

**An archaeological watching brief  
on a BT cable trench  
from Head Street to Southway,  
Colchester, Essex  
August-October 2006**

**report prepared by  
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on behalf of  
British Telecom**



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## 1 Summary

*During the digging of a BT cable trench from Head Street to Southway, Colchester, Essex, the central pier of the south-west gate into the Roman town was uncovered close to the modern surface. Other Roman and later remains in the trench included foundations, road metalling and pits.*

## 2 Introduction (Fig 1)

- 2.1 An archaeological watching brief was carried out on behalf of British Telecom during the digging of a trench for the laying of cable ducts, from the north end of Head Street to Southway. It was undertaken by the Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) from August to October 2006.
- 2.2 The cable trench extended for approximately 200 m within the walled town and for 150 m outside it. The route of the trench was confined to roads and started at an existing manhole on the west side of Head Street at the junction with the High Street. A short distance to the south, it crossed over onto the east side of Head Street and headed southwards to the crossroads at Head Gate (ie close to the site of the former Head Gate). It continued south-westwards down the east side of the street now known as Headgate (formerly the north end of Butt Road) and ended at an existing manhole on the south side of Southway at the junction with Butt Road.
- 2.3 The trench varied in depth and width (see sections 5.3-5.4). It was expected that most archaeological deposits beneath the roads, especially under Head Street, would have already been destroyed by modern service trenches. However, previously undisturbed archaeological deposits were frequently encountered, particularly as it proved necessary to lay the ducts below many of the existing services.
- 2.4 This report follows the standards set out in Colchester Borough Council's *Guidelines on standards and practices for 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), and *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 position of the north-south Roman street beneath Head Street has usually been assumed to extend in a straight line between Head Gate and North Gate (the site of the North Gate). Hull 1958, 66). It was also expected that the post-Boudican street closely followed the line of a military and early colonial predecessor. Such an alignment would extend under the east side of Head Street. There was, however, no convincing archaeological evidence to support these assumptions.
- The main east-west streets, each of which formed a crossroads with the north-south street, have been more accurately plotted. The street between Insulas 26 and 34 to the south of Culver Street West was excavated in 1981-2 (CAR 6, 43, 65-7 & 75-6). The street between Insulas 25b and 33b to the south of Church Street was excavated in 2000 (CAT Report 268, 3-4).
- 3.2 Part of the east side of the Roman south-west gate was uncovered during resurfacing work at the junction of Head Street and Sir Isaac's Walk in 1988 (CAR 6, 396-8; Hull 1958, 59-60). It lay 0.3-0.5 m below the modern ground-level. The gate was probably built at the same time as the town wall in c AD 65-80 (Crummy 2003), although the plan of the gate remained unclear. Prior to the Boudican revolt of AD 60/1, there does not seem to have been a gate in this position.

The gate was reused in post-Roman times and was demolished c 1753.

- 3.3** The position of the Roman street to the south of Head Gate is unclear. On the basis of the alignment of a Roman building found near the west end of St John's Street (Benfield & Garrod 1992, 33-7), the street is thought to extend in a south-westerly direction, slightly to the east of Headgate.
- 3.4** The extent of Roman burials between Head Gate and Southway is uncertain. Possible Roman inhumations have been observed near Head Gate (Hull 1958, 256) and a cremation burial was excavated further east in St John's Street in 1986 (CAR 9, 257-75). The extensive Butt Road cemetery site (CAR 9, 4-162) probably did not extend this far north.

## **4 Aims**

The aim of the watching brief was to record the depth and extent of any archaeological remains uncovered during the digging of the cable trench, and to assess the date and significance of these remains.

## **5 Methods (Fig 1)**

- 5.1** The contractors started work at the north end of Head Street on 21st August 2006. Initially this involved relocating an existing manhole on the west side of the street. This was an area that had been heavily disturbed by modern services. Following the excavation of trial holes (TH), the cable trench was cut across to the east side of Head Street, approximately 8 m south of the manhole, in an attempt to minimise the difficulties caused by existing services.
- From this point on, archaeological deposits were frequently encountered during the digging of the cable trench as well as of several more trial holes.
- 5.2** The ducts were usually laid in lengths of 6 m, although occasionally two or more lengths were laid at one time. The method of working involved cutting the edges of the trench with a disc cutter and breaking out the existing surface by JCB. The JCB would clear away the modern debris and then go back and dig out the trench. The ducts would be laid immediately and the trench at least partly backfilled.
- Some observation was possible during the digging of the trench, but there was little opportunity for detailed recording of the archaeological stratigraphy. Also, on health and safety grounds, most of the recording had to be done from street-level looking down into the trench.
- 5.3** The trench was deepest at the north end where it was 2.5-3 m below the modern ground-level; the latter was 32.6 m AOD. Over most of Head Street, however, it sloped up gradually, from 2-1.7 m deep north of Culver Street West, to 1.6-1.3m deep halfway down the road, and to 1.1 m deep by Sir Isaac's Walk and Head Gate, where the modern ground-level was 29.5 m AOD. In Head Street, the trench was 0.65-0.7 m wide.
- A rectangular box for a manhole was dug on the line of the trench 25 m north of Sir Isaac's Walk. It was 2.73 m long, 1.12 m wide and 1.8 m deep.
- Natural sand and cover loam (L12) varied in depth from nearly 2 m below the modern ground-level near the north end of the trench to 0.66 m immediately north of Head Gate.
- 5.4** From Headgate to Southway, the trench was 0.75-0.8 m wide, and it was dug at night. At the north end of Headgate it was 0.75 m deep, by Essex Road 0.8 m deep, and under Southway it was 1.1 m deep.
- 5.5** A final 20 m stretch of trench was completed at the Head Gate crossroads at the end of October, linking up the two previously completed sections of trench. Immediately prior to this, on 28th October, it was possible to carry out a small excavation on the central pier of the Roman south-west gate (see section 6.2). The edge of this had earlier been briefly uncovered in the cable trench near the entrance to Sir Isaac's Walk.

The excavated area measured approximately 3.5 m north-south by 1.65 m east-west, and was up to 1 m below the modern ground-level. The existing surface and

underlying make-up were first removed by JCB, and then the remains of the gate were cleaned up by hand.

The 0.7 m-wide cable trench was subsequently cut across the eastern half of the pier to a depth of 1 m below the modern ground-level.

- 5.6** Individual records of archaeological contexts, such as layers or features, as well as finds, were entered on CAT pro-forma record sheets. Section drawings were usually made at a scale of 1:10; a small sample of these are reproduced in Figure 6, and the remainder are available in the archive. Standard record shots of the trench and of individual contexts were taken on a digital camera. Further details of the methodology used can be found in the CAT document *Policies and procedures* (CAT 2006).

## **6 Results**

### **6.1 Pre-Boudican and Boudican remains** (Figs 4 & 6)

- 6.1.1** The top of a large pit (F2; Fig 4 & Sx 2 on Fig 6) was uncovered at a depth of 1.5 m below the modern ground-level, immediately north of the entrance to Culver Street West. It was 1.5 m wide and was backfilled with a thick deposit of Boudican destruction debris (L9; see section 6.1.5). This consisted mainly of large fragments of burnt daub, which were either *in situ* or derived from a building nearby. The pit cut some make-up layers (L10) as well as natural sand (L12). Although the pit remained largely unexcavated, it was probably a military and/or early colonial cess-pit which was open at the time of the Boudican revolt in AD 60/1. It was possibly situated close to a pre-Boudican street, although there was no definite evidence for this.

- 6.1.2** Another large pit (F4; Fig 4) was observed in the bottom of the trench some 40 m south of F2. It was also 1.5 m wide. The olive brown, upper fill of the pit was visible in section between 0.85 and 1.3 m below the modern ground-level.

This pit was less certainly pre-Boudican as it was not directly sealed by Boudican destruction debris (L9), although there was a deposit of L9 immediately to the south, level with the top of F4. This was probably a cess-pit which had gone out of use by the time of the Boudican revolt, or was possibly a post-Boudican pit.

- 6.1.3** There was a compact layer of gravel (L13; Fig 4), 1.22-1.45 m below the modern ground-level, approximately 12 m south of F2. The gravel extended for 3.1 m north-south. Although there was much modern disturbance in this area, L13 appeared to be sealed by Boudican destruction debris (L9).

The gravel possibly belonged to a minor east-west street of military or early colonial date, some 25 m north of the east-west street excavated in 1981-2 (see section 3.1).

There was, however, no definite evidence for a pre-Boudican north-south street on the line of the cable trench. It also seems unlikely that there was a pre-Boudican gate in the same location as the post-Boudican one (see section 3.2).

- 6.1.4** There was evidence for extensive pre-Boudican make-up layers (L10; Sx 2 on Fig 6), especially in the northern half of the trench. These consisted of pale brown clayey and sandy deposits 0.2-0.4 m thick, occasionally sealed by lenses of thin, dark occupation material. These layers were often sealed by Boudican destruction debris (L9) and sealed natural deposits (L12) such as cover loam and sand.

A small quantity of probable pre-Boudican finds, which were recovered from the spoil while the JCB was digging these layers, included pottery, animal bone and some copper-alloy fragments.

- 6.1.5** Although little *in situ* Boudican burning was seen, Boudican destruction debris (L9; Sx 2 on Fig 6) was fairly frequently observed, especially over the northern half of the trench. This consisted of a reddish-brown deposit with abundant fragments of burnt daub and charcoal. This largely derived from the redeposited remains of the clay superstructure of buildings burned down in AD 60/1. The destruction debris was usually 0.1-0.2 m thick, although it was occasionally thicker; for example, in the backfill of F2 (see section 6.1.1).

Finds attributed to L9 included a copper-alloy plate brooch (F7), a piece of keyed daub, and fragments of pottery and brick/tile.

## 6.2 Roman south-west gate (Figs 2-4, 6; Plates 1-2)

6.2.1 A large fragment of *in situ* Roman masonry (F6) was uncovered at the south end of Head Street (see section 5.5). The surviving, irregularly-shaped surface of F6 was 0.3-0.45 m below the modern ground-level. The masonry was probably originally rectangular in plan, although the north-east corner had been damaged by later features and the western edge lay beyond the limits of the excavation.

The well-preserved, south face of F6 was exposed 0.5 m high (0.45-0.95 m below the modern ground-level; 28.63-29.13 m AOD). Part of the east face survived close to the east section, while the surviving part of the north face was largely obscured by modern surfaces and was not examined in detail. A sondage into the west section indicated that the south-west corner of F6 probably lay 0.4 m beyond the limit of excavation. The evidence, therefore, suggests that the surviving upper courses of F6 measured 3.4 m north-south by 2.2 m east-west.

6.2.2 The core of F6 was constructed largely of stone (septaria) set in a pale yellowish-brown mortar, with a few flint nodules and fragments of brick/tile. The surviving evidence from the south and east sides indicated that the faces were built of courses of brick and dressed stone set in *opus signinum*. The latter was presumably used for its strength and waterproofing qualities. The evidence from the north face was unclear. It was probably faced with dressed septaria blocks although there was no evidence of tile courses.

Up to two upper stone courses, 0.25 m high, survived in the south face. These sealed a brick course offset 20-30 mm to the south. The south face below the brick course was obscured by a mortar coating, although after the BT cable trench had been cut through it was clear that there was at least one stone course below the brick offset. These offset courses were 0.23 m high and appeared to seal another offset, which extended a further 50 mm to the south. This was not examined in detail but consisted of mortar and perhaps indicated the top of the unfaced foundation. Thus the tile offset probably formed the base of the wall and the surviving upper stone courses part of the superstructure. This is broadly similar to constructional details observed in the town wall (CAR 6, 64; Crummy 2003, 44) and on the east side of the south-west gate (CAR 6, 396-7).

The south-west and south-east corners of F6 were probably built solely of courses of large brick. Three brick courses were visible above the offset brick course in the sondage in the south-west corner, and one brick course survived above the brick offset in the south-east corner.



Plate 2 The central pier (F6) of the Roman south-west gate, viewed from the south.

**6.2.3** The masonry was probably part of the central pier of the Roman south-west gate, built at the same time as the town wall in c AD 65-80. The remains of the pier can be reconciled well with the evidence from the east side of the gate excavated in 1988 (Fig 3; see section 3.2). The distance between the east face of the pier uncovered in 2006 and the west face of the east side of the gate seen in 1988 was approximately 3.4 m. The pier would have provided support for twin archways over the carriageways and probably also an overhead gallery.

In terms of Roman feet, the width of the pier was perhaps intended as 7.5 *pedes Monetales* rather than 5 pM (*ibid*, 398). Assuming that the total width of the carriageways was 30 pM, this would make the intended width of the archways slightly narrower than previously thought; ie 11.25 pM (3.32 m) each rather than 12.5 pM. The actual width of the eastern carriageway, based on the excavated remains, was 3.4 m (11.5 pM).

**6.2.4** The gate survived into the post-Roman period, and the gate was clearly still in use during the Siege of Colchester in 1648. At the beginning of the Siege on 13th June, the Parliamentary forces were narrowly repulsed from the Head Gate after fierce fighting.

It is unclear whether both carriageways remained in use and to what extent any rebuilding had taken place. Only a single arch is shown on Morant's map (Morant 1748), although this could be a conventional symbol rather than a realistic representation. The gate was demolished shortly afterwards in 1753.

### **6.3 Post-Boudican street metalling, foundations, and other Roman deposits** (Figs 4 & 6)

**6.3.1** The most convincing evidence for the north-south street (see section 3.1) came from the south end of Head Street close to the Roman south-west gate (F6). Although this area had been badly disturbed by later activities, a short stretch of street metalling (L17; Sx 4 on Fig 6) survived 5 m north of F6. The gravel metalling was 0.2 m thick, very hard, and lay 0.45 m below the modern ground-level.

No dating evidence was recovered from L17 and there was no direct stratigraphical relationship between L17 and F6, although, in terms of their relative levels, they looked contemporary. The metalling sealed natural sand (L12) and so could possibly have been pre-Boudican in date. Perhaps the area was terraced when the gate was built and the street laid out c AD 65-80. If L17 was Roman, then the absence of post-Roman metalling is also puzzling. Perhaps this had been stripped off in recent times.

Further north, the line of the cable trench appeared to lie slightly to the east of the north-south street. Some metalling (L22) was observed to the south of F6, although this was probably post-Roman in date (see section 6.4.2).

**6.3.2** Another stretch of gravel metalling (L21) was traced in the cable trench for approximately 10 m north-south, 25-35 m south of Culver Street West. The metalling was about 0.25 m thick and lay roughly 0.55-0.8 m below the modern ground-level, in an area much disturbed by later activities. In places, L21 appeared to consist of two bands of gravel separated by a thin clayey layer. It sealed a pit (F4; see section 6.1.2) and Boudican destruction debris (L9; see section 6.1.5).

The metalling L21 probably formed part of the Roman east-west street close to the east side of the Roman crossroads or was part of the crossroads itself (see section 3.1).

**6.3.3** Other possible evidence for Roman metalling included a thin layer of gravel (L8; Sx 2 on Fig 6) observed in the sides of the trench in several places for 38 m north of Culver Street West. This layer was 0.1-0.2 m thick, and sealed Boudican destruction debris (L9) at a depth of 1.2-1.3 m below the modern ground-level. The gravel may have been too insubstantial to have been metalling, and perhaps formed an early post-Boudican footway surface to the east of the north-south street.

At least one other gravel layer (L6) was seen in the west section at the north end of Head Street, north of Trial hole 1 (TH1; Fig 1). It was 0.25 m thick and 0.55 m or more below the modern ground-level. Its significance is unclear, although it could be associated with the Roman east-west street or footway below the High Street rather than the north-south street or footway.

**6.3.4** A north-south foundation (F1; Fig 4 & Sx 2 on Fig 6) was traced for at least 58 m in the northern part of the trench. It was constructed of septaria and greensand blocks, with occasional flint nodules and Roman brick/tile fragments, set in a pale yellowish-brown mortar. It survived to a height of approximately 0.35-0.45 m, was 0.8 m wide, and the top lay 0.5-0.7 m below the modern ground-level. The foundation sealed a layer of gravel (L11; Sx 2 on Fig 6), 0.12-0.25 m thick, which probably formed a base for F1.

In a few places, notably towards the southern end of F1, some dressed stone blocks came from the top of F1, suggesting that here the base of the wall superstructure survived on the foundation. A layer of mortar rubble and Roman building materials (L4), 0.2-0.25 m thick, at the northern end of F1, probably derived from it. The line of the cable trench coincided fairly closely with the alignment of F1, although the latter extended from being more in the west section to being more in the east section as the trench progressed southwards.

The foundation F1 is problematic as it extends down the middle of the projected position of the north-south street. The base of the foundation did not penetrate down to natural sand and F1 was, perhaps, not intended as an important load-bearing foundation. One possibility is that it delineated the eastern edge of the street from the footway, and supported colonnades or a verandah (CAR 3, 28). The street, therefore, could lie approximately 5 m to the west of its previously expected position. Alternatively, it could represent a central barrier down the middle of the street, although such an arrangement has not been observed in Roman Colchester before. The evidence from the trench further south perhaps reinforces the former hypothesis (see section 6.3.5). An explanation for this may be that the post-Boudican street followed the line of an earlier military street, which lay slightly to the west of the anticipated alignment due to the size of the *principia*, as was the case at Caerleon, for example (CAR 3, 6).

**6.3.5** Further south, another north-south foundation (F3; Fig 4 & Sx 3 on Fig 6) was traced in the cable trench. It extended from about 10 m north of the Roman gate for at least 40 m northwards. The foundation was of similar stone-and-mortar construction to F1, was 0.7 m wide and survived to a height of 0.25 m. It also had a gravel base (L14; Sx 3 on Fig 6), 0.15-0.3 m thick, with occasional brick/tile fragments. The top of F3 lay 0.3- 0.4 m below the modern ground-level.

Large dressed septaria blocks were frequently seen in the top of F3, as well as some brick/tile fragments, again indicating that the base of the wall survived and that this may have included brick courses. The edge of the foundation trench for F3 was clearly seen in several places in the contractor's working sections. Also unlike F1, F3 was usually cut into natural sand (L12), which was nearer the modern ground surface here than further north.

The plan of F3 in relation to the Roman south-west gate (Fig 4) suggests that the former separated the north-south street from a footway to the east. The position of the southern end of F3 was unclear, as it was cut by modern services and had started to extend beyond the east side of the cable trench. It probably extended as far as the north edge of an east-west street immediately north of the defences.

As in the case of F1, the line of the cable trench coincided fairly closely with the alignment of F3, with F3 gradually extending out from the west section, across the trench and into the east section, as it progressed southwards. It was possible to plot the position of the edges of F3 fairly accurately, and this indicated that it also was not on the expected north-south alignment. From the starting point of the Roman gate, F3 was 5° west of the anticipated north-south alignment. This could perhaps be explained by the need to link up with the more westerly position of the north-south street described in section 6.3.4. It may also be another example of the post-Boudican realignment of the street system (CAR 3, 8-9)

**6.3.6** Another stone-and-mortar deposit (F10; Fig 4), 0.1-0.15 m thick, was observed in the trench approximately 36-40 m south of Culver Street West. It lay 0.4-0.5 m below the modern ground-level and sealed a gravel layer, 0.15-0.25 m thick, which could have been a gravel base for F10.

This was possibly the remains of a north-south foundation in the north-west corner of Insula 34, although it appeared to seal street metalling (see section 6.3.2). Alternatively it could have consisted mainly of redeposited rubble, perhaps from an east-west return of F3.



**6.3.7** Several thick make-up layers of probable post-Boudican date were seen in the cable trench. These included a series of layers (L7; Sx 2 on Fig 6), 0.2-0.35 m thick, at the north end of the trench, which consisted mainly of olive-brown clayey deposits with some yellowish-brown sandy lenses. These sealed L8 (see section 6.3.3) and Boudican destruction debris (L9; see section 6.1.5), and were cut by foundation F1 (see section 6.3.4). These could have been make-up for a footway to the east of the north-south street.

Further south, there was an extensive series of layers (L16), 0.4-0.6 m thick. These were often visible in the east section of the trench when F3 (see section 6.3.5) was present in the west section. They were olive-brown in colour, occasionally fairly gravelly, and the lower part was usually lighter and sandier than the upper part. They sealed natural sand (L12) and so could have been, at least in part, pre-Boudican. These layers were probably make-up for a footway to the east of the north-south street which extended northwards from the Roman south-west gate.

Several thin layers, 0.3 m thick, sealed natural sand 1.05-1.75 m south of F6 and were probably Roman make-up. They were cut by a modern service trench to the south and by a trench (F11) to the north. The latter extended along the south face of F6. It was largely unexcavated and undated, but was possibly post-Roman.

#### **6.4 Post-Roman remains (Figs 4-6)**

**6.4.1** The evidence for post-Roman topsoil or 'dark earth' (L20) came mainly from the southern part of the trench, outside the walled town. Dark greyish-brown deposits of topsoil were observed some 5-25 m south-west of the town gate, approximately 0.5 m below the modern ground-level. Some of this was perhaps the upper backfill of the town's defensive ditch.

The top of the 'dark earth' was probably also reached at a depth of 0.75 m below the modern ground-level, 100-120 m south-west of the south-west gate.

Some of the make-up layers under Head Street could have included some reworked 'dark earth' (see section 6.4.4).

**6.4.2** A layer of gravel metalling (L22), 0.2 m thick, extended south of the town gate for at least 15 m. This lay 0.3-0.5 m below the modern ground-level, and sealed deposits that were probably post-Roman in date. Although L22 was undated, it was perhaps post-medieval in date.

Immediately south of the gate, L22 sealed a rubble-filled, east-west trench (F11). The southern edge of F11 was just over 1 m south of F6. The trench was undated, but could have been post-Roman in date.

**6.4.3** In the northern part of Headgate, the cable trench cut the remains of 19th-century or earlier buildings (Fig 5). A brick wall/foundation (F8), aligned roughly north-south, was uncovered 0.5 m below the modern ground-level. It was constructed of unfrogged red brick and extended beyond the bottom of the trench at a depth of 0.75 m below the modern ground-level. Some 20 m further south, another brick wall/foundation (F9) extended from north-east to south-west across the trench. A length of several metres of intact brickwork was exposed in the east section of the trench close to the modern surface. The bricks were also red and unfrogged, and F9 continued beyond the bottom of the trench at a depth of 0.9 m below the modern ground-level.

A thick layer of brick rubble (L18) extended between and sealed F8 and F9. This was presumably demolition debris from the buildings of which these had formed a part. Whether they were the remains of standing walls, foundations or cellar walls was unclear.

The foundations F8 and F9 were probably the remains of the east wall of a building occupying the corner plot between what was then the north end of Butt Road and Crouch Street. Early OS maps indicate that this building was demolished and the street widened some time between 1923 and 1958.

**6.4.4** A series of make-up layers of probable post-medieval or modern date were encountered under Head Street (L3, L5, L15) and Headgate (L19). These were usually dark greyish-brown in colour and charcoal-enriched.

The cable trench cut through the upper part of a large pit or ditch (F5; Fig 4), 55 m north of Sir Isaac's Walk. This feature extended roughly north-west to south-east and was 3.2 m wide in the bottom of the trench. The top of F5 was 0.8 m below the modern ground-level and appeared to be 4.5 m wide at this level. It contained a

small quantity of iron-rich concretions. Other finds from the machine spoil associated with F5 included slate, peg-tile, coal and clay-pipe fragments. The feature was probably, therefore, post-medieval or modern in date, perhaps containing waste from an industrial process.

Some leather offcuts of probable modern date (see section 7.3) were recovered from the trench approximately 20 m south of Culver Street West. These could not be attributed to a particular layer or feature.

A brick culvert (F7), which extended from north-west to south-east, cut the north-east corner of the central pier (F6) of the Roman gate. It was built of unfrosted red brick and was probably early Victorian in date.

The existing tarmac road surfaces (L1) usually sealed a layer of concrete (L2) up to 0.3 m thick. The latter appeared to be associated with one or two short lengths of tram-line, which had been left in place when the tram system went out of use c 1928.

## 7 Finds

7.1 A quantity of finds was recovered in the course of the watching brief. Where appropriate these were washed, marked and bagged according to context. The finds are listed in Appendix 1, and the small finds described in section 7.3.

7.2 Most of the finds were recovered at street-level from spoil upcast by the JCB. A few were found in the trench, mainly by the contractor's workmen. Many of the finds are thus considered unstratified, although some could be tentatively attributed to a layer, a group of layers or a feature. A sample was retained of Roman and post-Roman brick and tile, which were fairly plentiful on the site.

### 7.3 The small finds and bulk metalwork

*by Nina Crummy*

The assemblage ranges in date from early Roman to modern, although several items cannot be closely dated. The Roman items consist of a 1st-century plate brooch and a hone. A quern fragment is probably medieval, while two dress pins and a nail are late medieval or post-medieval. A group of leather offcuts, almost certainly from a cobbler's workshop, are probably modern. They were not recovered from a waterlogged context, making it unlikely that they are of any great antiquity, and one retains a piece of cartilage, which also points to a recent date.

Fig 7. SF 2, (9) L9. Roman copper-alloy plate brooch with circular centre and four lugs on the circumference, one set over the hinge, another over the catchplate, and two at the sides. One side lug has broken off. There is a convex setting of amber-coloured glass in the centre. Length 23 mm. The type occurs at Colchester, Chelmsford and Richborough (Niblett 1985, no 42; Henderson 1949, no 7; Bayley & Butcher 2004, 122, 154, fig 94, 341) and probably dates to the 1st century.

SF 1. (24). Unstratified. Two small copper-alloy dress or sewing pins with globular heads formed of wound wire, Colchester Type 2 (CAR 5, 7-8). Lengths 40 and 19 mm (both bent). The type occurs in the medieval and post-medieval periods.

SF 3. (22). Unstratified. 1) Small copper-alloy stud with convex head; most of the shaft is missing. Diameter 9 mm, length 5 mm. 2) Two copper-alloy pellets, probably burnt debris. Total weight < 1 g.

SF 6. (34). Unstratified. Amorphous copper-alloy lump. Possibly burnt debris or copper-alloy working debris. 17 by 12 by 10 mm.

SF 4. (23). Unstratified. Roman hone fragment, made from a calcareous sandstone with mica flakes. One end is broken, the other is original. The sides and edges are smooth, apart from a characteristic groove close to the edge of one side, formed when the hone was cut from the parent block of stone. Length 89 mm, section 28.5 by 22 mm.

SF 7. (35). Unstratified. Edge fragment from the upper-stone stone of a rotary quern made of Mayen lava from the Eifel Hills in Germany. The grinding surface retains a few traces of grooving; there is a rectangular slot for a handle adjacent to the hopper hole. There is no raised rim on the edge of the

upper surface. Diameter approximately 320 mm; thickness at rim 70 mm. The trade in querns made from this stone ran from the 1st century into the 2nd or 3rd century, and was then re-established in the late 7th century after which it persisted into the early post-medieval period. The handle hole and lack of a raised rim suggest that this example is medieval.

SF 5. (17). Unstratified. Thirty-nine leather offcuts, almost certainly from a cobbler's workshop. Modern, or perhaps late post-medieval, in date. 1-14) Triangular fragments, in some cases lacking one corner on the longest side. Longest dimensions 103, 100, 95, 87, 86, 70, 68, 67, 66, 62, 60, 58, 55 and 44 mm. 15-19) Approximately square or rectangular fragments. Dimensions 48 by 42 mm, 54 by 28 mm, 41 by 25 mm, 41 by 10 mm and 34 by 18 mm. 20-34) Strips; longest dimensions 103, 92, 85, 83, 82, 81, 72 (folded), 68, 66, 48, 46, 45, 43, 34 and 18 mm. 35-39) Amorphous fragments, one with bone and cartilage still attached. Maximum dimensions 94 by 57 mm, 86 by 64 mm, 81 by 47 mm, 43 by 51 mm and 93 by 33 mm.

(4) Unstratified. Iron nail with flat round head and clenched shank. Length (bent) 56 mm. Medieval or post-medieval.

(18). Unstratified. Corroded iron object with pebbles incorporated into the corrosion. Possibly a nail. Length 77 mm.

(19). Unstratified. Iron nail or bolt with convex square head. The shank is rectangular in section and tapers on the narrower axis; the tip is missing. Length 63 mm.

## **8 Conclusions**

- 8.1** The BT trench provided a slice through the south-west quarter of the Roman town. It demonstrated that archaeological remains could survive, even below a street like Head Street which has been subject to so much modern ground disturbance.
- 8.2** The base of the central pier of the Roman south-west gate lay close to modern ground-level, presumably because it had been reused up until the 18th century. The gate was shown to have had two archways, and its plan can now be reconstructed with confidence.
- 8.3** Assuming that they are Roman in date and that they delineated the edges of Roman streets, the foundations F1 and F3 provide evidence that the north-south Roman street may not have extended in a straight line between Head Gate and North Gate. The foundations are on a broadly similar alignment to the post-Roman Head Street frontages. They thus raise questions about the development of the street layout north of Head Gate, which must await a fuller archaeological investigation in the future.

## **9 Archive deposition**

The archive from the watching brief, including the site records, photographs and finds, will be permanently deposited with Colchester Museums under accession code COLEM 2006.103.

## **10 Acknowledgements**

CAT is grateful to British Telecom for commissioning and funding the watching brief, and particularly to the contractors, Lowery Ltd, for their patience and practical assistance on site, especially in relation to the Roman gate which could not have been successfully investigated and recorded without their substantial help and cooperation. The project was monitored by Martin Winter, Colchester Borough Council Archaeology Officer.

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## 12 Glossary

AOD	above Ordnance Survey datum point based on mean sea level at Newlyn, Cornwall
Boudican	dating to the time of the native uprising led by Boudica in AD 60/1
CBCAO	Colchester Borough Council Archaeology Officer
context	specific location on an archaeological site, especially one where finds are made; usually a layer or a feature
cover loam	a natural, wind-blown deposit, probably formed at the end of the last Ice Age
feature	an identifiable context, such as a pit, a wall or a post-hole
greensand	a form of sandstone, also known as Kentish Ragstone, imported from south of the Thames
IFA	Institute of Field Archaeologists
<i>imbrex</i>	curved Roman roof tile
medieval	period from AD 1066 to c AD 1500
modern	period from c 1850 onwards to the present
NGR	National Grid Reference
natural	geological deposit undisturbed by human activity
<i>opus signinum</i>	Roman 'concrete' with a pinkish appearance due to the addition of brick/tile fragments
post-medieval	period from c 1500 to c 1850
Roman	the period from AD 43 to c AD 410
septaria	calcareous, clay concretions found on the Essex and Suffolk coast
<i>tesserae</i>	small ceramic cubes used to make Roman tessellated and mosaic floors
<i>tegula</i>	flanged Roman roof tile
UAD	Urban Archaeological Database, maintained by Colchester Museums
U/S	unstratified, ie without a well-defined context

### 13 Appendix: finds list

The Roman pottery was recorded by S Benfield using the fabric type series devised for CAR 10 and summarised in Table 1. The vessel forms were recorded using the Camulodunum (Cam) Roman pottery form type series (Hawkes & Hull 1947; Hull 1958). Samian vessels were catalogued where possible using Dragendorff (Dr) form numbers, or other common form type references following those used in Webster 1996. Post-Roman pottery fabric codes are after CAR 7 (identification and comments by H Brooks).

**Table 1: Roman pottery fabric codes and fabric names (after CAR 10).**

Fabric code	Fabric name
AA	amphora, all excluding Dressel 20 and Brockley Hill/Verulamium region amphora
AJ	amphora, Dressel 20
BA	plain samian forms
SG	South Gaulish plain samian
EG	East Gaulish plain samian
BX	decorated samian forms
SG	South Gaulish decorated samian
CS	Pompeian-red wares
DJ	coarse oxidised and related wares
DZ	fine oxidised wares
EC	early Colchester colour-coat ware
GX	other coarse wares, principally locally-produced grey wares
HZ	large storage jars and other vessels in heavily-tempered grey wares
MQ	white slipped fine wares and parchment wares
TZ	mortaria, Colchester and mortaria imported from the continent

**Table 2: list of finds by context.**

Con-text	Finds no	Quantity	Finds description	Weight (g)	Date	
F1	5	1	<i>tegula</i> fragment	841.7	Roman	
		2	<i>imbrex</i> fragments	247.5		
		1	Roman brick fragment (60 mm thick; with mortar adhering)	1,862.1		
F5	28	2	iron-rich concretions	278.3	-	
L4	1	2	<i>tegulae</i> fragments (1 with mortar adhering)	2,019.5	Roman	
		2	Roman brick/tile fragments	630.0		
	2	6	Roman brick/tile fragments (4 with mortar adhering)	5,365.1		
L9	3	5	Fabric AA (2 sherds) possibly Dressel 20 (Fabric AJ) 1st-2nd/early 3rd century. Fabric BA (SG) (2 sherds) Dr 15/17, dated 1st century probably pre-Flavian. Fabric GX (1 sherd) probably form Cam 266 dated 1st-early 2nd century.	245.0	1st century, pre-Flavian?	
		1	<i>tegula</i> fragment	225.0		Roman
		1	fragment of keyed daub (burnt)	289.3		Boudican
	6	46	Fabric GX (46 sherds) body and neck sherds, all part of one pot, Cam 232, dated 1st to mid-late 2nd century.	427.0	1st to mid-late 2nd century	
			Roman brick fragment (58 mm thick)	683.7		Roman
	9	1	copper-alloy plate brooch		1st century	
L10	7	13	Fabric AA (5 sherds) from 2 amphoras, probably 1st-early 2nd/2nd century. Fabric AJ (5 sherds), 1st-early 3rd century. Fabric DJ (1 sherd), 1st-2nd/3rd century.	2,057.0	Roman, possibly 1st century	

			Fabric HZ ( 2 sherds), 1st-3rd century		
		1	animal bone fragment	10.4	-
	13	3	Fabric AA (1 sherd), probably 1st-early 2nd/2nd century. Fabric GX (2 sherds).	79.0	Roman
		2	animal bone fragments	30.8	-
L15	29	2	fired clay fragments	39.4	post-Roman
		1	peg-tile fragment	13.3	
U/S	4	1	iron nail		medieval/ post- medieval
U/S	8	1	Fabric AJ (1 sherd), 1st-early 3rd century	273.0	1st-2nd/early 3rd century
		3	<i>tegulae</i> fragments (2 with mortar adhering)	2,122.5	Roman
		1	<i>imbrex</i> fragment	363.2	
U/S	10	1	straight Roman glass handle with central rib, blue, approx 100 mm long x 38 mm wide x 80 mm thick, from jug or bottle	66.0	Roman
U/S	11	3	<i>tegulae</i> fragments (2 with traces of mortar adhering)	2,773.1	Roman
		1	Roman brick fragment (55 mm thick, 195 mm wide; with two finger impressions in one corner)	2,391.2	
		1	<i>imbrex</i> fragment	410.8	
U/S	12	6	Fabric CS (1 sherd) 1st century, probably pre-Flavian. Fabric DJ (1 sherd). Fabric GX (4 sherds).	32.0	Roman, pre-Flavian?
U/S	14	4	Fabric DJ (1 sherd). Fabric GX (2 sherds). Fabric HZ (1 sherd)	424.0	Roman, 1st-2nd century?
		1	Roman brick fragment (50 mm thick)	242.0	Roman
U/S	15	4	Fabric AA (1 sherd) probably 1st-early 2nd/2nd century. Fabric BA(SG) (1 sherd), Ritterling 12, burnt, dated pre-Flavian, probably Boudican. Fabric DJ or EC (1 sherd), 1st century? Fabric EC (1 sherd), pre-Flavian.	57.0	pre-Flavian, probably Boudican
		2	post-medieval red earthenware (Fabric 40) with deep brown glaze	2.9	17th-18th century
		2	clay-pipe bowls (1 burnt)	29.2	mid 17th century
U/S	16	19	Fabric AA (5 sherds), includes Dressel 7-11 <i>salazon</i> amphora, 1st-early 2nd/2nd century. Fabric BA(SG) (1 sherd), Dr 15/17, dated 1st century, probably pre-Flavian. Fabric BA(EG) (1 sherd), Dr 33, dated 2nd-early 3rd century. Fabric DJ (5 sherds). Fabric EC (1 sherd), pre-Flavian. Fabric GX (5 sherds). Fabric TZ (1 sherd), Cam 192A, dated Neronian?	584.0	1st-2nd century, but possibly pre-Flavian with intrusive 2nd- to early 3rd-century sherd
		2	animal bone fragments	35.2	-
		1	<i>tessera</i>	27.8	Roman
		2	<i>tegulae</i> fragments (1 with mortar adhering)	1,187.7	
		1	?worked flint fragment	1.7	-
U/S	17	39	leather offcuts		modern
U/S	18	1	iron ?nail		-

U/S	19	1	iron ?nail		-
U/S	20	5	Fabric GX (1 sherd). Fabric TZ (4 sherds) all from same pot, Cam 497 variant , dating mid-late 2nd to 3rd century?	1,040.0	mid-late 2nd century+
U/S	21	10	Fabric DJ (7 sherds), includes flagon with small rim, possibly Cam 155 variant, dated Claudio-Neronian to early Antonine. Fabric GX (2 sherds), one from a necked bowl or jar of probable 1st- to early 2nd-century type. Fabric HZ (1 sherd), 1st-2nd century.	270.0	1st-early 2nd century?
		1	animal bone fragment	39.5	-
U/S	22	3	copper-alloy stud fragment and pellets		?pre-Boudican
U/S	23	1	stone hone		Roman
U/S	24	2	copper-alloy dress pins		medieval/ post-medieval
U/S	25	11	Fabric AA (1 sherd) handle from a Cam 184 Rhodian amphora, dated 1st-mid 2nd century, possibly military and pre-Flavian. Fabric DJ (4 sherds). Fabric GX (2 sherds). Fabric HZ ( 1 sherd), Cam 273, dated 1st-2nd/3rd century. Fabric MQ (1 sherd), brown-cream slip with pattern on surface in brown paint. Fabric TZ (1 sherd), very abraded. Fabric DZ (1 sherd), base of dish or bowl?	463.0	Roman
		1	Colchester-type ware (Fabric 21a), body sherd	5.5	15th-16th century
		1	Raeren stoneware (Fabric 45d), body sherd	19.0	mid 15th to mid 16th century
		1	clay-pipe stem fragment	6.3	mid 17th-century
		1	peg-tile fragment	16.5	post-medieval/ modern
U/S	26	1	dark brown brick fragment (45 mm thick)	422.6	?modern
U/S	27	1	Fabric GX (1 sherd), dark burnt organic smuts in fabric, probably 1st-early 2nd century	3.0	1st-early 2nd century?
		1	Roman brick fragment (40 mm thick, with mortar adhering)	2,443.6	Roman
U/S	30	2	early medieval sandy ware (Fabric 13) - (1) thick body sherd (2) body sherd with applied strips reminiscent of Thetford ware (Fabric 9), but not in a Thetford ware fabric.	18.9	12th century
		1	modern ironstone (Fabric 48d) rim	16.8	19th to 20th-century
		1	glass fragment from near omphalos on base of wine bottle	32.1	probably 17th century
		3	animal bone fragments	68.8	-
		1	?Roman brick/tile fragment	17.4	?Roman
U/S	31	1	Fabric TZ (1 sherd) part of edge of mortaria flange	13.0	Roman, 1st-2nd/3rd century?
		2	clay-pipe fragments (1 bowl & 1 stem)	7.4	probably 18th century



U/S	32	1	worked flint	257.1	-
U/S	33	2	Fabric BX(SG) (1 sherd) probably Dr 37, dated late 1st century. Fabric HZ (1 sherd) Cam 273, dated 1st-2nd/3rd century.	152.0	late 1st century
		1	Roman brick fragment (40 mm thick)	908.2	Roman
		1	<i>imbrex</i> fragment	106.0	
		1	?Roman tile fragment	155.4	?Roman
		1	peg-tile fragment	57.9	post-medieval/ modern
		1	animal bone fragment	31.2	-
U/S	34	1	copper-alloy fragment		-
U/S	35	1	large quernstone fragment		medieval

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**Distribution list:**

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Checked by: Philip Crummy  
Date: 07.12.06

Adams c:/reports06/head street/report394.doc

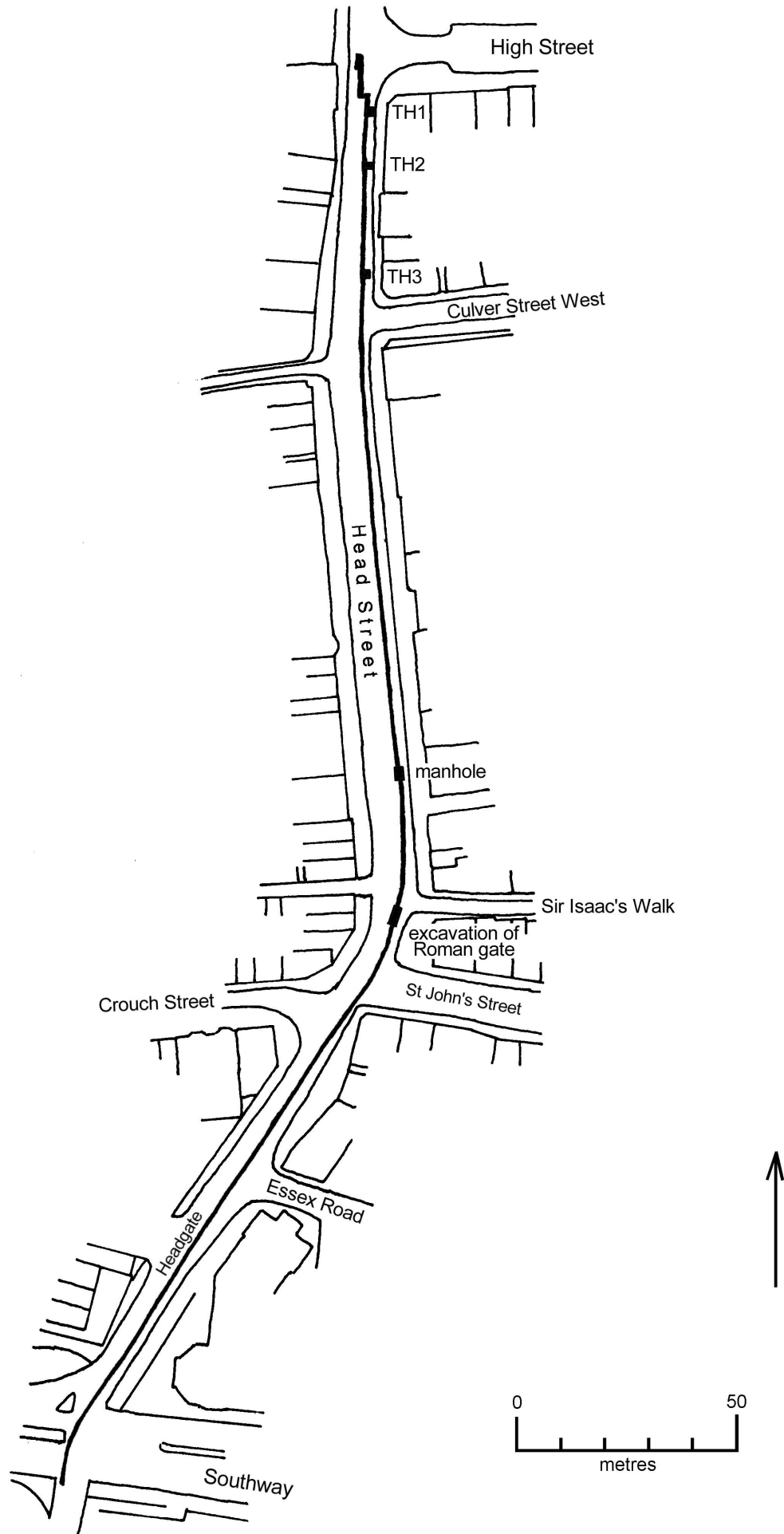


Fig 1 Site location plan, showing the course of the cable trench.

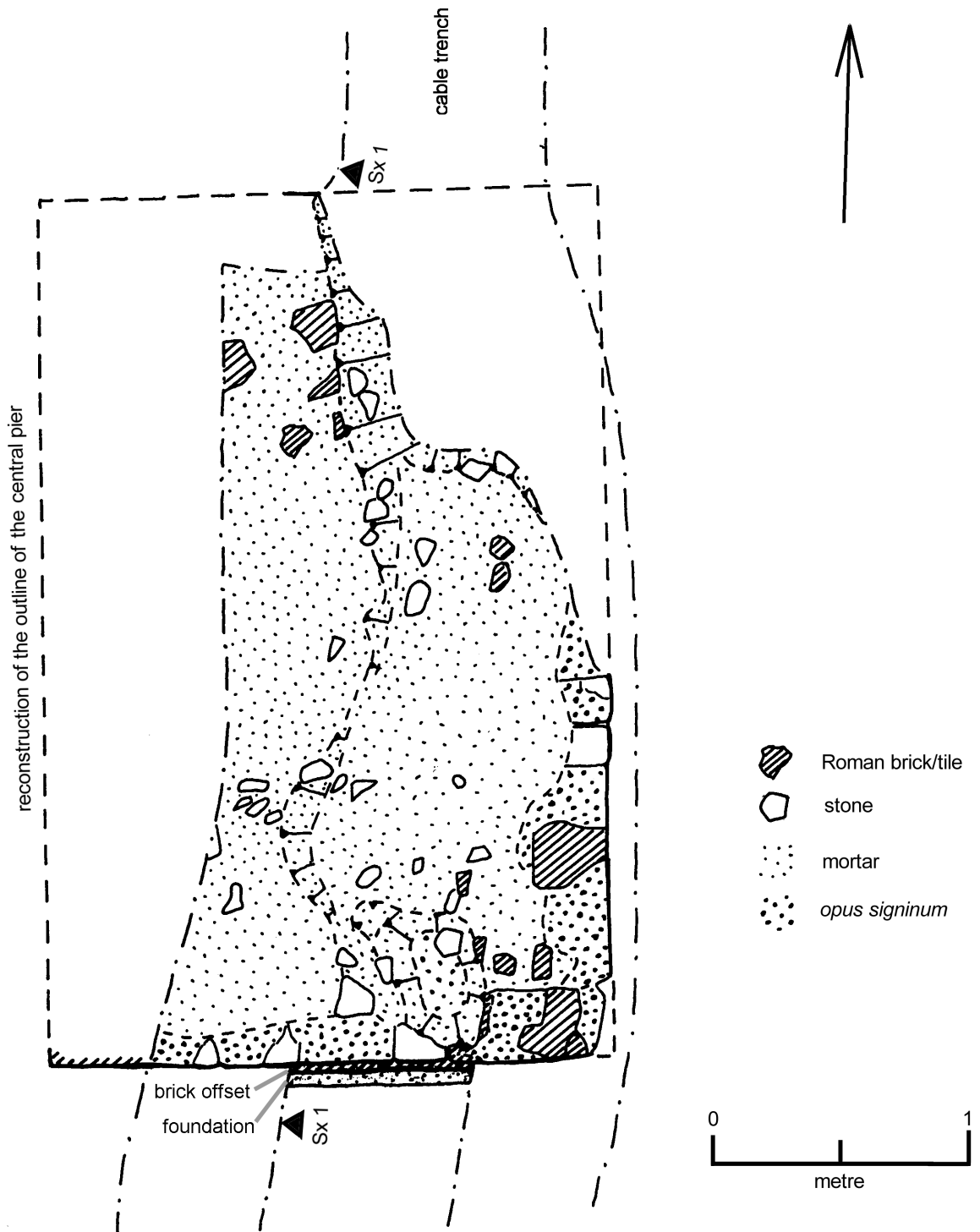
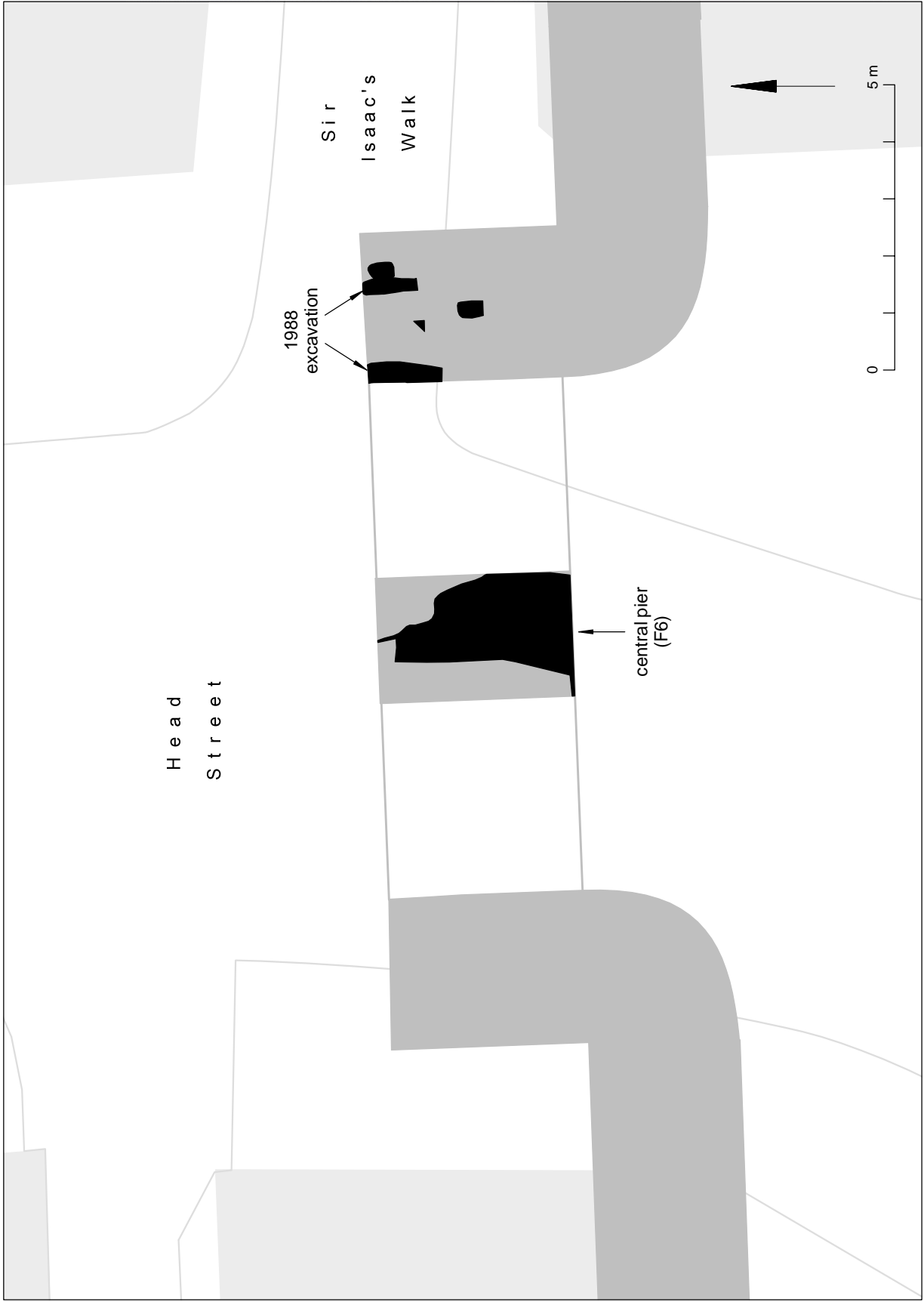


Fig 2 Plan of the central pier (F6) of the Roman south-west gate.



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Fig 3 Reconstruction of the ground-plan of the Roman south-west gate.

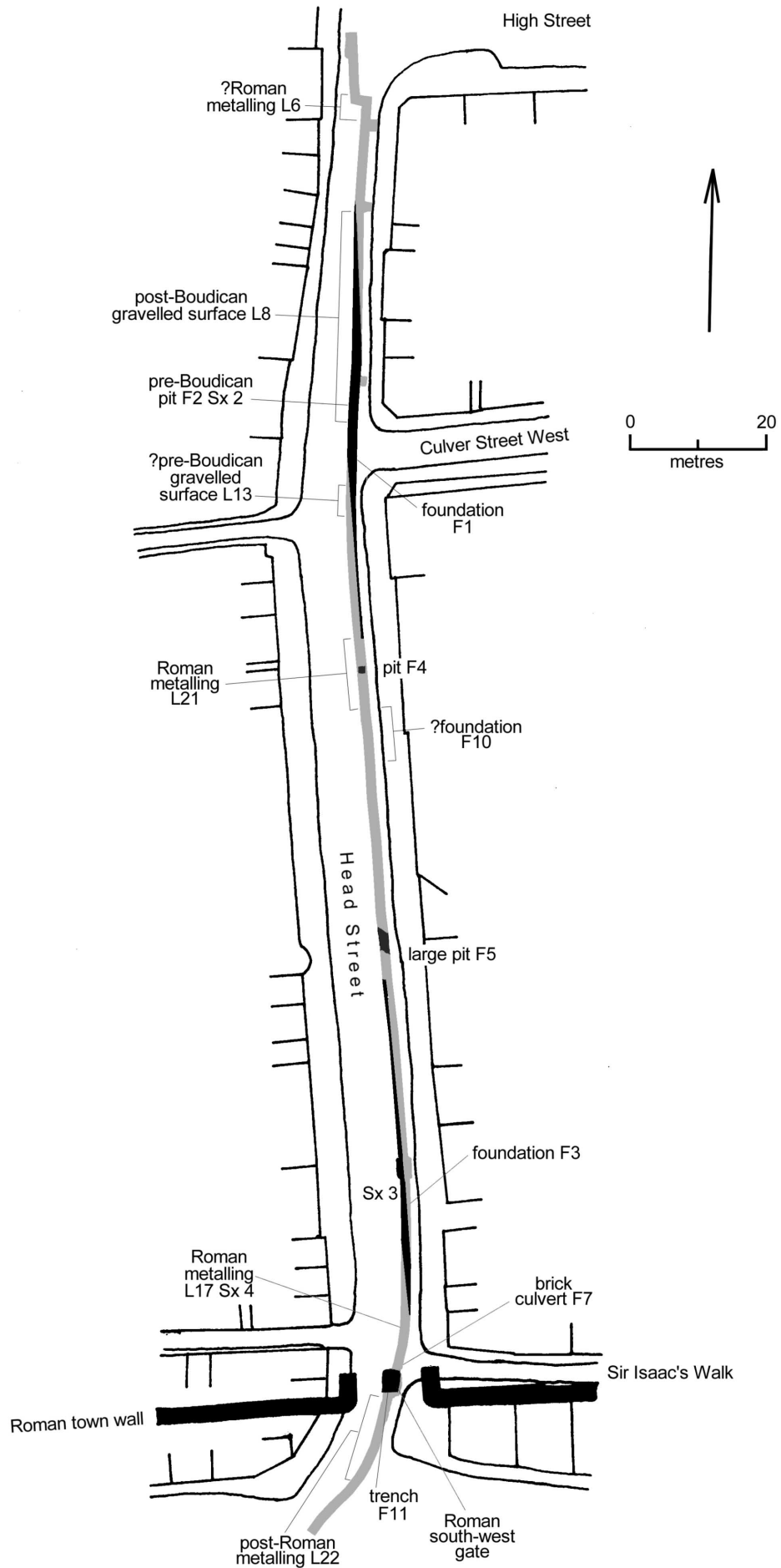


Fig 4 Roman and later remains in the northern part of the cable trench.

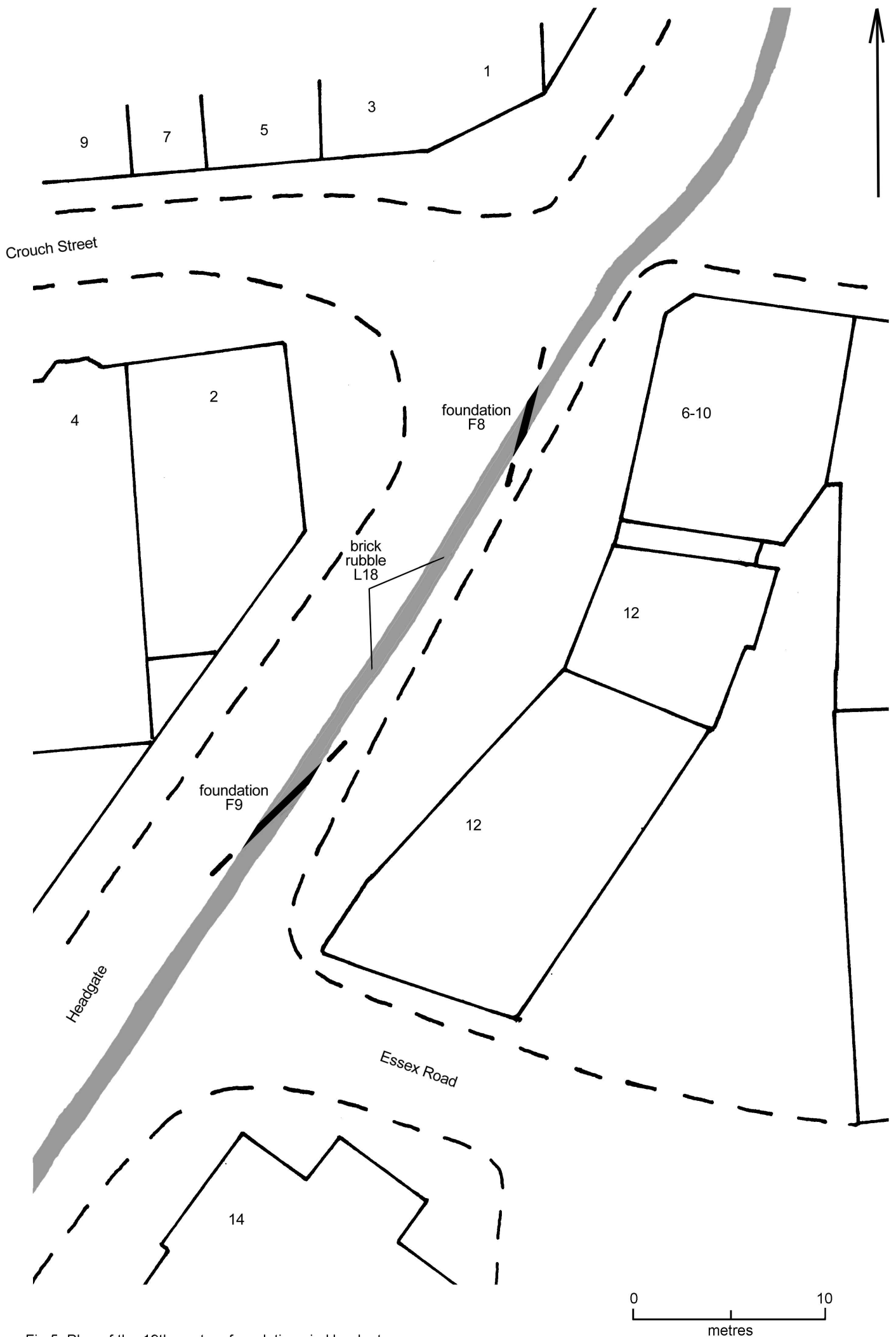
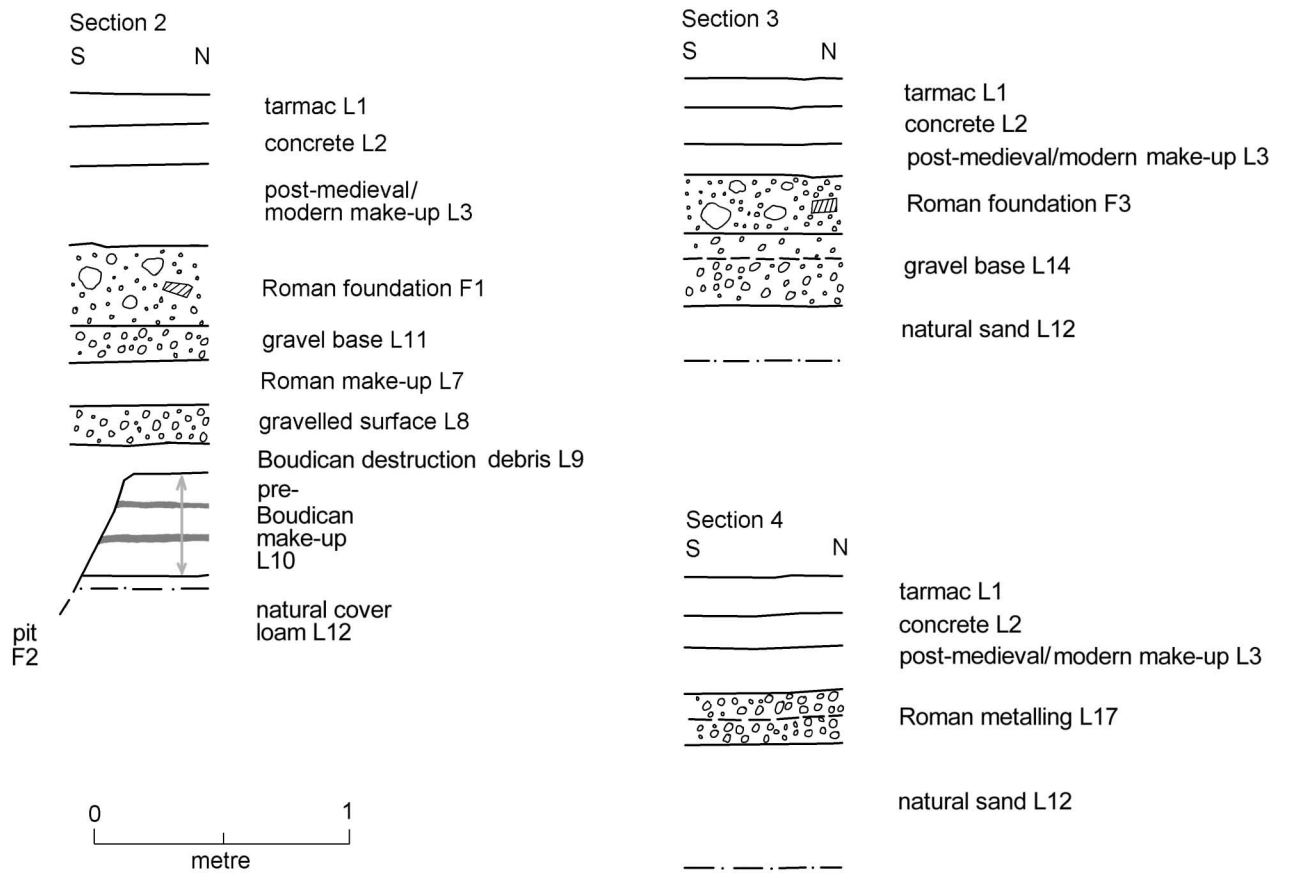
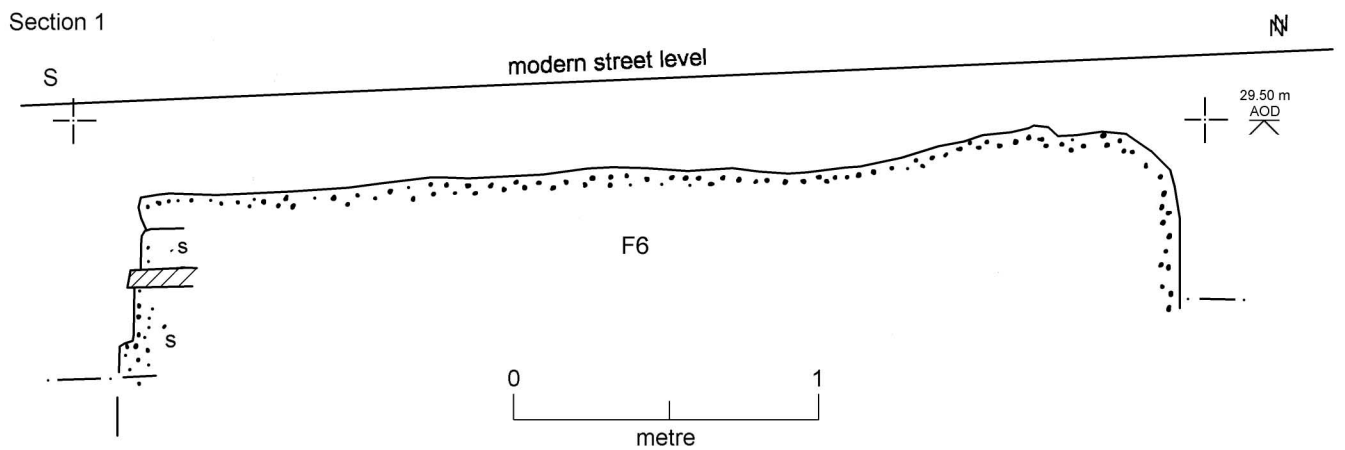


Fig 5 Plan of the 19th-century foundations in Headgate.



- stone
- septaria
- Roman brick
- gravel
- mortar

Fig 6 Sections 1-4.

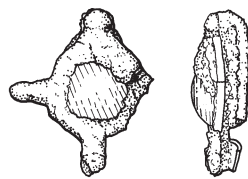


Fig 7 Roman copper-alloy plate brooch.



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

**Summary sheet**

<b>Site address:</b> Head Street to Southway, Colchester, Essex	
<b>Parish:</b> St Mary-at-the-Walls	<b>District:</b> Colchester Borough
<b>NGR:</b> TL 9940 2510	<b>Site code:</b> Museum accession code 2006.103
<b>Type of work:</b> Watching brief	<b>Site director/group:</b> Colchester Archaeological Trust
<b>Date of work:</b> August-October 2006	<b>Size of area investigated:</b> 350 m-long trench
<b>Location of finds/curating museum:</b> Colchester Museums	<b>Funding source:</b> British Telecom
<b>Further seasons anticipated?</b> No	<b>Related EHER nos:</b>
<b>Final report:</b> CAT Report 394 and summary in <i>EAH</i>	
<b>Periods represented:</b> Roman and post-medieval/modern	
<b>Summary of fieldwork results:</b> <i>During the digging of a BT cable trench from Head Street to Southway, Colchester, Essex, the central pier of the south-west gate into the Roman town was uncovered close to the modern surface. Other Roman and later remains in the trench included foundations, road metalling and pits.</i>	
<b>Previous summaries/reports:</b>	
<b>Author of summary:</b> D Shimmin	<b>Date of summary:</b> December 2006