

**An archaeological evaluation
at
135-137 New London Road,
Chelmsford, Essex.**

April 2012

**report prepared by
Ben Holloway**

**with contributions by
Stephen Benfield and Howard Brooks**

on behalf of John Finch Partnership

Planning reference: 11/01603/FUL
CAT project ref.: 12/3e
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NGR: TL 7053 0622



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CAT Report 643
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1 Summary

The site (located on the south side of New London Road, and to the east of the historic settlement of Chelmsford) consisted of an area of tarmac hardstanding used as car parking.

A single evaluation trench 8m in length positioned within the footprint of a proposed new extension revealed three archaeological features: a fragment of a post-medieval/modern wall foundation, an associated brick yard surface, and a post-medieval ditch.

These features relate to domestic activity in the properties fronting onto New London Road, and shed no light on the development of Roman or medieval Chelmsford.

2 Introduction (Fig 1)

This is the archive report on an archaeological trial-trenching evaluation at 135-137 New London Road, Chelmsford, Essex (TL 7053 0622).

The site is a rectangular area of open ground associated with the parking to the rear of offices at 135-137 New London road.

The Historic Environment Management (HEM) team of Essex County Council (ECC) were consulted by Chelmsford Borough Council in January 2012 for a planning application (11/01603/FUL) for the construction of a new three-storey rear extension at 135-137 New London Road, Chelmsford. In response to consultation, HEM made the following recommendation to the LPA in line with Planning Policy Statement 5:

No development, or preliminary groundworks, of any kind shall take place until the applicant has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work and recording in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted by the applicant, and approved by the planning authority.

A brief detailing the required archaeological work (an evaluation by trial-trenching) was written by HEM officer Richard Havis (HEM 2012). All archaeological work was carried out in accordance with a WSI (Written Scheme of Investigation) produced by Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) in response to the HEM team brief and agreed with the HEM team (CAT 2012).

The archaeological work was commissioned by Mr Richard Horley of John Finch Partnership, and was carried out by CAT on April 4th 2012. Post-excavation work was carried out in April 2012.

In addition to the WSI, all fieldwork and reporting was done in accordance with the Colchester Archaeological Trust's *Policies and procedures* (CAT 2008), and the Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (IfA 2008a) and *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (IfA 2008b). The guidance contained in the documents *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment* (English Heritage 2006: MoRPHE), *Standards for field archaeology in the East of England* (EAA 14) and *Research and archaeology revisited: A revised framework for the East of England*, East Anglian Archaeological Occasional Papers 24 (EAA 24) were also followed.

3 Archaeological background

This section is based on records held by The Essex Historic Environment Record (EHER), and in Medlycott 2011.

The modern town of Chelmsford grew from two separate *foci*, firstly a small Romano-British settlement to the south of the river (centred around what is now Moulsham Street) and, secondly, a medieval market town to the north of the river. The Roman settlement went out of use in the early part of the 5th century, and was re-occupied in the medieval period.

The site lies with an area of archaeological potential, to the east of the Roman town and outside the later 2nd-century town defences. Mesolithic and Neolithic worked flint and Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age pottery have been found at a number of sites within the Roman town in a disturbed layer at the top of the natural brickearth.

Roman Chelmsford or *Caesaromagus* was probably established around a fort constructed in the aftermath of the Boudican revolt of 60-61 AD. The civilian settlement developed along the London-Colchester Road (Moulsham Street) and a side road to the south-east that led to Heybridge and Wickford. The town included a *mansio* (government posting station), its bath-house, and a temple precinct. The *mansio* and bath-house were rebuilt on a larger scale in the mid-2nd century. In c 160-75 substantial earthwork defences were constructed around the town's core but the southern side of the circuit at least was abandoned by the mid 3rd century, and settlement continued to extend along the road frontages to the south and the east.

Excavation within proximity of the Roman town has revealed that Roman deposits and features survive despite being built upon. The development site lies to the north of the major Roman road to London which has been found to have extensive occupation along it. Further to the east in Marlborough Road trial trenches failed to locate surviving archaeology (EHER 18936). Other finds of coins within Marlborough Road indicate the presence of occupation.

The evaluation site also lies within the medieval and post medieval town.

4 Aim

The aim of the evaluation was to record and establish the character, extent, date, significance and condition of any remains and deposits likely to be disturbed by the proposed works, with particular attention to evidence of activity for the development of Roman Chelmsford.

5 Results of the evaluation (Figs 1-3)

This section gives an archaeological summary of the evaluation trench (T1), with context and finds dating information. The evaluation trench was excavated under archaeological supervision using a tracked excavator, through five layers: modern tarmac hard-standing 200mm thick (L1), a compacted base layer for the hard-standing consisting of crushed hardcore (L2), a remnant topsoil (L3), and an accumulation horizon (L4) which sealed natural brickearth deposits (L5).

An archaeological summary of each evaluation trench with a tabulation of context and finds dating information follows below.

T1: summary

T1, located in the centre of the site and within the footprint of the new extension, contained three archaeological features, a brick surface F1, abutting wall foundation F2. The wall foundation aligns with the property boundary that once divided no. 135 from no. 137.

F2 appears to be a yard surface associated with the rear of number 137. Ditch F3 runs broadly parallel with New London Road, and is likely to represent an earlier boundary feature, possibly an agricultural feature.

Trench 1 – archaeological contexts and dating.

Feature no	Type	Dated finds	Phase
F1	brick surface	brick	post-medieval/modern
F2	foundation	brick	Post-med/modern
F3	ditch	pot, peg-tile, clay tobacco-pipe, animal bone	post-medieval

6 Finds

by Stephen Benfield

A small quantity of post-medieval and modern finds came from three contexts in T1. The finds consist of pottery, ceramic building material (CBM), clay pipe and animal bone, and are listed and described in Table 2. Individual pieces or types of finds are dated and an overall spot date is provided for the finds from each context finds number. The medieval and post-medieval pottery fabric types recorded refer to the Essex post-Roman fabric series (Cunningham & Drury 1985; *CAR 7* 2000) and are listed in Table 1. Bricks are dated with reference to the typology and system for describing Essex brick (Ryan 1996, Appendix 1).

Fabric code	description	fabric period/common date range
40	post-medieval red earthen wares (general)	16/17-18C
45	German stone ware (general)	15/16-17C

Table 1 Pottery fabrics recorded showing period/common date range

ctxt no.	finds no	ctxt type	finds	spot date
F1	1	brick floor surface	CBM complete, White floor brick, 1944 g, (235 x 110 x 40 mm), slightly rounded edges to base, white, slightly powdery fabric (19C), slightly abraded surfaces; near complete, White floor brick, 1107 g, (220 x 110 x 33/25 mm) unusually the brick is thinner at one side than the other, white, slightly powdery fabric (19C), abraded surfaces; complete, White floor brick, 2348 g, (230 x 115 x 43 mm), hard pale white/cream fabric, part of base rough (19C) <i>Notes: despite some variation, overall the size and nature of these bricks broadly corresponds with 19th century White floor bricks (Ryan 1996); the two bricks in slightly powdery, white fabric are very similar and are probably related in terms of production/source; the other brick is in a harder fabric which may indicate a separate production or different source to the other two</i>	19C
F2	2	wall foundation	CBM brick, complete, 2566 g, London Stock brick (230 x 105 x 60 mm) pale yellow fabric with broad frog in base (L18-E20C), lime mortar on base of brick	L18-E20C
F3	3	ditch	Pottery Fabric 40 1@4 g, possibly Late medieval/early post-medieval Essex red ware (16-18C); Fabric 40(glazed) 1@8 g (16/17-18C); Fabric 45 1@3 g, almost certainly a German import (15/16-17C) possibly from Frechen, although the pale, slightly soft fabric might possibly allow an English (L17-18C) source CBM peg-tile 7@379 g (med- post-med/mod); brick 3@187 g, consists of one small corner in red orange fine sand fabric with shape edges (18-19C) and two coarse sanded pieces (18-20C); unidentified brick/tile piece 1@24 g possibly from a curving(?) tile with part of a small, angled perforation or hole surviving at one end which does not penetrated the full thickness of the tile (18-19/20C) Clay pipe stem pieces 3@10 g, one bore 1-2 mm (burnt) other two bore 2-3 mm (17/18-19C) Animal bone 2@45 g, one end of long bone piece from medium-large mammal (shaft chopped through) and large mammal (cow) tooth	pottery 16/17-18C, some CBM dated 18-19/20C

Table 2 Spot-dated list of finds by context and finds number

7 Discussion

Evaluation trenching to the rear of 135-137, New London Road has not produced a great deal of archaeological significance. However, the excavated features are consistent with what would be expected to the rear of a post-medieval street frontage - the remains of yard areas and boundary features. The boundary feature represented by F1 was observed as a scar on the rear wall of the building, with the brick surfacing F2 abutting the wall foundation (bricks sampled from the foundation are frogged indicating a mid 19th century date). Ditch F3 was sealed by wall foundation F2 and yard surface F1. It contained 17th century pottery, indicating an earlier phase of activity when the ditch may have been an agricultural land boundary put out of use by the expanding Victorian suburbs of 19th-century Chelmsford.

8 Acknowledgements

The Trust would like to thank Mr Richard Horley of John Finch Partnership for commissioning and funding the work. The project was managed by B Holloway, fieldwork carried out by B Holloway and C Lister. The project was monitored for HEM team by Richard Havis.

9 References

- | | | |
|---------------------------|-------|--|
| CAR 7 | 2000 | <i>Colchester Archaeological Report 7: Post-Roman pottery from excavations in Colchester 1971-1985</i> , by J Cotter |
| CAT | 2008 | <i>Policies and procedures</i> |
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| IfA | 2008b | <i>Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials</i> |
| Medycott, M | 1999 | <i>Chelmsford Historic Town Assessment</i> . Essex County Council |
| Medycott, M | 2011 | <i>Research and archaeology revisited: A revised framework for the East of England</i> , East Anglian Archaeological Occasional Papers 24 (EAA 24) |
| Ryan, P | 1996 | <i>Brick in Essex, from the Roman conquest to the Reformation</i> |

10 Abbreviations and glossary

CAT	Colchester Archaeological Trust
CBA	Council for British Archaeology
context	specific location of finds on an archaeological site
ECC	Essex County Council
EHHER	Essex Historic Environment Record, held by Essex County Council
feature	an identifiable thing like a pit, a wall, a drain; can contain 'contexts'
fill	the soil filling up a hole such as a pit or ditch
HEM	Historic Environment Management
IfA	Institute for Archaeologists
modern	circa 1800 - now
natural	geological deposit undisturbed by human activity
NGR	National Grid Reference
post-medieval	circa 1530 - 1800
Roman	the period from AD 43 to around AD 430

11 Archive deposition

The paper and digital archive is currently held by the Colchester Archaeological Trust at 12 Lexden Road, Colchester, Essex CO3 3NF, but will be permanently deposited with Chelmsford Museum under accession code 2012.067.

12 Contents of archive

Finds

1 museum box containing all finds (pottery, clay pipe, animal bone, peg tile)

Paper record

One A4 wallet containing:

brief and WSI
copy of CAT Report 643
original site record sheets

photographic log
disk with digital photographs

attendance record

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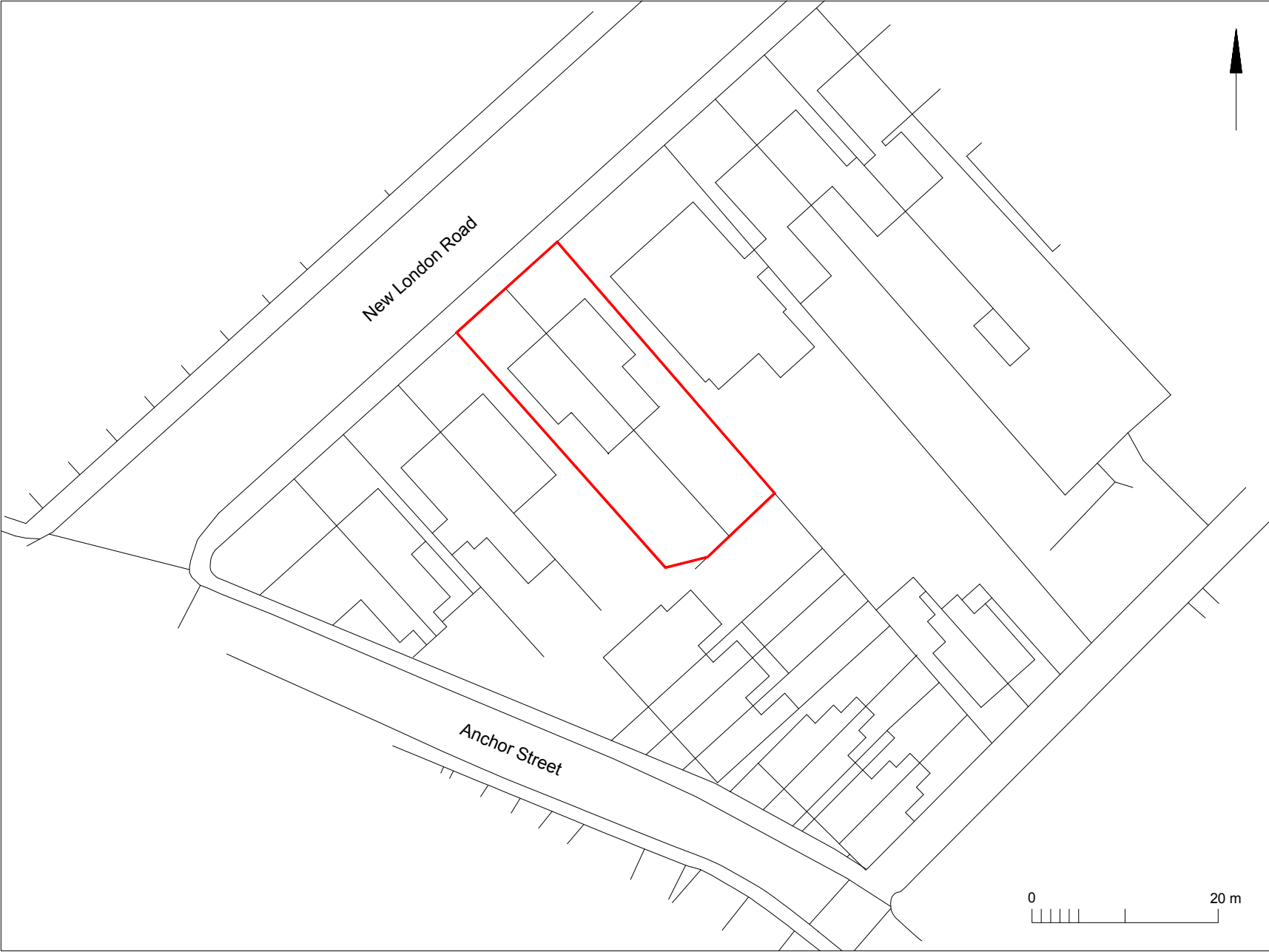


Fig 1 Site location.

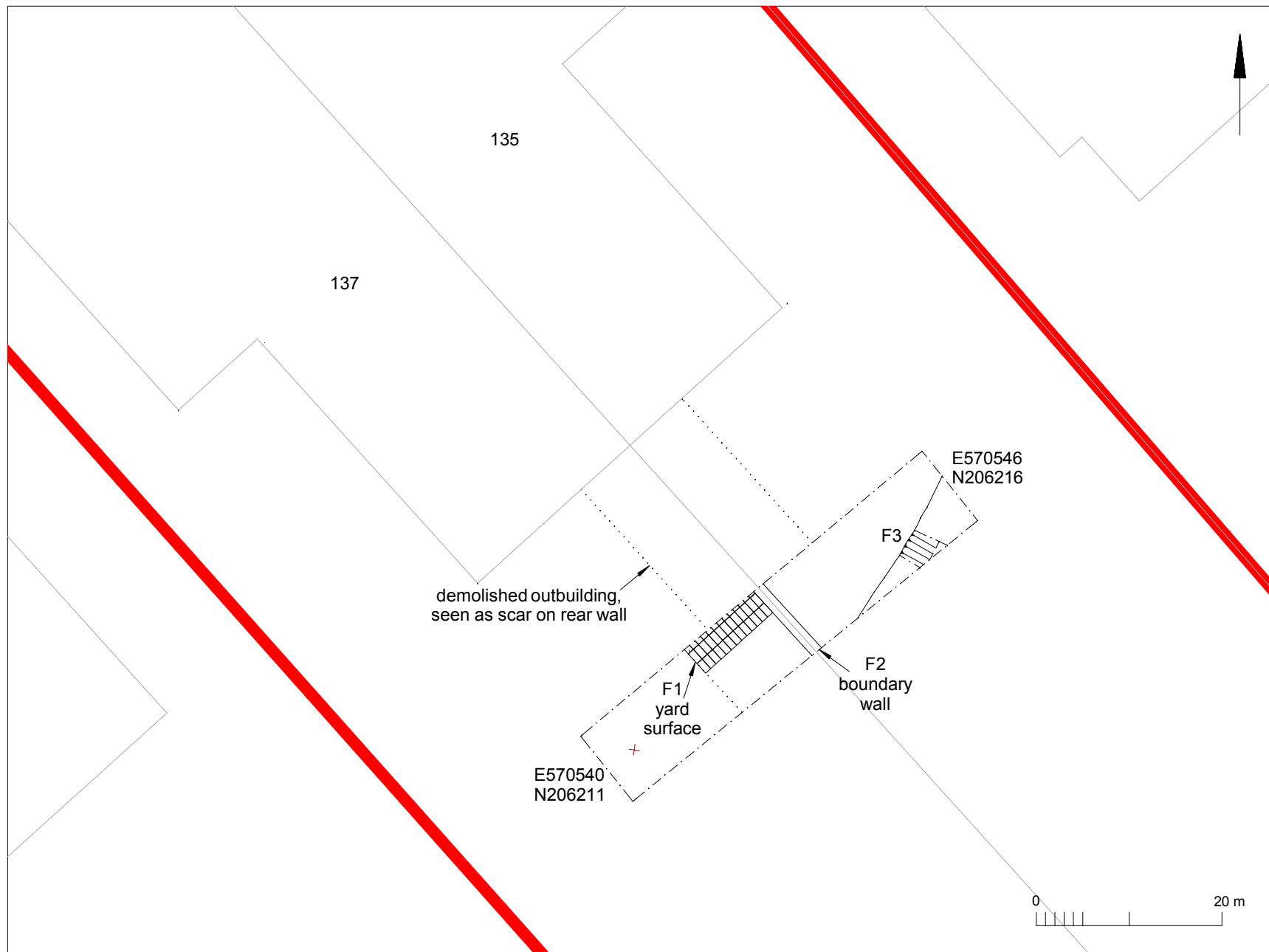


Fig 2 Evaluation results.

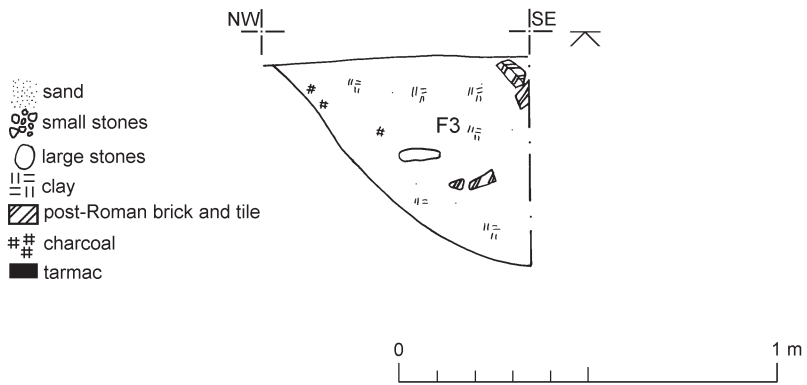
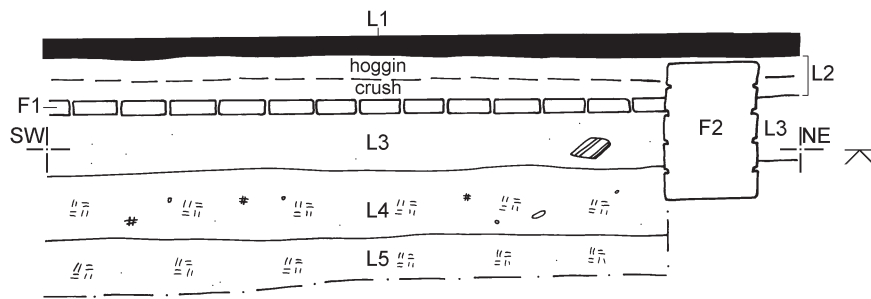


Fig 3 Sections.

Essex Historic Environment Record/ Essex Archaeology and History

Summary sheet

Site address: 135-137 New London Rd, Chelmsford, Essex	
Parish: Chelmsford	District: Chelmsford
NGR: TL 7053 0622 (c)	HEM code: CF 68 CAT Project code: 12/3e
Type of work: Evaluation	Site director/group: Colchester Archaeological Trust
Date of work: April 2012	Size of area investigated: 1 trench (8m)
Location of finds/curating museum: Chelmsford & Essex Museum: accession 2012.067	Funding source: Developer
Further seasons anticipated? No	Related EHER no 18936
Final report: CAT Report 643, summary in EAH	
Periods represented: post-medieval, modern	
<p>Summary of fieldwork results:</p> <p><i>A single evaluation trench 8m in length was positioned within the footprint of a proposed new extension. This revealed three archaeological features: a fragment of a post-medieval/modern wall foundation, an associated brick yard surface, and a post-medieval ditch.</i></p> <p><i>These features relate to domestic activity in the properties fronting onto New London Road, and shed no light on the development of Roman or medieval Chelmsford.</i></p>	
Previous summaries/reports: none	
Keywords: post-medieval wall, brick floor, ditch	Significance: *
Author of summary: Ben Holloway	Date of summary: April 2012
ECC HEM Monitor: Richard Havis	