

Archaeological Evaluation

157A-167 North Station Road, Colchester

NGR: TL 9929 2619

Introduction

On the 14th and 15th April 1998 a field evaluation commissioned by Jackson Projects Ltd was carried out to investigate the archaeological implications of proposed redevelopment at 157A-167 North Station Road, Colchester. The 0.13 hectare site lies approximately 850m to the north of Colchester town centre and was formerly occupied by a bakery and private houses. Archaeologically, major features of the surrounding area include a Roman cemetery and, 400 metres to the south, a Roman suburb, both of unknown extent.

Site Condition

Apart from the house at no.157A the site had previously been cleared of standing structures and the ground left more or less level with the pavement at the North Station Road frontage. The evaluation was carried out in wet conditions with water seeping into the bottoms of the trenches and occasional collapses of the trench sides.

Method

Four 1.8 metre wide trenches were progressively excavated by machine to depths of between 0.8m and 2.3m. The trench sections and exposed features were selectively examined by hand as far as safety considerations would allow.

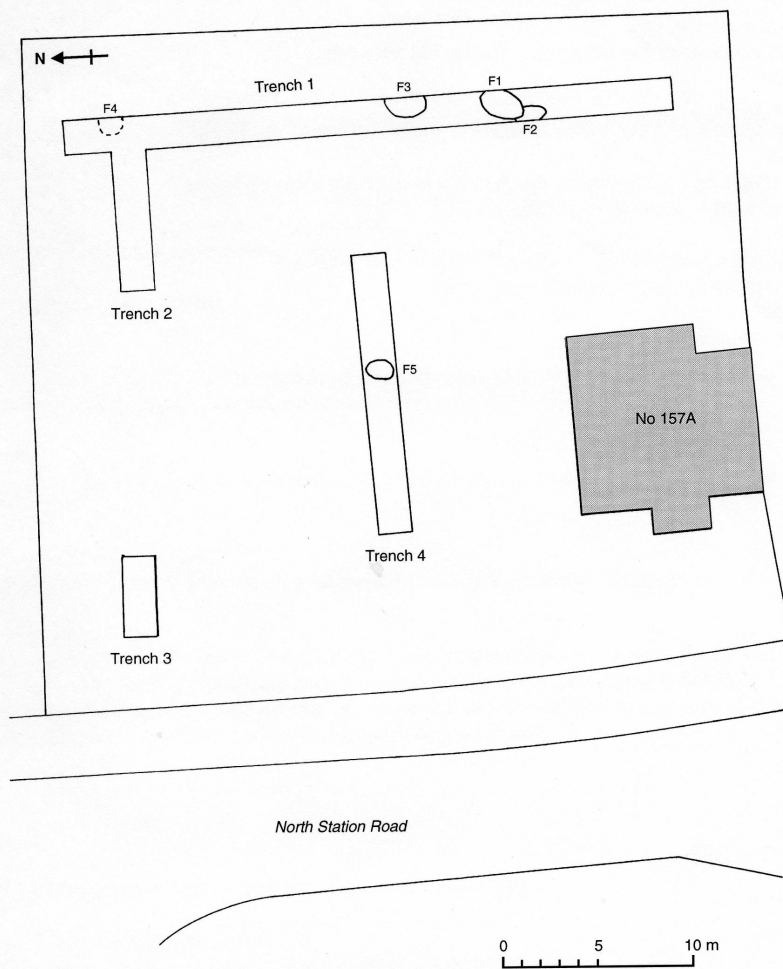
Results

The locations of the four exploratory trenches are shown on Figure 1.

Trench 1

A 32 metre long north-south trench at the rear of the site was excavated to depths ranging from 0.8m (southern end) to 1.1m (northern end). For summary purposes the trench has been divided into three sections:

Trench 1 north (the northernmost 10.4 metre length)
Trench 1 mid section (to the garden area of no. 157A)
Trench 1 south (at the rear of no. 157A)



**Fig. 1 Archaeological evaluation trenches
157A-167 North Station Road**

Layer 1. Uppermost 650mm (northern end), 300mm (mid and southern sections). For most of its length this layer consisted of a variety of modern deposits including brick and concrete rubble, gravel and coal, with occasional pieces of wood and rag, within a general matrix of very dark greyish brown soil. At the southern end of the trench the region at the rear of no.157A was largely composed of garden topsoil.

Layer 2. 300mm to 650mm (beneath Layer 1 in the mid and southern sections of the trench). A mixed layer, mainly of dark greyish brown silt loam with occasional small red brick fragments.

Layer 3. 650mm to 1.1m (beneath Layer 1 in the northern section of the trench) Predominantly a dark greyish brown silt loam containing occasional small red brick fragments and charcoal flecks.

Layer 4. 1.1m (north), 650mm (south), to limit of excavation (beneath Layer 3 in the northern section Layer 2 in the mid and southern sections). Natural clay, overall a pale yellowish brown with grey and mid brown mottles.

Four features were examined:

Feature 1. Pit.

A pit, sealed by Layer 2. The fill consisted of clay loam with a high content of small fragments of 100mm wide by 50mm thick soft red brick.

Feature 2. Pit.

A pit, sealed by layer 2 and cut by Feature 1. The fill was a greyish brown clay loam with rare oyster shell.

Feature 3. Pit.

A pit, sealed by Layer 2, with a similar fill and brick inclusions to that of Feature 1.

Feature 4. Burnt clay.

At the northern end of the trench an area of clay (Layer 4) directly beneath modern foundations was reddened by contact with intense heat. Examination of the surrounding ground revealed pink-tinged concrete, which suggests that the discolouration was caused by modern activity, perhaps associated with the bakery that previously occupied the site.

Trench 2

A 7.5m long trench extending west from the northern end of Trench 1.

Layer 1. Uppermost 650mm.

This layer was the same as Layer 1 at the northern end of Trench 1.

Layer 2. 650mm to 1.1metres.

Same as Layer 3 at the northern end of Trench 1.

Layer 3. 1.1 metres to limit of excavation.

Pale yellowish brown natural clay with grey and mid brown mottles.

Trench 3

A 4.4m long trench near the north-west corner of the site, excavated to a depth of 2.3 metres.

Layer 1. Uppermost 400mm.

Modern brick, concrete rubble and tarmac fragments.

Layer 2. 400mm to 750mm.

Mixed deposits consisting largely of slightly stoney mid to dark greyish brown sandy loam with occasional charcoal flecks and rare small red brick fragments.

Layer 3. 750mm to 1.5 metres.

An accumulation of mid yellowish brown silt loam.

Layer 4. 1.5 metres to 2 metres.

A seam of gravel in a matrix of yellow tinged grey/brown loamy sand.

Layer 5. 2.0 metres to limit of excavation.

Mid yellowish brown silty clay loam, similar to Layer 3 but with a higher clay content.

Trench 4

A 15m long east-west trench situated in the central area of the site excavated to depths of 1.25m (eastern end) and 1.4m (western end).

Layer 1. Uppermost 600mm.

Modern make-up and levelling. Mainly a very dark grey to black soil with a high content of coal dust, common brick fragments, occasional slate and bottles.

Layer 2. 600mm to 750mm.

Reddish brown silty clay loam with occasional small red brick fragments and charcoal flecks.

Layer 3. 750mm to 1.05 metres.

Pale to mid greyish brown clay loam with occasional small red brick fragments and charcoal flecks. One fragment of clay tobacco pipe stem was noted in the lower part of this layer.

Layer 4. 1.05 metres to 1.2 metres.

Pale yellowish brown natural clay with grey and mid brown mottles.

Feature 5. Pit.

A 50mm deep pit, sealed by Layer 3, lay in the central part of the trench. The fill, a mid brown clay loam, included common small fragments of 50mm thick red brick, some with a blue-grey glaze.

Discussion

In total, 106 sq metres was examined by trenching, which represents a sample of approximately 8% of the gross site area.

The overall site stratigraphy appears to be characterised by very mixed post-medieval to modern deposits of make-up and levelling which lie directly over naturally occurring sediments and clays. Beneath the late deposits three pits, Features 1, 3 and 5, all contained similar fills with brick inclusions and appear to be associated. Although incomplete, the proportions and fabric of the fragments suggest that the brick is no later than early 18th century in date, and from an unknown source which pre-dates the known modern phase of occupation. The only feature of possible antiquity (but indeterminate date) was the pit, Feature 2, in Trench 1.

Archive

The detailed site record, photographs and finds have been deposited with Colchester Museum under cover of COLEM accession code 1998.79.

C.E.Crossan
Colchester Archaeological Trust Ltd
12 Lexden Road
Colchester
CO3 3NF
Tel. & fax: 01206-541051

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