

**An archaeological evaluation at
'Skyline 120 Area A'
Great Notley business park,
near Braintree, Essex
July-August 2007**

**report prepared by
Adam Wightman**

**on behalf of
Countryside Properties Ltd**

CAT project ref.: 07/7G
Braintree Museum accession code: BRNTM 2006.7
HEM site code: GNBP07
NGR: TL 7380 2178 (c)



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CAT Report 433
August 2007

Contents

1	Summary	1
2	Introduction	1
3	Archaeological background	1
4	Aim	2
5	Methods	2
6	Results	3
7	List of finds	6
8	Discussion	7
9	Archive deposition	7
10	Acknowledgements	8
11	Abbreviations	8
12	References	8
13	Glossary	9

Figures after p 9

EHER summary sheet

List of figures

- Fig 1 Site location, including the location of the Late Iron Age-Roman enclosure excavated in 2006.
- Fig 2 Evaluation trenches in relation to the 1881 1:10,560 OS map.
- Fig 3 Annular copper-alloy brooch.

1 Summary

An archaeological evaluation consisting of 831.1m of trenches was carried out between July and August 2007. Features were found to be spread very thinly over the site and were almost all linear cuts resembling ditches or gullies, with a few pit-like features. Some parts of the site, in particular in the south-west, were found to be devoid of archaeology, with features recorded in thirteen of the 24 trenches. Only five of the 27 features recorded produced any finds.

Of those features without finds, most were natural in appearance and may have been the result of natural processes occurring during the last Ice Age or of more recent activity such as the felling of trees or invasive agricultural practices. Post-medieval field drains and likely field boundaries observable on the 1881 1:10,560 OS map were excavated in the western and north-eastern parts of the site, while linears which did not produce any artefacts dominated the archaeology of the rest of the site.

The absence of any Late Iron Age and early Roman finds indicates minimal activity in this area associated with the probable farmstead to the south-west of the site (excavations by CAT in 2006). This implies that most of the land here was not inhabited or used for arable farming in that period, and it has been suggested that it was heathland.

2 Introduction (Fig 1)

- 2.1 This is the archive report on an archaeological evaluation by trial-trenching carried out by the Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT). The investigations took place on the site of the west area of Phase 2 (Area A), at the 'Skyline 120' business park at Great Notley, near Braintree, Essex.
- 2.2 The 9.2 acre site is centred at NGR TL 7380 2178. It is situated to the north-west of Great Notley Garden Village, and to the east of Great Notley Discovery Centre, between the A120 and the A131.
- 2.3 The work was carried out by CAT between the 17th July and the 10th August 2007.
- 2.4 All fieldwork was done in accordance with a written scheme of investigation (WSI) submitted by CAT which followed a brief which was supplied by the Essex County Council Historic Environment Management (ECC HEM) team. The project was monitored by Pat Connell of the ECC HEM team.
- 2.5 This report follows standards and practices contained in the Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (IFA 1999) and *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (IFA 2001). Other sources are *Management of archaeological projects* (MAP 2), and *Research and archaeology: a framework for the Eastern Counties 1. Resource assessment* (EAA 3), *Research and archaeology: a framework for the Eastern Counties 2. Research agenda and strategy* (EAA 8), and *Standards for field archaeology in the East of England* (EAA 14).

3 Archaeological background

- 3.1 The development site is located near a series of cropmarks of former field boundaries (Essex Historic Environment Record or EHER no 14171) and possible ditched trackways (EHER nos 6501 and 9993).
- 3.2 The site is located south of the line of a Roman road which led from Colchester to Braughing in Hertfordshire. This road may be regarded, with some confidence, as a British track which was straightened and metalled by Roman engineers in the years following the invasion of AD 43. The road is called Stane Street in records from AD 1181 (EHER no 6502).
- 3.3 A fieldwalking survey was carried out across the current development site and part of the site of Great Notley Garden Village before developments in 1994. The survey did not record any particular concentrations of finds (Brooks 1994).

- 3.4** A further archaeological fieldwalking survey was carried out on another part of the site of the Great Notley Garden Village (EHER no 17766). The survey produced little evidence of substantial archaeological remains, but three concentrations of burnt flint were recorded at NGR TL 7410 2064, TL 7410 2066 and TL 7416 2072. These concentrations may indicate areas of prehistoric activity or possibly settlement (Garwood 1997).
- 3.5** In addition to the fieldwalking surveys, an archaeological watching brief and evaluation consisting of 1,400m of trenching was carried out by CAT between June and September 2005. Features were found to be spread very thinly over the site and were almost all linear cuts resembling ditches or gullies, with a few pit-like features. The north and west parts of the site were particularly lacking in archaeological material or features. Ditches containing Late Iron Age and early Roman pottery at the south-western corner of the site indicate that the land is on the edge of a Late Iron Age settlement which continued in use until the 1st century AD (CAT Report 337). Subsequent excavation of a 0.8ha site targeted on evaluation results and carried out by CAT in February 2006 identified a probable farmstead originating in the Late Iron Age that was expanded in the later 1st or early 2nd century AD and continued in use into the 2nd century AD (CAT Report 367). Evaluation work in 2006 by Wessex Archaeology carried out to the south of the evaluation site along the route of the A131 during widening works found no significant archaeological features or remains (Clarke pers comm 2007).

4 Aim

The aim of the fieldwork was to establish and record the character, extent, date, significance and condition of any archaeological remains likely to be affected by groundwork associated with the development of the 'Skyline 120' business park.

5 Methods (Figs 1-2)

- 5.1** Twenty-four trenches (Trenches 1-24 or T1-T24), each 1.6m wide, were excavated by machine, approximating to 831.1m of trenching. This equated to 4% of the 9.2 acre site. The trenches were located according to a plan agreed with the HEM team which ensured an even spread across the site. There was some deviation from the original trench layout, to avoid recent services work of which we were unaware and other such obstructions.
- 5.2** A mechanical excavator equipped with a toothless bucket was used for the evaluation trenches, excavating off the topsoil and subsoil to expose archaeological features. Work was carried out under archaeological supervision, and all exposed subsoil features were photographed and examined in sufficient detail to allow their nature, date and importance to be assessed.
- 5.3** Each trench and any features located within it were planned using a total station, and a plan of the trenches and the surrounding boundaries was also made in the same way.
- 5.4** Individual records of excavated contexts, layers, features or deposits were entered on CAT pro-forma recording sheets. Section drawings of layers were made at a scale of 1:10 and plans at a scale of 1:20.
- 5.5** Finds were registered on CAT pro-forma record sheets and assigned finds numbers according to context. Finds were washed, marked with the site code number, and bagged according to context. Post-medieval and modern pottery was identified by CAT archaeologist Howard Brooks.
- 5.6** Colour photographs of the main features, sections, and the site environs were taken with a digital camera.
- 5.7** Metal-detecting of the spoil heaps was conducted during the evaluation.

6 Results (Fig 2)

6.1 T1, T2, T3 and T4: summary

Located in the south-west of the field under evaluation, these trenches were dug to a depth of about 600mm below ground-level. In these trenches, as in all the others, topsoil (L1) overlaid a chalky orangey/brown clay subsoil (L2) which in turn sealed the natural chalky clay (L3). Linear features excavated in this area were found to contain post-medieval/modern field drain pipes, one of which appeared to run through T2 and T3 and then into T4 where it was observable between two other similar pipes on an alignment which the 1881 1:10,560 OS map shows matches the alignment of the field. A north-east to south-west aligned linear with a depth of 320mm was excavated in T1 (F7) which could possibly be the same linear identified in T8 and T11 due to its similar alignment, size, and fill. No artefacts were found in the feature. T4 in the western corner of the site uncovered the most interesting feature in this area – a linear stretch of burnt patches (F10) following a north-west to south-east alignment. Interspersed in these concentrations of charcoal were patches of burnt clay and daub, and the largest of the burnt patches contained some quite large pieces of burnt wood which lay along the edge of the feature. Some fragments of burnt clay were recovered from the fill. The feature was cut by a clay field drain pipe (F11). A 12th- to 14th-century annular copper-alloy brooch (Fig 3) was also found in T3 in an area disturbed by field drains.

T5, T6 and T7: summary

Located to the north-east of T1, T2, T3 and T4 towards the centre of the field and dug to a depth of around 500mm, these trenches were found to contain no archaeological features when stripped to the natural chalky clay.

T8, T9, T10, T11 and T12: summary

In the centre of the field and to the north of the copse of trees, the trenching again began to uncover features of an apparent archaeological nature at a depth below ground-level of around 400mm. T8, which ran along the northern edge of the copse, contained a linear feature which transpired to be three individual gullies (F1, F2, F3), which are most likely the result of deep ploughing. The scars of deep ploughing are particularly evident in these five trenches where the topsoil/subsoil is not so deep. Other less convincing features investigated also appeared attributable to this deeply invasive agricultural practice. T8 also contained the north-east to south-west aligned ditch (F4) which is possibly the same as the ditches in T1 and T11 (F7 and F16 respectively), although it had a more 'V'-shaped profile in this section. The section through this linear feature in T11 (F16) produced fragments of well-preserved long bone from a large ungulate but no datable material. Other linear features excavated in this area include three in T10 (F9, F12, F13) which are all on a north-west to south-east alignment, relatively shallow (two <300mm and one <500mm), devoid of finds, and with a firm mid-brown silty clay fill. There was one linear feature in T12 (F17) also on a north-west to south-east alignment and with similar characteristics to the linear features in T10. The shallow depth, irregular profiles, uneven edges and lack of finds which is characteristic of these features and others in this area may suggest that they are natural periglacial features or, as a comparison of the linear features' alignment with the field boundaries marked on the 1881 1:10,560 OS map suggests, the result of deep-cutting agricultural practices.

T13, T14, T15, T16 and T17: summary

To the east of the roundabout and further north-east across the field from T8-T12, the archaeology was reached at a depth of 550mm below the ground-level, cut into the natural chalky clay. T13 and T16 were both found to contain no archaeological features. T15 and T17 uncovered linear features which transpired to be deeper and of a distinctly different fill to those found in other parts of the site. What appeared to be two large linear features (F20 and F21) aligned at right-angles to one another were excavated in T15. Both had a soft orangey/grey clayey silt fill and depths of 1m and 0.85m respectively, but no finds were associated with the fills. The homogeneous clayey silt with manganese flecking in F21 seemed to undercut what appeared to be natural and there was not a clear edge to the feature. The feature is

therefore more likely to be of natural rather than man-made origin. In T17, two slightly smaller linear features (F23 and F24), both with fills almost identical to that identified in F21 and F22, converged in the north end of the trench but, despite depths of 700mm and the consequent volume of fill, the features once again produced no artefacts. A linear feature (F22) with a field drain in the upper fill in T14 had a 'V'-shaped cut which was 700mm in depth. However, the finds from this feature (snail shells, pieces of post-medieval brick and pottery of c 17th-century date) were in the top of the fill and are likely to be associated with the field drain and not necessarily with the ditch in which it appeared to lie.

T18, T19, T20, T21, T22, T23 and T24: summary

Located in the north-eastern part of the evaluation site, these trenches were dug to a depth of around 550mm below ground-level. T18 contained field drains covered with gravel but no archaeological features. T21 was also devoid of archaeology. Two linear features were recorded in this part of the site. All other possible features examined proved to be either natural or attributable to invasive agricultural practices. A north-east to south-west aligned linear feature (F25) in T20 had a mid-brown silty clay fill and a 'U'-shaped profile cut into natural, but contained no finds. A wide (2m) and deep (1m) linear with a distinctly darker fill was excavated in both T22 and T24 (F26 and F27 respectively), which an overlay of the 1881 1:10,560 OS map onto the evaluation site plan suggests was a field boundary. The ditch contained a high frequency of charcoal flecking (which appears in T24 as a thick lens), some pieces of well-preserved wood (T22), and a large cast iron object and a fragment of what appears to be leather with metal studs embedded into it (T24).

6.2 Summary table of contexts

Table 1: summary of contexts by trench number and associated finds.

Trenches or works	Feature or layer	Context type	Comments	Associated finds	Context dated as
all trenches	L1	topsoil	Dark brown/black, firm clay loam, about 250mm thick; high vegetation content.	post-medieval tile/ pottery/ modern china	post-medieval to modern
all trenches	L2	subsoil	Orange/brown firm silty clay with chalk inclusions.	-	Late Iron Age to post-medieval
all trenches	L3	natural – chalky boulder clay	Light grey/brown clay with abundant chalk and flint inclusions.	-	glacial
T8	F1	linear	One of a line of three NE-SW aligned gullies; 'U'-shaped profile.	no finds	possibly agricultural scarring
T8	F2	linear	One of a line of three NE-SW aligned gullies; 'V'-shaped profile.	no finds	possibly agricultural scarring
T8	F3	linear	One of a line of three NE-SW aligned gullies; 'U'-shaped profile.	no finds	possibly agricultural scarring
T8	F4	linear	Wide (1m) ditch running NE-SW with a 'V'-shaped profile; likely to be the same linear as F16.	no finds	possibly medieval or post-medieval
T8	F5	pit	Long oval-shaped pit aligned E-W; shallow ledge with undulating bottom.	no finds	possibly glacial
T8	F6	pit/linear terminal	Wide and fairly shallow feature running into trench section; clayey	1 hand-made square iron nail	post-medieval

Trenches or works	Feature or layer	Context type	Comments	Associated finds	Context dated as
			fill with chalk flecks and flint nodules.		
T1	F7	linear	Ditch running NE-SW with 'U'-shaped profile and depth of 320mm; convincing chalk-flecked brown silty clay fill.	no finds	possibly medieval or post-medieval
T9	F8	pit	Small pit filled by mid brown silty clay with chalk flecking.	no finds	possibly glacial or agricultural
T10	F9	linear	Very shallow 'U'-shaped linear running NW-SE, with a mid-brown fill.	no finds	possibly agricultural scarring
T4	F10	linear	Linear stretch of burnt patches containing burnt clay/daub with some surviving wood; cut by drain F11.	burnt clay	possibly post-medieval/modern
T4	F11	clay drain	Post-medieval/modern field drain which cut F10.	no finds	post-medieval/modern
T10	F12	linear	Linear running NW-SE with ambiguous edges, irregular profile and large quantity of chalk and clay in the fill.	no finds	possibly glacial or agricultural scarring
T10	F13	linear	Linear running NW-SE with ambiguous western edge and 'V'-shaped profile.	no finds	possibly glacial or agricultural scarring
T10	F14	pit/linear terminal	Deep curved feature in the corner of T10; likely to be a pit due to its steep sides; notably silty fill.	no finds	possibly medieval or post-medieval
T11	F15	pit/linear terminal	Feature ran into the east edge of T11, so unsure whether pit or terminal; mid-brown silty clay with chalk flecking.	no finds	possibly medieval or post-medieval
T11	F16	linear	Linear running NE-SW which is likely to be the same linear as F4 in T8, though with a slightly more rounded profile.	well-preserved ungulate long bone	possibly medieval or post-medieval
T12	F17	linear	Small shallow linear with a mottled fill and uncertain edges on a NW-SE alignment.	no finds	possibly glacial or agricultural scarring
T14	F18	pit	Small shallow pit with a mid brown silty clay fill and chalk flecking.	no finds	possibly agricultural scarring
T14	F19	pit	Possible oval-shaped pit which disappeared under section edge; shallow with irregular profile and mid-brown fill.	no finds	possibly glacial or agricultural scarring
T15	F20	linear	Linear running NE-SW with distinctive soft orange/grey clayey silt fill; wide and deep with ledges on each edge before a steep decline.	no finds	possibly glacial or medieval or post-medieval

Trenches or works	Feature or layer	Context type	Comments	Associated finds	Context dated as
T15	F21	linear	Linear running NW-SE with very similar fill to F20; very wide with long ledge leading to channel of considerable depth.	no finds	possibly glacial
T14	F22	linear	Ditch running N-S with 'V'-shaped cut which had a field drain in the upper fill.	snail shells, fragments of brick, glazed red earthenware of c 17th-century date	post-medieval
T17	F23	linear	Linear running NW-SE with similar distinctive soft orange/grey clayey silt to that found in F20 + F21; converged with F24.	no finds	possibly glacial or medieval or post-medieval
T17	F24	linear	Linear running NE-SW which converged with F23 and had identical fill.	no finds	possibly glacial or medieval or post-medieval
T20	F25	linear	Small linear feature running NE-SW, with mid-brown fill.	no finds	possibly medieval or post-medieval
T22	F26	linear	Wide E-W running linear with a soft dark orange/grey fill; charcoal flecking and some pieces of soft wood; likely to be the same ditch as F27.	modern wood fragments	post-medieval/modern
T24	F27	linear	Wide E-W running linear, same fill as F26 but with a dense lens of charcoal halfway down section; likely to be the same ditch as F26.	large cast iron object; ?leather fragment with nails embedded	post-medieval/modern

6.3 Medieval annular brooch (Fig 3)

by Nina Crummy

An annular copper-alloy brooch, broken at one point on the hoop, and with the tip of the pin missing. The internal diameter of the brooch is 18mm (23mm including ring). The form is medieval and examples may have a plain hoop, as here, or be decorated in some way (Egan & Pritchard 1991, 248-9).

7 List of finds

Table 2: list of finds by contexts.

Finds no	Context	Trench or location	Description	Date
1	F6	west end of T8	1 hand-made nail, square in profile	medieval/post-medieval
2	F10	west end of T4	8 fragments of burnt clay	?post-medieval
3	F16	south end of T11	8 fragments of well-preserved long bone of ungulate	?post-medieval
4	F22	east end of T14	15 snail shells 8 fragments of brick	c 17th century or later

			1 fragment of glazed red earthenware	
5	F27	south end of T24	1 cast iron object 1 fragment of leather embedded with ?nails	modern – perhaps from farm machinery
6	L2 U/S	south end of T3	1 annular copper-alloy brooch	12th-14th century

8 Discussion (Figs 1-2)

8.1 Summary

Features were found to be spread very thinly over the site and were almost all linear features resembling ditches or gullies, with a few pit-like features. Some parts of the site, in particular in the south-west, were found to be devoid of archaeology, with features recorded in thirteen of the 24 trenches. Only five of the 27 features recorded produced any finds. The majority of the pits recorded across the site had ambiguous edges and did not produce any artefacts, and most likely were produced by natural processes occurring during the last Ice Age or agricultural activities such as deep ploughing or the felling of trees. The same was observed for the numerically superior linear features which were often on the same alignment as the field boundaries on the 1881 1:10,560 OS map, suggesting that they may have been the product of invasive agricultural practices. Ditch A (Fig 2) matches up with the north-east to south-west aligned field boundary shown on the OS map, whereas the south-east to north-west boundary seems to tie in with an identified field-drain system running through T2, T3 and T4. Several other linear features were also found to contain field drains used to control the water content of the soils in these worked fields. Ditch B (Fig 2), which runs from the north-east to south-west, could also potentially have been a field boundary. Its absence on the 1881 OS map suggests that it is older than boundary Ditch A, although its alignment does not suggest that it is associated with the Late Iron Age-Roman farmstead (Figs 1-2).

One feature of possible archaeological significance was excavated in the westernmost corner of the site in T4. A linear stretch of burnt patches which ran in a north-west to south-east alignment was formed by intercutting and discrete burnt patches but, despite containing burnt clay and brick, these contained no datable material. The feature is considered to be associated with the laying of field drains, one of which cut the feature itself.

8.2 Conclusion

The evaluation site produced no evidence of the Late Iron Age and Roman activity identified in the nearby excavations by CAT in 2006. The absence of Late Iron Age and Roman features implies that this area of land was not inhabited or used for arable farming in that period, and it has been suggested that it was heathland. Many of the other features excavated on site were found to correspond to the farming of the land in post-medieval and modern times, with field drains, plough marks and even one boundary ditch itself matching the alignment of the field system still present on the land in the 1881 1:10,560 OS map.

9 Archive deposition

The paper and digital archive and finds are currently held by the Colchester Archaeological Trust at 12 Lexden Road, Colchester, Essex CO3 3NF, but will be permanently deposited with Braintree Museum under accession code BRNTM 2006.7.

10 Acknowledgements

The Trust would like to thank Andrew Martin Associates Ltd for commissioning the work, Countryside Properties Ltd for funding the work, and Ardmore Contractors for allowing access and for their assistance on site. The fieldwork was carried out by L Driver, E Hicks, N Rayner, D Ross and A Wightman. Plans produced by M McDonald; small finds drawing by E Spurgeon.

11 Abbreviations

CAT	Colchester Archaeological Trust
EAA	East Anglian Archaeology
ECC	Essex County Council
EHER	Essex Historic Environment Record
HEM	Historic Environment Management
IFA	Institute of Field Archaeologists
NGR	National Grid Reference
OS	Ordnance Survey

12 References

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|-------------------------|------|--|
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| CAT Report 337 | | An archaeological watching brief and evaluation at Great Notley business park, near Braintree, Essex, June-September 2005, unpublished CAT archive report, by K Orr, 2005 |
| CAT Report 367 | | An archaeological excavation at the 'Skyline 120' business park, Great Notley, near Braintree, Essex, January-February 2006, unpublished CAT archive report, by B Holloway, 2006 |
| EAA 3 | 1997 | <i>Research and archaeology: a framework for the Eastern Counties 1. Resource assessment</i> , East Anglian Archaeology, Occasional Papers, 3 , ed by J Glazebrook |
| EAA 8 | 2000 | <i>Research and archaeology: a framework for the Eastern Counties 2. Research agenda and strategy</i> , East Anglian Archaeology, Occasional Papers, 8 , ed by N Brown & J Glazebrook |
| EAA 14 | 2003 | <i>Standards for field archaeology in the East of England</i> , East Anglian Archaeology, Occasional Papers, 14 , ed by D Gurney |
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| Garwood, A | 1997 | Land at Great Notley Garden Village, Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit, unpublished report |
| IFA | 1999 | <i>Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation</i> |
| IFA | 2001 | <i>Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials</i> |
| MAP 2 | 1991 | <i>Management of archaeological projects</i> , 2nd edition (English Heritage) |

13 Glossary

context	either a feature, layer or a complex of layers/features
feature	an identifiable thing like a pit, a wall, a drain, a floor; can contain 'contexts'
Late Iron Age	the period immediately prior to the Roman invasion, ie c 70 BC-AD 43
layer	distinct or distinguishable deposit of soil
modern	period from the 19th century onwards to the present
natural	geological deposit undisturbed by human activity
post-medieval	after Henry VIII to around the late 18th century
Roman	period from AD 43 to c AD 410
U/S	unstratified (without a clear archaeological context)

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Adams c:/reports07/great notley/report433.doc



Fig 1 Site location, including the location of the Late Iron Age-Roman enclosure excavated in 2006.

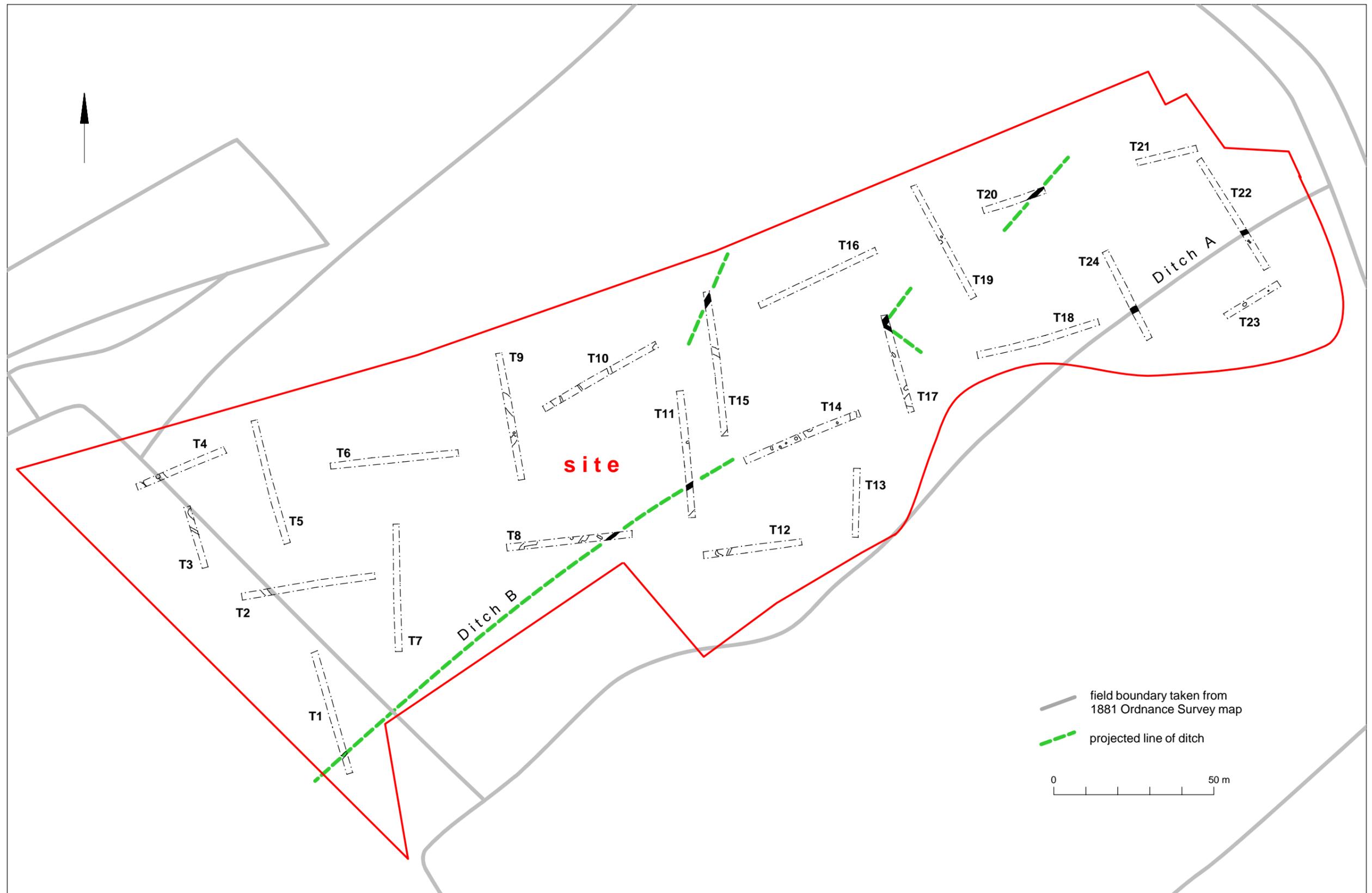


Fig 2 Evaluation trenches in relation to the 1881 1:10,560 Ordnance Survey map.

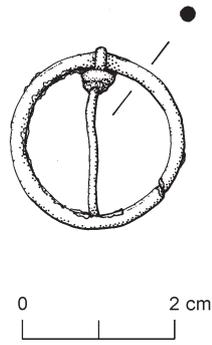


Fig 3 Annular copper-alloy brooch.

**Essex Historic Environment Record/
Essex Archaeology and History**

Summary sheet

Site address: 'Skyline 120' Great Notley business park, near Braintree, Essex	
Parish: Black Notley	District: Braintree
NGR: TL 7380 2178 (centre)	Site code: GNBPO7
Type of work: Evaluation	Site director/group: Colchester Archaeological Trust
Date of work: July-August 2007	Size of area investigated: 9.2 acres
Location of finds/curating museum: Braintree Museum (accession code BRNTM 2006.7)	Funding source: Developer
Further seasons anticipated? No	Related EHER nos: 6501, 6502, 9993, 14171, 17766
Final report: CAT Report 433 and summary in <i>EAH</i>	
Periods represented: ?medieval, post-medieval, modern	
<p>Summary of fieldwork results:</p> <p><i>An archaeological evaluation consisting of 831.1m of trenches was carried out between July and August 2007. Features were found to be spread very thinly over the site and were almost all linear cuts resembling ditches or gullies, with a few pit-like features. Some parts of the site, in particular in the south-west, were found to be devoid of archaeology, with features recorded in thirteen of the 24 trenches. Only five of the 27 features recorded produced any finds.</i></p> <p><i>Of those features without finds, most were natural in appearance and may have been the result of natural processes occurring during the last Ice Age or of more recent activity such as the felling of trees or invasive agricultural practices. Post-medieval drainage pipes and likely field boundaries observable on the 1881 1:10,560 OS map were excavated in the western and north-eastern parts of the site, while linear features which did not produce any artefacts dominated the archaeology of the rest of the site.</i></p> <p><i>The absence of any Late Iron Age and early Roman finds indicates minimal activity in this area associated with the probable farmstead to the south-west of the site (excavations by CAT in 2006). This implies that most of the land here was not inhabited or used for arable farming in that period, and it has been suggested that it was heathland.</i></p>	
Previous summaries/reports: Brooks 1994; CAT Reports 337 and 367; Garwood 1997	
Author of summary: Adam Wightman	Date of summary: August 2007