

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION
AT
117-119 & 124-125 HYTHE HILL, COLCHESTER

JANUARY 1998

Museum accession: 1997.84

On behalf of Rose Builders Limited



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AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION AT 117 - 119 & 124 -125 HYTHE HILL, COLCHESTER

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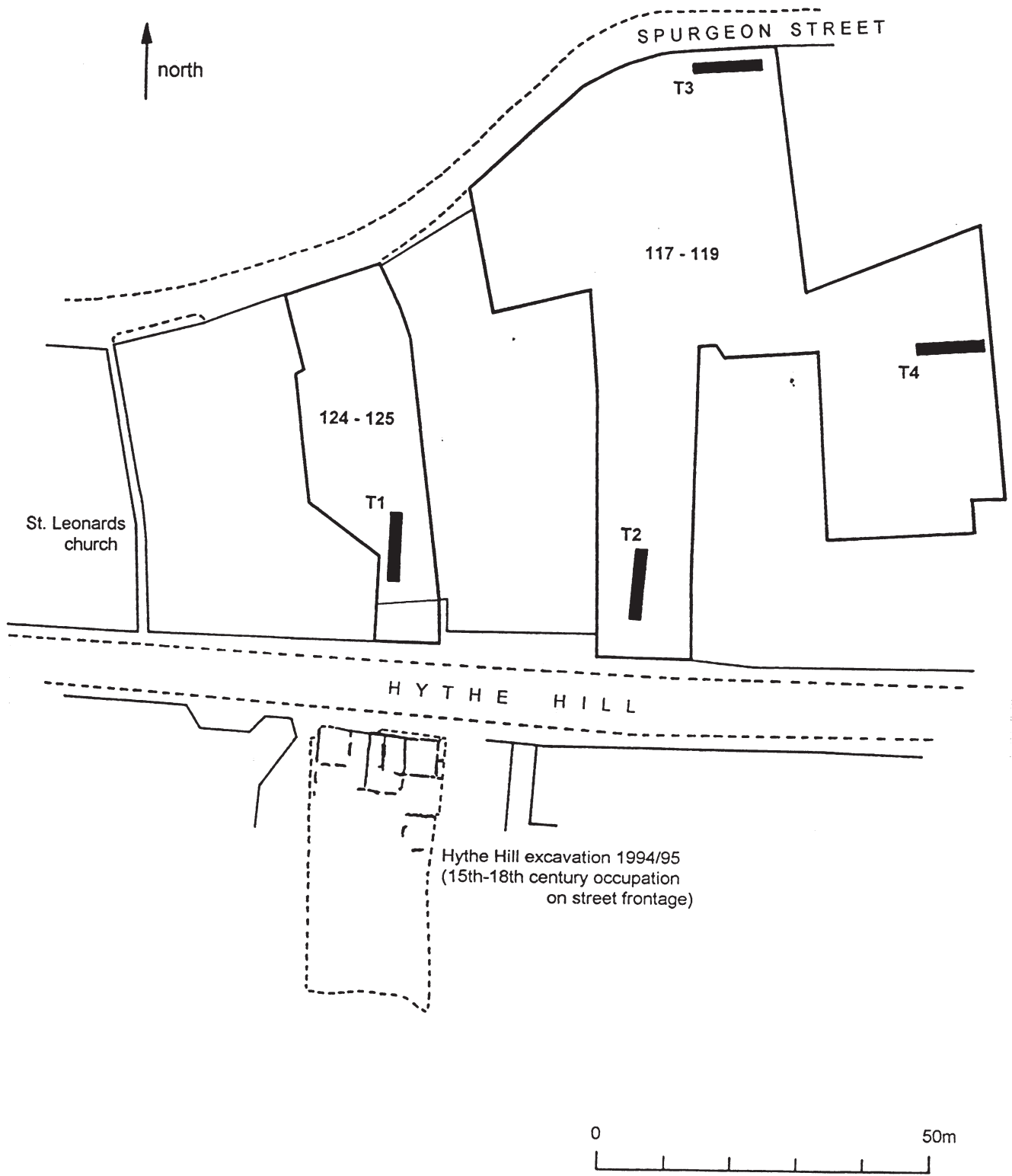
SUMMARY

The evaluation was carried out on two adjacent but separate development areas at 117-119 and 124-125 Hythe Hill. The plots of land are bounded by the Hythe Hill to the south and by Spurgeon street to the north.

Within both of the development parcels significant archaeological deposits of post medieval date are indicated along the road frontage on Hythe Hill surviving to between 0.1m and 0.5m of modern surface levels. Structural remains are represented by a stone and mortar foundation plinth (0.5m below the present surface) from a timber framed building which probably dates from the 16th-17th century. Fragments from glazed floor tiles suggest that this building could have been well appointed. Evidence was also recovered for a general accumulation of occupation debris and the later creation of prepared surfaces or yards to the rear of former buildings fronting the street. These survive to between 0.1 - 0.2 m below the modern ground level. Although the evaluation trenches did not significantly penetrate these deposits residual material recovered from them can be dated as early as the 14th century. This suggests that the archaeological sequence of occupation on this area of Hythe Hill probably begins in the late medieval period and structural remains from that period could be anticipated.

Away from the former building plots fronting Hythe Hill no evidence of any significant archaeology was encountered.

(COLCHESTER AND ESSEX MUSEUM ACCESSION CODE 1997.84)



117-119 & 124-125 HYTHE HILL COLCHESTER 1997
 Fig 1: GENERAL PLAN

INTRODUCTION.

(Fig 1)

An evaluation was carried out to assess the archaeological implications of proposed development of two sites, 117-119 and 124-125 Hythe Hill Colchester, which both span the plot of land bounded by Hythe Hill and Spurgeon Street. The westerly site (No.124-125) incorporates the area previously called Dolphin Yard.

The archaeological potential of this area has recently been illustrated by excavations on the former Colchester Tractors Site at 79 Hythe Hill (Brooks 1997) which is on the south side of the road opposite the proposed development areas. These excavations uncovered evidence of buildings dating from the 15th century onwards with internal floors, hearths, ovens and yard areas to the rear.

Four trenches (T1-T4) each 10 metres in length were excavated by JCB using a 1.8 metre ditching bucket. One trench (T1) was located in the westerly development area, the three others (T2-4) in the easterly. Any features revealed were tested by limited excavation. Plans and sections of each trench were drawn and a photographic record made.

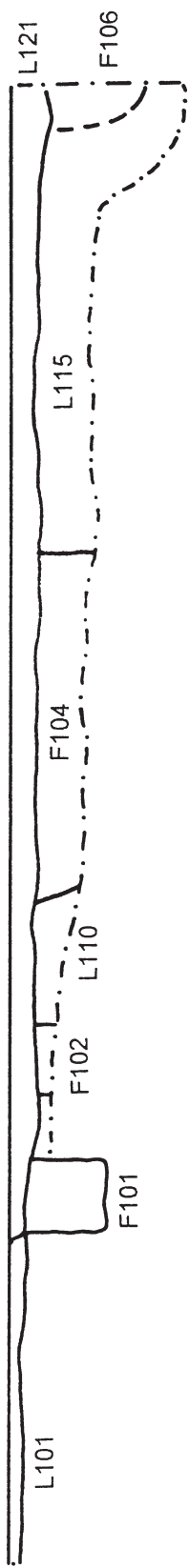
ARCHAEOLOGY AS REPRESENTED BY THE EVALUATION TRENCHES:

124 - 125 HYTHE HILL

Trench 1 (Fig 2)

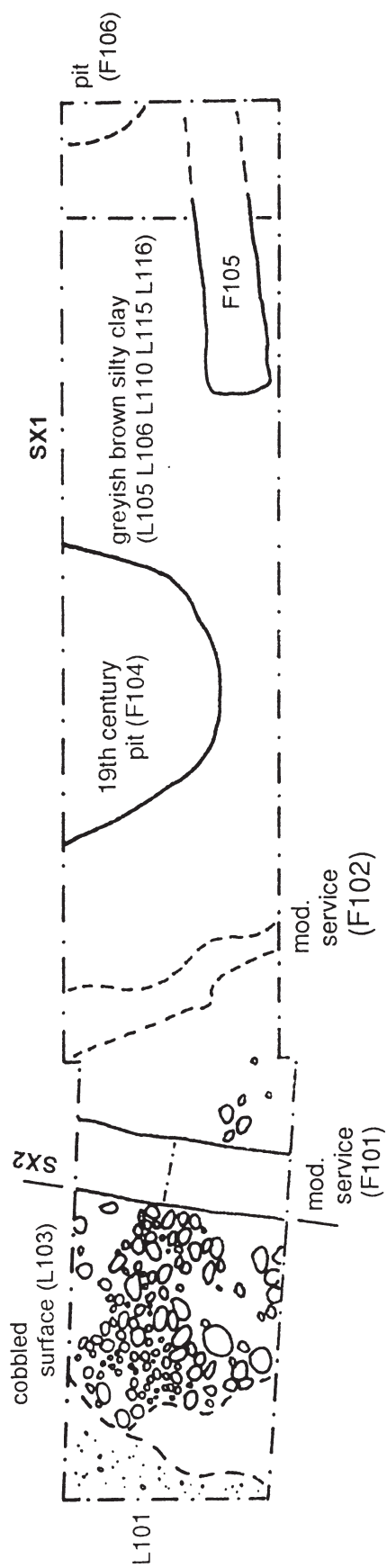
The removal of the existing gravel surface (L101) and underlying loam with brick and mortar debris (L121) revealed a number of modern features including service trenches and pits (F101-105). Material from the large pit (F104) can be dated to the 17th-19th centuries. At the south end of the trench was a cobbled surface (L103) comprising a single layer of tightly packed rounded stones averaging 10-25cm in size. This surface had been partially damaged by a modern service (F101). The cobbling or yard surface partly overlies an extensive layer(s) of greyish-brown silty clay (L105, L106, L110, L115, L116) which contain material dating from the 14th-18th centuries. These contexts probably represent general accumulation in yards and gardens to the rear of former properties fronting onto Hythe Hill.

section 1

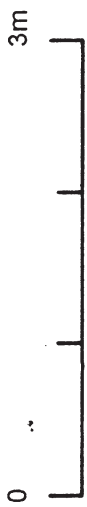


south

north



section 2



117-119 HYTHE HILL COLCHESTER 1997
 Fig 2: TRENCH 1 PLAN & SECTIONS

117 - 119 HYTHE HILL

Trench 2 (Fig 3)

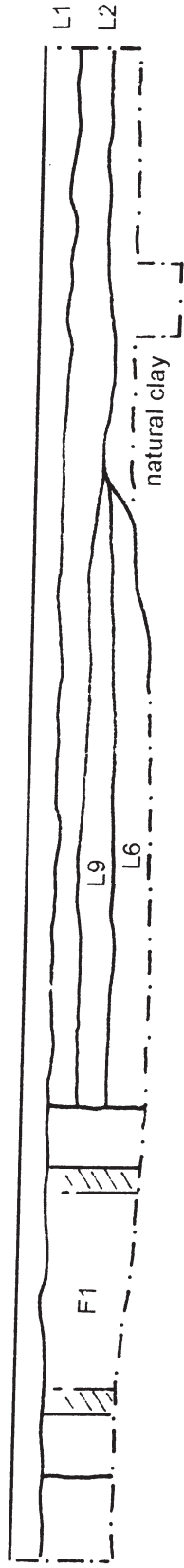
This trench is located nearest to the street frontage of Hythe Hill. Removal of the modern tarmac and mixed rubble make-up (L1) revealed a brick built Well with a clay lining (F1) cutting through earlier post medieval build up layers (L2, L9). Uncovered at the extreme south end of the trench was the remains of a relatively modern brick wall (F2) which had been constructed immediately on top of an earlier stone and mortar built wall (F3). This foundation was cut into the clay natural. The north end of the earlier wall (F3) seems to align with the rear northern edge of other old street frontage buildings, and by analogy with the excavations at 79 Hythe Hill probably dates to the 16th - 17th centuries. This feature is isolated from the other archaeology in this trench and consequently no stratigraphic relationship exists linking the wall with other contexts. A small area of gravel (L4) which is possibly the remains of a prepared surface at the north end of the trench overlies a series of dark yellowish brown sandy/clay loam deposits (L5, L6, L7). Finds from these contexts and from F3, which include pottery, bone, slate and tile, can be dated to the 15th -16th centuries. These finds are consistent with an interpretation that they derive from an accumulation of rubbish resulting from domestic occupation. Of particular note are several fragments of glazed tiles which imply that there was a building with a good quality tile floor on this plot. The absence of any evidence for tiled floors in the houses excavated at 79 Hythe Hill opposite, implies that the building here on the north side of the road was of higher status.

A single heavily corroded copper alloy coin, possibly early Roman was also recovered from this trench.

Trench 3 (Fig 4)

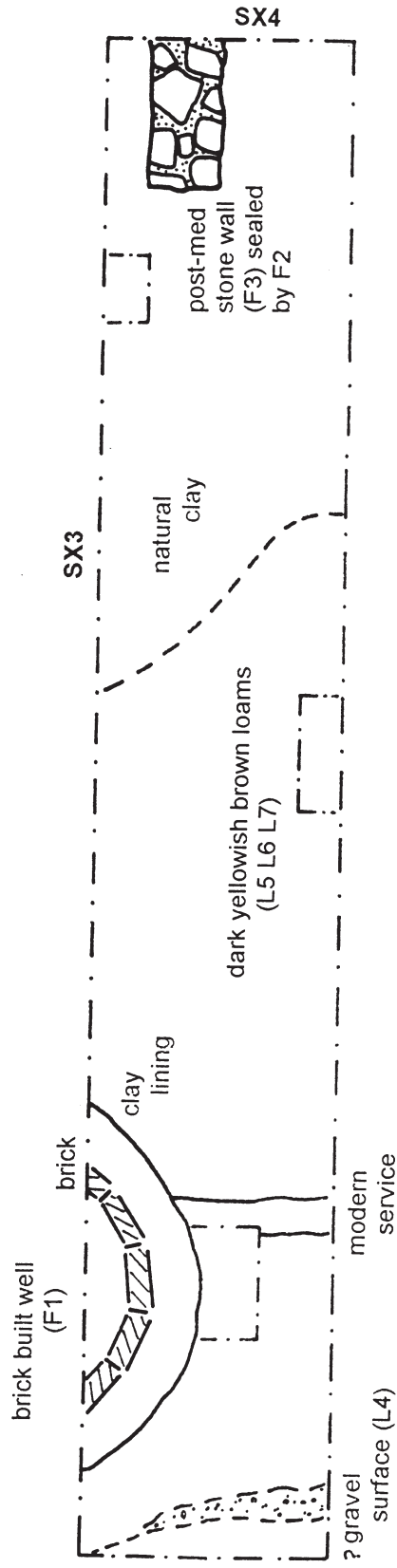
This trench was orientated west-east along the site frontage with Spurgeon street. Removal of the modern brick rubble layer (L1) covering this area revealed a dark loam (L2) with modern brick and post medieval tile throughout. This layer was approximately 0.7m thick and directly sealed the natural clay subsoil. The lack of any surviving significant archaeological deposits possibly indicates that previous reduction in ground levels has removed any remains.

section 3

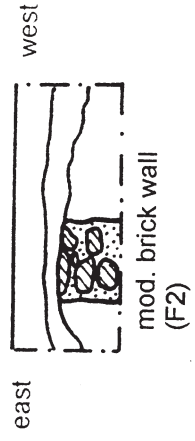


north

south

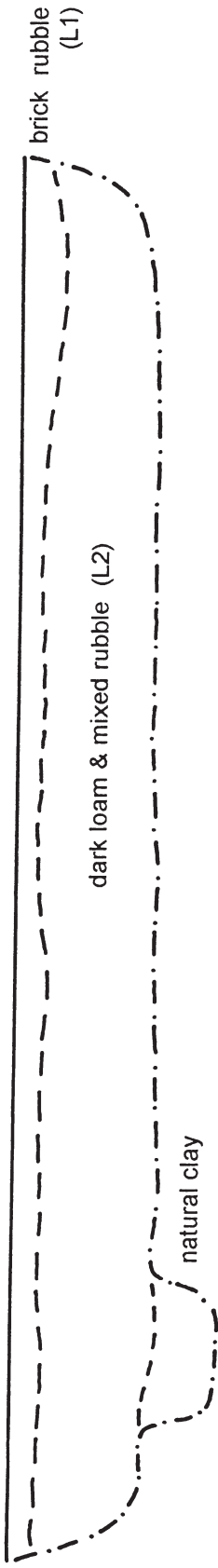


section 4



124-125 HYTHE HILL COLCHESTER 1997
Fig 3: TRENCH 2 PLAN & SECTIONS

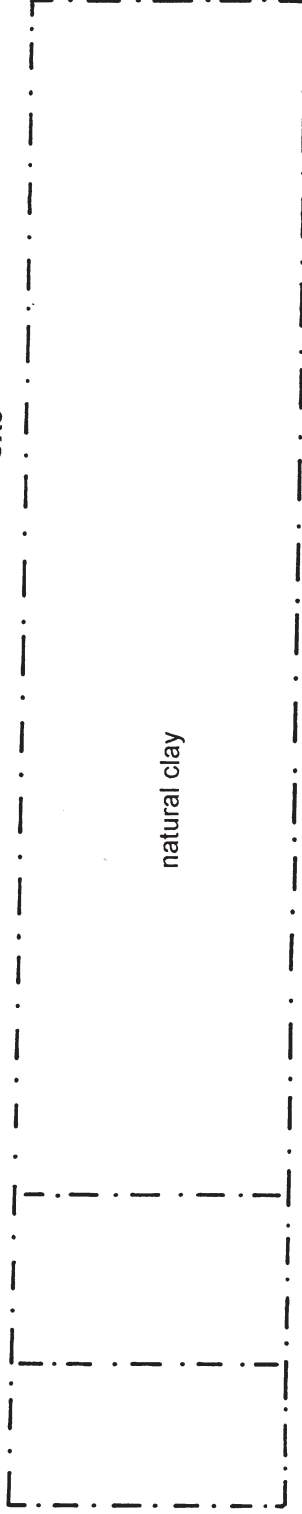
section 5



east

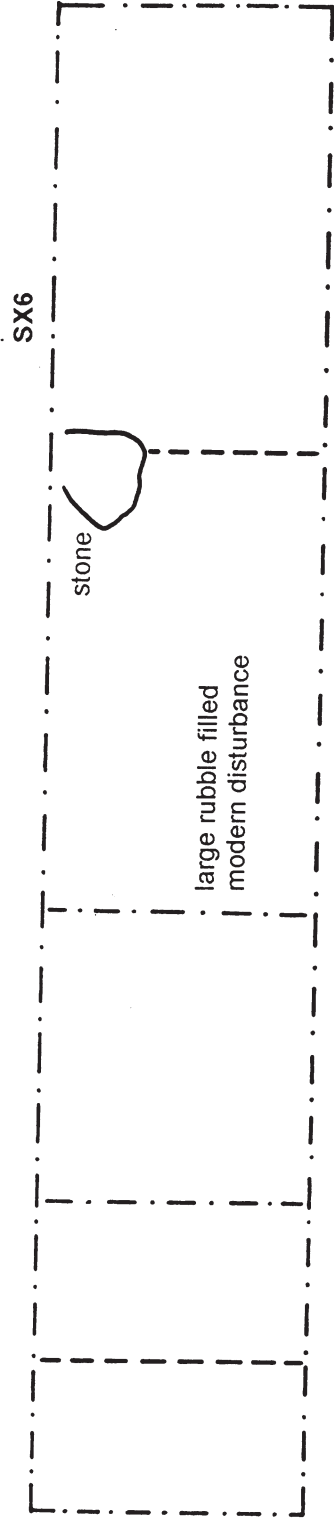
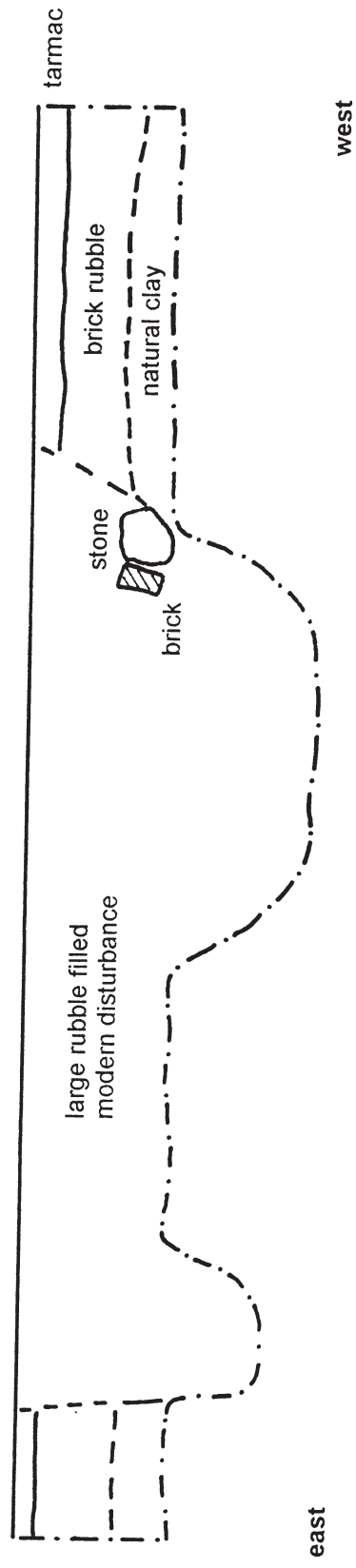
west

SX5



124-125 HYTHE HILL COLCHESTER 1997
Fig 4: TRENCH 3 PLAN & SECTION

section 6



124-125 HYTHE HILL COLCHESTER 1997
Fig 5: TRENCH 4 PLAN & SECTION

Trench 4 (Fig 5)

This trench was located towards the centre of the development plot. Its overall aspect was similar to that of trench 3, though a greater part of its length had been subject to a considerable modern disturbance. This area of disturbance (F1) was filled with mixed modern rubble and general demolition or clearance rubbish, which included part of a brick wall possibly part of a former building. Finds from the trench include clay pipe and pottery dating from the 19th and 20th centuries. This area, like trench 3, may have been subject to a reduction in levels, though the lack of any significant remains does not altogether preclude the possibility of significant archaeology surviving in the vicinity.

COLIN AUSTIN, JANUARY 1998. FOR:

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REFERENCES

- Brooks H. *Excavations on the former Colchester Tractors Site, 79 Hythe Hill 1994-5*, Archive Report, Colchester Archaeological Trust 1997.