

the north, attacked Colchester and destroyed it, before moving on to destroy London and St Albans. The Roman colonia of Camulodunum, modern day Colchester, had been left exposed to attack whilst its army was away on campaign and it was decreed that, never again must that be allowed to happen. So, after brutal reprisals against the British people, the Romans decided to build a wall around its capital city in Britannia.

We hope that this city guide will assist you in taking a tour around the walls that the Romans built here, some 1900 years ago. Parts of it are missing. Parts of it were destroyed during the Siege of Colchester in 1648. Parts of it are very decayed and in need of repair.

THE MAPS

The map on the front page of this leaflet shows the modern day outline of the town wall with its principal points marked. The large map on the inside of the leaflet was created by archaeologists and shows what is known of how the Roman colonia was laid out over the period of years of the Roman occupation (AD 43 to 410). It was divided into sections known as 'insulae'. Interestingly, many of our modern day roads aligned with the original Roman roadways.

THE METHOD OF CONSTRUCTION

The Romans realised that there was no natural building stone in this part of Essex, so they had to find alternatives. A material known as 'septaria' (a compacted clay) occurs naturally on the beaches of Harwich and Walton-on-the-Naze and this had to be dug out and brought back. Also, Essex's geology provided them with boulder clay that could be fired to make bricks. Remember that the area would have been heavily forested at that time so



the fuel to fire the bricks and tiles was easily at hand. Boudicca's attack also meant that there were roof tiles and materials that could be re-cycled. The lime needed for the mortar would most likely have come from Kent. A rough calculation tells us that the 2,800 metre length, 6 metre height and 2.4 metre thickness of the wall, required at least 40,000 tonnes of materials for the wall alone. The construction of the wall was no small task and would have been carried out by Roman soldiers, assisted by local labour from the

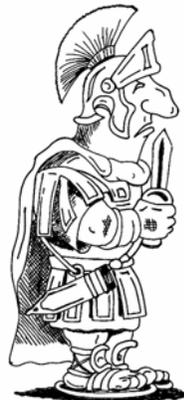
British people. Precise dating of the wall is uncertain but it is thought to have been started around AD 70 and finished 20 or so years later.

The construction of the wall was of an 'ashlar' construction. A foundation base was laid down and then an inner and an outer wall was built, with a rubble infill, as this drawing shows. A clear demonstration of this can be seen at the 1980s breach of this Scheduled Ancient Monument, that was permitted in St John's Street to give underground access to the new Culver Precinct.



Each inner and outer wall was precisely laid in a set number of courses, with around five septaria courses, followed by four fired tile courses. It was a thorough and precise bit of work, unsurpassed in modern times.

The inset picture shows one of the drain outlets in Vineyard Street car park. The Roman builders brought many skills and techniques and they appreciated the value of hygiene provided by a good drainage system. (There are underground Roman drains all over the town.)



For details of Guided Tours, please contact our Visitor Information Centre at Hollytrees Mansion, near to the War Memorial, tel 01206 282920.

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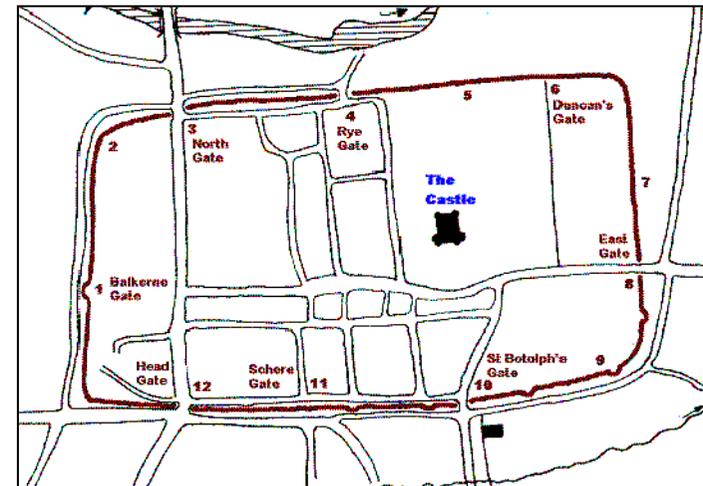
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Colchester's Roman Walls

A CITY GUIDE



The Romans invaded Britain in AD 43 and made Colchester their first capital. However, all did not go smoothly for them and, in the year AD 60, Queen Boudicca (Boadicea) of the Iceni tribe to



2. North West Corner Down Balkerne Hill, the wall is missing in places and much repaired in more recent times. Just over the wall here, archaeologists discovered what appears to have been a Roman bath house complex. Being built on a hill, originally for defensive reasons, their only natural spring water within the colonia was to be found here. Just across the road is what is left of Peter Schuyler Bruff's Victorian water works. A little further to the west is the area known as Sheepen, where the Iron Age people once lived and worked.

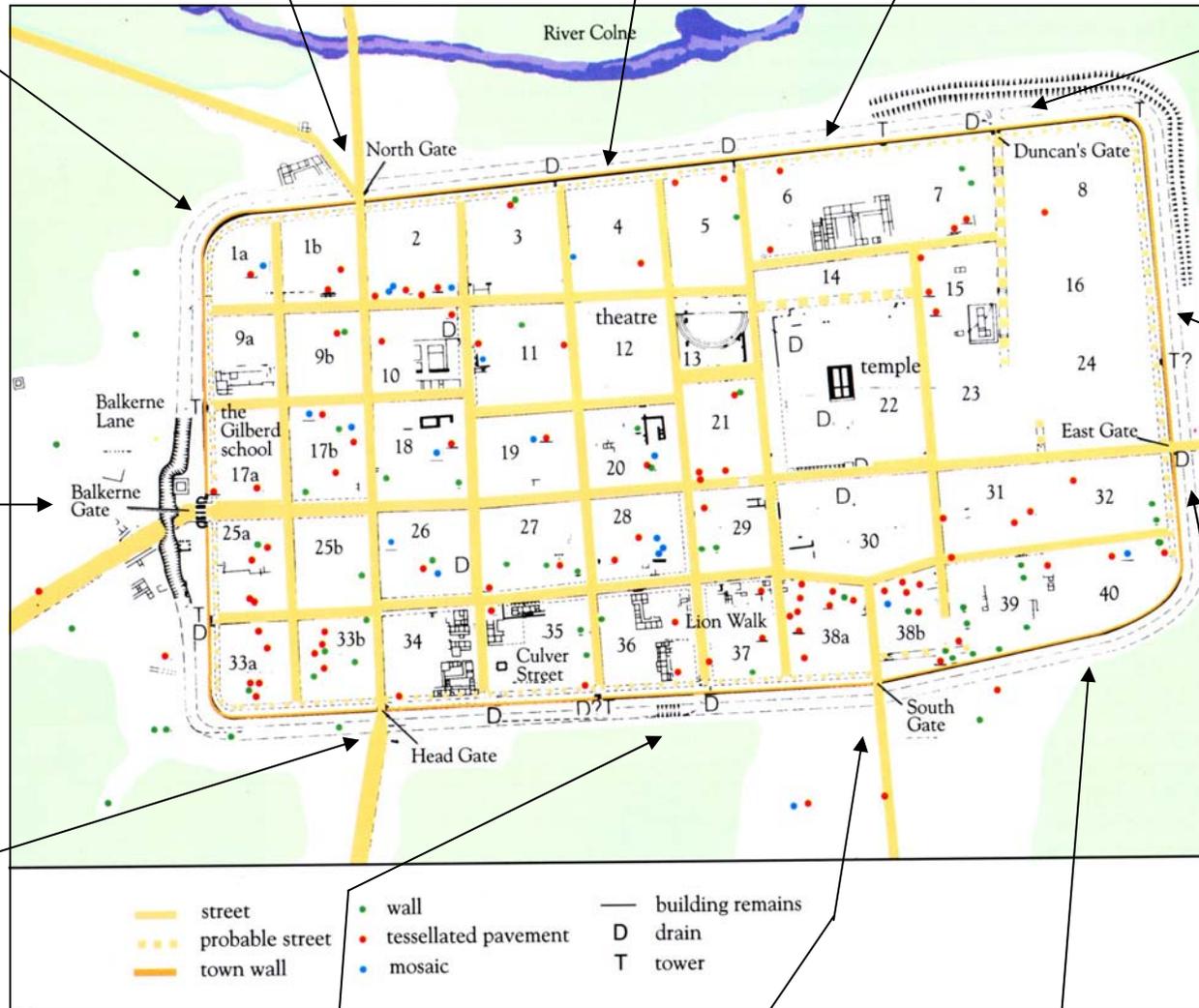
3. North Gate This gate would have been on a similar scale to the Balkerne Gate. The last evidence of the gate was removed in the 19th century, to suit greater traffic movement.

4. Rye Gate Once leading to Middle Mill, this medieval gate is a part of Castle Park and has no known Roman significance. Most of the associated Roman wall has been lost to us.

5. North Wall This section of the wall is north facing and has much lichen growth. It has lost its original outer wall structure and now comprises a much stabilised and repaired rubble infill of the original wall.

6. Duncan's Gate This is known as a postern gate and not of the scale of the main gates into the colonia. It was discovered by an amateur archaeologist named Duncan in the 1850s. It would have served to enable passage to the nearby river and to a cemetery that existed in the area. Part of the original Roman arched window section simply fell over and lies intact as it fell. There is also a well preserved drain system connected with the gate. This could be a great interpretation and reproduction project for the future.

1. The Balkerne Gate We start our tour at the oldest part of the wall, where it is believed once stood a monumental arch, raised to the glory of the Roman Emperor Claudius in the AD 50's. When the city wall was constructed, this arch was incorporated into the wall and was made a part of one of the main gateways into the colonia. Later in the Roman period, it was made redundant and was baulked, blocked-up, thus leading to its preservation, as you can see today.



7. East Wall Until recently this section of the wall was in a very poor state of repair, with ownership issues leading to its neglect. Interesting styles of specialist repair work have recently been carried out with the use of modern day materials, something that has been going on over many centuries. In ancient times, if you were fortunate to have a wall around your town, it was wise to repair it!

12. Head Gate It seems likely that after Balkerne was sealed, this became the main gateway, leading as it would have, to the very important cultural settlement at modern day Gosbecks, and beyond that to Londinium (London). Also, near this place was to be built the earliest Romano-Christian church that you can see next to the police station nearby and where a huge Roman graveyard was situated. The Romans buried their dead outside their city walls.

11. Scheregate It is thought that this gateway used to be a Roman drain that has been opened up in the medieval period to give access to St John's Abbey.

10. St Botolph's Gate Another of the five main gates into the Roman colonia. This one would have witnessed the triumphal processions that would have led to the circus.

9. South East Corner Along this section you can see some of the several medieval bastions that were added to the wall around 1380, when the Peasants' Revolt was in full swing.

8. East Gate A plaque on a nearby building tells us that this gate fell down in the 1680s, shortly after the Siege of Colchester of 1648. Can you see the Roman drain in the wall next to St James' church? East Hill has clearly been lowered to below the Roman level at around that period in time to make the passage of traffic up the hill easier. Remember that the military advantage of the colonia was the hill on which it was built. This must have made it very difficult for horse drawn traffic throughout the ages.