

**Archaeological trial-trenching at
12, High Street, Chelmsford, Essex
May 2011**

**report prepared by
Ben Holloway and Howard Brooks**

**on behalf of
Elwell Taylor**

NGR: TL 7090 0681
CAT project ref: 11/5c
HEM project code: CF 67
Chelmsford Museum accession code: CHMRE 2011.066



Colchester Archaeological Trust
12 Lexden Road,
Colchester,
Essex CO3 3NF

tel.: (01206) 541051
tel./fax: (01206) 500124
email: archaeologists@catuk.org

CAT Report 594
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1 Summary

The site is located in the historic core of Chelmsford, on the eastern side of the modern High Street. Formerly the service yard to the rear of 12 High Street, the site is now an area of hardstanding with a small temporary structure.

Two evaluation trenches (total length, 12m) were positioned within the footprint of a proposed new extension. Six archaeological features were identified. These were a fragment of clay (a floor?), a post-medieval pit, two post-medieval brick foundations with an associated compacted gravel surface, and a brick culvert whose function was probably to run water away from the property across the meadows towards the River Chelmer.

The excavated remains relate to the post-medieval and modern use of the yard area rear of this particular property, but there was no evidence relating to the medieval development of Chelmsford. A single Roman sherd shows that there was some Roman-period activity in the area.

2 Introduction (Fig 1)

This is the archive report on an archaeological trial-trenching evaluation at 12, High Street, Chelmsford, Essex, carried out on behalf of Elwell Taylor.

The site is the rear yard of 12, High Street, and is a 14m x 5.5m area of hard-standing enclosed by neighbouring properties. The eastern part of the site contains a temporary building (shed) which will be removed as part of the development works. Site centre is NGR TL 7090 0681.

The Essex County Council (ECC) Historic Environment Management (HEM) team were consulted by Chelmsford Borough Council in February 2011 for a planning application (11/00140/FUL) for the construction of a new single-storey rear extension to 12 High Street, Chelmsford. In response to consultation, in line with advice given in Planning Policy Statement 5, ECHEM made the following recommendation to the LPA:

"No development, or preliminary groundworks, of any kind shall take place until the applicant has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work and recording in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted by the applicant, and approved by the planning authority."

A brief detailing the required archaeological work (an evaluation by trial-trenching) was written by the HEM team officer (HEM 2011). In response to the HEM Brief, a WSI (Written Scheme of Investigation) was produced by CAT and agreed with the HEM team (CAT 2011). All archaeological work was carried out in accordance with the WSI.

The archaeological work was commissioned by Mr Nicolas Truelove of Elwell Taylor, and was carried out by the Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) 18th of May 2011. Post-excavation work was carried out in May/June 2011.

In addition to the Brief and WSI, all fieldwork and reporting was done in accordance with the Colchester Archaeological Trust's *Policies and procedures* (CAT 2008), and the Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (IfA 2008a) and *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (IfA 2008b). The guidance contained in the documents *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment* (MoRPHE), and *Standards for field archaeology in the East of England* (EAA 14) were also followed.

3 Archaeological background

This section is based on records held by The Essex Historic Environment Record (EHER).

The modern town of Chelmsford grew from two separate *foci*, firstly a small Romano-British settlement to the south of the River (centred around what is now Moulsham Street), and, secondly, a medieval market town to the north of the River. The Roman settlement went out of use in the early part of the 5th century, but was re-occupied in the medieval period.

The medieval town was founded in the late 12th century by the Bishop of London. Its main thoroughfare followed the line of the modern High Street, terminating at a crossing point south of the river Can marked by the current stone bridge built in 1787.

Royal charters were granted for a market in 1199 and for an annual fair in 1201 the market place being located at the north end of what is now the High Street, close to St Mary's Church (now Chelmsford Cathedral) which was founded in the early 13th century.

Excavations conducted around the High Street point to the establishment of property plots in the early 13th century. Additional observations also indicate that the area to the rear of the High Street may have coincided with the edge of the floodplain of the river Can and may have been subject to periodic flooding, until its reclamation in the post-medieval period.

In *Sleepers and the Shadows* (Grieve 1988), it is pointed out that no. 12 High Street coincide with a plot known as *Olivers*. This may be because it was in the possession of Thomas Knott and John Oliver in 1382 (Grieve 1988, 168).

4 Aim

The aim of the evaluation was to record and establish the character, extent, date, significance and condition of any remains and deposits likely to be disturbed by the proposed works. Specific attention was paid to evidence of activity associated with the medieval and post-medieval development of Chelmsford.

5 Results of the evaluation (Fig 2)

This section gives an archaeological summary of the evaluation trenches (T1,T2), with context and finds dating information.

The trenches were excavated under archaeological supervision using a tracked excavator. Three layers were removed by machine: L1, a 200mm-thick modern hard-standing; L2, a compacted crushed hardcore base for the hard-standing, and an accumulated soil horizon (L3). L3 sealed all the archaeological features, and, at the east end of T2, the alluvial silts (L4). After removal of L1-L3 all further investigation was carried out by hand. L3 was progressively thicker from west to east, being thickest at the eastern end of T2, towards the river.

An archaeological summary of each evaluation trench with a tabulation of context and finds dating information follows below.

Trench 1: summary (Fig 2)

T1 was located in the western half of the footprint of the proposed new extension. It contained three archaeological features: a fragment of compacted clay (F1), a brick foundation (F2) and a compacted gravel surface (F3).

Clay F1 contained a Roman greyware potsherd, which is residual in this context. It is most likely that F1 is the remains of a clay floor which has been truncated by later (post-medieval?) activity. Foundation F2 consisted of two walls, each a single brick wide, which did not meet at right angles. This probably indicates that it was not a major structure. However, a wall consisting of two rows of stretchers butting up to one of the single-brick walls shows that there may have been a later strengthening of (or addition to) the original structure. It is unclear what this structure was, but a horticultural use may be suggested. To the east of foundation F2, was a compacted gravel F3. This butted up to the western side of F2, and therefore appears to be associated it.

The archaeological features in T1 were sealed by post-medieval layer L3, which was in turn sealed by deposits associated with the modern yard (L1, L2).



Plate 1: general view of T1, looking east. Foundation F2 is centre.

Trench 1 – contexts and dating.

Feature no	Type	Dated finds	Phase
F1	clay surface	pottery	medieval?
F2	foundation	brick	post-medieval
F3	gravel surface	pottery, peg-tile	post-medieval

Trench 2: summary (Fig 2)

Trench 2 was located in the eastern side of the site, and also within the footprint of the proposed new extension. T2 contained three post-medieval features: wall foundation (F4), pit (F5), and brick-built culvert (F6).

Foundation F4 was unmortared and probably a part of a brick outbuilding. It sealed a large pit (F5), which contained most of the finds from this evaluation. These finds indicate that this was a rubbish pit to the rear of the property on the street frontage. F5 was cut on its northern edge by brick-built culvert F6, running E/W towards the river. Given the orientation of F6, it is reasonable to assume that it ran water away from the site and towards the river.

T2 features were sealed by post-medieval layer (L3). At the east end of T2, F5 was cut into grey clays which were probably the edge of the alluvial deposits on the river side of the site (where land drops away towards the river).



Plate 2: general view of T2, looking east. Brick culvert F6 is left centre.

Trench 2 – contexts and dating.

Feature no	Type	Dated finds	Phase
F4	brick foundation	-	post-medieval
F5	pit	pottery, animal bone, peg-tile (not kept)	post-medieval
F6	culvert	--	post-medieval

6 Finds

by Stephen Benfield, with Howard Brooks

A small quantity of finds, consisting of pottery, glass from vessels, clay pipe and animal bone, was recovered from five contexts divided between two evaluation trenches (Table 1). For the pottery the Roman fabric and form types refer to the Chelmsford (Essex) pottery type series (Going 1987). The post-Roman pottery fabrics refer to the Essex post-Roman fabric series (*CAR 7*). The pottery fabric types are listed in Table 2.

Trench	context and description	<u>finds no.</u> , quantities, weight and description	spot date
T1	F1 clay floor	004: pottery Rom 1@3g Fabric 47	Rom (M2-M3c)
T1	F2 foundation	002: pottery p-med 2@59g Fabric 40, 17-18c glass 2@21g, p-med/mod, one is a rim & neck sherd from a small bottle clay pipe 1@2g, stem animal bone 2@74g, large domesticate mammal, one is a rib, both ends of both bones sawn through	17-18c
T1	F3 gravel (surface)	003: pottery p-med 1@13g Fabric 40, 17-18c	17-18c
T1	L3 dump	005: pottery p-med 6@57g Fabric 45m, 19-20c, small sherd; Fabric 48d, 19-20c, rims from small bowl and jar, also small complete white ceramic round pallet with dished top dia 31 mm clay pipe 1@4g, stem	19-20c
T2	F5 pit	001: pottery p-med 1@414g Fabric 40, 16/17-18c, near complete pipkin, flat base, much of rim chipped away and handle missing, all-over reddish-brown glaze	16/17-18c
T2	F5 pit	007: pottery p-med 14@1581g; Fabric 40 17-18c, sherds prob. from two large storage jars; Fabric 40a, dish with yellow/cream slip trailed wavy line on rim; Fabric 45c? 2 sherds, 15/16-17C; Fabric 45e/d a large handled jug sherd 16-17C; Fabric 45m, 19-20c, complete (broken) lid; Fabric 48d, 18-19c, two small, whole, near identical cup/bowls (one 74g, other 90g weight) with small, beaded lip, plain cream, rim dia 75 mm, height 55 mm, also tea bowl/cup, relief decorated bowl, small circular (disc) ceramic pallet and jar lid, complete, broken, lid from paste pot with transfer lettering (probably tooth paste as the word paste is preceded by (T)H; glass 1@148g, p-med/mod, bottle, rim, neck & shoulder, dark green/green	19-20c (residual 16/17-18c pottery)

Table 1 Spot-dated list of finds by context

Fabric code	Description	Fabric period/common date range
<i>Roman:</i>		
47	sandy grey wares	Roman
<i>post-medieval:</i>		
40	post-medieval red earthenwares (general)	16/17-18c
40a	Metropolitan slipware	17-18c
45c	Raeren stoneware	15/16-17c
45e/45d	Cologne/Frechen stonewares	16-17c
45m	Modern English stonewares	19-20c
48d	Staffordshire-type white earthen wares	19-20c

Table 2 Pottery fabrics recorded showing period/common date range

Pottery discussion

There was one sherd of Roman pottery – a small rim in Roman greyware (Fabric 47) from a dish/bowl of form B4 (deep bead-rimmed dishes/bowls), dated mid 2nd-mid 3rd century. The sherd was recovered from a clay floor F1 (T1), which is dated as post-medieval.

The other pottery recovered can probably all be dated to the post-medieval and modern periods; although sherds from one pot might possibly date as early as the late medieval period (15th century). Two features in T1 (foundation F2 & gravel surface F3) both produced pottery dating to the 17th-18th century. One layer (dump/accumulation L3) and one feature (pit F5) both in T2 also contained pottery. The latest dated sherds from both these two contexts are of 19th-20th century date.



Plate 3: pottery from pit F5. Post-medieval red earthenware (Fabric 40) pipkin (left); three modern ironstone (Fabric 48d) tea-bowls (right).

The largest quantity of pottery comes from the pit F5 (T2) and is of interest because of the vessel types and the presence of several complete, or near complete pots (Plate 3, above). Overall the dating of the pottery from this feature spans the 16th/17th-19/20th century. There is a near complete, flat based pipkin (Fabric 40) which is glazed all over (finds number 1). This has a flat base, a solid handle (missing) and a plain everted rim – much of which is chipped or missing. There is a small indentation from a pouring lip on one side. The underside of the base has been scorched and sooted. There is also a bowl rim in Fabric 40a whose underside has been scorched and sooted. Two whole, virtually identical, plain cream coloured, small cup/bowls were also recovered (Fabric 48d) (find number 7). These have a small beaded lip and are both about 55 mm in height (one fractionally taller than the other) with a maximum rim diameter of 75 mm. It can be noted that one of these was recovered from inside the pipkin. Also of interest is part of a pale blue tea bowl or cup (Fabric 48d) with a darker blue painted pattern and a brown glazed rim top – which was probably meant to simulate gold. The feature also produced a number of large sherds from other pottery vessels. These include parts of two stone ware pots, one possibly from Raeren as the fabric is speckled with dark

inclusions (Fabric 45c), dated 15/16th-17th century, the other – part of a handled large jug – is probably a Cologne/Frechen product (Fabrics 45e & 45d) dated 16th-17th century. There is also part of the rim from a Metropolitan slipware plate (Fabric 40a), dated 17th-18th century; a complete, but broken, jar lid (Fabric 45m) of 19th-20th century date and part of a transfer lettered (tooth) paste pot lid (Fabric 48d) also of 19th-20th century date. The neck and shoulder of a glass bottle was also recovered from this pit. The shoulder of the bottle suggests a cylindrical body shape, possibly a wine bottle dating to the 18/19th-20th century.

Of interest among the other finds of pottery is a small, whole, ceramic disc, recovered from L3 (T1). This is white with a clear glazed (base unglazed). The diameter of the disc is 31 mm and the top is dished. It is probably a small mixing pallet of 19th-20th century date.

Other finds types were recovered in much smaller quantities. Glass of post-medieval or modern date was recovered from F2 (T1) and from F5 (T2) (see above). There are single small pieces of post-medieval clay pipe stem from F2 & L3 in T1. Also, two small pieces of animal bone, which come from F2 (T1). Both of these bones have been sawn through at both ends and probably represent meat joints from processed carcasses.

7 Discussion

Evaluation trenching to the rear of 12, High Street has not revealed remains of great archaeological significance. However, they are consistent with what would be expected to the rear of post-medieval street frontages, in other words the remains of post-medieval outbuildings (foundations F2 and F4), and of waste disposal (pit F5). In addition, the brick culvert F6 running towards the river is consistent with patterns of drainage expected in this part of Chelmsford.

8 Acknowledgements

The Trust would like to thank Mr Nicholas Truelove of Elwell Taylor for commissioning and funding the work. The project was managed and carried out by Ben Holloway. The project was monitored for the ECC HEM team by Teresa O'Connor, to whom we are grateful for bringing Hilda Grieve's book to our attention.

9 References

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| CAT | 2011 | <i>Written Scheme of Investigation for archaeological evaluation by trial trenching at 12, High Street, Chelmsford, Essex</i> . May 2011. |
| EAA 14 | 2003 | <i>Standards for field archaeology in the East of England, East Anglian Archaeology, Occasional Papers</i> , 14, ed by D Gurney |
| Going, C | 1987 | <i>The Mansio and other sites in the south-eastern sector of Caesaromagus: the Roman pottery</i> , CBA Research Report 62 |
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| IfA | 2008a | <i>Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation</i> |

IfA	2008b	<i>Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials</i>
MoRPHE	2006	<i>Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment</i> English Heritage

10 Abbreviations and glossary

AOD	above Ordnance Datum
CAT	Colchester Archaeological Trust
context	specific location on an archaeological site, especially one where finds are made
ECC	Essex County Council
EHER	Essex Historic Environment Record, held by Essex County Council
feature	an identifiable thing like a pit, a wall, a floor; can contain 'contexts'
fill	the soil filling up a hole such as a pit or ditch
HEM	Historic Environment Management
IfA	Institute for Archaeologists
modern	19th-21st centuries
natural	geological deposit undisturbed by human activity
NGR	National Grid Reference
post-medieval	<i>circa</i> 1530 to 1800
Roman	the period from AD 43 to around AD 430

11 Archive deposition

The paper and digital archive is currently held by the Colchester Archaeological Trust at 12 Lexden Road, Colchester, Essex CO3 3NF, but will be permanently deposited with Chelmsford Museum under accession code CHMRE 2011.066

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Distribution list:

Mr Nicholas Truelove (Elwell Taylor)
Richard Havis - Essex County Council Historic Environment Management Team
Essex Historic Environment Record, Essex County Council

12 Contents of archive

- 1 Museum box containing all finds
- 1 A4 card wallet containing
 - original site record (features, layers, finds)
 - sundry notes and plans
 - copy of report
 - ECC HEM brief.
 - CAT WSI
 - disc containing digital photographs
 - photograph catalogue



Colchester Archaeological Trust

12 Lexden Road,
Colchester,
Essex CO3 3NF

tel.: (01206) 541051
(01206) 500124

email: archaeologists@catuk.org

Checked by: Philip Crummy
Date: 20.06.11



Fig 1 Trench locations.

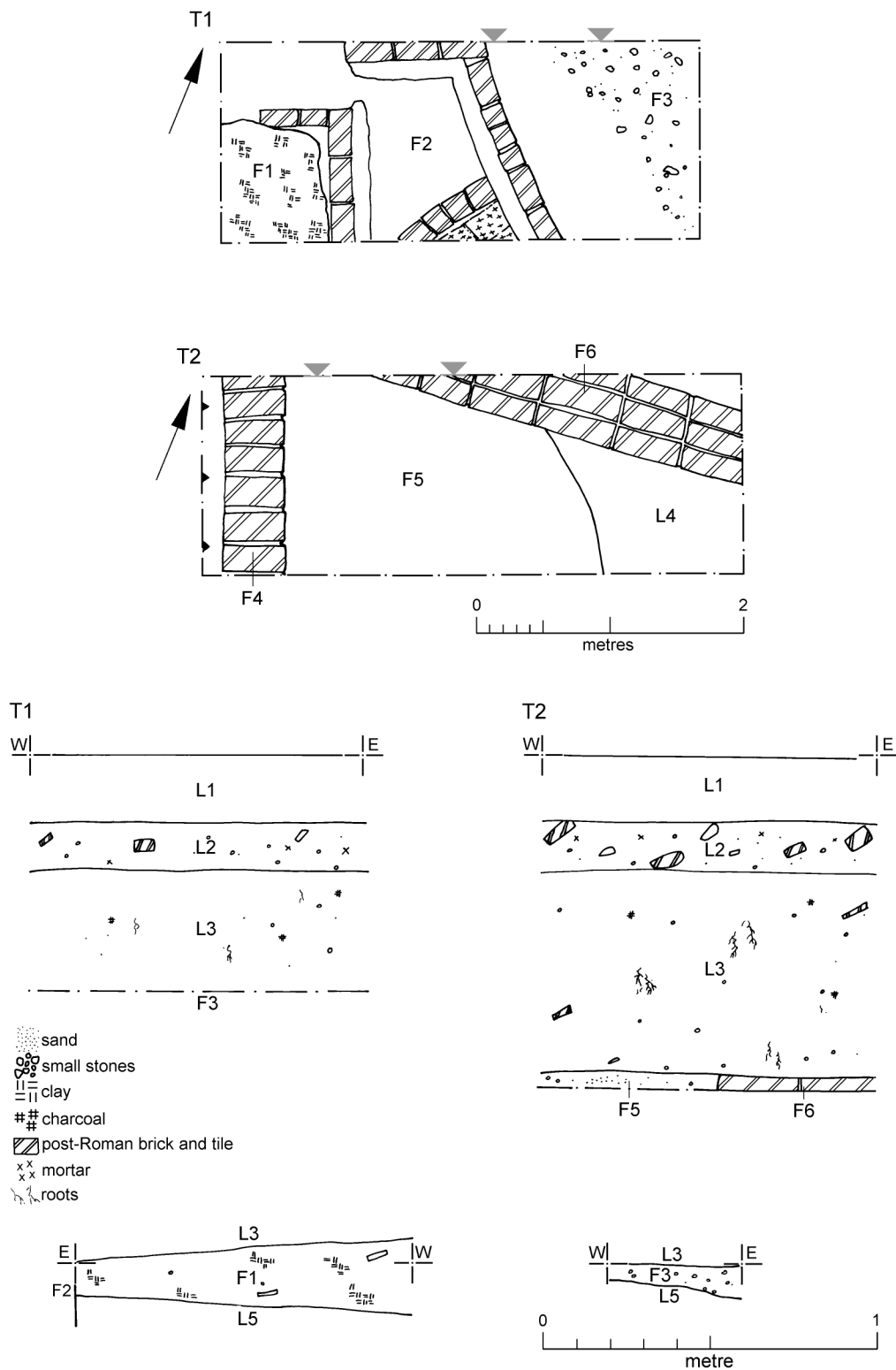


Fig 2 T1-2: plan and representative sections. F1 and F3: sections.

Essex Historic Environment Record/ Essex Archaeology and History

Summary sheet

Site address: 12 High Street, Chelmsford, Essex	
Parish: Chelmsford	District: Chelmsford
NGR: TL 7090 0681	Site codes: HEM – CF67 CAT project - 11/5c
Type of work: Evaluation	Site director/group: Colchester Archaeological Trust
Date of work: May 2011	Size of area investigated: 12 metres of trench in 77 sq m site
Location of finds/curating museum: Chelmsford Museum (accession CHMRE 2011.066)	Funding source: Developer
Further seasons anticipated? No	Related EHER and UAD nos: -
Final report: CAT Report 594, and summary in EAH	
Periods represented: post-medieval, modern	
<p>Summary of fieldwork results:</p> <p><i>The site is located in the historic core of Chelmsford, on the eastern side of the modern High Street. Formerly the service yard to the rear of 12 High Street, the site is now an area of hardstanding with a small temporary structure.</i></p> <p><i>Two evaluation trenches (total length, 12m) were positioned within the footprint of a proposed new extension. Six archaeological features were identified. These were a fragment of clay (a floor?), a post-medieval pit, two post-medieval brick foundations with an associated compacted gravel surface, and a brick culvert whose function was probably to run water away from the property across the meadows towards the River Chelmer.</i></p> <p><i>The excavated remains relate to the post-medieval and modern use of the yard area rear of this particular property, but there was no evidence relating to the medieval development of Chelmsford. A single Roman sherd shows that there was some Roman-period activity in the area.</i></p>	
Previous summaries/reports: None	
Keywords: brick foundation, gravel surface, culvert	Significance: *
Author of summary: Howard Brooks	Date of summary: June 2011