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# Land at Brierley Paddocks, West Mersea, Essex

## *Archaeological Excavation Report*

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## Summary

Between 14th and 18th December 2020 Oxford Archaeology East carried out a small (0.1ha) area excavation at Brierley Paddocks, West Mersea, Essex. This was one of two areas designated for excavation within a 9ha development area where geophysical survey and trial trenching had identified archaeological remains of prehistoric and Roman date.

The excavations uncovered an unurned cremation burial, a single pit and a series of ditches forming part of a wider field system. The only dateable finds recovered were small quantities of Middle/Late Bronze Age pottery. Whilst the cremation burial and pit seem very likely to be of Bronze Age date, the ditches followed the same alignment as nearby historic field boundaries recorded on first edition Ordnance Survey mapping, and it is uncertain whether they represent part of a prehistoric field systems or relate to much later, post-medieval/early modern land use.

## Acknowledgements

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The project was managed for Oxford Archaeology by Nick Gilmour. The fieldwork was directed by Malgorzata Kwiatkowska, who was supported by Jack Eassen, Anne-Laure Bollen and Tamara Hadnagyev. Survey and digitising was carried out by Valerio Pinna and Danielle Hall. Thanks are also extended to the teams of OA staff that cleaned and packaged the finds under the supervision of Natasha Dodwell, processed the environmental remains under the supervision of Rachel Fosberry, and prepared the archive under the supervision of Katherine Hamilton.



## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Scope of work

- 1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA) was commissioned by City and Country to undertake an excavation at Brierley Paddocks, West Mersea, Essex (Fig. 1; TM 02431 13082). The excavation area (ECC 4581) lay within a wider development area of 9ha and was the smaller of two separate areas selected for excavation on the basis of the results of previous phases of evaluation, including geophysical survey and trial trenching (see below, Section 1.3). The second excavation area (ECC 4582) was located in the southern part of the development area and work there has been carried out independently from the ECC 4581 excavation reported on here.
- 1.1.2 The work was undertaken as a condition of Planning Permission (planning ref. 192136). A brief was set by Jess Tipper of Colchester Borough Council outlining the Local Authority's requirements for work necessary to inform the planning process. A written scheme of investigation (WSI) was produced by OA detailing the methods by which OA proposed to meet the requirements of the brief (Gilmour 2020).
- 1.1.3 The site archive is currently held by OA and will be deposited with the appropriate county stores under the Site Code ECC 4581 in due course.

### 1.2 Location, topography and geology

- 1.2.1 The site is relatively flat, with an elevation of c.18m OD. It is situated on the eastern edge of West Mersea on former arable farmland. It is surrounded by residential buildings.
- 1.2.2 The bedrock geology of the area consists of clay silt and sand of the Thames Group, with no superficial deposits (British Geological Survey 2014).

### 1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The following background text has been taken from the WSI (Gilmour 2020). More extensive research will be undertaken as part of the report for the Area ECC 4582 excavations.
- 1.3.2 A desk-based assessment has been prepared settling out the full archaeological background of the site. A geophysical survey, fieldwalking and metal detector survey were also carried out. These were followed by two phases of archaeological trench evaluation. Each of these phases of archaeological work is summarised below.

#### *Desk Based Assessment (DBA)*

- 1.3.3 Based on known archaeological remains in the area, the DBA (Higgs 2019) identified the site as having a low potential for prehistoric, Anglo-Saxon and medieval archaeology, and a moderate potential for post-medieval and later remains. However, the site was identified as having a high potential for Romano-British remains, as one of the five Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) findspots of Roman date recorded in the vicinity of the site was found within the northern sector of the site (HERMCC6786). In

the wider context, there is also extensive evidence for the Roman occupation of West Mersea.

- 1.3.4 Relatively little is known about the history and development of the site, although it is undoubtedly closely associated with Brierley Hall, which was formerly known as Lee Keys Farm and was labelled as Leakey Hall as late as the 1897 Ordnance Survey map. Historic cartographic sources also consistently depict the site as agricultural land throughout the early modern and modern periods. The plan of West Mersea Hall Estate, which dates to 1817 and comprised the property of Mr. Thomas May, reveals that Brierley Hall and the northern and western sections of the site clearly formed part of the large estate. Plans of the Brierley Hall Estate dating from 1900 proposed the site for widespread development, but obviously did not come to fruition.

### *Geophysical Survey, fieldwalking and metal detector survey*

- 1.3.5 A geophysical survey, fieldwalking and metal detector survey was carried out across the site (Bull 2019, Diggons *et al.* 2019, Bingham and Podbury 2020).
- 1.3.6 The geophysical survey identified a small number of positive linear anomalies which appear to represent an area of archaeological activity in the southern portion of the site. A number of discrete positive anomalies were also distributed across the southern and eastern portion of the site, including an alignment of four probable pit feature sand a probable thermoremanent feature with associated pits to its south. Prominent across the site were broad, diffuse anomalies representing infilled channels reflecting former wetland environs.
- 1.3.7 The fieldwalking/metal detecting revealed that sparse Iron Age and Roman finds of pottery and CBM are broadly dispersed across the site, possibly with an emphasis in the eastern sector. No Roman metalwork was found.
- 1.3.8 Similarly the medieval pottery and CBM is sparsely distributed across the site, and coincident with the modern and early modern CBM in the eastern sector of the site. No medieval metalwork was found.
- 1.3.9 No intrinsically interesting post-medieval or modern finds were made within the pottery, CBM and metalwork assemblages.
- 1.3.10 The fieldwalking finds of pottery and CBM broadly correlate with the anomalies identified during the geophysical survey in particular the Roman CBM and medieval pottery. These anomalies were located towards the southern and eastern sectors of the site.

### *Phase 1 and 2 trial trench evaluation*

- 1.3.11 A total of 55 trenches were excavated across the development area during two phases of trial trenching carried out by Archaeological Solutions between 2019 and 2020 (Bingham and Podbury 2020). A total of 146 archaeological features were recorded. The majority of the features were located in the southern and eastern sections of the site, broadly correlating with the results of the geophysical survey and metal detector survey. Dating evidence was recovered from a large number of features, and the prehistoric, Roman, and post-medieval periods were represented.

- 1.3.12 The earliest archaeological evidence comprised residual Neolithic struck flint recovered from Roman features. The majority of datable features present on the site were of Roman date (61 in total). The limited number of post-medieval features were primarily located in the northern section of the site and contained modest deposits of pottery, CBM and glass.
- 1.3.13 Thirteen features contained Bronze Age finds. The northern side of the Thames Estuary has revealed a high intensity of evidence for Bronze Age settlement and activity. The evaluation recovered a relatively small quantity of pottery of likely Bronze Age origin, with a single diagnostic sherd from one pit suggesting a Middle to Late Bronze Age date. Much of the pottery has traits that are consistent with urns produced in the Middle to Late Bronze Age in Essex.
- 1.3.14 Roman activity on the site had clearly commenced by the mid/late 1st century AD, probably around the Conquest period, and continued until the mid/late 2nd century, when it appears to intensify, potentially peaking the mid/late 3rd century, with little conclusive evidence for activity in the 4th century AD. Many of the Roman features were ditches, but there appeared to be evidence of trampled/cobbled surfaces in several of the trenches.
- 1.3.15 There is extensive settlement evidence for the Roman occupation of West Mersea; the pottery assemblage comprises both imported and local fabrics that are reflective of patterns evident in the major urban centre of *Camulodunum* (Colchester). The Romano-British pottery is dominated by those produced at Colchester; similarly, the coarse wares and mortaria are almost entirely local.
- 1.3.16 The evaluation also recovered a substantial quantity of Roman CBM; the range and quantity of which is consistent with the presence of a substantial structure in close vicinity, although it is also feasible that it represents structural components of a significant boundary wall, fortification or demolition rubble from a farmstead or villa. A ditch and a kiln/oven, which was left *in situ*, contained a relatively small quantity of fired clay in association with deposits of CBM.
- 1.3.17 Many of the Roman features also contained animal bone; in terms of frequency and number of elements, the bone is derived from the butchering and meat waste from cattle. The assemblage suggests that the processing of large skins by a specialist worker may have taken place. Of great interest, both for its relative rarity and for its unusual modifications, is the whale bone present within one of the pits.

## 2 EXCAVATION AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 The overall aim of the investigation was to preserve by record the archaeological evidence contained within the footprint of the development area, prior to damage by development, and investigate the origins, date, development, phasing, spatial organisation, character, function, status, and significance of the remains revealed, and place these in their local, regional and national archaeological context.
- 2.1.2 Based on the results of the evaluation and the recommendations of the brief, more specific aims and research questions were formulated:
- i. To place the activity in context with the known activity of these dates in the surrounding area
  - ii. To characterise the activity present within the site
  - iii. To identify topographical/geological/geographical influences on the layout and development of the activity present within the current site and in the surrounding area
  - iv. To attempt an environmental reconstruction of the site
- 2.1.3 Some of the original aims and objectives of the excavation stated above could be met through the analysis of the excavated materials. These will be discussed in more detail in the report for the larger-scale excavations in the southern part of the development area (ECC 4582).

### 2.2 Fieldwork Methodology

- 2.2.1 The methodology used followed that outlined in the brief and detailed in the Written Scheme of Investigation (Gilmour 2020).
- 2.2.2 Machine excavation was carried out by a 14-tonne type excavator using a 1.8m wide flat-bladed ditching bucket under constant supervision of a suitably qualified and experienced archaeologist.
- 2.2.3 Spoil, exposed surfaces and features were scanned with a metal detector. All metal-detected and hand-collected finds were retained for inspection, other than those which were obviously modern.
- 2.2.4 All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using OA's pro-forma sheets. Trench locations, plans and sections were recorded at appropriate scales and colour and monochrome photographs were taken of all relevant features and deposits.

## 3 RESULTS

### 3.1 Introduction and presentation of results

- 3.1.1 The results of the excavation (Fig. 2) are presented below and include a stratigraphic description of the archaeological remains. Details of all contexts are included in Appendix A, with finds and environmental reports presented in Appendices B and C respectively. Cut numbers appear in **bold** throughout the report.
- 3.1.2 In terms of dating/phasing, dateable finds from the excavation consisted solely of small quantities of Middle/Late Bronze Age pottery, recovered from a series of linear ditches, a natural hollow and a single pit. A second small pit contained a deposit of cremated human bone but was not associated with datable finds. Whilst the cremation burial and the pit are thought very likely to relate to the Middle/Late Bronze Age activity represented by the pottery assemblage, the pottery from the ditches may be residual and it is possible these features relate to much later, post-medieval or early modern land use.

### 3.2 General soils and ground conditions

- 3.2.1 The natural geology of clayey silt was overlain by topsoil with an average thickness of 0.30m. Ground conditions throughout the excavation were generally good, and the site remained dry throughout. Archaeological features, where present, were easy to identify against the underlying natural geology.

### 3.3 Discrete features

- 3.3.1 Two discrete features, a cremation burial and a small pit, were exposed within the excavation area.
- 3.3.2 Cremation burial **4** (Fig. 3, Section 4; Plate 1) was located in the south-western corner of the site. This feature was sub-circular in plan with steep sides and a flat base. It was 0.54m in diameter, 0.12m deep and was filled by two deposits. The lower fill (**5**) was a light brownish grey silty sand and contained 1g of cremated bone. It was overlain by very dark grey silty sand (**6**) which contained 98g of cremated bone.
- 3.3.3 Pit **9** (Fig. 3, Section 9; Plate 2) was also located in the south-western part of the site, 7.5m north-east of cremation burial **4**. It was sub-circular in plan with moderately sloping sides and a concave base. This feature measured 1.64m in diameter and 0.28 deep and contained a single deposit of light brownish grey silty sand (**10**). A single small sherd of Middle/Late Bronze Age pottery (2g) was recovered from this feature.

### 3.4 Field system ditches

- 3.4.1 The excavation uncovered the remains of a ditched field system. The field system consisted of three ditches aligned north-north-west to south-south-east and two ditches on a west-south-west to east-north-east alignment. All these features were filled by homogeneous deposits of light brownish grey silty sand and were considered contemporary, as no relationships were recognised at their intersections.

- 3.4.2 The westernmost feature was ditch **11** (=21, 29; Fig. 3 Sections 11 and 27, Plate 5), which was aligned north-north-west to south south-east. This ditch was 1.1m wide and up to 0.28m deep with moderately sloping sides and a concave base. The largest pottery assemblage recovered from the site originated from this feature, with ten sherds of Middle/Late Bronze Age pottery (64g) being recovered from fill (22) of intervention **21**.
- 3.4.3 The second ditch on a north north-west to south south-east alignment was ditch **15** (=19; Fig. 3 Sections 15, 17 and 19, Plate 4). This linear feature was 1.2m wide, up to 0.30m deep and had moderately sloping sides and a concave base. A single sherd of Middle/Late Bronze Age pottery (6g) was recovered from this feature.
- 3.4.4 The easternmost ditch **13** (=25 =35 =37; Fig. 3 Sections 25 and 35, Plate 3) was orientated north-north-west to south-south-east and turned after 22m to west-south-west to east-north-east alignment. This ditch measured 1.06m wide, 0.20m deep with gently sloping sides and a concave base.
- 3.4.5 Ditch **7** (=17 =27; Fig. 3 Sections 17 and 27, Plate 5) was revealed in the south-western part of the site. It was aligned west-south-west to east-north-east. This feature was 1.4m wide, 0.24m deep with gently sloping sides and a concave base. The fill (8) of this ditch contained a single sherd (20g) of Middle/Late Bronze Age pottery.

### 3.5 Natural feature

- 3.5.1 A large natural hollow (22) was partly exposed against the north-western limit of excavation. This amorphous-shaped feature measured up to 4.5m in diameter and 0.1m deep, with gently sloping sides and an irregular base. Its fill contained a single sherd of Middle/Late Bronze Age pottery (12g).

### 3.6 Finds and environmental summary

#### *Prehistoric pottery (App. B.1)*

- 3.6.1 The excavation yielded 14 sherds (104g) of prehistoric pottery. It was recovered from five different contexts, the fills of ditches, a pit and a natural hollow. All of the pottery is from the Deverel Rimbury or post-Deverel Rimbury tradition, dating to the Middle or Late Bronze Age.

#### *Human skeletal remains (App. C.1)*

- 3.6.2 In total 99g of cremated human bone were recovered from the single cremation burial (4). These remains were dominated by skull and limb fragments belong to an adult/older subadult individual.

#### *Environmental samples (App. C.2)*

- 3.6.3 A total of five samples were taken from features within the excavated area. The plant remains recovered are extremely low in density and diversity, with only the fills of cremation burial 4 producing notable results in the form of abundant wood charcoal.



## 4 DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Reliability of field investigation

4.1.1 In general, the archaeological features were relatively shallow and had probably suffered from fairly extensive plough truncation. Most of the features contained homogenous fills dominated by mid greyish-brown clayey silt but they were clearly visible against the natural geology and the weather and ground conditions were good throughout the site work.

### 4.2 Interpretation

4.2.1 The recovery of Middle/Late Bronze Age pottery from several features across the site (pit 9, ditches 7, 19 and 21 and natural hollow 23) clearly suggests activity at the site during this period of later prehistory, although the small quantities of pottery recovered from individual contexts renders it uncertain whether this material was contemporary with the features from which it derived or was instead residual.

4.2.2 The single unurned cremation burial (4) contained identifiable bone comprising skull and limb fragments belonging to an adult or older sub-adult individual. Its occurrence within a charcoal-rich matrix suggest it represents a mixture of cremated bone and some debris from the funeral pyre. Although undated, the character of the burial is consistent with a Bronze Age date. Aside from this burial the only other discrete feature was a small pit (9) which produced a single sherd small sherd of Middle/Late Bronze Age pottery.

4.2.3 The ditches exposed across the area seem likely to relate to a system of field boundaries, although the small-scale of the excavation makes it difficult to assess the overall layout of any such wider system. Although the artefacts recovered from these excavations consisted exclusively of Middle/Late Bronze Age pottery, these features follow the same alignment as post-medieval/early modern field boundaries depicted on the first edition OS mapping of the site and subsequently identified during the geophysical survey and trail trenching of the development area (Bingham and Podbury 2020). Given that the pottery from these features may be residual, it therefore remains possible that these ditches relate to historic land use rather than being of prehistoric date. In due course, the results of the excavations within the southern part of the development area (ECC 4582) may provide evidence to help resolve this issue if further elements of such field systems are exposed and investigated.

### 4.3 Significance

4.3.1 The results and significance of this investigation should be reviewed as part of the analysis of the more extensive excavations in the southern part of the development area (ECC 4582).

## **5 PUBLICATION AND ARCHIVING**

### **5.1 Publication**

- 5.1.1 It is anticipated that the results of this excavation will be combined with those of the more extensive excavations in the southern part of the development area (ECC 4582) for the purposes of any publication/further dissemination.

### **5.2 Archiving, Retention and Dispersal**

- 5.2.1 The site archive (under Site Code ECC 4581, Accession No. TBC) will be deposited with Colchester Museum and comprises a maximum of two bulk finds/document box.



## APPENDIX A CONTEXT INVENTORY

Context	Category	Feature Type	Function	Cut	Filled By	Phase	Group	Master Number	Length	Breadth	Depth	Coarse component	Compaction	Shape in Plan	Break of Slope	Orientation	Profile
1	layer	topsoil		0		0	0	0	0		0.3						
2	layer	subsoil		0		0	0	0	0		0.1						
3	layer	natural		0		0	0	0	0								
4	cut	cremation	burial	4	5, 6	0	0	4	0.54	0.52	0.12			circular	gradual	n/a	wide U-shape
5	fill	cremation	cremation deposit	4		0	0	4	0		0.1	occ charcoal	soft				
6	fill	cremation	burial	4		0	0	4	0.54	0.38	0.08	burnt bone, freq charcoal	soft				
7	cut	ditch	field boundary	7	8	0	0	7	0	0.86	0.14			linear	gradual	E-W	wide, shallow U-shape
8	fill	ditch	disuse	7		0	0	7	0	0.86	0.14	rare gravel, freq manganese	soft				
9	cut	pit	unknown	9	10	0	0	9	1.64	1.3	0.28			sub-circular	gradual	n/a	wide U-shape
10	fill	pit	disuse	9		0	0	9	1.64	1.3	0.28	rare gravel	soft				
11	cut	ditch	field system	11	12	0	0	11	0	1.1	0.1			linear	gradual	N-S	wide and shallow
12	fill	ditch	disuse	11		0	0	11	0	1.1	0.1	rare gravel, manganese	soft				
13	cut	ditch	field system	13	14	0	0	13	0	0.62	0.14			linear	gradual	E-W	U-shape
14	fill	ditch	disuse	13		0	0	13	0	0.62	0.14	rare gravel, manganese	soft				

Context	Category	Feature Type	Function	Cut	Filled By	Phase	Group	Master Number	Length	Breadth	Depth	Coarse component	Compaction	Shape in Plan	Break of Slope	Orientation	Profile
19	cut	ditch	field system	19	20	0	0	15	0	1.68	0.3			linear	gradual	NNW-SSE	wide U-shape
20	fill	ditch	disuse	19		0	0	15	0	1.68	0.3	rare gravel, freq manganese	soft				
21	cut	ditch	field system	21	22	0	0	11	0	0.8	0.28			linear	moderate	N-S	V-shaped
22	fill	ditch	disuse	21		0	0	11	0	0.8	0.28	rare gravel, freq manganese	soft				
23	cut	hollow	natural	23	24	0	0	23	4.3	4.5	0.1			amorphous	gradual	n/a	irregular
24	fill	hollow	silting up	23		0	0	23	4.3	4.5	0.1	soft	some stones				
25	cut	ditch	field system	25	26	0	0	13	0	1.06	0.16			linear	gradual	N-S	wide U-shape
26	fill	ditch	disuse	25		0	0	13	0	1.06	0.16	rare gravel, manganese	soft				
27	cut	ditch	field system	27	28	0	0	7	0	1.4	0.24			linear	moderate	E-W	Longitudal section
28	fill	ditch	disuse	27		0	0	7	0	1.4	0.24	rare gravel, freq manganese	soft				
29	cut	ditch	field system	29	30	0	0	11	0	1.1	0.08			linear	imperceptible	N-S	very shallow
30	fill	ditch	disuse	29		0	0	11	0	1.1	0.08	rare gravel	soft				
31	cut	ditch	field system	31	32	0	0	11	0	1.1	0.14			linear	gradual	N-S	longitudal section
32	fill	ditch	disuse	31		0	0	11	0	1.1	0.14	rare gravel	soft				
33	cut	ditch	field	33	34	0	0	13	0	0.9	0.14			linear	gradual	E-W	longitud

## APPENDIX B FINDS REPORTS

### B.1 Prehistoric pottery

*By Nick Gilmour*

#### *Introduction*

- B.1.1 The excavation yielded 14 sherds (104g) of prehistoric pottery, with a moderate mean sherd weight (MSW) of 7.4g. The pottery was recovered from five different contexts: the fills of ditches, a pit and a natural hollow (Table 1).
- B.1.2 All of the pottery dates to the Middle or Late Bronze Age period and is in fabrics typically associated with this pottery of this date. There are no diagnostic features sherds.
- B.1.3 The pottery is in moderate to good condition, most sherds are un-abraded. The mean sherd weight is also moderate, indicating the generally good condition of the pottery.

Context	Cut	Spot Date	Feature Type	No of sherds	Weight (g)
8	7	MBA/LBA	Ditch	1	20
10	9	MBA/LBA	Pit	1	2
20	19	MBA/LBA	Ditch	1	6
22	21	MBA/LBA	Ditch	10	64
24	23	MBA/LBA	Natural hollow	1	12
<b>Total</b>				<b>14</b>	<b>104</b>

*Table 1 quantification of prehistoric pottery*

#### *Methodology*

- B.1.4 All the pottery has been fully recorded following the recommendations laid out by the Prehistoric Ceramic Research Group (PCRG 2011). After a full inspection of the assemblage, fabric groups were devised on the basis of dominant inclusion types, their density and modal size. Sherds from all contexts were counted, weighed (to the nearest whole gramme) and assigned to a fabric group. Sherd type was recorded, along with evidence for surface treatment, decoration, and the presence of soot and/or residue. Rim and base forms were described using a codified system recorded in the catalogue, and were assigned vessel numbers. Where possible, rim and base diameters were measured, and surviving percentages noted. In cases where a sherd or groups of refitting sherds retained portions of the rim, shoulder and/or other diagnostic features, the vessel was categorised by ceramic tradition (Collared Urn, Deverel-Rimbury etc.)
- B.1.5 All pottery was subject to sherd size analysis. Sherds less than 4cm in diameter were classified as 'small' (13 sherds); sherds measuring 4-8cm would have been classified as 'medium' (1 sherd), and sherds over 8cm in diameter would have been classified as 'large' (no sherds). The quantified data is presented on an Excel data sheet held with the site archive.

### *Prehistoric pottery fabrics*

B.1.6 Only a single fabric was identified.

F1: moderate poorly sorted flint in a sandy clay matrix

### *Middle to Late Bronze Age Pottery*

B.1.7 All of the pottery (14 sherds 104g) is from the Deverel Rimbury or post-Deverel Rimbury tradition; dating to the Middle or Late Bronze Age. The pottery is in a fabric typical of this date within the region. All of the sherds are plain body sherds and this lack of feature sherds prevents closer attribution or dating. The lack of sherds displaying carination is more characteristic of Middle Bronze Age pottery, but the assemblage is too small for this to be definitive.

### *Discussion*

B.1.8 The pottery assemblage from this excavation is small and lacks feature sherds, making it difficult to interpret. However, it is significant in demonstrating activity on the site during the Bronze Age.

### *Catalogue*

Context	Cut	Feature Type	Fabric type	Sherd type	No sherds	Wt (g)	Initial Spot Date	Small <4cm	Medium 4-8cm
22	21		F1	O	10	64	MBA/LBA	10	
24	23		F1	O	1	12	MBA/LBA	1	
20	19		F1	O	1	6	MBA/LBA	1	
10	9		F1	O	1	2	MBA/LBA	1	
8	7		F1	O	1	20	MBA/LBA		1

Table 2 Catalogue of prehistoric pottery

## APPENDIX C ENVIRONMENTAL REPORTS

### C.1 Human Remains

*By Zoë Uí Choileáin*

#### *Introduction*

C.1.1 A single undated, unurned cremation burial were recorded at Brierley Paddocks, West Mersea. Pit 4 was 0.52m in diameter and 0.12m deep. It contained two fills; fill 5 was light grey with occasional flecks of charcoal. Fill 6, the lower fill contained frequent charcoal and calcined human bone. The feature was untruncated and as almost all of the bone is in the lower deposit it is likely that this represents a 'token'/partial deposit of bone rather than a more complete but truncated cremation burial.

C.1.2 All deposits containing cremated bone were subject to 100% recovery and the material retained for sieving. Residues were passed through 10mm, 5mm and 2mm sieves. All bone was extracted for analysis. Recording of cremated bone was completed following the guidelines laid out by McKinley (2004).

#### *Results*

C.1.3 All bone is primarily chalk white in appearance with transverse longitudinal cracks. This suggests consistently high pyre temperatures.

C.1.4 A total of 99g of bone was recovered. 98g of this is from the lower deposit (5) with only a single gramme of bone being found in the upper fill (6).

C.1.5 The identifiable bone is entirely represented by skull and limb fragments. There are frequent charcoal flecks throughout deposit 6. This suggests bone was scooped from the pyre rather than carefully selected. There is not enough charcoal or debris to suggest however that this is a deposit of pyre material rather than a burial.

Cut	Fill	Urned/unurned	Depth (m)	Truncated	No individuals	Age
4	5	Unurned	0.1	Yes	1	Adult/older subadult
	6		0.08			

Table 3 A summary of the cremation burials

Cut	Fill	largest fragment mm	>10mm g	>10mm %	5-10mm g	5-10mm %	2-5mm g	2-5mm %	Total
4	5	-	-	0	-	-	1	100	1
	6	29	15	0	67		16		98

Table 4 Weight of cremated deposits by fragment size

#### *Discussion*

C.1.6 This burial fits the pattern for a Bronze Age cremation burial and in the context of the Bronze Age pottery recovered from the site, it is highly probable the feature dates to this period.

## C.2 Environmental Samples

*By Martha Craven*

### *Introduction*

C.2.1 A total of five samples were taken from features within the excavated area at Brierly Paddocks, West Mersea, Essex. The samples were taken from the fills of ditches, a pit and a cremation burial. The purpose of the assessment reported here was to determine whether plant remains and environmental indicators such as molluscs are present, their mode of preservation and what information can be inferred about such things as diet, economy, refuse disposal and trade.

### *Methodology*

C.2.2 The samples were processed by tank flotation using modified Siraf-type equipment for the recovery of preserved plant remains, dating evidence and any other artefactual evidence that might be present. The floating component (flot) of the samples were collected in a 0.3mm nylon mesh and the residues were washed through 10mm, 5mm, 2mm and a 0.5mm sieve.

C.2.3 A magnet was dragged through each residue fraction for the recovery of magnetic residues prior to sorting for artefacts. Any artefacts present were noted and reintegrated with the hand-excavated finds.

C.2.4 The dried flots were subsequently sorted using a binocular microscope at magnifications up to x 60 and an abbreviated list of the recorded remains are presented in Table 1.

C.2.5 Identification of plant remains is with reference to the Digital Seed Atlas of the Netherlands (Cappers et al. 2006) and OAE's reference collection. Nomenclature is according to Zohary and Hopf (2000) for cereals and Stace (2010) for other plants.

### *Quantification*

C.2.6 For the purpose of this assessment, items such as artefacts have been scanned and recorded qualitatively according to the following categories:

C.2.7 # = 1-5, ## = 6-25, ### = 26-100, #### = 100+ specimens

## Results

C.2.8 The botanical material from this site is quite sparse. Four out of five samples from this site are either devoid of or contain very small quantities of charcoal. Sample 2, fill 6 of cremation 4, is the only sample to contain abundant charcoal fragments and this is likely to be the remains of the funeral pyre.

Sample No.	Context No.	Cut No.	Feature Type	Volume Processed (L)	Flot Volume (ml)	Charcoal Volume	Human Skeletal Remains
1	5	4	Cremation Cut	9	5	<1	#
2	6	4	Cremation Cut	16	100	100	###
3	26	25	Ditch	17	5	<1	0
4	20	19	Ditch	13	10	<1	0
5	10	9	Pit	16	5	0	0

Table 5 Environmental samples from Brierly Paddocks

## Discussion

C.2.9 The plant remains recovered from this excavation are extremely low in density and diversity. The scarcity of plant remains suggests that this area was not a focus of arable processing or domestic activities. The evaluation of the site (Diggons and Podbury, 2020) also indicates similarly low levels of Bronze Age activity at the site.

C.2.10 The samples from this site have been fully processed, assessed, and warrant no further work.

## APPENDIX D      BIBLIOGRAPHY

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## APPENDIX E SITE SUMMARY DETAILS / OASIS REPORT FORM

### Project Details

OASIS Number	oxfordar3-409554		
Project Name	Land at Brierley Paddocks, West Mersea, Essex		
Start of Fieldwork	14/12/2020	End of Fieldwork	18/12/2020
Previous Work	Yes	Future Work	Unknown

### Project Reference Codes

Site Code	ECC4581	Planning App. No.	192136
HER Number	ECC4581	Related Numbers	ECC4582

Prompt	Planning Condition
Development Type	Rural Residential
Place in Planning Process	After full determination (eg. As a condition)

### Techniques used (tick all that apply)

- |  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aerial Photography – interpretation | <input type="checkbox"/> Open-area excavation           | <input type="checkbox"/> Salvage Record                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aerial Photography - new            | <input type="checkbox"/> Part Excavation                | <input type="checkbox"/> Systematic Field Walking         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Field Observation                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Part Survey                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Systematic Metal Detector Survey |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Full Excavation          | <input type="checkbox"/> Recorded Observation           | <input type="checkbox"/> Test-pit Survey                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Full Survey                         | <input type="checkbox"/> Remote Operated Vehicle Survey | <input type="checkbox"/> Watching Brief                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Geophysical Survey                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Salvage Excavation             |   |

Monument	Period	Object	Period
Cremation	Bronze Age ( - 2500 to - 700)	Pottery	Bronze Age ( - 2500 to - 700)
Pit	Bronze Age ( - 2500 to - 700)		Choose an item.
Ditch	Post Medieval (1540 to 1901)		Choose an item.

Insert more lines as appropriate.

### Project Location

County	Essex	Address (including Postcode) Land off Brierley Paddocks West Mersea Essex CO5 8GB
District	Colchester	
Parish	West Mersea	
HER office	Essex	
Size of Study Area	0.1 ha	
National Grid Ref	TM 02431 13082	

### Project Originators

Organisation	Oxford Archaeology East
Project Brief Originator	Jess Tipper

Project Design Originator	Nick Gilmour
Project Manager	Nick Gilmour
Project Supervisor	Malgorzata Kwiatkowska

## Project Archives

	Location	ID
Physical Archive (Finds)	Colchester Museum	TBA
Digital Archive	ADS	ECC4581
Paper Archive	Colchester Museum	TBA

Physical Contents	Present?	Digital files associated with Finds	Paperwork associated with Finds
Animal Bones	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ceramics	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Environmental	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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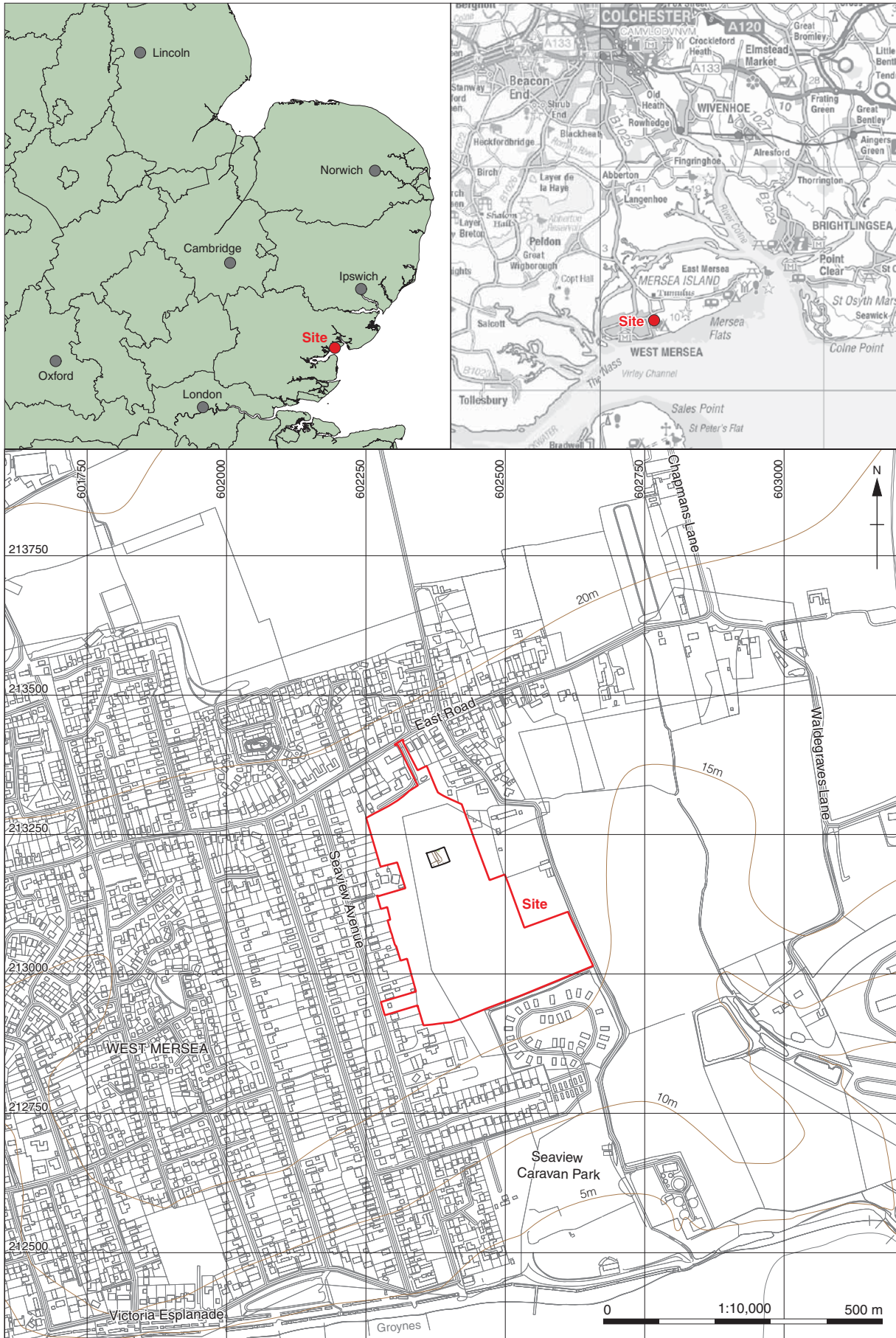
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Sections	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Survey	<input type="checkbox"/>





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Figure 1: Site location showing excavation area (black) in development area (red)

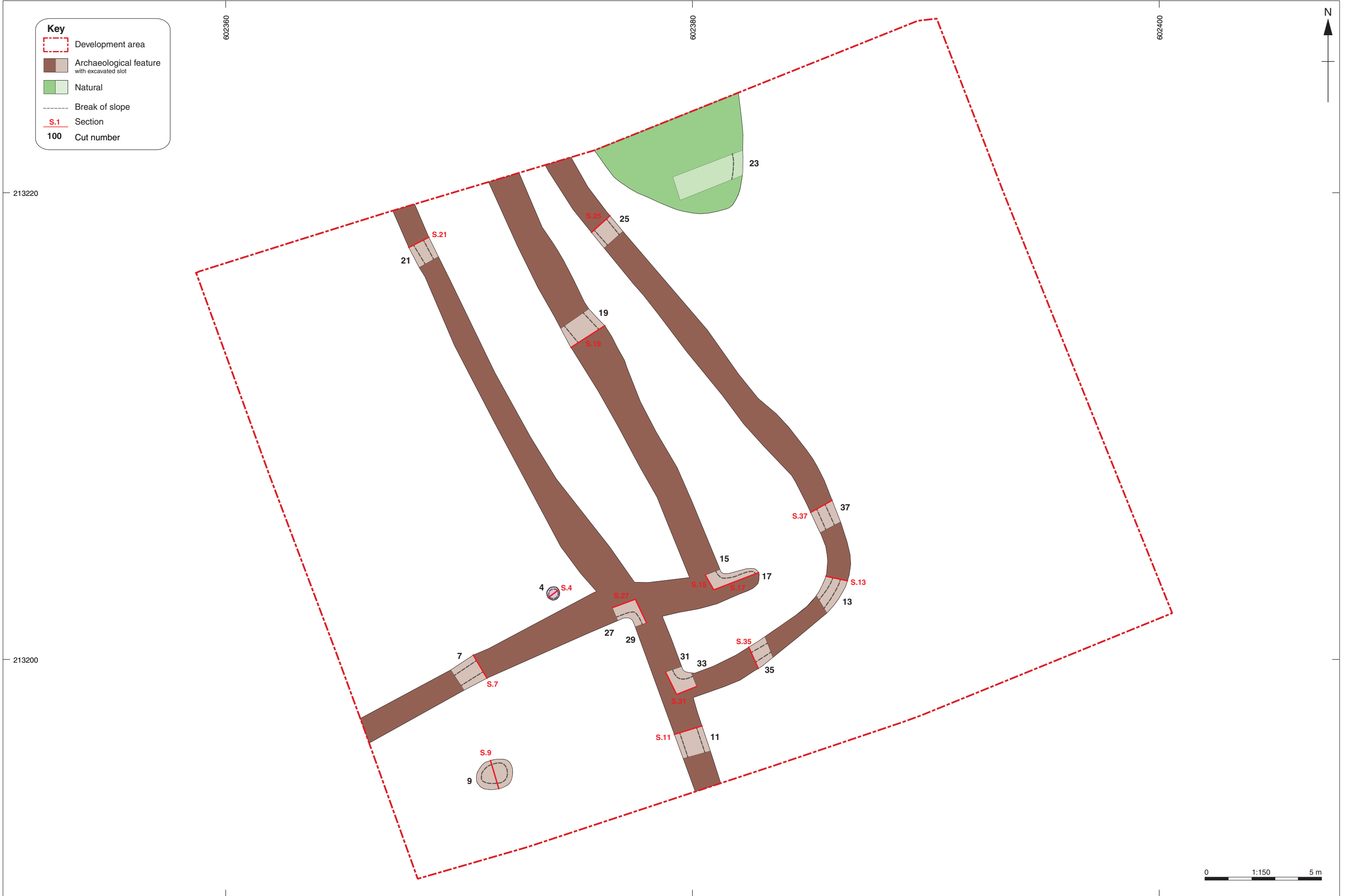


Figure 2: Plan of excavation area

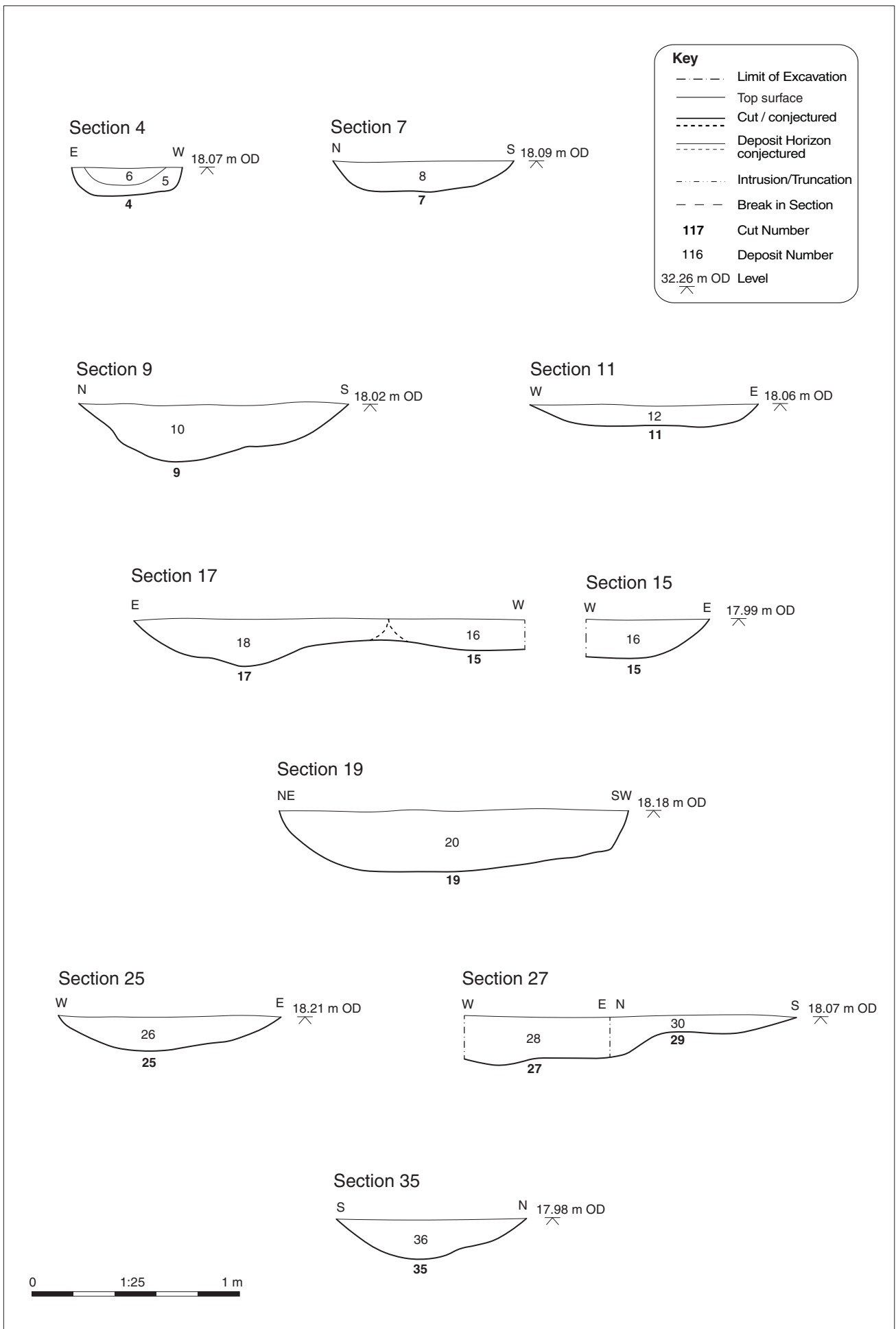


Figure 3: Selected sections





Plate 1: Cremation 4, looking south



Plate 2: Pit 9, looking west





Plate 3: Ditch 13, looking south west



Plate 4: Ditch 19, looking south





Plate 5: Contemporary ditches **27** and **29**, looking north east



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