An archaeological watching brief at Lexden Grange, 127 Lexden Road, Colchester, Essex July 2006-February 2007

report prepared by
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on behalf of
Enterprise Heritage Ltd

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1 Summary

Groundworks for a small residential development at Lexden Grange were monitored by the Colchester Archaeological Trust. Part of a Late Iron Age pedestal urn is likely to be the remains of a disturbed cremation burial. Other pits found and Roman pottery from spoil heaps may also be burial-related. A crucible and possible metal-working debris point to metal-working on the site in the Roman period.

2 Introduction (Figs 1-2)

2.1 This is the archive report on an archaeological watching brief carried out at Lexden Grange, 127 Lexden Road, Colchester, Essex. Enterprise Heritage were granted planning permission (planning ref.: F/COL/05/1173) to convert the existing building (formerly Colchester Borough Council planning offices) to residential use and to construct two new residential blocks. The site is located west of Colchester town centre, on the northern side of Lexden Road, and is centred on National Grid Reference TL 97867 25133.

2.2 The work was carried out by the Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) between the 18th July 2004 and the 27th February 2007.

2.3 Previously the development site consisted of one detached property built in 1904 and listed Grade 2 (Lexden Grange, with attached coach house). The linking part of the coach house was demolished as part of the development. There was rough unmade ground with protected tree groups to the front, hard car-park surfaces to the rear, and grass to the west. The site covers an area of 0.60 hectares and the height AOD varies between 35.7m to 34.56m.

2.4 All fieldwork was done in accordance with a specification agreed with the Colchester Borough Council Archaeology Officer (CBCAO). This report conforms to standards and practices contained in Colchester Borough Council's *Guidelines on the 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 Research Projects in the Historic Environment* (MoRPHE), 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 development site is situated just to the north of the main Roman road leading from the walled town to London. This area to the west of the town centre, termed 'the Western cemetery' by Hull (Hull 1958), was occupied by cemeteries in the Roman period. It is also in an area of Late Iron Age burials mainly dating to between 50 BC and 10 BC (*CAR* **9**, 261). The Iron Age burial group of three vessels was found to the rear of the Grange at a depth of 750mm in 1936. In 1904, a Roman burial was recorded from south of Lexden Grange. This was a rich flat cremation burial containing a bronze mirror and a bronze cup of the Late Iron Age (Urban Archaeological Database event or UAD nos 1178, 1225 and 1565).

3.2 An evaluation was carried out in September 2005 at Lexden Grange. Two trial-trenches were excavated. The evaluation did not locate any further Iron Age cremation burials. This does not prove a lack such features, merely that the trenches missed them. The trench at the front of Lexden Grange revealed Roman pits, proving some Roman-period activity on the site, but, with such limited investigation, the nature of this activity is hard to define. The trench to the rear of the Grange showed some modern disturbance from the creation of the car-parking area (CAT Report 338).

4 Aim

The aim of the fieldwork was to identify and record any features or finds which were disturbed by the groundworks. Particular attention was paid to the potential for Iron Age or Roman cremation burials.

5 Methods

5.1 An archaeologist from CAT was present during the contractor's groundworks to carry out a watching brief. Groundworks included foundation trenches, service trenches and a soakaway. Twenty-three visits were made over thirteen separate days between 18th July 2006 and 27th February 2007.

5.2 All the groundworks were carried out by contractors using a mechanical excavator, mostly with a toothed bucket.

5.3 Potential archaeological deposits which were exposed were cleaned by hand. Individual records of layers were entered on CAT pro-forma record sheets.

5.4 Section drawings were made at a scale of 1:10. Plans were made at scales of 1:10 and 1:50.

5.5 Finds were registered on CAT pro-forma record sheets and assigned finds numbers and small find numbers according to context. Finds were washed, marked and bagged according to context.

5.6 Colour photographs were taken with a digital camera.

5.7 A complete list of finds (Table 2) and a complete list of contexts (Table 3) are to be found in sections 7.3 and 13 respectively.

6 Results (Figs 2-4)

6.1 Foundation trenches

Between the 18th and 28th July 2006, the strip footings for the two new residential blocks were dug. The foundation trenches were 600mm wide and between 1m and 1.35m deep. Five features (F1-F5), all thought to be Roman, were exposed. F1 was a deep pit seen at the intersection of two of the southernmost foundation trenches, in the west- and north-facing sections (Fig 3). Roman pottery, dated early 2nd century to 3rd-4th century, was present throughout the fill, as were flecks of tile. The heavy concentration of charcoal flecks at the base of the pit suggested a cremation burial. However, the feature was checked for cremated bone and none was found. F1 was not bottomed but continued to below 1.35m below ground-level. It was sealed by 400mm of post-Roman subsoil (L2) and by 300mm of modern car-park layers.

In one of the central foundation trenches for the new residential block in the southern part of the site was a large pit with a charcoally inner fill and burnt daub edges (F2). This is the western half of a large pit that was excavated during the evaluation trenching of 2005 (F3 in evaluation trench T1). The feature was seen to be 1.5m wide, circular, and with straight sides. It was sealed by L2 subsoil and L1 topsoil and it cut L3 natural sand and gravel. Roman pottery, dated early to mid 2nd to ?3rd century, was present throughout the fill.

After the concrete for the foundations for the southern residential block had been poured, the oversite was stripped off. This reduction exposed a narrow ditch (F3) running east-west between two of the foundation trenches. The top of F3 was 400mm below ground-level and it was seen in plan only. It was 630mm wide and at least 2.5m long but did possibly carry on to the east for another 2.5m. Noticeable on the surface of F3 was smashed grey ware pottery (from a single vessel). This may tie in with a linear feature recorded in the 2005 evaluation (F2 in 2005 evaluation trench T1).

The foundation trenches for the new residential block in the northern part of the site, by the coach house, revealed two features. A ditch (F4; Fig 3), aligned north to south, was seen in the north- and south-facing sections of one of the foundation trenches. This contained Late Iron Age and early Roman pottery and a small amount of charcoal flecks. F4 was sealed by 400mm of L1 topsoil and it cut L3 natural sand

and gravel. To the east of F4 was a 1.8m-wide pit (F5; Fig 3) containing some charcoal, some very degraded bone and a small amount of Late Iron Age and early Roman pottery. F4 was sealed by 400mm of L1 topsoil and it cut L3 natural sand.

The footings for the northern residential block also produced some modern or undated pits which were not given feature numbers. This part of the site showed signs of disturbance, probably from the creation of the former car-park. The Roman features (F4 and F5) were shallower than those to the south and were sealed only by topsoil, indicating some soil-stripping here in the past.

6.2 Service trenches

Between the 22nd August 2006 and the 23rd January 2007, three long service trenches were dug. The first of these was a narrow trench, about 150mm in width, which was dug from the north side of Lexden Grange around the back of the new northern residential block near Sander's Drive and to the east of the coach house. The trench was approximately 500mm deep and did not encounter any features of archaeological significance.

Subsequently a large pipe trench was dug from the Lexden Road entrance to the coach house. This was 2.5m deep and 2.2m wide in total, because the trench had to be stepped out due to its depth. The northern end of the trench (near the coach house) had already been filled in without any archaeological monitoring. Most of the rest of the trench (which included two inspection chambers) had been dug out before CAT were informed. Therefore some features may have been missed, particularly as the contractors were using a mechanical excavator with toothed bucket. The contractors had salvaged some large sherds of a Late Iron Age pot from the northern part of the still-open trench. The contractors showed the author the exact spot that the pot had come from and a faint pit could be discerned on the east-facing section of the trench. The hand-cleaning of this pit (F6) produced more of the same pot as well as a very small amount of cremated animal bone. Examination of the pot showed it to be a Late Iron Age pedestal urn, a type often associated with cremation burials (Fig 4). F6 was cut into a light brown sandy silt layer (L4) which is likely to be a Roman topsoil. The top of the pit was 750mm below ground-level and sealed by L1 and L2. Roman pottery was picked off the spoil heap near F6. This pottery may also have derived from F6 or from other features that were not recorded.

A narrow trench was dug around the south and west sides of Lexden Grange in an area that was formerly gardens. A large fragment of a large grey ware jar (finds no 18) was retrieved from the spoil heap, probably from L2 subsoil. This is possible evidence from a further cremation burial.

6.3 Soakaway

On the 27th February 2007, two visits were made to monitor a large soakaway trench being dug on the western boundary of the site, to the south-west of Lexden Grange. The 3m² and 3m-deep trench had already been partially dug (using a toothed bucket) by the time that the visit was made. The contractors reported that they had observed a pit on the southern side of the trench as they had dug down. By the time that the visit was made, this pit (F7) had been largely dug out. The contractors had saved some of the Roman pottery that had come out of the soakaway trench and more was collected from the spoil heap. F7 could be seen in the north-facing section as being almost straight-sided and approximately 1.5m wide. F7 was deep, continuing beyond the base of the trench. At this lower level, its fill became lighter grey and it contained much Roman pottery. Charcoal flecks and some reddening of the natural sand around the edge of the pit was also observed. The depth of the soakaway trench prevented the author from entering and cleaning the sides of it or hand-digging any of it. Interestingly, the contractors reported that in plan the pit had perfectly square edges. However, at the lower level it had rounded edges. There was no later material so the feature is probably Roman (2nd century).

Another, smaller pit (F8) was recorded in the north-west corner of the soakaway trench. The contractors partially backfilled the trench and this allowed the author to enter the trench and clean the feature. F8 had much charcoal at the base and Late Iron Age and Roman pottery in its fill (1st-2nd century). A very small amount of cremated bone and non-cremated bone was retrieved from the lower fill. The bone, charcoal and two lumps of copper alloy which may be pyre debris suggest that this

feature is cremation-related. The small amount of bone suggests a pyre-debris dump rather than an actual cremation burial. However, a crucible was also found in F8. The two lumps of copper alloy may be metal-working debris (section 7.2) rather than pyre debris. Thus F8 could equally be associated with metal-working (of copper alloy). Somewhat strangely, one fragment of salt briquetage and a small amount of iron-working slag were also found in its fill. Some pottery from the spoil heap may have come from F8. F8 was sealed by 700mm of L1 topsoil.

Contractors reported a circular pit (F9) in the centre of the soakaway but they had dug it out by the time that the author arrived on site.

7 Finds

7.1 The pottery

by S Benfield

A quantity of pottery (9,244 g) was recovered during the watching brief. Of this, 2,060 g is unstratified. Apart from two unstratified post-Roman sherds (16 g), identified by Howard Brooks, all the pottery is of Late Iron Age or Roman date. The fabric code for the post-Roman sherd refers to post-Roman pottery fabric codes used in *CAR* **7**. The full name of the fabric type is provided, in brackets, with the code in the catalogue of pottery below. The Roman pottery was recorded using the Roman pottery fabric type series devised for *CAR* **10**, in which all the fabrics are recorded as two-letter codes (Table 1). To include Late Iron Age and Romanising pottery, fabrics additional to the *CAR* **10** fabric series have been used. These are grog-tempered wares (Fabric GTW) and Romanising coarse wares (Fabrics RCW). The additional fabrics are described below and full fabric names for each of the lettered fabric codes are given in Table 1. Where appropriate, reference has been made to the corresponding fabric types described in the National Roman Fabric Reference Collection (Tomber & Dore 1998). The vessel forms were recorded using the Camulodunum (Cam) Roman pottery form type series (Hawkes & Hull 1947; Hull 1958). For one grog-tempered vessel, the form type devised by Isobel Thompson for grog-tempered 'Belgic' pottery is also used (Thompson 1982). Samian vessels are recorded using Dragendorff (Dr) form numbers or other common type references following those used in Webster 1996. The pottery fabrics and the vessel forms present in each site context were recorded for each finds number. The number of sherds and the identifiable pottery forms were recorded for each fabric. The total weight of pottery and an overall spot date was recorded for each finds number. This information is set out in the catalogue of pottery below. The full list is in the site archive.

Fabrics and descriptions additional to *CAR* **10** fabrics used in this report:

Fabric GTW Grog-tempered wares
Generally thick sherds, with patchy red-brown to dark-brown surfaces. Fabric contains various quantities of crushed fired clay (grog) and is grey to brown.

Fabric RCW Romanising coarse wares
Sherd thickness is generally medium-thin. Fabric contains fragments of burnt organic matter and grog, though can be sandy. The fabric is either grey-brown with dark grey-brown surfaces (this includes black-surfaced wares (BSW)) which have a tendency to laminate, or pale brown to light grey and appearing abraded.

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

Fabric code	Fabric name	National Roman Fabric Reference Collection fabric
AA	amphoras, all excluding Dressel 20 and Brockley Hill/ Verulamium region amphoras	BAT AM 1, BAT AM 3
AJ	amphoras, Dressel 20	BAT AM 1
BA	plain samian	
BA (SG)	South Gaulish plain samian	
BA (EG)	East Gaulish plain samian	
DJ	coarse oxidised and related wares	COL WH
DZ	fine oxidised wares	
GB	BB2: black-burnished ware, category 2	COL BB2
GP	fine grey wares (Colchester, London and north Kent wares)	
GTW	grog-tempered wares	SOB GT
GX	other coarse wares, principally locally-produced grey wares	
HZ	large storage jars and other vessels in heavily-tempered grey wares	
RCW	Romanising coarse ware	
TZ	mortaria, Colchester and mortaria imported from the Continent	
UR	*terra nigra*-type wares	
LTC	*terra nigra*-type wares, local traded coarse ware	

Most common are Roman form types and fabrics of 1st- to early 2nd-century date. Also of 1st-century date are a number of sherds of grog-tempered ware of Late Iron Age type (Fabric GTW). However, some of the Roman pottery can be dated to the 2nd-3rd or 4th centuries.

Discussion

Apart from two unstratified sherds of 'Border' ware (Fabric 42), dated to the 16th-17th century (finds nos 16-17), all the pottery is of Late Iron Age and Roman date. While the Roman pottery spans the whole of the Roman period, much of the closely datable pottery is of 1st- or early 2nd-century date.

The closely-datable pottery from the features F3-F6 and most of the unstratified pottery is datable to the 1st or 1st-early 2nd centuries. Sherds of grog-tempered ware of Late Iron Age type were recovered from F4, F5 and F6. However, sherds of Roman pottery, dated to the post-conquest period, were also recovered with these sherds from F4 and F5, so that these pottery groups appear to be of Roman, rather than Late Iron Age, date. Pottery forms recorded that are of 1st- or early 2nd-century date are Cam 8, Cam 94, Cam 108, Cam 212-217 or 218, Cam 218, Cam 243-244/246, Cam 203, Cam 266, Cam 277, and Dressel 20 amphoras (Cam 187). The Cam 8 platter is in a local traded coarse ware (Fabric UR(LTC)), and the Cam 94 beaker is in early Colchester colour-coated ware (Fabric EC). All the pottery from these features, and the unstratified sherds, are comparable to the pottery from the Sheepen site at Colchester, the main period of activity there being dated as *c* AD 5-60 (Niblett 1985, 22-26, and table 1). The pottery from F8 could also date to the 1st century. However, it could date as early as the Neronian period, although the earliest-recorded previous examples at Colchester of Cam 122 date from *c* AD 110-125 and Cam 123 from *c* AD 90-110 (*CAR* **10**, 473). A ceramic crucible and a piece of briquetage were also recovered from F8.

The pottery associated with F6 is of particular interest. This consists of a partial pot, a Cam 203 (Thompson form A4, Thompson 1982) pedestal urn with a dished foot (Fig 4), and a single sherd from the rim of a Cam 270B large storage jar. Both of these vessels are wheel-thrown and grog-tempered. The Cam 203 urn is tempered with dark grog, while the large storage jar has a mixture of grog and burnt organic (?dung) temper. Various similar pedestal urns have previously been recorded as associated with burials (Thompson 1982, pp 37, 47, 53, 61, 65). Examples can be cited of pedestal urns of similar form, but with 'trumpet feet' (Cam 204; Thompson form A5, Thompson 1982), associated with burials at Great Chesterford (Crossan *et*

al 1990, 11-18). Close to the present site, a number of pedestal urns of similar forms, Cam 201 and 202/203, have been recovered from Lexden where they are known to be associated with burials (*CAR* **11**, 164-8). As the pedestal urn from F6 is represented by a near-complete profile (overall about one-quarter of the pot is present, with much of the body section represented by one large sherd), this suggests that it may have been placed in the ground as a whole pot rather than as sherds from a broken vessel. Its condition as a partial pot, and the association of this type of pot with burials, could indicate that it represents a disturbed burial. The form Cam 203 is dated, along with other closely-similar pedestal urns (Cam 201-205) as pre-conquest, meaning Late Iron Age, to Claudian (*CAR* **10**, 477). The date range of Cam 270B also begins in the Late Iron Age, pre-conquest period, but extends into the 2nd or 3rd centuries (*CAR* **10**, 479), although, as it contains grog and burnt organic temper in the fabric, it is probably more likely to date from the 1st century.

Pottery that can be dated to the 2nd-3rd or 4th centuries was recovered from F1, F2 and F7.

The latest closely-dated Roman pottery is a group of abraded sherds from a single pot from F1 (finds no 3). The fabric of these sherds indicates that the pot is a product of the Hadham potteries (Fabric CH) and can be dated to the mid-late 3rd to 4th century. From the same context is a sherd from a large jar or flask with roller-stamp decoration, which is probably of 3rd-century date. From F1 (finds no 2) there is a sherd decorated with burnished lines; this is probably from a Cam 278 jar in Fabric GB, dated mid 2nd to mid-late 3rd century. Also from F1 is a neck sherd with a groove below the rim that is probably from a Cam 268 jar, dated early/mid 2nd-late 3rd/early 4th century. A large sherd from a mortarium that is a variant on the form type Cam 497 was recovered from F2. This mortarium type is of 2nd- or 3rd-century date. A mortarium that can be attributed to form Cam ?496, as the internal rim bead is below the level of the flange, and dating to the 2nd or possibly 3rd century, was recovered from F7. Unstratified pottery associated with F7-F9 also included a sherd of East Gaulish samian (Fabric BA(EG)) of form Dr 33, dated early-mid 2nd to earlier 3rd century, and a sherd from a Cam 407 beaker, probably of BB2: black burnished ware category 2 (Fabric GB), dated mid-late 3rd to ?4th century.

Catalogue of pottery

F1

Finds no 2 (682 g):
Fabric DJ, 4 sherds - 1 with white slip, probably from flagons, 1st-2nd/3rd century
Fabric GB, 1 sherd - Cam 278, early 2nd to mid/late 3rd century
Fabric GX, 30 sherds - Cam 218 (2 vessels), 1st-early 2nd century; Cam 227, Neronian-early 2nd century; Cam 268, early/mid 2nd-late 3rd/early 4th century
Pottery dated: Roman, early 2nd-mid/late 3rd century.

Finds no 3 (273 g):
Fabric CH, 27 sherds - abraded, probably all from one vessel, mid-late 3rd to 4th century
Fabric DJ, 1 sherd - from a large jar or flask with roller-stamp decoration, ?3rd century
Pottery dated: mid-late 3rd to 4th century.

F2

Finds no 4 (258 g):
Fabric AJ, 1 sherd - burnt, 1st-2nd/early 3rd century
Fabric DJ, 2 sherds - one from a lid, 1st-2nd/3rd century
Fabric GX 1 sherd - Roman
Fabric HZ, 1 sherd - Cam 273, 1st-2nd/3rd century
Fabric TZ, 1 sherd - Cam 497 variant, early-mid 2nd-?mid 3rd century
Pottery dated: early-mid 2nd-?mid 3rd century.

F3

Finds no 5 (108 g):
Fabric GX, 6 sherds - Cam 108?, 1st-early 2nd century
Pottery dated: Roman.

Finds no 6 (132 g):
Fabric DZ, 1 sherd - ?1st-2nd century
Fabric GX, 24 sherds - Cam 108, 1st-early 2nd century; Cam 212-217 or 218, pre-Flavian/1st century, and rim from second similar vessel
Pottery dated: 1st-early 2nd century.

F4
Finds no 9 (91 g):
Fabric GX, 3 sherds - Cam 218?, 1st-early 2nd century; Cam 266, 1st-early 2nd century
Fabric GTW, 1 sherd - grog- and ?dung-tempered, 1st century
Pottery dated: 1st-early 2nd century.

Finds no 10 (130 g):
Fabric GTW, 4 sherds - Late Iron Age
Fabric GX, 3 sherds - Roman
Pottery dated: Late Iron Age-early Roman.

F5
Finds no 11 (127 g):
Fabric DJ, 1 sherd - 1st-2nd/3rd century
Fabric EC, 1 sherd - Cam 94, pre-Flavian
Fabric GX, 6 sherds - Roman
Fabric RCW, 2 sherds - 1st century
Fabric HZ, 1 sherd - 1st-2nd century
Pottery dated: Roman, ?1st century.

F6
Finds no 14 (773 g):
Illustrated, Fig 4 - Fabric GTW, 19 sherds - Cam 203 pedestal urn with dished foot, Thompson form A4 (Thompson 1982, 61-3), almost all of the profile, 19 sherds representing about 25% of the vessel, 2 large joining sherds comprise most of the profile, wheel-thrown with burnished bands around body, Late Iron Age
Fabric HZ, 1 sherd - rim sherd, Cam 270B, some grog and burnt organic (?dung) temper, 1st/2nd century.
Pottery dated Late Iron Age/early Roman.

F7
Finds no 19 (876 g):
Fabric HZ, 3 sherds - Cam 273, 1st-2nd/3rd century
Fabric TZ, 4 sherds - all from one pot, the internal bead is below the level of the flange, Cam ?496, ?2nd century
Pottery dated: Roman, ?2nd century.

F8
Finds no 22 (3,209 g):
Fabric AA, 1 sherd - 1st-2nd century
Fabric AJ, 1 sherd - 1st-2nd/early 3rd century
Fabric BA(SG), 1 sherd - 1st century
Fabric DJ, 2 sherds - 1st-2nd/3rd century
Fabric GP, 1 sherd - dot panel beaker, Cam 122 or 123, ?Neronian-2nd century
Fabric GTW, 1 sherd - Late Iron Age
Fabric GX, 33 sherds - partial pot Cam 120, *c* AD 55-90; Cam 119; a dark grey partial vessel of unknown form, Roman ?1st century
Fabric HZ, 4 sherds - Cam 271 and Cam 273, 1st-2nd/3rd century
Fabric TZ, 1 sherd - 1st-2nd/3rd century.
(There is also a ceramic crucible and a piece of briquetage with this group.)
Pottery dated: Roman, ?1st-early 2nd century.

L2
Finds no 18 (525 g):
Fabric GX, 2 sherds - includes whole base from a large jar, Roman.

Unstratified pottery
Finds no 1 (90 g):
Fabric DJ, 1 sherd - Roman
Fabric GX, 4 sherds - Cam 243-244/46, 1st-early 2nd century

Finds no 7 (88 g):
Fabric GX, 3 sherds - Cam 218?, 1st-early 2nd century, and sherd from a large storage jar

Finds no 8 (131 g):
Fabric HZ, 1 sherd - 1st-2nd/3rd century

Finds no 12 (40 g):
Fabric GTW, 1 sherd - Late Iron Age
Fabric RCW, 1 sherd - 1st century

Finds no 16 (53 g); Roman: 1 sherd (47 g) -
Fabric GTW, probably from a large storage jar, 1st century
Post-medieval: 1 sherd (6 g) -
Fabric 42 ('Border' ware), burnt, mid 16th-17th century

Finds no 17 (90 g):
Roman: 5 sherds (80 g) -
Fabric RCW, 4 sherds, two very abraded, 1st century
Fabric UR, 1 sherd, Cam 8/24, pre-Flavian
Post-medieval: 1 sherd (10 g) -
Fabric 42 ('Border' ware), mid 16th-17th century

Finds no 20 (associated with F7, F8, F9) (90 g)
Fabric AA, 1 sherd - salzone amphora, 1st-early/mid 2nd century
Fabric BA(EG), 1 sherd - Dr 33, early-mid 2nd to earlier 3rd century
Fabric DJ, 1 sherd - 1st-2nd/3rd century
Fabric ?GB, 1 sherd - Cam 407, mid-late 3rd/4th century
Fabric GX, 18 sherds - Cam 119; Cam 218 (2) - one is a partial pot - 1st-early 2nd century
Fabric HZ, 3 sherds - Cam 273, 1st-2nd/3rd century
Fabric UR(LTC), 1 sherd - Cam 14/28, 1st century
Pottery dated: Roman, mid-late 3rd century.

7.2 The crucible

by Nina Crummy

Fragments of at least one crucible from Lexden Grange (F8) point to metal-working on the site in the Late Iron Age or early Roman period. They are in a fabric that appears to match that of a group of brass-making crucibles from the Culver Street site in Colchester's town centre, some of which were stratified in Period 1 military contexts (*CAR* **6**, 194, 196; Bayley 1984). The characteristics that distinguish these crucibles from metal-melting crucibles include a pear-shaped profile, a lack of metal droplets on the internal surface and no reddening of the external vitrified surface, all features that also occur on the Lexden Grange sherds, apart from a single tiny red speck on the outer surface of one rim fragment. An important distinction is that on the outer surface of rim fragments from Culver Street there were traces of a second layer of fabric used to cap the vessels, and this feature does not occur on the rims from Lexden Grange. If used for brass-making, these crucibles may instead have had a cap that rested upon the rim, similar to a 2nd-century crucible from Canterbury (Bayley 1984, fig 3).

Analysis by energy dispersive X-ray fluorescence (XRF), a non-destructive technique, showed the inner surfaces of the Culver Street crucibles to have very high readings for zinc, a feature that could only occur if the vessel had been capped to trap zinc vapour within it as part of the cementation method for making brass (Tylecote 1962, 53).

It is recommended that a programme of analysis of the Lexden Grange fragments be undertaken to determine if they too were used to make brass. The Culver Street crucibles are, to date, the earliest evidence for brass-making in Britain, but many Late Iron Age object-types were made from the metal, such as coins, harness fittings and Colchester brooches. These objects may have been made from brass imported from Gaul in the form of ingots, but it also suggests that there was an insular tradition for brass-making that is yet to be evidenced by archaeological finds of pre-conquest brass-making crucibles. The stratigraphic context and associations of the Lexden Grange crucible(s) are particularly pertinent to this enquiry.

Fig 4, SF 3. F8, finds no 22. Crucible fragment in three fitting pieces (a), together with a non-fitting rim fragment (b) that is probably from a second crucible. A full profile of (a) is present, showing it to be a slightly elongated hemisphere, almost pear-shaped, with a rounded base and curved wall. At least 21 mm thick at the base, the wall reduces to 5 mm at the top. The maximum diameter was about 80 mm, height 68 mm. The fabric is tempered with finely chopped vegetable matter and a little mineral temper (probably fine grit). It is friable and porous. Externally it is vitrified; internally it is fired to grey with some patches of orange on the base,

with a marked change in colour to uniform grey on the wall, coinciding with the point at which it becomes noticeably thinner. The rim fragment (b) is in the same fabric. Height 46 mm, thickness tapering from 13 to 5 mm.

7.3 The small finds and bulk iron work

by Nina Crummy

Two fragments of resolidified copper alloy may be metal-working debris or all that remains of burnt pyre deposits. The heavy weight of the larger piece, relative to its size, suggests that it may originally have been all or part of a cast leaded bronze object.

SF 1. F8, finds no 24. Roman cremation-related pit or pit with metal-working debris. Amorphous lump of resolidified copper alloy, possibly metal-working debris or a burnt pyre deposit. Maximum dimensions 30 by 23 by 12.5 mm. Weight 22 g.

SF 2. F8, finds no 25. Roman cremation-related pit or pit with metal-working debris. Amorphous ?disc of resolidified copper alloy. Diameter 11 mm, thickness 6.5 mm. Weight 2 g.

7.4 Salt briquetage

by Nina Crummy

Salt briquetage is the term for the Late Iron Age and early Roman ceramic fabrics that were made by mixing coastal alluvium with much chopped vegetable matter and used to make troughs and other equipment utilised for the production of sea-salt at Red Hill sites on the Essex coast. A single sherd from a rectangular trough in Type A fabric, at 25 mm thicker than the average for the fabric type but within the normal range was found at Lexden Grange (F8). Type A is the usual fabric found in north-east Essex (Rodwell 1979, 149-53; Fawn *et al* 1990, 11). The Lexden Grange fragment can be seen as an outlier to the assemblage of briquetage vessels and salt-making hearth furniture found at Sheepen (Hawkes & Hull 1947, 346-7; Niblett 1985, 23).

It has been argued that the *oppidum* of Camulodunum owed some of its pre-eminence to trade in salt, and the recovery of has led to suggestions that production took place not only along the coast but also within the area of the *oppidum* itself (Rodwell 1979, 159-60). However, fragments of both vessels and hearth furniture are increasingly being recognised on inland sites, making the Sheepen material less likely to be evidence of production. Studies of the inland finds suggest that the site most distant from the coast to have produced briquetage may be Baldock, Hertfordshire (Rodwell 1979; Rigby & Foster 1986, 188; Barford 1990, 79-80; Sealey 1995).

Rodwell suggested two possible methods for the material to travel inland: first, that salt was traded in the vessels in which it was made, and second, that salt production may have been a seasonal occupation, providing a link between inland and coastal sites and a means whereby hearth furniture might travel as well as vessels (Rodwell 1979, 159-60, 172). In discussing briquetage from Kelvedon, Eddy added that raw salt-cakes might be acquired at the coast to be refined inland (Eddy 1982, 26).

F8, finds no 22. Fragment in Type A fabric, with much vegerable tempering. The external surface is oxidised with occasional small patches of reduction. The inner is reduced, with the reduction extending in towards the core. Maximum dimensions 71 by 55 mm, 25 mm thick.

7.5 The slag

by Nina Crummy

Two fragments of undiagnostic slag from F8 point to iron-working somewhere in the vicinity of the site. They may have been produced during either smelting or smithing.

F8, finds no 22. Eight small fragments of undiagnostic iron-working slag. All are very light, vesicular and friable, and probably come from one original piece. Weight 73 g.

7.6 Complete list of finds

Table 2: complete list of finds.

Finds no	Context	Description	Weight (in g)
1	U/S - SW foundation trench	Roman pottery	90.0
2	F1 - upper and middle fill	Roman pottery	682.0
3	F1 - middle and lower fill	Roman pottery	273.0
4	F2	Roman tile and daub	465.0
4	F2	Roman pottery	258.0
4	F2	Burnt reddened flint	38.6
5	F3 - surface of	Roman tile	369.0
5	F3 - surface of	Roman pottery	108.0
6	F3 - surface of	Roman tile	39.5
6	F3 - surface of	Roman pottery	132.0
7	U/S, possibly from F3	Micaceous mudstone - paving slab?	332.0
7	U/S, possibly from F3	Roman pottery	88.0
8	U/S - southern foundation trenches	Roman pottery	131.0
9	F4 - middle fill	Belemnite fossil	14.0
9	F4 - middle fill	Roman pottery	91.0
10	F4 - lower fill	Roman pottery	130.0
11	F5 - middle and lower fill	Roman tile	105.6
11	F5 - middle and lower fill	Roman pottery	127.0
12	U/S - spoil from pipe trench	Roman pottery	40.0
12	U/S - spoil from pipe trench	Roman? tile	215.0
13		no 13	
14	F6	Iron Age pottery	773.0
15	F6 - upper fill	Cremated animal bone including a sheep's tooth	2.0
16	U/S	Prehistoric and Roman pottery?	53.0
17	U/S	Peg-tile	34.2
17	U/S	Roman tile	346.6
17	U/S	Roman pottery	90.0
18	L2	Roman pottery	525.0
19	F7	Roman pottery	876.0
19	F7	Roman tile	260.0
19	F7	Slate (probably intrusive)	24.0
20	U/S, from F7, F8 or F9?	Roman pottery	90.0
21	U/S, from F7, F8 or F9?	1 piece of cremated bone (animal or human)	4.5
22	F8	Slate	72.0
22	F8	Roman tile	42.0
22	F8	Slag	73.0
22	F8	Animal bone	93.0
22	F8	Late Iron Age and Roman pottery	3,209.0
22	F8	SF no 3. Ceramic crucible	135.0
22	F8	1 fragment of briquetage	80.0
23	F8	Small amount of uncremated animal bone and one piece of cremated bone (human or animal?)	6.0
24	F8	SF no 1. Resolidified copper-alloy lump, possibly metal-working debris or a burnt pyre deposit	22.0
25	F8	SF no 2. ?Disc of resolidified copper alloy	2.0

8 Discussion

The features from the watching brief tie in with and add to what was found in the 2005 evaluation. All features except one (F6) can be dated to the Roman period. The western half of a pit with a burnt fill, found in evaluation trench T1, was identified in the foundation trenches (F2). A narrow ditch (F3) recorded during the watching brief may form one side of an enclosure, the eastern arm of which recorded in evaluation trench T1. It is tempting to interpret this possible enclosure as a burial enclosure but this was not confirmed.

Three or four further pits dating to the Roman period were identified (F1, F5, F7 and possibly F9) and one other Roman ditch (F4).

One probable Late Iron Age cremation burial (F6) was exposed during groundworks for a service trench. A pit (F8) exposed in the soakaway contained much charcoal, Roman pottery and a small amount of cremated bone. This is interpreted either as a Roman cremation-related pit or, due to the presence of a crucible, as a pit with metal-working debris. The lack of large quantities of human cremated bone could well be attributed to the manner of excavation using a mechanical excavator with a toothed bucket and done without archaeological supervision.

The crucible may have been used for making brass on the site and, if so, is a very rare example of its kind. Slag from the same feature points to iron-working on the site, as well.

It is feasible that some Roman pottery found on spoil heaps may possibly derive from other cremation burials.

The function of the large deep straight-sided pit (F7) seen in the soakaway is not easily identifiable. The depth of the soakaway prevented any hand-cleaning of the feature, meaning that the reddening of the edges at the base could not be investigated. The pit contained large amounts of Roman pottery in large pieces.

Modern disturbance was recorded on the north-eastern part of the site, similar to what was seen in the 2005 evaluation trench T1. This probably came about as a result of the creation of the car-park.

9 Archive deposition

The 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 and Ipswich Museums under accession code COLEM 2006.90.

10 Acknowledgements

CAT is grateful to Enterprise Heritage Ltd for commissioning and funding the work and to Martin Winter, Colchester Borough Council Archaeological Officer, who monitored the project. The fieldwork was carried out by S Benfield, W Clarke, C Lister, and K Orr. The finds were drawn by E Spurgeon.

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12 Glossary

amphora	large vessel for transporting wine, olive oil or fish sauce from the Continent
briquetage	clay apparatus used in salt-making
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'
modern	period from the 19th century onwards to the present
natural	geological deposit undisturbed by human activity
post-medieval	the period from *c* AD 1500 to around *c* AD 1900
Roman	the period between AD 43 and *c* AD 410
U/S	unstratified, ie no context

13 Contexts

Table 3: list of contexts.

Context	Description	Associated artefacts	Date of context
F1	Deep pit filled by medium dark brown sandy silt; charcoal at the base; tile and daub flecks throughout; started 700mm below ground-level - sealed by L2; cut natural L3	Roman pottery	Roman
F2	Western half of a pit, with bands of dense charcoal and burnt clay fill; medium brown fill, becoming darker brown towards the base; continuation of F3 from the 2005 evaluation - a straight-sided 1.5m-wide pit - sealed by L2; cut natural L3	Pottery, tile and daub	Roman
F3	630mm-wide ditch at least 2.5m long, filled by light brown sandy silt, aligned east to west; top of feature was 400mm below ground-level; smashed pottery on the surface - sealed by L2, cut L3	Roman pottery	Roman
F4	1.3m-wide ditch, aligned north-south; grey brown fill containing flecks of charcoal; top of feature was 400mm below ground-level - sealed by L1, cut L3	Late Iron Age and Roman pottery	Roman
F5	1.8m-wide pit with a moist medium grey brown sandy silt containing flecks of charcoal and degraded bone; top of pit was 400mm below ground-level - sealed by L1; cut L3	Late Iron Age and Roman pottery, and tile	Roman
F6	Pit containing fragments of a pedestal urn and some fragments of cremated bone; the top of the pit was 600mm below ground-level - sealed by L2; cut into L4 - probable cremation burial	Late Iron Age pottery, cremated animal bone	Late Iron Age
F7	Large, straight-sided, deep pit containing Roman pottery; charcoal and reddening of the sides at the base - sealed by L1; cut L3	Roman pottery and tile	Roman
F8	Pit - probable cremation-related pit or pit with metal-working debris with charcoal at the base of the pit - sealed by L1; cut L4 and L5	Roman pottery, a very small amount of cremated and non-cremated bone, animal bone, 2 lumps of melted copper alloy, crucible, slag and briquetage	Roman
F9	Possible pit reportedly seen by contractors before its removal, but not seen by an archaeologist		undated

L1	Medium grey brown sandy silt topsoil sealing some Roman or Late Iron Age features		modern
L2	Light yellow brown silty sand topsoil sealing some Roman or Late Iron Age features		post-Roman
L3	Natural sand and gravel		Glacial
L4	Very light brown sandy silt - Roman topsoil? - some Roman or Late Iron Age features cut into it		Roman

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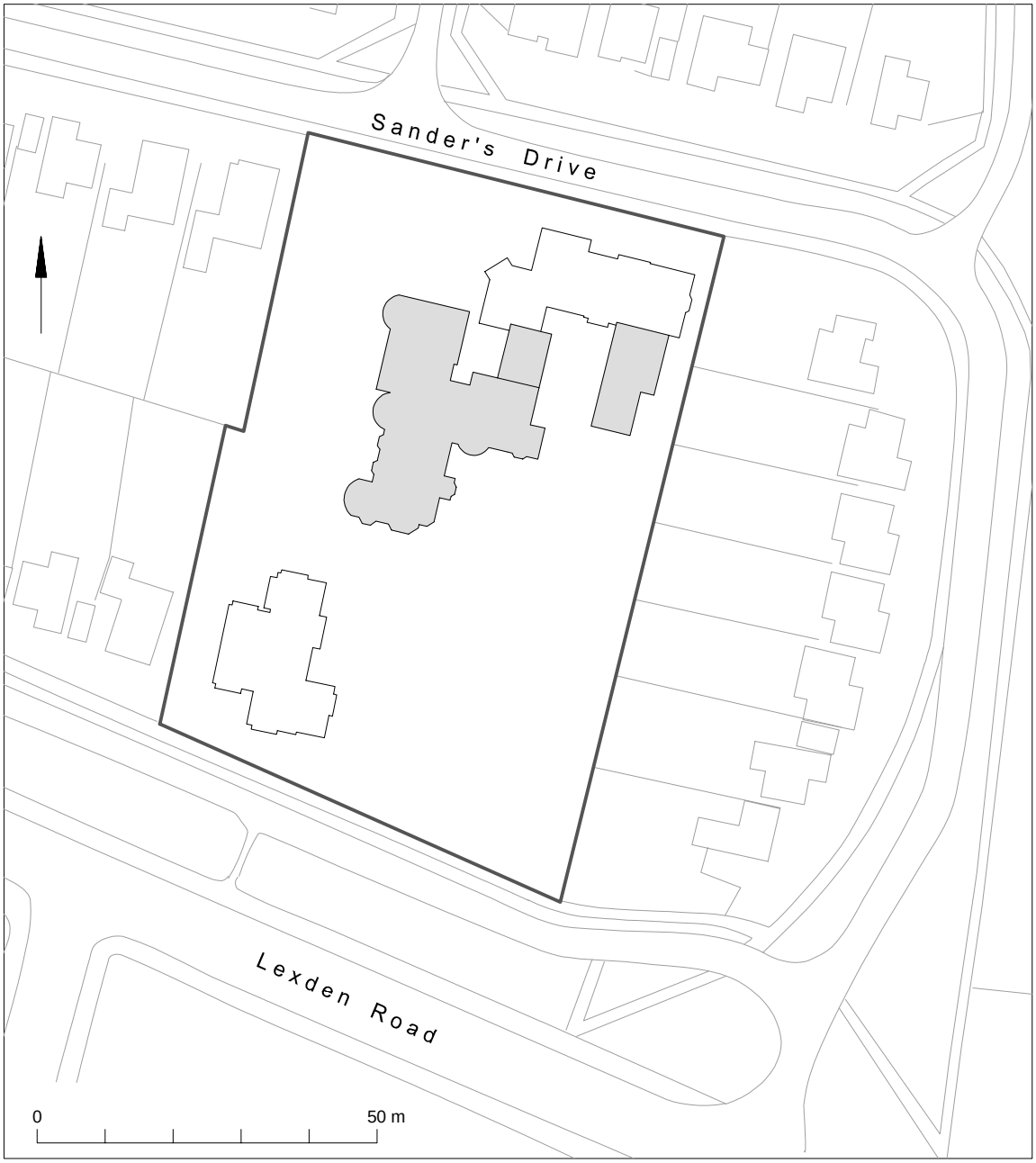


Fig 1 Site location (original buildings shaded).

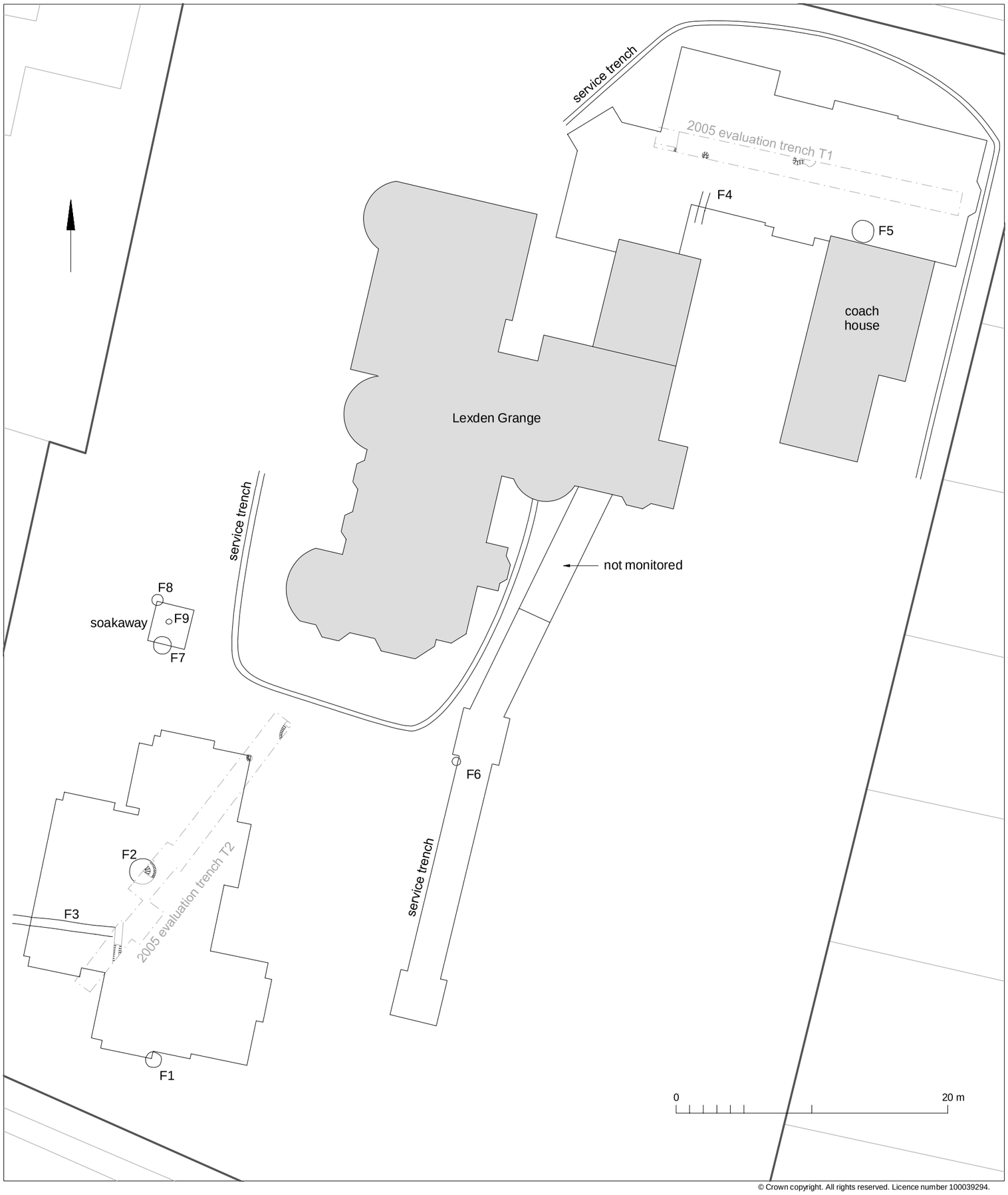


Fig 2 Plan of site, showing features from the watching brief and from the 2005 evaluation trenches.

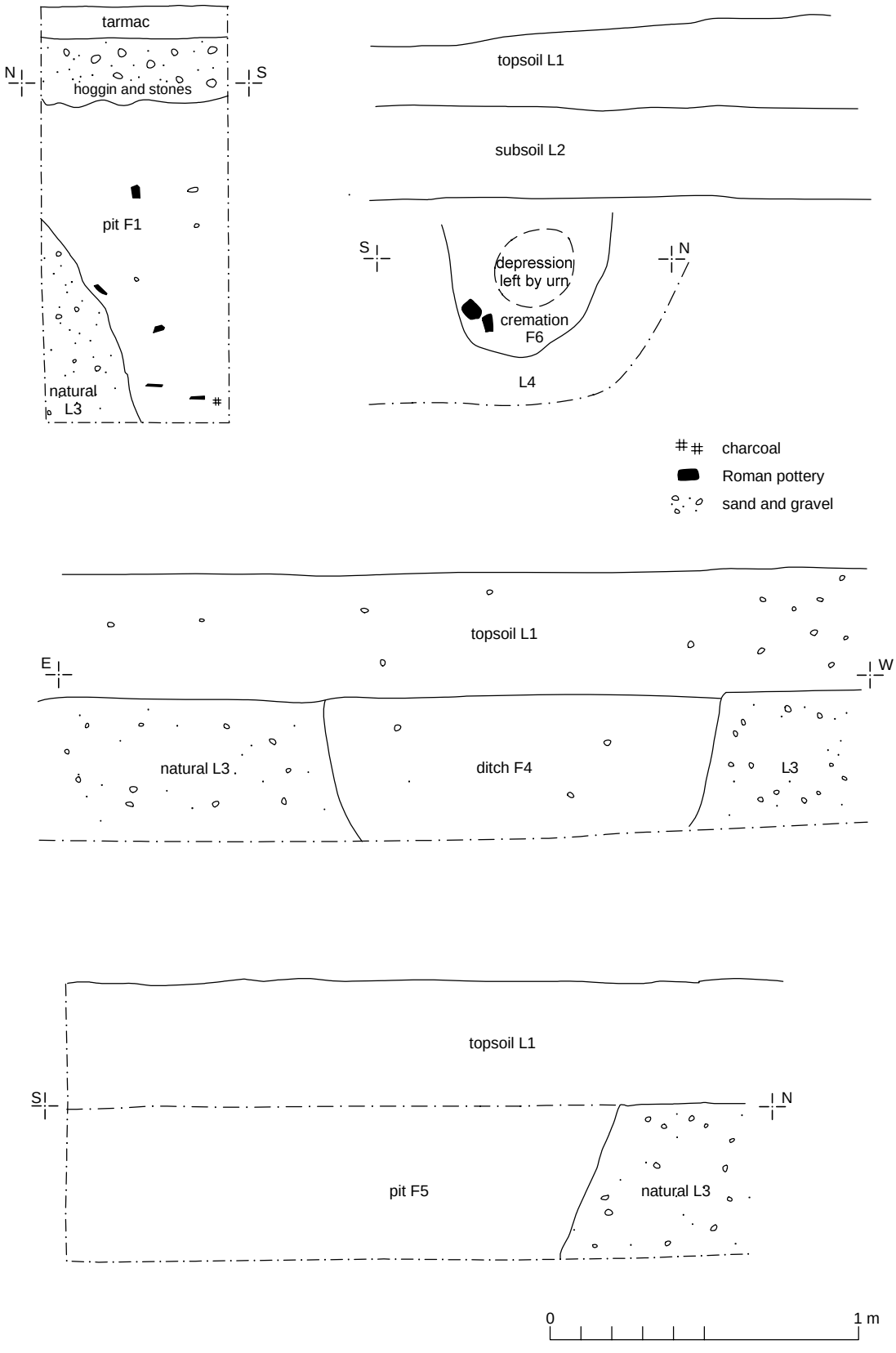
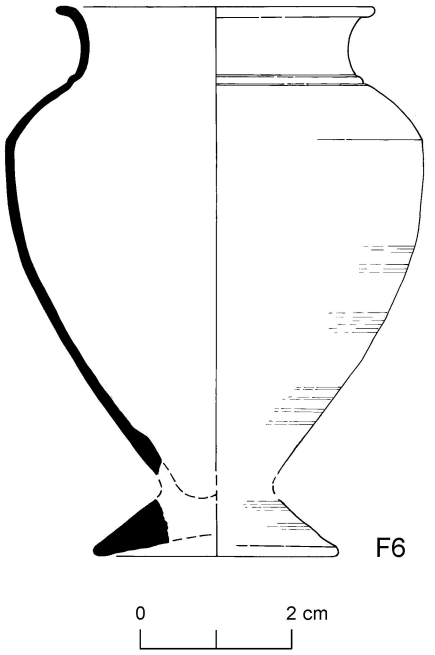


Fig 3 Sections.



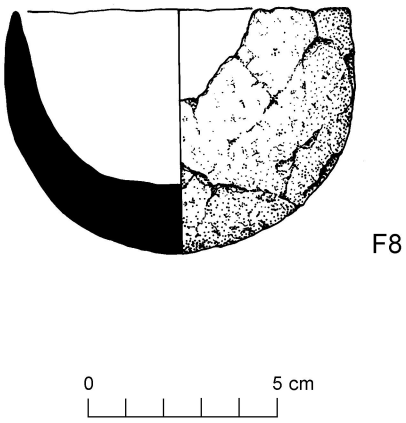


Fig 4 Pedestal urn from F6; crucible from F8.

Essex Historic Environment Record/
Essex Archaeology and History

Summary sheet

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">Site address: Lexden Grange, 127 Lexden Road, Colchester, Essex</td></tr>
<tr><td>Parish: Colchester</td><td>District: Colchester</td></tr>
<tr><td>NGR: TL 97867 25133 (c)</td><td>Site code:
Museum accession code COLEM 2006.90</td></tr>
<tr><td>Type of work:
Watching brief</td><td>Site director/group:
Colchester Archaeological Trust</td></tr>
<tr><td>Date of work:
July 2006-February 2007</td><td>Size of area investigated:
0.6 hectares</td></tr>
<tr><td>Location of finds/curating museum:
Colchester and Ipswich Museums</td><td>Funding source:
Developer</td></tr>
<tr><td>Further seasons anticipated? No</td><td>Related UAD nos:
1178, 1225, 1565</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Final report: CAT Report 431 and summary in EAH</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Periods represented: Late Iron Age and Roman</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Summary of fieldwork results:
Groundworks for a small residential development at Lexden Grange were monitored by the Colchester Archaeological Trust. Part of a Late Iron Age pedestal urn is likely to be the remains of a disturbed cremation burial. Other pits found and Roman pottery from spoil heaps may also be burial-related. A crucible and possible metal-working debris point to metal-working on the site in the Roman period.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Previous summaries/reports: CAT Report 338</td></tr>
<tr><td>Author of summary:
Kate Orr</td><td>Date of summary:
August 2007</td></tr>
</table>