

Archaeological investigation at Upper Castle Park, High Street, Colchester, Essex, CO1 1TJ

August 2021



by **Emma Holloway**

with contributions by Dr Matthew Loughton

fieldwork and figures by E Holloway

on behalf of **Colchester Borough Council**

NGR: TL 99851 25497 (centre)

CAT project ref.: 2021/08k

CHER code: ECC4658

OASIS ref.: colchest3-429253



Colchester Archaeological Trust

Roman Circus House,
Roman Circus Walk,
Colchester,
Essex, CO2 7GZ

tel.: 01206 501785

email: eh@catuk.org

CAT Report 1707

February 2022

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1 Summary

An archaeological investigation was carried out at Upper Castle Park, Colchester, Essex during the excavation of a pit for a commemorative tree on the site of an existing tree that had died. Upper Castle Park is a Grade II listed park and garden within the scheduled ancient monument of Colchester Castle. There were no archaeological remains as groundworks did not extend beyond layers of modern date.

2 Introduction (Fig 1)

This is the report for an archaeological investigation at Upper Castle Park, Colchester, Essex which was carried out on 31st August 2021. The work was commissioned by Colchester Borough Council, and was carried out by Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) during the excavation of a pit for a new cork oak tree to replace an existing tree that had died.

In response to consultation with Dr Jess Tipper, Historic England Inspector of Ancient Monuments (HEIAM) it was advised that the works should go ahead under the supervision of a CAT archaeologist (Scheduled Ancient Monument consent number S00241781). A written scheme of investigation (WSI) was prepared by CAT in advance of the groundworks and agreed the HEIAM.

In addition to the WSI, all fieldwork and reporting was done in accordance with *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 watching briefs* (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 draws on the Colchester Archaeological Trust report archive and the Colchester Historic Environment Record (CHER) (accessed via Colchester Heritage Explorer, <https://colchesterheritage.co.uk>).

The surface geology of the Castle Park area is a mix of Kesgrave sands and gravels and London clay. The south-western corner of the park is dominated by the 11th-century Norman castle keep and its associated earthwork defences (MCC1732). The Castle Park grounds were landscaped by Charles Gray of Hollytrees in the early 18th century. The site was sold to Colchester Borough in 1892 for the creation of a public park, laid out by Backhouse & Co. of York in the late 19th century. The majority of the park is a Scheduled Monument (SM EX 1, HA 1002217) and the park is a Registered historic park and garden.

Evidence for a number of Roman town houses (including MCC852, MCC854 and MCC856), walls, tessellated pavements, metalled streets, masonry drains and a water works have been recorded within the park, much of this is summarised by Hull (1958), Crummy (*CAR 6*) and Brooks (1997). The park also contains the site of the Temple of Claudius (MCC1830). The base of the temple is preserved beneath the Norman Castle. Crossing through the centre of the park is the town wall (MCC859), a dominant feature. The current site is located just to the south of the wall.

CAT have carried out numerous investigations within Castle Park, the nearest to the current site is a UKPN repair in 2017 which revealed layers dating to the modern, post-medieval and medieval periods, recorded to a depth of 0.45-0.7m below current ground level. Two patches of demolition material were recorded at the western-end of the trench and despite containing Roman material, they sealed medieval layer L3. The whole area had been badly disturbed by modern electrical cabinets and cables (CAT Report 1086).

4 Aim

The aim of the archaeological monitoring was to identify and record any archaeological contexts revealed during groundworks.

5 Results (Figs 2-3)

A pit was dug into the grass slope between the band stand area and the Roman town wall. The pit covered an area of 0.207m² and was excavated to a depth of 0.4m below current ground level.

The trench was excavated through modern upper topsoil (L1, 0.08-0.1m thick. Comprised of hard, dry, light to mid-brown leached humic loam) and lower modern topsoil (L2, 0.31-0.33m deep to the base of the tree pit. Fill was firm, dry mid-grey silty loam).



Photograph 1 Tree pit shot looking southeast



Photograph 2 Tree pit shot looking northeast

6 Finds

by Matthew Loughton

The watching brief uncovered 11 sherds of pottery and ceramic building material (henceforth CBM) with a weight of 159g (Table 1). The assemblage contained a variety of Roman, medieval, and post-medieval material which all came from the lower topsoil (L2). Roman finds included several tesserae cubes and sherds of greyware (fabric GX) and Coarse oxidised (fabric DJ) pottery. Post-Roman ceramics included sherds of Colchester-type ware (c 1200-1550), post-medieval red earthenwares (c 1500-19th/20th century) and peg-tile (medieval-post medieval). None of the pottery and CBM was retained.

Ceramic material	Number	Weight (g)	MSW (g)
Pottery	5	36	7
CBM	6	123	21
Total	11	159	14

Table 1 Details on the main types of ceramics and pottery

Small fragments of Roman brick and modern polystyrene were noted in L1 and fragments of oyster shell and a piece of modern plastic in L2, these were not retained.

7 Conclusion

Archaeological monitoring at Lower Castle Park did not exceed layers of modern date and therefore did not penetrate deep enough to reach archaeological features.

8 Acknowledgements

CAT thanks Tim Betts and Colchester Borough Council for commissioning and funding the work. The project was managed by A Wightman, fieldwork was carried out by E Holloway. The project was monitored for Historic England by Dr Jess Tipper.

9 References

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

- Brooks, H 1997 *A Historical Survey of Castle Park (Report for Council 1997)*
- Brown, N & Glazebrook, J 2000 *Research and Archaeology: A Framework for the Eastern Counties 2. Research agenda and strategy.* East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Paper **8** (EAA **8**)
- CAR 6 1992 *Colchester Archaeological Report 6: Excavations at Culver Street, the Gilbert School, and miscellaneous sites in Colchester 1971-1985.* By P Crummy
- CAR 7 2000 *Colchester Archaeological Report 7: Post-Roman pottery from excavations in Colchester, 1971-85.* By J P Cotter
- CAR 10 1999 *Colchester Archaeological Report 10: Roman pottery from excavations in Colchester, 1971-86.* By R Symmonds
- CAT 2021 *Health & Safety Policy*
- CAT 2021 *Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for an archaeological investigation at Upper Colchester Castle Park, High Street, Colchester, Essex, CO1 1TJ*
- CAT Report 1086 2017 *Archaeological monitoring and recording at Colchester Castle Park, Colchester, Essex – March 2017.* By L Pooley
- ClfA 2014a *Standard and Guidance for archaeological watching briefs*
- ClfA 2014b *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials*
- Drury, P J 1982 *Aspects of the origins and development of Colchester castle in the archaeological journal vol.139*
- Gurney, D 2003 *Standards for field archaeology in the East of England.* East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Papers **14** (EAA **14**)
- Historic England 2015 *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE)*
- Hull, M R 1958 *Roman Colchester*
- Medlycott, M 2011 *Research and archaeology revisited: A revised framework for the East of England.* East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Papers **24** (EAA **24**)
- MHCLG 2019 *National Planning Policy Framework.* Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

10 Abbreviations and glossary

CAT	Colchester Archaeological Trust
CBC	Colchester Borough Council
CBCAA	Colchester Borough Council Archaeological Advisor
CBCPS	Colchester Borough Council Planning Services
CHER	Colchester Historic Environment Record
CIfA	Chartered Institute for Archaeologists
context	specific location of finds on an archaeological site
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
natural	geological deposit undisturbed by human activity
NGR	National Grid Reference
OASIS	Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations, 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
residual	something out of its original context, eg a Roman coin in a modern pit
Roman	the period from AD 43 to c AD 410
section	(abbreviation sx or Sx) vertical slice through feature/s or layer/s
ws	written scheme of investigation

11 Contents of archive

Finds: none retained

Digital record

The report (CAT Report 1707)
CAT written scheme of investigation
Site digital photographs, thumbnails and log
Graphic files
Site data
Survey data

12 Archive deposition

The 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 the Archaeology Data Service under reference number ECC4658.

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Distribution list:

Tim Betts, Colchester Borough Council
Dr Jess Tipper, Historic England
Essex Historic Environment Record



Colchester Archaeological Trust

Roman Circus House,
Roman Circus Walk,
Colchester,
Essex, CO2 7GZ

tel.: 01206 501785 option 4

email: eh@catuk.org

Checked by: Philip Crummy

Date: 02.11.2021

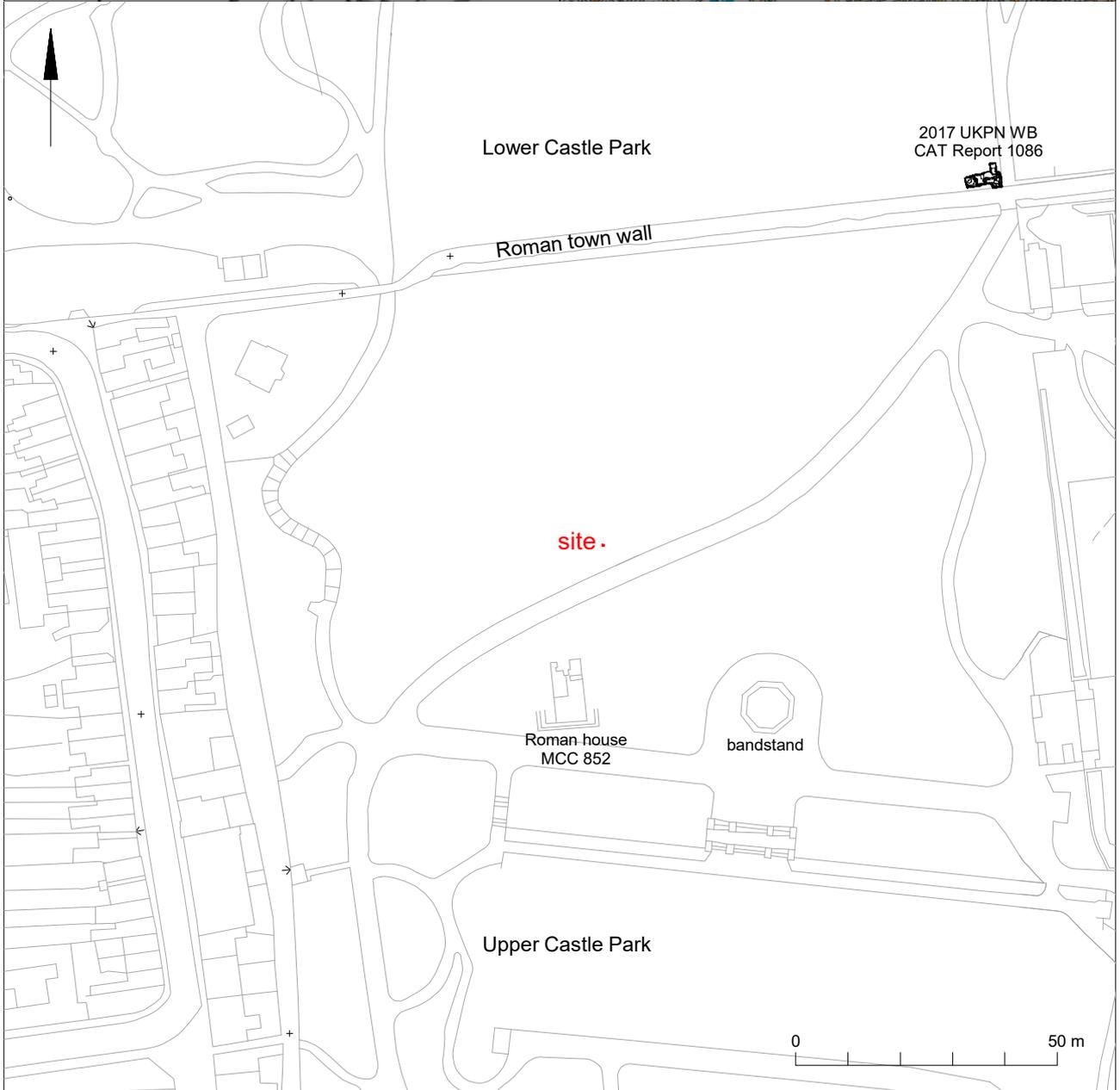
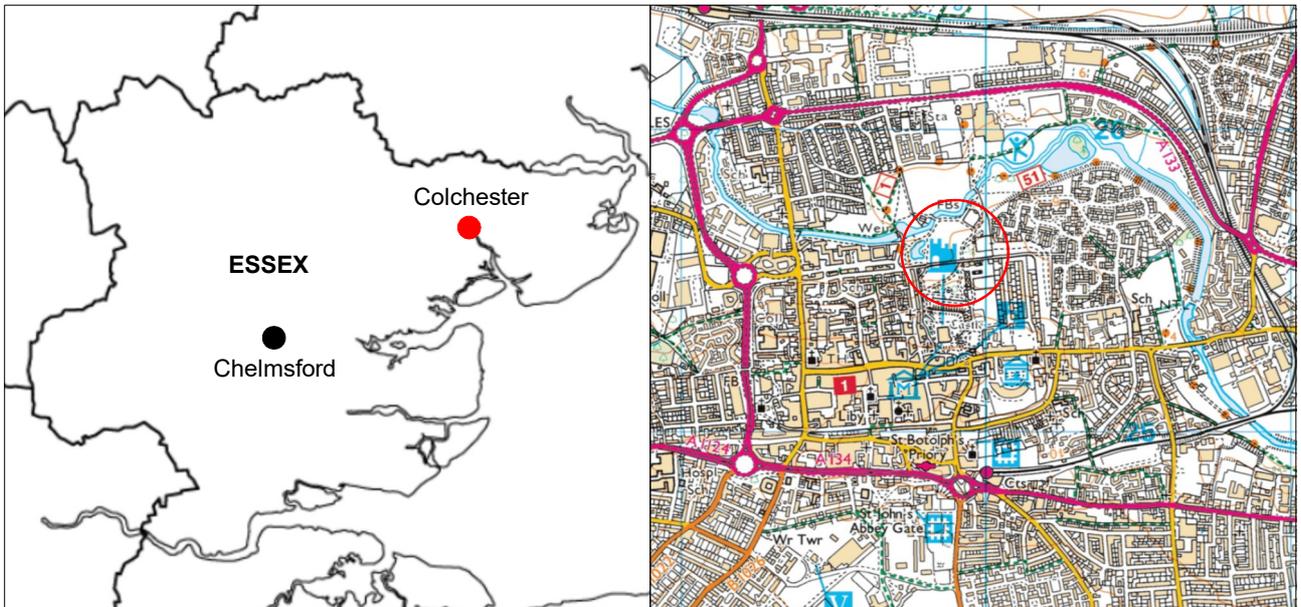


Fig 1 Site location.

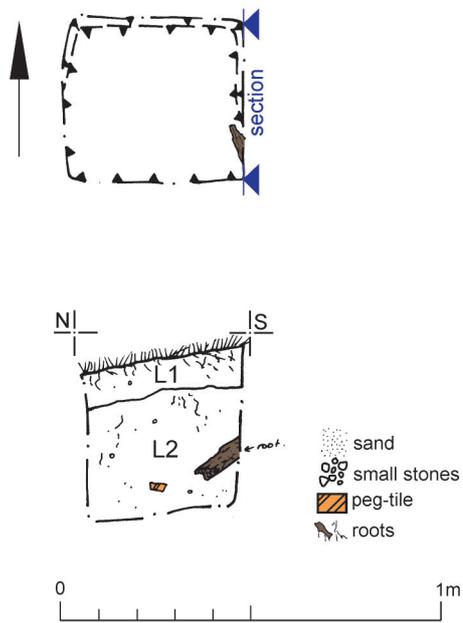


Fig 2 Tree pit plan and section.

Essex Historic Environment Record/ Essex Archaeology and History

Summary sheet

Address: Upper Castle Park, Colchester, Essex, CO1 1UG	
Parish: Colchester	District: Colchester
NGR: TL 99851 25497 (centre)	Site code: CAT project ref.: 2021/08k CHER ref: ECC4658 OASIS ref: colchest3-429253 Scheduled Monument consent number: S00241781
Type of work: Investigation	Site director/group: Colchester Archaeological Trust
Date of work: 31st August 2021	Size of area investigated: 0.21 square meters
Location of curating museum: Archaeology Data Service	Funding source: Colchester Borough Council
Further seasons anticipated? No	Related CHER/SMR number: NHLE 1002217, MCC852, MCC854, MCC856, MCC859, MCC1732 and MCC1830-1
Final report: CAT Report 1707	
Periods represented: Modern	
Summary of fieldwork results: An archaeological investigation was carried out at Upper Castle Park, Colchester, Essex during the excavation of a pit for a commemorative tree on the site of an existing tree that had died. Upper Castle Park is a Grade II listed park and garden within the scheduled ancient monument of Colchester Castle. There were no archaeological remains as groundworks did not extend beyond layers of modern date.	
Previous summaries/reports:	
Historic England Inspector of Ancient Monuments: Dr Jess Tipper	
Keywords: -	Significance: -
Author of summary: Emma Holloway	Date of summary: February 2022

Summary for colchest3-429253

OASIS ID (UID)	colchest3-429253
Project Name	An archaeological investigation at Upper Colchester Castle Park, High Street, Colchester, Essex, CO1 1TJ
Activity type	WATCHING BRIEF
Project Identifier(s)	2021/08k
Planning Id	
Reason For Investigation	Scheduled monument consent
Organisation Responsible for work	Colchester Archaeological Trust
Project Dates	31-Aug-2021 - 31-Aug-2021
Location	Upper Colchester Castle Park, High Street, Colchester NGR : TL 99849 25497 LL : 51.8921832270667, 0.902937268973528 12 Fig : 599849,225497
Administrative Areas	Country : England County : Essex District : Colchester Parish : Colchester, unparished area
Project Methodology	archaeological investigation of the hole for a new commemorative Cork oak tree to be planted in at the site of a former tree that had died expectantly. Work will be carried out in accordance with <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • professional standards of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists, including its Code of Conduct (CIfA 2014a-c) • East of England Standards and Frameworks published by East Anglian Archaeology (Gurney 2003, Medlycott 2011) and the recent review updates on https://researchframeworks.org/eoe/ • relevant Health & Safety guidelines and requirements (CAT 2021) • Scheduled Monument consent documents
Project Results	An archaeological investigation was carried out at Upper Castle Park, Colchester, Essex during the excavation of a pit for a commemorative tree on the site of an existing tree that had died. Upper Castle Park is a Grade II listed park and garden within the scheduled ancient monument of Colchester Castle. There were no archaeological remains as groundworks did not extend beyond layers of modern date.
Keywords	
HER	Historic England review - unRev - STANDARD
HER Identifiers	HER Event No - ECC4658
Archives	Digital Archive - to be deposited with Archaeology Data Service Archive