

An archaeological evaluation at North Station Road (adjacent to the Victoria Inn), Colchester, Essex

August 2001

**on behalf of
Glenn Carter**



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1 Summary

An archaeological evaluation consisting of four trial-trenches revealed part of a previously unknown mosaic pavement adjacent to an unusual Roman sunken feature, the walls of which were lined with opus signinum. The walls of the feature had been robbed out, leaving the opus signinum free-standing. The feature contained a large amount of painted wall-plaster, as well as a 4th-century coin. The sunken room and mosaic pavement were part of a 2nd- or 3rd-century house within the Roman suburb on present-day North Station Road.

2 Introduction

- 2.1 This is the report on an archaeological evaluation carried out by the Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) between the 6th and 15th August 2001. The work was necessitated by a planning application for a block of twelve apartments, which has now been given permission under application no F/COL/01/0731.
- 2.2 The site is located outside the walls of the town, on the west side of North Station Road (Fig 1), next to the Victoria Inn. It is centred at National Grid Reference TL 9932 2577. The site is on fairly level ground at 7m OD, and it is currently covered by gravel underlain by a thick layer of concrete on the western side. It was used as a car park for the nearby HSBC bank at the time of the evaluation.
- 2.3 This report follows the standards set out in the Borough Council's *Guidelines on standards and practices for archaeological fieldwork in the Borough of Colchester* (1999) and *Guidelines on the preparation and transfer of archaeological archives to Colchester Museums* (1996), and the IFA's *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (1999).

3 Archaeological background

- 3.1 The site is located outside the walls of the early legionary fortress and later Roman town of *Colonia Claudia*. No archaeological artefacts or previous excavations are reported from the current site. The Middleborough area however, is rich in archaeological finds, and it is clear that the site lies within a suburb of the Roman town. Some 40m north of the site, a large Roman house was discovered immediately north of Victoria Chase during construction work for the new Midland Bank (now HSBC) at 26 North Station Road (Crummy 1992, 346; EHCR 12514.)
- 3.2 A mosaic pavement was found in 1880 on the south side of Victoria Chase and just north of the development area, less than a metre below ground-level (EHCR 12517), and a tessellated pavement was discovered in front of the Victoria Inn in 1929 (Crummy 1992, 346; EHCR 12623). There are known Roman suburbs, excavated in 1979 before the construction of the Royal London building, some 220m to the south at Middleborough (Brooks & Crummy 1984, 155-209).
- 3.3 The development area has been built on before. The Chapman and Andr  map of 1777 shows buildings lining this part of North Station Road. Maps from 1897 to the 1970s show no 8 North Station Road just to the south of the Victoria Inn. A map from the 1970s or 1980s shows a factory to the rear (west) of the inn which partly covers the western end of the development area.

4 Aims and objectives

The aim of the archaeological work was to determine the location, character, extent, date, significance and quality of any surviving archaeological remains.

5 Methods

- 5.1** The fieldwork was carried out by a team of professional archaeologists from CAT, with project management by Howard Brooks. The fieldwork was monitored by Martin Winter, the Archaeological Officer for Colchester Borough Council. Six trenches were excavated:
- Trench or T1 - 5.6m long and 750-800mm wide, running NW-SE, in the extreme north-western corner of the site, near Victoria Chase.
- T2 - 7m long and 800mm-1.1m wide, running E-W, in the south-western part of the site near the fence.
- T3 - irregular-shaped, 7.5m x 4.4m, in the eastern part of the site near the road.
- T3a - 1.5m long by 400mm wide, running E-W, dug to the south of T3 to locate the southern extent of the Roman *opus signinum* structure.
- T3b - 1.5m long by 400mm wide, running E-W, dug to the south of T3a to locate the southern extent of Roman *opus signinum* structure.
- T4 - 4.5m long and 1.2m wide, running E-W, near the rear wall of the Victoria Inn.
- 5.2** For the excavation of T1, the concrete surface was removed by breaker. Other overburden was removed by machine with a flat-edged bucket under archaeological supervision.
- 5.3** All exposed subsoil features, archaeological deposits or negative features were manually cleaned, drawn in section and plan, and examined in sufficient detail to allow their nature, date and importance to be assessed and excavated. Features were left *in situ* if possible, after being cleaned and recorded.
- 5.4** A metal detector was used to check spoil heaps and any suitable strata.
- 5.5** Individual records of excavated contexts, layers, features and deposits were entered on pro-forma record sheets. Registers were compiled of finds and small finds.
- 5.6** The photographic record consists of general site shots and shots of all archaeological features and deposits. Standard 'record' shots of contexts were taken with a digital camera. Colour transparencies were used for overall site shots and all important contexts.

6 Results

6.1 Trench 1 (Fig 4)

The trench was dug to 1.8m depth. Under the car-park gravel was a thick layer of reinforced concrete (Layer or L4) which, at 180mm, was too thick to be the surface for the car park and is most likely to be the raft for a demolished building. This lay on top of 250mm of sub-base (L5).

In the eastern end of the trench, a thick layer of post-medieval topsoil containing abundant peg-tile (L7) sealed a 100mm-thick surface of *opus signinum* (Feature or F5) protruding out of the eastern baulk. This feature contained occasional *tesserae* and one piece of glass. The topsoil also seals a post-medieval or modern layer (L8) of light brown sandy clay containing more Roman *opus signinum*, mortar, tile and peg-tile. L8 and F5 sealed a Roman layer of dark brown loamy sand with small pebbles and oystershell (L12).

In the western half of the trench, a large post-medieval pit (F7) was cut into L8 and L12. Its upper fill consisted of light brown silty clay containing brick and peg-tile (L6). Its lower fill consisted of medium brown loose loamy sand also containing peg-tile to a depth of 900mm bgl (below ground-level).

6.2 Trench 2 (Fig 5)

The trench was dug to between 1.2m and 1.7m depth. It had to be carefully sited within a gap in the thick concrete layer (L4) to avoid breaking it out. Brick and sand hard-core and turf formed the surface of the trench (L1). This overlaid a modern dark grey/brown sandy loam layer with mortar flecks, containing modern brick (L2). At 350mm bgl to the bottom of the trench there was a disturbed Roman layer of dark grey/brown sandy loam with mortar flecks (L3). This contained only Roman material including septaria, tile and pottery. A brick manhole and various modern pipe-trenches had been dug through L2 and L3 in the centre of the trench.

L3 sealed three features which were recorded at the base of the trench. On the western side of the trench, at 1.3m bgl, was a ditch containing creamy/brown mortar

containing lumps of Roman *opus signinum*, wall-plaster, tile and oystershell (F1). The feature which is interpreted as Roman demolition debris ran north to south across the trench and was at least 400mm deep. The feature was half sectioned but it was not possible to excavate it to the base as it filled up with water.

Adjacent to F1, at 1.3m bgl, there was a substantial 690mm-wide brick and mortar Roman building foundation (F2) running at an angle across the trench. This had a stepped western edge which was sealed by F1. F1 may well be made up of demolition debris from this building. The wall is on roughly the same alignment as walls found under the HSBC building and it may be part of the same complex.

Under the manhole at 1.7m bgl was F3, an *in situ* but disturbed Roman tile and *opus signinum* surface running north to south. This is probably the remains of a floor surface which had been disturbed, probably by the digging of the manhole and drains. F2 and F3 were cleaned and left *in situ*.

6.3 Trench 3 (Figs 6, 7 & 10 and Plates 2, 3 & front cover)

The trench was dug in an irregular shape and to a depth of between 500mm and 1.4m. A mid grey/brown clayey sandy loam (L10) was recorded just below the car-park surface and hogging (L9) at 250-300mm bgl. L10 was up to 500mm in thickness and contained Roman painted wall-plaster, pottery, *opus signinum* and tile. This layer was cut on the southern side of the trench by a pit or soakaway filled with modern brick (F8).

One corner of a square or rectangular Roman structure was exposed in the north-eastern part of the trench (F6). What remained was a 60mm-thick free-standing *opus signinum* structure. The outer face of the *opus signinum* structure was very uneven (Plate 3), and traces of white mortar adhered to it. It was therefore originally on the inner face of a septaria and rubble wall. The top of the structure was very uneven where it had been truncated, but the highest point was only 490mm bgl (6.51m OD). This structure was sealed by and also partly filled by L10. In its north-eastern corner, within L10 and at 600mm bgl, was found a Roman coin dated c AD 367-375. This copper-alloy coin of Valens has the inscription SECVRITAS REIPVBLICAE on the reverse.

The northern wall of the structure was followed but it did not appear to survive beyond 2m to the west, ie to the edge of the mosaic (see below). The eastern wall ran for 1.5m to the south before being cut by the soakaway (F8) to the south-east. Although the southern wall was not identified, the excavation of T3a and T3b (see below) proved that the structure did not extend further to the south.

Under L10, a layer of Roman demolition debris (L17) filled the *opus signinum*-lined structure. L17 was made up of light brown/yellow mortar and was packed with Roman painted wall-plaster, septaria and tile. This layer started at 770mm bgl and is probably debris from demolition of the house to which the *opus signinum*-lined feature was attached. A sondage was dug through this layer to find the bottom of the structure, and it was found to be 900mm deep. The floor of the structure was of rough *opus signinum* but without any form of mosaic or tessellated floor. The interior walls had been smoothed off but did not have any form of decoration apart from a quarter-moulded corner and base.

The fact that a stone wall had been removed is corroborated by the presence of a probable post-Roman robber-trench (L16) surrounding the structure. This 310mm-wide trench contained a mid-grey/brown clayey loam fill which was less sandy, lighter in colour and less plastic than L10. This layer contained abundant Roman mortar flecks, *opus signinum* and tile. Both the walls surrounding the *opus signinum* and any wall connecting it to a building had been robbed out.

Opus signinum is often used on floor surfaces as the base of mosaics and tessellated pavements. It is often used in water features or in damp conditions due to its waterproof quality. The use of *opus signinum* as a wall-lining material is not otherwise known in Colchester. The structure may have been built as an ornamental pool attached to a building, although these are usually semicircular in shape. It is probably not ornate enough to be a plunge pool. Alternatively it could have been used as a cistern to collect water as this area is by the river and has a high water-table. An alternative theory is that it was a cellar to a building.

A pit (F9) had been cut through the probable south wall of the *opus signinum*-lined structure and the demolition debris (L17). The fill was similar to L10 above, a mid brown clayey loam containing Roman brick and tile and painted wall-plaster. The fact that it cuts L17 makes the feature later than the demolition of the house. The feature was 370mm deep and the base of it was 870mm bgl. It was a pit of medieval or post-medieval date.

The trench was extended to the south-west to find the western extent of the *opus signinum*-lined structure. The top of the *opus signinum* had been truncated in this area to 1m bgl. However, above it and to the west, at 580mm bgl, part of a black and white mosaic was exposed (F12). What remained showed a geometric arrangement of triangles and squares with a border. The *tesserae* were made of chalk and greensand, on a base of *opus signinum*. Part of the mosaic had subsided and it had been patched with two Roman tiles and red ceramic *tesserae*. Judging by the style of the mosaic, it would have decorated the floor of a 2nd- or 3rd-century house, probably the dining room or hall. The style of the mosaic is different to that found under Victoria Chase in the 19th century and was also too far away to have been a continuation of it. The pattern of the mosaic is on a different alignment to the wall of the *opus signinum* structure and so may not be contemporary with it.

Approximately 2m by 1m of the mosaic remained. An even edge of slightly raised *tesserae* defined its eastern edge. This and the border shows that the mosaic continued to the south and west but not the north and east. Therefore the surviving mosaic was in the NE corner of the room west of the *opus signinum* structure.

Under modern deposits (L9) and sealing the mosaic there were three different but adjacent layers starting at 420mm bgl and approximately 160mm thick. Covering the southern end of the mosaic was a brown loam mixed with light brown mortar, containing Roman *opus signinum* and tile and one piece of peg-tile (L18). This is interpreted as being a demolition layer which is either Roman, with intrusive peg-tile, or a medieval demolition layer. Covering the northern part of the mosaic was a brownish yellow, mottled grey clay layer (L19). This contained small pebbles and Roman tile and peg-tile with some burnt patches. Covering the western end of the mosaic was L20, a grey brown loam similar to L10 containing *opus signinum* and loose *tesserae* from the mosaic.

6.4 Trench 3a (Fig 6)

The trench was dug to a depth of 1.2m bgl across the projected line of the *opus signinum* structure (F6). The trench was dug through L9 and L10 and more Roman demolition debris, but the wall of the structure did not continue.

6.5 Trench 3b (Fig 6)

The trench was dug to a depth of 1.3m bgl across the projected line of the *opus signinum* structure (F6). The trench was dug through L9 and L10 and more Roman demolition debris, but the wall of the structure was found to not continue. Two *tesserae* were found 950mm bgl.

6.6 Trench 4 (Fig 8)

The trench was dug to a depth of between 750mm and 1.15m. Modern sand and brick hard-core for the car-park surface (L13) overlies a dark grey/brown sandy loam topsoil with brick and mortar flecks, clay pipe, and medieval and post-medieval pot (L14). Sealed by L14, at approximately 400mm bgl, starts a disturbed Roman layer (L15) of lighter grey/brown loam packed with Roman tile and mortar flecks and abundant *opus signinum*. This layer was recorded to a depth of 650mm bgl. Within L15, a gravel lens containing some Roman tile (L21) was recorded. From approximately 600mm bgl to the base of the trench, and sealed by L15, there was a light brown loamy layer containing large lumps of *opus signinum* and Roman tile which is interpreted as being a possible disturbed Roman floor or rubble layer (L22). This is likely to be the debris of the same building as found in the other trenches.

L14, L15 and L21 are cut by two later pits at each end of the trench. On the east side of the trench, a pit 1m deep is filled with mid-brown silty loam containing peg-tile, clay pipe, flecks of charcoal and modern pottery (F10). On the western side of the trench is a similar-sized pit (F11) filled by the same material but containing oystershell, tile, mortar, small stones and charcoal flecks.

7 Finds

7.1 Peg-tile, septaria and most Roman tile apart from the unusual pieces was discarded.

Mortar and *opus signinum* was discarded except where it was attached to something that was retained. All pottery was retained and will be sent to Colchester Museum for long-term storage, as will a sample of each colour of painted wall-plaster. All metal finds were discarded apart from the Roman coin. Animal bone was discarded.

7.2 Roman brick and tile

Roman brick and tile is listed in Appendix C. A sample of only half of the tile found from the site was actually collected. Approximately half the tile collected had been re-used, including fragments of box-tile from a hypocaust heating system. One of these fragments had been stamped using a die from London or Canterbury. The assemblage included roof-tile dating from the 2nd century, although one roof-tile is of probable 1st-century date. Some unusual pieces of brick were found which would have formed part of a herringbone brick floor.

7.3 Roman wall-plaster (Plate 4)

Roman wall-plaster is listed in Appendix D. A total of 12 kg of painted wall-plaster was collected showing a variety of colours, mainly a light green and dark red which appear to form panels. Brush strokes in other colours depict some sort of scene, possibly figural, but it is not possible to identify it exactly. Presumably the wall-plaster decorated a room in a high status house on the site. When it was demolished, the wall-plaster was broken up and either fell into or was put into the remains of the *opus signinum* structure.

7.4 Roman pottery

Roman pottery is listed within the general finds list in Appendix B. There was not any pottery of particular interest present. The small amount collected mainly consisted of coarse grey ware locally produced sherds.

7.5 Post-Roman pottery

Post-Roman pottery is listed within the general finds list in Appendix B. A small amount of medieval pottery was revealed, which may have been deposited during medieval robbing activity. Post-medieval pottery fragments (mainly post-medieval red earthenware and ironstone), clay-pipe fragments and peg-tile are likely to derive from a period when post-Roman buildings were present on the site.

7.6 Animal bone

A small amount of animal bone was collected, but none of it was from securely Roman contexts.

8 Discussion

All four trenches contained evidence of a substantial and high status Roman building or buildings constructed fully or partly of stone, with a tiled roof, painted walls, a herringbone patterned brick floor, and one floor with a mosaic. Some of the other floors may have been tessellated. This building at some stage included a sunken feature constructed of *opus signinum* and stone. In terms of dating, the range of pottery is not adequate to date the site accurately. The coin found dates the demolition of the *opus signinum* room to the later 4th century. The mosaic is of an earlier rather than later Roman style, and the datable Roman tile is mainly 2nd century. The evidence points to a 2nd-century house with a mosaic floor, to which the *opus signinum*-lined room was added. The demolition date for the *opus signinum*-lined room (4th century) may be applicable to the whole building. This would fit in with what we know from other excavations in the Middleborough area, where settlement dates from the late 1st to the late 3rd century (Brooks & Crummy 1984, 155).

The *opus signinum*-lined structure is unusual in Colchester. The small area evaluated makes it difficult to determine the relationship of this structure to the mosaic, but the most reasonable explanation is that the *opus signinum*-lined structure was an addition. It may well have been a pool or tank of some description, or a small cellar, but it is not known if it was inside the building or outside (eg in a courtyard).

The mosaic floor is in the north-east corner of a room whose east wall, though not found in the evaluation, can be inferred – it must have run north-south between the mosaic and F6. The *opus signinum* structure F6 must have backed onto the east

face of the missing wall, and the absence of F6 along that line can be explained if it was destroyed when the wall was robbed.

The *opus signinum* structure in T3 and the Roman foundation (F2) in T2 run NW-SE and are on approximately the same alignment as the foundation trenches of the Roman building excavated under the HSBC. One would expect buildings to be on the same alignment as the road, which adds weight to the theory that the course of the Roman road out of the north gate of the town followed a more north-westerly course than the modern North Station Road.

Other Roman black and white geometric mosaics are known from Colchester. In 1849 a floor with black and white squares was found under the 'Peoples' Hall' next to the Corn Exchange on the High Street which is now the Co-operative Bank (Hull 1958, no 17, 150). Part of a black and white mosaic was found during the extension to the Mercury Theatre in 1996 (Crossan 1996). Those mosaics that have been found outside the Roman town walls are all from this Middleborough area. A black and white key pattern mosaic was found in Victoria Chase in the late 19th century (see section 3). The Middleborough excavations of 1979 revealed several ornate mosaics in colour. However, there was also a fragment of a black and white mosaic from one of the rooms. This had a geometric decoration of lozenges and stepped triangles (Brooks & Crummy 1984, 180). Black and white diamonds are often used as the borders to more complicated mosaics. Therefore this type of black and white geometric mosaic is not rare in Colchester but it is, however, important.

The mosaic and the *opus signinum*-lined structure appear to lie under what was the site of no 8 North Station Road, the remains of which building could be seen on the surface. It is unusual for so much of archaeological deposits to survive *in situ* given the site's urban location, and especially at such a shallow depth.

9 Archive deposition

The full archive including a copy of this report, finds, digital data, photographs, plans and site notes will be deposited permanently with Colchester Museum under accession code 2001.153.

10 Acknowledgements

The Colchester Archaeological Trust is grateful to the following for their help and co-operation:

Glenn Carter, landowner
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Martin Winter, Archaeological Officer for Colchester Borough Council

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12 Glossary

opus signinum
peg-tile

a pink-coloured waterproof Roman mortar
a type of flat roof-tile in use from the medieval to modern periods

septaria
tesserae

Roman building stone
small tile or stone cubes used for Roman flooring and mosaics

Kate Orr, November 2001

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Appendix A: list of contexts

Table 1

Context	Trench	Description	Date
L1	T2	Grass and brick hard-core, car-park surface - seals L2	modern
L2	T2	Dark grey/brown sandy loam topsoil with mortar flecks, containing modern brick - seals L3	modern
L3	T2	Dark grey/brown sandy loam with mortar flecks containing Roman tile, septaria and pottery	disturbed Roman?
L4	T1 & T2	Concrete building pad	modern
L5	T1	Modern brick, asphalt and sandy loam - sub-base for concrete	modern
L6	T1	Light brown silty clay - upper fill of F7, contains occasional slate and modern brick	post-medieval or modern
L7	T1	Dark clayey loam topsoil, contains abundant peg-tile - seals L8	post-medieval or modern
L8	T1	Light brown sandy clay containing <i>opus signinum</i> , mortar, tile and peg-tile - seals L12	post-medieval or modern
L9	T3	Brick and sand hard-core sub-base for car park	modern
L10	T3	Mid brown/grey clayey loam, contains painted wall-plaster and tile - seals L17 and F6	Roman?
L11	T3	Dark brown sandy loam layer adjacent to L16, containing Roman tile, <i>tesserae</i> and post-medieval pottery	Post medieval
L12	T1	Dark brown loamy sand containing oystershell	Roman
L13	T4	Sand and brick hard-core for car park	modern
L14	T4	Dark grey/brown sandy loam topsoil with brick and mortar flecks - seals L15	post-medieval or modern
L15	T4	Lighter grey/brown loam with abundant <i>opus signinum</i> , mortar and Roman tile; 1 piece of peg-tile may be from a later context - seals L22	disturbed Roman?
L16	T3	Mid grey/brown clayey loam, fill of robber trench?, cuts L11, starts 510mm bgl	post-Roman
L17	T3	Mortar demolition debris containing painted wall-plaster and tile, starts 770mm bgl, fills F6 - sealed by L10	Roman
L18	T3	Loam and mortar ?demolition layer, contains Roman <i>opus signinum</i> and tile, and peg-tile - seals F12	post-Roman
L19	T3	Browny yellowy clay layer, containing Roman tile and peg-tile - seals F12	medieval or post-medieval
L20	T3	Grey brown loam - seals F12	Roman
L21	T4	Gravel lens within L15 containing some tile fragments	Roman
L22	T4	Light brown loam containing large lumps of Roman <i>opus signinum</i> and tile, possible floor, rubble layer - sealed by L16	Roman
F1	T2	Mortar layer - demolition debris, containing <i>opus signinum</i> and Roman tile - seals F2	Roman
F2	T2	Brick footing - sealed by L3	Roman
F3	T2	Disturbed blocks of <i>opus signinum</i> and tile - sealed by L3	Roman
F4	T1	Void with peg-tile and slate - sealed by L5 and L6	modern
F5	T1	<i>Opus signinum</i> floor base - sealed by L7	Roman
F6	T3	<i>Opus signinum</i> structure, filled by L10 and L17 - sealed by L10	Roman
F7	T1	Pit: lower fill is medium brown loose loamy sand containing peg-tile; upper fill is L7	post-medieval
F8	T3	Pit or soakaway filled with modern brick	modern
F9	T3	Pit cut into F6 containing mid brown/grey clayey loam	later Roman?
F10	T4	Pit filled with mid brown silty loam with tile, flecks of charcoal and post-medieval pottery	post-medieval or modern
F11	T4	Pit fill with mid brown silty loam, oystershell, tile, mortar and charcoal flecks	post-Roman or post-medieval?
F12	T3	Mosaic	Roman - 2nd or 3rd century

Appendix B: list of finds by context

(A sample of half of the tile and septaria was collected.)

Table 2

Find bag no	Context	Description	Date	Weight
1	T2, L1	animal bone	undated	112g
1	T2, L1	clay pipe	post-medieval	5g
1	T2, L1	1 sherd of fabric 48D ironstone	19th-20th century	15g
2	T2, L2	peg-tile	medieval to post-medieval	30g
3	T2, L3	tile including white tile, burnt tile (<i>imbrices</i> , <i>tegulae</i> and bricks), and brick with <i>opus signinum</i> attached; box-tile	Roman	6kg
3	T2, L3	1 sherd of black-burnished ware 2, fabric type GB; 1 sherd of grey ware, fabric type GX; 1 sherd coarse oxidised ware, fabric type DJ; 1 sherd of fine micaceous grey ware, fabric type WA	Roman	30g
3	T2, L3	septaria	Roman?	1.2kg
3	T2, L3	oystershell	undated	59g
4	T2, F2	brick	modern	1kg
4	T2, F1	brick and box-tile	Roman	2kg
4	T2, F1	septaria	Roman	651g
4	T2, F1	plain painted wall-plaster	Roman	90g
4	T2, F1	rim of grey ware jar, probably CAM 268/277 or variant, fabric type GX	Roman early to mid 2nd century to late 3rd/early 4th century	32g
4	T2, F1	grey ware sherd decorated with curved wavy lines between horizontal beading, possibly fabric type GR, probably imitating samian form Dragendorf 30	Roman, early 2nd century	26g
4	T2, F1	<i>opus signinum</i>	Roman	585g
5	T1, L7	peg-tile	medieval to post-medieval	410g
6	T1, L8	brick	Roman	108g
6	T1, L8	peg-tile	medieval or post-medieval	281g
6	T1, L8	<i>opus signinum</i>	Roman	90g
7	T1, F5	plain painted wall-plaster	Roman	51g
7	T1, F5	tile fragments	Roman	105g
7	T1, F5	animal bone	undated	1g
7	T1, F5	<i>tessera</i>	Roman	16g
8	T3, L10 (within F6)	copper-alloy coin (small find no 1)	Roman AD 367-375	3g
9	T3, L10 (within F6)	brick and tile including stamped flue-tile (die 42 or similar); pieces of roof-tile (<i>imbrex</i> and <i>tegula</i>); 2 pieces of herringbone floor brick	Roman	1.54kg
9	T3, L10 (within F6)	1 sherd of fabric 12 shell- and sand-tempered ware	medieval 1150-1200	8g
9?	T3, L10 (within F6)?	2 grey ware sherds (these sherds may be from T4, L14)	medieval or Roman	10g
9	T3, L10 (within F6)	animal bone and horn-core	undated	63g
9	T3, L10 (within F6)	septaria	Roman?	318g
9	T3, L10 (within F6)	painted wall-plaster	Roman	1kg
9	T3, L10 (within F6)	painted <i>opus signinum</i>	Roman	436g
10	T3, L10 (within F6)	painted wall-plaster	Roman	2.6kg

11	T3, L10 (within F6)	1 sherd of a CAM 108 beaker, fabric type GX	Roman - earlier 2nd century	4g
11	T3, L10 (within F6)	septaria	Roman?	263g
11	T3, L10 (within F6)	painted wall-plaster	Roman	30g
11	T3, L10 (within F6)	tile and brick	Roman	920g
12	T2, F1	large bricks and roof-tile (<i>imbrex</i> and <i>tegula</i>)	Roman	7kg
13	T1, u/s	Fe nail	late post-medieval	6g
14	T3, L16	grey ware sherd, fabric type GX	Roman	3g
14	T3, L16	animal bone	undated	44g
15	T4, L15	septaria	Roman	393g
15	T4, L15	plain painted wall-plaster	Roman	170g
15	T4, L15	1 grey ware sherd, fabric type GX	Roman	35g
15	T4, L15	1 sherd of post-medieval red earthenware	post-medieval	20g
15	T4, L15	peg-tile	medieval or post-medieval	50g
15	T4, L15	roof-tile	Roman	255g
16	T3, L17	<i>tessera</i>	Roman	37g
16	T3, L17	tile, including combed piece	Roman	465g
16	T3, L17	painted wall-plaster	Roman	2.1kg
16	T3, L17	2 grey ware sherds, fabric type GX	Roman	3g
16	T3, L17	animal bone	undated	15g
17	T3, F9	roof-tile and brick including one with scored lattice keying; box-tile with scored keying	Roman	1.8kg
17	T3, F9	painted <i>opus signinum</i>	Roman	233g
17	T3, F9	painted wall-plaster	Roman	273g
18	T3, L16	painted wall-plaster	Roman	174g
18	T3, L16	painted <i>opus signinum</i>	Roman	163g
18	T3, L16	animal skull and horn-core	undated	94g
18	T3, L16	6 <i>tesserae</i>	Roman	126g
18	L16	1 sherd large storage jar, fabric type HZ; 3 sherds grey ware	Roman	33g
18	T3, L16	roof-tile and brick with mortar; box- tiles with combing	Roman	1.6kg
19	T3, L17	brick and <i>tegula</i> fragments	Roman	1.2kg
19	T3, L17	plaster	Roman	728g
19	T3, L17	painted wall-plaster	Roman	3.8kg
20	T3, L17	painted wall-plaster	Roman	1kg
20	T3, L17	Fe object	undated	15g
20	T3, L17	<i>imbrices</i> with mortar and herringbone floor brick with mortar	Roman	3.5g
21	T4, L14	animal bone	undated	30g
21	T4, L14	clay-pipe stems and part of bowl	post-medieval	5g
21	T4, L14	2 sherds of fabric 20/21	medieval 12th-13th century	35g
21	T4, L14	5 sherds fabric 40 post-medieval red earthenware sherds	17th-18th century	100g
22	T3, L11	painted wall-plaster	Roman	15g
22	T3, L11	mortar	Roman	74g
22	T3, L11	tile	Roman	37g
22	T3, L11	2 sherds of fabric 40 post-medieval red earthenware	17th-18th century	63g
22	T3, L11	<i>tesserae</i>	Roman	120
23	T4, F10	tile and <i>opus signinum</i>	Roman	120g
23	T4, F10	clay-pipe stem	post-medieval	3g
23	T4, F10	1 sherd of fabric 48D ironstone	19th-20th century	3g
23	T4, F10	1 sherd of post -medieval red earthenware	17th-18th century	15g
23	T4, F10	animal bone	undated	145g
23	T4, F10	peg-tile	medieval or post-medieval	293g
25	T3 (part of F6)	<i>opus signinum</i> , part of F6	Roman	4.3kg
26	T3b	2 <i>tesserae</i>	Roman	38g

27	T3, L19	peg-tile	medieval or post-medieval	232g
27	T3, L19	2 grey ware sherds probably fabric 20	medieval - 1250-1400	27g
27	T3, L19	2 grey ware sherds, fabric type GX	Roman	20g
27	T3, L19	animal bone	undated	37g
27	T3, L19	<i>tegulae</i>	Roman	308g
28	T3, L19	peg-tile	medieval or post-medieval	42g
28	T3, L18	roof-tile	Roman	1.5kg
28	T3, L18	painted wall-plaster	Roman	253g
28	T3, L18	<i>opus signinum</i> (part of F6)	Roman	546g
28	T3, L18	1 sherd fabric 42 border ware	post-medieval - 1550-1700	3g
28	T3, L18	grey ware sherd fabric type GX	Roman	15g
28	T3, L18	animal bone	undated	22g
28	T3, L18	painted <i>opus signinum</i>	Roman	133g
29	T3, u/s	1 sherd fabric 20 medieval coarse ware	12th-13th century	100g
29	T3, u/s	painted wall-plaster	Roman	227g
29	T3, u/s	<i>tesserae</i>	Roman	42g
29	T3, u/s	combed box-tile	Roman	39g
30	T3, L20	black-burnished ware, fabric type 2 CAM 40 sherd with mortar on exterior	Roman - early 2nd to late 3rd century	9g
30	T3, L20	<i>tegula</i> base	Roman	65g
30	T3, L20	black and white stone <i>tesserae</i> (part of F12)	Roman	200g

Appendix C: report on the Roman brick and tile

by Ernest Black

2001.153

A sample of 91 tile fragments was examined (excluding tile *tesserae*, and counting joining fragments as a single tile). Of these, 43 pieces had evidence of re-use in the form of mortar over broken edges.

There were ten fragments of box-flue tile. These fall into two groups. In the first group belongs a fragment with relief-patterned keying approximately 13mm thick from T3, L10, F6. The die used is die 42 or a close copy of it, dated in London and Canterbury to c AD 100-120 (Betts *et al* 1997, 111-13). Other fragments of similar thickness came from context T2, L3 (approximately 14mm thick with combed keying and one side of a rectangular cutaway surviving 32mm from the face) and context T3, F9 (approximately 13/14mm thick with scored lattice keying). At Huggin Hill in London, a tile was keyed with die 42 on one face and had scored lattice keying on the other face (Betts *et al* 1997, 111). Another fragment of combed box-tile from context T2, F1 was only 11mm thick and must be close in time to the 1st-century 'thin-walled' box-tiles which are usually approximately 8-10mm thick (Black 1996, 60-62). A second tile fragment from context T3, F9 also carries scored lattice keying, but it is approximately 29mm thick and is clearly not a box-tile. The most likely identification is as the top or base of a voussoir.

The second group of box-tiles comprises combed fragments of greater thickness (approximately 17mm) from contexts T3, L16 (two pieces), L17 and F9. These are likely to date to later in the 2nd century. One of the fragments from T3, L16 has a possible edge of a cutaway approximately 34mm from the face, and this matches the position of the cutaway on the tile from T2, L3. It is possible that the second group of tiles were installed in the same hypocaust system as the first group, as part of a repair or extension sometime later in the 2nd century. A fragment approximately 14/15mm thick came from an unstratified context in T3.

The thickness of 27 measured *tegula* bases ranged from 14 to 29mm. All of these could comfortably belong to the 2nd century, with the single exception of the fragment with a base 29mm thick and a massive flange approximately 40mm wide from T2, F1 which is likely to be of 1st-century date. Eleven fragments of *imbrex* are present. Twenty-one fragments of brick were recorded of which eight had a thickness of 28-35mm, eleven a thickness of 35-50mm, and two a thickness of over 50mm (52mm and 64mm respectively). The fragment from T2, L3 which was 52mm thick had a clay lump (*mamma*) attached to one surface. A piece 31/32 mm thick from T3, L17 showed a finger-mark drawn in a straight line parallel to one edge.

Of particular interest were two fragmentary and one complete *spicae*, which were small bricks used in a herringbone brick floor. The two fragmentary examples (one certainly re-used) came from T3, L10, F6. The complete example (from T3, L17) was 148mm long and 39/40mm wide by 41/42mm deep. Faint traces of pink mortar suggest that it had originally been set in an *opus signinum* bedding but had later been set or deposited in a coarse off-white mortar, substantial traces of which still adhere to it. These bricks were not standardised in size and a variety of sizes is known from Colchester and elsewhere (Brodrigg 1987, 52; Crummy 1992, 256-7).

Bibliography

- | | |
|--|---|
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| Black, E W, 1996 | 'Box flue-tiles in Britannia: the spread of Roman bathing in the 1st and 2nd centuries', <i>Archaeological Journal</i> , 153 , 60-78 |
| Brodrigg, G, 1987 | <i>Roman brick and tile</i> |
| Crummy, N, 1992 | 'Roman and post-Roman tile and daub', in <i>Excavations at Culver Street, Gilbert School, and other sites in Colchester 1971-85</i> , by P Crummy, Colchester Archaeological Report 6, 251-72 |

Appendix D: report on the Roman painted wall-plaster

All the painted wall-plaster found was collected, amounting to 12kg. Most of this comes from the demolition layer within F6 (L17). Approximately one-eighth of this debris was sampled. Therefore if all the demolition debris had been excavated out of it, the estimated amount would be 100kg. The surface area of each piece was measured by colour and pattern. Plain coloured plaster represents half of the painted plaster. The most common colour pigments are a light green and a dark red which are used as stripes or panels of colour, side by side and divided by a white line. One of the most interesting pieces in these colours is an obtuse-angled corner which must be the corner of a recess or a window opening.

The light green also forms the background colour for brush-strokes in a number of other colours. It is not possible from the sample available to identify the design of the fresco. We know that there were blocks of plain light green, dark red and pink colour with some sort of design above or within this. There is one piece which may possibly show a figure. The design may have been figural, eg cupids, centurions, fish, mythological scenes, nymphs, etc. Alternatively there could have been an architectural theme, or foliage and swags, etc (Henig 1995). Some of the splashes of colour may be a marble effect as was commonly used along dados and baseboards (Ling 1984, 42 & 181). There may just have been a simple linear scheme of red panels with green borders edged with white lines as has been found at Middleborough and elsewhere in Britain in 1st- to 2nd-century buildings (Ling 1984, 180-81).

There are some pieces of painted *opus signinum* rather than plaster which are painted with a reddish pink pigment. These came from F9, L16 and L19 as well as within F6 (L10). These pieces must come from a differently plastered wall, but not from F6 because this was not painted.

Table 3 Roman painted wall-plaster categorised by design, with measurements in cm.

Context	Plain	Stripe	Splashes	Other (specify)
T3, L17	Olive green: 22 pieces each 3 x 4; 8 pieces each 4 x 5	Olive green with light pink fading into dark red stripe: 2 pieces each 3 x 6	Olive green/pale yellow splashed 'stripes': 1 piece 3.5 x 5; 2nd piece 4.5 x 6.5	Bright, deep red background with olive green broad edge with narrow stripes of pink and white at intersection of 2 colours: 4 pieces 10 x 15; 7 x 9; 2 pieces 4 x 5; 1 piece 8 x 9
T3, L17	Olive green on ribbed plaster: 3 pieces 3 x 5	Dark green, broad yellow stripes with dark yellowish orange splash: 1 piece 2.5 x 3	Dark red, dark yellow splashes: 1 piece 3.5 x 4.5	White and light blue splash on dark grey background with yellow swag: 1 piece 3.5 x 6.5
T3, L17	Olive green: 4 pieces each 4 x 5	White/light blue stripe: 1 piece 3 x 4	Dark grey background with green/yellow wash and bold indeterminate dark red splash: 1 piece 3.5 x 6	Grey area with red thick lines and olive green background: 1 piece 6 x 8
T3, L17	1 piece different coats of paint: traces of olive green, dark grey, yellow, dark red: 4.5 x 8	Light blue/dark red stripe: 1 piece 1.5 x 2	Dark grey with dark red splash: 1 piece 1 x 4	Corner piece: orangey/dark red square on olive green to cream background, 6 x 7
T3, L17	1 piece 3 different coats of paint: olive green, yellow and dark green: 3 x 3	Olive/yellowish green with red and dark grey stripe: 1 piece 3.5 x 5.5	Dark grey, splashes of dark red/yellow green: 1 piece 2 x 8	Olive green, pale yellow, pink and dark red, orange in indeterminate pattern: 1 piece 3 x 6

T3, L17	3 different coats: light yellow/olive green and dark red: 1 piece 5 x 6.5	Olive green with narrow orangey red stripe: 1 piece 1.5 x 4.5	Olive green with dark red splash: 1 piece 7 x 9	Olive green, dark red curved stripe and yellow wash: 1 piece 3 x 6
T3, L17	olive green: 8 pieces each 5 x 8	Impressionistic stripes produced by brush strokes, various shades of grey and dark red: 1 piece 4 x 10	Light grey, splashes of olive green: 1 piece 4 x 6	Light blue stripe surround(?) light pink background to possible dark red human figure (legs and arms visible, torso faint) with waving cloak, 1.4cm high: 1 piece 3 x 5
T3, L17	Olive green: 2 pieces 5 x 8; 6 x 6	Grey stripe against olive green background: 1 piece 3 x 4	White, light blue, pink, dark red splashes: 1 piece 2.5 x 3.5	Dark red 'curved' stripe on yellow, light blue, yellow, olive green background: 1 piece 4 x 7; 2nd piece 3 x 7
T3, L17	Dark red: 4 pieces each 3.5 x 6	Dark red background with orange/pink striped band: 1 piece 5 x 6.5	Light blue splashes on olive green: 1 piece 4 x 5	2 coats olive green/light yellow background with dark red edge and, in between, a triangle of light blue with subtle white and yellow floral dots: 1 piece 6 x 12
T3, L17	Different coats: light blue on grey on olive green: 2 pieces each 2 x 3	Dark grey stripe on olive green background: 1 piece 3 x 4	Splashes of orange and dark red, yellow on olive green background: 1 piece 5.5 x 7	Dark red areas of colour on olive green background: 1 piece 5.5 x 7.5
T3, L17	3 different coats: light blue, yellow, olive green: 1 piece 5 x 6	Frame - narrow stripe of yellow, alongside grey and pink: 1 piece 2 x 3	Splashes of orange, dark red on olive green background: 1 piece 5 x 6	Light blue swathe on red on yellow/olive green background: 1 piece 4 x 6
T3, L17	Light yellow: 1 piece 4 x 4	Wavy stripe: olive green on light blue: 1 piece 2.5 x 3.5	Orangey red wash over olive green background: 1 piece 3 x 4	
T3, L17	Olive green: 1 piece 3 x 4		Orangey/dark red small splashes on yellowy/olive green background: 1 piece 4 x 5	
T3, F6, L10				Wavy brown line against mixed background of blue, green, grey, yellow, cream: 1 piece 3 x 6
T3, F6, L10	Olive green: 4 pieces 5 x 7	Corner piece (120° angle), red and green with narrow white lines, and edge of white stripe: one face 9 x 11, other face 6 x 11	Olive green with dark red stripy splash: 1 piece 2 x 5	2 dark red lines on orangey background: 1 piece 3 x 4
T3, F6, L10	Olive green: 4 pieces each 3 x 5	Red with white striped edge: 1 piece 5 x 6		
T3, F6, L10	Dark red: 1 piece 3 x 4	Olive green background with white stripe at edge: 2 pieces each 8 x 10		Light blue splash on dark red/yellow and white: 1 piece 6 x 9
T3, F6, L10	Pinky red: 1 piece 11 x 14	Olive green background, light blue/pink edge		

T3, F6, L10	Olive green: 2 pieces 2 x 3	Dark red/light orange edge to olive green background: 1 piece 4 x 6		
T3, F6, L10		Red background with white/grey edge: 1 piece 3 x 5		
T3, L18	White plaster on pink <i>opus signinum</i> mortar: 7 x 15	Olive green background with narrow white and red stripes: 1 piece 5.5 x 9		
T3, L18	Pink mortar: 1 piece 5 x 6			
T3, F6, L10	Worn dark pinky red: 2 pieces each 5 x 10; 2 pieces each 4 x 7; 1 piece 5 x 13			
T3, L16	Dark pinky red: 1 piece: 6 x 10			
T3, L16	White plaster: 1 piece 3 x 3			
T3, F5	White plaster: 1 piece 3.5 x 5.5			
T3, L17				Pale green wash with cream edge, but indeterminate distinction: 1 piece 5.5 x 8
T3, L11	Yellowy cream: 1 piece 3.5 x 3.5			
T3, L18	Olive green: 1 piece 2.5 x 3.5			
T3, L16	Red: 1 piece 5 x 6			
T3, F6, L10	Red: 1 piece 2.5 x 3.5			
T3, F9	Red - discernible brush strokes: 1 piece 5.5 x 7.5			Mixed colours - grey, dark brown, yellow, aquamarine, white, green, all with subtle indeterminate edges: abstract 'design': 1 piece 7 x 7
T3, F9	Pink <i>opus signinum</i> mortar: 2 pieces: 6.5 x 9; 5 x 5 (with surface)			
T3, u/s	Pinky red: 1 piece 9 x 11			
T3, u/s	Olive green: 1 piece 4.5 x 5.5			
T4, L15	White plaster: 1 piece 6 x 8.5			
T2, F1	White plaster: 1 piece 5 x 6			
T3, F9				
T3, L18	Pinky red: 1 piece 4 x 5.5		Red dots on white plaster: 1 piece 2 x 2.5	
Total	2,310 CM²	639.25 CM²	316.50 CM²	852 CM²



Plate 1 Trench 2: F1 and F2, looking south.



Plate 2 Trench 3: view of F6, from above.



Plate 3 Trench 3: mosaic (F12) and F6, also showing F9, looking south-west.



Plate 4 Roman wall-plaster.

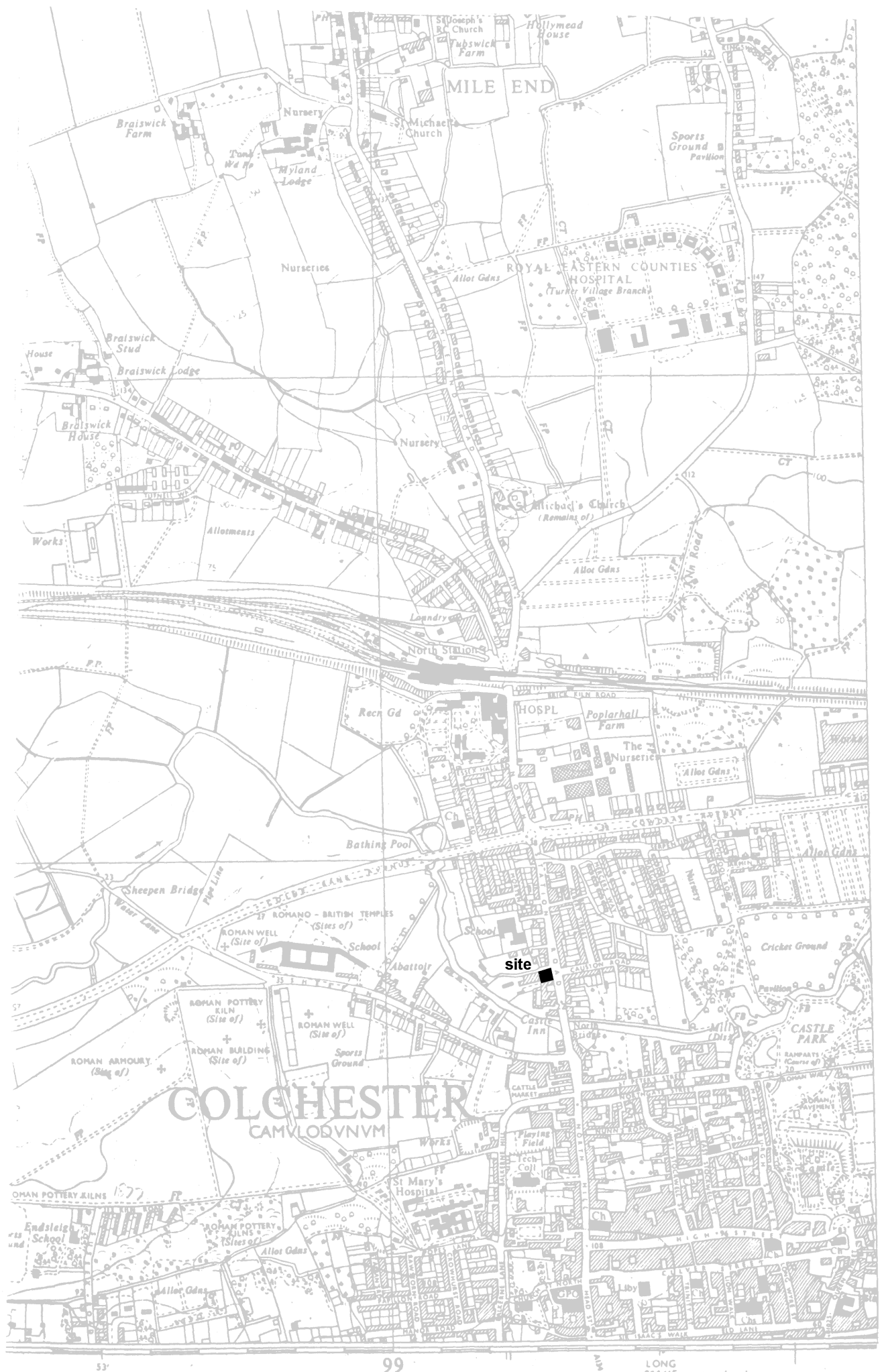
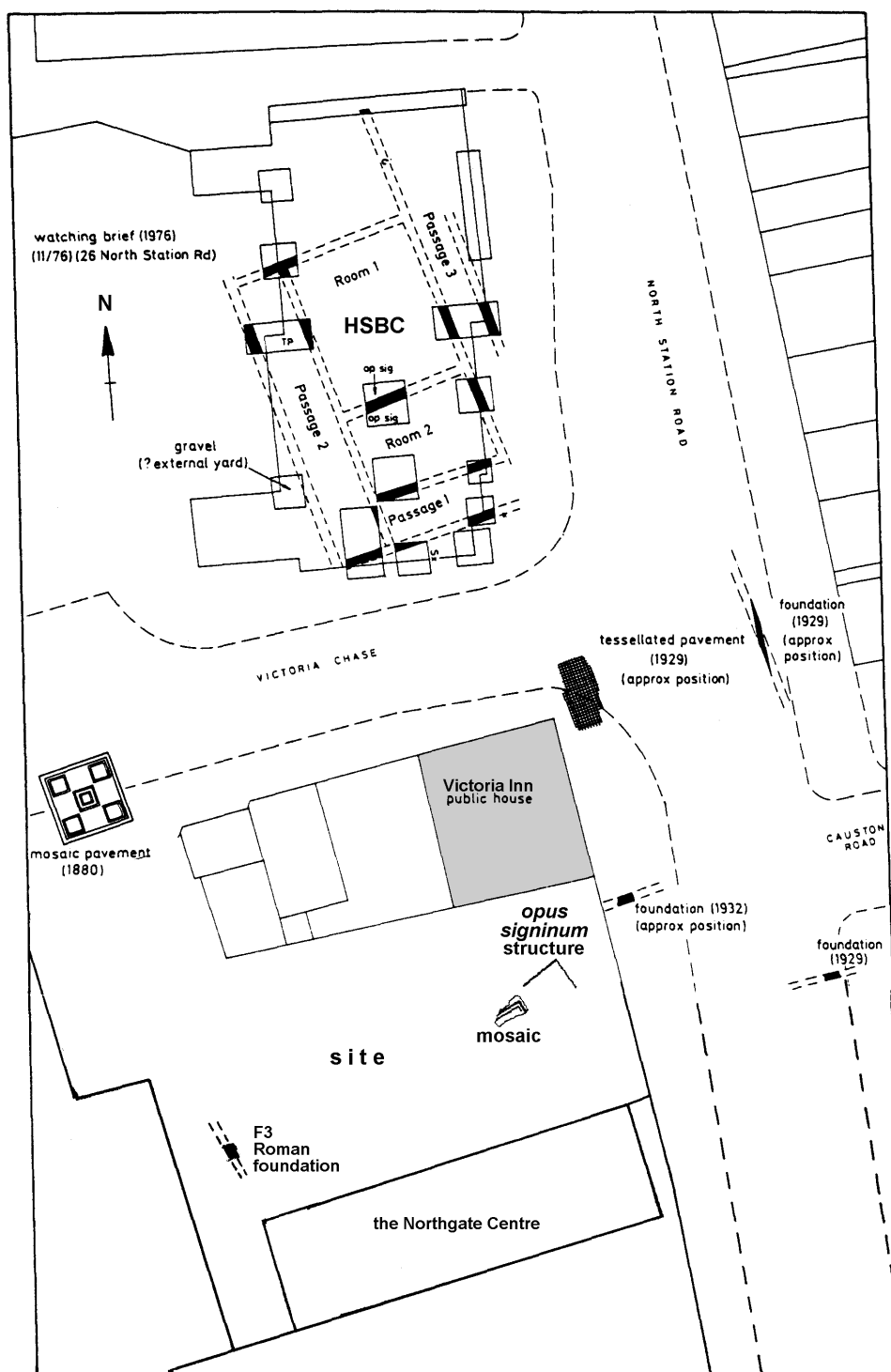


Fig 1 Site location, scale 1:10,560.

0 50
metres

REPRODUCED FROM THE ORDNANCE SURVEY MAP WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF THE CONTROLLER OF H.M. STATIONERY.



0 10 20
metres

Fig 2 Previously known archaeological sites tied in with archaeology from the evaluation, scale 1:500.
(Adapted from Crummy 1992, 347.)

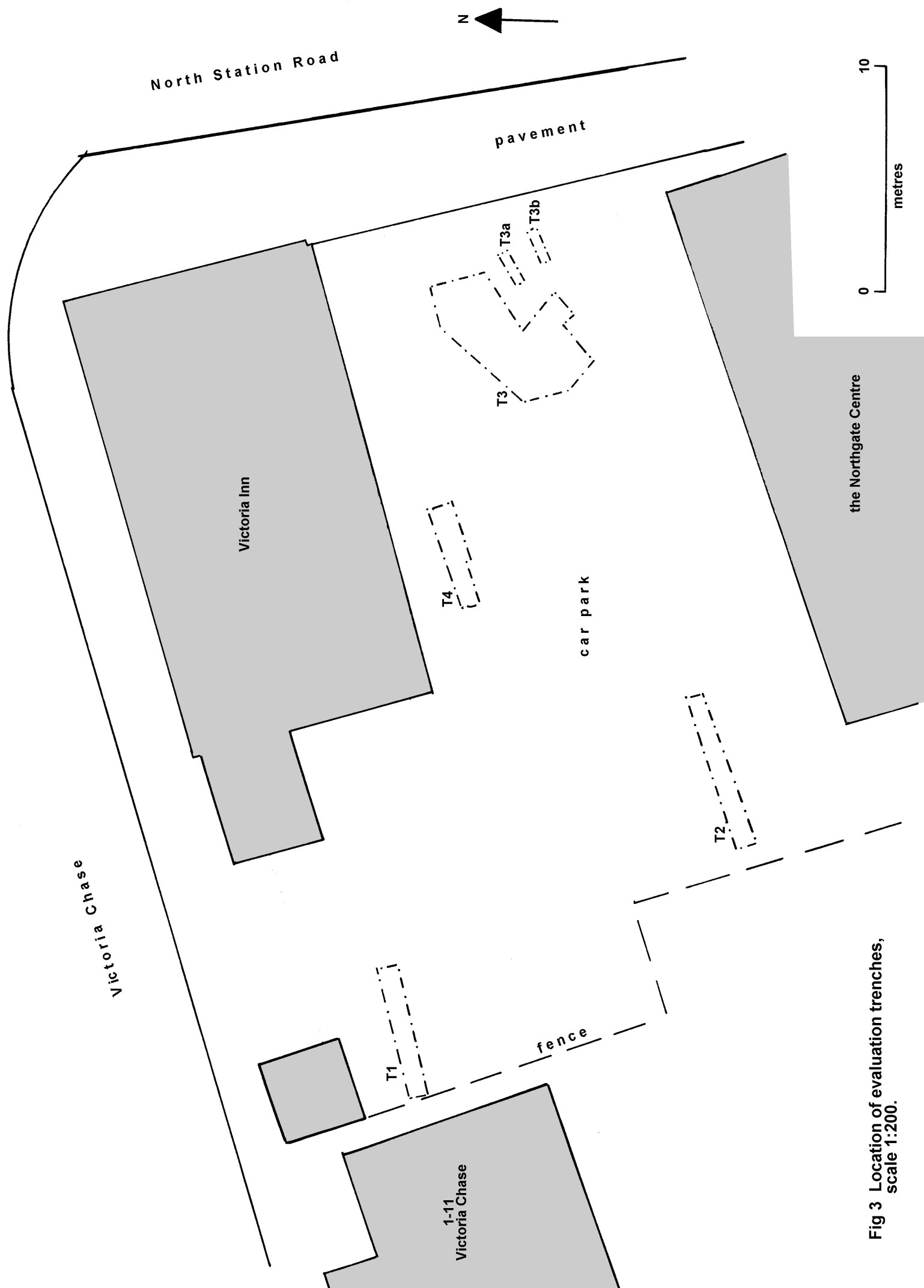
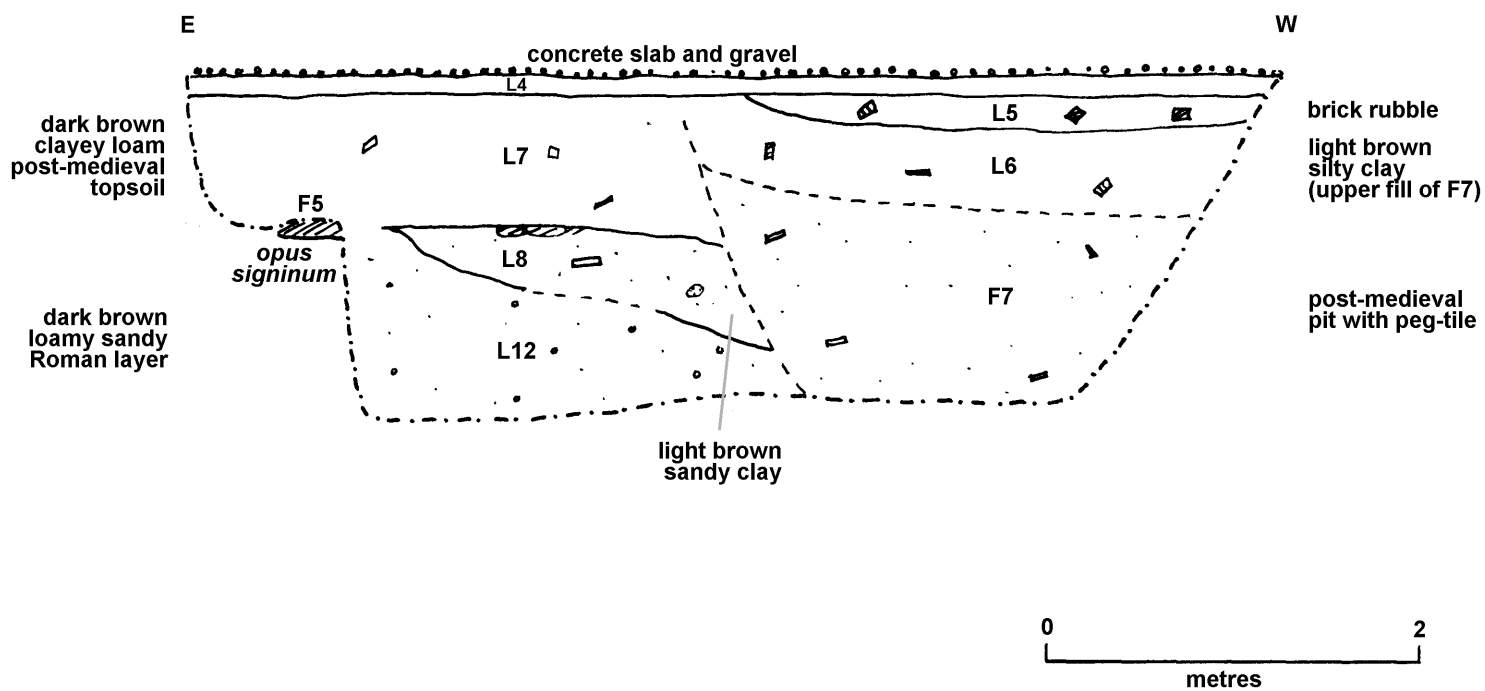


Fig 3 Location of evaluation trenches,
scale 1:200.

south-facing section of T1



plan of T1

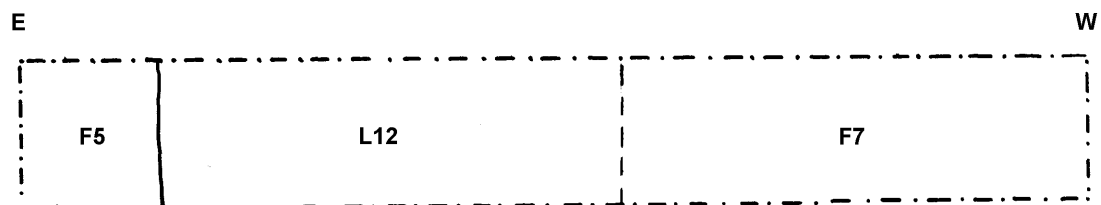
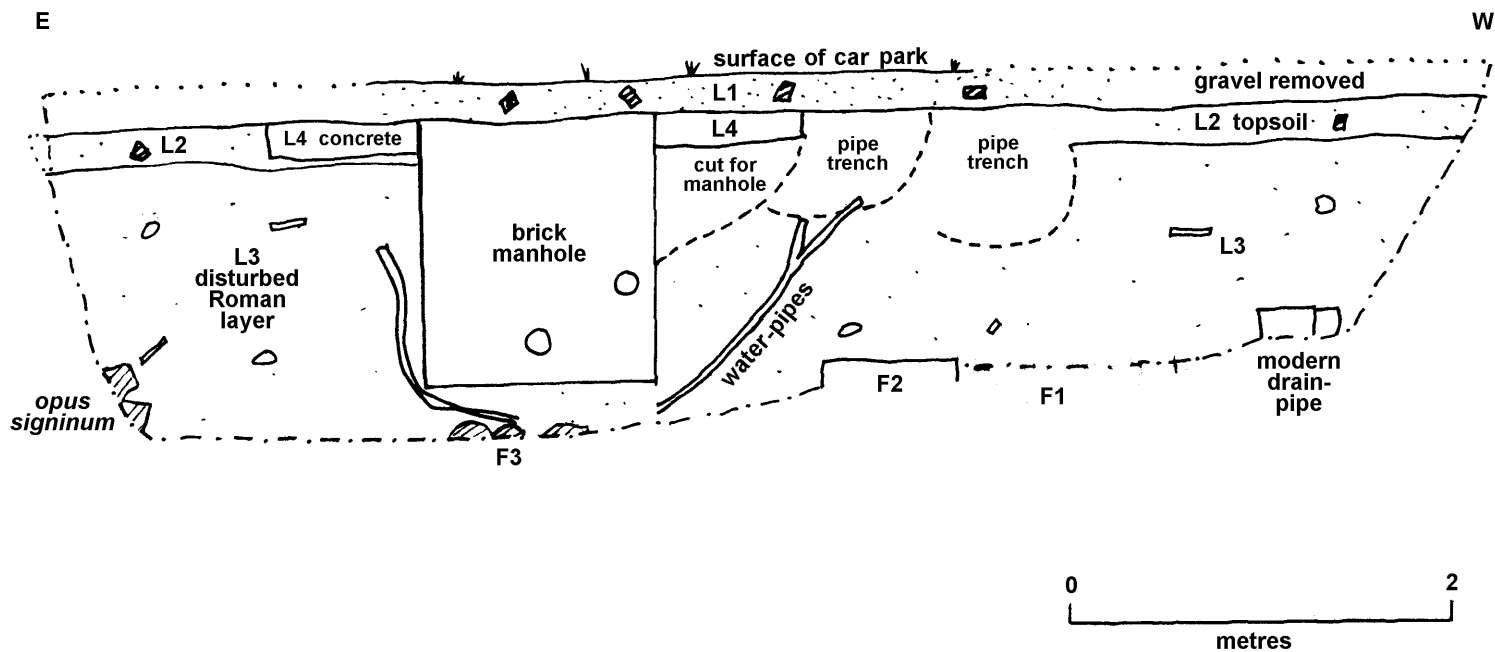
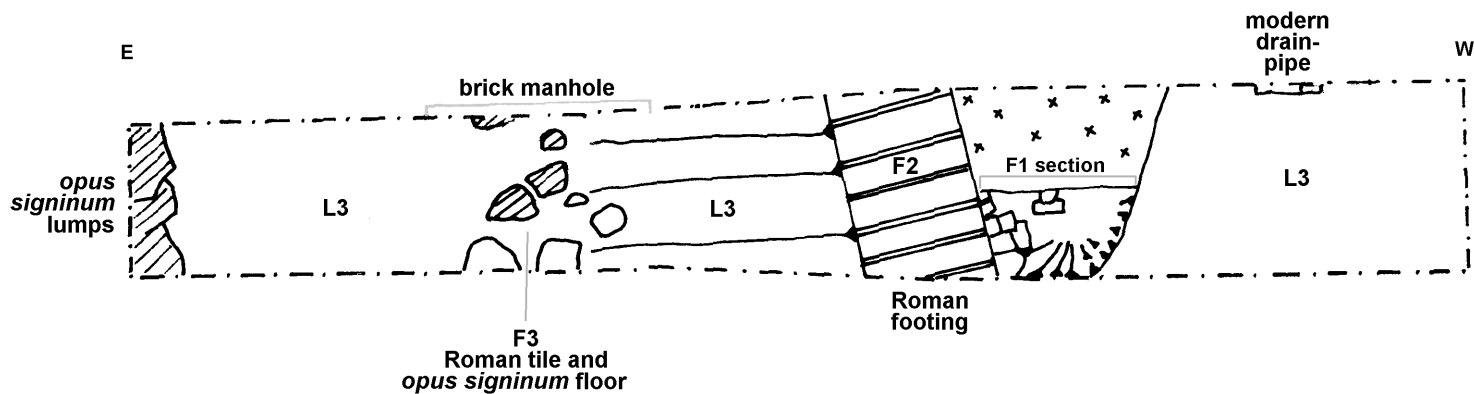


Fig 4 Trench 1: section and plan, scale 1:40.

north-facing section of T2



plan of T2



north-facing profile of T2, F1

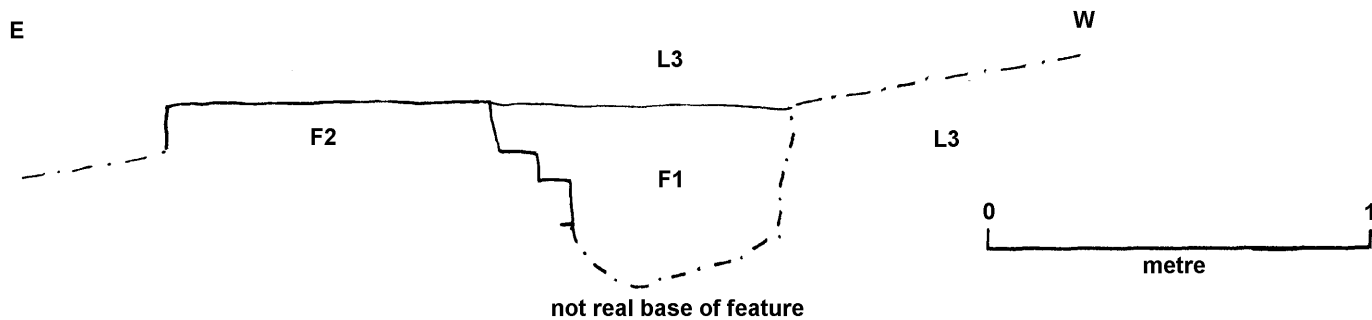


Fig 5 Trench 2: section and plan, scale 1:40 and profile, scale 1:20.

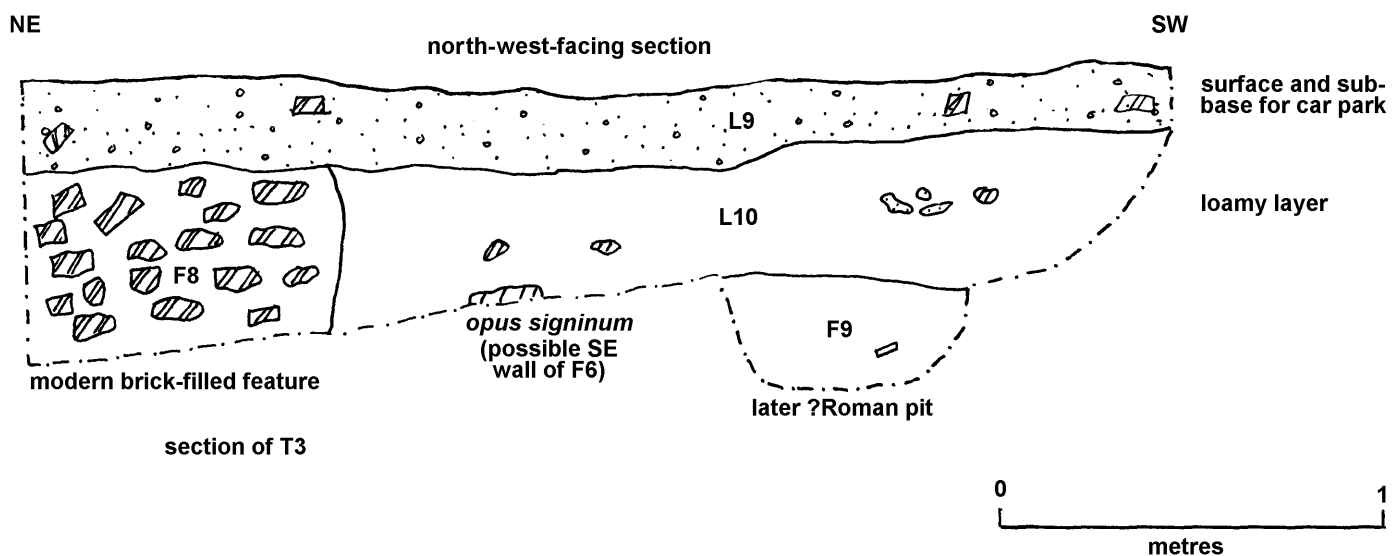
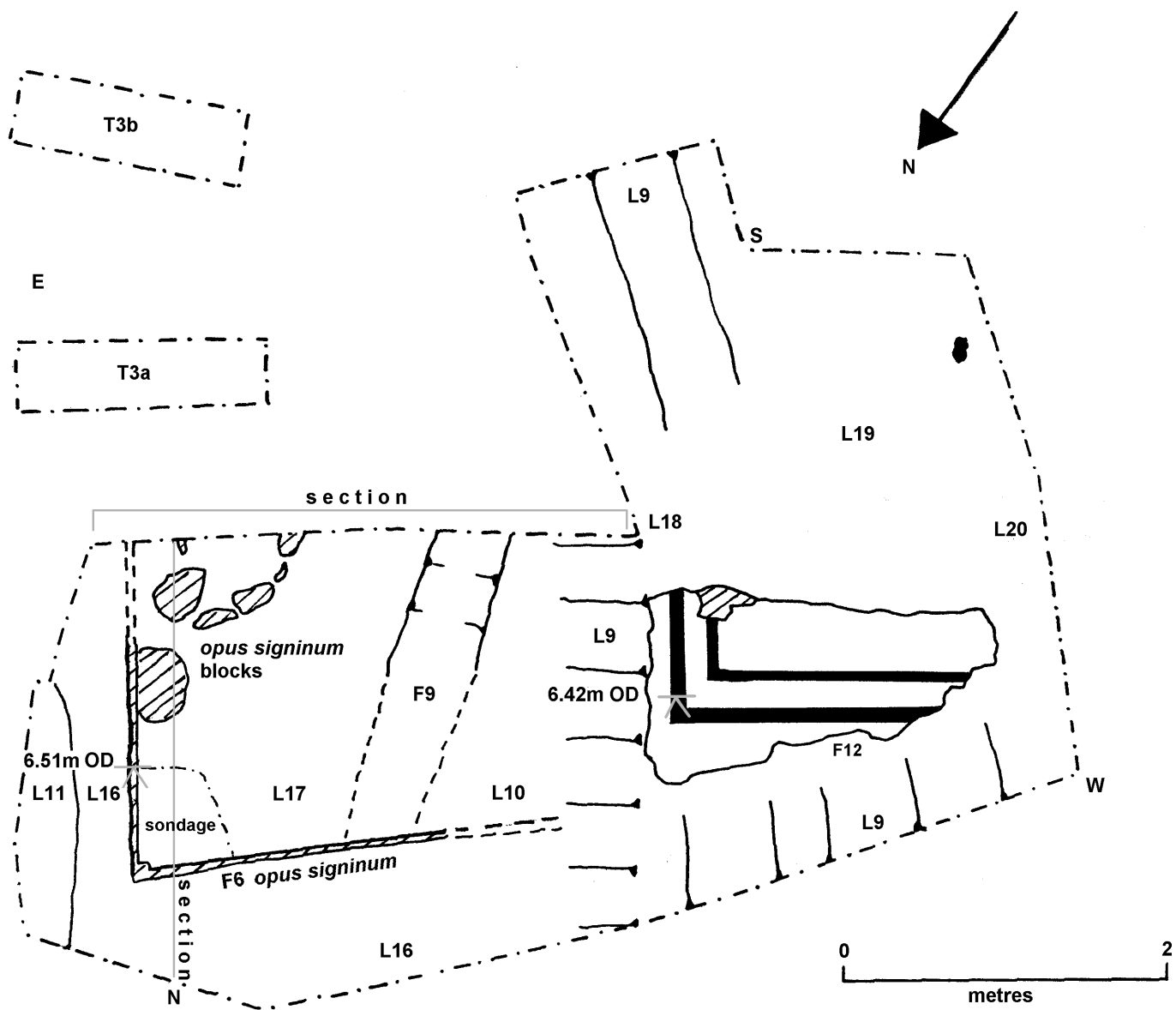


Fig 6 Trenches 3a and 3b: plan, scale 1:40 and section of T3, scale 1:20.

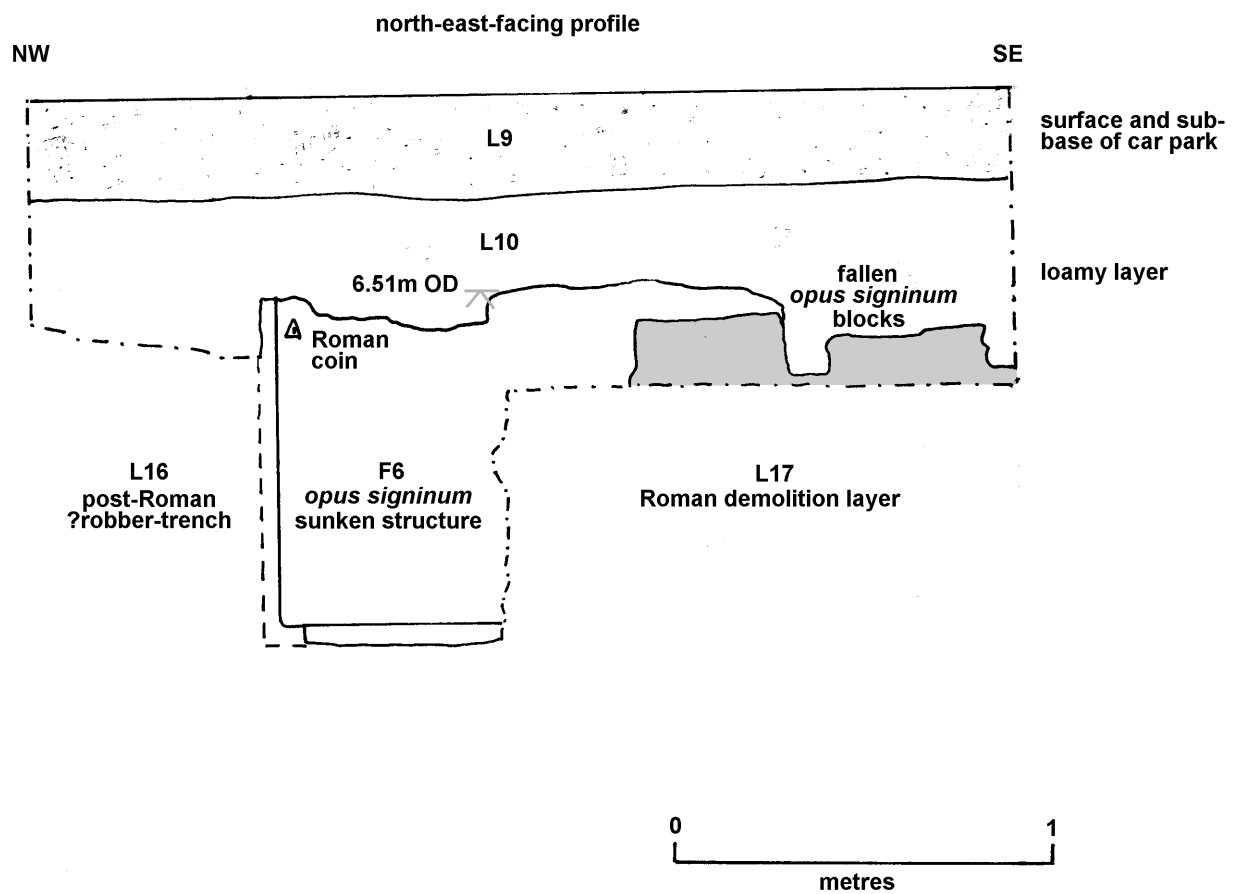


Fig 7 Trench 3: profile of F6, scale 1:20.

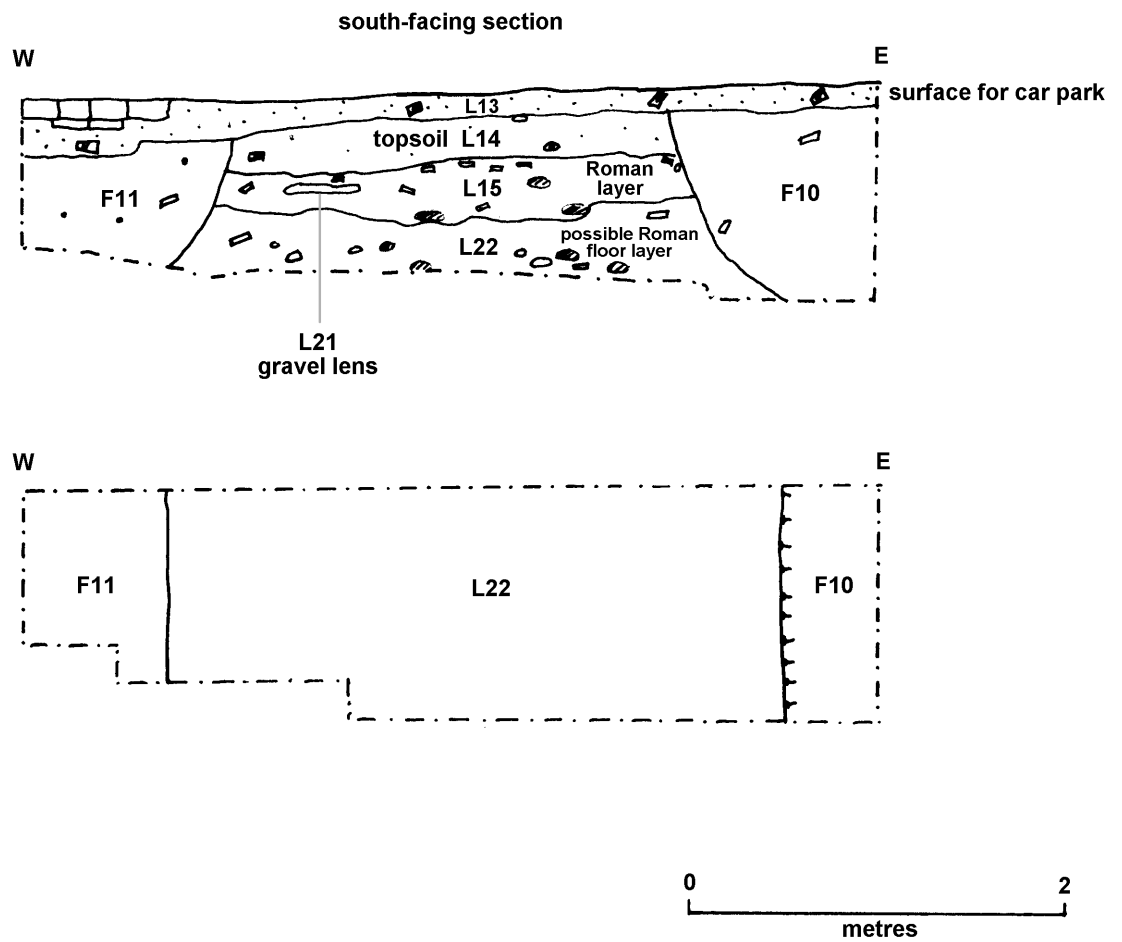


Fig 8 Trench 4: section and plan, scale 1:40.

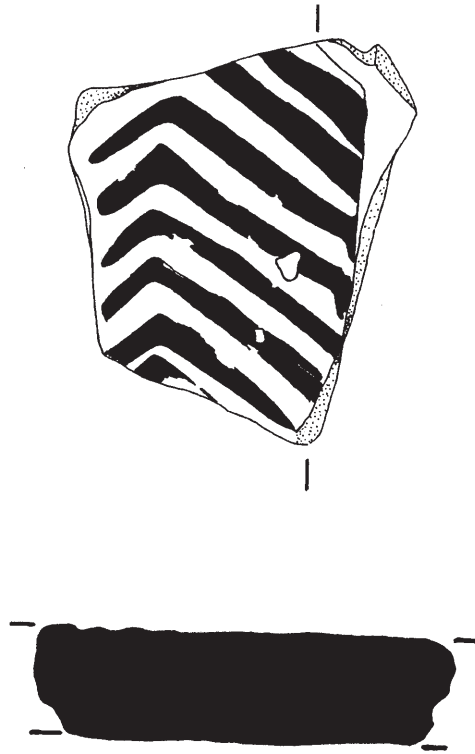


Fig 9 Tile with relief-pattern keying (die 42 or similar)
from F6, scale 1:1.

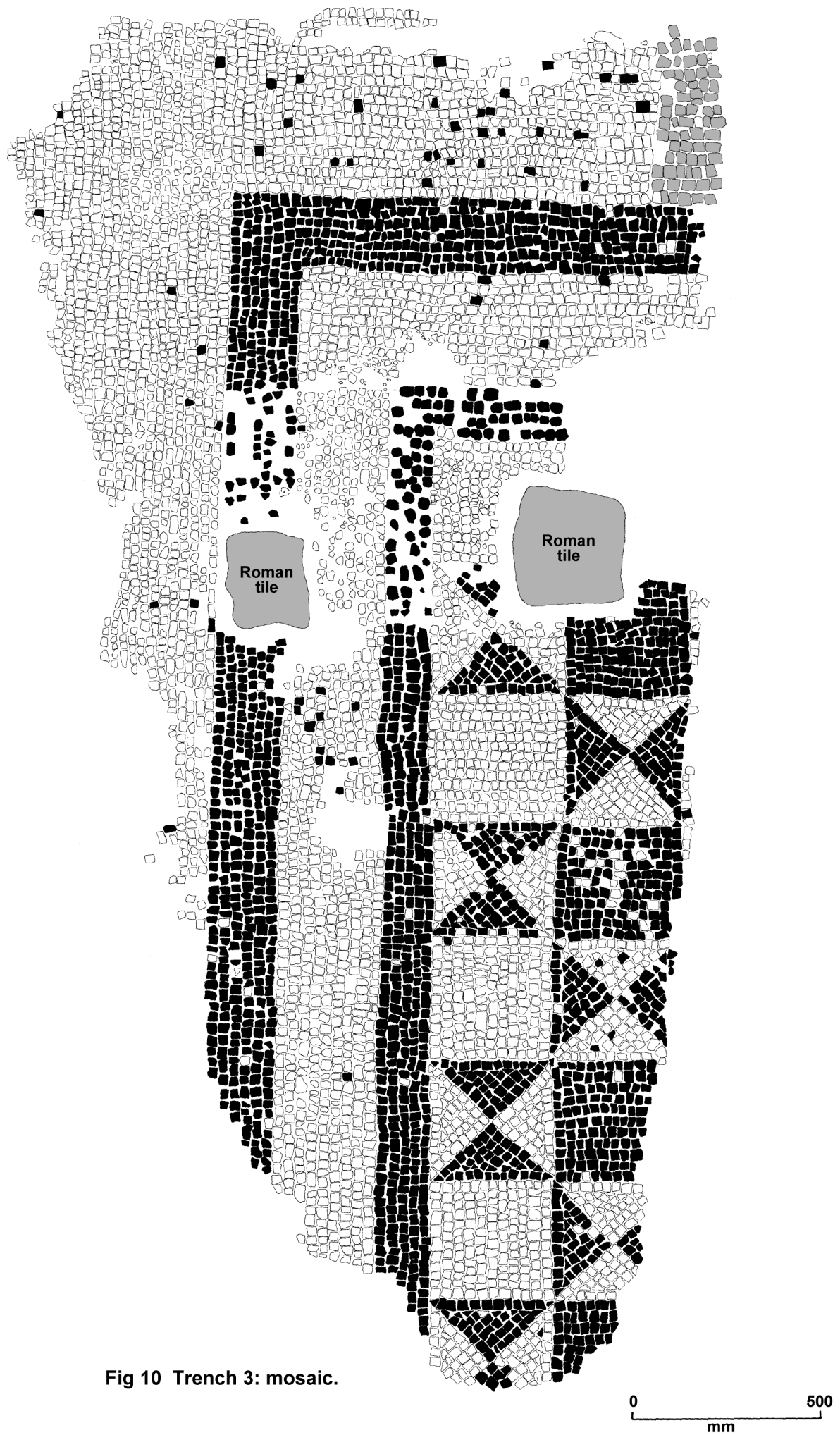


Fig 10 Trench 3: mosaic.

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

Summary sheet

Site name/address: North Station Road (adjacent to the Victoria Inn), Colchester, Essex	
Parish: Colchester	District: Colchester Borough
NGR: TL 9932 2577	Site code: 2001.153
Type of work: Evaluation	Site director/group: Colchester Archaeological Trust
Date of work: 6th-15th August 2001	Size of area investigated: 38m x 36m
Location of finds/curating museum: Colchester Museum	Funding source: Developer
Further seasons anticipated? No	Related EHCR nos: 12517, 12514, 12623
Final report: CAT Report 163 and summary in <i>EAH</i>	
Periods represented: Roman	
Summary of fieldwork results: <i>An archaeological evaluation consisting of four trial-trenches revealed part of a previously unknown mosaic pavement adjacent to an unusual Roman sunken feature, the walls of which were lined with opus signinum. The walls of the feature had been robbed out, leaving the opus signinum free-standing. The feature contained a large amount of painted wall-plaster, as well as a 4th-century coin. The sunken room and mosaic pavement were part of a 2nd- or 3rd-century house within the Roman suburb on present-day North Station Road.</i>	
Previous summaries/reports: 26 North Station Road (Crummy 1992, 346)	
Author of summary: Kate Orr	Date of summary: November 2001