

# Archaeological monitoring at Clifton House, 36 Mill Lane, Witham, CM8 1BP

February – March 2022



**by Bronagh Quinn**

with contributions by Dr Matthew Loughton and Laura Pooley  
figures by Emma Holloway

fieldwork by Megan Seehra and Alexander Smith

**commissioned by Jon Bell  
on behalf of the homeowner**

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**CAT Report 1796**  
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## 1 Summary

Archaeological monitoring was carried out at Clifton House, 36 Mill Lane, Witham, Essex in advance of the construction of a new dwelling. Located within an area of medieval and post-medieval activity, monitoring of the groundworks revealed that a large part of the site had been cleared of trees and/or shrubs. The only feature found was a modern pit or post-hole.

## 2 Introduction (Fig 1)

This is the report for archaeological monitoring carried out by Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) at Clifton House, 36 Mill Lane, Witham, Essex between 24th February and 18th March 2022. The work was commissioned by Jon Bell of Design & Conservation Ltd, on behalf of the homeowner, and took place during groundworks for the construction of a three-storey detached dwelling.

As the site lies within an area highlighted by the EHER as having a high potential for archaeological deposits, an archaeological condition was recommended by the Historic Environment Advisor of Essex County Council. This recommendation was for an archaeological monitoring of groundworks and was based on the guidance given in the *National Planning Policy Framework* (MHCLG 2019).

All archaeological work was carried out in accordance with a *Brief for Archaeological Monitoring at Clifton House, Mill Lane, Witham, Braintree*, detailing the required archaeological work, written by Teresa O'Connor (ECCPS 2021), and a written scheme of investigation (WSI) prepared by CAT in response to the brief and agreed with ECCPS (CAT 2021).

In addition to the brief and WSI, 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 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 primarily includes extracts from 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 site lies c 95m east of the River Brain which would have been both a resource and place of significance in prehistoric times. Although Iron Age and Roman settlement was focused in the Chipping Hill (EHER 8106-8, 8107, 8112-3, 8340 and 8444), Ivy Chimneys (EHER 14043-4) and Maltings Lane (EHER18505-6) areas of Witham, Bridge Street/Newland Street follows the line of a Roman road and Roman coins have been recovered along Mill Lane.

In 1147 King Stephen and Queen Matilda gave the manor of Witham to the Knights Templar. The Templars organised the development of the present town centre along the London to Colchester road in, or just before, 1212, when the market charter for a 'new town' at Wulvesford was granted. The new town quickly developed as a thriving commercial centre, although occupation also continued at Chipping Hill. There is considerable documentary evidence for the cloth-making industry in Witham during the 14th and 15th centuries (Medlycott 1999,4, EHER 8166).

Clifton House was constructed in the mid-20th century in the grounds of 'The Lawn', a house originally located to the north on a plot now occupied by nos. 44-50 Mill Lane and

Hollybank. Groundworks for the new dwelling at Clifton House were located to the rear of the historic street front for 'The Lawn'.

At 32 Mill Lane archaeological investigation revealed evidence for medieval activity and remains of a post-medieval building which would have fronted Mill Lane (EHER 16415-6). During an evaluation at 143-147 Newland Street concentrations of medieval and post-medieval activity was recorded (EHER 17428-9). On the opposite side of the river excavations at the Maltings Academy found well preserved medieval archaeology. Two phases of medieval occupation were recorded with pottery evidence dating features to the 11th-12th centuries, followed by a more intensive phase of activity in the 13th-15th centuries. The site showed evidence that the town may have been more extensive than previously thought to have had medieval occupation north-west of Newland Street (EHER 47679).

For a full background on the archaeology of the town, see the *Witham Historic Town Assessment Report* (Medlycott 1999) and *The Origins and Early Development of Witham* (Rodwell 1993).

#### 4 Aim

The aims of the archaeological monitoring were to record the extent of any surviving archaeological deposits and to assess the archaeological potential of the site to allow the ECCHEA to determine if further investigation is required.

#### 5 Results

All groundworks were carried out by mechanical excavator under the supervision of a CAT archaeologist.

A bank to the north of the entranceway was reduced by between 0.1m and 1.6m deep to the level of the current driveway (Photograph 1). It covered an area of 16.6 square metres and, at its deepest, the reduction resulted in the removal of about 0.8m of modern topsoil (L1) and 0.6m of modern made-ground (L2) into natural (L3).



**Photograph 1** Excavation of the bank to natural, looking west

Modern topsoil (L1/L4, 0.1-0.7m thick, increasing in depth from west to east) was stripped from the area of the new dwelling. Foundations were subsequently cut through modern made-ground (L2/L5, 0.2-0.4m thick) into natural (L3). The trenches were 0.3m wide and excavated to a depth of 0.8-0.9m.

Pit/post-hole (F1) was partially revealed. At 0.7m wide by 0.4m deep, it produced sherds of 19th-century pottery and ceramic building material. An area of grey/brown sandy-silt (F2), 8.8m by 4.4m and of varying depth (up to 0.9m), was identified by the landowners as an area of tree/shrub clearance which took place prior to the start of the groundworks.



**Photograph 2** Pit F1, looking south



**Photograph 3** Tree/shrub clearance F2, looking north



**Photograph 4** Site shot of completed foundation trenching, looking west

## 6 Finds

### 6.1 Ceramic finds

*by Dr Matthew Loughton*

Monitoring uncovered five sherds of pottery weighing 57g with an EVE of 0.05, and four pieces of ceramic building material (henceforth CBM) weighing 567g (Table 1). This material was recovered from two features (Table 2).

Ceramic material	No.	Weight (g)	MSW (g)	EVE
Pottery	5	57	11	0.05
CBM	4	567	142	-
<b>All</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>624</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>0.05</b>

**Table 1** Summary of the ceramic finds

Context	Description	No.	Weight (g)	MSW (g)
F1	Post-hole	6	576	96
F2	Tree/shrub clearance	3	48	16
<b>Total</b>		<b>9</b>	<b>624</b>	<b>69</b>

**Table 2** Quantities of pottery and CBM from specific features

The pottery includes Colchester-type ware (fabric 21) dating to c 1200-1550, post-medieval red earthenwares (fabric F40) dating to c 1500-19th/20th century (including a large bowl or pancheon (EVE: 0.05) from F2), and a sherd of Staffordshire-type white earthenwares (fabric F48D) dating to the 19th or 20th century. The CBM, which all came from post-hole F1, consisted of sherds of medieval/post-medieval peg-tile and un-frogged brick. None of the finds were retained.

Table 3 summarises the dating evidence for the features which contained dateable pottery and ceramics. Both features produced finds of 19th to 20th century date.

Context	Description	Post-Roman	CBM	Finds date
F1	Post-hole	F21, F40	PT, BR (un-frogged)	19th century
F2	Tree/shrub clearance	F21, F40 (large bowl/pancheon), F48D	-	19th-20th century

**Table 3** Approximate dates for the features

## 6.2 Miscellaneous finds

by Laura Pooley

Two complete glass jars and a fragment of clay pipe stem (5.3g) were recovered from the spoil heap (finds no. 1).

Glass bottles:

- 1) Medicine bottle, rectangular, pale blue glass, embossed on the front TABLESPOONS with measuring lines, 187.0g, 165mm high, 19th/20th century.
- 2) Perfume bottle, round, clear glass, embossed with a crown over ED.PINAUD / PARIS, 169.4g, 140mm high, 19th century.

A fragment of 19th-/20th-century clear glass (9.6g) and a complete cow radius (250g) came from F2 (finds no. 4). None of the finds were retained.

## 7 Conclusion

Excavations on this site revealed a modern post-hole and a large area of tree/shrub clearance. No evidence of earlier archaeological features was found, suggesting a limited archaeological potential.

## 8 Acknowledgements

CAT thanks Jon Bell and the homeowner for commissioning and funding the work. The project was managed by C Lister, fieldwork was carried out by M Seehra and A Smith. Figures are by E Holloway. The project was monitored for Essex County Council by Teresa O'Connor.

## 9 References

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

Brown, D	2011	<i>Archaeological Archives: A guide to best practice in creation, compilation, transfer and curation</i>
CAT	2022	<i>Health &amp; Safety Policy</i>
CAT	2021	<i>Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for archaeological monitoring at Clifton House, 36 Mill Lane, Witham, Essex, CM8 1BP</i>
ECCPS	2021	<i>Brief for Archaeological Monitoring at Clifton House, Mill Lane, Witham, Braintree</i> , by Teresa O'Connor
CifA	2014a	<i>Standard and Guidance for archaeological evaluation</i>
CifA	2014b	<i>Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials</i>
Historic England	2016	<i>Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE)</i>
Medlycott, M	1999	<i>Witham Historic Town Assessment</i> , ECC
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.
Rodwell, W	1993	<i>The origins and early development of Witham: a study in</i>

*settlement and fortification, prehistoric to medieval, Oxbow*  
Monograph 26

## 10 Abbreviations and glossary

CAT	Colchester Archaeological Trust
CBC	Colchester Borough Council
CBCAA	Colchester Borough Council Archaeological Advisor
CHER	Colchester Historic Environment Record
CIfA	Chartered Institute for Archaeologists
context	specific location of finds on an archaeological site
EHHER	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
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, <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
wsi	written scheme of investigation

## 11 Contents of archive

**Finds:** none retained

### Digital record

The report (CAT Report 1796)

CBC evaluation brief, CAT written scheme of investigation

Site digital photographs, thumbnails and log

Graphic files

Survey data

Scans of all original site records

## 12 Archive deposition

The 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 the Archaeological Data Service

**Distribution list:**

Homeowner  
Jonathan Bell, Design & Conservation Ltd  
Teresa O'Connor  
Essex Historic Environment Record



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*Date:* 30/05/2022

## Appendix 1 Context list

Context	Finds no.	Context	Description	Date
L1/L4	-	Topsoil	soft moist medium grey/brown loamy silt and inclusions of: stone 10%	Modern
L2/L5	-	Made-ground	soft moist light/medium grey/brown sandy silt with brick flecks and inclusions of: gravel 5%	Modern
L3	-	Natural	friable/firm dry medium yellow/orange sand and inclusions of: gravel 40%	Post-glacial
F1	3	Pit/post-hole	soft moist medium/dark grey/brown sandy silt and inclusions of: gravel 1%	Modern
F2	4	Tree/shrub clearance	friable moist medium/dark grey/brown sandy silt with brick flecks and inclusions of: gravel 2%	Modern

Finds no. 1 – unstratified from spoil heap

Finds no. 2 – VOID

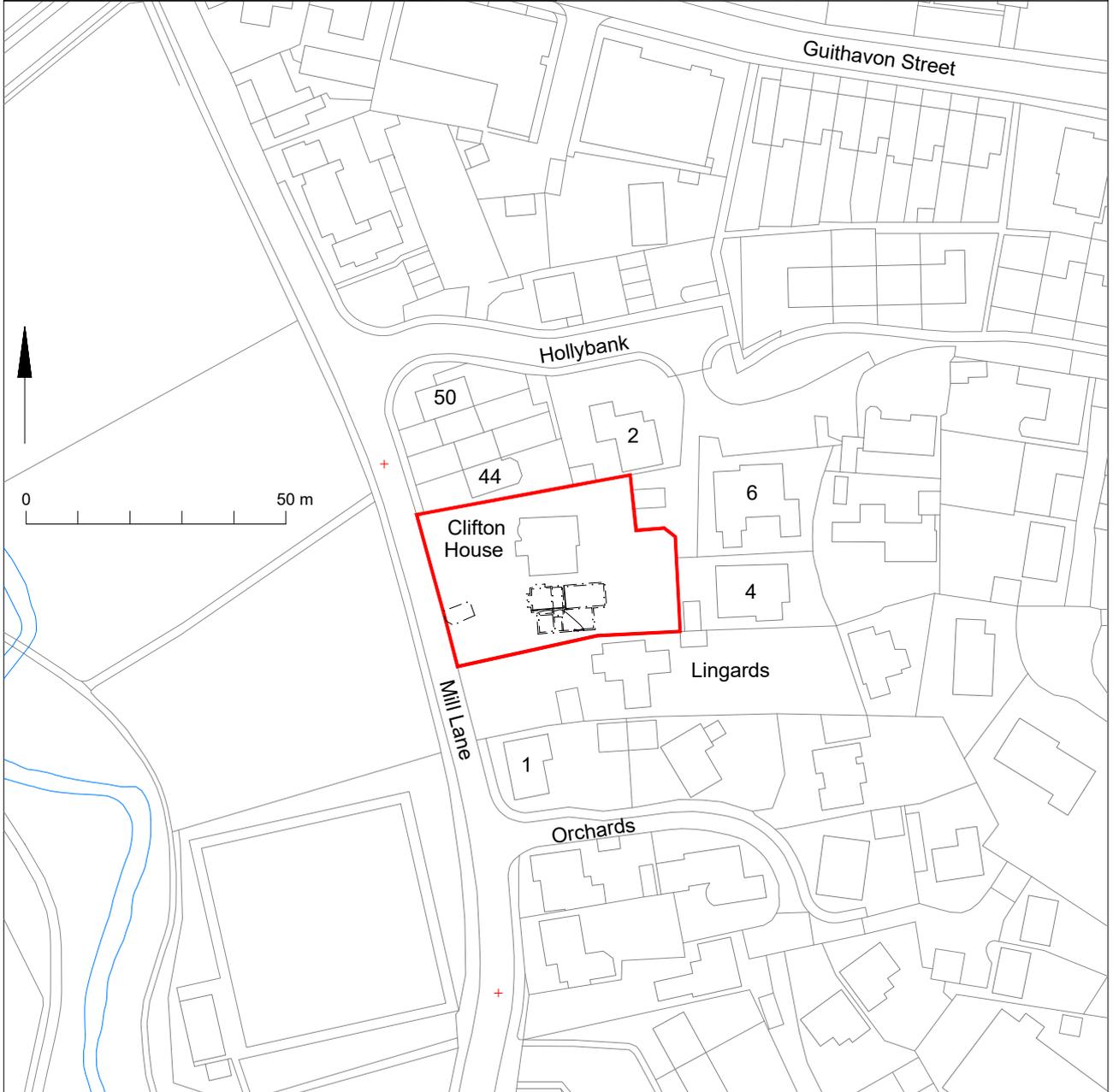
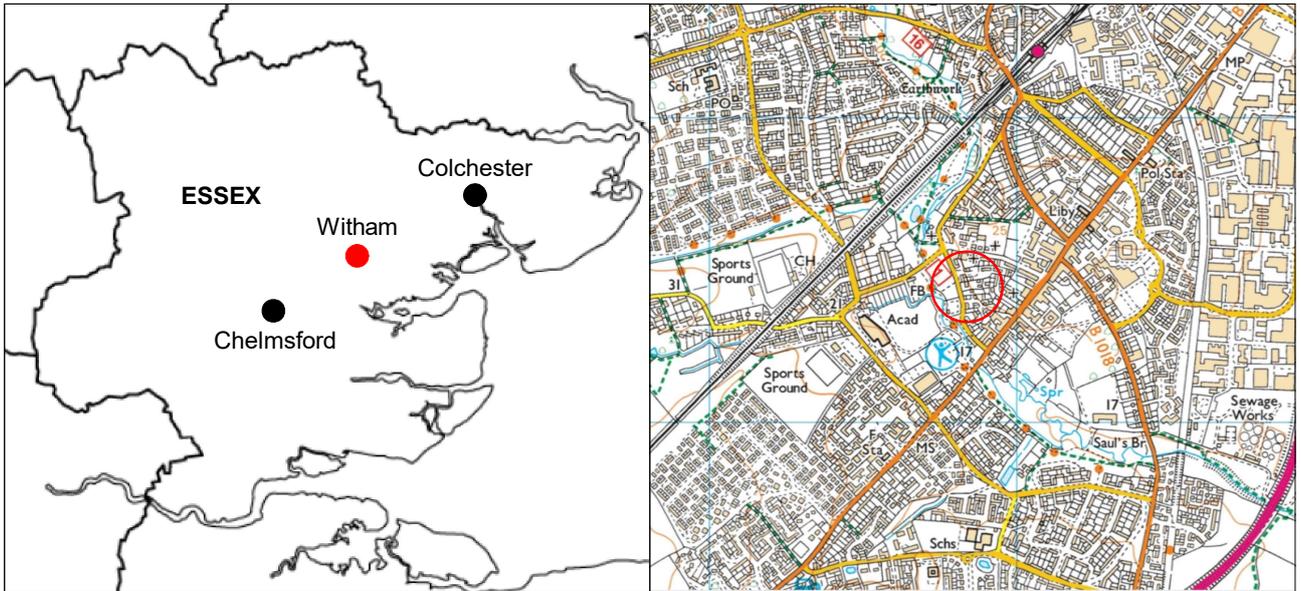


Fig 1 Site location

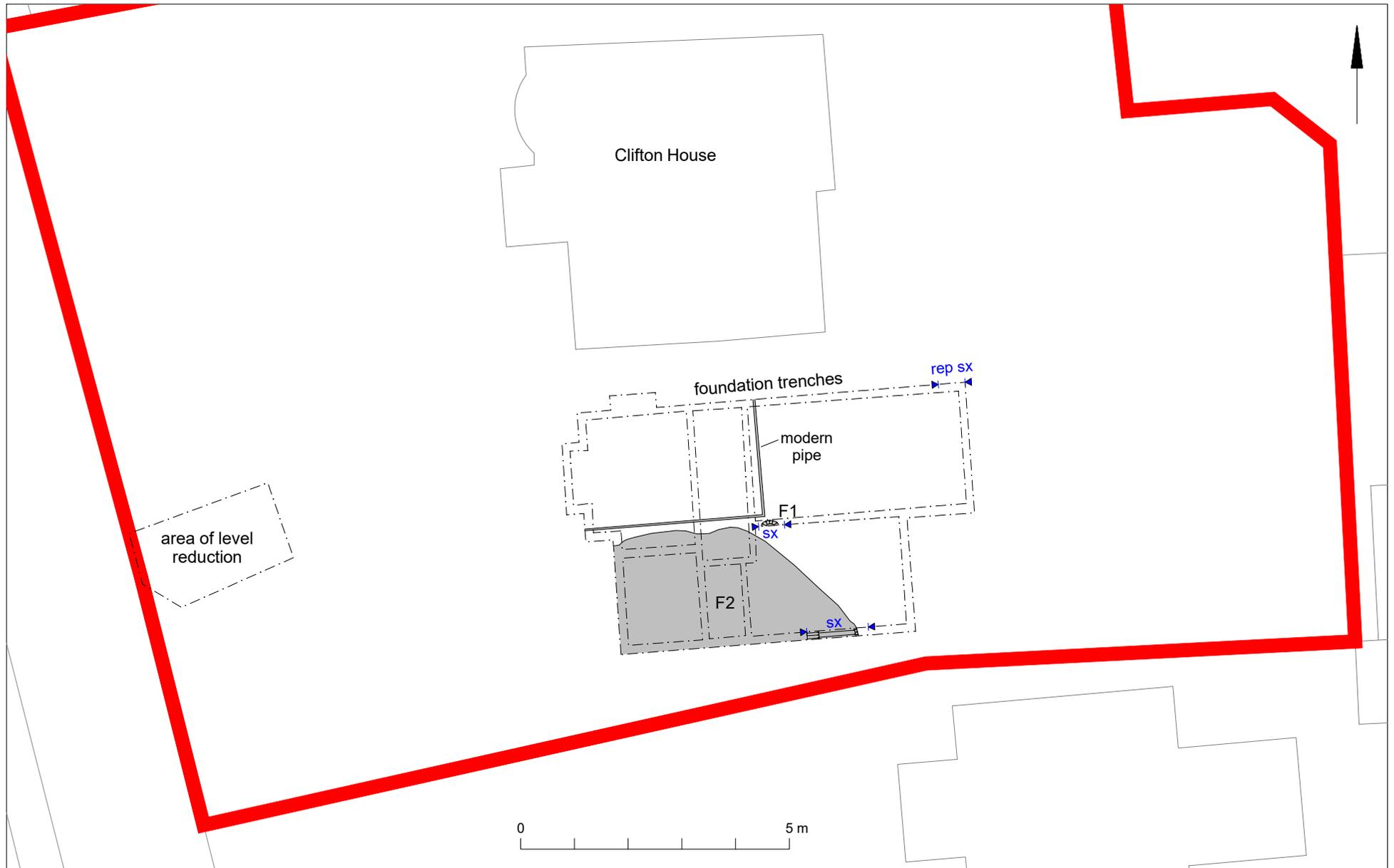


Fig 2 Results (modern features in grey).

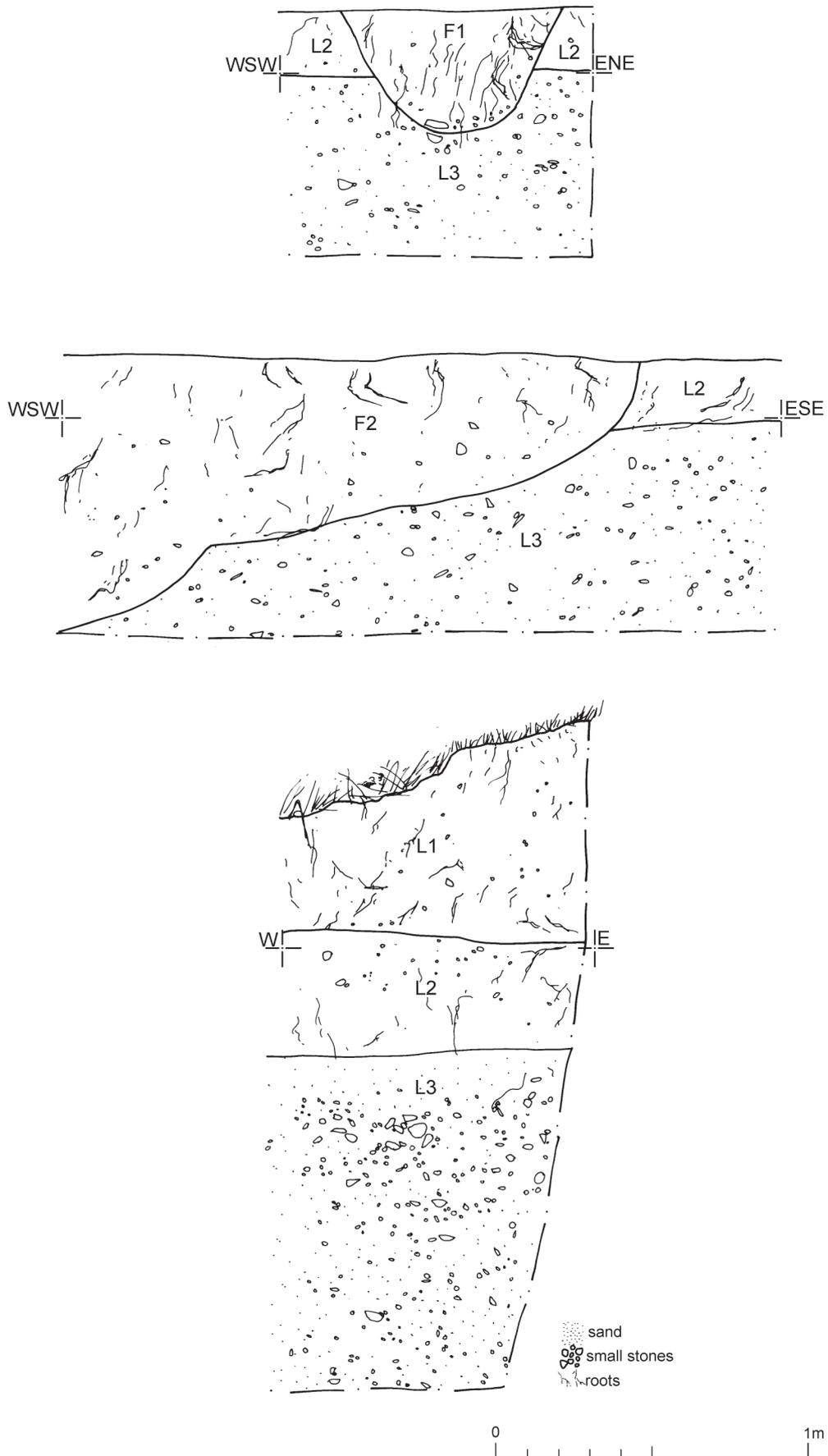


Fig 3 Feature and representative sections.

## Summary for colchest3-503105

OASIS ID (UID)	colchest3-503105
Project Name	Field Observation (Monitoring) at Clifton House, 36 Mill Lane, Witham, Essex, CM8 1BP
Sitename	
Activity type	Field Observation (Monitoring)
Project Identifier(s)	2021/11L
Planning Id	21/01348/FUL
Reason For Investigation	Planning: Post determination
Organisation Responsible for work	Colchester Archaeological Trust
Project Dates	24-Feb-2022 - 18-Mar-2022
Location	Clifton House, 36 Mill Lane, Witham, Essex, CM8 1BP NGR : TL 81838 14451 LL : 51.7991371273053, 0.63569955921567 12 Fig : 581838,214451
Administrative Areas	Country : England County : Essex District : Braintree Parish : Witham
Project Methodology	Archaeological monitoring of all groundworks
Project Results	Archaeological monitoring was carried out at Clifton House, 36 Mill Lane, Witham, Essex in advance of the construction of a new dwelling. Located within an area of medieval and post-medieval activity, monitoring of the groundworks revealed that a large part of the site had been cleared of trees and/or shrubs. The only feature found was a modern pit or post-hole.
Keywords	
Funder	
HER	Essex HER - unRev - STANDARD
Person Responsible for work	B, Quinn
HER Identifiers	
Archives	Digital Archive - to be deposited with Archaeology Data Service Archive;