

Watching brief - CAT Report 286

Site address: Lower and Upper Castle Park, Colchester, Essex
Date of fieldwork: 12th-13th May, 19th May and 27th July 2004
NGR: TL 9993 2560, TL 9993 2547, TM 0004 2540
CAT project ref.: 04/5b
Museum accession code: 2004.302

Purpose of watching brief:

The watching brief was carried out during the digging of small holes for new fence posts and an information board in Lower Castle Park, footings at the Castle café and pits for the bases of three new benches in Upper Castle Park. The information board required two post-holes and the three benches required four holes each.

Archaeological background:

The Castle Park is protected as a scheduled ancient monument due to the wealth of its Roman and medieval archaeology. The most significant remains are of the Roman temple dedicated to the emperor Claudius, which survives in part below the Norman castle keep. The park and the castle have been investigated on many occasions. For more information see Hull 1958 and Brooks 1996.

The footings dug to enclose the alcove at the back of the park café are within Insula 7 of the Roman town, where street metalling and Roman buildings with tessellated pavements have been observed during archaeological excavations in the past. The holes for the new benches were dug within Insula 16 of the Roman town. The post-holes for the information board and fence were excavated to the north of the Roman town wall and its rampart. A building once interpreted as being a Roman Mithraeum but which is now thought to have been a water-works survives below ground to the east of the play area (Hull 1958). The ditch enclosing the outer bailey to the castle survives to the south-west of the site.

Observations:

A watching brief was maintained as small holes and trenches were dug by hand. The deepest excavations were for the footings by the café which extended to a depth of 0.9m. The fence post-holes were dug to a depth of 0.56m. No features of archaeological significance were disturbed by the groundworks.

Finds:

Pottery and tile were retrieved plus some animal bone and plaster (see attached list of finds).

References:

Brooks, H, 1996 *An historical study of Colchester Castle Park* (CBC)
Hull, M R, 1958 *Roman Colchester*, RRCSAL, 20

Report author: K Orr

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Distribution list:

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List of finds

| Find no | Context | Description | Date | Weight (g) |
|---------|----------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------|
| 1 | Fence post-hole, topsoil | Fe nail | undated | 16 |
| 1 | Fence post-hole, topsoil | Pottery | Roman | 112 |
| 3 | Fence post-hole, subsoil | Pottery | Roman | 23 |
| 3 | Fence post-hole, subsoil | <i>Imbrex</i> tile | Roman | 47 |
| 5 | Fence post-hole, subsoil | Peg-tile | Peg tile | 149 |
| 7 | Bench hole, topsoil | Septaria | Roman or medieval | 64 |
| 7 | Bench hole, topsoil | Tile | Roman | 341 |
| 8 | Bench hole, topsoil | Animal bone | undated | 35 |
| 8 | Bench hole, topsoil | Brick | Roman | 82 |
| 9 | Bench hole, topsoil | Animal bone | undated | 17 |
| 9 | Bench hole, topsoil | Brick | Roman | 80 |
| 10 | Bench hole, topsoil | Lava quern fragment | Roman | 21 |
| 10 | Bench hole, topsoil | Tile | Roman | 100 |
| 11 | Bench hole, topsoil | Peg-tile and Roman tile | Roman and medieval or post-medieval | 274 |
| 12 | Information board, topsoil | Stone | undated | 90 |
| 12 | Information board, topsoil | brick | Roman? | 55 |
| 12 | Information board, topsoil | pottery | Roman? | 8 |
| 13 | Café footings, topsoil | Roman brick and peg-tile | Roman and medieval or post-medieval | 1120 |
| 13 | Café footings, topsoil | Oyster shell | undated | 58 |
| 13 | Café footings, topsoil | Plaster | undated | 130 |
| 14 | Café footings, subsoil | Brick and tile | Roman | 823 |
| 16 | Café footings, topsoil | Roman brick and peg-tile | Roman and medieval or post-medieval | 83 |
| 17 | Café footings, subsoil | Roman brick and peg-tile | Roman and medieval or post-medieval | 231 |
| 18 | Café footings, topsoil | Roman brick and peg-tile | Roman and medieval or post-medieval | 513 |
| 19 | Café footings, subsoil | Roman brick and peg-tile | Roman and medieval or post-medieval | 381 |



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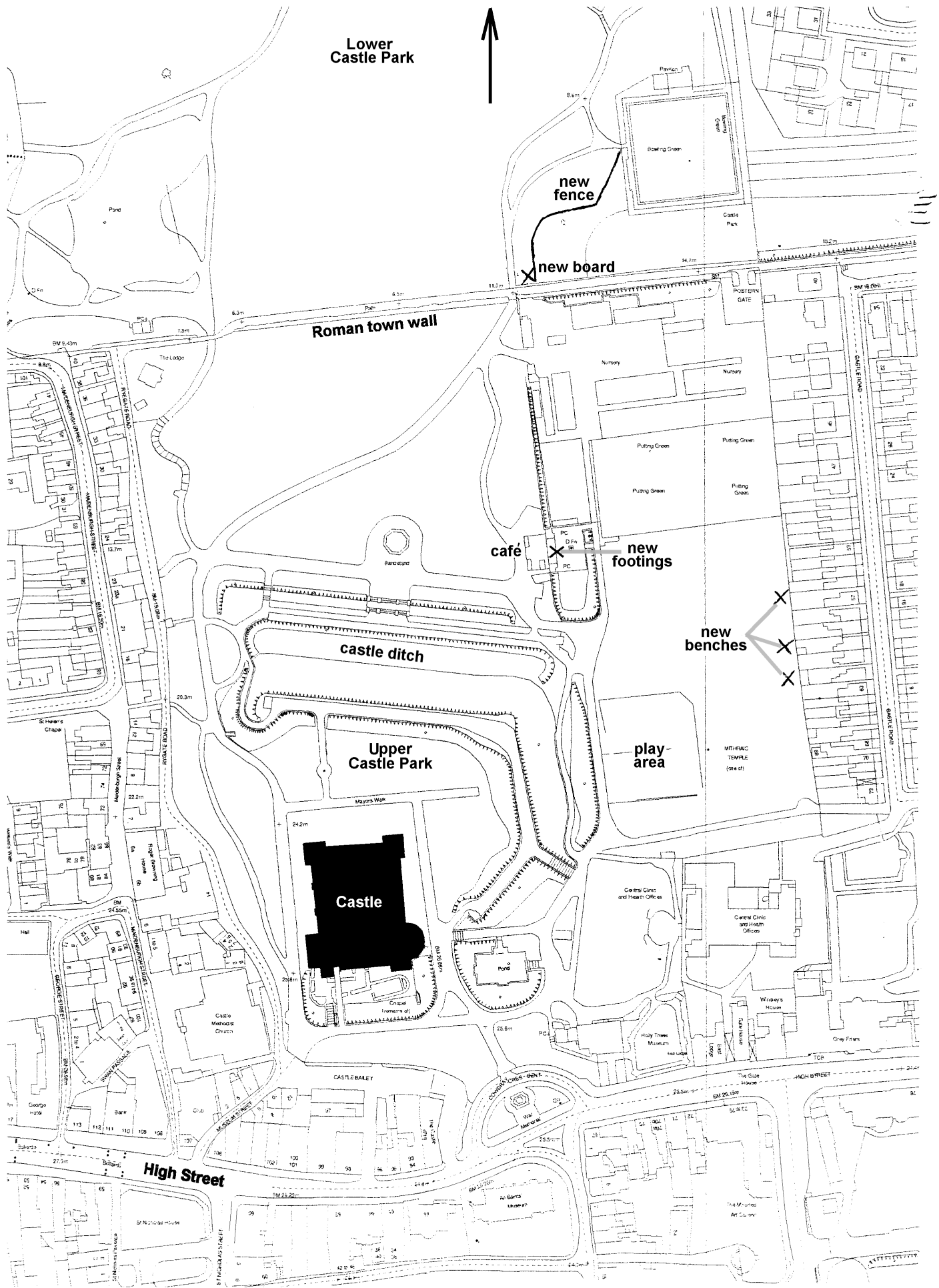


Fig 1 Location of groundworks.
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