

A watching brief on a borehole survey at Colchester garrison

June 2000



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Introduction

This report contains a record of the soil stratigraphy revealed in a series of geotechnical boreholes on land belonging to Colchester garrison. As a preliminary to deep drilling, pits were hand-dug at each location to check for the presence of services and buried ordnance in the uppermost 1.2m of ground. The archaeological watching brief, commissioned by W.S. Atkins Ltd on behalf of RMPA Services, focused on this first stage of the survey work.

Results

The borehole locations are shown in Figure 1. Seven of the eight sites were observed on this occasion (Boreholes or BH 1-7). Work at the remaining site (BH8) has been postponed, and will be watched if and when further digging takes place.

BH1

(35cm x 35cm x 0.8m deep)

South of the car park on the east side of Ypres Road

NGR: TL 9950 2371

- L1 Turf and topsoil. Modern redeposited soil. 15cm.
- L2 Mid brown sandy loam with a low content of small stones, common small fragments of red brick and occasional oyster shell. Dump, probably levelling in preparation for Layer 1 (L1). The brick fragments were too small to be dated, although the presence of oyster may indicate an earlier date for the source material. 25cm.

- L3 Mid brown fine sandy loam/loamy sand. This material extended down beyond the limit of the pit. Although free from inclusions, its texture was not altogether convincing as a purely natural subsoil.

BH2

(30cm x 35cm x 1.2m deep)

Main entrance, Kirkee and McMunn Barracks

NGR: TL 9886 2353

- L1 Turf and topsoil. Modern. 15cm.
L2 Yellowish brown sandy silt loam with a high content of small stones, occasional small fragments of red brick. Modern dumped material. 15cm.
L3 Yellowish brown silty sand with a low content of small stones. Natural subsoil. 40cm.
L4 Reddish brown sand, slightly silty, with a medium to high content of gravel. Natural.

BH3

(50cm x 30cm x 1.1m deep)

West of track between Ypres Road and Berechurch Road

NGR: TL 9922 2322

- L1 Ploughsoil. Mid brown sandy silt loam with a medium content of rounded and angular small stones, rare small fragments (<1cm) of red brick or tile. 40cm.
L2 Mid brown sandy silt loam, similar to L1, but with a higher content of small stones and no discernible brick inclusions. 15cm.
L3 Mixed mid brown silty clay loam and reddish brown sand. Natural.

BH4

(30cm x 35cm x 1.2m deep)

Kirkee and McMunn Barracks

NGR: TL 9858 2312

- L1 Turf and topsoil. Modern. 10cm.
L2 Brown fine sandy loam, compact, with a high content of small stones, occasional small yellow and red brick and minute coal fragments. Modern dumped material. 30cm.
L3 Sandy silt loam, brown with yellowish brown mottles, low content of gravel. Natural.

BH5

(40cm x 30cm x 1.2m deep)

Field west of Berechurch Road

NGR: TL 9946 2300

- L1 Mid brown sandy silt loam with a medium content of rounded and angular small stones, rare small fragments (<2cm) of red brick. Ploughsoil. 28cm.
- L2 Yellowish brown silty sand with a low to medium content of small stones. Natural subsoil.

BH6

(40cm x 30cm x 1.2m deep)

Roman Way

NGR: TL 9935 2254

- L1 Pale greyish brown silt loam with rare minute black flecks, possibly charcoal. Turf and topsoil. Approximately 20cm deep, merging to:
- L2 Yellowish brown silt loam with a low content of small stones. A subsoil which extended to an overall depth of 60cm, where it merged into:
- L3 Yellowish brown silt loam with reddish brown sand mottles. A natural silty sand in which the sand component increased with depth.

BH7

(40cm x 30cm x 1.2m deep)

Former sports field west of Berechurch Road

NGR: TL 9952 2327

- L1 Pale brown fine sandy silt loam with rare very small fragments of red brick or tile, also occasional minute fragments of coal and one sherd of porcelain. Modern turf and topsoil. 20cm.
- L2 Pale brown fine sandy silt loam, similar to L1 but without brick and coal inclusions. A long-term topsoil accumulation. At approximately 45cm overall depth this soil merges to:
- L3 Mixed mid brown silty clay loam and reddish brown sand. Natural.

BH8

Field east of Kirkee-McMunn barracks

Ground investigation at this location has been postponed.

Overall, no cut features were discernible in any of the pits. Stratigraphic evidence of modern (ie 19th-/20th-century) building and landscaping activity was revealed in the two pits at Kirkee and McMunn Barracks (BH2 and BH4), and also in the area to the south of the Ypres Road car park (BH1).

Archive

A copy of this report together with the original fieldwork records will be deposited permanently with Colchester Museum under cover of museum archive code 2000-59.

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