

**Archaeological monitoring and recording
on land at St John's Green Primary School,
Abbey Field, 5 Circular Road East,
Colchester, Essex, CO2 7SZ**

April-August 2017



by Dr Elliott Hicks
figures by Chris Lister and Sarah Carter

fieldwork by Alec Wade and Ben Holloway

Commissioned by Duncan Clark, Beardwell Construction Ltd

NGR: TL 99795 24258 (centred)
Planning application number: CC/COL/52/16
CAT project ref.: 17/03a
Colchester Museum accession code: COLEM: 2017.43
EHER ref: CCSJ17
OASIS reference: colchest3-280006



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

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

CAT Report 1163
September 2017

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OASIS Summary

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1 Summary

Archaeological monitoring and recording was carried out at St John's Green Primary School, Abbey Field, 5 Circular Road East, Colchester, Essex in advance of the construction of a two-storey extension to the rear of the school with extension of hard surface play area. The development site is located within a site of considerable Roman archaeological deposits which were excavated in 2013. Despite being located in an area of archaeological interest, no significant archaeological features were uncovered.

2 Introduction (Fig 1)

This report presents the results of archaeological monitoring and recording at St John's Green Primary School, Abbey Field, 5 Circular Road East, Colchester, Essex, which was carried out on the 13th April-24th August 2017. The work was commissioned by Duncan Clark of Beardwell Construction Ltd, in advance of the construction of a two-storey extension to the rear of the school with extension of hard surface play area, and was undertaken by Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT).

In response to consultation with Essex County Council Place Services (ECCPS), Essex County Historic Environment Advisors Richard Havis and Maria Medlycott 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 archaeological work was carried out in accordance with a *Brief for Archaeological Monitoring Land at St John's Green Primary School, Abbey Field, 5 Circular Road East, Colchester*, detailing the required archaeological work, written by Richard Havis (ECCPS 2017), and a written scheme of investigation (WSI) prepared by CAT in response to the brief and agreed with ECCPS (CAT 2017).

In addition to the brief and WSI, 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 briefs* (CIfA 2014a) and *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (CIfA 2014b).

3 Archaeological background

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

St John's Green Primary School has been extensively investigated over the past 15 years being a part of the Colchester Garrison redevelopment project, wherein it was known as 'Area E'. For a full and complete archaeological background of Area E and its immediate environs see CAT Report 778 (<http://cat.essex.ac.uk/all-reports.html>).

The development site was evaluated in 2004 (CAT Report 274) and 2004 (CAT Report 607) and excavated in 2013 (CAT Report 778). These investigations have revealed three phases of Roman activity consisting of a cemetery, ditches and enclosures.

The first phase consisted of 1st-century high-status Roman cemetery to one side of an early ditch (part of a northwest/southeast rectilinear landscape) which may have been its western boundary. The cemetery continued into phase 2, when it may have been associated with a Romanised farmstead building of early Roman date (found by the 2004 trenching) and associated with the northern of two connected east-west

enclosures forming a new landscape arrangement. These enclosures were at right-angles to the presumed north-south course of the Roman road leading to the town's southeast gate, thought to be on the approximate course of Mersea Road to the east.

The east-west landscape may have continued in use into the early 3rd century by when the Romanised building was seemingly abandoned. The Roman cemetery may have continued in use despite the landscape changes. The Phase 2 southern enclosure is likely to have been agricultural in use – a farmyard compound.

In Phase 3 (later 2nd/3rd century) a large sand and gravel quarry was dug through the Phase 1 and 2 ditches and probably through the southern extent of the earlier cemetery. The quarry was itself cut by several large pits on its southern edge which were filled with domestic rubbish and building material of the mid-2nd to 3rd century. This dating is similar to the latest material associated with the Romanised building and may reflect its final phase/ abandonment.

The elite nature of three early burials – including a *bustum* burial of a probable male c AD70 (accompanied by lamps and a coin of Vespasian) and a cremation burial (containing the fittings from a boxed burial and fragments of a mirror) – may indicate that the Phase 1 and 2 cemetery was exclusively used by one prosperous family founded at the time of the colony. The proximity to the Romanised farmstead building might suggest the farmstead had its origins in the 1st century.

A large ditch on the southern edge of the site is probably a circumvallation ditch dug in the Civil War of 1648, east of Fort Needham.

4 Results (Figs 2-3)

Archaeological monitoring at St John's Green Primary School was carried out on a series of occasions between April to August 2017 as and when groundworks were carried out. All groundworks were undertaken by the contractor under archaeological supervision.

On 13 April 2017, a CAT archaeologist observed the excavation of five pads. Each pad measured 1.25-1.3m per side, and was excavated to a depth of 1.3m. Excavation occurred through modern layers only. Modern tarmac and two layers of modern crush (L2, 0.54m thick) had been laid on a thick layer of modern sand (L3, c 0.4-1.3m). Modern grey/brown silty-sand (L4) in the base of pads 2-4 was probably backfill over the 2013 excavation area (CAT Report 778). No significant archaeological horizons or natural ground level was reached during groundworks indicating a significant depth of ground stabilisation had occurred over the site before the school was built.



Photograph 1 Pad 2 sx - looking north

On 21-22 August 2017, a CAT archaeologist oversaw the ground reduction to accommodate an extension to the existing hard play area. An area measuring c 201m² was reduced by 0.22m. Excavation occurred through modern topsoil (L1). No archaeological horizons were encountered as excavations did not extend beyond modern layers.



Photograph 2 Playground extension level reduction - looking south

On 24 August 2017, a CAT archaeologist monitored the reduction of ground to accommodate a new cycle store. An area measuring 8m in length and 3m in width was reduced by 0.15-0.2m. Excavation occurred through L1 onto a layer of made-ground (L5). No archaeological horizons were encountered as excavations did not extend beyond modern layers.

5 Finds

No archaeological finds were recovered.

6 Discussion

Archaeological monitoring and recording at was undertaken at St John's Green Primary School due to the location of the site within an area of significant Roman archaeological deposits which were investigated in 2013. Despite being located within a site of considerable archaeological interest, there were no significant archaeological remains as none of the groundworks extended below modern layers.

7 Acknowledgements

CAT thanks Duncan Clark and Beardwell Construction Ltd for commissioning and funding the work. The project was managed by C Lister and carried out by A Wade and B Holloway. Figures were prepared by C Lister and S Carter. The project was monitored for the ECCPS by Richard Havis and Maria Medlycott.

8 References

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

Brown and Glazenbrook 2000 *Research and Archaeology: A Framework for the Eastern Counties 2 – Research Agenda and Strategy*. East Anglian Archaeology

CAT	2014	<i>Health & Safety Policy</i>
CAT	2017	<i>Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for archaeological monitoring on land at St John's Green Primary School, Abbey Field, 5 Circular Road East, Colchester, Essex, CO2 7SZ</i>
CAT Report 274	2004	<i>An archaeological evaluation by trial-trenching at Area E of the Garrison Urban Village, Colchester, Essex: May 2004</i>
CAT Report 607	2011	<i>Stage 2 archaeological evaluation, Colchester Garrison Alienated Land, Area E (formerly Meeanee & Hyderabad Barracks), Colchester, Essex</i>
CAT Report 778	2013	<i>Roman burials, buildings, and enclosures west of Mersea Road, Colchester: Stage 3 archaeological excavation at Colchester Garrison Alienated Land Area E (GAL E): January 2013</i>
CIfA	2014	<i>Standard and Guidance for archaeological watching briefs</i>
CIfA	2014	<i>Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials</i>
DCLG	2012	<i>National Planning Policy Framework</i>
ECCPS	2017	<i>Brief for Archaeological Monitoring Land at St Johns Green Primary School, Abbey Field, 5 Circular Road East, Colchester</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. East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Papers 14 (EAA 14).</i>
Medlycott, M	2011	<i>Research and Archaeology Revisited: A Revised Framework for the East of England. East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Papers 24 (EAA 24)</i>

9 Abbreviations and glossary

CAT	Colchester Archaeological Trust
CBCPS	Colchester Borough Council Planning Services
CHER	Colchester Historic Environment Record
CIfA	Chartered Institute for Archaeologists
context	specific location of finds on an archaeological site
ECC	Essex County Council
ECCHEA	Essex County Council Historic Environment Advisor
ECCPS	Essex County Council Place Services
EHER	Essex Historic Environment Record
feature (F)	an identifiable thing like a pit, a wall, a drain: can contain 'contexts'
layer (L)	distinct or distinguishable deposit (layer) of material
modern	period from c AD 1800 to the present
natural	geological deposit undisturbed by human activity
NGR	National Grid Reference
OASIS	O nline A ccess to the I ndex of A rchaeological I nvestigations, http://oasis.ac.uk/pages/wiki/Main
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: n/a

Paper and digital record

One A4 document wallet containing:

The report (CAT Report 1163)

ECCPS evaluation brief, CAT written scheme of investigation

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 2017.43

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Distribution list

Duncan Clark
Beardwell Construction Ltd
Richard Havis and Maria Medlycott, Essex County Council Planning Services
Essex Historic Environment Record



Colchester Archaeological Trust

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

tel.: 01206 501785

email: lp@catuk.org

Checked by: Philip Crummy

Date: 6.9.2017

Appendix 1 Context list

Context Number	Finds Number	Feature / layer type	Description	Date
L1	-	Topsoil	Dark brown sandy-silt with occasional tile and brick inclusions	Modern
L2	-	Surface and levelling layer	Tarmac and crush with firm medium grey/brown sandy-silt with frequent gravel and stone inclusions	Modern
L3	-	Make-up layer	Firm medium orange sand	Modern
L4	-	Backfill	Medium grey/brown sandy-silt with occasional tile and brick inclusions	Modern
L5	-	Made ground	Medium grey/brown sandy-silt with frequent gravel, stone and tile/brick inclusions	Modern

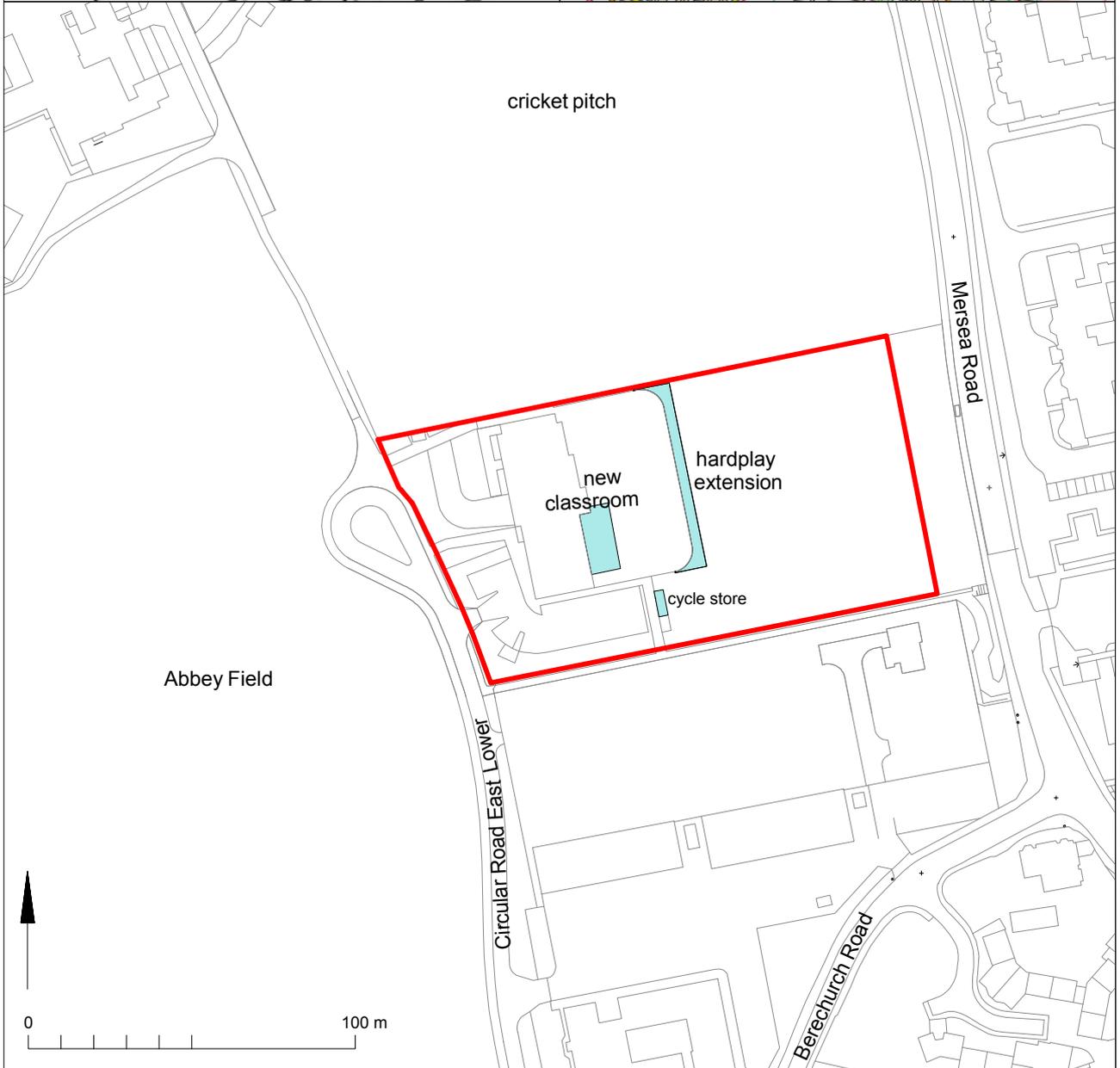
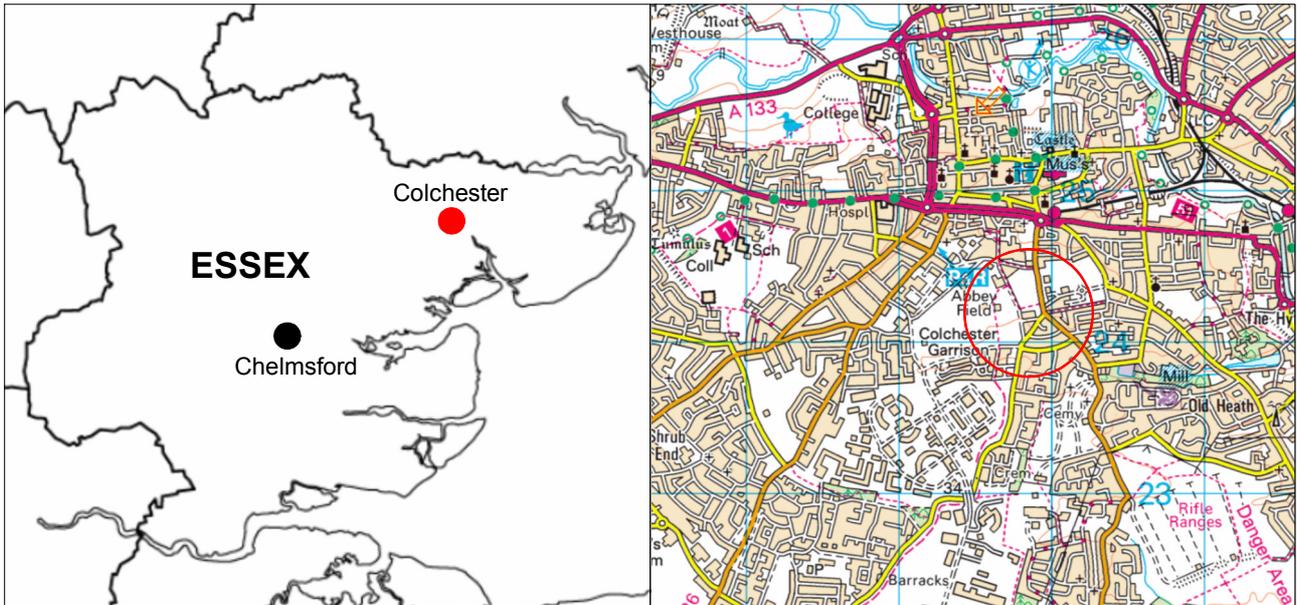


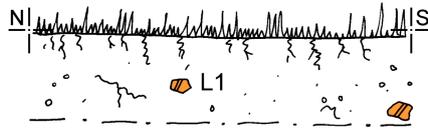
Fig 1 Site location with areas of shaded blue



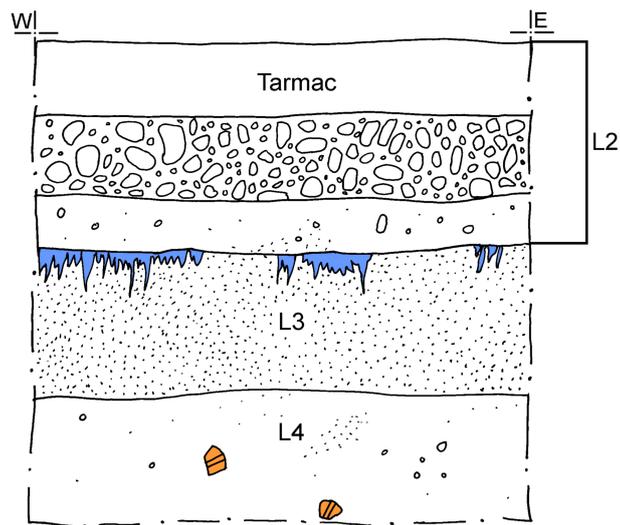
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Fig 2 Monitored areas (shaded blue) in relation to previous archaeological investigations.

Extension of hard-play area



Foundation pad 2



- sand
- small stones
- large stones
- √ roots
- membrane
- modern brick



Fig 3 Representative sections

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OASIS ID: colchest3-280006

Project details

Project name	Archaeological monitoring and recording at St John's Green Primary School, 5 Circular Road East, Colchester, CO2 7SZ
Short description of the project	Archaeological monitoring and recording was carried out at St John's Green Primary School, Abbey Field, 5 Circular Road East, Colchester, Essex in advance of the construction of a two-storey extension to the rear of the school with extension of hard surface play area. The development site is located within a site of considerable Roman archaeological deposits which were excavated in 2013. Despite being located in an area of archaeological interest, no significant archaeological features were uncovered.
Project dates	Start: 13-04-2017 End: 24-08-2017
Previous/future work	Yes / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	17/03a - Contracting Unit No.
Any associated project reference codes	CC/COL/52/16 - Planning Application No.
Any associated project reference codes	COLEM: 2017.43 - Museum accession ID
Any associated project reference codes	CCSJ17 - HER event no.
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	None
Current Land use	Community Service 1 - Community Buildings
Investigation type	""Watching Brief""
Prompt	Planning condition

Project location

Country	England
Site location	ESSEX COLCHESTER COLCHESTER St John's Green Primary School, 5 Circular Road East

Postcode	CO2 7SZ
Study area	1.19 Hectares
Site coordinates	TL 99795 24258 51.880507543879 0.903178393857 51 52 49 N 000 54 11 E Point

Project creators

Name of Organisation	Colchester Archaeological Trust
Project brief originator	HEM Team Officer, ECC
Project design originator	Laura Pooley
Project director/manager	Chris Lister
Project supervisor	Ben Holloway
Type of sponsor/funding body	Developer

Project archives

Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive recipient	Colchester Museum
Digital Archive ID	COLEM: 2017.43
Digital Media available	"Images raster / digital photography", "Survey"
Paper Archive recipient	Colchester Museum
Paper Archive ID	COLEM: 2017.43
Paper Media available	"Context sheet", "Drawing", "Miscellaneous Material", "Photograph", "Report"

Project bibliography 1

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	Archaeological monitoring and recording on land at St John's Green Primary School, Abbey Field, 5 Circular Road East, Colchester, Essex, CO2 7SZ: April-August 2017
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Hicks, E.
Other bibliographic details	CAT Report 1163
Date	2017
Issuer or publisher	Colchester Archaeological Trust
Place of issue or publication	Colchester
Description	A4 loose-leaf ringbound
URL	http://cat.essex.ac.uk/

Entered by Elliott Hicks (lp@catuk.org)
Entered on 6 September 2017

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