

**An archaeological watching brief on
geotechnical test-pits at
Colchester Garrison
in Essex, Stage 2
May 2003**

**report prepared by
Carl Crossan**

**on behalf of
Sir Robert McAlpine Ltd
and
Norwest Holst Soil Engineering Ltd**

CAT project ref.: 03/3B
NGR: TL 992 230 (centred)
Colchester Museums accession code: 2002-8



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

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

CAT Report 231
June 2003

Contents

1	Summary	1
2	Introduction	1
3	Archaeological background	1
4	Aim	1
5	Methods	1
6	Results	2
7	Finds	3
8	Discussion	3
9	Acknowledgements	4
10	References	4
11	Archive deposition	4

Figures after p 5

EHCR summary sheet

List of figures

Fig 1 Location plan: Stage 2 geotechnical test-pits.

Fig 2 TP1002: plan and section.

Fig 3 TP1003: section.

1 Summary

In May 2003, a watching brief took place on eight small test-pits, dug by soil engineers as part of a series of ground-investigation works in advance of redevelopment at Colchester Garrison. Two pits of indeterminate but possibly early date were noted in test-pits on farmland to the north of Earlswood Way. Both features lie within an area known to contain a late Iron Age/Roman field system and trackways.

2 Introduction

This report contains a record of the soil stratigraphy observed during a watching brief undertaken by the Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) on a series of test-pits dug by ground-engineering consultants Norwest Holst Soil Engineering Ltd in May 2003. The pits are part of a more extensive programme of geotechnical investigation which is taking place prior to a major PFI redevelopment scheme for Colchester Garrison. Previously, a group of test-pits and borehole starter-pits were monitored in March 2003 and reported on in CAT Report 222. In this, the second stage, eight test-pits were subject to archaeological monitoring (location plan: Fig 1).

3 Archaeological background

This watching brief is part of an on-going series of archaeological investigation and monitoring operations prompted by the PFI redevelopment scheme for Colchester Garrison. The scheme affects a large expanse of MoD-owned property to the south of the town centre, within which the main areas of archaeological interest span the Bronze Age to the Roman and medieval periods.

The observed pits were located in areas where the results of general survey and exploratory excavation currently include evidence of late Bronze Age/early Iron Age occupation, elements of an early Iron Age landscape, and extensive late Iron Age and Roman field systems and trackways. A Roman villa/farmstead was discovered at Kirkee McMunn Barracks in 1994 (Shimmin 1998). The archaeology and history of the garrison land are discussed in detail in the CAT desk-based assessment (CAT Report 97). The results of recent fieldwork are presented and reviewed in CAT Reports 184, 197, 203, 205, 206 and 207.

4 Aim

The aim of monitoring was to ensure that any archaeologically significant features observed or finds retrieved during the digging of the pits would be fully recorded, in order to augment the results from earlier investigations in the respective areas.

5 Methods

The watching brief was conducted in accordance with the standards set out in Colchester Borough Council's *Guidelines on standards and practices for archaeological fieldwork in the Borough of Colchester* (1999, updated 2002) and *Guidelines on the preparation and transfer of archaeological archives to Colchester Museums* (1996, updated 2002), and the Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Standards and guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (1999).

6 Results

Each test-pit was excavated in a series of horizontal spits using a mechanical digger equipped with a toothless digging bucket. The pit numbers (Test-pit or TP303, TP311, etc) quoted below correspond to those used in the engineers' investigation. Their locations are shown in Figure 1.

TP303 – Roman Way (NGR: TL 99433 22786)

A north-south trench, 3.3m x 90cm x 1.05m deep.

- L1 Dark greyish brown sandy loam. Topsoil.
(from 0 to 30cm overall depth)
- L2 Yellowish brown sandy silt loam. Subsoil.
(from 30cm to 80cm overall depth)
- L3 Coarse gravelly sand varying in colour from strong reddish brown to very pale greyish brown with a distinct water-washed appearance. Natural subsoil.
(from 80cm to 1.05m depth limit of excavation)

The soil sequence in the northernmost 1.1m of the trench was cut by the edge of a deep modern intrusion which extended beyond the 1.05m depth of excavation.

TP311 – Roman Way (NGR: TL 99486 22764)

An east-west trench, 2.6m x 90cm x 1.1m deep.

- L1 Greyish brown sandy loam. Topsoil.
(from 0 to 30cm overall depth)
- L2 Pale to mid brown silt loam. Subsoil.
(from 30cm to 70cm overall depth)
- L3 Fine sands varying in colour from strong reddish brown to very pale greyish brown with a distinct water-washed appearance. Natural subsoil.
(from 70cm to 1.1m depth limit of excavation)

The entire length of the south section was cut by a modern field-drain which extended to a depth of 1m.

TP316 - Roman Way (NGR: TL 99458 22884)

A north-south trench, 3.2m x 90cm x 1.1m deep.

- L1 Dark greyish brown sandy loam. Topsoil.
(from 0 to 45cm overall depth)
- L2 Yellowish brown sandy silt loam with small gravelly lenses.
(from 45cm to 80cm overall depth)
- L3 Mixed fine sands and grit. Natural.
(from 80cm to 1.1 depth limit of excavation)

TP318 - grassed area east of Kirkee McMunn Barracks (NGR: TL 99032 23012)

A north-south trench, 3.6m x 90cm x 75cm deep.

- L1 Mid greyish brown silt loam with a low content of small stones and occasional minute charcoal flecks. Topsoil.
(from 0 to 35cm overall depth)
- L2 Reddish-brown fine silt loam. Subsoil.
(from 35cm to 55cm overall depth)
- L3 Reddish-brown gravelly sand. Natural subsoil.
(from 55cm to 75cm depth limit of excavation)

TP319 – grassed area north-west of Berechurch Road (NGR: TL 99218 22988)

An east-west trench, 3m x 90cm x 65cm deep.

- L1 Mid greyish brown silt loam with a low content of small stones and occasional minute charcoal flecks. Topsoil.
(from 0 to 25cm overall depth)
- L2 Yellowish brown fine sandy silt loam. Subsoil.
(from 25cm to 40cm overall depth)

- L3 Reddish-brown gravelly sand. Natural subsoil.
(from 40cm to 65cm depth limit of excavation)

TP320 – grassed area east of Kirkee McMunn Barracks (NGR: TL 98961 23219)
A north-south trench, 3.1m x 90cm x 70cm deep.

- L1 Mid brown sandy silt loam. Topsoil.
(from 0 to 20cm overall depth)
L2 Pale brown sandy silt loam. Subsoil.
(from 20cm to 50cm overall depth)

merging to:

- L3 Coarse sand and gravel. Natural subsoil.
(from 50cm to 70cm depth limit of excavation)

TP1002 – field north of Earlswood Way (NGR: TL98886 22929)
An east-west trench, 3.2m x 90cm x 1.05m deep (plan and section: Fig 2).

- L1 Dark greyish brown sandy loam. Ploughsoil.
(from 0 to 20cm overall depth)
L2 Dark greyish brown sandy loam, similar to L1 but more compact and with a slightly higher silt content. Ploughsoil.
(from 20cm to 30cm overall depth)
L3 Mid brown sandy silt loam, similar to L4 but less stoney. Subsoil.
(from 30cm to 40cm overall depth)
L4 Mainly reddish-brown sand and silty sand with a varying but generally high stone content. Natural subsoil.
(from 40cm to 1.05m depth limit of excavation)

This trench revealed two features:

- F1 A backfilled archaeological trench, one of six excavated in this field as part of the large-scale archaeological evaluation that was undertaken by CAT in 2002 (trench no F28 in CAT Report 203, p 18, figs 2 & 6).
F2 A pit, sealed by L2, with a fill of greyish brown fine sandy silt loam.

TP1003 – field north of Earlswood Way (NGR: TL 99037 22925)
An east-west trench, 3.4m x 90cm x 90cm deep (section: Fig 3).

- L1 Dark greyish brown sandy loam. Ploughsoil.
(0 to 35cm overall depth)
L2 Mid brown sandy silt loam with a low content of small stones. Subsoil.
(from 35cm to 55cm overall depth)
L3 Reddish brown sand. Natural subsoil.
(from 55cm to 90cm depth limit of excavation)

This trench revealed one feature:

- F1 A shallow-sided pit or linear feature with a fill of mid brown sandy silt loam. The fill was almost identical to L2, but with a slightly higher stone content. The profile was the same in both south and north sections. The feature appeared to be either cut from within or sealed by L2.

7 Finds

No objects of any antiquity were recovered from these trenches.

8 Discussion

Two trenches, TP1002 and TP1003, revealed features of possible archaeological significance. Both were located in the field north of Earlswood Road, where archaeological evaluation trenches in 2002 exposed late Iron Age/Roman field-system ditches (CAT Report 203). TP1002 cut the south side of the 2002 evaluation trench no F28, the outline of which is shown in section in Figure 2. Known

archaeological features in the vicinity of the test-pit include a Roman pit and trackway ditches (FF2801-FF2803 in CAT Report 203). The natural subsoils in TP1002 were cut by a large pit (F2 in Fig 2) with a fill of greyish brown sandy silt loam, which extended to an overall depth of 1.05m. Although the stratigraphical relationships and character of the F2 pit fill would be consistent with an early origin, the date of the feature is currently uncertain in the absence of datable finds. The pit lies within an area intended for future larger-scale investigation, which should provide an opportunity to examine the surviving southern half of F2 and place it within a broader archaeological context.

The shallow feature (F1 in Fig 3) observed in TP1003 is again undated, although probably early, and perhaps even of natural origin.

9 Acknowledgements

The Trust would like to thank Sir Robert McAlpine Ltd and Norwest Holst Soil Engineering Ltd, both for commissioning the watching brief and for their co-operation in the field.

10 References

- | | | |
|----------------|------|--|
| CAR 11 | 1995 | <i>Colchester Archaeological Report 11</i> , Camulodunum 2, by C F C Hawkes and Philip Crummy |
| CAT Report 97 | 2000 | An archaeological desk-based assessment of the Colchester Garrison PFI site, by Kate Orr |
| CAT Report 184 | 2002 | An archaeological evaluation by fieldwalking and geophysical survey at Colchester Garrison PFI site, by Howard Brooks |
| CAT Report 197 | 2002 | An archaeological evaluation by trial-trenching on Area C at Colchester Garrison PFI site, Colchester, Essex, by Howard Brooks |
| CAT Report 203 | 2002 | An archaeological evaluation by trial-trenching on Area E/F at Colchester Garrison PFI site, Colchester, Essex, by Howard Brooks |
| CAT Report 205 | 2002 | An archaeological evaluation by trial-trenching on Area KR at Colchester Garrison PFI site, Colchester, Essex, by Howard Brooks |
| CAT Report 206 | 2002 | An archaeological evaluation by trial-trenching on Areas A, B, D, GJ, H, J, N, V and YP at Colchester Garrison PFI site, Colchester, Essex, by Howard Brooks |
| CAT Report 207 | 2002 | An archaeological evaluation by trial-trenching on Areas DR, G, M, P, Q, R, RO, S and T at Colchester Garrison PFI site, Colchester, Essex, by Howard Brooks |
| CAT Report 222 | 2003 | An archaeological watching brief on geotechnical test-pits at Colchester Garrison in Essex, by Carl Crossan |
| Shimmin, Don | 1998 | 'A late Iron Age and Roman occupation site at Kirkee and McMunn Barracks, Colchester', in <i>Essex Archaeology and History</i> , 29 , 260-69 |

11 Archive deposition

The archive will be deposited permanently with Colchester Museums under museum accession code 2002-8.

Distribution list:

Sir Robert McAlpine Ltd
Norwest Holst Soil Engineering Ltd
K Whittaker, RPS plc
Martin Winter, Archaeology Officer for Colchester Borough Council
Essex Heritage Conservation Record, Essex County Council

© Colchester Archaeological Trust 2003

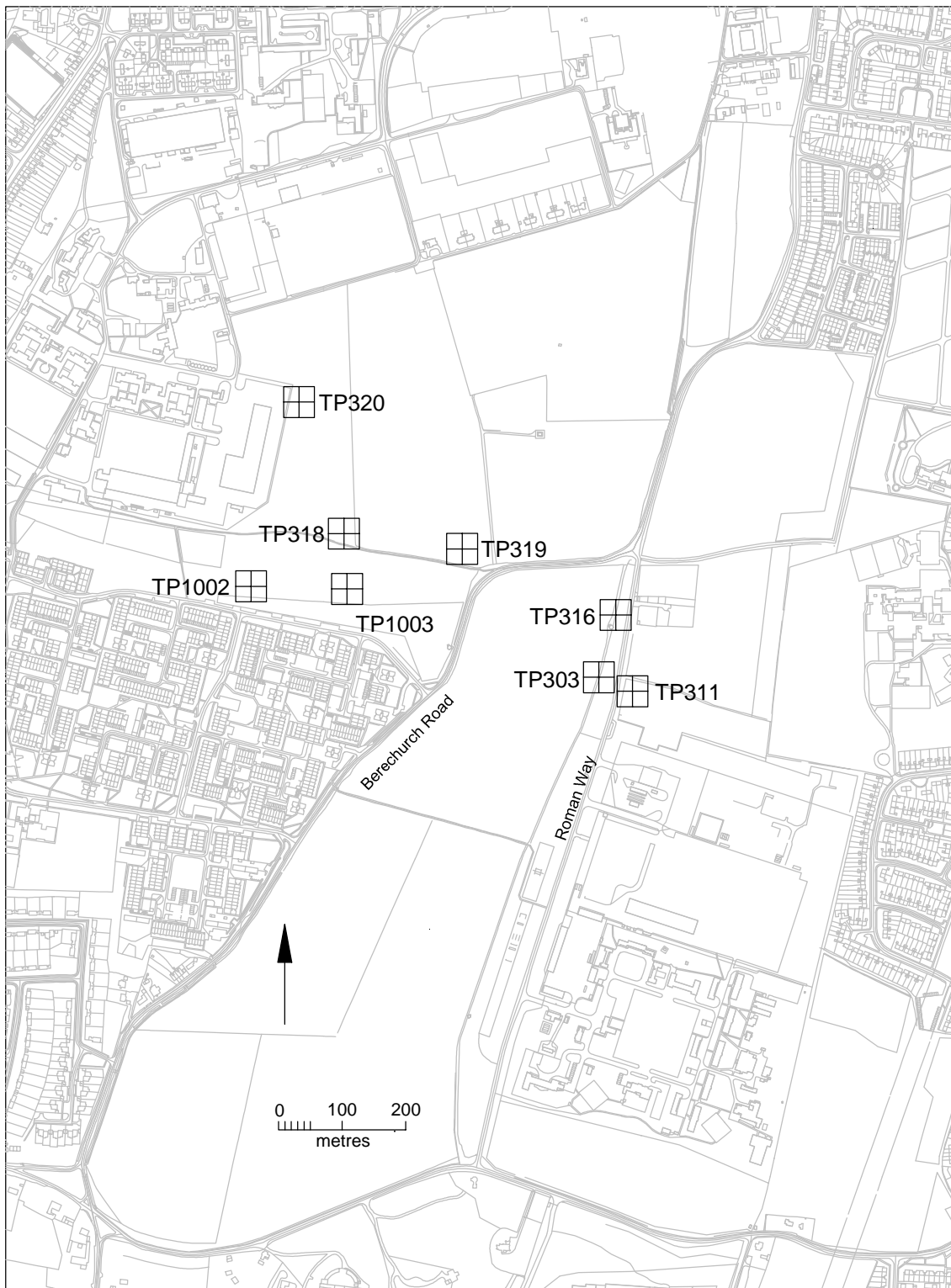


Colchester Archaeological Trust

12 Lexden Road,
Colchester,
Essex CO3 3NF

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

Checked by: Philip Crummy
Date: 06.06.03



© Crown copyright. All rights reserved. Licence number 100039294.

Fig 1 Location plan: stage 2 geotechnical test pits.

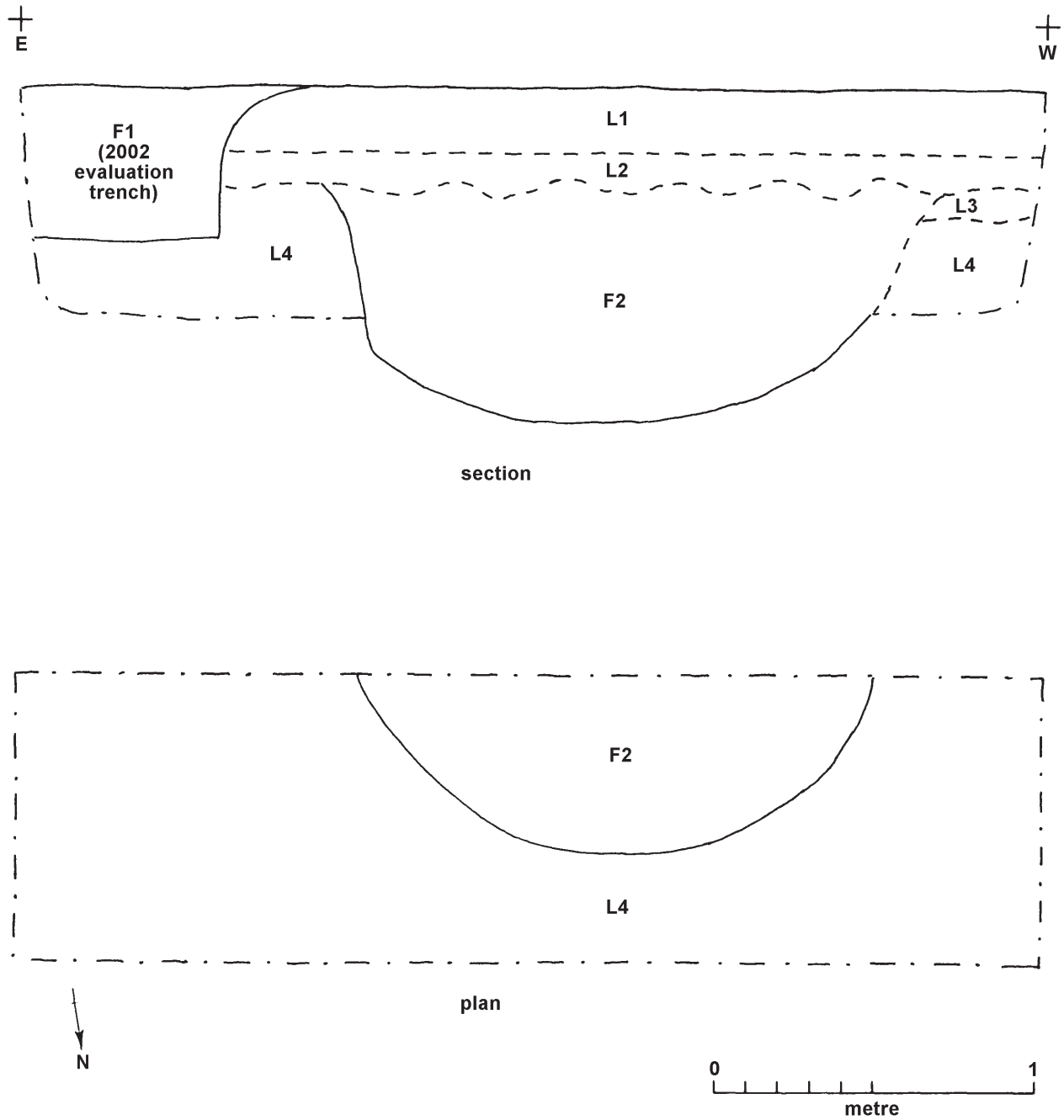


Fig 2 TP1002: plan and section.

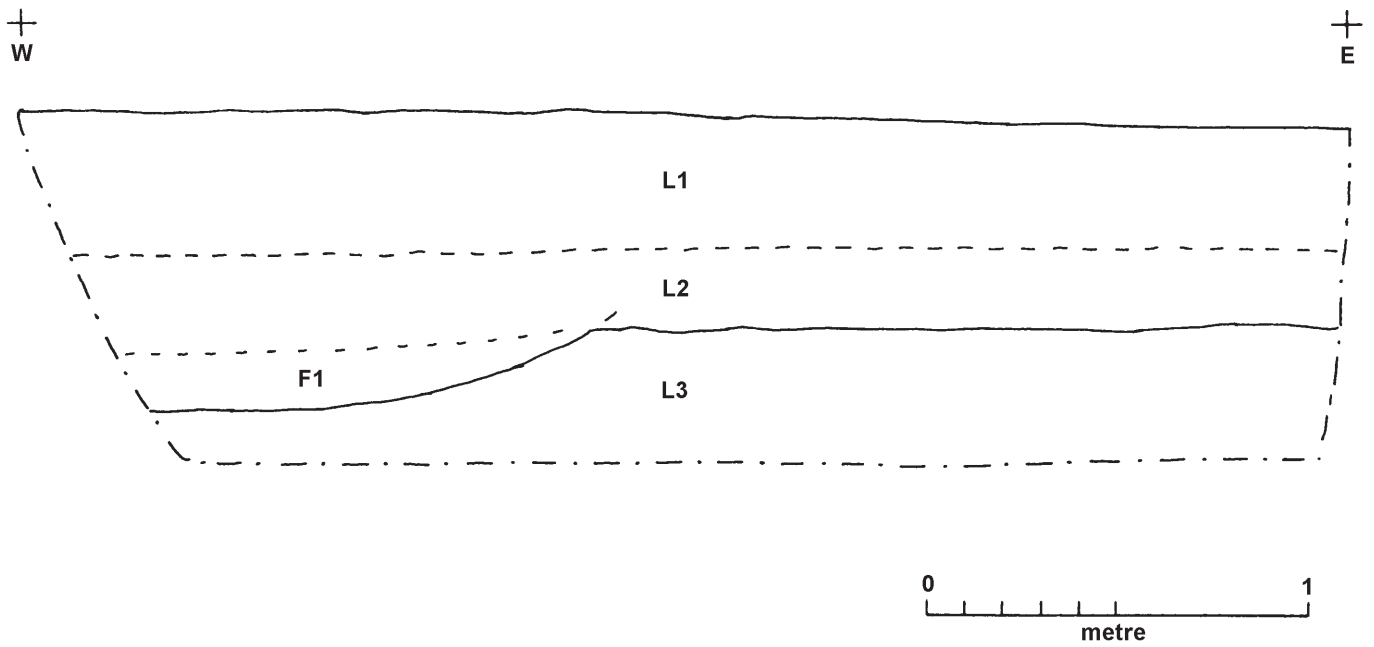


Fig 3 TP1003: section.

**Essex Heritage Conservation Record/
Essex Archaeology and History**

Summary sheet

Site name/address: various locations, Colchester Garrison in Essex	
Parish: n/a	District: Colchester
NGR: TL 992 230 (centred)	Site code: 2002-8
Type of work: Watching brief	Site director/group: Colchester Archaeological Trust
Date of work: May 2003	Size of area investigated: approx 20sq m
Location of finds/curating museum: Colchester Museums	Funding source: Sir Robert McAlpine Ltd and Norwest Holst Soil Engineering Ltd
Further seasons anticipated? Yes: excavation	Related EHCR nos: 11927
Final report: CAT Report 231	
Periods represented: undated, possibly Late Iron Age/Roman	
<p>Summary of fieldwork results: In May 2003, a watching brief took place on eight small test-pits, dug by soil engineers as part of a series of ground-investigation works in advance of redevelopment at Colchester Garrison. Two pits of indeterminate but possibly early date were noted in test-pits on farmland to the north of Earlswood Way. Both features lie within an area known to contain a late Iron Age/Roman field system and trackways.</p>	
<p>Previous summaries/reports: CAT Reports 184, 197, 203, 205, 206, 207, 222</p>	
Author of summary: Carl Crossan	Date of summary: 6th June 2003