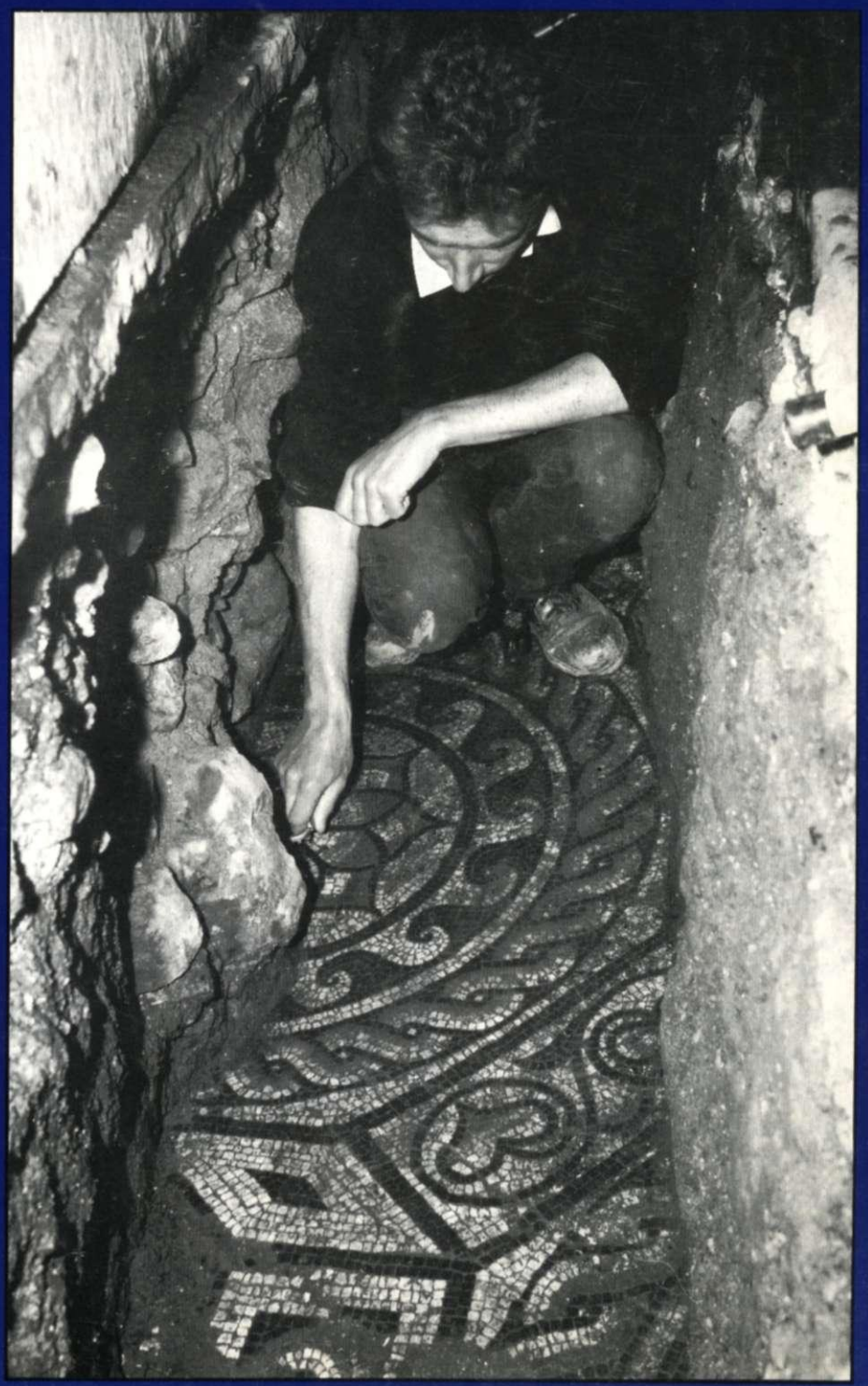
The COLCHESTER ARCHAEOLOGIST



THE CHAPEL ON THE ROOF

RED LION HOTEL

TOWN WALL

A FAREWELL TO ARMS

AROUND THE COUNTY

ARCHAEOLOGY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Issue Number 2 (1988-9)
£1.00

The COLCHESTER ARCHAEOLOGIST

The Colchester Archaeologist is an annual magazine which replaced *Catalogue*, the newsletter published twice yearly since 1976 by the Colchester Archaeological Trust and the Friends of the Colchester Archaeological Trust.

Cover: uncovering a mosaic pavement at the Red Lion

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the chapel on the roof

the remains of the lost chapel on the top of Colchester's eleventh-century castle go on permanent display

Practically all of the chapel in Colchester Castle was destroyed about three hundred years ago when much of the Castle was knocked down for building rubble. It was hard going — gunpowder and powerful screws had to be used. The walls of the upper part, being pierced by large windows and lateral passages, were eventually cleared away. But the lower part was too solidly built and stubbornly refused to be destroyed. Eventually, the demolition men gave up and the dreadfully-mutilated castle was sold. Fortunately, within about twenty years, the Castle found its way into the hands of Charles Gray, an antiquarian and later the member of Parliament for Colchester, who repaired the building with great care and dedication.

The level of the floor of the chapel corresponds with the position of the present roof of the castle. The little that survives of the chapel consists of the stump of the outer wall and the base of the floor. The remains have been hidden away for up to 200 years under a series of tiled roofs. But these have recently been removed as part of a plan to put the remains on permanent display.

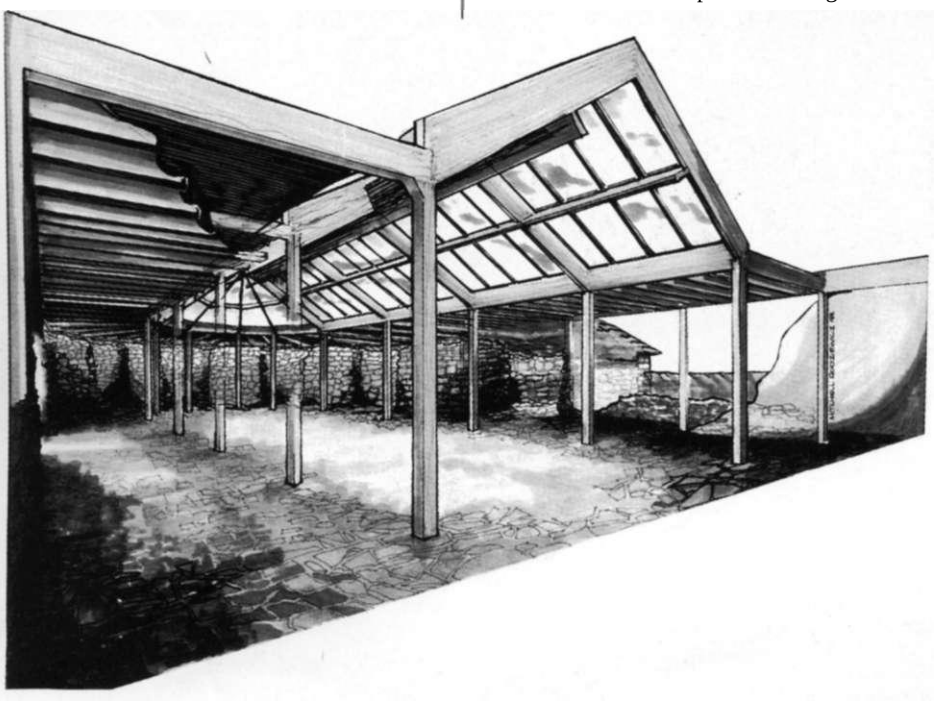
After the roofs were taken down, the Colchester Archaeological Trust carried out what in effect was the town's highest-ever excavation. It had been hoped that the floor of the chapel would survive and that the stumps would be found of stone pillars which formed aisles in the building (like the chapel in the White Tower of London).

The base of the chapel's outer wall still stands to an impressive height of six feet or so but nothing exists of the original Norman floor. Instead was a neatly-paved surface of bricks and re-used Roman brick. This was laid to provide a water-tight cover over the crypt below and is almost certainly yet more work of Charles Gray.

The remains are to be displayed in a new building being specially built for the purpose on the Castle roof. The new structure has been designed so that it will be practically invisible from the ground and not affect the look of the Castle. It is to house the fine mosaic pavement found in 1978 during the Middleborough excavations.

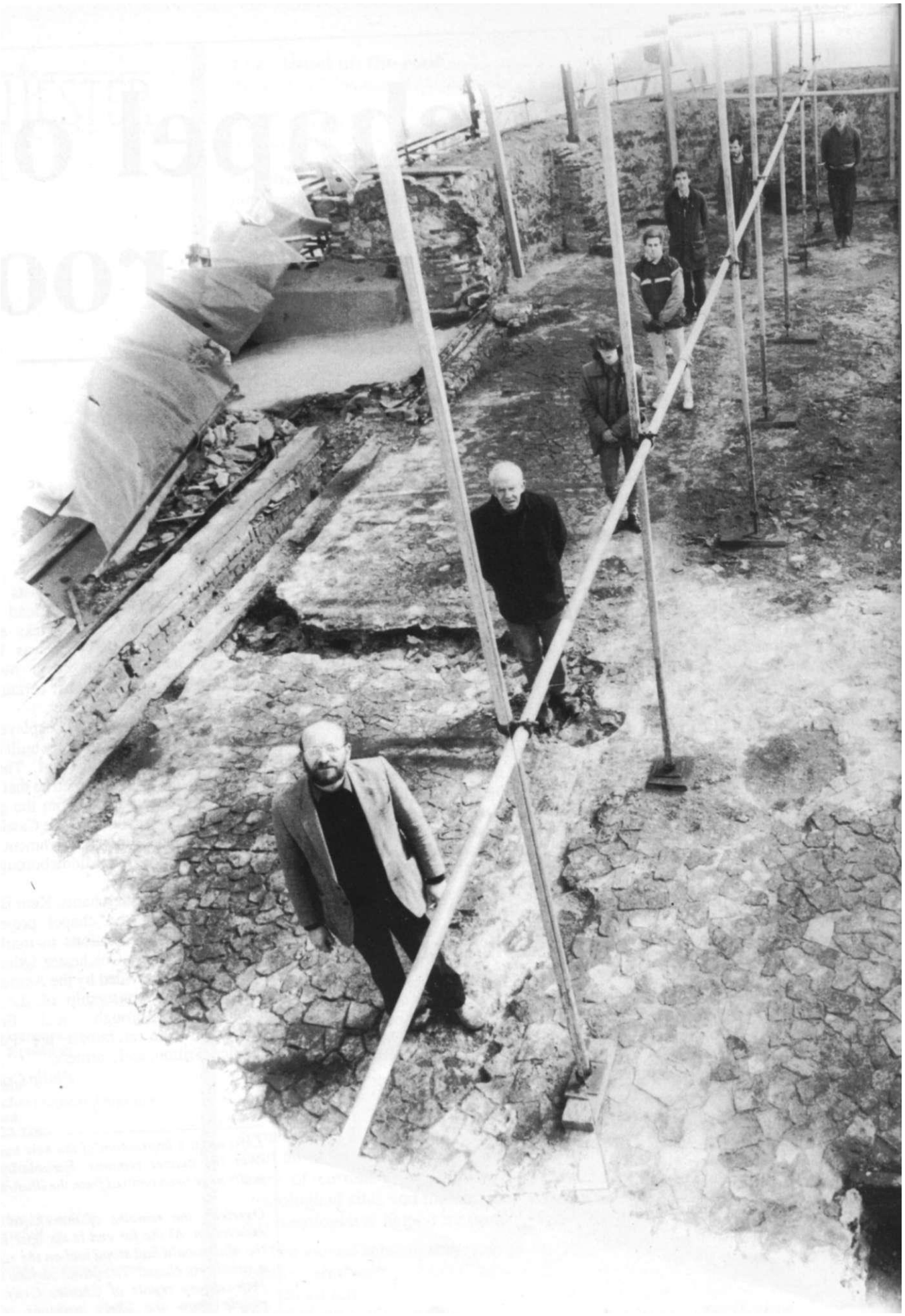
The builder's merchants, Kent Blaxill, are sponsoring the chapel project as part of their celebrations to mark 150 years of trading in Colchester. Other support is being provided by the Association of Business Sponsorship of the Arts, Colchester Borough, and English Heritage. The architects are Purcell, Miller, Tritton. and Partners.

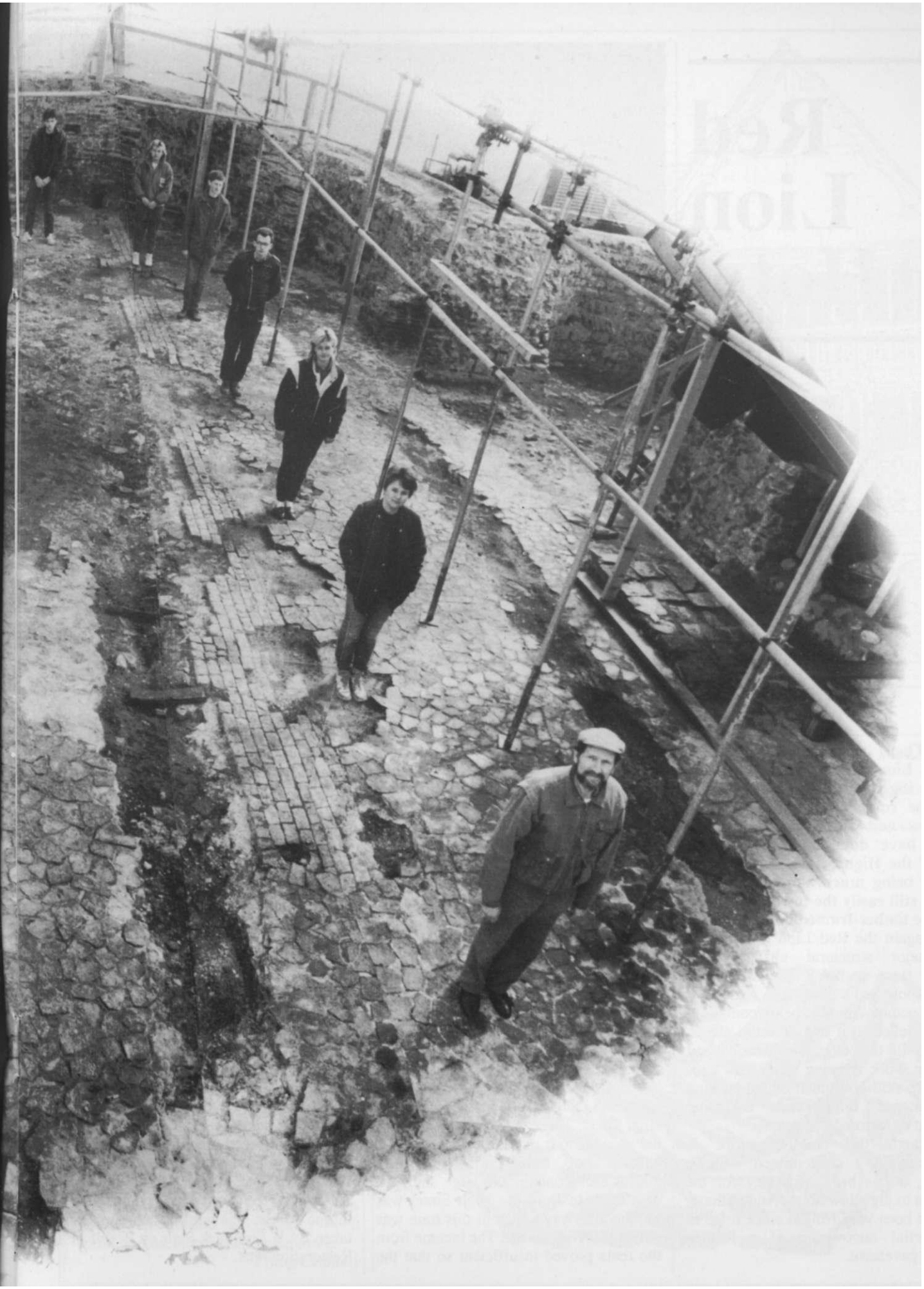
Philip Crummy



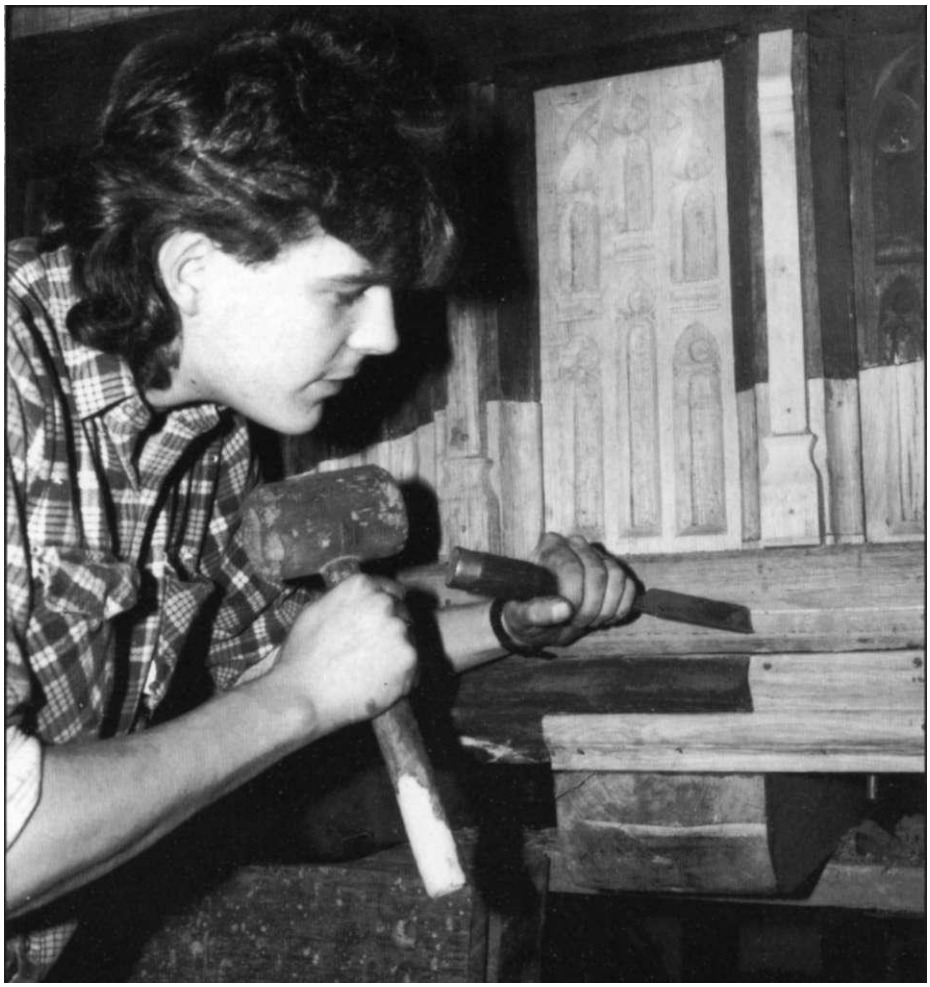
Left: artist's impression of the new building over the chapel remains. For clarity, the walls have been omitted from the illustration.

Overleaf: the remains of the chapel after excavation. At the far end is the apse where the altar would had stood and on the right is a small side chapel. The paved surface is the 18lh-century repair of Charles Gray. The people show the likely positions of the original columns — if these ever existed.





Red Lion Hotel



New replaces old— repair work at the Red Lion.

When it was built, the Red Lion must have been a striking sight. Its high gables over the rows of handsome arched windows and finely carved panels would have dominated the central part of the High Street. Even today, despite being much altered, the Red Lion is still easily the town's most impressive timber-framed building.

Yet again the Red Lion is undergoing major structural change. The ground floor is being converted into small shop units and the remaining hotel accommodation is being completely remodelled. But this time the alterations are for the better. The planning and building work is being done with considerable skill and much of the missing or damaged timber-work is being repaired or restored.

Although the building work is predominantly concentrated above ground, it has been necessary for the builders to dig a few holes. And of these, one has been very fruitful since it led to the partial uncovering of a Roman mosaic pavement.

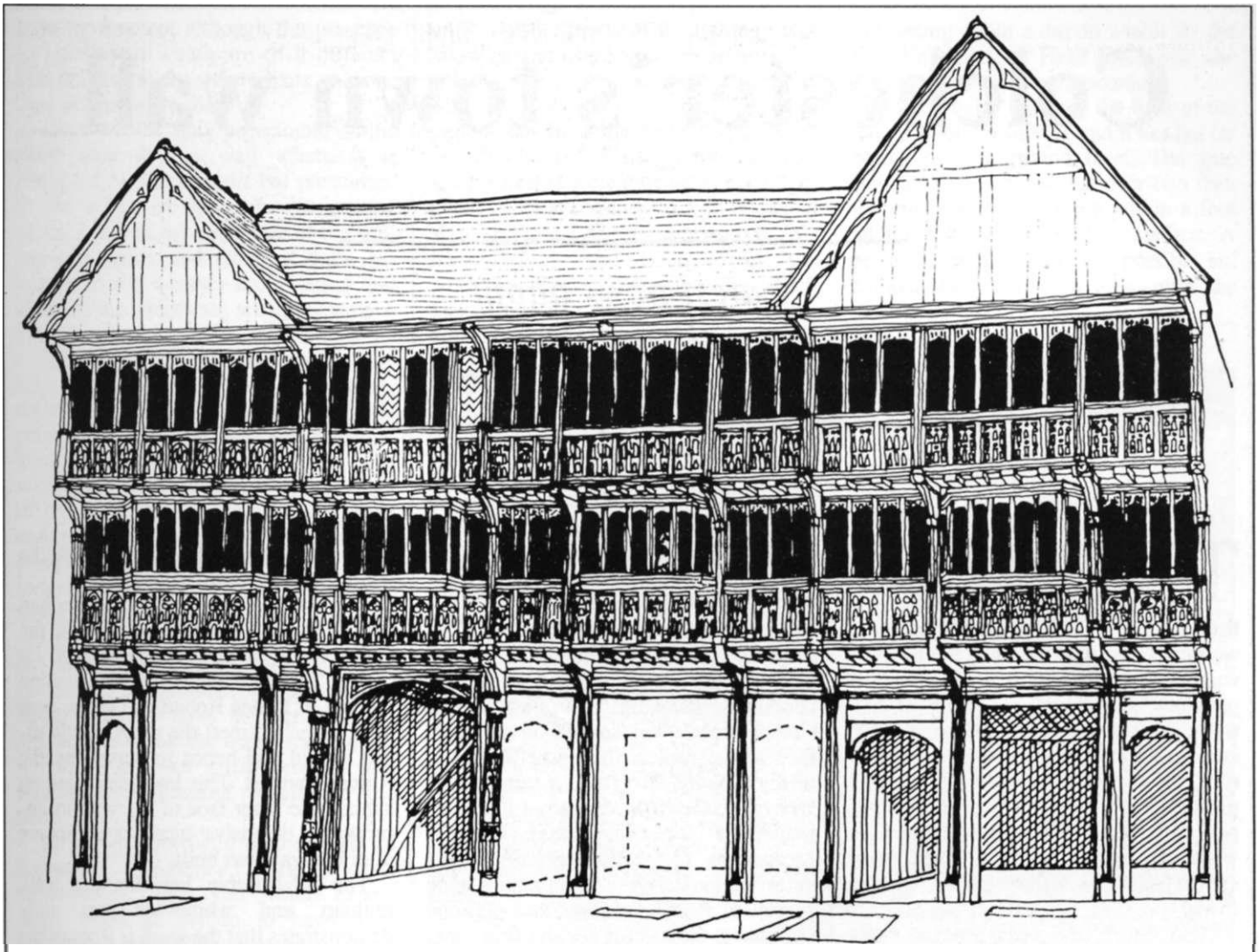
Unravelling the sequence

Closely involved with the conversion work is David Stenning of the Building Division at the Essex County Council's Planning Department. He and his colleagues are taking the opportunity to study and record the building and fathom out its complicated structural history. It is a difficult task but his latest working theory is as follows.

The building stems from a speculative development by the influential Howard family, either by the Duke of Norfolk or perhaps his son (the Earl of Surrey). It was probably built as five distinct but structurally-integrated houses incorporating part of an earlier building. Three were comparatively small and formed a single unit overlooking the High Street. These were of three storeys, the ground floor of each consisting of a lock-up shop. Behind were two large houses each containing a large hall. Access to these from the High Street was via the alleyway which at this time was only a short *cul-de-sac.* The income from the rents proved insufficient so that the whole complex was soon re-let as an inn. The alleyway was later extended southwards to gain access to the rear of the property where there were stables and various other ancillary buildings. This is likely to have happened in the 18th century at the time when coaching inns were at their peak and was achieved by demolishing part of one of the large halls.

David Stenning finds the building hard to date closely. The New Inn (or White Lion as it was also called) was certainly in existence by 1516 because its name crops up in a document of that date. He sees the main phase of building work taking place around 1500, with the earlier house which it incorporated dating from about 1475. The Red Lion acquired its present name much later. The colour change happened during the reign of James I in deference to the red rampant lion of Scotland.

The architects for the project are Dunthorne Parker. The work is being undertaken by H Firmin & Sons on behalf of Restoration Inns.



The mosaic

The pavement was uncovered in the bottom of a sewer trench dug along the alleyway. The floor (see cover photograph) is coloured white, grey, and red and is made of cubes less than half an inch across. The design seems to be based around four large circles, one in each corner. The whole must measure about 15 feet across. The pavement probably dates to the second half of the second century AD and is a fine example of the fifty or so which have been recorded in the town. Probably it would have adorned one of the best rooms of a substantial private house.

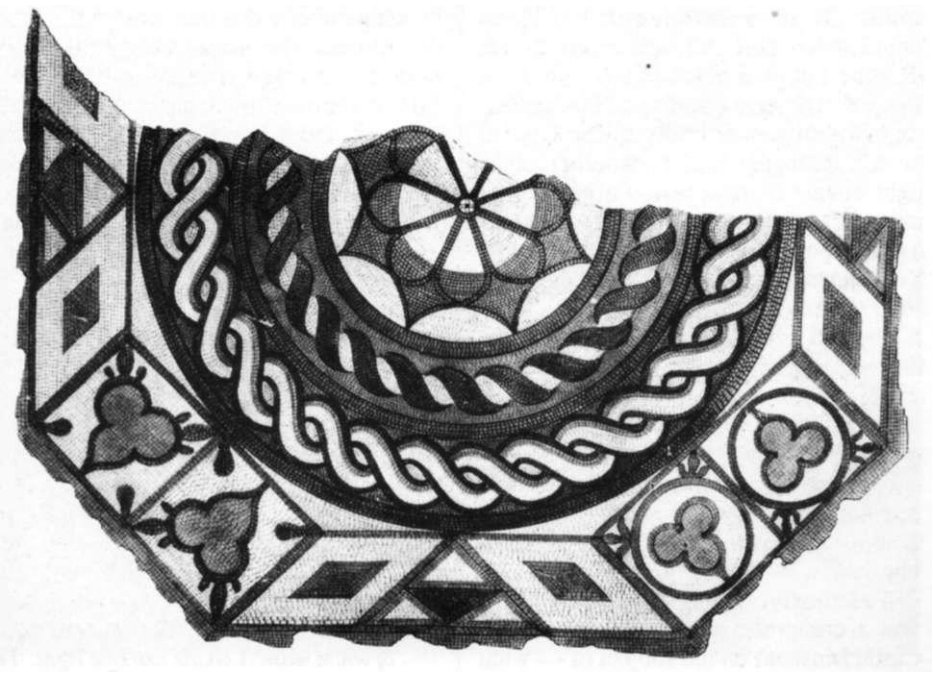
The mosaic has been seen at least twice before. The floor was partly uncovered in 1858 when a rather inaccurate drawing was made of it by Josiah Parish. A corner was later lifted in 1882 and still hangs on display in the Red Lion.

Much less than one quarter of the mosaic has been exposed during the present works. How much more still survives underground is unclear — it could be that there is not much more.

Philip Crummy

Above: reconstruction by David Stenning of the High Street frontage of the Red Lion in the 16th century.

Below: Josiah Parish's painting of the part of the mosaic uncovered in 1857. This more or less corresponds to the recently exposed area.



Colchester's town wall

Latest news about Britain's oldest town defences

This has undoubtedly been the year of the wall. It was never intended this way but that is how things have worked out. For a start, we now have discovered that the wall was whitewashed. This means that all previous artists' impressions of the town which show the attractive tile courses in the wall are wrong. From now on, the wall should be shown as plain, boring white! As you might expect, once having recognised the lime wash, traces of it have since been spotted at two other places in the town.

Also during the year, Roman Head Gate was discovered. Although only a tiny part of the gate could be exposed, this was the first time that the remains have been examined in a proper archaeological fashion. Then there were the drain arches, two being excavated within the space of six months. These sound rather dull and uninteresting, but they are impressive structures to look at and are important because of the level of sophistication they imply in the Roman town's drainage system. Another highlight was the reconstruction of part of the inner face of the wall at Culver Street — a rare opportunity to put something back. You can see this if you walk down St John's Street.

The major programme of repair to the walls is scheduled to start in 1988 and in anticipation of this, the first stage of the detailed stone-for-stone recording of the wall began in the summer of that year. The section involved was the stretch south of the Balkerne Gate — the Priory Street wall is to follow.

And finally, to round it all off, there was **a** comprehensive exhibition in the Castle Museum on the subject of — what else but the town walls?

Lime wash

The presence of lime wash was first suspected when yellowish white patches were noticed on the wall at Culver Street. However it was not until a similar deposit was spotted on the inner face of the wall at the Swag Shop site in Short Wyre Street that a sample was sent off to Graham Morgan at Leicester University for examination. Graham Morgan is an archaeological conservator who is carrying out a nation-wide survey of Roman mortars and plasters. On seeing the sample for the first time, he was not very convinced. But he was amazed at what he saw down his electron microscope — at least 45 separate layers of wash! Subsequent chemical analysis indicated that the wash was at least 95 per cent pure lime and that two of the layers were of a different composition to the others. The wash varies in thickness, the average being about 0.1 mm. The combined thicknesses of all the coats is about 4mm (ie a tenth of an inch). Graham Morgan was unable to see any brush marks on the surfaces of the coats which suggested to him that the wash was very fluid when applied.

The wash is undoubtedly Roman and not some later addition because in the three places where it has been seen (ie Culver Street, Swag Shop, and behind the site of Renee Roberts's Garage next to St Peter's Street) the wash was in effect sealed and hence preserved by the Roman rampart. This had been piled up against the inner face of the wall to improve its defensive qualities sometime after the wall was built.

The relationship between the wall, rampart and whitewash not only demonstrates that the wash is Roman but it also provides an indication of how frequently the wall was painted. The wall was probably built between AD 65 and 80 and the rampart added at the very most 100 years later. This represents an average of one coat of wash at least every two years. Since the wall was over a mile and half long, there could conceivably been a gang of men permanently employed to paint it. Of course each painting operation may have involved the application of several coats in which case the painting sessions would not have

A section through the coats of lime wash on the Roman wall as seen through an electron microscope. The surface of the stone is on the extreme left and the latest coat of white wash is on the extreme right. The section is about 4 mm across.

been so frequent although the presence of two layers which are of a different composition to the others hints at a one coat per session policy.

The wash has only been found on the inner face of the wall where it is protected by the rampart but presumably the whole of the wall was painted white. Little of the outer face of the wall survives intact, and where it does, exposure to the weather has ensured that traces of the whitewash are likely to have long vanished.

The purpose of the wash would have been to protect the wall, particularly from frost damage, by stopping the penetration of water into the masonry. Until comparatively recent times, this was a common way of protecting walls of brick and stone generally. The main reason why today the outer face of the Roman wall is crumbling is that it no longer has any protective coating. Walk along any stretch of the wall and you will see dozens of shattered pieces lying at the foot of it. The forthcoming comprehensive programme of repairs to the town wall can have no lasting effect but will only stem the decay for a period of years. It is an awful prospect but regular white-washing would do the trick.

If, as we now believe, the walls of Roman Colchester had been whitewashed, then you would expect other walls in Britain to have been similarly treated. However the evidence is limited. A few years ago, a part of Hadrian's Wall was excavated which was covered with the patchy remains of a thin white coating of some sort. And more recently a similar discovery was made during excavations at the fort at Newcastle. Clearly in Colchester, more samples from other parts of the wall need to be obtained and examined to confirm the results so far and to shed more light on the number of coats involved. Equally we look to excavators in Britain's other Roman towns to see if similar evidence can be recovered elsewhere.

Head Gate

In medieval times, Head Gate was the town's chief or 'head' gate which is how it acquired its name. The gate stood at the Crouch Street end of Head Street between the fur shop (now closed) and the opticians on the opposite side of the road and, like most of the other town gates, it was Roman in origin. The gate was demolished in 1753. Since then, small parts of foundations had been exposed occasionally in service trenches without much record so that until 1988, practically nothing was known about its plan or appearance.

Part of the gate was uncovered when Sir Isaac's Walk was being resurfaced as part of the finishing work for the Culver Precinct. The old pavements and street surfaces were dug out to a depth of about a foot to be replaced with brick and slab surfaces. At the junction of Sir Isaac's Walk and Head Street, the workmen clipped some masonry which looked to be of some antiquity. Consequently, a hurried excavation was carried out lasting about a day in which for the first time part of Head Gate was uncovered, examined and recorded.

Surprisingly, much of the base of the gate is likely to survive and it lies not far below present ground level. The gate stands to a height of just over two feet, the uppermost parts lying within a foot and a half of the modern surface. A proper excavation was not possible but enough was uncovered to identify the

First sight of Roman Head Gate.

remains as part of the north-east corner of the gate.

Everything which could be seen was Roman — there were no indications of any medieval alterations to the gate. It may be therefore that the medieval version of the gate may have been largely based on the Roman one, at least in terms of plan. Of course, we cannot be certain of this without a full excavation of the whole gate.

With so little of the gate uncovered, it is practically impossible to reconstruct the complete ground plan. Roman gates could be designed with various combinations of different arches, from the simplest with just one archway like Colchester's Duncan's Gate to the largest like the Balkerne Gate with two central archways flanked by two small ones. The position of the centre line of the Roman street which passes through Head Gate is known to within plus or minus five feet or so. This provides a rough indication of the position of the centre of the gate and thus is a help with any attempt to reconstruct the ground plan of the gate.

Most of the streets of the town were lined with footways. As a result principally of the excavations at Lion Walk and Culver Street, it now seems that the streets and footways were laid out to a standard plan based on strips measuring 12.5 Roman feet across. As you might expect, the gates, streets and footways seem to have been designed in a co-ordinated way. In effect the footways each occupied a single strip and the street itself two strips plus an extra five feet to allow for the central supports of the gates. Thus the combined widths of the streets and footways was 55 Roman feet (16.5 m).

The widths of the carriageways of two of Colchester's gates are known (ie Balkerne Gate and Duncan's Gate) and, significantly, they not only turn out to be the same but also to measure 12.5 Roman feet. When this formula is applied to the remains at Head Gate (using the positions of the corner of the gate and the centre line of the street), the resulting plan is that of a gate of two archways.

The picture is in fact rather more complicated than this. For example, the street through the Balkerne Gate was in fact 60 feet across rather than 55 because it was inherited from the legionary fortress which predated the town. This 60 foot dimension was confirmed at Culver Street where a similar street bisected the site north to south and is also reflected in the distance between the outermost edges of the two outer archways at the Balkerne Gate. This gate, as already explained, was designed to tie in with the dimensions of the street which it was to straddle.

Although the reconstruction of Roman Head Gate works fairly neatly, it contradicts the little that is known about the gate in later times. On Speed's and Morant's plans of Colchester, the gate is shown as consisting of a single arch. Since the gate was still standing when these plans were published (ie in 1610 and 1748 respectively), this evidence cannot easily be dismissed. There are three possible explanations for the difference between these representations and the reconstruction: the reconstruction is wrong; the plans, being drawn to a small scale, only show the gate in an idealised way; the gate was extensively rebuilt in medieval times and converted to a single arch gate from a double one. Only further excavation can resolved the matter.

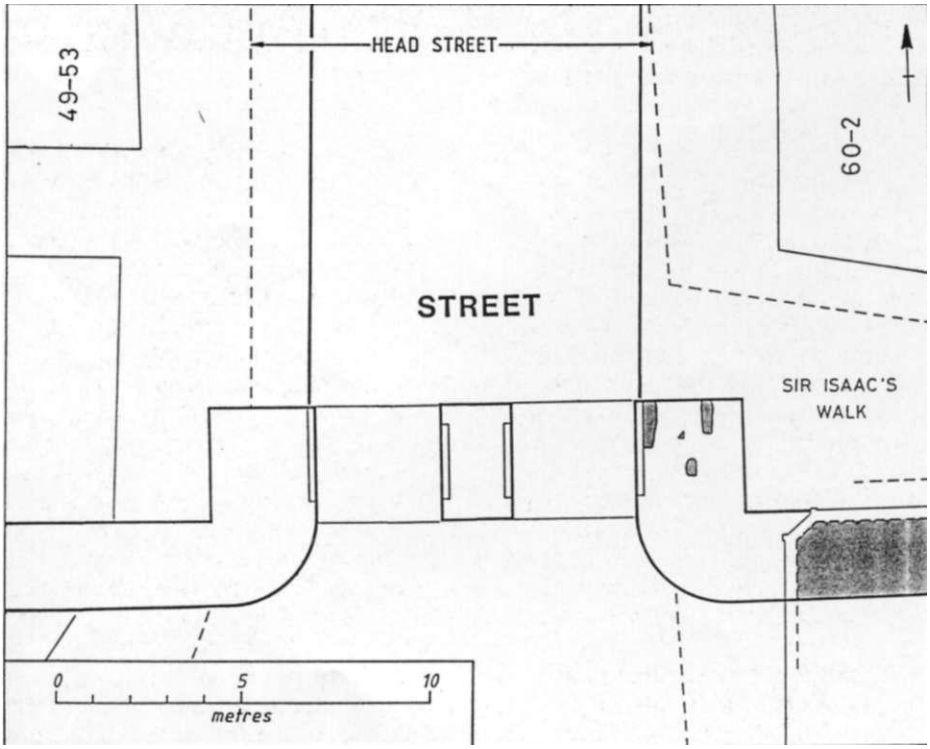
The other gates

In Roman times, there were at least six gates. The best preserved of these is the Balkerne Gate which straddled the road to the London and the west. The gate was large since it consisted of four arches: a pair of central archways flanked by two smaller pedestrian ones. It is was also unusual because the two central arches were part of an earlier gateway, erected as a free-standing monument sometime before the wall. This was probably built during the reign of Claudius to mark the foundation of the town and/or his military campaign in Britain which culminated in his visit to Colchester.

The only other gate which survives above ground in Colchester is to be seen in the Castle Park. The gate is comparatively well preserved — the ruins even include parts of two collapsed window openings. It is known as Duncan's Gate after the man who discovered it in 1853. The gate was small and consisted of only one archway which was similar in span to the central ones in the Balkerne Gate.

Unlike the Balkerne Gate and Duncan's Gate, the four other gates were all re-used in medieval and later times. The plans of all these gates are obscure and thus the extent to which they were rebuilt in post-Roman times is unknown. East Gate stood at the top of East Hill, North Gate at the foot of North Hill, South or St Botolph's Gate at the foot of Queen Street, and Head Gate at the southern end of Head Street. However, after the Siege of Colchester in 1648, the walls and gates ceased to have a defensive function and they were no longer maintained. Slowly the gates began to decay and one by one they were removed to ease the congestion which their existence caused. A large part of East Gate collapsed in 1651, presumably having

How Roman Head Gate may have appeared in plan.



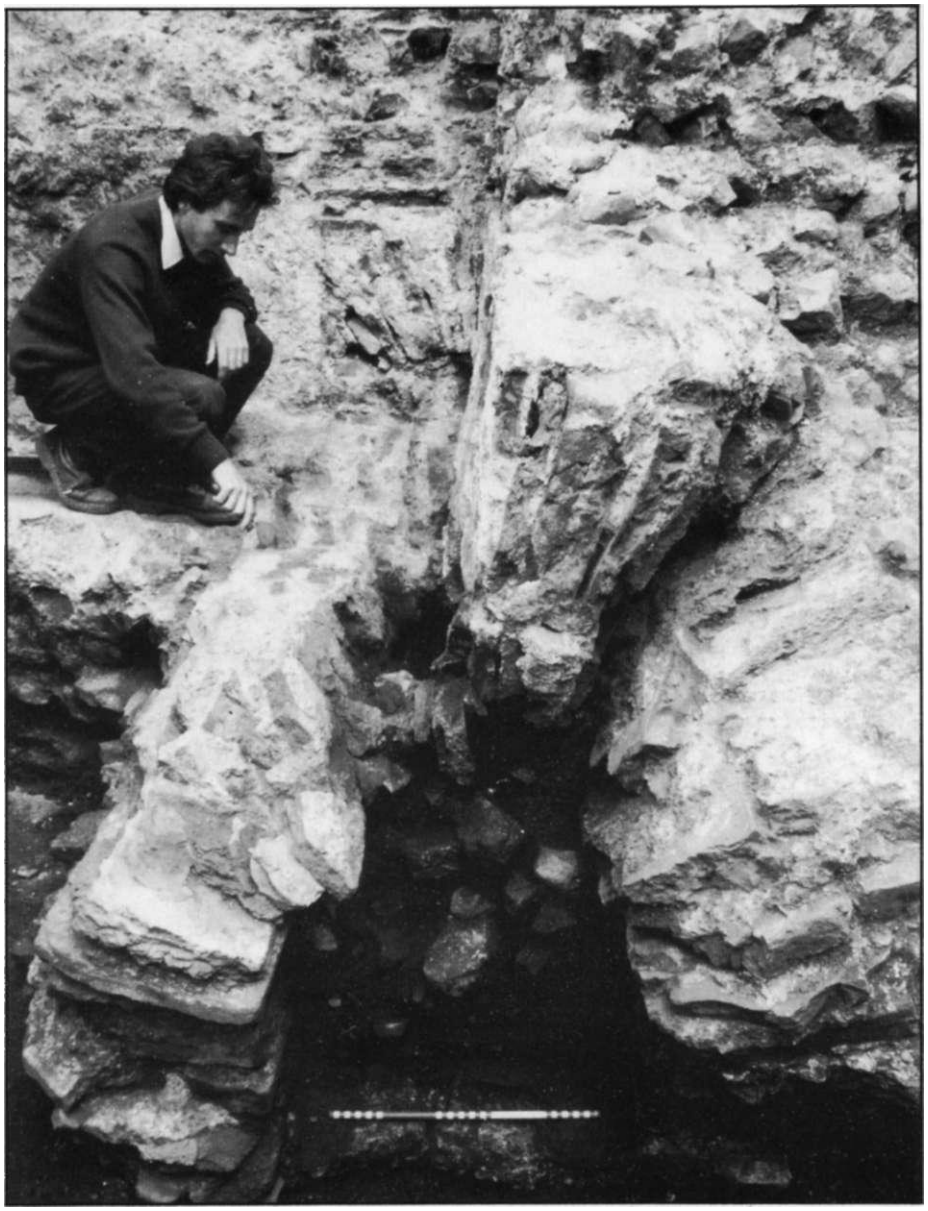
been badly damaged in the Siege a few years earlier. Head Gate was demolished in 1753, the North Gate suffering a similar fate some years later. The last remaining was South Gate which was pulled down in 1817 or 1818.

In addition, there were three other minor gates. One at St Mary's Steps was of medieval origin. It was far too narrow for wheeled traffic since it was only an enlarged Roman drain arch. The two other gates, ie Rye Gate and Schere Gate, may be of similar origin. The Roman wall is thought to pass unbroken under Sheregate Steps in which case the 'gate' may have been like that at St Mary' Steps. The Rye Gate, which was on the opposite side of town to the Shere Gate, was probably not of Roman origin because, as far as we can tell, it did not lie at the end of a Roman street. The gate was taken down in 1659.

The drain arches

The control and disposal of water was an important consideration for the comfort of the inhabitants of the Roman town. Water for drinking, washing, bathing, and various commercial uses was brought into Colchester in large quantities under pressure through wooden water-mains. Practically all of this water ended up as waste which needed to be conducted out of the town again. Also the tiled roofs and the streets of hard-packed gravel meant that particularly after heavy rainstorms large puddles or even flooding would have been a serious problem unless there was adequate drainage. From the very beginning of the Roman town, a complicated system of wooden drains was in existence. Essentially the waste water was channelled along the sides of the streets and disposed of around the edges of the town. Smaller drains from each of the houses were connected to the roadside drains. In addition to carrying off domestic waste water, these minor drains appear to have served as the Roman equivalent to the guttering under the eaves of modern houses. These drains seem to have been open and were intended to catch the water which must have cascaded off the roofs during heavy storms. They also prevented the build up of puddles next to the walls. As far as we can tell, sewage was not deposited into the drains but instead special latrine pits were used where the liquid content was able to soak away into the ground.

Building the Roman wall presented a difficulty in relation to the drains and the unwanted water. If the town was to be ringed with a solid wall with no gaps apart from the gates, how was the water to escape? The answer was to incorporate in the foundation of the wall arched passageways which were wide enough to accommodate the wooden drains. In this way, the water could be conveyed through the wall and conveniently allowed to drain into the town ditch which was dug at the outer foot of the wall.

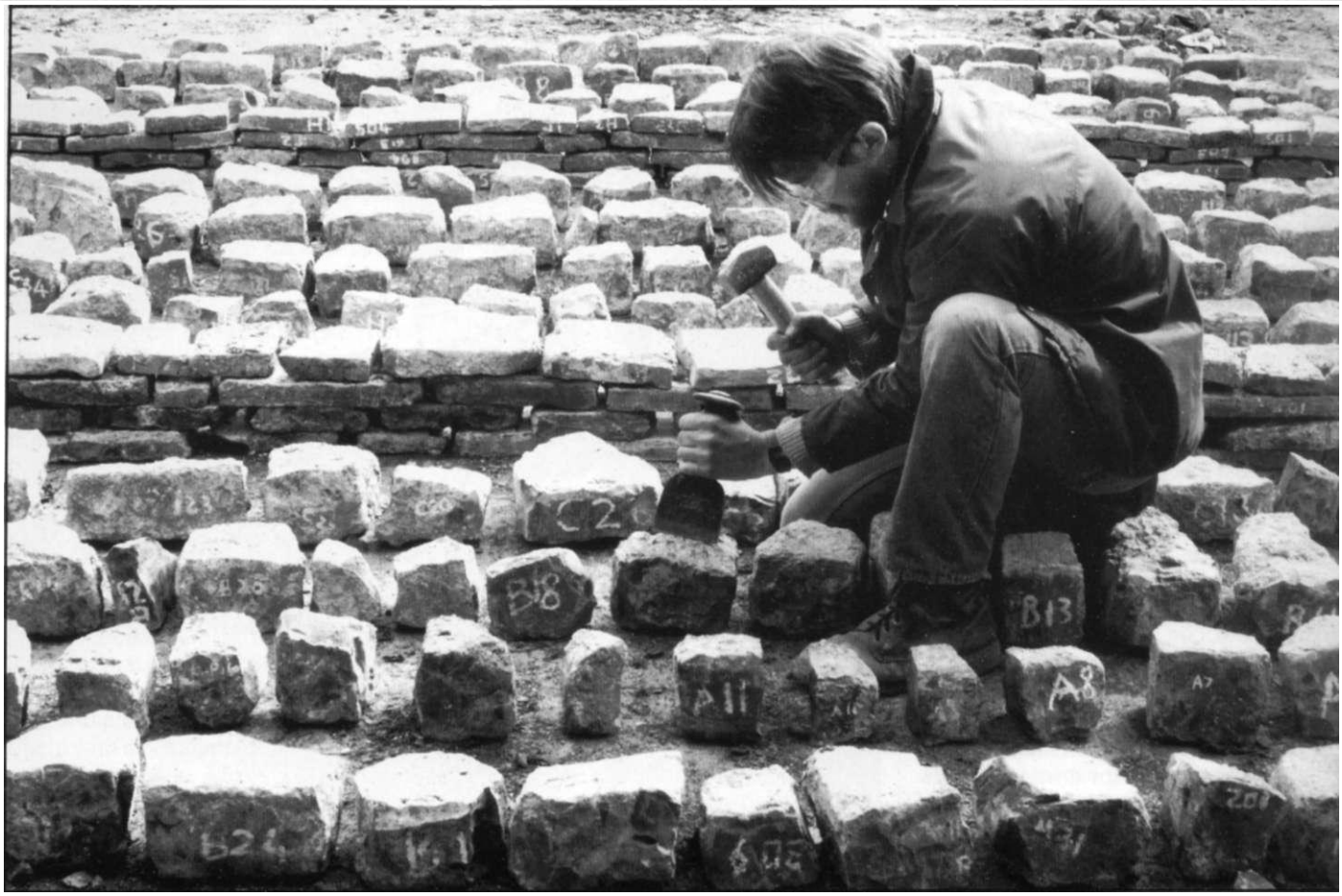


The drain arch at No 42 St John's Street.

Two of these arched passageways were discovered in 1988 bringing the total known to seven. Probably there were at least nine others. Each one was lined up with the side of a street so that a wooden drain could pass straight through it.

One was of the drain arches was found early in 1988 at the site of the 'Swag Shop' (No 11 Short Wyre Street) where a new shop now straddles a section of Roman wall. The excavation, which was funded by the developers, involved the recording of the wall, the examination of the drain arch, and the digging of a small trench behind the part of the wall where the Roman rampart was still intact. Although the upper part of the wall had long since been destroyed, the lower part was well preserved, particularly the inner face. The part which had been protected by the Roman rampart was especially important since it was from here that samples of the Roman whitewash were obtained.

But the main surprise was the drain arch. Rather than being simply contained within the foundation of the wall as expected, the inner end of it turned out to continue for a distance of about five feet beyond the face of the wall before



Stones and brick from the wall at Culver Street being prepared for reassembly.

coming to a finished end. Such an odd design is hard to explain.

The other drain arch was discovered at the rear of No 42 St John's Street where some redevelopment was to take place. The archaeological excavation and recording work which followed was funded by the developers, Frincon Holdings Ltd. The Roman wall proved to been have badly damaged. Like much of the wall along the southern side of the town, the upper part had been destroyed and the remaining outer face chipped and nibbled away over the years so that the core of the wall was exposed. Moreover, a large part of the wall, including the western half of the drain arch, had been taken away to enlarge a back yard. This probably happened sometime after the Siege of Colchester of 1648 when the wall no longer had a defensive role. Although still an impressive piece of masonry, the surviving wall is thus much reduced from its original state. In fact it is so thin that in places it has cracked and tipped forward.

Much of the stone was removed for reuse as building material. The drain arch, being made of tile, could not be so easily dismantled in large pieces with the result that it survived the robbing process rather better than the wall.

Tower

The Roman wall contained a series of towers. The number and positions of these are largely unknown but most were probably built where the streets formed *cul-de-sacs* with the wall. Little is known about the physical appearance of these structures except that in plan they incorporate a rectangular projection on the inner face of the wall which was about six feet wide and about eighteen feet long. As well as serving as look-out points and high platforms for weapons, they also presumably provided a way in which soldiers could get on and off the wall walk behind the parapet. Being at the ends of many of the streets, the towers occurred next to drain arches.

At the Swag Shop, enough of the inside of the wall was exposed to the west of the drain arch to show that there had not been a tower in this position. This is an important piece of evidence since until this discovery, it had been thought that probably all the streets ended in either a gate or a tower. This seems to be the case at No 42 St John's Street. Although the inner face of the wall was invisible (it lies under the south edge of the pavement in Sir Isaac's Walk), the pattern of bricks in the wall suggested the existence of a tower west of the drain arch. The courses of bricks which can be seen in well-preserved parts of the wall do not pass all the way through it — they only occur in the faces. Despite being close to the line of the inner face of the wall at No 42 St John's Street, the courses of bricks petered out to be replaced by core material. This indicates that the wall face probably turns northwards under the pavement in Sir Isaac's Walk to form the east side of a tower.

Rebuilding the wall

Part of the Roman wall has just been rebuilt. It is part of the section taken down to make the entrance tunnel into the new Culver Precinct. The demolition in 1985 and the subsequent rebuilding work was done by the Trust on behalf of Balfour Beattie.

Before the tunnel was made, an archaeological excavation was carried out to examine and record the rampart and other deposits which were behind the

The face of Roman wall in its new location off St John's Street

wall. The inner face, which had not been seen since Roman times, turned out to be beautifully preserved. Each stone and brick was individually numbered and the wall face was carefully planned. The face was then carefully dismantled and the pieces kept in store for a couple of years until they were needed. The reconstructed face can be seen in the eastern wall of the new tunnel, at right angles to its original position.

A surprising discovery made during the demolition of the wall was that very little of the brick had been whole pieces as always assumed. Instead it seems to have built of scrap material, no doubt to keep down costs.

Another discovery concerned the wall face. This turned out to have been built with time mortar which is pink in colour because of the addition of finely crushed brick. This had the effect of strengthening the mortar and making it set more quickly in damp conditions.

When the wall face was reconstructed, a similar mortar was used. The recipe was made as close as possible to the Roman original, even down to using authentic crushed Roman brick to give a matching colour. The resulting pink seems rather harsh but the match is good and it will weather to a greyish-brown colour in time. Of course we now realise that, because the wall was whitewashed, the Roman builders never intended the pink to be seen, nor indeed the scrap tile. Perhaps we should do the same?

Recording the wall

The extensive programme of repairs to the town wall is expected to start before the end of 1988. The first stage of the work will involve the Balkerne Gate and the section of wall to the south. This is to be followed by the stretch of wall bordering the car park in Priory Street. The work will consist of consolidating the faces of the wall and gate and ensuring that everywhere the top of the monument has a water-proof capping (which will be invisible from the ground).

The Colchester Archaeological Trust has already begun preparing the necessary stone-for-stone drawings of the face of the wall. These are needed for several reasons. They will represent a record of the wall before the repair started and they will provide a means whereby the position of all the various repairs can be recorded.

The technique which is being used is that being employed at the Castle. A series of black-and-white photographs is taken of the wall face by the Photogrammetric Unit of York University. These are printed in such that a way that the effects of parallax are minimised and the image is to an exact scale (1:20). The prints are then used as the basis for the stone-for-stone drawings on site.

Just as at the Castle, the chance to record the wall in such detail provides an opportunity to study it in a way that has not been possible before. A better understanding of the wall should lead to better conservation. In particular, it is hoped to learn much more about how the wall was designed and built. For example, it would have been built in sections. Will we able to recognise any of them? The sorts of clues which will be looked for will be slight changes in materials and building technique and the relationships of the coursing between ground level and the various surviving sections of wall. Similarly the wall and gates would have been designed by an architect. By carefully planning and measuring key areas, it may be possible to learn what common factors governed their designs.

Philip *Crummy*

A Farewell To Arms

Rex Hull had come to Colchester determined to explore its archaeological potential. He and the Lavers first dug at Duncan's Gate and discovered the Mithraeum at the top of the great drain. The Excavation Committee was formed when the meadows below Sheepen Farm were chosen as the route for the new by-pass. It is easy to forget now that, by 1928, the motor car was becoming a popular means of transport, and every Saturday and Sunday the only route by which this new fraternity of the road could reach its seaside chalets at Clacton and Jaywick was along the High Street. The Museum has a treasured photograph to show what ensued. Hence the by-pass, which with its three tracks would solve all the problems.

Rex Hull however, mindful of the great ditch then exposed in the Sheepen gravel pits, realised that the adjacent area was of great archaeological importance, and a public appeal was launched to fund the excavations; surely an early example of rescue archaeology, and planned on the area basis which is now so familiar. What an exhilarating time that must have been! Vigorous support came from Captain Mortimer Wheeler, and there the young Assistant Keeper from the British Museum, Christopher Hawkes, first met the delightful Jacquetta, brought over by Dad from Cambridge to see what was going on. There also toiled Stuart and Peggy Piggott; there it is said, Oswald cried 'Eureka' as the Colchester samian was identified. Colonel Appleby carefully dusted his immaculate shoes as he emerged from his trench, and around it all shone the goodwill of the Lavers; indeed everybody who was anybody in Colchester took an informed interest On Sundays they could walk along the tree-lined dykes, and speculate among the buttercups on those mysterious and silent memorials of a forgotten past, still the boundaries of the medieval Borough as they had been of Cunobelin's domain.

Digging ended when war came, and Hull passed the tedious nights of fire watching in writing up the finds, sorting the masses of pottery by day in Mumford's old factory in Culver Street. When peace returned he arranged the splendid exhibition of Roman metalwork to mark the nineteen centuries since the foundation of the Colonia, to which came, in all innocence of the future, the newly-appointed Keeper of Antiquities from Leicester. (You can read about this in the Colchester Archaeological Group's *Bulletin,* vol 27.)

On the eve of his retirement, David Clarke looks back on his 25 years as Colchester's Museum Curator

But Hull, after a frustrating attempt to record the fascinating remains below the demolished St Nicholas's Church, was drawn back to the kilns, and the committee re-emerged. Alas, the days of research digging were numbered, though not before he had completed his third volume and established Colchester firmly on the archaeological map.

Already the lunacy of the Buchanan Report (namely adapt to the motor car) was on the horizon. Bryan Blake dug the Embassy Suite and Temples IV and V and the time came for Hull to retire. I do not know if he knew that a candidate who has since added greatly to our archaeological treasures was passed over in the final analysis; but I felt that he was somewhat critical of the Museum Committee's choice.

I could see that the storm was imminent. Medieval houses vanished from East Street and East Hill, Vineyard Street came tumbling down: the Telephone Exchange foundations were carved through John Blyth's determined but all too limited excavations in the Lamp Factory, Blake was doing what he could at Lorgarth (now the entrance to the North Hill car park).

Fortunately help was at hand. Colonel Appleby, always a natural gentleman, took me to lunch in the Red Lion, Jack Brinson provided the local spur, W C Thorn as Chairman provided the link with the past, Bernard Mason looked after the money, Leonard Dansie and Lord Alport smoothed the way in the Town Hall. My former and ever-to-be honoured Director Trevor Walden kindly lent our Field Officer, Max Hebditch, for 6 weeks to dig the site to the side of the Casde, and then with the aid of the Pilgrim Trust (£3000 over three years) we appointed a first Director of Excavations, Ros Dunnett. She started on the Labour Club (Maidenburgh Street) and then moved to North Hill, picking up in the first tentative trench part of a fine mosaic. Given permission to clear it, in a few hectic days, three mosaics were exposed. There is a story which has grown up around this that important medieval remains were destroyed in order to get to the Roman levels. The mosaics were only three feet deep, so I find this difficult to believe and in any case the site seemed to have been gardens for a long time. However, it survived to have been quoted in Barry Jones 'Past Imperfect', a disquieting example of the longevity of gossip.

Ros worked in Gray's study on the Castle roof, carefully hiding her pipe when anyone knocked. I found it by accident and extracted a full confession. Gosbecks and Sheepen followed, with the Trust being set up when rescue archaeology received national recognition.

It is perhaps inevitable that the loss of monuments over these 25 years has been considerable. Heath Farm Dyke, the earliest in the series, has vanished save for a mound acting as a garden boundary, and a small fragment behind the Mormon

Church. The dykes themselves have been mutilated. By some 200 yards, the clearly visible ditch in Land Lane was 'landscaped' into nonentity, and of course, two large unsightly holes have been cut in the Roman Wall. Mile End Old Church, carefully excavated, still awaits consolidation after 15 years. In the 1960s, a substantial medieval house vanished, unrecorded, from Pelhams Lane, and the Cross Keys (now Presto's) fared little better a few years later. Our records of the old Essex County Standard offices in High Street, also a medieval building, are woefully inadequate, though the 1969 coin hoard was some compensation.

Worst of all perhaps, was the terracing of the Hilly Fields, a scheduled ancient monument. Ros dug about three acres out of thirteen, and the original plan to make relatively shallow terraces was replaced by fewer and deeper ones, so that the site is now substantially sterilised. Horace Calver subsequently brought in a collection of Roman glass, elegant vessels of brown and blue, and obviously from a burial, which we must have missed by a few feet. It was maddening to think that it had survived intact until a few days before. Even this year one of the finest surviving fragments of the town wall was partly covered with concrete and a medieval archway under the Angel has been lost.

The mosaics from North Hill still await proper re-laying, especially the central one (B) though there is now hope that the even finer one from Middleborough will find a home in the newly recovered Chapel, and there is room for others.

Nevertheless, on the credit side, the gains in knowledge have been very great, and as the finds come into the museum, the collections, already remarkable, offer limitless possibilities for display and for research. 'You name it, we've got two of them' is more than ever true. I have not been wholly unsuccessful in keeping my original promise to give Colchester a museum worthy of Hull's diligent work, and I wish my successor well in obtaining from public or private sources, the relatively small funds necessary to tell Colchester's fascinating story from then till now. My marks and scars I carry with me: I hope there may be at least one trumpeter on the other side.

David Clarke (foreground) gives a helping hand lifting one of the three mosaic pavements discovered on North Hill in 1965. Just behind him stands Ros Dunnett (now Mrs Niblett).

Photograph reproduced by courtsey of the Guardian.

in brief...

Decorated chimney pot

Fragments of a remarkable louver, an elaborate kind of chimney pot, came to light during a rushed salvage excavation at No 31-6 East Stockwell Street. The louver is a domed, turret-like object with side openings to let smoke out and fresh air in. The East Stockwell example is of the type which probably sat on top of a chimney stack. The three-foot-high louver dates to around the 14th century. It is glazed and decorated with white painted bands.

Museum conservator Ann-Marie Bojko pieces the louver together.

Stanway

Excavations at the gravel pit just north of Colchester Zoo revealed traces of occupation in the area throughout much of the prehistoric period. A notable find was a late Iron Age cremation in a large pot. Work to date has been restricted to two of the five ditched enclosures known from aerial photographs of the area. The enclosures were probably the central features of an Iron Age farmstead.

Butt Road Church

The remains of the Roman church are being laid out on permanent public display. The building was uncovered some years ago during extensive excavations carried out before work was to begin on the construction of a new police station at Butt Road. The church lies on the eastern side of a large Roman burial ground containing an estimated two thousand or more graves, of which about 750 have been excavated.

The church had stone walls and inter-

nal aisles of timber. The positions of the posts and missing parts of the walls are to be indicated on the ground to give visitors a clearer idea of the layout and size of the building.

The site will be officially opened to the public in 1989 as part of Essex Heritage Year. The work is being done by the Colchester Archaeological Trust whilst the cost is being borne by the Essex County Council with assistance from the Colchester Borough Council.

St Botolph's

Trial excavations at the Britannia Works site showed that the remains of the St Botolph's monastery lie 1.0-1.5 m below the surface of the car park and that water-logged Roman deposits (likely to contain wood and leather) are present about 2.0 m down. These conclusions will help in the planning of future archaeological work on the site should redevelopment make this necessary. The investigation was funded by the Colchester Borough Council.

Next site

A small archaeological investigation of the Next's shop took place at the rear of No 19 High Street to establish the depth of the underlying archaeological remains. The idea was to see if the groundworks for the new building could be designed in such a way that the disturbances to the archaeological deposits would be minimal and hence avoid the need for archaeological excavation.

In the event, the highest (and thus the latest) significant archaeological deposits were of 15th- or 16th-century date and belonged to the rear wing of a house fronting on to the High Street. The builders adopted piling as a method of constructing foundations and thereby the need for an excavation was averted.

The investigation was funded by Next Properties Ltd.

CAR Reports

The coins from excavations in Colchester, the fourth in the series of the Colchester Archaeological Reports, was published late in 1987. It is hoped that the fifth volume, **Post-Roman small finds from excavations in Colchester 1971-85** will be available by the end of the year and that others will soon follow, including the report on the Culver Street excavations.

Developers to the rescue

More and more developers have been contributing towards the cost of the excavations on their sites. The Trust is grateful for the financial support provided by the following firms:

TARMAC for the Warren Lane gravel pit, Stanway,

FRINCON HOLDINGS LTD for two separate sites, one No 42 St John's Street and the other at No 42 Crouch Street,

SWAG SHOPS for No 11 Short Wyre Street,

NEXT PROPERTIES LTD for No 19 High Street,

ARANMOREDEVELOPMENTS for the site behind the Mormon Church on Straight Road,

DIAMOND BAR LTD for Nos 6-7 Church Walk.

Fortress to City

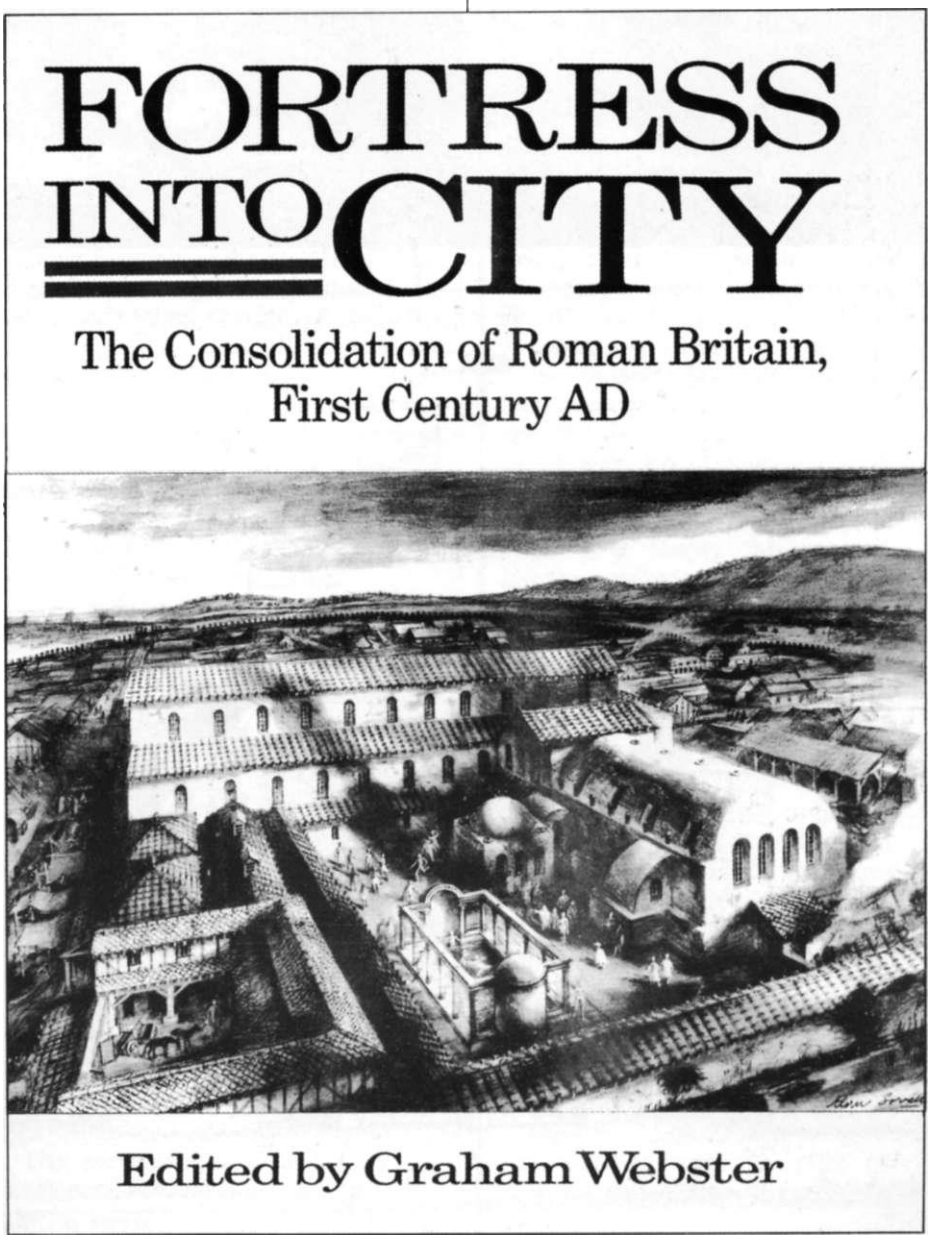
A highlight of the 1970s in Colchester was the discovery that the Roman town was not built from scratch but was a modified legionary fortress which the Roman army no longer needed.

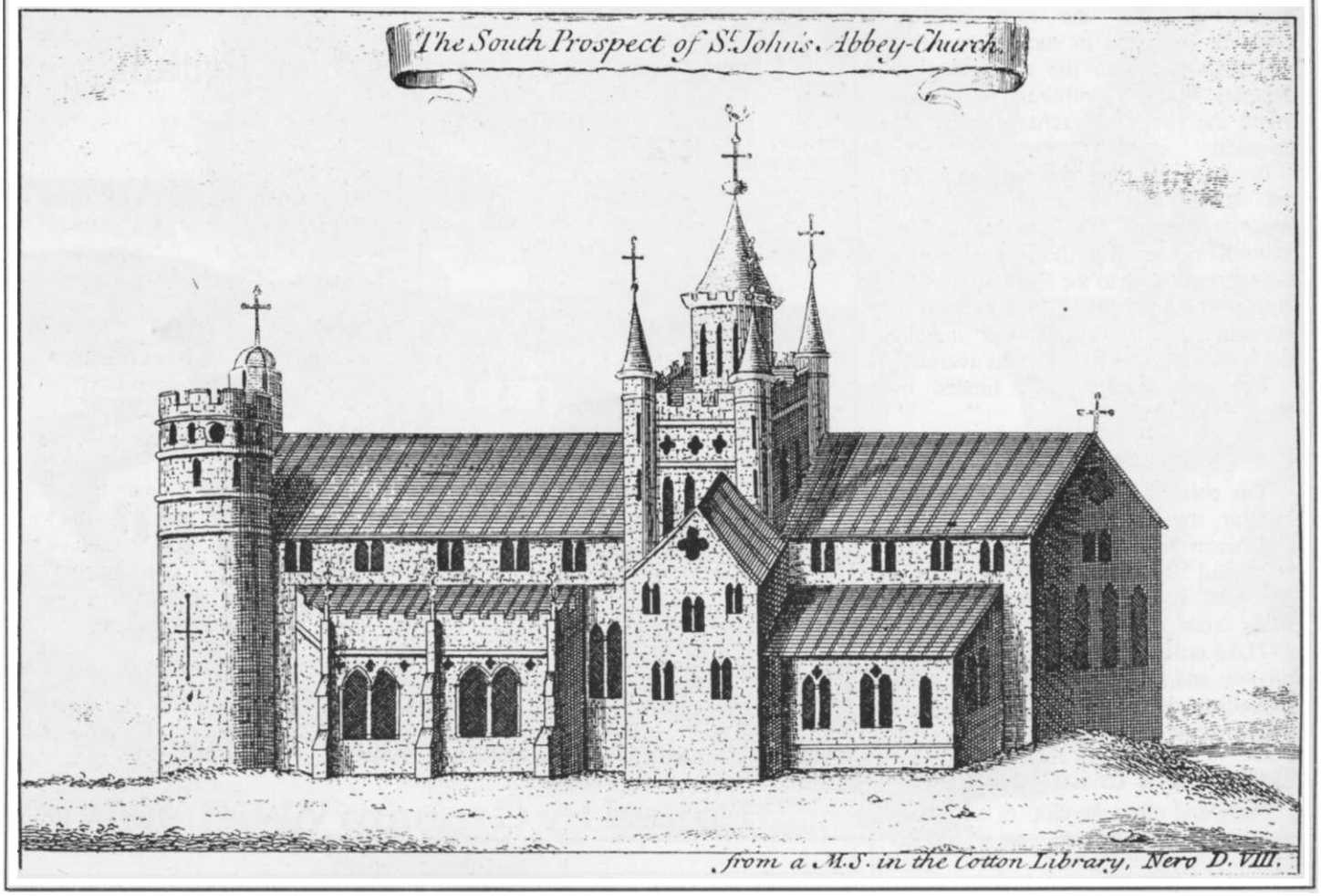
Similar sequences of military base to civilian town are being detected by archaeologists working in other towns. And as a result ideas are radically changing about the origins of many of Britain's most important ancient towns.

The results of this work are set out in a new book to be published by Batsfords in October 1988. The book, entitled **Fortress into City: the** Consolidation **of Roman Britain, First** Century AD costs £19.95. It was edited by Graham Webster and consists of a series of contributions covering Cirencester (A McWhirr), Colchester (P Crummy), Exeter (C Henderson), Gloucester (J Hurst), Lincoln (M Jones), and Wroxeter (G Webster).

Archaeology lectures

The Colchester Archaeological Group's winter session of lectures for




The South Prospect of St. John's Abbey-Church.
from a M.S. in the Cotton Library, Nero D. VIII.

1988/9 will include *Fakes and Forgeries* (Dr Michael Tite), *The Ancient City of Athens* (Dr Arthur Brown) and *Dendrochronology — Past, Present and Future* (Jennifer Hillam). There are also summer visits to places of archaeological or historical interest. Full details from Dennis Tripp, 69 Lexden road, Colchester C03 3QE (telephone Colchester 578059).

St John's Abbey church

Some delicately-carved stones from a modern foundation on a Colchester building site are likely to be remnants of the town's most important medieval monastic building.

Eighteen remarkable 'water-leaf' capitals, dating to 1180-1220, were found a few years ago during a watching brief at No 2-3 Stanwell Street. They originally came from the base of a vaulted roof of a rich ornate building.

The source of the sculptures must almost certainly be the church of St John's Abbey. The building was demolished in the 16th century with no record of its appearance or form apart from a drawing supposedly showing its south side. The illustration indicates that the building was predominantly of late 12th or early 13th century date — the same period as the capitals. Clearly the church, although known from written sources to have been founded in 1096, must have been rebuilt a century later.

When the capitals were discovered, they seemed rather too good to be true. However they have recently been examined and pronounced as probably authentic by Andrew Harris who specialises in material of this kind and is compiling an inventory of 12th-century sculptured stone from Essex.

Castle Museum exhibitions

A small exhibition of finds from the Angel Yard excavation was mounted in the Castle Museum during the summer of 1988. This had originally been planned for Angel Court, the newly-finished offices for the Borough Council.

Throughout the wnter of 1988/9, the following exhibitions are planned for the museum:

The Kingdom of the East Saxons
3rd-25th September 1988

The Dutch In Essex
1st-21st October 1988

Raiders — the story of army commandos, 1940-6
29th October — 26th November 1988

Exhibition of puppets from the Hogarth Collection
10th December 1988 — 7th January 1989

The art of map-making (from Holland)
14th January — 11th February 1989

Embroidery (from the Embroiderer's Guild)
4th March — 2nd April 1989

The Colchester Arts Society Exhibition
8th-30th April 1989

The Art of the Wood Carver
6th May — 4th June 1989

Colchester Charter 800 Exhibition
10th June onwards

Above left: six of the eighteen water-leaf capitals from Stanwell Street
Below left: the church of St John's Abbey — the source of the carved stone?

'Charter 800'

In 1989, Colchester is to celebrate the eighth centenary of its charter of independence from the crown. This is a key document in the history of the town because, amongst a whole range of concessions, it granted the townspeople the right to govern themselves and run their own courts. Various events are planned for the year, a high point being a 'History Fair' in the Castle Park on Sunday 11th June.

Private donations

The Inner Wheel of Colchester Forum presented the Trust with a cheque for £200. This was the result of a 'Midsummer Evening' at the Sir Alfred Munnings Art Museum at Castle House, Dedham in aid of three charities of which the Trust was one. The event was organised by Mary Hughes.

A cheque was received in memory of a long-standing member of the Friends of the Colchester Archaeological Trust. The donation was sent by his widow.

Both gifts are much appreciated. They have made possible the publication of this edition of our magazine.

Quarter century

The Colchester Archaeological Trust is twenty-five years old. It was founded in its present form under the name of the Colchester Excavation Committee in April 1963.

Crouched Friars?

A brief rescue excavation began early in August 1988 at No 42 Crouch Street The site is adjacent to where eighteen burials and part of a Roman building were excavated in 1972. It also lies close to the site of the monastery of the Crouched Friars. Early results were promising with foundations and human remains coming to light within the first week of the dig.

The excavation was funded by the developers, Frincon Holdings Ltd.

Philip Crummy

THE FRIENDS OF THE COLCHESTER ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

Howard Brooks

Take a trip

Why not join us on one of our regular excursions? There are usually four or five trips each year, on Saturdays from March to November. Our prices are competitive, and children are carried at reduced rates!

Over the years we have visited scores of places of archaeological or historical interest such as castles and churches, manors and mills, barns and baileys, and archaeological excavations of all periods. During 1988 we have toured Coggeshall Abbey and the superb Knights Templars barns at Cressing, seen lovely churches at Southwold and Blythburgh, and had our eyes and nostrils opened at the reconstructed Anglo-Saxon village at West Stow when modern but genuinely-clad Saxons were in residence. We also attended the opening preview of the the Roman Walls exhibition at the Castle, visited the chapel excavation on the Castle roof, and were invited to a charity 'Midsummer's Evening' at Dedham.

Forthcoming trips

On Saturday 12th November 1988, there will be a coach trip to the Museum of London. Please book with the enclosed form, or phone me on Colchester 851348.

There will be the usual full programme of trips in 1989. Members will be notified beforehand and you will receive booking forms. Visits to local excavations will be arranged at short notice.

Dates for your diary.

Saturday 21st January 1989. Annual General Meeting (business only). 11.00 am, 12 Lexden Road.

Saturday 28th January, 1989. Round-up of work in 1988 (illustrated talks). Venue to be arranged.

I

Recent Discoveries In Essex

Television cameraman filming the potin coins.

Iron Age money supply

A preliminary note on the interesting enclosed Iron Age settlement at the Airport Catering Site appeared in the last issue of *The Colchester Archaeologist.* This remarkable site consisted of an enclosure containing a dozen wooden round-houses and a central structure, perhaps a shrine or chiefs hut. The discovery of this settlement on the boulder clays of north-west Essex was a surprise in itself, but the most amazing discovery was made right at the end, on the very last evening of the excavation. This was the finding of a hoard of 'potin' coins in the gully of one of the round-houses.

'Potin' coins are made of cast bronze and are believed to be the earliest coins made on any scale in Britain. They circulated mainly in the area that is now Essex and Kent, during the late second and the first centuries BC. Although the face value of the coins is not known, they seem to be closer to a high value issue than everyday small change.

Potin coins from the Airport Catering Site. One third larger than actual size.

In modern terms, they were probably used to purchase the things we pay for in pounds rather than the things we pay for in pence.

These coins were found together, in a hoard, and this implies that someone left the site in a hurry around 40-20 BC, leaving his savings in a place to which he hoped to return later. Unfortunately for him, he was unable to do so, and his fortune remained undisturbed for 2000 years until the archaeologists came along.

Nine below zero: Neolithic settlement on the Essex coast

During the 3rd Millennium BC, sea level around the Essex coast was at least 9 ft below present Ordnance Datum, and was perhaps as much as 15 ft lower. As a result, extensive areas of what is now muddy foreshore must have been dry land. Remains of settlement have been found from the Thames through to Clacton. Attention is currently focussed on one location on the Essex foreshore. In the Blackwater Estuary near Osea Island, a Neolithic site — The Stumble — is currently being excavated by a team from the Essex County Council Archaeology Section.

Abundant domestic debris litters the submerged land surface within what must have been a hamlet or small village extending over approximately one hectare. Much pottery, flint tools and waste products from flint working, burnt flint, and fired clay have been found. A fine selection of carbonised plant remains complements this collection and suggests that the inhabitants probably grew primitive wheat (emmer and einkorn) and barley, and collected sloe, blackberry, hazel nuts, and various roots and tubers.

Today at high tide the site is covered by some three metres of water but studies of estuarine sediments suggest that during the 3rd Millennium BC the settlement was surrounded by a territory of some one kilometre radius, most or all of which was dry land. This configuration is supported by the preliminary evidence of the plant remains, all of which would be expected to occur with a dry land environment.

Millers and villas in the Roman countryside

The County Council's Archaeology Section carries out 80-100 watching briefs each year on sites of potential archaeological interest. Many turn out to be negative or yield finds of only minor importance. Occasionally, however,

highly significant discoveries are made, and the watching brief turns into a major project. This was the case recently at Blake House Farm, Stebbing, where John Laing Construction undertook gravel extraction for the Braintree by-pass from a 12 acre bor row pit. Nothing was visible on aerial photographs, but the west end of the borrow pit was about 200 yards from the Boxted Wood villa, discovered in 1948. A watching brief was therefore carried out during topsoil stripping, and a considerable spread of Roman pottery was identified at the western end of the pit. Rapid negotiations between archaeologists, John Laing Construction and the landowners made possible a seven week excavation which uncovered traces of a substantial Roman timber building. This was defined by areas of rammed clay with chalk, interpreted as a levelling layer on which floor tiles were laid. The building seems to have been thoroughly robbed out at the end of the 4th century, so it is difficult to assess its function. In pits and ditches around the building, substantial numbers of fragments of Millstone Grit were found. They derived from stones too large to have come from hand-operated querns; they must have come from millstones. So, was the timber building a Roman mill?

To decide this, it is necessary to consider the sources of power available in the Roman period — animal power and water power. Animal power seems unlikely for two reasons. First, within the building was a pair of flue bases, probably from an oven used to parch grain. This oven would have severely restricted the area available for animals walking round in a circle to operate the millstones. Secondly, the building was sited at the bottom of a slope right on the edge of the floodplain of the River Ter, an area which is very damp even today. If we assume the milling to have been part of the economic activity of the Boxted Wood villa estate, then an animal-powered mill could have been placed anywhere on the estate, rather than in a damp, boggy spot.

What about water-powered milling? The setting is far more plausible for a water mill, but clearly the crucial factor would be to identify a water-course adjacent to the building. Along its southern edge, there was a substantial ditch but, unfortunately, this butt-ended halfway across the site, and could not therefore have functioned as a water course.

On balance, the evidence points to a building used for threshing (a deposit of pure, carbonised spelt chaff was found on the site) and parching of grain in the oven mentioned above. The millstone fragments, which are not likely to have been moved far, probably indicate a mill just outside the limits of the borrow pit.

Trust House Forte, Roman style

Viewers of Channel 4 will remember the recent 'Chelmsford 123' comedy series about life in Roman Chelmsford or 'Caesaromagus'. The programme of excavations mounted by the Archaeology Section in response to redevelopment in the modern town has continued to make significant advances in our understanding of what life was really like in Roman Chelmsford. Excavations at the 'Abattoir' site between October 1987 and February 1988 uncovered more of the bath-house attached to the *mansio,* the most important building in Caesaromagus. Parts of the baths had already been located in previous excavations, by Chancellor and French in 1894-50, Brinson in 1947-49, and Drury in 1975. The *mansio* was part of a kind of official chain of service stations for travellers on public business, providing change of horse and accommodation. A hot bath must have been particularly welcome after a long ride on the roads of Roman Essex! It is likely that the bath-house would have provided other kinds of refreshment and relaxation — Roman baths fulfilled a number of functions, combining the modern gymnasium, baths and social club.

The baths were built in the mid 2nd century soon after the completion of the *mansio,* and were added to a pre-existing circular room, called a *laconicum* (a hot, dry sauna). They had been extensively robbed, and only the foundations and the underfloor heating system (the hypocaust) survived. The hot bath, and the main flue and stoke hole, had been rebuilt on four occasions. A hot bath was inserted in the hot room, or *caldarium,* and a (?) warm plunge bath (the only bath to survive intact) was added west of this in the 4th century.

The furnace room became increasingly dilapidated, and the main flue eventually became blocked with burnt debris in the late 4th century, marking the disuse of the bath house.

The bath-house lay in a roughly gravelled courtyard enclosed by a perimeter wall, and in two phases was bounded to the south by a range of timber sheds, presumably serving as a fuel store.

The mansio bath-house.

Young Archaeologists Club

ROMAN HANDWRITING

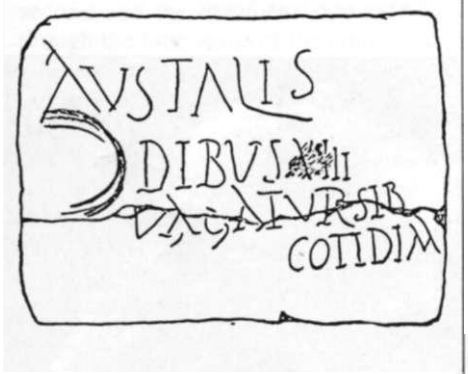
by Mike Corbishley

Fragments of Roman writing can be seen in many museums today — but these are usually in the form of inscriptions carved on stone. Handwriting, though, is less common — now. There must have been many examples during the Roman period but very few survive today. Where would you find examples of Roman handwriting?

Messages, names and scribblings

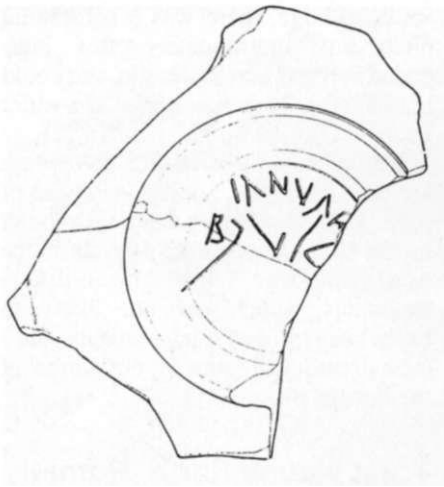
A workman at a tile factory near St Paul's Cathedral in London scratched this complaint about a fellow worker for everyone to see on one of the tiles left out to dry:

Austalis has been skiving off by himself every day for the last 13 days.



The base of the following dish (pictured at about half its real size) was found at the Roman fort of Segontium on the outskirts of Caernarfon in North Wales. Enough of the writing survives to show that it said:

Januarius, bugler in Victor's Century.



By this time a century was a unit of about 80 men commanded by a centurion. Januarius obviously didn't want his best dish stolen!

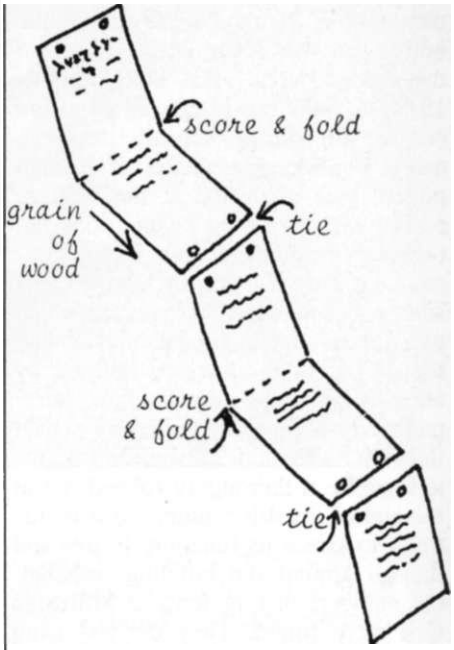
Curses

Curses scratched on to pieces of lead were used by the Romans to try to take revenge on people who had done them some wrong. Sometimes the curses were nailed face down on to a temple or rolled up and left for the gods to find and take action. Many curses have been found recently at Bath where they were thrown into the baths. Some of the wording is very strong like the one below found in London:

I curse Tretia Maria and her life and mind and memory and liver and lungs mixed up together and her words thoughts and memory....

Letters and lists on wood

Some Roman writing was done on papyrus — flattened-out river reeds from the Mediterranean but a favourite paper-substitute was a 'book' made from very thin sheets of wood. This could be used for fairly short pieces of writing such as letters or official lists and accounts. Recently a number of these wooden sheets have been found at the Roman fort of Vindolanda on Hadrian's Wall. This is what they looked like — why not make one yourself?



NOTE:

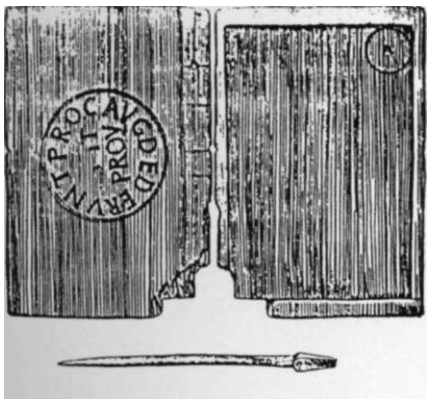
*Each **double** sheet should be about 40 x 20 cms. Score the back so that they fold inwards. Use thin sheets of balsa wood. Holes should be bored or drilled for leather (or you could use string) thongs.*

Make sure you have the grain of the wood the right way round or your sheets will fall apart at the folds. You will also find it easier to write across the grain.

The Romans wrote on these wooden sheets with reed pens and ink. When they are discovered they usually have to be photographed with infra-red film to bring out the writing which soon fades when it is exposed to air and light.

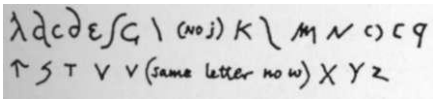
Another place you might find Roman writing fragments is on the wooden wax-filled writing tablets. The one at the top of the next page was found in London.

The cover, on the left, has the official



stamp of the procurator — the financial governor of a Roman province. The wax was poured into the right-hand side and notes or letters could be scratched on the wax with the metal stylus shown below the writing tablet. Notice the wedge-shaped end for erasing the words so that the tablet could be used again. Sometimes the writing comes right through the wax and onto the wood — and is preserved long after the wax has gone.

The writing you have seen above is called cursive writing—handwriting if you like. Handwriting varies, of course, but here is one version of the alphabet:



Try to work out some of the letters on the tile, or write your own name.

Young Archaeologists Club always welcomes new members—why not come along and find out what it's all about? The annual subscription is only £2.50. Write to:

Young Archaeologists Club
United House
Piccadilly
York YOl 1PQ
Telephone 0904 646411.

For local information write to:

Mike Corbishley
Rose Cottage
Stones Green Road
Great Oakley
Harwich
Essex C012 5BW

or ask about the date of the next monthly meeting at Colchester Castle Museum

Archaeology
at the
Sixth Form College

A FUTURE FOR THE PAST

by Colin Laker

One of the key innovations at the new Sixth Form college in Colchester on its opening in September 1987 was a one year GCSE course in archaeology. As well as starting the College from scratch, we were also starting the subject from scratch as well, there having been no teaching of it as an examination subject since Mike Corbishley's efforts in the 1970s. The course we followed has two main elements; a study of archaeological techniques, and an in-depth study of the archaeology of Roman Britain from 43 to 410 AD. From the outset we were determined to ensure that it fulfilled the promise of GCSE; that it would be active, practical and enjoyable.

This was most successfully achieved through field work, ranging from half-day visits to Sutton Hoo and the Springfield site at Chelmsford, through full day visits to Flag Fen, Grimes Graves and the British Museum, to a five day field course in Wessex, visiting, measuring and drawing such impressive prehistoric sites as Maiden Castle, Avebury and West Kennet. Students often remarked how visiting a site gave them a real understanding of it, and appreciation of height, depth and area, which they could not gain from photographs or slides alone.

Important as this was, however, it could not take up the majority of the time on the course, which was, of necessity, spent in Colchester. Here also though, we were able to inject an active and practical element, with students attempting to make their own flint tools (and finding out just how sharp knapped flint can be !), replicate Bronze Age pottery decoration, and undertake a mini-field project based on the Roman villa site at Copford. Few of these activities would have been possible without the expertise, encouragement and facilities offered by both the Colchester Archaeological Trust and the Colchester and Essex Museum. Often at very short notice the staff were able to provide handling and information sessions on Bronze Age metalwork and Roman pottery, illustrated lectures on Roman burial practices and small finds from the excavation on the College site, as well as spending time fieldwalking on a dull December afternoon, and identifying tiles, which we all hoped were Roman, but usually turned out to be much later in date.

With the coursework and exam now completed, we now await the first year's results, by which the success of the course, in part at least, can be assessed. By the criteria of involvement and enthusiasm, however, we think we can already adjudge it a success, and we plan to build upon this year's foundations, by introducing further active learning techniques, such as making and eating samples of Neolithic food, and undertaking microscopic analysis of pollen remains. Archaeology may grow in the next few years at the College to an A/S level option, and even an A level; there is, we believe, a great future in Colchester for the study and interpretation of the past.

* Mike Corbishley was formerly a teacher at the Royal Grammar School. He is currently an education officer with English Heritage. Colin Laker is a teacher at Colchester's Sixth Form College.

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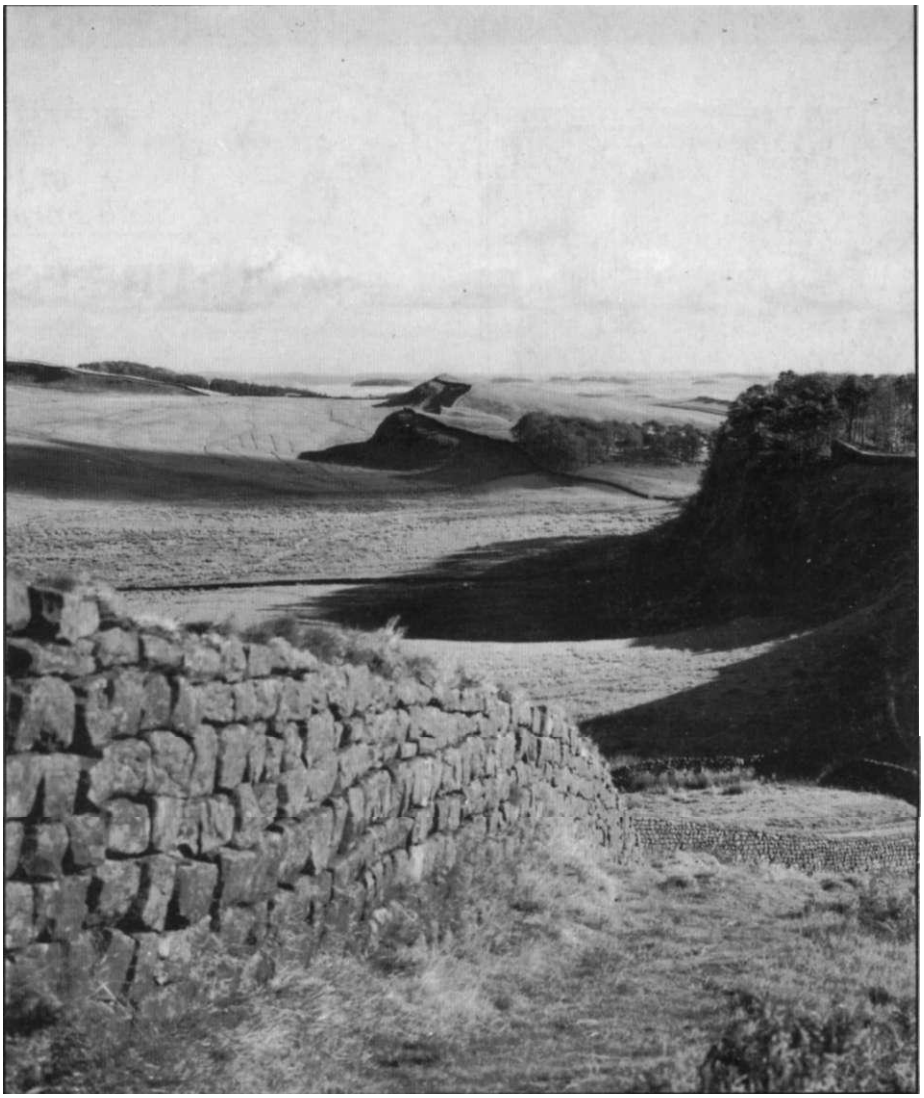

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