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the Colchester archaeologist

Roman suburb at St Mary's hospital

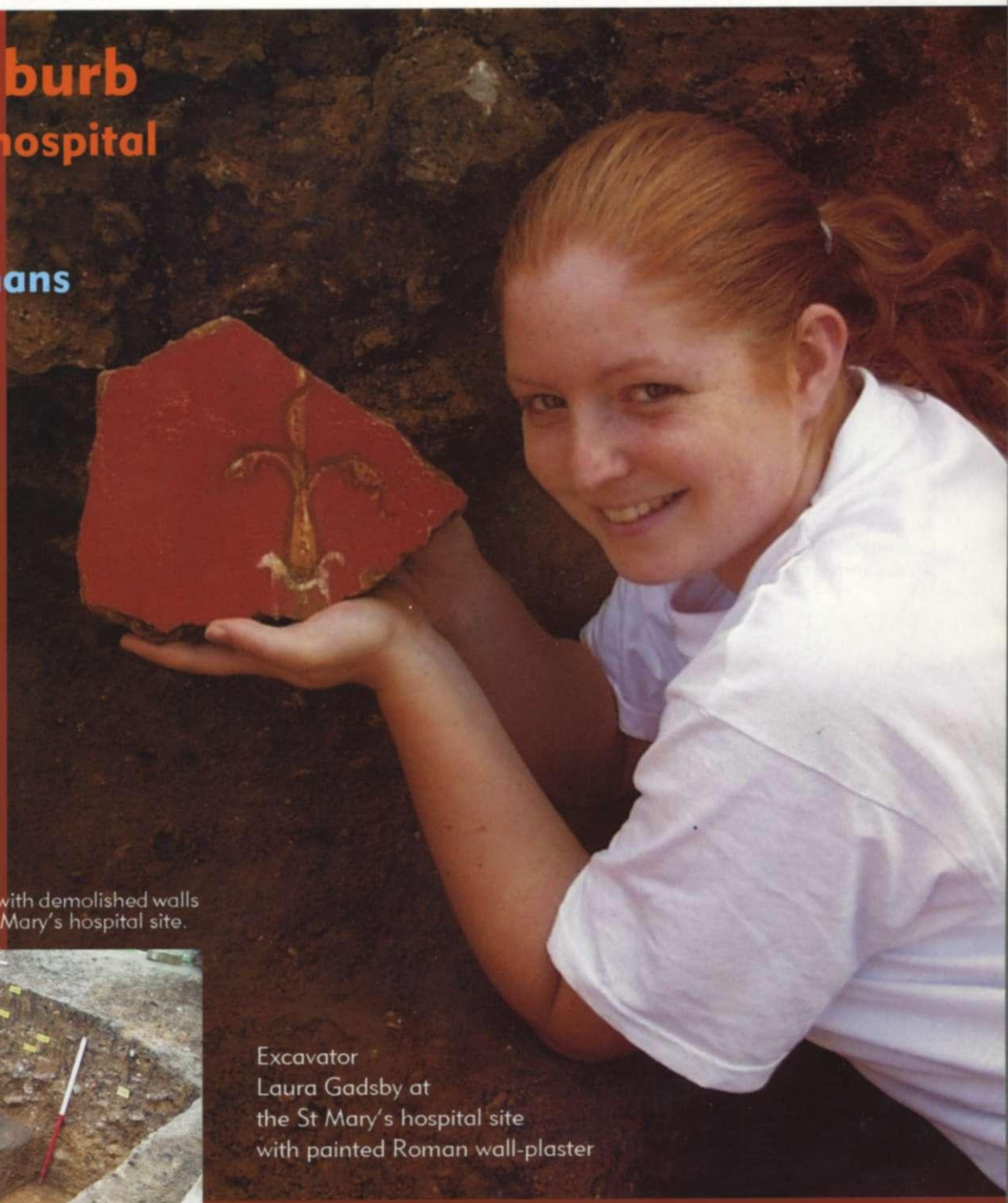
A British farm under the Romans

Mosaic in pub. car park

A 'red hill' salt-producing site

up the wall – the Roman town wall surveyed

St John's Abbey explored



Excavator Laura Gadsby at the St Mary's hospital site with painted Roman wall-plaster

Partly excavated Roman cellar with demolished walls including wall-plaster at the St Mary's hospital site.

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

the Colchester archaeologist

With thanks to all the contributors to this issue of the magazine -

Pat Brown of Colchester Young Archaeologists' Club
Mike Corbishley of English Heritage Education
Essex County Council Heritage Conservation
James Fawn
Andrew Phillips

Front cover: Trust excavator Laura Gadsby holding a piece of painted Roman wall-plaster in the Roman cellar where it was excavated.

designed by Gillian Adams
unattributed text by Howard Brooks
with additional material by Carl Crossan

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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.

The annual subscription rates:

Adults and institutions	£3.50
Family membership	£4.50
Children and students	£2.50

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

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 33 and for its support of the magazine.

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. The Trust is a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee.

We design and publish our own reports, books and magazines in-house.

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Picture on opposite page: view of the St Mary's hospital site from the Hilly Fields; the tower of the Town Hall is visible in the background.

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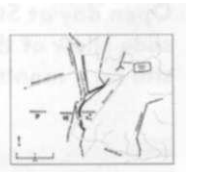
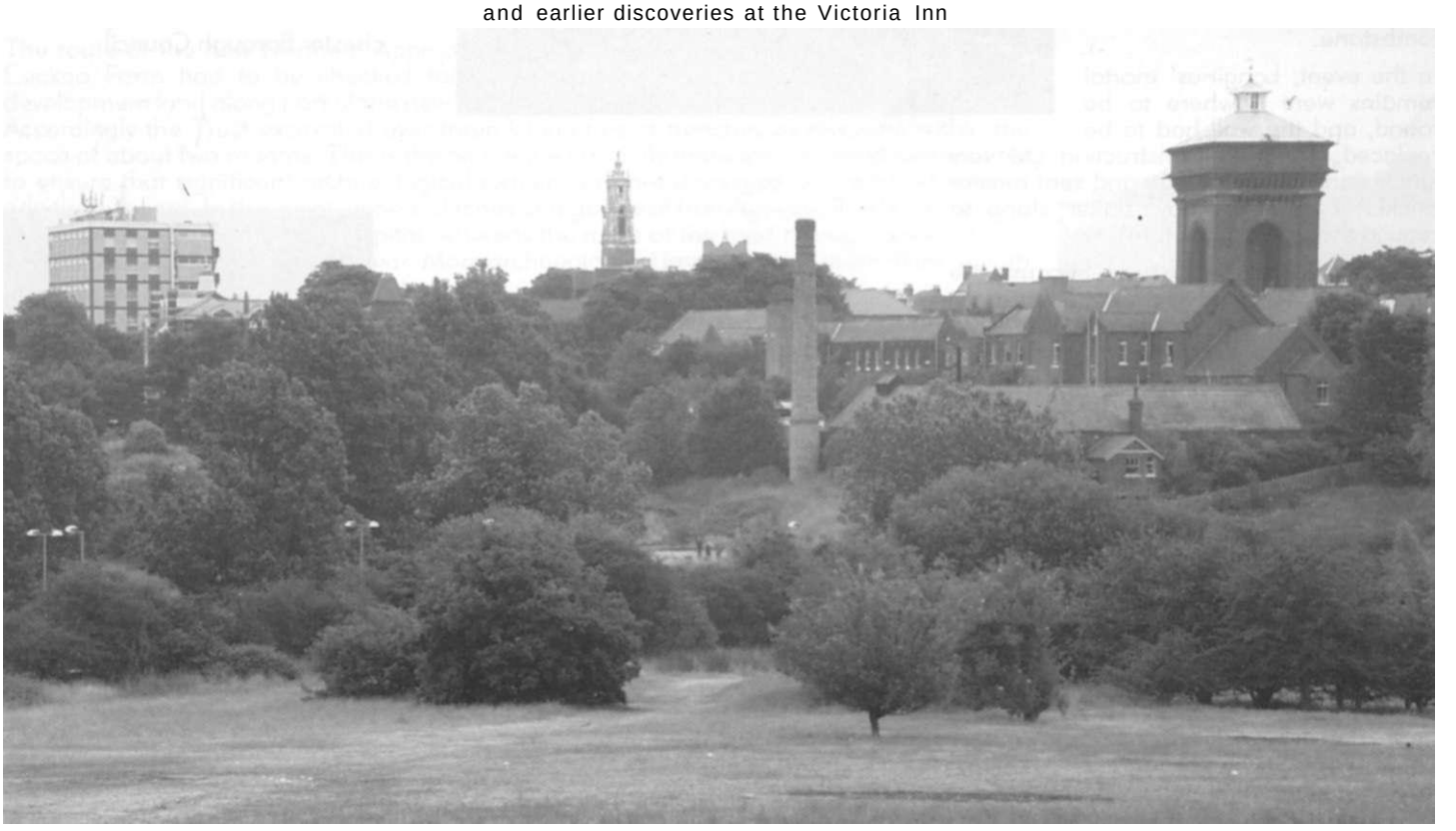




In brief...

Open day at St Botolph's priory and slide show of the St Mary's hospital site on a monitor, using a laptop.

Web site

The Colchester Archaeological Trust has a 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. Visit us at **www.colchester-arch-trust.co.uk**.

Offering to a god?

Complete Roman pots characterise cemetery sites - they are relatively rare inside the town walls, where burial was not generally allowed in Roman times. Pottery from the town centre is almost always broken discarded rubbish. However, an almost complete white-slipped pot was found in 2001, on a building site at St Peter's Vicarage on North Hill. Because it was probably deposited complete, it is likely to be part of a votive deposit containing food or drink offered to a god. Examples of such 'votive' offerings have been found occasionally in the past in Colchester; they include a pot on the Lion Walk site which was buried with the remains of three puppies.

The work was funded by the Colchester Borough Council.

Mr Currey's garden

A few years ago, Mr Ralph Currey generously permitted part of his garden wall to be taken down so that an archaeological excavation could be continued into his garden by a few feet. The purpose of the dig was to find the cremated remains of a Roman cavalry officer called Longinus. The excavation was a continuation of the one when James Fawn of the Colchester Archaeological Group had famously found the missing face from Longinus' tombstone.

In the event, Longinus' mortal remains were nowhere to be found, and the wall had to be replaced. Tendring Construction Ltd very kindly came to the rescue and sent master bricklayer Phil 'Swampy' Baker along to rebuild the wall (see picture).

Phil was keen to do the work because the wall had been built in the rare 'rat-trap' bond, and he felt that there was little chance of his being able to work on a wall of this kind again. He explained that rat-trap bond was developed in the 1800s for two reasons. It was designed to stop rats getting into roof spaces, and, being semi-hollow with cross bricks, rat-trap bond saved on bricks.

Later in the same year, after the garden and wall had been restored, we were very saddened to learn of the death of Mr Currey. He was a former English and History teacher at the Grammar School, and an established poet with a national reputation.

The Trust and the Colchester Archaeological Group are much indebted to Phil Baker and Tendring Construction for their help with the wall, and to the late Mr Currey for his forbearance in making it all possible.

Friends' donations

Many thanks to the Friends of CAT for their generosity over this year. The Friends funded: the purchase of software for the geophysics surveys, they paid for the hire of a ground-radar machine for the town gates survey (page 22), and they purchased a seat for the Roman church (page 32). The Friends also contributed more than usual for last year's magazine so that some of the pages inside could be in full colour.

Volunteer David Sims helps to process finds from the excavations. Thanks to all our volunteers for their help over the year.

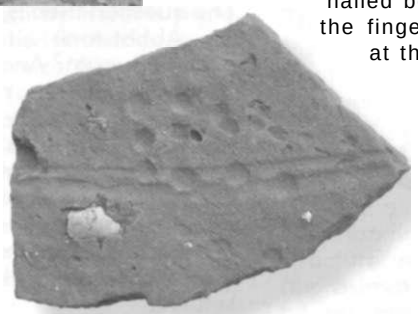
A cautionary tale

Birch airfield was constructed by the United States Air Force in 1943. In May 2001, when exploratory trenches were dug at the edge of the airfield, one of the more unusual finds was a large pit containing equipment dumped by the US 9th Air Force before returning home at the end of World War 2. No Glenn Miller gramophone records or jeeps came to light, but instead a stove, electrical items and broken plates were dug out of the upper levels of the pit. The plates are British and include one stamped 'RAF 1941' (see picture), which seems odd because Birch airfield was never used by the Royal Air Force. There is an archaeological lesson to be learnt here: without the wartime documentary record, it would be easy to assume wrongly from the pottery evidence alone that Birch airfield had been a RAF base. We can only hope that the Roman military did not exchange equipment in this manner.

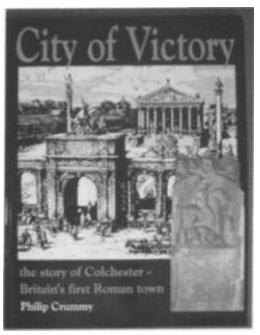
The work was funded by Hanson Aggregates.

Careful where you stand!

Footprints sometimes occur on Roman bricks. The culprits are usually animals that have been allowed to wander among the unfired bricks (laid out during the manufacturing process). But a fragment recently found on a site in West Lodge Road, Lexden bears the imprint of a hob-nailed boot and points the finger, so to speak, at the brick-maker himself.



The work was funded by Crowdell Associates.



The Trust's book on the archaeology of Colchester up to circa 1200 AD has been reprinted. The reprint was made possible with the generous support of the Hervey Benham Charitable Trust. *City of Victory* is available in bookshops for £12.50.

Trenching by the kilometre

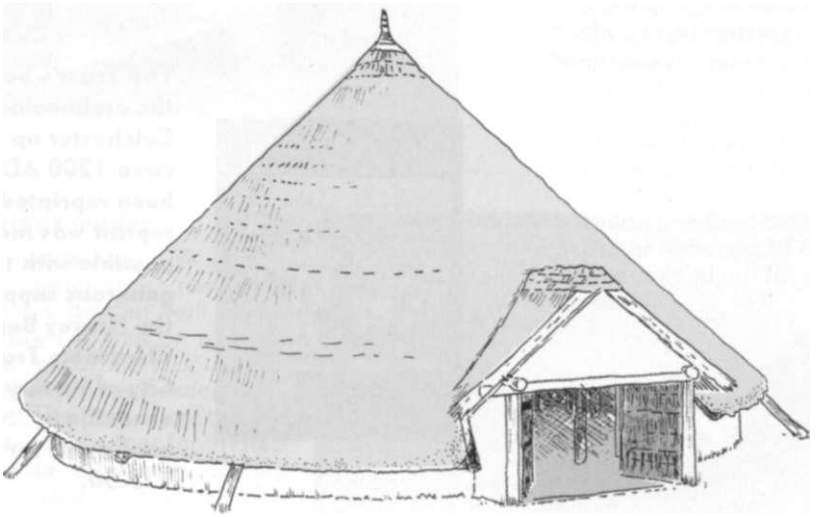
The route of the new Northern Approaches Road where it passes through Severalls and Cuckoo Farm had to be checked for archaeological remains, and so too did some development land along part of the new road in an area to the west of the General Hospital. Accordingly the Trust excavated over three kilometres of trenches by machine within the space of about two months. This is the technique normally employed on development sites to ensure that significant archaeological remains are not damaged or destroyed without adequate record. In the event, various ditches and gullies of Iron Age and Roman date were found on the site west of the hospital, whereas the route of the road through Severalls and Cuckoo Farm was pronounced clear. More archaeological investigations seem likely in both places.

The works were commissioned by Cofton Land and Property (the land west of the General Hospital) and by AERC on behalf of the Secretary of State for Health (Cuckoo Farm and Severalls).

Pictures - right: a trench with the hospital in the background; below: view of part of the site, looking towards Colchester town centre.

A British farm under the Romans

2001 saw the final season of excavation at the Abbotstone cropmark site, which is quite close to Colchester Zoo.
What was the nature of the site?
Was it a Roman farm, and how is it connected with Camulodunum?



Where was Camulodunum?

'No man is an island', and neither is any archaeological site. The Abbotstone site is part of a wider archaeological landscape of international importance. Other archaeological sites in the vicinity are: the Stanway burial site (1400m east); Grymes Dyke (1600m east); and the late Iron Age and Roman site at Gosbecks, with its classical Roman temple and theatre (east of Grymes Dyke). Camulodunum had two centres of activity: Gosbecks, which was probably the site of king Cunobelin's farmstead, and Sheepen (near the present-day Colchester Institute), which was predominantly concerned with trade and manufacturing.

Camulodunum was defended by a system of earthworks or dykes (see plan). The burial site at Stanway was actually outside the defences of Camulodunum, though it was unquestionably linked to it socially (and chronologically). Like Stanway, the Abbotstone site is also outside the defended parts of Camulodunum. The question then is, to what extent was the Abbotstone site actually part of Camulodunum? Another question is the dynamic between native and Roman settlement. Stanway was a native burial site, and Gosbecks was a native site which became Romanised. How does the Abbotstone site fit into this picture? Was it a native farmstead which co-existed with Gosbecks and then outlived it, or was it taken over by Roman settlers?

Previous excavations

Like Stanway and Gosbecks, Abbotstone has been known for some time as a cropmark site. Fieldwalking surveys (surface collections of objects) by the Trust in 1997 and 1998 scanned areas beyond the cropmarks, to check for previously unknown archaeological remains. We identified thin spreads of prehistoric flints and Roman brick and tile, with a thin concentration of Roman brick and tile directly north of the cropmark site. Surprisingly there was no surface material over the cropmark itself. The Trust undertook a geophysical survey over the cropmarks in 1998 which failed to establish the location of archaeological features below the ploughsoil, possibly because the ground was too wet. The cropmark site was extensively trial-trenched by the Trust in early 1999. This at last pinpointed the surviving subsoil features, thereby identifying the areas where full-scale archaeological excavation should be carried out.

The Trust's excavation in 1999 showed that the earliest activity here is represented by a few worked flints of probable late Neolithic or Bronze Age date. The earliest important feature was a ditch defining a roughly circular enclosure - a potential prehistoric house site. There was no sign of the post-holes which might show the position of a round-house, but the excavation of the ditch produced Middle Iron Age pottery which confirmed its prehistoric date (see magazine no 1 3).

The Trust excavation team returned to excavate the rest of the site late in 2000, but the very wet ground conditions prevented much digging, and the season had to be cancelled.

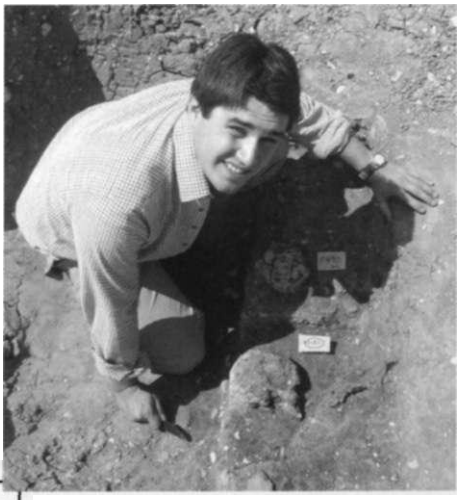
2001 excavation

This year's task was to complete the excavation of the remainder of the large Roman enclosure. This was no mean task - standing water had to be pumped out of all the features, and the site had to be scraped clean by machine to remove the silts which had washed onto the site over the winter. The main results have been the discovery of many more ditch lines than were visible on the air photographs or were expected after the previous season of digging. A human skull was found, with some broken pottery, in a Late Iron Age ditch near the Middle Iron Age enclosure (see picture). The lower jaw was missing, suggesting that the skull had been placed here when already decomposed. The skull may be the remains of a burial or perhaps a ritual deposit.

The remaining part of the ditch around the house site was excavated, and (gratifyingly) a ring of post-holes was discovered. These define the site of a prehistoric structure (presumably a house) on this spot. The internal diameter of the post-hole ring was approximately 10m, so with a conventional thatched roof over-hanging this post-hole ring, the structure might have been closer to approximately 14m external diameter- by no means a small building (see pictures).

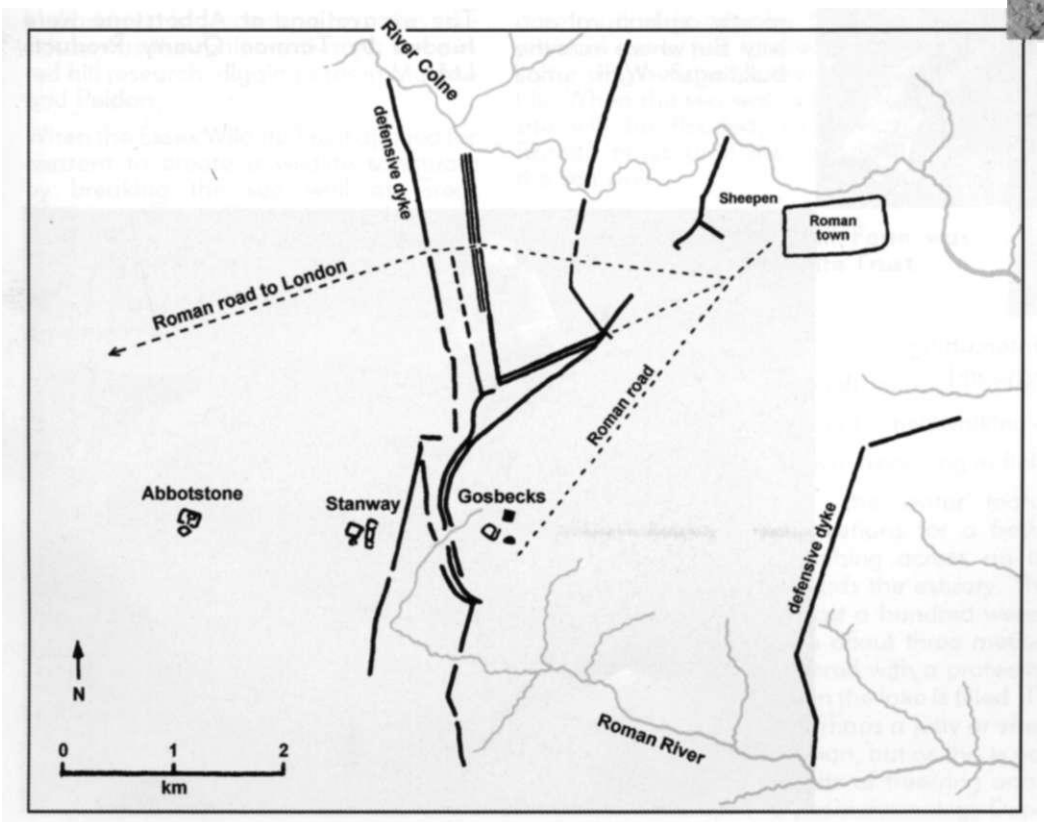
Farming

It would appear that there was a gap in activity on the site until the late Iron Age, when ditches were cut to define a large enclosure. In fact the majority of the features on the site were ditches defining three large enclosures - first the Iron Age one mentioned above, and then two separate Roman enclosures (north and south). The joint life-time of the enclosures spanned the later Iron Age to the mid 3rd century AD. The north (and larger) Roman enclosure had smaller ditches or gullies splitting it into smaller paddocks or fields, and other parallel ditches marking out road lines which were originally metalled. There were several cremation burials, one of them an interesting post-burial (where a cremation had been placed in a deep post-hole which presumably held a large post to mark the spot). What was most intriguing about the first season's work was the complete absence of buildings.



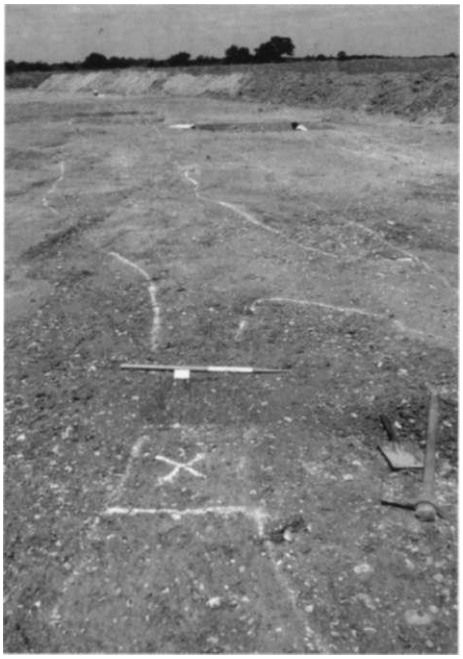
Above: Ben Holloway uncovering the human skull.

Left: plan of Camulodunum.



Opposite page -
Top: sketch of a Middle Iron Age round-house.

Bottom: the team marking the positions of the eleven post-holes of the Middle Iron Age round-house.



Above: lines were paint-sprayed on the ground to outline the archaeological features as they were uncovered by machine. Parts of the features were then hand-dug so that we could date them, explore their physical characteristics, and recover environmental material.

There was a short stretch of possible beam-slot associated with the post-burial, but no other structural features at all. The southern (and smaller) Roman enclosure was equally intriguing. It had opposed entrances, the northern one having a pair of gate-posts set back from the ditch line, which would imply the existence of an internal bank with the gate between the ends of the bank.

Still describing the site as a series of enclosures, it is now possible to suggest a sequence of development. The earliest enclosure seems to have developed out of the circular Iron Age house site, and to have been added to progressively, until the enclosure was regularised by being recut in the Roman period as our north enclosure. The south enclosure was added later on, also in the Roman period. Some of the ditch lines are boundaries from an adjacent field system which join up with the enclosure ditches, and remind us that the site was part of a wider farmed landscape.

Given that the site was occupied from the late Iron Age to the mid 3rd century, the question of the location of the living areas then arises. The Iron Age round-house is an obvious focus for occupation at that time, but what about the Roman period? It seems clear from the quantities of pottery debris and occasional cremation burials, the cheese presses and the large number of fragments of querns (used for grinding cereals into flour), that there was a great deal of activity here in Roman times, mostly agricultural activity. But where were the buildings? With small quantities of Roman window glass, roof-tile fragments and even flue-tiles (normally associated with hypocaust systems) coming from this site, there is an obvious mis-match between the finds evidence and the site evidence. Perhaps the Roman structures were surface-built without rubble foundations, and have left no trace. Perhaps these finds occur here as dumped rubbish, having been transported from somewhere else.

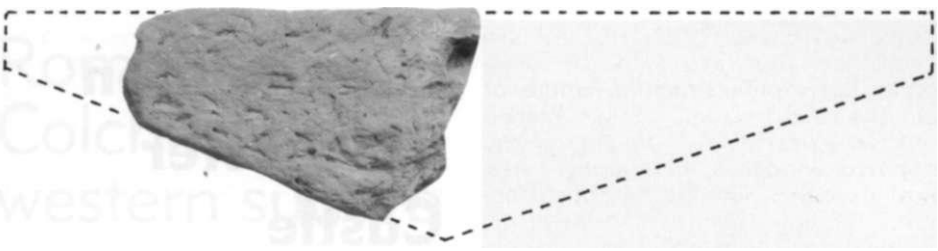
Abbotstone is a" site where we cannot come up with all the answers. However, the enclosures are part of a late Iron Age and mainly Roman rural site concerned principally with farming. If Roman buildings were erected here, they have not survived.

What about the inhabitants? It is difficult to see a radical change between the Iron Age enclosure and the Roman enclosures, so there is no basis for arguing for Roman settlers coming in to live on an Iron Age site (there is a lack of high status finds like coins and evidence of buildings). In fact, the lack of rich finds and the almost total absence of metal finds might indicate that it continued as a native (British) site which never became a Roman villa, and was never lived in by well-to-do Romano-Britons. To take a different angle, perhaps the lack of buildings is a reflection of the fact that the people who farmed here did not necessarily live here. Perhaps the site was owned by absentee landlords, who used a team of locals to work the land here, and perhaps even those workers lived off site.

The excavations at Abbotstone were funded by Tarmac Quarry Products Ltd.

Above: Sam Deeprose hard at work.

Right: an excavation through two intercutting ditches, with Philip Lomas in the background.



Salt of the earth! **Great Wigborough**

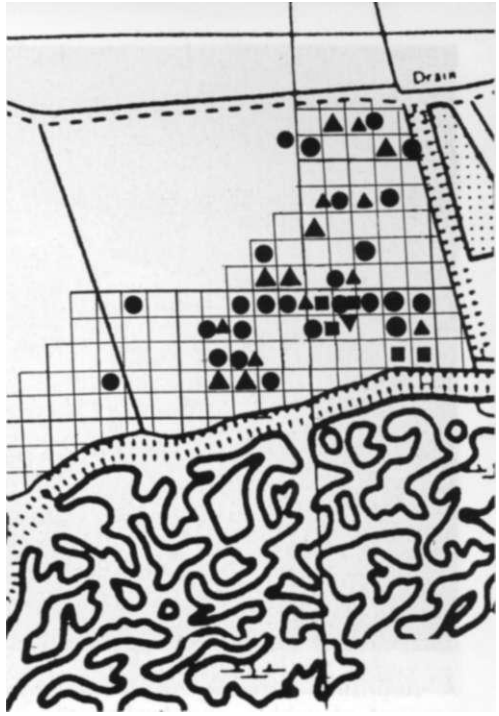
Salt is one of life's necessities. Before the discovery of the inland sources of salt in Cheshire and Warwickshire which still supply us today, salt was produced mainly by distillation of sea water at coastal sites. There is evidence for pre-historic salt-production at Mucking and Fenn Creek (Woodham Ferrers) in Essex, but the best evidence is from the late Iron Age and Roman period when over 300 salt-making sites are known from Essex alone. These sites are called 'red hills', because they survive to this day as low red mounds at approximately high water mark.

These curious sites have attracted antiquarian and archaeological interest for some time. In days gone by, they were thought to be Saxon or Danish potteries, Roman brickyards, or camp-sites used by queen Boudica or Alfred the Great when he was hiding from the Danes. Organised research dates back to 1879, but took on fresh impetus in 1906 with the formation of the Red Hills Exploration Committee which dug at various red hill sites in Langenhoe and Hullbridge. In recent years, Kay de Brisay was the main motivating force in red hill research, digging sites in Maldon and Peldon.

When the Essex Wildlife Trust applied for consent to create a wildlife sanctuary by breaking the sea wall at Great Wigborough to allow managed retreat of the coastline by the sea, this affected several red hill sites. The Trust was contracted by the Wildlife Trust to field-walk the site and then test-trench any concentrations of material. The field-walk revealed several surface concent-rations (see chart) of Roman pottery and 'briquetage', the debris from salt manu-facture. Where briquetage survives in identifiable fragments, it appears to be of large vessels in which salt was dried out or various pieces of clay rods, props and bars which might have supported the clay vessels over the fire. One such fragment from Wigborough was the 'fire bar' illustrated above.

Several test-trenches were then cut over the area of surface finds (see picture). The removal of the ploughsoil revealed the tell-tale red-coloured earth of two separate red hills, and the outline of what may have been clay-lined 'settling tanks' once used in the salt-making process. A geophysical survey by Aline and David Black for the Trust located distinct archaeological 'hot spots' over the area of one of the red hills. Fired clay structures like hearths are particularly susceptible to detection by magnet-ometry, and it may be that the geo-physical survey has located a number of salt-drying hearths on this particular red hill. When the sea wall is breached, the site will be flooded, as it was from Roman times until the construction of the sea wall.

The work at Abbotts Hall Farm was funded by the Essex Wildlife Trust.



Key

- Roman pottery
- Roman tile
- briquetage

The fieldwalking was done with the help of the Stoke-by-Nayland WEA Fieldwalking Group.

Top left: briquetage fragment and reconstruction.

Top right: fieldwalking chart.

Above: trenching in field.

Left: the water feature - elsewhere at Abbotts Hall, excavations for a freshwater lake uncovered wooden posts stretching across an infilled channel which once drained towards the estuary. The posts are oak, with sharpened points. Almost a hundred were finally exposed, forming two parallel lines about three metres apart. Most were left in place and covered with a protective layer of clay to help preserve them when the lake is filled. The few finds suggest that the structure - perhaps a jetty or small bridge across the creek - might be Roman, but as this is not certain, we are eagerly awaiting the results of tree-ring analysis which will be carried out by the Dendrochronology Department at Sheffield University.

New light on Colchester Castle

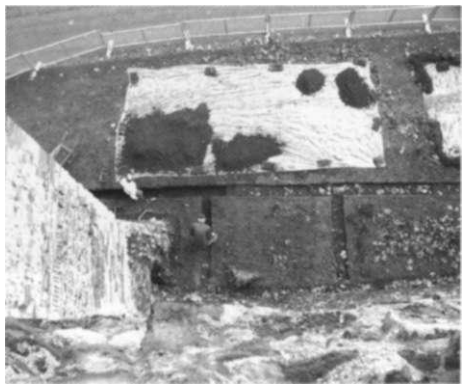
The installation of new floodlights for the Castle meant that over 200 metres of trenches had to be dug for the underground cabling. Being an important archaeological site, the trenches needed to be dug by archaeologists and the loose soil checked with a metal detector.

A surprising discovery was the large amount of rubble and broken tile in many of the trenches. The material must largely relate to the late 17th century when John Wheeley was knocking down much of the Castle. It conjures up a picture of a ruined and half-demolished Castle surrounded by great heaps of rubble.

Another striking feature of the work was the large number of clay-pipe fragments found in the trenches. The shaft for the lift dug inside the Castle in 1992 was just the same, and produced large numbers of bits of broken clay tobacco pipes. Clearly there must have been a lot of smoking in and around the castle in the past. The men working on the demolition of the castle must have smoked incessantly as they broke up the walls and cleaned the stone and brick for reuse by chipping off the old mortar.

However, the most useful outcome of the excavation was the realisation that the facing stones on the batter at the base of the keep wall were removed in the late 17th century as part of the demolition works for the castle. We can tell this because we found that they are still intact below the ground-level of *circa* 1700. This same level corresponds to the top of the foundations of the chapel and other buildings on the south side of the castle, showing that these must have been demolished to ground-level at the same time. None of this can be claimed to be especially interesting, but it all helps us to understand how the castle came to be in the state that it is today, and thus what it might have looked like originally. PC

The excavation was commissioned by Colchester Museums.



Top: the castle at the floodlighting ceremony.

Left: view of two parts of the site, from the top of the castle and on the ground.

Right: excavators working by the castle wall.

Roman Colchester's western suburb

Balkerne Lane in the days before the dual carriageway.

It seemed appropriate that we should find a Romano-Celtic temple (foreground) on a site occupied by a monumental stonemasons' works until 1974.

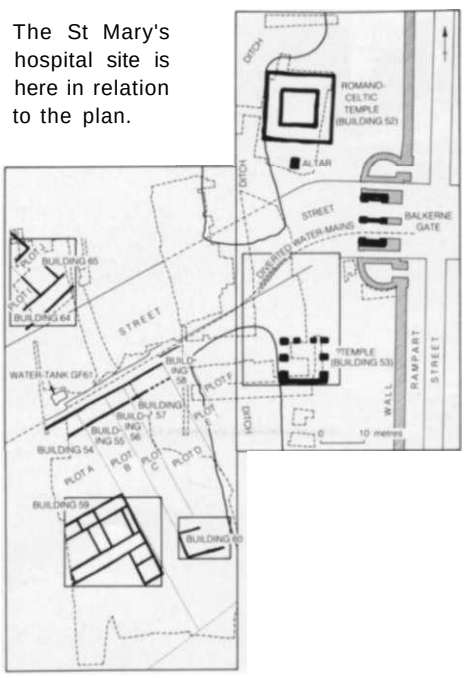
The planned redevelopment of the St Mary's hospital site presents a chance to explore part of a large Roman suburb outside the Balkerne Gate. The nature of the archaeological remains can be predicted to a degree, because of the major excavation of the 1970s on the Balkerne Lane site immediately to the south. And there is an old, undocumented plan showing what appears to be the remains of a Roman temple on the St Mary's hospital site itself.

Like the modern town, the Roman town of Colchester had suburbs outside the town wall. A large part of the western suburbs were excavated by the Trust in the 1970s before the construction of St Mary's multi-storey car park on Balkerne Hill. As a result, it was possible to trace the development of the area immediately south of the site of the former St Mary's hospital from the mid 1st century onwards.

The growth of the suburb reflects the growth of the Roman fortress and town lying to the west. Within a few years of the Roman conquest of AD 43, a group of flimsy buildings, perhaps workshops, had been erected outside the west gate of the Roman fort. By the time of the Boudican revolt of AD 60/1, more sturdy-looking buildings had taken their place, lining each side of the London road which now passed through the free-standing triumphal arch (on the site of Balkerne Gate). These were presumably shops and workshops providing service industries to the town. After the revolt, in the period AD 80-100, the inhabitants and shop-keepers in the western suburb must have felt they didn't fit in in the quite the same way as before, because the Roman town wall had now been erected - a physical barrier between the suburbs and the town, which incorporated the previous free-standing archway and converted it into the west gate of the town. A Romano-Celtic temple was also built immediately outside the west gate (see picture). This was built in the usual square-within-a-square pattern, with an inner 'cella' (sanctum) surrounded by an ambulatory (walkway). Roman policy was to adopt native religious beliefs and incorporate them into the Roman pantheon, so locals could worship their own deities as they had previously. The second structure was an aqueduct bringing water to the town from the direction of springs in the Lexden area. The western suburb reached its peak at the end of the 1st century, but declined thereafter. By the middle of the 3rd century, there were only a few buildings fronting onto the London road. The town ditch was widened and diverted around the Romano-Celtic temple and a possible shrine to the south of it.

There was a foretaste of the St Mary's hospital site - a month before the start of the St Mary's excavation, the Trust excavated trial-trenches at Topfield, a small adjoining site, which revealed a number of well-preserved Roman graves, part of the 'Union cemetery'.

The St Mary's hospital site is here in relation to the plan.

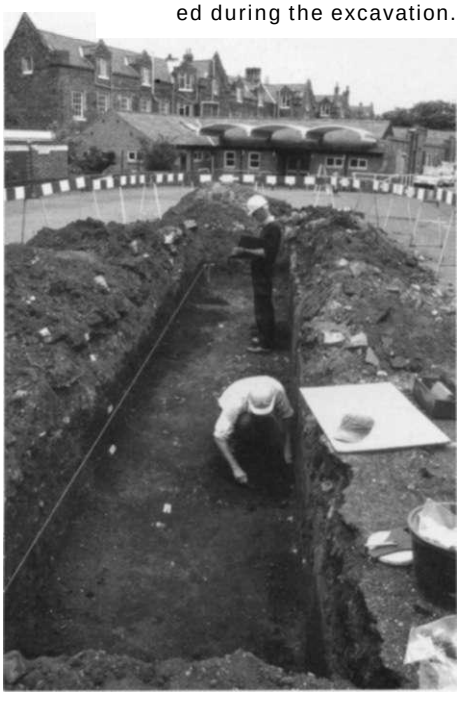


Above: part of the Ballkerne Lane site in 1975.

The St Mary's hospital site lies just to the west of the Balkerne Gate, the west gate of Roman Colchester. If you stand on the footpath through the Balkerne Gate, with the Hole in the Wall pub. on your right, the view directly west is of the rather unprepossessing St Mary's multi-storey car park. If you turn slightly right, you see the empty St Mary's hospital, formerly the 'Union' workhouse. The Trust evaluated the site in 1997, and is now excavating in advance of a new housing development.

Below: work during the evaluation at St Mary's hospital.

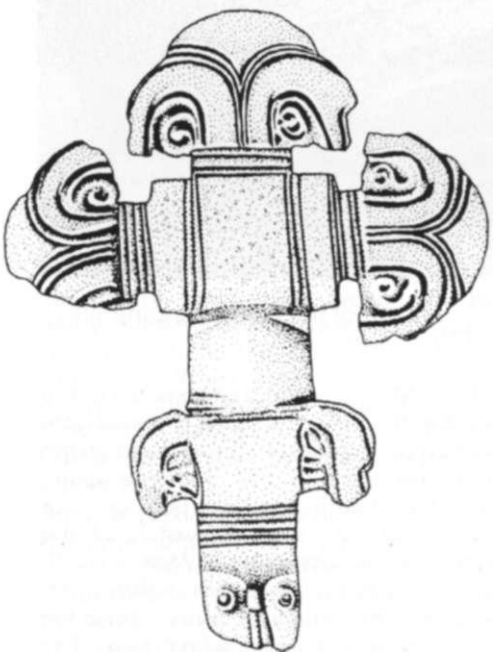
Left: plan of the Balkerne Lpne site in the 1970s showing Roman houses discovered during the excavation.



William Wire's diary - 5th May 1848

'... visited the excavations for the foundations of the infirmary at the Union House, only a few fragments of pottery have been discovered, but a foundation at the NW. corner running west made with fragments of Roman roof tiles and bricks cemented together with a loose kind of mortar in which sand was the principal...'

Major excavations begin at St Mary's hospital



St Mary's Hospital started off as a workhouse (the Union) and fortunately William Wire witnessed the building works and made a record of what was found.

The St Mary's hospital site is soon to be redeveloped, but 21st-century people are not by any means the first to take an interest in this plot of land - there is evidence for a great deal of activity here long before the building of the Union here in the 1830s. Prehistoric discoveries at St Mary's hospital include fragments of a late Bronze Age bucket urn. In the late Iron Age, Colchester became a nationally important tribal stronghold - Camulodunum - centred on the areas now known as Sheepen Hill and Gosbecks Farm. Sheepen Hill is only a short distance west of St Mary's hospital, and contemporary finds of an Iron Age jar and a coin of Cunobelin are recorded from the hospital site. The evidence for previous Roman discoveries at St Mary's hospital is almost overwhelming. There are at least four masonry buildings recorded here, including a possible square-within-a-square structure believed to be a Romano-Celtic temple.

There are also extensive records of burials at St Mary's hospital, known collectively as 'the Union cemetery'. Sixteen inhumations, three lead ossuaries containing cremations and one tile cist are known, but there are probably many more undiscovered or unrecorded. Apart from burials and buildings, many individual objects such as potsherds, bone pins, coins and brooches are recorded from the hospital site, leading to speculation that the site was used as a general rubbish-dump for the Roman town. Saxon finds are limited to two brooches recorded by William Wire in his diary. It is quite possible that these brooches accompanied Saxon burials. In medieval times, settlement focused on the walled area of the town, and the site is presumed to have been pasture.

An archaeological evaluation carried out by the Trust in 1997 confirmed the potential of the St Mary's hospital site. It revealed an inhumation, the clay floors of Roman buildings and a fragment of masonry wall, Boudican destruction debris, and much other dumped Roman debris, which confirmed previous ideas that this had been a rubbish-dump for the inhabitants of the Roman town. Small finds included lava quern, bone pins, pottery counters, a hone, and a fragment of *stylus* (a Roman writing instrument).

One of the initial aims of the 2001 excavation was to locate the possible Roman temple, known from an old, undocumented plan, so that it could be preserved *in situ* as part of the new development. Unfortunately, the temple has proved elusive. Geophysical survey and trial-trenching failed to locate it in the recorded position, and even the clearance of a large area was of little help. Perhaps the finder over-interpreted what he saw, and there never was a temple here at all, or it was recorded in the wrong position and has subsequently been destroyed. Ironically, the St Mary's hospital site is precisely the area where one would expect to find a Romano-Celtic temple - there was one excavated outside the Balkerne Gate (immediately south-east of the site) in 1975, and others have been recorded at St Helena's School 800m to the west.

The Victorian workhouse

Although it became a hospital in 1938, St Mary's started off as a workhouse or 'Union' where the poor and homeless of the Borough were housed and given useful employment. The sprawling hospital, which closed in 1993, consisted of the original Victorian core, and many more buildings, wards and nurses' accommodation blocks which had been added to the site over the 150 years since the original workhouse was built.

An important part of the archaeological project at St Mary's hospital has been the recording of the Union workhouse building, built by John Brown in 1 837 on a 3.6 hectare-plot purchased by the Guardians of the Poor the previous year. The survey consists of a series of photographs of elevations and significant features, along side scale drawings of the elevation (see page 17).

The excavation

The first phase of excavation focused on a ten-thousand square metre expanse of open ground toward the bottom of the hill. This low-lying area to the north of the main hospital blocks produced very promising results from three small machine trenches in 1997, including a short stretch of Roman wall foundation. On the morning of day one, the excavation quickly uncovered the Roman wall found in our 1997 trial-trench, and as a bonus exposed an adjoining small area of flooring made from the small red tile cubes known as *tesserae.* It seemed that we need only follow the line of the wall to reveal the rest of this building. In the following few days, the excavation around the wall was extended but frustratingly the remainder of the building was nowhere to be seen. As we dug deeper around the foundation, it soon became apparent why the rest of the building was so elusive - subsidence. The surviving length of wall had been built over an earlier deep pit with a high organic content. With no solid ground to rest on, the wall foundation along with the adjacent floor gradually sank into the soft pit fill, finally settling about a metre below its original level. Most of the original Roman construction level at this point had been lost due to later ground activity, leaving only the lower depths into which the foundation and nearby floor had subsided. We do not know how long it took for the heavy foundation to sink this far, but it is very likely that the

Opposite page -
Top: drawing of an Anglo-Saxon brooch of *circa* AD 600 from the site of the Union workhouse, found by workmen and recorded by William Wire.
Bottom: view of part of the site from the west.

This page -
Above: machine-trenching on the site.

Below: this early 20th-century building is to be retained in the new development.

Bottom: the workhouse today with NHS infill buildings in front of the main range (St Mary's hospital).

Above: cremation pot with lid.

Right: a poorly preserved burial of a juvenile, under excavation by Hayley Spencer.

Below right: reconstructed grey ware jar from the crouched burial (below).

Below: the crouched burial with crushed jar.

original occupants of the building had structural problems. We had no complaints though, as this early example of 'cowboy' construction had actually preserved part of the building that would otherwise have disappeared.

Despite the severe disturbance of the ground in some areas caused by various activities like terracing, and the many Victorian rubbish-pits dotted about the site, we have uncovered some interesting remains mostly in the form of burials, buildings and features associated with water supply.

Burials

A number of Roman burials, so far over thirty, confirm the existence of 'the Union cemetery' here. Rather than being tightly packed, as at the Butt Road site (where over 700 burials were excavated on the site of the police station in the 1970s), these burials are much farther apart, giving the impression that there was more open space available for burials on this side of town. The St Mary's hospital burials are inhumations, including one crouched burial, but there is at least one cremation. Most are late Roman, dating from the 3rd century onward. The graves were orientated in a variety of directions and most contained wooden coffins. Organic materials seldom survive: at St Mary's, the wooden coffin planks had completely decomposed, leaving only the iron fixing nails in place. The majority of the dead were buried with footwear. Again, like the wood of the coffins, the leather had not survived but clusters of up to forty tiny hobnails were found either on or very close to the bones of the feet. Some of the burials are accompanied by 'grave goods' (principally pots or items of

jewellery), including a box burial for a child containing six pots and eight armlets. It is probably true to say that there were Roman burials all over the site - a single inhumation was found by the evaluation in 1997, and the western extent of the cemetery is demonstrated by the two burials found in 2001 at the 'Topfield' site, immediately west of the hospital (see page 9).

Of the parts of this sloping site that have been removed by terracing since the Roman period, one of the more severe examples was in the area known as 'the bowling green'. Creating this flat recreational area in the north-west corner of the hospital grounds involved a large cutting into the side of the hill. Most of the surviving graves in the bowling green area lay within a few centimetres of the lowered surface and it is probable that other shallower burials were lost when the area was terraced. The bowling green was made in the 1970s but apparently never used.

Roman buildings

Four Roman masonry buildings have previously been recorded on this site, so it is no surprise that these excavations turned up the remains of three more. The 1997 evaluation located one fragment of masonry wall, and the latest excavations have shown that there is not much more of this structure than was found in the evaluation. The only extra information is that a small patch of tessellated flooring is associated with the wall, and that the whole wall/floor unit has only survived because it has slumped into the protective embrace of a large pit. The rest of this structure is missing, presumably robbed away for building materials, but there is a possibility that this is the structure which was mis-identified as a temple. A second structure has been heavily robbed, but survives as a rubble-filled trench.

The third structure was a cellar with a room above. The cellar was filled with debris from the demolition of the building, showing that the room above had mud-brick walls decorated with painted wall-plaster (see front cover). It is not clear yet how many separate houses the four structures represent.

Water supply

The most interesting discovery so far is the clay-lined water-channel or supply of some sort. Initially we thought that we had found two gravity-fed water conduits bringing water, one on the east side of the site for the area of the Sixth Form College (inside the town walls) and the other from the direction of the Chiswell Springs. The conduit took the form of a ditch lined at the bottom with clay in which there is a rectangular slot for either a wood-lined channel or a rectangular-sectioned wooden pipe. For various reasons, it now appears most likely that the conduit was a water-main of the sort found at Balkerne Lane in the 1970s (see page 9) but set in clay. Water-mains are usually readily

Below: an inhumation burial during excavation.
Bottom: the same burial fully excavated.

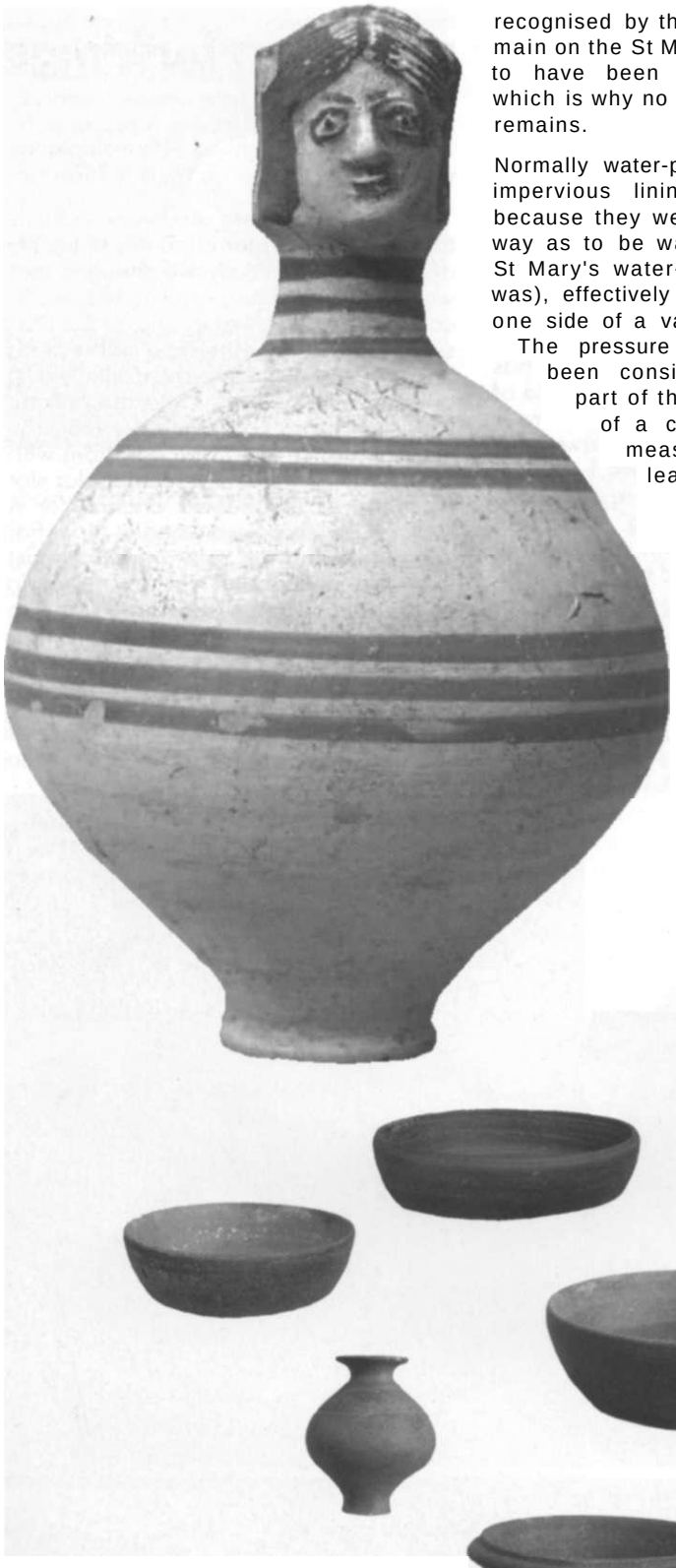
Pots from the grave (a flagon and two indented beakers) are shown on the left.

recognised by their iron collars. But the main on the St Mary's hospital site seems to have been removed in antiquity, which is why no collars were found in its remains.

Normally water-pipes did not need an impervious lining such as the clay, because they were designed in such a way as to be watertight. However, the St Mary's water-pipe (if that is what it was), effectively carried the water down one side of a valley and up the other. The pressure of water would have been considerable in the lowest part of the main, hence the use of a clay lining as an extra measure to counteract leakage.

Next steps

The first stage of the excavations came to a halt in October 2001, but we anticipate that further archaeological excavation will be carried out in 2002 when details for the redevelopment project are finalised. The St Mary's hospital site has such interesting archaeological remains that a solution is being sought which will minimise the impact of the housing redevelopment. Current Government policy is to preserve in position *(in situ)* as much archaeological material as possible. This policy is embodied in a document named PPG 16, which contains models of best practice and recommendations for how archaeological issues should be dealt with in modern redevelopment. The site developers Jaygate Homes altered the engineering design of the site so that as much of the archaeological material as possible is so left undisturbed. This will have the benefit of preserving a considerable slice of the western suburbs of the town for the future, and if the area comes up for archaeological investigation again, the techniques available to archaeologists in the future should be much more sophisticated than those we have today. After all, we now have ground-probing radars and other geophysical investigation techniques, and if the technology develops even further, there could be some very useful equipment in the offing!



Above: six pots from the box burial for a child - five at 25% actual size, and top, the painted face pot at a different scale (actual size 17.5 cm high). The vessels probably contained food and drink.

Above right: a shale armlet from the box burial, one of eight armlets from the grave, shown at actual size.

Right: the face pot during excavation.

Two Roman buildings

Left: the corner of a Roman cellar backfilled with wall-plaster and 'clay' or 'mud-brick' walls from the demolished Roman house.

Below: tessellated floor and features which belonged to one of the Roman houses on the St Mary's hospital site.

The excavations at St Mary's hospital are being funded by Jaygate Homes Ltd.

Roman water conduit

Above: an iron junction piece in the base of the slot in the clay lining. The slot in the clay-lined ditch is the remains of some kind of water conduit, but its form is unclear.

The flat iron junction piece suggests a wood-lined channel whereas other factors point to a standard wooden water-pipe that has been removed.

The Victorian workhouse

Andrew Phillips describes the Union workhouse and explains how it became an NHS hospital

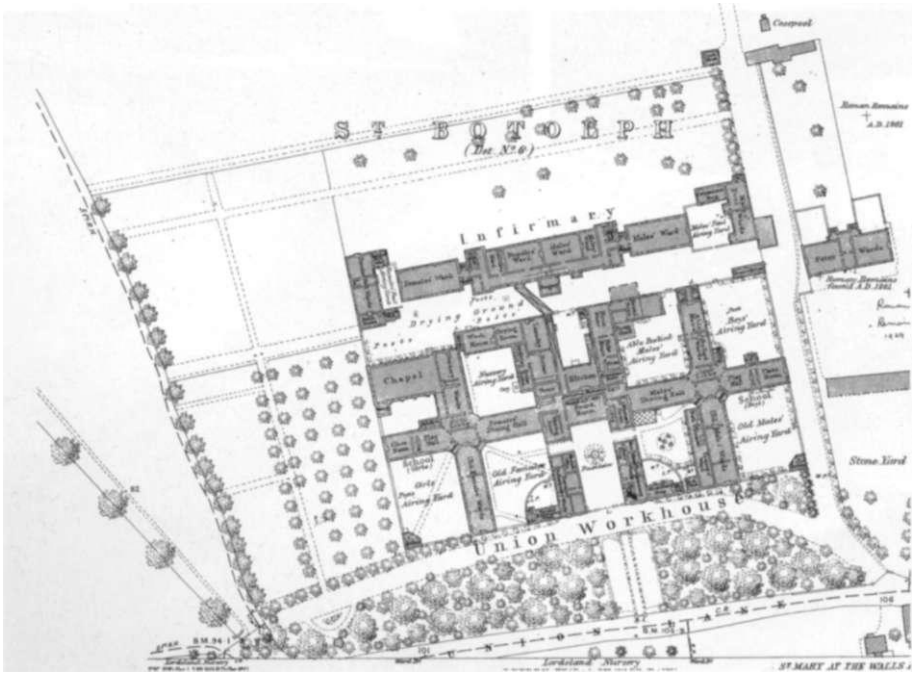
Goodbye to the workhouse

Colchester's Victorian workhouse exudes a grey gloom. It was built in 1836 in response to new government policy. Hitherto each parish had been able to give money or bread to its resident poor and to provide employment (repairing roads, for example) to the able-bodied poor (ie the unemployed). This generous (but expensive) welfare system was swept away by the New Poor Law of 1834. This required each town or district to build a large workhouse. Anyone destitute must enter the workhouse. Life inside was made deliberately bleak to dissuade the poor from scrounging off the public. Above all, paupers would be set to work, to pay for their keep. This measure was bitterly resented by the poor. When introduced in the North of England, there was widespread rioting. Historians agree that it helped to crush the rural Essex poor into sullen obedience. They called it 'the Spike.'

In Colchester things were less strident. No major scandal was recorded, but the refusal of those in charge, the 'Guardians of the Poor', to let members of the Press attend their meetings did keep the lid on things. We don't know what happened inside those gates, except that the Colchester workhouse filled up with three sorts of people: the old, too feeble to work, the sick, unable to afford doctors; and the destitute, notably young women with children. 'Layabouts' were harder to find. This is because the workhouse was really a prison.

Able-bodied applicants, in order to enter the workhouse, had to be destitute - without money or possessions. How then were they ever supposed to get out? Dependent wives and children had to enter too. Husbands and wives were then split up into men's and women's wards, and issued with workhouse clothing. Each day the men had tasks: unpicking the threads of old rope, chopping firewood or breaking big stones into gravel to surface the roads. They could never go out, except on Sunday to church. Some paupers checked which chapel was furthest away, and asked to worship there. At least then they got a walk on Sunday. For all these reasons, many of the Colchester poor, if out of work, preferred to go cold and hungry than consider the workhouse. Naturally the cost of the Poor Law rapidly went down.

The workhouse was run by an ill-paid resident staff, headed by the Master and Mistress. They were naturally grateful to the Clerk to the Guardians, a former mayor of Colchester, who got them the job. At Christmas 1874 this gratitude



Left: plan of the workhouse in 1876.

Above: view of the workhouse from the top of Jumbo, the former water-tower.

on opposite page -

Top: the entrance to the workhouse as it existed in 2001.

Right middle: the house built for the master and mistress of the workhouse.

Far right: part of the front elevation of the workhouse.

Below far right: survey of the former workhouse in progress.

Right: old photograph which is believed to show women inmates of the Union workhouse in the early 20th century (photo, courtesy of Mrs Carol Lyon).

took the form of a slap-up lunch for the Clerk and his cronies, even as, in another part of the building, the paupers lined up for their Christmas treat of a glass of ale and a pinch of snuff. Quite by accident a campaigning Liberal activist interrupted the feast. Before long the politics of Colchester were enlivened by an 'Anti-Lunch' Party, ruthless in their search for further skeletons in the workhouse cupboard. Soon it was discovered that the quantity of brandy purchased greatly exceeded the inmates' medical requirements. The workhouse Master and his wife left suddenly - and without a reference. New locks on the workhouse cellar door effected a saving of 18 gallons of beer a week.

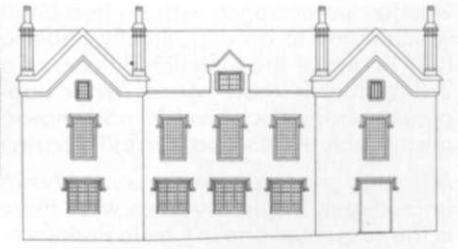
By 1900 Victorians felt bad about the workhouse. It began to get a bad press. The crusading journalist George Sims wrote a ballad that moved the nation. As you have probably only heard the first line, here is the opening:

It is Christmas Day in the Workhouse... and in long and hungry line
The paupers sat at the tables, for this is the hour they dine.
And the Guardians and their ladies, as the wind is in the East,
Have come in their furs and wrappers to watch their charges feast...

And so on, for 21 verses. In two years, 100,000 copies were sold. The campaign for the Welfare State had begun.

After the First World War, National Insurance, old age pensions and unemployment pay began to empty the workhouse of some of its traditional residents, though not the small army of tramps who got a meal and a bed on condition that they 'moved on', many doing a regular circuit to Braintree and to Witham and back. From 1929 the old Poor Law was replaced by 'public assistance', dispensed and means-tested by a committee of the Town Council. Increasingly the workhouse concentrated on its infirmary (ie hospital) facilities and its 'long stay', mostly elderly, residents. Only in 1948 did the Last of the Poor Law go as the workhouse was transferred via the National Assistance Board to the Health Service. Colchester workhouse enjoyed a second career as St Mary's Hospital, a service they had always provided for the poor. Not till the 1990s did this function cease, even though, ironically, homelessness was now becoming as serious a problem as it had been in 1836.

Some of the internal details of the building are of great interest. The main building was significantly and symmetrically segregated, with women and girls to the west and men and boys to the east, on each side of a dim, damp and dingy dining-hall. There was a school, and separate wards for elderly and able-bodied inmates. On the female side was a nursery ward, wash house, drying room and laundry. On the men's side was the flour store, bake house, bread store and oven, the pump house, the hearse house, the tramps' ward, the 'itch ward', a shoemaker's shop, and a tailor's shop. Around a central courtyard were the board room, the master's rooms and the porter's lodge. HB



Water supply in Roman Colchester

The Romans were able to provide pressurised running water in the town centre, a standard not equalled until the early 17th century.

Water is another of life's necessities, so it is no surprise that the paraphernalia required to extract water and deliver it to people is often found on excavation sites in and around the town. The discovery of a water-main or conduit on the St Mary's hospital site adds to our knowledge of the water supply to the Roman and later town.

Excavations at Balkerne Lane in the 1970s uncovered some key evidence for water supply. A shallow trench running across the site and heading towards one of the arches of Balkerne Gate carried four wooden water-mains (see picture). Each water-main was made of a series of straight wooden pipes held together by flat iron bands hammered into the thickness of the pipe walls to provide a water-tight and pressure-resistant joint.

Further evidence was the discovery on the Balkerne Lane excavation site of two parallel rows of post-holes which would have held lines of hefty wooden posts. This has been interpreted as being the remains of a Roman aqueduct, which could have brought water from Lexden and carried it over the top of the town wall in a raised culvert (see picture). After that, we must imagine it being fed into a water tower of some kind and redistributed from there along wooden water-mains to houses and public fountains in the town. In fact, the Head Street excavations in 2000 uncovered what might be the 'rising main' connection - there was an underground wooden water-trench with an iron band which came to an end directly under a hole in one of the tessellated floors of a 3rd-century Roman house. What happened above floor-level is not known; presumably there was a tap and a basin.

Although no waterworks are known immediately inside the town wall, there is the suspected one in Castle Park (now under the children's playground). It was originally thought to have been a pagan temple (a mithraeum), but the plan of the building and the spring which rises in it suggest otherwise.

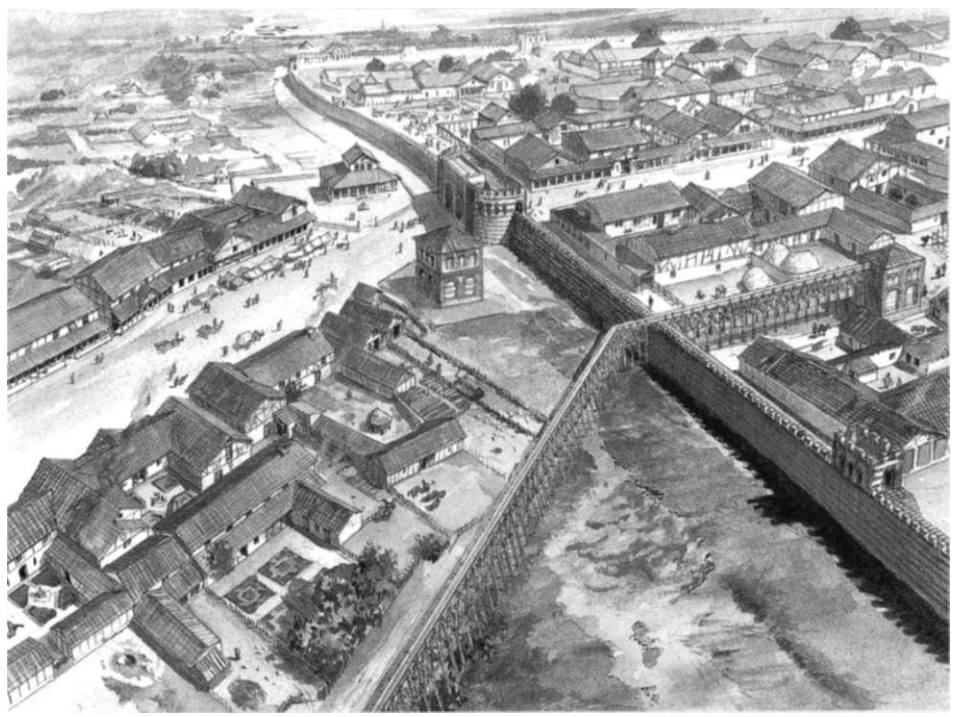
The problem at Colchester was that most of the Roman town was well above the spring line. This meant that, to provide a pressurised water supply, the water had to be raised in bulk from the springs to high ground where it could then be distributed in wooden pipes under pressure. Water could be raised by the 'Archimedes screw' or with pumps, but the most likely method was a series of water wheels.

Water was probably derived from different sources around the town, but a major source seems to have been Chiswell springs, west of the Balkerne Gate. Another was just east of the Temple of Claudius, in what is now the Castle Park. Wells would have been used along the north side of the walled town where the water-table was relatively close to the ground surface.

(For more information about the development of Colchester's water supply, see *Colchester Archaeological Report* 3, pages 26-8.)

Above: the remains of four wooden water-mains excavated in the 1970s at Balkerne Lane. The mains are curving to pass under one of the carriageways of the Balkerne Gate.

Below: reconstruction painting by Peter Froste of the west side of the Roman town in the late 1st century showing the wooden Paqueduct in the foreground.



Britain's first town wall

Left: some of the broken brick in the town wall near the Balkerne Gate. It may be the remains of public buildings destroyed during the Boudican attack on the town in AD 60/1.

by *Philip Crummy*

A recent survey produced new theories about Colchester's town wall. The idea that the wall was built in sections by gangs of workmen might be expected, but it seems as if some of the sections and the handiwork of different gangs can be identified. More interesting is the fact that the gangs seem to have been reusing building materials from public buildings destroyed during the Boudican revolt in AD 60/1. If this is true, then the vast quantity of reused building material in the wall suggests that there must have been several early public buildings of a monumental scale which as yet we know nothing about.

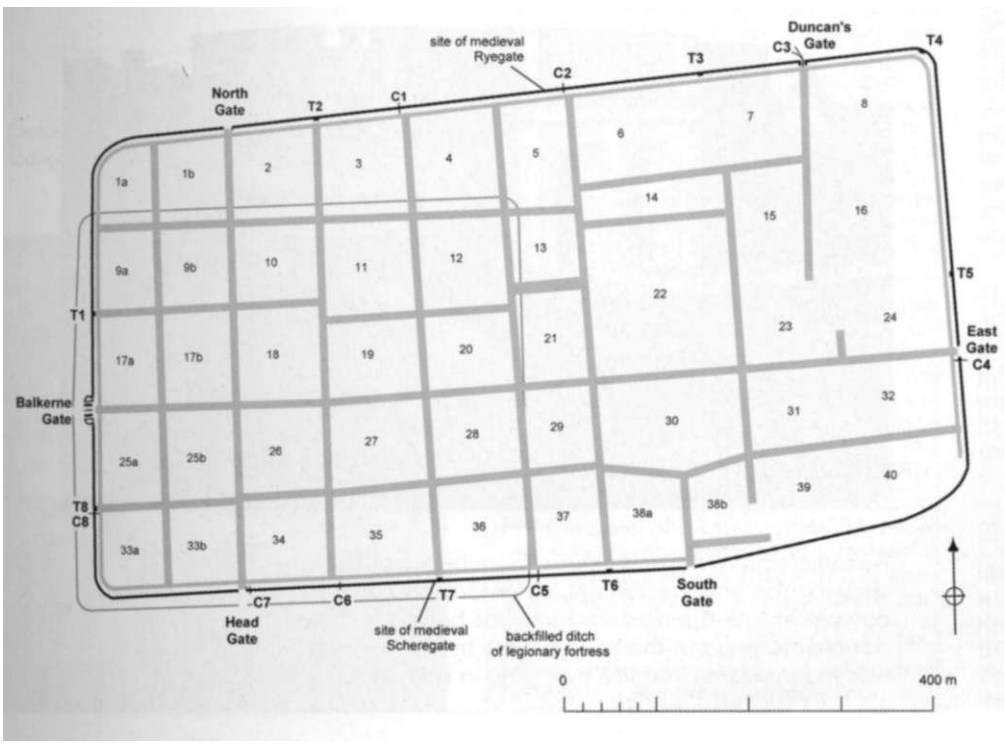
The town wall is one of the few relics of the Roman era that can seen above ground in Colchester. The wall was a key feature of the town, not just in Roman times, but until the 17th century when, during the Siege of Colchester, it performed its defensive role for the last time. From its beginning, the wall defined and shaped the layout of the town centre, and continues to do so today. It was about one and three-quarters of a mile long, of which about two-thirds is still visible above ground. Substantial stretches were rebuilt or refaced in the medieval period, and much is obscured by modern repairs and patches of various sorts. The best-preserved section is next to the Balkerne Gate, where large parts of the external face still survive more or less as built over 1,900 years ago.

The date of Colchester's town wall has long been a puzzle. It used to be regarded as being AD 150 to 200, and then the early 2nd century was favoured. But now the preferred date is *circa* AD 70 to 85, which, if correct, would make Colchester's town walls the earliest in Britain.

Some archaeologists are sceptical about whether a town wall could be as early as this in Britain, but the archaeological evidence from excavations at the rear of the wall strongly point to an early date. A key point is that Colchester was special in that it was a colony for retired veteran soldiers, and evidence on the Continent shows that colonies from the outset were normally provided with defensive walls. Colchester, being the first colony in Britain, was therefore in line for a wall at an early stage.

However, the provision of Colchester's wall had not been a straightforward matter, and in fact it was not given a wall when it was founded. Instead, this event seems to have occurred as a direct consequence of the destruction of the town by fire during the Boudican revolt of AD 60/1. The wall appears to have been built during the years immediately following the uprising as part of the re-foundation of the town.

Although the wall has been investigated many times over the years, it still holds on to many secrets. Only recently, careful study of the wall has revealed details about how the wall was built and how some of the materials for its construction might have been obtained.



Plan of Roman Colchester.

The plan shows the town wall, the street grid, the blocks of land formed by the streets *(insulae),* the six town gates, internal towers on the wall (T1 to T8), and culverts through the wall (C1 to C8). There could have been more towers and culverts than are shown here. The town was built on the site of a Roman legionary fortress, and its location is indicated on the plan. (The annex on the east side of the fortress is omitted.)

Public buildings destroyed by Boudica?

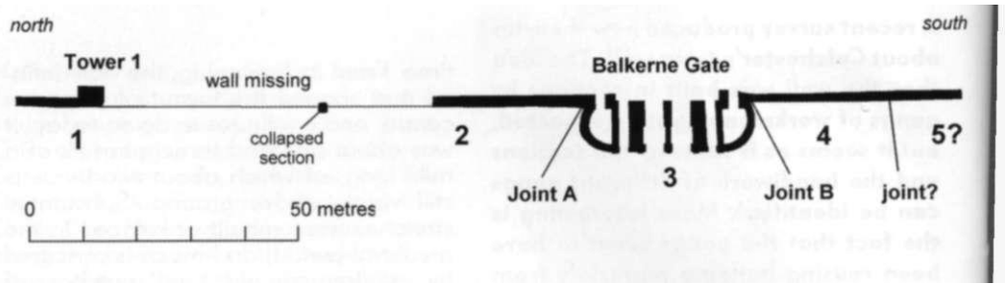
A surprising feature of the wall is that all the bricks in it appear to be in pieces. It is hard to find any brick which looks as if it might be complete. There are two possible explanations for this curious fact. One is that the brick was deliberately broken up, so that it would make a stronger wall. However, considering how much brick is involved, it seems extraordinary that tilers would make thousands of bricks only for their handiwork to be smashed into fragments. The other explanation is that the bricks are in pieces because the material was salvaged from buildings which had to be demolished. However, this explanation also seems flawed, because had the bricks been reused in this way, we might expect to see lumps of earlier mortar adhering to some of them, and this is not generally the case. A few do indeed seem to have bits of attached earlier mortar, but there is so little of it that the brick fragments must have been extremely well cleaned if indeed they were reused. Thus, although neither explanation can be claimed to be entirely convincing, reuse of the bricks seems by the far the likeliest explanation, and the question then arises as to which buildings the brick came from.

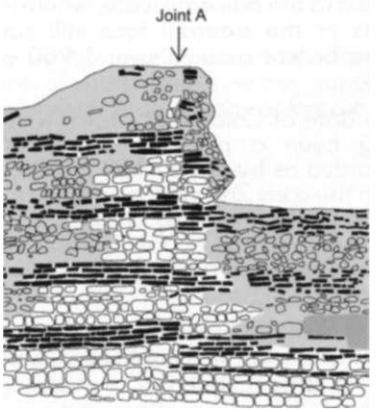
Very few houses had brick and stone walls in the 1st century in Colchester. In fact, even in the 2nd and 3rd centuries, when the use of stone and brick was at its peak in domestic construction, most new house walls were generally made out of a kind of mud brick rather than the kiln-fired bricks in the town wall. The only source of brick in the quantities needed for the town wall must have been public buildings. And even then, the scale of the buildings must have been monumental. There was enough brick in the town wall to have made six brick walls, 0.8 metres wide and **4** metres high, across the width of the largest of the squares *(insulae)* in the town (ie Insulas 22 and 30). Given that, like the town wall, the walls of these buildings would have been made out of a mixture of brick and stone, it is clear that several very large public buildings must have been demolished to produce all the broken brick for the town wall.

What might the buildings have been? The most obvious candidates are public baths (probably legionary in origin), a basilica (an aislea hall) opposite the Temple of Claudius, the superstructure of the Temple of Claudius if it needed to be rebuilt, and a monumental colonnade around the temple.

A section at a time

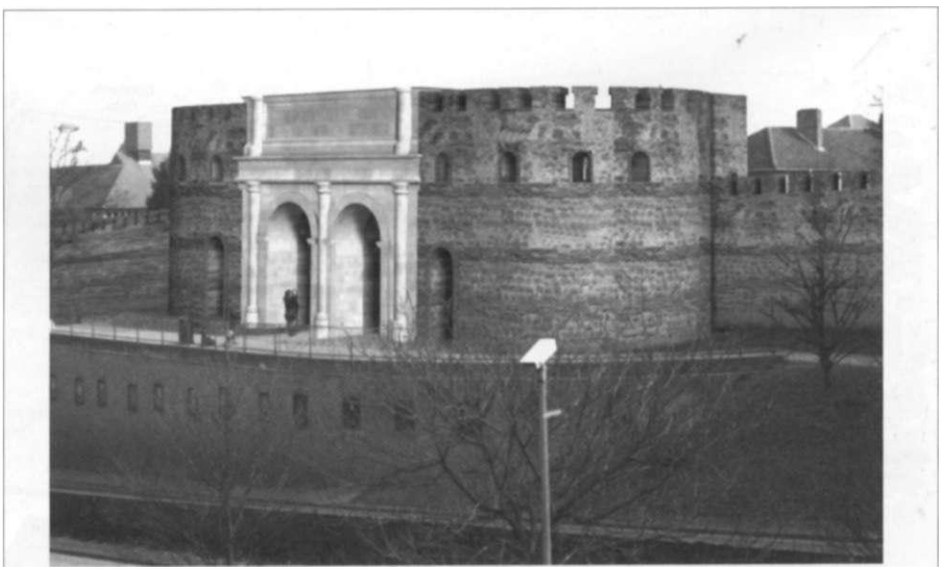
The wall was not raised as one unit all round its circuit, but instead was built in sections by a number of gangs each working at their own speed and, to a limited degree, building them in their own way. A close inspection of the best-reserved parts of the wall by the Balkerne Gate has provided evidence of as many as five different sections of wall, and indications of several gangs in operation. The coursing is one indicator. The coursing of the brick and stone forming the sides of the Balkerne Gate does not match the coursing in the adjacent sections of wall to the north and south, apart from at the base. These discontinuities show that the gate and the wall were constructed as one until the work had reached a few feet in height, when the gate was raised more quickly. There are also differences in the fabric of the wall which suggest different gangs with slightly different working practices. The wall on the north side of the gate differs from elsewhere in that it contains thousands of waste chippings





Above: plan showing the probable extent of the different sections of wall in which the wall at Balkerne Lane was built.

Left: drawing of the junction (Joint A) of the north side of the Balkerne Gate and the adjacent section of town wall. The break in the coursing of the brick and stone shows that the wall and the gate were built independently of each other except for the lowest four courses.



Reconstruction of the Balkerne Gate by Scout Design showing the gate as it might look today had it survived complete, with the modern buildings behind it. The double arch part in the centre is the triumphal arch, which was incorporated into the new gate in *circa* AD 70-85.

left over from the dressing of the facing stones. The gate too is different, in that it was bonded with pink mortar *(opus signinum)* rather than the normal white. (The pink colour is due to the addition of crushed and powdered brick.)

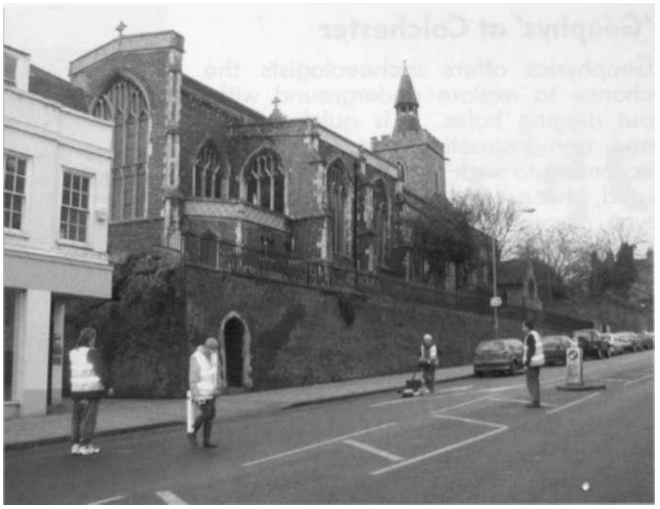
Evidence from past excavations elsewhere on the wall circuit helps to fill in a picture of how these gangs operated. Each gang seems to have had its own stockpile of materials close at hand. They dressed the stone and mixed the mortar on wooden boards next to the section of wall that they were building.

At the Balkerne Gate, the average length of each unit of wall seems to be about 40-60 m, which would mean that there might be 50 to 75 such sections round the circuit of the wall as a whole. If the wall was built very quickly in one season or so, then the scale of the project would be such that it might have been undertaken by a Roman legion (ie about 5,000 men). However, if the brick in the wall is indeed reused, then the building works probably went on for many years, and their progress must have depended to an extent on the rate at which public buildings were being demolished.

The Trust is indebted to Colchester Museums and the Colchester Borough Council for funding the Trust's recent review of the town wall. The purpose of the project was to compile an archive report covering all the archaeological investigations and records relating to the wall over the last fifteen years, including the drawn survey at 1:20 which the Trust carried out some years ago. The latter was undertaken with the aid of grants from English Heritage and Colchester Borough Council as part of a wider programme of works to repair and conserve the wall. PC

Below: photo, of a section of wall by the Balkerne Gate in 2001.

The search for the town gates of Roman Colchester



Above: the ground-radar team working on the site of East Gate, East Hill.

Compared with some other former Roman towns in Britain, Colchester is fortunate to have the remains of two of its Roman gates still exposed. One of them, the Balkerne Gate, is so well preserved that you can walk under one of its arches, and the other, Duncan's Gate, is sufficiently intact for the lower part of the gate to be completely exposed and on view (in Castle Park). But there were four other Roman gates, and the size and layouts of these gates are not known. This is because, unlike the Balkerne Gate and Duncan's Gate, these gates were in use in the medieval period, and they have since been removed because of decay and road improvement schemes. However, parts or these gates should survive below ground. Certainly small parts of the east sides of Head Gate and the north gate have been observed less than a foot under the surfaces of the modern pavements, and the level of the town wall near St Botolph's Street indicates that the base and foundations of the south gate should be similarly preserved. (The east gate may be exceptional, because it might have been completely destroyed when the gradient or East Hill was reduced in the 19th century.)

Opportunities to dig holes on the sites of the missing gates are limited, for obvious reasons, so it was decided to see if it might be possible to detect the presence of any remains by geophysics. Resistivity is no good where the surface is concrete, and magnetometry is not very effective with metal in the vicinity. Our only choice was ground radar.

But the sites of all four gates lie under main roads into town, so to carry out a ground-radar survey presented a considerable challenge. Clearly, there had to be as little traffic as possible, and night revellers are best avoided. This left no choice: the survey would have to be done early on a Sunday morning.

Five o'clock seemed to be the time to start. Traffic starts to build up by ten, so that was the deadline for completion. The police were consulted and their permission obtained, and so too the Borough's own traffic control officers. We had flashing lights, as did the ground-radar machine; we had two men at work' signs; we wore luminous jackets; and a risk assessment was prepared.

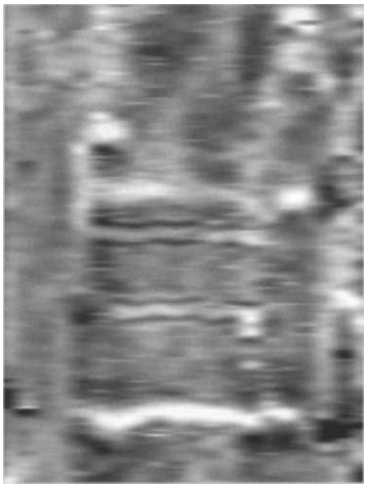
The plan of action was carefully worked out beforehand. Precision timing was vital if we were to finish all four gates before the traffic beat us. Howard. Stephen and I marked out the arias using chalk and strings as guidelines. The grids consisted of lines, spaced at one-metre intervals over the sites of each of the gates. We stretched strings temporarily across the full width of the streets as the lines were chalked. Oncoming traffic was always a problem and a worry. Peter and John worked the ground-radar machine, and Tim carried out a back-up survey using a magnetometer. The grid team started about half an hour before the others to keep ahead.

'Geophys' at Colchester

Geophysics offers archaeologists the chance to explore underground without digging holes. It is quick, cheap and non-destructive, but results vary according to such things as the method used, the ground conditions, and the type of archaeological features being explored. Various techniques can be used; ie magnetometry, resistivity and ground radar. Magnetometry measures minute variations in the magnetic field, and is particularly effective in detecting burnt areas. The downside is that it does not work well near large metal objects such as fences. Resistivity measures the electrical resistance in the ground, and is better suited to stone and rubble. It is slower than magnetometry because of the need to insert probes into the ground for every reading. Ground radar is relatively expensive, and the results are the most difficult to interpret, but it is not adversely affected by metal and it is quick.

The main project over the past few years has been Gosbecks, and this will continue to be the focus of our attention for some years to come. It is hoped eventually to survey the whole of the area. About 11 hectares have been done so far, but it is early days yet and there could be as much as 60 hectares to go.

The grounds of St John's Abbey have also been surveyed in the hope of recovering information about the demolished abbey (pages 23-5). The sites of four of Colchester's Roman town gates were targeted in the hope of recovering their plans, and there has also been work near Copford on the site of a Roman villa.



Picture: ground-radar plot from Queen Street. The lines are puzzling and seem too far north to be part of the gate; perhaps they indicate the site of a former pedestrian crossing.

It was pitch dark when we started, and the town was very quiet, apart from the occasional car and some street cleaners. Fortunately, it was dry and there was little wind to blow the string around as we laid out the grids. But there was a problem early on - a street cleaner thoughtfully warned us that we had twenty minutes before his automated cleaning machine washed away the chalk lines. Oh dear! There wasn't enough time for the team to take the readings. But the cleaner was sympathetic and 'phoned his boss, and the obliteration was scheduled for a later time.

In the event, the whole operation went like clockwork, and Peter pushed the ground-radar machine along the last chalk line at ten, and just as the traffic was building up. All in all, it was a masterly performance by the team. But did it work? We would know within a few hours, after Tim had processed the data.

We were extremely hopeful for results of a sort. Given the mass of masonry which survives under pavements and how close it is to the surface, it seemed very likely that we would be able to detect some of it with the ground radar. But unfortunately it was not to be. The kerbs and the rough surfaces of some of the roads caused some problems, but even so, it is very hard to see anything particularly positive in the results. We seem to have found evidence of a pedestrian crossing in Queen Street which no longer exists, but otherwise nothing definite. I don't doubt that geophysics is the way to find out more about Colchester's town gates, but it won't be for a while yet.

The ground-radar survey was carried out by Peter Cott, Dr John Woods, Dr Tim Dennis, Howard Brooks, Stephen Benfield and myself (Stephen, Peter, John and Tim are pictured below). The hire of the ground-radar machine was kindly paid for by the Friends of the Colchester Archaeological Trust. The machine was supplied by Utsi Electronics. PC

The team

We are lucky to have the services of a group of four very capable people working on geophysical projects for the Trust. Peter Cott is the team leader. He is a communications engineer who has developed considerable expertise in geophysics since his retirement. He has been carrying out geophysical surveys at Colchester and in East Anglia since 1993, particularly at Gosbecks. His first helpers were Dennis Tripp and James Fawn. Aline and David Black started as his assistants a few years ago, and having caught the bug, now carry out surveying themselves. Aline and David both have scientific backgrounds. Many people will know Aline from her time as Head at the Colchester County High School. Dr Tim Dennis is Senior Lecturer in the Department of Electronic Systems Engineering at the University of Essex. His primary role in the geophysics projects is the processing of the field data. He first became involved with Trust when he helped to organise the publication of live images of the Stanway excavation on the internet in 1997.

St John's Abbey explored

St John's Abbey was an important feature of medieval Colchester, yet thanks to Henry VIII, little now remains above ground. All that survives of the abbey is most of the precinct wall, the 15th-century gatehouse, part of a porter's lodge, and lots of fragments of worked stone in many of the more modern buildings in and around the site of the abbey.

Nothing is known about the buildings of the abbey except for the church which, fortunately, is depicted in a medieval drawing (see page 25). The illustration shows a substantial building with a large central tower rather like the one at Norwich cathedral, and a west front apparently flanked by two round towers. Interestingly, the drawing shows the south side of the church, and thus it appears to suggest that the cloisters and most of the other monastic buildings were to the north of the church. Not only would this have been an unusual arrangement, but it seems to contradict the early history of the abbey where it is stated that the monastic buildings were relocated on the south side of the church after the abbey burnt down in 1133.

The abbey was founded in 1095 by the Norman baron Eudo Dapifer on the site of an earlier church dedicated to St John. From the beginning the abbey was protected by a high wall. The impressive 15th-century gatehouse on the town side of the abbey is relatively late, but it was presumably a rebuilt version of an earlier gate. Another gate may have existed on the south side of the precinct (see page 24), its site being on the west side of the modern Flagstaff House on Napier Road.

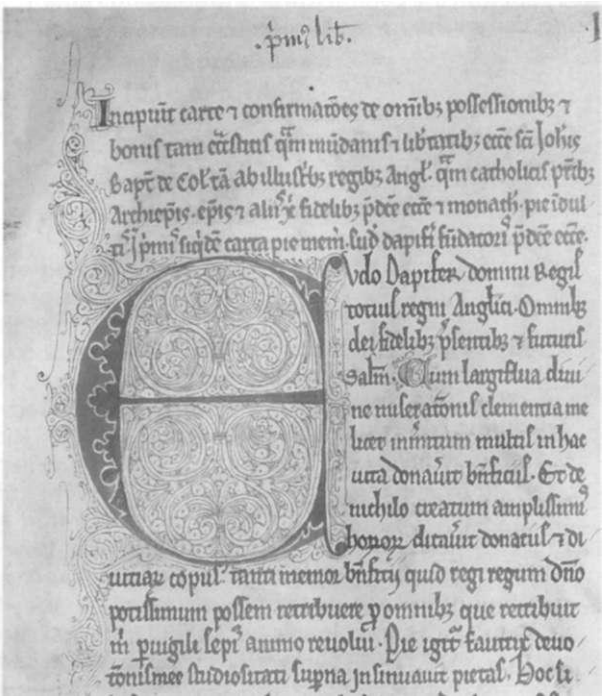
The abbey closed in 1538 as part of Henry VIII's attack on monasticism and the Catholic Church. The abbot, John Beche, vigorously opposed the termination of the abbey and was hanged as a result. He is said to have resisted the closure and to have hidden the abbey's valuable plate. The monks were evicted and the abbey buildings and land sold off. The monastic buildings were largely destroyed as the estate quickly passed through the hands of several owners. The estate ended up in the ownership of the Lucas family, who built a mansion for themselves probably incorporating parts of the ruined abbey. The mansion was demolished about a hundred years later in 1648 as a result of the Siege of Colchester, when the Royalists used the walled precinct as a bulwark against the Parliamentarians who were besieging the town.

Top left: Abbot Blyton's seal (14th century), published in the *Book of Colchester.*

Above: St John's Abbey precinct in 1748.

Below: part of the first page of the cartulary of St John's Abbey, with the initial 'E' for Eudo Dapifer.

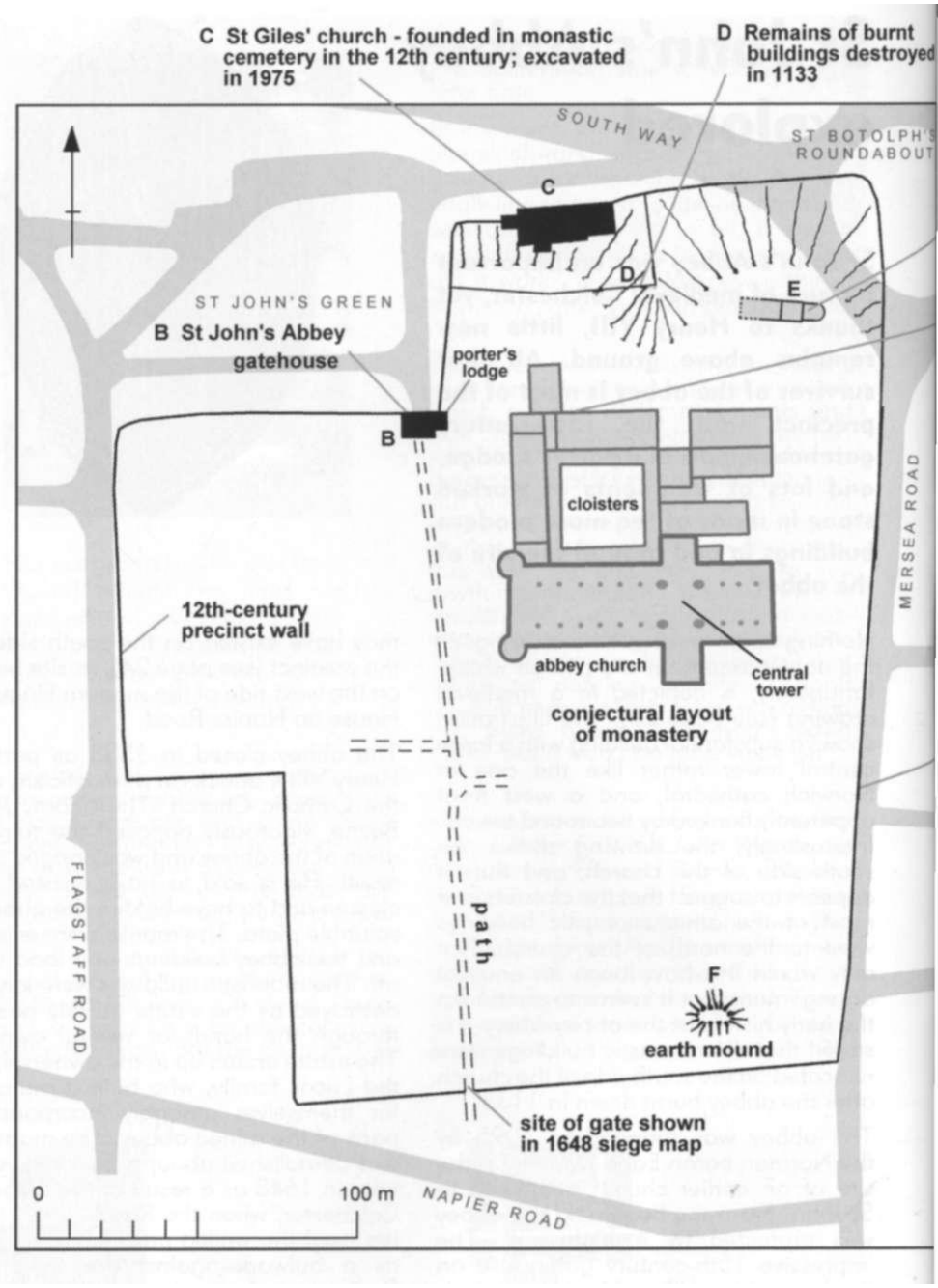
(Seal and cartulary reproduced courtesy of Colchester Museums.)



Below: a view of St John's Green in 2001 looking towards St John's Abbey gatehouse.

St John's Abbey explored

The precinct is not open to the public but the gatehouse can be visited. Parts of the precinct wall can be seen in the surrounding streets.



Right: a speculative **layout of the abbey** on the assumption that the **cloisters** were on the north side of the **abbey church.** The plan shown here is loosely based on the Benedictine abbey at Chester which was arranged in this way. There were probably more ancillary buildings than are shown here. According to the 1610 and 1648 maps of Colchester, the Lucas house stood in the southern part of the precinct. The house may have incorporated parts of some of the monastic buildings, as was sometimes the case in Dissolved monasteries elsewhere. The monastery was apparently being demolished in 1552, although there is a record to the effect that part of the abbey church was still standing as late as 1621. Interestingly, there is a tall building on the 1610 and 1648 maps, which could be interpreted as being the partly demolished abbey church where only the central tower and the east end have been retained. (The church at St Botolph's Priory in Colchester was treated in this way after the Dissolution, except that it was the nave that was kept with the central tower and east end being demolished.)

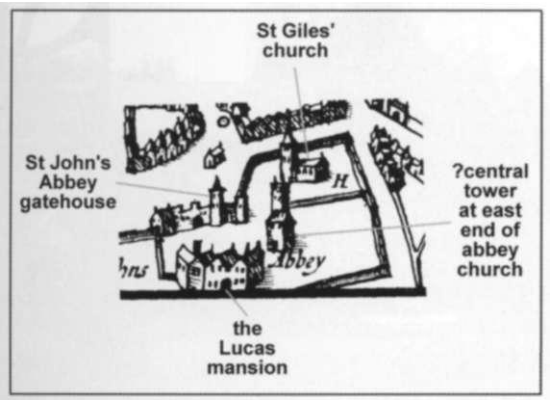
G A very small part of a substantial east-west foundation was found in 1986 during building works on the east side of the Garrison Officers' Club. This is the only part of the **abbey buildings** uncovered to date.

B St John's Abbey gatehouse is a very fine two-storeyed building of 15th-century date. The gatehouse is of two storeys, with flint flushwork panelling, battlements and corner turrets. The building was badly damaged during the Siege of Colchester in 1648, but it seems to have been accurately restored in the mid 19th century. The gatehouse is open to the public, without charge (but not the upper storey).

E St John's church, demolished 1095; excavated in 1972

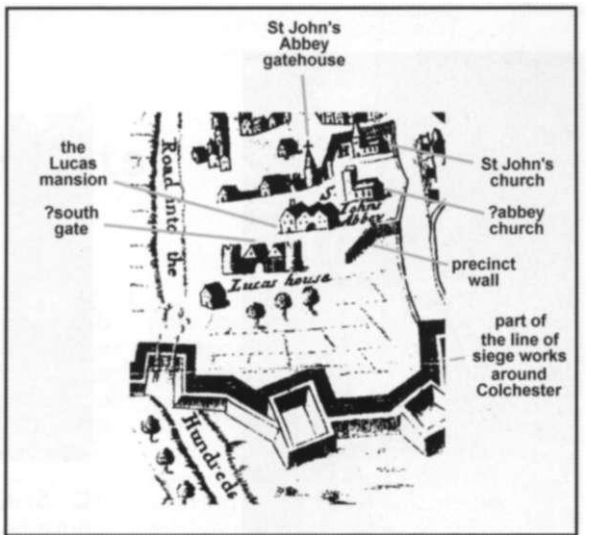
G Wall found in 1986

12th-century precinct wall, masked here by modern buttresses



Detail of Speed's map of Colchester published in I610.

The Siege map of 1648 appears to show a **gate** flanked by two towers on the south side of the abbey. The exact location of the gate may be where a 19th-century path through the gardens crossed the line of the precinct wall. The path led southwards from the St John's Abbey gate, and it could conceivably have survived from the medieval period.



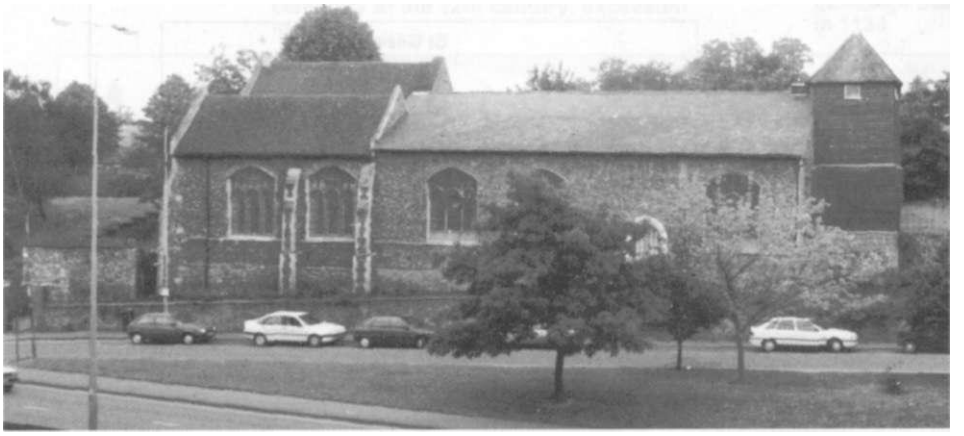
Above: detail from the Siege map of 1648 showing the Royalist forces holding the former precinct of St John's Abbey. Whoever compiled the Siege map took Speed's map as its core and added in enough detail around the edges to show surrounding Parliamentarian siege works. The added material includes the apparent gate on the south side of the precinct, and what appears to be a more accurate drawing of the east end of the abbey church.

continued on pages 26-27

Left: St John's Abbey church. Compare with the apparent remains of the abbey church shown in the 1610 and 1648 maps above.

A The precinct wall. Archaeological excavations in 1971 in the north-east corner of the precinct showed that the precinct wall was early and probably built between 1096 and 1133. It was refaced in the 16th century and has been patched and repaired at various places around its circuit throughout the centuries. The precinct wall in Mersea Road (right, in 2001) is dominated by modern brick buttresses, but its core is Norman. On the west side of the precinct, the wall has been much altered, and includes parts of 16th- or 17th-century window openings. These show that the wall was incorporated in post-Dissolution buildings erected along the west side of the precinct.

Above: a column of reused stone fragments on the site of the abbey precinct in 2001 (composite photo, by Tim Dennis).

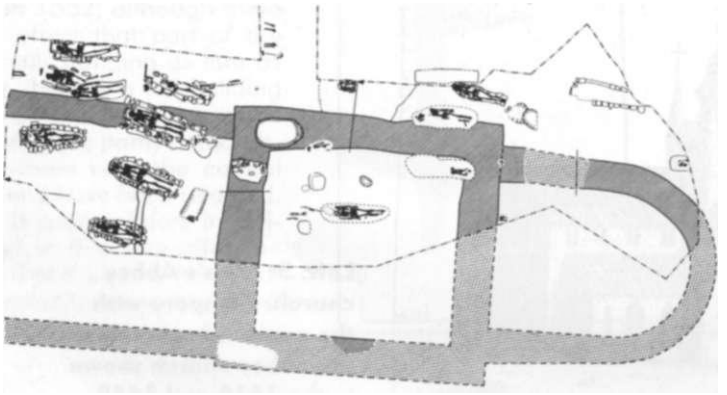


C St Giles' church (above) seems to have been built on part of the monastic cemetery some time between 1133 and 1171. It may have been a replacement for the demolished St John's church. St Giles' church was partly excavated in 1975 when the building was being converted into a masonic centre.

Above right: drawings of two floor-tiles from the church.

A large, ornate bronze votive plaque was said to have been found somewhere in the precinct in 1891. It was dedicated to the god Mars Medocius by a Caledonian called Lossio Veda. The plaque, now in the British Museum, may indicate the site of a **Roman temple.**

D The remains of **burnt clay buildings** were recorded under the churchyard wall of St Giles's church when part of the cemetery was dug away to make a car park in 1973. The buildings appeared to be the remains of the early 12th-century monastery which was destroyed by fire in 1133.



St John's church

E The remains of **St John's church**. The Anglo-Saxon church was demolished in 1095 as part of the preparatory work for the new abbey, and its site was subsequently used for burials. The church was excavated in 1 972 when the north-east corner of the precinct was lowered for the construction of St Botolph's roundabout. Roman burials were found at the same time.

Above: plan of St John's church and later burials.

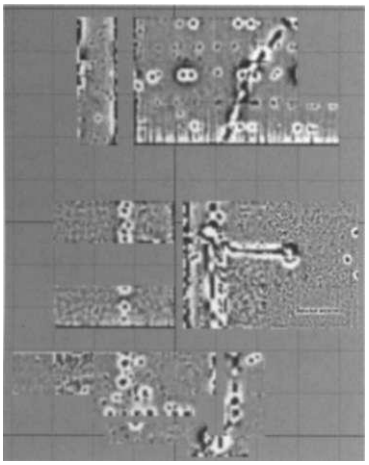
Right: part of the tower foundation of St John's church.

Middle: a monastic burial post-dating the demolition of St John's church.

The Young Archaeologists' Club

by Pat Brown

F A substantial elongated **earth mound** of uncertain origin. Human remains were apparently found in the mound in 1867. The earthwork is sometimes said to be a 'plague pit' or a mound for a windmill. The plague pit theory seems unlikely given that it is a mound, and there were three windmills close by but all to the east of the Mersea Road. The mound might simply be a heap of soil left over from terracing or some other earth-moving operation inside the precinct. But perhaps most likely of all is the possibility that it is an earthwork made by the Royalists during the Siege of Colchester in 1648. The Royalists made the former walled precinct into a major place of resistance against the Parliamentarians. The south side, in particular, came under heavy bombardment from Parliamentarian positions on the Abbey Field, so perhaps the mound, being close behind the precinct wall, was a gun emplacement or some sort of outpost.



Part of a geophysical survey undertaken by Aline and David Black for the Trust in 2001. It was hoped that it might prove possible to learn something about the layout of the abbey. However, the results so far have been inconclusive, partly because there is a lot of metalwork on the site which interferes with the readings.

Colchester Young Archaeologists' Club (YAC) was started in April 1994. Since then the club has had a steady average attendance of 15 out of a membership of 30-40. Undoubtedly the club has benefited from the increase of public interest in archaeology with television programmes like **Time Team,** which most of us watch avidly. National YAC was taken over by the Council for British Archaeology in 1993; it now has 67 branches. National members receive a magazine, can take part in YAC holidays and competitions, and are entitled to free admission to a number of sites and museums.

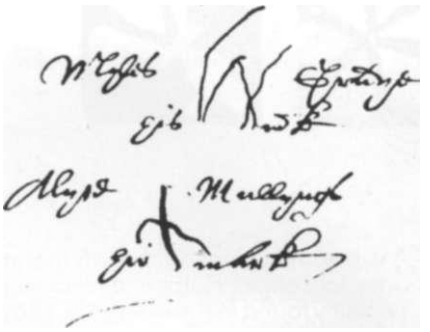
The Colchester club meets once a month in term-time, in the Charles Gray Room at Colchester Castle, though during the summer it goes out and about in Colchester and also runs coach trips to places of archaeological interest like Flag Fen, West Stow and St Albans. National YAC helps us with ideas and information, and ensures that all the branches maintain high standards of safety and child-care. The club leaders, all volunteers, are approved by National YAC. Colchester Museum Services have given help and support from the start, as has the Colchester Archaeological Group.

Children pay a £2 annual subscription to their local club and can take part in a wide variety of activities - making Saxon pots and Roman sandals, writing a newspaper about the latest displays in the museum, learning about coins and aerial photography, or being visited by two ferociously attired Saxon seamen! Insurance provisions normally prohibit the under-16s from working on archaeological sites, but this year we did have a chance to take part in a real dig, at the ECC training school at Cressing Temple (see picture), and also to participate in the Museum of London's splendid 'the Dig', where we excavated and recorded mini-trenches set up by museum staff. We have tried field-walking and pot-washing, and we have also recorded most of the gravestones at Holy Trinity church in Colchester. This year we completed a survey on St John's Abbey gateway.

Some children just come to see what it is all about, but others are 'hooked', and some even want to pursue archaeological careers. Several of the older children have done work experience in a museum or at an archaeological unit like the Trust. If you know anyone aged between 7 and 16 who would be interested in joining either National or Colchester YAC, please contact Pat Brown on (01206) 575082 or write to her at 172 Lexden Road, Colchester, C03 4BZ.

'W' is for...

James Fawn explores the mysterious letter 'W inscribed on some of the fragments of copper-working moulds found during the Head Street excavation in 2000



One interesting discovery during the Trust's excavation at the Head Street post-office site in 2000 was a pit which contained fragments of shaped fired clay moulds. Expert opinion is that these were used in the casting of bronze, especially since the pit also contained pieces of fused metal waste and soot. A bronze foundry in Head Street?

The accompanying photograph shows a particularly interesting fragment (top). It has a letter W (or inverted M) inscribed on the surface so that the resultant casting would have been signed by bearing the moulded letter in relief. Whose signature? Documentary evidence, part published and part deposited in the Essex Record Office, seems to provide an answer.

In 1605, 'Miles Graye of Colchester, bell-founder' bought the former property of a beerbrewer, called The Swanne with two Neckes. (Two Neckes or nicks is the mark of the Vintners' Company, used in the annual ceremony of Swan Upping on the Thames). The Gray(e)s were a well-known family of 17th-century bell-founders who cast bells for most churches in Colchester, many others in eastern England, one as far north as Newcastle and another as far south as Sussex.

The name Miles ran through five generations in the period, but only three have been identified as bell-founders; Miles I, II and III. The purchaser of the Swanne for £70 was Miles I, born about 1575; his father was probably a Miles Graye who lived in St Mary's parish in 1567. In 1598 the son formally confessed to making Alice Mullings pregnant at the house of Richard Bowler, also a bell-founder in Colchester (one of his bells is on display in Colchester Museum). Alice was probably a domestic and Miles a keen apprentice who was able to afford the Swanne six years later and who has become so well regarded as to merit the description 'Prince of Bell-founders'.

The confession document of 1598 (see picture) bears the marks of both Miles and Alice - it takes two to tango - indicating that they were unable to write their names. While Alice made the usual cross, Miles marked with a W. For some reason this 'W' mark is inscribed on several of his known bells and on bells attributed to him, instead of the obvious M.

He and Alice married, no doubt in haste, and had at least four children. The eldest from their encounter in 1598 was probably Miles II. The others were James, who became a millwright, Ann and Mary. They all married, Ann to a Michael Darbee who may have been of the same family as John Darbie, another bell-founder of the late 17th century.

Miles I lived at the Swanne or close by until he died. One deed shows that Alice was still alive in 1639 when he was about 65, but she must have died not too long after because Miles' will of 1649 just before his death shows that he had taken a second wife, Dorothy. His enterprising spirit obviously persisted into what would now be considered retirement age.

While bells nowadays originate from a foundry, in the time of the Grayes many were cast close to the churches where they were hung. The tenor bell at Lavenham, regarded as Miles' masterpiece, was cast in a field next to the churchyard. The molten bell-metal, a particular alloy of copper and tin, would have been poured into a mould with inner core and outer components buried in the ground to take the weight without breaking the mould. Thus many bell-founders travelled to where the client churches were; and although Miles II surely learnt his craft at the Swanne, it has been suggested that later he often acted as his father's agent, casting out of town.

In 1636 Miles I let the Swanne to his second son James for one penny a year and took two upper rooms in the latter's house which apparently was next door. His grandson, Ann's son Michael Darbie, was also accommodated with his bride. Miles II, his wife Jane and their children are not mentioned in the documents at this time and there is evidence that they were living in Saffron Walden where Miles II had his own workshop.

One thing we do know is the location of the Swanne. The deed of 1605 which conveyed the premises to Miles I states that they abutted 'north on highway from Lexden to Headgate for about 23 yards' and 'south-east upon highway from Layer to Colchester for about 22 yards'. The junction between the two highways is now Headgate cross-roads, and the premises must have extended between Crouch Street and Butt Road. Other dimensions given indicate that the Crouch Street frontage was somewhere between the present Odeon cinema and 'The Bull' pub.

The deeds show that the curtilage contained a number of buildings. The Swanne was a hall house fronting Crouch Street on the east of the site. It had a chamber above the hall, a garret and a closet. The kitchen was a separate room on the ground floor with a stair leading to it from the room above the hall. Other buildings were a stable, a work house, and a clay house which stored the carefully selected clay for moulds, most important for foundry work. The grounds included a 'great yard', a small yard, access to a well and an orchard and another dwelling house west of the Swanne.

In 1648, Crouch Street was the scene of bitter skirmishes during the Civil War siege of Colchester and properties were burnt by both opposing sides. The Swanne was almost certainly one of them for, in his will made shortly before he died in the following year, Miles I refers to it being 'lately burned down', no doubt a terrible blow. However, he was able to leave the work house, clay house, the orchard and use of well and yards to Dorothy, and perhaps Miles II used them while supporting his stepmother until his death in about 1656. By then some of the property had passed to him, for his widow Jane sold part in that year. Whether his son Miles III had the use of any of the site is not known.

The pottery found with the clay fragments in the pit suggests that they were deposited in the 17th century and of course they could easily have come from the Swanne site just around the corner. Not all the fragments were shaped for a bell and the composition of the bronze waste was not suitable for bell casting; this suggests that, like many bell-founders, the Grayes cast other objects. The fragments shown here were moulds for the legs of a three-legged vessel, perhaps to stand in the fire for cooking. If anyone has an antique bronze vessel standing on three legs and showing a W mark, the Trust would be most interested!

Pictures
on opposite page - top left: mould fragment inscribed with 'W'.
top right: Miles' and Alice's marks on the confession document. (Reproduced by courtesy of the Essex Record Office.)
Bottom: mould fragments from Head Street used in the manufacture of legs for large copper-alloy bowls.

on this page - above: the pit filled with foundry waste on the Head Street site.

Aerial archaeology of 'Constable country"

by Essex County Council Heritage Conservation

Essex County Council Planning

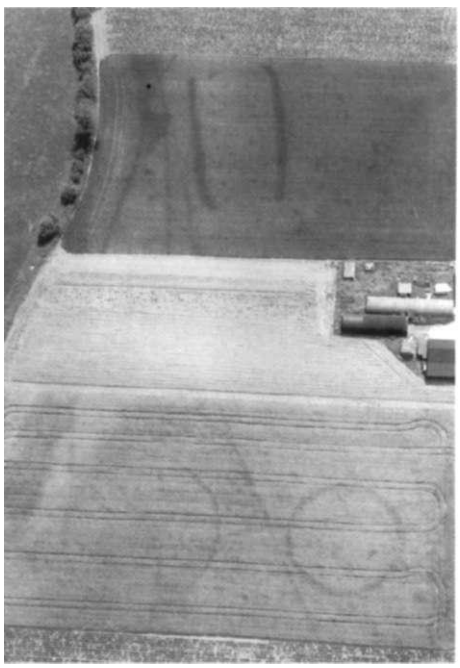
For over 30 years, the cropmarks of the Stour valley have been recorded from the air by Ida McMaster of the Colchester Archaeological Group and other members of the CAG, the Essex County Council, and Cambridge University. The cropmarks form an ancient landscape of monuments, trackways, fields and enclosures, and include two examples of cursus (long, narrow earthwork monuments of the Neolithic period, 4000 to 2000 years BC). While all these remarkable cropmarks are well known locally, they are perhaps not so widely appreciated at a national level as they should be. A project funded by English Heritage to study the cropmarks on both the Essex and Suffolk sides of the river has recently been completed by ECC Heritage Conservation.

The Stour cropmarks often show a close relationship to the river; they are frequently set within meanders or they may develop as linear sequences running across the necks of meanders. Among the systems of fields and trackways in the valley is an example at **Lawford,** long considered to be of Bronze Age origin. Here a group of monuments is enclosed within a large rectangular field, which is one of several linked to a series of trackways leading from the river floodplain to the valley side, which here forms a fairly steep scarp leading to the flat top of the Tendring plateau. There seems a clear logic to this field system linking the valley floor pasture to higher ground to the south. The cropmark fields and trackways at Lawford are unlikely to be the work of a single period.

A rather similar cropmark system of trackways and rectilinear enclosures associated with large ring-ditch cemeteries has been identified and extensively excavated at **Ardleigh,** about 5km south-west of Lawford. Here, the earliest phase of land division clearly belongs to the Early/Middle Bronze Age, and the system of trackways changed and developed throughout the Iron Age and Roman periods - indeed, some elements appear to survive as features in the present landscape.

The first phase of the Stour valley project has provided a firm basis for developing our understanding of and thus our management of the cropmarks in the valley. It is hoped that the cropmarks can be incorporated into existing schemes of management, which have for many years ensured the maintenance and enhancement of nature conservation and other aspects of the valley landscape. Such an approach will be a significant contribution to sustainable management of the valley landscape. It is also intended that future fieldwork will investigate the development of the cropmarks in conjunction with environmental sampling so that we can gain a clearer understanding of this immensely old landscape.

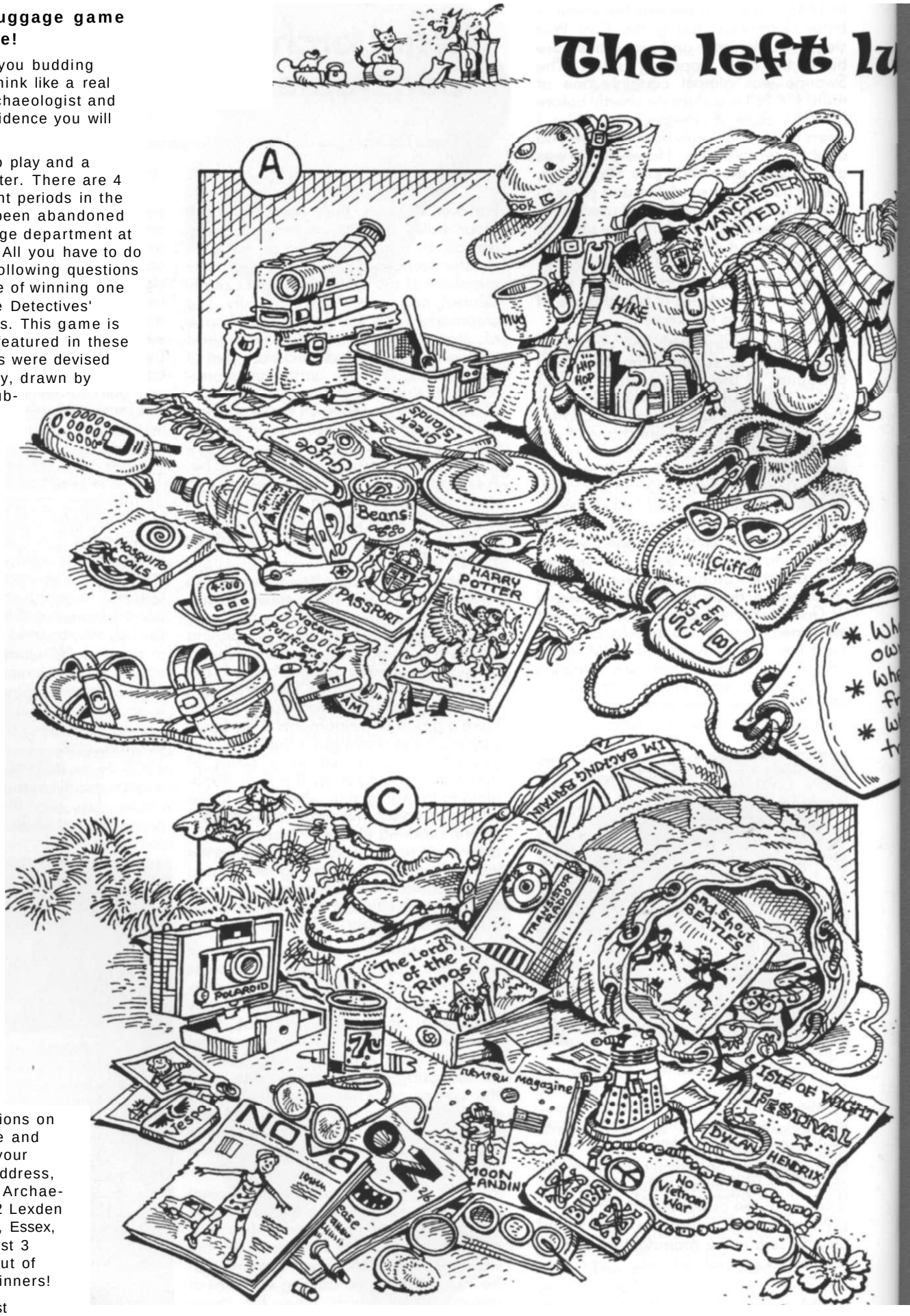
Picture
The upper half of this aerial photograph shows an open-ended, elongated enclosure on the floor of the Stour valley. The most likely interpretation of this monument is that it represents the remains of a long barrow, in which the dark, slightly curved lines are ditches from which the upcast was used to form a mound in between. The individual dark spots may indicate the remains of pits holding substantial timber uprights. There is no parallel for this cropmark elsewhere in Essex, but it probably belongs to the Neolithic period (about 4000 to 2000 years BC). No trace of either remains today. In the lower part of the photo, are two large ring-ditches, probably of prehistoric date.



Play the left luggage game and win a prize!

Here is a test for you budding archaeologists! Think like a real time detective archaeologist and investigate the evidence you will find on this page.

Here is a game to play and a competition to enter. There are 4 bags from different periods in the past. They have been abandoned in the Left Luggage department at a railway station. All you have to do is to answer the following questions to stand a chance of winning one of 3 special 'Time Detectives' poster game packs. This game is just one of those featured in these packs. The games were devised by Mike Corbishley, drawn by Dai Owen and published by English Heritage.



Answer the questions on the opposite page and send them, with your name, age and address, to the Colchester Archaeological Trust, 1 2 Lexden Road, Colchester, Essex, C03 3NF. The first 3 correct answers out of our hat are the winners!

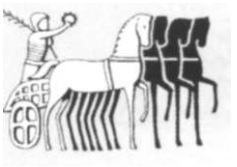
Closing date is 1 st October 2002.

ggage game

archaeology for young people

by Mike Corbishley
of English Heritage Education

The Friends of Colchester Archaeological Trust



Pictures

Below right: (top) Friends at the Castle and (bottom) at the Bartlow Hills.

The most popular events of the year were both in Colchester. One was at the former St Mary's hospital and the other at Colchester Castle.

A large group took the chance to visit the excavations at the former St Mary's hospital site. They were able to see the remains of the puzzling water-channels, and how they related to the lie of the land, which is helpful when trying to understand what they were for.

Colchester Castle has been the subject of intense study over the past few years, and some new discoveries have been made as a result of this. The idea of the visit to the castle was to give the Friends a chance to examine the building in more detail than is normally possible in a tour, and give them an insight into some of the as yet-unsolved mysteries surrounding the building and its development. The tour was a bit of a marathon, lasting two and a quarter hours, but just about everybody managed to last the course. The maximum number on any one tour was fixed at 30, so that the event had to be run three times to accommodate everybody (see picture).

The day trip to Cambridgeshire was much enriched by the presence of Alison Taylor, who was the county archaeologist for many years. Alison seemed to perform the impossible by showing us round the Roman town of Cambridge in a lively and informative manner, despite there being absolutely nothing of the place to see! The tour concluded with a visit to the Cambridge and County Folk Museum where there was an archaeological exhibition. After Cambridge, we walked around the Iron Age hill fort at Wandlebury, before concluding with a visit to the remarkable Bartlow Hills (see picture).

The annual churches trip found the Friends heading southwards to Greensted, Margarefting and Navestock under the expert guidance of David Andrews from the Essex County Council. The focus of the tour was woodwork.

Harlow Museum was very hospitable. Chris Lydamore, the curator, gave the Friends a tour of St Mary the Virgin church, and took the group to the new museum via Harlow's Roman temple. Chris outlined his plans for the new museum. The collections are currently being moved from Passmores House to what was the stable block of the demolished Mark Hall manor hall. The building has a walled garden divided into sections devoted to various types of plants, some of which are rare. Various reconstructions and experiments are planned for the kitchen garden, including a working hypocaust and a kiln. Chris rounded the day off with tea, which was much appreciated.

Liz Davies and Andy Robertson kindly showed a party of Friends around the excavations at Maltings Lane, Witham, where the County Council's field unit are excavating the site of a farmstead of late Iron Age and Roman date. The site is very large and will be dug over several years as areas become available.

The new bench overlooking the remains of the church and the information board, beside the police station at Maldon Road roundabout.

Rest a while...

The Friends of CAT donated a seat to the people of Colchester to mark the beginning of the new millennium. The seat is at the Butt Road Roman church, which the Trust laid out as a public monument in 1990 with the aid of a grant from the Essex County Council.

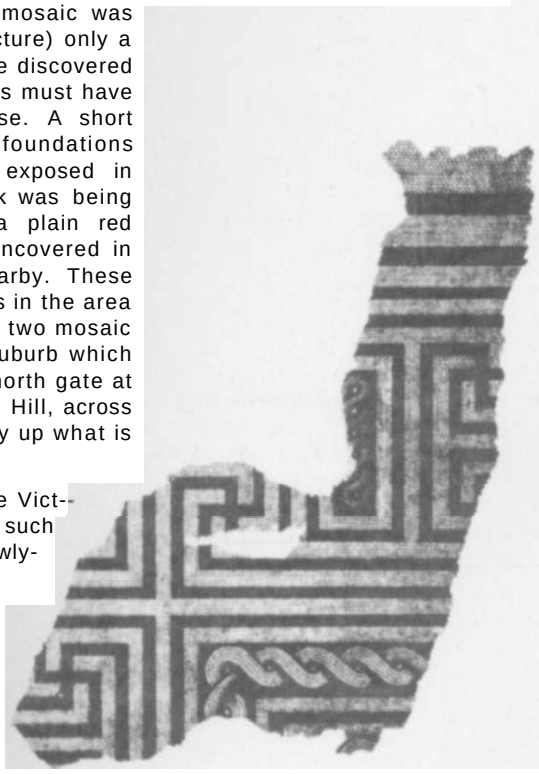
Earlier discoveries near the Victoria Inn

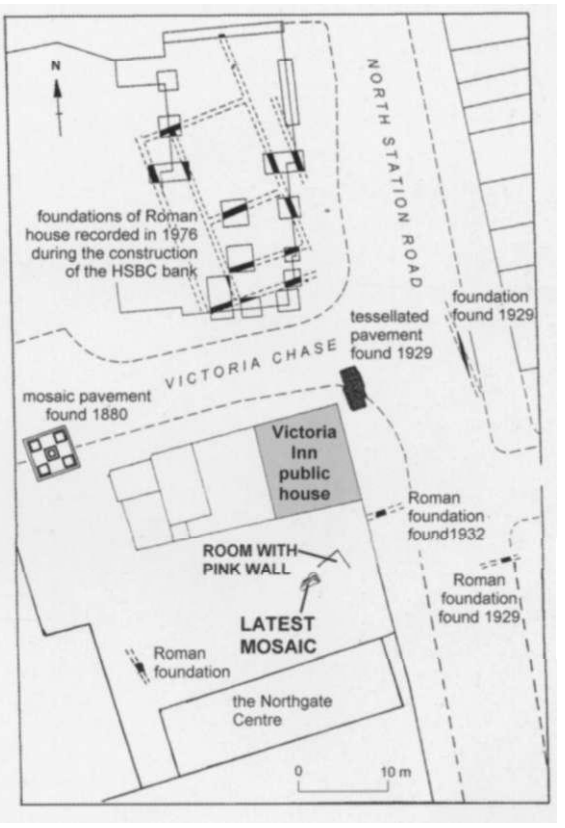
This is not the first Roman mosaic to be found in the vicinity of North Station Road. A black and white mosaic was discovered in 1880 (see picture) only a few yards away from the one discovered in 2001. The two pavements must have belonged to a grand house. A short distance to the north, the foundations of a Roman house were exposed in 1976 when the HSBC bank was being constructed, and part of a plain red tessellated pavement was uncovered in 1929 in the pavement nearby. These and various other discoveries in the area show that the house with the two mosaic floors was part of a large suburb which extended from the Roman north gate at the foot of the modern North Hill, across the River Colne and half-way up what is now North Station Road.

The new building beside the Victoria Inn is to be designed in such a way as to leave the newly-found mosaic undisturbed.

The archaeological investigation at the Victoria Inn was commissioned and funded by Glenn Carter and the Harding Brothers.

Below: drawing of the 1880 mosaic.





Mosaic found at the Victoria Inn

More Roman mosaic pavements have been uncovered in Colchester than in any other town in Britain. Despite being relatively common in Colchester, the discovery of a decorated pavement is always of great interest and value. And so it proved to be in North Station Road where, behind the Victoria Inn pub., a black and white mosaic was uncovered as part of a preliminary archaeological investigation prior to redevelopment. The investigation consisted of cutting four small trenches, three at the rear of the plot and one close to the North Station Road frontage.

The three trenches at the rear showed that there had been a lot of disturbance in the past, caused simply by people digging large holes in the plot over the last few centuries. However, one Roman masonry wall did survive, but this was at such a depth as to be safe from the proposed building work. The initial interest lay in what appeared to be a free-standing piece of Roman pink mortar wall (*opus signinum*). The lining proved to be the remains of a room with a sunken floor. Nothing like this has been found before in Colchester, and it is hard to imagine what purpose the room served. The remains of demolished clay walls and fragments of painted wall-plaster show that the room was not wholly utilitarian. Roman pink mortar is often used in bath-houses, so the room might be part of a bath-suite in the house.

See inside back cover for more details.

Pictures
Top: the Victoria Inn.
Left: part of a Roman mosaic floor and the *opus signinum* structure. This area of mosaic was patched with tile in three places.
Above: cleaning the mosaic.
Below: some of the fragments of painted Roman wall-plaster. Imagine how vividly coloured the rooms must have been – the colours are typical of Roman houses.

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