

Archaeological monitoring and recording on new flagpole foundations near Colchester castle bridge, Colchester, Essex

July 2015



report by
Robin Mathieson and Howard Brooks

commissioned by Michael Whelton of Universal
Stone on behalf of CBC

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OASIS entry no.: colchest3-217343
NGR: TL 99856 25273



Colchester Archaeological Trust
Roman Circus House,
Roman Circus Walk,
Colchester,
Essex CO2 7GZ

tel.: 01206 501785
email: archaeologists@catuk.org

CAT Report 853
September 2015

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1 Summary

Colchester Archaeological Trust undertook archaeological monitoring and recording on the contractor's excavation of two pits for new flagpoles on either side of the entrance bridge to Colchester Castle. The site is in an area of the highest archaeological importance, south of the Norman Castle, and south of the Roman Temple of Claudius in insula 22 of the Roman town. The pits revealed post-medieval layers, but no significant features. There were unstratified Roman and post-medieval finds.

2 Introduction

This is the report on archaeological monitoring and recording of the contractors' digging of two flag pole bases beside the entrance bridge to Colchester Castle (site centre: TL 99856 25273). The work was carried out by CAT on behalf of Universal Stone on 13th July 2015. All fieldwork and reporting was in accordance the following guidelines: CIMS 2008a, CIMS 2008b, ClfA 2014a, ClfA 2014b, EAA 14, and EAA 24.



Plate 1: western flag pole pit, view north (castle bridge to right) (see cover for eastern pit)

3 Archaeological background

The flagpole site at the end of the castle footbridge is in an area of outstanding archaeological pedigree. It is within the Roman town, within the precincts of the Temple of Claudius, and within the grounds of the Norman Castle¹. The well-published archaeological background (see, for example, Hull 1958, Crummy 1997) need not be repeated here, but it will be useful to summarise the more relevant sites (below) by referring to the Colchester Urban Archaeological Database (UAD).

The temple of Claudius, and its precinct (UAD MONuments 785, 713).

The Temple of Claudius, Insula 22. Founded in the AD50's (some debate whether it would have been built before or after the death of Claudius in AD54). The temple served as the centre of the Imperial cult in the province and dominated the eastern half of the city. It was surrounded by a large precinct. Much of the vaulted podium base of the temple has been preserved below Colchester castle, although none of the superstructure has survived. The base provides a clear indication of the scale of the building and based on the principles of Roman architect Vitruvius the building would have been over 20m high. The podium measures 32 x 23.5m.

The current site is only 23m south of the south face of the Temple of Claudius.

¹ The site is a Scheduled Monument (EX 1, HA 1002217). SAM was applied for and granted [Case No. S00103246]

The Precinct and monuments within it (UAD MON 713)

A large walled precinct belonging to the Roman Temple of Claudius situated off the modern High Street and within the Castle Park. The current site is only 30m north of the northern edge of the southern precinct wall.

The arcade probably continued to stand until, in C11th it was demolished to provide material for the Norman castle and the foundation of the outer rampart. A watching brief during the excavation of trenches for an extension to NW corner of the Conservative Club revealed a N-S wall foundation (ELM1046) constructed mainly of mortared septaria with occasional tile fragments. To the east of the foundation was a thick clay loam deposit assumed to be makeup associated with the wall. The wall and clay deposit appear to be Roman and perhaps marks the W boundary of the temple precinct. The eastern part of the clayey deposit was possibly cut by the castle bailey ditch.

An abortive excavation (EVT3091) was undertaken by the Morant Club in search of the castle ditch and forum wall in 1921. A single trench was cut northwards from the north kerb of High Street, on the site of the War Memorial, opposite All Saints Church. This revealed a wall which Hull believed to be Roman.

The Norman Castle and its bailey ramparts (UAD MONs 679, 764).

MON 679 Norman ditch around the Castle bailey rampart, constructed in 11th century.

Antiquarian Philip Morant says *'The (castle) bailey was formerly encompassed on the south and west sides by a strong wall, in which were two gates. That on the south was the chief. This wall was taken down by Robt. Norfolk Esq. who erected in the room of it a range of houses now standing in the High Street. The west wall reached as far as the east side of St Helen's Lane. On the north and east sides the castle was secured by a deep ditch and strong rampart of earth... This rampart is thrown upon a wall that formerly encompassed either the Castle or Palace of Coel, on the site whereof the Castle is built; the buttress and other parts of which wall have lately been discovered'*. See also EVT3068, EVT3057, EVT3105 to do.

During the excavation of a pipe trench in 1983 (EVT3015), the inner bailey ditch was traced for a total of just over 100 metres. During excavations in 1950 (EVT3121) the ditch inner edge was located where it had removed the metalling of two Roman streets.

In September 1964, demolition of 5 Maidenburgh Street prior to use of the site as a car park made an area of 38mx 10 m available for excavation, which was undertaken for 6 weeks in September - October 1964 under the direction of BRK Niblett (Dunnett) for the Colchester Excavation Committee. Two trenches were cut across the line of the Norman rampart which crossed the east end of the site. Beneath 0.6 m of modern rubble and garden soil a series of tips of sand, gravel and Roman tile and mortar. The maximum thickness of the deposit was 0.6 m which represents the remnant of the rampart. Immediately in front of the rampart on the edge of the bailey ditch was an inhumation burial, possibly of Saxon date. Several loose bones indicated the possibility of other burials. Eastern lip of Norman bailey ditch was located, immediately in front of rampart.

In 1969 a warehouse at the S end of Ryegate Rd was demolished prior to the construction of the Methodist Church. Four trenches were excavated to a depth of 2 m, located so as not to affect the foundations. The east (inner) lip of the bailey trench was revealed as was the western edge. Part of the bailey rampart was also excavated. The lower levels of the rampart remained intact to a depth of up to 1 m.

Norman bailey rampart surrounding Colchester Castle (UAD MON 764)

Trenches were dug into the north side of the rampart in 1950 (EVT3121). The Norman bank was found to have been built over structural remains walls of the Roman Temple Precinct (MON713). These remains were covered by a thick level of debris containing occupation material and broken bricks/tile. It was on a layer of chalk which sealed these remains, that the rampart was built. The excavations also showed that the Norman bank had been added to in later medieval times.

4 Results

Two pits 0.8m wide and 0.6m deep were dug by contractors, one on either side of the south end of the castle bridge. Both pits were dug into modern topsoil: the upper 0.40 to 0.45m of soil (Layer 1a) was loose and moist dark brown sandy loam, with oyster and brick flecks; the remaining depth to 0.6m below ground level was a similar soil, but dry (L1b). No archaeological features were revealed.

5 Finds (none retained).

Finds number 1 - Pit 1

Oyster shell, one fragment peg-tile, two small fragments Roman brick/tile.

Finds number 2 - Pit 2

One sherd of white-glazed pottery (19th/20th century), 1 rim frag of post-medieval red earthenware with a heavy brown glaze (19th century), 1 frag Roman tegula.

6 Conclusions

Previous archaeological observations have shown that there is a covering of post-medieval and modern topsoil over this part of Castle Park. Specifically, the 2000 hand-dug cable trenches for the castle floodlights passed within a few metres of this location, and showed that there was 0.8m of post-medieval topsoil here. Given those results, it is not surprising that the pits monitored here did not penetrate this topsoil cover when dug to 0.6m bgl.

7 References

Note: all CAT fieldwork reports are available online in .pdf format at <http://cat.essex.ac.uk>

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|-------------------|-------|--|
| ClfA | 2014a | <i>Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief</i> |
| CAT
Report 850 | 2015 | <i>An archaeological assessment: Winter Wonderland, Castle Park, Colchester, Essex.</i> Report by Howard Brooks |
| ClfA | 2014b | <i>Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials</i> |
| CIMS | 2008a | <i>Guidelines on standards and practices for archaeological fieldwork in the Borough of Colchester</i> |
| CIMS | 2008b | <i>Guidelines on the preparation and transfer of archaeological archives to Colchester and Ipswich Museums</i> |
| Crummy, P | 1997 | <i>City of Victory: the story of Colchester – Britain's' first Roman town</i> |
| EAA 14 | 2003 | <i>Standards for field archaeology in the East of England</i> , East Anglian Archaeology, Occasional Papers, 14 , ed by D Gurney |
| EAA 24 | 2011 | <i>Research and archaeology revisited: a revised framework for the Eastern Counties. Research agenda and strategy</i> , East Anglian Archaeology, Occasional Papers, 24 , ed by M Medlycott |
| Hull, MR | 1958 | <i>Roman Colchester</i> , Report 20 of the Research Committee of the Society of Antiquaries of London |

8 Acknowledgements

CAT thanks Michael Whelton for commissioning and funding the project. Site work by Robin Mathieson. Report by RM and H Brooks. Figure by HB. The project was monitored for English Heritage by Deborah Priddy.

9 Contents of archive

Finds: none

Paper and digital: One A4 document wallet containing:

This report (CAT Report 853). Original site record sheets. Photos on DC, and photo index. Sundry papers. OASIS summary.

10 Archive deposition

Archive is currently at CAT offices at Roman Circus House, but will be deposited at Colchester Museum (accession COLEM: 2015.69).

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Distribution list:

Michael Whelton

Deborah Priddy, English Heritage

Dr Jess Tipper, Archaeological Advisor for Colchester Borough Council
Essex Historic Environment Record, Essex County Council



Colchester Archaeological Trust

Roman Circus Centre, Roman Circus Walk,

Colchester, Essex CO2 7GZ

tel.: 01206 501785

email: archaeologists@catuk.org

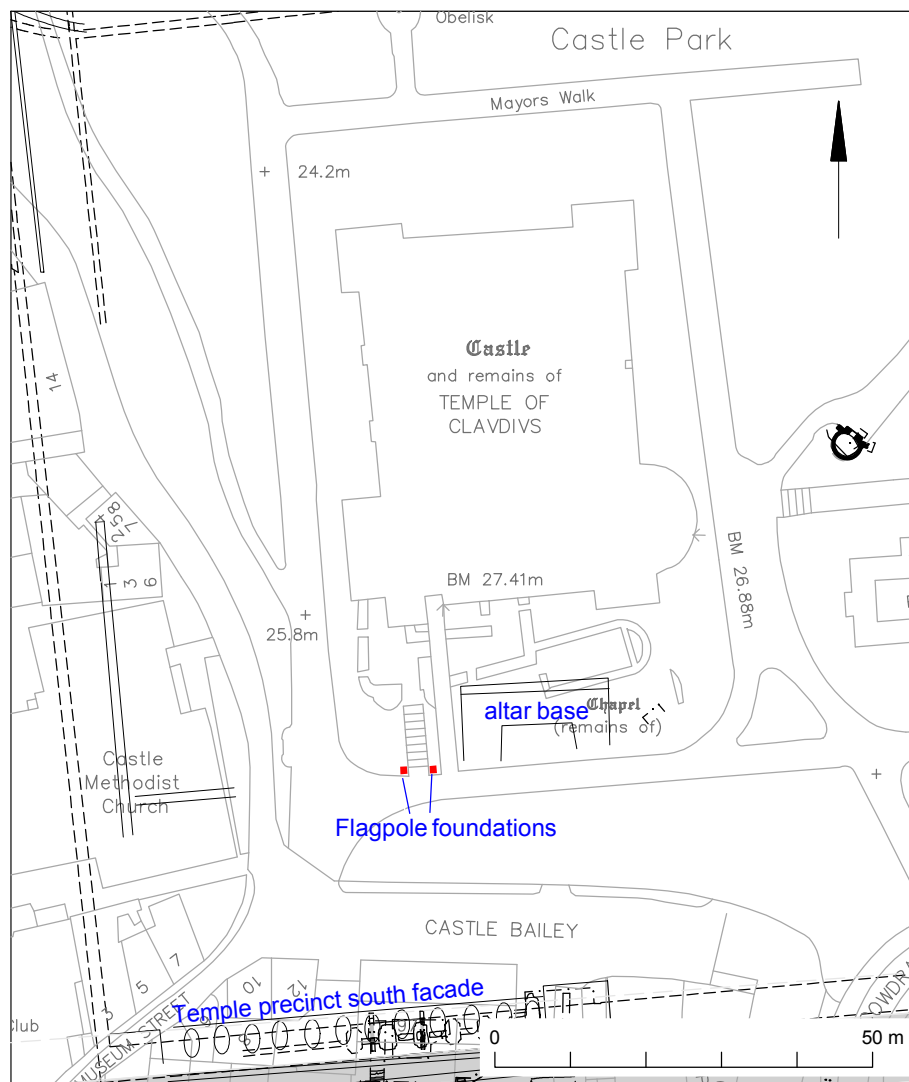


Figure 1 Flagpole foundations in relation to Roman Temple of Claudius and Norman Castle

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

Summary sheet

Site address: Colchester Castle, flagpole foundations at south end of footbridge, Castle Park, Colchester, Essex	
Parish: Colchester	District: Colchester
NGR: TL 99856 25273	Site codes: CAT Project – 15/07a OASIS - colchest3-217343
Type of work: Archaeological monitoring	Site director/group: Colchester Archaeological Trust
Date of work: 13th July 2015	Size of area investigated: two pits each 0.8m x 0.8m
Location of curating museum: Colchester & Ipswich Museums COLEM 2015.69	Funding source: developer
Further seasons anticipated? No	Related UAD nos: MONs 679, 713, 764, 785
Final report: CAT Report 853	
Periods represented: Post-medieval and modern	
Summary of fieldwork results: <i>Colchester Archaeological Trust undertook archaeological monitoring and recording on the contractor's excavation of two pits for new flagpoles on either side of the entrance bridge to Colchester Castle. The site is in an area of the highest archaeological importance, south of the Norman Castle, and south of the Roman Temple of Claudius in insula 22 of the Roman town. The pits revealed post-medieval layers, but no significant features. There were unstratified Roman and post-medieval finds.</i>	
Previous summaries/reports: None	
Author of summary: Chris Lister	Date of summary: July 2015

Appendix 1

(following pages)

OASIS DATA COLLECTION FORM: England

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Printable version

OASIS ID: colchest3-217343

Project details

Project name	Colchester Castle bridge/flagpole WB 15
Short description of the project	Colchester Archaeological Trust undertook archaeological monitoring and recording on the contractor's excavation of two pits for new flagpoles on either side of the entrance bridge to Colchester Castle. The site is in an area of the highest archaeological importance, south of the Norman Castle, and south of the Roman Temple of Claudius in insula 22 of the Roman town. The pits revealed post-medieval layers, but no significant features. There were unstratified Roman and post-medieval and finds.
Project dates	Start: 15-07-2015 End: 15-07-2015
Previous/future work	Yes / Yes
Any associated project reference codes	15/07a - Contracting Unit No.
Any associated project reference codes	2015.69 - Museum accession ID
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	Scheduled Monument (SM)
Current Land use	Other 14 - Recreational usage
Monument type	LAYER Modern
Significant Finds	POTTERY Post Medieval
Significant Finds	CBM Roman
Investigation type	"Watching Brief"
Prompt	Planning condition

Project location

Country	England
Site location	ESSEX COLCHESTER COLCHESTER Colchester Castle. Castle Park
Postcode	CO1 1TJ
Study area	1.3 Square metres

Site coordinates TL 99856 25273 51.889600556402 0.904651503129 51 53 22 N 000 54 16 E
Point

Height OD /
Depth Min: 0m Max: 0m

Project creators

Name of Organisation Colchester Archaeological Trust

Project brief originator English Heritage/Department of Environment

Project design originator Colchester Archaeological Trust

Project director/manager Chris Lister

Type of sponsor/funding body Borough Council

Name of sponsor/funding body Colchester Borough Council

Project bibliography 1

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