

## Report on a watching brief: CAT Report 509

**Site address:** Friday Wood, Berechurch, Colchester, Essex  
**Date of fieldwork:** November 2008-February 2009  
**NGR:** TL 9970 2165-TL 9900 2021  
**Location plan attached?:** Yes (Fig 1)  
**Museum accession code:** 2008.172  
**CAT project code:** 08/10e

### Summary

*During an archaeological watching brief on a cable trench in Friday Wood, Berechurch, Colchester, Essex, no significant ancient remains were located, although an assemblage of late Victorian/Edwardian pottery and glass was recovered from a large pit.*

### Introduction (Fig 1)

An archaeological watching brief was carried out on behalf of EDF Energy during the digging of a trench for the laying of cable ducts in Friday Wood, Berechurch, Colchester, Essex. It was undertaken by the Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) from November 2008 to February 2009.

Friday Wood lies just under two miles (3 km) to the south of Colchester town centre. The trench extended from north-east to south-west across the eastern side of the wood. The northern end of the trench (NGR: TL 9970 2165) was situated to the south of Berechurch Hall Road and to the east of Berechurch Dyke and the Military Corrective Training Centre (MCTC). The southern end (NGR: TL 9900 2021) lay to the south of the Roman River, close to the Abberton Grid station on the road between Layer-de-la-Haye and Abberton. The area is comprised mainly of level scrubland used for military training, but is also accessible to the general public. It is located within the Roman River Valley Conservation Area. An application for scheduled ancient monument consent in respect of Berechurch Dyke was made and consent was granted.

The height of the modern ground-level is approximately 32m above Ordnance Datum at the northern end of the trench and 18m above Ordnance Datum at the southern end.

Details of the watching brief methodology can be found in the Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for the project produced by CAT, which followed a brief written by the Colchester Borough Council Archaeological Officer (CBCAO) in September 2008 (Winter 2008).

This report follows the standards set out in Colchester Borough Council's *Guidelines on standards and practices for archaeological fieldwork in the Borough of Colchester* (CIM 2008a), and also those in the Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (IfA 2008a) and *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (IfA 2008b). The guidance contained in English Heritage's *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment* (MoRPHE 2006), and in the documents *Research and archaeology: a framework for the Eastern Counties 1. Resource assessment* (EAA 3), *Research and archaeology: a framework for the Eastern Counties 2. Research agenda and strategy* (EAA 8), and *Standards for field archaeology in the East of England* (EAA 14) was also followed.

### Archaeological background

The line of the cable trench was located 2.1-3 miles (3.35-4.8 km) south of the Roman and medieval walled town. It lay within the *oppidum* of Camulodunum, in an area where sporadic Late Iron Age/Roman occupation had previously been recorded.

The route of the cable trench traversed the Berechurch Dyke (*CAR 11*, 24-6), which is a scheduled ancient monument (SAM no 29466; EHER no 11633). Sections across the dyke were recorded nearby in 1945-6 and 1984 (*CAR 11*, 159).

Apart from the Berechurch Dyke, little previous archaeological evidence had been recorded from the line of the cable trench itself. A poorly-recorded Roman occupation site and some ditches were located in 1929 between the cable trench and the dyke, approximately 150m north of Park Farm (NGR: TL 996 208; EHER nos 11780-11781;

CAR 11, 137). About 200m to the north of this, parallel ditches were located west of the dyke and probably associated with it (NGR: TL 995 210; EHER no 11868).

## **Aim**

The aim of the watching brief was to identify and record any surviving archaeological deposits that were disturbed during trenching and drilling operations.

## **Methodology** (Fig 1)

The previous power cables were mounted on steel pylons, which had reached the end of their economic life. The replacements were laid underground in ducts over a distance of approximately 1,750m. The trench for the ducts was dug largely by the open-cut method. However, in the vicinities of Berechurch Dyke and of the Roman River, directional drilling was used.

The open-cut trench was dug by a mechanical excavator and was roughly 1.25m wide and 2m deep. It housed four ducts. In places, a corridor about 5m wide was stripped of topsoil before trench-digging commenced. There was also topsoil-stripping in the areas where directional drilling took place and along the line of an access track at the southern end of the trench.

An archaeologist from CAT monitored the cable trench during periodic site visits. Individual records of archaeological contexts, such as layers or features, as well as finds, were entered on CAT pro-forma record sheets. Section drawings were made at a scale of 1:10. Standard record shots of the trench and of individual contexts were taken on a digital camera. Further details of the methods used can be found in the WSI and in the CAT document *Policies and procedures* (CAT 2006).

## **Results**

The natural subsoil (L3) was reached along all parts of the trench, 0.3-0.5m below the modern ground surface. It consisted mainly of sands and gravels capped in places by cover loam. A thick deposit of sticky brownish-yellow clay was, however, unearthed in several locations, notably immediately to the north-east of Berechurch Dyke and to the south of the Roman River.

Over much of the length of the trench, there was a layer of disturbed or re-worked subsoil (L2), approximately 0.2m thick, between the natural subsoil (L3) and the modern topsoil (L1).

Finds were sparse along the trench. Among the unstratified finds from the machined surface were two possible worked flints (finds nos 2 and 4; see below, p 4). The flint (finds no 2) came from the middle of the area stripped for directional drilling to the south of the Roman River. The flint (finds no 4) was recovered approximately 340m north-east of Berechurch Dyke. A small fragment of probable Roman brick/tile (finds no 3) also came from the middle of the area stripped for directional drilling to the south of the Roman River.

## **Modern deposits** (Fig 1)

A large pit (F1) was cut by the trench approximately 300m north of the Roman River. It was approximately 3.5m wide and at least 1.35m deep (below the modern ground-level). It had a dark greyish-brown, charcoal-rich, 'ashy' fill, with brownish-yellow gravelly lenses. A quantity of modern pottery and glass (finds no 1; see below, pp 3-4), as well as fragments of iron, brick and tile, were recovered from F1 by the contractors.

This feature was probably a large rubbish- or gravel-pit of early 20th-century date. The finds perhaps derived from Park Farm, which lies less than 100m to the east.

Several other modern finds and deposits were observed along the length of the trench, including field drains, miscellaneous metal fragments and a large piece of roughly-shaped wood (details in site archive). The trench extended along and crossed a number of modern paths or tracks (L4), which were composed of layers of gravel and rubble approximately 0.3m thick and 3.5-4m wide. The upper part of much of the rest of the trench consisted of modern topsoil (L1), 0.3m thick.

## **Finds**

A quantity of finds was recovered during the watching brief. These are listed in detail in the site archive and the more significant finds are described below.

## Modern pottery and glass

by Howard Brooks

### Comment

This is a late 19th-century or early 20th-century group of glass bottles and jars, and ceramic items (mainly bottles). The range of types - ie medicine bottles, a milk bottle, an ink jar (not bottle), ceramic blacking bottles, a chamber pot, and a mustard jar - is typical of what might be expected in any late Victorian or Edwardian household.

There are several clues to the date of this group: first, the glass is all mould-made (ie after 1847; Meigh 1922, 33); second, there is a milk bottle (invented 1884: *ibid*, 37); third, there is a moulded screw thread on one jar (ie it must be later 19th century; *ibid*, 36); fourth, one of the stoneware bottles was manufactured after 1895 (web reference below).

This group can be said to represent the normal domestic needs of a family in the last few years of the 19th or the first few years of the 20th century. Some of the items are imported (an American ink bottle and a French mustard pot), which shows - admittedly at a rather simplistic level - that the occupants of Park Farm were not living in poverty. The absence of overtly modern glassware indicates that all this material was probably cleared out of its storage place (somewhere on Park Farm, immediately to the east of the findspot) within a decade or two of AD 1900.

### Glass catalogue

(All glass is two-piece mould-made, and clear or pale green colour, with a neck suitable for a cork stopper, unless stated otherwise.)

#### F1

##### *Finds number 1*

Cylindrical cobalt blue glass medicine bottle, three piece. Height 193mm, weight 305g.

Late 19th-century milk bottle. Height 213mm, weight 390g.

Long-necked ?sauce bottle, with D impressed on base. Height 200mm, weight 192g.

Square-section glass jar, "BATTY 1550" impressed on base. Height 135mm, weight 300g.

Rectangular-section medicine bottle with "TABLESPOONS" impressed vertically on one face and 11 graduated tablespoon marks. Height 160mm, weight 171g.

Rectangular-section medicine bottle with "90" impressed on base. Height 150mm, weight 144g.

Rectangular-section medicine bottle with dished front face. Height 134mm, weight 123g.

Cylindrical-section medicine bottle. Height 120 mm, weight 92g.

2 rectangular-section medicine bottles with wide mouth (27mm). Height 155mm, weight 184g. One has "2030" and a trident symbol impressed on base.

Cylindrical jar, with "8 OZ" stamped on base. Height 120mm, weight 147g,

Cylindrical jar, with moulded screw thread and "CHAS. M. HIGGINS & CO. - 3 oz - BROOKLYN N.Y." stamped on face. Height 72mm, weight 119g.

'... Charles M. Higgins of Brooklyn, N. Y., in 1880 commenced the manufacture of "carbon" inks for engrossing, architectural and engineering purposes, and has succeeded in producing an excellent liquid "Indian" ink, which will not lose its consistency if kept from the air. It can also be used as a writing ink, if thinned down with water ...' (web reference below)

Green glass, poor-quality beer bottle (bubbles in fabric). Height 230mm, weight 529g.

Green glass wine bottle. Height 293mm, weight 788g.

### Ceramics catalogue

(Pottery fabric references are after *CAR 7*.)

#### F1

##### *Finds number 1*

French cream-glazed stoneware mustard jar. Printed label "MOUTARDE de MAILLE. Vinaigrier - Distillateur. FOURNISSEUR des premieres Cours DE L'EUROPE. PARIS". Height 135 mm, weight 415g.

Pale brown, glazed purée dish (no glaze on base). Diameter 95m, depth 20mm. Internal printed label "Luxette. REGISTERED TRADE MARK". Weight 118g. There are references to Luxette purée in a cookbook of 1885 (Broomfield 2007, 135-6) and in *Mrs Beeton's family cookery* (1905). Victorian/Edwardian.

Fragment of handle/body of large storage jar (?beer/?fizzy drink). Weight 478g.

Female face mask, classical type, with Greek Key panel behind, from large vessel, Fabric 48d, 19th or early 20th century. Weight 56g.

Brown salt-glazed bottle, probably blacking bottle. Height 170mm, weight 556g.

Large brown salt-glazed bottle, probably blacking bottle. Stamp at foot of jar "Lovatt & Lovatt. Langley Mill. Notts". Height 195mm, weight 838g. Dated after 1895. (web reference below)

Large brown salt-glazed bottle, neck missing, probably blacking bottle. Height 150 mm(+), weight 604g.

Pale brown glazed bottle. Unknown use. Height 135mm, weight 278g.

2 pale brown glazed bottles, probably ink bottles. Height 115mm, weight 313g.

Pale brown glazed open-necked storage jar. Height 134mm, weight 543g.

Base fragment of large, pale brown glazed jar. Weight 168g.

9 sherds of Fabric 48d ironstone. Weight 497g. Mainly plate fragments, but also includes three pieces from a chamber pot. 19th or early 20th century.

### **Worked flint**

*by Adam Wightman*

The size, thickness and number of flakes removed from the pieces would suggest that these two flints are cores (one with more certainty than the other), from which small usable flakes would have been knapped.

An oval-shaped piece (finds no 4), with a strip of cortex down the centre of the piece, has had flakes removed until the angles on the piece have become too steep to successfully remove another flake. The area on the piece that resembles retouch is likely an area where continuous attempts to remove a further flake have failed as opposed to modification of the piece for use as a tool.

The second piece (finds no 2), a more pointed flint with lighter cortex, cannot be categorised as an intentionally knapped core with as much confidence. Most flake scars lack the negative percussion characteristics intentional flake removal would leave. The smaller flake scars may be an attempt to remove further larger flakes although they could just as easily be the result of rolling by a plough or some other mechanism.

### **Conclusions**

Despite a careful search along the line of the trench, especially in the vicinity of Berechurch Dyke, no evidence was found of occupation contemporary with the pre-Roman *oppidum* or the Roman town. Finds such as Iron Age or Roman pottery and Roman brick/tile were noticeably absent from the spoil heaps, which were also carefully checked. This suggests that settlement of this date was sparse in the area.

The only significant deposits uncovered were of modern date.

### **Archive deposition**

The archive from the watching brief, including the site records, photographs and finds, will be permanently deposited with Colchester and Ipswich Museums, under accession code COLEM 2009.172, in accordance with *Guidelines on the preparations and transfer of archaeological archives to Colchester and Ipswich Museums* (CIM 2008b) and *Archaeological archives: a guide to best practice in creation, compilation, transfer and curation* (IfA 2007).

### **Glossary**

AOD	above Ordnance Survey datum point, based on mean sea level at Newlyn, Cornwall
CBC	Colchester Borough Council
CBCAO	Colchester Borough Council Archaeology Officer
CIM	Colchester and Ipswich Museums
context	specific location on an archaeological site, especially one where finds are made; usually a layer or a feature
cover loam	a natural deposit consisting mainly of wind-borne silt, probably formed towards the end of the last Ice Age
EHHER	Essex Historic Environment Record
feature	an identifiable context, such as a pit, a wall or a post-hole
IfA	Institute for Archaeologists (formerly the Institute of Field Archaeologists)
Iron Age	period from c 650 BC to AD 43

MCTC	Colchester Military Corrective Training Centre
medieval	period from AD 1066 to c AD 1500
modern	period from c 1850 onwards to the present
natural	geological deposit undisturbed by human activity
NGR	National Grid Reference
<i>oppidum</i>	a large late Iron Age settlement, usually fortified
post-medieval	period from c 1500 to c 1850
Roman	the period from AD 43 to c AD 410
U/S	unstratified, ie without a well-defined context

## Acknowledgements

CAT is grateful to EDF Energy Ltd and Carillion plc for commissioning and funding the watching brief, and to Carillion plc and O J Smith Ltd for their help on site. The work was monitored by Martin Winter, Colchester Borough Council Archaeological Officer.

**Report author:** Donald Shimmin

**Report date:** May 2009

## References

- |               |       |  |
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| Beeton, I     | 1905  | <i>Mrs Beeton's family cookery</i>   |
| Broomfield, A | 2007  | <i>Food and cooking in Victorian England</i> , Greenwood Publishing (Santa Barbara, USA)   |
| CAR 7         | 2000  | <i>Colchester Archaeological Report 7: Post-Roman pottery from excavations in Colchester, 1971-85</i> , by J Cotter  |
| CAR 11        | 1995  | <i>Colchester Archaeological Report 11: Camulodunum 2</i> , by C F C Hawkes and P Crummy   |
| CAT           | 2006  | <i>Policies and procedures</i> (Colchester Archaeological Trust)   |
| CIM           | 2008a | <i>Guidelines on standards and practice for archaeological fieldwork in the Borough of Colchester</i> (Colchester Borough Council)   |
| CIM           | 2008b | <i>Guidelines on the preparation and transfer of archaeological archives to Colchester and Ipswich Museums</i> (Colchester Borough Council)                                    |
| EAA 3         | 1997  | <i>Research and archaeology: a framework for the Eastern Counties 1. Resource assessment</i> , East Anglian Archaeology, <b>3</b> , 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, <b>8</b> , ed by N Brown and J Glazebrook    |
| EAA 14        | 2003  | <i>Standards for field archaeology in the East of England</i> , East Anglian Archaeology, <b>14</b> , ed by D Gurney   |
| MoRPHE        | 2006  | <i>Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment</i> , English Heritage  |
| IfA           | 2008a | <i>Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief</i>  |
| IfA           | 2008b | <i>Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials</i>  |
| IfA           | 2007  | <i>Archaeological archives: a guide to best practice in creation, compilation, transfer and curation</i>   |
| Meigh, E      | 1922  | <i>The story of the glass bottle</i> (reprinted 1972)  |
| Winter, M     | 2008  | <i>Brief for archaeological attendance and recording (a watching brief), Berechurch Dyke, Colchester, Essex</i> (CBC Museums Service)  |
| WSI           |       | Written Scheme of Investigation for archaeological attendance and recording (a watching brief) in Friday Wood, Berechurch, Colchester, Essex, December 2009, by Donald Shimmin |

## Web references

Higgins Inks

<http://www.djmcadam.com/ink-industry.html>

accessed 06/05/09

Langley Mill

<http://www.langleypottersociety.co.uk/history.html>

accessed 08/05/09

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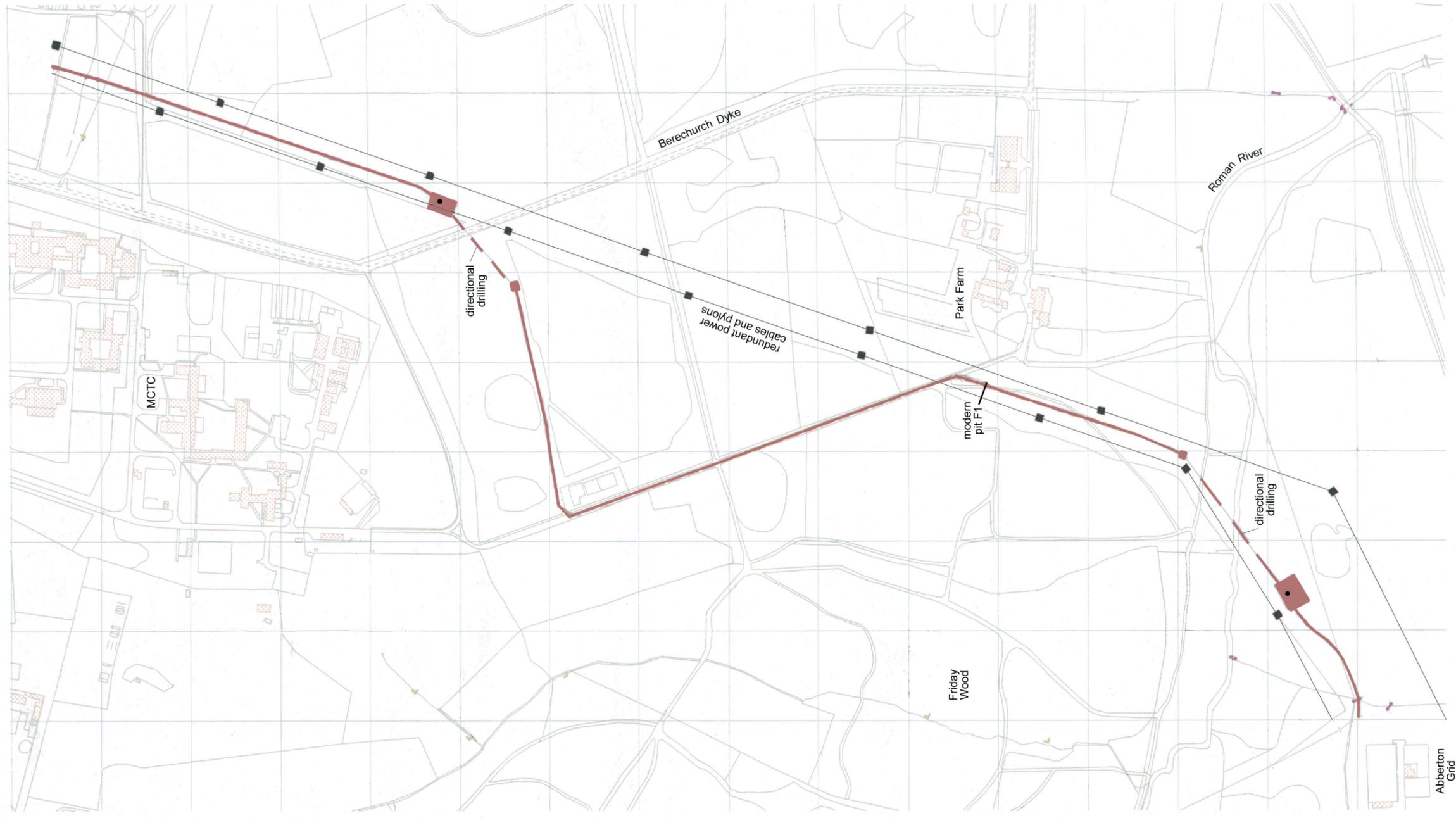


Fig 1 Site location plan, showing the course of the cable trench.

## Essex Historic Environment Record/ Essex Archaeology and History

### Summary sheet

<b>Site address:</b> Friday Wood, Berechurch, Colchester, Essex	
<b>Parish:</b> Colchester	<b>District:</b> Colchester
<b>NGR:</b> TL 9970 2165-TL 9900 2021	<b>Site code:</b> Museum accession code - COLEM 2008.172
<b>Type of work:</b> Watching brief	<b>Site director/group:</b> Colchester Archaeological Trust
<b>Date of work:</b> November 2008-February 2009	<b>Size of area investigated:</b> Approximately 1,750m-long trench
<b>Location of finds/curating museum:</b> Colchester and Ipswich Museums	<b>Funding source:</b> Developer
<b>Further seasons anticipated?</b> No	<b>Related EHER and UAD nos:</b> EHER nos 11633, 11780, 11781, 11868
<b>Final report:</b> CAT Report 509	
<b>Periods represented:</b> modern	
<b>Summary of fieldwork results:</b> <i>During an archaeological watching brief on a cable trench in Friday Wood, Berechurch, Colchester, Essex, no significant ancient remains were located, although an assemblage of late Victorian/Edwardian pottery and glass was recovered from a large pit.</i>	
<b>Previous summaries/reports:</b> None	
<b>Keywords:</b> Berechurch Dyke, pit, worked flint, modern pottery	<b>Significance:</b> *
<b>Author of summary:</b> Donald Shimmin	<b>Date of summary:</b> May 2009