CATALOGUE

ROMAN COIN HOARDS

COLCHESTER FORTRESS

COIN HOARDS AT OLIVER'S ORCHARD

To unearth a hoard of Roman coins is the dream of every ploughman. On Monday 9th May, 1983 Brian Wade was preparing a field at Olivers Orchard for sweetcorn when he noticed some bright blue-green objects in the plough soil. He jumped off the tractor and picked up about 90 coins andi after marking the spot with a stick, took the coins to Rupert Knowles, owner of the land.

Mark Davies, Assistant Curator at the Castle, came out immediately and confirmed that the coins were antoniniani, dating from about AD 270. Kath Evans marshalled the troops from the Colchester Archaeological Group to help the Museum staff in the excavation. Brian's son, Gary Wade, who is a member of the Colchester Young Archaeologists, was able to join in after school.

An area of two metres square was marked out and, after sieving and clearing the ploughsoil, a further concentration of coins appeared exactly where expected - knowing the direction of travel of the plough. The whole pot was excavated on the Tuesday and the coins carefully counted by Martin Wynter of the Museum, and bagged up in sequence. 4,041 coins were found in this pot.

On Wednesday the press and television were invited and Jenny Knowles spent all day carefully carrying the pot and coins to and from the field for the cameramen, That evening, to make sure no coins had been missed, Pat Adkins wa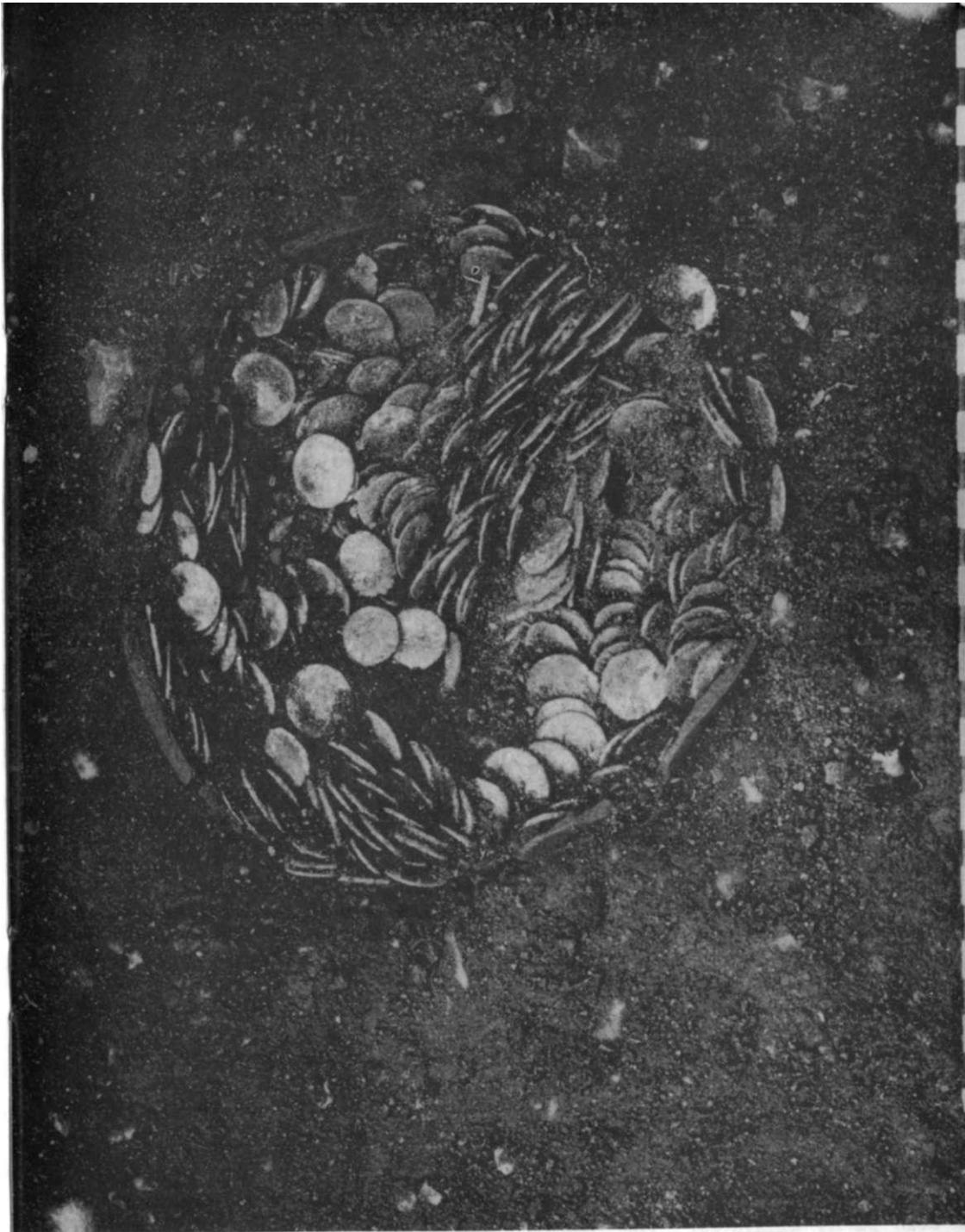s asked to scan the spoil with his metal detector. The telephones started ringing again when he reported a further concentration of 80 coins in the upper ploughsoil about two metres from the first hoard. As these could not have come from it, further digging was undertaken on Thursday and Friday and two more hoards discovered. Pot 3 containing 501 coins was almost whole, but Pot 2 was badly broken and dispersed. It now transpires that the latter had been two pots and that there were about 1,350 coins associated with them.

On Tuesday 17th May, 1983, Rupert Knowles and his elder brother, Martin, lugged the whole hoard - 6,036 coins - to the British Museum where they will be cleaned, catalogued and published, The Museum is well practised having just completed a similar hoard of 56,000 coins from Wiltshire.

The pots are being restored by Colchester Museum and it would be nice to see them reunited with some of the coins and on display to the public - either at the Castle or the Roman River Centre at Olivers Orchard.

Rupert Knowles

This is the largest hoard of Roman coins found to date in Colchester. But it is more significant as the first to have been excavated under

Photograph by Martin Wynter

archaeological conditions, thanks to the awareness and prompt action of the finder, Brian Wade, and the landowner, Rupert Knowles,

The coins are all 'antoniniani' and at first sight appear to be mostly official issues of the various emperors from Gallienus to Tetricus I, The silver content of similar coins reduces considerably during this period from about 27% to as little as 1%. Recent case history has excluded such hoards from Treasure Trove, but that decision rests with the coroner and the courts and will depend on an analytical report by the British Museum.
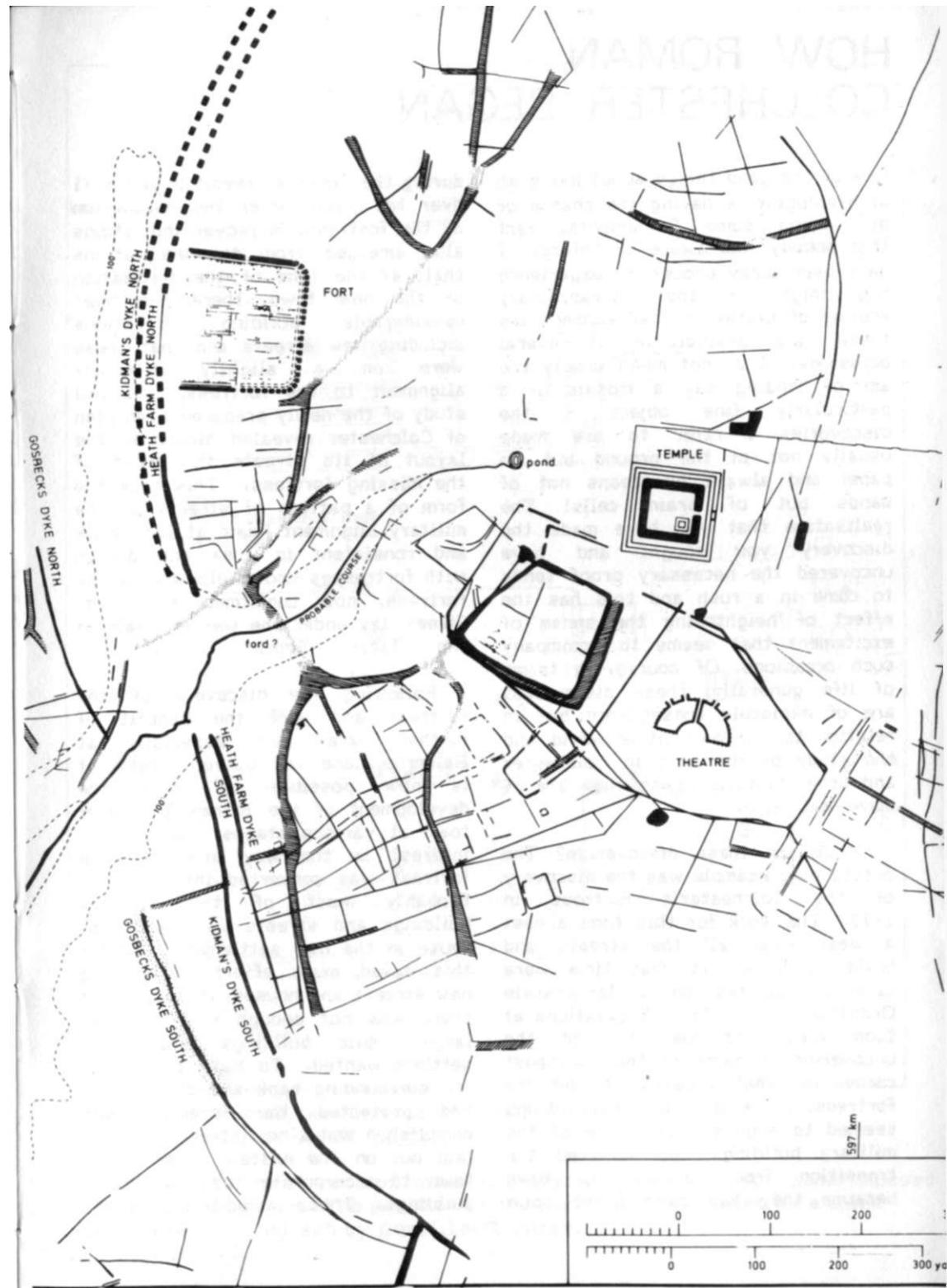
All three deposits seem to have been made within a very short time, no later than c AD 273. The pots were buried in the natural sandy gravel, just below the modern plough. Best preserved was Pot 1, a flagon sealed with a lead bung. It had been placed upside down, presumably to facilitate recovery intact by the owner.

There were no traces of any buildings or other features where the hoard was found, though doubtless the spot would have been related to some landmark like a tree, or it was so many paces from a house or farm building. The site lies at the southern end of the Gosbecks area, within Kidman's Dyke and remarkably close to the Roman road running northeast to the colonia. Some 400 metres away are the theatre and temple, which have been partly excavated. The theatre was dismantled possibly early in the

third century, But, far from the area being abandoned, this hoard suggests the presence two generations later of at least one person of substance who was able to put aside cash for another day. Its eventual recovery was due to the great help and co-operation of all concerned.

Mark Davies

* Opposite: plan of Gosbecks. The coin hoards were found in the southern part of the site. Knowledge about the nature of Gosbecks in late Iron Age and Roman times is extensive and derives mainly from cropmarks. These appear as the crops ripen and are clearest after a prolonged dry spell. The Gosbecks area was divided up into fields of varying sizes linked by ditched trackways. The complex was protected on the west by a series of dykes. Later, in the Roman period, a theatre and a large temple were built indicating that the area was still important in post-conquest times.
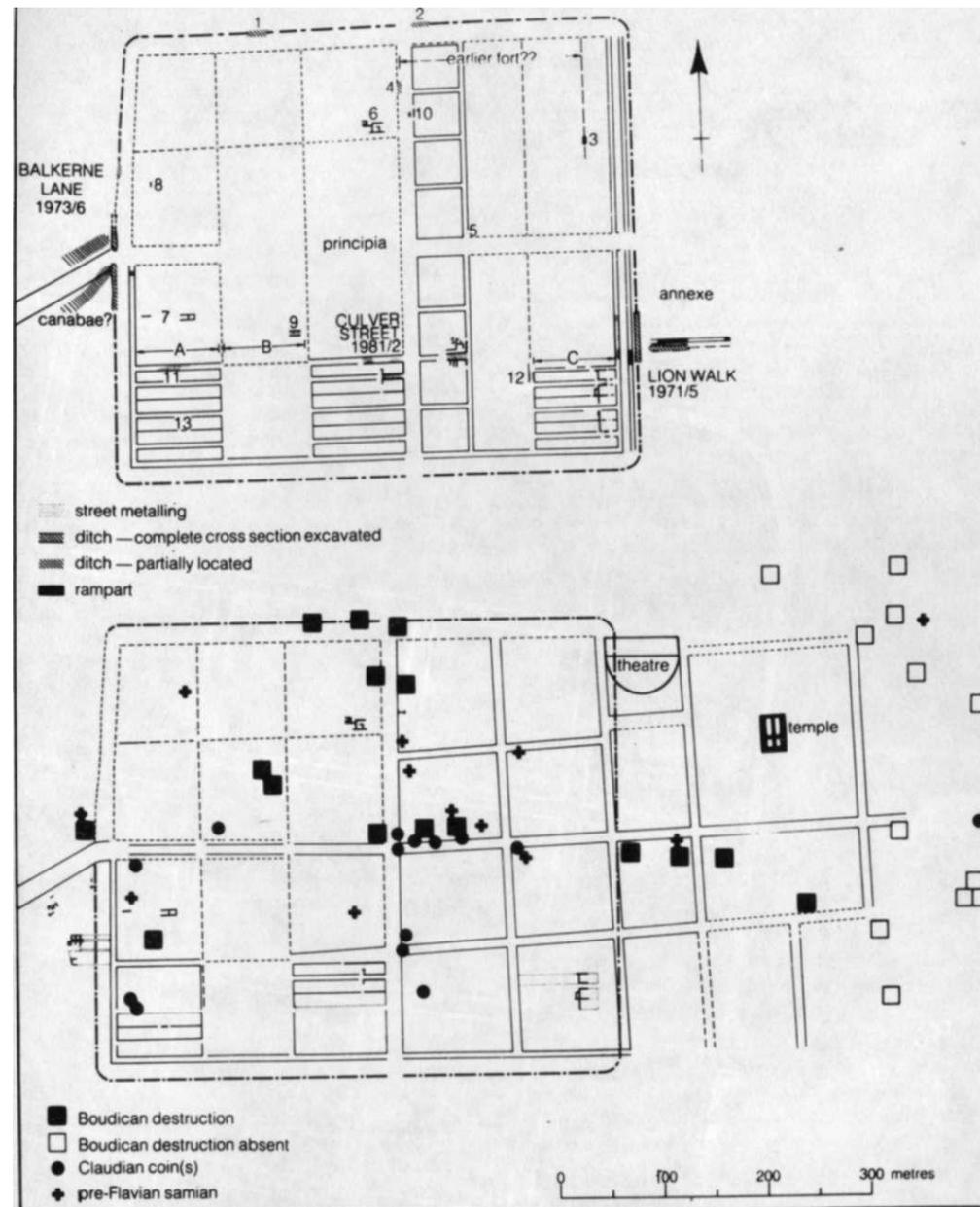
HOW ROMAN COLCHESTER BEGAN

One of the good things about being an archaeologist is having the chance of discovering some fundamental fact that nobody was aware of before. I have been lucky enough to experience the 'high' - the extraordinary feeling of elation - that accompanies these minor brainstorms on several occasions. I do not mean simply the act of finding say a mosaic or a particularly fine object - the discoveries I refer to are made usually not in the ground but on paper and always by means not of hands but of brain cells! The realisation that you have made the discovery you sought and have uncovered the necessary proof tends to come in a rush and this has the effect of heightening the sense of excitement that seems to accompany such occasions, Of course, in terms of life generally, these discoveries are of miniscule consequence but in relation to our own little world and the study of the past in Colchester and other historic towns they are of some real value.

What are these discoveries? The outstanding example was the discovery of the Colchester's fortress in 1973. The work for this took almost a week when all the streets and buildings known at that time were carefully plotted on a large-scale Ordnance Survey plan. Excavations at Lion Walk had just led to the uncovering of parts of the southeast corner of what appeared to be the fortress. Also the excavations seemed to suggest that some of the military buildings had survived the transition from fortress to town because they had been burnt down during the Boudican revolt in AD 60/1 over ten years after the evacuation of the fortress. Moreover indications also emerged from the excavations that, at the time of the foundation of the new town, there had been considerable building operations including new streets and that these were on a slightly different alignment to the fortress. Careful study of the newly prepared town plan of Colchester revealed hidden in the layout of its streets the ghost of the missing fortress. This took the form of a pattern of streets on the military alignment found at Lion Walk and consistent in area and design with fortresses known elsewhere. The fortress, now confirmed at Culver Street, lay under the western half of the later Roman town,

Following the discovery of the fortress and with the benefit of further excavations especially at Balkerne Lane and Culver Street, it is now possible to chart the development of the Roman and later town at various stages. Of special interest is the way in which the fortress was converted into a town. Probably most of the military buildings and streets were kept for reuse in the new settlement. Whilst this saved much effort in building new streets and houses, it meant that there was not enough room for the large public buildings which the settlers wanted. To make the space, the surrounding bank and ditch which had protected the fortress was demolished and a new street grid was laid out on the eastern side of the town to incorporate the new public buildings. These included the temple

legend:
- street metalling
- ditch —complete cross section excavated
- ditch — partially located
- rampart

- ■ Boudican destruction
- □ Boudican destruction absent
- ● Claudian coin(s)
- ✦ pre-Flavian samian

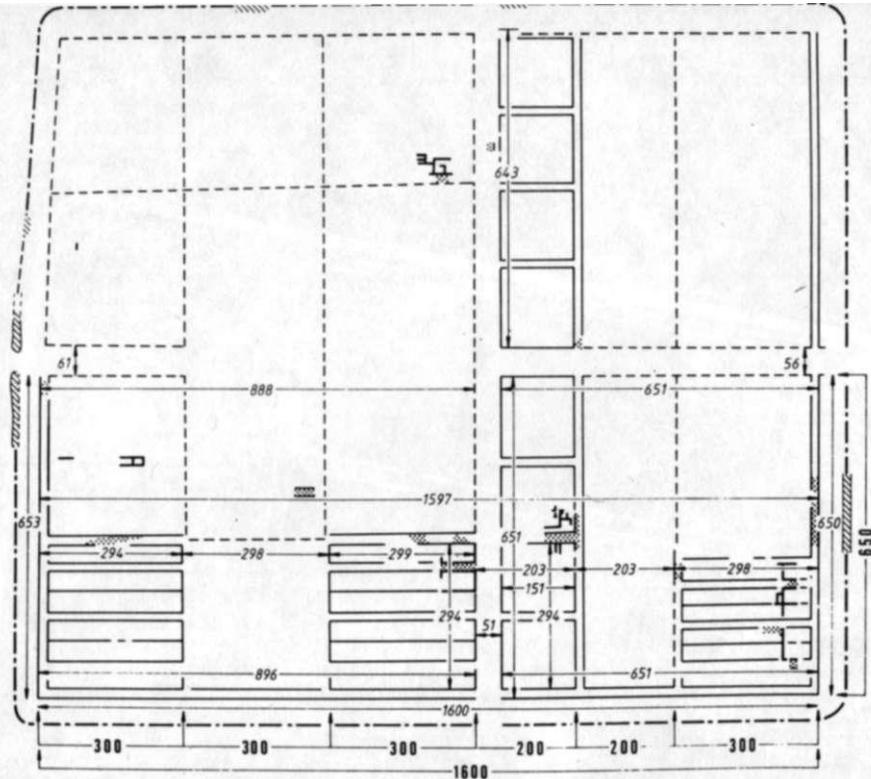* The conversion of the fortress at Colchester (top) into the town before the Boudican revolt (bottom).

* OVERLEAF: The streets of Roman Colchester (c 150 and later) superimposed on modern Colchester. The position of the fortress is indicated by a thick dashed line. Photograph by Aerofilms Limited.

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Balkerne
Gate

Temple

Roman town wall

* Measurements of the fortress at Colchester. The actual measurements are in italics. The intended measurements are shown in bold around the edge of the plan.

of Claudius (the remains of which you can see under Colchester Castle), a town hall (probably immediately south of the Temple), and a theatre (the site of which was confirmed at Maidenburgh Street in 1981). Unfortunately, the legionary defences were not replaced and the town was undefended at the time of the revolt. This, according to the Roman historian Tacitus, was why it was easy for the Britons to destroy the town.
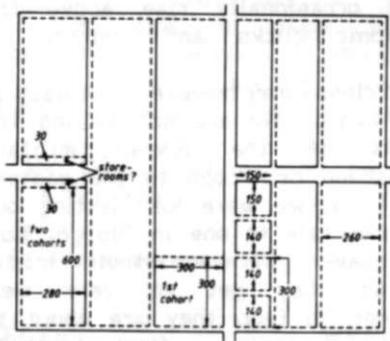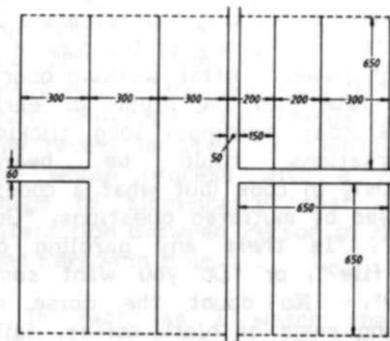
Another and more recent 'high' was the discovery (unique in its way) of how the military planner set about drawing up the plan for the fortress at Colchester all these years ago. This is the first time the layout of any fortress has been 'cracked' in this way and was achieved principally

because it is possible to tie down all archaeological facts to the highly accurate Ordnance Survey plans. Last autumn, following the end of the first phase of excavations at Culver Street, I replotted the evidence for the street systems of the fortress and the later town just as I had done almost ten years earlier but this time taking into account all the new information available since then. For some years I had been hoping to understand how the plan of the fortress had been formulated but without success. However, much to my surprise, it all turned out to be so obvious and easy to spot, that, even allowing for the fact that previously I had only the 1973 plans to work with, I wondered how I could have missed it before. Various measurements were taken of

key distances on the plan and these were converted into Roman feet. As a result it was possible to untangle the thought processes of the military planner.

First he set out on his plan a series of strips 300 and 200 feet wide. He then marked out the northern and southern limits of the fortress and its main streets. Next he set out the main north-south minor streets by cutting these out of the 200 and 300 feet wide strips and then began to allocate plots for the individual buildings. The theoretical measurements are in some cases extremely close to the actual dimensions as taken from the Ordnance Survey plan and the theory of how the fortress plan was conceived seems to be very convincing. Mo doubt similar work on other fortress plans will show the same kind of pattern.

For obvious reasons, archaeology is very object-orientated. This is hardly surprising when every year fresh objects are unearthed by the ton. It is however most unusual to discover how in anitiquity somebody thought and solved a particular intellectual problem: in this case how to plan the fortress at Colchester. We can be certain that once the plan was made, nobody gave it a second thought, Probably few if any of the soldiers would have known - or cared - how the layout of their based was devised and perhaps few if any of the occupants of the later town realised that some of the streets in Roman Colchester were of military origin, far less that they were set out on the basis of strips

* Three stages in the formulation of the plan of the fortress at Colchester. Measurements in Roman feet (pedes Monetales).

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200 and 300 feet wide. And why should they? Yet here we are, much later, able to bridge a huge gulf and read that planner's mind of almost 2,000 years ago.

Philip Crummy

MIDNIGHT FEASTS

If the telephone at the Trust's headquarters at Lexden Road were bugged, listeners-in might be forgiven for thinking that someone on the staff was a spy in the pay of a foreign power. After working-hours, often late into the night, or early on Saturday mornings, long clicking conversations could be heard, obviously in code (but what a code!), followed by muttered questions, "Got that?", "Is there any garbling on that file?", or "Do you want some more?". No doubt the noise of chinking mugs of black coffee, nail-biting, and anxious pacing footsteps would occasionally rise above the electronic clicks and whirrs.

Friends may however rest easy in their beds. We are not selling the details of the Roman military disposition of troops to the eastern bloc. No, we were just letting our computer talk to one in Slough. Now they have got over their initial shyness they get on very well together; in fact, they are about to produce their first book.

By using our word-processing programme and editing in commands which the Slough computer understands in terms of print size, italic, bold, etc, etc, we can transfer text down the telephone line straight on to the Slough machine's disks by using a modem coupler. Our modem coupler is a small rectangular device with a foam rest for the telephone receiver, two switches and four lights. The lights show which computer is talking when. They do not talk to each other in one of the usual computer languages, but in the most fundamental way possible, a sort of electronic Morse code. When our modem is linked to the computer, we simply dial the Slough tyepsetter's telephone number, wait for him to answer and confirm that he too is ready, then put the receiver on to the modem's rest, tell the computer to transfer a file, and sit back and twiddle our thumbs (or bite our nails!). The telephone line has to be fairly clear, as too much crackling can have a disastrous effect on the text, so after each file has been sent it is checked to see that the line hasn't interfered in any way.

It all sounds rather easy, doesn't it? But Ron Foord, the typesetter, has put in a lot of very hard work finding a programme that will enable our computers to link up, As they are not the same make, and as they do not use the same language, a lot of complications arose during the test runs. However, he persisted, and with help at our end from Charles Bowman of the Department of Computer Science at Essex University, the modem link was set up. From now on all should be plain sailing,

And the reason why it is done late at night or at weekends? As all computers know, it's the cheapest time to phone your friends!

Nina Crummy

NOTES

DIG IT

(How the processing of pottery at Culver Street is seen from the inside by two helpers, David Arnold from the Colchester Royal Grammar School and Emma Finney from Charles Lucas School.)

Should the world end between the hours of 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. during the week, there is a small group of people that probably won't notice. Even assuming that one of them does catch sight of the flood or the fire, he'll most likely feel compelled to 'finish this box' before donning his swimming trunks or his asbestos dungarees.

Perhaps it's the idea of sorting, bagging, marking debagging thousands of pieces of smashed pottery, while other people have 'real' jobs with ties and umbrellas and wages, that moulds the minds of these people into weird and wonderful shapes. The medical term for this (as Sue, the person in charge, will tell you) is lunacy. However, shuffling out of the time-tabled academic world, through the 'cut-price' commercial world, on my way to that sedate clutch of huts at Culver Street, it seems to me that the 'normal people' are the ones who lack sanity. For, here (unlike any other environment I know) a lot of trivial, unjustified conventions are simply trampled upon in the rush: Ph.D.s hump with G.C.Es, Youth jokes with Age, revolution sips the same 'tea' as conservation.

Also, there is the added bonus of actually being able to learn something, without having to put my hand up or plough through sixteen pages of text, only to discover that I'm in the wrong millenium anyway, I can toddle up to any one of the countless learned sages, an actual sherd in my hand, and say, "Wos this then? What are them knobbly bits?" The recent lectures have embellished the whole process with a further shade of significance, that of the interaction between Person in Museum and Person in Hole.

In fact, as I watch the dust settle on three tonnes of Roman pottery, blissfully aware of the clink of cups in the refreshments caravan, I think that this is probably one of the nicest Holes in the country.

By David 'Schliemann' Arnold & Emma 'Em' Finney

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RECENT MEETINGS

The Friends' AGM on January 29th was, as usual, in two parts. The business meeting was held in the morning at 12 Lexden Road, and among the items on the agenda lurked an innovation suggested by Colin Bellows, our Chairman. This was a summary of the Trust's work over the last year given by the Director, Philip Crummy. This gave Philip an opportunity to tell members about the the work of all the Trust's staff,

not just those who excavate and analyse. Those unsung heroes, the draughtsmen, for example. Also, he explained in some detail about the programme of publication, and the financing and methods of production of Colchester Archaeological Reports.

At our afternoon session in the Public Library lecture theatre we heard three talks. Dr Rosemary Luff told us of her work on the animal bone remains, and also passed round the skulls from the Balkerne Lane executions. Just the thing to give members a good appetite for tea! Robin Symonds brought us up to date with the progress of the pottery analysis, and Nick Smith led us through the ins and outs of building techniques in the Roman period as found on the Culver Street excavations.

In March intrepid members braved the cold for a coach trip to the wooden Anglo-Saxon church at Greensted near Ongar. He were met there by Adrian Gibson, one of southern England's experts on timber buildings, and Cecil Hewett of Essex County Council. Cecil is the man who has revolutionised the methods of dating timber buildings on the joints used in their constructions. Between them they gave us a most illuminating afternoon, taking us on from Greensted to the nearby church of Navestock, which has a wonderful Norman timber-framed tower, and, most unusually, timber columns and arches in the nave. These were discovered by Cecil Hewett sticking a penknife into one of the columns! I can

always tell a successful trip by the difficulty I have in persuading members back on to the coach. At Greensted and Navestock it was rather like trying to get bees to leave a honey pot!

Unfortunately, the trip in May to Coggeshall was cancelled because of the low number of bookings. A hard core of dedicated members regularly support the trips, but even so most outings either make a small loss or just break even. In Ipswich the Archaeology Section at the County Hall, led by Keith Hade, has recently formed a "Friends" group, and our trips in their direction will be thrown open to their members.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Saturday July 9th is the day set for the coach trip to Norwich. We will leave the War Memorial by the Castle Park promptly at 8.00 a.m. - those with difficulty getting out of bed early will be left behind quite ruthlessly - and drive to Ipswich if any members of the Suffolk County Archaeology Section's Friends wish to be picked up there (or any Ipswich-based members of our Friends). Leaving Ipswich at 8.45 a.m. we will go on to Framlingham Castle for a quick look round before arriving at Norwich at 11.30 a.m. Brian Ayres of the Norfolk Archaeology Section will meet us there and show us round the remains of the medieval (and earlier) town. Brian has been working in Norwich for some time now, and has done some remarkable work along the waterfront at Norwich. There may be

an excavation in the Castle Bailey at the time of our trip, which will be an added bonus. He will break the tour for lunch (the time to be arranged there, depending on whether or not we arrived on schedule), and there will be free time from about 3.00 p.m. for those wishing to explore the town or look round the Norwich Castle Museum. We will leave Norwich at 4.30 p.m. and expect to be back in Colchester by 7.00 p.m.
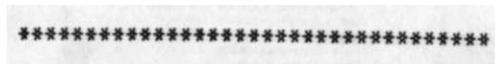
On Saturday September 3rd there will be a coach trip to Orford on the Suffolk coast just north of Hoodbridge. Orford is now primarily a fishing community, and is noted for two things - the excellence of its seafood restaurant and pubs, and its castle. From the top of the keep the view across the Suffolk countryside is breath-taking, and it is easy to imagine how nerve-wracking a sentry vigil up there might have been in times of civil strife. The coach will leave the War Memorial at 12.30 p.m., and call at Ipswich for anyone wishing to be picked up there. He hope to be at Orford by 2.00 p.m. He will start back at about 4.30 p.m. to arrive back in Colchester by 6.00 p.m.

On Saturday November 5th there will be a very rapid tour of the parish churches south of Colchester. Leaving the War Memorial at 1.00 p.m. I hope to take in the churches at Great and Little Wigborough, Little Birch, Peldon, and Fingringhoe, and the site of the now disappeared church at Langenhoe, We should aim to be back in Colchester at 5.00 p.m., but if I have my usual

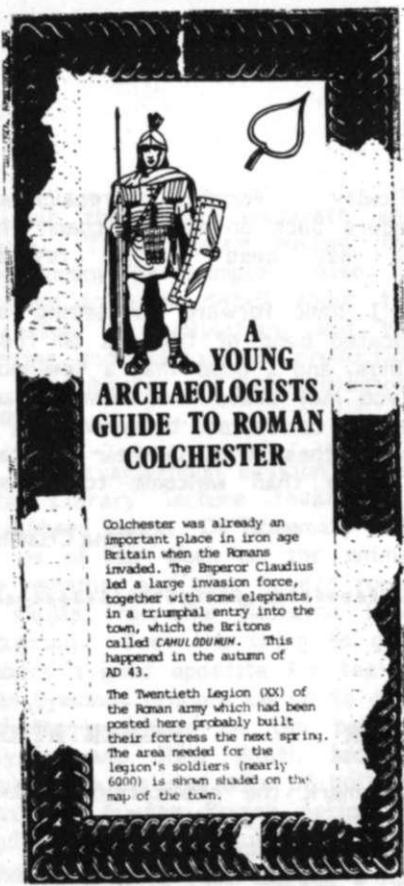difficulty forcing recalcitrant members back on to the coach this time may need to be revised!

I look forward to seeing our dedicated band of trippers on these outings, and I hope that a few more of you may brave the elements and join us. Of course, those wishing to come on these trips in their own cars are more than welcome to do so,

Nina Crummy.

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WINTER PRESENTATION

To mark the publication of two major reports by the Trust, it is planned to stage a presentation at which a special copy of each volume will be given to the Colchester Borough Council and all the Roman small finds will be handed over formally to the museum. The reports are **The Roman small finds from excavations in Colchester, 1971-9** by Nina Crummy (published this summer) and **Excavations at Lion Walk, Balkerne Lane, and Middleborough** by Philip Crummy (published this winter). The event will take place some time during the coming winter and will be accompanied by a small display of some of the relevant objects. Refreshments will be available. Friends will be invited to attend and will receive details nearer the time. We very much hope you will be able to join us.

A YOUNG ARCHAEOLOGISTS GUIDE TO ROMAN COLCHESTER

Colchester was already an important place in iron age Britain when the Romans invaded. The Emperor Claudius led a large invasion force, together with some elephants, in a triumphal entry into the town, which the Britons called *CAMULODUNUM*. This happened in the autumn of AD 43.

The Twentieth Legion (XX) of the Roman army which had been posted here probably built their fortress the next spring. The area needed for the legion's soldiers (nearly 6000) is shown shaded on the map of the town.

GUIDE TO ROMAN COLCHESTER

Mike Corbishley has just produced his Young Archaeologist's Guide to Roman Colchester. It takes the form of an A4 sheet of thin card printed both sides with information about what there is to see in the town. Also included is a town map and an artist's impression of Colchester in Roman times. The guide is published by the Young Archaeologist's Club with the aid of the profit from the concert given by the Bianchi Ensemble last year which many of the Friends attended. The guide costs 15p and is available at bookshops, the museum and the Culver Street site.

The FRIENDS OF THE COLCHESTER ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST has been formed to provide a means of keeping interested members of the public informed about the archaeological work going on in and around the historic town of Colchester. The Friends provide the funds to publish CATALOGUE - the newsletter of the Colchester Archaeological Trust. Friends receive two newsletters a year, attend an annual programme of lectures on the previous year's progress, are given conducted tours of current sites and can take part in a regular programme of archaeological visits to sites and monuments in the area.

The annual subscription rates are as follows' Adults £.1.50, Children and Students 75p, Family Membership £2.00, and Institutions £1.00. Those who live too far away to attend meetings or go on trips can receive newsletters only at a reduced rate of £1.OO. Subscriptions should be sent to Brenda May, Honorary Treasurer, Friends of the Colchester Archaeological Trust. 5 William Close. Wivenhoe, Colchester. Essex.

Philip Crummy   (Editor)