
The

COLCHESTER

A R C H A E O L O G I S T

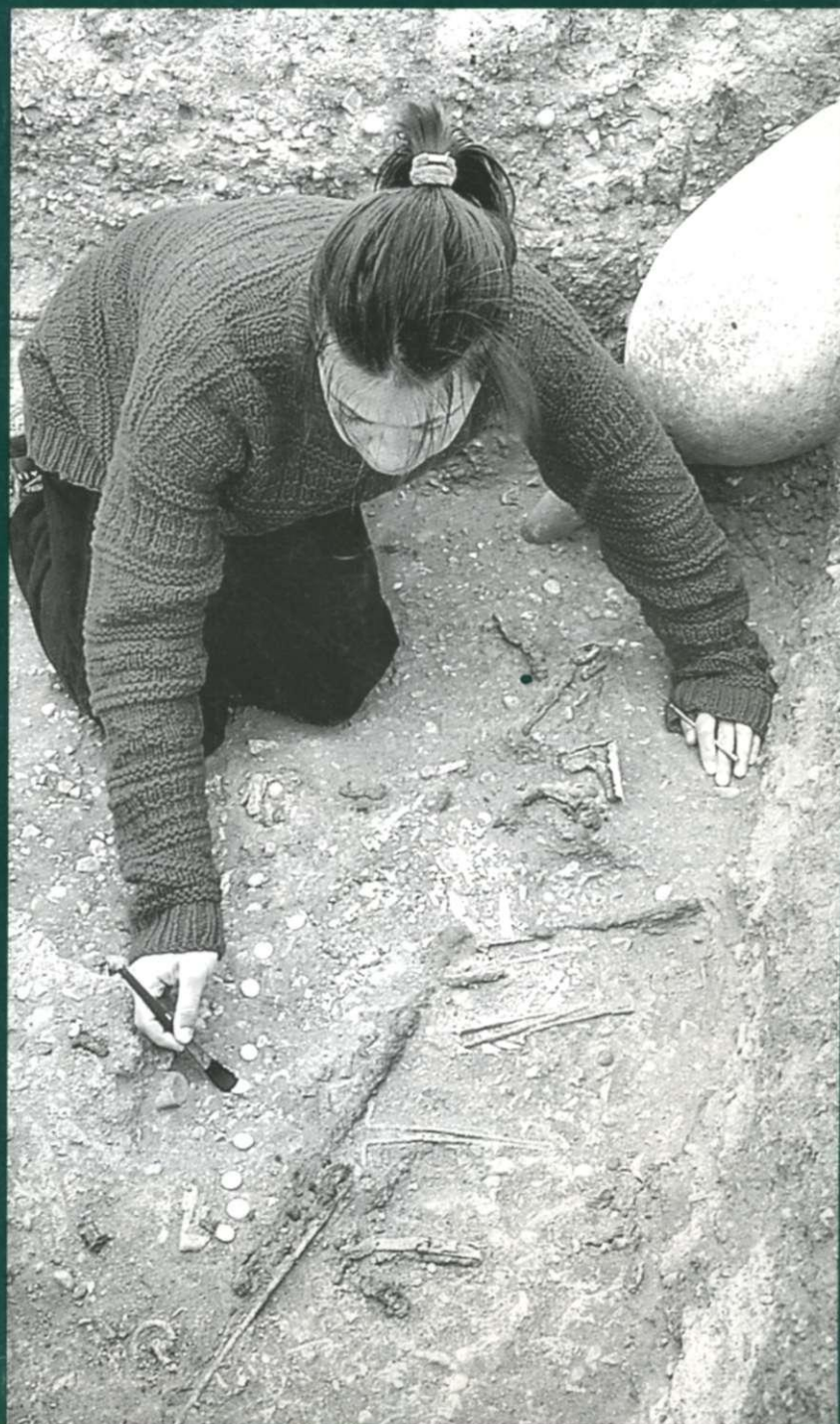
**ANCIENT
BOARD GAME**

**THE LOST FACE
OF LONGINUS**

GOSBECKS

AROUND ESSEX

**ARCHAEOLOGY
FOR YOUNG
PEOPLE**



Issue Number 10 (1996-7)

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**THE FRIENDS
OF THE
COLCHESTER ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST**

Cover: Lisa Hopi excavating the gaming board at Stanway.

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Your move, Doctor!

The latest excavations at Stanway produced dramatic results which created world-wide interest. Even so, there is still much to understand about the site and the extraordinary finds.



The discovery of the gaming board at the Stanway site created public interest on a level far beyond anything we have experienced before. They say that to make the headlines, any story has to involve the first of something, or the biggest, or the oldest, or whatever claim singles it out as being unique. The discovery of the game certainly qualified: it was the first recorded time anywhere that pieces had been found in position on a Roman game. And it had the added attraction that, being a board game, it was an archaeological find which everybody could easily relate to and understand.

The story was covered (in all cases with at least one picture or graphic) in most of the national newspapers, and there were ten or so radio interviews on various local and national channels including Radios Four, Five Live, and Scotland. The story made Ceefax, the BBC national news, French TV, New Zealand TV, and even CNN and (we believe) ABC News in the USA. Other foreign coverage (that we happen to have heard about) includes radio broadcasts or newspaper articles in Australia, Germany, Slovakia, New Zealand, Italy, and Ireland, as well as TV coverage by British Satellite Broadcasting which transmits around the world. And that is not the end of it. More will emerge: for example, National Geographic Magazine is to have an article (admittedly brief) on the discovery in the spring of 1997, and the British Museum Company is exploring the feasibility of producing a marketable replica of the game.

The game itself is of course of considerable interest as we shall see, but the good thing about the publicity is the fact that it drew attention to a site which is proving important for other reasons. And the more publicity it gets, the easier it will be to raise money to fund future work there. Firstly the site is helping us to identify a hitherto unrecognised form of high-status burial practice in Britain two thousand years ago. This may not sound particularly earth-shattering but it is a fairly rare event in archaeological terms. Secondly, the game seems to have belonged to a doctor whose surgical kit had been placed on the board. This is an extraordinary discovery since it is the first time in Britain that a surgical kit has been found, Roman or British, and it raises all sorts of interesting questions about medical practice in Britain two thousand years ago. Thirdly the site covers the critical period when the Romans arrived in Britain, and it is providing new evidence about the relationship between the native inhabitants and their new Roman masters. More of all this later.

The Stanway site was discovered by aerial photography in 1932. The photographs show five ditched enclosures with three being laid out in a line. However, the true nature of the site could not be understood until the excavations many years later. The site became a gravel pit in the 1960s when planning consent was given for mineral extraction, and excavation began in a small way in 1986 as the quarry face

approached the first of the enclosures. Since then, archaeological excavation has been intermittent and targeted only on the areas imminently threatened by the slowly advancing quarry face.

Burials and enclosures

Work on the site up to last summer involved the examination of at least parts of four of the enclosures. This has enabled us to understand the nature of the site and construct a chronological sequence for its development which we can summarise as follows.

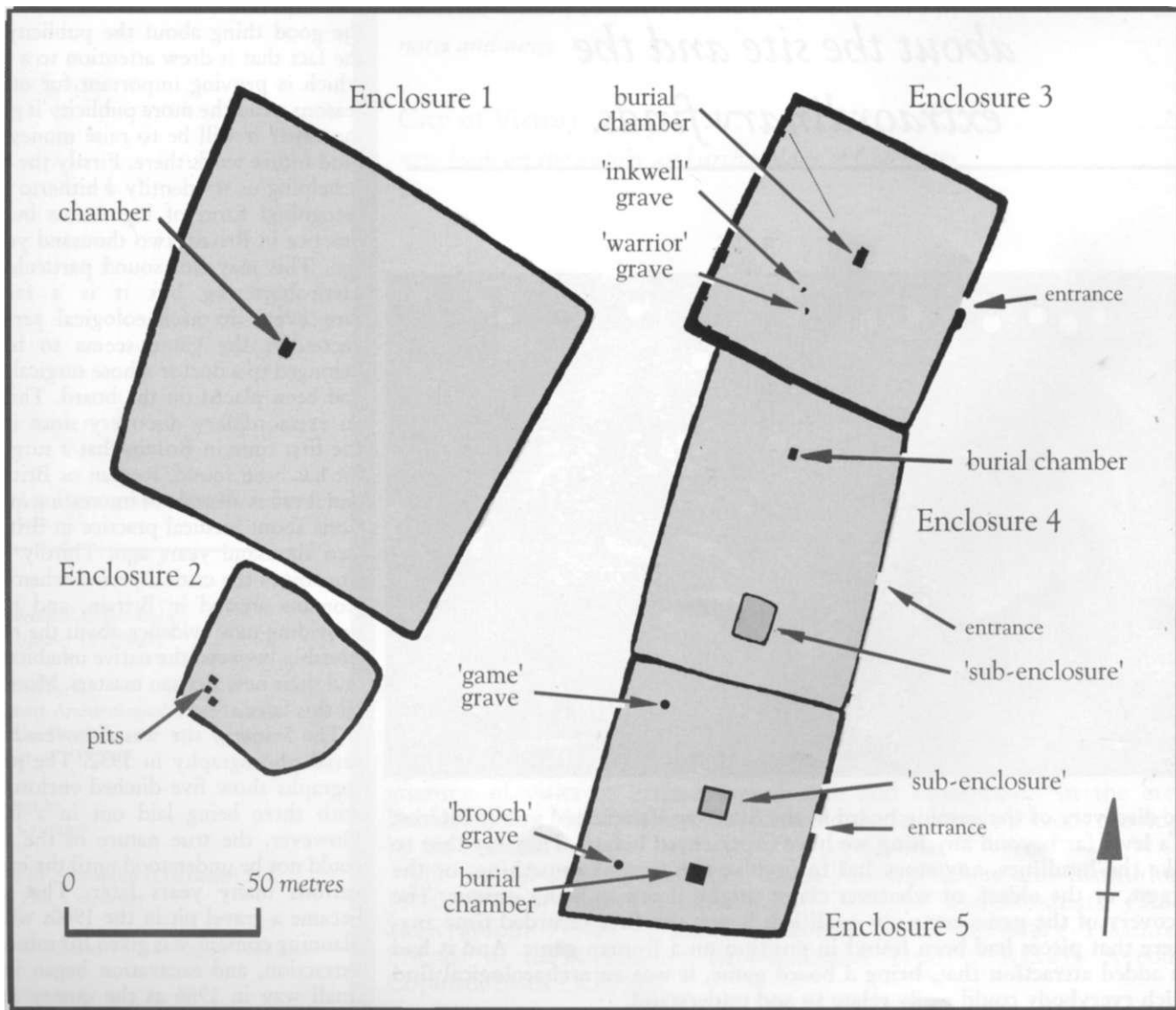
The smallest of the enclosures (Enclosure 2) was the earliest and this was probably the core of a farmstead dating from the 3rd or 2nd century BC. The ditched area would have contained round-houses and it would have provided an enclosure containing animals as well as houses. There are indications of a nearby ditched droveway which would presumably have been used to

lead animals from the enclosure to pastures a short distance away. The enclosure seems to contain lots of pits which presumably result from domestic occupation within it.

Enclosure 1 was the next to be laid out. This was the first of the funerary enclosures. Near the centre were the remains of a small timber chamber containing a few pieces of broken pottery and some scraps of burnt human bone. The chamber had been made of wooden planks nailed together in the shape of a rectangular box. Like all the other funerary enclosures, it was almost entirely empty inside. We only discovered one burial in the enclosure, and that took the form of a single pot containing cremated bone.

The remaining three enclosures then followed. All were all funerary in purpose; Enclosures 3 and 5 seem to have been first, with Enclosure 4 being more as infill between the two. Enclosure 3 provided the first big find. We dealt

with all this in earlier issues of *The Colchester Archaeologist* (nos 5 and 6) so we will not repeat it all here. But readers of those issues may recall the remarkable 'warrior' grave in Enclosure 3, with its extraordinarily rich collection of grave goods. These include over fourteen pottery vessels, two copper-alloy vessels, a fine glass bowl, two other glass vessels, and brooches. The objects allow it to be dated to the AD 50s. Of particular note - especially in the light of the more recent discovery in Enclosure 5 - is the collection of 20 glass counters and the remains of a folding wooden gaming board. The counters had not been placed on the board but they had either been put in a pile or in a bag close by it. However, of all the finds, the most significant were the remains of a spear and what may have been a shield. At this time (AD 50s), Britons would not have been allowed to carry arms. We are specifically told by the



historian Dio Cassius that Claudius disarmed the defeated tribes at Camulodunum, so the presence of these items suggests that the dead person must have enjoyed special privileges. Near the 'warrior' grave was another burial which, although not nearly so well endowed, is of equal interest. This one contained two pots, two brooches, and an inkpot. The last item is very significant because it suggests that the dead person had been literate.

Normally we might have guessed that the dead people sharing the enclosure had been close relatives of the person in the chamber. However the presence of the spear and inkpot in the two graves suggest that, rather than relatives, these were the burial places of high-ranking aides. The inkpot suggests the presence of a clerk, and the spear and possible shield the presence of an armour bearer. Armour bearers did exist and the Greek writer Posidonius gave an interesting description of a Celtic feast which features some.

When many people dine together they sit in a circle, with the most important man in the central place, like the leader in a chorus; this is someone who excels the others by virtue of his martial skill, birth or wealth. Next to him sits the host, and then alternatively on either side come all the others, in order of rank. Their shield-bearers stand behind them and the spearsmen sit in front in a circle like their lords, and feast in common in the same way.

It needs to be noted that Posidonius was describing Celts in Gaul rather than Britain and he was writing more than a century before our warrior burial. Nevertheless his account is still

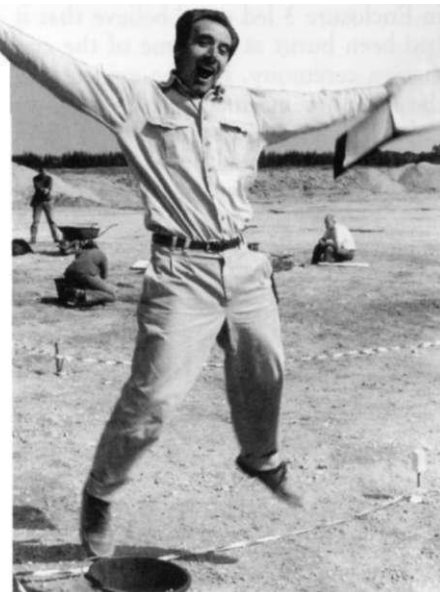
likely to be relevant here because of cultural and ethnic links between the two groups of peoples and the conservative nature of prehistoric cultures.

Armour bearers could move in high circles. The Roman historian Tacitus tells us how Cartimandua, the contemporary queen of the Brigantes (a tribe inhabiting what is now the northern part of England), replaced her husband Venutius with his armour bearer Vellocatius.

Of course it could be that the person represented in our warrior burial was not an armour bearer, but instead had simply been a member of the nobility buried with his arms. The upper class was made up of land-owners for whom, as we can see in the quotation from Posidonius, being a warrior was an outward sign of their status. However, arms are not common in graves of this period which is why we can consider less obvious explanations for their presence here.

The great summer of 1996

By 1996, it had become clear that the site was of great interest but the summer of that year was to provide even more spectacular results. The site is large (about 300 m square) so the archaeological excavations are costly. Most of the work has been funded by English Heritage with additional support from the Essex County Council, the Essex History Fair, the Essex Heritage Trust, and Colchester Borough Council. The work of 1996 was funded almost entirely by the site owner, Tarmac Southern Ltd, with



Stephen Benfield - an archaeologist with job satisfaction.

some extra help from the Essex County Council. Despite all the generous financial support, funds were still severely stretched, so that this year the work was arranged around the summer holidays to maximise student and other voluntary help. A campsite was provided next to the excavation and a work force of up to 30 people at any one time was assembled. The work was hard and the site was hot and dusty but the team performed well and with great effect.

The chamber in Enclosure 5 proved to be little different to the chambers examined in the other enclosures, although it has helped us to review our interpretation of what happened to them. In fact, there were fewer finds in the backfill of this one than elsewhere, and these were broken into smaller fragments than we had found before because the mourners seem to have made a better job of smashing them at the time of the burial ceremony. There were the usual nails around the sides of the pit and in its backfill, and there were traces on some of the edges of the pit of the planks which formed the vertical sides of the chamber. The nails around parts of the sides clearly were close to their original positions: the wood had rotted but they had stayed in place, thus showing us that the chamber had been made of wooden planks held together with nails. The chamber

Excavation in progress of the grave with the gaming hoard.



in Enclosure 3 led us to believe that it had been burnt at the time of the cremation ceremony, but the evidence in the chamber in Enclosure 5 seems to point to a different story. Rather than being broken up and burnt, this chamber appears to have been left intact, buried under a mound of soil which eventually collapsed into the void in the chamber once the roof-timbers had rotted. In the light of this, we think that that is really what happened to the other chambers too. The problem is that where the ground is very rich in iron (as at Stanway), there can sometimes be chemical reactions which affect decaying timber to leave it looking as if it has been charred. After excavating the previous chambers, we wondered at the time if this was the explanation here too, but specialist advice on the supposed charred timbers from these chambers favours the idea that the timbers had been burnt. All this will now need to be reviewed.

In the very centre of the enclosure, there was another one of these enigmatic 'sub-enclosures'. This is simply a square area on the ground which is

marked out by a shallow ditch. Two have been found so far, one in Enclosure 4 (excavated in 1992) and another in Enclosure 5. The one in Enclosure 4 was the larger of the two and had a burnt patch in the middle as if it had been the site of a funeral pyre. Although no such scorched area was found inside the sub-enclosure in Enclosure 5, none of the original ground surface survived so we cannot tell if it too had contained similar tell-tale signs. Clearly these were features which were visible inside the enclosures, either as simple square plots of land surrounded by a small bank and ditch or maybe as square burial mounds. If the latter, there does not seem to have been any burial in them, unless of course they had been placed in the body of the earth mound (which would be unusual).

In terms of finds, the real excitement was to come from the secondary burials. Like Enclosure 3, this latest enclosure was not entirely empty apart from the chamber and the sub-enclosure. It also contained at least three extra burials. One contained at least

two pots, and another contained three pots, a small glass pot, a glass bead, and six brooches. The glass-ware is a beautiful blue-and-white pot - the sort of thing that might have been used to contain cosmetics or ointment. The number of brooches was exceptional. Brooches are often found in Iron Age or early Roman burials, but not often in such numbers. The best-known cemetery of this period in the country is at the King Harry Lane site in St Albans. Of 475 burials from that site, the largest number of brooches from any burial was five, and that was only a single example. In the absence of buttons and zips, brooches were used as clothes' fasteners. The presence of a brooch in a grave thus tells us nothing about the sex of the deceased, since men as well as women used them. However, the small glass pot seems to suggest that the dead person was female. Analysis of the cremated bone may tell us if this is true.

The third grave proved to be quite extraordinary. People occasionally ask me what is the best thing we have found since I started in Colchester (in 1970). Usually I have to think hard and, depending on how I feel at the time, I might offer something like the mosaic at Middleborough or the couch at Lion Walk. No more hesitation! The discovery of the game was quite amazing, and it is easily the most exciting thing we have ever found. And if that was not enough, it turns out that the game had belonged to a British doctor whose surgical equipment had been placed on the gaming board with his remains.

Delicate excavation gradually uncovered the fragile remains of the game board with the pieces still more or less as they had been left 2,000 years ago. The wooden board had rotted away almost entirely, except for its corners where close contact with its L-shaped metal corner pieces resulted in the survival of some wood. The gaming counters must have dropped by around 15 mm (the thickness of the board) as the wood decayed, and there seems to have been some slight sideways movement of the pieces, presumably because the board was jolted at some point in the burial process. But by and large, there had been surprisingly little movement of the pieces, and this has allowed



The grave with gaming board.

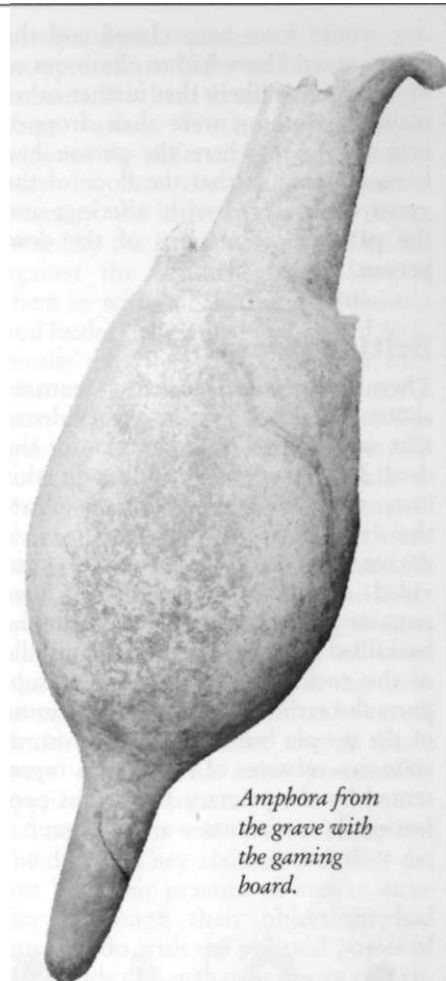
The board is at the top of the picture and the rods are to its right, in the very corner of the grave.

us to guess at how the board was laid out.

What seems to have happened is this. A roughly square pit was dug for the grave. The bottom was ledged so that one end was slightly deeper than the rest of it. A long wooden box (or at least some sort of wooden partitioning) was then placed in the deepest part of the grave so that it was a tight fit across one end of it. The gaming board was opened up and placed slightly askew on the bottom of the box. The pieces were set out in their starting positions, and a few pieces were moved as if a game had started (we will come to this in more detail later). The cremated remains of the dead person were placed on the board, either as a pile or in a bag - we cannot tell which. The medical instruments were then laid either directly on the board or on a shelf in the box. Various other items were placed in the box. This included a collection of strange rods and what appears to have been their container (again we will discuss all these later). These items were placed hard up against one end of the box. Also to go in the box were two brooches, a bead, and presumably some clothing or maybe blankets. Other objects were placed elsewhere in the grave. A dinner service of eleven pot-

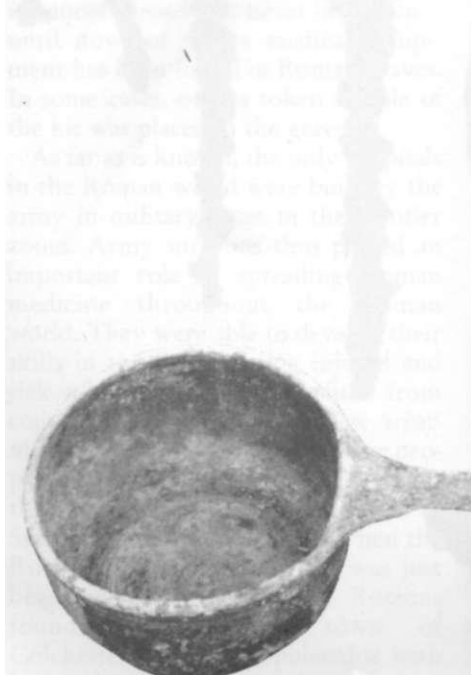
tery dishes and cups was carefully laid out to cover about a quarter of the floor of the pit. Food was presumably placed in and around the dinner service. A flagon (again presumably full of drink) was placed against a side of the pit. Something like a shelf, a tray or maybe a low table - we cannot tell what - was placed over the flagon and then on top of that were placed three special vessels. One was a glossy red decorated samian dish from South Gaul. (This is one of the closely datable items from the grave.) Another was a large copper-alloy pan. The third item was a copper-alloy strainer bowl. This was rather like an ancient form of teapot. It was a spouted vessel, with a perforated plate soldered on the inside just behind the spout to strain the liquid. Attached to the rim, opposite the spout, was a D-shaped drop handle. Thus two hands would have been needed to use the bowl - one to hold the handle and the other to support the vessel under the spout as it was tipped over. Again all three vessels were standing upright as if containing food and drink.

Somebody would have had to be standing in the grave to load it with the various objects just described. Once this was done, the lid of the wooden



Amphora from the grave with the gaming board.

Vessels from the grave with the gaming board. Right: the strainer bowl. The bowl was crushed in the ground. The spout is visible at the top of the photograph. The handle lies opposite. Below: the copper-alloy pan.



box would have been closed and the person would have had to climb out of the grave. It is likely that further other items of clothing were then dropped into the space where the person had been standing so that the floor of the grave was covered with offerings and the personal possessions of the dead person.

British doctor

There are various exciting features about the grave. One is the evidence that we have yet again for one of the dead having specialist skills. In this case, the medical instruments show that the person was a medic - a doctor/surgeon - who presumably provided care for the person whose remains subsequently ended up in the backfilled chamber-pit near the middle of the enclosure. This discovery supports the earlier view that at least some of the people buried in the enclosures were not relatives of the person represented by the primary burial but professional assistants and personal

attendants.

The instruments need to be X-rayed, cleaned, and conserved before we can be really certain about their identification - and indeed there are many other objects from the grave which need to be similarly treated, and some of these may prove to have a significant impact on the interpretation of the instruments themselves. However, they have been provisionally identified as medical by Ralph Jackson from the British Museum who specialises in items of this kind. Ralph Jackson believes that the Stanway instruments comprise the elements required for a basic surgical kit. At present, we have identified at least ten medical instruments and these including: two iron scalpels, a pair of iron tweezers, a pair of smooth-jawed fixation forceps, a copper-alloy scooped probe, a copper-alloy blunt hook, and a rather enigmatic instrument which

may have been a form of double sharp hook. The hooks would have been for moving or restraining soft tissue such as veins and flesh in an open incision. Blunt hooks would have been used for hooking tissue where it was important not to damage it.

What was the nationality of the doctor? Was he British, or could he have been a Roman or a Greek? In the Roman world, many doctors were Greek because Greek medicine was rather more scientifically-based than the Roman and thus more successful, whereas Roman medicine depended rather more on magical and religious practices. The medical instruments are informative in this respect since they seem to be nearly all of Celtic rather than standard Roman types. This then is not the equipment of a Roman doctor but of a Briton. The metal strainer seems to support this view.

Instruments from the doctor's grave. They have not all as yet been identified as being medical. The five on the right are iron, the rest copper alloy. The two iron scalpels are shown fourth and fifth in from the right. Their blades are at the bottom with the cutting edges facing downwards to the right.



Vessels of this type are hardly known outside Britain and it seems likely therefore that the bowl from Stanway was made in this country. Its presence in the grave is thus significant because it appears to confirm that this was the burial place of a Briton rather than a Roman.

Our knowledge of medical practice among the Britons before the arrival of the Romans is extremely limited, so we need to look to the Roman world for clues about how it might have worked. Most, if not all, Roman gods and goddesses were thought to have some healing powers so their help was sought by prayer and by making offerings. Lucky charms and magical incantations were often used in the hope of warding off disease or curing illnesses. On a more practical level, Roman doctors could treat sores and wounds with ointments and poultices and would prepare various medicines from herbs and spices. They could also perform substantial operations although, in the absence of effective anaesthetics, many people died from shock and pain as a result. And for those that did survive, the ineffectiveness of the antiseptics of the time meant that sometimes post-operative infections and gangrene would follow which, in some cases, could lead to amputation or worse. In those days, successful operations depended on the surgeon being accurate, strong, and above all fast. A full medical kit could run to many dozens of different items including scalpels, probes, spatulas, spoons, saws, tweezers, hooks, and forceps. There are many instances abroad (but never in Britain until now) of where medical equipment has been found in Roman graves. In some cases, only a token sample of the kit was placed in the grave.

As far as is known, the only hospitals in the Roman world were built by the army in military bases in the frontier zones. Army surgeons thus played an important role in spreading Roman medicine throughout the Roman world. They were able to develop their skills in the field treating injured and sick soldiers and they benefited from coming into contact with new treatments and drugs as more and more peoples and cultures were absorbed into the empire. The grave of the doctor at Stanway dates to the AD 50s when the Roman settlement of Britain was just beginning. In AD 49, the Romans founded the Roman town of Colchester and they populated it with hundreds, if not thousands, of former

soldiers who had served their time in the army. However, the Stanway doctor could not have been a retired army surgeon, because all the instruments would have been of standard Roman type which they are not.

Healers in the Celtic world were highly regarded and of high status. They belonged to a priesthood of learned men (and women) on a par socially with or just below that of the noble cum warrior class. These learned people included druids, bards, diviners (or seers), and physicians. Druids were the most senior and they were concerned with natural phenomena and philosophy. They were teachers, philosophers, and natural scientists who could make legal and other adjudications, even between rival tribes. Hence they were more than priests since they controlled the nobles and thus through them the whole of Celtic society. They were also credited with powers of magic and divination. Druidism was a cult which was based on the idea that the soul survives after death by passing to another living creature. This made its followers fearless in battle and is why the druids sanctioned human sacrifice. The two other main categories of learned people were bards (singers and



Nineteenth-century representation of a druid.

poets) and *Vates* (diviners or seers) who interpreted sacrifices and natural phenomena. It is hard to tell to what extent these various functions overlapped between the different groupings, and it may be that the medical man at Stanway was in fact a druid. A decree issued by the Roman emperor Tiberius against the Gaulish druids lumped them in with 'all that kind of diviners and healers' showing how, even if technically they were not all the same, they were still perceived by some Romans at least as having much in common. The training to become a druid reputedly took up to 20 years and was modular in the sense that the druids had to learn all that the bards would have had to learn. In the case of Irish bards some centuries later, it is known that they had to study such subjects as verse form, grammar, composition and recitation of tales, philosophy and law and that this took seven years. Hence it is said that all druids were bards but not all bards were druids. The same presumably applied to physicians.

The Romans were keen to stamp out the druids. They claimed that they did not like their practice of human sacrifice, although their objections had more to do with the political power of the druids rather than any gory cult rituals. In AD 54, Claudius issued a decree against the druids in Gaul, and we learn that in AD 60 the Roman army was involved in a big offensive against some druids in Britain who were holding out in a sanctuary in Anglesey. Our possible druid at Stanway died in the AD 50s, when the persecution was at its height. Thus the dating just allows for him to be a druid or at least some kind of 'diviner or healer' that the Romans might regard as a druid, although it should be noted that there is no clear proof that the Romans did manage to eradicate the druids in any case.

The rods buried near the gaming board are very mysterious. Each rod is cylindrical in section. One end is flat and the other resembles a triangular blade although it is not sharp. There are eight rods in all and they come in two slightly different sizes. Four of the rods are iron and four are copper alloy so that there are two small rods and two large rods in both iron and copper alloy. The rods lay so closely together in the ground that it seems unlikely that they had wooden handles or other degradable fittings which no longer survive. The rods were clearly associated with an adjacent wooden container of

some sort which incorporated eight copper-alloy rings. The rings lay in a row suggesting that the container was in the form of a wide, narrow box with an open top where the rings were fixed along its length. Each ring was attached to a cloth or leather covering over the wooden container by a narrow loop of cloth or thread.

We are as yet at a loss to explain the function of the rods or the rings, but there may be a clue in how the rods lay in the grave. Five of the rods had been placed in a neat pile at one end of the box, with the other three at an angle so as to rest on the gaming board. This careful arrangement suggests that, like the gaming board, the rods were laid out as if in use. One explanation for the rods is that they were used for divination. This is not so much a way of trying to tell the future but of trying to find out if the time is right for whatever course of action is being contemplated. The idea then was to see if the gods were well disposed towards whatever action was being proposed. A well-known example of this practice was to be found at Roman weddings where the entrails (particularly the liver) of a sacrificed animal were examined to see if it was the right time for such an event and if the couple were well suited. In the case of the rods from Stanway, would-be patients might wish to see if the time was right to submit themselves to the surgeon's knife. Our physician, if that what he was, could thus provide the complete service — consultation with the gods and then

full surgical intervention. Divination could be carried out by observing natural events such as the flight of birds, shooting stars or, as mentioned above, the physical characteristics of entrails. Sortilege is divination by the casting or drawing of lots. Various techniques have been used around the world and involve such things as bird bones, knuckle bones, pebbles, and arrows. This last method involved drawing specially marked arrows from a container or casting them down on the ground and interpreting the resultant pattern. It is interesting to note that the Stanway rods are rather like stylised arrows. It may be that each ring held a single rod upright and these were then drawn from the container as part of the divination process.

Ralph Jackson confidently discounts any medical or veterinary function for the rods, but there are of course other possible explanations for them. They might have been parts of another game, or they might have been used in conjunction with the gaming board, perhaps to push the pieces around rather like the way a croupier collects counters on a gaming table. The rods look like very large versions of Roman implements called *styli* which were used for writing on wax tablets, so maybe they were for writing or inscribing letters or symbols on the ground or some similar soft surface. However none of these ideas seems particularly plausible, which is why something like divination begins to look like a serious

possibility. Such a use does at least allow for the rods occurring in two different materials when there is no obvious practical reason why this should be so.

The game

The counters were made of glass in the shape of thick chocolate drops where one side is flat and the other curved. There were two colours, white and blue, and there were thirteen of each. All the counters were broadly the same size except for one white counter which was about half the diameter of the others.

The board was made of wood which preliminary investigations suggest is maple. It was about 55 cm long and 40 cm wide. It was hinged at both ends so that it folded longways. Each corner was strengthened with a right-angled metal bracket. The proportions of the board suggest that it was laid out as a grid of twelve by eight squares. The blue pieces were placed along one side of the board lengthways and the white were placed down the other side so that all twelve squares were filled on each side. The small white counter (the thirteenth one) was placed near the centre of the board. The thirteenth blue, distinguished from the others by being upside down, was placed in one corner, near blue's base line. Presumably the upside counter was the blue equivalent of the small white one. Perhaps originally there had been a small blue counter too but it was lost.



The strange rods (left) and three of the rings (below) associated with them.



It is of course not possible to say what game, if any, was being played. The single most important fact about the Stanway game is that it did not involve any dice; it was therefore a strategy game which depended entirely on mental skill. Some information survives about Roman board games although there is no set of rules for any single game and nor is there a complete list of all the games that were played. If we had to guess what it might be from those that are known, then that would be a game called *ludus latruculorum* meaning 'game of little robbers'. The idea of the game was to capture all of your opponent's pieces. This was done by trapping a single one of your opponent's pieces between two of your own. The Roman writer C Calpurnius Piso gives a lively account of the course of a game from which we can deduce something of how it was played:

But if you are tired after work and yet do not want to be just lazy, but play artfully then distribute the gaming pieces cleverly on the open board and lead wars with the glass warriors so that now the white one blocks the blacks and now the black one blocks the whites. But who didn't flee from you? Which stone retreated under your leadership? Which one has not — death already near — just defeated another enemy? Your battle line fights in a thousand ways: this one fleeing from an aggressor which he then nevertheless steals; this one, which was on the look-out, comes back on a long march; this one dares to enter a fight and deceives the enemy who is advancing in the hope of booty; this one is in a dangerous position and while it looks as if he is

blocked, he actually blocks two enemies. This one has bigger aims: to quickly break through the rabble, advance through enemy lines and destroy the now defenceless walls? Meanwhile, with heated fights still going on, the soldiers are scattered, but your phalanx is still complete or maybe one or two of your warriors are missing: you win and both your hands rattle with the captured group.

The beginning of this quotation shows how part of the game involved strategically placing the pieces around the board prior to making the first move. On the face of it, such a process would rule out *ludus latruculorum* for the Stanway game, but some games experts take the view that this is not necessarily so and that we could at Stanway be merely seeing a variation of this game.

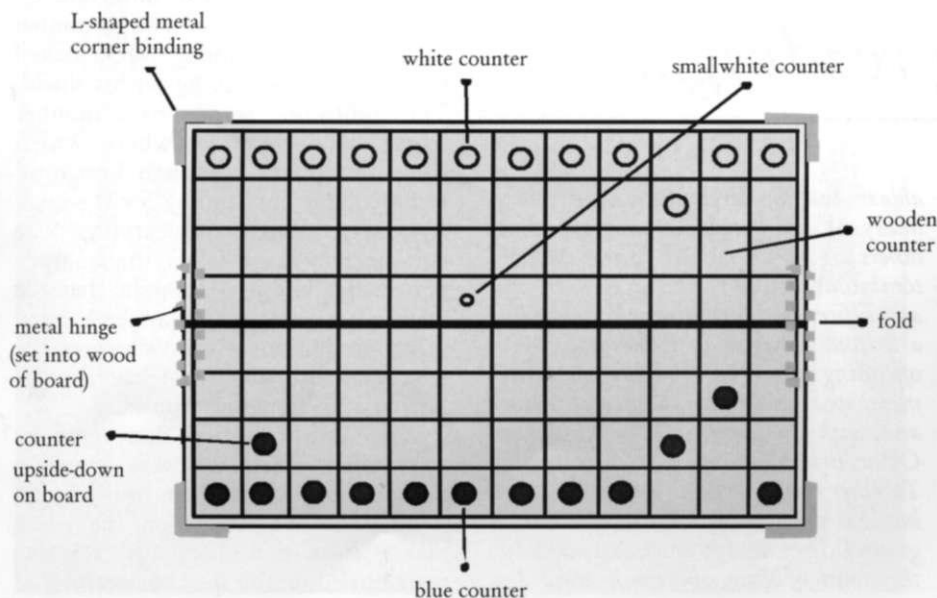
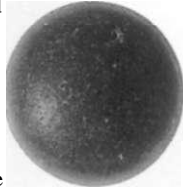
In truth, it seems unlikely that we will ever know what game, if any, was being played on the board. This would be hard enough had the gaming board been in a Roman grave, but it is the grave of a Briton and so the problem is even worse. Of course it may be that the pieces on the board do not represent the start of any sort of game at all, British or Roman. Burial practice involved much ritual and it could be that this was simply part of an elaborate graveside ceremony. Moreover, we need to bear in mind the possibility (remote as it is) that if the rods were used for divination, then so too might have been the gaming board. The glass counters and board were undoubtedly designed for board games but the physician may have used it as his standard stock in trade. It is hard for us to imagine how a gaming board could have

been used for divination, but our outlook on life and the world around us is so different to that of the Britons 2000 years ago that we should not let this close our minds to this possibility, strange as it might seem.

On the other hand, of the eight richest graves from the site as a whole (including the chambers), three contained gaming counters. This is a high proportion. Counters and gaming boards occur in the late Iron Age and the Roman period, but they are not this common. Of the 475 burials at King Harry Lane mentioned earlier, only two contained gaming boards (interestingly both wooden, folding, and of the same size as the latest gaming board from Stanway), and none are to be found from the hundreds of Roman burials recorded at Colchester. Could all three gaming boards at Stanway really have been used for divination? This seems unlikely and so would support the most obvious conclusion that the doctor's gaming board was primarily for pleasure - unless of course Stanway was a druidic centre. Now there's a thought!

Although the latest discoveries at Stanway have been spectacular, an important conclusion from the earlier phases of the work remains unchanged. The doctor, the 'warrior' and the literate person in Enclosure 3 all probably collaborated with the Romans in exchange for perks and special privileges. Being alive in AD 43 meant that they would have been on the losing side when the Romans invaded Britain. They would have seen the fall of Camulodunum and the subsequent triumphal entrance there of the Roman emperor Claudius with his elephants, his huge entourage, and his large army. Many Britons from Camulodunum must have chosen to fight on. For eight or so years, the British resistance was led by Caratacus, the most famous of Cunobelin's sons, until he lost a great battle and was later handed over to the Romans by the Brigantian queen, Cartimandua. Caratacus would have despised those who stayed behind in Camulodunum to collaborate with the Romans. Our doctor and his friends would have been very wary of their new Roman masters but even more fearful of some of their former friends and colleagues.

Possible layout of the game as it was left in the grave. This assumes that the board was accidentally jolted which caused the pieces to slip sideways slightly.



LONGINUS

they can. The stone totters and then, with a crash, it topples face downwards to the ground, smashing into great chunks with the force of the impact. As one, the jubilant Britons roar in triumph, jumping and punching the air for all they are worth — it's as if it had been a real Roman soldier.

Longinus' tombstone is one of the treasures in Colchester Museum. The discovery of the face in August last year (1996) was itself a great moment but, as we shall see, it has all but destroyed a colourful story.

The tombstone stood by the side of the main road leading westwards out of Colchester. It was the original A1 leading to London and St Albans. As time went on, it was to become lined with tombs and tombstones, all facing on to the street to impress the passing travellers. Among these monuments was the tombstone of the Roman centurion Facilis which stands alongside that of Longinus in Colchester Museum today.

Longinus presumably died between AD 43 and c AD 60. He was an officer (*duplicarius*) in a cavalry unit called *Ala I Thracum* which was raised in Thrace. He came from Sardica which is now Sofia in Bulgaria. It is likely that Longinus came to Britain as part of the invasion force in AD 43. The inscription on the stone tells us that Longinus served for only fifteen years, which suggests that he was still in the army when he died. Thus its presence provides some evidence that the *Ala I Thracum* was based in Colchester, either in the fortress (the site of which is under the present town centre) or in the small fort at Gosbecks. The fortress was evacuated in AD 49 and the dating of the fort at Gosbecks is uncertain.

The tombstone shows a mounted cavalry officer standing over a naked Celtic warrior cowering on his shield. The tombstone is one of a number from Britain and elsewhere which show this theme, although Longinus' tombstone is outstanding for the quality of its design and carving. The Britons may have taken the imagery personally, but it is thought that the scene is stylistic and may have been meant to symbolise the victory of life over death. It would not have been a portrayal of Longinus himself.

The tombstone was discovered in 1928 when workmen were lowering the ground level on a site near Lexden Road. The inscription on the stone makes clear that Longinus' remains were buried on the spot but nothing of



The discovery of the lost face of Longinus will rewrite the history books. But it all makes for much less interesting reading...

The discovery of Longinus' tombstone in 1928 was a great moment. The freshness and quality of the carving was stunning: it made a great new addition to the museum display. The fact that the face was missing was no disappointment: quite the opposite, because it made for a great story.

It's AD 60 and Boudica and the Britons are on the rampage. Roman Colchester is

ablaze and the air is thick with smoke. Many of the hated Romans are dead: others are on the run. A Briton spots the tombstone. It's a mounted Roman cavalry officer and he seems to be trampling a Briton. Enraged, he rushes over to the offending monument. He breaks off the metal spear which is in the soldier's hand and, with one swipe, smashes off his face. Other Britons hurry over to join him. Together they try to push over the stone, but it is very heavy and set well into the ground. They need to work as a team. On the count of three, they push as hard as

Above: James Fawn with the face of Longinus.



him was found, either in 1928 or some years later when the site was investigated by A F Hall (a school teacher at the Royal Grammar School).

Planning consent was given in 1995 for a house to be built on the site. We knew that the ground level had been lowered by four feet or more in 1928, so Longinus' cremated remains could be very close to the present ground level which is now concrete. Although the actual spot where the tombstone lay was not to be under the new house (it was to be in the new garden), there was a possibility that any surviving remains would be destroyed, if not when the concrete was removed and the garden made, then during subsequent cultivation by the occupants of the house. Planning consent for the new house was conditional on ensuring that any surviving remains of Longinus should not be destroyed. This meant that an archaeological excavation was needed.

The investigation of the site was carried out by James Fawn and members of the Colchester Archaeological Group as a collaborative project with the Archaeological Trust. The Trust removed the concrete and members of the Archaeological Group continued with the more interesting work.

An early discovery was a rectangular hole not much larger than the base of the tombstone. It was filled with soil and modern debris making it almost certain that the hole dates to 1928. Clearly the excavation was in the right place, but was this the hole which held the base of the tombstone or was it a hole dug in 1928 in an effort to find Longinus' remains? All around the hole were dozens of chips of pale yellow stone. At first there was some doubt that these really belonged to the tombstone, and if they did, what were they doing here? Then one morning James picked up one of the stone fragments, turned it over, and to his amazement found himself staring at a face. I thought it seemed too small to belong to Longinus but the helmet looked right. (Ironically we had just finished a

The inscription of the tombstone reads:

Longinus Sdapeze, son of Matycus, duplicarius of the First Squadron of Thracian Cavalry, from the district of Sardica, aged forty, with fifteen years' service. His heirs had this erect-ed in accordance with his will. Lies buried here.



reconstruction picture of the Longinus tombstone for the cover of the *City of Victory* where we had photographically recreated the missing pieces, including the face and the metal spear.) James took the face to the museum 'to present it' (as he put it) to the tombstone and, lo and behold, it was a perfect fit.

Other carved pieces started to emerge, including parts of the hands of the sphinx which sits on top of the stone. The carved pieces were all face down, more or less in the correct positions as they had been on the stone. A close examination of photographs of the tombstone before restoration shows that the missing pieces had all been next to where the stone had cracked. In other words, it looks as if they had flaked off the stone either as it hit the ground or at some later stage.

How then are we to interpret the dozens of stone fragments? The stone is heavily restored so that it is not obvious today how much was missing in 1928. But it is clear from contemporary photographs that the sides (particularly the right side) had been heavily damaged where repeated blows or some other kind of pressure produced the chips of stone found in 1996.

A slightly different picture of the demolition of the stone now seems to emerge. Rather than a frenzied onslaught on the face and other key features, it would seem that somebody had spent much time and energy doing something to the stone which had the effect of detaching many chips of stone and maybe splitting it into a number of large pieces. Was this person trying to destroy the monument and knock it over? The stone may in fact may have been broken into pieces as it lay face down on the ground. Blows at some time after the fall caused the stone to split and the face and other carved pieces to flake off. Being in relief, carved bits were liable to detach themselves if they were next to lines of weakness where the tombstone split.

The tombstone shortly after its discovery in 1928. It is photographed lying on planks on the site. Note the fresh appearance of some of the cracks and the fact that they pass close to missing features such as the face and horse's nose. This suggests that these pieces flaked off when the tombstone split into pieces. Did the workmen in 1928 break it levering the stone up out of the ground?

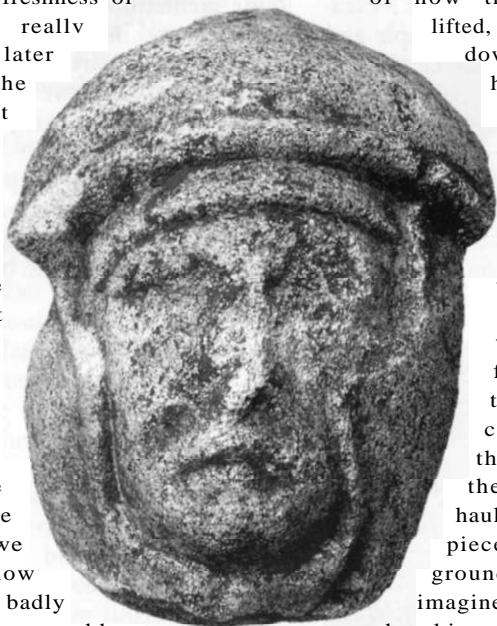


A reconstruction with all the missing parts on Longinus and his horse restored photographically. Done just before the face was found. (By Stephen Crummy.) This was to be a book illustration so licence was taken with the spear which, as shown by the surviving socket on the tombstone, did not continue to the rear of the hand. This face proved to be too large.



The tombstone of the legionary centurion Facilis stood less than 50 m away. It too faced on to the Roman road but was never damaged and broken in the same as Longinus' tombstone.

So it seems that we can accept the idea that the stone was indeed deliberately damaged but we need to withhold judgement on the date of the event and why it was done. In theory it could have happened any time. Does the apparent freshness of the carving really rule out a later date for the damage? If it tells us anything, it is that the stone was pushed on to its face early on but the freshness of the carving says nothing about the date of the damage. The truth is that we cannot say how well or how badly the stone would weather. And if the damage really was Boudican, why was the tombstone of Facilis apparently left untouched when it stood on the other side of the street, less than 50 m away?



despoilers of the monument were the workmen who found it in 1928. Contemporary photographs show some very crisp, sharp breaks in the stone. We have no knowledge of how the stone was lifted, but it lay face down and it could have suffered rough treatment until the men managed to get it out of the ground, turn it over, and see what it was. Longinus' face might therefore have come off as they levered up the stone and hauled it piece by piece out of the ground. We can imagine the workmen breaking up the stone and putting levers in the ground against the right-hand side of the monument — just where the damage is the greatest. It all seems sickeningly plausible. Shame about the nice story...

On top of all these doubts, we cannot discount the possibility that the real

Everyday life and death at Gosbecks

Our knowledge of what Gosbecks was like 2,000 years ago is still largely dependent on aerial photography. Large-scale excavations just north of the Gosbecks Archaeological Park are changing all this.

Within the last few months, Colchester has been spoilt for archaeology. Following on from the major excavations at Stanway and the Gosbecks Temple came Gosbecks site C, sister site to last year's excavation around the Roman water main at Gosbecks site B, which lay on the site of the new Maldon Road roundabout.

Imminent development by Gallifords Homes Ltd gave the opportunity to excavate in an area of late Iron Age and

Roman activity, evidenced in aerial photographs by an extensive system of field ditches and boundaries. The area lay just to the north of last year's excavation, within sight of the temple and theatre in the Gosbecks Archaeological Park. The work was funded by Galliford Homes.

Initial machining exposed the expected remnants of the field system and little more. It was only when the site was fully cleaned that a broader picture of life (and death) on the site was

appreciated.

The earliest activity on site is prehistoric. A sizeable amount of worked flint was found spread across the site mainly within crudely dug pits. The finest of these was an Acheulean hand axe, skilfully fashioned at least 150,000 years ago. As this was found during machining of the site it is thus, however, 'out of context' and does not necessarily point to such early settlement on the site. However, it may point to an early settlement nearby.

The other flints are likely to belong to the later prehistoric period when three crude hearths or possible ovens are constructed around the site. These were presumably sited in open areas within woodland as later on there is evidence of woodland clearance when the site is given over to farming. It is not yet known the purpose of these hearths, domestic or industrial, but samples taken from these features may shed light on this. No structures were seen to house these hearths.

A profusion of post-holes in the middle of the site may represent a dwelling in the form of a round house. No floor surfaces were seen or finds retrieved to confidently date this building, but it may well be part of early Roman activity on the site. This would make it contemporary with a 1st-century cemetery to the north-west. Nine cremations were excavated here, in-urned within samian and greyware bowls. One in particular included two samian bowls and two fine continental glass cups, one cup being placed within one of the bowls.

A cremation at the opposite side of the site proved to be extra special. This was enclosed by a square ditch, the cremation having pride of place in the



The square burial enclosure. Cremated remains were interred in the centre of the enclosure.



Above: copper-alloy figurine of a crouched hare.

Left: Nigel Rayner excavates a grave where only the teeth of the skeleton survives

Below: The earliest artefact from the site was this stone hand axe, made at least 150,000 years ago.

centre. Along with the burnt bone were found a flagon and a grey ware bowl. A mound might have been placed over the enclosure after burial. This was a more elaborate affair than the other burials and may reflect the wealth of the individual concerned.

Sometime around the 2nd century, the woods were cleared (as shown by burnt-out tree bowls) and the area given over to farming. A number of field ditches were dug and also a major boundary ditch to a settlement, earlier suggested by rubbish pits at Gosbecks site B. This cut a swathe across the site, splitting quite unceremoniously the cremation cemetery in two. In accordance with custom of the time, a change in burial practice is observed on the site. Now the bodies of the dead were placed in coffins, rather than being cremated, and interred outside the limits of the settlement. Hence at Gosbecks site C we have a group of seven graves hugging the line of the boundary ditch along its northern edge. Like the earlier cremations, these are not grand affairs, but a fair number had grave goods for use in the afterlife. A Nene Valley beaker, a black burnished dish and a flagon were retrieved from individual graves, as well as two finger rings. The pottery vessels may have contained nourishment for the journey. Judging by the size of the nails (up to 10 mm in diameter) the coffins were crudely built, quite bulky affairs. Unfortunately, due to the acidic sandy soil on site, the only skeletal remains to survive were teeth,



their enamel protecting them from decay.

Later the area ceased to be used for burial and the ditch was filled in along with the field ditches which serviced it. One of the 'star finds' of the site from this phase is an attractive well-preserved crouched hare figurine in copper alloy, possibly from a household shrine. This was cast into the upper fill of the ditch along with a pair of shoes or boots (as shown by its hobnails). This might be a votive offering in appreciation of good harvests and hope for continued fortune.

The story of Gosbecks site C is not about fine buildings and opulence but is of a small settlement within a rural landscape. The people lived their lives on the land and enjoyed a reasonable standard of living. Overall, the site has contributed greatly to the broader picture of the native settlement at Gosbecks.

Around the county

The latest news from the Archaeological Section at County Hall

Cressing Temple

The annual Field School excavation work this year centred around the site of the Templar Chapel. This part of the monument has been heavily landscaped, reducing the surface around the chapel by up to 0.5 m and removing a lot of archaeology. However, graves cut by the surviving masonry foundations of the chapel show that it was preceded by an even earlier building, probably of timber, with an apse at the east end.

New areas were also opened up around the chapel, in one of which was found a brick and timber sluice that controlled the flow of water through the complex network of drains and sewers dating to the time of Elizabeth I. A culvert carried water from the upper part of the moat to the sluice where, by closing wooden gates across three outlet drains, a small head of water could be built up and then, by opening a gate, sent to flush out the selected drain.

Boreham windmill

The remains of the earliest windmill to be excavated in Essex have been revealed at Boreham in the area of a former airfield, now part of a gravel quarry. The main feature was a large round pit, about 5 m across, in which the post of a post-mill would have been set. Around it was an almost complete ring ditch, 18 m in diameter. The material dug out from the ditch would have

been piled up to make the mill mound, though this had been flattened either by modern ploughing or by levelling for the World War Two runway nearby.

Pottery in the pit and ditch date them to the late 12th or 13th centuries, making this the earliest excavated or extant mill site in the county, and one of the earliest in England. The only excavated mill which might be earlier is an example at Great Linford in Buckinghamshire, dated to 1140-1300.

The mill lay in the corner of either a ditched field, or a moated enclosure. Close by lay a granary, shown by four massive post holes arranged in a square. The enclosure also held another timber

building, perhaps a house or barn, and two ponds. The site was abandoned in the 13th century, probably after it was destroyed by a fire, as large deposits of charcoal were scattered across the site, mostly near the windmill and the granary.

The defence of Harwich

The county's Archaeology Section has been recording the World War Two defence lines and pillboxes around Harwich and Dovercourt. The River Stour offered a vital east-coast deep-water anchorage to Allied shipping. To guard the port against air, sea or land attack was a major priority for the defence planners, and Harwich became one of the most heavily defended towns in Essex.

The Stanier Line, a two-and-a-half mile long defence chain, cut Harwich off from an inland approach, in case German forces landed along the coast and attacked the town from the rear. It crossed the peninsula from the shoreline at Dovercourt to the River Stour at Parkeston. The line's backbone was an almost continuous string of over 800 massive concrete blocks, running from the coast to Ramsey Creek. The creek itself then formed a ready-made anti-tank barrier, backed up by a disused railway embankment. After half a mile, the line left the creek to resume its chain of concrete blocks for the last few hundred yards to the river. An anti-tank ditch ran along its length, along which were also set a variety of infantry and artillery pillboxes. A road barrier at Dovercourt All Saints' church guarded the main road into the

This casemate, built to house a quick-firing 12-pounder gun, still overlooks Harwich harbour from Angel Gate.



town and a cable-type barrier could be raised to block tank access along the railway line into the Parkeston area.

Some of the Stanier Line anti-tank blocks still remain, although most were removed soon after the war. There is no trace of the original position of the road barrier, but the rusting cable of the railway barrier, set in its concrete anchorage blocks, still guards the main line into Parkeston Quay.

To counteract the threat from the air, barrage balloons hung in the sky above the harbour, and a variety of anti-aircraft weapons, from World War One Lewis guns to heavy 'ack-ack' guns, pointed skywards. Near Dovercourt swimming pool a battery of guns added their weight to the anti-aircraft defences from camouflaged concrete emplacements.

The major coastal artillery positions were at Landguard Fort on the Suffolk side of the estuary and Beacon Hill on the Essex side, both fortresses with heavy guns that had long protected the area from a seaborne invasion. A naval defence boom sealed the mouth of the estuary between Landguard and Beacon Hill. For in-shore defence a battery of quick-firing 12-pounder guns in brick and concrete casemates faced across the harbour from Angel Gate. One still

survives. Beacon Hill, with its gun emplacements, observation posts, pill-boxes and coastal searchlights, closed down in the mid-1950s, and is now a scheduled ancient monument.

World War Two airfields

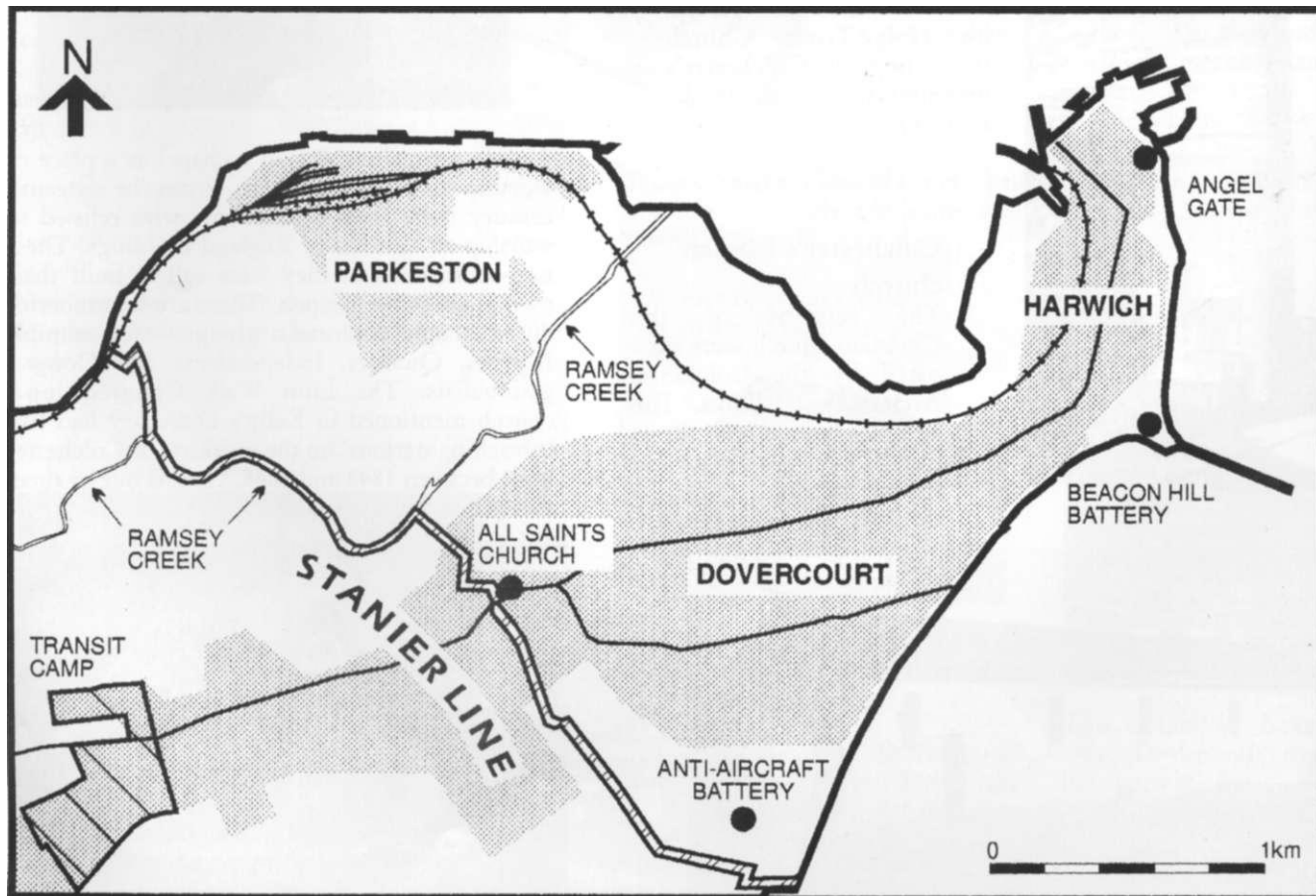
A three-month survey has been carried out to record the 22 military airfields which were used during World War Two. They were all of a similar pattern, each with three paved concrete runways linked by a perimeter track. On one side lay the main technical site, the hangars, control tower, stores, workshops, training facilities, and offices. An operations block and station headquarters complex was set further away to minimise the risk of damage during an attack. Bomb stores were built on the opposite side to the main technical site for safety reasons. Airfields were designed to be self-sufficient and had water towers, stand-by electricity generators and a sewage works built furthest away from the airfield. These also catered for up to a dozen dispersed groups of buildings that provided personnel accommodation, the mess and communal areas, and sick quarters.

The construction of these airfields

had a considerable impact on the Essex landscape, removing existing field boundaries and laying vast amounts of paved concrete. Immediately after the war many airfields were closed and reverted to agricultural use. The survival of some to the present day is due mainly to their re-use by farmers and industry. Some runways and perimeter tracks have been narrowed and used as field boundaries for modern large open fields. The airfield buildings however, have mostly been destroyed in order to produce regular field shapes.

Traces of all 22 Essex airfields can be found. Debden is perhaps the most complete site because it remains in Ministry of Defence ownership, but various buildings also survive at Little Walden and Matching, and there are control towers, operations blocks and hangars dotted across the county. The survey should ensure that these historic airfields will be recorded before they are lost forever.

The path of the wartime Stanier Line protecting Harwich from an attack on its landward side.



CHURCH DETECTIVES

by Mike Corbishley

Most places have at least one church or chapel. Towns, such as Colchester, have large numbers of them. Some are easy to find because their tall bell towers can be seen above other buildings. Other churches now have other uses, for example St Mary-at-the-Walls, whose tower was bombarded in the Civil War siege, is now an arts centre. Some churches, and especially chapels, no longer exist at all. But there are lots of ways to find out where churches and chapels used to be.

Although there were Christian churches in the Roman period in Britain, it was the arrival of Augustine in AD 597 which re-established Christianity in Britain. He had been sent by Pope Gregory I as a missionary.



After he arrived in Kent several churches were built or restored in Canterbury. Apart from the remains of Roman Christian churches, the first church buildings which can still be seen today date from the Saxon period, like Holy Trinity Church (now one of Colchester's museums opposite the Public Library).

Colchester's Roman church

The remains of this Christian church were excavated by the Colchester Archaeological Trust. This artist's impression shows what it might have been like in the Roman period. We think it was built between AD 320 and 340.



Chapels

There are various sorts of chapels. There were many thousands of medieval chapels in Britain. These were often outlying buildings from the main church. One of the most common was the 'chapel-of-ease' for people isolated in part of the parish. This idea continued into modern times. This tin chapel in Stones Green (near Harwich) was the chapel-of-ease for the Church of England church at Great Oakley.

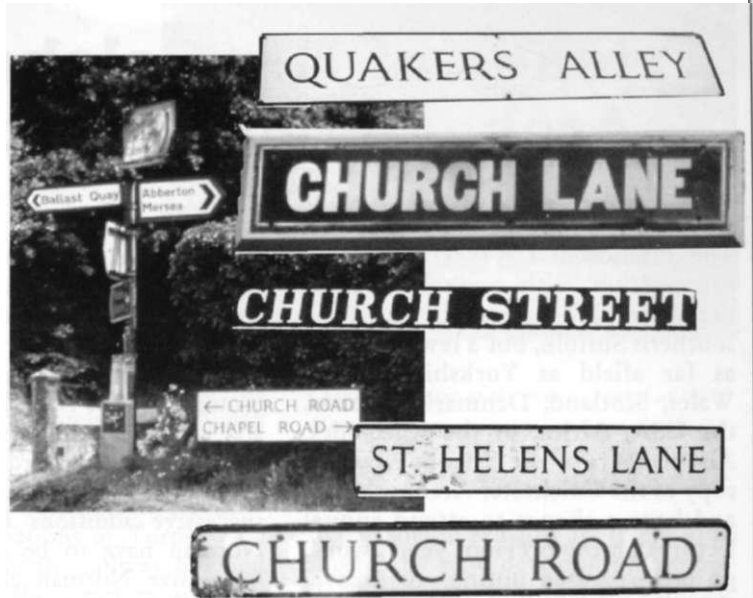
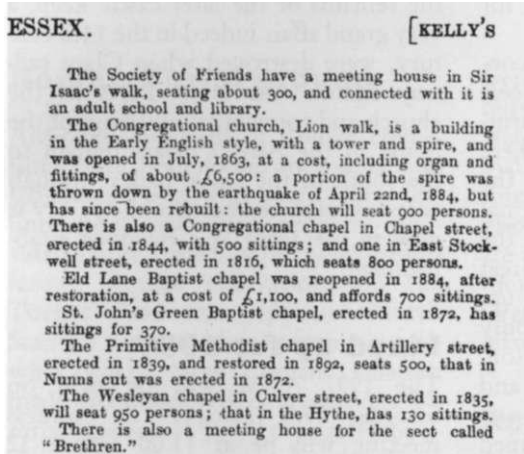


But we normally think of a chapel as a place of worship for non-conformists. From the sixteenth century there have been people who refused to worship in Church of England buildings. These non-conformists as they were called, built their own churches or chapels. There are a number of different non-conformist groups — for example Baptists, Quakers, Independents and Congregationalists. The Lion Walk Congregational church mentioned in Kelly's Directory had five 'preaching stations' on the outskirts of Colchester built between 1843 and 1845. Here is one of them still in use at Old Heath.



But how do you go about finding churches?

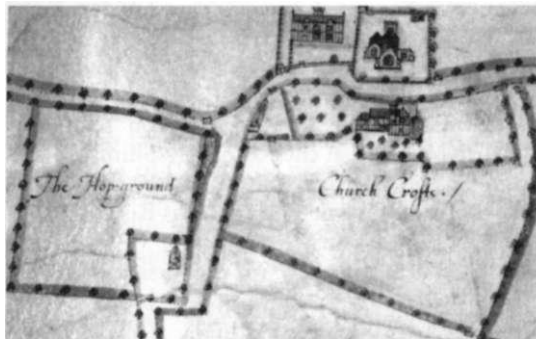
Well, you could start with the nineteenth-century answer to our Yellow Pages! Local directories were published by several firms. Among others, you will find Kelly's Directory of Essex in the Local Studies Section in Colchester's Public Library. Here is a section from the 1895 edition listing all the non-conformist chapels in Colchester.



2 How many times have you seen street names like these?

3 The names of places often show a connection with churches. A place with a monastery will often contain the word *mynster*, the Old English word-for example Charminster in Dorset. Can you think of any in Essex?

4 Fields were often named after churches or chapels, or show that the land was once owned by the church. Church or Chapel Field or Crofts is common. One field in Herefordshire is called Church Way Field, meaning 'land on the road to the church'.

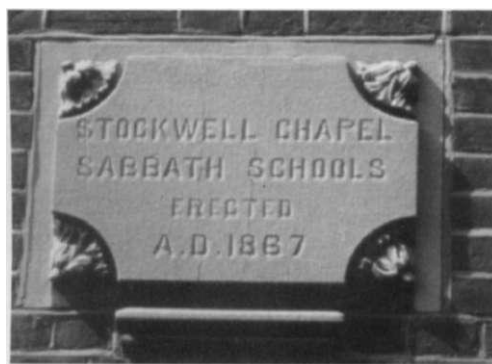


Old documents and maps often give us the evidence for churches. Here is the church at Aldham, near Colchester, pictured on a map drawn in 1639.

Finally, many churches and chapels have been recycled for another use. Here are some examples from Colchester and Dovercourt.

There are several other ways of spotting the places where churches or chapels stood:

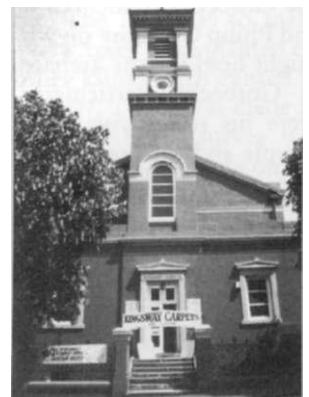
Stockwell Street chapel is now offices.



1 Wall plaques can often tell about non-conformist chapels.



In Dovercourt's High Street this chapel had a shop built in front of it and is now a keep fit centre.



The chapel in Kingsway, Dovercourt now has shops inside.

Friends of the Colchester Archaeological Trust

The Friends of CAT is a thriving organisation with several hundred members. Most live in Essex or southern Suffolk, but a few hail from as far afield as Yorkshire, South Wales, Scotland, Denmark, Canada, the USA, Africa, or the Antipodes. All members of the Friends receive a copy of the Colchester Archaeologist, and have a chance to attend annual lectures on the previous year's work, go on organised outings to excavation sites, ancient monuments, historic buildings, and museums, and to attend events related to the work of the Trust.

Events of 1996

The AGM was held in January in the lecture theatre of the Castle Museum in Colchester. Unfortunately, several members were snowed in that day, and many others were unwilling to risk venturing out on the slippery pavements, so for the first time ever there were enough seats to go round! The raffle was as successful as ever, despite the low numbers attending. Those who did manage to get into the town heard Carl Crossan on the second phase of the excavations on the site of the medieval leper hospital at St Mary Magdalen, Steve Benfield on the excavations in advance of the first phase of the Gosbecks residential development, and Philip Crummy on what the future might hold for the archaeological park at Gosbecks. Particularly fascinating were his reconstructions of what the temple and theatre might have looked like, and how they might appear again.

A 'hands-on' leather session for the Friends was held in March at the Museum of London, with members able to examine the remains of Roman and medieval shoes and scabbards from excavations in the City. Very little leather has been found in Colchester, as organic material needs to be waterlogged to survive in the ground, whereas London has the largest collection in the country thanks to excavations along the Thames and in the valley of the Walbrook, so this was an opportunity to fill in some gaps in our knowledge. After the session the

Friends visited the new displays in the Museum's prehistoric and Roman galleries, in particular looking out for more leather.

In May the annual churches trip concentrated on the twin themes of success and failure. Friends visited the burnt-out shell of Alresford church, where the removal of the plaster allows the successive additions to the original Norman nave to be seen easily, the impressive Norman church of Great Clacton, now unsafe and boarded up, with visitors restricted to viewing only the outside, Tendring, Little Clacton, and Thorrington, all thriving, and ending up at the massive, well-preserved and well-maintained Brightlingsea church.

In July, as a follow-up to the previous year's trip to Caistor-by-St Edmund, a coach-load of Friends headed for Norfolk to meet John Davies of Norwich Castle Museum at the Roman fort of Burgh Castle. The fort was built in the late 3rd century as one of a chain set up to defend the east coast. It overlooks Breydon Water, which in the Roman period was a large natural harbour capable of holding several hundred ships. Most of the perimeter wall of the fort remains standing, despite some robbing of the stone in later periods, apart from on the west side where it has collapsed into the valley. There have been excavations inside the fort, though the area is now grassed over. From Burgh Castle we moved on to Caistor-by-Yarmouth, its companion fort on the north side of the estuary, where the defences have all but disappeared, but the foundations of excavated buildings in one area are on display to the public.

The Stanway site was open to the public over the August Bank holiday weekend, and was visited by over three thousand people. The Friends of the Trust were out in force, both visiting and helping.

A request to visit a working windmill saw a coach party head for Saxtead Green, Suffolk, in September. This is 'in working order', though it does not actually work. Unfortunately, the great gale of 1987 damaged beyond repair the few working mills left in this area.

Saxtead, a postmill in English Heritage care, is in wonderful condition, and there is access to all parts of the mill so that the details of its construction and use can be seen.

In November there was a coach trip to Clare in Suffolk. The lay-out of the centre of the small town is not much changed since the medieval period, and the Norman motte survives, though the remains of the later castle keep, a very grand affair indeed in the 14th century, were destroyed when Clare railway station was built. Parts of the church and conventual buildings of the house of the Austin Friars remain to the south of the castle bailey, though access is restricted because the priory is now in use again as a religious establishment.

Lined up for 1997

The 1997 AGM will be held on Saturday 25th January. The business meeting will be at 11.00 am at 12 Lexden Road, and the afternoon lectures, tea and raffle in the Castle Museum lecture theatre at 2.00 pm. The speakers will be Philip Crummy on Stanway and Longinus, and Don Shimmin on the recently discovered Roman cremation cemetery at Turner Rise.

A 'hands-on Colchester cloth seals' session at the Museum of London will be held for the Friends in March. (More Colchester seals have found in London than in Colchester.) It will be run by Geoff Egan of the Museum of London who specialises in objects of this kind.

In May there will be a coach trip to the Bartlow Hills, the spectacular group of Roman-period barrows near Cambridge. Excavations into the mounds in the 19th century recovered many objects, showing that the barrows covered the burials of a wealthy group of Romano-Britons, almost certainly all from the same family. Though later in date, the burial rite at Bartlow is reminiscent of that used for the warrior and surgeon burials at Stanway.

The annual churches trip in 1997 will be to the Rodings. This was originally planned for 1996, but had to be postponed. The September and November sessions will be arranged later in the year.

Nina Crummy
Social Secretary

In brief...



Close-up of part of the mosaic found at the Mercury Theatre

Roman burial ground

Although hundreds of Roman cremations have been found in and around Colchester over the years, very few until now have been properly excavated and recorded. Now things are different. Rescue excavations on the Turner Rise site (opposite North Station) are providing information on what was a large Roman cemetery made up of hundreds of cremations. By early January of 1997, over sixty burials had been excavated by the Trust with the likelihood of more to come. The simplest of the cremations takes the form of a scatter of cremated bone in a pit. Others include pots and other artefacts, with the largest group so far containing about five vessels. Some of the vessels seem to have been broken at the time of burial, which is a rite hardly recognised in Colchester outside the Stanway site.

The Victorian amateur archaeologist Willian Wire recorded the discovery of several Roman burials when cuttings

were being made in the 1840s for the railway line immediately east of North Station. In 1928-9 about 30 Roman cremations were found in a clay pit not far south of Wire's burials. The recently-discovered cremations at Turner Rise are well north of the railway line and they show that the cemetery area was large and extended over a distance of at least 300 m.

Roman mosaic

A mosaic floor was discovered on the site of the Mercury Theatre earlier in 1996. This is the first mosaic to be discovered in Colchester in ten years. The floor consists of black and white chequers and it lies between the theatre and the nearby Roman town wall. The pavement is about a metre below the modern ground level. It had been part of a substantial Roman house, the remains of which now lie under the theatre. The find has since been covered over with a layer of sand and polythene and the trench backfilled.

The pavement was found during an archaeological evaluation which the Trust was carrying out for the Mercury Theatre, in connection with a planning application for a major scheme of improvements. Evaluations such as these are not full-scale archaeological excavations but are limited investigations to find out the extent to which important

archaeological remains are likely to be affected by new development proposals. In this case, now that the existence of the pavement is known, the Mercury Theatre's architect can plan the new work in such a way as to leave the pavement undamaged.

Roman tile kiln

A large kiln for the manufacture of tiles was discovered in the Borough Council's recently extended wood in Cymbeline Meadow, near Lexden Lodge Farm. This is the second kiln of this type to be found in this area. In the 1960s, a farmer ploughing an adjacent field uncovered the upper surface of the first kiln. This was later excavated by the Colchester Archaeological Group.

Since kilns often occur in groups, it was decided to survey the area of the proposed new tree plantings with the aid of a magnetometer. This is a machine which is especially effective at detecting buried deposits which are heavily burnt. The idea was to make sure that no new trees were planted on top of any other kilns which existed in the area. However, a visit was made to the site shortly before the survey was to be carried out and there, lying on the surface of the field, were the tell-tale signs of a hitherto unknown tile kiln. Pieces of bright red burnt tile and clay lay scattered around one of the posts in a new fence which had been put up around part of the wood. The men had sunk the post into the middle of a kiln without realising it.

Peter Cott was later able to carry out the geophysical survey and confirm that this was indeed a kiln. What's more, he was able to show that no others are likely to be affected by the recently-extended part of the wood.

Excavations in progress at Turner Rise



City of Victory

A new popular book on the history of Colchester will be on sale in shops from 20th February 1997. *City of Victory* is available in paperback and hardback forms and modestly priced at £9.95 and £14.95 respectively. It is 160 pages long and fully illustrated in colour. It features specially commissioned reconstruction paintings by Peter Froste which are based on the evidence from excavations in the town.

City of Victory is the fruit of over 25 years' research in and around the historic town of Colchester. Countless objects have been found in the town over the years, and many of the most interesting items are featured in the book, complementing the wealth of new information which has come from recent archaeological excavations. It covers work done right up to 1996, including the lost face of Longinus and the much-publicised gaming board from Stanway.

The book takes its title from 'Colonia Victricensis', which was the Roman name for the town. It begins with the Iron Age settlement of Camulodunum in the 1st century BC, and ends with the Normans over 1,000 years later. *City of Victory* tells the remarkable story of Roman Colchester from its military beginnings in the British stronghold made famous by Cunobelin, to its eventual end in the 5th century when the Roman empire was starting to crumble.

