

Archaeological excavation on land east of The Rest, Southminster Road, Asheldham, Essex, CM0 7DZ

November 2021



by Harvey Furniss

with contributions by Dr Matthew Loughton
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commissioned by the homeowner

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CAT Report 1736

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1 Summary

An archaeological evaluation (two trenches) was carried out on land to the east of The Rest, Southminster Road, Asheldham, Essex in advance of the construction of a single detached dwelling with associated access and groundworks. The development site is located within an area of significant archaeological remains including the Asheldham Camp (the Scheduled Monument univallate Iron Age hillfort), as well as prehistoric and Roman remains suggested by a series of findspots in the area. A modern pit and a post-medieval ditch were uncovered.

2 Introduction (Fig 1)

This is the report for an archaeological evaluation by trial-trenching on land to the east of The Rest, Southminster Road, Asheldham, Essex which was carried out on the 16th of November 2021. The work was commissioned by the landowner in advance of the construction of a detached dwelling and was undertaken by Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT).

In response to consultation with Essex County Council Place Services (ECCPS), Historic Environment Advisor Maria Medlycott 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 the *National Planning Policy Framework* (MHCLG 2019).

All archaeological work was carried out in accordance with a *Brief for trial-trenching and excavation at Land east of The Rest, Southminster Road, Asheldham* detailing the required archaeological work, written by Maria Medlycott (ECCPS 2021), and a written scheme of investigation (WSI) prepared by CAT in response to the brief and agreed with ECCPS (CAT 2021).

In addition to the brief and WSI, all fieldwork and reporting was done in accordance with *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE)* (Historic England 2016), and with *Standards for field archaeology in the East of England* (EAA 14 and 24). This report mirrors standards and practices contained in the Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (ClfA 2014a) and *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (ClfA 2014b).

3 Archaeological background

The following archaeological background draws on the brief and the Essex Historic Environment Records (EHER) held at Essex County Council, County Hall, Chelmsford, Essex (accessible to the public via <http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk>).

The proposed development site is located within the village of Asheldham in the Dengie Peninsular. The area is characterised by small isolated farms scattered throughout flat, open fields laid out over land reclaimed from the Dengie and Tillingham marshes during the 19th century.

Significant archaeological remains lie within the area. The Scheduled Monument of Asheldham Camp, a univallate Iron Age hillfort, is located to the immediate east of the development site (EHER 12051-12060; Scheduled Monument reference 1014142). Excavations conducted in 1985 established that the hillfort was built during the Early Iron Age, but also uncovered evidence of a phase of activity at the site prior to its construction, during which the area was apparently utilised for cereal cultivation or as pasture (EAH 22, 1991, 13-34). Cropmarks of ring-ditches, linear features and pits lie to the northeast (EHER 12185). An excavation carried out on land further to the east uncovered a Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age ring-ditch and a Romano-British rectilinear system of agricultural enclosures (EHER 12183). To the west of the site are cropmarks of a penannular ring-ditch and various linear features (EHER 16003).

An evaluation on land adjacent to Endway Farm in 2020 revealed two pits and a ditch dating to the Late Bronze Age, a pit dating to the Late Bronze Age or Early Iron Age, and a ditch dating to the Early Iron Age at the latest. Previous excavations of Asheldham Camp indicated that the site had witnessed a phase of activity prior to the construction of the hillfort. The present investigation provides further evidence of an earlier phase of activity here (CAT Report 1581).

Prehistoric to Roman occupation in the area is also suggested by a number of lithic blades, arrowheads and some Roman pottery recorded in the vicinity of the former Brook Farm (EHER12128-12130) and to the northeast of Asheldham Camp some sherds of unabraded Neolithic pottery was found during a watching brief prior to gravel extraction (EHER 12186).

4 Aims

The aim of the archaeological evaluation was to record the extent of any surviving archaeological deposits, and to assess the archaeological potential of the site to allow the ECCHEA to determine if further investigation is required.

5 Results (Figs 2-3)

Two trial-trenches were machine-excavated under the supervision of a CAT archaeologist. Trench 1 and Trench 2 were laid out in a T-shape with T1 measuring 11m in length and T2 10m. Both trenches were 1.8m wide. A full context list can be found in Appendix 1.

Both trenches were excavated to natural (L2) which was identified as a compact mid-brownish clay and a gravelly-sand sloping downhill southwards.

Trench 1 (T1)

Trench 1 was excavated through a layer of modern topsoil (L1) which varied in thickness from 0.31m at the western end to 0.68m to the east.

Finds from ditch F2 were dated to the 19th and 20th centuries with earlier material suggesting that the feature was an older field boundary (see Section 6). The feature had gently sloping sides and a concave base which measured 1.93m wide and 1.34m deep.

Trench 2 (T2)

Trench 2 was excavated through a layer of debris (L3) left behind after the recent demolition stables and pole barn. This layer was only observed at the northern end of trench 2. It was 0.5m thick. The southern half of trench 2 was excavated through the same modern topsoil as seen in trench 1.

Pit F1 produced a small assemblage of modern finds (not retained). The pit was most likely dated to the same period as the recently demolished stables and pole barn. The feature was sub-circular in shape with sharp sides and a flat base which was not fully exposed because it extended beyond the limit of the trench. The excavated part of the pit was 1.02m by c 1.3m. It was 0.32m deep.



Photograph 1 Trenches 1 and 2 – view SW



Photograph 2 Ditch F2 – view SW



Photograph 3 Pit F1 – view E

6 Finds

by Dr Matthew Loughton

The evaluation at Asheldham uncovered a small collection of pottery and ceramic building material (henceforth CBM) – 33 sherds with a weight of nearly 1.7kg and 0.27 vessels according to the rim EVE (Table 1). The mean sherd weight is relatively high at 51g.

Ceramic material	No.	Weight (g)	MSW (g)	Rim EVE
Pottery	23	367	16	0.27
CBM	10	1,327	133	-
Total	33	1,694	51	0.27

Table 1 Summary of finds

All of the material was recovered from ditch F2. The pottery included a sherd of BB2: black-burnished ware, category 2 (fabric GB) dating to AD 110/125-300; a thumbled base from a jug in Hedingham ware (fabric F22) (c 1140-1325/1350); and a Border ware base (fabric F42) dating to the 16th-17th century. There was also a small assemblage of post-medieval red earthenwares (fabric F40) (18 sherds, 264g, EVE 0.27) consisting of medium-sized bowls (EVE: 0.23) and a large bowl or pancheon (EVE: 0.04) with a simple heavy flanged rim, dating to c AD 1650-1750 (Cotter 2000, 200). Finally there was a sherd from a globular jug in Cologne stoneware (fabric F45E) dating from the 16th-17th century and a sherd of late slipped kitchenware (fabric F51A) dating to the 19th-20th century. The CBM consisted of sherds of medieval/post-medieval peg-tile and unidentifiable post-Roman brick fragments. Feature F2 dates to the 19th/20th century. None of this material was retained.

7 Conclusion

Two features were uncovered during the evaluation at Asheldham. Pit F1 was modern while ditch F2 was dated to the post-medieval period. Both features were likely associated with local isolated farms such as are typical of the surrounding area. The finds from F2 were an array of glazed and unglazed pottery along with a variety of CBM fragments all of which presumably derived from a post-medieval farmstead.

8 Acknowledgements

CAT thanks the homeowner for commissioning and funding the work. The project was managed by C Lister with the fieldwork carried out by H Furniss with O Windridge. The figures were by C Lister, H Furniss and E Holloway. The project was monitored for ECCPS by Maria Medlycott.

9 References

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

Brown, N & Glazebrook, J	2000	<i>Research and Archaeology: A Framework for the Eastern Counties 2. Research agenda and strategy.</i> East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Paper 8 (EAA 8)
CAR 7	2000	<i>Colchester Archaeological Report 7: Post-Roman pottery from excavations in Colchester, 1971-1985.</i> Colchester: Colchester Archaeological Trust Ltd, by JP Cotter
CAT	2021	<i>Health & Safety Policy</i>
CAT	2021	<i>Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for an archaeological trial-trenched evaluation and excavation on land east of The Rest, Southminster Road, Asheldham, Essex, CM0 7DZ,</i> by Emma Holloway
CAT Report 1581	2020	<i>Archaeological evaluation on land adjacent to Endway Farm, Southminster Road, Asheldham, Southminster, Essex,</i> by Dr. E Hicks
ClfA	2014a	<i>Standard and Guidance for archaeological field evaluation</i>
ClfA	2014b	<i>Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials</i>
EAH 22	1991	<i>Asheldham Camp – an Iron Age hill fort: the 1985 excavations, Essex Archaeology and History 22,</i> by O Bedwin
ECCPS	2021	<i>Brief for archaeological trial-trenching and excavation at Land east of The Rest, Southminster Road, Asheldham,</i> by M Medlycott
Gurney, D	2003	<i>Standards for field archaeology in the East of England.</i> East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Papers 14 (EAA 14)
Historic England	2016	<i>Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE)</i>
Medlycott, M	2011	<i>Research and archaeology revisited: A revised framework for the East of England.</i> East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Papers 24 (EAA 24)
MHCLG	2019	<i>National Planning Policy Framework.</i> Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

10 Abbreviations and glossary

Bronze Age	period from c 2500 – 700 BC
CAT	Colchester Archaeological Trust
ClfA	Chartered Institute for Archaeologists
context	a single unit of excavation, which is often referred to numerically, and can be any feature, layer or find.
ECC	Essex County Council
ECCHEA	Essex County Council Historic Environment Advisor
ECCPS	Essex County Council Place Services
EHHER	Essex Historic Environment Record
feature (F)	an identifiable thing like a pit, a wall, a drain: can contain 'contexts'
Iron Age	period from 700 BC to Roman invasion of AD 43
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	Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations, http://oasis.ac.uk/pages/wiki/Main
post-medieval	from c AD 1500 to c 1800
Roman	the period from AD 43 to c AD 410
section	(abbreviation sx or Sx) vertical slice through feature/s or layer/s
WSI	written scheme of investigation

11 Contents of archive

Finds: None retained

Paper and digital record

One A4 document wallet containing:

The report (CAT Report 1736)

ECC evaluation brief, CAT written scheme of investigation

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

Site digital photos and log

Digital record

The report (CAT Report 1736)

CBC evaluation brief, CAT written scheme of investigation

Site digital photographs, thumbnails and log

Graphic files

Site data

Survey data

12 Archive deposition

The 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 the Archaeological Data Service.

Distribution list:

Homeowner
ECC Place Services Historic Environment Advisor
Essex Historic Environment Record, Essex County Council



Colchester Archaeological Trust

Roman Circus House,
Roman Circus Walk,
Colchester,
Essex, CO2 7GZ

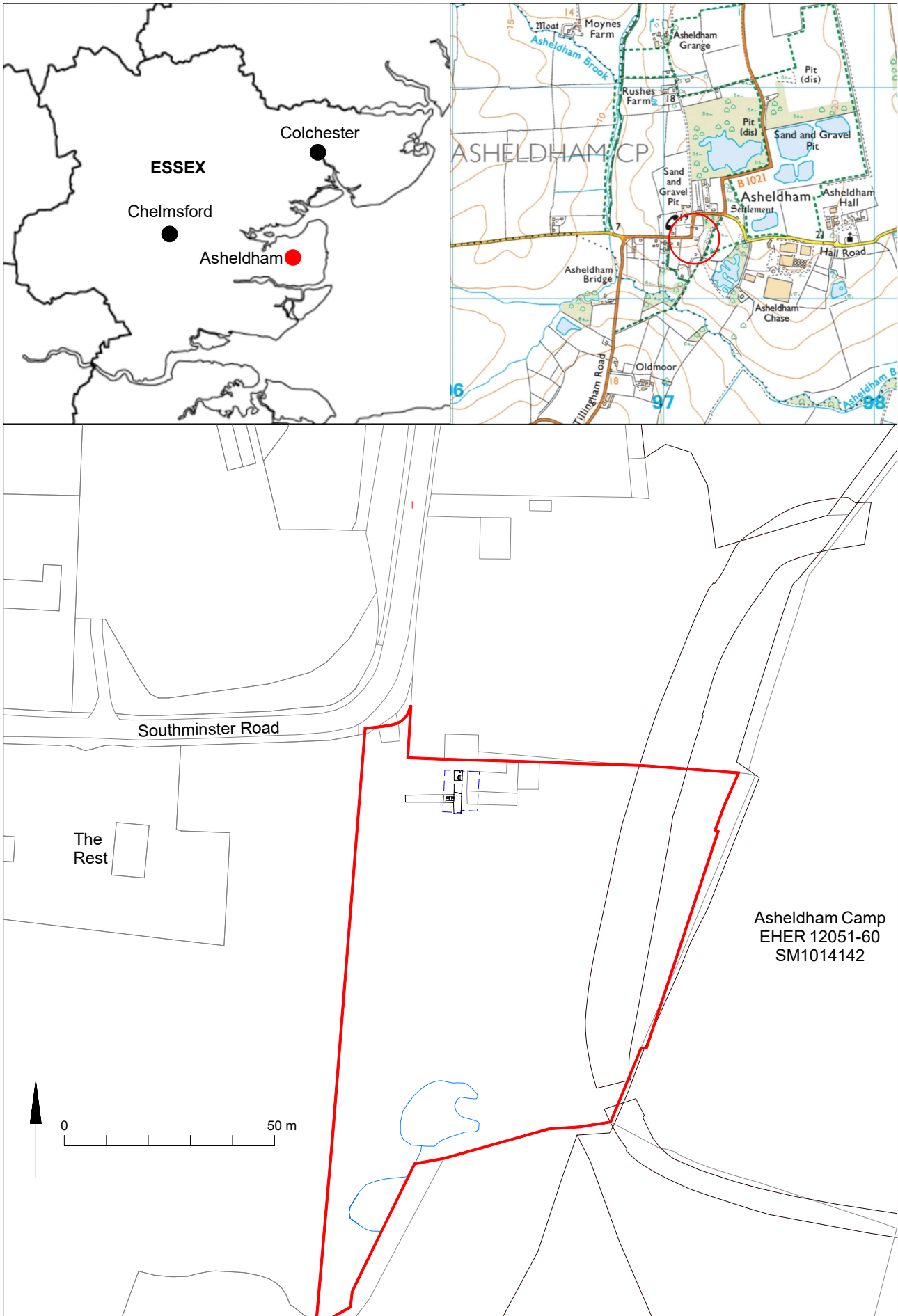
tel.: 01206 501785

email: hf@catuk.org

Checked by: Philip Crummy
Date: 24/11/2021

Appendix 1 Context List

Context number	Trench number	Find number	Feature type	Description	Date
L1	All trenches	-	Topsoil	Firm moist dark grey/brown silty clay	Modern
L2	All trenches	-	Natural	Firm moist medium grey/brown silt with charcoal flecks	Post-glacial
L3	Trench 2	-	Backfill	Demolition material consisting of disused service pipes and concrete rubble	Modern
F1	T2	-	Pit	Sub-circular in plan, sharp sides, flat base Hard, mid greyish yellow clay with occasional stone inclusions	Modern
F2	T2	1, 2	Ditch	Linear in plan, gradual to sloping sides and concave base Upper fill: Firm grey sandy silt with charcoal and stone inclusions and CBM flecks Lower fill: Hard, mid brownish grey sandy silt with regular rounded stone inclusions	Medieval/ post-medieval



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Fig 1 Site location

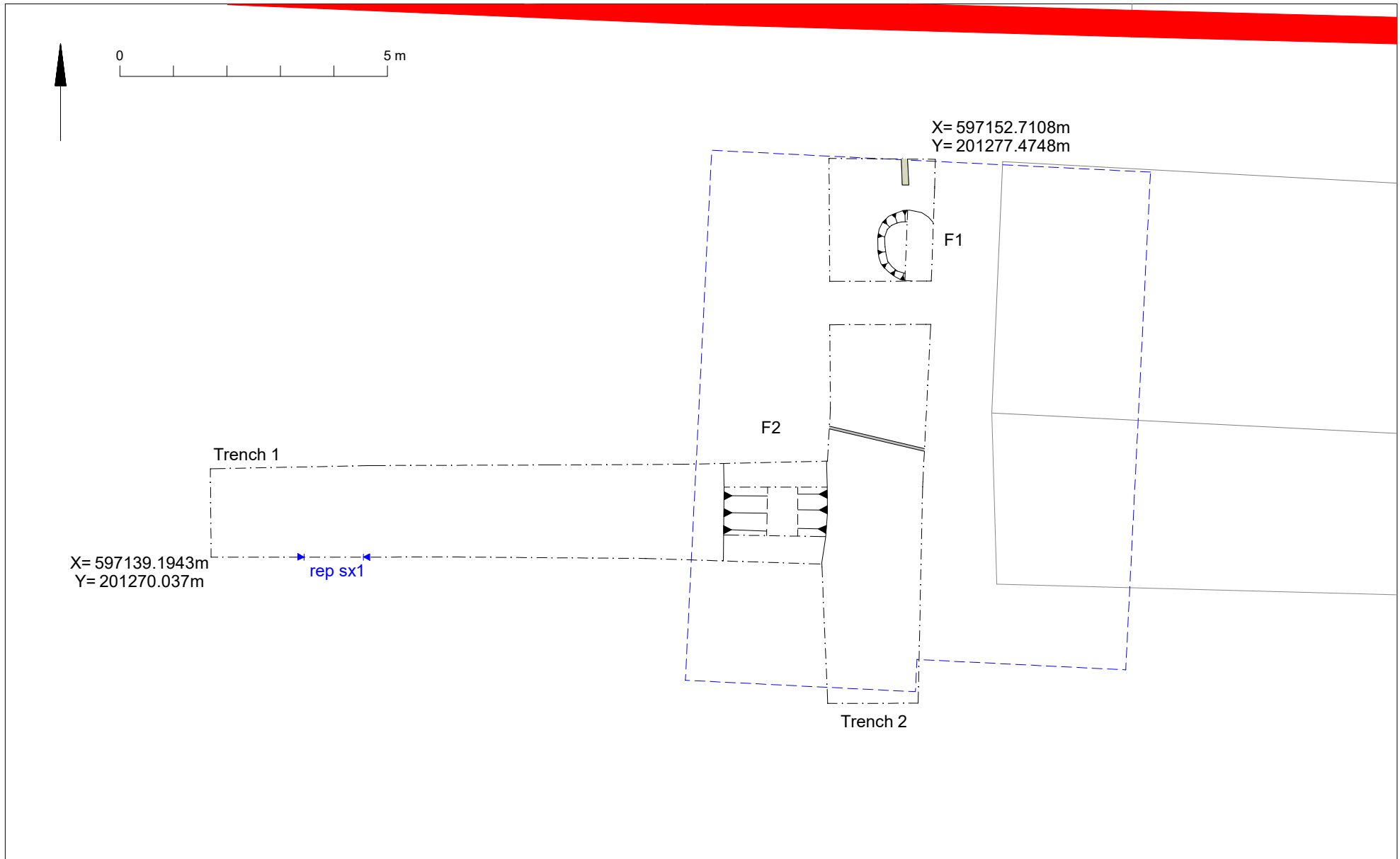


Fig 2 Results (modern feature in grey)

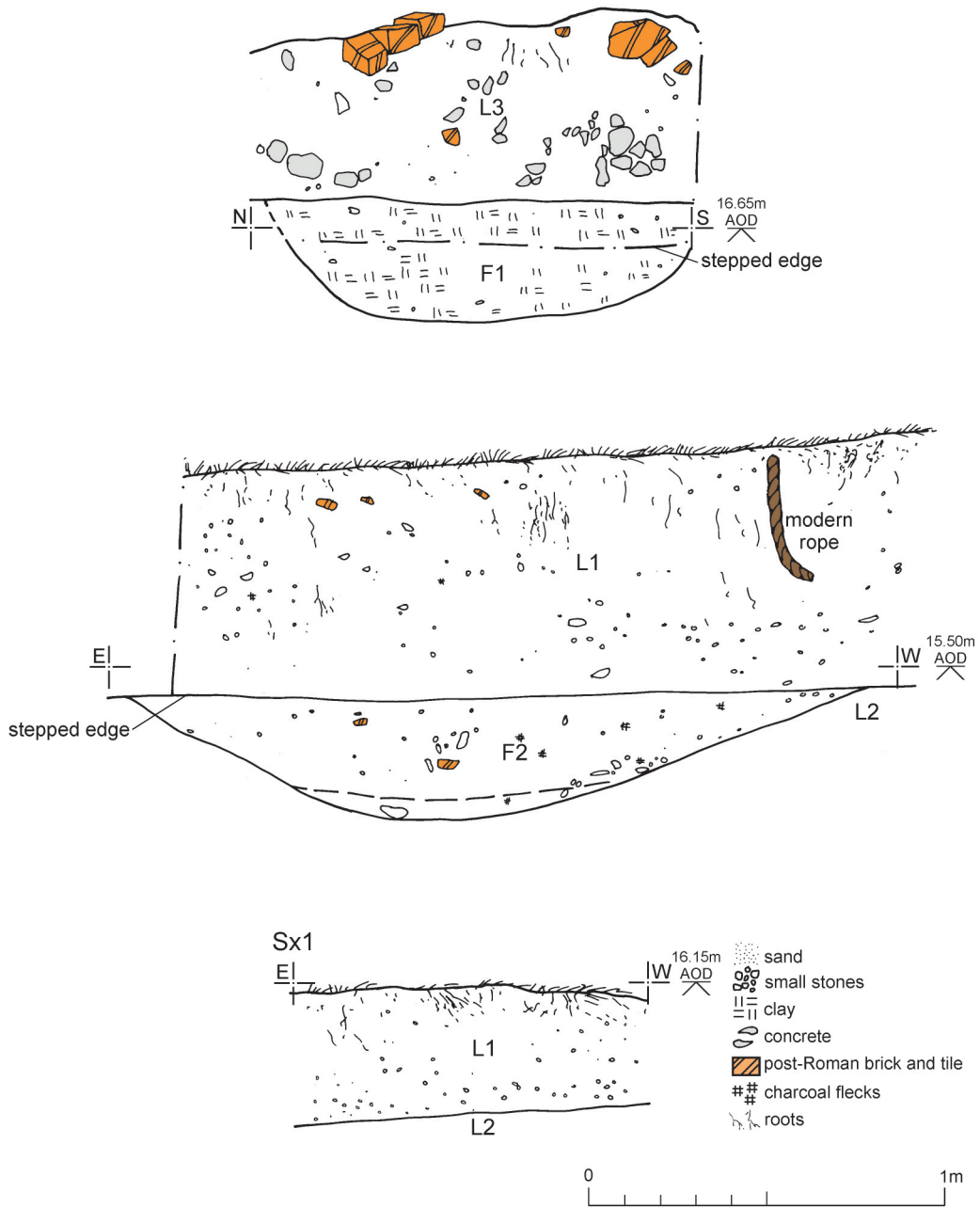


Fig 3 Feature and representative sections.

Summary for colchest3-432827

OASIS ID (UID)	colchest3-432827
Project Name	Archaeological evaluation on land east of The Rest, Southminster Road, Asheldham, Essex, CM0 7DZ
Activity type	TRIAL TRENCH
Project Identifier(s)	2021/10i
Planning Id	MAL/20/01003
Reason For Investigation	Planning: Post determination
Organisation Responsible for work	Colchester Archaeological Trust
Project Dates	16-Nov-2021 - 16-Nov-2021
Location	land east of The Rest, Southminster Road, Asheldham, Essex NGR : TL 97142 01272 LL : 51.675609, 0.849895 12 Fig : 597142,201272
Administrative Areas	Country : England County : Essex District : Maldon Parish : Asheldham
Project Methodology	Evaluation by trial-trenching
Project Results	An archaeological evaluation (two trenches) was carried out on land to the east of The Rest, Southminster Road, Asheldham, Essex in advance of the construction of a single detached dwelling with associated access and groundworks. The development site is located within an area of significant archaeological remains including the Asheldham Camp (the Scheduled Monument univallate Iron Age hillfort), as well as prehistoric and Roman remains suggested by a series of findspots in the area. A modern pit and a post-medieval ditch were uncovered.
Keywords	
HER	Essex HER - unRev - STANDARD
HER Identifiers	HER Monument No - AMTR21
Archives	Digital Archive - to be deposited with Archaeology Data Service Archive