

**An archaeological watching brief
at the site of Myland hospital,
Colchester, Essex
June 2002-July 2003**

**report prepared by
Kate Orr**

**on behalf of
Barratt Homes
Cofton Land and Property Ltd
George Wimpey Homes
Wilson Connolly Homes**

CAT project code: 01/6B
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1 Summary

During a watching brief which was carried out during housing development on a large development site between Mill Road and Brinkley Grove, formerly occupied by Myland hospital, no features or finds of archaeological significance were recorded.

2 Introduction

- 2.1 This is the report on an archaeological watching brief carried out by the Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) at the site of Myland hospital, Colchester, Essex. The site is located 4km to the north-east of Colchester town centre, centred at National Grid Reference TM 003 285 (Fig 1). The site consisted of 16 hectares of rough grassland, the majority of which was previously occupied by the hospital buildings. It is bounded by Mill Road to the north-west, Brinkley Grove to the south-west, the Gilbert School playing fields and Highwoods housing estate to the south-east, and vacant land to the north-east.
- 2.2 The watching brief was carried out between June 2002 and July 2003. It was a requirement conditional on planning consent (planning application no COL/97/0220) for a residential development which was given permission with a condition for an archaeological watching brief.
- 2.3 All fieldwork was done in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation agreed with the Archaeology Officer of Colchester Borough Council (CBCAO), which in turn followed a brief supplied by the CBCAO.
- 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* (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 An archaeological desk-based assessment of the site was carried out by CAT in 2000 (CAT Report 77). Although no discoveries have been recorded on the development site itself, cropmarks of rectilinear features and ring-ditches are located 500m to the north of the development site (EHCR 2644). The cropmark site has never been investigated, so it is not possible to interpret it definitely, but it may represent a prehistoric occupation site with associated fields. There are also four small ring-ditches which are visible as cropmarks 400m to the south (EHCR 2645). 350m to the south of the development site lies Brinkley Grove, an earthwork possibly representing a clay-pit (CAT Report 31; EHCR 11).
- 3.2 An archaeological evaluation was carried out by CAT in 2001 on land at Cuckoo Farm, west of the Myland hospital site, in advance of the construction of the new northern approach road (CAT Report 159). Undated charcoal-filled pits were recorded during the evaluation.
- 3.3 Myland Hospital was built in 1884 and demolished in 1989.

4 Aim

The aim of the fieldwork was to record any finds, features or deposits disturbed by the groundworks, especially in areas that had not previously been built on.

5 Methods

- 5.1 The watching brief was of an intermittent nature and 14 visits were made in total, and therefore only a small percentage of the groundworks were monitored.

- 5.2 Foundation and service-trenches were dug by contractors using a mechanical excavator with a toothed bucket. Sections were examined for features and spoil heaps were checked for finds.
- 5.3 Sketch section drawings were made of layers at a scale of 1:10. No features were recorded.
- 5.4 Colour photographs of the site were taken with a digital camera.

6 Results

The site was divided into three areas for development by separate builders (Fig 2): Barratt Homes, George Wimpey Homes, and Wilson Connolly Homes. In addition, Cofton Land and Property Ltd were responsible for the construction of the new access roads and the sewers. For a chronological list of site visits, see section 12.

6.1 The access road – Cofton Land and Property Ltd

Parts of the new main access road to the site (Road 1) were monitored in June 2002. This road extends from the Brinkley Grove roundabout and bisects all three development areas. The south-western section was monitored after 500mm of soil had been stripped off. 400mm of dark grey brown sandy loam topsoil with brick and tile fragments sealed a silty sandy yellow brown layer with modern brick and tile. No features of archaeological significance were recorded.

The section of main access road which extends through the George Wimpey Homes development area as far as the boundary with the Wilson Connolly Homes development area was monitored in October 2002 (called Road 8 in this section). Between 300mm and 1m of soil had been stripped off and natural clay was observed at the deepest part of the trench. The area was undisturbed except for some brick foundations which were part of a building marked on the 1977 OS map (scale 1:10,000) and now demolished.

The central section of Road 1 was not monitored.

6.2 The sewer-trenches – Cofton Land and Property Ltd

Sewer-trenches were dug along the line of the new main roads and visits were made between August and December 2002. Only the main sewer-trench that was dug alongside the main access roads (Roads 1 and 8) was monitored. This was dug to between 1m and 3m in depth and was shored up and then filled in quickly, so it was not always possible to see anything when visits were made. What little could be seen of the sections of the trenches proved to be negative.

Part of the central section of the main sewer-trench was observed in August 2002. 250-300mm of topsoil was seen to overlie natural clay.

Another section of the main sewer-trench dug at the entrance to the George Wimpey Homes development area in October 2002 was not shored up, and therefore the following soil profile was visible: 200mm of topsoil with flecks of brick and tile (200mm of topsoil had already been stripped off) overlying 200mm of buff stony sand. Underneath this was 1.1m of natural orange sand. There had not been much modern disturbance in this area.

In November 2002, another section of the main sewer was monitored where it meets Brinkley Grove roundabout. 600mm of very mixed topsoil containing brick and tile overlaid a thin band of grey subsoil. The underlying layer was orange clay.

6.3 House foundations - Barratt Homes, Wilson Connolly Homes and George Wimpey Homes development areas

6.3.1 Barratt Homes

The Barratt Homes development area was monitored during the stripping of the vegetation in June 2002, when approximately 200mm of soil was stripped off. No features of archaeological interest were recorded. The excavation of foundation trenches was also monitored between August 2002 and January 2003. Not all of the foundation trenches were monitored as periodic visits were made. On the Mill Road frontage there was a great deal of disturbance from previous hospital foundations and services. In the middle of the Barratt Homes development area, the following soil profile was observed: 500mm of very disturbed topsoil with building rubble. This overlaid greyish brown clay with brick and tile flecks. Underneath was reddish orange natural sand.

6.3.2 George Wimpey Homes

House foundations were monitored between October 2002 and January 2003 in the George Wimpey Homes development area. Several plots were monitored on the boundary with the Barratt Homes development area, by the new road and the trees. There was generally less disturbance in this area than in the Barratt Homes area, but no archaeological features were observed. On several visits, rain combined with heavy traffic on site had made the surface extremely muddy and rutted. There was clear evidence of modern dumping in the sections of one of the plots. A soakaway was being dug in which a modern ditch was observed in plan. One house plot had been dug through backfill from where contractors had removed an area of Japanese pond weed. No house foundations in the central part of the George Wimpey Homes area were monitored.

6.3.3 Wilson Connolly Homes

The line of the main road had been stripped (by Breheny Contractors) and this was monitored. Between 400mm and 800mm of soil had been stripped (not including a small quantity of topsoil that had previously been removed). 200-300mm of light brown silty topsoil sealed mottled orange, yellow and buff clay. The main spoil heap for the new road was checked and peg-tile only was observed (not collected).

7 Discussion

The watching brief was intermittent and fragmentary, and conditions on site were not ideal for monitoring groundworks. However, of the open trenches that could be seen, no features or finds of archaeological interest were recorded. The Barratt Homes area had been badly disturbed by the construction of Myland hospital in the late 19th century.

8 Acknowledgements

The site work was carried out by the author. The project was monitored by Martin Winter, Archaeology Officer for Colchester Borough Council.

The Trust would like to thank Cofton Land and Property Ltd for commissioning and funding the work, and Barratt Homes, George Wimpey Homes and Wilson Connolly Homes for funding the work, and all the clients for allowing access to the site.

9 Reference

- CAT Report 31 Brinkley Grove: an investigation of a scheduled earthwork to the north of Colchester, unpublished archive report, by S Benfield, 1999
- CAT Report 77 A desk-based assessment of the archaeological remains on land at NHS Estates, Myland Hospital, Colchester, by H Brooks and K Orr, unpublished archive report, 2000
- CAT Report 159 An archaeological evaluation on the route for the Northern Approach Road, Phase 3 (Severalls hospital/Cuckoo Farm), Colchester, Essex, unpublished archive report, by C Crossan, 2001

10 Glossary

context	specific location on an archaeological site, especially one where finds are made
cropmarks	ancient features which show as lines and other marks in crops due to differential root depth of roots over damp soil in archaeological
EHCR	Essex Heritage Conservation Record, Essex County Council
feature	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

11 Archive deposition

The archive is held by Colchester Archaeological Trust at 12 Lexden Road, Colchester, Essex CO3 3NF, but it will be permanently deposited with Colchester Museums under accession code 2002.118.

12 Appendix: list of site visits

- 12/06/02** – monitoring of stripping of vegetation and some topsoil (approximately 200mm) near the Mill Road frontage – negative.
- 13/06/02** – monitoring of new access road near Brinkley Grove. 400mm of dark grey brown sandy loam topsoil overlying 100mm of yellow brown silty sand.
- 05/08/02** – house foundations in the Barratt Homes development area on the Mill Road frontage. Some had already been part built. Brick foundations and old services from previous hospital buildings observed.
Central area of main sewer-trench monitored (dividing Barratt Homes and George Wimpey Homes areas); from what little could be seen, it appeared to be disturbed.
- 09/08/02** – two house foundations monitored in Barratt Homes area near the Mill Road frontage. Although there was not much in the way of disturbance, no features were observed.
- 16/08/02** – some house foundations in Barratt Homes area on the Mill Road frontage monitored. 250-300mm of topsoil was recorded (200mm had already been stripped off) overlying natural clay.
Part of the central section of the trench for main sewer was monitored but all the sides were shored up.
- 28/08/02** – part of the central section of the same trench was seen (approximately 3m deep). No features were observed.
- 07/10/02** – four house foundations were inspected in the middle of the Barratt Homes area. Depth 650mm-1.2m. The top 500mm was very disturbed (ground had already been reduced by approximately 200mm) with a great deal of building rubble. Underlying this was grey brown clay with flecks of brick and tile. Reddish orange natural sand at the base of the deeper trenches. No features were observed.
Two house foundations monitored in the George Wimpey Homes area, near the Barratt Homes area, by the main new access road. The soil profile just consisted of baked clay. Less modern disturbance was recorded here than on the Mill Road frontage.
The main sewer-trench was monitored within the George Wimpey Homes area. Depth 1.5m. 200mm approximately of topsoil had already been stripped off. 200mm of topsoil with brick and tile flecks sealed 200mm of buff stony sand. The rest of the trench was cut through natural orange sand. There was little modern modern disturbance.
Road 8 in the George Wimpey Homes area had also been stripped. 300mm-1m of material had been stripped off. There were no features apart from a brick rubble spread in one area which is probably the building marked on the 1977 OS map (scale 1:10,000). Natural clay was reached.
- 22/10/02** – soakaway trench in the George Wimpey Homes area. One modern linear feature. The area was very muddy and wheel-rutted.
- 28/10/02** – another monitoring visit to the section of road seen on 07/10/02. Photographs taken.
A section of the main sewer-trench in the George Wimpey Homes area, near the boundary with the Barratt Homes area, was open. No features were observed. Photograph taken. No house foundation trenches were open.
- 06/11/02** – a section of the main sewer-trench near Brinkley Grove was monitored. 1m deep. 600mm of topsoil mixed with modern brick and tile sealed a thin band of greyish subsoil which in turn sealed natural orange clay. There was also a short length of electricity cable trench open on the western side of the new access road in this area. No features were observed.

Three house foundations on the George Wimpey Homes area near the new access road had been filled in, but the oversight showed much disturbance from modern building in the topsoil which overlaid natural orange clay.

- 27/11/02** – foundation trenches for four houses were open in the middle of the Barratt Homes area (plot no 45 and vicinity) but already part filled in with concrete. All that was visible were pipes and brick footings from the hospital buildings. Very muddy.
- 12/12/02** – one house plot on the George Wimpey Homes area was monitored. In this area the contractors had removed Japanese pond weed and the trench was just dug through modern backfill. Very muddy and wheel-rutted.
- 28/01/03** – a site visit was made but there were no open groundworks to monitor.
- 31/07/03** – visit to the Wilson Connolly area. The line of the main road had been stripped (by Breheny Contractors) and was monitored. Between 400mm and 800mm of soil had been stripped (not including a small quantity of topsoil that had previously been removed). 200-300mm of light brown silty topsoil sealed mottled orange, yellow and buff clay. The main spoil heap for the new road was checked and peg-tile only was observed (not collected).

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Distribution list:

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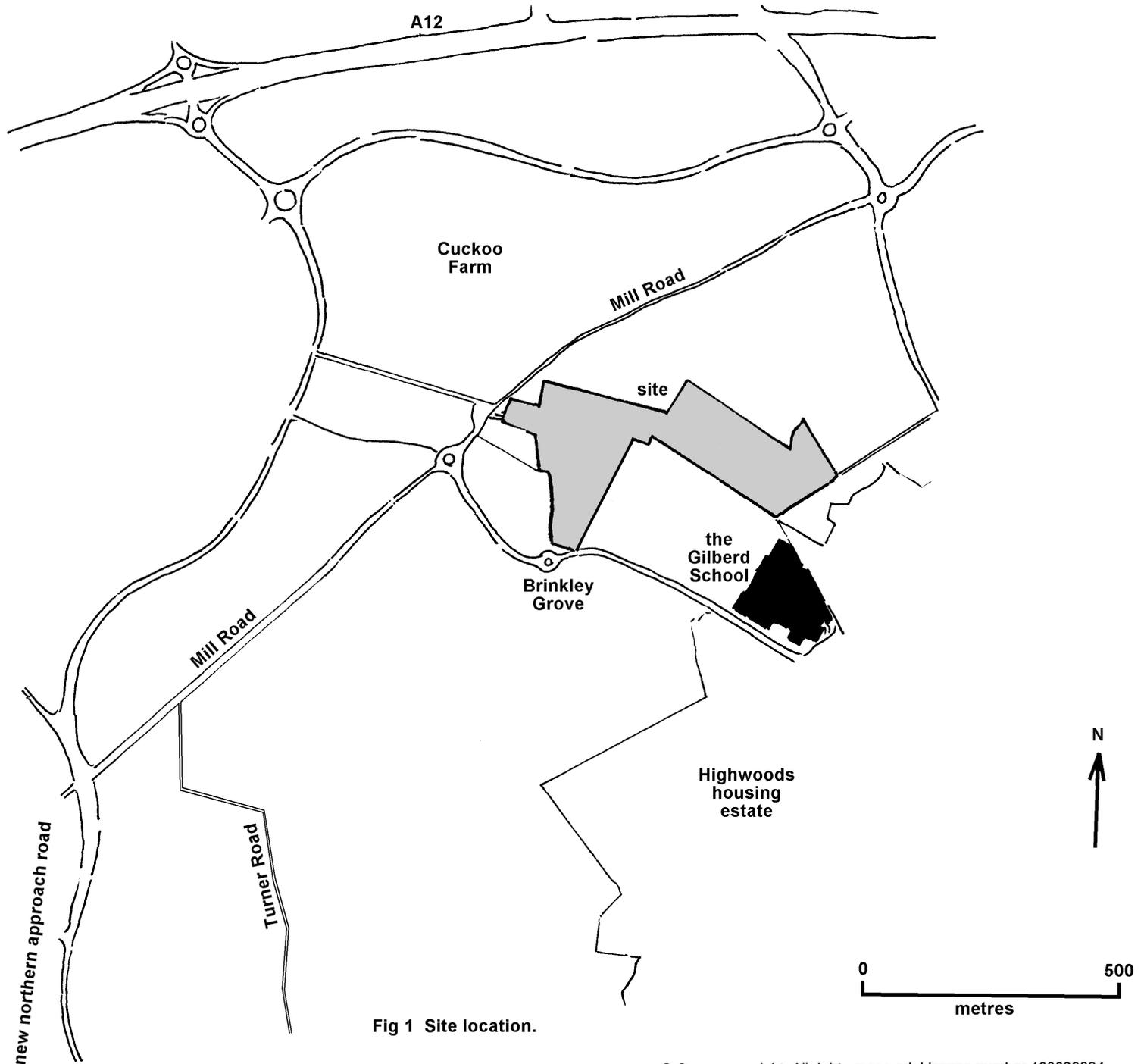


Fig 1 Site location.



Fig 2 Site plan, showing the old hospital buildings, the three development areas and the areas monitored with dates of visits.

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

Summary sheet

Site address: site of Myland hospital, between Mill Road and Brinkley Grove, Colchester, Essex	
Parish: Mile End	District: Colchester
NGR: TM 003 285 (c)	Site code: 2002.118
Type of work: Watching brief	Site director/group: Colchester Archaeological Trust
Date of work: June 2002-July 2003	Size of area investigated: 16 ha
Location of finds/curating museum: Colchester Museums	Funding source: Developers
Further seasons anticipated? No	Related EHCR nos: 2644, 2645
Final report: CAT Report 239 and summary in <i>EAH</i>	
Periods represented: None	
Summary of fieldwork results: During a watching brief which was carried out during housing development on a large development site between Mill Road and Brinkley Grove, formerly occupied by Myland hospital, no features or finds of archaeological significance were recorded.	
Previous summaries/reports: CAT Report 77	
Author of summary: Kate Orr	Date of summary: August 2003