

**An archaeological watching brief at
83-88 East Hill (Belgrave Place),
Colchester, Essex
August 2004-April 2005**

**report prepared by
Kate Orr**

**on behalf of
Golding Developments Ltd**

CAT project ref: 04/8e
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1 Summary

A watching brief was carried out during groundworks for a residential development at nos 83-88 East Hill (Belgrave Place), Colchester, Essex. Land Lane and the western part of the site appear to have been raised within the last two centuries. Within the eastern part of the site, there was evidence of medieval and post-medieval occupation to the rear of nos 83-85 East Hill, including a length of a medieval wall-plinth and a timber-lined tank or cellar. Evidence of later post-medieval or modern occupation was also recorded.

2 Introduction (Fig 1)

- 2.1 This is the archive report on an archaeological watching brief carried out at nos 83-88 East Hill ('Belgrave Place'), Colchester, Essex by the Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT). The watching brief was undertaken for Golding Developments Ltd during the groundwork phase for a residential development. Planning permission for development was given with a condition for an archaeological watching brief (planning application no F/COL/02/1720). The frontage of the development area measures 60m and the maximum depth of the site is 65m.
- 2.2 The development site is situated to the east of the town centre, on the northern side of East Hill and is centred at National Grid Reference TM 0023 2529. No 85 and the rear of no 83 East Hill (formerly a training centre) were demolished as part of the development. This allowed Land Lane to be widened. The front of no 83 has been retained and is to be converted to a single dwelling, due to its listed status. Nos 86-88 are also being converted, into twelve flats. Outbuildings and sheds on the western edge of the site and to the rear of nos 83-85 East Hill have been demolished. The site occupies an east-facing slope with ground-level varying from 15.8m on the eastern side to 20.3m on the western side. The ten new houses and garages were built on two levels, with the houses to the west of Land Lane being higher than those to the east.
- 2.3 The work was carried out by CAT between the 23rd August 2004 and the 20th April 2005.
- 2.4 This report mirrors standards and practices contained in Colchester Borough Council's *Guidelines for the standards and practice of archaeological fieldwork in the Borough of Colchester* (CM 2002) and *Guidelines on the preparation and transfer of archaeological archives to Colchester Museums* (CM 2003), the IFA's *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (1999) and *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (IFA 2001). The guidance contained in the documents *Management of archaeological projects* (MAP 2), *Research and archaeology: a framework for the Eastern Counties 1. Resource assessment* (EAA 3), *Research and archaeology: a framework for the Eastern Counties 2. Research agenda and strategy* (EAA 8), and *Standards for field archaeology in the East of England* (EAA 14) was also followed.

3 Archaeological background

- 3.1 The development site occupies an area of archaeological potential, lying just 7m outside the Roman town wall.
- 3.2 The site is adjacent to East Hill which was the major Roman and medieval road leading east from Colchester town centre. In 1928, a trench was dug at the bottom of East Hill which exposed a section of cambered road 1m below ground-level, just to the north of the present road (UAD no 586). A decorated Roman pavement was reportedly found at the bottom of East Hill 1.7m, below ground-level (UAD no 391).
- 3.3 Nos 86-88 East Hill were formerly a brewery.

4 **Aim**

The aim of the watching brief was to identify and record any archaeological remains that were exposed during the development and to assess the quality and extent of any remains that were encountered.

5 **Methods**

- 5.1 Fifteen visits were made by a CAT archaeologist between the 23rd August 2004 and the 20th April 2005, at various stages during the groundworks, ie ground-reduction and the excavation of footings, ground-beams and service-trenches.
- 5.2 Individual records of layers, finds and features were entered on CAT pro-forma record sheets.
- 5.3 Sketch plans and sections were made of features.

6 **Results** (Figs 2-3)

6.1 **Soil profile to the east of Land Lane (rear of nos 83-85 East Hill)**

The land to the east of Land Lane, including the area of the demolished buildings, was stripped of modern building debris and some topsoil, to a maximum depth of 1.5m. This was carried out using a mechanical excavator with a toothed bucket. The stripping reached post-medieval topsoil (Layer or L1). Strip footings and service-trenches were subsequently excavated through this layer. The soil profile varies over the site due to the slope; however, given below is a typical profile observed in the baulk below Land Lane:

modern road surface and brick and mortar rubble – approximately 1m depth.

L1 – post-medieval topsoil of which up to 500mm was stripped off. L1 contained peg-tile and 17th- to 18th-century pottery which was seen both in section and on the ground. The layer additionally contained animal bone and oyster shell in some areas and Roman pottery.

L2 – natural orangey brown sand, observed when strip footings dug were dug through L1. This layer was seen in all footings on the eastern side of the site. There did not appear to be an intervening layer between post-medieval L1 and natural L2.

6.2 **Soil profile on the western side of Land Lane (rear of nos 86-88 East Hill)**

The western half of the site was not subject to as many monitoring visits as the eastern side. The area was stripped of concrete and asphalt, after which piles were drilled and ground-beam trenches excavated. The ground-beams were 400mm-500mm deep, but the author was not permitted to inspect the trenches. Only topsoil was observed. The contractors reported that, to the rear of nos 87 and 88, the piles had been dug through up to 4m of topsoil. The area to the rear of no 86, near Land Lane, was stripped of up to 1m of topsoil and made-up ground in order to construct another house (plot 15). Clean sand appeared in the section at 900mm below ground-level but it seems unlikely to have been natural sand. A visit was made after piles and ground-beams for this plot had been dug, but the trenches had already been shuttered by the time of the visit. Peg-tile and animal bone on the spoil heap were the only finds retrieved.

6.3 **Timber-lined tank or cellar F1** (Fig 3)

Strip footings for the house on plot 20, to the rear of no 85 East Hill, exposed what at first appeared to be a large pit (Feature or F1). The pit contained one upright waterlogged timber post and one fallen timber post, which were seen by the author. The pit contained 17th- to 18th-century pottery, peg-tile and animal bone (find no 2). Further groundworks later on exposed more of the feature, which was seen by Richard Shackle from Colchester Local Studies Library and recorded by him as a timber-lined tank or cellar. Not all the posts and planks were present. In all, eight timber posts and one plank were seen *in situ*, lining a 1.6 x 3.2m area which quickly filled up with water. Mortice and tenons on the timbers indicated the method of

construction, allowing the reconstruction in Figure 3 to be drawn. The author saw the posts once they had been removed. The longest post was 3.4m in length. To the east and north of F1 was a spread (F4) of oyster shell and sheep bones, plus some peg-tile within L1.

6.4 Mortared wall-plinth F2

Adjacent to F1, to the east of it, a short length of a narrow wall (approximately 200mm wide), constructed of peg-tiles bonded with mortar, was seen in footings for plot 20 (F2). The wall appeared to be cut by F1. The section that the author saw was aligned east to west. However, the contractors reported that more of the wall was exposed later on and it appeared to be curving to the south-east. The lack of brick within the wall structure makes it likely to have been a medieval plinth to a timber wall.

6.5 Brick-lined well F3

A circular brick-lined well, approximately 1.5m in diameter, was exposed between plots 18 and 19. The bricks were narrow, apart from those at the top of the well which appeared to have been later replacements. The well, which was filled with polluted water, is likely to be post-medieval in date.

6.6 Flint and mortar layer F5

A storm-drain trench was excavated along the eastern side of Land Lane and exposed a layer of large rounded flint nodules under a thin seam of mortar (F5). This layer was seen in section only and occurred 600mm below the level of Land Lane. F5 was sealed by a layer of soil containing modern brick fragments. Above was brick rubble which provided the base for Land Lane. F5 lay above 600mm of loamy topsoil with peg-tile (L1). F5 may be connected to the previous 19th-century houses to the rear of no 85, perhaps part of a courtyard. To the south was a 19th-century brick foundation. Within the same section of trench but to the south, York stone slabs were observed which are thought to have been doorsteps to the previous properties.

6.7 Other

Other finds from the site included 17th- to 18th-century pottery (find no 3) from L1. This was retrieved from the east-facing section below Land Lane, at 1m depth. Peg-tile was found further north, in the same section, 1.2m below Land Lane (find no 4). These finds are evidence of a build-up or deliberate dumping of post-medieval material above F1-F3. A few sherds of Roman pottery were found unstratified from the northern part of the site (find no 5), but there were no Roman or earlier features.

7 Finds

The Roman pottery was identified by S Benfield of CAT; fabrics are after *CAR 10* and Cam numbers are after Hawkes & Hull 1947. The post-Roman pottery was identified by Howard Brooks of CAT (fabric numbers are after *CAR 7* and Cunningham 1985).

Find no	Context	Description	Date	Weight (in g)
1	L1, near F1	Peg-tile	post-medieval	30.0
1	L1, near F1	Oyster shell	undated	6.0
1	L1, near F1	Post-medieval pottery	17th-18th century	46.0
2	within F1	Post-medieval pottery	late 17th-18th century	687.0
3	L1, eastern side of site, north of garage 21	Post-medieval pottery	late 17th-18th century	588.0
4	L1, eastern side of site, by plot 19	Peg-tile	post-medieval	104.0
4	L1, eastern side of site, by plot 19	1 grey ware sherd (Fabric GX)	Roman	45.6
5	U/S, possibly L1, eastern part of site	Post-medieval pottery sherd	17th-18th century	26.0
5	U/S, possibly L1, eastern part of site	Peg-tile	post-medieval	46.0

5	U/S, possibly L1, eastern part of site	3 sherds black-burnished ware Type 2 (Fabric GB); includes a rim of a Cam 37b vessel	Roman -late 2nd-mid to late 3rd century	51.8
5	U/S, possibly L1, eastern part of site	1 sherd of plain samian (Fabric BA) (Central Gaulish), Drag 31	Roman to later 2nd-early 3rd century	20.9
5	U/S, possibly L1, eastern part of site	3 sherds of grey ware (Fabric GX)	Roman	26.3
5	U/S, possibly L1, eastern part of site	1 sherd of slipped and painted pottery (Fabric MQ)	Roman	5.3

8 Discussion

- 8.1** During the watching brief, several features were recorded, all on the eastern side of Land Lane. On the western (higher) side, the ground-beams were mainly dug through modern topsoil and made-up ground.
- 8.2** F1 may have been a timber-lined cellar or alternatively a tank, perhaps for the residents of no 85 to keep oysters in (R Shackle pers comm). The presence of water within the feature and the abundance of oyster shell nearby favours the latter interpretation. The late 17th- to 18th-century pottery found within F1 provides a date for when it went out of use, but its date of construction is less clear. Speed's map of Colchester of 1610 depicts rows of houses lining East Hill, and therefore it is feasible that this tank belonged to a 17th-century property.
- 8.3** The peg-tile and mortar wall resembles a wall-plinth which would have supported a timber wall. The lack of brick in the fabric indicates a medieval date. The contractors reported that when more of this feature was exposed, it appeared to curve round to the south-east. However, this was not confirmed by an archaeologist. This wall-plinth was possibly cut by the tank F1.
- 8.4** Later features were also exposed, namely a layer of flint nodules (F5), York stone slabs and brick foundations to the east of Land Lane which are associated with 18th- or 19th-century occupation.
- 8.5** Since the post-medieval period, there appears to have been a phase of substantial terracing involving raising the level of Land Lane and the western part of the site. This perhaps occurred before the construction of nos 86-88 East Hill. Because of this, piles rather than strip footings were required on the western side of the site.

9 Archive deposition

The finds and the paper and digital 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 2004.349.

10 Acknowledgements

CAT is grateful to Golding Developments Ltd for commissioning and funding the work, and to DCH Construction Ltd and Golding Developments Ltd for allowing access to the site. Richard Shackle of Colchester Local Studies Library recorded the timber-lined tank, and the rest of the fieldwork was carried out by Kate Orr of CAT. The project was monitored by Martin Winter, Colchester Borough Council Archaeology Officer.

11 References

- | | | |
|----------------------------|------|---|
| CAR 7 | 2000 | <i>Colchester Archaeological Report 7: Post-Roman pottery from excavations in Colchester 1971-85</i> , by J Cotter |
| CAR 10 | 1999 | <i>Colchester Archaeological Report 10: Roman pottery from excavations in Colchester 1971-1986</i> , by R Symonds and S Wade, ed by P Bidwell and A Croom |
| CM | 2002 | <i>Guidelines on standards and practices for archaeological fieldwork in the Borough of Colchester</i> |
| CM | 2003 | <i>Guidelines on the preparation and transfer of archaeological archives to Colchester Museums</i> |
| Cunningham, C M | 1985 | 'A typology for post-Roman pottery in Essex', in <i>Post-medieval sites and their pottery: Moulsham Street, Chelmsford</i> , by C M Cunningham and P J Drury, Chelmsford Archaeological Trust Report 5 and Council for British Archaeology Research Report 54, 1-16 |
| EAA 3 | 1997 | <i>Research and archaeology: a framework for the Eastern Counties 1. Resource assessment</i> , East Anglian Archaeology, Occasional Papers, 3, ed by J Glazebrook |
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| Hawkes, C F C, & Hull, M R | 1947 | <i>Camulodunum</i> , RRCSAL, 14 |
| IFA | 1999 | <i>Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief</i> |
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12 Glossary

context	specific location on an archaeological site, especially one where finds are made, usually an layer or a feature
feature	an identifiable thing like a pit, a wall, a drain, a floor
IFA	Institute of Field Archaeologists
medieval	period from AD 1066 to c AD 1500
modern	period from the 20th century onwards to the present
NGR	National Grid Reference
natural	geological deposit undisturbed by human activity
post-medieval	period from c 1500 to c 1900
Roman	the period from AD 43 to AD 410 approximately
UAD	Urban Archaeological Database, maintained by Colchester Museums
U/S	unstratified, ie no context

Distribution list:

Golding Developments Ltd
Martin Winter, Archaeology Officer for Colchester Borough Council
Essex Historic Environment Record, Essex County Council
Richard Shackle, Colchester Local Studies Library



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Appendix: the post-Roman pottery

by Howard Brooks (CAT)

Introduction

This is the report on 1.3kg of post-Roman pottery from nos 83-88 East Hill (Belgrave Place). The material will be deposited with Colchester Museums under accession code 2004.349.

Description of pottery

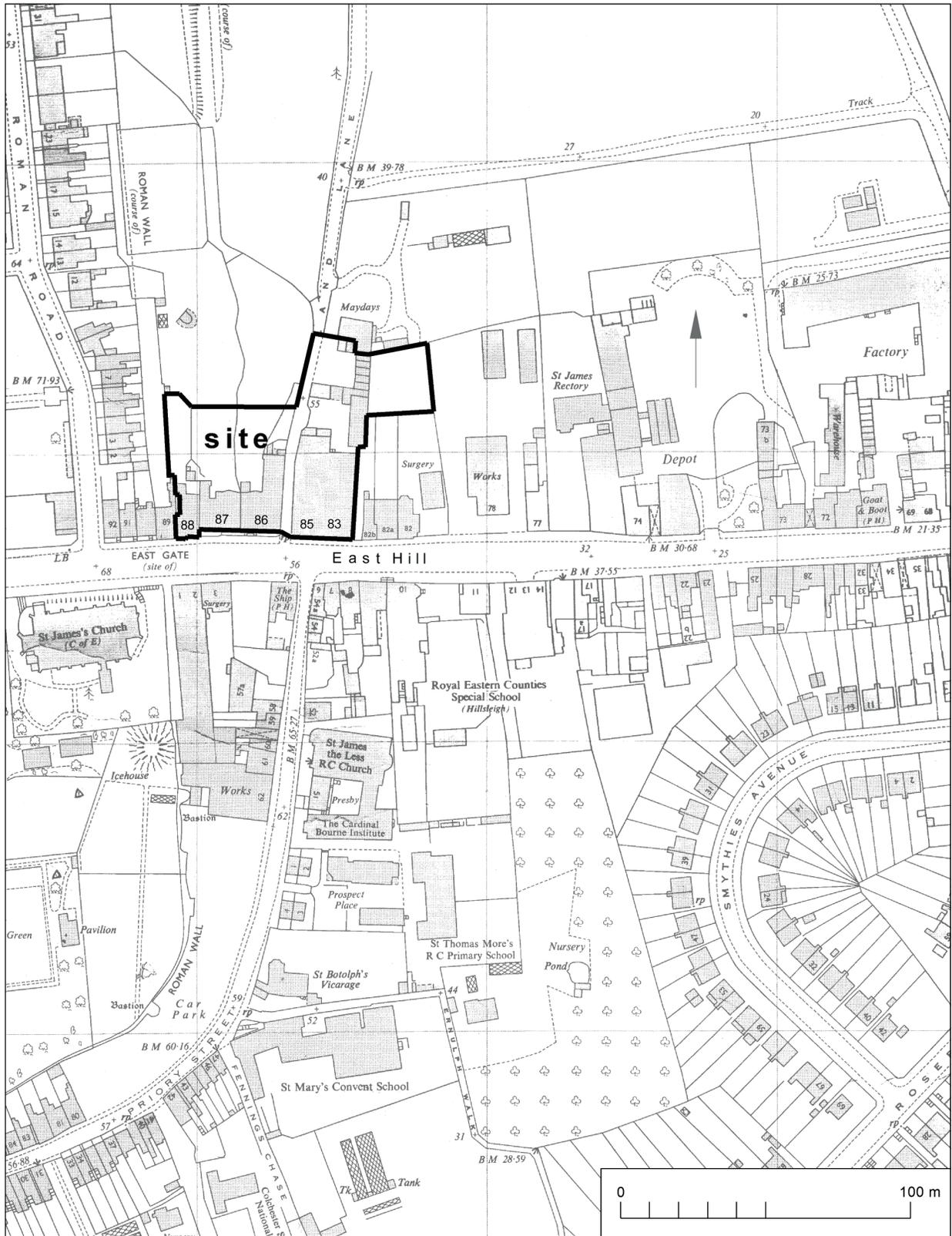
Fabrics present (after Cunningham 1985 and *CAR 7*) consist solely of Fabric 40 (post-medieval red earthenware). Pottery weights are listed below in Table 1. Full details in archive.

Table 1: weight (in grams) of fabric types per bag and context.

Bag no	Context	Fabric 40 (g)	context date
1	L1	46	17th or 18th century
2	F1	687	late 17th or 18th century
3	L1	588	late 17th or 18th century
5	U/S	26	17th or 18th century
	totals	1,387	

Discussion

This group consists of a single type of pottery, post-medieval red earthenware. It would be dangerous to draw too many conclusions from such a small group, beyond the general point that the date range for all the related contexts (L1, F1) is 17th or 18th century. The identifiable fragments include a number of small storage jars which match some examples published in *CAR 7* (206, fig 142.101-105). For those pots (from L1 and F1), a later 17th- or 18th-century date would be appropriate.



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Fig 1 Site location, showing previous buildings.

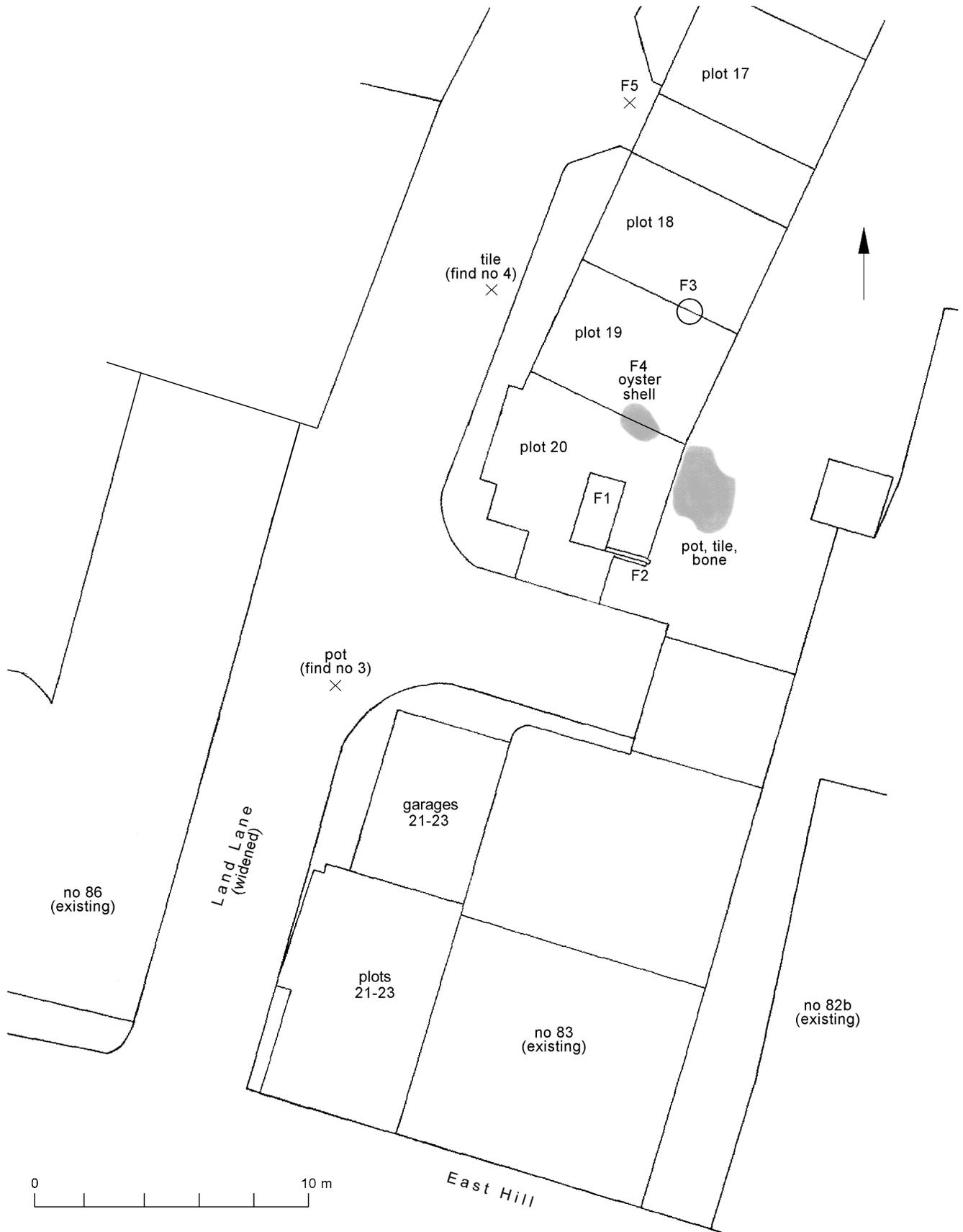


Fig 2 Plan of eastern part of the site (nos 83-85 East Hill), showing location of features.

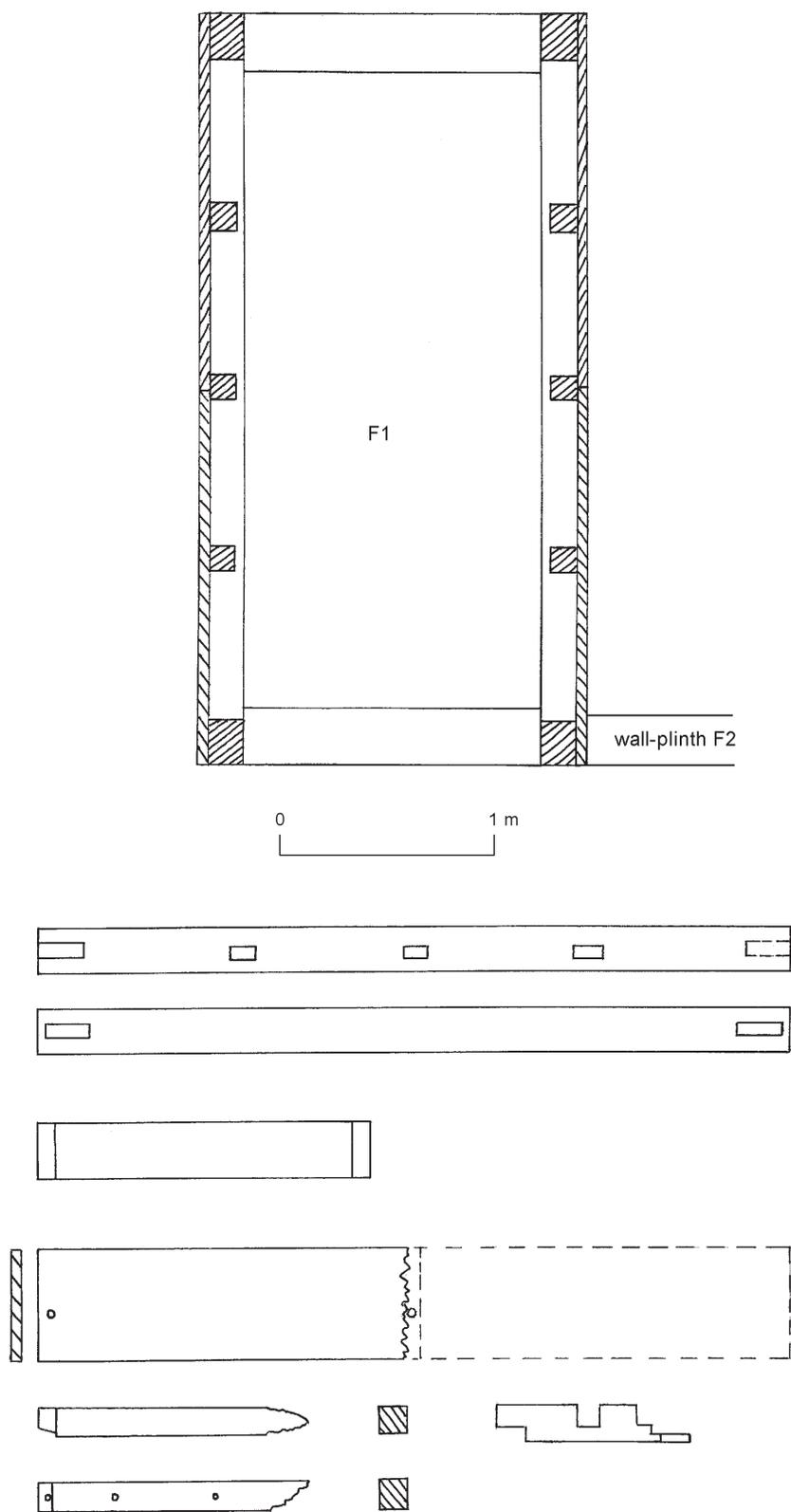


Fig 3 Reconstruction of ground-plan of tank F1 with wall-plinth F2 (above) and drawings of wooden posts and plank from F1 (below), by Richard Shackle.

**Essex Historic Environment Record/
Essex Archaeology and History**

Summary sheet

Site address: 83-88 East Hill (Belgrave Place), Colchester, Essex	
Parish: Colchester	District: Colchester Borough
NGR: TM 0023 2529 (centre)	Site code: Museum accession code 2004.349
Type of work: Watching brief	Site director/group: Colchester Archaeological Trust
Date of work: August 2004-April 2005	Size of area investigated: 60m x 65m
Location of finds/curating museum: Colchester Museums	Funding source: Developer
Further seasons anticipated? uncertain	Related EHER nos:
Final report: CAT Report 317 and summary in <i>EAH</i>	
Periods represented: medieval, post-medieval, modern	
<p>Summary of fieldwork results: <i>A watching brief was carried out during groundworks for a residential development at nos 83-88 East Hill (Belgrave Place). Land Lane and the western part of the site appear to have been raised within the last two centuries. Within the eastern part of the site, there was evidence of medieval and post-medieval occupation to the rear of nos 83-85 East Hill including a length of a medieval wall-plinth and a timber-lined tank or cellar. Evidence of later post-medieval or modern occupation was also recorded.</i></p>	
Previous summaries/reports: None	
Author of summary: Kate Orr	Date of summary: June 2005