

the Colchester archaeologist



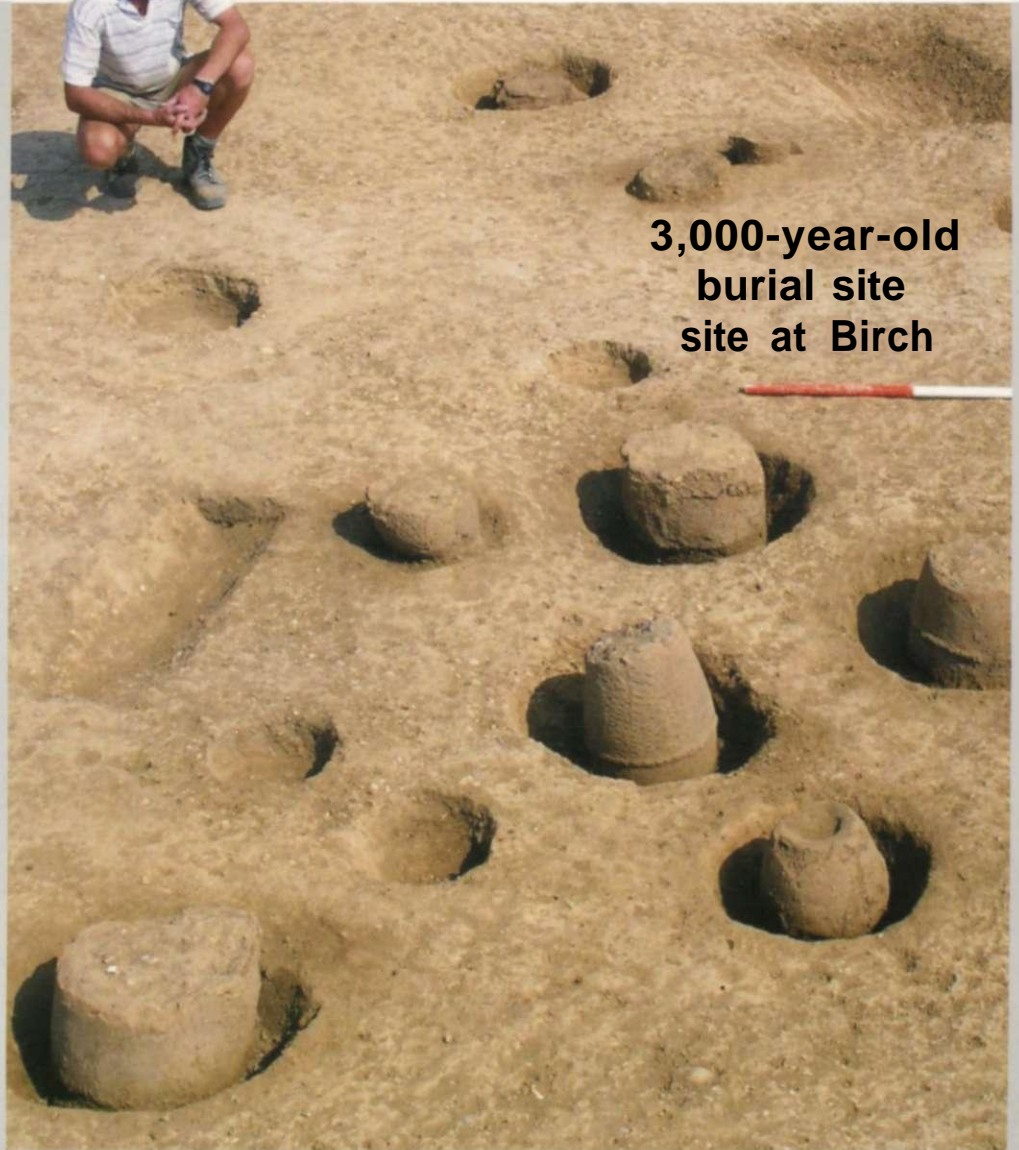
Earliest picture of Colchester?

Lighting lamps by the graveside

Stock raising in Camulodunum



Colchester's forgotten garrison



3,000-year-old burial site at Birch



Charlie Brown's



Edited and layout by Philip Crummy

Printed by PrintWright Ltd, Ipswich
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ISSN 0952-0988

The Colchester Archaeologist magazine is supported by the Friends of Colchester Archaeological Trust - see page 33.

Front cover. Bronze Age burial urns at Birch pit, Colchester.

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Colchester Archaeological Trust
12 Lexden Road,
Colchester,
Essex C03 3NF
tel.: (01206) 541051
tel./fax: (01206) 500124
email: archaeologists@catuk.org
web site: www.catuk.org

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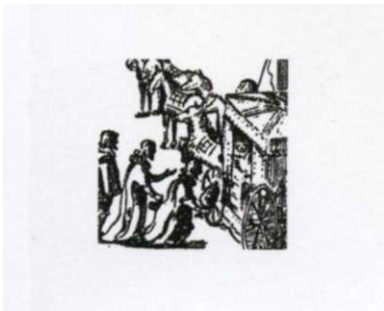
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New light on old problems

By Kate Orr and Philip Crummy

Excavations in spring of 2003 during a development in Lexden produced outstanding results which are extending our knowledge of early Roman burial practices. Lexden has long been associated with the most important Roman burials in Colchester, with many of them having been found throughout the area over many years. In the 19th century, before much of present day Lexden was built, it was a favourite spot for pottery hunting with large areas being turned over in search of Roman burials. But these early archaeological excavations were poorly recorded, and they were carried out at a time when archaeological techniques were in their infancy and the serious study of ancient burial practices had barely begun. Surprisingly then the recent opportunity to excavate a large area in Lexden and study it under controlled circumstances turned out to be a first and thus was very much welcomed for that reason.



The dig

The excavation proved to be unusual because it was a cross between a normal archaeological dig and an excavation for building works. Rather than excavate large areas, the investigation was to be limited to the builder's trenches for his foundations and services such as drains and electricity cables. And because grave goods are delicate and can be damaged by machines such as a JCB, these trenches had to be largely dug by hand - no mean task as it turned out. Fortunately the investigation was not strictly restricted to the builder's trenches because it was possible to enlarge the area of excavation where burials extended beyond the limits of the trenches so as to be able to remove the remains entirely.

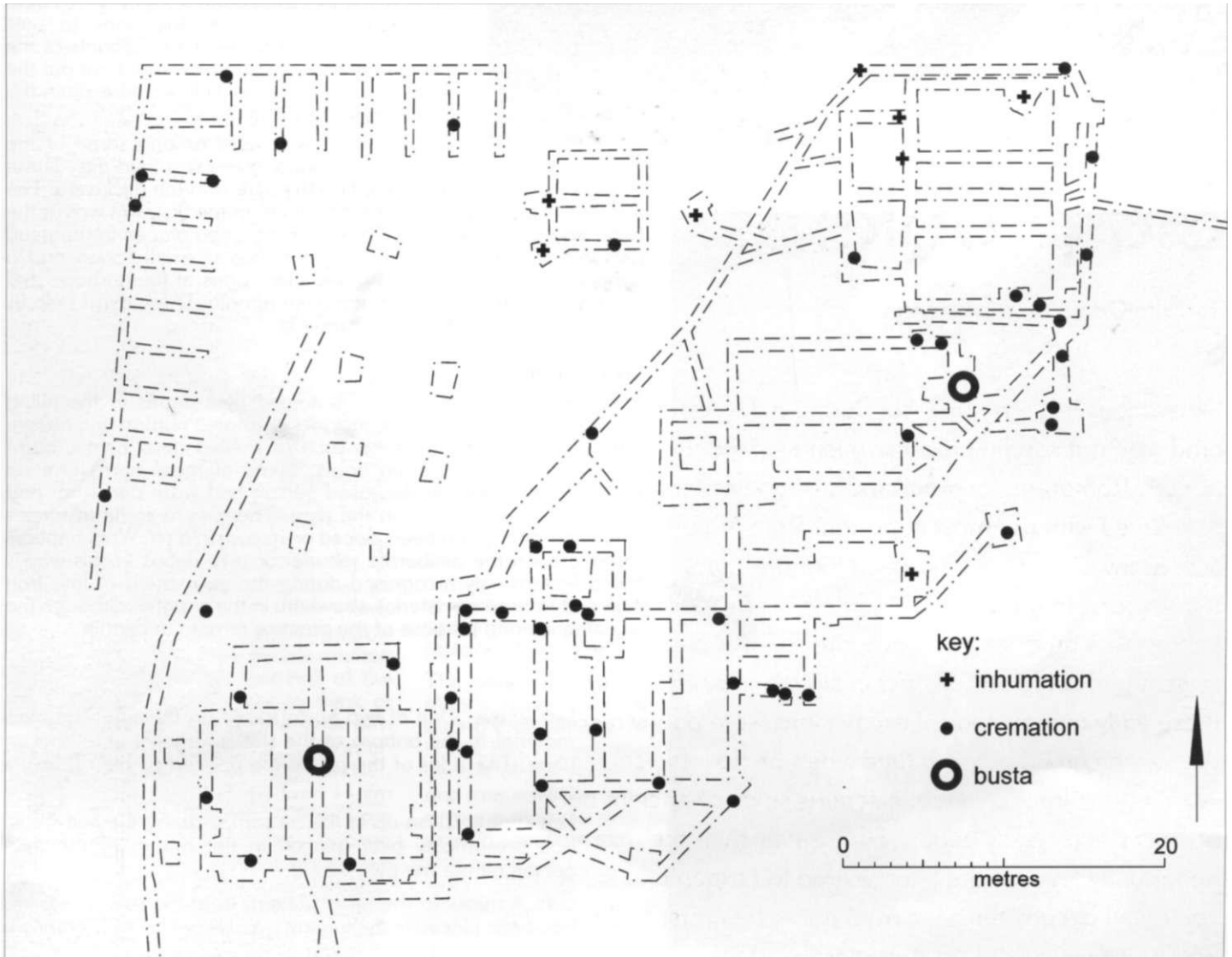
In all, the recent dig at Lexden resulted in the discovery of two pyre sites, fifty-one cremation burials and eight inhumation (unburnt) burials. Just ten per cent of the site was dug which gives an indication of just how dense the

burials must have been. How many more await discovery in the future can only be estimated. Very few burials intercut each other which suggests the cemetery must have had grave markers above ground.

A wide variety of cremations were revealed, mainly dated to the 1st or 2nd century AD but some belong to the later Roman period. Single urns containing the burnt human remains were the most common type. However some were more elaborate, featuring other additional vessels such as bowls, flagons and small beakers. Pollen analysis is being carried out on a selection of vessels in the hope of discovering their contents at the time of burial. The vessels are likely to have contained food and drink. The latter is most commonly believed to have been placed in the grave as food and drink for the deceased on their journey into the underworld. Other theories are that the contents represent the remains of family graveside feasting or offerings of food or drink to the gods.



One of six complete lamps from the site. This unusual exotic one shows a crocodile being attacked by a lion.





'Busta'

The most exciting features were the remains of two '*busta*'. These are rarely recognised in Britain where they are generally associated with the army. The two recently found examples are the first to be identified in Colchester.

A *bustum* was a type of cremation in which the cremated remains were left in a slot below the pyre. Essentially they were places of both cremation and burial. What remained of each was an oblong pit with reddened earth around the edge indicating that fires were lit over them. The pits were packed with blackened earth, some charcoal and a surprisingly large amount of cremated human bone. The relatives of the deceased would have erected a wooden pyre and placed the body on it. The fire was lit and the body cremated - ventilation being aided by the pit underneath. During the cremation the bone, pyre goods and what was left of the pyre would have slumped on to the ground and into the pit. Normally the cremated remains would have been carefully and painstakingly picked out of the ashes piece by piece for burial, but in the *bustum*, the remains were simply allowed to collect in the elongated pit or slot directly under the pyre and soil was heaped over to make a low mound.

In the first *bustum* the bone fragments were distributed in the pit in a way which corresponded roughly to their correct anatomical order, and there only appeared to be the remains of one individual. A bone specialist will be able to verify whether the latter is the case. The bone in the other *bustum* was much more jumbled.

Some of the pieces of bone from the pyres were quite large compared to the bone in pots elsewhere on the site. Ancient accounts of the process tell how the relatives would put out the fire with wine or water. This would explain the large fragments of bone.

Copper-alloy items were among some of the grave goods found in the scorched pits. These object must have been placed on the pyre with the deceased. The remains of both *busta* contained a coin. In the first, this was at the head end of the pit and is likely to have been placed in the dead person's mouth. The other pit contained a small spoon and a copper-alloy mirror which showed clear signs of fire damage and suggests that the deceased had been female. These items help us date both pyres to the 1st century AD.

Other pyres

Some of the cremation pits contained pyre debris in the filling around the urns. This debris includes cremated human and animal bone, charcoal and artefacts such as melted glass phials, burnt pottery and hobnails from boots. Some of these items give an indication of what the deceased person had worn and what had been placed with them on the pyre. There were some instances where this debris had been placed on its own in a pit. What appears to have been the deliberate reburial of pyre debris in this way is being increasingly recognised during the excavation of late Iron Age and Roman cemeteries elsewhere in the country, although the significance and purpose of the practice remain uncertain.

Left above. One of two *busta* found on the site. The black material at the bottom of the slot is largely made of burnt bone. The sides of the pit were reddened by heat from the pyre.

Left centre. Close-up of the *bustum* showing the coin which had presumably been placed in the mouth of the dead person before the pyre was lit.

Left. A mirror in the other *bustum* from the site. The mirror had been placed in the funeral pyre before it was lit or thrown on to it when it was burning.



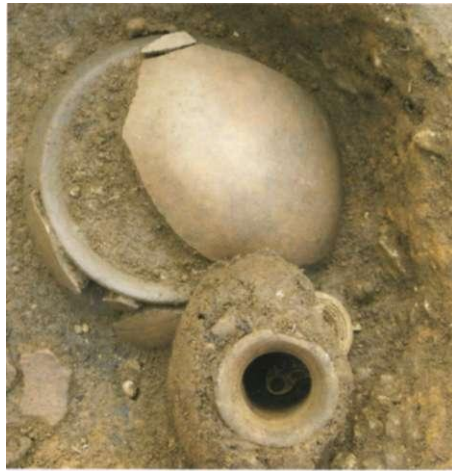


Burning lamps

One type of grave good that is not that common in cremation burials but was frequently encountered on this site are lamps. In two examples there was quite extraordinary and compelling evidence that the lamps had been buried when lit. This was shown by the careful way in which large fragments of pots had been arranged in the grave pit to shield the lamps from the grave backfill. This suggests that they were there to provide light for the deceased person. The fact that these lamps were lit at the time of burial suggests not only that lamps in other graves are likely to have been lit as well, but also that vessels placed in graves really did contain food and drink.

In general, cavities must have been created within a cremation pit when there was a need to have a lighted lamp in it. How this was achieved would vary according to the contents of the grave. Sometimes the cavity was ready-made as in 'amphora burials'. These were well suited to accommodating lighted lamps, because the grave goods and the cremated remains were placed inside the vessel for protection. This is presumably why a high proportion of amphora burials appear to have contained lamps, and a disproportionately high number of graves containing lamps turn out to have been amphora burials. The amphora burial from this site conforms to the pattern (see below).

Sometimes a cavity might be created from brick or tile as in cist burials. Like amphora burials, these seem to be especially associated with lamps. The last cist burial to be found in Colchester was uncovered during the excavations on the Abbey Field in 2000. True to



Left and below. Two lamps which were lit when buried. The lit wick in the lamp shown in the sequence of four photographs on the left was protected in the ground by the neck and rim of a broken flagon set upright above it rather like a chimney. The wick of the other lamp (see the four photographs below) was protected by two large sherds of broken pottery.

There were two holes in the top of each lamp. The large hole in the nozzle was for the wick. The smaller one near the middle was for oil.



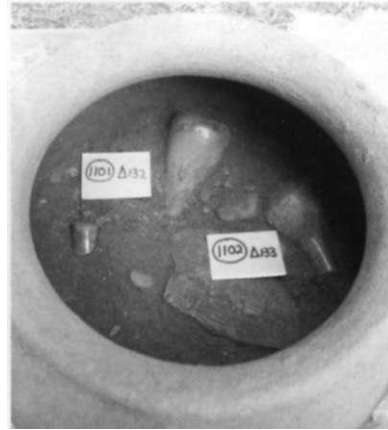
form, this contained an upright lamp (see *The Colchester Archaeologist*, no 14).

However for many graves with lamps, there is little evidence for a cavity which could have protected the delicate flame of a burning oil lamp. Of course, many of these may not have been lit when buried. But the recently-discovered evidence from our excavations at Lexden strongly suggest otherwise, and points to these lamps having been shielded in ways that have left no trace in the archaeological record. Perhaps wooden covers or boards were placed on top of the objects in some of the graves, or maybe some of the lamps were protected by pieces of wood placed over the flame in the same manner as the recently-discovered pottery fragments over the lamps at our Lexden site.



Inside the pots (right)

The fills of all the cremation urns have been 'excavated' and some found to contain interesting items in with the cremated bone. For example there are complete glass unguent bottles, lids, beakers and phials. One urn contained a perfectly preserved comedy-mask lamp. Did this item have a particular connection with the person interred?



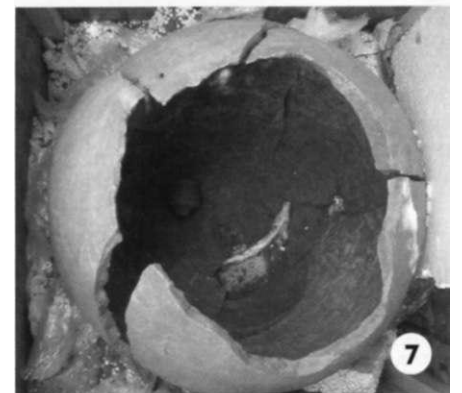
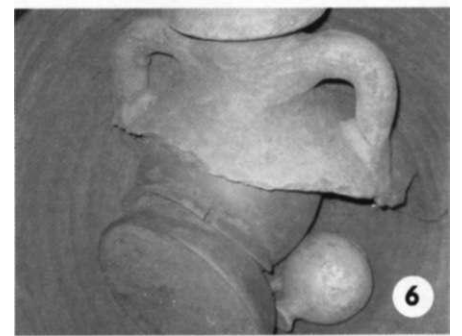
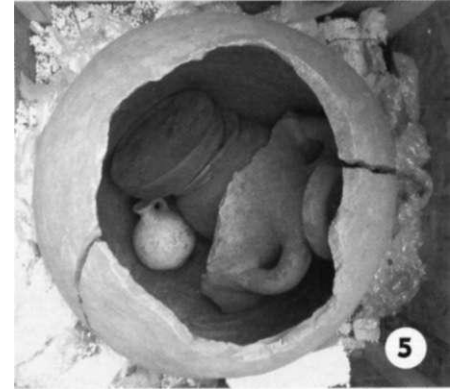
Amphora burial (right)

So-called 'amphora-burials' are relatively uncommon. Most of them involved the reuse of a type of globular-shaped amphora used for the importation of Spanish olive oil. The neck, shoulders and handles of the vessel are removed in one piece. The grave goods and the urn with the cremated remains are then laid inside, and the upper part of the amphora replaced to close off the vessel by acting as a rudimentary lid.

Just such an amphora was discovered during the recent excavation in Lexden (no 1 right). Despite there apparently being no top, the vessel still appeared to be the remains of an amphora burial. To save time and speed up excavation, it was decided to remove the pot from the site and empty it out back at the Trust's offices. This was not as easy an operation as it might sound. Being filled with soil, the pot was extremely heavy. It was also badly cracked and fairly delicate as a result. It therefore needed to be supported with bandages and a special cradle constructed around it (no 2) so that it could be lifted by crane out of the ground and placed on to the back of a lorry. Once this was done, the vessel and its contents were driven to the Trust's offices, craned off the lorry (no 3), and pushed on a trolley into a ground-floor room (Howard Brook's office) for excavation (no 4).

The first discovery was the upper part of the amphora, which rather than being lost as we had thought, must have tilted to one side so that it dropped inside the amphora and knocked over the vessels inside. These proved to consist of a flagon, an urn containing the cremated remains, a dish and a beaker (nos 5-8).

There was considerable disappointment when no lamp was found, since by this stage the theory about lamps being lit inside cavities had been developed. However, lo and behold, when the dish was emptied, a small lamp was found lying upside down against the side of the dish. Evidently the lamp had been placed (presumably lit) inside the dish which in turn had been placed on top of the cremation urn. The lamp must have rolled over when the top of the amphora came crashing down on the contents below.





Inhumations

The eight inhumation burials clustered in the northern part of the site and were buried at a deeper level than most of the cremations. No two inhumations were the same; the graves were in different positions and alignments and not all of those interred had been privileged to have been buried in a coffin. One individual was wearing a shale armlet which does not necessarily mean they were female. On another individual, the outline of hobnailed boots could still be plainly seen on his feet. The cremations mainly date from the 1st to 2nd century, but dating the inhumations is problematic because the dating evidence is limited. Typically in Colchester, inhumations are 3rd or 4th century in date, but there is some limited evidence that this recently excavated group at Lexden may be 1st or 2nd century. More work is needed to resolve the problem. Radiocarbon dating may be tried in due course.



Above left. An inhumation with a shale armlet worn on the upper part of the arm.

Above. An inhumation with hobnailed shoes on the feet.

Left. An inhumation buried on its side without a coffin.

The investigation was funded by Vaughan and Blythe (Construction) Ltd.



The earliest known picture of Colchester?

by Philip Crummy

A view supposedly of Colchester in 1638 has long been a puzzle. The picture shows the grand entrance into Colchester of Maria de' Medici, mother-in-law of King Charles I. It was published in 1639, and would thus appear to be the earliest detailed pictorial record of the town known to exist*. But is it reliable? Elements of the picture do indeed tie it to Colchester, yet there are things about it that cannot be correct. Now there is an explanation for this curious image which reveals its real historical value...

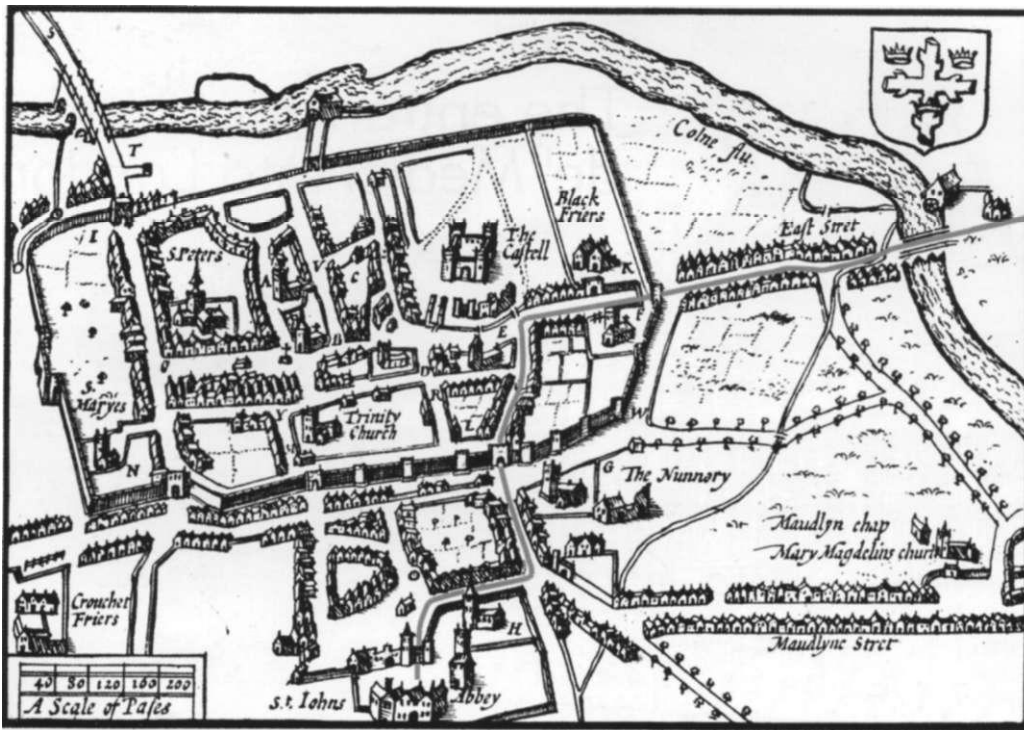
*There is an earlier picture than this one. It shows the east part of the walled town, but is too stylised to be regarded as an attempt at realism.



Maria de' Medici

Maria de' Medici was a member of the rich and powerful Medici family from Florence. She married the French king Henry IV in 1600. Following her husband's assassination ten years later, Maria was proclaimed regent for her eldest son Louis (the future Louis XIII) to govern France until he came of age. However when the time came, she failed to give up power in favour of her son. Her subsequent struggles with Louis and his minister, Cardinal Richelieu, resulted in her being banished by her son on two separate occasions. She lived in England for three years and became so unpopular that in 1641 the English Parliament voted her the huge sum of £10,000 so that she and her followers would leave the country. She died destitute the following year in Cologne.

Left. Maria de' Medici. This is one of a series of 21 paintings describing her life by the artist Peter Paul Rubens, whom she commissioned to undertake the work.



Maria de' Medici's route into Colchester superimposed on Speed's map. The royal convoy entered the town through East Gate having travelled from Harwich along the Harwich Road. It passed along Frere Street (now the upper part of East Hill) and turned left into Queen Street eventually to reach Sir John Lucas's house which was built on the site of St John's Abbey.

John Speed's map of Colchester. Published in 1611.

Grand entry into England

Maria de' Medici travelled to England in 1638 during the second of her periods of exile. She had good connections there because her daughter Henrietta had married Charles I making Maria the king's mother-in-law.

In 1638 Maria left Rotterdam with the intention of landing at Dover, but a storm at sea forced the two ships carrying the lady and her substantial retinue of courtiers and Catholic priests to land at Harwich. The travellers were so badly affected by sea sickness that they spent the week in the town recovering.

Meanwhile a large welcoming party organised by the king was waiting at Dover, but it had to rush to Harwich when news of the change of plan reached them. The group included various lords, knights, and gentlemen members of the English nobility. There was also an armed guard to protect the party as it made its way towards London.

Maria's journey across Essex to the capital lasted four days. She travelled in the king's carriage which had been sent to her for her use. Her route took her through Colchester, Chelmsford and Romford. First stop was Sir John Lucas's House in Colchester where she spent two nights. Then followed a night in Moulsham Hall, Chelmsford, and a further night in Gidea Hall at Romford. Her grandson King Charles I met up with Maria at Moulsham Hall and was subsequently by her side when the party made its grand entrance into London on their way to St James's Palace.

Contemporary account

Maria's arrival in England was documented in words and drawings by French historian Puget de la Serre in a book published in the following year. Two of the drawings are of particular interest to us. One shows Maria's entry into Colchester and appears to be the earliest surviving attempt to depict the town in a realistic way. The other is a drawing showing the convoy as it crossed London. A description in the book of the event allows us to work out the composition of the royal convoy as it is shown in the picture. This is an interesting and useful exercise because it reveals that the drawing was not intended to be the equivalent of a modern snapshot of the event, but an illustration for the book where the subject matter was compromised to make such an illustration possible (see pages 10-11).

Maria's entry into Colchester

In the book we learn there was great excitement at the arrival of the royal party in Colchester. When Maria de' Medici entered the town, she found the streets lined with soldiers. Just inside the town gate, the mayor and another official presented the lady with a large silver-gilt cup, according to de la Serre a gift traditionally given by the town to its royal visitors. The townsfolk cheered and the soldiers fired their muskets into the air. The convoy then went directly to the mansion of Sir John Lucas where Maria spent two nights. The account of her visit to Colchester tells little about her

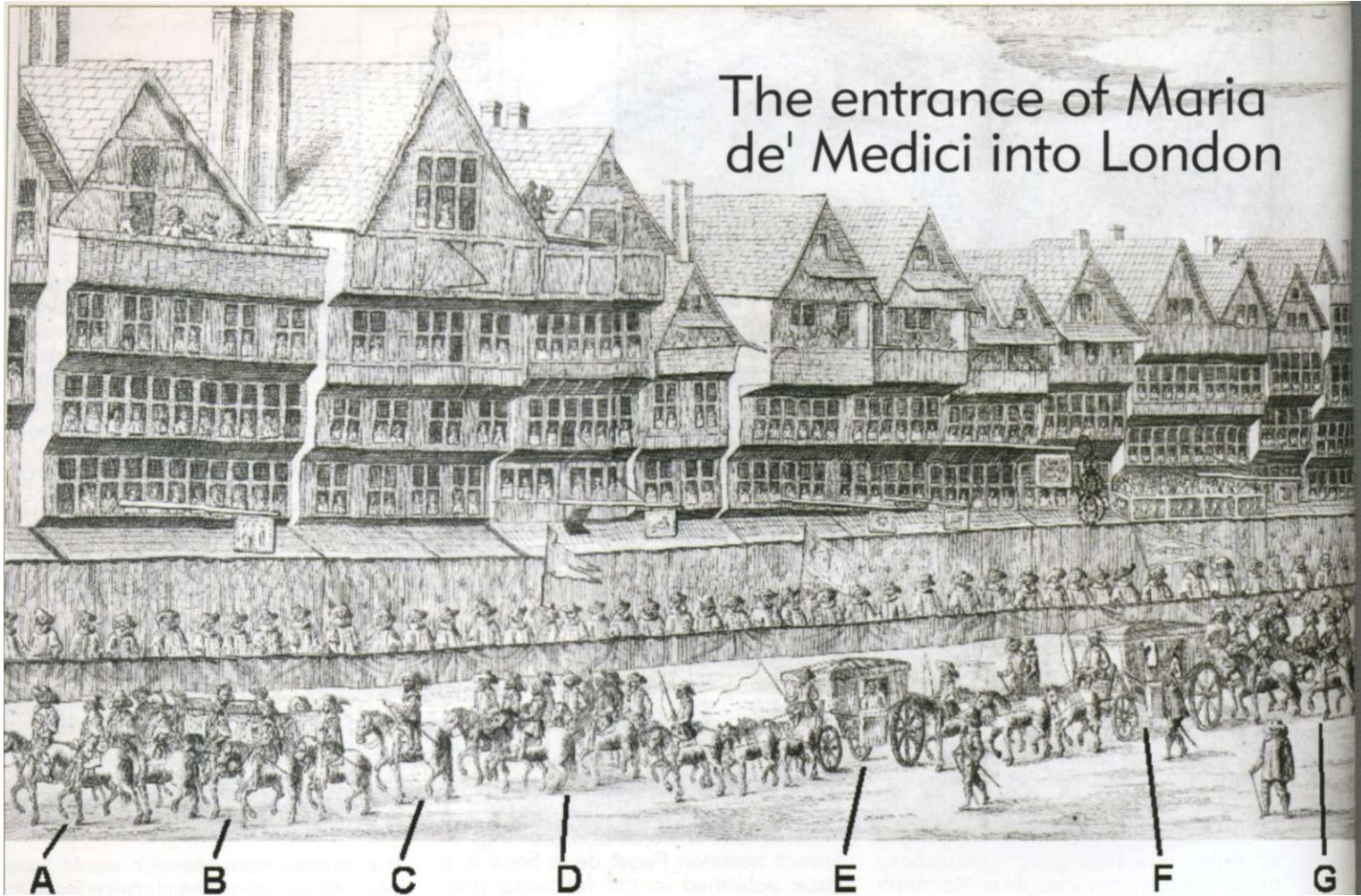
time in Colchester except that she enjoyed a walk in the fine gardens in Lucas's grand house.

The journey from Harwich would have taken Maria along the Harwich Road to Colchester. The convoy must thus have passed through East Street and then up East Hill so as to enter the town via East Gate. The presentation by the mayor must therefore have taken place at the top of East Hill in what used to be known as Frere Street (adjacent to where East Hill House now stands). Sir John Lucas's house was in the grounds of the former St John's Abbey, so after continuing a short distance westwards, the convoy would have turned left into Queen Street rather than head straight onwards along the High Street.

How the picture of Colchester was probably created

The illustration of Colchester is puzzling. It seems to have been drawn from a point just inside the East Gate, so that St James' church was to the left of the artist but just behind him. It shows Maria being presented with the silver-gilt cup just as described by de la Serre in his book. The convoy is shown taking a left turn as if entering Queen Street, and the upper part of a castle rises above houses on the right just as it should do if it shows Colchester castle correctly located in relation to Queen Street and East Gate. In the distance is a group of several church towers which again is consistent with the concentration of churches in the central part of the town. Thus in some ways the picture seems to show a

The entrance of Maria de' Medici into London



The above picture shows the convoy in London passing westwards along Cheapside as viewed looking north-eastwards from the corner of Friday Street. Puget de la Serre describes the pageantry of the event in his book. He gives the order and composition of the column and explains how the townsfolk watched in large numbers from the upper windows and balconies of the houses while guildsmen in ceremonial dress lined the street sitting on benches with fine cloths draped front and rear.

When de la Serre's description of the royal convoy is matched up with the picture, it becomes apparent that the artist shortened the column to make it fit the drawing. There were supposed to be twelve trumpeters but he only shows about six, and the fifty gentlemen pensioners are reduced to a mere handful. Another oddity is a discrepancy in the order of the column. De la Serre made clear in his book that the gentlemen-at-arms were in front of the king rather than behind him which was their usual position. But yet in the picture they are shown as being behind him, thus providing further evidence that the column was not drawn from life. Yet another feature supporting this conclusion is the appearance of the same characters in the lower right-hand corner of both this and the Colchester drawings (see nos 4-7 in the panel on the right). The chances of such a coincidence seem too small for this to be anything other than artistic invention, and a further indication that the scene is a reconstruction.

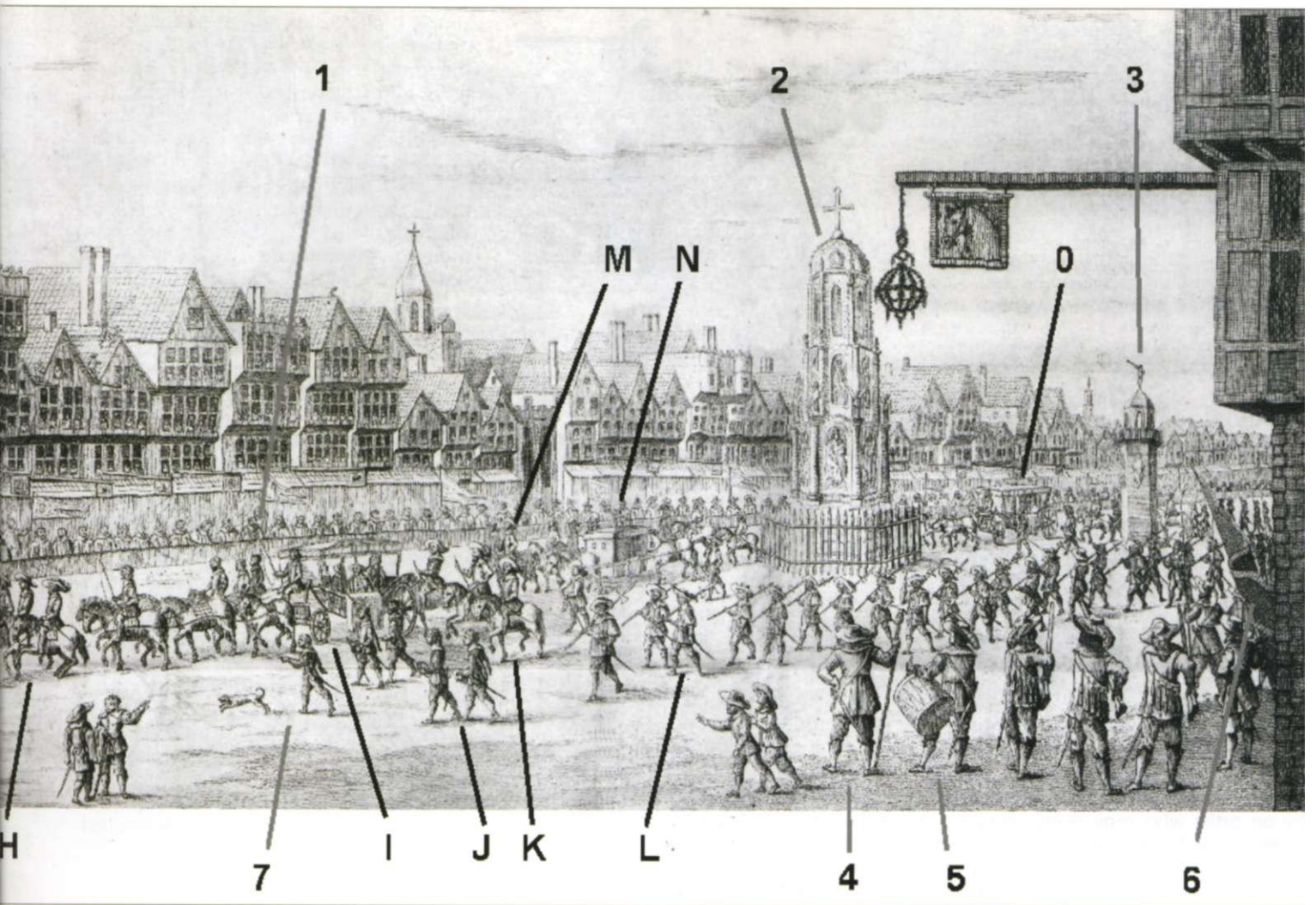
The 13th-century Eleanor Cross (taken down in May 1643) is accurately represented in the drawing (to a degree not matched by any feature in the Colchester picture), but the houses are less certain, particularly since no side streets are shown leading off Cheapside despite them having existed. All the houses were destroyed during the Great Fire of London in 1666.

In the column

- A Maria's couriers riding two by two
- B Twelve trumpeters
- C & D Fifty gentlemen pensioners (D) riding three abreast
- E The carriage of the Viscount of Fabrony
- F The carriage of Maria's equerries
- G Gentlemen sergeants-at-arms each with a large sword
- H Two of the King's equerries
- I The carriage carrying the King and Maria
- J Other equerries ranging around the King and Maria
- K The Count of Salisbury, the Count of Morton and the Count of Devon
- L 260 king's bodyguards carrying halberds
- M Maria's mounted bodyguard on the other side of the litter
- N Maria's litter borne by two mules
- O The carriage of the maids of honour, ladies of the court and officers of the Maria's court

In the street

- 1 Guildsmen seated on benches with cloth draped over them
- 2 The Eleanor Cross
- 3 Another water conduit further east along the street
- 4 Soldier with Halberd (appears in Colchester picture)
- 5 Drummer (appears in Colchester picture)
- 6 Large flag (appears in Colchester picture)
- 7 Small footman with dog (appears in Colchester picture)



east behind their lieutenant (C)

silver-gilt mace over his shoulder

ria's carriage with footmen to either side by the

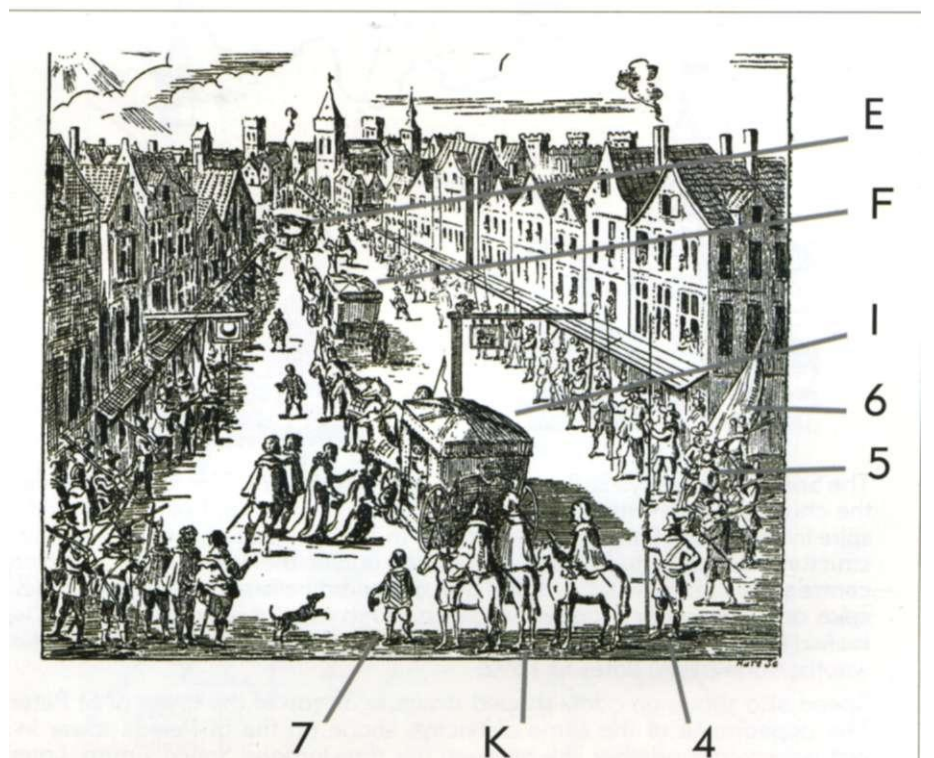
d Monsieur de la Masure all on horseback
ing along one side of the street
of the street level with the gentlemen of the

e bedchamber, domestic gentlemen and other

in front and behind them

reet
ure)

picture)



Elements in the Colchester picture common to the London one (ie 1, 4-7, E, F, & K). The men lining the left-hand side of the street are presumably townfolk firing muskets. The men on the right might be the bodyguard which accompanied the party.

town which is recognisable as Colchester, and yet there is much about it which cannot be true. The houses in the immediate foreground to the right and left don't look genuine. They are not jettied as was normally the case at that time, and three- and four-storey timber buildings such as shown here were rare in the town and confined to the very heart of the High Street where space was at a premium. Moreover the wooden shutters are strange too. They are all at the same height along both sides of the street to give continuous cover in a way which seems too uniform to be credible. The drawing seems to show the presentation taking place outside a pub called the Swan (see right). There was indeed a pub called the Swan at the top of East Hill, but it was on the opposite side of the street to that shown here. This seems a strange mistake for an artist to make if he was in Colchester at the time, drawing what he saw.



The mayor of Colchester (John Furley) is on his knees offering a large silver-gilt cup to Maria. He is accompanied by another borough official (the Recorder?) holding something in his hand. On the right above the carriage is what appears to be the sign of a pub called the Swan. There is a wooden swan at the end of the pole and picture of a swan on the board below.

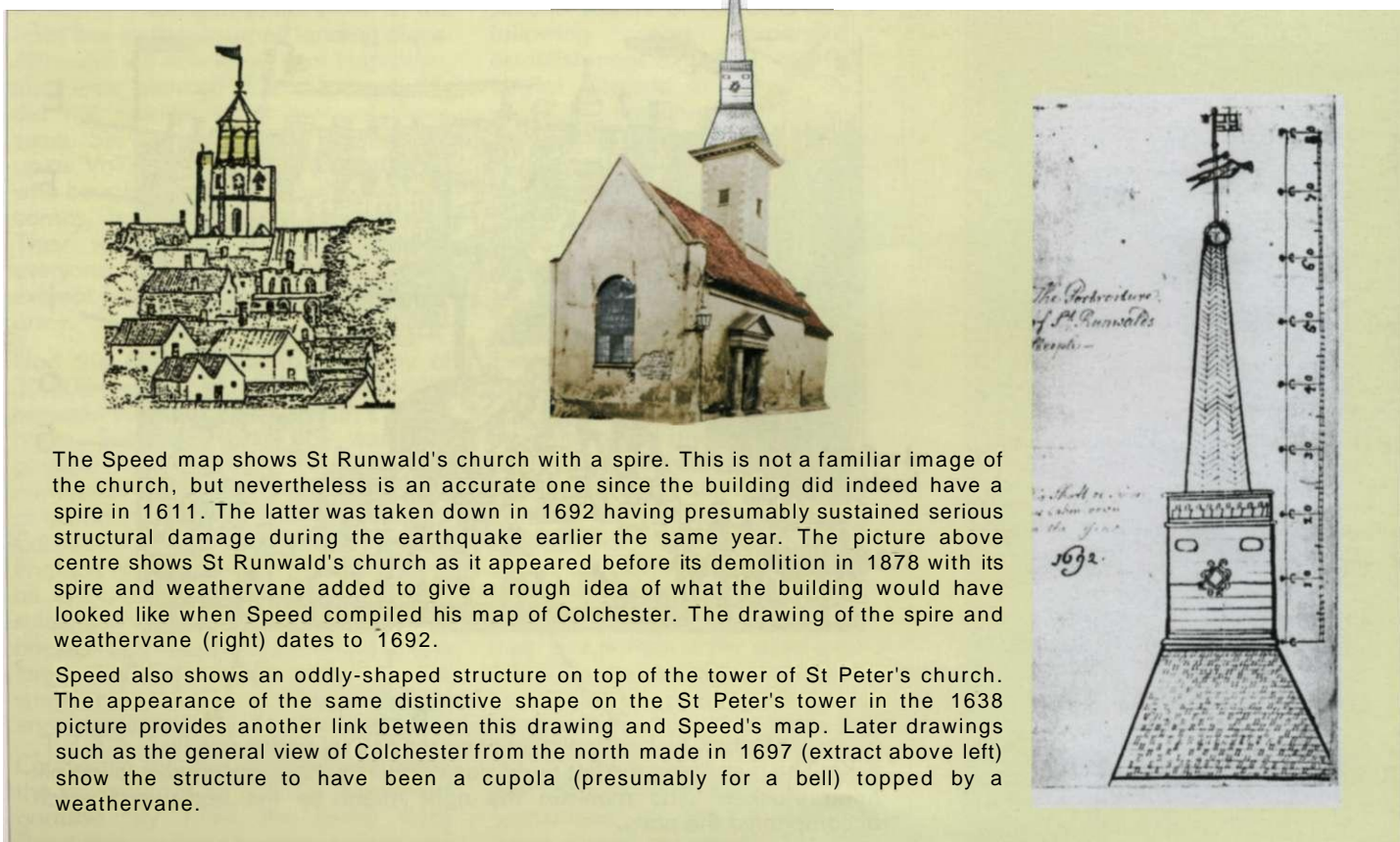
simply a plan, but showed the buildings as bird's-eye views. And these are what the artist used to reconstruct Maria's entry into Colchester. He identified the place on the plan where the mayor would have presented the cup to Maria. He then created an imaginary bird's-eye viewpoint a little to the east of this spot, and then used the map to work out which buildings could be seen from there and what parts of them would have been in view. Speed's map provided the elevations for these buildings, so he was able to draw the town-centre churches and the top of Colchester Castle. However there was a problem. All the buildings on Speed's map are drawn in a rudimentary way, and in particular Speed's houses are overly simplified and show practically no detail, being windowless, single-storey structures with a single door in the front. This clearly would not do, so the artist was forced to make up the detail, which is why the houses in the picture look so wrong for Colchester.

Historians have dismissed the picture as being of little value, although it has been cited in the debate over the vexed question of the original height of Colchester Castle since it appears to show a castle which is low in relation to the surrounding houses. Can the picture be properly explained? Yes it can. It turns out to be a reconstruction drawn by an artist who may even never have visited Colchester at all. He simply reconstructed the event by using little more than a map of the town and some

knowledge of what Maria's convoy looked like.

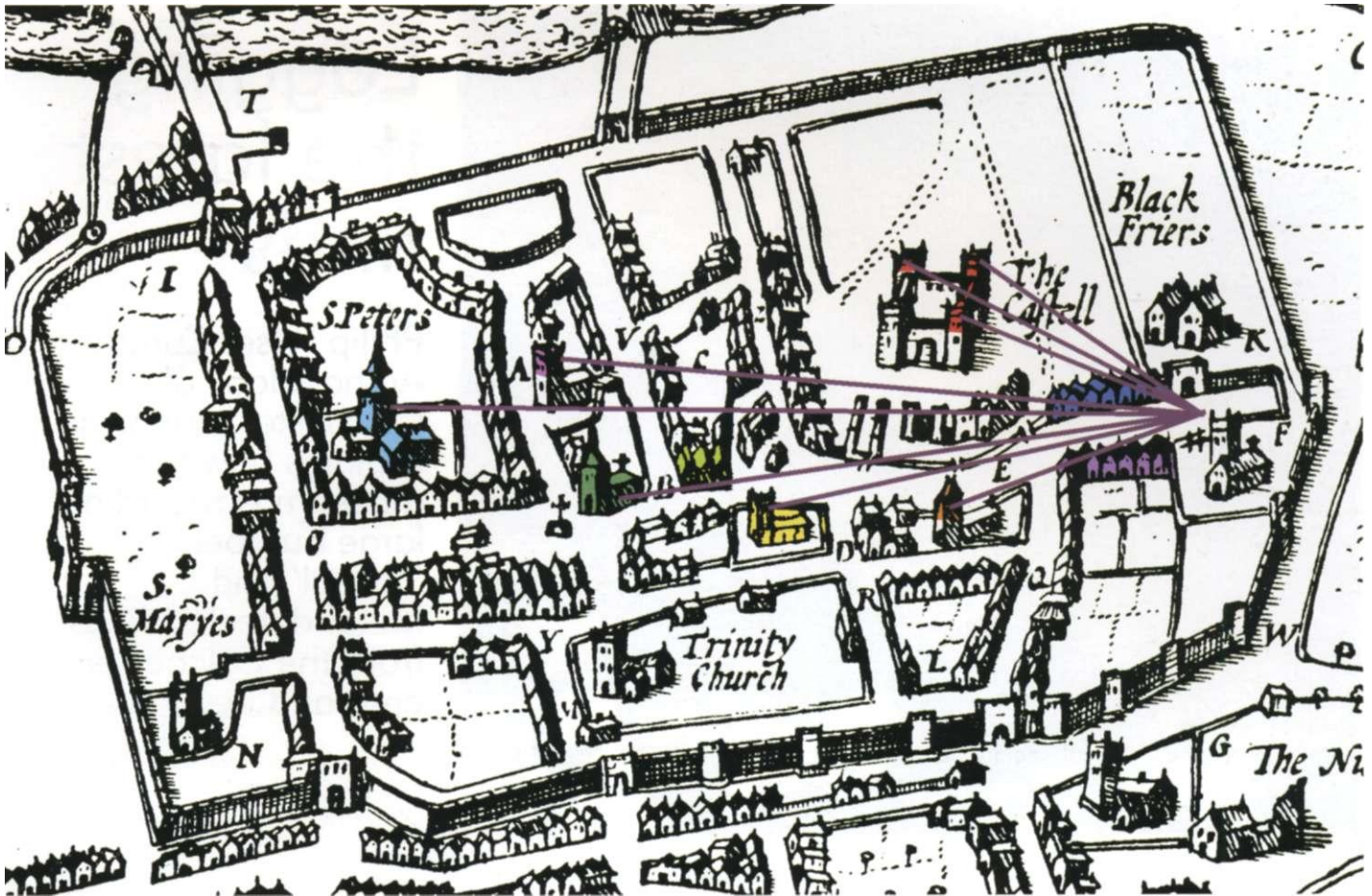
The town map in currency at that time had been made (probably) by cartographer John Speed for inclusion in his atlas of the counties of Britain which was published in 1611. It was clearly the map in common use in 1638 because it was used as the core of the so-called Siege Map of Colchester published ten years later in 1648. Fortunately for the artist, Speed's map was more than

Herein then lies an explanation for the picture: why it looks like Colchester in some ways and yet in others it cannot be so. The picture is simply a reworked version of the Speed map 'enhanced' with invented detail. Unfortunately, it tells us no more about the town and its buildings than does the Speed map, and can't really be regarded as the earliest picture of the town.



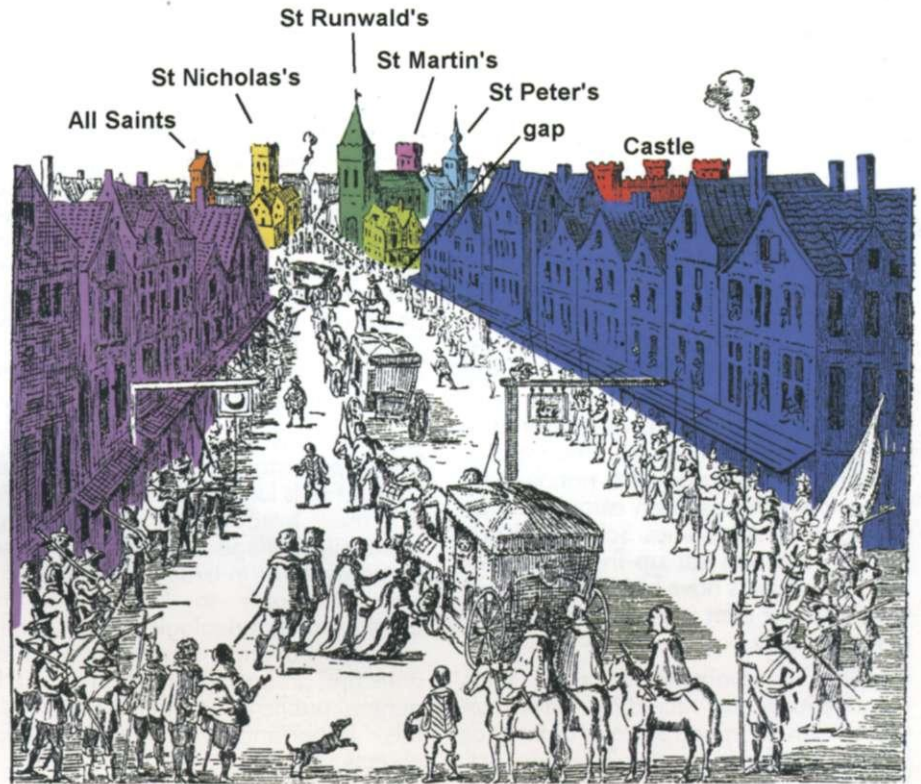
The Speed map shows St Runwald's church with a spire. This is not a familiar image of the church, but nevertheless is an accurate one since the building did indeed have a spire in 1611. The latter was taken down in 1692 having presumably sustained serious structural damage during the earthquake earlier the same year. The picture above centre shows St Runwald's church as it appeared before its demolition in 1878 with its spire and weathervane added to give a rough idea of what the building would have looked like when Speed compiled his map of Colchester. The drawing of the spire and weathervane (right) dates to 1692.

Speed also shows an oddly-shaped structure on top of the tower of St Peter's church. The appearance of the same distinctive shape on the St Peter's tower in the 1638 picture provides another link between this drawing and Speed's map. Later drawings such as the general view of Colchester from the north made in 1697 (extract above left) show the structure to have been a cupola (presumably for a bell) topped by a weathervane.



How the picture was composed

The sight lines superimposed on Speed's map above relate to buildings which appear in the skyline of the 1638 picture on the right. (Each key building or group of buildings has been colour-coded here to aid identification.) Much the same sight lines must have been used to construct the 1638 drawing. For example, the sight lines on the map above for St Runwald's show that the whole church would have been in view, whereas the tower of All Saints would have appeared behind the houses on the south side of Frere Street. This is how both buildings are shown in the 1638 picture. Other parts of the picture can be resolved in the same way. For example, the houses at the end of Maidenburgh Street (coloured pale green) are shown as having a gap in front of them in the 1638 picture. The gap must correspond to the open area shown to the east of these buildings on the Speed map plus the ditch forming the south side of the castle bailey. This reveals a second error in the 1638 reconstruction (in addition to the location of the Swan). The artist seems to have transposed the towers of St Peter's and St Martin's. Moreover, had this drawing really been drawn from the top of East Hill, then St Martin's tower would not have been visible, because it is too far downhill from the High Street.



Main sources and acknowledgements

Jean Puget de la Serre (1639), *Histoire de l'Entree de la Reyne Mere du Roy tres-Chrestien dans la Grande Bretagne*.
 W Gurney Benham (1901), 'Maria de Medici in Essex, 1638', *Essex Review*, 10, 200-8.
 Anon (1939), 'Removal of a Colchester Steeple in 1692', *Essex Review*, 48, 150-4.
 Thanks to the Bodleian Library for access to the Puget de la Serre book on microfilm and to Nina Crummy for assistance with the translation.



Logging the latest finds

Philip Wise, Curator of Archaeology at Colchester Museums, explains how the museum is recording large numbers of 'casual' and metal-detected finds from the Colchester area and beyond.

Left. Caroline McDonald, Finds Liaison Officer at Colchester Museums.

The Portable Antiquities Scheme comes to Essex

Every year, thousands of archaeological objects are discovered by metal detecting enthusiasts, or simply by people out walking or digging their gardens. These chance finds have the potential to tell us a great deal about the past, and yet, often, only a small proportion are recorded.

This is all set to change in Essex with the appointment of Caroline McDonald as Finds Liaison Officer. Caroline will be based at Colchester Museums, but will also be spending some time each month at Essex County Council's Heritage Conservation Branch in Chelmsford. Caroline's post is part of a nation-wide network which has been established by the Portable Antiquities Scheme. Since the scheme was set up in 1997, over 100,000 objects have been recorded, of which 73 per cent were found by metal detector users.

Caroline is available to offer finds identification and recording, advice on the conservation and storage of finds as well as guidance on the Treasure Act. She is also planning a series of special events around Essex so that people can have 'hands on' experience of archaeology and to learn why it is so important that we record chance finds.

Three months into her appointment, Caroline has already seen and recorded

over 100 finds. These include ancient stone tools, Roman brooches, Anglo-Saxon metalwork, post-medieval jewellery and numerous coins of all dates. The oldest find is an unusual Palaeolithic flint artefact from East Mersea, which is about 400,000 years old. Anglo-Saxon finds are rare in Essex, but already several have been seen. They include a button brooch from the Southminster area which confirms 6th-century activity on the Dengie peninsula. Amongst the coins is a silver *siliqua* of Flavius Victor, whose short reign of AD 387-8 is typical of the troubled times of the late 4th century.

Caroline has a particular interest in British prehistory. Before taking up the post of Finds Liaison Officer, she studied at the Institute of Archaeology, University College London and worked on excavations in Israel and Portugal as well as closer to home with the Colchester Archaeological Trust. She is already working closely with metal detecting groups, local societies and the general public to broaden awareness of the importance of archaeological objects.

The Portable Antiquities Scheme was set up in 1997 for the voluntary recording of archaeological objects and to raise awareness of how these finds may help us to understand our past. The scheme is funded by contributions from the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Depart-

ment for Culture, Media and Sport and Resource: The Council for Libraries, Archives and Museums. The Portable Antiquities Scheme database can be accessed at www.finds.org.uk.

If you would like to have any objects identified and recorded by Caroline, or would like more information about the Portable Antiquities Scheme then she can be contacted at Colchester Museums Resource Centre on 01206 282929 or by e-mail to caroline.mcdonald@colchester.gov.uk.

Who owns the finds?

This is probably the most frequently asked question in British archaeology. In most cases the answer is the landowner. This is because by tradition the landowner actually owns the soil of his land and anything that occurs within it, including of course archaeological finds. The main exceptions are artefacts which are treasure and wrecked ships and their contents. Human skeletons cannot be owned by anybody under English law, but can be kept in museums under licence.



Late Saxon gold sword pommel from Ardleigh.



Amongst recent treasure finds is a small gilt-bronze lion found to the south of Colchester. It was once attached to a larger object and it is thought that this was a reliquary or box containing the bones of a saint. The design of the lion, with its flat nose, wide mouth and swept back mane, is typical of the Romanesque period and the object probably dates to around 1200. How it came to be lost in a field is a mystery. The lion is just under 4 cms in length.

Treasure and Colchester Museums

Treasure trove is one of those things whose origins really are lost in the mists of time. The earliest reference is in a legal document written in the reign of Henry I around 1130-1135. At that time treasure trove was defined as coins or objects of gold or silver 'found hidden in the earth, or other private place, the owner thereof being unknown, in which case the treasures belong to the King'. It was thus used by the Crown over many centuries to add to its wealth. During the past 100 years its purpose changed from being a source of royal revenue to a method by which museums acquire important archaeological finds.

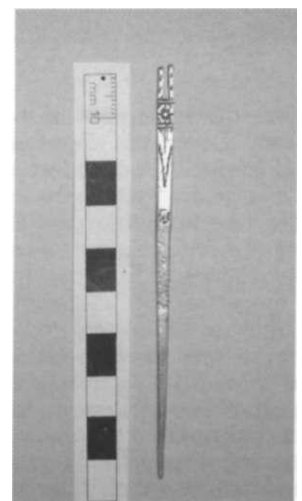
This change and further case law in relatively modern times meant that treasure trove was often seen as very confusing and few really understood how it operated. One of the most puzzling aspects was the requirement that the coins or objects were buried with 'the intention of recovery'. This often meant that during treasure trove inquests an archaeologist was required to explain the actions of an individual in the past, something that was frequently very difficult to do.

In September 1997 the Treasure Act 1996 came into force. This act superseded the old law of treasure trove tidying up much of the

confusion in the previous system and streamlining the process. Treasure was now defined as gold or silver objects and coin hoards, both being more than 300 years old when found. Also for the first time objects found in association with treasure items were covered by the law. So, for example, in the case of a Roman coin hoard in a pot both were treated as treasure, thereby ending the old nonsense of the coins being acquired by a museum but the container in which they were buried being returned to the finder.

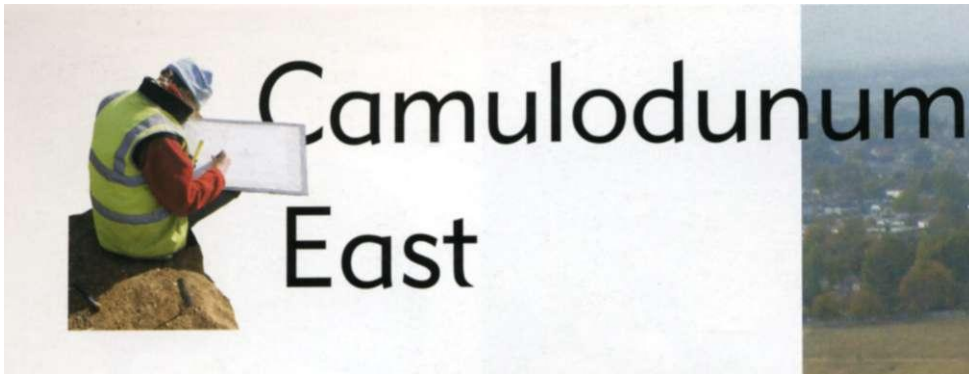
More recently from January 2003 the scope of the act was extended to include prehistoric base-metal hoards. These include hoards of Bronze Age weapons and tools which are frequently found in Essex.

Since August 2003 when Caroline McDonald started work as the Finds Liaison Officer for Essex, the number of treasure cases in the county has risen sharply. In the five-month period up to the end of 2003, twelve cases had been reported. These include a find of late Bronze Age metalwork from the Chelmsford area, a small hoard of four coins buried shortly before the Roman conquest near Clacton, a Late Saxon gold sword pommel from Ardleigh and an unusual 17th-century silver hairpin of Dutch design from south of Colchester.



Above. Late Roman *solidus* (gold coin).

Below. A 17th-century hairpin of Dutch design found south of Colchester.



The rebuilding of Colchester Garrison presents archaeologists with an unparalleled opportunity to investigate the British stronghold at Colchester on a large scale. Carl Crossan of the Trust and Rob Masefield of RPS Planning Transport and Environment describe how the latest investigations are showing that stock management shaped the landscape within the settlement.



The imminent development of the 160 hectare new Colchester Garrison has provided a long-awaited opportunity to examine a large area within the eastern part of the late Iron Age and Roman settlement of Camulodunum. From the 1930s excavations at Sheepen through to the more recent discoveries at Stanway, most of our current knowledge of the settlement area between the dykes has come from excavations in the western part of Camulodunum, locating important industrial, commercial and burial sites together with indications of agricultural activity. Much of the eastern half of the settlement up to the Berechurch Dyke is Ministry of Defence land which, for its size, has seen few changes and very little archaeological investigation until now.

Last year's work followed on from the evaluation conducted in 2002

(described in **The Colchester Archaeologist**, 16), which included a desktop study of existing records, geophysical survey, fieldwalking and a marathon 7 miles of trial-trenching. The evaluation produced evidence of activity stretching back to Neolithic times, but most heavily represented were fragments of trackways and field systems belonging to the late Iron Age and Roman periods. By 2003, the time had come to embark on substantial excavations to add detail to the picture. Three large areas were selected for an investigation commissioned by RMPA Services and the Ministry of Defence. The excavations, which were carried out by the Trust in conjunction with RPS Planning Transport and Environment, started in a dry and dusty August and were completed just in time to catch the November rains.

Earlswood Way

Each of the three areas was chosen with a specific research aim. The first to be examined was a ten thousand square metre site in a field next to Earlswood Way. This was selected because it was known to contain three ditched trackways and also stood just over 100 m away from the site of a Roman villa, which lay within the south-east corner of the neighbouring Kirkee-McMunn Barracks. The 'villa' was discovered during a 1994 watching brief on building works, which located the building's under-floor heating pit (hypocaust) and a small oven. The building, probably a farmhouse, seems to be of 2nd-century or later date, and may well have replaced an earlier less substantial structure. Stripping revealed a 150m stretch of a straight trackway which has been traced by aerial survey



as far as Roman Way, 500m to the east of the site. Ditches to either side of the major trackway belonged to two more tracks and a field boundary, all of which combined to form parts of five fields. This field pattern probably originated in the 1st century AD when it was most likely associated with a predecessor to the nearby farmstead building.

At first sight, an ancient field may seem like an open expanse of land with little to offer the archaeologist by way of excavation. Detailed examination proved otherwise. In the south-western field was a wide silt-filled hollow whose silts were removed to expose many stake and post-holes. The hollow may have been caused by erosion from livestock kept within a pen or barn which was drained by a gully feeding into a nearby ditch. To test this interpretation soil samples taken from the floor of the

hollow will be analysed to see if their phosphate levels differ from the surrounding area. If animals have been held there, their droppings should have enriched the phosphate content of the samples. This field also contained an isolated circular pit with internal stake holes suggesting it was originally wattle-lined, probably for storage purposes.

It seems clear that the tracks were used as droves for the movement of stock throughout the field system and also to the rich flood-plain pastures of the rivers beyond. Indeed stock management was highlighted in unusual detail at the connection of the southern and main trackways. Here a curving gully in the north field connected with the northern ditch of the main track. The gully appears to be a stock funnel into which animals could be driven from the north

Aerial picture looking northwards showing two of the large areas excavated in 2003. Colchester town-centre is visible near the horizon. The walled town would have taken up the right-hand half of the horizon.

The aerial picture was taken by Skyscene-Imaging of Colchester.



Left. Late Iron Age cremation at the Earlswood Way site. This helps to date the trackways

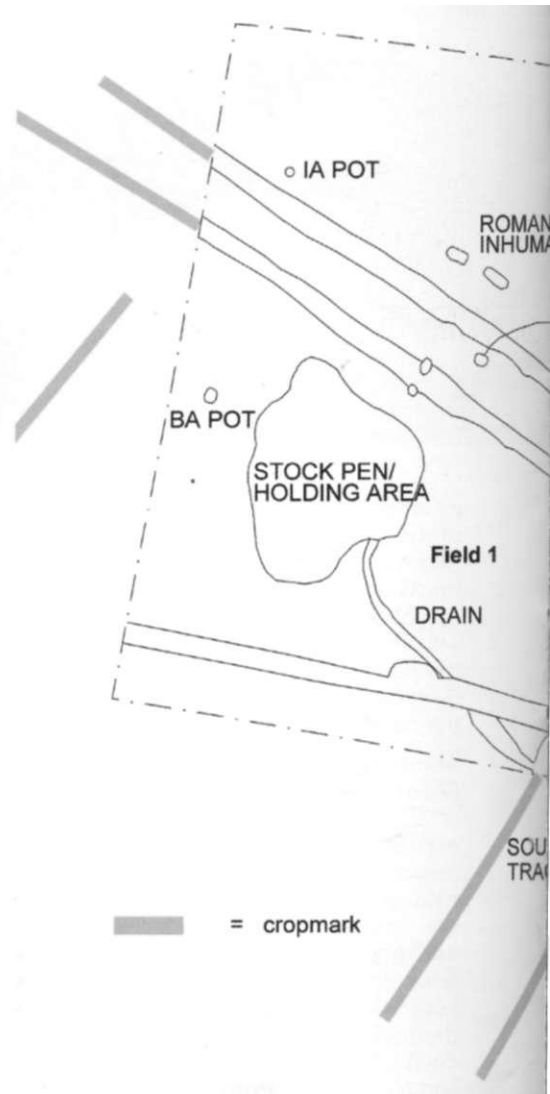
Below right. Simplified plan of the Earlswood Way site.

Below left. The east-west (approx) trackway at the Earlswood site. The excavators are lining the outer edges of the two ditches which formed the trackway.

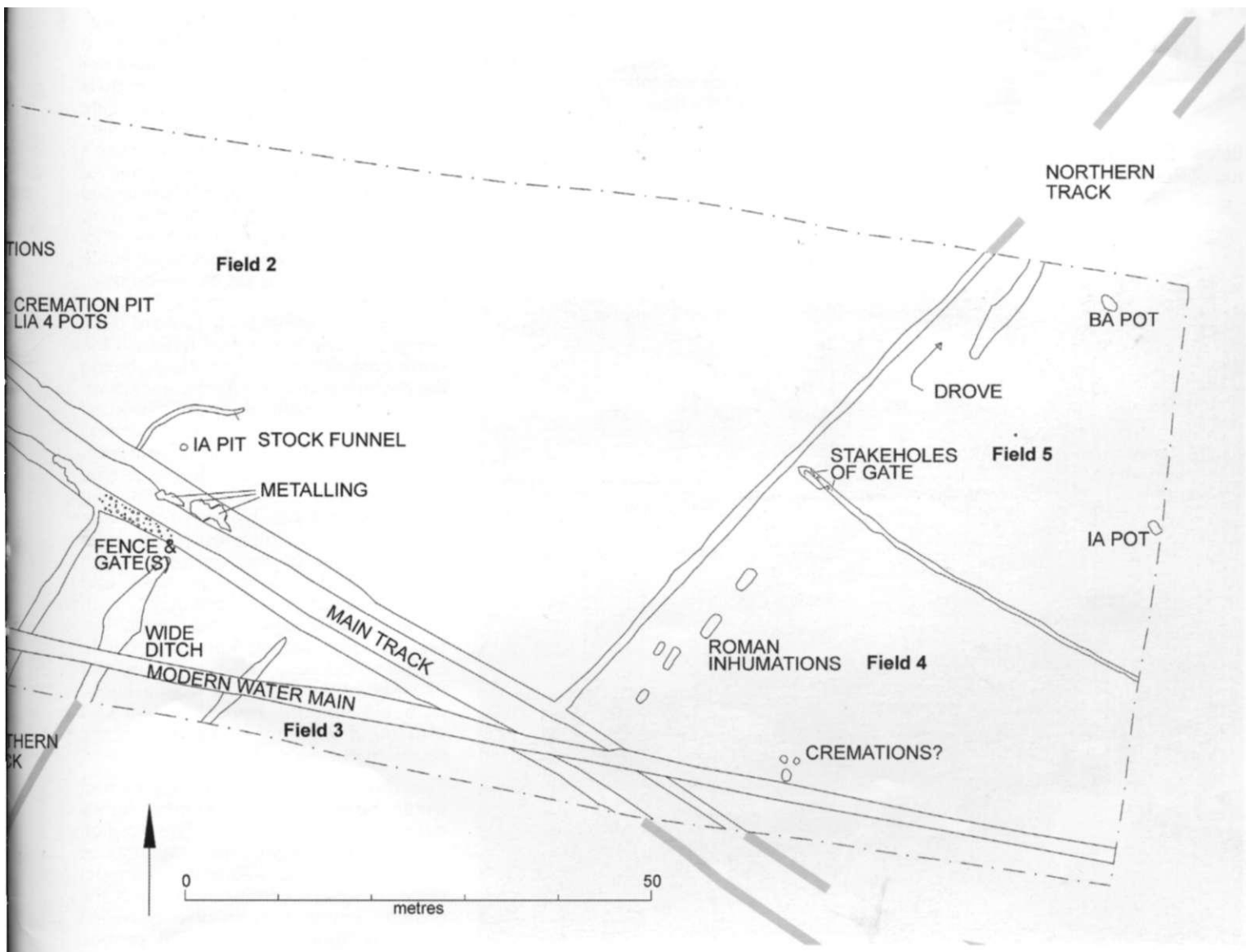
Far right. Post holes at the base of one of the trackway ditches indicating at least two phases of fence and a gate.

field on to the main track and then on to the southern track or into the south field. The crossing was emphasized by the relatively narrower and shallower nature of the main track's southern flanking ditch at this point. A series of stake and post-holes in the base of the gully appear to define a fence and gateway across the entrance to the southern trackway. Further patches of gravel metalling along the track and slumping into its ditches implies that the trackway was an eroded 'holloway', at least partially surfaced with gravel.

At the western end of the site a small pit contained a cremation burial with four complete late Iron Age pots arranged upright around one side, an iron fitting possibly from a box, and a spread of cremated bone. Although this isolated grave was found in an area between the main trackway ditches, it is pre-Roman and was almost certainly there before the trackway came into use. We were to find later graves in the fields adjoining the ditches. At the eastern end of the site, a group of five Roman graves lay



parallel to a field boundary ditch. These were inhumations, where the body was buried intact. Although the bodily remains had decomposed completely, three were clearly dug to accommodate adults and the other two were child-sized. The coffins were represented by iron nails and in one case by the blackened remains of a plank forming the base of the coffin. These were simple burials, unaccompanied by pots or other grave goods. Two more Roman graves were found close to the main trackway in the western part of the site. Both were inhumations and, in common with the other Roman group, the graves were placed at the edge of a field and laid parallel to a ditch. These were much shallower than the others, and can be more closely dated as one contained a complete pot and both had fragments of 2nd- to 3rd-century pottery scattered in the soil used to backfill the grave. From their locations, both the eastern group and the western pair are likely to have been inhabitants of the farm at different times in the Roman period.





Above. A grave at Earlswood Way with traces of the coffin still surviving.

Below. Excavation in progress near the top of Roman Way.



Roman Way

The second area to be studied lay in a field next to Roman Way, 700m to the east of the Earlswood Way site. A prime aim of the excavation here was to investigate a major early trackway which has been traced by air over several kilometres as it sweeps across the south-eastern part of Camulodunum. This trackway, which was in use up to at least the late 2nd century AD, was one of four routes to be found on this site. Three of them converged in a tangle of intercutting ditches worthy of spaghetti junction. Heavily worn by traffic, the ground at the intersection between the three needed gravel repairs in the early Roman period. Elsewhere, cremated remains were found at two spots, one of them an unusual late Bronze Age or early Iron Age burial in which pieces of pottery from several incomplete vessels appear to have been placed vertically in the pit.

Ypres Road

Further north, this five thousand square metre site on grassland was chosen because one of the 2002 evaluation trenches had given us a tantalising glimpse of a large ditch containing Middle Iron Age pottery. In this case we had no advance indications of the extent and course of the ditch as it did not show up on aerial surveys of the land. As the soil stripping progressed it became clear that the ditch marked the boundary of a roughly rectangular enclosure with an

internal area of about two thousand square metres. Although the exposed length of ditch had no gaps for entrances, there appears to have been an entrance on the east side, approached by an east-west trackway. Over time, the trackway had been worn down by traffic and patched with gravel to consolidate the erosion. The route ended abruptly a metre from the eastern ditch of the enclosure. Since there was no gap in the ditch, it is probable that there was a bridge across it. There also appears to have been a back entrance over the western enclosure ditch. Here an eroded platform on the ditch edge was consolidated with gravel at the point where it became considerably narrower and shallower, suggesting a point at which it could be easily crossed.

The enclosure ditch was most substantial on the eastern side of the enclosure at 2.8m in width and c 1.3m in depth. It was re-dug at least once indicating that the site was used for many years. There was a drainage sump in the south east corner of the enclosure ditch which may have been used as a well for stock.

The interior of the enclosure was dominated by the remains of a roundhouse about 12m in diameter enclosed by a circular drainage gully containing sherds of Middle Iron Age pottery. Such gullies were used to collect rainwater from the roundhouse's pitched thatched roofs. Two rings of post-holes within the gully represented the structural supports for the roof, whilst evidence for the construction of its walls comprised burnt daub with wattle impressions, from a pit to the north of the building. The doorway into the roundhouse is most likely to have been defined by two larger post-holes on the north-east side of the structure, facing the eastern entrance into the enclosure. A shallow pit containing the disturbed remnants of a cremation in a pot was found in the centre of the roundhouse. The vessel was of Middle Iron Age type although its association with a cremation is more typical of the Late Iron Age period. The latest pottery from the latest fill of the enclosure ditch includes Middle Iron Age types and types typical of the 1st century BC. With these factors in mind Paul Sealey has provisionally suggested an intermediate c 75-25 BC date for the roundhouse and latest fill of the enclosure. Interestingly, probable human cremated bone was also found within the upper levels of the southern enclosure ditch.

The roundhouse was relatively central within the enclosure but set back slightly towards the western edge. This position is interesting since the roundhouse would have had a greater visual impact upon the visitor coming in through the eastern entrance from the gravelled trackway, than if it had been central.



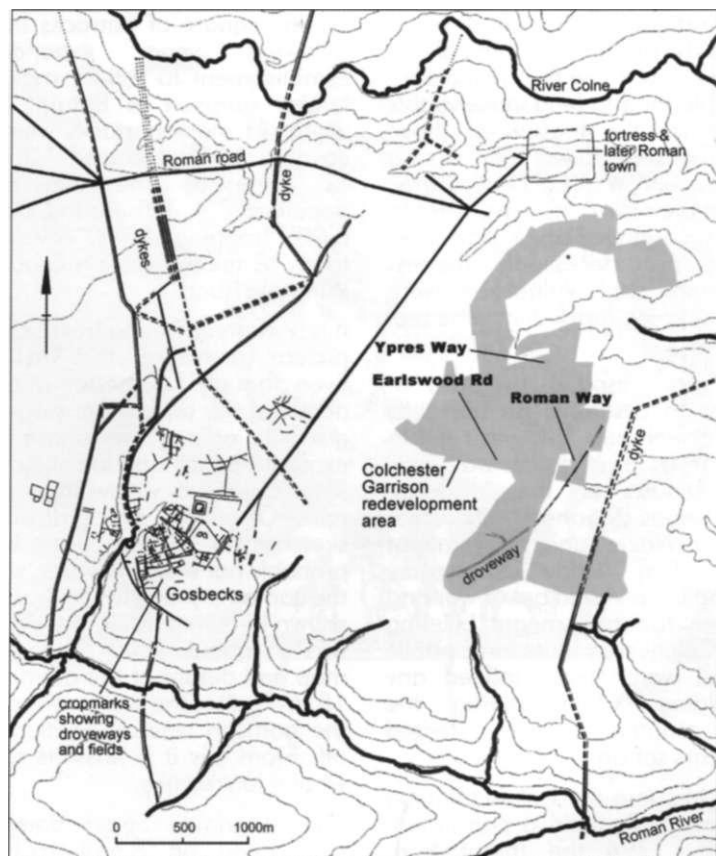
Above. The remains of the roundhouse near Ypres Road.

Below. Map of Camulodunum showing the extent of the garrison site (grey area), trackways, and the locations of the three areas excavations undertaken in 2003.

This wish to impress at the point of entry was also shown by the much more impressive nature of the enclosure ditch, and therefore of its presumed bank, on the eastern side of the enclosure compared with the other side's ditches. It was also interesting to find that domestic debris (in the form of discarded sherds of pottery) was dumped in greater quantities in the western ditch, at a point screened by the roundhouse, than in the southern and eastern ditches.

Following abandonment of the enclosure, and presumably the levelling of its banks, a trackway was cut through the central eastern area in a north-south direction. This later trackway was flanked by ditches and is of a similar date to the trackways found 700m to the south on the Earlswood Way and Roman Way sites.

The three excavation areas have proved extremely worthwhile exercises providing much new information on the settlement and changing patterns of land use in the Iron Age and Roman periods. Further analysis should allow an improved understanding of the environment and economy of this region of Camulodunum although the trackway dominated field-system clearly demonstrates an emphasis on livestock farming.



Colchester's forgotten garrison

Colchester Garrison is about to be rebuilt. But not for the first time. The Napoleonic garrison at Colchester was the biggest in the country, and was home for almost as many soldiers as there were townsfolk. Yet little of it survives today. Andrew Phillips explains why.



Because of the size and grandeur of Colchester's Victorian Garrison, we can easily overlook its remarkable predecessor, built during those hectic years when Napoleon threatened to invade in 2,000 flat-bottomed boats, especially constructed at Boulogne. Between 1803 and 1805, until Nelson's victory at Trafalgar, Essex stood in the front line as the assumed landing place. Although we now know that Napoleon, like Hitler, planned to land in Kent, this did not reduce the tension of those years. Six thousand Essex men signed up as 'Volunteers', a sort of Dad's Army, who bought their own uniforms, went to camps, but continued their day jobs. They were not necessarily heroes: everyone knew that Volunteers were exempt from being drafted into the real army.

Had the French landed, an army of 30,000 was to assemble on the cliffs between Harwich and St Osyth's within hours. Such a large force was only possible because of the immense number of troops stationed in the area: at Ipswich, at Weeley and, above all, at Colchester. For nearly a century England had been in and out of war and all too often this had meant billeting soldiers in Colchester: in its inns, public houses and warehouses, indeed any large building, while, during the summer months, large tented encampments sat on Lexden Heath.

Colchester became tired of petitioning the government to build a permanent garrison. By 1794 the threat from Revolutionary France was so serious and

the numbers so large that the government moved. A hatted garrison was built - at great expense - on land between Magdalen Street and Old Heath, still recalled by the street names Barrack Street, Artillery Street and Cannon Street. It was ready by February 1795 and housed 2,400 troops. A second square of barracks built in the following years expanded the establishment to 5,840, making it the largest garrison in Britain. By 1803, when yet more barracks were built for cavalry, the total topped 7,250, almost as large as the current civilian population. A drill ground close by for 6,000 troops and 700 cavalry survives today as the Recreation Ground beside Wimpole Road.

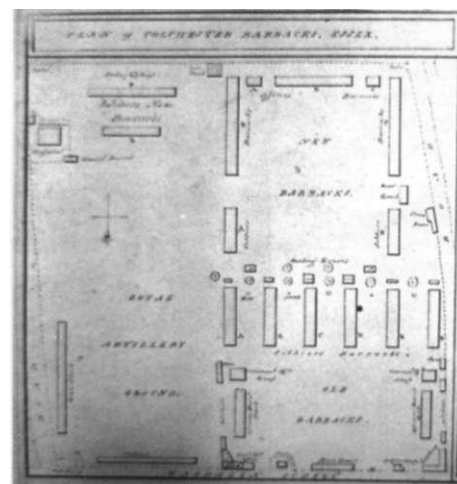
It is a matter of some frustration that no picture survives of this vast complex. Even though Colchester Museum has acquired the private drawing book of a garrison officer, he chose to make exquisite pencil and ink sketches of the River Colne, its willow trees and water mills. Of course, sitting down to make sketches of military dispositions was probably not wise. However, we do have the contemporary plan of those barracks shown here, recording the garrison as it was in about 1800, a contemporary map and details of the giant auction of 1816-7, after the wars were over, when the garrison was dismantled and sold off. From this it is possible to describe what it looked like.

The Magdalen Street Barracks were surrounded an 8-foot high wooden fence. Guard houses stood by the gate

An actual uniform of a Colchester Volunteer from the Colchester Museum collection. The age of the model is not entirely inaccurate. Photo courtesy of Colchester Museums.

in Magdalen Street, straddled by an arcaded porch to allow for bad weather. Round the square of the 'old' barracks of 1795 were a canteen, officer's stables, storerooms, coal yards, fire engine house, magazines and privies. Special 'boiling houses', sited close to wells, were presumably for cooking and laundry work. Just downhill from the barracks was a spring line (later

Map of the barracks in c 1800.





Troops in camp on Lexden Heath would have looked somewhat like this view of Warley Camp in 1794.

exploited by the Paxman Works) to supply water. Nevertheless the Army drilled a 100-foot artesian borehole, one of the earliest in Essex. The square was flanked by six two-storey, weather-boarded barrack blocks on brick footings, each housing 400 soldiers sleeping two to a bed in ten upstairs dormitories, with dayrooms downstairs heated by fireplaces. Ventilator tubes and grills circulated air throughout. Officers and sergeant-majors were housed by each block, but most officers had their own block on the far side of the square.

The 'new' barracks of 1796-8 lay in a square to the south, beside what is now Wimpole Road. There were two normal

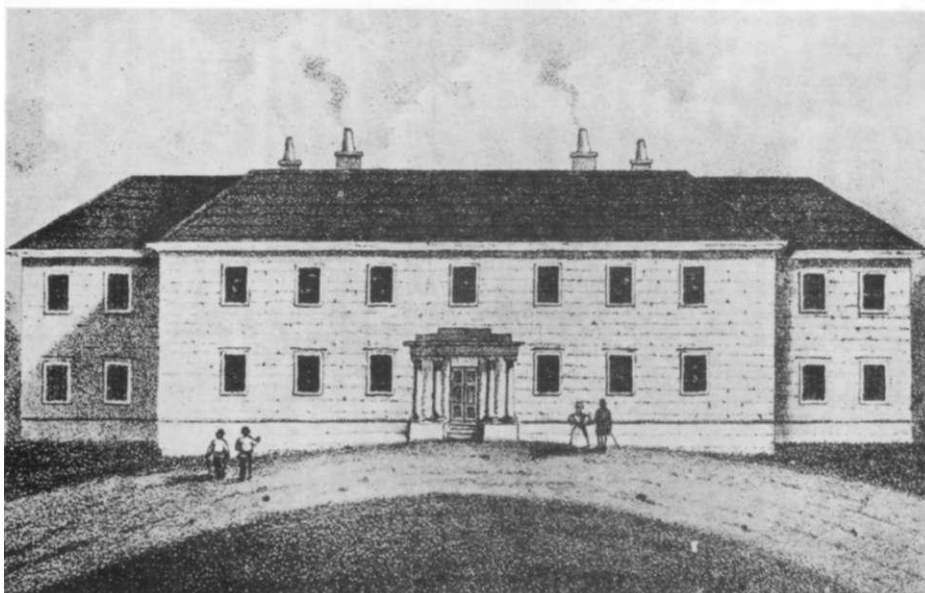
and two large two-storey blocks, each housing 1,080 men. East of these two squares was a doubled-sized square for the Royal Artillery. Around this square were stables, gun sheds and one-storey blocks for artillerymen. In the south-east corner, surrounded by its own fence, was a two-storey brick hospital which could accommodate 450 wounded, an extraordinary facility for that date, giving some idea of the casualties expected should invasion occur. When the garrison was closed, one wing of the hospital was dismantled and re-erected on Lexden Road where it still forms the core of the old Essex County Hospital.

The final part of the barracks, housing mainly cavalry and built after this plan

was drawn, stood on the east side of the Royal Artillery ground. Virtually all the building and equipping of these large complexes was in the hands of specialists, usually from London, who recruited their own considerable labour force, not necessarily in Colchester. Nevertheless, the barracks hugely boosted the local economy as local merchants supplied bread, fodder and fuel. Outside the main barrack fence stood a settlement of crude huts built by wives, children and camp followers of the resident regiment, since only a small number of women were allowed inside to do cooking and laundry work. As a regiment moved on and a new one moved into the barracks, so the huts were taken by the next wave of camp followers. Here too were a variety of seedy retail activities - often illicit - involving gambling and the sale of spirits.

Life in the barracks was governed by regular bugle calls, endless drilling and long periods of idleness. At times, after the passing of the invasion scare, soldiers helped with the local harvest, for which they were paid. Surviving order books show familiar offences: drunkenness, casual urination, gambling, ball-playing and stealing vegetables from local gardens. Occasional fights between rival regiments occurred. Soldiers bathing naked in the river upset the locals. A few married local girls in local churches, notable St Leonard's and St James, where they would all parade at special Sunday services, there being no garrison church as yet.

The barracks disappeared almost as fast as they had arrived. Being wooden-built they were not deemed suitable for long-term use. Details of the auctions in the local press give us some insight into garrison resources. The 1,848 lots included 'upwards of 40 wheelbarrows,' furniture, forges, thousands of unused bricks, but, above all, huts, some of which found their way to Walton-le-Soken, that well-known haunt of smugglers, soon to arise as a seaside resort. Garden sheds in the Tendring Hundred still betrayed their origins decades later. The row of cottages built facing Magdalen Street (demolished in the 1930s) were, I think, built now and were never part of the barracks. The garrison of Colchester, reduced to 800, reverted to being billeted in public houses - the traditional method. Not till the Crimean War would a new brick garrison arise - the one we are about to lose today.



The core of the Essex County Hospital on Lexden Road, seen here in 1824, was re-assembled from part of the Barrack Hospital.



Unravelling Charlie Brown's

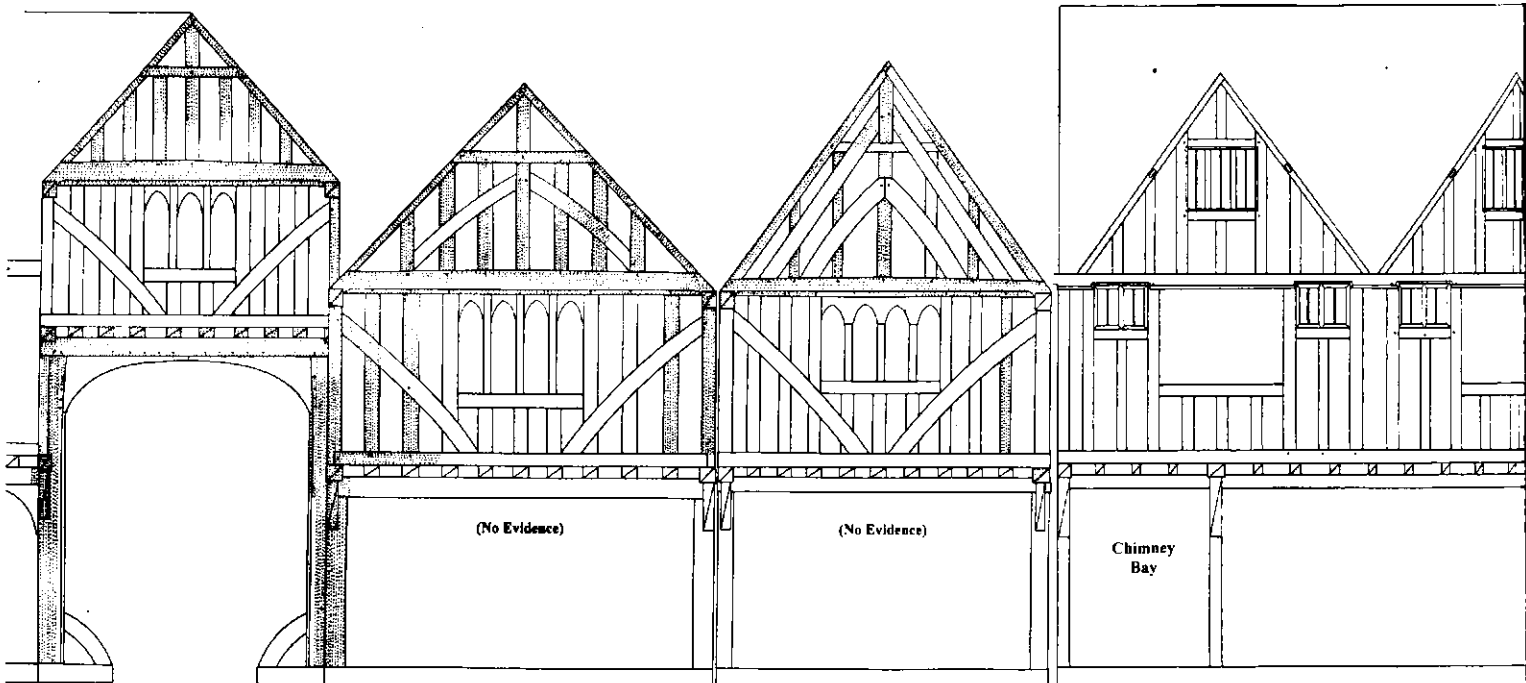


By Leigh Alston

Until their renovation in 2003, the timber-framed buildings of Charles Brown and Sons near the Siege House in East Street had remained unaltered for almost a century, and had become a local landmark. Architectural historian Leigh Alston was funded by Colchester Borough Council to analyse and record the structure as it was revealed, and CAT excavated its floors. A number of impressive discoveries included wall paintings, a medieval hearth and one of the finest 14th-century traceried windows in Essex.

Most residents of Colchester will be familiar with the long, gabled frontage of Charles Brown & Sons hardware merchants at 60-66 East Street, but relatively few will ever have crossed its threshold. Even in the 1970s, when I first saw the building as a teenager, I was struck by its timeless, Dickensian appearance, and wondered what secrets might lie within. It took a year or two to pluck up my courage, but I finally ventured through the door in the hope of finding the ancient beams and carvings promised by the exterior. I remember my disappointment and panic when I found myself without a beam in sight and confronted by an elderly, white-coated

Above. Charles Brown & Sons (60-66 East Street) before work began. The three left-hand gables are medieval, and the right-hand gable, together with the jettied range beyond, dates from the mid-17th century.



proprietor in a sea of rather dusty galvanised buckets, tins of paint, rolls of linoleum, paraffin lamps and an enormous quantity of other things that I could neither name nor find an excuse to buy. The structure of the building was entirely hidden by hardboard, plaster and whitewash. My blushes were spared by the entry of another customer, which allowed me to slip out unnoticed.

I continued to wonder for the next twenty-five years what 'Charlie Brown's' might contain, and was delighted in April 2003 to be asked by Colchester Borough Council to find out. The building had been acquired by Harding Homes, and was to be sympathetically restored and converted into three private houses. My childhood suspicions were confirmed on my first visit, when I found myself in a labyrinth of rooms that had been altogether bypassed by the 20th century. The outlines of medieval timbers could be seen in the walls, concealed behind several layers of wallpaper, packing cases and old lino that had been used to patch the badly decayed structure. The guttering had long since failed, and an ingenious system of pipes conducted water from the leaking roof valleys to overflowing and foul-smelling tin baths that had evidently been salvaged from unsold stock. I regret failing to photograph a particularly impressive cascade of empty 1920s paint tins and washing-up bowls that formed an ornamental wet-weather waterfall on one of the many staircases.

As spring turned into summer the entire building vanished behind a vast array of sheeted scaffolding, and became a



A remarkable bird's-eye view of the medieval roofs, stripped of tiles, from the dizzy heights of the scaffold.

hard-hat area. Much of the 19th century plaster was removed in order to repair the timber frame, and the resulting dust was trapped by the plastic sheeting to create one of the dirtiest and, during the hottest summer on record, sudorific building sites I have ever had the pleasure of working on. I would like to apologise to the many Asda customers who mistook me for a tramp as I did my evening shop on my way home. Yet more scaffolding was installed when it

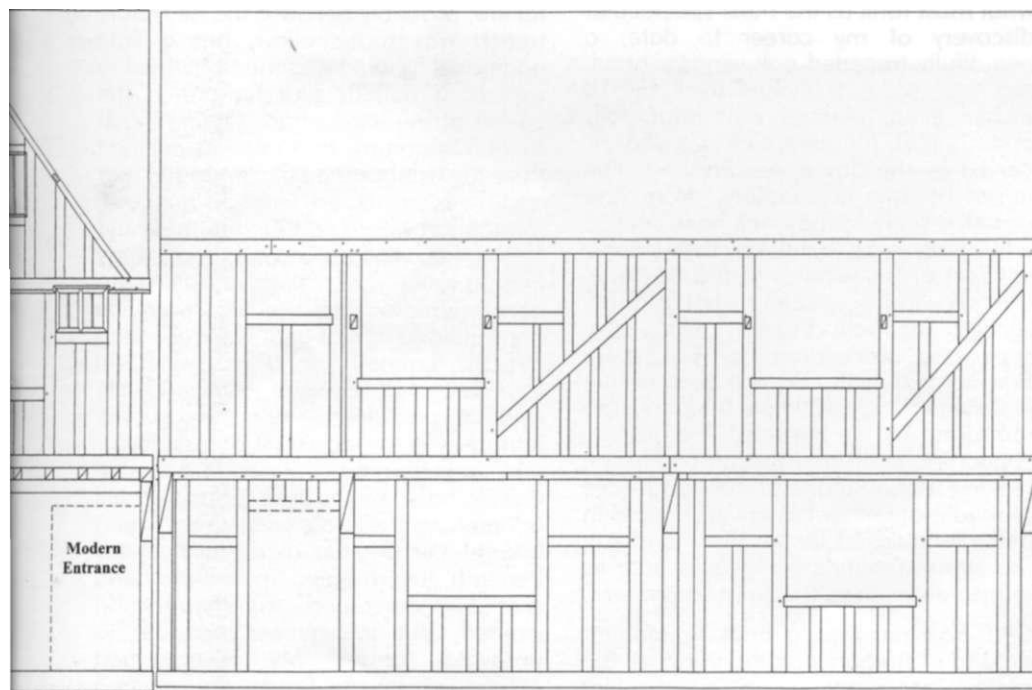
was realised how little remained of the medieval structure, and on one occasion I clutched my hat as I poked a corner post to demonstrate how solid it remained, despite appearances to the contrary, only to find the whole gable lurch forwards into the street by two inches. I clutched my hat once again when a truck hit the scaffold, lifting my feet clear of the boarding. Despite these trials of nerve, I was thrilled to gradually unravel the building's complex history. A

The facade of the medieval building as it would have appeared when built.

The third gable from the left is the first phase of construction, dating from the mid-14th century, against which the gateway and structure on the left was added in the 15th century. Stabilising braces at the feet of the gate-posts would have admitted pack animals but excluded wheeled vehicles. The few surviving original timbers here are shaded.

The two gables to the right represent Phase Three as it appeared in the mid-17th century. Like those of Phase Four, the main windows projected into the street, and have been lost. Of the two dormer gables, only the left-hand example now remains.

The rest of the building to the right (Phase Four) was built soon after Phase Three in the mid-17th century. The timber-frame was not intended to be visible, and was plastered and pargeted from the outset.





Lett. The 14th-century traceried window emerging from the clay plaster that had concealed it for five centuries.

Far right. Excavating the medieval floors on the site of the open hall (Phase Three). The flint and tile foundation of a timber wall overlays a mysterious tile hearth in the background.

Right. An unusually small and irregular hearth of peg-tiles on the site of the demolished open hall, beneath a late-medieval flint and tile foundation.

total of four separate building phases emerged from the plaster, excluding various modern extensions to the rear, of which the earliest dates from the mid-14th century and the latest from the mid-17th.

Phase One: fourteenth century

The oldest building on the site is the third of the four gables from the left, and dates from c 1330-1360. An attempt to obtain a more precise date through dendrochronology (tree-ring analysis) failed due to the fast-grown nature of the timber, taken from coppiced woodland, which contained insufficient annual rings to achieve a statistically accurate match. This structure formed a cross-wing at the high-end of an open hall which lay to its right and has since been demolished (Phase Three now occupies its position). Like Phase Two, the ceiling and most of the ground-floor walls had unfortunately been removed in the 19th century (the building is said to have suffered damage in the 1884 earthquake) but several impressive features remain. Picking at what appeared to be a chamfered Victorian door lintel, I revealed a fine 14th-century moulding that originally decorated an internal jetty projecting above the owner's head as he sat at the high table in his hall.

I suspected the presence of a first-floor window in the opposite side of the building, but did not expect to find anything particularly impressive as I pulled at the loose clay and straw that had been used to block it when Phase Two was added in the 15th century. Alone one evening, I gradually revealed what must rank as the most spectacular discovery of my career to date; a beautifully traceried oak window head, two feet wide, 5 inches thick by 18 inches deep, pierced with quatrefoils and, buried for centuries, as sharply carved as the day it was finished. The noise of my celebrations from the deserted scaffold may well have caused a few passers-by to quicken their steps. I left part of the window in the clay until the following day, keen to boast of my success to Jon Prosser, who ably supervised proceedings for Colchester Borough Council, and was then a little alarmed to find the whole thing fall into our arms as we revealed the rest; a supporting jamb had succumbed to the leaking roof, and one of the best pieces of medieval timber tracery ever found in Essex languished for several months in the site manager's portacabin until its reinstatement by a specialist carpenter.

CAT had received a brief to monitor ground disturbance, and early in the project had managed to find the flint

and tile foundation of a missing timber wall in, remarkably, precisely the place I'd predicted. Emboldened by this success, Borough funding was sought and secured to allow the Trust to dig a drainage trench across the floor of the demolished open hall in the hope of finding a hearth. This proved a singular failure, probably because the necessary trench was too shallow, but a little additional funding was then obtained to explore a curious flint feature in the corner of the excavation. Amidst much excitement on my part this was pursued from the front of the building to the rear and was revealed as a medieval foundation where no foundation should have been. As I desperately revised my interpretation of the building to accommodate this new discovery, a neatly laid hearth of peg-tiles was found directly beneath it. The medieval foundation of coursed flint and tile evidently post-dated this hearth, but the feature was far too small and curiously laid, with burning confined to one side only, to have caused the sooting that still adhered to the cross-wing. The wrong hearth! Yet another medieval floor lay beneath, as revealed in section, and probably contained the hearth I'd wanted, but it was not possible to excavate further. My hearth had escaped us, and CAT instead uncovered



a veritable can of worms (ie a complicated picture of changing functions and boundaries) from which few firm conclusions could be drawn. I can no longer neatly interpret the 17th-century hall of Phase 3 as a straightforward replacement of its 14th-century predecessor, and, in short, the exercise proved only that dirt archaeologists and architectural historians should lead entirely separate lives and never speak to each other.

Phase Two: fifteenth century

During the 15th century a large and impressive new building was added to the left-hand side of Phase One, blocking its traceried window. This new structure contained a tall, arched gateway leading from the street to a rear courtyard (the left-hand gable) along with ground-floor rooms on each side. The room to the left of the gate was built parallel to the street and has been demolished, but its gabled counterpart to the right remains. The building was fully jettied to both front and rear, with traceried windows to both elevations, so the courtyard was an impressive space in its own right (although a first-floor garderobe appears to have overhung it). A single traceried window still survives, overlooking the gate on the street, and may remain exposed when work is

complete. The exceptionally grand windows of Phases One and Two, combined with one of the tallest medieval gateways in the country (rising to 13 feet), would have created a dramatic visual effect that can have had few parallels in the town.

Phases Three and Four: seventeenth century

A new hall, complete with brick chimney stack, was built on the site of the 14th-century hall in the middle decades of the 17th century, perhaps soon after the siege of Colchester (no bullets were found at Charlie Brown's, in contrast to the nearby Siege House, but perhaps the war explains why so few original timbers survive in its frontage). This building was jettied with twin dormer windows that lit the first-floor chamber, and appears to have been externally rendered and pargeted from the outset. A number of 17th-century wall paintings have been found inside, chiefly in the form of embellished arcades in grey pigment, and these have been professionally conserved. Phase Four was added soon afterwards, replacing an earlier building, and is very similar in style to Phase Three. This too was rendered externally, and in consequence its timbers, which were never intended to be visible, are almost

entirely recycled from earlier structures (not ships!). This re-use of timber, coupled with the loss of most internal partitions, renders precise interpretation difficult, but the structure probably contained a pair of domestic houses.

What does it all mean?

While the various timber structures of Charlie Brown's are relatively easy to date, the lack of ground-floor walls renders any analysis of their precise original purpose much less certain. It seems unlikely, given its size, complexity and imposing fenestration, that the medieval building was a normal domestic house. There is evidence of an enclosed, gallery-like stair in the 14th-century wing, of a kind usually found only in inns, and the gateway and lack of internal communication in the 15th-century extension supports such an interpretation. The settlement at East Bridge was a detached hamlet of Colchester until the development of East Hill in the 16th century, and would have been an ideal resting place for travellers when the town gates were locked. For the moment this remains speculative, but the project is not yet complete, and it may be that documentary evidence will shed further light on the subject.

Three-thousand-year-old burial site in quarry



Every burial site throws up questions as we try to fathom what people centuries ago believed, and how this translated into the way they buried their dead. For example at Birch Quarry, not far south of Colchester a group of nine Middle Bronze Age cremation urns were recorded but most of them were inverted in the ground. This was a common practice in the Middle Bronze Age but why?

The excavation was carried out this summer in advance of an extension to Birch Quarry. The urns belong to the north-east Essex type of Ardleigh Group' which is a regional type of 'Deverel Rimbury ware' in use from c 1400-1200 BC. The exteriors of most of the urns are highly decorated for example with cordons, and large amount of finger-tip and finger-nail impressions. Seven of the urns contained cremated bone. The bone from the other two urns may have been deposited in pits nearby. The burials lay between three tightly clustered ring-ditches, which are presumably the remains of ploughed-out barrows. These groups of Bronze Age circular ditches are characteristic of north-east Essex and

comparisons can be made with nearby sites at St Osyth, Ardleigh and Brightlingsea. A scatter of hearths or fire pits were revealed but further away from the burials. Were these connected to the burial ritual in some way? Elsewhere were probable Bronze Age or Iron Age field ditches indicating that the surrounding landscape was agricultural.

In an interesting twist, it turned out that the present quarry was not the first on the site. A series of large flat-bottomed pits were spread across the site. Pottery sherds in their backfill showed the pits to have been dug in Roman times. The size and shape and the near absence of any finds suggest that they were for quarrying. They would have produced sand for mortar and gravel for roads and for aggregate such as used in floors. Mortar was introduced into Britain by the Romans and thus there would have been considerable demand for sand in a place such as Colchester. The Roman quarry pits at Birch suggest that, unlike quarries today, it may have been obtained from lots of relatively small pits scattered around the area rather than a few massive pits in the way that sand quarries operate today.

Above. The cremation burials were situated on a ridge on the southern side of the quarry.



Left and above. Care had to be taken to bandage the urns before lifting them out of the ground.

The investigation was funded by Hanson Aggregates.

Music and dancing at St Mary's

Two pairs of cymbals were found in a 4th-century child's grave at the St Mary's Hospital site during excavations by the Trust in 2002. Nina Crummy explains the significance of the unusual find.



The St Mary's site lay close to a Romano-Celtic temple found in 1975 on the crest of Balcerne Hill during the excavations in advance of the construction of the St Mary's car park and the dual carriageway. Finds included figurines of the god Mercury, a tortoise (one of Mercury's three animal companions, the others being the ram and the cockerel), and part of a votive branch which may have come from a Bacchic figure group. A priestess figurine from St Mary's was featured in last year's **The Colchester Archaeologist**, and may have been a votive offering to the same temple, though there are several other votives from further down the hill, where a small building next to the road may turn out to be a roadside shrine.

Some more unusual items from the St Mary's site have been cleaned up as conservation work on the finds progresses, two pairs of small cymbals lying side by side in a timber-vaulted grave that dates to the last half of the 4th century. We tend now to think of cymbals only as large instruments with one half held in each hand, but Roman period cymbals could be much smaller. There is a pair from Pompeii only 11 cm across, but the ones from St Mary's are even smaller at around 4.5 cm, and are almost more like castanets than true cymbals. Like the ones from Pompeii, each consists of two dished and flanged copper-alloy plates linked by a chain attached by iron split-pins. Very little of

the chains on the St Mary's cymbals survive, and only traces of the split-pins.

Archaeological finds of cymbals are rare, though there is one plate from a large pair (18 cm across) from the Temple of Cybele at Novaesium, modern Neuss in Germany. In Roman literature they are often associated with the rites of Cybele and her consort Attis, usually played by young male acolytes (*galli*) dancing in procession at festivals celebrating the goddess, but their use was not just restricted to the worship of Cybele, as the Old Testament mentions cymbals being played during sacrifices to Jehovah (II Chronicles 29, 25) and in the New Testament I Corinthians 13 begins with the famous verse *'Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal'*. They could also be played at musical entertainments, or to accompany plays when musicians replaced the classical-style chorus.

The person buried in the grave at St Mary's must have used the cymbals during their lifetime. The analysis of the bones has not yet been finished so the gender of the skeleton isn't yet known, and may never be certain, but even if it is a young man we may never know if he was a professional musician or a worshipper of Cybele or of some other deity, perhaps associated with the temple found in the 1970s or with the shrine lower down the hill, or even with one of the other temples in the town.

Above. The two plates at the top of the picture belong to one of the pairs of cymbals. The plates making up the other one are still in their playing position. See also below. Actual size.



Her eunuch priests shall walk in procession, and shall beat the hollow tambourines, and the cymbals, struck by cymbals, shall send forth their tinkling notes.

Ovid, *Fasti* IV, 183-5

From the county

by the Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit

THE DIGGING'S DONE IN DOVEHOUSE FIELD: Archaeology Field School excavations 1998-2003

The sixth and final annual training excavation took place in Dovehouse Field at Cressing Temple this summer, run by the Field Archaeology Unit. Over the years, hundreds of participating members of the public have got themselves dirty in pursuit of the ancient past of Essex. The Field School's manager, Trevor Ennis, takes the opportunity to review some of its highlights.



The excavation of the horse skeleton.

The Field School

Alongside the general public's interest in practical archaeology, the Field School has steadily grown in popularity since it began in Dovehouse Field in 1998 - extra places were made available to meet this demand and 88 trainees were catered for this year. It has always been the intention to use this dig to reach out to as many people as possible, of all ages, backgrounds and abilities, the only pre-requisite being an interest and enthusiasm for the past. Aspiring to show them what it is really like to be an archaeologist, the Unit's staff running the dig have always tried to present an honest and 'down-to-earth' view of life in the field - hopefully giving an informative and fun learning experience of the techniques of archaeological excavation. Having built up something of a reputation as a good place at which to enter the world of practical archaeology, trainees have been drawn from far-flung places such as Australia, America, France, Ireland and New Zealand, although most trainees have come from Essex or its surrounding counties. As well as providing an enjoyable summer activity for those in search of a more adventurous holiday, the field school has also stimulated some to pursue university studies in the discipline and even launched a number of careers in archaeology - it's always

good to get a postcard sent from a former trainee on a dig in a distant land!

Past discoveries

The remains revealed in the six years of excavation in Dovehouse Field can best be described as that of an agricultural landscape dating from the Late Iron Age to Late Roman periods, roughly 100 BC to AD 400. This landscape chiefly comprises a series of inter-connecting and crossing boundary and drainage ditches, marking the edges of numerous small fields and enclosures. These would have contained crops, such as wheat, and grazing livestock. It seems that agricultural produce was also dried and processed in these fields ahead of use and storage - a number of hearth and oven bases have been found, along with apparent cobble-lined working hollows and yard surfaces.

Although no traces of houses have been identified, the large amounts of household rubbish (broken pottery, animal bone, oyster shell, tools and jewellery) deposited in the ditches suggests that a habitation, perhaps a farmstead, was close-by. However, there are tantalising indications that this may not have been the home of simple farmers. Amongst the many ditches, some stand out as being far bigger than

necessary for mere field boundaries or drains, being some 3m wide and over 2m deep. These mark the perimeters of two rectangular enclosures. Although little of the interiors of these plots have been investigated, significant quantities of exotic imported Roman pottery has been found in their vicinities. Some of this even arrived before the Roman conquest of Britain in AD 43 and suggests that this may be the residence of an elite member of the local Late Iron Age tribe, the Trinovantes.

Another intriguing aspect of the site is the regularity with which ancient human remains have been uncovered during four of the six seasons of Field School digs. Prior to this summer, two skulls, two babies and an adult skeleton have been found. The latter, has proved the most enigmatic - lacking its lower legs when the body was buried, face-down, in a shallow grave in the top of an earlier ditch! Attitudes towards death and disposal of the dead were clearly different in Late Iron Age and Roman times: it seems as if ancestors, or parts of them, were kept around the place and buried from time to time as part of specific rituals to protect the farmstead! There is nothing like a skeleton to catch the imagination and fire the enthusiasm of a site's diggers.

This year's dig

The highlight of this year's swelteringly hot dig was undoubtedly the excavation of a complete horse skeleton. Like the legless human grave, it had been buried in the top of an earlier, in-filled, ditch some 2,000 years ago. This horse was painstakingly excavated by the trainees over a two-week period, bone by bone. It also proved to be the star attraction at the open day held to mark the end of the dig, on the August bank holiday weekend attracting much interest from young and older visitors alike. Further parts of the massive ditch surrounding the speculative elite residence were also investigated. Although these provided no new clues about the Late Iron Age occupants, two huge early Roman pits in close proximity yielded many artefacts that underline the high status of this settlement. One pit contained fragments of painted Roman wall plaster, which in the countryside, is usually only found at villa sites. It is typical that this find was made in the last few days of the last year of excavation at this site.

Thank you

The field school staff have received help and support from a great many people over the years, particularly from fellow ECC staff at Cressing Temple, the Mid Anglia Group of the Council for British



Trainees hard at it last summer.

Archaeology, the local Brain Valley Archaeological Society and from the many pot-washing volunteers. Thanks to them and all of the members of the public who visited the site. It has been a rewarding experience and, although this is the end of the field school at Cressing, we hope to continue it elsewhere in the county in future years.

// you would like details of the new field school excavation for summer 2004, please contact:

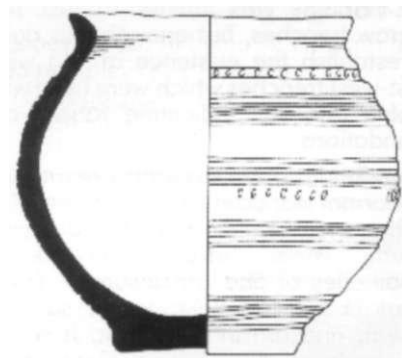
Trevor Ennis,
ECC Field Archaeology Unit,
Fairfield Court,
Fairfield Road,
Braintree CM7 3YQ.
Tel: 01376 331431
E-mail: trevor.ennis@essexcc.gov.uk

A TALE OF TWO POTS

From time to time, members of the public bring artefacts to the attention of the County Council's archaeologists. Usually, this is a matter of identifying pieces of medieval pottery, prehistoric flints or a Roman coin found in a garden. However, finds specialist Joyce Compton reports on a particular object that has turned out to have a bit more of a history than was at first apparent.

The Field Archaeology Unit received a phone call from a Mrs Hobbs of Springfield, Chelmsford, asking whether we would like a pot that she knew was old, perhaps prehistoric. This sort of thing does not happen every day, and we were happy to oblige. The pot had been discovered on an allotment in the Stanway area of Colchester more than 50 years ago and Mrs Hobbs was now keen that the pot should go to a good home. The item was duly collected, already carefully packaged in a plastic container.

Back at the Unit offices, we unveiled the pot and tried to work out how old it was. It is unusual for members of the public to be so precise about the date of artefacts



The 4,000 year old pot from the Stanway allotment (height 12 cm). The right-hand half of the drawing shows the exterior, the left-hand half the profile.

in their possession, but the pot certainly looked prehistoric. A check with our prehistoric pottery expert confirmed that the pot is an East Anglian beaker of Early Bronze Age date, and therefore at least 4,000 years old. These beakers tend to be complete when found, as they were often used as grave goods beside a crouched burial. Because Essex soils

tend to be acidic, the skeleton does not usually survive, and so the discovered pot always looks as if it is buried by itself in a rather large pit.

We then checked the Essex Heritage Conservation Record, to add the find of the beaker to the database of known sites and findspots. As expected, there are several entries for the Stanway area, but there appeared to be a similar prehistoric pot already noted from the same area. This second pot was described as a 'Middle Bronze Age urn' (about 1500-1000 BC) and that a drawing was available as part of the record. So we asked for a copy of the drawing for confirmation, as it seemed too much of a coincidence for there to be two prehistoric pots in the same spot. Sure enough, the pots are one and the same, though the earlier identification (made in 1979) had been slightly incorrect.

Thus, this ancient pot also has an additional, far more recent, history that started with its discovery half a century ago. Happily, the object and its written record have been re-united after more than 20 years and Colchester Museum is pleased to be able to add the beaker to their collection.

Spoil heap

Lexden Tumulus reunited

Excavated in 1924, the Lexden Tumulus is one of the most important monuments in Colchester. It is a burial mound which contained the remains of the richest known burial of its period in Britain. Probably in 1860, when it was part of Lexden Park, the tumulus had been made a landscape feature by enclosing it in a circle of Wellingtonia trees. Later the land was sold off for housing and the remains of the tumulus ended up split between two gardens divided by a hedge.

Although Colchester is very rich in archaeological remains, today there is relatively little that can be seen of these remains above ground. The Lexden Tumulus is a rare exception because it still survives as an earthwork. However, the hedge made it difficult to appreciate that the tumulus really is a distinct mound. Now all this has changed thanks to Mr and Mrs Tinson. The couple live in one of the houses whose garden includes one half of the mound. They wanted to own all of it, so they recently bought their neighbours house when it came up for sale. Mr and Mrs Tinson have since removed the offending hedge and are in the process of tidying up the monument to bring it back to something approaching its state a hundred years ago when it was part of Lexden Park.

The changes have sparked off renewed archaeological interest in the tumulus. Dr Tim Dennis of the University of Essex has been carrying out an in-depth geophysical study of the mound, and the Trust undertook a watching brief on some limited groundworks nearby.

Stanway

More archaeological investigations have just been completed on the Stanway site where in the 1990s the remains of high status burials were discovered including the Doctor with his medical instruments and his gaming board with its pieces all set out as if ready to play. A large area to the south-east of the site of the original discoveries has been stripped of topsoil in readiness for further sand and gravel extraction. The work revealed a number of dark, charcoal-rich patches a few of which on excavation proved to be the remains of cremations. None were as rich as the ones found in the 1990s, but their presence does show that the Stanway enclosures did not represent an isolated burial place, but was part of a much wider area associated with burials. One of the burials contained a



The Lexden Tumulus reunited.

coin struck during the reign of Vespasian (69-79 AD) showing it to be later than the rich burials in the main site. The investigation was made possible by funds kindly provided by Tarmac Southern Ltd.

Major Roman building?

An archaeological investigation in the car park at the rear of the Globe Hotel in North Station Road resulted in the discovery of what appears to have been a major Roman building with foundations at least 1.2 m wide. Exposure of the remains was limited to just two narrow trenches, but enough was done to establish the existence of two wide east-west trenches which were filled with rubble and soil indicating robbed-out foundations.

Foundations of such a width are massive by normal standards and are in keeping with a major public building or monument. There have been various discoveries of Roman houses over the years in the North Station Road area making it clear this was part of a suburb which extended from North Gate (at the foot of North Hill) across the river almost as far as the area now occupied by the Albert roundabout. The most recently discovered of these houses was on a site next to the Victoria Inn (see **The Colchester Archaeologist**, no 16, 20-1).

It is impossible to know at the moment what the remains represent. Public baths are a possibility given the relatively low-lying location. An amphitheatre is another since such a building is yet to be identified in Colchester. It doesn't look from the positions of streets and tessellated floors as if there was one inside the walls, and possible sites

outside the walls are limited too. Thus an amphitheatre north of the river in the vicinity of what is now the North Station Road area is not inconceivable albeit unlikely. However, in truth, too little of this latest discovery has been uncovered to tell us much about it except that it clearly was something special.

The investigation was commissioned and funded by the Globe Hotel.



Journal of the Colchester Archaeological Trust

Unfortunately, the new journal has been delayed for various reasons. However, everything has been resolved and the first two editions should be available about the time you receive your magazine. These are volumes 1 and 2 for the years 2001 and 2002 respectively. The delay has meant that volume 3 will be late too, but not nearly as much as the first two.

Each journal contains summaries of the year's fieldwork plus final reports of some earlier excavations. Copies can be obtained from the Trust for £10 each plus £5 post and packing. The first two editions can be bought for the price of one as a special introductory offer.

Friends of CAT

On a sunny day in March the Friends went over to Verulamium Museum at St Albans for the day. Verulamium has much in common archaeologically with Colchester: both have origins in the Late Iron Age, both were developed early on under the Romans, and both were razed to the ground by Boudica.

The reason for our visit was recent work by Simon West, the Museum's Field Archaeologist, on two rich graves accidentally found by metal detectorists not far from Verulamium. The detectorists had picked up readings for copper-alloy objects which they had then dug up, but, realising they had stumbled upon something out of the ordinary, had reported their discovery to the Museum so that the graves could be excavated. The burials turned out to contain fine glassware and pottery, and one had thirty iron arrowheads suitable for hunting rather than warfare. The graves probably date to the middle years of the 2nd century, but many of the objects were much older than that and may have been family heirlooms.

Simon first gave us an illustrated talk on the graves and explained how the site they came from fitted into the history of the Verulamium region as a whole. We were also able to go and look more closely at the finds in the museum's conservation laboratory. We then went over to the nearby Roman theatre, and there was still plenty of free time left to visit the museum displays and the fragments of the town wall in the park.

In May a coach party travelled down to North Kent where, with Alan Ward of Canterbury Archaeological Trust as our guide, in the morning we visited Oldbury Hill, a steep-sided Iron Age hillfort very different to our practically flat version at Pitchbury Ramparts, and Kits Coty Neolithic chambered tomb. We moved on to Rochester for lunch and a chance to look round the cathedral, then Alan took us on a whistle-stop tour of the town wall of Roman Rochester, which is not much in evidence above ground but much of the circuit has now been worked out thanks to a series of small excavations.

A blistering hot day in July saw a coachload of Friends set off for the Roman town of Silchester in Hampshire to visit the University of Reading's training excavation. Full of admiration



Some of the Friends being given a tour of Great Bricett church.

for the large digging team who were beaver away in soaring temperatures, we were given a tour of the site by the project and excavation directors Professor Mike Fulford and Dr Amanda Clarke. The project, now in its fifth year, aims to examine part of one *insula* of the Roman town in detail, hoping for insights into the beginning and end of the town as well as how it changed over the centuries. Mike then led one party on a walk around the circuit of Silchester's town wall, while others took a shorter route to meet up with them at the town's amphitheatre.

At the end of August we went off to a very different university excavation at Alchester near Bicester, where for the last few years Dr Eberhard Sauer of Oxford University (but now at Edinburgh) has been working with a small group of diggers in narrow trenches set in fields that are often full of sheep. The siting of the trenches has been very well aimed, because a major discovery has been that there was a Roman fortress at Alchester before the Roman town was established. This fortress is certainly contemporary with the legionary fortress at Colchester, and may even have been built slightly earlier. Alchester may hold the key as to whether the Romans invaded via Kent or Hampshire/West Sussex, or launched a two-pronged attack via both. On the way home we stopped off briefly in Aylesbury for refreshments and a quick visit to the museum there.

One Saturday in October Friends had a chance to visit the Trust's excavations at two of the sites dug as part of the

changes to the Garrison south of the town (see pages 14-21).

Back closer to home, a coach party of the Friends went off in November to visit three churches in south Suffolk. First of all we went to Aldham, a round-towered church in a beautiful setting. A few small fragments of Anglo-Saxon sculpture built into the walls hint at the pre-conquest history of the village. Next came Great Bricett, where the unusually large parish church is nearly all that remains of an Augustinian priory. Some of the cloister buildings were converted into a house joining onto the church, and thanks to the owner, Rupert Cooper, we were able to go into the house to see ancient timber woodwork revealed during building work in 1956. The last church was Elmsett, which has a 'Tithe War' memorial outside commemorating an incident in 1932 when a crowd of some 300 people tried to prevent bailiffs getting to Elmsett Hall to seize goods for non-payment of tithes to the church. Harold Cooper and Edwin Westren, who were both there as young lads, told us details of the protest and explained the background to the national anti-tithe movement. The law was changed in 1936 but not fully abolished until 1977.

The Friends continue to support the Trust in various ways, including the production of **The Colchester Archaeologist**. If you are interested in joining the Friends, details can be found on the inside of the front cover.

Nina Crummy