

Archaeological monitoring and recording at Magdalen Street Bus Depot, Colchester, Essex, CO1 2LD

January 2017



by Chris Lister

commissioned by Frederick Siemers (Fairhurst)

on behalf of Tiger Developments Ltd

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Colchester Archaeological Trust

Roman Circus House,
Roman Circus Walk,
Colchester,
Essex, CO2 7GZ

tel.: 01206 501785

email: cl@catuk.org

CAT Report 1063

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Fig 1 Site location

1 Summary

Archaeological monitoring and recording was undertaken at the former Colchester Borough Council bus depot on Magdalen Street during soil investigations carried out prior to redevelopment. Four test pits (each approximately 500mm x 400mm in size and excavated to varying depths) were excavated across the site. Nothing of archaeological significance was noted in these limited areas of investigation and it is concluded that Test Pits 1-3 were located in areas of post-medieval/modern accumulation, whilst Test Pit 4 was located below the local archaeological horizon.

2 Introduction (Fig 1)

This report presents the results of archaeological monitoring and recording at the former Colchester Borough Council bus depot on Magdalen Street, Colchester, Essex which was carried out on the 12th January 2017. The work was commissioned by Frederick Siemers of Fairhurst, on behalf of Tiger Developments Ltd, as part of soil investigations undertaken by Ian Farmers and was carried out by Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT).

In response to pre-application consultation (PE3924420) with Colchester Borough Council Planning Services (CBCPS), Colchester Borough Council Archaeological Advisor Dr Jess Tipper advised that in order to establish the archaeological implications of the site, the applicant should be required to commission a scheme of archaeological investigation in accordance with paragraphs 128, 129 and 132 of the *National Planning Policy Framework* (DCLG 2012).

This investigation took the form of *Archaeological Monitoring and Recording*. After discussions between the client and Colchester Borough Council Archaeological Advisor Jess Tipper it was agreed that a brief was not necessary to inform the work and a written scheme of investigation (WSI) would also not be required.

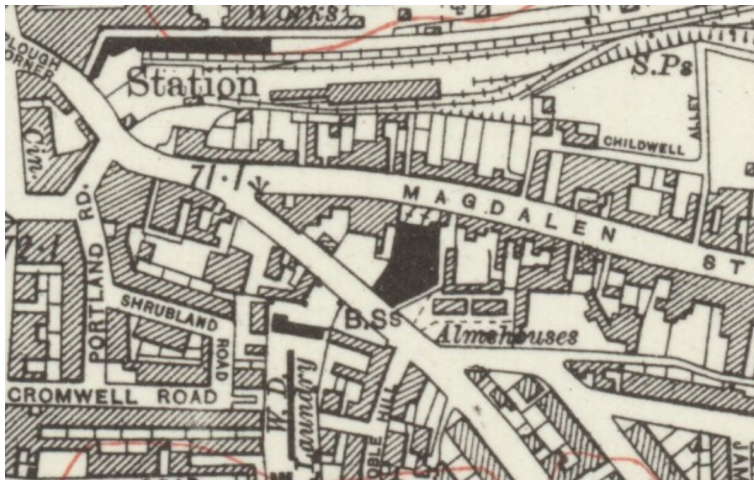
All fieldwork and reporting was done in accordance with English Heritage's *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE)* (English Heritage 2006), and with *Standards for field archaeology in the East of England* (EAA **14** and **24**). This report mirrors standards and practices contained in the Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and guidance for archaeological watching brief* (ClfA 2014a) and *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (ClfA 2014b).

3 Archaeological background

The following archaeological background draws on the major published sources for Colchester archaeology (listed below), and also on Colchester Historic Environment Record (CHER) and the Essex Historic Environment Record (EHER).

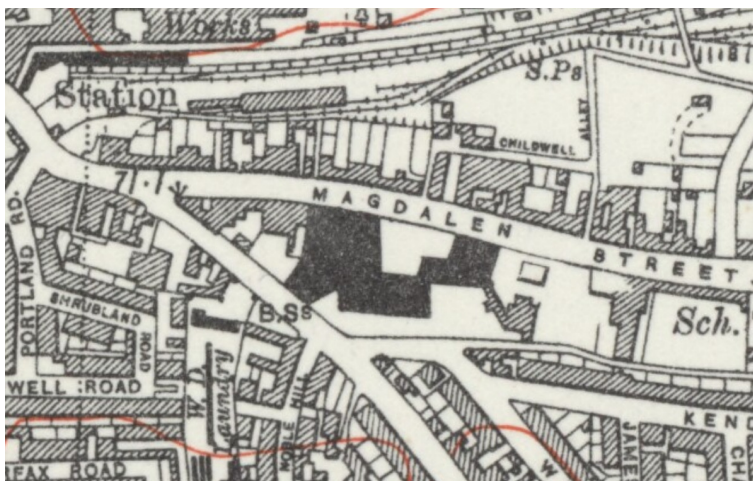
The former bus depot on Magdalen Street comprises a large area of land (0.43 ha) towards the west end of the wedge formed by Magdalen Street and Military Road. The majority of the site fronts the south side of Magdalen Street and extends southwards as far as Kendall Terrace, Grade II listed almshouses built in 1791 (CHER 117109) and with a short road frontage to Military Road (Fig 1). The site comprises brick buildings and steel-framed structures, with two areas of concrete hard-standing.

The western half of the site contains the remains of the municipal electric tramway depot, constructed in 1904 (locally listed www.colchestehistoricbuildingsforum.org). A former tram shed, bearing a date plaque of 1906 stands on the south side of the site, fronting Military Road (frontispiece). The Ordnance Survey edition for 1924 (Map 1) shows the extent of this tramway depot, with tramlines leading onto Magdalen Street.



Map 1 1924 edition of the 6" Ordnance Survey. The tram depot is shown as the solid black polygon, with tramlines leading onto Magdalen Street.

The trams were replaced by buses from 1928 onwards and, in 1935, the original tram depot was altered to accommodate this change. In 1938 an entirely new depot, designed by Goodey & Cressall of Colchester, was added to the eastern side of the depot, replacing several properties along Magdalen Street (Map 2).



Map 2 1938 edition of the 6" Ordnance Survey showing the altered 1904 tram depot and the new depot to the east. Kendall Terrace is incorporated into the footprint of the bus depot, possibly reflecting a pre-war intention to expand the depot further.

Magdalen Street provided the principal road link between the walled town of Colchester and the port at the Hythe. There is likely to have been significant ribbon development along the road during the medieval period and there were abundant post-medieval buildings. Archaeological excavations on the site of an existing house at 11 Magdalen Street, 125m to the west of the bus depot, identified the remains of a medieval predecessor fronting the earlier street (MCC 1244, 1246, 1248)

The EHER shows that the site was located close to two windmills, sited on the 1767 Sparrow map and 1777 Chapman and Andre map (sheet IX) (EHER 2555, 2566).

A negative watching brief was carried out on 3-5 Military Road in 1977 (CAR 6 p389, site code 5/77B).

Recent work by Colchester Archaeological Trust in the grounds of Winnock's Almshouses (CHER 117110) to the southwest of the bus depot, on the south side of Military Road, revealed evidence for extra-mural Roman activity, including a pit and a small section of possible metallised surface (CAT Report 936).

4 Results (Fig 1)

Each of the four test pits was excavated by the contractor in order to ascertain the depths of the foundations to different boundary walls. Consequently, the depth of each test pit varied. Test Pits 1-3 were excavated by hand, whilst Test Pit 4 was excavated by mechanical digger.

Test Pit 1

Test Pit 1 was located in an overgrown strip of land between a concrete retaining wall on the south boundary of the bus depot and a red brick wall forming the north boundary to Kendall Terrace (Photograph 1). Access was extremely limited.



Photograph 1 Test Pit 1 location –
view south.

The test pit measured 500mm x 400mm wide and was excavated to a depth of 900mm. It was excavated through a homogenous dry, fine sandy silt soil (L1) with abundant root disturbance and no obvious soil changes. An off-set concrete foundation for the brick wall was encountered 650mm below ground level, continuing to the full depth of the test pit (Photograph 2). The off-set extended approximately 250mm from the north face of the brick wall and the soil above this would normally be considered backfill within the construction trench for the foundation. However, this soil, along with the soil in the northern half of Test Pit 1, is far more likely to have been redeposited or disturbed during the construction of the concrete retaining wall for the bus depot. The only inclusions within the L1 were fragments of bitumen encountered at a depth of c.400mm (not retained).

No archaeological contexts were observed in Test Pit 1.



Photograph 2 Test Pit 1 – plan view.

Test Pit 2

Test Pit 2 was located in the same overgrown strip of land between the concrete retaining wall on the south boundary of the bus depot and the red brick wall forming the north boundary to Kendall Terrace, directly behind a large concrete-bunded fuel tank (Photograph 3). Again, access was extremely limited.



Photograph 3 Test Pit 2 location –
view south.

The test pit measured 500mm x 400mm wide and was excavated to a depth of 1050mm. It was excavated through the same homogenous soil (L1) as Test Pit 1 and

had the same abundant root disturbance. A single course of off-set brick, projecting 60mm from the face of the wall, provided the only foundation for the brick wall at the rear of Kendall Terrace (Photograph 4). Fragments of concrete were encountered at c. 800mm below ground level. Below the concrete may have been an earlier topsoil layer but the constraints of the test pit made this impossible to confirm. As with Test Pit 1 the soil in this location (certainly that above the concrete) appears to have been disturbed during the construction of the concrete retaining wall for the bus depot.

No archaeological contexts were observed in Test Pit 2.



Photograph 4 Test Pit 2 – plan view.

Test Pit 3

Test Pit 3 was located at the end of an alleyway leading from a gate off Military Road, between the concrete retaining wall on the south boundary of the bus depot and the red brick wall forming the north boundary to Kendall Terrace (technically outside the site boundary, Photograph 5). The test pit measured 500mm x 400mm wide. At this location the base of the brick wall was encountered at a relatively shallow depth, 400mm below ground level, and there was no foundation off-set. The test pit was excavated to a depth of 600mm below ground level and comprised a brown-black silty loam (L2), in contrast to the fills of Test Pits 1 and 2 (Photograph 6). Occasional fragments of peg-tile were observed within the fill (not retained) and it is possible that this soil, despite its location between the boundary to Kendall Terrace and the concrete retaining wall behind the tram shed may be a remnant of the original hillside.

No archaeological contexts were observed in Test Pit 3.



Photograph 5 Test Pit 3 location –
view south.



Photograph 6 Test Pit 3 – plan view.

Test Pit 4

Test Pit 4 was located inside the 1906 extension to the tram shed (Photograph 7). The concrete floor to this structure was broken out by mechanical breaker and the test pit itself was excavated by machine under artificial light sources. The test pit measured 600mm x 500mm wide. Coarse orange sand and gravel (L3) was found directly below the concrete floor and continued to a depth of 500mm without change. It was concluded that L3 was natural geology. This is unsurprising as the level of the floor in this building is significantly lower than ground level on the street outside.

No archaeological contexts were observed in Test Pit 4.



Photograph 7 Test Pit 4 location –
view south-west.

5 Finds

No finds were recovered during the course of the test pit monitoring.

6 Discussion

The four test pits provided only a tiny sample of the former bus depot but do indicate that much of the original ground level on the site has been terraced away, first by the construction of the tram depot in 1904 and then by the subsequent extensions to the bus depot in the mid-late 1930s. Ground levels associated with Winnock's Almshouses, Kendall Terrace and post-medieval buildings along Magdalen Street indicate a gradual slope falling from the area around Winnock's Almshouses to Magdalen Street. This slope has been severely truncated along the south edge of the site and it is doubtful that archaeological remains survive in this area. However, the northern boundary of the bus depot is equivalent in level to the surrounding levels of Magdalen Street and it is highly likely that below the street frontage are surviving archaeological remains dating to the medieval and post-medieval periods.

7 Acknowledgements

CAT thanks Frederick Siemers of Fairhurst for commissioning the monitoring and Tiger Developments Ltd for funding the work. The project was managed and carried out by C Lister. Figures were prepared by CL. The project was monitored for the CBCPS by Dr Jess Tipper.

8 References

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

CAR 6	1992	<i>Colchester Archaeological Report 6: Excavations at Culver Street, the Gilbert School, and other sites in Colchester 1971-85</i> , by P Crummy
CAT Report 936	2016	<i>Archaeological evaluation at 1-7 Winnocks Almshouses, Military Road Colchester, Essex CO1 2AF: March 2016</i>
ClfA	2014a	<i>Standard and Guidance for an archaeological watching brief</i>
ClfA	2014b	<i>Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials</i>
David Gurney	2003	<i>Standards for field archaeology in the East of England</i> . East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Papers 14 (EAA 14).
DCLG	2012	<i>National Planning Policy Framework</i>
English Heritage	2006	<i>Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE)</i>
Medlycott, M	2011	<i>Research and archaeology revisited: A revised framework for the East of England</i> . East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Papers 24 (EAA 24)

9 Abbreviations and glossary

CAT	Colchester Archaeological Trust
CBCPS	Colchester Borough Council Planning Services
CBM	brick/tile (ceramic building material)
CHER	Colchester Historic Environment Record (formerly the Urban Archaeological Database)
ClfA	Chartered Institute for Archaeologists
context	specific location of finds on an archaeological site
feature (F)	an identifiable thing like a pit, a wall, a drain: can contain 'contexts'
layer (L)	distinct or distinguishable deposit of soil
medieval	period from AD 1066 to Henry VIII
modern	period from c AD 1800 to the present
natural	geological deposit undisturbed by human activity
NGR	National Grid Reference
post-medieval	from Henry VIII to c AD 1800
residual	something out of its original context, eg a Roman coin in a modern pit
Roman	the period from AD 43 to c AD 410
Section	(abbreviation sc or Sx) vertical slice through feature/s or layer/s
WSI	Written Scheme of Investigation

10 Contents of archive

Finds: none retained

Paper and digital record

One A4 document wallet containing:

The report (CAT Report 1063)

Original site record (Feature and layer sheets, Finds record, plans)

Site digital photos and log, Architectural plans, Attendance register, Risk assessment

11 Archive deposition

The paper and digital archive is currently held by the Colchester Archaeological Trust at Roman Circus House, Roman Circus Walk, Colchester, Essex, CO2 7GZ, but will be permanently deposited with Colchester Museum under accession code: COLEM 2017.6.

Distribution list

Frederick Siemers, Fairhurst
Dr Jess Tipper, Colchester Borough Council Planning Services
Essex Historic Environment Record

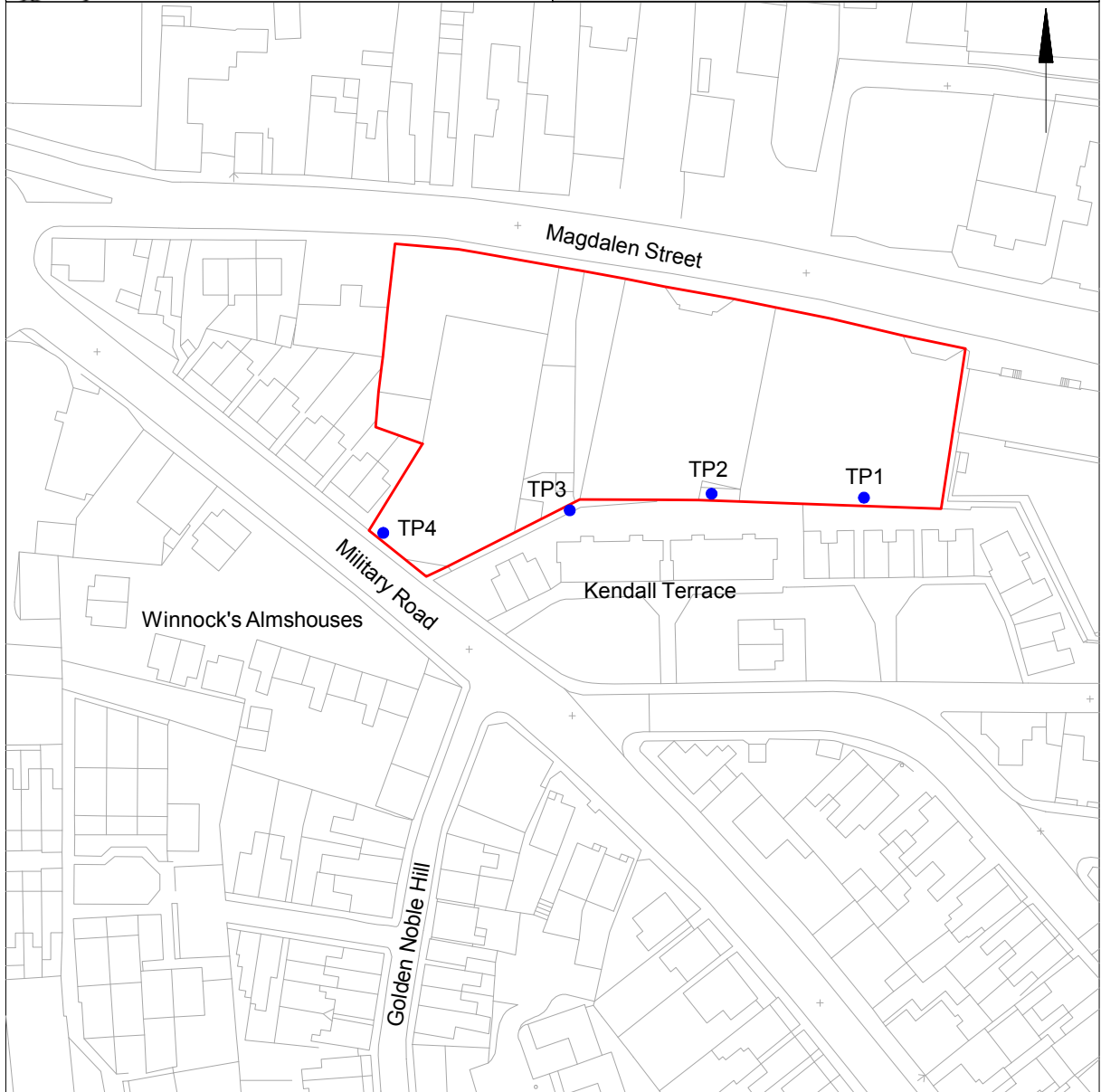


Colchester Archaeological Trust

Roman Circus House,
Roman Circus Walk,
Colchester,
Essex, CO2 7GZ

tel.: 01206 501785
email: cl@catuk.org

Checked by: Philip Crummy
Date: 15/02/2017



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Fig 1 Site location.



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OASIS ID: colchest3-272982

Project details

Project name	Archaeological monitoring and recording at the former Bus Depot, Magdalen Street, Colchester, Essex, CO1 2LD
Short description of the project	Archaeological monitoring and recording was undertaken at the former Colchester Borough Council bus depot on Magdalen Street during soil investigations carried out prior to redevelopment. Four test pits (each approximately 500mm x 400mm in size and excavated to varying depths) were excavated across the site. Nothing of archaeological significance was noted in these limited areas of investigation and it is concluded that Test Pits 1-3 were located in areas of post-medieval/modern accumulation, whilst Test Pit 4 was located below the local archaeological horizon.
Project dates	Start: 12-01-2017 End: 12-01-2017
Previous/future work	No / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	17/01g - Contracting Unit No.
Any associated project reference codes	160103 - Planning Application No.
Any associated project reference codes	ECC3939 - HER event no.
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	None
Current Land use	Transport and Utilities 2 - Other transport infrastructure
Monument type	NONE None
Significant Finds	NONE None
Investigation type	"Watching Brief"
Prompt	Planning condition

Project location

Country	England
Site location	ESSEX COLCHESTER COLCHESTER former Bus Depot, Magdalen Street
Postcode	CO1 2LD
Study area	0.43 Hectares
Site coordinates	TM 00165 24768 51.884954139905 0.908843162431 51 53 05 N 000 54 31 E Point

Project creators

Name of Organisation	Colchester Archaeological Trust
Project brief originator	none
Project design originator	none
Project director/manager	Chris Lister
Project supervisor	Chris Lister
Type of sponsor/funding body	Developer
Name of sponsor/funding body	Tiger Developments Ltd

Project archives

Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive recipient	Colchester Museum
Digital Archive ID	COLEM 2017.6
Digital Contents	"none"
Digital Media available	"Images raster / digital photography","Text"
Paper Archive recipient	Colchester Museum
Paper Archive ID	COLEM 2017.6
Paper Contents	"none"
Paper Media available	"Context sheet","Photograph","Plan","Report"

Project bibliography 1

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
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