

**An archaeological evaluation
by trial-trenching at the corner of
Mile End Road and Bruff Close,
Colchester, Essex
July 2005**

**report prepared
by Kate Orr**

**on behalf of
Hopkins Homes Ltd**

CAT project code: 05/7c
Colchester Museums accession code: 2005.93
NGR: TL 99297 26658 (centre)



Colchester Archaeological Trust
12 Lexden Road,
Colchester,
Essex CO3 3NF

tel.: (01206) 541051
tel./fax: (01206) 500124
email: archaeologists@catuk.org

CAT Report 332
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1 Summary

An evaluation was carried out on land between Mile End Road and Bruff Close, consisting of six trial-trenches. The only features observed on the site were several gravelly patches that did not seem to be convincingly archaeological. The topsoil and subsoil contained a small quantity of Roman ceramic building material and pottery suggesting the site of a Roman building nearby. Peg-tile and floor tiles may have derived from the original church at Mile End which is partially extant to the north of the site.

2 Introduction (Fig 1)

- 2.1 This is the archive report on an archaeological trial-trenching evaluation carried out in July 2005 by the Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT), on land at the corner of Bruff Close and Mile End Road, Colchester, Essex.
- 2.2 Outline planning permission for a residential development has been given with condition for an archaeological evaluation (O/COL/00/1869). The evaluation was required to provide information to be considered prior to the determination of the full planning application.
- 2.3 The site is located approximately 2 km north of Colchester town centre, on the eastern side of Mile End Road, north of Bruff Close. It is centred at National Grid Reference TL 99297 26658. The 0.85 ha site occupies a south-facing slope which is mainly laid to rough grass, with trees. The height AOD varies from 17.52m to 29.84m. A 3% sample of the site was evaluated which amounted to 165m of trenching.
- 2.4 All fieldwork was done in accordance with a specification submitted by CAT which followed a brief written by the Colchester Borough Council Archaeology Officer.
- 2.5 This report mirrors standards and practices contained in the Colchester Borough Council's *Guidelines for the standards and practice of archaeological fieldwork in the Borough of Colchester* (CM 2002) and *Guidelines on the preparation and transfer of archaeological archives to Colchester Museums* (CM 2003), and the IFA's *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (IFA 1999) and *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (IFA 2001). Other sources are *Management of archaeological projects* (MAP 2), and *Research and archaeology: a framework for the Eastern Counties 1* (EAA 3), *Research and archaeology: a framework for the Eastern Counties 2* (EAA 8), and *Standards for field archaeology in the East of England* (EAA 14).

3 Archaeological background

- 3.1 Excavations at Turner Rise, carried out prior to the construction of the ASDA supermarket building (Shimmin forthcoming), revealed a Roman burial ground beside a Roman road, which was on a north to south alignment.
- 3.2 The application site is situated outside the walled Roman *colonia* but may occupy an outlying area of the town. The route of the new Northern Approach Road was evaluated in 1997, and evidence of a possible Late Iron Age or Roman farmstead in the vicinity was found (CAT Report 2). A watching brief was carried out in the same area in 2002 and Roman, Iron Age and medieval pottery was retrieved associated with ephemeral pit- and ditch-like features (CAT Report 186).
- 3.3 A recent evaluation by Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd of the adjacent Wimpey housing development to the east produced evidence for Late Iron Age/Roman ditches and a Roman clay-extraction pit (Pre-Construct Archaeology 2004).
- 3.4 The application site is to the south-east of the site of the medieval church of St Michael and its associated rectory. This medieval church was demolished in 1648, rebuilt, and then demolished again in 1870. Only the remains of the 14th- to 15th-century nave survive above ground (EHER nos 11671 and 11672). The significance of this is that medieval churches were often the focus for medieval villages. It is known that Myland (Mile End) became a separate parish in 1254 and it

is possible that buried or earthwork remains of the medieval settlement and its fields extend into the application area.

- 3.5** Clay-extraction pits and tile and pottery kilns have been located in the area since medieval times and may date back as far as the Roman period.

4 Aim

The aim of the evaluation was to record the extent, nature and complexity of any surviving archaeological remains within the development site.

5 Methods

- 5.1** Six trial-trenches were placed evenly across the site (Trenches or T1-T6; Fig 2). All trenches were 1.6m wide and varied in length from 15m to 38m. A mechanical excavator removed soil in spits until archaeological features or natural ground were exposed. The depth of the trenches varied between 500mm and 600mm.
- 5.2** Individual records of layers and features were entered on CAT pro-forma record sheets. All exposed subsoil features, archaeological deposits or negative features were manually cleaned, planned using a total station, and examined in sufficient detail to allow their nature, date and importance to be assessed. Four features were excavated and drawn in section at a scale of 1:10.
- 5.3** A register was compiled of finds. Finds were washed, marked and bagged according to context.
- 5.4** Standard 'record' shots of contexts were taken with a digital camera.
- 5.5** A metal-detector was used to check all the spoil heaps.

6 Results

A similar soil profile was encountered in all six trenches; approximately 300mm of topsoil (Layer or L1) sealed light brown clay loam subsoil (L2). L2 was stony in places, especially at the eastern end of T1. In all trenches, both L1 and L2 produced common peg-tile and post-medieval pottery and occasional medieval and Roman pottery, but without any particular concentrations. Natural yellowish brown clay (L3) was encountered at approximately 500mm below ground-level.

6.1 Trench 1 (Figs 2-3)

T1 was located in the northern half of the site and was 15m in length. The trench was blank apart from two possible features, represented by spreads of gravel within slightly darker sandy clay that appeared to be cut into natural clay (Feature or F1 and F2). F1 had a definite linear edge on its western side but its eastern extent was not determined as it extended beneath the baulk of the trench. The stones were small to medium in size and angular to sub-angular in shape. The gravel was not compacted and did not appear to be an area of metalling. F2 was similar in appearance but narrower. One small fragment of tile or medieval pottery was retrieved from its surface. Slots were dug through each 'feature' to determine their depth and to retrieve dating information; both were found to be shallow and devoid of finds. F1 and F2 were sealed by L2 subsoil. L1 topsoil contained two pieces of Roman ceramic building material, ie a brick and a piece of box tile from a hypocaust.

6.2 Trench 2 (Figs 2-3)

T2 was located in the northern half of the site and was 32m long. A sub-circular patch of gravel was recorded at the northern end of the trench (F7), which resembled F1 and F2. F7 was sealed by L2 and was not excavated. L1 topsoil and L2 contained some Roman pottery and tile and one post-medieval floor tile.

6.3 Trench 3 (Figs 2-3)

T3 was located in the northern half of the site and was 26m in length. Two gravelly 'features' were recorded (F3 and F4), and slots were dug through each. Both features were similar in appearance to F1, F2 and F7. F3 was wide and roughly

linear and contained a small fragment of tile. F4's eastern edge was clear but its western course ran under the baulk of the trench. Like F1 and F2, the features were sealed by L2 and were shallow. L1 topsoil contained one piece of Roman brick, one fragment of Roman tile and a piece of Roman pottery. There was also one piece of post-medieval floor tile.

6.4 Trench 4 (Figs 2-3)

T4 was located in southern half of the site and was 39m long. No features were recorded. L2 contained one piece of Roman tile plus a possible piece of medieval or post-medieval floor tile.

6.5 Trench 5 (Figs 2-3)

T5 was located in the southern half of the site and was 28m long. In the centre of the trench there were two gravelly patches (F5 and F6). These were not dug because they were within L2, sealed by L1 and contained modern or post-medieval finds. L1 and L2 contained a very small quantity of Roman brick and tile.

6.6 Trench 6 (Figs 2-3)

T6 was located at the southern end of the site and was 25m in length. The trench contained no features. L1 contained modern and post-medieval pottery, tile and other material.

7 Finds

Finds were identified by Howard Brooks of CAT. Fabric descriptions are after Cunningham 1985 and CAR 7.
D = discarded

Table 1: quantities and weights of finds types, per find number and context.

Find no	Trench	Context	Qt	Wt (in g)	finds type	finds date
1	T1	F2	1	7	peg-tile or very coarse vessel in Fabric 21?	medieval or post-medieval
2	T1	L1	1	103	Roman brick	Roman
2	T1	L1	1	95	Roman box tile (hypocaust)	Roman
2	T1	L1	2	172	overfired post-medieval brick fragments D	post-medieval
2	T1	L1	11	466	peg-tile fragments D	post-medieval
2	T1	L1	1	32	body sherd in very sandy Fabric 21, grey core	13th-16th century
2	T1	L1	1	35	handle in Fabric 21 or 21a	13th-16th century
3	T1	L2	1	56	peg-tile fragment D	post-medieval
6	T1	L2	3	134	peg-tile fragments D	post-medieval
6	T1	L2	1	32	indeterminate brick lump D	
6	T3	F3	14	14	small bits of natural stone (like soft septaria)	
6	T3	F3	1	2	tiny spall of tile	?
8	T3	L1	1	13	iron nail, 57mm long (not complete), round head	
8	T3	L1	1	30	clinker D	
8	T3	L1	6	329	peg-tile fragments D	post-medieval
8	T3	L1	1	93	post-medieval/modern brick fragment D	post-medieval
8	T3	L1	1	430	substantial piece of Roman brick	Roman
8	T3	L1	1	50	Roman tile (?tegula flat piece)	Roman
8	T3	L1	1	65	Roman imbrex fragment	Roman
8	T3	L1	1	136	floor brick or tile (27mm thick) in sandy orange fabric, with surviving green glaze on surface	post-medieval
8	T3	L1	1	24	rim sherd of Staffordshire-type slipware dish	AD 1680-1750
8	T3	L1	1	5	body sherd of Colchester-type ware (Fabric 21a)	15th-16th century
8	T3	L1	1	16	grey ware sherd with brown below the surfaces	Roman
10	T2	L1	6	388	peg-tiles D	medieval or post-medieval
10	T2	L1	1	228	Roman brick	Roman
10	T2	L1	1	124	Roman tile (tegula flat piece)	Roman

Find no	Trench	Context	Qt	Wt (in g)	finds type	finds date
10	T2	L1	1	17	Fabric 40 hemispherical bowl rim with dark brown glaze, Cotter Form B1 (CAR 7, 194, 202)	17th-18th century
10	T2	L1	1	12	Colchester ware Fabric 21a body sherd	15th-16th century
10	T2	L1	1	99	large iron point (tine?), almost certainly dropped off a tractor	modern
10	T2	L1	2	17	Roman grey ware sherds	Roman
7	T3	L2	1	7	body sherd of glass bottle	17th-18th century
7	T3	L2	1	12	undated tile fragment	
9	T3	L2	2	167	peg-tile fragments D	post-medieval
9	T3	L2	1	114	unusually thick peg-tile (17mm) or Roman tile	?
11	T2	L2	5	191	peg-tiles D	post-medieval
11	T2	L2	2	159	one certain and a second possible floor tile; the certain example has bevelled edges seen on floor tiles; no glaze survives, orange fabric of pot type Fabric 21	medieval or post-medieval
11	T2	L2	1	8	iron nail, square head, 50mm long, probably 2" originally	
11	T2	L2	1	13	Roman grey ware sherd	Roman
11	T2	L2	2	14	sherds in dull brown and mid brown fabric	Roman
12	T4	L1	17	634	peg-tile fragments D	post-medieval
12	T4	L1	1	120	post-medieval brick D	post-medieval
12	T4	L1	1	154	floor brick or tile, 30mm thick, with glaze surviving on edge; looks post-medieval rather than medieval	post-medieval
12	T4	L1	1	140	unusually thick (24mm) peg-tile, or floor brick?	post-medieval
12	T4	L1	3	9	sherds of Fabric 48d	19th-20th century
12	T4	L1	1	22	recent-looking PMRE (Fabric 40)	18th-19th century
12	T4	L1	1	5	abraded sherd of Fabric 21 with grey core	13th-16th century
12	T4	L1	1	4	flowerpot rim (Fabric 51b)	19th-20th century
12	T4	L1	1	28	iron tool - boring tool like auger or bradawl	
12	T4	L1	4	28	clay tobacco-pipe stem fragments; bore diameters 2.5mm (x4)	post-medieval
13	T4	L2	1	67	post-medieval brick fragment D	post-medieval
13	T4	L2	4	76	peg-tile fragments D	post-medieval
13	T4	L2	3	111	pieces of burnt coal or shale?	
13	T4	L2	1	17	Roman <i>imbrex</i> fragment	Roman
13	T4	L2	1	13	Colchester-type ware (Fabric 21a) sherd with painted stripe	15th-16th century
13	T4	L2	1	4	clay tobacco-pipe stem and bowl fragment; bore diameter 2.5mm	post-medieval
13	T4	L2	1	54	PMRE (Fabric 40) base sherd with external dark glaze	17th-18th century
13	T4	L2	1	16	spall from floor tile with cream slip? or flat potsherd, with painted face?	medieval to post-medieval?
14	T5	F5	4	5	reduced Fabric 21a body sherds	15th-16th century
15	T5	L1	1	4	Fabric 48d body	19th-20th century
15	T5	L1	1	5	border ware (Fabric 42) body sherd	mid 16th-17th century
15	T5	L1	1	7	clay tobacco-pipe stem fragment, bore diameter 2.5mm	post-medieval
15	T5	L1	1	175	Roman brick fragment	Roman
15	T5	L1	2	147	post-medieval brick fragments D	post-medieval
15	T5	L1	13	370	peg-tile fragments, one with round peg hole D	post-medieval
15	T5	L1	4	88	quite heavily abraded Fabric 40 sherds, mostly from a large vessel	17th-18th century
16	T5	L2	2	228	peg-tile fragments D	post-medieval
16	T5	L2	1	49	Roman tile?	Roman?
16	T5	L2	1	5	coal or shale	
16	T5	L2	1	3	clay tobacco-pipe stem fragment; bore diameter 2.5mm	post-medieval
16	T5	L2	1	114	abraded, hefty piece of handle: large storage jar or cistern, in Fabric 21 or 21a	16th-17th century
5	T6	L1	2	10	sherds of Fabric 48d ironstone	19th-20th century
5	T6	L1	1	11	sherd of PMRE (Fabric 40)	17th-18th century
5	T6	L1	1	10	brass plate from some sort of instrument	20th century?

Find no	Trench	Context	Qt	Wt (in g)	finds type	finds date
5	T6	L1	2	34	clinker	D
5	T6	L1	5	155	peg-tile	D
5	T6	L1	4	16	coal	D
		totals	175	6,847		

8 Discussion

- 8.1** The evaluation resulted in seven gravelly 'features' (F1-F7) of various shapes and sizes being exposed. These 'features' have no clear form or function; they are shallow and are not compacted enough to have been deliberately metalled surfaces or tracks. They appear to be spreads of gravel or perhaps natural gravelly areas within the natural or the subsoil. Similar features were apparently found on the field to the east during the evaluation by Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd (Pre-Construct Archaeology 2004). Two sub-square pits with grass in their fills were recorded, which are likely to be recently backfilled test holes.
- 8.2** The topsoil and subsoil contained peg-tile, post-medieval floor tiles, post-medieval pottery and occasional medieval pottery and Roman brick and tile, but in no particular concentrations. The peg-tile and floor tiles may have derived from a building nearby such as the medieval church of Mile End (demolished in 1648). There were no structures found on the site nor features such as ovens or rubbish-pits that would indicate a medieval settlement here. The scatter of pottery and tile indicate medieval and post-medieval occupation in the vicinity, with the material probably finding its way here through the action of manuring on an arable field.
- 8.3** The small quantity of Roman material, particularly the box tile, suggests the site of a Roman building nearby. This possibility is supported by the results of an evaluation undertaken in 1997 about 250 m to the north-east in advance of the construction of the Northern Approach Road. The evaluation revealed Late Iron Age or early Roman ditches to the south and west of Turner Village hospital which were provisionally interpreted as a ditched trackway leading towards a settlement or site to the north (CAT Report 2).

9 Acknowledgements

The Trust would like to thank Hopkins Homes Ltd for commissioning and funding the work. The project was monitored by Martin Winter, Archaeology Officer for Colchester Borough Council. The site work was carried out by Brian Hurrell, Chris Lister and Kate Orr.

10 References

- | | | |
|----------------|------|--|
| CAR 7 | 2000 | <i>Colchester Archaeological Report 7: Post-Roman pottery from excavations in Colchester, 1971-85</i> , by John Cotter |
| CAT Report 2 | | An archaeological evaluation of the line of the Colchester Northern Approach Road. Stage 1: Turner Road to Boxted Road, unpublished CAT archive report, by Stephen Benfield, 1997 |
| CAT Report 186 | | An archaeological watching brief on the line of the Northern Approach Road and on land to the west of the District Hospital (NAR2a), unpublished CAT archive report, by Kate Orr, 2002 |
| CM | 2002 | <i>Guidelines on standards and practices for archaeological fieldwork in the Borough of Colchester</i> |
| CM | 2003 | <i>Guidelines on the preparation and transfer of archaeological archives to Colchester Museums</i> |

Cunningham, C M	1985	'A typology for post-Roman pottery in Essex', in <i>Post-medieval sites and their pottery: Moulsham Street, Chelmsford</i> , by C M Cunningham and P J Drury, Chelmsford Archaeological Trust Report 5 and Council for British Archaeology Research Report 54 , 1-16
EAA 3	1997	<i>Research and archaeology: a framework for the Eastern Counties 1. Resource assessment</i> , East Anglian Archaeology, Occasional Papers, 3 , ed by J Glazebrook
EAA 8	2000	<i>Research and archaeology: a framework for the Eastern Counties 2. Research agenda and strategy</i> , East Anglian Archaeology, Occasional Papers, 8 , ed by N Brown & J Glazebrook
EAA 14	2003	<i>Standards for field archaeology in the East of England</i> , East Anglian Archaeology, Occasional Papers, 14 , ed by D Gurney
IFA	1999	<i>Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation</i>
IFA	2001	<i>Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials</i>
MAP 2	1991	<i>Management of archaeological projects</i> , 2nd edition, English Heritage
Pre-Construct Archaeology	2004	Southern slopes on land at Rectory Close, Colchester, Essex, 2003
Shimmin, D	forth-coming	'Archaeological investigations at Turner Rise, Colchester, Essex, 1996-99', in <i>CAT Journal</i> 3

11 Glossary

AOD context	Above Ordnance Datum, ie height above sea level specific location on an archaeological site, usually a feature or layer
EHER feature	Essex Historic Environment Record, Essex County Council an identifiable thing like a pit, a wall, a drain, a floor; can contain 'contexts'
medieval	the period from 1066 to c 1500
modern	period from the mid 19th century to the present
natural	geological deposit undisturbed by human activity
NGR	National Grid Reference
post-medieval	period from c 1500 to the mid 19th century
Roman	the period from AD 43 to c AD 410

12 Archive deposition

The finds and the digital and paper archive are held by the Colchester Archaeological Trust at 12 Lexden Road, Colchester, Essex CO3 3NF, but both will be permanently deposited with Colchester Museums under accession code 2005.93.

13 Site data

Table 2: list of contexts.

Context	Trench	Description	Context date
F1	T1	Patch of slightly darker brown sandy clay within natural L3, with frequent small to medium angular and sub-angular stones – the stones are not compacted and the feature is shallow; may be a natural pocket of gravel	post-medieval or earlier?
F2	T1	Narrow linear patch of darker brown sandy clay within natural L3, with frequent small to medium angular and sub-angular stones – the stones are not compacted and the feature is shallow; may be a natural pocket of gravel	post-medieval or medieval
F3	T3	Patch of darker brown sandy clay within natural L3, with frequent small to medium angular and sub-angular stones – the stones are not compacted and the feature is shallow; may be a natural pocket of gravel, appears to be a linear feature	post-medieval or earlier?
F4	T3	Patch of small to medium angular and sub-angular stones within natural L3 – the stones are not compacted and the feature is shallow; the fill is similar to L2 (which seals F4). F4 may be a natural pocket of gravel	post-medieval or earlier?
F5	T5	Circular patch of darker brown sandy clay within L2, with frequent small to medium angular and sub-angular stones – the stones are not compacted and the feature is shallow; contains 15th- to 16th-century pottery	post-medieval
F6	T5	Narrow linear patch of darker brown sandy clay within L2, with frequent small to medium angular and sub-angular stones – the stones are not compacted and the feature is shallow	post-medieval
F7	T2	Sub-circular patch of darker brown sandy clay within L3, with frequent small to medium angular and sub-angular stones – the stones are not compacted and the feature is shallow; may be a natural pocket of gravel	post-medieval or earlier?
L1	all	Grass and topsoil – slightly friable, medium grey brown loam, slightly clayey; contains peg-tile and Roman tile, medieval, post-medieval and modern pottery	post-medieval or modern
L2	all	Subsoil – firm, light brown clay loam, very stony in places; contains peg-tile and Roman and post-medieval pottery	post-medieval
L3	all	Natural orangey brown clay with patches of gravel, some of which may be man-made	-

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Martin Winter, Archaeology Officer for Colchester Borough Council

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12 Lexden Road,
Colchester,
Essex CO3 3NF

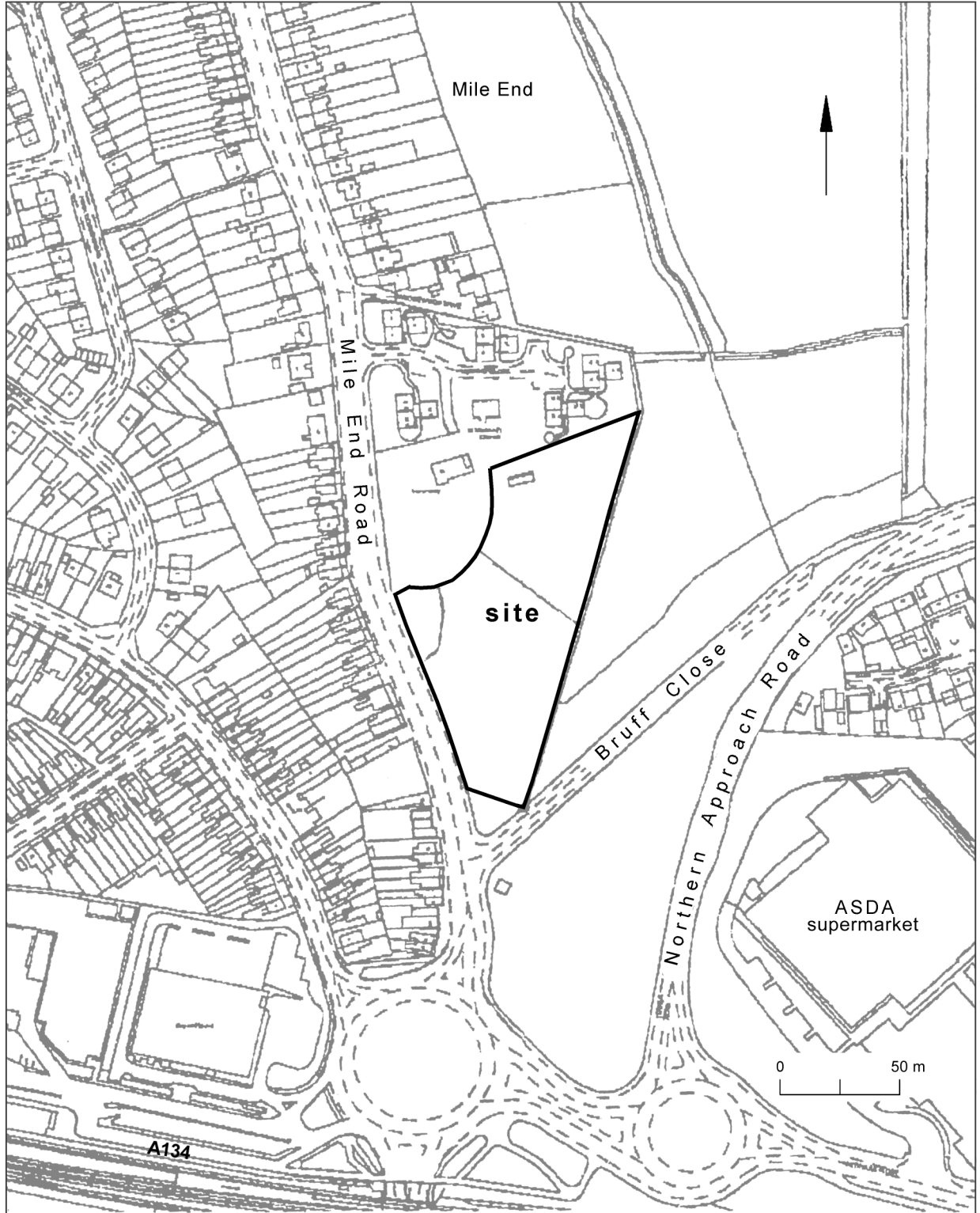
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email: archaeologists@catuk.org

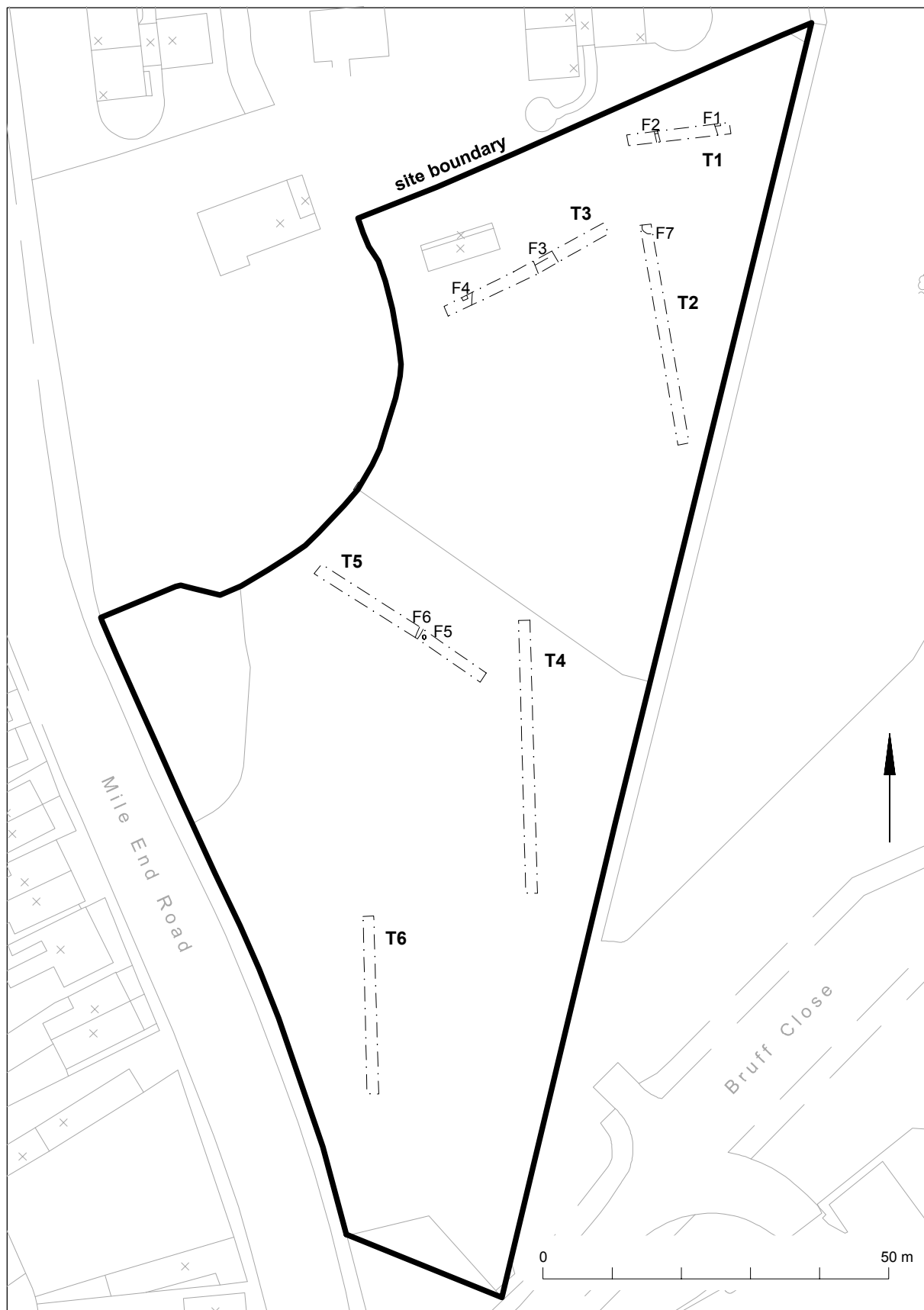
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Fig 1 Site location (adapted from fig 1 of CAT Report 186).



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Fig 2 Trench location plan showing features.

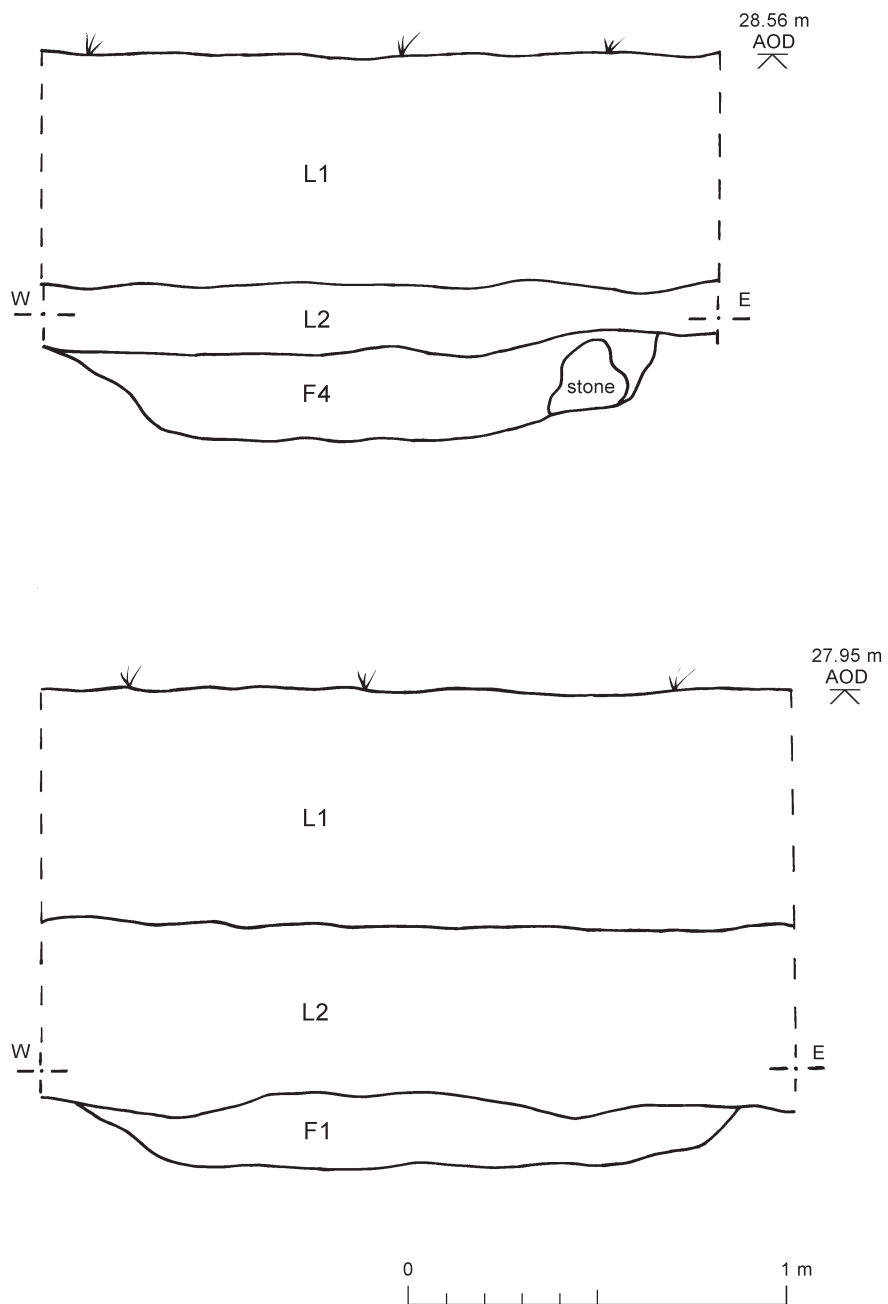


Fig 3 Section drawings: above - F4, south-facing;
below - F1, south-facing.

Essex Historic Environment Record/ *Essex Archaeology and History*

Summary sheet

Site address: land at the corner of Mile End Road and Bruff Close, Colchester, Essex	
Parish: Mile End	District: Colchester
NGR: TL 99297 26658 (c)	Site code: Colchester Museums accession number 2005.93
Type of work: Evaluation	Site director/group: Colchester Archaeological Trust
Date of work: July 2005	Size of area investigated: 0.85 ha
Location of finds/curating museum: Colchester Museums	Funding source: Developer
Further seasons anticipated? No	Related EHER nos: 11671 and 11672
Final report: CAT Report 332	
Periods represented: Roman, medieval, post-medieval	
Summary of fieldwork results: <i>An evaluation was carried out between Mile End Road and Bruff Close consisting of six trial-trenches. The only features observed on the site were several gravelly patches that did not seem to be convincingly archaeological. The topsoil and subsoil contained a small quantity of Roman ceramic building material and pottery suggesting the site of a Roman building nearby. Peg-tile and floor tiles may have derived from the original church at Mile End which is partially extant to the north of the site.</i>	
Previous summaries/reports: CAT Report 2, CAT Report 186, and Shimmin forthcoming	
Author of summary: Kate Orr	Date of summary: September 2005