

Colchester Archaeological Trust Ltd

Archaeological Evaluation Report

**Prince of Wales Site
London Road, Marks Tey**

for the Admillon Pension Scheme



June 1999

CAT Report 37

Archaeological Evaluation

Prince of Wales Site, London Road, Marks Tey, Colchester

NGR TL 918 228

Summary

This 0.27 hectare site lies close to the junction of two major prehistoric and Roman routes to the west of Colchester. An archaeological evaluation consisting of four exploratory trenches revealed no archaeologically significant features.

Introduction

On the 21st and 22nd June a field evaluation commissioned by the Admillon Pension Scheme took place to investigate the archaeological implications of proposed redevelopment on the site of the Prince of Wales public house, London Road, Marks Tey. The site was of potential archaeological interest since it lies close to the junction of two important prehistoric and Roman traffic routes, and might thus attract early settlement.

The evaluation followed the specification contained in the site Evaluation Brief issued by Colchester Borough Council's Museums Service, observing the requirements detailed in Colchester Borough Council's *Guidelines on Standards and Practices for Archaeological Fieldwork in the Borough of Colchester (1996a)* and *Guidelines on the Preparation and Transfer of Archaeological Archives to Colchester Museums (1996b)*. The current redevelopment proposal was submitted to Colchester Borough Council on 4th May 1999 (Application No. COL/99/0617).

Site Condition

At the time of evaluation the property contained the vacant public house with outbuildings to the north. Most of the exterior was tarmac surfaced, except for the north-eastern quarter which was open garden. The western end of the proposed development area is understood to be owned by Essex County Council and was in heavy use as an unofficial commuters' car park.

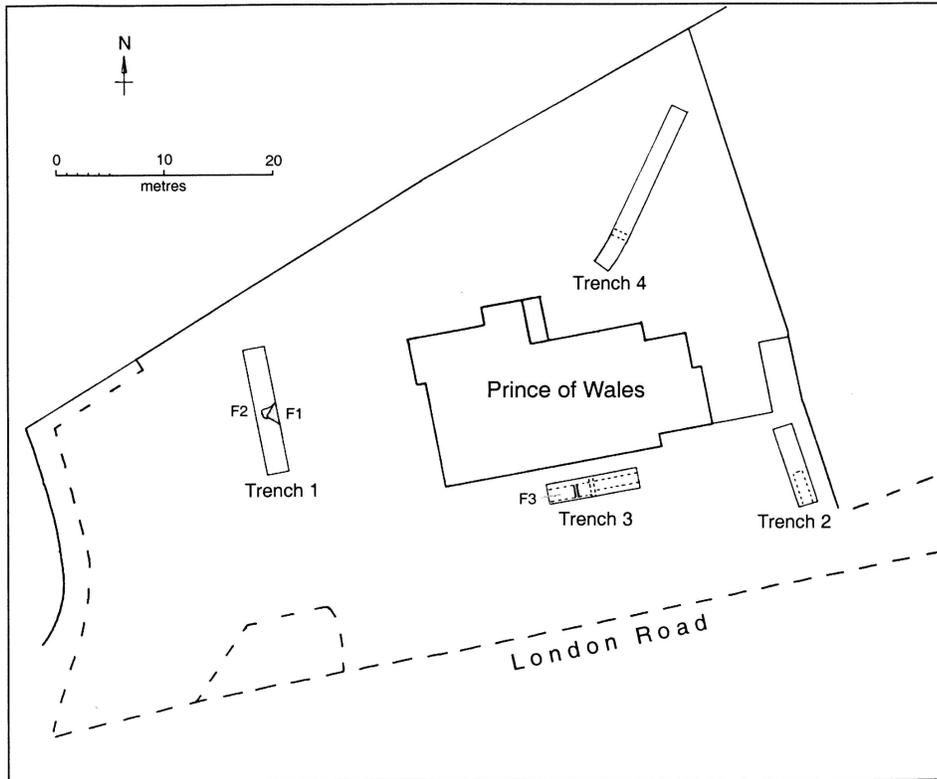


Fig 1 Prince of Wales, Marks Tey. Trench plan

Excavation

The investigation consisted of four machine-dug trenches situated as near as practically possible to the locations indicated in the Colchester Borough Council Museums Service Evaluation Brief, dated June 1999. Trenches were positioned to minimise contact with buried services, some of which are believed to be live. For levelling purposes a local bench mark was established on the top of the roadside kerbstone opposite the water hydrant (number 3003 4/64) outside the south-east corner the site. This was given a purely nominal datum value of 100m. Levels quoted below relate solely to this mark and are not intended to represent Ordnance Datum figures.

Results

The locations of the four trenches are shown in Figure 1.

Trench 1

A 12 metre long north-south trench in the western part of the site.

Width: 2.0m

Depth: 80cm (northern end), 1.0m (southern end)

Local ground level: 99.47m (northern end), 99.27 (southern end)

Stratigraphy:

- Layer 1. Tarmac laid on a bed of sandy gravel with varying amounts of brick rubble and mortar. Modern. 40cm thick.
- Layer 2. Yellowish brown clay with upper level stained greyish brown in places. Natural clayey subsoil. Extends to overall depth of between 60cm (northern end) and 90cm (southern end of trench).
- Layer 3. Pale yellowish brown clay with common small chalk fragments and flecks. Natural.

Midway along its eastern side, the trench exposed the corner of a brick structure (Fig.1, F1) within a construction pit (Fig.1, F2) and sealed by the tarmac Layer 1. Constructed of unfrosted red brick measuring 23cm x 10cm x 7cm (9"x4"x2¾"), the structure was triple-walled with cavities between. The brick appears to be of 18th century date at the very earliest.

Trench 2

A 7.5 metre long north-south trench at the south-east corner of the site.

Width: 1.9m

Depth: 1.1m (northern end), 2.75m (southern end)

Local ground level: 100.03m (northern end), 100.09m (southern end)

Stratigraphy:

- Layer 4. Tarmac laid on a bed of sandy gravel and brick hardcore. Modern. 30cm thick.
- Layer 5. Very mixed deposit, mainly yellowish brown clay loam with a scattering of small fragments of chalk and occasional small charcoal, coal and red brick fragments. Make-up, modern. Extends to overall depth of 1.1m.
- Layer 6. Mixed deposit, mainly dark brown clay loam with common charcoal flecks and occasional small fragments of red brick. Finds included a fragment of *c.*19th century white glazed cup. Modern dump. To overall depth of 1.35m.
- Layer 7. Yellowish brown clay loam. Natural subsoil. In the southern half of the trench this material was excavated to an overall depth of 2m at which point it merged with the underlying Layer 8. Natural clayey subsoil.
- Layer 8. Yellowish brown clay loam, similar to Layer 7, but with occasional white chalk fragment. Natural.

Trench 3

An 8.5 metre long east-west trench at the front of the public house.

Width: 1.9m, stepped to 1m at 95cm

Depth: 1.4m (eastern end), 2.1m (western end)

Local ground level: 100.2m (eastern end), 100.18m (western end)

Stratigraphy:

- Layer 9. Tarmac on sandy gravel and brick hardcore. Modern. 30 to 40 cm thick.
- Layer 10. Very mixed, mainly yellowish brown clay loam with a scattering of small fragments of chalk and occasional small charcoal and red brick fragments. Make-up, modern. Extends to overall depth of between 90cm (west) and 1.4m (east).

In the western part of the trench Layer 10 sealed a *c.*19th century brick cellar infilled with dark greyish brown clay loam with common small brick fragments (Fig 1. F3). The mortar floor of the cellar lay at the same depth as Layer 11 (1.75m), with which it may be contemporary.

- Layer 11. Mixed deposit, mainly dark brown clay loam with common charcoal flecks and occasional small fragments of red brick. Modern dump. Extends to an overall depth of 1.75m.
- Layer 12. Yellowish brown clay loam with occasional white chalk fragment. Natural.

Trench 4

A 16.5 metre long north-east to south-west trench in the north-eastern part of the site.

Width: 1.8m

Depth: 60cm (north-eastern end), 50cm (south-western end)

Local ground level: 99.01m (north-eastern end), 98.92m (south-western end)

Stratigraphy:

- Layer 13. Dark brown silt loam topsoil, merging into underlying Layer 14 at a depth of approximately 30cm.
- Layer 14. Brown to yellowish brown clay with stoney lenses. Natural subsoil. Extends to between 50cm and 60 cm overall.
- Layer 15. Yellowish brown clay with common small chalk fragments and flecks.

Finds

No items of any antiquity were recovered from the excavation. Post-medieval to modern items were discarded after recording.

Discussion

Common characteristics suggest that the following layers in Trenches 2 and 3 are associated:

Modern make-up: Layers 5 and 10.

Modern dump: Layers 6 and 11.

Underlying these, the clayey subsoils were fairly consistent with strong similarities linking Layer 2 with Layers 7 and 14. The natural clay, Layer 3, appeared elsewhere as Layers 8, 12 and 15 with varying amounts of chalky inclusions.

There appears to be a substantial amount of c.19th century dump and make up in the region nearest the London Road frontage. Although this may to some extent be attributable to local levelling, the exceptional depth of modern material (in relation to London Road) and the occurrence of redeposited natural chalky clay in the make-up (Layers 5 and 10) suggest that the ground in this part of the site has in the past been subject to heavy disturbance. To the west of the public house, the tarmac in Trench 1 lay directly above natural clays, with no discernible intrusions other than a relatively late brick feature. An uninterrupted stratigraphy appeared to be best represented in Trench 4, where topsoil merged into natural clayey subsoil cut only by drains.

If representative, the results from the area sampled by the exploratory trenches suggest that the redevelopment is unlikely to affect archaeologically significant features.

Archive

The fieldwork archive, including four trench plans, two section drawings, descriptive context notes, photographs and related data will be deposited with Colchester Museum for retention under cover of museum reference 1999.85.

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