

## **CAT Report 327**

### **Observations on two geotechnical trenches at the rear of 16 Coast Road, West Mersea, Essex**

**on the 13th June 2005**

#### **Background**

Two geotechnical trenches were examined by the Colchester Archaeological Trust in the north-west corner (Trench 1) and south-west corner (Trench 2) of the plot of land behind no 16 Coast Road, West Mersea, Essex (see attached plan Fig 1).

No 16 Coast Road is located on the western edge of the modern town centre, west of the church of St Peter and St Paul and the associated priory remains. West Mersea is the site of a small Roman settlement, and over many years there have been extensive Roman finds from the area around the church; these include tessellated floors and walls and reported mosaics.

#### **Results**

##### *Trench 1*

Trench 1, located in the north-west corner of the plot, was excavated by JCB through a modern dark earth (L1) and a post-Roman subsoil (L2) and into natural geological sands and gravels (L3). At the interface of L1 and L2 was a single pit feature (F1) that ran the length of the trench. The pit fill contained large quantities of oyster shell and some fragments of animal bone. There was charcoal flecking throughout the fill of the pit feature. No datable finds were recovered from the pit fill.

##### *Trench 2*

Trench 2 was located in the south-west corner of the plot and, as with Trench 1, was excavated by JCB through modern dark earth (L1) and subsoil (L2) and into the natural geological sands and gravels (L3). As in Trench 1 at the interface between the dark earth (L1) and the subsoil (L2), a pit (F2) was identified which ran the entire length of the trench. As in F1, the fill of the pit contained large amounts of animal bone and oyster shell. The pit also had frequent charcoal flecking throughout the fill. In addition to the bone and shell, six fragments of tile/brick were recovered from the pit fill.

#### **Finds**

A sample of 1.114kg of animal bone was recovered from the two features observed in the two geotechnical trenches. The bone appeared to be mostly bovine, although bone fragments from smaller animals were present in the assemblage. Among the bone were large amounts of oyster shell. No datable pottery was recovered from either of the pit fills, although tile fragments from F1 suggest a post-medieval date for the deposit.

#### **Discussion**

The pit features F1 and F2 that were observed in the two geotechnical trenches contained large amounts of animal bone, oyster shell and charcoal flecking. These finds are indicative of domestic activity and waste dumping. The distance of the pits F1 and F2 away from the house and other buildings associated with no 16 supports the interpretation that the pits contained domestic rubbish or midden deposits consisting of organic material that could not be reused and was buried away from the dwelling. Dating the deposits is difficult as no diagnostic material was recovered from either of the features. Fragments of both Roman and post-medieval tile were recovered from the fill of F2. The Roman material is, however, likely to be residual in the pit fill, with the later post-medieval material giving a more reliable date for the deposit.

Fieldwork and report by Ben Holloway.

Checked by: *Philip Crummy 20.06.05*

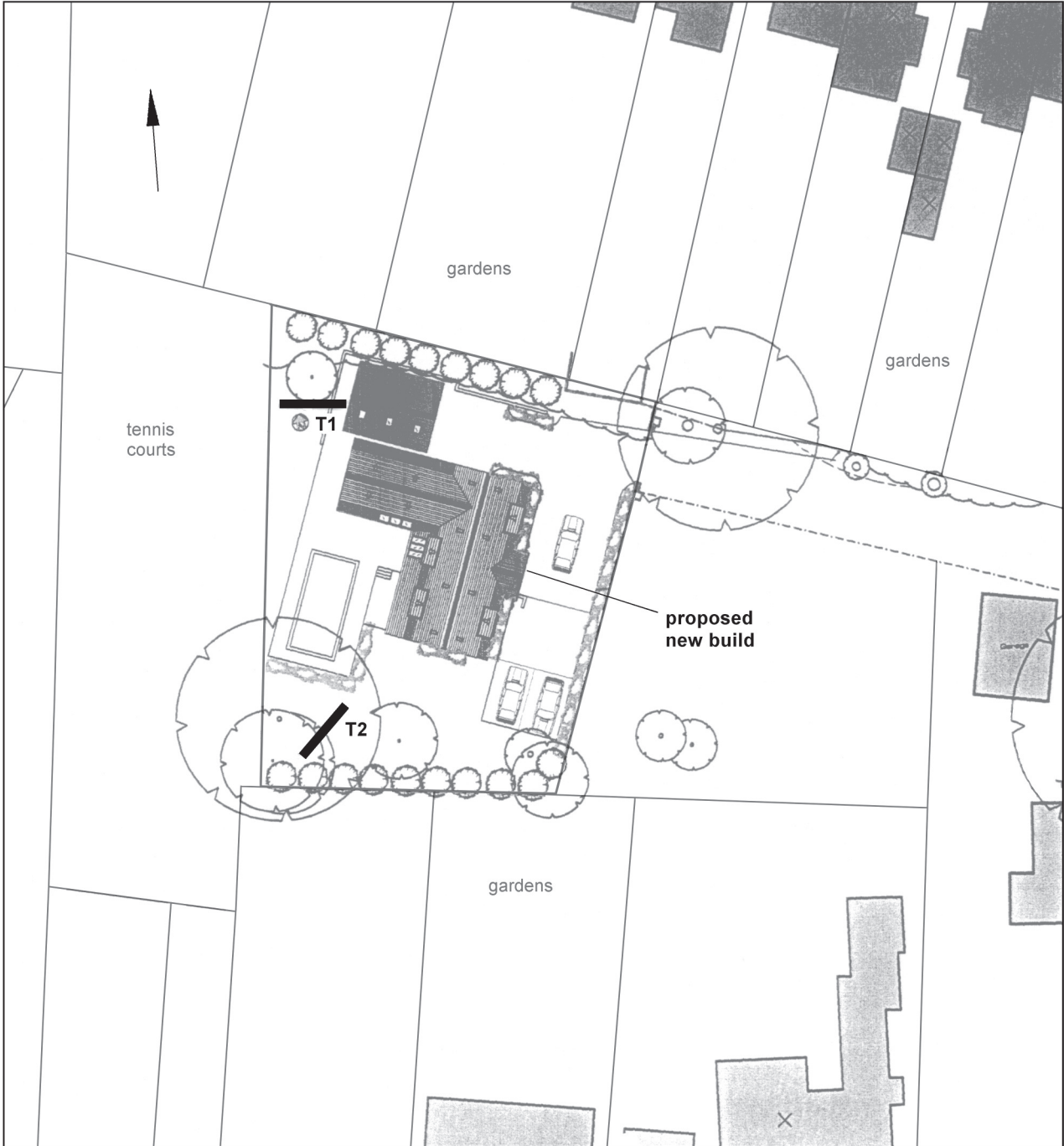


Fig 1 Trench locations. (Not to scale.)