Colchester Archaeological Trust

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Archaeological evaluation by trial-trenching at Pells Farm, 90 Burrs Road, Clacton-on-Sea, Essex, CO15 4LF: February 2026



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ECC code: EEX63202

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commissioned by Wayne Chapman, Frank Oliver Group on behalf of Frank Oliver Group

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1 Summary

An archaeological evaluation (four trial-trenches) was carried out at Pells Farm, 90 Burrs Road, Clacton-on-Sea, Essex in advance of the construction of four new dwellings and a double garage. The evaluation revealed five brick wall foundations, a ditch and a natural feature. The ditch and natural feature were undated. The brickwork of the five wall foundations dates to the 18th to mid-19th century. In relation to the tithe apportionment map of 1841 and OS map of 1896, the wall foundations likely align to agricultural buildings present on the maps.

2 Introduction (Fig 1)

This is the report for an archaeological evaluation carried out by Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) at Pells Farm, 90 Burrs Road, Clacton-on-Sea, Essex on 18th February 2026. The evaluation took place alongside a Historic England Level 2 historic building recording of the structures proposed for demolition and a level 1 recording for any modern structures, repairs or additions (CAT Report 2264). Work was commissioned by Wayne Chapman on behalf of Frank Oliver Group and took place in advance of the demolition of the extant agricultural buildings, with the retention of the farmhouse, followed by the erection of four new dwellings and a double garage.

As the site lies within an area highlighted by the Essex Historic Environment Record (EHER) as having a high potential for archaeological remains, an archaeological condition was recommended by the Essex County Council Historic Environment Consultant (ECCHEC). This follows the guidelines given in *National Planning Policy Framework* (MHCLG 2025).

All archaeological work was carried out in accordance with *Brief for Archaeological Building Recording and Trial Trenching at 90 Burrs Road, Clacton on Sea* (ECCPS 2026) and a W*ritten Scheme of Investigation* (WSI) prepared by CAT (2026a) in response to the brief.

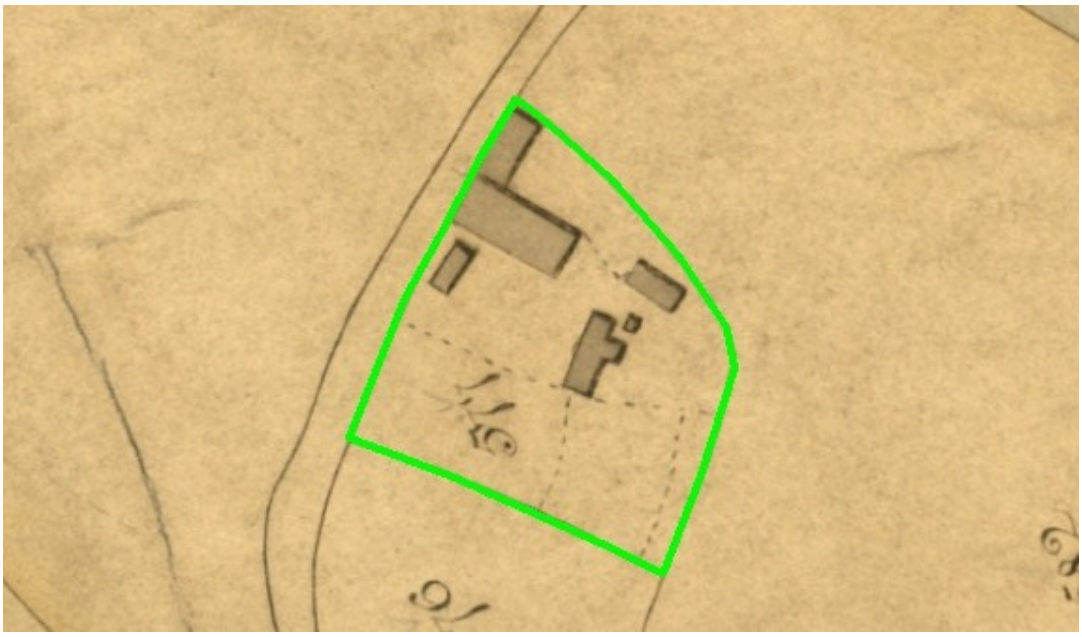
In addition to the project brief and WSI, all fieldwork and reporting was undertaken in accordance with:

- *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment* (*MoRPHE*) (Historic England 2015),
- Professional standards of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists, including its *Code of Conduct* (CIfA 2020a-b, 2023a-b, 2025),
- East of England standards and frameworks published by East Anglian Archaeology (Brown & Glazebrook 2000; Gurney 2003; Medlycott 2011) and the recent review updates on https://researchframeworks.org/eoe/
- Relevant health and safety guidelines and requirements (CAT 2026b).

3 Archaeological background

The following archaeological background includes extracts of the ECC Brief and Essex Historic Environment Records (EHER) held at Essex County Council, County Hall, Chelmsford, Essex (accessible via http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk).

The site proposed for redevelopment is located to the north-east of the historic settlement of Clacton-on-Sea, on the eastern side of Burrs Road. Pells Farm is a historic farmstead, depicted on the tithe apportionment map of 1841 (Map 1). The buildings proposed for demolition comprise three stables and two barns set around a small courtyard. While the configuration of these buildings differs to that depicted on the tithe map, parts of the historic buildings may have been incorporated into the current structures.



Map 1 Extract of the 1841 tithe apportionment map. Pells Farm outlined in green.

Approximately 125m to the south of the proposed development is the site of the former Gunfleet Estuary (EHER 48658). Used as a port and haven in the medieval period, the estuary extended between Frinton and Clacton and may have been tidal as far Weeley, and it has been posited that historically small boats may have been able to venture as far upstream as Thorpe-le-Soken. Documents and maps from the 16th century describe the Gunfleet estuary as a ‘haven’, implying its use for shipping. The channel between the coast and the Gunfleet sands also provided a safe anchorage for larger ships, including the opposing British and Dutch fleets during the Dutch Wars of the later 17th century. A number of landing-places have been identified along the estuary, which were linked by farms and villages on the higher land. Although the estuary continued to be depicted on

coastal maps and sea charts in the 17th and 18th centuries, its scale significantly reduced as it naturally silted up.

The estuary also has associated prehistoric activity, therefore areas close to the former estuary have a high potential for survival of archaeological remains.

The Geology of Britain viewer (1:50,000 scale[1]) shows the bedrock geology of the site to be Thames Group (clay, silt and sand) with superficial deposits of Kesgrave Catchment Subgroup (sand and gravel) in the north-eastern of the site.

4 Aims

The aims of the archaeological evaluation were to record the location, extent, character and significance 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.

Specific project aims were to record:

- Evidence relating to the use/activity relating to the Gunfleet Estuary located to the south.
- Evidence relating to any earlier settlement.

5 Results (Figs 2-5)

Four trial-trenches were machine-excavated under the supervision of a CAT archaeologist. The evaluation was accompanied by a historic building recording of the adjacent farmstead buildings (CAT Report 2264 2026). All trenches were 1.8m wide aside from T4 which was extended to 2.1m wide. Trench 1 (T1) was L-shaped and 13.7m long. Trenches 2 (T2) and 3 (T3) were initially planned to be linear. However, T2 was divided into two smaller trenches due to the presence of a telegraph pole and T3 was not undertaken due to the presence of live services. T2a was L-shaped and measured 4m long. T2b was linear and measured 9.5m long. T4 was completed as per the WSI and measured 8.8m long.

Trench 1

A layer of topsoil (L3, *c* 0.28-0.3m thick) sealed natural (L2). To the east end of the trench were wall foundations F3 and F4 (both were 0.23m wide, one course of red brick with lime mortar). A modern demolition layer (L4) was encountered in the area between the wall foundations (composed of mixed red brick and lime mortar fragments). Both wall foundations were parallel to each other and aligned north-east to south-west. A sample of brick was retained for analysis.

[1] British Geological Survey – https://geologyviewer.bgs.ac.uk/?

Trench 2a

A layer of topsoil (L3) sealed natural (L2). To the northern edge of the trench was brick wall foundation F5 (4.7m long, 0.4m wide and a minimum of four courses deep). The wall was damaged at the north-west end, and it was still attached to a standing building. The wall was aligned north-west to south-east. The wall foundation was covered by topsoil (L3). A sample of brick was retained for analysis.

Trench 2b

In the north of the trench, a modern make up layer (L5, multiple lenses of loam, sand, and angular stones, 0.4m thick) overlaid F6a. In the south of the trench, the topsoil (L3) sealed natural (L2). To the north-of the trench was a L-shaped brick wall foundation (0.37m wide) was uncovered and described as F6a and F6b. F6a was aligned north-east to south-west. At the base of the wall F6a was a modern demolition layer L6 (composed of loose red brick, peg tile and mortar). Wall F6b was aligned north-west to south-east. A sample of brick was retained for analysis.

Trench 4

A modern layer of crush observed in T4 (L1, 0.25m thick) sealed natural (L2). To the north-of the trench was ditch F1 (0.84m wide and 0.25m in depth), with steep sides and a concave base aligned north-west to south-east. To the south was natural feature F2 (1.05m long, 0.97m wide, 0.23m in depth) with steep sides and a concave base. Neither feature contained dating evidence.



Photograph 1 T1, looking south-east.



Photograph 2 F3 and L4 in T1, looking south-east.



Photograph 3 T2a, looking north-west.



Photograph 4 F5 in T2a, looking north-east.



Photograph 5 T2b, F6a and L6, looking south-west.



Photograph 6 F6a and L6, looking north-west.



Photograph 7 T4 and F1, looking south.



Photograph 8 F2, looking north-west.

6 Finds

by Dr Matthew Loughton

The evaluation brought back four brick samples:

F3 (finds no. 4) wall foundation: complete (3,303g) unfrogged brick (230 mm x 120 mm x 60 mm) with creased edge and pale yellow/buff coloured mortar.

F4 (finds no. 1) wall foundation: complete (3,334g) unfrogged brick (225 mm x 120/115 mm x 65 mm) with pale yellow/buff coloured mortar.

F5 (finds no. 2) wall foundation: complete (3,241g) brick (235 mm x 115/110 mm x 65 mm) with shallow long frog (175 mm x 55 mm). Traces of pale yellow/buff coloured mortar.

F6 (finds no. 3) wall foundation: complete (2,8121g) unfrogged brick (215/210 mm x 105 mm x 65/60 mm) with pale yellow/buff coloured mortar.

The unfrogged bricks from F3, F4, and F6 are 18th to early 19th century red bricks, perhaps with a preference towards the later part of this date range, while the frogged example from F5 dates to the early/mid-19th century. This material was not retained.

7 Conclusion

Archaeological evaluation at Pells Farm, 90 Burrs Road, Clacton-on-Sea, Essex, revealed five brick wall foundations, an undated ditch and a natural feature. The brickwork of the five wall foundations dates to the 18th to mid-19th century.

There are no buildings at the farm on the Chapman and André map, which implies all buildings must have been constructed later than 1777. In relation to the tithe apportionment map of 1841 and OS map of 1896, the wall foundations likely align to known agricultural buildings on the maps. F3 and F4 align with the orientation of a large building on the 1841 tithe map and later OS maps and are therefore probably internal walls (although it appears the building has been demolished by 1931). F6a appears on the 1841 map as a wall of a smaller building (see Fig 4).

F5 and F6b align with walls present on the 1896 OS map. F5 appears to be a courtyard wall and F6b appears to be a later addition to the smaller building (see Fig 5).

No activity relating to the Gunfleet Estuary to the south of Pells Farm was uncovered.

8 Acknowledgements

CAT would like to thank Wayne Chapman and the Frank Oliver Group for commissioning and funding the project. The project was managed by A Wightman and C Lister, with fieldwork carried out by N Rayner with X Smith and A Parker-Shirley. Figures were compiled by M Perou and C Hill. The project was monitored for ECCPS by Teresa O'Connor.

9 References

Note: all CAT reports, except for DBAs, are available online in PDF format at https://catuk.org/online-reports/

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10 Abbreviations and glossary

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
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'
layer (L)	distinct or distinguishable deposit (layer) of material
medieval	period from AD 1066 to 1540
modern	period from AD 1901 to present day
natural	geological deposit undisturbed by human activity
NGR	National Grid Reference
OASIS	**O**nline **A**cces**S** to the **I**ndex of Archaeological Investigation**S**, http://oasis.ac.uk/pages/wiki/Main
post-medieval	period from AD 1540 to 1901
section	(abbreviation sx or Sx) vertical slice through feature/s or layer/s
WSI	written scheme of investigation

11 Contents of archive

Finds: Not retained.

Digital:

CAT Report 2260

ECC evaluation brief, CAT written scheme of investigation

Digital photographs

Site data

Survey data

12 Archive deposition

The digital archive is currently held by the Colchester Archaeological Trust but will be permanently deposited with the Archaeology Data Service.

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Distribution list:

Wayne Chapman, Frank Oliver Group

ECC Place Services Historic Environment Advisor

Essex Historic Environment Record, Essex County Council

Appendix 1 Context list

Context	Trench no.	Finds no.	Interpretation	Description	Date
L1	4	-	Tarmac crush	Firm moist medium/dark grey/brown/black sandy silt with brick flecks, tile flecks	Modern
L2	All	-	Natural	Loose/soft moist light/medium yellow/orange/brown sandy silt	Post-glacial
L3	1, 2a, 2b	-	Topsoil	Loose/soft moist dark grey/brown/black sandy loam with brick flecks, tile flecks	Modern
L4	1	-	Demolition layer	Layer composed of mixed red brick fragments and lime mortar	Modern
L5	2b	-	Modern make up layer	Layer composed of multiple lenses of loam, sand, angular stones and sharp grit	Modern
L6	2b	-	Demolition layer	Layer composed of loose red brick, mortar and peg tile	Modern
F1	4	-	Ditch	0.84m wide, 0.25m in depth Friable moist medium brown silty sand and inclusions of: stone 1%	Undated
F2	4	-	Natural feature	1.05m long, 0.97m wide, 0.23m in depth Soft moist medium yellow/brown sandy silt	Undated
F3	1	4	Wall foundation	0.23m wide, one course in thickness Unfrogged red brick bonded in lime mortar wall	18th to early 19th century
F4	1	1	Wall foundation	0.23m wide, one course in thickness Unfrogged red brick bonded in lime mortar wall	18th to early 19th century
F5	2a	2	Wall foundation	4.70m long, 0.40m wide, 4+ courses in thickness Frogged red brick bonded in mortar wall	early to mid 19th century
F6	2b	3	Wall foundation	0.37m wide Unfrogged red brick bonded in mortar wall	18th to early 19th century

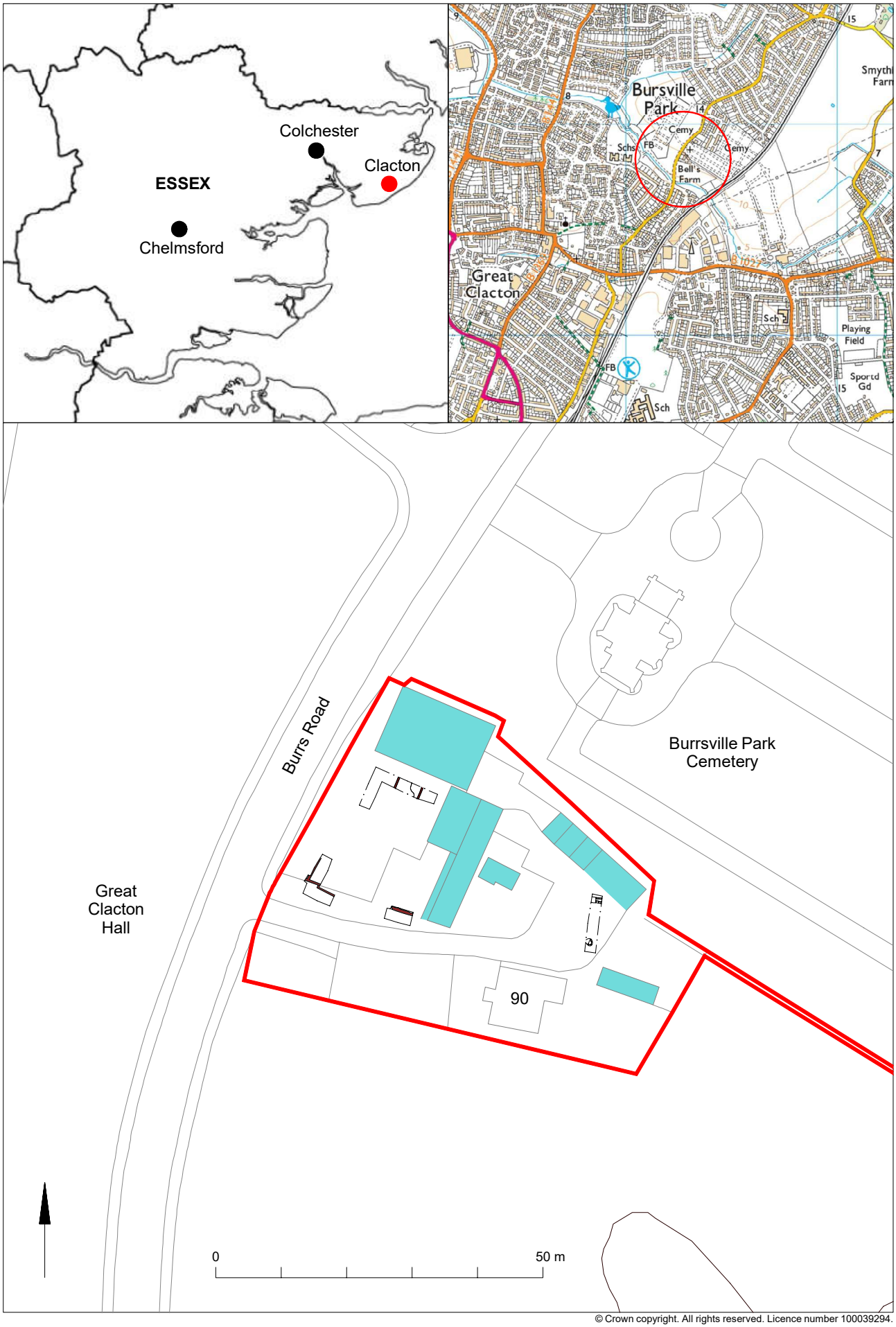


Fig 1 Site location.
Buildings from HBR shown in blue (CAT Report 2264).



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Fig 2 Results.

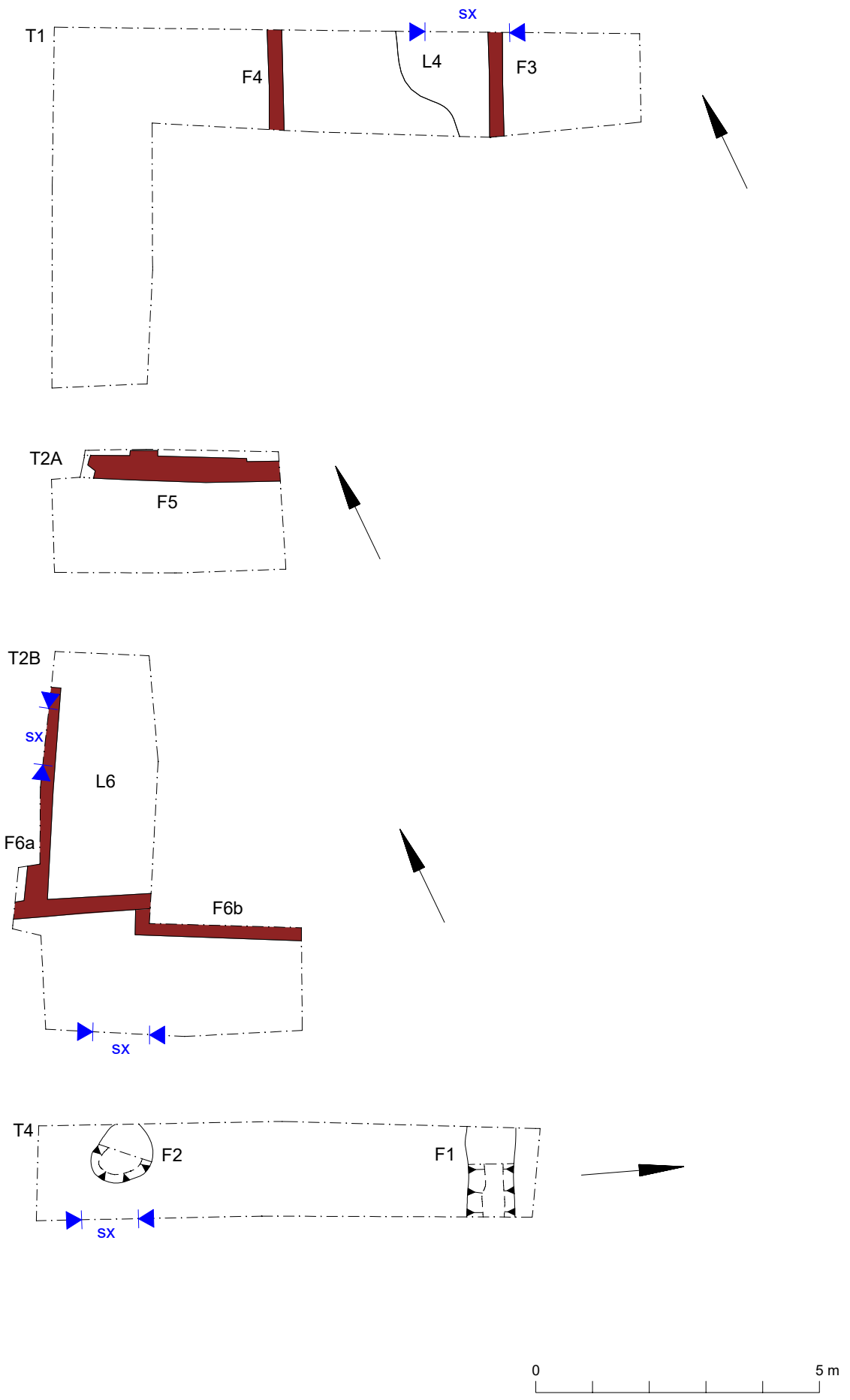
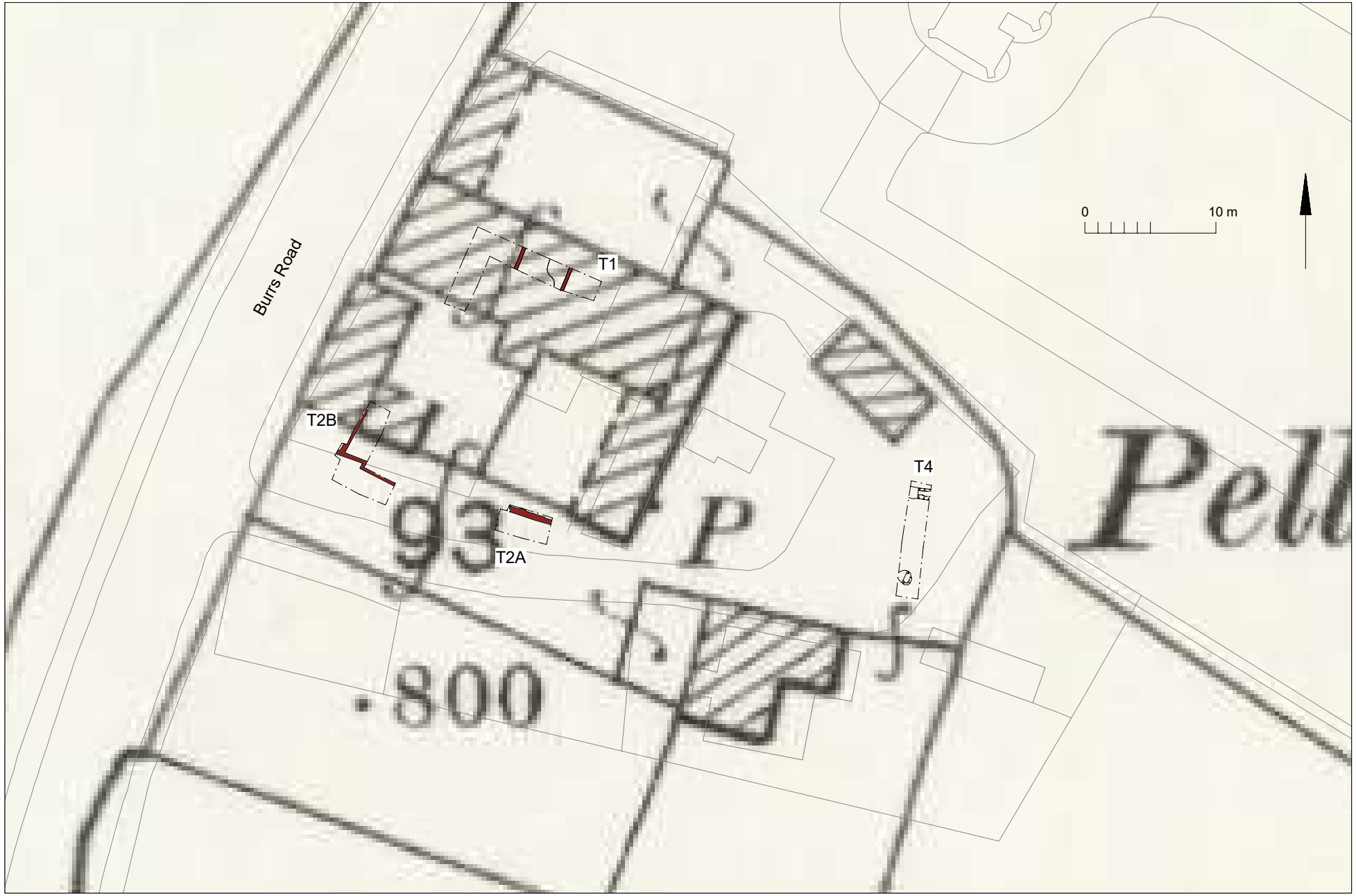


Fig 3 Detailed trench plans.



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Fig 4 Results overlain on the 1841 tithe apportionment map.



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Fig 5 Results overlain on the 1896 OS map.

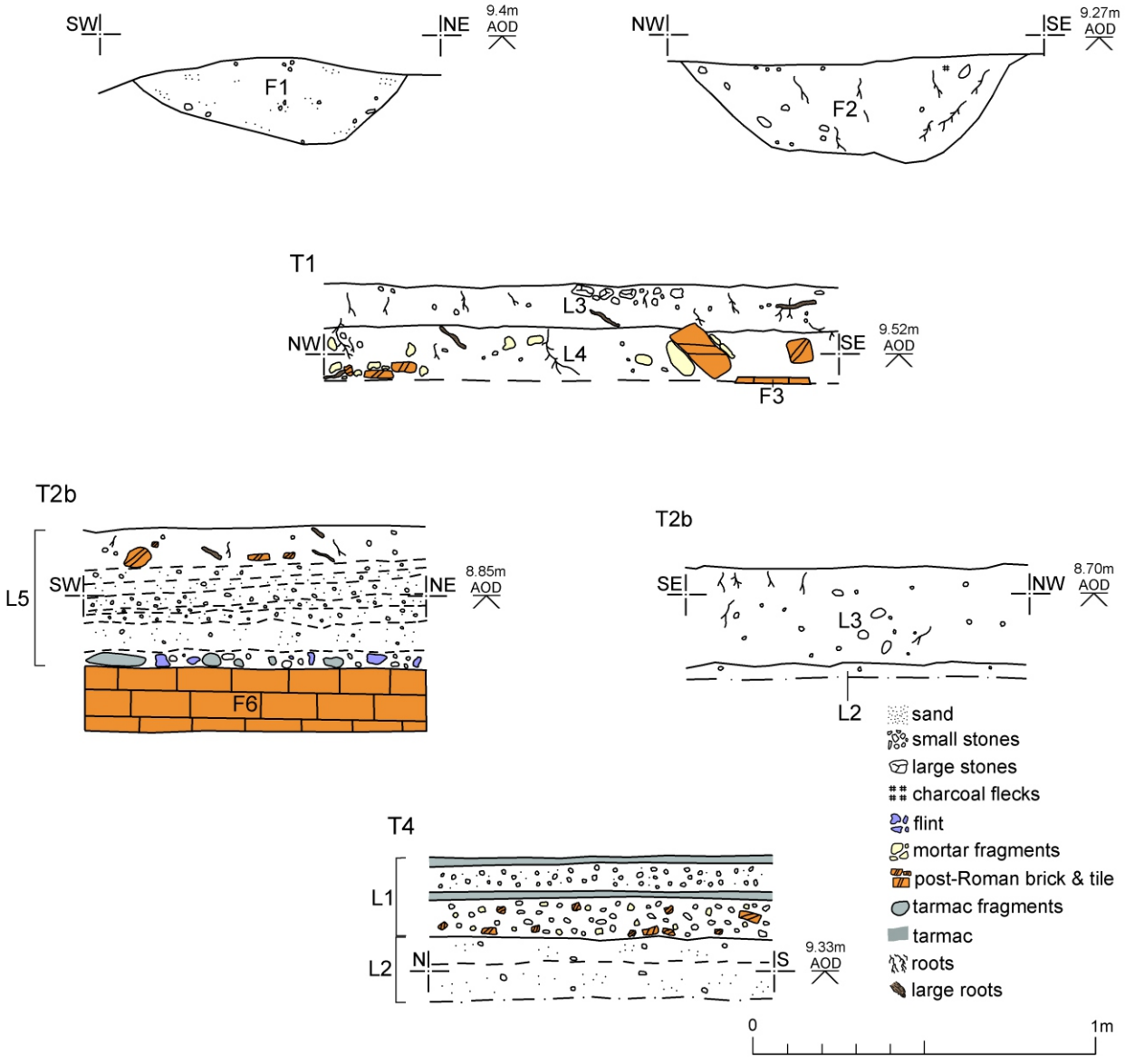


Fig 6 Feature and representative sections.

OASIS Summary for colchest3-540171

OASIS ID (UID)	colchest3-540171
Project Name	Evaluation at Pells Farm, 90 Burrs Road, Clacton-on-Sea, Essex, CO15 4LF
Sitename	Pells Farm, 90 Burrs Road, Clacton-on-Sea, Essex, CO15 4LF
Sitecode	EEX630202
Project Identifier(s)	2026/01c
Activity type	Evaluation
Planning Id	25/01467/FUL
Reason For Investigation	Planning: Post determination
Organisation Responsible for work	Colchester Archaeological Trust
Project Dates	18-Feb-2026 - 18-Feb-2026
Location	Pells Farm, 90 Burrs Road, Clacton-on-Sea, Essex, CO15 4LF NGR : TM 18252 16847 LL : 51.807635124466636, 1.164504098531748 12 Fig : 618252,216847
Administrative Areas	Country : England County/Local Authority : Essex Local Authority District : Tendring Parish : Tendring, unparished area
Project Methodology	Archaeological evaluation (four trial-trenches) as stipulated in the WSI.
Project Results	An archaeological evaluation (four trial-trenches) was carried out at Pells Farm, 90 Burrs Road, Clacton-on-Sea, Essex in advance of the construction of four new dwellings and a double garage. The evaluation revealed five brick wall foundations, a ditch and a natural feature. The ditch and natural feature were undated. The brickwork of the five wall foundations dates to the 18th to mid-19th century. In relation to the tithe apportionment map of 1841 and OS map of 1896, the wall foundations likely align to agricultural buildings present on the maps.
Keywords	Wall - POST MEDIEVAL - FISH Thesaurus of Monument Types Brick - POST MEDIEVAL - FISH Archaeological Objects Thesaurus Ditch - UNCERTAIN - FISH Thesaurus of Monument Types Natural Feature - None - FISH Thesaurus of Monument Types Natural Feature - None - FISH Thesaurus of Monument Types
Funder	Private individual
HER	Essex HER - unRev - STANDARD
Person Responsible for work	A Wightman
HER Identifiers	HER Event No - EEX63202
Archives	Digital Archive - to be deposited with Archaeology Data Service Archive;

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