

**An archaeological watching brief
at 56 Creffield Road,
Colchester, Essex
May 2014**

**report prepared by
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**on behalf of
David Rose**

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Fig 4 F2: plan and section 3, and beaker F2.2.

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1 Summary

Three Roman burials, two cremation burials and an inhumation, were excavated during an archaeological watching brief at 56 Creffield Road, Colchester. One of the cremation burials was urned. The other one was disturbed, but was possibly unurned, and among the finds from it was a complete Roman factory lamp. Only the lower limb bones of the inhumation were exposed. The burials formed part of the western cemetery area of Roman Colchester, and probably lay close to a Roman road. A post-Roman ditch extended roughly from south to north down the middle of the site.

2 Introduction (Figs 1-2)

- 2.1 An archaeological watching brief took place at 56 Creffield Road, Colchester, Essex, during groundwork in advance of redevelopment. The archaeological work was commissioned by Brian Griffiths on behalf of David Rose, and was carried out by the Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) in May 2014.
- 2.2 The site is located just over a third of a mile (0.57 km) south-west of the walled area of Colchester town centre. It is situated on the southern side of Creffield Road, near its western end. The site lies at approximately 35.7 m AOD and its NGR is TL 9872 2471. It falls within a conservation area.
- 2.3 The redevelopment included the demolition of an existing detached property, which was built in the early 1960s. This was followed by the construction of two semi-detached houses.
- 2.4 The monitoring and recording methods used during the watching brief were outlined in the Written Scheme of Investigation for the site, which was produced by CAT in March 2014 (WSI 2014). The WSI also set out proposals for post-excavation work, the production of a report, an archive and (if necessary) publication texts. It followed a brief written by Colchester Borough Council's Archaeological Officer (CBCAO) in February 2014 (CBC 2014).
- 2.5 This report follows the standards set out in Colchester Borough Council's *Guidelines on standards and practices for archaeological fieldwork in the Borough of Colchester* (CIMS 2008a), and also those in the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (IfA 2008a) and *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (IfA 2008b). The guidance contained in English Heritage's *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment* (MoRPHE 2006), and in the documents *Research and archaeology: a framework for the Eastern Counties 1. Resource assessment* (EAA 3), *Research and archaeology: a framework for the Eastern Counties 2. Research agenda and strategy* (EAA 8), *Standards for field archaeology in the East of England* (EAA 14), and *Research and archaeology revisited: a revised framework for the Eastern Counties. Research agenda and strategy* (EAA 24), was also followed.

3 Archaeological background (Fig 1)

- 3.1 The site is situated within the western cemetery area of Roman Colchester, where numerous Roman burials, including some spectacular funerary monuments, have been discovered since the 19th century (CAR 9, 258-64; Hull 1958, 253-4; CAT Report 97, 16-7; CAT Report 323; CAT Report 345).
- 3.2 Several Roman burials have been recorded in Creffield Road, close to the site (CAR 9, Fig 8.2). These include a lead coffin found in 1887 at 60 Creffield Road, immediately to the west of the site (Hull 1958, 254 & 293; CAT Report 97, 17). Also, part of a grey-ware jar containing cremated bone was recovered in 1999 from the foundation trench for a bay window extension at the rear of 54 Creffield Road, immediately to the east of the site (Crossan 1999).
- 3.3 The Roman burials tended to be located alongside the main approach roads into the Roman town. The site lies close to several Roman roads, as there was a major road junction approximately 100 m to the north-east, in the grounds of Colchester Royal Grammar School (CAT Report 345, 1-2 & Fig 1). One of these roads probably extended south-westwards towards Gosbecks and passed close to the western edge of the site.

- 3.4 Creffield Road was probably laid out and developed in the last quarter of the 19th century. It is not shown on the 1876 OS map, but is on the 1897 revision. The houses on the adjoining plots to 56 Creffield Road were built around the turn of the century and are on the Colchester Local List of historic buildings (Colchester historic buildings forum; web reference below).

4 Aims

The aims of the watching brief were to record the depth and extent of any archaeological remains uncovered during the building work, and to assess the date and significance of these remains.

5 Methods (Figs 1-2)

- 5.1 The archaeological monitoring and recording commenced on 20th May 2014, when the contractors started digging by machine the foundation trenches for the proposed building. The footprint of the building measured up to 18 m north-south by 14 m east-west, and was set back roughly 10 m from the Creffield Road frontage. The watching brief continued until 22nd May 2014.
- 5.2 The foundation trenches for the external walls were approximately 600 mm wide by 1.2-1.3 m deep. Those for the internal walls were mostly 450 mm wide and 1.2-1.3 m deep. In places, the natural subsoil (Layer or L4) was not reached at a depth of 1.2-1.3 m. Here, the trenches were dug slightly deeper, to about 1.4 m below the modern ground level.
- 5.3 The contractors dug the foundation trenches using a mechanical digger with a toothless trenching bucket. Following the removal of the modern topsoil (L1), the deposits in the trenches were progressively stripped under the supervision of a CAT archaeologist. CAT staff were given time to investigate, clean and record any archaeological remains uncovered, and to collect up the finds unearthed. Where no archaeologically significant deposits were exposed, machine excavation continued down to the depths described in section 5.2.
- 5.4 Individual records of archaeological contexts, such as layers or features, as well as finds, were entered on CAT pro-forma record sheets. Site plans were usually drawn at 1:20 and sections were drawn at 1:10. Standard record photographs of the site and of individual contexts were taken on a digital camera. Further details of the recording methods used can be found in the WSI, and in the CAT document *Policies and procedures* (CAT 2014).

6 Results

- 6.1 The natural subsoil (L4) consisted of brownish-yellow gravelly sand. This was capped in places by shallow pockets of pale brown cover loam. The top of the natural subsoil lay 900 mm-1.1 m below the modern ground level (i.e. in places where no significant archaeological or modern features were present).

6.2 Roman burials (Figs 2-5)

- 6.2.1 During machine-trenching on the eastern side of the building, three Roman burials (Feature or F1, F2 & F3) were uncovered. The burials cut the natural subsoil (L4), and they were truncated by later activity, such as cultivation.

6.2.2 F1 urned cremation burial (Fig 3)

Description: The cremation urn was set at a slight angle in a small circular pit, which survived approximately 400 mm across and 180 mm deep. The top of the urn lay approximately 850 mm below the modern ground level. Several sherds from the urn were displaced during machining. The urn was fragmented in antiquity and could not be lifted intact. The cremated bone was excavated from the urn on site. A few potsherds from vessels other than the urn were recovered from the pitfill. Small fragments of charcoal were sparsely spread through the fills of the pit and the urn. The western edge of F1 cut an earlier pit (F5).

Cremated human bone: A total of 300 g was recovered from an adult of indeterminate sex.

Burial goods: The cremated human bone was contained in a large jar (F1.1).

Date: ?2nd century or later

Pottery

F1.1 Large jar. Finds numbers: (1) 2 sherds, 77 g, from surface cleaning; (13) 80 sherds, 1,836 g. Cam form 231/232, Fabric GX. Near complete, but fragmented, large narrow necked jar; 50% of rim present (Eve 0.5) as four sherds, three joining together. Cordon at base of neck with band of rouletting below cordon and wider band on shoulder. Form dated mid 1st-mid/late 2nd century.

Other pottery sherds:

(13) 2 joining rim sherds, 13 g, from a beaker in grey ware, Fabric GX, with a body sherd, 2 g, from a folded beaker that is probably from the same pot. The beaker is probably Cam form 411, dated early/mid 3rd-4th century.

(13) 1 rim sherd, 22 g, from a bead-rimmed bowl of Cam form 37B, Fabric GB; form dated late 2nd-mid/late 3rd century.

(13) 1 base sherd, 8 g, from the base of a bowl with chamfered edge, Fabric GB; sherd dated early 2nd–mid/late 3rd century.

(13) 1 body sherd, 2 g, in soft fabric with black surface, Fabric GX, dated Roman – possibly early Roman (mid 1st-early 2nd century).

(13) 1 body sherd, 3 g, in grey ware, Fabric GX, dated Roman.

(13) 1 amphora body sherd, 106 g, in a buff fabric with fine silver mica, Fabric AA, from a moderately thin walled amphora with a relatively wide girth, most probably a Gaulish wine amphora which can broadly be dated to the mid 1st-early 3rd century.

6.2.3 F2 ?unurned cremation burial (Fig 4; Plate 1)

Description: This poorly-preserved burial consisted of a small pit, which measured approximately 500 mm across and 220 mm deep. It extended out from the section at the junction of two of the contractor's foundation trenches. The top of the pit lay about a metre below the modern ground level. The cremated human bone was concentrated in a layer near the bottom of the pit. Several potsherds, as well as some fragments of cremated bone, were displaced during machining. Many of the finds were recovered from the section.

A small quantity of cremated bone was found attached to the inside of a pottery sherd. A few iron nails were also recovered. It is possible therefore that some or all of the cremated bone was originally housed in an urn (F2.1), that was fragmented by later activity, and/or in a wooden box. Small fragments of charcoal were sparsely spread through the fill of the pit.

Cremated human bone: A total of 680 g was recovered from an adult of indeterminate sex.

Burial goods: Sherds from two pottery vessels were recovered (F2.1 & F2.2). A factory lamp (F2.3) came from the section in the south-western part of F2. The lamp was largely intact, although the central disc was missing. It was not possible to record in detail how the lamp lay in the ground. There were some pottery sherds nearby, but it was unclear whether these sherds 'shielded' the lamp, if the latter was lit when placed in the ground (*Col Arch* 17, 5). Five iron fragments, including at least two intact nails, were also found, as well as a probable Roman brick/tile fragment.

Date: mid/late 1st-early 2nd century

Pottery

F2.1 Jar/bowl. Finds numbers: (3) 3 sherds, 33 g, including 1 rim sherd with iron fragment attached, displaced during machining; (4) approximately 90 sherds, 657 g.

Cam form 218, Fabric GX. Most of pot present, but broken into sherds (base, body & rim). Two non-joining rim sherds present as one large rim sherd (4) and a smaller rim piece (3) (Eve 0.28). Black surface of some body sherds abraded away (especially on base and lower body), possibly from corrosive surrounding soil conditions. Form dated mid 1st-early 2nd century.

F2.2 Carinated beaker or small bowl (possibly Cam 327). Illustrated (Fig 4). Finds numbers: (4) F2, 16 sherds, 63 g.

Sherds from a plain beaker, with small footring base, low wall carination with slightly concave wall and simple flaring rim (Eve 0.1). Most of profile complete as joining sherds. Fabric is brown-buff in colour with a grey surface and dark-grey core. Dated mid-late 1st/early 2nd century.

It can be noted that the form of this pot is not closely paralleled in the *Camulodunum* (Cam) type series. At Colchester this vessel shape (having a low carination on the body and slightly concave wall) appears uncommon after the early conquest period, although there are a small number of pots which follow this general pattern that are recorded as Cam 327 (*CAR* 10). This form is an addition to the original Cam types series where this number was not used (marked vacant). Pots of this form type are described as bowls and are dated as Claudio-Neronian to late 1st century?. It might be possible for the pot here to be accommodated in this form type, although the shape of the pot suggests a beaker rather than a bowl. Beakers of similar form in finewares and dated to the early 2nd century are illustrated and discussed for the London area (Marsh 1978, Type 11). An example of this type of beaker was recovered from a cremation burial at Handford House, Colchester (F192.2)

(CAT Report 323, 40 & fig 84), where it was associated with a jar dated to the mid 1st-early 2nd century. A beaker from West Stow, considered to follow a *terra nigra* form, is also similar in many respects (West 1989, fig 60, no. 281), and examples of other similar beakers in local wares are mentioned there from other sites in Suffolk.

Other objects

F2.3 SF 1 (5). Factory lamp. Illustrated (Plate 1).

Whole lamp of form Loeschcke Type IX. Central top/disc mostly broken away and not recovered among the finds. Three small non-functional vestigial suspension points; air hole on groove toward nozzle. Pale fabric with slightly mottled orange-brown semi-lustrous colour coat and darker (dark grey) patches. Imported; known sources suggest a probable North Italian or possibly Gaulish/Rhineland source. Overall length 86 mm, width 59 mm, height 30 mm; weight 75 g (includes a small amount of soil retained in nozzle area).

The form Loeschcke Type IX appears in the last third of the 1st century AD (or possibly a little earlier) and continues in sporadic use into the early 3rd century, but appears to be rare after c 100 AD (Eckardt 2002, 189). Dated probably Flavian-Trajanic.



Plate 1 Lamp F2.3
(The lamp is 86 mm long)

(4) F2. 5 iron nails/nail fragments, 34 g, from box?; 1 complete, length 50 mm; 1 complete, clenched, length 25 mm from head to bend in shank; 2 shank fragments, lengths 50 & 41 mm; 1 other fragment, possibly complete, length 80 mm, perhaps some other type of fitting.

(4) F2. 1 tile fragment, 6 mm thick, 18 g. Surface flake, probably from a Roman brick/tile, slightly abraded.

6.2.4 F3 inhumation burial (Fig 5)

Description: Part of an inhumation burial was exposed during machine-digging of the foundation trench for the east wall of the proposed building. The inhumation burial was aligned roughly south-west to north-east. The backfill of F3 was reached at just over 1 m below the modern ground level. Only the lower limb bones were uncovered, at approximately 1.1 m below the modern ground level. Their orientation indicated that the head lay at the south-western end of the grave. The bottom of the grave was reached at approximately 1.2 m below the modern ground level. The grave cut was roughly 900 mm wide. A small quantity of iron nails and nail fragments was recovered. These presumably derived from a nailed wooden coffin, although no coffin stain was observed. The burial

was cut by a modern north-south pipe trench, which extended out by up to 150 mm from under the east section of the foundation trench.

Inhumated human bone: Only badly abraded lower limb bones were recovered (left and right femurs, tibiae and fibulae; 686 g). The bone was from an adult, probably male.

Residual finds: A couple of Roman pottery sherds were recovered from F3.

Date: ?later Roman

Pottery

(6) 1 body sherd, 12 g, Fabric GX, surface cleaning.

(10) 1 body sherd, 6 g, Fabric GX, grave fill.

(9) 1 sherd, 7 g, flowerpot, Fabric 51B, modern (19th-20th century), intrusive.

Other objects

(7) F3. 1 iron nail fragment, length 42 mm, 6 g, plotted.

(10) F3. 11 iron nails/nail fragments, 117 g, not plotted in detail; 2 complete, lengths 62 & 56 mm; 4 incomplete, lengths 46, 37, 31 & 27 mm; 2 shank fragments, lengths 43 & 35 mm; 3 ?head fragments.

6.3 Roman pit (Figs 2-3)

6.3.1 A feature (F5) was uncovered in an east-west foundation trench on the eastern side of the building. It extended into the sides of the trench, but appeared to be a small, oval pit, approximately 650 mm wide and 260 mm deep. The top of the pit lay about 960 mm below the modern ground level. It was cut by cremation burial F1.

Finds from F5 were sparse, but included a few sherds of Roman pottery, some fragments of animal bone and Roman brick/tile, and an iron nail. The potsherds cover a wide date range, but include a sherd of probable 3rd- or 4th-century date, as well as earlier material.

6.4 Post-Roman ditch (Fig 2)

6.4.1 A substantial ditch (F4) extended roughly from south to north down the middle of the site. The ditch was approximately 3.5 m wide, and had a greyish-brown loamy fill, with some orange sandy mottles. The bottom of the ditch was not reached during machine-trenching, so its depth remained unclear. It was not possible to hand dig a section across F4 due to safety concerns.

6.4.2 A post-medieval potsherd and a ?peg-tile fragment were recovered during machining, and probably came from the backfill of F4. It seems likely that F4 was a post-medieval field boundary ditch, although a ditch in this position has not been identified on early maps. Another possibility is that F4 was part of a Parliamentary earthwork, dating to the Siege of Colchester in 1648.

6.5 Other post-Roman deposits (Figs 2-4)

6.5.1 Over most of the site, the natural subsoil (L4) was sealed by a brownish, slightly clayey layer (L3), approximately 150-250 mm thick. This probably consisted mainly of subsoil, reworked and redeposited as a result of post-Roman activity, such as cultivation. The Roman features F1-F3 and F5 were sealed by L3, although the post-Roman ditch F4 cut L3.

6.5.2 Extensive deposits of greyish-brown, post-Roman topsoil, approximately 750 mm thick, covered the whole site. This consisted of a lower, more brownish layer (L2), which sealed L3 and was 300-400 mm thick. Overlying L2 was an upper, darker modern topsoil (L1), 300-500 mm thick. A layer of yellowish sandy material, approximately 100 mm thick, extended over the south-western part of the building footprint. It lay approximately 300 mm below the modern ground level and was sealed by L1.

6.5.3 A modern brick soakaway, 1.1 m wide, was observed in an east-west foundation trench in the south-western part of the building footprint (marked on Fig 2). A possible shallow pit or ditch, approximately 600 mm across, was noted in a north-south foundation trench at the northern end of the building footprint (Fig 2). It remained undated, but was sealed by modern topsoil (L1).

6.5.4 The northern 6 m or so of the building footprint coincided with the former house site. Within this area, some building rubble was incorporated within L1. Other modern

disturbance, including the remains of footings, was also observed, particularly at the northern end of this area.

7 Finds

7.1 Introduction

A quantity of finds was recovered during the archaeological watching brief. Where appropriate the finds were washed, marked and bagged according to context, in line with the recommendations in *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (IfA 2008b). An explanation of the pottery fabric and form codes used is given in section 7.2. The finds from F1, F2 and F3, including the small finds, are listed in sections 6.2.2, 6.2.3 and 6.2.4 respectively. The other finds, including brief descriptions of the pottery, are listed by context in Table 2 in Appendix 2. Further details are available in the site archive. The detailed report on the human bone by Julie Curl is given in section 7.3, and summary catalogues are provided in Tables 3 and 4 in Appendix 3.

7.2 Pottery fabric and form codes

(Identifications by Stephen Benfield)

The Roman pottery was recorded using the Colchester Roman fabric type series (*CAR 10*). Roman pottery vessel forms refer to the Camulodunum Roman pottery type series (Hawkes & Hull 1947; Hull 1958). The post-Roman pottery fabrics refer to Colchester post-Roman fabric type series (*CAR 7*).

Table 1: List of pottery fabrics

| Fabric codes | Fabric name |
|--------------------|--|
| <i>Roman:</i> | |
| AA | Amphorae, all (excluding Dressel 20 and Brockley Hill/ Verulamium region amphorae) |
| BACG | Central Gaulish plain samian |
| BAMV | Les Martres-de-Veyre plain samian |
| DJ | Coarse oxidised ware |
| EA | Nene Valley colour-coated ware |
| GB | BB2: black-burnished ware, category 2 |
| GX | Other coarse wares, principally locally-produced grey wares |
| HZ | Large storage jars and other vessels in heavily-tempered grey wares |
| ON | Mica-gilt wares |
| <i>Post-Roman:</i> | |
| 40 | Post-medieval (glazed) red earthenwares |
| 51B | Flowerpot |

7.3 The human bone

by Julie Curl

7.3.1 Methodology

The human remains were recorded following modified guidelines produced by English Heritage (Mays, 2004) and the IfA (Brickley & McKinley, 2004). All of the bones were quantified by context, and an estimate of the minimum number of individuals was recorded based on counts of the most frequent elements. An estimation was given of sex and age, based on those elements present. Bones were scanned for any pathologies, genetic traits and modifications, which were recorded. Fusion of bone and tooth eruption and wear were noted when possible to allow estimation of ages following Brothwell (1981). Where complete and suitable elements were present, they were measured for estimation of stature using the regression formulae of Trotter and Gleser (1952 & 1958), and for estimation of ethnicity and features.

For cremations, the contents were dry-sieved through a stack of 10, 5, and 2 mm sized mesh to maximise recovery and assess the degree of fragmentation. Fragments measuring over 5 mm were manually separated. Notes were made on the degree of fragmentation, levels of burning, damage and modifications, and on body zones represented.

All of the information for this analysis report was input directly into an Excel database for analysis. Summary catalogues of the results are provided in Tables 3 and 4 in Appendix 3, and a full catalogue of the cremation burials, including additional counts and measurements, is available in the digital archive.

7.3.2 Overall assemblage – quantification, provenance and preservation

The human assemblage totals 1,666 g and consists of 1,156 pieces of bone. There is one inhumation (F3) and two cremation burials (F1 & F2). The bone from one cremation burial (F1) survived within an urn. The second cremation burial (F2) was disturbed. It may have been unurned, but it is possible that some or all of the bone was originally buried in an urn. All of the remains are of Roman date.

7.3.3 The inhumation

A total of 686 g of bone was recovered, consisting of thirty-one pieces, from a Roman inhumation burial (F3; finds numbers (11) & (12)). These remains consist of quite poorly preserved and fragmenting lower limbs. The elements consist of incomplete left and right femurs, left and right tibias, and left and right fibulas; there are also numerous small fragments from these limbs. Most articular ends of the bones were destroyed, with only a proximal fragment of the right tibia remaining.

Age and sex

The size and fusion of the one articular fragment indicate an adult burial. The size of the bones would suggest male, but this could not be confirmed with any metrical data from the femur.

Stature

The bones are incomplete and measurements could not be taken for a more accurate estimation of stature. The size of the bones suggests a robust individual.

Pathologies/trauma

The proximal left fibula shaft shows some remodelling, irregular alignment, and irregular bone growth that would suggest a healed break. This break may be a result of inflicted trauma, but could be accidental and from a fall.

Ethnicity

There is no suitable elements present that would allow estimation of ethnicity.

7.3.4 The cremation burials

Two cremation burials were discovered. The cremated material totalled 980 g and consisted of 1094 pieces.

Urned cremation burial F1 (14)

The contents of the urned cremation burial produced a total of 300 g of bone, consisting of at least 319 pieces of bone, along with several fragments and dust under 1 mm in size. Most of the fragments (179 pieces) are larger than 10 mm, with the longest fragment (a rib) measuring 77 mm; a large fragment of skull measured 47 x 34 mm. Identifiable elements consisted of skull fragments, ribs, vertebrae and limb pieces.

There is an absence of teeth and phalanges, with such elements perhaps lost in the raking process and in collection for placement in the urn. The higher number of larger elements in this urn might suggest larger pieces were preferred and selected for burial.

The size of the elements would suggest an adult. There are no diagnostic pieces that allow a more precise age estimation or an estimation of sex.

One rib in the urned burial showed a probable healed break or fracture, which is a common pathology, with fractures and breaks on ribs occurring not only from trauma, but also from actions as simple as coughing.

?Unurned cremation burial F2 (17)

The bone from the lower fill of this pit amounts to 680 g and consists of 775 pieces; some very small fragments and bone dust was seen, along with some very small pieces of gravel. Just under half of the fragments (48% by fragment count) were greater than 10 mm in length, with the largest fragment having a length of 75 mm. Identifiable elements consisted of skull fragments, pieces of rib, vertebrae, upper and lower limb and one foot phalange. No teeth were seen and extremities (hands and feet) were poorly represented, which may be due to loss in the raking process or a bias in the recovery of the bone for burial.

A few articular ends were seen, including from a radius and tibia, and these indicate an adult; the size of the elements seen support this. No elements were seen that would allow estimation of the sex of the individual. No pathologies were recognised with the remains in F2.

It was also noted that one fragment of burnt rib showed some copper-alloy staining, suggesting a copper-alloy object was touching this fragment of bone at some stage during the burial time.

Fragmentation

The fragmentation of bone resulting from the cremation process may be increased by funerary practices such as raking and tending of the pyre, collection of bone at the pyre site, deliberate crushing prior to burial, as well as a result of post-depositional processes, excavation and processing (McKinley, 1989).

The largest proportion of bone fragments were from the 10 mm sieve. The degree of bone fragmentation is a little less in F2 (17) than that generally seen in archaeological cremations, where an average of 50% of bone fragments are over 10 mm in size (McKinley, 1994). The remains in F1 (14) show an average fragmentation.

Cremation colour

The colour of cremated bone depends on a range of factors including the maximum temperature reached, the length of the cremation process, the type and amount of fuel, the quantity of oxygen, the amount of body fat, as well as on the degree of uniformity of exposure to the heat across the body. A correlation has been found between the temperature attained and colour changes. Cremated bone can exhibit a large range of heat-induced colour variation from brown or orange coloured (unburnt), to black (charred: c.300 °C), through hues of blue and grey (incompletely incinerated: up to c.600 °C) to fully oxidised white (> c.600 °C) (McKinley, 2004).

The remains in both of the cremations from this site showed less fully oxidised remains, which might suggest insufficient time for burning or perhaps adverse (wet) weather conditions at the time of the cremation, resulting in less burning of the bone.

It was also noted that one fragment of burnt rib from F2 (17) showed some copper-alloy staining, suggesting a copper-alloy object was touching this fragment of bone at some stage during the burial time.

Surface Changes

Surface changes such as warping, cracking and fissuring are characteristics of cremated bone and are produced during the process of dehydration undergone by bone exposed to heat. The pattern of heat-induced bone changes in colour and texture can be exploited to infer the technological aspects of the ritual, the condition of the body at the time when the cremation process took place and the nature of post-depositional disturbance (Shipman *et al*, 1984).

In both of the cremations from this site, there was cracking and warping seen on the fully oxidised bone, with the remaining fragments showing less destructive changes.

7.3.5 Discussion of the human bone

The inhumation recovered from this site is substantially incomplete and lacking in elements that could allow greater identification of, and more information about, the individual. However, what could be gleaned was that the person was an adult, probably male, and this person had suffered a broken left fibula, which had healed well. It is not possible to determine the cause of the injury and if this was as a result of occupational hazards, interpersonal trauma or a simple fall.

The cremation burials seen in this assemblage are within the average range for cremations. It is interesting that there is a greater quantity of bone from the ?unurned cremation burial F2, as an urn usually offers greater protection and better survival of the bone. This might suggest, as suspected at the time of recovery, that this cremation may have originally been housed in an urn. Both of the cremations are from adults, but the damage and fragmentation to the bone that occurred during the burning, tending and collection process means that little information about the individuals is forthcoming. The individual in F1 (14) showed a healed break or fracture in a rib. This is a common pathology. Breaks or fractures of ribs can occur from inflicted injuries, but can occur as a result of coughing.

It was also noted that one fragment of burnt rib from F2 (17), showed some copper-alloy staining, suggesting a copper-alloy object was touching this fragment of bone at some stage during the burial time.

8 Discussion

- 8.1** Many Roman burials were excavated during the building of Colchester's western suburbs in the 19th and early 20th centuries (*CAR 9*, 258-61). George Joslin and John Taylor in particular amassed large collections of antiquities at this time. However, comparatively few burials in this area have been well excavated under modern conditions. An exception to this is the site at 1 Queen's Road (formerly Handford House), which lies approximately 100 m to the west of 56 Creffield Road. Here, 68 burials were excavated in 2003-5 (CAT Report 323). The burials dug during the watching brief at 56 Creffield Road in 2014 therefore added significantly to the corpus of recently excavated examples in the western cemetery area of Roman Colchester.
- 8.2** Most of the antiquities recovered during the 19th and early 20th century investigations in the area probably derived from cremation burials. At this time, interest was directed primarily towards objects, so that inhumations, being frequently unaccompanied by grave goods, attracted less attention than cremation burials (*CAR 9*, 257 & 265-67). The discovery at 56 Creffield Road of an inhumation alongside two different types of cremation burial helps to redress the balance and provide a more representative picture of the types of Roman burial found in the western cemetery area. At the former Handford House site, both cremation burials and inhumations were recorded, although cremation burials predominated (CAT Report 323). On sites in some other Roman cemetery areas in Colchester, such as at Butt Road, which lies closer to the walled town, inhumations predominated (*CAR 9*, 4-163 & 263-7; Crummy 2001, 118).
- 8.3** The burials at 56 Creffield Road probably lay close to a Roman road heading south-westwards towards Gosbecks. This reinforces the pattern seen elsewhere in the western cemetery area, where Roman burials were often located alongside the main roads out of the Roman town (Crummy 2001, 108-9). The alignments of the earlier inhumations in Roman Colchester varied considerably and often respected features such as roads and boundaries (*CAR 9*, 266). The orientation of the inhumation burial F3 at 56 Creffield Road, from south-west to north-east, was perhaps influenced by the alignment of the road to Gosbecks.
- 8.4** As well as the different types of burial recorded at 56 Creffield Road, there were also differences in the dates of the burials. The lamp (F2.3) and pots (F2.1 & F2.2) indicated that cremation burial F2 probably dated to the late 1st or early 2nd century. Many of the previous finds from the western cemetery area were of 1st- and 2nd-century date, so F2 is consistent with these.
- The urned cremation burial F1 was not as closely datable as F2, but was probably later in date. Although the urn (F1.1) was dated from the mid 1st to the mid/late 2nd century, several later sherds were found in F1, and in F5, which was cut by F1. These suggest that F1 dated to the later 2nd or 3rd century. Cremation burials of later Roman date are fairly common in some of Colchester's southern cemetery areas, but they are less well-known in the western cemetery area (CAT Report 323, 94-5).
- 8.5** No closely dated finds were recovered from the inhumation burial F3. Some indication of its date may be given by the alignment of the grave, as well as by the evidence from other sites. Nine inhumations, variously aligned, were excavated at the former Handford House site in 2003-5. Most of these were not closely dated, but it seems likely that they were later Roman in date (*ibid*, 94). At Butt Road, those inhumations that were not aligned east-west were earlier than the ones that were (Crummy 2001, 120). The former probably dated to the early 4th century, while the east-west graves dated roughly from the early/mid to the late 4th century or possibly later (*CAR 9*, 54-5 & 159-62). The dead in the east-west graves had probably been Christians (*ibid*, 192-8).
- In conclusion, the inhumation burial F3 at 56 Creffield Road was possibly a later Roman, pagan grave.
- 8.6** Accompanying grave goods were found only in the early cremation burial F2. This consisted of a factory lamp and two pottery vessels, although one of the latter may possibly have served as an urn. The other cremation burial F1 contained an urn, but no

accompanying grave goods. Only part of the inhumation burial F3 was excavated, so it is not known if grave goods were present in the unexcavated parts of the grave.

Grave goods were not always placed in burials in Roman Colchester, and where they were included the objects were often modest in number and type (CAR 9, 265-75). The differences in the provision of grave goods in the three burials at 56 Creffield Road are therefore consistent with what has been documented elsewhere in the Roman cemetery areas.

- 8.7 There was little evidence for post-Roman activity on the site, although a post-Roman ditch F4 extended from south to north down the middle of the site. This was probably of post-medieval date and was perhaps a field boundary ditch, although it is possible that it was part of a Parliamentary earthwork, dating to the Siege of Colchester in 1648.

9 Abbreviations and glossary

| | |
|---------------|--|
| AOD | above Ordnance Survey datum point based on mean sea level at Newlyn, Cornwall |
| BABAO | British Association for Biological Anthropology and Osteoarchaeology |
| BAR | British Archaeological Report |
| CAT | Colchester Archaeological Trust |
| CBC | Colchester Borough Council |
| CBCAO | Colchester Borough Council Archaeological Officer |
| Clfa | Chartered Institute for Archaeologists |
| CIMS | Colchester and Ipswich Museums Service |
| context | specific location on an archaeological site, especially one where finds are made; usually a layer or a feature |
| cover loam | a natural, wind-blown deposit, probably formed towards the end of the last Ice Age |
| DBA | desk-based assessment |
| EHES | Essex Historic Environment Record, held at Essex County Council, County Hall, Chelmsford |
| feature | an identifiable context, such as a pit, a wall or a posthole |
| IfA | Institute for Archaeologists (now the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists) |
| imbrex | curved Roman roof tile |
| medieval | period from AD 1066 to c AD 1500 |
| modern | period from c 1850 onwards to the present |
| natural | geological deposit undisturbed by human activity |
| NGR | National Grid Reference |
| OS | Ordnance Survey |
| peg-tile | rectangular roof tile of medieval or later date; intact examples usually have two peg-holes |
| post-medieval | period from c 1500 to c 1850 |
| residual | finds that were deposited earlier than the context in which they were found |
| RRCSAL | Reports of the Research Committee of the Society of Antiquaries of London |
| Roman | period from AD 43 to c AD 410 |
| UAD | Urban Archaeological Database, maintained by Colchester and Ipswich Museums |
| U/S | unstratified, i.e. without a well-defined context |
| WSI | Written Scheme of Investigation |

10 References

Note: all CAT reports (except DBAs) are available online in .pdf format at <http://cat.essex.ac.uk/>

| | | |
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11 Acknowledgements

CAT is grateful to David Rose for funding the archaeological watching brief, and to Brian Griffiths and Steve Norman for commissioning it. We would also like to thank those who assisted with the project, especially the following: the contractors, D G Rose Ltd, for their help on site; the finds specialists, Julie Curl and Stephen Benfield, for their contributions; the diggers, Emma Holloway and Stefania Usai; Emma Holloway also did the pot drawing and Jill Adams worked on the figures. The work was monitored by Martin Winter, Colchester Borough Council Archaeological Officer.

12 Archive deposition

The archive from the archaeological watching brief, including the site records, photographs and finds, will be permanently deposited with Colchester and Ipswich Museums, under accession code COLEM 2014.24, in accordance with *Guidelines on the preparation and transfer of archaeological archives to Colchester & Ipswich Museums* (CIMS 2008b) and *Archaeological archives: a guide to best practice in creation, compilation, transfer and curation* (IfA 2007).

13 Appendices

Appendix 1: contents of archive

One A4 document wallet containing:

1 Project management archive

- 1.1 Copy of the brief issued by CBCAO on paper and CD
- 1.2 Copy of the WSI produced by CAT on paper and CD
- 1.3 Site plans provided by the developer on paper and CD

2 Site archive

- 2.1 Attendance register
- 2.2 Context sheets
- 2.3 Site plans/sections on 1 sheet of A3 drafting film
- 2.4 Site plans/sections on 2 sheets of A4 squared paper
- 2.5 Photographic record sheets
- 2.6 Site photographs on CD
- 2.7 Site diary/notes on 1 sheet of A4 paper
- 2.8 Sundry papers

3 Research archive

- 3.1 Lists of finds, including small finds, on CD
- 3.2 Copies of specialists reports on CD
- 3.3 Photographs of lamp on CD
- 3.4 Drawing of pot F2.2
- 3.5 Copy of final report (CAT Report 799) on paper and CD

Not in wallet:

4 Finds archive

4.1 One museum box containing the finds

Appendix 2: list of finds by context

All weights are in grammes. Identifications and descriptions are by Stephen Benfield. For the pottery fabric and form codes, see section 7.2. Table 2 excludes the finds from Roman burials F1-F3; these are listed in sections 6.2.2-6.2.4. The glass is clear, unless stated otherwise. The fabrics of the ceramic building materials are reddish in colour, unless stated otherwise.

Table 2: list of finds by context

| Context | Finds no | Qty | Description | Wt (g) | Comments |
|---------|----------|-----|-----------------------------|--------|---|
| F4 | 16 | 1 | post-medieval pottery sherd | 25 | large dish rim, Fabric 40, mid 16th-mid 18th century |
| | | 1 | ?peg-tile fragment | 23 | 10 mm thick |
| F5 | 15 | 8 | Roman pottery sherds | 134 | 1 body sherd, 4 g, Fabric DJ, mid 1st-2nd/3rd century. 1 body sherd from a folded beaker, 1 g, Fabric EA, early/mid 3rd-4th century. 2 body sherds, large storage jars, 100 g, Fabric HZ, mid 1st-2nd/3rd century. 1 shoulder sherd, 5 g, Fabric GX, Roman. 2 body sherds, slightly abraded, from dish/bowl, 16 g, Fabric BACG, 2nd century. 1 body sherd, from plate/dish, 8 g, Fabric BAMV, early 2nd century (c AD 100-120). |
| | | 2 | Roman brick/tile fragments | 490 | 34 & 30 mm thick |
| | | 3 | animal bone fragments | 57 | |
| | | 1 | iron nail | 18 | 80 mm long |
| | | 1 | Roman pottery sherd | 12 | lower body sherd, Fabric GX |
| U/S | 2 | 2 | post-Roman glass vessels | 541 | 1 ?ginger beer glass bottle, weight 412 g, neck missing, stamped on face G.W.MA[?] & C^o , stamped near foot COLCHESTER & HALESWORTH . 1 intact small, squat brown glass bottle, weight 129 g, height 90 mm, stamped on sides 4^{oz} BOVRIL LIMITED , stamped on base R P . Late 19th-20th century. |
| | | 1 | animal bone fragment | 32 | |
| U/S | 8 | 1 | Roman pottery sherd | 21 | carinated body sherd, faint traces of surface mica-gilt, Fabric ON, Roman (mid 1st-2nd century?) |
| | | 1 | <i>imbrex</i> fragment | 183 | |

Appendix 3: summary catalogues of the human remains

Table 1 – Inhumation

Table 2 – Cremation burials.

Listed in order of feature/context number.

Key:

Ages: A = adult, J = Juvenile, SA = Sub-Adult, M = Mature

Condition: g = good, b = burnt, crem = cremated, f = fragmentary, er = eroded, w = warped, c = cracked, p = poor

Level: Level of burning: br-o = brown to orange (unburnt), g = grey, g-b/b-g = grey to blue, b = black, w = white

Path = pathology

Comments: GL = greatest length

Table 3: Inhumation summary record

| Ctxt/Grave | Find Nos | Male/F | Ad/J/N/P | Condition | Comp | Side | Path | Trauma | Weight (g) | Total Count | Misc | Fe | Tib/F | Faunal | Assoc.Finds |
|------------|-------------|--------|----------|------------|------|----------|-----------------|--------|---------------|----------------|------|----|-------|--------|-----------------|
| F3 | 11 & 12 | ?M | Adult | poor/frags | inc | L + R | Healed Break | Break | 686 | 31 | 25 | 2 | 4 | | Fe nails-coffin |

Table 4: Summary catalogue of the cremated material

| Context | Find No | Feature | Type | Find date | Ctxt wt | Count | >10mm | 5-9mm | 2-4mm | <1mm | Level | Warp | Crack | Adult | MNI | Element range | Path | foot | LL | UL | V/R | Skull | Misc | Comments |
|---------|------------|---------|---------------|--------------|------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|------|-------|------|-------|-------|-----|--------------------|------|------|----|----|-----|-------|------|--|
| F1 | 14 | Crem | Urned | Rom | 300 | 319+ | 179 | 105 | 35 | * | br-w | * | * | * | 1 | sk, l, r, v | 1 | | * | * | * | * | * | largest frags: rib GL 77mm, sk 47x34mm, great variation in burning, some unburnt |
| F2 | 17 | Crem | ?Un- urned | Rom | 680 | 775+ | 375 | 250 | 150+ | * | br-w | * | * | * | 1 | sk, l, r, v, ph | | * | * | * | * | * | * | largest fragment: GL 75mm |

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Distribution list:

David Rose
Colchester Borough Council Archaeological Officer
Essex Historic Environment Record, Essex County Council



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Colchester,
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tel.: 07436 273 304
email: archaeologists@catuk.org

Checked by: Philip Crummy
Date: 26.1.15



Fig 1 Site location.

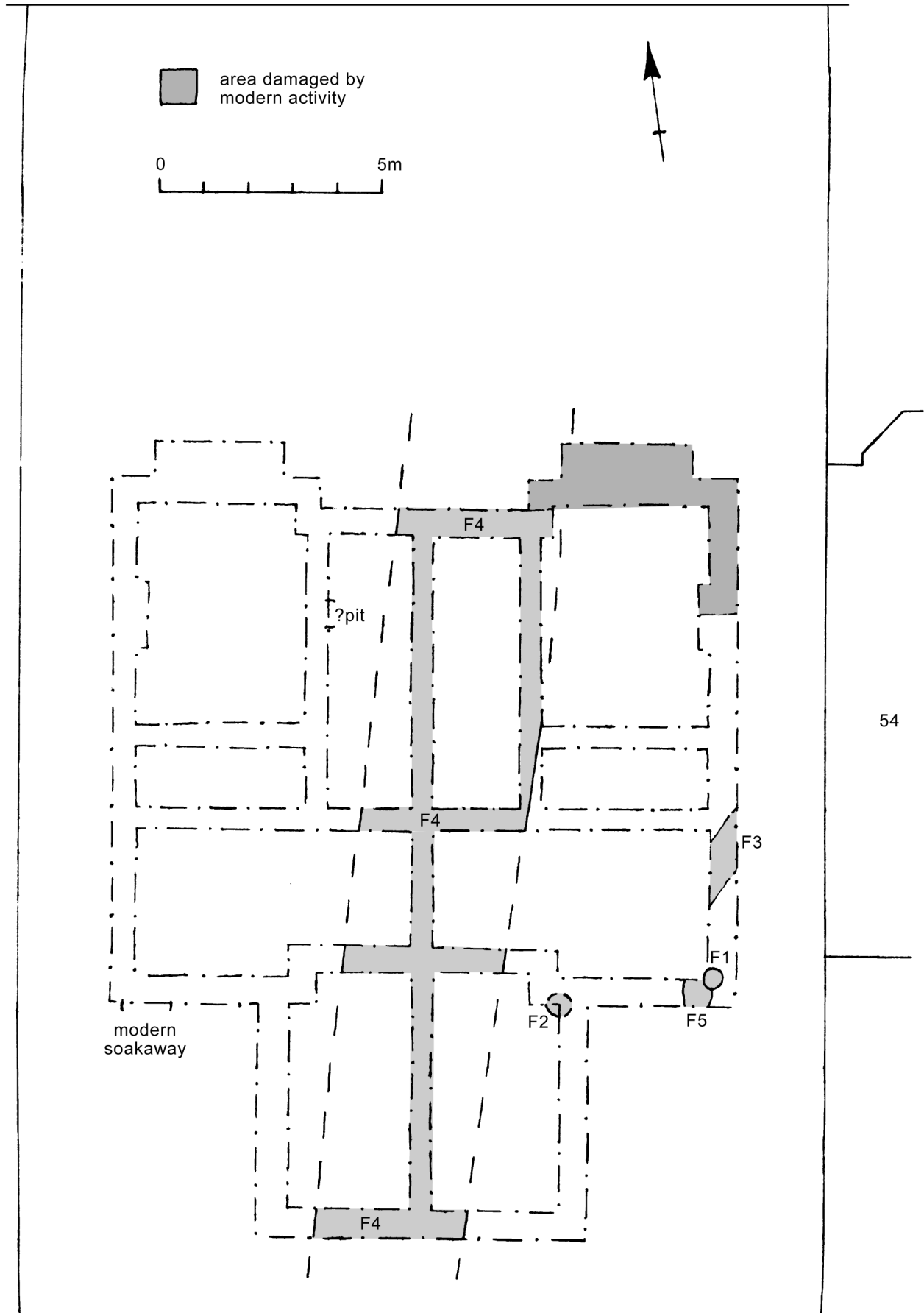


Fig 2 Site plan.

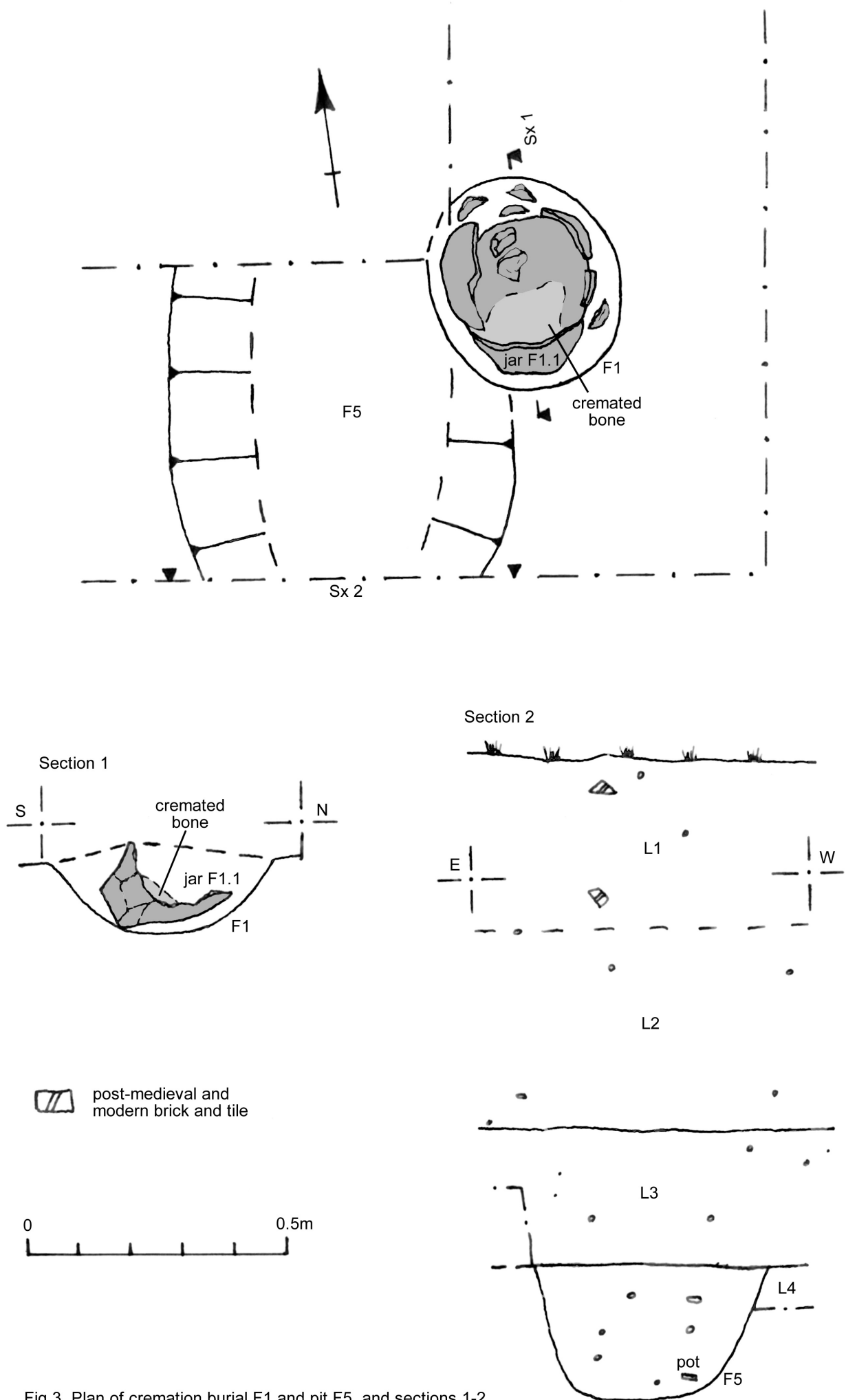


Fig 3 Plan of cremation burial F1 and pit F5, and sections 1-2.

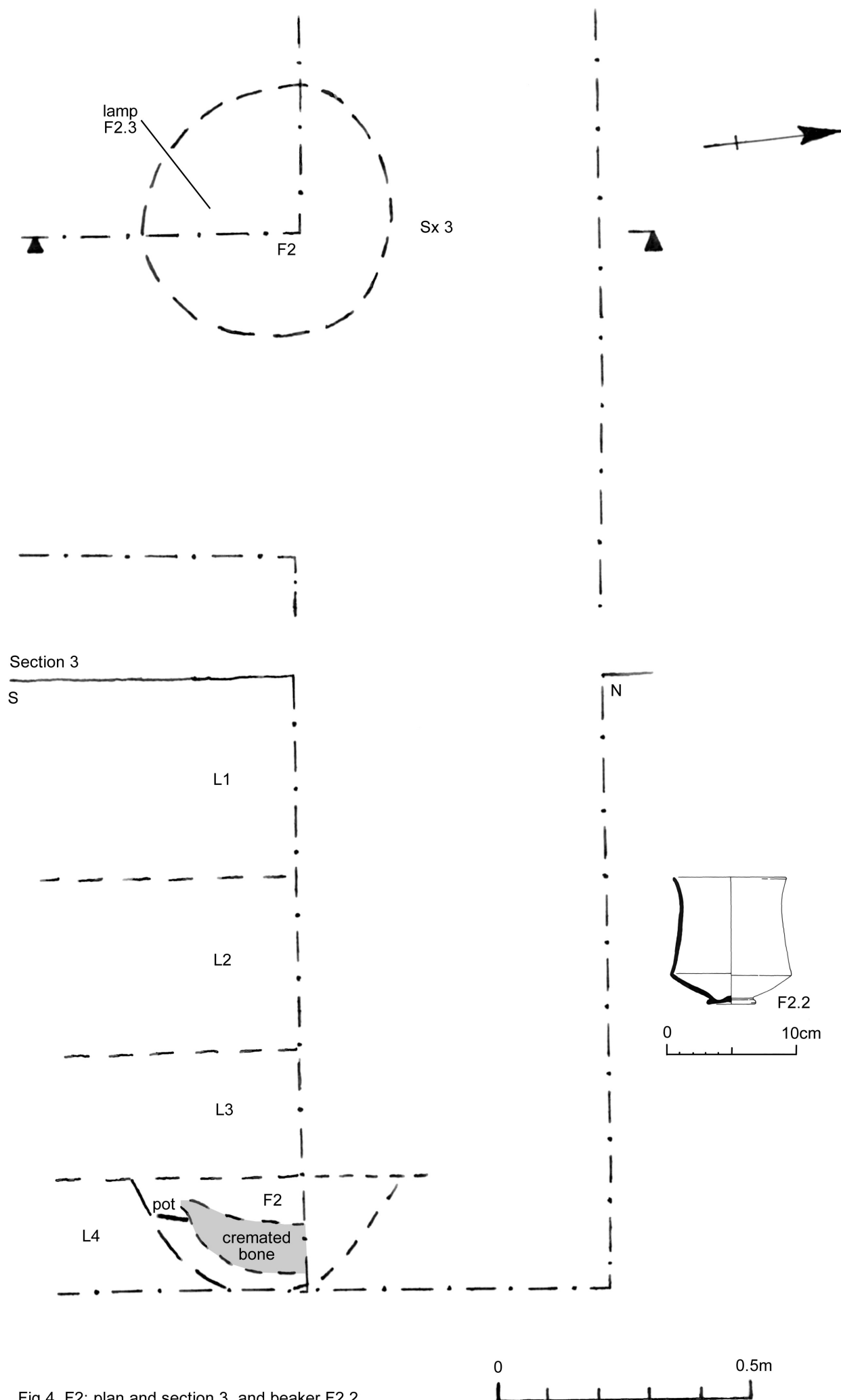


Fig 4 F2: plan and section 3, and beaker F2.2.

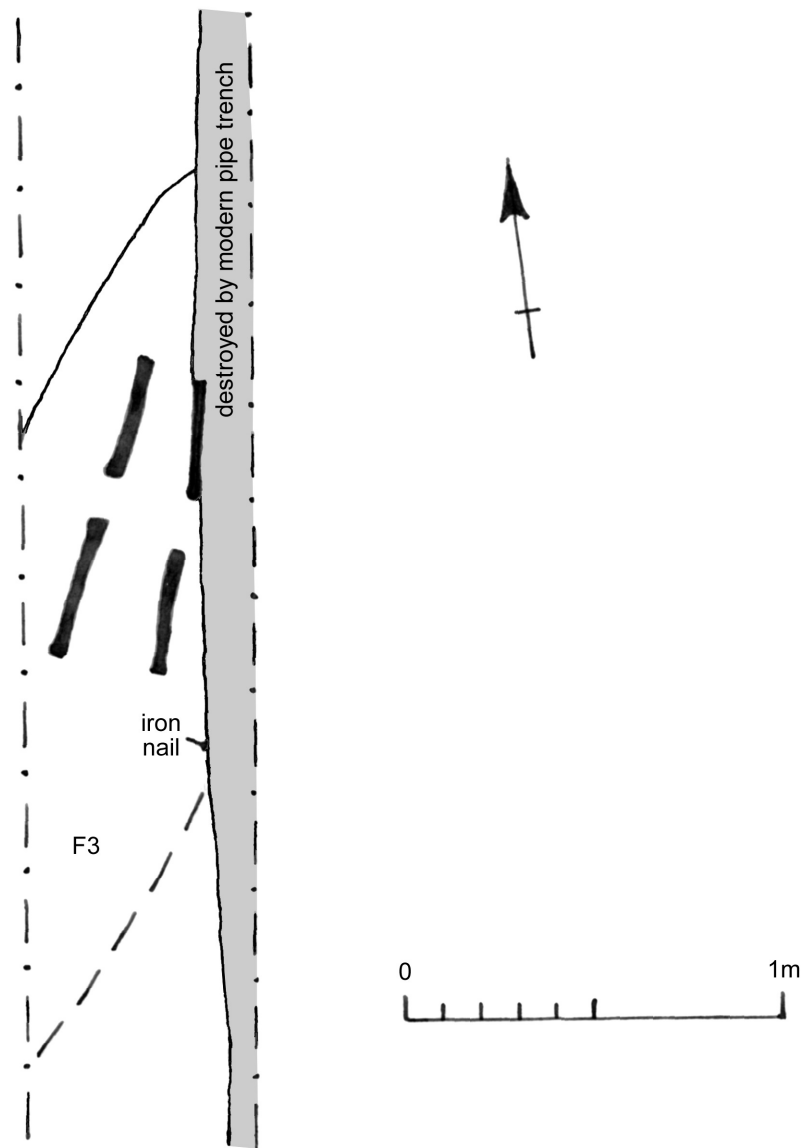


Fig 5 F3: plan.

Essex Historic Environment Record/ Essex Archaeology and History

Summary sheet

| | |
|---|---|
| Site address: 56 Creffield Road, Colchester | |
| Parish: Colchester | District: Colchester Borough |
| NGR: TL 9872 2471 | Site codes: Museum accession code: COLEM 2014.24 CAT project code: 14/03a |
| Type of work: Watching brief | Site director/group: Colchester Archaeological Trust |
| Date of work: May 2014 | Size of area investigated: 212 sq m |
| Location of finds/curating museum: Colchester and Ipswich Museums | Funding source: Client |
| Further seasons anticipated? No | Related EHER and UAD nos: |
| Final report: CAT Report 799 and summary in <i>EAH</i> | |
| Periods represented: Roman, post-medieval | |
| Summary of fieldwork results: Three Roman burials, two cremation burials and an inhumation, were excavated during an archaeological watching brief at 56 Creffield Road, Colchester. One of the cremation burials was urned. The other one was disturbed, but was possibly unurned, and among the finds from it was a complete Roman factory lamp. Only the lower limb bones of the inhumation were exposed. The burials formed part of the western cemetery area of Roman Colchester, and probably lay close to a Roman road. A post-Roman ditch extended roughly from south to north down the middle of the site. | |
| Previous summaries/reports: None | |
| Keywords: Roman burial, human bone, Roman lamp, Roman pottery | Significance: ** |
| Author of summary: Donald Shimmin | Date of summary: January 2015 |