

**An archaeological watching brief  
at the rear of 60-66 East Street,  
Colchester, Essex  
July-November 2004**

**report prepared by  
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**commissioned by  
Roy Grimwade Architects Ltd  
on behalf of  
Harding Homes**

CAT project ref.: 03/3d  
Colchester Museums accession code: 2003.213  
NGR: TM 0079 2536



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**CAT Report 335**  
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## 1 Summary

*An archaeological watching brief was carried out to the rear of 60-66 East Street during groundworks for new dwellings. The groundworks did not expose any archaeological features of particular note. It was predicted that there may have been medieval occupation here, perhaps outbuildings to the medieval building at 60-66 East Street or even a precursor to it. However, no evidence of this was observed.*

## 2 Introduction (Fig 1)

- 2.1 This is the report on an archaeological watching brief carried out by the Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) to the rear of 60-66 East Street, Colchester, Essex (formerly Charles Brown and Sons' commercial premises), between July and November 2004. This report relates to investigations to the rear of the property during groundworks for new dwellings and not the investigations inside the property which are covered in a separate report (CAT Report 283).
- 2.2 Planning permission was given to Harding Homes for the renovation of the property fronting East Street and the erection of thirteen new properties to the rear (planning application no F/COL/01/1848).
- 2.3 The former Charles Brown and Sons premises has a frontage of approximately 40m in length and a depth of 40m. It is a grade 2 listed building.
- 2.4 The building is located approximately 1.2 km east of Colchester town centre, on the north side of East Street. It is situated near the River Colne and is centred on National Grid Reference TM 0079 2536.
- 2.5 This report follows the standards set out in the Borough Council's *Guidelines on standards and practices for archaeological fieldwork in the Borough of Colchester* (CM 2002) and *Guidelines on the preparation and transfer of archaeological archives to Colchester Museums* (CM 2003), and the Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (IFA 1999) and *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (IFA 2001). Other sources are *Management of archaeological projects* (MAP 2), and *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).

## 3 Archaeological background

- 3.1 The site lies approximately 600m at its closest point to the historic town wall of Colchester, and is situated on the north side of what was the major Roman and medieval road leading east from Colchester out of the east gate. Extensive Roman cemeteries have been recorded around most of the walled part of the town, but are largely absent on this eastern side (Hull 1958; *CAR 9*). This area, by the East Bridge and near the junction of the roads to the ports of Ipswich and Harwich, was a flourishing hamlet in medieval and later times, as shown by the buildings on John Speed's map of 1610. Residents would have used the river for industrial activities such as tanning and fulling, and a watermill has existed on the site of the east mill since the 13th or 14th century (*VCH 9*, p 259). East Street and the east bridge were the location of some action during the siege of Colchester in 1648, and buildings such as the 'Siege House' were damaged.
- 3.2 The property is a long, gable-fronted, timber-framed building. Most of what remains of the building above ground dates to the 17th century; however, the central part of the property (nos 62 and the eastern half of no 64 East Street) began as a mid 14th-century building with an open hall. Recent recording of the building by architectural historian

- Leigh Alston identified features from this structure, ie a first-floor traceried window and a moulded beam with soot encrustation which once formed an internal jetty (Leigh Alston pers comm). The surviving evidence indicates that the building had been a wealthy merchant's house or an inn. During the 15th century, a large new building was added to the west of the hall (no 66 and the western half of no 64 East Street). This building was jettied and had further traceried windows. It included a large gateway leading into the rear courtyard. The 14th-century hall was replaced in the mid 17th century by another building, featuring wall-paintings on the first floor. The eastern end of the premises of Charles Brown and Sons (no 60 East Street) was added soon afterwards.
- 3.3** In 2003 and 2004, a below-ground watching brief and limited excavation was carried out by CAT inside 60-66 East Street, while the property was being renovated. The ceramic evidence indicates a start date for occupation on the site in the 12th century or possibly slightly earlier. A wall plinth, probably from the 14th-century building, was recorded under the floorboards. A sequence of medieval and post-medieval clay floors and occupation layers was exposed, indicating uninterrupted occupation till the present day. A peg-tile hearth recorded in the open hall building is likely to relate to an intermediate phase of the building (not 14th century). There was also evidence of subsequent occupation and changing layout of the building in the 15th and 16th centuries (CAT Report 283).

#### **4 Aims**

The aim of the watching brief was to identify and record any features or finds which would have been disturbed by the groundworks.

#### **5 Methodology**

- 5.1** Service trenches and some foundation trenches were monitored during five visits to the site. The trenches were excavated by a mechanical excavator with a toothed bucket. The service trenches were 700mm wide and 1m deep. Foundation trenches varied from 1.4m to 1.9m depth due to the presence of contaminated soil.
- 5.2** Feature numbers, layer numbers and find numbers were continued from the watching brief and excavation that was carried out by CAT inside the property (CAT Report 283).
- 5.3** Individual records of excavated contexts, layers, features and deposits were entered on pro-forma CAT record sheets.
- 5.4** Section drawings showing features and layers were made at a scale of 1:10.
- 5.5** Colour photographs of site shots and all important contexts were taken using a digital camera.
- 5.6** Finds were registered on CAT record sheets and assigned find numbers according to context. Finds were washed, marked and bagged according to context.

#### **6 Results (Fig 2)**

##### **6.1 Service trench (T20)**

A long service trench stretching from below the carriage arch of no 64 East Street and curving round to the rear of nos 60-64 was monitored on the 16th July and the 29th September. Three spurs off the main trench, leading to 60-64 East Street, were also monitored. Loose building rubble overlaid post-medieval or modern topsoil/subsoil of dark brown sandy loam. This in turn sealed natural orangey brown silty sand. Two features were recorded in the section of the main service trench (Trench or T20). A cut linear feature (Feature or F26) was seen, which followed an east to west alignment and was cut into natural. The feature was 330mm wide at its base and was filled by mixed

brown sandy clay with mottles of sand and some mortar flecks. A piece of re-used 13th-century pottery was retrieved while cleaning the base of the trench at this point, as was a sherd of Victorian pottery. These pieces may have derived from F26. To the east of F26, within the same service trench, a rubbish-pit or ditch was recorded (F27). This was filled by mid brown sandy loam which merged with the topsoil/subsoil above. The feature contained 17th-century pottery, abundant peg-tile, animal bone and one brick fragment. The feature was 3m wide and showed burning on its eastern side. F27 was not a recently-dug test-pit, as shown by the roots growing through it.

## 6.2 Foundation trenches

Foundation trenches for the eastern block of flats were monitored on the 29th September. These were too deep to enter and much of the soil had been contaminated by petrol from tanks which previously occupied this area. A possible ditch and a shallow pit were observed, plus a modern concrete tank.

Footings for new walls at no 66 East Street were monitored on the 28th October and the 2nd November. These consisted of two holes of 800mm by 1m width each, plus a 1.1m-wide by 3.6m-long trench on the road frontage. No former floors or ground surfaces were observed. The longer trench contained peg-tile and mortar.

The foundations for the new dwellings on the north and western sides of the site were not monitored.

## 6.3 Finds list

Finds were identified by Howard Brooks of CAT. Fabric numbers are after *CAR 7*.

Find no	Context	Quantity	Weight (in g)	Date	Description
41	F26, T20	1	39.7	13th century	A re-used sherd of Fabric 20 pottery
41	F26, T20	1	6.0	Victorian	Basalt ware pottery (Fabric 49)
42	F27, T20	2	520.0	17th-18th century	Fragments of a post-medieval red earthenware large bowl (Fabric 40)

## 7 Conclusion (Fig 2)

Those groundworks at the rear of 60-66 East Street which were monitored did not expose any archaeological features of particular note. It was predicted that there may have been medieval occupation here, perhaps outbuildings to the medieval building at 60-66 East Street or even a precursor to it. However, no evidence of this was observed, which may be due to the position of the groundworks rather than an absence of medieval features on the site. A post-medieval rubbish-pit and an undated but probably late feature were recorded.

## 8 Acknowledgements

CAT would like to thank Harding Homes for funding the work and for allowing access to the site, and Roy Grimwade Architects Ltd for their assistance. The fieldwork was carried out by Kate Orr.

## 9 References

- CAR 7 *Colchester Archaeological Report 7: Post-Roman pottery from excavations in Colchester, 1971-85*, by John Cotter, 2000
- CAR 9 *Colchester Archaeological Report 9: Excavations of Roman and later cemeteries, churches and monastic sites in Colchester, 1971-88*, by P Crummy, N Crummy & C Crossan, 1993
- CAT Report 283 An archaeological watching brief and limited excavation at 60-66 East Street, Colchester, Essex, unpublished CAT archive report, by Kate Orr, 2005
- CM 2002 *Guidelines on standards and practices for archaeological fieldwork in the Borough of Colchester*
- CM 2003 *Guidelines on the preparations and transfer of archaeological archives to Colchester Museums*
- EAA 3 *Research and archaeology: a framework for the Eastern Counties 1. Resource assessment*, East Anglian Archaeology, Occasional Papers, 3, ed by J Glazebrook, 1997
- EAA 8 *Research and archaeology: a framework for the Eastern Counties 2. Research agenda and strategy*, East Anglian Archaeology, Occasional Papers, 8, ed by N Brown & J Glazebrook, 2000
- EAA 14 *Standards for field archaeology in the East of England*, East Anglian Archaeology, Occasional Papers, 14, by D Gurney, 2003
- Hull, M R, 1958 *Roman Colchester*, RRCSAL, 20
- IFA 1999 *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief*
- IFA 2001 *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials*
- VCH 9 *The Victoria County History of Essex*, 9, 1994

## 10 Archive deposition

The finds, paper and digital archives are held by CAT at 12 Lexden Road, Colchester, Essex, but will be deposited permanently with Colchester Museums under the accession code 2003.213.

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### Distribution list:

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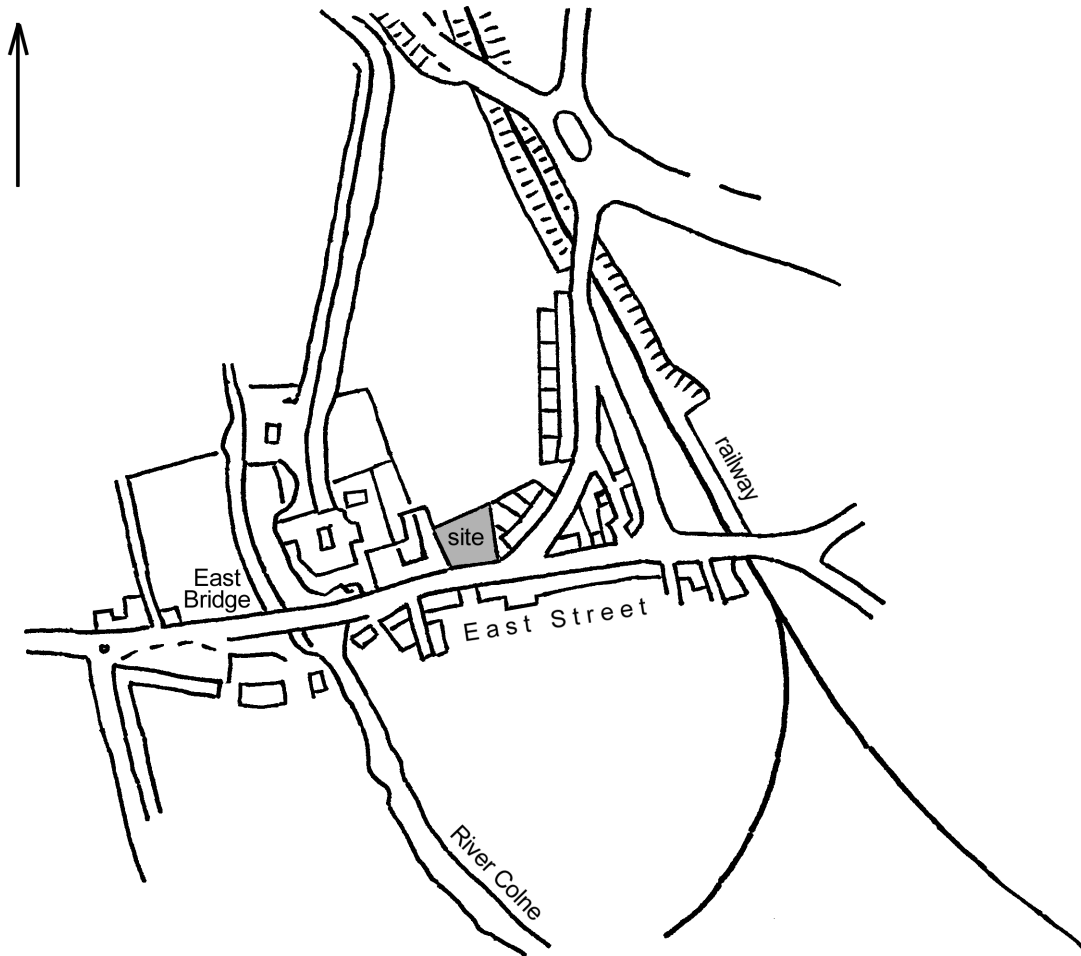
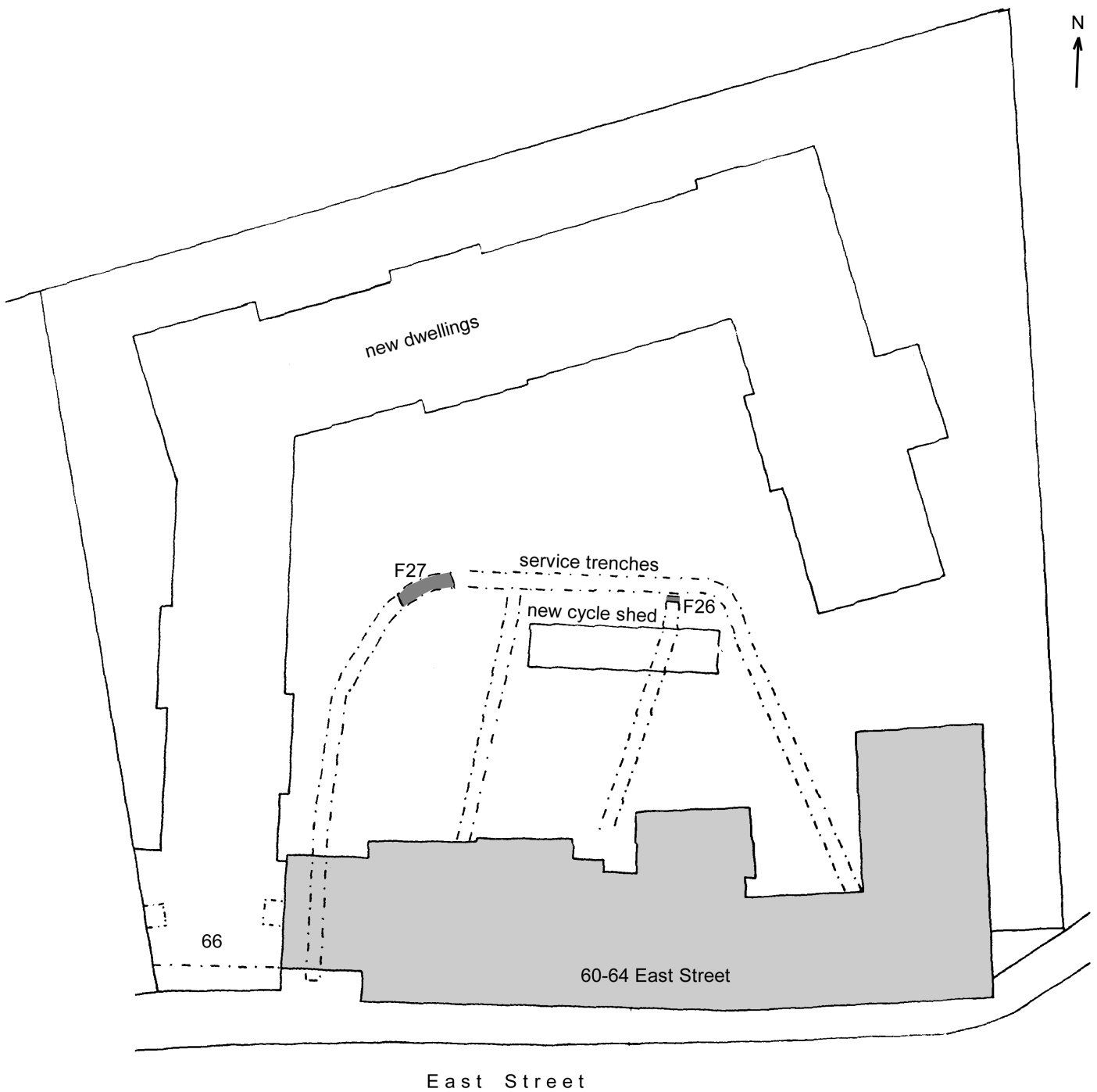


Fig 1 Site location (not to scale).





**Fig 2 Plan of site, showing original buildings (shaded), new dwellings, and monitored areas.**

# Essex Historic Environment Record/ Essex Archaeology and History

## Summary sheet

<b>Site address:</b> the rear of 60-66 East Street (formerly Charles Brown and Sons), Colchester, Essex	
<b>Parish:</b> Colchester	<b>District:</b> Colchester
<b>NGR:</b> TM 0079 2536	<b>Site code:</b> Museum accession code 2003.213
<b>Type of work:</b> Watching brief	<b>Site director/group:</b> Colchester Archaeological Trust
<b>Date of work:</b> July-November 2004	<b>Size of area investigated:</b> 45m x 45m plot
<b>Location of finds/curating museum:</b> Colchester Museums	<b>Funding source:</b> Developer
<b>Further seasons anticipated?</b> No	<b>Related EHER nos:</b>
<b>Final report:</b> CAT Report 335 and summary in EAH	
<b>Periods represented:</b> post-medieval and modern	
<p><b>Summary of fieldwork results:</b>  <i>An archaeological watching brief was carried out during groundworks for new dwellings to the rear of 60-66 East Street. This followed on from investigation inside the property in 2003 and 2004 (CAT Report 283). The groundworks did not expose any archaeological features of particular note. It was predicted that there may have been medieval occupation here, perhaps outbuildings to the medieval building at 60-66 East Street or even a precursor to it. However, no evidence of this was observed.</i></p>	
<b>Previous summaries/reports:</b> CAT Report 283	
<b>Author of summary:</b> Kate Orr	<b>Date of summary:</b> September 2005