

Heritage Statement: St Helena School, Sheepen Road, Colchester, Essex



the temple precinct wall exposed in 2014

An assessment of Heritage Assets

Prepared for PlayFootball
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1 Summary

St Helena School is in an area of high archaeological importance. It is within *Camulodunum* - the nationally-important late Iron Age and Roman fortress whose 12-square-mile extent is now occupied by modern Colchester.

Camulodunum had two principal centres. One was at Gosbecks (the farmstead and possible the home of Cunobelin) and the other was at Sheepen (the trading depot and quayside). St Helena School is on the northern side of Sheepen, and part of the site (and school) is a Scheduled Ancient Monument.

The school site coincides with the location of two Romano-Celtic temples (Colchester Temples 2, 3) and associated buildings (first discovered and excavated in 1935 when the school was first built, and prior to the construction of the new Colchester bypass - now the 'Avenue of Remembrance').

Temple 2 lies under the northern edge of the main school building, and the precinct wall encloses a block of land now occupied by the core school buildings. A much smaller Romano-Celtic temple (Temple 3) lies on the boundary between the extreme north edge of the school grounds and the Avenue of Remembrance.

Apart from the major excavation in the 1930s, there have been many small-scale archaeological projects at St Helena. These projects confirm the presence of extremely important archaeological remains at St Helena. Excavations in 2014 prior to the construction of the science and technology block exposed the Temple 2 precinct wall, a possible shrine, and a large possibly 'votive' pit containing a hoard of Roman coins.

The Roman remains are not deeply-buried, and are susceptible to damage from modern construction.

The proposed sports pitches occupy a large block of land to the east of the school. Assessing the potential damage caused by the construction of the pitches is genuinely difficult, as the only information we have is that provided by the four test pits dug in the corners of the proposed pitches. These showed the level at which archaeological remains are present and might be anticipated. Working clockwise from NW to SE, the 'archaeological level' in the four TPs was 540mm, 580mm, unclear, and 550mm respectively *below present ground level*. Allowing a 'buffer zone' of 150mm to protect the archaeological levels, it follows that approximately 400mm **in total** could be removed from this site without unduly impacting the archaeological level. If it is proposed to remove more than a total of 400mm, then it may be anticipated that the construction will have a detrimental impact on the buried archaeological remains.

2 Method and approach

It is conventional for Heritage Statements to assemble evidence from Historic Environment records, historic maps, air photographs, and records of local archaeological projects (if there are any), and from this evidence, to attempt to define the archaeological or historical value of an area or site.

This report follows that pattern to a certain extent, in that the *Historic Landscape Assessment* data and *Historic Environment* data are given in Sections 3 and 4 below, but the main body of the report draws on the very large amount of data on this site from archaeological interventions over the years. Perhaps uniquely, there are in the order of 20 archaeological interventions whose evidence we can pull together for this assessment.

With the exceptions just listed, this report follows the general precepts of *Standards and Guidance for Historic Desk-based Assessment* (ClfA 2014).

There is no air photographic coverage of this site. There are no World Heritage Sites, Listed buildings, Registered Parks and Gardens, or Listed Battlefields in the search area. Part of the site is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (see Figure 3).

This revision of May 2015 incorporates more information on the excavation of the test-pits, including photographs and a finds report.

3 Historic Environment Characterisation Project

(ECC / CBC 2009).

This section includes the relevant extracts from the above report, in the sections labelled Historic Environment Character Area 5 (Modern Colchester), and HE Character Zones 5.7 (Middleborough) and 5.8 (Sheepen). The HECA and HECZ gives an historical and archaeological context for the St Helena data in Sections 4 and 5.

3.1.5 HECA 5 Modern Colchester (pages 49-55)

Summary: This area comprises the Roman and medieval suburbs of the walled town (HECA 6) and the extent of modern Colchester. It includes much of the late Iron Age *oppida* of *Camulodunum*, the immediate hinterland of the Roman and medieval town, the town's historic port at the Hythe, a significant portion of the civil war siege works, the 19th Garrison, WWII defences and 20th century suburbs.

Historic Urban Character: The historic town's medieval suburbs contain buildings from a range of periods and several landmark structures. East Hill at the east end of the High Street has a mix of medieval, Georgian and Victorian housing and modern infill. The distinctive streetscape includes the former Georgian and Victorian mill and commercial buildings clustered around the river crossing and timber framed Siege House and Rose and Crown Hotel. Adjacent to the river crossing at East Bridge is a crenellated wall built as a defence during WWII. St John's Green is located to the south of the town based around the 11th Century Benedictine Abbey of St John's and its surviving 15th century gatehouse.

Modern Colchester has developed around the historic walled town and its suburbs. A number of the main road corridors into the town have Georgian properties surviving along them, mixed in with Victorian and later development. Following the arrival of the railway in the 19th century to the north of the town, and the subsequent development of an engineering industry, terrace housing for factory workers spread out from the medieval and post medieval suburbs, taking over land to the south of the town that was previously occupied by the original garrison in New Town and around Old Heath Road and also along

Maldon Road. These Victorian suburbs are characterised by regular block and street patterns and terraced housing interspersed with the occasional 'villa-style' house. Growth away from the town centre continued with residential expansion after the 1880's, particularly to the south-west of the walled town and along main road corridors such as Lexden Road. Lexden Road is now of mixed character, with post 1960's infill, as are many of the main road corridors into the town including Ipswich Road, Harwich Road, Mile End Road and Mersea Road. Land use is generally residential housing, although small groups of shops and other commercial properties are also known. The area to the south of Lexden Road includes a number of schools. The town saw large scale development during the Inter-war years and post war period with housing in these developments generally set out around crescents and cul-de-sacs. Large estates of this type include the areas around Shrub End and Prettygate in the south west, the area between St John's Road and Ipswich Road in the east of the town, and Monkwick, and the area south of Old Heath Road, in the south. Hawthorn Avenue to the south of St John's Road comprises an area of high-density inter-war housing with semi-detached and terraced housing and two and three-storey flats set out in courtyard layout. Several schools are located in the residential area. The town has witnessed extensive housing development during the early years of the 21st century, including the Balcerne Heights development outside the walled towns Balcerne Gate, large-scale construction of riverside flats on former industrial land at the Hythe and on former garrison land to the south of the town. Until relatively recently, the Colchester Garrison and associated military housing covered a large 'wedge' of land to the south of the town, extending from St John's Green, in the town's historic core, to Berechurch Hall road and open countryside to the south. The character of the area is currently changing, with Colchester Garrison forming one of the town's regeneration areas. Construction of modern housing as part of an 'urban village' is taking place around the Abbey field area and amongst some of the Victorian barracks. Modern military barrack blocks, recreational and other facilities are being built on formerly open land in the south of the area. Elsewhere there are areas of inter war and post war housing for military personnel and their families. The other characteristic type of built environment in the town are areas of modern commercial, industrial and retail land use, including the Tollgate retail centre off London Road, Whitehall Industrial estate, Peartree Road, Cowdray Centre, the Hythe and Severalls Business Park. Severalls Hospital in the north of the town was opened in 1913 and is set within a Grade II Registered Historic Park and Garden. The site is now scheduled for redevelopment for residential use. Further to the south, at Turner Rise, lies the town's modern General Hospital.

Archaeological Character: The archaeological character of the area is dominated by above and below ground remains associated with its former function as the late Iron Age *oppidum* of *Camulodunum*, the suburbs of the Roman walled town and its immediate hinterland (HECA 6) and the location within the area, of the town's medieval suburbs and the historic port at the Hythe. Many archaeological investigations have taken place across the area, which have repeatedly demonstrated its high importance and potential. Large scale excavations took place in the 1930's at Sheepen and have taken place in more recent decades outside the Balcerne Gate, at Butt Road and Middleborough, St Mary's Hospital and on the old and new sites of the Colchester Garrison. Early prehistoric activity in the area is demonstrated by finds of stray artefacts and pits from the Neolithic and Bronze Age indicating settlement in the area. Middle Iron Age features are limited but include a round house at Ypres Road, in the south of the area. During the late Iron Age, much of the HECA formed part of the *oppidum* of *Camulodunum*, which covered the area between the River Colne and Roman River to the south and was demarcated to the west by a series of massive bank and ditch earthworks. Many of the Iron Age dykes run through the area. The HECA contains late Iron Age funerary sites around Lexden, including the high status Lexden Tumulus. The HECA also includes the main area of manufacturing activity within the *oppidum*, at Sheepen. The site had its own defences and included the coin mint of the Iron Age tribal leader, Cunobelin. Following the Roman invasion, industrial activity including metal working, pottery and tile manufacturing and leather working continued at Sheepen until at least AD 60 when the site was destroyed during the Boudican revolt. A continuation of this activity, and roads linking Sheepen to the Roman town, has been revealed at the Colchester Institute. Palatial houses were built outside the town walls, such as at Middleborough, where one building had its own private baths. Water was probably provided

to the town via an aqueduct, for which evidence was recorded at the Balkerne Lane excavations, and conducted around it by wooden water-mains. Drainage was through arched masonry drains, although waterlogged and well-preserved timber drains have been recovered outside the town walls in St Peter's Street. Significant suburban settlement has been identified outside at least two of the town's main gates at Middleborough, and to the north of the River Colne, Balkerne Lane and St Mary's Hospital. However, extra-mural activity can be demonstrated on all sides of the town and current understanding is biased by the pattern of excavation which has been mainly focused to the west. Colchester's dykes, the Triple Dyke and Gryme's Dyke in the west of the area are considered to be Roman in origin. During the Roman period, burial continued in the Iron Age burial zone at Lexden and cremations have been recorded from Sheepen. Several large extra-mural cemeteries also developed within the area, to the west, north and south of the town. A Roman circus has been identified close to the southern cemetery in the area of the Abbey Field sports ground. The earliest cemetery, which may have had a military origin, was positioned along the London Road close to the Royal Grammar School, from which carved tombstones, a mausoleum and funerary sculptures have been recovered. A number of Temple sites are also known, including those near Sheepen and at the Royal Grammar School. Miscellaneous pits and ditches containing Roman waste have been recorded at several locations within the HECA and recent excavations on the former Garrison have revealed settlement including farmsteads at Kirkee McMunn Barracks and Goojerat Barracks. The town's suburbs went into decline during the 3rd century AD. At Butt Road, outside the south west corner of the walled town, a 4th century cemetery with graves containing burials in wooden coffins aligned east-west was laid out over an earlier one. The cemetery was associated with a masonry church and produced evidence for family plots. An early Anglo Saxon cemetery is known from a considerable body of finds to the south of the walled town in the Mersea Road area and two Viking type axeheads were found in the River Colne, but there is minimal evidence of the Danish occupation of the town. St Botolph's Priory was founded around 1100 AD outside the town's South Gate and was the first Augustinian foundation in Britain. Only the nave of the church survives above ground but extensive below ground deposits have been demonstrated. St John's Abbey was founded in 1095 AD to the south of the walled town on the site of an earlier church identified from excavations. The abbey gate still survives as does much of the precinct wall but the internal layout of its buildings is poorly understood, despite recent discoveries of parts of the monastic buildings. Another religious foundation was the House of the Crutched Friars, located outside the south west corner of the walled town along Crouch Street. The physical evidence for domestic dwellings immediately outside the town walls during the medieval period consists of a handful of excavated buildings and features including sites at Middleborough, outside the North Gate and around the river crossing at East Bridge, which spread east to where a 14th century building, the Rose and Crown, still stands. Excavations at Osborne Street, to the south of the walled town and close to the site of North Bridge, have revealed waterlogged organic remains. During the medieval period, a port and associated settlement was established at the Hythe to the east of the walled town and physically distinct from it. Excavations have revealed settlement around the 12th century church of St Leonard-on-the-Hythe and further deposits can be expected including waterlogged deposits/features associated with the former river frontage and quayside. Between the Hythe and the walled town stood the Leper Hospital of St Mary Magdalen. Elsewhere in the zone, medieval pottery kilns are known from a rural site at Mile End, a moated site is located at Lexden Lodge and medieval churches relate to extra mural parishes such as Lexden. Bourne Mill is a scheduled monument, to the south of the walled town, which had its origins as a late 16th century fishing Lodge. Bourne Mill was later converted and adjacent fishponds survive. In 1632 upwards of twenty corn mills are recorded in the borough; traces of the millponds can be seen in the river and stream channels and waterlogged deposits are likely to survive in places. High Woods Country Park to the north of the town contains a remnant of woodland which once formed part of the great Forest of Essex and includes the remains of a scheduled earthwork that may have formed part of the Civil War siege works that surrounded the town in 1648. Other evidence for the siege has been recovered nearby at Turner Rise and the significant deposits and the buried remains of a fort have been identified during excavations and from aerial photographs and geophysics survey at Sheepen. In the 17th century Winnock's Almshouses in Military Road were established in the town and the hospital building of St

Mary Magdalen was also converted into an almshouse. The onset of the French Wars in the late 18th century led to the establishment of a large military garrison in Colchester leading to the building of the largest new barrack complex in Britain in the area around Barrack Street and Artillery Road and a burial ground located early in the 19th century on the site of the later Garrison Church. The first garrison was demolished after the end of the Napoleonic wars but a new one was established after the arrival of the railway in 1843 with large and extensive accommodation built to the south of the town. Significant buildings of the Victorian Garrison survive but others, including the Garrison hospital have been demolished. Some of these have been revealed by recent excavations. During WWII Colchester was fortified as an 'anti-tank island' and the Eastern Command Line or Colchester Stop Line passed through the town. Surviving defensive structures include an extensive anti-tank ditch revealed in excavations at Bluebottle Grove, pill boxes, antitank obstacles and air raid shelters.

HECZ 5.7: Middleborough and Colchester Institute (129-131)

Summary: This zone to the north west of the walled town includes the Colchester Institute, St Helena School, Middleborough and St Peter's Street. The built environment comprises a variety of modern development. Considerable archaeological remains have been recovered from the zone including evidence of Roman, medieval and post medieval suburban development and Roman temples adjacent to the Sheepen site (HECZ 5.8). Low lying areas around Sheepen Road, the Institute and St Peters Street have potential for waterlogged remains and good preservation of palaeo-environmental data.

Historic urban character: The geology of the zone is a mixture of Kesgrave Sands and Gravels and London Clay, River Terrace gravels and alluvium. The eastern end of the zone, between the town wall and the river has had settlement on it since the Roman period. The area to the west was open fields until the 1930s. The zone is now characterized by a modern retail park of warehouse type units at Sheepen road, office blocks and car parking at Middleborough and offices and apartments along St Peter's Street. The Colchester Institute comprises a mixture of 1960's and post 1960's college buildings and grounds, currently undergoing redevelopment. St Helena School was built in the late 1930's and has playing fields to the north adjacent to the A133 'Avenue of Remembrance'.

Archaeological character: Outside the North Gate, excavations at Middleborough revealed well appointed Roman town houses, a kiln and street leading toward temples situated in the grounds of St Helena school. Work on the Institute site has revealed a gravelled road with minor roads leading off it to give access to parts of the Sheepen site (HECZ 5.8). Beside the roads were timber built workshops, ovens, kilns, hearths and metal working floors. Timber lined wells were preserved through waterlogging. At St Peters Street Roman timber drains and a street have been identified leading out of the walled town. The area next to the river between St Peters Street and the bottom of Balkerne Hill are known areas of water-logging and good preservation of organic materials can be anticipated. Evidence for medieval leatherworking has also been recovered from water-logged deposits adjacent to North Bridge. Parts of the zone around St Helena's school and the Institute are designated as a scheduled monument.

• Diversity of historic environment assets	Extensive multi-period below ground deposits	1
• Survival	Good survival of below ground deposits particularly in remaining areas of open ground including school playing fields	3
• Documentation	Excavation, HER data, UAD	2
• Group Value Association	Below ground archaeological remains of late Iron Age, Roman periods and later periods 3	3
• Potential ground archaeological	Good potential for below	3

remains and waterlogging		
• Sensitivity to change	Below ground archaeology highly sensitive to change	3
• Amenity Value	Good opportunities to interpret the late Iron Age and Roman and later development of Colchester in conjunction with other zones (particularly HECZ 5.8).	2

HECZ 5.8: Sheepen

Summary: This zone comprises the green space of Hilly Fields situated to the north west of the walled town. The green space is former farmland, characterized by grassland, ponds and dense scrub on the side of the Colne valley. The site is known to be archaeologically rich and formed the main area of manufacturing activity within the late Iron Age oppidum of *Camulodunum*.

Historic landscape character: The zone is an area of former farmland, which was converted to a public open space after the development of the A133 'Avenue of Remembrance' and associated archaeological excavations in the 1930's. The zone, which retains its historic field boundaries, now contains a diverse patchwork of wildlife habitats including wet grassland, ponds, acid grassland and hawthorn scrub and is designated as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation.

Archaeological character: Early 20th century excavations demonstrated that Sheepen was the main area of manufacturing activity within the late Iron Age oppidum of *Camulodunum*. The site had its own defences, Sheepen dyke, and included the coin mint of the Iron Age tribal leader, Cunobelin. Following the Roman invasion, industrial activity including metal working, pottery and tile manufacturing and leather working continued at Sheepen until at least AD 60 when the site was destroyed during the Boudican revolt. After the revolt, the site became a religious sanctuary with temples located beneath St Helena school (HECZ 5.7) and adjacent to the River Colne (HECZ 4.4). The eastern part of the site was used as a small cemetery during the 4th century. In 1648 the area was the site of Fort Ingoldby, which formed part of the Civil War siege works. A WWII pillbox is located within the zone, part of a wider defensive circuit around Colchester. Much of the zone is designated as a scheduled monument.

• Diversity of historic environment assets	Extensive multi-period below ground deposits	1
• Survival	Good survival in remaining areas of open ground including school playing fields	3
• Documentation	Excavation, publication HER data, UAD	3
• Group Value Association	Below ground archaeological remains of late Iron Age and Roman periods	3
• Potential	Good potential for below ground archaeological remains and some waterlogging	3
• Sensitivity to change	Below ground archaeology highly sensitive to change	3
• Amenity Value	Good opportunities to interpret the late Iron Age and Roman development of Colchester in conjunction with other zones (particularly HECZ 5.7).	2

4 Essex Historic Environment Record (EHER)

The list below gives the EHER references to a search area including the school grounds and its immediate vicinity

EHER reference number: 11641

Title: The Sheepen Dyke

NGR: TL 985255

Descriptive text: The Sheepen Dyke (not visible) encloses the settlement on the Hillyfields close by the river which was navigable at that point. Its eastern fork is a late addition. The dyke appears to have been filled in c.AD 43 although many parts of it may still exist below ground level.

Site Assessment = The Sheepen Dyke was completely destroyed when the area was developed for industrial activity soon after the Roman conquest.

A piece of the dyke was destroyed when the by-pass was constructed and the southern end destroyed when the land was levelled off to make a playing field though it is possible that here a section survives below a considerable depth of topsoil below the playing field.

References

Colchester Museum, 1997a, 1997b, 1997c,
Brooks 1972

11673

Sheepen Farm - site of pre Roman settlement

TL 985 255

Sheepen Farm pre-Roman and early Roman settlement and industrial complex. The first large scale excavation was by the Colchester Excavation Committee in 1930-9 along the route of the proposed Colchester by-pass. Further excavation undertaken by Dunnnett in 1970 prior to scarping of land to create a school playing field. Proven that the Iron Age settlement was protected to the east by the Sheepen Dyke and the fluruit is dated to the first two-thirds of the C1 AD after more humble beginnings in the Iron Age or possibly Bronze Age. Settlement continued unbroken from the Belgic into the Roman period. The area contained several important industrial complexes including pottery kilns. A mint of Cunobelin was discovered in the most recent excavations at Sheepen (Hawkes and Crummy 1995). Oppidum occupied from the mid C1 BC although Sheepen can be dated from the C10 BC. Scheduled Ancient Monument though partially built over by ECC school and playing fields.

Hawkes & Hull 1947, p21
Hull 1958 p246,249-51, 258

11674

Sheepen Farm pre-Roman and early Roman settlement and industrial complex

TL 985 255

Sheepen Farm pre-Roman and early Roman settlement and industrial complex, whose existence has been known since the mid C19. The first large scale excavation was conducted by the Colchester Excavation Committee in 1930-9 along the proposed route of the Colchester by-pass. Further excavation by Dunnnett in 1970

prior to the scarping of land to create a school playing field. Floruit of the settlement dated to the first two-thirds of the C1 AD and settlement continued unbroken from the Belgic into the Roman period until c.70 AD when it declined.

The final major building phase after the Boudiccan rebellion is marked by a large Romano-Celtic temple with a precinct wall. This continued to be used throughout the Roman period when the settlement had been abandoned and a second, smaller, temples was founded in the C3 outside its north-west corner. The area contained several important industrial complexes.

Pottery kilns are often found in groups, including a group of 4 kilns in one enclosure found in 1933 which produced a wide range of goods including samian and lamps.

There was an extensive metalworking industry, including evidence for the large scale production of Roman military equipment.

A mint of Cunobelin has also been discovered in the most recent excavation. Numerous Roman burials are scattered over the area especially in and around the area of the Kingswode kilns after they fell into disuse. Hull also postulates that this was the area of the major Roman brickfields producing tile and brick for most of Colchester.

Pre-Roman Iron Age oppidum known as Sheepen: occupation continued into the Roman period with gravel digging and small scale industries. Site Assessment = Scheduled Ancient Monument though partially built over by ECC school and playing fields.

Hawkes & Hull 1947, p21
Hull 1958, p246,249-50,251,258

11675, 11679-81

Sheepen -industrial site Excavation of part of Sheepen site in 1970.

TL 986 257

Excavation of part of the Sheepen site in 1970. After beaker finds a gap in occupation at Sheepen occurs until the Late Bronze Age or early Iron Age, the latter represented by coarse hand made pottery. Belgic occupation was clustered on the sheltered east side of a small ridge running north to south across the main excavation area. A large number of post pits were founds, capable of taking timbers up to 1 foot in diameter and sunk up to 5 feet into the subsoil, probably represent the remains of Belgic buildings. Seven of these pits are the remains of a rectangular or trapezoidal building although the rest form no recognizable pattern: the west end of the building is truncated by C18 gravel digging. Around the post holes are small rubbish sites containing quantities of Belgic pottery as well as imported luxury articles, eg amphora fragments and an especially fine collection of broken millefiore and marbled glass. Large quantities of bone were recovered. Snail shells from the pits indicate the surrounding country to be lightly wooded: soil and pollen samples also collected. Excavation also produced a number of Belgic coins - of Cunobelinus and a Gaulish bronze de la Tour.

The building measured at least partly 15 x 20 feet, the floor levels had been destroyed by ploughing. The general occupation suggests a small settlement of not more than three wooden huts in partly cleared parkland, but still using continental imports. There is scattered early Iron Age pottery from Sheepen Hill.

Earlier finds - Excavation in 1970 produced Palaeolithic hand axes from two features and possible other Palaeolithic flakes, also a possible Mesolithic graver four punch struck blades and a small end scraper, also possibly Mesolithic. The majority of

worked flints found here were recovered from the ploughsoil during excavation; they relate to the Neolithic, Early Bronze Age or later occupation

Niblett 1985

11682

Sheepen Roman military metal working site

TL 985 255,

Roman military metal working site. Site of a Roman armoury comprising large hollows with a timber structure in use as a military metal working site. The finds include all the litter of bronze and iron working. Dated AD49-61.

Hawkes & Hull 1947p85, 91-3

11683

St Helena's School

TL 987 258

Fragment of a Bronze Age sword found in 1937?, during the building of the school. Location possibly marked on Col Mus Map.

Hull 1976

11684

Sheepen - St Helena School (Temple 2)

TL 988 258

A small exploratory trench dug inside each of the two inner courtyards of the school in advance of proposed redevelopment uncovered a sequence of gravel surfaces in both areas at a depth of c.300-600mm. These were parts of the surface of a walled precinct around Temple 2 at Sheepen. The finds consist almost entirely of pottery and glass fragments dating to the 40's and 50's AD. The material is associated with the pre-Boudiccan activity at Sheepen which predates the temple and its precinct. Temple 2 is a small Romano-Celtic temple built on a mound of Antonine date, and excavated in 1935.

The mound on which the temple was built may have been a rubbish pit. The temple is dated to the C3 AD.

An evaluation in March 2010 by a single trial trench on the site of a proposed new building revealed a gravelled surface and a Roman pit. The gravel surface may have been associated with the adjacent Roman Temple 2, whose eastern temenos wall lies 35m to the west, or (less likely) it may have been the surface of a minor gravel road running along the eastern side of the temple temenos. Finds from this evaluation are of early Roman date, which is in keeping with previous finds from Sheepen and the St Helena School site.

Carter 1988

Hull 1958, p233-4, no 96

Lewis 1966, 2

Holloway and Brooks 2010

11685

Sheepen - St Helena's playing field

TL 989 259

Winged Roman house discovered to the north side of the temenos of temple 2. It was revealed by parchmarks. Limited excavation (Col Arch Trust) indicated that floor levels had been removed and parts of the foundations robbed, probably in the late Roman period.

Crossan 1992

11686

Sheepen

TL 985 257

Iron Age rubbish pit - salt working site. A roughly circular hollow 18 feet in diameter and 1 foot deep containing native pottery, an iron firedog head, two horse-shoes and a quantity of briquetage of salt making type suggesting that the Colne was tidal at this point. It is dated AD10-43.

Hawkes & Hull 1947, p73, 346-7

11687-91

Sheepen

TL 987 258

During the 1930-9 excavations fragments of fired clay objects later identified as briquetage were found. Only one fragment of briquetage was recovered from the 1970 excavation. Hull and Hawkes believed it to be a salt production site but recently Rodwell suggested that it should be considered an 'inland briquetage' site.

A probable Iron Age hut site with a single post hole and hearth in which was found a gold plated coin of the Brigantes.

A group of hut sites and a well, the latter lined with oak planks with corner posts, some 4'6" deep, dated 43-48AD.

Roman well, eight feet deep lined with sawn oak with shoulder jointing. The earliest material from the fill is dated AD 49-61.

Timber building incompletely excavated, some 56 feet long and 4-5 feet wide interpreted as a narrow aisle of a bipartite building.

Anon, undated

Hawkes & Hull 1947, p67, 104, 126

11692

Sheepen

TL 986 252

Roman pottery kilns (sites of). A group of 12 updraught kilns excavated in 1933 and 1959 all dated to c.190-200 AD. Nearby was a timber building, (?11684), a timber lined well (?11681) and a number of burials, both cremation and inhumation; one burial in a lead coffin was dated to the C4.

Hull 1963 , p13-147
Hawkes & Hull 1947, p121, 128

11693

Sheepen

TL 982 253

Roman pottery kilns found in 1877; five Roman kilns numbered 7-11 excavated by Joslin in 1877 two of which were the horizontal draught type.

Joslin 1878, p192-6
Hull 1963 , p2-9

11694

Sheepen

TL 987 256

Roman pottery kiln which had been destroyed still containing its last load of pottery, and dated 61AD

Hawkes & Hull 1947

11695

Sheepen

TL 985 258

Roman tile kiln discovered during excavation in 1934. It was not fully excavated but dated to AD 50-61.

Hawkes & Hull 1947
Hull 1963, p11

11698

Colchester - River Colne

TL 986 257

Roman samian sherds found.

ARTEFACT Colchester Museum

12503

Colchester-Sheepen

TL 987 256

Late Iron age and early Roman pit.

Hawkes & Crummy 1995 0-71b

12540

Colchester-Sheepen

TL 984 252

Early Roman cemetery

Hawkes & Crummy 1995

Crummy 1993 70-84

Niblett 1985

12542

Colchester-River Colne-Cowdray Avenue-Essex Hall road

TL 990 260

Various observations were made during the construction of a new road between the Middleborough roundabout and North Station Road, the most important of these being to part of the work which involved the diversion of the River Colne under the new road. A new river channel was dug to direct the River Colne slightly further south than its existing course. The river was to pass under the new road in two metal prefabricated 'tunnels' set like huge pipes in a deeply dug pit. The digging of these pits was watched by workmen. [HB addition here: as the person who visited after workmen reported seeing something, it was clear from their description of a burnt circular mark that they had seen a kiln dug away here]. In view of the pre- Flavian pottery subsequently found on the site it seems likely that this was a kiln. Although it was not seen by any member of the Trust it was possible to plot its position approximately. The sections of the pit provided much information about the previous courses of the river and the character of the various silts. One section showed the silts of the river in Roman and presumably later times. The lowest Roman silt layers contained substantial quantities of broken, unrolled, pre-Flavian pottery including wasters and unfired sherds. This indicated that the material derived from a pottery kiln contemporary with the activities of the nearby Sheepen site. Perhaps the material derived from the possible kiln observed by workmen. No dating evidence was found in the gravel and sand silt above the lowest levels, although fragments of rolled tile suggest that these layers may all be Roman.

Crummy 1992, 366-7

12543

Colchester-Sheepen

TL 987 256

Late iron age and early Roman pits.

Hawkes & Crummy 1995, 71ff

5 A list of archaeological projects at St Helena School

This section is based on major published works on the archaeology of Colchester by C F C Hawkes and Rex Hull (Hawkes & Hull 1947; Hull 1958), and by Philip Crummy (Crummy 1980, 248-52; Crummy 1997; *CAR 11* with C F C Hawkes), supported by other records held by *Essex Historic Environment Record* (EHER) and the *Urban Archaeological Database* held by Colchester and Ipswich Museums.

Sheepen and St Helena - 1930s to 2015

The site is in an area of high archaeological importance - the nationally-important late Iron Age and Roman defended fortress of *Camulodunum*. Within the 12 square miles of *Camulodunum* are two principal centres. These are at Gosbecks (the farmstead and possible the home of Cunobelin and his family) and at Sheepen (the trading depot and quayside). St Helena School is on the northern side of Sheepen, and part of the site (and school) is a Scheduled Ancient Monument: Essex SAM no 46).

Sheepen first came to light when the construction of the new Colchester bypass in the 1930s (Avenue of Remembrance) was preceded by extensive excavations directed by Colchester Museum Curator Rex (MR) Hull and Oxford academic Christopher (CFC) Hawkes. These excavations revealed a range of industrial activities including metal-working, enamelling, pottery- and tile-making and leather-working, enclosed within fenced compounds (Hawkes & Hull 1947; Niblett 1985). It was evident from the wide range of imported goods (particularly pottery), that Sheepen was a major commercial centre, and that trading vessels must have laid up at a quayside of sorts somewhere nearby.

Large quantities of 1st-century imported Roman amphoras have been found at the nearby Colchester Institute (*CAR 11* , 73-77; CAT Report 131).

The school site coincides with the location of two Romano-British temples (Hull 1958). These were first discovered and excavated by the Colchester Excavation Committee in 1935 on the site then about to be developed as St Helena School (Hull 1958, 224-34). The temple site consists of a late 1st-century Romano-Celtic temple (Temple 2 in the series of Colchester Temples) within a sacred precinct defined by an outer precinct (*temenos*) wall). A much smaller Romano-Celtic temple (no 3) lies on the boundary between the extreme north edge of the school grounds and the Avenue of Remembrance.

Immediately north of the north wall of the *temenos* is Building 159. This was discovered in 1976 (*CAR 6*, 345-6), and although absolute proof is lacking, it is a reasonable hypothesis that it was connected with the temple site (perhaps as lodging for a priest or for visitors, or as a shop).

Since 1976, and in response to small-scale development in and around the school, there have been a large number of archaeological projects, summarised briefly below and listed fully below. These have generally all revealed Roman deposits here, some of them substantial (CAT Reports 188, 349, 351, 384, 414, 451, 544, 699, 716).

In March 2002, a watching brief was held on the laying of new cables around the tennis courts. Although the trenches were too shallow to revealed substantial archaeological remains, they did produce early Roman tile and pottery.

In November 2005, an archaeological evaluation by three test-pits around the drama block revealed several features including a ditch and a possible post-hole. Associated pottery suggested a date in the 1st century AD (CAT Report 351). An archaeological excavation and monitoring was subsequently carried out during the excavation of footings for the extension to the drama block in June 2006. The investigation revealed pits, ditches and a gully all dating to the 'Sheepen period' - AD 5-60, sealed beneath 600 to 750mm of topsoil. The type of pottery and the presence of animal bone, slag, daub and Roman tile suggest

domestic and industrial use similar to that identified by previous investigations at Sheepen (CAT Report 384).

In February 2007, six evaluation trenches located in the school car-park revealed ten Roman features (seven pits, one wall foundation, one ditch and one metalled surface). Significantly, the Roman wall foundation was that of the precinct wall of Temple II. A large quantity of Roman finds included two post-conquest and pre-Boudican coins (ie between AD 43 and 60/1), a brooch fragment, and briquetage (pre 60/1?) and a number of potsherds dating primarily from the 1st to the early 2nd century (CAT Report 414).

Watching briefs on minor works such as cable laying took place in October 2005 (CAT Report 349), and in July-August 2007 (CAT Report 451). As was the case with the 2002 watching brief (above), the contractors' trenches were not deep enough to penetrate to significant archaeological levels.

The largest-scale archaeological intervention in the last 10 years took place in 2007 when CAT excavated six trial trenches (around the caretaker's house) in connection with a proposal to extend the car-park (CAT Report 414). Two of the trench positions were within the *temenos* (2007 T1-T2), and four were to its east (2007 T3-6). The eastern *temenos* wall was identified in its expected position at the east end of 2007 T1, and the other trenches revealed Roman pits, ditches and a metalled surface.

In 2010, a single evaluation trench was cut in front of the caretaker's house, revealing a gravelled surface and a Roman pit. The gravel surface may have been associated with the adjacent Roman Temple 2, whose eastern *temenos* wall lies 35m to the west, or (less likely) it may have been the surface of a minor gravel road running along the eastern side of the temple *temenos*. Finds from this evaluation are of early Roman date, which is in keeping with other finds from Sheepen and the St Helena School site.

In April 2013, an evaluation west of the main school building and NW of Temple 2 revealed three Roman pits, a compacted gravel surface, and a dump of ceramic building material. One of the pits contained a group of five, low denomination Roman coins dated to c AD 43-64. These are from a hoard or purse group possibly deposited at the time of the Boudican revolt, pre-dating the construction of the temple in the late 1st or early 2nd century.

Following the evaluation above, a 2014 area excavation on the footprint of a new western school extension revealed the precinct wall of Temple II, more of the expected gravel surface, and more of the pit which produced the coin hoard. More coins were recovered, bringing the total to around 30 (tbc after cleaning and conservation). A small Roman structure aligned with the adjacent temples may be a Roman shrine. The post-excavation phase of this project is now in progress.

Also in 2014, four test pits were dug in the corners of the proposed new sports pitches. The full report on this is given in Appendix 1 here.

Even more recently, a watching brief on boreholes in March 2015 revealed some Roman mortar among the modern rubble.

Recent work at St Helena School

Archaeological projects at St Helena's have been discussed above. Below is a more detailed list of recent work. As far as can be seen from consulting *Heritage Gateway* and *Essex Historic Environment Record*, all the projects were carried out by Colchester Archaeological Trust.

2002 watching brief on cables around tennis courts

Fieldwork date : March 2002
CAT project ref.: 02/3d
CIMS accession: COLEM : 2002.90
NGR: TL 987 259
Report: CAT Report 188
Report date: April 2002

Observations were made during an archaeological watching brief on the digging of cable trenches around the tennis courts at St Helena's School, Sheepen Road, Colchester. The trenches were being dug for new floodlights and their power cables. Two features were observed in the trenches, only one of which was certainly archaeological. There was a large number of loose finds, principally Roman tile and late Iron Age/Roman pottery of a type which has been found in adjacent Sheepen excavations.

2005 cable trench along southern school edge

Fieldwork date: 17th-26th October 2005
CAT project ref.: -
CIMS accession: COLEM 2005.127
NGR: TL 9890 2583
Report: CAT Report 349
Report date: November 2005

Scheduled Monument Consent was given for a trench to be dug along part of the southern school boundary to install a new electricity mains supply cable. The trench revealed 600-700mm of topsoil (L1) sealing a dry light brown silt subsoil (L2) which contained tile flecks. Roman pottery, tile, and post-medieval peg-tile and animal bone came from L1 and the top of L2. Contractors retrieved a 3rd-century Roman coin from the western end of the trench. No features were observed. The presence of a small amount of Roman material is to be expected, though the trench was not deep enough to expose Roman or Iron Age features. The only features of note were reinforced concrete foundations, said by the caretaker to be the remains of air-raid shelters which once stood to the east and west of the main school entrance.

2005 test pits around Drama Block

Fieldwork date: November 2005
CAT project ref.: 05/9d
CIMS accession: COLEM 2005.132
NGR: TL 9895 2580 (c)
Report: CAT Report 351
Report date: December 2005

Three small test-pits were hand-excavated next to the drama block at St Helena School, which is within the scheduled ancient monument of Sheepen. Three early Roman (1st century AD) Roman features included a ditch, possibly supporting a wooden fence. The presence of pottery and animal bone, burnt flint, a coin, slag and Roman tile suggests domestic use similar to that previously identified elsewhere at Sheepen. The finds include a sherd of Arretine samian bearing a potter's stamp not recognised in Colchester before. This reinforces the importance of Camulodunum as a centre for trade in the Late Iron Age.

2006 excavation of footings for new Drama Block

Fieldwork date: June 2006

CAT project ref.: 06/6b

CIMS accession: COLEM 2006.79

NGR: TL 9895 2580 (c)

Report: CAT Report 384

Report date: October 2006

The archaeological excavation of the foundation trench for an extension to the drama block carried out in June 2006 revealed pits, ditches and a gully, all dating to the 'Sheepen period' (ie, c AD 5-60), sealed by between 600mm and 750mm of topsoil. The type of pottery and the presence of animal bone, slag, daub and Roman tile suggest domestic and industrial use similar to that identified as a result of the previous investigations at Sheepen.

2007 evaluation in car park

Fieldwork: February 2007

CAT project ref.: 07/2a

CIMS accession: COLEM 2007.24

NGR: TL 9898 2578

Report: CAT Report 414

Report date: March 2007

Six evaluation trenches in the school car-park revealed 18 archaeological features: 10 Roman (seven pits, one wall foundation, one ditch and one metalled surface); one mid/late Bronze Age pit; one post-medieval ditch; six undated features (four pits and two ditches); and one natural feature. Significantly, the Roman wall foundation was part of the precinct wall for the late 1st century Roman temple II. A large quantity of Roman finds were also recorded including two coins which belong to the post-conquest pre-Boudican occupation of Sheepen, a brooch fragment and briquetage which may also date to before AD 60/1, and a number of pottery sherds dating primarily from the 1st to the early 2nd century.

2007 watching brief on cable laying in car park.

Fieldwork: July-August 2007

CAT project ref.: 07/7b

CIMS accession: COLEM 2007.77

NGR: TL 98987 25786

Report: CAT Report 451

Report date: April 2010

Following the evaluation (CAT Report 414), a watching brief was carried out on groundworks to reconstruct the car-park on the eastern side of the school grounds. This involved removing the old tarmac surface, creating a new path and cycle storage compound, and digging trenches for lighting cables. The groundworks largely only affected modern and post-medieval layers and therefore did not expose any archaeological features. In one lighting-cable trench, the Roman ground-surface was exposed but no archaeological features were observed.

2010 evaluation south of caretakers house

Fieldwork: March 2010

CAT project ref.: 10/2d

CIMS accession: COLEM 2010.11

NGR: TL 98970 25770

Report: CAT Report 544

Report date: April 2010

An evaluation by a single trial trench on the site of a proposed new building has revealed a gravelled surface and a Roman pit. The gravel surface may have been associated with the adjacent Roman Temple 2, whose eastern *temenos* wall lies 35m to the west, or (less

likely) it may have been the surface of a minor gravel road running along the eastern side of the temple *temenos*. Finds from this evaluation are of early Roman date, which is in keeping with other finds from Sheepen and the St Helena School site.

2013 evaluation on western school extension

Fieldwork: April 2013

CAT project ref.: 13/04a

CIMS accession: COLEM 2013.16

NGR: TL 98842 25847

Report: CAT Report 699

Report date: May 2013

An evaluation by four trial-trenches revealed three Roman pits, a compacted gravel layer (surface), and a dump of ceramic building material. One of the pits contained a group of five, low-denomination Roman coins dated to c AD 43-64. These are from a hoard or purse group possibly deposited at the time of the Boudican revolt, pre-dating the construction of the temple in the late 1st or early 2nd century.

2013 Excavation of foundation pads on 'link' building

Fieldwork: September 2013

CAT project ref.: 13/08f

CIMS accession: COLEM 2013.36

NGR: TL 9886 2584

Report: CAT Report 716

Report date: September 2013

The construction of a canopy between two existing school buildings involved the archaeological excavation of twelve foundation pads, each 0.8m square and 0.80m deep. The position of the new canopy straddles the predicted line of the northern wall of the enclosure (*temenos*) of Temple II.

From the plotted position of the *temenos* wall, it seems that none of the pad holes actually intercepted it. However, patches of compacted gravel were revealed in two of the pad-holes. A very small quantity of Roman tile and a mid-1st century sherd were recovered from the gravel. Layers of gravel have been seen at St Helena in 1935, 2007, and now twice in 2013. The gravel is too widespread to have been a road, so it is more likely to have been a Roman courtyard surface. However, it may slightly predate the temple, which was founded in the late 1st or early 2nd century.

2014 Excavation of western school extension

Fieldwork date: October - November 2014

CIMS - awaited

NGR: TL 98842 25847

Report: CAT Report - tbc (in prep)

The excavation involved works for a new science and technology block to the west of existing school building. Principal remains were Roman: nine pits, a compacted gravel surface L3, wall foundations F4 and F11, and two dumps of Roman roof tile. Of interest is a large Roman pit first identified at evaluation stage, when it produced five Roman coins (a hoard or votive deposit). At excavation stage, the pit produced a further 25 coins (in conservation: numbers tbc). The pit, with large quantities of Roman pottery in its upper fills and LIA pot in its lowest fills, may be a LIA/Roman transitional feature. It contained some organic material (a well?).

The temple precinct wall was exposed at the western side of the excavated area. This will necessitate some adjustment of the size of the precinct as previously plotted. Another point

of interest was a small rectangular structure on the northern edge of the site. As this aligns with the adjacent temples, it may be a small shrine.

2014 Excavation of test-pits on proposed sports pitches.

Client report only

Four test pits were hand dug at approximately the corners of the proposed sports pitch. No archaeological features were identified, but residual Roman brick and tile may be associated with the temple complex or with extensive activity on the 1st century industrial complex at Sheepen.

2015 borehole watching brief

Fieldwork date: 16-17th February 2015

CAT project code:

Fieldwork date: February 2105

Report: CAT Report 816 (in prep)

NGR: TL 8836 5850 (centre)

CIMS accession code - awaited

A watching brief was carried out in February 2015 during excavations of seven geo-technical boreholes as part of a survey ahead of new sports facilities. The boreholes cut through modern topsoil (L1) and into an accumulation horizon (hillwash / colluvium?), and into glacial gravels (final depth: between 5-6m).

No archaeological features or horizons were seen, but (mixed in with modern material) , Roman mortar tile and building stone was found mixed in with modern coal, peg-tile and concrete. There relative absence of material here reflects the site's position away from the main centre of activity here.

6 Assessment of the heritage assets

It is clear from the evidence set out above and on Figures 1 and 2 that St Helena School is in an area of high archaeological importance. Specifically, the site is at Sheepen, one of the hubs of the pre-Roman and early Roman fortress of *Camulodunum*. The school grounds include Colchester Temple 2 in its sacred precinct (temenos), and associated buildings. Roman roads are projected to pass along the southern and western sides of the temenos.

The many evaluations, watching briefs and excavations produce a consistent pattern of evidence here, to support the importance of the site and its archaeological remains.

1) the archaeological remains are of local, and regional importance, and it can be argued that the 'group value' of the temples and precincts is of national importance.

2) The important archaeological remains here are of the Roman period - there are no significant remains of other periods here.

3) the Roman remains are not deeply-buried, and are susceptible to damage from modern construction.

Given the above, it is of value to this assessment that test pits have already been dug into the corners of the proposed sports pitches. The report on this exercise is Appendix 1 of this report, and is summarised below.

*'The proposed sports pitches occupy a large block of land to the east of the school. Assessing the potential damage caused by the construction of the pitches is genuinely difficult, as the only information we have is that provided by the four test pits dug in the corners of the proposed pitches. These showed the level at which archaeological remains are present and might be anticipated. Working clockwise from NW to SE, the 'archaeological level' in the four TPs was 540mm, 580mm, unclear, and 550mm respectively below present ground level. Allowing a 'buffer zone' of 150mm to protect the archaeological levels, it follows that approximately 400mm **in total** could be removed from this site without unduly impacting the archaeological level. If it is proposed to remove more than a total of 400mm, then it may be anticipated that the construction will have a detrimental impact on the buried archaeological remains.*

The above text applies mainly to the sports pitches themselves. The application site includes an access corridor running south from the pitches to Sheepen Road. Apart from being crossed by several trenches which were monitored in 2005 and 2007, the corridor has also been sampled by 2007 evaluation trenches 4-6 (see Fig 2). The southernmost of these trenches, T4 and T5, revealed modern services and foundations, showing that this ground has already been disturbed. However, T4 contained a Roman pit and an undated ditch. This shows that there is some survival of archaeological deposits on the northern end of the approach corridor.

7 Position of proposed pitches

Placing new sports pitches at St Helena's will never be easy. However, the proposed location seems to be the most sensitive use of space in relation to the known archaeological remains. For instance, to rotate the pitches and place them along the northern site boundary would probably impinge on Temple 3 or Building 159 (Fig 2).

Four small test pits were dug on the eastern side of the school grounds (up against the boundary with 'Westway') in order to establish the archaeological level (the depth at which significant archaeological remains, if present, would be found), and the 'safe dig depth' on the proposed sports pitches site.

The test pits did not reveal any archaeological remains. The full report is given below.

8 The St Helena School 2014 archaeological test pits

Summary

St Helena School is located in an area of high archaeological potential – the Sheepen site, which is the trading depot of late Iron Age Camulodunum. A large part of the Sheepen site (including most of the St Helena school grounds), is a Scheduled Ancient Monument. There is a Romano-Celtic temple beneath the main school building. Its precinct wall is approximately 45m west of the nearest test-pit.

Following instruction from St Helena School and Mr Steve Bennett of PlayFootball, Colchester Archaeological Trust dug four 1m x 0.5m test pits (TPs), one in each corner of the proposed new sports pitches. As one on the test pits was within the Scheduled area (Essex no 46: List Entry 1002173), Scheduled Monument Consent was applied for, and granted by English Heritage.

The aim of the TPs was to establish the level at which archaeological remains were present – the 'archaeological level'. This information would inform the design of the sports pitches.

Although there were Roman finds in the topsoil in each TP, there were no Roman features (walls, pits, etc) in the small area exposed at the base of each TP – only 'natural' ground. Nevertheless, previous experience on this site shows that this is the level at which archaeological remains are present and might be anticipated.

Working clockwise from NW to SE, the 'archaeological level' in the four TPs was 540mm, 580mm, unclear, and 550mm respectively below present ground level. Allowing a 'buffer zone' of 150mm to protect the archaeological levels, it follows that approximately 400mm **in total** could be removed from this site without unduly impacting the archaeological level.

For more detail, see the **attached two figures**.

Aim

The aim of the test pitting was to establish the level (above Ordnance Datum) of significant archaeological horizons, in order to inform the engineering design of the proposed sports pitches.

Results (Figs 2-4)

This section gives an archaeological summary of the test pits (TP1-TP4), with context and finds dating information.

The test pits were excavated by hand, progressively through the topsoil and upper soil horizons down to the uppermost surviving level of archaeological significance, or the first undisturbed geological horizon.

Test Pit 1: summary

Positioned in the south-western corner of the proposed sports pitch, Test Pit 1 was excavated through two horizons:

L1: modern turf and topsoil (0.2m thick)

L2: post-Roman accumulation (0.4m thick), containing residual Roman CBM.

Removal of L1 and L2 revealed natural L3: (a boulder clay) at 600mm below ground level (BGL).

No archaeological features were observed during the excavation of TP1, or on the exposed surface of natural L3. Ground water seeped into the bottom of TP1 at the level of natural boulder clay L3.



Plate 1: Test pit 1, view north-east

Test Pit 2: summary

Positioned in the south-eastern corner of the proposed sports pitch, TP2 was excavated through L1 and L2 (as in TP1). The only difference is that flooding due to a field drain (consisting of a gravel-filled channel and a perforated plastic pipe) prevented the bottom of L2 (also the top of natural L3) from being reached. Maximum depth of excavation here coincided with ground-water level at 0.50m BGL



Plate 2: Test pit 2, view north-west

Test Pit 3: summary

TP3 was positioned in the north-eastern corner of the proposed sports pitch. Its stratigraphical sequence differed from that in to TP1 and TP2. Topsoil L1 sealed a layer of re-deposited boulder clay) L4, dated by modern glass but also containing residual Roman pottery, CBM, and mortar.

L4 sealed natural river gravels L5, at 0.6m bgl (without any layer corresponding to L3 in TP1-2). L4 may have been an attempt at raising or consolidating local ground level. The position of TP3 closer to the river may account for the high water table level here (0.5m bgl).



Plate 3: Test pit 3, view south-west

Test Pit 4: summary

Positioned in the south-western corner of the proposed sports pitch, TP4 was the only TP within the scheduled area at St Helena School. It shared a similar stratigraphical sequence to TP1 and TP2:

L1: topsoil, 0.20m thick:

L2: a post-Roman accumulation, 0.4m thick, containing residual Roman pottery and CBM.

Removal of L2 revealed natural river gravel L5 (as in TP3). Again, as in TP3, the water table was high in TP4 - at 500mm bgl. As in the other three test pits, no archaeological features were seen cutting the natural (L5, in this case).



Plate 4: Test pit 4, view north-east

Finds

by Steve Benfield

Introduction

Bulk finds of pottery and ceramic building material (CBM) together with pieces of glass, coal, bone, mortar and oyster shell, were recovered from three test pits (TP 1, TP3 & TP4). Most of the closely-dated finds are of Roman date, with some medieval and modern material. The quantities of the finds are shown in Table 1.

Find type	no	wt/g
Pottery	5	84
CBM	20	1877
Mortar	2	13
Glass	1	11
Coal	1	18
Bone	1	3
Oyster shell	2	57

Table 1: Quantities of bulk find types

Bulk finds

The pottery was recorded using the Colchester Roman and post-Roman fabric series (CAR 10, CAR 7). The pottery fabrics referred to are listed below (Table 2).

Fabric code	Fabric name
<i>Roman:</i>	
DJ	Coarse oxidised and related wares
GX	Other coarse wares, principally locally-produced grey wares
<i>Post-Roman:</i>	
21A	Colchester-type ware
45M	Modern English stoneware

Table2 Pottery fabric codes**

All bulk finds are listed and described in Table 3.

TP	context	find	find type	Fabric	no	wt/g	description	period	spot date
1	L2	2	CBM	red, sandy	6	625	Roman CBM probable <i>tegula</i> tile pieces (5@ 691 g) 15-26 mm thick – most 18+, also probable <i>imbrex</i> (1@ 34 g)	Rom	Rom
3	L4	1	pot	21A	1	6	Small sherd, external glaze, probably from a jug	med	M13-15C
3	L4	1	pot	21A	1	20	Base(?) sherd in red fabric with grey core	med	13-14C
3	L4	1	pot	45M	1	25		mod	L18/19-E20C
3	L4	1	CBM	red, sandy	1	65	<i>Tegula</i> flange with small section of LCW, Warry Type A	Rom	Rom
3	L4	1	CBM	red, sandy	3	329	Rom brick(2@ 240 g) one reused, <i>imbrex</i> piece (64 g), probable <i>tegula</i> tile piece (25 g)	Rom	Rom

TP	context	find	find type	Fabric	no	wt/g	description	period	spot date
3	L4	1	CBM	cream	1	26	Rom tile flake, prob from an <i>imbrex</i>	Rom	Rom
3	L4	1	CBM	red, sandy	2	59	Peg-tile (prob after the 13 century)	Med- p-med/mod	prob after 13C
3	L4	1	mortar		2	13	Two small pieces of Roman <i>op-sig.</i> mortar	Rom	Rom
3	L4	1	glass		1	11	Dark green bottle glass	mod	19-20C
3	L4	1	coal		1	18		Mod(?)	Mod(?)
3	L4	1	Anim bone		1	3	Small piece	Not closely dated	
3	L4	1	Oy. shell		2	57	Two large oyster shells (half)	Not closely dated	
4	L2	3	pot	DJ	1	14	Body sherd from a flagon(?)	Rom	M1-2/3C
4	L2	3	pot	GX	1	19	Body sherd, moderately soft fabric, possibly early Roman coarseware	Rom	Rom M1-E2C(?)
4	L2	3	CBM	cream	3	503	Roman CBM <i>tegula</i> tile piece (195 g) 28 mm thick base, <i>imbrex</i> piece (153 g), brick piece (155 g) 35 mm thick	Rom	Rom
4	L2	3	CBM	Red, sandy	4	270	Roman CBM <i>imbrex</i> (2@ 180 g), brick/tile (2@ 90 g)	Rom	Rom

Table 3: Bulk finds by context and type

Finds discussion

All of the finds from the three test pits (TP1, TP3 & TP4) were recovered from Layers 2 and 4 (L2, L4). The finds from TP1 & TP4 are all of Roman date, whilst those from TP3 also include medieval and modern finds.

The finds from TP1 (2) consist entirely of pieces of Roman ceramic building material (CBM) in red, sandy fabrics. The thickness of the flat pieces (15-26 mm) indicates they are almost certainly from the base of *tegula* roof tiles, with one piece of which is probably *imbrex* roof tile.

The finds from TP4 (3) consist of pieces of Roman CBM with two sherds of Roman pottery. The pottery sherds are both coarse wares and not closely dated. One (Fabric DJ) is probably from a flagon and is likely to date to the period of the mid 1st-2nd/early 3rd century, while the other (Fabric GX) is broadly dated as Roman, but is possibly of early Roman (mid 1st-early 2nd century) date. Both could be contemporary with the intensive early Roman period of occupation (c AD 43-60/65) at the adjacent Late Iron Age and Roman site at *Camulodunum*/Sheepen (Hawkes & Hull 1948, Niblett 1985).

The Roman CBM from TP4 includes pieces from bricks as well as roof tile. One *tegula*, and *imbrex* tile and one brick piece are in cream fabric(s). The thickness of the base of the cream fabric *tegula* piece is substantial at 28 mm thick.

While the finds from L2 in TP1 & TP4 are all Roman, those from L2 in TP4 indicate a modern date (19th-20th century) with residual Roman and medieval (13th-14th century) finds.

The finds from L4 in TP3 (1) include medieval and modern material (pottery) and pieces of peg-tiles which probably date to after the 13th century (Ryan 1993), but are not more closely dated than as medieval to post-medieval/modern. The medieval pottery consist of two sherds of Colchester ware (Fabric 21A) of 13th-14th/15th century date. Modern finds include a sherd of English stoneware (Fabric 45M) dated as late 18th/19th-20th century, and a sherd from a glass bottle of 19th-20th century date.

The Roman finds from TP3 consist of CBM and two fragments of *opus signinum* mortar containing crushed tile. One of the Roman tile pieces is the flange from a tegula roof tile which retains part of a lower cut-away. The cut-away does not reach (penetrate) the top of the flange, and can be identified as belonging to Warry's Type A group (Warry 2006, fig 1.3) which he suggests are typical of the period c 40-120 AD (Warry 2006, 63).

Although not closely dated, a number of the Roman finds from the three test-pits could suggest a general early Roman (mid 1st-early 2nd/2nd century) date for much of the Roman period finds assemblage. This is based on the two sherds of pottery, the thickness of the tegula tile bases (almost all in the range:18-26/28 mm) and the single tegula lower cut-away which is of a type which Warry suggests is of early Roman (mid 1st-early 2nd century) date.

Conclusions (Fig 2)

The test-pit investigation carried out on the site of the proposed sports pitch at St Helena revealed no significant archaeological features or horizons. Under the modern topsoil L1 is either an accumulated layer, probably best described as a post-Roman topsoil (L2), or a dumped clay whose date is defined by finds of modern glass. This whole sequence lies over natural ground - boulder clay in the two southern test-pits (TP1-2), and grey gravels, undoubtedly river gravels, in the northern test-pits, TP3-4¹.

Residual Roman material in accumulated layer / topsoil L2 includes ceramic building material (some of it possibly derived from the temple site), and six potsherds. How did it get there? The robbing out of the two Romano-British temples, the temple precinct wall and the associated Building B and Building 159, the subsequent arable use of the site, and then the construction of the School site in the 1930s can be regarded as a sufficient explanation of how Roman finds came to be spread over the whole site and incorporated into the local soil strata, from where they were excavated in the 2014 test-pits. The test-pits themselves did not reveal any *in situ* Roman deposits or structures, nor did the geophysical survey indicate that the important remains are in this part of the school grounds. In fact, it is a fair summary of the archaeology of St Helena that the main focus of Roman activity is to the west of the sports pitches, and is associated with the Roman temple and its precinct, now lying under the main school buildings.

Finally, the ground here is recently made up, and is prone to flooding. The evidence for 'made ground' is the modern dumped clay found in TP3, which is the north-easterly test pit, nearest to Westway and the Avenue of Remembrance. The senior caretaker has related in conversation that he remembers the construction of Westway over what was then the eastern side of the school grounds. It is clear from the fact that Westway is on a raised bank that material was imported into the school site for the construction of the road, and the caretaker's recollection that a small pond was filled in at that time fits perfectly with the discovery of modern

¹ Similar river gravels have been seen several times by CAT on the St Peters Street site, for which see CAT Reports 25 and 692.

dumped clay in TP3. The area continues to be low-lying, and was partially flooded at the time of the test pitting.

9 Archaeology and development

The proposed development site (PDS) is quite clearly in an area where important archaeological remains are known, principally the Roman temples and their associated buildings.

The Historic Environment Characterisation Project (CBC 2010) has this statement on the sensitivity of the archaeological remains in this part of Colchester.

'Below ground archaeology highly sensitive to change'.

The quality of the archaeological resource, supported by such statements, gives sufficient reason for the CBC Archaeological Officer (ECC) to have requested previous archaeological work on this site, and sufficient reason to request future work, as appropriate to specific developments.

This conclusion is in agreement with Colchester Borough Council's 2010 *Local Development Framework: Development Policies*, the relevant paragraphs of which are given below.

Policy DP14: Historic Environment Assets

Development will not be permitted that will adversely affect a listed building, a conservation area, historic park or garden or important archaeological remains.

Development affecting the historic environment should seek to preserve or enhance the heritage asset and any features of specific historic, archaeological, architectural or artistic interest. In all cases there will be an expectation that any new development will enhance the historic environment in the first instance, unless there are no identifiable opportunities available. In instances where existing features have a negative impact on the historic environment, as identified through character appraisals, the Local Planning Authority will request the removal of the features that undermine the historic environment as part of any proposed development. Support will be given to the provision of creative and accessible interpretations of heritage assets.

Conservation of the historic environment will also be ensured by:

- (i) Identifying, characterising, protecting and enhancing Conservation Areas;*
- (ii) Protection and enhancement of existing buildings and built areas which do not have Listed Building or Conservation Area status but have a particular local importance or character which it is desirable to keep. Such buildings or groups of buildings will be identified through a Local List which will be adopted by the Council;*
- (iii) Preserving or enhancing Listed Buildings, Scheduled Monuments, Historic Parks and Gardens, including their respective settings, and other features which contribute to the heritage of the Borough; and*
- (iv) Known sites of archaeological importance will be clearly identified and protected, and sites that become known, whether through formal evaluation as part of a Planning Application or otherwise, will similarly be protected according to their importance.***

Heritage Statements and/or Archaeological Evaluations will be required for proposals related to or impacting on the setting of heritage assets and/or known or possible archaeological sites, so that sufficient information is provided to assess the impacts of development on historic environment assets together with any proposed mitigation measures.

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Figs 1-2

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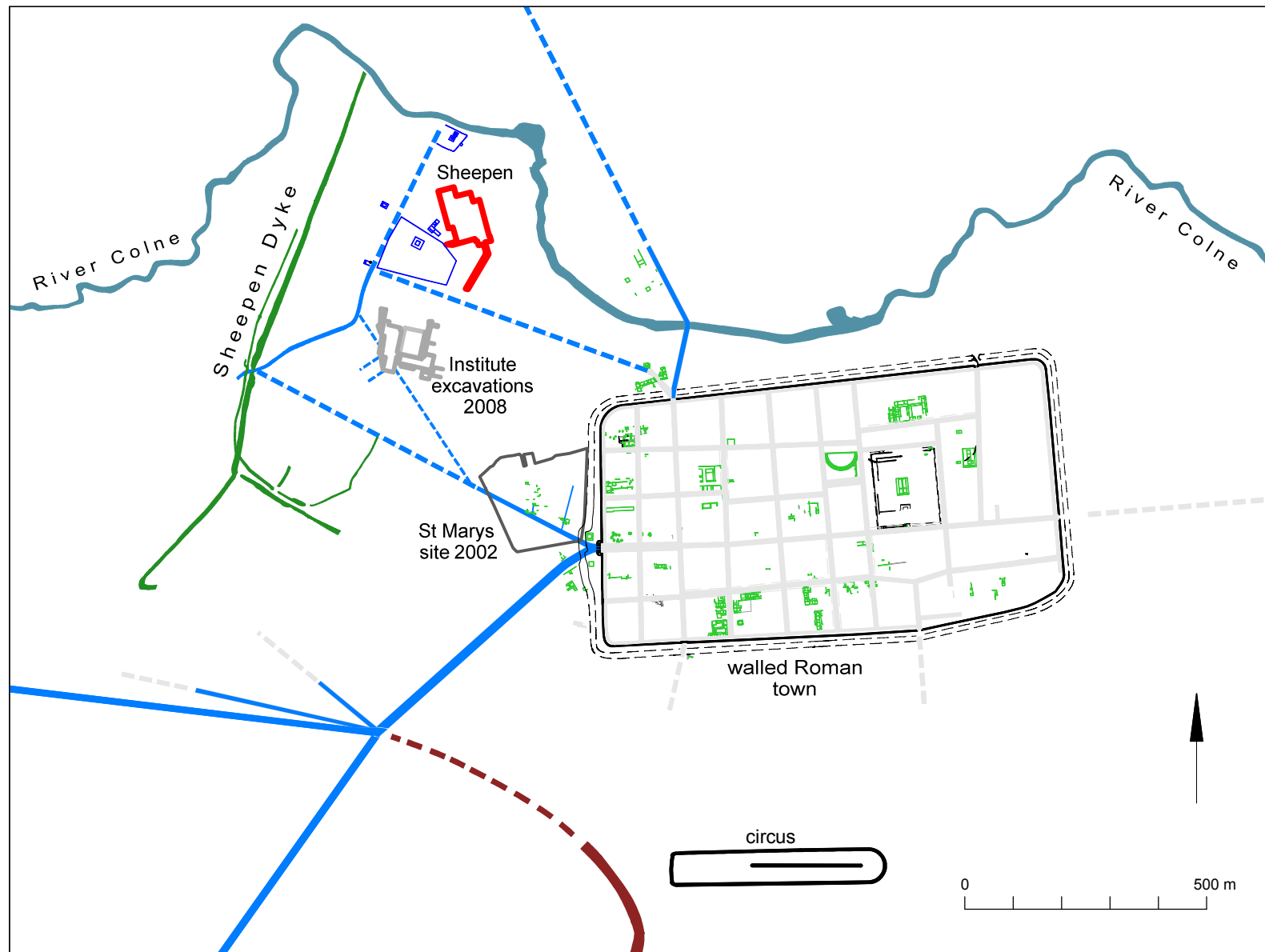
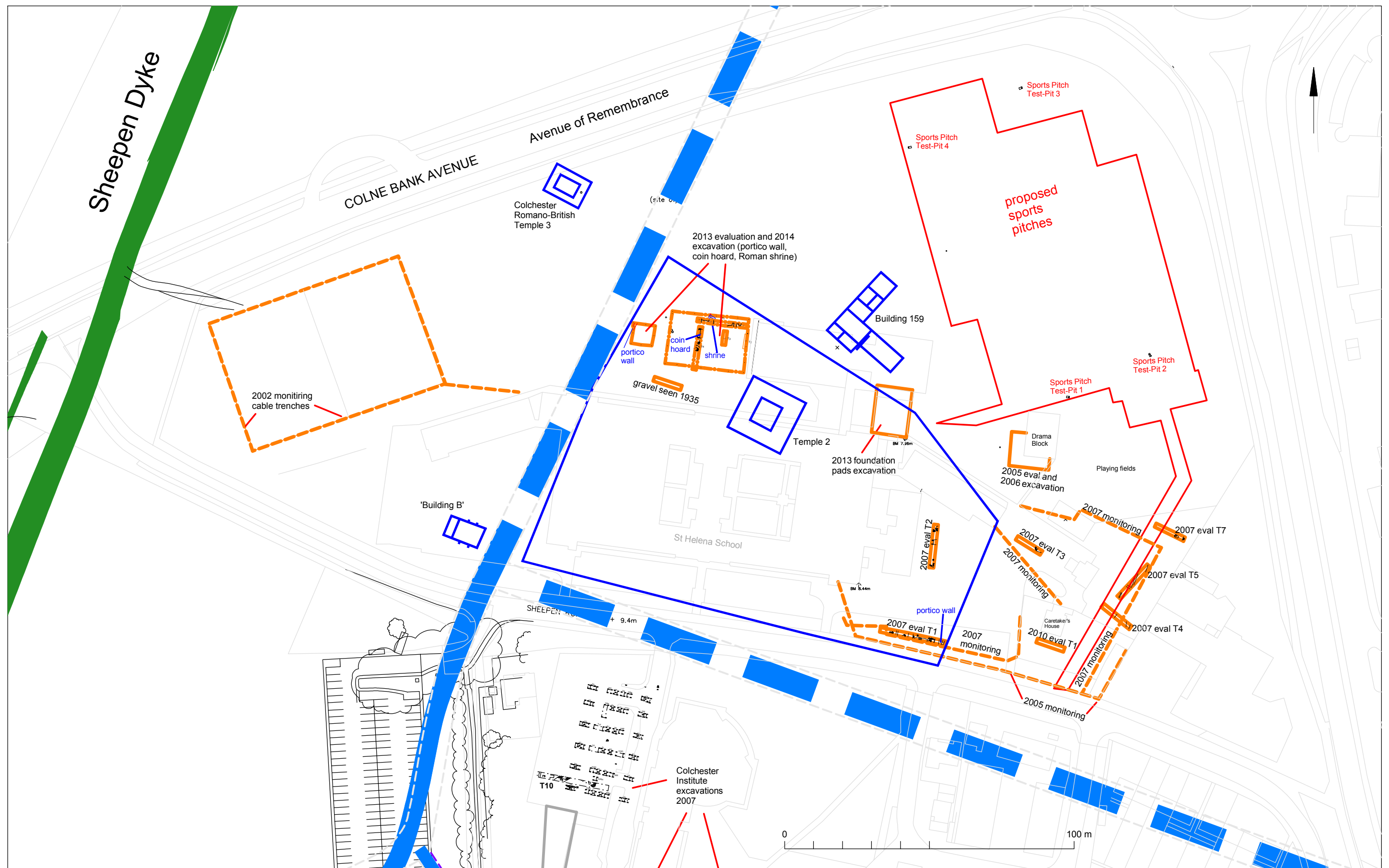


Fig 1 Site location (red) in its local archaeological context



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Figure 2 St Helena School, showing proposed sports pitches (red outline), previous archaeological work (orange) and Roman temples, precinct, and associated buildings (blue)