

The

COLCHESTER

ARCHAEOLOGIST

ROYAL GRAVES

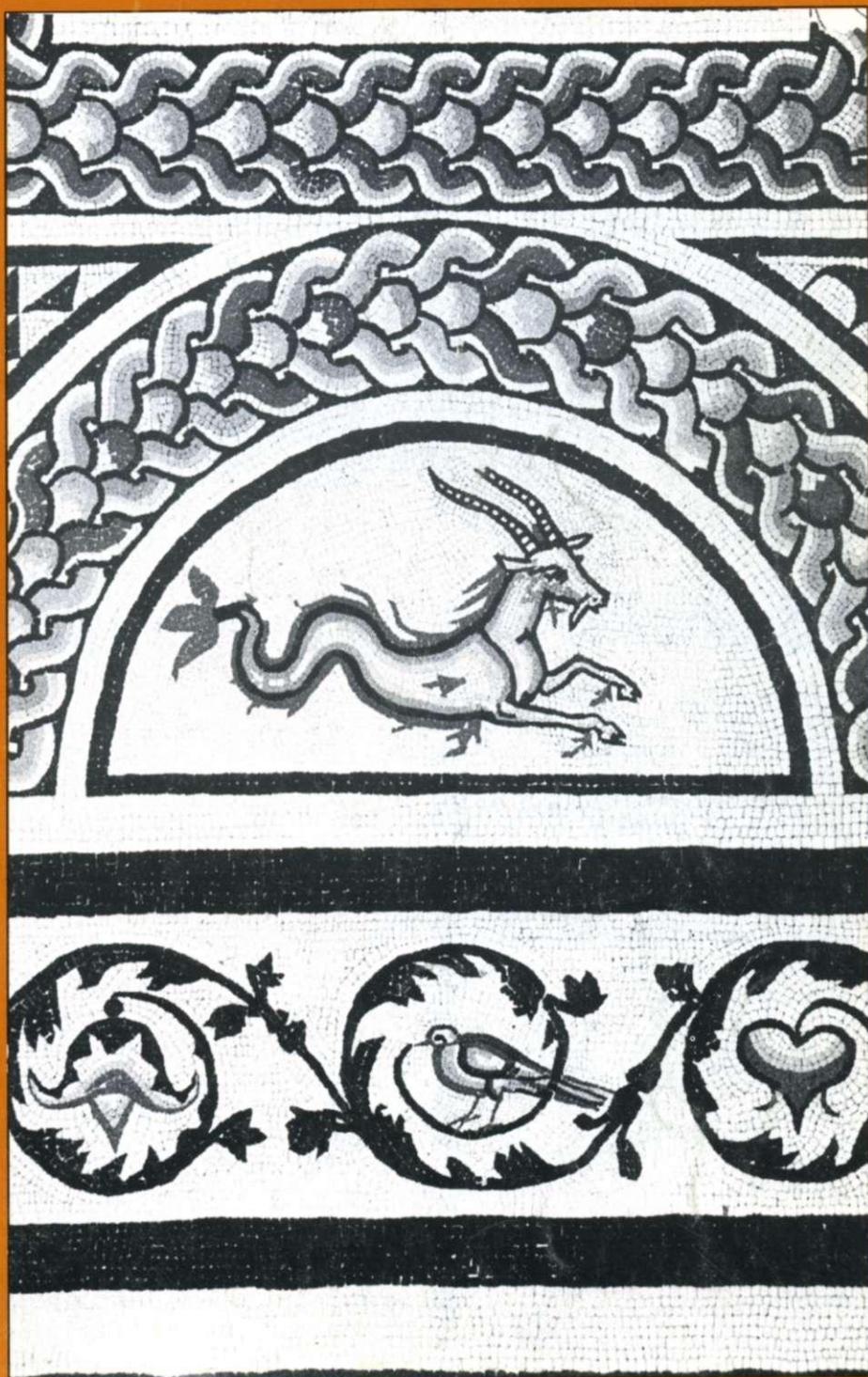
'THE MOSAIC OF
THE WRESTLING
CUPIDS'

ST BOTOLPH'S
PRIORY

SWEET-TOOTHED
WIFE-BEATERS

AROUND ESSEX

ARCHAEOLOGY
FOR YOUNG
PEOPLE



Issue Number 5 (1991-2)

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THE FRIENDS OF THE COLCHESTER ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

Cover:

Detail of 'The Mosaic of the Wrestling Cupids'. From the painting by R H Moyes.

The Colchester Archaeologist,
Issue Number 5 (1991-2)

Published by the
Colchester Archaeological Trust Ltd,
12 Lexden Road,
Colchester C03 3NF

Produced by
Philip Crummy

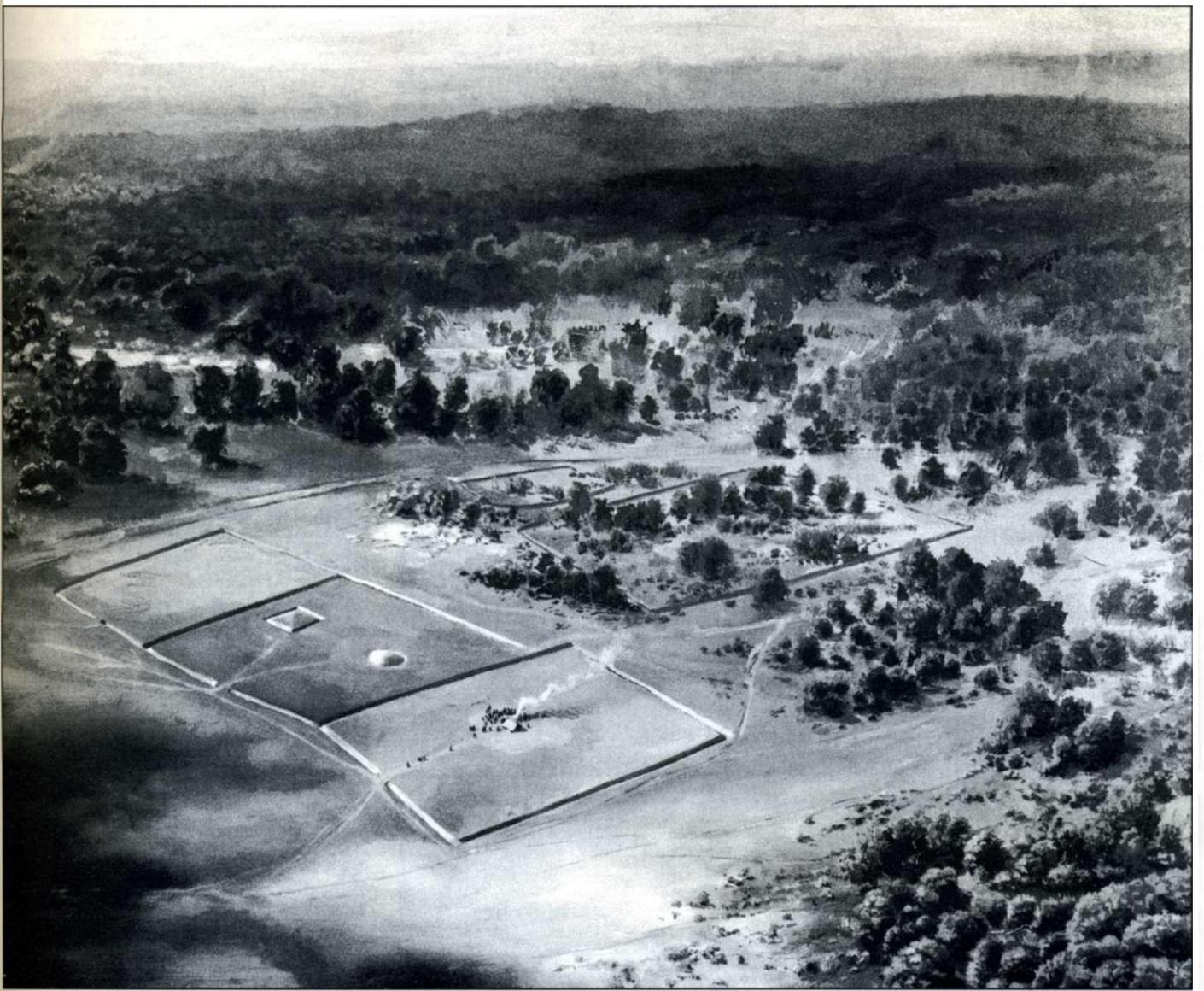
Printed by Witley Press Ltd,
Hunstanton, Norfolk

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The annual subscription rates are as follows: Adults and Institutions £3.00, Family membership £4.00, Children and Students £2.00. Subscriptions should be sent to Maureen Jones, Honorary Treasurer, Friends of the Colchester Archaeological Trust, 5 Ashwin Avenue, Copford, Essex C06 1BS.



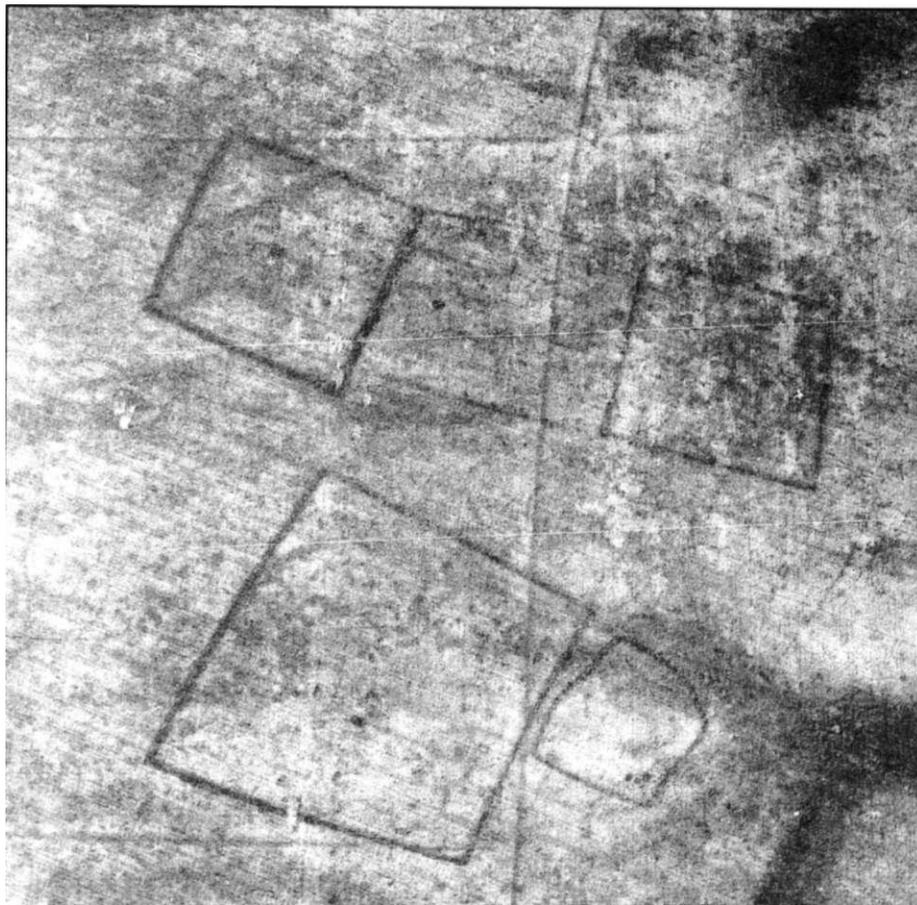
ROYAL GRAVES

What happened to the native leaders when the Romans conquered Camulodunum and settled here? Were they removed or were they dispossessed of their lands, and forbidden to pursue their customs and way of life? The recent discovery of rich burials at Colchester points to some answers...

At last, after several years of hard work, the Tarmac gravel pit at Stanway is bearing fruit with the discovery of extraordinary burial chambers constructed for the funerals of members of the native aristocratic upper class. Although the rituals and the structures are difficult to understand, it is clear that Stanway was a site of considerable importance around 2,000 years ago.

The site was discovered by aerial photography in the 1930s and is now being gradually destroyed as the face of the quarry advances. There are five large ditched enclosures or fields set out side by side as two groups, one of two (Enclosures 1 & 2) and the other of three (Enclosures 3, 4, & 5) set out in a line.

Above: reconstruction of the burial enclosures at Stanway by Peter Froste. (This is a preliminary version which is to be revised in the light of the dates of the chambers.)



Enclosures 1 and 2 appear to have originated as settlement or stock enclosures but probably during the second half of the 1st century BC, the largest of these came to be used as a burial place. Within 50 years or so, the first of the group of three enclosures was constructed but unlike the others, these all appear to have been specifically for burials.

The largest chamber

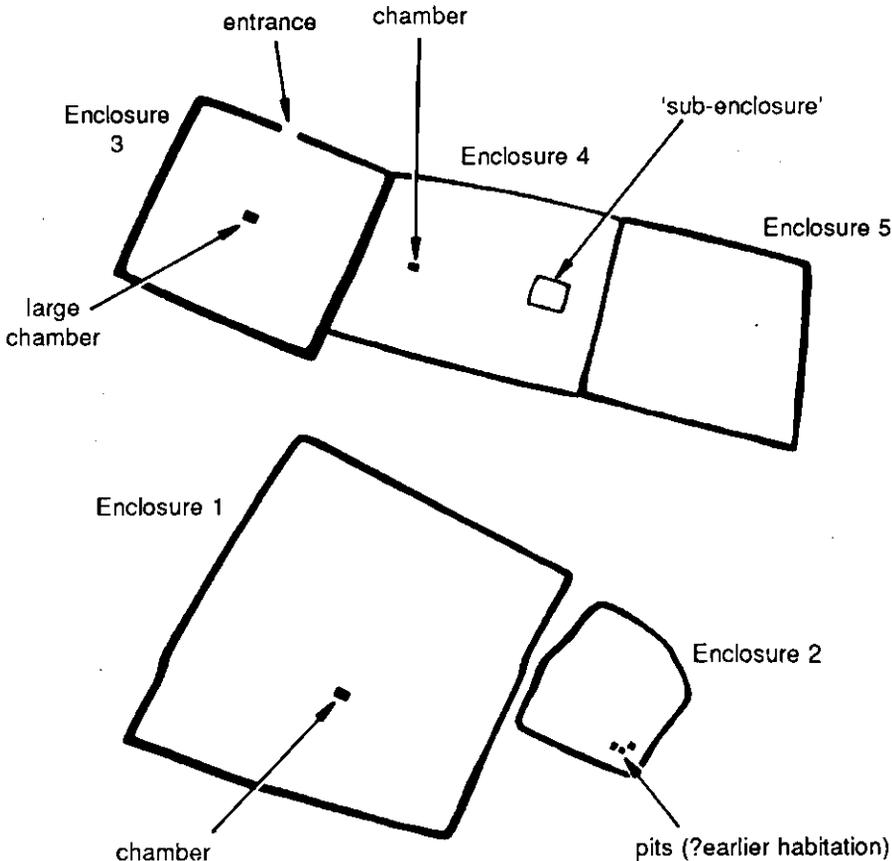
The biggest of the burial chambers was in the centre of Enclosure 3. The latter had only one entrance and this was placed centrally in the eastern side. The chamber was large, being equivalent in size to a small room. It measured 4 x 3.4 m in area and was just over 1 m deep. The walls were of timber planks held in place with iron nails. On opposite sides of the chamber, in the centres of the sides, were two vertical posts. These were offset just behind the timber walls as if the timbers had been nailed to them.

A chemical reaction had taken place with the effect that the positions of some of the timbers forming the walls could be seen as black stains. Moreover, traces of other timbers, these having been charred, were visible in the backfill of the chamber. The timbers lay in an ordered way and appeared to be the remains of the collapsed superstructure which had been burnt and had fallen into the pit at an early stage in the backfilling. Quite remarkably over fifteen different timbers could be identified.

The backfill itself was not the sand and gravel produced by the excavation for the chamber but a different material, implying that the pit for the chamber had been dug a considerable time before it was backfilled. If the chamber had been almost immediately backfilled, the original fill would have been used.

This was not all. On the eastern side of the chamber, just beyond the position of the wooden wall, was a curious circular pit filled almost entirely with charcoal and wood ash. The sides of the pit were very uniform and precisely defined, as if it had been wicker-lined or had once contained a barrel or bucket.

Scattered throughout the backfill of the chamber, but concentrated near the lower parts and on the floor and under the collapsed superstructure, were fragments of smashed pots and a small quantity of cremated human bone. At least 24 vessels were represented by the sherds. This must have been an expensive collection in its day because every single vessel had been imported,



The enclosures at Stanway viewed from the air as a cropmark in a ripe crop. Photograph reproduced courtesy of the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England.

having come from Gaul, Italy, and elsewhere. In fact, this is the largest known group of imported vessels of this type and period in a burial in Britain.

We have been able to reconstruct several of the vessels so that they are now practically complete but a few are so fragmentary that they are represented by only a few sherds. However it is clear that this was not simply a random selection of pots but the remains of a service, that is a set of bowls, cups, and plates needed for a meal. Some of the vessels were of the same design but of differing sizes so that they could be stored as nested sets. Other objects must have included brooches and possibly a figurine. Some of the pottery is so incomplete that there were likely to have been even more vessels, of which none are now represented. Moreover, there would almost certainly have been objects of organic materials such as textile, wood, leather, or bone which have vanished without any trace. The same would apply to any food deposited in the chamber.

Curiously, like the grave deposits, only a small quantity of the cremated bone appears to have found its way into the pit. This lay mainly on the floor of the chamber but pieces were present in the backfill indicating that the deposition of the bone on the floor occurred at the same time as the backfilling of the chamber.

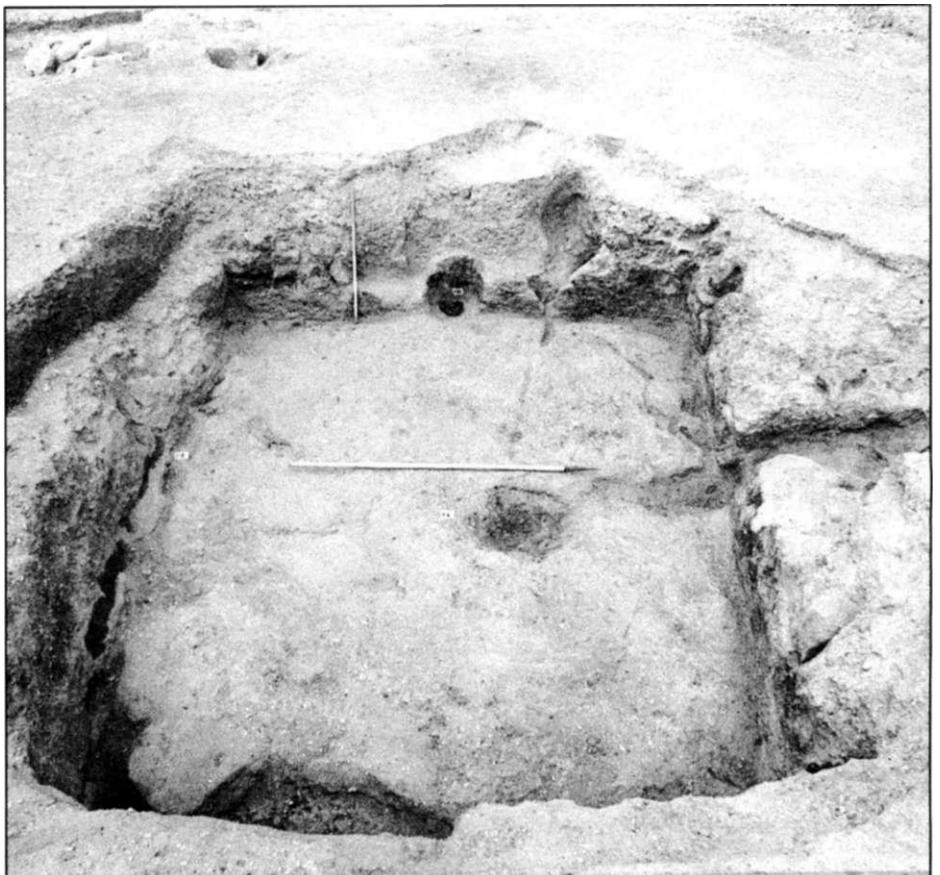
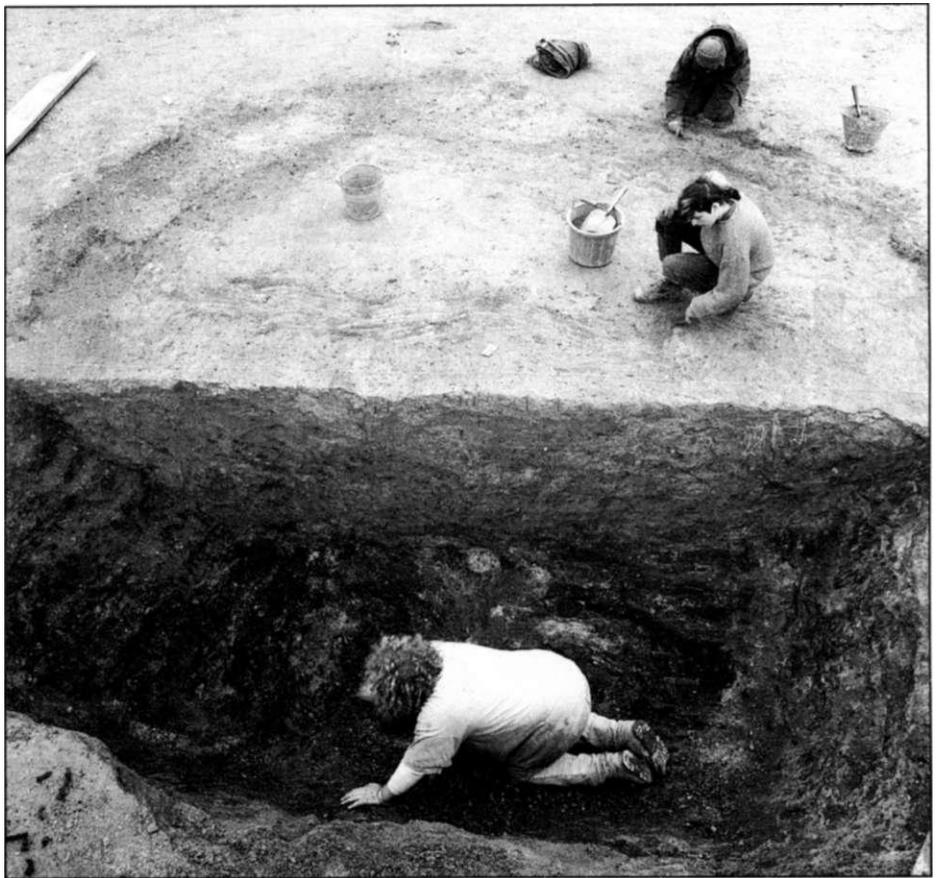
There is one final bit of evidence to consider. Just to the west of the chamber were some irregular, shallow depressions which contained fragments of cremated bone, charcoal, and tiny pieces of melted copper alloy.

The ritual

What does it all mean? Unfortunately no clear picture can be constructed which as yet explains all the evidence in a neat and convincing manner. And what explanations can be put forward are invariably not the only ones possible.

The two posts centrally placed in opposing walls probably either supported a flat horizontal platform which would have been above ground level or else formed gable ends to what would have been a small building with a ridged roof. The positions of the timbers forming the collapsed superstructure appear to favour a platform raised at least one foot above ground level but the evidence is ambiguous.

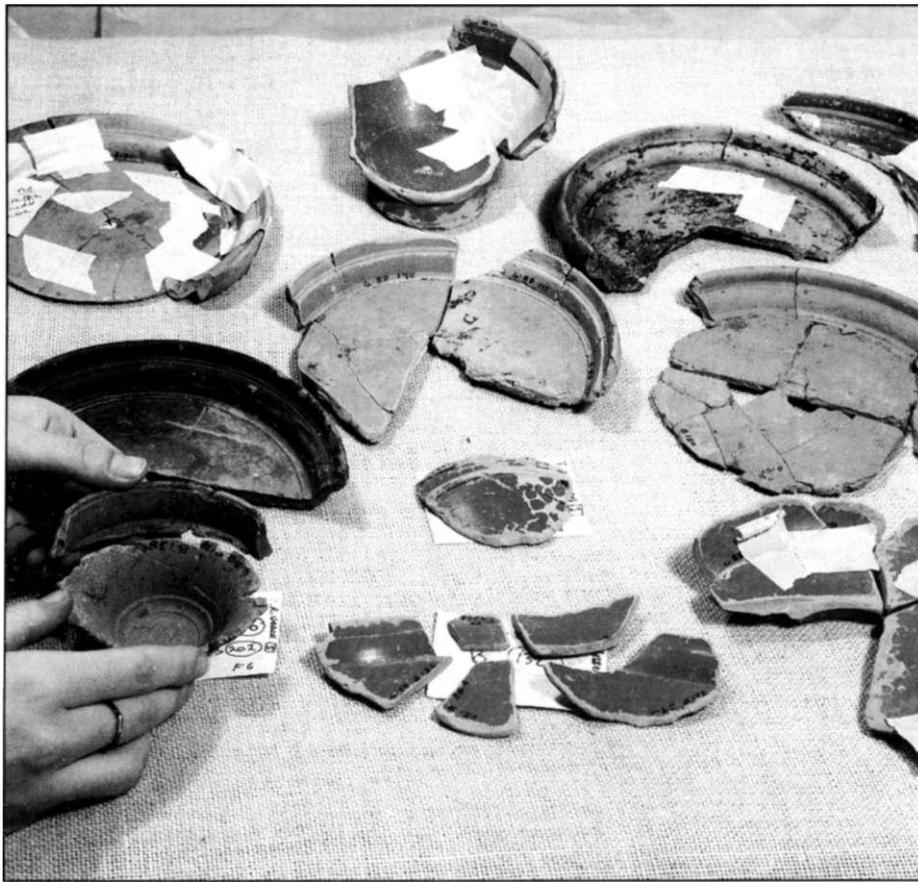
What was the chamber for? Presumably the body and the grave goods were kept here for a while, prior to cremation. The size of the chamber



The large chamber in Enclosure 3.

Above: the charred timbers being uncovered on the south side of the chamber.

Below: the chamber after excavation.



Some of the smashed pottery from the largest chamber.

suggests that the body had not yet been cremated and that the objects were still intact. We can thus imagine the body 'lying-in-state' and being viewed by large numbers of people in the same way that, for example, the body of Lenin could be seen in Moscow until recently. Of course there is no way of telling how long the body would have been kept this way — for all we know, the corpse might even have been embalmed.

However at some point, the body was removed from the chamber and placed on a funeral pyre and burnt. We can imagine that this ceremony would have been a grand affair, attended by large numbers of people and that it would have involved a funeral feast — an ancient version of the modern wake — in which the dead person was provided with a meal on the very plates and other dishes which we subsequently found in pieces.

The irregular patches of burning close to the west of the chamber suggest that the cremation took place next to it. The melted copper alloy hints that at least some of the grave goods were placed on the pyre and burnt with the body. The superstructure of the chamber was set on fire but the flames petered out before the below-ground part could burn. Presumably the burning of the superstructure

was intentional since the pyre seems to have been placed so close to it that it must have been obvious to those concerned that such an outcome was going to be hard to avoid.

We cannot know when the pottery and other objects were smashed but we can guess that it would have been done during the cremation ceremony when the destruction of these objects would have been seen as a process allied in some symbolic way with the destruction of the body itself and the departure of the dead person from the physical world. The burning of the chamber would presumably have been thought necessary to round things off.

Some time later, after the embers of the funeral pyre had cooled, the burnt bones were carefully picked out of the ash and charcoal. This process must have been a lengthy one since the bones (as is commonly the case with cremations) were very clean and relatively free from ash and charcoal. Presumably soon afterwards (although there might have been some other steps for which we have no evidence), a handful of the bones was tossed into the bottom of the chamber along with perhaps about a quarter of the pieces of broken pots. The remains of the burnt superstructure were still standing

when this operation began, but very soon the charred timbers collapsed or were pushed into the chamber by the weight of the material being dumped into it. The chamber was quickly filled in and more pottery sherds and bone were thrown in as the work proceeded. Again we cannot be certain that the pottery, bone, and soil had not somehow become mixed *before* the backfilling began although the concentration of the material on the chamber floor and towards the base of the fill suggests this was not the case.

You may wonder if the superstructure had been used as the base of the funeral pyre since it had been burnt. However there are several reasons why this is unlikely to have been so. One is that it would have been very hard to pick out the burnt bone and yet still leave the collapsed timbers as undisturbed as they were.

How was the backfilled chamber left? Was its position marked on the surface in some way and what happened to the rest of the bones and grave goods? One possibility is that more soil was mounded up over the chamber to form a barrow. The extra soil needed could have contained the missing bone and smashed grave goods which could have been thrown on the barrow mound as it was being constructed in the same way as the rest of the material was thrown into the chamber during its backfilling. Although such barrows are rare in Britain at this time, the Lexden Tumulus, the famous mound in Fitzwalter Road, indicates that Colchester possessed at least one such monument. There was no evidence of a ditch encircling the chamber as would probably have been the case if there had been a barrow here. The composition of the backfill suggests that the material used was obtained by scraping up topsoil and subsoil from the surrounding area or somewhere like it.

If no mound was built, then the rest of the bones and maybe the smashed grave goods were either buried elsewhere (perhaps in a pot) or they were dispersed in some way.

And what of the curious circular pit to one side of the chamber? We had wondered if the charcoal and ash which filled this pit was the material left over after cleaning the cremated bone but close analysis of this material revealed not the tiniest fragment of bone. We are therefore left mystified. The fact that it contained charcoal and ash suggests that whatever had been in the pit was removed and the pit was filled in shortly after the act of cremation. Why the charcoal and ash should have been so

concentrated is a puzzle since there was nothing to match it in the backfill of the chamber or elsewhere and certainly it was not the remains of a wooden object which had been burnt in the pit.

A chamber for a female

The central enclosure on the east side (Enclosure 4) also contained the remains of a rectangular wooden chamber. Not only was this smaller than the other one but it was good deal simpler. The chamber lacked the two posts but the timbers which had formed its walls were all vertical (as far as we could tell) and extended so close to the modern surface that they must have continued upwards to form an above-ground superstructure of some sort.

Like the first chamber, the backfill contained cremated bone and smashed pottery. There had been at least 20 vessels including a tiny phial of clear glass. Again the vessels seemed to form a large dinner service with many of the plates, bowls and cups appearing to have been in nested sets. The glass phial was of very thin glass — well under a millimetre thick. There were also some glass and paste beads from a broken necklace suggesting that the person concerned was female. Moreover this person may have been less important than the occupant of the other chamber because the chamber was smaller and it was not in the centre of its enclosure but had to share it with our so-called 'sub-enclosure'.

Another funeral pyre?

The 'sub-enclosure' was placed prominently in the southern half of Enclosure 4 in such a way that it seemed to provide a visual balance to the chamber to the north. It consisted of a shallow ditch which enclosed an area of about 8 x 9 m. Within this area, there was no clear trace of a burial but in the centre was a shallow burnt depression containing charcoal and tiny pieces of melted copper alloy. Quite what the enclosure represents is unclear but one possibility is that the ditch defined the site of a funeral pyre — since this would explain the burnt patch. Other explanations include a utilitarian structure of some sort or a square barrow, the mound of which has been destroyed.

Other cremations

Enclosure 1 was associated with three separate cremations. The most important of these was represented by a rectangular timber chamber of the sort

in Enclosures 3 and 4 but of smaller size. It was placed close to the centre of the enclosure and shared the same alignment as it. Like the others, cremated bone and bits of broken pottery were scattered on the floor and throughout its backfill. Other finds included a possible wooden object and a fragment of copper alloy which was too decayed and damaged to identify.

Elsewhere in this enclosure was a cremation which had been placed in an upright pot. This is the more familiar type of burial for this period. Also an irregularly-shaped pit contained a small quantity of cremated bone and various objects including a spring and part of the decorated copper-alloy binding of a wooden bucket or chest. Although the pit could not have been lined with timber walls, it seems very likely that this was nevertheless the product of a similar type of funerary ritual as that associated with the chambers.

Dates of the wooden chambers

The dating evidence has yet to be fully assessed but provisionally it seems as if the earliest burials are those in Enclosure 1 — these belong to around the end of the 1st century BC. Next seems to be the chamber in Enclosure 3 which is dated to around AD 20-30. Then came the female in Enclosure 4 who seems to have died certainly after the Claudian conquest in AD 43 and possibly even as late as AD 75-85.

Who were the dead?

Can we tell who these people were? Clearly the two in the two largest chambers had been important people and, in view of the relationship between the two enclosures concerned, were presumably related by marriage or birth.

Cunobelin is thought to have held power at Camulodunum for about thirty years or so and to have died within a few years of the start of the Roman invasion in AD 43. He is the great leader described (wrongly as it happens) by the Roman historian Suetonius as 'king of the Britons'. It would seem then that the largest chamber would have belonged to somebody who died when Cunobelin was in power and thus could well have been a relative of his. The female in the chamber in Enclosure 4 died some years after Cunobelin: perhaps she was a daughter or a niece of his or perhaps the wife of one his sons?

The grave goods do not appear to have been anything like as rich and varied as

those in the Lexden Tumulus so that we do not seem to be dealing with the very uppermost layer of the society of the time. On the other hand, so little of the cremated bone was left in the chambers that it is doubtful if they should be regarded as graves at all. It could be that bones and other relics were taken off and buried elsewhere, perhaps with more objects added. Perhaps the Lexden Tumulus is the result of just such a process which happened some years earlier?

A chamber of this kind dating to after the conquest is of great interest because of what it implies about the relationship between the Romans and at least one element of the local aristocratic upper class. Not only were these places associated with members of the British nobility who had no problems about using Roman or Romanised 'consumer goods' but, more to the point, they were people who were allowed to live alongside the Roman colony with sufficient freedom to pursue their own customs in what must have been a very public way.

The fact that one of the chambers apparently post-dates the Boudican revolt (which took place in AD 60/1) is even more significant since this suggests that the occupant was one of a group which did not side with Boudica. If they had done so then we may imagine that the retribution would have been extremely severe and that the Romans would not have allowed the practice of such overtly native burial rites and the erection of such monuments as found at Stanway.

Interestingly we know that Adminius, who was one of Cunobelin's sons, was expelled by his father and fled to Rome around AD 39/40. Could it be that when Claudius conquered Camulodunum, Adminius was instituted as the leader of the defeated natives and that in the latest chamber we are seeing a female who was part of a pro-Roman faction of which Adminius was or had been the key person? Although he could have died some considerable time before her, they still might have been close relatives.

The post-excavation work on the Stanway material continues, and no doubt as the work progresses our ideas about what it all means will continue to evolve and need revision. In the meantime we are grateful to Val Rigby of the British Museum for her preliminary assessment of the pottery and to Tarmac and English Heritage for funding the excavation. The various stages of the excavations were directed by Don Shimmin, G Carter, and C Crossan.

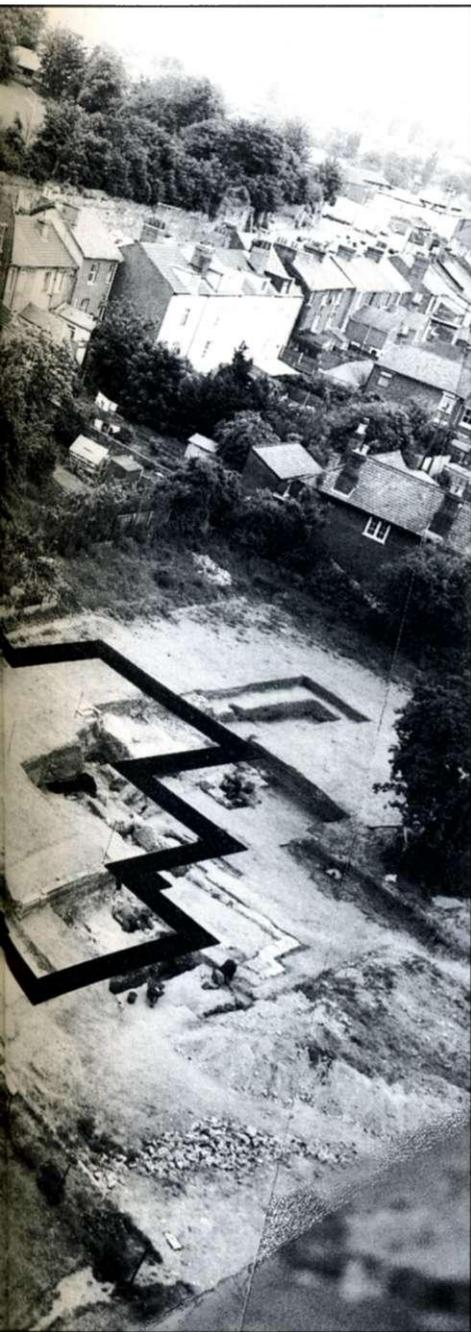


St Botolph's Priory

Visitors to Colchester's ruined Augustinian priory should soon find the trip even more worthwhile now that the true extent of the church has been discovered. But many questions still remain about its origin and the recently-found crypt.

Tucked away behind the shop-fronts of one of Colchester's busiest streets lies the town's best-kept secret — the great 12th-century priory church of St Botolph's. To those fortunate enough to discover it, the site offers both a tranquil refuge from the bustle of the town centre and an impressive reminder of an age less secular than our own.

The priory occupies an important place in the history of the medieval church, for it was the first Augustinian house to be founded in this country and as such was granted authority over all later Augustinian establishments, which numbered over 200 priories, abbeys and hospitals at the height of the order's



St Botolph's Priory viewed from the south during the excavations at the east end. The black lines indicate the positions of the missing walls of the church. These will be marked permanently on site.

outside town gates like Colchester's St Botolph's being especially favoured. He was the son of a Saxon nobleman and became a missionary to England in the 7th century.

St Botolph's stands just outside the south gate of the town in an area which may have formerly been part of a Roman cemetery. Its position is a tantalising one. Could the site contain the remains of an Anglo-Saxon church or even the remains of some kind of Roman predecessor such as a church? The location of the priory and the possibility of an early dedication to St Botolph's has prompted the suggestion that the building stands on the site of a Roman church or 'martyrium' which was a building, tomb or simply a specific spot associated with a saint or Christian martyr. Clearly any excavation of St Botolph's church is likely to be of great interest.

The foundation of the priory

At the beginning of the 12th century there was at Colchester a community of priests led by a presbyter called Ainulph. They probably served a parish church on or near the site later used for the priory. They decided to embrace a full religious life but were uncertain how to organise themselves. One of their members, Norman, suggested the rule of St Augustine of Hippo, and he and his brother Bernard were chosen to go abroad to study the rule then return to teach it to their fellows.

Norman and Bernard visited the Augustinian houses of Beauvais and Chartres, and on their return sometime between 1100 and 1104 the priory of St Julian and St Botolph was founded. Initially, the priory consisted of thirteen priests.

In 1107 or 1108 Norman left Colchester to become prior of Queen Matilda's new house of Holy Trinity, Aldgate, and with this sign of royal patronage, the Augustinian order began to flourish.

Work raising funds for the new priory church and buildings may have started not long after Norman and Bernard returned to Colchester. The priory was not wealthy, so it took years to complete the church, let alone the other priory buildings. A surviving document notes under the year 1177 that the 'church of St Botolph's was dedicated'. This gives a date for the completion of the church, and one which agrees with architectural details of the west front.

The priory church was built by the same technique used for Colchester's other grand Norman building, the castle.

Reused building materials robbed from the Roman town were mostly used, but for the places where decorative carving was needed, such as around doors and windows, good quality stone was brought from Caen in Normandy or Barnack in Northamptonshire. The exterior of the church was rendered with a layer of lime mortar, which gave the impression that better quality materials had been used. Only a few small patches of mortar remain, lodged in some of the deeper recesses of the west front. The rendering was probably brightened up with painted designs.

Augustinian canons

Houses of Augustinian canons were communities of priests following a monastic life, but serving non-monastic (private or parish) churches. They tried by their example to encourage outsiders to attempt to live in a perfect Christian way, and to offer up in their daily services prayer and praise on behalf of the world in general and their benefactors in particular.

An important difference between monks and canons was that all canons were ordained priests and so could conduct a Mass (communion service), while monks were not necessarily also priests.

With only a few exceptions Augustinian houses were small. Thirteen, a prior and twelve canons, was considered the normal minimum, but many houses had fewer. Latton Priory, near Harlow, in Essex was founded for only three canons, and there were only eight at Holy Trinity in Ipswich in 1194.

The canons wore a long cassock lined with sheepskin, over which was a long linen rochet (similar to a surplice) with wide sleeves. Similar style clothes are still worn by parish priests today. They also had an 'amice', a short cape, to go over the shoulders, which could be worn with or without a cloak.

A dark-coloured cloak was the most important feature of the canons' dress, for it earned them their nickname of **Black Canons**. Each canon would have had two, one with a hood for outdoor wear, and one without for use in church.

Monks always wore wool, and the use of linen by the canons was an important, sometimes controversial, difference between the two groups. The monks considered linen to be far too comfortable.

The rule of St Augustine

The Augustinian rule was not a detailed

influence. Although dedicated to the communal life of their priory or abbey, the discipline of the Augustinian canons tended to be less austere than other major orders and some had parochial responsibilities, spending much of their time among their local community.

St Botolph was an early saint who was especially popular in the south of the country. Over forty churches were dedicated to St Botolph, those just



The west end of St Botolph's Priory around AD 1200. Reconstruction by Peter Froste.

series of regulations like those followed by Benedictine monks, but a short document giving useful spiritual advice about obedience, property-holding, and the hours to be spent in prayer. Nonetheless, this advice became a secure working base for many communities of priests.

A canon of Cambridge wrote of St Augustine:

'Like a kind master, he did not drive his disciples with a rod of iron, but invited those who love the beauty of holiness to the door of salvation under a moderate rule'.

Moderation in all things lay at the

heart of the Augustinian order, so the canons dressed more comfortably than monks, held shorter services, fasted and kept silent less, and did not abstain from eating the flesh of animals.

Each house worked out its own pattern of life and worship, which had to be approved by the local bishop. Two houses were exempt from this approval, Waltham Abbey, which was under royal patronage, and St Botolph's, where the rule was first practised.

There was little real difference, beyond the principle of moderation, between the life of an Augustinian canon and that of a Benedictine monk, for many houses of canons modelled their daily routine on that of a monastery.

They rose early, and retired early. In summer they might be up by 1.30 am, and in bed at 8.15 pm. This made for a

very long day, so an afternoon siesta was customary, and clearly not a luxury but an essential. The midday meal may have been the only one of the day, though a second one at about 5 p.m. was more usual in winter. On fast days, only a single meal was taken late in the day.

The main offices (services), composed mainly of psalms and short prayers, were Nocturns, Mattins, Prime (sung at dawn), Terce, Sext, None, Vespers, and finally Compline. There would also have been a Mass, usually said in the early part of the day. Music played an extremely important part in these services.

Study was also part of daily life. In the 12th century the Augustinian order attracted many learned men. Scholars must have books, and some canons built up libraries by copying manuscripts themselves. Several important early

books have survived from the library of Waltham Abbey. Copying involved many tasks other than simply writing out the text, such as preparing parchment, ruling lines, drawing and colouring illustrations, and binding the finished manuscript.

Less scholarly jobs also had to be got through, and were appointed to the canons according to their talents. A canon of Bridlington in Yorkshire, writing in the mid-12th century, suggested the following as suitable tasks: making new clothes and repairing old ones; making wooden spoons, candlesticks, baskets, nets, beehives and mats; digging and manuring the garden; sowing and planting vegetables and herbs; trimming, pruning and grafting fruit trees; ploughing, sowing, and reaping corn; mowing hay and making haystacks.

The layout of the priory

Apart from the church, no trace survives above ground of the priory buildings, but early religious houses were built to a common plan, and so we can be sure that the main complex lay to the south of the ruins, largely beneath the present parish church. It may have been built, like the priory church, of reused Roman building materials.

Next to the south wall of the church would have been the **cloister**, consisting of an open plot, the **garth**, surrounded by four broad roofed **alleys**. The north cloister alley would have faced south and received the most sunlight, so it may

have been used as a place of study where the canons could work at small desks set close to the garth.

The eastern alley probably led to the **chapter house**, where daily meetings of the canons were held to discuss both spiritual and business matters, and to a common-room, or **parlour**, used for relaxation. The upper part of the eastern range would have been used as the dormitory, or **dorter**, where the canons slept. Dorters were long rooms, running north-south, often divided into small individual cubicles to give some privacy. Also at first-floor level and near the dorter would have been the lavatories, or **reredorter**. At ground-floor level beneath the reredorter would have been a large drain to carry away the waste water.

An **infirmary** may have been part of the main eastern block, or may have been a separate building with its own kitchen. Its principal use was for the sick, but elderly canons may also have lived here when they became too old to play an active role in priory life.

Parallel to the church would have been the dining-room, or refectory. It was probably a large rectangular room at first floor level, running east-west, with tall windows in the south wall to catch the sun. So that the canons could wash as they came in for meals, a washroom or **laver** was often set close to the refectory door, and not far from the dorter.

Sometimes the refectory was built over a cellar, a gloomy ground-floor room with only a few narrow windows to

keep the temperature cool inside, which was used as a storehouse. The kitchen would not have been far away from the refectory, and there may have been other associated buildings close by, such as a bake-house, or a brew-house.

The range next to the west cloister alley could be used for a number of purposes, storage, or guest accommodation, or the prior's apartments if a separate building was not provided for his use.

Later history

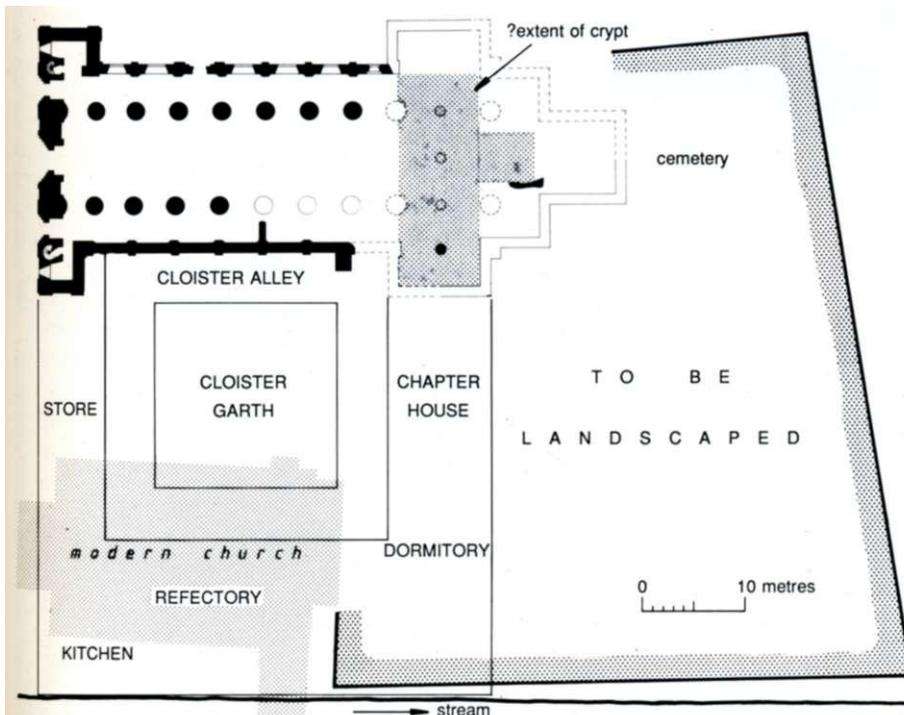
In spite of its privileged status, St Botolph's never became a particularly powerful or wealthy house. By the time of the Dissolution there were only seven canons in residence and the priory, with its annual revenue of £134, found itself among the poorer establishments which became the first victims of Tudor suppression in 1534.

In the years that followed the Dissolution, the nave of the priory church was preserved and remained in use for parish and civic services, but had finally to be abandoned when the 1648 Siege of Colchester left it in ruins. Beyond the nave, the entire eastern part of the church along with the cloister and all the priory outbuildings have disappeared with practically no record. Most of the priory's grounds, which once extended over many acres, have been built over, the final indignity being the construction of a large engineering works which by the 1940s covered the site of the east end of the church and much of the adjacent grounds.

Recent discoveries

The opportunity to recover lost land and open up the view of the ruins arose when the engineering works came up for sale a few years ago. Colchester Borough Council purchased the works and set aside nearly an acre of the site adjoining the church for amenity use. Working in conjunction with English Heritage, the Borough is sponsoring a landscaping scheme which will dramatically improve the appearance and setting of the standing remains. Since no record of the layout of the eastern part of the church has come down to us, the Trust was commissioned to carry out a limited investigation to trace and mark out the missing walls so that visitors will be able appreciate the church as a complete building.

The investigation has demanded a different approach from that used for



A possible layout of the priory.

most excavations in Colchester, where sites are frequently threatened with imminent wholesale destruction. Here, our aim was to retrieve the plan of the east end of the church with the minimum of ground disturbance so as to leave the site as undisturbed as possible and leave it for future archaeologists to explore more fully.

Once stripped of its concrete, the area turned out to have been extensively robbed. The foundations were poorly preserved because most of them had been dug up three hundred years or so ago for building materials. Nevertheless it proved possible to trace the plan of the demolished part of the church because the positions of the foundations were indicated by wide rubble-filled trenches containing the broken stone, tile and crushed mortar which the robbers did not want. From these it became apparent that the east end of the church had been fairly short and square-ended. Also found was the position of the crossing (the area under the central tower) and the transepts to either side. Among the destruction debris were some fine examples of window glass, stone-work and floor tiles, offering glimpses of the church's decorative style, whilst various graves, some lined with mortared stone and tile, indicated the position of a cemetery beyond the east end of the church.

Although the excavation was limited to little more than digging out the robber trenches, tantalising signs were noted of what appeared to be earlier buildings predating the priory church. One of these seems to have been Roman. It is on a slightly different alignment to that of the priory church and is associated with a surprising number of late Roman finds. Aligned differently yet again was another foundation, this time constructed of a very curious and unusually ashy mortar. We were unable to date this foundation but were left wondering if it could have belonged to a church predating the priory. What is quite clear from all this is that here is a very interesting site with much to tell future archaeologists fortunate to have the opportunity to examine it properly.

The crypt

Interesting as these finds are, it was really no surprise to find out that the

site possesses a complicated structural sequence. However, what we had not reckoned on was a crypt. The excavation of the south transepts proved tricky partly because, as it turned out, its floor was about ten feet below that of the nave. Moreover, partly buried in the floor was a large chunk of masonry in the form of the top of a column on three sides of which were parts of the arches which sprang from it. As the masonry crashed to the ground, it had been driven by its own weight well into the soft earth floor of the crypt. The column was too small to have come from the nave above but must instead have been part of the crypt itself.

With the veneration of saints, martyrs and their relics came the need to enshrine and display the tomb or relics. A crypt enabled a tomb to be venerated without it being disturbed, it provided the tomb with a suitable setting, and allowed public access without interference to the running of the church. Crypts were usually located at the east end so that an altar would be over the relic.

The presence of a crypt at St Botolph's is therefore quite significant because it suggests that the priory had a relic, presumably of St Botolph, St Julian or even perhaps St Denis.

Our excavation was too limited to establish the extent of the crypt except to show that it occupied the whole of the south transept and extended under the crossing. Crypts are usually symmetrical in relation to the long axis of the church above. The crypt should extend into the north transept but this does not seem to have been the case.

The future

The excavation has finished and the site has been backfilled ready for the next stage. Already, the demolition of the engineering works and the removal of obstacles at the east end of the nave have opened up a view of the church that has not been experienced for decades. By the spring of 1992, the positions of the walls of the east end should have been indicated on the ground and the area around seeded and turfed.

Although there will be no equivalent marking out of any of the monastic buildings, it is hoped that the likely position of the range of buildings on the east side of the cloister (which presumably included the chapter house and dormitory) will be shown by a raised flower bed. Elsewhere it is hoped that a pleasing mix of flowers and shrubs will turn what until recently was derelict waste land into a pleasant public amenity which will enhance the monument and bring pleasure to visitors and local inhabitants alike.

The large piece of collapsed masonry has had to be reburied because leaving it exposed is not a practical proposition. However, perhaps it may prove possible to return one day and display this and the other pieces like it which presumably lie in the rubble filling the crypt.

This article derives mainly from various notes by Carl Crossan, Nina Crummy, and Andrew Harris. Thanks are also due to Janet Cooper for her assistance with historical research and to Tony Baggs. The excavation was funded by the Colchester Borough Council with the help of English Heritage.



The collapsed section of column in the crypt. The stump of column on the crypt floor is visible to the rear right.

The return of 'The Mosaic of the Wrestling Cupids'



Of all the discoveries made in Colchester over the last twenty years or so, the mosaic at Middleborough stands out in people's minds. Believe it or not, even as I sat down to write this article a member of the public 'phoned up the Trust to ask a familiar question, 'Whatever happened to that mosaic...?' Perhaps this is not surprising. On two successive Saturdays in August and September of 1979, 2,700 visitors were given conducted tours around the site culminating with the mosaic. It was a great hit.

The pavement had to be lifted so that it would not be destroyed during the building works. Now, over ten years later, it has finally re-emerged looking better than it did before in the new displays in Colchester Castle.

The mosaic is of an exceptionally-fine quality with some of the tesserae being as small as an eighth of an inch across. Compared to many other mosaics, the design has been drawn and executed with considerable skill to produce a result which is lively and graceful. The square central panel shows two wrestling cupids watched by a bird and is surrounded by two bands of elaborate and colourful

The Middleborough mosaic in its new home in the museum in Colchester Castle.



Back in 1979: the mosaic being cleaned during the excavation (above) and a public open day at the site (below).



ribbon decoration or 'guilloche'. At the centre of each side is a semi-circular panel containing a sea-beast, the two intact panels showing a sea-goat and a sea-horse. The design is finished off with an attractive border consisting of a foliate scroll containing in its roundels birds and two types of lotus flower and two types of ivy leaf. None of the birds is the same, perhaps the most attractive being the one in the centre of the bottom border which is preening itself.

The pavement dates to the second half of the 2nd century and was in one of the largest private houses yet discovered in Colchester. The house stood just outside the north gate, between the town wall and the river Colne and would presumably have been the home of a wealthy family.

Quarter of a million cubes were needed to make the floor, each one of course having to be made by hand. The materials were all readily available: white tesserae were made of chalk (normally used for lime-making), red tesserae were made from broken tile, yellow from broken pottery, and the two

shades of grey were obtained by using septaria and Kentish ragstone, the two most common types of locally-used building stone. The materials were very cheap so that the main cost would have undoubtedly been in the labour needed to make the cubes and set them in the floor. We had to trace the mosaic a cube at a time on to clear sheets of plastic and even although this was done quickly with each tesserae only taking a second or so, the whole job was still equivalent to about two man-weeks' work. Just imagine how long it would have taken to make the mosaic in the first place!

The mosaic would have been made to order from a pattern book. The customer would have selected the overall design as well as the design of the various component parts making it up. Thus for example he would have chosen the type and shape of the borders and the subject matter of the pictures in the panels.

Surprisingly, despite its evident cost and the skill with which it was laid, the design itself was bungled. The mosaicists seemed unaware of how the design was formulated and the owner, who as the customer presumably paid up because either he too was not aware of the mistakes or, if he was, simply did not think them important. Had this happened today, we could imagine that many customers would refuse to pay until the faults were corrected or else demand a reduction in the price.

The faults, of which there are several, lie in the leafy border to the mosaic. Each side contains nine roundels. The central one contains a bird whilst the four to either side were to contain one of four different flower/leaf designs. The idea was that these flower/leaf motifs were to



The mosaic being lifted in sections in 1979.

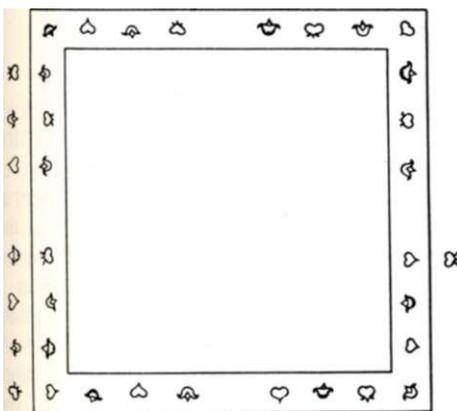
be placed in a balanced manner around the border. However on one side these motifs were completely muddled up with the result that only one of them ended up in the right place (and that was probably luck). Moreover, in one corner of the same side, not only was the motif not angled to point to the centre as it should have been, but also a short length of the main stem of the leafy scroll next to it was laid to run in the wrong direction. And on the opposite side of the mosaic the wrong type of leaf motif was used next to the central bird. Considering the amount and calibre of work the mosaic involved, the number of mistakes is surprising — either the mosaicists were very careless or they were rather dim.

It had been hoped to lift the pavement by rolling it up like a carpet. This technique involves gluing bandages to the surface of the floor and slowly rolling it up as the cubes are carefully prized off the mortar base in which they are bedded. The glue would have been dissolved off later, after the mosaic had been unrolled and set in a new bed. However this method proved impossible since the mortar base was too strong and,

more importantly, the pavement was dished in the middle where it had settled into the soft ground underneath making it impossible to roll up. The pavement was still covered in glue and bandages but it was then lifted flat in small sections cut along the main lines of the design to minimise the damage.

The pavement was stored for some years in premises owned by the Royal London Mutual Insurance Society. The restoration work was undertaken by the Colchester Borough Council, partly sponsored by the Royal London Mutual Insurance Society Ltd and the Friends of Colchester Museums. The restoration was done by Chris Smith of Art Pavements and Decorations Ltd which is a private company of mosaicists specialising in work of this kind.

The modern mosaicists used our tracing although they had problems since this was of the pavement in its distorted dish-shape. However they managed to complete the restoration so that the mosaic is now flat again. The result is most impressive and I can recommend that you pay the museum a visit and see it if you have not done so already.



Mistakes made during the laying of the mosaic. The inner square shows the actual positions of the various motifs. The intended motifs are shown on the outside where there are mistakes.



Maldon Friary: lost and found

Until recently, the whereabouts of Maldon's medieval friary had been a mystery. It was known to lie somewhere in the vicinity of the 19th-century buildings Friary East and Friary West, south of the High Street, but the exact site was not known. However, development proposals by the county and district councils have provided the opportunity for the County Council's Archaeology Section to search for answers to this puzzle.

The First phase of work, in 1990, uncovered a simple rectangular stone-built structure. This had a clay floor which sealed late 13th- or early 14th-century pottery, so the building was probably built at or soon after that date. After about a hundred years, the building was renovated and a timber-framed extension was added. The most spectacular find dates from about this

time — a mid 15th-century gold ring which was found in a nearby drain. Although by this time, the building was being used as a barn, its original function is not clear. Although it continued in use beyond the Dissolution, the building was demolished in the middle of the 16th century. Subsequently, the area was used for a courtyard and wooden sheds until these were demolished in the 18th century and the area reverted to gardens.

Discovery of the medieval out-building was followed, in 1991, by even more interesting results with the excavation of the heart of the medieval friary — the cloister. Within the cloister itself, eight burials were found. Part of another building to one side probably represents the chapter house — one wall has remains of a chequered pattern made up of alternating red brick and white chalk. It is hoped that further phases of excavation will result in the

Excavations in progress on the site of Maldon's medieval friary.

discovery of more of the religious house, in particular the church itself.

Elsenham box

In September 1990 Archaeology Section staff were informed of the discovery of a spectacular group of Roman finds by metal-detector users at Elsenham. A site visit showed that the finds had almost certainly been buried in a shallow pit contained within a wooden box, the bronze lock plate, lock and key of which survived. Although no remains of a body were found, the nature of the finds and the way they were placed in the ground, indicate that they were almost certainly grave goods.

The finds, of 2nd-century date,

include a curious bronze 'goblet' consisting of a bowl and a candlestick pedestal soldered together. The lip of the bowl has small projecting lobes and could not have been used for drinking. An iron lamp was also found, as were hobnails, three coins, and gaming pieces of bone, jet, and glass. In addition there were pottery vessels and a glass jug.

However, the most exciting of the finds was one of the smallest: a tiny hexagonal box of bronze and enamel. This measured merely 3 cm high and 4 cm in diameter. This type of box is referred to as a 'pyxis' and may have been used as an inkwell or an unguent pot. This is the first such object to have been found in Britain and only nine others are known. One discovered abroad, at Cologne, is remarkably similar to the Elsenham find. In fact, the similarities are such that they could be from the same workshop, even perhaps the same craftsman.

The pyxis was sold recently at auction in London, without the other finds. The Elsenham finds form an interesting addition to other rich burials

found nearby during excavations at Stansted Airport. Taken together, they are compelling evidence of great prosperity in the area during the 2nd century AD.

The finds have been recorded by the Archaeology Section and, subsequently, the pyxis was sold at auction in London. However, the British Museum was able to prevent the issuing of an export licence and has arranged to purchase the box and the other finds. As a result the finds can be displayed as they were buried and as they were found, for the benefit of the public.

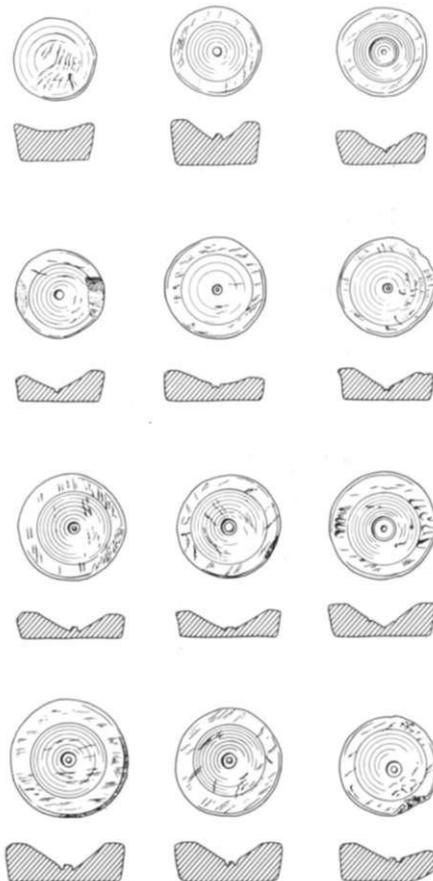
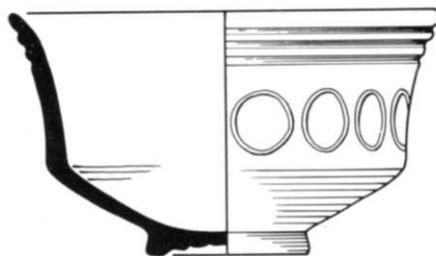
Finds from Elsenham.

Below: The Elsenham 'pyxis'. It is three centimetres high and four centimetres across.

Below right: Some of the carved bone gaming pieces (each one is about two centimetres across).

Right: Bronze 'goblet' or dish (ten centimetres across at the top).

Above right: Lead-glazed pottery vessel (seventeen centimetres wide).





In the past people got rid of their rubbish where they could — they threw it into pits and ditches, filled hollows in the landscape, used old wells and spread it on fields.

Archaeologists spend a long time digging up other people's rubbish. Old filled-in pits often contain much rubbish which was of no use to the original owner but is of great interest to the archaeologist. The photograph above shows a 500-year-old pit in Colchester. It contains broken pottery, discarded animal bones, oyster shells, and building rubble.

Sorting out the excavated rubbish takes patience and time; at the end of an excavation there might be tens of thousands of pieces of objects left to investigate. The photograph below shows crates of broken pottery on display on Blue Peter. This is only a small part of the pottery found on excavations in Colchester during the 1970s and early 1980s.

Opposite is a modern dustbin — well, half a dustbin — full of everyday 20th-century rubbish. Imagine you are an archaeologist and investigate this rubbish. There are two routes to follow.

Route 1

Archaeologists are like police detectives — looking for the



ARCHAEOLOGY— JUST A LOAD OF OLD RUBBISH

by Mike Corbishley

smallest clues to help them find out what has happened. What does this rubbish tell us about the people whose dustbin it is? Make a list of all the things in the dustbin and write down what you think each means. Here's a start...

Tin of whiskas. *A cat?*
Newspaper.

.....

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Did you work out what sort of family use this dustbin? Are there any children? How many pets? What sort of food do they eat?

Route 2

Let's imagine that all this rubbish has been dumped or buried somewhere. After some time quite a lot of it will have rotted away. Organic material (ie things which were once living such as paper or wood) will tend to rot quicker than inorganic things (ie things which were never 'alive' but manufactured, such as plastic or metal).

Your detective work is more difficult now. What can you tell about the family NOW? Once the label has gone from that can of cat food how do you know what was in the tin?

Did you know?

...that today each person in Britain disposes of five kilograms of rubbish each week.

Why not find out when the council first provided a dustbin-emptying service in your town or village? What happened to the rubbish before that?

Around the schools

'Change' at Kingswode Hoe School

Maureen Jones, the Treasurer of the Friends of Colchester Archaeological Trust, teaches Class 7 at Kingswode Hoe Special School, and this term she has been guiding them through a topic on 'Change', some of the work being based on the archaeology of standing buildings and objects.

First of all they looked at artefacts, and how tools for jobs have changed (or not) from the Victorian period to the present day. Washday was a favourite theme, and the class were able to get their 'hands on' a Victorian ponch, washtubs, tongs, and airers. What a contrast to the machines they see in their

homes today! The washing basket is a rare survival from the Victorian age, though now it is made of plastic instead of wicker.

Next the children took a larger view, emerging from the classroom to study the school building and the surrounding area. They discovered that the school is housed in what was a Victorian home, and features of Victorian domestic life survive, such as decorated cast-iron fireplaces.

They looked at the shape of the architectural features of the school building and compared them to extensions, both sympathetic and unsympathetic, to the original house, and to other houses round about.

Interesting questions arose, such as 'How did they light their houses?', so a search was made for old sealed-up gas fittings, and one boy worked out that as there were eleven chimneys, there must have been at least eleven fireplaces.

They went on to imagine life in the Victorian period. What were the clothes like? What would have been where the teachers today park their cars? Were there even any motor cars then? Would all the houses they can see today have been there then? What did they eat then? (Answer: Hovis, Colman's Mustard, Oxo, McVitie's biscuits.) Do we eat any

of the same things today? (Answer: Hovis, Colman's Mustard, Oxo, McVitie's biscuits.) What features of modern Colchester would they have been able to see from just outside the house? (Answer: the railway, St Mary's Hospital (then a workhouse) and Jumbo.)

The class found the topic and Maureen's approach to it very stimulating, and now look at their surroundings with more informed and discerning eyes.

Blood and guts

A potentially gruesome topic, 'Blood and Guts' was undertaken by Mrs Leveridge's class at Heathlands Primary School in West Bergholt. This subject inevitably led to the investigation of what else is inside the body, so a pair of skeletons from the Butt Road cemetery went along to the school to help the children get to grips with bones. The Bronze Age man found frozen in the Tyrol could not have been discovered at a more opportune time, and he too figured large in the children's work.

The class are preparing a full account of their findings which will be published in next year's magazine. It should make interesting reading.

Nina Crummy

the Victorian

Wash Day

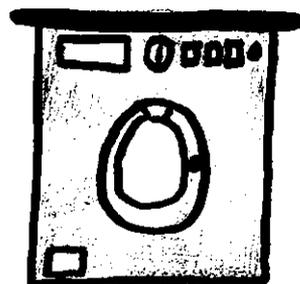
Then

now



A ponch

This ponch was used moving the water up and down to clean the clothes. It is made of wood and metal with holes the bottom.



A Washing machine

A washing machine does this automatically run by electricity the clothes tumble over and over. Washday is more expensive now

SWEET-TOOTHED WIFE-BEATERS?

'Unfortunately, not all injuries were unintentional...' Nina Crummy explains how the Butt Road skeletal remains reveal evidence of past violence

The Butt Road Roman church is rapidly, and rightly, becoming famous, and not only among archaeologists — it has even been entered into *The Guinness Book of Records*. But we should not forget the people buried in the adjacent cemetery. After all, it was built for, even by, them, and their funeral services were probably conducted within its walls.

Work on the cemetery site report is at last nearly complete, the final piece of the jigsaw having arrived in late 1991 when paleopathologist Stephanie Pinter-Bellows completed her report on the skeletal remains. Stephanie, daughter-in-law of Colin Bellows (a former Chairman of the Friends of Colchester Archaeological Trust), undertook the job of 'rescuing' the skeletal report from the notes left by the late Dr David Birkett, and she has produced a fascinating picture of the health of the population in general and several individuals in particular.

We are surely all aware that our modern diet contains too much sugar, so how do we compare to the late Roman population at Butt Road? Though 41 per cent of the people buried in the Butt Road cemetery showed evidence of dental caries, the rate of dental caries per individual was only 1.9, much lower than is experienced in developed countries today. How many of us can claim to have only two fillings!

But is this really a fair comparison? Dental caries is a prime cause of tooth loss, so, before we congratulate our Roman counterparts on their lack of toothache, the number of teeth lost before death should be considered. This brings to light a very different picture of Roman dental health, and an interesting contrast between males and females. The

females who died in middle age had lost on average 8 per cent of their teeth, the males 15 per cent, while elderly females had lost 32 per cent, and males 44 per cent. Clearly, the Romans loved sweet things, and the males apparently more so than the females.

The pathologies exhibited by a skeleton can be divided into congenital (present at birth) and acquired (during an individual's lifetime). There are eight examples of the congenital problem spina bifida occulta at Butt Road. This is a minor form of spina bifida proper that affects only a few vertebrae rather than the whole spine. The people with these malformed bones may have noticed no significant symptoms. However, one elderly male had a congenital pathology of which he really would have been fully aware. His right hip socket was shallow and the upper end of the femur was flat, so the hip tended to dislocate and to develop degenerative arthritis. This man would have walked with a pronounced limp, and would have been in constant pain.

Acquired pathologies detectable on bones include injuries to soft tissues such as wrenching or tearing muscles, but broken bones are probably the most obvious. The majority of bone fractures occur accidentally, and at Butt Road many classic accidental fractures are present among the population: a broken collar-bone, nine broken lower leg bones (tibia and fibula), and nine broken lower arm bones (radius and ulna).

Three of the broken arm bones are Colles' fractures of the radius, that is, they lie close to the wrist joint and are caused by falling on to the outstretched arm. Most of these breaks healed well, but one of the Colles' fractures, on the right radius of a young adult male, healed quite badly into a 'spoon' shape,

and one broken tibia was even worse. Located on the right leg of a middle-aged male, this was a mid-shaft compound fracture (the skin was also broken), which healed with an override of 45 mm (1³/₄ inches), and because of the break in the skin, a bacterial infection set in which affected the bone. Pus must have discharged from a deep abscess cavity, and until the infection was controlled and the break healed this man certainly suffered intense pain and fever.

Unfortunately, not all injuries were unintentional, and at Butt Road there were seven probably non-accidental injuries, four on the skull, and three on the ulna, all consistent with an injury made by a blunt instrument, not a sharp blade. All show signs of healing, so were not the cause of death. Stephanie interprets the hostile incidents which led to these injuries as most likely to be internecine strife, rather than foreign aggression, especially since most of the injuries were suffered by women!

The three non-accidental injuries on the ulna are all on the left arm and are all parry fractures. This type of break occurs on the middle third of the bone, and is commonly suffered when the arm is raised to ward off an aggressive blow. One of the three was sustained by a male, the other two by females, one of whom died in adolescence.

Almost all skull injuries represent intentional blows, though some may occur by falling against a blunt object, or from falling objects. All the Butt Road injuries show as depressions on the skull. Three, one on a middle-aged male and two on middle-aged females, are depressed fractures from a blunt instrument. The fourth, on a young adult female, was probably caused by an infection in an open non-accidental wound on the scalp.

Both accidental and non-accidental injuries are usually more common in the male. This male/female split is confirmed at Butt Road for accidental injuries, but is reversed for non-accidental injuries. Brutal aggression towards females seems to have been more common than towards males! This does not leave us with a very pretty picture of the lot of 4th-century women. (Perhaps toothache contributed towards male aggression?)

Most infections, like flu or measles, run their course too rapidly for the bones to be affected, so any infections which show as lesions on the bone are likely to be chronic and spread by bacteria rather than a virus. If only the outer layer (periosteum) of the bone is affected, the

lesions are known as periostitis. If the inner compact bone and medullary cavity have been attacked, the lesions are termed osteomyelitis.

Periostitis is often confined to a small area, and when it occurs on the tibia may be the result of repeated minor injuries to the lower leg. There are six cases like this at Butt Road, five in males. Was it an occupational hazard, or did these

individuals just keep walking into the furniture?

One young adult male has periostitis on all his bones but for the skull, a few ribs, and his foot and hand bones. This infection, probably due to the blood-born staphylococcus, has only just stopped short of being a case of full-blown osteomyelitis. The young man's illness probably lasted a few months, and was

the cause of his death.

Usually the bacterial organisms which cause infective lesions cannot be identified, but there is one case at Butt Road which may have been caused by the tuberculosis bacillus. The bones in the main part of the left foot of a middle-aged male have fused together to form two solid blocks. This poor man would have had a badly deformed foot.

The Friends of the Colchester Archaeological Trust

The Friends of CAT is a thriving organisation with several hundred members. Most live in Essex, but a few 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 varied year

The year started with a jam-packed AGM held in the Castle Museum's lecture hall. Members heard talks on medieval tiles from the excavation at St Mary Magdalen church, the search for the east end of St Botolph's Priory and the reconstruction of its west front, and the trial holes dug in the bus park in advance of possible redevelopment (now shelved), and two Roman buildings of intriguing size and plan.

In March members gathered at St Botolph's to hear Andrew Harris wax lyrical about the upstanding remains and Carl Crossan explain what we had,

or in some cases hadn't, discovered below ground. A small temporary exhibition on the priory in a portakabin next to the nave was also available for viewing.

From dirt archaeology to gilded plaster: May saw members heading for Wrest Park in Bedfordshire, a stately home with a difference. Built in the 19th century in the style of a French chateau, it boasts formal gardens, statuary, pavilions, a lake, woodland, a river, and slight touches of Capability Brown.

In July the annual churches outing, arranged by Friends' member Avril Farahar, took us to Ipswich, where we were guided around some of the town's redundant churches, and a few of those that have managed to survive. Our guide was an eloquent and informed member of the Ipswich Historic Churches Trust, who gave us a rare opportunity to enter buildings now locked against public access.

Patrick Denny led a walk around Edwardian Colchester in August, an intriguing view not just of the buildings, but also of the characters who lived and died in them.

Cressing Temple, near Witham, was our object in October. There Tim Robey, the Essex County Council archaeologist for Cressing, explained the history of the monastic establishment, the excavations in search of the elusive remains, and the huge restored barns.

The final meeting of the year, in November, was a session handling Roman glass in the Castle Museum. Hilary Cool, joint author of the forthcoming report on the Trust's excavated glass, was kind enough to come down from Nottingham to give us the benefit of her considerable expertise. She covered the manufacture of glass in the Roman period, changing styles and techniques, and the clues to look for on small

excavated fragments that allow the piece to be slotted into its broader horizon. This was a very enjoyable and informative occasion.

Looking forward

The AGM in 1992 will be held in the lecture room of the Castle Museum at 2.00 p.m. on Saturday 25th January. There will be illustrated talks on the excavations at Stanway, Church Lane (also Stanway), St Botolph's, and the Castle, and Stephanie Pinter-Bellows will reveal all about the pathology of the Butt Road human bones.

Next year's trips will include a visit (our second) to the Bronze Age wetland site at Rag Fen, the new display at St Alban's Museum, our annual churches outing, and a session of 'hands on the Bronze Age'.

Visits abroad

The town twinning society has suggested that the Friends might consider developing connections with equivalent organisations in the towns with which Colchester has links (ie Avignon in France, Wetzlar in Germany, Zwolle in Belgium, and Siena in Italy). This seems a splendid idea especially when you consider all the wonderful sites there are to visit in and around places like Avignon. Nevertheless we feel that there are some difficult practical problems if it is to be done at group level. However some members might be interested in exchange visits or simply providing hospitality for a like-minded visitor. If so, perhaps you could get in touch with Philip Crummy and he will pass on your name and see if something can be arranged.

Nina Crummy

In brief...

A thousand years ago...

Recent research into Anglo-Saxon coinage has suggested an interesting anniversary for Colchester. Almost exactly 1,000 years ago in AD 991 (probably), a man called Sweting came to Colchester and began striking coinage here. He was soon joined by another half dozen 'moneys' and between them it is estimated that they produced about half a million coins in the space of about six years or so. Sweting, it seems, was a moneyer in London who came to Colchester to start the minting of coins here. Coins continued to be made in the town for the next two hundred years or so, although the output was not so prolific as in those early years.

Only two of Sweting's coins are known in Britain but fortunately both are in the Colchester Museums. One of these coins is shown here. It is of the so-called 'crux' type, introduced in AD 989-991. The crux or cross is in the centre of the reverse with each of the letters from the word CRUX placed in an angle of the cross. The whole design is surrounded by the legend 'SPETINC MO COLN', meaning 'Sweting moneyer of Colchester'. (The Anglo-Saxon letters W and G appear like P and C.) On the other side of the coin is a portrait of Aethelred surrounded by an abbreviated version of 'AETHELRED REX ANGLORUM' (King Aethelred of the English).

The coin was struck or hammered so that the impression of the die was imprinted on a blank disk of silver. The coin is a penny: 240 made a pound — just as they did up until decimalisation in 1971.

Swetin was not the first to make coins in Colchester. Somebody did much the same thing almost a thousand years earlier in the late Iron Age when the first of the beautiful little coins were made which include those with 'CAMU' on them for Camulodunum. These coins were struck during the sixty years or so leading up to the Roman invasion. But that was not the end of it. When the Romans arrived, the army seems to have



produced coins in Colchester with which to pay the soldiers. This practice was short-lived however and the only other period when coins may have been made in the town is towards the end of the 3rd century when coins appear with the mint mark 'C' which some numismatists have suggested refers to Colchester.

We are grateful to Dr D M Metcalf and Mr W Lean whose recent research has provided much new information about the minting of Anglo-Saxon coins at Colchester and Maldon, and to Martin Winter of the Colchester Museums for his help.

St Martin's Church

St Martin's Church is an interesting building with the remains of a fine tower at the west end. Being redundant, it was until recently used as a small theatre for an amateur theatrical group. However it has been acquired by the Essex County Council who are converting it into offices.

The alterations are being made in such a way that disturbance to the church and the ground below are being minimised. The Trust was asked to carry out some limited excavations to provide some information about the depth and character of the archaeological deposits below the floor.

Although the work was very restricted, sufficient was done to enable some light to be thrown on the likely history of the development of the building. Churches usually are often subject to quite major alterations during their lives and it has been suggested that St Martin's Church started off as a cruciform-shaped church in which in plan a pair of transepts form the arms of a cross. Certainly visitors to the building today will see why this suggestion has been made for there are gabled projections in the north and south aisles which seem to be echoes of an earlier design. However the excavations showed that this could not have been the case and that the original church was of a much more modest plan.

Digging in Colchester Castle

It is not every day that the chance comes to dig inside Colchester Castle. We were able to dig on the roof a few years ago (see **The Colchester Archaeologist**, no 2) and recently we were asked to dig a small hole about ten feet square in the floor next to the boiler where a lift shaft for the disabled is to be built. The excavation on the roof proved of great interest. Would the same be true of the latest dig? Remember that the castle is built around the 'podium', the giant platform on which the Temple of Claudius was raised.

raised.

It would have been marvellous to report that we had uncovered a perfectly-preserved part of the floor of the podium (especially as in truth there was no real reason to suppose that it survives where we were digging). It would have been even more exciting to report that we had found remains of a wooden castle which preceded the present one (especially as this is something nobody would expect).

However, instead we have found, or at any rate confirmed, that the floor visible under a perspex cover in the central part of the museum was probably laid by Charles Gray in the 18th century. Under this there is a thick layer of broken and crushed mortar mixed with chips of stone and tile. This turns out to be the debris left by Wheely and his men who partly

demolished the castle in the late 17th century. The material is the waste left over after cleaning pieces of tile and stone for reuse elsewhere. There seems to be many tons of this debris so clearly it was not simply rubble ('hard core' in the modern sense) that Wheely was after but materials which could be reused to build walls. They must have spent an enormous amount of time on this task. Wheely lost money on his castle venture and in the sheer volume of waste which survives we can begin to sense how this might have come about.

The most evocative of the finds are the many fragments of clay pipe which occur in the latest deposits directly under the modern floor. These are much more plentiful than any other class of object. They belong to the days when part of the castle was used as a prison and there

were men there with many an idle hour to spend sucking on a pipe.

Winter lectures

The winter lecture programme of the Colchester Archaeological Group is in full swing. Lectures still to come include Hadrian's Wall on 27th January (Stephen Greep), bone-working in Roman Britain on 3rd February (Nina Crummy), Bronze Age metalwork in Essex on 17th February (Paul Sealey) and moats in Suffolk (Edward A Martin). The meetings are held on Mondays evenings in the Lecture Room at Colchester Castle. Non-members welcome. For further details, please contact Dennis Tripp, 69 Lexden Road, Colchester C03 3QE (telephone Colchester 578059).

Quarrying for the past



Stanway derives its name from the old English 'Stanweag(a)', a reference to the gravelled or 'stone' roads left behind by the Romans. To obtain their supply of gravel, Colchester's early road builders need have searched no further than the surrounding countryside and in doing so became forerunners of a local industry which today supplies much of the region's demand for gravel and sand.

In addition to its mineral wealth, the Stanway area is rich in evidence of late Iron Age activity important to our understanding of life in and around the Belgic stronghold. In recent years, archaeologists and quarry operators have developed close links to ensure that threatened sites are identified and investigated well in advance of extraction. The benefits of this association can be seen at the Tarmac pit (pages 1-5) and, more recently, in smaller-scale work at the ARC pit in Church Lane where excavations in advance of quarrying have located a late Iron Age trackway first spotted as cropmarks on an aerial survey.

Quarry pits west of Colchester. The old ARC pit is to the right, the new one to the left. The recent dig can be seen in the foreground. Photo by the Archaeological Section, Essex County Council.

Flanked by ditches, the two thousand year old track extended for at least 300 metres west from the boundary ditch of a large field and was a driveway for the passage of stock between the field and an enclosure identified on neighbouring land which is not threatened by quarrying.

Co-operation between quarry operators and archaeologists is an ongoing process. ARC Southern Ltd, who sponsored the Church Lane excavation, have recently commissioned the Trust to carry out an archaeological survey on over 100 acres of land adjacent to another of their pits. If the forthcoming survey yields indications of significant early activity, excavation will be needed, so watch this space!

Carl Crossan