, ECC HAMP team officer  
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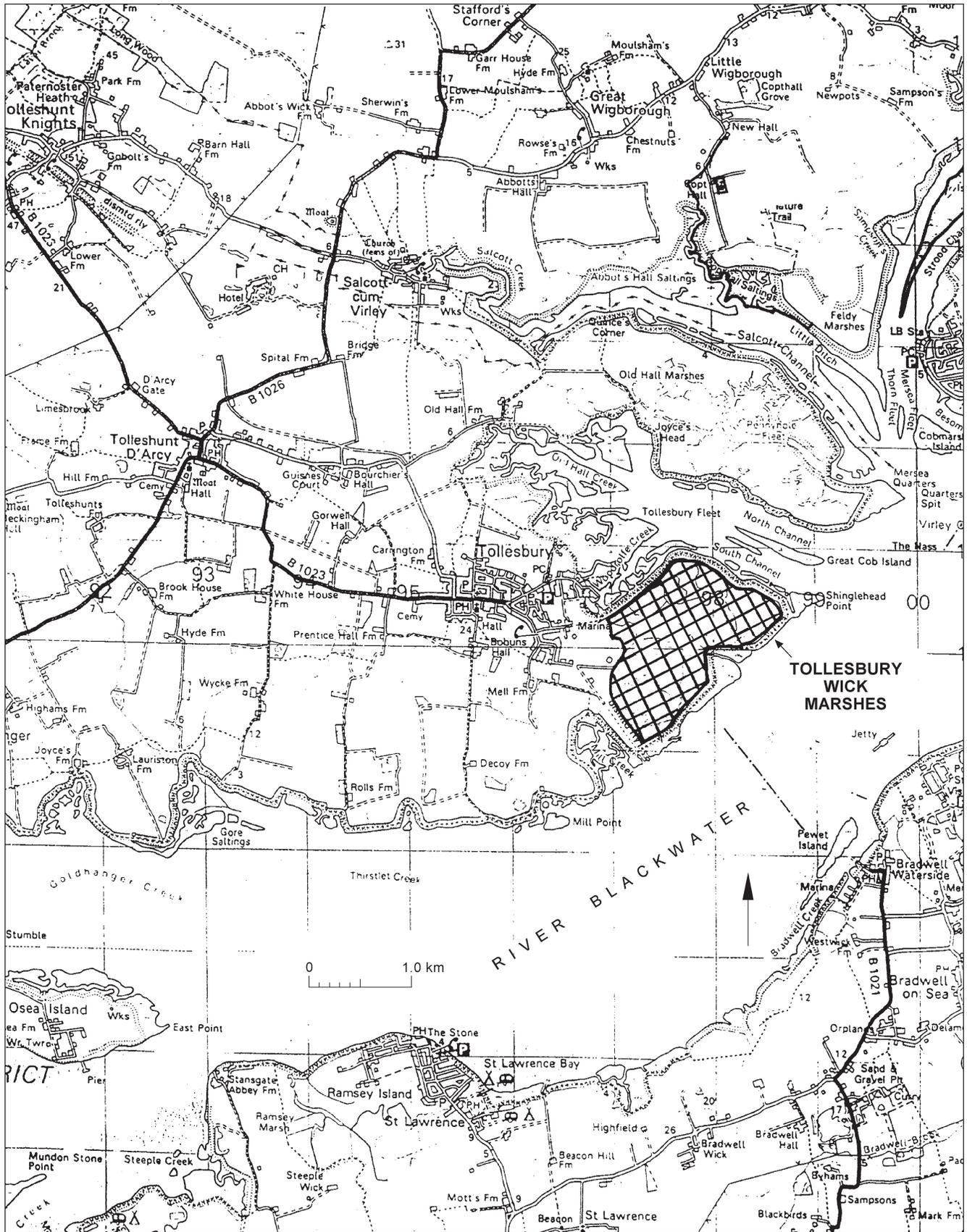
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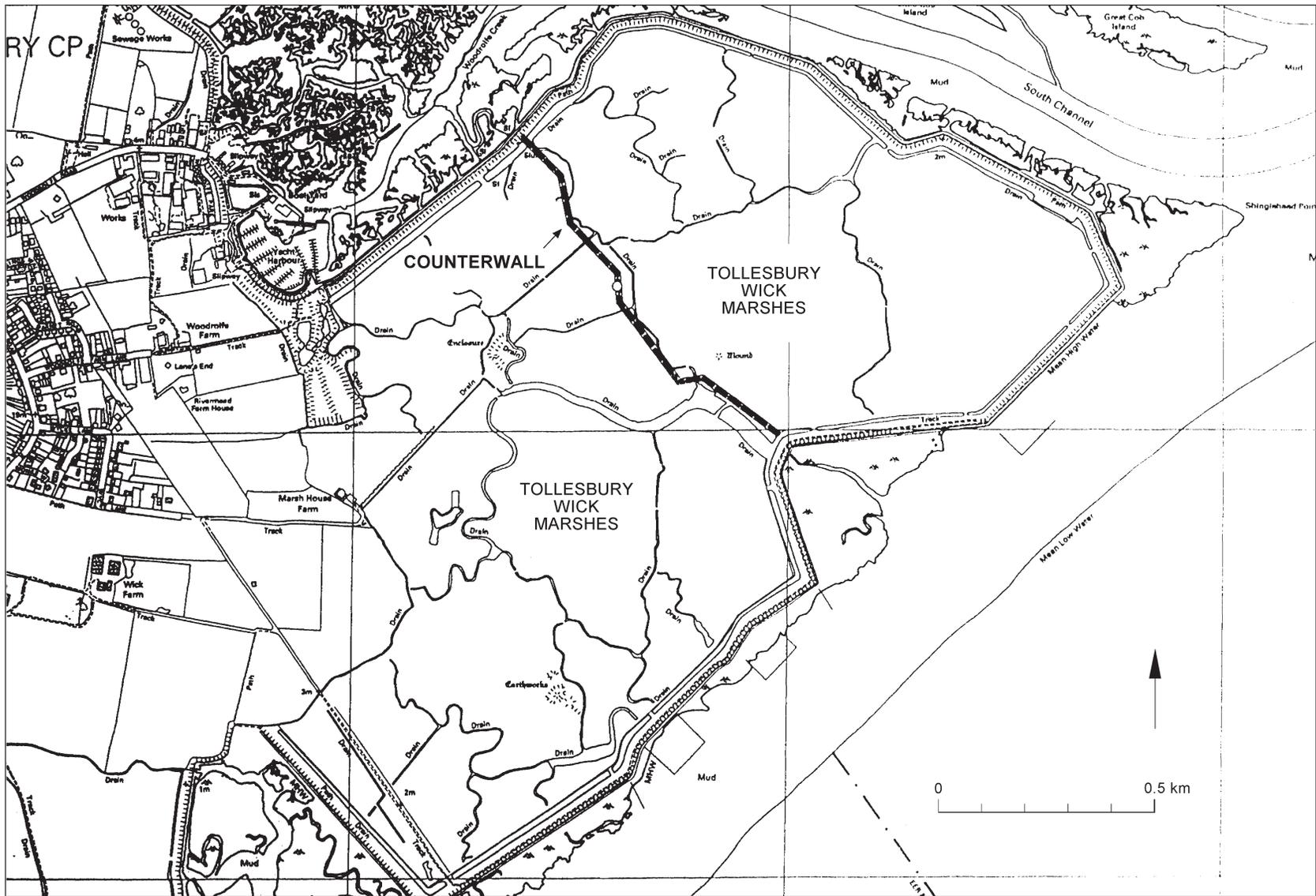
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Fig 1 Location of Tollesbury Wick Marshes.



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Fig 2 Location of counterwall.

**Essex Heritage Conservation Record/  
Essex Archaeology and History**

**Summary sheet**

<b>Site address:</b> Tollesbury Wick Marshes, Tollesbury, Essex	
<b>Parish:</b> Tollesbury	<b>District:</b> Maldon
<b>NGR:</b> TL 9740 1067- TL 9798 0999	<b>Site code:</b> HAMP group code: TOCW 04 Colchester Museums accession no 2005.9
<b>Type of work:</b> Monitoring and recording	<b>Site director/group:</b> Colchester Archaeological Trust
<b>Date of work:</b> September-October 2004	<b>Size of area investigated:</b> 875m-long strip
<b>Location of finds/curating museum:</b> Colchester Museums	<b>Funding source:</b> Developer
<b>Further seasons anticipated?</b> No	<b>Related EHCR nos:</b> 1156, 16192, 16710, 16827-16829
<b>Final report:</b> CAT Report 306	
<b>Periods represented:</b> None	
<b>Summary of fieldwork results:</b> <i>Nothing of archaeological significance was revealed during construction of an 875m-long counterwall and associated earthworks at Tollesbury Wick Marshes.</i>	
<b>Previous summaries/reports:</b> None	
<b>Author of summary:</b> Howard Brooks	<b>Date of summary:</b> January 2005