

An archaeological watching brief at 14 St Clare Road, Colchester, Essex

April 2001

**on behalf of
Colchester Borough Council**

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EHCR summary sheet

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- Fig 1 The Lexden cemetery showing site location of watching brief
(adapted from Hawkes & Crummy 1995, fig 7.1).
- Fig 2 Approximate site plan, scale 1:150.

1 Summary

Observations were made during and after groundworks for a new conservatory, at 14 St Clare Road, Colchester, Essex. No finds or features of archaeological significance were revealed.

2 Introduction

- 2.1 This is the report on an archaeological watching brief carried out by the Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) on the 24th, 25th, 27th and 30th April 2001. The work was necessitated by the construction of a conservatory, together with a soakaway, new drain-trench, and a small inspection chamber.
- 2.2 The site is located on the western side of the town, in the Lexden area. The conservatory was built in the garden of 14 St Clare Road, which is situated on the western side of the road. The site is located at National Grid Reference TL 9746 2493 (Fig 1).
- 2.3 This report follows the standards set out in the Borough Council's *Guidelines on standards and practices for archaeological fieldwork in the Borough of Colchester* (1999) and *Guidelines on the preparation and transfer of archaeological archives to Colchester Museums* (1996), and the IFA's *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (1999).

3 Archaeological background

- 3.1 The site occupies an area of rich archaeology, being within the Lexden Roman cemetery (Essex Heritage Conservation Record nos 11712, 11713 & 11714). This is a late Iron Age burial area which continued in use into the early Roman period. Since the early 1900s, 27 vessels representing at least 10 grave groups have been identified from an area approximately 75m across, on the western side of St Clare Road. The cemetery is discussed further in Hawkes & Crummy 1995, pages 164-9.
- 3.2 The Lexden Tumulus lies 250m to the south of the site; this is an important late Iron Age burial mound (EHCR 12535; Fig 1).
- 3.3 Imported early Roman brooches have been found close to St Clare Drive (EHCR 11717), and a Middle Bronze Age urn has been found in St Clare Road (EHCR 11720).
- 3.4 The standing bank and ditch of the Lexden Dyke (EHCR 11628) runs in a north-south direction, 100m to the west of the site. This is a late Iron Age defensive bank and ditch built by Cunobelin in AD 10, running from Braiswick to Bluebottle Grove. Just to the north of the site there is a trackway which runs through the entrance of the Lexden Dyke (Hawkes & Crummy 1995, 169).

4 Aims and objectives

The aim of the watching brief was to identify and record any archaeological features, finds or deposits revealed by the groundworks.

5 Methods

The fieldwork was carried out by Kate Orr and Stephen Benfield, who visited the site on four occasions. A record of the position of the site excavations was made which has been reproduced as Figure 2. Soil types were noted and one digital photograph was taken.

6 Results

The first visit was made on the 24th April, when the soakaway had already been dug by the builders. This was 1m x 1m x 1.2m deep and situated 500mm north of the boundary fence (Fig 2). The soakaway trench was not entered due to its depth, but the sides and the spoil were inspected. The following soil profile was observed:

Layer 1 - 0-630mm, mid-brown sandy silt topsoil with occasional stones. No artefacts visible.

Layer 2 - 630-750mm, layer of gravel.

Layer 3 - 750mm-1.2m, orangey-brown natural sand and gravel.

A second visit was made on the 25th April, when a small inspection chamber (manhole) and the linking drain-trench were dug out. However, these had already been filled in by the time the visit was made. These trenches were dug to a depth of 500mm.

The third visit was made on the 27th April, when the east to west foundation trench had been hand-dug by the builders. The trench was 500mm wide and 800mm deep. The following soil profile was observed:

Layer 1 - 0-100mm, concrete.

Layer 2 - 100mm-400mm, mid dark brown silty sandy loam, very stony.

Layer 3 - 400mm-700mm, yellow brown dark loamy sand, stony.

Layer 4 - 700mm-800mm, natural sand and gravel.

The fourth visit was made on the 30th April, when the last small length of foundation trench had been dug. The soil profile was the same, and there were no finds nor features.

7 Conclusion

No finds or features of archaeological significance were disturbed by the ground-works. It may be that the site is just outside the Lexden Roman cemetery. However, cremations are notoriously easy to miss, especially when so little excavation has actually taken place, and it may be therefore that the site is within the cemetery.

8 Archive deposition

A copy of this report plus the digital photograph will be deposited permanently with Colchester Museum under accession code 2001.83.

9 Acknowledgements

The Colchester Archaeological Trust is grateful to the following for their help and co-operation:

D J Thompson Builders

Martin Winter, Archaeological Officer for Colchester Borough Council

10 References

Hawkes, C F C, & Crummy, P, 1995 *Camulodunum 2*, Colchester Archaeological Report **11**

Kate Orr, May 2001

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