

An archaeological evaluation by trial-trenching at Barnetson Court, 1 Braintree Road, Great Dunmow, Essex September 2013



**report prepared by
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**Commissioned by
Vaughan and Blyth**

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Summary

Six trial-trenches were excavated by the Colchester Archaeological Trust in grassed areas around the former care home Barnetson Court in Great Dunmow, Essex.

Deep deposits of modern made-ground were identified in five of the trenches. The site is located on the side of a hill and the modern make-up identified in the trial-trenches had been used to level the site prior to the construction of the care home.

A trench located near the eastern boundary of the site identified a small area of open ground which had remained largely undisturbed by the construction of Barnetson Court. Residual Roman pottery was recovered from a buried topsoil layer and from two post-medieval/modern linear features in this trench.

In a trench to the east of the care home, a sherd of medieval pottery was recovered from the buried topsoil and a possible Roman gully was identified at a depth of 1.1m below modern ground level.

Introduction (Figs 1-2)

This is the archive report on the archaeological evaluation by trial-trenching carried out by the Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) at Barnetson Court, 1 Braintree Road, Great Dunmow, Essex (NGR TL 6301 2175) (Fig 1). The proposed development comprised of the demolition of a residential care home and the construction of 10 houses with associated parking (planning application UTT/1519/12/FUL).

The development site lies close to the centre of Great Dunmow on the edge of the medieval and post-medieval town and just outside the built-up area of the Roman town (Medlycott 1999). Excavations immediately to the west of the site at 83 High Street identified a potential Roman pottery kiln and evidence of Roman and medieval occupation (HER 46525, Sparrow 2009). Historic Ordnance Survey maps indicate that the site remained undeveloped until Barnetson Court was built on the site in the early 1990's.

Six trial-trenches (T1-T6) were excavated in the landscaped gardens surrounding the care home (Fig 2). The trenches were located in grassed areas and were situated to avoid known services and tree root-protection zones. The work was undertaken in accordance with a brief produced by the Historic Environment Officer Richard Havis (2013) and a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) produced by CAT (2013). In the WSI it was stated that the evaluation would consist of four trial-trenches totalling 89m in length. However, due to the significant depth of modern make-up encountered in three of the trenches, a series of smaller trenches were excavated instead. The trenches were excavated under archaeological supervision using a tracked excavator equipped with a toothless ditching bucket.

Results (Figs 2-5)

T1

T1 was located to the west of the care home near the boundary with 83 High Street (Fig 2). In the south-eastern half of the trench, a modern topsoil (L1) overlaid a medium grey/brown clayey-silt soil (L2) (Fig 4). It is probable that L2 is the topsoil which originally covered the site and that L1 is a topsoil layer spread across the site following the construction of the care home. L2 directly overlaid the natural geology, which was a mottled yellow/grey clay with frequent gravel (L3) (Fig 4). Peg-tile fragments were observed near the top of L2 and a fragment of Roman pottery (see finds section) was recovered from the interface between L2 and L3. A section of T1 was not excavated down to the natural geology due to the presence of a live electricity cable (Fig 3a).

Two linear features (F1 & F2) were cut into the natural geology in the centre of T1 (Fig 3a). Both of the linears were relatively shallow (Fig 4) with irregular edges and bases. Two sherds of Roman pottery and a sherd of post-medieval glazed red earthenware were recovered from F1 and two sherds of medieval/post-medieval pottery, two peg-tile fragments and part of a modern brick were recovered from F2.

In the north-western end of T1, the natural clay sloped downwards to the north and a deep deposit of modern made-ground was encountered (Plate 1 & Fig 3a). The modern make-up in T1 was a dark grey clayey-silt containing lots of modern building materials (L4) (Fig 4). Machine excavation continued to a depth of 1.8m below modern ground level, at which point a large ceramic drainage pipe surrounded in gravel was encountered. Due to the considerable depth of the modern deposits, the excavation of T1 was not continued beyond this point (Fig 2).

T2

T2 was excavated to ascertain whether the significant depth of modern made-ground encountered in T1 continued to the north-west (Fig 2).

The modern topsoil (L1) overlaid 800mm of made ground (L4) which, in turn, overlaid a thick deposit of dark grey clayey-silt (L5) (Fig 4). L5 directly overlaid the natural clay/gravel (L3). It is possible that this dark grey clayey-silt accumulated in this area prior to the construction of care home and is therefore equivalent to L2 in T1. However, L5 was much thicker and darker in colour than L2, perhaps indicating that there had previously been a pond in this area.

The natural clay/gravel (L3) was exposed at a depth of 1.7m below modern ground level in the western half of T2 (Fig 2 & Fig 5). It is possible that the cut observed in the base of T2 was the western edge of the trench for the ceramic drainage pipe seen in T1 (Fig 2).

T3

T3 was located at the southern end of a proposed L-shaped trench in the back garden of the care home (Fig 2).

The modern topsoil (L1) overlaid a thick deposit of dry, grey sand/clay (L4) (Fig 5 & Plate 2). The grey sand/clay contained no inclusions and was very compact. At a depth of 1.2m below modern ground level, L4 was so compact that excavation of the trench had to cease.

Possible interpretations for this deposit include imported alluvial sand/clay or bentonite, which may have been used in the construction of the care home or to seal over an area of ground contamination.

T4

Located on the corner of the proposed L-shaped trench (Fig 2), T4 was excavated through 1.2m of topsoil and made-ground (L1 & L4), at which point a deposit of washed gravel, similar to that which surrounded the ceramic pipe in T1, was encountered (Fig 5). No pipe was identified during limited investigations.

T5

T5 was the third small trench excavated along the length of the proposed L-shaped trench (Fig 2). The natural clay/gravel was uncovered at a depth of 1.7m below modern ground level and was overlain by the same stratigraphy encountered in T2 (Plate 3 & Fig 5).

T6

The modern topsoil (L1) overlaid a layer of silty-clay which contained a lense of modern building materials (L4) (Fig 5 & Plate 4). This layer of modern make-up had been deposited onto the original topsoil (L2)

which, in turn, overlaid the natural geology (L3) (Fig 5). A sherd of medieval coarseware was recovered from the buried topsoil (L2).

Two sherds of Roman pottery were recovered from a shallow linear feature (F5) located in the north-eastern end of T6 (Figs 3b & 5). Two modern features (F3 & F4) were also identified in T6 (Fig 3b).



Plate 1: T1, facing north.



Plate 2: T3, facing north-west.



Plate 3: T5, facing east.



Plate 4: T6, facing south-east.

Finds

by Stephen Benfield

A small quantity of bulk finds of Roman, medieval, post-medieval and modern date were recovered from two evaluation trenches (T1 & T6). The finds consist of pottery and ceramic building material (CBM). They were recovered from three features (F1, F2 & F5) and from buried soil layers (L2 & L5). All the finds are listed with both weight and count below (Table 2) and a spot date is provided for each context finds number.

The pottery fabrics recorded are listed below (Table 1). The Roman pottery fabrics and forms refer to the Essex (Chelmsford) fabric series (Going 1987) supplemented by the Colchester (*Camulodunum*) form type series (Hawkes & Hull 1947, Hull 1958). The medieval and post-

medieval pottery fabrics refer to the Essex post-Roman fabric series (Cunningham & Drury 1985 & CAR 7).

Table 1 Pottery fabrics recorded with common date ranges

Fabric code	Fabric name	Common date range
<i>Roman:</i>		
1	Colchester colour-coated wares	E/M2-3C
36	Hadham grey wares	Rom
44	Storage jar fabrics	Rom (M1-2.3C)
47	Sandy grey wares	Rom
<i>Post-Roman:</i>		
20	Medieval coarsewares	13-14C
40	post-medieval red earthenwares (general)	16/17-18C
98	Miscellaneous unidentified medieval and post-medieval, probably English	Medieval/post-medieval

Table 2 Finds recovered by context with finds spot dates

context and trench	finds no	finds	Finds spot date
F1 (T1)	2	Pottery Roman (2 sherds, 30 g). Fabric 36 (Hadham grey ware) rim sherd from necked bowl form (27 g) probably a Hadham product (dated probably mid 1st-2nd century); Sandy grey ware sherd (Fabric 47) sherd (3 g). Post-medieval Glazed red earthenware (Fabric 40) abraded sherd with internal glaze, fine red fabric (5 g) (dated probably 16th-18th century)	Post-medieval (16-18C) with residual Roman
F2 (T1)	3	Post-medieval (2 sherds, 4 g) Miscellaneous unidentified medieval and post-medieval wares, probably English (Fabric 98), small sherd with reddish-buff/cream surface and white slip with clear glaze (3 g); small buff sherd (1 g), both probably medieval. CBM Post-Roman Peg-tile (2@ 62 g) medieval-post-medieval/modern (dated probably 14th century or later). Part (edge section) of a broken brick or tile (676 g), tapering and probably wedge shaped (voussoir), hard sandy buff fabric with dark hard inclusions, probably modern; tar/bitumen deposit covering broken end (dated probably 19th-20th century)	Modern 19th-20th century with residual medieval/post-medieval
L2 (T1)	1	Pottery Roman Sandy grey ware sherd (Fabric 47) (20 g) sherd from a lid-seated jar, form G5.5 (dated 2nd-early/mid 3rd century)	Roman (2-E/M3C)
L4 (T1)	6	Pottery Roman Storage jar sherd (Fabric 44) (376 g) (dated mid 1st-2nd/3rd century)	M1-2/3C
F5 (T6)	5	Pottery Roman (2 sherds, 9g). Colchester colour-coated ware sherd (Fabric 1) from a scale decorated beaker, abraded (6 g), probably form Cam 407 (form dated mid 3rd-4th century, Colchester products probably date mid-late 3rd/early 4th century; Sandy grey ware sherd (Fabric 47) (3 g) (dated Roman)	M3-L3/E4C
L2 (T6)	4	Pottery medieval Medieval coarsewares (Fabric 20) rim sherd from a cooking pot (32 g) (dated 13th-14th century)	Medieval (13-14C)

Discussion

The site is located on the side of a hill which slopes to the north-east out from Great Dunmow town centre. The results of this trial-trenching evaluation indicate that significant landscaping was undertaken to level the site prior to the construction of the care home.

Based on the thickness of the modern make-up (between 0.5m and 1.2m) and the depth at which the natural geology was encountered (between 1.1m and 1.7m below modern ground level), it was evident that the land to the north and east of the existing care home had been built up. No archaeological features or deposits were identified in the trenches to the north of the care home and the possible Roman gully identified in the trench to the east of the care home was located at a depth of 1.1m below modern ground level.

The southern and western sides of the care home had been excavated into the slope of the hill. Based on the depth of the natural geology in the trial-trench excavated to the west of the care home (T1), it is very unlikely that any deposits would survive beneath the modern building in these areas. T1 was situated in an area roughly 10m by 15m in size which appears to have remained largely unaffected by the construction of the care home and is outside of the footprints of the proposed buildings.

In conclusion, if any archaeological features or deposits do survive within the footprints of the new buildings, they are likely to be largely unaffected by the proposed groundworks due to the depth of the modern made-ground and the proposed use of piled foundations.

Acknowledgements

CAT would like to thank Vaughan & Blyth (Construction) Ltd for commissioning and funding the project. The site work was undertaken by A Wightman and M Baister. The pottery was identified by S Benfield and E Holloway illustrated the sections.

The project was monitored by Richard Havis for the Essex County Council Historic Environment team.

References

Note: all CAT fieldwork reports are available online in .pdf format at <http://cat.essex.ac.uk>

CAR 7	2000	Colchester Archaeological Report 7: <i>Post-Roman pottery from excavations in Colchester, 1971-85</i> , by J Cotter
CAT	2013	Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological trial-trenching and excavation at Barneston Court, Great Dunmow, Essex, by A Wightman
Cunningham, C & Drury, P	1985	<i>Post-medieval sites and their pottery: Moulsham Street, Chelmsford</i> , CBA Research Report 54
Going, C	1987	<i>The Mansio and other sites in the south-eastern sector of Caesaromagus: the Roman pottery</i> , CBA Research Report 62
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Medlycott, M	1999	<i>Great Dunmow: Historic Town Assessment</i>
Sparrow, P	2009	<i>Roman and medieval remains at 83 High Street, Great Dunmow</i> . Essex Arch Hist 40 142-156

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Distribution list:

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checked by Philip Crummy 03/10/2013

Appendix 1: contents of archive

One A4 document wallet containing:

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Copy of the evaluation brief issued by ECC
- 1.2 Copy of the WSI produced by CAT
- 1.3 Risk assessment
- 1.4 Geotechnical report
- 1.5 1 x A1 site plan provided by developer
- 1.6 3 x A3 site plans provided by developer

2 Site archive

- 2.1 Site digital photographic record
- 2.2 Attendance register
- 2.3 Context sheets (F1-F5, L1-L5)
- 2.4 Finds register
- 2.5 Site photographic record on CD
- 2.6 OS benchmark information

3 Research archive

- 3.1 Monitoring (client) report
- 3.2 Finds report

Not in wallet

- The finds (1 medium sized bag)
- 1 x A3 Sx sheet

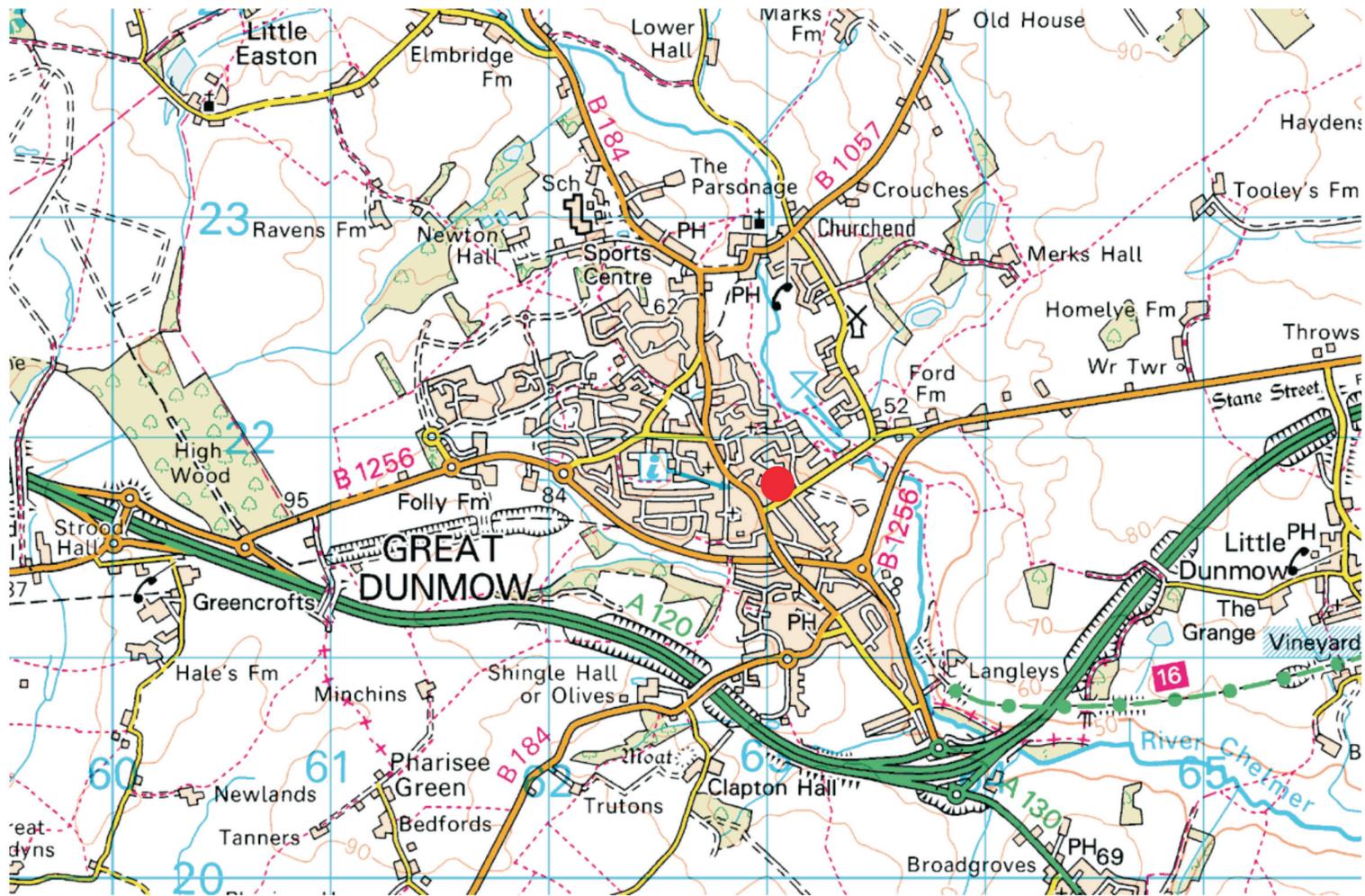


Fig 1 Site location, marked by a red dot.

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Fig 2 Trench locations.

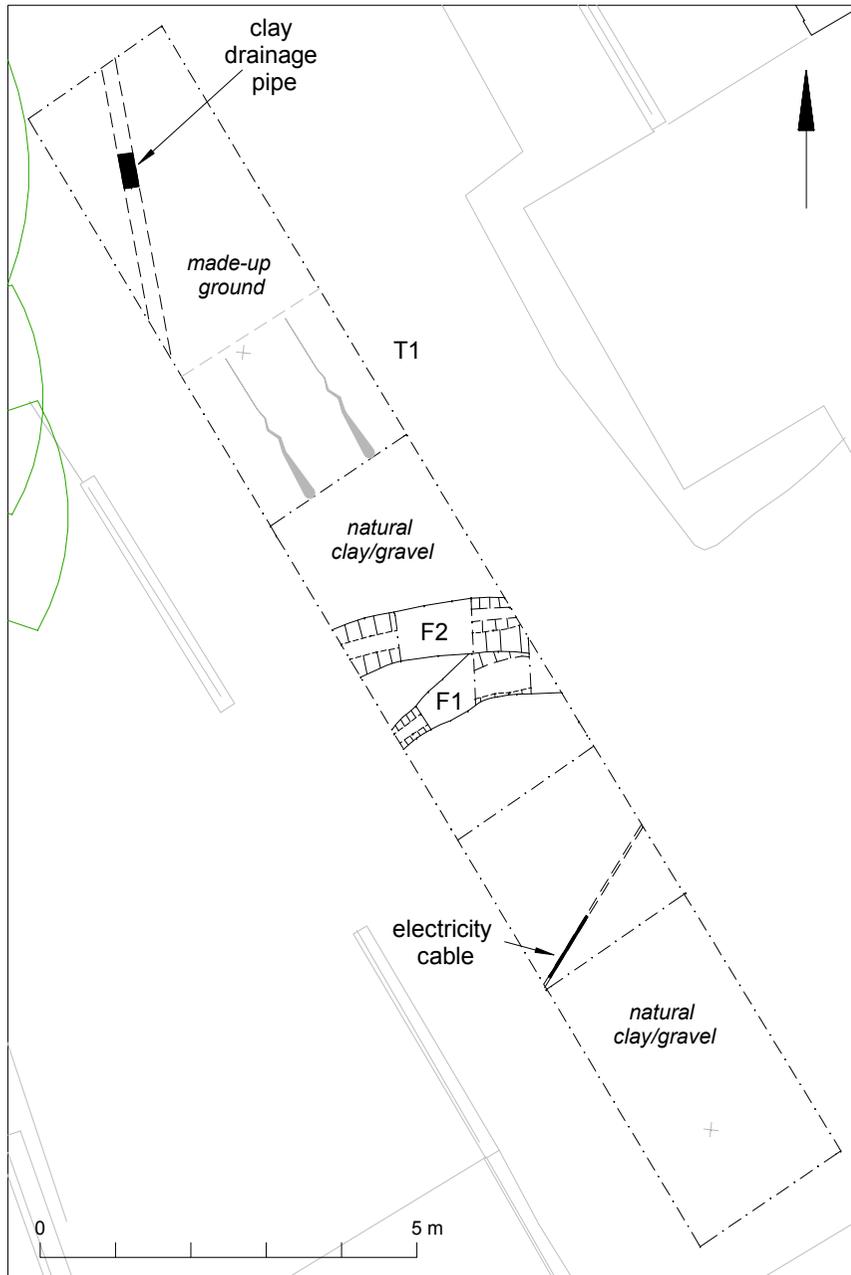


Fig 3a Trench 1.

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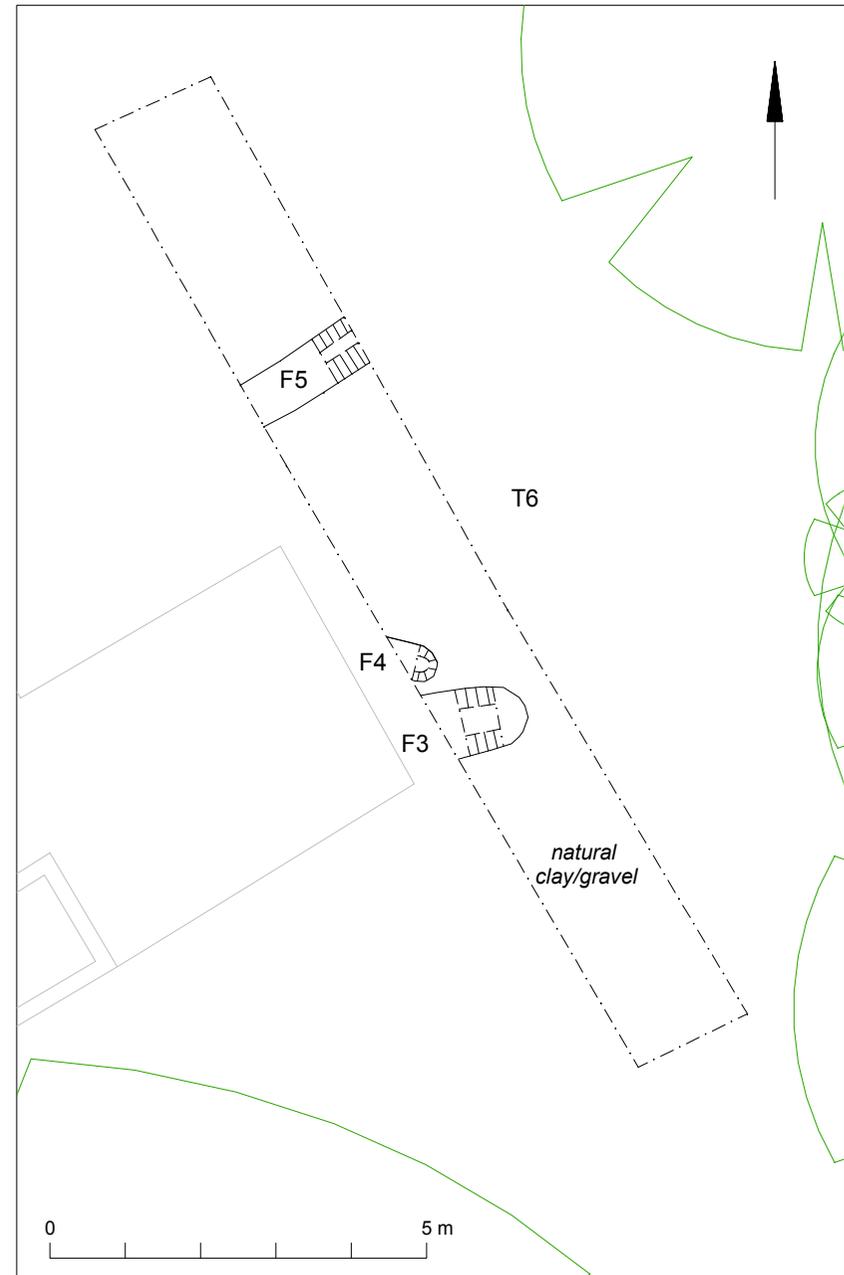
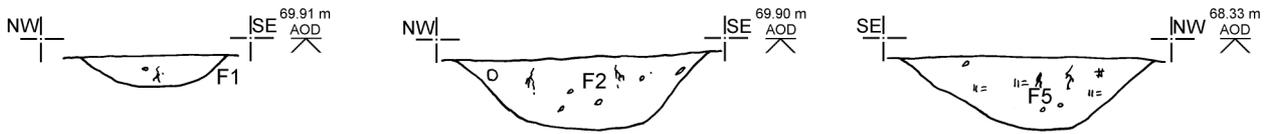
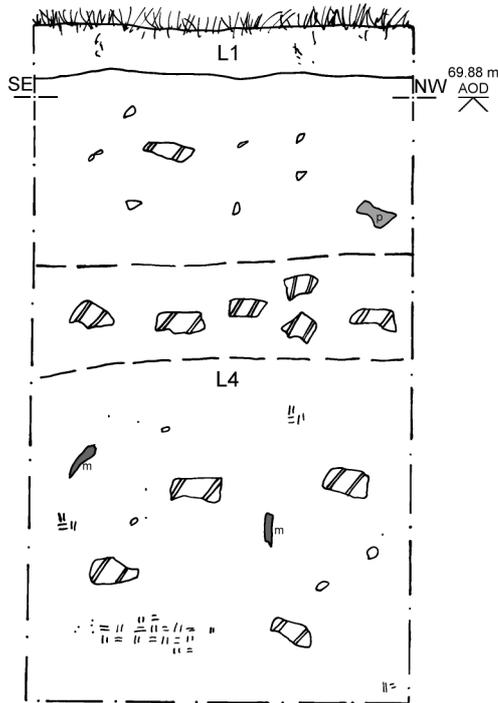


Fig 3b Trench 6.

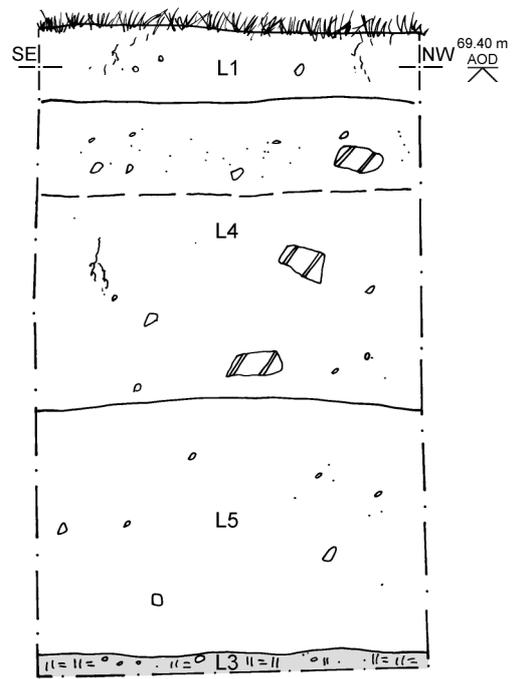
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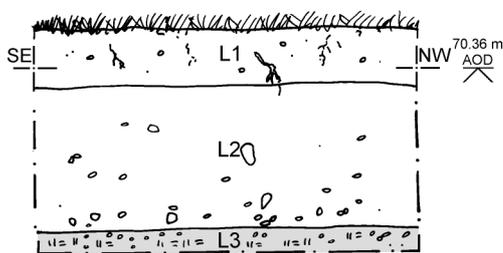
T1 (northern end)



T2



T1 (southern end)



- sand
- small stones
- ||| clay
- ### charcoal
- ▨ post-Roman brick and tile
- ▭ plastic fragments
- ▭^m modern metal fragments
- √ roots
- natural clay



Fig 4 F1-2 and F5: Sections. T1-2: Representative sections.

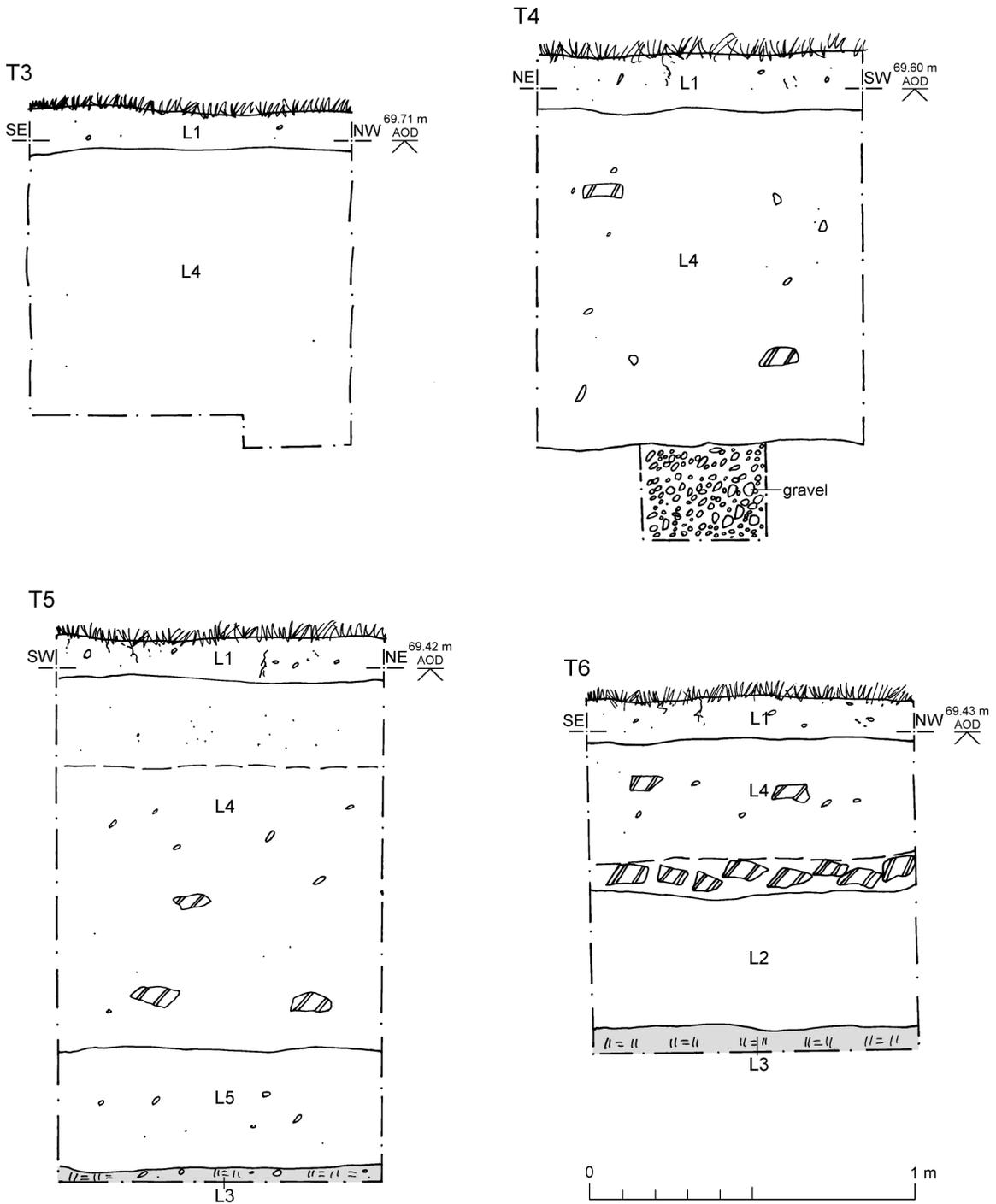


Fig 5 T3-6: Representative sections.

Essex Historic Environment Record/ Essex Archaeology and History

Summary sheet

Address: Barnetson Court, 1 Braintree Road, Great Dunmow, Essex	
Parish: Great Dunmow	District: Uttlesford
NGR: TL 6301 2175	Site codes: CAT project – 13/07i ECC – GD37 Museum accession – SAFWM 2013.26
Type of work: Evaluation by trial-trenching	Site director/group: Colchester Archaeological Trust
Date of work: September 2013	Size of area investigated: 4050 sq m
Location of curating museum: Saffron Walden Museum	Funding source: Developer
Further seasons anticipated? No	Related EHER numbers: 13864-13869, 46525
Final report:	CAT Report 724
Periods represented:	Roman & post-medieval
Summary:	
<p><i>Six trial-trenches were excavated by the Colchester Archaeological Trust in grassed areas around the former care home Barnetson Court in Great Dunmow, Essex.</i></p> <p><i>Deep deposits of modern made-ground were identified in five of the trenches. The site is located on the side of a hill and the modern make-up identified in the trial-trenches had been used to level the site prior to the construction of the care home.</i></p> <p><i>A trench located near the eastern boundary of the site identified a small area of open ground which had remained largely undisturbed by the construction of Barnetson Court. Residual Roman pottery was recovered from a buried topsoil layer and from two post-medieval/modern linear features in this trench.</i></p> <p><i>In a trench to the east of the care home, a sherd of medieval pottery was recovered from the buried topsoil and a possible Roman gully was identified at a depth of 1.1m below modern ground level.</i></p>	
Previous summaries/reports: none	
Keywords: Roman pottery, ?Roman gully, medieval pottery	Significance: *
Author of summary: Adam Wightman	Date of summary: October 2013