

**An archaeological watching brief on
groundworks for the new art block
(former cricket school),
Colchester Royal Grammar School,
Colchester, Essex**

July 2002

**commissioned by
the Roff Marsh Partnership
on behalf of
Colchester Royal Grammar School**

CAT project code: 02/6e
Colchester Museums accession code: 2002.24
NGR: TL 9875 2475



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CAT Report 208
September 2002

Contents

1	Summary	1
2	Introduction	1
3	Archaeological background	1
4	Aim	1
5	Methods	1
6	Results	2
7	Finds	2
8	Discussion and interpretation	3
9	Acknowledgements	3
10	References	4
11	Glossary	4
12	Archive deposition	4

Figures after p 5

Essex Heritage Conservation Record (EHCR) summary sheet

List of figures

- Fig 1 Site location.
- Fig 2 Plan of new art block showing foundations with dates of monitoring.

1 Summary

During a watching brief on groundworks for the new art block at the Colchester Royal Grammar School, Colchester, Essex, Roman ground-levels with Roman pottery were recorded. No archaeological features were observed.

2 Introduction

- 2.1 This is the archive report on an archaeological watching brief at the new art block, Colchester Royal Grammar School (CRGS), Colchester, Essex. The site was formerly occupied by the CRGS cricket school. The watching brief was carried out by the Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) in July 2002.
- 2.2 The school is located 1km west of Colchester town centre. The watching brief site is situated on the southern side of the school, to the north of Creffield Road, at National Grid Reference or NGR TL 9875 2475 (Fig 1).
- 2.3 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* (1999, updated 2002) and *Guidelines on the preparation and transfer of archaeological archives to Colchester Museums* (1996, updated 2002), and the IFA's *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (1999).

3 Archaeological background

- 3.1 The development site is situated outside the historic Roman town walls, within the western cemetery area of the Roman town which has been excavated in part over the last 150 years (Crummy *et al* 1993, 258-62; Hull 1958). An unusual walled cemetery about 80m to the north of the proposed new building was excavated between 1934 and 1940 and several Roman roads are known to converge under Gurney Benham House in the school grounds (Crummy *et al* 1993, 262-3).
- 3.2 An evaluation trench was excavated earlier this year by CAT (Holloway 2002) in between the old cricket school building and the existing art block. One possible Roman ditch was observed.

4 Aim

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

5 Methods

- 5.1 The excavation of foundations to the new art block were monitored, but not the service-trenches as these were shallower. Trenches were dug by the contractors, through tarmac, with a mechanical excavator with a toothed ditching bucket. The width of the trenches was 450mm and the depth varied from 600mm to 1.15m. The total footprint of the new building is 30m x 11m. Six visits were made to the site (see section 6).
- 5.2 A plan of the site excavations was made (Fig 2).
- 5.3 Records of layers were made and section drawings were made at a scale of 1:10.
- 5.4 Finds were assigned find numbers according to context, and washed, marked and bagged according to context.

6 Results (Fig 2)

6.1 17/07/02

The first visit was made after the southern foundation trench had been excavated. The trench was dug to 600mm depth in the west and 1m depth in the east. The trench cut through the brick foundations to the old cricket school building. Underneath the foundations stony topsoil was encountered. This topsoil overlaid mottled sandy silt. At the base of the trench was a light brown silt layer which may be natural subsoil. In the middle of the trench, at the base, the contractors had found cow bones (Fig 2).

6.2 22/07/02

The eastern foundation trench was monitored. This was excavated to nearly 1m depth. There were no finds or features of archaeological significance. The eastern part of the northern foundation trench was dug as well as some internal foundation trenches. The depth of these excavations was 750-800mm. Roman tile was found from 600mm below ground level in a layer of mid brown sandy clay.

6.3 24/07/02

The rest of the northern foundation trench was excavated. The following soil profile was observed:

Layer 1 or L1 - tarmac.

L2 - loose asphalt.

L3 - mid brown sandy silt containing residual Roman pot and tile and one sherd of post-medieval pottery (finds bag no 1).

L4 - light brown sandy silt and gravel occurring at 800mm below ground-level, with Roman tile, daub and pot (finds bag no 2). This is interpreted as being the Roman ground-level.

6.4 25/07/02

A visit was made but there had been no more digging. One piece of Roman grey ware pottery from the spoil heap was retrieved (finds bag no 4).

6.5 26/07/02

The western and south-western foundation trenches were monitored. The depth of excavations was 950mm, except for one section which had been excavated to 1.15m and not reached natural ground. Three pieces of Roman pottery (finds bag no 3) were found from the bottom of the south-western trench in a mid brown sandy silt layer similar to L3.

7 Finds

The finds consist mainly of Roman pottery and tile from the northern, western and south-western trenches. One piece of post-medieval pottery was collected from L3. The assemblage is fairly typical of forms of Roman pottery which are commonly found in Colchester, including locally produced grey wares and black-burnished wares as well as imported amphora.

Table 1: List of finds by context.

Finds bag no	Context	Description	Date	Weight in g
1	Northern trench, L3	1 sherd of pottery with white slip (Fabric MQ?)	Roman	19
1	Northern trench, L3	1 beaded rim of a black-burnished ware 2 type bowl (Fabric GB, CAM 37)	late 2nd to mid-late 3rd century	22
1	Northern trench, L3	1 sherd of a possible black-burnished ware 2 type vessel (Fabric G or GB)	late 2nd to mid-late 3rd century	10

1	Northern trench, L3	2 sherds of amphora, probably Dressel 20 (Fabric AJ)	1st-2nd century	138
1	Northern trench, L3	1 fragment of animal bone	undated	13
1	Northern trench, L3	Roman roof-tile fragments, one with evidence of re-use	Roman	1300
1	Northern trench, L3	1 sherd of glazed post-medieval red earthenware (Fabric 40)	18th-19th century	11
2	Northern trench, L4	4 sherds of a grey ware large storage jar (Fabric HZ)	1st-3rd century	215
2	Northern trench, L4	Roman roof-tile fragments	Roman	1380
2	Northern trench, L4	2 sherds amphora, 1 of Fabric AA and the other of Fabric AJ (Dressel 20)	1st-2nd century	21
2	Northern trench, L4	1 fragment of daub and 1 fragment of burnt daub	Roman	21
2	Northern trench, L4	1 rim of grey ware jar (Fabric GX)	2nd-3rd century?	22
3	SW trench, L3	2 sherds of grey ware (Fabric GX)	Roman	39
3	SW trench, L3	1 sherd of a slip-coated jar (Fabric NQ)	late 3rd-4th century	26
4	U/S spoil heap	1 large thick piece of a grey ware storage jar (Fabric HZ)	1st-3rd century	166

Roman pottery fabrics are after Symonds & Wade 1999 and post-Roman pottery fabrics are after Cotter 2002, and Roman pottery CAM nos are after Hull 1958.

8 Discussion and interpretation

The watching brief did not encounter any archaeological features. However, the abundance of Roman pottery and tile near the bottom of some of the trenches indicates the presence of Roman settlement in the immediate vicinity. The northern foundation trench appears to have reached to the Roman ground-level at 800mm (L4) as this is the only layer that produced Roman pottery without any later finds. Roman levels may also have been reached in the south-western trench.

9 Acknowledgments

The Trust would like to thank the following for their co-operation and assistance during the course of the project: Mr Peter Stebbings, Bursar of Colchester Royal Grammar School, for commissioning and funding the work; Tendring Construction for their assistance on site; and Martin Winter, Archaeology Officer for Colchester Borough Council, for monitoring the project

10 References

- Cotter, John P, 2000 *Post-Roman pottery from excavations in Colchester, 1971-85*, Colchester Archaeological Report **7**
- Crummy, N, Crummy, P, & Crossan, C, 1993 *Excavation of Roman and later cemeteries, churches and monastic sites in Colchester, 1971-88*, Colchester Archaeological Report **9**
- Holloway, B, 2002 *An archaeological evaluation at the Colchester Royal Grammar School, cricket school, Colchester, Essex*, CAT Report 179
- Hull, M R, 1958 *Roman Colchester*, Society of Antiquaries Research Committee Report, **20**
- Symonds, Robin P, & Wade, Sue, 1999 *Roman pottery from excavations in Colchester, 1971-86*, Colchester Archaeological Report **10**

11 Glossary

context	specific location on an archaeological site, especially one where finds are made
EHCR feature	Essex Heritage Conservation Record, Essex County Council an identifiable thing like a pit, a wall, a drain, a floor; can contain 'contexts'
NGR	National Grid Reference
natural	geological deposit undisturbed by human activity
post-medieval	the period from c 1500 to 1800
Roman	the period from AD 43 to around AD 430

12 Archive deposition

The archive is held at Colchester Archaeological Trust, 12 Lexden Road, Colchester, Essex CO3 3NF, but it will be permanently deposited with Colchester Museums under accession code 2002.24.

Kate Orr, September 2002

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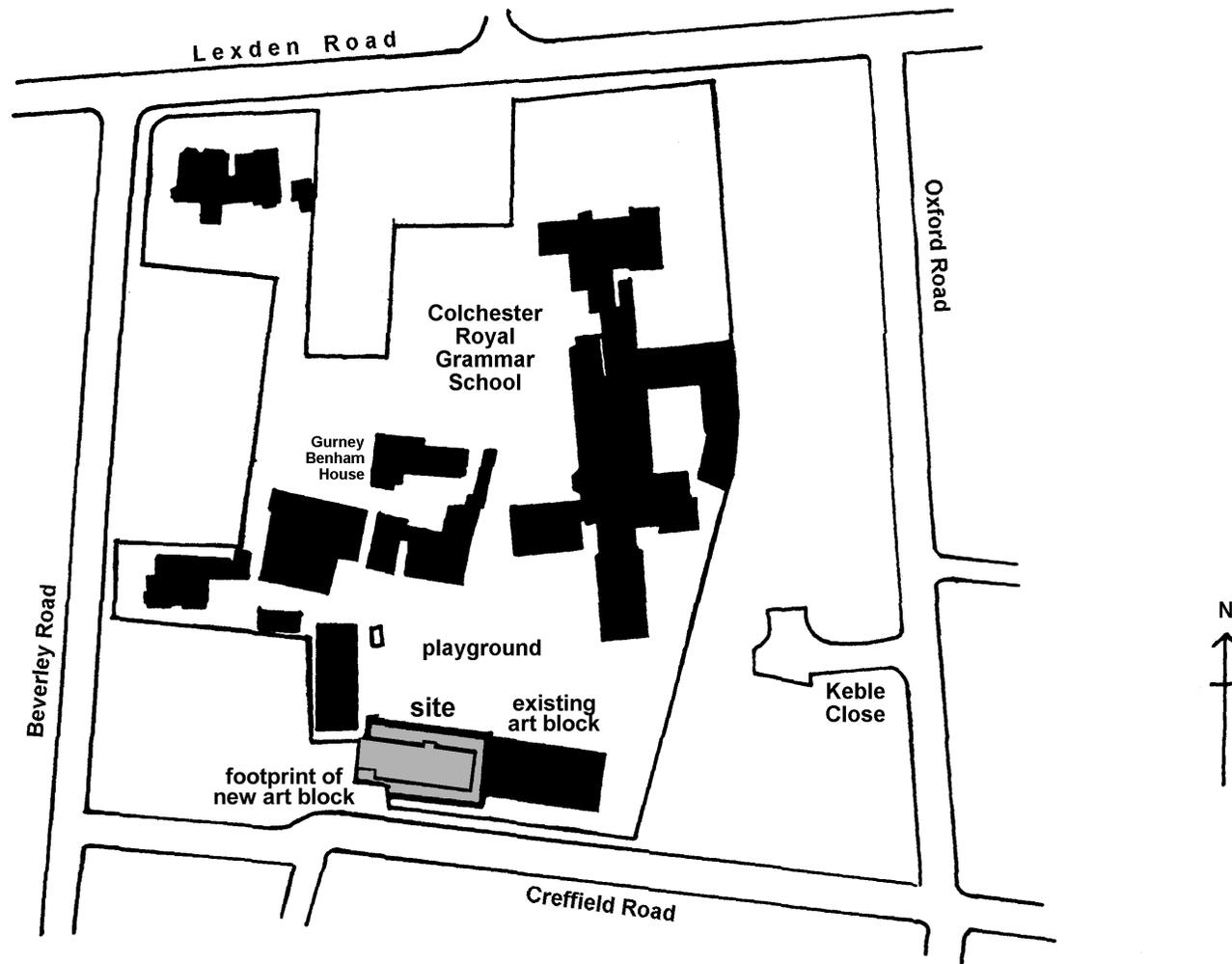


Fig 1 Site location.

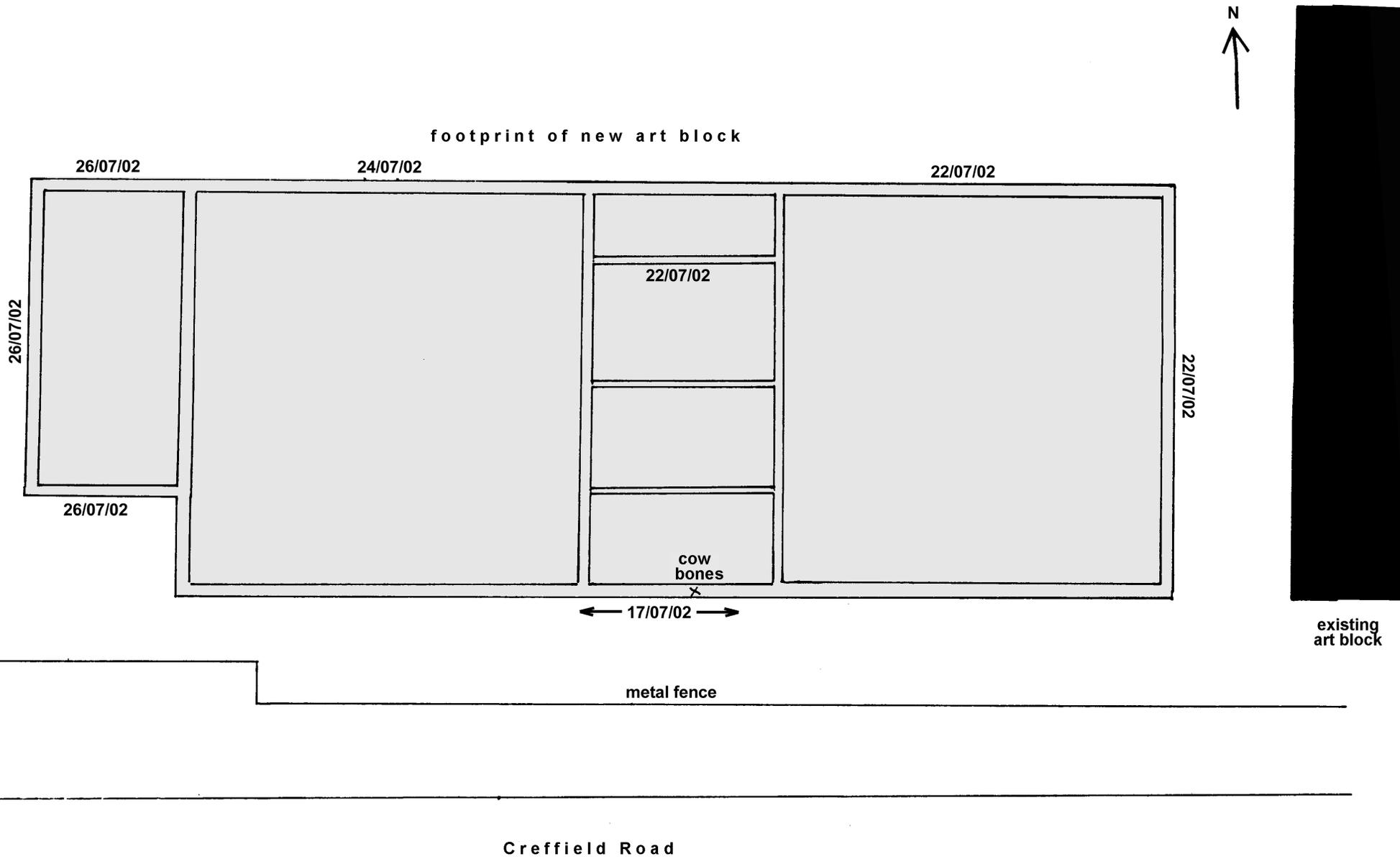


Fig 2 Plan of new art block, showing foundations with dates of monitoring.

**Essex Heritage Conservation Record/
Essex Archaeology and History**

Summary sheet

Site address: new art block (former cricket school), Colchester Royal Grammar School, Colchester, Essex	
Parish: Colchester	District: Colchester
NGR: TL 9875 2475	Site code: Museum accession code 2002.24
Type of work: Watching brief	Site director/group: Colchester Archaeological Trust
Date of work: July 2002	Size of area investigated: 30m x 11m
Location of finds/curating museum: Colchester Museums	Funding source: Colchester Royal Grammar School
Further seasons anticipated? No	Related EHCR nos: 13157, 13173, 13207
Final report: CAT Report 208 and summary in <i>EAH</i>	
Periods represented: Roman	
Summary of fieldwork results: During a watching brief at the Colchester Royal Grammar School on groundworks for the new art block, Roman ground-levels with Roman pottery were exposed. No archaeological features were observed.	
Previous summaries/reports: CAT Report 179	
Author of summary: Kate Orr	Date of summary: September 2002