

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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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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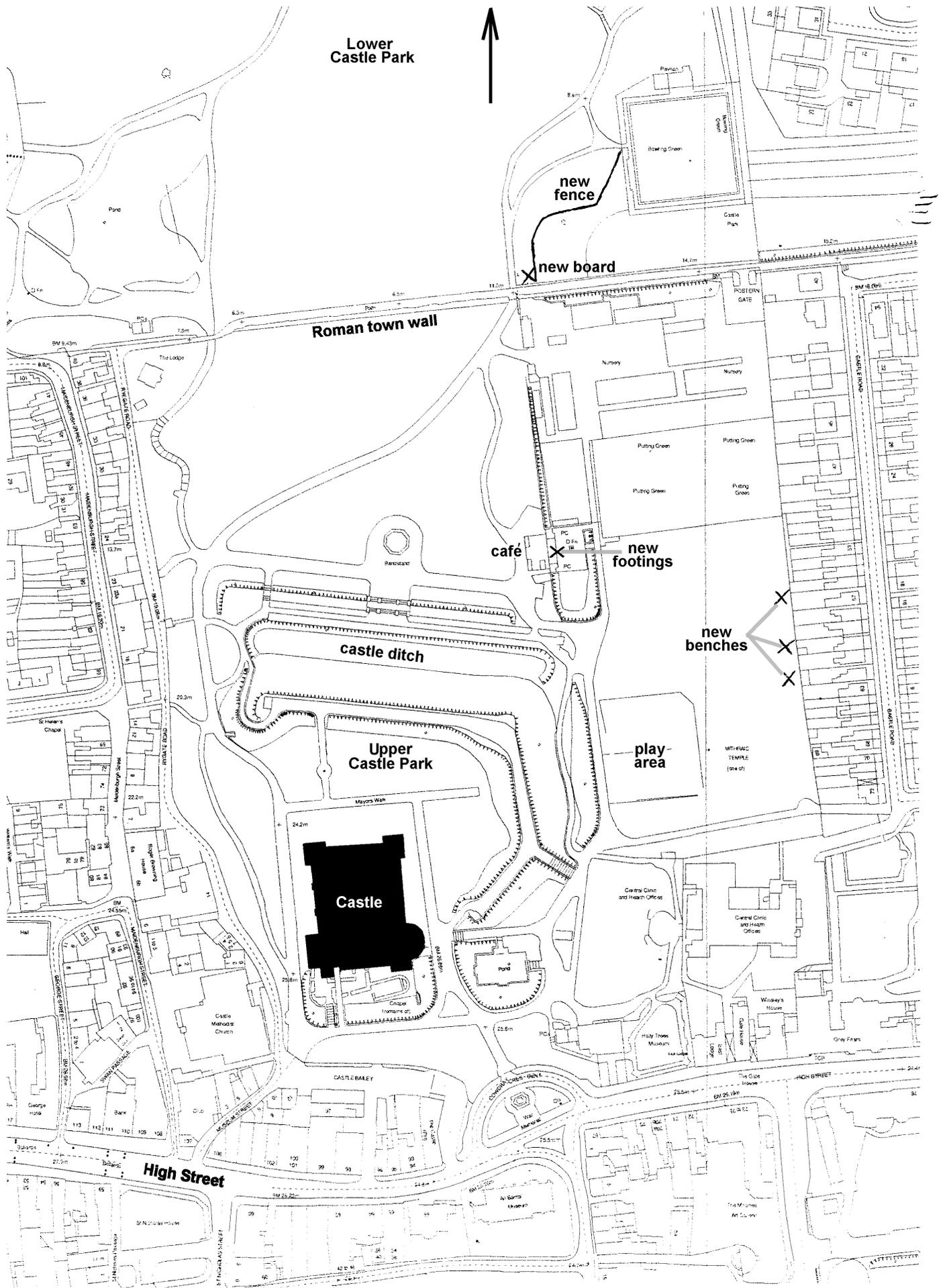


Fig 1 Location of groundworks.
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