

**An archaeological trial-trenching evaluation
at Lexden Grange, 127 Lexden Road,
Colchester, Essex
September 2005**

**report prepared by
Kate Orr**

**commissioned by
Inkpen Downie Architecture Ltd
on behalf of
Enterprise Heritage**

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NGR: TL 97867 25133



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1 Summary

Two trial-trenches were excavated at Lexden Grange, the site of two Late Iron Age cremation burials. The evaluation failed to locate any further examples. This does not prove an absence of such features, more that none were cut by the trenches. The trench at the front of the Grange revealed Roman pits, proving some Roman activity on the site, but the nature of this activity is hard to define because of the limited nature of the investigation. The trench to the rear of the Grange showed some modern disturbance from the creation of the car-parking area.

2 Introduction (Fig 1)

- 2.1** This is the archive report on an archaeological trial-trenching evaluation carried out between the 22nd and 28th September 2005 by the Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT), on land at Lexden Grange, 127 Lexden Road, Colchester, Essex.
- 2.2** Full planning permission has been applied for to convert Lexden Grange to residential use and to erect of two blocks of apartments within the grounds (F/COL/05/1173). The evaluation was required to provide information to be considered prior to the determination of the full planning application.
- 2.3** The application site occupies an area of 0.60 hectares on the north side of Lexden Road, to the west of Colchester town centre. It is centred at National Grid Reference TL 97867 25133 and is bounded by residential properties on all sites but the south. The site is currently occupied by a vacant, two-storey, Grade 2 listed property (the Grange), constructed in 1904. The height AOD varies from 35.67m to 34.56m.
- 2.4** All fieldwork was done in accordance with a specification submitted by CAT which followed a brief written by the Colchester Borough Council Archaeology Officer.
- 2.5** This report mirrors standards and practices contained in the Colchester Borough Council's *Guidelines for the standards and practice of archaeological fieldwork in the Borough of Colchester* (CM 2002) and *Guidelines on the preparation and transfer of archaeological archives to Colchester Museums* (CM 2003), and the IFA's *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (IFA 1999) and *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (IFA 2001). Other sources are *Management of archaeological projects* (MAP 2), and *Research and archaeology: a framework for the Eastern Counties 1* (EAA 3), *Research and archaeology: a framework for the Eastern Counties 2* (EAA 8), and *Standards for field archaeology in the East of England* (EAA 14).

3 Archaeological background

The application site is situated just to the north of the line of the main Roman road leading from the walled town to London. To the west is the 'Lexden cemetery', a group of Late Iron Age burials focused around St Clare Road. On the application site itself Late Iron Age burials have been recorded. In 1904, a rich flat cremation burial was recorded from south of the Grange. The burial contained a decorated bronze mirror, a bronze cup and bronze pin, and six pottery vessels dating to AD 10-25. In 1936, another Late Iron Age burial group of three vessels was found to the rear of the Grange, at a depth of 750mm (Urban Archaeological Database or UAD event nos 1178, 1225 and 1565).

4 Aim

The aim of the evaluation was to record the extent, nature and complexity of any surviving archaeological remains within the development site.

5 Methods

- 5.1 Two trial-trenches were dug; one to the rear and one to the front of Lexden Grange, in order to evaluate the areas to be disturbed by the new apartment blocks. A mechanical excavator removed soil in spits until archaeological features or natural ground were exposed. The depth of the trenches varied between 730mm and 1m.
- 5.2 Individual records of layers and features were entered on CAT pro-forma record sheets. All exposed subsoil features, archaeological deposits or negative features were manually cleaned, planned using a total station, and examined in sufficient detail to allow their nature, date and importance to be assessed. Four features were excavated and drawn in section at a scale of 1:10.
- 5.3 A register was compiled of finds. Finds were washed, marked and bagged according to context.
- 5.4 Standard 'record' shots of contexts were taken with a digital camera.
- 5.5 A metal-detector was used to check all the spoil heaps.

6 Results (Figs 2-4)

6.1 Trench 1 (T1)

This 25m-long trench was excavated in the lawn at the front of Lexden Grange. It was between 730mm and 830mm deep. The south-western end of the trench had to be jugged out to avoid a modern telecommunications cable. Just over 300mm of turf and topsoil (Layer or L1) sealed subsoil (L2), a greyish brown sandy silt. At between 750-830mm below ground-level, natural sand and gravel (L3) was reached. Four features were recorded. The edge of a large pit (Feature or F1) was recorded at the north-eastern end of the trench disappearing under the baulk. The feature was straight-sided on the north-west side. It cut L2 and L3 and was 650mm deep. Its fill was a grey brown sandy silt, similar to L2. Charcoal was rare except at the base of the feature. Roman pottery was present throughout, mainly dating from the 1st to 2nd centuries, plus there was one piece of residual Late Iron Age pottery. An iron nail, a fragment of Roman glass and a few fragments of animal bone were also retrieved from the fill. One of the fragments of bone appeared to have been cremated.

F2 was a 2m-long shallow pit which proved to be devoid of anything of archaeological interest except one piece of Roman pottery.

F3 was a 1.9m-wide straight-sided circular pit, near the south-western end of the trench. It was sealed by 700mm of topsoil and subsoil and cut natural sand and gravel (L3). The feature had six distinct fills (F3a-F3g) containing varying quantities of charcoal and Roman pottery. Of note was a band of orange burnt clay (F3b) which appeared to be *in situ* burning, but it may alternatively be burnt clay and daub that was thrown into the pit when it was already half backfilled. Roman brick and tile, iron nails, an iron linch-pin and a small amount of animal bone was also present in the pit fill. The feature is likely to be a large rubbish-pit which was filled in some time in the mid or late 2nd century.

F4 was a small discrete pit containing one piece of Roman grey ware.

6.2 Trench 2 (T2)

This 23m-long trench was excavated to the rear of the Grange, partly in the lawn but mainly within a tarmaced area. It was between 900mm and 1m deep. At the western end of the trench, in the lawn area, the soil profile was similar to that of T1. Within the car-parking area, however, the topsoil had been replaced by tarmac and a sand and brick sub-base (L4 and L5). This overlaid a dark brown silty sand, 500mm thick (L6). Natural sand and gravel was reached at 900mm (L3).

There was a modern ditch-like feature at the western end of the trench (F5) which proved to be fairly shallow. It contained 19th- to 20th-century pottery, brick and tile, and clay pipe. Two other 'features' were noted cutting into natural, but on excavation they appeared to be natural, possibly tree-root bowls. It was not clear whether L5 was subsoil or was modern made-up ground brought in when the area was tarmaced. The lack of archaeological features in this part of the trench would suggest that there has been some disturbance, and possibly there was soil-stripping at this time.

7 Finds list

Modern pottery, brick and glass were identified by Howard Brooks of CAT; Late Iron Age and Roman pottery was identified by Stephen Benfield of CAT.

Table 1: quantities and weights of finds types, per find number and context.

Find no	Context	Description	Date	Weight (in g)
1	F2	Roman pottery	Roman	17.0
2	Cleaning over F3	Roman tile and peg-tile	Roman and medieval to modern	162.0
3				
4	F3 – top 120mm	Roman pottery	Roman	62.0
4	F3 – top 120mm	Tufa?	?	10.9
4	F3 – top 120mm	Iron nail	Roman	12.0
4	F3 – top 120mm	1 piece of daub	1 piece daub	2.0
5	F3 – 200mm down	Soil sample - fill	Roman	-
6	F3 – 40mm down	Cu alloy strips	Roman	1.0
7	F3 –120-230mm down	Roman pottery	Roman	656.0
7	F3 –120-230mm down	Animal teeth	?	8.5
7	F3 –120-230mm down	Roman brick and tile	Roman	1,400.0
8	F3 –bottom fill	Iron object – linch pin or bolt	Roman	277.0
9	F3 –230-640mm down	Animal bone	?	38.0
9	F3 –230-640mm down	Roman brick and tile	Roman	610.0
9	F3 – 230-640mm down	Iron nails	Roman	32.8
9	F3 – 230-640mm down	Roman pottery	Roman	333.0
10	F3 – bottom fill	Roman brick	Roman	1,024.0
10	F3 – bottom fill	Animal bone	?	70.0
10	F3 – bottom fill	Roman pottery	Roman	196.0
11	F3 – fill b/fill c (170mm down)	Roman pottery	Roman	155.0
12	F4	Roman pottery	Roman	11.5
13	F1	Roman pottery and one piece of Late Iron Age pottery	Roman	950.0
13	F1	Burnt stones	?	46.0
14	U/S T1	Iron nails	?	117.0
15	F5	Victorian or later brick and peg-tile	Victorian or later	434.0
15	F5	Modern stoneware	19th-20th century	52.0
15	F5	Oyster shell	?	14.7
15	F5	Burnt?	?	9.8
15	F5	Glass	?	25.4
15	F5	Animal bone	?	10.6
15	F5	Clay-pipe stems	?	5.0
16	F1 – lower fill	Human bone?, one piece cremated	?	1.0
16	F1- lower fill	Iron nail	Roman?	31.0
17	-	-	-	-
18	F1 - lower fill	Glass	Roman	1.0

8 Discussion

The evaluation failed to locate any further Iron Age cremation burials on the site. This does not prove an absence of such features, more that none were cut by the trenches. T1 revealed Roman pits, proving some Roman activity on the site, but the nature of this activity is hard to define because of the limited nature of the investigation. T2 showed some modern disturbance from the creation of the car-parking area.

9 Acknowledgements

The Trust would like to thank Inkpen Downie Architecture Ltd for commissioning the work and Enterprise Heritage for funding the work. The project was monitored by Martin Winter, Archaeology Officer for Colchester Borough Council. The site work was carried out by Nicky Garland, Chris Lister, Kate Orr and Emma Spurgeon.

10 References

- | | | |
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11 Glossary

AOD	Above Ordnance Datum, ie height above sea level
context	specific location on an archaeological site, usually a feature or layer
EHHER	Essex Historic Environment Record, Essex County Council
feature	an identifiable thing like a pit, a wall, a drain, a floor; can contain 'contexts'
medieval	the period from 1066 to c 1500
modern	period from the mid 19th century to the present
natural	geological deposit undisturbed by human activity
NGR	National Grid Reference
post-medieval	period from c 1500 to the mid 19th century
Roman	the period from AD 43 to c AD 410

12 Archive deposition

The finds and the digital and paper archive are held by the Colchester Archaeological Trust at 12 Lexden Road, Colchester, Essex CO3 3NF, but both will be permanently deposited with Colchester Museums under accession code 2005.115.

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Appendix 1: the Late Iron Age and Roman pottery

by S Benfield

Introduction

In this report on the late Iron Age and Roman pottery, vessel form numbers follow those of the Camulodunum (Cam) Roman pottery type series (Hawkes & Hull 1947; Hull 1958). Late Iron Age and Roman pottery fabrics used in this report (Table 2) follow those devised for CAR 10 with the addition of the fabric for Late Iron Age grog-tempered ware which has been given the letter code GTW.

Table 2: Roman pottery fabric codes and the corresponding fabric name used in this report.

Fabric code	Fabric name
AA	amphora, all excluding Dressel 20 and Brockley Hill/Verulamium amphora
AJ	amphora, Dressel 20
BA	plain samian forms
BX	decorated samian forms
CB	Colchester red colour-coated roughcast ware
CZ	Colchester and other red colour-coated wares
DJ	coarse oxidised and related wares
GB	BB2: black-burnished ware, category 2
GTW	Late Iron Age grog-tempered ware
GX	Other coarse wares, principally locally-produced grey wares
HZ	Large storage jars and other vessels in heavily-tempered grey wares
KX	black-burnished ware (BB2) types in pale grey ware
TZ	mortaria, Colchester and mortaria imported from the Continent

The pottery was looked at by numbered find bag for each context. For each bag the pottery was sorted into fabric types, and the number or approximate quantity of sherds and the weight of pottery was recorded for each fabric type.

Approximately 2.3 kg (2,295 g) of Roman pottery was recovered from four features, with significant quantities of pottery from features F1 and F3. There was also one sherd of Late Iron Age grog-tempered ware (fabric GTW) weighing 14 g from F1.

Overall the condition of the pottery was good, though two sherds from bag 13 from F1 had been burnt; also in one bag of finds (unstratified), all the sherds were small or sherd fragments.

It should be noted that during the earlier part of the 20th century, two pottery groups, both from Late Iron Age cremation burials, were recovered from the site (EHER nos 1178, 1225 and 1565).

Pottery from the features

The pottery from F1 (941 g) included sherds from a number of vessel form types which were current in the 1st-early 2nd century (samian form Drag 29 decorated bowl, Cam 108 beaker, Cam 218 bowl, and Cam 266 jar). There was also one residual sherd of Late Iron Age pottery. Overall the pottery from F1 can only be securely dated as 1st-early 2nd century. However, a decorated samian bowl of form Drag 29 from F1 is not current after c AD 80 and this form is predominantly pre-Flavian. Given that all of the pottery form types from F1, including the sherd from a decorated samian bowl, are types which occur at the Sheepen site at Colchester (Hawkes & Hull 1947), where occupation effectively ended in AD 61 (Hawkes & Hull 1947, p 56; Niblett 1985, p 26), the pottery from F1 can be suggested as being contemporary with that from the Sheepen site and probably pre-Flavian.

Roman pottery from F2 consists of a single rim sherd. This is in a light grey coarse ware fabric and appears to be from a jar of form Cam 278, and can be dated to the early 2nd to mid-late 3rd century.

The pottery from F3 (1309 g) can be divided between the top fill (0 mm-120 mm depth), upper fill (120 mm-230 mm), and lower fill (230 mm-640 mm). A small quantity of pottery by weight (58 g) came from the upper fill, with about half of the remainder by weight coming from each of the remaining two fills, ie the upper fill (568 g) and lower fill (683 g). The top and upper fill of F3 both contained pottery forms and fabrics which were current in the early 2nd-early 3rd century. The colour-coat ware (Fabrics CB and CZ) is all of local

(Colchester) origin, and the recorded forms are of Cam 391 (two examples) which were current in the early 2nd-early 3rd century. Black-burnished ware is also present in Fabric GB which is also all of local or immediate regional production. The forms present in black-burnished ware are Cam 278 (one example) and Cam 37A (two examples). While Cam 278 spans the early 2nd to mid-late 3rd century, Cam 37A was current in the early 2nd-early 3rd century. The only other form type recorded from the top and upper fill is Cam 268, which is considered to have been produced from the early/mid 2nd century until the late 3rd-early 4th century (CAR 10, p 479). In contrast to the upper fills, the pottery from the lower fill contained some pottery forms which are of 1st- to early 2nd-century date (Cam 266, Cam 315). However, there is a small sherd of black-burnished ware (form Cam 278) of early 2nd- to mid-late 3rd-century date. There is also a sherd from a samian cup of form Drag 33 which is probably a product of one of the East Gaulish potteries and as such can be dated to the 2nd-early 3rd century.

There are only two sherds of Roman sandy grey ware from F4, and these unfortunately cannot be dated more closely than as being of Roman date.

Discussion

Although the previously known pottery from the site is of Iron Age date, from two cremation burials, all of the pottery from the evaluation is of Roman date, except for one Late Iron Age grog-tempered sherd from the fill of F1 (bag 13).

The Roman pottery is divided into two groups of different dates, ie that from F1 which can be dated to the 1st-early 2nd century (and which may well be pre-Flavian) and pottery of early 2nd- to 3rd-century date from F3 along with the single sherd of that date range from F2.

There is no indication of any pottery from the later Roman period (c mid-late 3rd-4th century) among the assemblage.

While the previously known pottery from the site is of Late Iron Age date and from cremation burials, the Roman pottery recovered during the evaluation consists mainly of small to medium-sized sherds from a number of pots. In general, there does not appear to be anything unusual in this assemblage which would necessarily indicate anything other than an accumulation of discarded sherds. Remains from funerary assemblages might be expected to include remains of partial vessels which could indicate displaced whole pots associated with burials. However, it can be noted that in bag 13 from F1 there was a large sherd representing part of a lid, including the central knob and part of the rim, and also two sherds from a Cam 108 beaker which appear to have been burnt. While not unusual in general assemblages, these could possibly indicate pottery derived from funerary activity on or around the site.

Table 3: Late Iron Age and Roman pottery by context.

Context	Fill location	Find no	Fabric	Description	Weight (in g)	Date
U/S			GTW	Rim in grog-tempered ware	3.4	Late Iron Age (c 70 BC-AD 43)
U/S			AJ	1 fragment of Dressel 20 amphora	2.8	1st-2nd/early 3rd century
U/S			HZ	Fragments of storage jar	6.3	
U/S			BX	1 small fragment of samian – South Gaulish	1.3	1st century
U/S			GX	Small quantity of grey ware sherds	7.1	?1st-2nd century
U/S			DJ	1 fragment	1.4	1st-2nd/3rd century
F1		13	AJ	1 sherd of Dressel 20 amphora	55.0	1st-2nd /early 3rd century

F1		13	AA	2 sherds of amphora 1 round handle – ?Cam 184	292.5	1st century
F1		13	BX	1 sherd of samian – Drag 29	5.7	pre AD 80
F1		13	HZ	Quantity of sherds from a Cam 275 storage jar	281.5	1st- 2nd/3rd century
F1		13	DJ	4 sherds inc part of a lid	117.8	1st- 2nd/3rd century
F1		13	GTW	1 body sherd	14.4	Late Iron Age
F1		13	GX	Quantity of pottery inc Cam 108 (burnt), Cam 218, Cam 233-235, Cam 266	183.0	1st-early 2nd century
F2		1	KX	1 sherd of ?Cam 278 rim	17.0	early 2nd to mid-late 3rd century
F3	top 120mm	4	TZ	1 sherd from a ?mortarium	6.3	1st- 2nd/3rd century
F3	top 120mm	4	GB	1 sherd from a bowl	4.2	early 2nd to mid- late 3rd
F3	top 120mm	4	GX	Rim of a Cam 268 jar and 3 other sherds	41.0	mid 2nd century +
F3	top 120mm	4	CZ	1 rim sherd Cam 391	2.7	early 2nd to early 3rd century
F3	top 120mm	4	CB	1 base sherd	4.0	early 2nd to mid-late 3rd century
F3	120mm –230mm down	7	HZ	Large storage jar, 2 sherds	315.3	1st-2nd /3rd century
F3	120mm –230mm down	7	DJ	2 sherds	32.7	1st-2nd /3rd century
F3	120mm –230mm down	7	CB	1 sherd of Cam 391	4.4	early 2nd to early 3rd century
F3	120mm –230mm down	7	GB	6 sherds inc rims from 2 Cam 37A bowl and 1 sherd from Cam 278 jar	54.2	early 2nd to early 3rd century
F3	120mm –230mm down	7	GX	20 sherds of grey ware, inc rim fragments from 5 different vessels inc ?Cam 268	161.6	mid 2nd century +
F3	230- 640mm down	9	DJ	1 sherd with rivet hole (repair) and a top of a flagon – Cam 149	23.6	1st-early 2nd century
F3	230- 640mm down	9	AJ	1 sherd of Dressel 20 amphora	37.6	1st to 2nd /early 3rd century
F3	230- 640mm down	9	HZ	Bottom of a storage jar	104.8	1st-2nd /3rd century
F3	230- 640mm down	9	GX	Quantity of grey ware, inc Cam 315, Cam 266	158.6	?1st- early 2nd century
F3	230- 640mm down	9	BA	1 sherd of samian – Drag 33	3.7	?2nd- early 3rd century

F3	230-640mm down	9	GB	1 sherd of ? Cam 278 jar	3.0	early 2nd to mid-late 3rd century
F3	bottom fill	10	GX	1 sherd	7.0	Roman
F3	bottom fill	10	DJ	1 sherd	6.8	1st-2nd/3rd century
F3	bottom fill	10	GB	1 sherd of a bowl	18	early 2nd to mid-late 3rd century
F3	bottom fill	10	AJ	1 sherd of a Dressel 20 amphora	164.4	1st-2nd/early 3rd century
F3	fill b/fill c	11	AJ	1 sherd of Dressel 20 amphora, rather thin but definitely Spanish Dressel 20 fabric from a large globular amphora	155.0	1st-2nd/early 3rd century
F4		12	GX	2 sherds of grey ware	11.4	Roman
				total weight	2,309.5	

Appendix 2: the metalwork

by Nina Crummy

This small assemblage consists of two small fragments of a copper-alloy strip and several nails and other fittings. The only object that can be dated is a corroded fitting from F3 that is almost certainly a Roman linch pin. Linch pins were used on wheeled vehicles, slotted into the ends of the axle, to prevent the wheels working loose as they turned. This example appears to be of Manning Type 2b, with spatulate head and forward loop, the commonest form in Roman Britain (Manning 1985, 74, fig 20).

SF 1. (6) F3. Two copper-alloy narrow strip fragments, probably part of the same object. One tapers slightly; length 17.5 mm, maximum width 6 mm. The other is folded in half; length 12.5 mm, width 6.5 mm.

(16) F1. Corroded lump of iron with mineralised wood adhering to it; probably a nail. Length 53 mm.

SF 2. (8) F3. Corroded ?linch pin. Length 153 mm, diameter of head 57 mm. Roman.

(4) F3. Iron nail with convex head and clenched tip. Length 64 mm.

(9) F3. Two iron nails, one clenched and both with flat heads, and one iron nail shank fragment. Lengths 67 mm, 39 mm (clenched), and 43 mm (shank).

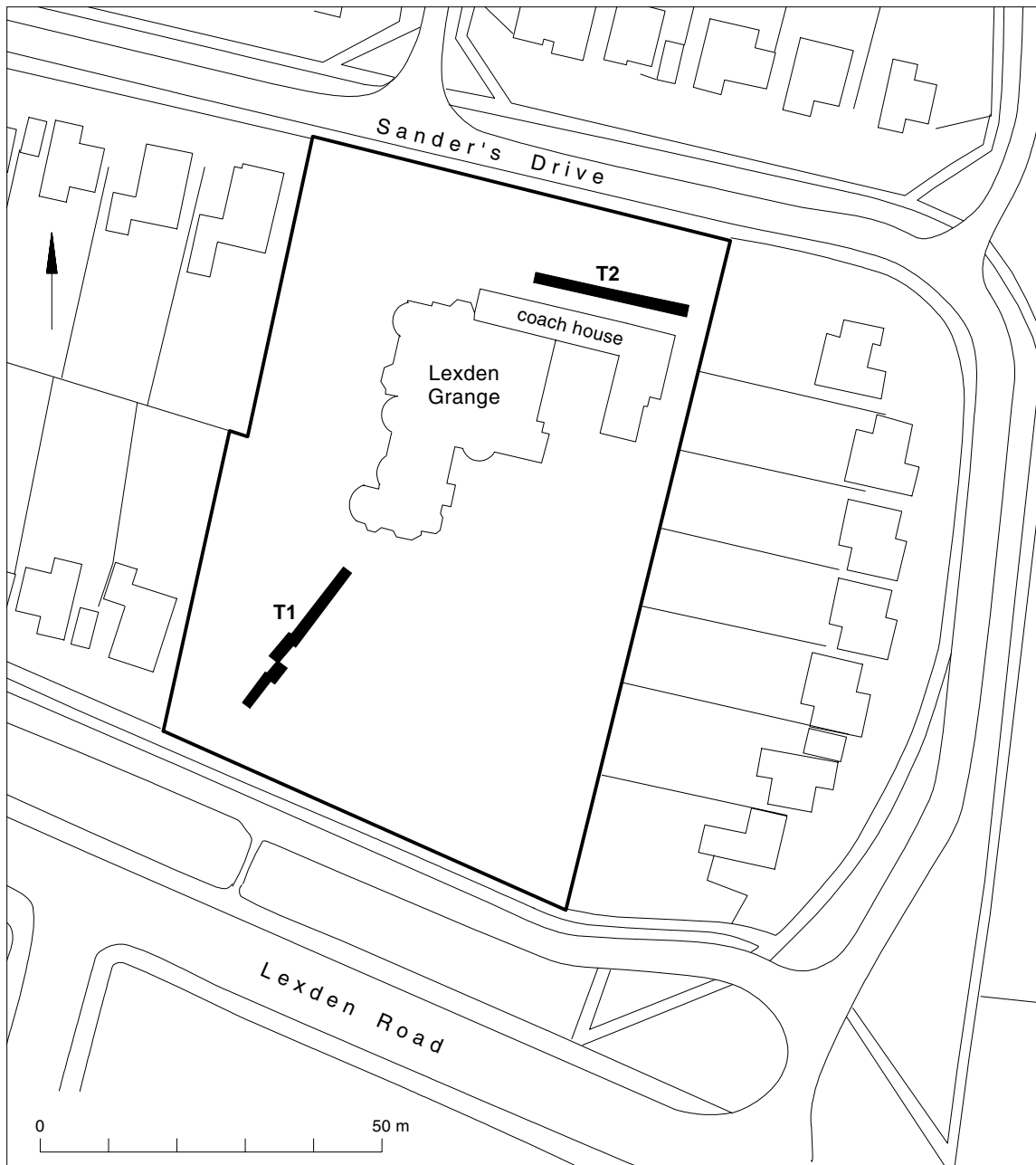
(14) U/S. a) Two iron nails, both with flat heads (one damaged). Lengths 58.5 mm, 80 mm. b) Probably an iron nail or screw with convex head fixed in an iron plug or socket. Length 131 mm. Modern.

Appendix 3: the clay tobacco pipes

by Nina Crummy

Two stems fragments with narrow bores probably date to the 19th century, the third is more likely to be 17th or 18th century.

(15) F5. Three clay tobacco-pipe stem fragments. a) Length 53 mm, bore diameter 2 mm. b) Length 39 mm, bore diameter 2 mm. c) Length 30.5 mm, bore diameter 3.5 mm.



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Fig 1 Trench locations.



Fig 2 Plan of trenches.

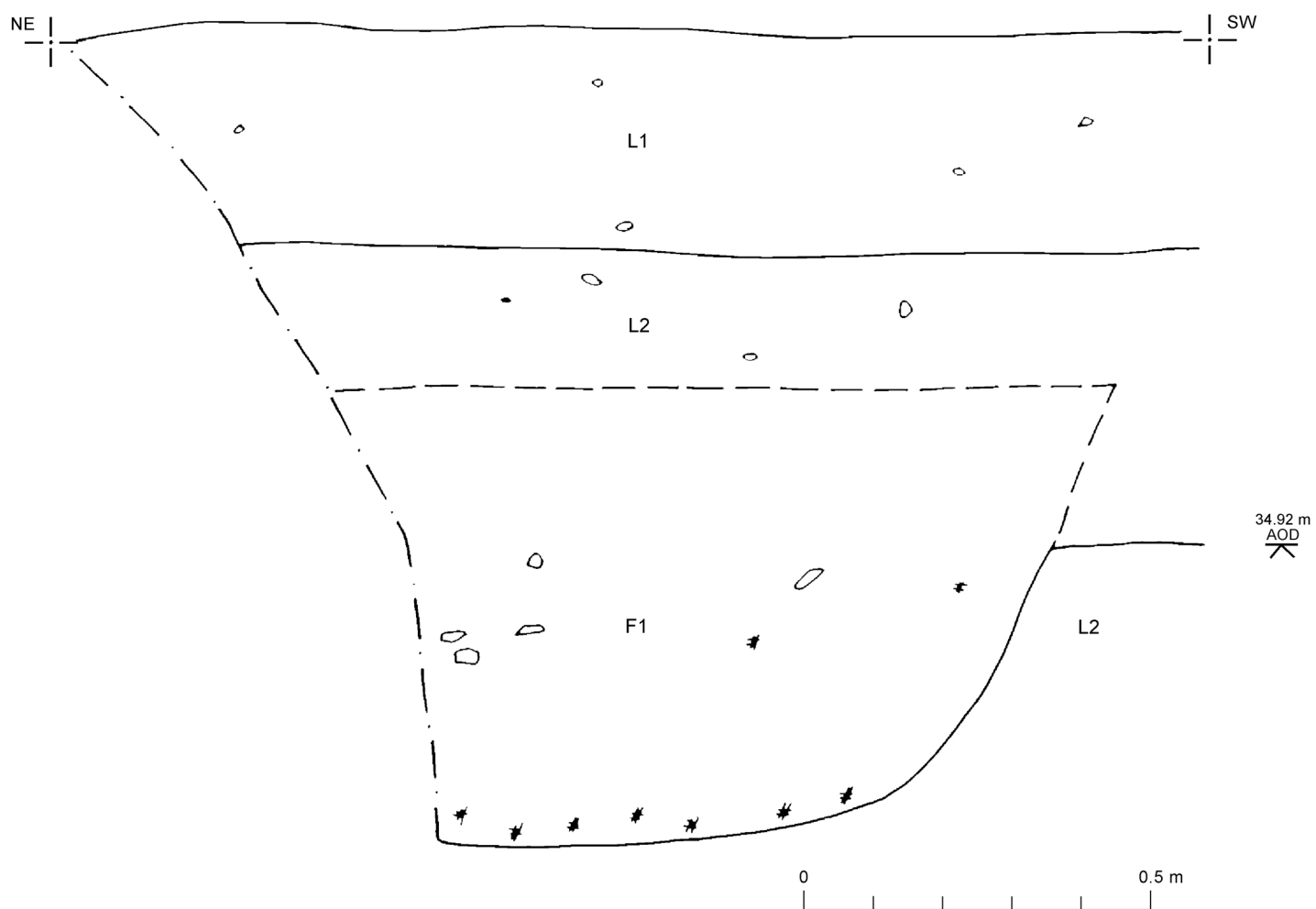


Fig 3 T1: F3; section drawing.

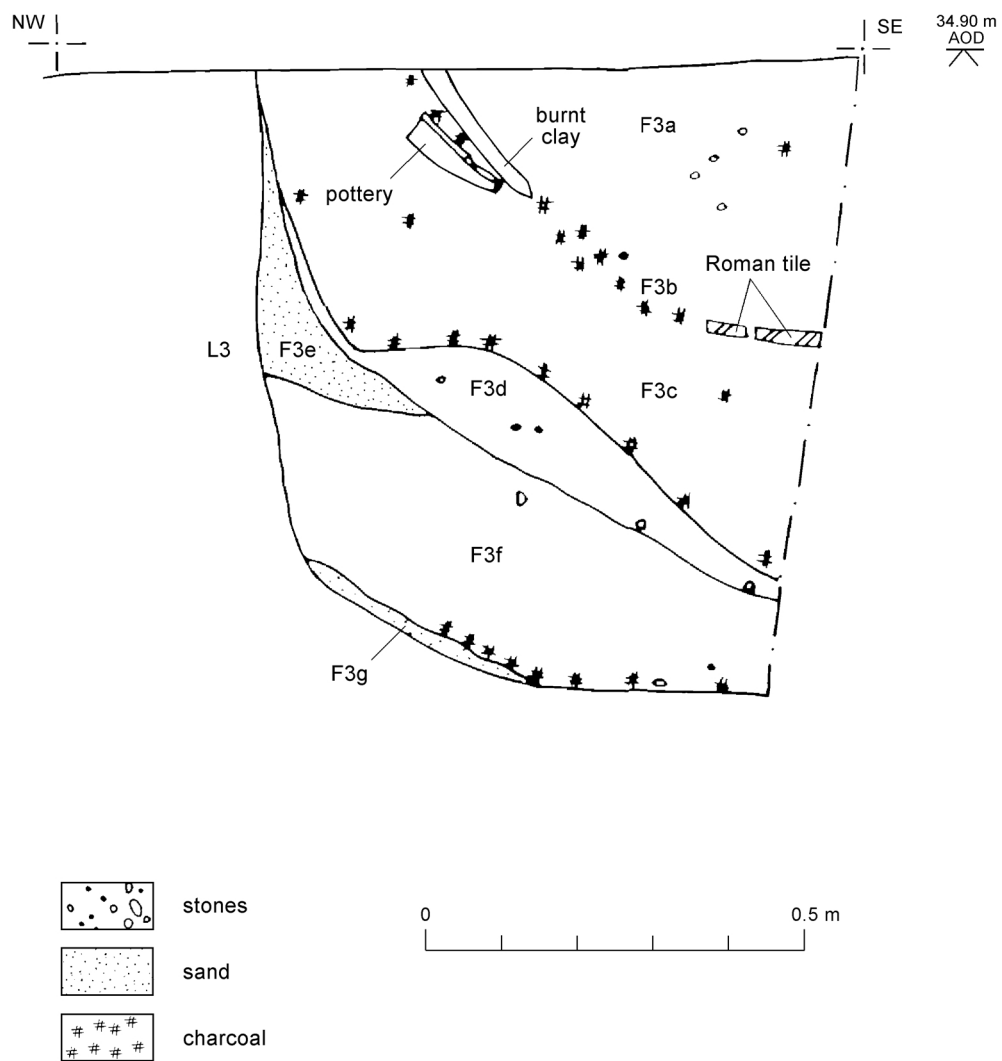


Fig 4 T1: F1; section drawing.

Essex Historic Environment Record/ *Essex Archaeology and History*

Summary sheet

Site address: Lexden Grange, 127 Lexden Road, Colchester, Essex	
Parish: Colchester	District: Colchester
NGR: TL 97867 25133	Site code: 2005.115
Type of work: Evaluation	Site director/group: Colchester Archaeological Trust
Date of work: 22nd-28th September 2005	Size of area investigated: 0.6 hectares
Location of finds/curating museum: Colchester Museums	Funding source: Developer
Further seasons anticipated? Possibly	Related EHER nos: 1178, 1225, 1565
Final report: CAT Report 338 and summary in EAH	
Periods represented: Roman	
Summary of fieldwork results: <i>Two trial-trenches were excavated at Lexden Grange, the site of two Late Iron Age cremation burials. The evaluation failed to locate any further examples. This does not prove an absence of such features, more that none were cut by the trenches. The trench at the front of the Grange revealed Roman pits, proving some Roman activity on the site, but the nature of this activity is hard to define because of the limited nature of the investigation. The trench to the rear of the Grange showed some modern disturbance from the creation of the car-parking area.</i>	
Previous summaries/reports: None	
Author of summary: K Orr	Date of summary: October 2005