

Archaeological strip, map and sample, B Ground Entrance Drive, Abbey Field, Circular Road North, Colchester, Essex, CO2 7SU

May – June 2016



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**commissioned by RPS
on behalf of RMPA Services Plc**

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CAT Report 971

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1 Summary

An archaeological strip, map and sample was carried out at B Ground Entrance Drive, Abbey Field, Circular Road North, Colchester during a drain replacement. The archaeology of Abbey Field has been well documented and includes a Roman burial ground and droveway, with the Roman circus located immediately to the north. Two Roman features (a pit and pit/grave-cut), a post-medieval pit and several modern features including a large circular brick-built manhole were identified.

2 Introduction (Fig 1)

This report presents the results of an archaeological strip, map and sample at B Ground Entrance Drive, Abbey Field, Circular Road North, Colchester, Essex which was carried out between 24th May and 21st June 2016. The work was commissioned by RPS on behalf of RMPA Services Plc in advance of drain replacement, and was undertaken by Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT).

In response to consultation with Colchester Borough Council Planning Services (CBCPS), Colchester Borough Council Archaeological Advisor Jess Tipper advised that in order to establish the archaeological implications of this application, the applicant should be required to commission a scheme of archaeological investigation in accordance with paragraphs 128, 129 and 132 of the *National Planning Policy Framework* (DCLG 2012).

All archaeological work was carried out in accordance with a written scheme of investigation (WSI) prepared by RPS in association with CAT and agreed with CBCPS (RPS 2016)

In addition to the brief and WSI, all fieldwork and reporting was done in accordance with English Heritage's *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE)* (English Heritage 2006), and with *Standards for field archaeology in the East of England* (EAA 14 and 24). This report mirrors standards and practices contained in the Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and guidance for archaeological watching brief* (ClfA 2014a) and *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (ClfA 2014b).

3 Archaeological background

The following archaeological background draws on the major published sources for Colchester archaeology (listed below), and also on the Urban Archaeological Database (UAD) created by Colchester Borough Council, and the Essex Historic Environment Record (EHER).

There is some evidence for prehistoric activity within the area: Middle Bronze Age vessels, probably burial urns, were found on the north-western boundary of the Garrison Urban Village (GUV, elsewhere referred to as the Alienated Land) redevelopment Area J1 in 2004-5 (UAD event no 1247). Several Bronze Age to Early Iron Age features were also excavated close to the earlier finds in 2005 during the GUV excavations at the former Le Cateau Barracks, adjacent to Le Cateau Road (Area J1 North; CAT Report 412). In addition, Bronze Age pits were found in 2004 in Areas C1 and C2 of the same project, to the west and south of Flagstaff House respectively (CAT Report 271).

At least 28 Roman burials were found during construction of the athletics ground and sports pitches to north-east of the site in 1925 (Hull 1958; UAD event no 1099). Further evaluation and excavation for an all-weather hockey pitch (immediately to the north of the athletics track) in 2000 recovered 78 cremation burials and cremation-related features, some only 300mm below existing ground-level (CAT Report 138 revised). A north-south ditch-defined track or droveway was also plotted, extending approximately through the middle of this area of burials. This track was identified further to the south in

2013 within the new Pavilion footprint although no further cremation burials were identified at this time (CAT Report 686). The Pavilion is located adjacent to present site.

Other Roman burials close to the site have been identified in Areas J1 North, J1 South, C2 (CAT Report 412) and Area H (CAT Report forthcoming). The excavation of J1 South also revealed a 20m-wide ditch-defined track or driveway with some surviving gravel metalling extending north to south through the site. This route continued on to the Lexden area where further burials and cemetery structures have been found next to it. The evaluation and excavation for the Abbey Field Car Park demonstrated that the route continued south across the line of the modern Circular Road North into the area of the site (CAT Report 424). Notably, burials appear to have been placed in clusters on the east side of the track or driveway. The western ditch of the track or driveway, in Area J1 South, produced a hoard of 41 silver Roman coins and part of a funerary inscription.

The 450m-long Roman circus was identified during the archaeological investigations in 2004-5 in Areas C1, C2 and J1 (CAT Report 412) and is c.100m to the north of the site. The starting gates at the western end were located in what is now the garden of the Sergeants' Mess (250m NNE of the current site), and the semicircular east end in what is now the garden of Flagstaff House. CAT also located the probable line of the central barrier at the northernmost point of the Abbey Field, in September 2005 (CAT Report 412). Details of the near turning post were revealed by excavation in Circular Road North in 2007 (Shimmin in CAT Report 412). The circus is unique in Britain, and as such is of national importance.

The Abbey Field has traditionally been used for Army training, with the Cavalry Barracks and Le Cateau Barracks to the west of Circular Road North in use since the 19th century. Maps pre-dating the garrison show no features in or near the excavation site, which suggests that the area was farmland in the 17th century. The OS 1st edition 1:10,560 map (surveyed 1875-76, published 1881) shows that, after the construction of barrack blocks to the west, the area continued to be open land and part of the Abbey Field, and was used as the Army drill ground. However, the 2006 evaluation (CAT Report 358) encountered services and flimsy foundations, which indicate that some 20th-century buildings had been present on the site. These may have resembled the temporary wooden structures still standing on the Abbey Field, eg the building to the south of the site.

4 Results (Figs 2-3)

All groundworks were excavated by machine under archaeological supervision.

Main drainage trench

The drainage trench totalled 58m long and measured 0.9-1.2m wide and 0.7-1.3m deep. It was excavated along the line of the pre-existing drainage trench, so only modern backfill was removed. However, archaeological horizons were identified within the section edge of the trench (undisturbed ground).

In section it was possible to determine that modern ground surface (L1, c 200-220mm thick) consisting of paving slabs, concrete or tarmac with crush, sealed four subsoil layers (L2-L4 and L6, c 200-400mm thick), which in turn sealed a natural interface (L5, c 100mm thick) and natural sands (L7). The location and depth of all these layers varied across the site (see Fig 3-4 for details).

Modern features were recorded throughout the trench and included concrete/brick manholes, electric cables and metal pipes. Feature F1 was a large loosely-built brick soakaway identified within cut F4. The structure was circular, approximately 2m in diameter, and built one brick thick. The red-brick bricks were frogged, measured 215mm by 105mm by 68mm, and were of 20th century date.

A further three features were also identified. Post-medieval pit or linear feature F2 cut Roman pit F3. A relatively straight-sided featured, F5, is either a Roman pit or may possibly represent the remains of a Roman grave-cut. It measured 0.5m wide by 0.4m deep.



Photograph 1 Main drainage trench, looking N



Photograph 2 Main drainage trench, looking SE



Photograph 3 F1, looking N

Soakaway and drainage trenches

A new soakaway was also excavated. It measured 1.7m by 1.4m by 2m deep and included a small length of joining drainage trench, 5.5m long by 0.4m wide and 0.5-0.7m deep. Five layers were identified. Modern topsoil (L8, c 140mm thick) sealed tarmac (L9, c 100mm thick), which sealed a layer of mid-brownish grey sandy silt (L10, c 110mm thick). Beneath this was a layer of pale cream/yellowish brown sandy silt (L11, c 200mm thick) which sealed natural sands and gravels (L7). No significant archaeological horizons were identified.



Photograph 4 Soakaway, looking N



Photograph 5 Drainage trench from soakaway, looking E

5 Finds

All of the finds from the site are listed in Table 1.

Context	Description	Qt.	Wt. (g)
F2 (1)	CBM: Two fragments of CBM	2	40g
F2 (4)	CBM: Four fragments of peg-tile. One corner fragment, 11mm thick, with peg-hole (11mm in diameter) and traces of mortar on broken edge (reuse). Three joining fragments, 12mm thick, forming peg-tile 154mm wide. Probably post-medieval	4	628g
F3 (2)	Roman pottery: Two fragments of Roman greyware (fabric GX), body sherd (1st-early 2nd century) and rim sherd possibly from a bowl or large jar (Roman, possibly 2nd century+)	2	38g
F5 (5)	CBM: Possible fragment of Roman imbrex but with one flat face and one slightly curved face, maximum 13mm thick	1	28g
	Iron nail: Incomplete, tip missing, 59mm long, square-shank, very corroded.	1	16g

Table 1 Finds by context (pottery identified by Stephen Benfield)

6 Discussion

A Roman pit, Roman pit/grave-cut and post-medieval pit were identified within the trench section during monitoring. If straight-sided cut F5 is a grave-cut as opposed to a

pit then it would indicate that the Roman burials identified on Abbey Field to the south-west and north-east continued into the development site.

7 Acknowledgements

CAT thanks RPS and RMPA Services Plc for commissioning and funding the work. The project was managed by C Lister and carried out by A Wade and R Mathieson. Figures were prepared by M Baister and E Holloway. The project was monitored for the CBCPS by Jess Tipper.

8 References

Note: all CAT reports, except for DBAs, are available online in PDF format at <http://cat.essex.ac.uk>

Brown, D	2007	<i>Archaeological Archives: A guide to best practice in creation, compilation, transfer and curation</i>
CAR 10	1999	<i>Colchester Archaeological Report 10: Roman pottery from excavations in Colchester, 1971-86</i> , by R Symonds and S Wade
CAT	2014	<i>Health & Safety Policy</i>
CAT	2016	<i>Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for continuous archaeological recording at 14 Acland Avenue, Colchester, Essex, CO3 3RS</i>
CAT Report 138	2000	<i>Archaeological excavations at the Garrison sports pitch, Circular Road North, Colchester, Essex (Abbey Field): February-March 2000</i>
CAT Report 271	2004	<i>An archaeological evaluation by trial-trenching at Area C1X and Area C2X of the Garrison Urban Village, Colchester, Essex: May 2004</i>
CAT Report 358	2006	<i>An archaeological evaluation for a new car park on the Abbey Field, south of Circular Road North, Colchester, Essex: March 2006</i>
CAT Report 412	2011	<i>Archaeological investigations on the 'Alienated Land', Colchester Garrison, Colchester, Essex: May 2004-October 2007.</i>
CAT Report 424	2007	<i>An archaeological excavation on the Abbey Field car-park, Circular Road North, Colchester, Essex: January-February 2007</i>
CAT Report 686	2013	<i>An archaeological watching brief at the Colchester Garrison Athletics Facility, Abbey Field, Colchester, Essex September 2012- March 2013</i>
CAT Report	forth-coming	<i>Archaeological excavation on Colchester Garrison Area H, Colchester, Essex</i>
CBC	2015	<i>Brief for continuous archaeological recording at 14 Acland Avenue, Colchester, CO3 3RS</i> , by J Tipper
ClfA	2014a	<i>Standard and Guidance for an archaeological watching brief</i>
ClfA	2014b	<i>Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials</i>
David Gurney	2003	<i>Standards for field archaeology in the East of England</i> . East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Papers 14 (EAA 14).
DCLG	2012	<i>National Planning Policy Framework</i>
English Heritage	2006	<i>Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE)</i>
Medlycott, M	2011	<i>Research and archaeology revisited: A revised framework for the East of England</i> . East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Papers 24 (EAA 24)
Hawkes, C.F.C., and Hull, M.R.	1947	<i>Camulodunum, first report on the excavations at Colchester 1930-39</i> , RRCSAL, 14
Hull, M R	1958	<i>Roman Colchester</i> , RRCSAL, 20

9 Abbreviations and glossary

CAT	Colchester Archaeological Trust
CBCPS	Colchester Borough Council Planning Services
CBM	brick/tile (ceramic building material)
ClfA	Chartered Institute for Archaeologists
context	specific location of finds on an archaeological site
feature (F)	an identifiable thing like a pit, a wall, a drain: can contain 'contexts'

layer (L)	distinct or distinguishable deposit of soil
medieval	period from AD 1066 to Henry VIII
modern	period from c AD 1800 to the present
natural	geological deposit undisturbed by human activity
NGR	National Grid Reference
post-medieval	from Henry VIII to c AD 1800
residual	something out of its original context, eg a Roman coin in a modern pit
Roman	the period from AD 43 to c AD 410
Section	(abbreviation sc or Sx) vertical slice through feature/s or layer/s
UAD	Urban Archaeological Database
WSI	Written Scheme of Investigation

10 Contents of archive

Finds: none retained

Paper and digital record

One A4 document wallet containing:

The report (CAT Report 971)

CBCPS Evaluation Brief, CAT Written Scheme of Investigation

Original site record (Feature and layer sheets, Finds record, plans)

Site digital photos and log, Architectural plans, Attendance register, Risk assessment

11 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 Museum under accession code: COLEM 2016.39.

Distribution list

Rob Masefield, RPS

RMPA Services Plc

Jess Tipper, Colchester Borough Council Planning Services

Essex Historic Environment Record



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Colchester,

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Date: 19.7.2016

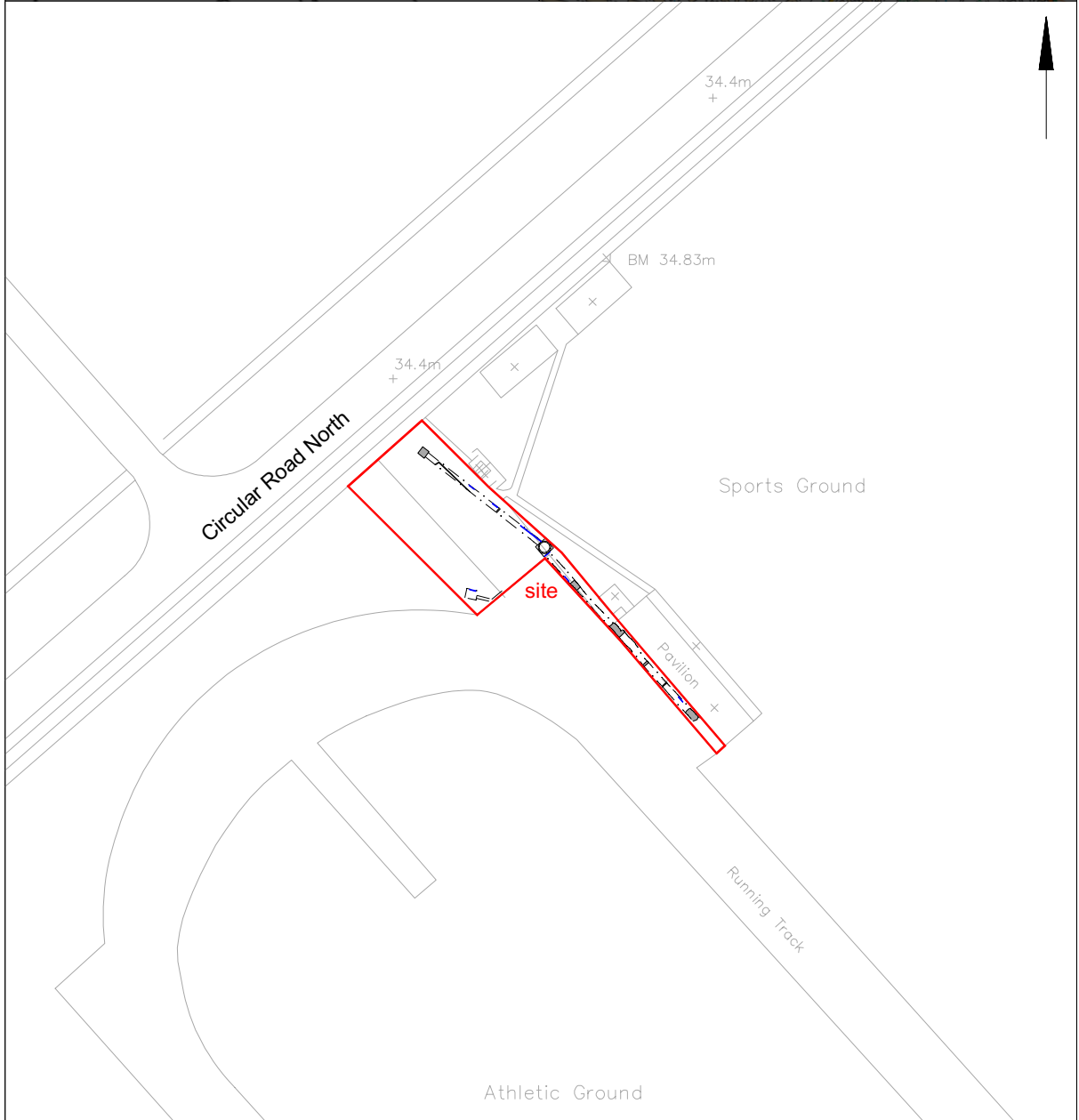
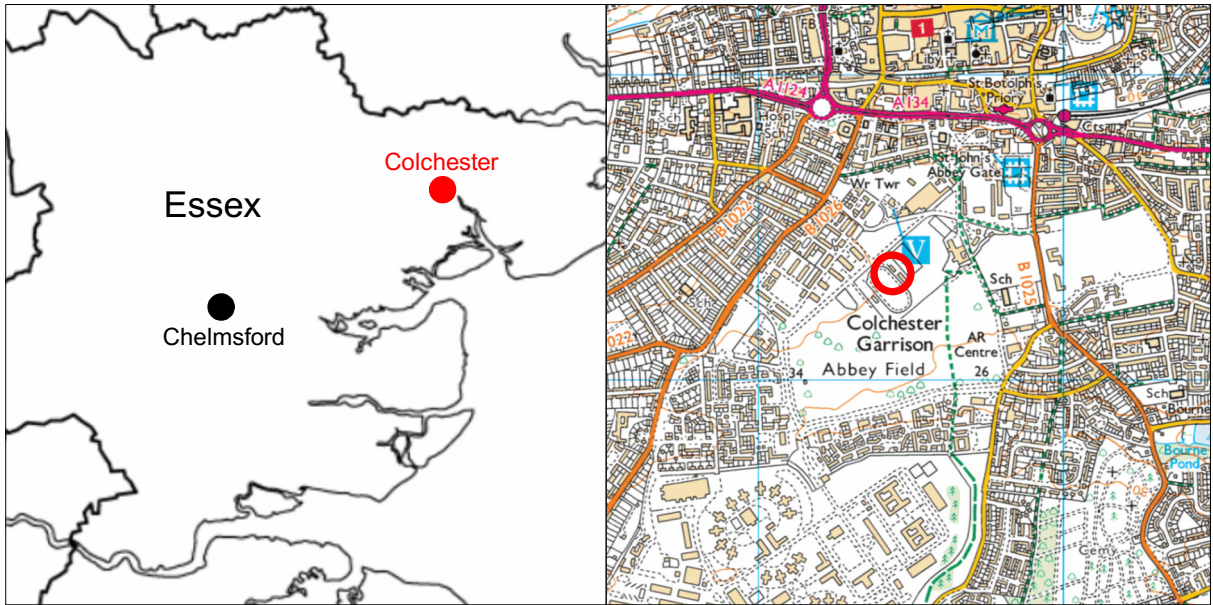


Fig 1 Site location.

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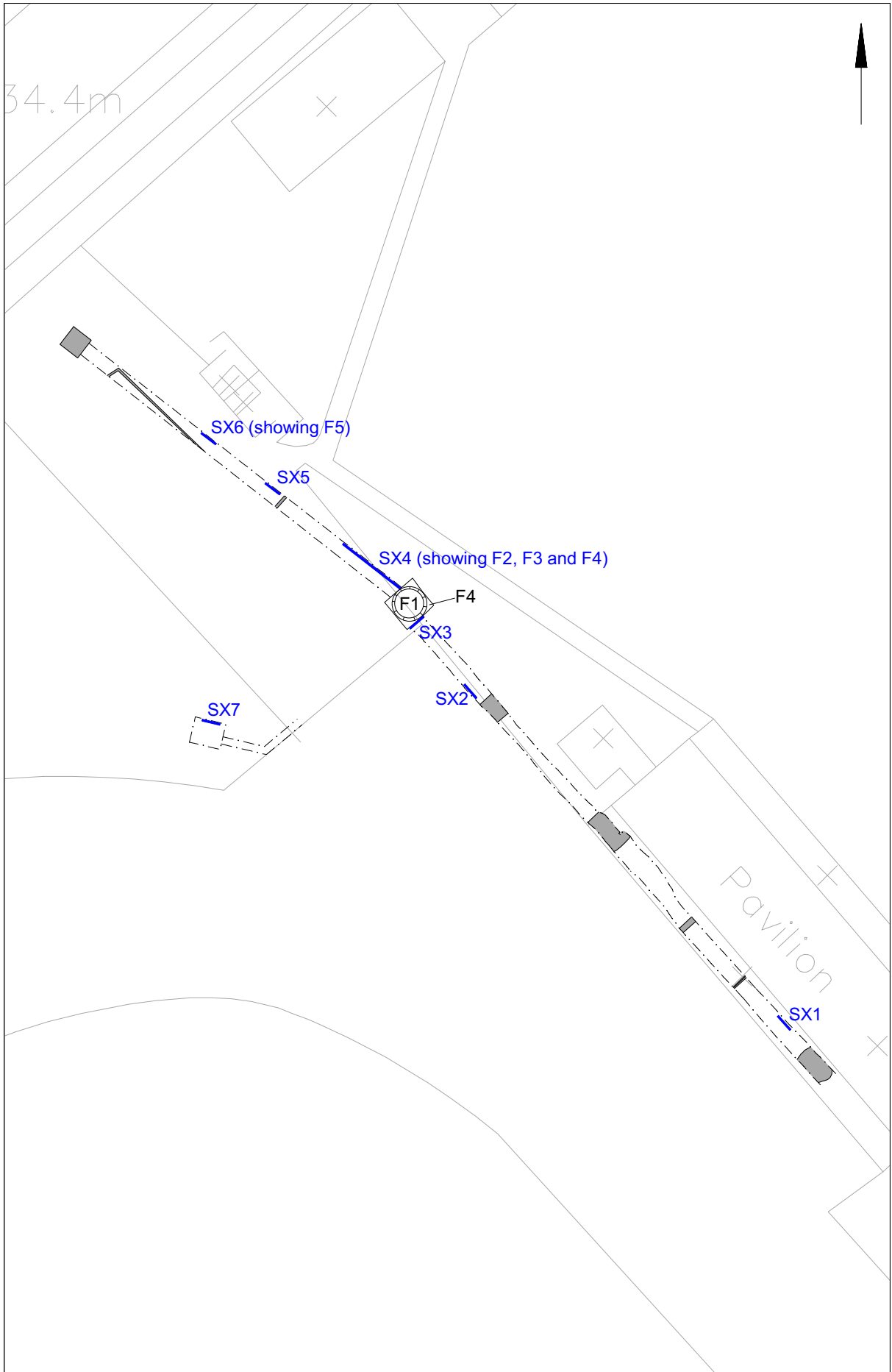
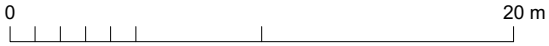


Fig 2 Monitoring results, modern services shown in grey.

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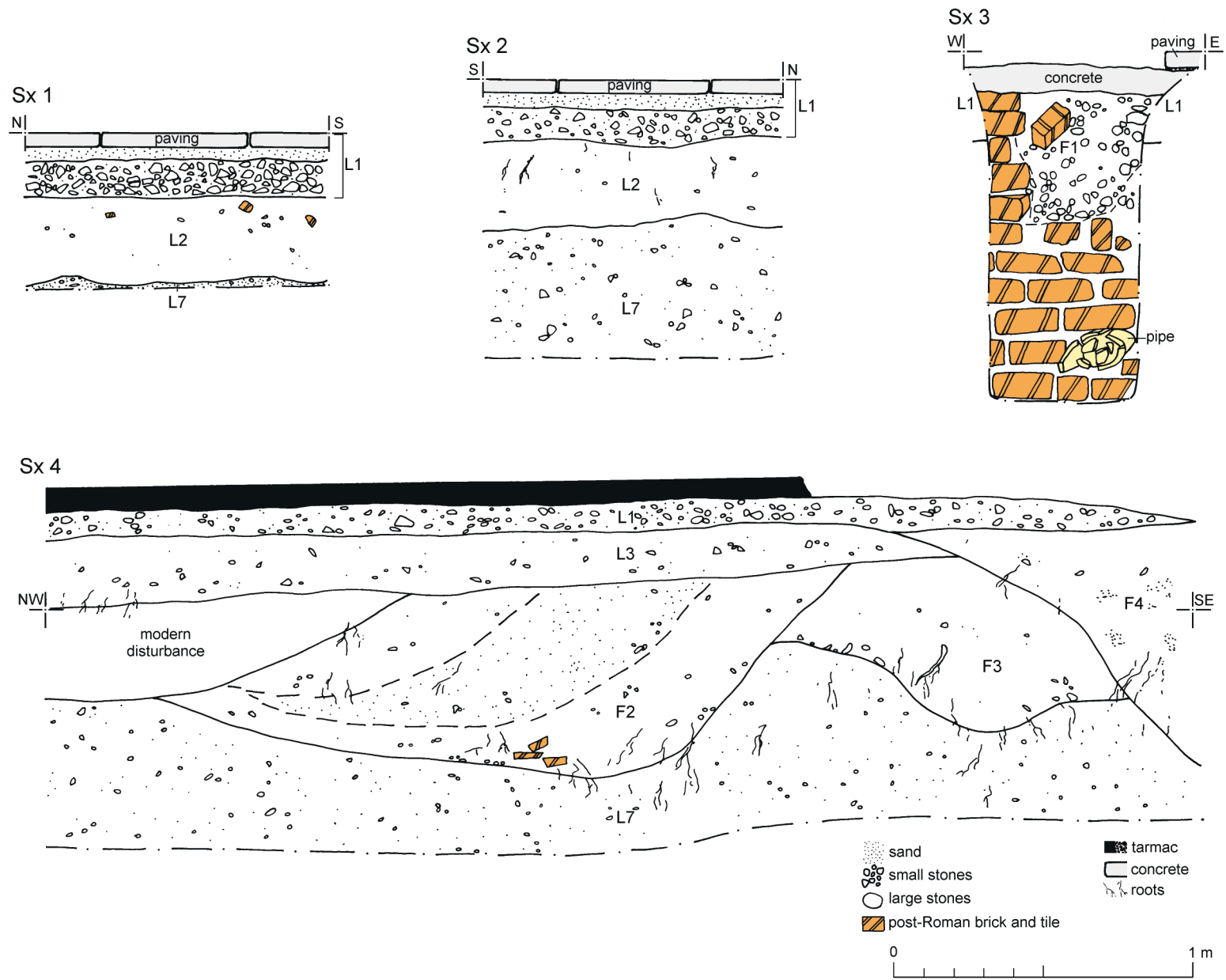


Fig 3 Drainage trench representative sections.

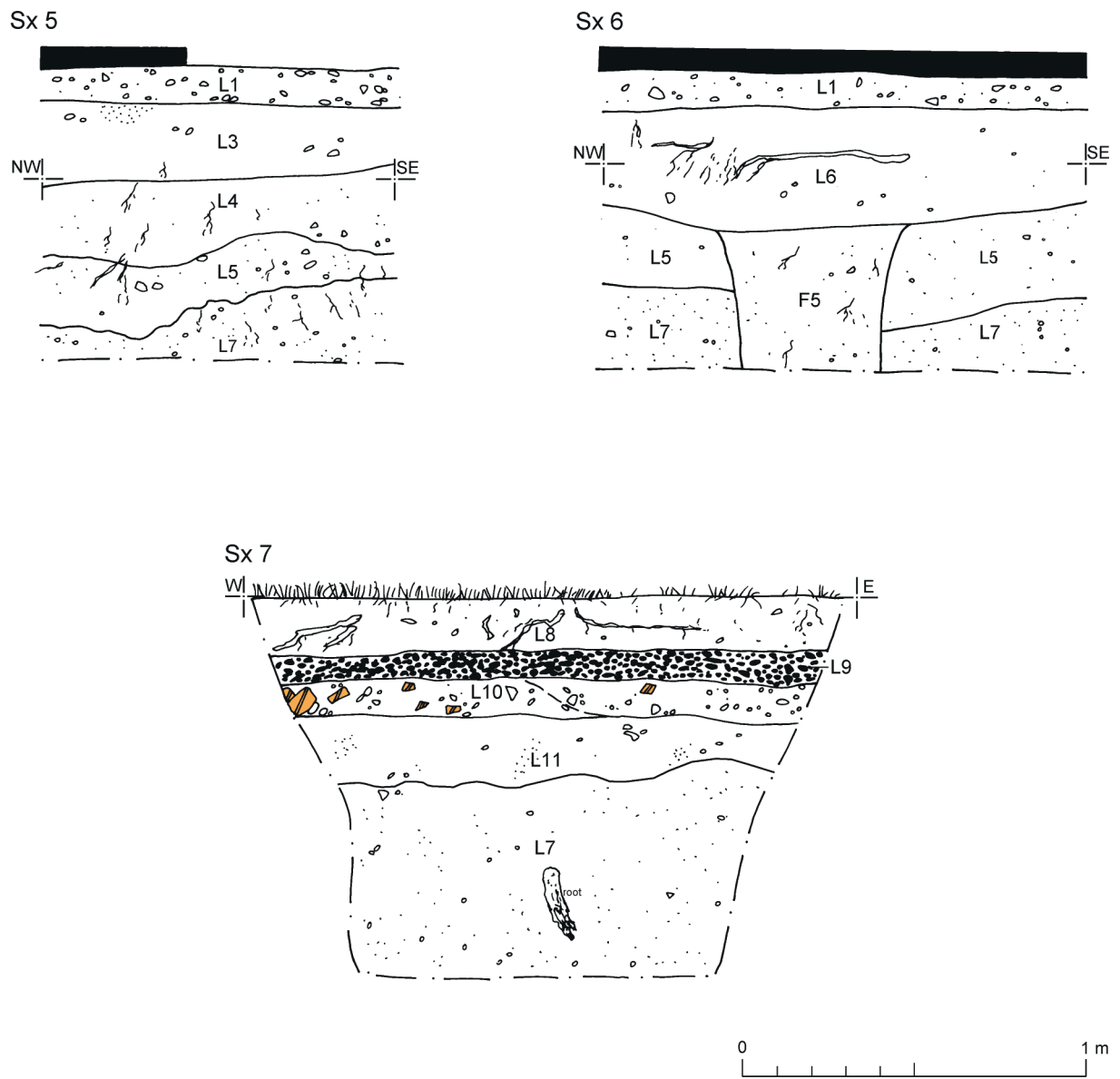


Fig 4 Drainage trench representative sections (Sx 5-6) and soakaway section (Sx 7)

**Essex Historic Environment Record/
Essex Archaeology and History**

Summary sheet

Address: B Ground Entrance Drive, Circular Road North, Colchester, Essex, CO2 7SU	
Parish: Colchester	District: Colchester
NGR: TL 994 243 (centre)	Site code: CAT project ref.: 16/04i UAD ref: ECC3743 OASIS ref: colchest3-248839
Type of work: Strip, map and sample	Site director/group: Colchester Archaeological Trust
Date of work: 24th May – 21st June 2016	Size of area investigated: approximately 65.6m ²
Location of curating museum: Colchester museum accession code COLEM: 2016.39	Funding source: Developer
Further seasons anticipated? no	Related UAD/SMR number:
Final report: CAT Report 971	
Periods represented: modern, post-medieval, Roman	
Summary of fieldwork results: An archaeological strip, map and sample was carried out at B Ground Entrance Drive, Abbey Field, Circular Road North, Colchester during a drain replacement. The archaeology of Abbey Field has been well documented and includes a Roman burial ground and driveway, with the Roman circus located immediately to the north. Two Roman features (a pit and pit/grave-cut), a post-medieval pit and several modern features including a large circular brick-built manhole were identified.	
Previous summaries/reports: CAT Report 138 and 686	
CBC monitor: Jess Tipper	
Keywords: -	Significance: *
Author of summary: Laura Pooley	Date of summary: July 2016

OASIS DATA COLLECTION FORM: England

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OASIS ID: colchest3-248839

Project details

Project name	Archaeological strip, map and sample at the B Ground Entrance Drive, Abbey Field, Circular Road North, Colchester, Essex
Short description of the project	An archaeological strip, map and sample was carried out at B Ground Entrance Drive, Abbey Field, Circular Road North, Colchester during a drain replacement. The archaeology of Abbey Field has been well documented and includes a Roman burial ground and driveway, with the Roman circus located immediately to the north. Two Roman features (a pit and pit/grave-cut), a post-medieval pit and several modern features including a large circular brick-built manhole were identified.
Project dates	Start: 24-05-2016 End: 21-06-2016
Previous/future work	No / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	16/04i - Contracting Unit No.
Any associated project reference codes	ECC3743 - HER event no.
Any associated project reference codes	COLEM: 2016.39 - Museum accession ID
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	None
Current Land use	Community Service 2 - Leisure and recreational buildings
Monument type	PIT Roman
Monument type	PIT OR GRAVE Roman
Monument type	PIT Post Medieval
Monument type	MANHOLE Modern
Significant Finds	POTTERY Roman
Significant Finds	CERAMIC BUILDING MATERIAL Roman
Significant Finds	POTTERY Post Medieval
Significant Finds	CERAMIC BUILDING MATERIAL Post Medieval
Investigation type	"Watching Brief"
Prompt	Planning condition

Project location

Country	England
Site location	ESSEX COLCHESTER COLCHESTER B Ground Entrance Drive, Abbey Field, Circular

Road North
 Postcode CO2 7GF
 Site coordinates TL 994 243 51.881026779335 0.897470925883 51 52 51 N 000 53 50 E Point

Project creators

Name of Organisation Colchester Archaeological Trust
 Project brief originator CBC Archaeological Officer
 Project design originator R. Masefield, RPS Group
 Project director/manager Chris Lister
 Project supervisor Alec Wade
 Type of sponsor/funding body Developer

Project archives

Physical Archive Exists? No
 Digital Archive recipient Colchester Museum
 Digital Archive ID COLEM: 2016.39
 Digital Contents "none"
 Digital Media available "Images raster / digital photography"
 Paper Archive recipient Colchester Museum
 Paper Archive ID COLEM: 2016.39
 Paper Contents "none"
 Paper Media available "Context sheet", "Miscellaneous Material", "Photograph", "Plan", "Report", "Section"

Project bibliography 1

Publication type Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
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