

**An archaeological evaluation on the site of a
proposed performing arts block, Colchester
Royal Grammar School, 6 Lexden Road,
Colchester, Essex
August 2012**



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**on behalf of
Colchester Royal Grammar School**

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1 Summary

Two evaluation trenches were excavated at the Colchester Royal Grammar School in August 2012, prior to the construction of a new performing arts block.

A north-west south-east orientated Roman road was uncovered at a depth of between 1.3m and 1.6m below modern ground level. The considerable depth of the Roman contexts in this area is attributed to the deposition of additional topsoil on the site within the past 80 years. The Roman road was first identified by A F Hall in the 1930's, with further excavations taking place on the site of the road in the 1950's. Two backfilled archaeological trenches from the 1950's excavations were identified. One of these trenches contained a dense concentration of Roman pottery, which was presumably discarded into the trench with the backfill.

A large quantity of Roman-period finds was recovered during the evaluation. One find of particular interest is a piece of worked fossiliferous limestone, which might be from Purbeck in Dorset and is from the outside of a building or monument, possibly a Roman tomb.

2 Introduction (Fig 1)

- 2.1 This is the archive report on an archaeological evaluation carried out by the Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) on behalf of the Colchester Royal Grammar School (CRGS), 6 Lexden Road, Colchester, Essex.
- 2.2 The site is located to the west of Colchester town centre, immediately adjacent to and south of Lexden Road and within the grounds of the Colchester Royal Grammar School (Fig 1). The site is situated within the walled boundary of the school and is currently flat, open, greensward surrounded by trees. Map evidence indicates that this has been the case for some 150 years when it apparently formed part of the rear garden of 12 Lexden Road. The site is centred at NGR TL 9868 2484.
- 2.3 The proposed site works includes the erection of a single storey, multi-purpose performance arts building comprising of a lecture room and a performance area connected by a large foyer area. The new building will have dimensions of approximately 16m x 21m.
- 2.4 A brief describing the required archaeological work (CBC 2012) was written by Mr Martin Winter, the Colchester Borough Council Archaeological Officer (CBCAO). In response to this brief, CAT produced a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) detailing the proposed excavation methodology, which was approved by the CBCAO (CAT 2012).
- 2.5 This report mirrors standards and practices contained in the Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and guidance for archaeological evaluation* (IfA 2008a) and *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (IfA 2008b), and Colchester Borough Council's *Guidelines on standards and practices for archaeological fieldwork in the Borough of Colchester* (CIMS 2008a) and *Guidelines on the preparation and transfer of archaeological archives to Colchester and Ipswich Museums* (CIMS 2008b). Other sources used are *Management of research projects in the historic environment* (MoRPHE) and *Standards for field archaeology in the East of England* (EAA 14).

3 Archaeological background (Fig 2)

The site is located within an extensive Roman cemetery area (Fig 2). Large parts of this area have been excavated since the mid 19th century. The grounds of the school were trenched in the 1930s-1950s by Mr A F Hall, an enthusiastic teacher at the school who discovered the course of the main Roman road to London and other roads of lesser importance and also confirmed that the area was an important focus of Roman funerary activity.

In the vicinity of the school, a number of Roman cremations, inhumations and tombstones have been discovered (Hull 1958). This includes the rectangular walled cemetery with its indications of high-status cremations and inhumations which lay

immediately north of and adjacent to the Roman road (Hall 1946). A full discussion of all cemetery areas can be found in *CAR 9*.

In 2005, CAT excavated the remains of a Roman temple-tomb 85m south-east of the proposed development site, ahead of the building of an extension for a science laboratory (CAT Report 345). CAT also conducted evaluation work and recording in 2010/11 during the construction of an extension to the sixth form block and a new building on the site of the former 'boarders hut' (CAT Reports 538 & 590).

4 Aim

The aim of the evaluation was to record the location, extent, date and character of any surviving archaeological remains within the area of the proposed development. This information will then enable an informed decision to be taken on the preservation or otherwise of any deposits and the need for further work and/or mitigation.

5 Results (Figs 2-5)

Two trial-trenches (T1 & T2) were excavated within the footprint of the proposed performing arts block. Both trenches were 1.2m wide and were carefully located between the tree root protection zones present in this area. T1 was 10m long and was positioned at a right angle to the Roman road known to partly lie beneath the proposed development site (Fig 2). T2 was 6m long and positioned on the south-western side of the Roman road.

Below the turf, there was a thick layer of dark grey-brown sandy loam topsoil containing modern materials such as plastic and roof slate (L1) (Fig 5). L1 overlay a similar topsoil layer which contained notably fewer inclusions than L1 and no modern materials (L2) (Fig 5). The two topsoil layers were present in both trenches and had a combined thickness of over 1m (Fig 5). Beneath L2, a slightly lighter soil containing frequent Roman finds directly overlay Roman contexts (L3) (Fig 5- T1). It is worthy of note that it was not possible to clean or closely examine large areas of the trenches due to the health and safety implications of their considerable depth. As a result, all recording was undertaken from the top of the trenches. Similarly, most of the finds recovered were collected from the upcast soil during the excavation of the trenches with the mechanical excavator. A significant quantity of Roman finds were recovered from L2 and L3 in both trenches (see section 6).

The north-west south-east orientated Roman road which was projected to cross the development area was uncovered in the north-eastern end of T1 (F1) (Fig 3). The road was constructed of compacted gravel and was relatively flat and smooth (Fig 5). The uppermost surface of the road was located at a depth of between 1.3m and 1.6m below modern ground level and was covered in a 20mm thick layer of pea grit. Near the south-western edge of the road, the compacted gravel appeared to have been cut by a ditch on a parallel alignment with the road (F2). A significant quantity of Roman finds, including numerous animal bones, was recovered from the upper fill of F2. To the south-west of the Roman road, a light yellow/brown sandy silt containing mortar, oyster shell and charcoal inclusions (L4) was identified at the same depth as the Roman road (Fig 5). This distinctive layer was encountered in both trenches at a similar depth (c 1.3 below modern ground level). Three sondages were excavated into L4 with the mechanical excavator (Fig 3). The sondages in the south-western end of T1 and the north-western end of T2 were excavated to a depth of 2m and 1.8m below modern ground level respectively. L4 was found to continue below these depths in both sondages (Fig 5). The finds recovered from L4 were all retrieved from the upcast soil and therefore may also have derived from the overlying soil layer L3 (see section 6).

During the excavation of T2, the top of a backfilled trench was encountered c 300mm below modern ground level (F3) (Figs 3 & 5). F3 had been backfilled with a mixture of topsoil and a light coloured soil containing frequent Roman finds and inclusions comparable to L4. F3 had vertical sides and continued below a depth of 1.5m below modern ground level (Fig 5). To the north-west of F3, a dense

concentration of finds, almost all of which were Roman pottery sherds, was encountered (F4) (Figs 3 & 5). Most of the pottery was located beyond the southern limit of excavation, but two large bags were recovered as a sample (see section 6).

6 Finds

by Stephen Benfield

A significant quantity of bulk finds of Roman date and a small number of post-medieval and modern finds were recovered. A large quantity of Roman pottery was recovered from one feature (F4) and is the main finds type among what appears to be a dump of finds discarded from a previous archaeological excavation (CAR 9, 262-63).

The finds have been quantified by count and total weight for each finds category. All of the finds (apart from those from F4) are listed in Table 2 together with a finds spot date for each context. Because of the significantly larger quantity and apparent unusual circumstances of the pottery recovered from F4, the finds from this pit are listed separately and the pottery is listed in Table 3.

The pottery fabrics have been noted and vessel forms recorded by fabric. The Roman pottery fabrics used in this report refer to the Colchester Roman pottery fabric series (CAR 10). Vessel forms to the Colchester Camulodunum (Cam) pottery type series (Hawkes & Hull 1947 & Hull 1958). The post-Roman pottery was recorded with reference to the Colchester post-Roman fabric series (CAR 7). It should be noted that post-Roman Fabric 45 is generic for all German stonewares not identified to a specific production source. The pottery fabrics recorded are listed in Table 1 below. Potters' stamps and other pottery of specific interest has also been noted. Descriptions of lower cut aways (LCA) on Roman *tegulae* tiles refer to Warry (2006).

Table 1: Roman and post-Roman pottery fabrics.

Fabric	Description
<i>Roman:</i>	
AA	amphorae, all (excluding Dressel 20 and Brockley Hill/Verulamium region amphorae)
AJ	amphorae (Dressel 20)
BA(SG)	South Gaulish plain samian
BA(MV)	Les Martres-de-Veyre plain samian
BA(CG)	Central Gaulish plain samian
BA(EG)	East Gaulish plain samian
CB	Colchester red colour-coated, roughcast ware
CH	oxidised Hadham ware
CZ	Colchester and other red colour-coated ware
DJ	coarse oxidised and related wares
DZ	fine oxidised wares
EC	early Colchester colour-coated ware
GA	BB1: black burnished ware, category 1
GB	BB2: black burnished ware, category 2
GP	fine grey wares (Colchester, London-type and north Kent wares)
GX	other coarse wares, principally locally-produced grey wares
HZ	large storage jars and other vessels in heavily-tempered grey wares
KX	black burnished ware (BB2) types in pale grey ware
MQ	white-slipped fine wares and parchment wares
TZ	mortaria, Colchester and mortaria imported from the continent
WA	silvery micaceous grey wares
UR	<i>terra nigra</i> -type wares (local/regional products)
UX	Romano-Saxon grey ware and types in similar fabric
<i>Post-Roman:</i>	
51B	Flowerpot

Finds from contexts L2/L3, L3/L4, F2 and F3.

The finds from these contexts are listed together in Table 2. Brick and tile is listed as ceramic building material (CBM). Finds of intrinsic interest are described more fully below.

Table 2: List of finds from the excavated trenches.

ctxt	finds no	finds	spot date
T1 L2/3	1	Pottery Roman 2@ 156 g; Fabric CH, beaker base (L3-4C); Fabric DJ, base Cam 207/296 (M1-2/E3C). CBM Roman 2@ 305 g, brick/tile base, probably a <i>tegula</i> ; <i>tessera</i> cube (slightly irregular, no trace of mortar). Animal bone 12@ 596 g medium(?) & large mammal, includes cattle horn cores pieces which have been sawn through and split.	Roman L3/E4C+
T1 F2/ L3	2	Pottery Roman 8@ 1274 g; Fabric AJ, Dressel 20 (M1-2C); Fabric DJ; Fabric CH(?) large part of a hooked lid (<i>CAR 10</i> , CH Type 91) (dated late 3rd-4th century), earliest occurrence from an excavated context recorded in <i>CAR 10</i> is from Period Ending Group 14 (c AD 275-300) and 3 examples recorded from the Colchester 'Mithraeum' deposit dated to the 4th/mid 4th century (Going 1987, 119-120); Fabric GB, Cam 37B (L2-M3C); Fabric GX (Roman); Fabric HZ, Cam 273 (L1-2C); Fabric TZ, mortarium flange, Cam 497 (rounded wall sided) (2-?3C). CBM Roman 3@ 117 g, <i>tegula</i> , cream/ very pale grey fabric, unusually small flange, base thickness 20 mm, brick, <i>tessera</i> cube (used in a floor as white mortar on base). Stone 1@ 1482 g, appears to be greensand (dated to E2C+). Animal bone 31@ 665 g medium mammal (pig) & large mammal (cow, horse).	Roman L3/E4C+
T1 L3/4	3	Pottery Roman 11@ 1576 g; Fabric AA, Dressel 2-4 handle (M1-E2C); Fabric AJ, Dressel 20 (M1-2C); Fabric BA(MV) Dr 18/31 (E2C); Fabric BA(CG) (2C); Fabric GB Cam 37B (L2-M3C); Fabric GX (Roman); Fabric HZ (M1-2/3C); Fabric TZ Cam 497 variant, spot and stamp MESSOR (stamp S1 below) (c. 140-170 AD). CBM Roman 8@ 3539 g, <i>tegula</i> , includes LCA (Warry Type A) and cream fabric <i>tegula</i> (base thickness 22-28 mm), <i>imbrex</i> , brick, includes corner from a small tile 35 mm thick, probably a <i>bessalis</i> or <i>pedallis</i> hypocaust tile. Animal bone 1@ 25 g medium/large mammal.	Roman L2C+
T2 L2/4	4	Pottery Roman 15@ 1968 g; Fabric AJ, Dressel 20 (M1-2C); Fabric DJ; Fabric GB Cam 37; Fabric GX Cam 268 (M2-E4C); Fabric HZ, Cam 273 (M/L1-2C); Fabric MQ, jar with frilled rim; Fabric TZ; Fabric WA, body sherd with burnished spiral pattern, this unusual pattern is previously recorded on a near complete pot from the 'Mithraeum' deposit at Colchester (Hull 1958, fig. 65 no. 64) dated to the 4th/mid 4th century (Going 1987, 119-120) although the pot here need not necessarily date that late. CBM Roman 5@ 1734 g, <i>tegula</i> , includes LCA (probably Warry Type C5); <i>imbrex</i> , includes cream fabric <i>imbrex</i> (thickness 20 mm). Glass Roman 1@ 8 g, top of a handle from a bottle or flask in blue green glass. Stone 1@ 1190 g, appears to be greensand (dated to E2C+). Animal bone 2@ 165 g large mammal.	Roman M2C+
T2 L2/4	6	Pottery Roman 33@ 2922 g; Fabric AJ, Dressel 20; Fabric BA(SG) Dr 27g (M-L1C); Fabric BA(MV) Dr 18/31, stamp ROPPV (stamp S1 below) (dated E2C); Dr 36 (E-M2C) this form is more common in the later 2nd century onwards but emerges in the Hadrianic period (Webster 1999); Fabric	Roman L2C+

ctxt	finds no	finds	spot date
		BA(EG) Trier fabric (M2-M3C); Fabric KX Cam 279 jar (M2-M3C); Fabric GX narrow necked jar and misc other sherds (Roman); Fabric TZ, mortaria base (large sherd). CBM Roman 6@ 720 g, <i>tegula</i> , includes LCA (Warry Type C5), <i>imbrex</i> . Animal bone 3@ 101 g medium(?) & large mammal.	
T2 F3	7	Pottery Roman 5@ 92 g; Fabric AJ, Dressel 20 (M1-2C); Fabric GB, Cam 37? (M2-M3C); Fabric GX (Roman). CBM Roman 1@ 138 g, <i>tegula</i> . Animal bone 8@ 126 g medium & large mammal. Shell 1@ 5 g, oyster.	
T1 L2/3	8	Worked stone 1@ 7,000 g, banded shelly limestone (described separately). Stone 1@ 2,500 g, appears to be greensand, some pale brown mortar adhering to part of the surface so has been used as a building stone (dated to E2C+). 1@ 3,750 g, irregular lump of unidentified limestone. 1@ 6,000g, irregular lump of septaria	

Stamps on pottery

Samian

S1 **ROPPV** Roppus ii dated AD 110-135? (Hartley & Dickinson 2011 Vol. 7, 404-405). (CAR 10 S573 - 4). Partial stamp, end broken away, central in dish of from Dr 18/31. Fabric BA(MV) L3/4(6).

Mortaria

S2 **MES.SOR** Messor (Hull 1963, fig 60 no.18) c. 140-170 (CAR 10 201, S66). Complete stamp on flange of mortaria (Cam 497 variant), located to left of the spout. Fabric TZ L3/4(3)

Worked stone (Plate 1).

A worked, architectural piece of banded fossiliferous limestone (weight approximately 7000g) was recovered from L2/3. The stone appears pale yellow buff to pale green-grey in colour. The maximum dimensions are: length 260mm, width 180mm, thickness 130mm.

The piece is approximately triangular in plan (viewed from above) and appears to be part of a stone-built corner from a building or monument. All of the surfaces had probably originally been worked to a smooth finish. The two shorted sides are now slightly rough and uneven with protruding bands. This effect appears to have been caused by differential weathering of the different layers (beds) contained within the stone. The other faces are smooth and unweathered, or not obviously so. The underside(?) has shallow, spaced-tool pecking. One corner has a half-round moulding with one edge flush with one of the converging faces. Another corner has a smaller half-round moulding partly formed by a slight off-set with the long back(?) edge and flush with the other face. These presumably form part of small, decorative pilasters.

The stone is not securely dated. Two pieces of worked architectural stone dated as medieval were recovered close by during an archaeological watching (CAT Report 590, 14). However, both are of different stone to that of the piece here, although one is a shelly limestone. The fossiliferous limestone piece suggests a possible Purbeck (Dorset) origin and stone from this source is known to have been imported into Colchester from the Roman period onwards. Also architectural funerary monuments (as well as tombstones and a walled cemetery) are known from this area of the Roman extramural cemeteries (Hull 1958, 253-254 & CAT Report 345) so that a Roman date may be possible.



Plate 1: Architectural worked stone.

Finds from F4

A total of 491 sherds of pottery with a total weight of 13,000 g (average sherd weight 26 g) was recovered from F4 in T2. This pottery is listed by fabric in Table 3. Apart from one sherd from a the base of a modern flowerpot (Fabric 53), all of the pottery is Roman. Body sherds make up 64% of the total, base sherds are 17% and rim sherds 19%.

Table 3: Pottery from pit F4 (T2) by fabric.

Fabric	body sherds no.	base sherds no.	rim sherds no.	sherd total	Forms recorded
AA	1			1	Cam 184 (handle) (M1-M2C)
AJ	24		2	26	Dressel 20 (rim dated L1-E2C), (rim dated L1-M/L2C)
BA(MV)	1			1	Dr 27 (fabric dated E2C)
BA(CG)	6		1	7	Dr 18/31 (E-M2C), Dr 33 (in this fabric dated E/M2-L2C)
CB	8			8	folded beaker (fabric dated E/M2-M3C)
CH	2	3		5	(fabric dated L3-4C)
CZ	10	4		14	folded beaker (fabric date E/M2-M3C)
DJ	78	18	7	103	Cam 140 (M-L1C), Cam 154 (M-L1C), Cam 155 (expanded top ring) (E-M2C), Cam 326 (M-L1C), also 2 lids
DZ	1			1	<i>terra-rubra</i> beaker sherd (fabric dated L1C BC- M1C AD)
EC	3			3	orange-brown slip, some roughcast (fabric dated M-L1C)
GA			1	1	Cam 39 (M2-4C)
GB	23	5	11	39	Cam 37/38, Cam 37B(?), Cam 40A, Cam 40B, Cam 278 (fabric dated E/M2-M/L3C)

Fabric	body sherds no.	base sherds no.	rim sherds no.	sherd total	Forms recorded
GP	1	2	3	6	Cam 122/123 (L1-2C)
GX	115	40	51	206	Cam 108, Cam 117, Cam 119, Cam 231-232, Cam 243-144/246, Cam 266, Cam 268, Cam 280-281, Cam 299(?) also 3 lids (note many rim sherds not possible to closely identify to form type) (the date range of the recorded forms spans the Roman period, although early-mid Roman form types appear to be more strongly represented)
HZ	33	4	8	45	Cam 271, Cam 270B, Cam 273 (date range forms recorded in this fabric type M1-2/3C)
KX	2	2	9	13	Cam 37A, Cam 37/38, Cam 37B, Cam 278 (date range forms recorded in this fabric type E/M2-3C)
MQ	2			2	1 sherd, red, sandy with cream slip, 1 sherd buff with brown painted line (dated Roman)
ON	3			3	(fabric dated M1-2C)
TZ	2	1		3	includes curved wall sided flange sherd (dated E2-L2C)
UR		2		2	Base sherds from 2 platters, probably local manufacture, one with fragment of block edge from a potters' stamp (Dated m-L1C)
UX	1			1	Fabric UX(A), micaceous (fine mica) (possibly late Roman but not closely dated)
53		1		1	red, sandy post-medieval/modern flowerpot base
Total	316	82	93	491	

In addition to the pottery a small quantity of other bulk finds was recovered from F4. These are listed below.

Briquetage 3@ 355 g (dated 1-2C); **CBM Roman** 19@ 1376 g *tegula* (1 piece with animal hoof print), *imbrex* (1 piece in buff fabric), corner/edge piece possibly from a flue tile, misc small and abraded pieces of brick/tile; **Glass** small piece of window glass 1@ 2 g (dated modern); **Stone** small piece of roofing slate 1@ 2 g (dated modern); **Misc. Slag:** (83 g) 3 pieces of black coke, 1 small piece of slag; 2 small pieces of light slag/clinker; **Animal bone** 21@ 396 g medium(?) and large mammal, where identifiable mostly cow bone; **Shell** oyster shell 4@ 72 g.

Finds discussion

Almost all of the closely-dated finds can be dated to the Roman period with just a few pieces from one context (F4) which can be dated to the post-medieval or modern period. There is no indication from the finds assemblage of any activity prior to the Roman period.

The closely-dated Roman finds consist of pottery sherds. While some of the early Roman pottery cannot be more closely dated than 1st-early 2nd century, several sherds, especially from the assemblage from (F4), are pre-Flavian or are probably so; notably early Colchester colour-coated ware (Fabric EC), a sherd from a *terra rubra* beaker (Fabric DZ) and sherds from two Gallo-Belgic style platters (Fabric UR) one of which has fragment from a potters' stamp. A Cam 154 flagon is also likely to be Claudio-Neronian date. Of note is the top of a handle from a 'Rhodian type' amphora, which although produced into the 2nd century appears particularly associated with Roman military sites (Tyres 1999, 93).

The majority of the pottery can be dated to the period of the later 1st-mid 3rd century, suggesting that most activity took place during that time. This is true of the pottery from all the contexts including the pit F4. While one piece of samian (L3/4(6)) is of 1st century date (Fabric BA(SG)), the other pieces are either from Les Martres (Fabric BA(MV)) and of early 2nd century date or are typical of Lezoux (Fabric BA(CG)) dated to the 2nd century. There is one sherd from a Dr. 38 bowl which appears to be in Les Martres fabric. This form is generally typical of the later 2nd century but was among the repertoire of forms produced from the early 2nd century and appears to be an early example (Webster 1996, 51). There are also a significant number of black burnished ware (BB2) sherds (Fabric GB) which can be dated to the 2nd-3rd century. Almost all are from F4. None of the black burnished wares (Fabric GB & Fabric GA) or black burnished ware types in greyware (Fabric KX) can be closely dated to the late Roman period (late 3rd-4th century). The two potters' stamps recorded, one from a samian bowl (S1) and one from a mortarium (S2), also date to the period of the 2nd century and 2nd-3rd century respectively.

Pottery which can be closely dated to the late Roman period (late 3rd-4th century) is much less in evidence and is only a small part of the assemblage. It consists entirely of a small number of sherds of oxidised Hadham ware (Fabric CH) which appears at Colchester from the late 3rd century. With these is a hook-rim lid (F2(2)) of a distinct type which it has been suggested are a Hadham product (*CAR 10*, CH Type 91) and which can be dated to the late 3rd-4th century. A body sherd in Fabric UX from F4 might date to the late Roman period, but possibly dates earlier.

Overall the date pattern of the Roman pottery is similar to that recovered from a nearby watching brief (CAT Report 590, 10-11) although for the late Roman period the range of pottery in terms of fabric types was greater among the watching brief assemblage. Also, the near absence of post-Roman finds reflects the small quantity of post-Roman finds was recovered from the watching brief (CAT Report 590, 12 & 14).

Many of the Roman pottery vessels (represented by the sherds) are serving dishes/bowls, drinking vessels and flagons, suggest that at least part of the assemblage may be related to the transport, preparation and consumption of food and drink. This is possibly associated with burial rites carried out in this cemetery area. Some may be parts of vessels disturbed from Roman burials.

The pottery recovered from F4 is of some interest as it appears probable that it represents a large dump deposit of discarded sherds (together with a few other finds) from an earlier archaeological excavation here. Both the physical stratigraphic location and the presence of a few, small, finds of modern date indicate the context is probably modern (assuming the modern finds are not intrusive). Not all of the pottery in the pit was recovered as it lay mostly outside of the trench. The pottery was rapidly quantified by fabric, form and by sherd type (body, base, rim) too see if there appeared to be any particular discard bias toward greywares or toward base and body sherds; however, no clear bias is apparent. The proportions of the dated pottery from F4 (in terms of the early, middle and late Roman periods) is similar to the overall assemblage from the other contexts (also mostly residual assemblages), although pottery which can be dated to the pre-Flavian period is only apparent in the larger collection of sherds from F4. It can be noted that there are no potters' stamps, no decorated samian among the sherds from F4; although it should be noted that none of the other contexts produced any decorated samian.

Of note among the other finds are a few pieces of briquetage from salt containers which are probably of 1st-2nd century date and the piece of architectural worked stone (L2/L3). It can be noted that one of several pieces of stone recovered from L2/L3 has mortar on one side indicating it had been used in building. This stone appears to be greensand from Kent (Kentish ragstone) which was probably first imported in any quantity when the Roman circus was built, probably in the 2nd century (Crummy 2008, 28).

7 Discussion (Figs 1,2 & 4)

The evaluation has shown that the surviving Roman deposits within the proposed development area are located at a depth of between 1.3m and 1.6m below modern ground level. The considerable depth of the Roman deposits is largely attributable to a thick layer of imported topsoil which covers the evaluation area. This topsoil probably originates from the construction of a nearby building or from the previous archaeological excavations which took place in this area (see below). The presence of additional topsoil also explains the noticeable rise in the ground level from the area of car parking to the north (Fig 4) up to the evaluation site.

Two Roman contexts were identified during the evaluation, a road (F1) and an accumulation layer (L4). Both contexts were overlaid by a buried topsoil (L2 or L3) which can be described as a cultivated post-Roman soil or 'dark earth'.

The north-west south-east orientated road was first identified in the 1930's. Following the acquisition of Gurney Benham House in 1934 (Fig 1), A F Hall excavated a series of exploratory trenches in which he discovered the main east-west orientated road and the smaller north-west south-east orientated road which was uncovered during this evaluation (Fig 2) (Hull 1958, 4). A section drawing showing the profile of the north-west south-east orientated road c 5m to the north-west of T1 is illustrated in Hull's Roman Colchester (1958, Fig 2 (iv)). This drawing shows the road to be 6.8m wide and covered by 0.75m of topsoil in the north and 0.5m in the south. This confirms that c 0.8m of the current overlying topsoil was deposited over the area after the excavations in the 1930's. The natural sand and gravel is located a further 0.95m below the top of the road in the north and 0.7m in the south, roughly 2.2m below the modern ground level. If any Roman burials survive within the development area, it would be expected that they would be located below the depth of the road surface, and perhaps even cut into the natural sand and gravel.

The section drawing does not show an outlying strip of gravel or roadside ditch which would correspond with the findings in T1. However, the southern edge of the road as it is plotted in Roman Colchester (Hull, 1958, 8) is close to the edge of the outlying strip of gravel identified in T1 (Fig 4), perhaps suggesting that F2 is a later feature which cuts the road surface.

Further archaeological excavations were carried out on the site of the road in the early 1950's by Mr Chittendon, a grammar school schoolmaster. The archaeological trenches from this excavation are included in a Figure 4 along with the results of this evaluation. It is clear on the figure that the feature F3 is a backfilled archaeological trench from the 1950's excavations (Fig 4). The pottery concentration F4 is also located within the area of a second archaeological trench to the north-west (Fig 4). Therefore, the finds from F4 are presumed to be the unwanted material from the excavation of the trench which were subsequently discarded during its backfilling.

A large quantity of Roman-period finds was recovered during the evaluation. Much of the pottery is of types which occur in burials or are associated with burial rites carried out in a cemetery area. The majority of the closely-datable pottery sherds can be dated to the period of the later 1st-mid 3rd century, suggesting that most activity on the site took place during that time. One find of particular interest is a piece of worked fossiliferous limestone, which might be from Purbeck in Dorset and is from the outside of a building or monument, possibly a Roman tomb.

8 Archive deposition

The paper and digital archive is held by the Colchester Archaeological Trust at Roman Circus House, off Circular Road North, Colchester, Essex CO2 7GZ, but it will be permanently deposited with Colchester and Ipswich Museums under the accession code COLEM 2012.44.

9 Acknowledgements

The Trust would like to thank Ben Downie of Inkpen Downie Architecture & Design Ltd for commissioning the evaluation and CRGS for funding it.

The fieldwork was conducted by Adam Wightman assisted by Emma Spurgeon and the project was monitored by Martin Winter on behalf of Colchester Borough Council. The section drawings were by Emma Spurgeon.

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

- | | | |
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11 Glossary

CBM	ceramic building material
CIMS	Colchester and Ipswich Museums
context	specific location on an archaeological site, especially one where finds are made, usually a layer or a feature
EHER	Essex Historic Environment Record, held by the ECC
feature	an identifiable thing like a pit, a wall, a drain, a floor; can contain 'contexts'
IfA	Institute for Archaeologists
<i>imbrex</i>	(plural <i>imbrices</i>) curved Roman roof tile placed over the junction between two <i>tegulae</i>
layer	distinct or distinguishable deposit of soil
modern	period from the 19th century onwards to the present
natural	geological deposit undisturbed by human activity
NGR	National Grid Reference
peg-tile	rectangular roof tile of medieval or later date
post-medieval	after Henry VIII to around the late 18th century
Roman	the period from AD 43 to AD 410, approximately
RRC SAL	Report of the Research Committee of the Society of Antiquaries of London
sondage	a small test excavation to examine the stratigraphy of a site, often a deeper investigation of a small part of a larger trench
<i>tegula</i>	(plural <i>tegulae</i>) flat Roman roof tile with edge flanges, which were covered by <i>imbrices</i>

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Distribution list:

Colchester Royal Grammar School
Martin Winter, Colchester Borough Council
Essex Historic Environment Record, Essex County Council



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Checked by: Philip Crummy
Date: 07/09/2012

12 Appendix: contents of archive

One A4 document wallet containing;

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Copy of the evaluation brief issued by the CBCAO
- 1.2 Copy of the WSI produced by CAT
- 1.3 Risk assessment

2 Site archive

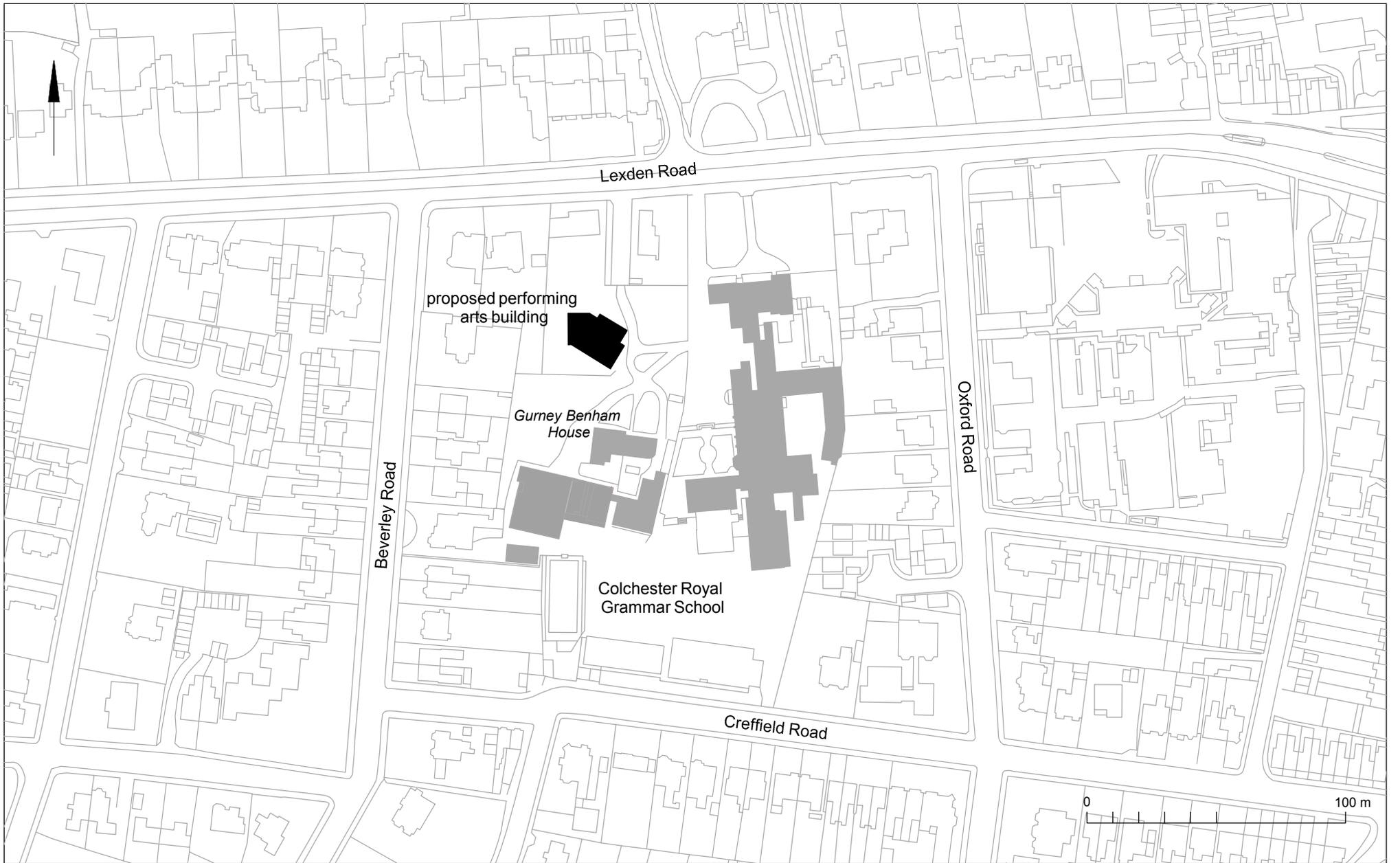
- 2.1 Digital photo. record
- 2.2 Attendance register
- 2.3 Context sheets (F1-F4, L1-L4)
- 2.4 Finds register
- 2.5 Site photographic record on CD

3 Research archive

- 3.1 Monitoring (client) report
- 3.2 Finds report

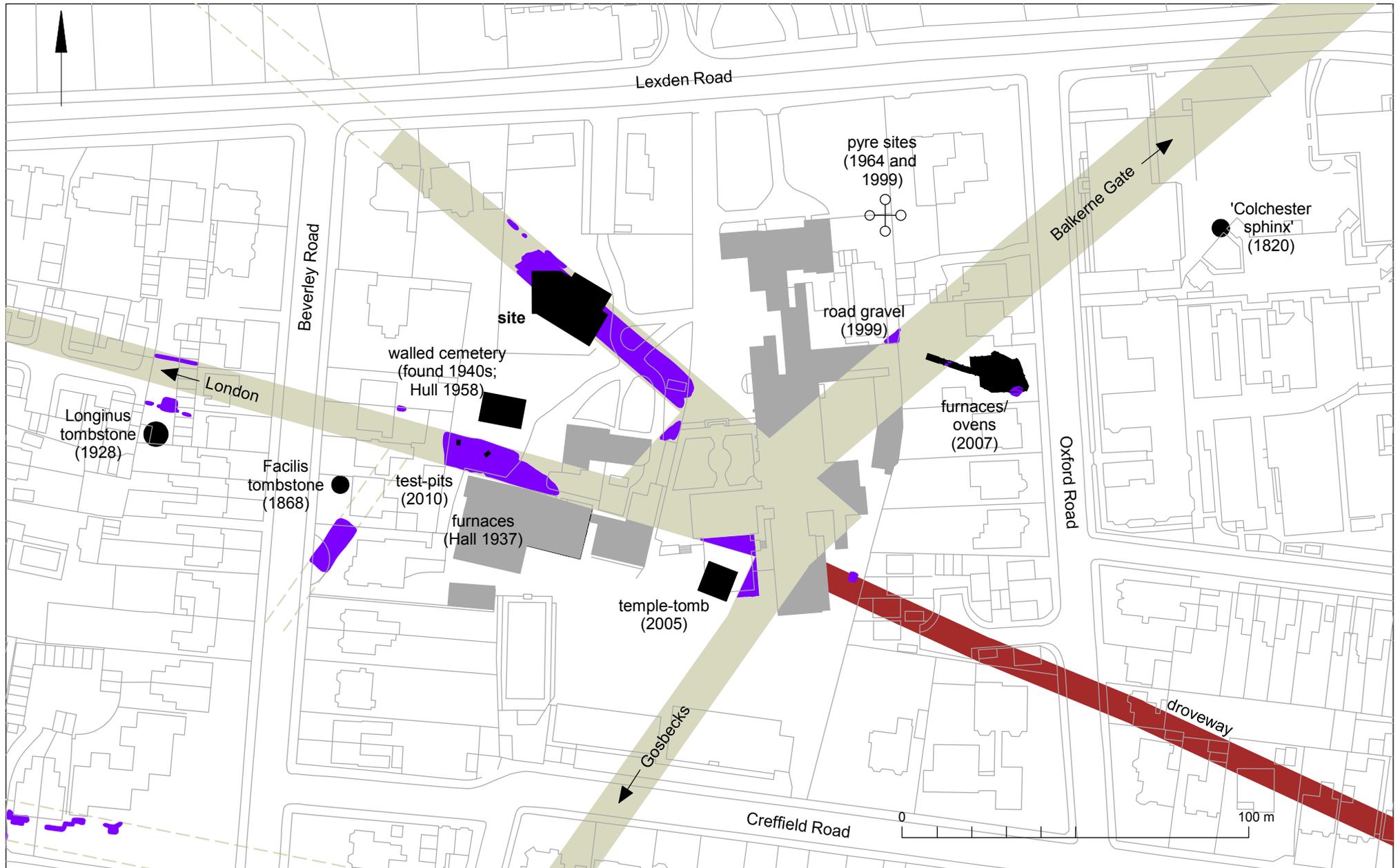
Not in wallet

The finds (these occupy 3 museum boxes)
3 x A3 Sx drawing sheets



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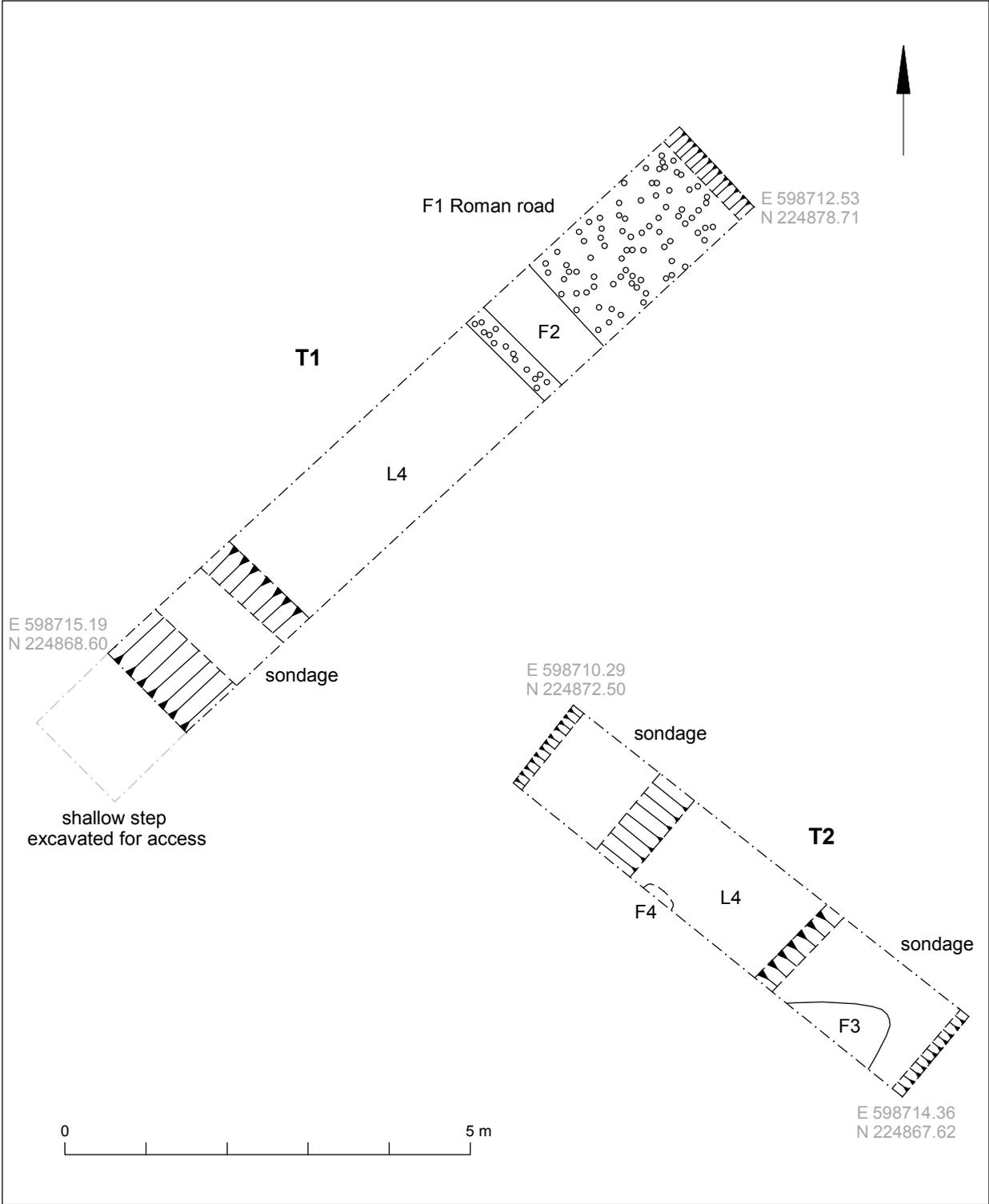
Fig 1 Site location (CRGS buildings are shown as light tone).



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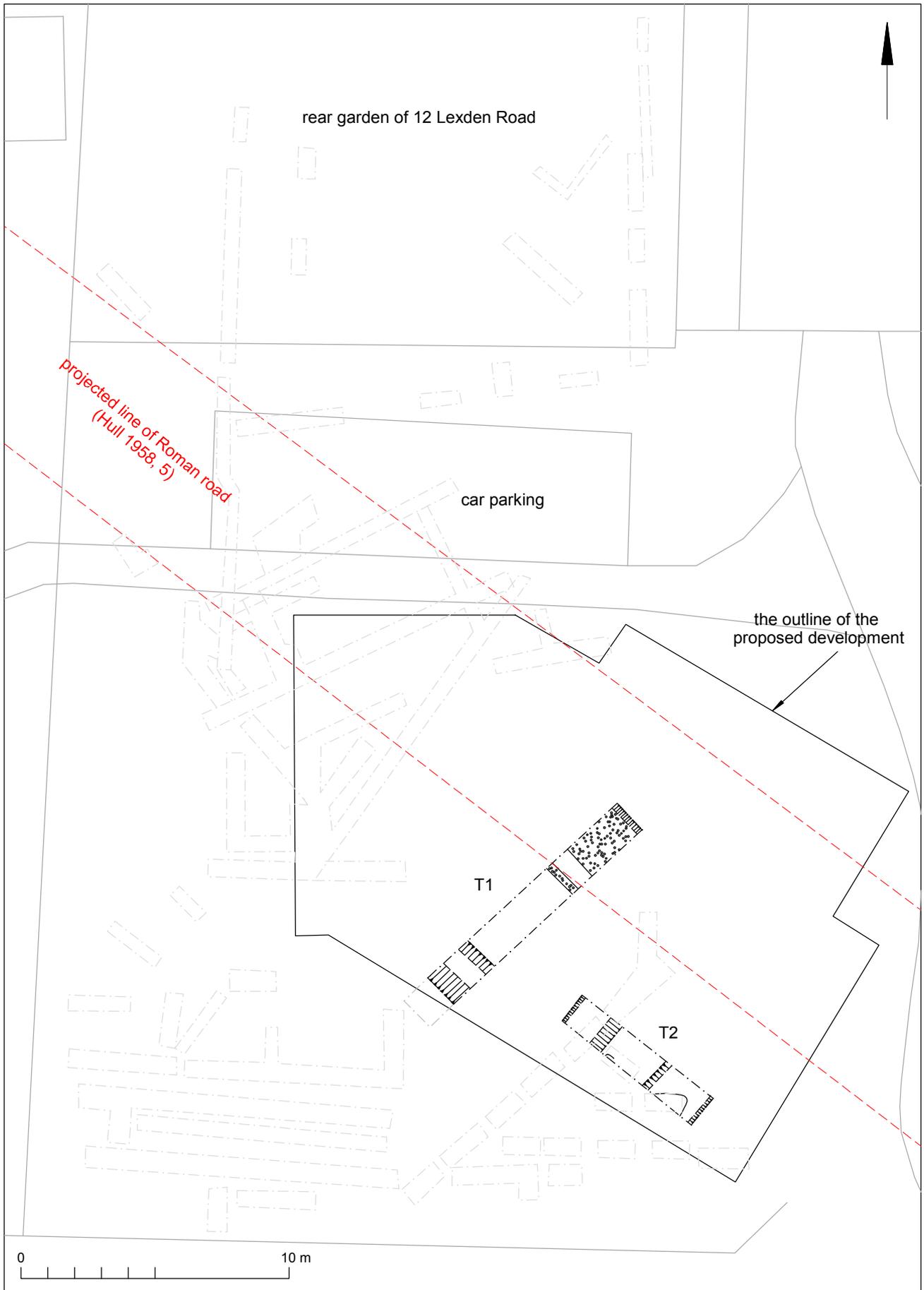
Fig 2 Site location in relation to previous discoveries of Roman roads and funerary monuments.

Key: ■ projected driveway ■ school buildings ■ observed gravel ■ key sites ■ projected roads



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Fig 3 Evaluation results.



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Fig 4 Site plan showing the evaluation trenches in relation to the proposed development, the archaeological trenches excavated in the 1950's (shown in light grey) and the projected line of the Roman road.

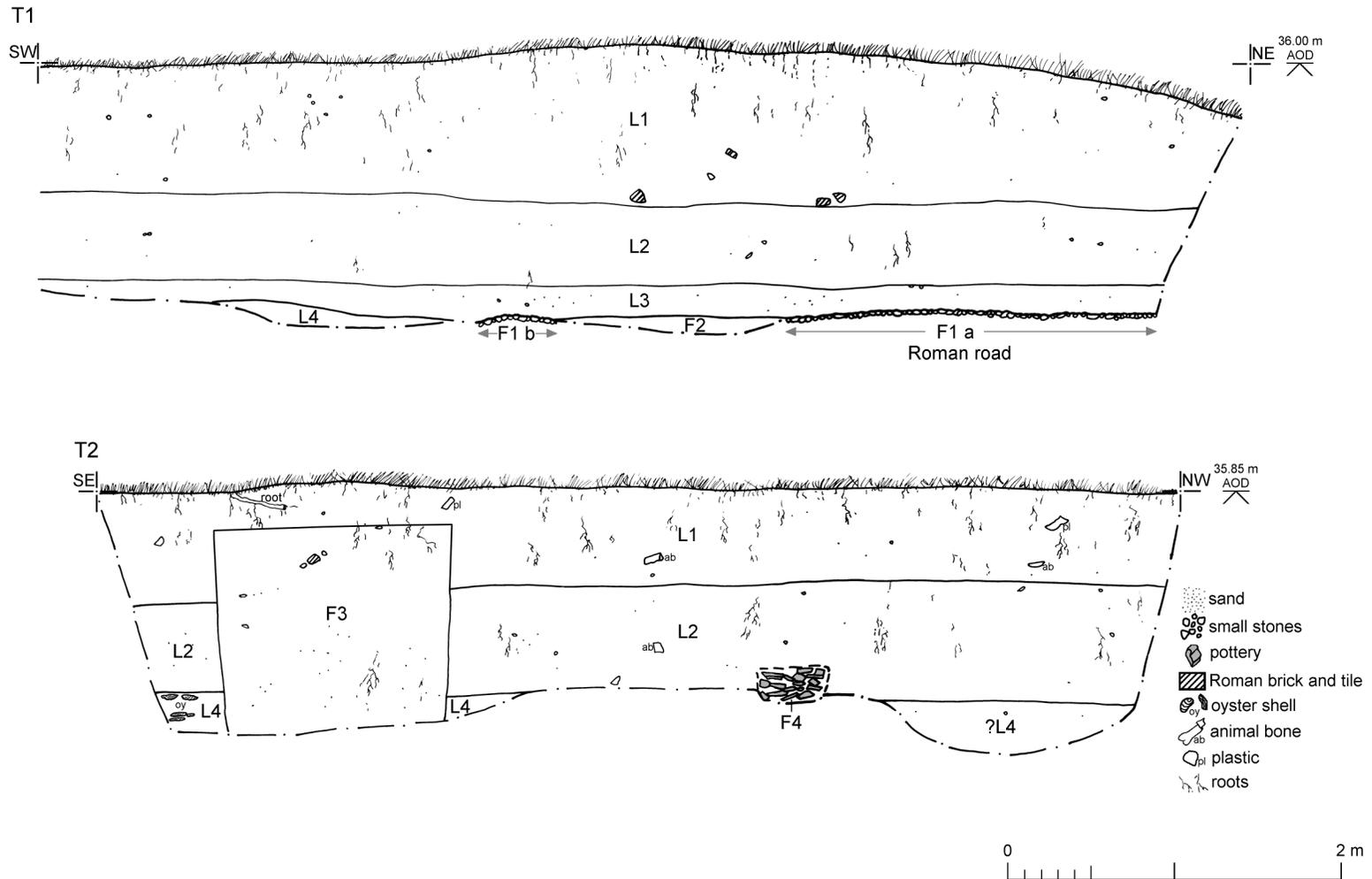


Fig 5 T1-2: Sections.

Essex Historic Environment Record/ Essex Archaeology and History

Summary sheet

Address: The site of a proposed performing arts block, Colchester Royal Grammar School, 6 Lexden Road, Colchester, Essex.	
Parish: Colchester	District: Colchester
NGR: TL 9868 2484 (c)	Site codes: CAT project code - 12/07e
Type of work: Evaluation	Site director/group: Colchester Archaeological Trust
Date of work: 17th August 2012	Size of area investigated: T1- 10m x 1.2m T2- 6m x 1.2m
Location of curating museum: Colchester and Ipswich Museums accession: COLIM 2012.44	Funding source: Developer
Further seasons anticipated? Maybe	Related UAD numbers:
Final report:	CAT Report 662 and summary in <i>EAH</i>
Periods represented:	Roman, modern
<p>Summary: <i>Two evaluation trenches were excavated at the Colchester Royal Grammar School in August 2012, prior to the construction of a new performing arts block.</i> <i>A north-west south-east orientated Roman road was uncovered at a depth of between 1.3m and 1.6m below modern ground level. The considerable depth of the Roman contexts in this area is attributed to the deposition of additional topsoil on the site within the past 80 years. The Roman road was first identified by A F Hall in the 1930's, with further excavations taking place on the site of the road in the 1950's. Two backfilled archaeological trenches from the 1950's excavations were identified. One of these trenches contained a dense concentration of Roman pottery, which was presumably discarded into the trench with the backfill.</i> <i>A large quantity of Roman-period finds was recovered during the evaluation. One find of particular interest is a piece of worked fossiliferous limestone, which might be from Purbeck in Dorset and is from the outside of a building or monument, possibly a Roman tomb.</i></p>	
Previous summaries/reports: CAT Reports 338 & 590	
Keywords: Roman road, previous archaeological excavations	Significance: *
Author of summary: Adam Wightman	Date of summary: August 2012