

Essex Historic Environment Record/ Essex Archaeology and History

CAT Report 569

Summary sheet

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| Address: An archaeological watching brief on the excavation of foundations for an art installation, Lower Castle Park, Colchester, Essex | |
| Parish: Colchester | District: Colchester |
| NGR: TL 99822 25600 (centre) | Site codes: CAT project – 10/9g Museum accession – COLIM 2010.68 |
| Type of work: Watching brief | Site director/group: Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) |
| Date of work: 28-29th September 2010 | Size of area investigated: 40m ² |
| Location of finds/curating museum: Colchester and Ipswich Museums | Related EHER numbers: |
| Further seasons anticipated? No | Final report: CAT Archive Report 569 |
| Periods represented: Roman, post-medieval, modern | |
| <p>Summary of fieldwork results:</p> <p>Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) monitored the excavation of foundation trenches for a temporary art installation in Lower Castle Park, Colchester, Essex. The site work comprised the construction of a concrete foundation of four linked concrete pads (LPA No. F/COL/10/1737). The installation is located 45m north of the Roman town wall, 60m south of the river Colne, and 30m east of the boating pond (Fig 1).</p> <p>The turf was removed from the excavation area prior to the excavation of the 600mm deep foundation trenches. Modern finds (i.e. plastic bottle tops) were observed in the upper part of the medium grey/brown topsoil layer (L1), and oyster shell, slate, Roman CBM and peg-tile, were recovered from throughout the layer (see Appendix 1). A cluster of nails dating to the late post-medieval to modern period was also identified in L1 in the northern foundation trench. The topsoil layer was 160mm deep including the turf.</p> <p>Beneath the topsoil was alluvial silty clay roughly 400mm deep (L2). L2 was a light, mottled grey/brown/orange colour, and contained very rare inclusions of stone, charcoal and CBM. L2 was identified in each of the foundation trenches. Occasional Roman CBM fragments were recovered (a selection of which were retained) as well as eight abraded sherds of Roman pottery. Peg-tile fragments and some very well-preserved animal bones derived from domesticates (some exhibiting butchery marks) and a deer, were also recovered. It is possible that this layer represents alluvial build-up in a flood plain/meadow environment and that the finds were well stratified. However, it was not possible to say for certain as work was undertaken under watching brief conditions and many of the finds were recovered from the upcast soil. Layer 2 overlay a medium grey alluvial clay with orange flecking which had no</p> | |

inclusions whatsoever (L3).

Two archaeological features were identified during the watching brief, both in the southern foundation trench (Fig 2). F1 contained frequent stones, sand, and brick and tile fragments. Based on the profile observed in the eastern trench edge, F1 appeared to be a shallow ditch. The southern edge of F1 was beyond the southern limit of excavation. Frequent fragments of Roman brick and tile were recovered from the feature (a selection of which were retained). Of particular interest was a large fragment of *Mammata*, tile which are not particularly common from excavations in Colchester (see Appendix 1). A few fragments of peg-tile were also recovered from the upper fill of the feature. The feature is visible on Google Earth as an east-west orientated linear that joins a north-south linear to the east (Fig 1). An examination of historic maps of Colchester show these features to be old field boundaries or drainage ditches which divided the land in the post-medieval period and possibly earlier. They have been subsequently infilled, with considerable Roman material incorporated in the infill material.

A square shaped pit was identified beneath F1, and its northern edge appeared to be beyond the southern limit of excavation. The pit contained frequent large building material fragments in a mortar rich fill. The building materials consisted of Roman brick, septaria and worked limestone. Two fragments of modern pottery were recovered from the vicinity of this feature and are either associated with F1 or, more likely, F2. As such, it is probable that the building materials were placed into the pit after it had been dug into the base of the boundary/drainage ditch F1.

Previous summaries/reports: CAT Report 26 & CAT Report 286

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Date of summary:
September 2010

Appendix 1: The Finds

By Stephen Benfield

Introduction

The types of finds and the total quantities recovered are set out in Table 1. These are listed by context in Table 2.

| Finds type | no. | wt (g) |
|---------------------------------|-----|--------|
| Pottery | 10 | 395 |
| Ceramic building material (CBM) | 19 | 5637 |
| Animal bone | 6 | 178 |
| Iron nails | 24 | 132 |
| Iron object | 1 | 6 |
| Worked stone | 1 | 957 |

Table 1. Type and quantities of finds

| Ctxt | find no. | pot no. | pot wt (g) | CBM no. | CBM wt (g) | other finds/notes | finds spot date |
|--------|----------|---------|------------|---------|------------|---|-----------------|
| L1 | 1 | | | 3 | 128 | Fe nails 24 @ 132 g; Fe obj. 1 @ 6 g; slate 1 @ 4 g; Oyster shell 1 @ 4 g | L p-med-mod |
| L2 | 2 | 5 | 290 | 3 | 966 | animal bone 3 @ 126 g | Rom |
| L2 | 3 | 3 | 18 | 5 | 207 | animal bone 2 @ 24 g | med- p-med/mod |
| F1 | | | | 7 | 4311 | animal bone 1 @ 28 g | med- p-med/mod |
| F1 ?F2 | 4 | 2 | 87 | 1 | 25 | slate 1 @ 3 g | mod |
| F2 | | | | | | worked stone 1 @ 957 g | |

Table 2. Type and quantities of finds by context with context spot date

Pottery

with Howard Brooks (modern pottery)

Introduction

A small quantity of pottery of Roman and of modern date was recovered. The pottery sherd count and weight was recorded for each finds number by context (Table 4). The Roman and post-Roman pottery fabrics refer to the Colchester fabric series: *CAR 7* (post-Roman) and *CAR 10* (Roman). Numbered pot forms were recorded, where possible, using the Camulodunum (Cam) pottery form type series (Hawkes & Hull 1947, Hull 1958). Samian vessels are recorded using Dragendorff (Dr) form numbers, or other common form-type references following those used in Webster 1996. The pottery fabrics recorded, together with the quantity of each fabric type, are listed in Table 3.

| Fabrics | Fabric name | no | wt (g) |
|---------------|--|--------------|--------------|
| <i>Roman</i> | | | |
| AJ | amphorae, Dressel 20 | 1 | 267 |
| BA(EG) | East Gaulish plain samian | 1 | 4 |
| GB | BB2: black-burnished ware, category 2 | 1 | 10 |
| GX | Roman sandy grey wares | 4 | 19 |
| TY(TG) | other British mortaria – Oxford, red/grey fabric with red colour-coat and pink grits | 1 | 8 |
| | | <i>total</i> | <i>8 308</i> |
| <i>modern</i> | | | |
| 45M | modern English stoneware (19th-20th century types) | 2 | 87 |

Table 3. Fabric names and quantity of pottery by fabric type

| ctxt | finds no. | Fabric code | no. | wt (g) | abr | description | form | Period | spot date |
|------|-----------|-------------|-----|--------|-----|---|------|--------|-----------|
| L2 | 2 | AJ | 1 | 267 | * | large body sherd | D 20 | Rom | 1-2C |
| | | BA(EG) | 1 | 4 | | small part of a base ring frag. from a cup, prob East Gaulish | | Rom | M2-M3C |
| | | GB | 1 | 10 | ** | rim, very abraded, | Cam | Rom | L2-3C |

| ctxt | finds no. | Fabric code | no. | wt (g) | abr | description | form | Period | spot date |
|-------|-----------|-------------|-----|--------|-----|--|------|--------|--------------------|
| | | | | | | grey sandy fabric traces of black surface | 37B | | |
| | | GX | 1 | 6 | | rim frag. from a jar/bowl | | Rom | Rom |
| | | GX | 1 | 3 | * | | | Rom | Rom |
| L2 | 3 | GX | 2 | 10 | | | | Rom | Rom |
| | | TY(TG) | 1 | 8 | ** | very abraded thin flange inc. part of spout and rim bead, late Roman, poss an Oxford product | | Rom | late Roman, M-L4C? |
| F1/F2 | 4 | 45M | 1 | 69 | | from an open bowl imitating slipware with glazed dark brown white design on interior | | Mod | 18-19C |
| | | 45M | 1 | 18 | | grey fabric, pale brown exterior | | Mod | 18-19C |

Table 4. Pottery by context

Discussion

The small quantity of Roman pottery consists of residual, abraded sherds from several of the contexts. There may be some degrading of the fabric on a few of the sherds and this, combined with abrasion, makes some attributions to a particular source of manufacture difficult. The potential date range of these sherds spans the whole of the Roman period, but the most closely dated pieces span the period of the mid 2nd-4th century.

Two sherds of modern (19th-20th century) pottery, both stoneware (Fabric 45M), were recovered from F1/F2. They are both in good condition.

Ceramic building material (CBM)

Introduction

A small quantity of ceramic building material (CBM) was recovered. This consists of, a total of nineteen pieces, together weighing 5637 g. The tile is listed by type and context in Table 5.

| ctxt | finds no. | type | description | thick (MM) | abr. | no. | wt (g) | spot date |
|------|-----------|------|--|------------|------|-----|--------|---------------|
| L1 | 1 | RI | piece from an <i>imbrex</i> roof tile, brownish silty fabric | 15 | * | 1 | 68 | Rom |
| | | PT | small pieces | 11 | | 2 | 60 | ?med/post-med |
| L2 | 2 | RB | corner of a Roman brick | 35 | | 1 | 682 | Rom |
| | | RBT | frag. prob. from a Roman brick | 35 | | 1 | 260 | Rom |
| | | RBT | frag. | | | 1 | 24 | Rom |
| L2 | 3 | RBT | poss. roof-tile (<i>tegula</i>) piece | 20 | | 1 | 111 | Rom |
| | | RBT | fragment, heavily worn & abraded | | ** | 1 | 30 | Rom |
| | | PT | | 10 | | 1 | 58 | ?med/post-med |
| | | B/T | misc. small fragments | | ** | 2 | 8 | |
| F1 | | RB | corner of a <i>mammata</i> brick, 33 mm thick, large piece with single clay <i>mammata</i> , longest surviving (incomplete) dimension 280 mm | 33 | | 1 | 2312 | Rom |
| | | RBT | 35 mm thick | 35 | | 1 | 833 | Rom |

| ctxt | finds no. | type | description | thick (MM) | abr. | no. | wt (g) | spot date |
|-------|-----------|------|---|------------|------|-----|--------|---------------|
| | | RBT | white mortar on all surfaces and partly across break, 20 mm thick | 20 | | 2 | 1108 | Rom |
| | | PT | small edge piece, thin tile | 8 | | 2 | 35 | ?med/post-med |
| | | PT | small piece | 10 | * | 1 | 23 | ?med/post-med |
| F1/F2 | 4 | PT | frag with peg hole | 10 | | 1 | 25 | ?med/post-med |

Table 5. Ceramic building material (CBM) by context
(RB- Roman brick; RBT- Roman brick/tile; RI-Roman *Imbrex*; PT- peg-tile)

Discussion

Apart from one piece of Roman *Imbrex* tile, which is in a dark reddish-brown silty fabric, all of the tile is in red coloured sandy fabrics.

The bulk of the CBM in terms of weight and the size of individual pieces consists of Roman brick and tile (RBT). There is a total of ten Roman pieces which together weigh 5428 g. These are all residual in later dated contexts.

Based on the corner pieces and the general thickness (commonly 33-35 mm), most of the Roman CBM appears to consist of pieces from flat bricks or building tiles. There is only one certain roof tile piece which is part of an *Imbrex*. One piece had clearly been reused in building as there is mortar across the surfaces and across one of the breaks. Of particular interest is a *Mammata* tile from F1. Although a recognised tile type, *Mammata* tiles, which have a few small pieces of upstanding clay fired onto the upper surface (Brodrigg 1987, 60-62 Type A), are not particularly common from excavations in Colchester.

Peg-tile was recovered from all of the contexts and finds numbers except for finds number 2 (L2). In total there are seven pieces, together weighing 201 g. The peg-tile pieces themselves cannot be closely dated. It can be noted that based on the archaeological sequence at Harwich (Essex), peg-tiles appear from the 13th century, but probably only become relatively common from the 14th century onward (Ryan 1993, 97). The standard late medieval peg-tile remains basically unchanged into modern times.

Two small abraded fragments of CBM (8 g) from L2 (finds number 3) could not be closely dated.

Miscellaneous finds

with Adam Wightman (animal bone)

There is a quantity of iron nails from one context together with small quantities or single examples other finds types (iron object, animal bone, slate, oyster shell & worked stone) from various contexts. These are reported here together and are listed by context in Table 2.

Iron nails

A number of iron nails were sampled from a larger quantity located in L1 (finds number 1). Most appear to be cut nails, possibly all are, and probably date to the late post-medieval to modern period ([http://wikipedia.org/wiki/Nail_\(fastener\)#history](http://wikipedia.org/wiki/Nail_(fastener)#history)).

In total twenty-four nails were recovered (weighing 132g). All are corroded. A number of the nail shafts are slightly bent from use but none seriously so. The individual nails all have surviving heads. Most of the heads are T or L shaped with the sides flat with the broader sides of the shafts; although on a few the sides also expand slightly beyond the broader sides of the shafts which may result from hammering the nail home or from corrosion. The ends of the nails are either corroded or missing but there appear to be at least two, possibly three sizes. Many of the apparently near complete nails group at between 50-60 mm in length, while two are significantly larger at between 80-110 mm long.

Iron object

A small corroded iron object (weighing 6g) was also recovered with the nails: finds number 1 (L1). This is 38 mm long and 10 mm wide. In section it appears to be of triangular shape, with the broader edge being about 4 mm across and appears to taper slightly toward one end. This might represent a piece from a blade, but this is quite conjectural. Its recovery from the same context as the nails and similar state of corrosion tends to suggest the same late post-medieval to modern date for this piece.

Animal bone

A small quantity of animal bone was recovered. Of interest is a possible deer tibia (67 g) from L2 (finds number 2). A probable sheep radius (52 g) - with butchery cut marks - and a fragment of long bone (7 g) from a medium size mammal also came from the same context. There is a sheep metatarsal (28 g) - which has been cut by butchery at one - end from F1 and two fragments of long bone (24 g) from a from medium size mammal were recovered from L2 (finds number 3)

Miscellaneous other finds

There are a small piece of slate (4 g) from L1 (finds number 1) and another (3 g) from F1/F2 (finds number 4). A fragment of oyster shell (4 g) was also recovered from L1 (finds number 1).

A single large piece of worked stone was recovered from F2. This is a piece of white (very pale grey) limestone (the matrix reacts with Hydrochloric acid) 72 mm thick weighing 957 g. The upper and lower surface survive as smooth worked surfaces, although the presumed upper surface is more finely finished, the lower having been left slightly coarse. There are two areas of surviving face on the sides. One face has a flat, smooth surface, which is of the same quality of finish as the top of the stone. The other, set at 90 degrees to this, has been left slightly coarse, with a small projection of broken or un-worked stone about 10 mm deep where it meets the lower surface. The well finished face and presumably the well finished upper surface of the stone represent the intended exposed finished surfaces of the block.

Discussion

The watching brief produced only a small quantity of finds. The most closely dated are of Roman, late post-medieval/modern and modern date. All of the contexts included piece of peg-tiles, so that these contexts probably date to at least the 13th century with all of the Roman material (pottery & brick/tile) being residual. The cut iron nails from L1 should date to the late post-medieval period or after and the two pieces of modern English stone ware from F1/F2 date that particular context to the 19th-20th century.

References

Brodribb, G., 1987, Roman brick and tile

CAR 7 2000, John Cotter, *Post-Roman pottery from excavations in Colchester, 1971-85*, Colchester Archaeological Report 7

CAR 10 2000, Robin Symonds & Sue Wade, *Roman pottery from excavations in Colchester, 1971-86*, Colchester Archaeological Report 10

Hawkes, C. F. C., & Hull, M. R., 1947, Camulodunum, first report on the excavations at Colchester 1930-39, *RRCSAL*, **14**

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Ryan, P., 1993 *Cressing Temple, a Templar and Hospitaller manor in Essex*, Essex County Council

Webster, P., 1996, Roman samian pottery in Britain, CBA Practical handbook in archaeology 13

Appendix 2: contents of archive

One A4 document wallet containing;

1 Introduction

- 3.1 Copy of the excavation brief issued by ECC HEM.
- 3.2 Copy of the WSI produced by CAT
- 3.3 Two A3 site plans

2 Site Archive

- 3.1 Digital photo record
- 3.2 Attendance register
- 3.3 Context sheets (F1-F2, L1-L3)
- 3.4 Finds register
- 3.5 Site photographic record on cd
- 3.6 Two A4 pages of section drawings

3 Research Archive

- 3.1 Monitoring (client) report
- 3.2 Extra A3 site plan
- 3.3 Finds report

Finds

The finds occupy less than one box

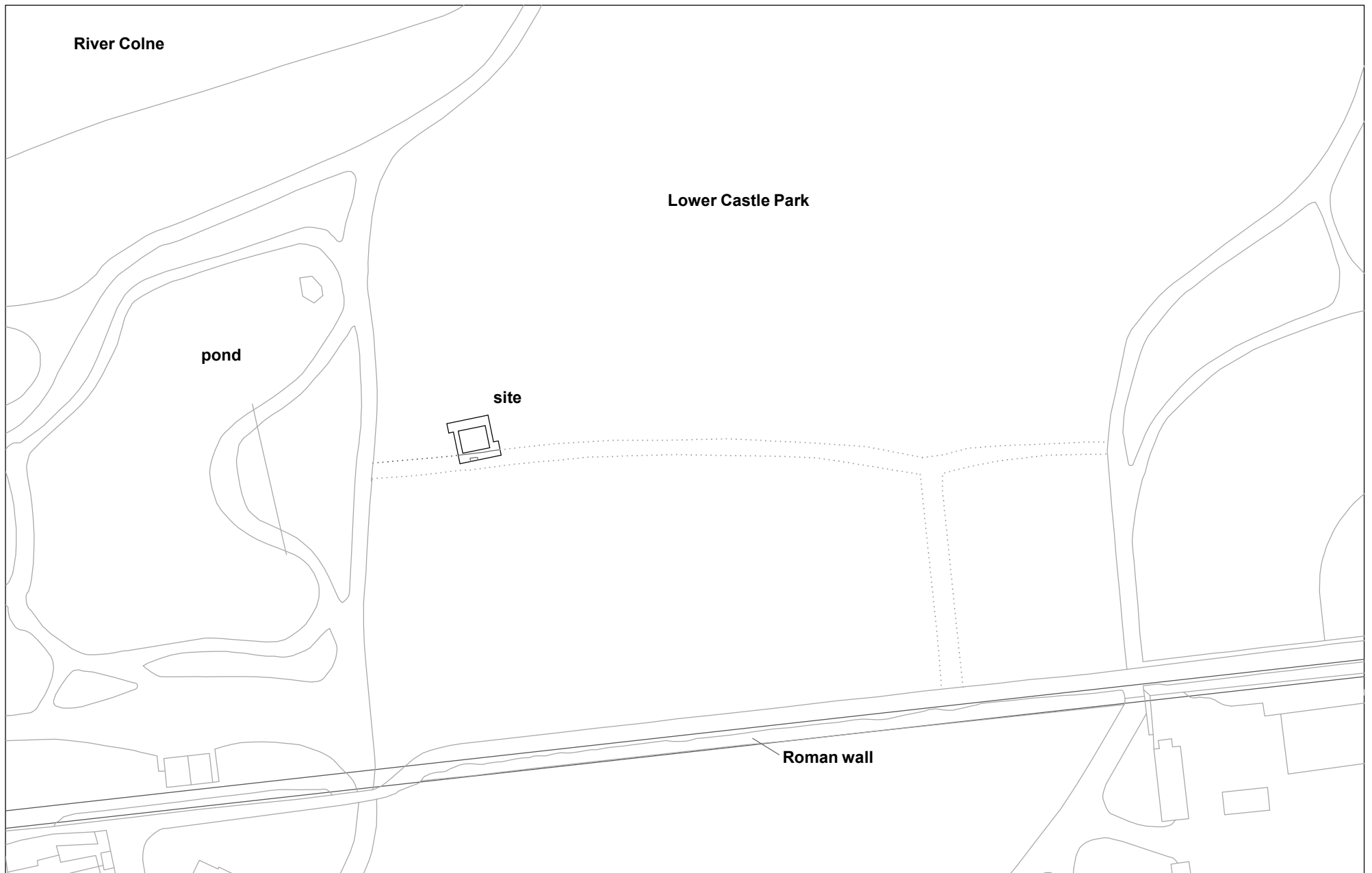


Fig 1 Site location with dotted lines representing the approximate alignment of the linears as observed on Google Earth.

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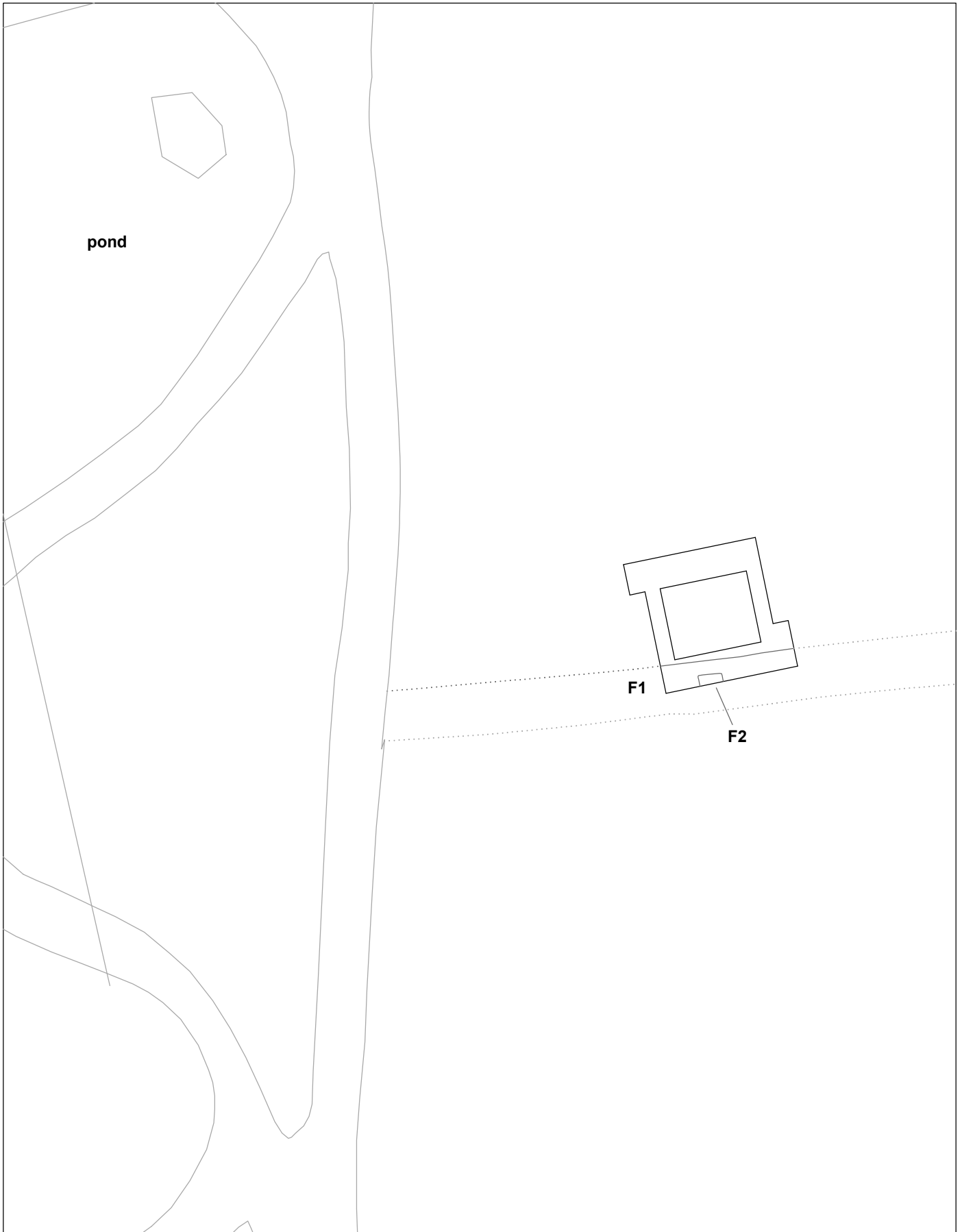


Fig 2 Results

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