



The evidence of this is easy to find in the walls of the castle that the Normans built around the podium of the once magnificent Temple of Claudius, and in our many churches and heritage buildings.

As a result, apart from a huge number of archaeological finds in our museums, evidence of Roman Colchester is limited. We hope that this leaflet will guide you to where that evidence is to be found.

Please take the Colchester Roman Trail with us and

visit the various places marked on our maps, as follows:

1. **THE BALKERNE GATE** - The best preserved Roman gateway in Britain; built as one of the several gateways into the walled colonia, after the destruction of Queen Boadicea in AD 60. Close by the Jumbo water tower.
2. **THE ROMAN WALL** - the oldest Roman wall in Britain completed circa AD 90 and 2800 metres long, 6 metres high, 2.4 metres thick. A walk around the walls is to be recommended.
3. **THE TEMPLE OF CLAUDIUS** - Built to the glory of the Emperor Claudius circa AD 50, later to be destroyed by Boudicca, but rebuilt again. Its foundations can be visited underneath our Norman castle.
4. **THE ROMAN CIRCUS** - The only known Roman circus in Britain, 440 metres long, 8 starting gates seating for 15,000, identified in 2004. During warmer months, open to visitors at Roman Circus House, accessed via Butt Road.
5. **THE ROMAN THEATRE OF THE COLONIA** - to be seen in Maidenburgh Street.
6. **THE ROMAN THEATRE and the ROMANO-CELTIC TEMPLE AT GOSBECKS** - both to be found at Gosbecks to the south of the town, on the Maldon Road. Easy parking for cars.

7. **THE ROMANO-CHRISTIAN CHURCH** - The earliest known Christian church in Britain, sited at the centre of a huge Roman period graveyard at Southway, next to the Police Station.
8. **THE ROMANO-BRITISH DEFENSIVE DYKE SYSTEM** - Started by the Iron-Age British people and continued to be maintained and enhanced into the Roman period. See the map for general locations. Unique in Britain.
9. **ROMAN FINDS AT COLCHESTER CASTLE** - Our award winning Castle Museum and Park are essential places for visitors to visit. The park has examples of Roman pavements, walls, drains, etc. The museum offers a huge collection of Roman period finds.
10. **GUIDED TOURS** - Please ask at the Visitor Information Centre for information about guided tours, located at the top of Queen Street, next to the War Memorial, tel 01206 282920.

List of Illustrations

- a. Bronze bust thought to be of the Emperor Claudius, found in a river and presumed to be part of a much larger statue.
- b. 'The Balkerne Gate' as it might have looked circa AD 80.
- c. Stele (tombstone) of a Thracian cavalry soldier named Longinus Sdapeze who died in Camulodunum circa AD 50 (in the Castle Museum).
- d. Model of how it is believed the Temple of Claudius would have looked circa AD 55, it being later destroyed by Boadicca.
- e. A funerary 'face' urn, found intact in a 'box' grave and now in the Castle Museum.
- f. 'The Colchester Vase'. A remarkable piece of Roman pottery depicting named gladiators of the time and now in the Castle Museum.
- g. Stele of a Roman centurion named Marcus Favonius Facilis who died in Camulodunum circa AD 100.



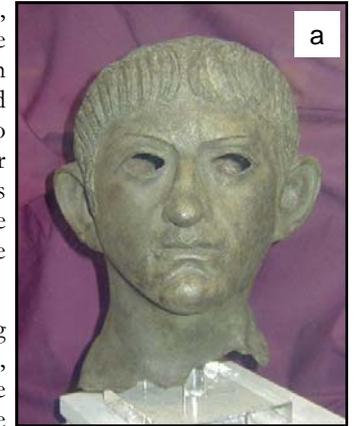
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ROMAN COLCHESTER

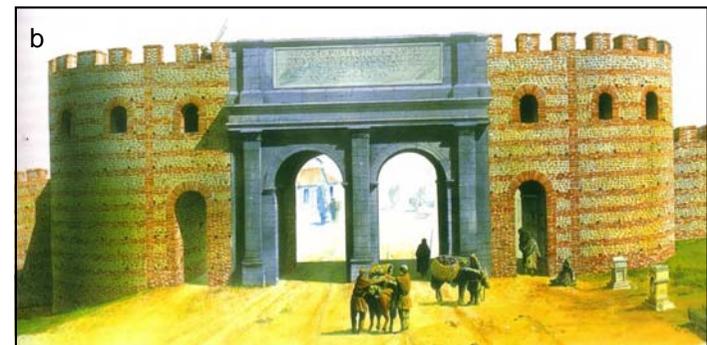
A CITY GUIDE

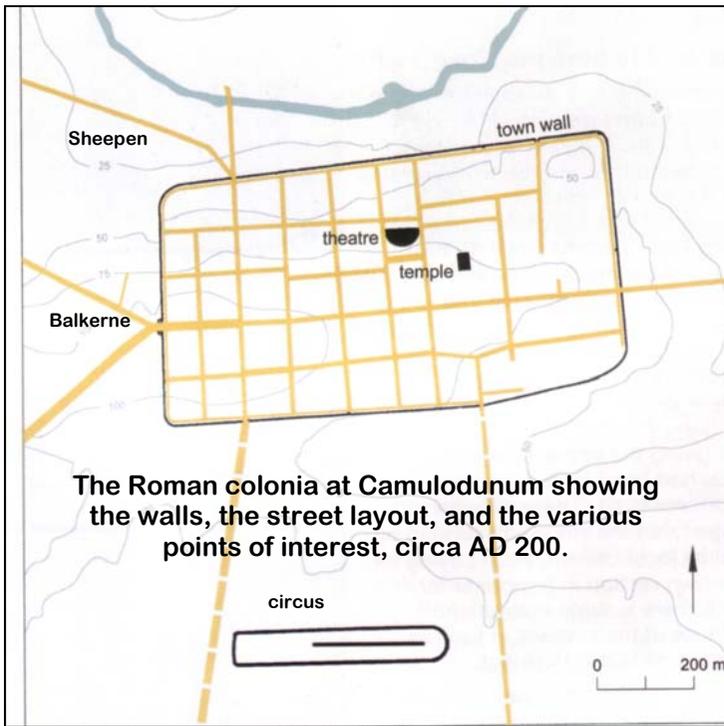
In or around the year AD 40, King Cunobelin, leader of the most powerful of the British tribes, died. His death resulted in a power struggle over who should succeed him. Under pressure from Cunobelin's sons, Verica, king of the Atrebatas, called upon Rome for help.



The Romans seized this long awaited opportunity and, under the direction of the Emperor Claudius, the Romans invaded Britain. They crossed the channel and made their way to the most powerful settlement in Britain, a place known as Camulodunom (now known as Colchester). Here they accepted the surrender of a number of British tribal leaders and set about the task of conquering and subduing the rest of Britannia.

Within a short time they had constructed a fortress on a nearby hillside, overlooking the British people of Camulodunum (the Romanised spelling of the name) who lived on low lying ground, near rivers and fresh springs, particularly in the modern day areas known as Sheepen and Gosbecks.





The Roman colonia at Camulodunum showing the walls, the street layout, and the various points of interest, circa AD 200.

We can only guess at how the British people felt about the situation. There was certainly some resistance to Roman rule, yet they were forced to accept the peace and order that it brought. Their lands were being taken to give to the new colonia's occupants. However, they were powerless to prevent it.

A triumphal arch was erected by the Roman conquerors, to the glory of the Emperor Claudius at the place we now know as Balkerne Gate. The fortress was short lived, probably because the British people quickly settled down to a peaceful way of life, and the hill top area was expanded into what was to become a colonia, a place where retired Roman soldiers could live and settle, be given land and who could be relied upon to look after Rome's interests.



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The newly laid out Roman capital (named the Colonia Victricensis - City of Victory) was set out and its streets, unencumbered by any earlier buildings, were laid out perfectly in east/west, north/south direction - as we see our High Street/East Hill and North Hill/Head Street are today. The Romans had a clear canvas with which to work!



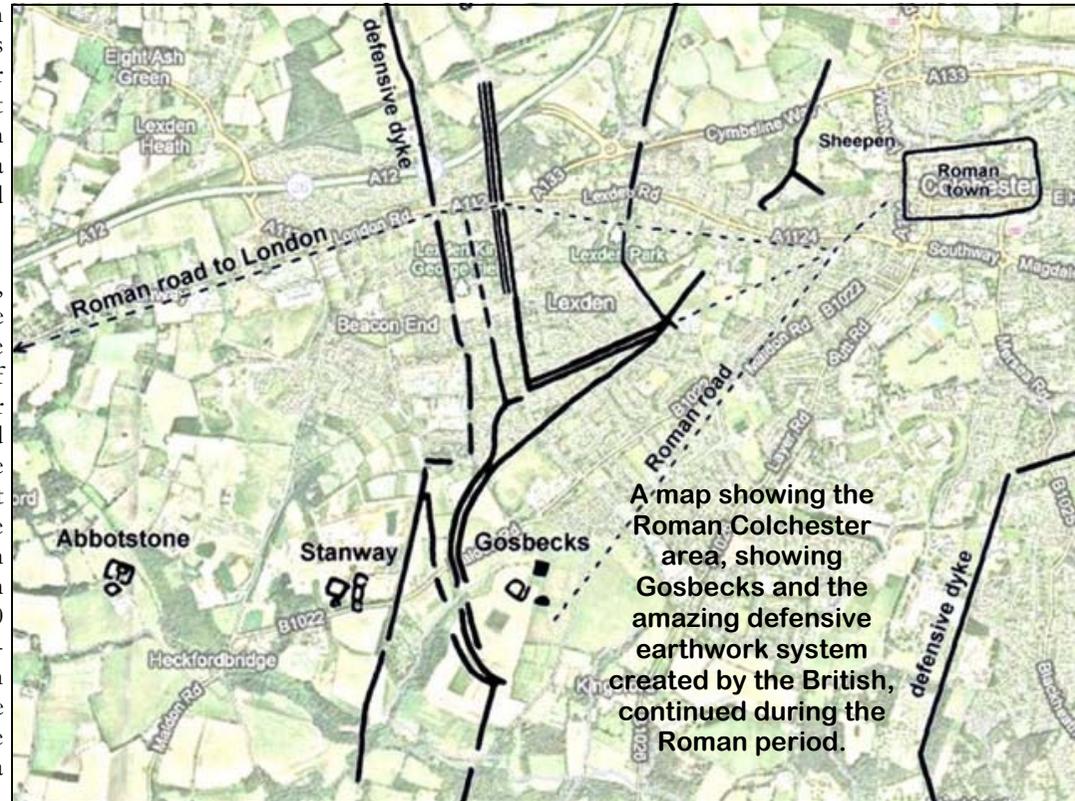
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Some 17 years after the Roman invasion however, in the year AD 60, the peace was shattered when Queen Boudicca (Boadicea), widow of King Prasutagus of the Iceni, so outraged by her treatment after her husband's death, assembled a huge army and headed south, seemingly bent on murder and destruction, razing Colchester to the ground and killing 30,000 (according to the Roman historian Tacitus) people, perhaps 7,000 of our Colchester inhabitants. She then continued on to destroy all things Roman and, in particular, Londinium (London) and Verulamium (St Albans).

Never again would the Romans be so unprepared and so, from around AD 70 they began the construction of what was to become the longest Roman settlement defensive wall in Britain, some 2800 metres long, around the colonia (a city by any other name).

Over the next few centuries, until circa AD 410, when Roman protection ended, Camulodunum evolved into a thriving Roman city, no longer the capital, as Londinium with its better position for trade and transport soon overtook Camulodunum in importance - but clearly still a place of great importance and Roman culture.

The Romans constructed here, two theatres (there are only five Roman theatres known in the whole of Britain), the Temple of Claudius (on the same site as our present day Norman castle) and numerous other temples (the Romano-Celtic temple at Gosbecks could accommodate over 5,000 people), a Roman circus (the only one known in Britain, with seating for 15,000 spectators), the earliest Romano-Christian church in Britain (when the Emperor Constantine declared the Roman empire to be Christian around AD 330) and a



A map showing the Roman Colchester area, showing Gosbecks and the amazing defensive earthwork system created by the British, continued during the Roman period.



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very orderly street system with houses, industry and government buildings.

...and, of course, in so doing they also brought us such things as underfloor heating, industry, art and culture, sanitation, roads, irrigation, clean water, medicine, education, wine, olives, baths, law and order, peace - and possibly an aqueduct.

This leaflet shows you where you can go to see the remains of our incredible Roman heritage. Please remember that the Normans who arrived here in the 11th century found a decayed city of a bygone age. As had the Romans before them, they quickly realised that there is no natural building stone in this part of Essex. But they found plenty of building materials left lying around that could be used. So they, in turn, set about very efficiently destroying Roman Colchester, using the decayed Roman building materials to construct their new city.



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