

**An archaeological watching brief  
at 107 High Street (the Conservative Club),  
Colchester, Essex  
June 2006**

**report prepared by  
Kate Orr**

**commissioned by  
richard Jackson plc consulting engineers  
on behalf of  
the Colchester and District  
Conservative and Unionist Club Ltd**

CAT project code: 06/6a  
Colchester Museum accession code: 2006.78  
NGR: TL 9980 2524 (c)



**Colchester Archaeological Trust**  
12 Lexden Road,  
Colchester,  
Essex CO3 3NF

*tel.:* (01206) 541051  
(01206) 500124  
*email:* [archaeologists@catuk.org](mailto:archaeologists@catuk.org)

**CAT Report 386**  
October 2006

## Contents

1	Summary	1
2	Introduction	1
3	Aim	1
4	Archaeological background	1
5	Methods	2
6	Results	2
7	The copper-alloy small find <i>by Nina Crummy</i>	3
8	Discussion	3
9	Acknowledgements	4
10	References	4
11	Glossary and abbreviations	4
12	Archive deposition	5

Figures after p 5

EHER summary sheet

## List of figures

- Fig 1 Site location, showing the castle bailey ditch and trial hole locations (adapted from Drury 1982, fig 38).
- Fig 2 Ground plan of the Conservative Club, showing location of trial holes.
- Fig 3 The north wall of the Conservative Club in relation to the underlying bailey ditch, based on auger and Mackintosh probe data.

## 1 Summary

Six trial holes/boreholes were dug in and around the exterior of the Conservative Club as part of a structural investigation into movement of the building. The survey confirmed that the building overlies the fill of the castle bailey ditch and that this is the cause of the subsidence. At its deepest point, the ditch was approximately 5.25m deep. A profile of the ditch was constructed using the borehole data.

## 2 Introduction (Figs 1-2)

- 2.1 This is the archive report on an archaeological watching brief carried out during the digging, augering and Mackintosh probing of engineer's trial holes at 107 High Street (the Conservative Club), Colchester, Essex. The watching brief was carried out on the 19th and 20th June 2006 by the Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT).
- 2.2 The Conservative Club is situated in the town centre, on the corner of the High Street and Maidenburgh Street, to the south-west of Colchester Castle. It is centred at National Grid Reference TL 9980 2524.
- 2.3 The property is a three-storey Grade II Listed Building. The age of the building ranges from 17th century to more modern 20th-century alterations and extensions including a single-storey extension to the billiard room. Listed Building Consent was given before the ground investigations took place.
- 2.4 The trial-hole work was carried out as part of a structural investigation into movement of the building. Some of the most notable cracking is on the north elevation, along the boundary with the Castle Methodist Church. The floors of the mixed lounge area and the billiard room also slope markedly.
- 2.5 This report mirrors standards and practices contained in the Colchester Borough Council's *Guidelines for the 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 research projects in the historic environment* (MoRPHE), and *Research and archaeology: a framework for the Eastern Counties 1* (EAA 3), *Research and archaeology: a framework for the Eastern Counties 2* (EAA 8), and *Standards for field archaeology in the East of England* (EAA 14).

## 3 Aim

The aim of the watching brief was to identify and record any archaeological remains that were exposed within the trial holes, specifically to determine the exact location and depth of the castle bailey ditch.

## 4 Archaeological background (Fig 1)

- 4.1 The site lies in the heart of the historic town.
- 4.2 Within the Roman *colonia*, a grid of streets was laid out to form rectilinear blocks of land (*insulae*). The Conservative Club occupies Insula 22 of the Roman town (CAR 6, 8-15). The High Street in the Roman and medieval period was the main route through Colchester town centre, with a continuous frontage of properties and buildings on both sides of the road. The principal feature of Insula 22 was the temple of Claudius, the podium of which was incorporated in the base of Colchester Castle (keep).
- 4.3 The Conservative Club lies just outside the bailey of the Norman castle. The inner bailey of the castle was surrounded by a defensive bank and ditch, the line of which runs roughly in a north to south direction in this area and turns 90° to the east under Museum Street. The ditch was filled in during the 16th century (Drury 1982, 378), and it is not visible above ground in this south-western area. However, its location

has been tested by excavation at various places. At 5 Maidenburgh Street (to the north of the Castle Methodist Church), three trenches were dug across it in 1964 and 1979 (Drury 1982, 342-6), and in 1969, four trenches were dug prior to the construction of the Castle Methodist Church itself (Drury 1982, 346-7). The bailey ditch was found to be approximately 20m wide and in excess of 5m deep. The Conservative Club was built directly on the infilled bailey ditch and this is considered to be the cause of the subsidence.

## **5 Methods** (Fig 2)

- 5.1** Six trial holes/boreholes were hand-dug by contractors in the interior and at the exterior of the building. Trial holes 1-3 were extended as boreholes using a hand auger. Trial holes 4-5 were not extended as boreholes because obstructions were encountered. A Mackintosh probe was used to verify the depth of natural ground in each trial hole/borehole. In the basement boiler room, a Mackintosh probe was used but no actual trial hole/borehole was dug. An archaeologist was in attendance during all the hand-digging, augering and Mackintosh-probing work.
- 5.2** Records were made of soil types at each stage of digging and augering. Natural sands and gravels were encountered at varying depths and this was noted in order to confirm the location of the castle bailey ditch and to gauge its depth.
- 5.3** Colour photographs were taken with a digital camera.
- 5.4** There was only one artefact of any archaeological significance, therefore a register of finds was not kept.

## **6 Results** (Figs 1-3)

- 6.1** The circumstances were not conducive to the recording of stratigraphy, but, as far as could be judged, modern material was recorded in the four exterior trial holes/boreholes (Trial hole 1-Trial hole 4) down to a maximum of 1.4m.

### **6.2 Trial hole 1**

This hole was dug at the exterior of the building, along its northern side. A 500mm x 400mm-wide trial hole was dug down to 1.1m depth. At 1m below ground-level, the concrete foundation to the modern extension to the building was encountered which extended to 1.39m below ground-level. All the material cut by the trial hole was modern topsoil and included cobbles, flint, some septaria, modern brick, slate, modern floor tile, clay pipe and flecks of mortar.

From 2m below ground-level, the augering exposed a lighter fill with some tile but with fewer mortar flecks. This is presumably the fill of the bailey ditch. It continued to 3.2m below ground-level where natural fine orange sand was encountered (23.04m AOD).

### **6.3 Trial hole 2**

This 750mm x 610mm trial hole was dug along the exterior northern wall of the building, to the east of Trial hole 1. Brick foundations to the original building were encountered at 250mm below ground-level. These extended to 900mm below ground-level, thus augering continued from here. Brick and mortar flecks were recorded down to 2.8m below ground-level and at this point the fill started to become wetter and siltier. Organic patches were noted at between 3.7m and 3.8m below ground-level. At 4.7m below ground-level, the fill became black silty clay. At 5m, the auger encountered a 200mm-thick lens of light brown moist silty sand with fragments of oyster shell and bone. The fill became darker again at 5.2m below ground-level but without any artefactual material. Natural brown sand and gravel was encountered at 5.45m below ground-level (20.36m AOD).

### **6.4 Trial hole 3**

This 450mm x 550mm trial hole was also dug along the northern side of the building, to the east of Trial hole 2. Foundations for the building were exposed at 900mm below ground-level and extended to 1.4m below ground-level.

Below this level, the auger encountered a brown sandy fill down to 2m below ground-level. From 2m to 2.6m below ground-level, the fill was characterised by mortar flecks and was mixed with grey sandy silt. At 2.6m to 2.8m below ground-level, the fill became a more moist grey brown sandy silt with mortar and tile flecks. A lens of silty clay with no artefactual material was encountered at 2.8m below ground-level. At 2.9m below ground-level, the fill became more silty and with occasional tile inclusions. Fine orange natural sand was encountered at 3m below ground-level (22.77m AOD).

#### **6.5 Trial hole 4**

This 300mm x 400mm trial hole was placed to the west of Trial hole 2, where the centre of the bailey ditch was believed to be. 400mm-thick foundations were encountered at 650mm below ground-level. This trial hole was not extended by auger because of a drain causing an obstruction. However, the Mackintosh probe encountered dense deposits (probably natural sand) at 6.25m below ground-level, confirming that this is probably the deepest point of the bailey ditch (19.68m AOD).

#### **6.6 Trial hole 5**

This 300mm x 300mm trial hole was dug within the billiard room and was 470mm deep. The first 300mm of material was made up of the floor and its sub-base. Underneath a dry brown silty sand with mortar, slate, unfrogged brick, septaria and peg-tile was recorded. Augering was not possible; however, a Mackintosh probe was driven to 5.38m below ground-level, at which point it encountered dense deposits which are likely to be natural sand (21.08m AOD).

#### **6.7 Trial hole 6**

A Mackintosh probe was used in the basement boiler room where there was not enough room to dig a trial hole and too many obstructions to auger. This encountered dense deposits which are likely to be natural sand at 2.8m below the basement floor level (21.65m AOD). The basement floor level is 2m below ground-floor level.

### **7 The copper-alloy small find**

*by Nina Crummy*

In Trial hole 1, within the modern topsoil, a penannular rectangular-section hoop of copper-alloy, 33 mm in diameter, tapering in width from 8 mm at one end to 3.5 mm at the other. The narrower end is broken and probably tapered to a point. The surface corrosion suggests that the object is of some antiquity, but it need be no older than the post-medieval period. It resembles a hoop earring, although the metal is thicker than would be expected and the wider end would be hidden in the hair. The identification is therefore uncertain.

### **8 Discussion (Fig 3)**

Each trial hole/borehole encountered the fill of the castle bailey ditch. The results of the survey have been used to construct a profile of the bailey ditch (Fig 3) which confirms what was previously known of its location and depth. The base of the ditch is 6.25m below ground-level, as seen in Trial hole 4. Given the presence of at least 1m of topsoil, this would give the depth of the ditch at its deepest point as 5.25m maximum.

Tile flecks and mortar flecks were common within the bailey ditch fill, plus a few pieces of animal bone and oyster shell. However, the auger holes were too small to produce any datable artefacts. Therefore, although varying fills were noted, it has not been possible to date them and thereby phase the infilling of the ditch. What can be said is that the fill became more moist at 2.6m-2.8m below ground-level. In Trial hole 2, organic patches were noted at 3.7m below ground-level, and a black silty clay was recorded at 4.7m below ground-level with oyster shell and bone surviving within it. This indicates that preservation of organic remains is fairly good in the lower fills of

the ditch, although it is not known whether remains such as wood or leather would survive.

The pattern of damage and distortion in the Conservative Club building corresponds with the deepest parts of the bailey ditch.

## 9 Acknowledgements

The Trust would like to thank Richard Jackson plc consulting engineers for commissioning the work and the Colchester and District Conservative and Unionist Club Ltd for funding it. The project was monitored by Martin Winter, the Colchester Borough Council Archaeology Officer. The fieldwork was carried out by Kate Orr.

## 10 References

- |           |      |  |
|-----------|------|--|
| CAR 6     | 1992 | <i>Colchester Archaeological Report 6: Excavations at Culver Street, the Gilbert School, and miscellaneous sites in Colchester, 1971-85</i> , by P Crummy                                      |
| 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>   |
| Drury, PJ | 1982 | 'Aspects of the origins and development of Colchester Castle', in <i>The Archaeological Journal</i> , <b>139</b>   |
| EAA 3     | 1997 | <i>Research and archaeology: a framework for the Eastern Counties 1. Resource assessment</i> , East Anglian Archaeology, Occasional Papers, <b>3</b> , ed by J Glazebrook                      |
| EAA 8     | 2000 | <i>Research and archaeology: a framework for the Eastern Counties 2. Research agenda and strategy</i> , East Anglian Archaeology, Occasional Papers, <b>8</b> , ed by N Brown and J Glazebrook |
| EAA 14    | 2003 | <i>Standards for field archaeology in the East of England</i> , East Anglian Archaeology, Occasional Papers, <b>14</b> , ed by D Gurney  |
| IFA       | 1999 | <i>Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief</i>  |
| IFA       | 2001 | <i>Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials</i>  |
| MoRPHE    | 2006 | <i>Management of research projects in the historic environment</i> (English Heritage)  |

## 11 Glossary and abbreviations

AOD	Above Ordnance Datum, ie height above sea level
bailey	enclosed area attached to a castle, normally defended by a bank and ditch or wall
CBCAO	Colchester Borough Council Archaeology Officer
context	specific location on an archaeological site, usually a feature or layer
EH	English Heritage
EHER	Essex Historic Environment Record, Essex County Council
feature	an identifiable thing like a pit, a wall, a drain, a floor; can contain 'contexts'
medieval	the period from 1066 to c 1500
modern	period from the mid 19th century to the present
natural	geological deposit undisturbed by human activity
NGR	National Grid Reference
post-medieval	period from c 1500 to the mid 19th century
Roman	the period from AD 43 to c AD 410

## 12 Archive deposition

The finds and the digital and paper 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 COLEM 2006.78.

© Colchester Archaeological Trust 2006

### Distribution list:

P D Chatfield, Richard Jackson plc consulting engineers  
Martin Winter, Colchester Borough Council Archaeology Officer  
Essex Historic Environment Record, Essex County Council



### Colchester Archaeological Trust

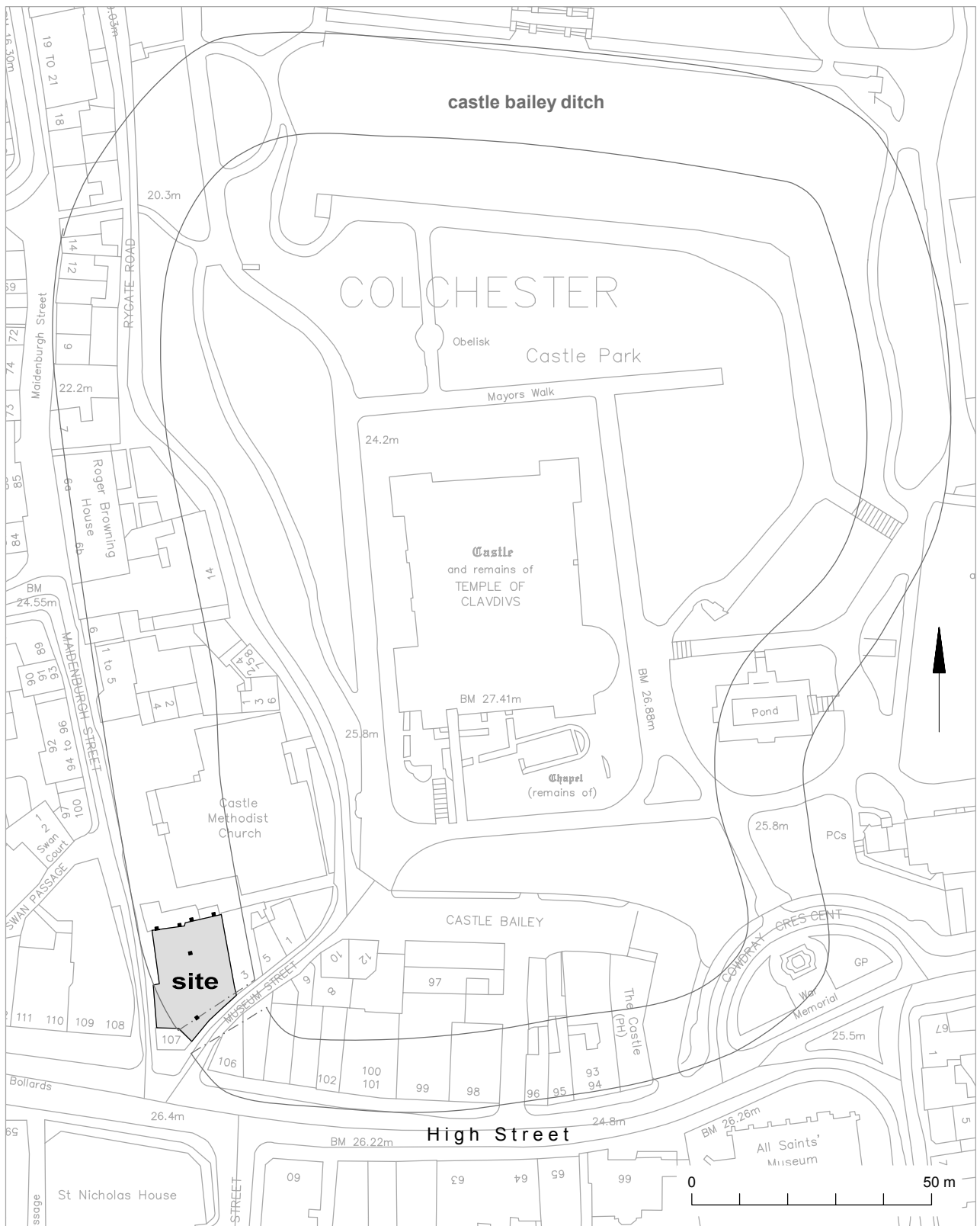
12 Lexden Road,  
Colchester,  
Essex CO3 3NF

tel.: (01206) 541051  
(01206) 500124

email: [archaeologists@catuk.org](mailto:archaeologists@catuk.org)

checked by: Philip Crummy  
date: 23.10.06

Adams c:/reports06/conservative club/report386.doc



© Crown copyright. All rights reserved. Licence number 100039294.

Fig 1 Site location, showing the castle bailey ditch and trial hole locations (adapted from Drury 1982, fig 38).



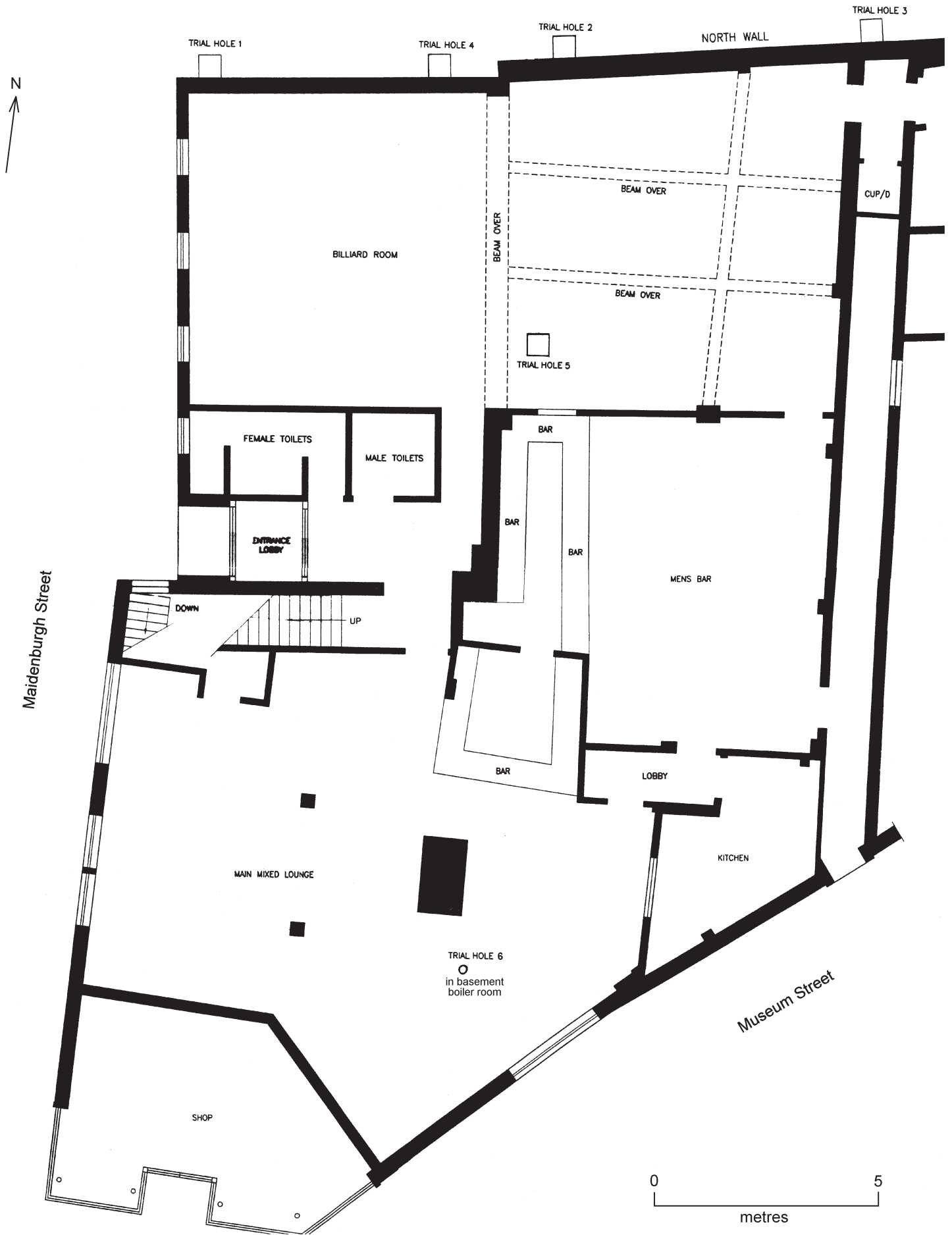


Fig 2 Ground plan of the Conservative Club, showing location of trial holes.

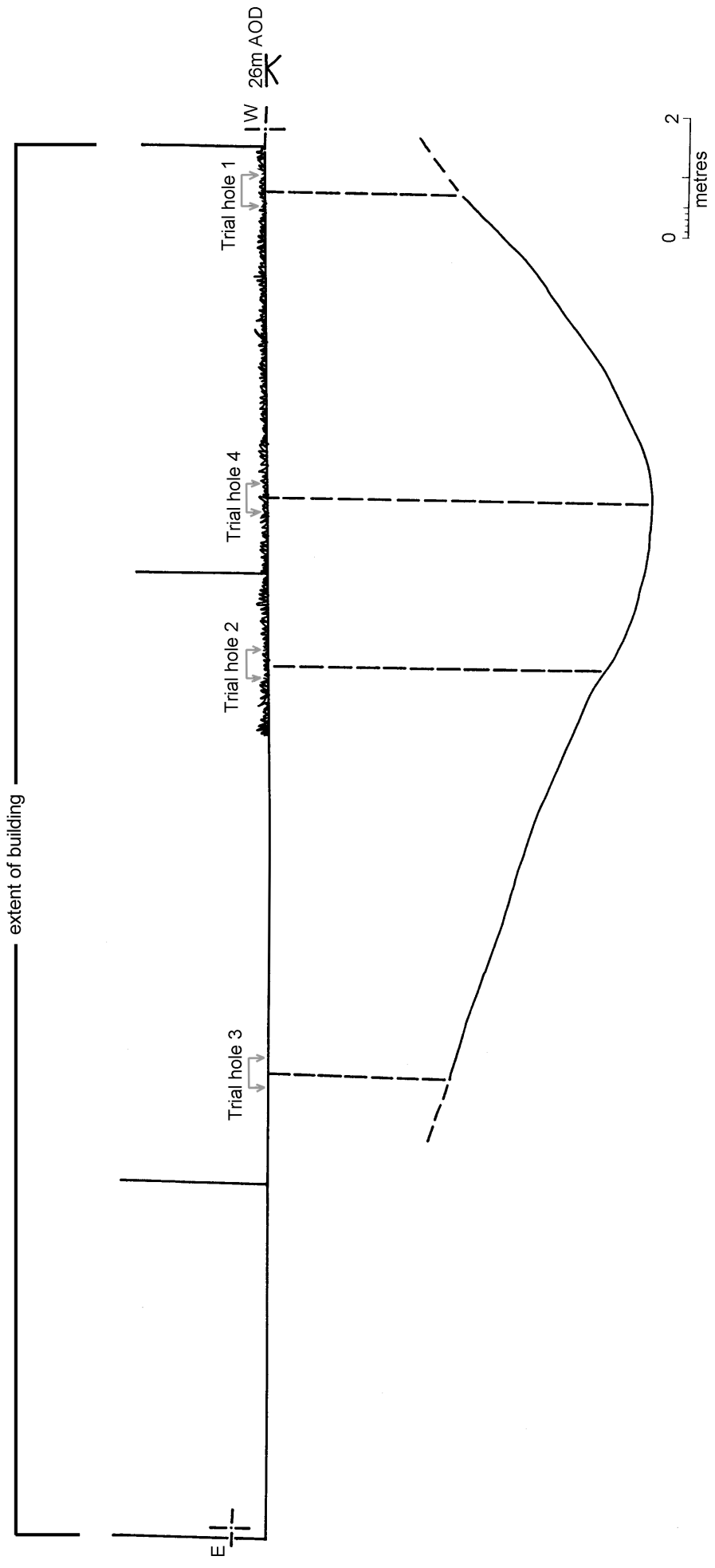


Fig 3 The north wall of the Conservative Club in relation to the underlying bailey ditch based on the auger and Mackintosh probe data.

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

**Summary sheet**

<b>Site name/address:</b> 107 High Street (the Conservative Club), Colchester, Essex	
<b>Parish:</b> Colchester	<b>District:</b> Colchester Borough
<b>NGR:</b> TL 9980 2524 (c)	<b>Site code:</b> 2006.78
<b>Type of work:</b> Watching brief	<b>Site director/group:</b> Colchester Archaeological Trust
<b>Date of work:</b> June 2006	<b>Size of area investigated:</b> 6 small trial holes/boreholes
<b>Location of finds/curating museum:</b> Colchester Museums	<b>Funding source:</b> the Colchester and District Conservative and Unionist Club Ltd
<b>Further work anticipated?</b> No	<b>Related EHER nos:</b>
<b>Final report:</b>	CAT Report 386 and summary in <i>EAH</i>
<b>Periods represented:</b>	medieval
<b>Summary of fieldwork results:</b> <i>Six trial holes/boreholes were dug in and around the exterior of the Conservative Club as part of a structural investigation into movement of the building. The survey confirmed that the building overlies the fill of the castle bailey ditch and that this is the cause of the subsidence. At its deepest point, the ditch was approximately 5.25m deep. A profile of the ditch was constructed using the borehole data.</i>	
<b>Previous summaries/reports:</b> None	
<b>Author of summary:</b> Kate Orr	<b>Date of summary:</b> October 2006