

An archaeological watching brief at the Sixth Form College, North Hill, Colchester, Essex July-September 2011

**report prepared by
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**on behalf of
the Sixth Form College**



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Summary

Further Roman remains were uncovered during an archaeological watching brief in advance of the construction of a new Languages Centre at the Sixth Form College, North Hill, Colchester, Essex. The site lies in the north-western corner of the college grounds, close to the Roman town wall, and was the latest in a series of archaeological investigations at the college in recent years. Over most of the site, nothing of archaeological significance was disturbed during the groundworks, apart from the bones of a dog buried in relatively recent times. However, along the southern edge of the site, the machine-digging of the foundation trenches uncovered the uppermost surviving Roman deposits. These were excavated by CAT down to the level required by the contractors. The deposits consisted mainly of late Roman demolition debris, which included many fragments of Roman painted wall-plaster and brick/tile. A late 3rd-century coin and some Roman pottery were among the other finds recovered. The top of an unrobbed east-west Roman wall foundation was also uncovered in two places. These remains perhaps formed part of the same Roman building that was excavated nearby in 2005-6 (Building 212).

Introduction (Fig 1)

An archaeological watching brief took place at the Sixth Form College, North Hill, Colchester, Essex, during groundworks in advance of the construction of a new Languages Centre. The watching brief was commissioned by the Sixth Form College and was carried out by the Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) from July to September 2011.

The Sixth Form College occupies a large site in the north-western corner of the Roman and medieval walled town. The Languages Centre site is located at the northern end of the college campus, close to the Roman town wall. It was formerly occupied by temporary classrooms. The redevelopment is part of the college's 'north site' phase 2 project and provides a sister building to the existing IT unit immediately to the east. The modern ground-level slopes from south to north.

The watching brief followed an archaeological evaluation on the site by CAT in June 2011 (CAT Report 596). This was undertaken in response to a brief written by Colchester Borough Council's Archaeological Officer (CBC 2011). As a result of the evaluation, the design of the proposed building, which was to be supported mainly on piles, was modified in order to minimise its impact on the archaeological remains.

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* (CIMS 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 (Fig 1)

The site is situated immediately inside the Roman town wall, which enclosed the Roman and later town and which is designated as a Scheduled Ancient Monument (Essex SAM no 7) under the Ancient Monuments Act 1979. Archaeological investigations have taken place over many years within the grounds of the Sixth Form College. The archaeological context of the current site is thus relatively well understood. The more significant and relevant results of these investigations are outlined below.

The site lies to the north of the site of the Roman legionary fortress, founded c AD 44 (CAR 3, 3-9; EHER nos 3530 and 12341). Roman barrack-blocks within the fortress have been excavated in the southern part of the college grounds, notably in 1984-85 (CAR 6, 128-32). Remains of buildings destroyed during the Boudican revolt in AD 60/1 were also found in this area (*ibid*, 132-5).

The site is located in the north-western corner of Insula 1a of the post-Boudican Roman town. The remains of buildings and streets of the Roman town have been investigated in a number of places within the college grounds, including on the site of the original college building in 1865 and 1910 (Hull 1958, 93-7; EHER nos 12433-12437). More recently, the remains of several large Roman buildings were uncovered during a series of archaeological evaluations, excavations and watching briefs undertaken by CAT in the 'mid-site' area between 2003 and 2006 (CAT Reports 260, 309, 347). These structures had tessellated, *opus signinum* and mosaic floors, as well as both robbed and unrobbed wall foundations. Among the finds were large amounts of painted wall-plaster, some of which were designed to imitate imported marbles.

The remains were probably those of town-houses, although a large and well-appointed building (Building 211) in the south-eastern part of Insula 1a may have been a *mansio* (a Roman official 'hotel'). Immediately to the north was a well-preserved structure with a timber water channel, which was probably part of a bath-house (Building 212; CAT Report 347, 25-9). More foundations and floors, possibly from the ?*mansio*, were uncovered in 2005-6 in pipe trenches slightly to the south of the current site (*ibid*, 42-3). The Roman remains in this area were sealed by between 0.6 m and 1.2 m of post-Roman topsoil or 'dark earth'.

On the 'north site', immediately to the east of the current site, an archaeological evaluation was carried out by the ECC Field Archaeology Unit in January 2000 within the footprint of the IT unit (ECC FAU 2000). This uncovered between 1.4 m and 2 m of post-Roman topsoil which sealed a deposit of probable Roman demolition debris.

In June 2011, an archaeological evaluation was carried out by CAT on the current site (Fig 1; CAT Report 596). Two evaluation trenches were dug in order to determine the depths of the latest significant archaeological deposits. The trenches uncovered thick deposits of post-Roman topsoil or 'dark earth' sealed by modern make-up and topsoil. The latest significant archaeological deposits consisted of late Roman demolition debris at a depth of approximately 1.1 m below the modern ground-level. During a watching brief on three boreholes, nothing of archaeological significance was observed.

Aims

The aims of the watching brief were to record the depth and extent of any archaeological remains uncovered during the groundworks, and to assess the date and significance of these remains.

Methods (Figs 1-3)

The groundworks included ground-reduction, piling, and the machine-digging of foundation and service trenches. Monitoring of the groundworks was carried out by CAT during intermittent site visits from the 27th July to the 26th September 2011.

Initially, a temporary access road was constructed into the site from the east. This involved some ground-reduction and also the digging of foundation trenches for a temporary bridge over the remains of the ?bath-house (Building 212) found in 2005. Next, ground-reduction took place over the site itself in advance of the laying of a piling mat. This varied in depth from approximately 100 mm at the northern end of the site up to 1.2 m at its southern edge.

After the piling was completed, the piling mat was largely removed and some further ground-reduction was carried out within the footprint of the building down to the reduced level. The machine-digging of the foundation trenches for the ground

beams then began at the northern end of the site and continued southwards. The trenches were dug approximately 250-300 mm below the reduced level across the site following the ground-reduction. The foundation trenches for the external walls were 800 mm wide, while those for the internal walls were 600 mm wide.

At the southern edge of the site, where Roman deposits were encountered, the digging of the foundation trenches was monitored continuously by a CAT archaeologist. Machining continued down to the uppermost surviving levels of archaeological significance. Excavation then continued by hand by CAT staff down to the level required by the contractors. Throughout the work, CAT staff were given time to investigate, clean and record any archaeological deposits uncovered, and to collect up the finds unearthed.

Individual records of archaeological contexts, such as layers or features, as well as finds, were entered on CAT pro-forma record sheets. Plans were usually drawn at 1:20 and section drawings were made at 1:10. Standard record photographs of individual contexts and general site shots were taken on a digital camera. Further information on the recording methods used can be found in the CAT document *Policies and procedures* (CAT 2006).

Results (Figs 1-3)

Roman wall foundation (Figs 1, 3)

During the final phase of machine-trenching at the southern end of the site, two short lengths of unrobbed east-west Roman wall foundation were uncovered. They were exposed in the bases of the foundation trenches between piles E and F and between piles C and G (Fig 3). The two exposures were approximately 5.5 m apart and were almost certainly parts of the same foundation (F3). The top of F3 lay 200-300 mm below the general level of the site following ground-reduction.

Wall foundation F3 was approximately 0.43 m wide. It was of stone-and-mortar construction, consisting mainly of septaria set in a pale brown mortar. The top of the foundation had been tamped flat. The narrowness of F3 perhaps suggests that it supported an internal wall. This was probably of timber-framed construction, infilled with wattle-and-daub (*CAR 3*, 22), and decorated with painted wall-plaster. The eastern exposure of F3 was sealed by Roman demolition debris (L4, L5), whereas the western exposure was sealed by 'dark earth' (L2), with L4 extending up to its southern edge.

The two lengths of foundation remained largely unexcavated. Only their upper surfaces were exposed and they were left intact in the bases of the modern foundation trenches. There was no trace of F3 in the foundation trench between piles A and H although, possibly, it lay below the bottom of the trench. The foundation F3 perhaps formed part of the same building (Building 211) that was uncovered nearby in 2005-6 (Fig 1; CAT Report 347, 38-43).

Roman demolition debris (Figs 1, 3)

Machine-digging of the foundation trenches along the southern edge of the site uncovered extensive layers of Roman demolition debris. These lay to the south of the Roman foundation F3 and were sealed by post-Roman topsoil or 'dark earth' (L2). The layers were uncovered mainly in the most southerly east-west foundation trench (between piles A and E; Fig 3). They were also exposed at the southern ends of the adjacent north-south foundation trenches (between piles A and H, C and G, E and F; Fig 3). Within the limits of the foundation trenches, the Roman deposits which were to be removed by the contractors were dug by hand by CAT staff down to the depth required by the contractors. The amount of material to be excavated varied, but it was roughly 200-300 mm thick.

Stratigraphically, the earliest of these Roman deposits lay towards the eastern end of the east-west foundation trench, between piles D and E. This consisted of a brownish dump layer (L6). Only the top of this layer was uncovered, over a fairly small area. Its extent was unclear and it remained largely unexcavated.

A yellowish-brown clayey layer (L4) sealed L6 and extended over most of the area between piles B and E, as well as for a metre or so north of piles C and E. This layer was at least 200 mm thick, although it was not fully excavated over much

of the area. It became thinner and patchy towards the eastern end of the east-west foundation trench, between piles D and E, and also to the north of pile E. It probably also extended to the west of pile B, but here it lay below the bottom of the contractors' foundation trench.

A large quantity of Roman painted wall-plaster fragments (described in the next section) was recovered from L4. Many pieces of Roman brick/tile also came from L4. Most of these came from roof tiles, with a few from keyed tiles. Among the other finds were *tesserae*, potsherds, animal bone fragments, iron nails and a few oyster shells, as well as fragments of unpainted plaster. Pieces of stone, mainly septaria with occasional fragments of greensand, were fairly common. Much of this material was probably demolition debris deriving from one or more Roman buildings on the site. The clayey component of the layer probably derives from collapsed daub walls.

The eastern part of L4 was sealed by a thin olive-brown dump layer (L5). This extended for a couple of metres north and west of pile E. It was approximately 150 mm thick. Among the finds from L5 was a late Roman coin dated AD 271-4 (SF 1; Fig 3).

Stratigraphically, the latest Roman deposit uncovered was a rubble spread (L3). This extended between piles A and B, and also for a metre or so both east of pile B and north of pile A. It probably extended further north, but here it lay below the bottom of the contractors' foundation trench. It was approximately 250 mm thick and consisted of large quantities of Roman brick/tile fragments and pieces of stone, mainly septaria. These were in a dark greyish-brown loamy fill, similar to the 'dark earth' (L2) which sealed it. Although many of the fragments of Roman brick/tile were roof tiles, there were also pieces of brick and keyed tile. The rubble spread L3 sealed L4 although, in section, it was observed that, in places, there was a thin brownish deposit, similar to L5, between L3 and L4.

Along with the other excavated Roman layers, L3 was probably mainly demolition debris deriving from one or more Roman structures on or near the site. This perhaps included part of the same building uncovered nearby in 2005-6 (Building 211; Fig 1). It seems likely that L3 was part of a stockpile of salvaged building materials rather than the remains of a collapsed stone-and-mortar wall, as this type of wall was rare in Roman Colchester (CAR 3, 23).

Roman painted wall-plaster (Table 1; Fig 3; Plate 2)

In total, 1,302 fragments of painted wall-plaster were recovered from L4, with a total area of 6,444 cm². The fragments came from the foundation trench for the south wall of the Languages Centre, between piles B and E (Fig 3). For the purposes of recovery on site, this stretch of trench was divided into six roughly equal lengths of approximately 1.2 m, each with its own finds number. After the painted wall-plaster fragments were lifted and cleaned, they were recorded in terms of the number of fragments, the description of the colours and patterns, and the approximate area of the painted surfaces. Summary descriptions are listed in Table 1 and more detailed descriptions are available in the site archive. In Table 1, the six divisions used during excavation have been reduced to the three roughly equal lengths of trench between piles B and C, C and D, and D and E. However, this still illustrates the variation in quantity and colour of the fragments from the different parts of the trench.

The fragments in the western part of the trench, notably between piles B and C, were more numerous and most had a white ground. Some were decorated with purple stripes and, to a lesser extent, with red stripes, while others had purple and/or yellow spots. Where there were coloured fields other than white, these were usually red or purple. The small quantity of other colours present included yellow, green/olive, grey, and pink. Other evidence for decorative schemes in this length of trench included some fragments with areas of red and white separated by purple stripes, and others with areas of yellow and white separated by red stripes. Several fragments had light red ?foliate swirls and streaks on a white ground, and a few had whitish ?foliage on a red ground.

The fragments of painted wall-plaster from the central and eastern parts of the trench (between piles C and D, D and E) contrasted with those from the western part. They were dominated by various shades of red and olive grey/grey, and white was less common. The evidence for stripes and spots was sparse, although a few

examples had white/grey stripes and several had red spots on a white ground. There were small quantities of other colours, such as yellow, which was fairly common at the eastern end of the trench, and brown and green. A little pale purple was present, but purple, in general, was scarce. Other evidence for decorative schemes included fragments with areas of red and grey separated by a thin creamy white stripe. A fragment with a brownish-yellow stripe, with spots attached to either side, on a red ground, was perhaps intended as a ?vegetal motif. There were also traces of possible dark olive grey ?foliage on an olive grey ground.

Interpreting this limited sample of painted wall-plaster is difficult. However, at least two decorative schemes seem to be represented, and it seems likely that these came from two separate rooms. The more westerly scheme, which was dominated by areas of white with some purple and red, was almost certainly from a simple and fairly inexpensive panel decoration (Ling 1985, 26-7). The fragments with purple and yellow spots on a white ground perhaps came from the dado. The more easterly scheme, which was dominated by areas of red and olive grey/grey, may also have come from a simple two-dimensional panel decoration. In both schemes, there was only limited evidence for more elaborate decoration such as foliate motifs. It was noticeable that the plaster on the fragments from the eastern part of the trench was, in general, thicker (at 20-25 mm) than that on fragments from the western part (at 10-15 mm). This reinforces the likelihood that the painted wall-plaster came from two rooms.

In 2005-6, quantities of painted wall-plaster were recovered from layers of Roman demolition debris in pipe trenches to the south of the 2011 site (CAT Report 347, 42-3 & 49-52). There are some similarities between the two sets of finds in terms of the colours present, such as white, purple, red and grey. However, the 2005-6 assemblage included painted architectural and mythological elements including snakes. It, therefore, remains unclear whether the 2011 fragments are directly related to these or to any of the other groups of painted wall-plaster fragments found in the mid-site area in recent years.



Plate 2: A selection of the fragments of Roman painted wall-plaster from L4.

(The left-hand trays and the upper two in the middle are from the western part of the trench, while the others are from the eastern part.)

Table 1 : summary descriptions of the painted wall-plaster from L4.

The numbers in brackets are finds numbers.

In the columns the figures listed are: **number of fragments - area in cm² - percentage of total area.**

Description of plaster	Piles B-C (4), (9)	Piles C-D (7), (10)	Piles D-E (14), (17)	Totals: (piles B-E)
white	267 1,301.2 33.2	22 85.0 6.5	34 127.5 10.4	323 1,513.7 23.5
white with purple stripes	54 399.0 10.2	-	1 6.2 0.5	55 405.2 6.3
white with purple and/or yellow spots	87 642.6 16.4	-	-	87 642.6 10.0
white with red stripes	20 95.5 2.4	1 2.2 0.2	-	21 97.7 1.5
white with other colours & stripes	88 472.5 12.1	11 93.7 7.2	13 78.7 6.4	112 644.9 10.0
purple (including pale purple)	50 175.9 4.5	1 6.0 0.5	6 19.4 1.6	57 201.3 3.1
purple with other colours & stripes	27 139.0 3.5	1 5.9 0.5	1 1.5 0.1	29 146.4 2.3
red (including light and dark red)	69 242.3 6.2	90 549.2 42.2	56 233.1 19.0	215 1,024.6 15.9
red with other colours & stripes	28 132.1 3.4	8 75.1 5.8	3 14.6 1.2	39 221.8 3.4
yellow (including brownish yellow)	11 39.3 1.0	1 3.0 0.2	31 108.9 8.9	43 151.2 2.4
yellow with other colours & stripes	19 112.6 2.9	-	4 11.0 0.9	23 123.6 1.9
green/olive	5 37.7 1.0	2 3.4 0.3	4 14.3 1.2	11 55.4 0.9
green/olive with other colours & stripes	5 39.8 1.0	1 3.9 0.3	2 22.0 1.8	8 65.7 1.0
olive grey (including greenish grey)	5 13.5 0.3	60 206.3 15.8	29 160.3 13.1	94 380.1 5.9
olive grey with other colours & stripes	3 10.4 0.3	6 50.3 3.8	15 120.8 9.9	24 181.5 2.8
grey (including light and dark grey)	7 28.2 0.7	47 122.8 9.4	51 181.8 14.8	105 332.8 5.2
grey with other colours & stripes	-	7 66.3 5.1	17 97.2 7.9	24 163.5 2.5
pink	6 24.4 0.6	-	-	6 24.4 0.4
brown (including greyish & yellowish brown)	-	10 28.8 2.2	8 19.6 1.6	18 48.4 0.7
reddish yellow/orange	2 4.2 0.1	-	2 3.5 0.3	4 7.7 0.1
others	1 6.9 0.2	-	3 4.6 0.4	4 11.5 0.2
Totals:	754 3,917.1 100.0	268 1,301.9 100.0	280 1,225.0 100.0	1,302 6,444.0 100.0
	60.8	20.2	19.0	100.0

Post-Roman deposits (Figs 2-3)

The uppermost Roman deposits were sealed by a substantial layer of dark greyish-brown post-Roman topsoil or 'dark earth' (L2). This was approximately 1 m thick and extended over most of the site. Among the finds recovered during the cleaning over of the latest Roman layers in the south-western corner of the site were two potsherds of probable Middle-Late Saxon date. These sherds probably derive from the lower part of the 'dark earth' (L2).

In the south-eastern part of the site, machining for the foundation trench between piles E and F uncovered a shallow east-west ditch (F2; Fig 3 inset). Only the bottom of this feature survived, cut into the uppermost Roman deposits. It survived approximately 700 mm wide and 100 mm deep, and was traced for just over 700 mm east-west as it crossed the foundation trench. The backfill of F2 looked similar to 'dark earth' (L2). Among the small number of finds from F2 were a couple of fragments of peg-tile, which suggests that it was possibly medieval or more likely post-medieval/modern in date.

During the machining of the foundation trench along the eastern edge of the site, a small quantity of dog bones (F1; Fig 2) was recovered. Some of these bones, including vertebrae and ribs, were still articulated and *in situ*. They lay in 'dark earth' (L2), 500-800 mm below the modern ground-level. Only those bones within the foundation trench were recovered. The dog had presumably been deliberately buried in a pit, although no definite pit edges were identified. A fragment of clay-pipe stem was recovered with the bone, indicating that the burial was probably post-medieval or later in date. The stem fragment had a narrow bore diameter (1.75 mm), which perhaps suggests that it dates to the early 19th century (Clark 2001, 246).

The 'dark earth' (L2) was sealed by deposits of modern make-up (L1), 500-700 mm thick, and including, in places, the remains of the piling mat. Several modern features were uncovered during the groundworks, including a probable soakaway at the southern edge of the site, close to pile B (Fig 3), and several foundations and drains (not on figs: further details are available in the site archive).

The depths below the modern ground-level of the post-Roman and uppermost Roman layers at the southern edge of the site, between piles B and C, were as follows:

0.00-0.55 m	modern make-up (L1)
0.55-1.30 m	post-Roman topsoil or 'dark earth' (L2)
1.30-1.55 m	Roman rubble spread (L3)
1.55-1.68+ m	Roman demolition debris (L4)
1.68 m	limit of excavation

Finds

Various finds were recovered during the watching brief. Where appropriate, the finds were washed, marked and bagged according to context, in line with the recommendations in *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (IfA 2008b). In this section, there is a list of the small finds and a discussion of the pottery. The painted wall-plaster is described and discussed on pages 4-5 of this report. The remaining finds, as well as brief descriptions of the pottery, are listed by context in Table 3 in Appendix 1, and further details are available in the site archive. The fragments of Roman brick/tile listed in Table 3 represent a sample of those found on the site.

Small finds

by Nina Crummy

SF 1. (18) L5. Dump. Roman. Copper-alloy coin, Tetricus II, rev. sacrificial implements, AD 271-4; D 17 mm.

SF 2. (20) Unstratified. Lead shot with sprue from casting; D 15 mm.

SF 3. (21) Unstratified. Flint nodule, naturally spherical, unworked; D 16 mm.

Pottery

by Stephen Benfield

Introduction

A total of 58 sherds weighing 689 g was recovered. Of this, 36 sherds (weighing 437 g) were recovered from one feature (F2) and three layers (L2, L4, L5); the remainder is unstratified.

The sherd count and weight were recorded by fabric for each finds number and an overall spot date given. Identifiable vessel forms were also recorded. The Roman pottery fabrics refer to *CAR 10* and the vessel form types to the Camulodunum (Cam) Roman pottery form type series (Hawkes & Hull 1947; Hull 1958). Samian forms refer to Webster 1996. The post-Roman pottery fabrics refer to *CAR 7*. All of the fabric types recorded are listed in Table 2. The pottery is listed by context in Table 3 in the appendix.

Table 2: list of pottery fabrics.

Fabric code	Fabric name
<i>Roman:</i>	
BA(SG)	South Gaulish plain samian
CH	oxidised Hadham wares
DJ	coarse oxidised and related wares
EA	Nene Valley colour-coated ware
GB	BB2: black-burnished ware, category 2
GP	fine grey wares (Colchester, London-type and north Kent wares)
GX	other coarse wares, principally locally-produced grey wares
HG	Eifelkeramik/Mayen ware
KX	black-burnished ware (BB2) types in pale grey ware
TE	mortaria: Nene Valley, white fabric and black grits, unslipped or with reddish wash
TG	mortaria: Oxford, red/grey fabric with red colour-coat and pink grits
TY	other British mortaria (not Colchester or Verulamium)
UX	Romano-Saxon grey ware and types in similar fabric
WA	silvery micaceous grey wares
<i>Post-Roman:</i>	
12D	Oolitic wares
20	Medieval sandy grey wares (general)
21A	Colchester-type ware

Discussion

The pottery recovered is Roman and medieval, with the majority dating to the Roman period.

The date range of the more closely-dated Roman pottery spans the whole of the Roman period from the 1st to the 4th/early 5th centuries. The few sherds associated with the stratified contexts F2, L2 and L5 could not be closely dated, other than as Roman. A larger number of sherds associated with L4 include fabric types which can be closely dated to the late Roman period of the late 3rd-4th century. Among the unstratified sherds collected is one in Mayen ware (Fabric HG) (U/S(3)), which is the latest closely-datable type of Roman pottery found in Colchester (*CAR 10*, 463).

The small quantity of Saxon and medieval pottery recovered (4 sherds, weighing 60 g) is all unstratified. Of interest are two sherds of hand-made, Saxon Oolitic ware (Fabric 12D; US(3)). This is a relatively rare fabric type at Colchester and is not closely dated, but appears to date to the Middle and Late Saxon/early medieval period (*CAR 7*, 38). One sherd is probably from the shoulder of a cooking pot, while the other has part of a distinct ?decorative groove.

Conclusions

The machining at the southern end of the Languages Centre site uncovered a Roman east-west wall foundation (F3) and some layers of late Roman demolition debris (L3-L6). The foundation survived unrobbed. Elsewhere in the town, Roman foundations were often robbed for their stone in medieval times. However, in this part of the college grounds, as previous investigations have shown (eg CAT Report 347, 38), the robbing of Roman foundations for their stone in medieval times was not carried out as thoroughly as in many other parts of the town. The foundation F3 probably supported a timber-framed wall, infilled with wattle-and-daub, and decorated with painted wall-plaster. The timber would either have rotted away or been taken away and re-used in Roman times.

Limited excavation by hand took place of those layers of Roman demolition debris which were to be removed by the contractors. Among the finds from these layers were many fragments of painted wall-plaster and Roman tile/brick. These probably derive from the Roman building of which F3 formed a part. However, in the time available, it was not possible to investigate this building further. As *tesserae* and keyed tile fragments were also recovered from the demolition debris, it seems likely that the building had tessellated floors and, perhaps, a hypocaust. This building was possibly part of the same large structure (Building 211) uncovered nearby in 2005-6 (CAT Report 347, 38-43 & 72). Building 211 may have been a *mansio* (*Col Arch* 19, 17). It perhaps also incorporated the ?bath-house found immediately to the north in 2005 (Building 212; CAT Report 347, 25-9 & 72-3).

Over 1,300 fragments of painted wall-plaster were recovered, in an assortment of colours and designs. Interestingly, the fragments from the western part of the east-west foundation trench contrasted with those from the eastern part. Those from the western part were dominated by areas of white with some purple and red, and there was much evidence for stripes and spots. The fragments from the eastern part of the trench were dominated by areas of red and olive grey/grey, with only slight evidence for stripes and spots. The fragments probably derive from two different decorative schemes, and it seems likely that they came from separate rooms. Both schemes appear to be fairly simple panel decorations.

Among the other finds from the demolition debris were a late Roman coin dated AD 271-4 and some pottery sherds. These suggest that the building from which the debris derives became derelict and was demolished in the late 3rd or 4th century. The uppermost Roman deposits were sealed by a thick layer of post-Roman topsoil or 'dark earth' (L2). Other evidence for post-Roman activity on the site was sparse. A few unstratified Saxon and medieval potsherds were found. The machining in the south-eastern part of the site uncovered a shallow ditch (F2) and a dog burial (F1), both probably post-medieval or later in date. In the medieval and post-medieval periods, the site was probably used primarily for cultivation, and the houses and associated outbuildings were located nearer the North Hill frontage.

Abbreviations and glossary

AOD	above Ordnance Survey datum point, based on mean sea level at Newlyn, Cornwall
axial	skeletal elements from the torso, such as vertebrae, ribs, hips
Boudican	dating to the time of the native revolt led by Boudica in AD 60/1
CAT	Colchester Archaeological Trust
CBC	Colchester Borough Council
CBCAO	Colchester Borough Council Archaeological Officer
CIMS	Colchester and Ipswich Museums Service
context	specific location on an archaeological site, especially one where finds are made; usually a layer or a feature
dado	lowest zone in a wall decoration
dark earth	post-Roman topsoil; probably the result of long-term cultivation, refuse-disposal and pit-digging
ECC FAU	Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit
EHES	Essex Historic Environment Record, held at Essex County Council, County Hall, Chelmsford, Essex

feature	an identifiable context, such as a pit, a wall or a post-hole
greensand	a form of sandstone, also known as Kentish Ragstone, imported from south of the Thames
hypocaust	Roman underfloor heating system
IfA	Institute for Archaeologists
<i>imbrex</i>	curved Roman roof tile (plural <i>imbrices</i>)
<i>insula</i>	an area or block within the grid pattern of a Roman town (plural <i>insulae</i>)
Late Iron Age	period from c 100 BC to AD 43
<i>mansio</i>	a staging post on a Roman road, maintained by the central government for the use of officials and those on official business whilst travelling
medieval	period from AD 1066 to c AD 1500
modern	period from c 1850 to the present
mortarium	Roman mixing bowl, with grit-roughened interior (plural <i>mortaria</i>)
natural	geological deposit undisturbed by human activity
NGR	National Grid Reference
<i>opus signinum</i>	Roman 'concrete' with a pinkish appearance due to the addition of brick/tile fragments
peg-tile	rectangular roof tile of medieval or later date
post-medieval	period from c 1500 to c 1850
residual	finds deposited earlier than the context in which they were found
Roman	period from AD 43 to c AD 410
RRC SAL	Reports of the Research Committee of the Society of Antiquaries of London
SAM	Scheduled Ancient Monument
samian	glossy Roman fine reddish pottery, used mainly as tableware
septaria	calcareous, clay concretions found on the Essex and Suffolk coast
<i>tegula</i>	flanged Roman roof tile (plural <i>tegulae</i>)
<i>tessera</i>	small ceramic cube used to make Roman tessellated and mosaic floors (plural <i>tesserae</i>)
UAD	Urban Archaeological Database, maintained by Colchester and Ipswich Museums
U/S	unstratified, ie without a well-defined context

References

Note: all CAT fieldwork reports are available online in .pdf format at <http://cat.essex.ac.uk/>

CAR 3	1984	<i>Colchester Archaeological Report 3: Excavations at Lion Walk, Balkerne Lane, and Middleborough, Colchester, Essex</i> , by P Crummy
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CBC	2011	<i>Brief for an archaeological evaluation: the Sixth Form College, North Hill, Colchester, Essex</i> , by Martin Winter
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CIMS	2008b	<i>Guidelines on the preparation and transfer of archaeological archives to Colchester and Ipswich Museums</i> (CBC)
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Crummy, P	2001	<i>City of Victory: the story of Colchester - Britain's first Roman town</i>
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ECC FAU Report 830	2000	<i>Archaeological evaluation at Colchester Sixth Form College North site, North Hill, Colchester, Essex</i> , unpublished ECC FAU archive report
Hawkes, C F C, & Hull, M R	1947	<i>Camulodunum, first report on the excavations at Colchester 1930-39</i> , RRCSAL, 14
Hull, M R	1958	<i>Roman Colchester</i> , RRCSAL, 20
IfA	2007	<i>Archaeological archives: a guide to best practice in creation, compilation, transfer and curation</i>
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>
Ling, R	1985	<i>Romano-British wall painting</i> , Shire Archaeology, 42
MoRPHE	2006	<i>Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment</i> (English Heritage)
Webster, P	1996	<i>Roman samian pottery in Britain</i> , CBA, Practical Handbook in Archaeology, 13

Acknowledgements

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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 2011.53, in accordance with *Guidelines on the preparation and transfer of archaeological archives to Colchester and Ipswich Museums* (CIMS 2008b) and *Archaeological archives: a guide to best practice in creation, compilation, transfer and curation* (IfA 2007).

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Adams x c:/reports12/sixth form college/report644.doc

Appendices

Appendix 1: list of finds by context

All weights are in grammes. For the pottery fabric and form codes, see Table 2 and the additional information on page 7 (identifications by Stephen Benfield). Adam Wightman identified the animal bone. The clay tobacco-pipe types follow those used in *CAR 5*. All the *tesserae* were of red tile.

Table 3: finds list.

Context	Finds no	Qty	Description	Wt (g)	Comments
F1	1	220	animal bone fragments	642	partial skeleton of a large breed of dog, mainly axial elements with some skull & limb fragments; also 1 sheep/goat scapula & 3 small mammal bones
		1	clay-pipe stem fragment	1	bore diameter: 1.75 mm
F2	13	2	Roman pottery sherds	6	Fabric GX
		3	animal bone fragments	21	
		2	peg-tile fragments	72	
		1	<i>tessera</i>	25	with mortar adhering
		1	lump of iron slag	206	
		L2	16	1	Roman pottery sherd
4	animal bone fragments	96		cattle mandible with teeth	
1	<i>tegula</i> fragment	323			
1	<i>imbrex</i> fragment	233		with 2 'stab' marks	
1	<i>tessera</i>	32		with mortar adhering	
L3	6	8	<i>tegula</i> fragments	5,150	1 with signature
		4	<i>imbrex</i> fragments	692	
		4	Roman keyed tile fragments	719	1 with scored lattice keying; 1 with wavy combing; 1 with straight combing; 1 with wavy & straight combing
		6	Roman brick fragments	8,301	30, 32-34, 33, 35, 40 & 45 mm thick; 1 with signature; 1 with mortar adhering
		2	Roman brick/tile fragments	444	
L4	5	7	Roman pottery sherds	107	1 x Fabric DJ (1st-2nd/3rd century?); 6 x Fabric GX
		9	animal bone fragments	127	large mammal bone fragments, with some evidence of butchery
		6	<i>tegula</i> fragments	1,824	
		3	<i>imbrex</i> fragments	519	
		1	Roman keyed tile fragments	60	
		4	<i>tesserae</i>	62	3 with mortar adhering
		3	Roman brick/tile fragments	556	
L4	8	4	Roman pottery sherds	32	1 x Fabric BA(SG), Dr. 27 cup (mid-late 1st century); 2 x Fabric GX, includes jar rim sherd; 1 x Fabric UX? (late 4th-early 5th century?)
		8	animal bone fragments	110	medium-large mammal bone fragments
		9	<i>tegula</i> fragments	10,384	6 with signatures, 6 with cutaways & 1 with ?dog paw mark
		1	<i>imbrex</i> fragment	1,098	
		9	<i>tesserae</i>	200	with mortar adhering
		1	Roman brick/tile fragment	535	20 mm thick
		4	iron nails	42	3 probably complete: 58, 48 & 43 mm long; other fragment: 29 mm long
L4	10	2	Roman pottery sherds	8	1 x Fabric GX, from jar with 'kettle scale' from boiling water; 1 x Fabric GP (mid 1st-2nd century)

L4	15	18	Roman pottery sherds	260	1 x Fabric CH, rim, probably Hadham (late 3rd-4th century); 2 x Fabric EA, base from a beaker and small sherd from a second pot (mid/late 3rd-4th century); 14 x Fabric GX, includes three sherds with 'kettle scale' from boiling water; 1 x Fabric TE, rim sherd from a mortarium (mid 3rd-4th century)
		37	animal bone fragments	594	medium-large mammal bone fragments, with some evidence of butchery
		25	<i>tesserae</i>	484	with mortar adhering
		4	small Roman brick/tile fragments	40	? <i>tesserae</i> fragments; 3 with mortar adhering
		1	glass fragment	3	clear ?vessel glass, 3 mm thick
		8	iron nail fragments	123	7 probably complete: 76, 61, 58, 56, 50, 49 & 38 mm long; other fragment: 25 mm long
L4	17	1	<i>tessera</i>	18	with mortar adhering
L5	11	2	Roman pottery sherds	15	Fabric GX
		5	animal bone fragments	109	medium-large mammal bone fragments, incl 1 sheep/goat horncore
		3	<i>tesserae</i>	45	with mortar adhering
		5	<i>tegula</i> fragments	2,793	2 with cutaways; 1 with mortar adhering
		1	<i>imbrex</i> fragment	189	
		1	Roman brick fragment	500	35-40 mm thick
U/S	2	1	Roman pottery sherd	12	Fabric GX
		2	animal bone fragments	48	cattle 3rd molar & sheep/goat femur
		1	clay-pipe bowl fragment	8	rim missing, probably Type 4 or 6, c 1640-80
		4	clay-pipe stem fragments	21	bore diameters: 1 x 2.5 mm, 3 x 3 mm
U/S	3	9	Roman pottery sherds	43	1 x Fabric GB (mid 2nd-mid 3rd century); 7 x Fabric GX; 1 x Fabric HG, grey fabric (late 4th-early 5th century).
		2	Saxon pottery sherds	23	Fabric 12D, hand-made (mid-late Saxon/early medieval; c AD 600-850/1066)
		2	<i>tesserae</i>	23	with mortar adhering
		1	peg-tile fragment	18	modern-looking
		1	window glass fragment	4	probably modern
		2	iron nails	6	probably complete: 51 (bent) & 34 mm long
		6	animal bone fragments	67	medium-large mammal bone fragments
U/S	12	7	Roman pottery sherds	129	1 x Fabric EA, beaker rim with bead (mid/late 3rd-4th century); 1 x Fabric KX, Cam 305 (late 3rd-4th century); 1 x Fabric TG, angular flange, CAR 10: TY Type 45 (4th century); 4 x Fabric GX, includes rim sherd
		2	medieval pottery sherds	37	1 x Fabric 20?, grey fabric, possibly distorted Roman sherd (12th-14th century?); 1 x Fabric 21A, dark surface with cream paint (13th-15/16th century)
		2	animal bone fragments	27	medium-large mammal bone fragments
		1	Roman keyed tile fragment	50	with wavy combing
		2	<i>tesserae</i>	22	
		1	iron nail	6	complete: 43 mm long
U/S	19	1	Roman pottery sherd	8	Fabric GX (?2nd century+)
		1	animal bone fragment	11	horse incisor
U/S	23	2	animal bone fragments	11	medium mammal bone fragments
		1	<i>tessera</i>	26	with mortar adhering

Appendix 2: contents of archive

The contents of the archive are:

1 x A4 cardboard wallet containing:

the site record sheets

site plans

CBCAO brief

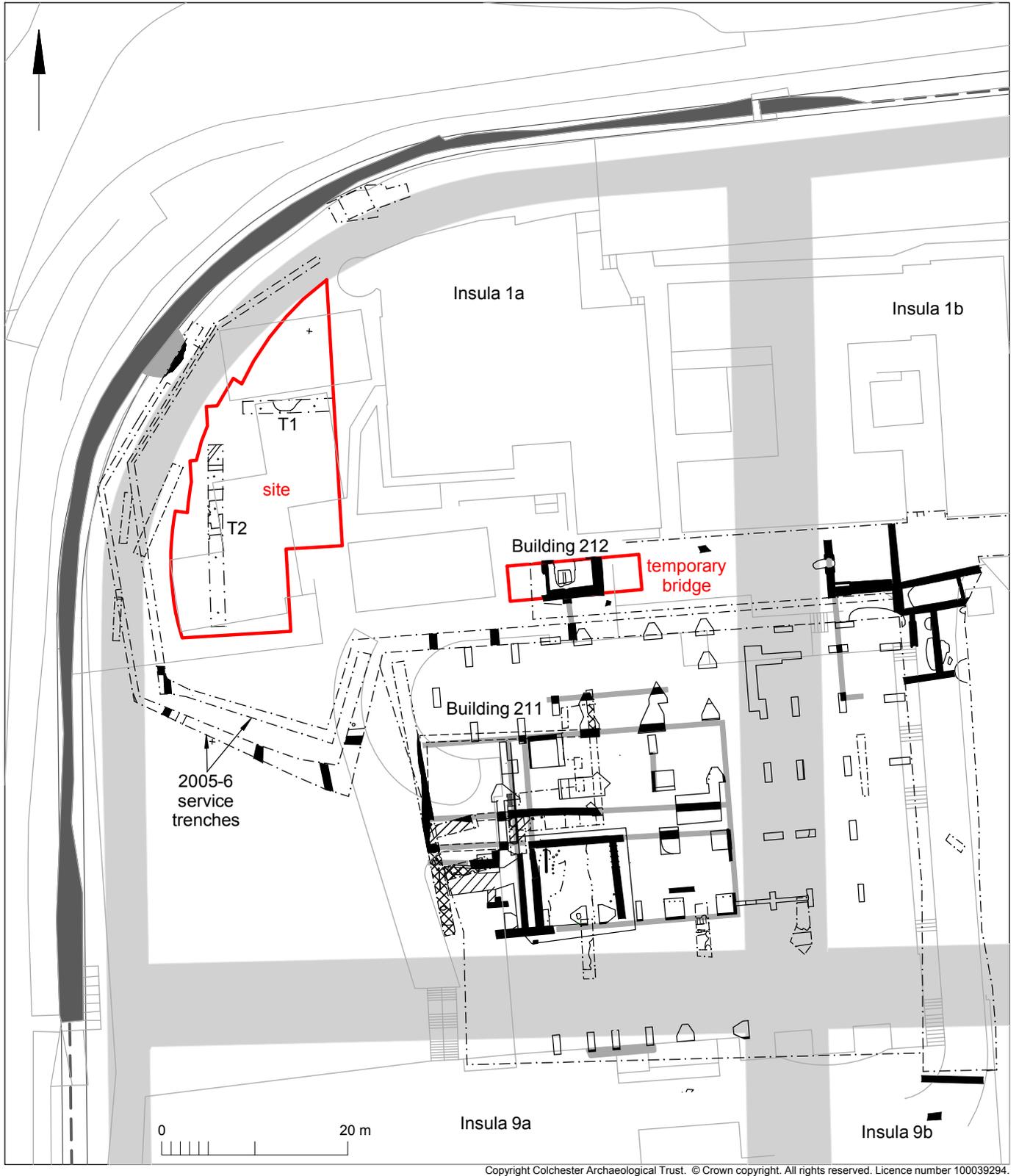
WSI

sundry papers

1 x paper copy of this report

CD containing digital material including the site photographs

Six museum boxes contain the finds.



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Fig 1 Site location, showing previous excavations and the 2011 evaluation trenches T1-T2.

- watching brief area
- wall
- projected wall
- limit of excavation
- town wall
- Roman street



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Fig 2 Site plan, showing the positions of the foundation trenches and dog burial F1 (plan of trenches supplied by the architect).

town wall
 Roman street

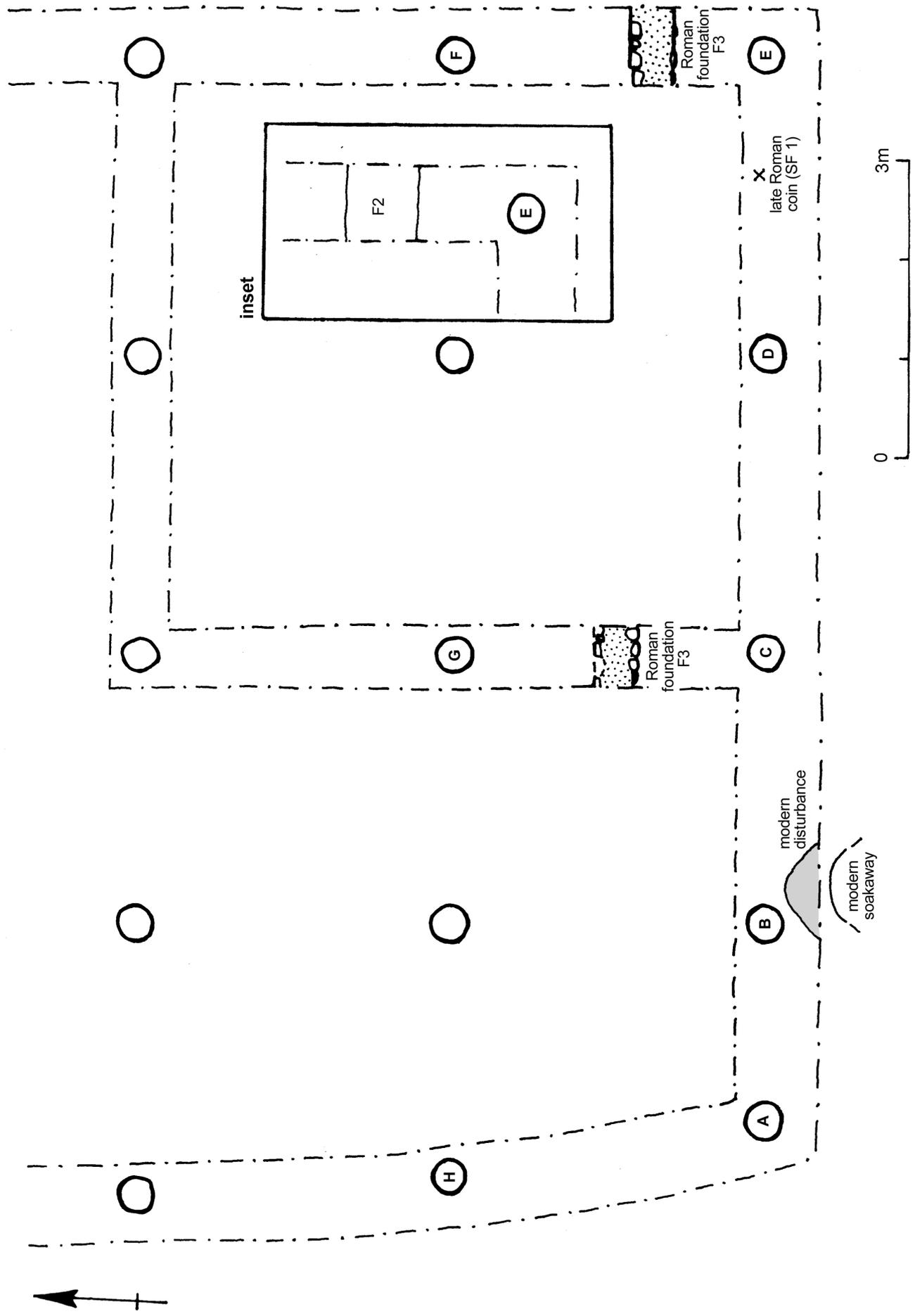


Fig 3 Plan of the southern end of the site.

○ pile

Essex Historic Environment Record/ Essex Archaeology and History

Summary sheet

Site address: Sixth Form College, North Hill, Colchester, Essex	
Parish: Colchester	District: Colchester Borough
NGR: TL 9926 2545	Site codes: Museum accession - COLEM 2011.53 CAT project - 11/7i
Type of work: Watching brief	Site director/group: Colchester Archaeological Trust
Date of work: July-September 2011	Size of area investigated: approximately 450 sq m
Location of finds/curating museum: Colchester and Ipswich Museums	Funding source: Client
Further seasons anticipated? No	Related EHER and UAD nos: EHER nos 3530, 12341, 12433, 12434, 12435, 12436, 12437
Final report: CAT Report 644 and summary in <i>EAH</i>	
Periods represented: Roman, post-medieval/modern	
<p>Summary of fieldwork results: <i>Further Roman remains were uncovered during an archaeological watching brief in advance of the construction of a new Languages Centre at the Sixth Form College, North Hill, Colchester, Essex. The site lies in the north-western corner of the college grounds, close to the Roman town wall, and was the latest in a series of archaeological investigations at the college in recent years. Over most of the site, nothing of archaeological significance was disturbed during the groundworks, apart from the bones of a dog buried in relatively recent times. However, along the southern edge of the site, the machine-digging of the foundation trenches uncovered the uppermost surviving Roman deposits. These were excavated by CAT down to the level required by the contractors. The deposits consisted mainly of late Roman demolition debris, which included many fragments of Roman painted wall-plaster and brick/tile. A late 3rd-century coin and some Roman pottery were among the other finds recovered. The top of an unrobbed east-west Roman foundation was also uncovered in two places. These remains perhaps formed part of the same Roman building that was excavated nearby in 2005-6 (Building 212).</i></p>	
Previous summaries/reports: CAT Reports 260, 309, 347, 596; ECC FAU Report 830	
Keywords: Roman, painted wall-plaster, foundation	Significance: *
Author of summary: Donald Shimmin	Date of summary: September 2012