

An archaeological watching brief on the laying of a cable pipeline at Colchester Castle Park, Colchester, Essex

April 2002

**on behalf of
Colchester Borough Council**

NGR: TL 9988 2532
CAT project reference: 02/4D
Colchester Museum accession code: 2001.238



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1 Summary

An archaeological watching brief was carried out at Colchester Castle Park, Colchester, Essex during groundworks for the laying of a cable pipeline from outside the park gates to near the footbridge leading to the castle door. No features of archaeological significance were observed, and all archaeological finds were residual.

2 Introduction

- 2.1 This is the report on an archaeological watching brief carried out by the Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) at Colchester Castle Park, Colchester, Essex during groundworks for the laying of a cable pipeline from outside the park gates to near the footbridge leading to the castle door. The trench ran from immediately outside the main gates at the south-west corner of the Castle Park to the footbridge (Fig 1).
- 2.2 All fieldwork was done in accordance with a specification agreed with the Archaeology Officer of Colchester Borough Council.
- 2.3 This report follows standards and practices contained in Colchester Borough Council's *Guidelines for the standards and practice of archaeological fieldwork in the Borough of Colchester* (1999).

3 Archaeological background

- 3.1 Colchester Castle Park is a site of great archaeological importance. In the Roman period, it lay in Insula 22 of the Roman town. This *insula* was dominated by the Temple of Claudius, the earliest stone and mortar building in Britain (Drury 1984). In other parts of Castle Park, recorded Roman remains include town houses which were excavated by Mortimer Wheeler, and a building once identified as a mithraeum but which is now thought to have been a waterworks. The principal published source for these discoveries is *Roman Colchester* (Hull 1958). In the medieval period, the remains of the Roman temple were used as a foundation for the Norman castle, and much of what is now the park came within the ramparts defining the castle bailey (Drury 1982). Later, the south face of the castle overlooked a bowling green, and excavations in the 1930s exposed the masonry which is visible nowadays outside (south of) the castle. The depth of this masonry, which represents principally medieval and later building in the bailey, demonstrates the amount of soil which has been dumped over the area south of the castle since medieval times.
- 3.2 In late 2001, CAT excavated a trench around the castle for the installation of floodlights (report in preparation).

4 Aims and objectives

The aim of the watching brief was to locate and record any features or finds of archaeological significance that might be disturbed by the groundworks.

5 Methods

- 5.1 All trenching was dug initially with jackhammers, to cut through the concrete/tarmac surfaces, and then by hand by the contractors. A CAT field officer was present during all trenching work.
- 5.2 Changes in soil layers were recorded. As no archaeological features were observed, no section drawings were made.
- 5.3 Finds were retrieved and recorded.

5 Results

6.1 Introduction

The watching brief covered a length of trench approximately 41m long, and generally 20-30cm wide and 30-40cm deep, except for one area which was 1m long, 1.20m wide and 50cm deep (Fig 1).

6.2 Outside the Castle Park gates

A length of trench 8.5m long, 30cm wide and 40cm deep was excavated. The trench was widened for a length of 1m to 1.20m and dug to a depth of 50cm. Layers L1, L2, L3 and L4 were excavated, from L1 sitting on the top to L4 on the bottom of the trench.

L1 - Concrete/tarmac street/path surface (5cm).

L2 - Modern rubble, possibly a hardcore base for the street surface (10cm).

L3 - Loose dark brown silty soil containing lots of modern brick and rubble (14cm).

L4 - Dark brown silty soil containing a mix of modern debris, clay pipe and oyster shell (10cm to the bottom of the trench).

6.3 Inside the Castle Park

A length of trench approximately 32m long, 20-30cm wide and 30cm deep was excavated. A 2m-long section of trench was dug through a flowerbed, through a dark brown silty topsoil (L5). Approximately 20m of trench was dug along the path on the south-west corner of the park. This was dug through L1 (a concrete/tarmac street/path surface) and into L6 (a dark brown silty soil containing large stones and brick) to a depth of 30cm. A 2m-long section of this trench contained L7, an orange sand and stony layer (10cm deep), possibly laid to raise the original ground-level of this area to create a flat path to tarmac. A further length, approximately 10m long, was dug along the east side of the footbridge leading to the castle door; this was dug through turf and a layer of mid/dark brown silty soil (L8).

6.4 No archaeological features were exposed in the trenching.

7 The finds

A few archaeological finds were recovered from the trenching, although none came from a recognisable archaeological context.

Table 1: List of finds.

Find no	Context	Description	Quantity	Weight	Archival status
1	L4	Clay pipe	3	7	Retained
2	L6	Clay pipe	5	34	Retained
3	L8	Roman tile with signature	1	1739	Retained
3	L8	Roman flue-tile	1	145	Retained

8 Discussion and interpretation

This watching brief showed that the groundworks for the cable pipeline did not disturb any archaeological remains. All finds appear to be residual, being mixed in with modern material.

9 Acknowledgments

Colchester Archaeological Trust would like to thank Colchester Borough Council for commissioning the work; Martin Winter, Archaeology Officer for Colchester Borough Council, for his assistance; and NTL for their assistance on site.

10 References

- Drury, P J, 1982 'Aspects of the origins and development of Colchester Castle', *Archaeological Journal*, **139**, 302-419
- Drury, P J, 1984 'The temple of Claudius at Colchester reconsidered', *Britannia*, **15**, 7-50
- Hull, M R, 1958 *Roman Colchester*, Society of Antiquaries Research Committee Report, **XX**

11 Archive deposition

The paper and digital archive is held at Colchester Archaeological Trust, 12 Lexden Road, Colchester, Essex CO3 3NF, but it will be permanently deposited with Colchester Museums under accession code 2001.238.

Laura Pooley, April 2002

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Distribution list:

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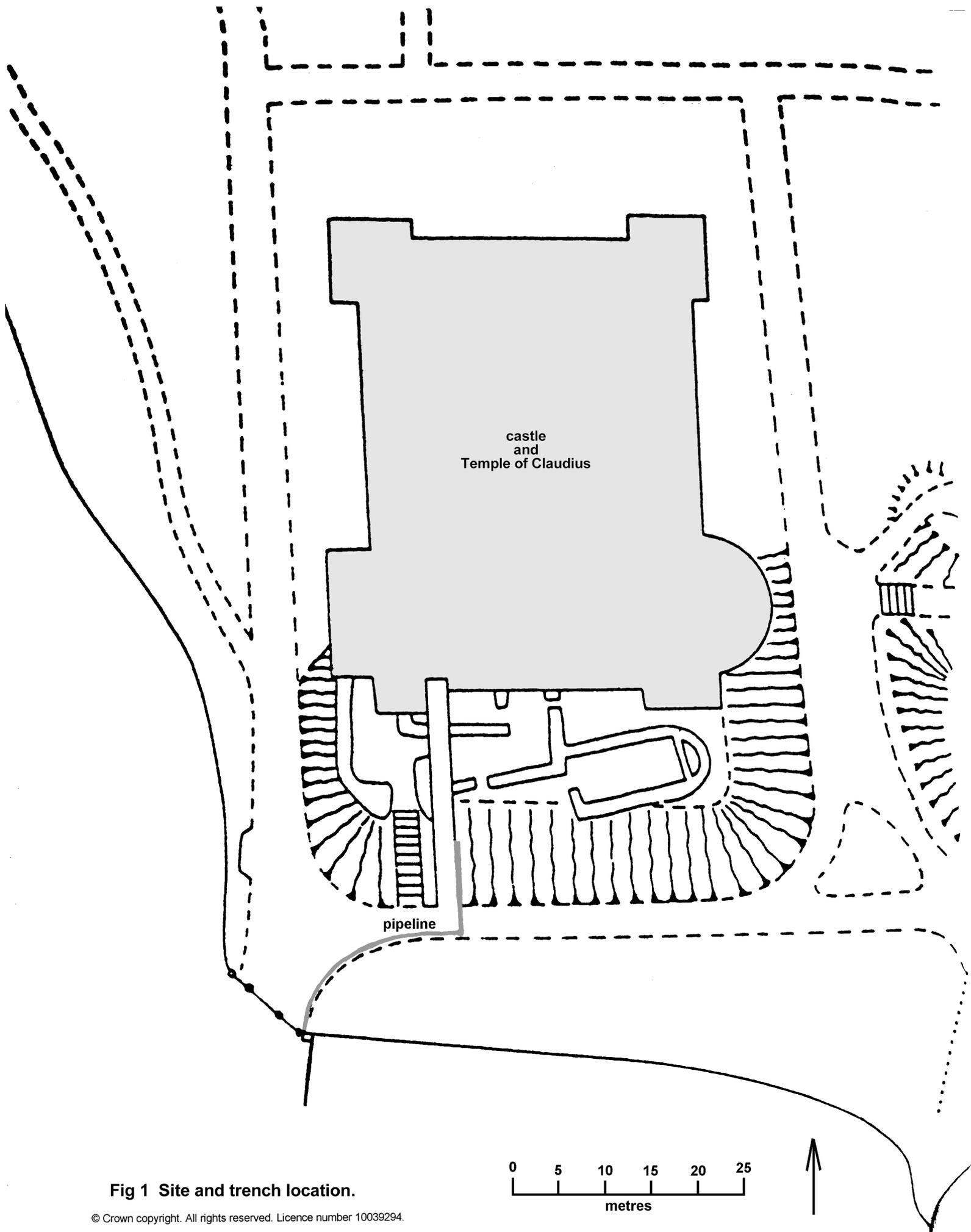


Fig 1 Site and trench location.

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Essex Heritage Conservation Record/ *Essex Archaeology and History*

Summary sheet

Site address: Colchester Castle Park, Colchester, Essex	
Parish: Colchester	District: Colchester
NGR: TL 9988 2532	Site code: Museum accession code: 2001.238
Type of work: Watching brief	Site director/group: Colchester Archaeological Trust
Date of work: April 2002	Size of area investigated: Approximately 41m in length, 20-30cm wide and 30-50cm deep
Location of finds/curating museum: Colchester Museums	Funding source: Colchester Borough Council
Further seasons anticipated? No	Related SMR nos:
Final report: CAT Report 190 and summary in <i>Essex Archaeology and History</i>	
Periods represented: Modern	
Summary of fieldwork results: <i>An archaeological watching brief was carried out at Colchester Castle Park, Colchester, Essex during groundworks for the laying of a cable pipeline from outside the park gates to near the footbridge leading to the castle door. No features of archaeological significance were observed, and all archaeological finds were residual.</i>	
Previous summaries/reports: None	
Author of summary: Laura Pooley	Date of summary: April 2002