

# **An archaeological watching brief at 26 Oaks Drive, Colchester, Essex**

**June and September 2001**

**on behalf of  
Colchester Borough Council**

CAT project ref.: 01/5F  
Colchester Museum accession code: 2001.102  
Scheduled Ancient Monument no: 46  
NGR: TL 9877 2511  
Planning consent no: 00/134



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**CAT Report 157**

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## **1 Summary**

*Observations were made during groundworks for an extension to the house and a new garage at 26 Oaks Drive, Colchester, Essex. Due to ground-raising in the recent past, the trenches cut through at least 2.5m of modern made-up ground before reaching natural sand. No features of archaeological significance were found, although there were sherds of late Iron Age, Roman and medieval pottery from the spoil heap.*

## **2 Introduction**

- 2.1 This is the report on an archaeological watching brief carried out by the Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) on the 11th and 13th of June and the 7th of September 2001 at 26 Oaks Drive. The work was necessitated by the construction of an extension to the house and a new double garage. Planning permission (no 00/134) and Scheduled Monument consent were given with the condition that an archaeological watching brief be carried out.
- 2.2 The site is located to the west of Colchester town centre, north of Lexden Road, on the west side of Oaks Drive. The site is located at National Grid Reference TL 9877 2511 (Fig 1). A garage was knocked down on the north side of number 26 and the extension built partly on the site of that and partly in the garden. The whole site covers an area of 13m x 12m (Fig 2).
- 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 Roman pottery- and tile-making, as is shown by the numerous kilns which have been found in the area. A Roman kiln was found under Oaks Drive when laying the road (EHCR 12534).
- 3.2 The site lies just to the west of Sheepen, a late Iron Age settlement and industrial centre established by the Trinovantes tribe and maintained in the years after the Roman conquest (Scheduled Ancient Monument no 46). Extensive excavations in the 1930s and smaller-scale work in 1970 and later have produced evidence of workshops engaged in a range of industrial activities including metal-working, enamelling, pottery-making and leatherworking in the areas to the west of the site (Hawkes & Hull 1947; Niblett 1985).

## **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. Particular attention was paid to the possible occurrence of Roman inhumations and kilns.

## **5 Methods**

- 5.1 Foundations were excavated by the contractors with a mini-digger to a width of 450mm and a depth below 2.5m.
- 5.2 The fieldwork was carried out by professional archaeologists from CAT. A record of the position of the site excavations was made which has been reproduced as Figure 2. Trenches were entered where depths allowed and soil types were noted. Spoil heaps were checked for finds. One digital photograph was taken.

## 6 Results

**11th June** - a visit was made by Kate Orr after a test-hole had been dug on the north-eastern corner of the house to assess the depth of the foundations of the recently demolished garage. The test-hole was only re-excavating the foundation trench and so it was filled with modern sandy material and brick and concrete.

**13th June** - a visit was made by Kate Orr after the foundation trenches had been dug out. These had been dug to between 900mm and 1.2m deep with a sondage 2.4m deep. Natural sand still had not been reached, and the building inspector had instructed the contractors to dig deeper as they were still in made-up ground. The fill of the trenches was very homogeneous mid-brown sandy silt garden soil, and there were no visible layers. Several drains ran across the trenches.

The following finds were retrieved from the spoil heap:

- 3 pieces of peg-tile (225g)
- 1 sherd of black coarse late Iron Age pottery (19g)
- 1 sherd of Roman or medieval unglazed greyish black pottery (2g)
- 1 sherd of green-glazed medieval Colchester ware pottery (3g)
- 3 sherds of either tile or post-medieval red earthenware (49g)
- 2 sherds of unglazed medieval pottery (7g)
- 2 fragments of animal bone (19g)
- 1 iron object (35g)

**7th September** - a visit was made by Howard Brooks after a soakaway had been dug to the front (east) of the house. The trench was dug to 1.5m depth, entirely through the garden soil, and nothing of archaeological significance was observed.

## 7 Discussion

No 26 was built at some time during the 1970s. The site slopes down from west to east, and it is thought that, when the house was built, material from the higher ground was taken and dumped on the lower ground to level it off, and that this is the reason for the depth of made-up ground on the site.

No features of archaeological significance were found. The Roman and Iron Age pottery from the spoil heap are expected, given the close proximity of the site to Roman and Iron Age industrial and settlement sites.

## 8 Archive deposition

The site archive including a copy of this report and the pottery will be deposited permanently with Colchester Museum under accession code 2001.102. All other finds have been discarded.

## 9 Acknowledgements

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

- Deborah Priddy - English Heritage Inspector
- Martin Winter - Archaeological Officer for Colchester Borough Council
- G R Sexton Contracting Ltd

## 10 References

- Hawkes, C F C, & Hull, M R, 1947      *Camulodunum, first report on the excavations at Colchester 1930-39*, RRCSAL, **14**
- Niblett, R, 1985                              *Sheepen: an early Roman industrial site at Camulodunum*, CBA Research Report, **57**

Kate Orr, October 2001

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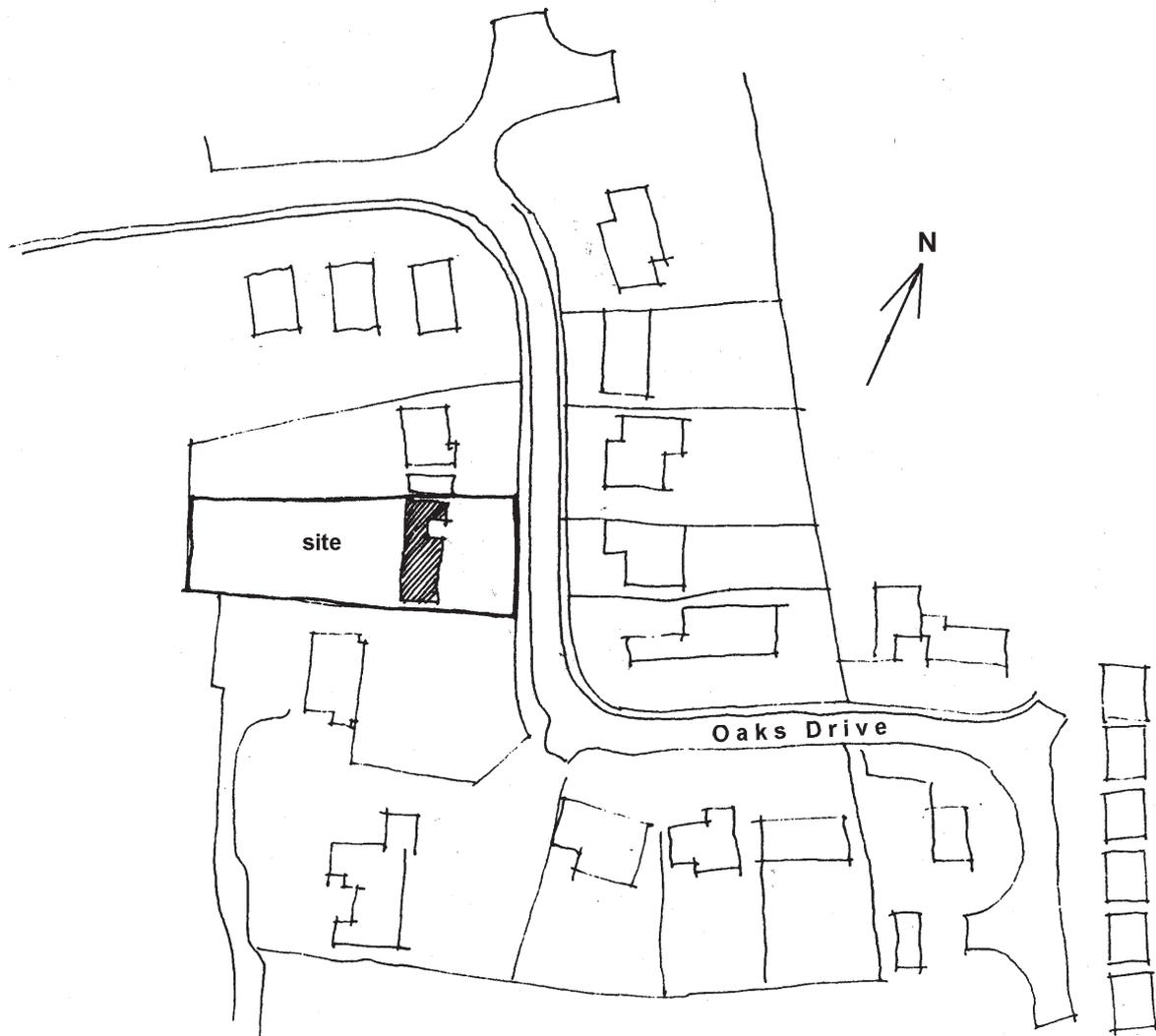


Fig 1 Location plan, scale 1:1250.



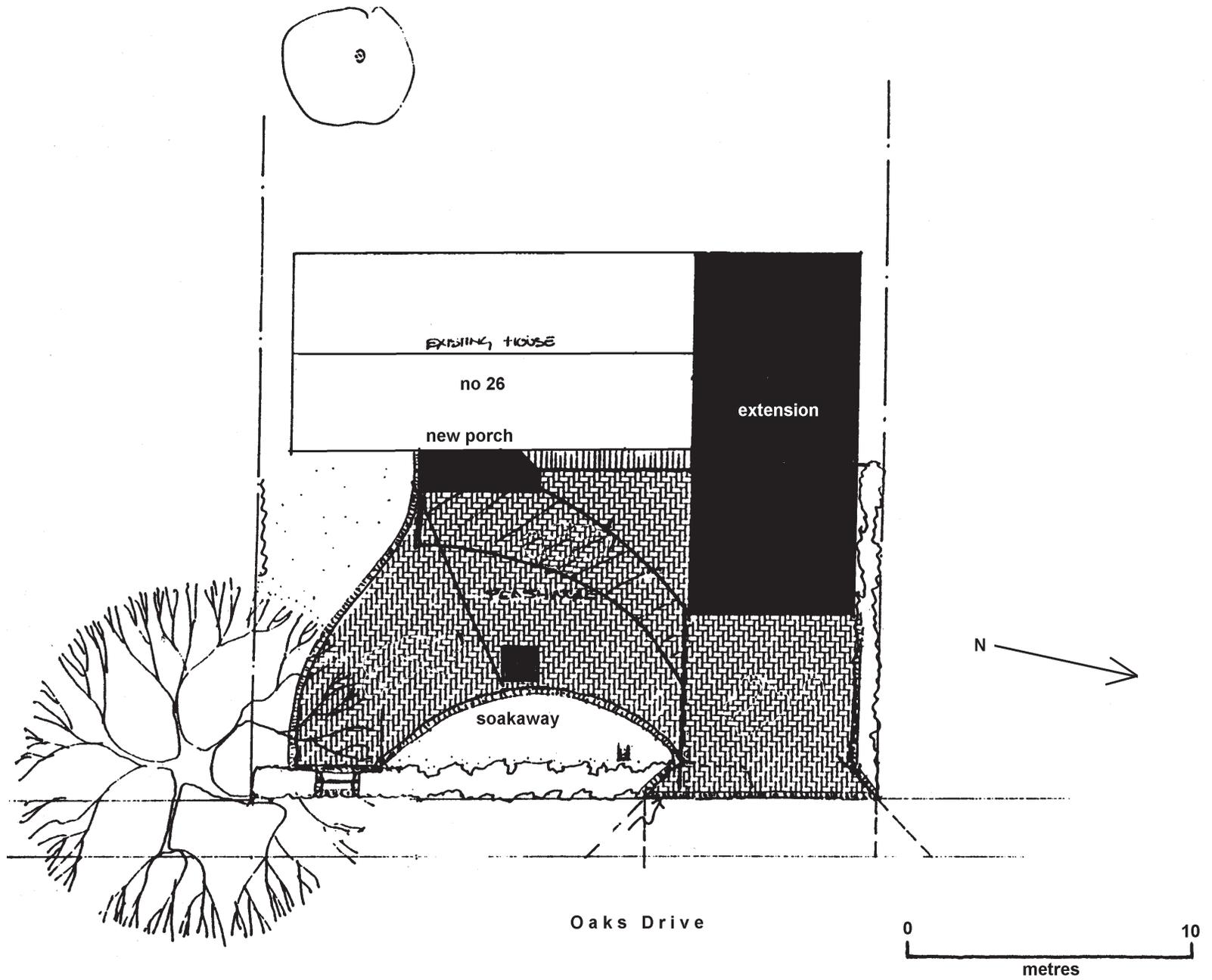


Fig 2 Plan showing extension and soakaway, scale 1:200.

**Essex Heritage Conservation Record/  
Essex Archaeology and History**

**Summary sheet**

<b>Site name/address:</b> 26 Oaks Drive, Colchester, Essex	
<b>Parish:</b> Colchester	<b>District:</b> Colchester Borough
<b>NGR:</b> TL 9877 2511	<b>Site code:</b> 2001.102
<b>Type of work:</b> Watching brief	<b>Site director/group:</b> Colchester Archaeological Trust
<b>Date of work:</b> June 2001	<b>Size of area investigated:</b> 13m x 12m
<b>Location of finds/curating museum:</b> Colchester Museum	<b>Funding source:</b> Colchester Borough Council
<b>Further seasons anticipated?</b> No	<b>Related EHCR nos:</b> 12534
<b>Final report:</b> CAT Report 157 and summary in <i>Essex Archaeology and History</i>	
<b>Periods represented:</b> Modern garden soil with residual late Iron Age, Roman and medieval sherds from the spoil heap.	
<b>Summary of fieldwork results:</b> Observations were made during the groundworks for the construction of an extension to the house and a new garage. No features of archaeological significance were found. The excavations did not extend below modern made-up ground. The small quantity of late Iron Age and Roman pottery from the spoil heap are expected given the close proximity of the site to Roman and Iron Age industrial and settlement sites.	
<b>Previous summaries/reports:</b> None	
<b>Author of summary:</b> Kate Orr	<b>Date of summary:</b> October 2001