

**An archaeological evaluation at  
the Salisbury Hotel,  
112 Butt Road, Colchester, Essex  
March 2004**

**report prepared by  
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**on behalf of  
Gladstone Homes**

CAT project ref: 04/3b  
Colchester Museums accession code: 2004.223  
NGR: TL 99159 24566



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**CAT Report 266**  
April 2004

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## 1 Summary

*Five trial-trenches were excavated at the Salisbury Hotel, which is thought to occupy a Roman cremation cemetery area. No features or finds of archaeological interest were recorded during the evaluation. This may be due to soil-stripping which was in evidence within the trenches. Alternatively the site could be just outside the main area of the cemetery.*

## 2 Introduction

- 2.1 This is the archive report on an archaeological trial-trenching evaluation carried out by the Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) at the Salisbury Hotel, 112 Butt Road, Colchester, Essex.
- 2.2 The developer submitted a planning application for a residential development with basement parking (LPA number F/COL/03/2199). The archaeological evaluation was necessary in order to assess any surviving archaeological remains that might be affected by the development.
- 2.3 The site is located south-west of Colchester town centre, on the corner of Butt Road and Salisbury Avenue, at National Grid Reference TL 99159 24566 (Fig 1). The site, which is level at between 34m and 35m AOD, measures approximately 35m by 35m and covers 0.118 hectares. The Salisbury Hotel is derelict and is to be demolished as part of the development. The rest of the site is currently hard surface ground to the rear and side of the public house.
- 2.4 All fieldwork was done in accordance with a specification submitted by CAT which followed a brief written by the Colchester Borough Council Archaeological Officer (see appendix).
- 2.5 This report mirrors standards and practices contained in the Colchester Borough Council's *Guidelines for the standards and practice of archaeological fieldwork in the Borough of Colchester* (1999, updated 2002) and *Guidelines on the preparation and transfer of archaeological archives to Colchester Museums* (1999, updated 2002), and the IFA's *Standard and guidance for an archaeological evaluation* (1999).

## 3 Archaeological background

- 3.1 A Bronze Age cremation urn has been found on Abbey Field. Middle Bronze Age pottery normally associated with cremation burials has been found at the junction of Salisbury Road and Butt Road (UAD 1247).
- 3.2 The site lies within the area of an early Roman cremation cemetery. There have been numerous reports of cremation burials being found in the Butt Road area, ie at Beaconsfield Avenue and at Le Cateau Barracks, in the Victorian period (Hull 1958). When Le Cateau Barracks were being built in the 1870s, workmen reported that they cut through cremation urns 'like currants in a bun', which gives an indication of the density of cremation burials in this area (Hull 1958, 253). This cremation cemetery area extended across Abbey Field where 28 Roman cremations were reported in 1925 (Hull 1958, 255-6).

Excavations by CAT at the Garrison sports ground (Abbey Field) in 2000 encountered approximately 70 Roman cremation burials. Most of these cremations were 300mm below ground-level (CAT Report 138). Recent evaluation by CAT within Colchester Garrison has revealed one further cremation 50m away from the Salisbury Hotel, in Cavalry Barracks (CAT Report 206).
- 3.3 The site is 300m south of a large later Roman cemetery, which is sited to the south of the walled Roman town. Over 700 inhumation burials have been recorded at Butt Road, during excavations on the site of the new police station in the 1970s and 1980s. The remains of a late Roman church excavated here represent one of the earliest standing structures of its kind in Britain (Crummy *et al* 1993). More recently, work at 47 Butt Road in 1997 (CAT Report 11), at 2 Alexandra Road in 2002 (CAT Report 187), and at the Cavalry Barracks in 2002 (CAT Report 206) has revealed further evidence of this inhumation cemetery. These two Roman cemeteries are some of the most extensive known in Britain.

- 3.4** Three Roman pottery kilns have been recorded in the Butt Road/Southway area (EHCR 12398); one is marked on Fig 1). These are typically found on the outskirts of a Roman town, away from the population centre, and it is possible that more may be found here. We do not have information about the depth that these kilns were found at.

## **4 Aim**

The aim of the evaluation was to record the extent, nature and complexity of any surviving archaeological remains within the development site.

## **5 Methods**

- 5.1** The fieldwork was carried out on the 15th and 16th March 2004. Five 1.4m-wide trial-trenches were excavated (Trenches 1-5 or T1-T5; Fig 2). The trenches had to be carefully placed to avoid buried services and two boreholes. A mechanical excavator with a breaker was used to remove the tarmac and concrete. A mechanical excavator with a toothless ditching bucket removed soil in spits until archaeological features or natural ground were exposed. A sixth trench was not excavated due to the lack of space caused by the presence of an electricity cable and sewer and the front of the hotel building.
- 5.2** Individual records of layers and features were entered on CAT pro-forma record sheets. All exposed sub-soil features, archaeological deposits or negative features were manually cleaned, drawn in section and plan and examined in sufficient detail to allow their nature, date and importance to be assessed.
- 5.3** Section drawings of features and layers were made at a scale of 1:10. Plans of features were made at 1:20.
- 5.4** A register was compiled of finds. Finds were washed, marked and bagged according to context.
- 5.5** Standard 'record' shots of contexts were taken with a digital camera. Colour transparencies were used for overall site shots.

## **6 Results**

### **6.1 Trench 1 - 4.5m long, 1m deep (Fig 3)**

T1 was dug on the northern side of the car park, to the side of the hotel building. The following soil profile and feature were observed:

Layer or L1 - 100mm of tarmac with a sandy brick rubble base.

L2 - 240mm of greyish brown sandy silt topsoil with occasional stones, containing modern china (find no 1).

L3 - 200mm of mid brown sandy silt with frequent stones. This layer contained peg-tile and scattered animal bone (find no 2).

L5 - underneath L3 and merging into natural L6 was light to mid brown sandy silt layer approximately 250mm thick, with abundant stones. There were no finds to date this layer.

L6 - natural sand and gravel appeared at 780mm below ground-level.

Feature or F1 - a ditch or large pit was recorded in the western end of the trench, starting at 600mm below ground-level and continuing to the base of the trench. This had a dark brown sandy silt fill and contained flower pot, modern glass and china. There was a seam of mortar and modern brick at the top of the feature. F1 is thought to be a modern rubbish-pit. It cut L5 and L6 and was sealed by L3.

### **6.2 Trench 2 - 9m long, 750mm deep (Fig 4)**

T2 was dug on the south-western side of the car park. The following soil profile was observed:

L1 - 100mm of tarmac with a sandy brick rubble base.

L4 - beneath L1 was another thicker layer of asphalt 160mm thick with 150mm of modern orange sand base. This appeared to be a previous car-park surface but did not extend into the other two trenches in the car park.

L7 - a compact orange and grey brown sandy silt layer extended to the base of the trench. This layer contained abundant peg-tile and pieces of modern brick, concentrated at the top of the layer, at the interface with L4.

L6 - natural sand and gravel appeared at 750mm below ground-level.

**6.3 Trench 3** - 4.5m long, 800mm deep (Fig 3)

T3 was located at the south-eastern corner of the car park, next to Butt Road. The following soil profile and feature were observed:

L8 - 100-130mm of tarmac with a concrete base.

L10 - 120mm of mid brown silty sand and brick rubble.

L9 - 550mm thick layer of brownly orange sand with mottles of light brown silty sand and frequent stones. This layer is similar to L7 and appeared to be a modern dumped layer.

L6 - natural sand and gravel was reached at 800mm below ground-level.

F6 - a modern linear feature cutting L9 was seen in both sections but not in plan. It was filled by light greyish brown silty sand and occasional stones. There were no finds from this feature.

**6.4 Trench 4** - 4.5m long, 800mm deep

T4 was located to the rear of the hotel building, in a patio area. The following soil profile was observed:

L1 - 100mm of tarmac with sandy base.

L10 - 200mm of mid brown silty sand with brick rubble.

L9 - 500mm of brownly orange sand with mottles of light brown silty sand and frequent stones.

L6 - natural sand and gravel appeared at 800mm below ground-level.

**6.5 Trench 5** - 4.5m long, between 500mm and 830mm deep (Fig 3)

T5 was also located to the rear of the hotel building, in a patio area. The following soil profile and features were observed:

L8 - 200mm thick surface of block paving stones, sand sub-base and concrete.

L10 - 200mm of mid brown silty sand with brick rubble.

L9 - 400mm thick sandy dumped layer (see L9 above).

L6 - natural sand was reached at 700mm below ground-level.

F2 - a modern brick foundation on a north to south alignment was removed. This ties in with old maps of the site which show a building to the rear of the hotel.

F3 - a modern brick soakaway, 800mm wide, was also recorded in the western part of the trench.

F4 - a modern pit filled by light brown sandy clay was seen in the south-facing section only. This was sealed by L10 and cut by F4.

F5 - a modern ceramic drain was left *in situ* in the western part of the trench. It cut L9 and appeared to be extending into soakaway F3.

**6.6 Summary**

No features or finds of archaeological significance were identified from the trial-trenches.

**6.7 Finds**

Modern pottery was identified by Howard Brooks of CAT. Fabric numbers refer to Cotter 2000. All finds have been discarded.

**Table 1: list of finds by context.**

Find no	Context	Description	Weight in g	Date
1	L2, T1	Peg-tile	56	medieval to modern
1	L2, T1	Animal bone	14	undated
1	L2, T1	Slate	33	modern
2	L3, T1	Clay-pipe stem	4	post-medieval or modern
2	L3, T1	Animal bone	15	undated
2	L3, T1	Fragment of a potty, ironstone Fabric 51b	29	19th-20th century
2	L3, T1	Peg-tile	19	medieval to modern
2	L3, T1	Slate	8	modern
3	F1, T1	Peg-tile	172	medieval to modern
3	F1, T1	Flower pot fragment, Fabric 48d	92	19th-20th century
3	F1, T1	Handle of a potty, ironstone Fabric 51b (same vessel as find no 2)	115	19th-20th century

## 7 Discussion

7.1 No features or finds of archaeological significance were identified from the trial-trenches. There was evidence in T5 of a modern building to the rear of the hotel. There was no evidence in T3 for any modern buildings between the hotel and 111 Butt Road. Modern pits and services were the only other features identified and these are likely to be related to the Salisbury Hotel. If the site formed part of the Roman cremation cemetery (section 3.2), then one would expect cremation burials to occur beneath the topsoil, cut into the natural L6 or the layer above. The only trench where topsoil had not been removed was T1. This was the also the only trench where there was an intermediate layer (L5) between natural and modern deposits. Unfortunately there was no dating evidence from L5. In the four other trenches, there were modern deposits of brick rubble and sandy dumped layers all the way down until natural ground was encountered. It would appear that the whole site, apart from the northern corner (the area of T1), had been stripped of topsoil and subsoil. Sandy material had then been dumped on top of natural sand. This probably took place at the time that the hotel was constructed, in the late 19th century. Material for the car park and patio have subsequently been laid on top of the sandy dumped layer.

7.2 There are two possible explanations for the absence of cremation burials. One is that this site is outside the main area of the Roman cremation cemetery, which is feasible as only one cremation burial has been reported in the area, from Cavalry Barracks which is across the road. The other is that cremations have been removed on the site by the activity described in 7.1. However, if recent activity has removed cremation burials, traces of them should still remain in the form of broken Roman pottery, cremated bone or other residual material. But there was no such evidence from the evaluation, the earliest find being peg-tile. Additionally one would expect something to have been reported or rumoured at the time of the construction of the Salisbury Hotel if cremation burials had been discovered, as they were reported from Le Cateau Barracks which was built in the same period.

## 8 Acknowledgements

The Trust would like to thank Gladstone Homes for commissioning and funding the work and for assistance on site. The project was monitored by Martin Winter, Archaeology Officer for Colchester Borough Council. The site work was carried out by Kate Orr and Chris Lister.

## 9 References

- |                                    |      |  |
|------------------------------------|------|--|
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| CAT Report 138                     |      | Archaeological excavations at the Garrison sports pitch (Abbey Field), Circular Road North, Colchester, Essex, 2000, unpublished CAT archive report, by Carl Crossan, 2001                         |
| CAT Report 187                     |      | An archaeological evaluation on land adjacent to 2 Alexandra Road, Colchester, Essex, unpublished CAT archive report, by Howard Brooks, 2002   |
| CAT Report 206                     |      | An archaeological evaluation by trial-trenching on Areas A, B, D, GJ, H, J, N, V and YP at Colchester Garrison PFI site, Colchester, Essex, unpublished CAT archive report, by Howard Brooks, 2002 |
| Cotter, J                          | 2000 | <i>Post-Roman pottery from excavations in Colchester 1971-85</i> , Colchester Archaeological Report 7  |
| Crummy, P, Crummy, N, & Crossan, C | 1993 | <i>Excavations of Roman and later cemeteries, churches and monastic sites in Colchester</i> , Colchester, Colchester Archaeological Report 9   |
| Hull, M R                          | 1958 | <i>Roman Colchester</i> , RRCSAL, 20   |

## 10 Glossary

AOD	Above Ordnance Datum, ie height above sea level
Bronze Age context	the period from c 2500 BC to 700 BC specific location on an archaeological site, especially one where finds are made
EHCR feature	Essex Heritage Conservation Record, Essex County Council an identifiable thing like a pit, a wall, a drain, a floor; can contain contexts'
modern	period from the mid 19th century to the present
NGR	National Grid Reference
natural	geological deposit undisturbed by human activity
post-medieval	period from c 1500 to the mid 19th century
Roman	the period from AD 43 to c AD 410
UAD	Urban Archaeological Database held by Colchester Museums

## 11 Archive deposition

The finds and paper archive are held by the Colchester Archaeological Trust at 12 Lexden Road, Colchester, Essex CO3 3NF, but both will be permanently deposited with Colchester Museums under accession code 2004.223.

## 12 Site data

Table 2: list of contexts.

Context	Trench	Description	Context date
F1	1	ditch or large pit starting at 600mm below ground-level and continuing to the base of the trench (not dug); dark brown sandy silt fill containing modern pottery, modern glass and china; there was a seam of mortar and modern brick at the top - sealed by L3	modern
F2	5	brick foundation on a north to south alignment (removed); this cut through L9 and L10 - sealed by L8	modern
F3	5	brick soakaway 800mm wide - sealed by L8, cut L9 and L10	modern
F4	5	pit filled by light brown sandy clay, seen in the south-facing section only - sealed by L10 and cut by F4	modern
F5	5	ceramic drain, left <i>in situ</i> ; it cut L9 and appeared to be extending into soakaway F3	modern
F6	3	linear feature seen in both sections but not in plan; filled by light greyish brown silty sand and occasional medium to large stones - sealed by L10, cut L9 (there were no finds)	modern
L1	1, 2, 4	tarmac with a sandy brick rubble base - surface of car park	modern
L2	1	greyish brown sandy silt topsoil with occasional small rounded stones, contained modern pottery, slate and peg-tile - sealed by L1	modern
L3	1	mid brown sandy silt with frequent small and medium rounded and angular stones; this layer contained peg-tile, modern pottery and scattered animal bone - sealed F1 and L5	modern
L4	2	thick layer of asphalt with modern orange sand base. This appeared to be a previous car-park surface	modern
L5	1	merging into natural L6 was light-mid brown sandy silt layer with abundant stones, approximately 250mm thick (there were no finds to date this layer)	undated
L6	all	natural orange sand and gravel	glacial
L7	2	compact orangey and grey brown sandy silt layer extending to the base of the trench; this layer contained abundant peg-tile and pieces of modern brick, concentrated at the top of the layer, at the interface with L4 (dumped layer)	modern
L8	3, 5	tarmac or paving stones with a concrete base - surface of patio/car park	modern
L9	3, 4, 5	browny orange sand with mottles of light brown silty sand; frequent small to medium rounded and angular stones - sealed by L10, merges with L6; this layer is similar to L7 and appeared to be a dumped layer	modern
L10	3, 4, 5	mid brown silty sand with brick rubble - sealed by L1 or L8	modern



**Distribution list:**

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Martin Winter, Archaeological Officer for Colchester Borough Council  
Essex Heritage Conservation Record, Essex County Council



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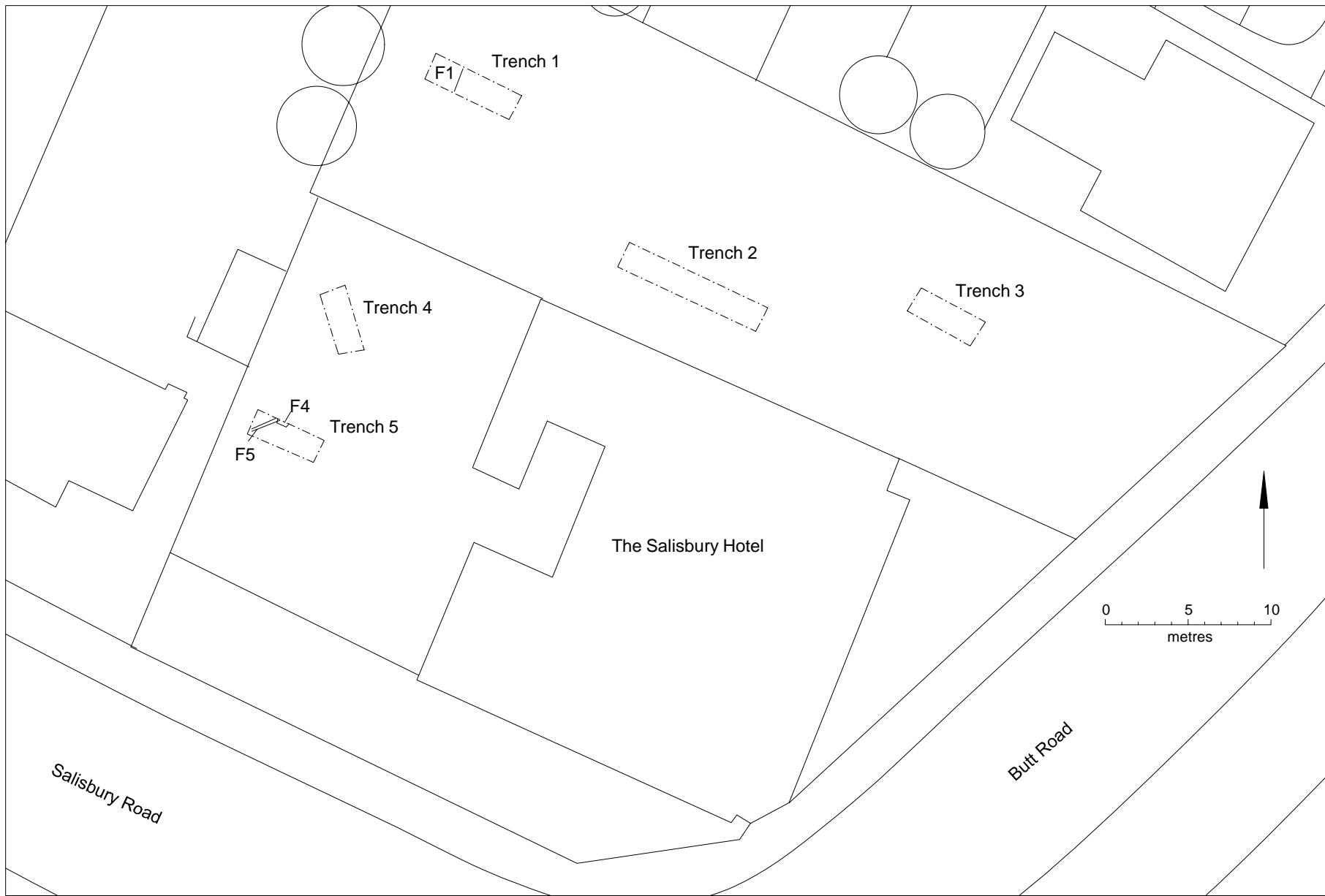
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**Appendix: brief supplied by CBC Archaeology Officer**



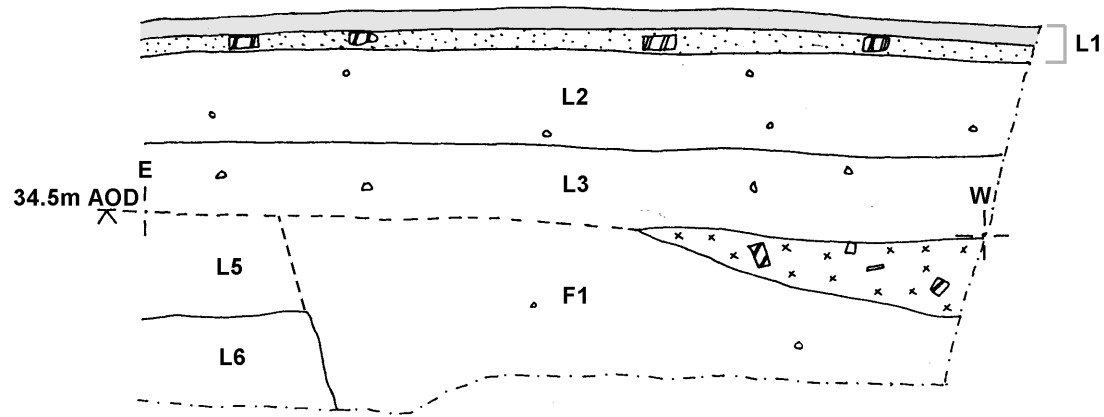
Fig 1 Site location (based on an Ordnance Survey map; © Crown copyright. All rights reserved. Licence no 100039294).



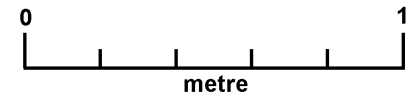
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Fig 2 Plan of trenches showing features.

T1: F1; north-facing section



- stones
- tarmac
- ⋯ sand
- ▨ modern brick (rubble)
- ×× mortar
- ▤ peg-tile



T5: F2, F3, F4; south-facing section

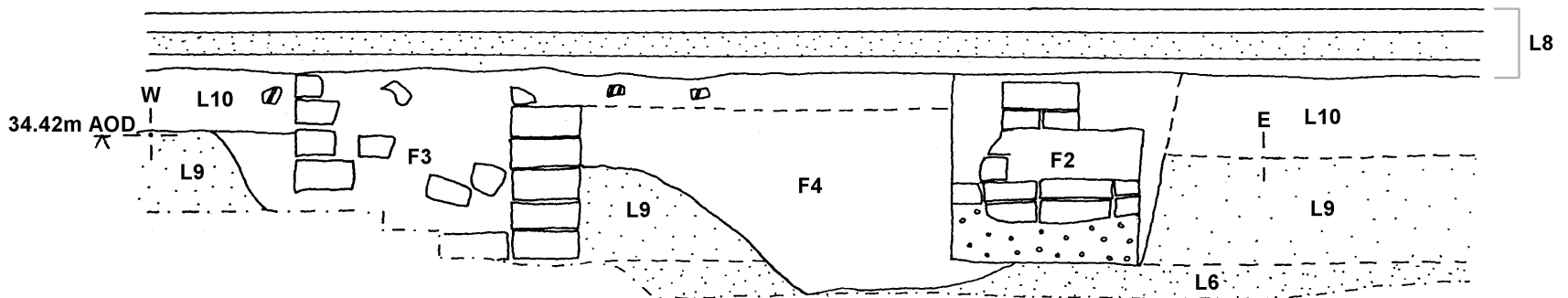
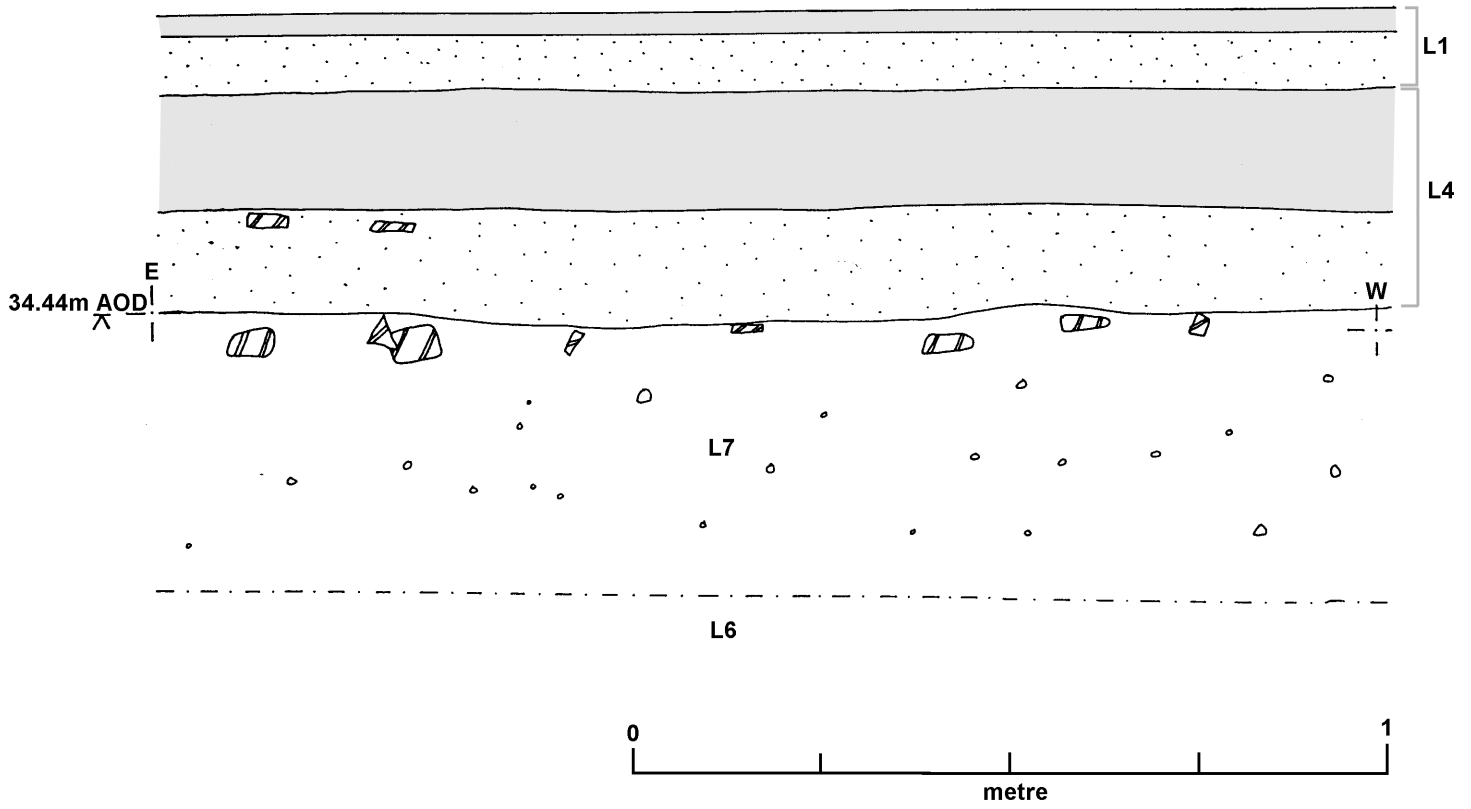


Fig 3 Trench 1 and Trench 5: section drawings.

T2: north-facing section of part of



T3: F6; north-facing section

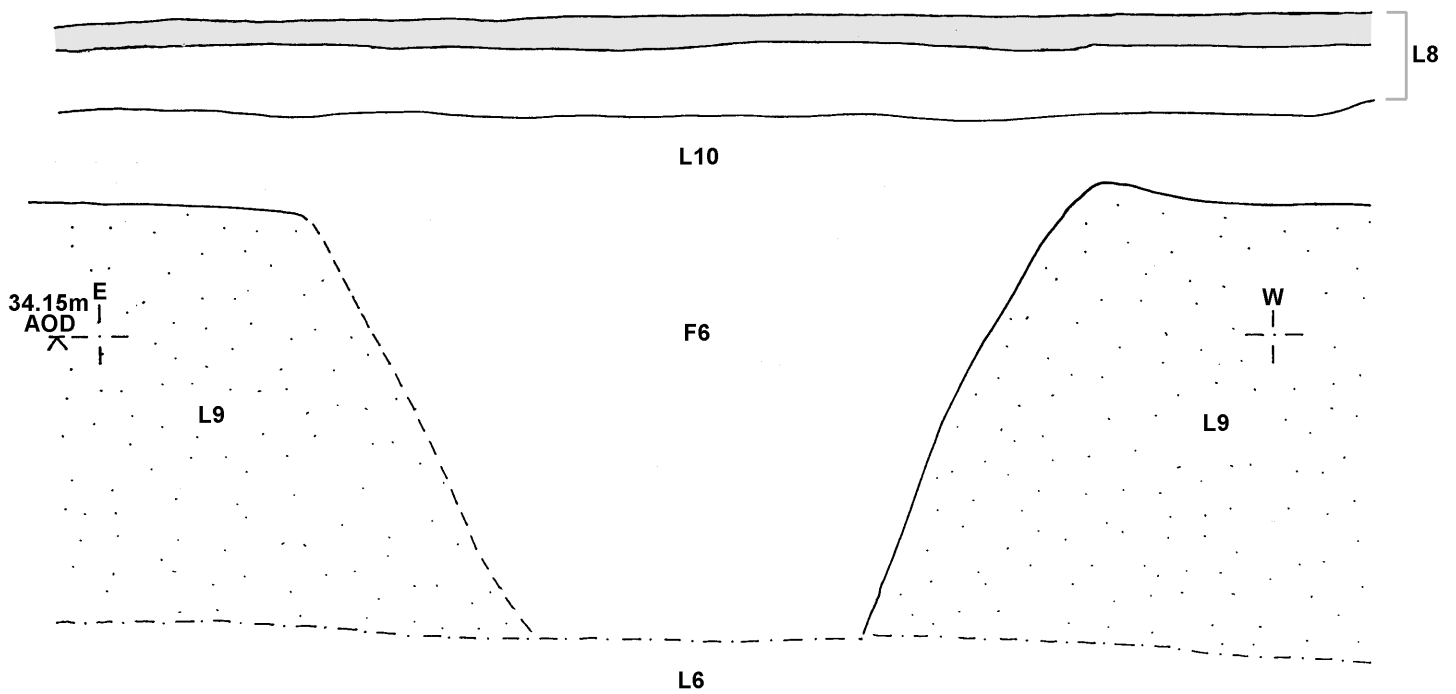


Fig 4 Trench 2 and Trench 3: section drawings (for key see Fig 3).

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

**Summary sheet**

<b>Site name/address:</b> the Salisbury Hotel, 112 Butt Road, Colchester, Essex	
<b>Parish:</b> Colchester	<b>District:</b> Colchester
<b>NGR:</b> TL 99159 24566	<b>Site code:</b> Museum accession code 2004.223
<b>Type of work:</b> Evaluation	<b>Site director/group:</b> Colchester Archaeological Trust
<b>Date of work:</b> 15th and 16th March 2004	<b>Size of area investigated:</b> 0.118 ha
<b>Location of finds/curating museum:</b> Colchester Museums	<b>Funding source:</b> Developer
<b>Further seasons anticipated?</b> No	<b>Related EHCR nos:</b>
<b>Final report:</b> CAT Report 266	
<b>Periods represented:</b> None	
<p><b>Summary of fieldwork results:</b>  <i>Five trial-trenches were excavated at the Salisbury Hotel, which is thought to occupy a Roman cremation cemetery area. No features or finds of archaeological interest were recorded during the evaluation. This may be due to soil-stripping which was in evidence within the trenches. Alternatively the site could be just outside the main area of the cemetery.</i></p>	
<b>Previous summaries/reports:</b> None	
<b>Author of summary:</b> K Orr	<b>Date of summary:</b> April 2004