

**Archaeological evaluation at
Building H11, Colchester Garrison Area A1
(former Meeanee & Hyderabad Barracks),
Mersea Road, Colchester, Essex**

October 2013



**report prepared by
Ben Holloway and Howard Brooks**

**on behalf of
Taylor Wimpey**

CAT project ref: 13/10a
Colchester & Ipswich Museums accession: COLEM 2011.12
NGR: TM 0016 2436 (c)



Colchester Archaeological Trust
Roman Circus House,
Off Circular Road North,
Colchester,
Essex CO2 7GZ

tel.: 07436273304
email: archaeologists@catuk.org

CAT Report 731
October 2013

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1 Summary

An evaluation by one 36m-long trench in the footprint of the recently-demolished Regimental Institute in the former Meeanee & Hyderabad Barracks at Colchester Garrison revealed three tree-throw pits, modern footings and modern service runs, but nothing of archaeological significance.

2 Introduction (Figs 1-2)

- 2.1 This is the report on archaeological evaluation at the former Hyderabad Barracks, Mersea Road, Colchester (Taylor Wimpey land parcel A1). This took the form of a single trench located within the footprint of recently-demolished Building H11.
- 2.2 The wider Area A1 (c 13.39ha) land parcel has previously been evaluated and mitigated by Colchester Archaeological Trust under the management of RPS (CAT Report 628 forthcoming), following transfer of ownership from the MoD to Taylor Wimpey. Building H11, on the north side of the new 'Roberts Road' (which connects Mersea Road to Military Road) was not previously subject to archaeological works. However, due to fire damage in the intervening period CBC have now agreed to the demolition of the damaged structure and new build on its former location.
- 2.3 The previous archaeological works comprised 'Stage 1b' archaeological evaluations, undertaken in 2002 and 2010. Stage 1a trenching took place in 2002 for outline planning, and comprised 19 trenches providing a 0.39% sample (533m²) within available grassed and tarmac areas (CAT report 206, August 2002). To achieve the required 3% sample for full planning a further 2.61% - 3,495m² (1,942m linear of 1.8m wide) trenching was undertaken during the early stages of the demolition contract in 2010. These evaluations identified a series of significant areas of archaeology and led to CBC requirements for a subsequent series of 'Stage 2' mitigation excavations, with a combined area of over 1ha, which were completed in 2011 (CAT Report 628 forthcoming). Figure 1 shows the location of Area A1 within the context of the Taylor Wimpey development area. Figure 2 shows the location of the previous trial trenches and mitigation areas (Sites A to K). Figure 3 provides the location of the proposed 42m long by 2m wide trench at Building H11.
- 2.4 The northern and eastern parts of Area B1b (to the north-west of Area A1) lie within the Benedictine Abbey of St John, which is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM 26307). It is now also known that 450m long Roman circus ran east-west from the southern central area of Flagstaff compound (Area B1b) to the former Sergeants Mess west of Circular Road North (within project Area H). Further wider archaeological context for the present site has been provided by archaeological work to the west along Napier Road (CAT Report 412). Recent investigations have greatly supplemented the previous Urban Archaeological Database (UAD) records held by Colchester Museum.

3 Geological and archaeological background

Geological background

- 3.1 Drift geology of the area is predominantly sands and gravel. This is occasionally in a clay matrix, and is sometimes capped by cover loam. The A1 site is broadly flat. The 2002 evaluation found that archaeological deposits were buried approximately 0.6m below present ground level in the eastern and western parts of A1, slightly deeper in some northern and southern parts. Modern horizontal truncation was severe close to the site entrance off Mersea Road onto Roberts Road and beneath Roberts Road. Vertical truncation was found to be moderate to severe via existing and former garrison foundations and services across the entire area. The least truncated area was the former parade ground area in the centre of A1.

- 3.2 The archaeological and historical setting of the Garrison redevelopment area has already been comprehensively explored in 'An archaeological desk-based assessment of the Colchester Garrison PFI site' (CAT Report 97, by Kate Orr, 2000), and a comprehensive archaeological background to the Colchester Garrison Project is given in RPS 2013. Below is an archaeological background to Area A.

Area A archaeological background

- 3.3 The earliest remains within Area A1 are dated to the early Neolithic and comprise the holes left by the removal of trees by the first agriculturalists around 3,500 BC. Mitigation Area E to the north-east of Building H11 included one such early Neolithic tree removal pit in T23 containing worked flint and 'Mildenhall ware' (Plain Ware) pottery. This is the earliest pottery from a secure context to have been recovered from Colchester. The most significant prehistoric remains from A1 is the large dyke (ditch) found within the south-east corner of the Area A1 (Site J, on Fig 2). The ditch was some 7m wide and about 2.5m deep and was found to kink within are J1 from approximately north-south (at the south extent) to north-east-east proceeding east towards the River Colne. Pottery from the base of the ditch confirmed its Late Iron Age date and comparison with the layout of Camulodunum's dykes (i.e. the defensive system of the royal estate of the late Iron Age kings of the Trinovantes and later the Catuvellauni) strongly suggests that the dyke in A1 is a continuation of the Berechurch Dyke from 1km to the south, that formed the eastern side of Camulodunum.
- 3.4 Colchester UAD reference UAD1513 relates to a rare find of an Iron Age mirror thought to have been found at the northern edge of the parade ground of Hyderabad & Meeanee Barracks in 1974 (CAT Report 97) but no definitely associated features were encountered during the evaluation or excavations at A1. Site F, within the Parade Ground and to the north-east of Building H11, found evidence of two small Iron Age to Roman stock corrals, one possibly associated with a roundhouse. These appear to demonstrate a very poor settlement (with very few finds), perhaps even a seasonal base, in the late Iron Age to earliest Roman period. However, the main late Iron Age settlement is thought to lie to the south of Area A1 based on dumping of rubbish into the dyke from the south side and a lack of significant occupation evidence from within Area A1.
- 3.5 The trenching and mitigation works have recorded evidence of Roman field systems in the form of drainage and boundary ditches, for example within mitigation Sites B, C, D, E, F (just to the northeast of H11), G (just to the north-west of H11), H, I (to the west of H11) and K. These demonstrate agricultural fields flanking Mersea Road which was almost certainly a Roman road leading to the south-eastern gate of the Roman town. The field ditches contain abraded Roman pottery, tile and building stone in low density and may have been within the farmland of the small 2nd-3rd century Roman villa-type establishment discovered in Alienated Land Area E, within the former sports pitch on the western side of Mersea Road. In addition a hoard of over 1,200 *antoniniani* coins of c AD 270 were recovered in a pot from the infill of the late Iron Age dyke in Area J. This is a significant indication of troubled times, and is one of at least four coin hoards of this date from the area south of the Roman town.
- 3.6 As Roman burial grounds are known to have flanked the Roman circus it was not surprising to find evidence of another burial plot within the north-western corner of A1 (the closest area to the circus), during the 2010 evaluation. The burial ground was mitigated by Area A which uncovered about 70 inhumations graves and around 10 cremations and 'pyre-pits'. The earliest burials may be two stone walled mausoleum enclosed burials (an inhumation and a cremation) at the southern site edge and dating to the second or third century AD. The cremations are also Roman, ranging in date from second to third/fourth century. However, the inhumations may date to either (or both) the late Roman period or the earliest Saxon period. Many contained Roman pottery, one woman with a Roman style necklace with and late Roman coin, but three graves contained weapons (spear heads with iron shield bosses) which could date to the fifth century AD. These were associated with at least four ring-ditches of probable barrows which are seen in the late 3rd century at Area C1/Napier Road/ Circular Road North,

where they are therefore Roman, but are also similar to early Saxon barrows elsewhere in eastern England. One of the ring-ditches produced a later fourth century coin but this cannot closely date the barrow or burial. On balance the cemetery is likely to have been that of a Germanic/barbarian quarter, some probably with military obligations as federates or militia directly associated with the late Roman to early post-Roman town. These are important as they are associated with the mechanism of the coming of the English. There were certainly 5th to 7th century early Saxon burials found in the late 19th century to the north of the development site (whilst a Saxon cremation may have been recovered from the site itself in 1926). The mitigation phase at Area A1 uncovered a further clutch of burials were found within Site H, next to Mersea Road and to the west of Building H11. These provided even fewer grave goods than those in Site A but are also likely to be of late Roman or possibly early post-Roman date (pending final analysis – CAT Report 628 forthcoming). A probable outlier grave was found within Area G next to the field boundary ditch and is the closest known burial to Building H11.

- 3.7 There were no definite medieval features within the site despite the proximity to St John's Abbey. However, another highly significant finding within Site A was the ditched elements of a star-shaped English Civil War fortlet and its associated laager offensive ditch. The fort and laager were part of the New Model Army's Civil War offensive positions, but are farther north than previously expected – almost against the wall of St John's Abbey which was defended by the Parliamentarians under Lucas. This confirms that original offensive positions shown on the Colchester Siege Map and included Fort Needham near the south-west corner of Area A1, had been moved forward as successful campaign progressed.

4 Methodology and aims

- 4.1 A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI: RPS 2013) set out proposals for the archaeological work including treatment of finds, production of a report, and deposition of the archive. The WSI mirrors standards and practices contained in *Guidelines on Standards and Practices for Archaeological Fieldwork in the Borough of Colchester* (CIM 2002), and relevant IfA standards - *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (IfA 2008a), and *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (IfA 2008b), and with National Policy guidelines as laid out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF: DCLG 2012).
- 4.2 The general aim of the evaluation was to recover sufficient evidence to characterise the nature, date, function and importance of the archaeological features within the affected area. The overarching research themes, as stated in the research design were to:
- Inform how the landscape was used and to what level of intensification, prior to the construction of Camulodunum (are there further indications of late Neolithic and Bronze Age settlement?),
 - elucidate the nature of spatial organisation within the oppidum
 - address the question of the effect of the establishment of the Roman town on the agricultural hinterland.
 - Elucidate the relative density of Roman burials and the influence of the recently discovered Roman circus across the northern zone of Colchester garrison.
- 4.3 Specific Aims: The specific aims have to an extent been informed by previous evaluation and excavation in Area A1 as follows:
- to establish the presence/absence of further early Neolithic activity at H11.
 - to establish any Iron Age activity that might be associated with the oppidum and in particular with the recently discovered extension of the Berechurch Dyke (here known as the Hyderabad Sector) and the evidence for impoverished occupation within Site F to the north-east)
 - to identify, and if necessary excavate, record and remove any human burials associated with the Roman and post-Roman landscape legally under a Ministry of Justice (formerly Home Office) licence (a single burial was identified within Area G whilst a cluster were investigated associated with the former Roman road to the west);

- to identify any further elements of the Roman to post-Roman landscape, which includes boundaries within Sites F and G, close to Building H11.

5 Results of the evaluation (Figs 3-4)

Trench 1 (T1): summary

T1, located within the footprint of the demolished Regimental Institute (HYD11) was cut through L1 - a demolition crush (the rubble remains and base slab of HYD11), an accumulation deposit (L2), and into the top of the natural geological material (L3).



Plate 1: strata in north side of T1



Plate 2: T1, view west

There were three archaeological features (F1, F2 and F3) whose fills and profiles indicate that they were probably tree-throw pits. Modern features associated with the demolished building (modern wall lines and various service runs) were planned but not given context numbers (Fig 3). F1-3 cut L2 and were sealed by L1.

Trench 1 – contexts and dating.

Context no	type	Dated finds	Phase
F1	natural pit	--	undated (post-glacial)
F2	natural pit	--	undated (post-glacial)
F3	natural linear	--	undated (post-glacial)
L1	brick crush	--	modern
L2	accumulated silt layer	--	post-medieval
L3	natural	--	--

6 Finds

There were no finds. None of the modern brick rubble seen throughout L1 and compressed into L2 was retained.

7 Discussion

No significant archaeological features or finds were identified by this evaluation. The surrounding trenches cut during the 2002 and 2010 evaluations and the area excavations of 2011 did not give rise to any particular expectation that any linear field boundaries detected in those areas would pass through the current site. Having said that, the 2011 excavation of A1 site F (40m to the north-east) identified a curvilinear Roman ditch FF8 which (if it were to continue to the south-west) may have cut through the H11 building plot, but no such ditch appeared in T1. Likewise, adjacent A1 Site G (50m north) contained an east/west aligned Roman boundary- or field-ditch (GF1), and any ditches running from south to north towards that ditch may have crossed the current site. None did.

Nevertheless, the current evaluation did give the opportunity to examine a sizeable area to the west of the Iron Age enclosures revealed in Area F (70m to the north-west) and also the Roman burials in T32, 50m to the north (CAT Rep 628). The only excavated evidence within the footprint of H11 was the group of tree-throw pits and the remains associated with the construction and demolition of the former Regimental Institute.

8 Glossary and abbreviations

CAT	Colchester Archaeological Trust
CBC	Colchester Borough Council
CIM	Colchester and Ipswich Museums
context	specific location of finds on an archaeological site (layer or feature)
feature	an identifiable thing like a pit, a wall, a drain, can contain 'contexts'
IfA	Institute for Archaeologists (formerly Institute of Field Archaeologists)
Iron Age	period from 700 BC to Roman invasion of AD 43
layer	distinct or distinguishable deposit of soil
make-up	material dumped to raise ground-level
MHB	Meeanee and Hyderabad Barracks
medieval	period from AD 1066 to c 1500
modern	period from the 19th century onwards to the present
natural	geological deposit undisturbed by human activity
prehistory	the years BC
Roman	the period from AD 43 to c AD 410
WSI	written scheme of investigation

9 References

CAT Report 97	2000	An archaeological desk-based assessment of the Colchester Garrison PFI site, CAT archive report, by K Orr
CAT Report 184	2002	An archaeological evaluation by fieldwalking and geophysical survey at Colchester Garrison PFI site, Colchester, Essex: January-March 2002, CAT archive report, by H Brooks
CAT Report 206	2002	An archaeological evaluation by trial-trenching on Areas A, B, D, GJ, H, J, N, V and YP at Colchester Garrison PFI site, Colchester, Essex, June-July 2002, report prepared by Howard Brooks.
CAT Report 361	2006	<i>Assessment report on the archaeological investigations carried out on Areas C1, C2, E, J1, O, Q, and S1 of the Alienated Land, Colchester Garrison, including the Time Team trenches and the Alienated Land watching brief, 2004-5</i> , CAT archive report, by L Pooley, B Holloway, P Crummy and R Masefield,
CAT Report 412	2011	<i>Archaeological investigations on the 'Alienated Land', Colchester Garrison, Colchester, Essex. May 2004-October 2007</i> . Report by L Pooley, P Crummy, D Shimmin, H Brooks, B Holloway, and R Masefield, with contributions by Francesca Boghi, H E M Cool, N Crummy, Julie Curl, S Benfield, Kevin Hayward, Val Fryer, Hazel Martingell, and Paul Sealey.
CAT Report 628	forthcoming	Archaeological evaluation and excavation at Colchester Garrison Area A1 (former Meeanee & Hyderabad Barracks), Mersea Road, Colchester, Essex. October-December 2010, January-March 2011. Report prepared by Howard Brooks, Ben Holloway and Rob Masefield
CAT/RPS Report 292	2005	The Colchester Garrison PFI project, Colchester Garrison, Colchester, Essex: a report on the 2003 excavation of Areas 2, 6, and 10: August-November 2003, CAT archive report, by H Brooks and R Masefield
CIM	2002	<i>Guidelines on standards and practices for archaeological fieldwork in the Borough of Colchester</i> (Colchester and Ipswich Museums)
Hull, M R	1958	<i>Roman Colchester</i> , Report of the Research Committee of the Society of Antiquaries of London, number 20
IfA	2008a	<i>Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation</i>
IfA	2008b	<i>Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials</i>
RPS	March 2002	<i>Colchester Garrison Alienated Land Outline Archaeological Project Strategy Proposal and Quality Plan</i> .
RPS	April 2013	<i>Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for Stage 2 Archaeological evaluation and possible excavation at Building H11, Area A1, former Hyderabad Barracks, Colchester Garrison</i> .

10 Archive deposition

There were no finds. The paper archive is currently at Roman Circus House, Circular Road North, Colchester, Essex, CO2 7GZ. It will be combined with that from the previous excavation stage and deposited at Colchester & Ipswich Museum under accession COLEM 2011.12.

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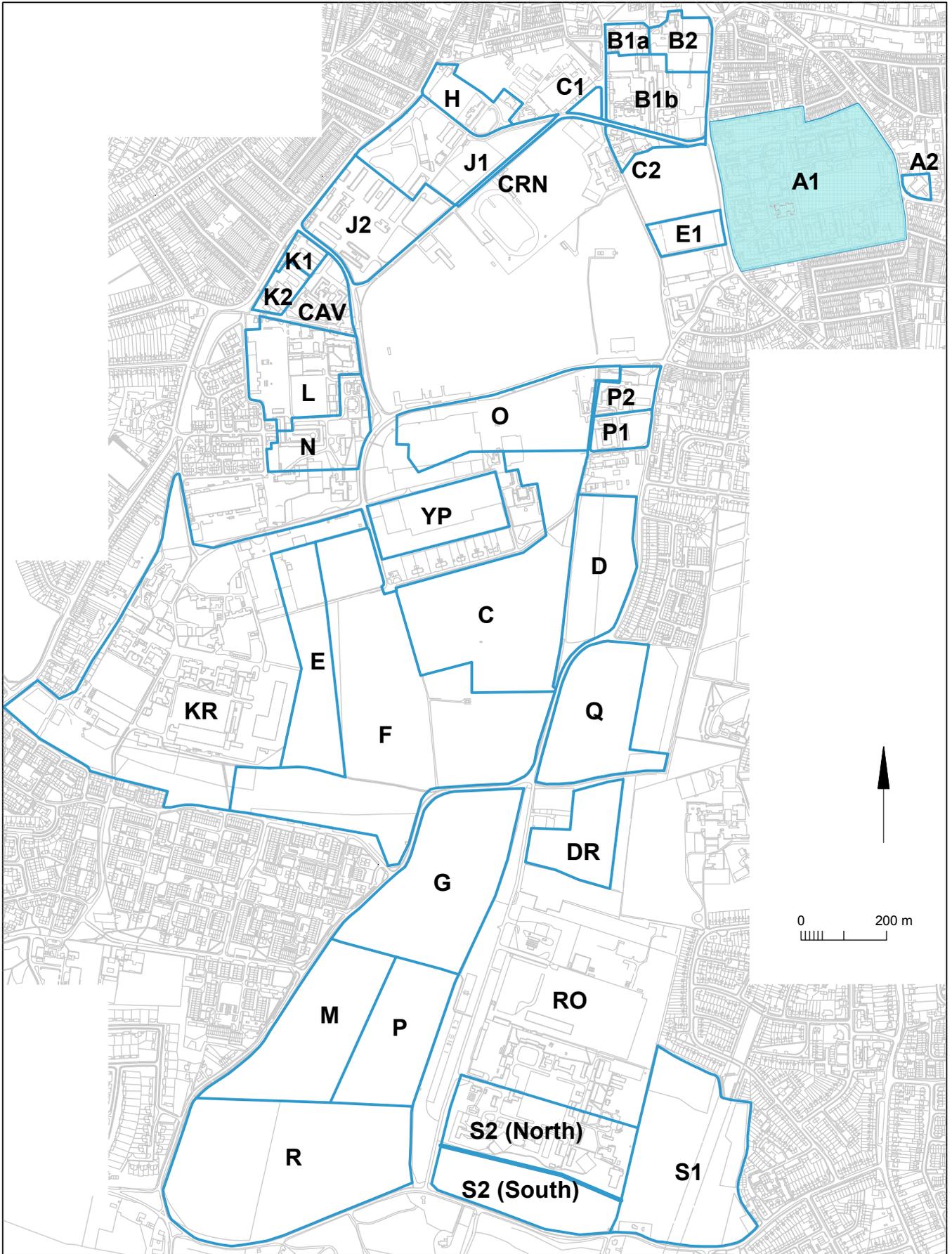
Essex CO2 7GZ

tel.: 07436273304

email: archaeologists@catuk.org

Checked by: *H Brooks*

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Fig 1 Area location plan, shown shaded.



Fig 2 Garrison Alienated Land Area A1 showing location of building H11. 2002 and 2010 evaluation trenches and 2011 excavation areas A-K also shown.

— 2002 evaluation trenches (T1-T19)
 — 2010 evaluation trenches (T1-T67)

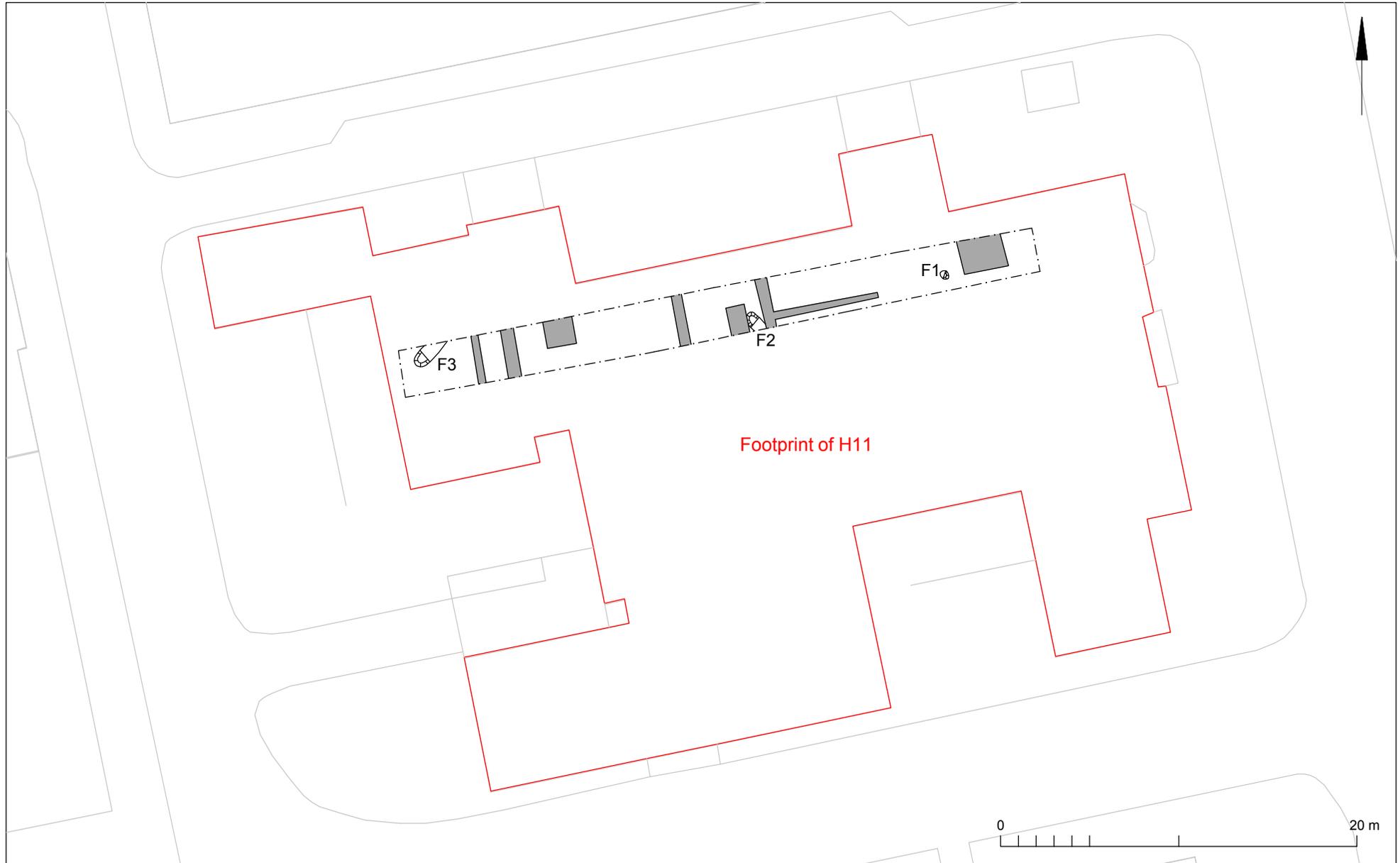


Fig 3 T1 features, with modern intrusions shown in grey.

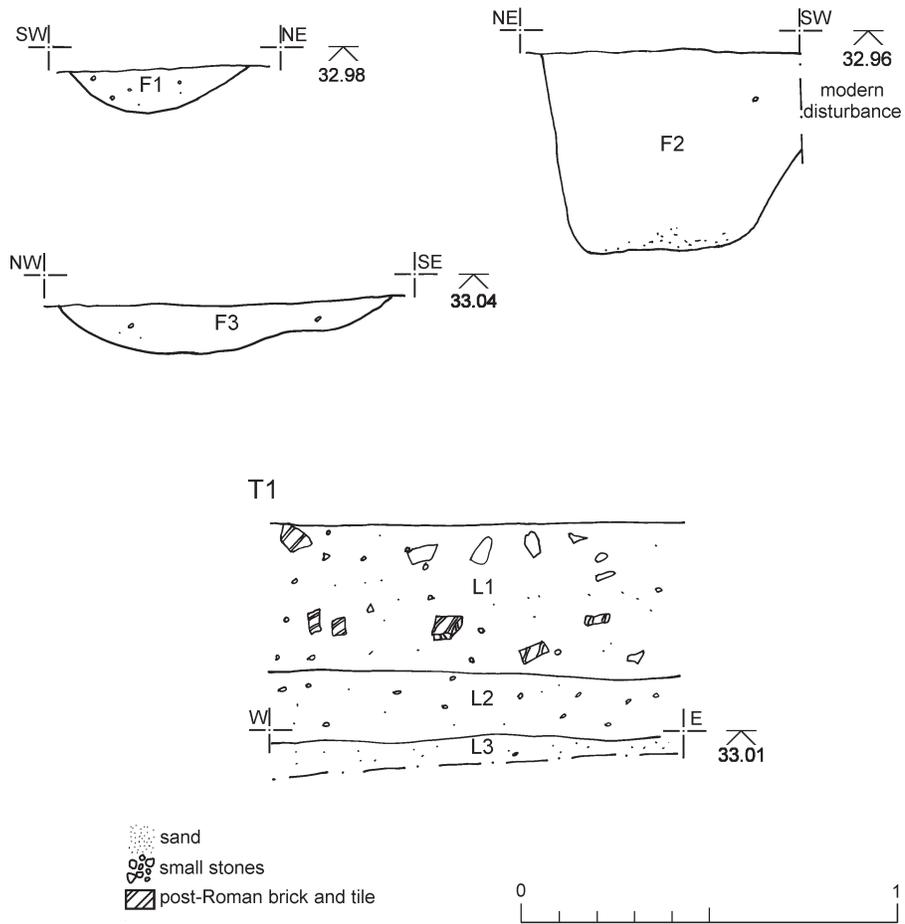


Fig 4 F1-3: Sections and T1 representative section.

Essex Historic Environment Record/ Essex Archaeology and History

Summary sheet

Address: Building H11, former Meeanee & Hyderabad Barracks, Colchester Garrison, Mersea Road, Colchester, Essex	
Parish: Colchester	District: Colchester
NGR: TM 0016 2436	Site code: CAT project code – 13/10a
Type of work: Evaluation	Site director/group: Colchester Archaeological Trust
Date of work: 3rd – 4th October 2013	Size of area investigated: 36m-long trench, 1.8m wide
Location of curating museum: Colchester and Ipswich Museum accession code : 2011.12	Funding source: Developer
Further seasons anticipated? No	Related EHER number:
Final report: CAT Report 731 and summary in EAH	
Periods represented: modern	
Summary of fieldwork results: <i>An evaluation by one 36m-long trench in the footprint of the recently-demolished Regimental Institute in the former Meeanee & Hyderabad Barracks at Colchester Garrison revealed three tree-throw pits, modern footings and modern service runs, but nothing of archaeological significance.</i>	
Previous summaries/reports: CAT Report 628	
CBC Monitor: Martin Winter	
Keywords: --	Significance: none
Author of summary: H Brooks	Date of summary: October 2013