

**An archaeological evaluation
at 19 Eld Lane, Colchester, Essex
October-December 2006**

**report prepared by
Laura Pooley**

**on behalf of
the East of England Co-operative Society**

CAT project ref.: 06/10a
Colchester Museums accession code: 2006.117
NGR: TL 9977 2502



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CAT Report 398
December 2006

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1 Summary

A trench dug at the rear of 19 Eld Lane showed that the remains of the town wall lie at a depth of about 0.45m below the modern ground-level and that the inner face survives at a depth of 1.0m. Although only a small part of the wall could be exposed, the little that was observed appeared to be post-Roman in date, which suggests that this part of the wall was a product of the repair programme which was carried out in the late 14th and early 15th centuries.

2 Introduction (Fig. 1)

This is the archive report on an archaeological evaluation carried out at 19 Eld Lane, Colchester, Essex. The evaluation was carried out in advance of a series of alterations and extensions to the rear of the property which might have affected the Roman town wall which is a scheduled ancient monument (Essex SAM no 10). The evaluation was required to establish the exact position and depth of the top of the inner (northern) face of the Roman wall, in order to inform the precise position and foundation design for the extension. This information will then be used to apply for scheduled monument consent.

The site is located in the town centre on the southern side of Eld Lane at National Grid Reference TL 9977 2502. The site of the extension is currently a concreted rear yard to the shop at 19 Eld Lane. The rear brick wall on the south side of the property is built directly on top of the Roman town wall and there is a 2-3m drop to the ground-level of the Vineyard Gate car-park to the south.

The evaluation was commissioned by the East of England Co-operative Society and carried out by the Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) on the 6th October, 26th October, 13th-14th November and 5th December 2006.

All fieldwork was carried out in accordance with a brief produced by Deborah Priddy of English Heritage (EH) and was monitored by EH and 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 Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (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 Aims and objectives

The aim of the evaluation was to locate, identify and assess the quality of any surviving archaeological features, specifically to characterise and assess the survival of the inner face of the Roman town wall and any archaeological deposits.

4 Archaeological background

The Roman town wall was constructed around the town c AD 65-80 following the destruction of the town during the Boudican revolt of AD 60/61. The wall was constructed of septaria with tile courses and a rubble core, bonded with mortar (CAR 3, 14). A recent study has concluded that the wall was 2.67m wide (including offsets at the

rear) which is equivalent to precisely nine Roman feet (*pedes Monetales*). A hypothetical cross-section of the wall shows the foundations as being 3.77m wide (Crummy 2003). Some previous work shows that the wall foundations were surprisingly shallow, at 600mm deep (Hull 1958, 25-6). However, work at the Sixth Form College in 2005 shows the stone foundations to be 1.2m deep with wooden piles below (CAT Report 347). The original height of the wall is not known, but the highest surviving part is next to the south side of the Balkerne Gate, where four groups of four tile courses indicate a height below parapet level of at least 4m.

The position of the inner face of the town wall between the site of the south gate and Head Gate can be predicted using evidence from several places where it has been uncovered. Careful plotting of these exposures shows that this stretch of wall had been built in a dead straight line. The two trenches at the rear of 19 Eld Lane were located such that the predicted line of the inner face should pass through the middle of each trench. The locations where the town wall had previously been exposed are as follows:

- 1) In 1988, at 11 Short Wyre Street (the 'Swagshop'), a large part of the inner (northern) face of the Roman town wall was recorded during redevelopment works. The wall had formed the south side of a post-medieval cellar, and it was fully exposed following the demolition of the standing building. Of note was the discovery in the wall of the remains of a culvert in the form of a drain arch. In addition to the recording of the wall, two trenches for stanchions were archaeologically excavated in advance in the rampart behind the wall, and parts of the late medieval re-facing of the south side of the wall were subsequently noted in the contractor's foundation trenches south of the wall (CAT Report 113).
- 2) In 1989, the core of the town wall was exposed in the south-west corner of the cellar under 21 Eld Lane when a hole was made in the cellar wall during refurbishment works. When the wall was being recorded, it was noticed that part of the northern (ie inner) face of the town wall was incorporated in one of the walls of the adjacent cellar under no 22. The position of the inner face of the town wall could only be plotted to within +/- 0.8m north to south on the site plan, because the thickness of the cellar wall could not be determined (CAT 1989).
- 3) During the excavations at Culver Street in 1981-2 and 1984-5, the inner face of the town wall turned out to be unrobbed and well-preserved. However, almost half the thickness of the south face had been robbed, making the surviving stump unstable and causing it and its foundations to tip to the south. There was a 40mm-wide offset at the foot of the inner face (CAR 6, 62).
- 4) During the excavations at Lion Walk in the 1980s, a section was dug behind the wall so as to cut through the rampart (CAR 3, 14-15). The inner face of the wall was beautifully preserved. This investigation also revealed a medieval semi-circular bastion built onto the outer face of the town wall (*ibid*, 84).
- 5) At 17 Eld Lane, the Roman wall and its foundation can be seen forming the south wall of the cellar (as at 11 Short Wyre Street). The inner face is unrobbed. The wall is approximately 1.5m thick, having lost approximately 1.2m of its outer (southern) face.

5 Results (Figs 2-3)

Two trenches were dug into the courtyard of 19 Eld Lane.

Trench 1: Trench 1 was abandoned when a live electricity cable was identified immediately below the concrete courtyard. It was not planned, but it was located approximately 1.5m to the east of Trench 2.

Trench 2: Trench 2 measured 1.7m long by 0.74m wide and was dug to a maximum depth of 1.7m below the ground-level of the courtyard. The highest surviving part of the wall was encountered at a depth of 0.4m below modern ground-level. The inner face of the wall was located at a depth of 1.0m. The face was stepped back a distance of 0.25m to form a 'step', about 0.45m in height, at the top of the wall. The face of the step

was rough in appearance but could represent an intentional offset rather than being the result of later robbing or damage. The stepped section of wall is made of broken Roman brick and septaria. Some of the brick is clearly re-used, because it has mortar adhering to it which is different to the mortar which the town wall was built with. The face of this section of wall directly underneath the stepped part appears to be more roughly made than is normal for the Roman town wall. It was exposed for a depth of six courses, none of which were brick. The absence of brick courses and the roughness of the work combine to suggest that the upper part of the wall here may not be Roman. Moreover, the absence of peg-tile and post-medieval brick in this part of the wall points to a medieval date for its construction, the most likely context being the major repair works which were carried out in the late 14th and early 15th centuries (CAR 3, 84).

6 Finds

6.1 Post-Roman pottery

by Howard Brooks

A small group of medieval and later pottery (57 sherds, weighing 3,117g) was recovered from three site contexts. The pottery fabrics have been classified according to fabric descriptions given in CAR 7. Fabrics present were Colchester-type ware (Fabric 21a), post-medieval red earthenware (PMRE: Fabric 40), Border ware (Fabric 42), Raeren stoneware (Fabric 45c), Frechen stoneware (Fabric 45d), tin-glazed earthenware (TGE: Fabric 46), and Staffordshire slipware (Fabric 50). Fabrics are not quantified here, but a full list is given in the archive. There was also one residual Roman sherd (identified by Stephen Benfield of CAT).

Comment

This is a typical Colchester post-medieval group, with a predominance of locally-produced Colchester-type ware and PMRE. Of the products from further afield, the German stonewares are more abundant than British products (TGE and Border ware).

Catalogue

Finds no 1 (L1, Trench 1): Sherds of tin-glazed earthenware and Staffordshire slipware. Group date: 18th century.

Finds no 2 (L1, Trench 2): The Colchester-type wares include a cistern with a bung hole. John Cotter dates these cisterns to the late 15th or early 16th century (CAR 7, 130). PMRE forms include pancheons and cooking pots, and there is one rim sherd from a chafing dish (a food warmer). Raeren stoneware and Frechen stoneware drinking jugs are dated to the late 15th and late 16th to 17th century respectively (*ibid*, 281-8). The Border ware handle is probably late 16th or 17th century. Except for a single sherd of Staffordshire slipware from the 18th century (intrusive?), this group dates to the late 16th or 17th century.

Finds no 3 (L1, Trench 2): The Colchester-type wares includes two large sherds, probably from a cistern, and a small round jug with a looped handle similar to that illustrated as CAR 7, figure 79.37. However, this example has criss-crossed incisions in a band between the rim and handle. There is no parallel in CAR 7 for this decoration, but Cotter does state that they are late medieval (late 15th or early 16th century: CAR 7, 128). Group date 17th century?

6.2 Bulk finds

Finds no 1 (L1, Trench 1): One piece of post-medieval brick was identified (at 1,608g) along with two pieces of animal bone (43g).

Finds no (L1, Trench 2): Eight pieces of Roman brick and tile were identified (at 1,806g) along with three pieces of peg-tile (603g) and twelve pieces of animal bone (584g).

7 Acknowledgements

The Trust would like to thank Mark Potter of Hurley Porte and Duell (Chartered Architects) for commissioning and John Addison of the East of England Co-operative Society for funding the work. The fieldwork was carried out by C Lister, K Orr, D Ross and D Shimmin.

8 References

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|----------------|------|---|
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9 Glossary

medieval	from AD 1066 to Henry VIII
modern	19th and 20th centuries
post-medieval	after Henry VIII and to the end of the 19th century
Roman	the period from AD 43 to c AD 410
septaria	local stone used as building material by the Romans

10 Archive deposition

The finds, 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 COLEM 2006.117.

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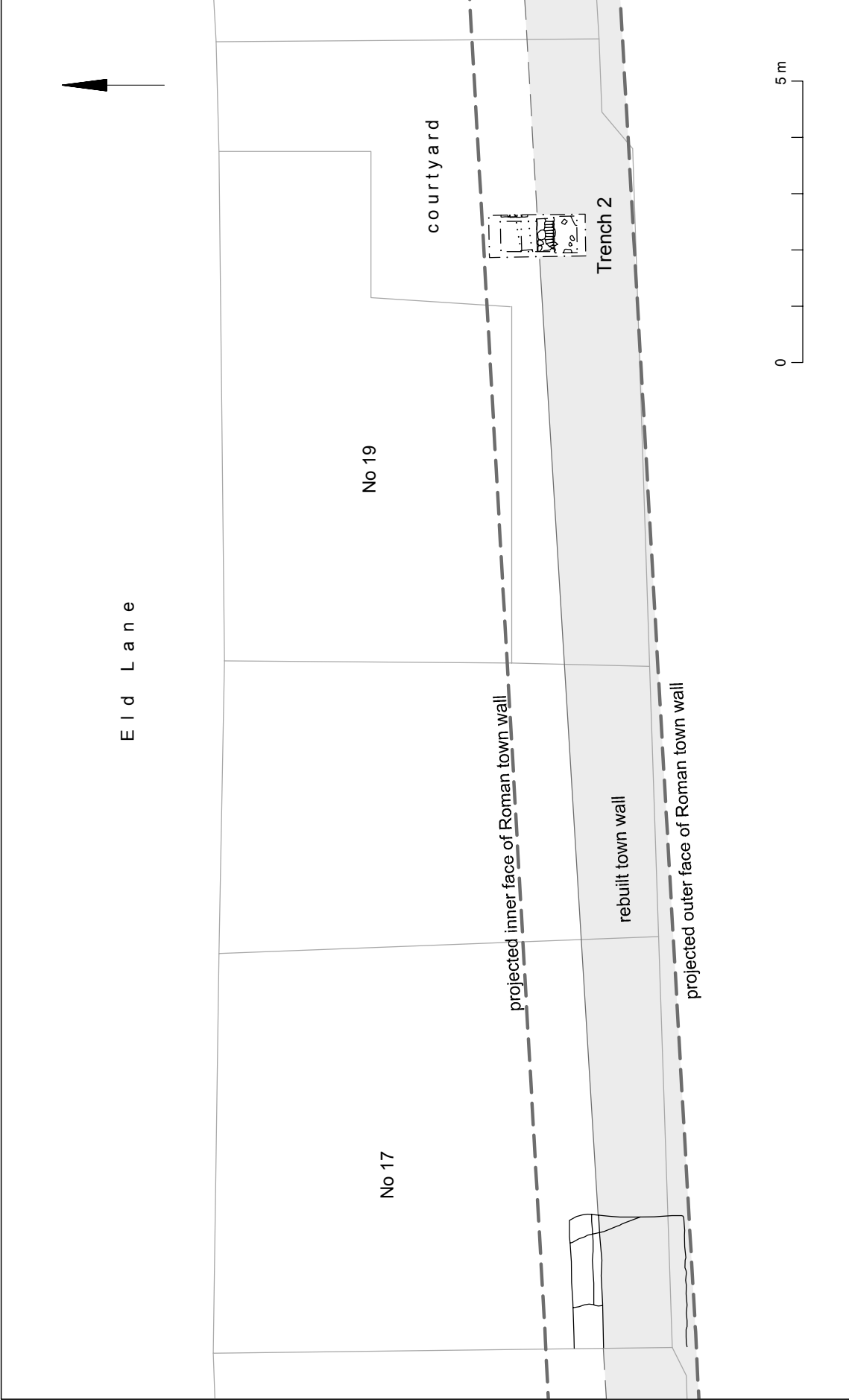


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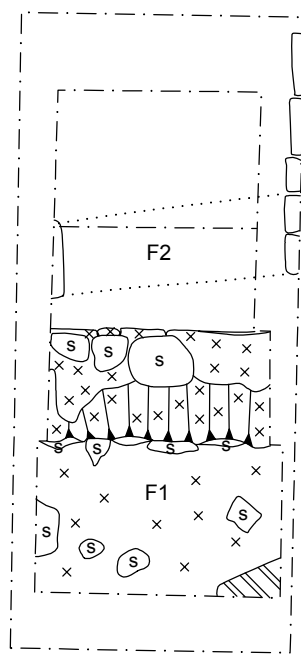
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Fig 1 Location plan.



- x x mortar
- (S) septaria
- ▨ post-medieval brick/tile



Fig 2 Plan of Trench 2.

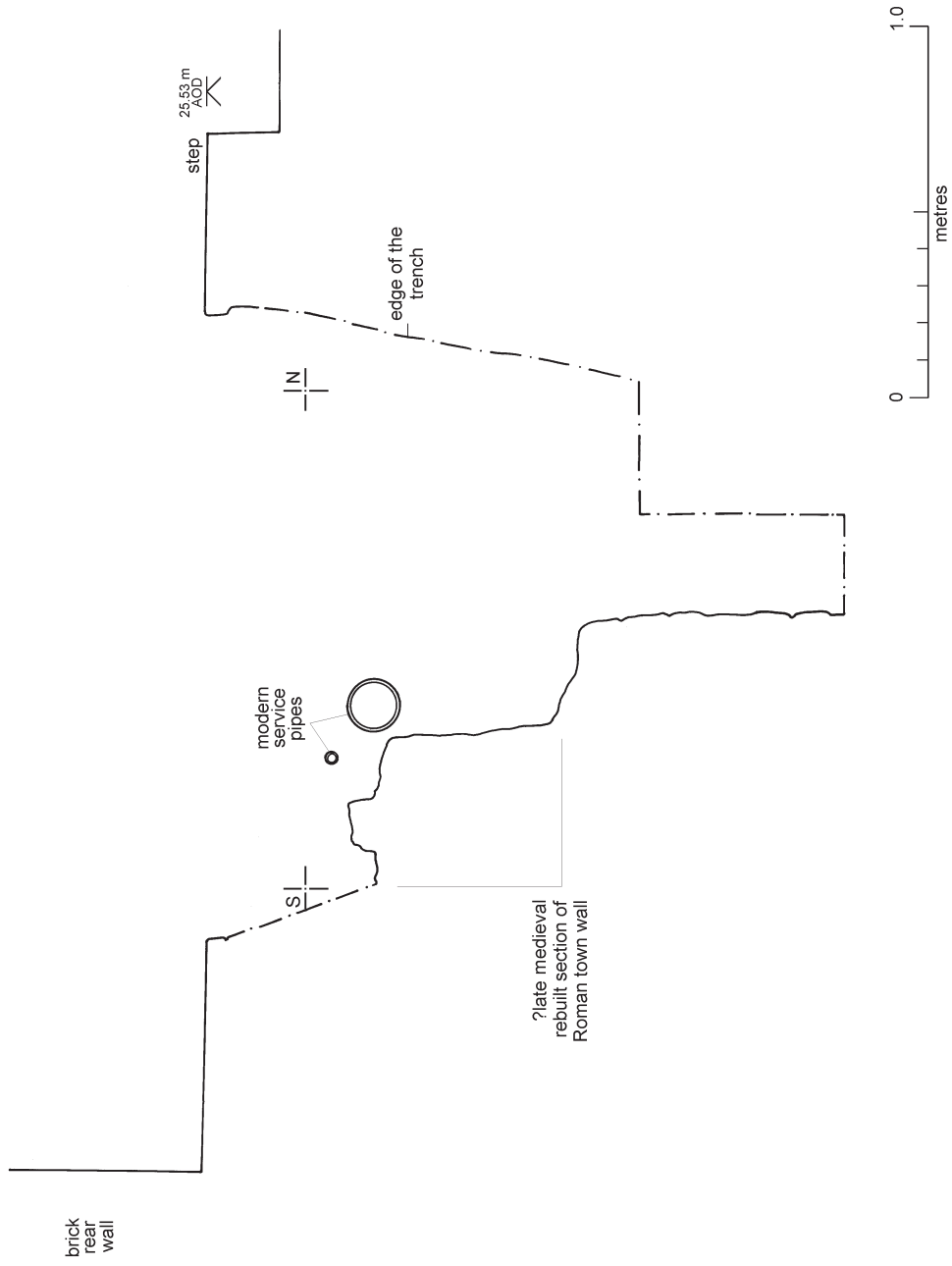


Fig 3 Trench 2: east-facing profile.

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

Summary sheet

Site address: 19 Eld Lane, Colchester, Essex	
Parish: Colchester	District: Colchester
NGR: TL 9977 2502	Site code: Museum accession code 2006.117
Type of work: Evaluation	Site director/group: Colchester Archaeological Trust
Date of work: 6th October-5th December 2006	Size of area investigated: 1.7m by 0.74m
Location of finds/curating museum: Colchester Museums	Funding source: Developer
Further seasons anticipated? No	Related EHER nos:
Final report: CAT Report 398 and summary in <i>EAH</i>	
Periods represented: medieval/post-medieval and modern	
<p>Summary of fieldwork results: <i>A trench dug at the rear of 19 Eld Lane showed that the remains of the town wall lie at a depth of about 0.45m below the modern ground-level and that the inner face survives at a depth of 1.0m. Although only a small part of the wall could be exposed, the little that was observed appeared to be post-Roman in date, which suggests that this part of the wall was a product of the repair programme which was carried out in the late 14th and early 15th centuries.</i></p>	
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