

# Archaeological monitoring at Writtle Mill, Chelmsford Road, Writtle, Essex, CM1 3ET

May 2019



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**commissioned by E&M Design  
on behalf of Mark Readman**

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**CAT Report 1491**  
October 2019

## Contents

1	Summary	1
2	Introduction	1
3	Archaeological background	1
4	Aims	3
5	Results	3
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
	Appendix 1 Context list	6
	Figures	after p6
	OASIS summary sheet	

## List of photographs, maps and figures

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

Photograph 1	Foundation F1, no direction indicated	3
Map 1	Extract from six inch OS map, Essex LII, surveyed 1874; pub. 1881	2
Map 2	Extract from six inch OS map, Essex LIV.SW, rev. 1938; pub. c 1946	2
Fig 1	Site location showing results of monitoring	
Fig 2	Monitoring results	
Fig 3	Results of 2016 evaluation and 2019 monitoring	
Fig 4	Representative sections	

## 1 Summary

*Archaeological monitoring was carried out at Writtle Mill, Chelmsford Road, Writtle, Essex during the construction of a single dwelling. The site was formerly occupied by a 19th-century mill, demolished around 2000, the foundations of which were recorded during an archaeological evaluation carried out in 2016. Groundworks for the new dwelling further exposed the foundations of the mill. As during the evaluation, there was no evidence of an earlier mill.*

## 2 Introduction (Fig 1)

This is the archive report for archaeological monitoring at Writtle Mill, Chelmsford Road, Writtle, Essex which was carried out during 24th September to 1st October 2019. The work was commissioned by E&M Design on behalf of Mark Readman during groundworks for a new dwelling, and was undertaken by Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT).

In response to consultation with Essex County Council Place Services (ECCPS), Historic Environment Advisor Alison Bennett advised that in order to establish the archaeological implications of this application, the applicant should be required to commission a scheme of archaeological investigation in accordance with the *National Planning Policy Framework* (DCLG 2012).

All archaeological work was carried out in accordance with a *Brief for Archaeological Monitoring*, detailing the required archaeological work, written by Alison Bennett (ECCPS 2016), and a written scheme of investigation (WSI) prepared by CAT in response to the brief and agreed with ECCPS (CAT 2016).

All fieldwork and reporting was done in accordance with English Heritage's *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE)* (English Heritage 2006), 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 evaluation* (ClfA 2014a) and *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (ClfA 2014b).

## 3 Archaeological background

The following archaeological background draws on the Essex Historic Environment Record (EHER) held at Essex County Council, County Hall, Chelmsford, Essex.

The proposed development is located near the historic settlement area of Writtle, which has its origins in the late Saxon period.

The EHER shows that the development is on the site of Writtle watermill (EHER 40756). The watermill was built in the 19th century (c 1870) as an overshot corn mill which, together with a windmill located a short distance to the north, would have provided a continuous supply of flour, and probably animal feed, to the village (Writtle Parish Council, 2004). Historic maps and photographs shows that the watermill was a rectangular building with the water-wheel housed in its own smaller structure on the north-east end of the building. The mill was aligned NE-SW with ancillary structures located further to the northeast. It was built of brick and tile, with a wooden lucam on the northwest-facing side. The mill closed around 1957 and the machinery was reported to have been removed c 1959. It was used as a contractor's store until it was demolished c 2000.

The watermill was fed by the River Wid which originally flowed further to the north of its current path. The mill site today has an almost complete but partly silted-up mill water

management area encompassing the mill race, overflow and reservoir areas (*ibid*). The remains of the millstream have survived to the west of the site.

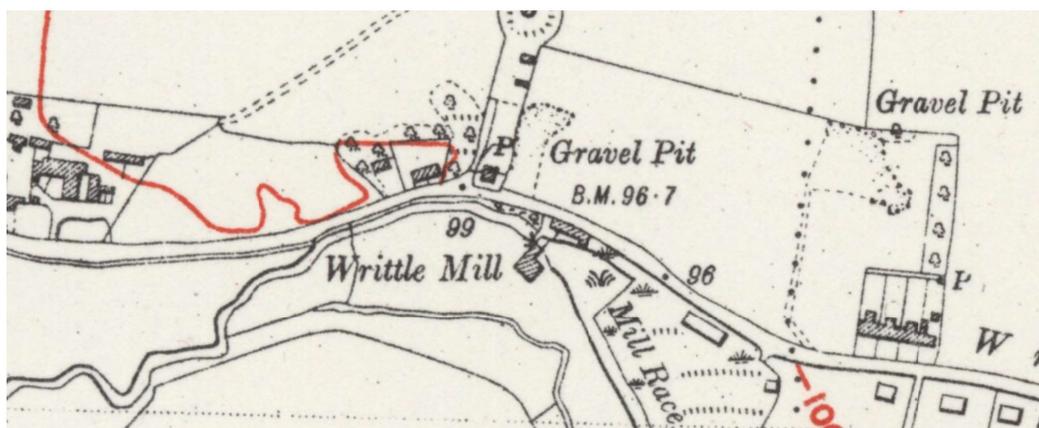
*Mills along the Chelmer* (Large, 1959) provides the following description of the mill before it was demolished:

*The present mill was originally owned by the Hylands Estate and upon the death of Arthur Prior passed into the hands of the Southgate family in 1920. The mill was built in c. 1870 but was damaged during the last war, resulting in the complete rebuilding of the north end and replacement of the roof. All the machinery is original and of iron with wooden cogs. It has a 12ft waterwheel with a 6ft breast and open buckets. The 10ft pit wheel is geared directly to a horizontal shaft running the length of the ground floor. The main shaft carries two more wheels which through wallers drive two pairs of 4ft stones. An additional pulley operates by belts two more pairs of stones on the floor above and ancillary machinery. A fifth pair of stones is driven by an oil engine.*

The Writtle watermill was also reported to have been built on the site of a 'Roman Mill' mentioned in 18th century records, and of a Domesday mill under *Writbla*. Foundations of these earlier mills may survive below ground.



**Map 1** Six inch OS map, Essex LII, surveyed 1874; pub. 1881



**Map 2** Six inch OS map, Essex LIV.SW, rev. 1938; pub. c 1946

In June 2016 CAT undertook an evaluation on the development site (CAT Report 964) (Fig 1-2). Two trial-trenches across the footprint of the new dwelling revealed that the foundations of the mill had largely survived below ground. Two external walls were

exposed and internal features included the foundations for a raised ground floor, a machinery inspection pit and possibly the pit for the pit-wheel. The third trial-trench within the new access road appears to have been located within the silted-up millstream.

#### 4 Aim

Archaeological monitoring was undertaken to excavate and record any archaeological deposits which were exposed by the groundworks.

#### 5 Results (Figs 2-3)<sup>1</sup>

A CAT archaeologist observed the excavation of approximately 129m of foundation trenching, 0.75m wide and 2.5m deep, to accommodate the new dwelling.

Nine layers were recorded. The northern part of the foundation trenching was excavated through modern concrete hard-top (L1, c 0.04-0.07m thick) accompanying sub-base (L2, c 0.11-0.14m thick), an accumulation layer (L3, c 0.24-0.29m thick), a ?demolition layer (L11, c 0.25-0.3m thick), a further ?demolition layer (L4, c 0.04-0.09m thick), a layer of buried topsoil (L5, c 0.19-0.29m thick), another accumulation layer (L6, c 0.18-0.31m thick) and a further accumulation layer (L7, c 0.12-0.2m thick) into natural clay (L8, encountered at a depth of 1.45-1.51m below current ground level [bcgl]). The southern part of the foundation trenching was excavated through L3 (c 0.26-0.29m thick), L11 (c 0.26-0.31m thick), L6 (c 0.32-0.37m thick) and L7 (c 0.21-0.26m thick) into L8 (encountered at a depth of 1.13-1.23m bcgl).

Foundation F1, which was of 19th-century date, was exposed by the groundworks. The foundation was constructed of frogged bricks.



**Photograph 1** Foundation F1 – no direction indicated

#### 6 Finds

There were no finds.

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<sup>1</sup> Context numbers (features [F] and layers [L]) and finds numbers follow on from those used in the evaluation (see Appendix 1 and CAT Report 964).

## 7 Discussion

Groundworks at this site further exposed the foundations of the 19th-century mill which formerly stood there, and which were recorded during the archaeological evaluation. As during this previous phase of work, no evidence of an earlier mill was encountered. Nor were there any finds evidencing earlier activity at the site.

## 8 Acknowledgements

CAT thanks E&M Design and Mark Readman for commissioning and funding the work. The project was managed by C Lister, fieldwork was carried out by B Holloway. Figures are by C Lister, B Holloway and S Carter. The project was monitored for ECCPS by Alison Bennett.

## 9 References

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

CAT	2014	<i>Health &amp; Safety Policy</i>
CAT Report 964	2016	<i>Archaeological evaluation at Writtle Mill, Chelmsford Road, Writtle, Essex, CM1 3ET</i>
ClfA	2014a	<i>Standard and Guidance for archaeological evaluation</i>
ClfA	2014b	<i>Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials</i>
DCLG	2012	<i>National Planning Policy Framework</i>
David Gurney	2003	<i>Standards for field archaeology in the East of England</i> . East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Papers 14 (EAA 14).
English Heritage	2006	<i>Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE)</i>
Large, E	1959	<i>Mills along the Chelmer</i>
Medlycott, M	2011	<i>Research and archaeology revisited: A revised framework for the East of England</i> . East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Papers 24 (EAA 24)
Writtle Parish Council	2004	Writtle Village Design Statement

## 10 Abbreviations and glossary

Anglo-Saxon	period from c AD 500 to 1066
CAT	Colchester Archaeological Trust
CBM	ceramic building material, ie brick/tile
ClfA	Chartered Institute for Archaeologists
context	a single unit of excavation, which is often referred to numerically, and can be any feature, layer or find.
ECC	Essex County Council
ECCPS	Essex County Council Place Services
EHHER	Essex Historic Environment Record
feature (F)	an identifiable thing like a pit, a wall, a drain: can contain 'contexts'
layer (L)	distinct or distinguishable deposit (layer) of material
modern	period from c AD 1800 to the present
natural	geological deposit undisturbed by human activity
NGR	National Grid Reference
OASIS	<b>O</b> nline <b>A</b> ccess to the <b>I</b> ndex of <b>A</b> rchaeological <b>I</b> nvestigations, <a href="http://oasis.ac.uk/pages/wiki/Main">http://oasis.ac.uk/pages/wiki/Main</a>
post-medieval	from c AD 1500 to c 1800
Roman	the period from AD 43 to c AD 410
section	(abbreviation sx or Sx) vertical slice through feature/s or layer/s
ws	written scheme of investigation

## 11 Contents of archive

**Finds:** n/a

### **Paper record**

One A4 document wallet containing:

The report (CAT Report 1491)

Original site records (layer sheets, sections/plans)

Photographic thumbnails and log

Inked sections and illustrations

### **Digital record**

The report (CAT Report 1491)

Photographs, photographic thumbnails and log

Graphics files

## 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 Chelmsford Museum under accession code CHMER: 2016.085

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### **Distribution list:**

E&M Design

Mark Readman

ECC Place Services Historic Environment Advisor

Essex Historic Environment Record, Essex County Council



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Checked by: Philip Crummy

Date: 01.11.2019

**Appendix 1 Context list**

<b>Context Number</b>	<b>Finds Number</b>	<b>Feature / layer type</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Date</b>
L1	-	Concrete hard-top	Concrete surface	Modern
L2	-	Sub-base	Soft, dry light grey silty-sand with frequent modern debris (concrete, CBM fragments etc) and 60% stones	Modern
L3	-	Accumulation	Firm, dry, medium grey/brown clayey-silt with CBM pieces	Modern
L4	-	?Demolition layer	Firm, dry light brown clayey-silt with frequent mortar and CBM pieces	Modern
L5	-	Buried topsoil	Firm, moist brown/grey silty-clay with occasional CBM pieces	Modern
L6	-	Accumulation	Firm, moist brown/grey silty-clay with small- to medium-sized stones	?Post-medieval / modern
L7	-	Accumulation	Firm, moist brown/grey clay	?Post-medieval / modern
L8	-	Natural	Firm, moist grey/brown clay	Post-glacial
L9	-	Topsoil	Soft, dry medium grey sandy-silt with occasional stones	Modern
L10	-	Made ground	Firm, dry light brown/grey silty-sand with frequent modern debris (concrete, CBM fragments etc) and frequent stones	Modern
L11	-	?Demolition layer	Firm, dry medium grey/brown clay with modern debris (concrete, CBM fragments etc)	Modern
F1	-	Foundation	Frogged brick foundation	19th century

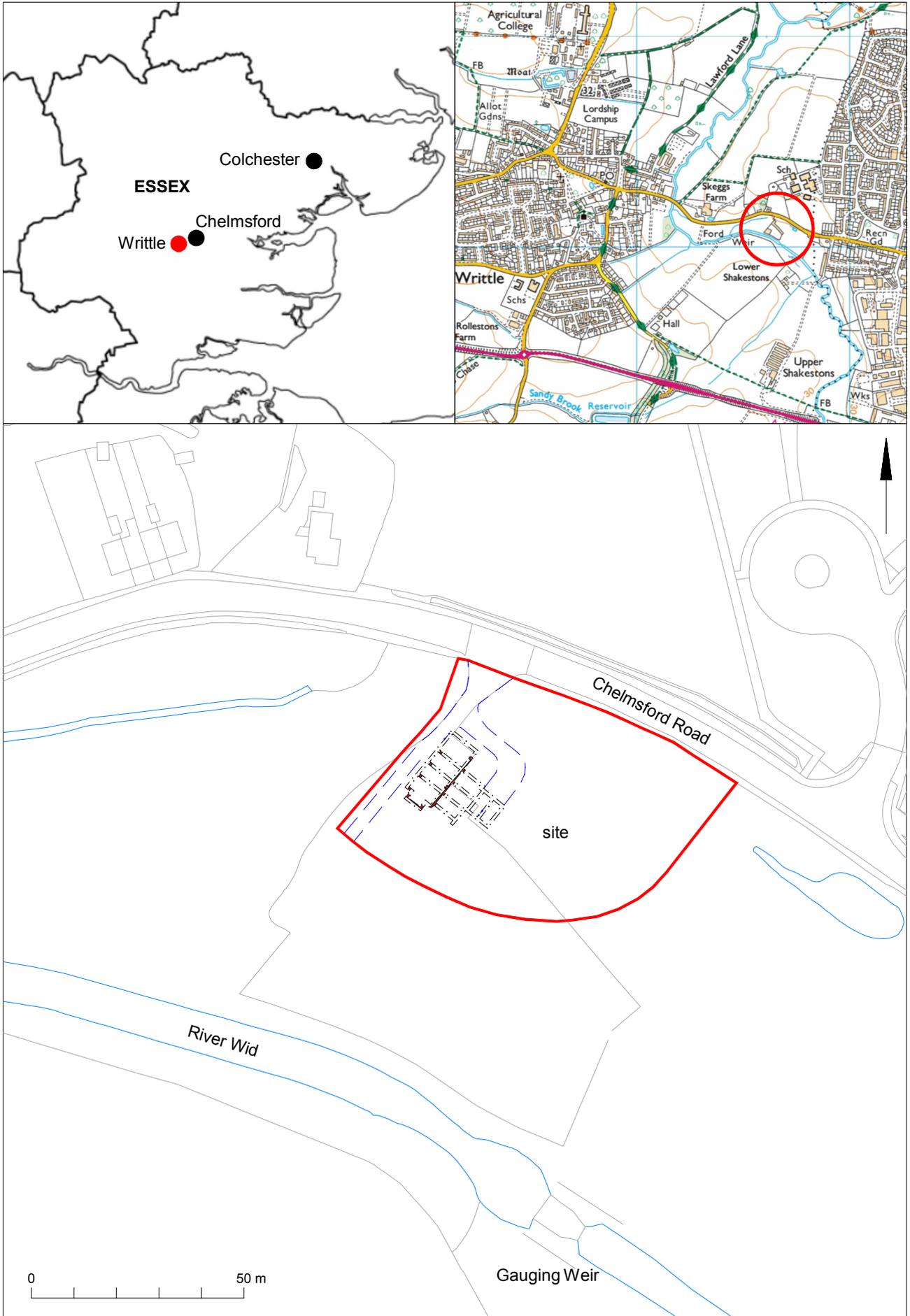


Fig 1 Site location showing results of monitoring

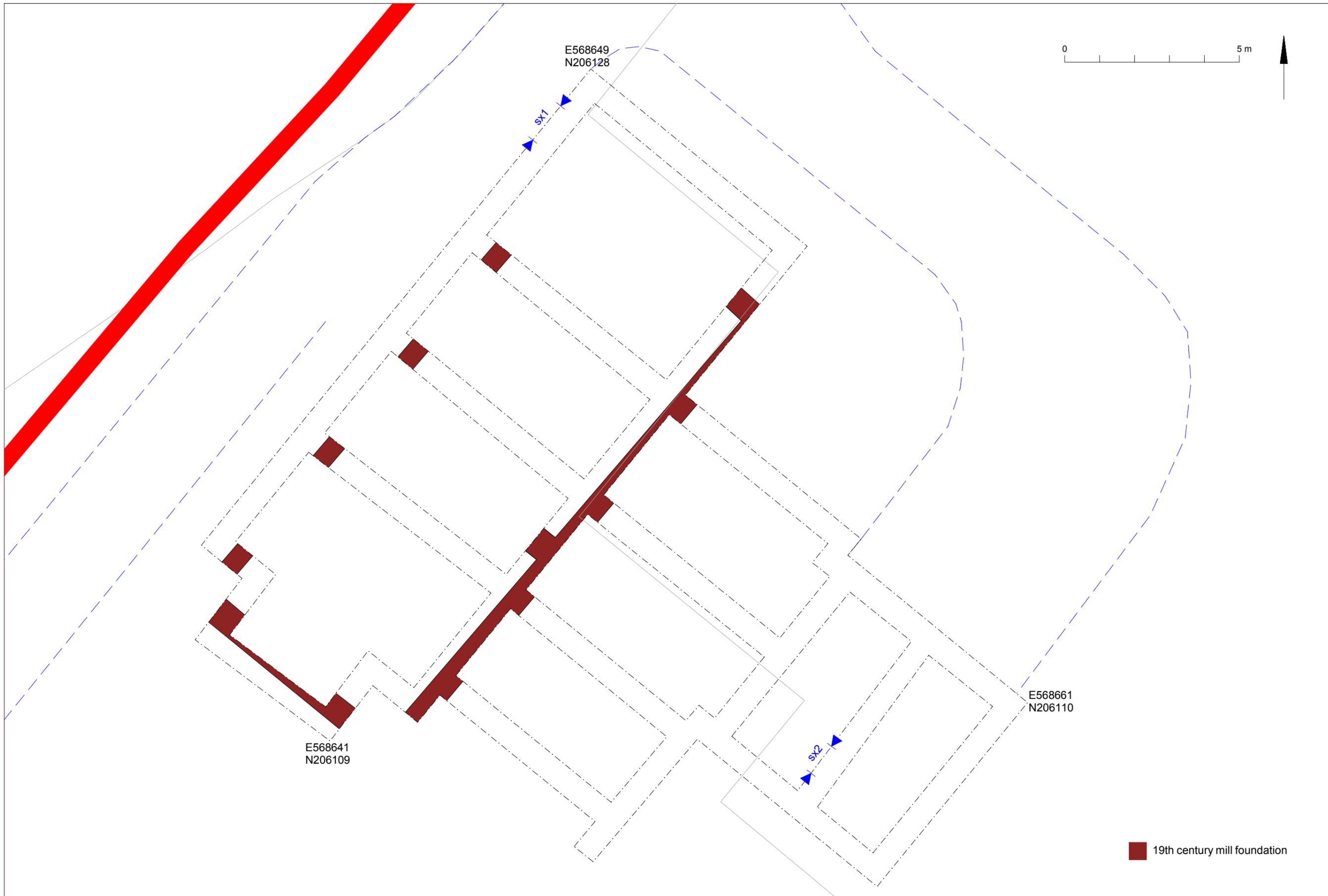


Fig 2 Monitoring results

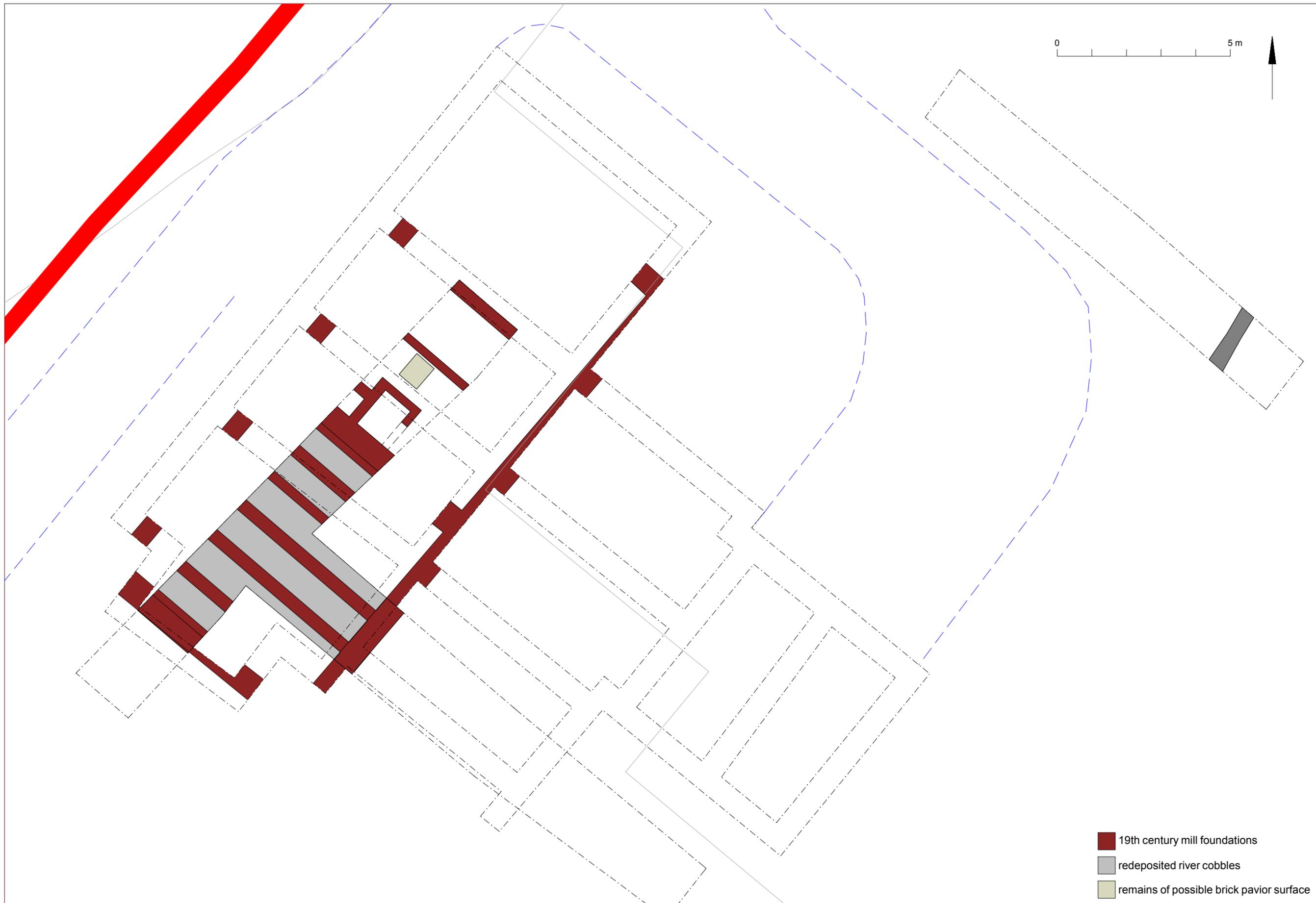


Fig 3 Results of 2016 evaluation and 2019 monitoring



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**OASIS ID: colchest3-259696**

### Project details

Project name	Archaeological monitoring and recording at Writtle Mill, Chelmsford Road, Writtle, Essex, CM1 3ET
Short description of the project	Archaeological monitoring was carried out at Writtle Mill, Chelmsford Road, Writtle, Essex during the construction of a single dwelling. The site was formerly occupied by a 19th-century mill, demolished around 2000, the foundations of which were recorded during an archaeological evaluation carried out in 2016. Groundworks for the new dwelling further exposed the foundations of the mill. As during the evaluation, there was no evidence of an earlier mill.
Project dates	Start: 24-09-2019 End: 01-10-2019
Previous/future work	Yes / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	16/08f - Contracting Unit No.
Any associated project reference codes	CHL 16/00086/FUL - Planning Application No.
Any associated project reference codes	CHMER: 2016.085 - Museum accession ID
Any associated project reference codes	WRM16 - HER event no.
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	None
Current Land use	Residential 1 - General Residential
Monument type	FOUNDATION Post Medieval
Investigation type	""Watching Brief""
Prompt	Planning condition

### Project location

Country	England
Site location	ESSEX CHELMSFORD WRITTLE Writtle Mill, Chelmsford Road
Postcode	CM1 3ET

Study area 0.35 Hectares  
 Site coordinates TL 6867 0611 51.727797577802 0.442561273049 51 43 40 N 000 26 33 E Point

### Project creators

Name of Organisation Colchester Archaeological Trust  
 Project brief originator HEM Team Officer, ECC  
 Project design originator Laura Pooley  
 Project director/manager Chris Lister  
 Project supervisor Ben Holloway  
 Type of sponsor/funding body Owner

### Project archives

Physical Archive Exists? No  
 Digital Archive recipient Chelmsford Museum  
 Digital Archive ID CHMER: 2016.085  
 Digital Contents "other"  
 Digital Media available "Images raster / digital photography", "Text"  
 Paper Archive recipient Chelmsford Museum  
 Paper Archive ID CHMER: 2016.085  
 Paper Media available "Context sheet", "Photograph", "Report", "Section"

### Project bibliography 1

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