

**An archaeological watching brief at
Lexden Wood Golf Club
(Westhouse Farm),
Colchester, Essex**

December 2001

**on behalf of
Lexden Wood Golf Club**

CAT project ref.: 01/12B
NGR: TL 973 261
Colchester Museum accession code: 2001.234



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1 Summary

No trace of the enclosure first identified through aerial photographs was exposed during the watching brief at the Lexden Wood Golf Club (Westhouse Farm), Colchester, Essex. However, two sherds of amphora and some burnt daub may indicate Roman settlement in the vicinity or Roman usage of the enclosure.

2 Introduction

- 2.1 This is the report on an archaeological watching brief carried out by the Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) prior to the building of a new golf shop at Lexden Wood Golf Club.
- 2.2 The Golf Club is located 2.5km to the north-west of Colchester in the Lexden area, at National Grid Reference TL 973 261. The existing shop and clubhouse are situated to the north of Bakers Lane, and the new shop is to be built to the east of them. The site is flat and lies at approximately 60m OD. Although the site has been ploughed in the past, at the time of the watching brief it was covered by grass.
- 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

Introduction

The site is situated only 200m west of the scheduled Moat Farm Dyke (EHCR 11627), part of the extensive and complex earthwork defensive system of pre-Roman Colchester. In addition, the site is inside a rectangular enclosure which was first identified as a cropmark (EHCR 11842). An evaluation of the cropmark enclosure in January 2000 by means of a geophysical survey and a single trial-trench revealed a scatter of Roman and prehistoric pottery (Brooks & Austin 2000). The level at which archaeologically significant deposits were present was determined to be at 300mm below modern ground-level (the base of the ploughsoil horizon). No archaeological features were uncovered; however, the position of the trial-trench was located within the area of the footprint of the proposed development and not over specific anomalies highlighted from the geophysical survey. As the proposed development lies within the enclosure, there is a potential for archaeological features to be present.

Appleby's trench

In September 1952, Lieutenant R J Appleby cut an exploratory trench across the ditch of the rectangular enclosure in the field immediately east of Westhouse Farm (NGR TL 9732 2608 - estimated). His trench was a few metres east of the south-west corner of the enclosure. The ditch lies under a blanket of ploughsoil 9-12 inches (200-300mm) thick, and it was 16 feet (4.9m) wide and 4 feet (1.2m) deep. The top fill of the ditch was described as 'Gravelly Loam' and the lower fill as 'loam'. Large thick pieces of pottery were reported, and at the depths quoted they must have been from the lower (loam) fill. Appleby describes the pottery as 'thick coarse and friable', and it 'was thought to be Bronze Age'. The published note on the excavation (in Hull 1954, 13, presumably written by Colchester Museum curator Rex Hull) describes it in more detail as 'thick, soft, black ware with a rough drab surface' and remarks that this was 'quite different from anything found in Colchester before ... certainly not Roman nor yet of the period of Cunobeline, and it is unlikely to be Saxon'. The upper filling of the ditch contained a fragment of Roman tile, which shows that the earthwork was not levelled before the Roman period. It is slightly startling for Rex Hull to conclude that he had not seen this type of pottery before (EHCR 12671).

The excavation report is enlarged upon by Philip Crummy (Hawkes & Crummy 1995, 137), who estimates the ditch at 3 feet 6 inches (1.1m) deep and 16 feet (4.9m) wide. The upper fill of the ditch containing the Roman tile is probably the bank which has become redeposited in the partially silted-up ditch. Crummy dates the pottery, now lost, to between the 8th century and *circa* 50 BC, and the earthwork to the Early or Middle Iron Age or earlier. It is likely that any pottery described as black and soft would immediately be assumed to be either Late Iron Age or Saxon, similar fabrics being produced in both periods. Against this must count the fact that Hull didn't recognise it, which he should if it was late Iron Age. In an enclosure of this type, the Late Iron Age would, of course, be the most appropriate date. Further work is required to establish the date of this enclosure, and to identify the date and function of the internal features, ie whether they are pits or not (Brooks & Austin 2000).

4 Aims and objectives

The aim of the archaeological work was to excavate and record any surviving archaeological remains.

5 Methods

- 5.1 The work was carried out by a professional archaeologist according to a brief (WSI) written by Colchester Borough Council's Archaeology Officer. An intensive watching brief was maintained during the stripping of the topsoil from the foundation trenches of a building measuring 32m x 9m. The deeper excavations were not monitored.
- 5.2 A record of the position of the site excavations was made which has been reproduced as Figure 2. Soil types were noted. A section drawing was made of a typical soil profile.
- 5.3 Finds were retrieved, cleaned and marked according to context.
- 5.4 The bottom of the trenches and the spoil heaps were metal-detected.
- 5.5 General shots were taken with a colour digital camera.

6 Results

In accordance with the WSI (Written Scheme of Investigation), the foundation trenches were dug to just below topsoil under archaeological supervision. Trenches were dug to 1.8m width because a narrower toothless ditching bucket was not available. The western trench was not monitored because cables had to be avoided; therefore a narrower ditching bucket (with teeth) was used at a later date. The top 300mm of topsoil (Layer or L1) and 100mm of subsoil (L2) were removed. The topsoil was a mid brown silty loam containing abundant small to medium angular stones. The subsoil was a reddish brown silt containing abundant small to medium stones. There were no finds from the topsoil and very few finds in the subsoil. Two pieces of amphora were found in the northern trench and some fragments of burnt daub in the southern trench. A key-ring was found on the spoil heap which had been made using a Roman copy of an early Roman bronze coin (see section 7 below).

The soil appeared to be relatively undisturbed and no features of archaeological significance were revealed. One pit, 450mm wide, was observed: however, a contractor informed the author that he had dug the hole as a test-pit.

7 Finds

7.1 Amphora identified by Paul R Sealey

Two sherds (weighing 200g) from a Roman amphora were found in the northern foundation trench. This was identified as a Dressel 2-4 black sand fabric, traditionally from Pompeii/Herculanium but now known to have been made in other regions of Italy as well, circa 50 BC-AD 79. The amphora would have been used to carry wine from Italy to Colchester.

7.2 Coin key-ring identified by N Crummy

A bronze coin, weighing 7g and with a diameter of 2.9mm, was found on the spoil heap. This had been punctured and made into a modern key-ring. This is a contemporary imitation of an *as* of emperor Claudius I, dated AD 49-61. The reverse legend is not visible but an official minting would read LIBERTAS AUGUSTA. Imitation Claudian coins are commonly found in excavations in Colchester. They were produced for the Roman army's use and may even have been minted in Colchester (Kenyon 1987, 24-5). Those coins with the LIBERTAS inscription, however, are rare. It is unfortunate that we do not know the coin's original provenance because it has been re-used in modern times.

7.3 Daub identified by Stephen Benfield

Some broken burnt daub (weighing 162g) was found in the southern trench, two pieces of which were collected. One contained the impression of a wooden wattle. This daub may be derived from a wattle and daub building.

8 Discussion

The presence of burnt daub may indicate the site of a wattle and daub building in the vicinity. The amphora sherds are interesting and may indicate Roman usage of the enclosure. However, they were not found within any feature and lay just below the ploughsoil so have probably moved from their original place of deposition. The coin is interesting, but it is of no value archaeologically as we do not know where it is from.

The footings did not impinge on the enclosure ditch and no pits relating to the enclosure were revealed.

9 Archive deposition

A copy of this report, digital data on disk, the finds and the paper archive will be deposited permanently with Colchester Museum under accession code 2001.234.

10 Acknowledgements

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

Dean Nevill of Lexden Wood Golf Club for funding the work
Martin Winter - Archaeological Officer for Colchester Borough Council
Nina Crummy for the identification of the Roman coin
Paul R Sealey of Colchester Museum for the identification of the amphora

11 References

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Kate Orr, January 2002

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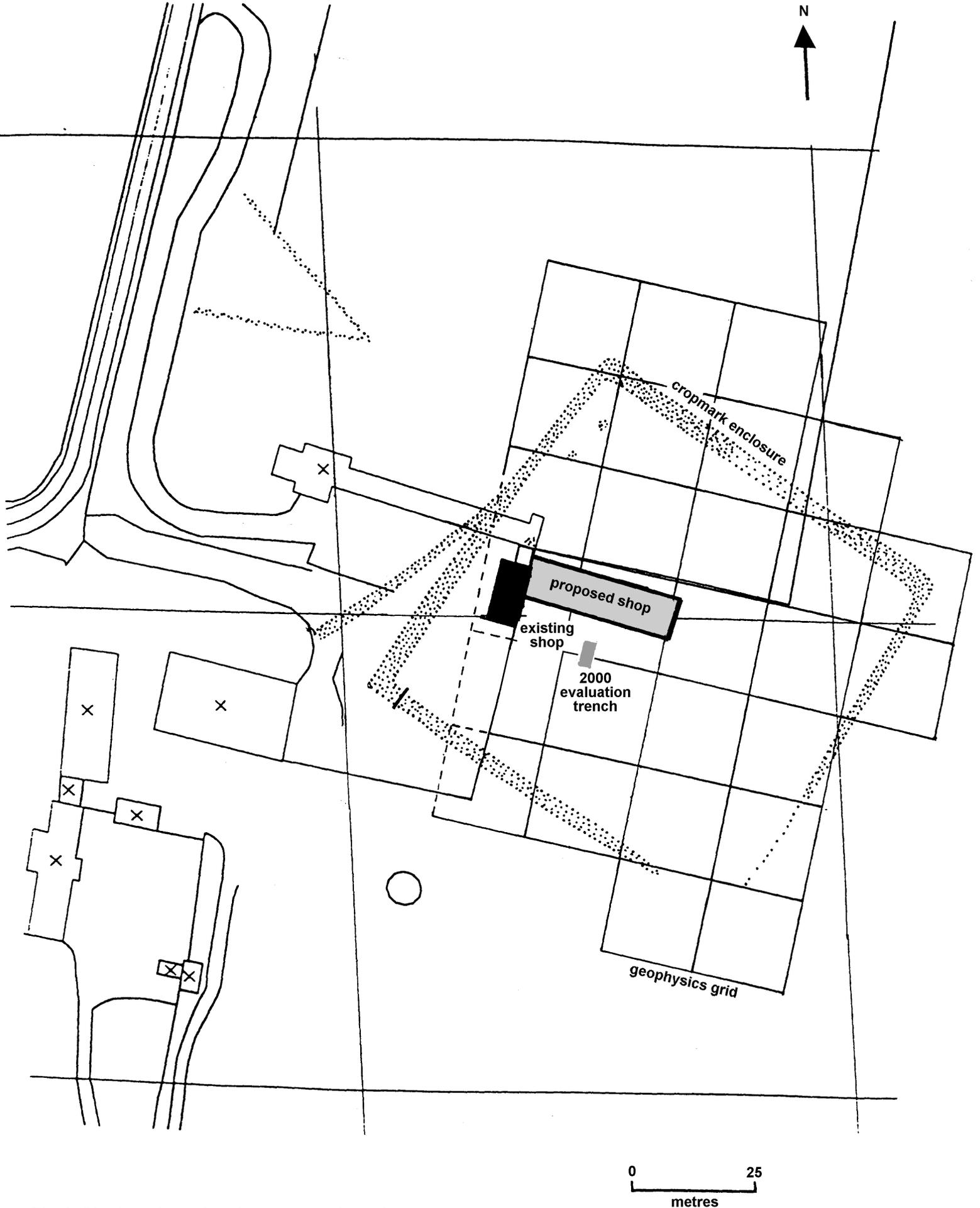


Fig 1 Site location, showing cropmark enclosure.

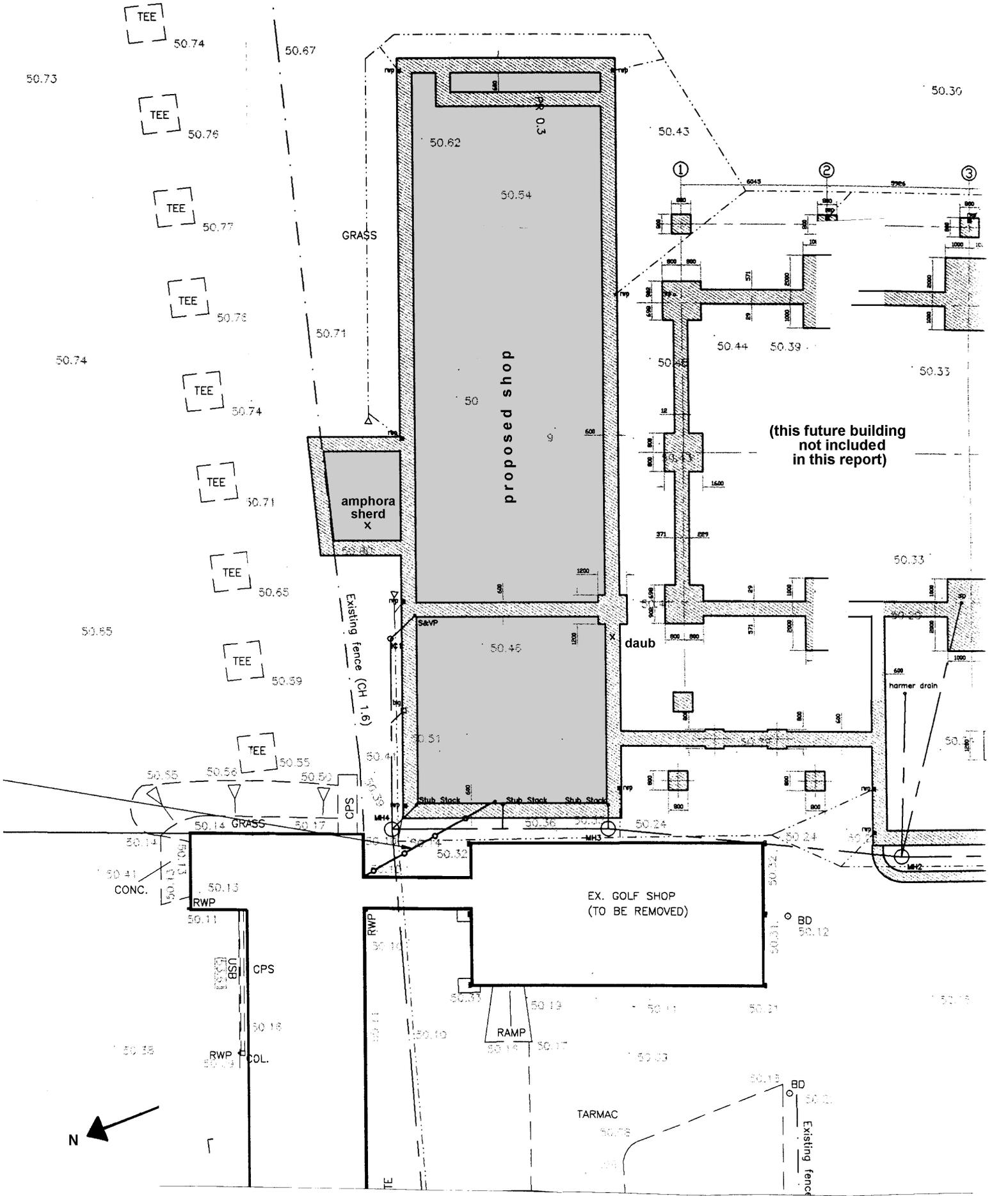


Fig 2 Site plan, showing foundations to new shop.



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

Summary sheet

Site name/address: Lexden Wood Golf Course (Westhouse Farm), Colchester, Essex	
Parish: Colchester	District: Colchester Borough
NGR: TL 973 261(c)	Site code: 2001.234
Type of work: Watching brief	Site director/group: Colchester Archaeological Trust
Date of work: December 11th 2001	Size of area investigated: 9m x 32m
Location of finds/curating museum: Colchester Museum	Funding source: Developer
Further seasons anticipated? Yes, during future building work	Related EHCR nos: 11627, 11842, 12671
Final report: CAT Report 167 and summary in <i>Essex Archaeology and History</i>	
Periods represented: Roman	
Summary of fieldwork results: No traces of the enclosure first identified through aerial photographs was exposed during the watching brief. However, two sherds of amphora and some burnt daub may indicate Roman settlement in the vicinity or Roman usage of the enclosure.	
Previous summaries/reports: CAT Report 47 and CAT Report 59	
Author of summary: Kate Orr	Date of summary: January 2002