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Review *See p. 59*

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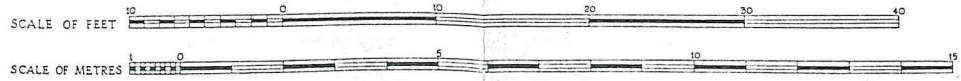
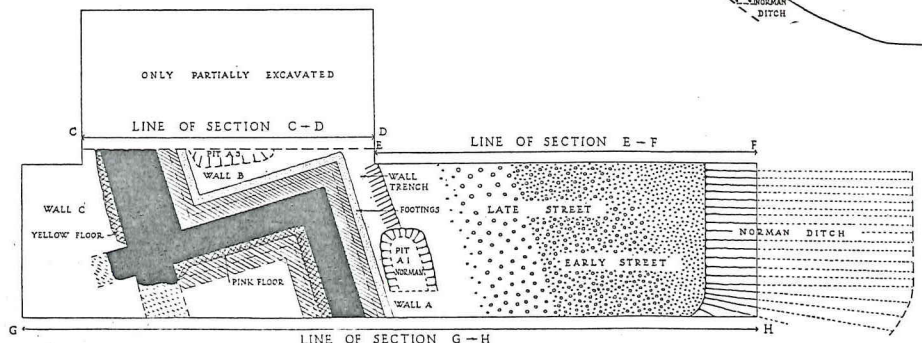
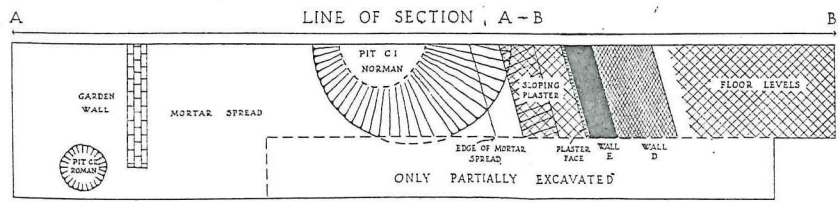
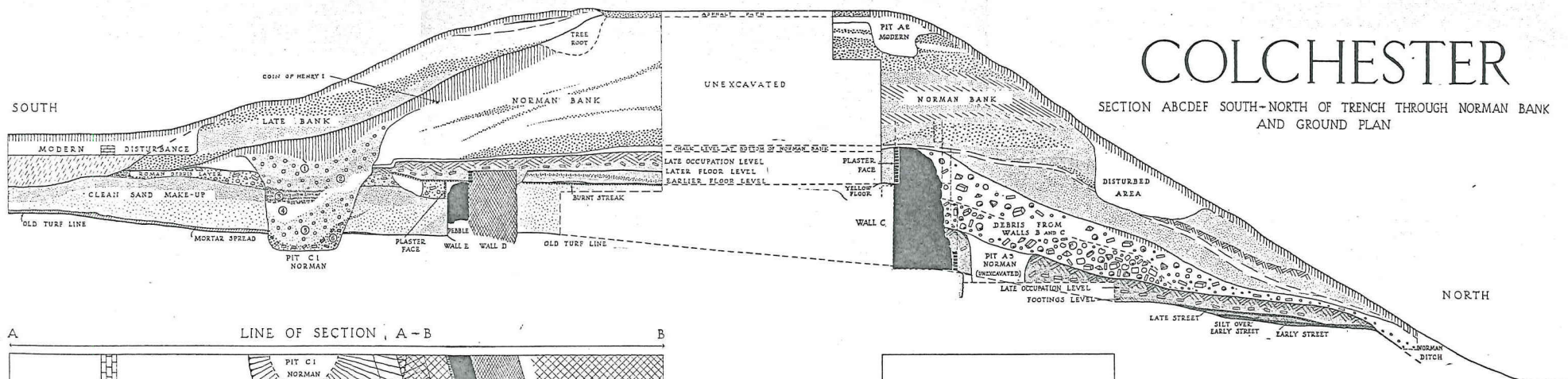
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COLCHESTER

SECTION ABCDEF SOUTH-NORTH OF TRENCH THROUGH NORMAN BANK AND GROUND PLAN



THE NORMAN BANK OF COLCHESTER CASTLE

By M. AYLWIN COTTON, F.S.A.

DURING the excavations at Colchester in 1950, in *Insula* 22⁴ of the *Colonia*, the Norman Bank was sectioned. An account has been given of the underlying Roman structures,¹ but not of the later phases of this earthwork. They consisted of the Norman Bank itself and a later make-up.

THE NORMAN EARTHWORK (fig. 1 and pl. xvi)

On the arrival of the Normans at Colchester there must still have been standing substantial ruins of the Roman town. Somewhere between the years 1076 and 1086 it is believed that they cleared the Temple ruins, or their site, exposing the *podium* around which they built the Keep, using for it much of the Roman building material already on the site. Traces of this activity were found in the trench cut into the earthwork. Two pits (pits A1 and A3) had been dug through the latest Roman occupation level against the outer face of the wall of the Roman structure under the bank, presumably as scaffold-holds for scaffolding put up to reach their upper parts. Behind the latest Roman occupation layer, the faced septaria of the Roman wall were left undisturbed; above this they were nearly all torn away from the wall core. Outside the north wall of this Roman building a great spill of wall debris marks this period of robbing.

The Upper Bailey of the Castle was at first defended by a bank and ditch. These still form a formidable monument on the north and east. Little remains on the west, but it still exists to a height of 8 feet in places on the south.² No historic date is known for the building of this defence, although a reference to the re-erection of a strong palisade on its crest, to replace one recently blown down, was made in the Pipe Rolls for A.D. 1219. Internal evidence suggests that it was built later than the Keep, since:

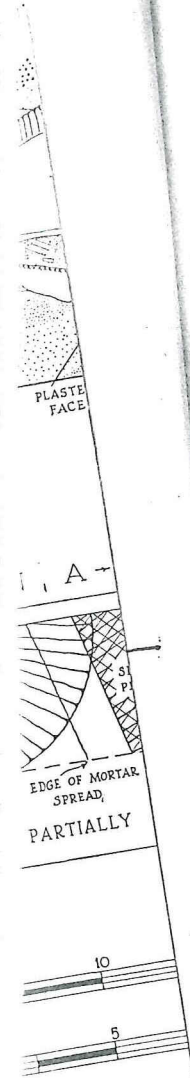
- (i) on the north side it is not in alignment with the north face of the Keep;
- (ii) there is a suggestion of a pause between the robbing of the Roman walls and the bank build, shown by a slight turf-line over the wall-tumble which produced a few sherds of pottery (fig. 3, 3-5);
- (iii) it may not have been built until after A.D. 1100, because a rare silver penny of Henry I was found in the junction of its make-up and the overlying turf-line.

The earthwork now stands 27 feet high above the present filled-in ditch under the rose-garden, and 20 feet above the old ground level at its central point. Its base is now 98 feet wide. The bank was based on a layer of white chalk or lime which formed a level surface over the top of the north wall of the Roman building

¹ M. R. Hull, *Roman Colchester*, Research Report No. XX (1958), pp. 180-9. Figs. 81 (facing p. 161) and 91 (between pp. 180 and 181) from this Report

are here reproduced as fig. 1 and pl. xvi.

² I am indebted to Mr. Hull for this information, found during his excavation of the southern entrance.



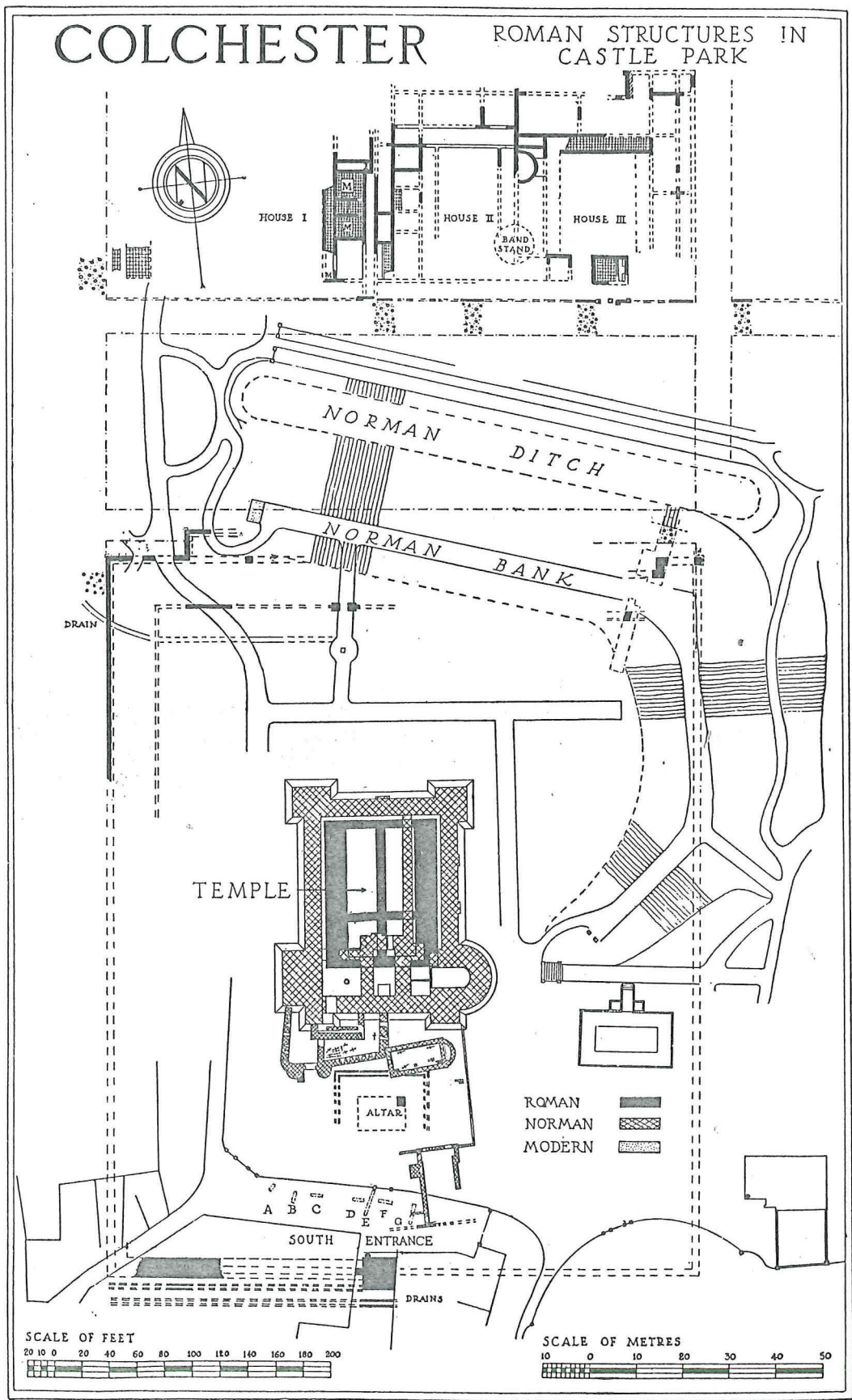


FIG. 1. Colchester: Temple of Claudius and its precinct, *Insula 22*.

and the flat ground to its south, and which tipped over the wall outside and sloped down over the wall-tumble.¹ This may perhaps have been thrown down to form a hard surface over which to run carts removing stones from the walls to build the Keep. The bank itself was built up of compact layers of sand and gravel derived probably from the ditch. Some of the first levels lying immediately on top of the Roman wall were of dirty gravel which may have come from the destruction of the two Roman streets and late occupation level cut into by the ditch.

Whilst the bank contained a quantity of derived Roman sherds, Norman pottery was sparse.² The crest of the bank had been removed by levelling under the area now occupied by an asphalt path, and no trace of a palisade was found. On the south of the bank was a large Norman pit (pit C1) which produced two pots³ and the greater part of a young ox skeleton.

THE LATE BANK

From the turf-line which grew over the Norman Bank came a miscellaneous collection of sherds, clay tobacco pipes, and a Nuremberg counter of A.D. 1650–1750. On its southern side the bank had been patched, probably in the nineteenth century, as worn halfpennies, probably of George IV, indicated. A further addition of surplus earth from the 1950 excavations tipped over this slope should be recorded.

SMALL FINDS

There were no noteworthy objects from the Norman levels. Those of interest from the Late Bank were a miniature pewter cup and many clay pipes. The majority of the pipes were of Oswald's Type 8a⁴ which includes two groups dated as *c.* 1650–90 and *c.* 1670–1720. They were associated with the Colchester tradesman's token of 1657 and the two Nuremberg jettons of comparable date (see below). One pipe had a straight cut or an incised broken line on its base; another had a circle enclosing dots and initials of which only an S remains. A few examples of Oswald's Type 4c, dated as *c.* 1630–70, also occurred.

COINS

Norman silver penny. A silver coin, found in the top of the Norman Bank at its junction with the old turf-line which covered it, is a penny of Henry I of the rare X type.⁵

¹ Mr. Hull has noted that there is a reference in an entry in Wire's diary for 1845 to a 'thin layer of lime or chalk resting on the ground superimposed by one of concrete' which he observed when trenches were cut in the Bailey, and suggests that it may refer to a comparable level.

² Fig. 3, 6–11.

³ Fig. 3, 12–13 and pl. xvii.

⁴ *A.N.L.* 3.10 (1951), 153–9; A. Oswald, 'The Archaeology and Economic History of English Clay Tobacco Pipes', *Journ. Brit. Arch. Assoc.*, 3rd ser. xxii (1960), 40–102.

⁵ Published in full by R. A. G. Carson, *B.N.F.* xxvi (1949–51), 344–5 and pl. A, 8. The coin was presented to the British Museum by the Colchester Museum Committee.

Nuremberg counters or jettons. Two bronze counters or jettons of Hans Krauwinkel of Nuremberg, one much worn, were found in the turf-line over the Norman Bank, in the tail of the Late Bank.¹

Tradesman's token. A copper farthing of JOHN COVENEY, Colchester, of A.D. 1657, was found in an unstratified level. According to Mason,² there is a record of 1645 of a John Coveney, a baymaker, who was probably the man who issued the tokens of 1657 and 1667. 'A John Coveney, householder', was buried at St. James on 3rd April 1687.

HUMAN, ANIMAL, BIRD, AND FISH BONES

*Human bones.*³ A number of fragments were recovered from levels in the Norman Bank.⁴ These included a single intermediate phalanx of the little finger, two skull-vault fragments, two incomplete fibulae of different individuals, a navicular bone, a great toe metatarsal, the first phalanx of a finger, a small fragment perhaps the shaft of a tibia, and the right half of a mandible. The last piece was interesting. The teeth were missing, but two molars (M2 and M3) had been lost during life and the alveolar margin of the jaw had healed smoothly afterwards. It would appear that these teeth had been extracted, for if they had remained decaying in the jaw one might have expected to find evidence of abscesses instead of clean healing.

*Animal bones.*⁵ Most of these were undistinguished, being those of the usual domestic animals, cattle (small in comparison with modern beasts), sheep, and pigs. A few bones of horses were also present, but nothing suggests that they were used for food. A complete femur of a rabbit (from pit A1, level 2) is the solitary specimen of the species, perhaps suggesting that it was then less numerous and widespread than today. Venison does not seem to have been more than a rarity on the menu, since a red-deer metatarsal was the only fragment seen. The Norman scaffold-pit (pit A1, level 2) yielded the bones of the left fore-quarter of an ox scapula, humerus, ulna, and radius complete. The bones bore cut-marks, and it seems likely that this was a gargantuan joint of beef which, when the meat had been carved off it, was thrown into the pit without being disjointed. Pit C1, level 3, contained 73 fragments of bones of an ox, being mostly vertebrae and ribs, possibly of the same young individual (the vertebral epiphyses were mostly still infused with the bodies of the

¹ For accounts of this prolific coinage of the mid-sixteenth to mid-seventeenth century, cf. James Wyatt, 'Nuremberg Tokens', *Reports and Papers of the Architectural Societies*, vii (1863-4), 300-5; and F. P. Barnard, *The Casting-Counter and the Counting Board* (1916), pp. 208-9.

² Ernest N. Mason, *Ancient Tokens of Colchester* (1902), pp. 27 and 81 (Benham & Co.: Colchester). Cf. also William Boyne, *Tokens issued in the 17th century in England, Wales and Ireland by Corporations, Merchants, Tradesmen, etc.* (1858), no. 78, p. 77, or vol. i of Williamson's ed. of 1889, no. 108, p. 216.

³ Report by Dr. I. W. Cornwall, Institute of Archaeology, London.

⁴ Found in the make-up of the Norman Bank. The occurrence of human bones in any earth derived from Roman levels inside the *Colonia* would be surprising. It may be noted, however, that Dr. Henry Laver found skeletons, which he took to be of Saxon date, on the red concrete floor inside the west wall; cf. *Tr. Essex Arch. Soc.* ix (1906), 123, and these may perhaps be similar remains.

⁵ Report by Dr. I. W. Cornwall, Institute of Archaeology, London.

vertebrae). Perhaps this also was the remains of a lordly baron of beef. The total number of bones from the Norman levels which were identified were: ox (142), sheep (23), horse (3), pig (44), rabbit (1), deer (2), and fox (1).

*Bird bones.*¹ The majority of bird bones from the Norman levels belong to the domestic fowl, *Gallus bankiva* var. *domestica*. There are two right femora differing very much in size between the two sexes of that day. On the whole domestic fowl have increased enormously as a result of protection and a constant food supply, and tend to deviate still further from the small size of the wild jungle fowl from which it was apparently derived originally. There is in addition an ulna and a radius, both from the left side, a right tibio-tarsus, and two very much abraded tarso-metatarsals. Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*) was represented by the head of the right femur, and a proximal end of the right humerus of the same species. There was found also part of the shaft of a left humerus of a swan (*Cygnus* sp.) There is too little of it to determine the species.

*Fish bone.*² One fish bone was found in pit C1, level 4. This was the first basal bone of the anal fin of a plaice (*Pleuronectes platessa*), or the bone often referred to as the 'plaice bone'.

¹ Report by the late Miss M. I. Platt, Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh.

² Report by Dr. Trewavas, British Museum (Natural History).