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## 11. THE TEMPLES OF ROMAN COLCHESTER

Philip Crummy

By Romano-British standards, the known temples of Colchester comprise a large and varied group of religious buildings. These include the massive Classical-style Temple of Claudius, seven Romano-Celtic temples, one, perhaps two, small rectangular temples and a possible martyrium. The temples at Sheepen and Gosbecks form parts of important native sanctuaries on the sites of the two key centres of pre-Roman occupation. The distribution of the four, perhaps five, temples at Sheepen indicates that probably more temples are still to be found on the site and that here was a Tempelbezirk of substantial proportions. At Gosbecks, the elaborate and large temple precinct and its associated theatre point to an important religious focus of the Trinovantes in post-Conquest times (Fig. 11.1).

To outline adequately present knowledge and interpretations of these buildings and their precincts would take up much more space than is available here and therefore only brief summaries are given, the emphasis being on unpublished aspects. A consolidated bibliography for the temples is given at the end of the article. The numbering system is an extension of Lewis's (1966

### The Temple of Claudius (Figs. 11.2 to 11.5

The existence of a large podium of a Classical style temple associated within the base of Colchester castle keep was first recognised by R. E. M. Wheeler and P. G. Laver who jointly described the discovery in their report on Roman Colchester (JRS 9 (1919), 145-7). A year later Wheeler published a further note (again in JRS) in which he suggested that the temple was that described by Tacitus as erected in honour of the deified Claudius. These works of Wheeler and Laver provided the basis for the account of the remains contained in the R.C.H.M. volume published in 1922.

The first plans of the temple podium were very inaccurate—wildly so—but some small trenches dug within the keep during the 1920s by Laver enabled a much clearer picture to emerge. In particular, the relationships were established between the Norman keep and the four sides of the podium. This work formed the basis of Hull's detailed and thorough description of the remains in his Roman Colchester published in 1958.

The podium of the Temple of Claudius (Fig. 11.2.1) measures approximately 32 x 23.5 m and has a shallow, thoroughly robbed foundation to the south which formed the base of a flight of steps. The podium contained two long and two short so-called 'vaults'. These had been filled with sand and although we shall here continue to refer to them as vaults, they were never 'vaults' as such; they were simply the largest areas of the podium which were not load-bearing and therefore needed to be neither deeply founded nor

indeed of solid stone. The vaults were a by-product of a method of construction designed to reduce the volume of building materials required for the podium by over a third. The stone used was septaria which had to be brought from the Essex coast, possibly from the Harwich area, more than 15 miles away. Thus the vaults enabled a considerable saving in building costs, both in terms of stone requirements and labour on site.

The walls of the vaults contain the impressions of the timbers used to shore the foundation trenches and the sand fill of the vaults (Fig. 11.4). Excavation is required to discover the precise process by which the podium was erected, but a few points are clear. The fill of the vaults was the sand which probably derived from the great foundation trenches. Sand was a suitable filling agent since, provided it is adequately compressed when laid, it will compact little with time or further pressure. The impressions of horizontal timbers on the inner faces of the vault walls show as a series of flat surfaces offset to one another. The planks were not centred as if to form free-standing semi-circular vaults but instead were placed against the bank of sand forming the fill of the vaults. Only one row of planks was required at any one time. These were placed on edge, end to end, and sand was heaped up and compacted behind. When the desired number of courses of stones had been laid and the mortar set (the number of courses being apparently haphazard), the planks were removed. More sand was heaped on the bank, the voids left by the planks filled and the process repeated again. Each plane in the walls thus represents one stage in the erection of the podium and at least one day's work, since the mortar had to set before the next stage could start. As the vaults approach their apices, the plank impressions disappear since presumably here the stones and mortar were laid directly on the compacted bank of sand.

The existence of the vaults is fortunate because these can tell much about the now long-vanished superstructure of the temple. The first published reconstruction (Fig. 11.5A) is to be found in Lewis 1966 (180, fig. 59). This was based on Hull's assessment of the temple which, although never published by him, is embodied in the well-known model made for the 'Empire Fair' held in Colchester in 1930 and now on display in the Colchester and Essex Museum (Pi. 11.1).

The most obvious objection to this plan is the placing of columns over the two small vaults. This is counter to the basic principle inherent in the vaults, namely that these were in non-load-bearing parts of the podium. Another defect is the width of the southern wall. Although not known exactly, the approximate width was made clear in a section dug by Laver in 1931 (Hull, 1958, 168, fig. 85). It was only slightly narrower than the north wall, the difference of about 0.2 m being explicable by the presence of external mouldings in all but the south side of the podium. A third objection is the treatment of the northern end of the flanking porticoes. The temple was not peripteral on all four sides since there was no portico along the back; the narrow width of the rear wall of the podium makes this clear. But an open end as shown here is most unlikely and parallels from elsewhere would point to the closed rear-wall type of temple (e.g. The Temple of Mars Ultor in Rome or the group of three temples at the Old Forum at Lepcis Magna).

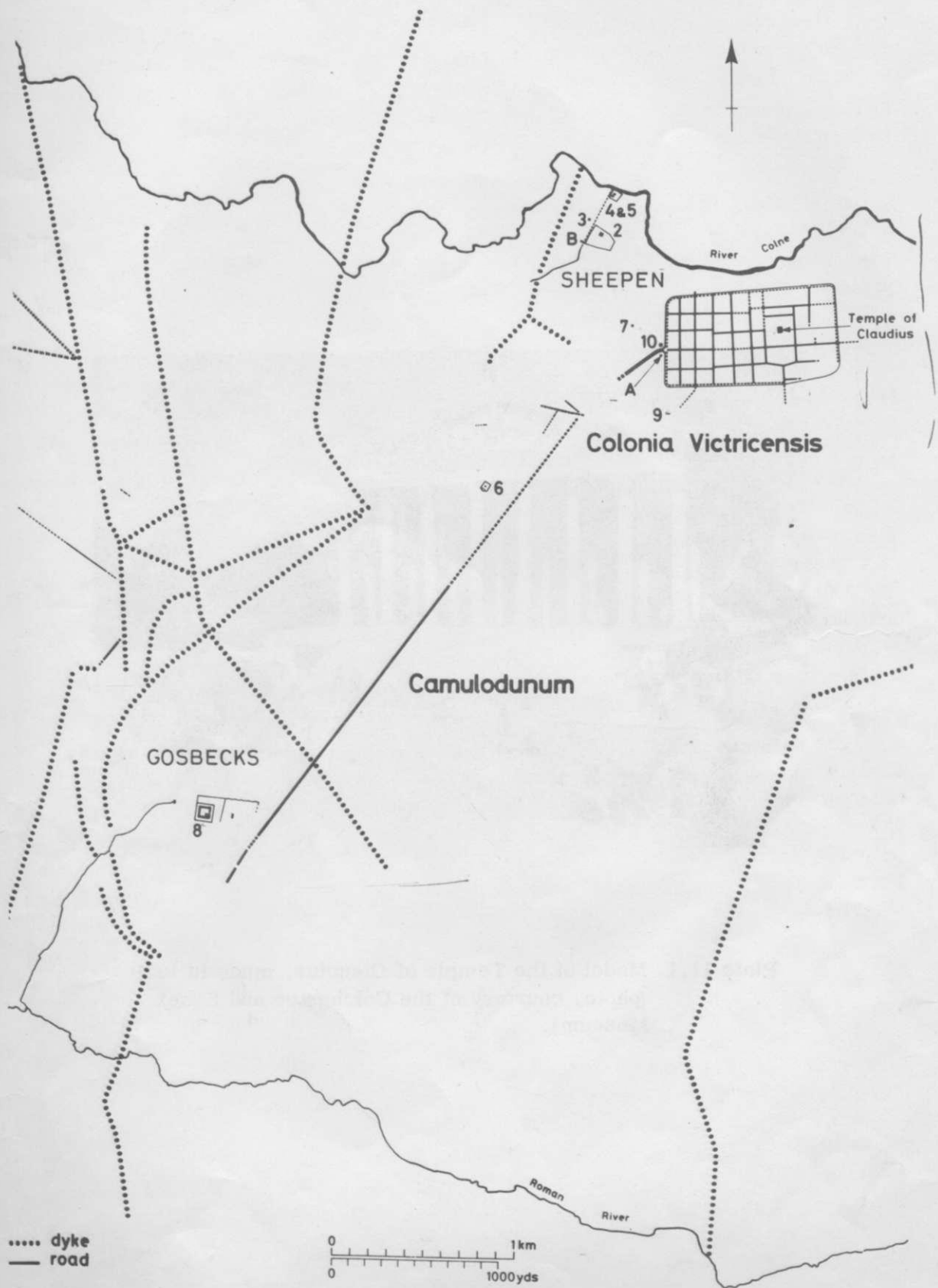


Fig. 11.1 The location of the temples of Camulodunum and Colonia Victricensis.



Plate 11.1 Model of the Temple of Claudius, made in 1930 (photo, courtesy of the Colchester and Essex Museum).

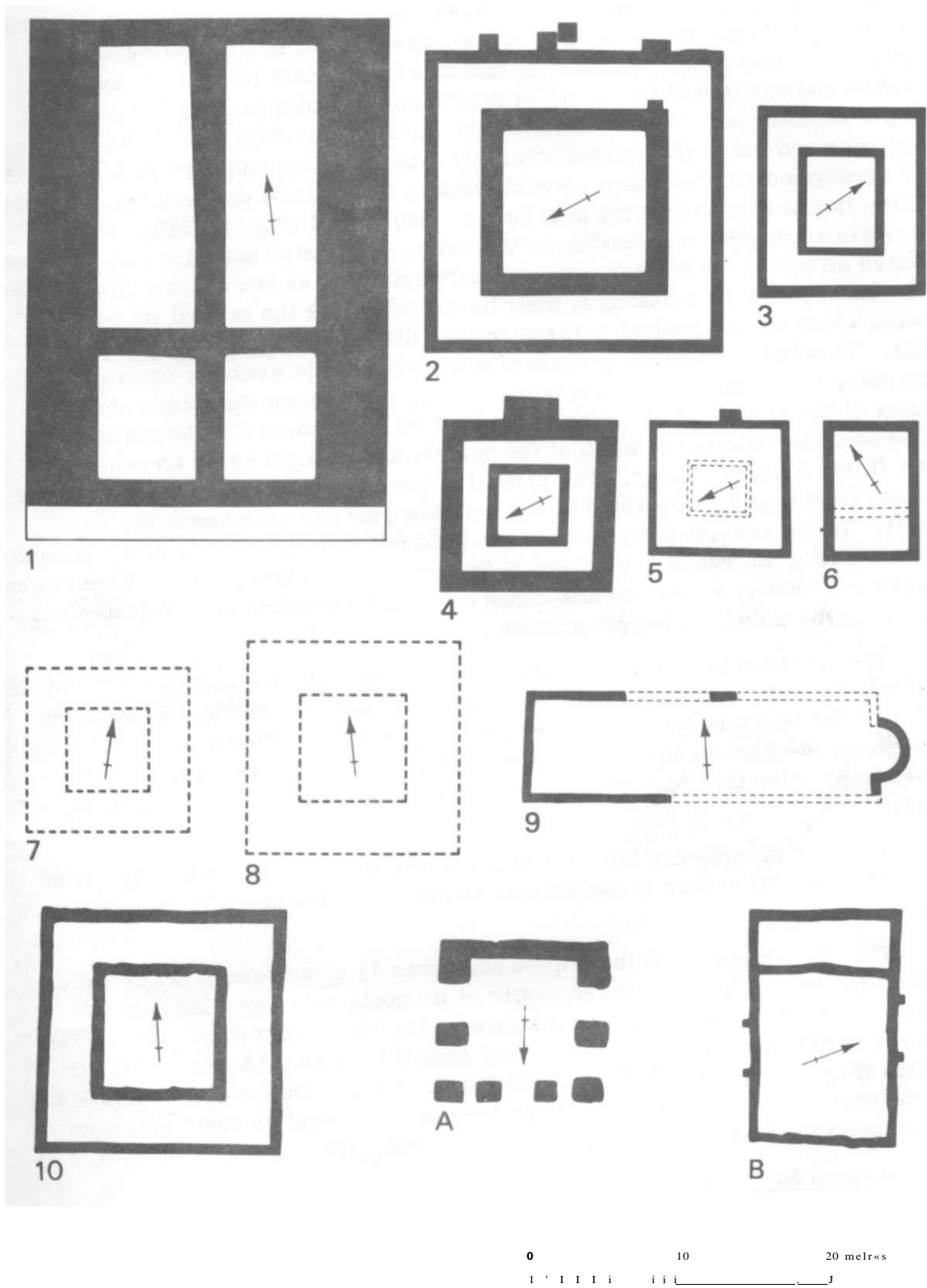


Fig. 11. 2 The plans of the temples of Colchester to a common scale.

Theoretically, it ought to be possible to reconstruct the superstructure of the temple reliably, but the main difficulty is that there is as yet no accurate survey of the podium. That the temple was octastyle is beyond doubt. Not only is the size of the podium such that this is the most likely style but the widths and position of the vaults in relation to the solid parts of the podium leave no other possibility. However the intercolumniation and widths of the columns and walls are problematic. By experimenting on paper with a variety of arrangements, the Eustyle would seem to fit the most comfortably, although since the fit is not exact the plan here is conjectural (Fig. 11.5B). The Eustyle arrangement according to Vitruvius, who stated that this was favoured above all others, was where the intercolumniation was two and a quarter times the diameter of the columns at their bases except for the central intercolumniation which was equivalent to three column diameters (*De Architectural* III, iii). Thus the width of the podium of a Eustyle temple would be equivalent to 25 column diameters.<sup>1</sup> On the basis of this, the column diameters along the front of the Temple of Claudius would be 0.94 m or about 3.2 Roman feet.<sup>^</sup> However the ratio of the width of the podium to its length as we know it does not fit the Eustyle exactly. The closest column diameter along the side to that of the front would be provided by ten columns plus one attached to the rear wall. This gives a column width of not 0.94 m but 0.92 m or about 3.1 Roman feet. These two results, 0.92 and 0.94, are so close that perhaps if the dimensions were better known the difference between them might be eliminated and the case for a Eustyle temple proven.

We may note that in its proportions the *cella* conforms exactly to Vitruvian principles, i.e. its length is one and a quarter times its width, including the walls. But this was not the case with the *pronaos* which was supposed to be in length three-quarters the width of the *cella* (*De Architectural* IV, iv). However in practice this was not often followed elsewhere (e.g. Morgan, 1960, 115).

There is no evidence for the number of the steps or their flanking walls. The reconstruction here is conjectural and based on the size of the foundations alone.

The precinct in which the temple stood was 4j *actus* square (Fig. 11.3; Crummy, 1977; fig. 12). In the centre of its south side was a monumental gate almost half of which has been uncovered by excavation (Hull, 1958, 171). On either side of this was a monumental arcade built on a 15-foot wide foundation (Fig. 11.6; Hull, 1958, 172; Hebditch, 1971). On the other three sides of the precinct, fragments of walls indicate a much smaller scale arrangement of presumably rooms and colonnades (Hull, 1958, 177-9).

#### The Sheepen Sanctuary (Fig. 11.7)

##### a) Temple 2 (Figs. 11.2. 11.3 and 11.8)

Temple 2 is very large, measuring about 60 ft square, and, like the other three at Sheepen, showed as a slight mound before excavation. The temple was discovered in 1935 and excavated by M. R. Hull whose detailed report of the work appeared in *Roman Colchester* (Hull, 1958, 224-33). The walls of Temple 2 were of stone and mortar. The upper floor levels had all



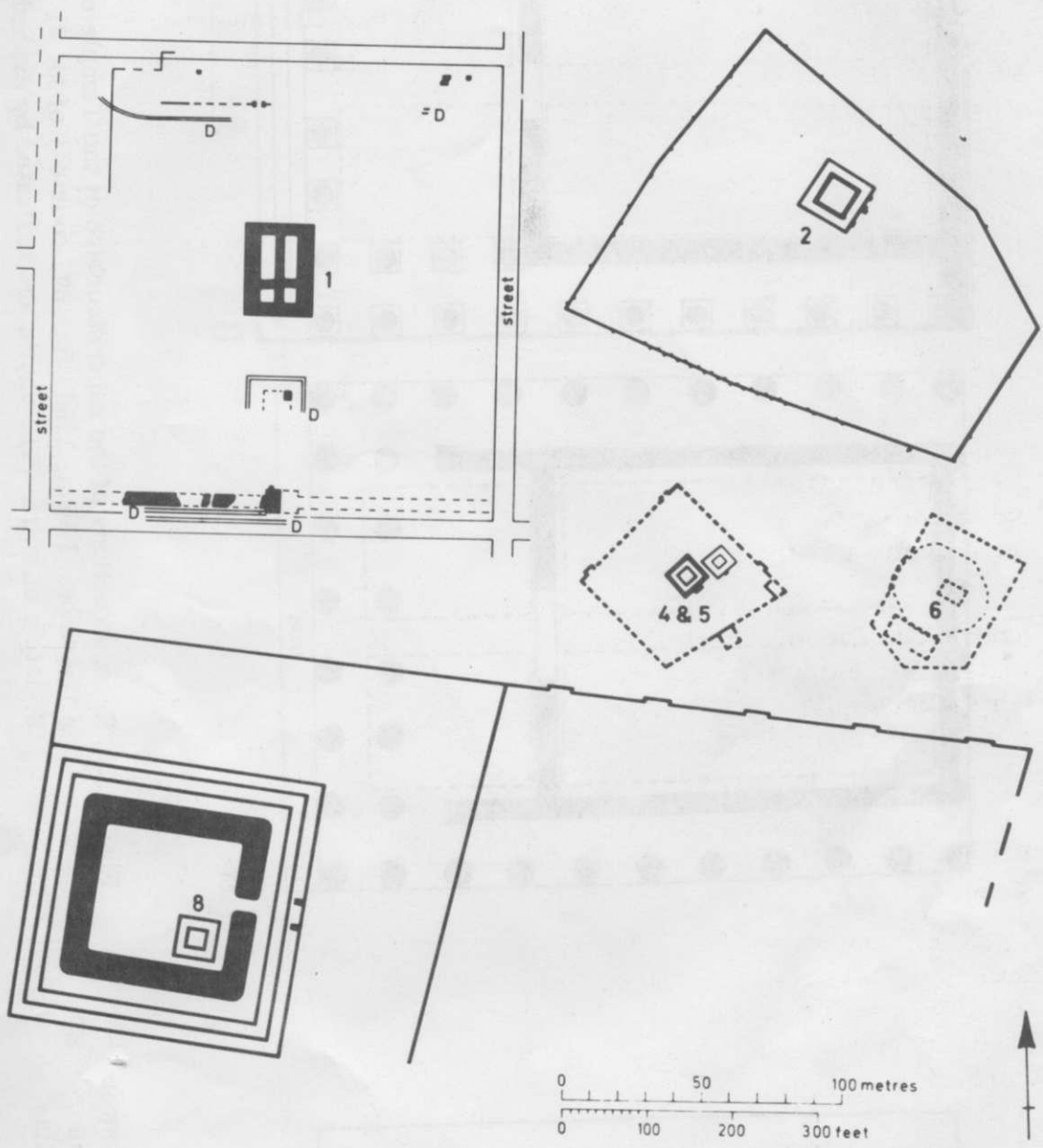
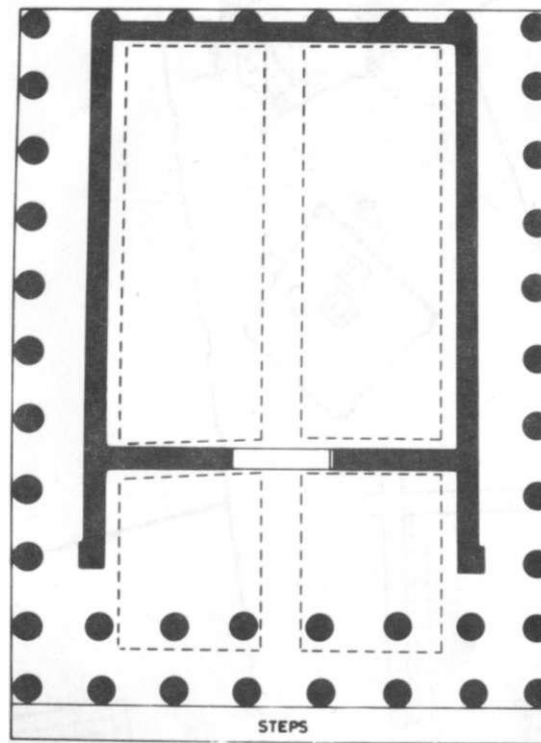
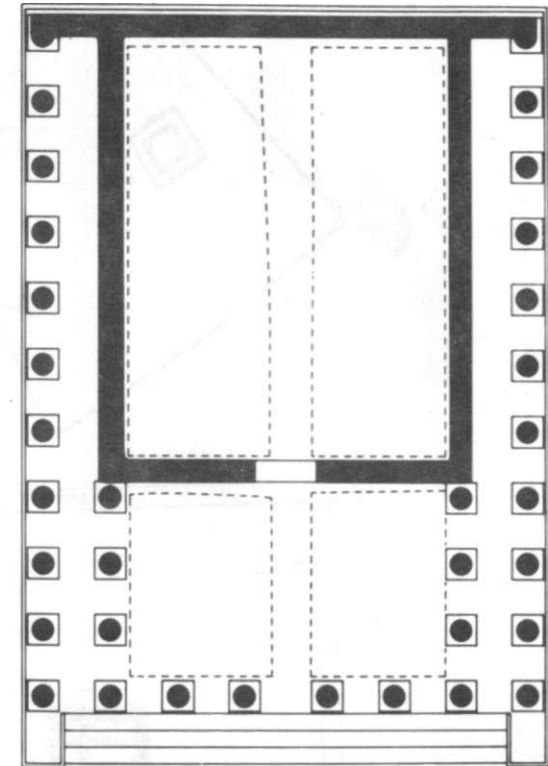


Fig. 11.3 The precincts of the temples of Colchester to a common scale.



A



B

0 5 10 metres

Fig. 11.4 Plank impressions in the 'vaults' of the Temple of Claudius (Temple 1).

Fig. 11.5 Reconstructions of the superstructure of the Temple of Claudius: A. source: Lewis, 1966, fig. 59, courtesy of M. J. T. Lewis; B. latest attempt. The vaults are indicated by dashed lines.

Fig. 11.6 Reconstruction of the southern facade of the precinct of the Temple of Claudius. The plan as shown is based on excavation but details of the superstructure are hypothetical. (Drawing by Peter Froste.)

been destroyed because of erosion but loose tesserae point to mosaic and tessellated pavements. Along the east side was found a series of plinths attached externally to the wall of the ambulatory and a complex sequence of layers and slots.

The dating evidence recovered was meagre; a coin of Domitian was found in the make-up of the temple indicating at the earliest a late first-century date for its construction, whilst three late coins, well stratified in the gravel layers to the east, point to maintenance of the area until at least 333.

The published plan of the temple shows it as being markedly irregular. Hull comments on this in his report and gives measurements to support this conclusion. But in the Colchester Museum there is another plan neatly annotated with measurements which suggests a much more regular layout (Fig. 11.8). Why Hull should have rejected this is puzzling and we must view this unpublished plan with caution.

Temple 2 lay within a large enclosure, 3 acres in size, which was surrounded by a wall about 1500 ft (460 m) in length (Fig. 11.3.2 and 11.7). On average the wall was two feet wide and had buttresses, alternately inside and out, set on average 8 ft 6 ins apart, centre to centre. The wall was traced by digging a series of trenches and thus the pattern of buttresses shown in the plan only reflects the areas of the wall that were examined; no doubt there was at least one entrance, and a regular distribution of buttresses all round the circuit. The buttresses must indicate that the wall was tall in relation to its relatively narrow width and point to the need for quiet and seclusion within the sacred enclosure.

A plaque (*Britannia* 7 (1977), 427), found within the precinct in 1976, indicates that Jupiter was worshipped in the temple.

b) Temple 3 (Figs. 11.2 and 11.7)

Temple 3 was discovered and excavated in the same year as Temple 2 and is dealt with in the same report (Hull, 1958, 233-4). Circumstances permitted only limited excavation and, as Hull points out, our knowledge of the building is therefore restricted and imprecise. Temple 3 was trenched obliquely and an area opened along its south-east side where a gravelled path was found apparently leading from an entrance. The building was rectangular in shape with the walls of the cella and ambulatory of similar width. No floor levels survived and indeed all the layers remaining appeared to predate the construction of the temple. Hull thought that the temple had been built on a mound datable to the third century or later, but gives almost no details. The foundations do not everywhere penetrate this mound, a fact which reinforces the suggestion that the two are not contemporary.

c) Temples 4 and 5 (Figs. 11.2, 11.3, 11.7 and 11.9)

For Temples 4 and 5, I am indebted to Mr. Bryan Blake who provided me with notes, plans and slides before his forthcoming full publication of the results of excavation. The following is Mr. Blake's provisional interpretation of his discoveries.

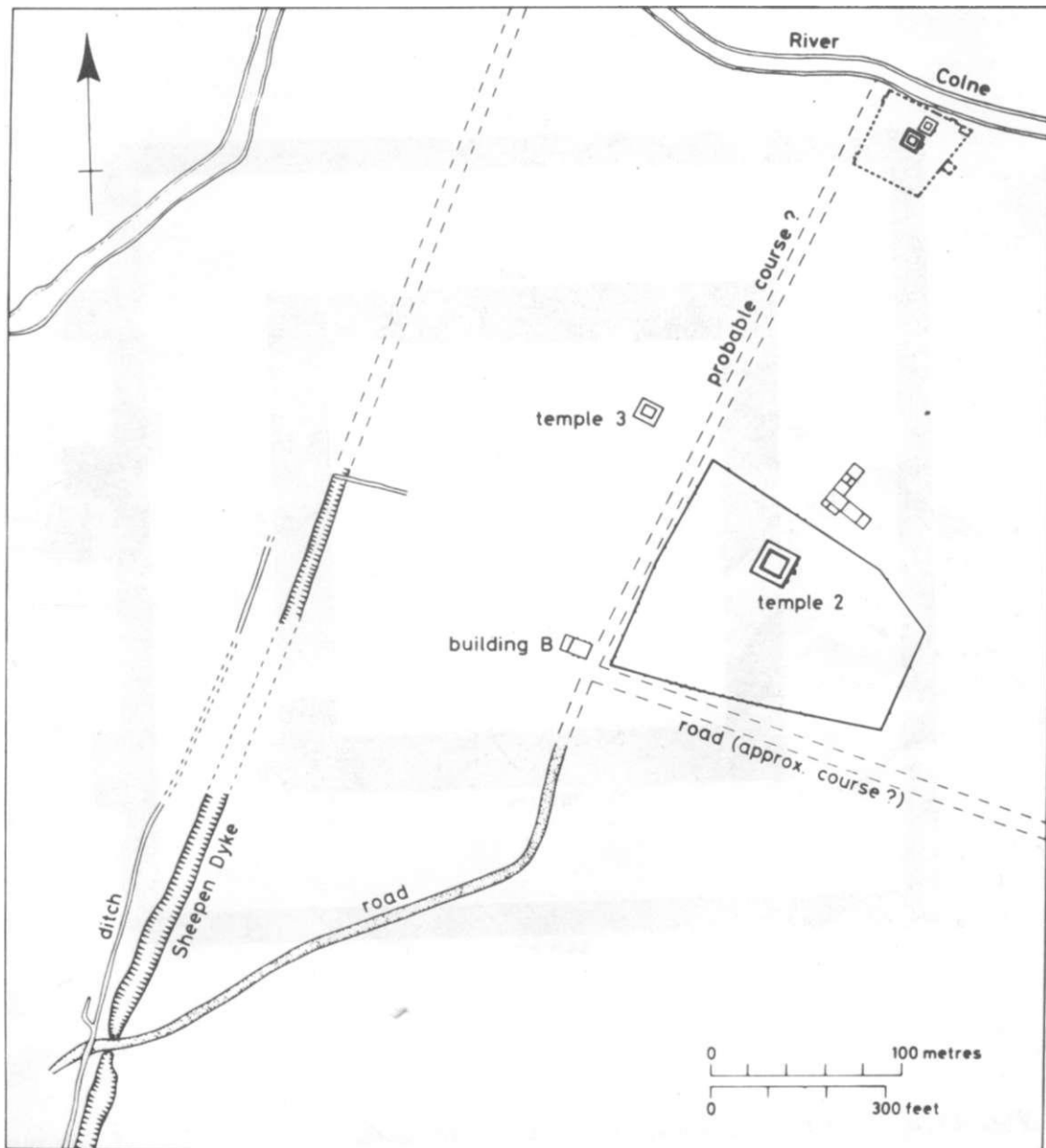


Fig. 11.7 The Sheepen sanctuary. (The back-filling of the Sheepen Dyke and the adjacent ditch probably both pre-date the development of the sanctuary.)

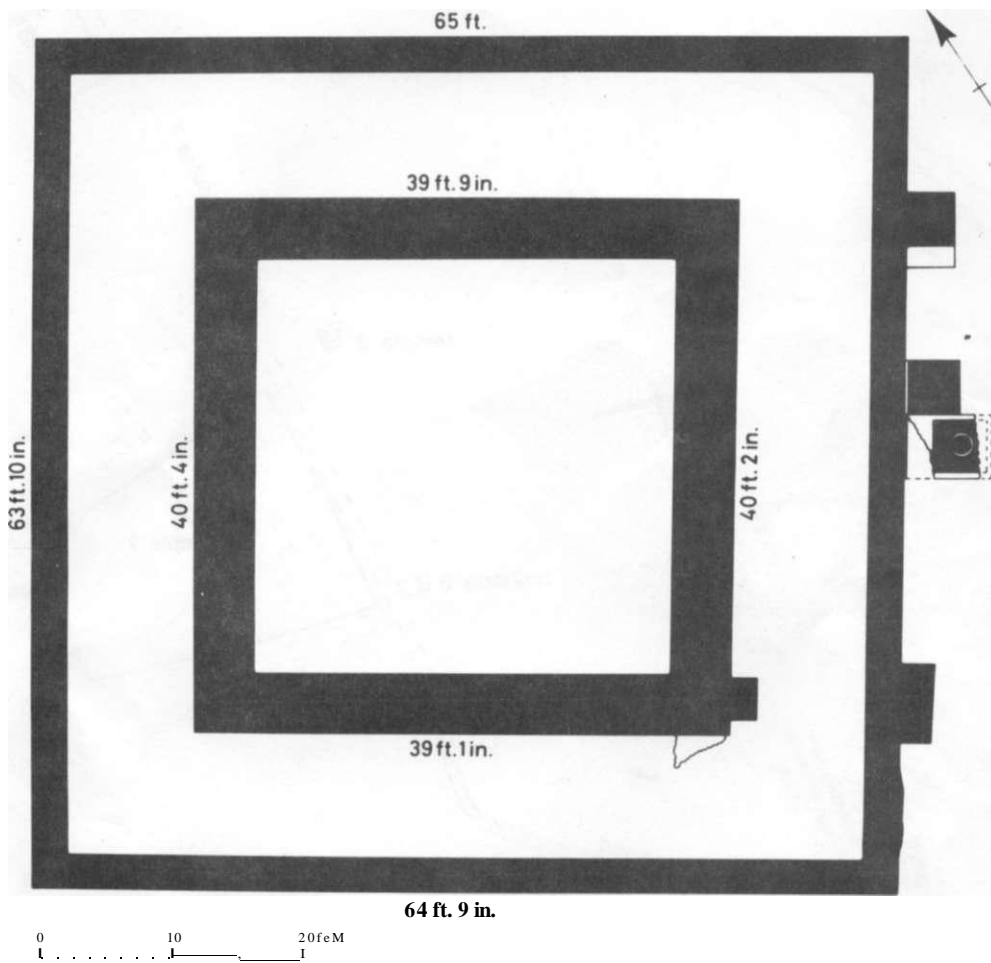
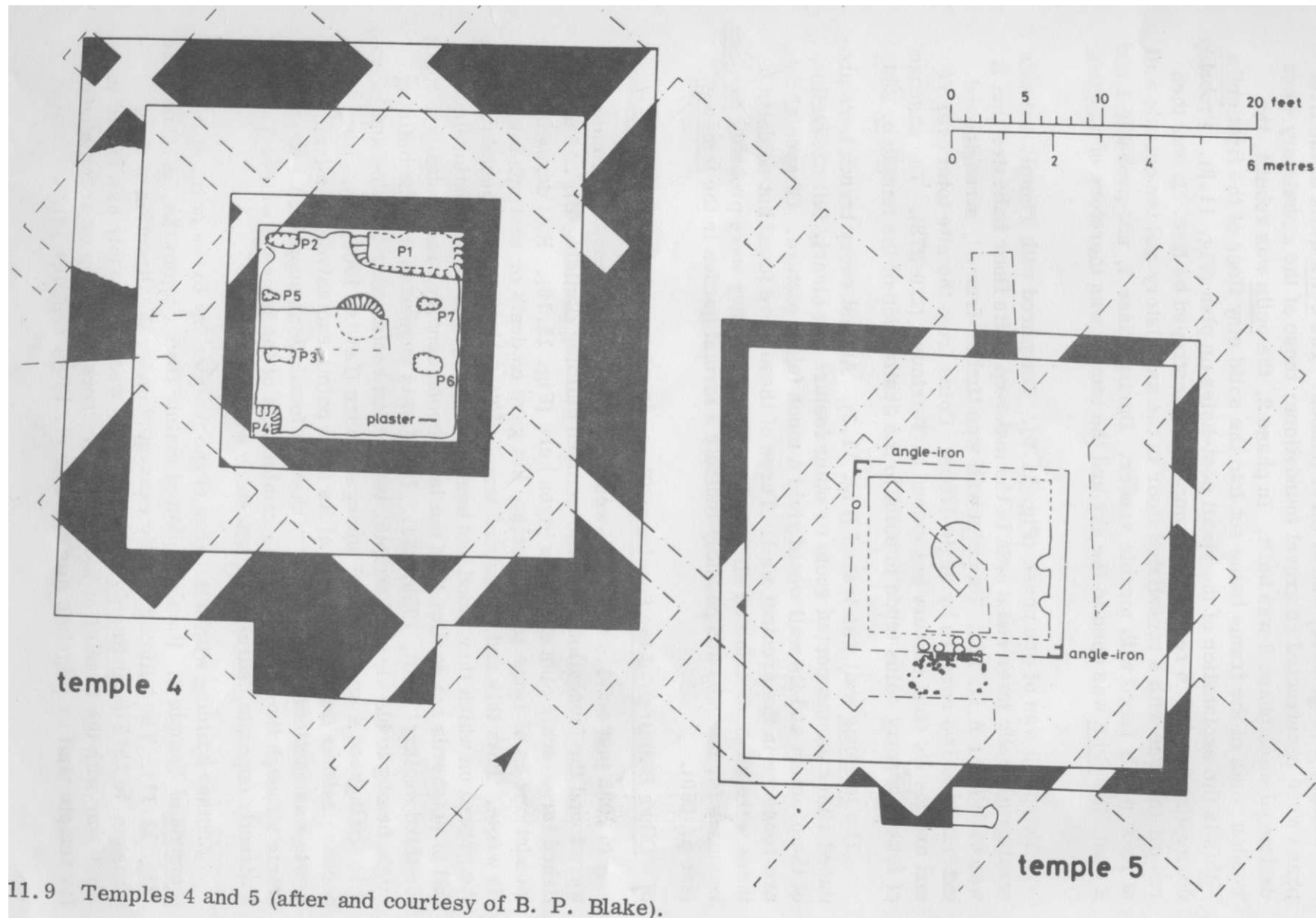


Fig. 11.8 The second version, hitherto unpublished, of the plan of Temple 2 (simplified). (Courtesy of the Colchester and Essex Museum.)



11.9 Temples 4 and 5 (after and courtesy of B. P. Blake).

Temple 4 (Fig. 11.9) was of three phases. The cella walls of the first phase were constructed on gravel foundations; those of the ambulatory were destroyed when phase 3 was built. In phase 2, the cella was rebuilt, the wooden posts of the frame being set into the solid clay floor of the first cella—this is the explanation of the small post-holes on plan (Fig. 11.9). Probably during the Boudiccan revolt, the temple was destroyed by fire. It was then rebuilt in stone with a tessellated floor in the ambulatory and the outside wall at least partly faced with marble veneer. During phase 3, and probably 1 and 2 also, the cella was open to the sky and the temple was therefore of Lewis's type III.

Temple 5 was of one phase (Fig. 11.9). Compared with Temple 4 it was stratigraphically later and a coin in the make-up of its floor indicates that it was built after A.D. 183. Its cella wall was timber-framed, strengthened externally at two corners by angle-irons. Coins from the site total over 70 and are mainly first century but extend to Tetricus I (270-273). The absence of fourth-century coins tends to point to the destruction of the temple c. 300.

The temenos wall was traced (Fig. 11.3). Almost every trench here produced either an unexpected room or other feature and clearly full excavation of the precinct and its wall would yield a much fuller picture. Of special note are recesses in the precinct wall. Three of these were found but no doubt there were more distributed all round the circuit. They were probably exedrae, recesses for benches and possibly indicate a formal garden in the temenos (seep. 260).

d) Other Buildings of the Sanctuary (Figs. 11.7, 11.10 and 11.11)

In 1935 just outside the south-west corner of the temenos of Temple 2 were found the foundations of a two-roomed building (Building B). An unpublished large-scale plan of this is given here (Fig. 11.10). Hull described the foundations as of rough pitched stone, but gave no depth or sections for them. He wrote, 'Both this and the second temple [Temple 3] had not been built until the ground on which they stood had been covered by a dark occupation-level full of potsherds not earlier than the late second century, and probably actually the third century' (Hull, 1958, 224). Dr. Lewis suggested that the building might belong to his class of simple, two-celled rectangular temples and likened it to Springhead 4 and Trier 26 amongst others (Lewis, 1966, 78). However, because neither its plan nor any of its finds points exclusively to a temple, Lewis was cautious. Hull believed that the foundations supported a wooden frame although the buttresses, so reminiscent of the temenos wall of Temple 2 directly opposite, surely indicate stone walls.

Another building within the area of the temples lay to the north of the temenos of Temple 2. Its plan, plotted mainly from cropmarks, is incomplete (Fig. 11.11). The building, partly excavated under the direction of Carl Crossan in 1975-6 (Britannia 8 (1977), 407), was presumably associated in some way with the running of the sanctuary, such as a shop or accommodation for temple staff or pilgrims (for example cf. Uley, Chapter 15).



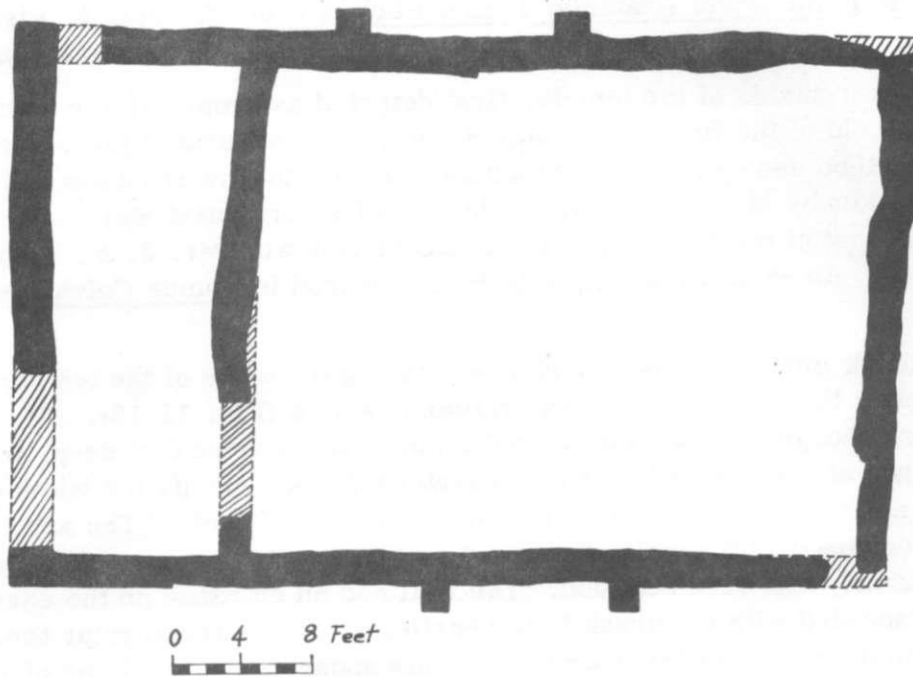


Fig. 11.10 Plan of two-roomed building (Building B) at Sheepen.  
(Courtesy of the Colchester and Essex Museum.)

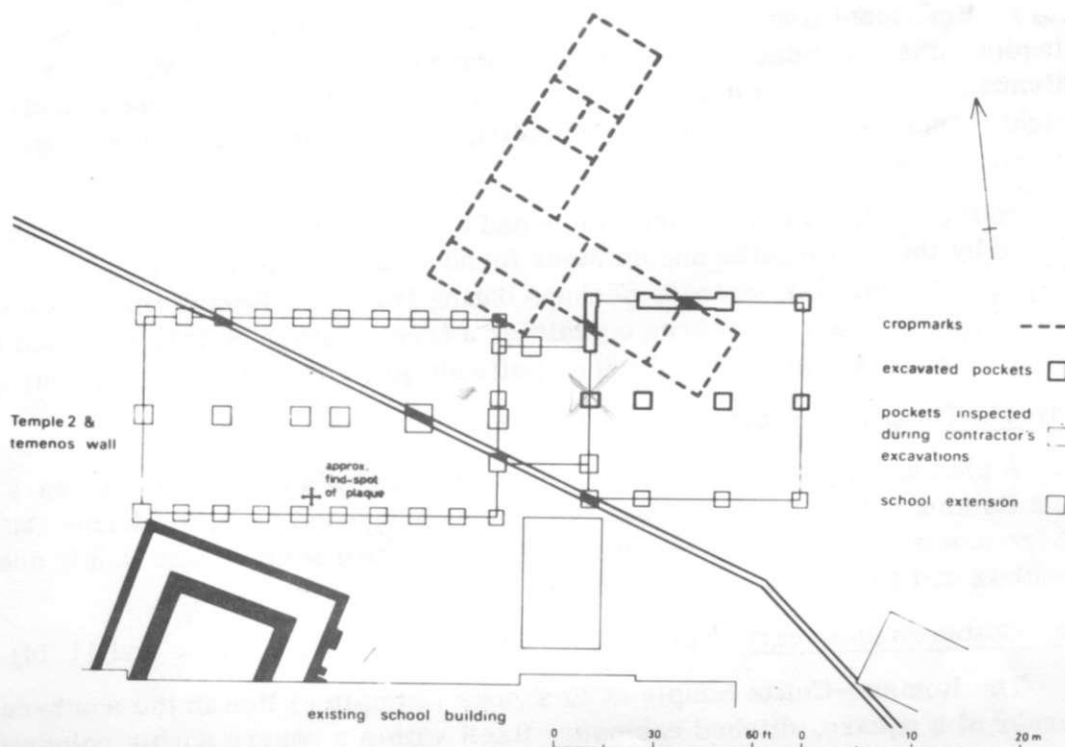


Fig. 11.11 Plan of Roman building at St. Helen's School.

Temple in the Royal Grammar School Playing Field (Temple 6; Figs. 11.2, 11.3 and 11.12)

The remains of the temple, first detected as cropmarks in 1938 in the rugby field of the Royal Grammar School, were excavated just after the war. The method used was a limited number of long narrow trenches and the work undertaken by Mr. A. F. Hall of the school's permanent staff and a local archaeologist of much experience, in association with Mr. J. F. Elam, the headmaster. An excavation report by Hull appeared in Roman Colchester (1958, 236-40).

Great difficulty was experienced tracing the walls of the temple and consequently the plan produced was rather tentative (Fig. 11.12). The earliest feature recognised was a polygonal ditch, almost three feet deep, with an entrance at the east side. The excavators did not specify the width of the ditch and were able to trace its course only imprecisely. The area had later been enclosed with a wall, swung out on the west to preserve the ditch which presumably had been retained. The wall had an entrance on the east side that corresponded with the break in the earlier ditch. A rectangular temple was built in the centre of the enclosure. This apparently had a floor of rammed soil which extended outside it and prompted Hull to postulate the possible existence of a timber verandah. Hull also suggested that perhaps the temple had been subdivided into two compartments by a north-south wall so that a square cella was formed with a narrow portico to the east. But there was no evidence of this. The southern building apparently had a wide entrance in its south wall and was taken by Hull to be an assembly hall. The only stratified datable objects reported are two coins, one of Domitian and the other of Hadrian. Three significant finds were made, namely a small bronze stag and two bronze plaques, one dedicated to Silvanus by a slave or freedman and the other to Silvanus Callirius by a coppersmith. Lewis suggests that in these objects we might detect a cult associated with hunting (Lewis, 1966; 75; see also Hassall, p. 85).

Hull postulated that at first there had been a timber temple which was replaced by the rectangular one on stone foundations, the ditch having been a palisade trench. But instead, perhaps dating from pre-Roman times, there had simply been a sacred area containing a tree or other feature enclosed and demarcated by the polygonal ditch or palisade (cf. Uley Ellison, p. 306).

Laver's Temple (Temple 7: Fig. 11.2.7)

A plan at 1:2500 by Dr. P. G. Laver exists which shows what appears to be a Romano-Celtic temple about 240 yards north-west of the Balkerne Gate. There are no details but the plan seems to show two squares one inside another about 18 and 35 ft across respectively.^

The Gosbecks Sanctuary (Temple 8; Figs. 11.2.8, 11.3, 11.13 and 11.14)

The Romano-Celtic temple at Gosbecks (Temple 8) lies in the south-east corner of a square, ditched enclosure itself within a square double colonnade, or as Hull termed it 'double portico'.

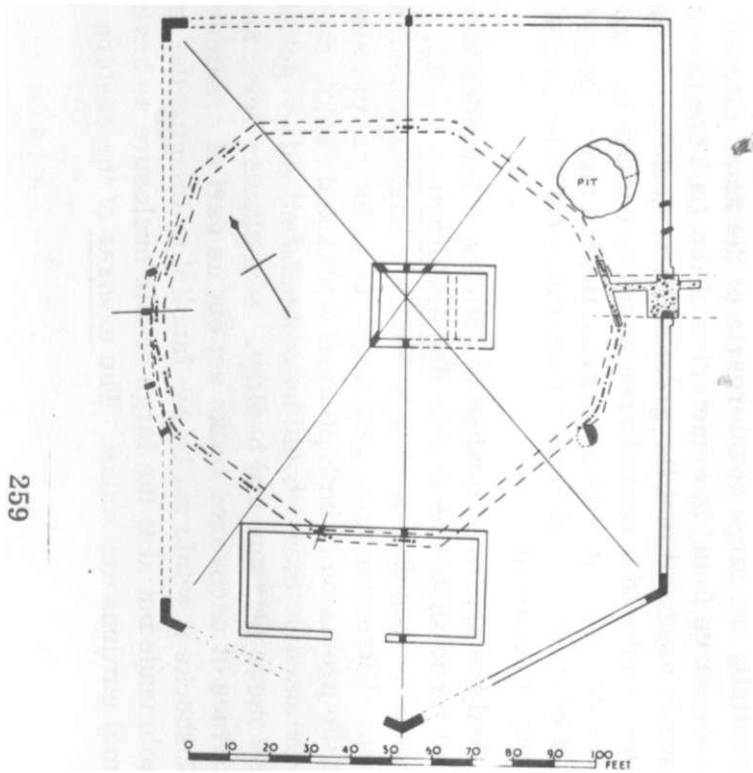


Fig. 11.12 Temple 6. (Hull, 1958, fig. 110; courtesy of the Society of Antiquaries.)

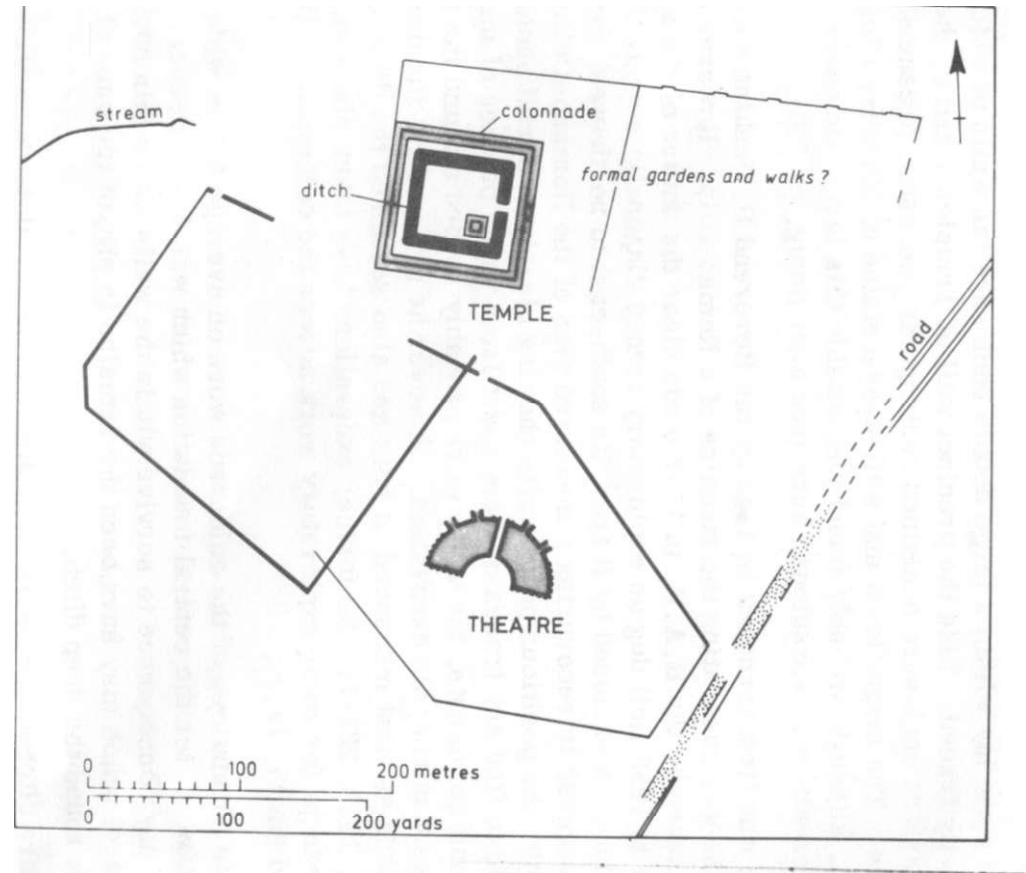


Fig. 11.13 The Gosbecks sanctuary.

The colonnade lay within a large double enclosure the walls of which have only been partly traced. Like the precinct wall of Temples 4 and 5, the north wall of the eastern enclosure contained rectangular recesses, presumably exedrae again. The magnificent and well-known statue of Mercury (Hull, 1958, 264, pi. XL), although probably found just outside this large enclosure, suggests that Mercury was worshipped here (see also Henig, p. 106).

The site was first trenched in 1842 by the Reverend H. Jenkins who thought that he was excavating the remains of a Roman villa. However aerial photographs taken by the R.A.F. in 1932 made clear the nature of the site and consequently in 1936 Hull dug an exploratory trench diagonally across the colonnade and the area enclosed by it from its south-east to north-west corners. Hull had no success in recovering a measured plan of the Romano-Celtic temple for, despite the positions of its walls showing clearly in aerial photographs, he was unable to find any traces of them apart from vague patches of mortar. As Hull himself comments, the walls were probably robbed out and the robber trenches missed during his excavation. However he did confirm the dimensions of the colonnade as first measured in 1842 and also sectioned the ditch in two places (Hull, 1958, 261-7). No further excavations have taken place on the temple site except for some exploratory work across the colonnade in 1977 (Crummy and Smith, 1980).

The three foundations of the colonnade were on average 0.8 m wide and 0.6 m deep except for the central foundation which was 0.4 m deeper. The only layer of any consequence to survive within the walls was a thin patchy spread of gravel which may have been the remains in situ of the base of an external bank round the deep ditch.

The square ditched enclosure is probably to be paralleled with Viereckschanzen found abroad especially in southern Germany (Ztirn, 1971; Schwarz, 1958). These are rectangular sacred areas enclosed by a ditch and bank. They can occur as multiple enclosures, sometimes one within another, and in this respect the Gosbecks enclosures are especially reminiscent.<sup>4</sup> Viereckschanzen are believed to have been used for ritual gatherings, fairs and markets. They are essentially the large counterparts of the small ditched and sometimes banked enclosures found in cemeteries of the La Tene provinces in general. It is usually assumed that the great ditch at Gosbecks is pre-Conquest and originally enclosed a sacred area possibly containing a grove or other feature. However the ditch is so regular in plan and so neatly integrated with the layout of the colonnade that a post-Conquest date for the earthwork cannot be entirely discounted.

Vitruvius described the approved method of building colonnades and explained that in general these should be double (De Architectura V, ix). From his information, it would be possible to reconstruct the Gosbecks colonnade closely along his lines. Vitruvius wrote that since the principal purpose of such structures was the provision of both pleasant walks and shelter from the weather, the areas enclosed by them should be embellished with vegetation to make the environment more pleasant and healthy. In a similar vein, he went on to describe the virtues of uncovered walks set out as part, of ornamental gardens. Thus at Gosbecks it would not be too fanciful to imagine the area within not only the colonnade but also the large double enclosure as having been laid out as formal gardens and walks. The exedrae of the eastern



Fig. 11.14 Gosbecks: plan of cropmarks and buildings.

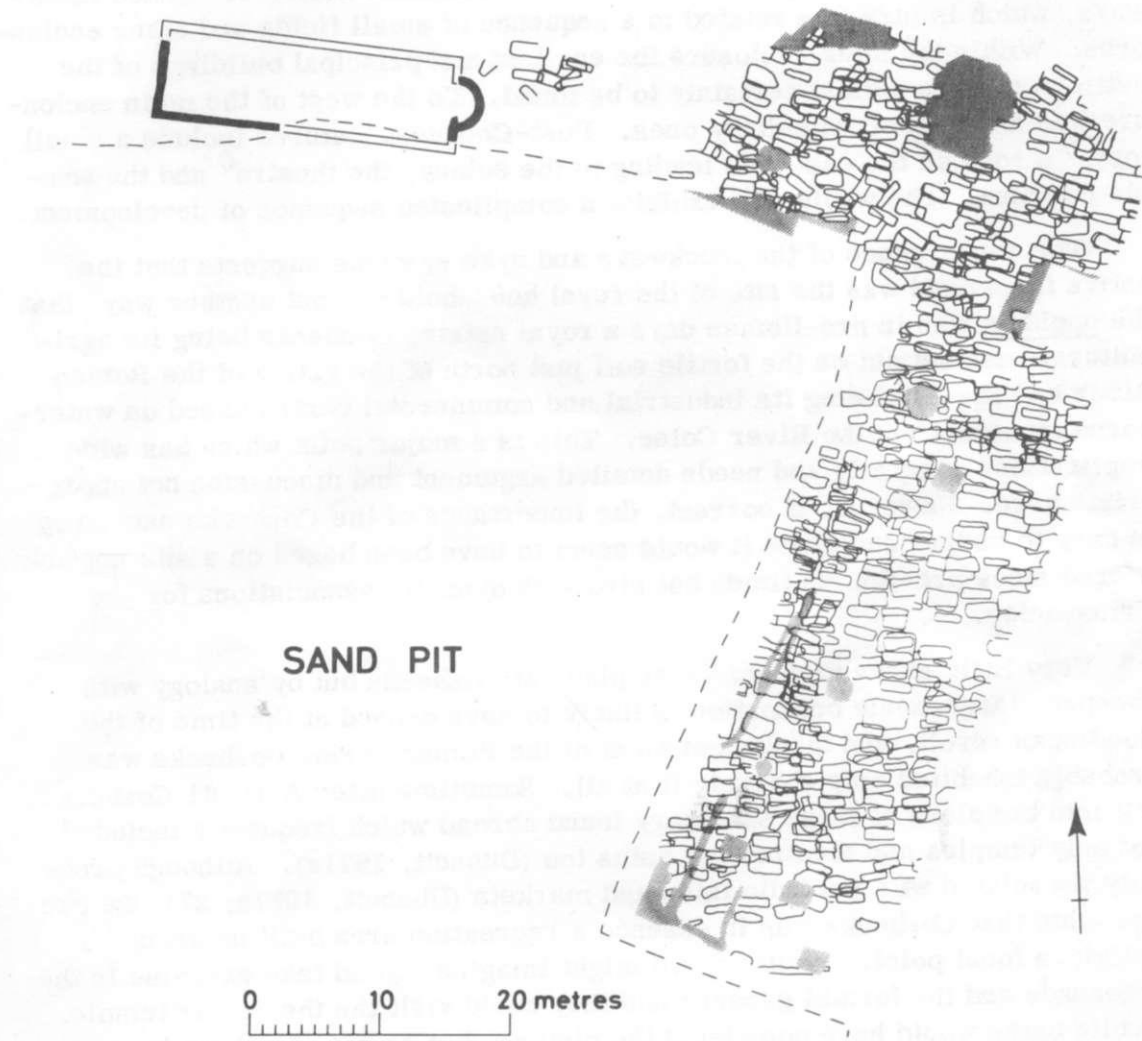


Fig. 11.15 Butt Road cemetery: general site plan (shading indicates largest areas destroyed by later activities).

enclosure are neatly compatible with such an explanation. (Indeed, formal gardens and walks may well have been commonplace in large temple precincts such as those of Colchester's Temple 2 and Temples 4 and 5 where exedrae also occur.)

The dry summers of the mid-1970s enabled detailed plans to be made of the cropmarks at Gosbecks and consequently the nature of the site is now better understood than ever before (Fig. 11.14). The focal point and oldest part of the settlement was a native farmstead. This took the form of a trap-ezoidal enclosure leading from which was an intricate series of ditched trackways, which in turn was related to a sequence of small fields and other enclosures. Within the main enclosure the earliest and principal buildings of the settlement were almost certainly to be found. To the west of the main enclosure was a series of subsidiary ones. Post-Conquest features include a small fort, ^ a road on the east side leading to the colony, the theatre\*\* and the temple complex. The whole site exhibits a complicated sequence of development.

The convergence of the trackways and dyke systems suggests that the native farmstead was the site of the royal household or, put another way, that the oppidum was in pre-Roman days a royal estate, Gosbecks being its agricultural base set out on the fertile soil just north of the valley of the Roman River and Sheepen being its industrial and commercial centre based on waterborne transport via the River Colne. This is a major point which has wide implications generally and needs detailed argument and discussion not appropriate here. However, if correct, the importance of the Gosbecks sanctuary is easy to understand since it would seem to have been based on a site not only sacred since pre-Roman times but also with dynastic associations for the Trinovantes.

Very little excavation has taken place at Gosbecks but by analogy with Sheepen, large-scale occupation is likely to have ceased at the time of the Boudiccan revolt, and throughout most of the Roman period Gosbecks was probably inhabited only sparsely if at all. Sometime after A.D. 61 Gosbecks fell into the class of large sanctuary found abroad which frequently included not only temples and theatres but baths too (Dunnett, 1971a). Although probably associated with periodic fairs and markets (Dunnett, 1971a, 27), we can postulate that Gosbecks was in essence a recreation area built up around a religious focal point. Visitors, we might imagine, could take exercise in the colonnade and the formal gardens and they could visit the theatre or temple. Public baths would have completed the picture, but as yet none have been detected.^

#### Butt Road Building (Temple 9; Figs. 11.2, 11.15, 11.16 and 11.17)

The apsidal building near Butt Road is south-west of the colonia and about 150 m from the town wall. It is orientated with its apse to the east. To the south and east of it is a Roman cemetery area which was discovered in the mid-nineteenth century when, during extensive sand quarrying, over two hundred burials were found (Wire's Diary; Hull, 1958, 256-7).

The apsidal building was first excavated by Hull in 1935, when parts of its stone walls were still standing above ground (Hull, 1958, 245-8). The excavation was confined to near the apse where the principal discovery was a pit

six to seven feet deep. Of this Hull wrote: 'Remains of wood at the bottom showed that it had been shuttered to hold back the soft sand. It was most probably a well. The shaft appeared to be about 3 ft in diameter, so that its wooden shuttering must have been quite narrow. In the mouth, and possibly used to close it, though not really lying level, was a large dressed block of sandstone. It apparently came from the entablature of a building\* (Hull, 1958, 245). The contents of the pit included almost 200 coins, a silver bracelet and ring, a complete second to third-century pot, a 'great quantity\* of birds\* bones, a complete knife, painted wallplaster and fragments of two iron vessels. At the bottom of the pit, below everything else, was most of a human skull and a complete human femur.

In 1965 Miss B. R. K. Dunnett carried out further excavations on the site. Her work took the form of a series of small box-trenches and provided the first plan of the building (Dunnett, 1971b, 78-84).

Recently the building and the adjacent cemetery area have been the scene of extensive excavations in advance of redevelopment (Fig. 11.15). These have been directed for the Colchester Archaeological Trust by Carl Crossan who has kindly supplied information for the following.

Almost without exception, the burials belong to two separate cemeteries, one on top of the other. The later cemetery is the larger and extends beyond the excavated areas on all sides, except on the south where its southern boundary has been found. In all, 620 burials belonging to this cemetery have been excavated. These are orientated with their heads to the west. With few exceptions, grave-goods are restricted to children. The earlier cemetery underlies the later one but does not extend as far east and only a strip 5 m wide down its eastern boundary has been available for excavation. Its burials, of which 65 have been examined, are laid north to south; roughly half of these have grave-goods.

Finds, especially coins, found either as grave-goods or in the back-fill of the graves, indicate that the earlier cemetery was in use until at least A.D. 218. The later cemetery belongs to the fourth century and was used for burial until at least A.D. 367.

About 97% of the burials were in nailed wooden coffins; the others were in lead coffins, hollowed tree-trunks or simple stone-and-tile-lined graves. Family plots are suggested by the discovery of a mausoleum, three timber vaults each of which was big enough for two or more coffins, and idiosyncratic distributions of various features related to the burials and their associated objects.

The apsidal building was stripped except for small islands which had to be left to preserve some trees (Figs. 11.16 and 11.17). Excluding the apse, the building was probably rectangular in shape and measured externally about 25 x 80 Roman feet.\* The floor levels survived only at the west end where they were simply trampled sandy soil. The 700 or so coins found on the site indicate activity in this area starting probably c. 320-40 and continuing into the fifth century (see p. 274).



Interpretation of the various features found in and around the building is difficult and requires a more detailed consideration than is possible here, but the following tentative summary is offered. The eastern end of the building appears to have been aisled. Later disturbances can account for missing post-holes, but there seem to have been at least four, perhaps six, bays. The absence of similar post-pits at the western end of the building points to at least one as yet undiscovered internal north-south division. A rather puzzling row of small pits lies on the line of the north wall. These are where the original ground surface sloped away sharply to the north and consequently may have been associated with internal strengthening of the wall here. Less likely, they may indicate an earlier timber phase of the building. Hull's pit was re-excavated and found to have had three posts around its edges (Fig. 11.17). To the north of it was a grave-like feature. This had been almost completely removed during earlier archaeological work but sufficient survived to suggest an elaborate timber-lined grave, the lining of which was strengthened by posts around its edges. Presumably the timber-lining found by Hull in his pit and its three posts are all part of this feature. To the west was a curious long pit which contained nine small post-holes at its western end. Probably this was in some way related to the primary burial although its purpose is obscure. Cutting this was another rectangular feature of which only the western end survived. This had grave-like proportions and appearance. No other burial or grave-like excavation was found inside the building, although the cemetery area to the south and east extends to within a metre of the apse. Outside the western end of the building was a rectangular post-built structure containing a tile-hearth. Coin evidence indicates that this was contemporary with the main building.

Although unusually long in relation to its width the most likely explanation for the apsidal building is that it was a martyrium, the focus of which was the ?grave-complex at its eastern end. The north-south orientation of the timber-lined grave can be explained by the cramped area available here for burial. The grave was placed between two posts in the southern aisle so that it lay south of the longitudinal axis of the building as if to leave room for another north-south grave opposite. Hull's pit was probably a late feature dug into the south end of the north-south grave. If so, then Hull must have slightly over-excavated the pit to reveal traces of the timber-lining of the underlying grave. Some of the contents of Hull's pit suggest that it may have been dug when the building was derelict. No human bones have been found in our presumed graves, although experience in the adjacent cemetery has shown that the acidity of the soil is such that frequently even adult burials decay so that only the skull or nothing at all survives. Perhaps the skull found by Hull at the very bottom of his pit was all that remained of the north-south burial and was in situ?

Balkerne Lane Temple: Temple 10 and ?shrine (Figs. 11.2, 11.18 and 11.19)

During recent excavations at Balkerne Lane the buildings discovered included a Romano-Celtic temple and a square building tentatively interpreted as a temple of unusual design.

All that survived of the Romano-Celtic temple (Fig. 11.20) was the foundations of the cella and the robber trenches for the foundations of the ambulatory. These were 0.8 m wide and 1.15 m deep. Five metres to the south

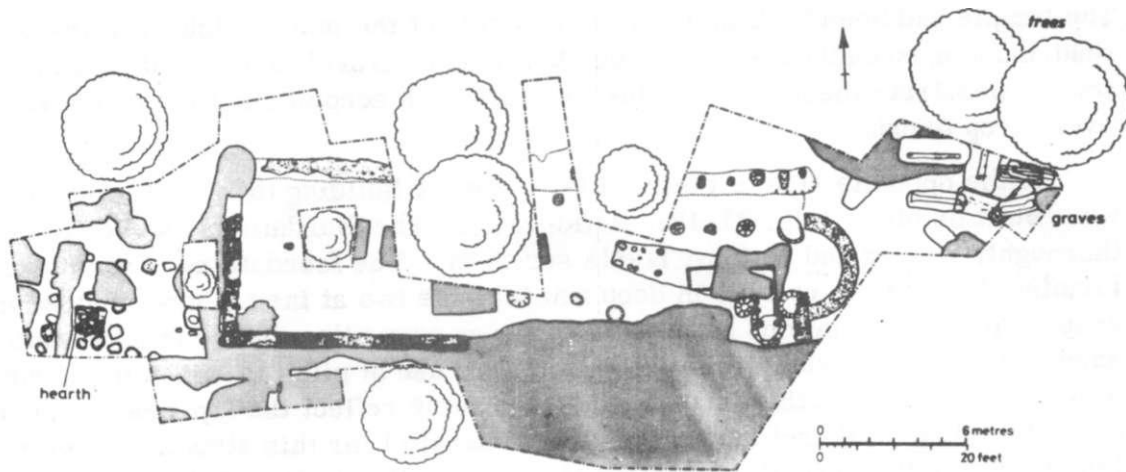


Fig. 11.16 Butt Road ?martyrium, Temple 9 (shading indicates areas destroyed by later activities).

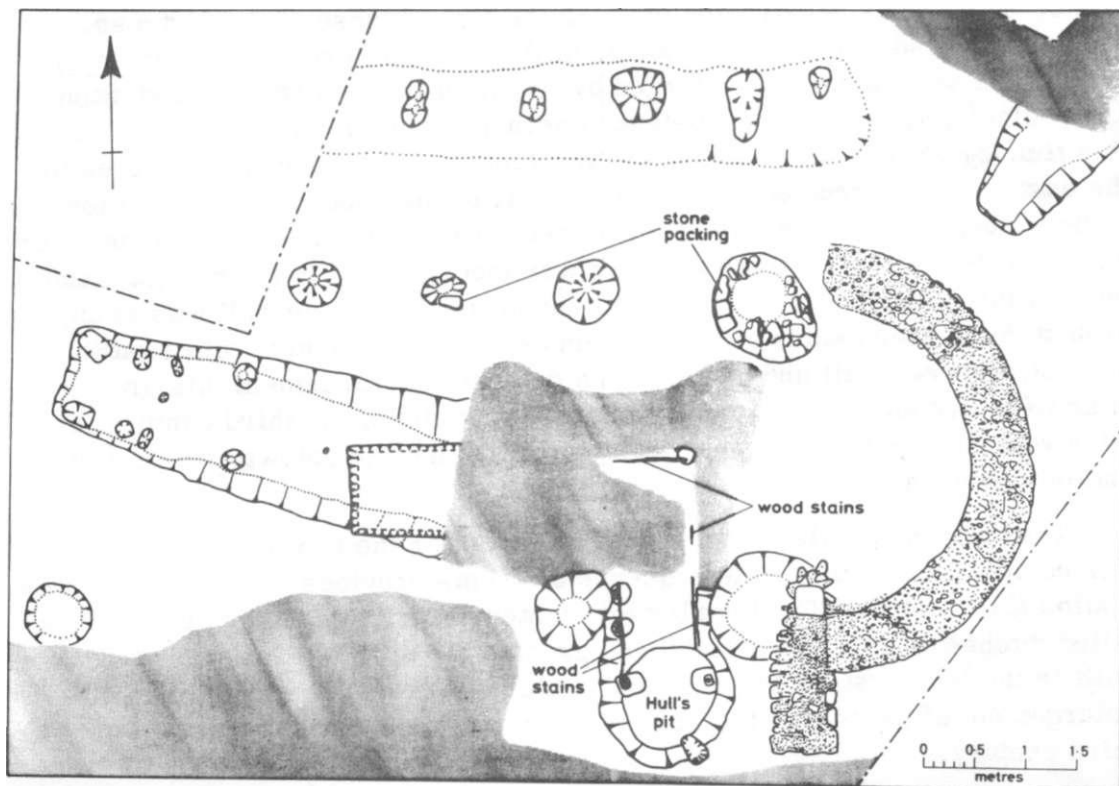


Fig. 11.17 Butt Road ?martyrium, Temple 9; features at east end (shading indicates areas destroyed by later activities).

was a much damaged rectangular plinth which probably was part of an altar. The temple had been built on the northern side of the main Colchester-to-London road and consequently overlay a thick build-up of gravel layers. It was the need to penetrate these to reach the natural which accounts for the comparatively deep foundations.

On the opposite side of the road lay a square building three sides of which were built on piers (Fig. 11.19: Building A). The foundations had been thoroughly robbed and no floor levels survived. The foundations of the piers forming the sides were 1.25 m deep whereas the two at the front were 0.85 m deep. All the foundations had been built on wooden piles driven into the natural sand. The area is well-drained and since the use of piles in non-waterlogged situations is rare, in this instance these can only reflect the top-heavy nature of the building. I do not know of any close parallel for this structure, but a temple seems the most likely explanation especially in view of the proximity of the Romano-Celtic temple opposite.

The sequence of occupation on the site as a whole, including the houses to the west, can be divided into six periods on the basis of changes in the defences. During period 1, the area lay mainly outside the legionary fortress and the road was lined with canabae. In period 2 (c. A.D. 49-60), the legionary ditch was filled in and houses built across it.

In period 3 (Fig. 11.18), after the Boudiccan destruction of the colony, new defences were constructed close to the line of those of the fortress. Towards the end of the first century, at the start of period 4, the defended area of the settlement was enlarged by levelling the second bank and ditch and replacing these with new defences perhaps about 300 m further west. At this time or shortly afterwards, the two temples and a monumental arch to the east were constructed. In the first part of the second century the town wall was built and to preserve these three structures the plan of the new works was modified. The monumental arch was incorporated in the new gate and the new ditch which was elsewhere to run at the foot of the wall was swung around the western sides of the two temples, leaving them perched rather uneasily between wall and ditch. As a defensive arrangement this proved unsatisfactory and, consequently, about the middle of the third century the ditch was enlarged and dug across the road so that the gateway was cut off and left redundant.

Thus although little direct dating evidence for the two temples survives, this complex and remarkable sequence of events provides good indirect information about dates. The temples are contemporary since they cut the back-filled ditches of periods 1a and 3 and predate the town wall. Thus they were built in the late first or early second century. They both existed after the enlargement of the town ditch and therefore survived until at least the mid-third century.

The date of their destruction is more difficult. Large fragments of masonry, almost certainly from the southern temple, were found at the bottom of the adjacent enlarged town ditch so that a mid to late third-century date for the destruction of the building is indicated. In period 6, a narrow ditch was dug along the eastern side of the town ditch; it ran along the western sides of the two temples cutting through the ambulatory of Temple 10. The latter

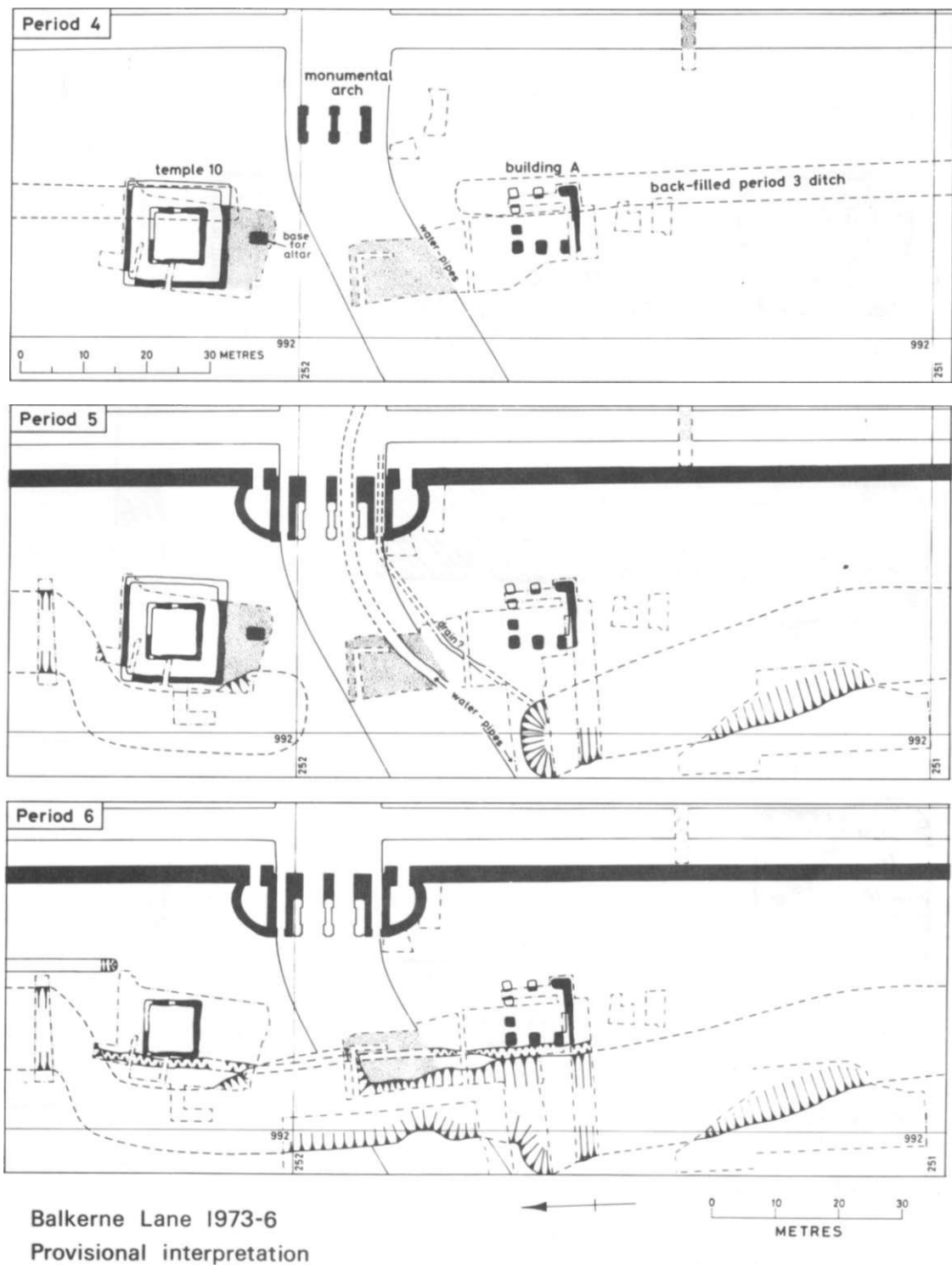


Fig. 11.18 Balcerne Lane; Periods 4 to 6.

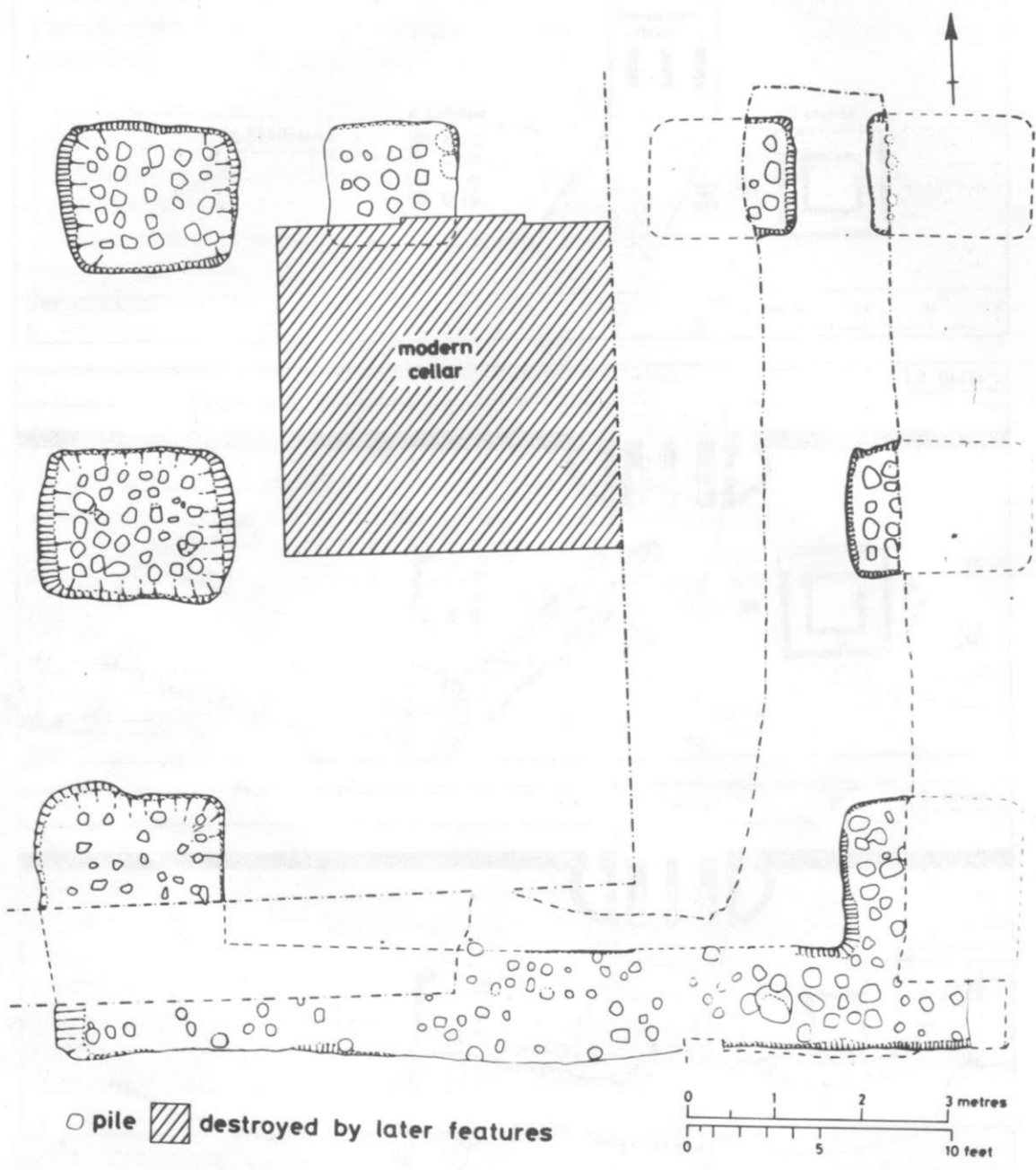


Fig. 11.19 ?Shrine at Balkerne Lane (Building A).

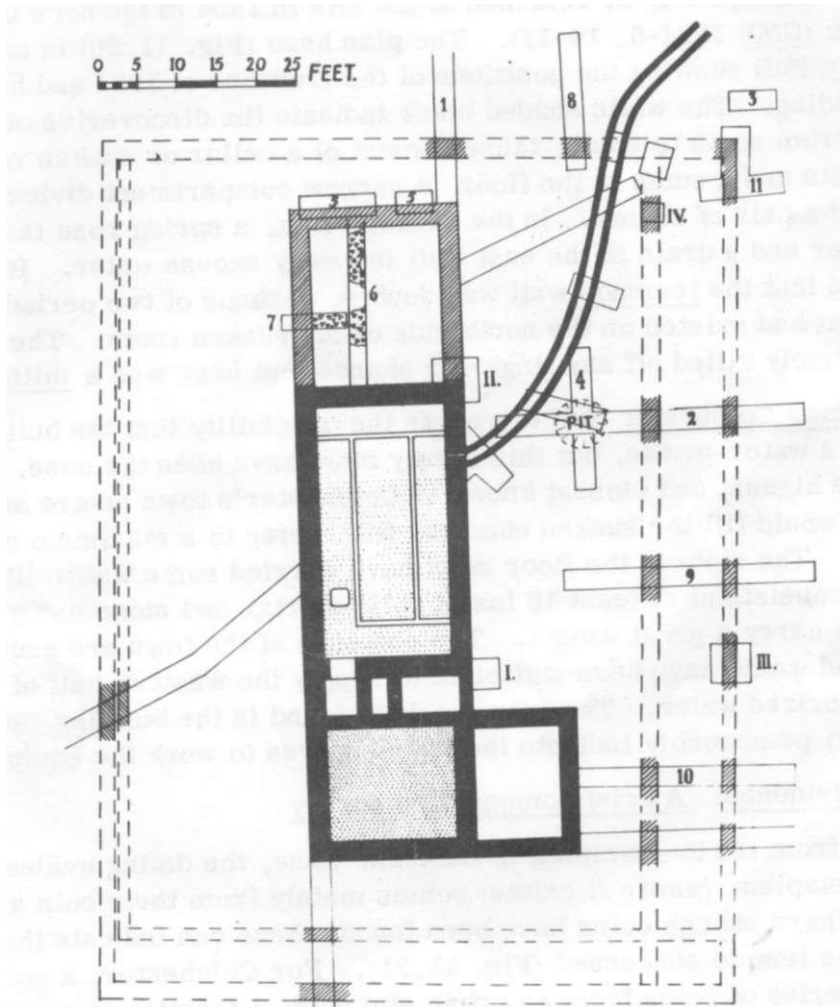


Fig. 11. 20 Hull's plan of his 'mithraeum' after the excavation of 1954. (Courtesy of the Colchester and Essex Museum.)

had been robbed out; the date of this is uncertain but the robber trench contains nothing necessarily datable to much later than a coin of 341-6 found in it. The narrow ditch indicates that probably in the second half of the fourth century the ambulatory of Temple 10 was demolished but the cella retained.

Hull's 'Mithraeum' (Fig. 11.20).

During the late twenties, Hull excavated a building to the east of the Temple of Claudius and suggested that it had been a mithraeum (Hull, 1958, 107-45). On the whole, his views were not accepted in the archaeological world and consequently he returned to the site in 1954 in the hope of clarifying the matter (CMR 1954-6, 10-11). The plan here (Fig. 11.20) is an unpublished drawing by Hull showing the positions of the trenches of 1954 and his final plan of the building. The walls shaded black indicate the discoveries of the late 1920s. From north to south, these consist of a cellar or sunken room with timber slots and a sump in the floor, a narrow compartment divided into three, and a pair of rooms. In the sunken room, a spring rose in the south-west corner and a drain in the east wall led away excess water. In 1954 Hull discovered that the temenos wall was double, perhaps of two periods, and that a room had existed on the north side of the sunken room. The resultant plan effectively killed off any lingering chance that here was a mithraeum

In Roman Colchester Hull discounts the possibility that the building could have been a water-works, but this surely must have been the case. The spring here is the highest and closest known to Colchester's town centre and in modern times would fill the sunken chamber with water to a maximum depth of 18 inches. The slots in the floor must have carried some water-lifting gear. The floor consists of at least 18 ins of solid mortar and stone and clearly was intended to carry a great weight. The contours of the town are such that a 20 foot head would have been sufficient to supply the western half of the colony with pressurized water. The iron shackles found in the building (Hull, 1958, III, pi.XXI) presumably indicate the use of slaves to work the equipment.

The Coin Evidence: A brief comparative survey

Apart from the two temples at Balkerne Lane, the dating evidence for the other temples (where it exists) comes mainly from their coin assemblages. Where enough coins have been found, these can indicate the period of use of the temple concerned (Fig. 11.21). For Colchester, a good representative series of coins from an urban site without temples is provided by the coins found at Lion Walk during the excavations of 1971-4. The site is within the town walls and yielded 581 closely datable Roman coins. Occupation at Lion Walk began in Claudian times and continued into the fifth century, so that its coin assemblage provides a good base with which to compare groups of coins from other sites in Colchester. The pattern of coin loss (the overall shape of the histogram) at Balkerne Lane is very similar to that of Lion Walk except for a slightly lower rate throughout the fourth century. Although about half the coins from Balkerne Lane were found within 10 m of the two temples, the presence across the site of a main thoroughfare with all the commercial activities that this implies renders the coin information inconclusive as far as the temples are concerned.

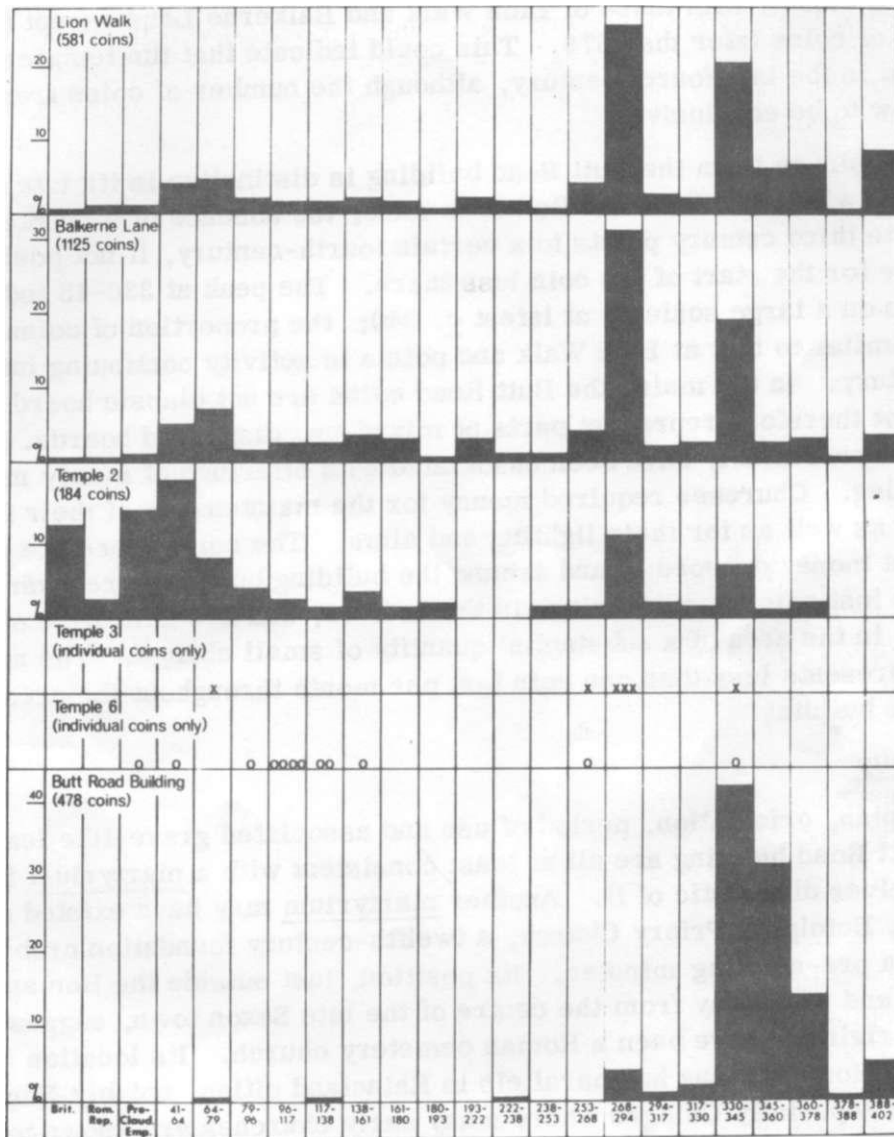


Fig. 11.21 Histogram of the largest assemblages of coins from the sites of Colchester's temples.



However the coins from Temple 2 at Sheepen are more useful. Here, the large proportion of pre-Neronian coinage is to be associated with the main period of occupation at Sheepen which in effect was terminated by the Boudiccan attack of 60/1 and which had no coinage later than Claudian copies. Thus the Neronian and later coins are to be linked with the temple. Their loss pattern compares closely with those of Lion Walk and Balcerne Lane except for the absence of coins later than 378. This could indicate that the temple was demolished in the late fourth century, although the number of coins from the site is too low to be conclusive.

The coinage from the Butt Road building is distinctive in its late date. Compared with Lion Walk and Balcerne Lane, the absence of a marked peak in the late third century points to a certain fourth-century, if not post-c. 320, date for the start of the coin loss there. The peak at 330-45 indicates coin loss on a large scale by at latest c. 340; the proportion of coins of 388-402 is similar to that at Lion Walk and points to activity continuing into the fifth century. In the main, the Butt Road coins are not classic hoard material and do not therefore represent parts of mixed-up, dispersed hoards. Rather they must presumably have been associated with offerings of money made in the building. Churches required money for the maintenance of their fabric and staff as well as for their lighting and alms. The coins therefore must represent money dropped in and around the building but never recovered. They are lost coins, not offerings in themselves, and are indicative of the exchange in the area of a substantial quantity of small change. The number found represents less than one coin lost per month throughout the presumed life of the building.

### Christianity

. The plan, orientation, period of use and associated grave-like features of the Butt Road building are all at least consistent with a martyrium if not in themselves diagnostic of it. Another martyrium may have existed on the site of St. Botolph's Priory Church, a twelfth-century foundation probably based on a pre-existing minster. Its position, just outside the Roman south-east gate and well away from the centre of the late Saxon town, suggests that it might originally have been a Roman cemetery church. Its location like that of the Butt Road building has parallels in Rhineland cities, notably Xanten, Mainz and especially Cologne where many early churches are known to lie in Roman cemetery areas.<sup>9.1°</sup>

To detect the progress of Christianity in Colchester we could conjecture that the retention of the cella of the Romano-Celtic temple at Balcerne Lane was indicative of its conversion into a Christian building. Similarly in the coin evidence, it could be argued that at Temple 2 the absence of coins of 388-402 (Fig. 11.21) points to the end of the pagan cult there in the late fourth century, but neither is conclusive.

It has been suggested that the Temple of Claudius was converted into a church in the fourth century. Certainly its plan would not render it inappropriate for such an event, as the fate of similar temples elsewhere shows: e.g. the Temple of Bacchus at Baalbek and the Temple of Athena at Syracuse. But at Colchester there is no firm evidence either way.

Within the town walls there were two medieval churches which apparently incorporated parts of Roman buildings (Crummy, 1974, 27-8; Crummy, forthcoming). The north wall of St. Helen's Chapel appears to be Roman and certainly it was restored c. 1100 implying that at this time the building was already of some antiquity. St. Nicholas's Church was demolished in 1955 and the rebuilding works observed by Hull. Part of the church appeared to have no foundations but mirrored in plan some underlying stout foundations which had belonged to a Roman public building. Thus it seems that the early church incorporated some Roman walls. But neither in the case of St. Nicholas's nor St. Helen's need there have been a Roman church. We must bear in mind that abroad throughout the fifth, sixth and seventh centuries not only were pagan temples converted into churches but so too could secular buildings be thus transformed. H

### The Distribution of the Temples and its Possible Significance

There are several factors<sup>1^</sup> which suggest that at Colchester there may have been a double community akin to examples known abroad, such as at Apulum in Dacia, Thamugadi in Numidia, Patrae in Achae and Dyrrachium in Macedonia (Salmon, 1969, 150, n.300). If so, then on the one hand there was the community of Roman citizens in the colony itself, Colonia Victricensis, and on the other there was the native body within Camulodunum. That there was at least a topographical if not administrative distinction between the two is implicit in the second-century inscription in the Vatican Museum to a censitor civium Romano rum Coloniae Victricensis quae est in Britannia Camaloduni, 'censitor for the Roman citizens of Colonia Victricensis which is in Britain at Camulodunum' (CIL XIV, 3955). The temples embody this distinction: Colonia Victricensis with its Classical temple of the Imperial Cult, and Camulodunum with its widespread Romano-Celtic temples and its two main native sanctuaries at Sheepen and Gosbecks. This same dichotomy can be detected in a wider sphere; Romano-Celtic temples have been found within the street grids of the tribal capitals of Verulamium, Silchester, Caerwent and Winchester—but not in any of the Roman colonies.

The western limit of Colonia Victricensis is probably indicated by the monumental arch at Balkerne Lane and the adjacent sequence of town defences especially since so often arches like this marked boundaries. The area to the west thus lay outside the colony proper. The buildings here show the same kind of physical relationship to the colony as did the earlier canabae to the legionary fortress. Despite being so close to the town centre, the Romano-Celtic temple at Balkerne Lane may have been on land held on a different legal basis from buildings within the colony. The town-zone of Colonia Victricensis could be equated with the gridded area and the main cemeteries, whereas Camulodunum retained its pre-Roman identity and covered all of the oppidum, including the dykes. Archaeologists have tended to point to Gosbecks as the focus of the missing administrative centre of the post-Conquest Trinovantian civitas, but after the 60s Gosbecks seems to have been no more than a very important rural or semi-rural sanctuary. Perhaps the development and legal status of the canabae after the foundation of the colony is likely to be bound up with this difficult problem.

### Acknowledgements

I am indebted to Nina Crummy who prepared the temple bibliography, to Bob Moyes for his draughtsmanship, to Alison Colchester for her photographic work, to Professor C. F. C. Hawkes for guidance concerning the earliest temple excavations, and to Dr. R. Reece for advice about coinage.

### NOTES

1. Vitruvius describes it as 24 column diameters, but in this figure he takes no account of the outer edges of the plinths at either side of the podium, each a quarter-column in width.
2. Taking the Roman foot as equal to 11.66" (Skinner, 1956, 777).
3. Hull, 1958, 240 and Hull's MS 'Roman Colchester' in the Colchester and Essex Museum.
4. Cf. sites in Schwarz, 1958, Beilagen 2, 3 and 4.
5. For the fort see Crummy, 1977, 87-90; Wilson, 1977, 185-7, J. Rom. Stud. 67 (1977), 126-7.
6. For the theatre see Crummy and Smith, 1980; Dunnett, 1971a, 27-47; Hull, 1958, 167-9 and Lewis, 1966, 130.
7. Two rather unconvincing candidates are the large rectilinear features about 150 m north and east of the temple.
8. On the assumption that the building did not extend north and south at its eastern end.
9. Useful references for these and other early churches are Friedrich, 1926, 10-113 and Radford, 1971, 1-12.
10. It has been suggested that the building discovered in 1972 (Crummy, 1974, 29; Med. Archaeol. 17 (1973, 139-40) was in its first phase a Roman martyrium or mausoleum (Rodwell, 1977, 38-39). However the evidence from the excavation indicates that this is most unlikely and that the building was purely Saxon in origin. An interim report will be available in Crummy, forthcoming.
11. For example, at Rome in the sixth century the library of the Forum of Peace of Vespasian was converted into the church of Sts. Cosmas and Damian, and the guard-room of Domitian's palace was transformed into the church of Santa Maria Antiqua. And in the seventh century, Pope Honorius I converted the senate house into the church of St. Adrian. Thus, although these examples are far removed from Colchester, the practice existed.
12. This suggestion will be discussed fully in the near future, most likely in the proposed Camulodunum H now being prepared. To discuss this in detail here would take up too much space and be out of place.

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? Temple A

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? Temple B

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## ABBREVIATIONS

<u>A. Ex.</u>	<u>Archaeological Excavations</u> , HMSO
<u>Archaeol. J.</u>	<u>Archaeological Journal</u>
<u>Bonner Jahrb.</u>	<u>Bonner Jahrbflcher</u>
CBA	Council for British Archaeology
<u>CIL</u>	<u>Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum</u>
<u>CMR</u>	<u>Colchester &amp; Essex Museum Report</u>
<u>Coll. Ant.</u>	<u>Collectanea Antigua</u>
<u>Essex Archaeol. Hist.</u>	<u>Essex Archaeology and History</u> (formerly <u>Trans. Essex Archaeol. Soc.</u> )
<u>J. Brit. Archaeol. Ass.</u>	<u>Journal of the British Archaeological Association</u>
<u>J. Rom. Stud.</u>	<u>Journal of Roman Studies</u>
<u>Medieval Archaeol.</u>	<u>Medieval Archaeology</u>
<u>Proc. Prehist. Soc.</u>	<u>Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society</u>
RCHM	Royal Commission on Historical Monuments
<u>Trans. Essex. Archaeol. Soc.</u>	<u>Transactions of the Essex Archaeological Society</u>
VCH	The Victoria History of the Counties of England

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