

Archaeological trial-pit survey at Parsonage Farm (Phase 2), Parsonage Lane, Thaxted Road, Wimbish, Essex, CB10 2UZ

November 2018



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commissioned by R.A.W Group

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CAT Report 1353

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Contents

1	Summary	1
2	Introduction	1
3	Archaeological background	1
4	Aims	2
5	Results	2
6	Finds	3
7	Discussion	4
8	Acknowledgements	4
9	References	4
10	Abbreviations and glossary	4
11	Contents of archive	5
12	Archive deposition	5

Figures after p6

OASIS summary sheet

List of photographs and figures

Cover: extract from Chapman and André's map of Essex, 1777

Photograph 1	TP7, looking WSW	3
Photograph 2	TP8, looking NE	3
Photograph 3	TP9, looking NNE	3
Photograph 4	TP10, looking SE	3

Fig 1	Site location
Fig 2	Detailed plan of site showing trial-pit locations
Fig 3	Representative sections

1 Summary

The second phase of an archaeological trial-pit survey was carried out at Parsonage Farm, Parsonage Lane, Thaxted Road, Wimbish to determine the level and extent of contamination on the site following an oil leak. The site lies within a medieval moated enclosure and is part of a scheduled monument. Whilst no significant archaeological remains were encountered, a sherd of medieval pottery and a fragment of medieval or post-medieval peg-tile were found.

2 Introduction (Fig 1)

This report presents the results of the second phase of an archaeological trial-pit survey at Parsonage Farm, Parsonage Lane, Thaxted Road, Wimbish, which was carried out during 23rd-27th November 2018 (for the results of the first phase of this work, also conducted by CAT, see CAT Report 1313). The work was commissioned by R.A.W Group in an attempt to ascertain the level and extent of contamination on the site after a recent oil leak and was undertaken by Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT).

In response to consultation, Historic England Inspector of Ancient Monuments (HEIAM) Deborah Priddy advised that as the site lies within a scheduled monument and in an area highlighted by the EHER as having a high potential for archaeological deposits, an archaeological condition should be implemented.

All archaeological work was carried out in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) prepared by CAT and agreed with the HEIAM (CAT 2018).

In addition to the WSI, all fieldwork and reporting was done in accordance with Historic England's *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE)* (Historic England 2015), and with *Standards for field archaeology in the East of England* (EAA 14 and 24). This report mirrors standards and practices contained in the Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and guidance for archaeological watching briefs* (ClfA 2014a) and *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (ClfA 2014b).

3 Archaeological background (Figs 1 and 2)

The following archaeological background utilises the Essex Historic Environment Record (EHER) held at Essex County Council, County Hall, Chelmsford, accessed via the Heritage Gateway.

Parsonage Farm is a medieval moated site and a scheduled monument (no. 1007841). The Historic England list entry for the site is summarised below:

"The monument includes a moated site and three ponds situated on high ground 1.8km south-west of All Saints Church, Wimbish. The moat is sub-rectangular in shape and measures 90m north-south by 75m east-west.

Foundations of the original house are preserved on the island and incorporated into the foundations of the present house, which dates to the 19th century.

The site is mentioned in the Court Rolls of 1392 as Personeslane. The present house, outhouses, bridges and garden walls, which occupy the site at present, are excluded from the scheduling, although the ground beneath them, including the foundations of the original house, is included."

There are around 6,000 moated sites known in England. They consist of wide ditches, often water-filled, that partly or completely enclose one or more parcels of land. These artificial islands would contain domestic or religious buildings. The site name of Parsonage Farm may indicate a religious connection. The peak period during which

moated sites were built was between about 1250 and 1350. Moated sites form a significant class of monument and are important for the understanding of the distribution of wealth and status in the medieval countryside.

The current house on the island dates from the 19th century, but an extension was added to the building in 1999. The archaeological investigation in advance of, and during, the construction of this extension (Gadd 2000) exposed building remains in the form of several wall foundations, a metalled track and a number of pits and ditches. Most of these features dated to the 13th century and the report concluded that there was 'continuous occupation of this site from that time to the present day'.

During the first phase of this survey, the only significant archaeological deposit encountered was part of the brick foundation of the 19th-century part of the house (CAT Report 1313).

In the fields immediately to the north of Parsonage Farm a series of cropmarks have been observed that suggest the presence of linear features, rectangular enclosures and a possible pond (EHER 18480). Whether these features are related to the moated site is unknown.

The farm buildings to the immediate south of the moated enclosure are largely 17th/18th-century in date and include a large listed aisled barn (Listed Building no. 1239242).

4 Aims

The aim was to identify and record any surviving archaeological deposits uncovered during the groundworks.

5 Results (Figs 2 and 3)

During this phase of the investigation a CAT archaeologist hand-excavated four trial-pits. Throughout this procedure a specialist from R.A.W Group checked the upcast soil for signs of oil contamination. If a trial-pit reached the natural (L3), a hole was bored into the layer with an augur to check it for contamination.

The trial-pits were excavated through three layers. Modern turf/topsoil (L1, c 0.18-0.36m thick) sealed a modern levelling layer/build-up of mottled brown/yellow silty-clay, with redeposited natural and common CBM fragments (L2, c 0.3-0.37m thick) which was situated above natural (L3, light yellow loamy clay, encountered at a depth of 0.29-0.66m below current ground level).

TP7

TP7 was located immediately to the east of the driveway. It measured 0.45m x 0.45m and was excavated to a depth of 0.56m. The trial-pit was excavated through all three layers. No significant archaeological remains were encountered but a fragment of medieval or post-medieval peg-tile was retrieved.

TP8

TP8 was situated approximately 3m east of the moat. It measured 0.4m x 0.4m and was excavated to a depth of 0.32m. It was excavated through L1 directly onto L3. There were no archaeological remains.



Photograph 1 TP7, looking WSW



Photograph 2 TP8, looking NE

TP9

TP9 was excavated 1.5m west of the driveway. It was 0.3m x 0.3m and 0.55m deep. All three layers were encountered in this pit, but there were no archaeological features.

TP10

TP10 was located in the small strip of ground between the driveway and the 19th-century house. It was 0.45m x 0.45m and c 0.7m deep. Again, all three layers were evident. An electrical cable was encountered. There were no archaeological remains but a sherd of medieval greyware pottery and a large piece of Purbeck marble were found.



Photograph 3 TP9, looking NNE



Photograph 4 TP10, looking SE

6 Finds

by Dr Matthew Loughton

A fragment of peg-tile and a sherd of medieval pottery were recovered from modern layer L2.

The fragment of medieval/post-medieval peg-tile weighs 256 g. It is 13-14 mm thick and has one central hole with a diameter of 18-19 mm. The earliest use of peg-tiles dates to around the late 12th century and they remained in use until the 16th century (McComish 2015, 33). In southeast England they became widespread by the start of the 14th century and replaced the earlier nib tile (Dury 1981, 130-131).

The sherd of pottery is of medieval sandy greyware type (Fabric 20) with a weight of 6 g. The outer surface of this sherd is blackened with traces of sooting (CAR 7, 97). This ware dates from c 1150 until 1375/1400 (*ibid*, 91-92).

The context L2 (2, TP10) also produced one large piece of Purbeck marble (fossiliferous limestone with iron staining?).

7 Discussion

While it has been established that this is a site of considerable archaeological significance, with deposits dating to the medieval period (Gadd 2000), as during the first phase of this work, no archaeological features were encountered. The single sherd of medieval pottery, and fragment of medieval or post-medieval peg-tile are indicative of activity here during these periods.

8 Acknowledgements

CAT thanks Rory Griggs from R.A.W Group for commissioning and funding the work. The project was managed by C Lister and carried out by M Baister. Figures were prepared by M Baister and S Carter. The project was monitored for Historic England by Deborah Priddy.

9 References

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

- | | | |
|-----------------------|-------|---|
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| CAR 7 | 2000 | <i>Colchester Archaeological Report 7: Post-Roman pottery from excavations in Colchester, 1971-85</i> , by J Cotter |
| CAT | 2018 | <i>Health & Safety Policy</i> |
| CAT | 2018 | <i>Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for archaeological excavation and recording of trialpits at Parsonage Farm, Parsonage Lane, Thaxted Road, Wimbish, Essex, CB10 2UZ</i> |
| CAT Report 1313 | 2018 | <i>Archaeological trial-pit survey at Parsonage Farm, Parsonage Lane, Thaxted Road, Wimbish, Essex, CB10 2UZ: August 2018</i> , by M Baister |
| Cifa | 2014a | <i>Standard and Guidance for archaeological watching briefs</i> |
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10 Abbreviations and glossary

CAT	Colchester Archaeological Trust
CBM	ceramic building material, ie brick/tile
Cifa	Chartered Institute for Archaeologists
context	specific location of finds on an archaeological site
EHER	Essex Historic Environment Record
feature (F)	an identifiable thing like a pit, a wall, a drain: can contain 'contexts'
HEIAM	Historic England Inspector of Ancient Monuments
layer (L)	distinct or distinguishable deposit (layer) of material
medieval	period from AD 1066 – 1500

modern	period from c AD 1800 to the present
natural	geological deposit undisturbed by human activity
NGR	National Grid Reference
OASIS	Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations, http://oasis.ac.uk/pages/wiki/Main
peg-tile	rectangular thin tile with peg-hole(s) used mainly for roofing, first appeared c AD1200 and continued in use to present day, but commonly post-medieval to modern
post-medieval	from c AD 1500 to c 1800
residual	something out of its original context, eg a Roman coin in a modern pit
section	(abbreviation sx or Sx) vertical slice through feature/s or layer/s

11 Contents of archive

Finds: none retained

Paper and digital record

One A4 document wallet containing:

The report (CAT Report 1353)

Original site record (feature and layer sheets, finds record, plans)

Site digital photos and log

12 Archive deposition

The paper and digital archive is currently held by the Colchester Archaeological Trust at Roman Circus House, Roman Circus Walk, Colchester, Essex, CO2 7GZ, but will be permanently deposited with Saffron Walden Museum (SAFWM: 2018.111).

Distribution list

Rory Griggs, R.A.W Group
Deborah Priddy, Historic England
Essex Historic Environment Record



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Checked by: Philip Crummy
Date: 17.12.2018

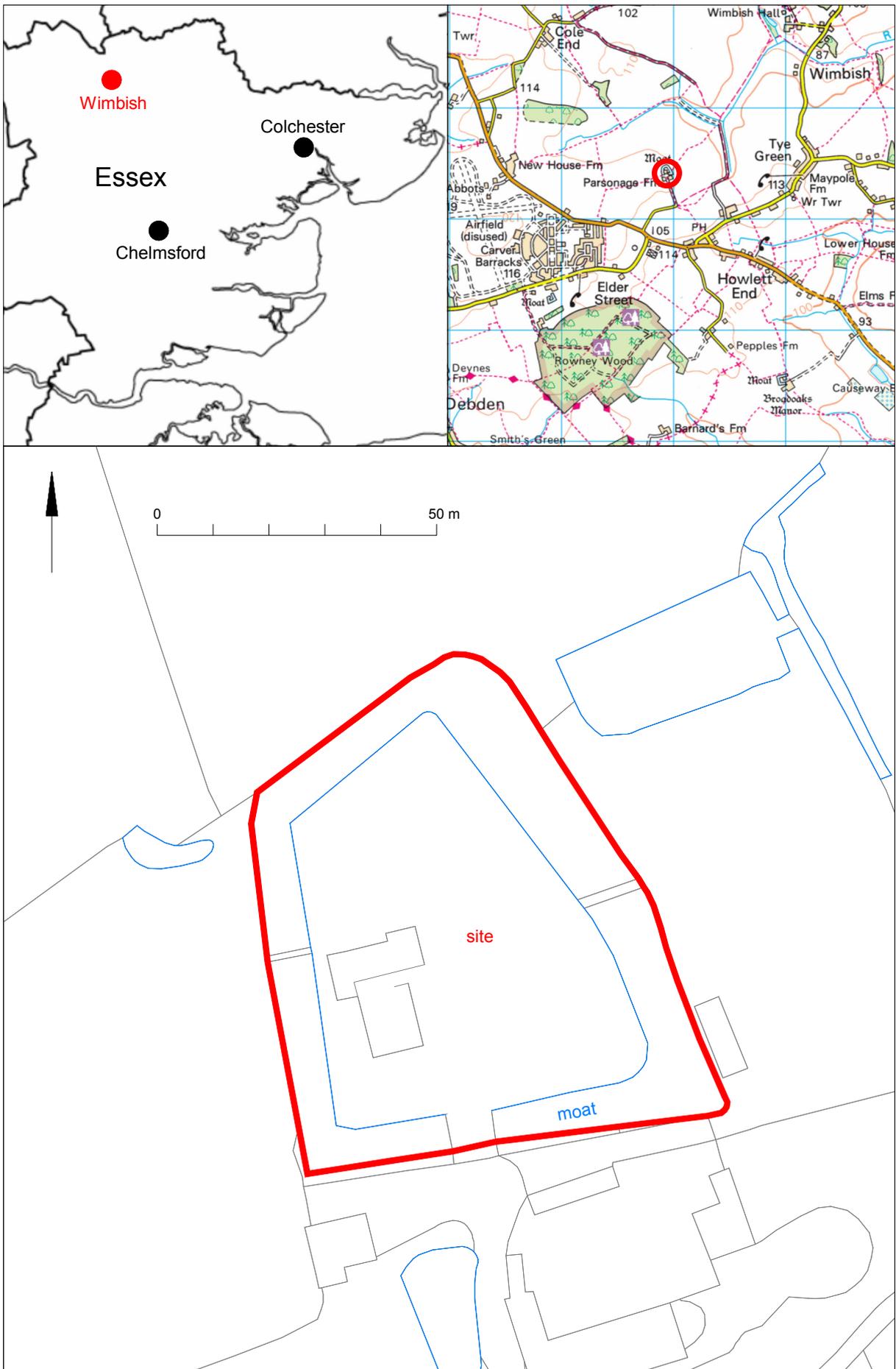


Fig 1 Site location.



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Fig 2 Detailed plan of site showing trial-pit locations.
 Test-pits TP1-6 (CAT Report 1313) shown in grey.

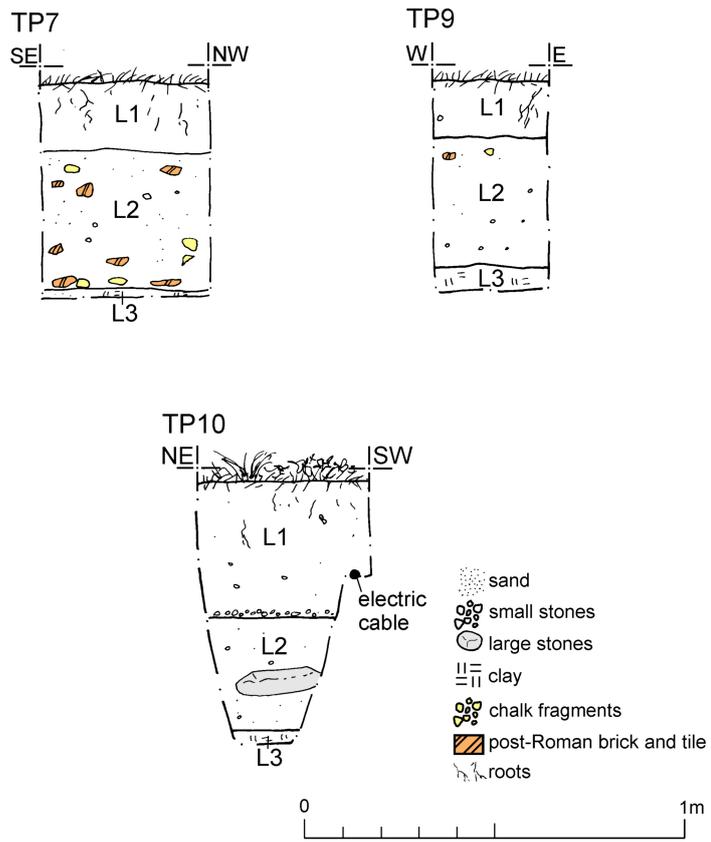


Fig 3 Representative sections.

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OASIS ID: colchest3-337038

Project details

Project name	Archaeological trial-pit survey at Parsonage Farm (Phase 2), Parsonage Lane, Thaxted Road, Wimbish, Essex, CB10 2UZ
Short description of the project	The second phase of an archaeological trial-pit survey was carried out at Parsonage Farm, Parsonage Lane, Thaxted Road, Wimbish to determine the level and extent of contamination on the site following an oil leak. The site lies within a medieval moated enclosure and is part of a scheduled monument. Whilst no significant archaeological remains were encountered, a sherd of medieval pottery and a fragment of medieval or post-medieval peg-tile were found.
Project dates	Start: 23-11-2018 End: 27-11-2018
Any associated project reference codes	18/11i - Contracting Unit No.
Any associated project reference codes	SAFWM: 2018.111 - Museum accession ID
Any associated project reference codes	WIMPF18 - HER event no.
Current Land use	Other 5 - Garden
Significant Finds	PEG-TILE Medieval
Significant Finds	PEG-TILE Post Medieval
Significant Finds	POTTERY Medieval
Significant Finds	PURBECK MARBLE Uncertain

Project location

Country	England
Site location	ESSEX UTTLESFORD WIMBISH Parsonage Farm
Postcode	CB10 2UZ
Study area	0.54 Hectares
Site coordinates	TL 57937 35438 51.994437522216 0.300681220105 51 59 39 N 000 18 02 E Point

Project creators

Name of Organisation	Colchester Archaeological Trust
Project brief originator	Richard Havis
Project design originator	Elliott Hicks
Project director/manager	Chris Lister
Project supervisor	Mark Baister
Type of sponsor/funding body	Developer

Project archives

Digital Archive recipient	Saffron Walden Museum
Digital Archive ID	SAFWM: 2018.111
Digital Media available	"Images raster / digital photography", "Text"
Paper Archive recipient	Saffron Walden Museum
Paper Archive ID	SAFWM: 2018.111
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Project bibliography 1

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