

**An archaeological watching brief
at Colchester Castle, Colchester, Essex
October 2006**

**report prepared by
Laura Pooley**

**on behalf of
Colchester Borough Council**

CAT project ref.: 06/10f
Colchester Museums accession code: 2006.129
NGR: TL 99884 25279



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CAT Report 397
December 2006

Report on a watching brief CAT Report 397

Site address: Colchester Castle Park
Date of fieldwork: 18th October 2006
NGR: TL 99884 25279
Museum accession code: 2006.129

Background (Fig 1)

The extension to the floodlight bunker was located in the south-east corner of Colchester Castle bailey. Previous excavations in this area revealed a number of archaeological features including several inhumation burials. These burials had been interred after the demolition of the chapel, barbican and forebuilding and are thought to date from the late 16th to the 17th centuries when the keep was used as a gaol (Drury 1983, 405-6). Documentary evidence reveals that those who died or committed suicide in custody (and possibly some who were executed) were buried adjacent to the keep (*ibid*, 406-7).

Results

An archaeological watching brief was carried out on groundworks during a small extension to a pre-existing floodlight bunker, located close to the south-east corner of Colchester Castle bailey, after human bone was found by the contractors. The remainder of the bunker was then excavated by hand by a member of staff of the Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT).

The extension to the bunker measured 2.8m by 1.25m and was cut through 10-35cm of modern topsoil (L1) onto a post-medieval silty soil (L3). A modern cable trench (F1) was recorded within the trench along with a post-medieval pit (F2/L2; Figs 2-3). A small quantity of finds was also recorded (see below) along with 20 pieces of human bone identified from L3 and unstratified.

All of the features and layers identified within the extension to the floodlight bunker dated to either the modern or post-medieval period. They also contained a quantity of finds probably associated with post-medieval demolition and disturbance around the castle keep. The human bone in particular is likely to be associated with the late 16th- to 17th-century burials located within the bailey (see above), but it was not recorded within a grave cut and had probably been disturbed by later activity.

Finds

Table 1: list of finds by context.

Feature number	Layer number	Finds number	Find type	Quantity	Weight (g)			
F2		4	Roman brick	6	2,463			
			Peg-tile	1	252			
			Greensand stone block	1	2,000			
			Septaria	1	1,322			
			Slate	3	286			
	L2	1	Post-medieval pottery – Colchester-type ware, including a rim from a ?jug with slip painting on flat top, 15th to 16th century	5	43			
			Post-medieval brick	1	222			
			Peg-tile	2	201			
			Mortar	2	202			
			Septaria	3	818			
			Slate	2	104			
				L3	2	Post-medieval pottery – Colchester-type ware, 15th to 16th century	1	6
Post-medieval brick	1	525						
Ceramic building material fragments	7	248						
<i>Opus signinum</i> fragment	1	29						
Black stone <i>tessera</i> cube	1	11						
Iron nails	2	12						
Probable human bone	12	81						
Animal bone	2	4						
U/S		4				Human bone (leg bones)	8	432
						Animal bone	13	92

Reference

Drury, P J, 1983 'Aspects of the origins and development of Colchester Castle', in
The Archaeological Journal, **139**, 302-419

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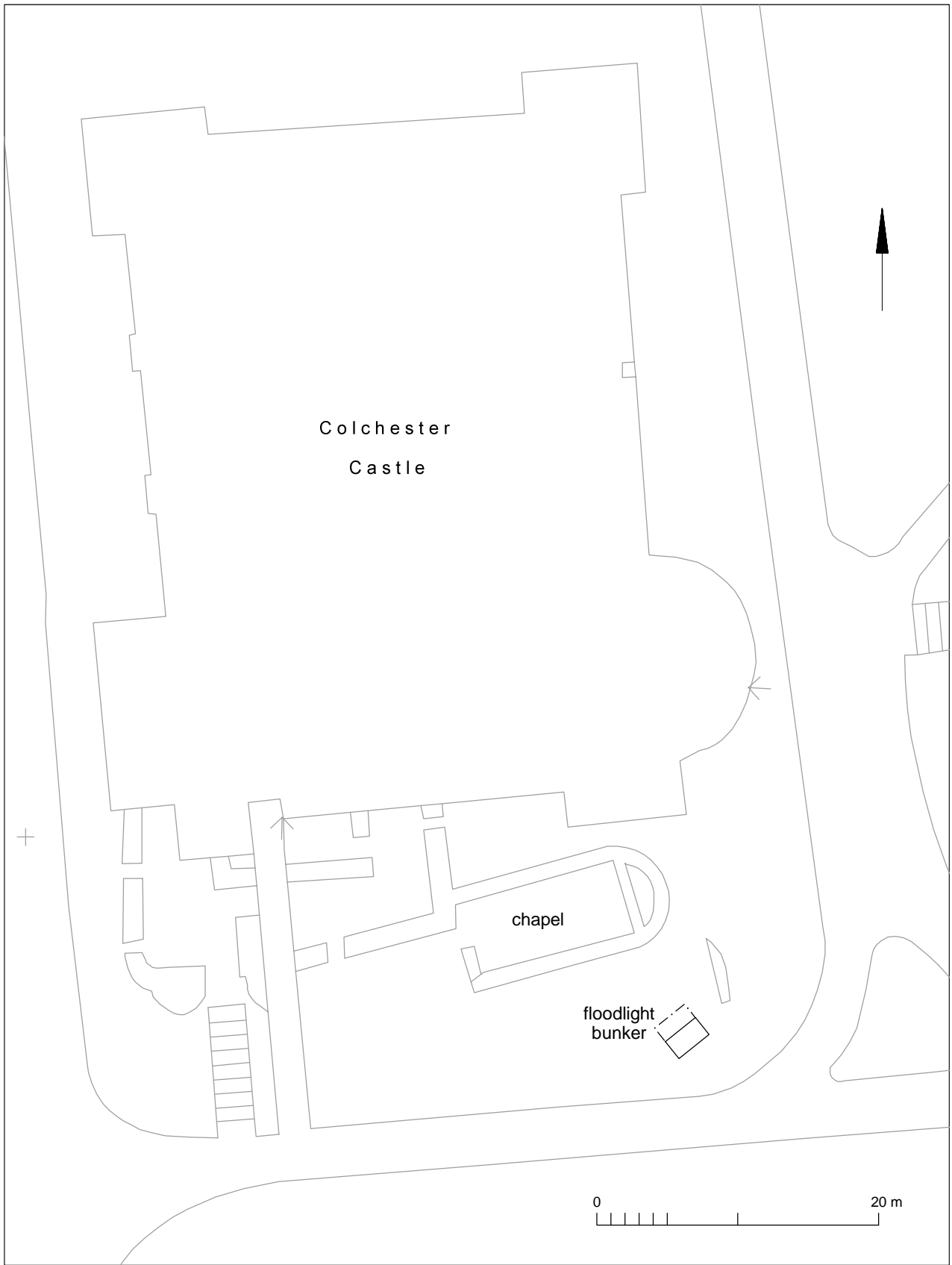


Fig 1 Site location plan.

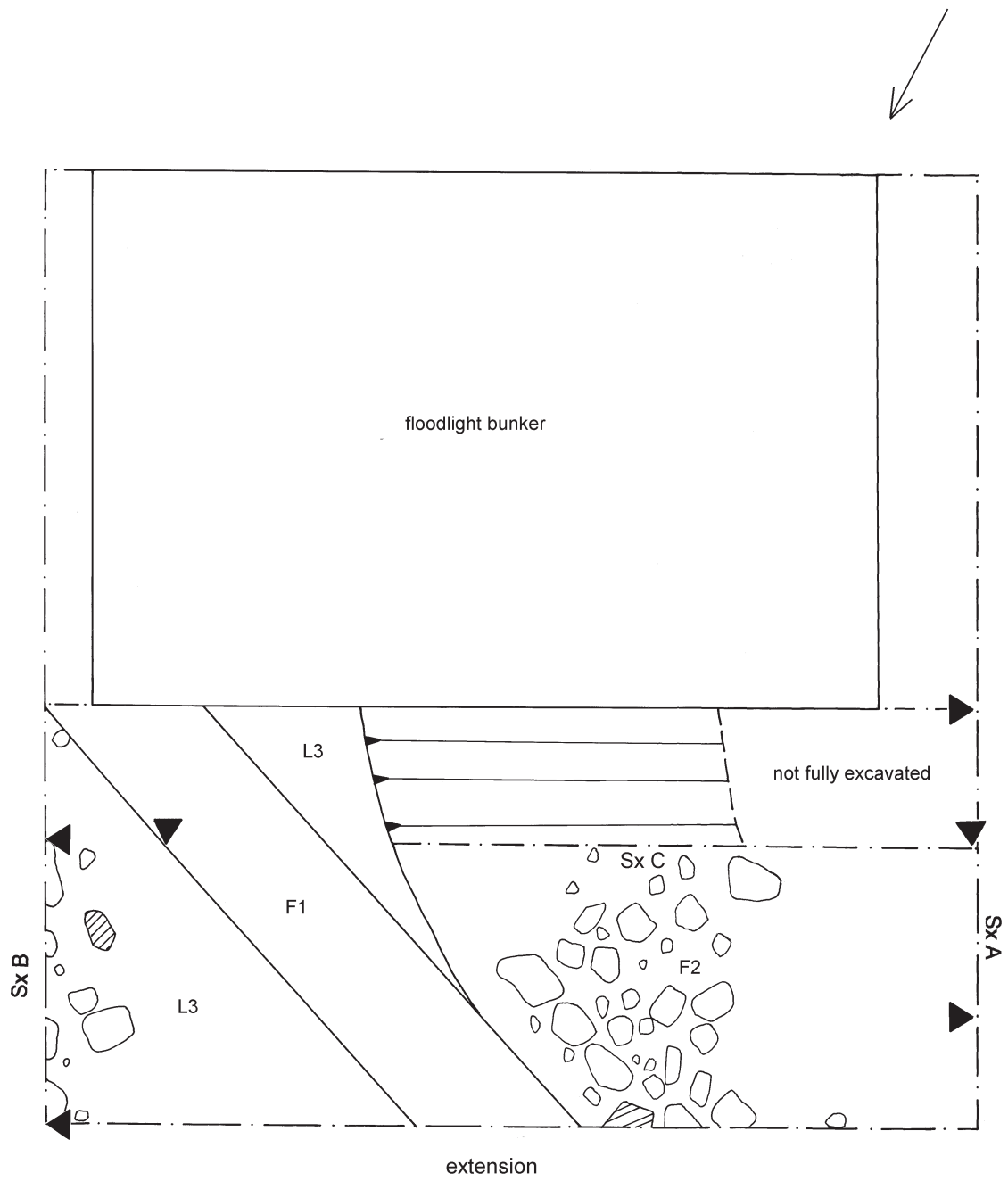
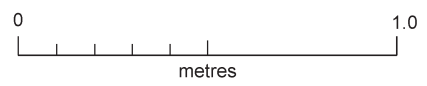
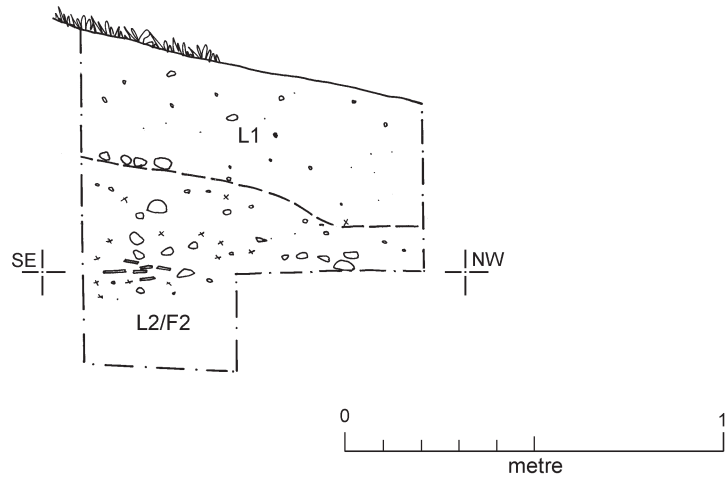


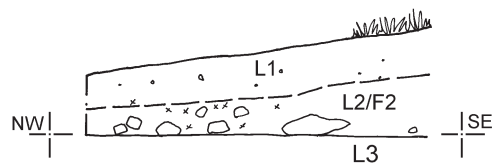
Fig 2 Site plan.



Sx A: north-east-facing section



Sx B: south-west-facing section



Sx C: south-east-facing section

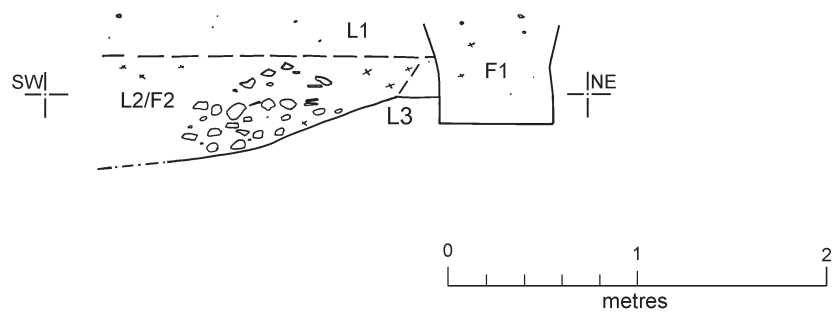


Fig 3 Sections.

Essex Historic Environment Record/ *Essex Archaeology and History*

Summary sheet

Site address: Colchester Castle, Colchester, Essex	
Parish: All Saints', Colchester	District: Colchester
NGR: TL 99884 25279	Site code: Museum accession code 2006.129
Type of work: Watching brief	Site director/group: Colchester Archaeological Trust
Date of work: 18th October 2006	Size of area investigated: 2.8m by 1.25m
Location of finds/curating museum: Colchester Museums	Funding source: Colchester Borough Council
Further seasons anticipated? No	Related EHER nos: 12224-12225, 12227
Final report: CAT Report 397 and summary in <i>EAH</i>	
Periods represented: post-medieval and modern	
<p>Summary of fieldwork results: <i>A watching brief was carried out during groundworks in the south-east corner of Colchester Castle bailey to add a small extension to the pre-existing floodlight bunker located there. The extension measured 2.8m by 1.25m and the groundworks revealed a modern topsoil layer, a post-medieval soil layer, a modern cable trench (2001), and a post-medieval pit. Interestingly, a small quantity of human bone was identified both unstratified and within the post-medieval subsoil layer. A number of inhumation burials are known from within the bailey, possibly dating to the late 16th and 17th centuries when the keep was used as a gaol, and those who died in custody were buried adjacent to the keep. It is likely that the bone recorded during the groundworks was disturbed from nearby graves.</i></p>	
Previous summaries/reports:	
Author of summary: Laura Pooley	Date of summary: December 2006