

**An archaeological watching brief at
Merly House, 21 West Lodge Road,
Colchester, Essex
March-June 2004**

**report prepared by
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**on behalf of
Mr and Mrs White**

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1 Summary

A watching brief was carried out during groundworks for a swimming-pool, garage and kitchen extension at 21 West Lodge Road. One in situ cremation burial and three disturbed cremation burials were recorded. These are part of a Roman cemetery, other burials from which were observed next door at the Handford House site. The in situ cremation burial included three coins and a hand-mirror with wood adhering to it. The cremated bone and the small finds suggest a burial of an adolescent girl or young woman who died c AD 77-85.

2 Introduction (Figs 1-2)

- 2.1** This is the archive report on an archaeological watching brief carried out at 'Merly House', 21 West Lodge Road, Colchester, Essex by the Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT). The watching brief was carried out during the groundworks for an indoor swimming-pool, garage and extension consisting of a rear kitchen to the original Victorian dwelling. Planning permission was given with a condition for an archaeological watching brief (planning application no F/COL/03/2062). The plot measures approximately 30m x 35m.
- 2.2** The development site is located on the western side of Colchester town centre, to the south of Lexden Road. It is centred at National Grid Reference TL 9824 2476.
- 2.3** The work was carried out between the 31st March and the 2nd June 2004.
- 2.4** All fieldwork was done in accordance with a specification agreed with the Archaeology Officer of Colchester Borough Council. 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* (CM 2002) and *Guidelines on the preparation and transfer of archaeological archives to Colchester Museums* (CM 2003), and the IFA's *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (IFA 1999) and *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (IFA 2001). The guidance contained in the documents *Management of archaeological projects* (MAP 2), *Research and archaeology: a framework for the Eastern Counties 1. Resource assessment* (EAA 3), *Research and archaeology: a framework for the Eastern Counties 2. Research agenda and strategy* (EAA 8), and *Standards for field archaeology in the East of England* (EAA 14) was also followed.

3 Archaeological background

- 3.1** The development site lies within what Hull termed the 'West Cemetery' (Hull 1958, 253-4). This large Roman burial ground was in use over a long time span and included both inhumation and cremation burials. It covered a wide area, and extended from what is now The Avenue east to Butt Road. Most of the finds were made in the 19th century. At least one burial area was contained within a wall, and traces of large funerary monuments are known from the walled cemetery to the rear of the Royal Grammar School and from West Lodge estate. Tile tombs, lead and stone coffins and other built tombs, as well as ordinary urned cremation burials, have been found from all over the area, lining the Roman road leading to the walled Roman town of Colchester. A detailed description and discussion of Colchester's Roman cemeteries can be found in Hull 1958 and more recently in *CAR 9* (257-75).
- 3.2** An abundance of burials has been recorded in Beverley Road, including some spectacular and well-preserved funerary monuments (*CAR 9*, 259-60). Most of these were excavated in the 19th century by George Joslin around his house at 10 Beverley Road (Urban Archaeological Database or UAD no 907). In 1866, Joslin discovered the so-called 'child's grave' in his garden. This burial contained an unusual collection of pipeclay figurines (UAD no 990, EHER no 11850). Joslin's other finds include the tombstone of the Roman centurion Facilis found in 1868 (UAD no 992, EHER no 11857). In the garden of 1 Queens Road, two Roman cremation burials and other remains have been recorded, although their precise find spots may be erroneous (UAD nos 1001 and 1003).

- 3.3 CAT undertook excavations at the adjacent property (1 Queens Road) – the former Handford House – in 2003 ahead of residential development (now 'Handford Place'). Over 60 Roman burials, both cremations and inhumations, were excavated from approximately 1,000m of foundation- and service-trenches. Of particular interest were two pyre sites of a type not found in Colchester before (CAT Report 323 in prep).
- 3.4 The house is shown on the Ordnance Survey map of 1875 as 'Little Merly'.

4 **Aim**

The aim of the watching brief was to identify and record any archaeological remains that were exposed during the construction of the new extension and to assess the quality and extent of any remains that were encountered.

5 **Methods**

- 5.1 The area of the swimming-pool enclosure and kitchen extension was stripped of between 300mm and 550mm of turf and topsoil (Layer or L1 and L2) before the watching brief commenced. The area of the garage was only stripped of turf. 450mm-wide foundation-trenches were subsequently dug for the garage (including T9-T10), kitchen extension (including T8) and swimming-pool enclosure (including T1, T3, T5-T7) by the contractors, using a mechanical excavator with a toothed bucket. These foundation-trenches extended to between 1.3m and 1.45m below reduced ground-level. The majority of this work was monitored by a CAT archaeologist. In June, the contractors dug out a pit for the swimming-pool, using a toothed bucket. Two short monitoring visits were made by a CAT archaeologist during this work.
- 5.2 Individual records of layers and features were entered on CAT pro-forma record sheets.
- 5.3 Plans were made of cremation burials at a scale of 1:10. Section drawings were made at a scale of 1:10.
- 5.4 A photographic record was made using a digital camera.

6 **Results** (Figs 2-7)

6.1 **Soil profile**

The following soil profile was observed throughout:

Layer or L1 – approximately 300-400mm of turf and dark grey brown sandy silt topsoil, with occasional stones (already stripped off)

L2 – 350-450mm of grey brown sandy silt topsoil containing clay-pipe fragments, peg-tile and post-medieval pottery (partially stripped off)

L3 – 250-300mm of buff brown silty sand with abundant angular and round stones 20-30mm in size – Roman ploughsoil.

L4 – natural reddish sand and gravel with frequent angular and round stones, 10-20mm in size. L4 started between 550mm and 600mm below reduced ground-level in the area of the swimming-pool and 750-800mm below ground-level in the area of the new kitchen.

6.2 **Cremation burials**

Two definite and two probable Roman urned cremation burials were disturbed during the groundworks, ie Feature or F1, F2 and F3 and find no 28.

6.2.1 **F1** (Fig 3)

Fragments from the base of a Roman flagon, plus a lid, were recorded in the west-facing section of T1, a foundation-trench for the indoor swimming-pool enclosure. The pot fragments were within L2, near the interface with L3 (find no 1). As no cut was observed and some breaks in the pot appeared to be old, it is considered to be a vessel that had previously been disturbed, perhaps as a result of gardening. There was no cremated bone anywhere near the pot, but it seems likely that it formed part of a cremation burial. An incomplete Roman lamp and some sherds from a Roman storage vessel (an 'amphora') were also present in T1, L2 (find no 2). It is feasible that these items may derive from the same cremation burial as the flagon.

6.2.2 F2 (Fig 3)

A disturbed cremation burial was found in T8, a foundation-trench dividing the kitchen extension and swimming-pool enclosure. A scatter of Roman pottery consisting of amphora and flagon sherds was partially removed by the digger bucket (find no 8). Both sections of the trench were examined and fragments of the same Roman flagon plus cremated bone were seen in both sections. The pot and bone were seen in L2, 200mm below reduced ground-level (ie 750mm below previous modern ground-level). A modern drain-trench running east to west had been cut through this cremation burial and dragged the contents for over a metre. No cut was observed.

6.2.3 F3 (Figs 4-8)

A third cremation burial was exposed in T9, a foundation-trench for the garage. This consisted of a circular pit containing a centrally placed cremation urn (12), with a flagon (13) adjacent to it, the top of which was clipped by the digger bucket. The pit was filled by mid to light brown sandy silt with silty clay lenses. There appeared to be a burnt patch on the western side of the feature. Occasional fragments of charcoal and cremated bone in the fill plus an iron nail head and a melted glass object may derive from pyre debris which was deposited with the vessels. A bone hairpin, plus fragments from a ring-handle from a box, all of which had been burnt on the pyre, were also found within the urn (Fig 7 nos 1-3).

The contents of both vessels were 'excavated' and the urn was found to contain cremated bone and a small copper-alloy hand-mirror. Wood still adhering to the back of the mirror may derive from a comb or a wooden case. Three coins had been placed next to the mirror, at the bottom of the urn; these were placed with the emperor's head facing downwards. The coins and other small finds indicate that the person died c AD 77-85.

6.2.4 Find no 28

The contractors retrieved a small grey ware jar and three iron nails while excavating the pit for the swimming-pool. These items were found 1.2m below grass level (930mm below reduced ground-level), in a patch of darker earth, within the L4 natural. No cremated bone was found with the pot; however, given the type of pot and its location, it is likely to be part of a cremation burial which has been moved.

7 Finds

Post-medieval pottery was identified by Howard Brooks of CAT. Fabrics are after CAR 7. Detailed reports follow in section 14 for Roman pottery (p 9), cremated human bone (p 10) and small finds (p 13).

Table 1: finds.

Find no	Context	Description	Date	Weight (in g)
swimming-pool enclosure				
1	T1, F1	Clay-pipe stem	post-medieval or modern	2
1	T1, F1	Roman pottery (sherds from 4 vessels)	early Roman	439
2	T1, L2	Lamp fragment (small find 1)	Roman	
2	T1, L2	Amphora sherds	early Roman	245
3	T3, L3	Mortar	modern	11
4	T6, L2	1 sherd German stoneware – 'Westerwald ware' (Fabric 45F) 1 sherd of post-medieval red earthenware (Fabric 40)	early 18th century 17th-18th century	19 12
4	T6, L2	1 piece of burnt flint	undated	3
4	T6, L2	Clay-pipe stem	post-medieval or modern	3
4	T6, L2	Grey ware sherds	Roman	19
5	T6, L2	Roman tile	Roman	207

5	T6, L2	Clay-pipe stem	post-medieval or modern	6
5	T6, L2	Peg-tile	medieval to modern	56
5	T6, L2	1 sherd of late slipped kitchen ware (Fabric 51a)	Victorian	34
5	T6, L2	Roman pottery	Roman	3
6	T5, L2	Roman tile	Roman	382
7	T7, L2	Roman <i>imbrex</i>	Roman	72
8	T8, F2	Fragments of an amphora, fragment of a flagon and 2 grey ware sherds	early Roman	1,097
8	T8, F2	Cremated bone		
spoilheap				
9	U/S	Roman pottery	Roman	18
9	U/S	Roman tile	Roman	138
swimming-pool enclosure				
10	T8, L2, part of F2	Flagon sherds	early Roman	29
10	T8, L2, part of F2	Cremated bone		
U/S				
11	U/S	Clay-pipe stem	post-medieval or modern	6
11	U/S	Pottery	Roman	90
11	U/S	Animal bone, butchered – cattle?	undated	348
garage				
12	T9, F3	Cremation urn	early Roman	1,205
12	T9, F3, fill of cremation urn, spit 8	Cu-A hand-mirror (small find 3)	early Roman	
12	T9, F3, fill of cremation urn, spit 8	Cu-A coin (small find 4)	early Roman	
12	T9, F3, fill of cremation urn, spit 8	2 Cu-A coins (small finds 6 & 7)	early Roman	
12	T9, F3, fill of cremation urn, spit 9	Bone buckle fragment (small find 8)	early Roman	
12	T9, F3, fill of cremation urn	Hobnail (small find 9)	early Roman	
13	T9, F3	Flagon	early Roman	730
14	T9, F3	Cremated bone		
15	T9, F3	Fe nail head	early Roman	
16	T9, F3	Pot; part of flagon 13?	early Roman	
16	T9, F3	Glass object	early Roman	
17		no find no 17		
18	T9, F3, under cremation urn 12	Soil sample		
19	T9, F3?	Small Cu-A fragment (small find 1)		
20	T9, F3?	Soil sample		
21	T9, F3	Soil sample containing cremated bone		
22	T9, L2 or L3	Cremated bone		
23	T10, L3	Cremated bone		
24		no find no 24		
25	T9, F3, fill of cremation urn 12, spit 8	Fe nail	early Roman	
26	T9, F3, fill of cremation urn 12, spit 9	Fe nail fragment	early Roman	
27	T9, F3, fill of cremation urn 12, spit 9	2 Fe nail shank fragments	early Roman	
swimming-pool pit				
28	U/S	Grey ware jar	Roman	217
28	U/S	3 Fe nails	Roman?	

8 Discussion

- 8.1 In the pre-Roman Iron Age in south-east Britain, the main visible burial rite was cremation and this certainly seems to be true in Colchester, as seen at the Lexden cemetery, the Lexden Tumulus and the cemetery at the Stanway site (Crummy 1997, 22, 23). The Romans also practised cremation of the dead, which was intended to completely dispose of the body to ensure that the spirit entered the other world and did not return to haunt the living (Alcock 1980, 50). They also brought other practices to Britain which gained popularity, such as the placing of a coin in the mouth of the deceased or into a cremation urn to pay the passage for the dead across the mythical River Styx (*ibid*, 57).
- 8.2 Two definite and two probable cremation burials were recorded during the groundworks for the kitchen extension, swimming-pool and garage at 21 West Lodge Road. Three of the cremation burials had been previously disturbed and partly or wholly moved from their original positions. The fourth cremation burial (F3) comprised an almost complete urn with a flagon as an ancillary vessel; presumably the flagon contained liquid at the time of deposition. Classical sources and archaeological evidence indicate that food and drink were placed in the grave with the remains of the deceased to help them in their journey to the afterlife. Cremation burials at the Handford House site commonly included flagons and beakers with the cremation urn. However, pollen analysis carried out on one of the urns from the Handford House site did not produce evidence of any residues inside. The pottery, coins and hand-mirror associated with F3 give a likely date of burial of the later 1st century AD, ie c AD 77-85.
- 8.3 The hand-mirror placed in the cremation urn (12) of F3 shows continuity from Late Iron Age burial practice (Fig 8). The presence of a mirror in a grave often involved the sacrifice of a valuable possession or heirloom (Philpott 1991, 182-3) and it is possible that this mirror was deliberately broken for interment. The cremated bone is from an individual aged between 15 and 23 years of age. If the individual was at the younger age range, then this would accord with the small finds report (section 14.3) which suggests that the coins were selected for their protective images and probably accompanied the body of a child. The presence of the mirror suggests a female burial.
- 8.4 A Roman lamp was found in T1, L2 which may have formed part of cremation burial F1 (Fig 8). At the Handford House site, lamps were found in 16% of the cremation burials (9 out of 57), and there was evidence from two of the cremation burials that the lamps had been deposited in the grave while lit. Alcock suggests three main reasons for putting a lit lamp in graves: to provide light for the journey to the afterlife, to make the dead feel at home, and to serve as a link between the living and the dead (Alcock 1980, 60-61). Philpott suggests more symbolic meanings and also the practical function of providing light for the graveside mourners during the cremation ceremony (Philpott 1991, 192).

9 Archive deposition

The finds and the paper and digital archive are held by the Colchester Archaeological Trust at 12 Lexden Road, Colchester, Essex CO3 3NF, but will be permanently deposited with Colchester Museums under accession code 2004.275. Some of the finds are to be loaned back to Mr and Mrs White, the house-owners.

10 Acknowledgements

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12 Glossary

CM	Colchester Museums
Cu-A	copper-alloy
EHHER	Essex Historic Environment Record, held by Essex County Council
Fe	iron
feature	an identifiable thing like a pit, a wall, a drain, a floor; can contain 'contexts'
IFA	Institute of Field Archaeologists
Iron Age	the period in Britain c 700 BC-AD 43, ie preceding the Roman invasion
medieval	period from AD 1066 to c AD 1500
post-medieval	c AD 1500 to c AD 1900
modern	period from the 19th century onwards to the present
NGR	National Grid Reference
natural	geological deposit undisturbed by human activity
Roman	the period in Britain from AD 43 to AD 410
SF	Small Find
spit	part of a deposit defined in terms of depth
UAD	Urban Archaeological Database, held by Colchester Museums
Victorian	1837-1901

13 Site data

Table 2: context descriptions.

Context	Trench	Description	Date
L1	all trenches	Dark grey brown sandy silt topsoil with occasional stones	modern
L2	all trenches	Grey brown sandy silt topsoil with occasional stones. Contains clay pipe, peg-tile, post-medieval pottery and 2 disturbed Roman cremation burials, other Roman pottery and tile, Roman lamp	post-medieval to modern
L3	all trenches	Buff brown silty sand with abundant angular and rounded stones, 2-3cm in size	Roman
L4	all trenches	Natural red sand and gravel with abundant angular and rounded stones, 1-2cm in size	Glacial
F1	T1	Disturbed cremation burial in L2 consisting of fragmentary pot, no bone	Roman
F2	T8	Disturbed cremation burial in L2 consisting of spread of cremated bone and pottery over a 1m-area	Roman
F3	T9	Cremation burial with urn and flagon, and pyre debris	Roman

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14.1 Report on the Roman pottery

by Stephen Benfield of CAT

CAM nos are after Hawkes & Hull 1947; fabric codes are after CAR 10.

Table 3: Roman pottery.

Find no	Context	Description	Fabric	Weight (in g)	Date
1	T1, F1	Quantity of flagon sherds, most of the lower part of vessel; no rim	DJ	370.0	1st-2nd/3rd century
1	T1, F1	Very small quantity of sherds from another vessel, course oxidised ware	DJ	15.4	1st-2nd/3rd century
1	T1, F1	Very small quantity of greyware sherds from a lid	GX	40.0	?1st-2nd century
1	T1, F1	1 sherd, possible part of lid or base of another pot	GX	14.0	Roman
2	T1, L2	2 amphora sherds	AA	245.0	1st-early 2nd century
4	T3, L2	Very small quantity of grey ware pottery	GX	19.0	Roman
5	T5, L2	1 sherd	DJ	3.0	1st-2nd/3rd century
8	T8, F2	Small quantity of flagon sherds, form CAM 154/155	DJ	111.0	1st to mid-late 2nd century
8	T8, F2	Quantity of amphora sherds and possibly some flagon sherds	AA	970.0	1st to early 2nd century
8	T8, F2	2 sherds of grey ware	GX	16.0	Roman
9	U/S	1 sherd from a dish, form CAM 40b	GB	14.0	early 2nd to mid-late 3rd century
9	U/S	1 sherd of pottery	DJ	2.0	1st to 2nd/3rd century
10	T8, L2 (same as F2)	2 sherds of flagon	DJ	29.0	1st to 2nd/3rd century
11	U/S	2 sherds of a large storage jar	HZ	75.0	1st-3rd century
11	U/S	Very small quantity of pottery	DJ	15.0	1st-2nd/3rd century
12	T9, F3	Almost complete jar (used as a cremation urn)	GX	1,205.0	1st-2nd century
13	T9, F3	Quantity of ring-necked flagon sherds, form CAM 154/155	DJ	730.0	Claudio-Neronian, ie 1st century
28	swimming-pool pit	Nearly complete grey ware jar without rim	GX	217.0	Roman

Some of the vessels lack rims, but where datable, date mainly from the 1st to 2nd centuries and nothing need be later than 2nd century. The pottery includes jars and flagons and a lid which is what would be expected from cremation burials.

Associated with these were sherds from at least one amphora which probably also derived from one or more cremation burials.

14.2 Report on the cremated human bone

by Julie Curl of Norfolk Archaeological Unit

Summary

A total of 0.917kg of bone, consisting of 983 fragments, was recovered from excavations at 21 West Lodge Road. Of the total weight, 0.809kg of the bone was produced from a 1st-century cremation urn. Other bone was retrieved from a disturbed cremation burial and from other soils of a Roman date.

Methodology

Due to the high level of fragmentation in this assemblage, it was realised that not all the bone would be identifiable. Initial bone was sieved through a 3mm sieve to separate fragments that would be too small to identify, but checked for fragments of teeth. The remaining bone was then sorted and examined thoroughly to identify as much bone to the individual element (such as femur, humerus) as possible and to distinguish human bone from any animal bone that might have been present. Bones were examined for burning and the degree of burning that had occurred. All bone was examined for any cut marks or pathologies. Weights and counts of the number of fragments were taken for each bag. All the information is presented in two tables within this report (Tables 4-5).

Results

Size of cremation burials

The size of a cremation burial depends on the individual (age, sex, body size, bone density), and the extent of bone recovery from the pyre site and during excavation, as well as on the rate of bone preservation (McKinley 1993, 285).

A total of 0.917 kg of bone was recovered from this assemblage, of which 0.809kg was recovered from the various spits in cremation urn 12 (F3). Cremation burials in containers are normally larger than cremation burials in pits. It is likely that bone is more carefully collected if it is to be placed into an urn; also, there is less likely to be any bone lost after burial when it is contained in a vessel.

A total of 0.053kg of cremated bone was found within L2 in T8 (find no 10). Small quantities of bone, some of which were burnt, were found from F2 (find no 8), T9 (find no 22), T10 (find no 23), and the fill of cremation burial pit F3 (find nos 14 and 21). It is possible that the bone in these contexts derives from disturbed cremation burials or burnt domestic refuse, or a combination of these. The small size of these cremation burials may be due to a range of factors, including partial collection and loss of the volatile portion of bone before burial as well as post-depositional disturbance and bone decay.

Fragmentation

The fragmentation of bone resulting from the cremation process may be increased by funerary practices such as raking and tending of the pyre, collection of bone at the pyre site, and deliberate crushing prior to burial, as well as a result of post-depositional processes, excavation and processing (McKinley 1989).

The bone found within cremation urn 12 (F3) was generally less fragmented than bone found elsewhere on this site. Although there were large numbers of fragments inside the urn, particularly in spits 8 and 9, there were more fragments of a sufficient size to enable them to be identified to individual elements. The bone was removed from the urn in a series of spits and it is interesting to note that the lower spits contained a higher number of fragments and that these lower spits tended to contain many very tiny fragments that had obviously fallen to lower levels within the urn. Bone found outside the urn was generally not identifiable to elements.

The maximum fragment size was 51.00 mm long by 15.38 mm wide, and one piece of human pelvis measured 43.02 mm by 41.30 mm; both of these larger fragments were found in the urn. The majority of pieces of bone were considerably smaller, although over 50% of the bone was over 10 mm long, with many fragments measuring under 2 mm to 3 mm. The degree of bone fragmentation is similar to what is found in other archaeological cremation burials where an average of 50% of bone fragments are over 10 mm in size (McKinley 1994, 340).

Colour

The colour of cremated bone depends on a range of factors including the maximum temperature reached, the length of the cremation process, the type and amount of fuel, the quantity of oxygen, and the amount of body fat, as well as on the degree of uniformity of exposure to the heat across the body. Cremated bone can exhibit a large range of heat-induced colour variation from normal coloured (unburnt), to black (charred: approx 300°C), through hues of blue and grey (incompletely incinerated: up to approx 600°C) to fully oxidised white (> approx 600°C) (McKinley 2004, 11).

Table 4: summary of all of the bone recovered, giving weights, quantities of fragments and degree of burning.

Trench	Finds no	Spit no	Layer no	Feature no	Weight (g)	Total qty	Colour/degree of burning
T9	12	1		F3	5	11	Burnt white/grey
T9	12	2		F3	4	10	Burnt white/grey
T9	12	3		F3	4	6	Burnt white/grey
T9	12	4		F3	7	12	Burnt white/grey
T9	12	5		F3	13	13	Burnt white/grey
T9	12	6		F3	47	35	Most burnt white/grey, some brown colour remaining in centre of some fragments
T9	12	7		F3	85	9	Burnt white/grey
T9	12	8		F3	275	409	Most burnt white/grey, some brown colour remaining in centre of some fragments
T9	12	9		F3	344	387	Most burnt white/grey, some brown colour remaining in centre of some fragments
T9	12	base		F3	25	10	Burnt white/grey
T8	8			F2	2	4	No obvious burning
T8	10			F2	53	31	90% white, 10% brown
T9	22		L3		14	4	95% white, 5% grey
T10	23		L3		10	18	No obvious burning
	14			F3	21	17	40% white, 15% grey, 45% brown
	21			F3	8	7	70% grey, 30% white
					917	983	

Some of the bone from cremation urn 12 (F3) was fully oxidised, ie exposed to a temperature in excess of approximately 600°C. Many fragments of bone were incompletely oxidised, ie exposed to a temperature in excess of approximately 300°C and up to approximately 600°. Bone from find nos 8 and 23 showed no obvious burning and may represent remains of general bone waste.

Surface changes

Surface changes such as warping, cracking and fissuring are characteristics of cremated bone and are produced during the process of dehydration undergone by bone exposed to heat. The pattern of heat-induced bone changes in colour and texture can be exploited to infer the technological aspects of the ritual, the condition of the body at the time when the cremation process took place, and the nature of post-depositional disturbance (Shipman *et al* 1984).

The cremated bone from 21 West Lodge Road showed extensive evidence of cracking both transversely and longitudinally, and many bone fragments were warped.

Some of the bone did not show a great deal of surface change, which would indicate that not all of the bone had been subjected to full cremation.

Elements present

Only the bone recovered from cremation urn 12 from burial F3 produced any fragments that could be identified to individual elements and details of these are given in Table 5. Generally the bone recovered from the urn is in better condition than the remainder of the assemblage, resulting in more identifiable fragments.

Table 5: Summary of the bone recovered from F3, cremation urn 12 giving details of the fragments of elements identified.

Find no	Spit no	Feature no	Wt (g)	Total Qty	Elements present
12	1	F3	5	11	No identification to individual elements
12	2	F3	4	10	No identification to individual elements
12	3	F3	4	6	No identification to individual elements
12	4	F3	7	12	No identification to individual elements
12	5	F3	13	13	1 ulna fragment; 12 no ID
12	6	F3	47	35	2 humerus, 3 ribs, proximal phalange, 1 fibula; 28 no ID
12	7	F3	85	9	Mandible condyle, 1 femur, 1 fibula, 1 ulna, 2 skull, 2 vertebrae; 77 no ID
12	8	F3	275	409	4 pelvis, 10 skull, 1 sacrum, 2 vertebrae, 4 radius, 3 humerus, 5 tibia, 2 femur, 1 scapula, 1 fibula, 1 metapodial, 3 rib; 225 no ID
12	9	F3	344	387	1 proximal phalange, 2 pelvis, 1 clavicle, 2 ulna, 4 humerus, 2 radius, 12 skull, 1 orbital, 3 tibia, 5 femur, 1 scapula, 4 rib; 350 no ID (many very small fragments)
12	base	F3	25	10	1 metapodial, 1 vertebrae, 58 no ID (very small fragments)

Fragments were identifiable from most elements within the body, although it is interesting that no teeth were present. The range of elements present is indicative that the contents of the urn represent the whole body of one individual.

Age, sex and pathologies

Indications as to the age of the individual in the cremation urn come from fragments of skull found within spit 9 where the sutures have not fused. An unfused proximal radius was also produced from spit 9. The unfused radius in particular can give some indication of age as this bone does not fuse until the ages of 15 to 23 years. Therefore, the unfused radius present in the contents of this urn, along with the unfused fragments of skull, would suggest a juvenile or young adult of between 15 and 23 years at death.

None of the bones gave any clear indications as to the sex of the individual. However, the bone was placed in the urn with a hand-mirror, an accessory more commonly associated with females, which may suggest that these are the bones of a young woman.

One fragment of humerus from spit 8 shows a probable healed fracture on the shaft of the bone.

Conclusions

Analysis of the bone from cremation urn 12 (F3) and the other contexts from the site revealed the presence of cremated human remains in the urn and unidentified remains from outside the urn, some of which had been cremated. The bones present within the urn and the associated find of a hand-mirror would suggest that this was the burial of a cremated female with an approximate age of between 15 and 23 years at death.

No animal remains were identified in any of the bags of bone; this would indicate that there had probably not been any ritual feasting associated with the cremation and eventual burial of the human remains. If there had been feasting, this might have taken place elsewhere or the resulting bone waste might have been deposited on another part of the site.

14.3 Report on the small finds

by Nina Crummy

Most of the objects come from cremation burial F3, which is discussed below. Of the other finds only one is certainly Roman; it is part of a mid 1st-century lamp and probably comes from a disturbed burial, though it was found in L2.

Grave goods and other debris from F3

The objects from the grave can be divided into primary and secondary grave goods; the former are burnt, the latter are not and would have been added when the urn was filled with collected pyre debris. The grave goods point to this being a female burial, possibly a juvenile, with a deposition date in the later Vespasianic period (after AD 77), or perhaps a little later in the reign of Titus (AD 79-81) or the early years of Domitian (AD 81-96).

The primary deposits consist of a fragment of a bone hairpin, a melted glass flask, a single hobnail, two fragments from a ring-handle from a box, a structural nail, and three narrow nail shank fragments, probably too long to be from hobnails. As with the cremation burials found nearby at Handford House, the single hobnail is evidence that the deceased was cremated fully clothed and wearing shoes. The glass flask would have been of the tubular form often found in mid to later 1st-century cremation burials (*CAR 8*, 159-60). It may have been contained in the jewellery box represented by the two ring-handle fragments, along with the hairpin, and perhaps with other toilet and jewellery items, and possibly clothes (Riha 2001). Boxes with these distinctive handles from early Roman burials in Britain are concentrated in the south and east, with the majority coming from Essex and Hertfordshire (Philpott 1991, table A4). The head of the hairpin is mostly missing, but sufficient remains to show that it was in the form of female bust. It belongs to a group that shows only the front of the upper chest, which curves forward to rest on the front of a pedestal with prominent mouldings; on this example the mouldings are square. The plain and delicate form of the chest of this pin is closely matched by a complete examples from Pompeii and Mainz, which also sit on a neat pedestal with square mouldings (Ward-Perkins & Claridge 1976, no 71a; Mikler 1997, 48-9, taf 37, 2). The Mainz pin is dated by the hairstyle to the Flavian period, and a similar date for the West Lodge Road fragment would exactly match the coin evidence from the grave. Rather cruder and perhaps slightly later versions of the same form have been found in Colchester at Balkerne Lane in a context dated broadly from the Flavian period to the end of the 3rd century (*CAR 2*, fig 23, 443), and at the Gilbert School in a post-Boudican context (*CAR 6*, fig 6.2, 50).

The secondary deposits consist of three coins, a small hand-mirror, and some thin flakes of softwood. The mirror is of Lloyd-Morgan's Type G, which dates to the second half of the 1st century; several Group Gs from the Netherlands come from Flavian contexts (Lloyd-Morgan 1977, 235; Lloyd-Morgan 1981, 39-40). The type as a whole is quite small, with those from the Netherlands ranging in diameter from 41 to 106 mm; the West Lodge Road example falls in the centre of the range. The flakes of wood may come from a box used to store the mirror (Lloyd-Morgan 1977, 233), though alternative sources may be a boxwood comb, or possibly a writing tablet (*cf* Chapman & Straker 1986; Galloway 1979, fig 31, 194).

The coins are all *dupondii* of Vespasian, with one dated to AD 77-8. All are in good condition and were placed in the urn with reverse face upwards. Two show the female personification *Fides Publica*, the third is another female personification, probably *Pax Aug*. The *Fides Publica* reverse type is not common as a site find on asses and *dupondii* in Colchester; no examples were identified among the fourteen Vespasianic base metal coins from the Head Street site, excavated in 2000, and none were among the twelve from the St Mary's hospital site, excavated in 2001-3. In the light of this rarity, it is highly likely that the F3 coins were deliberately selected for deposition because of their reverse types. The selection of coins with reverses appropriate in a funerary setting has been noted in the town and elsewhere (N Crummy in prep). The choice of the image of *Fides* (trust, faith, confidence) in this context can be read as exhorting the dead girl/woman to face the underworld bravely and with confidence, while *Pax*, if this is the correct identification of the third coin, no doubt refers to the peace of the tomb.

Primary deposits

- Fig 7, no 1 SF 8. (12) F3 (spit 9). Burnt fragment of a bone hairpin in the form of a female bust. All that remains of the bust is the gently sloping upper chest, unmarked by any suggestion of drapery, resting at the front of a well-formed pedestal which has a single square moulding separated by a short neck from a pair of square mouldings; a tiny stump of the round shaft remains beneath the lowest moulding. Length 22 mm.
- SF 9. (12) F3 (spit 9). Iron hobnail with bent shank. Length 11 mm.
- Fig 7, no 2 SF 12. (12) F3 (spit 7). Heat-affected fragment of a copper-alloy ring-handle with distinctive grooved section. Length 34 mm, diameter 5 mm.
- Fig 7, no 3 SF 13. (14) F3. Small heat-affected fragment of a copper-alloy ring-handle with distinctive grooved section as SF 12 above, but not necessarily both from the same ring. Length 10 mm, diameter 4.5 mm.
- (25) F3 (spit 8). Iron nail with flat round head; most of the shank is missing. Length 18 mm.
- (26) F3 (spit 9). Fragment of a narrow iron nail shank. Length 18 mm.
- SF 11. (27) F3 (spit 9). Two fragments of narrow iron nail shanks, possibly both from the same nail. Lengths 14 and 19 mm.

Secondary deposits

- SF 4. (12) F3 (spit 8). Copper-alloy *dupondius* of Vespasian. Obverse: IMP CAES VESPASIAN AVG COS VIII PP, emperor's bust to right. Reverse: FIDES (PVBL)ICA, SC; Fides standing left, holding cornucopia in left hand, right hand outstretched holding patera; as *RIC* 828. Diameter 28 mm; weight 10.34 g. Date: AD 77-8. Mint: Lyon.
- SF 6. (12) F3 (spit 8). Copper-alloy *dupondius* of Vespasian, placed on top of SF 7 in the urn. Obverse: -/AR VESPASIAN AVG COS /-. Reverse: -/ AVG, SC, possibly *Pax*; standing female figure to right, right hand outstretched holding patera. Diameter 30 mm; weight 12.45 g. Date range: AD 69-79. Mint, Lyon.
- SF 7. (12) F3 (spit 8). Copper-alloy *dupondius* of Vespasian, lying beneath SF 6 in the urn. Obverse: IMP CAES VESPASIAN AVG COS /- Reverse: FIDES (PV)BLICA, SC, Fides standing left, holding cornucopia in left hand, right hand outstretched holding patera; as *RIC* 828. Diameter 27 mm; weight 11.60 g. Date range: AD 69-79. Mint: Lyon.
- Fig 8, no 4 SF 3. (12) F3 (spit 8). Small copper-alloy (speculum) hand-mirror with loop handle. The disc is circular, though not perfectly so, and is in fragments. It is slightly convex, with the reflecting side well-polished. The rear face has two pairs of fine concentric grooves set around a lathe centre-mark. Though some spin marks can be seen on this face, it is distinctive for being covered with transverse marks. These probably come from the initial rolling out of the sheet metal. The handle is of simple loop form and is in three pieces; one side is slightly damaged, but it is not certain if this occurred before burial or during deposition. There is a scar on the rear face where the pointed support was attached. Diameter 66-70 mm, length of handle 58 mm.
- SF 3. (12) F3 (spit 8). Seven fragments (and several tiny pieces) of thin wood, one with a trace of copper-alloy staining. Dimensions of largest pieces 22 by 14 mm, 26 by 5 mm.

Associated fragments

- (15) F3 Small amorphous fragment of iron. Maximum dimensions 9 by 9 by 5 mm.
- SF 1. (19) F3? Tiny fragment of copper-alloy sheet. Maximum dimensions 4 by 4 mm.

Other finds

- Fig 8, no 5 SF 2. (2) L2. Most of the lower part of a volute lamp, of either Central Gaulish or local manufacture. The fabric is buff-white and the slip ranges from brown to black. Diameter 58 mm, height 24 mm.
- SF 10. (3) L3. Two fragments of modern hard grey mortar.
- (28). Unstratified. Three iron nails with mineral-preserved wood down the shank. Lengths 30, 28 and 26 mm; all incomplete.

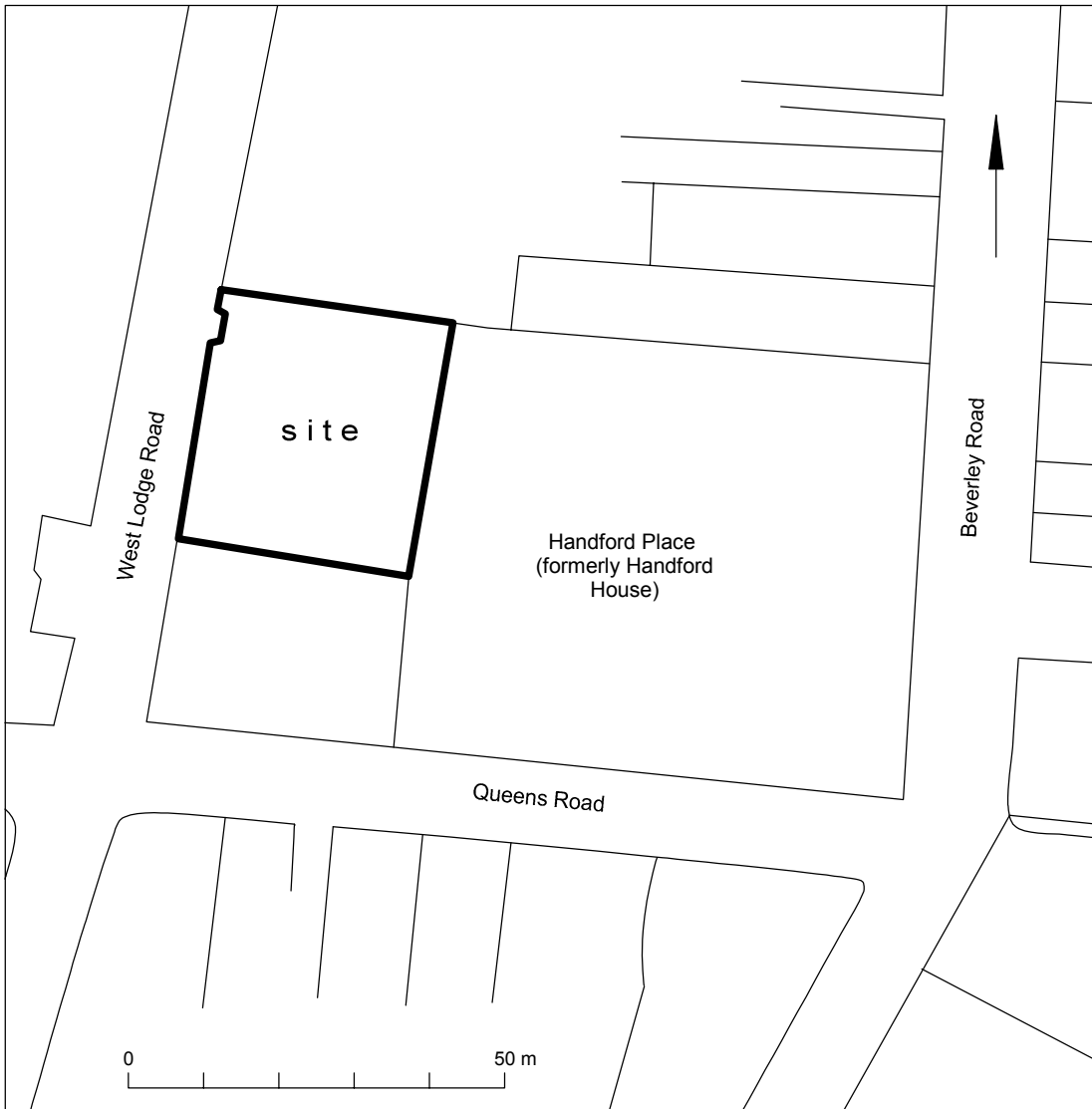


Fig 1 Site location.

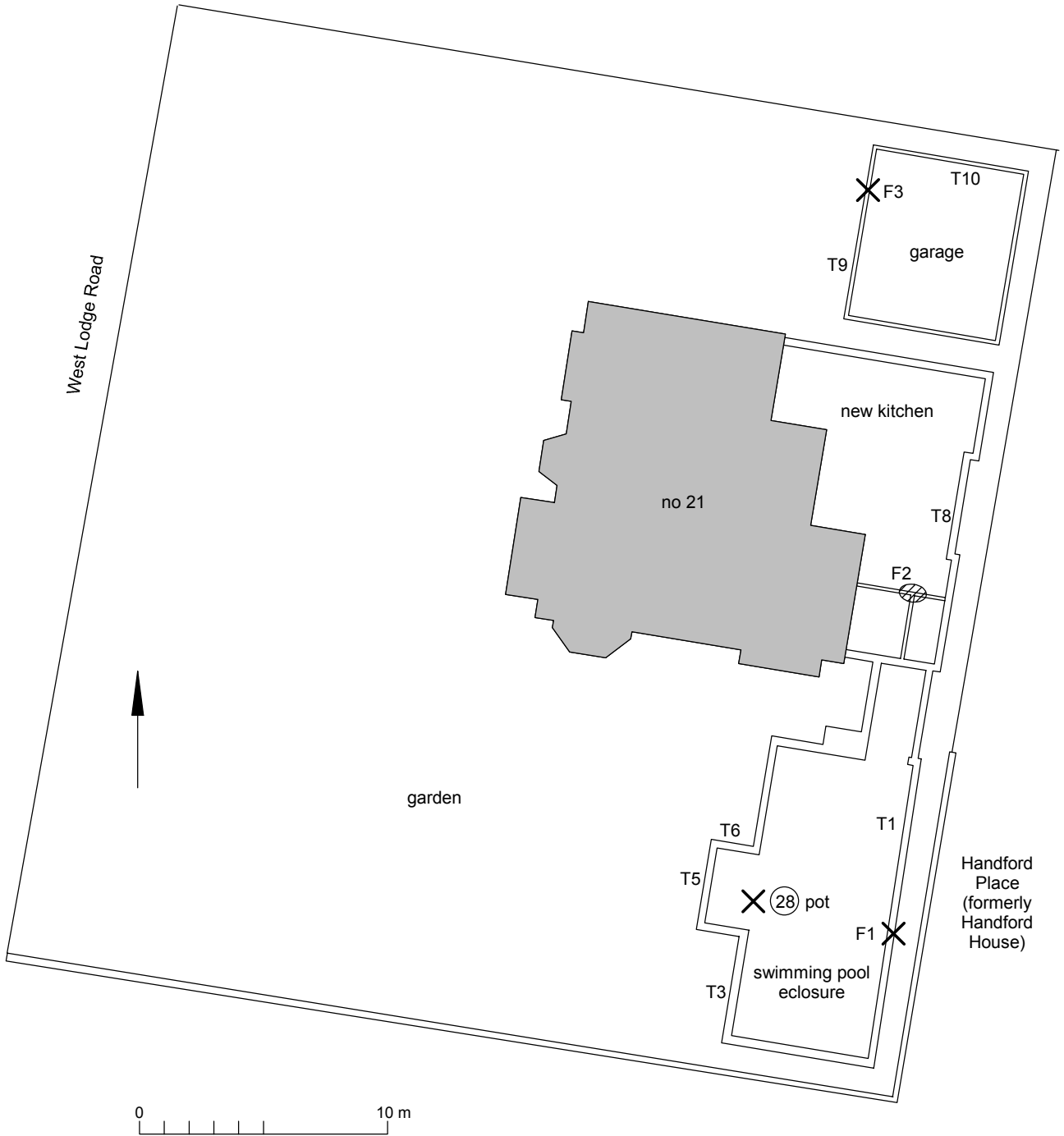


Fig 2 Plan showing feature locations.

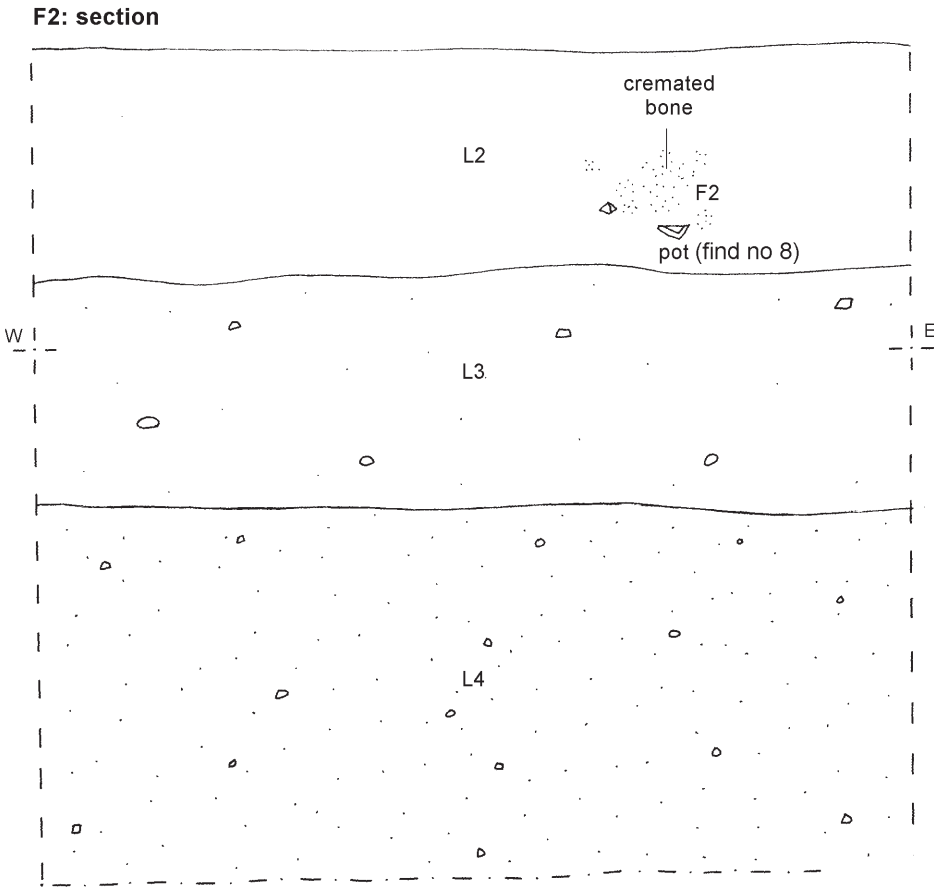
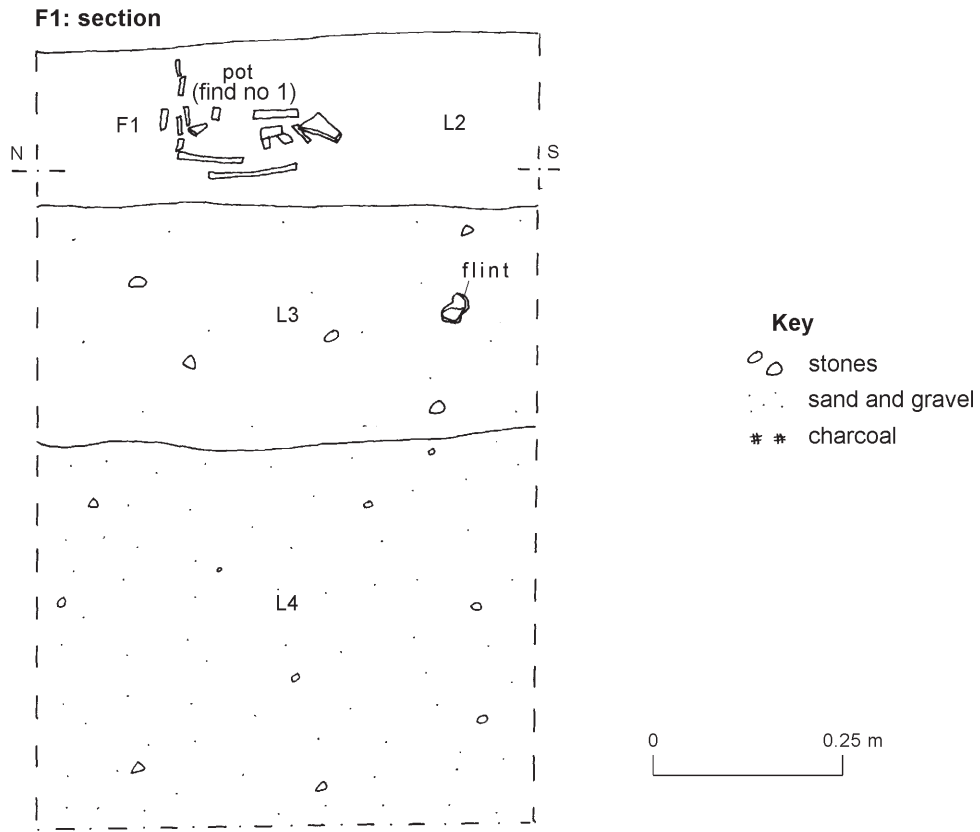
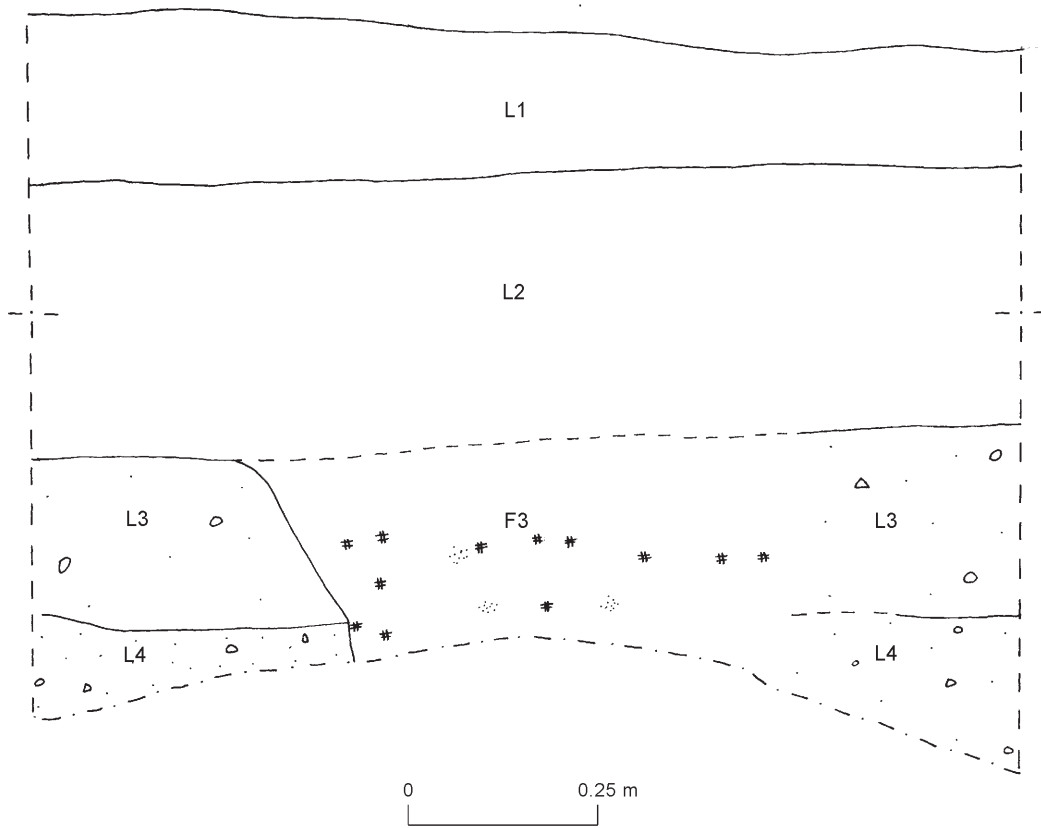


Fig 3 F1: west-facing section (above) and F2: south-facing section (below).

F3: section



F3: plan

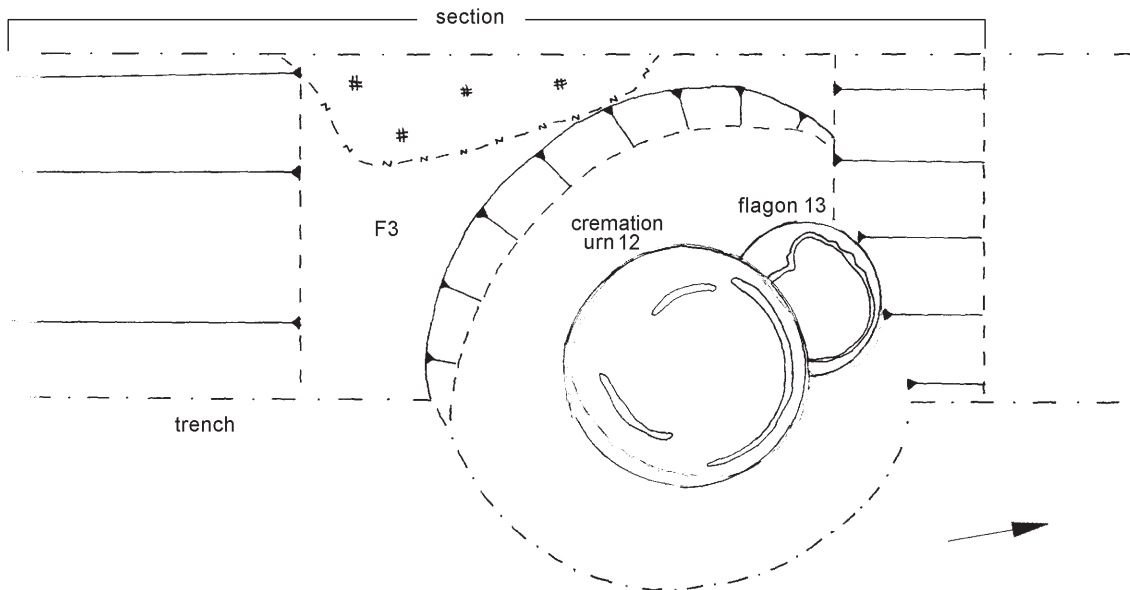
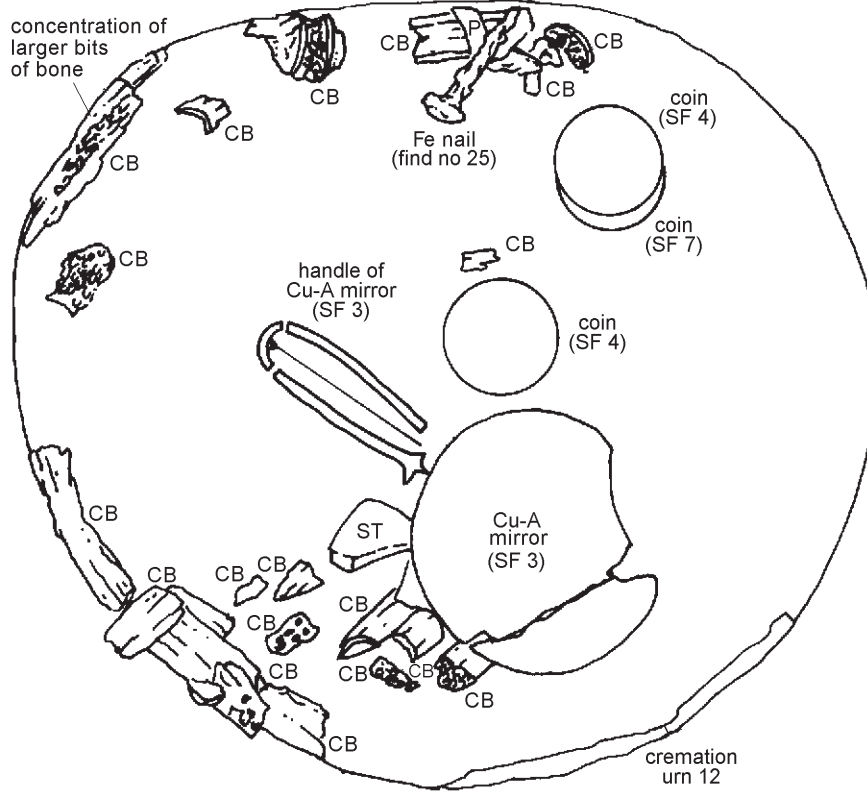


Fig 4 F3: east-facing section (above) and plan (below).

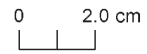
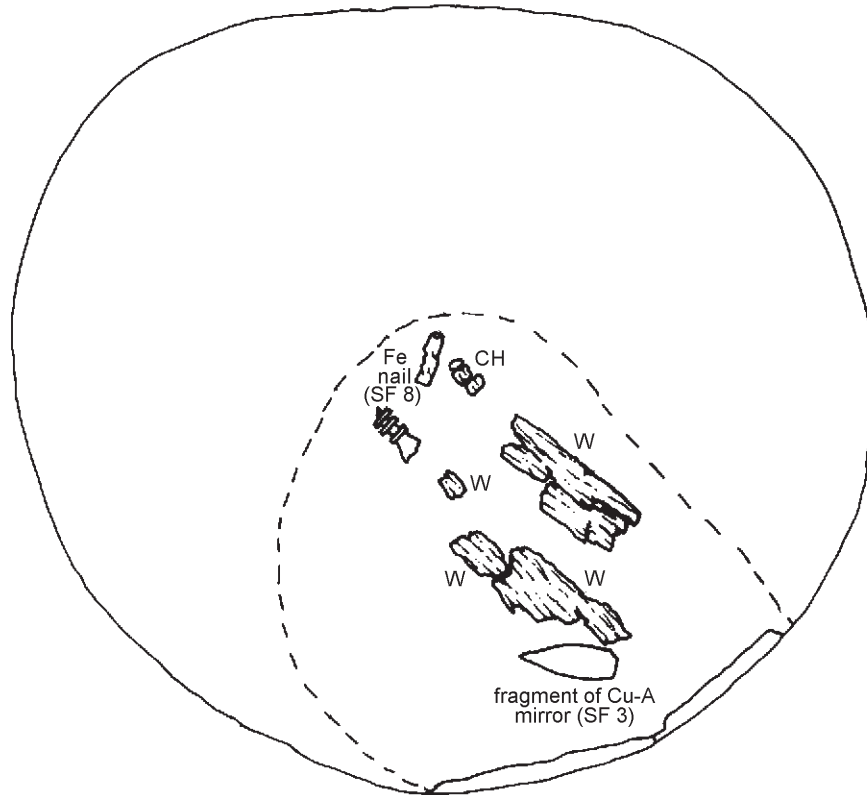
F3: spit 8 (24-27cm down)



Key

CB	cremated bone
ST	stone
CH	charcoal
W	wood
P	pottery

F3: spit 9 (27-30cm down)



the dashed area shows where under the mirror/wood, etc it was all very loose; a few more fragments of wood were found among the loose bone

Fig 5 F3: cremation urn 12; spit 8 - plan of contents, showing hand-mirror, coins and bone (above); and overlay of spit 9 showing wood and bone hairpin fragment (below).

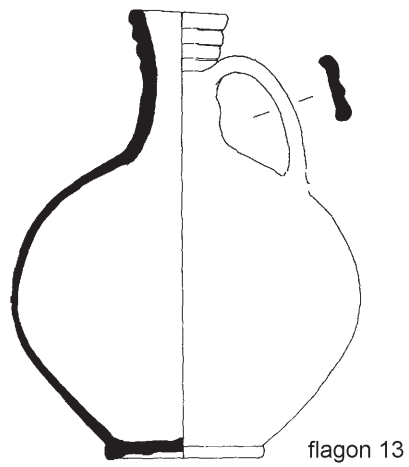
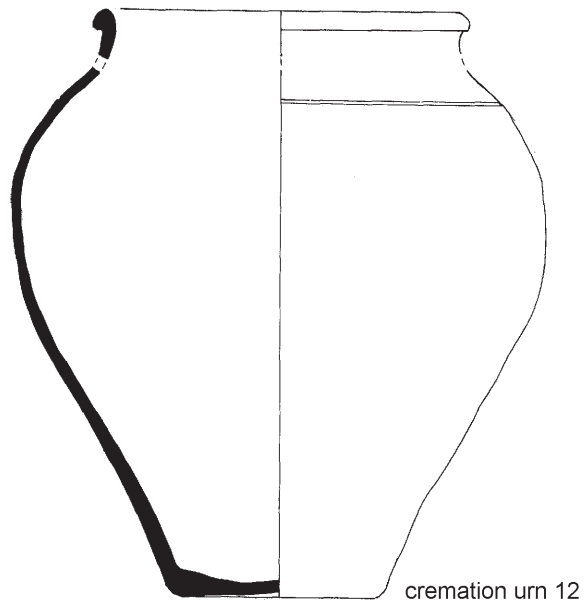


Fig 6 F3: cremation urn 12 and flagon 13.

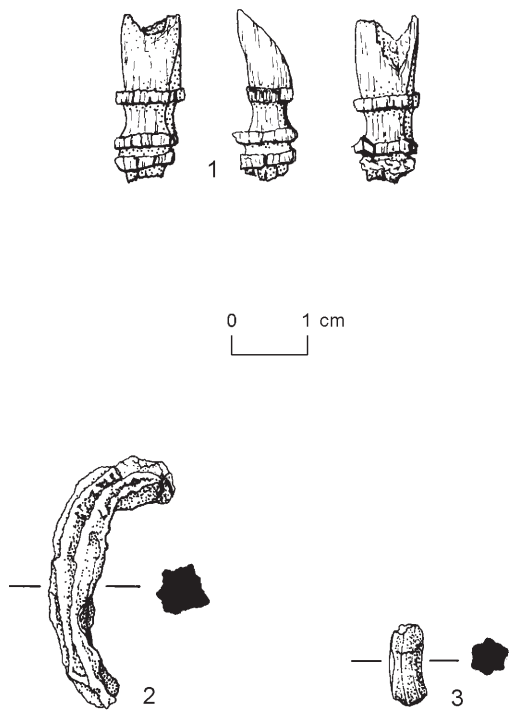


Fig 7 F3: cremation urn 12; bone hairpin fragment (above) and copper-alloy ring-handles (below).

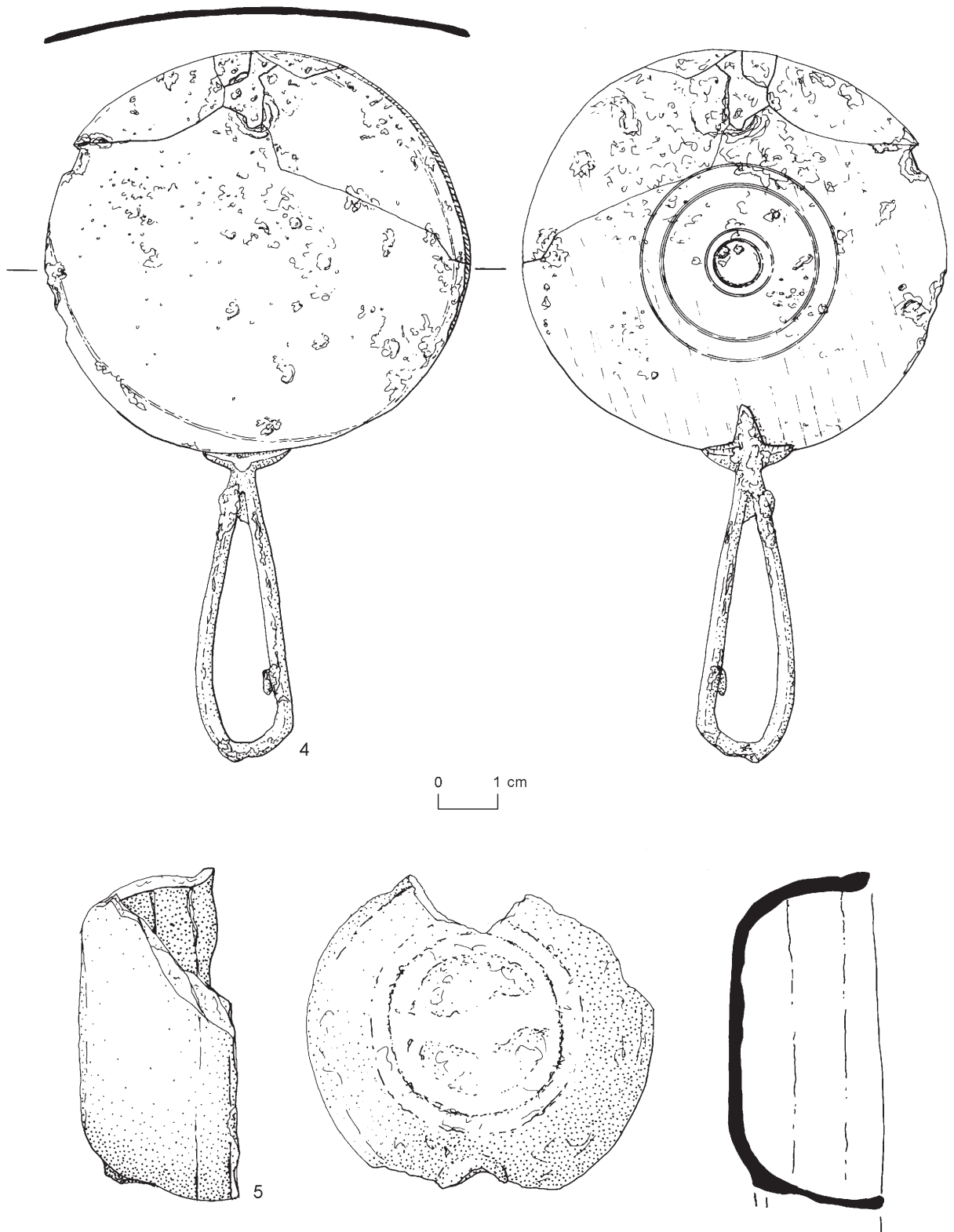


Fig 8 T9: F3; cremation urn 12 - hand-mirror (above), and T1: L2; lamp fragment (below).

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

Summary sheet

Site address: 'Merly House', 21 West Lodge Road, Colchester, Essex	
Parish: Colchester	District: Colchester
NGR: TL 9824 2476 (c)	Site code: Museum accession code 2004.275
Type of work: Watching brief	Site director/group: Colchester Archaeological Trust
Date of work: 31st March-2nd June 2004	Size of area investigated: 30m x 35m
Location of finds/curating museum: Colchester Museums	Funding source: House owners
Further seasons anticipated? No	Related EHER nos: 11850, 11857
Final report: CAT Report 293 and summary in <i>EAH</i>	
Periods represented: Roman	
<p>Summary of fieldwork results: <i>A watching brief was carried out during groundworks for an indoor swimming-pool, new garage and kitchen extension at 21 West Lodge Road. One in situ cremation burial and three disturbed cremation burials were recorded. These are part of a Roman cemetery, other burials from which were observed next door at the Handford House site. The in situ cremation burial included three coins and a hand-mirror with wood adhering to it. The cremated bone and the small finds suggest a burial of a an adolescent girl or young woman who died c AD 77-85.</i></p>	
Previous summaries/reports: None	
Author of summary: Kate Orr	Date of summary: June 2005