



Planning, Transport
and Environment

INDEX DATA	RPS INFORMATION
Scheme Title Colchester Eastern approaches Rd.	Details Stage 2 ! Arch Eval.
Road Number	Date
Contractor Colch. Arch. Trust	
County Essex	
OS Reference TMO2	
Single sided ✓ Double sided A3 (Colour ●	

✓

COLCHESTER ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST
Colchester Eastern Approaches Road: Stage Two
Archaeological Evaluation
Part Two: Magdalen Street

Summary

A 3 metre deep exploratory trench at the rear of 154 Magdalen Street revealed no archaeologically significant features. The stratigraphy at this point in the proposed route for the road appears to consist of substantial dumps of relatively late material above natural subsoil.

Background

The following locations were selected for exploratory excavation as part of the brief for evaluation of the archaeological implications of the route for Stage Two of Colchester's Eastern Approaches Road:

- 1) Land north of St Mary Magdalen's Almshouses, Brook Street
- 2) Land north of Magdalen Street
- 3) Land adjacent to the British Rail depot at The Hythe

The site at Brook Street was investigated and reported upon in July, 1993. The subject of this report is Magdalen Street, the second of the sites to become available.

The Site (TM 00302488)

The exploratory trench was located in the north-west corner of the Colchester Enterprise Centre (formerly Affiliated Factors) property at 154 Magdalen Street. This site lies within a strip of land which will be affected by a proposed 130 m long road cutting. It was adopted after preparations for a simpler ground investigation in premises to the west were frustrated by access difficulties.

Results and Interpretation

A 10 m x 2 m trench was dug to a depth of 3 m, revealing the following stratigraphical sequence:

- 1) Concrete. 0.2 m. Modern yard surface.
- 2) Brick rubble. 0.35 m. Modern hardcore.
- 3) Very dark greyish brown sandy loam with a low to medium content of small stones and occasional very small fragments of grey mortar and red brick. 1.5 m. 19th century dumped material.
- 4) Dark brown sandy loam with rare flecks of yellowish brown clay loam and low to medium content of small stones. 1 m. Post-medieval — 19th century.
- 5) Clean gravelly sand.

No manual excavation or cleaning was attempted at the lower levels due to the depth and unstable nature of the trench sides. Dating evidence for layer 3 was fairly common with willow pattern and similar printed pottery present in the soil to an overall depth of 2 metres. Viewed from the ground surface the horizon between layers 3 and 4 was not sharply defined, the latter being distinguished by a gradual lightening in colour and a comparative rarity of datable inclusions. The only finds definitely attributable to layer 4 were a small fragment of peg-tile and a short length of clay tobacco pipe stem which, while not closely datable, at least indicates a post-medieval origin for the deposit. Indeed, it may be that layers 3 and 4 are part of the same phase of 19th century dumping activity. The underlying sand, layer 5, is assumed to be a natural subsoil; again, close inspection was impossible for practical reasons as two major trench collapses occurred while this level was being exposed.

There is a striking difference in subsoil levels between this spot and the areas to either side. Approximately 60 m to east and west, engineers' trial pits (ref: TP105 and TP103) found natural sand at 19.8 m OD, within 1.1 m and 1.3 m of their respective surface levels. In contrast, sandy deposits lay at approximately 15.6 m OD in a trial pit situated 15 m to the north-west (TP104). Both TP104 and the archaeological trench contained substantial levels of modern fill, of which the material in the evaluation trench is almost certainly associated with the 19th century railway cutting works. Curiously, of the four locations, the archaeological trench lay furthest away from the edge of the cutting (12 m), yet contained at least as great a depth of modern fill as TP104 which borders the cutting; also substantially more than that found in TP103 and TP105. A reason for this anomaly might lie in the fact that the evaluation site adjoins Childwell Alley, a centuries-old lane which leads north from a gap between properties in Magdalen Street. In the 1860s this opening could have provided a convenient access from Magdalen Street for traffic involved in excavation of the railway cutting, in which case the ground at this point would need to be lowered to approach the full depth of the cutting, then made up on completion of the works to restore the route of the alley. This is speculative, but would explain why such a depth of late fill exists at this point while the ground to either side was relatively unaffected by railway construction.

Conclusions

The results from this evaluation and two trial pits (TP103, TP104) directly in the path of the proposed Magdalen Street road cutting suggest that the threatened ground is unlikely to be of archaeological value. Although no excavation seems necessary, a precautionary watching brief should be held on unexplored areas affected by the roadworks.

Colchester Archaeological Trust,

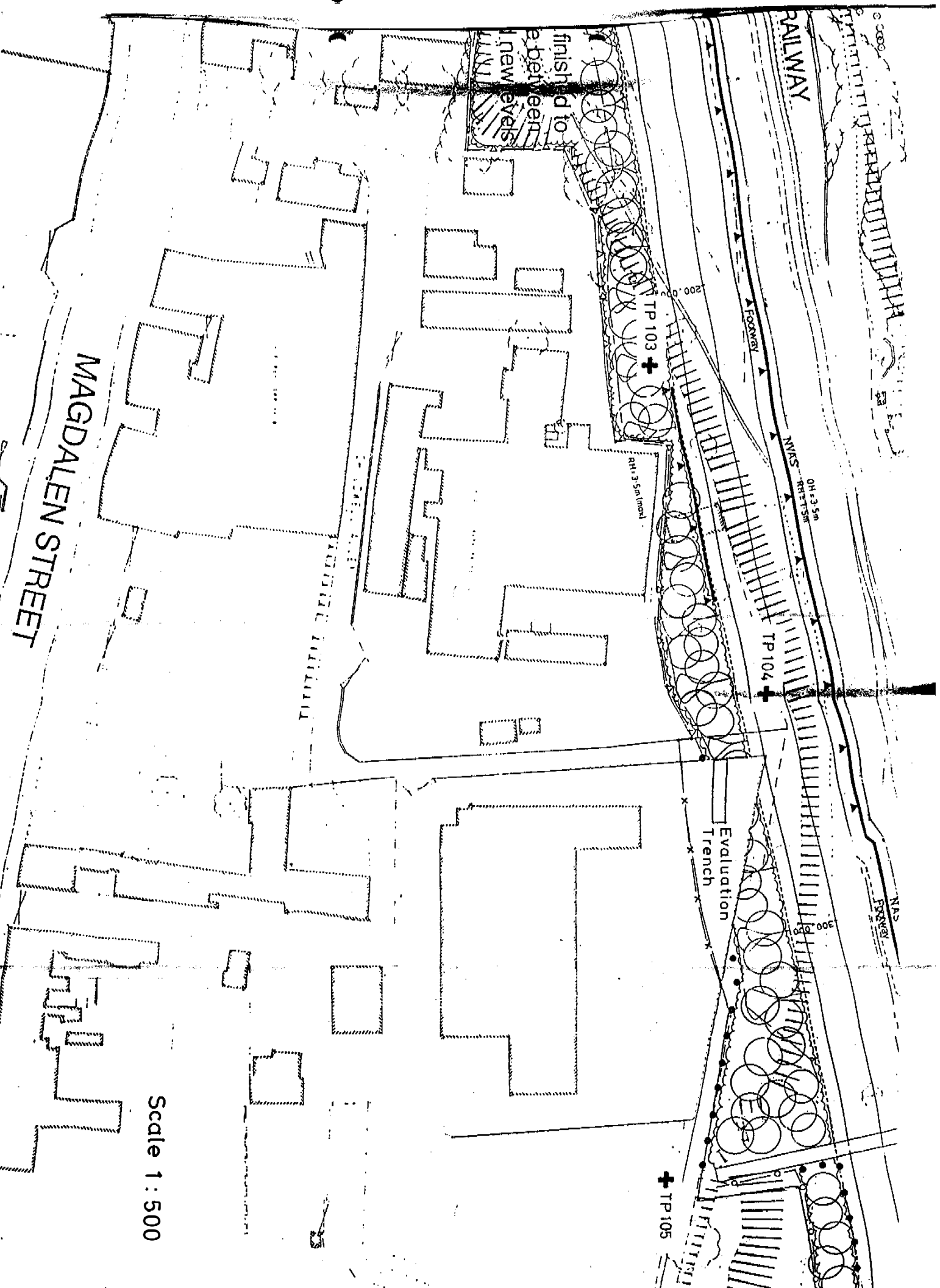
12 Lexden Road, Colchester CO3 3NF.

Report Ref: CC/EAR 2.2, September 1993.

[illegible]

- 1) An accredited archaeological agency shall be commissioned to carry out a watching brief on the contractor's excavations for the road. The scope of the commission should include site observation, any necessary recording and subsequent preparation of an archaeological archive in accordance with nationally accepted standards of practice.
- 2) The road excavation programme should include an archaeological contingency allowance of 7 days should circumstances arise where a significant find cannot be adequately recorded during the normal progress of works.

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MAGDALEN STREET

RAILWAY

TP 103 +

TP 104 +

TP 105 +

Evaluation
Trench

Scale 1 : 500

finished to
new levels