

**An archaeological evaluation  
by trial-trenching on land  
to the rear of 52 High Street,  
Great Dunmow, Essex  
December 2011**



**report prepared by  
Adam Wightman**

**on behalf of  
Foxley Builders**

CAT project ref.: 11/12a  
NGR: TL 6268 2167 (c)  
ECC project code: GD33  
Saffron Walden Museum accession code: SAFWM 2012.2



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**CAT Report 631**  
January 2012

## Summary report

This is the summary report on the archaeological evaluation by trial-trenching carried out by the Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) in December 2011 prior to the construction of a pair of semi-detached houses on land to the rear of 52 High Street, Great Dunmow, Essex (site centre at TL 6268 2167; Fig 1).

The Essex County Council Historic Environment Management (ECC HEM) team advised that archaeological trial-trenching be undertaken because the development site lies within the area of the Roman, medieval and post-medieval town of Great Dunmow (Fig 1; Medlycott 1998). The trial-trenching was undertaken in accordance with a written scheme of investigation (CAT 2011) produced by CAT in response to a brief issued by ECC HEM (HEM 2011, included with the report). The site consisted of an open area, part hardstanding and part grass, which included two raised flowerbeds, to the rear of the existing property at no 52.

Two evaluation trenches (T1-T2) were excavated within the footprint of the proposed houses (Fig 2). The trenches were positioned between the lines of the proposed foundation trenches of the new buildings so that the ground into which the foundation trenches would be excavated was not disturbed (Fig 2). The trenches were excavated under archaeological supervision using a tracked excavator equipped with a toothless ditching bucket.

A dark-grey silt topsoil (L1) overlay a clayey-silt soil accumulation (L2; Fig 4). Just below the turf and within these soil layers, the stumps of two brick walls or foundations were encountered. F1 in T1 was a short length of wall or foundation constructed of red bricks (not frogged), five courses deep and bound with a lime mortar (Fig 3). The bricks in F1 are dated to the 18th-19th/20th century (see Appendix 1). F1 was seemingly freestanding with no apparent returns at either end. F2 in T2 was the end of a brick wall or foundation also constructed of red bricks (not frogged), dated to the 16th/17th-18th century (Fig 3). F2 was three courses deep and, although the bricks had lime mortar on their surfaces, they were quite loose, which suggests that the end of the wall had been previously damaged. A shallow pit or area of consolidation filled with brick fragments and stone (F4) was also encountered just below the topsoil in T1 (Fig 3). F4 did not cut the natural (L3), but sherds of post-medieval pottery were recovered from the vicinity of the feature during its excavation by machine (see finds from F4/L2 in Appendix 1). The pottery sherds recovered indicate a possible post-medieval date for F4 (late 17th-18th century).

The natural geology (L3) varied across the site. In T1, the natural was a flint gravel in a sandy clay matrix whereas, in T2, it was a medium orange/brown silty-clay with gravel patches (Fig 4). Two exploratory slots were excavated into the silty-clay in T2 to confirm that it was the natural geology (Fig 3). The gravel encountered in T1 was similar to that identified by CAT in 2009 and 2010 in a gravel seam at the Salerooms site located 270m to the north-east of the current site (CAT Report 535).

Two features had been cut into the natural geology, ie a large rubbish-pit (F5) in T1 and a shallow pit or linear feature (F3) in T2 (Fig 3). F5 had a clayey-silt fill and contained frequent sherds of pottery, bottle glass and brick fragments. Pottery sherds consisting of seven different pottery fabric types were recovered from F5 (see Appendix 1). A fragment from an English stoneware tankard was impressed with an inscription. The right-hand part of the inscription is missing but it almost certainly reads:

**I; G  
177(9)**

Based on this date and the dates of the other pottery fabrics recovered, it is probable that pit F5 dates to the first half of the 19th century. F3 was a shallow linear feature on the same alignment as the stone edging on the eastern side of the existing raised flowerbed in the middle of the site (Fig 3). F3 had a dry, solid fill which contained a small quantity of finds (see Appendix 1), including a pottery sherd almost certainly from the same

Staffordshire-type white earthenware bowl as sherds recovered from F5. Therefore, it is probable that F3 and F5 are contemporary.

The archaeological features identified during this evaluation are post-medieval or modern in date and are interpreted as landscaping features and rubbish-disposal pits in a former back garden or yard to a property fronting onto the High Street. No evidence of Roman or medieval activity was identified during this evaluation.

## References

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

CAR 7	2000	<i>Colchester Archaeological Report 7: Post-Roman pottery from excavations in Colchester, 1971-85</i> , by J Cotter
CAT	2011	<i>Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for archaeological trial-trenching and excavation on land to the rear of 52 High Street, Great Dunmow, Essex</i> , by E Spurgeon
CAT Report 535		Report on an archaeological evaluation, excavation and watching brief at the Salerooms site, Chequers Lane, Great Dunmow, Essex: August and September 2009 and March 2010, unpublished CAT archive report, by H Brooks and A Wightman, 2011
Cunningham, C, & Drury, P	1985	<i>Post-medieval sites and their pottery: Moulsham Street, Chelmsford</i> , CBA, Research Report, <b>54</b>
HEM	2011	<i>Archaeological trial-trenching and excavation at the rear of 52 High Street, Great Dunmow, Essex</i> , by R Havis
Medlycott, M	1998	<i>Great Dunmow: historic towns project: assessment report</i> (ECC Planning, Archaeology Section)
Ryan, P	1996	<i>Brick in Essex, from the Roman conquest to the Reformation</i>

## List of plates and figures

Frontispiece: general view of the site with T1 in the foreground, view north.

Fig 1 Site location.

Fig 2 Site plan.

Fig 3 Results.

Fig 4 T1-T2: representative sections.

## Appendices

### Appendix 1: finds

by Stephen Benfield

A small number of finds of post-medieval and modern date was recovered from the two evaluation trenches. They consist of pottery, ceramic building material (CBM), glass and slate. They were recovered from one layer (L2) and five features (F1, F2, F3, F4/L2, F5). The finds are listed in the table below and spot dates are provided for each context. The medieval and post-medieval pottery fabric types refer to the Essex post-Roman fabric series (Cunningham & Drury 1985; CAR 7) and are listed below. The bricks have been dated following the typology for Essex bricks (Ryan 1996).

**Table 1: pottery fabrics.**

Fabric code	Description	Date
40	post-medieval red earthenwares (general)	16th/17th-18th century
40A	Metropolitan slipware	17th-18th century
45	English stonewares	mid/late 17th-18th century
45F	Westerwald stoneware	17th-18th century
45M	English stonewares	19th-20th century
47	Staffordshire-type white stoneware	19th-20th century
48D	Staffordshire-type white earthenwares	18th/19th-20th century
50	Staffordshire-type slipware	mid/late 17th-18th century

**Table 2: list of finds with spot-dating.**

Trench	context	finds no	finds	spot-date
T1	F1	1	<b>CBM</b> post-Roman: brick, 1@2,700 g, complete red brick, not frogged, lime mortar on surfaces, 220 x 118 x 65 mm	(18th-19th/20th century)
T1	F5	4	<b>pottery</b> post-medieval: Fabric 40, 5@311 g, includes rim sherds from large bowls; Fabric 40A, 4@329 g, much of the rim of one dish, one other sherd; Fabric 45, 1@88 g, tankard rim, impressed with letters <b>I; G</b> and date <b>177(9)</b> below; Fabric 45M, 2@116 g, rim sherds, probably both from tankards; Fabric 45F, 1@109 g, ?chamber pot rim; Fabric 47, 1@11 g, pressed plate with decorated edge; Fabric 48D, 3@30 g (some sherds almost certainly from same bowl as in F3 (finds no 6)) <b>glass</b> post-medieval, 1@115 g, bottle base in very dark glass, 18th-19th/20th century	19th-20th century
T1	F4/L2	3	<b>pottery</b> post-medieval: Fabric 40, 4@282 g, rims from large ?storage jar and a large bowl; Fabric 40A, 1@8 g, bowl form; Fabric 50, 1@11 g, rim from a porringer (similar to <i>CAR 7</i> , fig 170.2)	mid/late 17th-18th century
T2	F2	2	<b>CBM</b> post-Roman: brick, 1@3,000 g, complete red brick, patchy blue-grey glaze, not frogged, lime mortar on surfaces, 235 x 110 x 60 mm	(16th/17th-18th century)
T2	F3	6	<b>pottery</b> Fabric 48D, 1@2 g, almost certainly from same bowl as in F5 (finds no 4) <b>glass</b> post-medieval: vessel glass, 4@33 g, rim and sherds from a glass ?bowl, surfaces degraded and iridescent <b>CBM</b> post-Roman: peg-tile, 1@67 g	19th-20th century
T2	L2	5	<b>CBM</b> post-Roman: peg-tile 2@121 g, 12-13 mm thick, round fixing holes	13th century+

## Appendix 2: contents of archive

One A4 document wallet containing:

### 1 Introduction

- 1.1 Copy of the evaluation brief issued by the ECC HEM team
- 1.2 Copy of the WSI produced by CAT
- 1.3 Risk assessment
- 1.4 1 x A3 site plan provided by the developer

### 2 Site archive

- 2.1 Digital photographic record
- 2.2 Context sheets (L1-L3, F1-F5, 1 x trench sketch sheet)
- 2.3 Attendance register
- 2.4 Finds register
- 2.5 Site photographic record on CD
- 2.6 1 x A4 sheet with 2 x representative trench section drawings

### 3 Research archive

- 3.1 Monitoring (client) report

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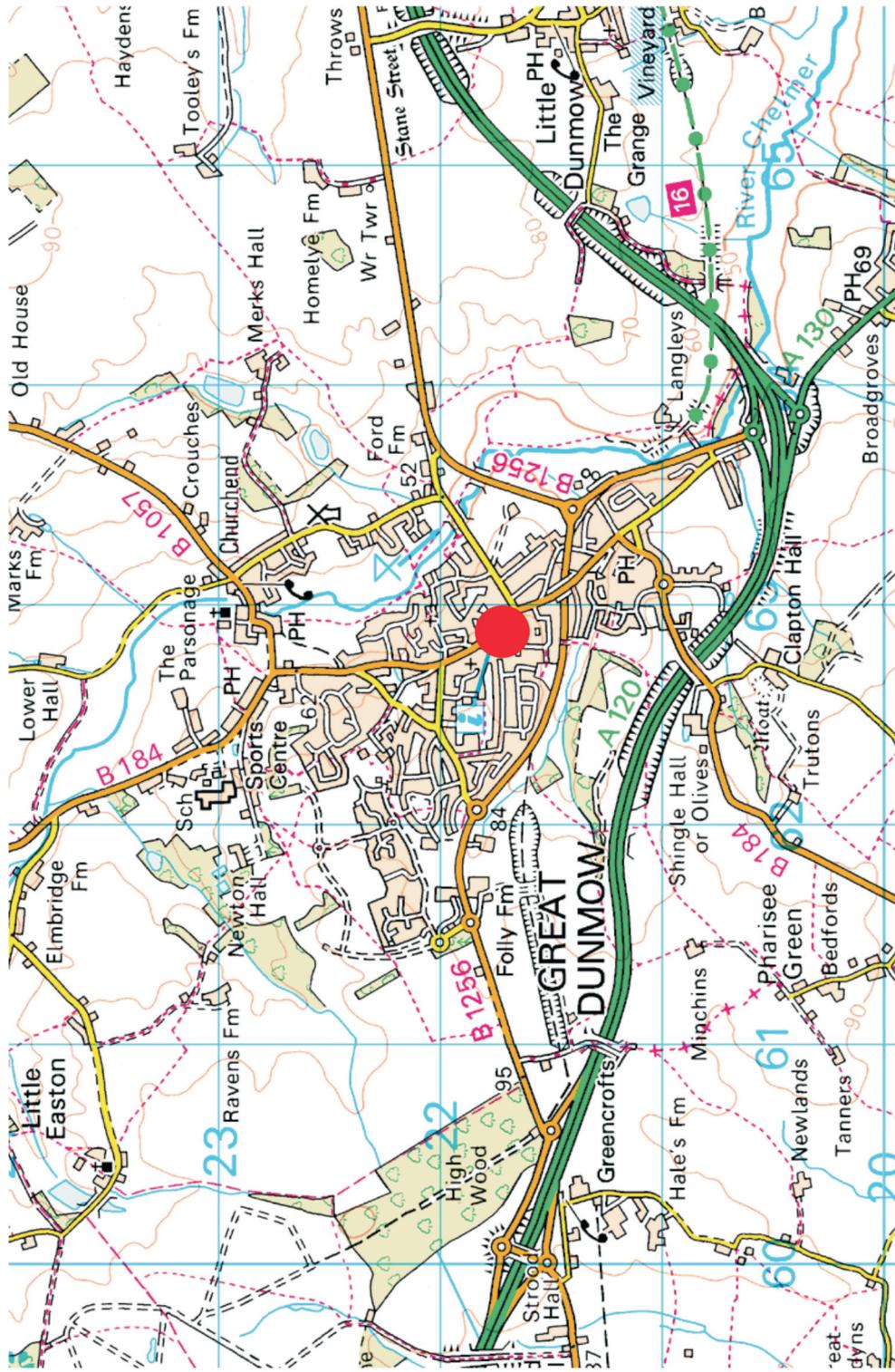
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Adams x c:/reports 12/46 high street dunmow/report 631.doc



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Fig 1 Site location (marked by red dot).

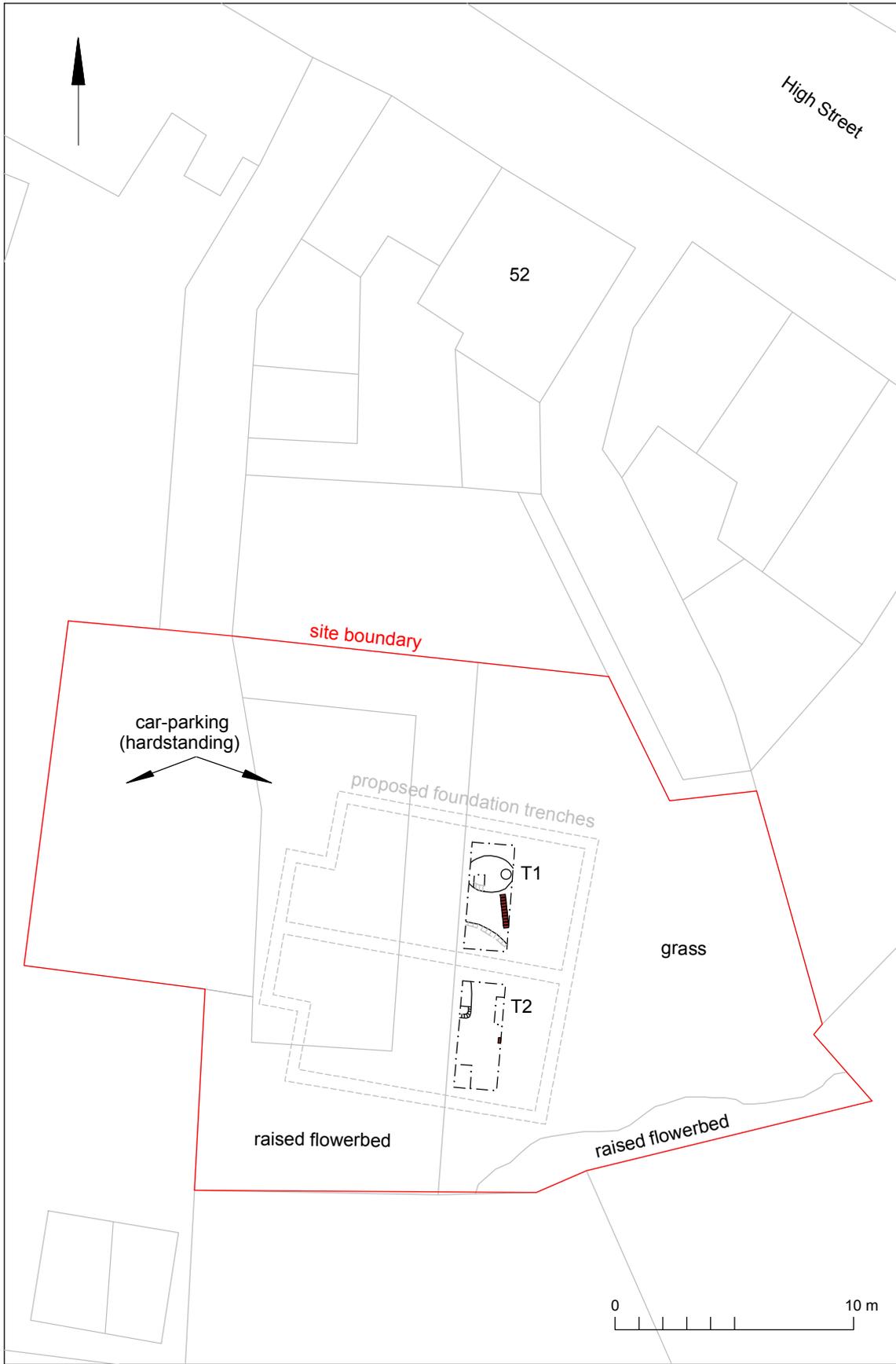
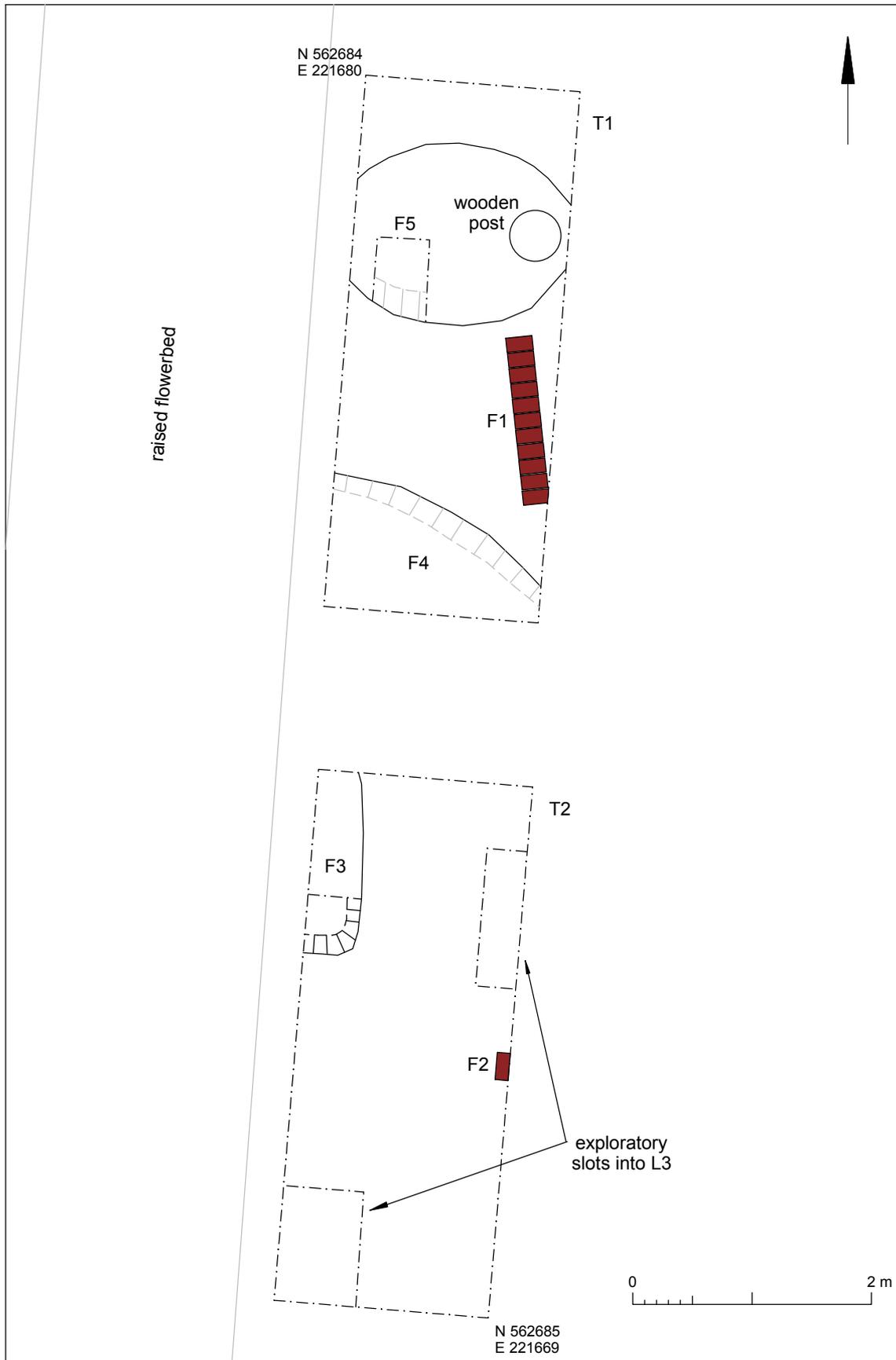
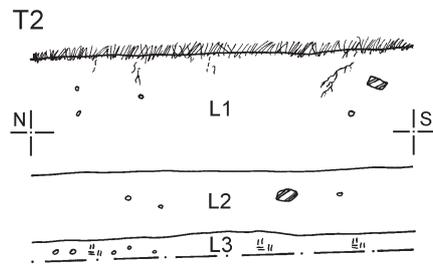
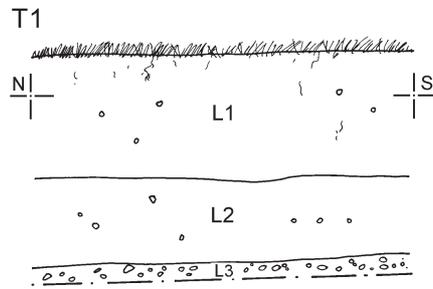


Fig 2 Site plan.



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Fig 3 Results (brown tone is brick).



-  sand
-  small stones
-  clay
-  charcoal
-  post-Roman brick and tile
-  roots

Fig 4 T1-T2: Representative sections.

## Essex Historic Environment Record/ Essex Archaeology and History

### Summary sheet

<b>Address:</b> land to the rear of 52 High Street, Great Dunmow, Essex	
<b>Parish:</b> Great Dunmow	<b>District:</b> Uttlesford
<b>NGR:</b> TL 6268 2167 (c)	<b>Site codes:</b> CAT project – 11/12a ECC – GD33 Museum accession – SAFWM 2012.2
<b>Type of work:</b> Evaluation	<b>Site director/group:</b> Colchester Archaeological Trust
<b>Date of work:</b> 5th December 2011	<b>Size of area investigated:</b> 9m of trench (1.8m wide) in a 600 sq m site
<b>Location of curating museum:</b> Saffron Walden Museum	<b>Funding source:</b> Developer
<b>Further seasons anticipated?</b> No	<b>Related EHER numbers:</b> 13867, 46525
<b>Final report:</b> CAT Report 631	
<b>Periods represented:</b> post-medieval, modern	
<b>Summary:</b> <i>An archaeological evaluation by two trial-trenches identified post-medieval and modern features which are interpreted as landscaping features and rubbish-disposal pits in a former back garden or yard to a property fronting onto the High Street. No evidence of Roman or medieval activity was identified during this evaluation.</i>	
<b>Previous summaries/reports:</b> none	
<b>Keywords:</b> landscaping features, rubbish- disposal pits	<b>Significance:</b> *
<b>Author of summary:</b> Adam Wightman	<b>Date of summary:</b> January 2012
<b>ECC HEM team monitor:</b> Richard Havis	