

Report on a watching brief: CAT Report 407

Site address: rear of 31 Creffield Road, Colchester, Essex
Date of fieldwork: 1st-6th December 2006
NGR: TL 9880 2477 (c)
CBC brief?: Yes
Plan attached?: Yes (Fig 1)
Museum accession: COLEM 2006.145
CAT project code: 06/12a

Introduction

This is the report on a watching brief on the construction of a new dwelling in the back garden of 31 Creffield Road. The new property will be accessed off Keble Close (off Oxford Road).

Archaeological background

The watching brief site lies on the edge of the Roman 'West Cemetery' of Colchester. This covers a large area, from The Avenue eastwards to Butt Road. A detailed discussion of Colchester's Roman cemeteries can be found in Hull 1958 and more recently in *CAR 9*.

Two Roman cremation burials have previously been found in Creffield Road (UAD nos 3790 and 3796), and the Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) have excavated a Roman temple tomb at the Colchester Royal Grammar School, 60m to the north-west (CAT Report 345).

Report

01/12/06

Observed removal of turf and 150mm of very humic topsoil (L1). No archaeological features or finds were seen. Observed excavation of soakaway in the south-west corner of the site, also through humic topsoil/imported material L1, which was 1.2m thick here. L1 sealed a very dry, leached-out subsoil (L2), which sealed natural sand/gravel (L3). Two features were observed (sketch in archive):

F1: possible grave, aligned east-west. Fill dry dark brown sandy silt. As this was at foundation level, no excavation was necessary. No coffin nails or other finds were retrieved.

F2: unexcavated pit in east edge. No finds.

Although there were no finds from these features, finds no 1 (Roman pottery and tile, animal bone) was recovered from L2, which sealed them.

04/12/06

Observed continued removal of topsoil (L1), and excavation of western footings (length 2m, depth 1m). These cut through L1 into L2. L3 natural was visible at base of trench.

05/12/06

Excavation of footings beams. Roman finds were recovered from L2, ie finds no 2: Roman pottery, tile, quernstone (Small Find 1), and animal bone. A post-medieval or modern pit (F3) was seen in the central grouping of ground beams.

06/12/06

Part of a WW2 air-raid shelter was removed. No other archaeological finds or features were seen.

Finds

Roman pottery

by Stephen Benfield

Introduction

The watching brief produced just over 4 kg (4,206 g) of Roman pottery. The pottery was recorded using the Roman pottery fabric type series devised for *CAR 10*, in which all the fabrics are recorded as two-letter codes (Table 1). Where appropriate, reference has been made to the corresponding fabric types described in the National Roman Fabric Reference

Collection (Tomber & Dore 1998). The vessel forms were recorded using the Camulodunum (Cam) Roman pottery form type series (Hawkes & Hull 1947; Hull 1958). Samian vessels were catalogued where possible using Dragendorff (Dr) form numbers or other common form type references following those used in Webster (1996). The pottery fabrics and the vessel forms present in each site context were recorded for each finds number (Table 2, in archive). The number of sherds was recorded for each fabric, and the identifiable pottery forms present in each fabric type. The total weight of pottery and an overall spot date was recorded for each finds number.

Table 1: Roman pottery fabric codes and fabric names used in this report (after CAR 10).

Fabric code	Fabric name	National Roman Fabric Reference Collection fabric
AJ	amphoras, Dressel 20	BAT AM 1, BAT AM 3
DJ	coarse oxidised and related wares	COL WH
BA	plain samian forms	
EG	East Gaulish plain samian	
GX	other coarse wares, principally locally-produced grey wares	
HZ	large storage jars and other vessels in heavily-tempered grey wares	
TZ	mortaria, Colchester and mortaria imported from the Continent	COL WH

Roman pottery discussion

The pottery was all recovered from one context, L2 (finds nos 1 and 3). The sherds are mostly of large size, which reflects both the types of vessels of which they were part (mainly amphoras and mortaria), and possibly the fact that they were collected during a watching brief where large sherds would be more obvious.

The quantity of pottery is not large. Although by weight it amounts to just over 4 kg, this is made up of only 24 sherds. Nine vessels are represented by the sherds. These are a Dressel 20 amphora (Fabric AJ), a Cam 497 variant mortarium (Fabric TZ) and a ?Dr 45 mortarium (Fabric BA(EG)), 2 flagons and a jar (Fabric DJ), a jar/bowl and a lid (Fabric GX), and a large storage jar (Fabric HZ). The date range of the pottery that can be dated (other than simply as Roman) is 1st-mid 3rd century. The Dressel 20 amphora can be dated to the 2nd century based on the rim profile (Tyers 1996, fig 52), and the Cam 497 variant mortarium is of Antonine-early/mid 3rd-century date. The latest closely-dated pottery is a base from a samian vessel which is probably a Dr 45 mortarium, dated late 2nd century (c AD 170) to mid 3rd century.

Catalogue of other finds

Post-Roman pottery fabrics are after CAR 7.

Finds no 1, L2

Animal bone; flint blade or scraper with retouch on two sides, one end broken; Roman sherds including amphora and mortarium; and Roman brick and tile. Group date: Roman.

Finds no 2, F3

Base of 19th- to 20th-century green beer bottle; peg-tile with small nail holes; Fabric 51b flowerpot sherds; and animal bones. Group date: 19th-20th century.

Finds no 3, L2

Roman brick and tile, including *tegula mammata* and box tile; tufa lump; modern ceramic drain-pipe; Roman sherds; and Roman lava quernstone fragment (Small Find 1). Group date: Roman, with intrusive modern drain-pipe.

For more detail of finds, see archive.

References

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| CAT Report 345 | | A Roman temple-tomb at Colchester Royal Grammar School, Lexden Road, Colchester, Essex, August-September 2005, unpublished CAT archive report, by Howard Brooks, 2006 |
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Report authors: B Holloway and H Brooks

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Distribution list:

Dr Laxton, via Inkpen Downie

Robert Lewarne (P G Oxley – contractors)

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

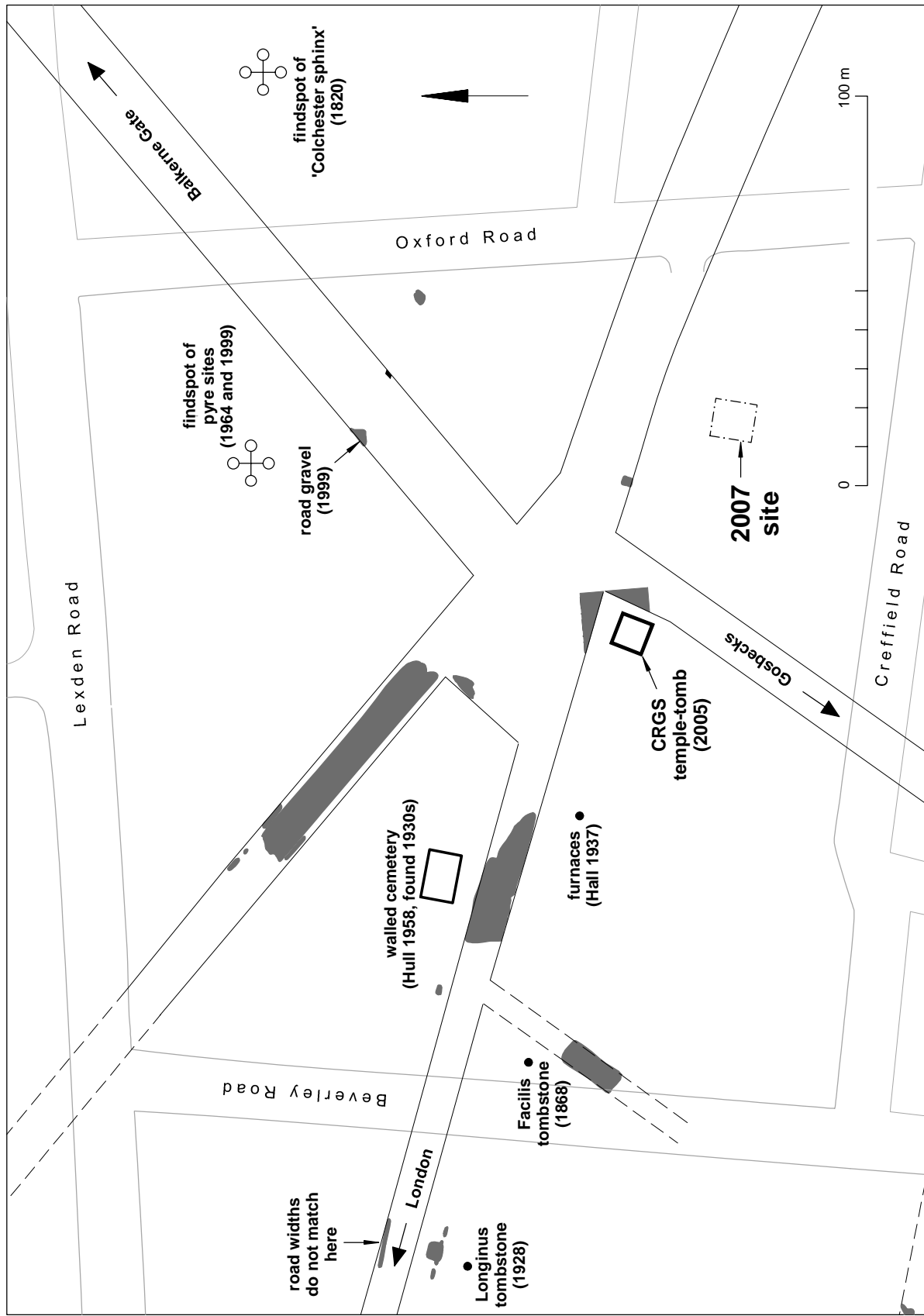
(01206) 500124

email: archaeologists@catuk.org

Checked by: Philip Crummy

Date: 21.03.07

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 Fig 1 Site location in relation to Roman roads and funerary monuments. (Date of discovery shown in brackets.) (Roman road metalling is shown as dark tone.)

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

Summary sheet

Site address: 31 Creffield Road, Colchester, Essex	
Parish: Colchester	District: Colchester
NGR: TL 9980 2477 (c)	Site code: Museum accession code COLEM 2006.145
Type of work: Watching brief	Site director/group: Colchester Archaeological Trust
Date of work: 1st-6th December 2006	Size of area investigated: approx 100m ²
Location of finds/curating museum: Colchester Museums	Funding source: Developer
Further seasons anticipated? No	Related EHER and UAD nos: UAD nos 3790, 3796
Final report: CAT Report 407 and summary in <i>EAH</i>	
Periods represented: Roman	
Summary of fieldwork results: <i>A single possible inhumation grave cut was observed during a watching brief on a site within the Roman 'West Cemetery' of Colchester. No coffin nails or other objects associated with the ?grave were found, but Roman pottery was recovered from overlying strata.</i>	
Previous summaries/reports: None	
Author of summary: Howard Brooks	Date of summary: March 2007