

## Report on a watching brief: CAT Report 495

**Site address:** Upper Castle Park, Colchester, Essex  
**Date of fieldwork:** 19th May-18th June 2008  
**NGR:** TL 9982 2540 (summerhouse)/TL 9991 2532 (rotunda)  
**Figures attached?:** Yes (Figs 1-4)  
**Museum accession code:** 2008.75  
**CAT project code:** 08/5f

### Summary

An archaeological watching brief took place during conservation work on the summerhouse and the rotunda in the Upper Castle Park, Colchester, Essex. Significant Roman or Norman remains were not identified. Post-medieval deposits included a brick feature pre-dating the summerhouse.

### Introduction (Fig 1)

An archaeological watching brief was carried out in the Upper Castle Park on behalf of Colchester Borough Council during conservation work on the summerhouse and the rotunda. The watching brief was undertaken by the Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) in May and June 2008.

This report follows the standards set out in Colchester Borough Council's *Guidelines on standards and practices for archaeological fieldwork in the Borough of Colchester* (CIM 2008a), and also those in the Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (IfA 2008a) and *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (IfA 2008b). The guidance contained in English Heritage's *Management of research projects in the historic environment* (MAP 2), and in the documents *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.

### Archaeological background

Colchester Castle Park is protected as a Scheduled Ancient Monument (Essex SAM no 1) due primarily to the wealth of its Roman and medieval archaeology.

The summerhouse is situated at the western end of a raised walk converted from the Norman inner bailey rampart to the north of the castle keep by Charles Grey in the 18th century (Phillips 2001, 30). The summerhouse was built in 1731, in the style of a Greek temple (*VCH 9*, 150-51). The Norman rampart was sectioned 80m to the east of the summerhouse in 1950 (Cotton 1962, 57-61). It survived approximately 3.3m high and overlay the remains of the north precinct wall of the Temple of Claudius, and also an east-west Roman street immediately to the north of the precinct (Hull 1958, 180-84).

The rotunda is dated 1747 (*VCH 9*, 151) and is situated near the south-eastern end of the walk. Only part of the original structure of the rotunda survives above ground today. This consists of the entrance arch on its north-eastern side, together with two short buttresses to either side of the arch. Little now remains of the circular main chamber, although this was probably still standing in the second half of the 19th century as it is shown on the OS map of 1875.

Both the summerhouse and the rotunda are shown on the map published in Morant 1748.

### Aims

The aim of the watching brief was to record the depth and extent of any archaeological remains uncovered during the conservation work, and to assess the date and significance of these remains.

## **Methods** (Figs 2-3)

Conservation work on the summerhouse and the rotunda included the underpinning of parts of the structures. This involved the contractors hand-digging narrow trenches alongside the existing structures and then undercutting the structures by approximately 0.5m. The trenches were subsequently shuttered and filled with concrete.

The trenches were dug in short lengths, each approximately 1m long. At the summerhouse, only the north side and the northern part of the west side were underpinned. The depth of the trenches was stepped from 0.6m to 1.2m and were at their deepest in the north-western corner of the summerhouse. A shallow trench for a drain was dug northwards down the slope from the north-eastern corner of the summerhouse. At the rotunda, three small trenches (T1-T3) for underpinning were dug alongside the south-eastern part of the structure, and these were approximately 1.25m deep.

The trenches were cleaned and recorded by a CAT archaeologist during intermittent site visits. Individual records of archaeological contexts, such as layers or features, as well as finds, were entered on CAT pro-forma record sheets. Plans were usually drawn at 1:20 and section drawings were made at 1:10. Standard record shots of the site and of individual trenches and contexts were taken on a digital camera. Further details of the recording methods used can be found in the CAT document *Policies and procedures* (CAT 2006).

## **Results**

### **The summerhouse** (Figs 2, 4)

Due to the height of the inner bailey rampart, no trace of Roman remains or of the natural subsoil were uncovered in the trenches at the summerhouse.

The earliest layer uncovered in the trenches was a dark greyish-brown topsoil (L3) at least 0.5m thick. Finds from L3 included peg-tile and slate fragments as well as pieces of Roman brick/tile. This layer was probably post-medieval in date, and therefore undisturbed Norman rampart deposits were also not reached in the trenches.

A brick feature (F1) was uncovered 0.45m below the modern ground-level on the north side of the summerhouse. The feature was rectangular in shape, 0.4m wide, and extended under the summerhouse. It survived at least three courses high, two of which were removed during the underpinning. The bricks were unfrogged, orangey-red in colour and measured 235 x 113 x 65mm. They were set in a degraded yellowish-brown mortar.

No edges for a cut were visible for F1, which was sealed by L3. It remained unclear whether F1 was a freestanding plinth or a foundation cut into the lower part of L3. The bricks looked 18th or early 19th century in date. Assuming that the summerhouse has not been relocated or rebuilt, F1 should date to before 1731 and perhaps belonged to an earlier 18th-century feature constructed on the rampart.

The post-medieval topsoil L3 was sealed by a lighter brownish layer (L2/L4). This was up to 0.9m thick and was most extensive in the trenches along the west side of the summerhouse. This layer (L2/L4) was probably post-medieval make-up, perhaps associated with the construction of the summerhouse in the 18th century. It possibly also equated with the 'Late Bank' excavated in 1950 (Cotton 1962, 59).

The wooden superstructure of the summerhouse rested on brick footings which were approximately 0.4m high. These footings lay on a yellowish-brown sandy make-up layer (L1), up to 0.4m thick, which sealed L2/L4 and L3. The lower courses of the brick footings were offset 0.1m and 0.15m out from the bottom of the summerhouse superstructure. Only 0.1m or less of the footings lay below the modern ground-level around the outside of the summerhouse. This consisted of a turf and topsoil layer (L5), 0.12-0.15m thick, which sealed L1 and L2/L4. Only modern topsoil was visible in the shallow drainage trench dug down the bank from the north-eastern corner of the summerhouse.

### **The rotunda** (Figs 3-4)

The natural sand and gravel subsoil (L9) was reached in all three trenches (T1-T3) dug at the rotunda at depths of 0.75-1.25m below the modern ground-level. The natural subsoil was sealed by a layer of dark greyish-brown topsoil (L8), although the boundary between L8 and L9 was not sharp. The uppermost 0.3m or so of L9 was brownish with mottles of L8.

The topsoil L8 was approximately 0.5m thick and contained sparse fragments of Roman brick and tile and oyster shell. It was probably a post-Roman topsoil or 'dark earth'. There were therefore no definite Roman levels identified in the trenches. These levels had probably been destroyed during the construction of the Norman defences.

In T1 and the eastern part of T3, L8 was sealed by a brownish-yellow sandy make-up layer (L7), 0.1m thick. In T2 and the western part of T3, L8 was sealed by modern turf and topsoil (L5) and the existing concrete and tarmac surfaces. The sandy layer L7 was sealed by a layer of mixed greyish-brown topsoil (L6), 0.45m thick, which contained peg-tile fragments and looked redeposited. It was sealed by modern turf and topsoil (L5) and the existing concrete and tarmac surfaces. The layers L6 and L7 were probably post-medieval make-up layers associated with the construction of the rotunda, although it is possible that L7 derived from the Norman bank.

L6-L8 were cut by the foundations for the rotunda (F2). These were fairly shallow, 0.2-0.3m deep, and were usually offset 0.1-0.15m out from the base of the rotunda walls. The foundations were of stone-and-mortar construction with sparse fragments of Roman and post-Roman brick and tile. The surviving superstructure of the rotunda includes stone blocks and reused Roman brick and tile, much of which was presumably salvaged from the remains of the Norman keep. Fragments of peg-tile and post-medieval brick are also present.

## **Finds**

A quantity of finds was recovered during the watching brief. These are listed in detail in the site archive and the more significant finds are described below.

In the trenches at the summerhouse, many fragments of Roman brick and tile were found, mainly by the workmen, and a sample of these was retained. Three sherds of Roman coarse pottery and two fragments of Roman painted (red) wall-plaster came from L2. Unstratified finds from the summerhouse included some peg-tile fragments, a stoneware sherd and a clay-pipe stem fragment.

From the spoil at the rotunda came several post-Roman pottery sherds and a couple of animal bone fragments.

### **The Roman pottery**

*by Stephen Benfield*

*L2 (2) summerhouse*

Three sherds of grey ware, probably of local origin (*CAR 10*, Fabric GX). 41g. Two of the sherds are from the body of vessels, either jars or bowls, and can be dated as Roman. One sherd is from the rim of a vessel, most probably a jar of form Cam 268, which was current in the early-mid 2nd to late 3rd/early 4th century.

### **The post-Roman pottery**

*by Howard Brooks*

Fabric descriptions are after *CAR 7*.

#### **Unstratified**

*(4) summerhouse*

One body sherd of Fabric 45d (Frechen ware). 15g. Mid 16th or 17th century.

*(9) rotunda T1*

One type B2 rim sherd in Fabric 13 (early medieval ware). 27g. 12th century.

*(11) rotunda T3*

One sherd of Fabric 13 (early medieval ware). 5g. 11th-12th century.

One sherd of Fabric 21 (sandy orange ware). 12g. Unusual form – possibly a small lid. 13th-16th century.

### **The animal bone**

*by Adam Wightman*

*Unstratified (10) rotunda T2*

Two fragments, 122g.

An almost complete left humerus of a pig. Damage to the bone appears to be post-depositional and no evidence of butchery is observable. The distal epiphysis of the bone has fused but the proximal has not, placing the specimen at between 1 and 3.5 years old at time of death.

A fragment of the left scapula of a cow (cattle). The smooth chop-marks on the piece indicate it was butchered in antiquity.

## Conclusions

No Roman or Norman archaeological deposits were identified in the trenches at either the summerhouse or the rotunda. The remains of a post-medieval brick feature (F1) pre-dating the summerhouse were uncovered on the north side of the latter.

There was no trace of an earlier structure pre-dating the rotunda. Roman deposits here appeared to have been destroyed during the construction of the Norman defences. There was no definite evidence for the Norman rampart either, perhaps because the trenches were located towards the inner edge of the inner bailey ditch.

## Archive deposition

The archive from the watching brief, including the site records, photographs and finds, will be permanently deposited with Colchester and Ipswich Museums, under accession code COLEM 2008.75, in accordance with *Guidelines on the preparations and transfer of archaeological archives to Colchester and Ipswich Museums* (CIM 2008b) and *Archaeological archives: a guide to best practice in creation, compilation, transfer and curation* (IfA 2007).

## Acknowledgements

CAT is grateful to Colchester Borough Council for commissioning and funding the watching brief, and to the contractors, Bakers of Danbury, for their help on site. The work was monitored by Philip Wise, Colchester and Ipswich Museums Service.

## References

- |             |                |   |
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| CAT<br>CIM  | 2006<br>2008a  | <i>Policies and procedures</i> , Colchester Archaeological Trust<br><i>Guidelines on standards and practices for archaeological fieldwork in the Borough of Colchester</i> , Colchester Borough Council |
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| Phillips, A | 2001           | 'Charles Grey, Esq.' in <i>the Colchester Archaeologist</i> , <b>14</b> , 30  |
| VCH 9       | 1994           | <i>The Victoria History of the Counties of England, A history of the county of Essex, 9: the Borough of Colchester</i> , ed by J Cooper   |

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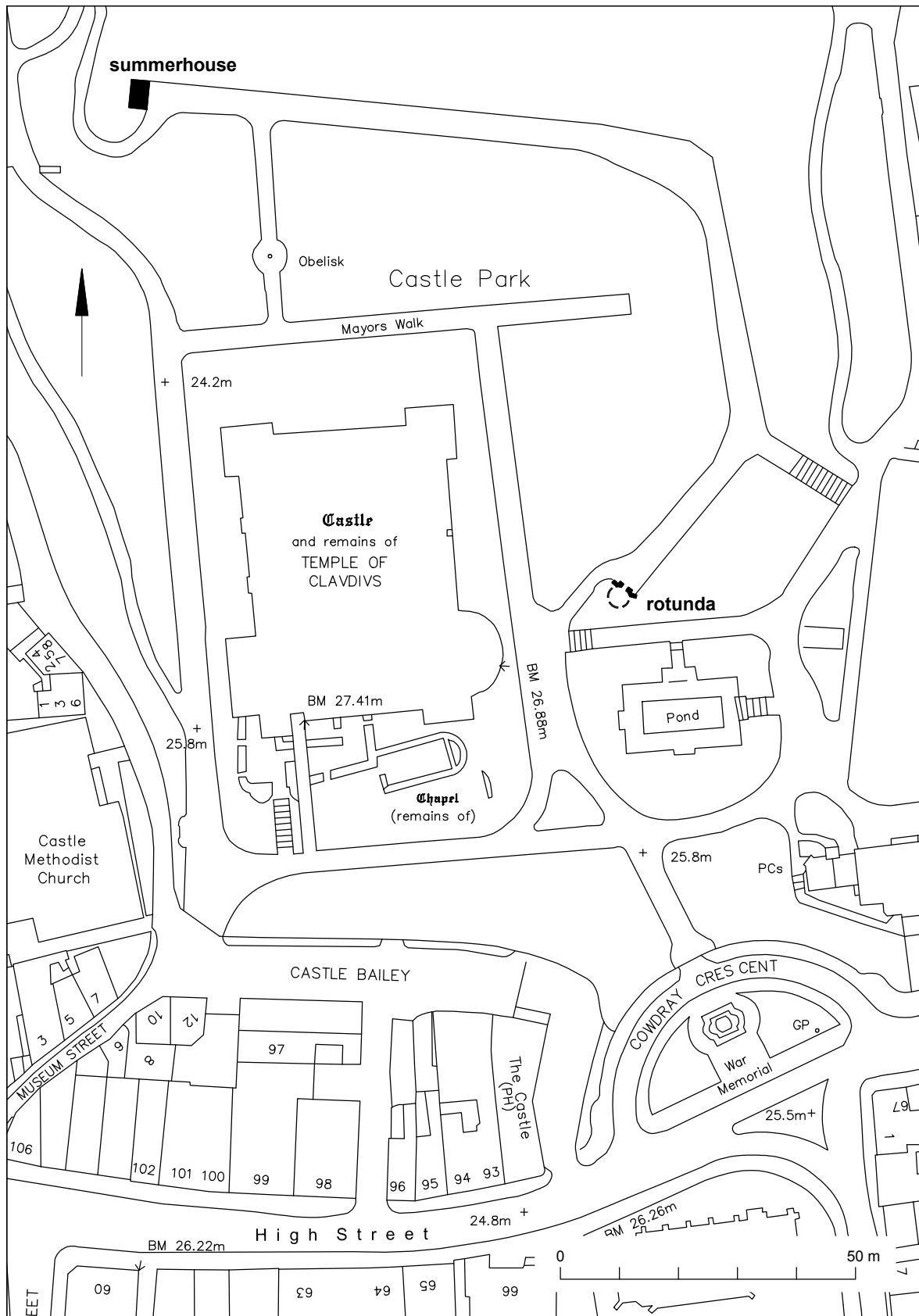


Fig 1 Site location.

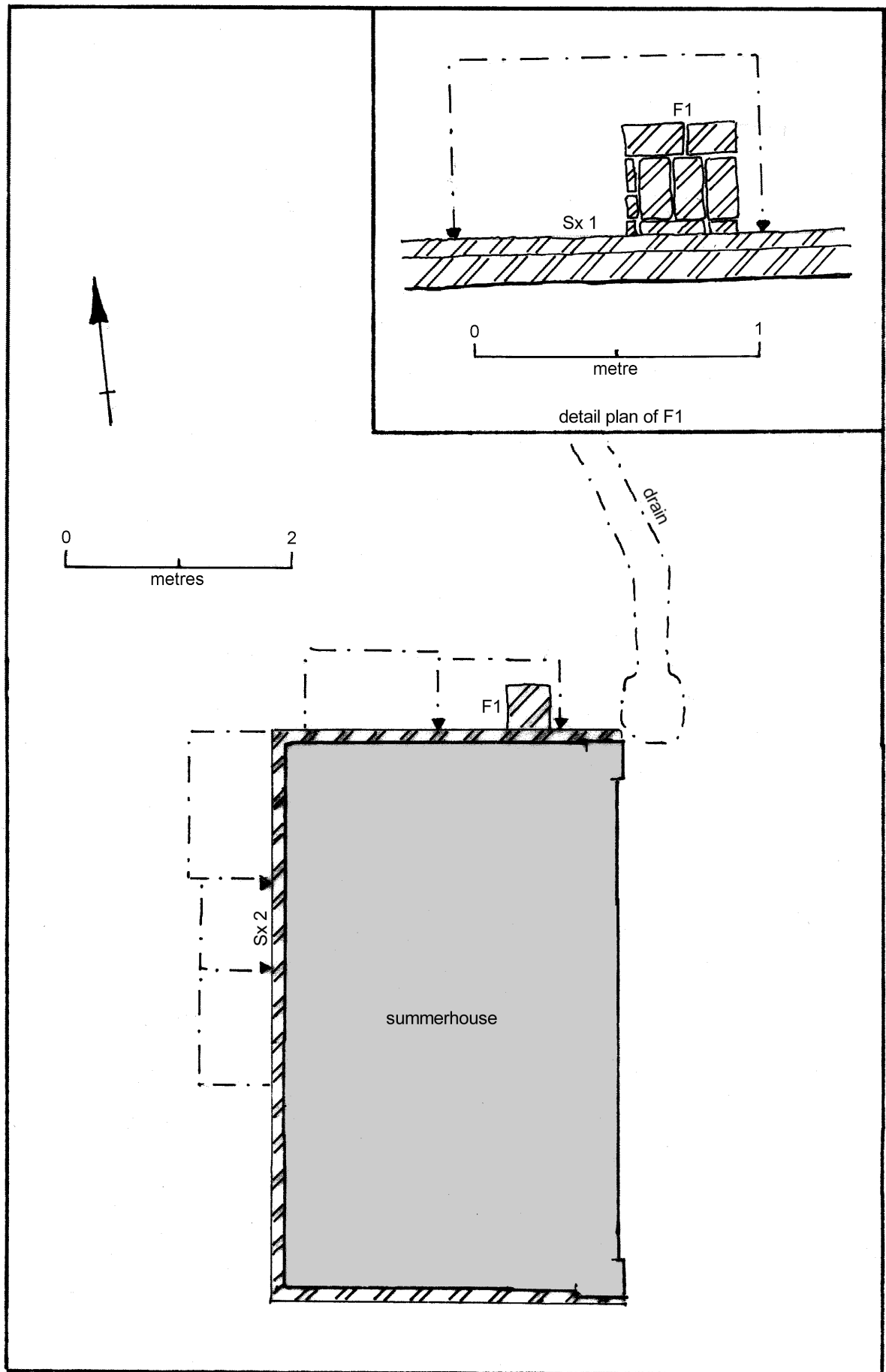


Fig 2 Plan of the summerhouse, showing the position of the trenches and of F1.



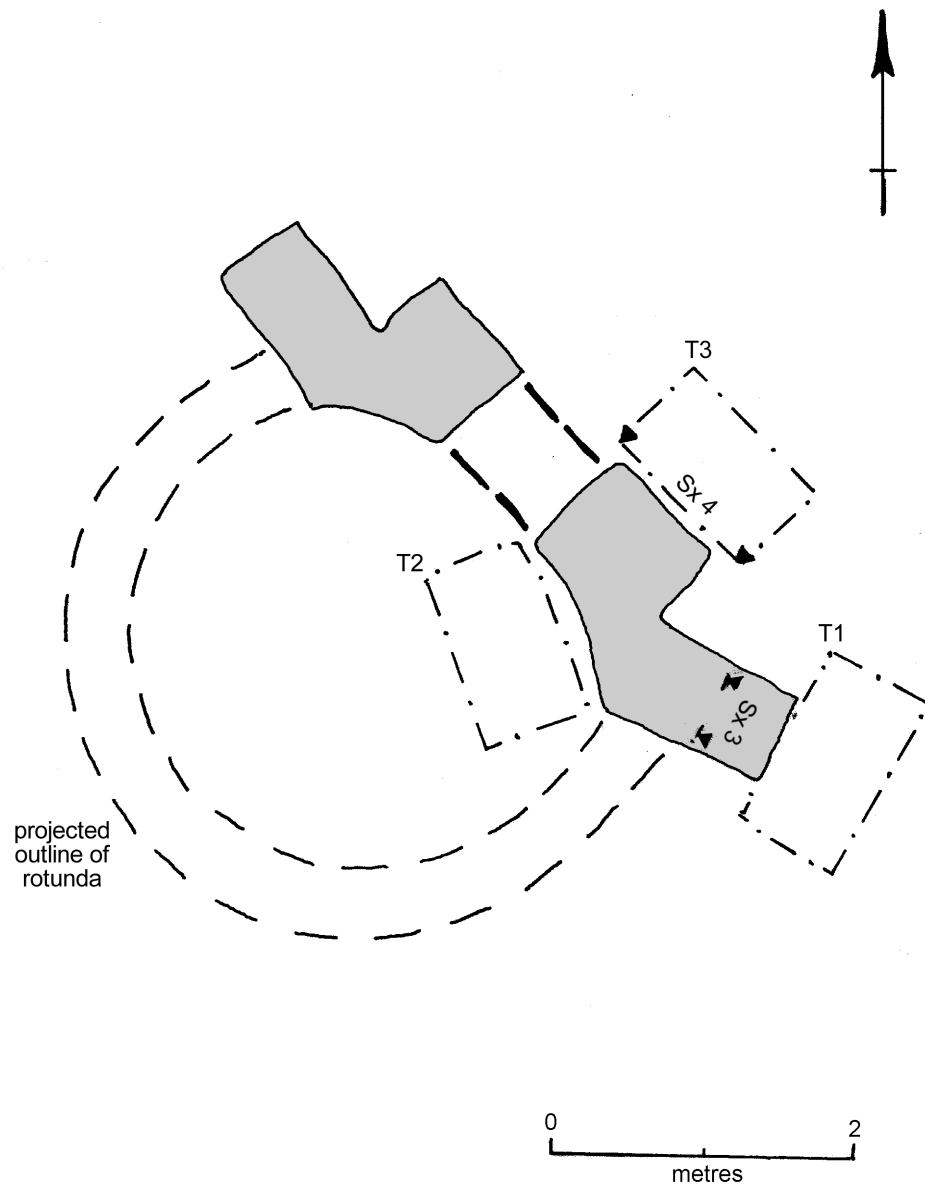
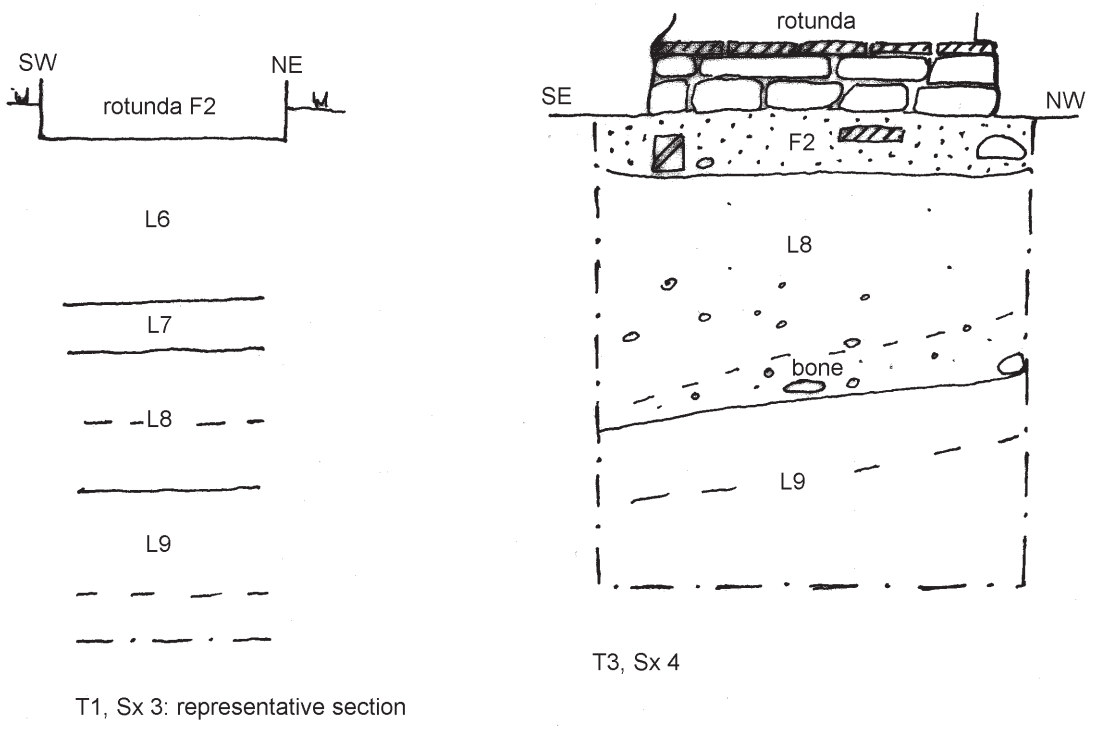
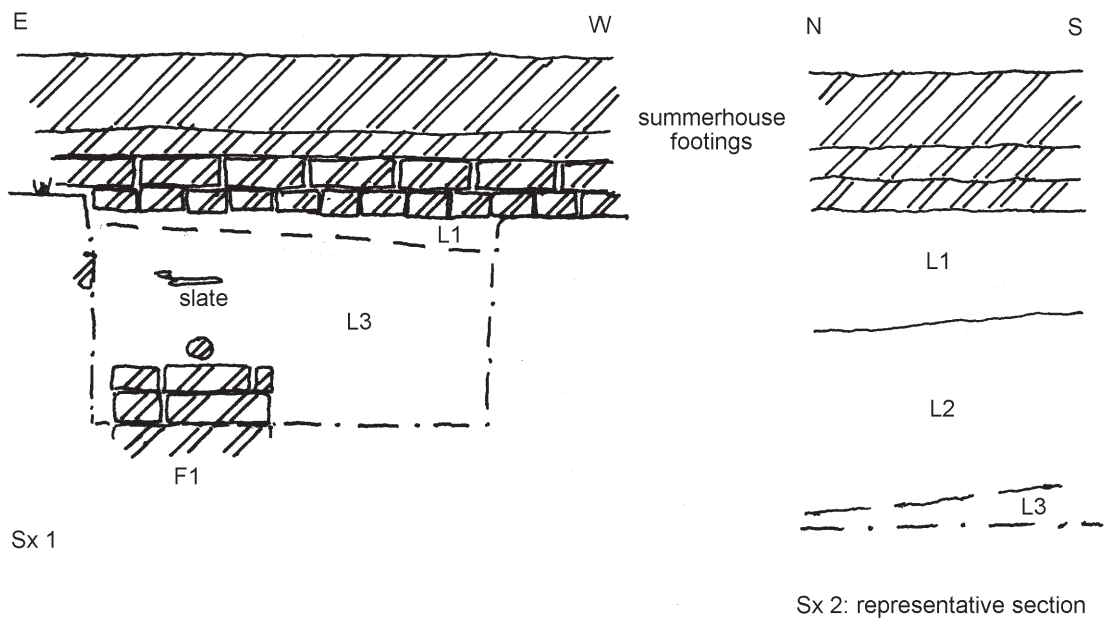






Fig 3 Plan of the rotunda, showing the position of trenches T1-T3.



-  stone
-  Roman brick/tile
-  post-medieval and modern brick/tile
-  mortar

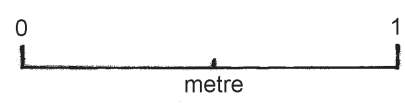


Fig 4 Sections: Sx 1-Sx 4.

## Essex Historic Environment Record/ Essex Archaeology and History

### Summary sheet

<b>Site address:</b> Upper Castle Park, Colchester, Essex	
<b>Parish:</b> All Saints'	<b>District:</b> Colchester
<b>NGR:</b> TL 9982 2540 (summerhouse) TL 9991 2532 (rotunda)	<b>Site code:</b> Museum accession code - COLEM 2008.75
<b>Type of work:</b> Watching brief	<b>Site director/group:</b> Colchester Archaeological Trust
<b>Date of work:</b> 19th May-18th June 2008	<b>Size of area investigated:</b> 8.2 sq m
<b>Location of finds/curating museum:</b> Colchester and Ipswich Museums	<b>Funding source:</b> Colchester Borough Council
<b>Further seasons anticipated?</b> No	<b>Related EHER and UAD nos:</b> -
<b>Final report:</b> CAT Report 495 and summary in <i>EAH</i>	
<b>Periods represented:</b> post-medieval	
<b>Summary of fieldwork results:</b> <i>An archaeological watching brief took place during conservation work on the summerhouse and the rotunda in the Upper Castle Park, Colchester, Essex. Significant Roman or Norman remains were not identified. Post-medieval deposits included a brick feature pre-dating the summerhouse.</i>	
<b>Previous summaries/reports:</b> None	
<b>Keywords:</b> summerhouse, keep, rotunda	<b>Significance:</b> *
<b>Author of summary:</b> Donald Shimmin	<b>Date of summary:</b> March 2009