

**An archaeological watching brief at
96 High Street (Axe Music),
Colchester, Essex**

February 2001

**on behalf of
Colchester Borough Council**

NGR: TL 9987 2524
CAT project reference: 01/2C
Colchester Museum accession code: 2001.21



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Plate 1 Foundation trench and pipe, looking west.

Fig 1 Site location.

Fig 2 Site plan.

1 Summary

Observations were made after a short trench had been dug for a new wall at the rear of 96 High Street. The watching brief has shown that no archaeological remains were impacted during this work. It is highly likely that archaeological deposits exist on the site, but the trench was not deep enough to reach archaeological levels, the top 500mm being modern make-up. Two fragments of Roman tile or brick and one sherd of 17th-century tin-glazed pottery were the only finds.

2 Introduction

- 2.1 This is the report on an archaeological watching brief carried out by Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) on 8th February 2001, at the request of Colchester Borough Council.
- 2.2 Axe Music is situated on the north side of the High Street, Colchester, Essex, approximately 65m south of Colchester Castle. The site is located at National Grid Reference TL 9987 2524. The trench was excavated at the rear of the shop, in a courtyard area (see Fig 1).
- 2.3 The work was necessitated by the building of a wall and the laying of a new surface water-pipe and sewer-pipe in order to separate the property and create a new access.
- 2.4 This report follows the standards set out in the Borough Council's *Guidelines on standards and practices for archaeological fieldwork in the Borough of Colchester* (1996) and *Guidelines on the preparation and transfer of archaeological archives to Colchester Museums* (1996), and the IFA's *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (1994).

3 Archaeological background

- 3.1 The site is located 65m south of the Norman castle keep. The course of the 11th-century defensive ditch, enclosing the bailey (courtyard) of the castle, is believed to run through or very near the site. This ditch has now been filled in and built on (Crummy 1997, 141). In 1986, during resurfacing works, CAT undertook an excavation along Museum Street to the west of the site. Sections of massive foundations of the main gateway into the castle bailey were found (CAT 1987, 5).
- 3.2 The castle was built on the site of a large Roman temple dedicated to the Roman emperor Claudius. An arcade was built to surround the temple precinct, the line of which may cross the site. This arcade abutted a Roman street laid out east to west just to the north of the High Street. Part of what may be a Roman monumental gateway was excavated during the resurfacing work at Museum Street (see section 3.1).

4 Aims and objectives

The aim of the watching brief was to identify and record any archaeological features, finds or deposits revealed by the groundworks.

5 Methods

5.1 The trench for the wall foundation had been dug but not filled in at the time of the author's visit. The trench had been dug 2.2m to the north of the rear wall of the shop, from east to west, between the existing boundary wall and a man-hole. It measured 330mm in width, 2.2m in length and 500mm in depth. Due to rain the bottom of the trench was filled with water.

5.2 A trench for a surface water-pipe had already been dug and the pipe laid, as had a sewer-pipe for the toilet. Therefore these trenches could not be observed (see Fig 2).

5.3 A record of the position of the site excavations was made which has been reproduced in Figure 2. Soils types were noted, and a digital photograph was taken which has been reproduced here as Plate 1. Three artefacts were retrieved. The following soil profile was observed:

Layer 1 - 0-150mm, concrete surface and modern brick rubble.

Layer 2 - 150mm-500mm, soft muddy mixed sandy material containing modern brick, two fragments of Roman brick fragment (330mm down), and one piece of 17th-century tin-glazed earthenware. This layer is interpreted as being modern build-up.

6 Results

The area where the trench was excavated had obviously been disturbed in the past by the digging of the existing boundary wall foundation and the man-hole. The Roman tile fragments and sherd of pottery were found in a modern layer (Layer 2) and are therefore not *in situ*. However, they may have come from the site and been redeposited during building work in the past. It is common to find Roman artefacts within Colchester's town walls, and one would expect this type of material from the site, as it is on a Roman street and near the temple precinct (see Plate 1).

7 Archive deposition

A copy of this report plus the finds will be deposited permanently with Colchester Museum under accession code 2001.21.

8 Acknowledgements

Thanks to Martin Winter, Colchester Borough Council Archaeological Officer, and to Alan Gray of Axe Music.

9 References

- Colchester Archaeological Trust, 1987 *the Colchester archaeologist* magazine, issue 1, 5
Crummy, Philip, 1997 *City of Victory, the story of Colchester – Britain's first Roman town*



Plate 1 Foundation trench and pipe, looking west.

Kate Orr, February 2001

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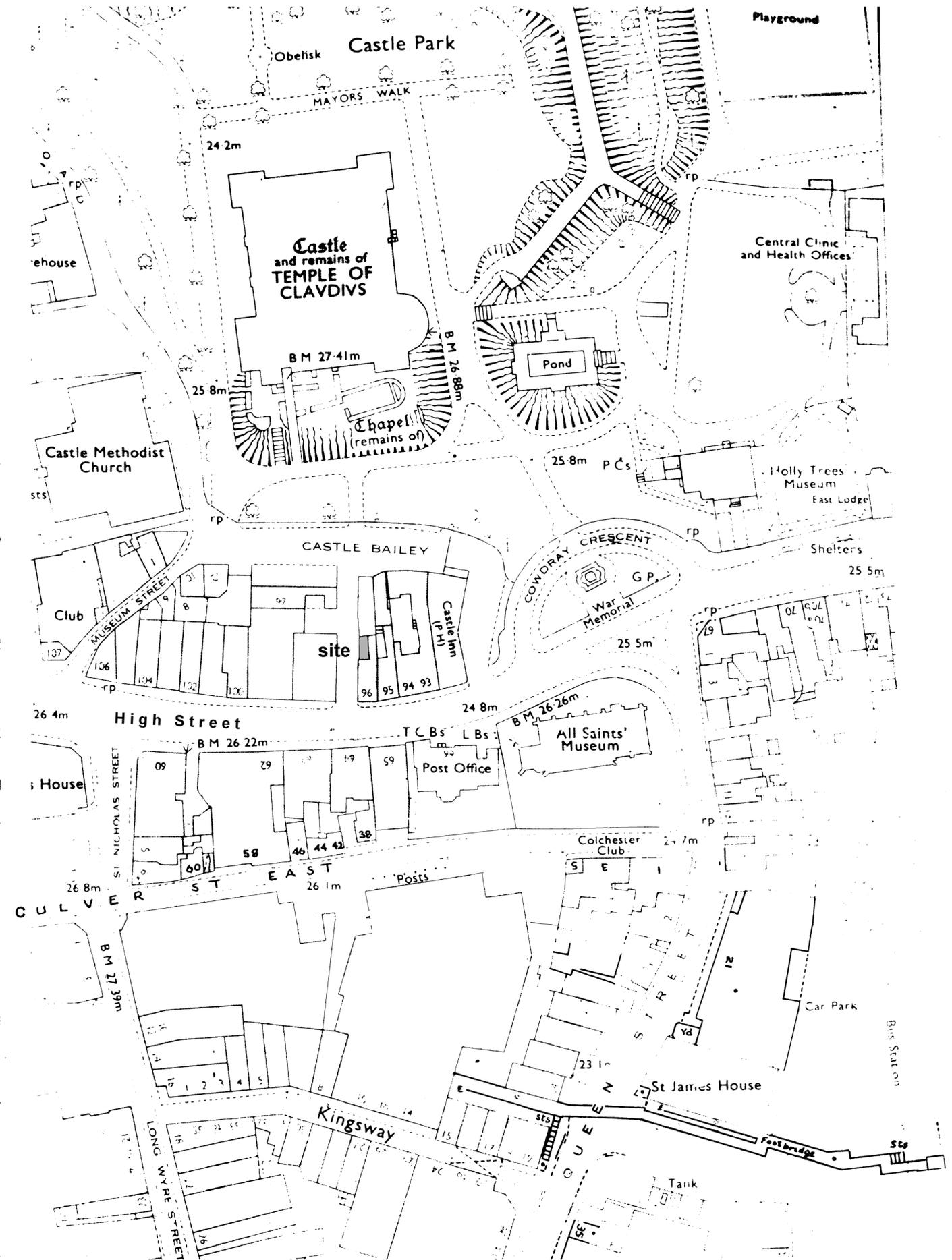


Fig 1 Site location, 1:1250.

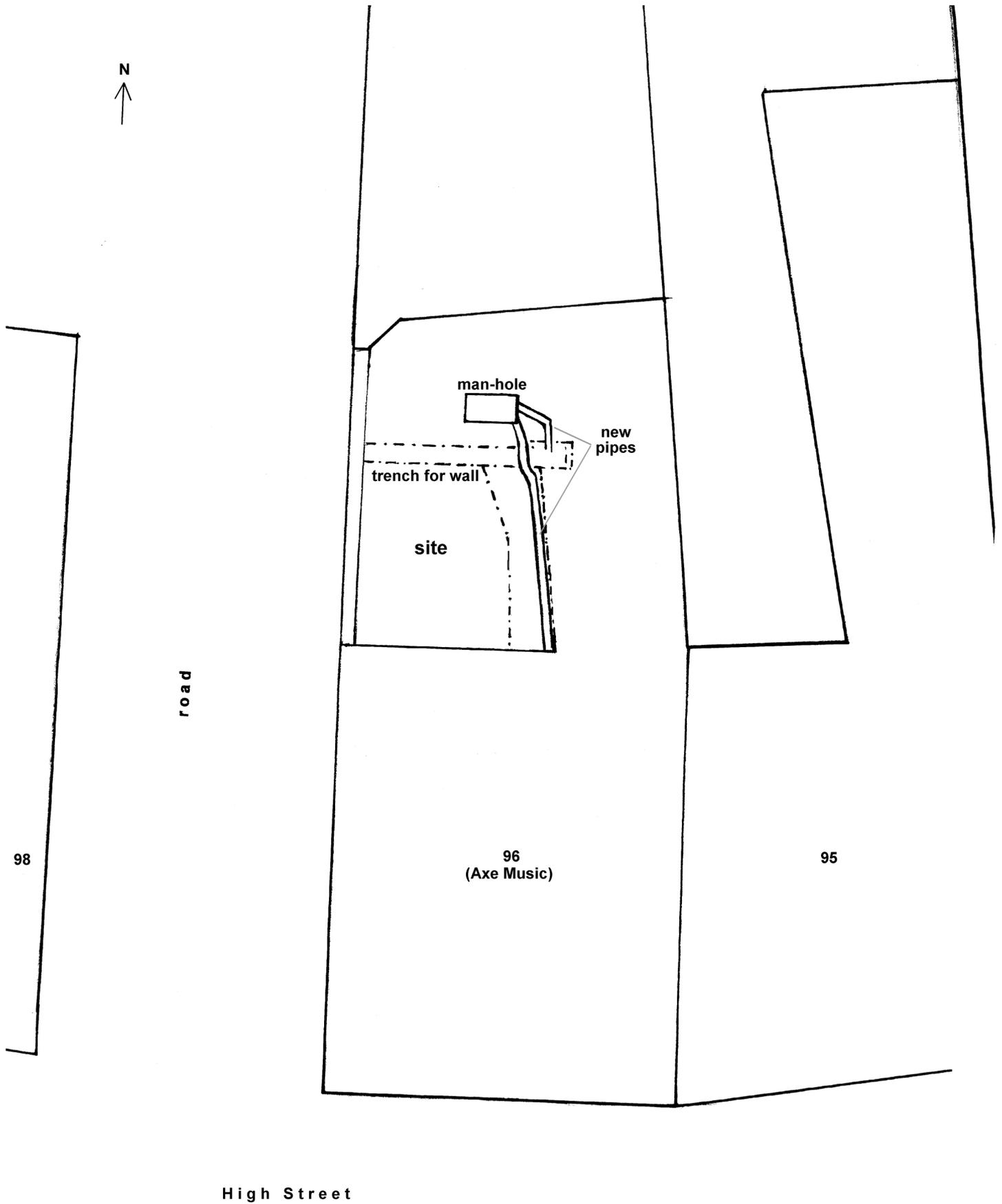


Fig 2 Site plan.

not to scale

**ESSEX SITES AND MONUMENTS RECORD/
ESSEX ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORY**

SUMMARY SHEET

Site name/address: 96 High Street ('Axe Music'), Colchester, Essex	
Parish: Colchester	District: Colchester Borough
NGR: TL 9987 2524	Site Code: 2000.21
Type of work: Watching brief	Site director/group: Colchester Archaeological Trust
Date of work: February 2001	Size of area investigated: 2.2m x 330mm
Location of finds/curating museum: Colchester Museum	Funding source: Colchester Borough Council
Further seasons anticipated? No	Related SMR nos:
Final report: CAT Report 126	
Periods represented: Roman, post-medieval, modern	
<p>SUMMARY OF FIELDWORK RESULTS: Observations were made after a short trench had been dug for a new wall at the rear of 96 High Street ('Axe Music').</p> <p>The watching brief has shown that no archaeological remains were impacted during this work. It is highly likely that archaeological deposits exist on the site, but unfortunately the trench was not deep enough to reach archaeological levels, the top 500mm being modern make-up. One fragment of Roman tile or brick and one sherd of 17th-century tin-glazed pottery were the only finds.</p>	
Previous summaries/reports:	
Author of summary: Kate Orr	Date of summary: February 2001