

Archaeological monitoring and recording at Sir Isaac's Walk, Colchester, Essex, CO1 1JJ

February and April 2017



by Laura Pooley
figures by Laura Pooley

fieldwork by Emma Holloway and Chris Lister

on behalf of Philip Wise, Colchester Borough Council

NGR: TL 99442 25006 (centre)
Planning reference: 163208
CAT project ref.: 17/02i
Colchester Museum accession code: COLEM 2017.13
CHER ref: ECC3956
OASIS reference: colchest3-277115



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

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

CAT Report 1071
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1 Summary

Archaeological monitoring and recording was carried out at Sir Isaac's Walk, Colchester during groundworks for a trial posthole and final posthole for the installation of a new interpretation panel. Located at Headgate, the southwest gate of the Roman city, the trial posthole measured 440mm by 280mm and 510mm deep. The final posthole was actually dug 30m further to the east and measured 450mm by 350mm and 800mm deep. Both were excavated through modern paving laid on a sandy-concrete, onto a layer of modern silty-loam. At the base of the final posthole was a layer of oyster shell.

2 Introduction (Fig 1)

This report presents the results of archaeological monitoring and recording on land at Sir Isaac's Walk, Colchester, Essex which was carried out on 17th February and 18th April 2017. The work was commissioned by Philip Wise, Colchester Borough Council during groundworks for a trial-hole to check if the ground was suitable for the installation of a new interpretation panel, and was undertaken by Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT).

In response to consultation with Colchester Borough Council Planning Services (CBCPS), Colchester Borough Council Archaeological Advisor Jess Tipper advised that in order to establish the archaeological implications of this application, 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).

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).

A new interpretation panel is due to be located within the Roman town of *Colonia Claudia Victricensis* on land adjacent to 62 Head Street (Sir Isaac's Walk) on part of the Roman town wall (Scheduled Monument NHLE no. 1003772) known as Headgate.

The Roman town wall was built around the town in the later 1st century AD following the revolt led by Boudica. It is constructed of a core of layered septaria and mortar faced with coursed septaria and tile. A recent study has concluded that the wall has an average width of 2.67m (including offsets) which is equivalent to precisely nine Roman feet (*pedes Monetales*). A hypothetical cross-section of the wall shows the foundations as being 3.77m wide (Crummy 2003). Some previous work shows that the wall foundations were surprisingly shallow at 600mm deep (Hull 1958, 25-6). Work by CAT at the Sixth Form College in 2005 shows the stone foundations to be 1.2m deep with wooden piles below (CAT report 347), although, being water-logged, ground conditions here presumably explain their exceptional depth. Trial-holes confirmed that survival of the foundations varies. Where they have not been robbed away, the foundations extend 2.1m from the existing face of the wall and are in a sound state of preservation. Above ground, the survival of the wall is very patchy. Up to 2.4m width of wall has been lost and nothing of the original exterior facing of the wall survives, only the core. The

majority of what is standing has been refaced in brick or stone or completely rebuilt in brick.

The following is taken from Heritage Statement: Colchester Town Walls – Headgate (by Philip Wise, CBC):

Headgate, the south-west gate of the Roman city, increased in importance once the Balkerne Gate was closed around AD 300 and later became the principal gate of the medieval town. In 1893 a trench for a gas main struck the probable remains of the Roman gateway (Hull, 1958, 60) and repairs to the town drains in 1913 also encountered Roman foundations in this area (Jarmin 1915, 107). In 1988 a watching brief confirmed the location of the Roman gate (CAR 6, 396-7) and in 2006 a second watching brief uncovered part of the central pier of the gate close to the modern ground surface (CAT Report 394).

Nearby on the east side of the gateway is 58-62 Head Street, also known as Headgate House or Rebow's House. This is a Grade II Listed Building described as being a 'large late 17th-century house with medieval cellar and 18th-century front. It has historical associations with the Rebow family including Sir Isaac Rebow who entertained King William III here on three occasions.*

4 Results (Fig 2)

Trial posthole

A single trial posthole was hand-dug by contractors under archaeological supervision. Measuring 440mm by 280mm and 510mm deep it was excavated through block paving laid on a sandy concrete (L1, 300mm thick). A smaller hole, approximately 260mm in diameter, was then dug for a further 210mm into a layer of dark-brown silty-loam (L2) containing modern brick fragments (not retained).



Photograph 1 Trial posthole, looking E

Final posthole

The final posthole for the interpretation panel was actually dug 30m further to the east of the trial posthole. It was hand-dug by contractors under archaeological supervision. Measuring 450mm by 350mm and 800mm deep it was excavated through block paving laid on a sandy concrete (L1, 300mm thick) onto a layer of dark-brown silty-loam (L2) containing modern brick fragments and post-medieval peg-tile (not retained). At the very base of L2 was a layer of oyster shell perhaps suggesting the beginning of occupation debris at this depth.



Photograph 2 Final posthole

5 Finds

There were no archaeological finds.

6 Discussion

Two small postholes were excavated at Sir Isaac's Walk, Colchester. One was excavated to a depth of 510mm through modern layers. The other was excavated to a depth of 800mm through mainly modern layers but onto a layer of oyster shell at the very bottom. This perhaps suggests the beginning of occupation debris at this depth.

7 Acknowledgements

CAT thanks Philip Wise, Colchester Borough Council for commissioning and funding the work. The project was managed by C Lister and carried out by CL and E Holloway. Figures were prepared by L Pooley. The project was monitored for the CBCPS by 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 miscellaneous sites in Colchester 1971-1985</i> , by P Crummy
CAT Report 347	2009	<i>Roman buildings, the rear face of the Roman town wall and archaeological investigations in Insulas 1a, 1b, 9a and 9b, at the Sixth Form College, North Hill, Colchester, Essex: April 2005-March 2006</i>
CAT Report 394	2006	<i>An archaeological watching brief on a BT cable trench from Head Street to Southway, Colchester, Essex: August-October 2006</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>
Crummy, P	2003	'Colchester's town wall' in <i>The archaeology of Roman towns: studies in honour of John S Wacher</i> , ed by P Wilson
DCLG	2012	<i>National Planning Policy Framework</i>
English Heritage	2006	<i>Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE)</i>
Gurney, D	2003	<i>Standards for field archaeology in the East of England</i> . East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Papers 14 (EAA 14).
Jarmin, A M	1915	'The Colchester town ditch' in <i>Transactions of the Essex Archaeological Society XIII</i> , 107-112
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)
Hull, M R	1958	<i>Roman Colchester</i> , RRC SAL, 20
Wise, P	2016	<i>Heritage Statement: Colchester Town Walls – Headgate</i>

9 Abbreviations and glossary

CAT	Colchester Archaeological Trust
CBCPS	Colchester Borough Council Planning Services
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 (layer) of material
medieval	period from AD 1066 to c 1500
modern	period from c AD 1800 to the present
natural	geological deposit undisturbed by human activity
NGR	National Grid Reference
post-medieval	from c AD 1500 to c 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 sx or Sx) vertical slice through feature/s or layer/s

10 Contents of archive

Finds: n/a

Paper and digital record

One A4 document wallet containing:

The report (CAT Report 1071)

Original site record (feature and layer sheets, plans, sections)

Site digital photos and log, attendance register

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: 2017.13.

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Distribution list

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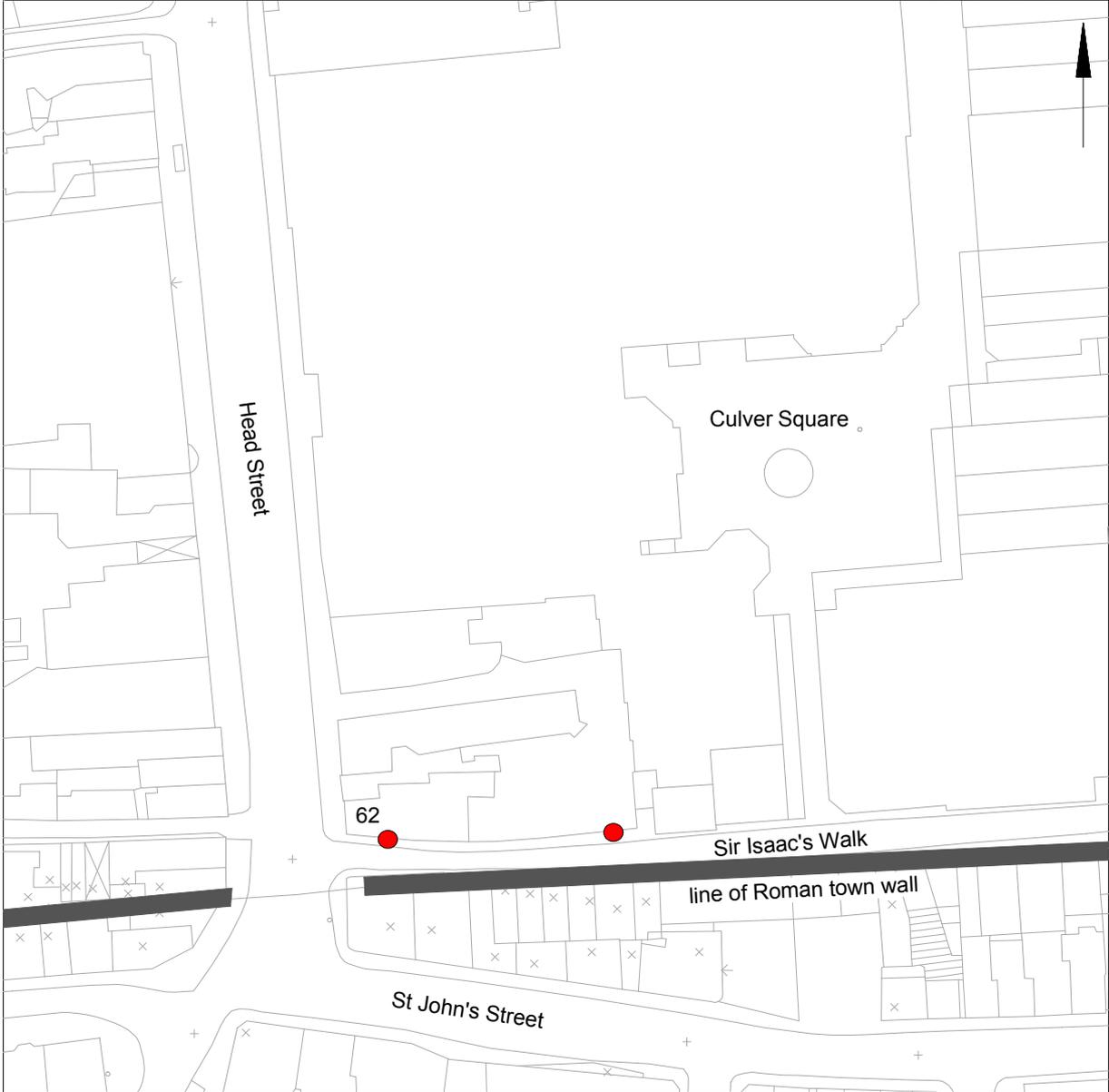
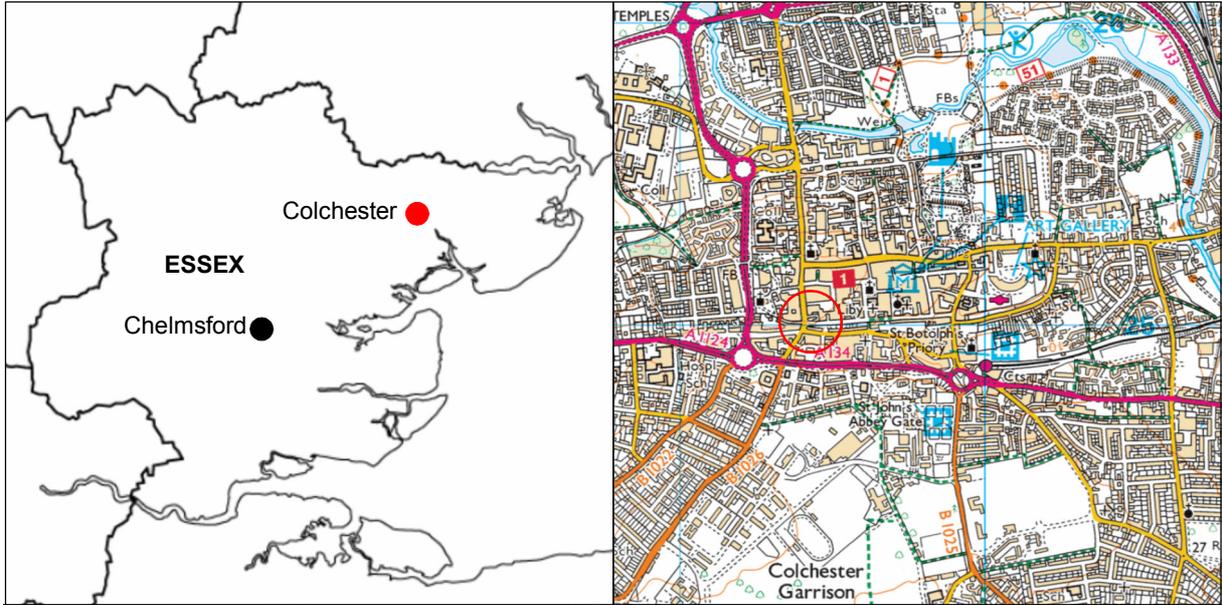
tel.: 01206 501785

email: lp@catuk.org

Checked by: Philip Crummy

Date: 22.2.2017

Date: 24.4.2017



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Fig 1 Site location (red circles)





Fig 2 Results

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Essex Historic Environment Record/ Essex Archaeology and History

Summary sheet

Address: Sir Isaac's Walk, Colchester, Essex, CO1 1JJ	
Parish: Colchester	District: Colchester
NGR: TL 99442 25006 (centre)	Site code: CAT project ref.: 17/02i CHER ref: ECC3956 OASIS ref: colchest3-277115
Type of work: Monitoring and recording	Site director/group: Colchester Archaeological Trust
Date of work: 17th February & 18th April 2017	Size of area investigated: 0.28m ²
Location of curating museum: Colchester museum accession code COLEM: 2017.13	Funding source: Borough Council
Further seasons anticipated? no	Related CHER/SMR numbers:
Final report: CAT Report 1071	
Periods represented: modern	
Summary of fieldwork results: Archaeological monitoring and recording was carried out at Sir Isaac's Walk, Colchester during groundworks for a trial posthole and final posthole for the installation of a new interpretation panel. Located at Headgate, the southwest gate of the Roman city, the trial posthole measured 440mm by 280mm and 510mm deep. The final posthole was actually dug 30m further to the west and measured 450mm by 350mm and 800mm deep. Both were excavated through modern paving laid on a sandy-concrete, onto a layer of modern silty-loam. At the base of the final posthole was a layer of oyster shell.	
Previous summaries/reports: none	
CBC monitor: Jess Tipper	
Keywords: -	Significance: none
Author of summary: Laura Pooley	Date of summary: April 2017

OASIS DATA COLLECTION FORM: England

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OASIS ID: colchest3-277115

Project details

Project name	Archaeological monitoring and recording at Sir Isaac's Walk, Colchester, Essex, CO1 1JJ
Short description of the project	Archaeological monitoring and recording was carried out at Sir Isaac's Walk, Colchester during groundworks for a trial posthole and final posthole for the installation of a new interpretation panel. Located at Headgate, the southwest gate of the Roman city, the trial posthole measured 440mm by 280mm and 510mm deep. The final posthole was actually dug 30m further to the east and measured 450mm by 350mm and 800mm deep. Both were excavated through modern paving laid on a sandy-concrete, onto a layer of modern silty-loam. At the base of the final posthole was a layer of oyster shell.
Project dates	Start: 17-02-2017 End: 18-04-2017
Previous/future work	No / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	17/02i - Contracting Unit No.
Any associated project reference codes	163208 - Planning Application No.
Any associated project reference codes	ECC3956 - HER event no.
Any associated project reference codes	COLEM: 2017.13 - Museum accession ID
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	None
Current Land use	Transport and Utilities 1 - Highways and road transport
Monument type	N/A None
Significant Finds	N/A None
Investigation type	""Watching Brief""
Prompt	Planning condition

Project location

Country	England
Site location	ESSEX COLCHESTER COLCHESTER Sir Isaac's Walk
Postcode	CO1 1JJ
Study area	0.28 Square metres
Site coordinates	TL 99442 25006 51.887351795031 0.898488481351 51 53 14 N 000 53 54 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	Emma Holloway
Project supervisor	Chris Lister
Type of sponsor/funding body	Borough Council

Project archives

Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive recipient	Colchester Museum
Digital Archive ID	COLEM: 2017.13
Digital Contents	"Stratigraphic"
Digital Media available	"Images raster / digital photography"
Paper Archive recipient	Colchester Museum
Paper Archive ID	COLEM: 2017.13
Paper Contents	"Stratigraphic", "other"
Paper Media available	"Context sheet", "Miscellaneous Material", "Photograph", "Plan", "Report", "Section"

Project bibliography 1

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	Archaeological monitoring and recording at Sir Isaac's Walk, Colchester, Essex, CO1 1JJ: February and April 2017
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