

*The*  
**COLCHESTER**  
ARCHAEOLOGIST

**ROMAN CHURCH  
ON DISPLAY**

**350-YEAR-OLD  
SHOPPING  
DEVELOPMENT**

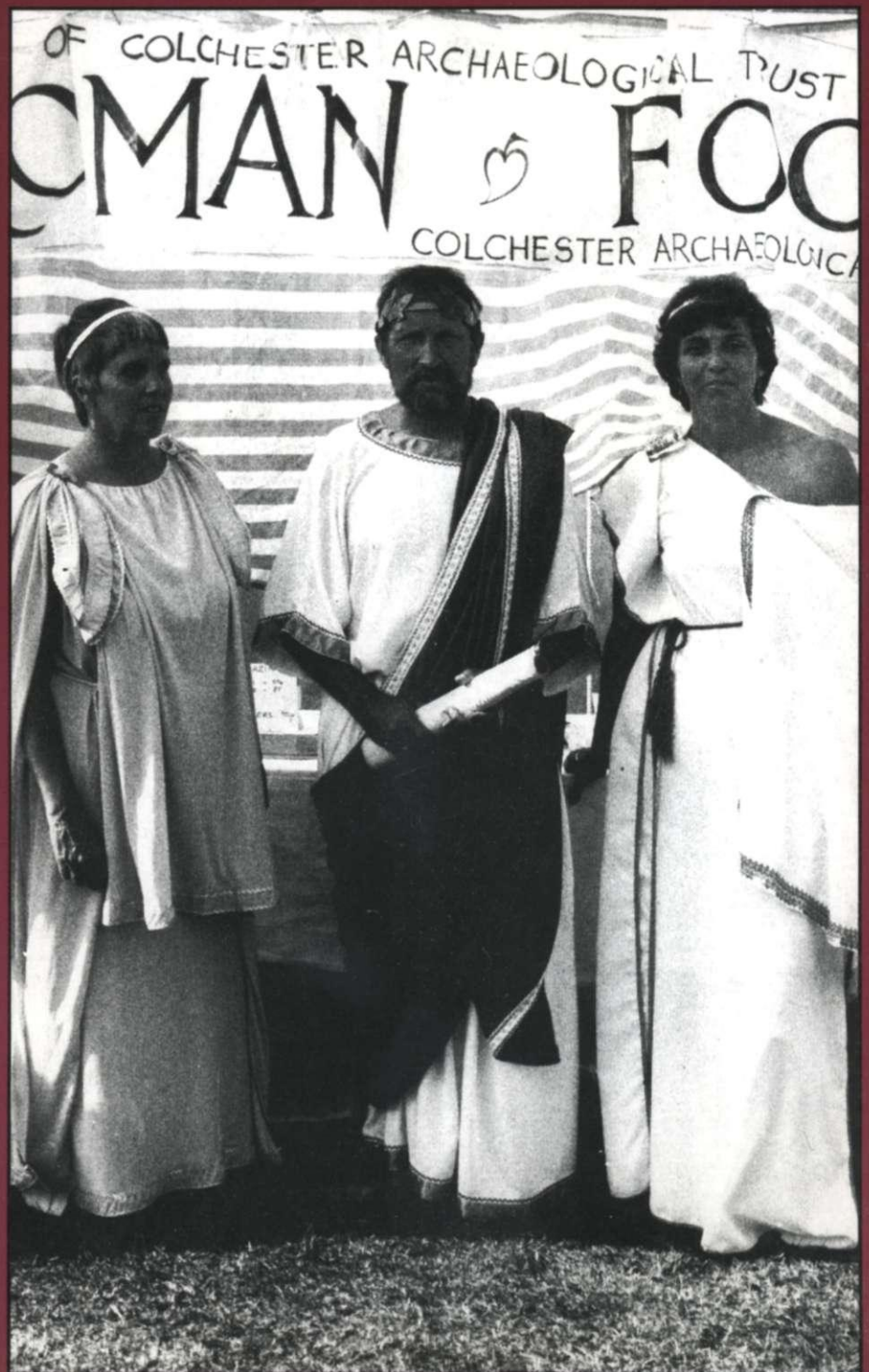
**BRINGING THE  
PAST TO LIFE**

**THE HOUSE OF  
LAZARUS**

**OSBORNE STREET**

**AROUND THE  
COUNTY**

**ARCHAEOLOGY  
FOR YOUNG  
PEOPLE**



Issue Number 3 (1989-90)  
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**The Colchester Archaeologist** is an annual magazine which replaced *Catalogue*, the newsletter published twice yearly since 1976 by the Colchester Archaeological Trust and the Friends of the Colchester Archaeological Trust.

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## THE FRIENDS OF THE COLCHESTER ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

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*Cover: selling Roman food at the Essex History Fair. Pictured left to right are Gabrielle Chadwick, Bob Moyes, and Eleanor Clark (see pages 7 and 17).*

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The Friends of the Colchester Archaeological Trust exists to keep interested members of the public in touch with the archaeological work in the historic town of Colchester. Members receive **The Colchester Archaeologist**, attend an annual lecture about the previous year's work, are given conducted tours of current sites, and can take part in a programme of visits to archaeological sites and monuments in the area. Publication of **The Colchester Archaeologist** is helped by funds provided by the Friends.

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# 350-year old shopping development

The overwhelming impression left after the end of the excavations at Angel Court was of an area in the High Street which between about two and five hundred years ago was packed with buildings jostling each other for a share of the valuable frontage on the High Street.

Until comparatively recently, the High Street was very much the heart of the town. This was where the Moot Hall stood (the old town hall and civic centre), where many of the town-centre inns and churches were located, and where above all the market and most of the town's shops were to be found. Consequently, the High Street frontage was the most sought-after in the town — particularly in the central area where the Angel Court site is situated.

By the 17th century — and quite possibly for many years before — pressure for building land on the High Street was so scarce that the buildings on the Angel Court site had been extended backwards so often and to such an extent that they reached over 50 m in length. To allow access to these extensions, the houses incorporated narrow alleys stretching back at right-angles from the High Street. The area affected extended between East and West Stockwell Streets and possibly beyond. Similar conglomerations of buildings and alleys can be seen in the centres of many cities in Britain today, eg the 'closes' of Scotland. How old these alleys are in Col-

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**Archaeology above ground can be just as rewarding as excavation below. Detailed study and survey of a building now demolished at Angel Court revealed the remains of two small 17th-century shops built as a part of a commercial redevelopment of the sort we are familiar with today.**

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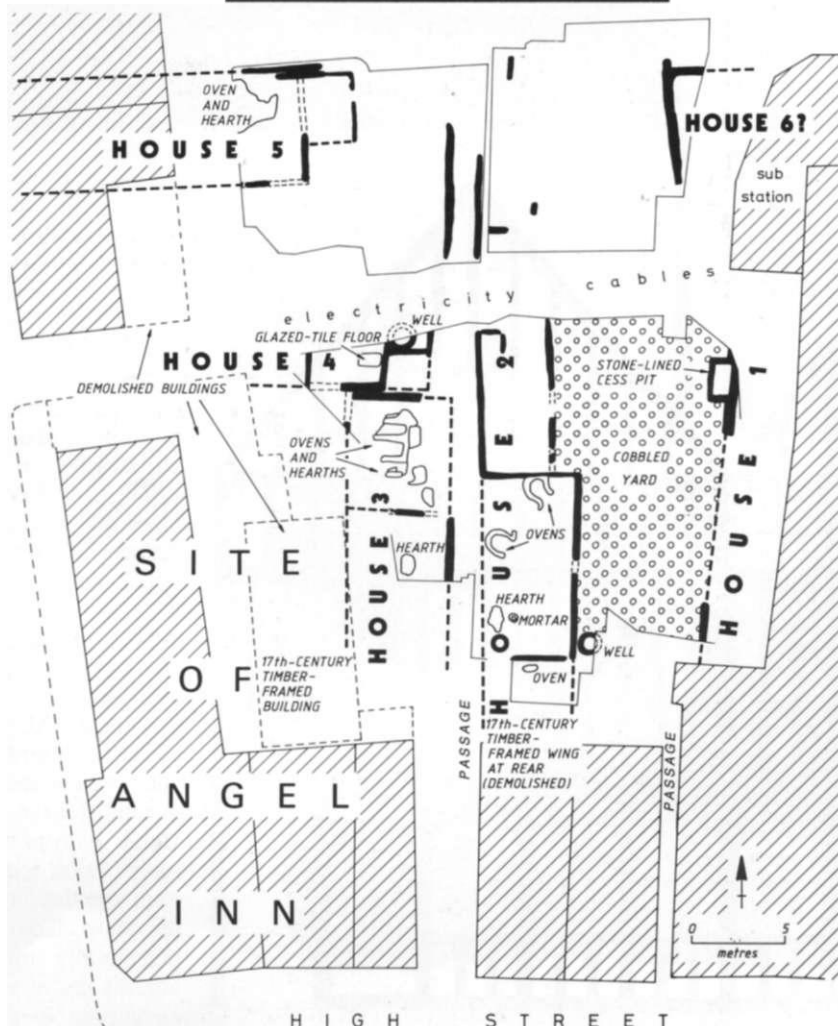
Chester is unclear but it is possible that the southern ends of East and West Stockwell Streets started off as long ago as AD 1000 as private alleys which later, perhaps through long-established usage, became public rights of way to allow access to the well at Stockwell.

Archaeological work at the Angel Court site took place in two stages. The main phase of excavations was in 1986 when the surface car park (Angel Yard) at the rear of nos 133-4 High Street was examined. This was followed by the construction of the so-called 'mini-town hall' which opened in 1988. During the following year, nos 133-4 High Street (the former Bike Shop and Ladbroke's)

were demolished so that the next part of the mini-town hall could be built. Since nos 133-4 were timber-framed and clearly of some age, both buildings had to be recorded in detail as demolition progressed. (They were in too dangerous a condition to do much work in them beforehand.) It is expected that within a few years the third and final stage of the development will take place following the acquisition of no 132 High Street (currently occupied by Newson's).

## Excavation

During the course of the Angel Court excavations, parts of at least five medieval or later buildings were excavated. Associated with them were various ovens and hearths. These were made of peg-tiles set in a sandy clay and occurred in such large numbers that a commercial function such as baking or brewing is likely for most of them. An unusual find which is sig-



nificant in this respect is a large mortar (as in pestle-and-mortar). It is made of Purbeck marble and, being two feet across, is extremely heavy. The mortar would have been used to grind or mash up grain, spices and possibly meat. Its exceptional size suits the presumed commercial associations of the building in which it was found.

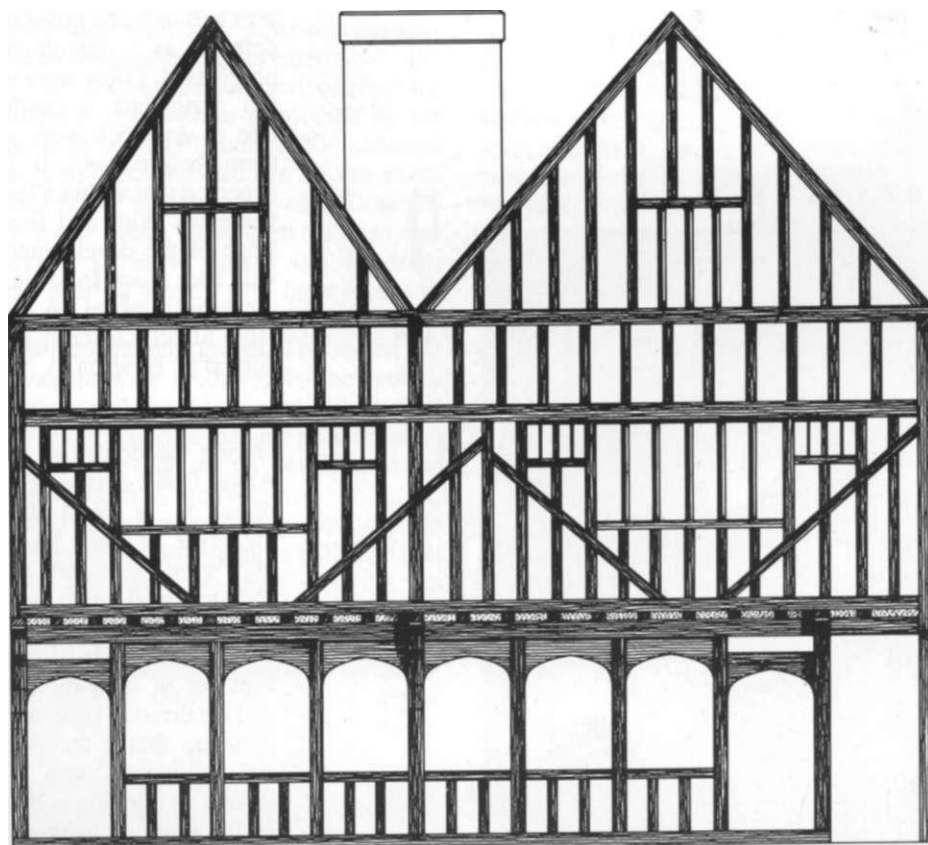
### Timber-framed building

Although many of the timbers in nos 133-4 were severely affected by rot, sufficient survived to enable much of the timber-frame to be recorded in detail and to establish that it had probably been built between 1600 and 1650. Timber-framed buildings of this period contained hardly any nails — and when they were used, they tended to be confined to the roof. Instead the frames of the buildings were held together by a variety of cleverly-designed joints, each intended to perform certain functions depending on its position in the frame. Rather than using glue or cramps, round wooden pegs were placed through the joints at the most appropriate places to stop them being pulled apart. The frames were prefabricated in the carpenter's yard where many of the timbers were numbered to assist in the task of erecting the frame on site. The designs of the various types of joints changed over the



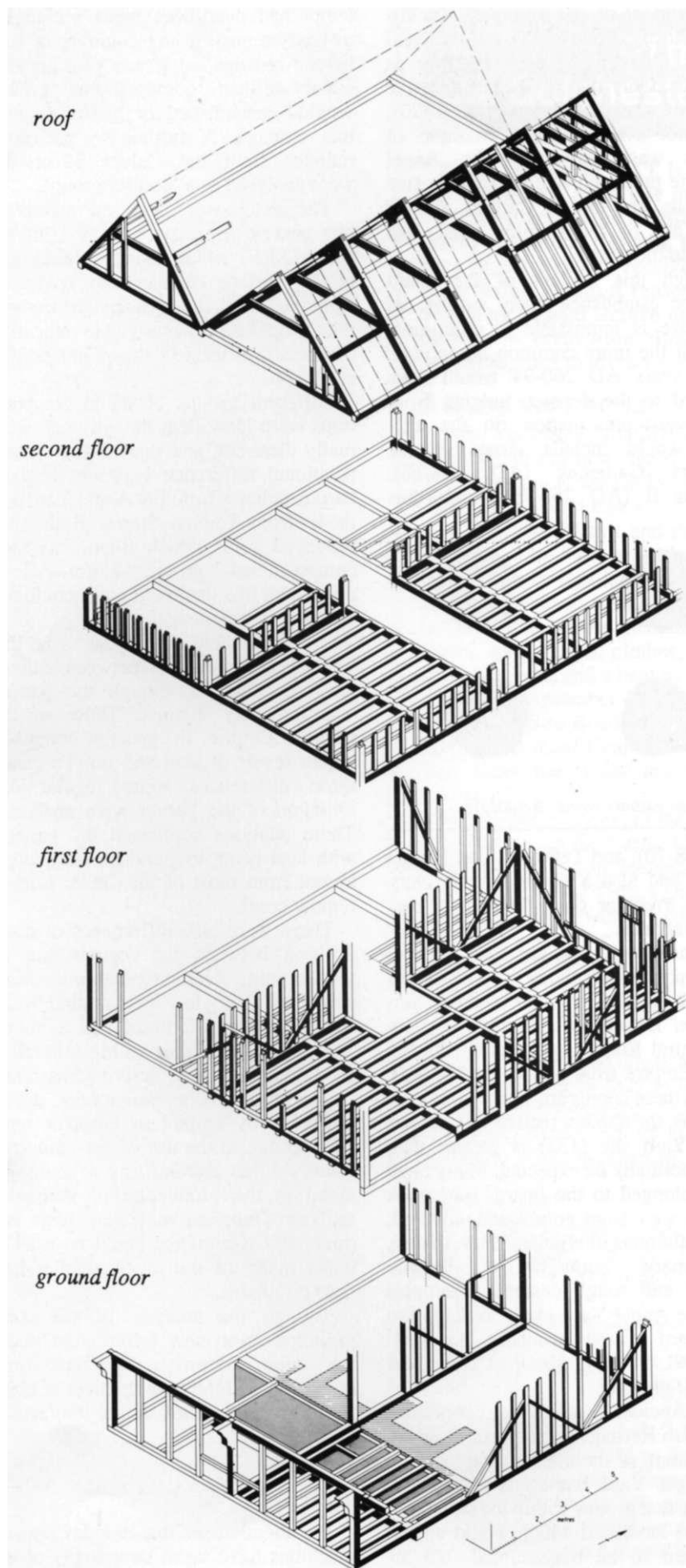
*Above: excavation of the large mortar.*

*Left: reconstruction of the High Street elevation of the two shop units with domestic quarters above. The 1st and 2nd floors overhung the shop fronts to form a jetty.*



years so that by studying them today it is possible to obtain dating evidence for the building.

The timbers in nos 133-4 turned out to have all belonged to the same timber frame. This was a three-storey building which was probably constructed during the first half of the 17th century. It took the form of two separate roughly-similar units fronting the High Street. They shared a central single brick chimney-stack which provided fire-places on all three floors. Each unit contained a shop which took the form of a single ground-floor room on the street frontage. Under both of these rooms was a communal brick cellar which must have been used for the storage of goods traded in the shop. The domestic quarters were presumably upstairs. In view of the hearths and ovens found during the excavations, it seems probable that the



ground-floor rooms behind the shops were also intended for commercial usage. A narrow external passage was provided down the east side of no 133 at ground-floor level (the first floor continued over the top of it to butt on to no 132). The passage provided access to the yard and buildings behind).

Each shop front probably consisted of three wide round-headed windows and a doorway. The windows would not have been glazed but each would have been covered at night by a large wooden shutter which was hinged to the wall just below the window.

### Roman remains

As so often happens, the excavated area turned out to straddle parts of two adjacent Roman houses. The houses shared a common or party wall and fronted on to a Roman street which lay north-south along the western side of the site. The rooms in both houses were large suggesting that the houses may have themselves been of a more substantial nature than normal. One of the rooms contained an oven and therefore was presumably a kitchen whilst another was a cellar backfilled with broken roof tiles and daub and painted plaster from demolished walls.

An unusual discovery was thirteen whole pots which had been buried close to the foundations of the walls. These would have contained food and drink as offerings to the gods. Discoveries of this kind are often made on sites in the town although never before in this number.

### Some finds

#### *The late 3rd-century coin hoard*

Well over four hundred Roman coins were found on the Angel Yard site, many of them coming from a layer of topsoil which had accumulated slowly and steadily on the site for up to 1,000 years, from the late 3rd century well into the medieval period. Most of the coins in this topsoil were of late 3rd century date, with just a few belonging to the 4th century. In one corner of the site the topsoil filling a small hollow produced over a hundred coins, also all of late 3rd or 4th century date.

Similar topsoil layers, known as 'dark earth', are found in most Roman towns, and where the dark earth has been

*The surviving timber frame of the 17th-century building. The floors and roof are shown separately for clarity.*

excavated previously in Colchester it has produced many late Roman coins, but never as many as at the Angel Yard. Suspicions were aroused that a coin hoard had been deposited on the site in the late Roman period, probably set into the floor of a room in one of the Roman buildings found during the excavations, and that over the centuries cultivation, with the frequent turning over of the topsoil, had broken the hoard up and dispersed it over a wide area. This is not an uncommon fate for coin hoards, especially if the coins included in the hoard are not made of precious metal, if the container in which they had originally been stored had rotted away (wooden boxes and leather bags would rot, while a metal or pottery vessel would be more likely to survive intact), and if the initial breaking-up of the hoard occurred long after such coins ceased to be current

Confirmation of the presence of a hoard had to wait until the coins were conserved to see if any unusual denominations were present, or if there were concentrations of coins from a specific close date range within the late 3rd to 4th century. A standard pattern of coin loss in Roman towns has been established for some years now, and deviations from this norm, deviations both of numbers lost over specific periods and of denominations present in specific periods, can be easily recognised.

Once the Angel Yard coins were legible enough for close identification, it became apparent that a hoard was present, and that it had as its nucleus well-preserved silver and silver-washed coins of the early and middle 3rd century. The period from AD 195 to AD 222 is one of low coin loss, but nine silver *denarii* (fairly high denomination) of this period were among the coins from the Angel Yard. Most, if not all, of these coins probably originated in the hoard. Debasement of the coinage in the early 3rd century caused the *denarius* to be replaced by the *antoninianus*, a coin made of copper-alloy but often given a silver wash to enhance its appearance, effectively imitating a genuinely silver coin. Several silvered *antoniniani* of the emperors Aurelian (AD 270-5) and Postumus (AD 259-68) also probably originated in the hoard. Coins of these emperors are not particularly common as site finds; the large-scale excavations of the 1970s in Colchester produced only one *antoninianus* of Aurelian and thirteen of Postumus, while the Angel Yard over a few weeks produced three of Aurelian and four of Postumus.

*Antoniniani* of the emperors Tacitus (AD 275-6), Probus (AD 276-82) and Carinus (AD 283-5) are very rare as site finds. Only two of Tacitus and five of Probus were found during the 1970s, while not even a single example of Carinus was recovered. The Angel Yard site produced five of Tacitus, five of Probus, and one of Carinus. All, or nearly all, of these coins must also belong to the hoard.

Though this nucleus of the hoard could be established fairly simply, its exact size is impossible to determine. Many of the more common *antoniniani* of the years AD 260-94 would have belonged to the deposit, judging from their over-representation on the site. These would include issues of the emperors Gallienus (AD 253-68), Claudius II (AD 268-70), Victorinus



*Barbarous radiate coins. Actual size.*

(AD 268-70), and Tetricus I and II (AD 270-4), and also a number of the very profuse irregular coins known as barbarous radiates.

Barbarous radiates are irregular *antoniniani* which are dated to AD 270-284 and are copies of the regular *antoniniani* issued by emperors of both the Central Empire and the breakaway Gallic Empire from about AD 260-280. Though these copies are very common as site finds, the number recovered from the Angel Yard site (131) is greater than would normally be expected. Many must have belonged to the hoard. Barbarous radiates vary from good-sized, silvered, close imitations of regular issues, to tiny, poorly-made coins with illegible legends and rough designs. Examples from the Angel Yard likely to belong to the hoard would probably be well-preserved, of good size and style, and possibly silvered.

The Ancient Monuments Laboratory of English Heritage agreed to analyse the composition of the metals used to make the Angel Yard barbarous radiates in the hope that groups within the collection could be identified which would enable the hoard to be reassembled. No at-

tempt had ever been made previously to analyse such a large number of barbarous radiates, so it was possible that clearly-defined compositional groups would be established for the first time for this coinage. A further 44 barbarous radiates from the Culver Street site were analysed as a 'control group'.

The metals were analysed qualitatively by energy-dispersive X-ray fluorescence (XRF), which, though it looks only at the surface of the coin, gives an average across the whole surface and thus should give a reasonable indication of the alloys used in the production of each coin.

Different groups of metal compositions were identified, though none were really clear-cut, and there was no compositional difference between the barbarous radiates from the Angel Yard and those from Culver Street. Both sites produced coins which fitted into each compositional group. Unfortunately, this meant that the hoard coins could not be easily distinguished.

However, there did appear to be differences in composition between coins of the two Empires, though the pattern was not very distinct. Those of the Central Empire in general contained higher levels of lead and tin. To check these differences some regular *antoniniani* of the period were analysed. These analyses confirmed the pattern with lead being low and tin completely absent from most of the Gallic Empire regular coins.

There were also differences of composition between the regular and irregular coins. All the regular *antoniniani* contained a very low level of zinc, while some barbarous radiates had a higher zinc level, sometimes so high the alloy used could fairly be described as brass. Coins of this composition, not distinguishable by empire or emperor type, may be due to the use of 1st- and 2nd-century brass *dupondii* as a source of metal in the production of barbarous radiates. *Dupondii* were very large and thick, and if remelted could be used to make many of the much smaller barbarous radiates.

Though the analysis of the coins provided some new information, sadly the main question remained unanswered, and the exact number of coins in the Angel Yard hoard remains a mystery.

### *Thimbles*

We are all aware that in today's world machines have taken over many of the

tasks formerly performed by hand, and we can all think of crafts now practised by few which were once part of ordinary domestic life. One craft which is heading in this direction is hand-sewing, which is still taught in primary schools, but is regarded more as useful for developing manipulative skills than as a talent essential for survival in the world beyond school. Most clothes or furnishings today are factory-made, and even for home-produced items needle and thread rarely have to be taken up because modern sewing machines can perform very complex stitching.

This decline in the use of the needle is paralleled by a decline in the use of that even humbler tool, the thimble. Thimbles nowadays tend to be either of plastic or aluminium and very cheap, or of silver or china with an intrinsic value beyond that of their function. Yet in later medieval and post-medieval Britain, thimbles made of brass, a good-quality durable copper alloy, were of such importance in daily life that they were imported from the Continent in great quantities.

There are two forms of thimble: those with a closed, usually domed end, and ring-type examples with an open end. The earliest archaeological contexts in Britain which produce thimbles are surprisingly late — thimbles with domed ends make their appearance about 1350, and ring-type thimbles about 1450. It is not certain what preceded the brass thimble, though the most likely possibility is a leather guard similar to the leather ring used by archers to protect the right thumb.

Very little brass was made in Britain before the 17th century, so that most thimbles found on archaeological sites dating to before that period were usually imported from the Continent, where they had been in production from the 13th century. Many came from Nuremberg in Germany, where the quality of their manufacture was controlled by the Guild of Thimblemakers, and where between about 1520 and 1620 each master thimblemaker was required to place his mark on his products. In the 15th and 16th centuries some Nuremberg thimbles, particularly those used by gentlewomen for fine sewing or embroidery, were decorated around the base, designs of 'hearts and flowers' being especially popular. Holland was another source of thimbles imported into Britain, and supplied the bulk of our requirements during the 17th century even when some thimble production had begun in this country. It was in Hol-

land that an important technical advance in thimble manufacture was developed.

The basic thimble form could be produced by casting the brass in a mould or by gently working sheet brass into a series of holes with graduated punches (stamping). The indentations were then applied individually by a hand-held punch or drill. Casting became the main method of manufacture in Holland in the early 17th century and round about the same time the Dutch developed a wheel-like machine which allowed the indentations on the surface to be applied more rapidly and evenly. This technique remained a Dutch monopoly until 1693 when a patent for such a machine was awarded to a Dutch merchant, John Lofting, who subsequently founded a thimble manufac-



*Thimbles from the Angel Yard site. Actual size. The thimble in the bottom left is crushed flat.*

tory in Britain capable of producing two million pieces a year.

The Angel Court site produced eight brass thimbles: seven with a closed end, and one ring-type. All are very worn and corroded, and many are broken, though surviving details of form and surface treatment help to suggest their date and origin. They cover a range in date from possibly as early as the 14th century up to the 17th century. One is probably of British manufacture, the rest imported from the Continent, mostly from Holland. None are decorated, and none are stamped, but they represent a group of plain, well-used, ordinary working tools.

Two of the closed-end-type thimbles have no indentations on the crown and small circular punched holes, features which place them earlier than 1620. One of the two is small but of adult-sized

diameter, and has a slightly pointed crown. It is a form of light-duty thimble popular between about 1350 and 1450. The other is tall, with a solid projecting rim showing it was cast, and a wide plain band between the rim and the indentations. Analysis of the metal at the Ancient Monuments Laboratory of English Heritage showed that this thimble retains traces of a silver wash. In the 17th century the 'quality' end of the market was taken over by silver thimbles and brass examples became considered of lower status. This thimble probably shows that in the early years of the century at least there was also a middle range on the market, with silver-washed thimbles commanding a higher price than plain brass ones, but not such a high price that they were beyond the means of ordinary folk.

Two more closed-end thimbles are typical examples of those found in 17th-century levels on archaeological sites in Colchester. Almost certainly light-duty Dutch thimbles, they have rectangular indentations which have been applied with a knurled wheel in a spiral running upwards from the base. Two others have very fine machine-applied indentations. Unfortunately the top of each is missing, but enough survives to show that both are similar to Dutch forms, one a type made between 1620-50, and the other made in the last half of the 17th century.

The final closed-end thimble is very unusual and almost certainly British-made. It is made of very much thicker metal than usual, and is not pitted with indentations, but instead bears two bands of incised lines laid out in rough grids. These bands are themselves crossed by curved lines which sweep up and down around the body. Part of an incised line can also be made out on the corroded top. This thimble probably dates to the 16th or early 17th century.

The solitary ring-type thimble has indentations similar to those of the closed-type light-duty Dutch thimbles of the 17th century. Ring thimbles were traditionally used by tailors, who usually had much heavier cloth to deal with than the home needlewoman.

These thimbles from the Angel Court form a small collection typical of those in everyday use from about 1350 to 1700, with the 1600s particularly well represented. The closed-end thimbles provide evidence of ordinary domestic sewing on the site, while the ring thimble may suggest that commercial tailoring was carried out in the area.

*Philip and Nina Crummy*

# Bringing the past



*The 1989 Essex History Fair was a phenomenal success. Keith Bradbury, Chairman of Essex History Fair '89, provides the background.*

**T**he biennial Essex History Fair took place this year in Colchester Castle Park on Sunday 11th June. Behind that bald statement lies a drama in which this prestigious event, planned as the major highlight of the Colchester Charter 800 Celebrations, almost failed to take place.

Planning was proceeding well and an estimated staging cost of £9,000 was virtually committed when Colchester Borough Council officers had reluctantly to inform the organising committee that the Sunday Observance Act of 1760 made it illegal to charge an entrance fee for 'publick entertainment or amusement' into any location which would



# to life

thus be deemed 'a disorderly house or place'. After considerable deliberation and consultation however, the committee decided to go ahead and rely on voluntary contributions from those attending. This courageous decision — and a great deal of energetic work by the organisers — was eventually vindicated when a most successful History Fair took place.

It comprised over forty hours of concurrent entertainment in four different locations in the Park and also featured static displays from a wide range of over fifty organisations. Performances ranged from Roman drill by the Ermine Street Guard, through re-enactment of medieval living and events by The White Company, and displays by the King's Army of the English Civil War Society to Elizabethan dressage. Period and traditional music and dance was well represented and performed by numerous groups which included folk dance from England, Ireland, Scotland, and Wales. In all these displays and events it was impressive to see the high standard of accuracy and workmanship in dress, equipment, weaponry, and movement.

The Castle and Park made a wonderful location for the fair. The Castle itself was open throughout the Fair and the Colchester Tourist Guides conducted a series of continuous tours of its interior and exterior.

The public support was magnificent. An attendance of 15,400 was achieved and the total takings came to about £19,100. After the performers' fees, administrative costs and a donation to Colchester Castle, it was therefore possible to hand over cheques for £5,000 each to the Charter 800 Association and the Essex History Fair Trust. Not bad for the Fair that 'nearly never was'.



*Above: one of over a hundred customers who tried the Trust's genuine Roman food. On offer were stuffed dates (*dulcia domestica*) and sweet wine cakes (*mustei*) made according to the recipes of Apicius, the famous Roman gourmet. Looking on is Trust secretary Eleanor Clark. Below: Trust draughtsman and temporary fast-food salesman Bob Moyes takes an off-duty stroll through the crowds.*

*Left above: Civil War pikemen and musketeers in action (The English Civil War Society). Left below: medieval shoe-makers (The White Company).*



# The house of Lazarus

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*The site of Colchester's little-known medieval leper hospital is about to be redeveloped for sheltered housing. Carl Crossan outlines the history of the site and the archaeological discoveries so far.*

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**T**oday, we associate leprosy with tropical regions yet it was once a disease familiar to the population of this country. The late 11th and 12th centuries saw the creation of a large number of hospitals, many initially devoted to the care of lepers. These hospitals, commonly called lazarus-houses after St Lazarus, were religious institutions in which the prime aim was the strengthening of the soul rather than the cure of the body. Even the humblest lazarus-house would have its own chapel, in addition to dormitory, eating and washing areas.

On admission, both staff and inmates would take the three main monastic vows



of poverty, chastity and obedience. Each hospital had its own set of rules governing worship, dress, hygiene and conduct, but common to all was the ideal that every patient should be treated as if he were master of the house. The lepers were allowed to venture outside the bounds of the hospital but usually only on condition that they follow detailed instructions designed to minimise contact with the local community. One surviving medieval manual dictates that journeying lepers must never walk bare-foot and should always be clothed in a distinctive costume which covered them almost completely; the dress specified consists of a cloak, hood, coat, shoes of fur, plain shoes and a girdle. In addition, the leper would carry his own dish for food, gloves to prevent skin contact and a clapper or bell to signify his approach. He was forbidden from travelling down narrow lanes in case he should meet someone. If anyone spoke to him on the open road, his instructions were to move to their leeward side before replying.

Such rules seem to have been designed to allay the general public's fear of contagion. Within the hospitals it was — quite correctly — recognised that leprosy is not easily communicable. Visitors from outside were not only permitted, but often encouraged to stay overnight.

Fortunately, this disfiguring disease did not persist — its incidence appears to have peaked around 1350, then

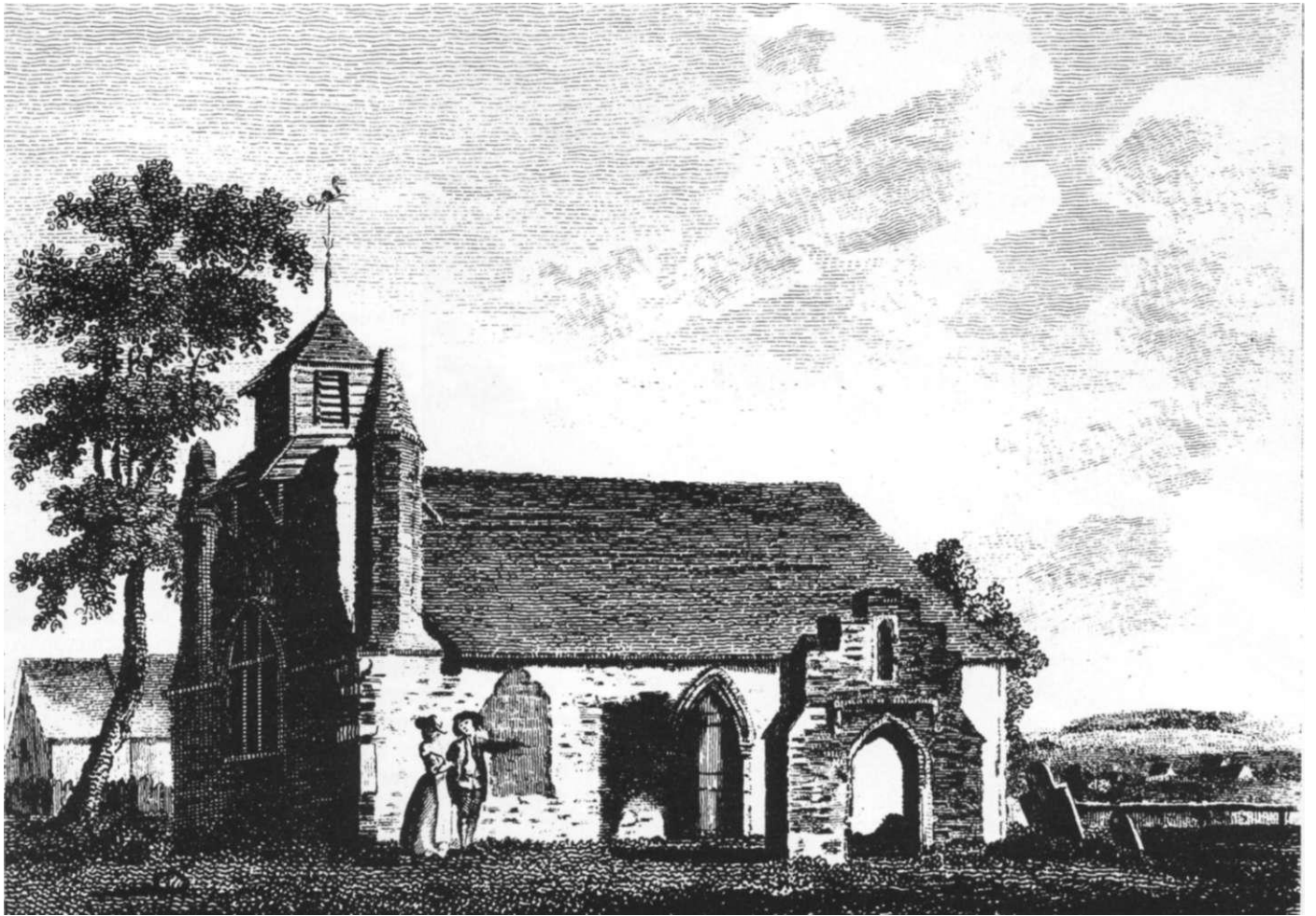
declined to the point where it became almost unknown in Britain's population after the 16th century.

## The site

Colchester's only known leper hospital was established in the early 12th century by Eudo Dapifer, steward to King Henry I. Dapifer's other works in the town include Colchester Castle and the great Abbey of St John's. Dedicated to St Mary Magdalen, the hospital stood about a half mile south-east of the town, close to the road leading to the medieval Hythe.

In comparison with some of Colchester's medieval religious establishments there are few documents relating to the early history of the hospital. However, those that do survive offer some fascinating insights into the affairs of the house. Here we are indebted to staff of the Victoria County History of Essex for providing the most recent collation of material from their files.

An early reference to the hospital appears in a charter of Henry II. Issued after the death of the hospital's original patron, Eudo Dapifer, the charter grants income from the manor of Brightlingsea to St John's Abbey, instructing the abbot to allocate from it a sum of £6 each year for the use of the infirm of the hospital. The hospital was placed in the charge of the abbey which provided the lepers with a daily al-



*Above: The first church in 1783. Viewed from the south-west.*

*Right: The Victorian church of St Mary Magdalen in 1989.*

lowance of bread, beer, and meat. Henry also took the lepers into his protection with a declaration that none should molest them, or prosecute them except before the king in person or his justices by his order.

On the 8th December 1189, Richard I granted the hospital permission to hold an annual fair on the vigil and feast-days of St Mary Magdalen, the 21st and 22nd July. Fairs were popular in medieval England and provided valuable funds for authorised charities. St Mary's fair was probably held on Magdalen Green, an open area to the south of the hospital now occupied by the Victorian church.

In addition to the abbey tithes and fair, the hospital was maintained by independent income from various gifts of land. However, it was never a wealthy house. In 1301 their taxable possessions were a brass pot worth 1s 8d, a cart worth 2s, cattle worth £3 3s 4d and grain worth 16s 8d. This assessment coincided with a low point in relations between the





*The 19th-century graves on the site of the first church. Viewed from the north-east.*

hospital and St John's Abbey. In the early 14th century, the hospital brethren complained to Parliament claiming that a former abbot had persuaded them to show him Henry's charter, then threw it into the fire. Following the destruction of the charter, the abbot first withdrew their daily ration of food, then refused to pay over the £6 grant from the Brightlingsea lands. The abbot of the time was said to have arrived at the hospital with a great force, demanding that the brethren obey him. When the master of the hospital refused, he was dragged from his church along with another who disobeyed and both were

thrown out of their dwellings. Parliament rejected their complaints but in 1320, the king made a grant of protection to the master and brethren on account of their poverty.

Having survived the disputes with the abbey, the hospital continued its work until the mid 16th century when it suffered in the aftermath of the dissolution of the monasteries. As religious houses owing allegiance to Rome, the hospitals did not escape the pressures imposed by Henry VIII and his successors. The hospitals were suppressed by a general statute of Edward VI. Mary Magdalen's lands were seized and in

1565 plots in Colchester, Greenstead, and Layer were granted to two senior officials of Elizabeth I.

The hospital was re-established as an almshouse by James I in 1610 under the title of 'The College or Hospital of King James within the Suburbs of the Town of Colchester'. It consisted of a master and five unmarried poor people who resided there for life. In addition to administering the almshouse the master was charged with 'the cure of the souls of the parishioners of St Mary Magdalen' by arranging regular services in the church which once stood in the hospital grounds. Successive masters of the house seem to have interpreted their responsibilities in differing ways; in 1644 the Reverend Gabriel Honeyfold was ejected from his post at the hospital for 'preaching seldom, neither residing nor providing for the cure, swearing by his faith and playing cards on Sunday'. When a former mayor was appointed master in 1650, services ceased altogether and the church was used as a poorhouse for a time.

The neglect appears to have continued for the rest of the 17th century. Income due to the hospital was claimed to be up to ten years in arrears and in 1691 a commission appointed to correct abuses included Colchester in its list of hospitals to be investigated. Regular services did not resume until 1721 when Thomas Parker, the Lord Chancellor, repaired the church at his own expense.

Major changes took place in the 19th century. The almspeople were rehoused in a newly-built terrace facing Brook Street and in 1854 the cramped and decaying former-hospital church was replaced by the present church which was built on part of Magdalen Green to the south. The rest of the green and the site of the now-demolished medieval church were both then used for burial. In spite of this expansion of the church grounds, regular burial ceased in the late 1880's due to lack of space for further plots.

## **The excavations**

The site is today a derelict churchyard adjoining the now disused Victorian church. Prompted by plans to develop the land for sheltered housing, the Trust is engaged in church-sponsored excavations to salvage a more complete history of this important establishment.

Our first task has been to locate the hospital church demolished in 1854. Although none of the earlier hospital buildings survive above ground, we had the advantage of knowing its approximate

position thanks to the existence of a number of 17th- and 18th-century maps which, in their stylised fashion, show something of the hospital as it was in their day. The one prominent feature common to all the maps is the hospital church, generally depicted as standing on the western part of the site. A narrow exploratory trench across the area indicated on the maps soon revealed a light scattering of demolition debris, then at a lower level a short stretch of intact wall foundation which was to prove to be part of a complex group of remains representing a building much altered during its 800-year-old life.

Before mounting a full-scale excavation of the building it was necessary to carefully remove and record the 19th-century burials for future reinterment in another area of consecrated ground. This done, excavation is continuing and has to date revealed the nave, chancel, and porch of the church. The walls of the nave rest on c 12th-century foundations composed of alternating layers of light clay and compacted mortar, a distinctive constructional technique found on several of Colchester's monastic sites. With such early origins, it seems likely that the building was originally laid out as a chapel for the hospital, then converted to a church upon the formation of the parish of St Mary Magdalen in the early 13th century.

Elsewhere on the site, surface clearance has revealed another hospital building which has yet to be investigated.

We can only guess at the number of burials that the churchyard and hospital grounds have seen over the centuries. In a recent ground survey over 400 18th- and 19th-century plots were still discernible in the churchyard, but these only represent the tip of the iceberg and the full figure is likely to be many times that number. With such a high density of burial, the earlier graves inevitably suffer disturbance. However any intact early graves of hospital inmates will be of particular interest since their remains offer a valuable opportunity for the bone specialist to study medieval disease.

As for the future, the church hopes that the housing to be built there will provide sheltered accommodation for the less well off, a most appropriate use for a site with a 900-year-old tradition of caring for the community.

*The archaeological excavations at St Mary Magdalen's are being funded by the Chelmsford Diocesan Pastoral Committee.*

## Recording the churchyard




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*The surviving monuments in the churchyard are also being recorded. Some tell sad tales of early death.*

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The appalling level of child mortality in Victorian England is illustrated by the inscriptions on the family tomb of James and Mary Brown. The panels record the loss of nine children between 1844 and 1857. James was churchwarden for almost 40 years and died in 1887.

Many members of the garrison were buried here in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. The best preserved memorial from that period is dedicated to John Rodger, a private from the Ayrshire Regiment, who died in a drowning accident in 1805.

However, perhaps the most touching of all the memorials is that of Thomas Patrick, a former churchwarden who was killed on a Saturday night in 1827 as he tried to detain street robbers in Magdalen Street. His assailant, an occasional prize-fighter and wanted criminal known as 'Big Jem', was later arrested and brought to justice. The inscription on the stone reads:

*'By murderous hands my life was taken away, And here I rest until the Judgement day, I've left a wife and (indistinct) dear, to mourn my loss, the stroke it was severe.'*

On closer study, the indistinct section turns out to be the word 'children' recut on top of 'son most' showing that his wife must have been carrying a child at the time of his death.

# Osborne Street

*by Donald Shimmin*

The proposed redevelopment of the surface car park at Osborne Street as a multi-storey car-park and shopping complex provided a good opportunity to excavate a little known suburban area of Colchester. The site is situated about 100 yards from the town's south-east gate on the route to the Hythe and close to the town's two main medieval monastic foundations — St John's Abbey and St Botolph's Priory.

The site lies on the south side of an underground water course which until recently surfaced near St Botolph's Priory. This proved significant as the damp anaerobic soil conditions over much of the site favoured the preservation of organic remains such as wood and leather, a most unusual situation in Colchester.

Roman remains on the site were surprisingly sparse and research showed that a tantalising report from 1907 of a mosaic on the site was actually referring to somewhere else! There were not even any burials which are usually common on extra-mural sites. However an area of tessellated pavement was revealed in a trench at the eastern end of the site sealing an earlier daub floor and timber revetment, including parts of several well-preserved wooden posts. These must have belonged to a building which fronted on to a Roman street underlying St Botolph's Street.

The next phase of activity on the site is represented by a series of wicker drains and fences of late 12th to 14th century date. The stake and interwoven wattle lining of the drains was very well-preserved, surviving in places a foot high. Early medieval wooden structures, including the houses themselves, have been extensively excavated in recent years in places such as York and Dublin but this is the first time that

*Uncovering the floors of the house burnt during the Siege of Colchester.*

*Before the Trust moved on to the Osborne Street car park the only Cavaliers in evidence were those parked there. However towards the end of the dig, the burnt remains of a 17th-century house were uncovered which bore witness to the struggle between the besieged Royalists and the surrounding Parliamentary forces during the Siege of Colchester in 1648.*

similar remains have been uncovered in Colchester.

By the late 14th century the buildings on the St Botolph's Street frontage had extended back over the site and there followed a complicated sequence of structural remains dating from the 14th to the 18th centuries. Initially these included substantial stone and mortar foundations, followed by carefully constructed plinths of peg-tile set in a 'herringbone' pattern, which were finally rebuilt in brick in the 17th century. Associated with the foundations and floors were various other features including an oven, the bases of several barrels, a timber-lined pit, wooden drains and even the timber ground-plates of a small structure. These probably belonged to out-buildings at the rear of houses or workshops. Finds included some fragments of wooden vessels and pieces of



leather as well as quantities of pottery and animal bone.

A house of 16th- to 17th-century date was uncovered at the western end of the site near the Stanwell Street frontage. This was of timber-framed construction, and most of the rooms had well-preserved tiled floors, which replaced earlier clay floors. The tiled floors, which included some glazed examples, were much worn and repaired, latterly in brick (see photograph). The floors were heavily scorched when the building was burnt down and the whole building sealed by a layer of destruction debris. The dating evidence, notably the clay pipes and pottery, strongly suggests that the house was one of the many burnt down during the Siege of Colchester in 1648.

The siege lasted 11 weeks and about half way through on July 14th a critical action took place in the nearby St John's Abbey grounds. This in effect confined the Royalists to within the town walls with little hope of escape, and enabled the Parliamentary forces to set up artillery on St John's Green in order to bombard the town. Small wonder if nearby houses were obliterated in the process!

Extra-mural development is by no means a recent phenomenon in Colchester and the excavation of sites like Osborne Street illustrates how at different times throughout the Roman, medieval and later periods, people were prepared to live in houses which did not have the protection offered by the wall.

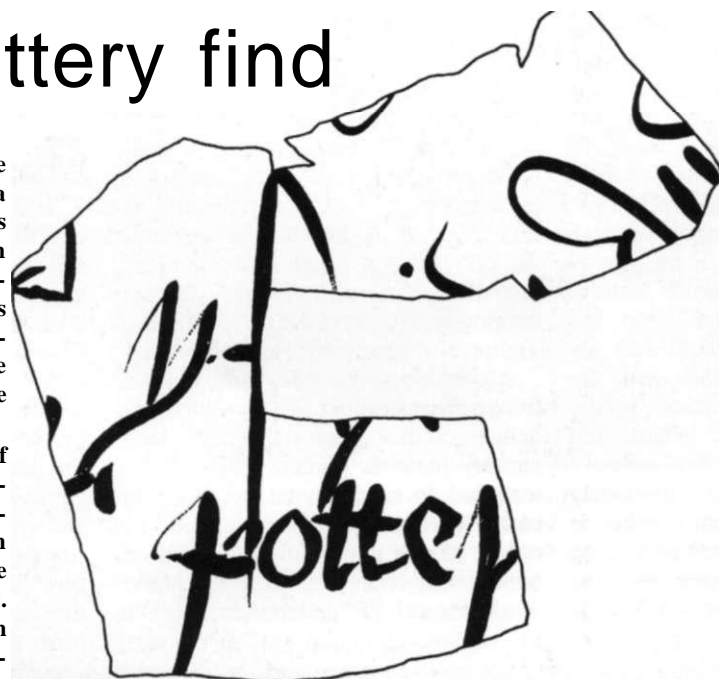


A 17th-century map of the Siege of Colchester. The position of the burnt house at Osborne Street is indicated by an arrow.

## Rare pottery find

An unusual find from the Osborne Street site was a group of pottery sherds from a medieval pot on which the potter had apparently inscribed his name. Although very incomplete, sufficient of the pot was found to read the word 'potter'.

The pot concerned is of the type known as sgraffito ware, so-called because it was decorated with patterns scribed on to the pot before its firing. Names often occur on Roman pots but the prac-



tice is practically unknown in the medieval period. The Osborne Street pot dates to around 1400 when people still might change their surnames to match their occupations. Presumably this indeed was the potter's surname although there is a surviving reference to a John Pottere in 1345/6 who was a miller.

No evidence of pottery-making was found at Osborne Street but there was at least one kiln of slightly later date about 200 yards to the south east. Its existence was shown by the discovery of wasters (badly-fired rejects) at least twice in the past.

# Recent Discoveries in Essex

## Cressing Temple

Unlike many English counties, Essex does not possess a great medieval cathedral. However, Cressing Temple provides, perhaps, an alternative, a Norman manorial complex which is unique in Europe. The two great barns, the Wheat Barn and the Barley Barn, are over 700 years old, and are probably the best-preserved medieval timber barns in Europe. The barns were part of a large estate owned by a crusading order of warrior monks, the Knights Templar, hence the name Cressing Temple. The site has passed through many hands since the Middle Ages, and the present estate incorporates buildings of many periods. As well as the barns, there is a 16th-century farmhouse, granary and walled garden, and 18th-century farm buildings.

Cressing Temple was acquired by Essex County Council in September 1987, to safeguard the existence of this internationally important site and to make it more readily accessible to the general public. These sentiments were shared by English Heritage, the National Heritage Memorial Fund and the European Community, who have all made grants to assist with the site's purchase and conservation.

The County Council's main objective will be the development of the site as one of the focal points for the historic heritage of Essex, based upon the preservation of its historical and archaeological value, together with the encouragement of continued public use through appropriate leisure and educational activities. To achieve these ambitious aims will obviously take a number of years, but it is hoped that visitors will always find something to interest them at Cressing and that some may indeed find it worthwhile making periodic visits to see progress



*Cressing Temple from the air showing the Barley Barn (centre right) under repair and excavations in progress at the far end of the walled garden (centre left).*

made as the work proceeds. Repair and conversion work will be proceeding gradually, providing fuller facilities and access, all of which work will have to be carried out with a great deal of care and preparation on a site as sensitive as this. Whatever is done, the main consideration must be to conserve and enhance the unique character of the site whilst providing a venue for a wide range of public activities compatible with that character.

Archaeological investigation is an important part of the restoration of Cressing Temple. Construction trenches for new electricity and water supplies, required as part of the preparation of improved visitor facilities, are carefully dug in advance by archaeologists to record surviving ancient remains. One of the contractors trenches, in the area between the walled garden and Court Hall, revealed a concentration of features ranging in date from the early medieval Templar occupation to the 16th century.

Alongside this work, trial excavations are proceeding in the walled garden, prior to its restoration as a 16th-century paradise garden. This work is intended to reveal what evidence for earlier garden layout survives, and the nature of any underlying medieval occupation, in order to assess what further work should be undertaken prior to the replanting of the garden on early

Tudor lines. So far the work has revealed extensive evidence of earlier garden layouts including gravel paths, flower beds, cultivated soils, and a wide brick surface, apparently a walkway around the inside of the garden wall. This brick surface appears to be part of a very early garden layout and may be part of the original scheme. The degree of survival of archaeological evidence is remarkable given that the garden has been cultivated for 400 years. Beneath the 0.5-1.0 m of stratified deposits a wide variety of features ranging in date from prehistoric to post medieval are cut into the natural chalky boulder clay.

## What a way to go!

While the new hangars, terminal buildings, car parks, hotels, roads and railways have been sprouting out of the ground at the blossoming Stansted Airport, archaeologists from Essex County Council have been digging down looking for our roots!

For four years, a team of hardy perennials have been trudging over the Essex boulder clay plateau, both finding and excavating previously unknown archaeological sites. Excavations (reported in previous issues) are now at an end, and in recent months most of the team's work has been in the form of a 'watching brief' (following



behind the contractors' earthmoving plant, and recording new sites or finds as and where they crop up).

Having to do watching brief work is rather like drawing the short straw. It can involve long periods of trudging around behind machines when it is too wet to dig on site, and long periods of finding nothing at all. On the other hand, it can turn up spectacular discoveries, a good example of which is the finding of a rich Roman box-burial at the Duckend Car Park site.

The deceased person, probably a wealthy Romano-British farmer, was cremated and buried in the mid second century AD. He was accompanied by an extraordinary assortment of grave goods, including a complete glass bowl, a glass cup and an urn, two bronze paterae, two bronze jugs, and a whole dinner service of samian ware pottery. The better-preserved of the two jugs is an exquisite piece, straight from the root-stock of classical art, and produced by a master-craftsman.

We are inclined to forget that the purpose of such grave goods was to supply food and drink for the journey to the after-life. The bowls and plates might have held a variety of food-stuffs, but what was in the jug? - almost certainly a very fine vintage. Perhaps we should raise a glass to whomever was buried there, to toast the obvious profitability of his own farming enterprise, and to celebrate our own good fortune in walking across a muddy field, and finding a beautiful flower.

### A vintage summer!

The dry summer of 1989 was certainly good news for archaeologists! Indeed, it is likely that 1989 will go down in history, with the hot summer of 1976, as a vintage year for the discovery of archaeological cropmark sites.

The Archaeology Section was awarded a grant from the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments (England) for a series of flights, concentrated in the north-west of the county. Although this area is not normally conducive to good cropmark formation, they can be found, particularly along the river valleys which cut into the boulder clay plateau. New discoveries in this area are particularly important, in view of the long-term threat from



*A bronze jug from Stansted Airport—one of a group of vessels with a Roman cremation.*

development resulting from the expansion of Stansted Airport. Although all the photographs have not yet been analysed, it is clear that many new sites have been discovered. These include single ring ditches near Little Bardfield and Takeley, and the cross-trees of a wind mill near Ridgewell. Even such well-flown areas as the Stour valley have produced new sites, such as two large ring ditches near Clare.

One of the most exciting of the new discoveries, potentially, lies north-west of Great Dunmow. Here, a small square enclosure lies close to a stretch of what looks like a Roman road. Between the enclosure and the road is a group of large, dark pit-like marks. Although interpretation at this stage can only be provisional, the enclosure may be a Roman temple, and the pit marks are very similar to Saxon

sunken-featured buildings, such as those excavated at Mucking.

The dry weather also resulted in parchmarks appearing in grassland. At Tilty, the plan of the largely buried remains of the abbey was revealed, even to the extent of showing the pillars of the church. Although the Abbey had shown as a parchmark before, it had only been possible to produce a very rudimentary plan of the remains.

Amateur flyers have also been active in the skies above Essex and they too have reported spectacular results. Until their photographs have been checked against the County Council's Sites and Monuments Record, it is too soon to say how many new sites have been discovered. However, the 1989 season should see a significant addition to our knowledge of the archaeology of Essex.

# In Brief....

## West Stockwell Street

The former rates office in West Stockwell Street was demolished in the summer of 1989 to allow a new development of houses. Being in the historic 'Dutch Quarter' of the town, archaeological investigation of the site was undertaken to record any remains. The site itself was full of promise because all around there are buildings of antiquity: directly opposite stands a fine 15th-century house, immediately to the north is the Stockwell Arms which is of the same date, and a short distance to the south is St Martin's Church, parts of which date back to at least the 12th century. The Roman remains were of interest too because the site lies on the junction of two streets and obtaining exact fixes on the positions of the Roman street frontages is of great value in mapping out the layout of the Roman town.

In the event, the east-west Roman street was located although the north-south proved to have been too badly damaged by the digging of pits in the area. The great surprise however was

on the West Stockwell Street frontage where the excavations revealed a 16th- or 17th-century cellar but little evidence of the floors in the adjacent rooms which must have existed. The site lies on a very steeply sloping part of West Stockwell Street and it seems most likely in the light of the excavations that the floors on the ground-floor were suspended wooden ones and that they were raised well above the street which is why they left few traces. In situations like this it is normal to find the remains of earlier floors underneath but in this case no such discoveries were made.

The most likely explanation for the absence of the expected deposits is that after the end of the Roman period, the site remained open until the 16th or 17th centuries when the first house was built on it. This suggests that there must have been little pressure on building land in the Dutch Quarter until at least this time.

Such an interpretation fits the historical background as far as it is known. The main influx of Dutch immigrants into Colchester occurred in the late 16th century, many settling in the area around East and West Stockwell Streets.

Demand for accommodation was such that in 1609 it was said there was not a vacant house to be had in the town. The shortage of housing no doubt contributed greatly to the building boom which occurred at this time, the evidence for which is still to be seen in the number of houses of the period in Colchester. Presumably the house which was erected on our vacant plot in West Stockwell Street was part of the response to the meet the shortage.

## New publications

The Trust produced two new publications in 1989. The first was the fifth in the series of Colchester Archaeological Reports. It is entitled *The Post-Roman small finds from excavations in Colchester 1971-85* and is by Nina Crummy. It follows on from Colchester Archaeological Report 2 (now out of print) which deals with Roman small finds. The book costs £12.00 post-free from Oxbow Books (10 St Cross Road, Oxford).

The second publication is the booklet *Secrets of the grave*, produced to coincide with the laying out of the Butt Road Roman church as a public monument. It includes colour reproductions of two

## It's a piece of cake!

Trust Treasurer Steve Maddison retired last March after nine years' hard cheque-signing. The work was purely voluntary and had to be fitted into what spare time he had left after a demanding full-time job with Barclays Bank. Steve, who commutes each weekday to London, has had to give up being treasurer because Barclays is relocating part of its



headquarters in Coventry. A important link with the Trust has been Pat, his wife, who because she has worked in Barclays Bank in Colchester, has acted as go-between, ferrying cheques and countless bits of paper between Steve and the Trust.

A party was held in the Chapel on the Castle roof to thank Steve and Pat for all their efforts and to wish them well in Coventry. As a special farewell treat, we thought Steve might like to eat a cheque book rather than write on it. Pictured left to right are all three of the Trust's former Honorary Treasurers: Colin Buck (1969-75), Steve Maddison (1980-89), and Ida McMaster (1975-80).

of Peter Froste's reconstructions of the church (see pages 21-22). The booklet can be obtained from local bookshops, the Castle Museum, or the Trust (£1.75 post-free).

### Archaeology lectures

The Colchester Archaeological Group's winter session of lectures for 1989/90 will cover a wide range of topics including the dinosaur from Gloucestershire (by Geoffrey Tann), the archaeology of ritual and magic (by Ralph Merrifield), water and the Roman engineer (Dr A K Knowles), and the development of clocks in Europe (Viscount Midleton).

Full details can be obtained from Dennis Tripp, 69 Lexden Road, Colchester C03 3QE (telephone 578059).

### And in the Museum ....

The museum's varied programme of temporary exhibitions over the next year is to include one on the recent excavations in the town. On display will be many of the best finds from sites such as Culver Street, Gilbert School, Butt Road and Angel Yard. Visitors will be able to see the four-thousand-year-old Neolithic pottery from Culver Street (a very unexpected find but the best group of its kind from the county!) and the exceptionally fine Roman dagger scabbard from the Gilbert School. The exhibition will continue until 20th January 1990 after which it will be updated at intervals to incorporate recent and new finds.

Other exhibitions include:

*The Magic of Pantomime* (9th December 1989 — 6th January 1990)

*Computing Past and Present* (13th January 1990 — 10th February 1990)

*750 Years of Telecommunications* (16th June 1990 — 15th July 1990).

### The Roman wall

Like last year, the Roman town wall continued to attract our attention. The detailed survey of the wall is in full swing with about half being completed by the autumn of 1989. In addition exploratory trenches were dug on two sites where the position and condition of the buried parts of the wall had to be clarified before building works could proceed on those sites. Excavations such as these occasionally need to be carried out because, although the wall has been given statutory protection against damage, its exact position is not always known.

### Stanway excavation

Work inside the enigmatic prehis-

## The Friends of the Colchester Archaeological Trust

The Friends of CAT is a thriving organisation with several hundred members. Most live in Colchester or nearby, with a few more scattered across the British Isles, but some hail from as far afield as Denmark, Gibraltar, Canada, the USA, Africa, and the Antipodes. All members of the Friends receive a copy of *The Colchester Archaeologist*, and those living within a reasonable distance of Colchester have a chance to attend an annual lecture on the previous year's work, to go on organised outings to excavation sites, ancient monuments, historic buildings and museums, and to attend events related to the work of the Trust.

### A busy year so far

1989 has been a particularly lively one for the Friends. There have been coach trips around the Iron Age dyke systems of Colchester, to the unspoilt village of Castle Acre to see the Priory and Castle, to Ely Cathedral, and to some churches in north-west Essex.

In June the Friends and the Trust ran a joint stall and small display at the Essex History Fair, with the sale of Roman food (stuffed dates and sweet wine cakes) by stall-holders in Roman dress proving a real crowd-puller. In September the Friends were granted the use of the Mayor's charity fund-raising stall in Colchester market, this time sticking to modern dress and selling bric-a-brac, books, toys, plants, clothes, and cakes donated by members. Nearly everything was sold, and a healthy sum was raised to boost the bank balance.

Also in September Friends were invited to attend the service of rededication for the Butt Road Roman cemetery church and afterwards to take coffee in the Maldon Road Chapel and view just a small selection of the finds from the Butt Road site. Later that day they may even have seen themselves on television!

In October members of the Friends had an opportunity to attend a preview of an exhibition in the Castle Museum, Colchester, on finds from recent excavations. The exhibition, mounted by staff of the Museum, was formally opened at the preview by the Trust's Director, Philip Crummy. It will run until January of next year when it will be updated to cover more recent finds

### And more to come

A coach trip to Saffron Walden in November will round off the visiting year, with the new archaeological gallery in the museum there being just one of the treats in store.

The AGM, with its illustrated talks outlining the previous year's work by staff of the Trust, will be held on January 27th 1990 in the lecture room of the Public Library in Trinity Square, Colchester.

The schedule of trips for next year will include visits to some Essex churches, and a tour round the dramatic prehistoric site of Flag Fen near Peterborough.

### Do join us

For details of trips and other events contact Nina Crummy, 2 Hall Road, Copford, Colchester, C06 1BN. Tel. Colchester 210255. Further information on the Friends and how to join is to be found inside the front cover of this magazine.

Nina Crummy

toric enclosures continued at the quarry pit in Stanway. The site is known from aerial photography (see *The Colchester Archaeologist* 1, pp 2-3) and is gradually being destroyed as the quarry face advances eastwards. There are five enclosures in all on the site, excavation of the western half of the western pair now having taken place. Associated with

the various pits and ditches which have been excavated so far was a wide variety of pottery sherds indicating probable occupation at various times between the Neolithic and Roman periods. It is hoped that further excavation will be possible fairly soon — perhaps in 1991 depending on how quickly the quarry face advances.

Philip Crummy

# Rediscovering a 19th-century brick kiln

*Mike Corbishley*



**Y**oung Archaeologists from the Colchester district had a chance to tackle some industrial archaeology when they helped local volunteers excavate a brick kiln in the hamlet of Stones Green near Harwich in Essex.

If you look at old maps, especially those from the 18th and 19th centuries which show the names of fields, you will often find the words clay, brick, die or kiln appearing. Making bricks and tiles for building was a local industry in the recent past. Kilns for firing, or baking, bricks were often constructed on the site of a new development and then abandoned afterwards. Little villages often had their own brick kiln.

The owners of Kiln House in the area in which I live thought that they had a brick kiln in the grounds behind the house and wanted it investigated. As soon as we had fought our way through the undergrowth, it was clear that this had been the site of a kiln — and that the kiln was extremely well preserved. While I made arrangements to clear and excavate the kiln I began to investigate other clues.

## Documents and maps

The word KILN appeared in the names of three fields around Kiln House on a map made in 1844, except that the house was not called Kiln House then. A book called Kelly's Directory (list of tradespeople in each

village or district) of 1845 does record a 'builder and bricklayer' called William Finch. You can see copies of Kelly's Directories in Colchester Library (Local Studies Section). The official government census (a record of everyone's address, age and occupation etc) of 1851 records that William Finch was a 'Bricklayer Master' and employed four men. So, we have a very good idea of when bricks started to be made at Kiln House. Other records tell us that the kiln was in production until the First World War.

## Clearing the site

Archaeologists often have to clear away soil over a site or even demolish buildings ahead of a rescue dig in a town. On this site we had to cut down trees and bushes and remove weeds! It all had to be done carefully though so that the kiln itself could be preserved.

## Excavation begins

Once uncovered it was clear that the kiln had survived very well. It's a sort of kiln called a 'Suffolk type' which means that a draught of air is provided under the kiln floor from three pointed arches at the front. The kiln is basically a four-sided box made of bricks and tiles (you can see how thick the walls are). Inside thousands of bricks of clay were neatly stacked. A temporary roof was then constructed to keep the heat in as the

kiln was 'fired'. It might be left burning for a fortnight!

## All built of bricks

We found that all the parts of the kiln were made of bricks (no surprise really!) except for the iron frames on the draught doors — brick walls, brick floor and brick arches. To support the kiln walls a great bank of earth had been piled up at the back. In front of the kiln was the stokepit where the ashes of the great fires were put.

## After the First World War

We discovered that when the kiln went out of production, it was filled in by knocking down one of the walls. The arches were bricked up — we think to stop anyone crawling in and being crushed by debris. The stokepit and the kiln were used as a rubbish pit by the people who lived in the house from 1914 to about the 1960s.

## More clues

After the excavation we went to look for evidence in the village of what happened to the bricks made in the kiln — we had found stacks of fired bricks around the kiln. We found that the nearby Methodist Chapel had been made with Kiln House bricks. In the parish churchyard we found that special triangular bricks made in this kiln were used for tombs in the late 19th century.

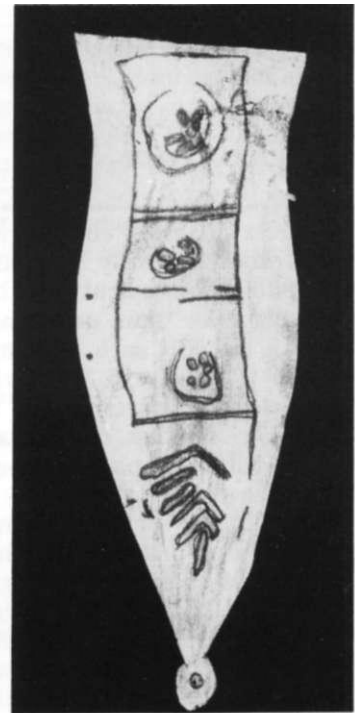
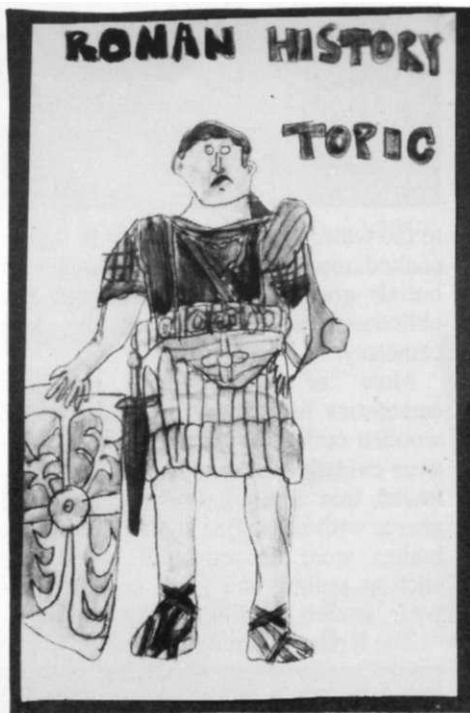
# The Romans at school



*Children at Stanway Fiveways Primary School have been busy looking at the Romans. Nina Crummy explains.*

Last term Miss Hayhoe's class of juniors at Stanway Fiveways Primary School took as their topic 'Roman Colchester'. A wealth of material for their project books was produced by visits to the Balcerne Gate and the Castle Museum, with maths creeping in by working out bus fares, distances, and the measurements of the gate. Roman small finds from the Colchester Archaeological Trust were taken to the school to illustrate a short talk, and the children then spent some time drawing objects 'from life' and examining them in detail.

The drawings, written work and models produced by the children were of very high quality, reflecting how the topic had captured the children's imaginations. Some of their work was on display on the Trust's stall at the Essex History Fair, where it drew a lot of admiring attention, and a very small selection is illustrated here. Members of the Friends of the Trust will recognise the dagger scabbard — it's the one recovered from the Gilbert School excavation.



# Unique ancient monument

*The Roman cemeteries at Butt Road turned out to be of great value in the study of the development of Christianity in Britain. The focal point of the site was a church, the ruins of which were recently laid out on permanent display.*

*Artist's impressions by Peter Froste.*

**C**olchester's Roman church at Butt Road was finally 'opened' as a public monument late in September this year thus providing the town with the only such building on display in the country. To mark the event, representatives from a wide range of Christian denominations took part in a joint service specially written for the occasion.

The Roman church and over seven hundred graves were uncovered by the Trust in the 1970s and 1980s although archaeologists had known of the existence of the site for 150 years. Originally there could have been as many as several thousand graves but hundreds had been destroyed with little record in the 19th century when the area was quarried for sand and gravel. The recent excavations were prompted by the need to explore and record the site fully before the construction of the new police station which otherwise would have led to the loss of much of the remains.

The alignments of the graves and the relationships between them indicated that there had been two quite different but successive cemeteries, the first for pagans and the second for Christians. The first cemetery contained a comparatively small number of graves, all of which were more or less aligned north-south. The second cemetery was laid out on top of the first one, probably during the early part of the 4th century. The graves were east-west with the heads



*Artist's impression of the Christian cemetery at Butt Road. Viewed from the south. The walled town is in the background. The Balcerne Gate is in the top left-hand corner.*

to the west. They were laid out in tightly packed rows which, as the number of burials grew, crept over and gradually obliterated the graves of the first cemetery.

Most of the bodies in both cemeteries had been buried in nailed wooden coffins, but various other types were evident including lead coffins, hollowed tree trunks, timber vaults, and graves with no coffins at all. Some of the bodies were accompanied by objects such as pottery and glass vessels, footwear, armlets, necklaces, and hairpins.

The Roman church was probably built

between AD 320-340 and was contemporary with the second cemetery. Its external walls were of stone and brick, its roof was tiled, and its floor was probably of earth and sand. The eastern wall was curved in the shape of an apse, whilst in-

*Excavation in progress of an unusual double burial in a wooden vault.*





*Above: artist's impression of the church viewed from the south-east.*

*Below: the commemorative service to mark the discovery of the church.*

side wooden posts formed short northern and southern aisles and a transverse screen. Some grave-like pits existed at the eastern end of the church suggesting that the building may have been the burial place of important local Christians. Finds from the site included hundreds of 4th-century coins and — most unusual — five complete oil lamps which imply that the building was dark inside.

The remains of the building have been consolidated and laid out for public view. The missing parts of the walls are indicated by strips of white cement and low oak posts show the positions of the missing uprights which would have formed the aisles and screen. The consolidation and display work was carried out by the Trust with the aid of funds from the Essex County Council and the Colchester Borough Council.

After the ceremony the Anglican Bishop of Colchester, the Rt. Rev. Michael Vickers, said the purpose of the service was to celebrate the town's long history as a centre of Christianity.

"It was fitting that it took place during 'Mission Colchester' in which the present-day churches of the town unite, for the church in front of us was built, it seems, before the great schisms which divided Christendom," he said.

