

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**  
**AT**  
**4 CLOTHALL ROAD, BALDOCK,**  
**HERTFORDSHIRE**

**By**  
**A. J. OFFORD**

**North Hertfordshire District Council Museums**  
**Field Archaeology Section**  
**Department of Engineering and Leisure Services**

**September 1992**

4 CLOTHALL ROAD, BALDOCK  
SITE CODE : BAL 56'92  
NATIONAL GRID REF. TL 2469 3401

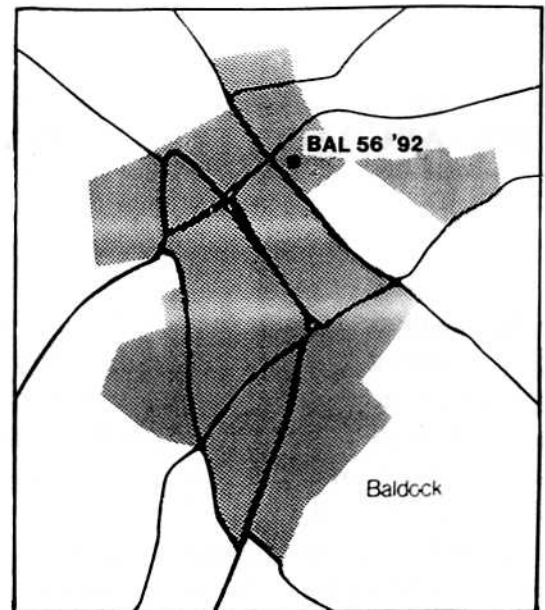


Figure 1.

## INTRODUCTION

From the 9th to mid-day on the 12th of September 1992 watching brief was carried out on the cutting of wall footing trenches for an in-fill house on the land to the south of no.4 Clothall Road, Baldock. The house was being built by the owner of No. 4 Clothall Road, Mr. Gilbert, with the builders DB Sharp & Sons

Ltd. No funding was provided for a full scale investigation, only a watching brief could be done by the Field Team, also unfunded. Two members of the team, Tony Offord and Andy Richmond worked on the site for all three days and were joined by a third member, Chris Colley on the last day.

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The site was situated between a partially excavated Romano-British cemetery on Clothall Common to the NE, and Baker's Close to the SW, which is a Scheduled Ancient Monument also dating to the Romano-British period. It was no surprise therefore, when the wall

footing trenches, which were 0.70 m wide and 1.20 m in depth cut through several archaeological features. In total, ten pits were revealed many of which were intercutting, and contained Romano-British pottery.(see fig 2)

## THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION

Four small intercutting pits were seen in the NW sector of the site. Pit 04 appeared to be sub-square in shape and approximately 2.00 m wide. As well as being seen in both sections, it was also seen along the base of the trench so its depth is unknown. Three layers were contained within this feature, which produced a large number of finds. These included lumps of clunch stone, a large fragment of mortaria, grey-ware and shelly-ware pot sherds. Two possible Iron Age pot sherds and a tile fragment, date this feature from the first century AD to the second century AD. Pit 04 had been truncated by a later, shallow pit (20) to the SW, circular in shape with a diameter of 1.18 m and a depth of 0.34. Pit 20 contained three layers with fragments of tile, fabric 16 and grog-tempered pot sherd fabric 2A, implying dates in the first to second centuries AD.

Pit 04 was also truncated by a later shallow pit 05 to the NE, oval in shape and measuring 1.10 m at its widest point, but only 0.34 m in depth. It contained two layers which yielded just one sherd of samian ware, and one of grey-ware pottery, placing this feature to between the first and fourth century AD. This feature was in turn truncated by a shallow pit 08 to the NE., also oval in shape, it was 1.24 m at its widest and 0.37 m in depth, containing two layers. No dating evidence was available.

Intercutting pit 08 were two other large pits 09 and a re-cut 14 to the NE. Unfortunately the point of intersection was too small to interpret the relationship between the three features. Pit 09's shape and depth could not be ascertained, a layer of its fill was seen along the base of the trench covering 1.90 m. It can be inferred that the depth of this feature was approximately 2.00 m. Its diameter was 3.20 m. The pit contained four layers yielding a grey-ware folded beaker which was almost complete,

shelly-ware, samian and colour coated (cc3) pot sherds, dating from the late second to early fourth centuries AD.

The re-cut 14 appears to be roughly circular in shape with a diameter of 2.50 m, and a depth of 0.80 m. Two layers were seen in section which produced shelly-ware, colour coated and samian pot sherds to date this feature also from the second to the fourth centuries AD.

Three more pits were seen to the east of this six feature complex. Pit 38 was small and oval in shape and 1.40 m at its widest point, with a depth of 0.51 m. It contained four layers yielding shelly-ware and grey-ware pot sherds, to give a date range from the first to the fourth century AD. Pit 38 truncated another small oval-shaped pit (33) to the south. This feature was 1.70 m at its widest and 0.60 m in depth, with four layers which yielded shelly-ware and grog-tempered pottery sherds, dating from the first to the fourth centuries AD. Further to the east was yet another small pit 21, this was circular in shape with a diameter of 1.40 m and a depth of 0.50 m. It contained two fills which produced just one grog-tempered pot sherd (fabric 2A), which gives dates from the mid first century BC to the mid first century AD.

The final pit (28) was also the last to be investigated. Seen to the SE of the site, it was a large circular feature 2.40 m in diameter. This pit was also seen in the base of the trench, measuring 1.80 m across, which suggests the actual depth of the pit was approximately 1.80 m. Two layers were seen in section, yielding decorated samian, grey-ware and shelly-ware, and a sherd of colour coated fabric cc13 as well as a brick fragment, giving a date for this feature somewhere in the third or fourth century AD.

## RESULTS & CONCLUSIONS

The ten features could all be dated with reasonable certainty. All these pits, were ultimately used as rubbish dumps, although they may have previously had a variety of functions including storage facilities during the Romano-British period. Pit 04 is dated to the late pre-Roman Iron Age and is therefore unique in this group - relating to the earliest known settlement in the town area. The site is situated near the heart of the Roman town of Baldock. Unfortunately, in almost every excavated instance, the only surviving remains are sub-surface features such as pits, ditches, graves and cremation cuts. The presence of ten pits in such close proximity to each other, with clunch stone found in one of the pits, indicates that there was sizable activity - probably occupation for a considerable duration, around what is now the northern end of Clothall Road.

All the features were recorded in the two and a half days spent on site. Each feature was drawn in section (both sections where possible) and pro-forma context sheets were given to each layer and cut. The site was relatively level with a 0.30 m covering of topsoil, and the features were located by measuring the corners of the wall footing trenches to known points such as the house and boundary wall.

### FINDS ANALYSIS

POTTERY RECOVERED	WEIGHED	2,575 g
TILE/BRICK	''	855 g
BONE	''	2,525 g
OYSTER SHELL	''	195 g
TOTAL FINDS	''	6,140 g

Thanks to Mr. Gilbert and to D.B. Sharp & Sons Ltd for their cooperation. The illustrations were drawn by A. J. Offord.

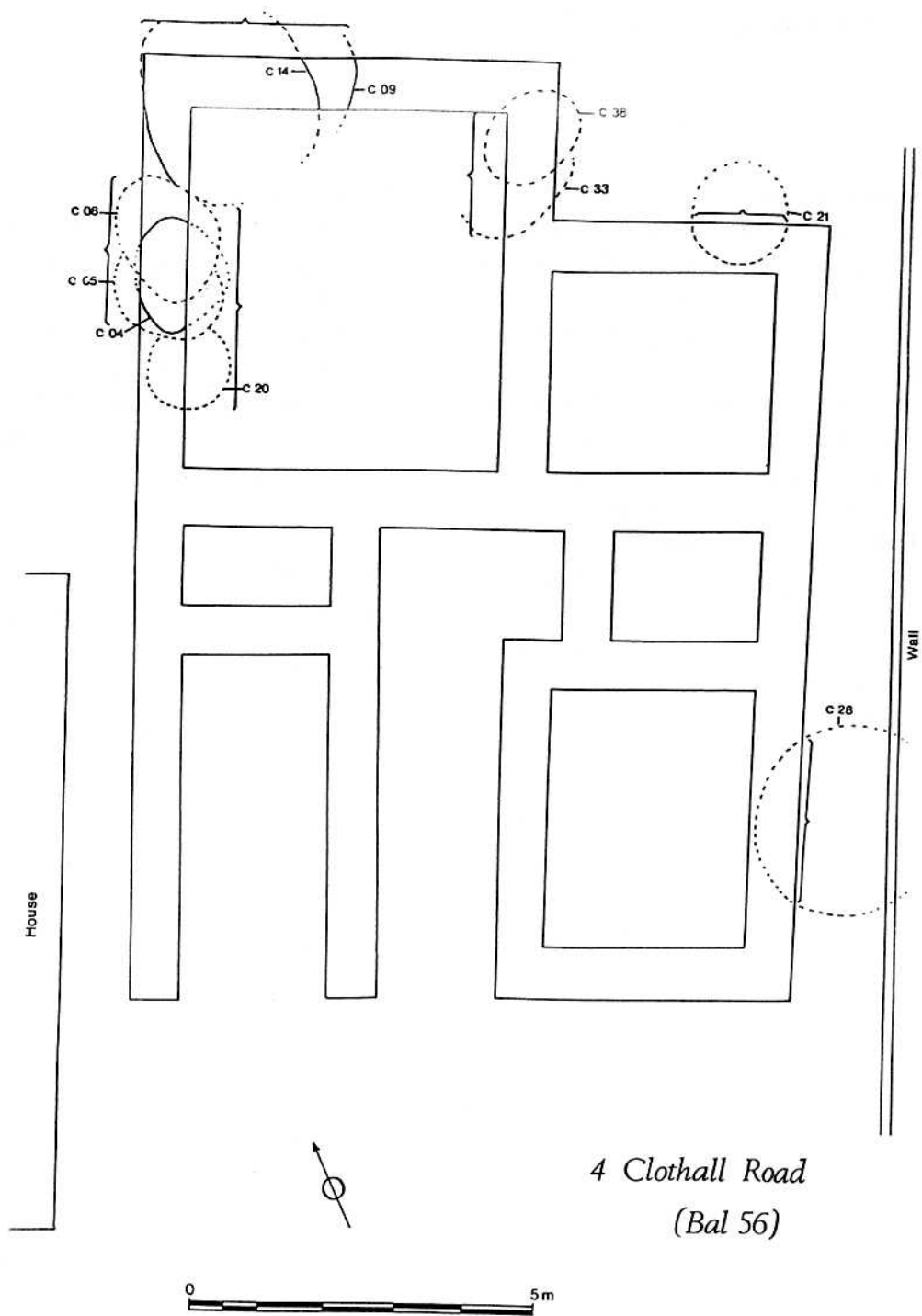


Figure 2. The wall foundation trenches for the new building showing location of archaeological features. Dotted lines indicate the likely projection of features seen in the trench walls and base.