

Report on a watching brief: CAT Report 315

Site address: Olivers Lane, Gosbecks Archaeological Park, Colchester, Essex
Date of fieldwork: 21st April 2005
NGR: TL 9708 2230
Colchester Museums
accession code: 2005.42
CAT project code: 05/4e
CBC brief?: no
Map attached?: yes (Fig 1)

Introduction

A trench was excavated in a grass field within Gosbecks Archaeological Park by contractors to lay a water-pipe to feed a cow trough. The trench was 23m long, 300mm wide and 800mm deep, and dug by a small mechanical excavator on the western side of the field, approximately 8m east of Olivers Lane. The field lies within Gosbecks Archaeological Park, a scheduled ancient monument (SAM no 57).

Archaeological background

The archaeological park covers an extensive area, and comprises nationally important archaeological remains of the late Iron Age and Roman periods. The site was the centre of Cunobelin's capital 'Camulodunum' (Cunobelin was the king of the Catuvellauni tribe). It was criss-crossed by Iron Age droveways and field systems. Camulodunum was defended on the western and southern sides by a system of dykes. The focal point of the settlement at Gosbecks was a large enclosure, to the west of the watching brief site, thought to have been Cunobelin's farmstead. A small fort was constructed by the Roman army probably during the Claudian invasion; the site of this lies to the north-west of the watching brief site. Subsequently, the Romans built a religious complex at Gosbecks which included a Romano-British temple surrounded by a monumental portico, plus a theatre and a road leading to the walled Roman town. Knowledge of the site is based largely on an extensive aerial photographic record supported by some small excavations.

Brief report

One visit was made during the excavation of the trench. The ground was undisturbed and consisted of turf and grey brown topsoil overlaying sand and gravel. One possible archaeological feature was recorded; a ditch, 6m wide, cutting the natural sand. The trench was not deep enough to expose the bottom of the feature. There were no finds to date the feature, but it seems to correspond with cropmark ditches shown on aerial photographs (see attached map). However, its fill, being similar to the topsoil, did not appear ancient; however, it may represent a former field boundary ditch.

Finds

The spoil was checked by hand but no finds were made.

Acknowledgements

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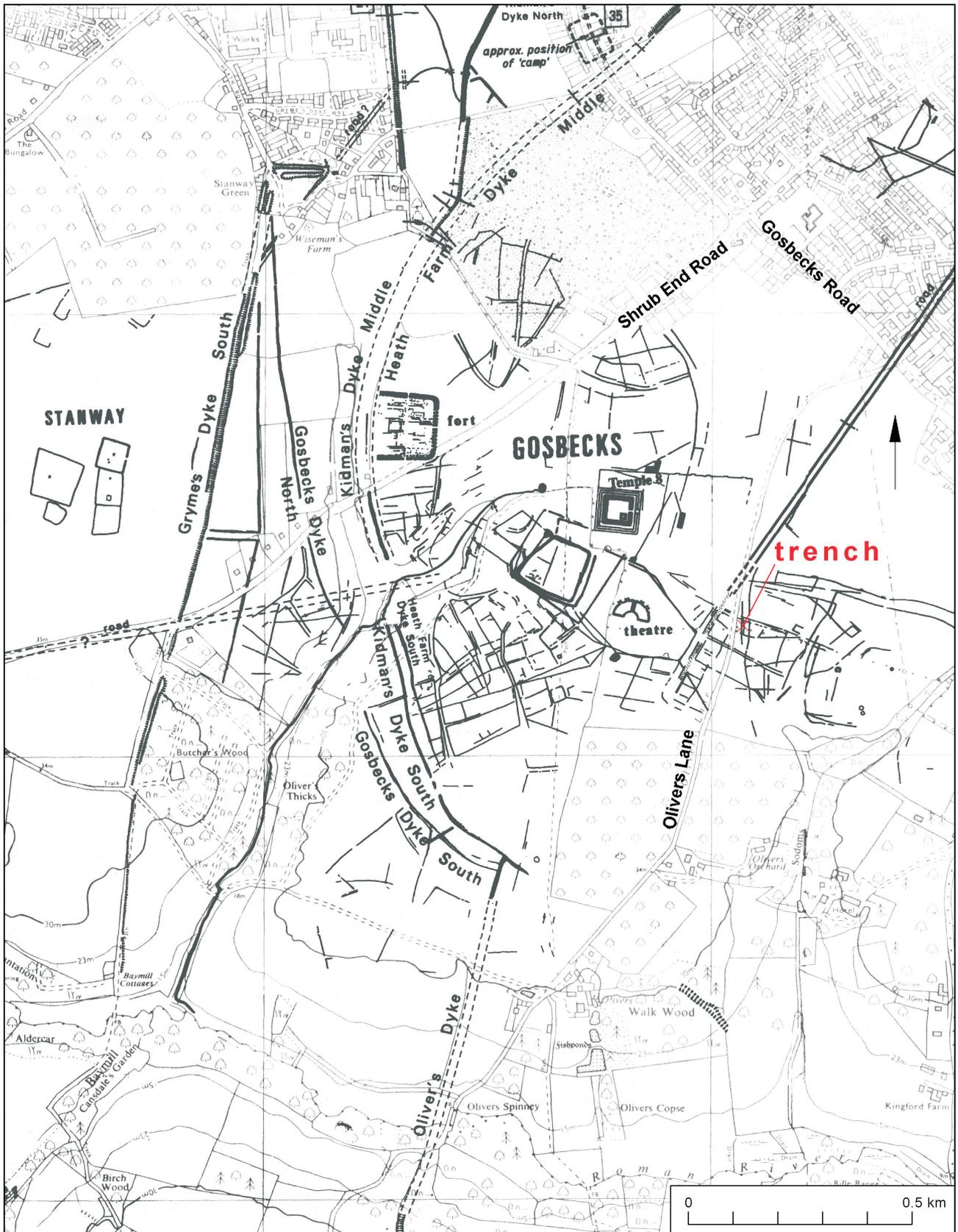


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Fig 1 Location of the trench in the context of archaeological features.