Ruins to Re-use:
Romano-British Remains in Post-Conquest
Literary and Material Culture

Volume Two of Two

Jane-Heloise Nancarrow
Abstract
This thesis examines the re-use of Roman material culture in England following the Norman Conquest at St Albans, Chester, and Colchester. It argues that the material legacy of Roman Britain conveyed a sense of imperial authority, antiquity and longevity, and an association with the early Christian church, which were appropriated to serve transitional Norman royal, elite, monastic and parochial interests in different architectural forms. Importantly, this thesis examines literary evidence describing the Roman past, Roman buildings, and even instances of re-use, which were produced at each town as part of the intellectual expansion of the twelfth century.

This thesis comprises of two introductory chapters, followed by three central case study chapters, and culminates in a comparative discussion chapter which evaluates re-use in the context of competing socio-political interests following the Norman Conquest. It expands upon previous understandings of re-use by focusing on topography, building material and hidden reuse, in addition to the re-use of portable remains and decorative emulation.

The aim of this thesis is to develop an interdisciplinary methodological and theoretical approach to examine re-use, in the knowledge that this yields a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. In addition to literary and archaeological evidence, it draws theoretical perspectives from history, art history, and literary criticism.

The underlying tenet of this thesis challenges the view that re-use was often unremarkable. Through an examination of multi-disciplinary evidence, it becomes clear that re-use was a complex, nuanced and, above all, meaningful part of the architectural endeavours of the Normans, and was used to secure their primacy at these towns and across their emerging nation.
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Plan of the external and internal walls of the castle, with the load bearing Norman wall crossing a weaker part of the Roman barrel vault. Phillip Crummy, *Aspects of Anglo-Saxon and Norman Colchester*, p 48.
Cracks appeared in the excavated vaults of Colchester Castle following heavy rains in 1931, directly underneath the main interior wall. This shows that the Normans believed the podium to be, if not solid, then of a sufficiently load-bearing capacity to support large masonry walls. However, they not build the main exterior walls on the podium.

The divide between the Roman podium and the abutting Norman foundations in the vaults of Colchester Castle. This was photographed in the vault underneath the podium, on the north side of the castle.
The large freestone blocks surrounding the entrance and forming the quoins of major projections of the keep were salvaged from Roman buildings (most likely the front wall of the Roman temple complex).
Figure 135:
Note that the stone quoins do not extend higher than the first phase of building. This may indicate that this particular supply of Roman stone ran out early in the building of the west wall of the keep.

Figure 136:
The foundations of the west wall. Note the careful selection of *petit appareil* blocks, and an attempt to lay them in a fashion that resembles the better preserved sections of Roman wall.
Figure 137:
Main internal spiral staircase. Like at St Albans, the *tegulae* provided building material for a variety of functions. Here, the large, hard tiles are used as the treads for stairs.
Figure 138:
Flint and tile banding in the south wall of the apse. The layers of brick interspersed with stone, termed 'polychromy' can also be seen in the Roman walls around the town. The Norman builders experimented with different ways of layering the polychromy in the north end of the eastern wall face.
Figure 139:
In some places in the east wall, the tiles are confined to a single layer. This does not match the polychromy found in the nearby Roman walls, where several layers of brick are interspersed with the flint.
Figure 140:
When viewed from further away, despite not precisely emulating the Roman polychromy, the monumental size of Colchester Keep emphasises the banding in the decoration. It may have been this overall decorative effect that the builders were trying to evoke. Colchester Keep viewed from the north-east corner.
Section of the Roman wall near the Balkerne Gate. The selection and use of *petit appareil* stone interspersed with Roman brick was a decorative technique copied by the Normans.

The main dividing wall at a ground floor level. Tile banding was also practised in the interior of the castle.
Herringbone decoration made out of Roman bricks adorns the first floor internal wall. It is not known whether this surface was plastered, but the deliberate decoration using the rarer Roman tegulae suggests that it wasn’t.

All of the castle’s fireplaces, on each floor, were constructed out of Roman tiles arranged in decorative herringbone patterns.
Figure 145:
This fireplace is constructed using Roman *tegulae* and smaller medieval bricks. It may have been completely plastered, as the fire-blackened plaster at the top of the fireplace attests.

Figure 146:
The small apse on the side of the top-floor chapel. Angled *tegulae* are used here in a single band for decoration.
Figure 147:
Plan of the Roman theatre of Colchester, with the area of St Helen's and the excavated remains marked in darker shading.
Figure 148:
Plan of the observed Roman walls, and the location of St Helen’s, Phillip Crummy, *Aspects of Anglo-Saxon and Norman Colchester*, p 147.
Figure 149:
The line of the outer wall of the Roman theatre was built as a dark section of bricks into the surface of Maidenburgh Street. The inner wall of the theatre is underneath St Helen's church, further down the street on the left.
Figure 150:
The Roman theatre of Colchester. Remains of the internal corridor can be seen as the flat surface in the middle ground, the foundation of the outer wall of the theatre is the raised area in the foreground.

Figure 151:
The same view of the theatre foundations from the north, with the line of the outer wall more visible (please excuse the reflection).
Figure 152:
The north face of St Helen's chapel, from the corner of Maidenburgh Street and St Helen's Lane.
Figure 153:
Roman masonry at the lowest levels of the north wall of St Helen’s chapel.

Figure 154:
A photograph of St Helen’s chapel, taken in 1892 (prior to the late nineteenth century restoration).
Figure 155:
Location and plan of St John's Benedictine monastery, of which nothing now survives. Adam Wightman. *St John's Abbey church*, figure one.
Figure 156:
Potential plan of St John’s, based on proportions gathered from excavation of the west end and an early drawing of the church.
Adam Wightman. *St John’s Abbey church*, p 22.
Figure 157:
Location of St Botolph's Augustinian Priory to the south east of the Roman south gate and along the Roman route into Colchester.
Figure 158:
Plan of St Botolph’s church and associated monastic buildings. The dark areas are the remaining walls which can be seen today.
Figure 159:
St Botolph’s from the south east, the remains visible today consist of the nave. The crossing and east end of the church were destroyed in the English Civil War.
The Romanesque priory of St Botolph's, Colchester was built almost entirely out of re-used Roman stone and tile.
Figure 161:
The town wall adjacent to St Botolph’s is of a different character to the rest of the Roman walls, suggesting a later date for construction and a possible source of building stone for the twelfth-century monasteries.
Figure 162: 
The west front of St Botolph's Colchester. Note the arches, doorways, window frames, and quoins constructed out of recycled Roman tegulae.
Figure 163:
The late-Romanesque central doorway in the west front of St Botolph’s, Colchester. The decorative relief is carved Caen stone, interspersed with Roman tegulae.
Figure 164:
The decorative scheme at St Botolph’s may have involved the lime rendering of the exposed Roman brickwork.
Figure 165:
The nave pillars near the west door at St Botolph’s show evidence of rubble construction or repair.
But at the crossing end of the nave, the Romanesque pillars clearly show the rubble and tile polychrome striation reminiscent of Roman buildings.

Nave pillars towards the crossing on the north side of St Botolph's show evident polychrome banding. This may have helped keep levels even when building with rubble, but it is difficult to see how this construction technique could be anything other than intended for decorative effect.
Figures 168:
When viewed from further away, pillars in the north nave aisle demonstrate a pleasing aesthetic effect.