

Colchester Archaeological Trust



**CAT Report 2157
issued April 2025**

**Archaeological monitoring and recording at
The Rectory, Highbridge Street, Waltham Abbey, Essex,
EN9 1DG: March 2025**



**CAT project ref.: 2025/03m
ECC code: EEX61446**

**Archaeological monitoring and recording at
The Rectory, Highbridge Street, Waltham Abbey, Essex,
EN9 1DG: March 2025**

NGR: TL 38087 00666 (centre)

Planning ref.: pre-planning

**CAT project ref.: 2025/03m
CAT Report 2157**

**ECC code: EEX61446
OASIS id: colchest3-532819**

fieldwork by Xander Smith

report prepared by Xander Smith

**commissioned by Chris Jones
on behalf of the Diocese of Chelmsford**

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Issued:	04/04/2025	

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1 Summary

Archaeological monitoring and recording was carried out at The Rectory, Highbridge Street, Waltham Abbey, Essex, as part of a wider assessment of the building. The Rectory is a Grade II listed (NHLE 1124127) three-storey, timber-framed house, which was built in the late 16th – early 17th century with numerous later additions. A small test-pit against the building to determine the depth of its foundations did not reveal any archaeological remains.

2 Introduction (Fig 1)

This is the report for archaeological monitoring and recording carried out by the Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) at The Rectory, Highbridge Street, Waltham Abbey, Essex, on the 28th of March 2025. Work was commissioned by Chris Jones on behalf of the Diocese of Chelmsford as part of a wider assessment of the building. Groundworks were limited to the excavation of a small test-pit against the building to determine the depth of its foundations.

As the building is Grade II listed (NHLE 1124127), Essex County Council Place Services were consulted at this pre-planning phase, and a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording of all groundworks related to the assessment was recommended.

All fieldwork and reporting was undertaken in accordance with:

- *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE)* (Historic England 2015),
- Professional standards of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists, including its *Code of Conduct* (CIfA 2020a-b, 2022, 2023a-b),
- 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 and safety guidelines and requirements (CAT 2025).

3 Archaeological and geological background

The following archaeological background includes Essex Historic Environment Records (EHER numbers) held at Essex County Council, County Hall, Chelmsford, Essex (accessed via <http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk>).

According to legend Waltham Abbey (the town) was founded in the reign of Cnut when Tofig brought the miraculously revealed stone crucifix from Montacute (Somerset) to Waltham and erected a church to house it. Previously there had been little more than a hunting lodge in the forest. An early Saxon settlement is suggested on place-name evidence. It later became a hundredal meeting place. The

11th-century Domesday Book records a growing community of 169 men in a manor of 40 hides. The medieval built-up area is to the south of the monastic precinct. The oldest portion of it appears to be that closest to the church and market-place, although it expanded to the east, south and finally the west over the centuries (EHER 3666)

The Rectory, listed as Waltham Abbey Vicarage, is a grade II listed building. Its origins lay in the late 16th – early 17th century with additions to the north in the 18th century and a porch added to the south in the 19th century. Joseph Hall, afterwards Bishop of Exeter and Norwich, lived here 1612-34, and Thomas Fuller, cleric and historian, lived here 1649-57. Historic England notes that the building has been “Graded partly for historic interest”.

The Geology of Britain viewer (1:50,000 scale¹) shows the bedrock geology of the site is part of the London Clay Formation (clay, silt and sand) with superficial deposits of Alluvium (clay, silt, sand and gravel).

4 Aims

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

5 Results (Figs 2-3)

All groundworks were carried out by hand under the supervision of a CAT archaeologist. A single test-pit measuring 0.7m by 0.6m was excavated against the south-western corner of the building to a depth of 0.65m. Garden topsoil (L1, 0.35-0.4m thick) sealed subsoil (L2, 0.25-0.3m thick) which in turn covered natural (L3, encountered at a depth of 0.65m). The base of the Rectory's brick foundation was shown to be 0.6m deep from ground level.

¹ British Geological Survey – <https://geologyviewer.bgs.ac.uk/>



Photograph 1 Working shot, view north-west.



Photograph 2 Working shot, view north-west.



Photograph 3 Test-pit fully excavated, view east.



Photograph 4 Test-pit fully excavated, view north.

6 Finds

6.1 Pottery and ceramic building material (Appendix 1-2)

by Dr Matthew Loughton

Monitoring uncovered a small assemblage of pottery and ceramic building material (henceforth CBM) at 10 sherds with a weight of 385g and EVE of 0.13 (Table 1). The mean sherd weight is 38.5g. This material was recovered from topsoil (L1) and subsoil (L2).

Ceramic material	No.	Weight (g)	MSW (g)	EVE
Pottery	5	38	7.6	0.13
CBM	5	347	69.4	-
All	10	385	38.5	0.13

Table 1 Summary of the pottery and CBM

Post-medieval/modern pottery

The post-medieval/modern pottery was recorded according to the fabric groups from *CAR 7* (Cotter 2000) while the number of vessels was determined by rim EVE (estimated vessel equivalent) (Table 2). Two sherds of medieval Colchester-type ware (Fabric F21) came from subsoil L2 while sherds of 19th-20th century pottery (fabrics F48B, F48D, F51B) came from topsoil L1.

Fabric code	Fabric description	Fabric date range guide
F21	Colchester-type ware	c 1200-1550
F48B	English porcelain	19th-20th century
F48D	Staffordshire-type white earthenwares	19th-20th century
F51B	Flowerpot	19th-20th century

Table 2 Post-medieval/modern pottery fabrics recorded.

Fabric code	Fabric description	No.	Weight (g)	MSW (g)	EVE
F21	Colchester-type ware	2	8	4.0	0.00
F48B	English porcelain	1	3	3.0	0.08
F48D	Staffordshire-type white earthenwares	1	22	22.0	0.05
F51B	Flowerpot	1	5	5.0	0.00
Total		5	38	7.6	0.13

Table 3 Summary of the post-medieval/modern pottery.

Context	Feature type	No.	Weight (g)	MSW (g)	EVE
L1	Topsoil	3	25	8.3	0.13
L2	Subsoil	2	8	4.0	0.00
Total		5	38	7.6	0.13

Table 4 Quantities of post-medieval/modern pottery from specific contexts.

Ceramic building material (CBM)

The CBM consists of five fragments of medieval/post-medieval peg-tile with a weight of 347g which came from subsoil L2.

Conclusion

Table 5 summarizes the dating evidence for layers L1 and L2. None of the pottery or CBM was retained.

Context	Description	Post medieval/modern pottery	CBM	Date Approx.
L1	Topsoil	F48b (miniature cup/toy cup), F48 (large bowl), F51b	-	19th-20th century
L2	Subsoil	F21	PT	Medieval/post-medieval

Table 5 Approximate dates for the individual layers based on the pottery and CBM.

7 Conclusion

Due to the limited scope of the test-pit, nothing more than the foundations of the historic building were identified. All finds came from the topsoil and subsoil and represent a small sample of the kinds of material evident in any historic building's garden.

8 Acknowledgements

CAT would like to thank Chris Jones for commissioning and funding the work. The project was managed by A Wightman and C Lister, with fieldwork carried out by X Smith. Figures were compiled by X Smith and M Beale. The project was monitored for ECCPS by Maria Medlycott.

9 References

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

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10 Abbreviations and glossary

CAT	Colchester Archaeological Trust
ClfA	Chartered Institute for Archaeologists
Early Medieval	AD 410 to 1066
ECC	Essex County Council
ECCHEA	Essex County Council Historic Environment Advisor
ECCPS	Essex County Council Place Services
EHHER	Essex Historic Environment Record
feature (F)	an identifiable thing like a pit, a wall, or a drain: can contain 'contexts'
layer (L)	distinct or distinguishable deposit (layer) of material
medieval	period from AD 1066 to 1540
modern	period from AD 1901 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
post-medieval	period from AD 1540 to 1900
section	(abbreviation sx or Sx) vertical slice through feature/s or layer/s
WSI	written scheme of investigation

11 Archive deposition

Digital record: This project falls within the ClfA definition of a sterile project (<https://www.archaeologists.net/work/toolkits/archives/sterile-projects>), and as such the preserved archaeological archive will take the form of a single digital document that incorporates all the relevant elements from the project archive. This document will be uploaded to OASIS and released into the Archaeological Data Service (ADS) library, from where it will be curated by the ADS. The single digital document will include the report, brief, wsi, photographs, and original site data (for example context sheets, section drawings).

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Distribution list:

Chris Jones on behalf of the Diocese of Chelmsford
ECC Place Services Historic Environment Advisor
Essex Historic Environment Record, Essex County Council

Appendix 1 Pottery list

Context	Feature type	Find no.	NR	GR	MSW	Discard	Rim	Handle	Base	Fabric Group	Typology	Function	EVE	Diameter	Comments	Start Date	End Date
L1	TOPSOIL	1	1	5	5	X				F51B	FLOWER POT	FLOWER POT				1800	2000
L1	TOPSOIL	1	1	22	22	X	1	0	0	F48D	LARGE BOWL	BOWL	0.05	360		1800	2000
L1	TOPSOIL	1	1	3	3	X	1	0	0	F48B	CUP	CUP	0.08	30	MINI CUP OR TOY CUP	1800	2000
L2	SUBSOIL	2	1	5	5	X				F21					GLAZE INT	1200	1550
L2	SUBSOIL	2	1	3	3	X				F21						1200	1550

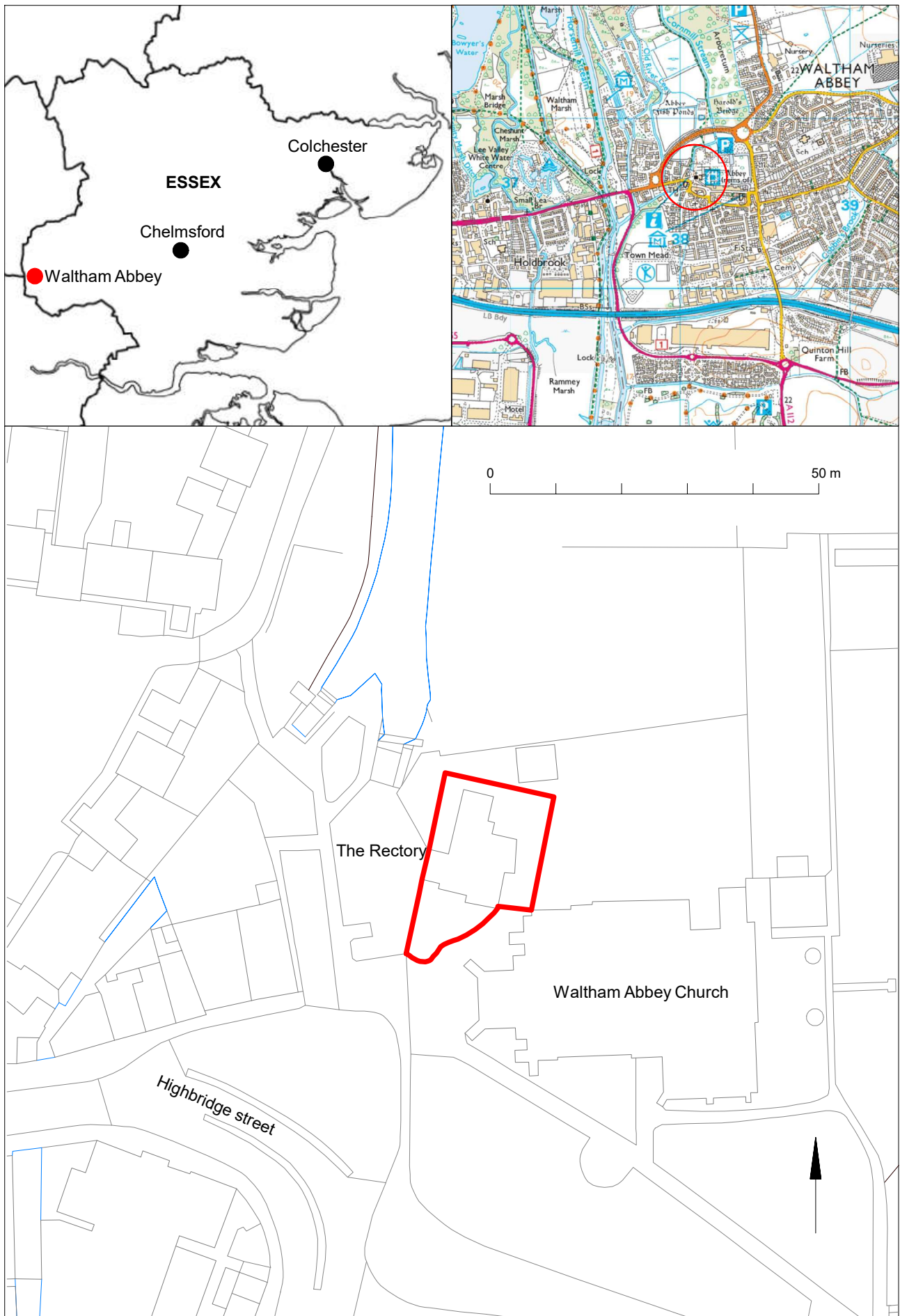
Appendix 2 CBM list

Context	Feature type	Find no.	NR	GR	MSW	Discard	Typology	Mortar	Overfired	Comments	Start Date	End Date
L2	SUBSOIL	2	1	66	66	X	PT				1200/1250	1600
L2	SUBSOIL	2	2	192	96	X	PT	X		WHITE MORTAR	1200/1250	1600
L2	SUBSOIL	2	1	71	71	X	PT		X		1200/1250	1600
L2	SUBSOIL	2	1	18	18	X	PT				1200/1250	1600

NR = number/quantity

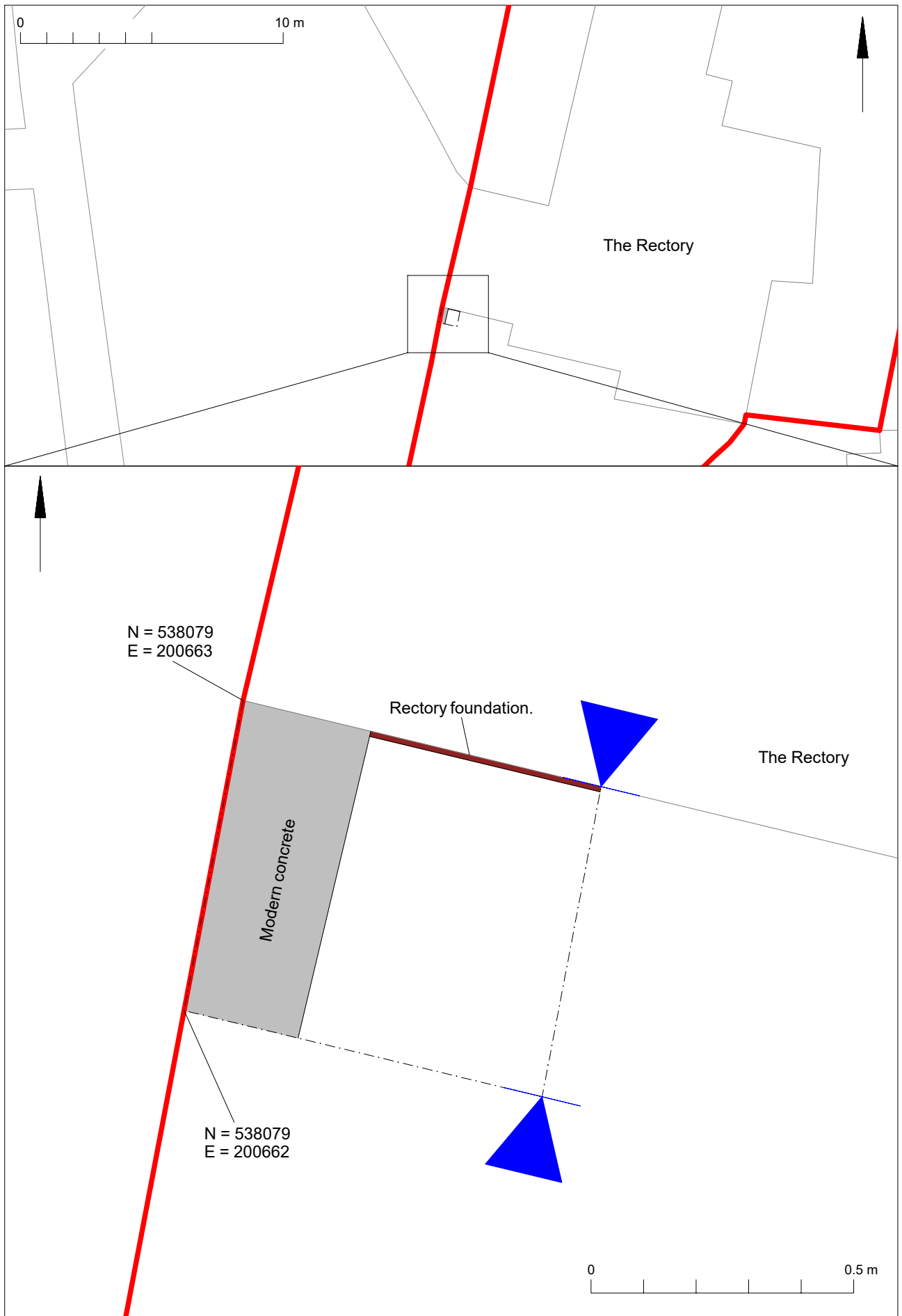
GR = grams

MSW = mean sherd weight (g)



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Fig 1 Site location.



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Fig 2 Results.

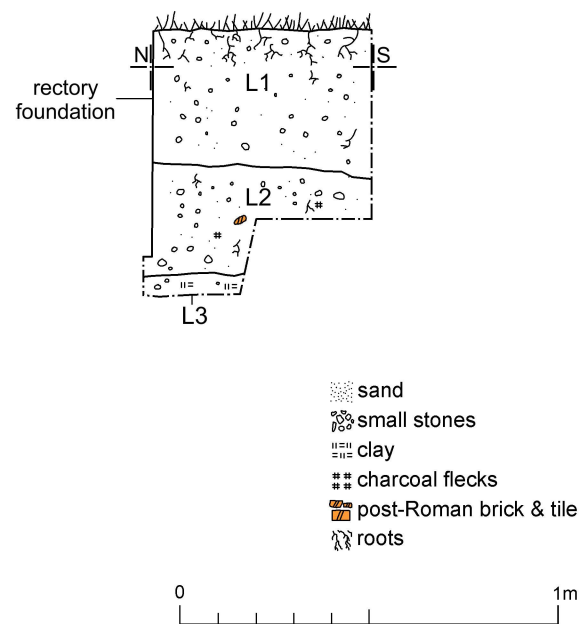


Figure 3 Representative section.



EEX61446_photograph_001 General site shot, view...

EEX61446_photograph_002 General site shot, vie...

EEX61446_photograph_003 General site shot, vie...



EEX61446_photograph_004 General site shot, vie...

EEX61446_photograph_005 General site shot, vie...

EEX61446_photograph_006 General site shot, vie...



EEX61446_photograph_007 Working shot, view nor...

EEX61446_photograph_008 Working shot, view nor...

EEX61446_photograph_009 Working shot, view nor...



EEX61446_photograph_010 Working shot, view nor...

EEX61446_photograph_011 Working shot, view nor...

EEX61446_photograph_012 Working shot, view nor...



EEX61446_photograph_013 Working shot, view nor...



EEX61446_photograph_014 Working shot, view nor...



EEX61446_photograph_015 Working shot, view nor...



EEX61446_photograph_016 Working shot, view nor...



EEX61446_photograph_017 Working shot, view nor...



EEX61446_photograph_018 Working shot, view nor...



EEX61446_photograph_019 Working shot, view nor...



EEX61446_photograph_020 Working shot, view nor...



EEX61446_photograph_021 Working shot, view nor...



EEX61446_photograph_022 Working shot, view nor...



EEX61446_photograph_023 Mid ex shot, view north.



EEX61446_photograph_024 Mid ex shot, view north...



EEX61446_photograph_025 Mid ex shot, view north.



EEX61446_photograph_026 Working shot, view north.



EEX61446_photograph_027 Mid ex shot, view north.



EEX61446_photograph_028 Working shot, view north.



EEX61446_photograph_029 Working shot, view north.



EEX61446_photograph_030 Working shot, view north.



EEX61446_photograph_031 Working shot, view north.



EEX61446_photograph_032 Working shot, view north.



EEX61446_photograph_033 Working shot, view north.



EEX61446_photograph_034 Working shot, view north.



EEX61446_photograph_035 Working shot, view north.



EEX61446_photograph_036 Post ex shot, view north.



EEX61446_photograph_037 Post ex shot, view east...

EEX61446_photograph_038 Post ex shot, view wes...

EEX61446_photograph_039 Section shot of test pit,...



EEX61446_photograph_040 Post ex shot, view north.

EEX61446_photograph_041 Post ex shot, view west.

EEX61446_photograph_042 Post ex shot, view north.



EEX61446_photograph_043 Post ex shot, view north.

EEX61446_photograph_044 Location shot, view nor...

OASIS Summary for colchest3-532819

OASIS ID (UID)	colchest3-532819
Project Name	Archaeological monitoring and recording at The Rectory, Highbridge Street, Waltham Abbey, Essex, EN9 1DG: March 2025
Sitename	The Rectory, Highbridge Street, Waltham Abbey, Essex, EN9 1DG
Sitecode	EEX61446
Project Identifier(s)	2025/03m
Activity type	Watching Brief
Planning Id	
Reason For Investigation	Planning: Pre application
Organisation Responsible for work	Colchester Archaeological Trust
Project Dates	28-Mar-2025 - 28-Mar-2025
Location	The Rectory, Highbridge Street, Waltham Abbey, Essex, EN9 1DG NGR : TL 38087 00666 LL : 51.68777679607316, -0.003783783142847 12 Fig : 538087,200666
Administrative Areas	Country : England County/Local Authority : Essex Local Authority District : Epping Forest Parish : Waltham Abbey
Project Methodology	Archaeological monitoring and recording of all pre-planning groundworks as recommended by Essex County Council Place Services
Project Results	Archaeological monitoring and recording was carried out at The Rectory, Highbridge Street, Waltham Abbey, Essex, as part of a wider assessment of the building. The Rectory is a Grade II listed (NHLE 1124127) three-storey, timber-framed house, which was built in the late 16th – early 17th century with numerous latter additions. A small test-pit against the building to determine the depth of its foundations did not reveal any archaeological remains.
Keywords	
Funder	Religious body Diocese of Chelmsford
HER	Essex HER - unRev - STANDARD
Person Responsible for work	Adam Wightman, Chris Lister
HER Identifiers	HER Event No - EEX61446
Archives	