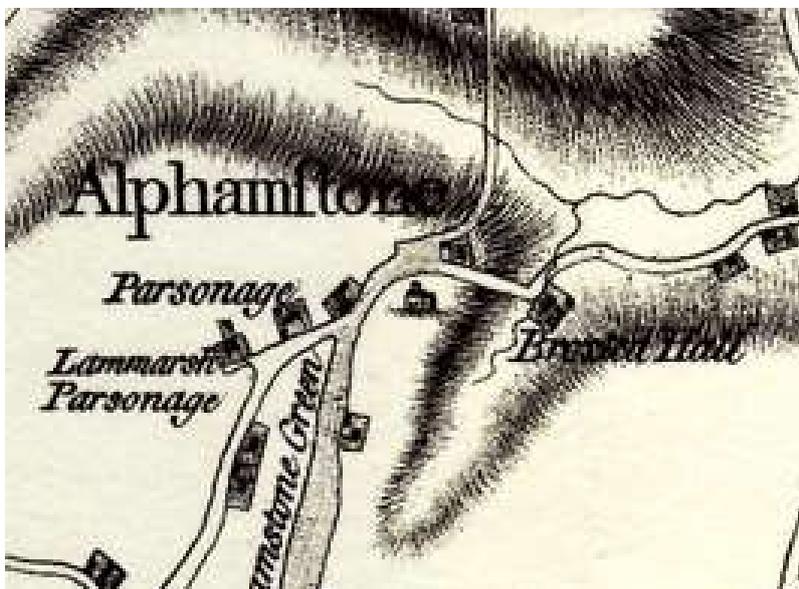


Archaeological evaluation at St Barnabas' Church, Lamarsh Road, Alphamstone, Essex, CO8 5HS

June 2020



by **Dr Elliott Hicks**

with contributions by Dr Matthew Loughton, Adam Wightman and Laura Pooley
figures by Chris Lister, Mark Baister and Emma Holloway

fieldwork by Mark Baister

**commissioned by David Whymark
on behalf of St Barnabas' Church PCC**

NGR: TL 87878 35461 (centre)

Planning ref.: pre-planning

CAT project code: 20/03h

ECC code: APSB20

OASIS ref.: colchest3-390227



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CAT Report 1564

June 2020

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1 Summary

An archaeological evaluation of two trial-trenches was carried out at St Barnabas' Church, Lamarsh Road, Alhamstone, Essex in advance of the construction of a new shed housing a toilet and a flower arranging and mower storage area with associated services. The church is thought to pre-date the Norman invasion, and to have been built at the site of an earlier Anglo-Saxon minster church. There are several sarsen stones within the churchyard, which lies immediately to the north of the known site of a Roman villa complex. Excavations revealed a possible grave cut, a post-medieval or modern burial vault or funerary monument foundation and a modern pit.

2 Introduction (Fig 1)

This is the report for an archaeological evaluation by trial-trenching at St Barnabas' Church, Lamarsh Road, Alhamstone, Essex, which was carried out on 18th June 2020. The work was commissioned by David Whymark on behalf of St Barnabas' Church PCC in advance of the construction of a new shed housing a toilet and a flower arranging and mower storage area with associated services. The work was undertaken by Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT).

In response to consultation with Essex County Council Place Services (ECCPS) Historic Environment Advisor Teresa O'Connor and Diocesan Archaeological Advisor Debbie Priddy it was 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 the *National Planning Policy Framework* (MHCLG 2019).

All archaeological work was carried out in accordance with a *Brief for archaeological trial trenching*, detailing the required archaeological work, written by Teresa O'Connor (ECCPS 2017), and a written scheme of investigation (WSI) prepared by CAT in response to the brief and agreed with ECCPS (CAT 2020).

In addition to the brief and WSI, all fieldwork and reporting was done in accordance with Historic England's *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE)*, 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 evaluation (ClfA 2014a)*, *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 Essex Historic Environment Records (EHER) held at Essex County Council, County Hall, Chelmsford, Essex (accessible via <http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk>).

The Church of St Barnabas lies on elevated land in the midst of arable fields. It formerly had another dedication, but it is not known. The nave walls are 0.8m thick and are thought to pre-date the Norman conquest. Rodwell and Rodwell consider St Barnabas' as the likely site of an Anglo-Saxon minster church (Rodwell & Rodwell 1977, 94). Minsters were monastic churches founded by the early Christian missionaries which existed between the 7th and 11th centuries. They were occupied by a peripatetic clergy, primarily Celtic monks, who travelled into the wider area to minister to its inhabitants. During ground reduction carried out at the north side of the nave and chancel carried out in the 1980s, it was found that a portion of the face of the north wall is formed of skulls and long bones. It was thought that this represented charnel from graves disturbed during the construction of the church, lending further credence to speculation that an earlier church had previously stood at the site. The south aisle and chancel were constructed in the 14th century. In the 16th century the chancel was partially

rebuilt, and the south porch was added in either the 16th or 17th century. The church was restored in the 19th century (Bennett & Gilman 1989, 150; EHER nos. 9321-9324 & 28558).

A scheduled Roman villa complex lies in a field immediately to the south of the churchyard (Scheduled Ancient Monument no 24872). The south edge of the churchyard overlies and follows the course of a rubble and mortar wall which forms part of this complex. A spread of tegulae, imbrex, box flue tile fragments and sherds of predominantly 3rd- and 4th-century pottery lies across this part of the field and in the early 20th century, the owner of the field reported walls and burnt rubbish extending southwards from the churchyard. More Roman pottery, mostly of 1st-century date, as well as a bronze needle, a coin of Valerian and another coin, possibly of Magnetius, have also been found within the churchyard itself. A cropmark recorded at NGR: TL 8787 3540 marks the location of one of the main buildings within the complex. Geophysical investigation of the area by resistivity and magnetometry conducted in 2004 identified potential wall lines to the west of the site. Several strong anomalies were recorded within the churchyard but none resembled the lay-out of a structure. (EHER nos. 9317-8).

A number of sarsen stones lie within the churchyard, and it has been speculated that these represent the remains of a prehistoric stone circle (EHER 9320). Several of these stones have actually been incorporated into the church itself, suggesting that the construction of the church on this site represented an attempt to Christianise a pagan site (EHER 9323). Stone circles are often surrounded by Bronze Age burials, and an Early Bronze cremation cemetery has also been discovered here, with several urns discovered within the churchyard and in a field to the west (EHER 9319).

In 2007, CAT carried out an excavation at the church. Three test-holes were dug by hand at the northern side of the nave. A number of features – some pre-dating the construction of the nave – were encountered. Of principal interest was an east-west aligned inhumation burial, the orientation of which suggests that the deceased was a Christian. The burial partially underlies and thus pre-dates the nave of the church. It is possible that this burial is late Roman in date, but it is more likely to originate from the Anglo-Saxon or Norman periods. Another deposit of Roman date revealed in another of the test-holes may have been part of a large pit or ditch, perhaps a rubbish-pit associated with the nearby villa. Residual Roman pottery and tile was recovered during excavations.

The foundation of the nave was found to be constructed out of unmortared stone and earth and to extend to between 0.4-0.5m below current ground level [bcgl]. It was also found that it had not been dug through undisturbed natural clay but rather lay on top of cut features or a layer. All these deposits pre-date the construction of the nave, which possibly has its origins prior to the Norman conquest, and so the layers of made ground within the churchyard must be of some antiquity (CAT Report 417, EHER nos. 9321-3, 28558).

4 Aim

The aim of the archaeological evaluation was to determine the potential of the proposed new development to damage significant archaeological remains within the churchyard.

5 Results (Figs 2-3)

Feature, layer and finds numbers used during the current excavation follow on from numbers assigned during the test-pit excavation undertaken at this site by CAT in 2007 (CAT Report 417).

One archaeological trial-trench was machine excavated under the supervision of a CAT archaeologist. The trench was 30m long by 1.8m wide.

The trench was cut through modern topsoil (L1, c 0.19-0.24m thick, loose/soft moist dark brown/black sandy-silt) into a layer of burial soil (L4, firm, dry medium grey/brown sandy-silt with CBM pieces, iron nails and disarticulated human bone) until a possible grave cut was encountered.

Post-medieval or modern burial vault or funerary monument foundation F9 was uncovered. It was constructed out of unfrosted red bricks bonded in lime mortar. The base of the feature lay at an approximate depth of 0.55m bcgl.



Photograph 1 F9 – looking east northeast

Possible medieval or post-medieval grave cut F8 was uncovered at the southwest end of the trench at an approximate depth of 0.8m bcgl. It appeared to be aligned E-W. It was not excavated.



Photograph 2 F8 – looking east northeast

Modern pit F10 was observed in section cutting L4 and sealed by L1. It was 0.45m wide and was excavated to a depth of 0.34m but the base of the pit was not revealed.

6 Finds

6.1 Ceramic finds

by Dr Matthew Loughton

A small assemblage of Roman and post-Roman ceramic building material (henceforth CBM) was recovered from burial soil L4 (Table 1). Roman CBM included roof tile (tegulae, imbrex) – including one sherd with a possible nail hole – and tesserae cubes. Post-Roman CBM consisted of medieval or post-medieval peg-tile. There was also a sherd of coarse, principally-locally produced Roman grey ware pottery (fabric GX) from a small beaker or jar (Cam 108?) dating from c AD 44 to the end of the 2nd century AD. Finally, there was also a piece of roofing slate and two pieces of mortar.

Ceramic material	no.	weight/g	MSW/g	Rim EVE
Pottery	1	7	7	0.18
CBM	19	2,244	119	-
SBM	1	7	7	-
All	21	2,258	108	0.18

Table 1 Details on the main types of ceramics and pottery

6.2 Flints

by Adam Wightman

Three flints were recovered from burial soil L4 (13). The first was a large, secondary hard-hammer flake with retouch on the ventral face at the distal end and the proximal end (retouched notch) which is of Neolithic or Bronze Age date. A thick secondary hard-hammer flake, which was a waste flake from knapping process, and a possible core with some potential hard-hammer flake removals were also found. These might either be prehistoric or alternatively may be waste pieces from the construction of the church.

6.3 Other finds

by Laura Pooley

An iron nail came from L4 (finds no.13). The nail was complete with a rectangular-sectioned shank and flat head of figure-eight shape, 44.5mm long, 3.2g, of probable medieval date.

7 Conclusion

Excavations at this site revealed a possible medieval or post-medieval grave cut at a depth of 0.8m bcgl. As excavations ceased once a possible grave cut had been reached, it may be that further inhumation burials lie at deeper depths within the area of the evaluation trench. A burial vault or funerary monument foundation was also uncovered. It was probably of late 18th- or early 19th-century date. The area of the proposed development apparently overlies graves.

As excavations did not penetrate beyond medieval or post-medieval layers no Roman remains associated with the villa complex situated to the south were encountered and nor was there any evidence of the Anglo-Saxon minster church which is thought to have stood at this site. A small assemblage of Roman CBM was recovered, however.

8 Acknowledgements

CAT thanks David Whymark and St Barnabas' Church PCC for commissioning and funding the work. The project was managed by C Lister, fieldwork was carried out by M Baister. Figures are by C Lister, M Baister and E Holloway. The project was monitored for ECCPS by Teresa O'Connor and by Diocesan Archaeological Advisor Debbie Priddy.

9 References

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

- | | | |
|--------------------------|-------|--|
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10 Abbreviations and glossary

Anglo-Saxon	period from c 500 – 1066
Bronze Age	period from c 2500 – 700 BC
CAT	Colchester Archaeological Trust
CBM	ceramic building material, ie brick/tile
ClfA	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
EHHER	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
medieval	period from AD 1066 to c 1500
modern	period from c AD 1800 to the present
natural	geological deposit undisturbed by human activity
Neolithic	period from c 4000 – 2500 BC
NGR	National Grid Reference
OASIS	Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigation S , http://oasis.ac.uk/pages/wiki/Main
peg-tile	rectangular thin tile with peg-hole(s) used mainly for roofing, first appeared c AD1200 and continued in use to present day, but commonly post-medieval to modern
post-medieval	from c AD 1500 to c 1800
prehistoric	pre-Roman
Roman	the period from AD 43 to c AD 410

section (abbreviation sx or Sx) vertical slice through feature/s or layer/s
WSI Written Scheme of Investigation

11 Contents of archive

Finds: none retained

Paper record

One A4 document wallet containing:

The report (CAT Report 1564)

ECC evaluation brief, CAT written scheme of investigation

Original site record (sections)

Site digital photos and log

Inked section drawings

Digital record

The report (CAT Report 1564)

ECC evaluation brief, CAT written scheme of investigation

Graphics

Site digital photos and log

Survey data

12 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 Braintree Museum under project ref. APSB20.

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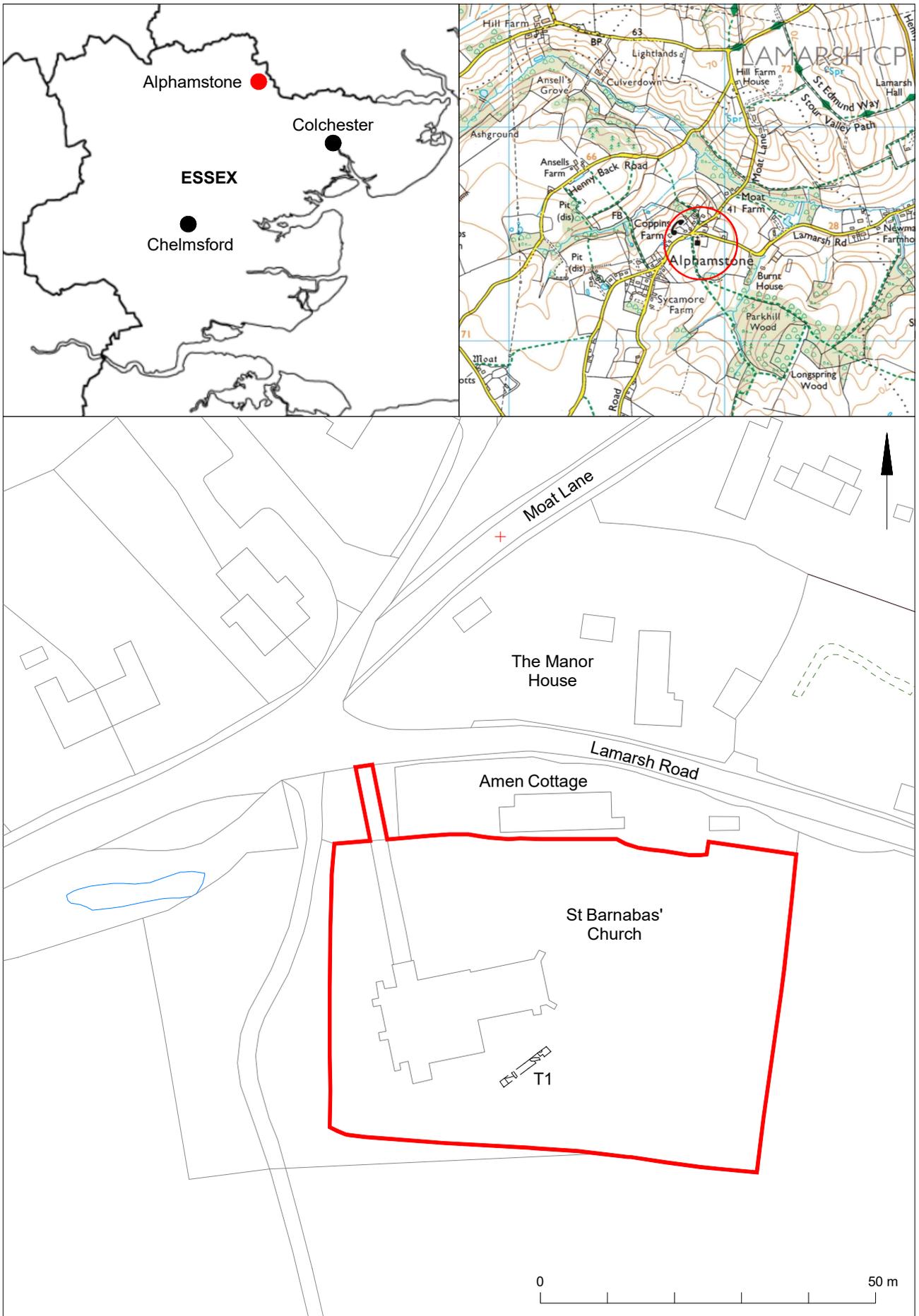
email: eh2@catuk.org

Checked by: Philip Crummy

Date: 13.08.2020

Appendix 1 Pottery list

Cxt	Feature type	Find no.	TR	NR	GR.	MSW	Discard	Rim	Handle	Base	Dec.	STAMP	GRAF Pre-F	GRAF Post-F	Wind Int	Wind EX	Soot Int	Soot EX	Burn Int	Burn Ext	Overfired	Residue	Abraded	Modif	Mark	Repair hole	Hole	Disc	Polishing	Fabric Grp	Typology	EVE	Diam.	Vessel Height	Comments	Date
L4	?	13		1	7	7		1	0	0																			GX	Cam 108	0.18	90		? small beaker/jar	AD 44-130/140/200?	



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Fig 1 Site location.

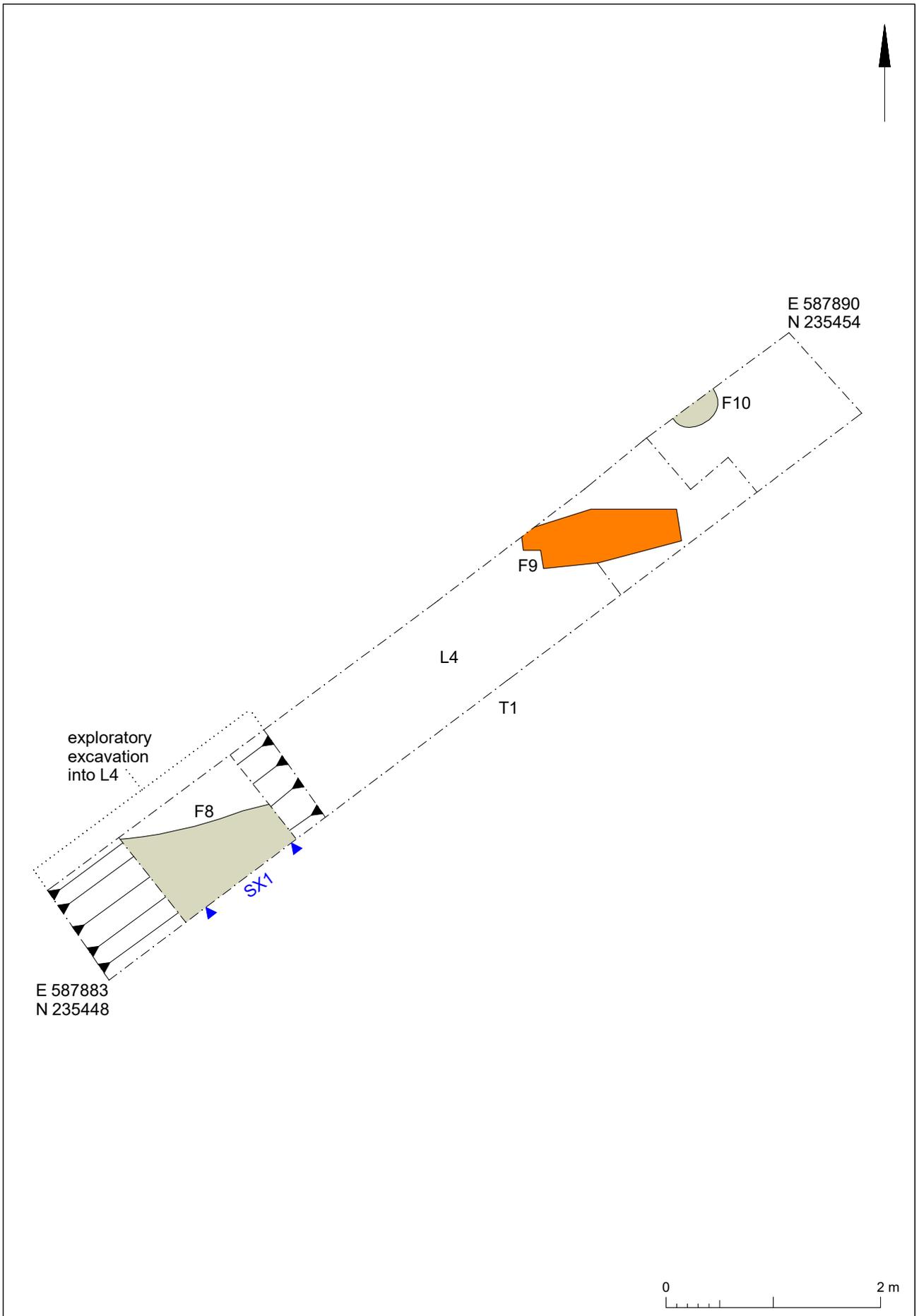


Fig 2 Evaluation results.

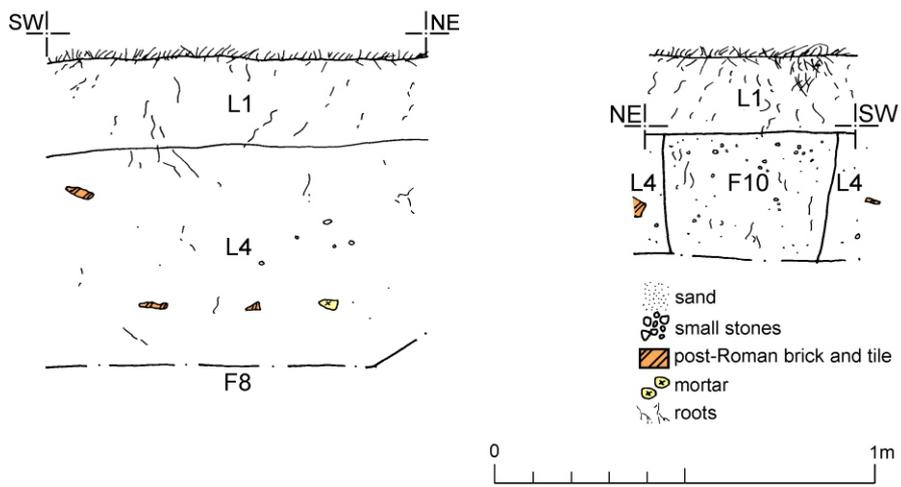


Fig 3 Sections.

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OASIS ID: colchest3-390227

Project details

Project name	Archaeological evaluation at St Barnabas' Church, Lamarsh Road, Alphamstone, Essex, CO8 5HS.
Short description of the project	An archaeological evaluation of two trial-trenches was carried out at St Barnabas' Church, Lamarsh Road, Alphamstone, Essex in advance of the construction of a new shed housing a toilet and a flower arranging and mower storage area with associated services. The church is thought to pre-date the Norman invasion, and to have been built at the site of an earlier Anglo-Saxon minster church. There are several sarsen stones lie within the churchyard, which lies immediately to the north of the known site of a Roman villa complex. Excavations revealed a possible grave cut, a post-medieval or modern burial vault or funerary monument foundation and a modern pit.
Project dates	Start: 18-06-2020 End: 18-06-2020
Previous/future work	Yes / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	APSB20 - Sitecode
Any associated project reference codes	colchest3-390227 - OASIS form ID
Any associated project reference codes	2020/03h - Contracting Unit No.
Any associated project reference codes	9321-9324 and 28558 - HER event no.
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	Listed Building
Current Land use	Other 4 - Churchyard
Monument type	BURIAL VAULT Post Medieval
Monument type	FUNERARY MONUMENT Post Medieval
Monument type	GRAVE CUT Medieval
Monument type	GRAVE CUT Post Medieval
Monument type	PIT Modern
Significant Finds	CBM Roman
Significant Finds	CBM Medieval
Significant Finds	CBM Post Medieval
Significant Finds	POTTERY Roman
Significant Finds	SLATE Uncertain
Significant Finds	MORTAR Uncertain
Methods & techniques	""Targeted Trenches""
Development type	Public building (e.g. school, church, hospital, medical centre, law courts etc.)
Prompt	Faculty jurisdiction
Position in the planning process	Pre-application

Project location

Country	England
Site location	ESSEX BRAINTREE ALPHAMSTONE St Barnabas' Church, Lamarsh Road, Alphamstone
Postcode	CO8 5HS
Study area	0.31 Hectares
Site coordinates	TL 87878 35461 51.985289182508 0.736352398515 51 59 07 N 000 44 10 E Point

Project creators

Name of Organisation	Colchester Archaeological Trust
Project brief originator	HEM Team Officer, ECC
Project design originator	Emma Holloway
Project director/manager	Chris Lister
Project supervisor	Mark Baister
Type of sponsor/funding body	Parochial Church Council
Name of sponsor/funding body	St Barnabas' Church PCC

Project archives

Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive recipient	Braintree Museum
Digital Archive ID	APSB20
Digital Media available	"Images raster / digital photography", "Text"
Paper Archive recipient	Braintree Museum
Paper Archive ID	APSB20
Paper Media available	"Miscellaneous Material", "Photograph", "Report", "Section"

Project bibliography 1

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
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