

**Archaeological trial-trenching  
at Area S of the  
Garrison Urban Village,  
Colchester, Essex  
May 2004**

**report prepared by  
Ben Holloway**

**commissioned by  
RPS Planning, Transport & Environment  
on behalf of  
Taylor Woodrow**

CAT project ref.: 04/4D  
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**Colchester Archaeological Trust**  
12 Lexden Road,  
Colchester,  
Essex CO3 3NF

*tel.:* (01206) 541051  
*tel./fax:* (01206) 500124  
*email:* [archaeologists@catuk.org](mailto:archaeologists@catuk.org)

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## 1 Summary

*This is the archive report on archaeological trial-trenching at Area S of the planned urban village at the Garrison, Colchester, Essex to locate the exact position of Berechurch Dyke. The work was carried out in two stages as part of a programme of archaeological investigation of areas of alienated land, acquired by Taylor Woodrow for residential development. The fieldwork on Area S was necessitated by design requirements for the installation of a new service close to the estimated course of the Berechurch Dyke and the creation of a green 'corridor' in the development to preserve the surviving remains of Berechurch Dyke. The first stage of the investigation involved the excavation of three 50m x 0.5m trial-trenches. Two large ditches were observed in the three trenches; one was the ditch of Berechurch Dyke and the westerly ditch was thought to be also part of the dyke. Finds from the first stage of trial-trenching included a very small amount of Roman pottery and tile as well as a single sherd of prehistoric pottery from the westerly ditch. The second stage of the investigation consisted of the digging of two trial-trenches to investigate further the westerly ditch observed in the first stage of the work. Post-medieval finds from the sections cut across the feature in the second stage showed it to be post-medieval in date and therefore not part of the dyke.*

## 2 Introduction

2.1 The proposed development of the alienated land at Colchester Garrison involves the redevelopment, primarily for residential use, of areas of the present Colchester Garrison and adjacent farmland formerly owned by the MoD. The construction of the new garrison over the next four years will allow a phased decanting of the existing Garrison personnel into the new garrison, thus facilitating phased release of the former Garrison areas. As part of the alienated land scheme, an undeveloped green 'corridor' is to be left so that the remains of Berechurch Dyke can be preserved. However, no trenches were sited to cut the line of Berechurch Dyke during the 2002 evaluation (CAT Report 207). To establish the course of the dyke and so position the green 'corridor', and avoid significant impact on the dyke during the installation of a new service, three 50m by 0.5m trial-trenches were excavated to define and precisely identify the location of the earthwork. Area S is centred on NGR TL 9978 2213, and is located on the north side of Berechurch Hall Road and to the east of the perimeter wire of Roman Barracks.

The site is located in an area of arable agricultural land which is currently being used as 'set aside', with areas of woodland to the north and east, and with public footpaths extending around Area S to the west, north and east.

Local drift geology is predominantly sands and gravel. This is occasionally in a clay matrix, and is sometimes capped by cover loam.

- 2.2 The procedure for investigating the location of the Berechurch Dyke was agreed by Philip Wise (Principal Archaeologist for Colchester Borough Council) in consultation with Rob Masefield of RPS on 18th May 2004.
- 2.3 The trial-trenching was commissioned by RPS on behalf of Taylor Woodrow and was carried out by the Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) under RPS project management. The project was monitored by the CBCAO and RPS.
- 2.4 The investigation followed a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) prepared by RPS in association with CAT, dated March 2004, and agreed by CBCAO (RPS 2004b). The WSI was produced in accordance with a research design prepared by RPS in 2004 (RPS 2004a). This report mirrors the standards and practices contained in Colchester Borough Council's *Guidelines on the standards and practice for archaeological fieldwork in the Borough of Colchester* (2002) and *Guidelines on the preparation and transfer of archaeological archives to Colchester Museums* (2002), and the Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Standards and guidance for an archaeological field evaluation* (1999).

### 3 Aims and objectives

The aims and objectives of the archaeological trial-trenching were to define and to precisely identify the location and the alignment of the Late Iron Age/early Roman Berechurch Dyke so that minimal disturbance will be caused to the earthwork during work on the installation of a new service by Taylor Woodrow and for the creation of a green 'corridor' in the development to preserve the surviving remains of Berechurch Dyke.

### 4 Archaeological background

The archaeological and historical setting of the proposed development area has already been comprehensively explored in a desk-based assessment or DBA (CAT Report 97); only a brief summary relating to Berechurch Dyke is included here. This section is also based on RPS 2004a and RPS 2004b.

The Garrison PFI site occupies the eastern edge of the *oppidum* of Camulodunum with Berechurch Dyke forming its eastern boundary (Fig 1). Berechurch Dyke survives as a slight earthwork to the south of Area S and is a scheduled ancient monument (SAM no 10) where it is extant. The dyke consists of a rampart with a parallel ditch on its east side. The dyke continues north of Berechurch Hall Road as a dip in an arable field parallel to the boundary with Roman Barracks (Area S). The route of the dyke cannot be seen in the woodland to the north, nor is it apparent in the playground of Monkwick School. The course of the monument has been projected north-east to the modern Colchester Cemetery where it turns to the east and becomes Barnhall Dyke (CAR 11, p 9, fig 1).

Three sections were cut across the Berechurch Dyke within the Garrison area in the 20th century to establish the course of the feature.

NGR TL 9997 2301 – A F Hall excavated a section across the dyke in 1944 just to the north of Monkwick School. The ditch and base of the rampart were located (no 85 in CAR 11).

NGR TL 0012 2330 – A F Hall made several observations during the digging of graves in the modern cemetery in 1960. He located the junction of Berechurch Dyke with Barnhall Dyke (UAD event no 376; EHCR no 12536; no 17 in CAR 11).

NGR TL 9957 2156 – CAT excavated a section across the rampart and ditch near Berechurch Camp in 1984. Below the modern road, the rampart proved to survive to a height of 1m. The upper sides of the ditch indicated that it must be around 3.75m deep and that therefore the dyke was on the same scale to the major dykes on the west side of the *oppidum* (EHCR no 12528; no 78 in CAR 11).

There is no evidence as to when the dyke was backfilled. Map evidence from the 18th and early 19th centuries shows the area as arable land. Chapman and André's map of 1777 shows the area as unwooded, as does the 1st Edition OS map of 1874 and the 2nd Edition OS map of 1904. This tradition of agriculture seems to have continued throughout the first half of the 20th century until Roman Way Camp (later Roman Barracks) was established in the 1930s. With the gradual expansion of Colchester to the south and west, some adjacent land was built over for the Monkwick housing estates, although Area S survived as an area of arable farmland until the present day.

## 5 The trial-trenching

### 5.1 Introduction (Figs 3-4)

A series of three trial-trenches were machine-cut under archaeological supervision along the western edge of Area S close to the edge of Roman Barracks (Trenches S1-S3 or TS1-TS3). The trenches were 0.5m wide and 50m long and were cut at intervals from north to south along the projected course of Berechurch Dyke (Fig 2). Table 1 below gives grid co-ordinates for the ends of each trench, its length, and heights above Ordnance Datum for modern ground-level and the level of natural subsoil. Next, a summary and list of contexts is given for each of the trial-trenches (section 5.2 below). This is followed by a general discussion of the archaeology in section 7.

**Table 1: Trench co-ordinates and heights above OD for modern ground-level and natural subsoil.**

Trench no	Terminal co-ordinates	Trench length	OD level on ground-level	OD level on natural
TS1	W: 599758.74, 222243.05 E: 599788.05, 222237.94	50m	33.80 32.30	33.10 31.65
TS2	W: 599724.94, 222090.27 E: 599752.70, 222084.76	50m	33.14 32.96	32.44 32.20
TS3	W: 599694.72, 221954.11 E: 599714.84, 221950.40	50m	32.54 32.41	31.84 31.71

### 5.2 Description of the archaeological sequence

This section gives an archaeological summary of each trench with a tabulation of context and finds dating information.

#### 5.2.1 Area S

##### Trench S1: summary (Figs 2-4)

Trench S1 was excavated on the northern end of the projected course of Berechurch Dyke and two linear features were observed in the trench (Fig 2). One of these linear features was to the east of the remains of the rampart (SF1), while the other (SF2) was to the west between the remains of the rampart and the perimeter wire of Roman Barracks. Datable material was only recovered from SF1. The datable ditch feature contained a single sherd of prehistoric flint-tempered pottery and a Roman potsherd, suggesting a Late Iron Age/early Roman date for the ditch. The undated linear feature also appears to be a ditch, although only one edge was observed at the westernmost end of the trial-trench. The features were clustered in the western half of the trench, cutting the natural geology (SL3).

**Table 2: Trench S1 – archaeology.**

Feature or layer no	Type	Dated finds	Phase
SF1	Linear ditch feature	Prehistoric pottery sherd/Roman pot sherd	Roman
SF2	Linear ditch feature	None recovered	-

##### Trench S2: summary (Figs 3-5)

Trench S2 was excavated at the mid-point of the projected route of the dyke; as with Trench S1, two linear features were recorded in the trench. These were the same ditch features as those previously recorded in Trench S1 (SF1 and SF2), although as in Trench S1 only the eastern edge of SF2 was observed. Datable material was recovered from both of the ditch features and consisted of a fragment of Roman tile from SF1 and a sherd of Roman pottery and a fire-cracked flint from SF2. The pottery from both of the ditches suggests, as in Trench S1, a Late Iron Age/early Roman date for the ditches.

**Table 3: Trench S2 – archaeology.**

Feature or layer no	Type	Dated finds	Phase
SF1	Linear ditch feature	Roman tile fragment	Roman
SF2	Linear ditch feature	Roman potsherd, fire-cracked flint	Roman

**Trench S3: summary** (Figs 3-5)

Trench S3 was excavated at the southernmost end of the projected course of the dyke. However, unlike the two previous trial-trenches, only the eastern edge of SF1 was observed in this trench. It is at this point in the course of the dyke that it appears to angle to the west. No datable material was recovered from the ditch in Trench S3, although its alignment suggests that it is the same ditch SF1 as recorded in the other two trial-trenches, which would give the feature a Late Iron Age/early Roman date.

**Table 4: Trench S3 – archaeology.**

Feature or layer no	Type	Dated finds	Phase
SF1	Linear ditch feature	None recovered	-

## 6 The finds

### 6.1 General

The finds are listed in Table 6 (Appendix) which gives descriptions and approximate dates for stratified finds. Summaries of the Roman pottery are given below. No small finds were recovered from the trial-trenching.

### 6.2 The Roman pottery

*by Stephen Benfield*

A total of 3g of Roman pottery was collected from the trial-trenching. The assemblage consisted of one sherd of coarse oxidised and related wares (Fabric DJ) of the 1st to 3rd centuries AD, possibly part of a flagon base, and one sherd of coarse grey ware (Fabric GX). (Fabric descriptions are after *CAR 10*; CAM form numbers are after Hawkes & Hull 1947 and Hull 1958.)

As well as the Roman pottery, a single 8g sherd of prehistoric pottery was also recovered from the trial-trenching. This is a large coarse flint-tempered body sherd; the size of the temper within the fabric suggests that the pottery is of a Bronze Age date.

## 7 Discussion

During the trial-trenching in Area S, two archaeological features were recorded across the three trial-trenches. No Anglo-Saxon, medieval or post-medieval features were recorded during the work, nor were any features of a certain prehistoric date observed. The cut features that were recorded consisted of two linear features which contained Roman material. All the features were cut into the natural geological sands and gravels (SL3). No modern disturbance was recorded in the trial-trenches as the area has been under agriculture throughout the post-medieval and modern periods. The linear ditch feature SF1 is interpreted as being part of the defensive ditch which with the rampart constituted Berechurch Dyke; it is of the same dimensions as the defensive ditch as previously recorded (*CAR 11*, p 9). The ditch also extends along the east side of the remains of the rampart as do the previously observed remains of the rampart and ditch. The small amount of material which was recovered suggests an early Roman date

which would also indicate that the ditch represents the remains of Berechurch Dyke. The second linear feature SF2 is also a ditch which appears to follow the course of the dyke but on the west side of the rampart. This configuration has not been observed in other parts of Berechurch Dyke. It may be argued that the proximity to Roman Barracks suggests that SF2 is part of a modern defensive system constructed during the Second World War, although no modern finds were recovered from the features such as barbed wire and timber and other modern debris that would usually be associated with a military feature. However, the small amount of material which was recovered is of a Roman date, indicating that the ditch may be associated with Berechurch Dyke rather than with Roman Barracks.

**Table 5: summary of all features.**

Note: (1) number of each context type  
(2) that number as a percentage of all contexts  
(3) that number as a percentage of cuts only (ie discounting layers).

	topsoils, subsoils, other layers	prehistoric features	Roman features	Anglo-Saxon and medieval features	post-medieval and modern features	undated features	natural features
(1) number	3	0	2	0	0	0	0
(2) as % of all contexts	60	0	20	0	0	0	0
(3) as % of all cuts		0	100	0	0	0	0

## 8 Conclusions

No prehistoric or Iron Age remains were recorded during the trial-trenching work in Area S.

Roman features were recorded in the western end of each of the three trial-trenches. These consisted of a ditch feature (SF1) interpreted as being part of the remains of Berechurch Dyke, extending along the eastern side of the remains of the dyke rampart. Datable material recovered from this feature, which was recorded across the three trenches, consisted of two Roman potsherds and a tile fragment, giving a date range of the 1st to 3rd centuries AD. This corresponds with what is known about Berechurch Dyke from previous observations and investigations. A further linear feature was recorded in Trench S1 and Trench S2 (SF2) to the west of the rampart; this was at first interpreted as being a ditch associated with the dyke, although a ditch to the west of the rampart has not been observed previously at Berechurch Dyke, but the finds recovered from it suggest a Roman rather than a modern date.

Elsewhere the three trial-trenches produced no evidence of any Anglo-Saxon or medieval activity, nor was there any evidence of modern activity apart from that which is already documented such as Roman Barracks.

The evidence from the trial-trenching suggests a rural agricultural landscape throughout prehistory and the Roman period, defined by the course of the defensive earthwork of Berechurch Dyke. The area has remained so through the medieval, post-medieval and modern periods until the construction of Roman Barracks in the mid 20th century.

In addition to the trial-trenching that took place in Area S in June 2004, a further two trial-trenches (Trench S4 and Trench S5) were excavated in July 2004. The aim of the new trenches was to recover dating material from SF2, the ditch feature which was identified in Trenches S1 and S2 to the west of the dyke and on a similar alignment. The two trenches S4 and S5 were located close to trial-trenches S2 and S3, and measured 1.6m by 5m and 1.6m by 4m. Both the trenches were excavated using a JCB.

The ditch feature SF2 was identified within the trial-trench S4, and was also seen in trial-trench S5, although in this location the feature appears to have been cut across the route of the Berechurch Dyke and removing it completely.

Finds recovered from the sections cut across SF2 are post-medieval and consist of glass, peg-tile fragments and a potsherd. The finds that were recovered from SF2 indicate that the feature is not associated with the dyke but is a later post-medieval feature. It is likely that SF2 represents the remains of an estate boundary ditch possibly associated with Berechurch Hall. The ditch has been cut along the line of the dyke respecting its route at the north but removing all trace of the earthwork and the ditch at the southern end.

The ditch feature SF2 is not apparent on aerial photographs from 1944 (CAT Report 97) and is likely to have been backfilled prior to the establishment of Roman Way Camp and later Roman Barracks.

## 9 Acknowledgements

The project was commissioned and funded by Taylor Woodrow. The project consultants were RPS. The project was monitored by CBCAO. RPS provided EOD cover.

The fieldwork was supervised by Ben Holloway and carried out by Mariusz Gorniak, David Ross and Chris Lister.

## 10 References

- |   |      |  |
|---|------|--|
| CAR 10  | 1999 | <i>Colchester Archaeological Report 10, Roman pottery from excavations in Colchester, 1971-86</i> , by R P Symonds and S Wade, edited by P Bidwell and A Croom   |
| CAR 11  | 1995 | <i>Colchester Archaeological Report 11, Camulodunum 2</i> , by C F C Hawkes and P Crummy   |
| CAT Report 97                                   |      | An archaeological desk-based assessment of the Colchester Garrison PFI site, by Kate Orr, unpublished CAT archive report, 2000   |
| CAT Report 207                                  |      | An archaeological evaluation by trial-trenching on Areas DR, G, M, P, Q, R, RO, S and T at Colchester Garrison PFI site, Colchester, Essex: May-September 2002, by Howard Brooks, unpublished CAT archive report, 2002 |
| Colchester Museums (Colchester Borough Council) | 2002 | <i>Guidelines on standards and practices for archaeological fieldwork in the Borough of Colchester</i>   |
| Colchester Museums (Colchester Borough Council) | 2002 | <i>Guidelines on the preparation and transfer of archaeological archives to Colchester Museums</i>   |
| Hawkes, C F C, & Hull, M R                      | 1947 | <i>Camulodunum, first report on the excavations at Colchester 1930-39</i> , RRCSAL, <b>14</b>  |
| Hull, M R                                       | 1958 | <i>Roman Colchester</i>  |



Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA)	1999	<i>Standard and guidance for an archaeological evaluation</i>
RPS	2002	<i>Colchester Garrison PFI Health and Safety plan</i>
RPS	2004a	<i>Research design for archaeological investigations for the alienated land, Colchester Garrison</i>
RPS	2004b	<i>WSI for archaeological evaluation and excavation of the alienated land, Colchester Garrison – Areas C1 and C2</i>

## 11 Glossary and abbreviations

Anglo-Saxon	the period from c AD 430 to AD 1066
AOD	above Ordnance Datum
Bronze Age	c 2000 BC-700 BC
CAR	<i>Colchester Archaeological Report</i>
CBCAO	Colchester Borough Council Archaeology Officer
cut	an unspecified hole in the ground
ditch	a linear cut, usually to define the edge of a field
EHCR	Essex Heritage Conservation Record, held by Essex County Council
EOD	Explosive Ordnance Disposal
Iron Age	7th century BC to Roman invasion of AD 43
Late Iron Age	c 200 BC-AD 43
medieval	from AD 1066 to Henry VIII
modern	19th and 20th centuries
NGR	National Grid Reference
pit	a hole dug principally for the disposal of rubbish
post-medieval	after Henry VIII and to the end of the 19th century
prehistoric	pre-Roman, or generally the years BC
residual	something out of its original context (ie a Roman coin in a 19th-century pit)
Roman	the period from AD 43 to c AD 430
RPS	RPS Planning, Transport & Environment
SAM	scheduled ancient monument
UAD	Urban Archaeological Database, held by Colchester Museums

## 12 Archive deposition

The finds, paper and digital archive are held by the Colchester Archaeological Trust at 12 Lexden Road, Colchester, Essex CO3 3NF, but will be permanently deposited with Colchester Museums under accession code 2004.296.

**Distribution list:**

John Philips of Taylor Woodrow  
Rob Masefield of RPS  
Martin Winter, Archaeology Officer for Colchester Borough Council  
Essex Heritage Conservation Record



**Colchester Archaeological Trust**

12 Lexden Road,  
Colchester,  
Essex CO3 3NF

tel.: (01206) 541051  
tel./fax: (01206) 500124  
email: [archaeologists@catuk.org](mailto:archaeologists@catuk.org)

Checked by: Philip Crummy  
Date: 23.08.04

## Appendix

Table 6: finds list.

Finds bag no	Context	Area	Trench	Detail
1	SF1	S	TS1	Prehistoric pot, tile chip
2	SF1	S	TS2	Roman tile fragment
3	SF2	S	TS2	Roman pot fragment, fire-cracked flint

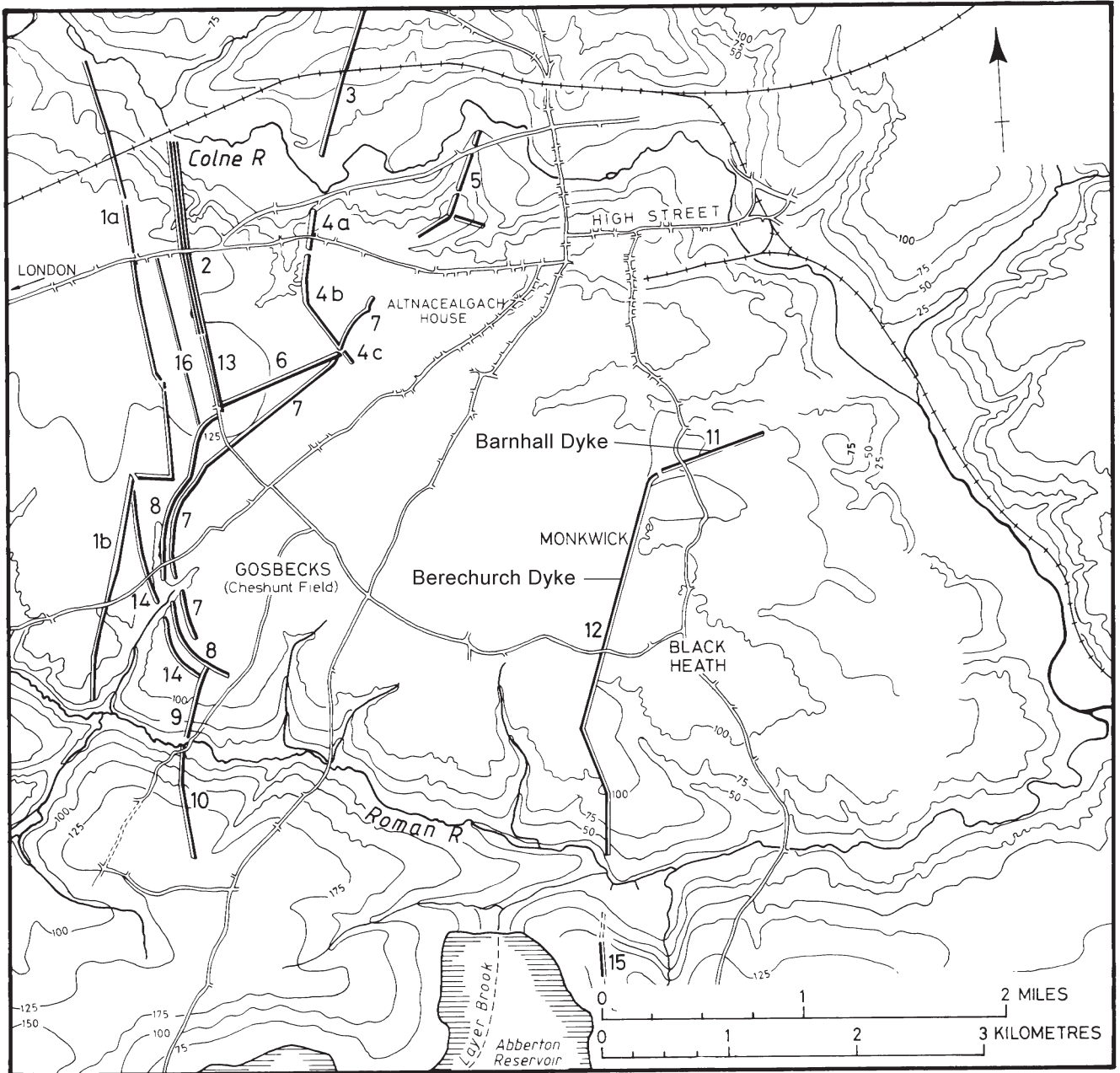


Fig 2.1 The dyke system.

- |                           |                           |                                |                      |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------|
| 1a... Gryme's Dyke North; | 4a... Lexden Dyke North;  | 8..... Kidman's Dyke;          | 14... Gosbecks Dyke; |
| 1b... Gryme's Dyke South; | 4b... Lexden Dyke Middle; | 9..... Oliver's Dyke;          | 15... Abberton Dyke; |
| 2..... Triple Dyke        | 4c... Lexden Dyke South;  | 10... Layer(-de-la-Haye) Dyke; | 16... Dugard Dyke.   |
| (Shrub End Dyke North     | 5..... Sheepen Dyke;      | 11... Barnhall Dyke;           |                      |
| in early Roman Phase 1);  | 6..... Prettygate Dyke;   | 12... Berechurch Dyke;         |                      |
| 3..... Moat Farm Dyke;    | 7..... Heath Farm Dyke;   | 13... Shrub End Dyke;          |                      |

Fig 1 Plan of the *oppidum* dyke system of Camulodunum.

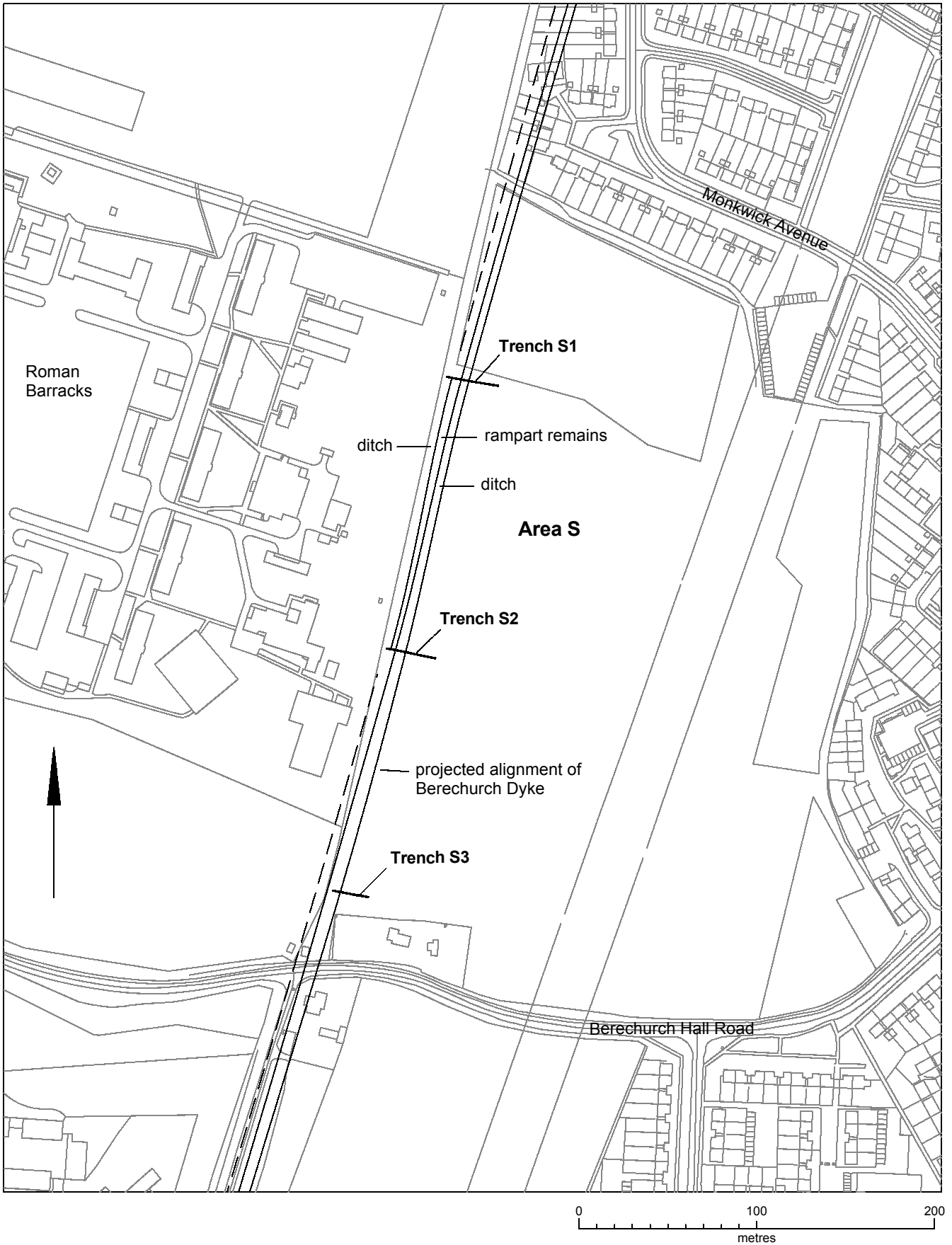


Fig 2 Trench location plan, showing the projected alignment of Berechurch Dyke.

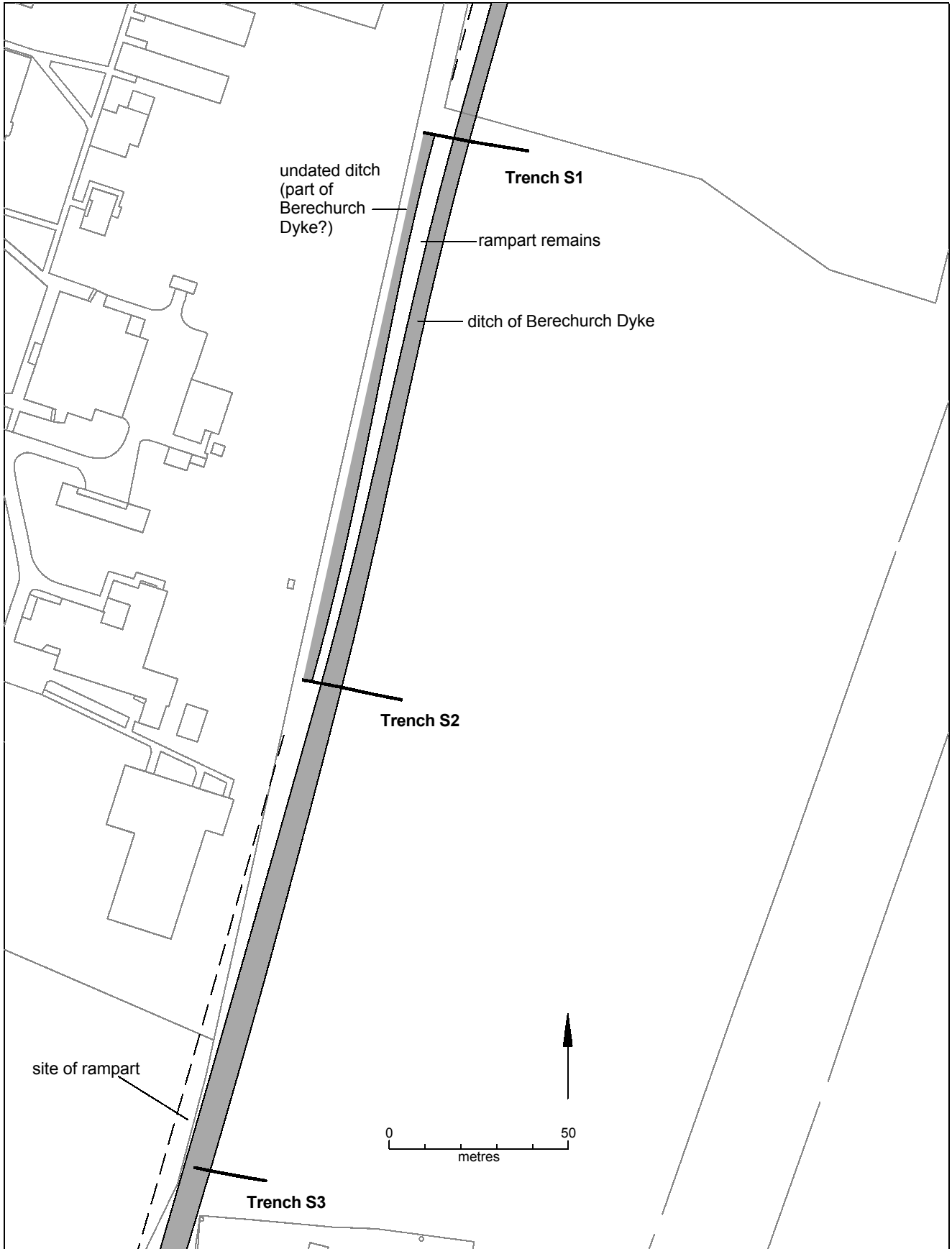


Fig 3 Berechurch Dyke alignment.

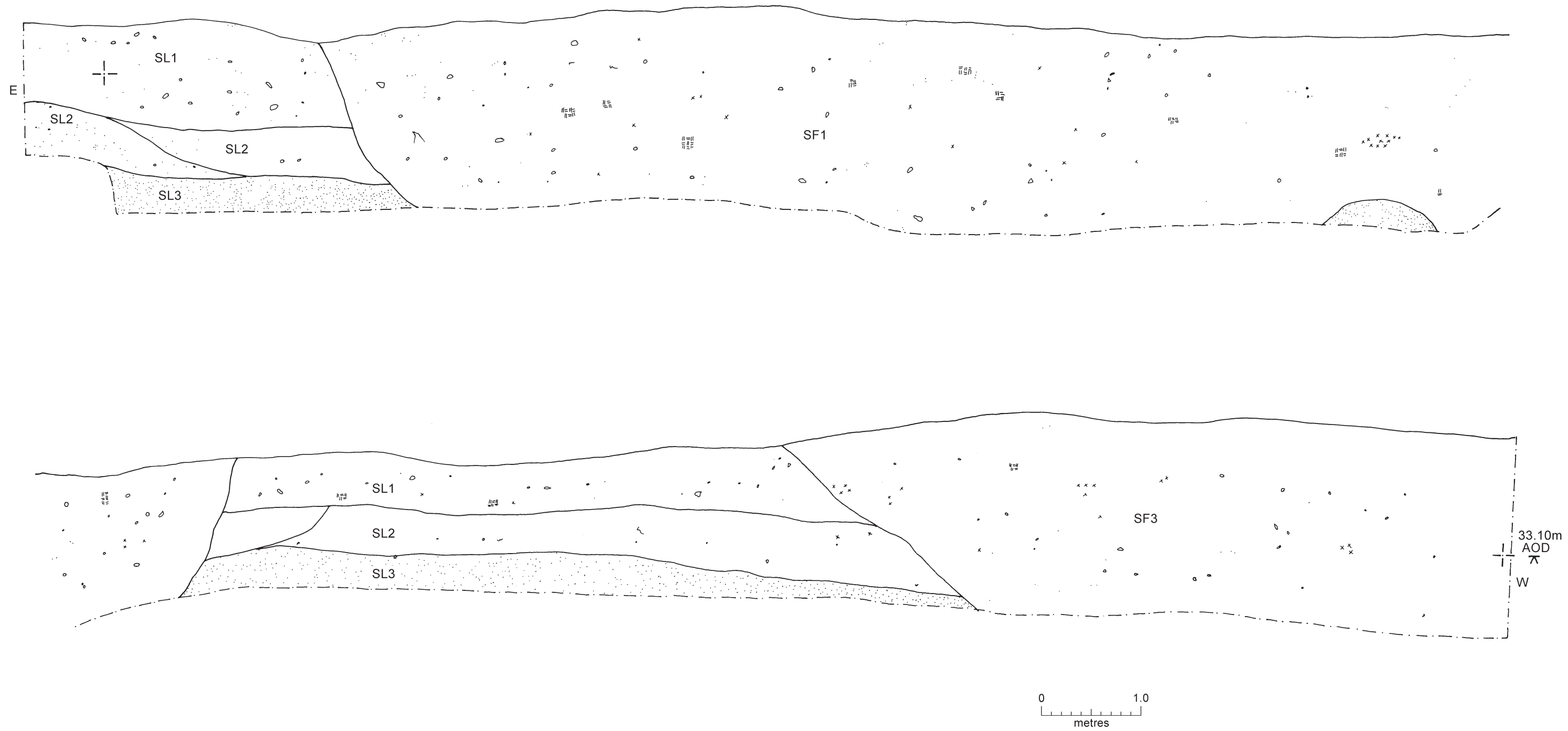


Fig 4 Trench S1: section.

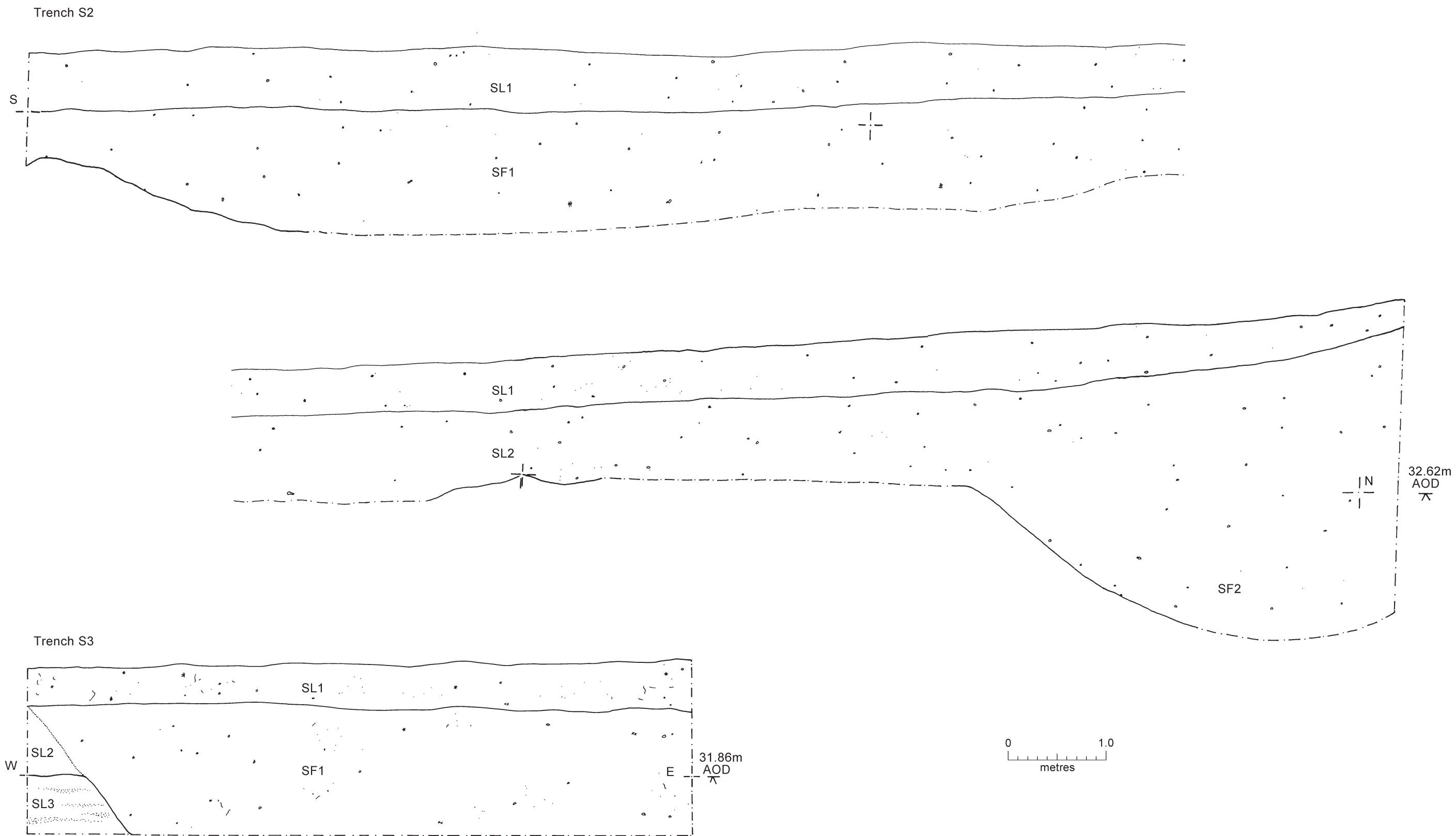


Fig 5 Trenches S2 and S3: sections.



# Essex Heritage Conservation Record/ *Essex Archaeology and History*

## Summary sheet

<b>Site name/address:</b> Area S of the Garrison Urban Village, Colchester, Essex	
<b>Parish:</b> Colchester	<b>District:</b> Colchester Borough
<b>NGR:</b> TL 9978 2213 (c)	<b>Museum accession code:</b> 2004.296
<b>Type of work:</b> Trial-trenching	<b>Site director/group:</b> Colchester Archaeological Trust
<b>Date of work:</b> May 2004	<b>Size of area investigated:</b> 150m of trenching
<b>Location of finds/curating museum:</b> Colchester Museums	<b>Funding source:</b> Developer
<b>Further seasons anticipated?</b> Yes	<b>Related EHCR nos:</b>
<b>Final report:</b> CAT Report 273	
<b>Periods represented:</b>	
<p><b>Summary of fieldwork results:</b>  <i>This is the archive report on archaeological trial-trenching at Area S of the planned urban village at the Garrison, Colchester, Essex to locate the exact position of Berechurch Dyke. The work was carried out in two stages as part of a programme of archaeological investigation of areas of alienated land, acquired by Taylor Woodrow for residential development. The fieldwork on Area S was necessitated by design requirements for the installation of a new service close to the estimated course of the Berechurch Dyke and the creation of a green 'corridor' in the development to preserve the surviving remains of Berechurch Dyke. The first stage of the investigation involved the excavation of three 50m x 0.5m trial-trenches. Two large ditches were observed in the three trenches; one was the ditch of Berechurch Dyke and the westerly ditch was thought to be also part of the dyke. Finds from the first stage of trial-trenching included a very small amount of Roman pottery and tile as well as a single sherd of prehistoric pottery from the westerly ditch. The second stage of the investigation consisted of the digging of two trial-trenches to investigate further the westerly ditch observed in the first stage of the work. Post-medieval finds from the sections cut across the feature in the second stage showed it to be post-medieval in date and therefore not part of the dyke.</i></p>	
<b>Previous summaries/reports:</b> CAT Reports 97 and 207	
<b>Author of summary:</b> B Holloway	<b>Date of summary:</b> June 2004