

**An archaeological
excavation and watching brief at
26 West Lodge Road, Colchester, Essex**

May 2001

**on behalf of
Crowdell Associates**

NGR: TL 9848 2477
Planning application no: F/COL/00/0197
CAT project reference: 01/5c
Colchester Museum accession code: 2001.92



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CAT Report 142

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1 Summary

A small archaeological excavation and watching brief at 26 West Lodge Road, Colchester, Essex, failed to reveal any Roman cremations or any other features or finds of archaeological interest.

2 Introduction (Figs 1 & 2)

- 2.1 This report describes the results of an archaeological excavation and watching brief carried out by Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) at 26 West Lodge Road, Colchester, Essex. The site lies approximately 1km west of the town centre at National Grid Reference TL 9848 2477. The plot is located on the western side of the road, in between no 26 and West Lodge Garage. It is relatively flat and had recently been cleared of thick vegetation. The work was prompted by the construction of one dwelling which received planning permission under application no F/COL/00/0197. In May 2000, CAT excavated a trench to evaluate the site; this revealed one Roman cremation burial (Fig 2: Crossan 2000).
- 2.2 The excavation was carried out by Kate Orr of CAT on the 8th and 9th of May. The watching brief was carried out by Kate Orr and Howard Brooks of CAT on the 23rd and 24th of May and the 7th and 8th of June. Post-excavation work was carried out between the 10th of May and the 2nd of July.
- 2.3 The investigation followed a brief written by the Archaeological Officer for Colchester Borough Council, who also monitored the project.

3 Archaeological background

- 3.1 The site has been identified as being of potential archaeological interest since it lies within an extensive Roman cemetery area which flanks the main Roman approach road to the west of the town (EHCR 11852). Mr John Taylor found Roman burials during the construction of his house West Lodge in 1848 (Hull 1958, 250). At that time the surrounding area, including the current development plot, was part of his 8-acre estate. He undertook substantial excavations on at least half of his land and gave over 170 cremation vessels to Colchester Museum. Taylor estimated that at least 2000 cremation vessels were buried on his land (Crummy 1993, 258).
- 3.2 George Joslin also amassed a large collection of antiquities, including finds from Roman graves, from the area around his house on Beverley Road. One of the most impressive finds was the tombstone of the centurion Facilis (Hull 1958, 254; EHCR 11857).
- 3.3 The CAT evaluation of 2000 in the north-east corner of the plot revealed one Roman cremation burial, probably of 1st-century date. This consisted of an oval pit with a centrally-placed pot, within which was found a quantity of human cremated bone and a broken clay lamp (Fig 2; Crossan 2000).
- 3.4 A Roman altar was found in 1849 on West Lodge Road (EHCR 11853).

4 Aims and objectives

The archaeological investigation was carried out with the aim of locating, identifying and recording any surviving archaeological features. Particular attention was paid to possible Roman cremations.

5 Methods (Figs 2 & 3)

- 5.1 The investigation was carried out by professional archaeologists following guidelines set out by the Institute of Field Archaeologists and Colchester Borough Council. One hundred per cent of the groundworks were either excavated or monitored.

- 5.2** The excavation phase took place on the 8th and 9th of May. It consisted of the digging out of the house foundation trenches and the rear garage wall trench by a mini-digger machine equipped with a 450mm-wide toothless ditching bucket; 48m of foundation trench was excavated in this way. After topsoil had been removed, the soil was taken off in 100mm strips and each bucket of material was inspected. The sides of the trenches were inspected, as were the bases of the trenches after each spit had been removed. The narrowness of the foundation trenches reduced the chances of seeing features in section. Trenches were dug down to between 740mm and 900mm below ground-level (bgl), ie to the level of natural subsoil. Where archaeological features were encountered, they were tested by hand-excitation. The trenches were backfilled immediately. The northern arm of the garage foundation was not excavated at this time as the northern fence had not been removed, and therefore the mini-digger could not manoeuvre its bucket in the right place to dig the trench.
- 5.3** On the 23rd of May, a watching brief was maintained during the digging of the soakaway which is 6.3m east of the western wall of the plot. The soakaway was dug 1.5m x 1.5m wide and to 1.6m bgl, with a mini-digger. On the 24th of May, a watching brief was maintained during the digging of the exterior garage foundation (5.5m). The trenches were dug by a mini-digger fitted with a 450mm-wide toothed ditching bucket. The garage foundation trench was 450mm wide and 900mm deep.
- 5.4** On the 7th and 8th of June, the rest of the service trenches were hand-dug by the contractors and a watching brief was maintained. The depth of these trenches was 300mm, except for the one running along the southern edge of the site which was 800mm deep; the width of all the trenches was 250mm.
- 5.5** All layers, features and finds were recorded using CAT standard record sheets. All features were planned. A section drawing was made of Feature or F2 and F3 and also of a section of the general soil profile (Fig 3).
- 5.6** Finds were retained from each archaeological context and were washed, marked and bagged according to context.
- 5.7** General shots were taken with a digital camera.

6 Results (Figs 2 & 3)

- 6.1** CAT excavated the house foundation and rear garage (see section 5.2 and Fig 2).

The following soils were observed:

Layer or L1 - Dark grey-brown sandy loam topsoil with occasional small stones and root activity. It contains modern pot, clay-pipe stems, a small amount of animal bone and some frogged and unfrogged bricks on the surface. Thickness 0-200mm bgl. There were concrete slabs just below the surface within this layer in the southernmost foundation trench.

L2 - Lighter brown sandy loam topsoil with occasional stones, sealed by L1. This layer is found at a depth of approximately 200mm bgl. Its thickness varies from 120mm in the west to up to 500mm elsewhere. It contains a few pieces of Roman tile and pottery, modern pot and peg-tile, and a small amount of animal bone and clay pipe. An unfrogged brick was found at 700mm bgl within this layer in the southernmost foundation trench.

L3 - Layer of sand and gravel in the most westerly foundation trench only, sealed by L2. This layer does not contain any finds, charcoal or tile flecks. It starts at 320mm bgl and its thickness is 700mm.

L4 - Mid-brown sandy silt loam similar to L2 but only observed in the westernmost foundation trench, sealed by L3. It contains charcoal flecks, a small amount of possible Roman tile and pottery, animal bone, a small amount of modern pottery, a small glass bottle, and a yellow unfrogged brick. This layer starts at 390mm bgl and its thickness is approximately 270mm.

L5 - Yellow/brown sandy silt loam and gravel sitting above the natural, seen in all the trenches, but in the northern trenches it is more reddish in colour. This layer contains a small amount of modern brick, glass and pottery, one sherd of Roman pottery, and one

unfrogged brick (100mm x 210mm x 60mm). This layer starts between 550mm and 660mm bgl. The thickness varies but is generally 100mm.

L6 - Yellow/brown sand and gravel, natural subsoil. This becomes more clayey to the south. In the centre and north, the natural is mottled grey/brown and orangey/brown. The natural is sealed by and often indistinguishable from L5. It starts between 600mm and 900mm bgl.

L7 - 200mm of crushed concrete hardstanding had been laid on the surface at the entrance to the site (the north-east). This layer sealed topsoil (L2) and contained some unfrogged yellow bricks (95mm x 210mm x 50mm).

Features: only two features were observed from the excavation -

F1 - Part of a small undated pit in the most westerly house foundation trench at the corner with the garage trench. This feature is cut into the natural at 800mm bgl and is 330mm deep. The whole of the feature was not seen as it appeared to continue under both baulks. It measured 750mm north to south and 160mm east to west, and it was almost straight-sided. It was filled with mid-brown sandy loam and contained one oyster shell and one animal bone.

F2 - When excavating the rear (west) garage foundation trench, a large ditch or pit was seen starting at 560mm bgl, running east to west. It was at least 3.5m wide, perhaps more as its southern end could not be seen in the trench. It was filled with a similar dark grey brown sandy loam as the topsoil (L1), but it was not very mixed. Its northern edge was straight-sided and could be seen cutting into L5 (Fig 3). The feature appeared to continue below 1.2m bgl where the excavation stopped. The only find was one piece of modern chipboard. This feature is too far west and too deep to be the CAT evaluation trench, but it could be a modern test-pit (Fig 3).

Finds:

During the excavation of the south-eastern foundation trench, a large dump of 19th- and 20th-century pottery, bottles and tile was retrieved. This was found 400mm-600mm bgl within L2 but did not appear to be part of any feature. Several residual pieces of Roman pottery and tile were found during this phase.

There were no cremations or other finds of any archaeological importance.

6.2 CAT maintained a watching brief on the digging of the northern garage wall trench, soakaways and other services.

The following soils were observed in the soakaway trench:

L1 and L2 - Sandy loam topsoil containing modern brick and tile, frequent stones, occasional animal bone and much Victorian 'willow pattern' pottery, plus two sherds of Roman pottery. 0-800mm depth.

L6 - Natural reddish-brown sand with occasional gravel. This natural layer starts at 800mm bgl and carries on beyond the bottom of the trench at 1.6m.

Features:

One feature (F3) was observed in the soakaway trench, but none were present in the northern garage trench or service trenches. F3 was a large pit seen in the northern section of the soakaway trench, cut into natural at 800mm bgl. It was filled with the same mid-brown sandy loam as the topsoil and contained charcoal flecks, modern brick and modern pottery. It extended below the limit of the trench (1.6m) and was approximately 1m wide (Fig 3).

Most of the service trenches did not extend below topsoil and therefore no features or archaeological deposits were revealed. Neither were there any features or finds within the northern garage wall trench.

Finds:

The only finds from the watching brief were modern pottery and tile, three animal bones, and three sherds of Roman pottery.

7 Finds (see Appendices 1, 2 and 3)

Residual sherds of Roman pottery were found. However, the finds mainly consisted of modern material from the last 200 years including pottery, tile, animal bone, clay pipe, and bottles. Generally there were very few finds across the site apart from a concentration of Victorian and 20th-century pottery, tile, and glass bottles, some of which were nearly complete. These came from the foundation trench for the bay window of the house at the south-eastern edge of the site between 400mm and 600mm bgl. This seems to be a dump. No clear edges of a pit were observed although the topsoil around the finds (L2) appeared to be looser than it was elsewhere.

8 Conclusions

8.1 The investigation showed that the ground had been disturbed and contaminated with modern material. Over most of the site, modern pottery, brick and tile and other artefacts were found in all the layers down to the top of the natural subsoil. In some cases, small amounts of Roman pottery and tile were mixed in with the modern finds. These have probably been redeposited from lower layers which were disturbed by previous groundworking activity; in the south, concrete slabs were observed just under the surface. To the rear (west) of the plot, some kind of concrete-lined pit can be seen. F2 and F3 appear to be modern test-pits. The south-eastern corner of the site has been used as a dump for pottery, glass and tile in the 19th or 20th century. The site may also have been dug as a garden in the past.

8.2 It was expected that at least one more Roman cremation burial would be found by the excavation. The cremation found in the north-eastern part of the site by the evaluation was sealed by a layer that did not contain any modern material and was therefore quite early (Crossan 2000, 2). However, the layers recorded during this current investigation appeared to be more disturbed. One explanation is that any other cremations may already have been disturbed by modern activity (see section 8.1) or deliberately excavated by John Taylor in the 19th century. However, there is the possibility that cremations still survive on the site and that the groundworks simply missed them.

9 Archive deposition

The full archive, including a copy of this report, the bagged and boxed finds, and digital photographs, plus section drawings and plans on hanging strips, digital data on disk, and a summary, will be permanently lodged at Colchester Museum under accession code 2001.92.

10 Acknowledgements

The Colchester Archaeological Trust is grateful to the following for their co-operation at various stages of the project:

Martin Winter, Archaeological Officer for Colchester Borough Council
Mr Crowdell of Crowdell Associates
Robert Hall of Mills Builders

11 References

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| Hull, M R, | 1958 | <i>Roman Colchester</i> , Research Report of the Committee of the Society of Antiquaries, London, 20 |

Kate Orr, July 2001

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Appendix 1: Roman pottery and tile

Table 1 List of Roman pottery and tile.
All finds listed in Table 1 have been retained.

Finds bag no	Context	Description	Date	Weight in g
2	L2, house foundation	2 Roman sherds, 1 amphora and 1 grey ware	Residual Roman	15
2	L2, house foundation	9 pieces of Roman tile, 1 with flue	Residual Roman	656
3	L4, house foundation	5 pieces of Roman tile, one with hobnail boot impression	Residual Roman	794
3	L4, house foundation	1 sherd of Roman grey ware	Residual Roman 2nd-4th century	6
4	L5, house foundation	2 sherds of Roman pottery	Residual Roman	15
6	L2, south-eastern house foundation	Roman tile, possibly the base of a roof-tile	Residual Roman	335
10	L1, soakaway	1 sherd of Roman flagon	Residual Roman	13
11	u/s on spoil heap from digging drains	2 sherds of Roman pottery, - 1 grey ware and 1 of the 2nd century or later	Residual Roman (one 2nd century or later)	13

Appendix 2: medieval and later pottery

Table 2 List of medieval and later pottery.
All finds listed in Table 2 have been discarded.

Finds bag no	Context	Description	Date	Weight in g
1	L1, house foundation	1 sherd of modern stoneware fabric 45m	19th-20th century	12
2	L2, house foundation	7 sherds of ironstone fabric 48d 5 sherds of late slipped kitchenware fabric 51a 7 sherds of flowerpot 1 sherd of red earthenware fabric 40 1 sherd of possible Colchester ware fabric 21a 2 sherds of modern stoneware, fabric 45m	19th-20th century " " " " "	107 193 100 16 11 112
3	L4, house foundation	1 sherd of ironstone fabric 48d	19th-20th century	7
4	L5, house foundation	1 sherd of modern stoneware, fabric 45m 1 sherd of fabric 48d ironstone	19th-20th century	2 22
6	L2, south-eastern house foundation	3 mostly complete classic late slipped kitchenware vessels, fabric 51a (see Cotter fig 171, 2) Most of a stoneware fabric 45m bowl 3 flowerpot sherds 1 sherd of ironstone fabric 48d	19th-20th century " " "	2397 664 52 28
6	L2, south-eastern house foundation	most of a fabric 45m (modern stoneware) hot water bottle	19th-20th century	1317
8	L2, soakaway trench	3 sherds of ironstone fabric 48d, one of which is a tray on legs	19th-20th century	211
9	F3, soakaway trench	1 sherd of fabric 45m modern stoneware 3 sherds of a very hefty red earthenware fabric 40 vessel	19th-20th century "	59 275

Medieval and later pottery *by Howard Brooks*

Introduction

This is a report on a pottery group excavated by Colchester Archaeological Trust from a site at 26 West Lodge Road, Colchester, Essex, in May 2001. The archive will be deposited in Colchester Museum under accession code 2001.92.

The material

A total of 57 sherds weighing 5.2 kg was examined. These came from 8 bags representing 7 site contexts. The material was classified according to Cunningham (1985) and Cotter (2000). Material from each bag was listed, weighed and identified. These lists are in the archive.

Discussion

This group of pottery is entirely of 19th- to 20th-century origin. It is characterised by fabrics 51a (late slipped kitchenware: 20 sherds, 2590g), 45m (modern stonewares: 16 sherds, 2038g), 48d (modern ironstones: 13 sherds, 375g), and 51b (flowerpot: 10 sherds, 152g). There are small amounts of fabrics 40 (post-medieval red earthenware) and 21a (Colchester-

type ware), but always residually within later groups. There are also three residual Roman sherds, one amphora and two grey wares (total weight 43g).

Of interest are an almost complete bowl in late slipped kitchen ware, with iron stained yellow slip, and a rectangular fabric 48d piece with legs, which looks like a stand (for cakes?), and a stoneware hot water bottle.

On balance, the pottery suggests very small-scale activity in the Roman period, then much activity in the 19th and 20th centuries, which is certainly due to the expansion of the suburb of Lexden, and later domestic use of the site.

In view of the fact that the site was evaluated for its Roman potential, and that a Roman cremation burial was recovered from the site, no further comment on the post-medieval pottery is warranted.

References

- | | | |
|------------------|------|--|
| Cotter, John, | 2000 | <i>Post-Roman pottery from excavations in Colchester, 1971-1985</i> , Colchester Archaeological Report 7 |
| Cunningham, C M, | 1985 | 'A typology for post-Roman pottery in Essex', in <i>Post-medieval sites and their pottery: Moulsham Street, Chelmsford</i> , by C M Cunningham and P J Drury, Chelmsford Archaeological Trust Report 5, Council for British Archaeology Research Report 54, 1-16 |

Appendix 3: other finds

Table 3 List of other finds.

All finds listed in Table 3 have been discarded.

Finds bag no	Context	Description	Date	Weight in g
1	L1, house foundation	glass	modern	30
1	L1, house foundation	animal bone	undated	24
1	L1, house foundation	clay-pipe stem	post-medieval or modern	1
2	L2, house foundation	clay-pipe stems	post-medieval or modern	25
2	L2, house foundation	one piece of peg-tile	post-medieval or modern	172
2	L2, house foundation	oyster shell	undated	14
2	L2, house foundation	glass	modern	15
2	L2, house foundation	animal bone	undated	31
3	L4, house foundation	small green glass bottle	modern	11
3	L4, house foundation	1 animal bone	undated	18
3	L4, house foundation	1 piece of peg-tile	post-medieval or modern	23
4	L5, house foundation	peg-tile and septaria?	post-medieval or modern and undated	95
5	F1, house foundation	1 animal bone and 1 oyster shell	undated	33
6	L2, house foundation	glass bottles	modern	1056
6	L2, house foundation	peg-tile and brick	post-medieval or modern	625
6	L2, house foundation	large iron object	modern	307
6	L2, house foundation	clay-pipe stems	post-medieval or modern	26
7	F2, rear garage foundation	piece of chipboard	modern	2
8	L2, soakaway trench	animal bone	undated	52
11	u/s from spoil heap	animal bone	undated	10

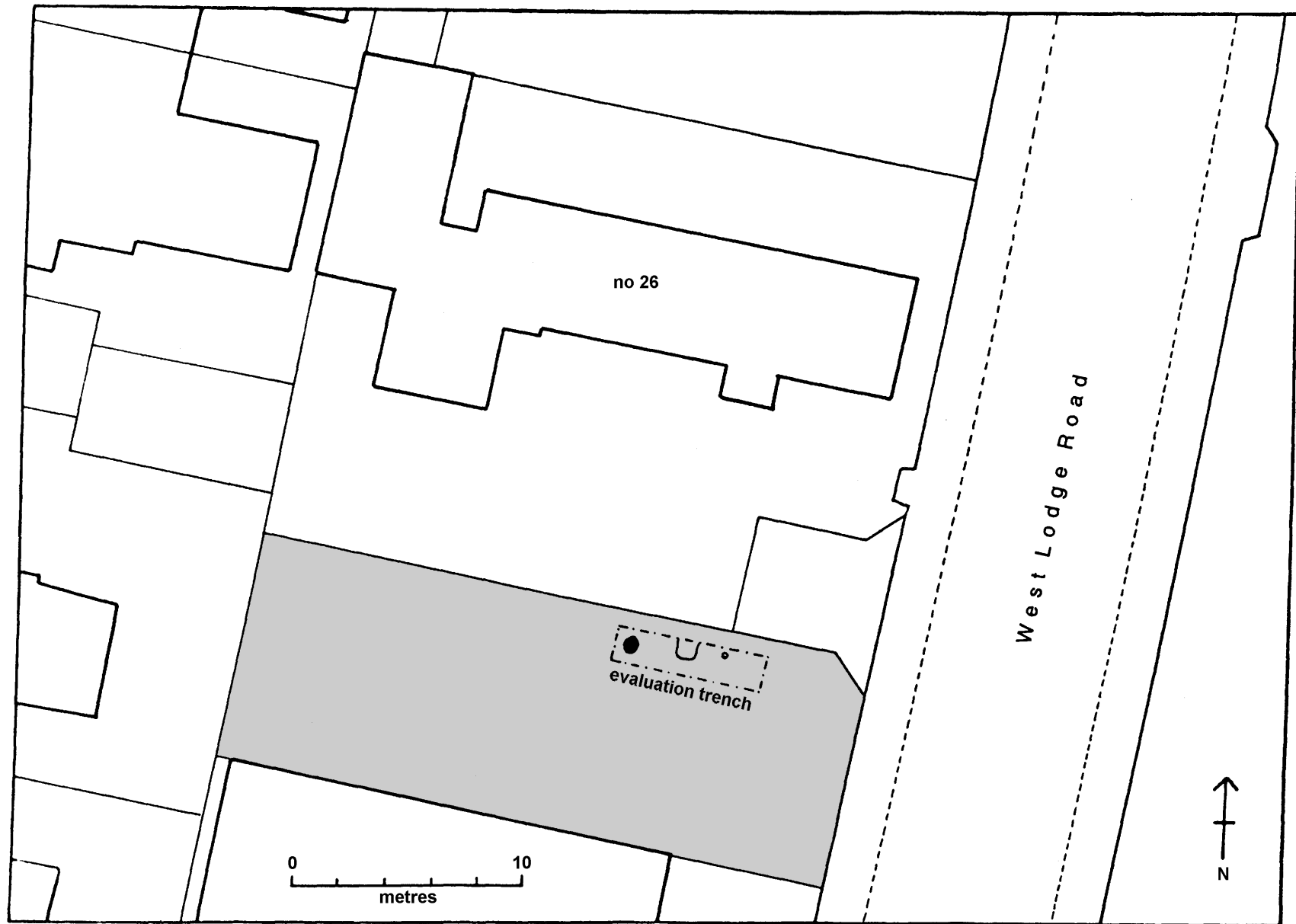


Fig 1 Location plan, scale 1:250.

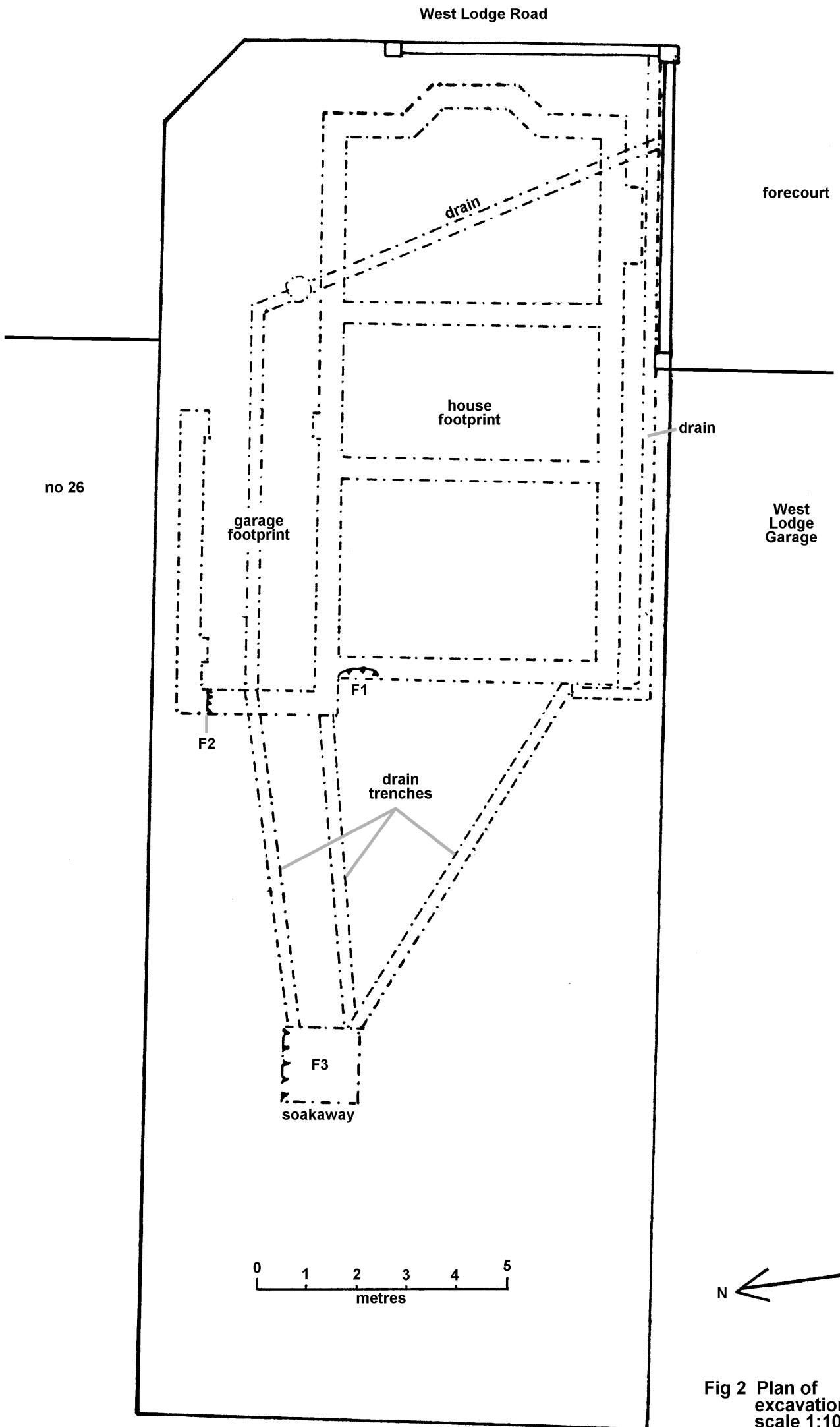
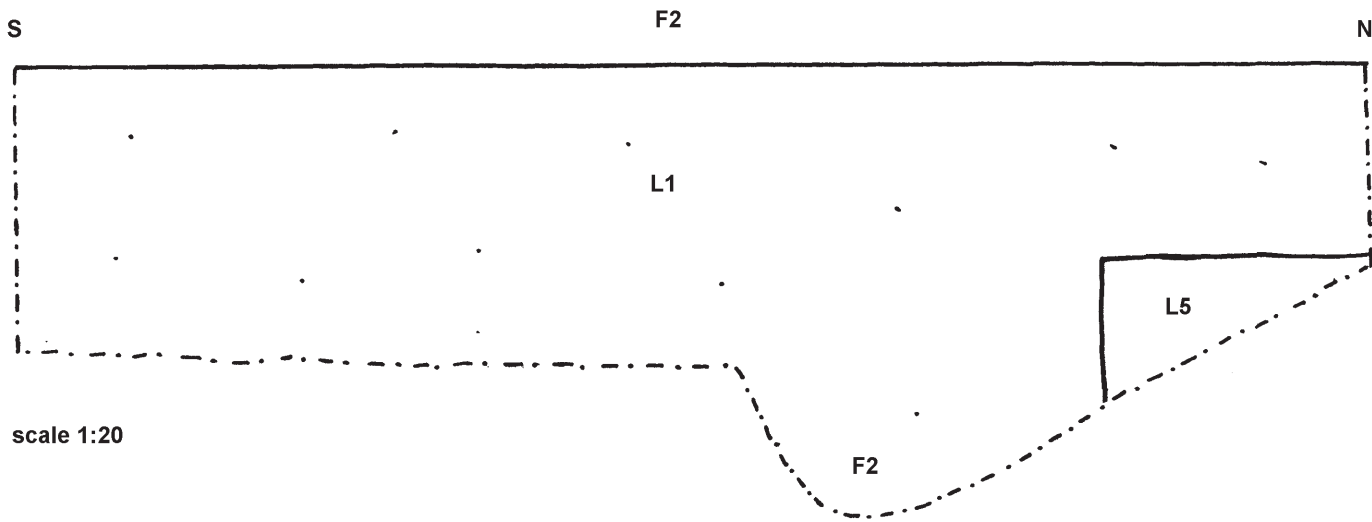


Fig 2 Plan of excavations, scale 1:100.



scale 1:10

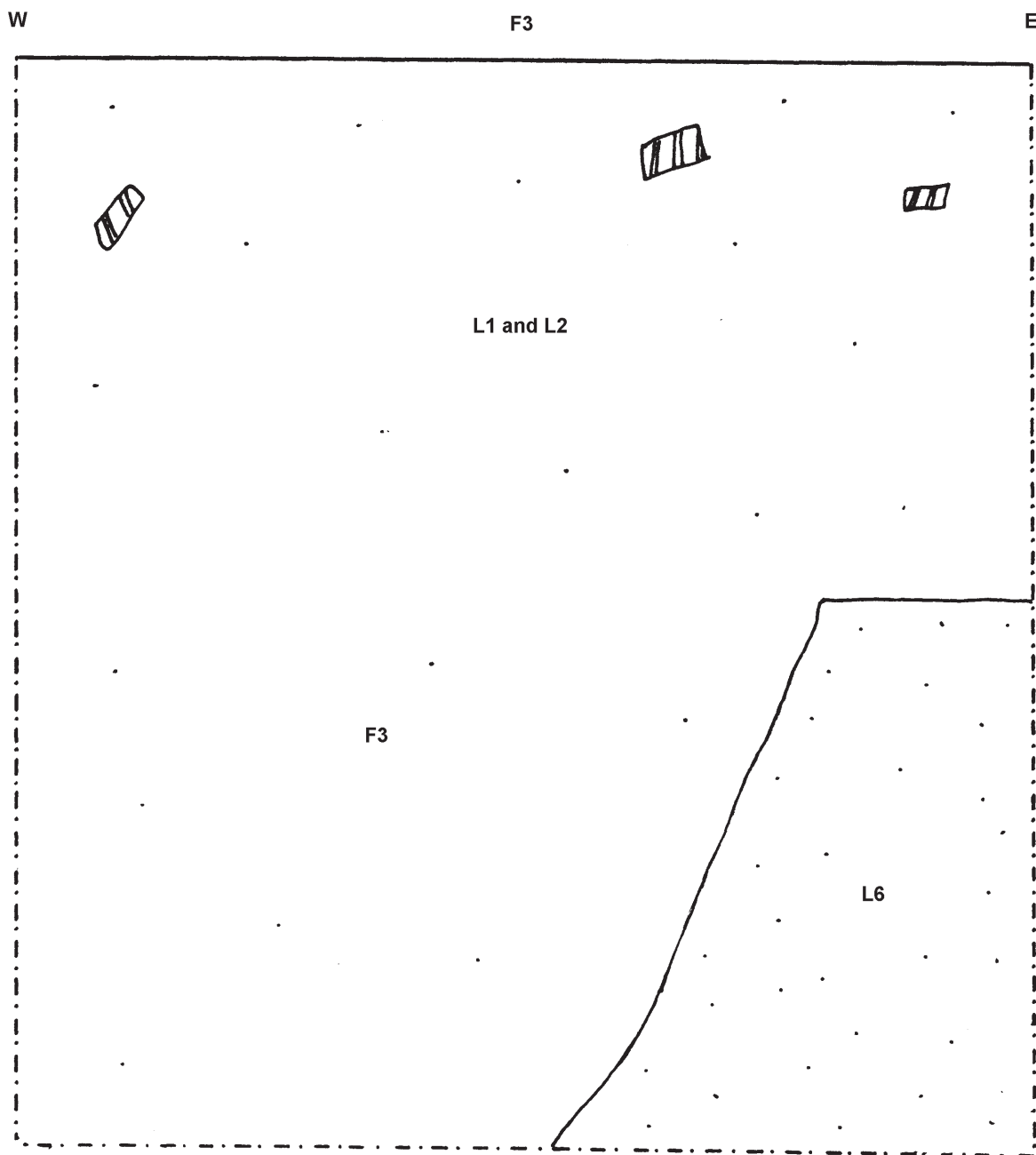


Fig 3 Section drawings of F2 and F3.



**ESSEX HERITAGE CONSERVATION RECORD/
Essex Archaeology and History**

Summary sheet

Site name/address: 26 West Lodge Road, Colchester, Essex	
Parish: Colchester	District: Colchester Borough
NGR: TL 9848 2477	Site code: 2001. 92
Type of work: Excavation and watching brief	Site director/group: Colchester Archaeological Trust
Date of work: May and June 2001	Size of area investigated: 21m x 10m
Location of finds/curating museum: Colchester Muesum	Funding source: Developer
Further seasons anticipated? No	Related EHCR nos: 11852, 11853, 11857
Final report: CAT Report 142 and note in <i>Essex Archaeology and History</i>	
Periods represented: Modern with some residual Roman pottery and tile	
<p>Summary of fieldwork results:</p> <p>A small archaeological excavation and watching brief at 26 West Lodge Road failed to reveal any Roman cremations or any other features or finds of archaeological interest. The investigation showed that the ground had been disturbed and contaminated with modern material.</p> <p>It was expected that at least one more Roman cremation burial would be found by the investigation. The cremation found in the north-eastern part of the site by the evaluation was sealed by a layer that did not contain any modern material and was therefore quite early (Crossan 2000, 2). However, the layers recorded during this current investigation appeared to be more disturbed. One explanation is that any other cremations may already have been disturbed by modern activity or deliberately excavated by John Taylor in the 19th century. However, there is the possibility that cremations still survive on the site and that the groundworks simply missed them.</p>	
Previous summaries/reports: CAT Report 80	
Author of summary: Kate Orr	Date of summary: July 2001