

**An archaeological watching brief on  
land to the rear of 53-55 Lexden Road,  
Colchester, Essex  
January 2013**

**report prepared by  
Donald Shimmin**

**commissioned by  
Steve Norman on behalf of Robin Davies**

NGR: TL 985 251  
CAT project ref.: 12/12c  
Colchester and Ipswich Museums accession code: COLEM 2013.2



**Colchester Archaeological Trust**  
Roman Circus House,  
Circular Road North,  
Colchester,  
Essex CO2 7GZ

tel.: 07436 273 304  
email: [archaeologists@catuk.org](mailto:archaeologists@catuk.org)

**CAT Report 689**  
April 2013

**Essex Historic Environment Record/  
Essex Archaeology and History  
CAT Report 689  
Summary sheet**

<b>Site address:</b> Land to the rear of 53-55 Lexden Road, Colchester	
<b>Parish:</b> Colchester	<b>District:</b> Colchester Borough
<b>NGR:</b> TL 985 251	<b>Site codes:</b> Museum accession code: COLEM 2013.2 CAT project code: 12/12c
<b>Type of work:</b> Watching brief	<b>Site director/group:</b> Colchester Archaeological Trust
<b>Dates of work:</b> 8th-11th January 2013	<b>Size of area investigated:</b> 165 sq m
<b>Location of finds/curating museum:</b> Colchester and Ipswich Museums	<b>Funding source:</b> Client
<b>Further seasons anticipated?</b> No	<b>Related EHER and UAD nos:</b> --
<b>Final report:</b> CAT Report 689 and summary in <i>EAH</i>	
<b>Periods represented:</b> modern	
<p><b>Summary of fieldwork results:</b> An archaeological watching brief took place on land to the rear of 53-55 Lexden Road, Colchester, Essex, during groundwork in advance of the construction of a detached dwelling with attached garage. No significant archaeological remains were observed during the watching brief.</p> <p>The site is located on the northern side of Lexden Road, approximately 750 m west of the walled area of Colchester town centre. The plot of land covers an area of some 1300 sq m (0.13ha) and was formerly gardens. It is set back some 60 m from Lexden Road and is accessed via a narrow lane located between 51 and 53A Lexden Road.</p> <p>The site lies within the western cemetery area of the Roman town, although there are no previous records of burials from the site itself. The aims of the watching brief were to record the depth and extent of any archaeological remains uncovered during the redevelopment, particularly any Roman burials, and to assess the date and significance of these remains.</p> <p>The groundwork included a series of narrow trenches for the foundations of the house and for the garage on the northern side of the house (Fig 1). The foundation trenches were approximately 500 mm wide and 1.0-1.3 m deep. In the north-western corner of the house/garage there was a large area of modern disturbance, and here the foundation trenches were dug 1.3-2.2 m deep. The trenches were dug by the contractor using a mechanical excavator with a toothless trenching bucket, under the supervision of a CAT archaeologist. The narrow trenches on the northern and western sides of the garage were not observed in detail. The ground level within the building footprint was reduced by up to 300 mm using a mechanical excavator with a toothless ditching bucket. Several shallow service trenches were also dug. Further details of the methods used during the watching brief can be found in the Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for the site, which was produced by CAT in December 2012.</p> <p>The natural subsoil (Layer or L3) was reached at a depth of between 0.6 m and 0.8 m below the modern ground level over most of the site, and consisted of brownish-yellow gravelly sand. A brownish, slightly clayey layer (L2), between 0.25 m and 0.5 m thick,</p>	

extended across most of the site and sealed the natural subsoil (L3). Layer 2 probably consisted mainly of subsoil, reworked and redeposited as a result of post-Roman activity, such as cultivation. It was sealed by dark greyish-brown modern topsoil (L1), which was 0.2-0.3 m thick. In places there were also thin deposits of modern dump/make-up at or near the modern ground surface.

A large modern pit was uncovered during trenching in the north-western corner of the house/garage. It measured at least 6 m across and was up to 2.0 m deep. The pit had a blackish, loamy fill, and contained many tree fragments as well as some modern rubble. Information from the contractors suggests that this was probably dug in the early 2000's.

The large pit cut a modern well or soakaway. The latter was reached at a depth of 2.0 m below the modern ground level and measured approximately 2.8 m across. It was constructed of brick with a concrete lining. Standing water was observed within the well/soakaway at approximately 2.1 m below the modern ground level. The natural subsoil (L3) was reached at a depth of approximately 2.0 m below the modern ground level in this part of the site.

In conclusion, no significant archaeological remains were found during the watching brief, although a small quantity of unstratified finds was recovered. The finds consisted of fragments of pottery and ceramic building material, and were mainly of Roman date. They came from the machining of the trenches, from the spoil heaps, and from the surface of the site in the north-western part of the plot. The Roman finds probably represent a general spread of occupation material, rather than fragments largely derived from burials. The finds are listed in the appendix below. The finds that were retained, together with the site records, photographs and the rest of the site archive from the watching brief, will be permanently deposited with Colchester and Ipswich Museums.

We are grateful to Steve Norman for commissioning CAT to undertake the archaeological watching brief, on behalf of his client, Mr Robin Davies. We would also like to thank the contractors, KMC Project Management, for their help on site. The fieldwork was carried out by Adam Wightman, Stephen Benfield and Donald Shimmin. The work was monitored by Martin Winter, Colchester Borough Council Archaeological Officer, who also prepared a brief in July 2012 specifying the archaeological work required on the site.

**Previous summaries/reports:** none

**Keywords:** Roman pottery, Roman tile

**Significance:** neg

**Author of summary:**  
Donald Shimmin

**Date of summary:**  
April 2013

## **Appendix**

### **Finds**

by Stephen Benfield

#### Introduction

A small quantity of unstratified (U/S) finds of Late Iron Age (LIA), Roman, medieval, post-medieval and modern date were recovered from the site. The finds consist of pottery and ceramic building material (CBM) and the majority are of Roman date. The finds are listed by context and described in Table 2. The Roman pottery was recorded with reference to the Colchester Roman pottery fabric series (*CAR 10*). Roman vessel forms refer to the *Camulodunum* (Colchester) type series (Hawkes & Hull 1947; Hull 1963) and samian forms refer to Webster 1996. The post-Roman pottery was recorded with reference to the Colchester post-Roman pottery fabric series (*CAR 7*). The pottery fabrics recorded are listed in Table 1. The CBM and post-medieval/modern finds were discarded.

Fabric	Description	Fabric date
<i>LIA &amp; Roman:</i>		
BA(SG)	South Gaulish samian	M-L1C
BA(EG)	East Gaulish samian	M2-M3C
CZ	Colchester and other red colour-coated wares	E2-3C
EA	Nene Valley colour-coated ware	M3-4C
GTW	Late Iron Age grog-tempered ware	50 BC-50 AD
GX	other coarse wares, principally locally-produced grey wares	Roman
TZ	mortaria, Colchester and other mortaria imported from the continent	Roman
WA	silvery micaceous grey wares	Roman
<i>Post-Roman:</i>		
20	Medieval sandy grey wares (general)	12-14C
40	Post-medieval red earthenwares (general)	L16/17-18C
51B	Flower pot	Modern

Table 1 Pottery fabrics

con-text	context type	finds no	description of finds	finds spot dating
U/S	Spoil heap	1	<b>Pottery: Late Iron Age &amp; Roman</b> (7@ 259 g) Fabric GTW, 1 sherd, abraded (LIA); Fabric EA, 1 sherd, decorated with cream dots (partly abraded) on black surface (M3-4C); Fabric GX, 3 sherds (Rom), Fabric TZ, 2 sherd (join) Cam 498 (M/L2-3C) <b>CBM: post-Roman</b> (3@ 256 g) two pieces in hard fired grey or grey surfaced fabric (p-med/mod); one piece in buff fabric with ridged (scallop shell?) surface (mod)	LIA, Roman, post-medieval/modern and modern
U/S	Machine-excavation of footings	2	<b>Pottery: post-medieval</b> (1@ 68 g) Fabric 40, rim from a large storage jar <b>CBM: post-Roman</b> (1@ 19 g) piece from an air brick (mod)	post-medieval and modern
U/S	Spoil heap in NW part of site	3	<b>CBM: Roman</b> (3@ 541 g) three pieces of flat Roman tile, the thickness at between 15 mm and 21 mm suggests they are probably pieces from <i>tegula</i> roof tiles	Roman
U/S	Surface finds from NW part of site	4	<b>Pottery: Late Iron Age &amp; Roman</b> (14@ 146 g) Fabric BA(SG), 1 sherd from a Dr 37 decorated bowl (L1C) 1 other sherd (M-L1C); BA(EG) 1 sherd, Dr 31 bowl; Fabric CZ 1 sherd (M2-3C); Fabric GX, 7 sherds (Rom); Fabric HZ 1 sherd (M1-2/3C); Fabric KX, 1 sherd, Cam 39 bowl (M2-4C); Fabric WA 1 sherd (Rom). <b>Medieval</b> (2@ 12 g) Fabric 20 rim (medieval). <b>Modern</b> (1@ 4 g) Fabric 51B, flowerpot <b>CBM: Roman</b> (5@ 1222 g) <i>Tegula</i> two pieces, base thickness 17 mm; Roman brick 2 pieces; Roman combed flue tile 1 piece (L1/2-4C)	Roman, medieval and modern

Table 2 Finds listed by context and find number

## References

- |                             |      |  |
|-----------------------------|------|--|
| <i>CAR 7</i>                | 2000 | <i>Colchester Archaeological Report 7: Post-Roman pottery from excavations in Colchester, 1971-85</i> , by J Cotter  |
| <i>CAR 10</i>               | 1999 | <i>Colchester Archaeological Report 10: Roman pottery from excavations in Colchester, 1971-86</i> , by R P Symonds and S Wade, ed by P Bidwell and A Croom |
| 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                   | 1963 | <i>The Roman potters kilns of Colchester</i> , RRCSAL, <b>21</b>   |
| Webster, P                  | 1996 | <i>Roman Samian Pottery in Britain</i> , CBA Practical Handbook in Archaeology, <b>13</b>  |

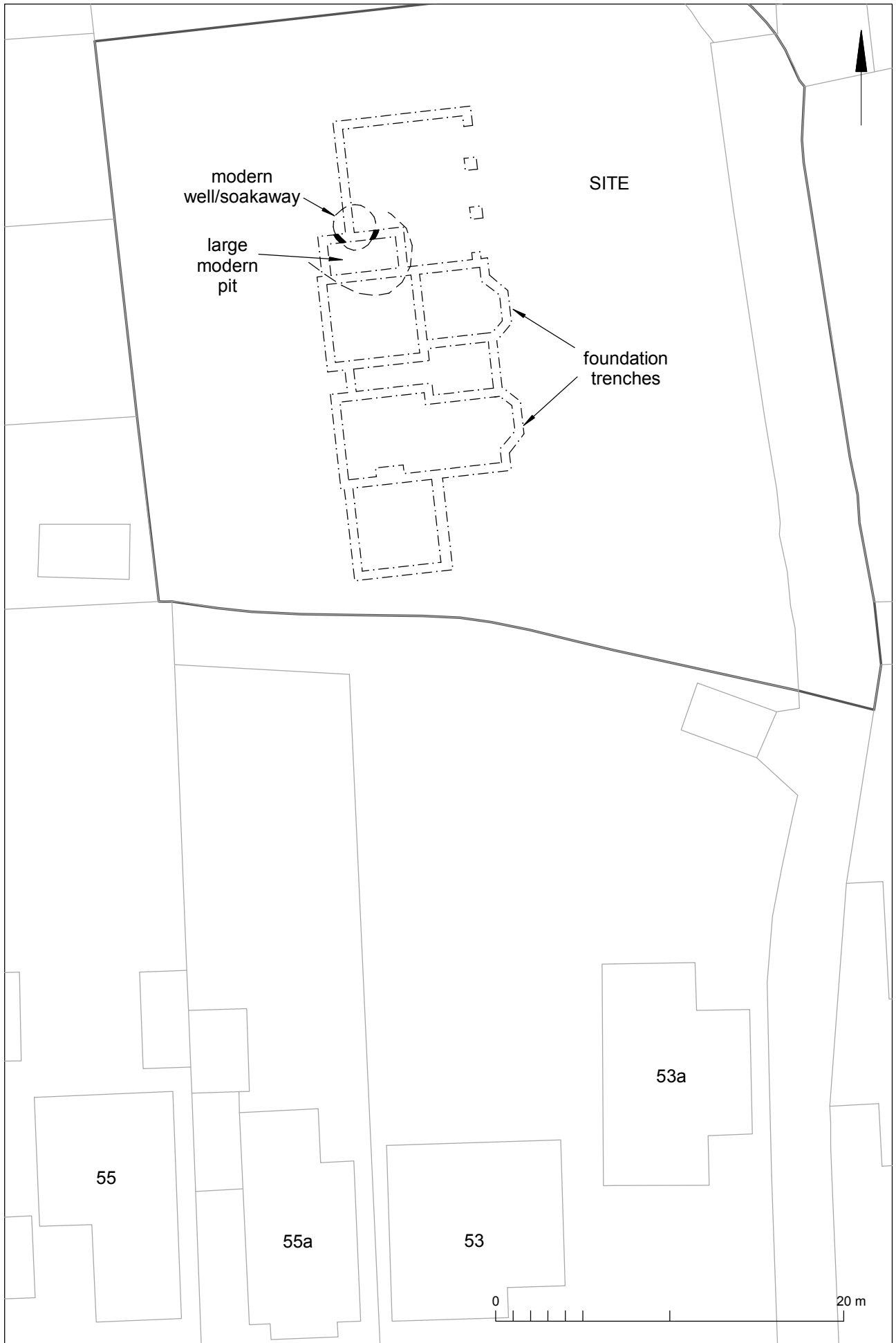


Fig 1 Site plan.