

## NOTES ON GREAT TEY ROMAN ROAD EXCAVATIONS

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### 1. Introduction

Between 1996 and 2006 CAG, under the direction of James Fawn, carried out a series of excavations along the line of a suspected Roman Road at Great Tey.

The road had first been noticed as parallel lines of crop marks in aerial photos (RAF4625 30.07.63 RHCM NMR TL8824/1, and Ida McMaster, 1976 (Ref. 1), personal collection, now lodged with ECC Historic Environment).

The existence of the road was confirmed in two excavations across its supposed line carried out by the Group between 1986 and 1993. These, designated Teybrook A (TA) and Teybrook B (TB), have already been fully reported by James Fawn (Refs. 2 & 3).

Further trenches were dug between 1993 & 2006, mainly on the boundary between Teybrook Farm and Warrens Farm, where the crop marks seen on the aerial photographs faded out (Figs. 1 & 2), with the objective of determining whether the road continued beyond this point, and if so, in which direction. None of these excavations have been reported.

The purpose of these notes is to record the extensive surviving archive, which has been deposited with Colchester and Ipswich Museum, and to note any germane observations from surviving members of the digging team.

### 2. Summary

No trace of the road could be found much beyond the point at which it disappears as a crop mark (TC). Around the line of the road, the entire area was rich in Roman activity, but it proved impossible to draw any firm conclusions as to the nature of that activity. A series of discontinuous surfaces, all made of crushed Roman brick or tile, and at a varying range of depths, were found in several of the trenches. These suggested some sort of low status industrial or agricultural activity, possibly associated with the villa 200m to the NE, but the evidence was very confusing. Many of the surfaces were overlain with a layer of dark silty alluvium, suggesting that the area was subjected to regular flooding – hardly surprising since it lay close to, and in the flood plain of, the Roman River.

Four trenches along the West side of Cow Meadow (TD, TH, TI, TJ) cut through a large ditch-like feature running in a gentle curve roughly NS along the East side of the boundary fence. James Fawn originally interpreted this feature as a boundary ditch, but its size and position, and the fact that it contained large quantities of Roman building materials, Roman coins and animal bone, all suggest that it was an early course of the Roman River, which changed course, or was diverted, towards the end of the Roman period..

Within the wood, on the Teybrook Farm side (East) of the boundary fence, TC serendipitously cut a small ring ditch. Sherds of pottery found within it (TC, TE) suggested that this was a Bronze Age ring ditch. Trench TF failed to find any evidence of a burial.

### 3. Comments on Individual Trenches

**TA & TB** have already been reported, (Ref. 2 & 3) and need not be discussed further.

**TC** is the northernmost trench in which any evidence for the road can be found. Drawing 12 (AJF) records a section which shows traces of 2 vestigial ditches, which could be interpreted as 2 of the ditches of the road, and photographs show some evidence of metallurgy.

The western end of the trench cut a ring ditch and 2(?) small fragments of pottery recovered from this area were identified as Bronze Age.

**TD** was a small, but ultimately very deep trench which cut the line of the ditch/river on the west side of Cow Meadow. Significant quantities of Roman material, mainly CBM, were recovered, and these have been archived unexamined. No drawings of this trench survive, but its position has been located and marked on Fig. 2

**TE & TF** further investigated the Bronze Age ring ditch. TE confirmed the ditch position and diameter, which Drawing 16 suggests to be about 6.7m. TF produced no evidence for a central feature. The approximate position of the ring ditch is shown as a hatched red circle on Fig. 2.

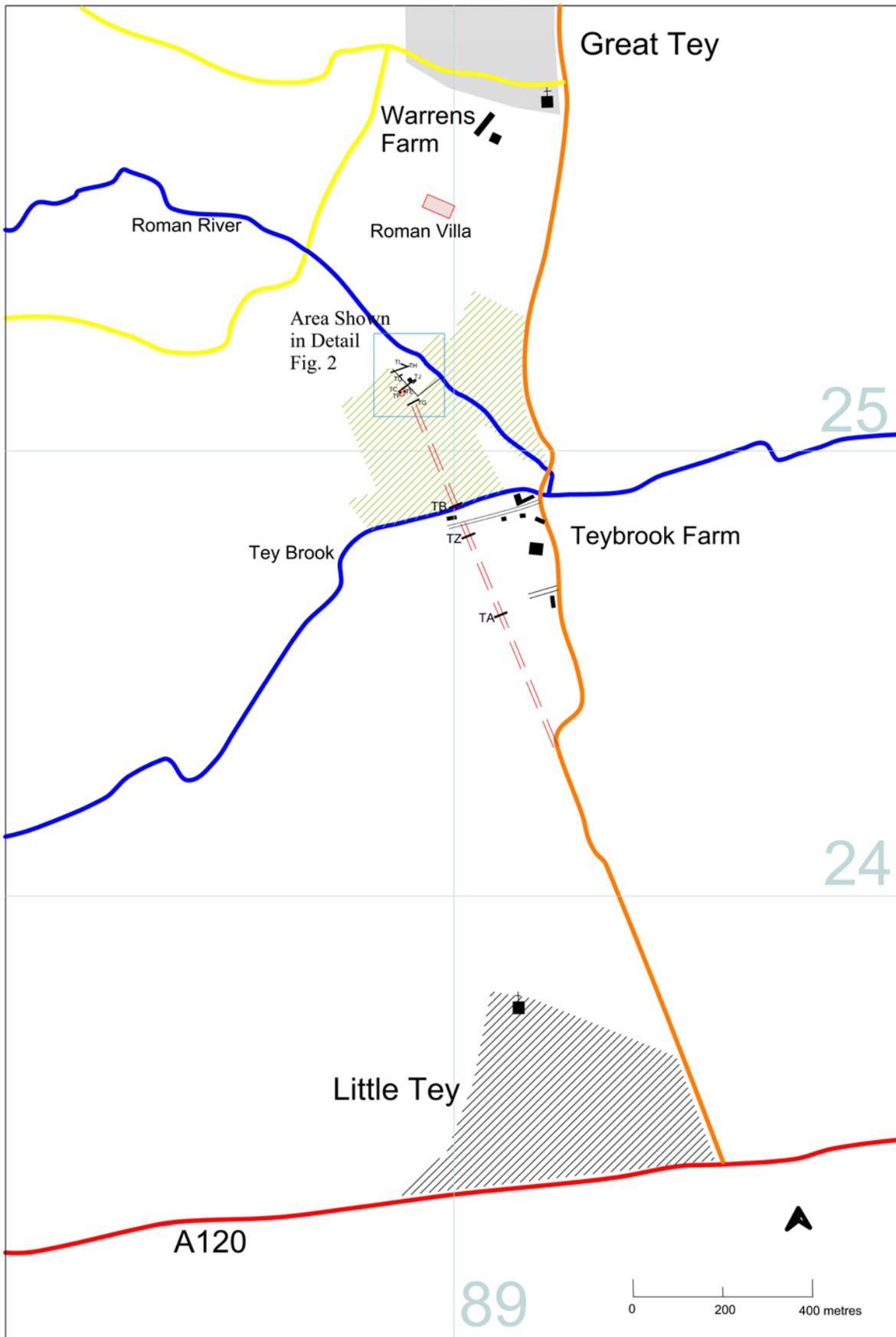
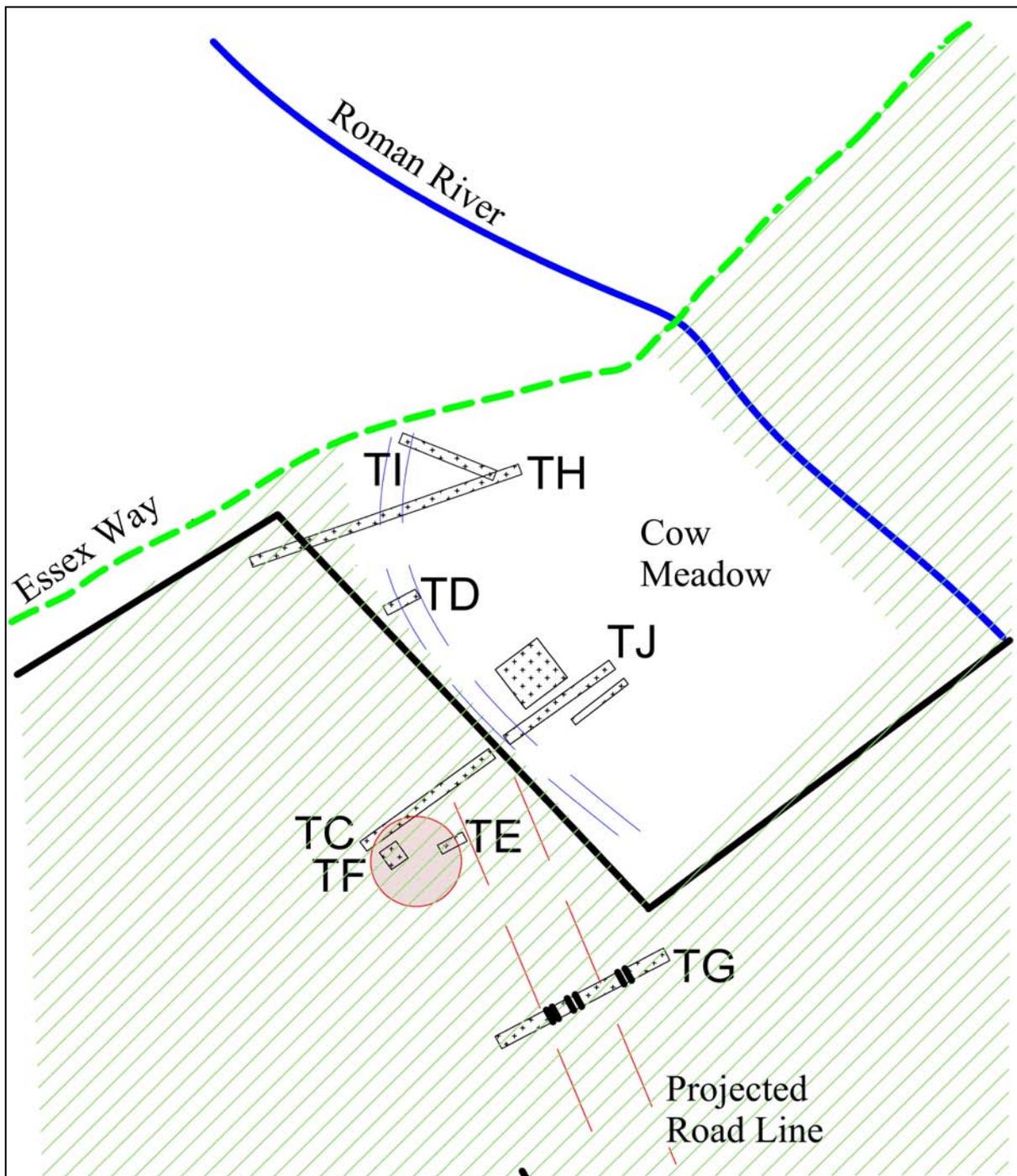


Fig. 1 Line of Roman Road (red dashes) as seen in aerial photographs, and positions of TA, TB & TZ. Pale blue lines and numbers are from OS Map Area TL



**Fig. 2 Cow Meadow, showing limit of Roman Road, and trenches TC - TJ.**  
**Approximate ditch/river bed line shown as blue dashes.**

**TG** was placed to the south of **TC** in order to establish the line of the road, which had not been clear in **TC**. 3 ditches were identified, shown as thick black lines on Fig. 2.. These are shown on Drawing 16, and confirm with reasonable accuracy the line of the road shown on aerial photographs.

**TH & TI.** **TH** was originally begun, within the wood, in 1995 to investigate the possible continuation of the road beyond **TC**. No trace of the road was found. The trench was subsequently extended to the East into Cow Meadow to investigate the ditch/riverbed feature, and again in 2004 still further East. A section of the Eastern half was drawn on completion, Drawing 15 below. Two Roman coins were recovered from the area of the ditch. **TI** was subsequently opened diagonally to the North of **TH**. Both **TH** and **TI** cut through the ditch/riverbed, and also exposed a complicated series of broken brick surfaces, largely composed of broken (probably) Roman brick and tile. A more detailed report on both these trenches is in preparation (*Jonathan Oldham, Forthcoming*)

**TJ “River Bed”** was dug in 2006 and extended the line of TC across the ditch/river bed into Cow Meadow. As with TD, considerable quantities of Roman CBM were recovered. More significantly 3 Roman coins were found. These all dated to the early 4<sup>th</sup> century (See small finds list below) suggesting the feature was open until at least this time, and was filled in at or towards the end of the Roman period. The line of the “River Bed” shows clearly on Google Earth and has been marked on Fig. 2 as two blue dashed lines cutting through TJ TD TH & TI. Considerable quantities of animal bone were also recovered. These have been examined by Ed Heigham, and her report is included in the archive

**TZ** In 2006, at the request of the landowner Richard Browning, a further trench was put across the line of the road just south of Chase Cottages (see Fig. 1). This excavation was directed by Ruth Rolfe. The positions of the four ditches were established, but no convincing road metalling was found, probably because the site was on the sloping ground leading down to Tey Brook, and the road had consequently suffered from erosion and plough damage. A section was drawn by Anna Moore et al., Drawings 17, 18 & 19. No finds were recorded.

**Further Excavations in Cow Meadow.** Several other trenches around or open areas around TJ were excavated during 2006. No record survives of identification numbers for these trenches. Two can be seen, either on Google Earth or on AJF photographs, and these are shown, unlabelled on Fig. 2. No finds have survived. The recollection of the digging team is that they contained a series of discontinuous surfaces, at varying depths, comprised of crushed Roman CBM. Many of the surfaces were overlain with a layer organic silty material consistent with episodes of flooding. No dating evidence was recovered from any of the trenches.

## References

1. McMaster, Ida: Notes on Two Possible Roman Roads and Crop Marks, CAG Bull 19, 1976 pp. 10-11.
2. Fawn, James: A Roman Road at Teybrook Farm, Great Tey, CAG Bull. 34, 1991 pp. 29-37
3. Fawn, James: A Roman Road at Teybrook Farm, Great Tey: Part II, CAG Bull. 41 2001 pp. 7-14

## ARCHIVE

The materials deposited with Colchester and Ipswich Museum are:

**James Fawn Notebook.** Covering the period from October 1992 to June 2006, the notebook records information related to excavations along the Roman road from TB to TH. Mostly the data consists of 3 dimensional co-ordinates for finds from within the trenches, but since the co-ordinates relate to reference points which are nowhere clearly defined, they are of little value. Occasionally survey measurements are recorded, but these are very difficult to interpret. No other information, observations or interpretations are recorded.

**Photographs.** Approximately 240 slide photographs were taken by James Fawn. These have been archived, together with their digital scans. Very few of them were labelled, except by date of processing, but the scans have been examined by other members of the digging and most have been identified. They have been supplemented (in digital form) by a few additional photographs taken by other members of the team. They provide the best record (other than the few drawings listed below) of some of the features exposed during the excavations.

## Drawings

1. Section of TA, showing 4 ditches (AJF 1991)
2. Land profile along line of road, including TA & TB (AJF)
3. Section of part of TB, possibly showing stream crossing, but not completed or labelled (AJF)
4. Titled “Teybrook Farm, Great Tey” showing (part of) unidentified road section. (AJF)
5. Section of TB, showing position of brick and tile finds. (AJF)
6. a) Section of TB, showing position of other finds, and  
b) Plan of TB, showing position relative to Teybrook and Chase Cottages (AJF)
7. Land profile along line of road, showing TB and land to the north as far as Roman River (AJF)
8. Section across Teybrook and TB 15.11.92 (AJF)
- 9 & 10. Not labelled, but identified as two parts of a section across TA, and reproduced in CAG Bull. 34 (Ref. 1) (AJF)
11. Map of Teybrook area, showing position of excavation trenches, published in CAG Bull. 34 (AJF)
12. Road section draft, labelled TC. (AJF)
13. Plan showing positions of TA & TC relative to fence line between Teybrook farm and Warrens Farm (AJF)
14. Land profile along line of road, showing TB & TC. A more finished version of 7. (AJF)

15. Section of TH (Anna Moore)
16. Plan showing positions of TC TE & TG, and possibly TD (AJF)
- 17, 18 & 19. Section (in three parts) of TZ. (Anna Moore et al.)

### **Small Finds**

Coin of Carausius Late 3c. From TH  
Radiate coin. Late 4c. From TH  
Coin of Constantine. Early 4c. From "River Bed"  
Coin of Crispus. Early 4c. From "River Bed"  
Coin of Licinius II. Early 4c. "River Bed" spoil  
Possible copper/bronze Roman strap fitting.

### **Pottery and other finds**

7 archive boxes of pottery and bone from excavations TC to TI. This material has not been fully evaluated, but would appear to be almost exclusively Roman. Bone found in the "River Bed" was examined by Ed Heigham BDS, and her report is in the appropriate box with the finds. Large quantities of Roman CBM were not retained, though a few representative examples were retained

### **Additional Information**

1. Heigham, Ed. BDS Bone Report for Animal bone Samples from Marks Tey (*sic*) Site. Unpublished personal communication to Don Goodman (CAG) January 2007
2. Copy of Google Earth photo, of Cow Meadow, taken 09.10.2006, showing position of some of trenches extant at the time