

**An archaeological watching brief during the  
construction of the Williams & Griffin  
temporary trading store in the Colchester  
Borough Council car park, St Runwald Street,  
Colchester, Essex.**

**July-August 2013**



**report prepared by  
Adam Wightman**

**on behalf of Fenwick Ltd**

CAT project ref.: 13/07d  
Colchester & Ipswich Museums accession code: COLEM 2013.59  
NGR: TL 99535 25250



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**CAT Report 742**  
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## Summary

*The Colchester Archaeological Trust undertook a watching brief during the construction of a temporary trading store for Williams & Griffin in the Colchester Borough Council (CBC) car park, St Runwald Street, Colchester.*

*The groundworks included the excavation of foundation-pits for the temporary building, a 130m long cable trench for a new electricity supply and the foundation for a new electrical substation.*

*In the CBC car park, surviving floor surfaces and wall foundations from the outbuildings of the former Cups Hotel were uncovered in one of the foundation-pits and in the cable trench. Deposits of dark soil, building materials and sandy-clay appear to have been imported to raise the ground-level in the northern portion of the car park prior to the construction of the outbuildings.*

*In the plot of a former workshop to the west of West Stockwell Street, the foundations of a 19th-century building and a lead-lined pit were identified in the cable trench.*

*The excavations monitored during this watching brief were not deep enough to impact upon any remains or deposits dating to before the late 18th or 19th centuries.*

## Introduction

This is the archive report on the archaeological watching brief carried out by the Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) on behalf of Fenwicks Ltd at the Williams & Griffin department store, Colchester, Essex (NGR TL 99535 25250). The work was undertaken during the construction of a temporary trading building to the east of the existing department store in the Colchester Borough Council (CBC) car park (Fig 1).

The archaeological monitoring was undertaken during the excavation of foundations for the new building and for a new electricity substation in the CBC car park. The excavation of a 130m long cable trench for a new electricity supply which also crossed the existing store site and a plot of land west of West Stockwell Street, was also monitored. This archaeological watching brief follows an evaluation by test-pitting undertaken by CAT in 2011 across the Williams & Griffin store site and in the CBC car park (CAT Report 622).

All fieldwork and reporting was done in accordance with CAT's *Policies and procedures* (CAT 2008), Colchester Borough Council's *Guidelines on standards and practices for archaeological fieldwork in the Borough of Colchester* (CIMS 2008a), *Guidelines on the preparation and transfer of archaeological archives to Colchester and Ipswich Museums* (CIMS 2008b), and 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 the documents *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment* (MoRPHE), *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

The following is taken from the desk-based assessment prepared by Mills Whipp Projects (Mills Whipp 2011).

The site lay at the central crossroads of the initial Roman legionary fortress and then at the heart of Roman Colchester. Numerous Roman finds from the site and surrounding area demonstrate intense Roman occupation from the foundation of the Roman town until its decline in the 5th century.

There is evidence that the Anglo-Saxon settlement of Colchester was centred on the High Street. In the medieval period the High Street was again

the focus of the town. Timber-framed buildings occupied the frontage and a rare 12th-century masonry building stood behind the frontage. To the north, as the ground sloped down, there would have been outbuildings, yards, wells and rubbish pits.

In the post-medieval period a similar pattern of settlement existed. In the late 18th century, the first iron foundry in Essex was established on the site.

## Results

The archaeological monitoring took place over a period of five weeks and consisted of eleven site visits. The excavation of the foundation for the electricity substation in the CBC car park was carried out by contractors under continuous archaeological supervision. The excavation of the cable trench and the foundation-pits for the new temporary building were monitored periodically. For the purpose of the following discussion, the land affected by the groundworks has been divided into three distinct areas (from east to west): behind the store and in the loading bay, the CBC car park and the former workshop site on the western side of West Stockwell Street (Fig 1).

### *Behind the store and in the loading bay*

Directly adjacent to the existing department store, the cable trench was excavated to a depth of up to 1m below modern ground level. Roughly 500mm of modern surfacing overlaid a dark soil containing modern/post-medieval building materials. No evidence of the Roman demolition debris identified in TP6 of the 2011 evaluation (CAT Report 622) was identified in the cable trench (Fig 1).

In the store loading bay, the tarmac overlaid a thick deposit of crushed modern brick and concrete c 700mm deep which, in turn, overlaid a loose dark soil. These deposits appear to have been used to raise the ground level during the construction of the loading bay.

### *The CBC car park*

The car park was covered in successive layers of modern hardstanding totalling between 300mm and 700mm in thickness. The hardstanding had been laid onto a loose dark soil and surviving wall foundations and floor surfaces. Five wall foundations constructed of red bricks bonded in a white mortar were identified in the cable trench (F1-F5; Fig 2). Due to the fluctuating depth of the cable trench, it was possible to observe concrete beneath the lowest course of bricks for foundations F2 and F5. With the exception of F2, the foundations all continued below the base of the cable trench and were broken out using a mechanical excavator. Due to the width of F2, the decision was made to lay the ducting beneath the foundation at a depth of 1.6m below modern ground level.

A loose soil containing varying quantities of post-medieval/modern building materials was identified beneath the surviving floor surfaces and in between the wall foundations. Pieces of modern ironwork, clay pipe stems and glass bottle fragments were all observed in the dark soil (but not retained). The CBC car park is located on a natural slope and it is probable that this deposit was brought onto the site to raise the ground-level at the northern end of the car park.

The foundation for the electrical substation was excavated to a depth of 1.2m below modern ground level (Fig 2). A deposit of sandy-clay c 0.7m deep which contained fragments of brick and peg-tile was identified beneath the modern hardstanding. It is probable that this material was also deposited here to raise the ground-level. Beneath the sandy-clay, at a depth of 1.1m below modern ground level, a dark soil containing clay pipe stems and peg-tile fragments was encountered.

The majority of the foundation-pads for the temporary building were constructed directly onto the existing car park surface. Only the northernmost pads required foundation-pits to be excavated and these were a maximum depth of c 400mm below modern ground level. A brick surface

constructed from pale yellow bricks laid on their narrow sides was uncovered in the north-westernmost foundation-pit (Fig 2). This is probably the same brick surface identified in TP8 of the 2011 evaluation (CAT Report 622) (Fig 1).

#### *The former workshop site*

To the east of the CBC car park, the cable trench linked up with West Stockwell Street through a plot of land formerly occupied by a 19th-century house and workshop (Fig 1). These structures were recorded by CAT prior to their demolition to facilitate the installation of the new electricity supply (CAT Report 691).

The ground-level was c 1m lower at the western end of the workshop site than in the adjacent CBC car park. Therefore, a slope with a gradient of 1:16 was created in the workshop site to allow vehicular access to the car park. This resulted in a short stretch of the cable trench and a second electrical substation being built into the made-ground of the new slope (Fig 2, shaded grey).

The rest of the cable trench was excavated from the existing ground level to a depth of c 800mm. A 300mm thick layer of modern hardstanding overlaid a dark soil containing modern brick, peg-tile, clay pipe stems and glass bottle fragments. Two wall foundations constructed of red bricks in a white/cream mortar (F6 & F7) were identified in the cable trench (Fig 2).

In addition to the cable trench, a lead-lined pit was excavated using a mechanical excavator. Contaminated soil beneath the lead lining of the pit was removed to a depth of 0.8m below modern ground level.

### **Finds**

The only find retained during the watching brief was a large cast-iron object 740mm long by 370mm high (Plate 1). It is presumed that it was once displayed somewhere, perhaps outside a shop. It is relatively flat, has a large bolt protruding from its reverse side and is partially painted on its front surface. It is possible that the object represents an oil lamp. A circular protrusion from the top of the object on the right hand side has been broken off and may have been the handle of the lamp (Plate 1).

The object was recovered by the contractors during the excavation of the cable trench in the north-western corner of the CBC car park. It is probably Victorian or early 20th century in date and could have been made in the iron foundry which once occupied the plot where the existing department store now stands (CAT Report 622).



**Plate 1 Cast iron object (20cm-long scale).**

## Discussion

Based on the historical map evidence, the surviving floor surfaces and foundations in the CBC car park are probably the remains of 19th/20th-century outbuildings to the rear of the former Cups Hotel (CAT Report 622). The brick surface identified in one of the foundation-pits is probably the floor of a stable and the wall foundations identified in the cable trench are the remains of stable blocks and store rooms. The deposits of dark soil, building materials and sandy-clay appear to have been used to raise the ground level in the northern portion of the car park, probably to level the backyard of the Cups Hotel prior to the construction of the outbuildings.

In the plot of the former workshop to the west of West Stockwell Street, the easternmost wall foundation identified in the cable trench was probably the western wall of the demolished 19th-century house. This wall was identified as a later addition to the building (CAT Report 691) and it is probable that the westernmost foundation identified in the cable trench is the remains of the original western wall. The purpose of the lead-lined pit is unknown. However, it may have been an original feature of the workshop to the rear of the house (CAT report 691).

In conclusion, the excavations monitored during this watching brief were not deep enough to impact upon any remains or deposits dating to before the late 18th or 19th centuries.

## Acknowledgements

CAT would like to thank Fenwick Ltd for commissioning and funding the work. Site work was undertaken by Adam Wightman and Howard Brooks. The project was monitored for Colchester Borough Council by Martin Winter (CBCAO) and for Fenwick Ltd by Peter Mills of Mills Whipp Projects.

## References

**Note: all CAT fieldwork reports are available online in .pdf format at <http://cat.essex.ac.uk>**

CAT	2008	<i>Policies and procedures</i>
CAT Report 622	2011	<i>Report on an archaeological evaluation by test-pitting at Williams &amp; Griffin, 147-155 High Street, Colchester, Essex; November 2011.</i> Unpublished client report by A Wightman
CAT Report 691	2013	<i>Historic building recording of a 19th-century house and workshop off West Stockwell Street, Colchester, Essex; March 2013.</i> Unpublished client report by C Lister
CIMS	2008a	<i>Guidelines on standards and practices for archaeological fieldwork in the Borough of Colchester</i>
CIMS	2008b	<i>Guidelines on the preparation and transfer of archaeological archives to Colchester and Ipswich Museums</i>
EAA3	1997	<i>Research and archaeology: a framework for the Eastern Counties 1. Resource assessment,</i> East Anglian Archaeology, Occasional Papers, <b>3</b> , 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, Occasional Papers, <b>8</b> , ed by N Brown & J Glazebrook
EAA 14	2003	<i>Standards for field archaeology in the East of England,</i> East Anglian Archaeology, Occasional Papers, <b>14</b> , ed by D Gurney
IfA	2008a	<i>Standard and guidance for an archaeological</i>

lfA	2008b	<i>watching brief Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials</i>
Mills Whipp	2011	<i>Williams &amp; Griffin, 147-155 High Street, Colchester; Desk Based Assessment- Archaeology.</i>
MoRPHE	2006	<i>Management of research projects in the historic environment (English Heritage)</i>

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## **Appendix 1: contents of archive**

One A4 document wallet containing:

### **1 Introduction**

- 1.1 Risk assessment
- 1.2 2 x A3 site plans

### **2 Site archive**

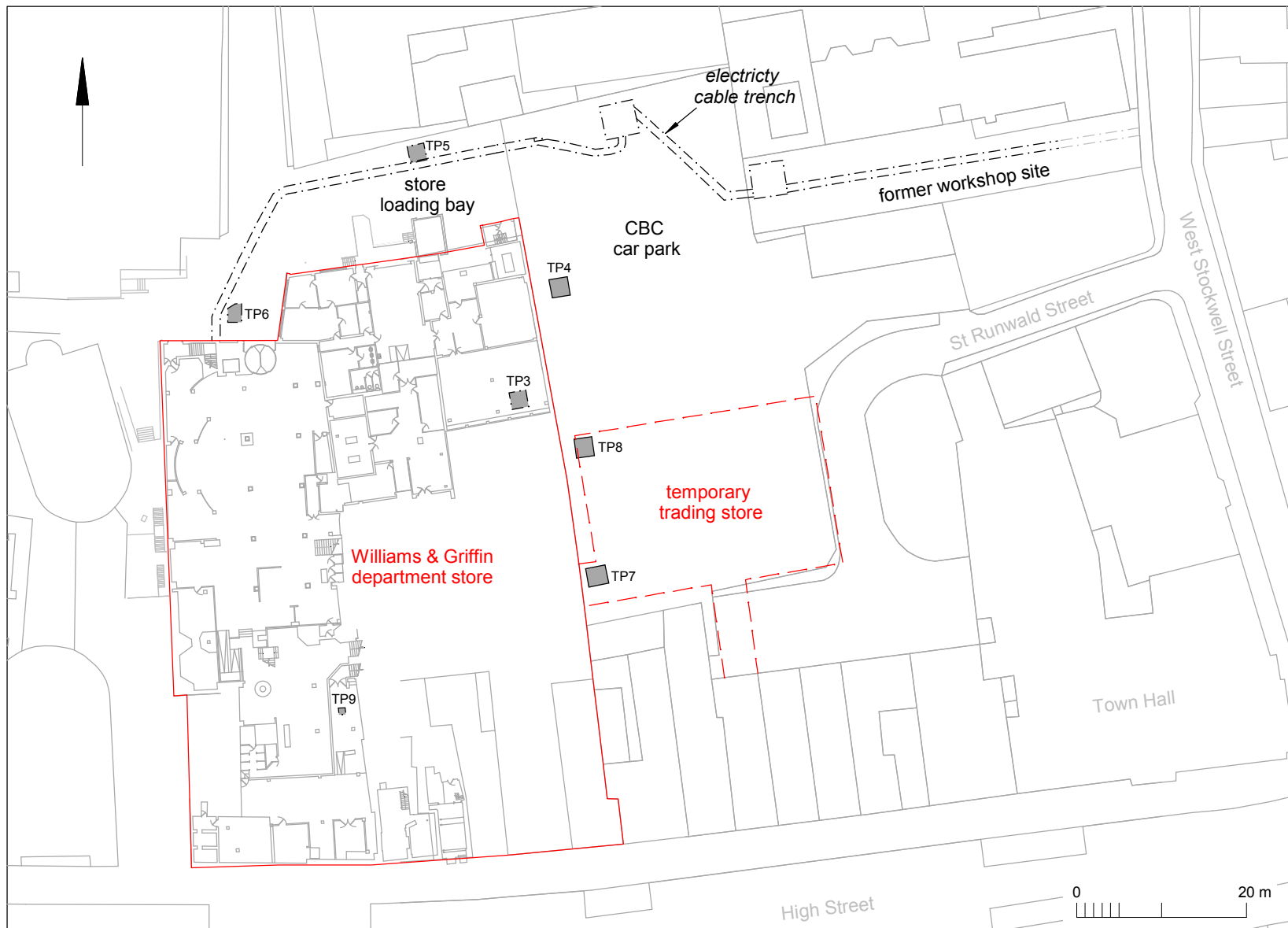
- 2.1 Attendance register
- 2.2 Site digital photographic record
- 2.3 1 sheet of digitized site notes
- 2.4 Finds register
- 2.5 Site photographic record on CD

### **3 Research archive**

- 3.1 Monitoring (client) report

### **Not in wallet**

- 1 large cast-iron object



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Fig 1 Site location showing the electricity cable trench, the temporary trading store and the location of the 2011 test-pits (TP3-TP9; shaded grey).



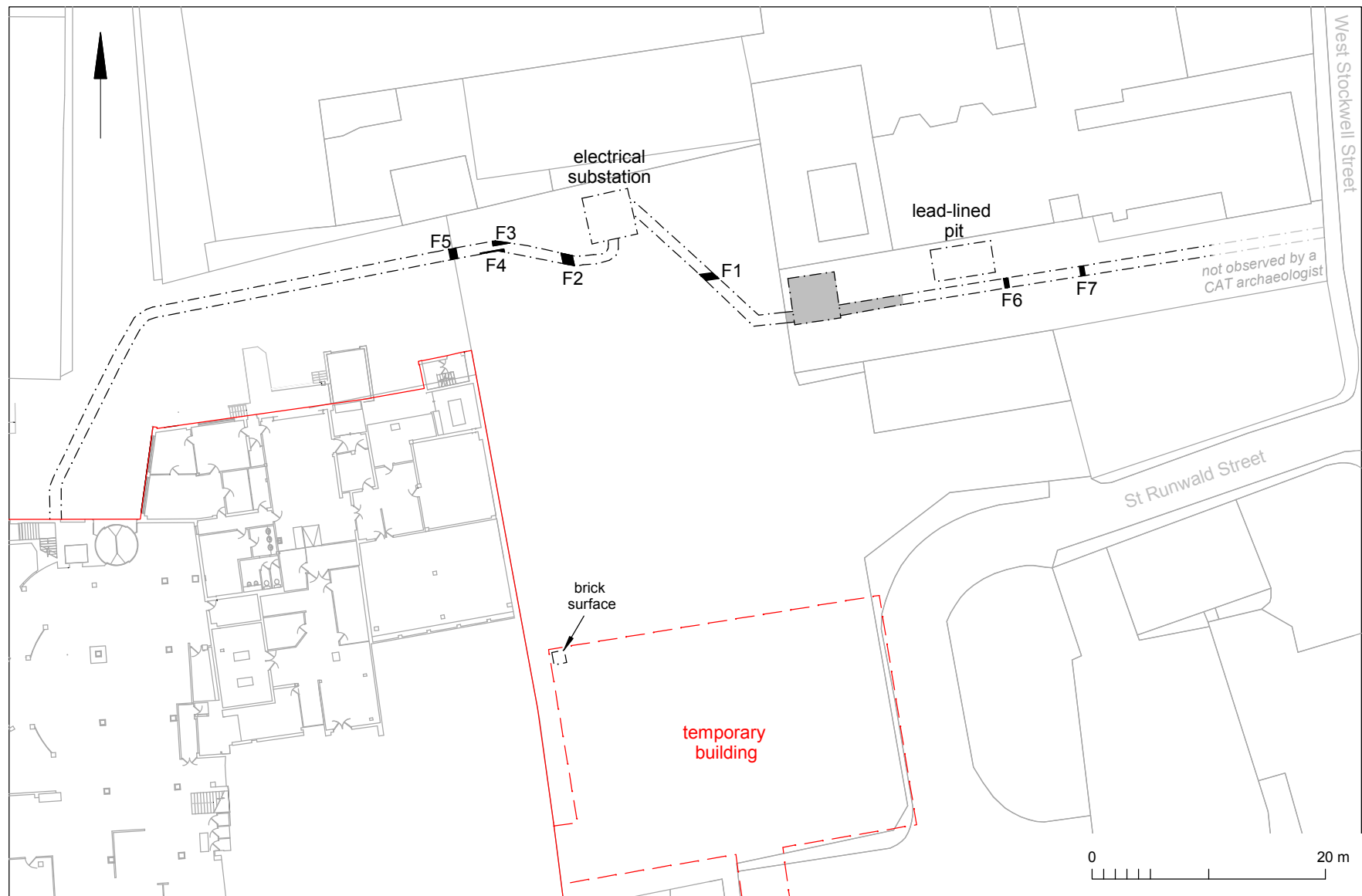


Fig 2 The results of the watching brief with the substation and stretch of cable trench built into the new slope shaded grey.

## Essex Historic Environment Record/ Essex Archaeology and History

### Summary sheet

<b>Site address:</b> Williams & Griffin temporary trading store in the Colchester Borough Council car park, St Runwald Street, Colchester, Essex	
<b>Parish:</b> Colchester	<b>District:</b> Colchester
<b>NGR:</b> TL 99535 25250 (c)	<b>Site codes:</b> CAT Project - 13/07d Museum accession - COLEM 2011.20
<b>Type of work:</b> Archaeological watching brief	<b>Site director/group:</b> Colchester Archaeological Trust
<b>Date of work:</b> July-August 2013	<b>Size of area investigated:</b>
<b>Location of curating museum:</b> Colchester & Ipswich Museums	<b>Funding source:</b> Developer
<b>Further seasons anticipated?</b> Yes	<b>Related UAD/ EHER nos:</b>
<b>Final report:</b> CAT Report 7342	
<b>Periods represented:</b> post-medieval, modern	
<p><b>Summary of fieldwork results:</b></p> <p><i>The Colchester Archaeological Trust undertook a watching brief during the construction of a temporary trading store for Williams &amp; Griffin in the Colchester Borough Council (CBC) car park, St Runwald Street, Colchester.</i></p> <p><i>The groundworks included the excavation of foundation-pits for the temporary building, a 130m long cable trench for a new electricity supply and the foundation for a new electrical substation.</i></p> <p><i>In the CBC car park, surviving floor surfaces and wall foundations from the outbuildings of the former Cups Hotel were uncovered in one of the foundation-pits and in the cable trench. Deposits of dark soil, building materials and sandy-clay appear to have been imported to raise the ground-level in the northern portion of the car park prior to the construction of the outbuildings.</i></p> <p><i>In the plot of a former workshop to the west of West Stockwell Street, the foundations of a 19th-century building and a lead-lined pit were identified in the cable trench.</i></p> <p><i>The excavations monitored during this watching brief were not deep enough to impact upon any remains or deposits dating to before the late 18th or 19th centuries.</i></p>	
<b>Previous summaries/reports:</b> CAT Report 622 and CAT Report 691	
<b>Author of summary:</b> Adam Wightman	<b>Date of summary:</b> November 2013