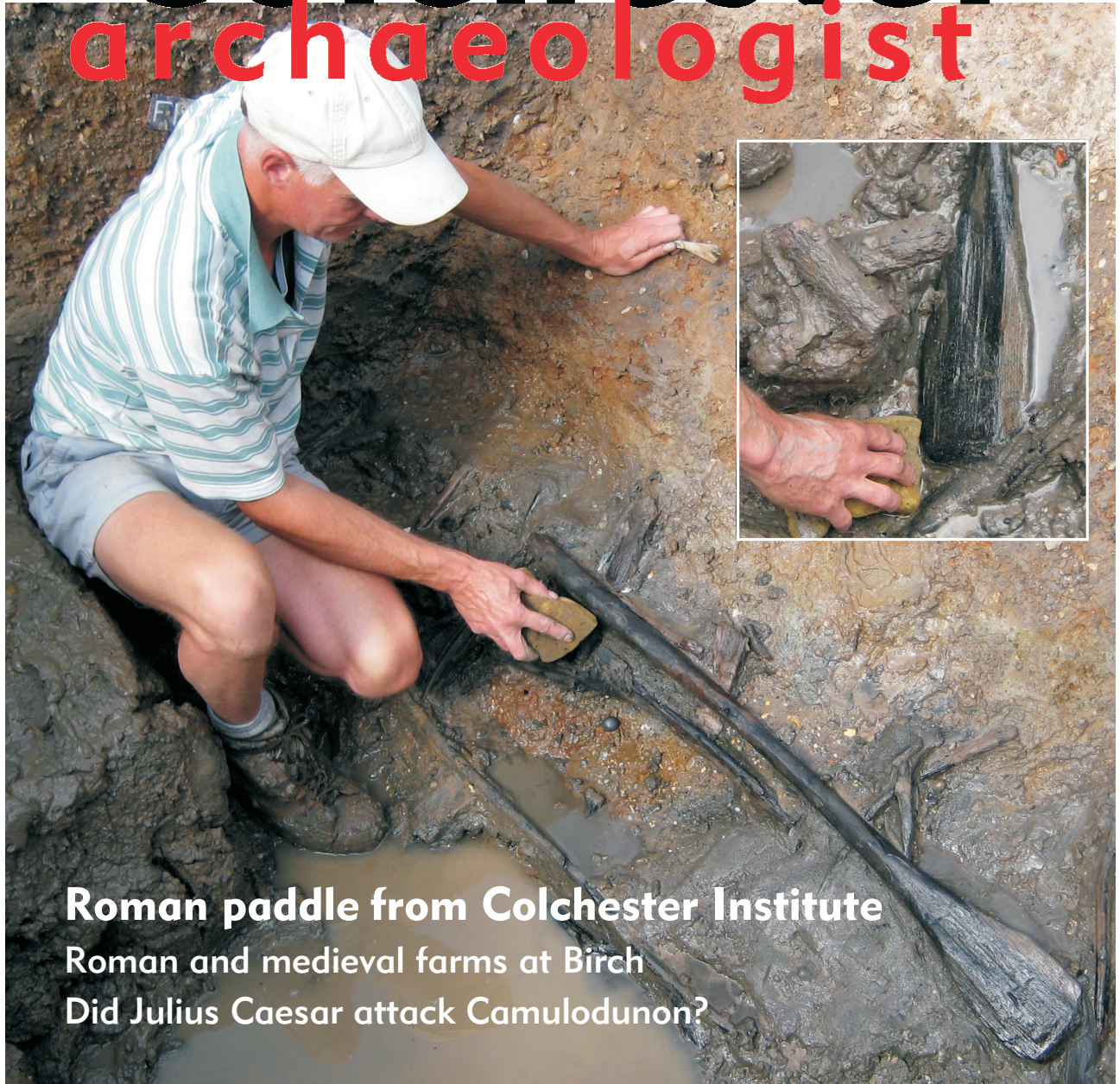


the Colchester archaeologist



Roman paddle from Colchester Institute
Roman and medieval farms at Birch
Did Julius Caesar attack Camulodunon?



The world of Victorian archaeologist William Wire



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Friends of the Colchester Archaeological Trust

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

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Front cover. Nigel Rayner uncovering the Roman paddle at the Colchester Institute.

Right. Sam Bax excavating Roman pots at Birch Quarry in 2008.



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Back to school

By Howard Brooks and Ben Holloway



Colchester Institute is being rebuilt. As part of a rolling program, most of the present buildings are to be demolished and replaced with new facilities to create a campus fit for the 21st century.

CAT have been digging at the Colchester Institute site since 2006.

Initially, a series of evaluations identified areas where archaeological remains might survive, and those areas were excavated in advance of redevelopment from 2007 onwards.

Work in 2007 was reported on in **The Colchester Archaeologist** 21. Ben Holloway and Howard Brooks now bring us up to date with the most recent work (from June 2008 to January 2009) which took place in the wake of the demolition of the Learning Resource Centre and Library in the centre of the campus. Although much of the recent work was carried out in very restricted spaces, we are gradually building up a picture of this fascinating site, described below.

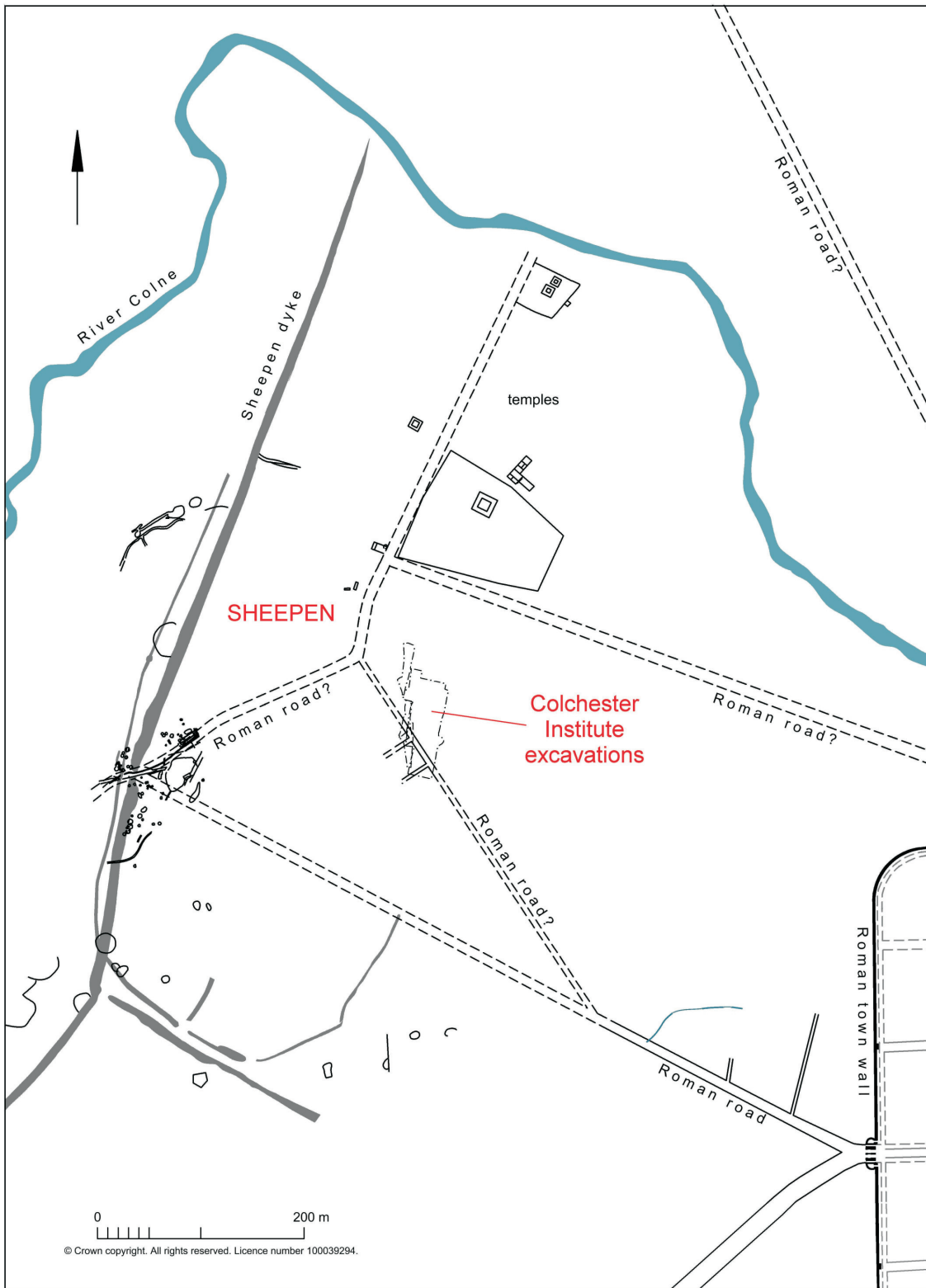
Camulodunum – Sheepen and Gosbecks

The Colchester Institute site stands on the east edge of an area now known as Sheepen. Before the Roman invasion under the Emperor Claudius in AD 43, Sheepen was a pivotal part of Camulodunum, the great fortress of the war god 'Camulos'. The other major site at Camulodunum was at Gosbecks, where king Cunobelin presided over the agricultural focal point of Camulodunum, and a huge hillfort-sized

enclosure there may have been his home. By contrast, Sheepen was an industrial depot where a wide variety of objects were manufactured and through which Roman luxury goods such as wine and jewellery were traded. The Romano-Celtic temple lying under the playing field at St Helena's School (200 m to the north) was one of several such buildings at Sheepen where we can imagine merchants would have gone to make offerings to the gods in the hope of the safe arrival of their next ship-load of Roman wine.

The earliest large-scale excavations at Sheepen were carried out by Rex Hull (then the curator of Colchester Museum) and Christopher Hawkes (later the Professor of European Archaeology at Oxford) in the 1930s in advance of the building of the new bypass (now named the Avenue of Remembrance). Their excavations did not only examine the road-corridor for the bypass (as we would probably do nowadays), but a much wider area, including the site now occupied by

Above. Richard Crockett holds a Roman pot which was one of two vessels from a pit.



the Colchester Institute. The standard archaeological technique in those days was to open up long trenches (which we would now call 'evaluation trenches'), and then widen the trenches if anything interesting was found. (We have come across some of the 'Hawkes and Hull' trenches in our larger-scale excavations.) Later, in 1970, Rosalind Niblett directed an excavation on the (now abandoned) playing fields to the west of the Institute site. The CAT excavations of

2007-09 have been carried out on the area to the east of the 1970 site, and have also allowed areas trenched by Hawkes and Hull to be examined in more detail.

Roman Sheepen

The most surprising discovery made during the recent excavations is that Sheepen was actually quite 'urban' in the Roman period. The main reason for thinking this is the discovery (in the



2007 season) of a previously-unknown Roman gravel road heading from the Sheepen site towards Balcerne Gate (with two minor roads giving access to various parts of the site: **The Colchester Archaeologist** 21). This road was also uncovered on the excavations at the St Mary's Hospital site (now Balcerne Heights: **The Colchester Archaeologist** 15). This newly-discovered road network shows that there were good transport links between the river Colne, Sheepen, and the Roman town. Apart from giving general access between all these places, these roads would also have been used by traders taking their goods from the river (via Sheepen) to the Roman town, and vice versa.

Beside the gravel roads were timber buildings (some with cellars), hearths and metal-working floors, slag and crucibles. These finds show that metal-working was being carried out here, as it was on the adjacent 1970 site. Ovens or kilns were also found, along with two timber-lined wells. Elsewhere were closely packed inter-cutting pits, some containing cremation burials and others votive pots with no cremated bone. These burials may be outliers of the larger Roman cemetery known at the former St Mary's Hospital site (now Balcerne Heights), which is now known to have been connected with this site by a gravel road.

Iron Age Sheepen

Before Sheepen was linked to the Roman town by the roads, it was the northern focus of the late Iron Age oppidum of Camulodunum. An oppidum (plural oppida) is best described as a 'proto-town'. Oppida were large areas of land defended by earthen ramparts. (Ours are known as the Colchester Dykes, and the nearest to the Institute site is the Sheepen Dyke approximately 250m to the west.) It is generally thought that oppida served two purposes. First, they include within their defences large areas of farmland, as well as farms and other living sites. Second, their riverside location allowed them to develop as



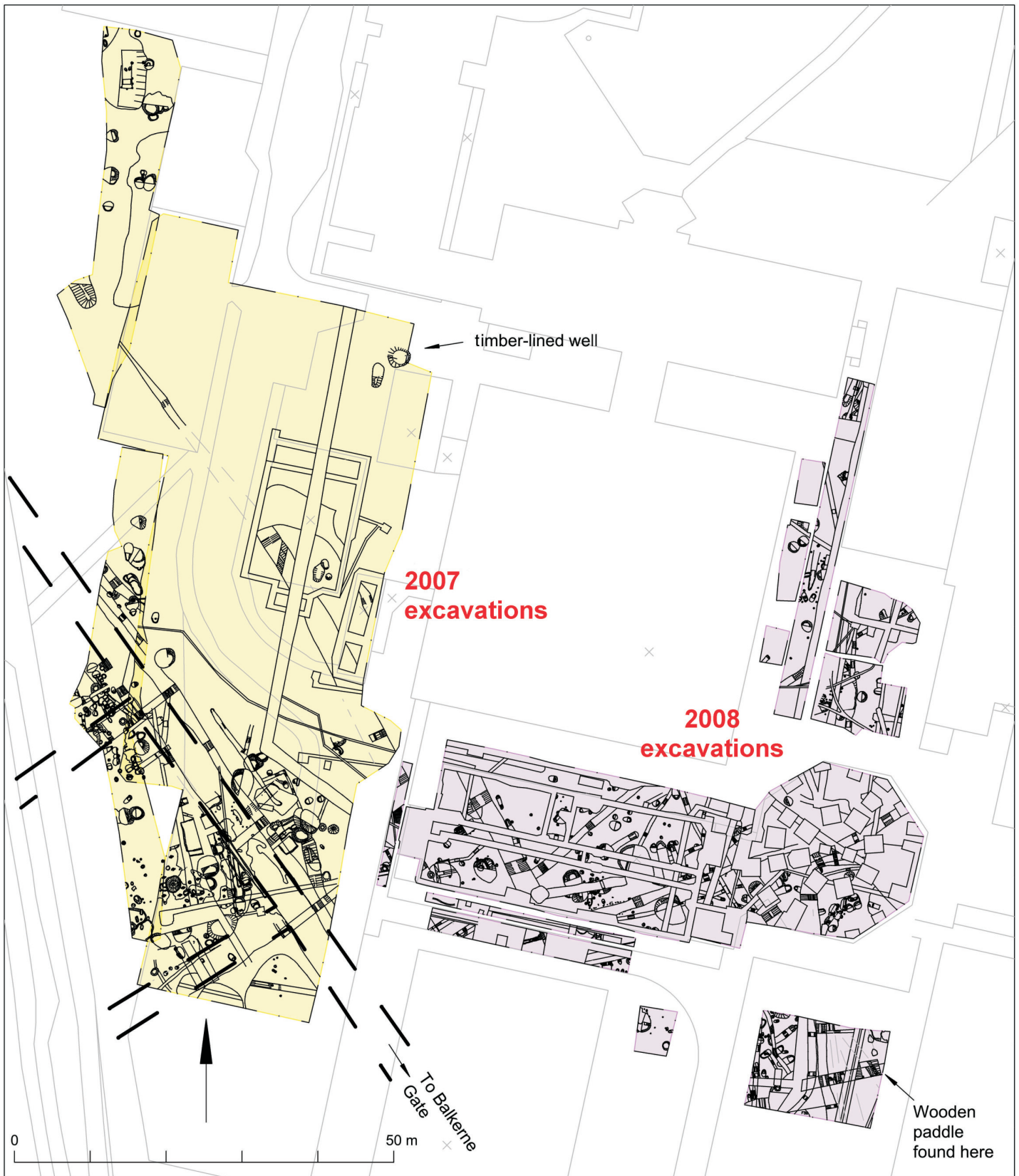
Above. The 1930s excavation at Sheepen in progress.

Centre. The gravelled street leading north-westwards out of the Balcerne Gate towards Sheepen which was discovered in 2002. The photograph was taken during the excavations on the site of St Mary's Hospital (now Balcerne Heights). The Sheepen site is on the horizon with the Institute to the right in the valley.

Below. The other end of the same street as found in 2007 during the excavations at Colchester Institute.



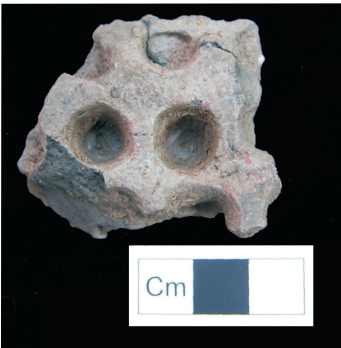
The most recent investigations at the Institute were badly affected by heavy rain. But work had to go on....



Latest plan of the excavations at the Colchester Institute showing the two different phases of investigations (yellow for 2007 and purple for 2008) and the position of the Roman road (bottom left) leading from the Balcerne Gate to the river Colne.



The wooden paddle from the Institute at an early stage of excavation.



Some finds from the recent excavations.

Far left. Fragment of a coin mould. Used for making blanks which we were then struck to make coins.

Left. A medallion from a glass vessel showing the face of Bacchus. Actual size.

Below left. A carbonised bread roll. Actual size.

Below. The reverse and obverse of a classic gold coin of Cunobelin. His name is abbreviated to CUN on the reverse, and the location of his mint at Camulodunum is abbreviated to CAMV on the obverse. Twice actual size.



bases or depots from which the local Britons could trade with the Roman world, with which they were increasingly coming into contact after Julius Caesar's expeditions to Britain of 55 BC and 54 BC.

Following the discovery of sherds of a type of Roman amphora known as Dressel 1a in a well on the 2007 excavation site, we now know that Sheepen was probably founded within a few decades of Caesar's expeditions of 55 BC and 54 BC. The reasoning behind this is that scholars believe that the Italian wine (transported in the amphoras) was traded into Britain through such depots as Sheepen up to the time of Caesar's expeditions of 55/54 BC, but probably not much later. The wine in this particular amphora was clearly drunk at Sheepen, and (some years later?) the amphora was broken up, and part of it was thrown into the well. Therefore the well was in use within a decade or so of 50 BC, demonstrating that Sheepen was in use at that time.

The wooden paddle

The most interesting and exciting discovery of the 2008-09 season was a wooden paddle found amid a tangle of waterlogged wood in a Roman ditch. It was approximately 1m long, and was in an excellent state of preservation as a result of the waterlogged conditions. The blade of the paddle has a bevelled edge, and the handle has been shaped to provide a more comfortable grip. This paddle may have been used to propel a small vessel (such as a coracle) along an inlet connecting Sheepen with the Colne. Was the coracle used in some way when Roman ships landed their cargo on the banks of the Colne near Sheepen?

Recent finds: eat, drink, and be merry!

Although the excavation of pits, ditches, gullies and post holes is the 'bread and butter' of modern archaeology, we are fortunate in Colchester to often work on sites which produce large volumes of finds, many of them of great interest. Sheepen is just such a site. Apart from the paddle, 2008-09 finds included a bread roll, fine pottery, coins, brooches and imported glassware.

In 2007, finds included fine pottery, imported amphoras, and clay moulds for the manufacture of coins. The coin moulds are of particular importance, because the minting of coins is an outward sign of a desire on the part of local Britons to be part of a wider and more civilised world, as well as being a means by which trade could be carried out.

We'll be back!

The excavations at the Colchester Institute continue to produce fascinating results at many levels – new roads, areas of occupation, and finds including gems such as the wooden paddle. Building work is programmed to continue for some time yet, so we are hoping for more of the same!

Volunteers needed to help CAT on the web

Volunteers are needed to help expand the content of CAT's new website (<http://cat.essex.ac.uk>). Colchester Archaeological Trust Online Report Library was established last year as a joint project between the Trust and the University of Essex to provide free website access to as many reports and publications as possible about archaeological investigations and research about Colchester. There are now over 400 CAT Archive Reports online plus various other publications including *The Colchester Archaeologist* (but not the latest issue), many of the Colchester Archaeological Report Series (all about excavations 1971-85), Philip Morant's *History and Antiquities of Colchester* (1748), and Rex Hull's *Roman Colchester* (1958). Many more reports and publications are to be added in due course. The work is being done by volunteers, but more people are needed to come to the Trust's offices and help. If you feel you are reasonably comfortable with computers and have a few hours to spare each week (weekdays between 8.30am and 5.00pm), please give us a call.

The original CAT website (<http://www.catuk.org>) has not been forgotten because it has been given a major make-over. Christine and Adrian Clark have redesigned the site so that it can now be easily updated by staff at the Trust. Here you will find news about the latest digs in and around Colchester. Other information on the site includes the publications the Trust has for sale and how they can be bought, how to contact the Trust, and what commercial services it offers developers and the like.

Not to be outdone, the Friends of CAT website has had a facelift too. It has a new home (<http://friendsofcat.org.uk>) and a much improved look. Again updating its content will be much easier too.



CAT chariot treads the boards

Our chariot was on public view again – this time in Oxford as a stage prop. The Oxford University Classical Drama Society needed a chariot for their production of *Agamemnon* by the Greek playwright Aeschylus. Understandably, chariots are not easy to find these days, so ours came to the rescue. Here it is in action in the Oxford Playhouse with *Agamemnon* himself onboard entering 'stage right'.

Julius Caesar and Camulodunon

When Julius Caesar was waging war in Gaul, he twice crossed over to Britain.

The culmination of his campaigns was the capture of the fortress of the British king Cassivellaunus. The identification of the stronghold has remained a mystery, but archaeological investigations in Colchester over recent years have opened up the possibility that the stronghold was Camulodunum.

In AD 43, Claudius led his army in triumph into Camulodunon, stronghold of the late British king Cunobelin. Could Julius Caesar have done the same a hundred years earlier? It's an intriguing question, but only one of many that concern Colchester's earliest years. When, how and why was Camulodunon established? What did it look like? Could it be called a town? What of the relationship between the Catuvellauni and the Trinovantes? And was it a Trinovantian settlement or a Catuvellaunian one? Luckily, there have been various opportunities in recent years for some large-scale excavations, and answers to some of these questions are starting to emerge.

Until recently, the start date for Camulodunon could not be pushed further back than c 25 BC. The evidence for this date comes from various sources. The Lexden Tumulus is the starting point. Excavated in 1924, it is the burial place of a British king who died c 15-10 BC (but no earlier than 17 BC). A group of cremation burials close by the tumulus seems slightly earlier and pulls the date for Camulodunon back to c 50-15/10 BC, on the basis that the cremation burials did not contain a particular type of pottery ('Gallo-Belgic') which was imported in substantial quantities into Colchester soon after its manufacture began in BC 15/10. Then there are early coins of the Catuvellaunian king Tasciovanus which were mint marked 'CAM' for Camulodunon and are dated numismatically very approximately to 25 BC. The name Camulodunon means 'fortified place of Camulos', a British god of war. Thus its appearance on the coins of Tasciovanus shows that, by c 25 BC, Camulodunon must have been an important place and must have had defences.

As the result of some recent excavations, occupation at Camulodunon can now be traced back into the Middle Iron Age, that is to before the mid 1st century. The site at Stanway Quarry, which was excavated intermittently between 1987 and 2004, consisted largely of a series of five ditched enclosures. Four of these were funerary in purpose and were associated with various unusual cremation burials including the 'Doctor's burial' with his surgical instruments and gaming board. The earliest of the enclosures was not funerary, but was a farmstead containing a

round-house datable to c 200-50 BC. Despite the change of use from agriculture to cemetery, the configuration of the enclosures suggests that there had been continuity of a sort from the 2nd century BC to the early Roman period.

Abbotstone was a cropmark complex near the Stanway site. Excavated 1999-2001, it contained the remains of a native farmstead which originated in the Middle Iron Age and lasted with modifications until the 3rd century or so. In its earliest form, Abbotstone consisted of two small enclosures, at least one of which appears to have contained a round-house. Again, like Stanway, an interesting aspect of the site is the evidence for continuous occupation from the 2nd century BC until the 3rd century AD.

Finally, there were the excavations on the large swathe of land where Colchester Garrison is being rebuilt. About 300 hectares are involved in what was the eastern part of Camulodunon. The archaeological work here began with an extensive programme of geophysics. Evaluation then followed on a grand scale with about seven miles of trenches dug by machine. This led to a series of area excavations in the most vulnerable and archaeologically-sensitive parts of the development.

Two of the areas were particularly interesting. One of them (Area 2) provided the first and only clear example yet found in Colchester of a prehistoric round-house. The building, dated to c 100-50 BC, had been erected inside a small square ditched enclosure. Although continuity with the later droeways cannot be clearly proved, the building's enclosure shared the same alignment as the droeways making some form of continuity likely. The important word here is 'continuity', because the identification of occupation predating c 25 BC would not on its own be enough to argue that Camulodunon was in existence before that date, especially since it must be conceded that all three sites (ie Stanway, Abbotstone, and Area 2) could represent small, unconnected settlements in a pre-Camulodunon landscape.

Another area of particular interest on the Garrison site (Area 6) provided an insight into the layout and appearance of Camulodunon. The defining feature of the excavation area was a

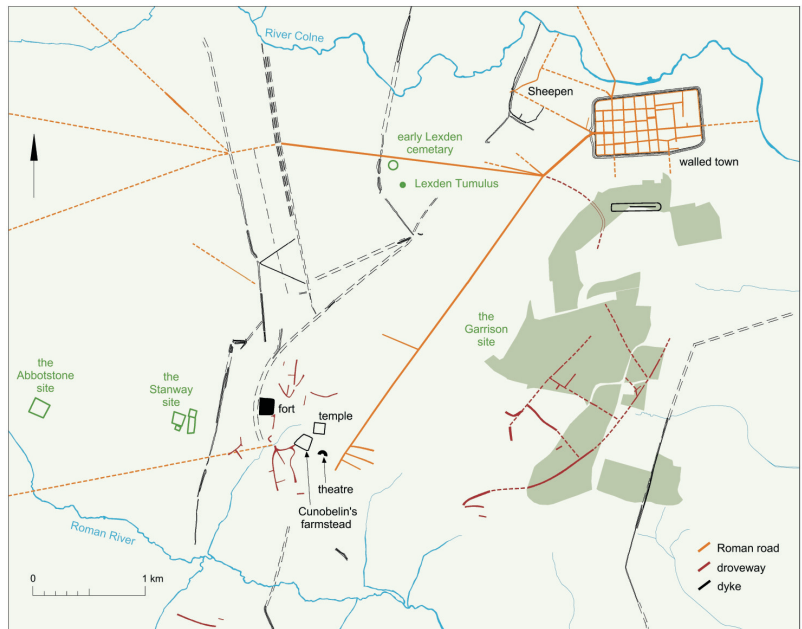
long stretch of droveway. Similar droveways inside the settlement have been known for many years from cropmarks. A few of these were within the Garrison site, but the densest complex of them is in the Gosbecks area to the west. It was a surprise to find that the droveway in Area 6 had developed into a hollow way and was later metallised, presumably to help stop further erosion. Subsequent investigation elsewhere on the Garrison site indicated that this was probably the normal pattern with the droveways generally.

Area 6 also included parts of fields to either side of the droveway. The overall impression was of a landscape geared towards the management of stock. Groups of post-holes in the ditches flanking the droveway showed the positions of timber gates and how stock was moved from one enclosure to another. Phosphate analysis confirmed that a large depression in a corner of one of the fields was where animals, presumably cattle, had congregated and turned the ground there into a quagmire. The droveways were of course by their nature bound up with animal farming, and their hollowed-out surfaces suggest that they were used extensively for that purpose. Small groups of burials along the sides of fields were presumably of members of some of the families who worked the fields. Similar remains in a comparable position were found during excavations at Gosbecks in 1995-6. The Garrison and the Gosbecks burials together suggest that the people who lived in Camulodunon were widely spread and lived on small-holdings.

The droveway on Area 6 and the others on the Garrison site were Late Iron Age or Roman in date. A very wide droveway lay west of the circus. It must have been a principal route in and out of Camulodunon, because it connected the main road leading westwards towards London and the west with the maze of curved droveways and fields which characterised the settlement.

One additional piece of evidence for an earlier date for the start of Camulodunon needs to be mentioned and that is a single sherd of a type of amphora known as a Dressel 1, found in a Roman-period ditch at Gosbecks about 15 years ago. The sherd is clearly much older than the ditch in which it lay since vessels of this kind are associated with sites dating to the 2nd and early 1st centuries BC. It is true this is only a single sherd, but its presence at Gosbecks suggests that an investigation of the great farmstead there known from aerial photographs will turn out to be early in origin – possibly even earlier than Julius Caesar's invasions of Britain.

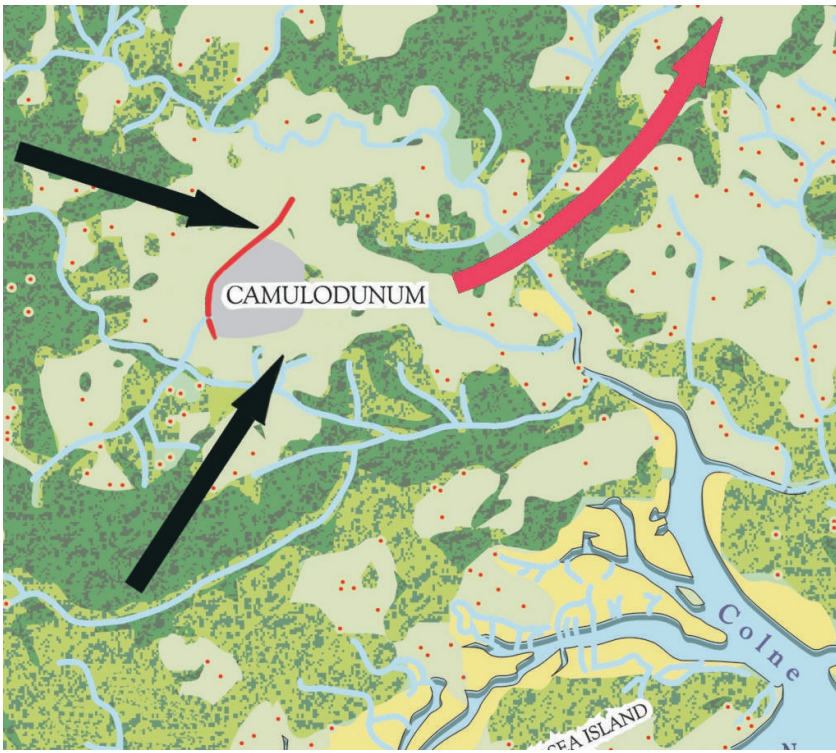
You could be forgiven for wondering why we make so much of pushing back the start date for Colchester. The answer is to do with Julius Caesar. If Camulodunon really did exist by the mid 1st century BC, then it must have existed when he invaded Britain. And given the size and importance of the place, at least later on, we are entitled to ask if it had a role to play in Caesar's exploits on these shores.



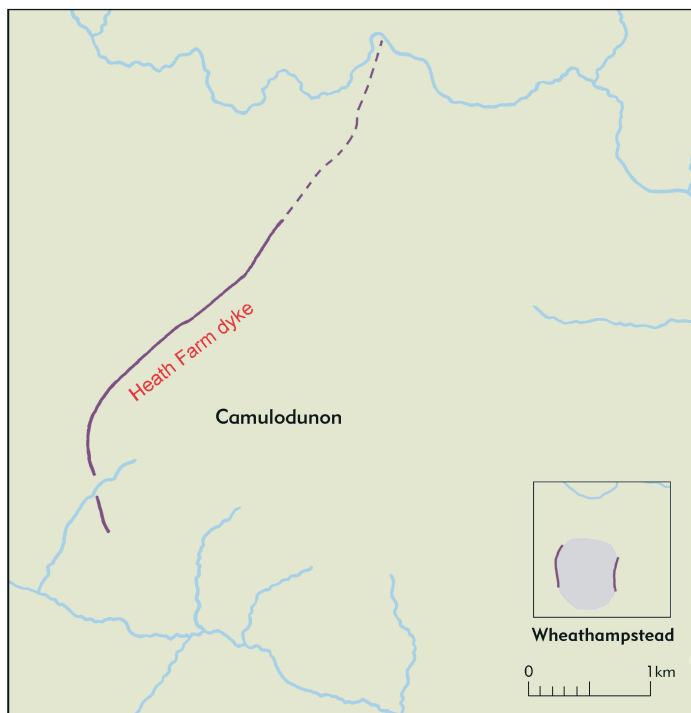
Plan of Camulodunon showing the full extent of the dyke system and the locations of Stanway, Abbotstone, and the Garrison sites. The dykes were developed over a period of many years. The earliest (Heath Farm Dyke) was constructed during the 1st century BC with the latest being added just after the Boudican Revolt of AD 61.

Julius Caesar gives his own account of what happened at that time. The British king Cassivellaunus killed the king of the Trinovantes whose son, Mandubracius, fled for his life to the Continent in the hope of gaining the protection of Caesar who happened to be engaged on his conquest of Gaul at the time. The Britons had been supporting the Belgae and the Gauls in their war against the Romans. Caesar invaded Britain in 55 BC and then again the following year because his first attempt had been a failure. This time he met with success. He defeated Cassivellaunus in his stronghold, and made him agree to leave the Trinovantes alone and let them appoint Mandubracius as their king. Caesar gives few clues as to where the stronghold was, but he does describe it and he tells us about his attack in the following passage:

... he [Caesar] learnt that the stronghold of Cassivellaunus, defended by woods and marshes, lay not far away, and that he [Cassivellaunus] had gathered there a great number of men and cattle. (Now 'stronghold' is what the Britons call a thickly wooded area fortified by a rampart and ditch, and it is their practice to gather together in such a place to avoid enemy raids.) Caesar set out for this place with the legions. He found that it was extremely well fortified by both natural and man-made defences; nevertheless he launched an assault on two sides. For a short time the enemy remained there, but they could not resist the assault of our troops and made their escape from another side of the stronghold. A large number of cattle was found there, and many of the people who fled were captured and killed. (The Gallic War, v.21.)



Was Camulodunon the fortress of the British king Cassivellaunus which Julius Caesar attacked and captured in 54 BC? Caesar himself tells us he assaulted the stronghold on two sides (the black arrows) having evidently travelled north-eastwards from the Thames. The relationship between the earliest of Camulodunon's dykes (Heath Farm Dyke) which is shown above in red and the surrounding topography makes it easy to imagine how the assault could have gone. One part of Caesar's army could have moved eastwards parallel with the Colne valley so as to tackle the defences head-on, while the other part could have attempted to bypass them by entering Camulodunon from the south. This second group would have crossed the Roman River (which would have been easy to do) at a point where they could move northwards behind the Heath Farm Dyke and hence into the centre of the stronghold. Cassivellaunus then escaped (if he was there in person) with many of his men and cattle by fleeing east or north-eastwards over the river Colne.



Over the years, several sites have been suggested as being Cassivellaunus' stronghold. The best candidate is undoubtedly Wheathampstead near St Albans. Other possibilities are Ravensburgh (9 ha), Wallbury (12.5 ha), Braughing (which is not fortified), and perhaps The Aubreys (8 ha). The trouble is that they all seem rather small. Wheathampstead is the largest of the group by far, but, even at 35 ha, it seems hard to justify Caesar's assertion that there was a great quantity of cattle there and that he attacked the stronghold on two sides in such a way that the Britons could escape out of another. Camulodunon, on the other hand, was a different matter. Not only did it truly dwarf Wheathampstead in area being at least thirty times the size (at over 1,000 ha), but the relationship between its earliest dyke (Heath Farm Dyke) and the river Colne corresponds with Caesar's description of his two-pronged assault rather neatly. However, it must be conceded that Wheathampstead should not be ruled out on the basis of size alone. It is true that, in normal battle order (*acies triplex*), five legions would have presented a line two to three kilometres in length, which seems excessive in relation to Wheathampstead which was only about 600 m across, but then it would all depend on what tactics Caesar would have employed when storming a fortified place such as the one he describes. He might even have done it on a limited front to allow Cassivellaunus' men an escape route so that he could catch them from behind as they fled (a favoured tactic).

A second point in support of Camulodunon as the stronghold is its association with Catuvellaunian kings. Cunobelin issued thousands of coins mint marked CAM and variations thereof, thus showing that Camulodunon was his principal base. The British king associated with the Lexden Tumulus has not been identified, but Addedomaros is the favoured person on the grounds of date. But it is possible that the dead king was Tasciovanus, father (presumably) of Cunobelin, and, if this were so, the link between Camulodunon and the Catuvellaunian royal line, and hence Cassivellaunus himself, would become clearer. (This assumes that Cassivellaunus was Catuvellaunian which is something that Caesar is silent about.) Coin evidence places Tasciovanus' death around the beginning of the 1st century AD, a date not irreconcilable with that of the Lexden Tumulus. The tumulus contained an exceptionally rich and varied group of objects. Tasciovanus' coins, at least his later ones, were very Romanised in appearance. The burial group is likewise and, curiously, several of the subjects depicted in the collection appear on his coins, ie the griffin, the bull, the boar, the cupid, and the head of Augustus. Certainly if the identity of the dead king were to be judged by the images on his coins alone, Tasciovanus would be the clear winner over Addedomaros. The objection to Tasciovanus stems from the fact that coins mint marked Camulodunon occur only among the

earliest of his issues, and that it would seem more likely that he was buried in the Verulamium area where most of his coins were minted.

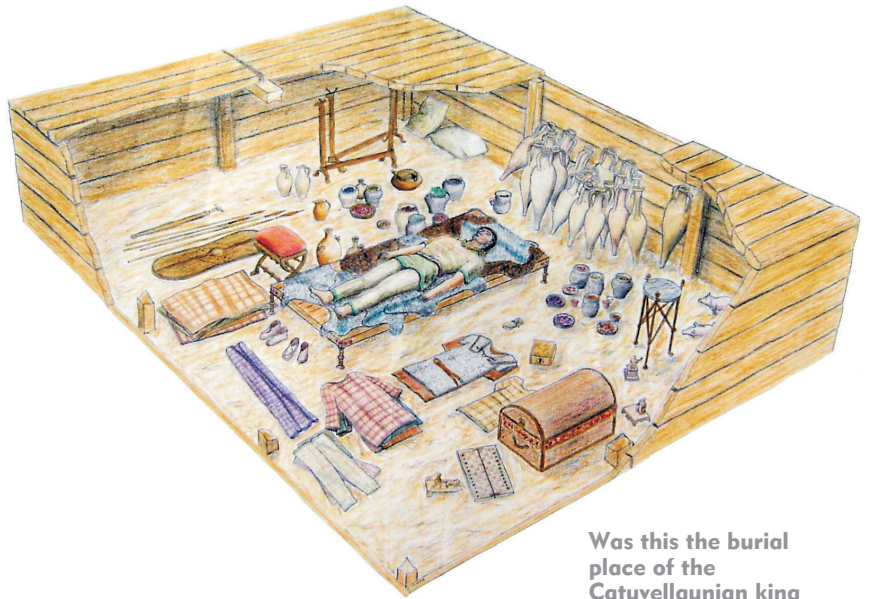
Thus, in support of Camulodunon being Cassivellaunus' stronghold, we can point to its exceptional size which seems more in scale with the size of Caesar's army, its layout which suits Caesar's description of his attack, its apparent association with two Catuvellaunian kings, and its existence when Julius Caesar invaded Britain.

The case is still a weak one, but there is one last point in its favour. If Caesar had indeed attacked and defeated Cassivellaunus at Camulodunon, then Claudius' invasion of Britain begins to look as if Claudius meant it to be a deliberate but more successful re-run of Julius Caesar's campaign (the second one) a century earlier. The similarities between the two campaigns would be striking if Camulodunon had indeed been Cassivellaunus' stronghold. Both armies landed in Kent (although some archaeologists dispute the Claudian landing site), crossed the Thames, and headed for Camulodunon and the heart of the Catuvellaunian resistance. The submission of the defeated tribes was received there on both occasions, followed by the withdrawal by Caesar in one case and Claudius in the other. Claudius even brought war elephants with him, presumably in reference to the one brought by Caesar since, by this stage, they were an antiquated form of weaponry. The only difference between the two campaigns would be that Claudius left most of his army behind to consolidate his victory, whereas Caesar withdrew his to Gaul.

But you may by now have spotted a problem. Caesar seems to paint a picture of a stronghold devoid of settlement, whereas we are at pains to prove otherwise. Interestingly, those droveways which are datable turn out to be no earlier than c 50-25 BC, and some, possibly many, are Roman. This gives us a way out: the Camulodunon we know, with its intricate network of fields and droveways, was a later development, and the mid 1st-century BC occupation we have recently discovered represents either an early phase when the place was barely occupied or even (as we have already mentioned) small, independent settlements predating Camulodunon.

But how and when was Camulodunon founded? Its association with Catuvellaunian kings and its location away from the Catuvellaunian heartland (now Hertfordshire) suggest that Camulodunon was the result of a Catuvellaunian encroachment into Trinovantian territory. Presumably the original purpose of the stronghold was to provide a place of refuge in times of need for Catuvellauni who had moved into the area. After all, this is precisely what Caesar tells us places such as this were for, and the Catuvellauni would have been living in hostile territory.

Would it be going too far to go further and suggest that this infiltration was triggered by the stealing of cattle from the Trinovantes? Cattle rustling was endemic among some groups in



Was this the burial place of the Catuvellaunian king Tasciovanus, father of Cunobelin? Reconstruction of the burial chamber at the Lexden Tumulus illustrated by Stephen Crummy.

antiquity. In those communities, the stealing of cattle was seen as an honourable military pursuit, indulged in by all regardless of status, and a test of leadership. In the Highlands of Scotland, for example, cattle rustling was a major activity celebrated in bardic song. It was said that, at any one time, a clan chieftain could have as many of his men out stealing cattle from his neighbours as he had trying to recover animals stolen from him by others. The 'Border reivers' is another group notorious for their rustling, in their case in southern Scotland and northern England. Reiving, that is raiding for cattle, sheep, and whatever else which could be taken, was an established way of life which was regarded with no discredit among the people of the Borders.

Clearly there was a strong link between Camulodunon and stock-raising. This much has been demonstrated by recent excavations. And there is too the statement in Caesar that Cassivellaunus' stronghold was filled with many cattle and men. Certainly there are plenty of parallels in antiquity for raiders-turned-settlers. The idea is plausible enough that the war-like Catuvellauni were drawn to Trinovantian territory in the mid 1st century BC if not before in search of loot, particularly cattle. Their expansions south of the Thames in the years leading up to the Claudian conquest could be explained in the same way. True or not, Camulodunon looks as if it had a relatively quiet beginning in terms of human occupation, and only later, with substantial, permanent settlement, did it assume its economic and political importance. Whether or not early visitors really did include Julius Caesar is up for debate, but unfortunately it is hard to see how we will ever know the truth.

Philip Crummy

This article first appeared in a slightly different form in *Current Archaeology*.

In the pipeline...



Don Shimmin uncovers Boudica's handiwork in Queen Street.

The replacement gas mains were usually laid in trenches dug alongside the redundant 1930's mains. As the contractors wended their way up Queen Street and into Culver Street East, the remains of several Roman buildings were revealed in the trench. These included foundations, floors and drains, as well as Roman street metalling. Many of the foundations had been robbed for stone in the medieval period, but their existence could be inferred from the robber trenches. Several mortar floors, some of which probably formed the bases for tessellated pavements or mosaics, lay 0.6-0.9m below the modern ground level.

Under the pavement on the west side of Queen Street, near the junction with Culver Street East, part of a large Roman foundation and a drain were uncovered. The foundation survived unrobbed 1m below the modern ground level. It may have belonged to a public building in Insula 30. Little is known about this building, but there was no evidence to back up the suggestion that it

The gasmen continued laying mains along Queen Street and Culver Street East, giving CAT the chance to investigate more archaeological remains. This followed on from the discovery of the South Gate in St Botolph's Street reported in last year's magazine. Among the archaeological finds this year were the exceptionally well-preserved remains of what turned out to be the earliest Roman buildings now known in this part of town.

was an amphitheatre. The drain extended obliquely across the trench, from NNW to SSE. This part of the trench had been much disturbed by later service trenches and pits, and it was surprising that despite all this the remains of the drain survived in the bottom of the trench. The sides and base of the drain were constructed of Roman brick set in *opus signinum*, a hard Roman mortar with a pinkish hue. The drainage channel was 0.4m wide and the western side of the channel survived up to 4 courses (0.25m) high.

At the northern end of Queen Street, under the pavement to the east of the Natural History Museum (formerly All Saints Church), a thick reddish-brown layer was revealed only 0.5-0.6m below the modern ground level. This consisted mainly of fragments of burnt daub with some pieces of Roman brick and tile. Records show that this deposit had been seen on several previous occasions from the mid-19th century onwards and was usually interpreted as kiln debris of Norman or later date. During the

trenching for the gas main, we were able to examine this layer in detail and confirm that it was in fact Boudican destruction debris. The burnt daub was derived mainly from daub-block walls destroyed during the Boudican revolt of AD 60/1. While cleaning over this layer, we recognised the remains of two burnt daub-block walls *in situ*. They were aligned east-west, approximately 8m apart, and were 0.6m (2 feet) wide. They were constructed of sun-dried blocks of 'clay' which had been baked hard in AD 60/1, with their outer edges burnt a lurid red colour.

One of the daub-block walls had to be covered over almost immediately, but the other one was left open for a while. This one was probed with an iron stake, and a hard surface was reached just over 1m below the bottom of the trench (ie 2.05m below the modern pavement level). This was probably a mortared plinth, which would have supported a pair of timber beams or ground-plates, upon which the courses of daub blocks would have been laid. This type of early Roman wall has been found elsewhere in Colchester, notably under the Culver Street precinct in the 1980s, as well as at Head Street in 2000 (*The Colchester Archaeologist* 14, 9-11). It was used in the construction of barrack blocks and other buildings within the Roman fortress.

The two daub-block walls in Queen Street were therefore probably of military origin, built as part of a large annexe on the east side of the fortress. Unfortunately very little is known about the layout and function of the buildings in the annexe. However it is clear that the Queen Street walls formed part of a substantial building that was significant enough to be retained in the early civilian town in a prime location opposite the precinct of the Temple of Claudius.

We also augered immediately to the south of one of the daub-block walls. This indicated that the layer of Boudican destruction debris was approximately 1.45m deep (ie 0.5-1.95m below the modern pavement). It appeared to seal a thin burnt floor deposit about 0.1m thick, which in turn sealed natural sand. Thus not only were the Boudican deposits extensive and close to the modern ground level, but there is also the



tantalising prospect that they include early Roman walls still standing almost 1.5m (5 feet) high.

This level of preservation bears comparison with Pompeii, but why it exists here is unclear. Further to the south and south-west the Boudican deposits were not so marked and not so close to the modern ground level. One possible factor is that there was probably a north-south street a short distance to the east in the early colonial period (c AD49-60/1), and perhaps earlier as well. Thus the daub-block walls uncovered in the trench may lie close to the corners of the building(s) and this may have aided their preservation. Whatever the reason, this area does not seem to have been as extensively cleared after the Boudican revolt as elsewhere. Hopefully we will not have to wait too long for the opportunity to examine these walls again.

Donald Shimmin

The watching brief was commissioned by Morrison for National Grid.

Above. Work-experience student Jack Quarrie holds a fragment of a daub building block which was burnt and reddened during the Boudican revolt of AD 61.

Left. The top of one of the daub-block walls which evidently survives to a height of about 1.5m. The faces of the wall are to the right and left. The very top of the wall was cut away by the machine and is visible in the side of the trench.



Two farms: one quarry

Excavations on the outskirts of Colchester have revealed the remains of two ancient farms of quite different dates. One goes back over seven centuries whereas the other began about two thousand years ago before the Roman conquest of Britain. Stephen Benfield gives us some details.

For a number of years now, the Trust has been involved with recording archaeology at Birch Quarry on behalf of Hanson Aggregates. The work first started in the 1990s when a field walking survey, led by Carl Crossan, located areas with Roman finds. Since 2004, as the quarry has expanded, we have been engaged in excavation at the quarry every year. One such excavation, which uncovered a Middle Bronze Age burial ground, has previously been reported in **The Colchester Archaeologist** for 2004 (issue number 17). However, about the same time, at the west end of the quarry, an excavation on a prehistoric and Roman site was begun. This has continued each year as more of the site was made available to excavation by the expansion of the quarry. While I have talked about this site at the meetings of the Friends of the Trust, it has not yet been reported in **The Colchester Archaeologist**. As all of the area of the main Roman enclosure has now been excavated, this seems an appropriate time to write about the site, especially as some of the finds have been particularly exciting this year.

Quarry manager Kevin Thompson and Emma Spurgeon inspect the Roman oven.



It is possible that the earliest activity we have encountered on the site dates from the middle or later Neolithic period (c 3000-2000 BC). Some sherds which are probably part of a decorated Neolithic pottery bowl were recovered from a small pit. However, nothing else which may date so early has been uncovered so far. Rather later in date, but probably still preceding any extensive settlement on the site, is a shallow ditch forming a small circle or ring. This is similar to the small circular ditches of the Middle Bronze Age burial ground mentioned above and may represent a similar feature, especially as a small sherd from a large pottery vessel, possibly a Bronze Age cremation jar, was recovered close by. If so, this feature can probably be dated to the period c 1500-1000 BC.

While we have not found traces of any houses, we can be confident that people were living on the site by the Late Bronze Age (c 1000-700 BC). This is because we have uncovered a number of pits with pottery, together with some domestic and personal items, of that date. We have also excavated a large pit which was possibly a water-hole associated with the settlement. The pits have been found thinly spread across the site from the area close to Maldon Road to about 300 m north of it. This indicates that the settlement was quite extensive, although we do not know that the whole area was occupied at the same time. The location of family dwellings may have shifted around the site over a period of time which our relatively coarse archaeological dating, based on changes in styles of artefacts, cannot easily divide. However, the finds from two of the more recently excavated of these pits have been especially interesting. There is a whole clay loomweight, a small solid drum shaped object with a central hole for suspension, which shows that textile was being woven on the site. The other, and rather more exciting find, is a complete bronze dress pin for fastening a cloth cloak or wrap together. It is probably worth mentioning at this point that despite this prehistoric period being called the Bronze Age, bronze is not a particularly common find when excavating settlements of the period. This is because it was a valuable and recyclable material and is not usually found unless it had been deliberately buried. I have rarely seen metal objects of this period on any site I have been on, which makes this such a nice find. Also, it raises the question of why it was put into the pit. It could not easily have been a casual loss, so that a deliberate ritual inclusion seems likely.

There is little evidence of any people at the quarry site after the Late Bronze Age until the Late Iron Age period, c 50 BC-43 AD. During that time a rectangular ditched enclosure, of which we can trace three sides, about 100 m across was laid out. There was an entrance through the ditch on the west side and another on the north side. The difficulty in now tracing the east side, and the fact that there appear to have been wide entrances or gaps in the ditch in that area, suggests the enclosure was not defensive. It probably served to define a farmstead and controlled the movement of people and animals

around it. No buildings have been able to be located within the enclosure, although a few short sections of gullies may indicate where former buildings once stood.

The farm enclosure had a long life, continuing in use though Roman period (c AD 43-410). The ditches on the north and west sides were redefined in the early Roman period, although the two known Iron Age entrances were blocked; first that on the east side, then, later, that on the north side. The ditches of the farm enclosure on those sides were now used to form one side of ditched droveways for livestock, which directed the farm animals around the enclosure away from the centre of the farmstead. A similar droveway now also formed the west side of the enclosure. To the north of the farm enclosure were several fields or paddocks divided up by ditches. It was during the early Roman period that the cremated human remains, some with pots, were buried a short distance to the east of the farm enclosure. These presumably are the remains of some of the family or workers on the farm. We do not know where the inhabitants of the farm in the later Roman period were buried.

The appearance and layout of the Roman farm in terms of its buildings are also not known, although, rather like the Iron Age, some lengths of gullies and post-holes may indicate the site of former buildings. Little or no mortar, plaster, stone, or tile cubes from tessellated floors which would indicate substantial and well appointed buildings have been recovered. There are pieces from roofing tiles, but these may be reused handy building material rather than indicating a tile roofed building on the site. Probably we must imagine timber-framed buildings with earth or timber floors and possibly thatched roofs, not dissimilar constructionally to many rural cottages and barns until recent times.

The only structure which we can positively identify is the remains of a large oven, which has been one of the most interesting recent finds on the site. This was situated in the northeast part of

the farm enclosure. The remains of the oven consisted of a tile-lined flue linking a stoking pit with a large rectangular oven base about 2.5 m square. The oven is not closely dated within the Roman period, but is almost certainly of mid or late Roman date. Similar structures are known from many Roman rural sites across the country and are often referred to as corn-dryers, although they may also have functioned as malting floors in part of the process of brewing.

The end of the Roman period appears to see the abandonment of settlement on the site until the high medieval period of the 12th and 13th centuries. The medieval settlement was east of where the Roman farm had been located. What has been uncovered so far consists of what appear to be two small enclosures, probably stock pens for animals, marked by ditches and post-holes, with a droveway on the east side of them. The ends of the enclosures also appear to have had narrow access passages which would allow close control over the livestock. Once again, no buildings have been identified, but the quantity of finds allows us to be sure that people were living on the site and that the remains represent parts of a medieval farm. Smaller quantities of finds dating from the 14th century up until the 16th/17th centuries suggest that the farm remained in use until that time.

While bone does not survive well because of the soil type at Birch, the remains of sheep have been noted for their association with post-Roman features. The small passages with the stock pens, mentioned above, may have been ideal for sheep farming, although no sheep remains were associated with them. However, rather sadly, some of the bones indicate that at least part of the herd was in relatively poor health. Julie Curl, the animal bone specialist who examined them, suggests they had been under stress possibly from over-breeding, over-milking, poor nutrition or exposure to bad weather for long periods.



Late Bronze Age dress pin. Actual size.



The enclosure ditch of the Iron Age/Roman farm under excavation.



Patrick Spencer excavates a Late Bronze Age loomweight.



Brian Hurrell with the Late Bronze Age dress pin.



Large Roman oven

Late Bronze Age water hole.

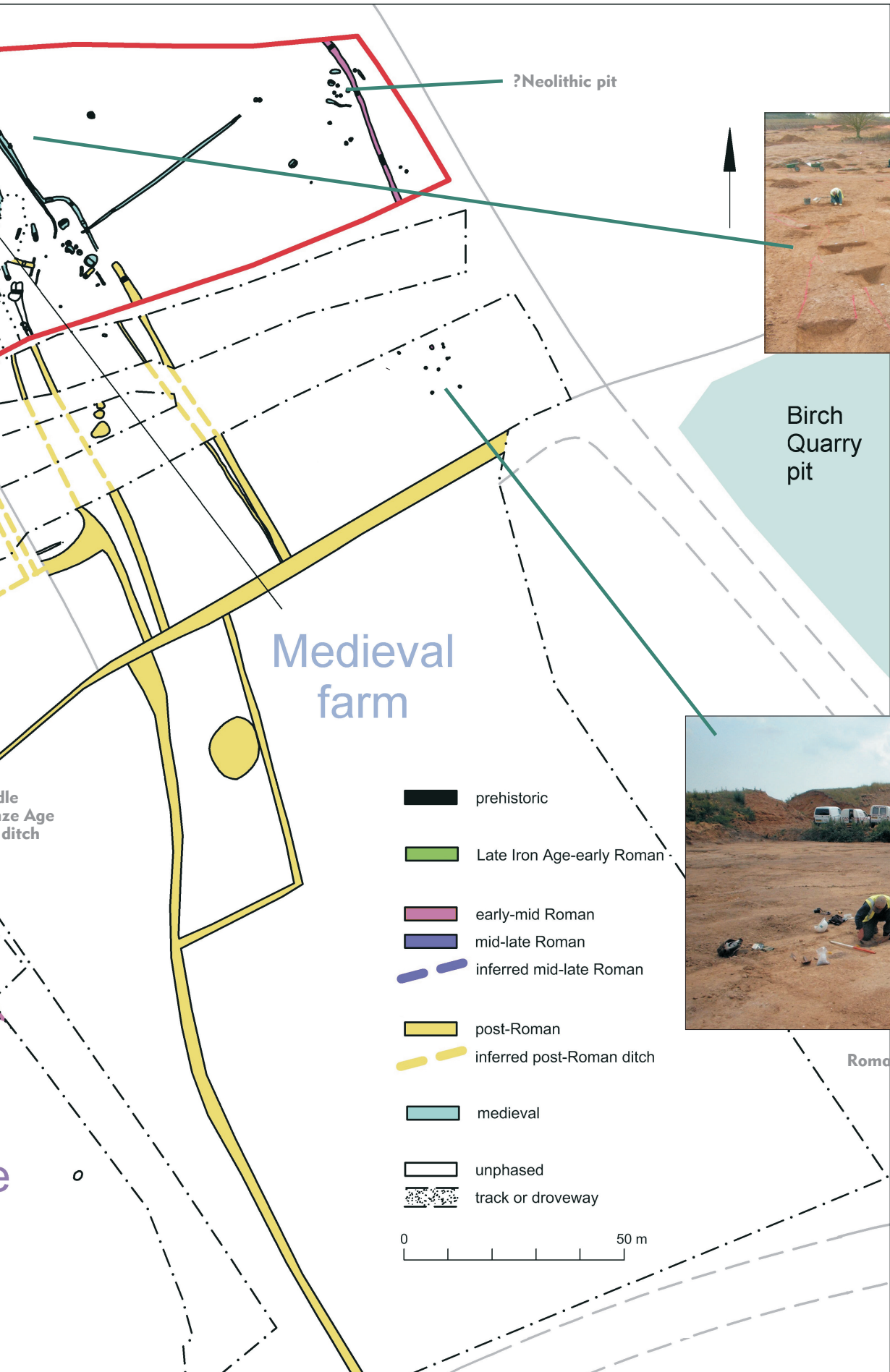


limit of 2008 excavation

Roman field ditches

Mid
Bron
ring

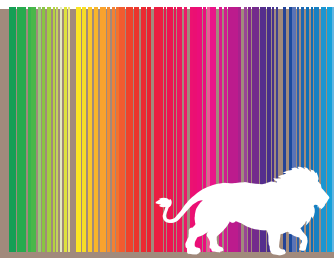
Late Iron Age
and
Roman
farm



Medieval farm.



Roman cremation burials.



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Going underground in Lawford church

A long-overdue modern underfloor heating system was recently installed in St Mary's Church, Lawford. While the contractors were lowering the level of the floor, Don Shimmin watched and recorded some intriguing new evidence about the development of the church.



Much of the surviving fabric of the church is of 14th-century date including a splendid chancel in the Decorated style with fine carvings. The picturesque brick tower is largely a 16th- and 17th-century rebuild following the partial collapse of the 14th-century tower. The north aisle was added in 1826, and this had a gallery which has since been removed. St Mary's Church is located close to Lawford Hall, some distance to the north of the main village.

The design of the new heating system necessitated the lowering of the floor deposits in the nave and north aisle to a depth of 350mm below the existing floor level. This involved taking up the existing tiled floor as well as a memorial stone over a vault, and partially dismantling the remains of the old heating system. Stripping then started in earnest of the underlying dusty, greyish-brown deposits.

An abrupt halt was soon called when a jumble of disarticulated human bone was uncovered in the north aisle. This turned out to be confined to a fairly small area and was probably a collection of bone from several individual burials that had been disturbed when the north aisle was built in the 1820s. The bone, along with further, smaller quantities of human bone found during the remainder of the work, has since been reburied.

As stripping recommenced, an east-west foundation began to be exposed between the nave and the north aisle. It was expected that the former north wall of the nave, which was demolished when the north aisle was built, would be found in this position. The foundation consisted of a layer of pale brown mortar with stone fragments, which sealed a thick deposit of sand and gravel containing very large unmortared septaria blocks. These hard, clay concretions occur naturally along the Essex and Suffolk coast not far away.

Due to the depth restriction of 350mm, there was a limit to how much excavation could be carried out. The eastern part of the foundation was 1m wide and looked just as we anticipated. However the central and western parts were over twice as wide (2.2m), and a north-south

foundation 1.3m wide extended off at right angles northwards. This is not what was expected and remains a mystery.

Other remains uncovered included several postholes along the southern edge of the east-west foundation, as well as a post-pad constructed of peg-tile overlying the northern edge of the foundation. These might have provided roof supports or perhaps scaffolding for the 1826 work.

An architects survey of the church immediately prior to the extension of 1826 does not help much in the interpretation of the foundations. It shows the north wall of the nave the same moderate size all the way along, with no walls extending off to the north. It did confirm however that there was no north doorway at this time opposite the south doorway with its 14th-century porch.

The foundations we uncovered may therefore have belonged to an earlier phase of development of the church. Possible explanations include a side chapel, a north porch which subsequently went out of use, an earlier phase of tower, or a monument in the graveyard outside the nave. However none of these explanations seems to fit the bill convincingly. It is a reminder of how long and complicated the development of churches can be, often reflecting the myriad changes within the surrounding community.

Donald Shimmin

The watching brief was commissioned and funded by the PCC of St Mary's Church, Lawford.





Rayne Foundry

Essex didn't escape the Industrial Revolution. Over thirty foundries were in operation in the county during the 19th century. The last of these closed down in 2001.

Chris Lister had the job of recording this significant part of Essex's industrial heritage before its demolition earlier this year.



When Victorian England and industry are mentioned, various images are brought to mind – steam locomotives and traction engines, the famous photograph of Isambard Kingdom Brunel standing in front of the iron launching chains of the SS Great Eastern, and the Great Exhibition of 1851, housed in Crystal Palace. There is one thing that all of these have in common: iron, and iron produced on an industrial scale. But the iron that was involved in these machines and structures evolved from much humbler beginnings.

Innovations in agriculture from the 17th century onwards called for greater mechanisation. Machines such as Jethro Tull's seed drill (1701), Joseph Foljambe's Rotherham plough (1730), and Andrew Meikle's threshing machine (1784), became more and more commonplace (if not accepted by the labourers whose jobs they made redundant), and all of them made significant use of iron. Although many of the iron components these machines used would have originally been manufactured by smiths in local forges, as demand increased a greater capacity for manufacturing was required. The replacement of organic fuels (charcoal) with fossil fuels (coal), with coke ultimately being applied to all stages of iron smelting, combined with improvements to the processes of iron production, meant that by the end of the 18th century domestic iron

had become cheaper and more plentiful and all but replaced foreign imports. This allowed enterprising men with capital and ability to set up the first of the nation's foundries where large-scale production of iron goods and components started. The demand for agricultural machinery, the expansion of overseas colonies and international trade meant markets for these goods and displaced agricultural workers provided the labour. The development of the cupola furnace (of which more later) further assisted the growth of small foundries.

You would be forgiven for associating 19th-century iron manufacturing in Great Britain solely with the Black Country and South Wales, for these were very important locations in the industry, but you might be surprised to find out that Essex had at least thirty foundries during this period. One of these was at Rayne, a village just west of Braintree, which enjoyed the distinction of being the last surviving working iron foundry in Essex. Unfortunately Rayne Foundry ceased casting production and closed in 2001. In 2008, prior to redevelopment of the site, Colchester Archaeological Trust was called in to undertake a three-day photographic and descriptive survey of the remaining buildings.

Although Rayne Foundry was the last operational iron foundry in Essex, it was not the

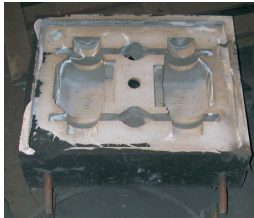
The cupola furnace with the metal-handling monorail at the top of the frame.

Opposite. The interior of the pattern shop, a view typical to all areas of the abandoned foundry.

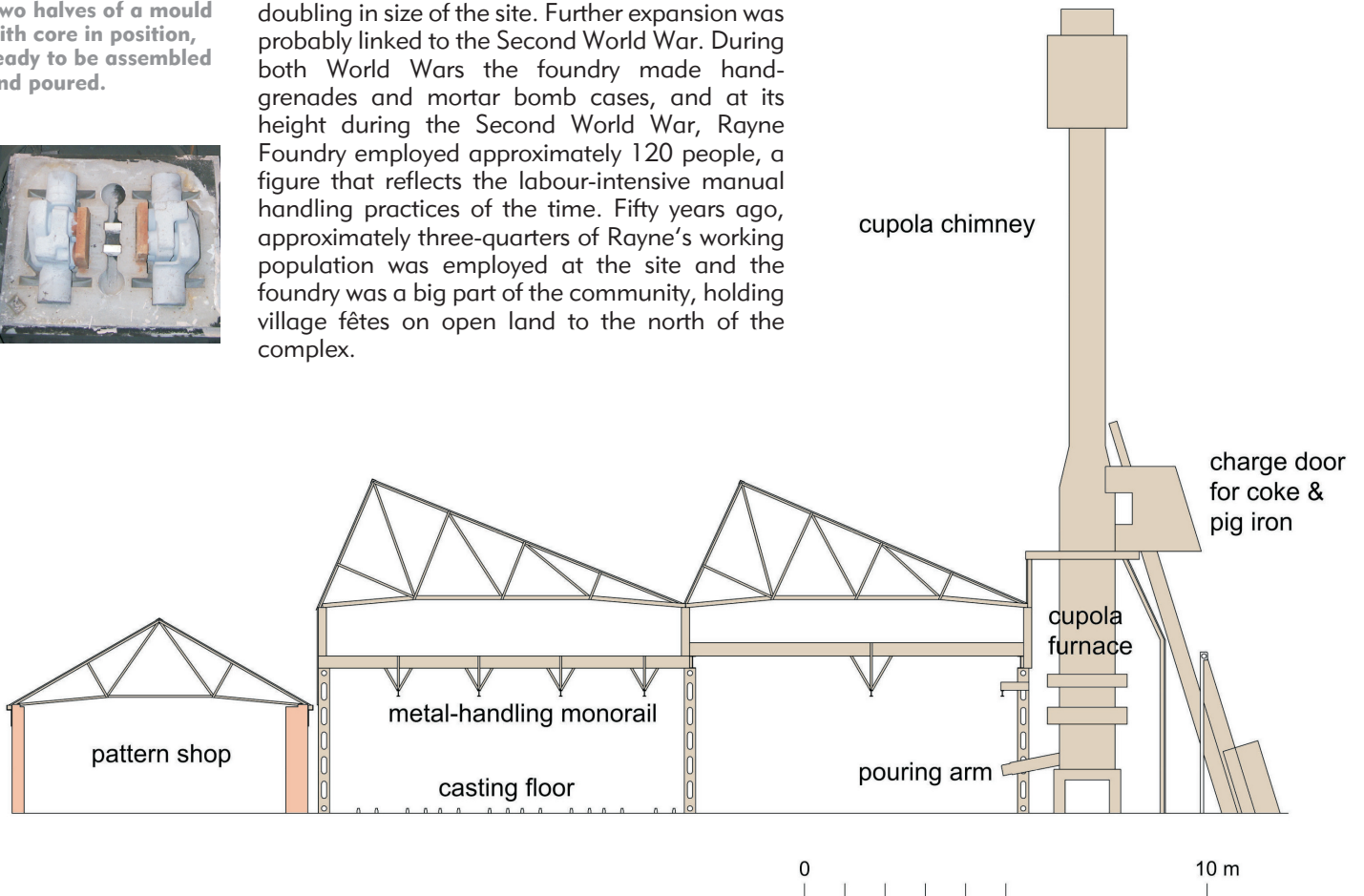
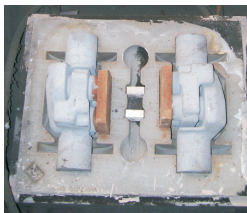
The cupola furnace chimney rising over the main foundry.

first; that distinction belongs to Colchester with a foundry owned by one Joseph Wallis, which operated near the High Street from 1792. However, Rayne Foundry could boast the longest continuous operation, as well as the last working cupola furnace in Essex. A search of documents held at the Essex Record Office revealed that the foundry was first recorded on the tithe map of 1838 as belonging to one Edward Goss, when it was a small cluster of buildings in the centre of the village. Due to the agricultural nature of the surrounding area, it is highly likely that Rayne Foundry was concerned with the casting and manufacture of farm machinery (including, no doubt, variations on the Rotherham plough and the seed drill). This is confirmed by an advertising leaflet from the 1856 Royal Agricultural Show held at Chelmsford, which lists thirty implements displayed by Goss and Peene of Rayne Foundry. The implements, which are accompanied by a short description and explanation of use and price, range from horse-drawn ploughs and harvesting equipment to smaller hand-held items. Eyewitness testimony reports that, even in the mid-20th century, Rayne Foundry proudly displayed a selection of their larger farm machinery in front of their offices.

The late 19th century saw a change of ownership and an expansion of the foundry buildings. The partnership of Barnard and Lake are recorded as purchasing timber and sawdust for Rayne Foundry in the 1880s and the Ordnance Survey map of 1881 shows a near doubling in size of the site. Further expansion was probably linked to the Second World War. During both World Wars the foundry made hand-grenades and mortar bomb cases, and at its height during the Second World War, Rayne Foundry employed approximately 120 people, a figure that reflects the labour-intensive manual handling practices of the time. Fifty years ago, approximately three-quarters of Rayne's working population was employed at the site and the foundry was a big part of the community, holding village fêtes on open land to the north of the complex.



Two halves of a mould with core in position, ready to be assembled and poured.

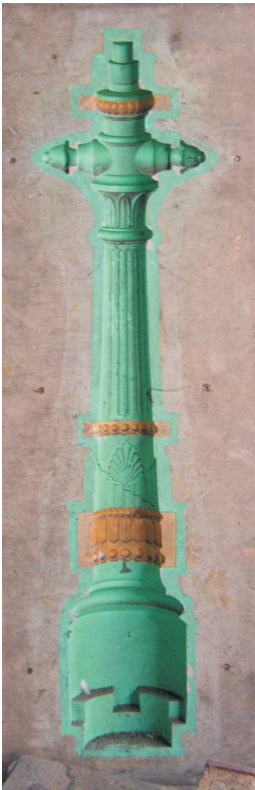




The casting floor with the embedded rails to move moulds along beneath the monorail.



Ladle hoists attached to the overhead metal-handling monorail.



Above. Pattern for a street bollard similar to those found on most High Streets.

Above right. Pattern for iron railing finials, such as you might find in a public park.



As well as producing agricultural ironwork, structural pieces were cast, the best examples being bollards, lamp-posts and other street furniture. Rayne Foundry also cast in brass (notably replacement cogs for the clock mechanism of Big Ben and pieces for Hampton Court Palace), bronze, gunmetal and aluminium.

Yet, at the time of the survey, Rayne Foundry was a dark, overgrown, pigeon-inhabited, shadow of its former self, which had been abandoned for nearly eight years. Although some of the machinery and the equipment had been auctioned off after the closure, many tools and fixtures were still in place. Moulds ready for casting were particularly in evidence and, throughout the foundry complex, it was clear that the employees had been ordered to stop what they were doing and leave. In many respects Rayne Foundry had been frozen in time. This was, of course, a desperately unfortunate event for Rayne Foundry's employees and clients but an excellent opportunity for CAT. Our task was to try and make sense of the derelict buildings and find out if any of the original structures remained, as well as documenting an account of the iron casting process at Rayne. We were assisted in this by the participation of Mr Jim Gepps, a former employee of Rayne Foundry, and Messrs Richard Carr and Stanley Paige, two retired employees of Paxman's in Colchester. Colchester historian Andrew Phillips was also of great assistance. These verbal testimonies combined with the abandoned features helped us to build up an accurate narrative of the iron casting process at Rayne.

The casting of iron requires certain technologies that are best performed in-house, namely the creation of wooden patterns to form casting moulds, an ability to produce molten iron and facilities to finish off the castings. Each of these stages involve skilled procedures and generally take place in separate parts of the foundry complex. At Rayne, blueprints for castings were converted into patterns in the pattern shop. A pattern is an exact wooden replica of the finished product around which a mould is formed for casting. They are manufactured slightly over-sized to a pre-determined dimension to allow for shrinkage as the iron cools. Patterns can be very intricate, with hollows and chambers. This requires a core (again made from patterns) to be placed within the mould. Once the patterns were completed, they were sent to the moulding floor where the moulds were fabricated. Moulds are constructed from a cast iron or steel box in two halves, each with no top or base. The pattern is placed into one half and wet sand mixed with acid and resin is packed around it. (In earlier days this would have been a mix of wet sand with coal dust or manure). This is turned over and the process repeated for the second half. With the removal of the pattern from the centre, the mould is ready for casting. Completed moulds at Rayne Foundry were moved to the casting floor to await the molten iron.

As you can see from the plan of the site, these initial stages took place in peripheral buildings at Rayne Foundry (shaded blue). The centre of the foundry was reserved for the 'hot work', the melting of the iron and the pouring of the liquid

metal into the moulds. The iron was melted in a cupola furnace, a coke-fired furnace which was charged from a raised platform and which had air fed into it from an electrically-powered fan. A specific mix of pig iron and scrap was used and limestone was added to the mix to purify the metal. When the iron was molten, the liquid metal was poured into ladles suspended from hoists on an overhead monorail. These hoists were pulled on chains by the foundrymen to the casting floor where the moulds sat on rails. As the molten iron was poured into the moulds, the heat ignited particles of coal dust or manure in the sand, forming a gaseous barrier between the sand and the surface of the casting. Once cool, the sand moulds were broken off the castings and recycled for future use. The rough castings were shot-blasted and hand-finished, a process called fettling, and then in some cases dipped in an oxide solution to prevent rusting. The wooden patterns were retained for future use in case more castings were needed at a later date.

One hundred and sixty years of iron-working at Rayne finally came to an end in 2001 and the demolition of Rayne Foundry started the day after the survey was completed in 2008. Now (in spring 2009), the derelict site is well under way to becoming a housing estate. The work carried out at Rayne Foundry over its lifetime was undoubtedly hard, dirty and potentially dangerous but also highly skilled. However, it is hard to gauge the importance of Rayne Foundry – certainly as an employer it played a significant role in village life. As part of the nation-wide policy of Total War during the First and Second World Wars, it contributed to the country's defence and war effort. By the manufacture of goods and components for sale locally, nationally and internationally, it benefitted the economy and therefore society in general. Archaeologically speaking, little of any importance or significance survives. But it is perhaps because of its continuous history that Rayne Foundry deserves special mention. No other foundry in Essex was able to boast a longevity which extended almost from the start of industrial capacity iron-working to the final evolution of the industry in Essex. Rayne Foundry is gone, but certainly not forgotten and no doubt will live on, in a small way, in the street names of the new housing estate which is taking its place.

Colchester Archaeological Trust would like to take this opportunity to thank Knight Developments for commissioning and funding the survey and Messrs Richard Carr, Jim Gepps, Stanley Paige and Andrew Phillips for their time and input.

Over a hundred years of engineering know-how: (from left to right) Jim Gepps, Richard Carr, Stanley Paige and Chris Lister (CAT).



In search of Wire's world



A trawl through the records for William Wire – Colchester's Victorian archaeologist-cum-watchmaker-cum-antiquities dealer-cum-postman – leads unexpectedly to the places where he once lived, worked, and lies buried.

The world of Colchester's best known Victorian archaeologist, William Wire, is alive and well – at least to a point. A few weeks ago, I thought it might be interesting to try and find out where William Wire lived and worked. It was largely a matter of looking at various public records (such as the census returns), contemporary trade directories, various articles written by others about him, and the Wire papers in the Essex Record Office. The challenge turned out to be easier than I expected and the results were much better than I had hoped. The records threw up four buildings closely connected with him. And surprise, surprise, three of them turn out to still exist, including the one where he had his little shop – but more on this later.

William Wire is well known for his diary in which he logged his visits to various building works around the town and the discoveries made there. With some justification, he is sometimes regarded as Colchester's first field archaeologist although this is not strictly true.

William was a Colchester man through and through. He was born in the town, spent almost all his working life there, and was buried in the municipal cemetery. He was passionate about all things ancient from Colchester and even more

passionate in his belief that Colchester should have its own museum – something which was yet to come. However, his life was not an easy one for illness and money problems were rarely far away.

William did leave Colchester for a few years when he went to London to serve an apprenticeship as a watchmaker. However, he returned in 1828, and the records showed that he was living in a house on North Hill by 1832-4. Further delving into the records revealed the house to be No 54. A good result.... but was it still there? A hasty visit to North Hill to find a no 54 met with success, for there tucked away at the end of an alley stands a fine little house clearly old enough to have existed in William's day. In fact, the size and quality of the building turns out to be a surprise considering the financial problems that he had to contend with during his days there.

During his time in this house, William found himself very frustrated by the failure of the town to set up its own museum. Out of exasperation, he fitted up a room in a building in the High Street as an embryonic museum for the town. This was late in 1840. One of his printed handbills tells us that admission was either by donation or the gift of a suitable object of 'interest or curiosity'. Unfortunately, the enterprise only lasted a few months before poverty and sickness forced William to sell off his entire collection. The handbill makes our search easy since it says the house number was 45. Another good result... but could this building really still be there?

Despite all the changes the High Street has endured over the years, the original no 45 High Street turns out to have survived. It is the three-storey building immediately next to the Red Lion Hotel, its ground floor now being occupied by Robert Dyas, the hardware store. It is not possible to know where about in the building William set up his museum. If it had been on the

Above right. No 54 North Hill where William Wire lived and worked as a watchmaker in the 1830s and 40s.

Below. No 45 High Street (immediately to the left of the Red Lion Hotel) where William Wire set up his museum in 1840.



ground floor (which seems the most likely), then the room no longer exists since the ground-floor was stripped out by shop-fitters many years ago.

Various records showed a change of address for William sometime between 1848 and 1850, his new home being no 3 Church Street South (now called Church Walk). During the ensuing years, his business could not support himself and his family and he was forced to take on extra work as a 'letter carrier'. However, he continued to trade as a watchmaker and 'dealer in antiquities', and he worked out of a small shop presumably at the front of his house on the ground floor. This was the shop which was to be described as "a place of resort for many leading men of science and archaeology." If any of the buildings found in this search can be said to represent the essential Wire, this would be the one. But what were the chances of it surviving? Another rapid visit this time to Church Walk brought joy – for there, amazingly enough, it still stands!

No 3 is one of an early to mid 19th-century pair of brick houses built at different times but with the appearance of a single property. It is a three-storey building with wrought-iron balconies at first-floor level. Clearly no 3 is a more modest house than no 54 North Hill, the difference being a reflection William's more difficult financial circumstances.

William's old house is now a flat with a barber's shop on the ground floor where he must have had his famous little shop. Unfortunately, the later insertion of a shop front resulted in the loss of the original window and doorway, but the ground-floor frontage of no 4 is still intact and gives us a good idea of how William's shop would have looked from the outside.

William died unexpectedly in 1857. The death notice in the Essex Standard gave his address at the time as being West Street which comes as a surprise. Presumably he must have moved there shortly before he died. Working out which one was William's last home might prove tricky but at least most of the original West Street still exists.

Hopefully nos 3 and 4 Church Walk will survive long term. Who knows one day maybe the front of no 3 will be restored to look on the outside like the shop originally run by William Wire all those years ago. Some kind of William Wire shop or centre beckons...

After I wrote this article, I thought I ought to check that William really had been buried in the Mersea Road cemetery. But there is a problem here. When he died, an appeal was launched in the Essex County Standard to raise money for his widow Mary and her dependent children. Not surprisingly then, his grave seems to have been without a permanent marker. A phone call to the cemetery manager Penny Stynes paid dividends. Most impressively, Penny knew all about William Wire and his unmarked grave. She had already worked out exactly where he lay and is now to do something she has been planning for a while – William is to get his grave marked!

Philip Crummy



Above. No 3 Church Walk where William Wire lived in the 1850s and had his shop. His house is now a barber's shop on the ground floor with a flat above.

Below. No 4 Church Walk (right) gives a better idea of what William Wire's shop (left) would have looked like originally.





Spoil heap

The annual roundup of the year's work by Ben Holloway

Well, here we all are again another year and another spoilheap. Despite the credit crunch, we have been busy wee archaeologists during this past year, and teams from the Trust have been working on projects in all corners of the county and on a couple of occasions into the wild west (well as wild as Hertfordshire gets at any rate!). Trust staff have braved the elements, temperamental transport, and even livestock in pursuit of archaeological excitement across two counties as well as more familiar surroundings in and around Colchester.

Stanhope Business Park

One of our longer range expeditions was a large evaluation consisting of some one thousand metres of trenching across the site of an abandoned concrete works at Stanford-le-hope on the Thames estuary. The results of the work

were archaeologically disappointing since little of significance was found especially since the famous archaeological site at Mucking lies not far to the west and Roman finds have been found in the past from the foreshore and Mucking creek. The culprit was severe truncation caused by modern levelling and soil stripping to remove industrial contaminates. However, despite the poor results, various Palaeolithic flints were recovered as surface finds showing that the modern site clearance had failed to remove the archaeological evidence completely and that some vestiges of ancient activity do survive on this part of the Thames foreshore.

Abberton Reservoir

This was a slightly unusual project in that the investigation had a strong research element to it. A farm track to the north-west of the reservoir lies

Trench at Abberton reservoir to test for the presence of the remains of a Roman road.



along part of the route of a Roman road from Colchester to Mersea Island proposed by archaeologist Henry Laver about a hundred years ago. It never seemed a very convincing theory but here was a chance to test it by digging a trench at right-angles to the farm track to see if any traces could be found of the supposed Roman road. The remains of a farm track were identifiable in the ground as compacted gravel and medium sized cobbles. However, the base for this material contained fragments of brick and salt-glazed pipe showing that show that the track is post-medieval at the earliest. Had the track followed the route of a Roman road, then we would probably have found either the remains of its gravelled surface or evidence of ditches to either side of it. Of course, we cannot say for certain that there was no Roman road in this position, but it certainly looks unlikely.

Clintons, Little Hadham

The furthest we travelled last year was to a moated farm at Bury Green, Little Hadham where we monitored the construction of a horse ménage (and leapt over a fence when the horses escaped – huge great creatures!). No archaeological features were identified in the strip, although evidence of long-term agricultural activity such as plough scarring was recorded as well as lumps of broken farm machinery and an abundance of horseshoes.

Imbirds Farm, Good Easter

At Imbirds Farm, we worked with historic buildings expert Leigh Alston on a project which involved building recording and trenching. Imbirds lies in the heart of rural Essex and is yet another moated farm site. The complex contained a well-preserved example of a thatched six-bay barn which dates to the 18th or 19th centuries but incorporates a number of earlier elements belonging to 12th or 13th centuries or so. Other farm buildings are a mix of old and relatively new including 19th- and 20th-century cattle sheds, pig sheds and stables. The trenching revealed no evidence of any early structures associated with the moated site, but it did produce a substantial amount of interesting carved building stone. The stonework appears to have derived from a church, the nearby St Andrews church being the most obvious source. This building had been damaged by fire in the 19th century and subsequently 'restored', the redundant stonework apparently dumped and finding its way into the hardcore base for the farmyard.

Negative projects carried out around the county have included watching briefs and evaluations. These included projects at sites in Springfield, Billericay, Orsett, Maldon and Kelvedon. As well as adventures into the wider world, we have had a busy year closer to home and there always seems to be something archaeological going on in Colchester.



Colchester Garrison

Despite a general slowing of garrison-based projects with the completion of the Merville barracks and the housing slowdown, the garrison has still kept the Trust on its toes over the last year.

Goojerat Barracks

The imminent relocation of the units occupying Goojerat Barracks to the new facilities in Merville and the subsequent hand over of the land and buildings to Taylor Wimpy brought about the necessity to continue evaluation work first begun in 2002. An extensive programme of trenching was adopted. The one minor difficulty at the start of the project was that the army hadn't moved out yet. This caused trenching to take place in a rolling programme and involved the relocation of a number of trenches to accommodate obsolete equipment that was difficult to move such as obsolete six-ton trucks, redundant Landrovers, and a captured Iraqi tank displayed on the parade square. The evaluation showed to what extent the camp had been remodelled in the early 1970s and the huge level of infilling and levelling that had been carried out prior to the construction of the original barracks in the early 1900s.

Archaeological features uncovered during the investigation included a number of post-medieval ditches, which may have been part of a fort which in turn was part of the parliamentary works constructed during the siege of Colchester in 1648. Further archaeological activity included the continuation of the Roman field system seen earlier across the Garrison area. Other ditches found during the evaluation suggest the presence

Eighteenth-century six-bay barn at Imbirds Farm.



**Mind your head Brian!
Digging in the shadow
of an Iraqi tank at
Goojerat Barracks.**

of an enclosure and various finds hint at settlement activity in the area too.

Excavation of the possible enclosure is anticipated at some stage, but at the time of writing remains firmly in the planning stages. Further evaluation of former garrison areas including Hyderabad Barracks and Roman Barracks are also planned for the future. The garrison project hasn't quite finished with us yet.

Weston Homes Community Stadium

A new home for Colchester United caused an unseemly scrum (wrong game I know) in the office for the watching brief that went with it. Our resident U's fan was only just pipped to the goal

line. No significant archaeological deposits were observed during the monitoring although a ditch was noted that flukily corresponded roughly with the halfway line of the new pitch. The features found were datable to the post-medieval and modern periods and formed part of an agricultural landscape.

Central Clinic

With the conversion of the Central Clinic building adjacent to the Castle Park into flats, we returned to the site to continue the trenching done in 2006 and to monitor various groundworks. No substantial remains were seen during our investigations. However, areas of highly compacted

**Colchester United's
stadium under
construction.**



gravel were noted in some locations. The metalling was consistent with metalling observed in 2006 and seems to have been part of a Roman road extending north-south.

Williams Walk



Evaluation work took place in the centre of the walled Roman town. The site is an interesting one being close to the Roman theatre partly excavated at Maidenburgh Street in the 1980s. Thick deposits of post-medieval and modern dumped material (including a tin bath and chrome toast rack) were identified. No evidence for the remains of Roman buildings was found which had either been removed by more recent activity or protected by the extensive much-later accumulation horizon. An area of highly compacted fine gravel was, however, observed in one of the trenches. The gravel is likely to be part of the north-south road that extended up the west site of the Roman theatre.

Sixth Form College

Expansion at the Sixth Form College continued to provide opportunities to investigate an area within the walled Roman town that has been

relatively free of post-Roman development. The most recent excursion involved evaluation trenching around the former Technical College (now the core of the Sixth Form College), which was constructed in 1910 on the site of a large Roman town house dating to the 2nd century AD. The work carried out by the Trust team was by its nature limited. It was commissioned as part of a pre-planning investigation designed to establish if remains survived and at what level they would expect to be encountered. Evaluation trenches stopped at the first archaeological horizon identified. This was a thick deposit of demolition debris that included tile, mortar and fragments of painted wall-plaster consistent with the type of high-status building that is known to have occupied the site of the former Technical College. Further trenching in the southern area of the campus also led to the identification a highly compacted surface. Although only a small area was exposed, the surface appears to have been of an east-west street Roman road first seen in the 1980s during major building works to extend the college southwards.

In addition to these projects a number of negative projects were also carried out in and around the town. These included evaluations and watching briefs at Oxford Road, St Clare Road, Oaks Drive and at St Leonard's Church in Lexden.

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The Friends of Colchester Archaeological Trust

Annual roundup by chairman Jane Meech

Our January 2008 Annual Lecture at Lion Walk United Reformed Church was, as always, well attended with over 100 members gathering to hear Howard Brooks, Ben Holloway, Steve Benfield, and Philip Crummy give us detailed and illustrated explanations of the Trust's work carried out in the previous year. The purpose of the Friends is to be a link between the work of the Trust and the general public, and the Annual Lecture is an excellent way of achieving this link. Only members of the Friends can attend, and in addition to getting such detailed information in the lecture itself, there is also the opportunity to talk to the archaeologists over tea and cakes afterwards. This year (2009) we also had a wonderful display of some of the finds from recent excavations, including one of the rings found at the circus starting gates dig, and Emma Spurgeon from the Trust was on hand to give background information on the finds. Being able to attend the Annual Lecture is itself worth the £5 annual membership subscription (only £6 for family membership), and if you factor in that you also get this magazine sent to you hot off the press *and* the chance to come on our trips, it makes membership of the Friends a must! For details on how to join contact our Membership Secretary, Gabrielle Chadwick. (See details on the inside front cover.)

Advertisement over – what have we been up to in 2008? Although it wasn't a Friends' event, many of us were in the Ivor Crewe Lecture Hall at Essex University in March to hear Philip Crummy give the annual Burrows Lecture. Entitled "They're Always Finding Something", it was an enthralling illustrated tour through Philip's many years excavating in Colchester, including the vast Culver and Lion Walk precincts. Such major excavations are so rare these days, and it took many of us back in memory seeing that part of

Colchester as it was before the present developments.

Our first coach outing was on 10th May to the Weald & Downland Open Air Museum near Chichester. Over 50 historic buildings, ranging from 13th to early 20th century, all once threatened with destruction, have been re-erected on the 50 acre site set in beautiful downland. One particular favourite was the Bayleaf medieval farmstead, with a timber-framed hall-house from the early 15th century, with its herb and vegetable garden. In addition to touring the site to view the buildings, Mike Corbishley had arranged for the Friends to have a special guided tour of a new build at the Museum, the Downland Gridshell. Completed in 2002, it serves as a storage area for the tools and artefacts, and as a studio and workshop for research and conservation of the collections. The collections are held in a basement cut into the hillside, and the huge deck above is enclosed in a lightweight structure called a gridshell. The building itself is made of oak laths, and the whole thing fits in perfectly with the ancient buildings and landscape surrounding it. The guide gave a talk about the design and construction, plus a tour of the collections and explanation of conservation methods. A long journey from Colchester, but all agreed it was worth the early start, especially as we had one of the best days weather-wise in an otherwise dismal spring.

Our late summer trip on 27th September was to Framlingham and Orford castles. Framlingham was re-built by Earl Roger Bigod (son of the rebellious Hugh Bigod) in the late 12th/early 13th century, on the site of an earlier motte-and-bailey castle. His successors, including the Howard Dukes of Norfolk, adapted the castle to suit their needs. Many of the original castle buildings were demolished over the years, and a poorhouse was built in 1729 which also utilised parts of earlier buildings. A very complicated site therefore, but not if you have Mike Corbishley with you. Mike's explanation and description of the various uses of the castle over the centuries, and its inhabitants, brought it all vividly to life, and gave our full coach-load of Friends members an unforgettable morning. A climb up to the battlements and a walk all the way round on the wall afforded magnificent views over the castle, the town, and the mere. Continuing on to Orford, we dispersed to various hostleries and cafes for lunch, enjoying the brilliant warm sunshine and

Reconstructed buildings at the Weald & Downland Open Air Museum near Chichester.





The Friends touring Framlingham Castle.

the view across the water to Orford Ness. Meeting up with Mike after lunch, he walked us round the keep, the only remaining part of the castle. As with Framlingham, Mike explained how the original layout would have looked. King Henry II built Orford castle between 1165 and 1173 to declare his authority to the barons of East Anglia, especially that pesky Hugh Bigod, Earl of Norfolk. The castle served as a huge statement of royal power and superiority – a grand domestic residence as well as a military stronghold (though there is no evidence that Henry ever visited it). It seemed strange that such a high profile building was situated in tiny, out-of-the-way Orford, but it was a successful and important port and market town in the 12th century. After Mike had taken us round the keep and set the scene for us, we made our own way round the inside, making use of the very good audio guide provided by English Heritage. The amazing weather contributed to a wonderful and informative day out.

Our final event of 2008 was a talk by Mark Hassall, who is Chairman of Colchester Archaeological Trust. Now retired after 40 years teaching Roman courses at the Institute of Archaeology in London, Mark is also past President of the Royal Archaeological Institute. As well as being a Roman archaeologist, Mark has a strong interest in pilgrimage and has done several, including one to Jerusalem. The one which he described to us on 11th October followed in the footsteps of his kinsman Thomas de Hassall. He was priest of the parish of Sandbach in Cheshire, and in 1402 undertook an eighteen-month pilgrimage to Rome. Six hundred years later, Mark walked (in stages over several vacations) from Bordeaux to

Rome, taking the same routes where known and where possible. The talk was beautifully illustrated with some of the photos taken on the way, and Mark took us with him through France and Italy, in sun and (copious) rain. More than 60 Friends enjoyed the afternoon, and chatting to Mark over the tea and biscuits afterwards.

I would like to take advantage of this roundup to thank Mike Corbishley, my co-organiser of the trips out. Mike finds time in a busy life to research the venues, negotiate favourable entry costs, and produce handouts for everyone, in addition to providing informative and amusing talks as he shepherds us round. I would also like to thank Philip's team at the Trust for giving up their time to deliver the Annual Lecture for us.

Mike Corbishley and some of the Friends at Orford Castle. (Photographs by Mick Meech.)



New Roman mosaic for Lion Walk



Owners of the Lion Walk precinct hope that a copy of a remarkable mosaic fragment found in 1974 will form a focal point of a proposed major facelift for the shopping centre. By a happy coincidence, the Roman floor showed a lion walking left to right as if somehow the precinct owed its name to the find. But not so. The precinct took its name from the medieval street which preceded it and in turn took its name from the nearby Red Lion Inn (now Red Lion Hotel).

The earliest known reference to Lion Walk the street dates to the early 14th century when it was called Cat Lane. Later, probably in the 17th or early 18th century, the street became known as Lion Walk because it led from the rear of the Red Lion Inn.

The Red Lion was built as a town house for John Howard, first Duke of Norfolk, in the early 1480s when it seems to have been known as the White Lion in reference to his family's coat of arms. Then, between 1501 and 1515, the building became the New Inn and had a sign on the High Street. The building possibly owes its present name to the accession of James IV of Scotland to the English throne in 1603 whose coat of arms featured a red rampant lion.



The pavement was uncovered by workmen who were laying a pipe along the east side of the original street Lion Walk. It lay just a few feet below the street surface directly below some double yellow lines. The construction of the huge basement which exists under the precinct was preceded by major excavations by CAT archaeologists in the early 1970s. The walking

lion mosaic lay in a room of a large Roman house partly uncovered during these investigations. The replica mosaic was made for CAT by volunteers led by Peter Herring, the person who led the team which made the full-size circus mosaic now on public view on the site of Colchester's Roman circus in Circular Road North.

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