

Archaeological monitoring and recording at Heybridge Swifts Football Club, Scraley Road, Heybridge, Essex, CM9 4TT

June 2021



by Sarah Veasey

with contributions from Dr Matthew Loughton and Adam Wightman
figures by Sarah Veasey

fieldwork by Robin Mathieson and Sarah Veasey with Bronagh Quinn

on behalf of Velocity Sports Ltd

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Colchester Archaeological Trust

Roman Circus House,
Roman Circus Walk,
Colchester,
Essex, CO2 7GZ

tel.: 01206 501785

email: sv@catuk.org

CAT Report 1693

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1 Summary

Archaeological monitoring and recording was carried out at Heybridge Swifts Football Club, Scraley Road, Heybridge, Essex, during groundworks for the construction of an artificial grass football pitch. The site is located within an area of dense linear and discrete cropmarks. Twenty-nine features were uncovered, two of which produced Bronze Age pottery sherds. Only 11% percent of the excavation area reached the natural geology, consequently no cropmarks could be identified.

2 Introduction (Fig 1)

This is the report for archaeological monitoring at Heybridge Swifts Football Club, Scraley Road, Heybridge, Essex which was carried out from 24th-29th June 2021. The work was commissioned by Joe Boniface on behalf of Velocity Sports Ltd, and was carried out by Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) during groundworks to replace existing natural grass stadium pitch with 3rd Generation artificial grass surface.

In response to consultation with Essex County Council Place Services (ECCPS), Historic Environment Advisor Maria Medlycott 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* (MHCLG 2019).

All archaeological work was carried out in accordance with an *Archaeological Brief for archaeological monitoring and recording*, detailing the required archaeological work, written by Maria Medlycott (ECCPS 2019), and a written scheme of investigation (WSI) prepared by CAT (2019) in response to the brief and agreed with ECCPS.

In addition to the brief and WSI, all fieldwork and reporting was done in accordance with the *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE)* (Historic England 2016), 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 field 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 Brief and the Essex Historic Environment Records (EHER) held at Essex County Council, County Hall, Chelmsford, Essex (accessible to the public via <http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk>).

The site sits within the coastal landscape of the Blackwater estuary. The Blackwater river valleys cuts through a plateau of London clay formation with superficial river terrace deposits of sand and gravel. Evidence recorded on the EHER tells us the area of the Blackwater estuary contains a large amount of multi-period archaeology. Primarily, large quantities of potential archaeological evidence has been recorded through cropmarks by aerial photography.

Cropmarks are divided into plots on the HER and key areas include: the area the site is situated within (ECC 16407), Loft's Farm to the immediate north (ECC 17685 and see below), East of Slough House Farm to the north (EHER 7905), South of Church Lane to the northeast (EHER 8906), Chigborough Farm area to the east (EHER 7864) and Drapers Farm cropmarks to the southeast (ECC7939). All of the cropmark plots include evidence interpreted as pits, ring-ditches, linear features and enclosures. Cropmarks are often tenuously interpreted as evidence of prehistoric activity, but can often be former post-medieval agricultural field boundaries. Archaeological work across cropmarks within close proximity have proven that the cropmarks represent real features. Some of these were looked at by amateur groups and others investigated on larger scale by Essex Field Archaeology Unit (FAU) in advance of mineral extraction. Key sites are summarised below.

The football club is located within an area of cropmarks (ECC16407). In 2013, CgMs carried out a desk-based assessment of the current site and the potential for moving the club to land at Drapers Farm. The assessment gives a full background to archaeology within the area (Hawkins 2013). CAT subsequently carried out an assessment of the aerial photography of the two sites (CAT Report 791). It was concluded that the area has been extensively settled in pre-medieval times. The enclosures, ditches and pits which show as crop marks at Drapers Farm form part of a cohesive archaeological landscape which is likely to date to the prehistoric (possibly Iron Age) or Romano-British periods, or span multiple periods of occupation and land use. The features at Heybridge Swifts are likely to be field boundaries, with some traces of other ditches and pits indicative of possible buried settlement (plotted cropmarks are shown in green on Fig 1). In 2010 Essex Field Archaeology Unit carried out an archaeological investigation at Heybridge Primary school (FAU report 2264), which is located on the western boundary of the Football Club. Five Late Iron Age features were identified including boundary ditches and pits thought to suggest the presence of domestic occupation and perhaps a farmstead in the vicinity. Some of the Iron Age ditches align with the cropmarks which continue into the current site.

Directly to the north of the proposed site, fields around Lofts farm formed part of a major cropmark complex destroyed in a ten year programme of gravel extraction. Maldon Archaeological Group carried out fieldwalking, observation of topsoil stripping and selective rescue excavation where possible. In 1984-85 discoveries mostly came from field LFP. On the northern fields the earliest occupation of the site was represented by a scatter of pits producing Neolithic flints and Mildenhall style pottery (ECC7898). Evidence of Bronze Age occupation included features and pottery, most notably, a rectangular enclosure alongside four-post structures (ECC 7899), concentric ring-ditches in field LFN were dated to early-mid Bronze Age and included cremation burials (ECC7887) and a well, bucket urn and ring-ditch (EC7894). Iron Age evidence included a 'barrow-burial' thought to be Early Iron Age in date (ECC7900) and evidence of two settlements, characterised by small groups of pits and hearths (ECC7895) and in field LFN a field system (ECC7888-9) and four ring-ditches with distinctive Belgic pottery and a small hoard of bronzes. Roman evidence included trackways (ECC7897) and a medieval or post-medieval pit (ECC7902). On the fields to the south of Lofts farm Neolithic features were recorded, including one of the County's largest collections of Middle Neolithic pottery (ECC7879-7880, 7892), undated charcoal pits were also thought to be possibly Neolithic (ECC7883). A clay-lined pit with pottery dating between late Bronze Age-Early Iron Age (ECC7881). Iron Age occupation evidence included a hut circle, a straight field ditch, and two pits, although only a third of the hut circle could be fully excavated (ECC7882). Agricultural field systems were recorded dating to both the Iron age (ECC7893), and possible Roman periods (ECC7890). Post-medieval finds included a large post-medieval pit containing burnt red earth (7891). A small moated enclosure and finds were found in Field LFD, these are typical of the small moated homesteads which came into being around 1300 (ECC7884-6).

4 Aims

The aim of the archaeological monitoring was to record the location of any surviving archaeological remains within the area of the proposed development and identify its relationship to the known cropmarks.

5 Results (Figs 2-4)

An area measuring approximately 74m by 114m was machine-excavated under the supervision of a CAT archaeologist.

The area was stripped through turfed topsoil (L1, c 0.12-0.15m thick) and subsoil (L2, c 0.10-0.15m thick). The north-east corner (Fig 3) of the site is the only area where the natural (L3, c 0.30m below current ground level [bcgl]) was uncovered, and groundworks over the rest of the site did not go deep enough to impact on any of the archaeological remains. A full context list can be found in Appendix 1.



Photograph 1 Site shot

A total of 29 features were uncovered: one ditch, twelve pits, one post-hole, one pit/post-hole, seven pits/tree-throws and nine tree-throws.

Two features produced sherds of Bronze age pottery; pit/tree-throw F6 (4.69m by 0.87m and 0.17m deep) and pit F27 (1.12m by 0.51m and 0.14m deep). None of the remaining 27 features produced finds or other datable material.



Photograph 2 F27 sx – view NW

Pit F26 produced a single undated flint fragment. The pit was wide and shallow (1.46m by 1.05m and 0.12m deep) with irregular edges.

Pits F4, F7, F9, F10 and F24 (0.44-0.61m by 0.46-0.63m and 0.06-0.11m deep) and pit/post-hole F8 (0.39m by 0.34m and 0.11m deep) appeared to be arranged in a line with a right angle turn at the NW end, covering a distance of approximately 11m.



Photograph 3 F7, F8, F9 and F10 – view NE

Pit F5 was oval in shape and 0.69m by 1.21m and 0.15m deep. Pit F11 was round in shape with a diameter of 0.46m and a depth of 0.11m. Pit F12 had slightly irregular edges and was 0.86m by 0.93m and 0.19m deep.

Undated post-hole F15 was 0.18m by 0.34m and 0.20 deep.

Ditch F3 was on a NW/SE alignment and had a wide U-shaped profile. It was 0.92-0.95m wide and 0.16-0.21m deep.



Photograph 4 F3 sx2 – view E

Six pit/tree-throws (F1, F2, F13, F14, F17, F21) were excavated. They ranged in size from 0.70-3.05m by 0.28-0.81m and 0.08-0.23m deep. Nine undated tree-throws (F16, F18-20, F22, F23, F25, F28 and F29) were also excavated.



Photograph 5 F25 sx – view SW

6 Finds

6.1 Pottery

By Dr Matthew Loughton

Monitoring uncovered three sherds of handmade pottery tempered with coarse flint (HMF) with a weight of 52g. This material was recovered from the pit/tree-throw F6 (one sherd at 28g) and the pit F27 (two sherds at 24g). This pottery is likely to be of Bronze Age date. All the sherds were retained.

6.2 Lithics

By Adam Wightman

A single fragment of flint was recovered from F26 (finds no. 3). There is a small possibility this is a prehistoric core fragment but it is more likely to be part of a nodule damaged by modern agricultural practices.

7 Conclusion

Excavations at Heybridge Swifts Football Club uncovered 29 features, 27 of which contained no datable finds, with two producing small fragments of Bronze Age pottery.

Several cropmarks have been identified in the southern half of the development site. Unfortunately, the site was not stripped deep enough in this area for any to be uncovered. Ditch F3 is likely to be related to these cropmarks.

While three small fragments of Bronze Age pottery attest to some low level activity on/surrounding the development site, so few of the features could be dated making any further interpretation difficult. As the features are largely undated, many with leached fills and irregular edges, it is possible they may be natural in origin. The tree-throws perhaps indicate a period of tree-clearance, though this is more likely to be from modern agricultural purposes.

8 Acknowledgements

CAT thanks Velocity Sports Ltd for commissioning and funding the work. The project was managed by C Lister and A Wightman. Post-excavation was managed by L Pooley. Fieldwork was carried out by R Mathieson and S Veasey with B Quinn. Figures are by S Veasey. The project was monitored for ECCPS by Maria Medlycott.

9 References

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

- | | | |
|--------------------------|-------|---|
| Brown, N & Glazebrook, J | 2000 | <i>Research and Archaeology: A Framework for the Eastern Counties 2. Research agenda and strategy.</i> East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Paper 8 (EAA 8) |
| CAT | 2021 | <i>Health & Safety Policy</i> |
| CAT | 2021 | <i>Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for archaeological monitoring and recording at Heybridge Swifts Football Club, Scraley Road, Heybridge, Essex, CM9 4TT</i> By E Holloway |
| CAT Report 791 | 2015 | <i>Land at Heybridge Swifts Football Club Ground and Drapers Farm, Heybridge, Essex: Assessment of Aerial Photography for Archaeology.</i> By C Cox |
| CgMs | 2013 | <i>Archaeological desk based assessment on land a) Heybridge Swifts Football Club and b) Drapers Farm, Heybridge, Essex,</i> By D Hawkins |
| ClfA | 2014a | <i>Standard and Guidance for archaeological evaluation</i> |
| ClfA | 2014b | <i>Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation,</i> |

		<i>conservation and research of archaeological materials</i>
Cifa	2019	<i>Code of conduct</i> . Published 2014, revised 2019.
ECCPS	2021	<i>Brief for archaeological monitoring and recording at Heybridge Swifts Football Club, Scraley Road, Heybridge</i> . By M Medlycott
FAU Report 2264	2010	<i>Heybridge Primary School, Rowan Drive, Heybridge, Essex: archaeological Investigation</i> . By T Ennis
Gurney, D	2003	<i>Standards for field archaeology in the East of England</i> . East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Papers 14 (EAA 14)
Historic England	2016	<i>Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE)</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)
MHCLG	2019	<i>National Planning Policy Framework</i> . Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

10 Abbreviations and glossary

Bronze Age	period from c 2500 – 700 BC
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
ECC	Essex County Council
ECCHEA	Essex County Council Historic Environment Advisor
ECCPS	Essex County Council Place Services
EHER	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
medieval	period from AD 1066 to c 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
post-medieval	from c AD 1500 to c 1800
prehistoric	pre-Roman
Roman	the period from AD 43 to c AD 410
section	(abbreviation sx or Sx) vertical slice through feature/s or layer/s
wsj	written scheme of investigation

11 Contents of archive

Finds: part of one box

Paper record

One A4 document wallet containing:

The report (CAT Report 1693)

ECC evaluation brief

CAT written scheme of investigation

Original site record (sections)

Site digital photos and log

Inked sections

Digital record

The report (CAT Report 1693)

ECC evaluation brief,

CAT written scheme of investigation

Site digital photographs, thumbnails and log

Graphic files

Survey data

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 Colchester Museum under project ref. HYHS21

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Colchester Archaeological Trust

Roman Circus House,
Roman Circus Walk,
Colchester,
Essex, CO2 7GZ

tel.: 01206 501785

email: sv@catuk.org

Checked by: Philip Crummy

Date: 10/09/2021

Appendix 1 Context list

Context	Finds No.	Context type	Description	Date
L1		Top soil	Soft moist brown silty loam	Modern
L2		Subsoil	Soft moist medium grey/brown sandy silt	Undated
L3		Natural	Soft moist medium yellow/orange/brown sandy silty clay and inclusions of: gravel 25%	Post-glacial
F1	-	Pit/tree-throw	Soft moist light/medium grey/brown silty loam with charcoal flecks	Undated
F2	-	Pit/tree-throw	Soft moist light/medium grey/brown sandy silty loam	Undated
F3	-	Ditch	Soft moist light grey/brown silty loam with charcoal flecks	Undated
F4	-	Pit	Soft moist light grey/brown silty loam	Undated
F5	-	Pit	Soft moist light orange/grey/brown silty loam	Undated
F6	1	Pit/tree-throw	Soft moist light grey/brown silty loam with charcoal flecks	Prehistoric
F7	-	Pit	Soft moist light grey/brown silty loam	Undated
F8	-	Pit/posthole	Soft moist light grey/brown silty loam with charcoal flecks	Undated
F9	-	Pit	Soft moist light grey/brown silty loam	Undated
F10	-	Pit	Soft moist medium grey/brown silty loam	Undated
F11	-	Pit	Soft moist light grey/brown silty loam	Undated
F12	-	Pit	Soft moist medium/dark grey silty loam	Undated
F13	-	Pit/tree-throw	Soft moist light grey silty loam	Undated
F14	-	Pit/tree-throw	Soft moist medium grey silty loam	Undated
F15	-	Post-hole	Soft moist medium grey silty loam with charcoal flecks	Undated
F16	-	Tree-throw	Soft moist medium grey/brown silty loam with charcoal flecks	Undated
F17	-	Pit/tree-throw	Soft moist medium grey/brown silty loam	Undated
F18	-	Tree-throw	Soft moist light grey silty loam with charcoal flecks	Undated
F19	-	Tree-throw	Soft moist medium grey/brown silty loam with charcoal flecks	Undated
F20	-	Tree-throw	Soft moist medium grey silty loam	Undated
F21	-	Pit/tree-throw	Soft moist medium grey/brown silty loam	Undated
F22	-	Tree-throw	Soft moist medium grey/brown silty loam	Undated
F23	-	Tree-throw	Soft moist light grey/brown silty sand	Undated
F24	-	?Pit	Soft moist light/medium grey/brown silty sand	Undated
F25	-	Tree-throw	Soft moist light grey sandy silt	Undated
F26	3	?Pit	Soft moist light grey/brown silty sand	Undated
F27	4	Pit	Soft moist light grey/brown silty sand	Prehistoric
F28	-	Tree-throw	Soft moist light grey/brown silty loam	Undated
F29	-	Tree-throw	Soft moist medium/dark grey/brown silty loam	Undated

Note – finds no. 2 was not assigned

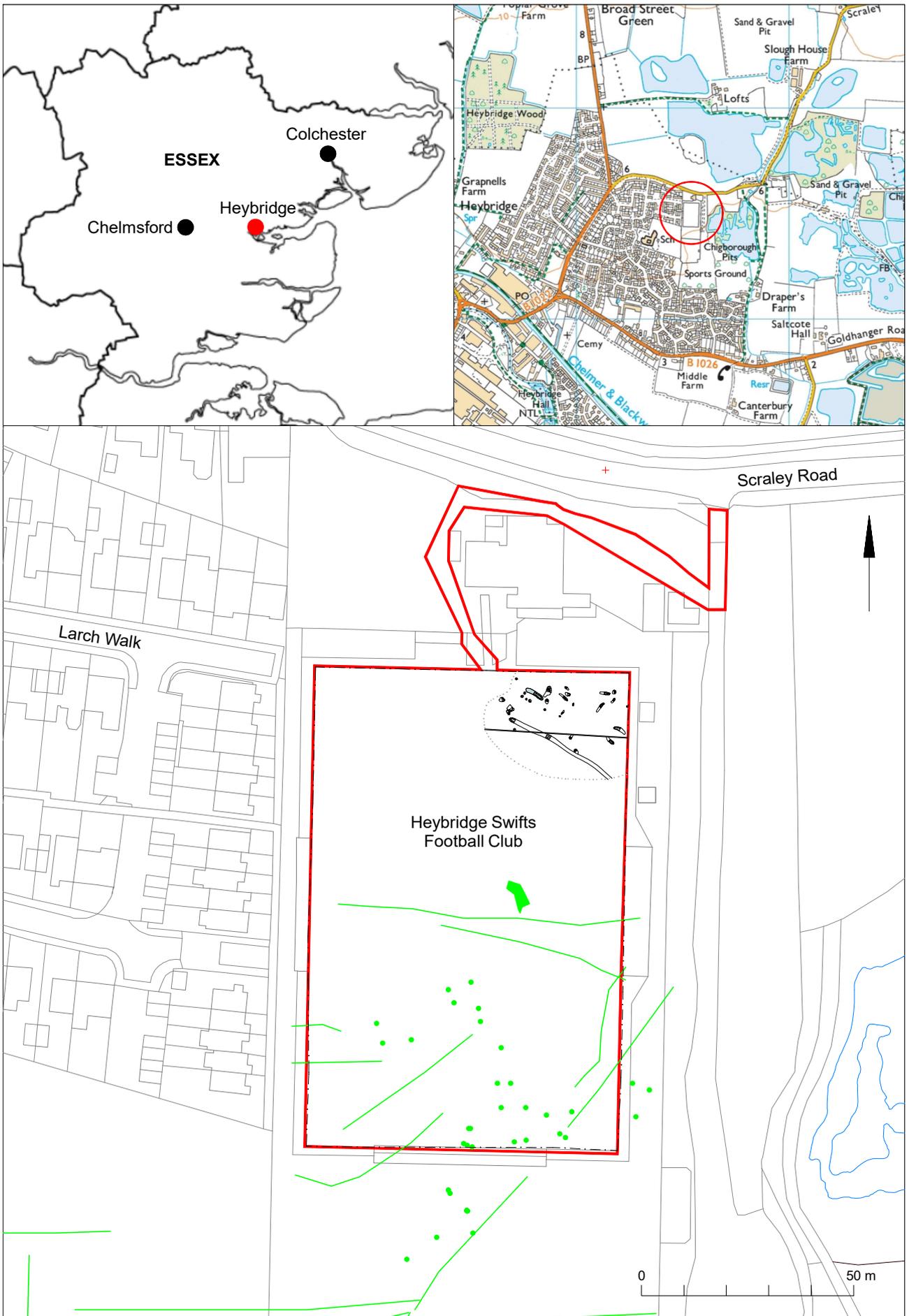
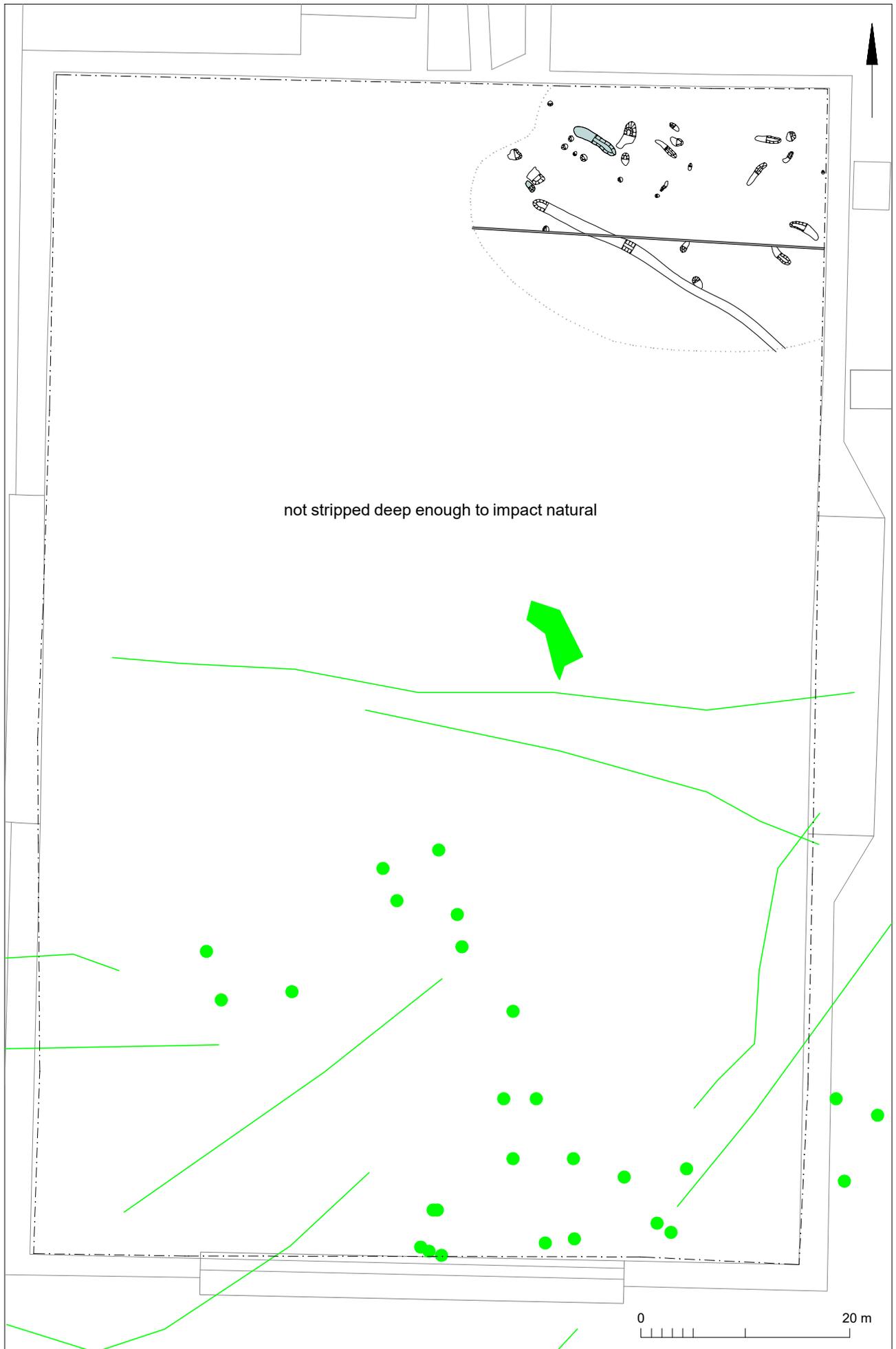


Fig 1 Site location plan showing plotted cropmarks (in green).



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Fig 2 Results. Cropmarks in green. Cropmarks supplied by Air Photo Services.

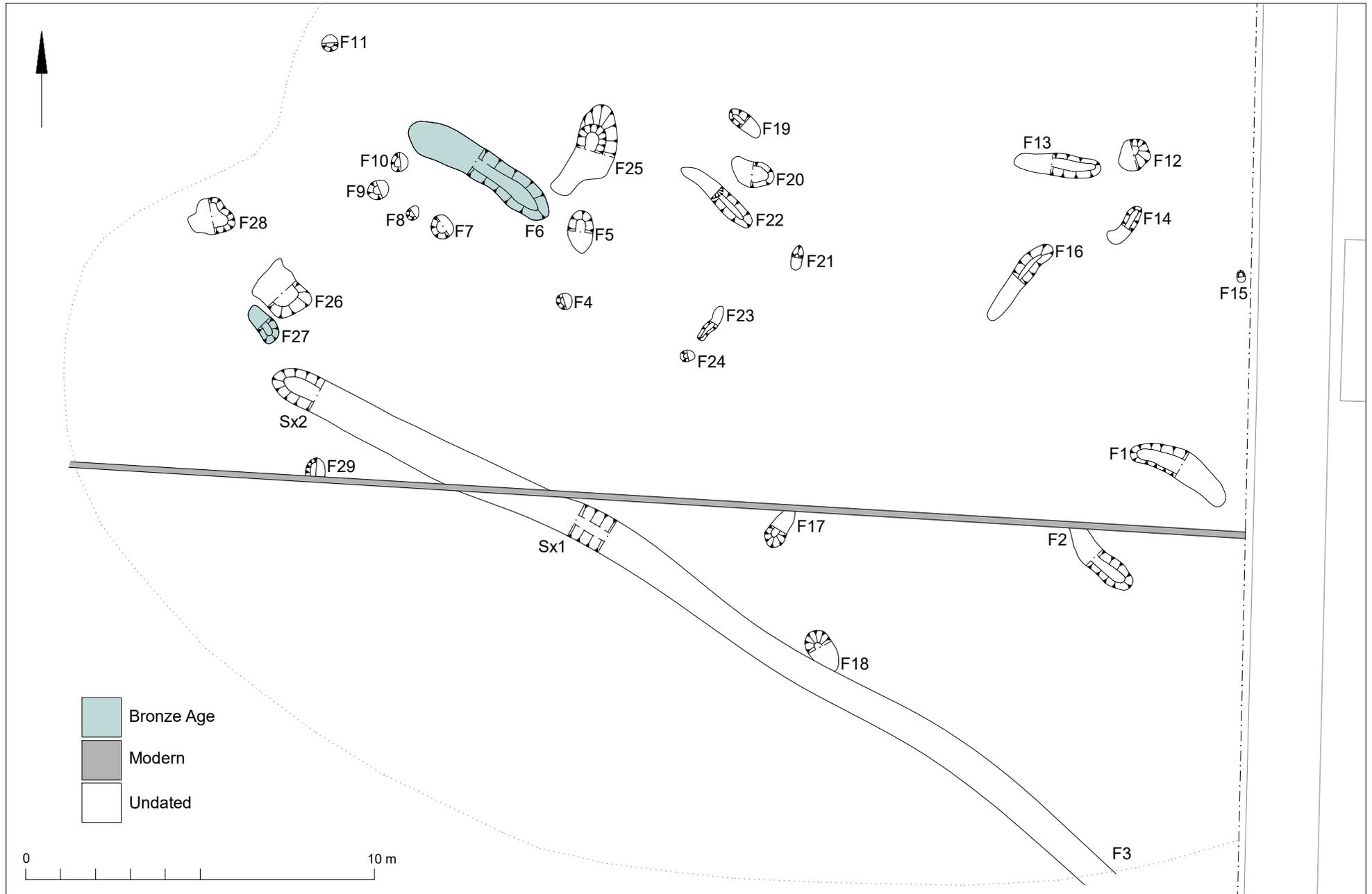


Fig 3 Detailed plan of the archaeology in the northeast corner of the site.

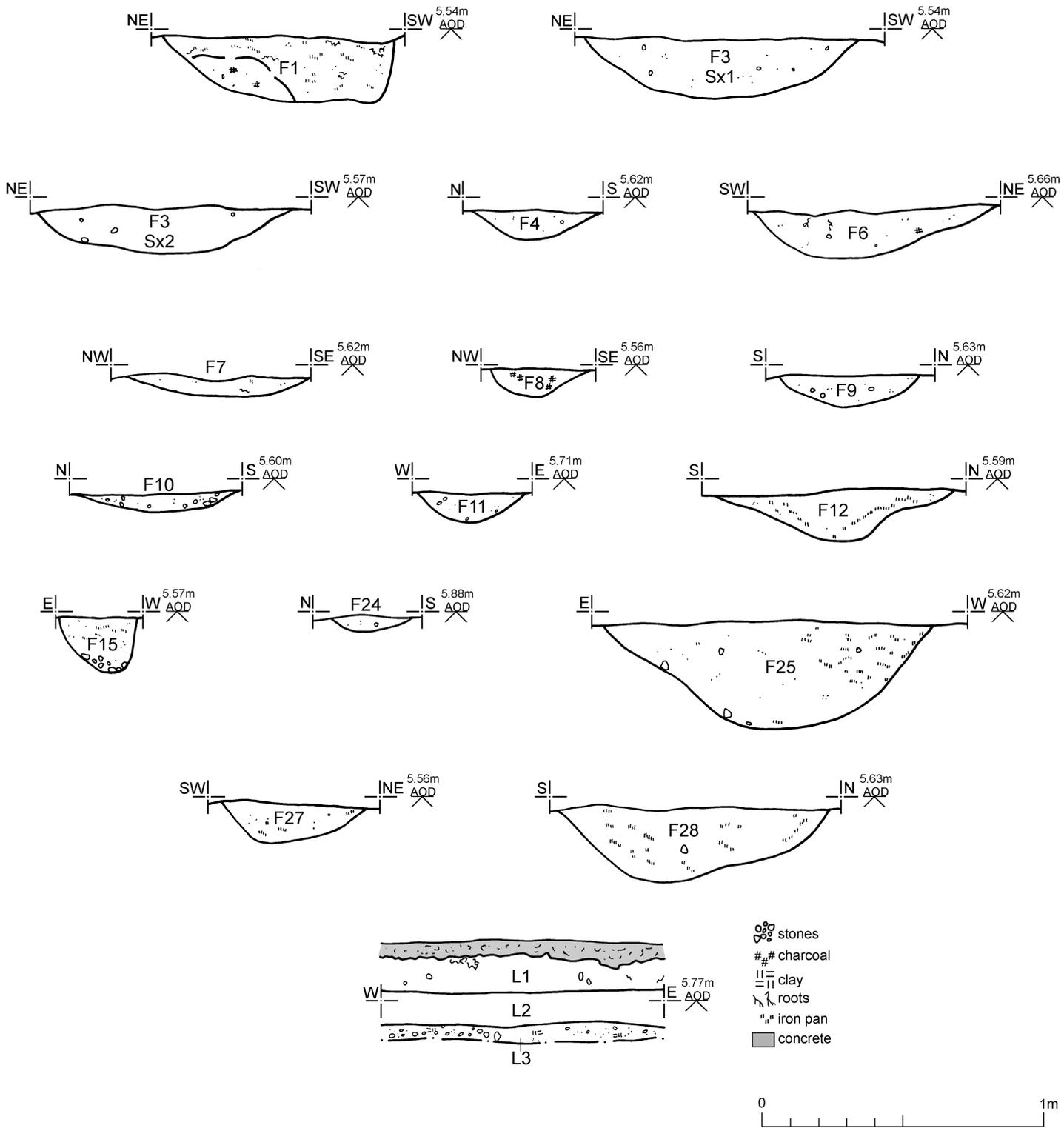


Fig 4 Feature and representative sections.

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OASIS ID: colchest3-350032

Project details

Project name	Archaeological monitoring and recording at Heybridge Swifts Football Club, Scraley Road, Heybridge, Essex, CM9 4TT
Short description of the project	Archaeological monitoring and recording was carried out at Heybridge Swifts Football Club, Scraley Road, Heybridge, Essex, during groundworks for the construction of an artificial grass football pitch. 29 features were uncovered, two of which produced Bronze Age pottery sherds. No cropmarks could be identified as the area was not stripped deep enough.
Project dates	Start: 24-06-2021 End: 29-06-2021
Previous/future work	Not known / No
Any associated project reference codes	MAL/19/00205 - Planning Application No.
Any associated project reference codes	2019/04g - Contracting Unit No.
Any associated project reference codes	HYHS21 - HER event no.
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	None
Current Land use	Other 14 - Recreational usage
Monument type	PIT Bronze Age
Monument type	PIT Uncertain
Monument type	DITCH Uncertain
Monument type	TREE-THROW Uncertain
Significant Finds	POTTERY SHERDS Bronze Age
Investigation type	"Watching Brief"
Prompt	National Planning Policy Framework - NPPF

Project location

Country	England
Site location	ESSEX MALDON HEYBRIDGE Heybridge Swifts Football Club, Scraley Road, Heybridge, Essex

Postcode CM9 4TT
 Study area 0.8 Hectares
 Site coordinates TL 86538 08503 51.743610707441 0.702300849426 51 44 37 N 000 42 08 E Point

Project creators

Name of Organisation Colchester Archaeological Trust

Project brief originator HEM Team Officer, ECC

Project design originator Emma Holloway

Project director/manager Chris Lister

Project supervisor Robin Mathieson

Type of sponsor/funding body Owner

Name of sponsor/funding body Velocity Sports Ltd

Project archives

Physical Archive recipient Colchester Museum

Physical Archive ID HYHS21

Physical Contents "Ceramics"

Digital Archive recipient Archaeological Data Service

Digital Archive ID HYHS21

Digital Contents "none"

Digital Media available "Images raster / digital photography", "Survey", "Text"

Paper Archive recipient Colchester Museum

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