

**An archaeological evaluation by trial-trenching on land to the north of the abbey precinct wall, St John's Green,
Colchester, Essex
December 2011**

**report prepared by
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on behalf of
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1 Summary

Two evaluation trenches were dug just outside the site of the medieval precinct of St John's abbey. They were located next to St John's Green on a narrow strip of land bounded along its southern side by the remains of part of the medieval wall which enclosed the abbey precinct. The investigation revealed a few Roman features (two narrow ditches and three pits) and three modern features including a substantial pit. No medieval features or finds were found, most of the finds being Roman.

The Roman pits and ditches indicate that there had been Roman-period occupation in the general vicinity of the trenches, and building materials of the same date from the trenches suggest that this had focussed around a substantial Roman building of some kind. This had mortared foundations if not mortared walls and at least one tessellated floor. This conclusion is reinforced by the absence in the trenches of any evidence for burials. Occupation in this part of the Roman town rather than burial is in accord with similar evidence found during the investigations in 2007, a short distance to the south of the trenches within the site of the abbey precinct (CAT Report 405). Nevertheless, the overall picture of the area in the Roman period is of one dominated by the circus and burial plots and cemeteries.

2 Introduction (Figs 1-3; Plates 1-2)

- 2.1** This is the archive report on an archaeological evaluation by two trial-trenches commissioned by RPS on behalf of Lexden Restoration and Development and carried out by the Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) in December 2011.
- 2.2** The trenching was required by the Colchester Borough Council Archaeological Officer Mr Martin Winter (CBCAO) to provide archaeological information for an extension to the previously evaluated area (ie Area B1a of the Garrison redevelopment site; Figs 1-3).
- 2.3** This area of land has been passed to Lexden Restoration and Development by Taylor Wimpey and a revised application (to the previously consented scheme) is under preparation. The new proposal includes a new building located to the north of the Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM) of St John's abbey precinct, although the wall forming the south boundary of the plot, being post-medieval, is apparently not itself scheduled. The brick fabric of the precinct wall at the eastern end of the current site appears to be earlier (probably 17th century; Plate 1) than the buttressed stretch (c 19th century; Plate 2). As a result, two trenches were required to evaluate the site of the proposed residential dwelling and garage. These evaluation trenches were outside the St John's abbey SAM and, therefore, did not require Scheduled Ancient Monument Consent (Figs 2-3). They were located on the south side of St John's Green Conservation Area within an area of grass and scrub which had formerly been part of the grounds of Abbey House to the south-west. The site (previously a kitchen garden) is enclosed by the 17th- to 19th-century brick wall which replaced the original precinct wall of the medieval St John's abbey to the south and by a wooden panel fence to the north. The site is more or less level, but a drop of about 0.5m down onto the street forming its northern boundary (ie the south side of St John's Green) may indicate that there has been some terracing here.



Plate 1: part of the rebuilt stretch of St John's abbey precinct wall, which forms the south boundary of the site (north is to the left).



Plate 2: as Plate 1, but further west.

- 2.4 The requirements for archaeological evaluation of this land were included in a 2004 strategy document (*Colchester Garrison Alienated Land Outline Archaeological Project Strategy Proposal and Quality Plan*: RPS 2004). This document was required by and agreed by Colchester Borough Council (CBC).
- 2.5 Site centre is at NGR TL 9971 2476.
- 2.6 All fieldwork and reporting was undertaken in accordance with a WSI (Written Scheme of Investigation) detailing the proposed archaeological work which was written on behalf of Lexden Restoration and Development by Robert Masefield of RPS (RPS 2010). In addition, the guidelines contained in the following publications were followed: the Colchester Archaeological Trust's *Policies and procedures* (CAT 2008), Colchester Borough Council's *Guidelines on standards and practice 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* (MoRPHE) and *Standards for field archaeology in the East of England* (EAA 14) was also followed.

3 Archaeological and historical background

(Figs 1-2)
by Robert Masefield of RPS

3.1 Introduction

This section is based largely on records held by the Colchester Borough Council Urban Archaeological Database (UAD) and CAT Report 97.

Although this evaluation was not a part of the larger Taylor Wimpey redevelopment of the northern part of Colchester Garrison, it seems sensible to take the findings of that PFI project into account, where appropriate. The relationship between the Taylor Wimpey evaluation and the current work will be explained briefly. The whole of the St John's abbey precinct was defined as Area B in the Taylor Wimpey scheme (Fig 2). The western side of Area B was subdivided into Area B1a to the north (the house and grounds of Abbey House) and Area B1b to the south (the southern part of Area B1b). The eastern side of the precinct, ie everything east of the abbey gatehouse, was defined as Area B2. The current site, even though north of the precinct wall, has been included in Area B1a since it belonged to Abbey House.

Drift geology of the area is predominantly sands and gravel. This is occasionally in a clay matrix, and is sometimes capped by cover loam. The Area B1a site is broadly flat, although a terrace in the north-eastern area descends to a lower level at the Officers' Club. The 2002 evaluation in Area B1 found that archaeological deposits were buried up to a metre below present ground-level.

The archaeological and historical setting of the Garrison redevelopment area has already been comprehensively explored in 'An archaeological desk-based assessment of the Colchester Garrison PFI site' (CAT Report 97), and will only be summarised here.

The site, like much of the land south and south-west of Colchester's modern town centre, lies within the area of the pre-Roman *oppidum* of Camulodunum. The only above-ground traces of this *oppidum* are some of the linear banks and ditches of the defensive dyke system which surrounded it. The Garrison lies within the site of the eastern part of the *oppidum* and includes, in the Roman Barracks area, one of the defensive dykes (ie Berechurch Dyke).

As presently understood, the *oppidum* had two main centres of activity: at modern Gosbecks Farm (2km south-west of the Garrison), which was a Late Iron Age and Roman rural farmstead and, possibly, the home of Cunobelius; and Sheepen (2km north-west of the Garrison), which was the industrial and trading centre. Apart from these two large centres, it is likely that there were a number of smaller domestic and farming sites in the *oppidum*. One of these was identified by the field boundaries, paddocks and other features recorded by CAT at Kirkee and McMunn Barracks in 1994 (Shimmin 1998). A large area of cropmarks is recorded over the southern part of the Garrison. Geophysical survey has confirmed and added to the pattern of linear cropmark features within the settlement (CAT Report 184).

3.2 Periods

Introduction

Prior to 2002, no archaeological finds from within the Area B1a site had been recorded on the Urban Archaeological Database (UAD), the historic environment record held by CBC Museums Service. However, the archaeological context of the area is now relatively well understood following a series of evaluations and excavations conducted in adjacent areas since 2002 by CAT. The following background section was written prior to the 2007 evaluation. Section 5 then provides the results of the evaluation.

Prehistoric

A Neolithic/Early Bronze Age beaker (UAD no 1249) was known prior to 2002 from the vicinity of Flagstaff Road (bordering the western side of Area B1a; Fig 2). This evidence for activity was reinforced by an excavation by CAT in Area C1 in 2004 of a cluster of approximately 1m-diameter pits containing similar pottery and, together, these suggest small-scale although potentially intermittent or seasonal occupation (CAT Report 361). In addition, an early Neolithic tree-throw pit containing pottery and blade-dominated flintwork has recently been excavated at Area A1 (Hyderabad Barracks and Meeanee Barracks), suggesting some early tree clearance (CAT report in prep).

Late Bronze Age pottery in 300mm-deep pits and a Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age flint blade were found during excavations in the abbey grounds (UAD no 3019). In addition, a Late Bronze Age pit was excavated beneath Flagstaff Road during the installation of the storm-water drain by the Anderson Group in January 2006. Several Late Bronze Age settlement-related features were excavated in 2005 during the archaeological excavations in Area J (North). However, the 2002 evaluation trenches within Area B1a produced no evidence of features or finds of prehistoric date and, notably, no clear traces of the Late Iron Age *oppidum* landscape have been identified within the area by the investigations.

Roman

The most important period for the wider area lies in its use as the hinterland of the Roman town.

The abbey was built over a Roman cemetery area; 34 Roman inhumations were excavated from 1971 to 1985 in the abbey grounds, to the east and north-east of Area B1a. Other inhumations have been found within the grounds since the 19th century, including some interred in lead coffins. However, none are known within Area B1a. The 2002 and 2007 evaluations did not identify burials of any period. Roman burials have been found around the southern and eastern sides of the site of the Roman circus in the vicinity of Area B1a, most notably within Area C2, the Napier Road car-park and beneath Napier Road itself. Over 400 burials were excavated further to the west within Area J1 (near Butt Road) in 2004.

The remains of a stone-built monumental Roman circus, currently unique in Britain, was discovered during excavations in Areas B1b, C1, C2 and J1 in 2004 and 2005, with further foundations and a monument base uncovered during service works at Napier Road in 2006 (CAT Report 361). The east-west orientated circus was approximately 450m long and 70m wide with a central barrier. The circus had been used for chariot-racing.

The site of the circus extends through the southern part of Area B1b, approximately 90m to the south of the southern boundary of Area B1a and 200m south of the current site. It is, therefore, unlikely that archaeological deposits or features directly associated with it would be present within Area B1a.

Two ring-ditches enclosing late Roman burials were identified during excavation work in Hyderabad Barracks in 2011 (Area A). Similar ring-ditches were excavated in Area C2, close to the Arena Leisure Centre, in 2004 (about 160m to the west of those found at Hyderabad Barracks; Fig 2). These latter ring-ditches enclosed late Roman cremation burials. However, the burials within the 2011 ring-ditches were late Roman inhumation burials with spears and shields. These are extremely interesting. Ring-ditches are thought to be Germanic in their affinities. It is possible that these are the burials of some of the German mercenaries known to have been drafted in by the Romano-British authorities to defend Roman Britain against Saxon marauders.

Anglo-Saxon

The site of an Early Saxon cemetery on Mersea Road has been identified by fragmentary remains and grave goods. Further evidence for the period

was identified in 1972 when the remains of the small Anglo-Saxon church of St John were excavated before the construction of St Botolph's roundabout. A coin of Elthelred was found in 1852 near the eastern edge of Area B1a (UAD no 1181), but the only Anglo-Saxon find during the 2002 evaluation of Area B1a was a residual Middle Saxon sherd in trench BT3. While this could suggest Anglo-Saxon occupation in the vicinity, there is currently no firm evidence to support this conclusion.

Medieval

The following text for the medieval period is taken from CAT Report 97:

'... The Abbey was built by the Benedictine Order by 1115 but burnt down in 1133. It was rebuilt in the early 13th century.

The cruciform -shaped church is thought to have stood in the north of the Abbey precinct. Human remains, certainly medieval burials associated with the Abbey, have been recorded several times in this area (CAR 1, 203-221). The church was added to and altered in the 14th and 15th centuries. To the north of the church were the cloister, chapel house and domestic buildings. Some of the domestic buildings were said to have been moved to the south side of the church after 1133 and this has been backed up by archaeological evidence (CAR 1, 28-30)...

The Abbey and St Giles' Church were surrounded by a precinct wall with towers. The wall dates from before the 13th century and was refaced in parts in the 16th century. It was partly demolished when building St Botolph's roundabout in the early 1970's, but it was recorded before its destruction (CAR 9, 219). Surviving stretches (some refaced in brick) can still be seen in various places ...

The surviving Abbey gatehouse was built in the 15th century as the main gatehouse, giving access to the town. The upper storey was blown up during the Siege in 1648 and was rebuilt, probably in the 1840s... The building is Grade 1 Listed and is also scheduled. It is possible that there was a second gatehouse, in the Flagstaff House area.

The Abbey was dissolved in 1538 and started to fall down or be demolished at this time ...' (pp 23-4)

Little evidence for abbey-period archaeology was found in the 2002 trenches BT1-BT3 in Area B1, although a large group of Colchester-type ware came from trench BT1 including cisterns and cooking pots which must derive from a pre-Dissolution dump of domestic rubbish from the abbey.

The remains of St John's abbey are the dominant standing archaeological features in the northern part of Colchester Garrison (ie the gatehouse and precinct wall). Although the precinct wall survives for much of its circuit, including the splendid abbey gatehouse (the north precinct gate), the site of the abbey church (demolished in the later 17th century) was lost. However, following a fire which destroyed the Garrison Officers' Club building, evaluation trenching by CAT exposed extremely large robber trenches which indicate the site of the abbey church, located further north than previously thought (CAT Report in prep). The middle and then the west end of the church were located, and subsequent geophysical survey by Dr Tim Dennis detected the east end.

Post-medieval

CAT Report 97 further states:

'... (the abbey) passed through many hands including the Lucas family, was confiscated during the Civil War, and then changed ownership several times until it was bought by the War Office in 1860. Maps from 1610 and 1648 show (possibly) part of the abbey church, other abbey buildings and part of the precinct wall still standing. These maps may not be entirely accurate; however, some abbey buildings may still have been standing at this time but having different uses. Lucas's house is one of these (see section 6.8.6). There also appears on these maps to be buildings to the west of the abbey gatehouse (where Abbey House is now) and to the N of Lucas's house (on Flagstaff Road) ...' (pp 24-5)

Evidence for post-Dissolution activity on the site of St John's abbey was located in four trenches in Area B1 in 2002. The area around trench BT1, comprising the lawn of Abbey House, was geophysically surveyed (Black 2002, fig 4), and the results showed a wide crescent-shaped feature to the east of Abbey House. Trench BT1 intercepted this feature as BF101 and found it to be a ditch of post-medieval date.

A dense area of post-medieval (16th- to 19th-century) pits was encountered within trench BT3. Other features included post-holes indicating the presence of a building and a dog burial. Trenches BT1-BT3, therefore, suggest relatively intensive post-Dissolution and more recent activity within Area B1a.

It is possible that the crescent-shaped ditch within Area B1a was a siege-related feature, given its proximity to St John's abbey gatehouse, where action took place during the Civil War siege of Colchester in 1648. Unfortunately, no firm dating evidence was obtained to confirm or refute this. However, most of the features within trenches BT2 and BT3 post-date 1648 and the post-holes within trench BT3, in particular, clearly post-date the Civil War.

3.3 Cartographic evidence

Speed's map of Colchester of 1610 has little detail and is not to scale, but it appears to show the area to the south-west of the gatehouse as open. This is consistent with the Siege Map of 1648 and the French map of Colchester of 1650. Philip Morant's map of Colchester (published 1748) shows greater detail although, again, only major buildings are shown, and it indicates a building in the location of Abbey House but open ground with trees to the east within Area B1a. This situation is confirmed by Thomas Sparrow's map of Colchester (1767), Chapman and Andre's map of the County of Essex (Colchester town centre, 1777), and Cole and Roper's map of Colchester c 1800-1815. The OS 1st Edition 1:10,560 map of 1874-6 shows that, after the construction of barrack-blocks to the west, the area continued to be occupied by gardens prior to a sequence of development of military buildings within the southern part of Area B1b, to the south and south-west of Area B1a. (All these maps are included in CAT Report 97.)

4 Aims

The aim of the evaluation was to establish the character, extent, date, significance and condition of any archaeological remains and deposits likely to be affected by the proposed works.

5 Results of the evaluation (Figs 2-4)

This section gives an archaeological summary of the evaluation, with context and finds-dating information. Methodology follows the WSI (RPS 2010). Trench numbering follows on from the eight evaluation trenches dug in Area B1a in 2002 (BT1-BT6) and 2007 (2007 T7-2007 T8), hence T9 and T10.

Trench 9: summary (Fig 4)

T9 was 15m long and was excavated through an organic-rich topsoil horizon 0.6m thick (L1), an accumulation deposit 0.1m thick (L2), and into natural (L3), which was 0.7m below modern ground-level. Six archaeological features were identified: three Roman pits (F2, F4, F5), a Roman ditch (F6), a modern pit (F3), and a natural feature, probably a tree-throw pit (F7). All the archaeological features cut natural L3 and were sealed by L2.

F3 contained a large quantity of Roman material in its upper fills, ie pottery, tile, shell and animal bone as well as a copper-alloy ring and pot counter and, in its lower fills, were lenses of redeposited natural sand and gravel sealing a horizon of clean sand. This horizon in turn sealed a dark humic fill containing 19th- and 20th-century pottery and other modern materials (peg-tile, pottery, glass, clay pipe), dating F3 to the 19th to 20th century.

T9: contexts and dating evidence

| Context | Type | Dated finds | Phase |
|---------|--|-----------------------------------|----------------------|
| F2 | pit | pottery, tile | Roman |
| F3 | pit | pottery, tile, glass, animal bone | 19th or 20th century |
| F4 | pit | pottery, tile | Roman |
| F5 | pit | pottery, tile | Roman |
| F6 | ditch | pottery, tile, shell, animal bone | Roman |
| F7 | natural feature, probably a tree-throw pit | - | - |

T9: soil depths (all AOD)

| | W end | E end |
|------------------------------------|--------|--------|
| modern ground-level | 30.00m | 29.80m |
| bottom of topsoil L1 | 29.40m | 29.20m |
| bottom of L2 (= top of natural L3) | 29.30m | 29.10m |

Trench 10: summary (Fig 4)

Located to the west of T9 and closer to the precinct wall, T10 was 10m long, and excavated through the same horizons as T9, ie L1 (0.6m thick) and L2 (0.1m thick), and into natural (L3) at 0.7m below ground-level. T10 contained a single archaeological feature, ie Roman ditch F1, which was aligned north to south and was parallel with ditch F6 in T9.

There was significant modern disturbance in the western end of T10 in the form of a deposit of brick and stone rubble, probably the remains of a soakaway associated with Abbey House. There was a modern, brick-capped electricity duct at the eastern end of T10.

F1 cut natural L3 and was sealed by L2. The modern electricity duct cut L2, and was sealed by topsoil L1.

T10: contexts and dating evidence

| Context | Type | Dated finds | Phase |
|---------|-------|----------------------------|-------|
| F1 | ditch | pottery, tile, animal bone | Roman |

T10: soil depths (all AOD)

| | W end | E end |
|------------------------------------|--------------|--------------|
| modern ground-level | 30.70m | 30.80m |
| bottom of topsoil L1 | 30.10m | 30.20m |
| bottom of L2 (= top of natural L3) | 30.00m | 30.10m |

6 Finds

by Stephen Benfield

Introduction

A small quantity of Roman and modern finds was recovered from six features (F1-F6). These finds are catalogued in Table 2 in terms of sherd number and weight by context and fabric type. In addition, there are two individually recorded small finds (SF1, SF2) which are described separately.

The pottery for each finds number was briefly examined and spot-dated. Sherd count and weight was recorded for each finds number. Fabric types and identifiable vessel forms were recorded. The fabric names are listed below (Table 1). The Roman pottery fabrics refer to the Colchester fabric series listed and described in *CAR 10* and the National Roman fabric reference collection (Tomber & Dore 1998). Roman vessel form types were recorded, where possible, using the Camulodunum (Cam) Roman pottery form type series (Hawkes & Hull 1947; Hull 1958). Samian forms were recorded following Webster (Webster 1996). Post-Roman pottery fabrics refer to *CAR 7*.

Table 1: pottery fabrics.

| Fabric code | Fabric name | date |
|--------------------|--|--------------------------|
| <i>Roman</i> | | |
| AJ | amphoras (Dressel 20; Tomber & Dore 1998, Fabric BAT AM 1) | mid 1st-2nd century |
| BA(CG) | Central Gaulish plain samian | early-late 2nd century |
| BA(EG) | East Gaulish plain samian | mid 2nd-mid 3rd century |
| CZ | Colchester and other red colour-coated wares | mid 2nd-mid 3rd century |
| DJ | coarse oxidised and related wares | mid 1st-3rd century |
| EA | Nene Valley colour-coated ware | mid/late 3rd-4th century |
| GA | BB1: black-burnished ware, category 1 | mid 2nd-4th century |
| GB | BB2: black-burnished ware, category 2 | mid 2nd-mid 3rd century |
| GX | other coarse wares, mainly locally-produced grey wares | Roman |
| KX | black-burnished wares (BB2) types in pale grey ware | mid 2nd-4th century |
| HZ | large storage jars and other vessels in heavily- tempered grey ware | 1st-3rd century |
| MQ | white-slipped fine wares and parchment wares | Roman |
| TY | mortaria, other British (not Colchester or Verulamium) | Roman |
| <i>Post-Roman</i> | | |
| 48D | Staffordshire-type white earthenwares | 18th/19th-20th century |
| 51A | late slipped kitchenware | 19th-20th century |

Small finds

There are two small finds. The pottery counter (SF1) can be closely dated to the Roman period. The copper-alloy ring (SF2) is from pit F3, which is modern. Nearly all the finds from this feature are Roman, and a Roman date for this object (given its corroded condition) appears likely. Plain or decorated finger-rings are most commonly associated with late Roman

(3rd- to 4th-century) inhumation burials at Colchester, and one was found on the finger of one buried individual (*CAR 2*, 45).

SF1 Pottery counter, complete. Sub-circular counter cut from a grey ware sherd/pot (Fabric GX). Slightly faceted edges roughly smoothed. Weight 16.1 g, diameter 41 mm, thickness 4 mm. Roman. (T9, F3 (finds no 5))

SF2 Copper-alloy ring, complete. Corroded. Appears to be a plain, D- or slightly oval-shaped copper-alloy band, 2.5 mm broad. Weight 1.7 g, diameter 23 mm (internal diameter 19-20 mm). Probably Roman. (T9, F3 (finds no 4))

Finds discussion

The majority of the finds can be dated to the Roman period, and almost all the excavated features in T9 and T10 produced only Roman-dated finds. The exception is F3 (T9), which also produced modern (19th- to 20th-century) finds.

The closely-dated Roman finds (pottery) date to the mid 2nd-3rd century. Although some could be as late as the 4th century, none need be, and no pottery types are specifically 4th century. The latest closely-dated Roman pottery is Nene Valley colour-coated ware (Fabric EA), which appeared in Colchester from the early-mid 3rd century (*CAR 10*, 279). The only vessel form in this pottery fabric is a Cam 407 scale-decorated beaker, which was current from the early-mid 3rd century (*CAR 10*, 486-7). Taking the Roman pottery assemblage as a whole, there is no clear evidence of any Roman occupation on the site after the mid-late 3rd century.

The Roman tile includes a *tessera* cube. The white mortar on its base shows that it had been set into a floor. Thus the *tessera* and the other Roman CBM (including roof tile and flue tile pieces) from the evaluation could indicate that the site of a Roman building exists in the vicinity.

A complete copper-alloy finger ring of probable Roman date (SF2) may derive from a disturbed inhumation burial, or it may be a casual loss.

Table 2: list of finds with spot dates.

| Trench | Feature no | finds no | context type | finds type and description | spot-dating summary |
|--------|------------|----------|--------------|---|---|
| T9 | F2 | 2 | pit | pottery Roman: Fabric BA(CG), 1@61 g (Dr 45); Fabric CZ, 1@3 g (folded beaker); Fabric GB, 1@41 g (Cam 37B); Fabric GX, 12@70g; Fabric HZ, 3@274 g; Fabric TY, 1@36 g, mortarium base sherd, dirty white fabric with some red inclusions and translucent grey/colourless quartz grits CBM Roman: 6@717 g, includes pieces of <i>tegula</i> and a piece from a combed flue tile animal bone 1@2 g | Roman, late 2nd-mid 3rd century |
| T9 | F3 | 3 | pit | pottery Roman: Fabric AJ, 1@55 g; BA(CG), 1@12 g; BA(EG), 3@81 g (Dr 31); Fabric CZ, 9@37 g (includes folded beaker – possibly Fabric EA); Fabric DJ, 1@28 g (from large vessel); Fabric EA, 4@220 g (Cam 407); Fabric GA, 1@5 g (Cam 279); Fabric GB, 1@47 g (Cam 37B); Fabric GX, 25@278 g (Cam 268 (2)), includes some sherds with internal water scale from use; Fabric HZ, 3@ 126 g (decorated shoulder); | modern, 19th-20th century with residual Roman |

| Trench | Feature no | finds no | context type | finds type and description | spot-dating summary |
|--------|------------|----------|--------------|---|--------------------------------|
| | | | | Fabric KX, 1@9 g (bowl base); Fabric MQ, 4@17 g Post-Roman: Fabric 48D, 1@2 g; Fabric 51A, 2@177 g CBM Roman: 20@2,505 g, includes <i>tegula</i> , <i>imbrex</i> , combed flue tile. Post-Roman: peg-tile, 6@135 g (dated 13th century+); brick, 3@977 g, includes frogged red brick (19th-20th century) stone 1@258 g, hard limestone (reacts with hydrochloric acid), one smooth worked face, piece max. surviving thickness 28 mm, possibly a veneer or paving fragment(?) clay pipe 1@1 g, stem piece glass vessel glass, 2@ 53 g, bottle neck, green glass (18th century) and blue-green, small, cordonned piece; window glass, 1@1 g, blue-green, thin, flat piece, 1 mm thick (post-medieval/modern?) iron nail 1@28 g, rectangular shaft section (post-medieval/modern?) animal bone 4@143 g, various, from large mammal shell oyster shell, 5@83 g | |
| T9 | F4 | 6 | pit | CBM Roman: 3@450 g (one piece 14 mm thick might possibly be peg-tile, but is probably Roman) burnt stone white quartz 1@26 g, crazed, probably heat-affected | Roman |
| T9 | F5 | 7 | pit | pottery Roman: Fabric CZ, 1@4 g, (beaker) buff fabric probably Colchester; Fabric GX, 1@9 g | Roman, mid 2nd-mid 3rd century |
| T9 | F6 | 8 | ditch | pottery Roman: Fabric GX, 5@24 g CBM Roman: 1@24 g | Roman |
| T10 | F1 | 1 | ditch | pottery Roman: Fabric EA, 2@14 g, beaker sherds; Fabric GX, 8@160 g; Fabric KX, 1@31 g (Cam 305); Fabric HZ, 4@135 g CBM Roman: 16@2,008 g, includes pieces of <i>tegula</i> , <i>imbrex</i> , Roman brick and a <i>tessera</i> cube with white mortar from floor setting shell oyster shell, 3@21 g | Roman, late 3rd-4th century |

7 Discussion

Although this evaluation was not a part of the larger Taylor Wimpey redevelopment of the northern part of Colchester Garrison, it seems sensible to take findings from this earlier work into account where appropriate.

Seven archaeological features were recorded during this evaluation: three Roman pits, two Roman ditches and a modern pit. The two Roman ditches (F1, F6) were parallel, and aligned approximately north-west to south-east. They are probably to be interpreted as land boundary ditches, and finds from them (pottery, CBM, shell) probably indicate contemporary settlement of late 3rd- to 4th-century date in the vicinity. No prehistoric or Anglo-Saxon remains or finds were recorded.

The three Roman pits (F2, F4, F5) are another indication of Roman settlement nearby. The five Roman pits found in the 2007 T8 in Area B1a (approximately 50m south of the 2011 trenches) also produced evidence of Roman domestic activity in the form of structural material (ie brick, tile, *imbrex*, painted wall-plaster), as well as pottery, shell, and animal bone. The Roman CBM from the current evaluation, including a *tessera*, also supports the idea of a nearby Roman structure, which was presumably robbed out. The dating of the pottery from the pits is slightly earlier than that from the ditches, ie 2nd/3rd century rather than 3rd/4th century. A reasonable compromise would be that the ditches and pits are all early-mid 3rd century, as suggested by Stephen Benfield in his finds report.

During the previous evaluations on Area B1a, an area of Roman extra-mural settlement was identified on a southerly slope overlooking the Roman town. The current site was clearly part of that extra-mural settlement.

Even though the site was located to the north of and outside the abbey precinct, it is quite surprising that no medieval or abbey-related material was recovered, even residual in later contexts.

One of the modern features was the large pit (F3) in T9. Other modern activity was limited to a soakaway and electricity supply duct in T10, both associated with Abbey House.

8 Acknowledgements

The CAT and RPS would like to thank Mr Jonathan Frank of Lexden Restoration and Development for commissioning and funding the work.

The project was managed and carried out by B Holloway, with digital survey carried out by C Lister assisted by B Holloway.

The project was monitored for Colchester Borough Council by Martin Winter (CBC Archaeology Officer) and for Lexden Restoration and Development by Robert Masefield of RPS.

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10 Glossary and abbreviations

| | |
|-------------|---|
| Anglo-Saxon | post-Roman, AD 410 to c AD 1066 |
| AOD | Above Ordnance Datum |
| Bronze Age | 2,500 BC to c 700 BC |
| CAT | Colchester Archaeological Trust |
| CBC | Colchester Borough Council |
| CBM | Ceramic Building Material, ie brick and tile |
| CIMS | Colchester and Ipswich Museums |
| context | specific location on an excavation, usually relating to finds |
| ECC | Essex County Council |
| EHFR | Essex Historic Environment Record |
| IfA | Institute for Archaeologists |
| medieval | the period from AD 1066 to Henry VIII |

| | |
|---------------|--|
| modern | 19th century to the present |
| natural | geological deposit undisturbed by human activity |
| NGR | National Grid Reference |
| post-medieval | after Henry VIII and up to Queen Victoria |
| Roman | the period from AD 43 to c AD 430 |
| RPS | RPS Planning (Project Consultants) |
| RRCSAL | Report of the Research Committee of the Society of Antiquaries of London |
| UAD | Urban Archaeological Database held by CIMS |
| U/S | unstratified, ie without any context |

11 Archive deposition

The paper and digital archive is currently held by the Colchester Archaeological Trust at 12 Lexden Road, Colchester, Essex CO3 3NF, but will be permanently deposited with Colchester and Ipswich Museums under accession code COLEM 2011.94.

12 Contents of archive

Finds

1 x museum box containing all finds

Paper record

1 x A4 wallet containing:
brief and WSI
copy of CAT Report 630
original site record sheets
photographic log
attendance record
disk with digital photographs

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Distribution list:

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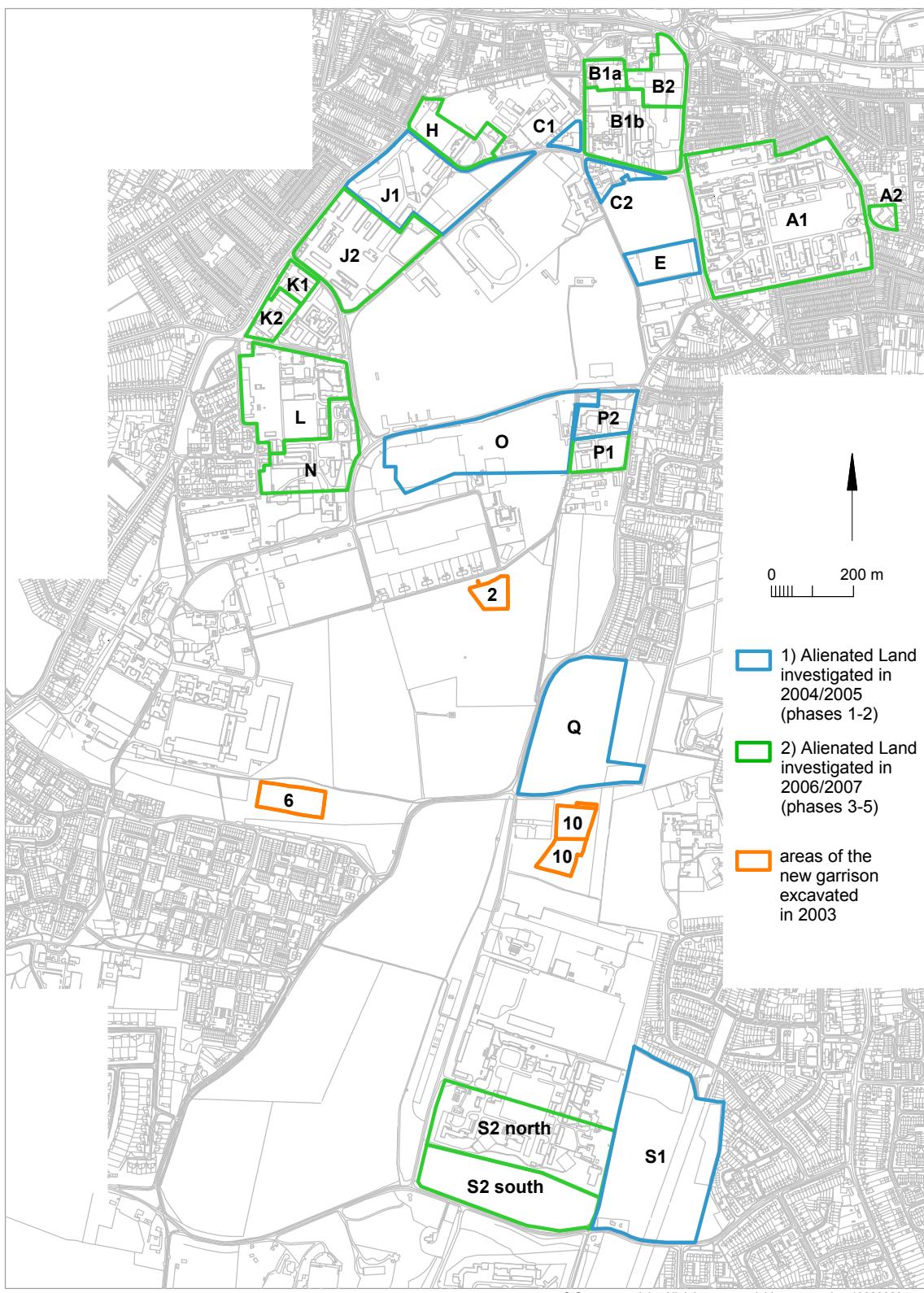


Fig 1 Area B1a: location plan.

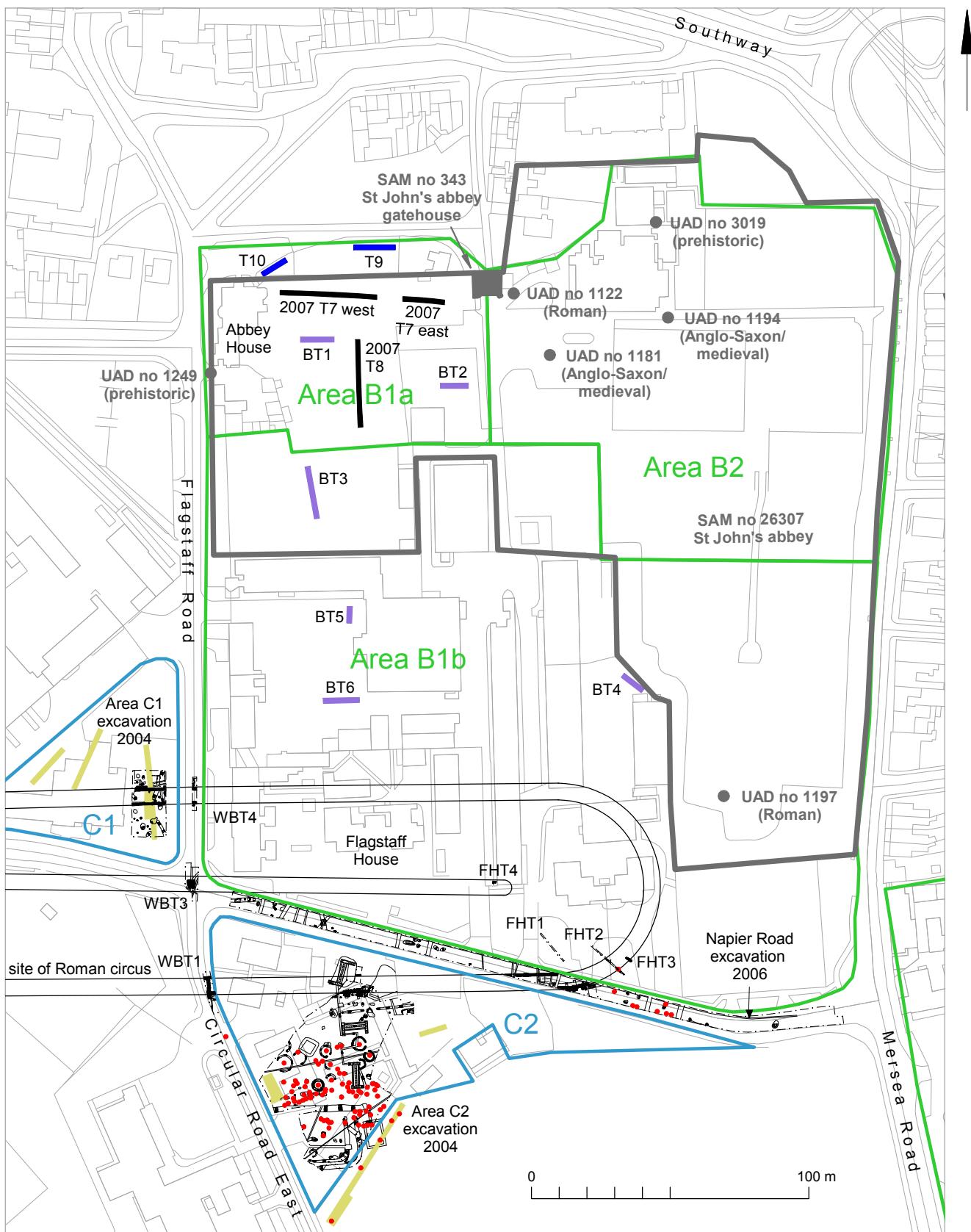


Fig 2 Area B1a: trench location plan, showing T9-T10 in relation to the earlier evaluation trenches and the Taylor Wimpey development areas.

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— 2002 evaluation trench
 — 2004 evaluation trench
 — 2007 evaluation trench
 ● burial
 — Area C
 — Area B
 — 2011 evaluation trench

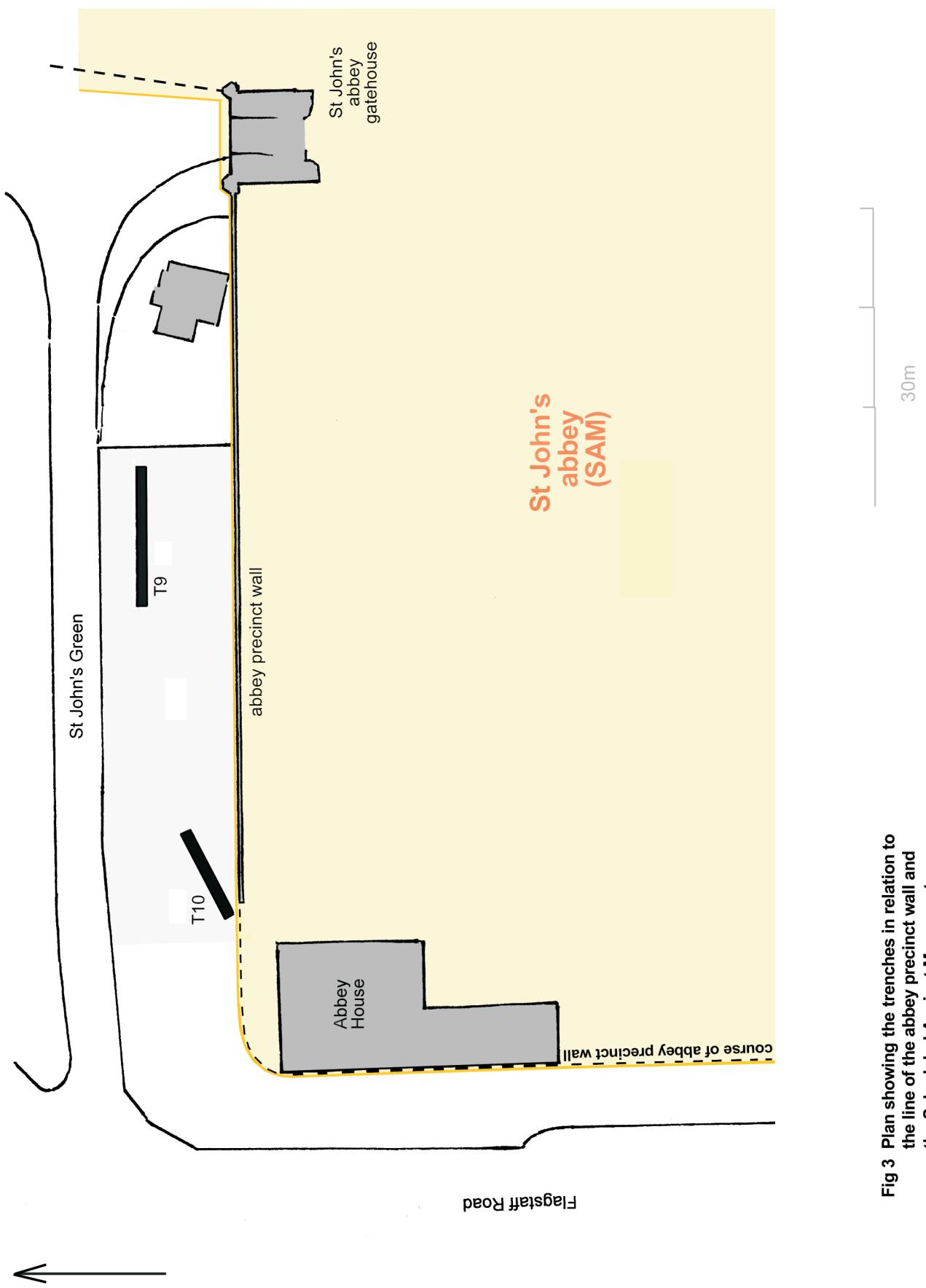


Fig 3 Plan showing the trenches in relation to the line of the abbey precinct wall and the Scheduled Ancient Monument.

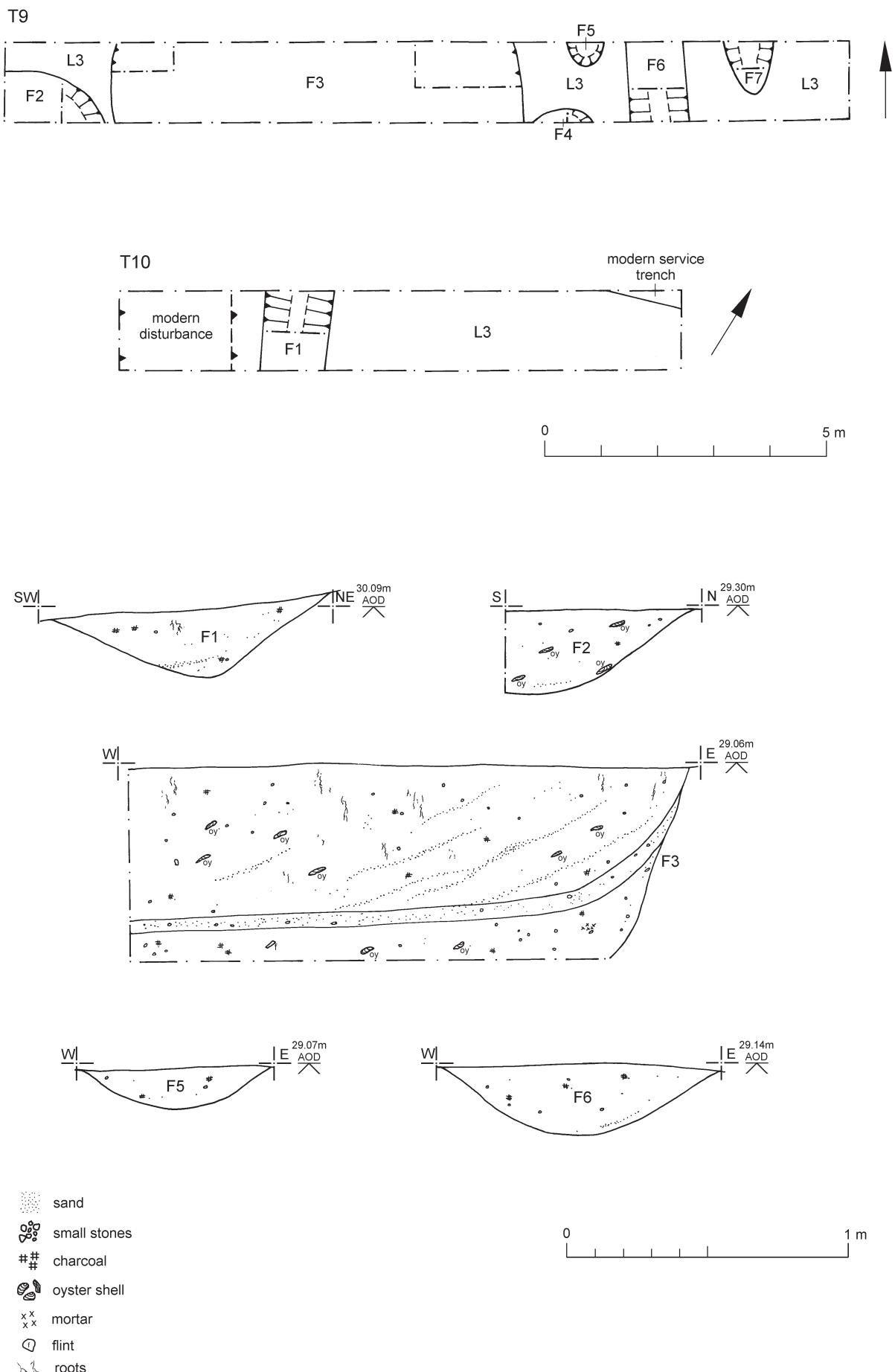


Fig 4 T9-T10: trench plans; F1-F3 and F5-F6: sections.

Essex Historic Environment Record/ Essex Archaeology and History

Summary sheet

| | |
|--|---|
| Site address: land to the north of the abbey precinct wall, St John's Green, Colchester, Essex | |
| Parish: Colchester | District: Colchester |
| NGR: TL 9971 2476 | Project codes: CAT - 11/12d Museum accession - COLEM 2011.94 |
| Type of work: Evaluation | Site director/group: Colchester Archaeological Trust |
| Date of work: December 2011 | Size of area investigated: 2 trenches, total length 25m |
| Location of finds/curating museum: Colchester and Ipswich Museums | Funding source: Developer |
| Further seasons anticipated? No | Related UAD and SAM nos: UAD nos 1122, 1181, 1194, 1197, 1249, 3019; SAM nos 343, 26307 |
| Final report: CAT Report 630 and summary in EAH | |
| Periods represented: Roman, modern | |
| <p>Summary of fieldwork results: <i>Two evaluation trenches were dug just outside the site of the medieval precinct of St John's abbey. They were located next to St John's Green on a narrow strip of land bounded along its southern side by the remains of part of the medieval wall which enclosed the abbey precinct. The investigation revealed a few Roman features (two narrow ditches and three pits) and three modern features including a substantial pit. No medieval features or finds were found, most of the finds being Roman.</i></p> <p><i>The Roman pits and ditches indicate that there had been Roman-period occupation in the general vicinity of the trenches, and building materials of the same date from the trenches suggest that this had focussed around a substantial Roman building of some kind. This had mortared foundations if not mortared walls and at least one tessellated floor. This conclusion is reinforced by the absence in the trenches of any evidence for burials. Occupation in this part of the Roman town rather than burial is in accord with similar evidence found during the investigations in 2007, a short distance to the south of the trenches within the site of the abbey precinct (CAT Report 405). Nevertheless, the overall picture of the area in the Roman period is of one dominated by the circus and burial plots and cemeteries.</i></p> | |
| Previous summaries/reports: none | |
| Keywords: Roman, pits, ditches | Significance: * |
| Author of summary: Howard Brooks and Ben Holloway | Date of summary: February 2012 |