

**An archaeological watching brief  
on one section of an  
Anglian Water sewer pipeline in  
Church Lane, Lexden,  
Colchester, Essex**

**June-December 2001**

**on behalf of  
J Breheny Contractors Ltd**

CAT project reference: 01/4D  
NGR: TL 9716 2500-TL 9688 2468  
Colchester Museum accession code: 2001.74



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**CAT Report 170**  
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## 1 Summary

*An intermittent watching brief was carried out on one section of an Anglian Water sewer pipeline along Church Lane in Lexden, Colchester, Essex. No features or finds of archaeological significance were revealed by the groundworks, probably due to disturbance from the laying of the road and previous services.*

## 2 Introduction

- 2.1 This is the report on an archaeological watching brief carried out by the Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) on the Church Lane, Shakespeare Road and Lexden Road section of a new Anglian Water sewer pipeline. Planning permission was given with the condition that an archaeological watching brief be carried out. The work was commissioned by Breheny Contractors.
- 2.2 The new sewer pipeline is located 2.5km west of Colchester town centre, in Lexden. The pipeline starts immediately south of Cymbeline Way at the Spring Lane roundabout at TL 9728 2542. It runs towards Spring Lane and joins it just north of Lexden Road. It crosses Lexden Road (the A1124), runs along Church Lane and finishes in Shakespeare Road at TL 9688 2468 (Fig 1). The whole length is approximately 400m, but this report does not cover the Spring Lane section for which a separate report has been written (Orr 2001). The width for the pipeline trench was approximately 1.75m and the depth 2.5m. The underlying geology of the area is London Clay overlain by a superficial sequence of sands and gravels.
- 2.3 This report follows the standards set out in the Borough Council's *Guidelines on standards and practices for archaeological fieldwork in the Borough of Colchester* (1999) and *Guidelines on the preparation and transfer of archaeological archives to Colchester Museums* (1996), and the IFA's *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (1999).

## 3 Archaeological background (Fig 2)

- 3.1 The area around Lexden has been inhabited from prehistoric times to the present day. The earliest finds consist of one Stone Age hand-axe from Church Lane (Essex Heritage Conservation Record or EHCR no 11968) and a Palaeolithic hand-axe from the Lexden Road/Spring Lane junction (EHCR 11861).
- 3.2 The route of the pipeline is thought to bisect two Roman roads which run west from Colchester to London. Early Ordnance Survey maps indicate that this part of Lexden Road ('Stane Street') is of Roman origin, but before the medieval period it would have had a straighter alignment. It may cross Lexden Park and join up with a section of Roman road identified at St Clare Road, in which case the pipeline would cross this road on Church Lane. Another Roman road runs through the Grammar School grounds on Lexden Road and joins up with Lexden Road further to the east (EHCR 11705).
- 3.3 The graveyard at St Leonard's Church extends 200m south from the junction of Lexden Road and Church Lane. The finds evidence indicates continued use from the late Iron Age to early Roman period. It is possible that the cemetery extended to the west into Lexden Park, where a number of late Iron Age to Romano-British urns and an amphora have been found (EHCR 11713).
- 3.4 The Iron Age settlement of Camulodunum was flanked by a number of large linear earthwork dykes, most of which were built in the late Iron Age to define and protect this important settlement centre which was succeeded by Roman Colchester. However, some can be dated to the early Roman period. The pipeline lies between two dykes built by the Iron Age Trinovantes tribe. The closest one is the Lexden Dyke (EHCR 11628), a bank and ditch possibly built in the late 1st century BC. This lies 150m to the east but only the bank survives, at Lexden Springs. The Triple Dyke (EHCR 11636) probably dates from the early Roman period. It lies 400m to the west of the pipeline at its closest point (Hawkes & Crummy 1995, 26).
- 3.5 Houses on Thompson Avenue and Wordsworth Road have been built over a rectangular enclosure of unknown date which was identified as a cropmark in 1949. While not in the line of the new pipeline, there may have been related archaeological features which could be affected by this work (EHCR 11917).

- 3.6 The Victorian church of St Leonard (EHCR 11808) was built to replace a 13th-century chapel to the north of it, the remains of which were still visible in the 1950s (EHCR 11807).

## 4 Aims and objectives

The aim of the watching brief was to identify and record any archaeological features, finds or deposits revealed by the groundworks. Particular attention was paid to the possible presence of surviving Iron Age and Roman deposits including burials.

## 5 Methods

- 5.1 The work was carried out by CAT professional archaeologists (Stephen Benfield and Kate Orr) in accordance with a brief written by Colchester Borough Council's Archaeology Officer. This report covers the intermittent watching brief maintained by the author along Church Lane, Shakespeare Road and Lexden Road which was carried out between the 4th of June and the 19th of December 2001.
- 5.2 The trench was dug in lengths of 2.5-3m. The pipes were laid immediately and the trenches were backfilled before the next length was dug. Therefore only a limited amount of open trench was seen as only periodic visits were made by an archaeologist.
- 5.3 The sections of the trenches were checked for archaeological features, although this had to be done from beside the trenches. Soil types were noted. Where possible, spoil heaps were checked for finds. General shots were taken with a colour digital camera.

## 6 Results

Fifteen monitoring visits were made, the results of which are described below.

### 04/06/01

Church Lane/Lexden Road - the reception pit on the junction of these two roads was monitored. The digger-driver reported seeing a layer of cut stones on the western section, just below the asphalt; he said it looked like an east-west road. This pit was also monitored by Stephen Benfield and four photographs were taken. The digger-driver also reported clay pipes from the section of trench which was dug just south of this pit.

### 04/06/01

Church Lane - a section of trench 38.5m south of the reception pit was monitored. One piece of animal bone was found from the top layers.

### 06/06/01

Church Lane - a visit was made but no digging was taking place.

### 08/06/01

Church Lane near Lexden Road - more sections of the trench were monitored. An existing sewer went up the western side of the trench and a drain up the eastern side causing almost total disturbance. Generally the profile was as follows:

0-250mm – tarmac.

250mm-500mm - 'hogging' (modern sand and gravel).

500mm-750mm approximately - concrete layer.

750mm to the bottom - sand.

### 13/06/01

Lexden Road - a circular trench, 1.1m deep, was monitored. The profile consisted entirely of modern deposits laid for the road, ie tarmac, concrete and brick underlain by sand and gravel 'hogging'.

**12/07/01**

Church Lane - sections of the trench dug at the southern end of Lexden Park were monitored. Tarmac, concrete and sand were observed.

**13/07/01**

Church Lane - sections of the trench were monitored further down Church Lane. A similar soil-profile was observed. Two existing sewers run down Church Lane at this point. There was also an electricity cable in the eastern section at 400mm below ground-level.

**18/09/01**

At the junction of Shakespeare Road, Church Lane and Parsons Hill and outside no 5 Church Lane, narrow gas trenches were being dug to a depth of between 850mm and 1.1m. Tarmac was observed at a depth of 0-300mm, underlain by reddish brown sand with small stones and tile with existing pipes. Three lengths of trench were monitored.

**18/09/01**

Church Lane - a trench opened by 'Cresseners House', half-way between Lexden Road and Shakespeare Road, was monitored. This was 1m x 1m wide and 1m deep. Tarmac, sand and gravel were observed under the pavement.

**09/10/01**

Church Lane - sections of trench dug at the southern end of Lexden Park were monitored. Tarmac and sand only were observed.

**23/10/01**

Church Lane/Shakespeare Road - a 10m-long and 1.5m-deep section of open trench was observed. The trench followed the line of an existing pipe at the bottom, and therefore all the ground above it was disturbed. Tarmac and concrete underlain by modern sand and gravel were observed. One photograph looking north-west was taken. The spoil heap was checked for finds.

**22/11/01**

Church Lane/Shakespeare Road - a section of trench was observed. Concrete surrounding an old drain was being removed in order to lay the new sewer-pipe.

**27/11/01**

Church Lane/Shakespeare Road - a section of trench was observed. However, this area is very disturbed as it is criss-crossed by services, and nothing of archaeological significance was observed.

**14/12/01**

Shakespeare Road - a visit was made but no digging was taking place.

**19/12/01**

Shakespeare Road - a manhole was monitored but only a small amount of it was visible, and all that could be seen was sand, concrete and pipes.

No features of archaeological significance were observed, apart from one area of cut stones in the reception pit near Lexden Road. There were no finds apart from one piece of animal bone from a modern layer and some reported clay pipes.

## **7 Discussion**

- 7.1** The pipeline trench was mainly dug into the road. The tarmac and sub-base to the road overlaid what appeared to be natural sands and gravels, although it was sometimes hard to distinguish between natural sand and modern sand.
- 7.2** A contractor reported a layer of 'cut stones' just below the tarmac in the western section of the reception pit, on the junction of Church Lane and Lexden Road. The projected line of one of the Roman roads would seem to cross Church Lane at this point (Fig 2); however, neither Stephen Benfield or Kate Orr observed anything of that nature in their monitoring of this pit.

- 7.3 There were no archaeological features cut into the sands and gravels. This may be due to an absence of archaeology or it may be that features have been disturbed by the soil-stripping involved in creating the road as well as disturbance from the laying of services.

## 8 Archive deposition

A copy of this report, digital photographs on disk, and the paper archive will be deposited permanently with Colchester Museum under accession code 2001.74.

## 9 Acknowledgements

The Colchester Archaeological Trust is grateful to the following for their help and co-operation during the project:

J Breheny Contractors  
Martin Winter - Archaeological Officer for Colchester Borough Council

## 10 References

- |                                  |  |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Hawkes, C F C, & Crummy, P, 1995 | <i>Camulodunum 2</i> , Colchester Archaeological Report 11   |
| Orr, K, 2001                     | 'An archaeological watching brief on one section of an Anglian Water water-main in Spring Lane, Lexden, Colchester, Essex', CAT Report 160 |

*Kate Orr, January 2002*

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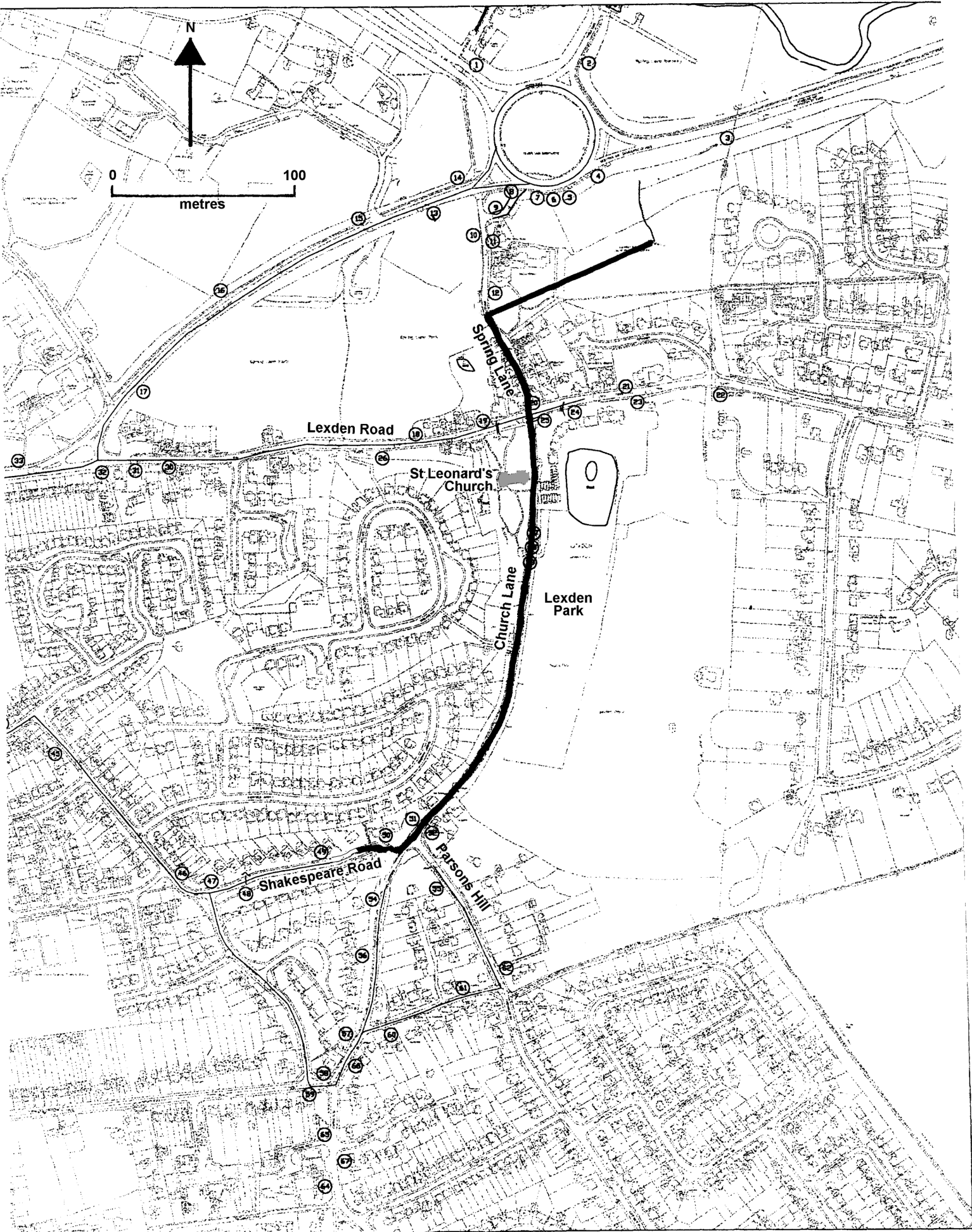


Fig 1 Location of pipeline, scale 1:2500.

**—————** route of pipeline



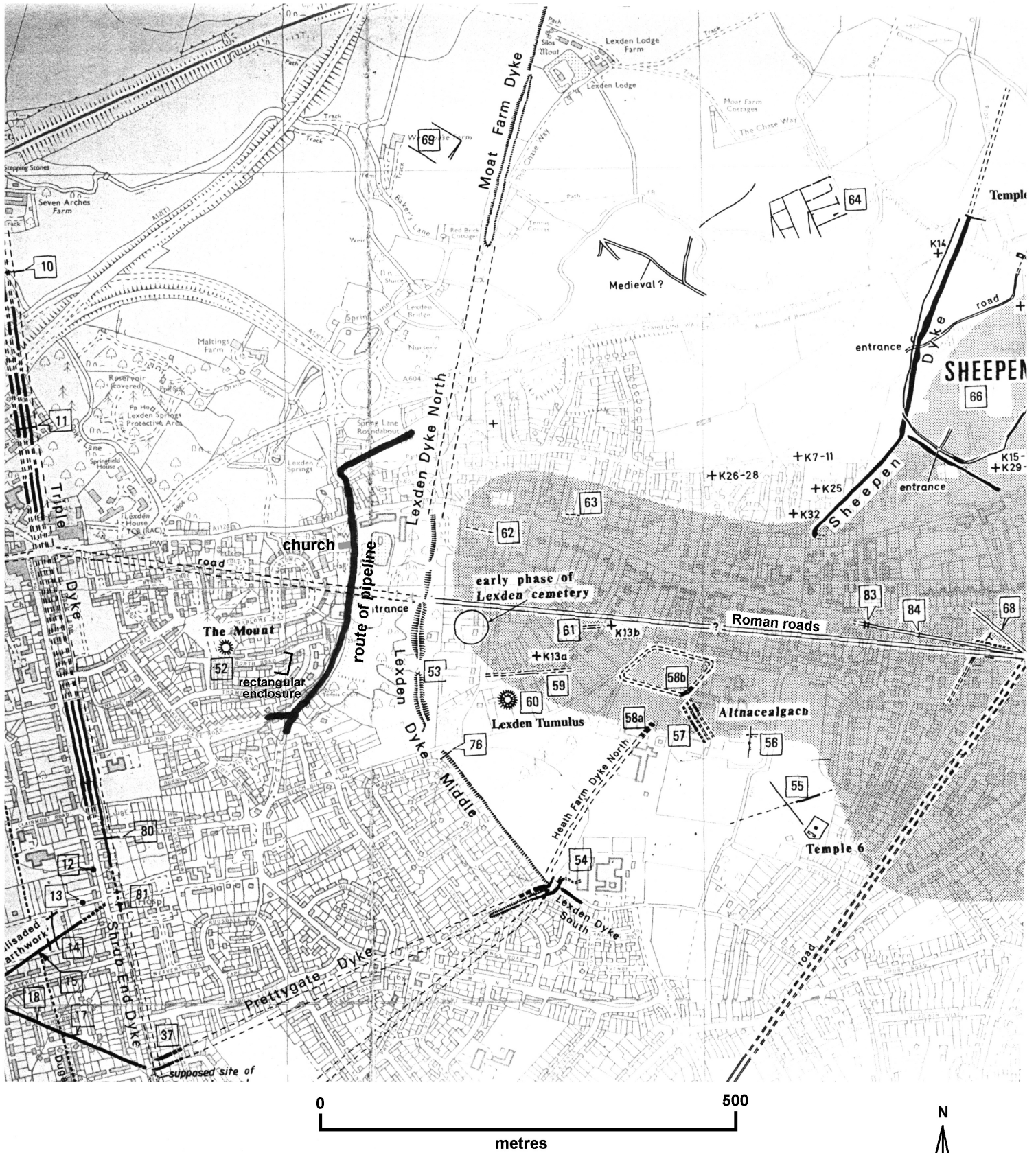


Fig 2 Dykes, roads and other archaeological features in the pipeline area (taken from Hawkes & Crummy 1995, fig 6.1).

# Essex Heritage Conservation Record

## Summary sheet

<b>Site name/address:</b> One section of an Anglian Water sewer pipeline in Church Lane, Lexden, Colchester, Essex	
<b>Parish:</b> Colchester	<b>District:</b> Colchester Borough
<b>NGR:</b> TL 9716 2500-TL 9688 2468	<b>Site code:</b> 2001.74
<b>Type of work:</b> Watching brief	<b>Site director/group:</b> Colchester Archaeological Trust
<b>Date of work:</b> June-December 2001	<b>Size of area investigated:</b> this section, 250m
<b>Location of finds/curating museum:</b> Colchester Museum	<b>Funding source:</b> Developer
<b>Further seasons anticipated?</b> No	<b>Related EHCR nos:</b> 11861,11968, 11705, 11713, 11628, 11636, 11808, 11807, 11917
<b>Final report:</b> CAT Report 170 and summary in <i>Essex Archaeology and History</i>	
<b>Periods represented:</b> Modern	
<b>Summary:</b> An intermittent watching brief was carried out on one section of an Anglian Water sewer pipeline along Church Lane in Lexden, Colchester, Essex. No features or finds of archaeological significance were revealed by the groundworks, probably due to disturbance from the laying of the road and previous services.	
<b>Previous summaries/reports:</b> CAT Report 160 (Spring Lane section 2001)	
<b>Author of summary:</b> Kate Orr	<b>Date of summary:</b> January 2002