

**COLCHESTER COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS  
COLCHESTER  
ESSEX**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING & RECORDING**



**Essex County Council  
Field Archaeology Unit**

**MARCH 2012**



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Approved By: Adrian Scruby	Signature:
Position: Project Manager	Date:

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As part of our desire to provide a quality service, we would welcome any comments you may have on the content or the presentation of this report. Please contact the Archaeological Fieldwork Manager, at the

**Field Archaeology Unit,**  
Fairfield Court, Fairfield Road, Braintree, Essex CM7 3YQ.  
fieldarch@essexcc.gov.uk  
Tel: 01376 331470  
Fax: 01376 331428

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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING AND EXCAVATION AT  
COLCHESTER COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS  
COLCHESTER  
ESSEX**

Client: T J Evers Limited on behalf of Colchester County High School for Girls

NGR: TL 97900 24600

Site Code: CCHSG11

Oasis No.: essexcou1-120725

Dates of Fieldwork: 07<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> & 21<sup>st</sup> November 2011 and 19<sup>th</sup> January 2012

**SUMMARY**

*A programme of archaeological monitoring was undertaken during the construction of a new Dance Studio and associated facilities, the installation of a new cover to an existing outdoor swimming pool and the construction of a new boiler room at the Colchester County High School for Girls.*

*The school is situated in a rich archaeological landscape - Lexden Dyke, an earthwork delineating the Late Iron Age tribal centre or oppidum lies c.550m to the west of the development area, while within the area enclosed by it, c.350m to the west of the school, are the remains of the Lexden Tumulus, a rich Late Iron Age burial mound together with an associated cremation cemetery spanning the period from the last quarter of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC up to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD. Extensive archaeological remains were uncovered during extension works to the school in 1955, including a triple-dyke system comprising ditches approximately 4m wide, with associated berms that collectively formed a monument some 25.5m across. Residual 2<sup>nd</sup> century pottery was also found along with a line of postholes and a small ditch. In the same year a palisade trench, pits, gullies and an irregular wattle and daub structure was investigated at Altnacealgach House, immediately to the north of the school.*

*As part of the current works, an initial visit was made to monitor the removal of two small trees that stood within the footprint of the Dance Studio extension; however, no archaeological material was noted in the upcast and no features were noted in the exposed sides of the holes. Further monitoring visits were then made during the reduction of ground levels across the footprint of the extension and the cutting of strip-foundation trenches and service runs, revealing extensive previous disturbance of the site arising from works associated with the construction of the school. This comprised numerous underground*

*services and landscaping layers, with the foundation trench for the dividing wall between the dance studio and changing rooms cut by six service runs of varying size, including three large concrete-set/ capped drains.*

*The pool canopy works were undertaken in mid-January 2012 and comprised the excavation of a shallow trench approximately 1.6m wide around the edges of the existing outdoor pool that again revealed only services and landscaping layers similar to those noted in the Dance Studio extension footprint.*

*Although the area is rich in archaeological remains no archaeological features or finds, with the exception of a few sherds of modern pottery and tile, were noted or recovered during the monitoring works and no trace was seen of the triple dyke system or other large, linear features previously recorded nearby. While this may be a result of the extensive disturbance of the site that has taken place in the past, it is also likely to be a reflection of the comparatively small areas investigated and the shallow depth of the pool works. However, given the absence of any remains within the development footprint it is clear that the current works have had no impact upon the archaeological record.*

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This report describes the results of a programme of archaeological monitoring undertaken during groundworks associated with the construction of a new Dance Studio and associated facilities as an extension to the existing Gymnasium, the installation of a new cover to the existing outdoor swimming pool and the construction of a new boiler room. The fieldwork was procured by Atkins and carried out by the Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit (ECC FAU) for T J Evers Limited on behalf of the school, in accordance with a written scheme of investigation prepared by ECC FAU (2010) and approved by the Colchester Borough Council Archaeological Officer.

1.2 A planning application for the construction of a new Dance Studio extension and the erection of a canopy over the existing outdoor pool and other associated works was submitted to Colchester Borough Council (CBC) in July 2011 (111313). A condition was placed on planning consent on the recommendation of the CBC Archaeological Officer as the construction works had the potential to disturb archaeological remains. This advice follows guidance contained in *Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment* and the condition states that:

*Prior to the commencement of development, details of a watching brief to be carried out by a suitably qualified archaeologist during construction works shall be submitted to, and agreed in writing, by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall thereafter be carried out strictly in accordance with these agreed details. In the event that any important archaeological features or remains are discovered which are beyond the scope of the watching brief and require a fuller rescue excavation the construction work shall cease immediately and shall not recommence until a revised programme of work including a scheme of investigation has been submitted to, and approved in writing, by the Local Planning Authority.*

1.3 The site archive will be deposited with the Colchester & Ipswich Museum Service under the accession code COLEM: 2011.79. (see Appendix 1). A digital version of this report will be submitted, along with a project summary, to the Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations (OASIS).

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## **2.0 BACKGROUND**

### **2.1 Topography and Geology**

2.1.1 The development area is located in the western suburb of Colchester, off Lexden Road (TL 97900 24600), on the northern edge of the school complex. The site is bounded by Park Road to the north, by playing fields to both east and west and by school buildings to the south (Fig. 1). The area of the Dance Studio extension comprised a mix of amenity grass with two small trees, while the pool works took place in an existing hard-landscaped area. The site is fairly flat with an Ordnance Datum of between 36m and 37m. The underlying geology consists of glacial sands and gravels of the Kesgrave and Lowestoft Formations overlying London Clay.

### **2.2 Archaeological and Historical Background**

2.2.1 The following archaeological background utilises the Essex Historic Environment Record (HER) and the Colchester Urban Archaeological Database (CUAD), accessed via the Heritage Gateway.

2.2.2 Lexden Dyke, an earthwork delineating the Late Iron Age tribal centre or *oppidum* lies c.550m to the west of the development area. Within the area enclosed by it, c.350m to the west of the site, are the remains of Lexden Tumulus (SM29464/ 1019967), a rich Late Iron Age burial mound together with and an associated cremation cemetery spanning the period from the last quarter of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC up to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD. The walled colonia lies 1km to the ENE, while an extensive Scheduled area (EHER 11673) lies 400m to the north and north east and includes the Sheepen Roman industrial areas.

2.2.3 Extensive archaeological remains were uncovered during extension works to the school in 1955, including a triple-dyke system comprising ditches approximately 4m wide, with associated berms that collectively formed a monument some 25.5m across. Residual 2<sup>nd</sup> century pottery was also found along with a line of postholes and a small ditch (EHER12630, CUAD MCC2177). In the same year John Wachter uncovered a palisade trench, pits, gullies and an irregular wattle and daub structure at Altnacealgach House, immediately to the north of the school (EHER 12632) In the 20th century Altnacealgach House and its grounds came into the ownership of Essex County Council, forming the basis of its regional offices in Park Road until vacated in the last decade.



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2.2.4 An archaeological evaluation was carried out in the grounds of the Essex County Council Offices during December 2006, prior to redevelopment, approximately 100m to the north of the current site. Two Roman cremation burials were found in the south of the property. One burial, dated to the later 2nd century, was well-preserved and comprised a large jar covered by an upturned dish. The second burial was probably contemporary and comprised the lower half of a grey-ware jar that had been truncated in antiquity. Two large east-west aligned ditches and a smaller north-west/south-east aligned ditch may also date to the Roman period (ECC FAU 2006).

2.2.5 The site is likely to have been agricultural land in the medieval and post-medieval periods and appears as such on the 1st edition OS map (1876).

### **3.0 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

#### **3.1 General aims**

3.1.1 The specific aim of the investigation was to determine the presence or absence, extent, date, character, condition and significance of any archaeological remains that may be present within the development area and to ensure their preservation by record prior to damage or destruction.

#### **3.2 Research objectives**

3.2.1 The specific objectives of the investigation were to:

- To obtain more information about the Roman settlement previously revealed in the area
- To look for signs of any Pre- and post-Roman occupation

3.2.2 In the event that significant archaeological remains were encountered this report would have aimed to place the results in context with the research objectives laid out in *Research and Archaeology: a Framework for the Eastern Counties, 2. research agenda and strategy* (Brown and Glazebrook 2000). As no features of any significance were identified the project will not contribute to any of the research agendas.

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## **4.0 METHOD**

- 4.1 The new Dance Studio extension will be constructed on traditional strip foundations and archaeological monitoring was undertaken during the removal of two trees within the footprint of the extension, the general reduction of ground levels and the excavation of strip foundations. Monitoring works were also undertaken during groundworks associated with the construction of a new canopy over an existing outdoor swimming pool and the construction of a new boiler room (Fig. 1).
- 4.2 All work was carried out in accordance with IfA (Institute for Archaeologists) by-laws and guidelines and complied with Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England (Gurney 2003). Standard ECC FAU excavation, artefact collection and recording methodologies were employed throughout.

## **5.0 FIELDWORK RESULTS (Plates 1 - 4)**

- 5.1 An initial visit was made in early November 2011, prior to the commencement of construction works, to monitor the removal of two small trees that stood within the footprint of the Dance Studio extension. The boles were dug out by mechanical excavator to reveal in the case of the larger of the two trees a light to mid-orangey brown silty gravel. No archaeological material was noted in the upcast and no features were noted in the exposed side of the hole. In the case of the second, smaller root bole, dry, loose, grey-brown silty topsoil was revealed overlying the same silty gravel seen in first root bole. Concrete and other modern material was present in the upcast and around the edges of the hole.
- 5.2 A series of monitoring visits were then made in mid to late-November during the reduction of ground levels across the footprint of the extension, the cutting of strip-foundation trenches and service runs. Extensive evidence of disturbance arising from works associated with the construction of the school was noted, comprising numerous underground services, and landscaping layers. The latter took the form of a 20cm thick layer of imported light grey silty topsoil overlying 10 – 15cm of light orangey-brown gravel, which in turn sealed the original topsoil (Plate 1).
- 5.3 These landscaping layers sealed an extensive array of services, of varying size, the trenches for which criss-crossed the extension footprint. By way of example, the foundation trench for the dividing wall between the dance studio and changing rooms

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was cut by six service runs of varying size, including three large concrete-set/ capped drains (Plates 2 and 3).

- 5.4 The pool canopy works were undertaken in mid-January 2012 and comprised monitoring of the excavation of a trench approximately 1.6m wide by 0.3m deep around the edges of the existing outdoor pool (Plate 4). On the west side of the pool an existing concrete slab was removed. Around the north, east and south side a layer of dark brown-black silt-sand gravel-rich topsoil was removed, which appeared to be a later landscaping layer, similar to those noted in the Dance Studio footprint. A service pipe was noted running along the northern edge of the pool at a depth of 0.3m below the existing ground surface. No archaeological finds or features were noted in the excavated areas.

## **6.0 DISCUSSION**

- 6.1 Although the area is rich in archaeological remains no archaeological features or finds, with the exception of a few sherds of modern pottery and tile, were noted or recovered during the monitoring works and no trace was seen of the triple dyke system or other large, linear features previously recorded nearby. While this may be a result of the extensive disturbance of the site that has taken place in the past, it is also likely to be a reflection of the comparatively small areas investigated and the shallow depth of the pool works. However, given the absence of any remains within the development footprint it is clear that the current works have had no impact upon the archaeological record.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ECC FAU would like to thank Trevor Pyman of Atkins, who commissioned the work on behalf of the school and T.J Evers Limited, who procured the services of ECC FAU and carried out the construction works. Particular thanks are extended to Bob Myhill, site foreman. The archaeological monitoring was undertaken by Adrian Scruby and Lukasz Miciak of the ECC Field Archaeology Unit, the illustrations are by Andrew Lewsey. The project was managed by Adrian Scruby, who also authored the report. The works were monitored by Martin Winter of Colchester Borough Council, in his capacity as archaeological advisor to the LPA.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- |                                  |      |  |
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| ECC FAU                          | 2011 | <i>Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Monitoring &amp; Excavation: Colchester County High School for Girls, Colchester, Essex</i> . ECC FAU internal publication |
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| Gurney, D.                       | 2003 | <i>Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England</i> , E. Anglian Archaeol. Occ. Pap. <b>14</b>   |
| Institute for Archaeologists     | 2001 | <i>Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Evaluation</i> (revised)  |

## **APPENDIX 1: CONTENTS OF ARCHIVE**

**SITE NAME:** Colchester County High School for Girls

**SITE CODE:** CCHSG11

### **Index to Archive:**

**1. Introduction**

1.1 ECC FAU WSI

**2. Research Archive**

2.1 Client Report

**3. Site Archive**

3.1 Location plan

3.2 Photographic Registers

3.3 Site Photographic Record (1 set of Black & White prints, 1 Set of digital images on disk)

3.4 Miscellaneous notes/plans

## APPENDIX 2: HER SUMMARY SHEET

### HER SUMMARY SHEET

<b>Site name/Address:</b> Colchester County High School for Girls, Norman Way, Colchester, Essex, CO3 3RH	
<b>Parishes:</b> Colchester	<b>District:</b> Colchester
<b>NGR:</b> TL 97900 24600	<b>Site Code:</b> CCHSG11
<b>Type of Work:</b> Archaeological Monitoring	<b>Site Director/Group:</b> A. Scruby, ECC Field Archaeology Unit
<b>Dates of Work:</b> 07 <sup>th</sup> , 10 <sup>th</sup> , 18 <sup>th</sup> & 21 <sup>st</sup> November 2011 and 19 <sup>th</sup> January 2012	<b>Size of Area Investigated:</b> 420 sqm
<b>Location of Finds/Curating Museum:</b> Colchester	<b>Funding source:</b> Client – T J Evers Limited on behalf of Colchester County High School for Girls
<b>Further Seasons Anticipated?:</b> No	<b>Related CUAD/ HER Nos.:</b> EHER12630, CUAD MCC2177, EHER 12632
<b>Final Report:</b> EAH note	<b>Oasis No.:</b> essexcou1-120725
<b>Periods Represented:</b> modern	
<p><b>SUMMARY OF FIELDWORK RESULTS:</b>  <i>A programme of archaeological monitoring was undertaken during the construction of a new Dance Studio and associated facilities, the installation of a new cover to an existing outdoor swimming pool and the construction of a new boiler room at the Colchester County High School for Girls.</i></p> <p><i>The school is situated in a rich archaeological landscape - Lexden Dyke, an earthwork delineating the Late Iron Age tribal centre or oppidum lies c.550m to the west of the development area, while within the area enclosed by it, c.350m to the west of the school, are the remains of the Lexden Tumulus, a rich Late Iron Age burial mound together with an associated cremation cemetery spanning the period from the last quarter of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC up to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD. Extensive archaeological remains were uncovered during extension works to the school in 1955, including a triple-dyke system comprising ditches approximately 4m wide, with associated berms that collectively formed a monument some 25.5m across. Residual 2<sup>nd</sup> century pottery was also found along with a line of postholes and a small ditch. In the same year a palisade trench, pits, gullies and an irregular wattle and daub structure was investigated at Altnacealgach House, immediately to the north of the school.</i></p> <p><i>As part of the current works, an initial visit was made to monitor the removal of two small trees that stood within the footprint of the Dance Studio extension; however, no archaeological material was noted in the upcast and no features were noted in the exposed</i></p>	

**Site name/Address:** Colchester County High School for Girls, Norman Way, Colchester, Essex, CO3 3RH

*sides of the holes. Further monitoring visits were then made during the reduction of ground levels across the footprint of the extension and the cutting of strip-foundation trenches and service runs, revealing extensive previous disturbance of the site arising from works associated with the construction of the school. This comprised numerous underground services and landscaping layers, with the foundation trench for the dividing wall between the dance studio and changing rooms cut by six service runs of varying size, including three large concrete-set/ capped drains.*

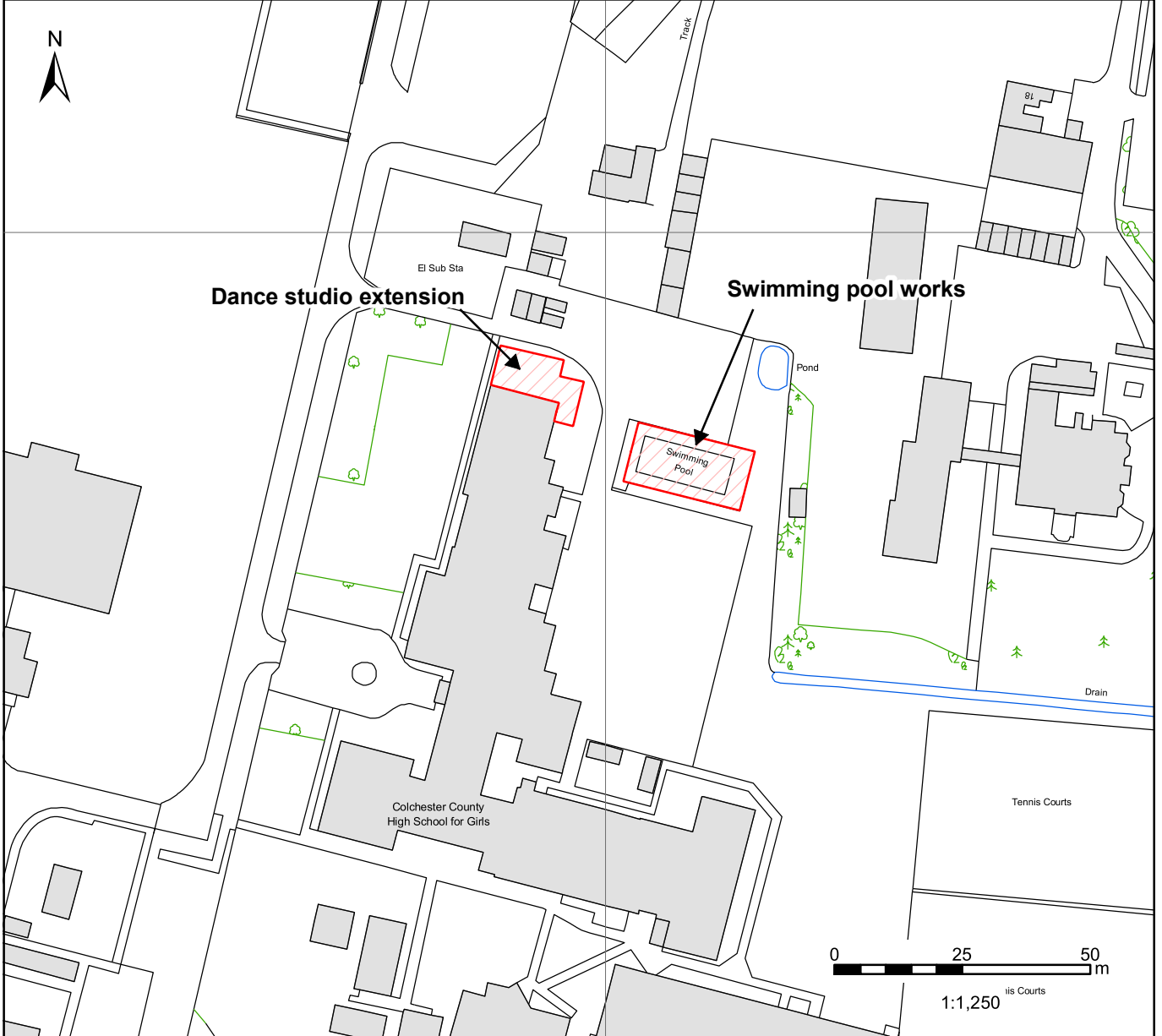
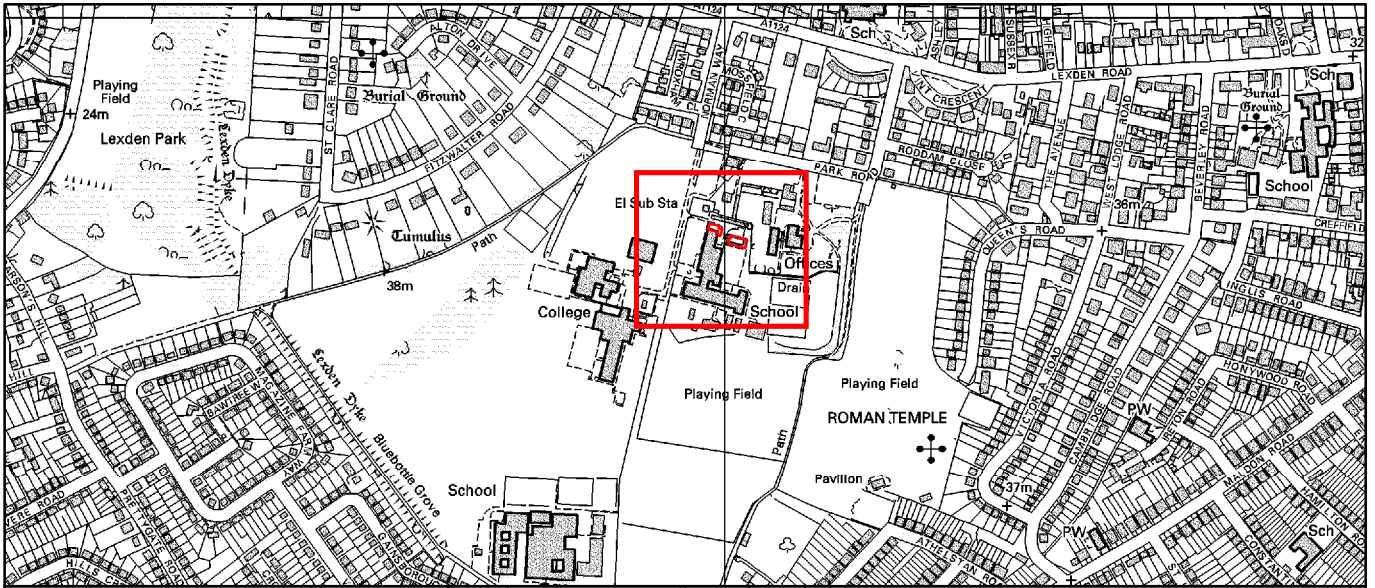
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**Previous Summaries/Reports:** None

**Author of Summary:** A. Scruby

**Date of Summary:** March 2012



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Fig.1. Location of areas of archaeological monitoring





Plate 1: Buried original topsoil horizon sealed by 1950's construction layers

Plate 2: View of extension end wall looking WNW, showing service runs and drains





Plate 3: Foundation trench for dividing wall between Changing Rooms and Dance Studio showing service and former drain runs

Plate 4: Pool works in progress – stripping of shallow trench for new concrete slab to support canopy

