

**Historic building recording
at the Arena, Circular Road East, Colchester,
Essex, CO2 7SZ**

October 2015



report prepared by Chris Lister

on behalf on RMPA

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1 Summary

A programme of historic building recording was carried out by Colchester Archaeological Trust on a complex of buildings at the Arena Leisure Centre, Circular Road East, Colchester in October 2015. The complex was formerly one of eight purpose-built post World War 2 NAAFI clubs and was opened in 1947. The NAAFI closed in 1961 and was reopened as the Arena Club. Although much altered internally, the complex has overall retained its plan form.

2 Introduction (Fig 1)

This is the archive report on the historic building recording at the Arena Leisure Centre, Circular Road East, Colchester, Essex, in response to an application for its demolition in advance of the redevelopment of the site. The work was commissioned by RPS on behalf of RMPA, and carried out by Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) in October 2015. The Arena club was built in 1947 as a military NAAFI with most of the structures of single-storey brick construction. The building is centred at NGR TL 996 244.

Pre-planning application advice was sought from Colchester Borough Council in regard to the redevelopment of the site, including the demolition of the existing structures. Given the historic significance of the buildings, it was recommended that a building record be undertaken prior to demolition. This recommendation is in line with the guidance given in Paragraph 141 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

A brief detailing the required work (historic building recording) was issued by Colchester Borough Council's Archaeological Advisor (Tipper 2015). In response to the brief, a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was prepared by Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT 2015) and agreed with the CBCAA. All work was carried out in accordance with this WSI.

All work was carried out according to standards and practices contained in the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and guidance for archaeological investigation and recording of standing buildings or structures* (2008), *Management of research projects in the historic environment* (MoRPHE), and *Standards for field archaeology in the East of England* (EAA 14). In addition, the guidelines contained in *English Heritage: Understanding Historic Buildings, A guide to good recording practice* (2006) and *RCHME: Descriptive Specification 3rd Edition* were followed.

3 Aims

The aim of the building recording was to provide a detailed record and assessment of the building prior to demolition. The building recording was carried out to Level 2 (English Heritage, 2006).

In particular the record considered:

- Plan form of the site.
- Materials and method of construction.
- Date(s) of the structures.
- Function and internal layout.
- Fixtures and fittings.
- Original and later phasing, additions and their effect on the internal/external fabric and the level of survival of original fabric.
- The significance of the site on a regional level.

4 Building recording methodology

The following are included in this report:

- A brief documentary and cartographic survey of the evidence pertaining to the building and its history.
- A large-scale block plan of the site.
- A detailed description of the building. The description addresses features such as materials, dimensions, method of construction including brickwork, joinery, fenestration, spatial configuration, phasing, re-used timbers, carpentry marks/graffiti and any evidence of original fixtures and fittings.
- A brief discussion of the history and development of the building, including its design, date, form and function and any significant modifications/reuse.
- A photographic record, comprising digital photographs of both general shots and individual features (external and internal). Selected examples of the photographic record are clearly tied into the drawn record and reproduced as fully annotated photographic plates supporting the text. The photographic record is accompanied by a photographic register detailing location and direction of shot (Appendix 1).

5 Historical background (Maps 1-2)

The structures proposed for demolition at the Arena form a locally significant complex of former NAAFI (Navy, Army and Air Force Institute) buildings.

The NAAFI originated in 1921, evolving from the amalgamation of the Expeditionary Force Canteens (established in 1915 for the comfort of overseas troops in World War 1) and the Navy and Army Canteen Board (formed 1918 to serve troops at home). The typical barracks NAAFI provided cooked light meals and cold snacks, cakes, hot and cold drinks, beer; a shop-counter for necessities such as razors, cigarettes and Brasso; a restaurant with bar; a reading room with books, newspapers and headed notepaper for letters; a small stage for entertainments and announcements; and indoor activities such as billiards and

board games. It would also host sporting activities and contests. The NAAFI used its own internal currency of NAAFI tokens and sold NAAFI own-brand products such as cigarettes.



Insignia of the NAAFI, the motto translates as 'Serving the Services'

During World War 2 the number of NAAFI employees rose from 8,000 to 110,000 and the number of NAAFI establishments rose from 1,350 to nearly 10,000, often based in buildings that were ill-suited for the purpose. By the end of 1945, linked to the massive troop demobilization that was underway, canteens were closing at a rate of 200 per week. However, the ad hoc NAAFI canteens of World War 2 were succeeded by a building programme of large permanent facilities called the 'NAAFI club' or 'NAAFI town club'. Construction started on a series of eight NAAFI clubs in 1946. These added restaurants, lounges, bars, reading and writing rooms, music and television rooms and ballrooms to military and naval centres. The Arena Club was the second of these to be built (1947).

These new NAAFI clubs were designed by architect Ernest M Joseph, whose association with NAAFI architecture went back to the Navy and Army Canteen Board of WW1. During WW2 he was Director of Works, responsible for overseeing the expanding number of NAAFI facilities.

The eight new NAAFI clubs comprised:

- Portsmouth, constructed in 1946 and since demolished
- Colchester, constructed in 1947, surviving but scheduled for demolition
- Aldershot, constructed in 1948 and since demolished
- Chatham, constructed in 1948 and now the King Charles Hotel
- Catterick, constructed in 1949 and since demolished
- Plymouth Hoe, constructed in 1952 and since demolished

All of which were all built to a Modernist design.

- Lincoln, constructed 1952-3 and surviving in 2013
- Salisbury, constructed in 1954 and since demolished

These last two were built in a more traditional design.

The first NAAFI club (Portsmouth) was opened by HRH Princess Elizabeth and a commemorative programme for the Colchester NAAFI was issued in 1947. The opening of the Plymouth NAAFI by HRH Princess Margaret was recorded on a Pathé newsreel.

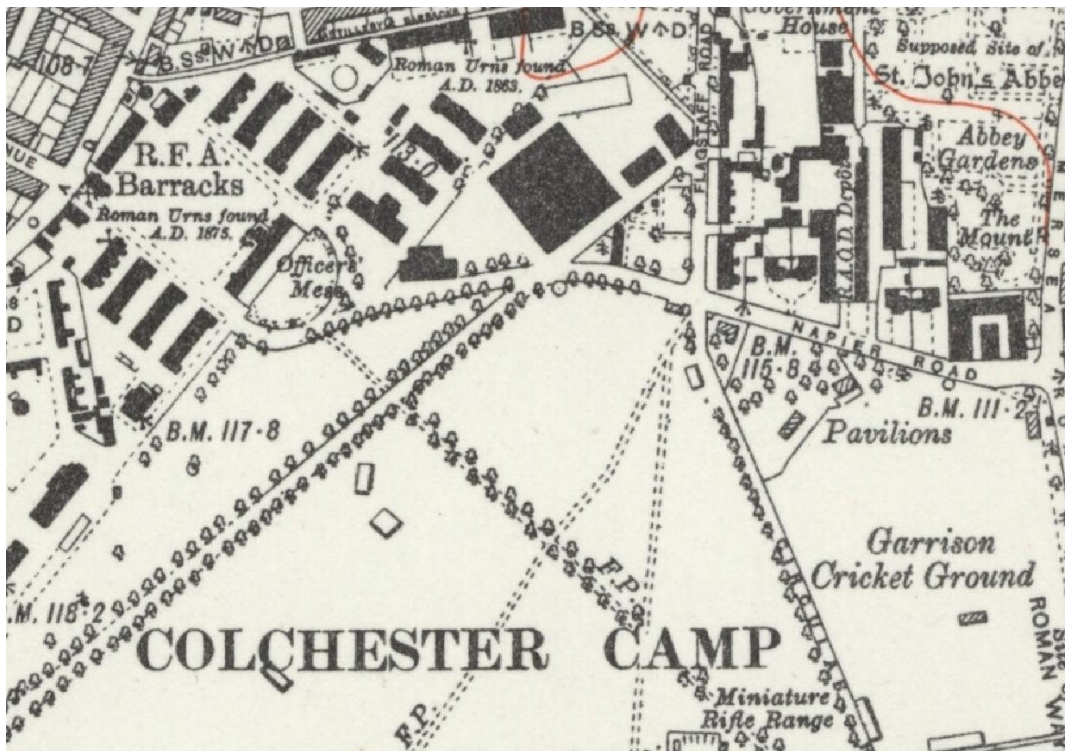
The Colchester NAAFI was constructed on the northern tip of Abbey Field, immediately to the south of Le Cateau Barracks (formerly the Royal Field Artillery Barracks) and the Royal Army Ordnance Depot (now the Flagstaff compound) on land that was previously undeveloped (Map 1). The 1955 edition of the Ordnance Survey (Map 2) shows the plan of the NAAFI, which has remained virtually unaltered. Unfortunately none of the original building plans have survived; a copy deposited at the Essex Records Office (D/B 6 Pb3/8937) is missing and the National Archives do not hold any copies. A postcard issued shortly after the Colchester NAAFI opened in 1947 has the only original images of the complex that could be found in the course of the research for this report (Jephcott, 2014).



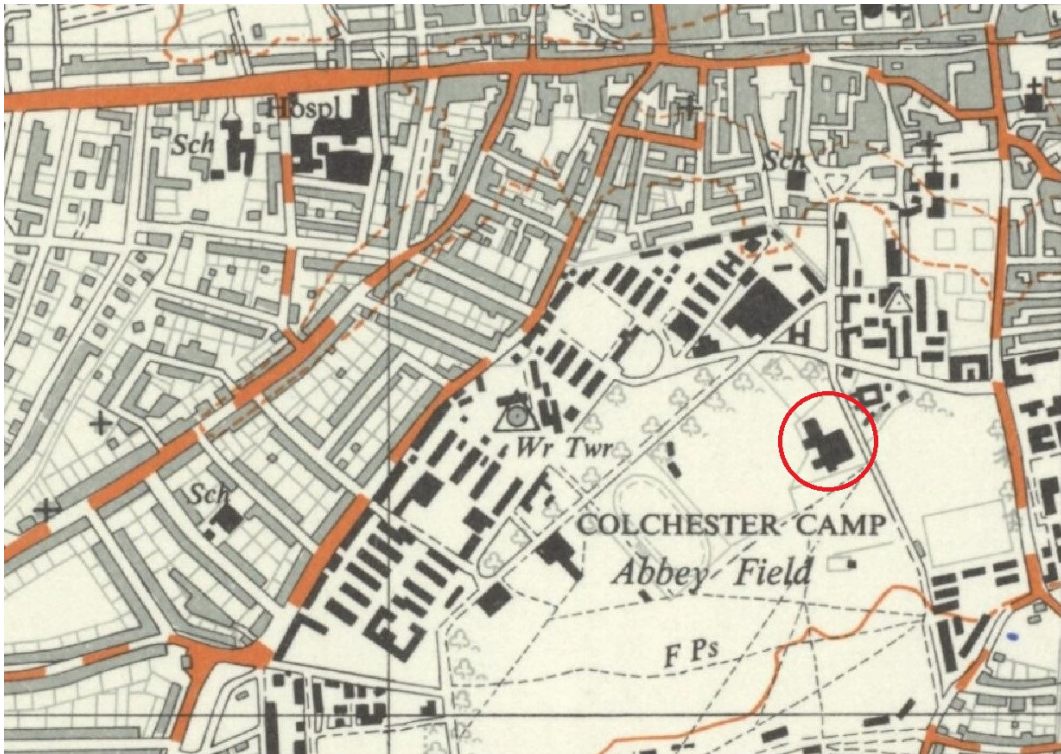
Original postcard issued to commemorate the opening of the Colchester NAAFI
(Jephcott, 2014)

The postcard depicts the northeast façade surrounded by four internal views, including the Restaurant, the Lounge and the Tavern. This postcard would have undoubtedly have been on sale in the NAAFI shop for servicemen and women to purchase and send home.

The Colchester NAAFI was modernist in its design and materials, although not architecturally outstanding. What is surprising considering the scale of the building is that it had a relatively short existence as a NAAFI. Hansard records a House of Commons debate from 11th December 1963 which mentions the Colchester NAAFI having been unused for two and half years. Although the building remained in the ownership of the Ministry of Defence until recently disposed of to RMPA Services as part of the Colchester Garrison redevelopment, its conversion to a leisure centre is probably the main reason why the interior and exterior have been extensively altered since its construction, although its plan shape has remained predominantly unaltered.



Map 1 1938 edition of the 6 inch Ordnance Survey, Sheet 37 NE, showing the undeveloped land to the south of the Royal Field Artillery Barracks and Royal Army Ordnance Depot where the Colchester NAAFI would be constructed several years later.



Map 2 1955 edition of the 1:25,000 Ordnance Survey, TL92, showing the NAAFI (circled).

6 Descriptive record (Figs 1-3)

The Arena Club is a sprawling complex of buildings located at the north tip of Abbey Field (Fig 1). This is best appreciated when seen from above (Photograph 1).



Photograph 1 Aerial view of the Arena (Google)

The plan form of the complex has a main range, aligned roughly north-west to south-east, with a C-shaped formation of structures surrounding a courtyard attached to its eastern side. Much of this courtyard has been infilled with single-storey extensions. The majority of the structures have gabled roofs of corrugated asbestos sheeting, with the exception of the two-storey extension to the east and a group of single-storey buildings at the south-east corner, which are flat-roofed (Photograph 2).



Photograph 2 Two-storey extension on the east side of the Arena (GF3 and FF3) with the gabled main range to the right (GF1) – view south

For the purposes of clarity, due to the high number of small rooms and spaces contained within the Arena complex, this report will treat the buildings as areas, seven on the ground floor (labelled GF1-GF7 on Fig 2) and three on the first floor (FF1-FF3 on Fig 3).

The building was originally constructed from red brick laid in stretcher bond over a steel and concrete skeleton with Crittall-type metal framed windows, many of which have survived. A particular feature of the eastern façade are full height glass block walls around the entrance (Photograph 2). Much of the main range is clad with wooden shingles (Photograph 3). The NAAFI postcard shows that this is a later feature and probably dates to the 1960s when the NAAFI was closed and the building converted into the Arena.

The NAAFI postcard also shows that where the modern entrance is located was originally the site of a three-storey, flat-roofed structure. Photograph 3 shows that this has been replaced and the gabled roof of the main range extended to incorporate the replacement two-storey structure.



Photograph 3 Northern end of the main range with shingle-clad sides and the reduced central section (formerly three storeys) – view south

The main complex of buildings has been added to with a number of small brick or timber structures, created in some instances by roofing over open spaces between existing buildings. This has created a complex of buildings that is labyrinthine and not conducive to photography. The following external photographs seek to illustrate this point.



Photograph 4 North-west elevation of GF1 with GF6 in the background – view south-east



Photograph 5 South-east elevation of GF5, most recently used as a base for a taxi firm – view north-west



Photograph 6 Areas GF7 and GF4, most recently used for the Arena Gym – view north



Photograph 7 South-east elevation of GF2 and FF2/FF1 – view north-east



Photograph 8 The remaining "open space" in the courtyard to the east of the main range, viewed from the fire escape of FF1 – view north-east

The internal arrangement of the Arena complex has been significantly altered since it was laid out as the NAAFI. The following section deals with Areas GF1-7 of the ground floor and attempts to extrapolate the original function of these rooms and spaces.

GF1 (Fig 2)

GF1, located at the north end of the complex is probably the most altered component of the original NAAFI building. This has been converted to a sports hall/dance studio, complete with a sprung cedar floor (Photograph 9).



Photograph 9 GF1 converted to a sports hall – view north

The original function of GF1 is uncertain, but the height of the room perhaps suggests it may have been a ballroom or dance venue. The wall to the east appears to have been open to the single-storey flat-roofed structure that extends along the length of GF1; this may have provided seating for those using the main room. Most recently it was the offices of Catten College, an establishment offering training in hairdressing and beauty therapy. The remains of a blocked-in serving hatch or counter are located in the south-east corner of GF1 (Photograph 10, labelled 'a' on Fig 2). This and a narrow staircase leading to a room on the first floor (since sub-divided) suggests this part of GF1 was restricted to NAAFI staff. The sub-divided room at the top of the stairs has parquet flooring, a feature of the original fabric of the NAAFI. A second potential original NAAFI feature in GF1 is a plate glass shop front (Photograph 11, labelled 'b' on Fig 2). This appears to be original but no evidence survives to indicate its function.

An extension constructed at the north-east corner of GF1 is incorporated into the rooms formerly used by Catten College.



Photograph 10 An original NAAFI serving hatch and counter in the south-east corner of GF1 – view south-east



Photograph 11 Interior view of a plate glass shop front, located at the south end of GF1 – view east

GF2 (Fig 2)

GF2 comprises the centre of the main range and incorporates the modern entrance to the Arena (labelled 'c' on Fig 2), some original NAAFI serving hatches and the rooms behind them ('d'), some unspecified function rooms ('e') and an original flight of stairs to the first floor.



Photograph 12 The modern entrance to the Arena (GF2), one of the original entrances to the NAAFI with probable replacement doors – view north-west

Photograph 12 shows one of the original entrances to the NAAFI, with a distinctive moulded concrete door surround and glass block margin lights. The doors may be original but are probably later replacements as the same style doors are found throughout the Arena, some in locations that are definitely post NAAFI. A second original NAAFI entrance is located to the south of this one (Photograph 13, labelled 'f' on Fig 2). This has the same distinctive moulded concrete surround and margin lights formed from glass blocks, although it is a single-width doorway instead of a double-width entrance.



Photograph 13 A second original entrance to the NAAFI located in GF2 – view south

The modern foyer of the Arena has two original NAAFI serving hatches which have been blocked and a third where the counter has been cut to provide access to the rooms behind the servery (Photograph 14).



Photograph 14 Part of the original NAAFI servery in GF2, cut to provide access to the rooms behind – view south

The rooms labelled 'e' on Fig 2 have unknown functions, although those on the west side of the building have the original parquet flooring. Those on the east side have been converted to an office and toilet blocks and if they originally had parquet floors these have since been replaced.

GF2 also has the original flooring and wall covering in the corridor that extends the length of the building (Photographs 15 and 16). In particular Photograph 15 shows that the steel frame of the building's superstructure was encased in timber veneers to soften the appearance.



Photograph 15 One of the steel supporting posts of the building's superstructure encased in timber veneers, located in GF2. The original flooring and wall covering can also be seen – view south

The open staircase to the first floor is original to the NAAFI building and has straight steel balusters with curves at the bases and a hardwood bannister (Photograph 17). The NAAFI postcard shows that a second staircase was originally located somewhere in the building,

possibly in GF1 where the original three-storey structure was located. This appears to have had identical steel balusters and hardwood bannister.



Photograph 16 The corridor extending the length of GF2 with the original flooring and the stairs to the first floor – view south-east



Photograph 17 The staircase located in GF2 providing access to the first floor – view north

GF3 (Fig 2)

GF3 is located to the east of the corridor in GF2 and comprises a large open-plan bar (labelled 'g' on Fig 2) with a kitchen area to the east ('h'), store rooms ('i') and two auxiliary bar areas ('j' and 'k'). The bar (Photograph 18) has a faux rustic theme, with exposed brickwork, and a shingled canopy over the serving area. The brickwork, however, is predominantly formed from brick slips attached to the walls rather than the exposed fabric of the building. As with the corridor in GF2 the steel posts of the superstructure have been encased in timber veneers.



Photograph 18 The bar located in GF3 - view west

The NAAFI postcard provides firm evidence for the original function of the bar in GF3. The photograph of the Lounge shows a fireplace with a large, distinctive smoke hood. This feature (Photograph 19) survives in the bar and is labelled 'l' on Fig 2.

A small kitchen area ('h') is located to the east of the bar. It is difficult to say for certain if this is the original function of this space but it is certainly possible that this was once a small kitchenette providing light refreshments to the patrons of the Lounge. The kitchen is adjacent to an area that most recently housed catering-sized coolers and freezers for the bar ('i') but was originally probably storage for coal and ashes and general waste, accessible as it would have been from the main road.

A cellar is located beneath the kitchen and the access for this is between the kitchen and the storage area. This has both a steep ladder access and a motorized barrel lift (Photograph 20). The cellar itself is open with barrel racks on the west wall and a drayman's hatch to the south. This latter feature has been covered over by auxiliary bar 'j'.



Photograph 19 Original NAAFI Lounge smoke hood located in GF3 - view south-east



Photograph 20 Mechanized barrel hoist to the cellar below GF3 – view west

The area directly to the south of the bar in GF3 and west of the storerooms was originally open ground, part of the courtyard. Two structures (labelled 'j' and 'k' on Fig 2) were constructed in this space as auxiliary bars or games rooms (Photographs 21 and 22).



Photograph 21 Auxiliary bar/games room 'j' located in GF3 - view south-east



Photograph 22 Auxiliary bar/games room 'k' located in GF3 - view north

GF4 (Fig 2)

GF4 is located at the south end of the main range and comprises the Arena Gym. This area has many inserted stud walls which have subdivided the original space into several small rooms (Photograph 23). The main area of GF4 has the original parquet flooring, whilst the area to the east has tiled floors. The parquet flooring (as with the other areas of the Arena with this type of flooring) has a ceramic tile border. There is no definitive evidence for what this area was used for but the size of the space could indicate this was a dining room. The area to the east with the tiled floors could feasibly have been a kitchen. This theory is supported by a tiled room (labelled 'm' on Fig 2) that appears to have originally been a cold store; similar rooms can be found in the Le Cateau Barracks NAAFI building nearby, which was constructed ten years earlier and is the current home of Colchester Archaeological Trust.



Photograph 23 The Arena Gym, located in GF4, with the original parquet flooring and tiled border - view north

GF5 (Fig 2)

GF5 comprises a small group of single-storey, flat-roofed structures located at the south-east corner of the complex. The majority of the rooms have parquet floors but no other apparent original features. At the time of the survey these rooms were occupied by a construction company who also provided security for the complex. The rooms were filled with equipment or construction materials and photography was difficult. Photograph 24 has been included to illustrate this fact rather than to show any particular features, although the original parquet flooring can be discerned.



Photograph 24 Example of the difficulties faced in recording GF5, the original parquet flooring can be seen in the foreground - view south-west

An additional building to the north of GF5 was inaccessible at the time of the survey but appeared to comprise the same arrangement of small rooms. Based on the size of the rooms it is likely that the buildings of GF5 may have been on-site accommodation for NAAFI staff.

GF6 (Figs 2, 3)

GF6 is a small structure projecting from the west side of GF2. Its only means of access is through a narrow passage way located behind the original NAAFI serving hatches in GF2. The nature of the access suggests this was not a public area of the NAAFI but may have been additional on-site accommodation for NAAFI staff. GF6 has parquet flooring throughout and has been extensively modernised. However, it retains one room (labelled 'n' on Fig 2) that displays several original features. This has wooden panelling to the walls and a hearth with a large smoke hood identical to the one in GF3 (Photograph 25). A serving hatch in one wall suggests this was a dining room and gives the overall impression that this suite of rooms may have been occupied by a senior member of the NAAFI staff, possibly the complex manager.



Photograph 25 A probable dining room located in GF6, with original parquet flooring, wood panelling and hearth with large smoke hood, identical to the one in GF3 - view north-west

A flight of steep stairs provides access to the upper floor (Fig 3); originally a single room this has been subdivided by the insertion of a stud wall that supports a mezzanine. A spiral staircase located just outside the entrance to the dining room has been inserted through the original flat roof and provides access to a modern first floor extension, in effect a timber-framed conservatory constructed on the roof of GF6.

GF7 (Fig 2)

GF7 is a rectangular single-storey structure projecting from the west side of GF4 and accessed by a corridor leading from GF2. It is a large open space with a parquet floor and vertical tongue and groove pine cladding to the interior walls (Photograph 26). The west end contains a bar (labelled 'o' on Fig 2). Padded leather-effect benches are fixed to the walls and these stand on the tiled border to the room. These benches do not appear to be an original feature; they stand a little higher than the base of the windows displaying an awkwardness of design that does not seem in keeping with the original aesthetic of the building. The bar area has been extended to the west.



Photograph 26 The interior of GF7, with original parquet flooring, vertical tongue and groove cladding and bar in the far wall; the benches around the walls are probably later additions - view south-west

FF1 (Fig 3)

FF1 is a large open-plan room located above GF2 in the centre of the main range. It has a bar at the north end (labelled 'p' on Fig 3) and has been decorated in a faux rustic style to resemble a Bavarian beer hall (Photograph 27). This look has been achieved by the application of brick slips below the windows and timbers attached to the wall plaster, presumably to resemble a timber-framed building. This is not the original decoration and may possibly be symbolic of the Arena's connection to the British Army, large portions of which were stationed in Germany after the Second World War. A low stage at the south end suggests this may have been used as a music venue. The roof is supported on king post trusses with hewn knee braces which continue the imitation timber-framed decor. As with the posts of the superstructure on the ground floor the trusses are actually formed by steel beams overlaid with timber veneers (Photograph 28). These veneers on the tie beams even have imitation tool marks on them to promote the rustic theme.



Photograph 27 The interior of FF1, with original parquet flooring and later faux rustic decoration - view south-east



Photograph 28 Tie beam and brace of truss in FF1, showing timber veneers attached to steel superstructure

FF1 is separated from FF2 by what was originally two rooms with parquet flooring forming back bar areas to the FF1 and FF2. The floor of the back bar area to FF1 has been replaced with tiles and both rooms have been subdivided.

FF2 (Fig 3)

FF2 was originally another large open-plan room with a bar (labelled 'q' on Fig 3) and although it has been subdivided by the insertion of a stud wall it retains many original features (Photograph 29). There is parquet flooring throughout and wooden panelling to the walls. The main source of natural illumination on the eastern side comes from the full height glass block walls (Photograph 30). The ceiling has moulded plaster coving and there is a cartouche with a classical figure at each end of the room below the apex of the roof (Photograph 31). At the north end of FF2 (on the eastern side of the modern dividing wall) additional stud walls have been erected, forming a small room (labelled 'r' on Fig 3). This small room has a curiously curved wall next to a brick hearth, both of which appear to be original features.

On the west side of the northern end of FF2 there is a room which originally was also accessible from the stairs in GF1. This access has since been blocked but it seems likely that this room was for use by NAAFI staff rather than patrons.

A serving hatch is located in the east wall connects FF2 to FF3 (labelled 's' on Fig 3).



Photograph 29 Western half of FF2 showing the original bar, parquet flooring and inserted stud wall to the left – view south-east



Photograph 30 Eastern half of FF2 showing the original parquet flooring, wood panelling and glass block wall. The white painted stud wall to the right conceals the original curved wall and brick hearth at the end of the room. The serving hatch connecting FF2 and FF3 is just visible on the right of the photograph – view north



Photograph 31 Detail of one of the two cartouches located at either end of FF2

FF3 (Fig 3)

FF3 projects east from the main range and is located directly above GF3. It is accessed via a single-width doorway off the landing at the top of the stairs to GF2, which suggests this area was for NAAFI staff only. FF3 comprises a long corridor in line with the doorway with multiple small rooms to either side (Photograph 32). These rooms have been much altered and there remains no clue as to their original purpose, although the serving hatch linking FF2 and 3 may indicate that at least some of these rooms were used for food preparation. The corridor leads to a fire escape at the east end of the building.



Photograph 32 Doorway providing access to FF3 – view north-east

7 Discussion

The Arena Leisure Centre is neither a particularly old building or an architecturally outstanding one. The alterations that have been carried out on it in the latter half of the 20th century have robbed the complex of any charm or aesthetic appeal it may have once had when it was built as a NAAFI. There are a few surviving features worthy of note; the staircase, the parquet floors and the panelling in several of the rooms for example, but on the whole the internal layout of the complex has been severely compromised. The importance of the building lies not in its architecture but in the place it occupies in both national and local history. Nationally the complex is of importance to social/military history as one of the last examples of a post-war building programme that aimed at benefiting the servicemen and women of the nation and their families. The construction of the eight NAAFI clubs in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War would have been a costly undertaking for a government deep in war debt and so it is hard to understate the significance of this programme. This makes the closure of the Colchester NAAFI in 1961 that much harder to understand. Clearly government priorities had changed in 15 years, particularly in regard to the size of Britain's armed forces. It is possible that the end of National Service, in 1960, meant that Colchester as a garrison saw far fewer troops stationed here and there was not a need for such a large NAAFI. The scattered barracks of Colchester Garrison were also endowed with smaller NAAFI's and it may well be that the NAAFI club had become too expensive to administer. Changing attitudes to recreation by young troops may also have contributed to the demise of such facilities as the Lounge, and the Restaurant.

On a local level the Arena is important as an institution that carried on the link between the garrison and the town, providing off base recreational facilities that were used by many troops, (the Gym and the sporting facilities probably more so than the Elite Dance Works Studio or the Catten College of hairdressing!). The function rooms would also have undoubtedly been used by the local troops and their families.

8 Acknowledgements

Colchester Archaeological Trust would like to thank RMPA for funding the building recording.

Plans are based on surveys carried out by the author.

The building recording was carried out by Chris Lister.

Much of the NAAFI research was undertaken by Jill Adams.

The project was monitored by Jess Tipper, Colchester Borough Council Archaeological Advisor.

9 References

Note: all CAT reports, except for DBAs, are available online in .pdf format at

<http://cat.essex.ac.uk>

CAT	2015	<i>Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for historic building recording at Arena, Circular Road East, Colchester, Essex</i>
CBC	2015	<i>Brief for Continuous Archaeological Recording at the Arena, Circular Road East, Colchester, Essex</i> by Jess Tipper
ClfA	2008	<i>Standard and guidance for archaeological investigation and recording of standing buildings and structures</i>
EAA 14	2003	<i>Standards for field archaeology in the East of England</i> , East Anglian Archaeology, Occasional Papers 14, ed by D Gurney
English Heritage	2006	<i>Understanding Historic Buildings, A guide to good recording practice</i>
Hansard	1963	<i>Vol 686, c393</i>
Jephcott, J	2014	<i>Colchester, The Postcard Collection</i>
MoRPHE	2006	<i>Management of research projects in the historic environment</i> (English Heritage)

Websites consulted include:

<http://www.naafi.co.uk/history>

10 Abbreviations and glossary

CAT	Colchester Archaeological Trust
ClfA	Chartered Institute for Archaeologists
EHER	Essex Historic Environment Record, held by the ECC
ERO	Essex Records Office
feature	an identifiable thing like a pit, a wall, a floor; can contain 'contexts'
HE	Historic Environment
modern	period from the 19th century onwards to the present
NAAFI	Navy Army Air Force Institute
NGR	National Grid Reference
post	in wall frames vertical members which rise the full height of the frame, being either main posts at the bay divisions or intermediate posts within the bay
tie beam	beam tying together the post-heads of a timber-framed wall or the upper surfaces of a solid wall
truss	a frame consisting of several pieces of timber, jointed and triangulated in order to retain its shape under load

11 Archive deposition

The paper and digital archive is currently held by the Colchester Archaeological Trust at Roman Circus House, Roman Circus Walk, Colchester, Essex CO2 7GZ, but will be permanently deposited with Colchester Museum under accession code 2016.14.

12 Contents of archive

One A4 document wallet containing:

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Copy of brief issued by CBCAA
- 1.2 Copy of WSI produced by CAT
- 1.3 Risk assessment

2 Site archive

- 2.1 Digital photographic record.
- 2.2 Digital photographic contact sheet.
- 2.3 Attendance register
- 2.4 Site photographic record on CD

3 Research archive

- 3.1 Client report

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Distribution list

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Appendix 1

Full list of digital photographic record (images on accompanying CD)

- Arena 001.jpg North elevation of GF3 - view south.
Arena 002.jpg East elevation of GF1 - view south.
Arena 003.jpg East elevation of GF1, the Arena sports hall with Catten College in the foreground - the structure to the right is a later addition - view south-west.
Arena 004.jpg The north elevation of the Arena sports hall with later wooden shingles - view south-east.
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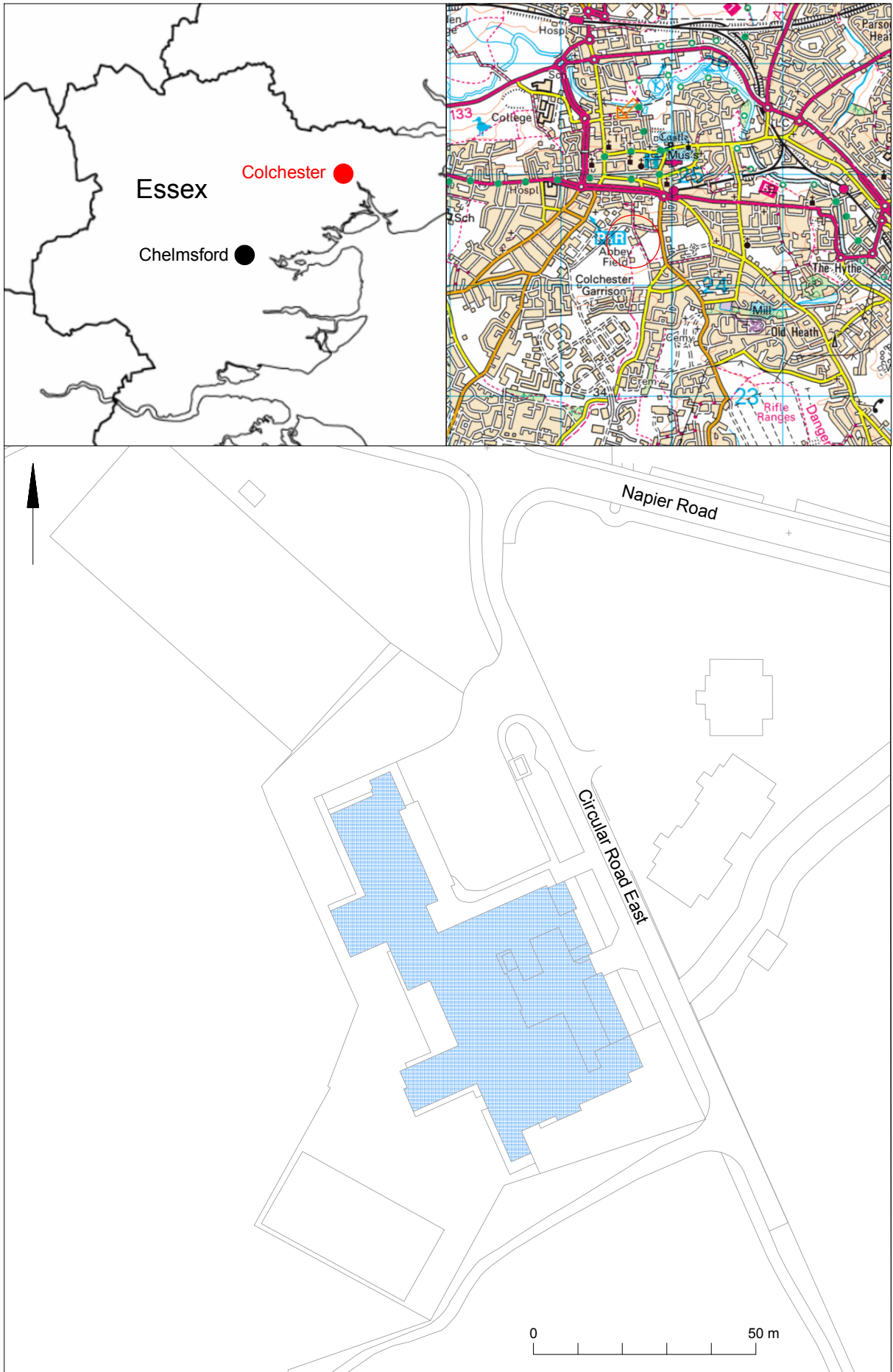


Fig 1 Site location.

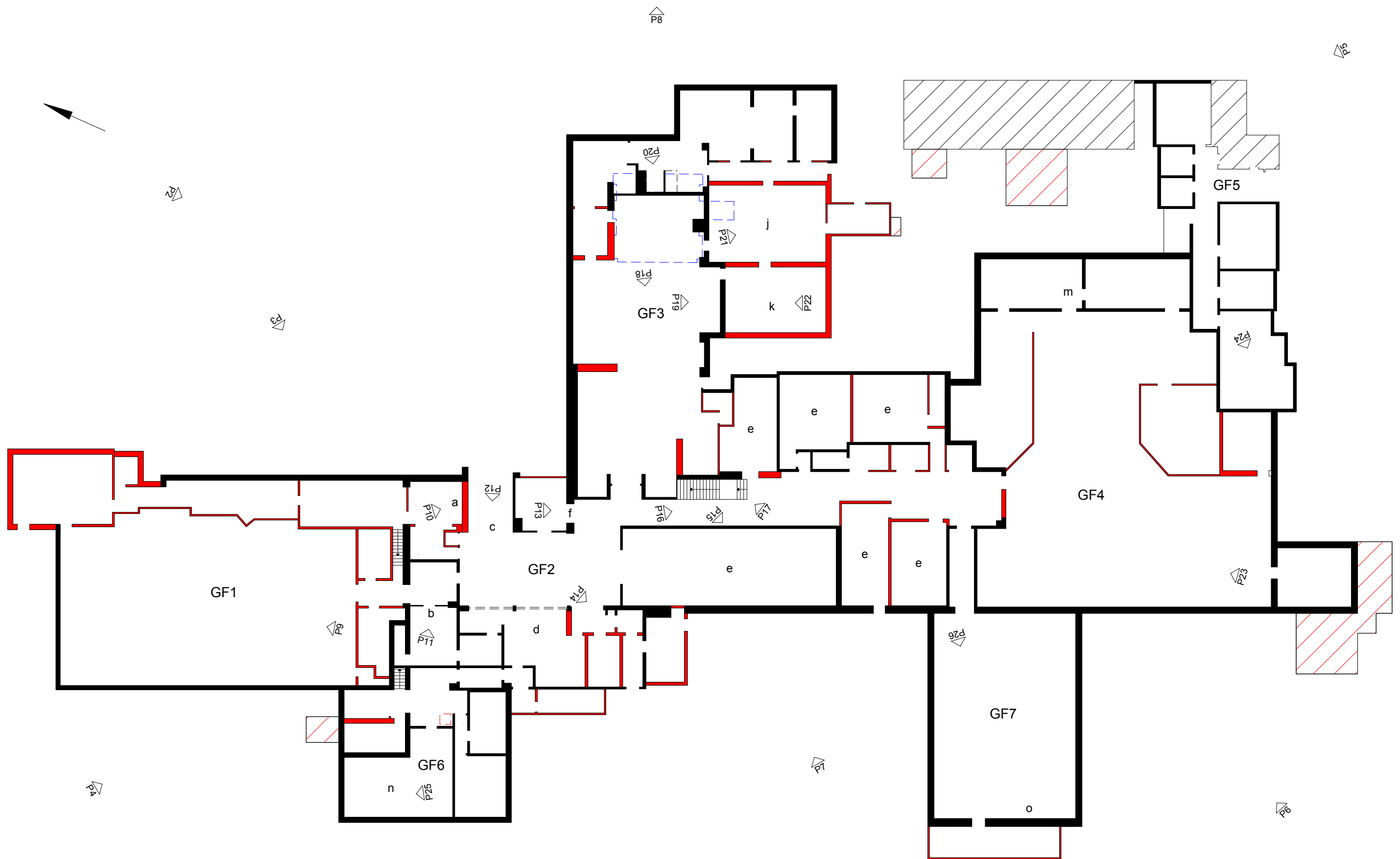


Fig 2 Block plan of ground floor; the location and orientation of photographs included in this report are indicated by the numbered arrows.



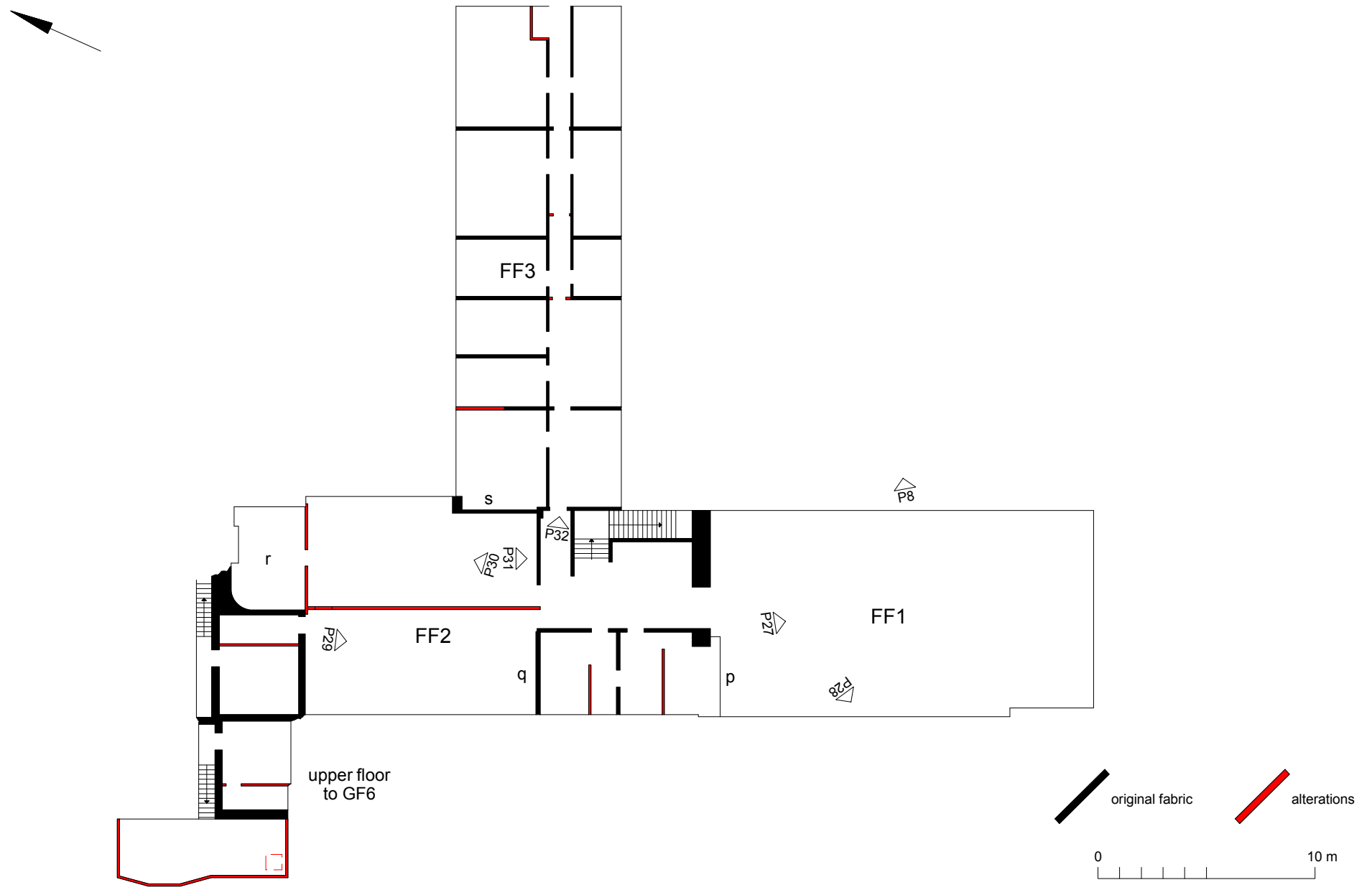


Fig 3 Block plan of first floor; the location and orientation of photographs included in this report are indicated by the numbered arrows.

Essex Historic Environment Record/ Essex Archaeology and History

Summary sheet

Address: The Arena, Circular Road East, Colchester, Essex, CO2 7SZ	
Parish: Colchester	District: Colchester
NGR: TL 996 244 (c)	Site codes: CAT project – 15/09d UAD ref - OASIS ref - colchest3-223153
Type of work: Building recording	Site director/group: Colchester Archaeological Trust
Date of work: October 2015	Size of area investigated: n/a
Location of curating museum: Colchester Museum, accession number: 2016.14	Funding source: Client
Monitored by: Jess Tipper, Colchester Borough Council Archaeological Advisor	
Further seasons anticipated? No	Related EHER numbers:
Final report:	CAT Report 883
Periods represented:	20th-21st century
Summary: <i>A programme of historic building recording was carried out by Colchester Archaeological Trust on a complex of buildings at the Arena Leisure Centre, Circular Road East, Colchester in October 2015. The complex was formerly one of eight purpose-built post World War 2 NAAFI clubs and was opened in 1947. The NAAFI closed in 1961 and was reopened as the Arena Club. Although much altered internally, the complex has overall retained its plan form.</i>	
Previous summaries/reports:	
Keywords: NAAFI	Significance: *
Author of summary: Chris Lister	Date of summary: February 2016

Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for historic building recording at the Arena, Circular Road East, Colchester, Essex

NGR: TL 996 244 (centre)

Planning reference: pre-application

Client: RMPA

Agent: RPS

Curating Museum: Colchester

Museum accession code: tba

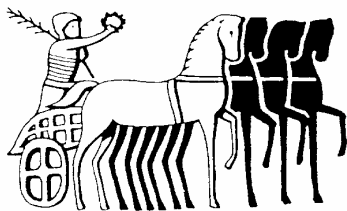
CAT Project code: 15/09d

OASIS ref: colchest3-223153

Site Manager: Chris Lister

CBC Monitor: Jess Tipper

This WSI written: 08-09-2015
revision



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1 Introduction

- 1.1 This is a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for historic building recording at the Arena, Circular Road East, Colchester, Essex. This work is to be carried out in advance of the demolition of the building complex. The work comprises a Historic England Level 2 survey of the buildings. The work is to be carried out on behalf of the owners, RMPA, by Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT).
- 1.2 The site comprises a complex of buildings constructed in 1946/7 as a military NAAFI and is centred at NGR TL 996 244.
- 1.3 Pre-planning application advice was sought from Colchester Borough Council in regard to the redevelopment of the site, including the demolition of the existing structures. Given the historic significance of the buildings, it was recommended that a building record be made prior to the demolition. This recommendation is in line with the guidance given in Paragraph 141 of the National Planning Policy Framework, which states:

Building Recording

"No works shall take place until the implementation of a programme of archaeological work has been secured, in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation which has been previously submitted to and approved, in writing, by the Local Planning Authority. The scheme of investigation shall include an assessment of significance and research questions; and:

- a) The programme and methodology of site investigation and recording.*
- b) Provision to be made for analysis of the site investigation and recording.*
- c) Provision to be made for reporting, publication and dissemination of the analysis and records of the site investigation.*
- d) Provision to be made for archive deposition of the analysis and records of the site investigation.*
- e) Nomination of a competent person or persons/organisation to undertake the works set out in the Written Scheme of Investigation.*
- f) The scheme of investigation shall be completed as agreed and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.*

Reason:

To safeguard archaeological assets within the approved development boundary from impacts relating to any groundworks associated with the development scheme and to ensure the proper and timely investigation, recording, reporting and presentation of archaeological assets affected by this development, in accordance with Policy SD1 and ENV1 of Colchester Borough Council's Core Strategy (2008)."

- 1.4 A brief detailing the required work (historic building recording) was issued by Colchester Borough Council's Archaeological Advisor (Tipper 2015). In response to the brief, this Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) has been prepared for submission to the CBCAA.
- 1.5 Any variations to this WSI will be agreed beforehand with the CBCAA.

2 Historical background

- 2.1 The structures proposed for demolition at the Arena form a locally significant complex of former NAAFI (Navy, Army and Air Force Institute) buildings.
- 2.2 The NAAFI originated in 1921, evolving from the amalgamation of the Expeditionary Force Canteens (established in 1915 for the comfort of overseas troops in World War 1) and the Navy and Army Canteen Board (formed 1918 to serve troops at home). During World War 2 the number of NAAFI employees rose from 8,000 to 110,000 and the number of NAAFI establishments rose from 1,350 to nearly 10,000. By the end of 1945 canteens were closing at a rate of 200 per week. However, construction started on a series of eight NAAFI clubs in 1946. These added restaurants, lounges, bars, reading and writing rooms, music and television rooms and ballrooms to military and naval centres. The Arena Club was the second of these to be built (1947).
- 2.3 These new NAAFI Clubs were designed by Ernest M Joseph, whose association with NAAFI architecture went back to the Navy and Army Canteen Board of WW1. During WW2 he was Director of Works, responsible for overseeing the expanding number of NAAFI facilities. The Colchester NAAFI was modernist in its design and materials, although not architecturally

outstanding. The interior and exterior have been extensively altered since its construction although the footprint remains identical.

3 Aims

3.1 The aim of the building recording will be to compile a Historic England Level 2 record of the buildings prior to their demolition. Specifically this will consider:

- Plan form of the site.
- Materials and method of construction.
- Date(s) of the structure.
- Function and internal layout.
- Fixtures and fittings.
- Original and later phasing, additions and their effect on the internal/external fabric and the level of survival of original fabric.
- The significance of the site on a regional level.

4 Building Recording Methodology

4.1 A Historic England Level 2 survey of the outbuildings will be undertaken prior to their conversion.

4.2 A documentary and cartographic survey of the evidence pertaining to the history and evolution of the present buildings will be made. Sources consulted will include:

- Essex Historic Environment Record.
- Essex Records Office.
- Local Studies Library.
- The site owner/developer.

4.3 A large-scale block plan will be made of the site using existing architects' drawings or the current OS 1:2500 map extract. The position of each building, structure and significant boundary will be shown and given a unique number noting date of construction and function.

4.4 All the numbered features on 4.3 will be described. The description will seek to address materials, dimensions, method of construction including brickwork, joinery, fenestration, spatial configuration, phasing, any evidence of original and/or later fixtures/fittings and mechanisation, carpentry marks.

4.5 A full photographic record will be made comprising colour digital photographs. This record will include both general shots and details of external and internal features (ie structural detail, joinery, fixtures and fittings joinery/carpenters'/Baltic-timber marks etc). A photographic scale will be included in the case of detailed photographs. The photographic record will be accompanied by a photographic register detailing (as a minimum) location and direction of shot.

4.6 The completed plans will be clearly annotated to show the location and orientation of photographs taken as part of the survey.

4.7 Fully annotated photographic plates supporting the text will be reproduced as colour laser copies.

4.8 The guidelines contained in *English Heritage: Understanding Historic Buildings. A guide to good recording practice (2006)* will be adhered to. In addition, RCHME: *Descriptive Specification 3rd Edition*, ClfA's *Standard and Guidance for the Archaeological Investigation and Recording of Standing Buildings or Structures (2014)* and the appropriate sections of the *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England (East Anglian Archaeology occasional paper 14, 2003)* and *Research and Archaeology Revised: A Revised Framework for the East of England (EAA 24, 2011)* and *Management of research projects in the historic environment (MoRPHE)* will be used for additional guidance in the design of the project specification, the contents of the report, and for the general execution of the project.

5 General methodology

5.1 The relevant document of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (ClfA) will be followed, i.e. *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of*

archaeological materials (2014), *Standard and guidance for archaeological investigation and recording of standing buildings or structures* (2014). Other guidelines followed are those published in EAA 14 and EAA 24, and MoRPHE.

- 5.2 An accession code for the project will be sought from Colchester museum to identify the project archive when it is deposited at the curating museum.
- 5.3 An Event number for the Colchester Urban Archaeological Database (UAD) will be requested from the CBCAA before fieldwork commences.
- 5.3 At the start of work an OASIS online record will be initiated and key fields completed on Details, Location and Creators forms.
- 5.4 All the latest Health and Safety guidelines will be followed on site. CAT has a standard health and safety policy, which will be adhered to (CAT 1999, updated 2014).

6 Results

- 6.1 A copy of the report, labelled DRAFT, detailing the building recording will be submitted to the UAD within six months of the completion of the field work. Upon approval a .pdf version will be submitted to the UAD.

The building recording report will include:

- The aims and methods adopted in the course of the investigation.
- A brief history of the building complex.
- Annotated drawings including a location map and an overall plan showing all buildings. Where appropriate, the plan drawings will be tied into the OS Grid.
- Labelled re-productions of a representative sample of the photographs
- A concise non-technical summary of the project results.

- 6.2 The site archive will be presented to Colchester Museum in accordance with their requirements.
- 6.3 An HER summary sheet will be completed within four weeks and supplied to the Essex Historic Environment Record. This will be completed in digital form and a copy attached to the final report.
- 6.4 Publication of the results, at least to a summary level, will be submitted, accompanied by appropriate resources, for publication in Essex Archaeology & History or another agreed publication within one year of the completion of the fieldwork.

7 Monitoring

- 7.1 The Colchester Borough Council Archaeological will be responsible for monitoring progress and standards throughout the project. This will include the fieldwork, reporting, and publication stages.
- 7.2 Notification of the start of work will be given to the CBCAA one week in advance of its commencement.
- 7.3 Any variations of the WSI shall be agreed with the CBCAA before they are carried out.
- 7.4 The involvement of the CBCAA will be acknowledged in any report or publication arising from this project.

8 Archive deposition

- 8.1 The full archive will be deposited at Colchester Museum within two months of the completion of the final publication report.
- 8.2 The storage of the archive will accord with Colchester Museum's guidelines.
- 8.3 A summary of the contents of the archive will be supplied to the CBCAA at the time of deposition at the museum.

9 References

ClfA	2014a	<i>Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials</i>
ClfA	2014b	<i>Standard and guidance for archaeological investigation and recording of standing buildings or structures</i>
Colchester Archaeological Trust	2014	<i>Policies and procedures</i>
English Heritage	2006	<i>MoRPHE: Management of Research Projects in the Historic</i>

	(revised 2009)	<i>Environment</i>
English Heritage	2006	<i>Understanding Historic Buildings. A guide to good recording practice</i>
Gurney, D.	2003	<i>Standards for field archaeology in the East of England</i> East Anglian Archaeological, occasional papers 14 (EAA14)
Medlycott, M.	2011	<i>Research and Archaeology Revisited: A Revised Framework for the East of England</i> , East Anglian Archaeological Occasional Papers 24 (EAA 24)
Tipper, J	2015	<i>Brief for Continuous Archaeological Recording at The Arena, Circular Road East, Colchester, Essex</i>

Chris Lister 08/09/15

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Appendix - team structure and details

List of team members

Site supervision and Recording

Building recording - Chris Lister

Graphics

Chris Lister

Report writing

Chris Lister

Senior Site Staff

Chris Lister BA

Chris joined CAT in June 2000 for the Head Street excavation. He studied Ancient History and Civilization at the University of Wales, College of Swansea, graduating in 1997. Formerly the unit surveyor responsible for the site recording of the majority of works undertaken by CAT Chris has supervised excavations at Colchester Zoo and Colchester Garrison, and carried out evaluations and watching briefs throughout Essex, Hertfordshire and Suffolk. As a buildings surveyor Chris has experience of working on a broad range of structures, including medieval moated enclosures, post-medieval barns and agricultural buildings, industrial sites, and a large number of buildings associated with Colchester Garrison, ranging from Victorian barracks through to 20th-century defensive structures. He has also recorded domestic dwellings, ranging from Regency and Victorian labourers' cottages to more substantial timber-framed structures such as Daniel Defoe's house at Tubbeswick in Colchester. After six months as the acting Archaeological Officer for Colchester Borough Council (2014-15) Chris was appointed as the Contracts Manager to Colchester Archaeological Trust.

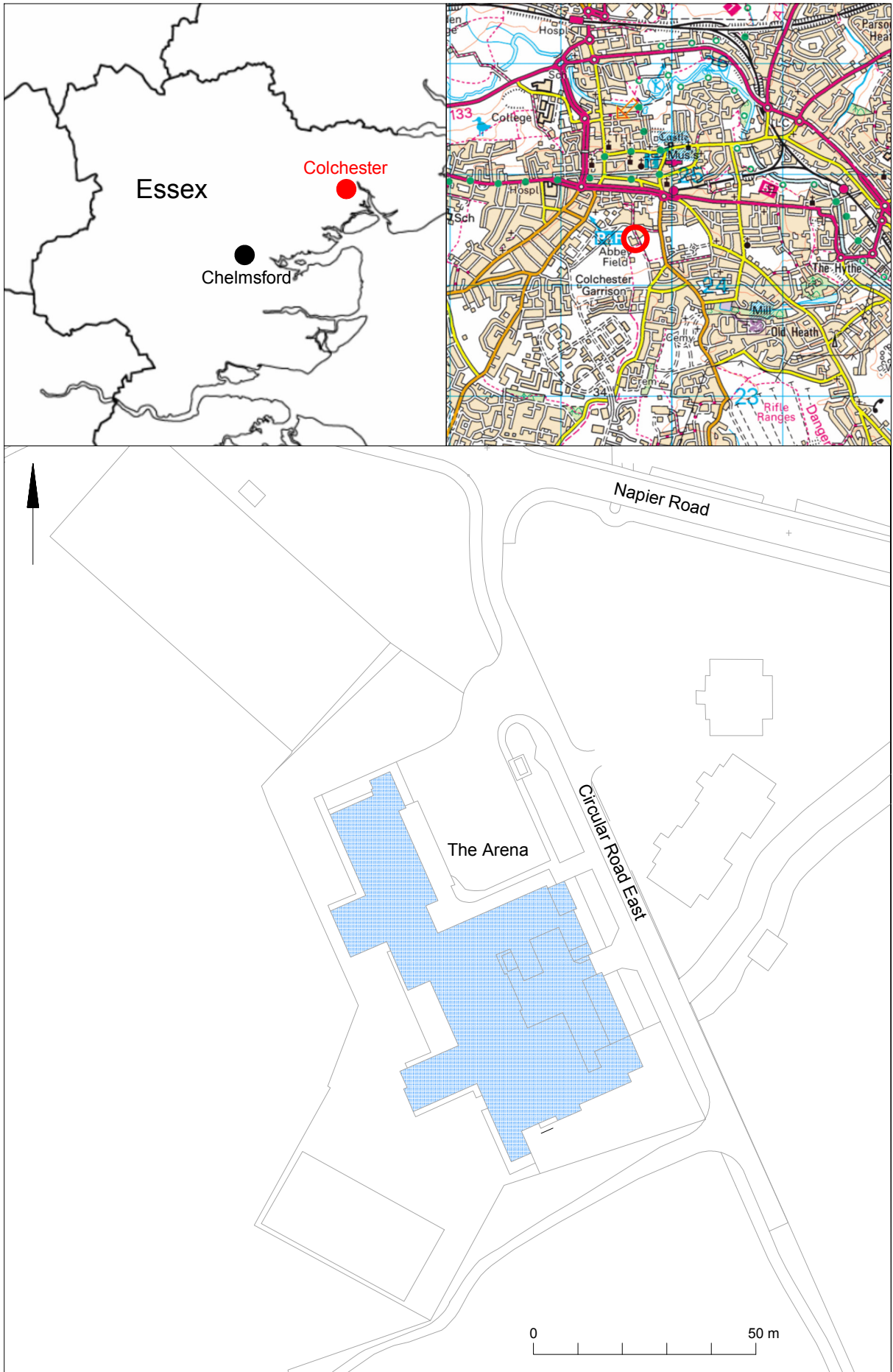


Fig 1 Site location.

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Project details

Project name	Historic Building Recording at the Arena, Colchester, Essex: October 2015
Short description of the project	An Historic England Level 2 building record was carried out on the Arena Leisure Centre, Colchester. The Arena was formerly a purpose-built NAAFI club.
Project dates	Start: 10-09-2015 End: 22-02-2016
Previous/future work	Yes / Yes
Any associated project reference codes	15/09d - Contracting Unit No.
Type of project	Building Recording
Current Land use	Community Service 2 - Leisure and recreational buildings
Monument type	NAAFI BUILDING Modern
Significant Finds	NONE None
Methods & techniques	"Annotated Sketch","Photographic Survey"
Prompt	Planning condition

Project location

Country	England
Site location	ESSEX COLCHESTER COLCHESTER The Arena, Colchester
Postcode	CO2 7SZ
Study area	0 Square metres
Site coordinates	TL 996 244 51.88185291486 0.9004309414 51 52 54 N 000 54 01 E Point

Project creators

Name of Organisation	Colchester Archaeological Trust
Project brief	CBC Archaeological Officer

originator	
Project design originator	Chris Lister
Project director/manager	Chris Lister
Project supervisor	Chris Lister
Type of sponsor/funding body	Landowner
Name of sponsor/funding body	RMPA

Project archives

Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive recipient	Colchester Museum
Digital Archive ID	Colem 2016.14
Digital Contents	"Survey"
Digital Media available	"Images vector","Text","Images raster / digital photography"
Paper Archive recipient	Colchester Museum
Paper Archive ID	Colem 2016.14
Paper Contents	"Survey"
Paper Media available	"Photograph","Plan","Report","Survey "

Project bibliography 1

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	Historic building recording at the Arena, Circular Road East, Colchester, Essex, CO2 7SZ: October 2015
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Lister, C.
Other bibliographic details	CAT Report 883
Date	2016
Issuer or publisher	Colchester Archaeological Trust
Place of issue or publication	Colchester
Description	A4 comb-bound report
URL	http://cat.essex.ac.uk
Entered by	Chris Lister (cl@catuk.org)

Entered on

23 February 2016

OASIS:

Please e-mail [Historic England](#) for OASIS help and advice

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