

# **Report on an archaeological watching brief at Thomas Lord Audley School, Monkwick, Colchester**

**July 2000**

**for WS Atkins Property Services**



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**CAT Report 91**

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# Archaeological watching brief at Thomas Lord Audley School, Monkwick, Colchester July 2000

## 1 Introduction

- 1.1 This is the report on an archaeological watching brief at Thomas Lord Audley School, Monkwick, Colchester, Essex, commissioned by WS Atkins Property Services and carried out by Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) in July 2000.
- 1.2 All work was done to a brief written by Colchester Borough Council's Archaeology Officer (CAO) with advice from Essex County Council Heritage Advice Management and Promotions (HAMP), and mirrors standards in the *Guidelines on standards and practices for archaeological fieldwork in the Borough of Colchester* (1996), and *Guidelines on the preparation and transfer of archaeological archives to Colchester Museums* (1996).
- 1.3 Proposed work was the building of a new drama complex, measuring 350m<sup>2</sup>, with attendant service trenches south of the existing block A of Monkwick County Junior School (Fig 1).

## 2 Archaeological background

- 2.1 The development is located on the site of Monkwick Farm, a moated grange (complete with fishponds) of St John's Abbey, Colchester. After the Dissolution of 1547 it came into the possession of Sir Francis Jobson, who apparently rebuilt the house and enclosed a park there. The property was badly damaged during the Civil War in 1648, and then restored. Becoming increasingly dilapidated, it continued in existence as a farmhouse until its demolition in 1963, in preparation for the construction of a school. The fishponds had been drained in 1920.
- 2.2 The extension is also on the line of the Berechurch Dyke, a late Iron Age/early Roman defensive earthwork comprising a bank with an east facing ditch. This linear dyke runs roughly north-south along the upper western edge of the Colne valley. Where the dyke is

extant, over a mile to the south of the schools, the rampart survives to a height of 2m and is 9.5m wide, and the ditch is 2m deep and 4m wide.

### **3 Aims**

The aim of the archaeological work was to identify and record any archaeological features or deposits revealed by the groundworks.

### **4 Report**

#### **4.1 Wednesday 5th July 2000**

At the time of the visit, the site area had been marked out on the grass, and although topsoil stripping was planned to start now, the supervisor was still waiting for the JCB to arrive. 1 hour

#### **4.2 Thursday 6th July 2000**

Topsoil stripping had just begun. Nothing was visible in the stripped area, corresponding with the north-west corner of the proposed building. Stripping here did not penetrate topsoil. Spoil heap checked. No finds. 1 hour

#### **4.3 Friday 7th July 2000**

Topsoil stripping was now completed, and the footings trench along the eastern edge of the site was open. A cut feature (F1) was seen in section in both sides of the trench. Within the constraints of a narrow trench, this seemed to be about 3m wide, deeper than the trench (1.25m), and filled with brownish orange sand with occasional pebbles. Natural soil, by contrast, was orange sand with some clay. The feature was cut by a modern plastic pipe in a gravel-filled trench. There is no other dating evidence for it. The feature was sketched (Fig 3 here). 1 hour

#### **4.4 Tuesday 11th July 2000**

The rest of the footings trenches were seen open. There was no sign of the feature recorded on 7th July. However, there was one other feature seen (F2) in the extreme south-west corner of the building. This was 1.7m wide (running off the trench) and deeper than the trench depth (0.9m). It was filled with light yellowish brown sandy loam with a very high

content of stones. It is possibly a natural feature. The normal site stratigraphy was recorded elsewhere on the site as:

- L1 turf and topsoil (up to 20cm deep).
- L2 light brown sandy loam (15cm deep).
- L3 light yellowish brown sandy loam with very a high content of stones.
- L4 natural reddish brown sand.

1.5 hrs

## **5 Discussion**

**5.1** Two archaeological features were recorded by this watching brief. One (F1) was apparently an isolated and undated pit, and the second (F2) may be a natural feature.

**5.2** The two major potential archaeological sites which might have been encountered here were the remains of the moated grange of St John's Abbey, reputedly on the site of Monkwick Farm, and the Iron Age Berechurch Dyke. There were no medieval or post-medieval finds from this watching brief, nor any signs of the grange's moat or fishponds. It must be the case that this site does not coincide with the body of the grange. Similarly, there was no sign of a continuous linear earthwork like the dyke. On the evidence seen here, it seems certain that Berechurch dyke did not pass under the position of the new drama complex. In fact, the projected line of the dyke (as seen on Ordnance survey sheet <sup>1</sup>) seems to pass 30 or 40 metres east of this position.

## **6 Finds**

There were no finds.

## **7 Archive deposition**

The full archive is presently at CAT headquarters at 12 Lexden Road, Colchester, but it will be permanently deposited at Colchester Museum.

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<sup>1</sup> 1:10,000 TL: 92 SE

## **8 Acknowledgements**

Thanks to WS Atkins Property Services for commissioning the work (especially to Mr D Clampin), to Richard Havis of Essex County HAMP and to Martin Winter of Colchester Museums for monitoring the project. Thanks also to site agent Clive Andrews for assistance on site.

*Howard Brooks  
12th September 2000*

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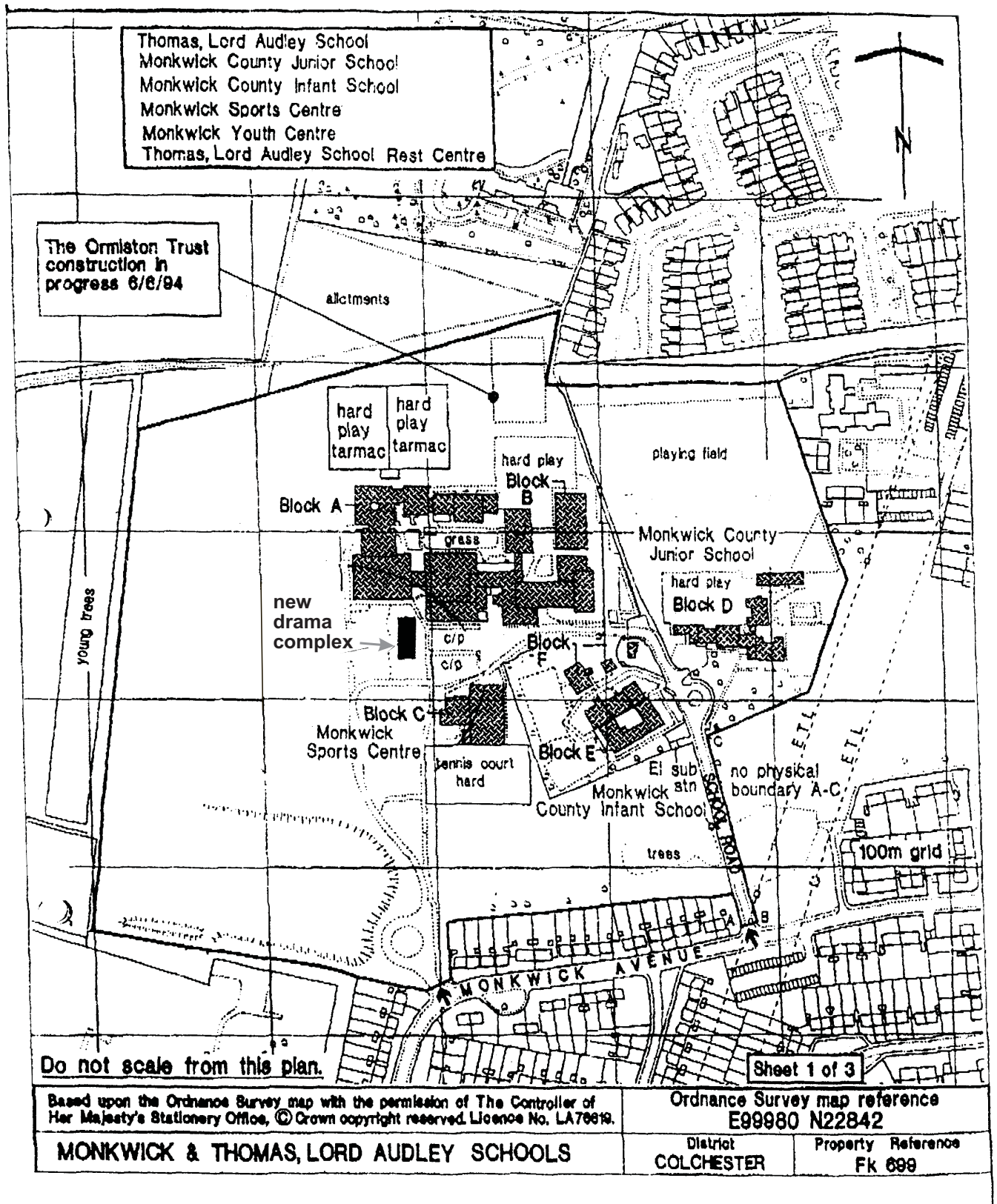
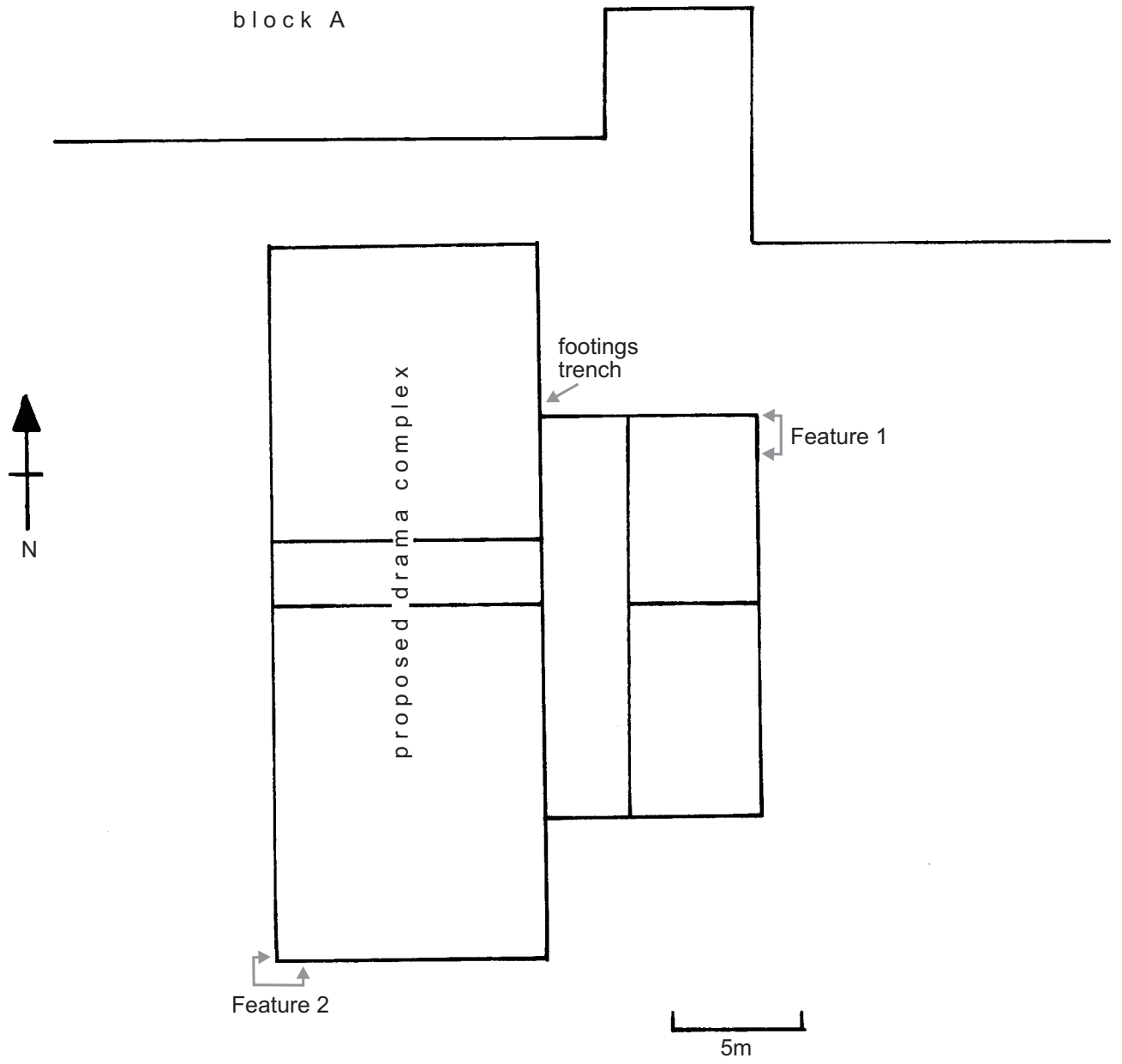
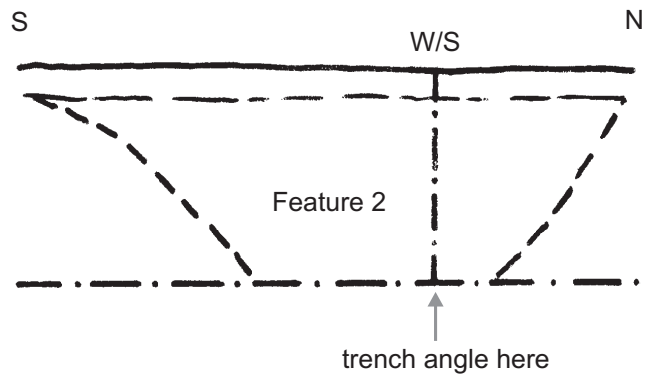
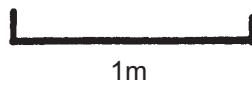
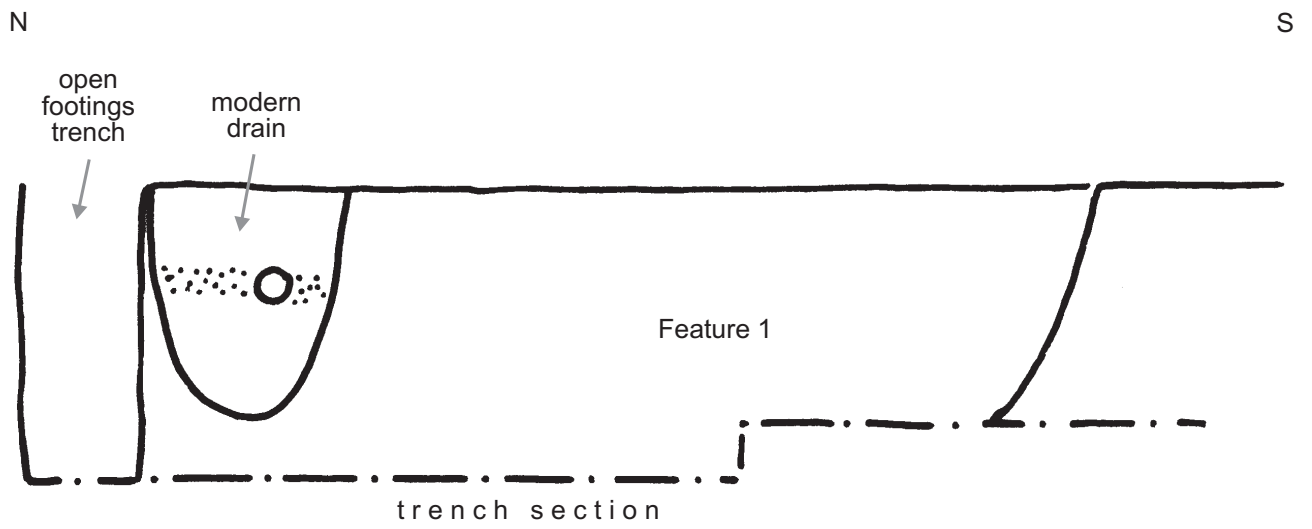


Fig 1 Site location.





**Fig 2 Footings trenches and recorded features.**



**Fig 3 Sections.**