

Report on a watching brief CAT Report 342

Site address: 7a Victoria Road, Colchester, Essex
Date of fieldwork: 28th June-5th October 2005
NGR: TL 98410 24650
CBC brief?: Yes
Location plan attached?: Yes (Fig 1)
Museum accession code: 2005.95
CAT ref: 05/6e

Archaeological background:

The site lies on the edge of what Hull (Hull 1958, 253-4) termed the 'west cemetery'. This large Roman burial ground was in use over a long time span and included both inhumation and cremation burials. It covered a large area, now believed to stretch from The Avenue east to Butt Road. Most of the finds were made in the 19th century and formed part of large collections. At least one burial area was contained within a wall, and traces of large funerary monuments are known from the walled cemetery to the rear of the Royal Grammar School and from West Lodge. Tile tombs, lead and stone coffins and other built tombs as well as ordinary urned cremation burials have been found from all the over the area, lining the Roman road leading to the walled town of Colchester. A detailed description and discussion of Colchester's Roman cemeteries can be found in Hull 1958 and more recently in *CAR 9*, 257-75.

The nearest and most recent archaeological intervention occurred at the rear of 4 Victoria Road in 1998, but this proved to be negative; the work was undertaken by CAT (Urban Archaeological Database event no 3557).

Brief report:

Planning permission was given for a rear extension to the property and for a swimming-pool to be constructed in the garden. The permission had a condition for an archaeological watching brief (F/COL/05/0244). Fifteen visits were made during the groundworks. The ground in a 22.4m x 11.9m area to the rear of (west of) no 7a was reduced. This was where the extension to the property was to be built. The ground was stepped down so that, at the rear of the property, the depth of reduction was between 750mm and 800mm, and to the west, by the boundary wall, it was 2.2m. Foundation trenches were subsequently dug up to 1.6m deeper. Up to 800mm of topsoil was observed which may well have been brought in from elsewhere. At the western part of the reduced area, natural was seen at 1.7m below ground-level. Nothing of archaeological significance was recorded.

The excavation of a trench measuring 11.15m x 5.65m, for the swimming-pool, was then carried out. This was to the south of the reduced area. Nothing of archaeological significance was observed apart from a pit-like feature containing a small amount of Roman brick.

Finds:

None kept.

References:

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| <i>CAR 9</i> | 1993 | <i>Colchester Archaeological Report 9: Excavations of Roman and later cemeteries, churches and monastic sites in Colchester, 1971-88</i> , by N Crummy, P Crummy & C Crossan |
| Hull, M R | 1958 | <i>Roman Colchester</i> , RRCSAL, 20 |

Report author: Kate Orr

Report date: October 2005

Distribution list:

Mr Y Van Helfteren (owner)

Martin Winter, Archaeology Officer for Colchester Borough Council
Essex Historic Environment Record, Essex County Council



Colchester Archaeological Trust

12 Lexden Road,
Colchester,
Essex CO3 3NF

tel.: (01206) 541051

tel./fax: (01206) 500124

email: archaeologists@catuk.org

Checked by: *Philip Crummy*

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Fig 1 Site location.