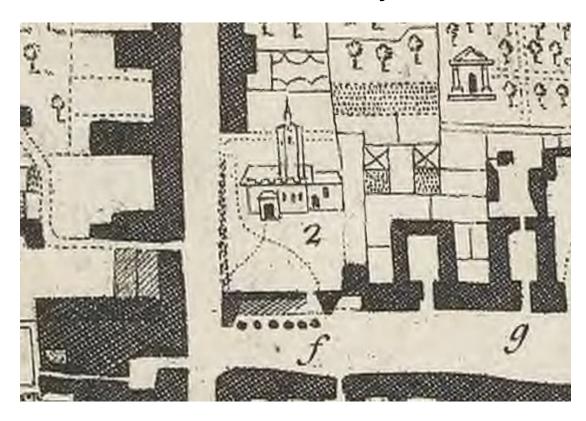
Colchester Archaeological Trust



CAT Report 1940 October 2023

Archaeological monitoring and recording at St Peter's Church, North Hill, Colchester, Essex, CO1 1DZ: March-May 2023



CAT project ref.: 2023/01m CHER code: ECC4798

Archaeological monitoring and recording at St Peter's Church, North Hill, Colchester, Essex, CO1 1DZ: March-May 2023

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Diocesan Archaeological Advisor: David Andrews
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report prepared by Megan Beale

with contributions from Dr Matt Loughton, Laura Pooley, Martin Stuchfield and Alec Wade

fieldwork by Megan Beale and Alexander Smith

commissioned by Wendy Whitfield, PCC of St Peter's Church, Colchester

Prepared by:	Megan Beale Senior Site Assistant and Project Osteologist			
Reviewed by:	Laura Pooley Post Excavation Manager			
Approved by	Philip Crummy Director of Archaeology			
Issued:	16/06/23			
Revised:	12/10/23			

Colchester Archaeological Trust

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

tel.: 01206 501785 email: ms@catuk.org web: https://catuk.org

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1 Summary

Archaeological monitoring took place at St Peter's Church, North Hill, Colchester ahead of the construction of a new kitchen, toilets and flooring. The church has its origins in at least the Anglo-Saxon period, and is a Grade II* listed building. Evidence of three tombs or vaults were found, as well as the remains of a brass monument, a post-medieval soakaway, and remnants of brick foundations. A small quantity of disarticulated human bone was also found inside and outside the church.

2 Introduction (Fig 1)

This report presents the results of archaeological monitoring undertaken by the Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) at St Peter's Church, North Hill, Colchester between 30th March and 12th May 2023. The work was commissioned by Wendy Whitfield, PCC of St Peter's Church and took place during groundworks for new toilets, kitchen, limecrete flooring and other associated groundworks.

In response to consultation with the Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC), the DAC Archaeological Advisor David Andrews (DACAA) advised that, in order to establish the archaeological implications of this application, the applicant should be required to commission a scheme of archaeological investigation in accordance with the *National Planning Policy Framework* (MHCLG 2019).

All archaeological work was carried out in accordance with archaeological advice given by the DACAA, and a written scheme of investigation (WSI) prepared by CAT in response to the advice and agreed with the DACAA (CAT 2023).

In addition to the WSI, all fieldwork and reporting was done in accordance with *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE)* (Historic England 2016) and with *Standards for field archaeology in the East of England* (EAA **14** and **24**). This report mirrors standards and practices contained in the Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and guidance for archaeological watching brief* (CIfA 2014a) and *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (CIfA 2014b).

3 Archaeological background (Fig 2)

The following archaeological background draws on the Colchester Archaeological Trust report archive and the Colchester Historic Environment Record (CHER/ECC numbers; accessible via Colchester Heritage Explorer (https://colchesterheritage.co.uk/map)).

St Peter's is a large church, able to seat up to 600 people, and is a key part of the Colchester Town Centre Parish churches. The church has Historic England Grade II* Listed Building status (NHLE 1123570, CHER MCC408 and MCC3487).

There has been a church at the site of St Peter's since at least the Anglo-Saxon period. Mentioned in the Domesday book of 1086, the church must have been well-established and considered of high importance, as the survey mentions that the church was staffed by two priests. Little is known of the original church but, considering it has the same name as the current church, it is thought to have likely occupied the same location. The current church has its origins in the 14th century but it was altered and widened in the 15th century and little is known about the original layout as the surviving illustrations are not very detailed.

During the Colchester earthquake of 1692, the church's central tower sustained damage and, in the mid 18th century it was declared unsafe. A new tower was built at the western end of the church in 1763 and other alterations were made to the building.

Recent work includes the removal, repair and replacement of the roofs at the north and south as well as internal plastering work in 2005-6, the installation of a disabled ramp in 2008 and a new central heating boiler in 2012.

In 2019, CAT carried out a negative watching brief on the excavation of twenty-four boreholes in the church's crypt to establish the extent of any oil contamination caused by a leak from the feed line to the boiler (CAT Report 1428).

The church is situated in an area of considerable archaeological importance. It is located within *Insula* 18 of the Roman town and on the corner of the High Street of the present town, where settlement has been centred from the Anglo-Saxon period through to the present. There is a large body of published information on Colchester's archaeological and historical background (in particular Morant 1748, Hull 1958, *CAR* 1, *CAR* 3, *CAR* 6). In particular, the results of the extensive archaeological excavations in the town centre at Lion Walk (1971-4), Balkerne Lane (1973-6), and Culver Street (1981-85), have provided a clear understanding of the sequence of archaeological deposits which exist in the centre of Colchester. Archaeological remains likely to be encountered may include the following based on previous sites investigated in the vicinity:

- the site of the 1st-century Roman fortress established in c AD 44 (CHER MCC477);
- buildings converted or replaced in or after AD 49 when the fortress became a colonia
- the re-use of the via principalis;
- the remains of the colonia buildings burnt and destroyed in the Boudiccan uprising (AD 61);
- the post-Boudiccan clearance and the rebuilding of the Roman town in the Flavian period;
- the houses and public buildings built from the 2nd century onwards on stone and mortar foundations, walls variously wattle and daub, clay block, and stone and brick, with tessellated and mosaic floors:
- evidence of the decline of the town during the late 3rd century and the end of the Roman occupation in the 5th century.

4 Aims

Archaeological monitoring was undertaken to excavate and record any archaeological deposits exposed during the groundworks.

5 Results (Figs 2-3)

All groundworks were carried out under the supervision of a CAT archaeologist. A full context list can be found in Appendix 1.

5.1 Inside the church

An area measuring 58m² was reduced by 0.1-0.3m along the northern wall of the church. Wooden floorboards were first removed, followed by supporting wooden battens and bricks. There was a small amount of rubble underneath this but no soil was found or removed.

This reduction revealed the remains of a monument slab (F1) and a burial vault (F2). F1 consisted of a rectangular ?limestone slab measuring 2.1 x 0.9m and orientated east to west. It was located at the far east end of the area of reduction. Inlays were seen on F1 to indicate a brass monument or similar incised slab (David Andrews pers. comms.). These consist of a border, three similarly-looking shapes in the centre, and a "key-hole" shape at the top. There is a darkened, rectangular shape at the bottom which may have originally been a foot-plate. The original latten, if any, was not present; either it did not survive, was destroyed, or was robbed. F2 was a rectangular brick vault. It was 2.4 x 0.9m and also orientated east to west. It was located at the far western end of the area of reduction.

There were also two brick-and-?limestone foundations (F3, F4) against the north wall of the church. F3 was 1m west of F1 and measured 0.7 x 0.8m. F4 was almost 5m west of F3 and was 0.45 x 0.8m. The full extent of both of these is unknown but both appeared stepped in form. They do not correlate with the external buttresses and do not match them in form. F3 and F4 may have been foundations for former statues or monuments. Brick could not be recovered from them as they were complete and not fragmented.



Photograph 1 General shot of wooden battens and bricks after floorboards removed in north aisle. Taken by Bakers of Danbury.



Photograph 2 F1 in plan.



Photograph 3 View of F2 from north side, looking south.



Photograph 4 View of F3 (foreground) with F1 in the background, looking east.



Photograph 5 View of F4, looking north.

5.2 Outside the church

A drainage trench, 15m long, 0.4m wide and 0.8m deep, was cut through L1 (>0.8m deep), a churchyard topsoil. Occasional disarticulated bone was recovered from this layer.

A further three features were uncovered. Most westerly was F5 which is the top of a 19th-century brick tomb with stone capping. It was roughly orientated east/west, and consists of two sandstone stone slabs 0.09m thick laid on a brick plinth. F5 was at least 0.45m wide and 1m long. The full extent was not seen but a void was detected underneath the brick.



Photograph 6 View of F5, looking south.

F6 was another tomb, due to a corner in the drainage trench, F6 was seen in two places (Photograph 8). It consisted of a mix of brick and stone mortared together. It was east/west in orientation, at least 0.3m wide and approximately 2m long. F6 is the top of a burial chamber marked by the chest above (Photograph 7). This is a bevelled top chest tomb (Type 1122; Mytum 2000) over F6.

The last feature, F7, was a backfilled pit or soakaway. It was 1.35m in length and at least 0.4m wide. The fill of F7 was a mix of peg-tile, brick, slate and disarticulated human bone. Brick recovered from the fill dates to the 19th-century. The full extent of the feature was not seen.



Photograph 7 The western section of F6 seen, looking south.



Photograph 8 Full extent of F6 seen, looking south.



Photograph 9 Another view of the chest tomb above F6, prior to excavation



Photograph 10 F7 in section, looking south.

6 Finds

6.1 Ceramic building material

by Dr Matthew Loughton

The watching brief uncovered one sherd (550g) of medieval/post-medieval peg-tile from soakaway F7, and one fragment of Roman brick (15g) from topsoil L1. Complete unfrogged 19th-century bricks, with dimensions of 240 mm x 115 mm x 70 mm and 230 mm x 110 mm x 70 mm, came from tomb F5 and soakaway F7. All of the finds have been discarded.

6.2 Clay tobacco pipe, glass and shell

by Laura Pooley

Two fragments of post-medieval clay pipe stem came from the backfill over tomb F5 (9.2g) and soakaway F7 (8.4g). Pieces of oyster shell were recovered from both topsoil L1 (3 pieces, 35.7g) and F5 (two pieces, 38.8g). Topsoil L1 also produced a fragment of olive green, straight-sided glass wine bottle (107.1g) of post-medieval/modern date. The corner of a piece of worked sandstone was removed from tomb F5 so the pipe could be laid. The piece was one of at least two slabs capping the brick tomb and is now triangular, the corner having been cut off by a modern circular saw. Both surfaces are flat, the top is roughly weathered and the base dressed. The two sides have been roughly worked and mortar covers the bottom half of the stone where it was set into the tomb. It is 315mm long, 70mm wide and 90mm thick. All of the finds have been discarded.

6.3 Animal bone

by Alec Wade

During the watching brief six pieces of animal bone were collected. They weighed 176g and were representative of post-medieval butchery waste. They derived from two contexts, F7, a 19th-century soakaway and L1, modern topsoil. All the identifiable bone was cattle. Based upon its general size and robustness, it is extremely likely that the remaining pieces were also cattle. Part of a large cervical vertebrae from the soakaway had been sawn in half longitudinally as part of the process of dividing the animal's carcass. The use of a saw for this purpose is generally a characteristic of post-medieval butchery techniques. The proximal cattle radius fragment from topsoil L1 had both cut and chop marks resulting from butchery and was subsequently doggnawed upon being discarded. All of the animal bone has been discarded.

Context	Find no.	Total weight (g)	Species	No.	Comments
F7	5	66	Large sized mammal (horse, cattle or larger species of deer)	2	(1) Cervical vertebrae fragment that has been sawn in half along the sagittal plane.(1) Vertebrae fragment that has been dog gnawed.
L1	2	110	(1) Proximal radius frag transverse fine cut and chop marks. Slight dog		 (1) Premolar from maxilla. (1) Proximal radius fragment that has transverse fine cut and vertical/oblique chop marks. Slight dog gnawing. (1) Small acetabulum fragment.
			Large sized mammal (horse, cattle or larger species of deer)	1	(1) Unidentified fragment.

Table 1 Animal bone listed by context.

7 Human Bone

by Megan Beale

A quantity of disarticulated human bone was recovered during monitoring at St Peter's Church. A small amount was found inside the church but the majority was found outside during the excavation of a drainage trench. All bone was assessed on site and was not washed.

A total of 54 fragments weighing at least 1,559g was recovered from four contexts (u/s, L1, F5, F7). All remains were disarticulated. All bone was in a fairly good condition.

Across the entire assemblage there was a minimum number of individuals (MNI) of eight individuals.

Age was able to be estimated for all eight individuals. Overall there were six adults, one infant and one foetus (Table 3). Sex could only be estimated for three individuals. The other five could not be estimated due to immature remains or not enough information to determine sex.

Context	Finds no.	Individual	Age Group	Age	Sex	Method(s) used		
u/s	1	1	middle adult	30-40 yrs	?female	Dental attrition (Lovejoy 1985; Brothwell 1981); mental eminence (Buikstra & Ubelaker 1994		
u/s	1	2	young- middle adult	20-50 yrs	?male	Epiphyseal fusion and general wear of bone; humeral constriction (Falys et al 2005)		
L1	2	1	adult	-	indeterminate	Epiphyseal fusion and size of bone		
L1	2	2	young adult	22-26 yrs	indeterminate	Pubis (Todd in Buikstra & Ubelaker 1994, 22)		
L1	2	3	infant	2-3 yrs	indeterminate	Length of metacarpal (Kimura 1976 in Schaefer, Black & Scheuer 2009) and epiphyseal fusion		
F5	3	1	adult	-	indeterminate	Epiphyseal fusion and size of bone		
F7	5	1	adult	-	?female	Epiphyseal fusion and size of bone		
F7	5	2	foetal	7 wks+	indeterminate	Primary ossification time of humerus (Schaefer, Black & Scheuer 2009, 183); proximal tibial head diameter (Kiskira <i>et al</i> 2022; Maijanen <i>et al</i> 2021)		

Table 3 Summary of estimations

Individual 1 from u/s (1) was found to have no third molars on their mandible. These may be congenitally absent, or may have been removed as part of a dentistry procedure. This same individual also had ante-mortem tooth loss of their left lower second premolar, which was still healing at the time of death.

A left 5th metatarsal from L1 (2) was found to have a well-healed fracture mid-shaft.

A cut mark was found on the right hand side of a frontal bone from F5 (3), above the eye socket. It is unclear if this is ante-mortem or post-deposition.

The right supraorbital foramen was present in a partial frontal bone from F5 (3). The left side of the bone was not available.

Multiple cut marks were present throughout the entire assemblage. These have all occurred post-deposition, most likely when they were disturbed from their original grave. Multiple animal tooth marks were also seen on a radius from L1 (2), likely from a rodent.

8 Monument Slab (Fig 4)

by Martin Stuchfield and Megan Beale

Assessment of the monument slab (F1) was conducted over email by Martin Stuchfield (Hon. Conservation Officer of the Monumental Brass Society). It is specifically an indent for a monumental brass memorial, with the latten or brass removed, lost or no longer surviving.

The indents comprise a civilian at the top of the slab, two wives, a possible figure of Christ, and a scroll in the centre, plus an inscription at the bottom. There is also a border in the form of a marginal inscription, with roundels at each corner. It is dated to around c1525AD. It is not known who the memorial commemorates. A possible candidate is Thomas Clere (Martin Stuchfield pers comms). Thomas Clere (1462-1520) is buried at St Peter's Church (Find a Grave 2023; memorial ID 128200983).

9 Conclusion

Archaeological monitoring at St Peter's Church revealed evidence of three burial tombs/vaults, a brass monument, as well as foundations possibly related to former monuments, and an old possible soakaway. Small quantities of disarticulated human bone were also recovered from inside and outside the church.

The design of F1 is similar to some brass monuments at Queens' College, Cambridge (Queens' College 2023), which commemorated individuals who died in the mid-late 16th century. The north and south aisles of the church were added in the 15th century, so it is likely F1 was added to the church during this period at the earliest. It also could have been moved from its original position from elsewhere in the church. Brass monuments were largely used as grave markers between the 14th and 17th century (Badham 2009). As brass monuments were used as grave markers, it is likely a vault or tomb lays beneath F1. The three inlays in the centre likely originally depicted individuals to whom the memorial was made for, with the foot-plate detailing their names, a poem, or Bible verse. The inlay at the top may have been another figure or other religious symbol.

Inside the church, there are several memorial slabs on the north wall, detailing individuals who are buried underneath the church. Full details of the memorials can be seen on the St Peter's Church website, but it is possible F2 is the vault of one of these families. The memorials in the north aisle are dated from between AD 1648-1789.

The exact nature of F3 and F4 are unknown. However as they do not line up with the external buttresses and are not the same in form, they cannot be buttress foundations. The square shape of F3 may be indicate the base of a column and the rectangular shape of F4 suggests a commemorative statue or similar monument. CBM could not be recovered from either feature as they were structurally sound, so dating them is difficult. The brick may have also been reused as has been carried out elsewhere in the church (Rodwell & Rodwell 1977, 28). It is possible F3 and F4 are foundations evidencing earlier versions of the church. Diagram 1 shows an overlay of the plans of the church, and the locations of F3 and F4 do not line up with probable foundations from the earliest part of the church. Nevertheless the original nave may have been shorter than estimated, which means F3 and F4 may have been part of the construction of the north transept.

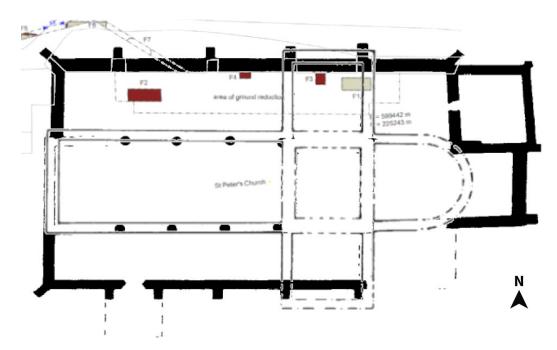


Diagram 1 Rough overlay of the later medieval plan of the church (thick black lines), probable foundations from the Roman/Anglo-Saxon periods (thinner black lines) as well as the results from this monitoring. Church plans are from Rodwell & Rodwell 1977.

The disarticulated remains found inside the church are likely the result of changes that the church building itself has undergone through its long history. This includes the rebuilding of the tower in 1763 and widening of the north aisle in the 15th century. Soil movement for grave digging can also displace human remains.

There were no finds recovered from F6 to date it. However the type of chest tomb related to it were typically popular in the 18th and early 19th century (Mytum 2000, 20). There is no clear above ground monument related to F5, but it may have been moved or destroyed. Brick recovered from the feature dates it to 19th century.

The finds recovered from the soakaway (F7) indicate it was backfilled or went out of use no later than the 19th century. Due to its proximity to the churchyard, it was likely a soakaway related to the church.

10 Acknowledgements

CAT thanks Wendy Whitfield and the PCC of St Peter's Church for commissioning and funding the work. CAT also thanks Martin Stuchfield for providing information on the monument slab. The project was managed by C Lister and A Wightman and fieldwork was carried out by M Beale and A Smith. Figures were prepared by E Holloway and A Smith. The project was monitored for the DAC by David Andrews.

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

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12 Abbreviations and glossary

Anglo-Saxon period from c 500 – 1066
CAT Colchester Archaeological Trust
CBC Colchester Borough Council

CHER Colchester Historic Environment Record
CIfA Chartered Institute for Archaeologists

context specific location of finds on an archaeological site

DAA Diocesan Archaeological Advisor DAC Diocesan Advisory Committee

feature (F) an identifiable thing like a pit, a wall, a drain: can contain 'contexts'

latten an alloy resembling brass made in thin sheets and used to make monumental brasses

and church ornaments

layer (L) distinct or distinguishable deposit (layer) of material

modern period from c AD 1800 to the present

natural geological deposit undisturbed by human activity

NGR National Grid Reference

OASIS Online AccesS to the Index of Archaeological InvestigationS,

http://oasis.ac.uk/pages/wiki/Main

post-medieval from c AD 1500 to c 1800

prehistoric pre-Roman

Roman the period from AD 43 to c AD 410

section (abbreviation sx or Sx) vertical slice through feature/s or layer/s

wsi written scheme of investigation

13 Contents of archive

Finds: None retained.

Human remains: All immediately reburied on site.

Digital:

CAT Report 1940 Digital photographs

Site data Survey data

14 Archive deposition

The digital archive is currently held by the Colchester Archaeological Trust at Roman Circus House, Roman Circus Walk, Colchester, Essex CO2 7GZ, but will be permanently deposited with the Archaeological Data Service.

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Distribution list

Wendy Whitfield, PCC of St Peter's Church, Colchester David Andrews, Diocesan Archaeological Advisor Essex Historic Environment Record

Appendix 1 Context list

Context	Context type	Description	Date
L1	Churchyard topsoil	Friable moist dark grey/brown sandy silt with brick flecks, tile flecks	Post-medieval- modern
F1	Monument slab	Rectangular limestone slab	Medieval
F2	Burial vault	Rectangular brick vault	Medieval/ post-medieval
F3	Brick foundations	Brick and mortar	Undated
F4	Brick foundations	Brick and mortar	Undated
F5	Burial tomb or vault	Rectangular stone slabs lying on brick plinth	Post-medieval
F6	Burial tomb foundations	Brick and stone mortared together	Post-medieval
F7	Soakaway	Friable moist medium/dark grey/brown sandy silt with brick flecks, tile flecks and inclusions of: tile/brick 30%	Post-medieval

Appendix 2 Elements Present (human bone)

Element	u/s	s (1)	L	1 (2)	ı	F5 (3)	ı	F7 (5)
Cranium	3	-	5	39.92g	3	41.41g	-	-
Mandible	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Scapula	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Clavicle	_	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Ribs	2	-	5	14.66g	1	2.41g	-	-
Vertebrae	_	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sacrum	_	-	1	13.37g	-	-	-	-
Humerus	3	-	4	134.04g	-	-	1	2.34g
Ulna	-	-	2	22.97g	-	-	1	33.30g
Radius	_	-	1	18.41g	1	16.73g	-	-
Carpal	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Metacarpal	1	-	1	1.31g	-	-	-	-
Phalanges, hand	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pelvis	-	-	3	54.20g	-	-	-	-
Femur	-	-	7	593.51g	1	20.91g	3	203.92g
Patella	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Tibia	2	-	1	140.55g	-	-	2	187.20g
Patella	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Tarsal	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Metatarsal	2	-	1	3.36g	-	-	-	-
Phalanges, foot	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Misc	-	-	8	11.54g	-	-	-	-
TOTAL	17	-	39	1050.84g	7	81.46g	7	426.76g



Fig 1 Site location.

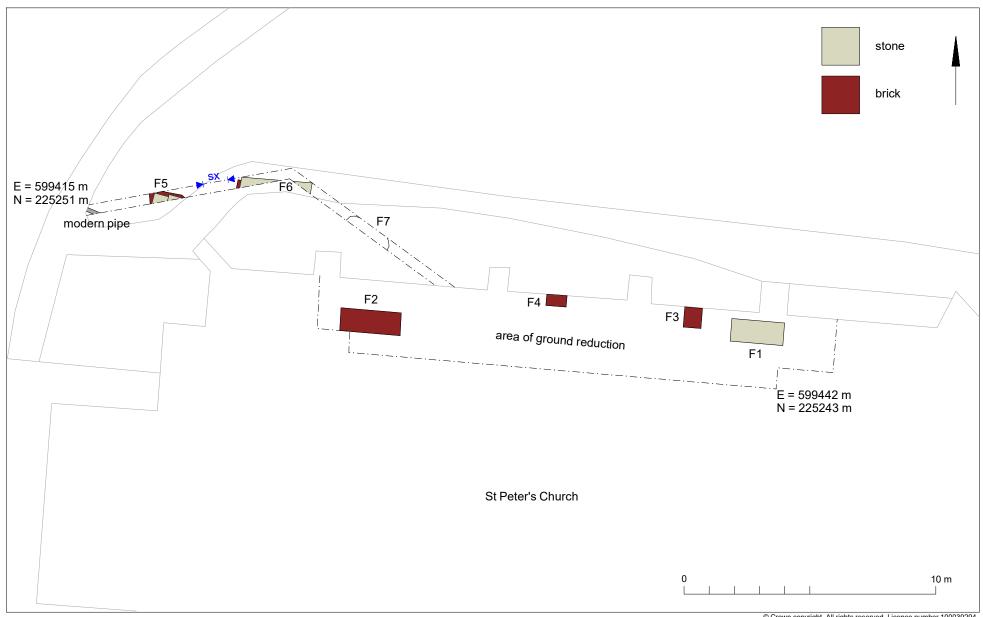


Fig 2 Results.

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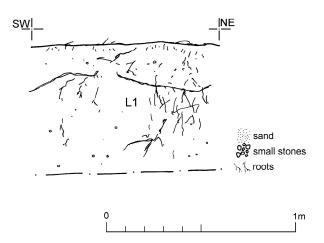


Fig 3 Representative section.

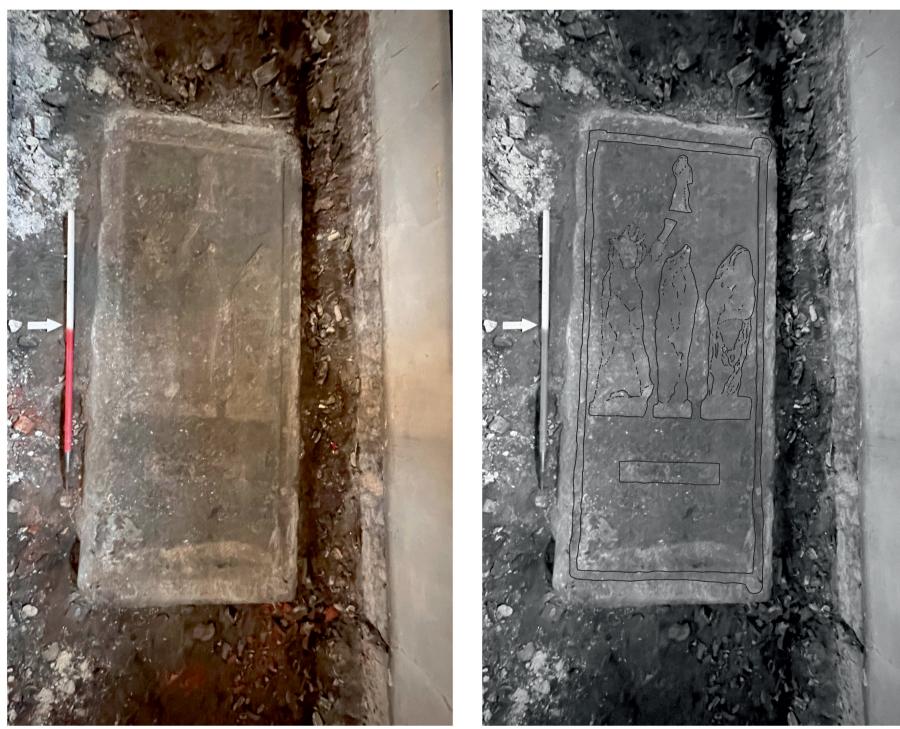


Fig 4 Stone slab with indents left from monumental brasses, original (left) and edited to show remaining lines (right).

Essex Historic Environment Record/ Essex Archaeology and History

Summary sheet

Parish: Colchester	District: Colchester
NGR: TL 99432 25238 (centre)	Site code: CAT project ref.: 2023/01m CHER code: ECC4798 OASIS ref: colchest3-512459
Type of work: Monitoring	Site director/group: Colchester Archaeological Trust
Date of work: 30th March and 12th May 2023	Size of area investigated: 0.27ha
Location of curating museum: Archaeology Data Service	Funding source: St Peter's Church, Colchester
Further seasons anticipated? No	Related CHER/SMR number: MCC408, MCC3487, MCC477

Final report: CAT Report 1940

Periods represented: Post-medieval – Modern

Summary of fieldwork results:

Archaeological monitoring took place at St Peter's Church, North Hill, Colchester ahead of the construction of a new kitchen, toilets and flooring. The church has its origins in at least the Anglo-Saxon period, and is a Grade II* listed building. Evidence of three tombs or vaults were found, as well as the remains of a brass monument, a post-medieval soakaway, and remnants of brick foundations. A small quantity of disarticulated human bone was also found inside and outside the church.

Previous summaries/reports: CAT Report 1428

DAA monitor: David Andrews

Keywords: - Significance:
Author of summary:
Megan Beale Date of summary:
12th October 2023

Summary for colchest3-512459

OASIS ID (UID)	colchest3-512459
Project Name	Archaeological monitoring and recording at St Peter's Church, North Hill, Colchester, Essex, CO1 1DZ
Sitename	St Peter's Church, North Hill, Colchester, Essex, CO1 1DZ
Activity type	Watching Brief
Project Identifier(s)	2023/01m
Planning Id	
Reason For Investigation	Ecclesiastical consent
Organisation Responsible for work	Colchester Archaeological Trust
Project Dates	30-Mar-2023 - 12-May-2023
Location	St Peter's Church, North Hill, Colchester, Essex, CO1 1DZ NGR: TL 99432 25238 LL: 51.8900068051174, 0.896735868435391 12 Fig: 599432,225238
Administrative Areas	Country : England
	County: Essex
	District : Colchester
	Parish : Colchester, unparished area
Project Methodology	Monitoring was carried out ahead of groundworks for new toilets, kitchen, limecrete flooring and other associated groundworks. All archaeological work was carried out in accordance with archaeological advice given by the DACAA, and a written scheme of investigation (WSI) prepared by CAT in response to the advice and agreed with the DACAA (CAT 2023). All groundworks were carried out under the supervision of a CAT archaeologist.
Project Results	Archaeological monitoring took place at St Peter's Church, North Hill, Colchester ahead of the construction of a new kitchen, toilets and flooring. The church has its origins in at least the Anglo-Saxon period, and is a Grade II* listed building. Evidence of four tombs or vaults were found, as well as a post-medieval soakaway and remnants of internal monument foundations. A small quantity of disarticulated human bone was also found inside and outside the church.
Keywords	Burial Vault - POST MEDIEVAL - FISH Thesaurus of Monument Types
	Soakaway - POST MEDIEVAL - FISH Thesaurus of Monument Types
Funder	
HER	Colchester Borough Council - unRev - STANDARD
Person Responsible for work	Megan, Beale
HER Identifiers	
Archives	Digital Archive - to be deposited with Archaeology Data Service Archive;