

**An archaeological watching brief at  
Fairfax Road and Lucas Road,  
Colchester, Essex**

**April 2001-February 2002**

**on behalf of  
H M Lingard Ltd**

NGR: TM 0004 2463  
CAT project ref.: 01/3E  
Colchester Museum accession code: 2001.77  
Planning application no: COL/00/1072



**Colchester Archaeological Trust**  
12 Lexden Road,  
Colchester,  
Essex CO3 3NF

*tel.:* (01206) 541051  
*tel/fax:* (01206) 500124  
*email:* [archaeologists@colchester-arch-trust.co.uk](mailto:archaeologists@colchester-arch-trust.co.uk)

**CAT Report 173**  
February 2002

## Contents

1	Summary	1
2	Introduction	1
3	Archaeological background	1
4	Aims and objectives	1
5	Methods	2
6	Results	2
7	Discussion	2
8	Archive deposition	2
9	Acknowledgements	2
10	References	3
	Appendix A: day by day site attendance records	4
	Appendix B: report on the copper-alloy object <i>by Nina Crummy</i>	6
	Figures	after p 6
	EHCR summary sheet	

## List of figures

Fig 1 Site location and plan.

Fig 2 Section drawing.

## 1 Summary

*Observations were made during and after groundworks for the construction of three blocks of flats on the corner of Fairfax Road and Lucas Road, Colchester, Essex. No features or finds of archaeological interest were recorded.*

## 2 Introduction

- 2.1 This is the report on an archaeological watching brief carried out by the Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) between the 18th of April 2001 and the 13th of February 2002. The work was necessitated by the construction of three blocks of flats on the corner of Fairfax Road and Lucas Road. Planning permission under application number COL/00/1072 was granted on the 21st September 2000 with a condition for a watching brief. This report follows a brief written by the Archaeological Officer for Colchester Borough Council and a Written Scheme of Investigation written by CAT.
- 2.2 The site is located off Mersea Road, on the corner of Fairfax Road and Lucas Road at National Grid Reference TM 0004 2463 (Fig 1). It comprised a fenced vacant plot which until recently was occupied by a garage and commercial buildings. The whole site covers an area of 0.15 ha.
- 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 development site is situated outside the Roman town wall and lies to the east of the presumed Roman road which ran south from Colchester towards Mersea Island. A number of Saxon and/or Roman burials were found in the vicinity of the development area in the middle of the 19th century. A probable Roman burial was found at 11 Mersea Road in 1913 (Urban Archaeological Database or UAD event no 22). Roman burials are shown on the Cutts map of Colchester of 1888 on Fairfax Road (UAD event no 1058; Essex Heritage Conservation Record or EHCR no 13198).
- 3.2 The Saxon finds consist mainly of spearheads and shield bosses from this area of Mersea Road, eg those found during the construction of 10 Mersea Road in 1873, indicating the existence of a cemetery here which was in use from the 5th to 7th centuries. A collection of objects including 21 beads, three bronze buckles, the head of a radiate brooch and a bone comb may also come from this cemetery (Crummy 1981, 14 & 15; UAD event no 917). Another group of finds believed to be from this area were obtained by Colchester Museum in 1926 (UAD event no 1113; EHCR nos 13229 and 13230).
- 3.3 A complete pot was found nearby in the north-west corner of Meeanee Barracks in 1938. The pot is early Saxon in date and it contained fragments of human cremated bone (Crummy 1981, 14; UAD event no 935). Fragments of human skull were found in a similar area of Meeanee Barracks in a watching brief in 2000, but no associated artefacts were found (Orr 2000).

## 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 possible Roman and Saxon inhumations, especially grave goods.

## **5 Methods**

- 5.1** The fieldwork was carried out by Kate Orr and Stephen Benfield of CAT. The size of the area excavated for the first block was 22.5m x 12.1m (Block 1). The size of the second block was 18m x 5m (Block 2) and the size of the third block was 23m x 9m (Block 3). The width of the foundations was usually 450mm; however, due to collapsing trench sides, some larger areas were dug out. The foundation depths were between 1m and 1.2m. The ground-level had already been previously reduced to between 200mm and 500mm below the road level. Measurements of depth given in this report are from the reduced ground-level. Drains were dug between 400mm and 800mm wide and between 400mm and 1m deep. All excavations were carried out by the contractors using a machine with a toothed ditching bucket.
- 5.2** A record of the position of the site excavations was made (Fig 1). Soil types were noted and artefacts retrieved. Section drawings were made of layers, one of which has been reproduced as Figure 2.
- 5.3** Artefacts were assigned finds numbers, washed, marked and bagged and looked at by Howard Brooks of CAT.

## **6 Results** (see Appendix A for day by day site attendance records)

- 6.1** The groundworks on the western and northern parts of the site encountered brick and concrete rubble from demolished modern buildings and tarmac from a driveway. On the Lucas Road side there was less building debris, but the top 500-600mm of dark brown sandy silt topsoil was very disturbed and contained a great deal of modern rubbish. Under this made-up layer, in most areas, there was a layer of clean lighter brown sandy silt. This did not contain any finds and is presumed to be natural subsoil.
- 6.2** No features of archaeological interest were observed in any of the trenches. The only artefact was one copper-alloy late post-medieval or modern implement (see Appendix B) and an animal bone.

## **7 Discussion**

It was surprising not to find any archaeological features or finds, especially as grave goods from Anglo-Saxon burials have been discovered in the Mersea Road area. The site had previously been lowered below the road level. It would appear that a good depth of soil had been stripped off, including some of the natural, and modern debris dumped on top. This would explain the complete lack of features and finds and also the lack of any intermediate soil between the natural and the modern. Obviously the construction of the garage and commercial buildings would have caused disturbance to any archaeological remains here as well.

## **8 Archive deposition**

A copy of this report plus the copper-alloy find, notes and digital photographs will be deposited permanently with Colchester Museum under accession code 2001.77.

## **9 Acknowledgements**

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

H M Lingard Ltd  
Kevin Smith, Architectural Technician  
Martin Winter, Archaeological Officer for Colchester Borough Council  
Sargents Groundworks Contractors

## 10 References

- Crummy, P, 1981 *Aspects of Anglo-Saxon and Norman Colchester*, Colchester Archaeological Report 1
- Orr, Kate, 2000 Report on an archaeological watching brief of geotechnical test-pits, Colchester Garrison PFI site, CAT Report 110

Kate Orr, February 2002

© Colchester Archaeological Trust 2002

### Distribution list:

H M Lingard Ltd  
Martin Winter, Colchester Borough Council  
Essex Heritage Conservation Record, Essex County Council



### Colchester Archaeological Trust

12 Lexden Road,  
Colchester,  
Essex CO3 3NF

tel.: (01206) 541051  
tel/fax: (01206) 500124  
email: [archaeologists@colchester-arch-trust.co.uk](mailto:archaeologists@colchester-arch-trust.co.uk)

Checked by: Howard Brooks  
Date: 21.02.02

*athlon/c:/reports/fairfaxroad/rep173.doc*

## **Appendix A: day by day site attendance records**

### **18/04/01**

The first visit to the site was made after the first foundations had been dug in the south-western corner of Block 1, ie the western part of the site. Modern bricks were observed to a depth of 600mm below ground-level. Natural sand was observed from 850mm below ground-level.

### **19/04/01**

More footings in the western area of Block 1 were monitored. The sides of the 1m-deep trenches were caving in. The topsoil consisted of very disturbed greyish-brown sandy silt containing frogged bricks and modern rubble. There did not appear to be an intermediate layer between this and the natural yellowy brown sand. Further east, the soil profile was similar but with less modern debris and some brick flecks. The spoil heap was checked for finds. There were no finds or features of archaeological interest.

### **20/04/01**

The north, north-eastern and central footings of Block 1 were monitored. Footings were dug to 1.2m below ground-level. Modern brick was present in the upper layers. Old concrete footings to a previous building, probably the garage, were encountered in the northern footings.

### **23/04/01**

The southern eastern area of Block 1 was monitored. An old sewer-pipe was cut through at 850mm below ground-level. The following soil profile was recorded:

Layer or L1 - 0-560mm - modern loose mid-brown sandy silt topsoil with modern brick and asphalt (make-up for drive).

L2 - 560mm-1m - lighter brown sandy silt with occasional stones.

L3 - 1-1.1m - natural light brown clayey sand.

A section drawing of this area has been reproduced as Figure 2.

### **24/04/01**

Foundations for Block 3 on the Lucas Road side of the site were monitored. Trenches were dug to 1m in depth.

L1 - 0-350mm - loose mid brown sandy silt topsoil with some small stones and occasional brick flecks. A sewer-pipe was seen running north to south just below ground-level.

L2 - 350mm-1m - yellow brown sand with some small stones. Another sewer-pipe was seen running north to south.

### **25/04/01**

Further foundations of Block 3 were monitored. A similar soil profile as elsewhere was observed. A large modern test-pit was cut into by the north-western foundations. This was filled with modern rubbish including brick rubble.

### **26/04/01**

The foundations at the northern end of the Block 3 were monitored. No finds or features of archaeological interest were observed.

### **04/06/01**

The north, north-western and eastern foundations of Block 2 were monitored.

The eastern trench was dug to 1m below ground-level and the following soil profile was observed:

- L1 - 0-150mm - loose sandy light silt with brick rubble.
- L2 - 150-330mm - asphalt.
- L3 - 330mm-1m - dark brown sandy silt with a few flecks of modern brick.

The northern trench was dug to 1.1m below ground-level and the following soil profile was observed:

- L1 - 0-250mm - sandy silt with brick rubble.
- L2 - 250-550mm - asphalt.
- L3 - 550-900mm - dark brown sandy silt with occasional modern tile, brick and concrete.
- L4 - 900mm-1.1m - lighter brown sandy silt with no bricks.
- L5 - 1.1m - the natural light brown sandy silt was just appearing.

The north-western foundation trenches had to be dug to a depth of 1.4m due to bad ground. They were dug through very loose soil with brick rubble and asphalt.

#### **05/06/01**

The south and south-eastern foundation trenches of Block 2 were monitored. These were dug to a depth of 1.2m and had a similar soil profile to the northern trenches. There were no features or finds of archaeological interest.

#### **22/11/01**

A drain was monitored which had been dug alongside Fairfax Road, in front of Block 1. It was dug to 800mm depth and 800mm width. The following soil profile was recorded:

- L1 - 0-300mm - concrete pavement and sand hogging.
- L2 - 300-500mm - dark brown sandy silt made up ground with modern tile and modern pottery.
- L3 - 500-800mm - dark reddish brown natural sandy silt.

#### **27/11/01**

The continuation of the drain and a manhole were monitored. Again the results were negative. Part of an animal leg bone was found nearly 1m below ground-level (later discarded).

#### **20/12/01**

The continuation of the drain to the south and east around Block 3 was monitored. This was only 400mm deep and 500mm wide. Only dark brown sandy silt was observed with modern brick and occasional small stones.

#### **13/02/02**

A short length of drain was monitored on the east side of the south-eastern area around Block 3. This was dug to 1m depth and 400mm width. 600mm of dark brown sandy silt with modern brick and rubbish was observed overlying a mid brown, very sandy loam with no artefacts.

**Appendix B: report on the copper-alloy object** *by Nina Crummy*

2001.77

**Copper-alloy object**

Thick cast scyphate terminal, the central bar broken. The heavy weight indicates that lead forms a major part of the alloy. Height 33mm, width 47mm. Probably either from a handled implement or a decorative fitting.

The very regular surface and edges, the lack of finishing marks, and the perfect symmetry of the object indicate use of a machine-made metal mould and therefore a late post-medieval to modern date.

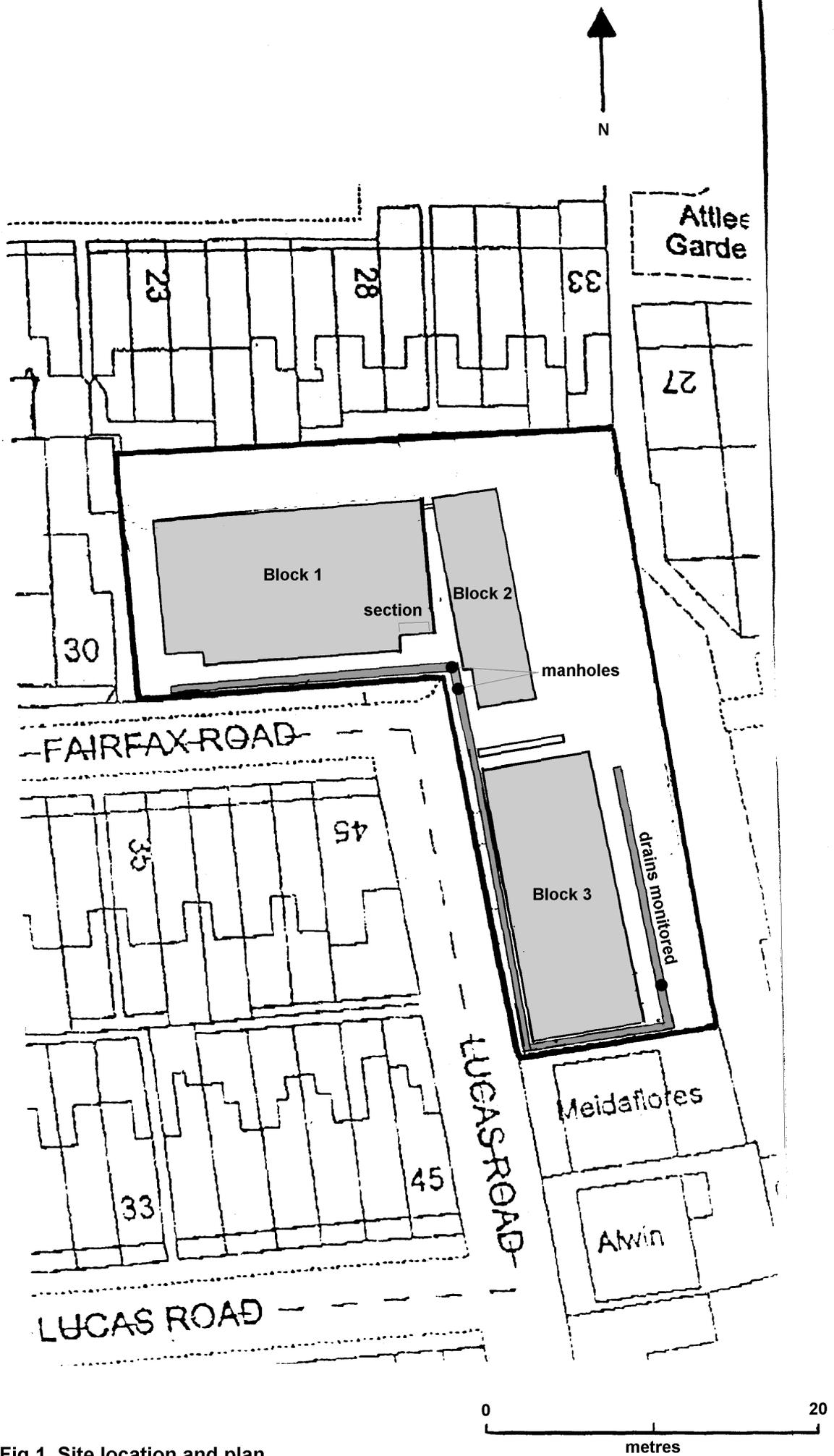


Fig 1 Site location and plan.

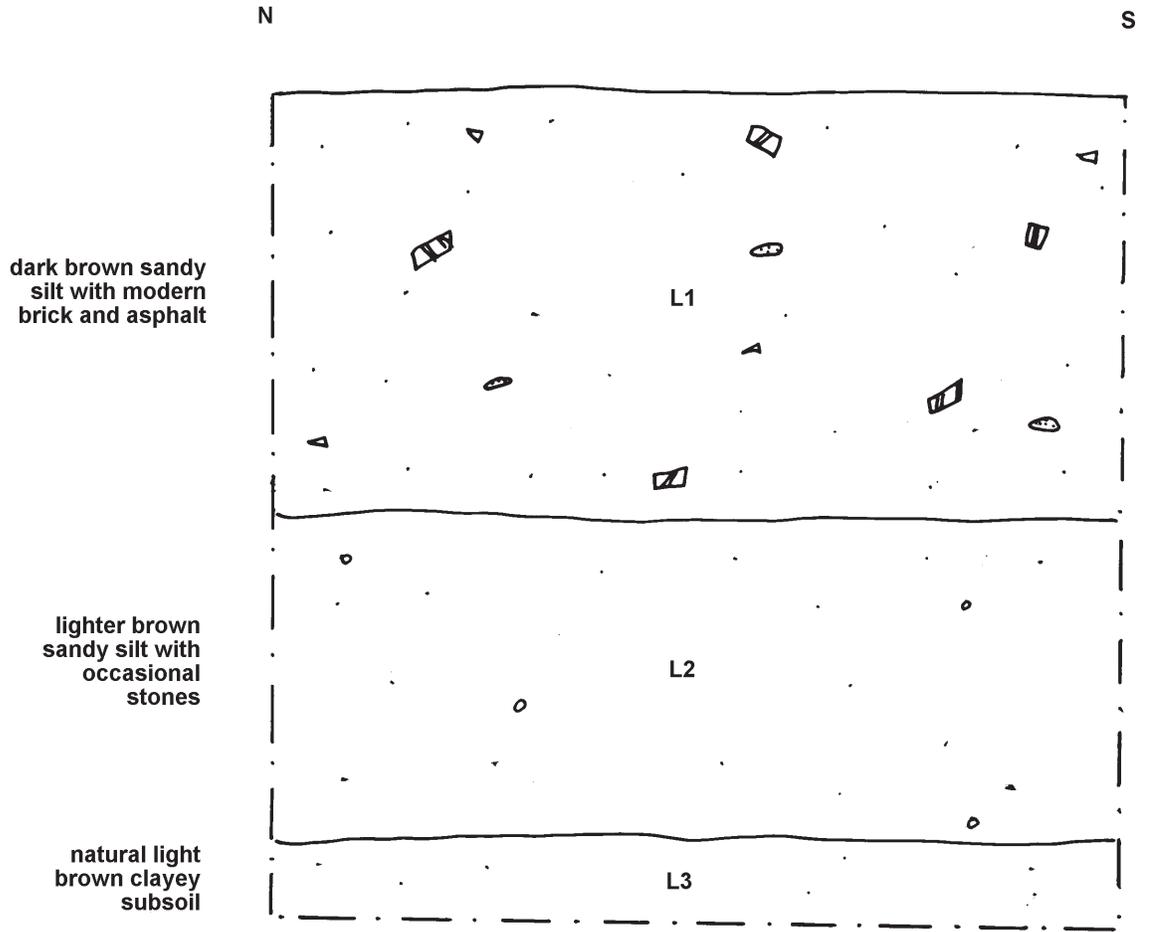


Fig 2 Section drawing of foundation trench, Block 1.

# Essex Heritage Conservation Record

## Summary sheet

<b>Site name/address:</b> Fairfax Road/Lucas Road, Colchester, Essex	
<b>Parish:</b> Colchester	<b>District:</b> Colchester Borough
<b>NGR:</b> TM 0004 2463	<b>Site code:</b> 2001.77
<b>Type of work:</b> Watching brief	<b>Site director/group:</b> Colchester Archaeological Trust
<b>Date of work:</b> April 2001-February 2002	<b>Size of area investigated:</b> 0.15 ha
<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> 13229, 13230, 13198
<b>Final report:</b> CAT Report 173 and summary in <i>EAH</i>	
<b>Periods represented:</b> Modern	
<b>Summary of fieldwork results:</b> Observations were made during and after groundworks for the construction of three blocks of flats. No finds or features of archaeological interest were observed.	
<b>Previous summaries/reports:</b> None	
<b>Author of summary:</b> Kate Orr	<b>Date of summary:</b> February 2002