

# Archaeological evaluation on land south of Colchester Road, White Colne, Essex, CO6 2PP

June 2017



**by Mark Baister**

with contributions by Stephen Benfield  
figures by Mark Baister and Sarah Carter

fieldwork by Mark Baister with Ziya Eksen  
and Jane Roberts

**on behalf of  
Granville Developments**

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Planning reference: BTE/2124/16  
CAT project ref.: 17/05I  
ECC project code: WCCR17  
OASIS reference: colchest3-285841



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**CAT Report 1114**  
June 2017

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OASIS Summary sheet

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## 1 Summary

*An archaeological evaluation (five trial-trenches) was carried out on land south of Colchester Road, White Colne in advance of a planned housing development. One 13th-14th century boundary ditch was uncovered, possibly delineating a roadside plot. All remaining features were modern or undated but most contained several sherds of residual 13th-14th century pottery, suggesting nearby activity in that time period.*

## 2 Introduction (Fig 1)

This report presents the results of an archaeological evaluation on land south of Colchester Road, Wakes Colne, Braintree, Essex which was carried out on 8th-9th June 2017. The work was commissioned by Granville Developments, in advance of the construction of eight new dwellings and associated garages, and was undertaken by Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT).

In response to consultation with Braintree District Council, Essex County Council (ECC) Historic Environment Advisor (HEA) advised that in order to establish the archaeological implications of this application, the applicant should be required to commission a scheme of archaeological investigation in accordance with paragraphs 128, 129 and 132 of the *National Planning Policy Framework* (DCLG 2012).

All archaeological work was carried out in accordance with a *Brief for archaeological trial trenching and geo archaeological assessment on land South of Colchester Road, White Colne*, detailing the required archaeological work, written by the HEA (ECC 2017), and a written scheme of investigation (WSI) prepared by CAT in response to the brief and agreed with the HEA (CAT 2017).

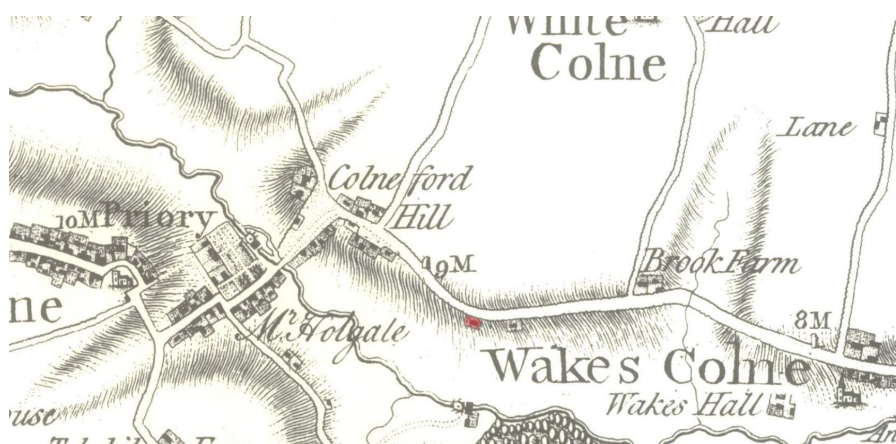
In addition to the brief and WSI, all fieldwork and reporting was done in accordance with English Heritage's *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE)* (Historic England 2015), and with *Standards for field archaeology in the East of England* (EAA 14 and 24). This report mirrors standards and practices contained in the Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and guidance for archaeological evaluation* (ClfA 2014a), *Standard and guidance for the creation, compilation, transfer and deposition of archaeological archives* (ClfA 2014b) and *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (ClfA 2014c).

## 3 Archaeological background

The following archaeological background draws on the Essex Historic Environment Record (EHER) held at Essex County Council, County Hall, Chelmsford, Essex.

The EHER shows that the development site is located on the outskirts of the medieval town of Earls Colne along a major historic route. The Chapman and André map of 1777 (Map 1) shows two dwellings within the immediate vicinity of the site, one of which is a still extant thatched cottage (NHLE no 1123177), the other of which is no longer standing and may have stood within or nearby the development site.

To the south of the site gravel extraction has uncovered abundant and significant prehistoric finds including Mesolithic and Neolithic flint assemblages and bones (EHER 8628, 8704-5, 8775), and 25-26 Bronze Age urns containing cremations (EHER 8627). A single Upper Palaeolithic lithic tool was also recovered from the White Colne Gravel Pit above significant Pleistocene faunal remains.



**Map 1** Chapman and André map from 1777. Dwelling that may have stood within the development site highlighted red.

#### **4 Results** (Figs 2-4)

Five trial-trenches were mechanically excavated under the supervision of a CAT archaeologist.

##### **Trench 1 (T1): 20m long by 1.8m wide**

Trench T1 was excavated through a layer of modern topsoil (L1, c 400mm thick), sealing natural clay to the north-west and loamy sand to the south-east (both L2). The trench contained east/west aligned modern ditch F6 (containing residual 13th-14th century pottery), with a V-shaped profile and rounded base. Also present in the trench was a north/south aligned shallow modern linear, F2 (which again contained residual 13th-14th century pottery).



**Photograph 1** F6 in T1. Photograph taken facing west.

##### **Trench 2 (T2): 24m long by 1.8m wide**

Trench 2 was excavated through a layer of modern topsoil (L1, c 310mm thick) which sealed natural clayey-loam and gravels (L2), which in turn sealed a thick layer of natural clay (L3).

A sondage was excavated by machine towards the northern end of T2 in order to ascertain if the gravels in this trench were part of the geoarchaeologically significant river gravels detailed in the Archaeological background above. It was determined that the gravels were glacial in origin and of no archaeological interest.

The trench contained shallow two east/west aligned linears. The southern-most one (F3), contained small fragments of peg-tile and slag and probably dates to the post-medieval period (see Finds below). The northern-most linear (F5) contained no dating evidence.

Between these two linears in the centre of the trench was a very shallow and heavily truncated pit (F4), which contained a large quantity of finds, considering its depth (50mm). The pottery recovered was 13th-14th century in date, similar to F1 in T4, but much more abraded.



**Photograph 2** F4 in T2.  
Photograph taken facing south-west.

**Trench 3 (T3): 20m long by 1.8m wide**

Trench T3 was excavated through a layer of modern topsoil (L1, c 370mm thick) which sealed loamy sandy clay (L2).

Two land drains were observed in this trench, aligned east-west. No features were present.

**Trench 4 (T4): 25m long by 1.8m wide**

Trench T4 was excavated through a layer of modern topsoil (L1, c 230mm thick) which sealed a dark loamy sand to the west of the trench and a mottled sandy clay to the east (both L2).

The trench contained a large north-west/south-east aligned medieval ditch F1 (containing 13th-14th century pottery), with a U-shaped profile and a flat base.



**Photograph 3** F1 sx1 in T4. Photograph taken facing south-east.

#### **Trench 5 (T5): 20m long by 1.8m wide**

Trench T5 was excavated through a layer of modern topsoil (L1, c 360mm thick) which sealed a dark loamy sandy clay (L2).

Three land drains were observed in this trench, aligned east-west. No features were present.

## **5 Finds**

*by Stephen Benfield*

### **Introduction**

A moderate quantity of finds dated to the medieval, post-medieval & modern periods was recovered during the evaluation. These come from the fill of several cut features (F1, F2, F3, F4 & F6). The finds consist of pottery, ceramic building material (CBM), vessel glass, iron pieces and slag. All of the finds are catalogued in Table 2. The pottery fabrics used in the report refer to the Essex post-Roman fabric series following **CAR 7** and are listed in Table 1.

<b>Fabric</b>	<b>Fabric description</b>
20	Medieval sandy greyware (general)
40	Post-medieval red earthenware
40B	Stock-type black glazed ware
45M	Modern stoneware
48E	Yellow ware
48D	Staffordshire-type white earthenwares

Table 1 Pottery fabrics

<b>Ctxt</b>	<b>Ctxt type</b>	<b>Find no</b>	<b>Type/ description</b>	<b>Finds Spot date</b>
F001 (sx1)	Ditch (Upper fill)	3	<b>Pottery medieval</b> Fabric 20 (7 sherds, 38 g) body sherds, mostly greyware, one with black surface, all slightly abraded (c 13-14C). <b>CBM</b> (1 pieces, 32 g) abraded piece of peg-tile, 12-13 mm thick, in sandy orange fabric, broadly medieval-post-medieval probably dating to the late 13th-14th century or later. <b>Other: modern</b> iron angle bracket with attachment probably from a shelving unit (386 g) – L19th-20th C	Prob circa 14th C finds with a large piece of modern (L19-20C) ironwork (intrusive?)

Ctxt	Ctxt type	Find no	Type/ description	Finds Spot date
F001 (sx1)	Ditch (Lower fill)	4	<b>Pottery medieval</b> Fabric 21 (1 sherd, 66 g) base of oval section handle from a jug, oxidised surface light grey fabric core to handle, small medial row of stab impressions (circa 13th-14th C)	circa 13th-14th C
F001 (sx2)	Ditch (mid-Lower fill)	2	<b>Pottery medieval</b> Fabric 20 (4 sherds, 22 g) small body sherds slightly abraded, inc one abraded sandy buff, some sooting to external surfaces of a couple of the grey sherds (c 13th-14th C); Fabric 21 (1 sherd, 4 g) abraded sandy orange fabric with traces of slight ridges on surface (c 13th-14th C). <b>Slag</b> (21 pieces, 874 g) irregular, nondescript, grey coloured, slightly vesicular slag; pieces range from 70 mm x 60 mm to small pieces, some tending toward flat overall shape (ie thinner than breadth or width) but includes irregular lumps <b>Other:</b> small lump of sandy ferrous material, in part at least cemented sand possibly from contact with an iron object	circa 13th-14th C
F001 (sx2)	Ditch (Lower fill)	1	<b>Pottery medieval</b> Fabric 20 (2 sherds, 12 g) one sherd slightly sandier with orange oxidised surface (c 12th/13th-14th C) and abraded, other sherd grey with red-brown fabric core (c 13 <sup>th</sup> -14 <sup>th</sup> C). <b>Slag</b> (1 piece, 10 g) small piece of nondescript dark grey slag	circa 13th-14th C
F002	Linear feature (mid fill)	5	<b>Pottery medieval</b> Fabric 20 (1 sherd, 10 g) abraded (c 13-14C) <b>Pottery modern</b> Fabric 45M (1 sherd, 16 g) 18-19/E20C; Fabric 48E (1 sherd, 8 g) blue mocha design (L18th-19th/E20th C). <b>Glass</b> (2 sherds, 6 g) small rim fragments from a bottle in dark green glass (probably L18/19th-E20th C). <b>CBM</b> (2 pieces, 74 g) piece from a brick and second small brick(?) fragment (pots-medieval-early modern). <b>Other:</b> small piece of corroded iron (24 g)	L18th/19th-E20th C
F003	Linear feature (upper/mid fill)	6	<b>CBM</b> (3 pieces, 10 g) small peg tile pieces/ fragments, very broken-up and abraded (probably residual or with a significant history prior to deposition). <b>Slag</b> (2 pieces 1 g) two very small pieces/ fragments of dark slag/ cinder pieces	late-medieval-post-medieval+
F004	Pit?	7	<b>Pottery medieval</b> Fabric 20 (7 sherd, 24 g) abraded small sherds (probably residual or with a significant history prior to deposition) inc abraded sandy buff sherds probably from a cooking pot base edge (circa 13th-14th C). <b>CBM</b> peg-tile (2 pieces, 56 g) thick tile piece up to 16 mm thick, orange margins with grey core one other small piece; Other fragments of CBM (11 pieces, 40 g) brick/tile pieces, very broken-up and abraded (probably residual or with a significant history prior to deposition)	circa 13th/14-14th C (probably old or residual in context)
F006	Ditch (upper fill)	8	<b>Pottery medieval</b> Fabric 20 (1 sherd, 4 g, grey body sherd with dark grey surfaces (c 13 <sup>th</sup> -14th C), also Fabric 20 (1 sherd, 32 g) rim from a neckless cooking pot with flat top rim, orange fabric with grey surface, abraded – prob late medieval (L13th/14th-14 C). <b>Pottery post-medieval &amp; modern</b> Fabric 40 (6 sherds, 128 g)	circa M/L18th-19th C

Ctxt	Ctxt type	Find no	Type/ description	Finds Spot date
			<p>one sherd (rim from a bowl) prob c 17th-18th C, other sherds poss later c L17-M19C; Fabric 40B (1 sherd, 4 g) c 17-18C; Fabric 45 (1 sherd, 10 g) probably modern stone ware c18th-19th C; Fabric 48D (2 sherds, 94 g) inc plain creamware-type dish (M/L18th-19th/E20 C).</p> <p><b>CBM</b> Peg-tile (2 pieces, 124 g) about 9 mm-10 mm thick, probably post-medieval; Brick (1 piece, 1152 g) half of a brick, 105 mm x 45 mm, brownish orange fabric with dark grey-brown surfaces, probably c 16th-17th century and prob not later than E18th century</p> <p><b>Other:</b>  <b>Iron pieces</b> – Corroded flat pieces of iron strip (3 pieces, 38 g), small rounded bar-like piece or nail shaft (1 piece, 16 g).  <b>Natural</b> - small flint, almost 100% cortex (dorsal face), dull ventral face, natural, possibly a frost removal.</p>	
F006	Ditch (Lower fill)	9	<p><b>Pottery post-medieval &amp; modern</b> Fabric 40 (2 sherds, 40 g) rim from a deep bowl, late-type fabric c L17th-M19th C; Fabric 45M (3 sherds, 58 g) rim from a bowl &amp; base from a second pot (L18th/19th-E20th C); Fabric 47 (1 sherd, 12 g) rim edge from a dish with combed bead (c 18th-18th/19th C).</p> <p><b>CBM</b> Peg-tile (2 pieces, 80 g) both 12 mm thick, orange-red coloured, one less sandy a refined looking fabric (post-medieval). Brick/tile (184 g) buff-cream fabric with some red streaks, small piece from the edge of the brick (c 35 mm thick) abraded, probably part of a floor tile (probably post-medieval)</p>	L18-19/E20C

Table 2 Finds by context

### Finds discussion

Medieval coarseware pottery sherds, broadly dated to the period of the 13th-14th century, are associated with both sections cut through the ditch F1. The pottery consists of relatively small or small-medium size sherds, apart from one medium-large sherd from the handle of a jug which is naturally more robust than the others, and may have come from a midden and represent manure scatter. An abraded piece of peg tile from the upper fill of one section could indicate a date in the 14th century or later as peg-tiles are not generally common prior to the 14th century in Essex (Ryan & Andrews 1993). However, a large piece of modern ironwork came from the same fill as the peg-tile (F1 sx 1 (3) upper fill) suggests there is intrusive material in this context. As no tile was recovered from the other excavated ditch fill this could allow a date in the 13th or early 14th century prior to the common availability of peg-tiles. A quantity of nondescript slag was also recovered from the fill of this ditch, from F1 sx2 (2). This possibly represents smithing debris.

Similar dated medieval pottery and pieces of CBM were recovered from the pit F4, but these are even smaller and generally more abraded than that from the ditch F1 suggesting they are residual or have a significant history prior to being deposited in this context.

Most of the medieval pottery recovered consists of plain body sherds. With regards to vessel form the only recognisable pieces are a handle from a jug from F1 sx1 (94), part of the base edge of what is probably a cooking pot from F4 (7) and a rim sherd that appears to be from a neckless cooking pot from F6 (8) - although this latter piece



appears to be in a fabric similar to Colchester-type ware with a sandy orange fabric a dark (grey) surface.

A small quantity of material recovered from from linear feature F3, consisting of small pieces of peg-tile and slag/cinder, does not include any finds that need date to the post-medieval or modern period. However, the finds themselves are probably not sufficient to closely date the feature. Also, the composition of the slag appears dissimilar to that recovered from ditch F1 and could be pieces of hearth cinder.

Finds from the linear feature F2 and ditch F6 include post-medieval pottery and CBM as well as sherds from modern factory made wares dating to the late 18th/19th-early 20th century. The fill of these features is clearly of relatively modern date.

It can be noted that absence of any animal bone from the features might indicate that bone is poorly preserved in soils here.

## 6 Discussion

The most significant feature uncovered during the evaluation at White Colne was F1, a large 13th-14th century ditch in T4 (Photograph 3). Although its alignment suggested it would be observed in T2, it wasn't, suggesting that it must turn (or end) quite abruptly.

One possible interpretation of this ditch is as the boundary of a roadside plot alongside Colchester Road (Fig 2). It is possible this may relate to the dwelling visible on the Chapman and André map (Map 1) although, given the map's date of 1777, this could mean the 13th-14th century pottery recovered from the ditch is residual.

The only other feature of interest was the shallow truncated pit F4 containing, as it did, an assemblage of pottery sherds similar in date to those recovered from F1. However, the small size and abraded nature of these sherds suggest they too could be residual, and that this feature is more recent.

Ditches F2 and F6 in T1 are both definitely modern, but, again, each one contains some residual pottery of a 13th-14th century date.

This constant appearance of abraded 13th-14th century pottery, even in modern features, suggests that there was a centre of activity near this site in the late medieval period. The pottery could have ended up in these later features as a result of manure scatter on fields, although it should be noted that no finds were observed during the machining of the topsoil.

Whether the activity represented by these abraded pottery sherds is the medieval town of Earls Colne immediately to the west or a farmstead or dwelling in closer proximity (perhaps succeeded by the building shown on the Chapman and André Map) is uncertain.

## 7 Acknowledgements

CAT thanks Granville Developments for commissioning and funding the work. The project was managed by C Lister and carried out by M Baister with Z Eksen and J Roberts. Figures were prepared by M Baister and S Carter. The project was monitored for the ECC by Teresa O'Connor.

## 8 References

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

CAT	2017	<i>Health &amp; Safety Policy</i>
CAT	2017	<i>Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for archaeological evaluation and geoarchaeological assessment on land south of Colchester Road, White Colne, Essex, CO6 2PP</i>
CAR 7	2000	<i>John Cotter, Post-Roman pottery from excavations in Colchester 1971-85, Colchester Archaeological Report 7</i>
ECC	2016	<i>Brief for archaeological trial trenching and geo archaeological assessment on land South of Colchester Road, White Colne by T O'Connor</i>
CIfA	2014a	<i>Standard and Guidance for an archaeological evaluation</i>
CIfA	2014b	<i>Standard and guidance for the creation, compilation, transfer and deposition of archaeological archives</i>
CIfA	2014c	<i>Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials</i>
DCLG	2012	<i>National Planning Policy Framework</i>
Gurney, D	2003	<i>Standards for field archaeology in the East of England. East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Papers 14 (EAA 14).</i>
Historic England	2015	<i>Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE)</i>
Medlycott, M	2011	<i>Research and archaeology revisited: A revised framework for the East of England. East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Papers 24 (EAA 24)</i>
Ryan, P., & Andrews, D.	1993	<i>'A Brick and tile typology for Cressing Temple' in Andrews, D., Cressing Temple. A Templar and Hospitaller manor in Essex, 93-103</i>

## 9 Abbreviations and glossary

CAT	Colchester Archaeological Trust
CBM	ceramic building material, ie brick/tile
CIfA	Chartered Institute for Archaeologists
context	specific location of finds on an archaeological site
ECC	Essex County Council
EHHER	Essex Historic Environment Record
feature (F)	an identifiable thing like a pit, a wall, a drain: can contain 'contexts'
HEA	Historic Environment Advisor
layer (L)	distinct or distinguishable deposit (layer) of material
medieval	period from AD 1066 to c 1500
modern	period from c AD 1800 to the present
natural	geological deposit undisturbed by human activity
NGR	National Grid Reference
OASIS	<b>O</b> nline <b>A</b> ccess to the Index of Archaeological Investigation <b>S</b> , <a href="http://oasis.ac.uk/pages/wiki/Main">http://oasis.ac.uk/pages/wiki/Main</a>
post-medieval	from c AD 1500 to c AD 1800
residual	something out of its original context, eg a Roman coin in a modern pit
Roman	the period from AD 43 to c AD 410
section	(abbreviation sx or Sx) vertical slice through feature/s or layer/s
WSI	<b>W</b> ritten <b>S</b> cheme of Investigation

## **10 Contents of archive**

**Finds:** none retained

### **Paper and digital record**

One A4 document wallet containing:

The report (CAT Report 1114)

ECC evaluation brief, CAT written scheme of investigation

Original site record (feature and layer sheets, finds record, plans)

Site digital photos and log, architectural plans, attendance register, risk assessment

## **11 Archive deposition**

The paper and digital archive is currently held by the Colchester Archaeological Trust at Roman Circus House, Roman Circus Walk, Colchester, Essex, CO2 7GZ, but will be permanently deposited with Braintree Museum (an accession code has been requested).

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**Distribution list**

Granville Developments

Teresa O'Connor, Historic Environment Advisor Essex County Council  
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Checked by: Philip Crummy

Date: 15.06.2017

## Appendix 1 Context list

Context number	Finds no.	Context type	Description	Date
F1	1, 2, 3 & 4	Ditch	Firm, dry, medium-dark grey/brown clayey-silt with occasional stones	Medieval 13th-14th century
F2	5	Ditch	Firm, dry, medium grey/brown clayey-silt	19th – early 20th century
F3	6	Shallow linear	Firm, dry, medium grey/brown clayey-silt	Post-medieval
F4	7	Heavily truncated pit?	Firm, dry, medium grey/brown clayey-silt	Medieval 13th-14th century? (small abraded sherds of pot – probably residual)
F5		Shallow linear	Firm, dry, medium grey/brown clayey-silt	undated
F6	8 & 9	Ditch	Friable, dry, medium grey/brown loamy clay silt	19th – early 20th century
L1		Topsoil/ploughsoil	Loose, dry, dark brown sandy-silt	Modern
L2		Natural	Firm, dry, medium yellow/orange sandy loam with occasional stones and manganese	Post-glacial
L3		Natural clay	Firm, dry, light yellow/orange clay sealed by L2 in T2	Post-glacial

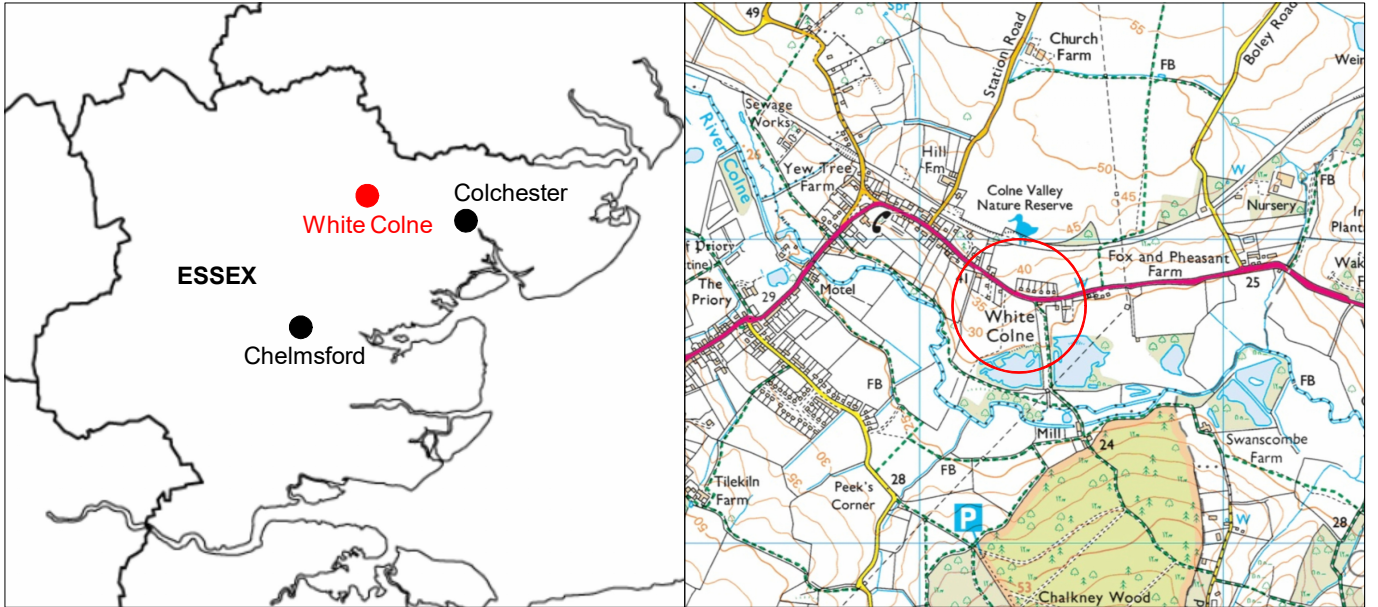
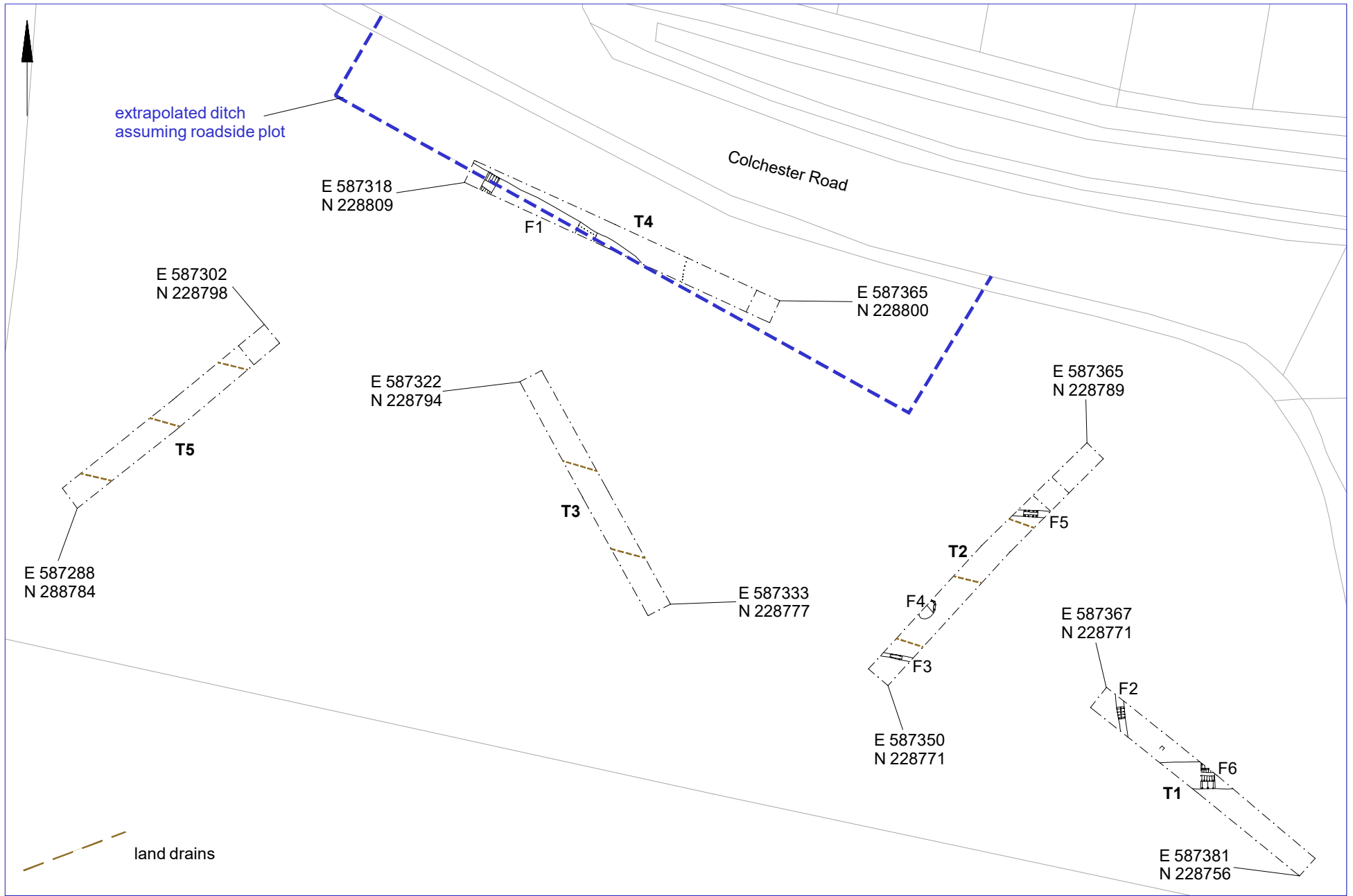


Fig 1 Site location.



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Fig 2 Detailed plan of evaluation results, with NGR trench co-ordinates.



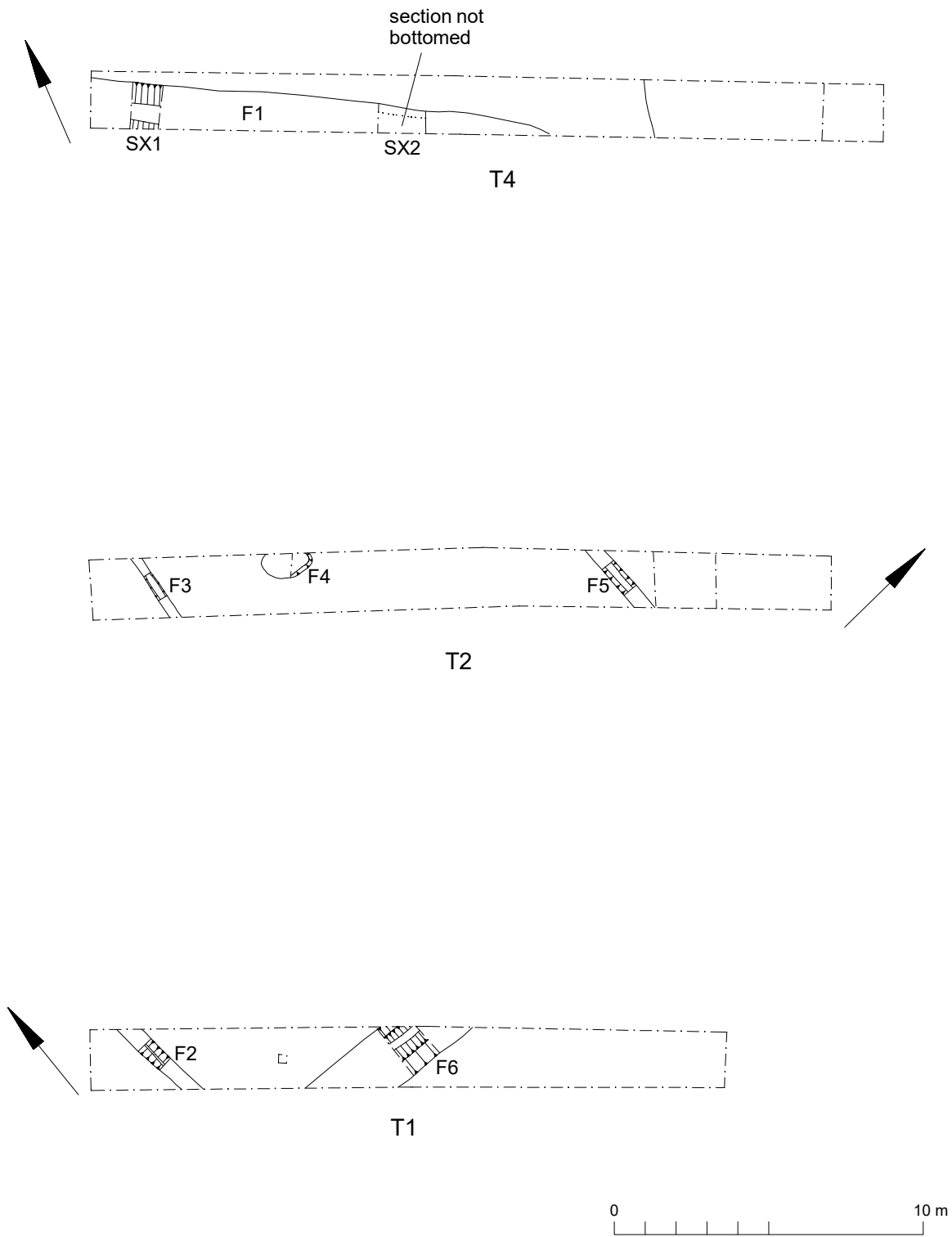


Fig 3 Detailed trench plans of T1, T2 and T4.



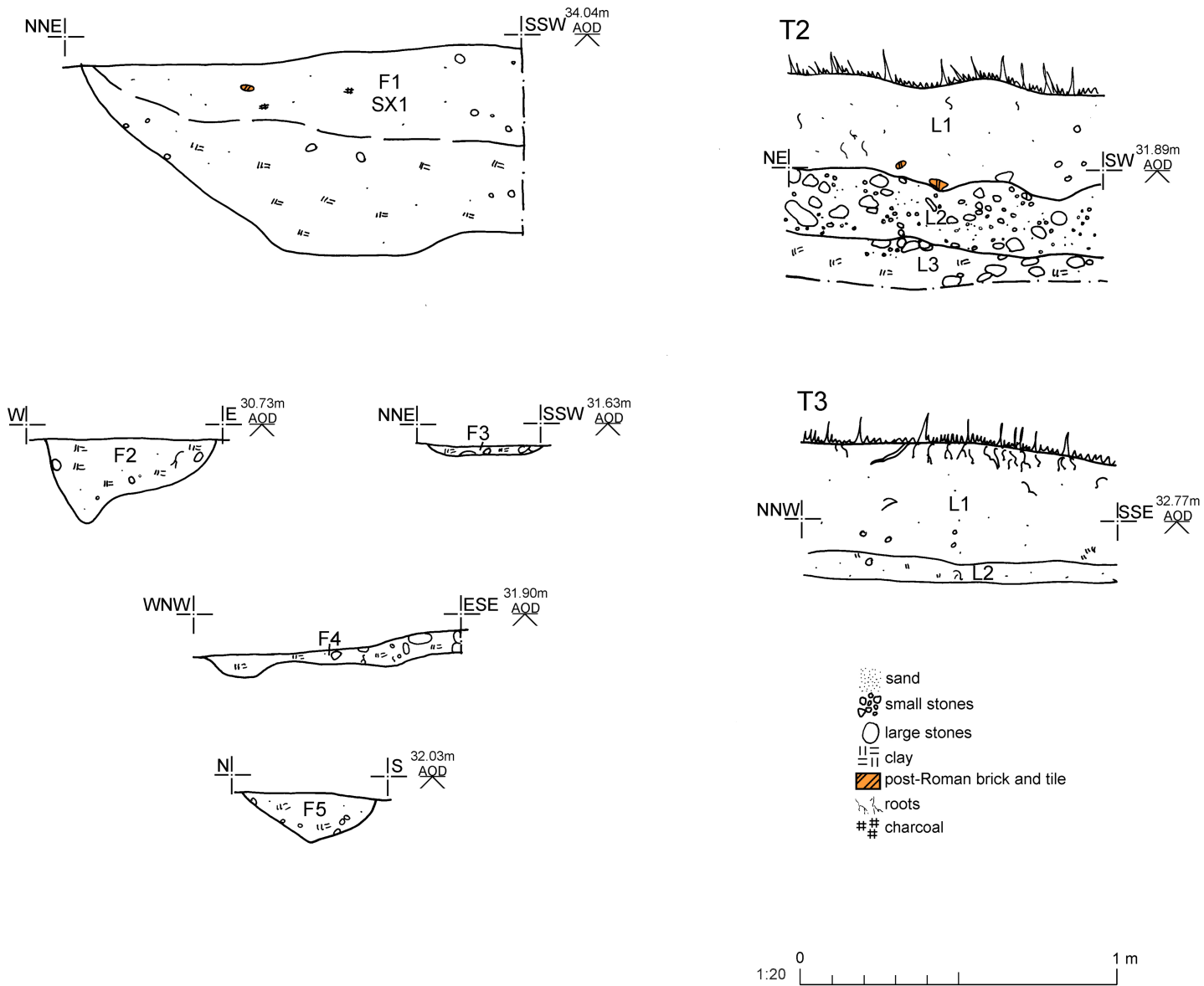


Fig 4 Feature and representative sections

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## Printable version

**OASIS ID: colchest3-285841**

### Project details

Project name	Archaeological evaluation on land south of Colchester Road, White Colne, Essex, CO6 2PP
Short description of the project	An archaeological evaluation (five trial-trenches) was carried out on land south of Colchester Road, White Colne in advance of a planned housing development. One 13th-14th century boundary ditch was uncovered, possibly delineating a roadside plot. All remaining features were modern or undated but most contained several sherds of residual 13th-14th century pottery, suggesting nearby activity in that time period.
Project dates	Start: 08-06-2017 End: 15-06-2017
Previous/future work	No / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	17/05I - Contracting Unit No.
Any associated project reference codes	BTE/2124/16 - Planning Application No.
Any associated project reference codes	WCCR17 - HER event no.
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	None
Current Land use	Cultivated Land 4 - Character Undetermined
Monument type	BOUNDARY DITCH Medieval
Monument type	BOUNDARY DITCH Modern
Significant Finds	POT Medieval
Methods & techniques	"Test Pits","Sample Trenches"
Development type	Rural residential
Prompt	Planning condition
Position in the planning process	Not known / Not recorded

### Project location

Country England

Site location	ESSEX BRAINTREE WHITE COLNE land south of Colchester Road
Postcode	CO6 2PP
Study area	4994 Square metres
Site coordinates	TL 87332 28789 51.925549422124 0.724772218694 51 55 31 N 000 43 29 E Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 0.31m Max: 0.4m

### Project creators

Name of Organisation	Colchester Archaeological Trust
Project brief originator	HEM Team Officer, ECC
Project design originator	Laura Pooley
Project director/manager	Chris Lister
Project supervisor	Mark Baister
Type of sponsor/funding body	Developer

### Project archives

Physical Archive recipient	Braintree Museum
Physical Contents	"Ceramics"
Digital Archive recipient	Braintree Museum
Digital Contents	"Survey", "other"
Digital Media available	"Images raster / digital photography", "Survey", "Text"
Paper Archive recipient	Braintree Museum
Paper Contents	"Survey"
Paper Media available	"Context sheet", "Correspondence", "Diary", "Miscellaneous Material", "Notebook - Excavation", "Research", "General Notes", "Photograph", "Plan", "Report", "Section", "Survey "

### Project bibliography 1

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	Archaeological evaluation on land south of Colchester Road, White Colne, Essex, CO6 2PP June 2017
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Baister, M.
Other bibliographic details	CAT Report 1114
Date	2017
Issuer or publisher	Colchester Archaeological Trust

Place of issue or publication	Colchester
Description	A4 bound report with clear plastic front and black back.
URL	<a href="http://cat.essex.ac.uk/summaries/CAT-1114.html">http://cat.essex.ac.uk/summaries/CAT-1114.html</a>
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