

Archaeological trial-trenching evaluation: land north of Elmstead Road, Colchester, Essex

February 2014



report prepared by Ben Holloway

on behalf of Mr Charles Gooch

CAT project ref.: 14/02h

NGR: TM 0221 2442

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Colchester Archaeological Trust

Roman Circus House,
Circular Road North,
Colchester,
Essex CO2 7GZ

tel.: 07436273304

email: archaeologists@catuk.org

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1 Summary

This site on the eastern side of Colchester is close to the projected course of a Roman road and to the Bronze Age barrow cemetery to the south on the Knowledge Gateway site.

Six evaluation trenches (total length 175m) revealed five archaeological features: a medieval pit, three medieval ditches (a trackway?), and a natural pit.

The medieval ditches are probably associated with a medieval phase of Salary Farm, to the south. The western part of the site has been terraced, so that topsoil directly seals natural ground. This (as well as water-logging due to Salary Brook), may account for the lack of archaeological material on the site's western side.

2 Introduction (Fig 1)

This is the archive report on the archaeological evaluation carried out by Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) on land north of Elmstead Road, Colchester, Essex, on 27th February 2014. The work was commissioned by Robert Pomery Planning Consultants, on behalf of Charles Gooch. Post-excavation work was carried out in March 2014.

At the time of the evaluation, the site was open ground recently used as livestock paddock. Proposed works involve the construction of 18 new dwellings, garages and associated infrastructure.

Site centre is NGR TM 0221 2442

3 Archaeological background

This section is based on records held by Essex Historic Environment Record (EHER) held at Essex County Council, County Hall, Chelmsford, and the Urban Archaeological Database held at Colchester and Ipswich Museums.

There are no archaeological finds from this site. The Elmstead Road (immediately south of the site) may follow the course of a Roman road (EHER 2534). A prehistoric barrow cemetery has been known for some time, 250m to the south (EHER 2413), and CAT carried out a watching brief here in 201. This included a magnetometer survey (CAT Report 638), and also revealed a Roman cremation vessel and a spread of medieval pottery on both sides of Boundary Road.

An earlier field evaluation by ECC FAU (FAU 2004) confirmed that the four mounds and ring-ditches situated to the adjacent to the railway line and Salary Brook were man-made, and artefacts recovered indicated a late Iron Age or Roman date use or remodelling of an existing Bronze Age monument. A watching brief conducted by CAT on associated infrastructure works in the area

4 Methodology

A planning application to the LPA has not yet been submitted but will be forthcoming. A discussion with Mr Martin Winter, Colchester Borough Council Archaeological Officer (CBCAO) has identified that the development site is within an area of significant archaeological potential, and that archaeological work will be required prior to construction

A brief detailing the required archaeological work (an evaluation by trial-trenching) was written by the CBCAO (CBC 2014). This is in line with advice given in *National Planning Policy Framework* (DCLG 2012):

" *L2 Implementation of Archaeological Fieldwork Programme*

No development including any site clearance or groundworks of any kind shall take place within the site until the applicant or their agents; the owner of the site or successors in title has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work from an accredited archaeological contractor

in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The development shall be carried out in a manner that accommodates the approved programme of archaeological work."

All archaeological work was carried out in accordance with a WSI (Written Scheme of Investigation) produced by CAT in response to the CBCAO brief and agreed with the CBCAO (CAT 2014).

All fieldwork and reporting was done in accordance with the recognised local and national standards as defined in CIM 2008a, CIM 2008b, IfA 2008a, IfA 2008b, EAA 14, and EAA 24.

5 Aim

The aim of the evaluation was to record and establish the character; extent, date, significance and condition of any remains likely to be disturbed by the proposed works. Specific attention was paid to potential archaeology, as given in Section 3, above.

6 Results of the evaluation (Figs 2-4)

This section gives an archaeological summary of the evaluation trenches (T1-T6), with context and finds dating information.

The trenches were excavated under archaeological supervision using a tracked excavator, through two layers: L1 - a modern topsoil 250mm thick, and L2 a silt/clay accumulation horizon 250mm thick. Removal of L1 and L2 revealed natural L3. In the western part of the site (T1-T4) L2 was absent, and L1 directly overlay natural L3. There were five archaeological features: a Roman pit and ditch, two medieval ditches, and a natural pit.

Trenches 1-4: summary

T1-T3, on the western site edge contained no archaeological features.

Trench 5: summary

T5, located in the eastern half of the site, contained a medieval pit F1, containing a medieval sherd and a brick fragment.



Plate 1: medieval pit F1

Trench 5: context and dating

Context	Description	Dating
F1	pit	medieval

Trench 6: summary

T6, on the eastern site edge, contained three medieval ditches, F2, F4 and F5, and natural pit F3.

The parallel medieval ditches are NW/SE aligned, and may be a trackway associated with Salary Brook Farm.



Plate 2: ditch F2 and natural pit F3



Plate 3: ditches F4, F5

Trench 6: Archaeology

Context	Description	Date
F2	ditch	medieval
F3	natural pit	--
F4	ditch	medieval
F5	ditch	medieval

7 Finds

by Stephen Benfield

Introduction

A small quantity of bulk finds consisting of pottery, ceramic building material (CBM) and animal bone (tooth fragments) were recovered from three contexts (F1, F2 & F5) in two evaluation trenches (T5 & T6). The total quantities are listed by finds type below (Table 1). The pottery is of medieval date while the CBM includes part of a large flat brick. In addition two finds were recorded as small finds (SF).

Finds type	no.	wt (g)
Pottery	23	337
Ceramic building material (CBM)	7	2180
Animal bone	6	1

Table 1: Type and quantities of finds

Bulk finds

The medieval pottery was recorded using the Colchester post-Roman fabric series (CAR 7). The pottery fabrics recorded are listed in Table 2 below. All of the bulk finds are listed with a spot date in Table 3.

Fabric	Description
13	Early medieval sandy wares
20	Medieval sandy greywares (general)
21A	Colchester-type ware

Table 2: Medieval pottery fabrics

ctxt type	finds no.	find type	Fabric	no	wt/g	form	notes	spot date
F1 (T5) pit	1	pot	20	1	8			12-14C
		CBM	Red, sandy	4	2108	large flat brick	Corner piece, thickness 40-45 mm; width >180 mm, length >230 mm	(12-14C?)
F2 (T6) ditch	2	pot	20	1	24		grey sherd, as some from F5(3)	12-14C
		pot	20	5	34		Sherds from more than one pot	12-14C
		pot	21A	1	145	large bowl/pancheon	rim	15-16C
F4 (T6)	5 (SF1)	quern		1	87	quernstone	Piece of abraded lava	Rom-med
		knife		1	73	scale-tang knife	quernstone	Corroded (14C+)
F5 (T6) ditch	3	pot	13 / 20	1	8		Abraded, oxidised, sandy poss.	11-13/14C
		pot	20	12	103	cooking pot	Fabric 13 grey sherds (rim & body) from one vessel	12-14C

ctxt type	finds no.	find type	Fabric	no	wt/g	form	notes	spot date
		pot	20	2	15			12-14C
		CBM	red, sandy	3	72	peg-tile		med - post-med
F5 (T6) ditch	4	Animal Bone		6	1		Shattered part of an animal tooth (ruminant)	

Table 3: Bulk finds by context

Small finds

Two objects were recorded as small finds - a piece of quernstone (SF1) and an iron, tanged knife (SF2). Both are from F4 (T6). They are described below.

SF1. T6 F4(5) Piece of imported (Rhineland) lava quernstone (87 g). Quite abraded. (Dated Roman-medieval)

SF2 T6 F4(6) Corroded iron, scale-tang knife (72 g). Blade appears asymmetric to handle tang with a small shoulder; pointed end tip of knife is bent-up at an angle to the blade and is broken away, joining piece. Possible small knob-like end cap at end of handle. Overall length 225 mm, length of blade 140 mm, max width (blade) 30 mm. (Probably 14th century or later (see below) but not closely dated)

Finds discussion

Most of the finds were recovered from ditch fill and the most closely dated (pottery) are medieval, dating to the period of the 11/12th-14th century and 15th-16th century.

A single sherd of medieval pottery was recovered with pieces of a large flat tile-like brick from a pit in Trench 5 (F1). The pottery can be dated to the 12th-14th century. The brick, which is in a brownish red, sandy fabric is 40-45 mm thick and with original dimensions of width and length greater than 180 mm & 230 mm. One side has smoothed border running around the edge, with traces of finger-wipe marks toward the centre of the brick. This surface of this side is slightly coarse and sandy. The other side of the brick is plain with a moderately smooth surface finish. The edges are moderately regular with some smoothed patches, possibly from knife trimming. The piece is similar to Roman bricks, but the details of form and fabric indicate it is possibly a medieval 'great brick' (Ryan 1996, 22-31) dating to the period of the 12th-14th century and this would be in keeping with the closely dated pottery from the site. It can be noted that medieval 'great bricks' have been noted in the church of St Anne & St Lawrence at Elmstead, although the description of these does not closely match the brick here (Ryan 1996, 31).

The remainder of the finds are from the fill of ditches located in Trench 6.

Pottery associated with ditch F2 is dated to the 12th-14th century together with a sherd from a large bowl (pancheon) of probable slightly later, 15th-16th century, date. The pottery from F5 dates to the period of the 11th/12th-14th century and includes a rim from a cooking pot. There are also a few pieces of peg-tiles from F5(3). Peg-tiles have a broad date range, from the early medieval period onward, but are likely to date to the 13th/14th century or later as they do not appear to have been in common use in Essex prior to that time (Ryan 1993, 97).

A piece of a Rhenish lava quernstone (SF1) was recovered from ditch F4. These quernstones were imported during the Roman period and again in the middle-late Saxon and medieval period. The piece is quite abraded and is not closely dated, but its condition indicates it has some extended depositional history and it is probably an old object in relation to this context. The only other find from this ditch is a complete iron, scale-tanged knife (SF2), although the end (knife tip) is broken away as a separate joining piece. The knife, which is corroded, is not closely dated and unfortunately the

piece of quernstone (SF2) found with it does little to assist a close dating for the context. Among medieval assemblages from London scale-tang knives are not recorded prior to the 14th century (Cowgill et al, 26). The other finds from the site could indicate a medieval date for the knife, although a later date may also be possible.

The very small quantity of animal bone recovered (F5(4)) consisting entirely of fragments of a tooth (the hardest part of the skeleton) could indicate that, in general, bone does not survive well on the site.

8 Discussion

The western part of the site (coinciding with T1-T4) has been reduced and/or terraced, with the result that topsoil L1 directly sealed natural L3. This may account for a total lack of archaeological activity on this part of the site. An additional reason for the lack of activity may be the low-lying land near Salary Brook and the consequent chance of water-logging.

The only significant archaeological remains were the three parallel medieval ditches in T6 on the eastern site edge. These may be a trackway associated with Salary Brook farm to the south. The quantity of pottery in the ditches would indicate that a domestic site is not too far away (ie, Salary Farm).

When the medieval ditches had fallen out of use, the site appears to have remained farmland up to the present day.

9 Acknowledgements

CAT thanks Mr Robert Pomery on behalf of Charles Gooch for commissioning and funding the work. The project was managed by B Holloway, and the fieldwork was carried out by BH and M Baister. The project was monitored by CBCAO Martin Winter.

10 References

CAR 7	2000	<i>John Cotter Post-Roman pottery from excavations in Colchester, 1971-85, Colchester Archaeological Report 7</i>
CAT	2014	<i>Written Scheme of Investigation for archaeological evaluation at land north of Elmstead Road, Colchester, Essex. February 2014 (CAT WSI By Ben Holloway).</i>
CAT Report 638	2012	<i>A watching brief at the Knowledge Gateway, the University of Essex, Colchester. September 2010 – August 2011.</i>
CBC	2014	<i>Archaeological Evaluation Land North of Elmstead Road, Colchester, Essex, CBC Brief, by Martin Winter</i>
Cowgill, J, de Neergaard, M, & Griffiths, N	1987	<i>Knives & scabbards, Medieval finds from excavations in London: 1</i>
DCLG	2012	<i>National Planning Policy Framework</i>
EAA 14	2003	<i>Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England. East Anglian Archaeology, Occasional Paper 14. By David Gurney (ed)</i>
EAA 24	2011	<i>Research and archaeology revisited: A revised framework for the East of England, East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Paper 24. By Maria Medlycott</i>
English Heritage	2006	<i>Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE)</i>
IfA	2008a	<i>Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation</i>
IfA	2008b	<i>Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials</i>
Medlycott, M	1999	<i>Essex Historic Towns Report: Thaxted (ECC Planning</i>

		Department)
Ryan, P	1996	'Roof tile' in: Andrews, A., (ed) <i>Crossing Temple. A Templar and Hospitaller manor in Essex.</i> Essex County Council
Ryan, P	2006	<i>Brick in Essex, from the Roman conquest to the Reformation</i>

11 Abbreviations and glossary

CAT	Colchester Archaeological Trust
context	specific location of finds on an archaeological site
ECC(PS)	Essex County Council (Place Services)
EHHER	Essex Historic Environment Record, held by Essex County Council
FAU	Field Archaeology Unit (ECC)
feature	an identifiable thing like a pit, a wall, a floor; can contain 'contexts'
fill	the soil filling up a hole such as a pit or ditch
IfA	Institute for Archaeologists
medieval	period from AD 1066 to approximately 1500/1530
modern	19th-21st centuries
natural	geological deposit undisturbed by human activity
NGR	National Grid Reference
Roman	the period from AD 43 to around AD 430
WSI	<i>Written Scheme of Investigation</i>

12 Contents of Archive

Finds

One large bag containing smaller bags

Paper and digital record: One A4 wallet containing:

This report (CAT Report 759)
ECC Brief and CAT WSI
Original site record (Feature and layer sheets)
Photo log and photos on CD
Sundry papers

13 Archive deposition

The paper and digital archive is currently held by the Colchester Archaeological Trust at Roman Circus House, Circular Road North, Colchester, Essex CO2 7GZ, but will be permanently deposited with Colchester and Ipswich Museum under accession code COLEM 2014.19.

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Distribution list:

Mr Charles Gooch

Martin Winter Colchester Borough Council Archaeological Officer (CBCAO)

Essex Historic Environment Record, Essex County Council



Colchester Archaeological Trust

Roman Circus House

Circular Road North,

Colchester,

Essex CO2 7GZ

tel.: 07436273304

email: archaeologists@catuk.org

Checked by: *Howard Brooks*

Date: 25.03.14

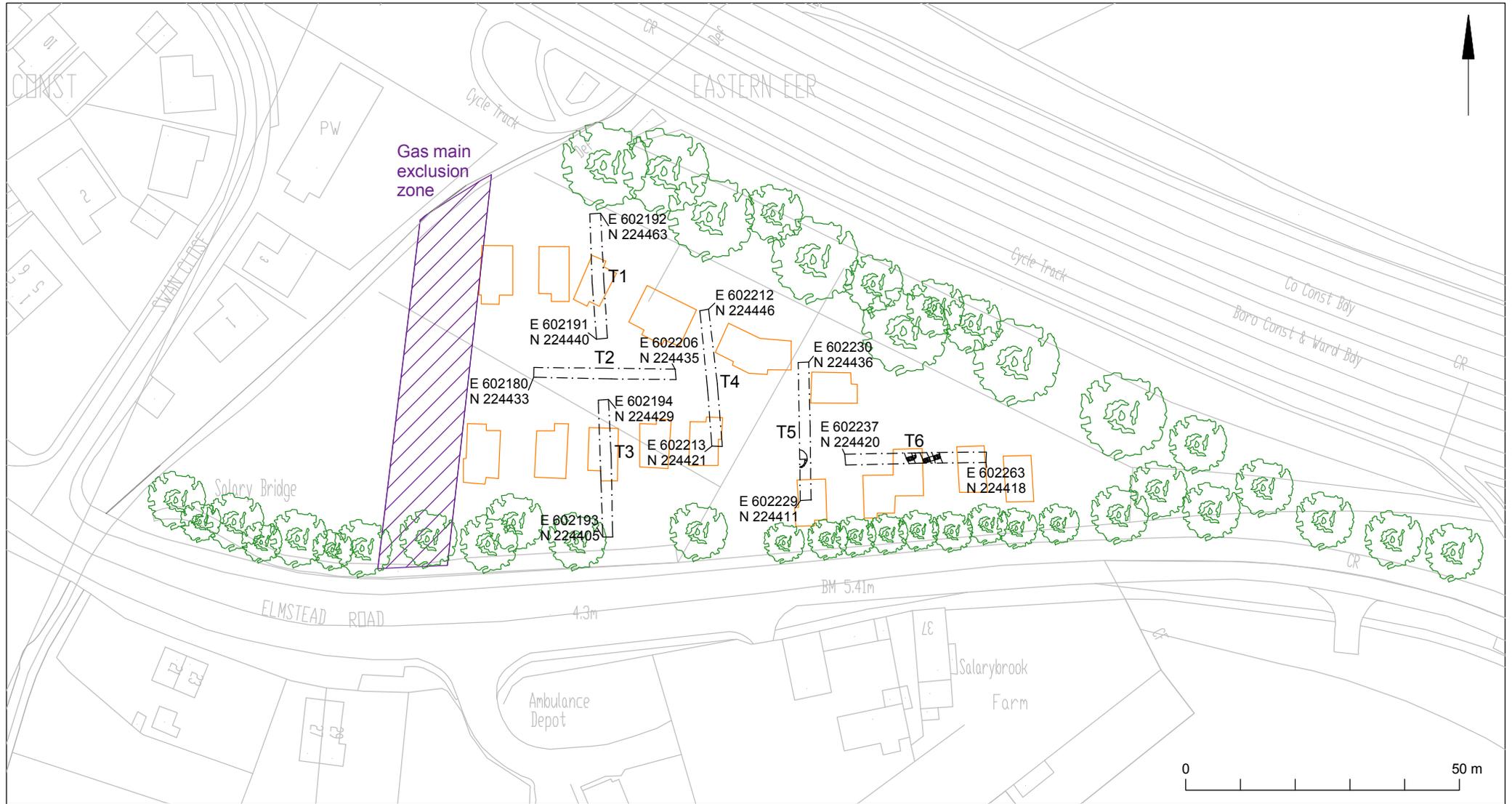


Fig 2 Trench plan. Proposed buildings shown in orange.

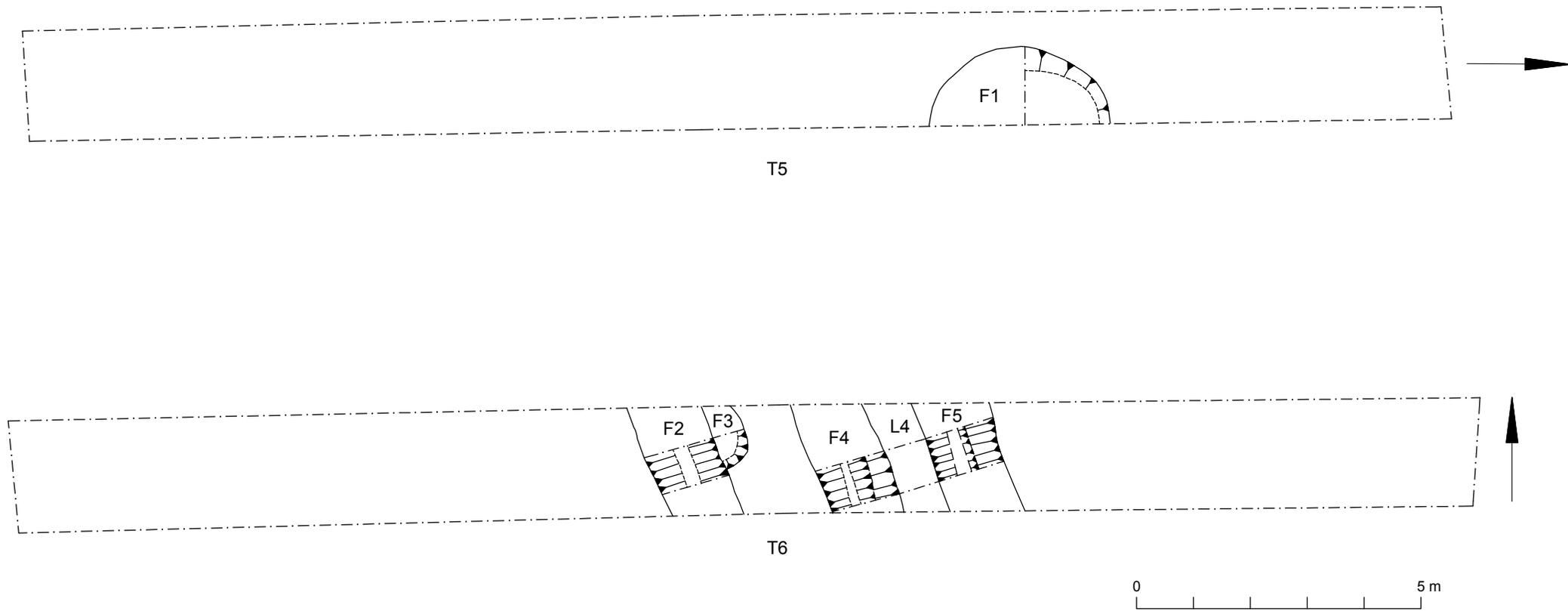


Fig 3 T5-6: Detailed trench plans.

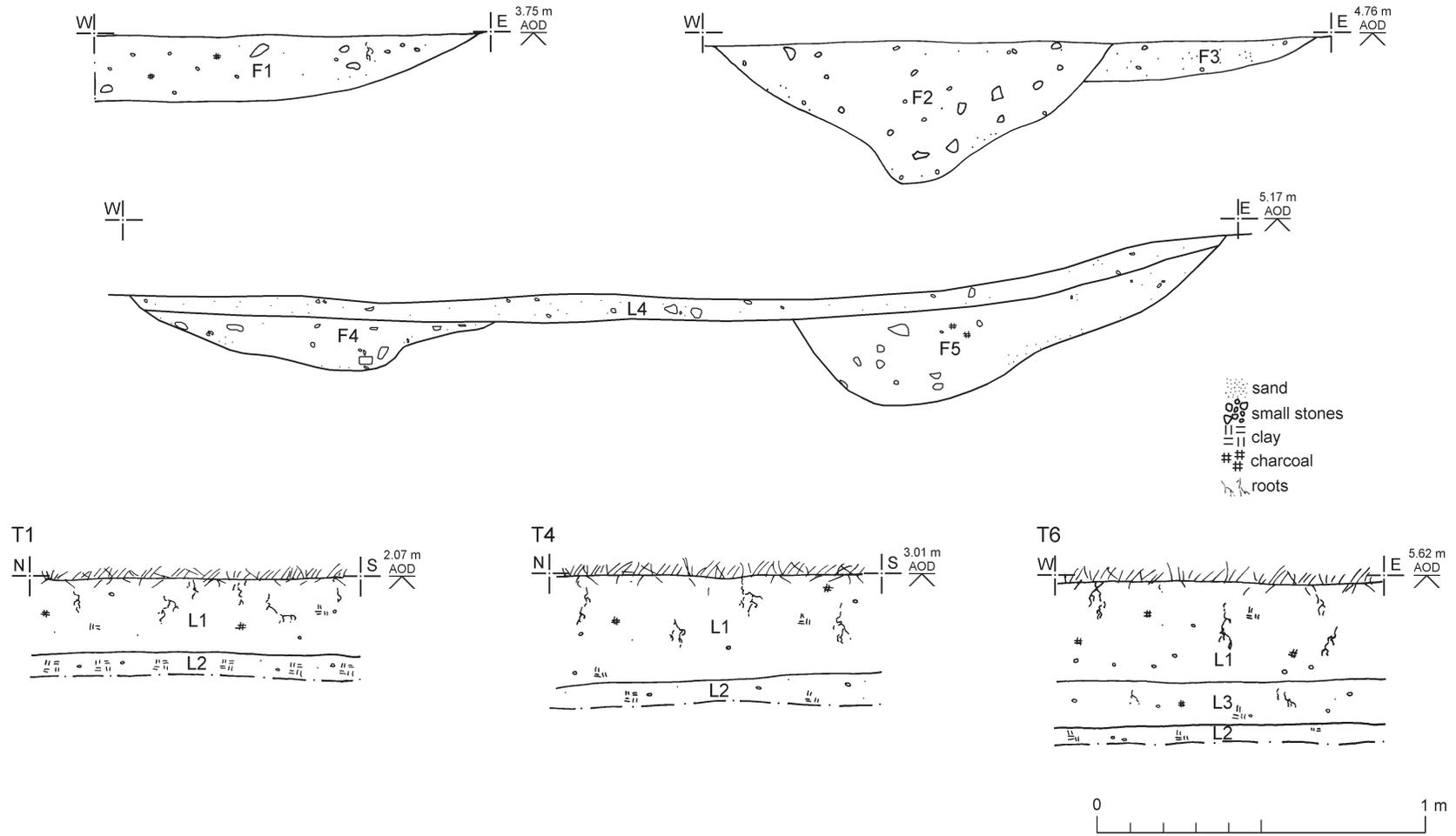


Fig 4 Feature sections (F1-5) and representative trench sections (T1, T4 and T6).

Essex Historic Environment Record/ Essex Archaeology and History

Summary sheet

Address: Land North of Elmstead Road, Colchester, Essex	
Parish: Colchester	District: Colchester
NGR: TM 0221 2442	Site code: CAT project code – 14/02h
Type of work: Evaluation	Site director/group: Colchester Archaeological Trust
Date of work: 27th February 2014	Size of area investigated: Total of 175m of trenches
Location of curating museum: Colchester and Ipswich Museum accession code : 2014.19	Funding source: Developer
Further seasons anticipated? Yes	Related EHER number: EHER 2534, 2413
Final report: CAT Report 759	
Periods represented: Roman, Medieval	
<p>Summary of fieldwork results: <i>This site on the eastern side of Colchester is close to the projected course of a Roman road and to the Bronze Age barrow cemetery to the south on the Knowledge Gateway site.</i></p> <p><i>Six evaluation trenches (total length 175m) revealed five archaeological features: a medieval pit, three medieval ditches (a trackway?), and a natural pit.</i></p> <p><i>The medieval ditches are probably associated with a medieval phase of Salary Farm, to the south. The western part of the site has been terraced, so that topsoil directly seals natural ground. This (as well as water-logging due to Salary Brook), may account for the lack of archaeological material on the site's western side.</i></p>	
Previous summaries/reports: None	
Monitor: Martin Winter (CBC)	
Keywords: Medieval	Significance: *
Author of summary: Ben Holloway	Date of summary: March 2014