

An archaeological evaluation
at
St Mary's School,
91 Lexden Road, Colchester

September 2000

commissioned by Laurie Wood Architects
on behalf of St Mary's School



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CAT Report 95

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CAT Report 95
CAT site code: STM 2000
CAT project code: 00/9c
Colchester Museum accession code: 2000.106
NGR: TL 9920 2501
Planning reference: F/COL/00/0254



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An archaeological evaluation at St Mary's School, 91 Lexden Road, Colchester, Essex

1 Summary

The site lies on the north side of Lexden Road, in an area of potential Roman cemetery. A 6m- long evaluation trench failed to reveal any archaeological deposits or finds. There is reason to believe that there has been some truncation of the ground surface here.

2 Introduction

- 2.1** This is the archive report on an archaeological evaluation by trial trench slightly to the north of two temporary structures to the north-east of the main school building at St Mary's School, 91 Lexden Road, Colchester, Essex. The archaeological work was commissioned by Laurie Wood Architects on behalf of St Mary's School. The site is centred at TL 9920 2501.
- 2.2** The current development proposal is to replace the two temporary structures with a new hall and classroom block, and is the subject of Colchester Borough Council application no F/COL/00/0254.
- 2.3** Fieldwork was carried out by Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) on 11th September. Post-excavation work was carried out on 15th-18th September 2000. All work was done in accordance with a brief issued by the Archaeology Officer of Colchester Museums.
- 2.4** This report mirrors standards and practices contained in Colchester Borough Council's *Guidelines for the standards and practice of archaeological fieldwork in the Borough of Colchester*.

3 Archaeological background

St Mary's School is situated outside the historic walled town, and on the north side of a major Roman road which ran west from Colchester towards London and Braughing. This road was lined on both sides by an extensive and rich Roman cemetery area. Roman remains of an unspecified nature were found close by when 'The Turrets' (89 Lexden Road) was being constructed in 1816 (Hull 1958, 292). Roman kilns are known north of the site in an area now designated as Scheduled Ancient Monument.

4 Aim

The aim of the evaluation was to locate, identify and assess the quality and extent of any surviving archaeological remains on the site.

5 The evaluation trench (Fig 2)

A single 6m-long trial trench was dug in the location shown on Figure 2. The trench was progressively stripped by a mechanical digger using a 1.5m-wide toothless ditching bucket. The upper surfaces were progressively stripped off until either significant archaeological deposits or natural ground were reached. The topsoil (L01) was removed in this way, as well as L02, a dark yellowish brown very compact loam. This brought the trench level down to a hard and convincing natural ground (L03) - a compact layer of orange brown gravel with yellow brown sand. Just to confirm that this was natural, the trench bottom was overdug by approximately 140mm at the east end and 100mm at the west.

6 Finds

There were no finds.

7 Discussion and interpretation

No archaeological remains were exposed by the evaluation trench. In an area of Roman cemeteries, it is possible that evaluations of this type might accidentally miss isolated cremation burials. However, it should also be noted that the extreme shallowness of cover over natural ground on this site may indicate that there has been some ground reduction or terracing here, which may have removed archaeological remains.

8 Acknowledgements

Thanks to St Mary's School for commissioning the work through the good offices of Laurie Wood Architects. Site work was carried out by Nigel Rayner and directed by Howard Brooks. The project was monitored by Martin Winter for Colchester Borough Council.

9 References

- Crummy, Philip, 1992 *Excavations at Culver Street, the Gilbert School, and other sites in Colchester 1971-85*, Colchester Archaeological Report **6**.
- Crummy, Philip, 1993 *Excavations of Roman and later cemeteries, churches and monastic sites in Colchester 1971-88*, Colchester Archaeological Report **9**.
- Hull, M R, 1958 *Roman Colchester*, Research Committee of the Society of Antiquaries of London, Report **XX**.

10 Glossary

context	specific location on an archaeological site, especially one where finds are made
feature	an identifiable thing like a pit, a wall, a drain, a floor; can contain 'contexts'
medieval	from AD 1066 to Henry VIII
NGR	National Grid Reference
natural	geological deposit undisturbed by human activity
post-medieval	after Henry VIII and up to Victorian
residual	an earlier object out of place in a later context (eg a Roman coin in a Victorian pit)
Roman	period from AD 43 to around AD 430
u/s	unstratified (no context)

11 Archive deposition

The finds and paper archive are held at Colchester Archaeological Trust, 12 Lexden Road, Colchester, Essex CO3 3NF, but both will be permanently deposited at Colchester Museum, under accession code 2000.106.

12 Site data

12.1 Site context list

Context	Description	Cuts/seals	Context date
L01	Topsoil	L02	modern
L02	Subsoil	L03	post-medieval?
L03	Natural	-	-

12.2 Soil descriptions

Context	Description
L01	Dark grey brown sandy loam with common small stones, and occasional peg-tile (not kept).
L02	Dark yellowish brown very compact sandy loam. Common small stones, peg-tile (not kept).
L03	Orange brown compact gravels with patches of yellow brown sand.

*Howard Brooks
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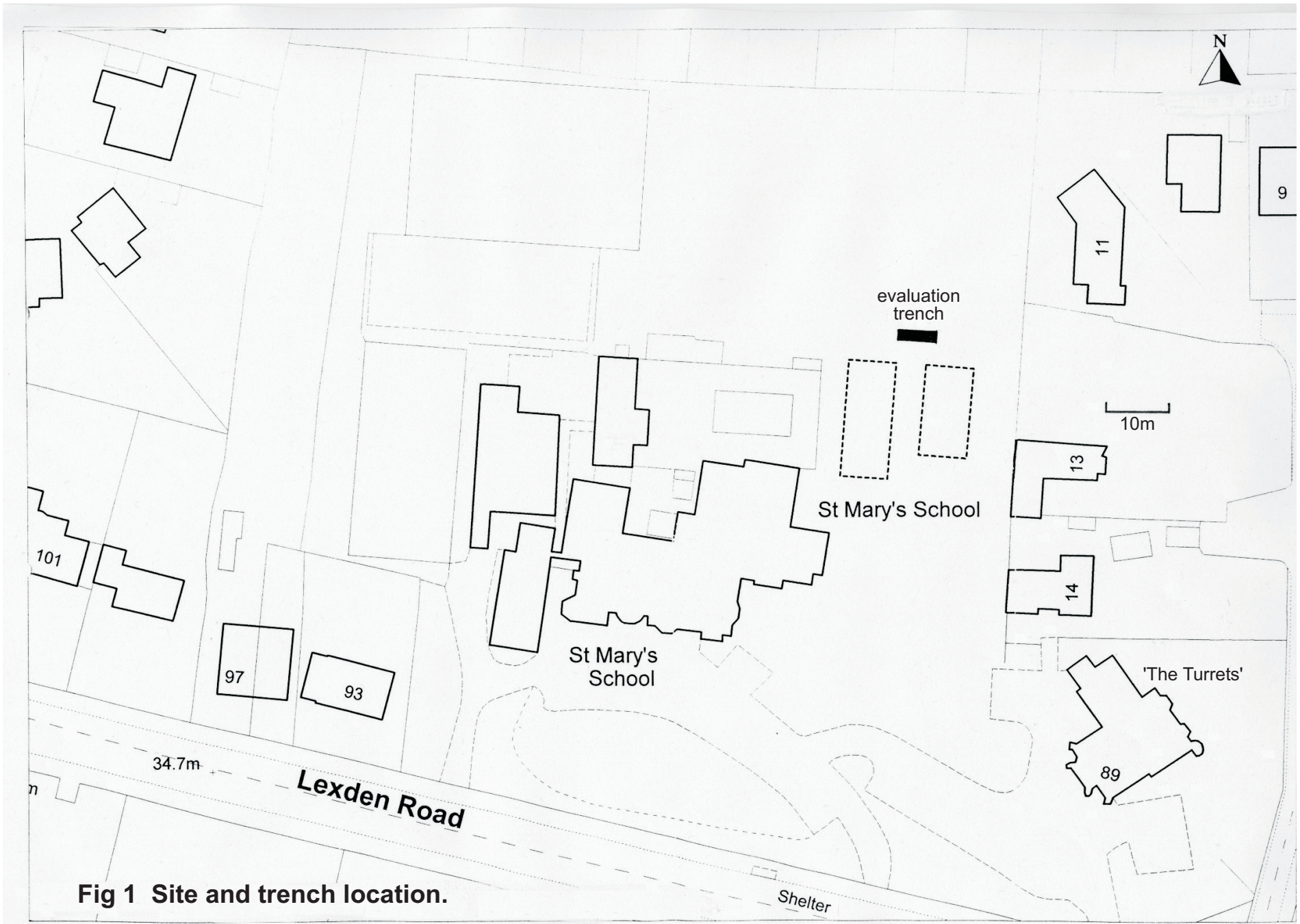


Fig 1 Site and trench location.

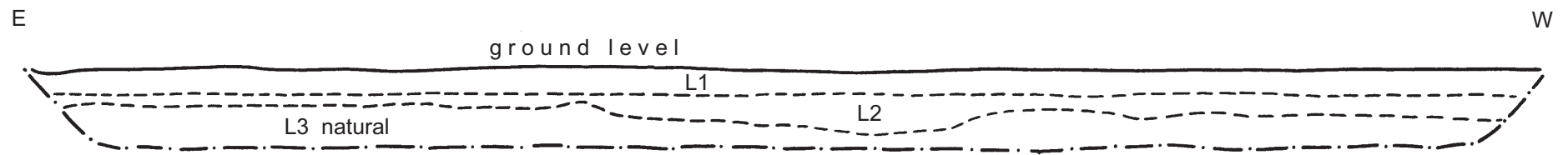


Fig 2 Trench section.

