

**Archaeological evaluation and excavation  
at land to the rear of 37-45 Clare Road,  
Braintree, Essex**

**March-May 2012**



**commissioned by Mr Mark Plummer**

**report prepared by Chris Lister**

Planning reference: 12/00086/FUL

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Braintree Museum accession code: pending

NGR: TL 7515 2276 (c)



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**CAT Report 645**  
May 2012

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EHER summary sheet

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## 1 Summary

Archaeological evaluation and excavation was carried out on land to the rear of 37-45 Clare Road, Braintree ahead of the construction of twelve new houses. The site is situated on the north slope of the valley of the River Brain at the open end of a triangular area formed by the main Roman roads of Stane Street (Rayne Road) and the Sudbury to Chelmsford route (London Road) which enclosed the Roman town at Braintree.

Activity recorded on the site is from the Late Iron Age and Roman periods and consisted of pits and ditches. A significant feature was a hitherto unknown metal track that potentially leads to the Roman town cutting through the area believed to be used for burials.

## 2 Introduction (Figure 1)

- 2.1 This is the archive report on the archaeological evaluation by trial-trenching and the resulting open area excavation carried out on behalf of Mr Mark Plummer by the Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) at land to the rear of 37-45 Clare Road, Braintree, Essex (site centre: NGR TL 7515 2276).
- 2.2 The proposed development comprises 0.56 ha of land to the rear of 37-45 Clare Road, north of the former railway line. The site incorporates parts of the gardens of these properties and part of the land formerly belonging to the adjacent Bowling Club (Fig 1). The site slopes gently to the south in the area of the gardens until it meets the boundary with the Bowling Club where there is a sharp drop of approximately 1m to the level landscaped surface of the west bowling green.
- 2.3 A planning application was submitted to Braintree District Council (12/00086/FUL) in January 2012 for the demolition of 39 Clare Road and the erection of twelve new dwellings and garages with associated parking spaces, amenities and landscaping, and the formation of a new vehicular access onto Clare Road.
- 2.4 Given the archaeological potential of the site, and following *Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment* (DCLG 2010), the Essex County Council Historic Environment Management (ECC HEM) team recommended that an archaeological evaluation by trial-trenching should be carried out. The recommended work was described in a brief written by Maria Medlycott of the ECC HEM team in February 2012 (Medlycott 2012).
- 2.5 The archaeological evaluation was undertaken in March 2012 in accordance with the HEM brief and a corresponding Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) produced by CAT (CAT 2012a) and agreed with the HEM team.
- 2.6 As potentially significant features were revealed during the evaluation it was decided to follow up this phase of work with an open area excavation. This was located at the north end of T3. A second WSI for this subsequent phase was produced by CAT and agreed with the HEM team (CAT 2012b).
- 2.7 In addition to the WSI, all fieldwork and reporting was carried out in accordance with CAT's *Policies and procedures* (CAT 2008), the Institute for Archaeologists *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (IfA 2008a), *Standard and guidance for archaeological excavation* (IfA 2008b) and *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (IfA 2008c). The guidance contained in the documents *Management of research projects in the historic environment* (MoRPHE), and *Standards for field archaeology in the East of England* (EAA 14) was also followed.

## 3 Archaeological background (Figure 4)

- 3.1 This section is based on records from the Essex Historic Environment Record (EHER) held at Essex County Council, County Hall, Chelmsford.
- 3.2 The site lies on the western extent of the Roman town at Braintree, much of which appears to have been confined within a triangular area between the main Roman roads of Stane Street (Rayne Road) and the Sudbury to Chelmsford route (London Road). Within the area of the Roman town there appears to have been two phases of development. The first century town was concentrated in the area of the modern

Pierrefitte Way, and there is some suggestion of deliberate planning in the initial layout of the town with the minor roads and major boundary ditches running at right-angles to London Road, forming blocks approximately 145m apart. In the second and third centuries the town expanded into the Rayne Road and George Yard area, and there appears to have been a second phase of road building, which cut across the original layout. Burials have been located on the western edge of the built-up area (Medlycott 1988).

- 3.3** Early antiquarian reports indicate finds of Late Iron Age and Roman date within close proximity to the development site. A large number of finds dating from the Late Iron Age to the Roman period were recovered from a ditch during gravel extraction at Hunnables Pit, less than 100m east of the development site. Cremation burials with possible grave goods and urns have been recovered from various locations including Hunnables Pit (EHER 6306), 8 Clare Road (EHER 6317) and 13 Grenville Road (EHER 6322), suggesting extensive burial areas.
- 3.4** Evidence for possible buildings and boundary ditches have been recovered from Grenville Road (EHER 17783-4) and College Road (EHER 16866) which possibly lie at the edge of the Roman town. Recent work to the south-west of the site on the former William Julien Courtauld Hospital has demonstrated the survival of Roman features in that area.

## **4 Aim**

The aim of the investigation was to determine the presence or absence of archaeological deposits within the development area and to preserve by record any remains which would be destroyed by the construction of the new buildings, access road and associated groundworks.

## **5 Results** (Figures 1-3, 5)

### **5.1 Introduction**

In fulfilment of the brief and WSI (HEM 2012; CAT 2012a), four trenches totalling 136m in length (T1-T4) were excavated within the area of the proposed development (Fig 1). One of the trenches (T1 - 33.5m long) was located in the grassed garden to the rear of 39 Clare Road on the alignment of the proposed access road. Two of the trenches (T2 - 30m long and T3 - 33.5m long) were located to straddle the south ends of the gardens and the west bowling green. The remaining trench (T4 - 39m long) was located through the west bowling green. T3 was positioned through the footprint of the proposed buildings on the west side of the development site. T2 and T4 were intended to be positioned through the footprints of the other proposed buildings but site limitations at the time of the evaluation forced the trenches to be relocated just outside these footprints.

The trenches through the gardens were excavated through turf and topsoil (L1). This covered an accumulation layer of brown sandy-silt soil (L2) that had small inclusions of CBM and charcoal, and is interpreted as the remains of earlier archaeological activity. L2 sealed the natural geology (L3) a yellowy/orange coarse sand and gravel mix. The trenches excavated through the bowling green were dug through a level turfed surface (L4) which sat upon a 600mm thick make-up deposit of mottled orangey brown silty clay, that sealed L2. This had clearly been used to artificially raise and level the south end of the bowling green.

Using the contractor's mechanical excavator, equipped with a toothless bucket, the four trenches were dug under the supervision of a CAT archaeologist. Excavation ceased in all trenches at L3 where archaeological features could be seen cutting the natural geology. These took the form of pits and ditches, many of which contained Late Iron Age and Roman pottery sherds, and an expanse of compacted gravel in T3. Following a site meeting with the ECC HEM officer, it was decided that an open area excavation would be commissioned to allow the alignment of the gravel (F10) to be accurately plotted. A second CAT WSI (CAT 2012b) was approved by the HEM team for an 8m by 10m open area excavation centred on the compacted gravel in T3.

The form types of the recovered pottery finds provide good evidence for an analysis of the site. Archaeological activity on the site has been grouped as follows;

Period 1: Late Iron Age

Period 2: Roman

Period 3: medieval-modern

### 5.2 Period 1: Late Iron Age (Figures 2-3, 5)

Four features on the site contained only Late Iron Age pottery (F5-7 and F11). Two of these (F5 and F6) were shallow pits, located at the east end of T4, which produced grog-tempered sherds dated to the early-mid 1st-century AD (Fig 2). A third Late Iron Age feature was F7, a small shallow pit at the north end of T2, which contained a single grog-tempered sherd of pottery of mid 1st-century BC to mid 1st-century AD date (Fig 2). Two additional sherds of Late Iron Age grog-tempered pottery were collected as surface finds just to the north of F7. These may be associated with F7. F11 was a tree-throw observed in the open area excavation (Fig 3). This contained a single sherd of Late Iron Age grog-tempered pottery.

### 5.3 Period 2: Roman (Figures 2-3, 5)

Two features that contained Roman pottery were excavated in the evaluation phase. F4, located in T4, was the terminal of a ditch aligned north-east to south-west which contained nineteen sherds of pottery, approximately two-thirds of the overall amount of pottery recovered from both phases of work (Fig 2). Nine of these sherds were dated to the Roman period with the remainder being residual Late Iron Age fabrics. F4 truncated the Late Iron Age pit F5 and this may be where some of these sherds originate. The second Roman feature was another ditch (F8, located in T2) aligned north-west to south-east (Fig 2). The section excavated through this ditch contained two sherds from a Roman storage jar.

A third feature that has been assigned to the Roman period is F10 (Fig 3). This is the expanse of compacted gravel from T3, subsequently investigated further during the open area excavation. No datable finds were recovered from this feature during either phase of work, but it is likely that F10 is part of a metalled track aligned north-east to south-west (Fig 4).



Plate 1 F10 metalled track - view north-west

### 5.4 Period 3: medieval-modern (Figures 2-3)

The remaining five features from the site can be divided between those that are demonstrably modern and those that are not possible to closely date. Modern features included F2, a pit located in T4, which contained clay pipe, peg-tile and

flower pot, and F12, an ash pit located on the north edge of the open area excavation.

Features that proved impossible to closely date were the small pit F1 and ditch F3, both located in T4. Although F1 contained a sherd of Late Iron Age grog-tempered pottery this was residual with peg-tile fragments. Similarly, F3 contained only peg-tile. Peg-tiles are common in Essex from the late 13th or 14th centuries, but continue essentially unchanged into modern times (Ryan & Andrews 1993, 97). Therefore it is extremely difficult to date these features.

One undated feature (F9) was excavated at the north end of T1. The fill and irregular profile suggests this may be a natural feature.

## 6 The finds

by Stephen Benfield

### Introduction

A small quantity of bulk finds consisting of pottery, ceramic building material (CBM), clay pipe and stone were recovered. All of the finds are listed by finds number for each context in Table 2 and a spot date is provided for each finds number. The finds are dated to the Late Iron Age, Roman, medieval-post-medieval/modern and modern period. The Roman pottery fabrics refer to the Essex Roman pottery fabric series (Going 1987) and the post-Roman pottery fabrics refer to the Essex post-Roman pottery fabric series (Cunningham & Drury 1985, *CAR 7*). All the fabrics are listed in Table 1 below.

Fabric code	Fabric name
<i>Late Iron Age – Roman:</i>	
31	Unspecified buff wares
47	Sandy grey wares
50	?South Essex shell-tempered ware
53	Grog-tempered fabrics
<i>Post-Roman:</i>	
51B	Flowerpot (modern)

Table 1 Late Iron Age, Roman and post-Roman pottery fabrics

### Discussion

The most common finds type recovered (both by count and weight) is pottery, almost all of which can be dated to the Late Iron Age and Roman periods.

There is a total of twenty-nine sherds of Late Iron Age and Roman pottery with a combined weight of 198g. The average sherd weight is 6.8g. Almost all the sherds are abraded which suggests a significant post-depositional history.

The Late Iron Age and Roman pottery consists of coarse wares of local or regional production. The majority of sherds are grog-tempered (Fabric 53) and can be dated to the Late Iron Age, although this fabric type probably remained current into the Early Roman period. Grog-tempered pottery accounts for 55% by count and 71% by weight. Pottery which can be dated to the Roman period consists of sandy grey wares (Fabric 47) and a sherd of buff, oxidised ware (Fabric 31), which together account for 41% by count and 27% by weight. The pottery is not closely dated within the Roman period, although the oxidised sherd is likely to date from the mid 1st to 2nd or 3rd century. A single sherd of shell-tempered ware (Fabric 50) can be dated to the 1st century AD and might be either Iron Age or Roman.

Apart from one feature (F4) which produced nineteen sherds (106g), the pottery was recovered as just one or two sherds from any one context. Late Iron Age pottery is the latest dated find associated with F6, F7, F11, and L2, while Roman pottery is the latest dated find associated with F8 and F4.

The only pottery of post-Roman date is a single sherd (7g) from a modern flowerpot (Fabric 51B) from F2.

In contrast to the pottery, all of the small quantity of CBM (ceramic building material) is of post-Roman (medieval or later) date. Most common are pieces of peg-tiles, of which there is a total of nine (85g). These were recovered from F1, F2 and F3. They are not closely dated and might date to the medieval, post-medieval or modern periods. There is one small abraded piece of brick (14g) of likely post-medieval or modern date from F2.

Trench	ctxt	find	finds	finds spot date
002	F007	007	<b>Pottery</b> LIA: Fabric 53 1@21g (slightly abraded) (M1C BC-M1C AD)	LIA
002	F008	008	<b>Pottery</b> Roman: Fabric 47, 2@23, thick sherds, probably from a large storage jar	Rom
003	F010	010	<b>Stone</b> 1@20g small piece of sandstone/quartzite(?) stone, possibly part of a small cobble size piece; common, small dark grey-green sub-rounded fragments in grey matrix. (glacial erratic piece?)	
004	F001	001	<b>Pottery</b> LIA Fabric 53, 1@8g (M1C BC-M1C AD) (abraded) <b>CBM</b> Peg-tile(?) 1@10g (14 mm thick) (med-mod)	medieval-post-medieval/modern (?) (residual LIA)
004	F002	002	<b>Pottery</b> modern: Fabric 51B (flowerpot), 1@ 7g <b>CBM</b> Post-medieval brick 1@14 g (abraded); Peg-tile(?) 1@11g (med-modern); Unidentified 1@10g (abraded) <b>Clay pipe</b> Bowl 1@7g (CAR 5, Crummy Type 4, dated c 1640-1660); stem piece 1@1.5g	modern
004	F003	003	<b>CBM</b> Peg-tile 7@64g (med-mod)	medieval-post-medieval/modern
004	F004	004	<b>Pottery</b> LIA-Roman: Fabric 31, 1@1g (fragment) (Rom); Fabric 47, 8@27g (M1C-4C) includes a jar rim (abraded) and a rim from a lid edge; Fabric 47(?), 1@4g, silty fabric (IA?/Rom); Fabric 50, 1@2g (1C AD); Fabric 53, 6@36g (M1C BC-M1C AD); Fabric 53(SJ), 2@36g (1C AD). Note: generally small sherds, some abraded	Roman (with residual LIA)
004	F005	005	<b>Pottery</b> LIA: Fabric 53, 2@3g, hard sandy fabric (prob. E-M 1C AD)	LIA
004	F006	006	<b>Pottery</b> LIA: Fabric 53, 1@3g, hard sandy fabric (prob. E-M 1C AD)	LIA
004	L002	009	<b>Pottery</b> LIA: Fabric 53, 2@18g, one highly grog-tempered, the other a simple, everted LIA rim from a jar or bowl form with flat rim edge/top and sparse visible grog-tempered in fabric	LIA
	F011	011	<b>Pottery</b> LIA: Fabric 53, 1@16g, abraded, probably from a large jar/storage jar	LIA

Table 2 List of finds with spot dates

## 7 Discussion (Figure 4)

Archaeological activity on the development site appears to be limited to the Late Iron Age and Roman periods. The three pits and the tree-throw containing Late Iron Age pottery indicate a small level of Late Iron Age activity taking place in this part of Braintree. This is undoubtedly associated with the Late Iron Age centres of domestic occupation identified in the Fountain and Boar's Head excavations from the 1980's, approximately 350m north-east of the development site (Havis 1993).

Roman activity was confined to two ditches and the metalled track. The ditches are probably the remnants of field boundaries, but the track is of considerable interest. Although the lack of finds made it impossible to accurately date this feature, Havis' re-interpretation of Braintree's Roman road system (Havis 1993) suggests this may be a previously unknown track leading from the Roman settlement to the River Brain (Fig 4). The excavations associated with the construction of Pierrefitte Way and George Yard revealed a network of at least six minor roads between the main routes

of Stane Street and London Road. If the track from the development site is projected north-east it is shown to be parallel with the London Road and meets a perpendicular link-road between the two main Roman routes. This would create a new track or minor road through the area where the small town's burial are believed to be located. However, there are several problems which could challenge this conclusion. In addition to the lack of finds from the gravel, there was also no evidence of roadside ditches or quarrying along the line of the track. The minor roads identified in the excavations from the 1980's had roadside ditches and it would be logical to assume that any extension to the road network would also have these characteristics. It is also impossible to state categorically that this section of track joins with the road system to the north-east. Further excavation along its projected line is needed to establish whether this is the case or if the track is a short section of metalling associated with an outlying settlement. No discernible evidence of re-metalling of the track was observed in the excavated section and it may be that this track was only in use for a short while.

## 8 Acknowledgements

Colchester Archaeological Trust would like to thank Mr Mark Plummer for commissioning and funding the excavation.

The fieldwork was conducted by Ben Holloway and Chris Lister. Plans were produced by Chris Lister with illustrations by Emma Spurgeon. The project was monitored by Maria Medlycott and Teresa O'Connor on behalf of Essex County Council Historic Environment Branch.

## 9 References

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

- |                           |       |   |
|---------------------------|-------|---|
| CAR 5                     | 1988  | <i>Colchester Archaeological Report 5, The post-Roman small finds from excavations in Colchester 1971-85</i> , by Nina Crummy                                 |
| CAR 7                     | 2000  | <i>Colchester Archaeological Report 7, Post-Roman pottery from excavations in Colchester 1971-85</i> , by John Cotter   |
| CAT                       | 2008  | <i>Policies and procedures</i>  |
| CAT                       | 2012a | <i>Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological trial-trenching at land to the rear of 37-45 Clare Road, Braintree, Essex.</i>                          |
| CAT                       | 2012b | <i>Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological excavation at land to the rear of 37-45 Clare Road, Braintree, Essex.</i>                               |
| Cunningham, C, & Drury, P | 1985  | <i>Post-medieval sites and their pottery: Moulsham Street, Chelmsford, CBA Research Report 54</i>   |
| DCLG                      | 2010  | <i>Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment</i> . Dept of Communities and Local Government  |
| EAA 14                    | 2003  | <i>Standards for field archaeology in the East of England</i> , East Anglian Archaeology, Occasional Papers, 14, ed by D Gurney                               |
| English Heritage          | 2006  | <i>Management of research projects in the historic environment (MoRPHE)</i>   |
| Going, C                  | 1987  | <i>The Mansio and other sites in the south-eastern sector of Caesaromagus: the Roman pottery</i> , CBA Research Report 62                                     |
| Havis, R                  | 1993  | <i>Roman Braintree: excavations 1984-90</i> , Essex Archaeology and History 24  |
| HEM                       | 2012  | <i>Archaeological Building Recording and Trial-Trenching, The Hope Inn, 16 High Street, Tollesbury, Essex</i> . Essex County Council brief by Maria Medlycott |
| IfA                       | 2008a | <i>Standard and guidance for archaeological excavation</i>  |
| IfA                       | 2008b | <i>Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials</i>   |
| Medlycott, M              | 1998  | <i>Braintree Historic Towns Project Assessment Report</i>   |
| Ryan, P & Andrews, D      | 1993  | 'A brick and tile typology for Cressing Temple' in <i>Cressing Temple, A Templar and Hospitaller manor in Essex, 93-99</i> , ed by Andrews, D                 |
| Ryan, P                   | 1996  | <i>Brick in Essex, From the Roman conquest to the Reformation</i>   |

## 10 Abbreviations and glossary

CAT	Colchester Archaeological Trust
CBA	Council for British Archaeology
context	specific location of finds on an archaeological site
ECC	Essex County Council
EHHER	Essex Historic Environment Record, held by the ECC
feature	an identifiable thing like a pit, a wall, a floor; can contain 'contexts'
HEM	Historic Environment Management Team
IfA	Institute for Archaeologists
layer	distinct or distinguishable deposit of soil
medieval	period from AD 1066 to Henry VIII
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	the period from AD 43 to c AD 410
WSI	Written Scheme of Investigation

## 11 Archive deposition

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

## 12 Contents of archive

One A4 document wallet containing:

### 1 Introduction

- 1.1 Copy of the evaluation brief issued by ECC HEM team
- 1.2 Copy of the evaluation WSI produced by CAT
- 1.3 Copy of the excavation WSI produced by CAT
- 1.4 Risk assessment
- 1.5 Method statement
- 1.6 Safe system of work document

### 2 Site archive

- 2.1 Digital photographic record
- 2.2 Digital photographic contact sheet
- 2.3 Site photographic record on CD
- 2.4 Context sheets (F1-12; L1-5)
- 2.5 Finds register
- 2.6 Trench sketch sheets x 3

### 3 Research archive

- 3.1 Copy of the site report (CAT Report 645)
- 3.2 Finds reports and data

### Not in file

The finds occupy 1 box  
2 x A3 SX drawing sheets

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**Distribution list**

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checked by: Philip Crummy  
date: 09.05.12

*PC Projects/ 2012/Clare Road, Braintree/Report645.doc*



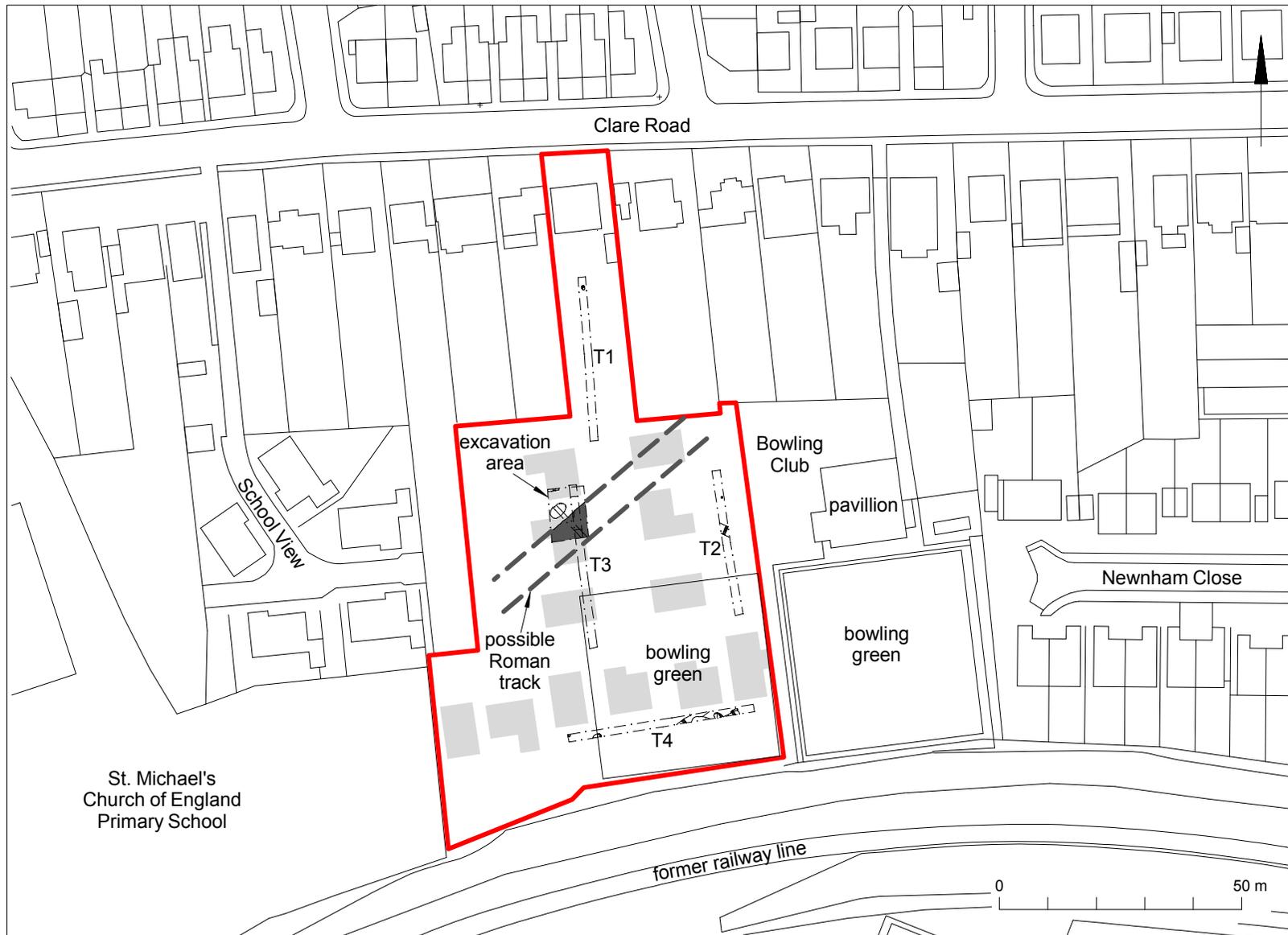
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## Appendix 1

Summary of contexts and dating

<b>context</b>	<b>description</b>	<b>finds</b>	<b>date</b>
F1	pit	pottery, peg-tile	medieval, post-medieval or modern with residual Late Iron Age pottery
F2	pit	pottery, peg-tile and clay pipe	modern
F3	ditch	peg-tile	medieval, post-medieval or modern
F4	ditch	pottery	Roman with residual Late Iron Age pottery
F5	pit	pottery	Late Iron Age
F6	pit	pottery	Late Iron Age
F7	pit	pottery	Late Iron Age
F8	ditch	pottery	Roman
F9	pit/tree-throw	-	un-dated/natural
F10	gravel track	-	Roman
F11	tree-throw	pottery	Late Iron Age
F12	ash pit	-	modern
L1	turf and topsoil	-	modern
L2	accumulation	pottery	medieval with residual Late Iron Age pottery
L3	natural sand and gravel	-	natural
L4	turf and topsoil (bowling green surface)	-	modern
L5	redeposited natural	-	modern



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Fig 1 Site location showing trenches and excavation area in relation to proposed development (light grey).

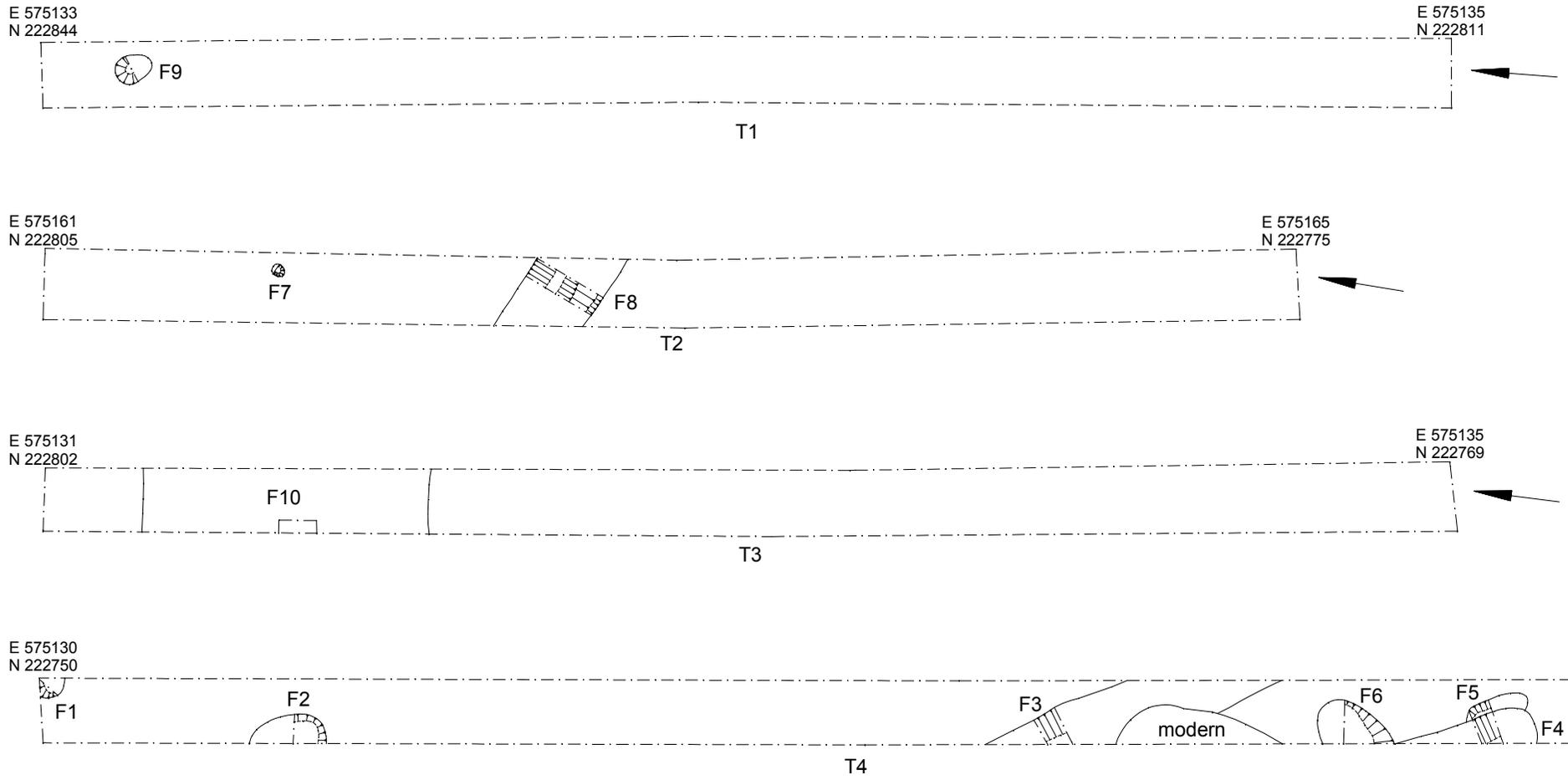


Fig 2 Trial-trenching results.

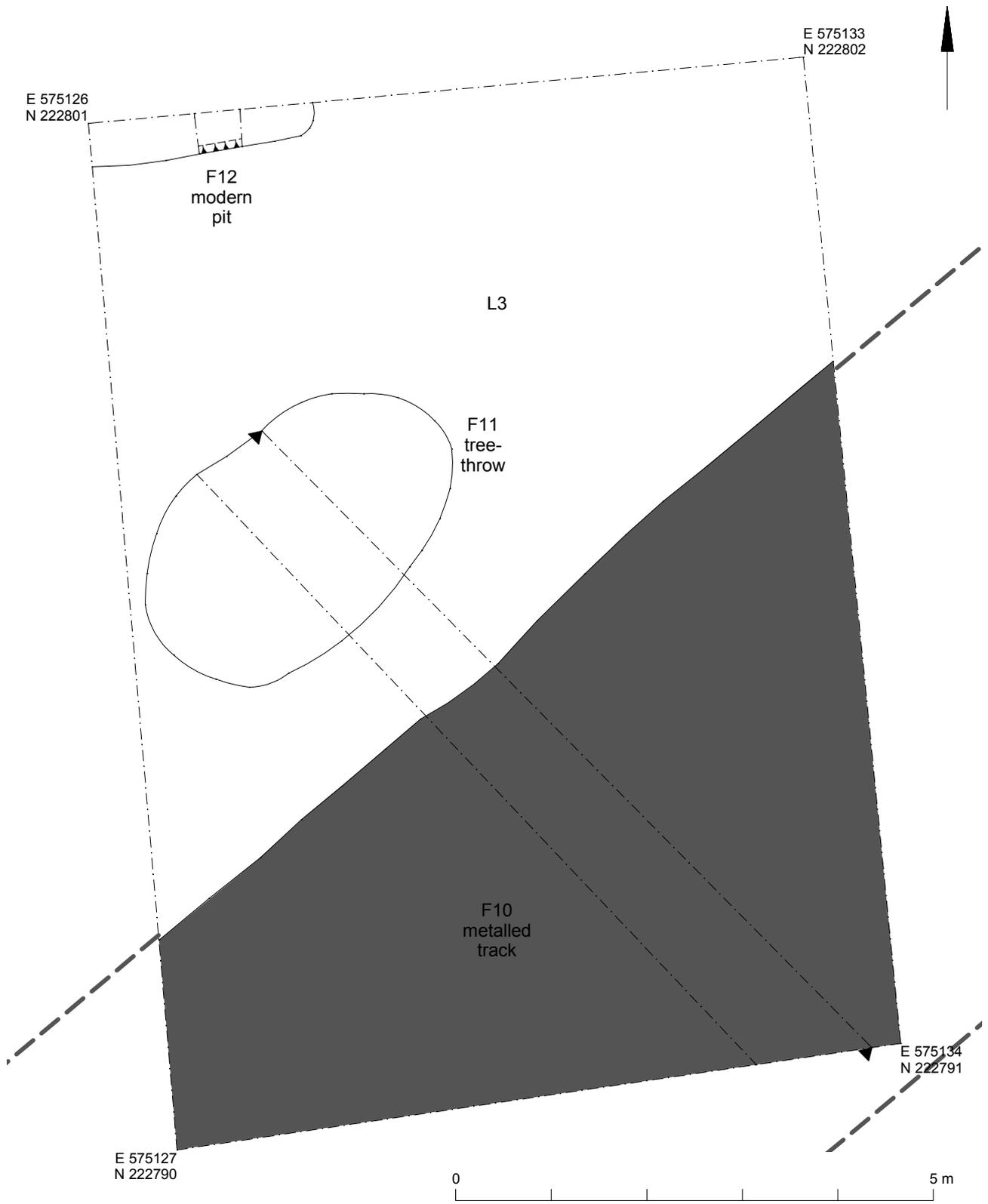


Fig 3 Excavation results.

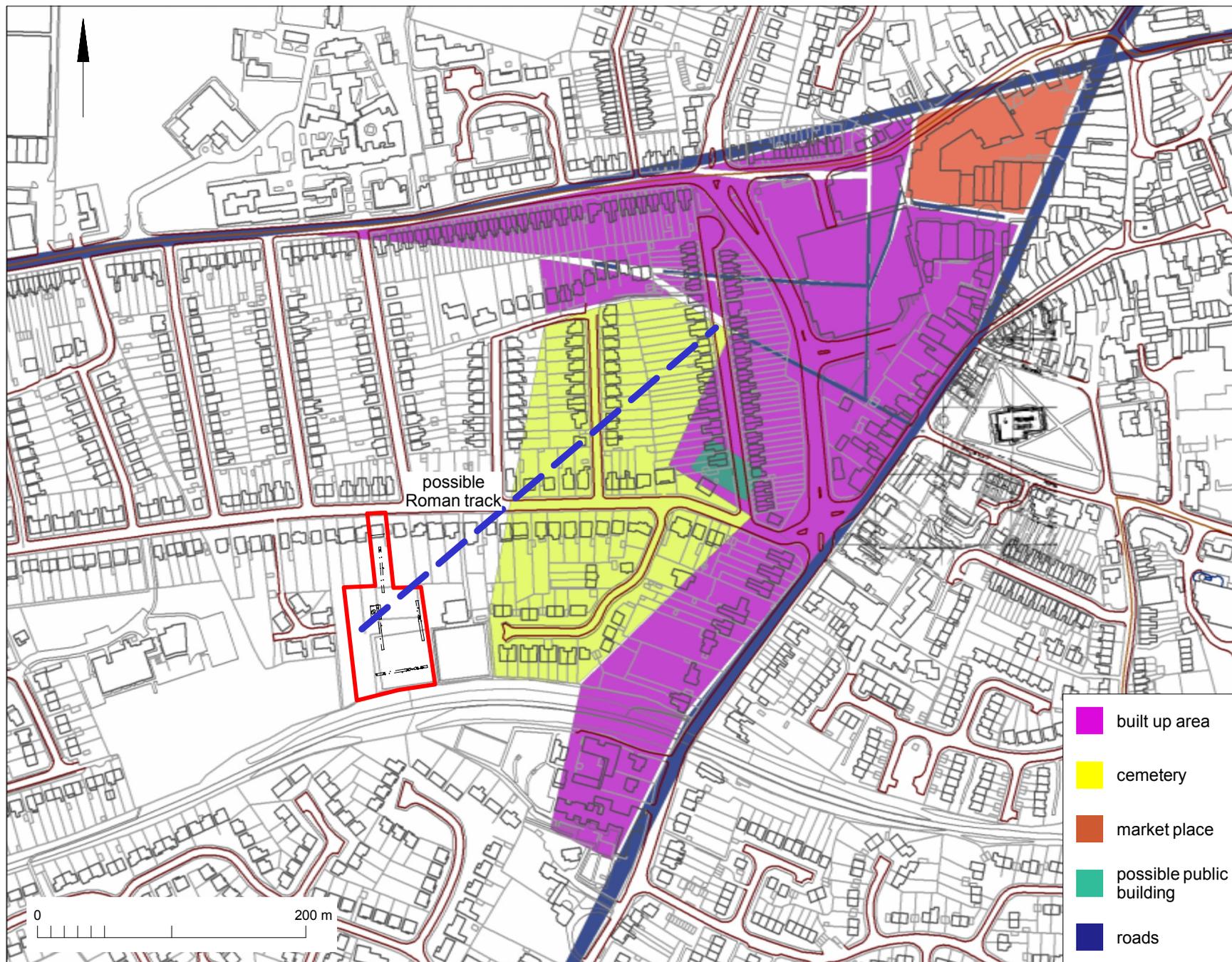


Fig 4 The site in relation to Roman Braintree.

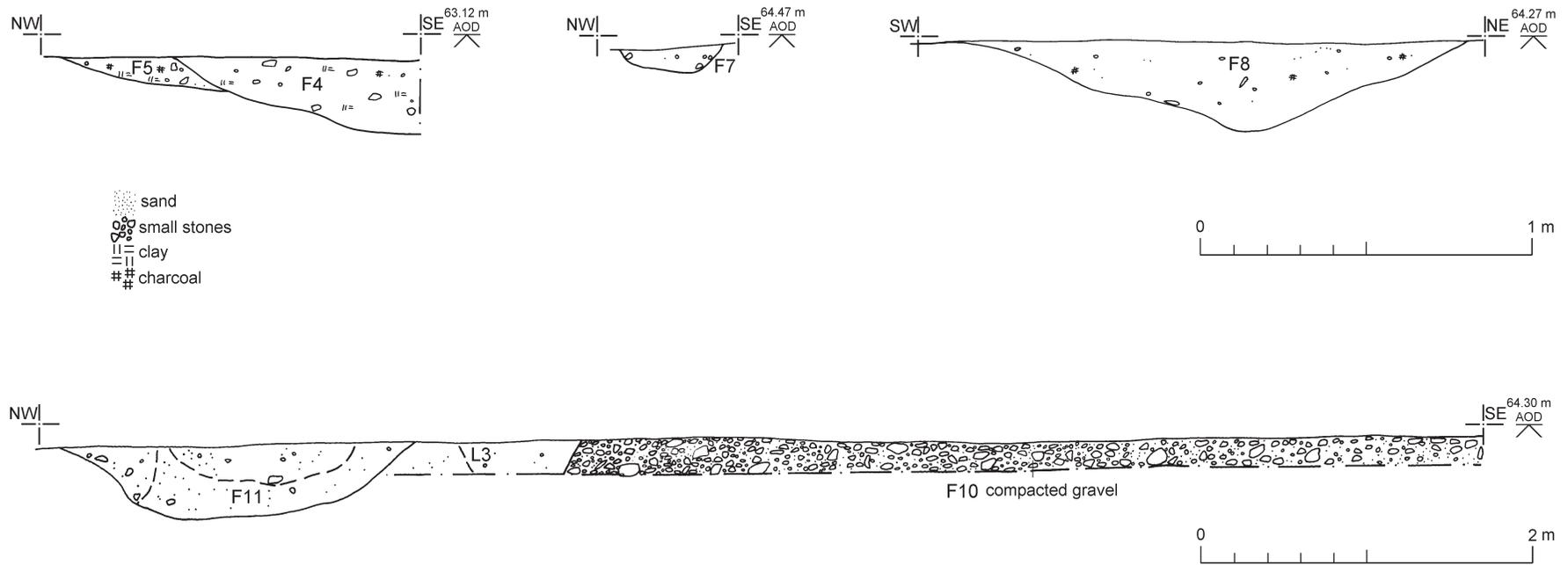


Fig 5 Sections.

## Essex Historic Environment Record/ Essex Archaeology and History

### Summary sheet

<b>Address:</b> Land to the rear of 37-45 Clare Road, Braintree, Essex	
<b>Parish:</b> Braintree	<b>District:</b> Braintree
<b>NGR:</b> TL 7515 2276 (c)	<b>Site codes:</b> CAT project code - 12/02k ECC HEM code – BT47
<b>Type of work:</b> Evaluation and excavation	<b>Site director/group:</b> Colchester Archaeological Trust
<b>Date of work:</b> March-May 2012	<b>Size of area investigated:</b> 136m (linear) and 0.008 ha (open area)
<b>Location of curating museum:</b> Braintree Museum accession code pending requested March 2012	<b>Funding source:</b> Developer
<b>Monitored by:</b> Maria Medlycott and Teresa O'Connor of Essex Historic Environment Management Team	
<b>Further seasons anticipated?</b> No	<b>Related EHER numbers:</b> 6306, 6317, 6322, 17783-4, 16866
<b>Final report:</b>	CAT Report 645
<b>Periods represented:</b>	LIA/Roman
<b>Summary:</b> <i>Archaeological evaluation and excavation was carried out on land to the rear of 37-45 Clare Road, Braintree ahead of the construction of twelve new houses. The site is situated on the north slope of the valley of the River Brain at the open end of a triangular area formed by the main Roman roads of Stane Street (Rayne Road) and the Sudbury to Chelmsford route (London Road) which enclosed the Roman town at Braintree.</i> <i>Activity recorded on the site is from the Late Iron Age and Roman periods and consisted of pits and ditches. A significant feature was a hitherto unknown metal track that potentially leads to the Roman town cutting through the area believed to be used for burials.</i>	
<b>Previous summaries/reports:</b> n/a	
<b>Keywords:</b> LIA/Roman, track	<b>Significance:</b> **
<b>Author of summary:</b> Chris Lister	<b>Date of summary:</b> May 2012