

Archaeological monitoring at the former site of St Runwald's Church, High Street, Colchester, Essex, CO1 1SP

July 2019



by Dr Elliott Hicks

with contributions by Megan Seehra

figures by Chris Lister

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commissioned by Mark Dunning, Cadent Gas

NGR: TL 99617 25220 (centre)

CAT project ref.: 19/10k

CHER ref: ECC4394

OASIS reference: colchest3-371737



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CAT Report 1493

December 2019

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OASIS Summary

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Fig 1 Site location

1 Summary

Archaeological monitoring was carried out at the former site of St Runwald's Church, High Street, Colchester, during emergency works to detect the source of a gas leak. St Runwald's Church was located in the middle of Colchester High Street and is thought to date from 8th or 9th century. Groundworks at this site revealed the disarticulated remains of at least two individuals that were likely interred at the church, and were disturbed and reburied during its demolition in 1878. A sample of human bone sent for radiocarbon dating indicates that the burials date from the late 17th to the late 19th century.

2 Introduction (Fig 1)

This report presents the results of archaeological monitoring at the former site of St Runwald's Church, High Street, Colchester, Essex, which was carried out from 2nd to 9th July 2019. The work was commissioned by Mark Dunning of Cadent Gas and was undertaken following emergency works to detect a gas leak. The work was undertaken by Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT).

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 (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 Colchester Archaeological Trust report archive and the Colchester Historic Environment Record (CHER) accessed via the Colchester Heritage Explorer (www.colchesterheritage.co.uk):

The site lies in an area formerly occupied by St Runwald's Church (MCC82). The church stood in an island in the middle of the High Street – 'Middle Row' – and had a rectangular nave with opposing doorways and a square chancel. It was demolished in 1878, but part of the original graveyard remains, situated at the corner of West Stockwell Street and St Runwald's Street, 40m to the north. The dimensions of the church's walls – described as 'nearly three feet' in thickness – and its dedication to St Runwald, the earliest of which date to the 8th century, have led Rodwell and Rodwell to speculate that it was founded in the late Anglo-Saxon period (1977). Gascoyne and Radford similarly suggest that the origins of the church lay in the 9th century (2013). Many of its earlier features were obscured by restoration work undertaken in 1760 prior to its demolition during the following century (Rodwell & Rodwell, 1977).

In 1986 and 1989, CAT carried out an excavation to the north of the site, at Angel Yard on the High Street, Colchester, before it was redeveloped for use as Council offices. These excavations revealed parts of two large Roman houses dating to the mid 2nd century. A probable late 3rd-century dispersed coin hoard was recovered from post-Roman topsoil or 'dark earth' immediately above demolition levels from the more northerly house. The dark earth was subsequently cut by pits of mainly 11th- to 14th-century date. During the 14th century, further additions were made to the rear of buildings fronting both the High Street and West Stockwell Street, evidenced by the remains of foundations, ovens and hearths. By c 1500, the western part of the site had largely been cleared and the area cobbled over, while the eastern part continued to be used, with partial rebuilding, and the re-gravelling of the yard. In the first half of the 17th century, the frontage of 133-134 High Street was rebuilt as a three-storey timber-framed structure divided into two shops (Shimmin & Carter 1996).

Archaeological monitoring of groundworks for the construction of the 'pop-up' toilet, located immediately to the north, was undertaken in October 2006. A medieval or post-medieval floor or path and a cut feature were observed, both of which were thought to have been associated with the church (CAT Report 396).

4 Aim

Archaeological intervention occurred to recover human remains exposed by the groundworks.

5 Results (Figs 2-3)

A CAT archaeologist attended the site to assess the archaeological significance of a contractors' pit excavated to detect a gas leak.

The pit was excavated through accumulated modern paving layers with underlying sub-base approximately 0.7m thick onto a ?demolition layer (soft, dry medium grey silty-sand with frequent CBM and concrete pieces).

No archaeological features were encountered.



Photograph 1 Contractors' pit – looking southwest

6 Finds

There were no finds, although human remains were recovered (see report below).

7 Human bone

by Megan Seehra

Introduction

A small amount of disarticulated human bone was found under the gas pipes in unstratified soils during excavations at Colchester High Street during July 2019. Most of the bones are in fragments and in a poor state of preservation, making the assessment of the bones difficult.

Methodology

The human remains were recorded and analysed using updated guidelines by the IFA (Mitchell & Brickley 2017) and Buikstra & Ubelaker (1994). As the remains were found in unstratified soils, they could not be separated by context or feature number. The

bones were visually inspected for any pathologies, non-metric traits and modifications, which, if any, have been recorded. Stature was recorded based on the original formulae of Trotter and Gleaser (1958).

Quantification

A total of 53 human bone fragments were recovered from the unstratified soils. Not all fragments were identifiable, and the identifiable bones are as follows: at least four femora (two left and two right, only one of which was complete), a partial right pelvis, a left distal end of a humerus, partial fragments of the frontal bone (skull), one lumbar vertebra, proximal end of a right radius, a partial calcaneus, and fragments of an animal vertebra (probably the atlas bone of a cow). The other fragments look to be part of long bones but are otherwise unidentifiable. The total weight of the remains recovered is 1.376 kg.

Minimum number of individuals (MNI)

It is difficult to determine which fragments belong to which individuals. However the femora have a clear difference in size.

The femora were the most prevalent and complete bones present and were therefore used to calculate the MNI. There are two right femora with the proximal end and partial shaft present, and two left femora with the femoral head present. Based on this, there were at least two individuals present in this assemblage, with an uncertain possible third. This report will assume that the MNI is two individuals.

Ageing of individuals

There were several bones present showing the epiphyseal fusion, allowing an estimation for ageing; these include proximal end of the radius, at least four femora, one lumbar vertebra and a partial calcaneus.

The one relatively complete lumbar vertebra showed signs of epiphyseal fusion, placing at least one of the individuals at a minimum age of 23 years old (Schaefer, Black & Scheuer 2009).

There were between four and five femora from this assemblage; three have the femoral head and shaft, one just has the femoral head and greater trochanter, the possible fifth has just the distal end of the femur. Nevertheless, all epiphyses of these bones are fused. We can estimate from this that both individuals (based on the MNI) are of adult age as the age of fusion of the femoral head is between 16-19 years old (Roberts 2009).

There appears to be no significant sign of any joint degeneration, so we can place both individuals at young-middle adult (24-49 years old). It is difficult to place the individuals at a more precise age due to lack of preservation.

Sexing assessment

The four femora (fragments) seem to show a clear division in the two MNI calculated for this assemblage. Based on the comparable size of the femora (Photograph 2), it appears that one individual was a probable male, and another individual was a probable female.

The frontal bone fragment preserved in this assemblage has a smoother, flatter supra-orbital ridge (forehead), with an unpronounced glabella (brow ridge), implying one individual is likely to be female (Buikstra & Ubelaker 1994).

The pelvis is normally a good indicator of determining sex. However the fragment present in this assemblage only has the greater sciatic notch as a method of sexing this bone. This notch is the least reliable method of assessing sex using the pelvis, and the

notch in this instance does not appear to show signs of implying male or female either way (Buikstra & Ubelaker 1994).



Photograph 2 Comparison of femora

Non-metric traits

Non-metric traits are variants in the skeleton that are usually found to be present or absent (e.g. missing wisdom teeth in adulthood) and can be indicative of a genetic trait or environmental conditions.

The partial skull from this assemblage still has the metopic (frontal) suture present (Photograph 3). This suture is present at birth and normally closes around 8 years old (Schaefer, Black & Scheuer 2009; Buikstra & Ubelaker 1994) making the frontal bone one whole bone. However, some individuals still retain their metopic suture into adulthood; the size of this part of the skull indicates the individual was in adulthood, making the suture a non-metric trait. Metopism is thought to be genetic (Silva *et al* 2013), and so the presence of this trait could be useful in determining family relationships within an assemblage.



Photograph 3 Metopic suture on partial skull

Stature

The only complete bone in this assemblage is a left femur, which has been determined as belonging to a possible female. Using the equations by Trotter (1970) (in White & Folkens 2005), this female had an approximate height of between five foot one inches and five foot four inches.

Pathologies and modifications

There appears to be a small amount of eburnation (polishing) on the head of the radius fragment; the same radius also has a very strong radial tuberosity (Photos 4 and 5) with some osteophytes (extra bone growth) around it as well. Eburnation occurs where bones meet to form joints and is usually the result of the destruction of the cartilage at the joint, which means the bones are rubbing together, causing a polished look and a great deal of pain for the individual. It is normally a secondary consequence of osteoarthritis.



Photograph 4 Detail of radius head



Photograph 5 Detail of radius

The osteophytes on the radial tuberosity would also be the result of osteoarthritis (Roberts & Manchester 2010). Bringing in the strong radial tuberosity, it is likely this individual carried out a large amount of manual labour over a long period of time. This does not necessarily place this individual as an older adult (49 years+) as they could have worked from a very early age, or could have sustained some sort of trauma to cause the degeneration of the bone in this way.

This area of joint disease would have occurred at the elbow, uncommon compared to other joints in the body (Roberts & Manchester 2010). If the rest of the skeleton was present, similar pathologies might also be seen in the rest of the arm (humerus, ulna) and shoulder, and may be bilateral.

Some post-deposition damage was noticed among the bones, most notably two teeth marks around the femoral head of a left femur (Photo 6). These appear to belong to an animal, possibly a rat. This is not unusual, especially for disarticulated remains, as the bones would have been disturbed possibly more than once since the original burial.



Photograph 6 Teeth marks on head of left femur

There are also various blunt force depressions and minor cut marks to all femora, and a cut mark to the top of the skull – almost certainly post-deposition – whether due to animal disturbance, the pressure and movement of soil, or during excavation.

8 Radiocarbon Dating

A sample of human bone from the male (Body A) was submitted for radiocarbon dating at SUERC Radiocarbon Laboratory (SUERC-90684; see Appendix 3). The purpose of submitting the sample was to date the human remains recovered from the service trench.

A 2-sigma calibrated date (at 95.4% confidence) of 1670 to 1950 AD was produced. As St Runwald's Church was demolished in 1878, the date of this burial can be refined further and is likely to date somewhere from the late 17th to the late 19th century.

9 Conclusion

Groundworks at this site revealed the disarticulated remains of at least two individuals, one of whom was likely male, the other female, and possibly a third individual.

Epiphyseal fusion was evident, but there was no sign of joint degeneration, indicating that these individuals were either young adults or in middle age, one of whom exhibited evidence of having carried out manual labour over a prolonged period.

These remains lay in unstratified soils and were in a disarticulated and fragmentary state, giving the impression of having been previously disinterred and reburied, probably when the church was demolished. A radiocarbon date of 1670 to 1950 AD, along with the demolition date of church, indicate the burials date from the late 17th to the late 19th century.

10 Acknowledgements

CAT thanks Mark Dunning and Cadent Gas for commissioning and funding the work. The project was managed by C Lister and carried out by C Lister, A Wightman and A Wade. Figures were prepared by C Lister. The project was monitored for the CBCPS by Jess Tipper.

11 References

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

- | | | |
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Folkens, P A

12 Abbreviations and glossary

Anglo-Saxon	period from c 500 – 1066
CAT	Colchester Archaeological Trust
CBCPS	Colchester Borough Council Planning Services
CBM	ceramic building material, ie brick/tile
CHER	Colchester Historic Environment Record
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
modern	period from c AD 1800 to the present
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
Roman	the period from AD 43 to c AD 410

13 Contents of archive

Finds: all human bone reburied

Paper record

One A4 document wallet containing:

The report (CAT Report 1493)

Site digital photos and log

Digital record

The report (CAT Report 1493)

Graphics

Site digital photos and log

Survey Data

14 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 ref. no. ECC4394.

Distribution list

Mark Dunning, Cadent Gas

Jess Tipper, Colchester Borough Council Planning Services

Essex Historic Environment Record



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tel.: 01206 501785

email: eh2@catuk.org

Checked by: Philip Crummy

Date: 12.12.2019

RADIOCARBON DATING CERTIFICATE

12 December 2019

Laboratory Code SUERC-90684 (GU54004)

Submitter Laura Pooley
Colchester Archaeological Trust
Roman Circus House
Roman Circus Walk
Colchester
Essex CO2 7GZ

Site Reference Colchester High Street 2019/10k

Context Reference unstratified

Sample Reference Body A

Material Human remains

$\delta^{13}\text{C}$ relative to VPDB -19.6 ‰

$\delta^{15}\text{N}$ relative to air 13.3 ‰

C/N ratio (Molar) 3.3

Radiocarbon Age BP 179 \pm 22

N.B. The above ^{14}C age is quoted in conventional years BP (before 1950 AD) and requires calibration to the calendar timescale. The error, expressed at the one sigma level of confidence, includes components from the counting statistics on the sample, modern reference standard and blank and the random machine error.

Samples with a SUERC coding are measured at the Scottish Universities Environmental Research Centre AMS Laboratory and should be quoted as such in any reports within the scientific literature. The laboratory GU coding should also be given in parentheses after the SUERC code.

Detailed descriptions of the methods employed by the SUERC Radiocarbon Laboratory can be found in Dunbar et al. (2016) *Radiocarbon* 58(1) pp.9-23.

For any queries relating to this certificate, the laboratory can be contacted at suerc-c14lab@glasgow.ac.uk.

Conventional age and calibration age ranges calculated by :



Checked and signed off by :



SUERC-90684 (179,22)

68.2% probability

1690 (16.3%) 1740AD

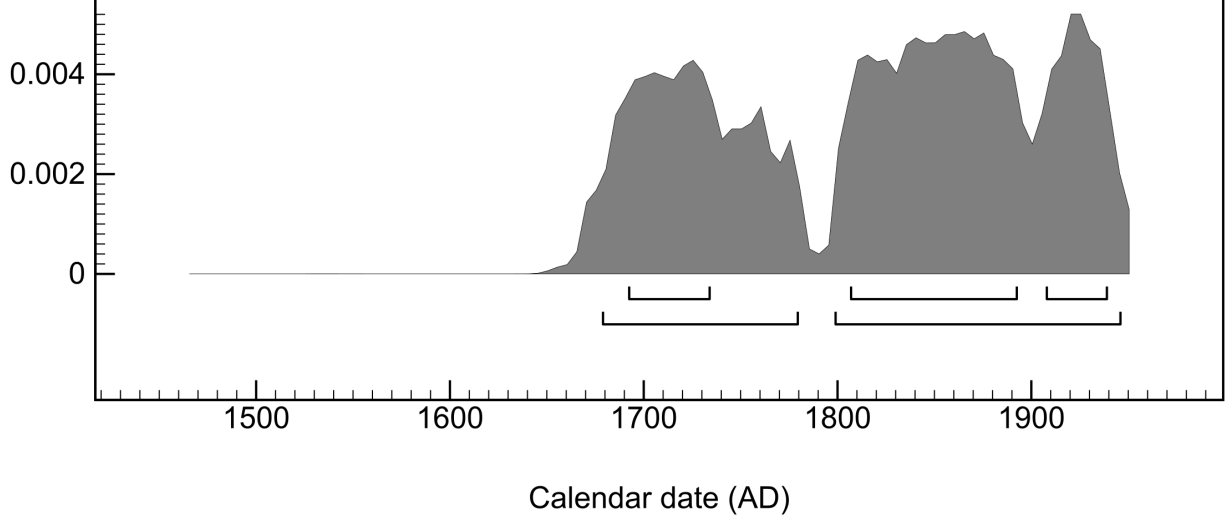
1800 (51.9%) 1940AD

95.4% probability

1670 (33.5%) 1780AD

1790 (61.9%) 1950AD

Probability density



The radiocarbon age given overleaf is calibrated to the calendar timescale using the Oxford Radiocarbon Accelerator Unit calibration program OxCal 4.*

The above date ranges have been calibrated using a mix of the IntCal13 and Marine13 calibration curves. †

Human bone collagen with a $\delta^{13}\text{C}$ value above -20‰ , accompanied by a raised $\delta^{15}\text{N}$ value, is taken to indicate a marine component in the diet. The percentage contribution of this marine component is calculated using end-members of -21.0‰ (fully terrestrial) and -12.5‰ (fully marine) with an uncertainty of 10% applied.

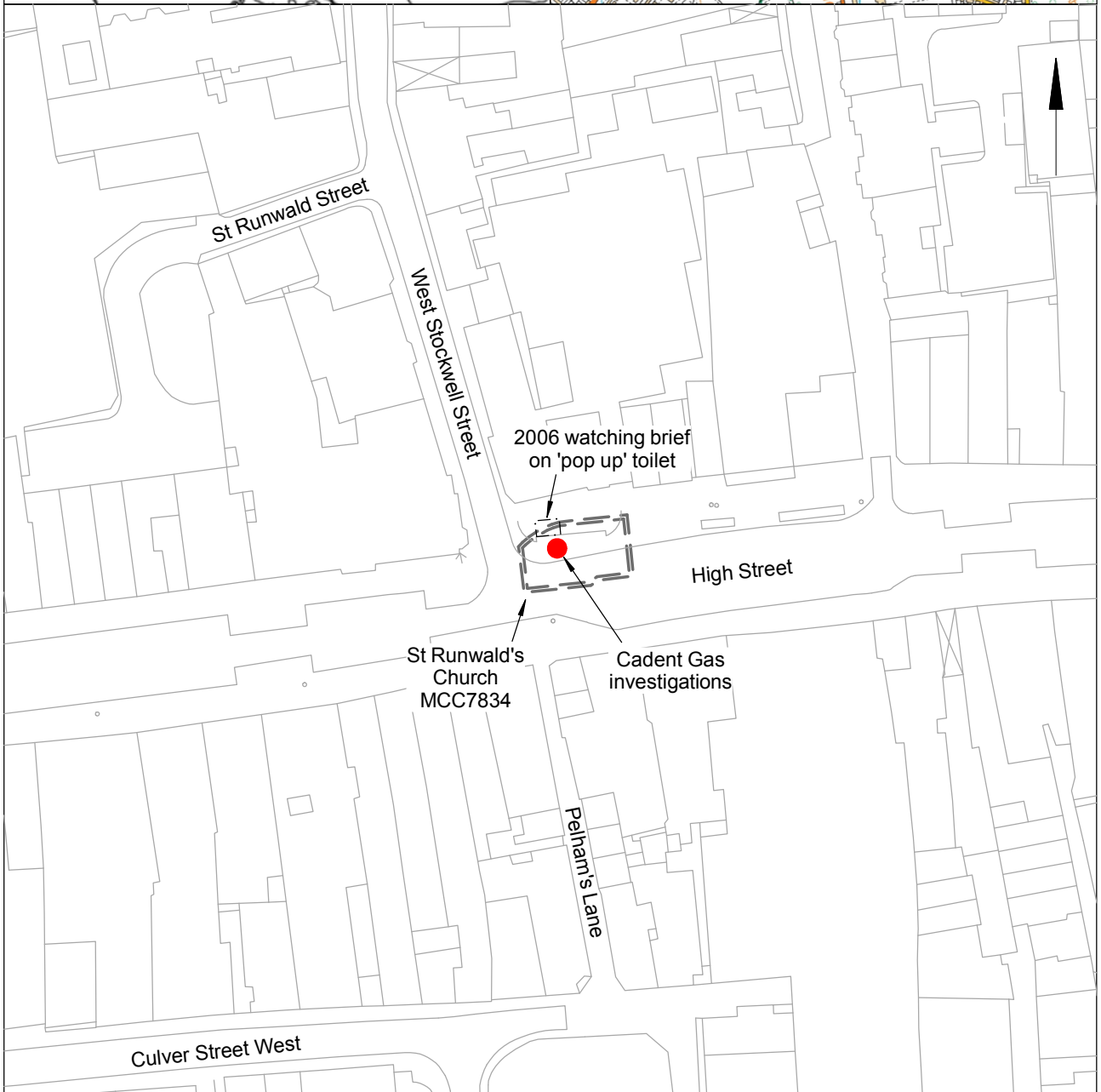
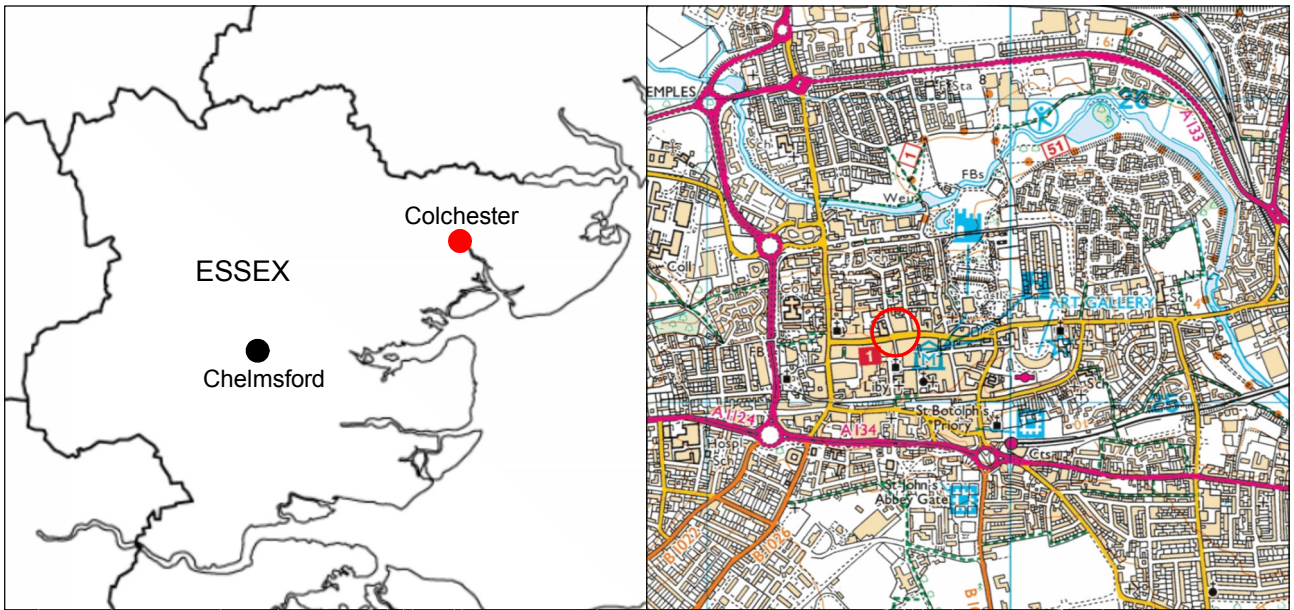
The $\delta^{13}\text{C}$ value of -19.6‰ gives a 16% marine contribution ($\pm 10\%$).

A regional marine offset (ΔR) of 0 ± 50 years has been used in the calibration.

Please contact the laboratory if you wish to discuss this further.

* Bronk Ramsey (2009) *Radiocarbon* 51(1) pp.337-60

† Reimer et al. (2013) *Radiocarbon* 55(4) pp.1869-87



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Fig 1 Site location.

0 50 m

Essex Historic Environment Record/ Essex Archaeology and History

Summary sheet

Address: The former site of St Runwald's Church, High Street, Colchester, Essex, CO1 1UN	
Parish: Colchester	District: Colchester
NGR: TL 99617 25220 (centre)	Site code: CAT project ref.: 19/10k CHER ref: ECC4394 OASIS ref: colchest3-371737
Type of work: Monitoring	Site director/group: Colchester Archaeological Trust
Date of work: 2nd-9th July 2019	Size of area investigated: 1m ²
Location of curating museum: Colchester museum	Funding source: Developer
Further seasons anticipated? no	Related CHER/SMR number: CHER MCC82
Final report: CAT Report 1493	
Periods represented: ?Anglo-Saxon, ?Medieval	
Summary of fieldwork results: <i>Archaeological monitoring was carried out at the former site of St Runwald's Church, High Street, Colchester, during emergency works to detect the source of a gas leak. St Runwald's Church was located in the middle of Colchester High Street and is thought to date from 8th or 9th century. Groundworks at this site revealed the disarticulated remains of at least two individuals that were likely interred at the church, and were disturbed and reburied during its demolition in 1878. A sample of human bone sent for radiocarbon dating indicates that the burials date from the late 17th to the late 19th century.</i>	
Previous summaries/reports: -	
CBC monitor: Dr Jess Tipper	
Keywords: -	Significance: None
Author of summary: Dr Elliott Hicks	Date of summary: December 2019

OASIS DATA COLLECTION FORM: England

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Printable version

OASIS ID: colchest3-371737

Project details

Project name	Archaeological monitoring at the former site of St Runwald's Church, High Street, Colchester, Essex, CO1 1SP: July 2019
Short description of the project	Archaeological monitoring was carried out at the former site of St Runwald's Church, High Street, Colchester, during emergency works to detect the source of a gas leak. St Runwald's Church was located in the middle of Colchester High Street and is thought to date from 8th or 9th century. Groundworks at this site revealed the disarticulated remains of at least two individuals that were likely interred at the church, and were disturbed and reburied during its demolition in 1878. A sample of human bone sent for radiocarbon dating indicates that the burials date from the late 17th to the late 19th century.
Project dates	Start: 02-07-2019 End: 09-07-2019
Previous/future work	No / No
Any associated project reference codes	ECC4394 - HER event no.
Any associated project reference codes	19/10k - Contracting Unit No.
Any associated project reference codes	colchest3-371737 - OASIS form ID
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	None
Current Land use	Other 11 - Thoroughfare
Monument type	N/A None
Significant Finds	HUMAN BONE Post Medieval

Project location

Country	England
Site location	ESSEX COLCHESTER COLCHESTER The former site of St Runwald's Church, High Street, Colchester, Essex, CO1 1SP
Postcode	CO1 1SP
Study area	1 Square metres
Site coordinates	TL 99617 25220 51.889210645623 0.901152077919 51 53 21 N 000 54 04 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	Cadent Gas

Project archives

Physical Archive Exists?	No
Physical Archive notes	The human bones recovered were reburied.
Digital Archive recipient	Colchester Museum
Digital Archive ID	ECC4394
Digital Media available	"Images raster / digital photography","Text"
Paper Archive recipient	Colchester Museum
Paper Archive ID	ECC4394
Paper Media available	"Photograph","Report"

Project bibliography 1

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	Archaeological monitoring at the former site of St Runwald's Church, High Street, Colchester, Essex, CO1 1SP: July 2019
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Hicks, E.
Other bibliographic details	CAT Report 1493
Date	2019
Issuer or publisher	Colchester Archaeological Trust
Place of issue or publication	Colchester
Description	A4 loose-leaf ring-bound
URL	http://cat.essex.ac.uk
Entered by	Dr Elliott Hicks (eh2@catuk.org)

Entered on 13 December 2019

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