

**An archaeological watching brief
on a cable-trench at
Gosbecks Archaeological Park,
Maldon Road, Colchester, Essex
May 2003**

**report prepared by
Ben Holloway**

**on behalf of
24seven Utility Services**

CAT project code: 03/5b
NGR: TL 974 229-TL 959 223
Colchester Museums accession code: 2003.151



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

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

CAT Report 235
July 2003

Contents

1	Summary	1
2	Introduction	1
3	Archaeological background	1
4	Aim	1
5	The cable-trench	2
6	Finds	2
7	Discussion and interpretation	2
8	Acknowledgements	2
9	References	3
10	Glossary	3
11	Archive deposition	3
12	Site data	3

Figures after p 4

EHCR summary sheet

List of figures

- Fig 1 Site and trench location.
- Fig 2 Representative sections: north-facing and south-facing.
- Fig 3 Representative sections: north-facing and north-facing.

1 Summary

Observations were made during a watching brief at the Gosbecks Archaeological Park, Maldon Road, Colchester, Essex on the excavation of a cable-trench which extended for 1500m, from Butcher's Wood along Maldon Road around the perimeter of the archaeological park through the Gosbecks View estate to the Shrub End sub-station. Two archaeological features were recorded during the watching brief.

2 Introduction

- 2.1 This is the archive report on an archaeological watching brief carried out by the Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) at the Gosbecks Archaeological Park, Maldon Road, Colchester, Essex on behalf of 24seven Utility Services. The watching brief was carried out between the 7th and 12th May 2003. Scheduled Ancient Monument consent was given before works began on the site.
- 2.2 The trench was dug by the contractors along the area to be observed prior to the laying of new electricity cables. The length of cable-trench that was observed extended between NGR co-ordinates TL 974 229 and TL 959 223.
- 2.3 All fieldwork was done in accordance with a specification agreed with the Archaeology Officer of Colchester Borough Council.
- 2.4 This report mirrors standards and practices contained in Colchester Borough Council's *Guidelines for the standards and practice of archaeological fieldwork in the Borough of Colchester* (1999, updated 2002) and the IFA's *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (1999).

3 Archaeological background

At a general level, the archaeology of the Gosbecks area in the late Iron Age and Roman periods is well known. Knowledge of the site is based on an extensive aerial photographic record supported by some small excavations (concentrated on the major Roman monuments), which together have enabled a relatively detailed plan of the site to be pieced together. Much of the area is covered by the remains of field systems bounded by a number of substantial earthwork dykes to the south and west. At the heart of the Gosbecks site is a large late Iron Age enclosure, and just to the east of this are the remains of an extensive Roman religious complex. Known structures here include a Romano-Celtic temple set within a large portico, other walled enclosures, and a theatre which survives as a slight earthwork. The course of a Roman road can be traced from the *colonia* as far as the east side of this complex. To the west is the site of a Roman fort which is known only from aerial photographs, as are several ring-ditches to the east of this area which are presumably of Bronze Age date. All of the cropmark areas are protected as Scheduled Ancient Monument no 57, and previous work here is summarised in *Roman Colchester* (Hull 1958) and *Camulodunum 2* (Hawkes & Crummy 1995).

4 Aim

The aim of the watching brief was to identify and record any archaeological remains that were exposed during the excavation of the cable-trench. This will allow the date, importance and condition of any remains to be assessed.

5 The cable-trench

A single trench was excavated from Butcher's Wood along Maldon Road around the perimeter of the archaeological park through the Gosbecks View estate to the Shrub End sub-station (Fig 1). The trench was excavated using a mechanical excavator with a toothless bucket. The trench was 300mm wide and was excavated to a depth of 700mm where the cable conduit was laid and the trench backfilled.

The trench was generally excavated through topsoil (Layer or L1), subsoil (L2), and finally into the natural geology (L3; Fig 2). Other layers were recorded during the watching brief, ie a backfill material (L4; Fig 3) and the remains of a modern road surface (L5 and L6; Fig 2). Six features were recorded, though only two of these were archaeological. The remaining four were a modern plastic water-main (Feature or F1); concrete manholes (F2/F3); and a ceramic conduit for a BT fibre-optic cable (F6). The two archaeological features (F4 and F5) were linear features that appeared to extend into the archaeological park. These possibly represent ditches associated with trackways which crossed the area.

6 Finds

The material which was recovered from the cable-trench consisted of pottery, tile and a single iron nail. The material was recovered from the two linear features F4 and F5 and unstratified from the spoil heap.

The Roman pottery (identified by Stephen Benfield) consisted of a small assemblage of mostly body sherds, mainly grey ware with some oxidised ware. The assemblage also contained fragments of storage jars, Dressel 20 amphora, Gallo-Belgic white ware and platter of south Gaulish samian ware. There was no material that was obviously of a late Iron Age date; all the pottery appears to be early Roman, dating to the 1st century AD.

Finds list

Finds no	Layer no	Feature no	Description	Context	Period	Weight (g)
4	U/S	U/S	Pot	Spoil heap	LIA/Roman	19
2	U/S	U/S	Pot	Spoil heap	Roman	71
1	-	F4	Pot	Linear feature/ditch	Roman	137
3	-	F5	Tile	Linear feature/ditch	Roman	91
3	-	F5	Pot	Linear feature/ditch	Roman	233
3	-	F5	Fe nail	Linear feature/ditch	Roman?	9

7 Discussion and interpretation

Little archaeological material was recorded during the watching brief on the cable-trench at Gosbecks Archaeological Park. The two linear features which were identified are likely to be ditches associated with the trackways that traversed the area within the dyke system and which were incorporated in the field systems. The other features that were identified were modern services. There was no evidence of ditches or earthworks where the trench crossed Grymes Dyke, Gosbecks Dyke or Heath Farm Dyke, nor was the ditch of the fort observed during the watching brief.

8 Acknowledgements

The Colchester Archaeological Trust would like to thank 24seven Utility Services for commissioning and funding the work, and 24seven Utility Services and McNicholas Construction Services for their assistance on site. The project was monitored by Martin Winter, Archaeology Officer for Colchester Borough Council.

The project was managed by Howard Brooks and the site work was carried out by Ben Holloway, Chris Lister and Carl Crossan.

9 References

- Hawkes, C F C, & Crummy, P, 1995 *Camulodunum 2*, Colchester Archaeological Report, **11**
- Hull, M R, 1958 *Roman Colchester*, Research Committee of the Society of Antiquaries of London Report, **20**

10 Glossary

context	specific location on an archaeological site, especially one where finds are made
LIA	late Iron Age
feature	an identifiable thing like a pit, a wall, a drain, a floor; can contain 'contexts'
NGR	National Grid Reference
natural	geological deposit undisturbed by human activity
Roman	the period from AD 43 to around AD 430

11 Archive deposition

The paper and digital archive is held by the Colchester Archaeological Trust at 12 Lexden Road, Colchester, Essex CO3 3NF, but it will be permanently deposited with Colchester Museums under accession code 2002.151.

12 Site data

12.1 Site context list

Location	Context	Description	Context date
Cable-trench	L1	Topsoil	modern
Cable-trench	L2	Subsoil	modern
Cable-trench	L3	Natural geology	Glacial/post-Glacial
Cable-trench	L4	Backfill	modern
Cable-trench	L5	Road surface	modern
Cable-trench	L6	Road bedding	modern

12.2 Soil descriptions

Location	Context	Description
Cable-trench	L1	Grey brown silt, occasional small stones, root/animal activity.
Cable-trench	L2	Yellow brown silt, some small stones, occasional roots.
Cable-trench	L3	Coarse yellow sand and gravel, small stones, sand patches, occasional manganese flecks.
Cable-trench	L4	V.compacted fine orange sand/gravel.
Cable-trench	L5	Black asphalt old road surface.
Cable-trench	L6	Compacted concrete lumps and chalky material.

© Colchester Archaeological Trust 2003

Distribution list:

24seven Utility Services

Martin Winter, Archaeology Officer for Colchester Borough Council

Essex Heritage Conservation Record, Essex County Council



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: 24.07.03

Adams c:/reports03/gosbeckswb/final/report235final.doc

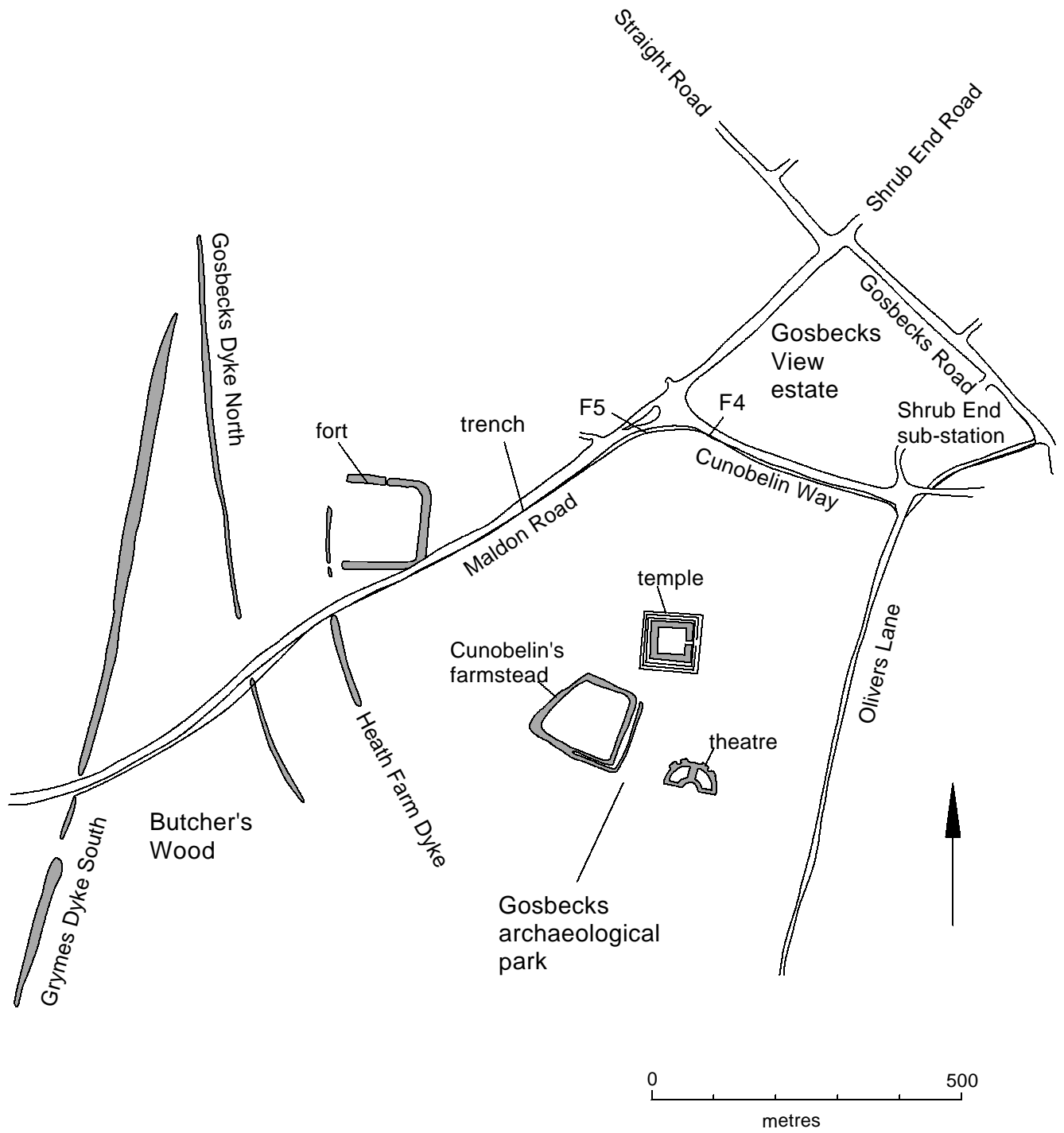
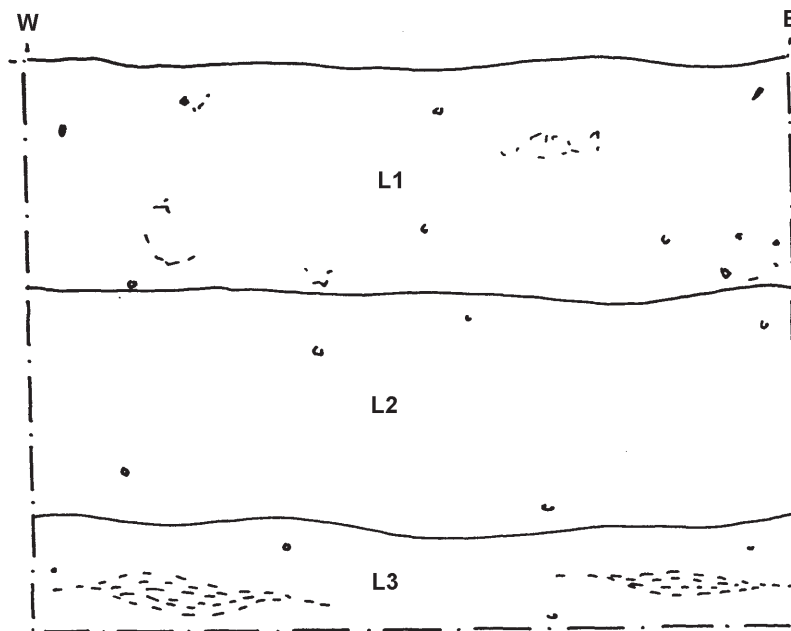
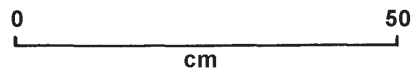


Fig 1 Trench location.

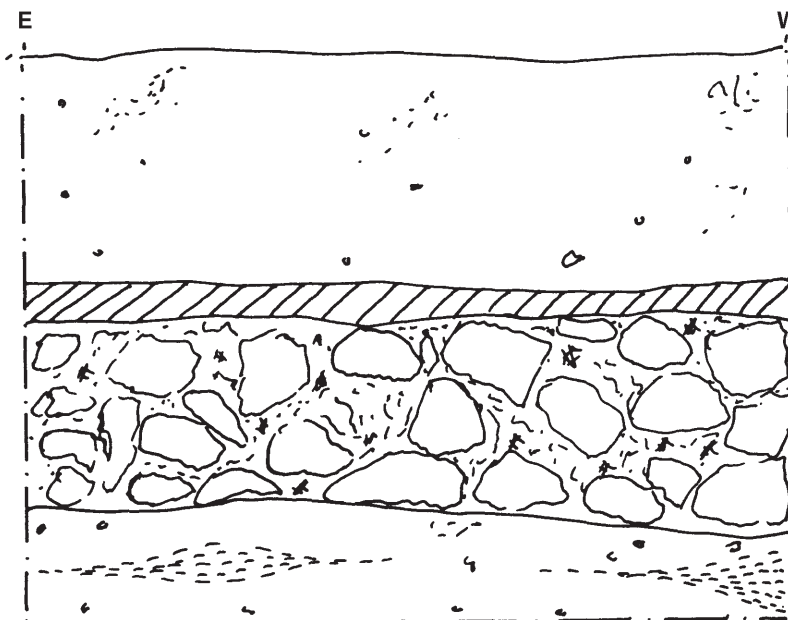
Representative south-facing section



- L1 grey/brown silty topsoil, occasional small stones, root/animal activity
- L2 yellow/brown silt, some small irregular stones, occasional root activity
- L3 coarse sand/gravel yellow/orange natural Glacial deposits



Representative north-facing section



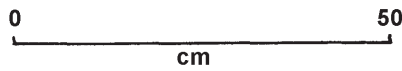
- L1 grey/brown silty topsoil, occasional small stones, root/animal activity
- L5 black asphalt of old road surface
- L6 bedding for L5, very compacted concrete/rubble
- L3 coarse sand/gravel yellow/orange natural Glacial deposits

Fig 2 Representative sections: south-facing and north-facing.

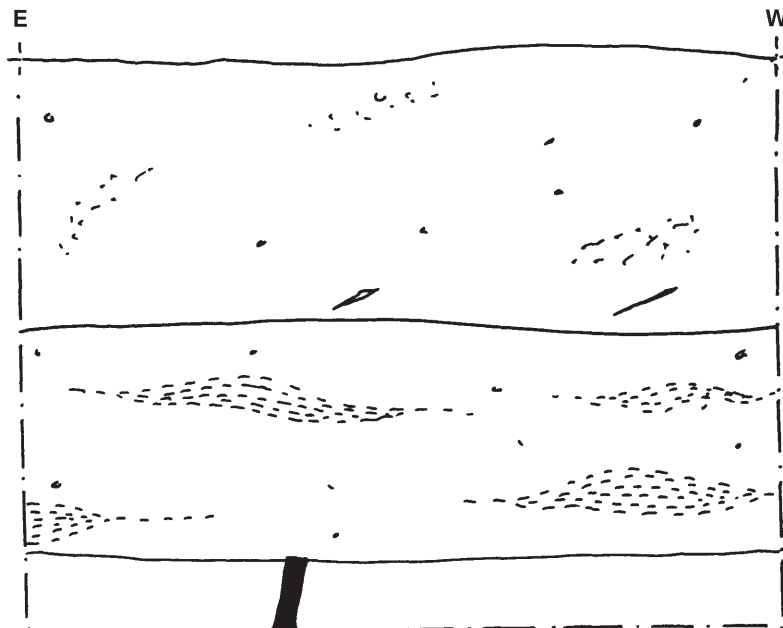
Representative north-facing section



- L1 grey/brown silty topsoil, occasional small stones, root/animal activity
- L4 very compacted sand/gravel layer associated with road construction (modern)
- L2 yellow/brown silt, some small irregular stones, occasional root activity



Representative north-facing section



- L1 grey/brown silty topsoil, occasional small stones, root/animal activity
- L4 very compacted sand/gravel backfill for conduit
- F6 ceramic BT conduit for fibre-optic cable

Fig 3 Representative sections: north-facing and north-facing.

Essex Heritage Conservation Record/ *Essex Archaeology and History*

Summary sheet

Site address: Gosbecks Archaeological Park, Maldon Road, Colchester, Essex	
Parish: Colchester	District: Colchester
NGR: TL 974 229-TL 959 223	Site code: Museum accession code 2003.151
Type of work: Watching brief	Site director/group: Colchester Archaeological Trust
Date of work: May 2003	Size of area investigated: 1500m of cable-trench
Location of finds/curating museum: Colchester Museums	Funding source: 24seven Utility Services
Further seasons anticipated? No	Related EHCR nos:
Final report: CAT Report 235 and summary in <i>EAH</i>	
Periods represented: Roman	
Summary of fieldwork results: <i>Observations were made during a watching brief at the Gosbecks Archaeological Park, Maldon Road, Colchester, Essex on the excavation of a cable-trench which extended for 1500m, from Butcher's Wood along Maldon Road around the perimeter of the archaeological park through the Gosbecks View estate to the Shrub End sub-station. Two archaeological features were recorded during the watching brief.</i>	
Previous summaries/reports: None	
Author of summary: Ben Holloway	Date of summary: July 2003