

**An archaeological watching brief
at the former CBC depot,
Jarmin Road, Colchester, Essex
October 2008**

**report prepared by
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**on behalf of
Knight Environmental Ltd**

NGR: TL 9980 2595
CAT project ref.: 08/10a
Colchester and Ipswich Museums accession code: COLEM 2008.157



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CAT Report 604
October 2011

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Figure

Fig 1 Site plan, showing the 2008 test-pits (TP1, TP3-TP11, TP13-TP15) in relation to the 2007 evaluation trenches (T1-T7; shown grey).

Summary

An archaeological watching brief took place at the site of the former CBC depot at Jarmin Road in Colchester during the machine-excavation of a series of test-pits by the developer. Two probable Roman features were revealed in the south-western part of the site. There was a spread of fragments of burnt daub and Roman brick/tile across the site. These probably derive from a Roman tile kiln on or near the site. The natural subsoil was contaminated in places by leakages from underground fuel tanks.

Introduction (Fig 1)

An archaeological watching brief was carried out on behalf of Knight Environmental Ltd at the former CBC depot in Jarmin Road, Colchester, Essex. This involved the monitoring and recording of a series of test-pits that were excavated by Knight Environmental Ltd in advance of a proposed residential redevelopment. The watching brief was undertaken by the Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) in October 2008.

The site is situated on the north side of the River Colne, adjacent to the cricket ground in the Lower Castle Park. It lies approximately 360 m north of the walled area of Colchester town centre. The site was formerly used for vehicle maintenance and storage. It covers an area of approximately 1.25 hectares. The modern ground-level slopes slightly from the north-west at approximately 6.2 m AOD to the south-east at approximately 5.2m AOD.

The excavation and recording methods used were outlined in the Written Scheme of Investigation (CAT 2008) for the site, which was produced by CAT in October 2008. The WSI also set out proposals for post-excavation work, the production of a report, an archive and, if necessary, publication texts. It followed a brief written by Colchester Borough Council's Archaeological Officer (CBCAO) in May 2008 (CBC 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* (CIMS 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* (MoRPHE 2006), 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 (Fig 1)

Just inside the entrance to the north-western corner of the site, a Roman pottery kiln was discovered in the 1950s (Kiln 33; Hull 1963, 174; UAD no 3757). It was not properly recorded at the time and it is unclear to what extent the kiln survived. A small quantity of pottery was recovered from the kiln site. This consisted mainly of mortarium sherds, most of which were wasters. They were provisionally dated to the early 4th century, which suggests that the kiln was comparatively late in the sequence of Roman kilns found in Colchester (Crummy 2001, 109-110).

Findings recorded in the immediate vicinity of the site include spreads of mainly Roman pottery, possibly from burials, at Frinton Lodge in Catchpool Road and at the Fire Station site in Jarmin Road (Hull 1958, 258; UAD no 967). Further to the north-west, in the Serpentine Walk area, there are records of several Roman burials (Hull 1958, 294; *CAR 9*, fig 8.2), a quantity of Roman brick and tile fragments, possibly from a tile kiln (Hull 1963, 174-5), and a spread of Roman

pottery (*ibid*, 175). The site lies several hundred metres to the north-east of the site of the Roman suburb in the North Station Road area (*Col Arch* **15**, 33-4).

At Turner Rise, approximately 500 m north of the site, sixty Roman cremation burials were excavated in 1996-7 to the west of a previously unrecorded north-south Roman road (Shimmin forthcoming). Establishing the alignment of this road with accuracy was difficult due to the short length exposed. A projection of the line of the road southwards leads to the Middle Mill area; perhaps to a ford or bridge across the River Colne close to the present weir and footbridge (*Journ CAT* **2**, 19). This projected alignment thus passes 65-75 m to the west of the Jarmin Road site and is roughly parallel with Catchpool Road.

An archaeological evaluation took place on the Jarmin Road site in January and February 2007 (CAT Report 409). Many of the features and layers recorded within the seven evaluation trenches were of post-medieval or modern date. However, several Roman features were identified, including at least two ditches and a pit. A further three undated pits and a ditch were possibly also Roman in date. No definite evidence associated with the 4th-century kiln was identified, but one piece of cremated human bone may derive from a disturbed Roman burial.

Aims

The aims of the watching brief were to identify and record the depth, extent and condition of any archaeological remains uncovered in the test-pits, to establish the date and significance of these remains, and to assess to what extent they are likely to be affected by groundworks during the redevelopment of the site.

Methods (Fig 1)

The test-pits were excavated by Knight Environmental Ltd as part of a programme of ground investigations on the site in advance of redevelopment. Thirteen test-pits (TP1, TP3-TP11, TP13-TP15) were dug using a 360° mechanical excavator. A couple of other test-pits (TP2, TP12) were abandoned and several test-pits had to be realigned slightly or extended due to the presence of services or intractable modern obstacles. At the time of the watching brief, all of the buildings on the site had been demolished, although their footprints could still be made out. Other features such as inspection pits and a weighbridge were also visible, although there were few surface indications of any underground fuel storage tanks.

Monitoring and recording of the test-pits were carried out by CAT on the 13th-15th October 2008. Following the breaking-out of the existing concrete and tarmac surfaces (L1), the deposits in the trenches were progressively stripped under the supervision of a CAT archaeologist. The stripping continued down to the uppermost surviving levels of archaeological significance. Where no archaeologically significant deposits were exposed, machine-excavation continued until the natural subsoil (L5) was reached. The surface of the subsoil was then scraped clean and checked for archaeological features. CAT staff were given time to investigate, clean and record any archaeological remains uncovered, and to collect up the finds unearthed. Machine-excavation of the subsoil then continued under the supervision of Knight Environmental Ltd personnel.

The test-pits varied in size, but were usually 0.75 m wide, 2.5-3 m long and roughly 3 m deep. Individual records of archaeological contexts, such as layers or features, as well as finds, were entered on CAT pro-forma record sheets. Plans were drawn at 1:20 and section drawings were made at 1:10. Standard record photographs of the test-pits, and general site shots, were taken on a digital camera. Further information on the recording methods used can be found in the WSI, and in the CAT document *Policies and procedures* (CAT 2006). Detailed notes on the stratigraphy in the test-pits are available in the site archive.

Results

The natural subsoil (L5) was reached in all the test-pits. The depth it was reached at varied from 0.5 m below the modern ground-level in TP1 to just over 1 m in TP9 and TP10. The upper part of the natural subsoil was usually clayey. It varied in colour and thickness, but was typically light brownish-grey, occasionally with an olive hue, and was 0.2-0.6 m thick. It sealed extensive deposits of brownish-yellow sand and gravel at least 2 m thick.

In a number of the test-pits, some of the natural sand and gravel was stained an olive-brown colour and had a strong smell of petroleum fuel. This was particularly marked in TP6, TP8, TP10, TP13 and TP15. The contamination was probably the result of leakages from underground fuel tanks on the site. It tended to follow the natural bedding planes within the sand and gravel. For example, the contaminated layers in TP10 were concentrated 1.6-2 m below the modern ground-level and in TP15 were 1.6-2.4 m below the modern ground-level.

Roman deposits (Fig 1)

A shallow Roman feature (F1) was revealed in TP9 in the south-western corner of the site. It had a dark greyish-brown fill and extended over the northern 1.35 m of the test-pit. It was approximately 0.55 m deep and appeared to be either a pit or part of an east-west ditch. A small quantity of Roman pottery and two fragments of Roman tile were recovered from the backfill of F1. The sherds dated from the mid 2nd to the 3rd century. This feature lay approximately 2.5 m south of the east-west Roman ditch (F19) uncovered in T3 during the 2007 evaluation (CAT Report 409, 2).

The test-pit TP10 cut across the western end of 2007 evaluation trench T4. A shallow east-west ditch (F2), with a yellowish-brown fill, was exposed in TP10. This was the same feature as F16 in T4 in 2007 (*ibid*). The ditch was approximately 2 m wide and 0.5 m deep. No finds were recovered from the ditch in either 2007 or 2008. It was perhaps a continuation of ditch F19 uncovered in T3 in 2007, and thus was probably Roman in date.

A brownish layer (L4), approximately 0.2 m thick, was observed in many of the test-pits. This layer was probably largely re-worked subsoil. It sealed the natural subsoil (L5) and was sealed by post-Roman topsoil (L3). Many fragments of burnt daub and Roman brick/tile were observed in L4 and a sample was recovered. Some of the fragments of Roman brick/tile were possibly wasters. The frequency of the burnt daub and brick/tile fragments varied from test-pit to test-pit, although they were particularly marked in TP3, TP4, TP5, TP7, TP14 and TP15. This suggests that there was an east-west spread of material across the middle of the site. A sherd of Roman pottery was recovered from L4 in TP3. The burnt daub and Roman brick/tile probably derive from one or more tile kilns located on or near the site.

Quantities of burnt daub and Roman brick/tile were also recovered during the 2007 evaluation, particularly in T5 and, to a lesser extent, in T1 and T2 (*ibid*, 6). Some of the fragments of Roman brick/tile were poorly fired and were possibly wasters. The fragments of burnt daub do not contain wattle voids and they probably derive from daub blocks. These were often used in the construction of Roman kilns (eg Hull 1963, 19-20, 35-8). Some of the tile fragments had burnt daub attached to them and these had, perhaps, also been used in kiln construction.

Thus the fragments of burnt daub and Roman brick/tile recovered in 2007 and 2008 suggest that there had been at least one Roman tile kiln on or near the site. Roman kilns often occurred in groups. Some of the fragments could possibly derive from the pottery kiln found in the 1950s.

Post-Roman deposits

A layer of post-Roman topsoil (L3) was observed in all the test-pits. This was approximately 0.25 m thick and was greyish-brown in colour, occasionally with an olive hue. In TP6, L3 was contaminated by modern petroleum spillages or leakages. The existing surfaces (L1) were of concrete and tarmac and were approximately 0.15 m thick. They were usually laid on modern rubbly make-up (L2), 0.1-0.15 m thick.

Finds

A small quantity of finds was recovered during the watching brief. Where appropriate, the finds were washed, marked and bagged according to context, in line with the recommendations in *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (IfA 2008b). The finds are listed by test-pit in Table 1 in the appendix, and further details are available in the site archive.

Conclusions

The 2008 test-pits provided further evidence for Roman activity on the site. This included two ditches or pits in the south-western part of the site where Roman features were also uncovered during the 2007 evaluation.

In many of the test-pits, there was a spread of fragments of burnt daub and Roman brick/tile. These fragments probably derive from one or more Roman tile kilns located on or near the site. A reappraisal of the finds from the 2007 evaluation reinforced this interpretation.

Thus, both the 2007 and 2008 work confirmed the presence of significant archaeological remains on the site. When the redevelopment of the site commences, there should be an archaeological watching brief to monitor any groundworks. This is particularly the case if extensive ground-disturbance is necessary in order to mitigate the contamination on the site.

Archive deposition

The archive from the watching brief, including the site records, photographs and finds, is currently held by CAT at 12 Lexden Road in Colchester, but it will be permanently deposited with Colchester and Ipswich Museums under accession code COLEM 2008.157, in accordance with *Guidelines on the preparation and transfer of archaeological archives to Colchester and Ipswich Museums* (CIMS 2008b) and *Archaeological archives: a guide to best practice in creation, compilation, transfer and curation* (IfA 2007).

The contents of the archive include:

- 1 x A4 cardboard wallet containing the site record sheets, site plans, copies of the CBCAO brief and the WSI, sundry papers, and a CD containing digital material including the site photographs.
- 1 x plastic bag containing the finds, taking up roughly a quarter of a museum box.

Acknowledgements

CAT is grateful to Knight Environmental Ltd for commissioning and funding the watching brief, and for their help on site. The work was monitored by Martin Winter, Colchester Borough Council Archaeological Officer.

Abbreviations and glossary

AOD	above Ordnance Survey datum point based on mean sea level at Newlyn, Cornwall
CAT	Colchester Archaeological Trust
CBC	Colchester Borough Council
CBCAO	Colchester Borough Council's Archaeological Officer
CIMS	Colchester and Ipswich Museums Service
context	specific location on an archaeological site, especially one where finds are made; usually a layer or a feature
feature	an identifiable context, such as a pit, a wall or a post-hole

lfa	Institute for Archaeologists
<i>imbrex</i>	curved Roman roof tile (plural <i>imbrices</i>)
modern	period from c 1850 onwards to the present
mortarium	Roman mixing bowl, with grit-roughened interior (plural <i>mortaria</i>)
natural	geological deposit undisturbed by human activity
NGR	National Grid Reference
post-medieval	period from c 1500 to c 1850
residual	finds that were deposited earlier than the context in which they were found
Roman	the period from AD 43 to c AD 410
RRCSAL	Reports of the Research Committee of the Society of Antiquaries of London
samian	glossy Roman fine reddish pottery, used mainly as tableware
<i>tegula</i>	flanged Roman roof tile (plural <i>tegulae</i>)
UAD	Urban Archaeological Database, maintained by Colchester and Ipswich Museums
U/S	unstratified, ie without a well-defined context
waster	pottery or other ceramic object damaged during manufacture and usually discarded

References

Note: all CAT reports (except DBAs) are available online in .pdf format at <http://cat.essex.ac.uk/>

CAR 9	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 and C Crossan
CAR 10	1991	<i>Colchester Archaeological Report 10: Roman pottery from excavations in Colchester, 1971-86</i> , by R P Symonds and S Wade, ed by P Bidwell and A Croom
CAT	2006	<i>Policies and procedures</i> (Colchester Archaeological Trust)
CAT	2008	Written Scheme of Investigation for archaeological attendance and recording (a watching brief) at Jarmin Road, Colchester, Essex, October 2008, by H Brooks
CAT Report 409		An archaeological evaluation at Jarmin Road, Colchester, Essex, January 2007, unpublished CAT archive report, by L Pooley, 2007
CBC	2008	<i>Brief for archaeological attendance and recording (a watching brief), Jarmin Road, Colchester, Essex</i> , by M Winter
CIMS	2008a	<i>Guidelines on standards and practice for archaeological fieldwork in the Borough of Colchester</i> (CBC)
CIMS	2008b	<i>Guidelines on the preparation and transfer of archaeological archives to Colchester and Ipswich Museums</i> (CBC)
<i>Col Arch 15</i>	2002	<i>The Colchester Archaeologist, 15</i> (Colchester Archaeological Trust)
Crummy, P	2001	<i>City of Victory: the story of Colchester - Britain's first Roman town</i>
EAA 3	1997	<i>Research and archaeology: a framework for the Eastern Counties 1. resource assessment</i> , East Anglian Archaeology, 3 , 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, 8 , ed by N Brown and J Glazebrook
EAA 14	2003	<i>Standards for field archaeology in the East of England</i> , East Anglian Archaeology, 14 , ed by D Gurney, ALGAO East
Hawkes, C F C & Hull, M R	1947	<i>Camulodunum, first report on the excavations at Colchester 1930-39</i> , RRCSAL, 14
Hull, M R	1958	<i>Roman Colchester</i> , RRCSAL, 20

Hull, M R	1963	<i>The Roman potters' kilns of Colchester</i> , RRCSAL, 21
IfA	2007	<i>Archaeological archives: a guide to best practice in creation, compilation, transfer and curation</i>
IfA	2008a	<i>Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief</i>
IfA	2008b	<i>Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials</i>
<i>Journ CAT 2</i>	2004	<i>Journal of the Colchester Archaeological Trust</i> , 2 , for the year 2002 (Colchester Archaeological Trust)
MoRPHE	2006	<i>Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment</i> (English Heritage)
Shimmin, D	forthcoming	CAT Report 322: Archaeological investigations at Turner Rise, Colchester, Essex, 1996-99

Appendix: list of finds by test-pit

All weights are in grammes. Roman pottery fabric codes follow those used in *CAR 10* (identifications by Stephen Benfield). The Cam vessel form number refers to the Camulodunum Roman pottery form type series (Hawkes & Hull 1947; Hull 1958). The samian sherds were catalogued using a Dragendorff (Dr) form number.

Table 1: finds list.

Test-pit	Context	Finds no	Qty	Description	Weight (g)	Comments
TP3	L4	3	1	Roman pot sherd	9	Fabric DJ, whitish body sherd
			1	<i>tegula</i> fragment	191	gritty reddish brown fabric, possible waster
			2	brick/tile fragments	77	probably Roman, one waster
TP4	L4	4	2	brick/tile fragments	145	probably Roman, one possible waster
TP5	L4	1	1	<i>tegula</i> fragment	394	
			2	brick/tile fragments	203	one probably Roman, other possible post-Roman brick fragment
			2	burnt daub fragments	108	both featureless
TP9	F1	2	5	Roman pot sherds	131	Fabric GB, Cam 38, sherd with rim and part of base; 2nd-3rd century; Fabric BA (EG), Dr 31, 2 joining rim sherds, mid-2nd to mid-3rd century; Fabric GX: body sherd; Fabric DJ, orange body sherd
			2	<i>imbrex</i> fragments	376	

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Fig 1 Site plan, showing the 2008 test-pits (TP1, TP3-TP11, TP13-TP15) in relation to the 2007 evaluation trenches (T1-T7; shown grey) and the demolished buildings.

Essex Historic Environment Record/ Essex Archaeology and History

Summary sheet

Site address: the former CBC depot, Jarmin Road, Colchester, Essex	
Parish: Colchester	District: Colchester
NGR: TL 9980 2595	Site codes: Museum accession - COLEM 2008.157 CAT project - 08/10a
Type of work: Watching brief	Site director/group: Colchester Archaeological Trust
Date of work: October 2008	Size of area investigated: 28 sq m
Location of finds/curating museum: Colchester and Ipswich Museums	Funding source: Developer
Further seasons anticipated? Yes	Related EHER and UAD nos: UAD nos 967, 3757
Final report: CAT Report 604 and summary in <i>EAH</i>	
Periods represented: Roman	
<p>Summary of fieldwork results: <i>An archaeological watching brief took place at the site of the former CBC depot at Jarmin Road in Colchester during the machine-excavation of a series of test-pits by the developer. Two probable Roman features were revealed in the south-western part of the site. There was a spread of fragments of burnt daub and Roman brick/tile across the site. These probably derive from a Roman tile kiln on or near the site. The natural subsoil was contaminated in places by leakages from underground fuel tanks.</i></p>	
Previous summaries/reports: CAT Report 409	
Keywords: burnt daub, Roman, tile, ditch	Significance: *
Author of summary: Donald Shimmin	Date of summary: October 2011