

**An archaeological excavation  
and watching brief at the Musket Club,  
Homefield Road, Colchester, Essex  
December 2004-February 2005**

**report prepared by  
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**on behalf of  
RMPA and the MoD**

CAT project code: 05/1b  
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NGR: TL 9837 2254



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## 1 Summary

*The car-parking area south of the Musket Club lies over an archaeological 'cropmark site' recorded in the 1970s - a sub-rectangular enclosure of suspected Iron Age date (EHCR 11839).*

*A watching brief was carried out on various minor service works connected with the redevelopment of the site. In addition, an area which coincided with the northern arm of the enclosure was cleaned by hand, and three sections were cut across the ditch. The ditch was recorded in contractors' trenches at a further three points on its circuit.*

*Modern service-trenches had caused much disturbance to the ditch, but a small quantity of pottery indicated a Middle Iron Age or later date for the enclosure.*

*The work was carried out by the Colchester Archaeological Trust, managed by RPS on behalf of RMPA and the MoD, as part of a programme of archaeological work on an area of the Colchester Garrison alienated land acquired for residential development.*

## 2 Introduction

- 2.1 This is an archive report on an archaeological excavation and watching brief at the Musket Club, Homefield Road, Colchester, Essex.
- 2.2 The Iron Age enclosure is centred on NGR TL 9837 2254 (Fig 1).
- 2.3 The archaeological work was carried out by Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) in association with RPS Planning, Transport and Environment, between 13th December 2004 and 3rd March 2005 (Fig 2). Post-excavation work was carried out between 4th and 11th April 2005.
- 2.4 All fieldwork and reporting was done in accordance with the site-specific written scheme of investigation (RPS/CAT 2003), Colchester Archaeological Trust's *Policies and Procedures* (1999), Colchester Borough Council's *Guidelines for the standards and practice of archaeological fieldwork in the Borough of Colchester* (1996, revised 2002) and Council's *Guidelines on the preparation and transfer of archaeological archives to Colchester Museums* (1996, revised 2003), and the IFA's *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (1999a) and *Standard and guidance for archaeological excavation* (1999b).

## 3 Archaeological background

The archaeological and historical setting of the Colchester Garrison area has been comprehensively explored in a desk-based assessment or DBA (CAT Report 97), and is only summarised here. This section is also based on CAT Report 207 and RPS 2004.

Much of the land to the south and west of the modern town centre falls within the pre-Roman *oppidum* of Camulodunum. The surviving above-ground remains of the *oppidum* are some of the linear banks and ditches of the defensive dyke system that surrounded it. Centres of occupation, trackways, boundary ditches and roads have been identified from cropmarks.

As presently understood, the *oppidum* had two main centres of activity: at Gosbecks Farm (1.5km west of the Musket Club), a late Iron Age rural farmstead (possibly the home of Cunobelin); and at Sheepen (2km to the north of the Musket Club), which was an industrial and trading centre. Apart from these two large centres, it is likely that there was a number of smaller sites, industrial or domestic, that await discovery within the *oppidum*. One such site (a farmstead) has been recorded at Kirkee McMunn Barracks (Shimmin 1998). The cropmarks within the Garrison site may represent the trackways and field boundary ditches that are associated with such sites.

Over the southern part of the Garrison site, a large number of cropmarks are recorded. Geophysical survey has partially confirmed and also added to the pattern of these cropmark features (CAT Report 184). Interpretation based on limited excavations would indicate that these are late prehistoric and/or Romano-British in date and represent the trackways, paddocks and field boundaries of a rural settlement. Overlapping of the cropmarks in the vicinity of the Musket Club suggests that multiple phases of activity are represented.

In addition to the pre- and early Roman activity relating to occupation and agriculture associated with the *oppidum*, the land immediately to the south of the Roman walled town includes the southern extra-mural cemetery within which a number of Roman burials were recorded throughout the 19th and 20th centuries (Hull 1958).

#### **4 Previous archaeological work at the Musket Club**

Two trial-trenches were excavated in 2002 in the centre and across the north-western angle of the enclosure ditch (CAT Report 207, 44-5). This work was done as part of the assessment and evaluation stage of archaeological works in advance of the construction of the new garrison (Area T). The north-west angle of the enclosure ditch was located, but heavy disturbance from modern mains and other works had severely truncated the Iron Age remains.

#### **5 Aim**

- 5.1** The aim of the excavation was to record any surviving archaeological remains, in particular the presumed Iron Age enclosure and any associated features.
- 5.2** The results of previous excavations in Colchester and elsewhere in England, especially the south-east, enable various issues to be identified as research priorities for the Colchester Garrison Urban Village site. In relation to the Musket Club site, the date of the enclosure and the implications of such an enclosure for the management of the landscape, the following research aim is particularly relevant (RPS 2004, section 5.4):

**Overarching Research Aim:** To characterise the nature of landscape utilisation and change from the Neolithic (or earlier) to the Romano-British period. In particular, the potential establishment of planned and 'owned landscapes' by the Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age.

#### **6 The excavation and watching brief (Figs 2-5)**

A watching brief was maintained on a number of service works in and around the site. The position of all these works is shown on Figure 2, where reference numbers 1-5 relate to notes in the site archive. No archaeological remains were exposed in these minor works (for further details, see site archive).

Within the general area of contractor's works, an area measuring approximately 14 x 20 m and coinciding with the northern arm of the enclosure ditch was selected for formal excavation (RPS/CAT 2003). Within this area, three sections were cut across the enclosure ditch (Area T Feature 2 or TF2, Sx 1-3; Fig 3). A further three sections were recorded in contractor's trenches, one to the east of the above sections (TF2 Sx 4), and a further two on the western arm of the enclosure (TF2 Sx 5-6; Fig 3). These are described below.

**TF2 Sx 1 (western section on northern arm) (Fig 4, top)**

The ditch TF2 was 1.6m wide and 0.57m deep (ditch bottom at 33.77m AOD: 0.7m below modern concrete slab surface). The top fill of the ditch was heavily cut by modern service-trenches F1, TF3 and TF4. The single ditch fill was firm, dry, medium brown sandy clay with charcoal flecks and a few pebbles.

Finds – 1.6g of ?charcoal.

**TF2 Sx 2 (central section on northern arm) (Fig 4, middle)**

The ditch TF2 was 1.75m wide and 0.8m deep (ditch bottom at 33.75m AOD). Top fill was cut by modern service-trench TF1. There were three ditch fills<sup>1</sup>: upper, soft medium brown silt with occasional small stones; middle, soft mottled pale brown and medium brown silt with occasional small stones; lower, strong brown coarse sand with lenses of medium brown grey silty sand and occasional small stones.

Finds – 1 potsherd, probably Early Iron Age, in middle to lower fill.

**TF2 Sx 3 (eastern section on northern arm) (Fig 4, bottom)**

Surviving ditch TF2 was 1.8m wide (slightly clipped on southern edge, and cut by modern pipe TF1 on northern edge) and 0.8m deep (ditch bottom at 33.92m AOD) below site level (between 34.42m and 34.62m AOD). There were three ditch fills<sup>2</sup>: upper, medium/dark brown soft silt with occasional small stones; middle, mottled medium/pale brown soft silt with occasional small stones; lower (rapid silting), mottled pale brown soft with strong brown sand.

No finds.

**TF2 Sx 4 (east of the three other sections on the northern arm)**

The ditch TF2 was located here in a contractor's trench. Position fixed but no section drawn due to limited time.

**TF2 Sx 5 (western arm, southern section) (Fig 5)**

Surviving ditch TF9 was 1.00m wide and 0.8m deep (ditch bottom at 33.94m AOD). The ditch was sealed by up to 0.7m of modern overburden. The ditch fill was firm, moist light brown slightly sandy silt.

No finds.

**TF2 Sx 6 (western arm, northern section) (Fig 5)**

The ditch TF11 was 1.8m wide and 0.9m deep (ditch bottom was 1.07m below contemporary turfed land surface). Ditch was sealed by 0.65m of modern overburden. There was a 100mm-deep band of oil staining at the top of the ditch fill, certainly of modern origin. Ditch fill was light brown friable, slightly sticky sandy silt.

No finds.

## 7 Finds

### The prehistoric pottery

The material was shown to Dr Paul R Sealey of Colchester Museums, who provided the following comments.

**Bag 1 - TF2 (Sx 2) -** 1 small sherd with two other fragments, 2.5g, with fine flint temper. Probably Early Iron Age. Other similar pieces in a clay lumps, not weighable.

**Bag 3 - TF2 surface find** - 1 small sherd, 2.6g, with fine sand temper. Middle Iron Age. Second possible sherd, or part of the surface of a sherd (not weighable because in clay lump). This came from the surface of the top fill of TF2, between TF2 Sx 1 and TF2 Sx 2.

<sup>1</sup> these are numbered 1-3 from upper down to lower on Fig 4 (middle)

<sup>2</sup> these are numbered 1-3 from upper down to lower on Fig 4 (bottom)

## Other finds

Bag no	Feature	Quantity	Weight (in g)	Comment
4	TF9	1	12.0	peg-tile fragment
2	TF2 Sx 1	5	1.6	laminated material – presumably charcoal fragments

## 8 Discussion

The excavation and watching brief have indicated a likely Middle Iron Age or later date for the enclosure at the Musket Club.

Excavations and evaluations in the area of the new garrison development have shown that there was settlement in this area from the early first millennium BC. Evidence of this takes the form of field boundaries containing Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age pottery, such as those found in Area Q (1400m to the north-east of this enclosure: CAT Report 207, 26-9). During the following Iron Age, more and more of the landscape was cleared of woodland and farmed, and various enclosures were created. These include the Middle Iron Age settlement in Area 2 (south of Ypres Road: CAT Report 292), and the Musket Club enclosure. The Area 2 enclosure is probably a domestic structure, but the function of the enclosure at the Musket Club is not so clearly defined. There are two reasons for this: first, there has been very little excavation in the interior of the enclosure; second, there are relatively few finds from the excavated ditch sections. This lack of finds may suggest that this was not a settlement. However, the combination of sub-rectangular enclosure and central pit-like cropmark is very reminiscent of the nearby Late Iron Age royal burial sites at Stanway (CAR 11, 169).

## 9 Acknowledgements

The Trust and RPS would like to thank RMPA and the MoD for commissioning and funding the work, and Sir Robert McAlpine and the site contractors Knights for their assistance.

The project was managed by Carl Crossan and the site work was carried out by Carl Crossan, Mariusz Gorniak, Kate Orr and Nigel Rayner, with digital survey carried out by Chris Lister assisted by Ben Holloway.

The project was monitored for Colchester Borough Council by Martin Winter (Archaeology Officer), and for RPS by Charles le Quefsnie.

## 10 References

- |                |      |   |
|----------------|------|---|
| CAR 11         | 1995 | <i>Colchester Archaeological Report 11, Camulodunum 2</i> , by C F C Hawkes and P Crummy  |
| CAT Report 97  |      | An archaeological desk-based assessment of the Colchester Garrison PFI site, unpublished CAT archive report, by Kate Orr, 2000  |
| CAT Report 184 |      | An archaeological evaluation by fieldwalking and geophysical survey at Colchester Garrison PFI site, Colchester, Essex, unpublished CAT archive report, by H Brooks, 2002   |
| CAT Report 207 |      | An archaeological evaluation by trial-trenching on Areas DR, G, M, P, Q, R, RO, S, and T at Colchester Garrison PFI site Colchester, Essex: May-September 2002, unpublished CAT archive report, by H Brooks, 2002 |

CAT Report 292		The Colchester Garrison PFI project, Colchester, Essex: a report on the 2003 excavation of Areas 2, 6, 10, August-November 2003, unpublished CAT archive report, by H Brooks, 2005
Colchester Archaeological Trust	1999	Policies and Procedures
Colchester Borough Council	2002	Guidelines for the standards and practice of archaeological fieldwork in the Borough of Colchester
Colchester Borough Council	2003	Guidelines on the preparation and transfer of archaeological archives to Colchester Museums
Hull, M R	1958	<i>Roman Colchester</i> , RRCSAL, <b>20</b>
IFA	1999a	Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief
IFA	1999b	Standard and guidance for archaeological excavation
RPS	2004	Research design for evaluations and watching briefs on alienated land, new garrison, Colchester, RPS in association with CAT
RPS/CAT	2003	Written Scheme of Investigation for a Stage 2 excavation at the Musket Club, Colchester new garrison PFI
Shimmin, D	1998	'A Late Iron Age and Roman occupation site at Kirkee McMunn Barracks, Colchester', <i>Essex Archaeology and History</i> , <b>29</b> , 260-69

## 11 Abbreviations and glossary

AOD	above Ordnance Datum
CAT	Colchester Archaeological Trust
CBC	Colchester Borough Council
context	specific location on an archaeological site, especially one where finds are made
EHCR	Essex Heritage Conservation Record
feature	an identifiable thing like a pit, a wall, a drain, a floor; can contain 'contexts'
fill	the soil filling up a hole such as a pit or ditch
IFA	Institute of Field Archaeologists
Iron Age	period immediately before the Romans, dating from 700 BC to AD 43
natural	geological deposit undisturbed by human activity
NGR	National Grid Reference
prehistoric	belonging to the Stone, Bronze or Iron Ages (before the Romans)
Roman	the period from AD 43 to around AD 430

## 12 Archive deposition

The paper and digital archive is currently held by the Colchester Archaeological Trust at 12 Lexden Road, Colchester, Essex CO3 3NF, but it will be permanently deposited with Colchester Museums, under accession code 2005.30.

**Distribution list:**

Sir Robert McAlpine  
RPS Planning, Transport and Environment  
Martin Winter, Archaeology Officer for Colchester Borough Council  
Essex Heritage Conservation Record, Essex County Council



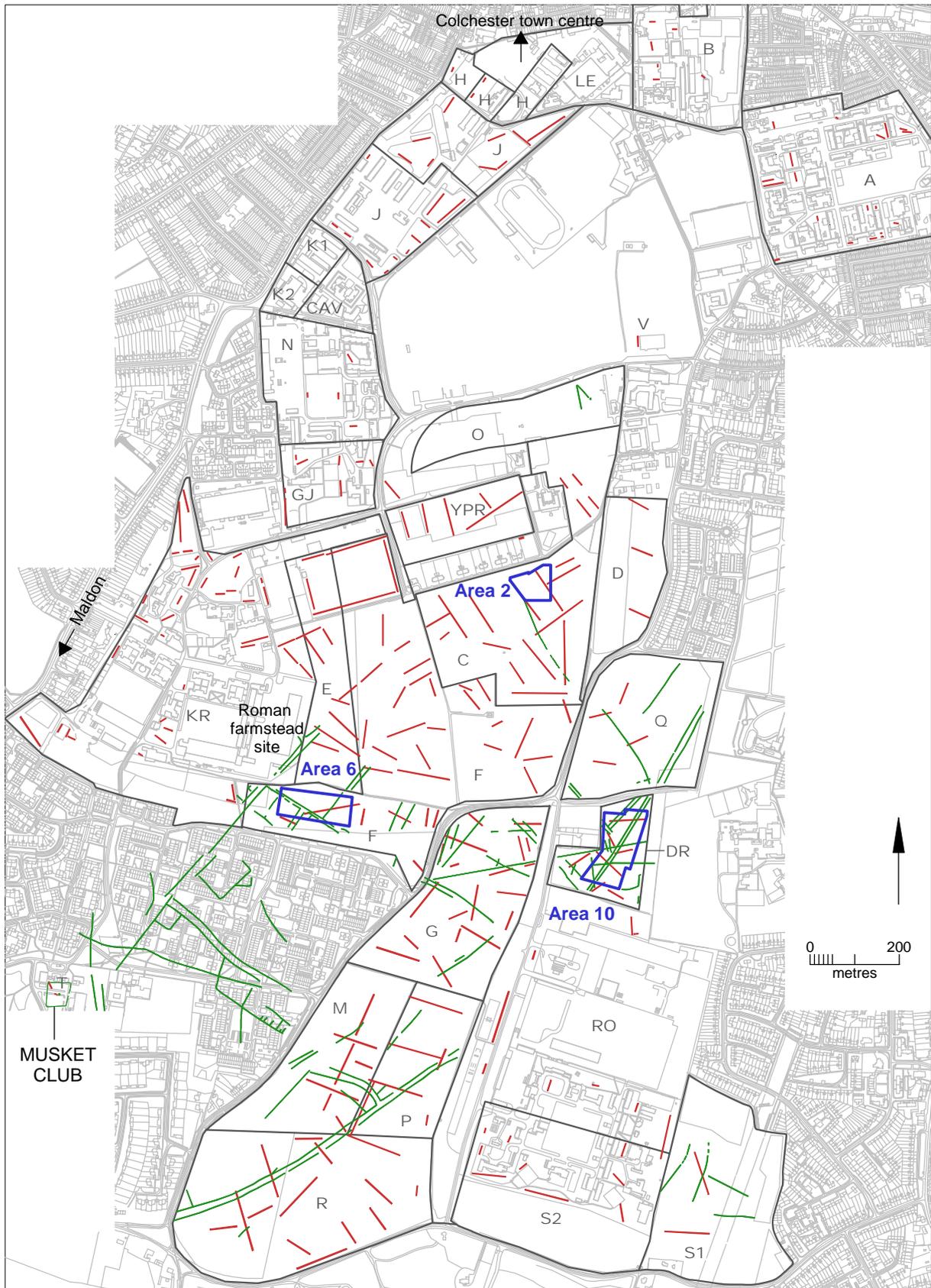
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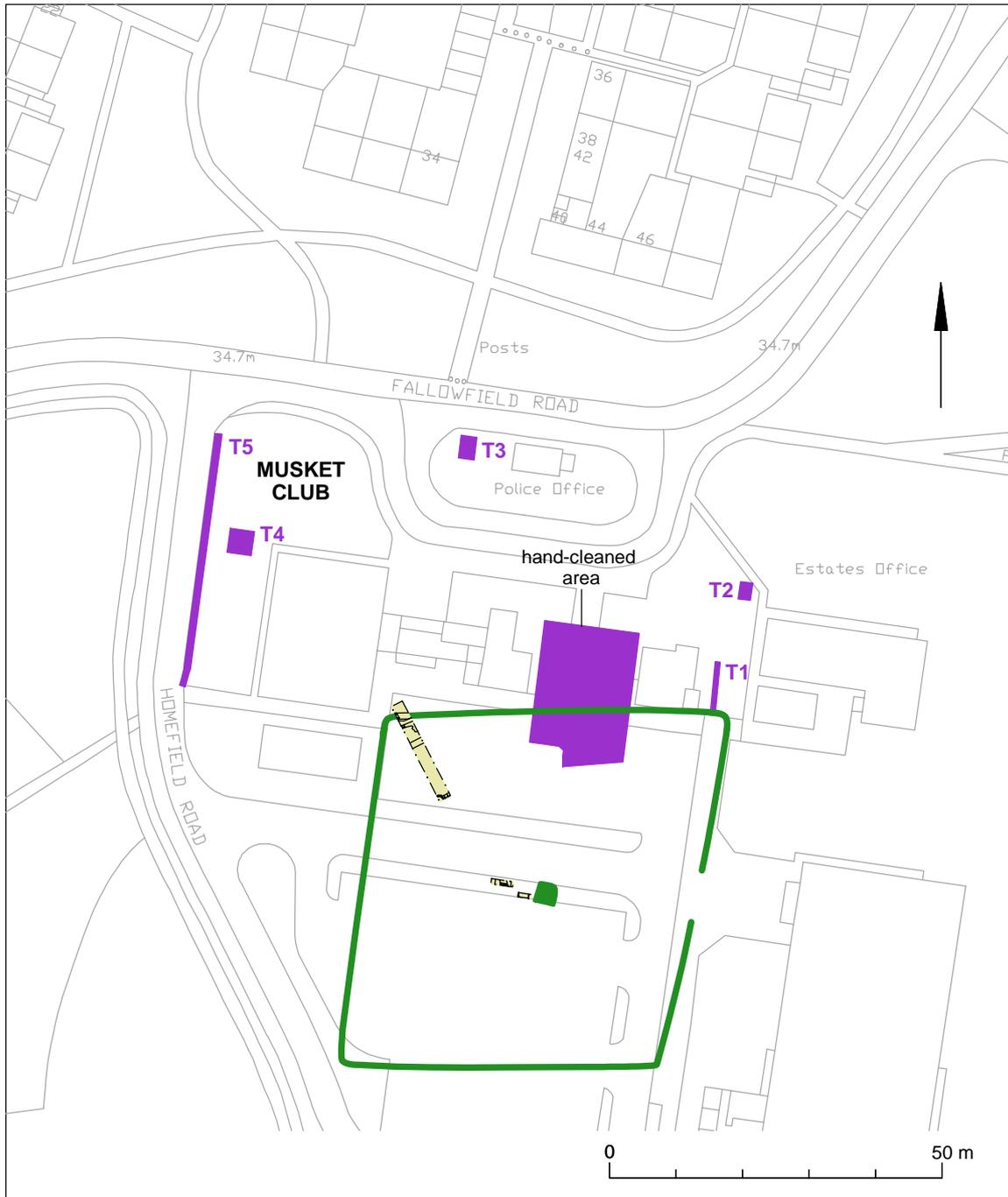
adams c:/reports05/musket club/final/report311final.doc



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- 2002 trench
- cropmark/geophysical anomaly
- 2004 trench
- redevelopment area

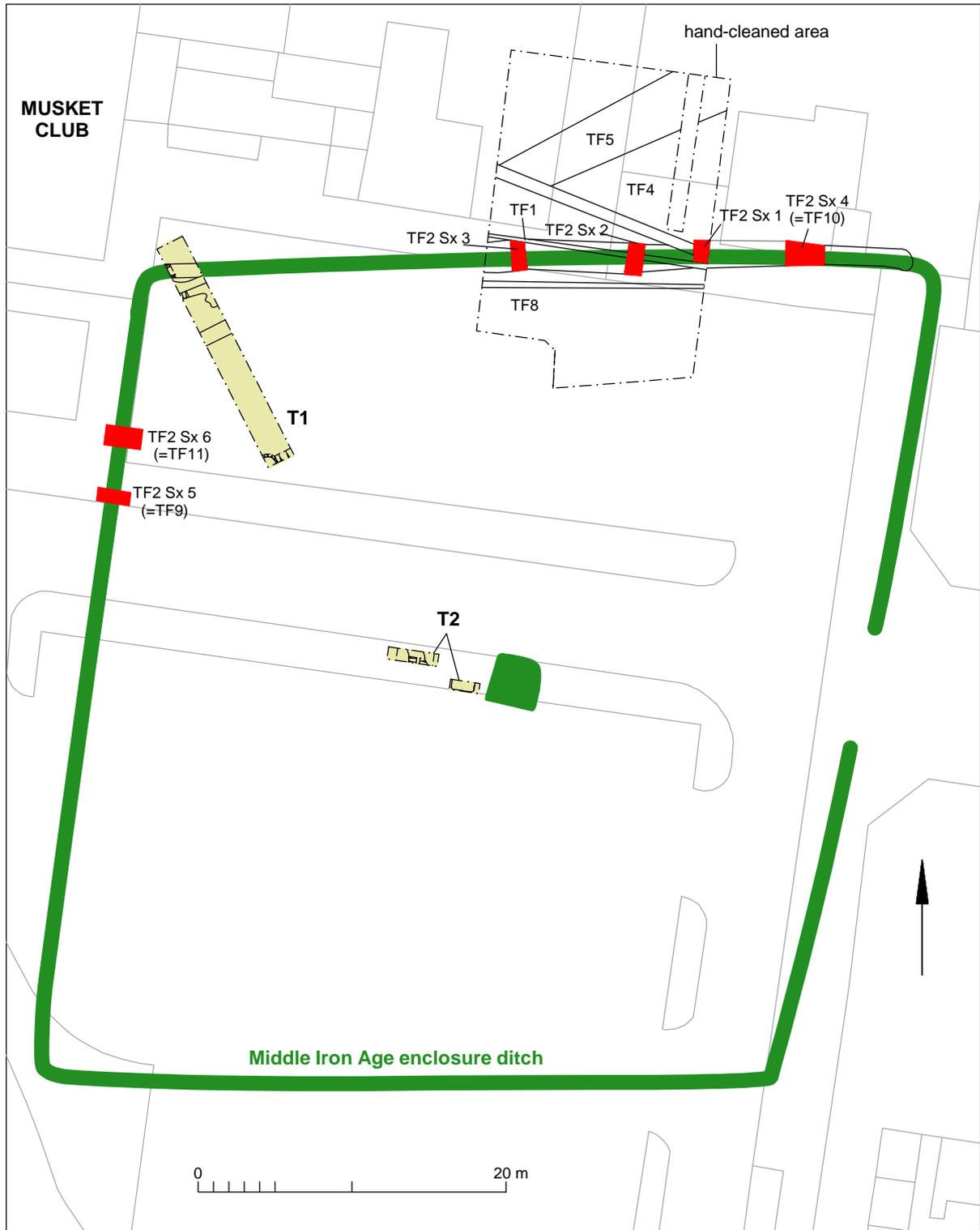
Fig 1 Colchester Garrison, showing location of the Musket Club (Area T).



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-  2004-2005 watching brief
-  2002 trench
-  cropmark

Fig 2 Location of 2004-2005 watching brief areas.



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-  2004-2005 trench
-  2002 trench
-  cropmark

Fig 3 Location of 2004-2005 sections across enclosure ditch.

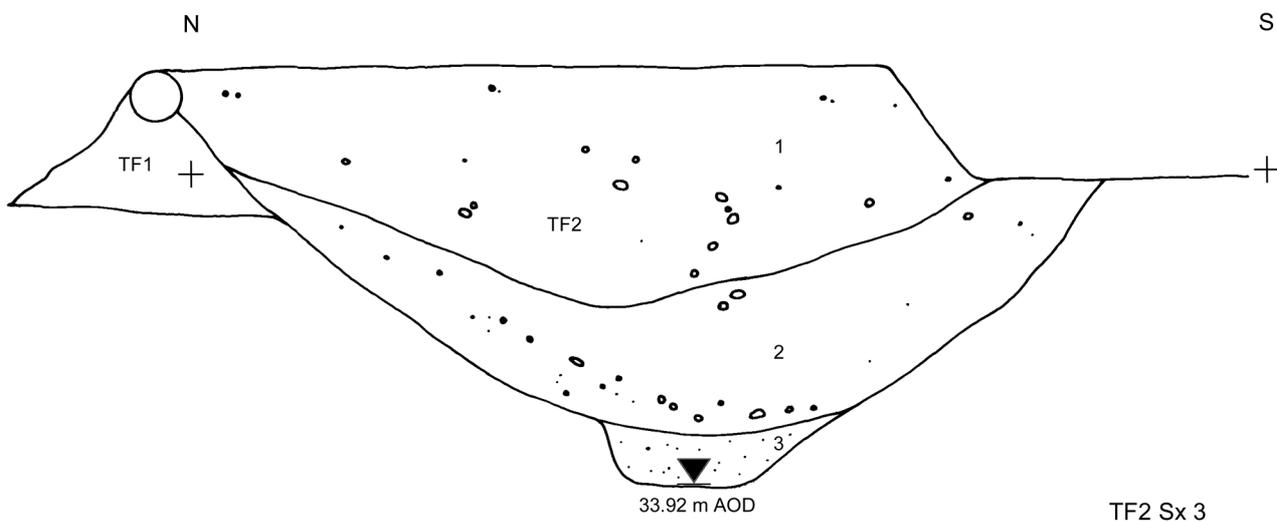
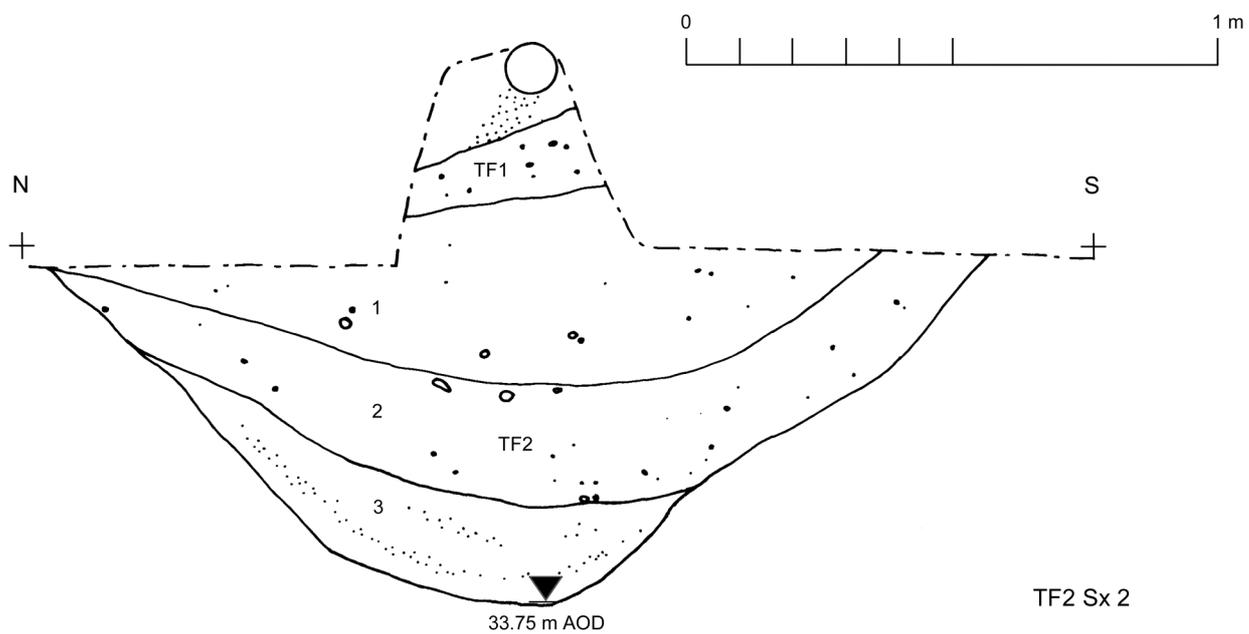
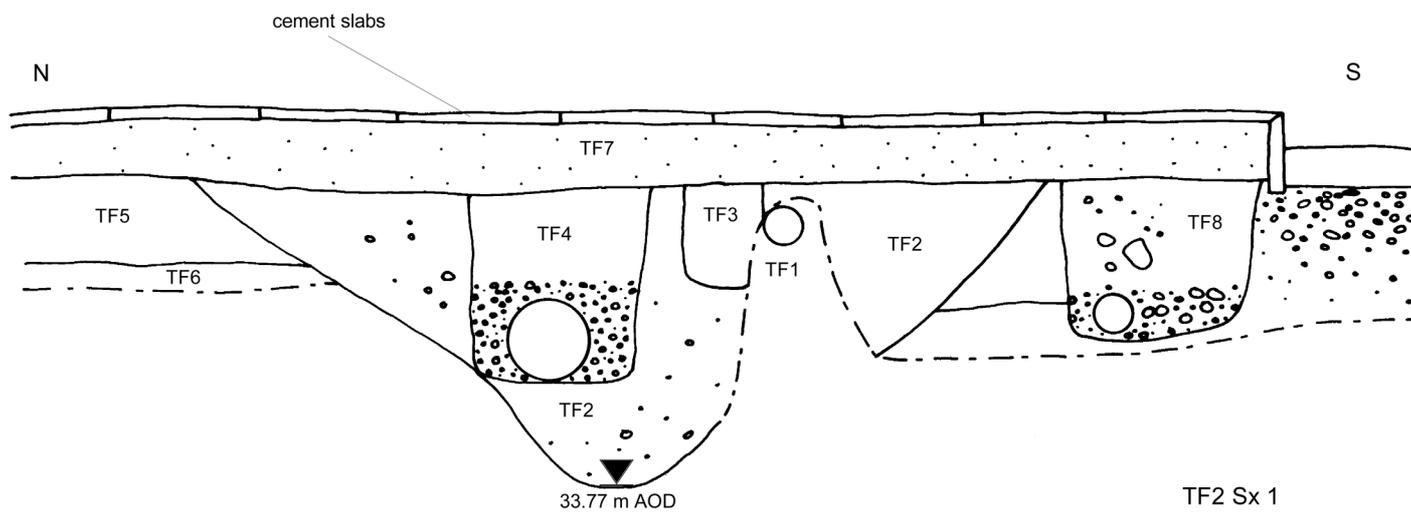


Fig 4 Sections 1-3.

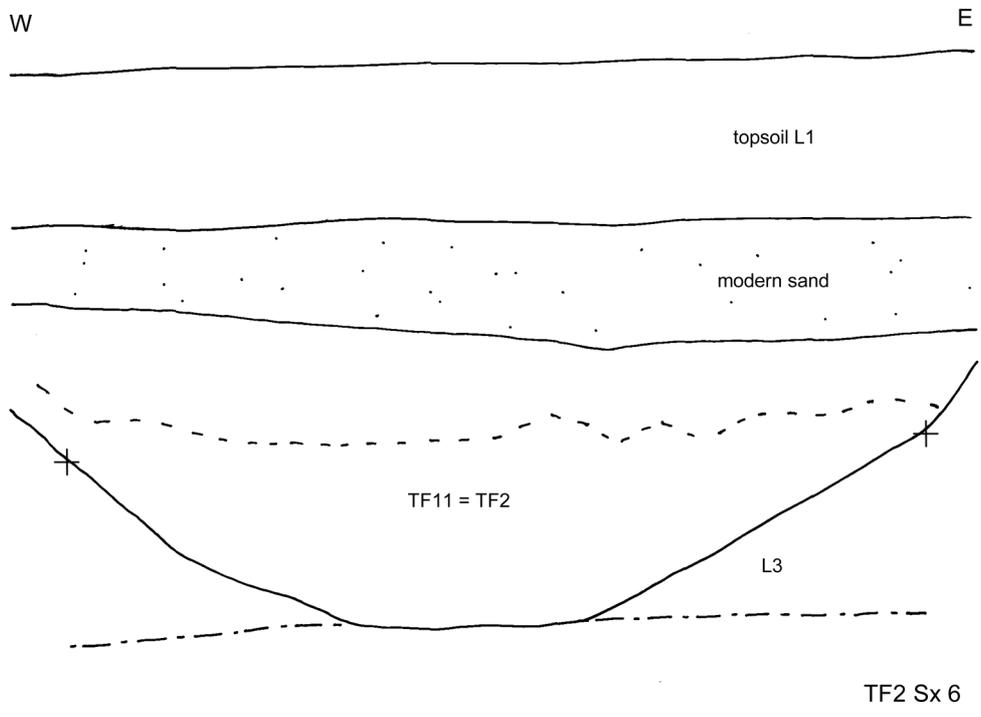
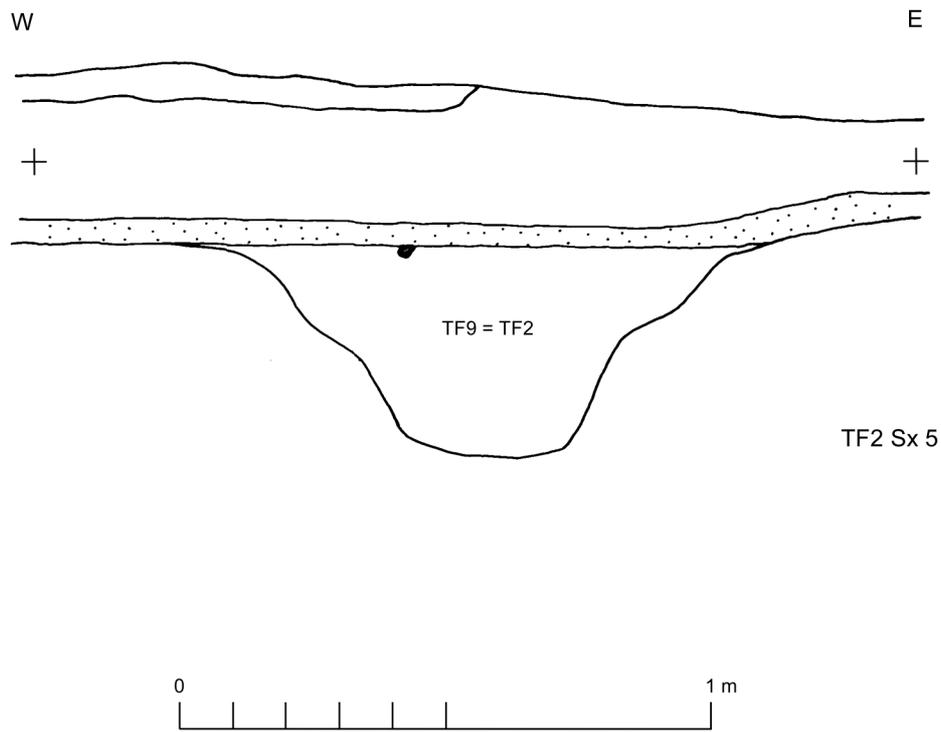


Fig 5 Sections 5-6.

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

## Summary sheet

<b>Site address:</b> the Musket Club, Homefield Road, Colchester, Essex	
<b>Parish:</b> Colchester	<b>District:</b> Colchester
<b>NGR:</b> TL 9837 2254	<b>Site code:</b> Museum accession code 2005.30
<b>Type of work:</b> Excavation and watching brief	<b>Site director/group:</b> Colchester Archaeological Trust
<b>Date of work:</b> December 2004-February 2005	<b>Size of area investigated:</b> 2 small trenches and WB
<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> 11839
<b>Final report:</b> CAT Report 311 and summary in <i>EAH</i>	
<b>Periods represented:</b> Middle Iron Age or later	
<p><b>Summary of fieldwork results:</b></p> <p><i>The car-parking area south of the Musket Club lies over an archaeological 'cropmark site' recorded in the 1970s - a sub-rectangular enclosure of suspected Iron Age date (EHCR 11839).</i></p> <p><i>A watching brief was carried out on various minor service works connected with the redevelopment of the site. In addition, an area which coincided with the northern arm of the enclosure was cleaned by hand, and three sections were cut across the ditch. The ditch was recorded in contractor's trenches at a further three points on its circuit.</i></p> <p><i>Modern service-trenches had caused much disturbance to the ditch, but a small quantity of pottery indicated a Middle Iron Age or later date for the enclosure.</i></p>	
<b>Previous summaries/reports:</b> None	
<b>Author of summary:</b> Howard Brooks	<b>Date of summary:</b> 22nd April 2005