

**An archaeological
watching brief
on the groundworks of
pads for gate-posts at
St Botolph's Church,
Colchester, Essex**

April 2002

**on behalf of
Colchester Borough Council**

CAT project ref.: 02/4a
Colchester Museum accession code: 2000.35
NGR: TL 9999 2492



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1 Summary

Observations were made during an archaeological watching brief on the groundworks of pads for two gate-posts which were erected to link fencing with the new extension to St Botolph's Church, Colchester, Essex. The holes were dug to 800mm depth. Disturbance and rubbish from the former Britannia Works were recorded. Except for one piece of residual Roman tile, nothing of archaeological significance was recorded.

2 Introduction

- 2.1 This is the report on an archaeological watching brief carried out by the Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) on the 9th April 2002 during the groundworks of pads for two gate-posts. Planning permission and Scheduled Ancient Monument consent were given with the condition that an archaeological watching brief be carried out.
- 2.2 The Georgian church of St Botolph's is located in the centre of Colchester, and the new extension and gate-posts are located to the rear (east) of the church and south-east of the remains of the medieval priory of St Botolph's. The site is located at National Grid Reference TL 9999 2492 (Figs 1-2).
- 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, updated 2002) and *Guidelines on the preparation and transfer of archaeological archives to Colchester Museums* (1996, updated 2002), and the IFA's *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (1999).

3 Archaeological background (Fig 2)

- 3.1 The monastic remains of St Botolph's priory are among the most impressive in Essex, standing in grounds of considerable archaeological importance as the site of the earliest house of the Augustinian canons in England. As such the site has been designated as a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM no 26301). The house was founded by the Augustinians between 1093 and 1100, and it was built using tile and brick from the remains of surrounding Roman buildings. It is thought likely that it was built on the site of a previous Anglo-Saxon monastic institution. The priory's precinct is thought to have been large (Crummy 1981, 74) and it may extend into the recent church extension area.
- 3.2 In 1991, exploratory excavations established the ground-plan of the demolished eastern end of the priory church. The excavations, carried out by CAT, located the church's extensively robbed eastern wall foundations and encountered important evidence indicating the presence of a crypt or undercroft beneath the south transept (*The Colchester Archaeologist* magazine, 1991-2). A large part of the grounds now open to the public was acquired by Colchester Borough Council following the 1980s' closure of the Britannia Works (engineering works) which had occupied the site for much of the present century. In the following year, the positions of the demolished walls and piers were marked out permanently on the ground by CAT as part of a wider scheme involving landscaping and improved public access to the site. Part of a Roman building underlying the church to the east of the crypt was also revealed by the exploratory excavations.
- 3.3 In 1999, CAT excavated one evaluation trench prior to the construction of the new extension (Shimmin 1999). The trench was dug to 1m depth and deposits appeared to be modern, with no evidence earlier than the 19th century. Much disturbance had been caused by the construction of the Britannia Works and the subsequent clearance and landscaping of the site.
- 3.4 In 2000, CAT undertook a watching brief of two boreholes and a test-pit at the site. Borehole 1 was positioned just north of the extension and modern deposits were recorded to a depth of 1.2m. Borehole 2 was located in the south-eastern corner of the extension and modern deposits were recorded to a depth of 2.2m (Crossan 2000a). Beneath these levels lie deposits of potential archaeological value. A piece of leather probably from a shoe was found in borehole 2 at 4.4m depth. Later in

2000, a watching brief was carried out during work on the fencing which surrounds the church and priory grounds (Fig 2). Residual human remains were found, but the majority of the pits did not penetrate below post-medieval levels (Crossan 2000b). In 2001, another watching brief was carried out during the groundworks for the church extension. Modern disturbance from the Britannia Works was observed extending down to 1m depth (Orr 2001).

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 remains of the Augustinian priory buildings.

5 Methods

A record of the position of the site excavations was made which has been reproduced as Figure 2. Both gate-post pads were dug to a depth of 800mm, and each was 750mm x 750mm. Both holes had been filled in by the time the visit was made. The spoil was checked for artefacts, and those that were collected were later discarded.

6 Results

- 6.1 The upcast from the pads consisted of a dark brown sandy loam containing abundant peg-tile, concrete, slate, glass, a metal spring, and what looked like files for metal-working. It is assumed that this represents rubbish from the Britannia Works which previously occupied the site. The holes were not dug deep enough to penetrate post-medieval or medieval remains which are to be found at over 2m below ground-level according to boreholes dug on the site (Crossan 2000a).
- 6.2 One fragment of Roman tile weighing 67g and two sherds of Fabric 51a flowerpot (Cotter 2000) weighing 36g were retrieved from the spoil heap and later discarded.

7 Archive deposition

The archive, which consists of this report and site notes, will be deposited permanently with Colchester Museum under accession code 2000.35 (the same accession code as the watching brief on the fencing which was carried out in 2000).

8 Acknowledgements

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

Colchester Borough Council for funding the work
Neil Smith Contractors
Deborah Priddy, English Heritage Ancient Monuments inspector

9 References

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Kate Orr, April 2002

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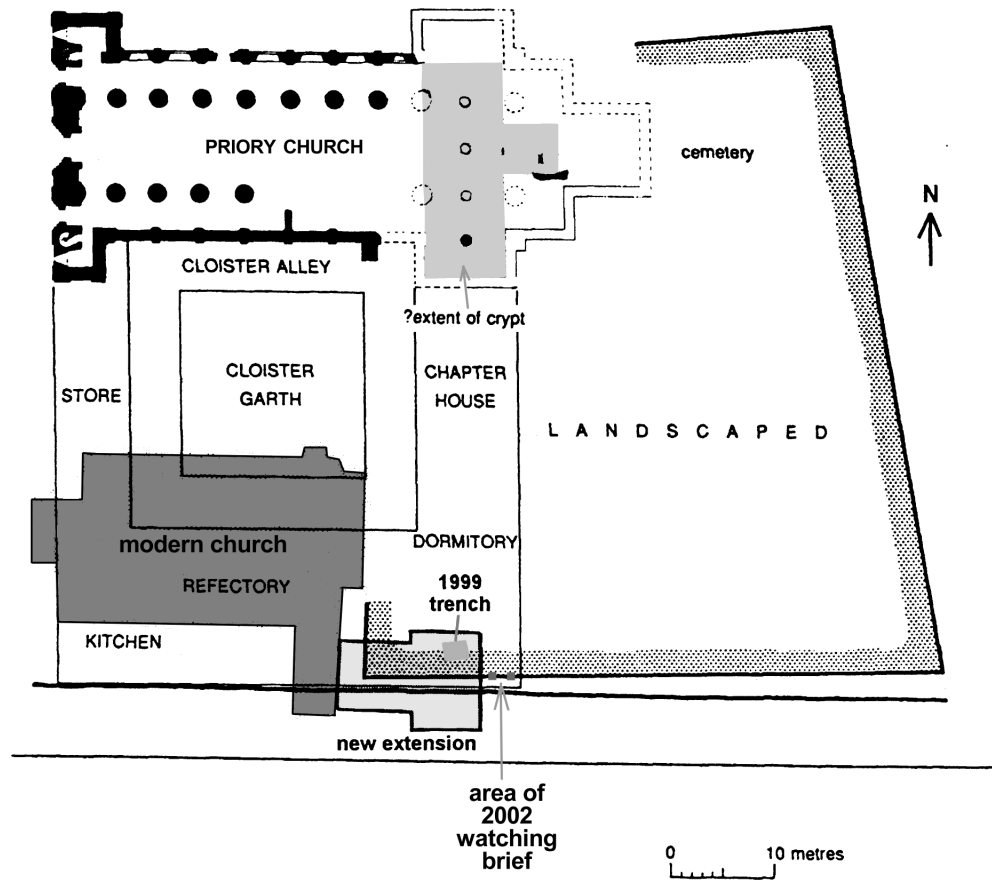


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Fig 1 Outline of the priory church with the modern church, scale 1:750 (taken from CAT Report 143).

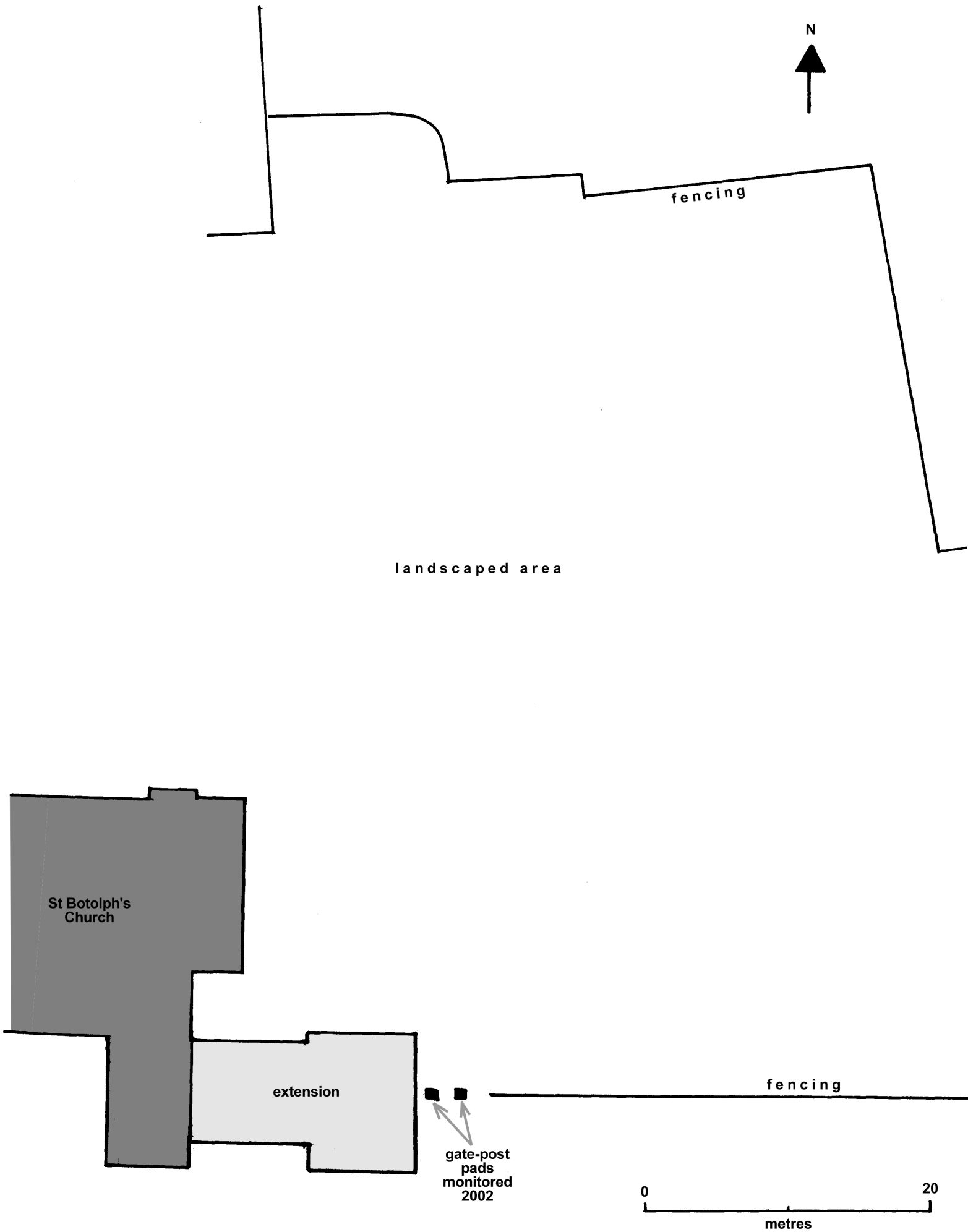


Fig 2 Site plan showing area covered by the 2002 watching brief, scale 1: 330.

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

Summary sheet

Site name/address: St Botolph's Church, Colchester, Essex	
Parish: Colchester	District: Colchester Borough
NGR: TL 9999 2492	Site code: 2000.35
Type of work: Watching brief	Site director/group: Colchester Archaeological Trust
Date of work: 9th April 2002	Size of area investigated: 2 pads of 750mm x 750mm each
Location of finds/curating museum: Colchester Museum	Funding source: Colchester Borough Council
Further seasons anticipated? No	Related EHCR nos:
Final report: CAT Report 183 and summary in EAH	
Periods represented: Modern	
<p>Summary of fieldwork results: <i>Observations were made during an archaeological watching brief on the groundworks of pads for two gate-posts which were erected to link fencing with the new extension to St Botolph's Church, Colchester, Essex. The holes were dug to 800mm depth. Disturbance and rubbish from the former Britannia Works were recorded. Except for one fragment of residual Roman tile, nothing of archaeological significance was recorded.</i></p>	
Previous summaries/reports: CAT Reports 32, 39, 71, 117 and 143	
Author of summary: Kate Orr	Date of summary: April 2002