

**Archaeological monitoring at  
Wallace's Field,  
Tarmac Colchester Quarry,  
Stanway, Colchester, Essex**

**May 2001**

**commissioned by  
Tarmac Southern Ltd**

NGR: TL 9490 2215  
Colchester Museum accession no: 2001.100  
CAT project reference: 01/5d  
CAT site code: WAL 01



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**CAT Report 139**

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# 1 Summary

*Wallace's Field lies 800m WSW of the Stanway burial enclosures, where excavations in 1988-96 revealed rich late Iron Age and early Roman burials.*

*A watching brief was maintained during topsoil-stripping prior to mineral extraction. A number of prehistoric flints and Roman potsherds, and a single prehistoric potsherd, were recorded in unstratified positions. Five features were also recorded, all of them being charcoally features lying directly beneath the topsoil. They are undated, but it is very likely that they were created by the recent burning and removal of trees.*

## 2 Introduction

- 2.1 This is the report on archaeological monitoring at Wallace's Field, which lies in the south-east corner of Tarmac Colchester Quarry, Stanway, Colchester, Essex, in the north-eastern angle of Warren Lane and Maldon Road.
- 2.2 Site work was commissioned by Tarmac Southern Ltd, and carried out by the Colchester Archaeological Trust between the 17th and 23rd May 2001. Post-excavation work took place between the 1st and 6th June 2001. Figure 1 shows the site location.
- 2.3 This field is subject to mineral extraction under an existing consent.
- 2.4 National Grid Reference for the centre of the site is TL 9490 2215.
- 2.5 The project was monitored by Pat Connell on behalf of Essex County Council Heritage Advice Management and Promotion (HAMP).
- 2.6 This report follows the standards set out in the IFA's *Standard and guidance for archaeological watching briefs*.

## 3 Archaeological background

- 3.1.1 The Tarmac Colchester Quarry is located in an area of outstanding archaeological interest, including Gosbecks, the rich Stanway burial enclosure site, and the Abbotstone enclosure site. There is much recent literature on this topic <sup>1</sup>, from which the following summary is taken.
- 3.1.2 As presently understood, Camulodunum (pre-Roman Colchester) had two centres of activity: Gosbecks Farm (600m east of the edge of Stanway Quarry), which was predominantly an agricultural centre, and the industrial and trading centre at Sheepen which lies 5km to the NE near the present-day Colchester Institute.
- 3.2 The burial site at **Stanway** was actually outside the defences of Camulodunum, though it was unquestionably linked to it socially (and chronologically). Like Stanway, the Abbotstone site is also outside the defended parts of Camulodunum. Another part of the scenario is the dynamic between native and Roman settlement. Stanway was a native burial site, and Gosbecks was a native site which became Romanised.
- 3.2.1 The Stanway enclosures contained the burial sites of British aristocrats buried during the 1st century BC and up to a few decades after the Roman invasion in AD 43. There were five ditched enclosures at Stanway. Four of them contained the remains of nailed wooden mortuary chambers placed centrally or axially within their enclosures. The grave goods which accompanied the burials were smashed in antiquity; and, together with small quantities of cremated human bone, the fragments were scattered through the soil filling the chambers. At least one of the chambers was destroyed and burnt before being backfilled. Provisionally, the earliest of the excavated chambers (Enclosure 1) dates from the late 1st century BC. This was followed by the chamber in Enclosure 3 (*circa* AD 25-35), and by Enclosure 4 (*circa* AD 60 or later). The latter was probably for a woman since it contained beads from a broken necklace.

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<sup>1</sup> Hawkes & Crummy 1995; Crummy 1997

- 3.2.2** Enclosure 3 contained two secondary burials in square pits without chambers. The grave goods were intact and provide dates for both burials of *circa* AD 50-60. One grave contained an inkwell, indicating literacy, and the other a substantial collection of imported and other objects including a spear and a possible shield. The most extraordinary burial at Stanway is the 'doctor's grave' in Enclosure 5. This contained a strainer bowl which was used to prepare medicine, a strange collection of rods and rings which may have been used for divination, a gaming board with the glass gaming pieces in position, as if at the start of a game, and a unique set of medical equipment including a saw, various pairs of tweezers, and other equipment possibly used for cauterising wounds. Other grave goods included an amphora, and a number of cups and plates on which food for the afterlife would have been provided.
- 3.2.3** The small number of burials concerned, and the elaborate nature of the rite, suggest that the dead were all members of a British elite, and possibly all related. The date of the earliest chamber would suggest that, in the decades leading up to the time of Cunobelin, there was some stability and continuity among the upper classes, as opposed to the changing political scenario which is suggested by the evidence of contemporary coins. Moreover, the continued practice after the Roman conquest of what must have been a very public rite, and the appearance of arms in one of the secondary graves, both indicate that the people concerned enjoyed special privileges and no doubt Roman favour. In return, a pro-Roman faction like this, with appropriate ancestry, could have played a part in helping the Roman authorities to manage the newly-formed *civitas* (local administration). The collection of material from the Stanway burials is of the greatest archaeological importance, not only from the interest of the objects themselves, but also from the amount of historical information which can be gleaned from them.
- 3.3** Like Stanway and Gosbecks, **Abbotstone** has been known for some time as a cropmark site. Excavations in 1999 by the Colchester Archaeological Trust showed that a Bronze Age pit and a Middle Iron Age enclosure predated two larger enclosures of Late Iron Age and Roman date. There were also a few scattered cremation burials. Excavations in 2001 should expose the centre of the main enclosure and the site of any buildings.

## **4 Aims and objectives**

The aim of the archaeological work was to record the location, character, extent, date, significance and quality of any surviving archaeological remains.

## **5 Methodology**

A professional archaeologist was in attendance during the topsoil-stripping. Such objects as were seen were recorded, and the five features revealed were half sectioned.

## **6 The excavated features** (Fig 2 for location, Fig 3 for detail)

### **Feature 1**

On the surface, this was a charcoally layer. On excavation, it turned into a shallow, circular feature, whose top fill was heavily charcoal-flecked sandy silt, and whose lower fill was yellow brown gravel.

### **Feature 2**

A small circular charcoal deposit. On excavation, the charcoal was found to be confined to the upper fill, and the lower fill was pale yellow brown silty sand.

**Feature 3**

A kidney-shaped charcoal layer. On excavation, this proved to be a deposit of charcoally slightly sandy silt, topped by a patch of dark brown charcoally sandy silt.

**Feature 4**

A patch of charcoally sand lying over a natural feature filled with sandy silt. Two natural flints were recovered from the natural feature.

**Feature 5**

A circular feature filled with charcoally silty sand.

**Comment**

None of these features looked or 'felt' ancient. It was the opinion of the excavators that they were recent. The charcoal and the recent feel of the features suggests that they were produced by the removal of trees.

**7 Finds**

**7.1 General comment**

The quality of finds from this project is not high. The finds recovered were mainly natural or modern-looking flints, many probably produced by the plough or even by the mechanical plant-stripping the site. Other finds included peg-tile and undated brick or tile pieces. The only pieces of note are the flint-gritted prehistoric sherd and the six apparently genuine flints. The sherd was shown to Nigel Brown of Essex County Council HAMP, who confirmed it as prehistoric.

## 7.2 Finds list

Medieval and later pottery codes after Cunningham 1985 and Cotter 2000.

Find no	Context	Quant	Wt	Description
1	u/s	1	8	Peg-tile fragment
1	u/s	1	9	Flint flake, probably man-made
2	u/s	1	5	Flint blade with some cortex, possibly core preparation
3	u/s	1	5	Flint flake - small bashed lump
4	u/s	2	36	Flint flakes - probably natural
4	u/s	2	0.5	Minuscule flakes of grey ware pottery, probably Roman
5	u/s	1	1	Brick/tile fragment
6	u/s	1	11	Peg-tile fragment
7	u/s	1	6	Flake; natural
8	u/s	1	6	Flint flake, notched piece, backed
9	u/s	1	26	Flint flake; natural
10	u/s	1	43	Peg-tile fragment
11	u/s	2	30	Peg-tile fragments
12	u/s	1	6	Grey ware rim sherd
13	u/s	1	14	Flint flake
14	u/s	1	25	Peg-tile fragment
15	u/s	1	147	Industrial brick fragment, 19th-20th century
16	u/s	1	23	Tile, undated
17	u/s	5	130	Brick fragments, probably post-medieval
18	u/s	1	60	Tile, 23mm thick; Roman?
19	u/s	1	22	Peg-tile fragment
20	u/s	1	20	Flint flake - looks fresh; probably modern
21	u/s	1	83	Curious speckled natural stone
22	u/s	1	31	Peg-tile fragment
23	u/s	1	11	Peg-tile fragment
23	u/s	1	1	Orange sherd, possibly flowerpot fabric 51b
24	u/s	1	5	Flint flake, very short blade?
25	u/s	3	9	Brick fragments
26	u/s	1	7	Prehistoric flint-gritted pot sherd
27	u/s	1	11	Flint flake: probably modern
28	u/s	2	57	Peg-tile fragments
29	u/s	1		Discarded stone
30	u/s	3	161	Peg-tile fragments
31	u/s	1	23	Roman <i>imbrex</i> roof tile fragment
32	u/s	1	9	Peg-tile fragment
33	u/s	1	1	Brick/tile fragment; undated
34	u/s	1	3	Flint flake, possibly prehistoric
35	u/s	1	32	Peg-tile fragment
36	u/s	1	4	Flint flake; not convincing
37	u/s	1	7	Peg-tile fragment
38	u/s	1		Discarded stone
39	u/s	1		Discarded stone
40	u/s	1	3	Flint flake; probably modern
41	u/s	1	42	Undated brick/tile lump
42	u/s	1	27	Undated brick/tile lump
43	u/s	1	3	Clay tobacco-pipe stem fragment
44	u/s	1	22	Bashed flint lump, probably modern
45	F4	2	32	Flint flakes; probably natural
46	F4	1	5	Piece of stone (discarded)
47	F1	many	54	Charcoal sample

## 8 Discussion

### 8.1 General

Ground conditions at Wallace's Field were not ideally suited for the detailed observation and recording of archaeological features. While it is certain that any ditch lines of the type excavated at Abbotstone enclosure or Stanway would have been seen, it is by no means certain that all small pits and post-holes which may exist on this site were seen.

Nevertheless, the identification of five features and the recovery of a number of potsherds and flints means that the work was at least a partial success.

## 8.2 Prehistory

The single flint-gritted prehistoric potsherd and the six prehistoric flints are probably contemporary. Together they indicate a low level of activity here in the prehistoric period, probably in the late Bronze Age or early Iron Age. While that activity is not as intense (or interesting) as that at the Abbotstone or Stanway sites, it is useful background information, similar to that provided by the flint scatter from the elephant enclosure watching brief at Colchester Zoo, directly south of this site (Benfield 1996).

## 8.3 Roman

The low level of Roman finds here suggests that material may have arrived via a manure scatter from an adjacent farm (Abbotstone?), and need not indicate Roman occupation.

## 8.4 Later

The five excavated features are all along the north side (track side) of the field, and may be holes created by the removal and burning of trees prior to the field being ploughed. The finds from the features (two probably natural flints, and charcoal) certainly do not contradict this interpretation.

## 9 Archive deposition

The full archive, including a copy of this report, the bagged and boxed finds, digital photographs, plus section drawings and plans on hanging strips, digital data on disk and a summary, will be permanently lodged at Colchester Museum.

## 10 Acknowledgements

Colchester Archaeological Trust is grateful to Tarmac Southern Ltd (Mr David Marsh) for commissioning the work, and to the following for their co-operation at various stages of the project:

- Pat Connell of Essex County Council HAMP for advice and project monitoring
- Nigel Brown of Essex County Council HAMP for commenting on the prehistoric pottery
- Martin Winter, Archaeology Officer for Colchester Borough Council
- Tarmac Southern Ltd

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Howard Brooks, June 2001

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**Distribution list**

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Essex Heritage Conservation Record, Essex County Council  
Colchester Museum

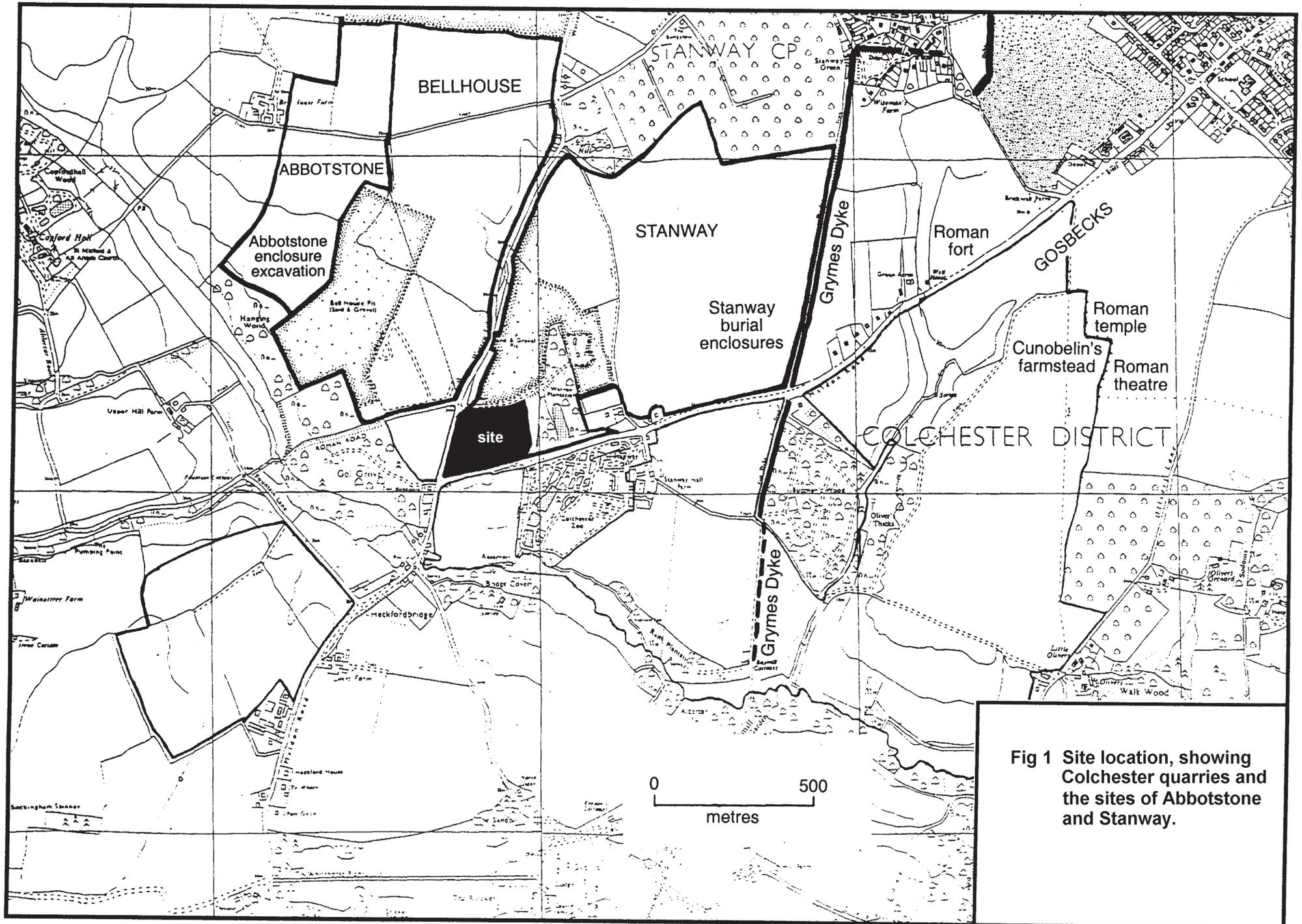


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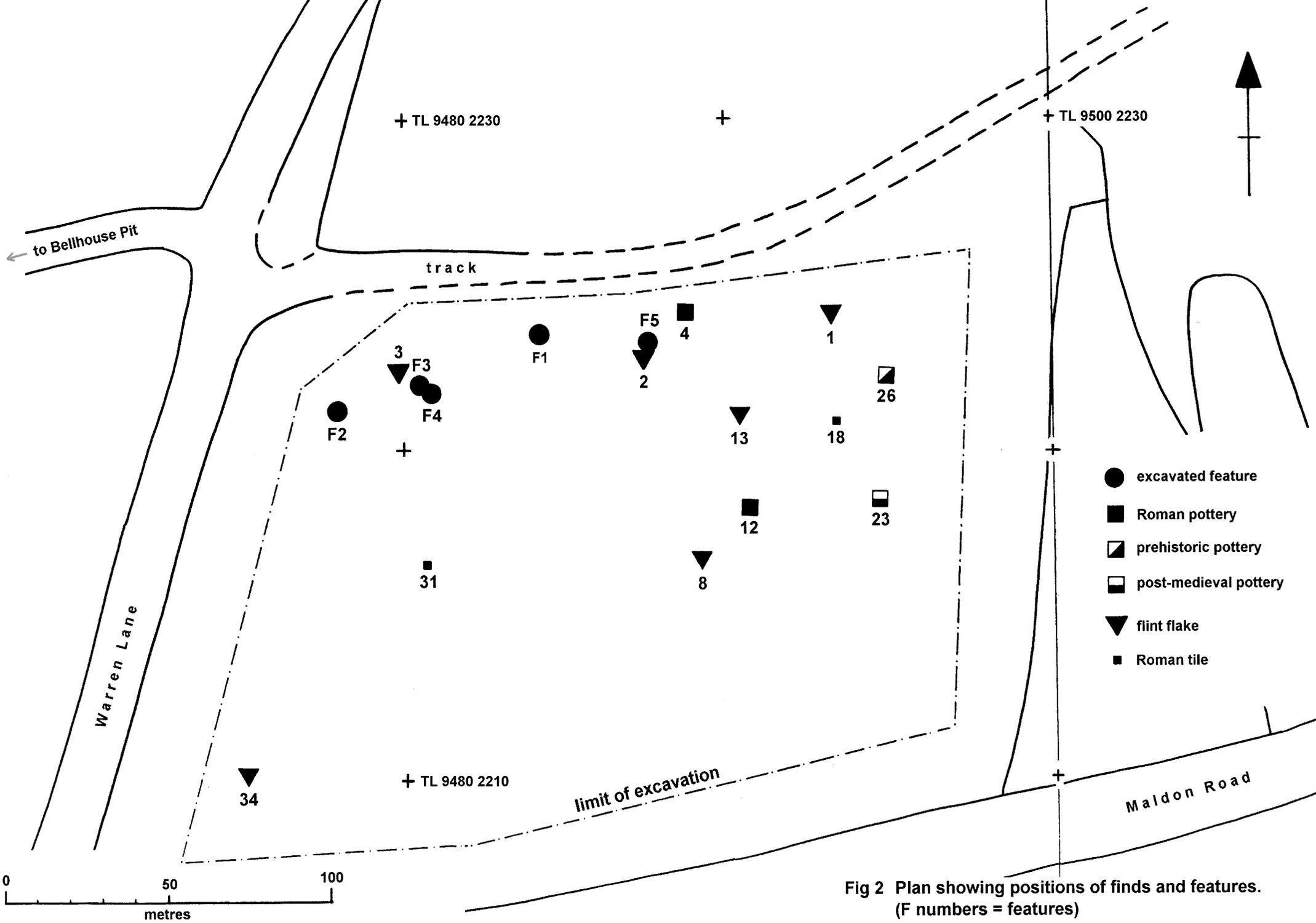
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**Fig 1 Site location, showing Colchester quarries and the sites of Abbotstone and Stanway.**



+ TL 9480 2230

+

+ TL 9500 2230

track

F1

F5

3

F3

F4

F2

2

4

1

26

13

18

+

12

23

31

8

- excavated feature
- Roman pottery
- ◻ prehistoric pottery
- ◻ post-medieval pottery
- ▼ flint flake
- Roman tile

+ TL 9480 2210

34

limit of excavation

Maldon Road

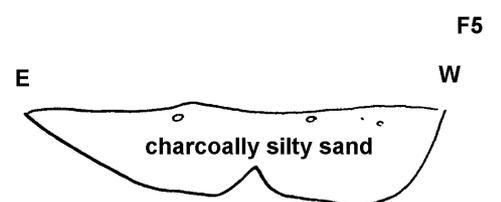
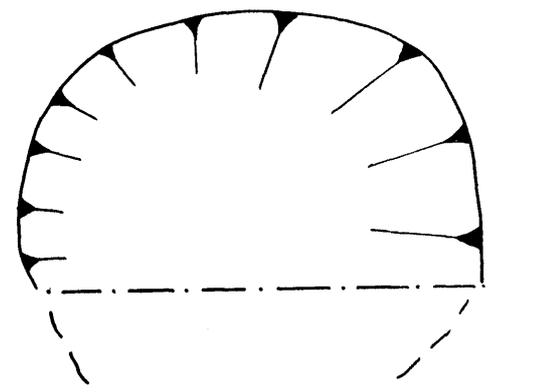
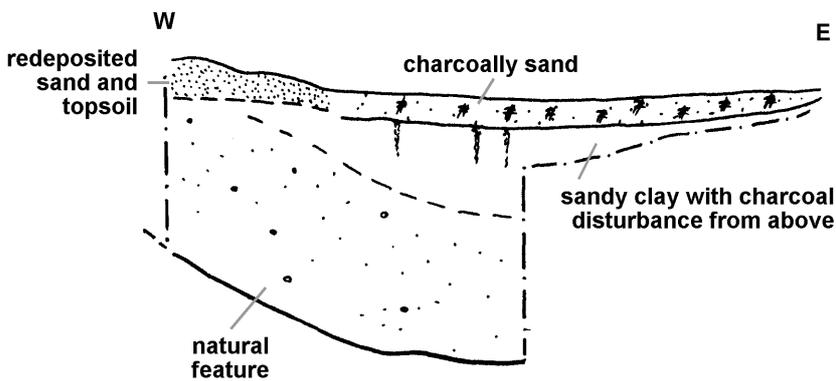
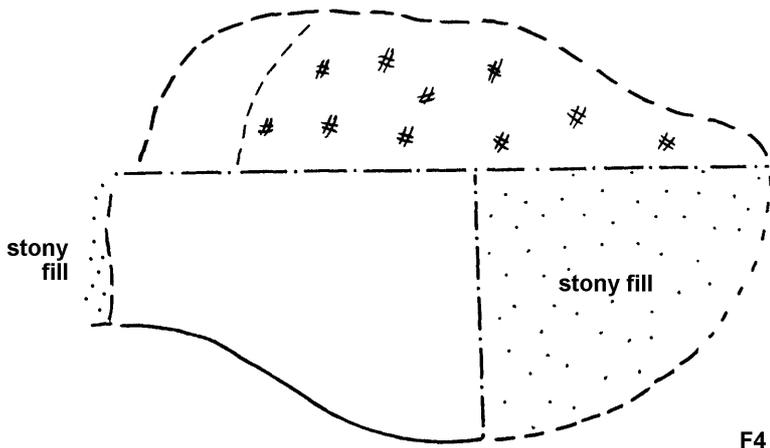
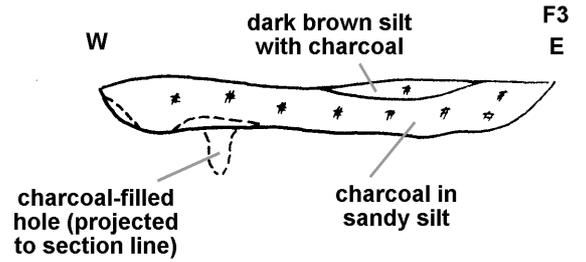
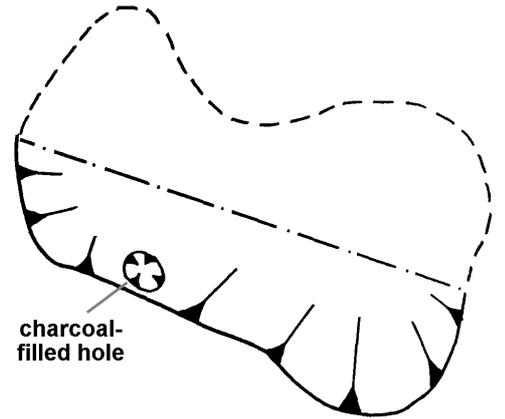
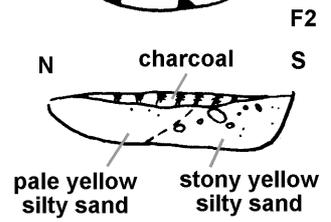
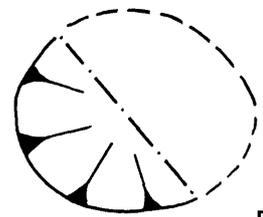
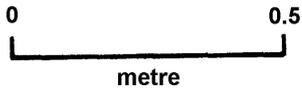
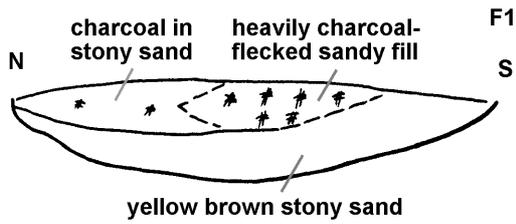
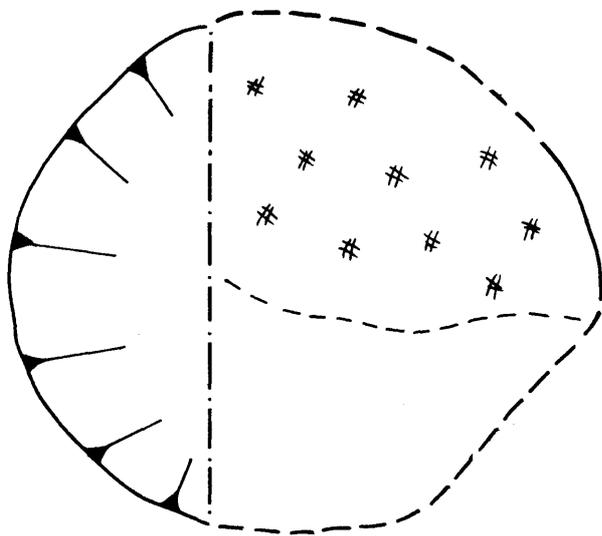


Fig 3 Plan and section of Features 1-3 (F1-F3).

**Essex Sites and Monuments Record/  
Essex Archaeology and History**

**Summary sheet**

<b>Site name/address:</b> Wallace's Field, Bellhouse Pit, Stanway, Colchester, Essex	
<b>Parish:</b> Stanway	<b>District:</b> Colchester
<b>NGR:</b> TL 9490 2215 (centre)	<b>Site code:</b> WAL 01
<b>Type of work:</b> Watching brief	<b>Site director/group:</b> S Benfield, Colchester Archaeological Trust
<b>Date of work:</b> May 2001	<b>Size of area investigated:</b> 2000 m2
<b>Location of finds/curating museum:</b> Colchester Museum	<b>Funding source:</b> Developer
<b>Further seasons anticipated?</b> No	<b>Related SMR nos:</b> 11843, 11919, 11756-11757, 12552
<b>Final report:</b> CAT Report 139 and Summary in <i>EAH</i> annual round-up	
<b>Periods represented:</b> Probably modern pits. Unstratified Roman and prehistoric finds.	
<p><b>Summary of fieldwork results:</b></p> <p>Wallace's Field lies 800m WSW of the Stanway burial enclosures, where excavations in 1988-96 revealed rich late Iron Age and early Roman burials.</p> <p>A watching brief was maintained during topsoil-stripping prior to mineral extraction. A number of prehistoric flints and Roman potsherds, and a single prehistoric potsherd, were recorded in unstratified positions. Five features were also recorded, all of them charcoally features lying directly beneath the topsoil. They are undated, but it is very likely that they were created by the recent burning and removal of trees.</p>	
<b>Previous summaries/reports:</b> N/A	
<b>Author of summary:</b> Howard Brooks	<b>Date of summary:</b> 05/06/01