

**An archaeological watching brief at
Kingsmead House,
108 Straight Road, Colchester, Essex
July 2004-February 2005**

**report prepared by
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**on behalf of
W A Hills**

CAT project ref.: 04/7a
Colchester Museums accession code: 2004.352
NGR: TL 9660 2426 (c)



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1 Summary

The site lies on the course of the Shrub End Dyke on the eastern side of Straight Road in Lexden. A watching brief on redevelopment works revealed a single undated feature, probably a ditch, which is approximately 26m east of the line of the Shrub End Dyke.

2 Introduction

2.1 This is the archive report on an archaeological watching brief carried out at Kingsmead House, 108 Straight Road, Colchester, Essex. The watching brief was carried out during the groundwork phase for a residential development consisting of three new blocks – Block A, Block B and Block C (this latter being the gatehouse). Planning permission for development was given with a condition for an archaeological watching brief.

2.2 The development site, which measures 56m x 54m, was formerly occupied by the Royal Eastern Counties Hospital. It is situated on the east side of Straight Road, Lexden, at National Grid Reference TL 9660 2426 (centre). The work was carried out by the Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) between the 12th July 2004 and the 8th February 2005.

2.3 This report follows standards and practices contained in Colchester Borough Council's *Guidelines on the standards and practices 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 Institute of Field Archaeologists' *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 (Fig 1)

3.1 The Iron Age *oppidum* of Camulodunum was flanked by a number of large linear earthworks (dykes), most of which were built in the Late Iron Age to define and protect this important settlement centre which was succeeded by Roman Colchester (Essex Historic Environment Record or EHER no 11625).

3.2 Two of the dykes run north to south along the east side of the modern Straight Road – Triple Dyke to the north and Shrub End Dyke to the south. Previous archaeological investigations suggest that the Triple Dyke runs south from the River Colne (near Seven Arches Farm) to a position just north of Heath Road (CAR 11, 159-60 and fig 6.1). Shrub End Dyke appears to continue the defensive line at least as far south as the modern Church of the Latter Day Saints (CAR 11, 121 and fig 6.1).

3.3 The development site therefore lies on the course of the Shrub End Dyke. During a previous phase of redevelopment on the same site in 1984, the Shrub End Dyke was sectioned at two places. Its western edge was recorded at 21.5m east of the western site boundary (on Straight Road). Its width was recorded at 6m and its depth varied from approximately 1m to 3m deep (CAR 6, 1045-6, fig 13.278).

4 Aim

The aim of the watching brief was to identify and record any archaeological remains exposed during the development, and to assess their quality, extent, date, and importance.

5 Methods

- 5.1 The development consists of three blocks of apartments (Blocks A-C) constructed with strip footings. Intermittent monitoring visits were made by a CAT archaeologist during groundworks.
- 5.2 Individual records of layers and features were entered on CAT pro-forma record sheets.
- 5.3 Sketch plans were made of features.
- 5.4 A digital photographic record was made.

6 Results (Fig 2)

6.1 Block A

Visits were made on the 12th and 19th July 2004. Lots of modern disturbance was observed. This was caused by modern service trenches, older foundations and the removal of old cellars. Nothing of archaeological significance was observed.

6.2 Block B

Visits were made on the 28th July 2004 and the 13th August 2004. One possible ditch was seen in the south-facing section of the northern wall of the eastern half of Block B (Feature or F1). Sealed by modern sandy mixed material, F1 was 2m wide at its base and was filled with yellowish brown sandy silt. No finds were recovered. The ditch was not seen in the opposite, north-facing section as this had been disturbed by a pipe trench, nor was it seen in any other foundation trenches. F1 was cut into natural sand and gravel. The foundation trench was 1.1m deep and the bottom of F1 was seen, implying that it was a shallow ditch. The centre of F1 was 49m east of the west site boundary on Straight Road.

Trenches on southern side of Block B had been previously disturbed by a cellar. Trenches on the western side of Block B had been disturbed by previous building, modern bricks, a possible well, and pipes. Other trenches in Block B were blank in archaeological terms.

6.3 Bicycle shed

One visit was made on the 8th February 2005 after foundation trenches for the bicycle shed on the southern edge of the site had been dug. Trenches were 1.3m deep and 0.45m wide. In these trenches, 0.15m of topsoil overlaid 0.65m of subsoil. Natural clayey sand and gravel 'natural' was encountered at 0.80m below ground-level. No features were observed, and no finds were recovered .

7 Discussion

An undated feature, probably a ditch, was recorded on the north edge of the east side of Block B. The principal interest of any feature on this site is whether or not it is part of the dyke system. In this particular case, the ditch is considerably farther to the east than the recorded line of the Shrub End Dyke (49m east, as opposed to 21.5m east of the western site boundary on Straight Road). Therefore, although it is tempting to assume that it may have been part of the dyke system, this must remain unproven.

8 Archive deposition

The finds, 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 2004.352.

9 Acknowledgements

CAT is grateful to W A Hills Ltd for commissioning the work and for allowing access to the site. The project was monitored by Martin Winter, Colchester Borough Council Archaeology Officer. Fieldwork was carried out by Kate Orr and Laura Pooley.

10 References

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|--------|------|--|
| CAR 6 | 1992 | <i>Colchester Archaeological Report 6: Excavations at Culver Street, the Gilbert School, and other sites in Colchester, 1971-85</i> , by P Crummy |
| CAR 11 | 1995 | <i>Colchester Archaeological Report 11: Camulodunum 2</i> , by CFC Hawkes & P Crummy |
| CM | 2002 | <i>Guidelines on standards and practices for archaeological fieldwork in the Borough of Colchester</i> |
| CM | 2003 | <i>Guidelines on the preparation and transfer of archaeological archives to Colchester Museums</i> |
| EAA 3 | 1997 | <i>Research and archaeology: a framework for the Eastern Counties 1. Resource assessment</i> , East Anglian Archaeology, Occasional Papers, 3 , ed by J Glazebrook |
| EAA 8 | 2000 | <i>Research and archaeology: a framework for the Eastern Counties 2. Research agenda and strategy</i> , East Anglian Archaeology, Occasional Papers, 8 , ed by N Brown & J Glazebrook |
| EAA 14 | 2003 | <i>Standards for field archaeology in the East of England</i> , East Anglian Archaeology, Occasional Papers, 14 , ed by D Gurney |
| IFA | 1999 | <i>Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief</i> |
| IFA | 2001 | <i>Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials</i> |
| MAP 2 | 1991 | <i>Management of archaeological projects</i> , second edition (English Heritage) |

11 Glossary

context	specific location on an archaeological site, especially one where finds are made
feature	an identifiable thing like a pit, a wall, a drain, a floor; can contain 'contexts'
IFA	Institute of Field Archaeologists
Iron Age	period from approximately 8th century BC to the Roman conquest of AD 43
modern	period from the 19th century onwards to the present
NGR	National Grid Reference
natural	geological deposit undisturbed by human activity
Roman	the period from AD 43 to AD 410 approximately.

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Distribution list:

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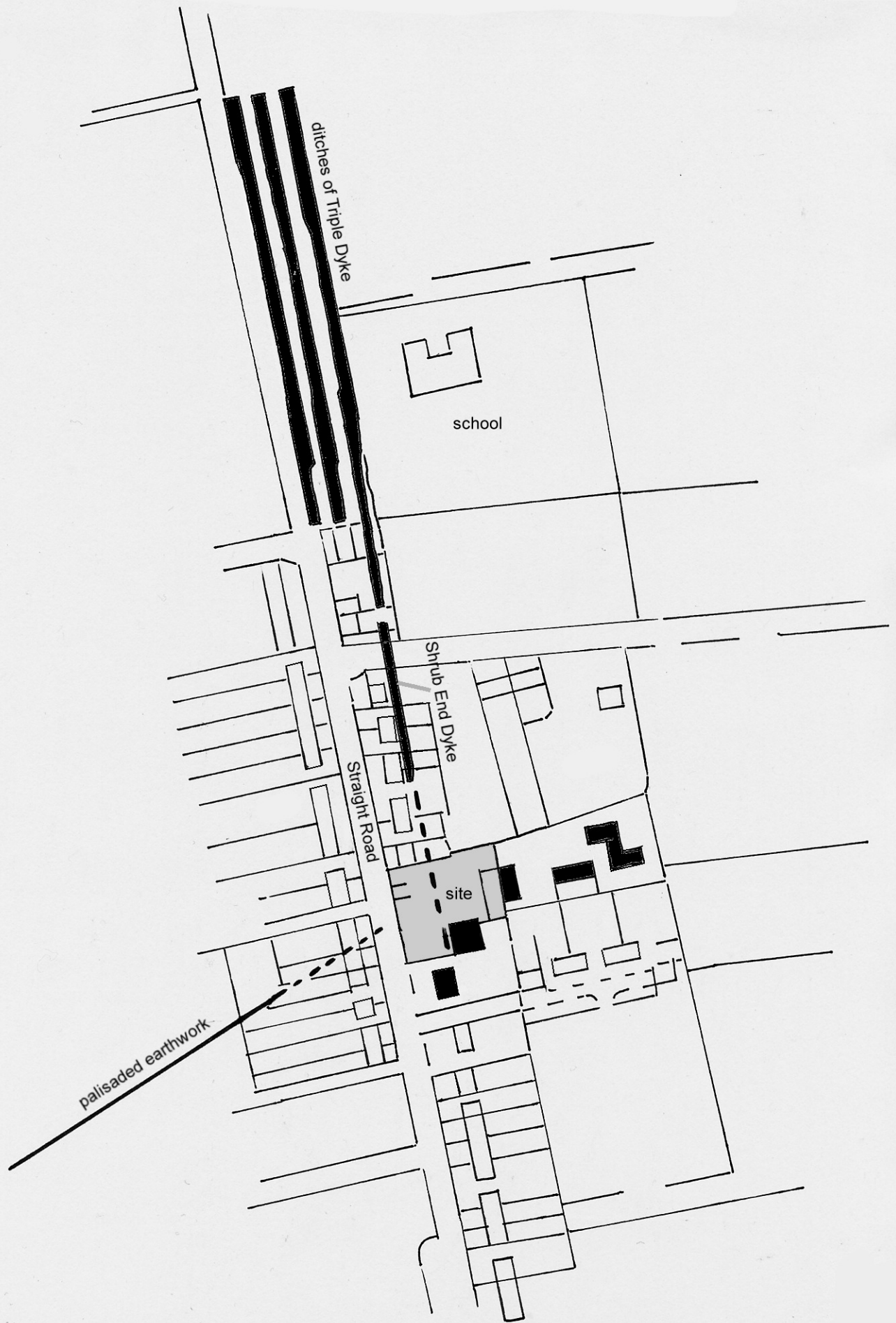


Fig 1 Site location.

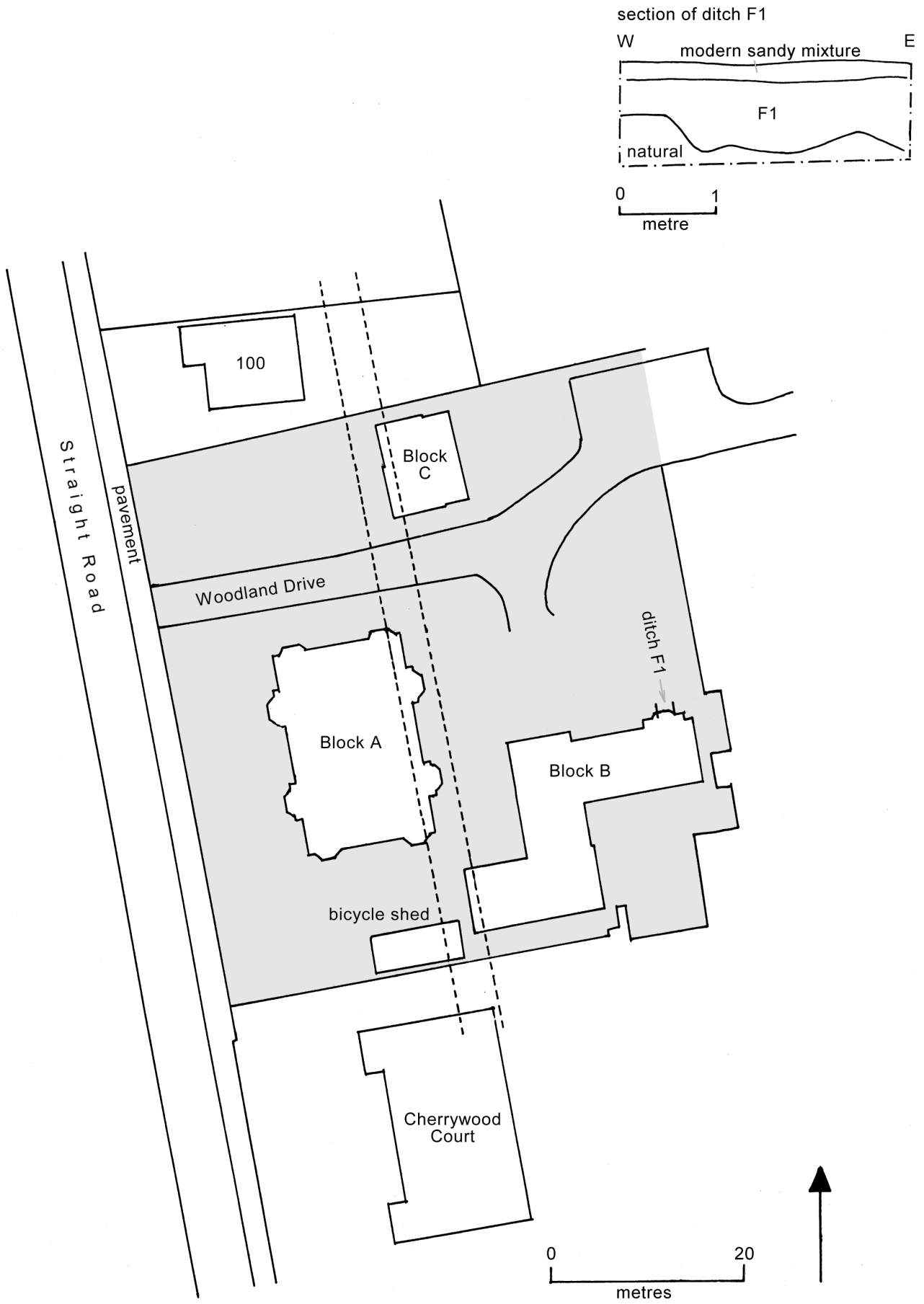


Fig 2 Site plan, with F1 section inset.

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

Summary sheet

Site address: Kingsmead House, 108 Straight Road, Colchester, Essex	
Parish: Colchester	District: Colchester
NGR: TL 9660 2426 (c)	Site code: Museum accession code 2004.352
Type of work: Watching brief	Site director/group: Colchester Archaeological Trust
Date of work: July 2004-February 2005	Size of area investigated: 56m x 54m plot
Location of finds/curating museum: Colchester Museums	Funding source: Developer
Further seasons anticipated? No	Related EHER nos: 11636
Final report: CAT Report 381 and summary in <i>EAH</i>	
Periods represented: (undated)	
Summary of fieldwork results: <i>The site lies on the course of the Shrub End Dyke on the eastern side of Straight Road in Lexden. A watching brief on redevelopment works revealed a single undated feature, probably a ditch, which is approximately 26m east of the line of the Shrub End Dyke.</i>	
Previous summaries/reports: CAR 6, 1046	
Author of summary: K Orr and H Brooks	Date of summary: August 2006