

Archaeological monitoring at Martello Tower E, Clacton-on-Sea, Essex, CO15 1XT

September 2020



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figures by Chris Lister

fieldwork by Mark Baister and Sarah Carter

**commissioned by Layla Davey
on behalf of Tendring District Council**

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CAT Report 1611
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1 Summary

Archaeological monitoring was carried out at Martello Tower E, Clacton-on-Sea, Essex during groundworks to repair the tower. Martello Tower E is a 19th-century and Grade II listed building which lies on the coast of Clacton-on-Sea. During the clearance of the debris within the tower a small amount of finds dated to the 20th-century were recovered. A trench was dug around the perimeter of the tower, exposing the lower courses of bricks and foundations.

2 Introduction (Fig 1)

This is the report on archaeological monitoring at Martello Tower E, Clacton-on-Sea, Essex which was carried out in September 2020. The work was commissioned by Layla Davey on behalf of Tendring District Council and was undertaken by Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT).

The proposed work comprised the restoration of the Martello tower. The Historic England Inspector of Monuments (Will Fletcher) advised that the applicant should commission a scheme of archaeological monitoring to be carried out during the restoration works.

All fieldwork and reporting was done in accordance with English Heritage's *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE)* (Historic England 2015), and with *Standards for field archaeology in the East of England (EAA 14 and 24)*. This report mirrors standards and practices contained in the Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and guidance for archaeological field excavation (ClfA 2014a)* and *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials (ClfA 2014b)*.

3 Archaeological background

The following archaeological background includes extracts from the Essex Historic Environment Record (EHER) held at Essex County Council, County Hall, Chelmsford, Essex (accessible to the public via <http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk>). In addition, the history website <https://martellotowers.co.uk/> was consulted.

Martello towers are small coastal artillery forts built across the British Empire after the renewal of the war with France in 1803. The design of the towers was based on a tower in Martello Bay, Corsica. They were generally circular, up to 12m tall and had a ground-floor, first-floor and a roof. The walls were thick (up to 4m), particularly on the seaward side, and were battered to resist cannon fire. The ground-floor served as a storage area for the powder magazine, with alcoves for shot, cartridge and general storage, and contained a water cistern. The first-floor would have been living quarters for around 25 men, and would have contained the only exit from the tower, accessed by an external staircase. The roof was open, supported by a large central pillar rising from the lower-floors below, and carried one or more swivelling cannons within a deep embrasure.

Martello Tower E lies on the shoreline of Clacton-on-Sea, at the western end of the town. It is a Grade II listed building (NHLE no 1016554) and is one of the 103 towers built between 1809 and 1812 along the south-east coast, from West Sussex to Suffolk.

When completed Tower E stood some distance back from the shoreline, behind a now destroyed forward battery and guard house. After its completion in 1812 the tower was armed and provisioned but never garrisoned, and it was not until after 1816 that married pensioners from sapper and artillery units were appointed as caretakers.

Not much is known about Tower E's use throughout the rest of the 19th century. In 1904 the War Office sold the tower to the West Clacton Estate, an amusement park,

and it became the home of the estates manager. In 1935 the tower was sold to Butlins Holiday Camp, and a water cistern was subsequently mounted to the roof to supply nearby chalets. During the Second World War the holiday camp was requisitioned by the government and used as a training site for the pioneer corps. The camp closed in 1983 and the tower has been unused since.

4 Aim

Archaeological monitoring was undertaken to excavate and record any archaeological deposits and remains exposed by the removal of debris within the tower and any external groundworks.

5 Results (Fig 2)

Removal of the debris within the tower revealed a small quantity of 20th-century finds, most likely material discarded around the time of the final use of the tower's interior.

Around the perimeter of the tower a trench was excavated through a soft silty-sand topsoil. It was excavated to a depth of 0.5m and exposed the tower foundations and its lower courses of brickwork (Photograph 1).



Photograph 1 Detail of trench dug around tower. Photograph taken facing north.

During the monitoring works the opportunity was taken to photograph the interior of the tower. These were to record the surviving features and the damage, particularly to the floor, that had occurred since the tower became derelict in the mid 20th century. A selection of photographs have been included in appendix 1.

6 Finds

Finds included 2 glass bottles, several fragments of crockery and other ceramic, glazed tile fragments and iron fragments, all dating to the 20th century. No finds were retained.

7 Conclusion

During clearance works within the tower, a selection of 20th-century finds were uncovered. These were most likely material discarded when the tower was requisitioned, during the Second World War as a training site.

8 Acknowledgements

CAT thanks Layla Davey for commissioning and Tendring District Council for funding the work. The project was managed by C Lister, fieldwork was carried out by M Baister and S Carter. Figures are by C Lister. The project was monitored for Historic England by W Fletcher.

9 References

Note: all CAT reports, except for DBAs, are available online in PDF format at <http://cat.essex.ac.uk>

Brown, N & Glazebrook, J	2000	<i>Research and Archaeology: A Framework for the Eastern Counties 2. Research agenda and strategy.</i> East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Paper 8 (EAA 8)
CAT ClfA	2019 2014b	<i>Health & Safety Policy</i> <i>Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials</i>
Gurney, D	2003	<i>Standards for field archaeology in the East of England.</i> East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Papers 14 (EAA 14)
Historic England	2015	<i>Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE)</i>
Medycott, M	2011	<i>Research and archaeology revisited: A revised framework for the East of England.</i> East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Papers 24 (EAA 24)
MHCLG	2019	<i>National Planning Policy Framework.</i> Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

10 Abbreviations and glossary

CAT	Colchester Archaeological Trust
CBM	ceramic building material, ie brick/tile
ClfA	Chartered Institute for Archaeologists
clinker	the stony residue from burnt coal or from a furnace
context	a single unit of excavation, which is often referred to numerically, and can be any feature, layer or find
ECC	Essex County Council
ECCPS	Essex County Council Place Services
EHHER	Essex Historic Environment Record
embrasure	opening in a parapet or wall within a fortification to allow gunfire through
feature (F)	an identifiable thing like a pit, a wall, a drain: can contain 'contexts'
layer (L)	distinct or distinguishable deposit (layer) of material
medieval	period from AD 1066 to c 1500
modern	period from c AD 1800 to the present
NGR	National Grid Reference
OASIS	O nline A ccess to the I ndex of A rchaeological I nvestigations, http://oasis.ac.uk/pages/wiki/Main
peg-tile	rectangular thin tile with peg-hole(s) used mainly for roofing, first appeared c AD1200 and continued in use to present day, but commonly post-medieval to modern
post-medieval	from c AD 1500 to c 1800
section	(abbreviation sx or Sx) vertical slice through feature/s or layer/s
WSI	written scheme of investigation

11 Contents of archive

Finds: none retained

Paper record

One A4 document wallet containing:

The report (CAT Report 1611)

Photographic thumbnails and log

Digital record

The report (CAT Report 1611)

Photographs, photographic thumbnails and log

Graphics files

12 Archive deposition

The paper and digital archive is currently held by the Colchester Archaeological Trust at Roman Circus House, Roman Circus Walk, Colchester, Essex CO2 7GZ, but will be permanently deposited with Colchester Museum under project ref. tbc.

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Distribution list:

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Date: 28/10/2020

Appendix 1



Photograph 2 Martello Tower external view. Photograph taken facing south-east.



Photograph 3 Martello Tower external view. Photograph taken facing west.



Photograph 4 Martello Tower external view. Photograph taken facing north-east.



Photograph 5 Martello Tower internal view, ground-floor. Detail of central pillar. Photograph taken facing south-east.



Photograph 6 Martello Tower internal view, first-floor. Detail of central pillar. Photograph taken facing south-west.



Photograph 7 Martello Tower internal view, first-floor. Detail of smoke vents. Photograph taken facing north-west.



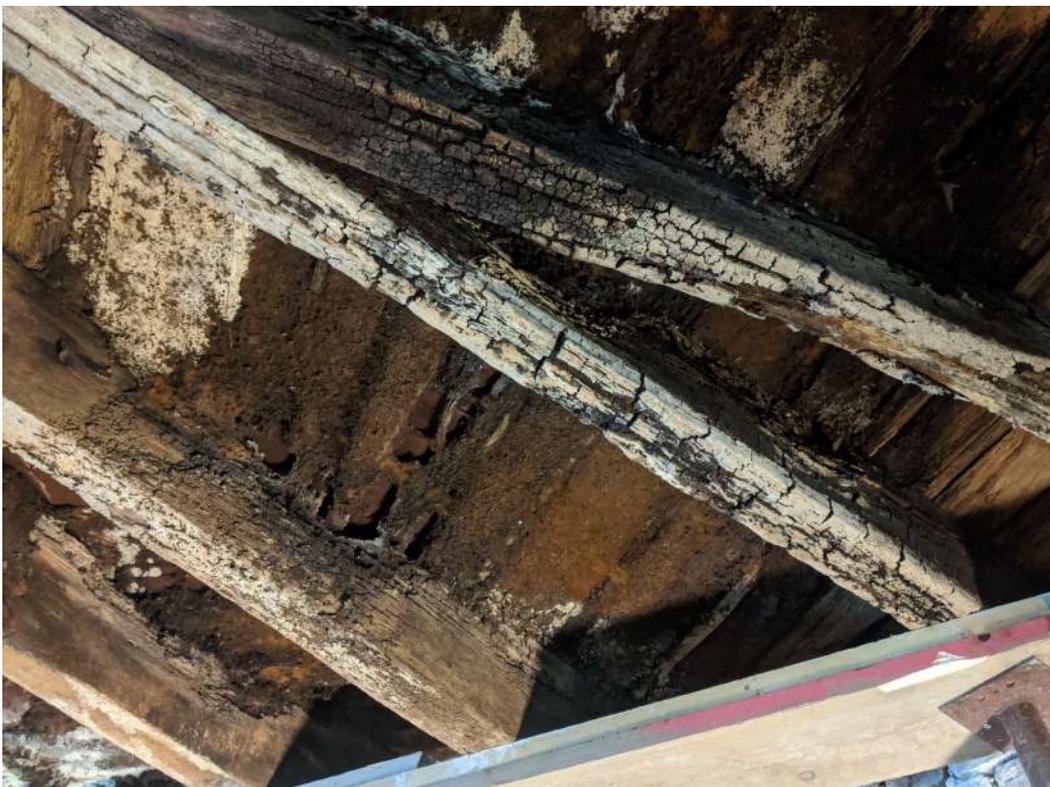
Photograph 8 Martello Tower internal view, first-floor. Detail of embrasure. Photograph taken facing south.



Photograph 9 Martello Tower internal view, first-floor. Detail of stairwell embrasure. Photograph taken facing north-east.



Photograph 10 Martello Tower external view. Detail of embrasure. Photograph taken facing west.



Photograph 11 Martello Tower internal view, ground-floor. Detail of damage to floor above.



Photograph 12 Martello Tower internal view, ground-floor. Detail of damage to floor above.



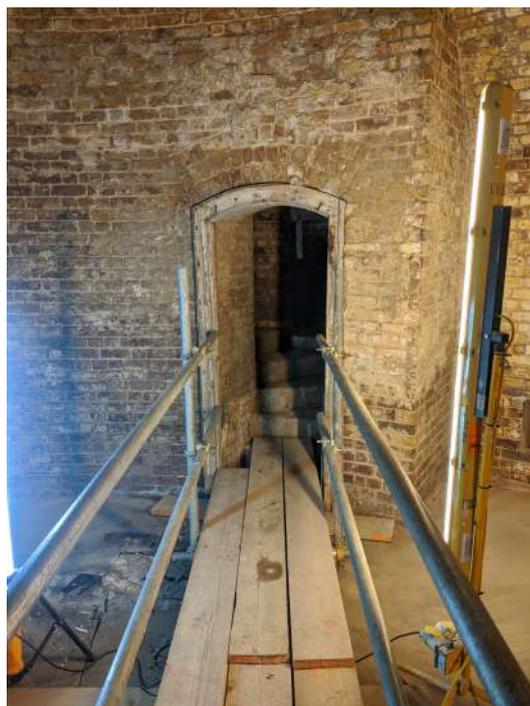
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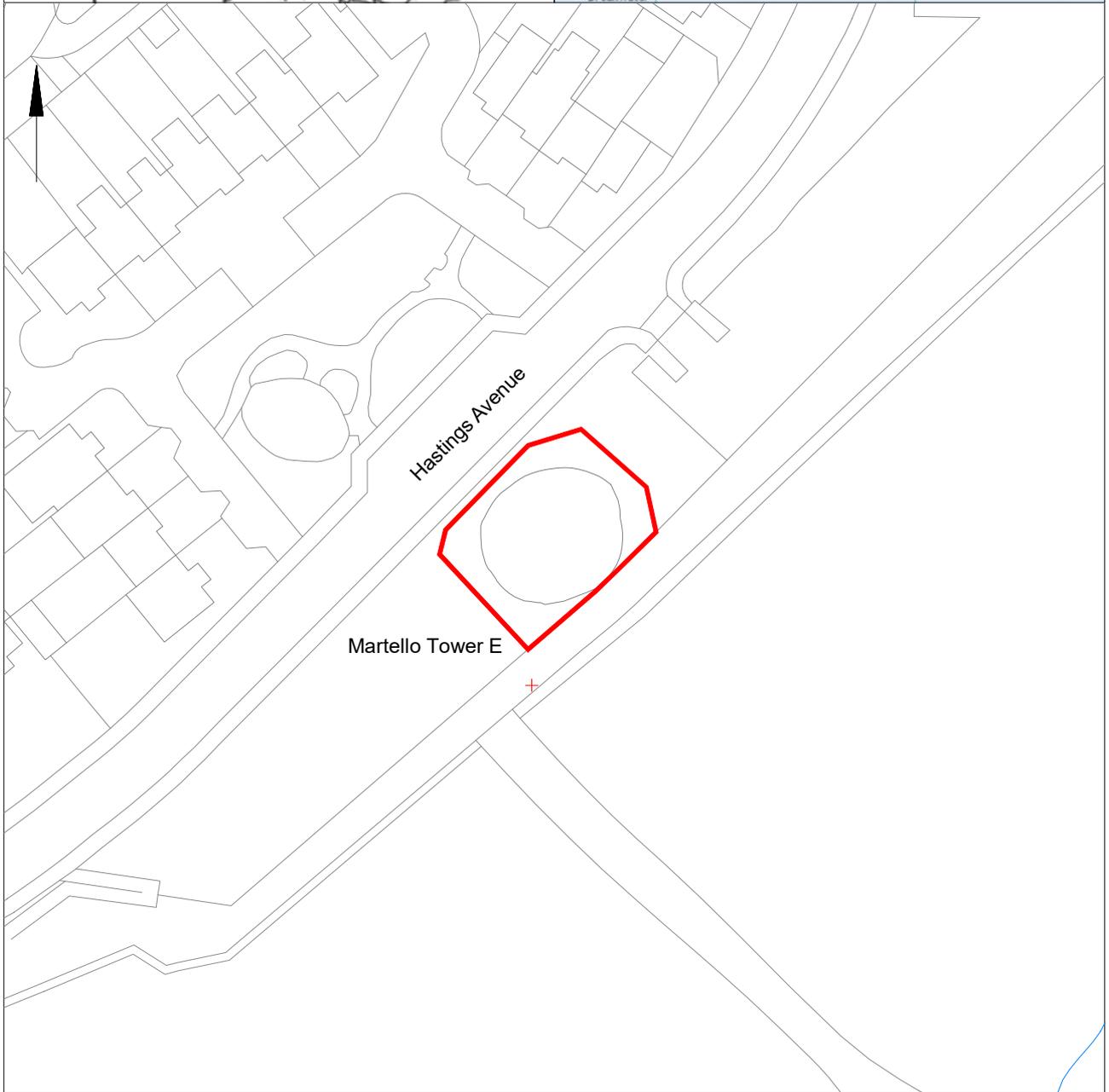
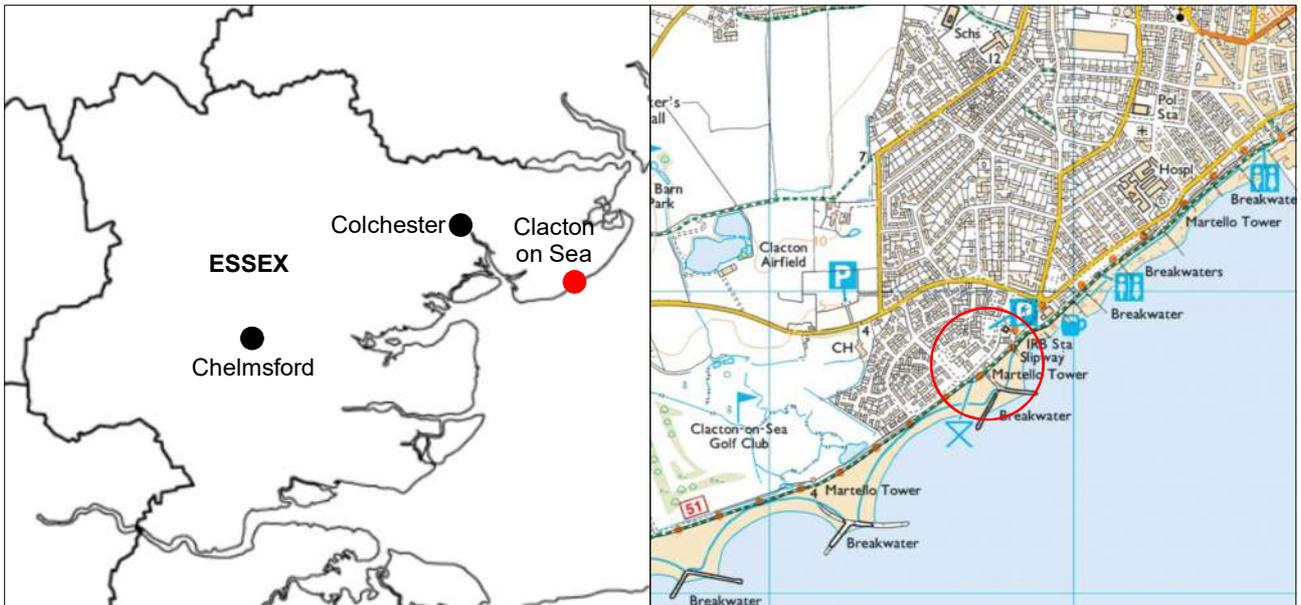
Photograph 22 Martello Tower internal view, first-floor. Photograph taken facing north-west.



Photograph 23 Martello Tower internal view, ground-floor. Photograph taken facing south-east.



Photograph 24 Martello Tower internal view, first-floor. Detail of fireplace. Photograph taken facing south-east.



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Fig 1 Site location.



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OASIS ID: colchest3-406884

Project details

Project name	Archaeological monitoring at Martello Tower E, Clacton-on-Sea, Essex, CO15 1XT
Short description of the project	Archaeological monitoring was carried out at Martello Tower E, Clacton-on-Sea, Essex during groundworks to repair the tower. Martello Tower E is a 19th-century and Grade II listed building which lies on the coast of Clacton-on-Sea. During the clearance of the debris within the tower a small amount of finds dated to the 20th-century were recovered. A trench was dug around the perimeter of the tower, exposing the lower courses of bricks and foundations.
Project dates	Start: 15-09-2020 End: 17-09-2020
Previous/future work	No / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	2020/04f - Contracting Unit No.
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	Listed Building
Current Land use	Other 15 - Other
Monument type	NONE None
Significant Finds	NONE None
Investigation type	"Watching Brief"
Prompt	Listed Building Consent

Project location

Country	England
Site location	ESSEX TENDRING CLACTON ON SEA Martello Tower E
Postcode	CO15 1XT
Study area	0 Square metres
Site coordinates	TM 16714 13756 51.779866468896 1.142065837402 51 46 47 N 001 08 31 E Point

Project creators

Name of Organisation	Colchester Archaeological Trust
Project brief originator	HISTORIC ENGLAND

Project design originator	none
Project director/manager	Chris Lister
Project supervisor	Chris Lister
Type of sponsor/funding body	Owner
Name of sponsor/funding body	Historic England

Project archives

Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive recipient	Archaeological Data Service
Digital Contents	"none"
Digital Media available	"Images raster / digital photography", "Text"
Paper Archive recipient	Colchester Museum
Paper Contents	"none"
Paper Media available	"Photograph", "Report"

Project bibliography 1

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