

the Colchester archaeologist

Roman Colchester uncovered at Head Street

Roman cemetery at the Abbey Field

Exploring the High Street

Pots of silver coins

The nursery rhymes of Colchester

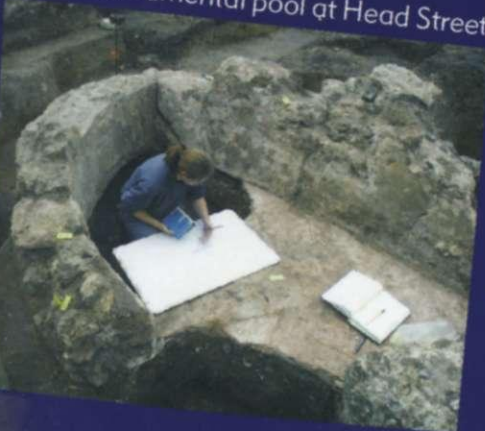
Colchester Castle measured up

Charles Gray, Esq. and Hollytrees

face to face – Pauline Skippins holding a 16th-century jar from the Head Street excavation



Roman ornamental pool at Head Street



– and news of all the latest archaeology in and around Colchester



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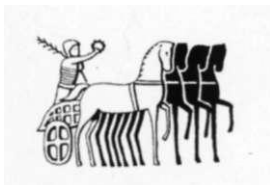
Front cover: Trust volunteer Pauline Skippins with a 16th-century German stoneware jar from the Head Street dig.

*unattributed text by Philip Crummy
edited and designed by Gillian Adams*

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Marion Archibald

Mike Corbishley of English Heritage Education

Carl Crossan of the Colchester Archaeological Trust

Essex County Council Heritage Conservation

James Fawn

Tom Hodgson of Colchester Museum

Andrew Phillips



tel./fax (01206) 364583

The Colchester Archaeological Trust is a full-time professional unit, providing developers and others with a full range of archaeological services, from consultancies and site evaluations to full excavation. We have over 25 years' experience of working in partnership with construction industry professionals and local government planning departments. It is a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee.

The Trust designs and publishes its own reports, books and magazines in-house.

Colchester Archaeological Trust
12 Lexden Road,
Colchester,
Essex C03 3NF

tel.: (01206)541051

tel./fax: (01206)500124

email: archaeologists@colchester-arch-trust.co.uk

web site: www.colchester-arch-trust.co.uk

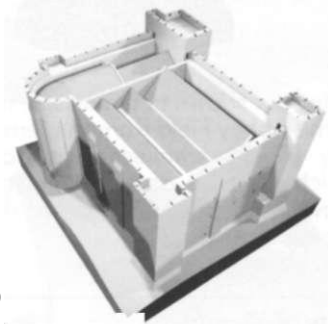
The Colchester archaeologist magazine is largely funded by the Friends of Colchester Archaeological Trust - see page 32.

The Trust is grateful to Colchester Borough Council for placing an advertisement on page 25 and for its support of the magazine.



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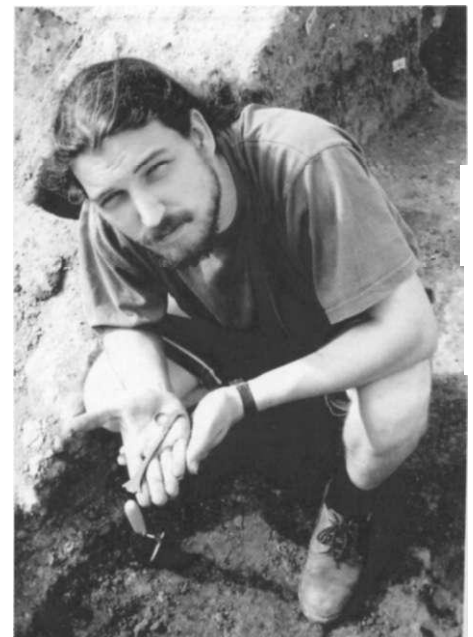


Some images of the Head Street site -

Far left: preliminary machine work.

Left: one of the open days. Three parties of visitors are each being given a guided tour of the site by a Trust member of staff standing in the excavation. Viewed from the north-west across the site of the partly-demolished post office.

Right: Luke Cleland with his latest find.





A tiny pot shown at actual size from a burial at the Abbey Field Roman cremation cemetery. It is the smallest of several small pots which may be associated with children's graves. See page 5 for more details about the excavation.

City of Victory

The Trust's book on the archaeology and history of Colchester has sold out. *City of Victory* was published in February 1997 with a print-run of 5,250. Being in colour throughout, the book was expensive to produce and represented a considerable investment by the Trust even with grants from various sources and pre-publication orders from Friends and other supporters. Fortunately good sales have allowed us to recover the initial outlay.

Some outlets may still have copies in stock, and the Trust has a small number of 'seconds' with imperfect covers for anybody keen to get hold of a copy. A reprint is being considered, although the cost may prove to be too great.



Boudica on TV

Boudica never fails to fascinate. Two television programmes about the British heroine featured the burnt remains of Colchester as left by Boudica and her British army. One was a 'what if' programme trying to answer the question 'What if Boudica had won the war?' The other was fronted by TV personality Rory McGrath for the History Channel. Filming for both was timed to coincide with the uncovering of the Boudican remains at the Head Street excavation.

Left: Rory McGrath at the Head Street dig discussing Boudica with site director Howard Brooks.

In brief...

Happy 25th

The Friends of the Trust have two reasons to celebrate. Not only is the organisation 25 years old in 2001, but membership stands at an all-time high. At the start of the year, the Friends had 448 fully paid-up members. Most are family memberships, so the actual number of people involved is greater than this.



The Trust had a stand at an open day organised by Colchester Museum at St Botolph's priory in the summer of 2000.



Live transmission

Last summer's major excavation was tucked away around the back of the empty post office building and was invisible from Head Street itself. To let shoppers and passers-by see what was going on, a television linked to a camera on site was put in a window in Head Street with a small display about the dig. The television was kindly loaned by Hughes TV & Audio Ltd and the video link was installed by Dr Tim Dennis of the University of Essex.

New web site

The Colchester Archaeological Trust has a new web site. It features the latest news about sites and publications in Colchester, as well as clickable maps which allow visitors to explore interactively some Colchester archaeological sites. The web address is www.colchester-arch-trust.co.uk.

'New treasures' display

Visitors to Colchester Museum can see some of the latest finds from Colchester and the surrounding area in a special temporary exhibition. Objects on display include the lead canister from the Menzies' site (page 19), various finds from the Head Street excavation (pages 9-13), and some metal-detectorist finds. It also features objects from the Kelvedon Warrior Grave which, although found many years ago, have never been on display until now. The exhibition will continue until the end of 2001 with the content changing throughout the year.

Out and about

2000 was one of our busiest years for some time in terms of small projects. There were sixty in all. Most were routine, but some produced useful information or finds.

Thirty-four of the projects were in the form of watching briefs. This is where an archaeologist visits a site either to inspect open trenches or be present when they are being dug. Sometimes the archaeologist has to visit a site repeatedly over a long period; at other times it might just consist of one visit carefully timed to coincide with open trenches.

Twelve projects were evaluations. In these cases, a sample of a site is investigated to find out if significant archaeological remains are present and to establish how the proposed redevelopment will affect them. Evaluations are generally done by machine and they are designed to be relatively quick and inexpensive. They can lead on to full excavation if it turns out that important archaeological remains have to be destroyed during a development. A good example of this is the new sports pitch on the Abbey Field (see page 5). A single cremation found during the evaluation prompted a large-scale investigation and the excavation of over seventy more burials. A smaller evaluation at West Lodge Road in Lexden also produced a Roman cremation. In this case, the foundations for the new house which is planned for the site will need to be dug by hand so that any other cremations there can be adequately recorded.

Then there were seven desktop assessments. These often precede field evaluations. They involve an archaeologist collating and assessing all the available evidence for a site from records. No excavation is involved. There are various large-scale redevelopments proposed in and around Colchester at the moment, and the archaeological impact of these proposals must be assessed and taken into account when planning consent is being considered.

On top of all this, there were also seven excavations, ranging in scale from the major dig at the post office site (see pages 9-13) to a small trench behind a property near the top of North Hill for a rear extension.

Nowadays, the Trust sometimes works outside Colchester too. For example, there was a (literally) lengthy watching brief of an Anglian Water pipeline near Sible Hedingham where various Roman remains were recorded. The trench for the pipeline was 4 km long and the Roman remains related to a settlement nearby which had been detected some years ago. Then there was an evaluation at the church of St Peter ad Vinculo in Coggeshall in advance of the construction of a small extension. Roman remains have been found in the area in the past and there was some doubt about the extent of bomb damage from World War 2. Although more Roman material was found, the investigation showed that much of the ground had been disturbed by the bomb blast, and that the extension could be built without serious archaeological loss.

The Castle Hedingham-Halstead pipeline (right). Recording Roman remains cut through by a trench for a water-main near Sible Hedingham. Funded by Anglian Water.



Investigating World War 2 bomb damage at St Peter ad Vinculo church in Coggeshall (above). Funded by St Peter ad Vinculo parish council.



At the top and bottom of the hill

An evaluation near the foot of North Hill revealed part of a Roman house with a tessellated floor (above left). More remains of Roman floors and a foundation were uncovered at the top of the hill behind a house where a rear extension is planned (above right). Funded by Fenn Wright.



Top of the range

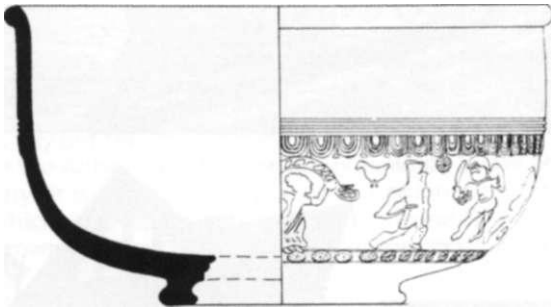
Roman potters in Colchester were involved in a business which tried to compete with foreign imports, but mysteriously failed. They made samian, the most technically-demanding pottery of its time. The quality of their product was fairly good but, for some unknown reason, sales appear to have been poor.

Excavations in Colchester always produce lots of samian pottery. Abbey Field was no different, and interestingly the dig provided a piece of a rare vessel made by a Colchester potter.

Samian was manufactured in huge quantities in Gaul and lots of it was imported into Britain. However, some samian was made in Colchester too. This was shown by the discovery many years ago of hundreds of fragments of samian moulds and one of the specialised kilns needed for samian manufacture on the Hilly Fields.

Close study of the patterns in the Colchester moulds appears to reveal two potters, each making their own moulds. The moulds do not include name stamps, so consequently the people who made the moulds are simply referred to as Potters A and B. The large fragment from the Abbey Field was from a vessel made by Potter A.

The standard of the Colchester samian industry was good and its products compared well with the foreign competition. Colchester samian was being made during the second half of the second century, and included plain forms as well as decorated. Strangely the industry does not seem to have been successful because, even in its home town where transport costs would have been negligible, imported samian was much more popular. This is clear from site finds of the 1970s and 1980s. Of the thousand or so pieces of decorated samian found during that time, only a mere five appear to have been made in the town. Indeed, the proportion of Colchester samian is so low that we must wonder if some of the samian is being wrongly identified as imported wares. Some potters were migrant and set up in more than one place. Maybe somehow the mysterious Potters A and B were more successful than we think they were.



Samian was top-of-the-range pottery. It was much harder to make than ordinary pottery and needed complicated kilns for its production. Decorated vessels were made in moulds. The rims were normally drawn up above the mould and base-rings were added later.



Top: illustration of a complete samian bowl made by Potter A. (This is not the bowl from the Abbey Field. Nor was it made in the mould shown here.) Compare the pot with the mould and note how the potter must have drawn the rim up above the mould and added the base-ring afterwards.



Above: the fragment of the samian bowl of Potter A from one of the graves on the Abbey Field site (excavated in 2000).

Right: a mould of Potter A from the samian kiln on the Hilly Fields (found in 1933).

Left: Jason Walker illustrating some of the Roman pots from the cremation cemetery on the Abbey Field.



Roman burial ground

cremation cemetery under a sports field

by Carl Crossan

July 2000 saw the opening of Colchester's latest sports amenity, a floodlit all-weather pitch topped with astroturf. The new pitch is part of the Garrison sports ground on Abbey Field, a large open space which lies just half-a-mile south of the High Street. The field holds more than a sporting interest, for it lies in a region of Roman cemeteries which stretches across a broad area to the south and west of the town.

Many Roman graves have been discovered during works in the area over the last 150 years. In 1925, twenty-eight burials were found when the Garrison sports ground was originally laid out, and in 1931 a groundsman digging holes for goal-posts hit a cremation burial a mere four

inches below the surface. That was 70 years ago, and until recently there has been little opportunity to find out more about the Abbey Field cemetery. The long-awaited chance arose earlier this year when 6,000 square metres of the old pitch was stripped away in readiness for its 21st-century covering. The machine-stripping operation needed to be carried out with great care, both to protect graves that might appear at any moment, and also to ensure that the stripping stopped at the exact depth needed for ground engineers to form a drainage bed for the new pitch.



Above left: flagon with a face mask from one of the graves. Probably placed in the grave full of wine or some other drink.

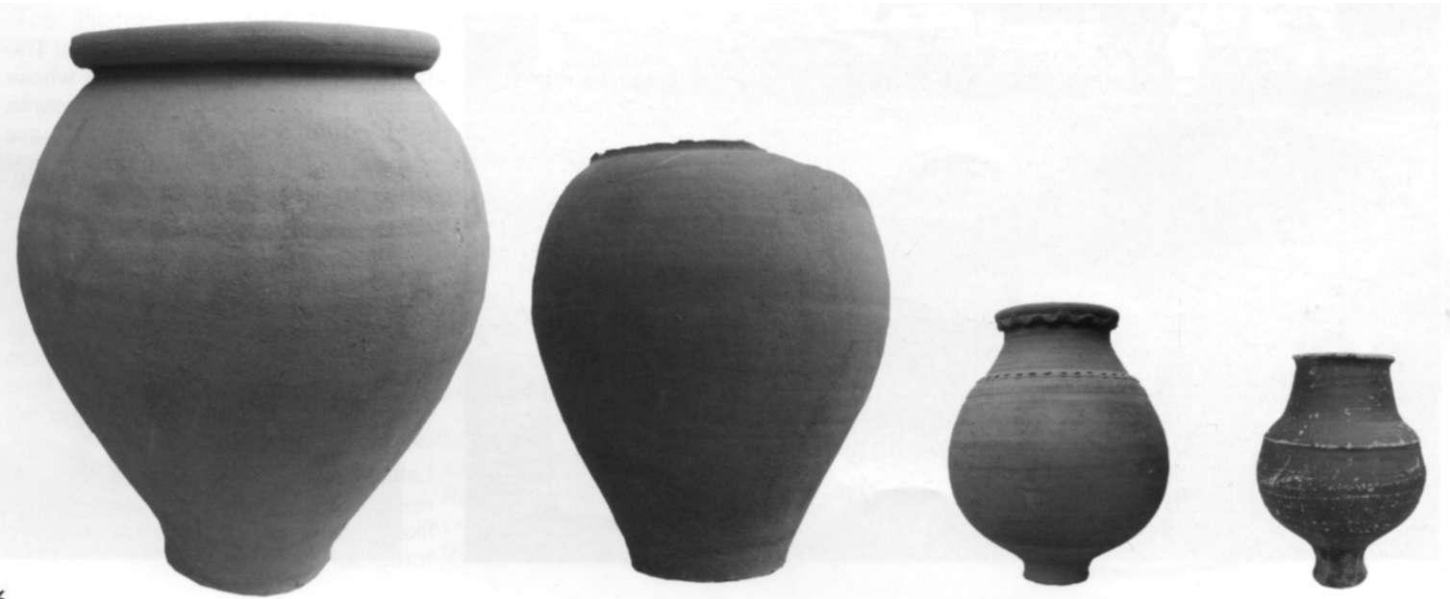
Above: burial in a wooden box. The dead person was a young girl whose remains had been buried with some of her personal possessions. These included armlets of copper alloy and shale, a necklace of jet and glass beads (see page 6) and two coins. The wood forming the box no longer exists, but the presence of the box is shown by 20 iron nails, and something of its shape is revealed by subtle differences in soil colour and texture. The position of one side of the box is indicated by a faint straight line parallel with the left side of the photograph.

Left: precision stripping of the site revealed dozens of cremation burials like the one under excavation in the foreground.

Below: excavating a cremation burial. A typical example of a cremation burial in a pot. The cremated remains were placed in a pot with an inverted bowl as a makeshift lid. The two vessels and their contents were then placed upright in a small pit. The photographs below show the pots *in situ* after one half of the original pit has been carefully re-excavated.



Below: the five largest pots were used as containers for cremated human remains. The smallest pots are examples of vessels which were buried upright, perhaps containing food or drink. All shown at about one-quarter size.



In all, 73 graves were excavated. In the majority of examples the cremated remains had been placed in urns of everyday pottery, some with lids, then buried in a pit with no discernible accompaniment. Some were more elaborate, with several pots, and a few contained wooden caskets (the wood had long since decomposed, leaving rusty iron nails as pointers to their size). A small number of graves were more richly furnished with personal items including shale and copper-alloy armlets and jet beads of various types, and, in one grave, coins and a small stone mixing palette which was probably for cosmetics. The majority of the pots were full of soil which has since been laboriously extracted and fine-sieved to remove the fragments of cremated bone for specialist analysis. The sieving produced some surprises: the glass phial was found lying in the middle of a large soil-filled pot, and had probably been deliberately placed there among the cremated remains. In total, a third of a

ton of soil from the site was sieved and reserved for environmental sampling, which revealed a variety of grasses and cereal grains of the time. One notable characteristic of the soil was the high content of charcoal, also tiny pieces of coal, charred grasses and twigs which were probably used as kindling for the cremation pyres. Most of the graves lay to either side of a possible early trackway which appeared to cross the site heading towards the town. Since Roman law prohibited most burial within city limits, cemeteries were placed on the outskirts of populated areas and are often found flanking the approach roads to Roman towns. When the site and its finds are fully analysed, it will be informative to





compare the Abbey Field graves with those excavated in 1997 from the late 1st- to 2nd-century cremation cemetery at the Asda store site on the northern approaches to Colchester. Situated at opposite ends of the town, these two sites have provided the only modern opportunities to record areas of an urban cremation cemetery in detail.

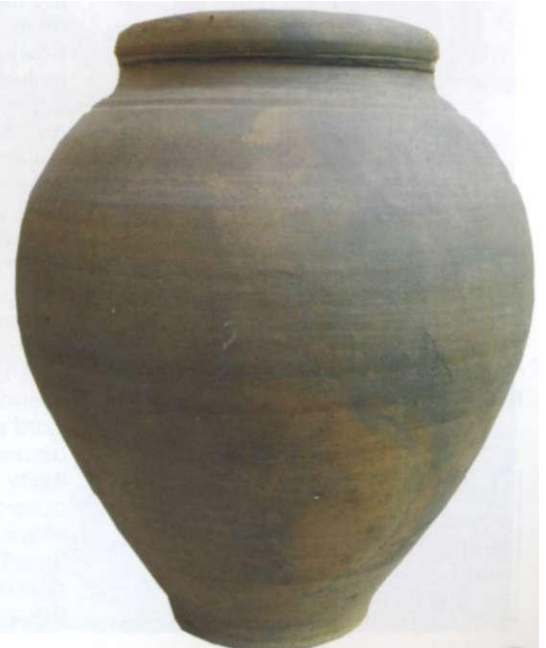
This was a true rescue excavation in the sense that the stripping extended to the precise depth affected by the development, and no further. There is no doubt that, in places, more graves remain to be discovered at a deeper level, but for now these are safely preserved beneath a thick new blanket of astro turf.

The excavation was commissioned by W S Atkins Consultants on behalf of Colchester Garrison and took place with the kind co-operation of McArdle Sport-Tec Ltd.

Top left: jet beads from the box burial illustrated on page 5. Most of the beads are circular and interlock. They are 8 mm in diameter. Two of the other beads are in the form of bears. These delicately carved pieces are only 8 mm long; they are very rare objects.

Top middle: a glass unguent bottle which had been placed in a pot along with human cremated remains. The fact that the vessel had not melted shows that it could not have not been put on the funeral pyre with the body. Unguent bottles (sometimes called 'teardrop' bottles) are thought to have contained fragrant oils for application on the skin.

Above: the most elaborately constructed grave was a tile 'chamber' where the human remains and the grave goods were protected by large bricks lodged against each other to form a box in the ground. The photograph shows a reconstruction of the one found on the Abbey Field site. One of the bricks has been omitted to reveal the contents of the grave. The human remains were put inside a large pot. A deep inverted bowl was then placed on top of the pot to act as a lid and a shallower bowl was laid on top of that. A pair of small flagons and a lamp were also placed in the 'chamber'. The flagons were presumably filled with drink, and the topmost bowl probably contained food. The lamp (shown close-up on the left) may have been left burning when the grave was covered over.



Victorian hi-tech post office

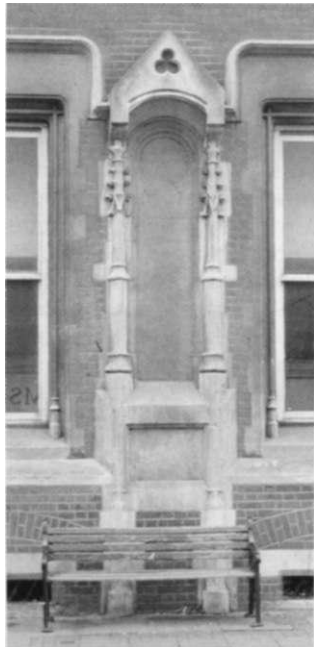
The story of the mail and post office in Head Street

by James Fawn



Above: the post office building during the celebrations for Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee in 1887 (photograph courtesy of Colchester Museum).

Below: the niche for the clock and letter-box in 2000.



A longer version of this article will be published with the main site report.

The Head Street post office was closed in 1997 and the post office re-opened further north along the road; the sorting office was re-located in 1996.

In 1985 the east side of Head Street underwent a transformation when the Culver Precinct was created. One of the old buildings demolished is probably best recalled as Richards' the hairdressers of the 1930s. Before it made way for the short-lived Culver Arcade, now Woolworth's, some old post office receipts were found in a chimney. The Essex Record Office in Colchester has one of them, dated 1813, in which the initials MS appear against the title of Postmaster. MS was in fact the Postmistress, Maria Savage, whose home was the post office for many years.

In the 18th century mail was collected at coaching inns for ready despatch. Sparrow's map of Colchester shows the King's Head off Head Street as the Post House in 1767. The Cups in the High Street was a subsequent example. However, later in the century, the growing volume of mail made the setting-up of a main post office with subsidiary offices desirable.

Miss Savage was not the first 19th-century Postmistress, for directories list Elizabeth Manning in 1792/4 and again in 1811 with the address 'P.O. Head Street'. Although numbering of premises was sanctioned in 1811, it was not in general use until the 1830s, so that we do not know if Miss Savage had moved into the office of her predecessor. She continued to appear as Postmistress in directories from 1823 to 1832. A second set of initials on the receipt is presumably that of one of her assistants; welcome help since her hours were long.

Henry Verlander had become postmaster by 1835 with an office on the west side of Head Street nearly opposite Miss Savage's home. The business continued in the family when Joseph Verlander followed on in 1841. The Verlanders saw in some of Rowland Hill's postal reforms, which included the penny post of 1840 and the introduction of pre-paid stamps such as the 'penny black'. Postmen no longer collected money on delivery and so were able to go their rounds more quickly to deal with the consequent increase in the volume of letters, which nationally doubled within a year. William Wire, the Colchester antiquarian collector, recorder of local archaeology and postman, will have worked from this office until he died in 1857.

In 1859 Henry Benson Card took up the postmastership at 146 High Street. Mr Card's eyesight began to fail and Mrs Card assumed more and more of the responsibility. By the early 1870s the business had outgrown the office again and a further move was undertaken, back to Head Street. Fenn Wright, the estate agents, now occupy the High Street site though not the original building.

Nos 33 and 34 Head Street were pulled down in 1872 to make way for the new post office. The Crown accepted a tender of £4,140 from Mr George Dobson of Butt Road for the construction of a three-storey and attic building to be completed in a year. High on the north wall was placed a plaque which still reads 'This wall is the property of the Postmaster General 1873', as if to emphasise that the new office belonged to the Crown and was not on private premises.

The *Essex Standard* was critical of its architecture, calling it 'a ponderous block of buildings' which 'now lifts its head as if in scorn of the tiny room opposite [in Miss Savage's house] in which the business was formerly carried on.' It was more enthusiastic about the facilities provided, which included the telegraph.

The telephone was not patented until 1876, but the first practical telegraph had been invented in 1837 and was rapidly taken up by the railways and by private companies set up to send messages by wire, ie telegrams. The 1868 Telegraph Act authorised the Postmaster-General to take over the telegraphs and in 1870 Colchester's public Postal Telegraph Office was given as 'Head Street, top of High Street', precise address now unknown. The new Post Office, fitted out and opened on June 22nd 1874, contained the next telegraph office, the first floor being the instrument room while the basement held batteries and stores.

The ground floor contained the postal and money-order business as well as sorting rooms and staff facilities. The second floor was the private quarters of the Postmaster, or rather Postmistress, since Mrs Card had now taken over officially. The 1887 photograph shows an important feature in an ornamental niche on the front of the building, a clock which could be set to London time by the telegraph, and to which all other clocks in the town could be referred, with a built-in letter-box below. The clock and the letter-box were in use until 1934. The 2000 photograph shows the surviving niche.

The Cards lived 'above the shop', but after their retirement around 1890 succeeding Postmasters resided elsewhere. In the early 20th century, some houses and gardens behind the post office made way for an extension to the sorting office and for sheds for bicycles, still a convenient mode of transport for our post deliverers. The former Verlander office adjacent to the 1874 building disappeared during the major extension of the premises in 1934.

The GPO has therefore had a long association, albeit interrupted, with Head Street. If you think it is still in that street, you are wrong; the current office is now on North Hill - but only just!

Roman Colchester uncovered

The latest large-scale excavation in the town-centre was on the site of the former post office in Head Street. The remains proved to be well preserved, and the finds were prolific and informative. The Roman army, Boudica, and the Roman colonists had all been busy, and there was much to dig and record.

Largest town-centre dig in fifteen years

Chances to dig inside the walled area of Colchester are becoming increasingly rare, so the recent excavation at Head Street was a big event for archaeologists, particularly because of its large size. The dig was the largest in Colchester town centre for fifteen years. Its purpose was to record the archaeological remains which would have been destroyed by the construction of a multiplex cinema on the site of the former post office in Head Street.

The Roman army

The earliest remains were part of the legionary fortress which predated the Roman town. It was built between AD 44 and 49, and would have provided safe and relatively comfortable accommodation for about 5,000 Roman soldiers. The military remains at Head Street turned out to be difficult to interpret in terms of plan and function, but it seems likely that they incorporated workshops of some kind.

A distinctive feature of the fortress at Colchester is the use of mortared plinths as foundations. The Romans introduced mortar into Britain, and these must be some of the earliest walls in the country.

Boudica

Whenever a Roman house is discovered in Colchester dating to the AD 50s, it almost invariably turns out to have been destroyed by fire. And so it proved at Head Street, where the latest excavation revealed yet another Roman house which was destroyed during the Boudican revolt. The pattern is so consistent that it seems that when Boudica and her followers put the Roman town to the torch during the famous British revolt of AD 60 or 61, the destruction must have been total - every building was burnt.

Many of the houses and other buildings would have been difficult to set alight, which suggests that the Britons systematically torched the buildings one by one. The buildings would have been

Right: part of one of the sides of a trench at Head Street showing the way the ground level rose during Roman times. Every layer represents a separate activity in its own time.

Below: the site from on top of the post office building looking west.





One of the first mortared walls in Britain

This is a corner of a building which was once part of the Roman legionary fortress. The building, like the fortress, dates to c AD 44-49. Only the mortared base of the wall survived. It was made by pouring a mixture of gravel stones and wet mortar into wooden shuttering. The upper part of the wall was demolished c AD 50. It consisted of courses of sun-dried blocks of sandy clay. The wall must be one of the earliest examples of the use of mortar in Britain.



hard to set on fire because the floors and walls were of clay brick and few of the timbers in the walls were exposed. Furniture and combustible fittings would be fairly sparse in those days. The roof timbers must have provided the main fuel for the fires, but many of the roofs must have been tiled making them difficult to set alight. Only roofs covered with thatch, planks or wooden shingles would have burnt easily, and they would have allowed the fire to spread quickly. The ease with which the fire spread probably depended on how common the tiled roofs were.

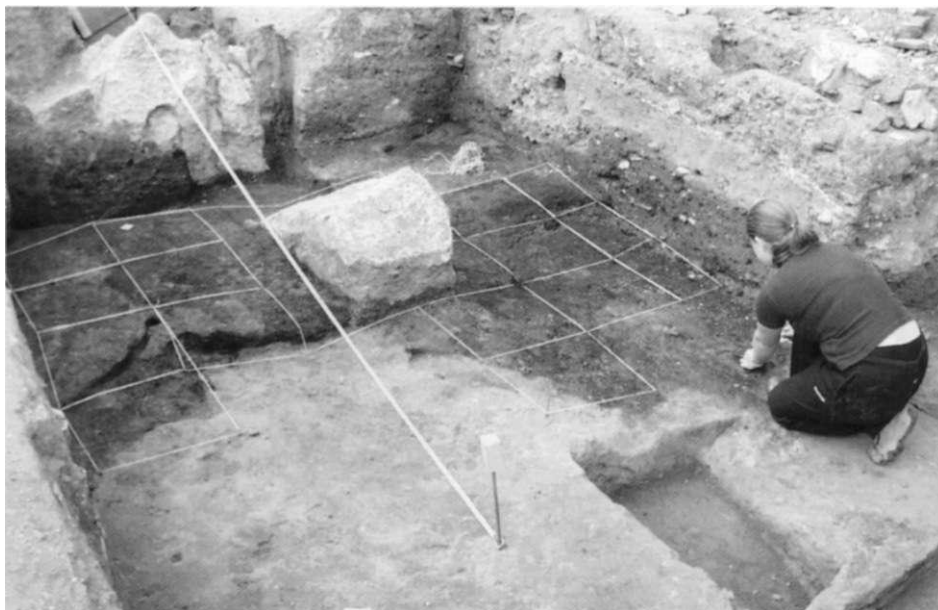
The burnt house at the Head Street site lay lengthways along the frontage of an east-west gravelled road. It was a modest structure with clay floors and walls which were mostly neither painted nor plastered. These walls were made of rectangular sun-dried clay blocks laid in courses on top of a pair of timbers lying side by side. They were thick and capable of bearing the great weight of a tiled roof. The faces of the walls were scored or impressed with chevron patterns. Some of the walls had subsequently been plastered, showing that these

Below left: organic remains of seeds, plants, insects and small animals can survive in the Boudican remains. Floors are obvious places to look for material of this kind. The floors of the Head Street building were divided by strings into squares 0.5 m wide, and the surfaces were gently scraped up and saved square by square. The collected materials will be examined by an environmental archaeologist to look for evidence of how the rooms were used.

Below: some collapsed decorative wall plaster being uncovered. Probably late 1st or 2nd century in date.

Right: close-up of the base of a painted wall in the Boudican debris. The stump of the wall survived *in situ*.

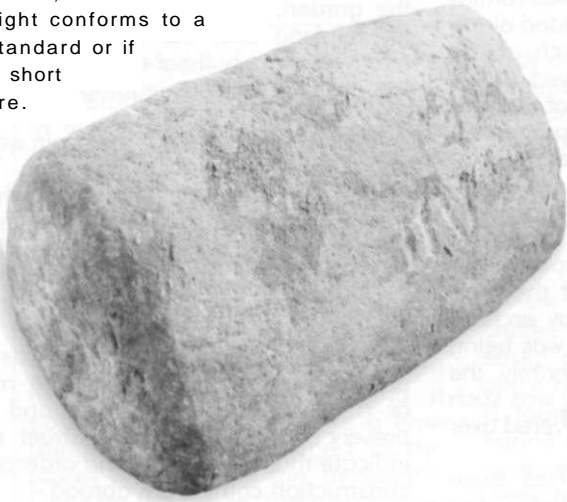
Far right: part of a timber drain destroyed by fire during the Boudican revolt.



Short measure?

An unusual stone object (below) with the letters 'IIV' inscribed on the side was found in the later Roman levels. The inscription appears to be an attempt by an illiterate cutter at the number, seven, which of course should be 'VII'. The object must be a weight, since it weighs about six and-a-half Roman pounds. Lots of examples of Roman weights are known from the Roman world, and the margin of error in our example would not be out of place among them. It appears that the official standard for the Roman world was not rigorously followed.

In this case, we cannot tell if the weight conforms to a local standard or if it gave short measure.

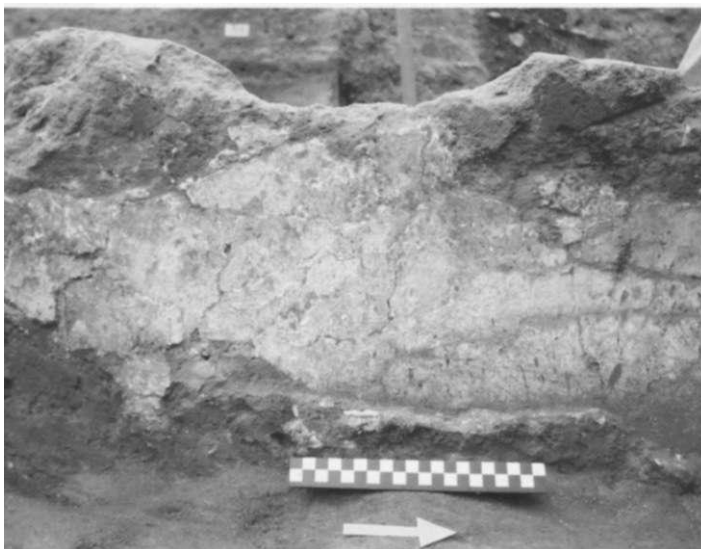


Two of the many complete glass bottles from the site. These are examples of 'onion' bottles, so-called because they resemble onions in shape. They date to c 1700.

marks had a practical function as well as a decorative one.

In places, the floors of the house were heavily scorched red and deep brown, and overlying them was a layer of burnt debris up to a foot or so deep. The debris consisted of crushed and broken fragments of burnt walls lying between the stumps of walls which were still in their original positions. The absence of substantial chunks of collapsed wall on the floors suggests that the building was still standing after the fire, but as a roofless burnt-out shell. This is typical of all the burnt houses found in Colchester so far.

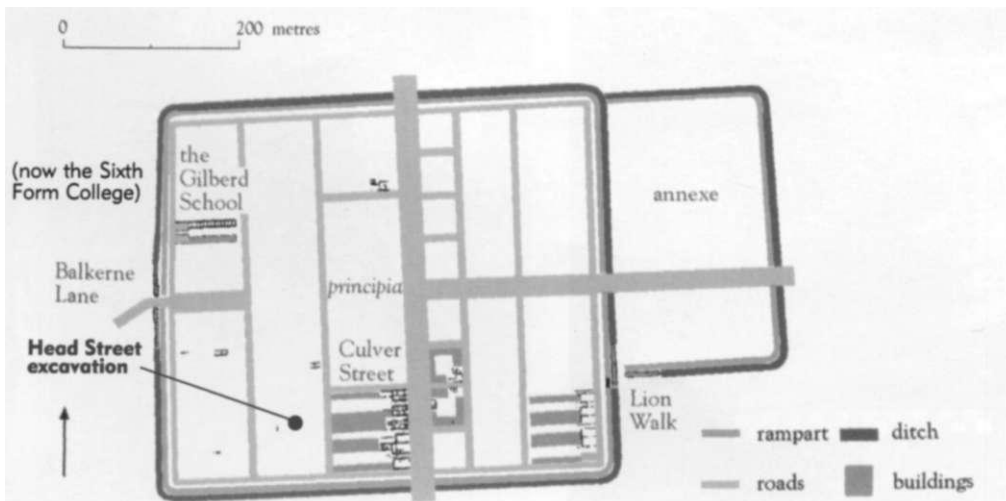
Sometimes, remains of burnt furniture are found in the debris, but this is rare. Bodies too are quite exceptional, with only one possible example known from the town so far. So it was at Head Street, where there were no traces of bodies or furniture. It is as if the Roman settlers had time to clear away their possessions and seek safety elsewhere. This makes sense because the Roman historian Tacitus tells us how the colonists at Colchester took shelter in the Temple of Claudius. The absence of furniture is more problematic, since it could easily have been destroyed without trace in the





Above: part of the site with Jumbo, Colchester's famous water-tower, in the background, and visitors on site.

Below: plan showing the layout of the legionary fortress and the largest parts of the buildings which have been excavated so far. The position of the Head Street excavation is marked with a red spot.



fire. In fact, one of the burnt houses excavated at Lion Walk in the 1970s did contain the remains of a bed in one room and a shelf or other piece of furniture in another. However, the bed was broken and in a poor state before the fire, so maybe it had not been worth saving.

Ornamental pool

After the Boudican fire, the area was rebuilt. The east-west street was retained, but a wide footway was added along the south side, overlying much of the remains of the house destroyed in AD 60/61. The land to the south of the new frontage was split into two properties. One plot was cultivated, whereas pits for sand were dug on the other.

Eventually houses were built on both plots. An interesting feature of one of these buildings was a D-shaped basin projecting into the garden at the rear. The feature was discovered by archaeologists when part of the site was being redeveloped in 1934. Fortunately the floor level of the new building was such that the basin could be left covered over and undisturbed.

The inside of the basin had been covered with plain white mosaic, but nearly all of this had been removed in the Roman period and the face repaired with poorly-applied plaster.

The archaeologists in 1934 could not tell if the basin was the remains of a cold plunge bath (a feature found in Roman baths) or an ornamental pool, partly

because they were not able to dig a large enough area.

The recent excavation has shown that the room on to which the basin was built did indeed contain the remains of an underfloor heating system - just as might be expected if it were part of baths. And what's more, the remains of a wooden water-main were also found nearby. However, it now seems almost certain that the structure is the remains of an ornamental pool built to enhance the garden. There are several reasons for thinking this, but mainly it is the relatively slight build of the structure and the absence of steps leading down into it.

All of what survived of the basin would have been below ground level. The straight part forming the back may have extended upwards a couple of metres or so to form an ornamental back, and the curved part on the front would have continued upwards for maybe a metre to form a low wall.

Very few ornamental pools such as this are known in Britain. They are more of a Mediterranean feature, and the presence of one at Head Street may indicate that the person who ordered its construction came from abroad.

The excavation at Head Street was commissioned by Licet Developments Ltd.



Right: the ornamental pool and a sequence of snapshots of its lifting.

sequence starts here →



Saving the pool

The ornamental pool was removed in large pieces, so that it can be reconstructed by Colchester Museum on a new site. The work was done by Jess Jephcott and Colchester Engineering Systems with the aid of a crane and a prefabricated steel cradle shaped to match the pool.

The remains of the pool were badly cracked and in places very fragile. Some of the cracks passed right through the structure, making it possible to move it a bit at a time using a crane. The largest of the pieces was over a ton in weight. Once on the cradle, the pieces were securely propped and the whole lot lifted by crane in one go on to the

back of a lorry. The cradle and its contents were then taken to a museum store where it was unloaded by crane. Using a cradle in this way allows each piece to be disturbed only once, thereby reducing the risk that the pieces would disintegrate before reaching their final resting place.

Now that the pieces are on the cradle, the remains of the pool can easily and safely be dropped into place by crane when a suitable site is found. The cradle will then be buried and the pieces will stay on it permanently. The pool can then be recreated by fine-tuning the positions of the pieces with levers and setting them in mortar.



***We have lift-off' - up, up and away!**



Head Street - the volunteers



Top and above: volunteers washing and marking pottery and other finds at Head Street.

Left: Dan Biglin who helped during the summer at Head Street.

What the volunteers say -

Colin Harvey, a printer who did some finds processing on his days off
 'I was born in Colchester and have lived here all my life. I am interested in the history of Colchester and this seemed like an opportunity to see it at first hand. Very informative and good to particularly liked opening each of the bags to see v

Elizabeth South, a midwife
 'We live at Gosbecks near the Archaeological Park, and we were already curious about archaeology. When we saw the advert in the paper, we thought that we would love to do that ar

Graham South, a retired building surveyor
 'My father was a postman in Colchester for 40 years, so when I saw that the dig was on the site of

Rebecca Gorrige (currently doing an archaeology course in Colchester)
 'I thought it was brilliant! It was fascinating touching things that had not been touched for 2,000 years.'

Bridget MacAlpine, a retired teacher

'I am fascinated by what went on in Colchester in th

Alan Ladbrooke, a retired educationalist
 'I have become very interested in history since I retired. I find that history comes alive when you can see the evidence coming out of the ground. It was great to find out at first hand how people lived in the past.'

A triumph!

A team of over forty volunteers helped with the initial processing of the finds from the dig. Some came every day, others for just a few hours each week. Some had previous experience, others had never done anything like it before. The challenge was to sort, wash and mark all the 'bulk' finds from the site so that they were ready to be studied by specialists as soon as the excavation finished. And so it proved to be. On the triumph!

with thanks to the volunteers:

Carol Addison
 Edith Bickerstaffe
 Dan Biglin
 Mary Coe
 Hilary Cairns
 Pete Campbell
 Caroline Dow
 Margaret Ebdon
 Pat Farnell

Margaret Gooderham
 Don Goodman
 Rebecca Gorrige
 Denise Hardy
 Hilary Harvey (and Colin)
 Janet Harrison
 Alan Ladbrooke
 Martha Lambert
 John Lay
 Bridget MacAlpine
 Brenda May
 Anna Moone
 Charlotte Mecklenburgh
 Francis Nicholls
 Sheila and Robin Nisbett

Emily Neish
 Freda Nicholls
 Janet Read
 Graham, Nicholas and Sue Rowe
 Rodney Reynolds
 Joyce Rodger
 Pauline Skippins
 David Sims
 Alison Speller
 Graham and Elizabeth South
 Richard Shepherd
 Margaret Ward
 Fred Westgate
 Margaret Westgate
 Eve Williams

Exploring the High Street



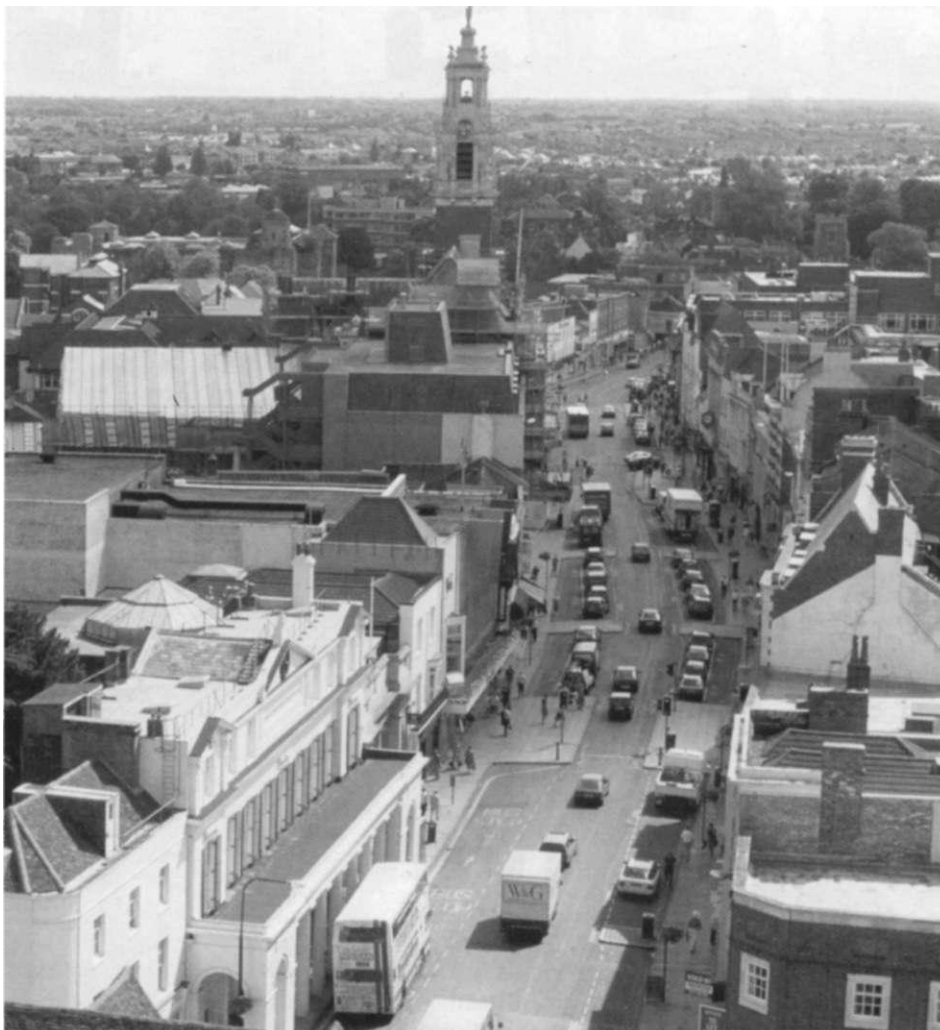
Today, the High Street faces a period of adjustment, having lost its dominant role in the town. From the beginning, it was the most important street in Colchester. At first (in the AD 40s), it was the main approach road leading up to the front of the headquarters building (*principia*) of the legionary fortress. Then in the Roman town, it was the principal east-west route across the settlement. It linked the east and west gates and it appears to have contained most of the town's shops (in front rooms in private houses). The subsequent Saxon town seems to have been concentrated around the central part of the street where St Runwald's church stood in the middle of it. The Normans cleared and remodelled one end of the High Street to build their huge fortress (the castle). The existence of All Saints' and St Nicholas' churches probably prevented the street being diverted further southwards than it was. In the 12th century, the townsfolk built the town hall ('moot hall') on the

centre of the High Street's north frontage so that it was in the very centre of town. At about the same time, some houses here were built of stone, presumably to reduce the risk of fire or to make them more secure. In the centuries which followed, temporary market stalls in the High Street became permanent to form Middle Row beside St Runwald's church, and trade and commerce developed and flourished as shown by, for example, the Dutch Bay Hall, the later Corn Exchange, the livestock and other street markets, and the arrival of banks in the mid 18th century.

Below: the High Street as seen from the top of Jumbo a few years ago, looking eastwards. The town hall (which is on the site of the Norman moot hall) is in the centre. The castle is just visible behind it to the left. The kink at the far end of the street is the Norman diversion around the castle bailey.



Above: three of the 17th-century drug jars from the apothecary's shop, the 'Old Twisted Posts and Pots', which used to be on the High Street close to the Red Lion. The jars were found in rubbish-pits during the excavations which preceded the building of the Lion Walk precinct in the 1970s. The jars are labelled with the names of the drugs.



Top: the milestone (the 'obelisk') which once stood in the High Street next to St Runwald's church. It gave the distances in miles to London, Harwich, Norwich, Yarmouth, and Ipswich. The remains of the obelisk now stand in the town cemetery off Mersea Road where it is re-used as a memorial for the Wire family.

Some interesting buildings and sites on the High Street



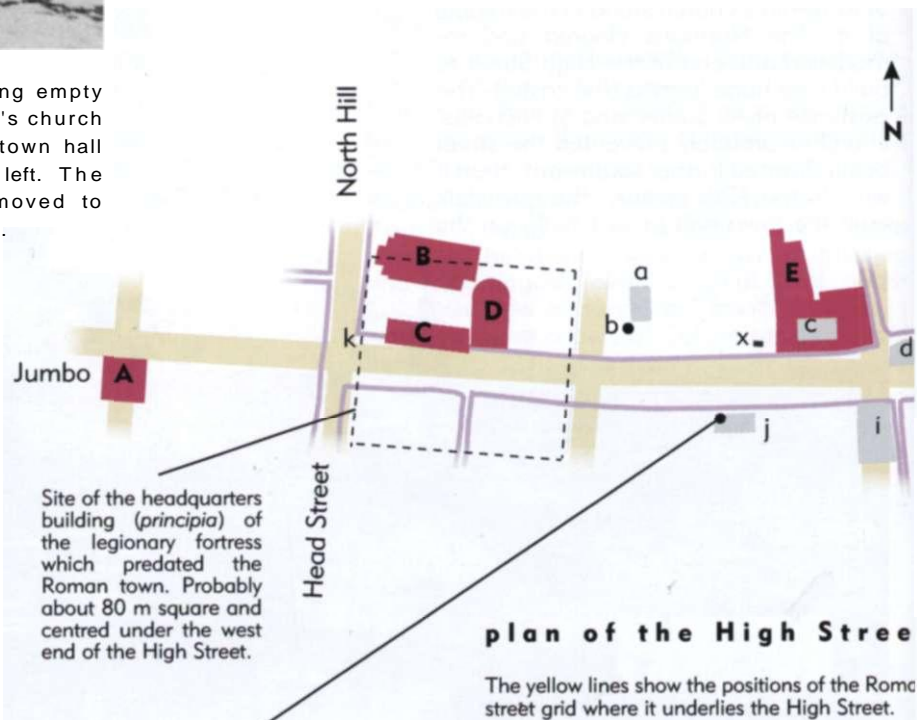
The west end of the High Street in 1858 showing empty animal pens for the livestock market. St Runwald's church is in the centre background with the Victorian town hall (opened 1845 and demolished 1897) to the left. The Cups hotel is on the left. The market was moved to Middleborough at the foot of North Hill in 1862.



The Albert Hall of Colchester.

Existing buildings shown on plan (red)

- A** Jumbo. Water-tower built in 1883.
- B** St Peter's Church. The richest church in Essex in 1066 (according to Domesday).
- C** The Essex and Suffolk Fire Office. On the site of the Dutch Bay Hall which was central to Colchester's cloth industry.
- D** The Albert Hall, built as a corn exchange in 1845. Now the Co-operative Bank.
- E** The town hall. Opened in 1902.
- F** Hollytrees. Built 1716. (See page 24.)
- G** All Saints' Church. Medieval.
- H** The Red Lion Hotel. One of the best-preserved inns of its period in the country.



Part of a Roman mosaic floor found in the garden of the Three Cups Inn in the 18th century.



3-D model of the lead canister found in 2000 at Menzies', in its original form (by Scout Design).



St Runwald's church (d on the plan).



Reconstruction drawing of an unusual pottery drinking vessel from the Roman pottery shop which was burnt down during the Boudican revolt (b on the plan). Found in 1927.



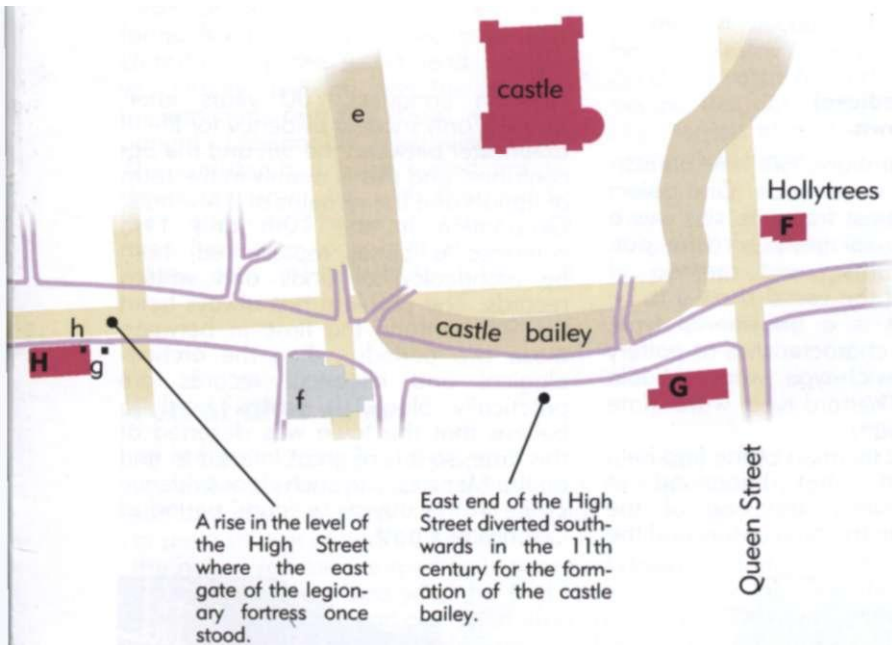
Excavations in progress on the site of the Cups Hotel in 1973 (x on the plan).

Angel Yard excavations in the 1980s. Remains of Roman and medieval houses. Now Angel Court council offices (z on the plan).



Not surviving (grey)

- a Eleventh- or twelfth-century stone house in Foundry Yard. Demolished 1886.
- b Site of a Roman pottery shop burnt down in AD 60/1 during the Boudican uprising (site of former Jacklins' confectionery shop/tea room),
- c Moot hall. Medieval town hall. Twelfth century. Demolished in 1843 to make way for a new town hall which was demolished in 1897 to build the present one.
- d St Runwald's Church. Stood in the middle of the High Street. Demolished in 1878. Perhaps as early as 8th or 9th century in origin,
- e Eleventh-century defensive ditch forming the south side of the castle bailey. Now filled in and under shops and street,
- f Site of St Nicholas' Church. Medieval church replaced in 1875 with a church designed by Gilbert Scott which in turn was knocked down in 1955 and replaced by St Nicholas House (occupied until recently by the Co-op).
- g Site of a Roman pottery shop burnt down in AD 60/61 during the Boudican uprising,
- h 'Old Twisted Posts and Pots' (an apothecary's shop); 17th-century drug jars from the shop found during the Lion Walk excavations in the 1970s.
- i Eleventh- or twelfth-century stone house. Demolished in 1730.
- j Thirteenth-century house with at least two lead canisters filled with coins buried in the floors on the site of Menzies' shop.
- k King Coel's Pump. A large public well which still exists under the pavement and street.



A rise in the level of the High Street where the east gate of the legionary fortress once stood.

East end of the High Street diverted southwards in the 11th century for the formation of the castle bailey.

Below: Roman mosaic floor under Red Lion Passage. Last uncovered in 1988.



The Red Lion Hotel was built c 1500 as a series of three shop units on the High Street frontage added on to a slightly older house behind. The idea was to take advantage of the good rents that this part of the High Street could command.



Buried treasure at John Menzies' shop

Opportunities to examine really 'hot' archaeological sites in Colchester don't come up often, so you can imagine our interest when we heard that the Menzies' shop on the High Street was to be taken down and the site redeveloped behind the frontage. Previous discoveries of two lead canisters filled with medieval silver coins show that Menzies' and its neighbour on the east side probably occupied the site of a 13th-century house whose owner or owners had kept very large sums of money buried in the floors for safe-keeping. Would another hoard of coins be found? Also the site lies in the heart of what was the medieval town, so could it reveal anything new about the origins of the relatively obscure Saxon town?

Much of the site had been destroyed in 1969 when it was last redeveloped. The construction of exceptionally massive pile-caps and ground-beams resulted in the loss of most of the archaeological remains which were there. To minimise further damage, it was decided that the new building should re-use the existing foundations and thereby reduce the need for more ground disturbance. Our role during the redevelopment works was therefore modest and restricted to digging a few trenches where new foundations were needed, and carrying out a watching brief when the builders cleared the 1969 foundations in readiness for their re-use.

Start of the medieval and modern town

Despite the limitations, two very interesting discoveries were made. One object of especial interest from the site was a large part of a relatively primitive pot. The shape, fabric, and method of manufacture of the vessel show it to be 9th century. It is a transitional type, combining the characteristics of pottery known as Ipswich-type ware (Middle Saxon) with Thetford-type ware (late Saxon to Norman).

The date and location of the find help us understand what happened in Colchester between the end of the Roman period in the 5th century and the

Norman conquest 700 years later. There is only modest evidence for life in Colchester between the 5th and the 8th centuries, and this is mainly in the form of burials and the remains of a few huts. Occupation in the 10th and 11th centuries is better represented, both by archaeological finds and written records. The problem has always been the 9th century, the time in between these two periods, when the archaeological and historical records are practically blank. It seems hard to believe that the town was deserted at this time, so it is of great interest to find on the Menzies' site such clear evidence of life in this otherwise 'dark' period of Colchester's past.



Top: large fragment of a 9th-century pot from the site.

Above right: the front of Menzies' during the works.

Left: Alec Wade recording on the Menzies' site.

Right (on the opposite page): the empty lead canister found in 2000 with the single 13th-century coin from the pit which contained the canister. The canister is 200 mm high and the coin is 18 mm in diameter.

The 5th- to 8th-century material is scattered around the town with no obvious concentrations. The distribution seems to reflect the Roman town. The 10th- and 11th-century finds, on the other hand, are at their densest close to the High Street, and the 9th-century pot fits this pattern. The High Street was the core of medieval Colchester in almost everyway - physically, economically, and administratively. Its economic function was paramount, because it hosted the market and was where most of the houses and shops were to be found. The large fragment of pot from the Menzies' site is an important find, because it shows that Colchester probably became an urban centre in the 9th century.

A third hoard?

The other interesting discovery at Menzies' in 2000 was a lead canister. It lay only a few yards away from where, in 1969, another lead canister had been found filled with coins (see page 20). Unfortunately the latest lead canister was empty, but the way the lid sags inwards hints that the vessel was once upright, presumably filled with coins. The canister had been buried upside-down in a small pit, with the lead lid firmly attached. The edges of the lid had been bent over to hold it in place. A solitary coin of Henry III lay in the soil

close by, as if it had been dropped when the canister was being emptied.

The canister is decorated with crosses and vertical lines. Decoration of this form is characteristic of Roman lead tanks, and it seems that whoever made the canister must have cut one up and re-used the lead sheeting.

The find is puzzling. Why bury the canister upside-down? Come to that, why bury it at all when the canister could have been kept on a shelf or under the bed until it was needed? Whatever the explanation, it is unlikely that the canister was in the pit because it had been thrown away. Lead was valuable, and people did not normally dispose of rubbish under their floors.

The work was commissioned by Chartwell Land Ltd. The archaeological consultants were CgMs (Consulting) Ltd.



Pots of silver coins

At around 12.55 pm on Saturday 5th January 1902, a workman named Mr Brown put his pick through something soft and metallic. On pulling the pick out, he was astonished to see a shower of bright silver coins running 'like peas' out of the hole. Workmen immediately swarmed down the ladders into the trench to see what he had found. Literally it was buried treasure - a lead pot full of silver coins! The silver pennies were rapidly disappearing into pockets by the handful when the foreman arrived on the scene. Mr Saunders had seen the rush of men and came at once to see what was going on. He sternly claimed the coins for the bank who owned the site and demanded that the men put all the coins back.

The silver pennies were then decanted into a bucket and taken for safe-keeping to the bank's temporary premises further up the High Street. The bucket was full to the top and the coins were heavy, weighing between 25 and 30 lbs. It turned out that this was one of the largest medieval coin hoards ever found in the country. The coins allow its deposition to be dated precisely to 1237.

For the next few days, coins were traded around the town, furtively passed from hand to hand. A well-known London dealer reputedly left town a happy man after going round all the shops where the coins might be purchased.

An inquest was held at the town hall the following Thursday. The town crier paraded through the streets beforehand announcing that it would decide who made the find and who was the legal owner.

Strangely, Mr Brown was not present at the event. Mr Saunders told the jury that the man was no longer with his firm because he had stayed away from work for three days

after the discovery and had been replaced. Mr Saunders could not say why he had 'stopped away', but had no reason to suppose that Mr Brown had any of the coins.

The number of coins in the hoard is put at around 11,000, but this is a very rough estimate. The coins in the bucket never seem to have been counted, and nobody knows how many were taken off the site by the workmen. Rumours that a thousand illegally acquired coins were in circulation were denied at the inquest.

The jury decided that the hoard was treasure trove and belonged to the Crown. They also decided that Mr Brown was not the sole finder, but had to share the honour with four of his workmates who were working nearby at the time. The question of a reward was also discussed, but it was outside the jurisdiction of the inquest and it is not clear now if one was ever given. The missing coins were regarded as a matter for the police, since illegally keeping treasure trove was punishable by imprisonment or fine.

In 1969, an even bigger hoard was unearthed on the adjacent property when a shop for Boots' the Chemist was being built (see page 20). This time there were more than 14,000 coins. Again they were in a lead canister and again they were 13th century. Although from different properties, the hoards had been buried close enough to each other to make it likely that the two properties were originally one.

Unfortunately neither hoard survives intact. Much of the 1902 find ended up in the British Museum, but many coins were dispersed to various museums around the country. The bulk of the 1969 hoard was returned to the finders, although Colchester Museum and the British Museum both have selections of the coins. The 1969 canister and what survives of the 1902 one are in Colchester Museum.

The 1969 coin hoard

by Marion Archibald

How many shoppers stepping onto the escalator in Menzies' store, until recently occupying nos 21-23 High Street in Colchester, knew that just under their feet lay the findspot of one of the largest medieval coin-hoards ever discovered in England and that, just a few metres away through the wall, was that of another?

When the shop was refurbished in 1969, David Clarke (the curator of Colchester Museum) recalled the discovery in 1902 of about 11,000 early 13th-century Short Cross-type silver pennies on the Westminster Bank property next door and predicted, not entirely in jest, that another hoard might be forthcoming here. On 13th February the site foreman George Mead made the not-unexpected call which sent the curator and his assistant running down the High Street

to the site. A late decision to re-locate the escalator to the front of the shop meant that a JCB could not be used to excavate the pit for its works. While doing the job with pick and shovel, Ronald Munson and George Purvis had just come upon a lidded lead canister containing thousands of silver coins. At a coroner's inquest, where the jury included several members whose fathers had served in the same capacity in 1902, the coins were declared treasure trove. About 2,000 representative coins were selected for museums around the country - over 400 of them for Colchester Museum, which also acquired the container (in those days not legally part of the treasure trove), which was generously presented by the then land-owner Boots' the Chemist. The finders were rewarded with the market value of the coins retained while the rest were returned to them and later sold at auction.

The hoard totalling 14,076 coins was made up of two parts. A mixed currency group of 12,160 coins, mainly English Long Cross-type pennies of Henry III from mints all round the country but including some Anglo-Irish, Scottish and Continental issues plus a few plated forgeries, was set aside in 1256. Then, at an uncertain date at least twelve years later, 1,916 newly-struck pennies from the nearest mint of Bury St Edmunds were added. The total face value of the hoard was £58.13s Od, then a huge sum representing, at minimum, the purchasing power of £25,000 today.

The canister is of a type used by those handling large amounts of cash and probably designed to accommodate a specific sum, in this case, 100 marks (16,000 pence). The excellent quality of the coins, compared to the underweight and often clipped specimens of medieval currency in everyday use, also points to financiers as likely owners. Research by David Stephenson has shown that local Jewish bankers, Aaron and his sons Samuel and Joce, owned houses in this part of the High Street at the time. It cannot be proved absolutely, but it seems likely that the Colchester medieval coin-hoards were the reserves of this family or other financiers in their community unable to take the contents with them when the Jews were harshly expelled from England in 1290.



Above: the 1969 hoard as it was found.

Right: David Clarke and Ros Dunnett posing with the hoard. Ros Dunnett was in charge of the Colchester Excavation Committee (now Colchester Archaeological Trust).

Photographs © Colchester Museum.



Marion Archibald was formerly at the Dept of Coins and Medals at the British Museum. A detailed report on the 1969 hoard is in a new book English medieval coin hoards 1 by Marion Archibald and B C Cook; it will be published in 2001 by the British Museum.

Colchester Castle measured up

How high was Colchester Castle?

Colchester Castle is a most interesting and complicated building, and yet despite extensive and repeated study over many years, it is still far from being properly understood. Big issues still remain unresolved, and no doubt the castle will hold on to some of its secrets for many years to come.

In the 19th century, there was a prolonged and at times acrimonious debate about whether or not the building was Roman. And it is easy to see why people might think that. Not only is the castle largely built of Roman building materials (all robbed from the Roman town), but the coursing of the walls is in places very similar to Roman work. Moreover, being Norman and thus 'Romanesque', the building recalls Roman architecture because of its round-headed arches and vaults. However, in the early 20th century, the matter was settled with honour on both sides when it was found that the so-called 'vaults' in the basement of the castle were Roman. It turned out that the castle had been built around and over the podium or base of a massive Roman temple which we now know was the Temple of Claudius.

From temple to castle

Why did the Norman baron, Eudo Dapifer, build the castle around the base of the Roman Temple of Claudius? The castle was constructed almost entirely of re-used Roman building materials (unlike the White Tower), so there would have been a logic in incorporating *in situ* Roman work if it suited. There may also have been an element of one-upmanship. It seems as if, in the 11th century, the local people believed that the temple had been the palace of the great King Cole (see page 26) who had founded the town. By building the castle on the palace, Eudo might have been making a statement about his own power and authority and that of his master, William the Conqueror, on whose behalf he was carrying out the work.

Above right: impression of the Temple of Claudius as it might have looked from ground level in Roman times (3-D model by Scout Design).

Right: aerial photograph of Colchester Castle. From the south-east, showing the south front, the cupola, and the modern roof (photograph by Edward Clack).

Since then, the main area of controversy has focused on the original height of the castle. This is a more important issue than might appear at first, since really it is about trying to determine what precisely is missing - this is critical because it impacts on the design of the building, and whether or not the original concept was ever realised. The problem stems from the fact that the castle was partly demolished in the 17th century, and there are no unambiguous drawings or records showing what the castle was like before the demolition started.

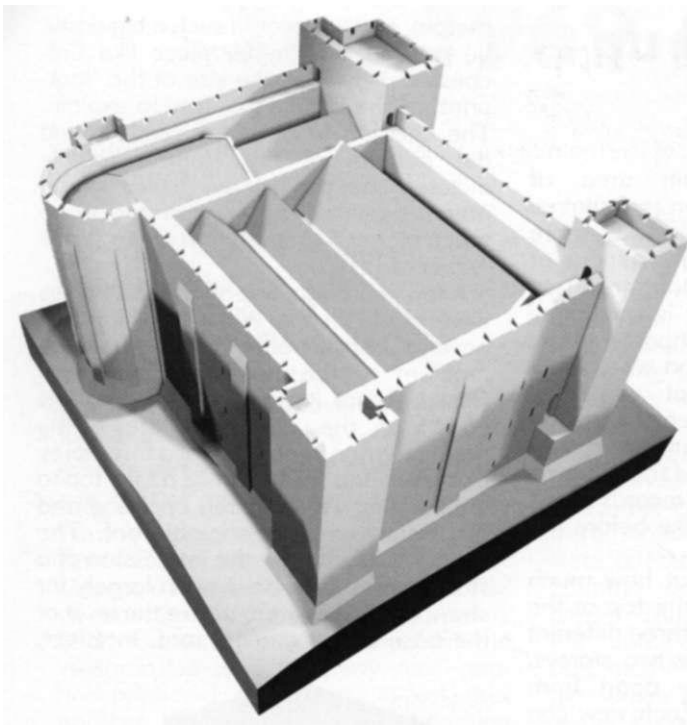
Opinion is divided about how much has been removed from the top of the castle. Broadly, there are three different views: that it had another two storeys, one storey, or very little apart from towers and battlements. Each view can be justified, and none can claim proof.

Colchester Castle is very similar to the White Tower in London (the Tower of London), and comparison between the two suggests that there should have been two more storeys at Colchester. Of all the possibilities, this is the most likely. However, a big objection to this idea is to do with the resultant size of the castle. Another two storeys would mean that the castle would have been the largest Norman castle in the land by a large

margin, and why would such a big castle be needed in a minor place like Colchester? However, the size of the 'footprint' of the building is easy to explain. The decision to build the castle round the podium of the Roman temple dictated the size of the building and meant that the ground plan had to be much bigger than even that of the White Tower of London.

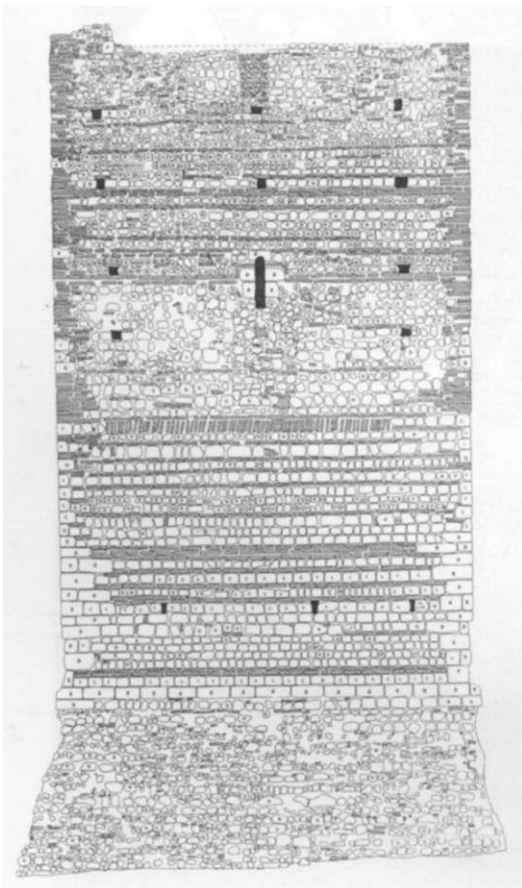
A few years ago, important discoveries were made at the White Tower which have a considerable bearing on the problem of the height of Colchester Castle. There it was found that, in its early form, the uppermost storey of the great Norman keep was not a true storey at all, but had started off as a fake top to the building which merely enclosed and hid from view the original roof. The windows which gave the impression of a storey turn out to have been largely for show, since they were above the level of the base of the original roof. In effect,





Above: the castle as it might have looked had it been built to full height. Viewed from the north-east (3-D model by Scout Design).

Below: stone-for-stone drawing of the north face of the north-east tower.



the roof was set inside the top of the building.

The radical reinterpretation of the White Tower was prompted by the discovery behind some museum cases of triangular shapes resembling the upper parts of gable walls, and it was confirmed by the subsequent discovery of outlets for drains passing through the thickness of the keep wall. The outlets were at the same level as the base of the presumed original roof, and their purpose was to remove rainwater which otherwise would have been trapped inside the keep. They were found in the floor of a passage which is in the thickness of the outer wall and runs around all of the building except for the chapel.

If Colchester Castle had less than two more storeys, then there must have been a major change of plan when the building reached first-floor level. Whatever form any revised design took, the discoveries at the White Tower indicate that the level of the Norman roof would have to correspond to the base of the roof of the castle today. This would mean that the main hall and the chapel were never built, and that the lower hall and the crypt of the chapel would have been used in their place.

A problem with the minimalist reconstruction of Colchester Castle (ie no additional storey) is that it does not take into account what appears to be the remains of a window above the present roof level near the north-west corner of the castle. One additional storey seems more likely than none at all, but it is hard to square the remains of the chapel with an arrangement of this kind.

The Trust has been making detailed scaled plans of the castle as part of a project to draw together and publish the various pieces of work which have been undertaken in the building in recent years. This will include the major survey of the outside face of the keep when, between 1984 and 1993, every stone was carefully drawn at a scale of 1:20. It will also include the excavation of the chapel on the roof in 1988.

One objective of the work is to try and resolve the mystery of the original height of the building. Part of the project has involved trying to reconstruct the

building in three dimensions with a computer model, and the preparatory work for this has thrown up some problems which were not otherwise apparent. The whole issue of the original height of the castle is a very complicated one and, although several interesting and significant pieces of evidence have emerged during the survey and the 3-D modelling, no convincing case can yet be made for any of the three possible solutions.

The vital clues to solve the mystery may await discovery in the tops of the castle walls where, regardless of how many storeys once existed, there should either be chutes for latrines or outlets for drains. If there had been two more storeys, then there should be the lower parts of chutes belonging to latrines in the missing floor (remember that the upper storey would have been a dummy). If there had been one more storey or even none at all, then there should be channels for the drains which drained the roof as at the White Tower.

With luck, an inspection of the top of the keep wall - a kind of archaeological dig into the masonry - could make everything clear. This might mean removing bits of the restoration carried out by Charles Gray. In the 18th century, Gray saved what was left of the castle from further ruin. Although we are not told that this is the case, there is a sense that his restorations were designed to echo what he believed had been removed. For example, his round tower on the south-west corner may be a reference to an earlier round tower in that position, and the square room in the opposite corner with its curious brick pinnacles may similarly echo a square predecessor or even square towers at the corners. One of his other projects was to create a wall walk around the top of the castle on its west and north sides. We need to take a close look at this restoration to see if it is a re-creation of the passage in the thickness of the wall like the one referred to above at the White Tower, and to see if any channels for drains can be found in the floor of it.

Acknowledgements

The stone-for-stone drawings of the castle were done by Bob Moves and Terry Cook of the Colchester Archaeological Trust on behalf of Colchester Borough Museums Service and English Heritage. The current project is being funded by Colchester Museums.

We are especially indebted to the following people: Joseph Crittendon and Philip Taylor of Scout Design for the 3-D models, and June and John Wallace for their help in preparing scaled plans of the vaults and roof of the castle.

Surveying the castle. June and John Wallace taking measurements on the roof of the castle in 2000, with Charles Gray's cupola behind them.



Dennis Tripp: a final farewell

It is with great sadness that we bid a final farewell to Dennis Tripp who died in December 2000. From 1984 until 1995, Dennis worked on practically all of the main digs in Colchester - including the one on the castle roof (see inset picture; Dennis is standing at the front). Even though he was a volunteer and didn't need to dig, his commitment and enthusiasm was such that he would always turn up for a full day's work whatever the weather or time of year. And this was despite very real and persistent mobility problems. But he was more than just a keen amateur archaeologist, he was also a kind and courteous companion and colleague, as anybody fortunate enough to have worked with him will testify.



Philip Morant

The Rev Philip Morant (1700-1770) was rector of St Mary-at-the-Walls' church 1738-1770. He was a friend of Charles Gray (see page 30), and they shared bookish and antiquarian interests. Gray was a subscriber to Morant's book The history and antiquities of Colchester (1748). Morant was a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of London.

Morant is commemorated by the Morant Lecture and the Morant dinner both held annually by the Essex Society for Archaeology and History.

Virtual tour of the castle

With all the technological wizardry that is now available, the boring old slide projector begins to look past its sell-by date. Clearly the first Morant Lecture of the millennium year had to be a bit different. Maybe we could not quite compete with the recent film *Gladiator*, but the challenge was to give a presentation that was more experimental than usual.

The Morant Lecture is an annual event organised by the Essex Society for Archaeology and History. This year it was held in Colchester Castle, so the choice of subject was easy: Colchester Castle and the work which we have been doing there. The plan was to use as much technology as we could without spending any money (which is normal). And the presentation was to be unrehearsed (which is asking for trouble).

The visual aids included live video feeds from key parts of the castle and various three-dimensional computer reconstructions manipulated in real time on a screen. These

were supplemented by the usual mixture of slides and overhead transparencies. The cables and cameras were inherited from the 1997 excavation at Stanway, where we published live images of the dig on the internet. There were three screens in the lecture room, and two two-person camera crews moving in and around the castle, each with their own camera, cables and sound link. The idea was to give the audience a guided tour of the castle without leaving their seats.

In the event, everything worked more or less as hoped and on cue, thanks mainly to the electronic mastery of Dr Tim Dennis. John Woods on the castle roof provided sequences of the walls, Gray's tower and the 'chapel', and Steve Benfield with the second camera did the same for the front of the building and the Roman 'vaults'.

The only problem was the non-appearance of a video clip showing an excavation in progress in the 'well room' about five years ago, and that was my fault because I thought I had lost the tape (it was actually in the video player, but that was too obvious a place for me to look).



Thanks to:

Staff in the Castle Museum for their help; Dr Tim Dennis and John Woods of the Department of Electronic Systems Engineering at the University of Essex for live video feeds from various places in Colchester Castle on the day; and Joseph Crittendon and Philip Taylor of Scout Design. The occasion was Essex Archaeological Society's annual Morant Lecture at the castle on 19th May 2000, this year's subject being the castle itself and its construction. The presenter was Philip Crummy, director of the Colchester Archaeological Trust.

Looking to the past and future at Hollytrees Museum

by Tom Hodgson of Colchester Museum

Hollytrees Museum was closed to the public at the end of April 2000 for a major redevelopment funded by the Heritage Lottery and Colchester Borough Council. This will see the installation of a lift, a new entrance and a shop, as well as a complete re-display on the theme of domestic life in Colchester from 1700 to the present day.

Because Hollytrees is a Grade I Listed Building, preliminary research and recording of the building has been a vital component of the project, and the findings have given us a greater understanding of the complex history of the house.

Hollytrees was completed in 1719, replacing a timber-framed house on the site. It was built in the Palladian style for Elizabeth Cornelisen of Camberwell in London, and her detailed articles of agreement with a London builder, Thomas Blagden, still survive at the Essex Record Office. They include specifications for a 'handsome canopy' over the front door, which is certainly what happened! At this stage the house consisted of a square block with a small

bay to the west accommodating the stair half-landings and closets. Two features that have been discovered from this original phase are the doorway into the stable yard, which is now an internal feature which has undergone many alterations (see picture on right), and, on the first-floor landing, a timber with the remains of a wooden peg, which is clearly part of the material that Thomas Blagden was allowed to salvage and re-use from the old house that was pulled down.

The house passed by marriage in 1727 to Charles Gray, the local MP and antiquarian. He planted the holly trees at the front after which the house gets its name and, more importantly, in 1748 he commissioned the architect James



Deane to build an extension to the west occupying part of what was the stable yard. The principal room was the library on the first floor with the fine Venetian window looking out over the garden at the rear. Below was a servants' room and an arcade leading out into the garden. English Heritage have agreed to



Hollytrees house under renovation in 2000, from the rear (to be the new museum 'frontage' and entrance) - you can see the original main block with the narrow stairways bay on its right, and Gray's extension to the right of that.

The Venetian window - arched, with two side panels (partly obscured by the builders' screens) - is in Gray's library, where he could look out over his gardens.

the re-opening of the arcade (at present a kitchen) to form the new museum entrance as it will return it to something approaching its original purpose.

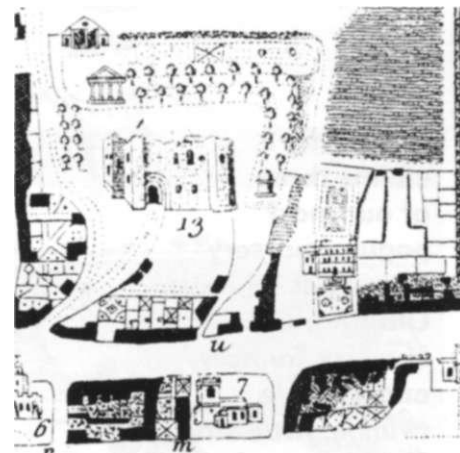
When Charles Gray died in 1782, Hollytrees passed (again by marriage) to the Round family, wealthy local bankers and prominent in the social life of the town. The Rounds owned Hollytrees until 1920 when it was sold to the Borough, and it has become clear from the opening-up work that they made many changes of which we have only the scantiest of records. A split level on the first floor was found to be caused by the insertion of a massive iron beam, probably about 1870, to take the place of the load-bearing wall that was removed to make the Garden Room on the ground floor into the large room that we know today. Examination of doors and panelling shows that most have been modified, patched up or moved to new locations over the years.

During 1928/9, the local architects Duncan, Clarke and Beckett adapted Hollytrees to become a museum. Their plans, which are also held at the Essex Record Office, show tantalising glimpses

of a servants' stair and a 'dumb waiter' linking basement kitchen to dining room (originally Charles Gray's library) that had been installed by the Rounds and were now removed as new toilets and even two new windows were installed in the north front. However, the unexpected survival of a panelled closet wall has been discovered bricked-up behind the 1920s toilet wall.

Archaeological contractors CgMs (Consulting) Ltd have been commissioned to produce a full report on all the features uncovered during the present building work, leading to a more detailed appraisal of Hollytrees than was possible before. A small evaluation was also carried out by the Colchester Archaeological Trust in the garden at Hollytrees in 2000 ahead of alterations, and there will be further evaluation work on site in 2001.

Hollytrees Museum will re-open in July 2001. The discoveries discussed in this article will be more fully explained in the new displays, allowing visitors to share in the fascinating history of the building.



Far left: blocked doorway inside Hollytrees showing at least four building phases from 1719 to 1928 (photograph courtesy of Colchester Museum).

Above: detail from the map of Colchester published in *The history and antiquities of Colchester* by Philip Morant (1748), showing Hollytrees, the castle and the gardens all facing All Saints' church.

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The nursery rhyme:



Colchester claims three of our most popular nursery rhymes as its own: *Old King Cole*, *Humpty Dumpty*, and *Twinkle, twinkle, little star*. But how much do they really have to do with the town?

Origins of nursery rhymes

Most nursery rhymes have been handed down from generation to generation, and consequently their origins are obscure. Many of the oldest rhymes are fragments of ballads or folk tales whose meaning has been lost. *Rock-a-bye baby* is a good example, since, although sung as a lullaby, babies would hardly fall asleep if they could appreciate the danger of the wind blowing (and the cradle falling). Some nursery rhymes were educational under the guise of being amusing. For example, *One, two, three, four, five, Once I caught a fish alive* was to help the child count. Others were simply to amuse; for example, *This little piggy went to market* is part of a tickling game. Some started off as adult riddles which found their way into the nursery as the riddle or the context became obsolete, eg *As I was going to St Ives*. There is the view that some nursery rhymes such as *Humpty Dumpty* have a hidden political reference. Finally, there are nursery rhymes like *Twinkle, twinkle, little star* which were written as poems for children.

Old King Cole

*Old King Cole
Was a merry old soul,
And a merry old soul was he;
He called for his pipe,
And he called for his bowl,
And he called for his fiddlers three!*

*Every fiddler, he had a fiddle,
And a very fine fiddle had he;
Twee tweedle dee, tweedle dee', went the fiddlers.*

*Oh, there's none so rare
As can compare
With King Cole and his fiddlers three.*

According to Colchester's legend (the 'Colchester Chronicle'), the town was founded by Coel who later became a British king. Coel married his daughter Helena to the Roman emperor Constantius to end a two-year-long siege of the town. The couple then had a son, Constantine, who was born in Colchester and became Rome's first Christian emperor. The popular assumption is that if Coel was indeed Old King Cole in the nursery rhyme, then he was merry because he had transferred his kingdom to the Romans and there was peace in his land.

Of course, the story is only partly true, and the critical bits are made up. For example, Constantius did besiege a town in Britain, but it was London, not Colchester. Helena did marry Constantius, and Constantine was their son. But Helena is unlikely to have been the daughter of a British king, because she was from a humble background and probably born in Asia Minor. Moreover, Colchester was not, as you might think from its name, the 'chester' or camp of Cole or Coel. The 'Col' element probably comes from 'Colonia' which was the shortened version of the town's Roman name. If Coel in the legend

was indeed a real person, then maybe he was a high-ranking Briton who lived c AD 300 during the Roman occupation, or perhaps he was a shadowy, semi-historical British king called Coel Hen ('Coel the Old') who was around about a century later.

The legend of Coel has a long ancestry in Colchester. Although the oldest known copy is 14th century in date, the legend is clearly much older and goes back to at least the early 12th century, because Geoffrey of Monmouth included a version of the story in his history of British kings.

In the medieval and later town, the fictional founder of the town was commemorated everywhere; large or mysterious structures were labelled as Coel's. Hence the remains of the giant Roman temple of Claudius were called 'the Palace of Coel'. The great hall in the castle was at least 95 feet long and was known as 'King Coel's Hall'. A large public well at the west end of the High Street was called 'King Coel's Pump', and the Balcerne Gate was 'Colkyng's castle' (see picture below). Largest and most mysterious of all is the great crater on the outskirts of town long known as 'King Coel's Kitchen'. Conceivably it was Geoffrey's history that stimulated the legend in Colchester.

Conceivably King Cole of the nursery rhyme might be Coel of Colchester, although it is doubtful if anyone will ever be able to prove it.

Humpty Dumpty

*Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall,
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall.
All the King's horses,
and all the King's men,
Couldn't put Humpty together again.*



Above right: King Coel's Kitchen in 1759 by William Stukeley. The road behind the pit is now known as King Coel Road.

Right: St Mary-at-the-Walls' church. The top of the tower has been rebuilt after being destroyed during the Siege.

Below: the Balcerne Gate.



of Colchester



There are several interpretations of the rhyme. Colchester's version has it that Humpty Dumpty was the famous cannon which the Royalists (the 'King's men') hoisted up on the tower of St Mary's church (the 'wall') during the Siege of Colchester of 1648 (see picture below). The cannon, a saker, was reputedly operated by a one-eyed gunner named Thompson who killed and injured many of the Parliamentarians (Roundheads). Eventually the cannon was silenced when the Parliamentarians destroyed the top of the tower with their own artillery.

Other explanations are also political. Some argue that Humpty Dumpty was Richard III and the rhyme is a reference to the Battle of Bosworth Field when he was knocked off his horse and died after being wounded many times. Another view is that *Humpty Dumpty* was Charles I, with the rhyme being about his execution by the Parliamentarians.

The problem with all of these explanations is that *Humpty Dumpty* occurs under various names throughout Europe where people would have had little interest or knowledge of English affairs. In France it is *Boule, Boule*, in Denmark *Lille-Trille*, and in Germany *Humpelken-Pumpelken*. The most likely explanation is that the rhyme is simply a riddle, which asks the question, 'What is it that the King's men could not put back together?' The answer is an egg.

Twinkle, twinkle, little star

'Twinkle, twinkle, little star' must be one of the best-known poems in English. It was written by Jane Taylor and published in a book of poems for children which she wrote with her sister Ann.

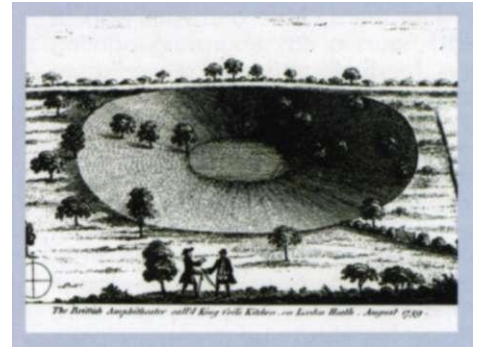
Jane moved to Colchester with her family in 1796 when she was 12.

King Coel's Kitchen

This is a large bowl-shaped hole in the ground measuring about 60 m across. Today it is hidden behind houses and trees. In the 18th century, King Coel's Kitchen was drawn by William Stukeley, a well-known archaeologist, who thought that it was the remains of a Roman amphitheatre.

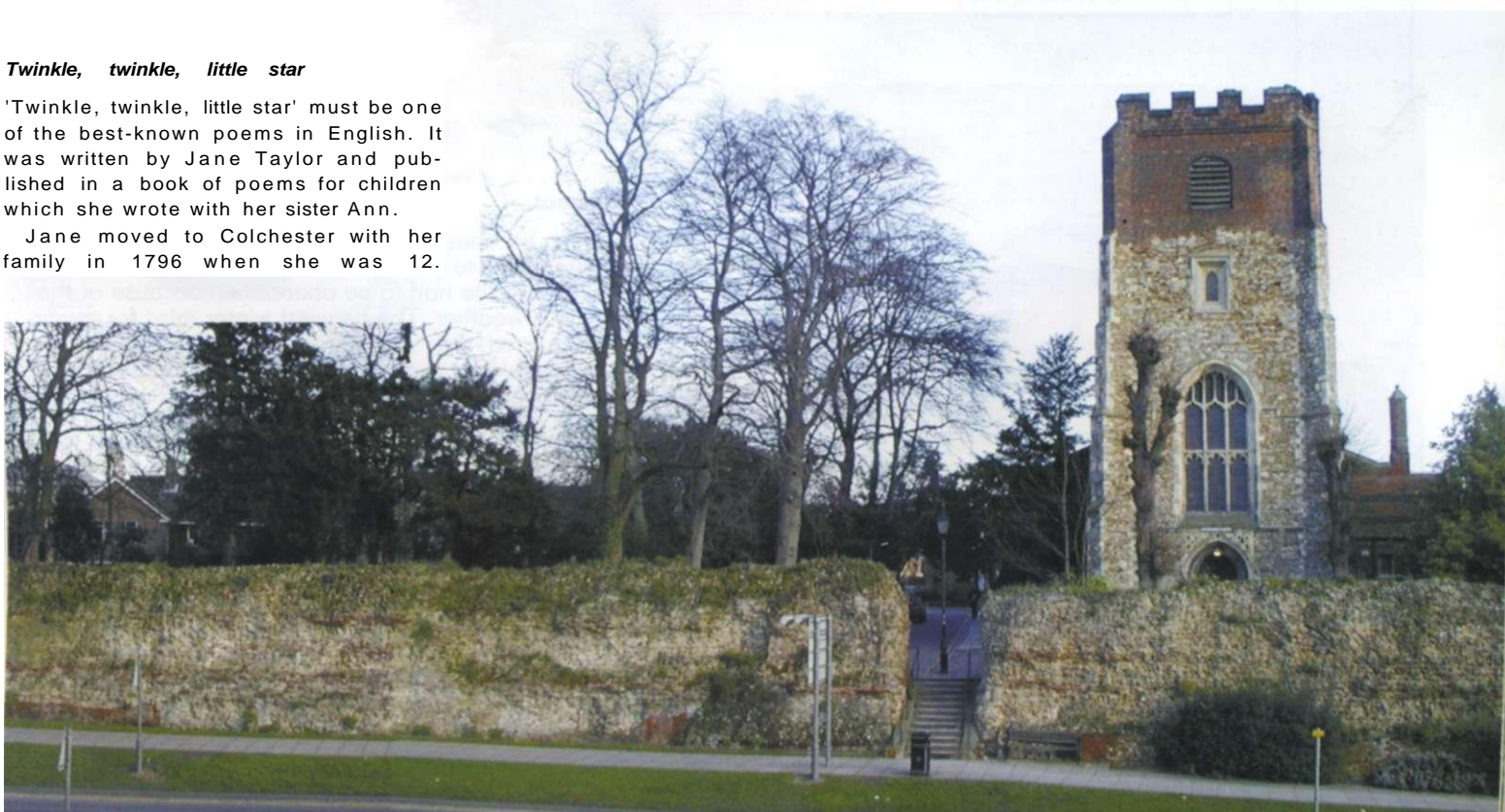
The name is interesting. The 'King Coel' part is easy to explain because, as we have already seen on page 26, large-scale works of unknown origin were often ascribed to Coel. 'Kitchen' is more difficult. The shaded and sunny slopes of the pit must have provided plants with a range of sheltered environments which were usual in the locality. Thus 'Kitchen' might be as in 'kitchen garden', because a wide variety of plants were found there.

In 1974, King Coel's Kitchen was shown to have been a quarry for sand and gravel when we dug a series of small trenches in the floor of the pit. Here we found distinctive layers of large gravel stones which derived from the grading of excavated sand and gravel in the 18th or 19th centuries. Recently, the current owner, Councillor J Pyman, kindly showed us a copy of a deed which reveals that the pit had indeed been a quarry and that it was a source of materials for repairing the roads until no later than 1859.



Interestingly, Stukeley's drawing of King Coel's Kitchen shows mature trees growing in the pit and reveals no sign of an active quarry. This means that the quarrying referred to in the deed must have started after the drawing was made.

Could Stukeley have been right after all, and could King Coel's Kitchen be the site of a Roman amphitheatre which was used as a quarry in the 19th century? Roman Colchester may well have had its own amphitheatre, but presumably it would have been close to the town centre, and it would have been oval in shape with distinctive banks for seating. It seems much more likely that King Coel's Kitchen is the remains of a medieval or maybe even Roman quarry which was re-opened in the 19th century.



'Twinkle, twinkle' was published in 1806 in *Rhymes for the Nursery* when she was about 23, and so it is very likely that the poem was written in Colchester.

The Taylors lived in Angel Lane (now nos 11-12 West Stockwell Street). From their late teens, Jane and Ann worked for 10 hours a day engraving printing plates for their father in a workroom entered from the back of the house; they could just see Mile End church from its window. In Colchester they often scribbled their poems on scraps of paper in moments snatched from engraving. Interestingly, they kept their engraving tools sharp by honing them on fragments of Roman brick which they found around the town. They enjoyed long walks to Heckford and summer picnics in the High Woods, and sometimes in the evening after work they would stroll to Mile End and back.

Below: the Taylor house in 2000.



*Twinkle, twinkle, little star,
How I wonder what you are!
Up above the world so high,
Like a diamond in the sky.*

*When the blazing sun is gone,
When he nothing shines upon,
Then you show your little light,
Twinkle, twinkle, all the night.*

*Then the trav'ler in the dark,
Thanks you for your tiny spark,
He could not see which way to go,
If you did not twinkle so.*

*In the dark blue sky you keep,
And often thro' my curtains peep,
For you never shut your eye,
Till the sun is in the sky.*

*'Tis your bright and tiny spark,
Lights the trav'ler in the dark, -
Tho' I know not what you are,
Twinkle, twinkle, little star.*



Abbotstone II:

return to the farmstead



Washout

Nothing escapes the effects of global warming. What was supposed to be the second and final session at the Abbotstone site had to be abandoned because of the atrocious weather. The heaviest winter rains for many years turned the site into a mud-bath and made it impossible to dig. Water filled the trenches and covered much of the site in great pools. Walking on the site left deep trails of footprints and boots buried in balls of sticky mud. There was so much water that using pumps proved to be a waste of time.

After several weeks of valiant effort, we had to admit defeat. However, the site is of great interest and cannot be given up. It contains the remains of a farmstead which originated in the Iron Age and continued in use throughout the Roman period, and thus should tell us something about the relationships between the Britons and the incoming Roman settlers. The field is to be quarried away so the excavation has to be finished as soon as possible. So make no mistake, we will be back - weather and global warming permitting of course.

The excavations at Abbotstone are being funded by Tarmac Southern Ltd.



Major study of post-Roman pottery

Pottery changed relatively quickly over the years and therefore has great value to the archaeologist as a means of dating archaeological features and layers which contain it. Pottery can also tell us about activities which took place on a site, and, being the product of a major industry, it can show patterns of trade and cultural contact.

The recent publication of John Cotter's book is therefore a milestone for archaeologists in Colchester and the surrounding region, since it sets out in detail much of the information needed to understand and interpret the post-Roman pottery found in Colchester.

John catalogued and studied the two tonnes of post-Roman pottery excavated in Colchester between 1971 and 1985, and he uses the results to describe the sorts of pottery which were in use in Colchester between the 5th and 18th centuries. The bulk of the pottery in use in Colchester between the 11th to early 16th centuries was made locally, and his detailed study of these wares forms the core of the book. The early medieval kilns on the site of the Royal London

offices at Middleborough are covered in particular detail. They were active from about 1175 to 1225 and they form a key reference point for the study of Colchester's pottery industry. The production of roof-furniture, particularly louvers, was an interesting element of the local industry. Louvers were elaborate forms of chimney-pots and two of the most complete and highly decorated louvers published in Britain in recent years are described in the book.

John also treats English post-medieval wares in detail. This group includes some remarkable drug jars (English and imported) found in apothecary dumps during the Lion Walk excavations in the 1970s. Through documentary research, these can be related back to a shop on the High Street called 'Old Twisted Posts and Pots'.

Foreign pottery is also well represented in the book. The proportion of imported material was high from the late medieval period onwards: the German stonewares alone constitute one of the richest and most diverse collections from south-east England. The large volumes of imports must reflect Colchester's status as a port and the economic success of the town at the time.

CAR 2001

With the publication of the volume on post-Roman pottery, all twelve volumes in the Colchester Archaeological Reports series are available and the series is now complete.

Starting in 2001, the Trust intends to change direction and publish a report each year. The new reports are to be called the CAR 2000 series. Each edition will contain reports of the previous year's work as well as full accounts of major excavations and surveys from previous years. The reports will be inexpensive and include a CD-ROM. They will be obtainable from the Trust or local bookshops. The first issue will be CAR 2001 after its year of publication, and it will cover work done in 2000. It is hoped that CAR 2001 will be available by or during the summer of 2001.

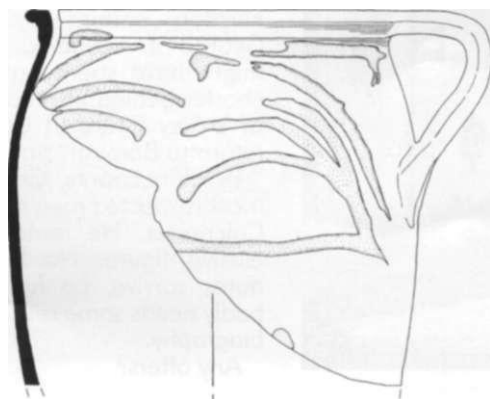
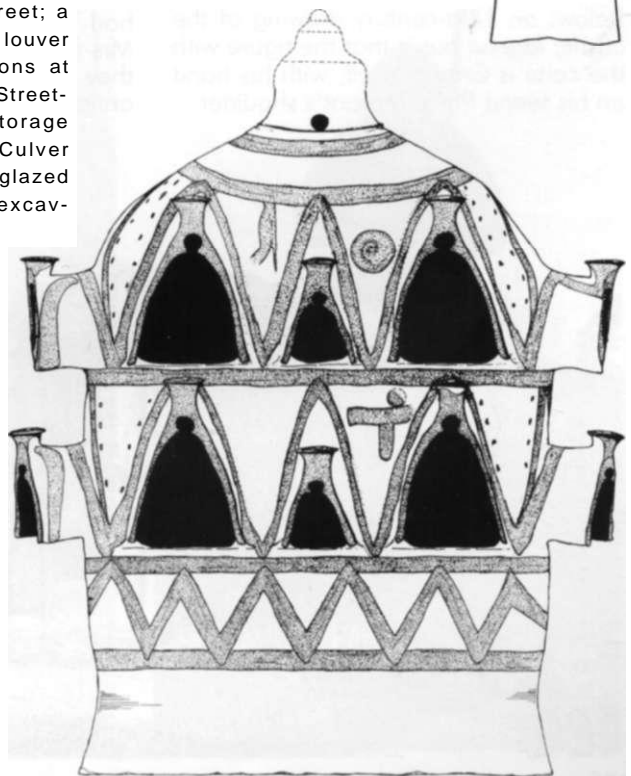
Details of the new CAR 2000 series and the Colchester Archaeological Reports can be found at www.colchester-orch-trust.co.uk. Information about the publications can also be obtained by contacting the Trust by post. (See inside front cover for the address.)

Post-Roman pottery from excavations in Colchester, 1971-85 (Colchester Archaeological Report 7) is over 400 pages long and is in hardback. It can be obtained from the Colchester Archaeological Trust at a cost of £36 post free (UK only).



Illustrations from the post-Roman pottery volume: clock-wise, starting top right:

a Colchester-ware roof finial (0.3 m high) from Queen Street; a Colchester-ware chimney louver (0.7 m high) from excavations at Angel Yard on the High Street-part of a Colchester-ware 'storage jar' from excavations in Culver Street; and a Dutch tin-glazed plate of c 1630-40 from excavations in Lion Walk.



The post-Roman pottery project and its publication were supported by English Heritage.

Charles Gray, Esq

by Andrew Phillips



The be-wigged and rather careworn face of Charles Gray looks down from the walls of Hollytrees Museum, the house where he lived for 56 years. Of course, we cannot know if it is a good likeness. The late John Bensusan-Butt (a local and art historian) suggested that the portrait, which has come down to us via the Round family, is a poor copy of an original by Gainsborough. Certainly Gray had the money, the cultural discrimination and the political clout to employ so fashionable an artist. Who, then, was he?

Sarah Gray died in 1751; Charles Gray died in 1782. Their two young daughters died in 1749 and 1753. The family memorials are in their parish church of All Saints' (now the Natural History Museum opposite the castle).

Above: portrait of Charles Gray (on display in Hollytrees Museum; photograph courtesy of Colchester Museum).

Below: an 18th-century drawing of the castle; legend has it that the figure with the cane is Gray himself, with his hand on his friend Philip Morant's shoulder.

Charles Gray was born in 1696, the son of George Gray, a glazier of Colchester, who was himself a member of the town's elite; an alderman, and the Borough Chamberlain from 1719 to 1725. Young Charles attended the Colchester Royal Grammar School, completing his education at the Inns of Court in London, and returning to Colchester to practise as an attorney, where he built up a large regional practice in manorial stewardships. However, his claim to the walls of Hollytrees he owed to his marriage; his wife's family wealth must also have funded his expensive political career.

On his father's death, Gray married Sarah Creffield, herself a widow, who had inherited Hollytrees from her aunt Mrs Cornelisen. As a 'wedding present' they received Colchester Castle, a romantic ruin overlooking the house like a

very large garden gnome, abandoned as a quarry for building material by John Wheely a generation before. Fortunately for Colchester, Gray was a considerable antiquarian and a founding Trustee of the British Museum. It is a nasty thought that he may well have channelled some nice archaeological finds from our area into the British Museum's collection...

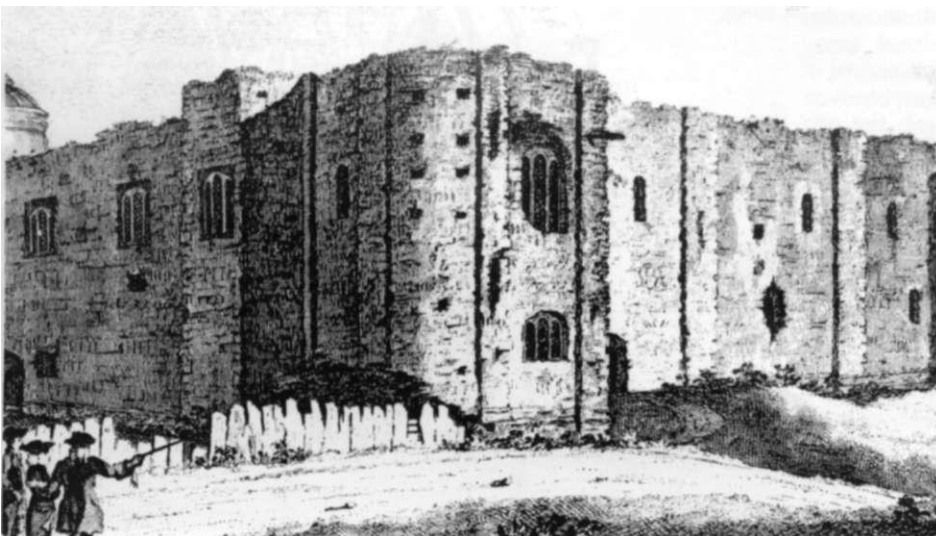
I secretly suspect that Gray married Sarah for her castle - his subsequent stewardship was so robust; his 'improvements' were absolutely not what English Heritage would approve of today! Believing the ruin to be Roman, he had large windows inserted in the south wall and the apse and also roofed the area in and made it his library. He built the familiar cupola above the doorway and the small room on the north-west tower which he used as a study. Finally, in the grounds, he converted the line of the ramparts into a 'walk', complete with exotic trees, an ornamental 'ruined' gateway, and the little classical summer-house at the end of the walk.

Gray's other claim to fame was as Colchester's longest-serving MP ever: a total of 32 and-a-half years, with a gap in the middle when he lost the seat after a dispute over spoilt ballot papers, rather like Bush and Gore in the US. Noted in the House of Commons for being above corruption (honest, intelligent and rich), he favoured a modest measure of Parliamentary reform. A Tory, but never a party politician, he addressed the House only four times between 1761 and 1780.

For much of his early years Gray also sat as a member of the Borough Corporation in Colchester, until a mix of political corruption, incompetence and inertia in the Corporation led to the suspension of the Borough's Charter in 1742. After a lot of trying, the Colchester lawyer William Mayhew secured the support of Gray and his Whig rival Isaac Rebow for a cunning plan; declaring a political truce in the town, they stood together uncontested for the two Colchester seats at the 1761 General Election caused by the death of George II, spending the money they might have spent on vote-winning on charter-getting instead. Gray was thereby a key figure in Colchester's happy return to Borough status in 1763.

By all accounts, Gray was one of the most respected men of his generation in Colchester. He remains, however, an elusive figure. No humanising anecdotes survive, no family tradition. He badly needs some research and a proper biography.

Any offers?



Coastal survey



by Essex County Council Heritage Conservation

Archaeology along the coast

The Essex coastline is about 400 miles long and is full of interesting and, in many cases, unusual archaeology. Within the intertidal zone (the area between the low and high water marks), continued erosion by the sea regularly reveals new material. A pioneering survey of most of the coastline during the 1970s and 1980s produced evidence of a remarkable range of prehistoric and Roman sites. Some of the prehistoric sites in what is now the intertidal zone would have been 'dry land' sites when they were occupied because the sea level was lower then.

Above the high-water mark, there are also types of sites which show how particular coastal resources were used in the past. Examples of these are the so-called 'red hills'.

The ECC Field Archaeology Unit has been involved in two coastal projects this year, one of which was a survey to locate new sites in the intertidal zone.

Survey at Benfleet, Foulness and Mersea

Although earlier archaeological survey along the coast has looked at much of the coastline, three stretches had not previously been surveyed, and the aim of the current project is to fill in these gaps.

The areas concerned are the Foulness group of islands, the north shore of Mersea Island with its associated creeks, and the Benfleet and Fobbing area. This project is part of a larger survey looking at the coast from Clacton in the north of Essex down to Whitstable in Kent, and taking in the Thames estuary; funding for this is being provided by English Heritage and by the European Union through its Interreg IIC programme.

The field work has been carried out by ECC Field Archaeology Unit staff, with much assistance from local volunteers, and on the Strood at Mersea with Kate Orr of the Colchester Archaeological Trust. Survey has concentrated on looking for archaeological remains (structures, finds, 'humps and bumps') along the edge of the saltmarsh or the sea wall.

One of the practical difficulties is to locate archaeological finds precisely in areas where there are few nearby features to which they can be related. New technology in the form of a digital global positioning system (DGPS) is used to overcome this problem. The DGPS relies on signals transmitted by a number of satellites to locate within a few centimetres the position of a receiver on the ground. The receiver is carried on a pole by a member of the survey team, and this information is transferred to a hand-held

computer with a program called Pocket FastMap, which enables positions to be recorded on an Ordnance Survey map 'on the spot' (see picture below).

Back in the office, the information collected in the field can be compared digitally with earlier editions of Ordnance Survey maps and with aerial photographs. Comparison with earlier maps can be particularly useful, as some parts of the Essex coast have changed considerably since the 1953 floods.

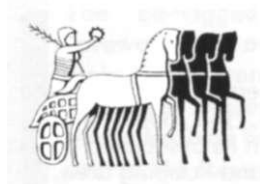
The results so far have been encouraging. On Foulness, timber wharves and jetties have been found, along with sections of old sea wall and oyster pits. In the Mersea area, a number of marine wrecks were identified, along with oyster pits and layings, plus a hitherto unrecorded 'red hill'. A red hill is a low, reddish-purple mound which is the debris resulting from the preparation of salt from sea water, mainly during the late Iron Age and Roman periods.

Below left: a small detail of an 1838 Ordnance Survey map showing Mersea Island and the Strood.

Below: ECC archaeologist Ellen Heppel surveying the coastline in 2000 with a DGPS receiver and hand-held computer (photograph courtesy of ECC Heritage Conservation).



The Friends of Colchester Archaeological Trust



As usual, the year began with the AGM and a round-up of the previous year's work in and around Colchester. Topics included the Iron Age/Roman farmstead at Abbotstone, the post-medieval houses excavated at the Hythe, and the latest discoveries at the Gosbecks Archaeological Park. A guest speaker was Patricia Smith who is a biochemist from the University of Essex. She came along to describe how she and her assistant Ken Voong had managed to extract DNA from the human bones from the Roman cemetery at Butt Road.

During the year there were three visits to archaeological excavations. In July, a large number of the Friends turned up to be shown around the Trust's Head Street excavation by Howard Brooks. Sites of this size are rare in Colchester these days. In fact, this was the largest in 15 years, so it was an opportunity not to be missed. The visit was at a good time when there was much to be seen of the famous Boudican debris as well as other Roman remains.

A few weeks later, the Friends travelled to see the massive excavations at Stansted airport by Frameworks Archaeology, where settlements were being uncovered ranging in date from the Middle Bronze Age to the post-medieval

Friends of the Colchester Archaeological Trust

If you are interested in following archaeological discoveries in Colchester, then why not consider joining the Friends of the Colchester Archaeological Trust? Membership continues to rise and now stands at about 450 individuals and families. The subscription rates are modest, and include an annual copy of *the Colchester archaeologist* magazine delivered to you as soon as it is published. You can also join tours of current sites and organised trips to places of historical and archaeological interest in the region.

Further details can be obtained from Maureen Jones, Friends of Colchester Archaeological Trust, 5 Ashwin Avenue, Copford, Colchester, Essex C06 1BS or www.friends-of-cat.ndo.co.uk.



period. Nick Cook kindly arranged for us to be shown around the site.

A month later, the Friends were on another Trust site, this time at Abbotstone off Warren Lane. This year's excavations have been hampered by some atrocious weather, as those that turned up found out for themselves.

In March, there was a 'castle day' led by Philip Dixon, an authority on British castles, who acted as lecturer and tour guide. The idea was to explore the topic of castles in some depth to find out about their development and how they were used. The day started in earnest at Pleshey village hall with an illustrated lecture on the castles of Britain. Then followed tours of Pleshey Castle, the motte at Great Easton, and Castle Hedingham castle. These were chosen as good illustrations of different types of castle.

In May, the Friends explored three of the less accessible parts of Camulodunum and its dyke system. First stop was Lexden Wood where, with Mr Lock (who owns part of the wood), we were able to visit the best-preserved parts of Colchester's dyke system. Mr Lock can

Below: Friends at West Stow with Stanley West, the excavator (on the left pointing at the hut).

Below left: well-preserved section of Grymes Dyke in Lexden Wood.



remember the excavations in the wood in 1932. He did not take part because he was convalescing at the time, but he can recall all the people involved and even the positions of the trenches. Secondly, we visited King Coel's Kitchen (which is described here on page 27). Nothing can be seen of Grymes Dyke which butted on to the pit, but the pit itself is the perfect backdrop to a picturesque garden which we were kindly allowed to see by the owner, Councillor J Pyman. Last stop was a large earthwork at Haynes Green near Layer Marney. The earthwork is in the form of a very substantial ditch with a bank on either side. It has the look of an Iron Age dyke, and indeed it may well be one despite the double bank. If it is, the earthwork is important since it suggests that Camulodunum (ie pre-Roman Colchester) was larger than is thought.

By popular demand, there was also a return trip to the remarkable Anglo-Saxon village at West Stow. West Stow is the key site for the study of early Anglo-Saxon settlements in Britain, so it was a great treat to be shown around by its excavator Stanley West. Part of his work was experimental and involved *in situ* reconstructions of some of the huts; the results have been kept and developed along with the rest of the site into a country park and visitor centre.

The last event of the year was a trip to see the remains of Barking Abbey with Mark Watson as guide. The abbey was founded c AD 666 by St Erkenwald for his sister St Ethelburga, and it is the earliest recorded monastic house in Essex.

Play the game – archaeology for young people

by Mike Corbishley of English Heritage Education



Inset picture: part of a reconstruction drawing of burial mounds at Arleigh (taken from *Splendid and permanent pageants*; reproduced courtesy of ECC).

START

Road widening destroys one side of the barrow. Lose 15 points.

The land become sheep pasture protecting the barrow from further plough damage. Gain 5 points.

FINISH

Early 18th century: antiquarian investigators open the barrow. All record of what they discovered is lost. Lose 10 points.



Rabbits make a warren and damage the barrow with their digging. Lose 5 points.

Will the barrow survive?

Rules of the game

Each player starts the game with a newly-built barrow worth 30 points.

The final fate of each barrow - survival or destruction - will depend on how successful it is in avoiding the various threats which have faced it over the last few thousand years.

Throw a six to start. Each player rolls the dice in turn and moves the counter the number of squares shown on

the dice. The game ends when the last player finishes the course. The winner is the player whose barrow survives the course without losing all points. If more than one barrow survives, the winner is the barrow with the highest score - it is obviously the best preserved. If players lose all their points before they reach the end they must withdraw from the game. Their barrow has been destroyed!

Trees growing on top of the barrow are uprooted by a violent storm. This causes damage to the barrow. Lose 5 points.

The local council buy the land on which the barrow sits and fence it off to reduce damage from ploughing. Gain 5 points.

Farmer plants trees on the barrow. Their roots gradually burrow into the barrow damaging it. Lose 5 points.

English Heritage schedule the site by law protecting it from further damage. Gain 5 points.

Broken Beaker pottery found by the 19th-century excavators is thrown away as not being worth keeping. Lose 5 points.

The barrow becomes a favourite picnic spot. People scrambling up and down the sides wear away the turf and increase erosion on the barrow. Lose 5 points.

Early 19th century: antiquarian excavators dig down through the central burial. Lose 5 points.

The farmer ploughs too close to the barrow and destroys the ditch and outer edges of the mound. Lose 10 points.

Chemicals sprayed on the surrounding fields kill ancient flora growing in the barrow. Lose 5 points.

An unthinking visitor breaks the law by using a metal detector on the barrow and digs in it to search for 'treasure' causing more damage. Lose 10 points.

The Head Street post office excavation

Plans for a multiplex cinema in Colchester resulted in the biggest excavation seen in Colchester for fifteen years. Behind the former post office building on Head Street, a team of over forty people spent the summer of 2000 uncovering the remains of Colchester's past, from the 18th century right back to the time of Boudica and before. The earliest building was built by the Roman army in the AD 40s as part of the legionary fortress which preceded the town. Boudica's destruction of Colchester by fire was evident from thick layers of burnt debris, and a large town house of the later Roman town incorporated an unusual ornamental pool in a garden to its rear.

(See pages 9-13 for more details.)



Pictures

Top: a tile antefix decorated with the head of Medusa. Antefixes were decorative features placed along the eaves of the very best tiled roofs. The face of Medusa had the power to turn all who looked at her to stone, and was used to protect buildings and other places from evil. The Head Street antefix lay in the earliest levels of the site, so it must have been part of an important building in the legionary fortress.

Above:

A - a large stump of an early house wall at Head Street. It is red in colour because of the Boudican fire in AD 60/61. The diamond pattern on the side is keying for wall-plaster which, in this case, seems never to have been applied.

B - part of a floor at Head Street, discoloured by the heat of the Boudican fire in AD 60/61.

Left: an impression of the large, later Roman town house excavated at Head Street showing the rear garden and the ornamental pool (3-D model by Scout Design).



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