

Report
on a trial trench in the gardens of
Tymperleys House,
Trinity Street, Colchester.

5th August 1999

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CAT Report 40

Report on a trial trench in the gardens of Tymperleys House, Trinity Street, Colchester.

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Abstract

A trial trench was dug against the south wall of the gardens of Tymperleys House. The following strata were encountered : modern concrete slab and brick rubble foundation (to 0.24m below modern slab top), and made ground - various garden topsoil layers (to 1.30m below modern slab top). The bottom of the brick garden wall not located, and must therefore be deeper than 1.30m below modern slab top.

The trench revealed a sequence of topsoil layers, indicating that soil had been dumped here in post-medieval times to raise the level of the garden (which stands considerably higher than the properties to the south). Finds recovered dated from the Roman period (residual here), and principally from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries.

Introduction

In connection with the redevelopment of the north block of Scrutton Bland's premises (18, Sir Isaac's Walk), a trial trench was commissioned by Mr Peter Scott of Scott & Masters Chartered Architects. The aim was to establish, for engineering purposes, the depth of the standing wall between 18, Sir Isaac's Walk and Tymperleys garden. Due to the potential archaeological significance of this area in general, and specifically because a Roman tessellated floor had been recorded somewhere in the garden of what is now called Tymperleys¹, the Colchester Borough Council Archaeology Officer (Mr Martin Winter) requested that the trench should be dug by qualified archaeologist(s). Subsequently, Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) was asked to carry out the work. All site work, examination of finds, and report writing took place on 5th August 1999. The finds and notes will be deposited at Colchester Museums under accession number 1999.108.

Description of Excavation

An exploratory trench was dug by hand against the south wall, near the south-west corner of the gardens of Tymperleys Clock Museum (see location plan). The top layer (the concrete slab foundation of a former out-house) had been broken by contractors working for Mr Scott. Excavation below slab depth was all carried out by hand by CAT staff. The following strata were encountered under the modern concrete slab (Layer 1):

- *Layer 2: brick rubble foundation for concrete slab (0.14m thick)*
- *Layer 3 top: very dark greyish brown topsoil; no large inclusions, but a gritty feel with small flecks of mortar and brick (0.5m thick)*
- *Layer 3 middle: a greyish brown topsoil, slightly grittier than above (perhaps 5% of total) (0.25m thick).*
- *Layer 3 bottom: as layer 3 top (0.30m thick).*

A plan was prepared to show the location of the trench, and of the strata exposed in the west section of the trench. Photographs were taken of the hole and the location. All finds were collected.

¹

Hull, 1958, 209, no. 77

Finds

The following finds were recovered, all from layer 3. Weights are in grammes. Fabric descriptions are after Cunningham 1985 (medieval and later fabrics), and Symonds and Wade 1999 (Roman fabrics)

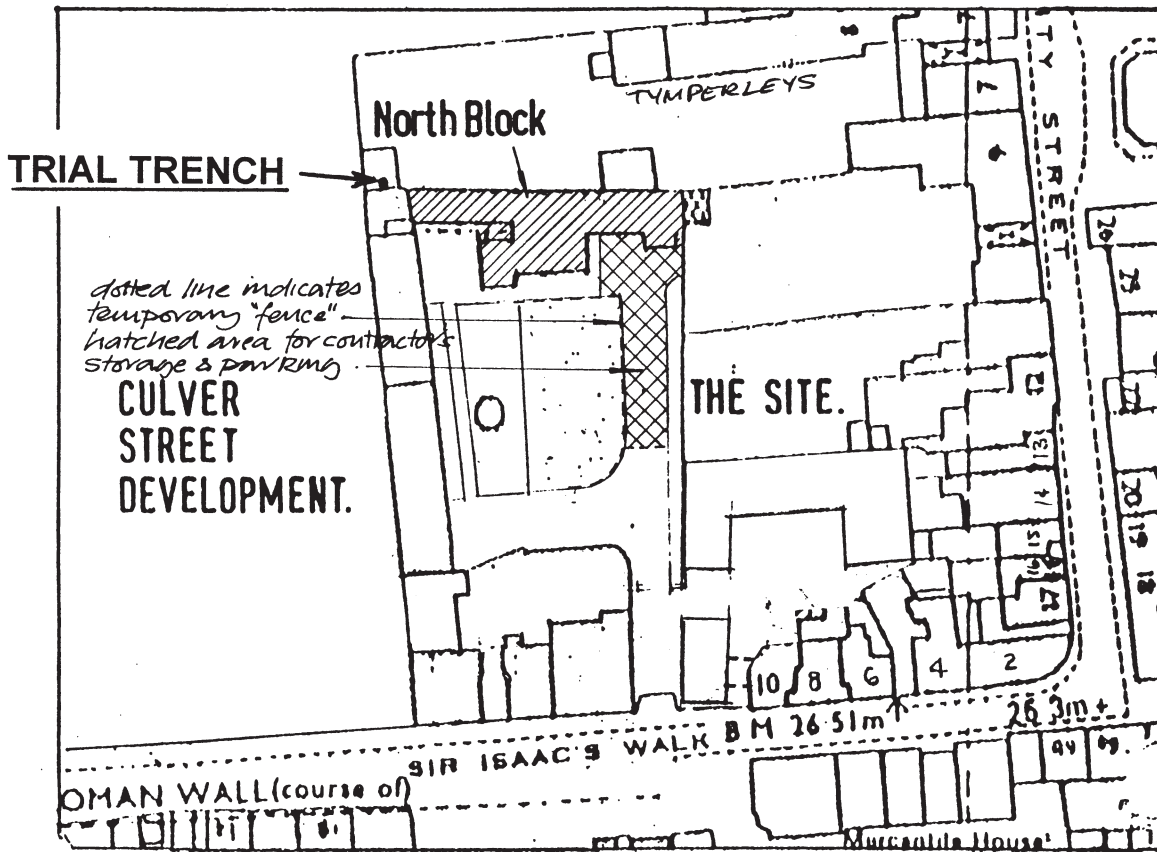
Quantity	Weight	Description	Date	Discarded
3	1050	tegula fragments with flange	Roman	✓
1	180	tegula fragment	Roman	✓
2	160	peg tile fragments	post-medieval	✓
3	85	plain red tesserae	Roman	
1	3	clay tobacco pipe stem fragment: 9mm diameter	post-medieval	
2	80	ironstone type, pale brown fabric with pleasant honey glaze; fragments of a colander pot	19th-20th	
1	20	fabric 51b flower pot rim fragment	19th-20th	
1	35	fabric 40 type, plain body sherd with mottled green glaze	17th-19th?	
3	160	Glazed fabric 40 (post-medieval red earthenwares)	17th-19th	
2	5	Fabric 48b English porcelain rim sherds of cup?	Late 18th-19th	
1	2	Roman sherd: Nene valley, fabric EA	early -mid 3rd century or later	
1	10	Molar of young <i>bos</i>		

Results

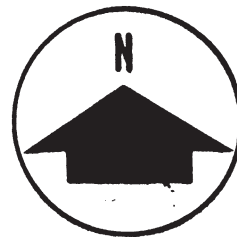
The excavated deposits suggest the following sequence of events. An old topsoil level (layer 3 bottom, approximately 1 metre below modern ground surface) was probably close to ground level on this site before the eighteenth century. After this time, the date of material recovered from the two upper layers of dumped topsoil suggests that up to a metre of soil was deposited here during a period which might stretch from the later eighteenth to the twentieth century, but could (in fact) be confined merely to the nineteenth century. The brick wall on the south side of the garden is built (in its lower courses at least) of 'Tudor' bricks. These would conventionally date to the seventeenth century, or perhaps the eighteenth². In the circumstances found here, these garden soils have been dumped against the face of a standing garden wall.

References

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- Cunningham, C. M., 1985 'A typology for post-Roman pottery in Essex', in Cunningham, C. M. and Drury, P. J., *Post-medieval sites and their pottery: Moulsham Street, Chelmsford*, Chelmsford Archaeol. Trust Rep. 5, Counc. Brit. Archaeol. Res. Rep. 54, 1-16
- Hull M R, 1958 *Roman Colchester*, Report of the Research Committee of the Society of Antiquaries XX
- Symonds, R.P., & Wade, S., 1999 *Roman pottery in Colchester 1971-85* (eds. Bidwell, P., & Croom, A.), Colchester Archaeol Rep, 10.



SITE LOCATION PLAN



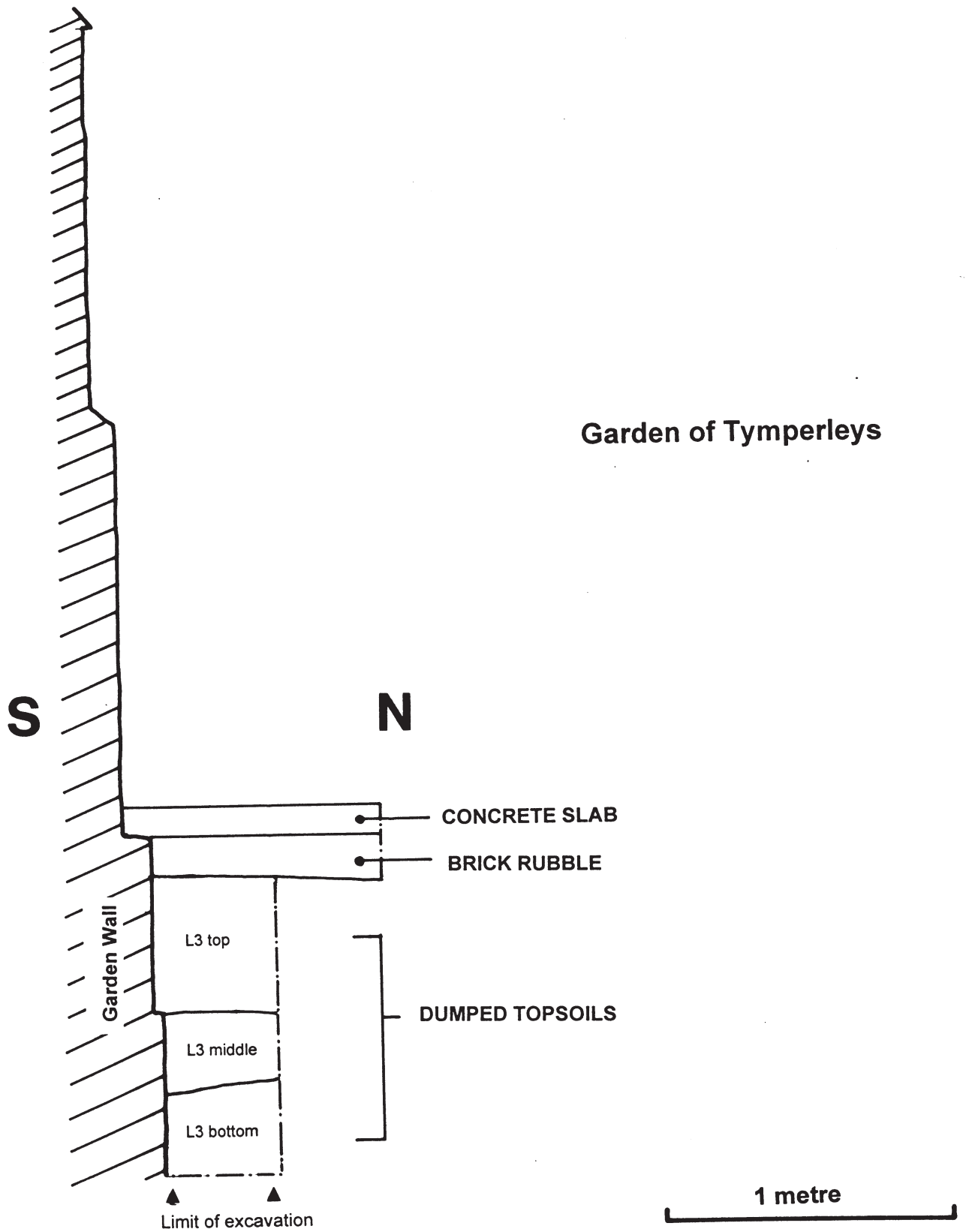
18 SIR ISAACS WALK COLCHESTER
 PROPOSED REFURBISHMENT ETC
 OF FIRST FLOOR OFFICES NORTH BLOCK

2-99

NTS

SIW/ 200

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Trial Trench in Tymperleys Garden, 1999
Section of deposits recorded in west side of trench