

Archaeological excavation and monitoring on land at Alresford Hall, Ford Lane, Alresford, CO7 8AY

July-December 2021



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**commissioned by Dawn Mercer (Rural Solutions)
on behalf of Wyvernwood Limited**

NGR: TM 07516 20452 (centre)

Planning ref.: 19/01856/FUL

CAT project ref.: 2021/07b

ECC code: ALFL21

OASIS ref.: colchest3-425790



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CAT Report 1828

July 2022

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1 Summary

Archaeological monitoring was carried out on land at Alresford Hall, Ford Lane, Essex in advance of the construction of an adventure play-park. The site is located adjacent to Alresford Hall, a Grade II listed building, within an area of known cropmarks. Following a phase of evaluation work, a small excavation was carried out as well as several areas of monitoring. This phase of work revealed an area that was sporadically inhabited from the Middle Bronze Age until the early Roman period. Notable features include a possible linear trackway, ring-ditch and a pit which produced an almost complete Bronze Age loomweight.

2 Introduction (Fig 1)

This is the report for archaeological monitoring carried out by Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) on land at Alresford Hall, Ford Lane, Alresford, Essex from July 2021 until December 2022. The work was commissioned by Dawn Mercer (Rural Solutions) on behalf of Wyvernwood Limited during the construction of a new adventure play-park.

In response to consultation with Essex County Council Place Services (ECCPS) and following a programme of evaluation trenching and test-pitting, Historic Environment Advisor Teresa O'Connor 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).

A Brief for Archaeological Work on land at Alresford Hall, Ford Lane, Alresford, was produced by Teresa O'Connor detailing the required archaeological work (ECCPS 2020), and a written scheme of investigation (WSI) was prepared by Archaeological Solutions Ltd in response to the brief and agreed with ECCPS in advance of the groundworks (AS Ltd, 2020b).

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 excavation* (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 Record (EHER) held at Essex County Council, County Hall, Chelmsford, Essex (accessible to the public via <http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk>), and the evaluation report (AS Ltd 2020a) and WSI produced by Archaeological Solutions Ltd (AS Ltd 2020b).

The site lies adjacent to Alresford Hall, a grade II listed building (NHLE No 1111422), on the site of a former nursery at Alresford Hall Farm. Within the site several cropmarks have been identified: up to seven ring-ditches, pits, linear features and a double-ditched trackway (EHER 2592 and 2613).

It has been suggested these cropmarks are part of a wider complex of cropmarks to the south-west at Broomfield Hall Quarry. Investigations at the quarry found cropmarks of three ring-ditches (EHER 1906). When excavated, they were found to have a probable grave in the centre although no bone was present. The ring-ditches were found to be undated, but presumed to be Saxon in origin as they matched the size of other ring-ditches excavated at Orsett. Other features excavated included pits, post-holes, rectilinear ditches and a cobbled trackway (EHER 1907 and 1908).

Although the finds evidence from the excavations were limited, lithic evidence of Mesolithic, Neolithic and Bronze Age date (EHER 1902 and 1903) were recovered. Finds of Iron Age to medieval date (EHER 1902-06) and remains of a Roman villa, with surviving paved floors (EHER 2115), have also been found in Broomfield Quarry.

Other cropmarks at the Broomfield site include ring-ditches and rectilinear features (EHER 2386) and a rectangular enclosure, a group of oval features, part of a possible trackway, and possible penannular huts (EHER 2273).

Two evaluations have been carried out within the development site, one in 1993 and one in 2020. In 1993, a two-trench evaluation was carried out in advance of the construction of a glasshouse and hardstanding. Although no features relating to the cropmarks were identified, prehistoric flint flakes were recovered (EHER 14374). A programme of trial-trenching and test-pitting was undertaken in 2020 by Archaeological Solutions (AS Ltd 2020a). This evaluation recorded ditches and pits, some of which correlated with the cropmarks. Pottery sherds dating from the Neolithic to the Roman period were recovered, as well as worked flints.

4 Aims

Archaeological monitoring was undertaken to excavate and record any archaeological deposits which were exposed by the groundworks, with particular attention paid to the identification of known cropmarks on the site.

5 Results (Figs 2-15)

Several areas of groundworks were excavated under the supervision of a CAT archaeologist. (see Fig 2) These have been divided into subsections below. A full context list with measurements and soil descriptions can be found in Appendix 1.

5.1 Car Park (Fig 3)

Two areas (totalling 972.40m²) were machine-excavated under the supervision of a CAT archaeologist. A strip between the areas could not be excavated due to a line of trees. The areas were excavated through a layer of topsoil (L1) and a make-up layer (L2) into the natural geology (L3).

Five pits and five ditches, one of which was a curvilinear, were uncovered in the car park excavation.

In the western area were four ditches. Ditches F1 and F2 were on a parallel north-west/south-east alignment and both had a wide U-shaped profile. Small assemblages of pottery were recovered from both ditches, dating F1 to the Middle Iron Age and F2 to the Late Iron Age.



Photograph 1 F2 sx2 – view north-west.

Middle Iron Age curvilinear ditch F3 had a U-shaped profile and produced 16 pottery sherds. Undated ditch F4 was on a north-west/south-east alignment and had a V-shaped profile. The relationship between F3 and F4 was unclear but they merged to form one ditch, indicating they are probably contemporary in date.



Photograph 2 F3 sx2 and F4 sx2 – view north-west.

In the eastern area a single ditch, F6, was uncovered. It was on a north north-east/south south-west alignment and had a U-shaped profile. Three sherds of pottery and a copper-alloy coin were recovered dating it to the Late Iron Age/early Roman period.

To the west of ditch F6 were pits F5, F7, F8 and F9 with pit F10 to the east. Pit F7 produced the site's largest assemblage of pottery, 135 sherds, dating to the Late Bronze Age. The assemblage included pottery sherds attributed to domestic wares (jars and bowls) as well as sherds from a possible bucket urn.

Middle Bronze Age pits F8 and F10 produced the second and third largest assemblages of pottery respectively. As well as pottery sherds, pit F8 contained an almost complete Bronze Age loomweight. Pit F10 was heavily disturbed by rooting and produced fragments of a bucket urn.

Undated pit F9 had a dark charcoal fill and contained a small quantity of cremated bone. Pit F5 was also undated.



Photograph 3 F8 sx – view south-east.



Photograph 4 F10 sx – view south-east.

5.2 Service Trench (Fig 4)

Approximately 1020m of service trenching was machine-excavated. The trench was 0.60m wide and dug to a depth of 0.70-1.00m. In the southern half of the site the trenches were excavated through layers L1, L2 and L3. In the northern half of the site, the trench was excavated through a layer of ploughsoil (L4) into L3.

Seven features were identified in the service trench: four ditches, including continuations of ditches F1 and F2, and three pits.

Ditch F13 was located in the west of the service trench. It was on a rough north-east/south-west alignment with a U-shaped profile. A single fragment of probable loomweight was recovered from the fill, which was not closely dateable.

Three pits, F14, F15 and F16, and ditch F17 were located in the northern half of the service trench. All three pits were undated and not fully exposed due to the limit of excavation [LOE]. The ditch was modern in date and on a north-west/south-east alignment.



Photograph 5 Service trench – view east.



Photograph 6 Service trench working shot – view west.

5.3 Car Park Drainage (Fig 5)

Three drainage trenches were excavated to the east of the car park area. The trenches were 0.60m wide and had a total length of 44.13m. The trenches were cut through L1, L2 and L3.

Two undated ditches, F11 and F12, were uncovered in the southern two trenches. They were both on a north north-east/south south-west alignment and had a U-shaped profile. Both ditches are parallel to ditch F6 uncovered in the car park excavation area.

5.4 Enchanted Castle (Fig 6)

Forty post-holes and three foundation pads were excavated through L1, L2 and L3. The post-holes were 0.30m in diameter and dug to a depth of 0.70-0.80m. The foundation pads were 3.30m by 3.30m and 0.35m deep.

Two features were identified in the foundation pads: ?ditch/pit F18 and pit F19. Pit F19 produced a single sherd of pottery dating to the Iron Age. Undated ?ditch/pit F18 was not excavated as the foundation pad was already at the correct construction depth.

5.5 Small is Big (Fig 6)

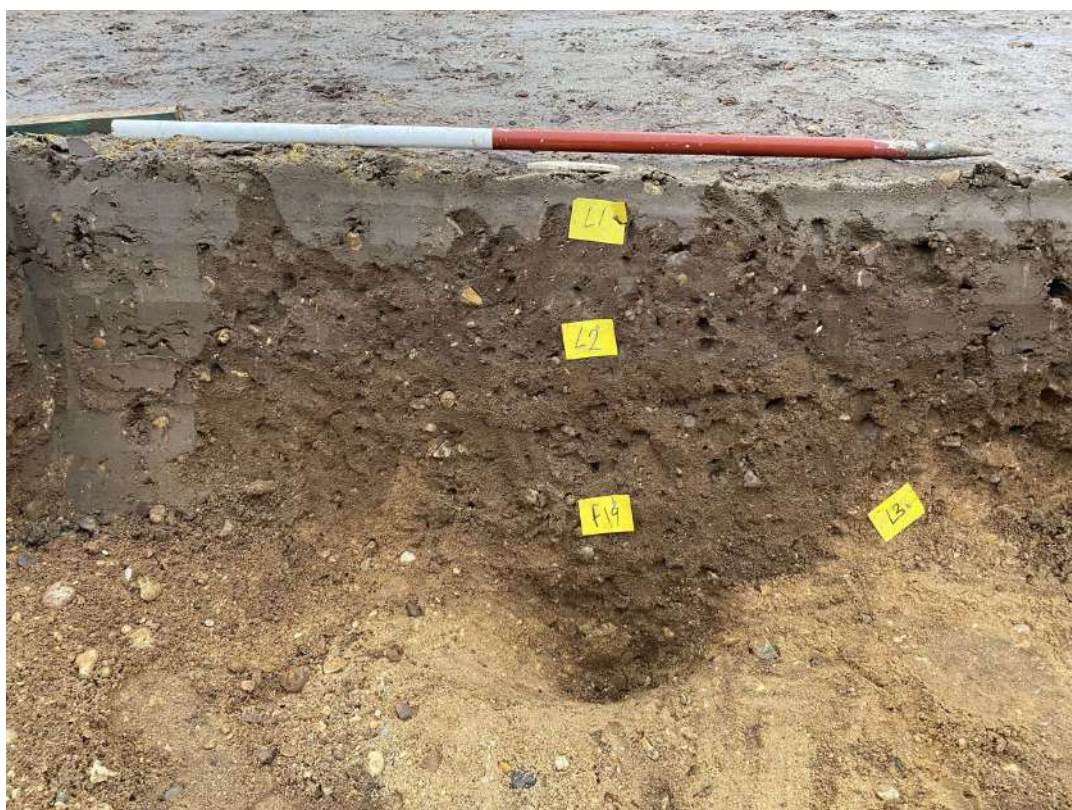
Twenty-eight post-holes were machine-excavated through L1, L2 and L3. The post-holes were 0.30m in diameter and dug to a depth of 0.80-0.90m. No archaeological finds or features were observed.

5.6 Goblin Tunnels (Fig 7)

Fifty-four post-holes were machine-excavated under the supervision of a CAT archaeologist. They were cut through L1, L2 and L3. The post-holes were 0.30m in diameter and roughly 0.70m deep. No archaeological finds or features were observed.



Photograph 7 F11 sx - view north.



Photograph 8 F19 and Enchanted Castle Foundation pad.



Photograph 9 Working shot (Small is Big).



Photograph 10 Goblin tunnel completed post-hole – view north-east.

5.7 Sandpit (Fig 8)

Four rectangular foundation pits were machine-excavated. The foundation pads were 1.50m by 0.60m, 1.20m by 0.60m, 0.90m by 0.60m and 0.60 by 0.60m. They were excavated through L1, L2 and L3. No archaeological finds or features were observed.

5.8 Tank Trench (Fig 9)

An area measuring 4m by 15m was stripped through L1 and L2 onto L3 under the supervision of a CAT archaeologist.

Four features were uncovered: the very end of the terminus of ditch F1, the edge of ditch F2 and two undated pits, F20 and F21.

Both pits were small and not fully exposed due to the LOE. Pit F20 truncated the south-west edge of pit F21.

5.9 Galleon (Fig 10)

An area covering 193m² was stripped of 0.30m of L1 into L2. Then four large foundation pads (1.5m by 1.1m), three small foundation pads (0.70m by 0.70m, 0.50m by 0.50m and 0.60m by 0.60m) and 12 post-holes (0.30m in diameter) were mechanically-excavated. The foundation pads were all dug to a depth of 0.60m and the post-holes between 0.60m and 0.90m. No finds or features were found.



Photograph 11 Sand pit area – view north-east.



Photograph 12 Tank trench – view north-east.



Photograph 13 Galleon foundation pads – view west.

6 Finds

6.1 Ceramic and Pottery finds

by Dr Matthew Loughton

The evaluation uncovered 216 sherds of pottery and ceramic building material (henceforth CBM) with a weight of just over 3.4kg and EVE of 1.23 (Table 1). Sherds of pottery and ceramics were recovered from eight features and one layer (Table 2). Pit F7, at 135 sherds with a weight of 2.1kg, produced a sizeable proportion of the total assemblage (Table 2).

Ceramic material	No.	Weight (g)	MSW (g)	EVE
Pottery	213	3,375	16	1.20
CBM	3	41	14	-
All	216	3,416	16	1.23

Table 1 Summary of the pottery and CBM.

Context	Description	No.	Weight (g)	MSW (g)
F1	DITCH	2	3	2
F2	DITCH	6	34	6
F3	DITCH	16	149	9
F6	DITCH	3	9	3
F7	PIT	135	2,102	16
F8	PIT	17	294	17
F10	PIT	34	794	23
F19	PIT	1	9	9
L2	MADE GROUND	1	19	19
US	-	1	3	3
Total		216	3,416	16

Table 2 Quantities of pottery and CBM from specific contexts.

Prehistoric pottery

Excluding an unidentifiable Roman greyware (fabric GX) vessel (1 sherd, 3g, EVE:0.05) which was unstratified, and rare Late Iron Age/early Roman sherds, most of the material dates to the prehistoric period. Prehistoric pottery was recovered from four ditches and four pits (Table 3). Pit F7 alone produced a considerable proportion of the assemblage followed by pit F10, while the remaining features produced very modest-sized assemblages (Table 3).

Context	Description	No.	Weight (g)	MSW (g)	EVE
F1	DITCH	2	3	2	0.00
F2	DITCH	4	12	3	0.00
F3	DITCH	16	149	9	0.05
F6	DITCH	3	9	3	0.03
F7	PIT	135	2,102	16	0.95
F8	PIT	17	294	17	0.00
F10	PIT	34	794	23	0.15
F19	PIT	1	9	9	0.00
Total		212	3,372	16	1.15

Table 3 Quantities of prehistoric pottery from specific features.

The prehistoric pottery assemblage consists of 212 sherds with a weight of 3.3kg and EVE of 1.18 (Table 4). The handmade pottery is found in a variety of fabrics although flint-tempered wares (fabric HMF) account for a sizeable proportion of the assemblage and 75% of the sherd count, 80% of the weight and 75% of the EVE (Table 4). It is highly likely that much of the flint-tempered pottery dates to the Bronze Age-Early Iron Age although there are occasional grog-tempered (fabric GTW) and wheel-made sandy ware (fabric SW) sherds dating to the Late Iron Age/early Roman period (Table 4).

Fabric Group	Fabric description	No.	Weight (g)	MSW (g)	EVE
HMF	Handmade flint-tempered	160	2,685	17	0.88
HMGF	Handmade grog and flint-tempered	35	571	16	0.27
HMS	Handmade sand-tempered	12	97	8	0.00
HMSF	Handmade sand flint-tempered	3	4	1	0.00
GTW	Grog-tempered ware	1	8	8	0.00
SW	Sandy ware	1	7	7	0.03
Total		212	3,372	16	1.18

Table 4 Details on the prehistoric pottery.

Pit F10 contained a Middle Bronze Age bucket urn (EVE: 0.15) in fabric HMF (Fig. 16.9). The top of the rim is decorated with impressed finger-tips, while the upper vessel wall is decorated with vertical rows of impressed finger-tips between vertical lines and the lower body is also decorated with horizontal rows of impressed finger-tips. This style of decoration is typical of the middle Bronze Age 'Deverel-Rimbury' pottery from Ardleigh (Brown 1999, 76-116).

The pit F7 contained a good-sized assemblage of Post-Deverel-Rimbury (late Bronze Age-early Iron Age) pottery with 135 sherds with a weight of 2.1 kg and EVE of 0.95 (Table 3). Diagnostic vessels included a plain middle Bronze age bucket urn (EVE: 0.47) (Peachey 2020, 83) in fabric HMF (Fig. 16.3), a jar with a bead rim (EVE: 0.06) in fabric HMGF (Fig. 16.5) of which a slightly similar vessel, dating to the late Bronze Age, is known from North Shoebury (Brown 1995, 84 fig. 65 no. 77). There was a jar (EVE: 0.12) with a flat-topped upright slightly flared rim (Fig. 16.6) in fabric HMF of which similar examples, dating to the late Bronze age, are known from Chadwell St Mary (Peachey 2020, 76-77) and from North Shoebury (Brown 1995, 84 fig. 65 nos. 72, 74, 78).

There is a flared rim from a possible tripartite bowl (EVE: 0.03), dating to the late Bronze Age (Newton 2020, 78) or early Iron Age (Brown 1995, 83-87, fig. 65 nos. 81-82), which is in a finer fabric (HMF) with a smooth burnished surface (Fig. 16.7). Alternatively, this rim is slightly similar to a Neolithic carinated vessel from North Shoebury (Brown 1995, 74-77 fig. 60 no. 34). A late Bronze Age date for this assemblage is likely.

The ditch F3 contained a jar with a bead rim (EVE: 0.05) which although it is found in fabric HMF with a slightly smoothed surface, the vessel form is more typical of the Middle Iron Age. This vessel has traces of sooting below the rim on the exterior surface. This feature also produced a small quantity of handmade sand tempered (fabric HMS) pottery which could also date to the Middle Iron Age.

One sherd of grog-tempered pottery with a weight of 8 gr came from the ditch F2 and from the upper ditch F6 there is a late Iron Age/early Roman Cam 229 bowl (EVE: 0.03) in sandy ware (fabric SW).

Ceramic building material (CBM)

CBM was limited to one sherd (19g) of medieval/post-medieval peg-tile from made-ground L2 and two sherds of baked clay (22g) from ditch F2.

Conclusion

Table 5 summarizes the dating evidence for the features and layer which contained dateable pottery and ceramics. Most of the pottery dates from the Middle to Late Bronze Age with some later Middle Iron Age and Late Iron Age/early Roman activity.

Context	Description	Prehistoric	CBM	Date Approx.
F1	DITCH	HMS	-	Middle Iron Age?
F2	DITCH	HMSF, GTW?	-	Late Iron Age?
F3	DITCH	HMF (Bead-rim jar) HMS	-	Middle Iron Age
F6	DITCH	HMF, SW (CAM 229?)	-	Late Iron Age/early Roman
F7	PIT	HMF (plain bucket urn, bowl with upright rim, tripartite jar?), HMGF (Bucket urn, jar with bead-rim)	-	Late Bronze Age
F8	PIT	HMF	-	Bronze Age-Early Iron Age?
F10	PIT	HMF (Bucket urn)	-	Middle Bronze Age
F19	PIT	HMS	-	Iron Age?
L2	MADE GROUND	-	PT	medieval/post-medieval

Table 5 Approximate dates for the individual features.

6.2 Small finds

by Laura Pooley

The loomweight from pit F8 (SF1) is of a distinctive cylindrical form with vertical perforation used on the warp-weighted loom in the Middle Bronze Age and perhaps the early Late Bronze Age (Adkins & Needham 1985, 38; Jones & Bond 1980, 475). They have a wide distribution across southern Britain, stretching from Cornwall to Essex (ApSimon & Greenfield 1972, fig 24A, 1; Barford 1995, 125). At c 118mm in diameter, the example from Alresford Hall appears to fall within a standard range of sizes defined by examples of 110mm from Winnall Down in Hampshire, 114mm from Kingston Buci in Sussex, 114 and 116mm from North Shoebury in Essex, 116mm from Birch in Essex, 121mm from Brandon in Suffolk and 125mm from Mucking in Essex (Crummey 2010, 13). The presence of the loomweight at Alresford Hall would suggest the existence of a Bronze Age community producing their own cloth, with a building containing a loom in the vicinity and the farming of sheep and/or goats for wool production (Crummey 2010, 14). A second fragment of probable loomweight (SF2) came from ditch F13. It is in a different fabric to SF1 and may be of a different date, but too little had survived to determine the size or shape of the loomweight. The only metal small find was a fragment of Roman copper-alloy coin (SF3) from ditch F6 sx1.

Fig 17 SF1 Pit F8, finds no.9. Virtually complete fired clay cylindrical loomweight with some slight (modern) damage – c 119mm across, 93mm high, with central perforation c 20mm diameter, 1,496g. The fabric is a sandy clay with some small-medium flint grit. The external surface has fired generally to patchy orange-grey with the core orange-buff

SF2 Ditch F13, finds no. 12. Fragment of fired clay object, probably a loomweight, 97.2g. The fabric is a sandy clay with rare grit. The external surface has fired generally to patchy orange-buff with the core a dark grey/black. Undated.

SF3 Ditch F6 sx1, finds no. 6. Fragment of Roman copper-alloy coin, c 20% complete, 3.4g and in poor condition. Obverse: illegible. Reverse: Figure with arm resting on shields, [S]C in field, inscription [...][...][...] (with visible inscription to right of and below the C). Probably an image of Roma sitting on cuirass, holding spear and leaning on three shields.

6.3 Miscellaneous finds

by Howard Brooks (flint) and Laura Pooley

Flint, U/S (13): Flake. Nice quality greyish brown flint, 8g. Cortex on one edge. Good striking platform, bulb of percussion and ripples. Flake from a core from which three flakes had previously been detached. Slight nibbling or working on three edges means this may have been used as an edge-scraper (although it is a little too small to hold comfortably). Dating of single pieces is difficult. Lack of patination means a Mesolithic or even early Neolithic date can be ruled out. Perhaps Bronze Age.

Charcoal, F9, from sample <1>: Thirteen fragments of charcoal, 5.4g.

Glass, L2 (14) (discarded): Fragment, 4.3g, from a small post-medieval/modern purple glass vessel. Including part of the shoulder, rim and neck of the bottle, the fragment shows that the vessel was six-sided, and was probably a perfume bottle.

6.4 Cremated Bone

by Megan Seehra

Introduction

Burnt bone was recovered from one context (F9) during archaeological excavation in the Car Park area at Alresford Hall. The cremation was unurned. No dating evidence was found in this context. However, other dateable features in this area were dated to the prehistoric period. The cremation appeared undisturbed by later activity.

Methodology

This methodology followed guidelines from ClfA (McKinley 2018). The feature was 100% excavated and all fill was taken as a sample. The bone was wet sieved and, once dry, it was mesh-sieved into size groups ranging from 10mm+ to <3mm. Each size group was then weighed and counted. Any fragments under 3mm were not counted due to their high fragmentation, and were weighed only. Fragments over 3mm were then divided into colour groups (white, white-grey, brown-black, unburnt) which were counted and weighed.

Results

The weight of the cremation is only 32.63g, with the average adult cremation in the modern period weighing is 1,650g (McKinley 2000). The weight may indicate this was a small token formally deposited after the cremation process. They may also represent juveniles, foetal or animal remains.

This cremation was highly fragmented, with the largest fragment being 20.86mm in length. The majority of the cremation was between 4-7mm. Discussed in further detail in a later section, this denotes a long cremation process whereby the heat-related changes result in bone fragmentation. Movement and raking may have also occurred during the cremation, which would agitate and fragment the bone further. As previously mentioned, these cremation deposits likely represent a small sample of the entire individual, and larger fragments of bone may have been kept or deposited elsewhere.

Size	Weight (g)	# fragments
4-7mm	22.13	163
7-10mm	6.08	17
10mm+	4.42	5
TOTAL:	32.63g	185

Table 6 Total weight (g) and fragment count (4mm+) for all cremations.

The heat source used to cremate human remains can reach temperatures of up to 1400°C, and normally burns for at 1-3+ hours to complete the cremation process (McKinley, 2002, 406-407). Completely white bone fragments indicate oxidised bone, whereas black or brown bone means charring only.

Most of the bone was either white or white-grey in colour (table 7). In addition to the high fragmentation, this indicates these remains were likely burnt at a temperature of at least 700°C for at least 1 hour (Ubelaker, 2015). The high percentage of white (oxidised) bone indicates an efficient cremation process, i.e. the distribution of heat.

Dehydration of human bone during cremation – especially fleshed bone – causes various types of cracks, fissures, warping and shrinkage. As per classifications outlined by Symes *et al* (2008, 46-47), there are seven fracture types associated with cremated human bone: longitudinal, step, transverse, patina, splintering and delamination, burn line fractures, and curved transverse. Longitudinal, transverse and step fractures were identified amongst the assemblage. Splintering and delamination was also seen.

Some shrinkage has also occurred, although the exact percentage is unknown due to high fragmentation, therefore it is likely insignificant.

Feature	White	White/Grey	Black/Brown	Unburnt
F9	95/15.03/46%	86/17.2/53%	4/0.4/1%	-

KEY: Fragment count (3mm+). Weight (g). Percentage of cremation (3mm+).

Table 7 Fragmentation and weight from all eight contexts of fragments over 3mm.

7 Discussion

A total of 21 features were discovered during monitoring and excavation works on land at Alresford Hall: eleven pits, nine ditches and a ?ditch/pit. Nine of the features excavated produced dating evidence, mainly in the form of pottery sherds, nearly all of which were prehistoric in date.

The earliest evidence of human activity uncovered during this phase of work were Middle Bronze Age pits F8 and F10. An almost-complete loomweight was recovered from F8 and from F10 came fragments of a bucket urn. Pit F7 was dated to the Late Bronze Age, but it also contained some residual sherds of a possible Middle Bronze Age plain bucket urn.

Although no urned cremations were uncovered, a small quantity of cremated bone was identified in undated pit F9. Not enough bone was present for a whole adult human burial but it may represent a ritual deposit, child or animal. The types of pottery and a loomweight recovered from these Bronze Age pits are indicative of domestic activity and cloth production close to the site, as well as funerary activity.

Evidence of Iron Age activity was also found on land at Alresford Hall, most of which was clustered together. The earliest Iron Age features were ditch F1 and curvilinear ditch F3, both Middle Iron Age in date. Ditch F2 was Late Iron Age and pit F19 Iron Age. Most of the finds assemblages from the Iron Age features were limited, making the dating of ditches F1 and F2 and pit F19 tentative.

Ditches F1, F2 and F3 were also identified during the evaluation phase of work. The small quantities of pottery (all eight sherds or less) dated these features to the early Roman period, an indication that the Middle Iron pottery is residual and that the features are Late Iron Age/early Roman in date.

Undated ditch, F4, was located close to these Iron Age ditches. Ditch F4 did not produce any finds but its proximity to curvilinear ditch F3 indicates it is probably of a similar date.

These four ditches (F1, F2, F3 and F4) are consistent with some of the cropmarks located within the development site. Ditches F1 and F2 align with cropmarks of a trackway and curvilinear ditch F3, as does ditch F4 with a ring-ditch and adjacent linear cropmark.

The possible trackway (F1 and F2) is roughly 4.5m wide. The differing dates in finds recovered from the two ditches could indicate that this trackway was originally dug during the Middle Iron Age and reused during the Late Iron Age and early Roman period, or that they are separate entities (and not trackway) and represent two phases of activity. Less than half of the possible ring-ditch (F3) (c 18m in diameter) was uncovered. Without further excavation it is not possible to know if there were any features central to the ring-ditch.

Besides a modern ditch in the north (F17), the latest-dated feature was ditch F6. Finds, including a copper-alloy Roman coin, dated this ditch to the Late Iron Age/early Roman period. It is probably a continuation of a cropmark identified to the north of the Car Park area. The ring-ditch cropmark identified to the west of ditch F6 was not found.

Ditch F13, which is located in the service trench, is also probably the continuation of the cropmark just to the north-east of the trench. Ditch F13 was undated but did produce a fragment of probable loomweight.

Several more undated features were also identified during this phase of work, mainly pits (F5, F14-16, F20-21), but also two ditches (F11 and F12) and ?ditch/pit (F18).

It is assumed the cropmarks on land at Alresford Hall are associated with the cropmarks to the south-west at Broomfield Quarry (EHER 1906-8). Finds and features at Broomfield Quarry have been dated from the Mesolithic to the Saxon period, a wider time period than the features detailed in this report, although the evaluation phase of work did uncover a small amount Neolithic pottery and worked flint. When compared to the three ring-ditches excavated in Broomfield Quarry, the ring-ditch here is projected to be over double the diameter. The Broomfield ring-ditches produced little dating evidence and were surmised to be Saxon in date, while this ring-ditch is likely to be Late Iron Age at the latest.

Despite the small areas investigated during both the evaluation phase and the excavation/monitoring, a relatively large quantity of archaeology has been uncovered on land at Alresford Hall. The evidence uncovered points to an area of land that was used sporadically from the Neolithic period until the early Roman period. While it is difficult to fully identify how the features fit into the landscape here, whether agricultural or purely domestic, it is clear the area had a variety of uses including funerary practices and cloth production. As a very minimum, the excavations here have aided in the dating of some of the cropmarks identified on the site and given a small insight into what is likely a wide prehistoric landscape.

8 Acknowledgements

CAT thanks Dawn Mercer (Rural Solutions) and Wyvernwood Limited for commissioning and funding the work. The project was managed by C Lister, fieldwork was carried out by S Veasey with M Seehra and B Quinn. Figures are by S Veasey and E Holloway. The project was monitored for ECCPS by Teresa O'Connor.

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

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10 Abbreviations and glossary

Bronze Age	period from c 2500 – 700 BC
Bronze Age (Middle)	Middle Bronze Age, period from c 1500 – 1000 BC
Bronze Age (Late)	Late Bronze Age, period from c 1000 – 700 BC
CAT	Colchester Archaeological Trust
CIfA	Chartered Institute for Archaeologists
context	a single unit of excavation, which is often referred to numerically, and can be any feature, layer or find.
cropmark	an archaeological site no longer visible on the ground due to the removal of

	upstanding remains (often by ploughing). The sites are recorded from aerial photographs by differential crop growth over buried features such as pits, ditches and walls
ECC	Essex County Council
ECCHEA	Essex County Council Historic Environment Advisor
ECCPS	Essex County Council Place Services
EHER	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
Iron Age (Early)	Early Iron Age, period from c 600 – 400BC
Iron Age (Middle)	Middle Iron Age, period from c 400 – 100BC
Iron Age (Late)	Late Iron Age (LIA), period from c 100 – 50 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
Neolithic	period from c 4000 – 2500 BC
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
ws	written scheme of investigation

11 Contents of archive

Finds: One box

Paper record

One A4 document wallet containing:

The report (CAT Report 1828)

Original site records (notes and section drawing)

Photographic thumbnails and log

Inked sections

Digital record

The report (CAT Report 1828)

Photographs, photographic thumbnails and log

Graphics files

Survey data

12 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 Colchester Museum under EHER code ALFL21 and the Archaeological Data Service.

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Colchester Archaeological Trust

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

tel.: 01206 501785

email: sv@catuk.org

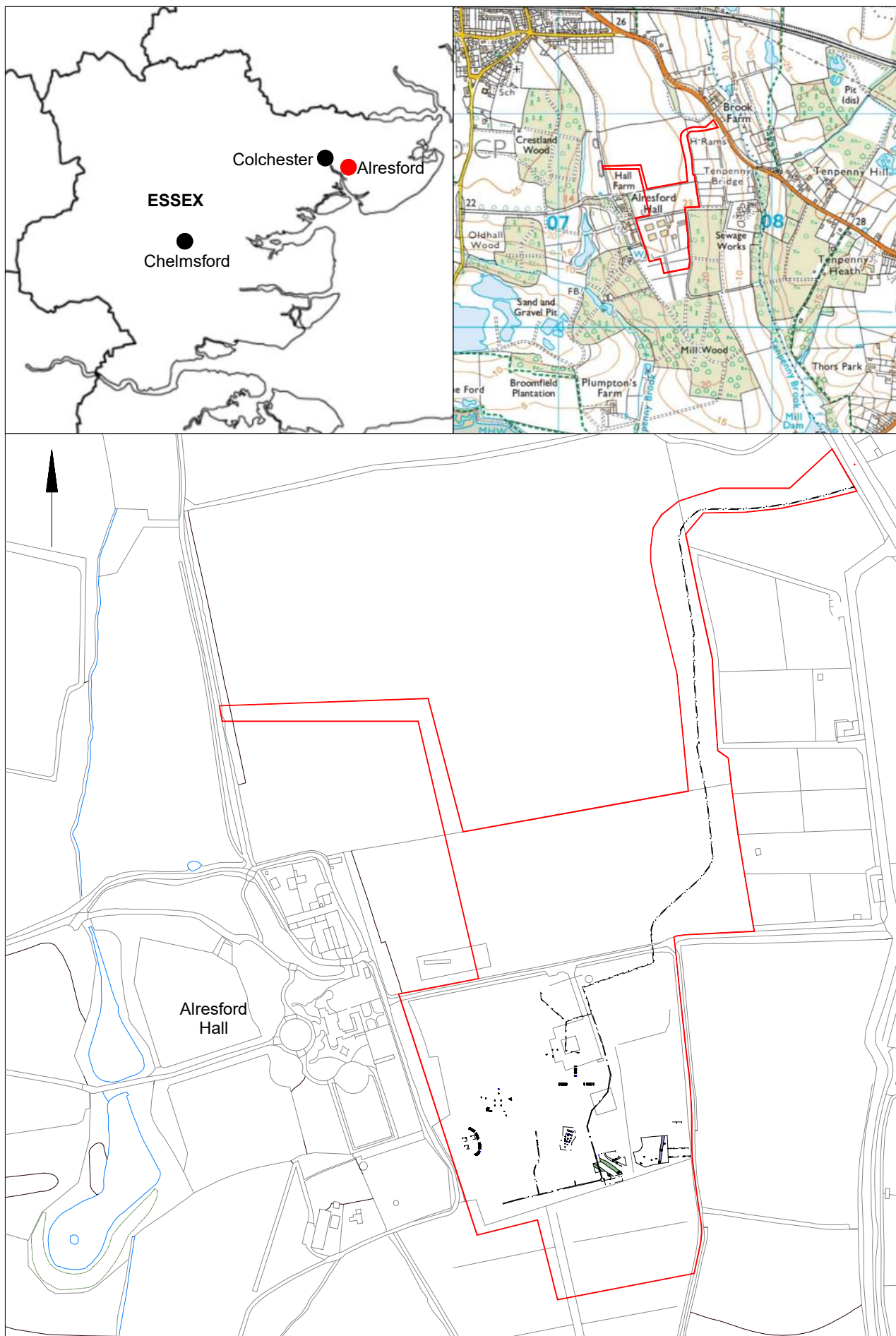
Checked by: Philip Crummy

Date: 29/07/2022

Appendix 1 Context List

Area	Context	Finds no.	Context type	Description	Date
Main park area	L1	-	Topsoil	Soft dry medium grey/brown sandy silt 0.09-0.27m thick	Modern
All	L2	14	Make-up layer	Soft dry medium grey/brown sandy silt and inclusions of: stone 10% 0.11-0.42m thick	Modern
All	L3	-	Natural	Soft dry light/medium yellow/orange sand and inclusions of: gravel 0% stone 25% 0.33-0.41m below current ground level	Post-glacial
Service trench	L4	-	Ploughsoil	Soft dry medium grey/brown sandy silt 0.30-0.41m thick	Modern
Service trench, car park, tank trench	F1	4	Ditch	Soft dry medium grey/brown sandy silt with charcoal flecks and inclusions of: stone 7% Exposed length 21.30m average width 1.65m and average depth 0.55m	Middle Iron Age?
Service trench, car park, tank trench	F2	1	Ditch	Soft dry light grey/brown sandy silt with charcoal flecks and inclusions of: stone 7% Exposed length 17.82m average width 2.30m and average depth 0.61m	Late Iron Age?
Car park	F3	2, 3	Curvilinear ditch	Soft light grey/brown sandy silt with charcoal flecks and inclusions of: stone 7% Exposed length 16.50m, average width 0.95m and average depth 0.27m	Middle Iron Age
Car park	F4	-	Ditch	Soft moist light grey/brown sandy silt with charcoal flecks and inclusions of: stone 10% Exposed length 18.60m, average width 1.21m and average depth 0.42m	Undated
Car park	F5	-	Pit	Soft moist light grey sandy silt with charcoal flecks 0.36m by 1.85m and 0.17m deep.	Undated
Car park	F6	5, 6, 11	Ditch	Soft moist medium/dark grey sandy silt and inclusions of: stone 15% Exposed length 23.74m, average width 1.65m and average depth 0.57m	Late Iron Age/early Roman
Car park	F7	7	Pit	Soft moist medium/dark grey/brown sandy silt with charcoal flecks and inclusions of: stone 5% pot 15% Diameter c 0.47m and 0.19m deep	Late Bronze Age
Car park	F8	8, 9	Pit	Soft moist light grey/brown silty sand 0.96m by 0.40m and 0.31m deep	Middle Bronze Age
Car park	F9	<1>	Pit	Soft moist dark grey/black silty sand c 0.40m in diameter and 0.08m deep	Undated
Car park	F10	10	Pit	Soft moist/wet medium grey/brown sandy silt with charcoal flecks and inclusions of: stone 5% 0.96m by 0.40m and 0.31m deep	Middle Bronze Age
Car park drainage	F11	-	Ditch	Soft firm light grey sandy silt with charcoal flecks and inclusions of: stone 5% 0.95m wide and 0.29m deep	Undated

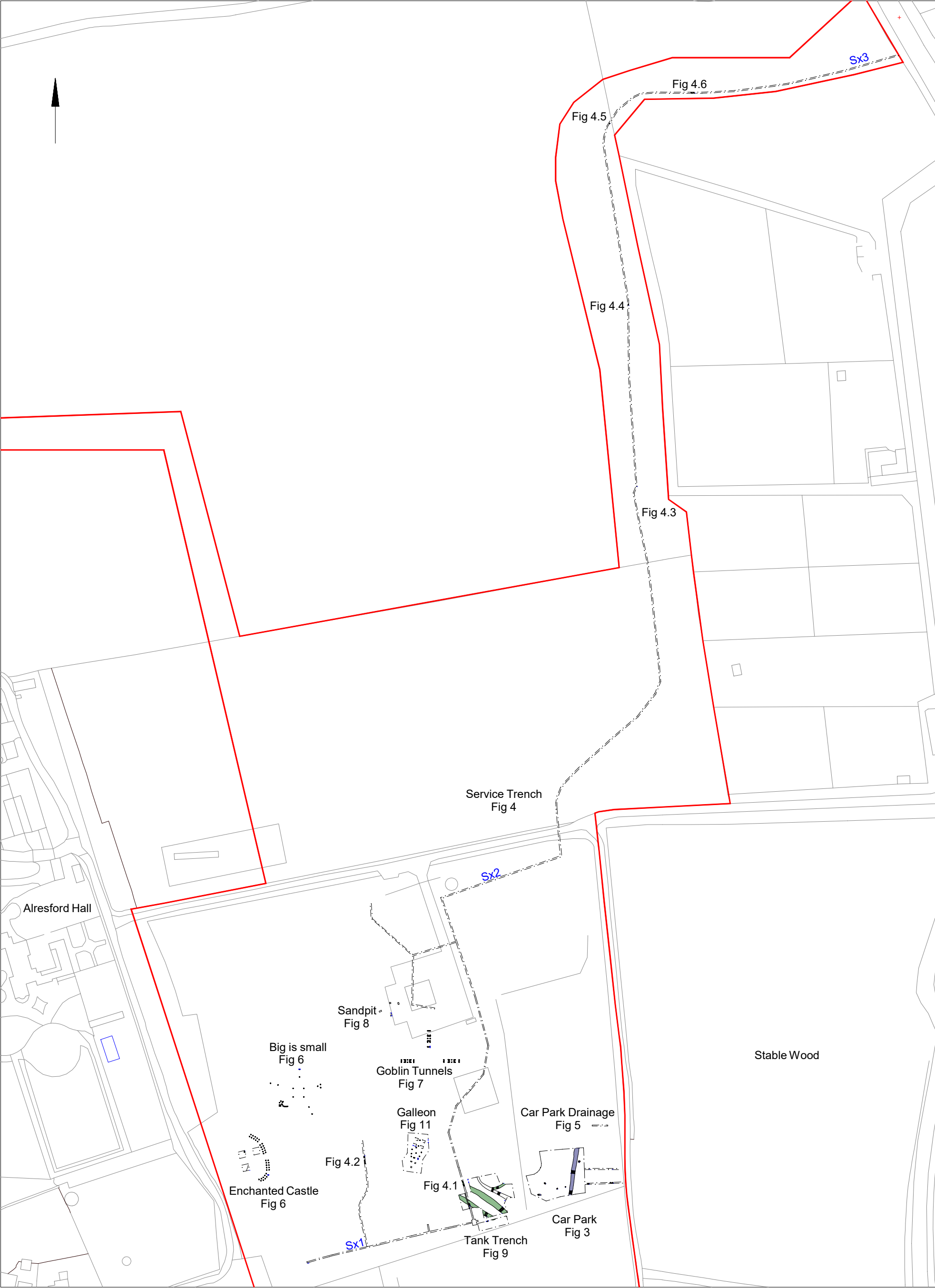
Car park drainage	F12	-	Ditch	Loose moist/wet medium/dark grey/brown sandy silt with charcoal flecks and inclusions of: stone 15% 1.74m wide and 0.49m deep	Undated
Service trench	F13	12	Ditch	Friable medium grey/brown sandy silt 3.90m wide and dug to 0.80m	Undated
Service trench	F14	-	?Pit	Firm light grey sandy silt and inclusions of: stone 70% 0.32m by 0.20m and 0.28m deep	Undated
Service trench	F15	-	?Pit	Friable medium/dark grey/brown loamy silt with charcoal flecks and inclusions of: stone 2% 0.76m by 0.46m and 0.36m deep	Undated
Service trench	F16	-	?Pit	Firm light/medium grey/brown sandy silt and inclusions of: stone 30% 0.40m by 0.27m and 0.34m deep	Undated
Service trench	F17	-	Ditch	Firm light/medium grey/brown sandy silt and inclusions of: stone 10% 1.67m wide and dug to a depth of 0.43m	Modern
Enchanted castle	F18	-	?Ditch/pit	Firm medium grey/brown sandy silt and inclusions of: stone 30%	Undated
Enchanted castle	F19	15	Pit	Friable medium grey/brown loamy silt and inclusions of: stone 45% 0.72m by 0.58m and 0.39m deep	Iron Age?
Tank trench	F20	-	Pit	Soft medium grey/brown sandy silt 0.61m by 0.38m and 0.24m deep	Undated
Tank trench	F21	-	Pit	Soft medium grey/brown sandy silt 0.41m by 0.30m and 0.32m deep	Undated



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Fig 1 Site location.

0 100 m
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Fig 2 Results.





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Fig 3 Car Park results.

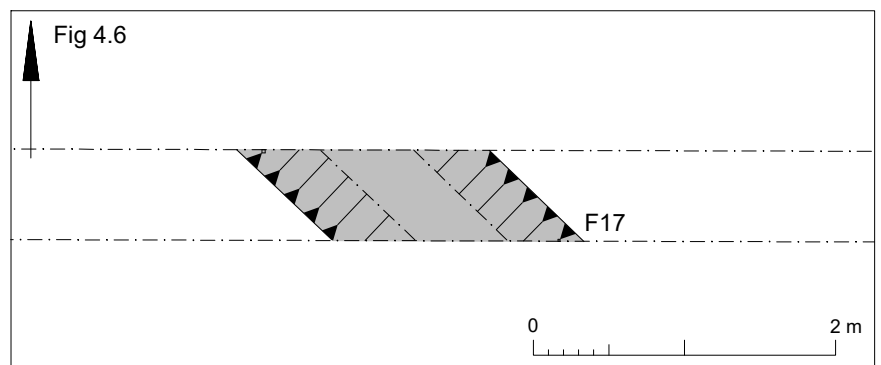
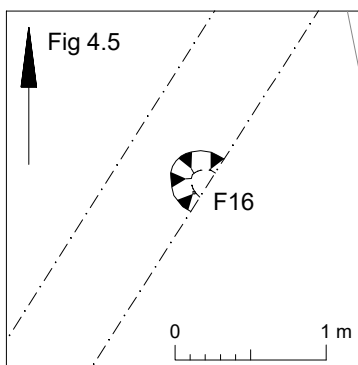
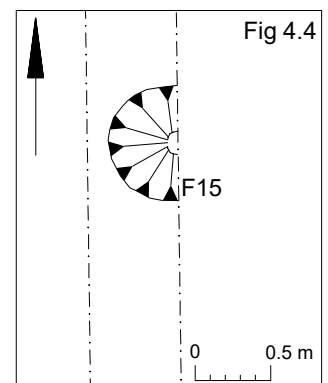
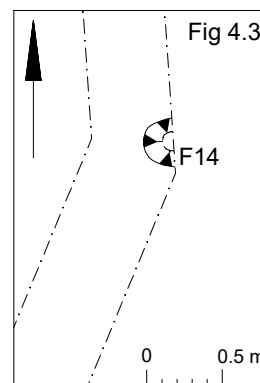
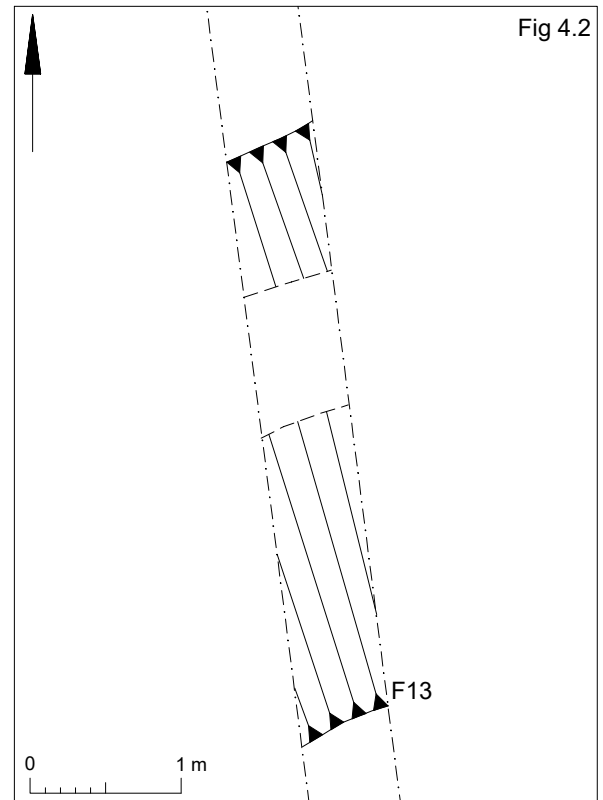
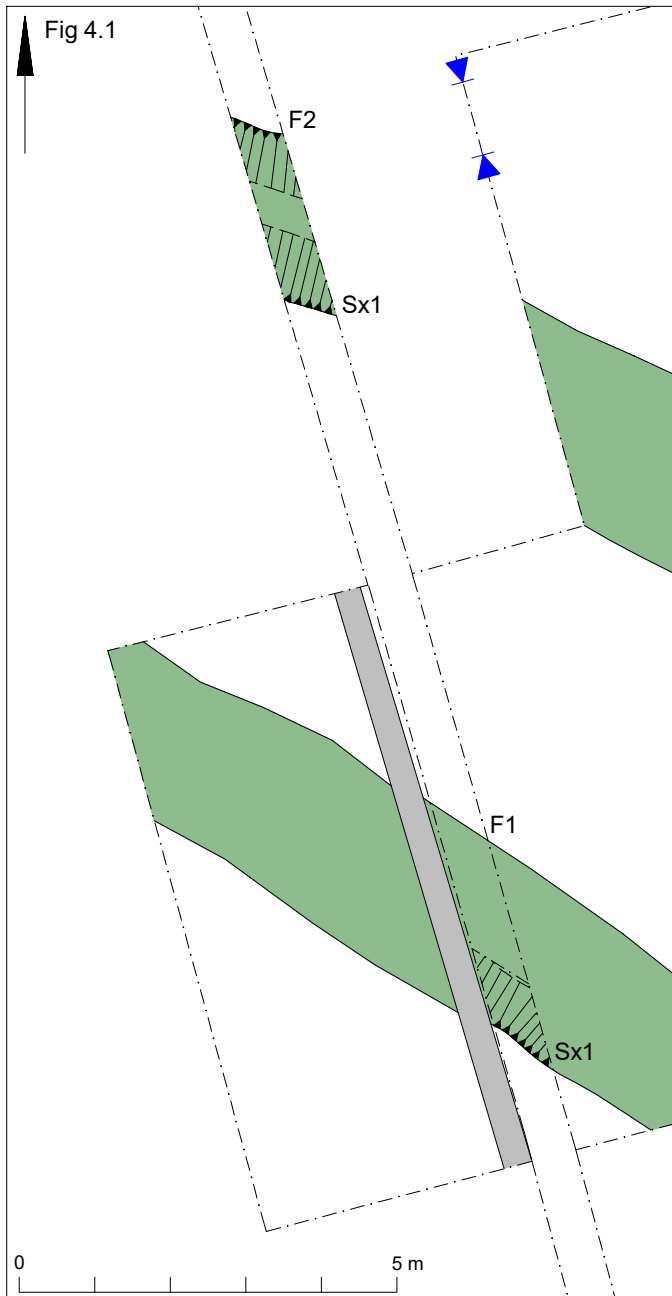
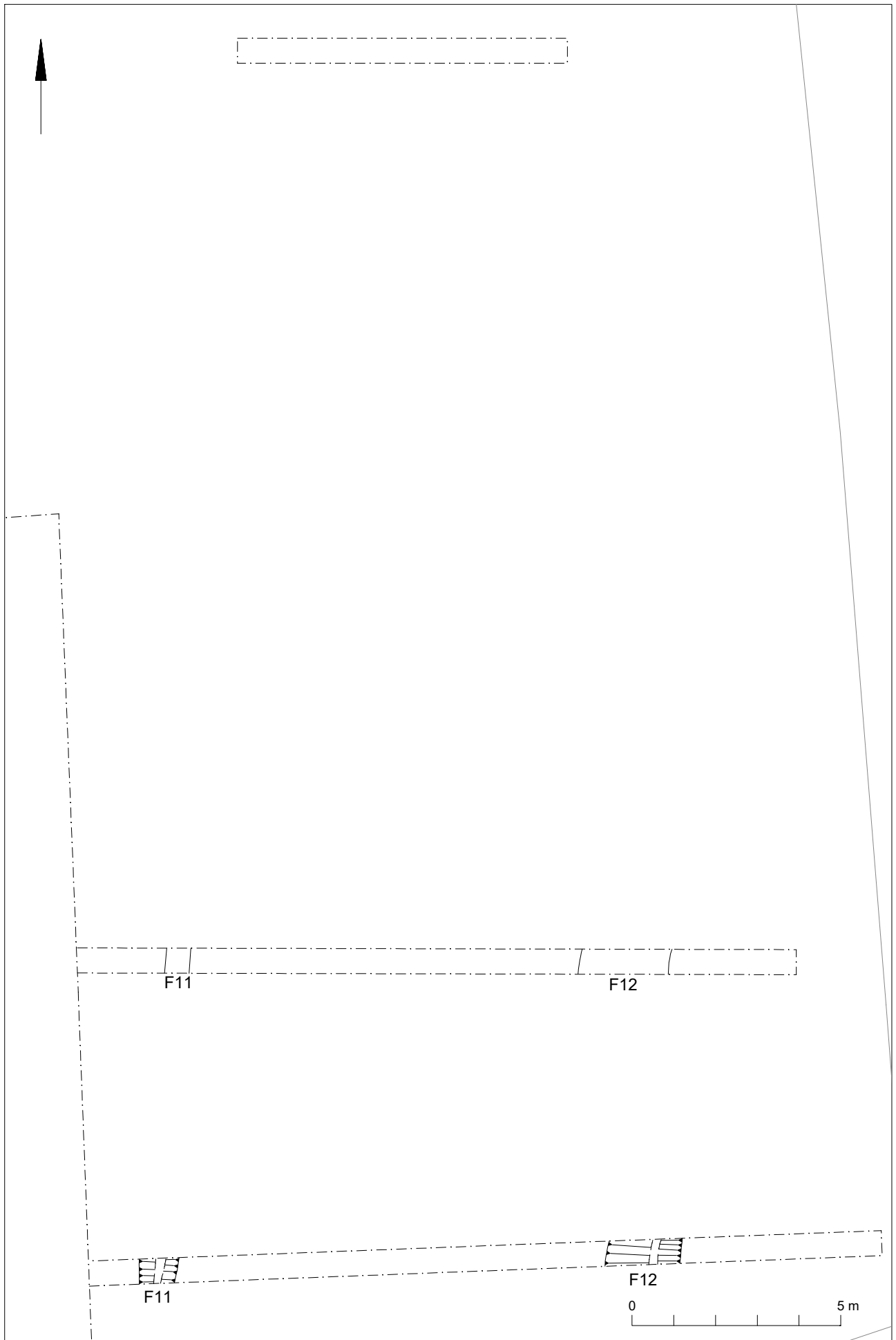


Fig 4 Service Trench results.



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Fig 5 Car Park Drainage results.

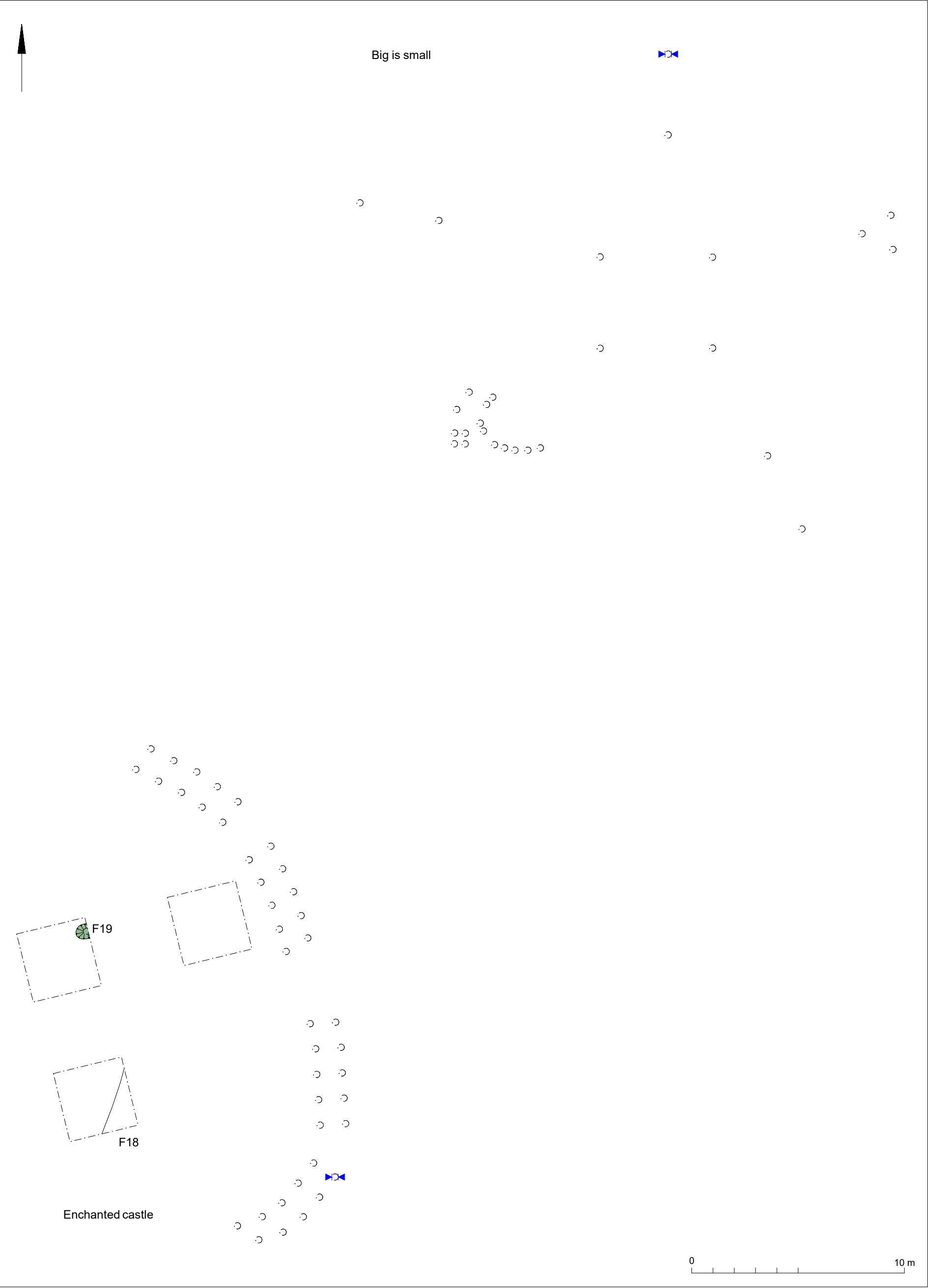
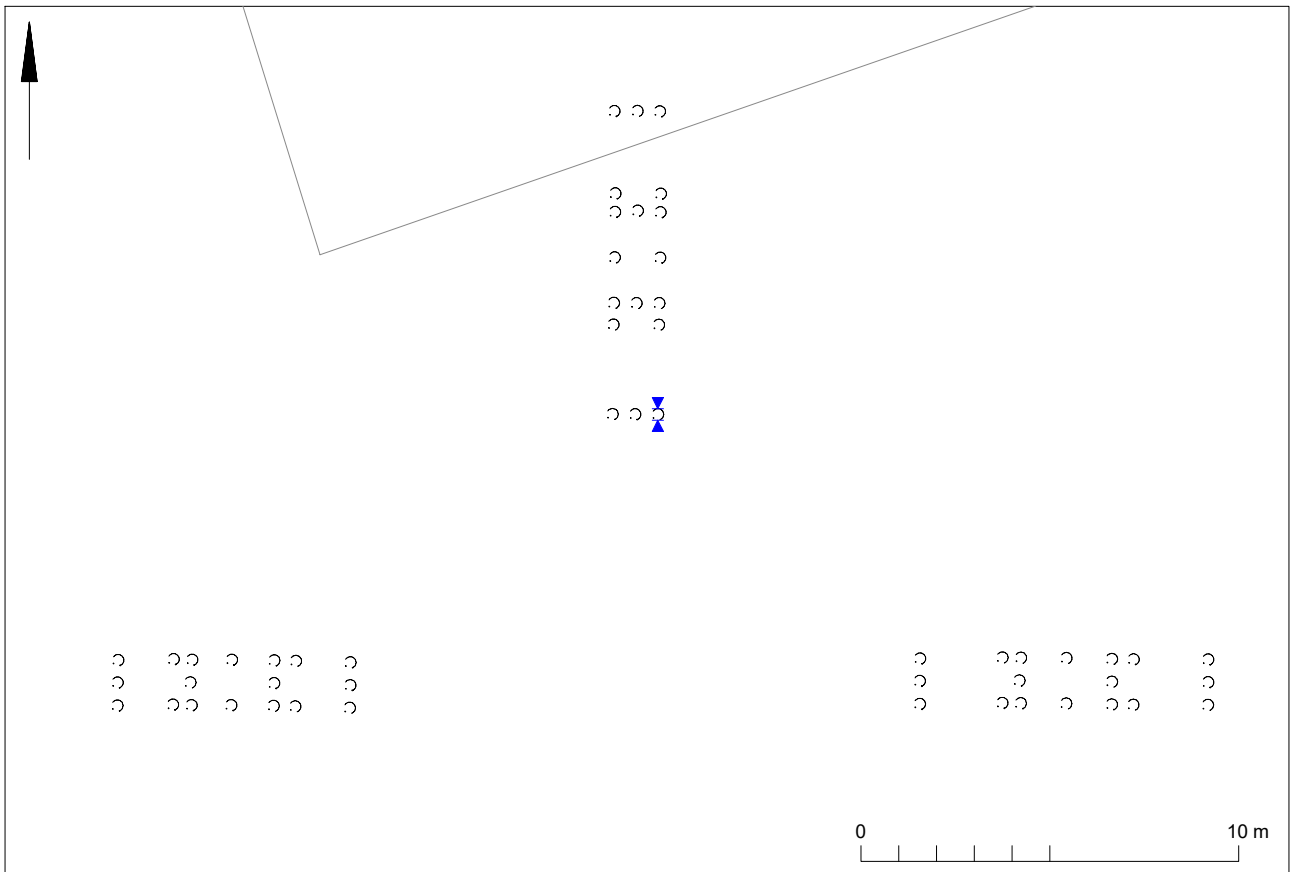
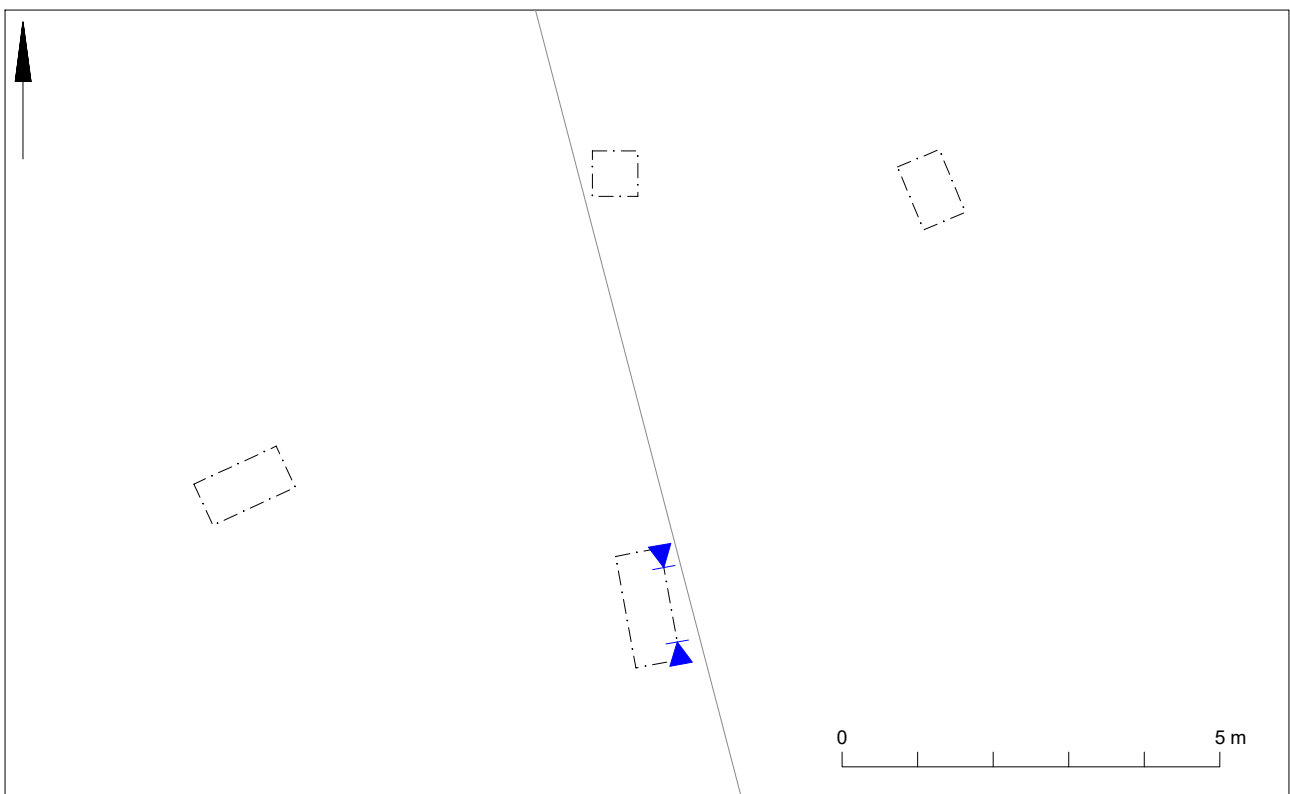


Fig 6 Enchanted Castle and Big is Small results.



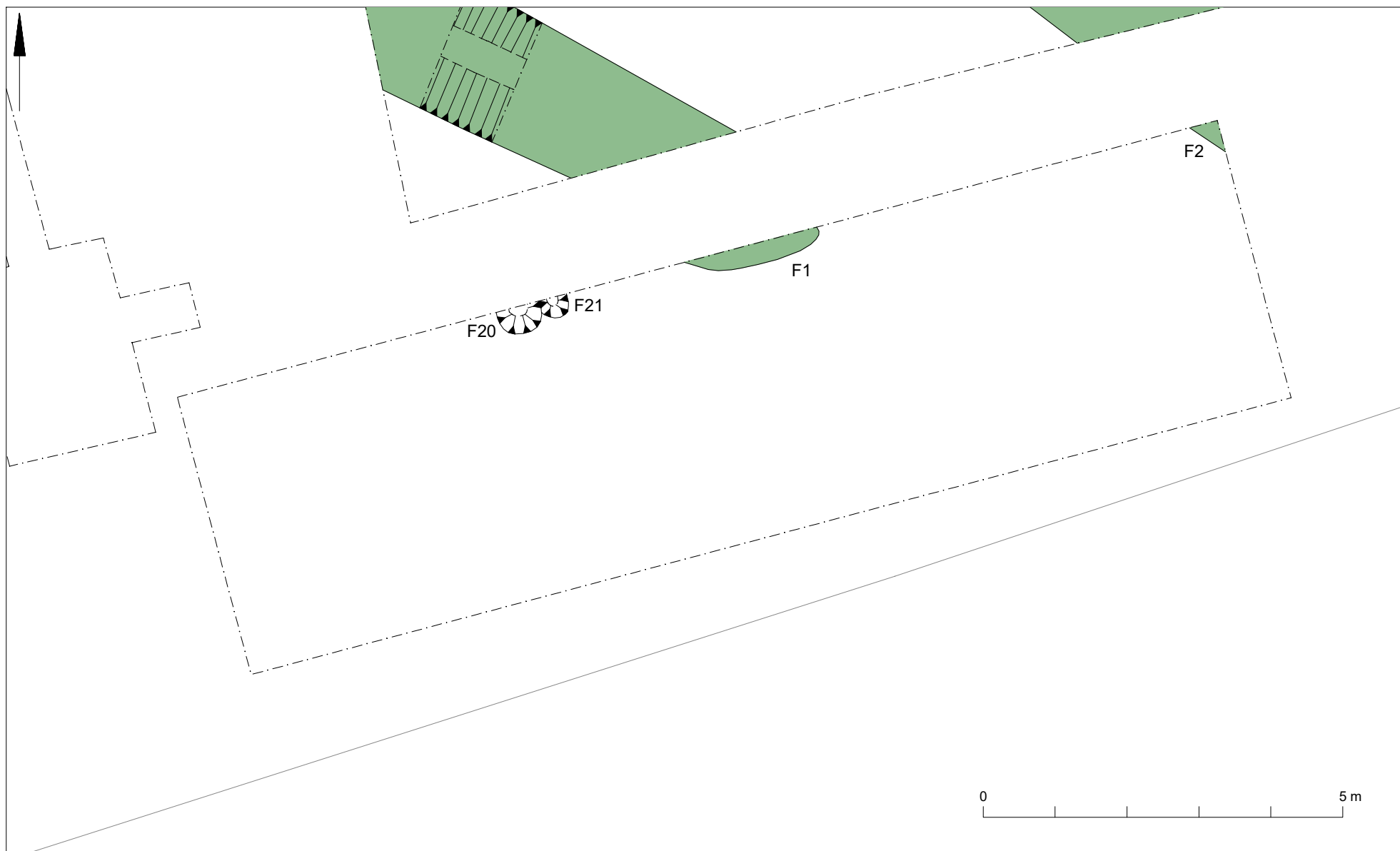
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Fig 7 Goblin Tunnel results.



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Fig 8 Sandpit results.



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Fig 9 Tank Trench results.

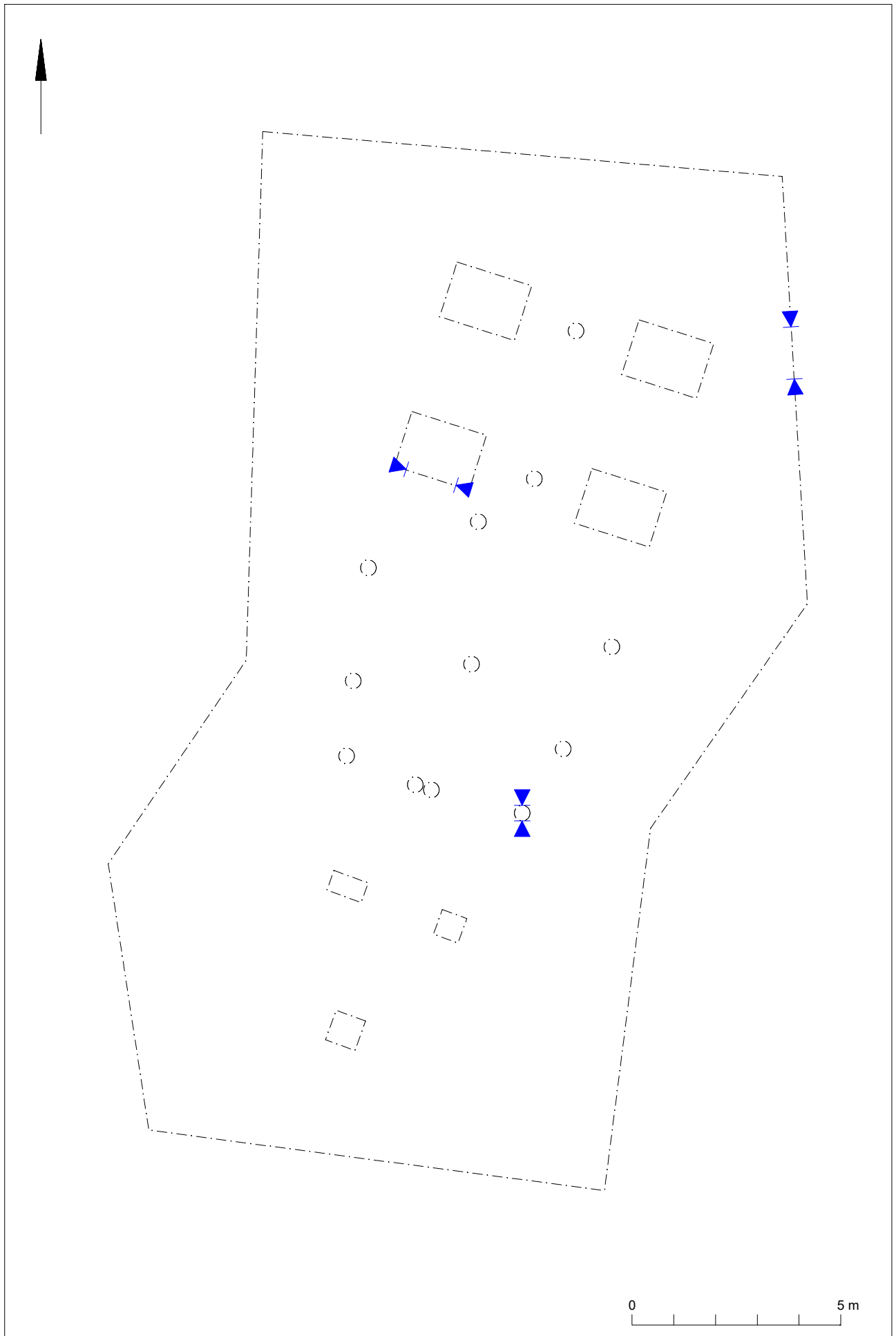


Fig 10 Galleon results.

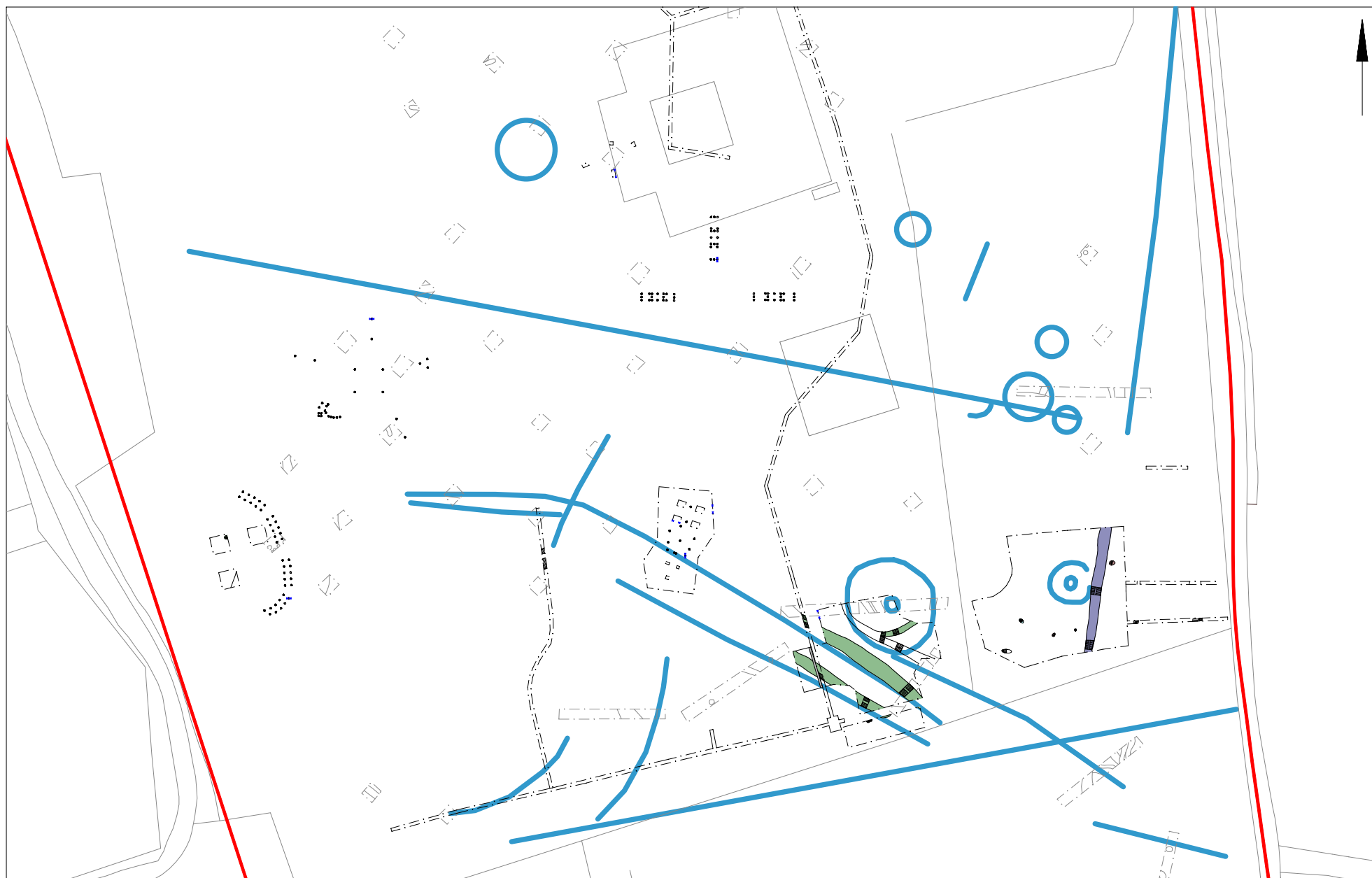


Fig 11 Results in relation to the evaluation results (grey) and cropmarks (blue, not rectified).

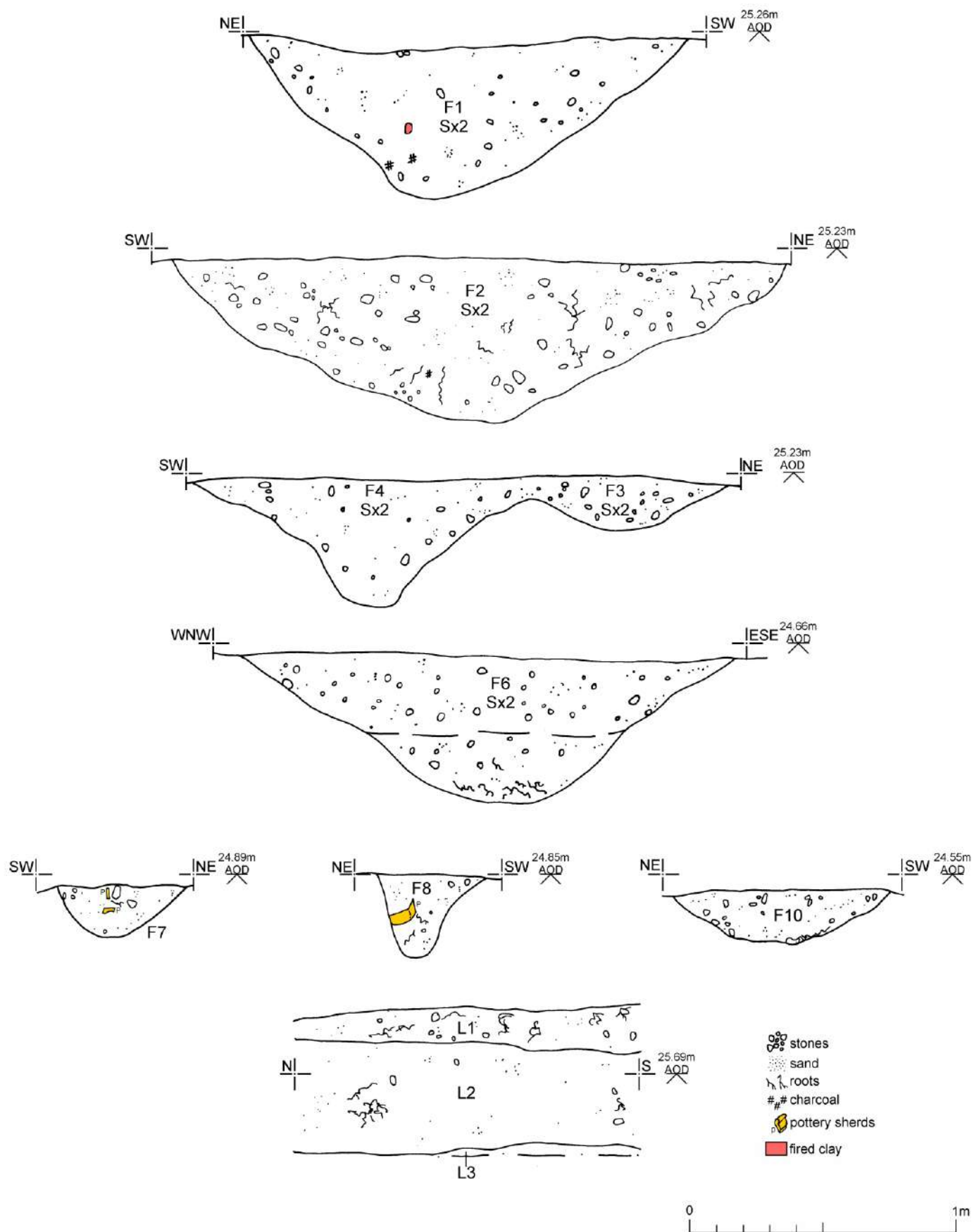


Fig 12 Feature and representative sections from the Car Park.

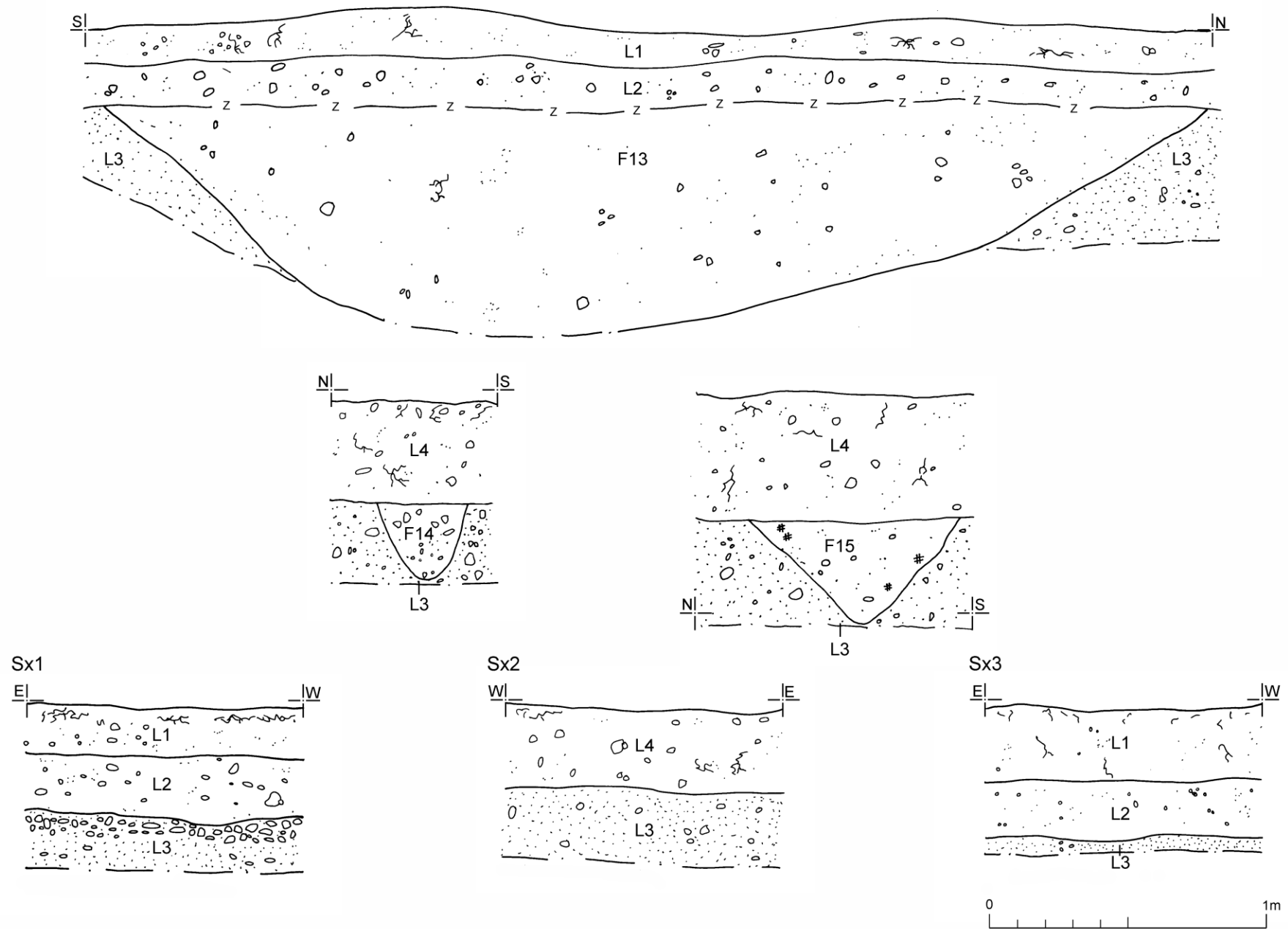
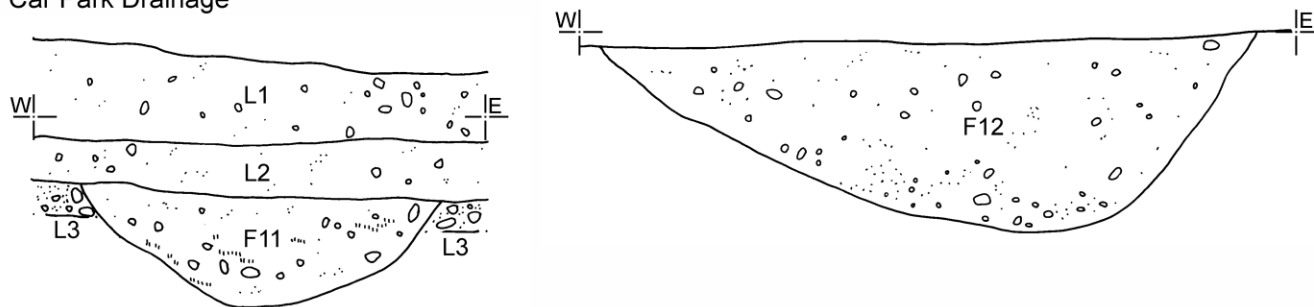
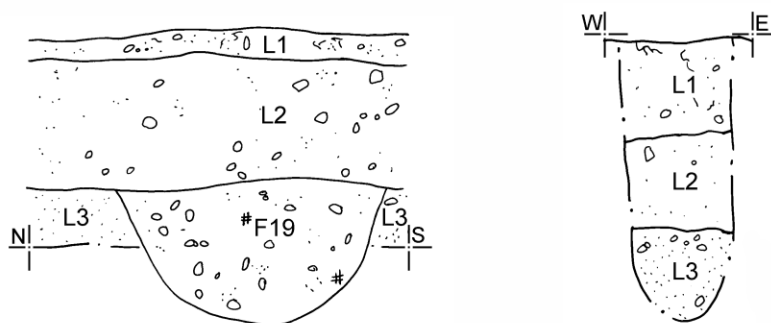


Fig 13 Feature and representative sections from the Service Trench.

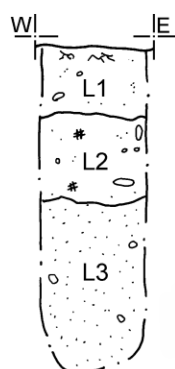
Car Park Drainage



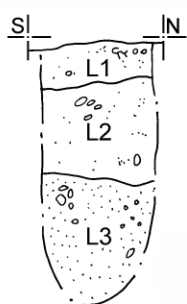
Enchanted Castle



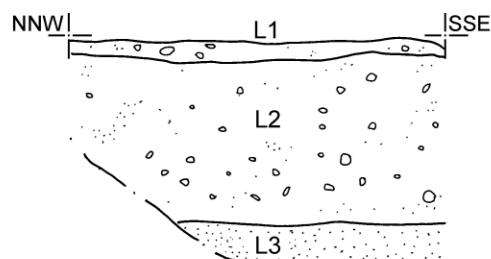
Small is Big



Goblin Tunnels



Sandpit



Tank Trench

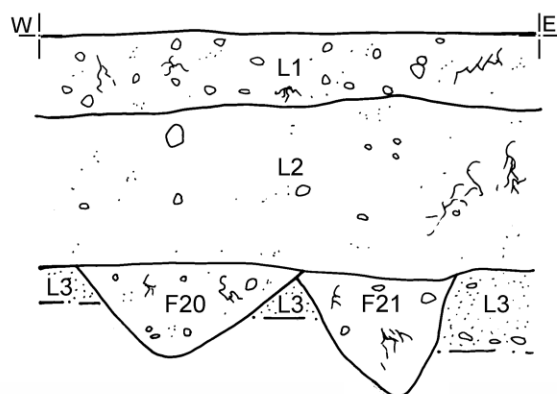


Fig 14 Feature and representative sections from the Car Park Drainage, Enchanted Castle, Small is Big, Goblin tunnels, Sandpit and Tank Trench

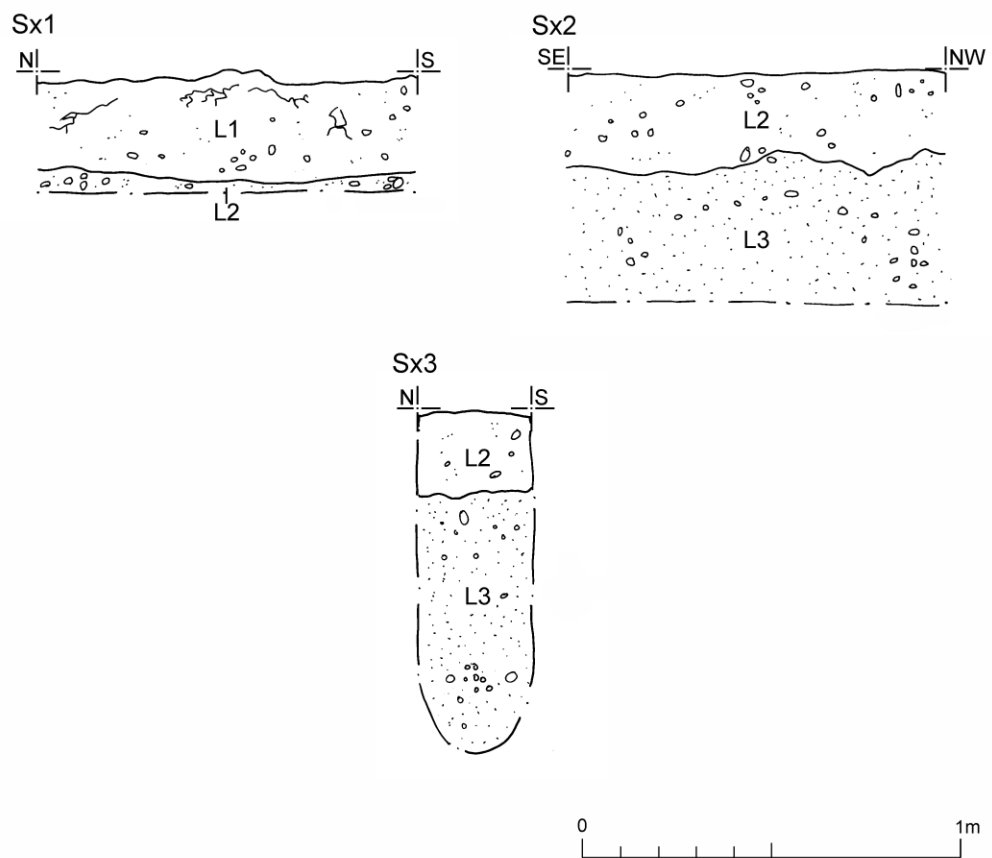


Fig 15 Representative sections from the Galleon.

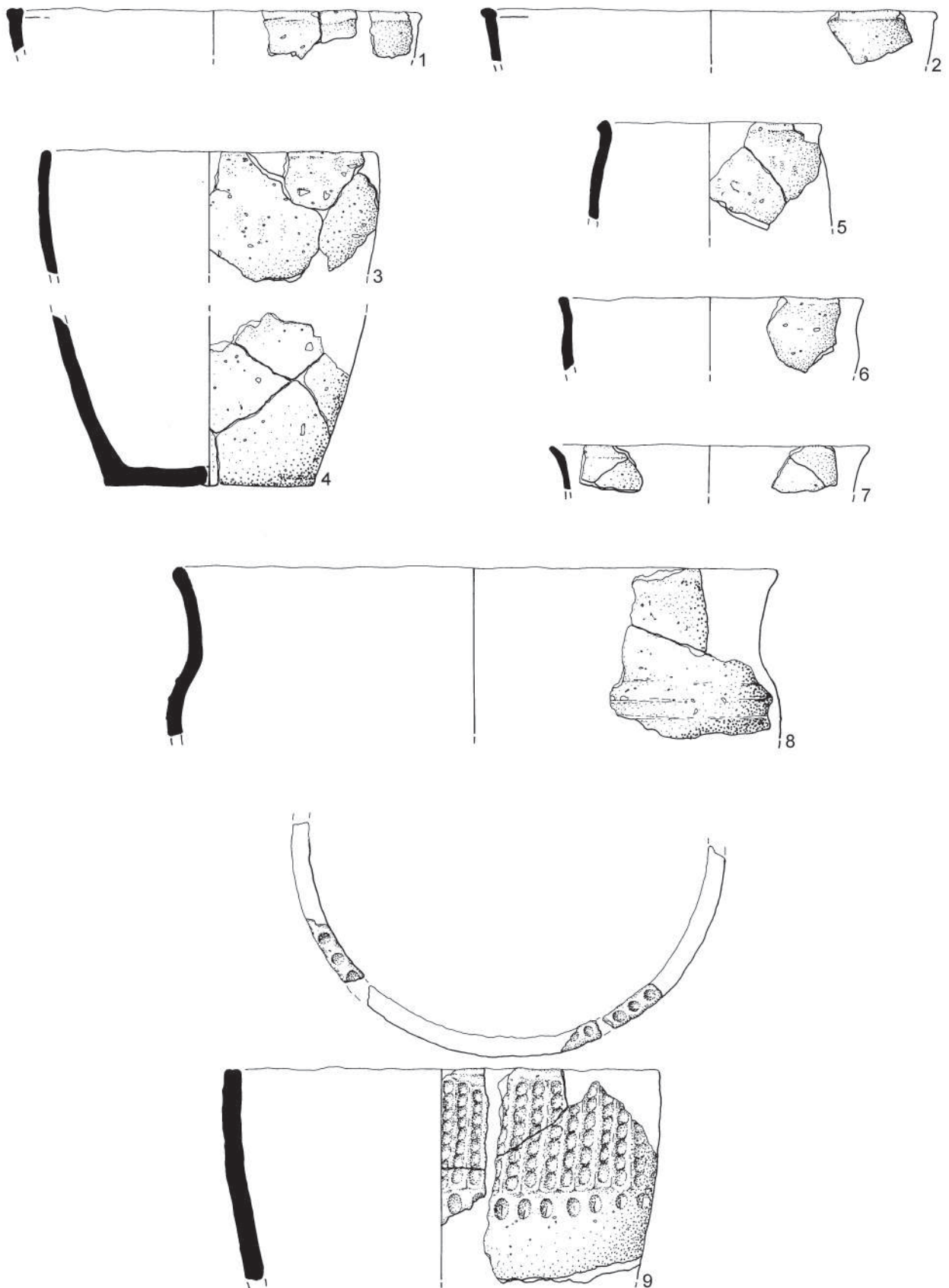


Fig 16 Prehistoric pottery from F7 (1-8) and F10 (9).

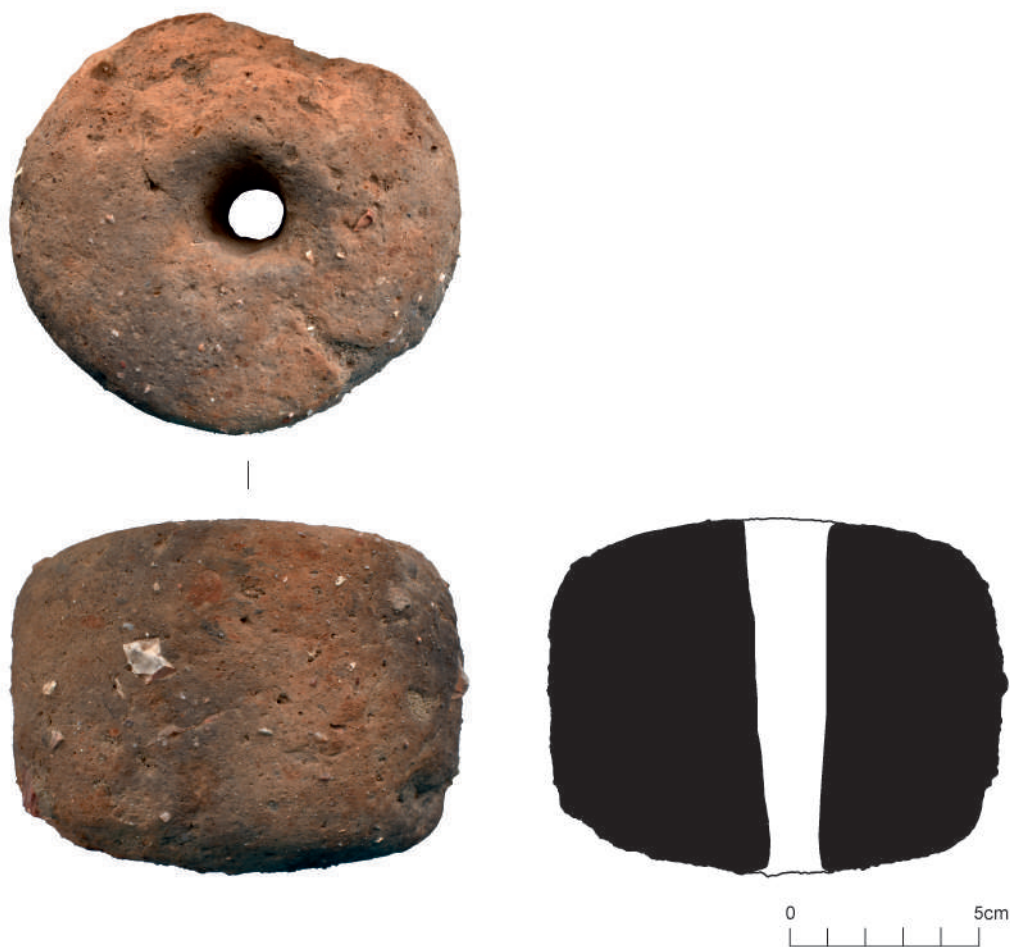


Fig 17 Bronze Age loomweight SF1.

Summary for colchest3-425790

OASIS ID (UID)	colchest3-425790
Project Name	Archaeological monitoring at Alresford Hall, Alresford, Colchester, CO7 8AY
Sitename	Alresford Hall, Alresford, Colchester
Activity type	WATCHING BRIEF
Project Identifier(s)	2021/07b
Planning Id	19/01856/FUL
Reason For Investigation	Planning requirement
Organisation Responsible for work	Colchester Archaeological Trust
Project Dates	20-Jul-2021 - 01-Dec-2021
Location	Alresford Hall, Alresford, Colchester NGR : TM 07516 20452 LL : 51.8440876771899, 1.01116736522056 12 Fig : 607516,220452
Administrative Areas	Country : England County : Essex District : Tendring Parish : Alresford
Project Methodology	Several areas of groundworks were mechincally-excavated under the supervision of a CAT archaeologist.
Project Results	Archaeological monitoring was carried out on land at Alresford Hall, Ford Lane, Essex in advance of the construction of an adventure play-park. The site is located adjacent to Alresford Hall, a Grade II listed building, within an area of known cropmarks. Following a phase of evaluation work, a small excavation was carried out as well as several areas of monitoring. This phase of work revealed an area that was sporadically inhabited from the Middle Bronze Age until the early Roman period. Notable features include a possible linear trackway, ring-ditch and a pit which produced an almost complete Bronze Age loomweight.
Keywords	Ring Ditch - LATE IRON AGE - FISH Thesaurus of Monument Types Field System - LATE IRON AGE - FISH Thesaurus of Monument Types Ditch - ROMAN - FISH Thesaurus of Monument Types Cremation Pit - UNCERTAIN - FISH Thesaurus of Monument Types Pit - BRONZE AGE - FISH Thesaurus of Monument Types Loomweight - MIDDLE BRONZE AGE - FISH Archaeological Objects Thesaurus Jar - BRONZE AGE - FISH Archaeological Objects Thesaurus Urn - MIDDLE BRONZE AGE - FISH Archaeological Objects Thesaurus Bowl - BRONZE AGE - FISH Archaeological Objects Thesaurus Coin - ROMAN - FISH Archaeological Objects Thesaurus
Funder	
HER	Essex HER - unRev - STANDARD
Person Responsible for work	S, Veasey

HER Identifiers	HER Event No - ALFL21
Archives	Physical Archive, Documentary Archive - to be deposited with Colchester & Ipswich Museum Service (Colchester Collection); Digital Archive - to be deposited with Archaeology Data Service Archive;