

# Archaeological monitoring and excavation: Stage 6 western extension, Hanson Quarry, Maldon Road, Birch, Essex

August-September 2013



report prepared by  
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on behalf of Hanson Aggregates

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## 1 Summary

Archaeological monitoring and excavation was carried out at Birch Pit in 2013 on behalf of Hanson Aggregates. The archaeological monitoring covered topsoil-stripping of the Stage 6 western extension (1.08ha), adjacent to the Stage 5 area excavated in 2012.

There were twenty-two archaeological features. The significant remains included a 'placed deposit' (a Late Bronze Age jar without cremated bone) and seventeen pits and post-holes containing LBA sherds. Other features were mostly post-medieval field ditches which are shown extant on 19th-century Ordnance Survey maps.

Much of the site had been disturbed by the construction and subsequent removal of a World War II airbase.

## 2 Introduction (Figs 1-2)

This is the report on the archaeological monitoring of a topsoil strip on the 'Stage 6 western extension' of Birch Pit, Maldon Road, Birch, and on the subsequent excavation of all uncovered archaeological features. The work was carried out by Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) between 19th August and 12th September 2013 on behalf of Hanson Aggregates.

The requirement for archaeological work was prompted by a western extension to existing quarry-pit. In July 2012 Essex County Council Place Services was consulted by Essex County Council in continuation of planning consent for mineral extraction first granted in 1995. Attached to the consent was the following condition:

*'No development, or preliminary groundworks of any kind shall take place until the applicant has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work and recording in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted by the applicant, and approved by the MPA.'*

The Stage 6 extension is to the NNE of Palmers Farm, is centred at NGR TL 9225 1935), and measures approximately 180m N-S and 60m E-W (1.08 hectares).

This arable land was formerly part of a World War II United States Army Air Force base.

Previous areas of watching brief and excavation on the quarry western extension have been identified by individual letters, and so the 2013 area was allocated the letter J. Area J was located immediately to the west of 2012 Area I (CAT Report 671).

All archaeological work was carried out in accordance with a brief issued by ECC Place Services (Gascoyne 2012), and according to a *Written Scheme of Investigation* (WSI) produced by CAT (CAT 2013) in response to the ECC brief and agreed with ECC.

In addition to the WSI, all fieldwork was carried out in accordance with CAT *Policies & Procedures* (CAT 2012), Colchester Borough Council's *Guidelines on standards and practice for archaeological fieldwork in the Borough of Colchester* (CIMS 2008a), and *Guidelines on the preparation and transfer of archaeological archives to Colchester Museums* (CIMS 2008b), and the Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and guidance for an archaeological excavation* (IfA 2008a) and *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (IfA 2008b). The guidance contained in the documents *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment* (MoRPHE: English Heritage 2006), and *Standards for field archaeology in the East of England* (EAA 14) was also followed.

### 3 Archaeological background

The archaeological background of the Birch Pit area has been summarised in CAT Reports produced since mineral extraction started here in 1995.

Most of our knowledge of the local archaeological landscape derives from the many recent excavations and watching briefs carried out in advance of quarry expansion since the early 1990s.

Some 0.8 km to the NE of the site is the extensive cropmark complex including a large sub-rectangular enclosure with associated tracks or droveways and a system of fields (EHER 11548, 11577, 11582 & 11924). Close to these sites, but within the boundaries of the permissible northern quarrying area, there are several smaller cropmark sites (CAT Report 8, appendix). Neolithic and early Mesolithic flints have also been recorded about 2 km to the east of the site (Spencer & Dennis 1988).

The most significant archaeological remains identified during the 1992 assessment was two surface scatters of Roman finds NE of Palmer's Farm (*ibid*). A small quantity of medieval pottery was also recovered. Further work was undertaken by CAT in 1997 on one of the areas of Roman finds (*ibid*) and in 1998, geophysical survey and trial-trenching were undertaken by CAT within the same area of Roman finds. This revealed a number of features containing Roman finds (CAT Report 23).

Other archaeological work has been undertaken by CAT at the quarry in response to the expansion of the extraction area (Fig 1). In 1995, a small Roman oven was excavated on the east side of the quarry close to Brake's Farm (NGR TL 9333 2002; CAT excavation 1995 on Fig 1; CAT archive 6/95b). In 2001 evaluation trenching by CAT in advance of a northern extension to the quarry revealed Bronze Age and Roman features (CAT Report 141). Excavation here in 2003 revealed a Bronze Age cemetery - three ring-ditches with sixteen urned and unurned cremation burials - and part of a Roman field system (CAT excavation 2003 on Fig 1; CAT Report 289). In 2005 excavation at the Birch airfield compost site (on the former USAAF airbase) revealed features of Late Iron Age and Roman features (CAT Report 326; CAT excavation 2005 on Fig 1). In 2004, again in 2005-6, 2007 and in 2008, excavation prior to extensions to the western side of the quarry (Fig 2; CAT Reports 383, 485, 523) revealed prehistoric, Roman, medieval and post-medieval features. There was no clear trace of any buildings, but ditches defined enclosures divided by tracks or droveways. A Roman oven was situated in one enclosure, and there was a small group of cremation burials to the east of the enclosures. There were a few Late Bronze Age features, including one large pit (possibly a waterhole).

#### **Disturbance caused by the construction and demolition of Birch airfield**

Ground disturbance caused by the construction and subsequent demolition of Birch airfield has been noted during previous excavations. The impact and implications of this have been discussed previously (CAT Report 485 section 3.2). Approximately 75% of the Stage 5 excavation stripped area had been affected. There were numerous wheel-ruts penetrating the natural which was generally very hard and compacted, probably a direct result of the passage of heavy machinery over the site during the removal of the airfield. A number of disused armoured electricity cables were also encountered which almost certainly relate to the airfield.

### 4 Aim

The aim of the monitoring and excavation was to record and establish the character, extent, date and significance of any archaeological remains and deposits that will be removed by works associated with mineral extraction. Particular attention was to be paid to remains mentioned in Section 3 above.

## 5 Report on monitoring and excavation (Figs 2-6)

Archaeological features uncovered by the topsoil strip include three post-medieval ditches F1, F2, F15. F2 continued the line of a ditch excavated in 2012 (Area I, F1) and is the infilled ditch shown on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map of this area. F1 may be of a similar date, perhaps stripped out before the OS coverage. A fourth ditch, F16, is undated. Its alignment may indicate a Roman (matching the major enclosure to the east) or post-medieval date.

Among the features discovered in 2013 were three, perhaps four, post-medieval ditches aligned NW-SE and SW-NE. The easternmost of these appears on the OS 1st edition, and the other post-medieval ditches may be of approximately the same date – perhaps grubbed out just before the OS map was surveyed. These ditches are not archaeologically significant.

There was one group of significant features (F4-F14, F18-F22). This included a buried Late Bronze Age jar (F4: Fig 6 here), and a cluster of pits and post-holes containing LBA sherds (F8-F13, F18-F22), and prehistoric flakes (F13). Post-holes / pits F5-7 and F14 contained no dated finds, but given their proximity to what is clearly a LBA feature group, they are probably of the same period. There was one undated pit (F3).

There were no cremated bones associated with the buried LBA jar. It is therefore described not as a burial, but as a 'placed deposit'. It seems likely that it is associated with the adjacent pit/post-hole cluster. There may be structures within the cluster, but if so, they are not easily discerned.

Flints and post-medieval pottery were recovered during the topsoil scrape (ie, L2).



Plate 1: placed deposit F4

## 6 Finds

Stephen Benfield

### Introduction

Bulk finds of pottery, flints and burnt stones were recovered from pits and post-holes located closed together on one area of the site. The pottery associated with these features can be dated to the Late Bronze Age. The quantities of the types of finds are listed in Table 1 and are listed by context in the finds appendix (pp 12-14).

| Finds type  | No. | Wt g |
|-------------|-----|------|
| Pottery     | 378 | 6065 |
| Flint       | 3   | 28   |
| Burnt stone | 39  | 2830 |

**Table 1: Quantities of types of bulk finds**

### Pottery

#### Prehistoric pottery

In total there are 376 sherds of hand-made flint-tempered pottery with a total weight of 6,035 g. This was recovered from the fill of pits (F4, F8, F12, F13 & F18-22) and post-holes (F9, F10 & F11) and from the subsoil (L2). The largest quantity of pottery from a single feature comes from one of the pits (F4) which contained the broken remains of a near complete large jar (BP 13.4). The pottery was recorded using the following the fabric classification devised by Brown for recording prehistoric pottery in Essex (Brown 1988). The pottery fabrics recorded are listed in Table 2.

| Fabric | Fabric description          | no  | Wt (g) |
|--------|-----------------------------|-----|--------|
| A      | Flint S 2 well sorted       | 1   | 20     |
| B      | Flint S-M 2                 | 64  | 423    |
| C      | Flint S-M with occasional L | 310 | 5589   |

**Table 2: Prehistoric pottery by fabric**

Key: size of inclusions: S-small (<1 mm), M-medium (1-2 mm), L large (>2 mm), density of inclusions: 2 = 6 to 10 per square cm

In terms of close dating there are three diagnostic rim sherds and one near complete vessel. All are typical of Late Bronze Age plain ware assemblages as defined by Barrett (1980). None of the pottery forming the assemblage is decorated and all of the pottery can be associated as an assemblage of Late Bronze Age date (c. 1000-700 BC). The rim sherds are from a necked bowl with simple everted rim in a fine, fabric with smoothed or burnished surfaces (Fig 6.1) belonging to Barrett's Class IV, a rim from a plain, slightly open bowl which has a smoothed or burnished exterior surface (Fig 6.2) of Class III and a flat-topped rim from a shouldered jar (Fig 6.3) of Class 1.

The near complete jar (Fig 6.4) is a large shouldered vessel also of Barrett's Class 1. A similar vessel is illustrated among a Late Bronze Age assemblage from North Shoebury (Brown 1995, fig. 64 no. 70). This was discovered filling the base of a pit (F4) as the cracked (broken) lower half filled with a clay soil matrix containing sherds from the upper part of the vessel. The soil fill also contained a few small body sherds from one or more other pots and some sparse, fragments of charcoal and red fired clay. The vessel itself must have been empty, or essentially so, when the upper half was broken as sherds from the rim were found close to or on the base. It appears that the vessel was buried in the pit upright and probably complete (or near so as part of the rim is missing) and the vessel body was later damaged by pressure. As the upper part has collapsed into the base, if all of the damage happened later it would appear that a lid or cover would have been necessary to prevent the body filling with soil; alternatively the upper part may have been broken into the pot earlier. Placed upright in a pit, which is of similar size to the pot and which was probably cut to receive it, its position in the ground could suggest that it was used a storage vessel. However, the burnt residue both on the external rim area and internally indicates that it had probably been used in a domestic

context. As only the upper exterior surface above the shoulder is blackened, it appears possible that it might originally have been buried in the pit up to the shoulder above which it was exposed to a fire or ashes. This could suggest that it had been located inside a building or shelter. Another possibility is that it was a placed vessel within a ritual context. These possibly interpretations may not necessarily be completely exclusive of each other.

A number of pits dated to the Late Bronze Age have been revealed across the western quarry extension at Birch, finds from two of which suggest they may have ritual connotations. One (F340) produced a complete copper-alloy pin and another (F360) a complete drum-shaped loomweight with fragments of one or two others (CAT Report 523). Also with possibly ritual connotations, possibly involving feasting, is a significant assemblage of Late Bronze Age post-Deverel-Rimbury plain ware, which includes fineware vessels. This was recovered from a large pit (F238) thought to be a water hole (CAT Report 485). Although earlier in date, at Sandon (Chelmsford) a truncated Middle Bronze Age urn was located upright in the base of the pit (F195) which must have been dug to receive it (CAT Report 536). The pot appeared to have been deliberately placed complete into the pit. As no human bone was recovered from the fill of either the pit or the pot itself (ie it was not a burial), it was interpreted a placed deposit, possibly ritual in nature, within a settlement/domestic area. It can also be noted that from a later period individual Middle Iron Age pots have been located as placed deposits buried within a round house and inside a second possible roundhouse at Colchester (CAT Report 292, 10 & Crummy *et al* 2009, 30).

Illustrated (Fig 6.1) F12(16) Rim from a fine bowl simple everted rim in a fine, dark surfaced fabric with smoothed or burnished surfaces (Barrett 1980 Class IV). Fabric B (16 g)

Illustrated (Fig 6.2) F21(10) Small, slightly open bowl with simple rim, dark reddish-brown surfaces, smoothed or burnished on exterior surface (Barrett 1980 Class IV). Fabric B (14 g).

Illustrated (Fig 6.3) F22(14) Medium-large shouldered jar, slightly concave neck with flat-topped rim, two joining sherds, one other rim sherd not joining (Barrett 1980 Class 1). Fabric C (57 g)

Illustrated (Fig 6.4) F4(2) Large jar, shouldered with slightly concave neck, flat topped rim, found together as broken sherds with lower pot half upright in base of pit, presumed whole when deposited although a little over 50% of rim appears to be present, dense gritting on base, faint vertical wiping above edge of base, some horizontal wiping around neck and around interior, patchy flint gritting showing across exterior, upper exterior above shoulder blackened, lower body oxidised, burnt sooting/residue on outside by rim and on interior of pot, body mostly oxidised exterior, reduced around rim and interior, Fabric B-C, rare large size flints (Barrett 1980 Class 1). Fabric C (5065 g)

### **Post-Roman pottery**

Two sherds of post-medieval pottery were recovered from the subsoil (L2). The post-medieval pottery was recorded using the Colchester (Essex) post-Roman pottery fabric series (*CAR 7*). Two abraded, joining sherds of post-medieval red earthenware (Fabric 40) was recovered from the subsoil (L2). The sherds, which join together, are part of the rim of a vessel with an attached loop handle. The Fabric dates from the period of the late 17th-18th/19th century.

### **Flint**

Two worked flints were recovered from one pit (F13) and another from the subsoil (L2). These are described below. The pit contained pottery which dated to the Late Bronze Age. Both the flints from this feature are thick flakes exhibiting scars from a pragmatic, irregular removal of flakes on the dorsal face and would not be out of place in a Late Bronze Age context. One is the lower part of a snapped flake. It has a notch on one side made by a small flake removal and which has some light retouch or use wear. The other has some light retouch or use wear along one edge. It can be noted that the

ventral face of the notched flakes is lightly patinated suggesting possible reworking of an earlier large flake. The piece recovered from the subsoil is a small irregular flake and again would be comfortable with a Late Bronze Age dating.

F13 (17) Secondary thick, triangular shaped flake, some cortex, some light retouch or use wear along one edge.

F13 (17) Secondary, snapped thick flake, some cortex and lightly patinated on the ventral face, notch on one side (formed by small flake removal) with light retouched or use wear to notch and adjacent edges.

L2 (1) Small tertiary flake.

### **Burnt stone**

A total of thirty-nine pieces of burnt (heat altered) stone were recovered which together weigh 2,830 g. Almost all of this is flint with just two pieces of sandstone/quartzite which together weigh 73 g. Most of the flints are whitened and crazed from the heat although a few are discoloured red. The burnt stone was recovered from the fill of pits (F6, F7, F12, F18-20 & F22) and post-holes (F10 & F11) located close together on a small area of the site. Pottery associated with these features dates them to the Late Bronze Age.

Burnt stones are commonly associated with prehistoric occupation and were probably primarily used as 'pot boilers' to heat water. The burnt stones recovered originate from the underlying gravel deposits and would have been available to collect from the surrounding area. Sandstone/quartzite also occurs naturally in the gravel deposits, but is much rarer than flint. It also has superior thermal properties, being less prone to fracture. Some deposits of pot-boilers are known which are dominated by these stones and these must have been specifically sought out and selected (Crummy *et al* 2009, 18-19). The low incidence of sandstone/quartzite among the burnt stones here and the small-medium size of stones suggests a non-selective process of local collection.

## **7 Discussion**

In general, the 2013 results match those of the 2012 season in that there appear to be relatively few features in the areas coinciding with the northern edge of the Birch Pit. The density of features here is not as high as in the centre of the site where the large LIA and Roman enclosure was excavated, mainly in 2008.

The significant remains consist of the 'placed deposit' F4 and the cluster of pits and post-holes which mostly contained BA pottery, and in one case prehistoric flints. It is possible that a structure of sorts is represented by these post-holes, although none is clearly discernible.

The Bronze Age remains can be seen in a wider context. There has been a comprehensive discussion of the archaeological landscape at Birch in previous CAT Reports (particularly Reports 485 and 523). The section dealing with prehistory is given below, and the 2013 remains have been included. In the text below, the word 'settlement' refers to earlier features on and around the LIA/Roman enclosure.

### **The prehistory of the Birch Pit**

The earliest recognised activity on the site consists of a number of discarded pieces of worked flint. Some of these could date to the Mesolithic period, but they are possibly Neolithic, and a number of others are more certainly Neolithic in date. These flints are all residual finds from later-dated features. A few decorated pottery sherds, recovered during the present excavation from a small pit, could be earlier Neolithic in date, but this is not certain.

The Middle Bronze Age (c 1,500-1,100 BC) is represented by a ring-ditch (CAT Report 383, 6), a complete drum-shaped loom-weight recovered from a pit (F360), and a few pieces of pottery (CAT Reports 383, 485). About 1 km to the north-east of the present site there is also a small number of ring-ditches associated with Middle Bronze Age cremation burials (CAT Report 289; CAT excavation 2003 on Fig 1).

A much larger number of features and finds can be dated to the period of the Late Bronze Age (c 1,100-700 BC). The features consist of pits, including a possible waterhole, while the finds from them include significant quantities of pottery and a complete bronze disc-headed pin. To these can now be added the post-holes and pits excavated in 2013.

The nature of the activity here during the Middle and the Late Bronze Age is difficult to interpret. The ring-ditch (CAT Report 383, 6), if it is of Bronze Age date - which seems most likely - suggests a ritual, probably burial site in the Middle Bronze Age. The pits, containing pottery and some other finds, almost certainly represent traces of a settlement on this area, although no evidence of any buildings which can be dated to this period has been recovered unless the 2013 post-holes represent a structure. The ring-ditch was situated within the area over which the pits representing this settlement have been found. As a probable ritual monument, which must have been known or visible, the settlement here would seem to diminish or annul its original social context. However, there was a Bronze Age ring-ditch in close proximity to the Middle Bronze Age settlement at the LTCP site at Stansted in Essex (Cooke *et al* 2008, 54-6 & fig 4.27). It may be that, rather than inhibiting settlement, the presence of this ring-ditch was in some way a focus for the Late Bronze Age settlement here.

The Late Bronze Age pits were, for the most part, isolated features. That these represent a settlement here is supported by the presence of a large pit, possibly a waterhole (CAT Report 485, 6). Based on experience when excavating the site, a large open pit would almost certainly have retained and filled with surface water. Water holes have been suggested as key diagnostic features of settlement sites in the Bronze Age (Cooke *et al* 2008, 52). The area over which the pits are known to occur shows that this settlement could have been quite extensive, although how closely contemporary most of the pits are is not known. However, finds from two pits - a loom-weight from F360 and a bronze pin from F340 - suggest that they date from the late Middle or the early Late Bronze Age and from the end of the Late Bronze Age respectively. It is possible therefore, that the pits could represent localised shifts over time of a small settlement.

The finds of the loom-weight (SF 72) and the bronze pin (SF 68) are of particular interest as both are complete objects. The loom-weight was whole and would still have been usable. Although slightly bent, the pin appears to be perfectly functional and was still a valuable object when put into the ground as the metal could certainly have been recycled. These two objects can be explained as selected deliberate deposits (and to the group of ritual deposits we can now add the placed deposit F4 excavated in 2013).

Selected objects, exemplified by finds of metalwork, were used of in the context of ritual acts involving permanent deposition in prehistory, commonly into water or into the fill of pits. At the Birch Pit site, the pin and the loom-weight were deposited in pits as a ritual act.

Unfortunately it remains the case that very little evidence regarding the economy, in terms of the farming regime, has been recovered for the Late Bronze Age settlement. No ditches of this period have so far been located at the Birch Pit site and the landscape appears, therefore, not to have been physically parcelled up, and may have been generally open in terms of man-made boundaries. In this respect, it can be noted that the underlying surface geology of the area is primarily clay, which is heavy and difficult to dig. The only archaeologically identified features which might have been visible in the surrounding landscape remain the small burial monuments of the ring-ditches to the north-east of the settlement (CAT Report 289), the small ring-ditch within

the area of the settlement itself (CAT Report 383) and whatever structure is represented by the 2013 post-holes and pits (if any). The most obvious inference, in terms of farming, from the apparently open aspect of the landscape, is that it probably represents a predominance of stock husbandry. The possible waterhole feature and the loom-weight support this conclusion. However, some level of mixed farming seems likely. Cereals are represented by a single carbonised spelt glume base, indicating a locally-grown crop, and a burnt cereal grain from F335 (section 7.10). Also, there is a large worn sandstone piece, probably originally a prehistoric saddle quern, which had been re-used as a post base (CAT Report 383).

Returning to the 2013 results, modern wheel-ruts were seen on site cutting down into natural ground. That, as well as the discovery of steel cables, demonstrates the extent of damage caused by the construction and later removal of the WWII airbase and its runways.

## 8 Acknowledgements

The project was commissioned by Alex Smiles of Hanson. Site work was managed by B. Holloway. Fieldwork was carried out by BH and M. Baister. The project was monitored for Essex County Council Place Services by Adrian Gascoyne.

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## 10 Glossary and abbreviations

|            |   |
|------------|---|
| Bronze Age | prehistoric period defined by the introduction and use of metal (bronze) in Britain, c 2,000-700 BC |
| CAT        | Colchester Archaeological Trust   |
| CBC        | Colchester Borough Council  |
| CIMS       | Colchester and Ipswich Museums  |
| context    | specific location on an excavation, usually relates to finds  |
| cut        | an excavation of unspecified purpose  |
| EHHER      | Essex Historic Environment Record, held by ECC  |
| feature    | an identifiable thing like a pit, a wall, a drain, a floor; can contain 'contexts'                  |
| HEM        | Historic Environment Management team of Essex County Council  |
| IfA        | Institute for Archaeologists  |
| Iron Age   | prehistoric period defined in Britain by the introduction and use of iron, c 700 BC-AD 43           |

|                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| Late Bronze Age    | c 1,000-700 BC (see Bronze Age above)  |
| layer              | distinct or distinguishable deposit of soil  |
| medieval           | period from AD 1066 to Henry VIII  |
| Mesolithic         | period of late hunter-gatherers, c 8,000-4,000 BC  |
| Middle Bronze Age  | (see Bronze Age above) c 1,500-1,000 BC  |
| modern             | 19th century to the present  |
| modern natural     | period from the 19th century onwards to the present  |
| Neolithic          | geological deposit undisturbed by human activity<br>period which saw the introduction of farming practices into Britain, c 4,000-2,000 BC  |
| NGR                | National Grid Reference  |
| post-medieval      | after Henry VIII to around the late 18th century   |
| Roman              | the period from AD 43 to c AD 430  |
| Roman worked flint | period of assimilation of Britain as part of the Roman Empire, c AD 43-410<br>any flint, discarded waste or used piece, which has been worked as part of the process of producing usable flint pieces or tools |

## 11 Archive deposition

The paper and digital archive is currently held by the Colchester Archaeological Trust at Roman Circus House, off Circular Road North, Colchester, CO2 7GZ, but will be permanently deposited with Colchester & Ipswich Museum (accession 2014.20).

## 12 Contents of archive

### Finds

1 museum box containing all finds.

### Paper record

One A4 wallet containing: Brief and WSI: Copy of Report 738  
Original site record sheets  
Photo log  
Attendance record  
Disc with digital photographs

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### Distribution list:

Alex Smiles, Hanson Group  
Adrian Gascoyne, ECC HEM officer  
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Checked by: *Philip Crummy*  
Date: 27.05.14

## Appendix: bulk Finds (26/11/2013)

| ctxt no. | finds no | ctxt type | Find type | sherd  | period | Finds description  | material | Fabric incs | Fabric code | surf | col | no  | Eve | Wt/g | Period/spot date | Pot no (cut). |
|----------|----------|-----------|-----------|--------|--------|--|----------|-------------|-------------|------|-----|-----|-----|------|------------------|---------------|
| F004     | 002      | pit       | pot       | r ba b | preh   | SV, large jar, shouldered with slightly concave neck, flat topped rim, foun together, upright and presumed whole when deposited, completed base, rim dia about 290 mm? A little over 50% or rim appears to be present, faint vertical wiping above edge of base, horizontal wiping around neck and around interior, patchy flint gritting across exterior, burnt sooting/ residue on outside by rim and on interior of pot, body mostly oxidised exterior, reduced around rim and interior, Fabric B-C, rare large size flints |          | FL          | C           |      | ox  | 243 |     | 5065 | LBA              | BP 13.4       |
| F004     | 002      | pit       | pot       | b      | preh   | Sherds from one or more thin walled pots found with the near complete large jar BP 13.4, mostly dark reduced   |          |             |             |      | r   | 6   |     | 17   |                  |               |
| F005     | 003      | ph        | BS        |        | Preh   | Small piece of burnt flint from a small stone  | flint    |             |             |      |     | 1   |     | 15   |                  |               |
| F006     | 007      | pit       | BS        |        | preh   | Small pieces of burnt flint from a small stones  | flint    |             |             |      |     | 3   |     | 67   |                  |               |
| F007     | 008      | pit       | BS        |        | preh   | Pieces of burnt flint from stones/cobbles  | flint    |             |             |      |     | 5   |     | 133  |                  |               |
| F008     | 004      | pit       | pot       | b      | preh   |  |          | FL          | C           |      | ox  | 1   |     | 10   | LBA              |               |
| F008     | 004      | pit       | pot       | b      | preh   |  |          | FL          | B           |      | ox  | 1   |     | 1    | LBA              |               |
| F008     | 004      | pit       | pot       | b      | preh   |  |          | FL          | B           |      | r   | 1   |     | 1    | LBA              |               |
| F009     | 006      | ph        | pot       | b      | preh   |  |          | FL          | C           |      | ox  | 1   |     | 1    | LBA              |               |
| F009     | 006      | ph        | pot       | b      | preh   |  |          | FL          | B           |      | ox  | 2   |     | 3    | LBA              |               |
| F009     | 006      | ph        | pot       | b      | preh   |  |          | FL          | B           |      | r   | 1   |     | 4    | LBA              |               |
| F010     | 005      | ph        | BS        |        | preh   |  | flint    |             |             |      |     | 2   |     | 130  | LBA              |               |
| F010     | 005      | ph        | pot       | b      | preh   | Sherds and small frags   |          | FL          | C           |      | ox  | 4   |     | 14   | LBA              |               |

| ctxt no. | finds no | ctxt type | Find type | sherd | period | Finds description  | material | Fabric incs | Fabric code | surf | col | no | Eve | Wt/g | Period/spot date | Pot no (cut). |
|----------|----------|-----------|-----------|-------|--------|--|----------|-------------|-------------|------|-----|----|-----|------|------------------|---------------|
| F011     | 015      | ph        | BS        |       | preh   | Larger stone/cobble and stone pieces, some discoloured red   | flint    |             |             |      |     | 8  |     | 313  |                  |               |
| F011     | 015      | ph        | BS        |       | preh   | Small piece from small cobble/stone  | S/Q      |             |             |      |     | 1  |     | 38   |                  |               |
| F011     | 015      | ph        | pot       | b     | preh   | Fine ware, smoother surface, thin walled   |          | FL          | B           | s    | r   | 1  |     | 13   | LBA              |               |
| F011     | 015      | ph        | pot       | b     | preh   | Misc sherds  |          | FL          | C           |      | ox  | 12 |     | 50   | LBA              |               |
| F011     | 015      | ph        | pot       | ba    | preh   | Misc sherds  |          | FL          | C           |      | ox  | 1  |     | 13   | LBA              |               |
| F011     | 015      | ph        | pot       | b     | preh   | Misc sherds  |          | FL          | C           |      | r   | 8  |     | 40   | LBA              |               |
| F012     | 016      | pit       | BS        |       |        | Medium size pieces, some discoloured red   | flint    |             |             |      |     | 4  |     | 1700 |                  |               |
| F012     | 016      | pit       | pot       | r     | preh   | Rim from a fine bowl, mature PDR plain ware group, M at Brudenell fig 5.7  |          | FL          | B           | s    | r   | 1  |     | 16   | LBA              | BP 13.1       |
| F012     | 016      | pit       | pot       | b     | preh   | Sherd from a fine bowl/cup mature PDR plain ware   |          | FL          | B           | s    | r   | 1  |     | 11   | LBA              |               |
| F012     | 016      | pit       | pot       | b     | preh   |  |          | FL          | B           |      | ox  | 1  |     | 5    | LBA              |               |
| F012     | 016      | pit       | pot       | b     | preh   | Misc sherds, more coarse temper than the fine sherds Fabric B-C  |          | FL          | B           |      | ox  | 12 |     | 58   |                  |               |
| F012     | 016      | pit       | pot       | b     | preh   |  |          | FL          | C           |      | ox  | 3  |     | 38   | LBA              |               |
| F012     | 016      | pit       | pot       | b     | preh   | Smooth black surface with sparse med flint   |          |             |             | s    | r   | 1  |     | 3    | LBA              |               |
| F013     | 017      | pit       | BS        |       | preh   | Medium sized pieces  | flint    |             |             |      |     | 5  |     | 162  |                  |               |
| F013     | 017      | pit       | flint     |       | preh   | Secondary thick flake, some cortex, notch on one side, formed by small flake removal, with light retouched or use wear |          |             |             |      |     | 1  |     | 13   | LBA              |               |
| F013     | 017      | pit       | flint     |       | preh   | Secondary thick, triangular shaped flake, some cortex, some light retouch or use wear along one edge                   |          |             |             |      |     | 1  |     | 14   | LBA              |               |
| F013     | 017      | pit       | pot       | b     | preh   | Misc sherds (some abraded)   |          | FL          | B           |      | ox  | 6  |     | 92   | LBA              |               |
| F013     | 017      | pit       | pot       | b     | preh   | Fine flint   |          | FL          | A           | s    | r   | 1  |     | 20   | LBA              |               |
| F014     | 009      | pit       | BS        |       | preh   | Pieces from stones/small cobbles   | flint    |             |             |      |     | 3  |     | 85   |                  |               |
| F018     | 011      | pit       | BS        |       | preh   | Small pieces   | flint    |             |             |      |     | 2  |     | 6    |                  |               |
| F018     | 011      | pit       | pot       | r     | preh   | Small rim sherd, upright/ slightly flaring simple rim  |          | FL          | B           |      | r   | 1  |     | 5    | LBA              |               |

| ctxt no. | finds no | ctxt type | Find type | sherd | period | Finds description   | material | Fabric incs | Fabric code | surf | col | no | Eve | Wt/g | Period/spot date | Pot no (cut). |
|----------|----------|-----------|-----------|-------|--------|---|----------|-------------|-------------|------|-----|----|-----|------|------------------|---------------|
| F018     | 011      | pit       | pot       | b     | preh   | misc  |          | FL          | B           |      | r   | 3  |     | 20   | LBA              |               |
| F018     | 011      | pit       | pot       | b     | preh   | Appears fine, but with relatively sparse mixed med-large flints |          | FL          | C           | s    | r   | 1  |     | 3    |                  |               |
| F019     | 012      | pit       | BS        |       | preh   | One discoloured red   | flint    |             |             |      |     | 2  |     | 18   |                  |               |
| F019     | 012      | pit       | pot       | r     | preh   | Moderately thick sherds   |          | FL          | B           |      |     | 4  |     | 31   | LBA              |               |
| F020     | 013      | pit       | BS        |       | preh   | Unusually is white, part of a stone/small cobble                | S/Q      |             |             |      |     | 1  |     | 35   |                  |               |
| F020     | 013      | pit       | pot       | b     | preh   | Common s-m flint. Abraded                                       |          | FL          | B           |      | ox  | 1  |     | 35   | LBA              |               |
| F020     | 013      | pit       | pot       | b     | preh   |   |          | FL          | C           |      | ox  | 1  |     | 2    | LBA              |               |
| F021     | 010      | pit       | pot       | r     | preh   | Small bowl, simple rounded rim                                  |          | FL          | B           | s    | ox  | 1  |     | 14   | LBA              | BP 13.2       |
| F021     | 010      | pit       | pot       | b     | preh   | Misc moderately thick sherds                                    |          | FL          | C           |      | ox  | 12 |     | 168  | LBA              |               |
| F022     | 014      | pit       | BS        |       | preh   | One moderately large flint, one small                           | flint    |             |             |      |     | 2  |     | 128  |                  |               |
| F022     | 014      | pit       | pot       | r     | preh   | Large shouldered jar, two joining sherds, one other rim sherd   |          | FL          | C           |      | r   | 3  |     | 57   | LBA              | BP 13.3       |
| F022     | 014      | pit       | pot       | b     | preh   | Fine body sherd   |          | FL          | B           |      | r   | 1  |     | 12   | LBA              |               |
| F022     | 014      | pit       | pot       | b     | preh   | Misc sherds   |          | FL          | C           |      | ox  | 19 |     | 121  | LBA              |               |
| F022     | 014      | pit       | pot       | b     | preh   |   |          | FL          | C           |      | r   | 1  |     | 7    | LBA              |               |
| L002     | 001      | Sub soil  | flint     |       | preh   | Small tertiary flake  |          |             |             |      |     | 1  |     | 1    | preh             |               |
| L002     | 001      | Sub soil  | pot       | ba    | preh   | Sherds from a base with heavily gritted underside               |          | FL          | B           |      |     | 7  |     | 30   | LBA              |               |
| L002     | 001      | Sub soil  | pot       | b     | preh   | Sherds from a base with heavily gritted underside Fabric B/C    |          | FL          | B           | ox   |     | 13 |     | 55   | LBA              |               |
| L002     | 001      | Sub soil  | pot       | r     | p-med  | Joining sherds, part of handle on rim? Abradred                 |          |             | 40          |      |     | 2  |     | 30   | LBA              |               |

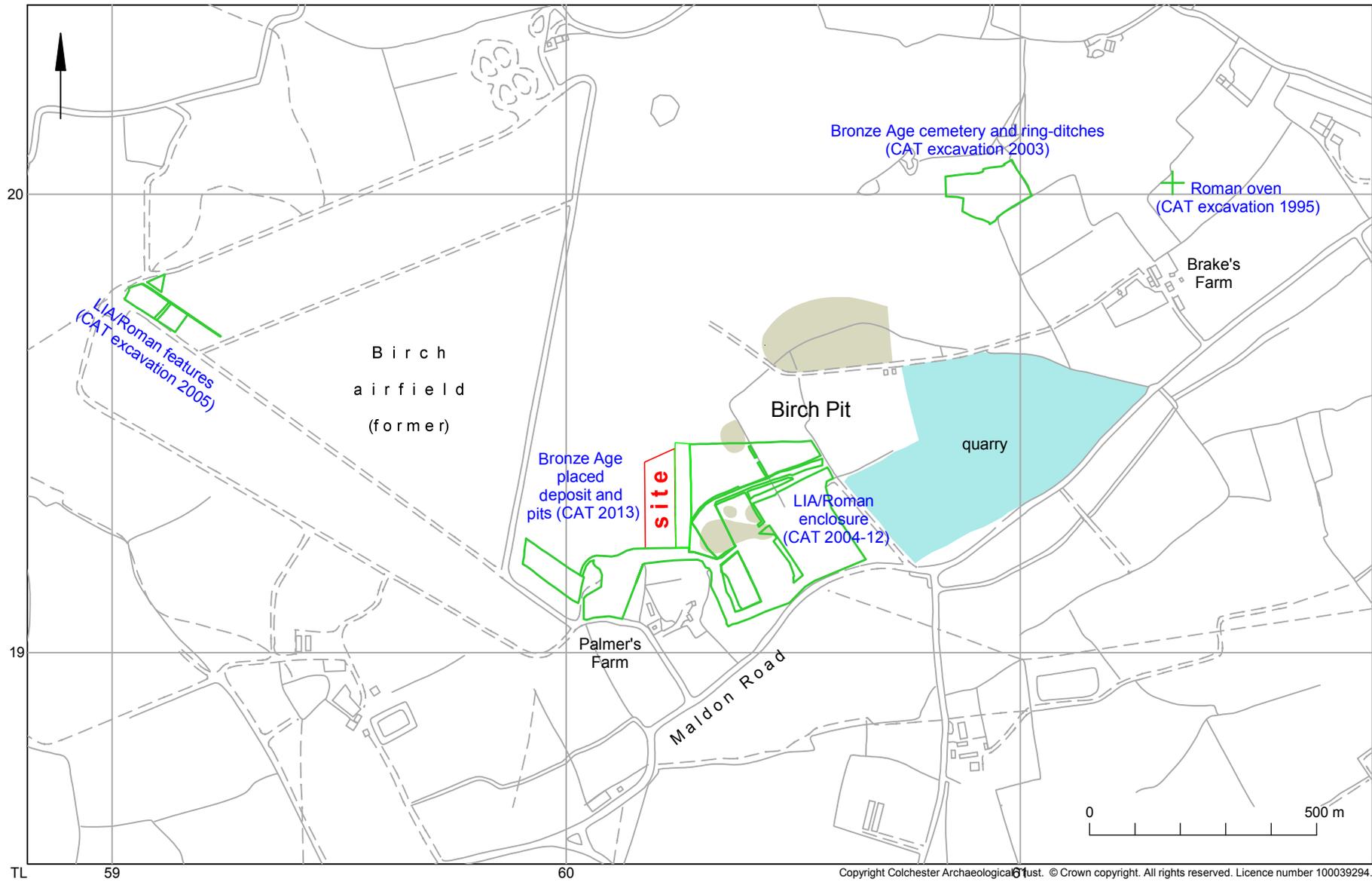


Fig 1 2013 Site location (red) showing previous excavations

concentrations of Roman surface finds

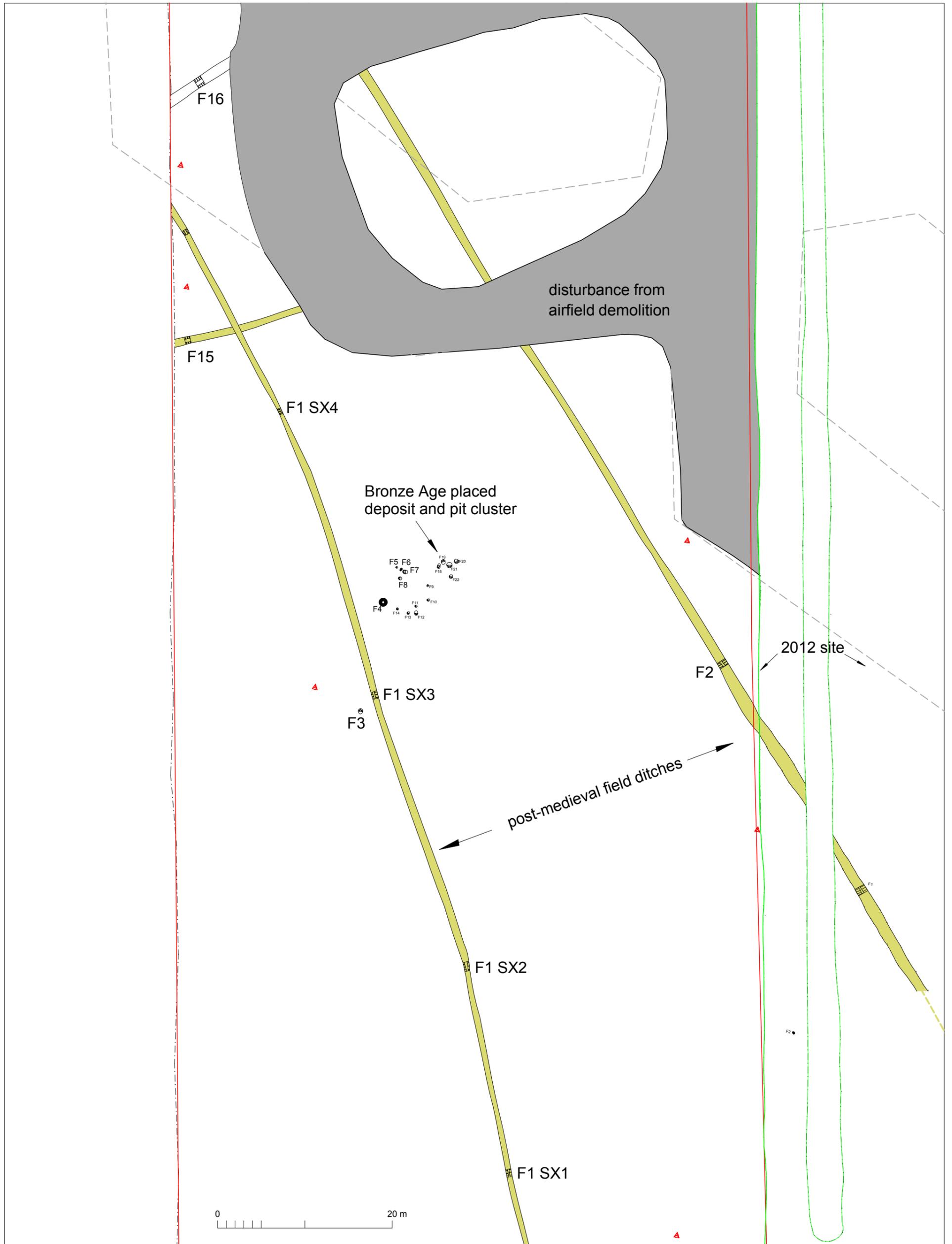


Fig 2 2013 extraction area (red line) showing features excavated in 2013. For detail of pit cluster, see Fig 2a

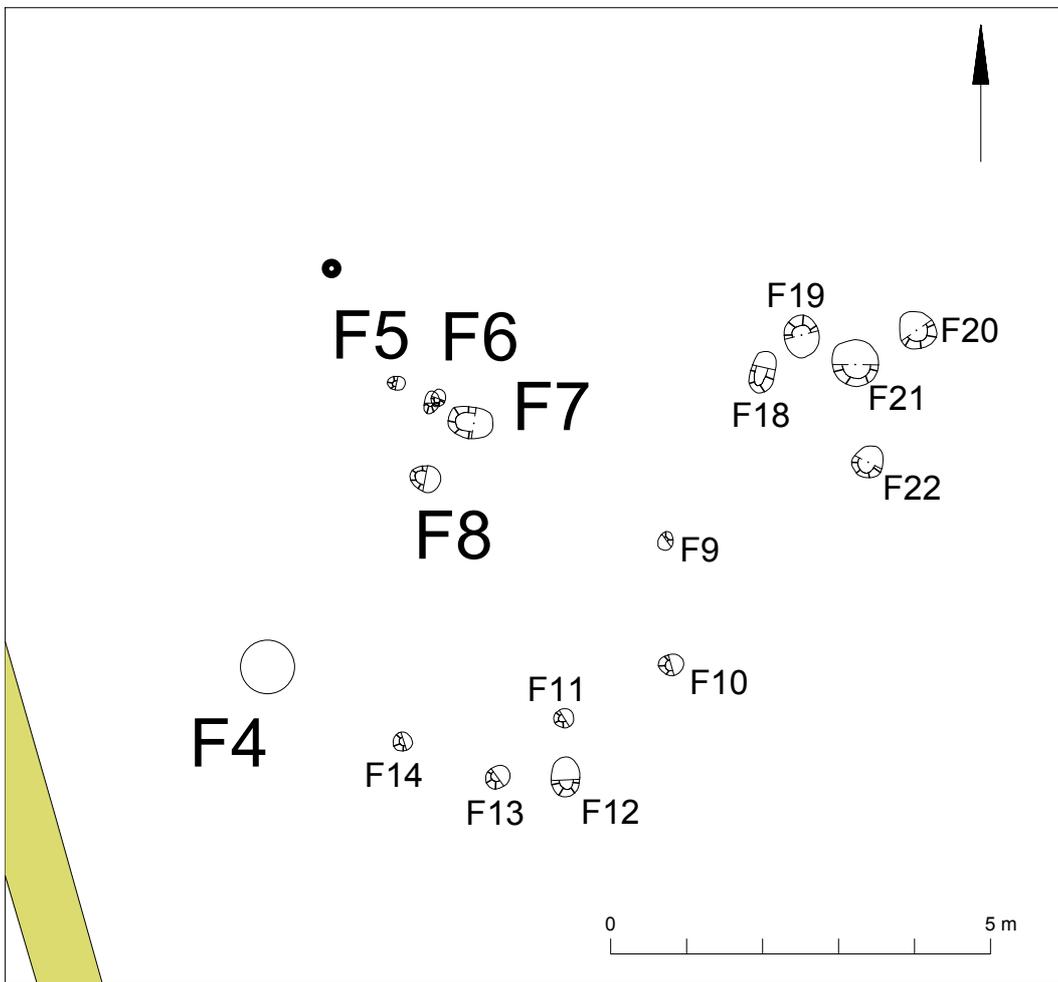
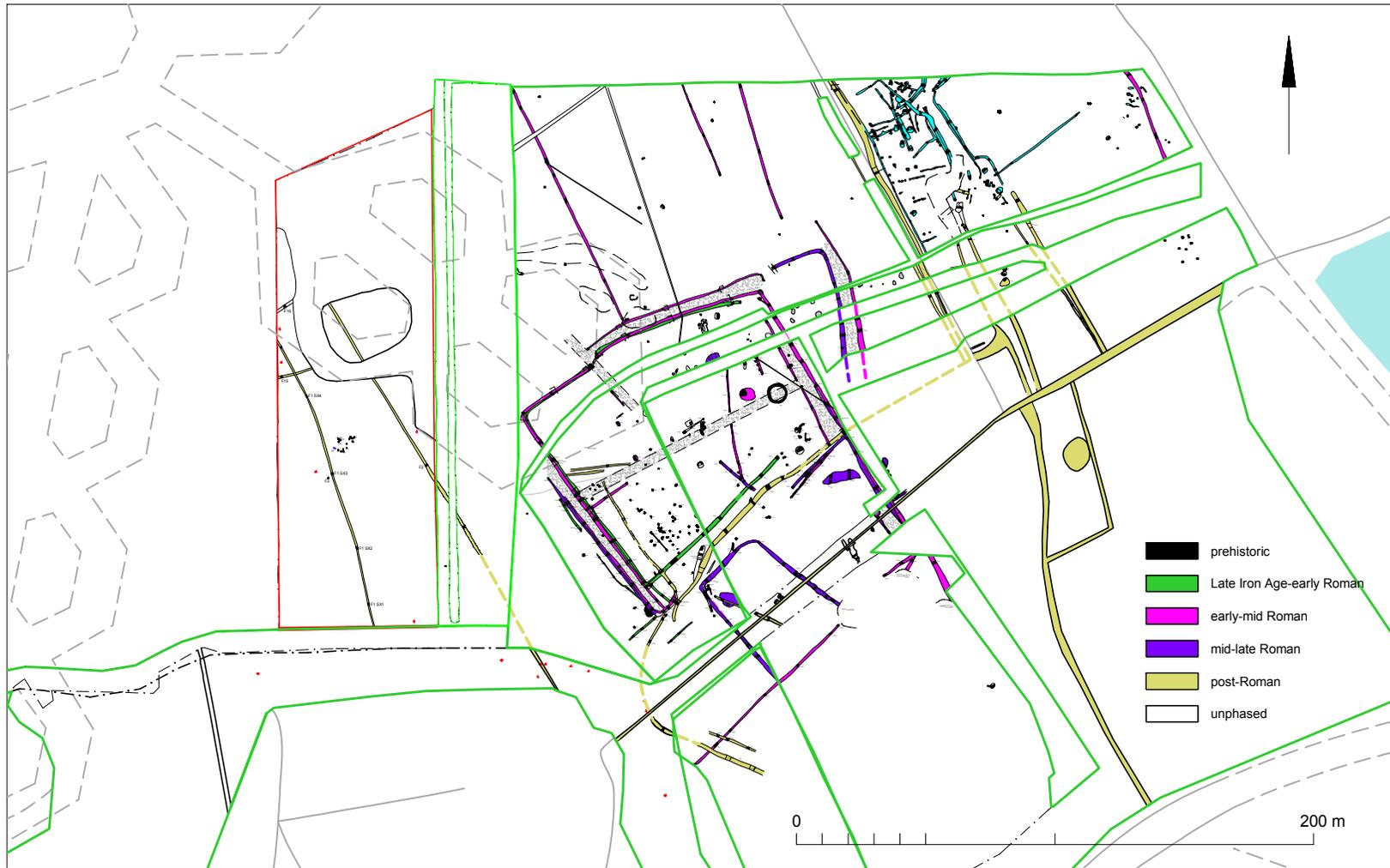


Fig 2a Detail of placed deposit F4 and pit/post-hole cluster F5-F14, F18-F22



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Fig 3 Overall plan of features recorded 2004-13 (2013 season - red line)

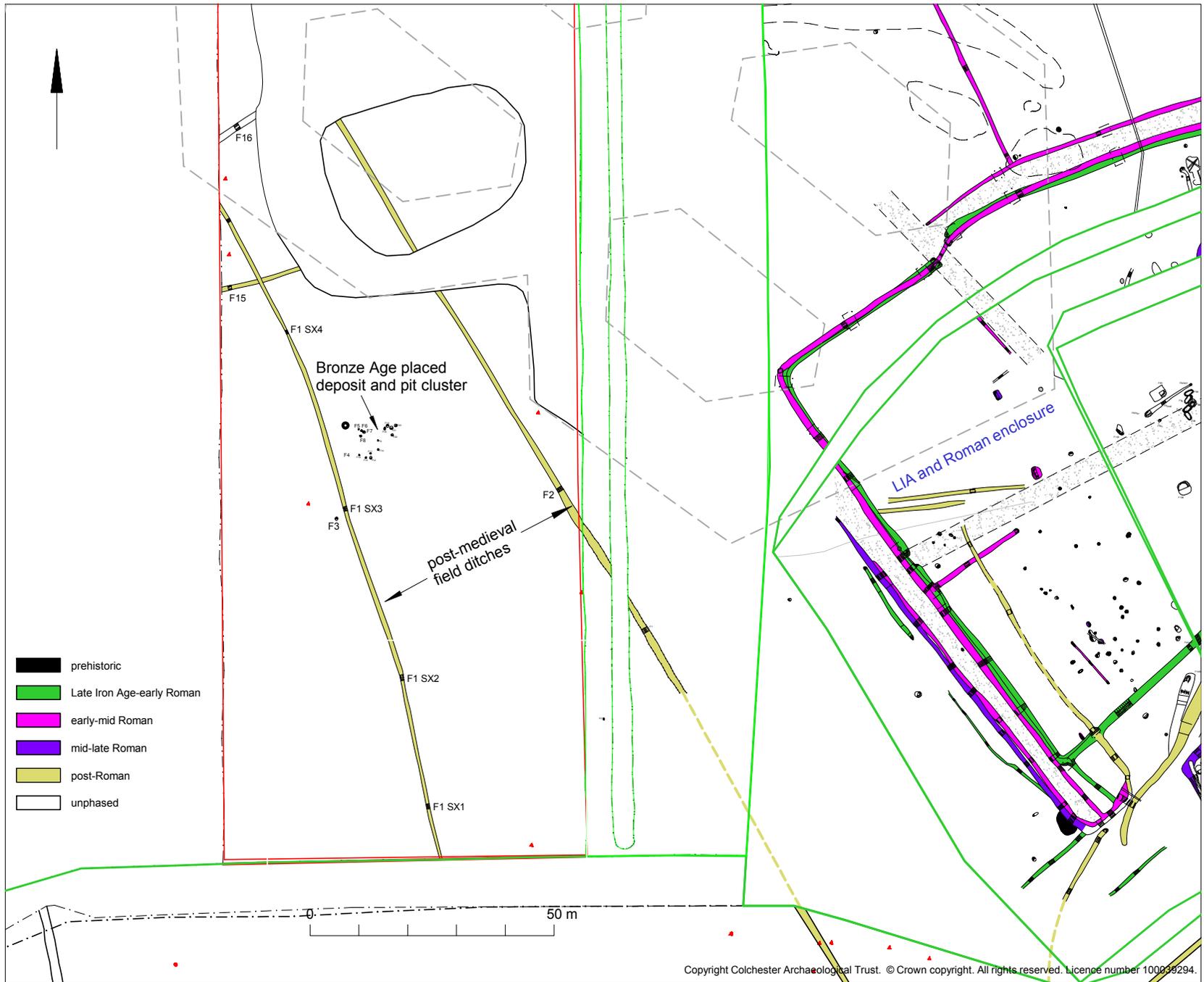


Fig 4 Phasing of 2013 features (red line) shown next to main Iron Age/Roman enclosure

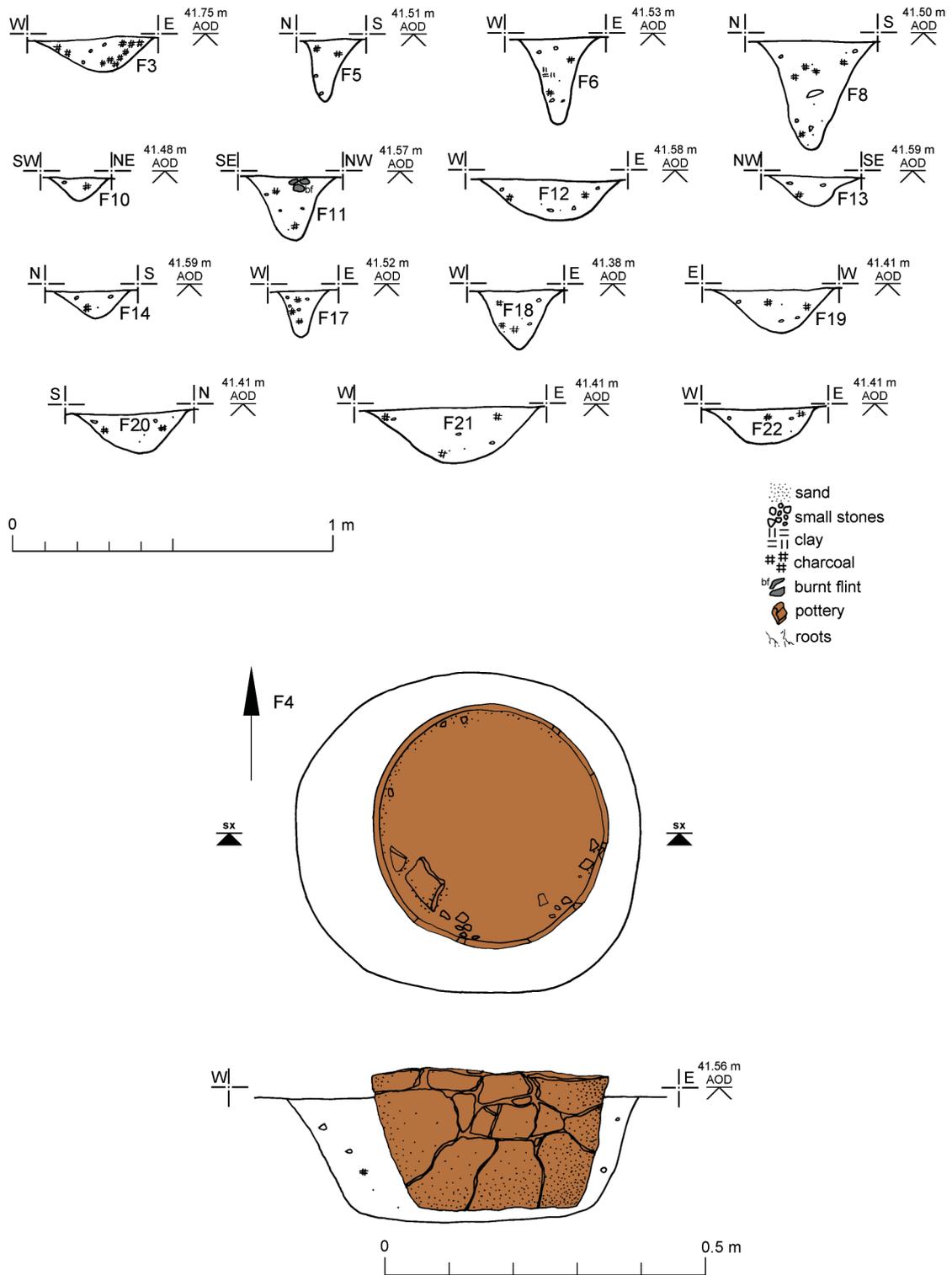


Fig 5 General feature sections (F3, F5-6, F8, F10-14 and F17-22) and placed deposit plan and section (F4).

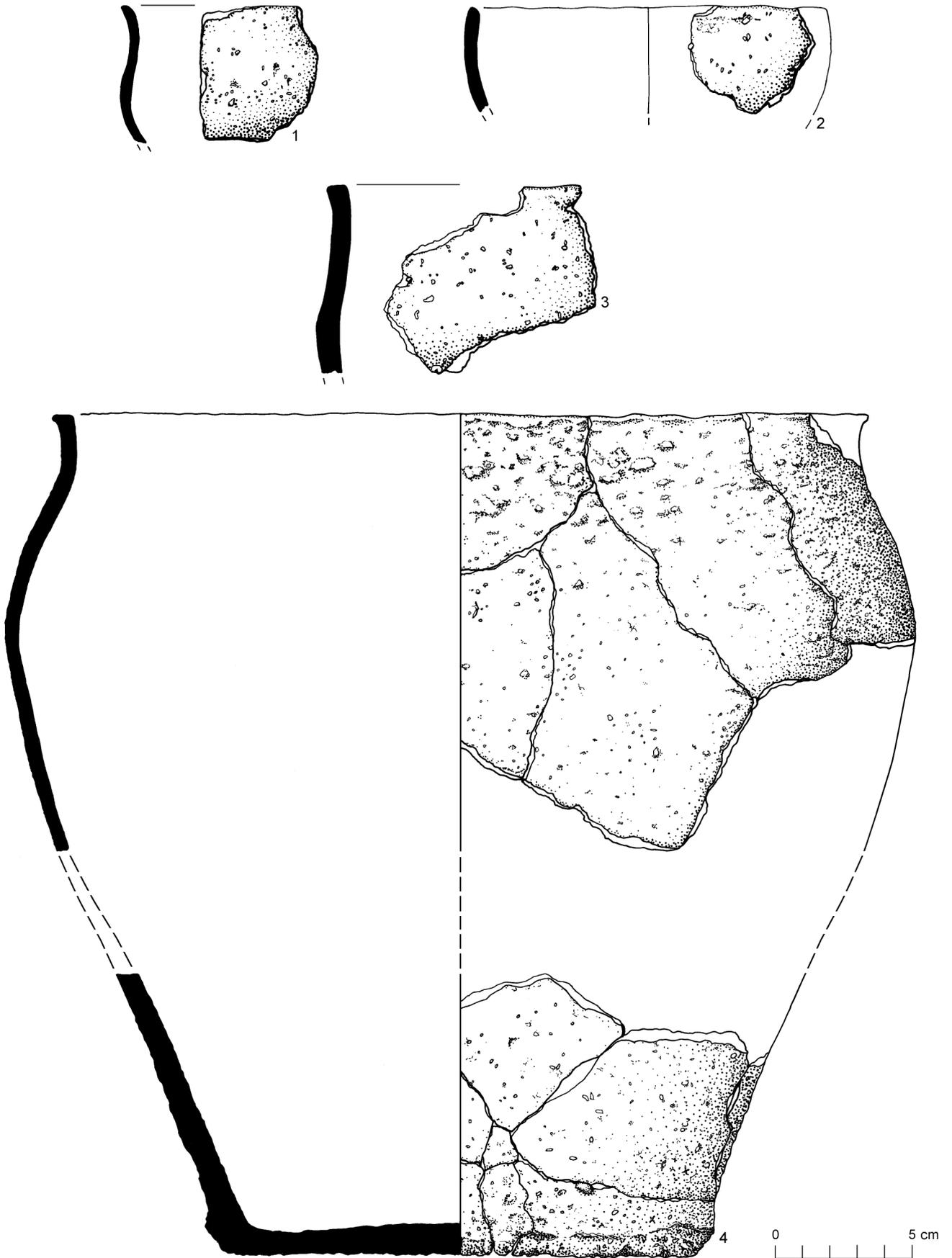


Fig 6 Pottery.

# Essex Historic Environment Record/ Essex Archaeology and History

## Summary sheet

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Address:</b> Birch Pit, Maldon Road, Birch, Essex   |   |
| <b>Parish:</b> Birch   | <b>District:</b> Colchester                                       |
| <b>NGR:</b> TL 9225 1935 (c)   | <b>Site codes:</b><br>CAT project code - 13/9a                    |
| <b>Type of work:</b><br>Monitoring and excavation  | <b>Site director/group:</b><br>Colchester Archaeological Trust    |
| <b>Date of work:</b><br>September 2013   | <b>Size of area investigated:</b><br>1.08 ha (open area)          |
| <b>Location of curating museum:</b><br>Colchester and Ipswich Museums<br>accession code 2014.20  | <b>Funding source:</b><br>Hansons Aggregates                      |
| <b>Further seasons anticipated?</b><br>Yes   | <b>Related EHER numbers:</b><br>11548, 11577, 11582 & 11924       |
| <b>Final report:</b>   | CAT Report 738  |
| <b>Periods represented:</b>  | prehistoric, post-medieval, modern                                |
| <p><b>Summary:</b><br/>Archaeological monitoring and excavation was carried out at Birch Pit in 2013 on behalf of Hanson Aggregates. The archaeological monitoring covered topsoil-stripping of the Stage 6 western extension, adjacent to the Stage 5 area excavated in 2012.</p> <p>There were twenty-two archaeological features. The significant remains included a 'placed deposit' (a Late Bronze Age jar without cremated bone) and seventeen pits and post-holes containing LBA sherds. Other features were mostly post-medieval field ditches which are shown extant on 19th-century Ordnance Survey maps.</p> <p>Much of the site had been disturbed by the construction and subsequent removal of a World War II airbase.</p> |   |
| <b>Previous summaries/reports:</b>   | CAT Report 383, CAT Report 485,<br>CAT Report 523, CAT Report 671 |
| <b>Monitored by:</b><br>Adrian Gascoyne, ECC Place Services  |   |
| <b>Keywords:</b> Bronze Age  | <b>Significance:</b> **   |
| <b>Author of summary:</b><br>Ben Holloway  | <b>Date of summary:</b><br>May 2014                               |