

Archaeological test-pit at 9 Ashley Gardens, Colchester, Essex

November 2014



**report prepared by Ben Holloway
on behalf of Mr Robert Harding**

CAT project ref.: 14/111
NGR: TL 9827 2506
Colchester & Ipswich Museum accession code: 2014.112



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CAT Report 803
December 2014

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1 Summary

This site (the front garden of 9, Ashley Gardens), lies west of the historic Roman and later town of Colchester and within the Roman 'western cemetery area'.

A test-pit was excavated to the south of a newly-constructed extension on the southern side of the house. The work was carried out in response to a recommendation from the Colchester Borough Council (CBC) planning team.

The test-pit revealed a modern foundation, and a 2nd-century Roman pit. The fact that the Roman pit extended beyond the western side of the test pit (towards the new extension) indicates that other Roman features may have existed here, and would have been encountered had the new foundation beams been archaeologically excavated.

The absence of burials indicates that this site is to the west of the main area of the Roman western cemetery, which lies to the south and east along the Roman road to London.

2 Introduction (Fig 1)

This is the report on the archaeological test-pit dug at 9 Ashley Gardens, Colchester, by Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) on 21st of November 2014.

The site (currently open ground in the gardens of number 9) is being landscaped in the final part of a redevelopment project. Site centre is NGR TL 9827 2506.

A planning application was submitted to the LPA in July 2013 to extend the existing property. CBC Archaeological Officer (CBCAO) had identified that the development site was within an area of significant archaeological potential, and that archaeological work would be required prior to construction. Section 5 of the planning consent states:

'No development shall commence until details of a watching brief to be carried out by a suitably qualified archaeologist (during construction works) has been submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall thereafter be carried out in strict accordance with these agreed details. In the event that any significant archaeological features or remains are discovered which are beyond the scope of the watching brief (and require fuller rescue excavation) the construction work shall cease immediately and shall not recommence until a revised programme of archaeological work including a scheme of investigation has been submitted to, and approved in writing, by the Local Planning Authority. Reason: To enable the inspection and recording of any items of archaeological importance'.

Because this condition was not fulfilled at the time of construction, CBC recommended that the test-pit should be excavated post-construction.

The archaeological work was commissioned by Mr Robert Harding, and carried out to a methodology agreed with CBCAO.

In addition to the WSI, all fieldwork and reporting was done in accordance with CAT *Policies and procedures* (2012), 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), CIMS 2008a, CIMS 2008b. The guidance contained in the documents *Standards for field archaeology in the East of England* (EAA 14) and *Research and archaeology revisited: A revised framework for the East of England*, East Anglian Archaeological Occasional Papers 24 (EAA 24) was also followed.

3 Archaeological background

This section is based on records held by Essex Historic Environment Record (EHER) held at Essex County Council, County Hall, Chelmsford, and the Urban Archaeological Database held at Colchester and Ipswich Museum

The site is on the edge of the Roman western cemetery, in which numerous cremations and funerary monuments have been recorded since the nineteenth century (Hull, 1958). For a wider discussion of cemetery areas see Crummy & Crossan (1993).

The site is also located within the oppidum of Camulodunum, which has been explored since the 1930s, (Hawkes & Crummy 1995). Excavations in the 1930s revealed early Roman military ditches, probably a small fort. Additional work in the 1950s revealed further Roman ditches and timber structures; possibly a small rural farmstead.

CAT has undertaken a number of other fieldwork projects in the locality in recent years. These have demonstrated well-preserved LIA and Roman stratigraphy. It was likely that such deposits would survive on the current development site.

4 Aim

The aim of the evaluation was to establish the character; extent, date, and significance of any remains and deposits disturbed by the groundworks. Specific attention was paid to potential archaeological remains mentioned in section 3 above.

5 Results (Fig 2)

This section gives an archaeological summary of the test pit (TP1), with context and finds dating information.

TP1 was excavated under archaeological supervision by a tracked excavator using a toothless bucket, through two layers: a modern topsoil 500mm thick (L1), and a silty accumulation horizon (L2) 200mm thick. This revealed the natural sands and gravels (L3).

TP1 was located to the east of the new extension, in the southern part of the plot. Two features were identified: a modern concrete footing F1, and a Roman pit F2.

The Roman pit, which contained Roman tile and pottery, extended beyond the test pit towards the extension on the southern side of the existing property. The modern foundation F1 ran along the northern edge of TP1. This was part of the intended extension of number 9, but remained unused when the final footprint was changed.



Plate 1: concrete footing F1 is under the shovel, and Roman pit F2 is at the bottom of TP1.

Test Pit 1: Archaeological

Context	Description	Date
F1	concrete footing	modern
F2	pit	Roman 2nd century

6 Finds

by Stephen Benfield

Two finds were recovered, both from Feature 2 (F2). One is a small piece (62g) from the end of a Roman *imbrex* roof tile in a red sandy fabric. The other is a small, abraded sherd (6g) of Central Gaulish samian (Fabric BACG), dated to the 2nd century.

7 Discussion

The Ashley Gardens site is within an area of intense archaeological activity, which includes part of the western cemetery of the Roman town.

The test-pit produced a small amount of archaeological material - a piece of Roman roof tile and a 2nd-century samian ware sherd, both from Roman pit F2 which extends beyond the confines of TP1 and west towards the foundations of the new extension. This would suggest that additional Roman activity (ie, pits) would have been encountered had the new foundation beams been archaeologically excavated.

There was no evidence of burials or other funerary activity. This is probably due to the site's being located away from the main cemetery focus which lies to the south and east along the Roman road to London.

8 Acknowledgements

CAT thanks Mr Robert Harding for commissioning and funding the work. The project was managed by B Holloway, and monitored by CBCAO Chris Lister. Figures are by Emma Holloway and Howard Brooks.

9 References

CAT	2012	<i>Policies and Procedures</i>
CIMS	2008a	<i>Guidelines on standards and practice for archaeological fieldwork in the Borough of Colchester</i> (CBC)
CIMS	2008b	<i>Guidelines on the preparation and transfer of archaeological archives to Colchester and Ipswich Museums</i> (CBC)
Crummy, Nina, Crummy, Philip, and Crossan, Carl	1993	<i>Colchester Archaeological Report 9: excavations of Roman and later cemeteries, churches and monastic sites in Colchester, 1971-88</i> . Colchester Archaeological Trust.
EAA 14	2003	<i>Standards for field archaeology in the East of England</i> East Anglian Archaeological, Occasional Papers, 14, ed by D Gurney
EAA 24	2011	<i>Research and archaeology revisited: A revised framework for the East of England</i> , East Anglian Archaeological Occasional Papers, 24, ed by M Medlycott
Hawkes, C F C, & Hull, M R	1947	<i>Camulodunum</i> , Report of the Research Committee of the Society of Antiquaries of London, 14
Hull, M R	1958	<i>Roman Colchester</i> , RRCSAL, 20
IfA	2008a	<i>Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation</i> . Institute for Archaeologists.
IfA	2008b	<i>Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials</i> . Institute for Archaeologists.

10 Abbreviations and glossary

CAT	Colchester Archaeological Trust
CBC	Colchester Borough Council
context	specific location of finds on an archaeological site
EHHER	Essex Historic Environment Record, held by Essex County Council
feature	an identifiable thing like a pit, a wall, a floor; can contain 'contexts'
IfA	Institute for Archaeologists
LIA	Late Iron Age
natural	geological deposit undisturbed by human activity
Roman	the period from AD 43 to around AD 430
samian	high quality Roman tableware

11 Content of archive

paper archive

One A4 wallet containing: this report: original site record: photo catalog: photos on disc: sundry papers and plans.

finds: one small bag

12 Archive deposition

The paper and digital archive is currently held by the Colchester Archaeological Trust at Roman Circus House, Roman Circus walk, Colchester, Essex CO2 7GZ, but will be permanently deposited with Colchester and Ipswich Museum under accession code COLEM 2014.112.

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Distribution list:

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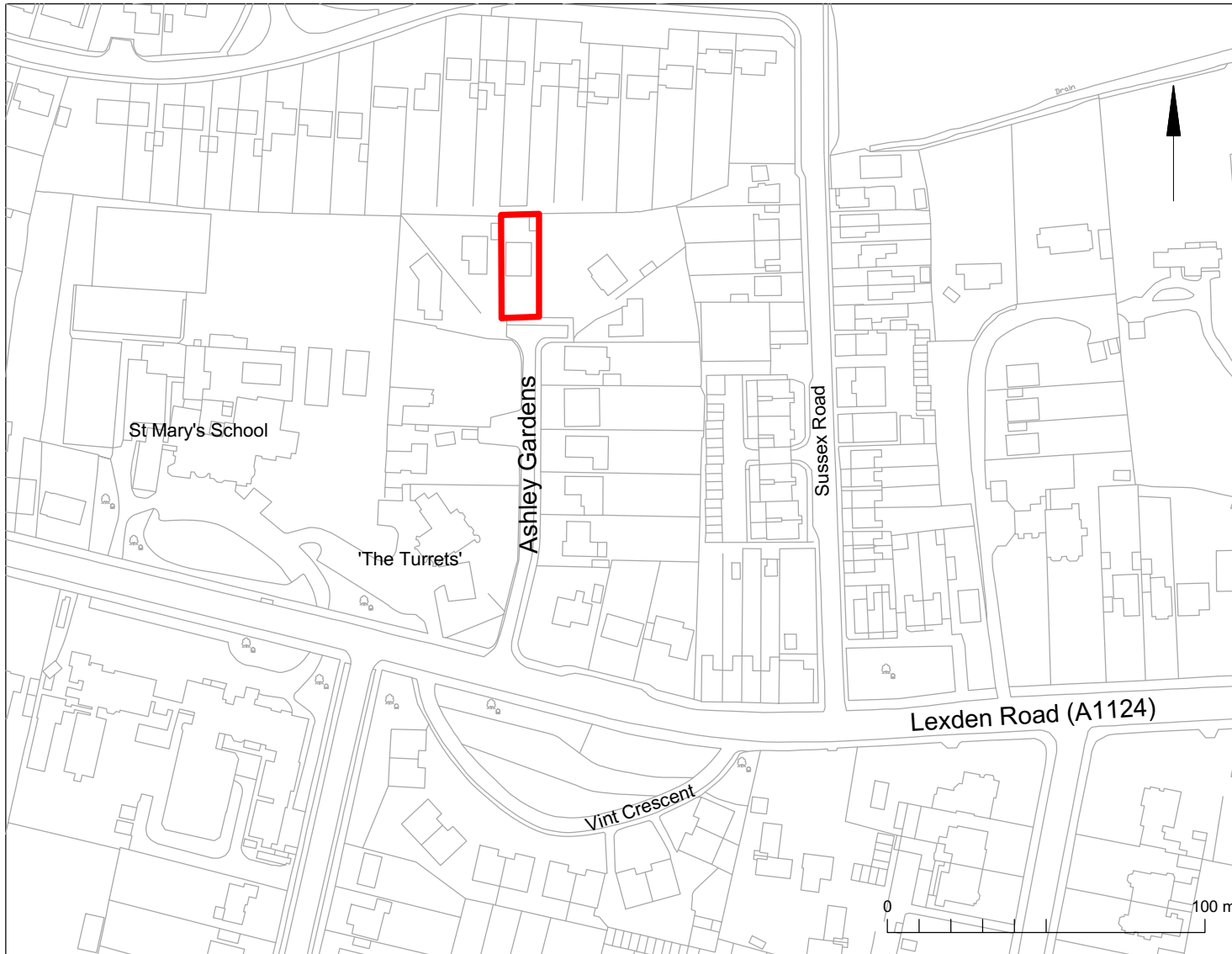


Fig 1 9, Ashley Gardens: location

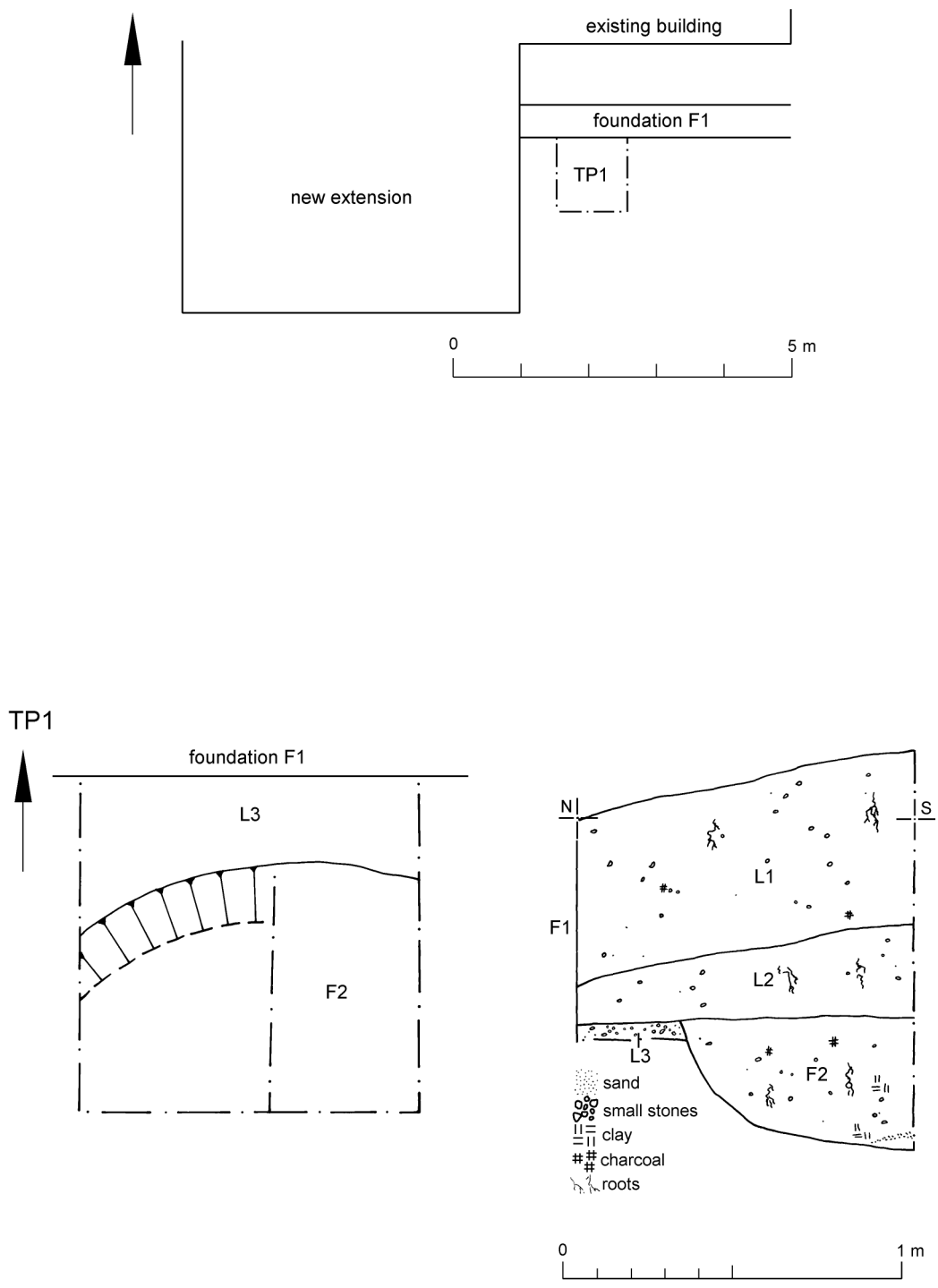


Fig 2 Site plan. TP1 detailed plan and section.

Essex Historic Environment Record/ Essex Archaeology and History

Summary sheet

Address: 9 Ashley Gardens, Colchester, Essex	
Parish: Colchester	District: Colchester
NGR: TL9827 2506	Site code: CAT project code – 14/111
Type of work: test-pit	Site director/group: Colchester Archaeological Trust
Date of work: 21st November 2014	Size of area investigated: 1x1m (test pit)
Location of curating museum: Colchester & Ipswich Museum accession code : 2014. 112	Funding source: Developer
Further seasons anticipated? no	Related UAD number: --
Final report: CAT Report 803	
Periods represented: Roman	
<p>Summary of fieldwork results: <i>This site (the front garden of 9, Ashley Gardens), lies west of the historic Roman and later town of Colchester and within the Roman 'western cemetery area'.</i></p> <p><i>A test-pit was excavated to the south of a newly-constructed extension on the southern side of the house. The work was carried out in response to a recommendation from the Colchester Borough Council (CBC) planning team.</i></p> <p><i>The test-pit revealed a modern foundation, and a 2nd-century Roman pit. The fact that the Roman pit extended beyond the western side of the test pit (towards the new extension) indicates that other Roman features may have existed here, and would have been encountered had the new foundation beams been archaeologically excavated.</i></p> <p><i>The absence of burials indicates that this site is to the west of the focus of the western cemetery area, which lies to the south and east along the Roman road to London.</i></p>	
Previous summaries/reports: None	
CBC monitor: Chris Lister	
Keywords: Roman	Significance: *
Author of summary: Ben Holloway	Date of summary: December 2014