

Colchester Archaeological Trust



**CAT Report 1904
issued March 2023**

**Archaeological evaluation on land at
St Osyth Priory Park, St Osyth, Essex, CO16 8GW:
February 2023**



**CAT project ref.: 2023/01h
ECC code: STOPP23**

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**commissioned by Matthew Bynoe
on behalf of City & Country**

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1 Summary

An archaeological evaluation (eight trial-trenches and three test-pits) was carried out on land at St Osyth Priory, St Osyth, Essex in advance of the construction of 17 dwellings for residential and holiday accommodation. St Osyth is a coastal village located at the southernmost tip of the Tendring peninsula, and the Priory estate is roughly the entire length of the village of St Osyth, located between the village and Brightlingsea creek to the west. The village was renamed after the Priory in the 12th century. Archaeological evaluation was localised in four areas of pending development. The only feature of archaeological significance encountered during the evaluation was a ditch. A service trench and natural features were also excavated.

2 Introduction (Fig 1)

This is the report for an archaeological evaluation carried out by Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) from 6th to 9th of February 2023 at St Osyth Priory Park, St Osyth, Essex. The work was commissioned by Matthew Bynoe of City & Country in advance of the construction of a 17 new dwellings for residential and holiday accommodation, landscaping, ancillary works and associated ground works.

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 at Essex County Council Place Services (ECCPS). This recommendation was for an archaeological evaluation by trial-trenching 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 historical building recording and archaeological evaluation*, written by Teresa O'Connor and detailing the required archaeological work (ECCPS 2022), and a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) prepared by CAT and agreed in advance with ECCPS (CAT 2023).

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* (CIfA 2014a) and *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (CIfA 2014b).

3 Archaeological background

The following archaeological background includes extracts of the ECC Brief (ECCPS 2022) and Essex Historic Environment Records (EHER) held at Essex County Council, County Hall, Chelmsford, Essex (accessed via <http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk>).

The village of St Osyth is recorded as *Cicc* in the Domesday Book of 1086 and is said to be the location of a 7th-century nunnery founded by Saint Osyth, from whom the modern village gets its name. The proposed development site is located within the park at St Osyth Priory, to the west of the centre of the historic town.

St Osyth Priory (NHLE No. 1002193) is a medieval priory that was founded in the 1120's by Richard de Belmeis, Bishop of London, as a house for Augustinian Canons. It became an abbey dedicated to Saints Peter and Paul, and Osyth sometime before 1161. The park associated with the priory was most likely gained around 1268, when a charter was granted to the abbey allowing some hunting rights. The abbey was suppressed and surrendered to the crown in 1539.

In 1553, Thomas Darcy gained possession of the abbey and was responsible for making many structural changes. Many of the medieval buildings were demolished, including the abbey church, and impressive modifications were made to the remaining buildings to create a

substantial residence. New buildings were also constructed and the formal walled garden created. Over the next 400 years, the priory and park had considerable reworking, remodelling and modernisation, as well as additional buildings added. In the late 19th century gravel extraction began within the park and continued into the 20th century.

The area of the ruins of the priory and garden are scheduled (SAM No. 24 and EHER 4) and the park is a Registered Park and Garden (NHLE No. 1000237). St Osyth Priory and park contains 22 structures which are listed.

Four areas will be under investigation during these archaeological works (see Fig 1). The area known as The Slip is closest to the scheduled zone and priory remains. To the west of The Slip is a possible barrow (EHER 2828). It is a circular mound with a shallow ditch, while possibly prehistoric in date it has not been conclusively dated so may represent a post-medieval garden feature.

Within the vicinity of Pigeon House, a Roman burial group has been recorded (EHER 2893-4). Discovered in 1931, it comprised a large greyware urn, a second smaller urn, a buff colour coated cup and a stamped Samian platter.

Shell Grotto is located approximately 300m south of Nun's Wood, which is the proposed location of the 7th-century nunnery associated with Saint Osyth (EHER 4647). Evidence for Roman buildings has also been uncovered in Nuns Wood. Remains of a tessellated pavement were found in 1906 and then again in 1921 (EHER 2885), and during gravel extraction in 1963 wall foundations of mortar and tegulae or septaria were identified (EHER 2890). Scatters of Roman finds have also been found in the woods (EHER 2887, 2988, 48110), which included pottery sherds, tegula, box flue tiles and tesserae.

In 2010, the remains of an extant structure in Nuns Wood were recorded as 16th or early 17th century in origin with later repairs (AS 2010). Two trial-trenches were excavated in the woodland to investigate the potential for remains of a chapel. The evaluation revealed 18th/early 19th century building remains and a small gully but no evidence of the earlier chapel. Nun's Wood is also the location of an incomplete medieval moat (EHER 2835).

North Lodge is located near the northern boundary of the park, approximately 400m north-west of Nun's wood. On land north and east, adjacent to North Lodge, several cropmarks have been identified. These include linear features and two conjoined oval enclosures (EHER 2937), linear features and a possible trackway (EHER 18124) and a straight double-ditched trackway (EHER 2984).

Shell House (the building to be recorded in Shell Grotto) is a folly that was designed to overlook Flag Creek. It is thought to be 18th century in origin and constructed of flint and blue slag (Debois Landscape Survey Group 2003). Follies are buildings constructed primarily for decorative purposes, but with an appearance suggesting some other function, which were popularised during the 18th and 19th centuries.

4 Aims

The aims of the archaeological evaluation 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 (Figs 2-6)

Seven trial-trenches and three test-pits were machine-excavated under the supervision of a CAT archaeologist. Site stratigraphy consisted of topsoil (L1, c 0.21-0.35m thick), subsoil (L2, c 0.24-0.5m thick) and natural (L3).

Shell Grotto (Figs 2 & 6; Photographs 1-2)

Trench 1 (12m long by 2m wide) – There were no archaeological features.

Trench 2 (2.4m by 2.1m) – Opened within the ruinous foundations of a post-medieval folly to the east of T1. Topsoil (L1) sealed a layer of demolition material (L5, c 0.34-0.38m thick) over subsoil (L2). Samples of floor tile and brick were recovered from the demolition layer.

Trench 3 (2.1m by 2m) – There were no archaeological features.

Pigeon House (Figs 4 & 6; Photograph 3)

Trench 4 (10m long by 1.75m wide) – An additional layer of subsoil (L4, c 0.1-0.13m thick) was recorded below L2. There were no archaeological features uncovered in the trench.

The Slip (Figs 3 & 5-6; Photographs 4-6)

Trench 5 (15m long by 1.8m wide) – Moved 3m to the south due to a row of trees on the northern boundary line. Ditch F4 sx1, aligned north-west to south-east and measuring 2m wide by 0.67m deep, produced a single fragment of prehistoric pottery. Also excavated was natural feature F3.

Trench 6 (14.5m long by 2.2m wide) – Natural features F1 and F2 were excavated.

Trench 7 (13m long by 1.8m wide) – There were no archaeological features.

Trenches 8 and 9 (10m and 15m long by 1.8m wide) – Originally intended as two separate trenches, they were moved to form a cross-shaped trench due to the position of a fence and several trees. Ditch F4 sx2 (continuing from T5) crossed both trenches on a north-west to south-east alignment, and was 2.4m wide by 0.97m deep. Service trench F6 in T8 produced finds of post-medieval date. Animal burrow F5 was also present.

North Lodge (Figs 4 & 6; Photograph 7)

Trench 10 (3.4m by 2m) – There were no archaeological features.



Photograph 1 Trench 1, looking north-west.



Photograph 2 Trench 3, looking north-west.



Photograph 3 Trench 4, looking west.



Photograph 4 Ditch F4, Trench 5, looking south-east.



Photograph 5 Trench 6, looking south.



Photograph 6 Trenches 8 and 9 with ditch F4 in the centre, looking north-west.



Photograph 7 Trench 10, looking north north-east.

6 Finds

6.1 Pottery and ceramic building material

by Dr Matthew Loughton

The evaluation uncovered four sherds of pottery (208g) and eight pieces of brick and floor tile (21kg). This material came from three contexts (Table 1).

Context	Description	No.	Weight (g)	MSW (g)	EVE
F4	Ditch	1	3	3	-
F6	Service trench	4	678	170	0.61
L5	Demolition layer	7	21,394	3,056	-
Total		12	22,075	1,840	0.61

Table 1 Quantities of pottery and CBM from specific contexts.

Pottery

Ditch F4 produced one small sherd (3g) of handmade flint-tempered pottery (fabric HMF) and service trench F6 three sherds of medieval and post-medieval pottery. Two (120g) sherds from F6 were of Colchester-type ware (fabric F21) from a lid-seated cooking pot (EVE:0.35) and a squat jug (EVE:0.21)?, both broadly dating to AD 1400-1550, and the last sherd (85g) was of post-medieval red earthenware (fabric F40) from a smaller storage jar (EVE:0.05) dating to c 1500-18th/19th century.

Ceramic building material (CBM)

A fragment of unfrosted post-medieval brick (? mm x 107/105mm x 40mm) came from service trench F6. Demolition L5 contained four intact plain post-medieval floor tile 'pavers' (205mm x 205mm x 35-40mm), one of which had traces of a green glaze along one edge. This layer also produced two dark-brown unfrosted bricks (230mm x 110mm x 55mm and 240mm x 115mm x 60mm), which probably date to the 16th-17th/18th century, and an orange coloured brick (220mm x 108mm x 60/65mm) dating to the late 18th-early/mid 19th century.

Conclusion

Ditch F4 could be of prehistoric date, but this is based on only one small sherd, while demolition layer L5 is post-medieval.

6.2 Miscellaneous finds

by Laura Pooley and Adam Wightman

Finds from service trench F6 (finds no.2) included a fragment (88.2g) of medium-sized mammal skull (sheep/goat or pig), an oyster shell (48.9g), two fragments of coal/coke (33.7g), two iron nails (40.9g, one clenched at 90°), and a crumpled iron strip with a nail at each end (58.0g).

7 Conclusion

Archaeological evaluation at St Osyth Priory revealed largely negative results. There were no archaeological features in the areas of North Lodge, Pigeon House or Shell Grotto, although post-medieval brick and floor tile from demolition layer L5 in Trench 2 was most probably from Shell Grotto itself. The most significant discovery was ditch F4 from Trenches 5, 8 and 9 of The Slip. The ditch produced one small fragment of prehistoric pottery, but could well be of later date and possibly associated with the Priory.

8 Acknowledgements

CAT would like to thank Matthew Bynoe for commissioning the work on behalf of City & Country. The project was managed by A Wightman and fieldwork was carried out by H Furniss with A Ronn, S Veasey, and G Williams. Figures were produced by H Furniss, E Holloway and

C Lister. The project was monitored for Essex County Council by Teresa O'Connor (ECCPS).

9 References

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

Archaeological Solutions	2010	<i>Nuns Hall (Anns Hall), St Osyth's Priory, Essex, Archaeological Impact Assessment and Evaluation.</i>
Archaeological Solutions	2011	'Chapter 11: Archaeology' in <i>Environmental Statement Volume 1: Main Text</i> by JB Planning Associates
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	2022	<i>Health & Safety Policy</i>
CAT	2023	<i>Written scheme of investigation for historic building recording and archaeological evaluation on land at St Osyth Priory Park, St Osyth, Essex, CO16 8GW</i>
Cotter, JP	2000	<i>CAR Report 7: Post-Roman pottery from excavations in Colchester, 1971-85.</i> Colchester: Colchester Archaeological Trust Ltd.
CIfA	2014a	<i>Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation.</i> Revised Oct 2020
CIfA	2014b	<i>Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials.</i> Updated Oct 2020
Debois Landscape Survey Group	2003	<i>St Osyth Priory, Essex Historic Landscape Survey</i>
ECCPS	2022	<i>Brief for Archaeological evaluation and historic building recording on land at St Osyth's Priory Park, St Oysths, Tendring,</i> by T O'Connor
The Folly Fellowship	2017	<i>What is a folly?</i> Accessed via http://follies.org.uk/index.php/what-is-a-folly/
Gurney, D	2003	<i>Standards for field archaeology in the East of England.</i> East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Papers 14 (EAA 14).
Historic England	2015	<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	2021	<i>National Planning Policy Framework.</i> Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
Ryan, P	1996	<i>Brick in Essex from the Roman Conquest to the Reformation.</i> Chelmsford: Pat Ryan.

10 Abbreviations and glossary

CAT	Colchester Archaeological Trust
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
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
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	O nline A ccess to the I ndex of A rchaeological I nvestigations, http://oasis.ac.uk/pages/wiki/Main
post-medieval	from c AD 1500 to c 1800
prehistoric	pre-Roman
residual	something out of its original context, e.g a Roman coin in a modern pit
section	(abbreviation sx or Sx) vertical slice through feature/s or layer/s
ws	written scheme of investigation

11 Contents of archive

Finds: None retained

Digital record

CAT Report 1904

ECCPS brief, CAT written scheme of investigation

Site digital photographs

Survey data

Site data

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.

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Distribution list:

Matthew Bynoe, City & Country

Teresa O'Connor, Essex County Council Planning Services

Essex Historic Environment Record

Appendix 1 Context list

Context Number	Trench number	Finds Number	Layer type	Description	Date
L1	All	-	Ploughsoil	Soft to firm, dry dark brownish-black silt with small stone inclusions.	Modern
L2	All	-	Subsoil	Firm, dry mid to dark yellowish-brown silt with occasional gravel and small stone inclusions.	Undated
L3	All	-	Natural	Soft, dry mid brownish-orange sandy gravel.	Post-glacial
L4	T4	-	Subsoil	Soft to firm, moist mid brown silty clay	Undated
L5	T2	3	Demolition layer	Loose, dry dark brown sandy silt with rooting and ceramic building material throughout.	Post-medieval

Context Number	Trench number	Finds Number	Feature type	Description	Date
F1	6	-	Natural feature	Soft/loose, dry mid greyish-brown silty sand with gravel inclusions. 0.87m x >0.77m x 0.16m deep. Feature extending beyond the limit of excavation.	Undated
F2	6	-	Natural feature	Soft, dry mid brownish-grey silty sand with gravel inclusions. 0.9m x 0.87m x 0.30m deep.	Undated
F3	5	-	Natural feature	Soft, dry mid brownish-grey silty sand with sand and gravel inclusions. 1.19m x 1.09m x 0.24m deep	Undated
F4	5, 8, 9	1	Ditch	Firm, dry light to mid greyish-brown sandy silt with rooting and small stone inclusions. >42.11m long x c 2.25m wide x c 0.82m deep Feature extending beyond the limit of excavation.	Undated
F5	9	-	Animal burrow	Soft/loose dark brownish-grey silty sand with occasional small stone inclusions and sand flecking. >0.28m x 1.02m x 0.16m deep Feature extending beyond the limit of excavation.	Undated
F6	8	2	Service trench	Soft, moist very dark brownish-grey sandy silt with heavy rooting. >9.8m long x >2.02m wide x >0.86m deep Feature extending beyond the limit of excavation.	Pot-medieval/ modern

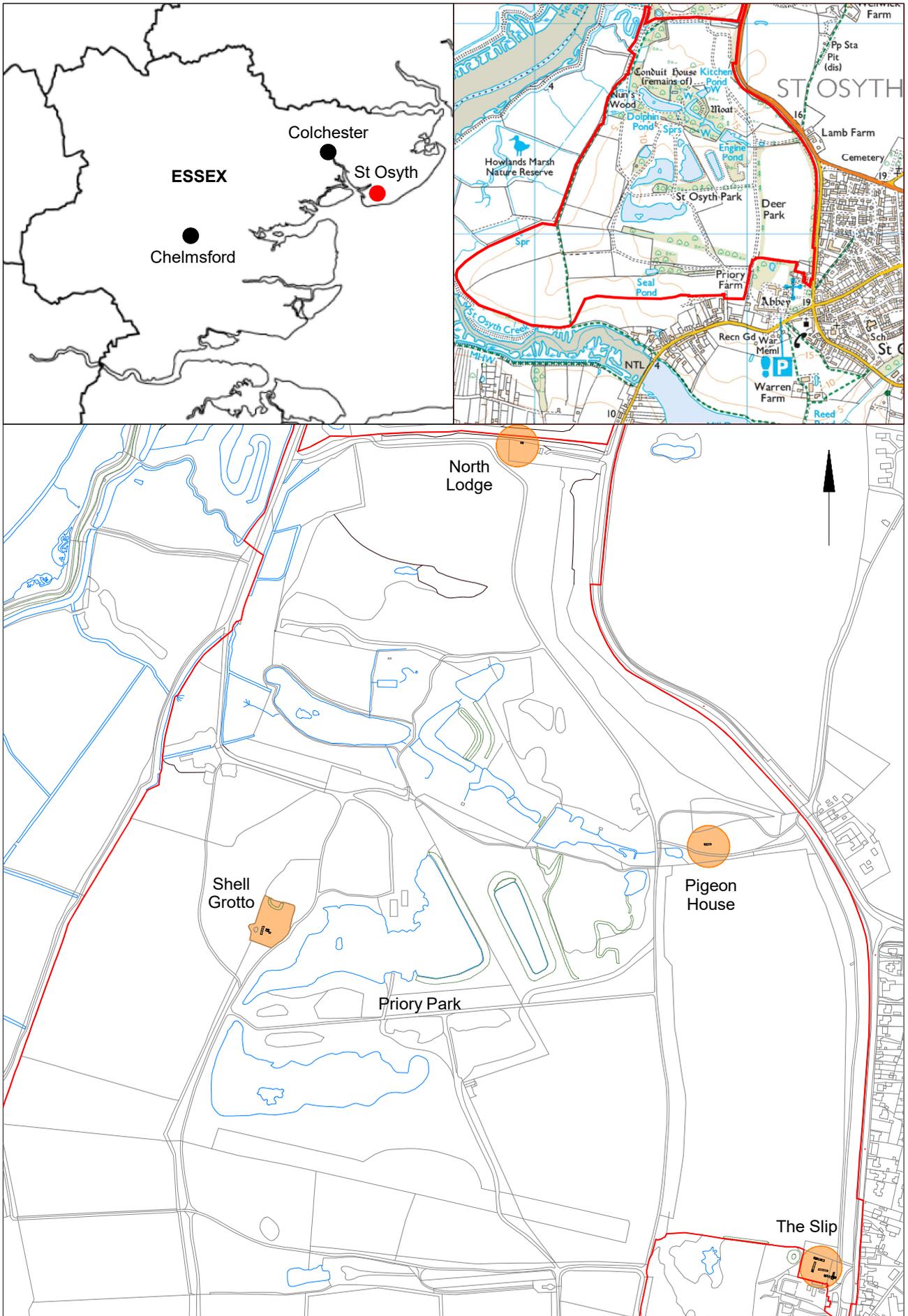


Fig 1 Site location (areas of work highlighted in orange).

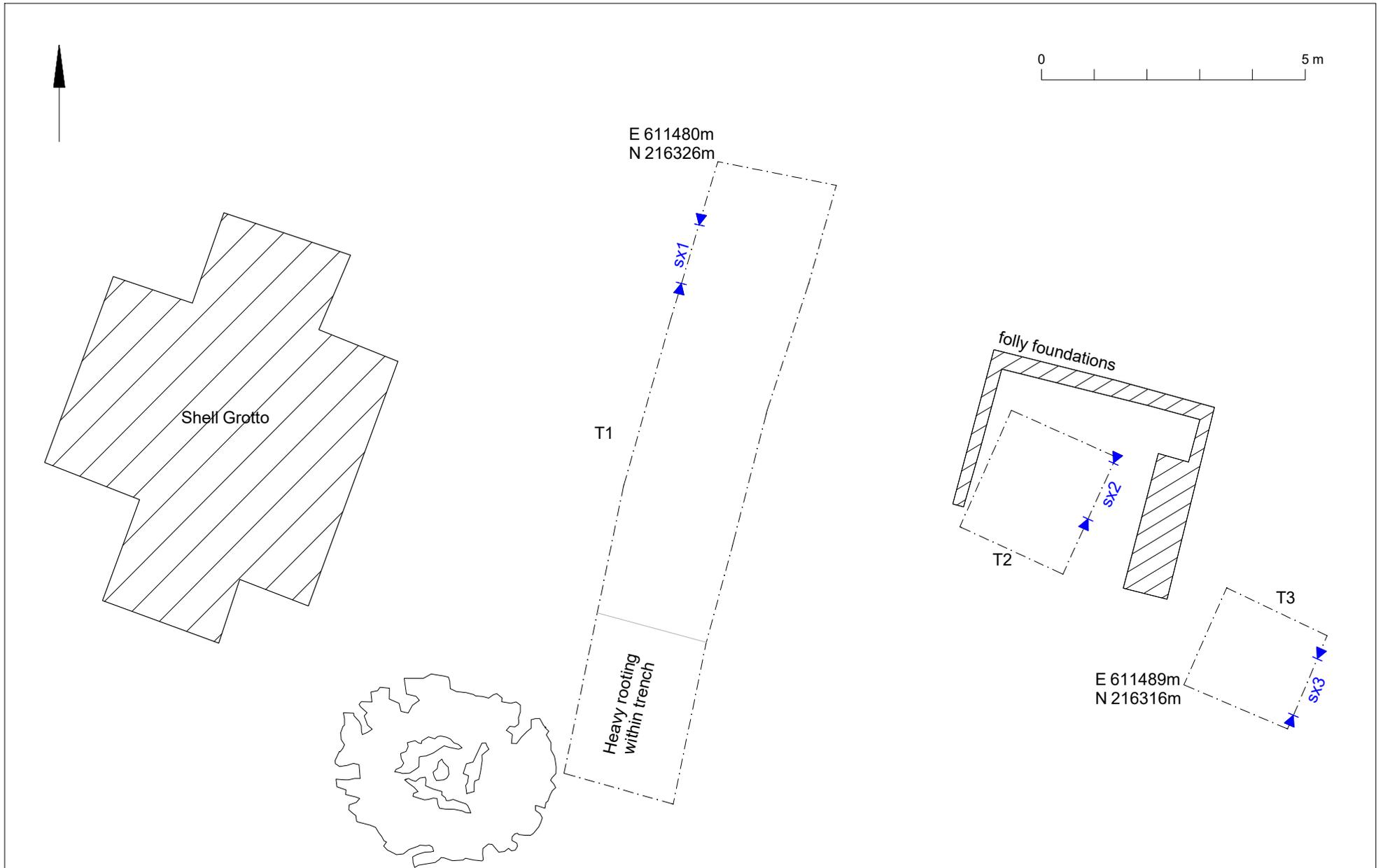


Fig 2 Results from Shell Grotto.

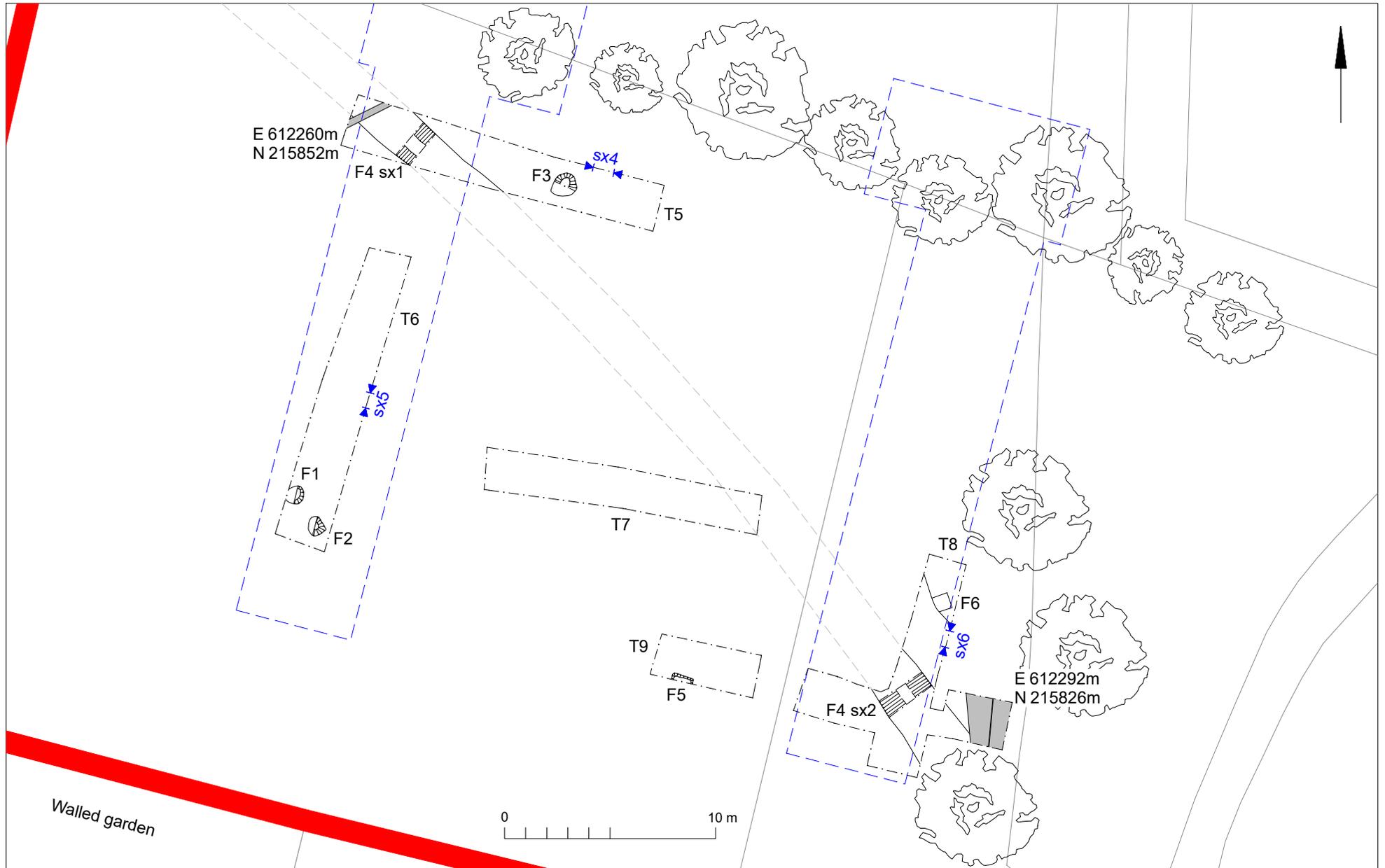
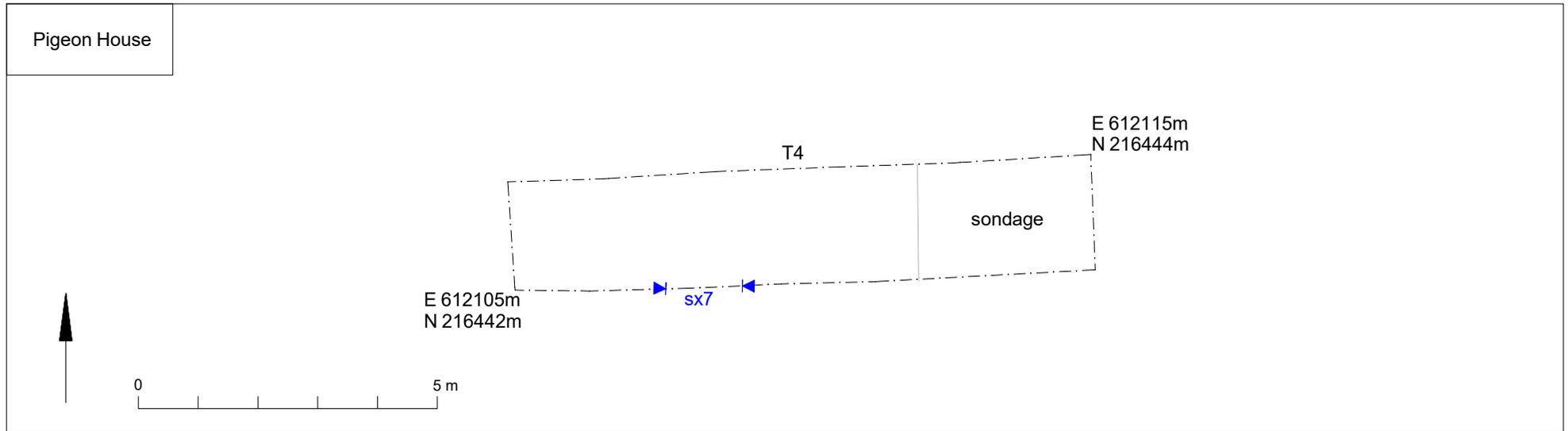
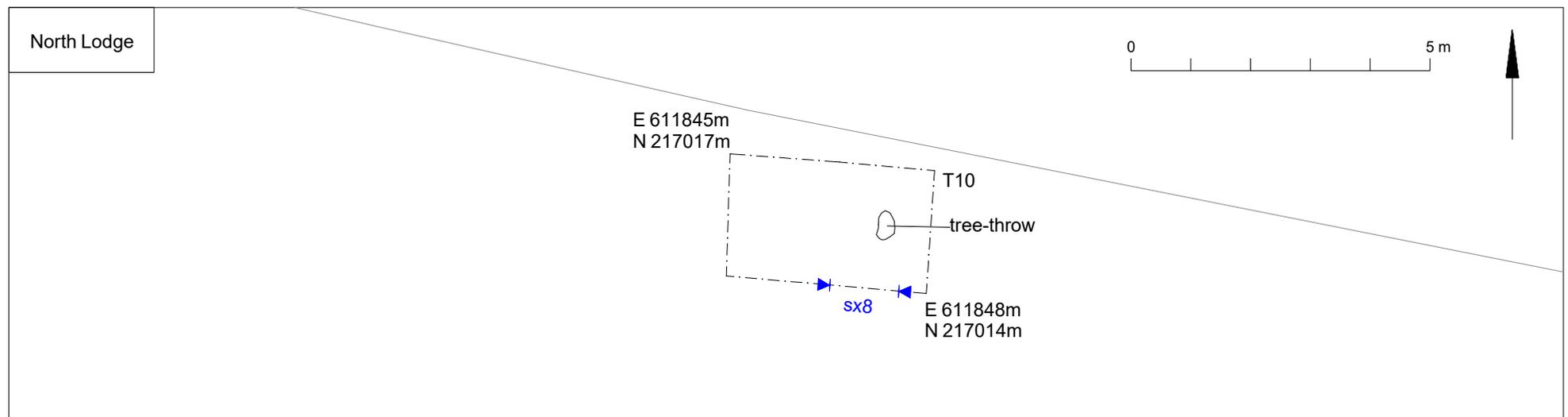


Fig 3 Results from The Slip (modern services highlighted grey)



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Fig 4 Results from Pigeon House and North Lodge.

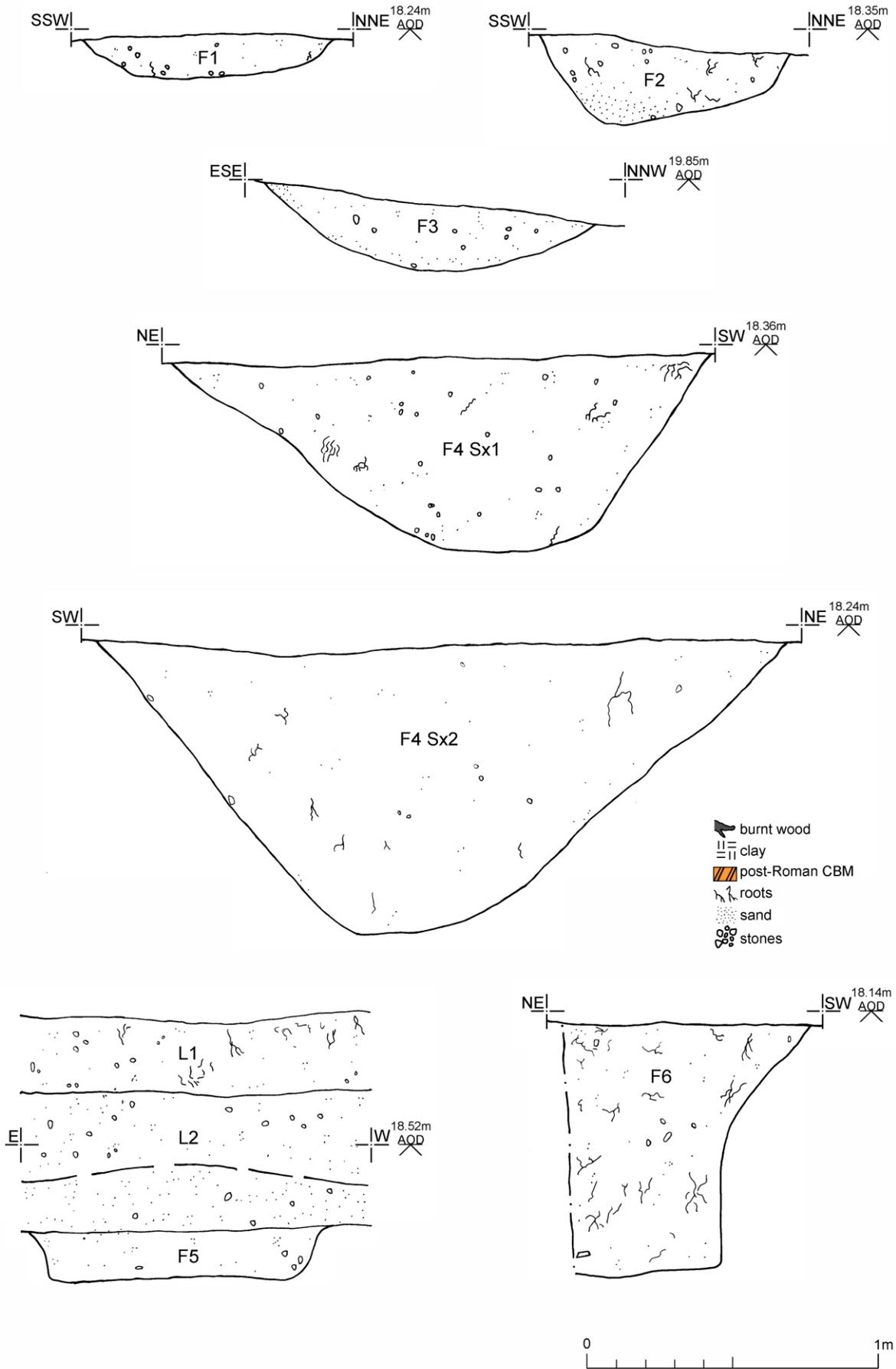


Fig 5 Feature and representative sections.

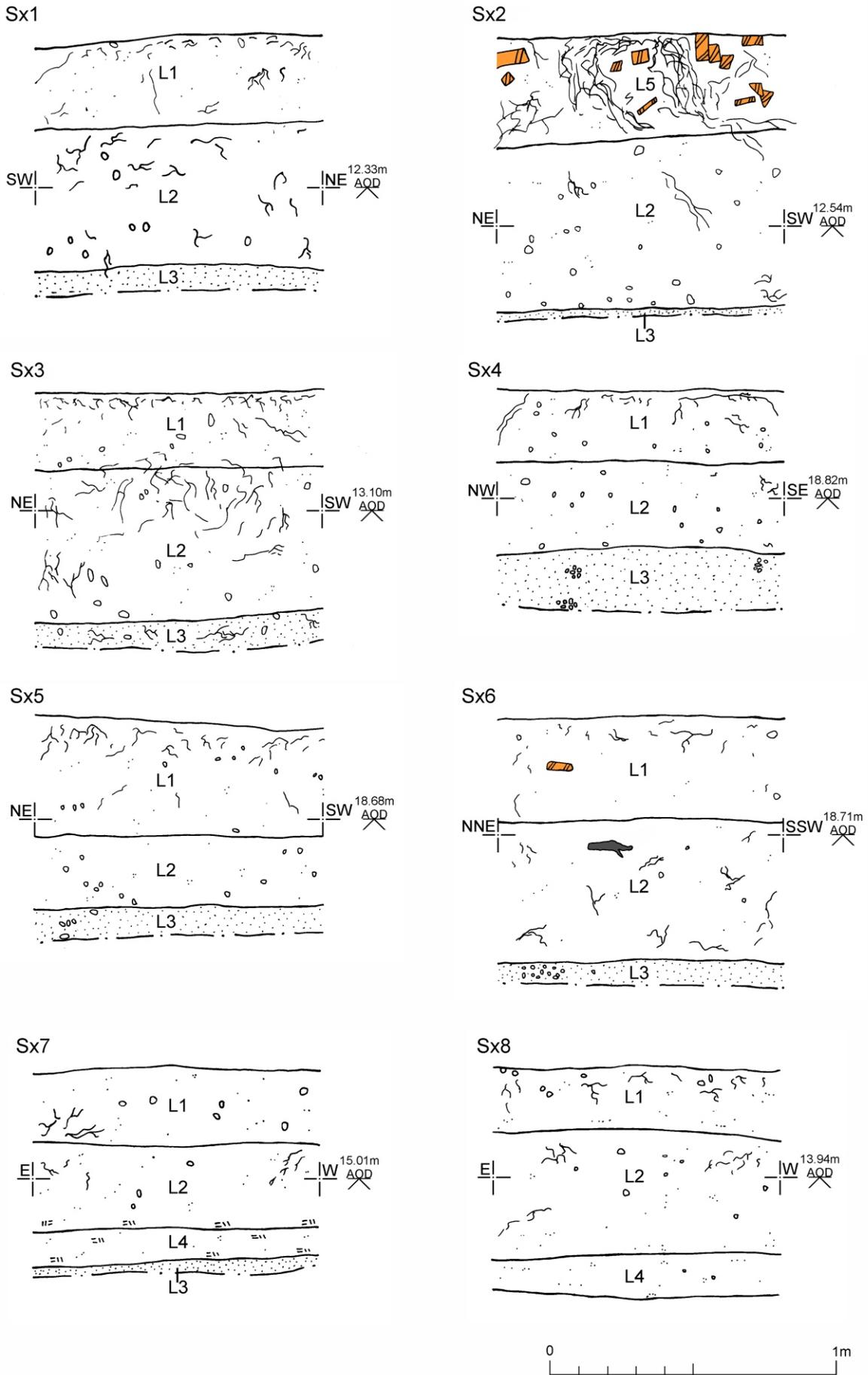


Fig 6 Representative sections.

Summary for colchest3-512504

OASIS ID (UID)	colchest3-512504
Project Name	Archaeological evaluation on land at St Osyth Priory Park, St Osyth, Essex, CO16 9GW
Sitename	Land at St Osyth Priory Park, St Osyth, Essex
Activity type	Evaluation
Project Identifier(s)	2023/01h
Planning Id	17/00634/FUL, 19/00032/FUL, 16/00671/FUL
Reason For Investigation	Planning: Post determination
Organisation Responsible for work	Colchester Archaeological Trust
Project Dates	06-Feb-2023 - 09-Feb-2023
Location	Land at St Osyth Priory Park, St Osyth, Essex NGR : TM 11906 16163 LL : 51.8039335258394, 1.07217767777485 12 Fig : 611906,216163
Administrative Areas	Country : England County : Essex District : Tendring Parish : St. Osyth
Project Methodology	Archaeological evaluation (10 trial-trenches) carried out as specified in the project brief and wsi.
Project Results	An archaeological evaluation (eight trial-trenches and three test-pits) was carried out on land at St Osyth Priory, St Osyth, Essex in advance of the construction of 17 dwellings for residential and holiday accommodation. St Osyth is a coastal village located at the southernmost tip of the Tendring peninsula, and the Priory estate is roughly the entire length of the village of St Osyth, located between the village and Brightlingsea creek to the west. The village was renamed after the Priory in the 12th century. Archaeological evaluation was localised in four areas of pending development. The only feature of archaeological significance encountered during the evaluation was a ditch. A service trench and natural features were also excavated.
Keywords	
Funder	
HER	Essex HER - unRev - STANDARD
Person Responsible for work	H, Furniss
HER Identifiers	HER Event No - STOPP23
Archives	Digital Archive - to be deposited with Archaeology Data Service Archive;