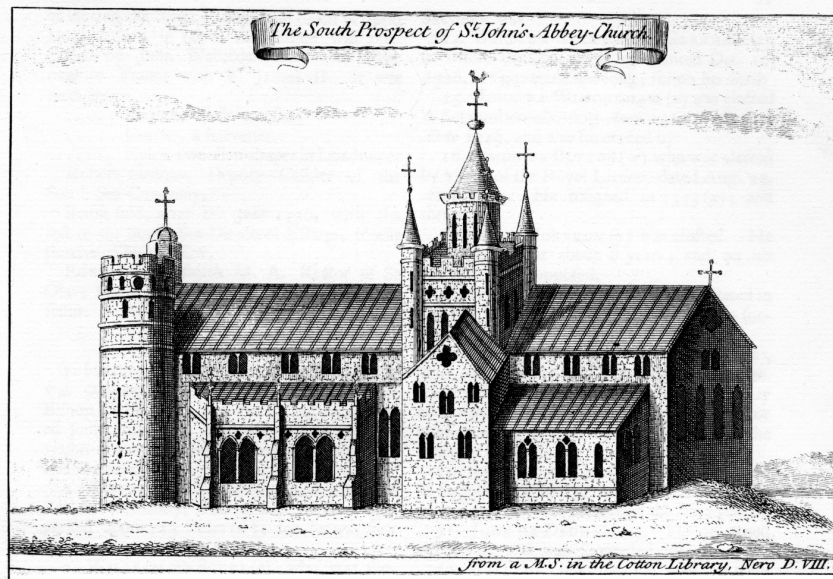


St Johns Abbey church: An evaluation at the Garrison Officers Club, St Johns Green, Colchester, Essex.

February-March 2011



report prepared by
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on behalf of The Colchester Garrison Officers Club

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1 Summary

The site of the Abbey church of St John's has been discovered in an evaluation on the site of the Garrison Officers Club. Three evaluation trenches were cut in the first instance, and two more were added when structural remains were discovered.

The parts of the church exposed in the evaluation were the west wall, the north and south nave walls, and internal walls which are probably the south wall of the north aisle and the north wall of the south aisle.

No superstructure survived. The only below-ground structure was a length of footings for the west church wall. To judge by the evaluated part of the church site, the church has been completely demolished (probably in the 17th century), and all walls and floors removed. Notable finds included painted glass and decorated floor tiles, presumably from the church structure.

Non-church finds included a few Roman pits, two medieval inhumations (40m to the north of the north wall of the church), and many pits and much robbing activity probably connected with the conversion of part of the demolished church into the Lucas House which occupied the (church) site until it was demolished in the late 17th century (after it suffered severe damage in the civil war), or with the military use of the site thereafter.

2 Introduction (Fig 1)

- 2.1 This report describes the archaeological work carried out by the Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) on behalf of The Colchester Garrison Officers Club, St Johns Green, Colchester, Essex between December 2010 and March 2011.
- 2.2 The site is located within a sensitive archaeological area south of Colchester town centre. It is immediately adjacent to St. John's Abbey Gatehouse and within the grounds of the walled boundary of the abbey precinct of the former Benedictine Abbey of St John.
- 2.3 An archaeological evaluation was carried out on the former site of the Garrison Officers Club building which had been destroyed by fire. The site had been cleared of fire damaged buildings of the officers club down to ground floor slab level leaving only the squash courts standing to the rear (north) of the clubhouse.
- 2.4 Most of the site of which is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM no 26307) (Fig.1). This evaluation has therefore required Scheduled Monument consent.
- 2.5 The monument description states that all visible and buried remains of the abbey are included within the SAM, including part of the Roman extra-mural cemeteries that are located within the abbey precinct wall. Also included are the remains of a medieval church (thought to have been Sigeric's Church of St John the Evangelist) and a 17th-century house and its formal gardens whose terraces are visible within the Garrison Officers' Club grounds. For clarity, in terms of buried remains, it is stated that all ground beneath the modern non-scheduled standing buildings, surfaces and services are included.
- 2.6 A planning application will eventually be submitted to the LPA for re-construction of the Officers Club. Scheduled Monument Consent and Conservation Area consent will also be required.
- 2.7 This report documents the three evaluation trenches agreed beforehand and the two extra trenches excavated to explore the possibility that the former St Johns abbey church had been discovered beneath the building.
- 2.8 The site is located at NGR TL 9981 2477.
- 2.9 All fieldwork and reporting was done in accordance with CAT's *Policies and procedures* (CAT 2008), Colchester Borough Council's *Guidelines on standards and practices for archaeological fieldwork in the Borough of Colchester* (CIMS 2008a) and

Guidelines on the preparation and transfer of archaeological archives to Colchester and Ipswich Museums (CIMS 2008b), and the Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (IfA 2008a) and *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (IfA 2008b). The guidance contained in the documents *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment* by English Heritage (MoRPHE), and *Standards for field archaeology in the East of England (EAA 14)* was also followed.

3 Archaeological and historical background (Fig 1)

The site is located at the northern edge of the extensive precinct of St John's Abbey. The precinct, the precinct wall and Abbey Gatehouse are all Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAM 26307).

There is more detail of the church in the Discussion (Section 67 below), but a summary is given here. The abbey of St John's at Colchester was one of the last of the monastic houses to be seized by Henry VIII as part of his plan to crush the power of the catholic church in England and Wales. Its last abbot, John Beche, was imprisoned in the Tower of London, discharged, rearrested and then tried in Colchester where, in 1539, he was found guilty and hanged.

The abbey church was laid out in 1095 and completed in 1115. In 1133 the abbey was burnt down, and documentary evidence from this time states that the cloister and other buildings were then relocated to the south of the church (*CAR 1*, 40-41. *VCH 9*, 303). The church along with the rest of the abbey was demolished during the century following the Dissolution of the Monasteries by Henry VIII.

Following the dissolution of the Abbey in 1539 the site passed to various individuals and was eventually acquired by the Lucas family who constructed a mansion and resided there until the mid 17th century. During the siege of Colchester in 1648 the former abbey was used as a royalist stronghold and sustained considerable damage in the fighting. With the exception of the extant, but restored gatehouse, the remaining abbey buildings seem to have been demolished in the 1660s. The abbey site was bought by the War Office in 1860 from the Baring family, and stayed in military ownership until very recently (*VCH 9*).

No plan of the monastery has survived, the nearest being what was shown on John Speed's map of Colchester published in 1611-12. This shows a number of buildings huddled together inside the abbey's defensive wall labelled 'St John's Abbey' and what appears to be the church's central tower still standing in isolation.

An evaluation carried out by CAT in 2007 to the west of the Garrison Officers Club uncovered a few sections of monastic foundations, also Roman, medieval and post-medieval deposits buried beneath deep deposits of topsoil, buried topsoil and demolition material. This was an important advance but the exposures were limited and inconclusive because the investigation was modest in scale. Nothing was seen of the church itself until the current evaluation (CAT Report 405). A watching brief in 1986 conducted when the squash courts were extended to the east revealed medieval walling and graves (UAD EVT 3380), and CAT excavations during an extension to the east side of the Garrison Officers' Club in 1988 (findings unpublished) revealed a stone wall foundation believed to have been part of the abbey church (UAD EVT 3380).

4 Aim, method

The aim of the evaluation was to establish the extent, character, and date of any archaeological deposits that may be present. This information would then enable an informed decision to be taken on the preservation or otherwise of any deposits and the need for further archaeological work and/or mitigation.

5 Results (Figs 1-4, 6-8)

Methodology

Evaluation methodology was according to a Brief (CBC 2010) provided by Colchester Borough Council Archaeological Officer (CBCAO), and a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) written by CAT and agreed with CBCAO (CAT 2011).

The evaluation consisted initially of three trial-trenches (T1-T3: Fig 1). Trench 1 (8m long) was located north of the extant squash court and was aligned NW-SE (to aid the identification of any E-W orientated graves in this area). T2 (N-S and 25m long) and T3 (E-W and 17m long) were placed within the footprint of the demolished clubhouse to examine the conjectural layout of the abbey church (Fig 1).

The discovery of substantial robber trenches (ie the abbey church) led to the opening up of a further two trenches: a series of linked trenches essentially forming one N-S trench 20m long (T4) along the western edge of the clubhouse footprint, and T5 (10m long and N-S) positioned midway between T2 and T4 to intercept the extrapolated position of robbed-out wall lines seen in the northern end of T2.

The pre-church features (Fig 4)

Given the importance of the Abbey church, it seems sensible to discuss the excavated sequences in relation to the church and its demolition.

There were a number of features in Trench 2 which predated the church sequence. Generally speaking these contained Roman finds, and it is most likely that they were of Roman date. However, given the ubiquity of Roman finds, it is also possible that they were medieval features containing residual Roman material. They were :

F2: Small pit cutting natural L4. Sandy silt fill, with oyster shell. Appeared to cut F9.

F7: Small part of a pit at the extreme S end of T2. Cut natural L4, contained one piece of Roman pottery, oyster shell and other inclusions.

F8: Ditch, E-W aligned, and with V-shaped profile. Contained large quantity of oyster and mussel shells. Based on the similarity of the fills, it was infilled the same time as the gully F9 directly to its south. Cut by robber trench F1. Fifteen Roman sherds.

F9: E-W gully alongside and directly S of ditch F8. Roman pottery in fill.

F19: Ditch, E-W orientated, cutting natural L4 at N end of T2. Unexcavated, surface finds only, all Roman. Much slag in this feature.

Also in the centre of T2 was a group of much larger features referred to in site note as 'Pit complex A'. None of them were excavated, and all finds were recovered from the surface of the features: They were:

F10: Large pit, with very pronounced tip line of oyster shells. Only partially in T2. Cut pit F11. Ten Roman sherds.

F11: Small part of a larger pit, cut by F10. Roman pottery and tile.

F12: Large pit, cut by F13, F14, F16, F22. Lots of Roman pottery.

F14: Small pit cutting F12. No finds.

F15: Pit (or more than one?), cut by F12.

Generally speaking, these features represent Roman-period (or perhaps medieval) use of the site prior to the construction of the Abbey church. Given the apparent size of the larger pits (F10, F12, F15), it is likely that these were originally dug to extract sand for construction projects in and around the (Roman) town.

The robbing of the church structure (Figs 2-4)

None of the original church structure survived, but the west end of its ground-plan is defined by the position of robber trenches. Four east/west-aligned walls were defined by robber trenches. From N to S across the site, it is proposed that these were:

- the N nave wall (robber trench F20) intercepted by the N end of T2 and T5.
- the south wall of a N aisle (robber trench F18) in T2 and the centre of T5
- the north wall of a S aisle (robber trench F4), in T2.
- the S nave wall (robber trench F1), in T2 and T3.

Further to these, another very large N-S aligned robber trench in T4 (F33 and F39) appears to define the W nave wall, although it remains to be established why it was not quite at right angles to the S nave wall (ie, robber trench F1).

Detail of the robber trenches

It is pertinent to the interpretation of the site to consider the profiles and depths of the robber trenches, and the material they contain (both demolition debris from the church, and dated finds).

F1: the south nave wall, and F6: continuation of south nave wall.

A large, wide, straight-sided. So large was this robber trench that the three machine-cut sections of T3 (sx 1- sx3) only exposed its fill, and not its sides.

The CBM recovered from the surface of F1 consisted of post-medieval and reused Roman material. Lots of other finds inc painted window glass.

The proportions of CBM, soil (loose), mortar and sand changed dramatically along the robber trench. F1 SX1- cut from ground level, lots of CBM and stone in a mainly mortar matrix. F1 SX2- similar to SX1. F1 SX3- east portion of SX3 almost entirely sand (redeposited natural). Very little CBM at all. Edges shown by collapse of backfilled robber trench material away from the edges. Return to soil and mortar 0.5m from the far western end. F24 could be a buttress cut by F25. F1 SX4 was unexcavated and had lots of stone in a mortar rich matrix- lots of CBM and quite soil in places, in particular when a SX was excavated through F30. SX4 was cut by quite a few later pits as well as modern building foundations.

Finds: PMRE. 17th-19th German stoneware. Raeren?. 17th-18th

F6 was a continuation of F1, the main difference being that F6 was much deeper - 1.4m deep as opposed to F1 which was 0.7m deep. The fill was the same as F1 - lots of mortar, stone and CBM. The difference in depth may imply that the wall robbed by F6 was of a much more substantial build than that robbed by F1. If this is so, then T2

coincided with a difference in the structure of the church, with the less substantial structure to the west of T2 (ie, walls in T3-5), and the more substantial structure to the east of T2.

Finds: Fine medieval sherds, possibly Hedingham ware fabric 22. 1 has green glaze over brown stripe. PMRE. 17th-19th

F4: the north wall of the south aisle

Another massive E-W aligned robber trench in the centre of Trench 2. Cut through dark soil (L2/L3) and through natural. Fill of soft yellow sand with soil (more sand than soil). Very little CBM or stone (though some big pieces of stone-greensand). More finds associated with church (worked stone painted window glass etc.). Kink on the southern edge of the robber trench could have been formed during collapse when the material was being robbed as very steep sides and deep.

F18: the south wall of the north aisle

Another large E-W robber trench. SX1- Some very solid bits, in particular beneath pit F17 (stone, and brick set in a solid mortar- still quite a bit of sand!). Quite a lot of soft orange/yellow sand but overall lots of stone, CBM and mortar. Certainly most solid (in places) of all the robber trenches, possible solid foundation survived further down. Cut pretty much from the surface, cut by a modern foundation, not excavated, no finds recovered.

SX2 (T5)- slot excavated through F17, the fill was considerably sandier in this location and the edges were a little uncertain (believed to be due to collapse). Excavation was continued to a depth of 0.8m below modern ground level. Roman and PM CBM and stone recovered.

F20: the north wall of the nave

The furthest north of the large E-W robber trenches. T2 (SX 1)- Considerably more soil in this robber trench than the others. May have been truncated by a later dark soil feature- why it was not observable until much further down and under a load of dark soil (dumped?, lots, or one large, pit). F20 reduced in this area to ensure that it was a robber trench. finds recovered suggest it certainly is one despite amount of soil in fill compared to the other robber trenches. Quite a bit of mortar further down. A sondage was also excavated against the edge of the trench. The northern edge of the robber trench was located outside of the loe. The southern edge may have been cut by another feature or it may have been collapse. Finds were recovered in keeping with the robber trench theory (from surface no.27, then sondage).

SX2 T5- Mixed fill of sand (orange, natural) and dark grey brown sandy silt. SX2 survived at a much greater height than SX1. Lots of stone (mainly septaria and greensand) as well as some moulded pieces of mortar and some glazed floor tile. The robber trench of SX2 cuts through a probable demolition layer (L5) and a dark brown soil/sand layer beneath (L6). Both northern and southern edges were identified.

Finds: Base fragment of green glass wine bottle. 18th century? Frechen ware fabric 45d

F24: south nave wall buttress?

Probable buttress, or an extension of the southern aisle? Quite a wide N-S aligned robber trench continuing under southern loe. Peg-tile and more glazed floor tile, abundant mortar, stone and CBM.

F33: southern end of west nave wall

N-S robber trench in the southern end of Trench 4. This robber trench was different to the other in that it was mainly mortar fill and contained a large flint nodule (not retained). The fill was more similar to F5. Based on other finds though this is probably

the western end of the church but perhaps there was a later addition here (hence different fill and flint nodule!).

F39: main west nave wall

The superstructure had been robbed down to a c.3.5m wide, flat, and solid surface consisting of undressed stone in a pale yellow lime mortar. There was little or no true robbing debris lying over the foundation because it had been truncated by the construction of the large modern foundations which overlay it and hindered access to parts of F39.

Small right-angled hollowed out depression in the masonry on the western edge, only 60mm deep, perhaps where a structural feature was once located. Small slot excavated down western edge showed front of masonry to be very flat (almost smooth) almost, but not, faced (but mainly mortar). Slot also found it to be deep, with flat, solid masonry continuing below a depth of 0.45m below. North-eastern corner the smooth flat face became more rough and it was not flat on top of the masonry (i.e. very rough in this corner, felt like it had been damaged/broken off, probably a wall in this location) broken of bits lay next to the wall stump. Convincing corner overlain by thick mortar deposit. Nothing to the north of this corner.

Whole thing was notably shallow- overlain by a modern building debris then a very thin layer of mixed dark soil with lots of inclusions. Foundations laid directly on it so uncovered in 1920's when first phase of officers club was constructed.

Mainly mortar, greensand and septaria. Especially mortar in east,.

Robbing of other possible parts of church

F3: robber of internal nave structure?

Almost parallel to and 00m north of south nave wall, this straight-sided and flat-based trench may have been a robber trench. Cut from high up, and had a sandy dark fill. Contained a glazed floor tile.

F5, F16, F22: circular mortar features

F5 was a shallow, circular feature, filled almost entirely with mortar. Not solid or substantial. One of a series of three, the other two (F16, F22) were extremely shallow and mostly beyond loe. Fragmentary mortar and occasional building material including Roman and post-Roman CBM, and glazed floor tile which looked notably later than the glazed tile from the robber trenches. Tempting to see these as column bases, but spacing not regular, and perhaps too insubstantial. May be patches of mortar from construction phase of church, or (because cut from high up) from a later building?

Finds: F5: PMRE. 17th-19th

F13

An E-W feature cutting F12 Roman pit F12 in pit complex A. Quite straight sided and quite square ended. Not bottomed, excavation stopped at a depth of 1m below modern ground level. Robber trench? Possibly. Contained glazed floor tile. Circular mortar feature (F16) directly sealed it, so if F16 were part of the church, then F13 predates (that phase of the) church.

F37

Possible robber trench in approximate alignment of west church wall (ie, robber trench F33 and solid masonry F38).

Steep-sided and deep. Fill: sandy with rare stone fragments and also little CBM – a lot darker than other robber trenches. Cuts natural L4. Finds included peg-tile and PM pot. A later feature cut into the robber trench?.

Finds: PMRE. 17th-19th.

F41

Originally suspected of being a robber trench, but more likely to be a deposit of demolition material (lots of mortar) adjacent to and west of the robbed west wall of the church (ie F39). Approximately 70mm deep (where cut by F40). Overlies natural L4.

F46

A narrow projection of lime mortar with brick/peg-tile, running almost E-W off W wall of nave. Quite solid, and sealed by pea grit. Truncated footing, or robber trench?

Features outside church (to the west)

F34: Dark soil deposit with abundant oyster shell - large pit outside church? Unexcavated. Cut through by robber trench F33. Only residual Roman finds.

F35: Pit, lots of whole oyster shell as well as small inclusions. Not excavated. Mostly outside of loe.

Finds: Twisted rod handle in gritty red fabric. Probably fabric 21, sandy orange ware. 13th-14th?

F36: Post-hole, c.30cm diameter, cutting natural L4. Not excavated.

F38

Unexcavated large pit (or complex of pits) all with very similar medium brown silty sand fills). Post-med finds and residual Roman CBM. Perhaps associated with robbing/demolition?

Finds: PMRE. 17th-19th. Includes handle and rim frags F38/L2 Unglazed PMRE. 17th-19th.

F40

Pit with dark fill cutting mortar rich deposits (F41) next to church masonry F39. Straight sided with a flat base. Slate observed in fill (according to notes).

Post-medieval pit complex B – outside church (to the west)

F43: Large pit which is presumed to abut (rather than cut) masonry F39. Dark soil fill. Presumed to be post-med or later.

F44: B. Earlier pit in pit complex series.

F45: Sub-square looking pit cutting robbing material F46.

Pit complex C: late post-medieval pits cutting robber trench F1.

These pits clearly post-date the 17th century robbing of the church, and their finds indicate that they probably post-date the Lucas House. Probably associated with military use of site.

F25

One of a series of pits in a row along southern loe of T3. Possible more pits in Pit complex C series may have been lost when F1 SX 2 was excavated. Fill was dark and contained post-med/mod pot, CBM and small coal frags. Quite a bit of F25 was beneath a modern foundation.

Finds: Fabric 45m modern stoneware. 19th-20th.

F30

Based on shape could have been two pits. Half sectioned to retrieve finds and find out depth. Pot, peg-tile and clay pipe recovered. Dark fill, cut F1 SX3- which was notably solid in base of pit.

Finds: PMRE. 17th-19th.Fabric 48d modern ironstone. 19th-20th

F31

One, or two pits, unexcavated.

F32

Unexcavated PM pit.

F48

Photographed as F25 when it was believed that F25 was a linear. Certainly another discrete pit in series of pits.

Modern features

These are features at the top of the stratigraphical sequence.

F17

Pit cutting robber trench F18. dark soft fill. Fabric 20? medieval coarseware. 13th-14th century.

F23

Post-med/modern pit, cut from high up, overlies pit complex A, Roman material in fill (reused/residual). Very loose fill with common mortar frags.

F42

Modern pipe. (labelled as feature before pipe uncovered).

F47

A linear believed to be late post-medieval but possibly modern. Ran the length of the whole southern half of T5. Deep feature (base not found at depth of 0.9m BMGL), cut the church demolition material (L6) and the post-medieval wall robbing (F18 SX2). One piece of pot ?modern? 1 fabric 48d modern ironstone, 44g. 19th-20th

Trench 1

F26

Small, round pit, the edge of which was red as it had been scorched. The fill of the pit contained abundant small frags (inclusions) of shell. The shell included oyster, cockle, mussels and winkles. Pit appeared to be cut into the fill of a huge pit which also contained lots of small shell frags, in particular one 'tip-line' which was dense with shell. A second small pit, F29 was v. similar. Bout the same depth as a ?med human burial but could feasibly be Roman.

F27

Probably a very large pit. Possibly a backfilled quarry.. Based on depth and location would pos make sense to be medieval but all the finds (and there were a few) point

towards Roman date (M/L2C-M3C) for the deposit. Chance it is just deposited soil incorporating lots of Roman material, perhaps dumped there by the monks during the removal of the hillock. However, when the base of the trench was cleaned it looked as if there were distinct fill 'tip-lines' in the base of the trench. It is uncertain whether the entirety of T1 was excavated into F27. If so, then there are five distinct fills or 'tip-line'. It is possible, however, that the deposit of dark soil in the south-east is not part of the feature and is in fact just a dark soil/topsoil deposit, perhaps akin to L3 in T2-5 or perhaps from the deposition of soil here by the monks. It is known from previous work that the deposits in this area are deep (PC's WB. A small section was excavated by hand through F27 to a depth of below 1m BMGL and it was still homogenous dark soil. Fill A had lots of shell, Fill B had absolutely loads in a dark yellow/brown sand.

- A- medium brown soil, quite a bit of shell.
- B- Light brown soil with abundant shell
- C- Mottled clay/soil with frags of building material.
- D- Darker brown soil
- E- Very dark brown/grey soil, mottled with clay/sand, lots of building material frags.

F28

A medieval inhumation. Can be confident of age due to bone preservation and observation of loads of other skeletons in this area during the PC watching brief. Also documented? Just one foot was uncovered in very western end of trench. The bone was not excavated, it was photographed, its location plotted then it was covered over again. The rest of the skeleton was outside the loe. E-W orientated with head end in the west (as you'd expect). Grave fill was exactly the same as the dark soil into which it was cut (very hard to distinguish). Heads to the west.

F29

Same as F29, more of feature outside of loe. No evidence of burning in the fill of the pit. Not excavated.

6 Finds

6.1 Note on finds reports

A complete list of finds by Stephen Benfield is given below as Table 1. In addition, reports on individual finds types are then given (6.2, medieval and later pottery: 6.3, the small finds, painted glass and clay tobacco pipe: 6.4, floor tiles: 6.5, animal bone).

Roman pottery fabric codes are after *CAR 10*, and post-Roman after *CAR 7*.

Table 1: Bulk finds list and spot dating
by Stephen Benfield

Context	finds no	Context type and date	finds	spot dating
F01	001	Post-medieval robber trench	pot p-Rom 1@17g Fabric 40 CBM Rom 2@987, RBT (reused); post Rom 5@2313: brick, PT bone 1@35g	p-med/mod – pot 17-18C
F01	002	Post-medieval robber trench	pot p-Rom 1@17g Fabric 45M CBM Rom 1@903, RBT (reused); post Rom 2@687: brick, PT	prob mod
F01	049	Post-medieval robber trench	CBM post Rom 1@312: glazed floor tile	med
F01 sx2	013	Post-medieval robber trench	CBM Rom 4@1979, RBT (reused); post Rom 3@597: brick, PT stone 1@429: sep	p-med/mod
F02	004	Roman pit	pot Rom 1@2g Fabric GX slag 1@64g	Rom
F02	043	Roman pit	stone 3@554: sep	
F03	005	Post-med pit	pot Rom 5@48g: Fabrics BACG, GB, GX CBM Rom: 2@167g, RBT; p-Rom 2@137g, T, glazed floor tile	(residual Rom) med
F04	009	Post-medieval robber trench	stone 1@11000g greensand, large flat stone piece, not worked, mortar on all faces, but only traces at one end on roughly curving edge	reused Rom?
F05	006	Post-med mortar filled pit	pot Rom 4@57g: Fabrics CZ Cam 391, GB, GX; p-Rom Fabric 40 CBM Rom: 1@275g, RB cream; p-Rom 3@277g, B/T wall plaster 1@10g white surface animal bone 2@23g (mandible) stone 1@39g prob greensand – tesserae like large cube slate 1@7	p-med 17-18C
F05	010	Post-med mortar filled pit	CBM Rom: 2@1348g, RBT (reused); p-Rom 2@625g, glazed floor tile	med
F06	015	Post-medieval robber trench	pot Rom 1@15g: Fabric GB; p-Rom 3@40g Fabrics 40 CBM Rom: 1@327g, RBT (reused); p-Rom 9@825g, PT, T, glazed floor tile Stone 2@203g stone chips greensand, sep	17-18C
F06	016	Post-medieval robber trench	pot Rom 1@1g: Fabric GX; p-Rom 2@15 Fabric 20, Fabric 40 CBM Rom: 3@144g, RBT (reused);	17-18C

Context	finds no	Context type and date	finds	spot dating
			p-Rom 5@497g, PT, glazed floor tile animal bone 1@20g stone 1@27g stone chip grey limestone- greensand slate 1@155 (large fixing hole – roof slate)g	
F07	017	Roman pit	pot Rom 1@6g: Fabric GX	Rom
F08	018	Roman ditch	pot Rom 5@44g: Fabric DJ, CH?/DJ GA Cam 279, GQ Cam 330, GX Cam 243-244.246, HZ, ON, TZ CBM Rom: 1@84g, RBT animal bone 15@509g	prob 2C, poss L3-4C
F08	019	Roman ditch	pot Rom 8@212g: Fabrics DJ lid, GX Cam 243-244/246 worked flint 1@3g small flake (preh) animal bone 1@17g slag 1@155g	M1-M2C
F09	020	Roman ditch	pot Rom 3@32g: Fabrics DJ, GX	Rom
F10	021	Large Roman pit	pot Rom 10@180g: Fabrics GX, HZ animal bone 3@38g slag 1@61	Rom
F11	022	Roman pit	pot Rom 2@54g: Fabrics GB Cam 278, GX handled pot CBM Rom: 1@67g, RBT	M2-M3C
F12	023	Roman pit	pot Rom 15@116g: Fabrics GX Cam 243-244/246 bone 2@48g	Rom M1-E/M2C
F12	031	Roman pit	pot Rom 2@59g: Fabric GX lid	Rom ?1-2/3C
F13	024	Med or Post-med pit	pot Rom 1@4g: Fabric GX CBM p-Rom 2@33g, PT, glazed floor tile	med
F13	030	Med or Post-med pit	pot Rom 8@86g: Fabrics DJ, GB, GX Cam 307 CBM Rom: 1@66g, RBT; p-Rom 9@585g, glazed floor tile (?burnt) ?animal bone 3@51g	med
F17	025	post-med / modern pit	pot Rom 4@27g: Fabrics GB Cam 37B, GX (1 sherd poss med greyware) CBM Rom: 1@56g RBT (reused); p-Rom 1@178g, glazed floor tile slate 1@3g	med/p-med
F18 sx 2	055	Med/ Post-medieval robber trench	CBM Rom: 2@868g, RBT; p-Rom 1@20g, PT stone 3@1155: greensand (2); sep	med/p-med/mod
F19	026	Roman ditch	pot Rom 3@32g: Fabric GX animal bone 1@78g slag 1@522g	Rom
F19	048	Roman ditch	pot Rom 1@16g: Fabric GX slag 4@186g	Rom
F20	027	Post-medieval robber trench	CBM Rom 1@15g, RBT (reused); p-Rom 2@27g, PT Glass 1@27 dark green Onion? bottle base stone 1@122 white limestone, small moulded architectural piece with sq cut back, broken at both ends, cut mark across part of one broken end	p-med/mod

Context	finds no	Context type and date	finds	spot dating
			face (reworked?) mortar 2@1101g	
F20	043	Post-medieval robber trench	pot Rom 5@44g: Fabric DJ; Fabric GX CBM Rom 10@1826g, RBT, TE(F) (reused); p-Rom 4@123g, PT animal bone 4@60g stone 1@79: white limestone, worked sq corner piece slate 2@4g shell 2@1g: land snail mortar 2@373 fe nail 1@5g sq head, small	p-med/mod
F20	044	Post-medieval robber trench	pot p-Rom 1@12g: Fabric 45D CBM Rom 1@120g RBT; p-Rom 2@110g B PT stone 6@ 4629g sep greensand slate 1@32g mortar 4@228g	16-17C
F20	050	Med or Post-medieval robber trench	CBM Rom 3@475g: post Rom 1@312: glazed floor tiles animal bone 2@15g	med
F20	051	Med or Post-medieval robber trench	stone white limestone 1@122g, small piece of architectural stone, worked with concave mouldings, saw cut on one broken edge, reused	med
F21	034	= F1 robber trench	CBM p-Rom 3@740: PT, glazed floor tile clay pipe 1@5g: stems	p-med/mod
F23	033	Med/Post-med / modern pit	pot Rom 1@4g: Fabric GX CBM Roman: 7@531: RBT, FT (reused); p-Rom ?PT	?Residual Rom – med/p-med/mod
F24	036	Med/ Post-med robber trench	CBM post Rom 3@565: glazed floor tiles (2) one with mortar over break; PT	med/p-med
F25	035	Mod pit	pot p-Rom 1@15g Fabric 45M CBM post Rom 3@132 PT coal 2@7g	mod
F27	057	Large ?medieval pit	pot Rom (10@377g) BACG prob Dr 31 stamp PAVLLI.M PAULLI M(anu) Paullus poss c 135-60 AD, AJ D20, GB, GX, GA animal bone 1@14g shell 2@4g Oy, cockle	M/L2C-M3C
F27	059	Large ?medieval pit	shell 7@22g Oy, cockle, mussel, periwinkle	
F30	037	Modern pit	pot p-Rom 4@66g Fabrics 40, 48D CBM 6@137g: p-Rom PT clay pipe 3@7g: stems shell 1@2g: Oy	mod
F31	037	Modern pit	animal bone 2@14g	
F34	038	Large Roman or medieval pit	pottery Roman 1@19g: Fabric HZ CBM Roman: 1@1107, brick	1-2/3C
F35	039	Medieval pit	pot Rom 2@23g Fabric GX; p-med 1@39g: Fabric 21 (twisted handle imitating Hedingham ware) animal bone 2@55g	13-14C
F37	040	Post-med ?Robber	pot p-Rom 1@49g Fabric 40 CBM Roman: 2@415g, RBT; p-Rom	17-18C

Context	finds no	Context type and date	finds	spot dating
		trench	4@514g, PT animal bone 2@15g	
F38	041	Post-med pit	pot p-med 3@264g: Fabric 40 animal bone 1@15g	p-med 17-18C
F38 /L2	042		pot p-med 1@38g: Fabric 40 CBM Rom 2@124 RBT, p-Rom 1@34g PT slag 1@118g	p-med 17-18C
F41	058	Church demolition debris	pot Rom (5@92g) GX CBM Rom (2@258g) FT combed, TE	L1C+
F47	054	Modern cut	pot p-med 1@44g: Fabric 48D	mod
L2	005	Pre-church soil?	pot Rom 30@860g: Fabrics AA D20, BACG, CH, EA GQ Cam 69B/320, GX, HZ Cam 273, TZ Cam 498	L3-4C with residual 2-3
L2	007	Pre-church soil?	CBM Rom 4@353, TE(F), RBT; ?p-Rom 1@86 PT? animal bone 23@718g	Rom/?p-Rom
L2	011	Pre-church soil?	pot Rom 7@103g Fabrics BACG Dr 37 rim, GX, TZ Cam 498 CBM Rom 4@736g, TE(F), RBT (no mortar) animal bone 4@53g nail fe 1@4 (small) fe 2@53 – poss corroded nail or obj	M2-?M3C
L5	053	Post-demolition topsoil	pot p-Rom 4@57g Fabrics 20, 40, 48D, 45M bottle]EVENS[on body,](L)NS[on shoulder CBM : p-Rom 1@22g PT glass p-Rom: 1@15g clay pipe 1@4g: stem coal 1@14	mod
L5/6	052	Post-demolition topsoil/church demolition debris	pot Rom 3@77g: Fabric GX	Rom
us	060	???	pot Rom 3@216g: Fabrics DJ Cam 155, CZ; GX	E/M2-M/L3C
us	056		CBM p-Rom 1@37 decorated glazed floor tile	

6.2 Comment on medieval and later pottery

by Howard Brooks

Table 2 below adds to the base data of Table 1 (above), and expands slightly on descriptions. Pottery fabrics are after *CAR 7*.

This group (28 sherds total weight 723g). is typical of a post-medieval collection from Colchester, in that the dominant pottery fabric type is post-medieval red earthenware (PMRE: Fabric 40: 65% of the group by weight), with modern ironstones (Fabric 48d: 10%), and smaller quantities of German stonewares.

The glass is unremarkable.

Most of these contexts are convincingly dated to the either the post-medieval period (F1, F5, F20, F37, F38) or to the 19th-21st centuries (F25, F30, F47, L5). However, there are two contexts which contain only medieval pottery, that is F17, F35.

Table 2: post-medieval pottery and glass

Finds no.	Context	Qty	Wt	Notes
01	F1	1	18	PMRE. 17th-19th.
02	F1	1	17	German stoneware. Raeren?. 17th-18th
06	F5	1	5	PMRE. 17th-19th.
15	F6	2	24	Fine medieval sherds, possibly Hedingham ware fabric 22. 1 has green glaze over brown stripe.
16	F6	3	31	PMRE. 17th-19th.
25	F17	1	6	Fabric 20? medieval coarseware. 13th-14th century.
27	F20	1	27	Base fragment of green glass wine bottle. 18th century?
35	F25	1	15	Fabric 45m modern stoneware. 19th-20th.
37	F30	2	61	PMRE. 17th-19th.
37	F30	2	5	Fabric 48d modern ironstone. 19th-20th.
39	F35	1	39	Pleasing twisted rod handle in gritty red fabric. Probably fabric 21, sandy orange ware. Looks early, 13th-14th?
40	F37	1	50	PMRE. 17th-19th.
41	F38	3	261	PMRE. 17th-19th. Includes handle and rim frags
42	F38/L2	1	37	Unglazed PMRE. 17th-19th.
44	F20	1	12	Frechen ware fabric 45d
53	L5	1	30	Fabric 48d modern ironstone
53	L5	1	14	1 fabric 45m modern stoneware ginger-beer bottle with transfer lettering ..EVENS.. (presumably STEVENSONS)
53	L5	1	7	PMRE. 17th-19th.
53	L5	1	6	1 fabric 13 or 20 medieval coarseware. 11th-14th (residual)
53	L5	1	14	1 base fragment from pale green hexagonal glass bottle. Perfume or similar? 19th century.
54	F47	1	44	1 fabric 48d modern ironstone, 44g. 19th-20th
		28	723	

6.3 The small finds, painted glass and clay tobacco pipe

by *Nina Crummy*

Small finds

Five objects in this small assemblage come from robber trenches or from dark earth within the church and can be associated with the abbey, one came from a post-medieval pit, and two are unstratified. Only two pieces can be broadly dated, both from robber trenches: a copper-alloy lace-end with riveted top that belongs within the period c. 1375-1550/75, and a hinged copper-alloy book-clasp of probable 15th century or even early 16th century date. The other items are a copper-alloy shaft or wire fragment, part of an iron staple or chain and part of an iron strap, a small fragment of iron slag, a piece of lead shot, and a second misshapen piece of lead that may be spent shot. The two latter are unstratified and cannot be associated with any confidence to the Siege of Colchester, given the ubiquity of lead shot on both urban and rural post-medieval sites.

The book-clasp (Fig 5.1: SF 1) is derived from examples with zoomorphic terminals that date from the late 14th century into the 15th (*e.g.* Egan & Pritchard 1991, fig 101), but it has three features that suggest it belongs late within that range. First, the terminal has lost all trace of zoomorphism; second, its strap-plate is of thinner metal than seen on earlier clasps, being closer in quality to the post-Dissolution double riveted plate form, such as those found at Lion Walk, Colchester and at Maldon Friary

(CAR 5, 68; Major 1999, 119, fig. 32, 23); and third, the strap-plate is not hinged on a rivet held between two projecting arms at the top of the pendant, as is usual for these clasps, but on a slot in a rectangular tab at the top of the pendant.

The clasp is the only item that can be closely connected to the daily activities of the abbey. It would have been riveted to the end of a short strap fixed to the cover of the book, and to hold the book closed the pierced pendant fitted over a small hook attached to the back cover. A fine lace passed through the perforated terminal allowed the clasp to be lifted and released smoothly from the hook.

The London clasps come from riverside dump contexts and there is an example of this type residual in a 17th century secular building at Norwich and (Margeson 1993, 36, fig. 20, 239), but there are many more stratified examples from monastic sites. These include St Augustine's Abbey in Canterbury, Battle Abbey, the College of the Vicars Choral in York, Greyfriars in Oxford, the Austin Friars in Leicester and both Greyfriars and Whitefriars in Norwich, emphasising both the importance of books in devotional life and the role played by monastic establishments in developing libraries and encouraging literacy (Henig 1988, 181, fig. 54, 9-11; Geddes 1985, 158, fig. 50, 37; Ottaway and Rogers 2002, 2938, fig. 1503, 14478, 14641, 15236; Goodall 1989, 226, fig. 62, 25; Clay 1981, 133, fig. 48, 28; Huddle 2007; Crummy in Clark in prep.).

Fig 5.1: SF 1. (12) F1 sx 2. Robber trench. Copper-alloy hinged book-clasp, terminating in a flat-backed pierced pendant with a narrow terminal, also pierced. The strap-plate is of folded type, recessed at one end to allow it to pass through a slot in a rectangular tab at the top of the pendant; the back-plate remains only the width of the slot. A single rivet set near the top of the back-plate secured the leather strap between the plates. Length 36 mm, maximum width 12 mm.

SF 6. (46) F20. Robber trench. Copper-alloy Type 1 lace-end with riveted top. Length 18 mm.

SF 2. (14) F6. Robber trench. Long bent copper-alloy shaft or stout wire fragment, round in section except at one end which has been snapped off and is slightly flattened. Length 150 mm, diameter 3 mm.

SF 5. (32) F13. Post-medieval pit. Iron U-shaped staple or chain link fragment, both ends broken. Width 41 mm, height 22 mm.

SF 7. (7) L2. Dark soil within church. Tapering iron fragment, possibly a strap terminal. Length 35 mm, width 23 mm.

SF 3. (28). Unstratified, metal-detected from spoil. Plano-convex lead object, with mortar traces; possibly spent shot. Diameter 26 mm; weight 29 g.

SF 4. (29). Unstratified, metal-detected from spoil. Lead shot. Diameter 19 mm; weight 42 g.

SF 8. (11) L2. Dark soil within church. Iron slag. Weight 46 g.

Painted glass

Three small fragments of medieval window glass from the robber trenches must have come from the abbey church. Two are decorated, one is very corroded and no surface details are visible. What remains of the best preserved fragment shows a linear design running parallel to a grozed edge, suggesting that it formed a frame to a central motif (Fig 5.2: (3) F1). This fragment is quite thin and is probably of late 14th or 15th century date (Graves 2003, 124). The other decorated piece is too corroded for any surface detail to be determined, but it is also thin and is probably of the same date. The most corroded piece is 3 mm thick and is probably earlier.

Fig 5.2 (3) F1. Robber trench. Fragment of painted glass with one straight grozed edge, the rest broken. A linear design executed in red-brown paint runs parallel to the grozed edge. 45 by 33 mm, 1.5 mm thick.

(8) F4. Robber trench. Small fragment of glass, all the edges broken. Slightly raised areas are probably the remains of paint. 19 by 16 mm, 1 mm thick.

(47) F20. Robber trench. Corroded fragment of potash glass with one straight chamfered edge, the rest broken. No trace of paint is visible. 58 by 28 mm, 3 mm thick.

Clay tobacco pipe

Only plain stems were found. They cannot be closely dated, but all must be later than c. 1580.

(34) F21. Post-medieval robbing. Plain stem fragment. Length 36 mm, diameter 11 mm, bore hole diameter 3 mm.

(37) F30. Post-medieval pit. Three plain stem fragments. 1) Length 46 mm, diameter 6 mm, bore hole diameter 1.5 mm. 2) Length 41 mm, diameter 8 mm, bore hole diameter 1.5 mm. 3) Length 26 mm, diameter 4 mm, bore hole diameter 1.5 mm.

(53) L5. Topsoil over demolition material. Plain stem fragment, tapering and scorched in places. Length 52 mm, diameter 7-9 mm, bore hole diameter 3.5 mm.

6.4 The floor tiles

by Nina Crummy

Only fragments of floor tiles were recovered, although one triangular tile is almost complete. They have been given individual numbers, prefaced by 'Tile'. Twenty-one tiles form a cohesive group, one is markedly different (Tile 22).

The fabric of the group of 21 is similar to that noted for locally-made tiles on other sites in Colchester, a hard-fired sandy clay with some fine grit which has occasionally been calcined. Two pieces differ slightly from the norm: Tile 7 has more fine grit than the other pieces and Tile 19 has some additional larger pieces of grit. A few have fragments of grog in the fabric, a feature not previously recorded. In general the tiles have been fired in an oxidising atmosphere so that only the core is occasionally reduced, but on a few the bottom of the tile and the sides are also patchily reduced. The absence of nail holes in any surviving corners, as found on imported Flemish tiles, confirms a local origin for these tiles (Drury 1981, 130; 1984, 81).

The only tile in this group where the size can be accurately determined is the triangular tile (10). With sides 111 mm long and a thickness of 21 mm it is closely comparable to both square and triangular tiles from the site of the Hospital of St Mary Magdalen and St Giles Church in Colchester (Crummy 2003, 121; *CAR 9*, 231, 234). Tile 5 came from a much larger tile, being incomplete at 155 by 115 mm, and Tile 12 is the next largest fragment at 115 by 110 mm. Both are thicker than the triangular tile at 30 mm and 28 mm respectively. At the nearby St Giles's Church several sizes of tiles were noted: 111 mm, 125 mm, 146 mm, 180 mm, 195 mm, 210 mm and 240 mm square (*CAR 9*, 231). A similar range may have been used at St John's Abbey.

On all 21 tiles the upper surface was coated in a lead glaze. Some are monochrome, some had slip applied to the surface to produce two colours. On seven of the monochrome tiles a basic lead glaze was used to produce a brown surface colour, sometimes slightly speckled with green from iron impurities in the glaze (Tiles 5-11).

One tile (4) is a deep green from a glaze with copper added to it, while two (20-1) with less copper added to the glaze are a consistent greenish-brown (khaki) colour also seen on some tiles from St Mary Magdalen (Crummy 2003, 122). Tile 19 may have had white slip applied beneath the glaze to produce a monochrome yellow surface, but too little remains for this to be certain.

Tile 9 (Fig 5.6) is glazed on both sides and has part of a clay plug inserted horizontally into the fabric so that it lies parallel to the two faces. The plug is hollow internally, where a nail or narrow wooden dowel was inserted. The upper surface of the tile is worn, which suggests that the glazing of the sand-roughened underside was a manufacturing error. However, the combination of double-sided glazing and plug implies that this tile may have been set upright with both faces exposed, perhaps as a lip at the edge of a wall recess set close to ground level, although this does not account for the wear on one face. Unfortunately, the fragment is quite small, has no original edges and has been reused, so that mortar on both faces and all the broken sides obscures any surviving traces of the original mortar that might provide a clue to its use.

A second fragment, Tile 10, has smears of glaze down the sides and on the underside, but in this instance the glaze on the underside can be presumed to be accidental.

On seven of the two-colour tiles white slip has been patchily applied to the surface, probably by splashing it from a brush or from the fingers, to produce a brown surface mottled with yellow (Tiles 12-18). On some of these tiles the slip can be seen in places where the glaze has worn away. Three tiles were decorated in a variety of ways (Tiles 1-3. Fig 5.3-5.5), although Tiles 1 and 3 are only small fragments and their full designs remain uncertain. Tile 2 is divided into two triangles, one brown and one yellow, with white slip painted onto the surface to produce the yellow; a single brush stroke running diagonally across the tile was initially used to define the division between the two halves. Tile 1 would have had an elaborate design executed in yellow on brown, with incised lines used in places to define areas where slip was to be applied to produce the yellow. Tile 3 has a geometric design of yellow on brown.

The exceptional piece, Tile 22, was unglazed. It is made from a well-puddled clay with almost no grit, with small linear voids produced by cracking of the fabric during firing; it has a buff core and only very slightly darker pinky-buff margins. The fabric does not compare closely to that used for imported Flemish floor tiles, so this tile is likely to be local, but perhaps of a later date than the main group. It may be comparable to the unglazed tile used to repair a glazed tile pavement in Building 28 at Lion Walk (Drury 1984, 81; *CAR 3*, fig. 68).

Most of the tiles came from post-medieval robbing within the area of St John's Abbey church and Tile 21 came from a build-up of dark soil inside the building; all can be assumed to have been used for pavements inside the church. One of the decorated tiles (Tile 3) came from a trench 20 m north of the church and may derive from Dissolution debris either from the church or from another of the abbey buildings. As with Tile 9 above, Tiles 1, 4, 5, 12 and 18 have mortar on the broken sides and were presumably reused as building material during the course of pre-Dissolution alterations and repairs. However, Tile 4 came from a post-medieval pit (F5) that may be associated with a later building than the church. It is the only green-glazed tile and from its context it might be of post-Dissolution date, but this combination of factors is perhaps a coincidence. The triangular tile is from a post-medieval/modern pit (Tile 10 from F17) but it is unlikely to be post-Dissolution as its small size matches that of medieval tiles from ecclesiastical and monastic sites in the town (Crummy 2003, 121; *CAR 9*, 231, 234).

Catalogue

- 1. Fig 5.1** (50) F20, post-medieval robbing. Bevelled edge fragment with mortar on one broken side. The fabric is a hard-fired sandy clay with some grit, with patches of slight reduction. Guide lines were used to outline at least part of a design painted in white slip beneath a lead glaze to produce a yellow design on a brown field. The design cannot be identified; all that remains is a curved band between two incised lines and a small part of another band, not defined by lines, running off it at a right angle. 58 by 77 mm, 25 mm thick.
- 2. Fig 5.2.** (16) F6, post-medieval robbing. Corner fragment with bevelled sides. The fabric is a hard-fired sandy clay with a very little grit, patchily reduced both internally and externally on the underside. The surface was divided into two triangular areas of colour, with lead glaze fired to brown on one side and white slip coated with lead glaze fired to yellow on the other. 106 by 86 mm, 25 mm thick.
- 3. Fig 5.3** (56). Unstratified, from Trench 1, 20 m north of the church. Fragment with no surviving original edges. The fabric is a hard-fired sandy clay, patchily reduced. The surface is decorated with a geometric design painted in white slip and covered by a lead glaze that has fired to produce a yellow pattern on a brown field. All that remains of the design is a line, not quite straight, separating a row of lozenges running parallel to it from two curved elements. 48 by 50 mm, 16 mm thick.
- 4.** (10) F5, post-medieval mortar-filled pit. Two fragments, probably from the same tile, both with broken sides covered with mortar. Both are made from a hard-fired sandy clay fabric with some grog and chalk inclusions, oxidised throughout to pinky-orange. Both are coated with a lead glaze that has fired dark green. One is a corner fragment with bevelled sides, part way down one of which a little glaze has trickled. 96 by 90 mm, 30 mm thick. On the other fragment part of an edge survives, also with a slightly bevelled side and here fully covered by glaze. 65 by 101 mm, 30 mm thick.
- 5.** (34) F21, post-medieval robbing. Corner fragment with bevelled sides down each of which a little glaze has trickled. The broken sides are covered with mortar. The fabric is a hard-fired sandy clay with some fine grit, reduced apart from narrow oxidised margins, and coated with a lead glaze fired to a greenish-brown. 155 by 115 mm, 30 mm thick.
- 6.** (50) F20, post-medieval robbing. Edge fragment, straight-sided. The fabric is a hard-fired sandy clay with some fine grit, reduced apart from narrow oxidised margins; glaze fired greenish-brown. 55 by 44 mm, 21 mm thick.
- 7.** (30) F13, post-medieval pit or robber trench within church. Fragment with no original edges. The fabric is a hard-fired sandy clay with grog and more fine grit than is present in the other tiles, fired to a fairly regular reduced core with oxidised margins. The surface is coated with a lead glaze that has fired to brown. 62 by 77 mm, 23 mm thick.
- 8.** (24) F13, post-medieval pit or robber trench within church. Chip from a corner of a tile in the same fabric as Tile 7, with parts of both edges and a very little of the surface. The sides are bevelled and one has a trickle of a lead glaze fired to brown. 13 by 20 mm, thickness incomplete, >18 mm.
- 9. Fig 5.6.** (16) F6, post-medieval robbing. Fragment with no original edges, but with mortar on the broken sides. A plug of clay with a central nail or narrow dowel hole has been inserted into it crossways. The fabric is a hard-fired sandy clay with some grog. The surface is very worn but retains traces of a lead glaze fired to a dark greenish-brown. The sand-roughened underside is also glazed. 59 by 72 mm, 29 mm thick.
- 10.** (25) F17, post-medieval/modern pit. Fragment of a triangular tile, with parts of all three edges remaining. The two outer sides are bevelled, the inner side (hypotenuse) is straight. The fabric is a hard-fired sandy clay, patchily reduced. The surface is coated with a lead glaze fired to a dark brown. Some glaze has run over onto the sides and there are also smears of glaze on the underside. Outer edges 111 mm long, 21 mm thick.

- 11.** (5) F3, post-medieval pit or robber trench within church. Corner fragment with bevelled sides, one partly coated with dribbles of white slip. Fabric, firing and glaze as Tile 10, the triangular tile from F17. 47 by 53 mm, 20 mm thick.
- 12.** (36) F24, post-medieval robbing. Fragment with no surviving original edges. Most of the broken sides are covered with mortar. The fabric is a hard-fired sandy clay with some grog and fine grit, generally oxidised but with some reduction of the core in places. The surface is coated with a lead glaze fired to brown with some dark speckling and random patches of yellow where a little white slip has been smeared on the surface. 115 by 110 mm, 28 mm thick.
- 13.** (49) F1, post-medieval robbing. Corner fragment as Tile 12, with bevelled sides and with white slip visible where the glaze has worn off. 91 by 96 mm, 28 mm thick.
- 14.** (50) F20, post-medieval robbing. Bevelled side fragment as Tile 12. 92 by 107 mm, 25 mm thick.
- 15.** (30) F13, post-medieval pit or robber trench within church. Four fragments, all probably from the same tile; two are corner fragments, one an edge. All the sides are bevelled. As Tile 12, but the glaze is very worn. Maximum surviving dimensions: i) Corner, in two pieces, 47 by 61 mm, 27 mm thick; ii) Corner, 35 by 63 mm, thickness incomplete, >23 mm; iii) Edge, with a little trickle of glaze in one place, 72 by 35 mm, 30 mm thick; iv) 72 by 74 mm, 28 mm thick.
- 16.** (30) F13, post-medieval pit or robber trench within church. Three fragments as Tile 12; possibly part of Tile 15 but with less yellow on the surface. One is an edge fragment with bevelled side. i) Edge, 45 by 48 mm, thickness incomplete, >18 mm. ii) Chip, 21 by 29 mm, 28 mm thick. iii) Chip, 21 by 27 mm, thickness incomplete, >13 mm.
- 17.** (24) F13, post-medieval pit or robber trench within church. Corner fragment, with bevelled sides; as Tile 12. Slight shallow grooves in the glaze, sometimes double, may be all that remains of a design but could have been made by a worn brush used to apply the slip or glaze. 31 by 59 mm, thickness incomplete, >14 mm.
- 18.** (36) F24, post-medieval robbing. Edge fragment with bevelled sides, in a hard-fired sandy clay with some grog and fine grit, oxidised throughout. The surface has a lead glaze over patchily applied white slip, fired to yellow with brown streaks. There is mortar on one broken side and on a small part of another. 73 by 41 mm, 29 mm thick.
- 19.** (15) F6, post-medieval robbing. Corner fragment with slightly bevelled sides. The fabric is a hard-fired sandy clay with a very little grit, patchily reduced both internally and externally on the underside. Some patches of white slip remain on the surface, one with small streaks of green on or in it. This tile may have been decorated rather than plain. 79 by 84 mm, 21 mm thick.
- 20.** (30) F13, post-medieval pit or robber trench within church. Corner fragment with both sides bevelled, but one much less so than the other. The fabric is a hard-fired sandy clay with a little grit, oxidised throughout. The surface is coated with a lead glaze that has fired green-brown. 58 by 73 mm, 18 mm thick.
- 21.** (7) L2, dark soil within church. Corner fragment with one straight-sided edge and one bevelled outwards to the underside rather than inwards. The fabric is a hard-fired sandy clay, oxidised throughout. There is a small patch of lead glaze fired green-brown on the surface, which is very worn. 53 by 70 mm, 27 mm thick.
- 22.** (5) F3, post-medieval pit or robber trench within church. Unglazed edge fragment in an oxidised fabric apparently fired at a lower temperature than the other tiles in this assemblage. 80 by 43 mm, 25 mm thick.

6.5 Animal bone

by Adam Wightman

Ctxt	Find no	qty	species	element	side	Wt g	comment
F1	1	1	sheep	tibia- shaft & distal	right	34.7	proximal gnawed away
F5	6	1	pig	mandible distal end		14.1	
		1	med/lrg mammal	mandible		8.4	
F6	16	16	lrg mammal	scapula/pelvis		20.1	cut marks
F8	18	4	lrg mammal	rib fragments		62.7	cut & chop marks
		1	pig	canine		8.3	well preserved
		2	lrg mammal	vertebrae 1thor 1atlas		41.4	
		1	cow	scapula		33.7	
		1	med/lrg mammal	scapula		37.1	chopped
		1	cow	humerus shaft & distal		230.8	chopped
		1	sml/med mammal	rib		3.5	
		1	cow	radius shaft		71	scoop
		2	lrg mammal	long bone frags		14.9	1 has lots of cut marks
		1	sml/med mammal	long bone frag		5.1	cut marks
F8	19	1	lrg mammal	vertebrae		16.6	
F10	21	1	cow	ulna	right	19.4	
		1	sheep	radius shaft & prox	left	11.8	pathology at ulna joint
		1	med/lrg mammal	scapula frag		6.3	
F12	23	2	sheep	tibia shafts	left	48.1	2 MNE, cut marks on one, both gnawed
F13	30	1	human	Vertebrae (lumbar)		23.2	slight osteoarthritis
		1	human	phalange		2.3	1st phalanx, hand
		1	lrg mammal	ulna		25	
F19	26	1	cow	metacarpal distal	right	80.6	
F20	43	1	sheep	tibia shaft	right	12.2	cut marks & gnawed
		1	lrg mammal	radius shaft frag		28.4	cut mark, broken fresh
		1	med/lrg mammal	humerus		16.2	
		1	med/lrg mammal	med/lrg mammal		3.2	
F20	50	1	sheep	tibia shaft & distal	left	18	
F27	57	1	lrg mammal	long bone frag		14.9	poor preservation
F31	37	1	cow	3rd phalanx		7.9	
		1	sheep	astragalus		5.8	pos cut marks
F35	39	1	cow	mandibular hinge	left	39.2	
		1	deer	tibia shaft & distal	left	16	
F37	40	1	sheep	radius shaft & prox	right	13.5	
		1	dog	ulna prox		4.4	pos cut, pos path
F38	41	1	dog	humerus	right	15	whole
L2	7	1	lrg mammal	vertebrae frag		35.2	
		1	cow	molar		18.9	
		1	sml/med mammal	vertebrae		5	whole
		3	lrg mammal	rib frags		71.6	cut marks
		8	cow	scapula	left	190.3	MNE 1, chop & cut marks
		2	cow	scapula	right	168	MNE 1, chop & cut marks
		1	med mammal	humerus unfused epiphysis		2.6	
		1	cow	tibia shaft	left	146.6	broken fresh, scoops chop

Ctxt	Find no	qty	species	element	side	Wt g	comment
		1	cow	radius prox		51.5	broken fresh, chop marks
		2	lrg mammal	long bone frags		16.5	
L2	11	1	cow	radius shaft		26.3	
		1	lrg mammal	vertebrae thor		26.5	

Roman

Relatively large assemblage from ditch F8, 15 bones- well preserved, PIG and COW, lots of butchery mark- chop, cut and scoops, mixture of elements and species. One cow metacarpal from linear F19 in northern end of T1. Two pits from Roman pit complex A- F10, F12 containing cow and sheep bone, sheep bones from long bones (gnawing and pathology).

Robber trenches

Sheep tibia from F1- gnawed, large mammal scap/pelv with cut marks from F6, five bones from F20- sheep and identified mammal, all long bone frags, two with cut marks one gnawed.

Other possible church features

F5 contained two mandible frags, one definitely from a pig and F13 contained one large mammal ulna and two human bones- one lumbar vertebrae with a little osteoarthritis and one 1st phalanx from the hand.

Outside church (to the west)

F35 had a cow mandibular hinge and a deer tibia shaft, F37 had a sheep radius and a dog ulna and F38 had a complete dog humerus.

Pit complex C, late post-medieval pits cut through robber trench F1

F31- One cow 3rd phalanx and a sheep astragalus (possible cut-mark)

Trench 1

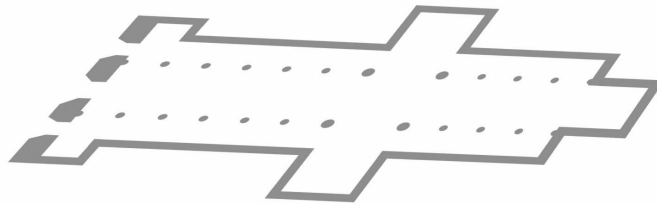
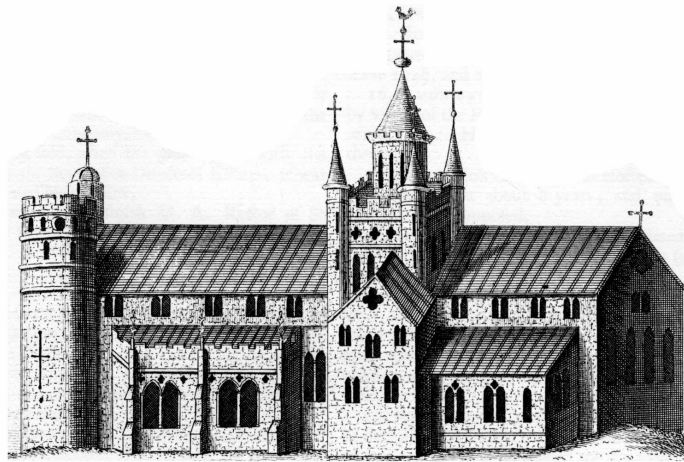
F27 one large mammal fragment poorly preserved.

L2

21 bones from finds number 7 which I'm pretty sure was the soil from above F8 and F9 (F8 had a lot of bone as well!)

2 bones from finds number 11 which I think was from over pit complex A- therefore all these bones could well be roman also.

7 Discussion and conclusions



The abbey church was laid out in 1095 and completed in 1115. The church along with the rest of the abbey was demolished during the century following the Dissolution of the Monasteries by Henry VIII. No plan of the monastery has survived, the nearest being what was shown on John Speed's somewhat schematic map of Colchester which he prepared in 1607 and published in 1611-12. This shows a number of buildings huddled together inside the abbey's defensive wall labelled 'St John's Abbey' and what appears to be the church's central tower still standing in isolation. A few sections of monastic foundations were uncovered in 2007 when CAT trenched part of the southern part of the precinct as preliminary works for the Garrison redevelopment project by Taylor Wimpey. This was an important advance but the exposures were limited and inconclusive because the investigation was modest in scale. Nothing was seen of the church itself until some of the remains of the nave were discovered early in 2011 during more exploratory archaeological excavations inside the former precinct. This time the investigation was taken place on the site of the clubhouse of the Officers' Club which was burnt to the ground last year.

Four trenches were dug across the site of the clubhouse where its replacement was planned and as a result the 'robbed' remains of four very substantial foundations were revealed, all lying east-west just as you would expect for a church. Quite a discovery – the west end of the abbey church! The foundations had in fact been largely broken out so as to recover building stone for reuse elsewhere but their original positions and dimensions were plainly indicated by the debris-filled trenches left by the workmen who carried out this back-breaking work.

Of the four foundations, the widest had been the matching pair along the centre of the building. These would each have supported a row of massive columns which in turn would have supported the nave roof. (The nave was the western part of the church.) The two outer foundations were narrower and they formed the bases for the outer

walls of the nave. All four foundations terminated at the western end with a wide north-south wall to give us the position of the west end of the church.

The church proved to have been very thoroughly demolished. Even the floors had been removed. Finds were limited but fragments of glazed tile testify to quality floors, and painted glass point to colourful windows just as would be expected in a building such as this.

Length of the church

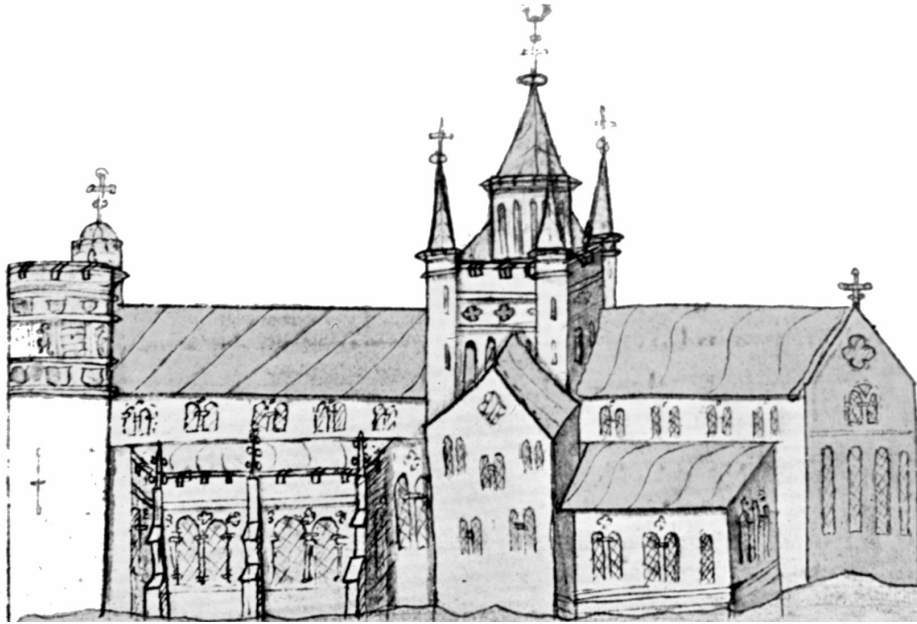
Tim Dennis (University of Essex) with the help of Ralph Potter of the University of East London and a Noggin Smart Cart from Michael de Bootman of East Lexham Norfolk, carried out some geophysical investigations in the hope of detecting other parts of the church. Two techniques were employed – magnetometry and ground-penetrating radar. The radar proved to be particularly effective and revealed what can only have been the east end. This discovery was especially valuable because it provides us with the overall length of the church.

A church built in the early 12th century would have had a rounded east end but Tim Dennis' survey showed that it had been square and that therefore this part of it had been rebuilt. Other parts of the church are much more difficult to detect on the surveys. The fact that the east end stands out so clearly is because its remains are more substantial. This reinforces the conclusion that the east end was rebuilt.

Surprisingly, at about 90m, the church turns out to have been big. It also lies a bit further north than we expected. In fact the ground must have sloped steeply downwards it stood along the top of the southern side of little valley which lies east to west just outside the walled town-centre. In its day, the church must have dominated the southern skyline. It would have been an imposing sight from the town centre.

Early picture of the church

Fortunately – and rather remarkably – a drawing of the church exists. It is hard to date but it appears to be an Elizabethan (ie c 1550-1600) copy of a earlier drawing made before or at the time of the Dissolution. An interesting aspect of the picture is that it shows an early 13th-century church with some later alterations – not the early 12th-century one it should have been. This is clear from the design of the windows and other details. How do we explain this? Well presumably the church was extensively remodelled in the 13th century. A monastic record that, in 1235, Henry III gave 15 oak timbers to the abbey seems to back up this conclusion.



Unfortunately this most interesting drawing is seriously flawed because it appears to show several features which are strange and force us to question its accuracy and reliability.

Plainly the drawing shows the south side of the church. It shows a cruciform-shaped building with a large central tower flanked by short arms (transepts) and a single tower at the west end. The drawing also appears to show two chapels which have been added to the south side of the building.

But there are problems here. These should be visible between the chapels and the main south wall of the church. Also the drawing shows a round, battlemented tower at the west end with an arrow slit in it. A square, not round, tower would be normal in this size and type of church. So too would be narrow windows, not arrow slits. And we would expect to see two towers at the west end, one to the east. Most problematic and important of all, there is no obvious evidence of cloisters and this is a key consideration when we come to try and reconstruct something of the overall ground plan of the monastery.

Reconstructing the plan of the church

We can attempt to improve our rudimentary plan of the church by combining it with drawing. The numbers of the windows in the drawing reveal the number of columns. Left of the transepts, the drawing shows five windows. This suggests four columns in each of the two rows plus an attached one on the west wall. We can guess the likely layout of the columns in the church using this sort of approach.

Interestingly we can now start measuring the plan and trying to work out if we can detect something of the architect's thinking when he designed the building. We need of course to work in feet, not metres, as he would have done. The crucial things to look for are multiples of whole feet and repeating patterns of dimensions. We make an assumption here that the architect would have had an underlying strategy when designing the building and that probably he would have worked with whole feet to implement it. At its root – if we could go back far enough – the principle would be that each of the two rows of columns was placed under the centre of its half of the roof so as to take its weight. This means that the distance (all measured centre to centre)

between the two rows of columns would have been half the distance between each column and its nearest side wall. The spacing between the columns themselves in each of the rows (ie the width of the bays) would probably have been specified in terms of whole feet.



Using these assumptions about design principles and column positions as implied by the windows, it is possible to produce a ground plan for the whole of the church which comes close to matching the drawing of the church. The plan assumes that the two rows of columns are 40 feet apart and each row is 20 foot from the nearest side wall, all measured centre to centre. The best fit east to west gives us a spacing between the columns (ie bay width) of 22 feet. The plan has been constructed using these figures.

Location of the cloisters and other monastic buildings

The cloisters formed the hub of a monastery. Normally on one side and attached to it lay the church. Attached to another side was the Chapter House where the monks would hear a chapter from their order and conduct their daily business. Around the other sides were the living quarters, dormitories, refectory, kitchen, toilets and the like. The cloisters allowed the monks to move around their monastery whilst staying under cover. Sometimes they were built on the north side of the church but in most cases they were to the south.

Now that we know exactly where the church stood, it is clear that the cloisters and the bulk of the other monastic buildings must have stood south of the church because there was not enough room for them north of it. This is certainly true of the cloisters (although conceivably not of the Chapter House).

An early history of the abbey survives in which we are told that the monks' living and working quarters were moved from the north to the south side of the church in the early 12th century. These presumably would have included the cloisters. To make the move possible, a little 'hill' which overlooked the church had to be removed and the resultant spoil was spread out north of the church to make a cemetery.

The true nature of this intriguing hill is uncertain. The ground that the abbey was built on rises to the south. If the monks felt they wanted level ground south of the church, then perhaps the terracing work which they would have needed to do was what became described as 'removing a little hill'. This seems the most likely explanation for the 'hill'. If there really had been a hill south of the church, then it could not have been a natural one. Two explanations for this feature come to mind. The most likely one is that hill was in fact a very large Roman burial mound (a barrow). The spot was a very

prominent one and there were Roman burials in the immediate vicinity. A less likely explanation is that the hill was the remains of a Roman amphitheatre. Again the location is good for one and we are running out of possible sites for the amphitheatre elsewhere in town.

The Lucas family and the reuse of redundant abbey buildings

The mass closure of the religious houses of England and Wales in the early 16th century by Henry VIII was followed by a mass of sale of their assets. Many former monasteries were converted into homes by the rich and influential. St John's Abbey was no different. It was acquired in due course by the powerful Lucas family who appear to have converted some of the buildings into a large mansion and demolished many of the others. Details are thin but they must have been knocking down buildings around 1590 when Thomas Lucas built Bourne Mill with building materials from the former abbey.

In 1607, when John Speed prepared his survey of Colchester, he labelled a collection of buildings inside the abbey precinct as being 'St John's Abbey'. This group does not appear to have been reused by the Lucas family because the Lucas house is shown as a separate building on the Colchester Siege Map of 1648. (The reason why the Lucas house does not appear on the Speed map must be because Speed's survey did not extend far enough south to reach it.)

This is a new interpretation of these maps, ie that part of the abbey appears on Speed. What all this implies is the a large part of the monastic complex was still standing as late as 1648, much of it was south-west of the church, and presumably was demolished not long afterwards along with the Lucas mansion.

8 Archive deposition

The finds and paper archive are currently at CAT headquarters at 12 Lexden Road, Colchester, Essex, but will be permanently deposited with Colchester and Ipswich Museums under accession code COLEM 2011.20.

9 Acknowledgements

The investigation was funded by the Garrison Officers Club. The fieldwork was managed and undertaken by Adam Wightman assisted by Chris Lister and Nigel Rayner. This report by AW, with Howard Brooks. Graphics by AW and CL. Section and finds drawings by Emma Spurgeon.

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Note: all CAT reports, except for DBAs, are now available online in .pdf format at <http://cat.essex.ac.uk>

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11 Glossary and abbreviations

CAT	Colchester Archaeological Trust
CBC	Colchester Borough Council
CBCAO	Colchester Borough Council Archaeological Officer
CBM	Ceramic Building Material, ie brick and tile
CIMS	Colchester and Ipswich Museums
context	specific location on an excavation, usually relates to finds
cut	an excavation of unspecified purpose
IfA	Institute for Archaeologists
loe	Limit of excavation (ie, edge of trench)
medieval	the period from AD 1066 to Henry VIII
modern	19th century to the present
NGR	National Grid Reference
OD	Ordnance Survey datum, based on mean sea level at Newlyn, Cornwall
post-medieval	after Henry VIII and up to Queen Victoria
Roman	the period from AD 43 to c AD 430
RRC SAL	Report of the Research Committee of the Society of Antiquaries of London
UAD	Urban Archaeological database held by CIMS
U/S	Unstratified, i.e. without any context
VAF	Visual Arts Facility

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Distribution list:

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Checked by: PC

Date: 04/11/11

12 Discard Finds lists

Roman CBM, post-Roman CBM, stone, mortar discard list

ctxt	Find no	Qty	Type	Weight g
30	37	6	peg-tile	137
37	40	1	tile	155
37	40	1	brick	260
37	40	4	peg-tile	514
F01	01	1	bricks (reused)	347
F01	01	2	peg-tile	469
F01	01	1	floor brick	941
F01	02	1	brick/tile (reused)	903
F01	02	1	peg-tile	190
F01	43	3	septaria	554
F01 SX2	13	3	brick	1599
F01 SX2	13	1	tile	380
F01 SX2	13	1	peg-tile	93
F01 SX2	13	1	septaria	429
F03	05	1	tile	84
F03	05	1	peg-tile	83
F03	05	3	brick/tile	277
F03	05	1	brick/tile (reused)	756
F05	6	1	? greensand	39
F06	15	1	brick (reused)	35
F06	15	2	brick/tile (reused)	110
F06	15	5	peg-tile	300
F06	16	3	brick/tile (reused)	144
F06	16	3	peg-tile	72
F06	15	1	greensand	50
		1	septaria	153
F06	16	1	greensand	27
F08	18	1	brick/tile	84
F11	22	1	brick/tile	67
F17	25	1	brick/tile (reused)	56
F18	55	2	greensand	428
SX2		1	septaria	727
F18 SX2	55	2	brick/tile	868
F18 SX2	55	1	peg-tile	20
F20	27	1	brick/tile (reused)	15
F20	27	2	peg-tile	27
F20	43	10	brick/tile (reused)	1826
F20	43	4	peg-tile	123
F20	44	1	brick	120
F20	44	1	peg-tile	61
F20	44	1	peg-tile	58
F20	44	5	brick/tile	392
F20	44	2	peg-tile	87
F20	27	2	mortar	1101
F20	43	2	mortar	373
F20	44	2	greensand	1178
		4	septaria	2242
		4	mortar	228
F20	51	1	white limestone	122
F38/L2	42	2	brick/tile	124
F38/L2	42	1	peg-tile	34
L02	7	4	brick/tile	353
L02	11	4	brick/tile (no mortar)	736
L05	53	1	peg-tile	22

13 Contents of archive

One A4 document wallet containing:

- 1 Introduction
 - 1.1 Risk assessment

- 2 Site archive
 - 2.1 Digital photo record
 - 2.2 Attendance register
 - 2.3 Context sheets
 - 2.4 Finds register
 - 2.5 Site photographic record on CD
 - 2.6 A3 section sheets

- 3 Research archive
 - 3.1 Client report
 - 3.2 Sundry papers Finds report

Finds
x Museum boxes (TBC).

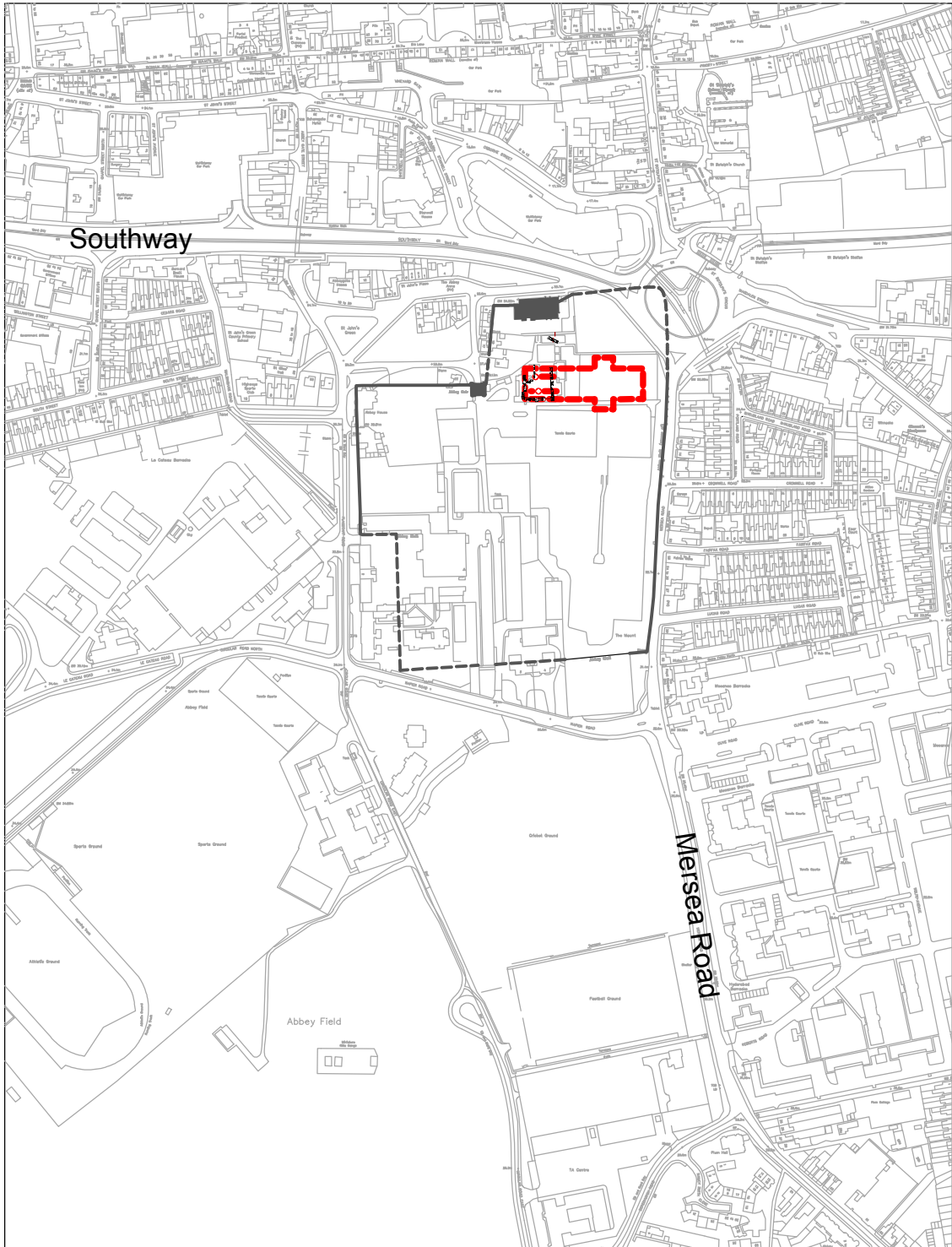


Fig 1 Site location



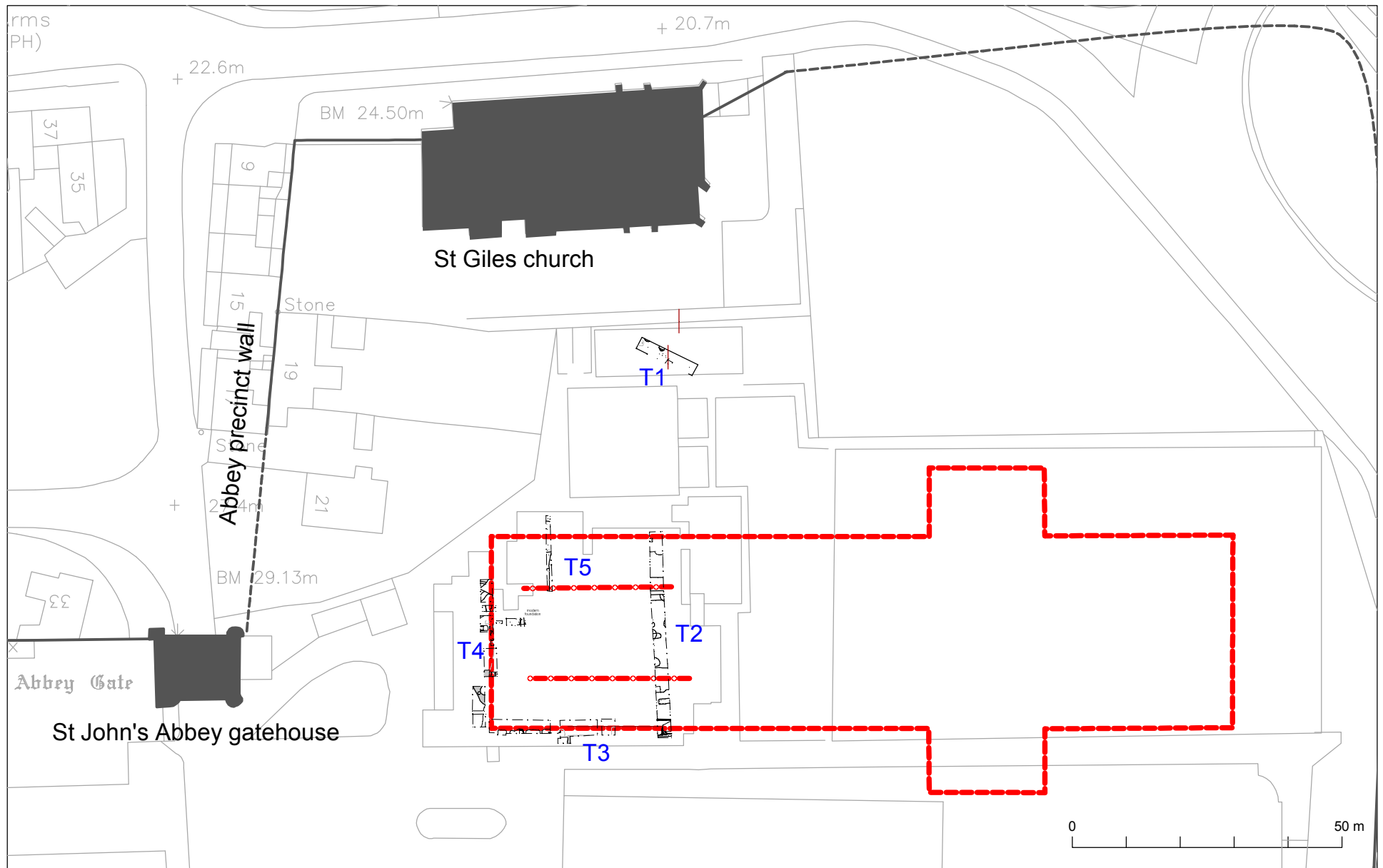


Fig 2 Trench location with projected church reconstruction, showing Abbey gatehouse, St Giles, and precinct wall

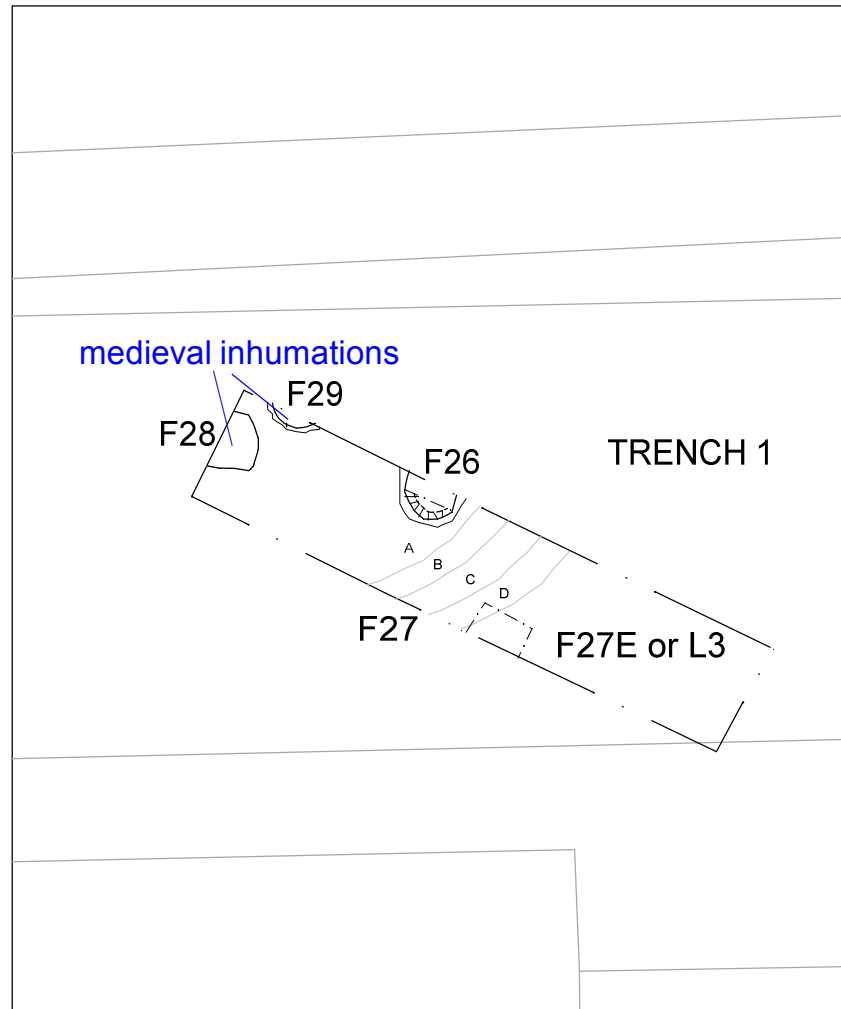


Fig 3 Trench 1: detail

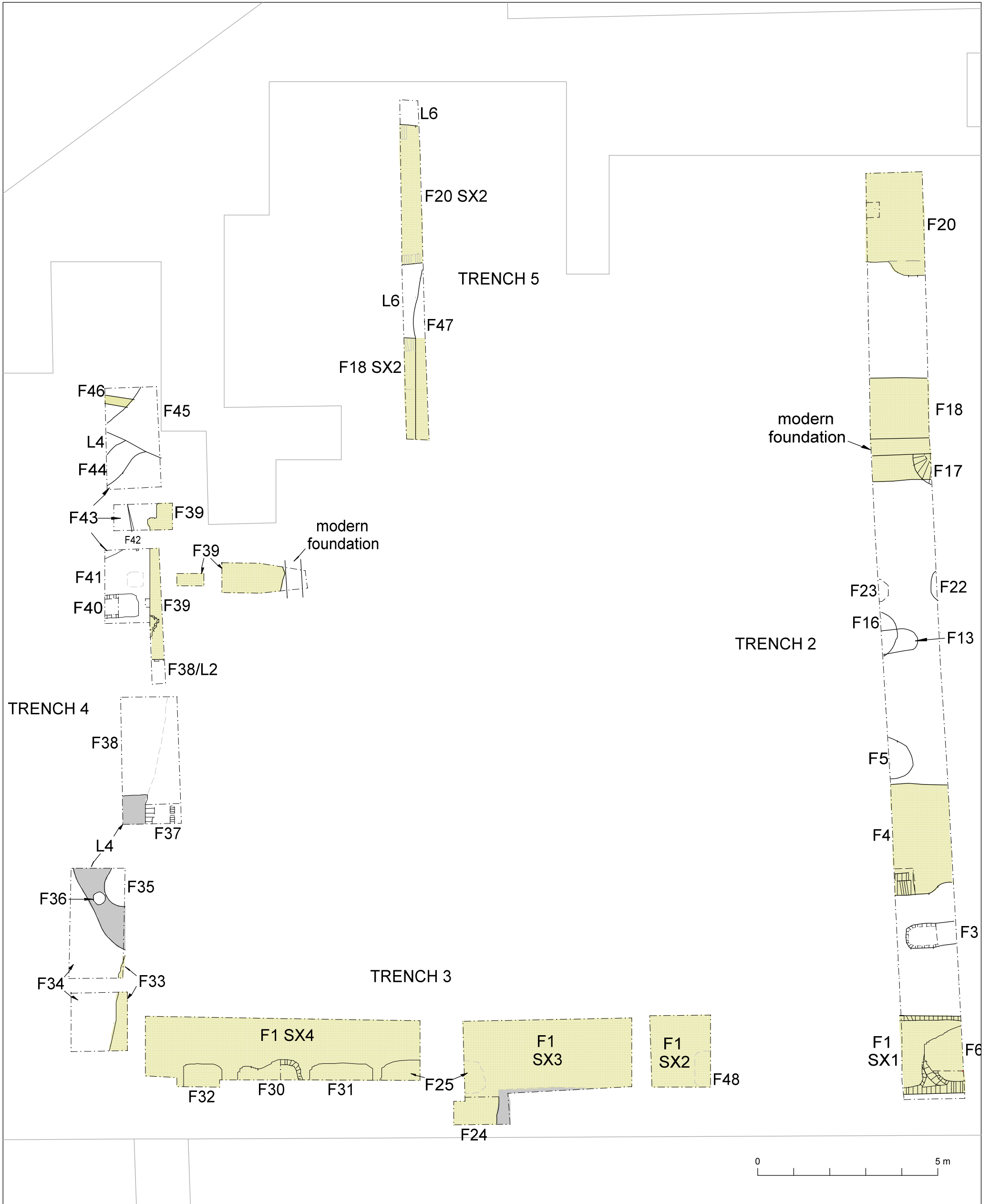


Fig 4 Trenches 2-5: detail

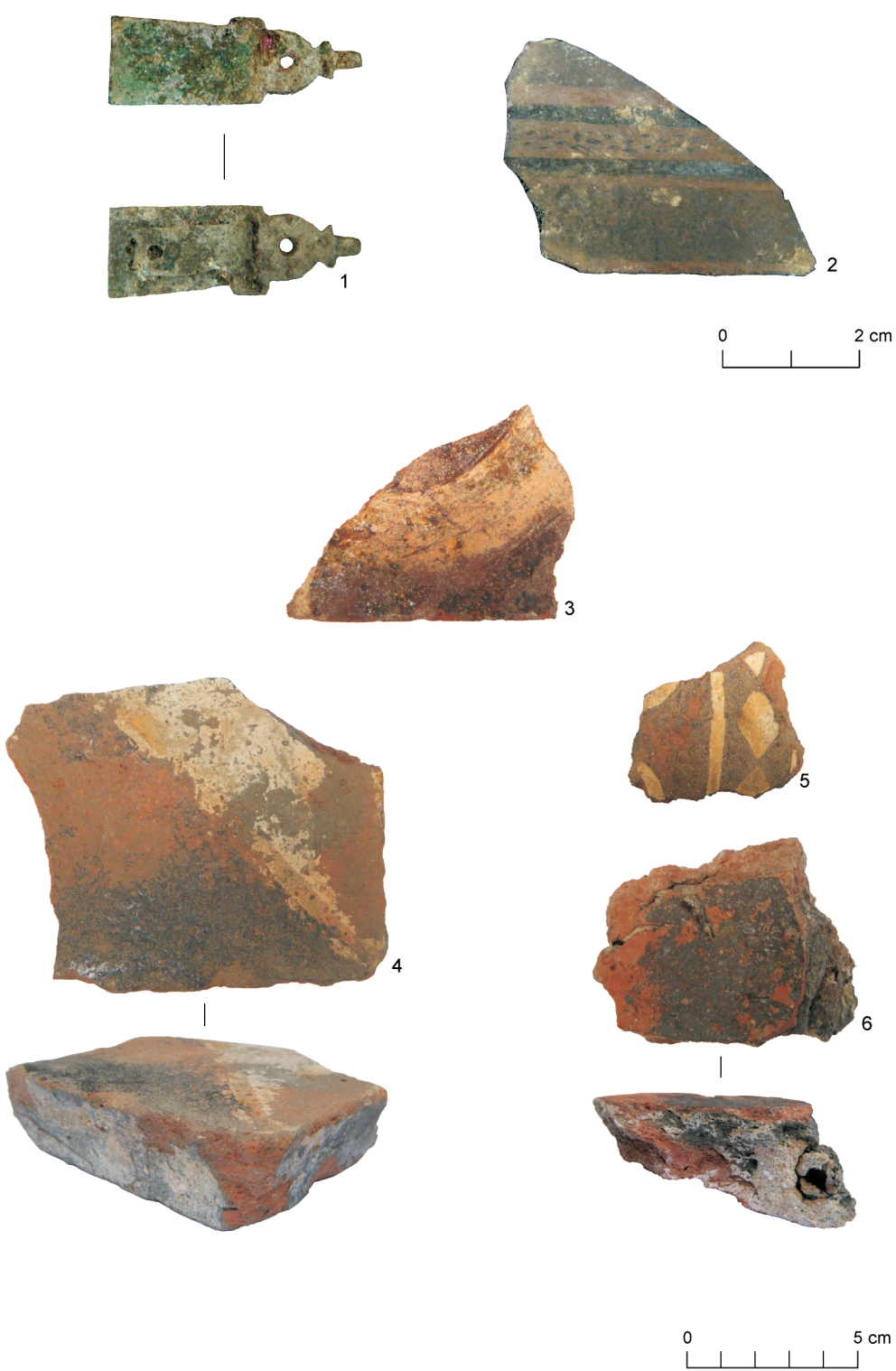
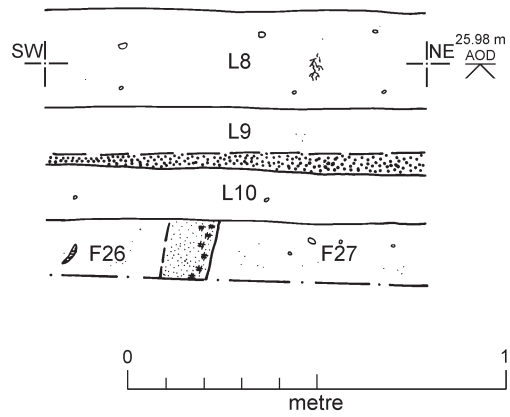


Fig 5 Small Find (1), painted glass (2) and floor tiles (3-6).



- sand
- small stones
- large stones
- ⊙ septaria
- ||| clay
- ### charcoal
- ▨ Roman brick and tile
- ▧ post-Roman brick and tile
- mortar
- ⊙ oyster shell
- √ roots

Fig 6 Trench 1: representative section

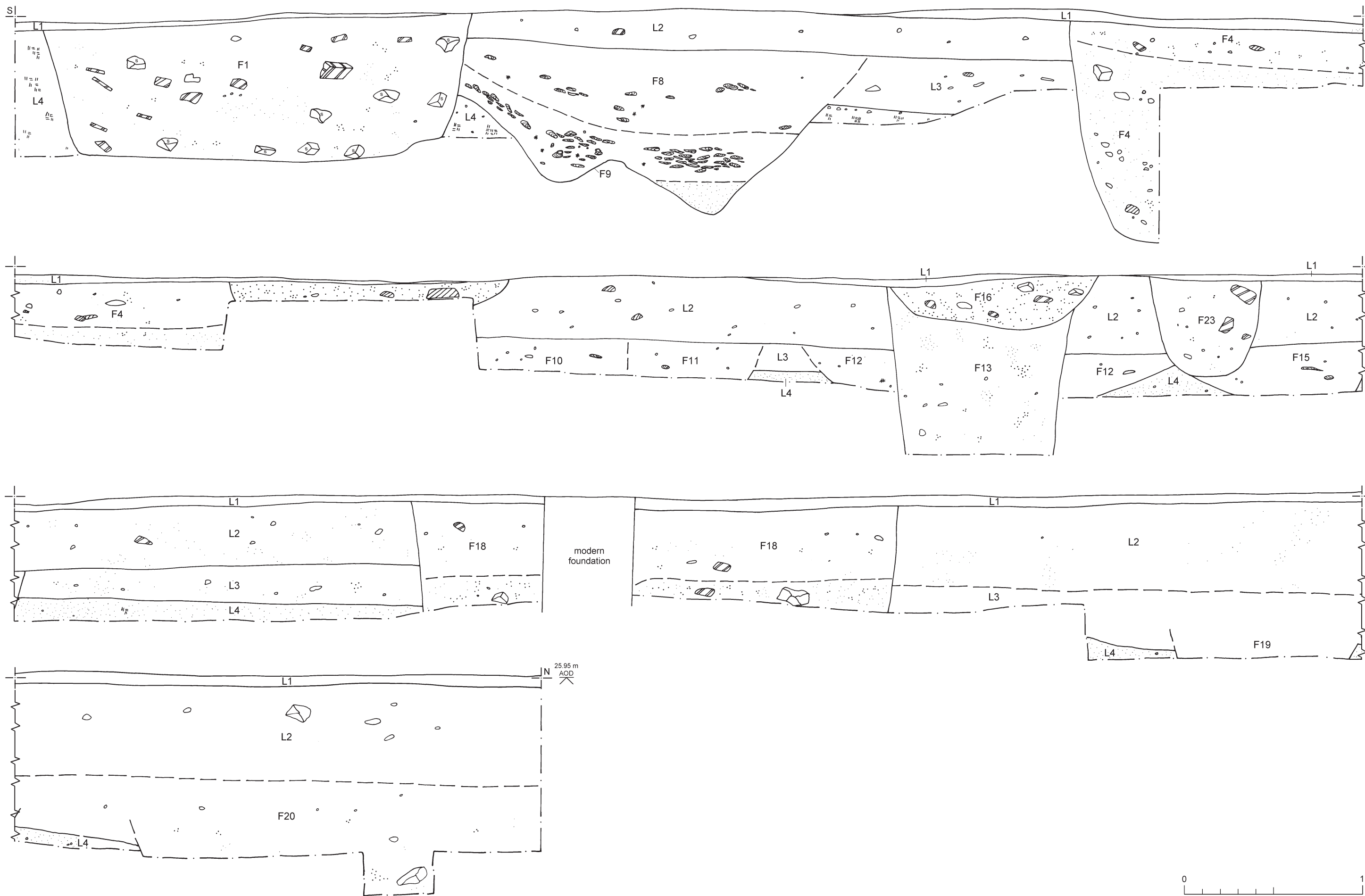


Fig 7 Trench 2: representative section

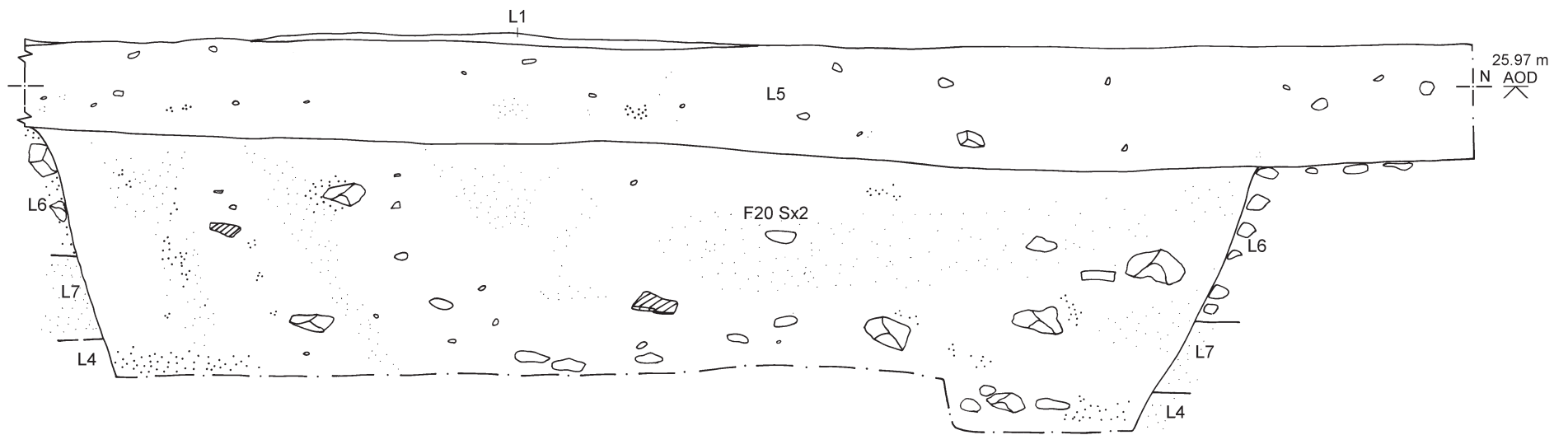
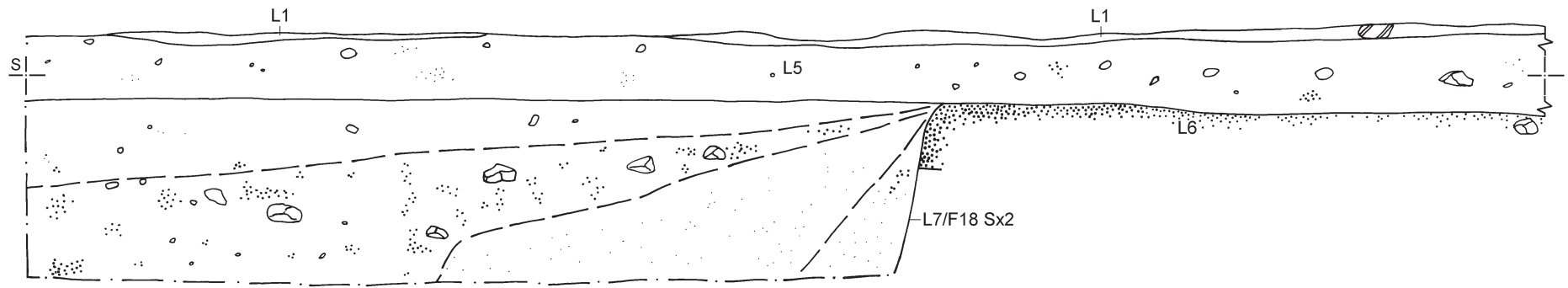
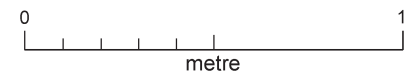


Fig x Trench 5: representative section.



Essex Historic Environment Record/ Essex Archaeology and History

Summary sheet

Site address: St Johns Abbey Church: Garrison Officers Club site, St John's Green, Colchester, Essex	
Parish: Colchester	District: Colchester
NGR: TL 9981 2477 (c)	CAT Project code: 11/1b SAM: 26307
Type of work: Evaluation	Site director/group: Colchester Archaeological Trust
Date of work: February-March 2011	Size of area investigated: 5 trenches (total length 80m)
Location of finds/curating museum: Colchester & Ipswich Museums: accession 2011.20	Funding source: Developer
Further seasons anticipated? Yes	Related UAD/ EHER nos: UAD event nos 935, 1073, 1080, 1099, EHER nos 11893-11894
Final report: CAT Report 601, summary in EAH	
Periods represented: Roman, medieval, post-medieval	
<p>Summary of fieldwork results:</p> <p>The site of the Abbey church of St John's has been discovered in an evaluation on the site of the Garrison Officers Club. Three evaluation trenches were cut in the first instance, and two more were added when structural remains were discovered.</p> <p>The parts of the church exposed in the evaluation were the west wall, the north and south nave walls, and internal walls which are probably the south wall of the north aisle and the north wall of the south aisle.</p> <p>No superstructure survived. The only below-ground structure was a length of footings for the west church wall. To judge by the evaluated part of the church site, the church has been completely demolished (probably in the 17th century), and all walls and floors removed. Notable finds included painted glass and decorated floor tiles, presumably from the church structure.</p> <p>Non-church finds included a few Roman pits, two medieval inhumations (40m to the north of the north wall of the church), and many pits and much robbing activity probably connected with the conversion of part of the demolished church into the Lucas House which occupied the (church) site until it was demolished in the late 17th century (after it suffered severe damage in the civil war), or with the military use of the site thereafter.</p>	
Previous summaries/reports:	
Author of summary: Howard Brooks	Date of summary: November 2011