

Archaeological monitoring at Old Hall Marshes, Old Hall Lane, Tollesbury, Essex, CM9 8TP

August-September 2021



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commissioned by Kieran Alexander, RSPB

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CAT Report 1725

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1 Summary

Archaeological monitoring was carried out at Old Hall Marshes, Old Hall Lane, Tollesbury, Essex during phase 2 groundworks for the creation of new wetland scrapes and other amendments to the reserve. Despite being located within a historic grazing marsh and close to a number of Red Hills (salt-production sites), no archaeological remains were encountered.

2 Introduction (Fig 1)

This is the report for archaeological monitoring carried out by Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) for Phase 2 investigations at Old Hall Marshes, Old Hall Lane, Tollesbury, Essex on the 25th August 2021 and 21st September 2021. The work was commissioned by Kieran Alexander of RSPB during the creation of new scrapes and other amendments to the reserve. This follows Phase 1 archaeological monitoring carried out by CAT in 2019 as part of the same project (CAT report 1475).

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 a *Brief for archaeological monitoring and excavation at Old Hall Marshes, Old Hall Lane, Tollesbury*, detailing the required archaeological work, written by Maria Medlycott (ECCPS 2019), and a written scheme of investigation (WSI) prepared by CAT in response to the brief and agreed with ECCPS (CAT 2019).

All fieldwork and reporting was done in accordance with *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 excavation* (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 Record (EHER) held at Essex County Council, County Hall, Chelmsford, Essex (accessible to the public via <http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk>).

The Old Hall Marshes are of national significance as a rare example of an intact historic grazing marsh located between Salcott Creek and Tollesbury Fleet, to the southeast of Salcott village. Coastal grazing marshes are a major heritage asset, part of the special landscape character of many parts of the English coast. Essex County Council, often working in partnership with English Heritage, has arranged detailed surveys of those reserves to enhance the approach to their management (Gascoyne & Medlycott 2014).

Reclamation of the Old Hall Marsh area (marsh 41) is thought to have been underway in a piecemeal fashion by the late 16th century, but the process accelerated over the following decades and reached its full extent by the mid-18th century. The sea walls have undergone a number of alterations. The marsh has large fleets, water filled creeks, relict salt marsh surface and raised causeways that cross the marsh. There are nine or more mounds, which are perhaps the remnants of red hills, midden sites, two surviving duck decoy ponds, one of which is scheduled, and remains of barns, a decoy house and a house. The marsh is crossed by a number of counter walls, which appear

as raised earthworks. The borrow dykes are crossed by causeways in places (ECC 48467).

Buried land surfaces have been recorded on several grazing-marsh sites, these generally are recorded as a result of erosion of the marsh edge and as a consequence are most visible in the inter-tidal zone, but occasionally have also been recorded during excavations. The buried land surfaces range in date from the Neolithic to the Roman period.

Approximately 426 red hills have been recorded around the Essex coast, and this number is increasing as a consequence of aerial survey and excavation. Red hills are sites where salt was extracted by evaporation from sea water, using clay pans over hearths. They are conspicuous sites, either because of their associated red earth deposits or because they form slight mounds in flat landscapes. The earliest excavated examples appear to date to the Middle Bronze Age (Germany 2004, 192-5), but the majority have their origins in the Late Iron Age and Roman periods. Some were re-used during the medieval period (for an overview, see Fawn *et al* 1990). At the Stanford Wharf Nature Reserve, Oxford Archaeology undertook a large-scale archaeological investigation in advance of the development of a new deep-sea London Gateway container port. An area of approximately 30 hectares was investigated with large areas extensively excavated (HER 47049). Although the artefactual evidence recovered was limited, two large Romano-British salt-production sites with associated buildings were uncovered (Biddulph *et al* 2012). Key evidence included channels dug to catch salt water, briquetage trays and supports, evaporation hearths and traces of red hills.

Two red hills lie very close to the proposed scrapes, one of which is actually situated between the new scrape areas (see Fig 2). Areas of earthworks, thought to be red hills are plotted to the southeast of the site (ECC 11556, ECC 16707 and ECC16192).

CAT carried out a watching brief in 2003 to the west of the current site for the excavation of a 100m ditch as part of water control system enhancements. No features or finds of archaeological significance were recorded during the works. It was noted that the ground appeared to be undisturbed except for the previous removal of the topsoil (CAT Report 249). Archaeology South East (ASE) undertook monitoring work in 2015 during enhancement work, but no archaeological remains that pre-dated marsh improvement were identified. Post-medieval and modern drainage, particularly in the form of ceramic and gravel filled underdrainage, was present across the site. It was noted, however, that the area was thought to have been subject to levelling in the 1960s (ECC 16192, ASE Report 8438).

Monitoring for Phase 1 groundworks at this site in 2019 (CAT Report 1475) did not reveal any previously unknown red hills, nor did they expose any other archaeological features, although a single, very small sherd of Roman pottery and a fragment of medieval or post-medieval brick were recovered.

4 Aims

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

5 Results (Figs 2-3)

Two areas were stripped to natural by a mechanical excavator supervised by a CAT archaeologist. The first was a previously unexcavated area covering 695 square metres in the centre of a scrape originally excavated in 2019. The second smaller area, of 194 square metres, was excavated to the northeast of the scrape for additional drainage. Area 1 was reduced by c 0.6m through topsoil (0.45-0.55m thick) into natural, and there were no archaeological remains. Area 2 was only reduced by 0.1-

0.2m through topsoil, so the strip did not go deep enough to impact any archaeological remains sealed beneath. Topsoil was a solid, mid-grey silty-clay with charcoal flecking, and natural a hard, light grey and orange-brown mottled clay.



Photograph 1 Area 1, looking south-west.



Photograph 2 Area 2, looking roughly north-west

6 Finds

There were no archaeological finds.

7 Conclusion

Monitoring of groundworks at Old Hall Marshes, Tollesbury did not encounter any archaeological remains.

8 Acknowledgements

CAT thanks Kieran Alexander of RSPB for commissioning and funding the work. The project was managed by C Lister, fieldwork was carried out by S Veasey and A Wightman. Figures are by S Veasey and E Holloway. 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>

- | | | |
|--|-------|--|
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| Biddulph, E, Foreman, S, Stafford, E, Stansbie, D & Nicholson, R | 2012 | <i>London Gateway: Iron Age and Roman salt making in the Thames Estuary. Excavation at Stanford Wharf Nature Reserve, Essex.</i> Oxford Archaeology Monograph 18 |
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| CAT | 2019 | <i>Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for archaeological monitoring and excavation at Old Hall Marshes, Old Hall Lane, Tollesbury, Essex, CM9 8TP</i> by E Holloway |
| CAT Report 249 | 2003 | <i>An archaeological watching brief during enhancements to the water control system at the RSPB nature reserve, Old Hall Marshes, Tollesbury, Essex: October 2003</i> by K Orr |
| CAT Report 1475 | 2019 | <i>Archaeological monitoring at Old Hall Marshes, Old Hall Lane, Tollesbury, Essex, CM9 8TP: September 2019</i> by E Hicks |
| 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> |
| Germany, M | 2004 | 'Middle Iron Age red hill at Tollesbury Creek, Tollesbury, Essex', <i>Essex Archaeology and History</i> 34 , 192-195. |
| ECCPS | 2019 | <i>Brief for archaeological monitoring and excavation at Old Hall Marshes, Old Hall Lane, Tollesbury</i> , by M Medlycott |
| Gascoyne, A & Medlycott, M | 2014 | <i>Essex Historic Grazing Marsh Project.</i> ECC |
| 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> |
| Historic England | 2018 | <i>The Role of the Human Osteologist in an Archaeological Fieldwork Project</i> , by S Mays, M Brickley and J Sidell |
| 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
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
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'
Iron Age	period from 700 BC to Roman invasion of AD 43
Iron Age (Late) layer (L)	Late Iron Age (LIA), period from c 100 – 50 BC to Roman invasion of AD 43
medieval	distinct or distinguishable deposit (layer) of material
modern	period from AD 1066 to c 1500
natural	period from c AD 1800 to the present
Neolithic	geological deposit undisturbed by human activity
NGR	period from c 4000 – 2500 BC
OASIS	National Grid Reference
	Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations , http://oasis.ac.uk/pages/wiki/Main
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
wsi	written scheme of investigation

11 Contents of archive

Finds: n/a

Paper record

One A4 document wallet containing:

The report (CAT Report 1725)

Original site records (notes and section drawing)

Photographic thumbnails and log

Inked sections

Digital record

The report (CAT Report 1725)

Photographs, photographic thumbnails and log

Graphics 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 EHER code TOOH21.

Distribution list:

Kieran Alexander (RSPB)
ECC Place Services Historic Environment Advisor
Essex Historic Environment Record, Essex County Council



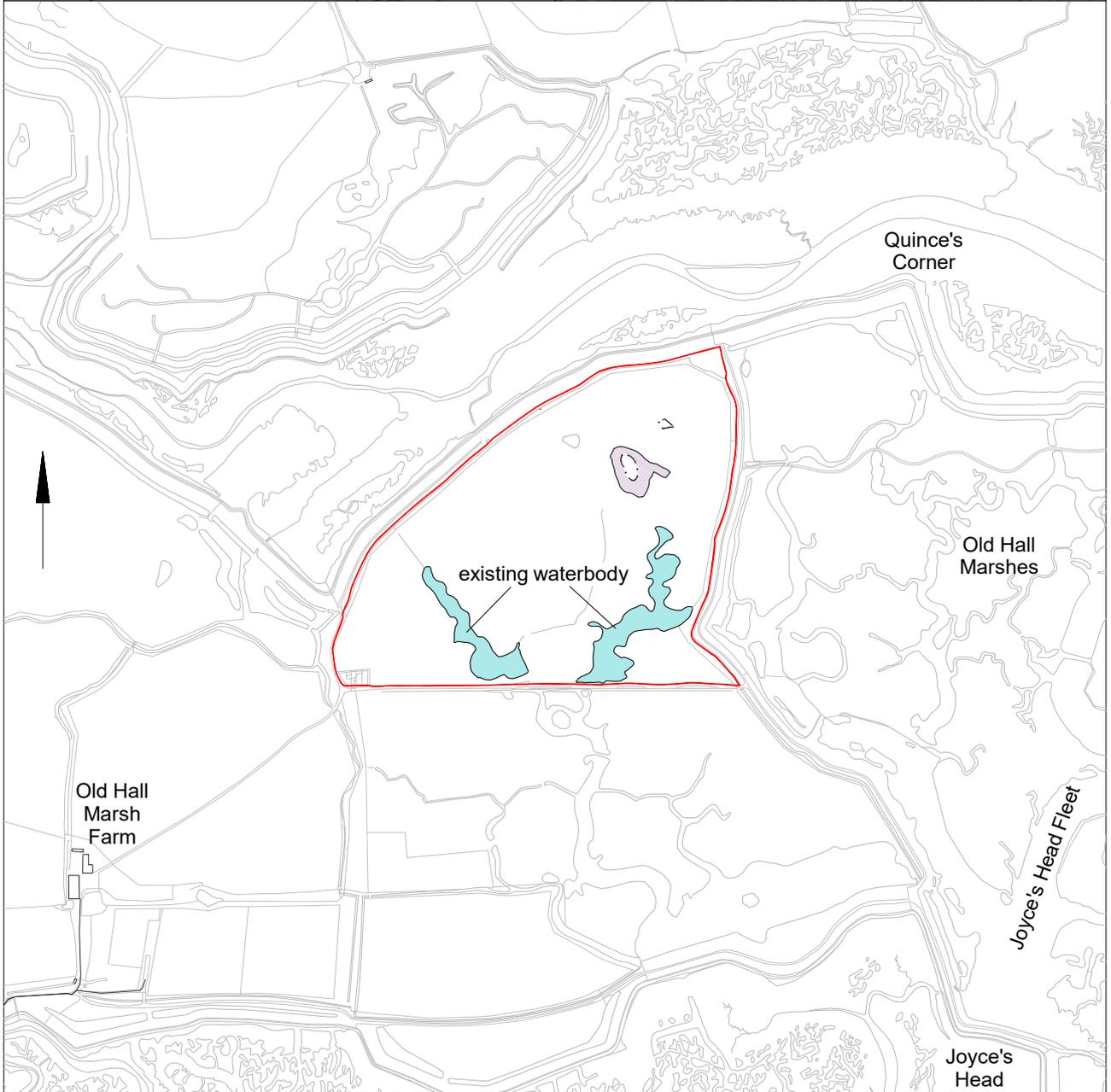
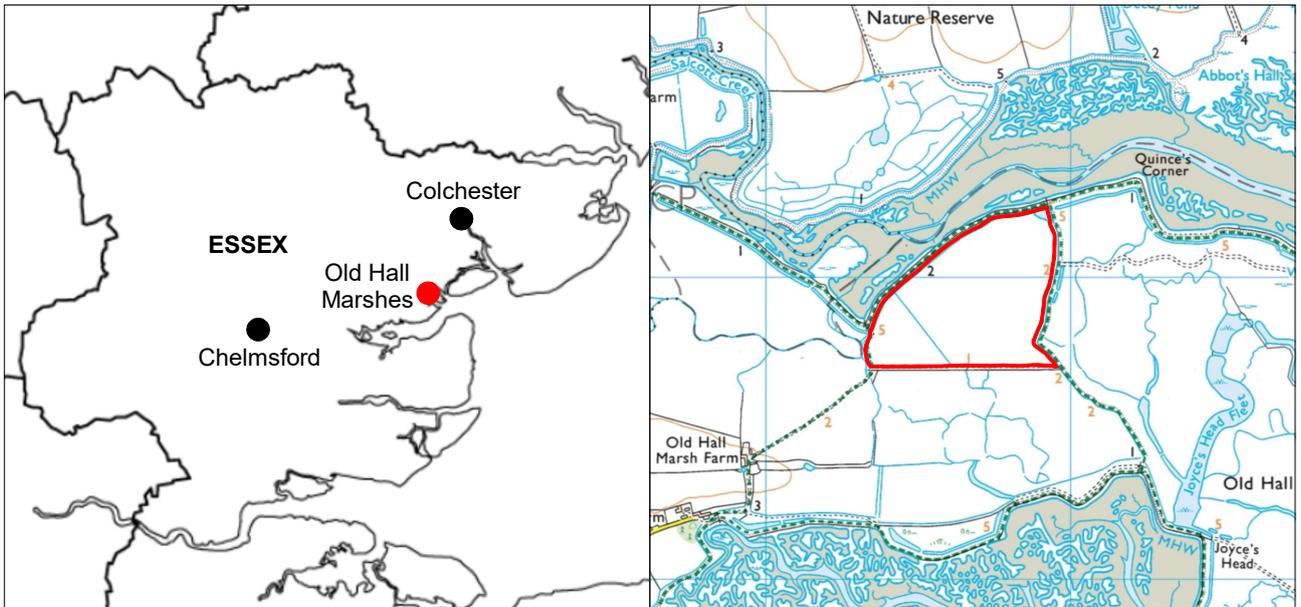
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Checked by: Philip Crummy
Date: 15/10/21



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Fig 1 Site location.



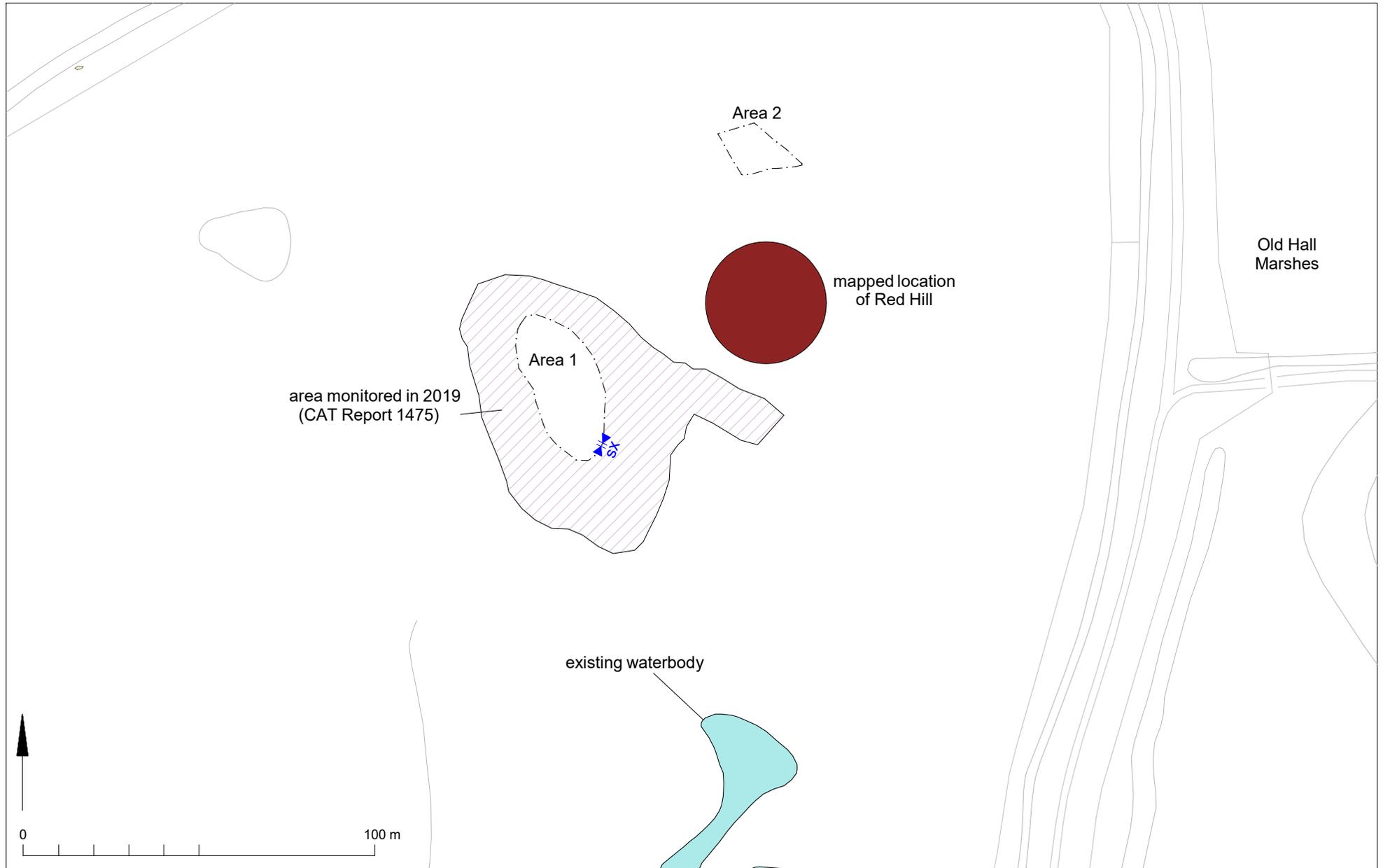


Fig 2 Monitoring results.

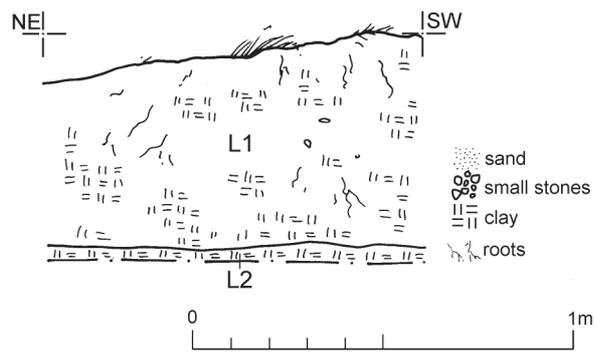


Fig 3 Representative section.

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OASIS ID: colchest3-433042

Project details

Project name	Archaeological monitoring at Old Hall Marshes, Old Hall Lane, Tollesbury, Essex, CM9 8TP
Short description of the project	Archaeological monitoring was carried out at Old Hall Marshes, Old Hall Lane, Tollesbury, Essex during phase 2 groundworks for the creation of new wetland scrapes and other amendments to the reserve. Despite being located within a historic grazing marsh and close to a number of Red Hills (salt-production sites), no archaeological remains were encountered.
Project dates	Start: 25-08-2021 End: 21-09-2021
Previous/future work	Yes / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	2021/07f - Contracting Unit No.
Any associated project reference codes	MAL/18/01395 - Planning Application No.
Any associated project reference codes	TOOH21 - HER event no.
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	None
Current Land use	Coastland 4 - Saltmarsh
Monument type	N/A None
Significant Finds	N/A None
Investigation type	"Watching Brief"
Prompt	Planning condition

Project location

Country	England
Site location	ESSEX MALDON TOLLESBURY Old Hall Marshes, Old Hall Lane
Postcode	CM9 8TP
Study area	23.1 Hectares
Site coordinates	TL 97400 12656 51.777170801008 0.861807778372 51 46 37 N 000 51 42 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 director/manager	Adam Wightman
Project supervisor	Adam Wightman
Project supervisor	Sarah Veasey
Type of sponsor/funding body	Landowner

Project archives

Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive recipient	Archaeological Data Service
Digital Archive ID	TOOH21
Digital Contents	"other"
Digital Media available	"Images raster / digital photography","Survey","Text"
Paper Archive recipient	Colchester Museum

Paper Archive ID TOOH21
Paper Contents "other"
Paper Media available "Miscellaneous Material", "Photograph", "Report", "Section"

**Project
bibliography 1**

Publication type Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
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