

**An archaeological evaluation at
the Blackwater Hotel,
Church Road, West Mersea,
Colchester, Essex
March 2003**

**report prepared by
Laura Pooley**

**on behalf of
Dolphin Developments (U.K) Ltd**

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Colchester Museums accession code: 2003.73



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1 Summary

An archaeological evaluation by trial-trenching was carried out at the Blackwater Hotel, Church Road, West Mersea, Colchester, Essex, prior to the redevelopment of the site. Nothing of archaeological significance was observed.

2 Introduction

- 2.1** This is the report on an archaeological evaluation by trial-trenching carried out by the Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) at the Blackwater Hotel, West Mersea, Colchester, Essex (National Grid Reference or NGR TM 0082 1259), prior to the redevelopment of the site.
- 2.2** The work was carried out on the 6th March 2003 according to the brief set out by Martin Winter, Archaeology Officer for Colchester Borough Council.
- 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) and *Guidelines on the preparation and transfer of archaeological archives to Colchester Museums* (1996).

3 Archaeological background

- 3.1** The site is in an area of high archaeological potential. It lies 100m west of the Church of St Peter and St Paul, underneath which survive the remains of a Roman villa (Fig 1; Essex Heritage Conservation Record or EHCR 2274). Roman walls, mosaics and tessellated floors have been recorded since the 18th century in the vicinity (EHCR 2214 and EHCR 6533-6534) and are believed to form part of an extensive complex of buildings. West Mersea is thought to have been a Roman small town and the remains of further buildings may be discovered.
- 3.2** The site of a medieval Benedictine monastery also lies immediately west of the church and a number of human skeletons have been found in the area (EHCR 2187 and EHCR 12546).

4 Aims and objectives

The evaluation is designed to locate, identify and assess the quality and extent of surviving archaeological remains on the site prior to a decision being taken on the preservation or otherwise of deposits and the need for further work and/or mitigation.

5 Methodology

- 5.1** Three trenches were excavated within the site. Trenches 1-3 were each 1.5m wide and totalled 20m in length (8m, 4m and 8m long respectively). A scan with a cable/service detector produced a number of signals close to the not yet demolished hotel building, so the trenches were located within the yard and garden at the rear of the site (Fig 2).
- 5.2** The trenches were machine dug with a flat-edged ditching bucket in shallow spits to the first significant archaeological level. All archaeological features and deposits were then cleaned and excavated by hand.
- 5.3** Individual records of excavated contexts, layers, features and deposits were entered on CAT pro-forma record sheets
- 5.4** All trenches, features and deposits were planned at 1:20 and sections drawn at 1:10.
- 5.5** A photographic record was kept consisting of general site and trench shots and shots of all archaeological features.

6 Results

6.1 Trench 1 and Trench 2

Trench 1 was 1.5m wide x 8m long x 450mm deep and Trench 2 was 1.5m wide x 4m long x 450mm deep. Trenches 1 and 2 were dug into the courtyard of the hotel through a gravel surface (Layer or L1), the sand base into which the gravel was set (L2), a layer of hardcore containing much modern building debris (L3) and a dark brown silty clay subsoil (L4) to a depth of approximately 400mm. L5, a natural mid brown/orange silty clay, lay directly below this. No features or finds of archaeological significance were recorded in either trench.

6.2 Trench 3

Trench 3 was 1.5m wide x 8m long x 550mm deep, dug in the garden of the hotel through a layer of topsoil (L6, a mid-dark brown silty loam) to a depth of approximately 550mm straight onto natural (L5). Three features were noted in this trench. Feature or F1 was a modern pit full of slate (seen in section), F2 was a lime-lined pit containing a jam jar and other modern material, and F3 was a lime pit (Fig 3).

Feature	Finds no	Description	Quantity	Weight in g	Date
F2	1	Jam jar	1	366	modern
F2	1	Glass	1	45	modern
F2	1	Metal object (in pieces)	18	193	modern
U/S	2	Glass bottle	1	377	modern
U/S	2	Animal bone – probably cattle	1	63	-

7 Discussion

7.1 No features or finds of archaeological significance were recorded during the excavation of Trenches 1 and 2.

7.2 Three features were recorded in Trench 3, all of which appear to be modern.

8 Archive deposition

A copy of this report will be deposited permanently with Colchester Museums under the accession code 2003.73.

9 Acknowledgements

The Colchester Archaeological Trust would like to thank Dolphin Developments (U.K) Ltd for sponsoring the work, Mr B Morgan for his assistance and for providing plans of the site, and Martin Winter for monitoring the work.

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Distribution list:

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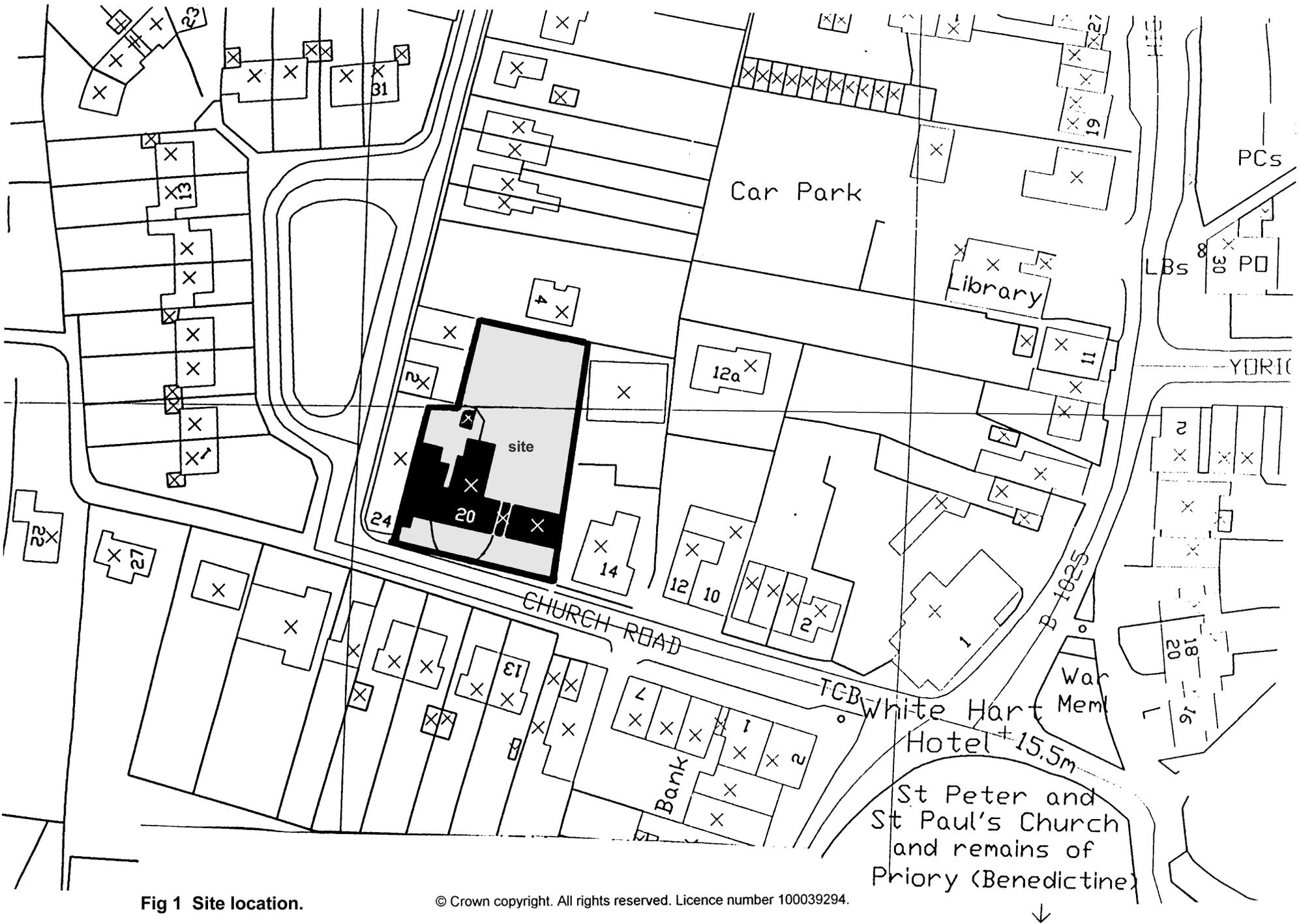


Fig 1 Site location.

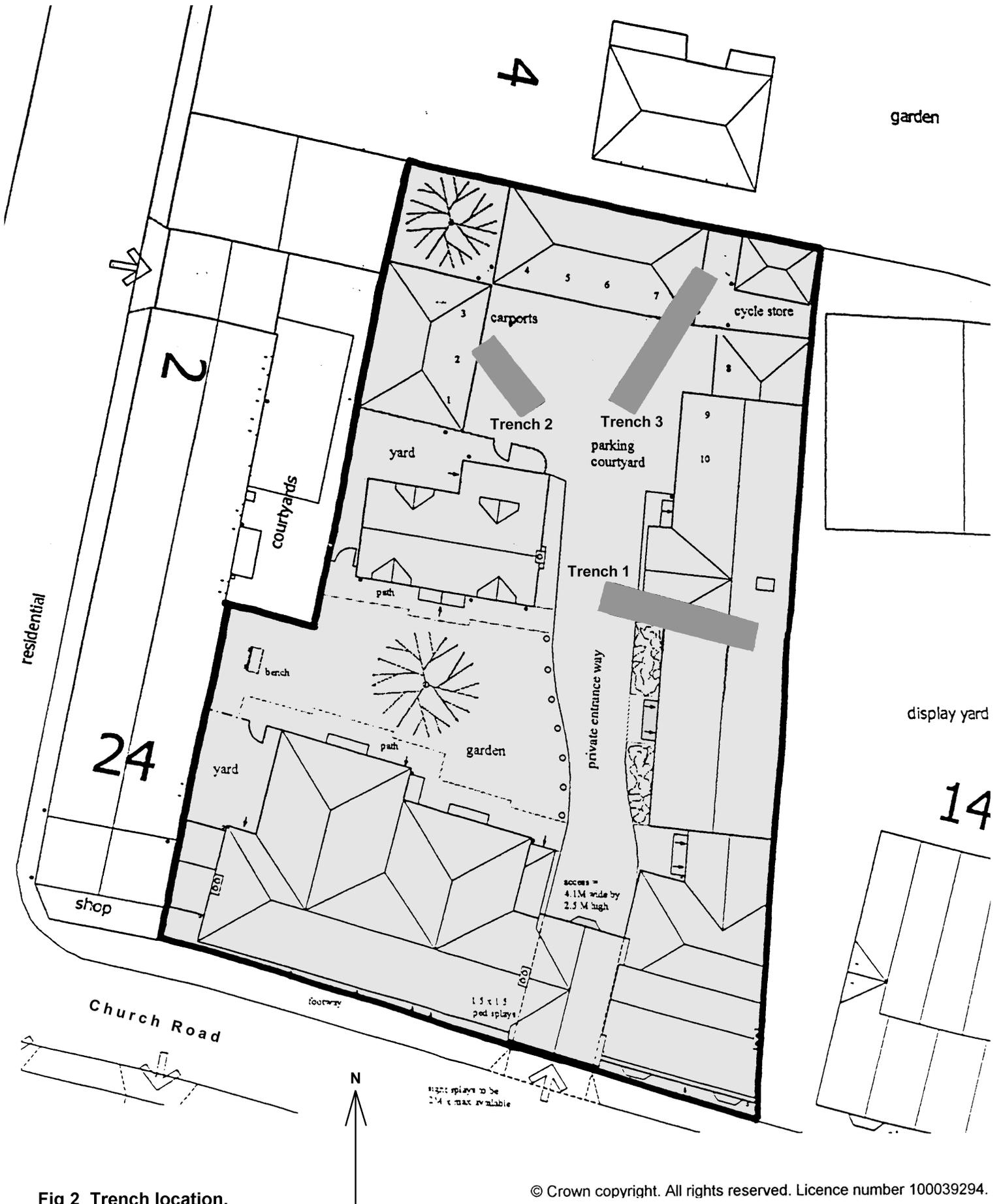


Fig 2 Trench location.

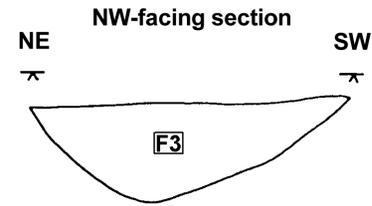
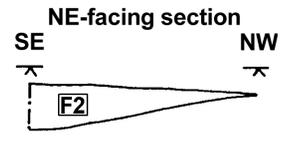
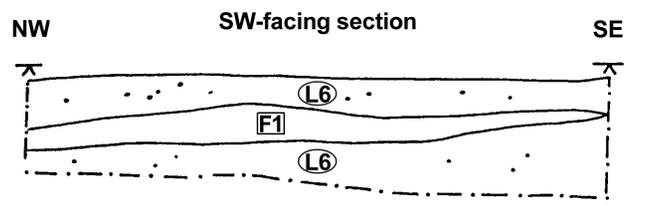
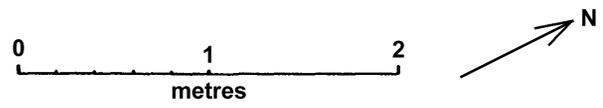
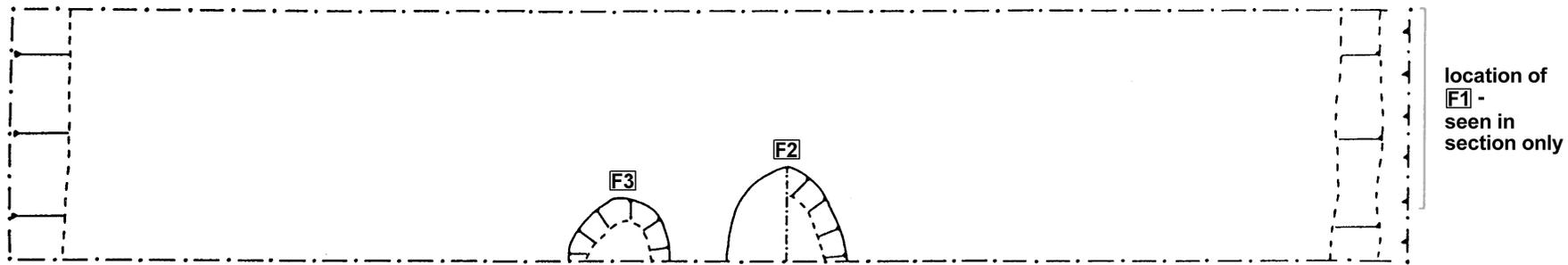


Fig 3 Trench 3: plan and sections.

Fig 3 Trench 3: plan and sections.

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

Summary sheet

Site address: the Blackwater Hotel, Church Road, West Mersea, Colchester, Essex	
Parish: Colchester	District: Colchester
NGR: TM 0082 1259	Site code: Museum accession code 2003.73
Type of work: Evaluation	Site director/group: Colchester Archaeological Trust
Date of work: March 2003	Size of area investigated: 3 trenches 1.5m wide and totalling 20m long
Location of finds/curating museum: Colchester Museums	Funding source: Dolphin Developments (U.K) Ltd
Further seasons anticipated? No	Related EHCR nos: 2187, 2214, 2274, 6533-6534, 12546
Final report: CAT Report 223 and summary in <i>EAH</i>	
Periods represented: Modern	
Summary of fieldwork results: An archaeological evaluation by trial-trenching was carried out at the Blackwater Hotel, Church Road, West Mersea, Colchester, Essex, prior to the redevelopment of the site. Nothing of archaeological significance was observed.	
Previous summaries/reports: N/A	
Author of summary: Laura Pooley	Date of summary: March 2003