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

Volume Two of Two

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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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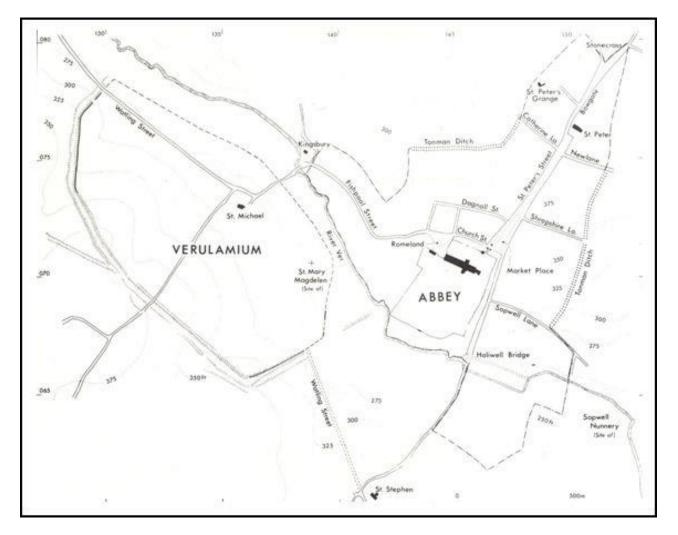


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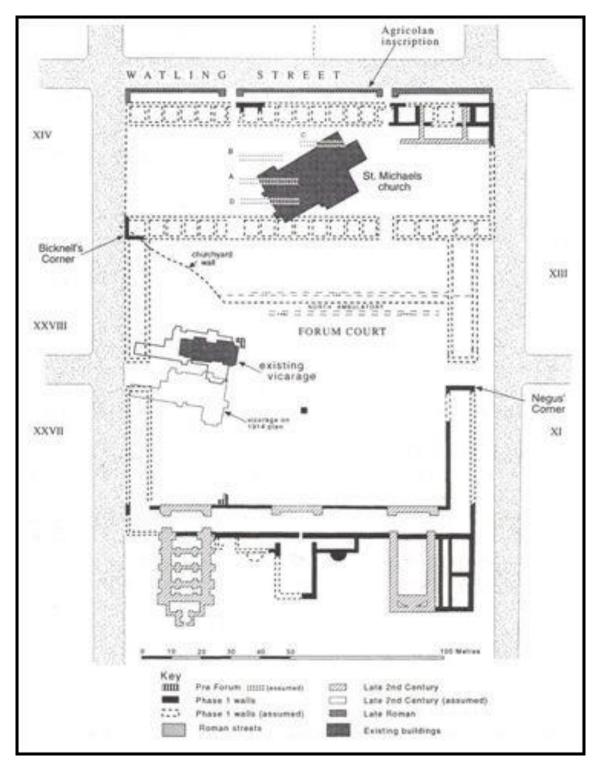


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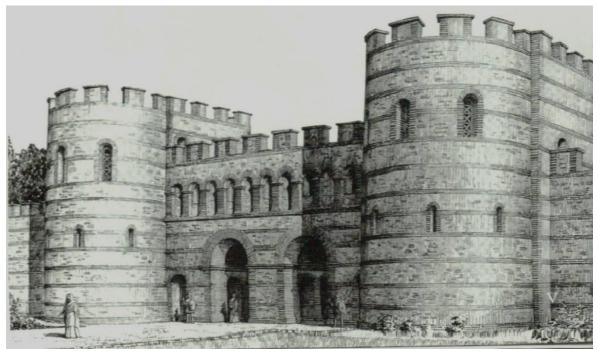


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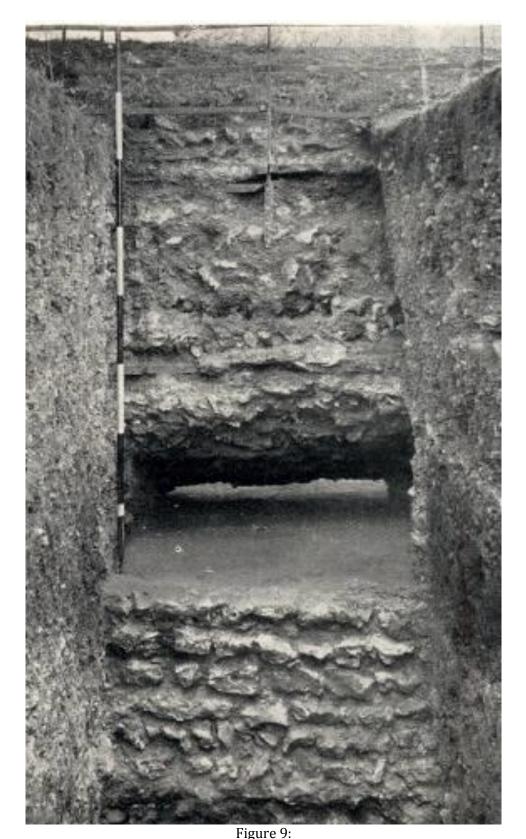


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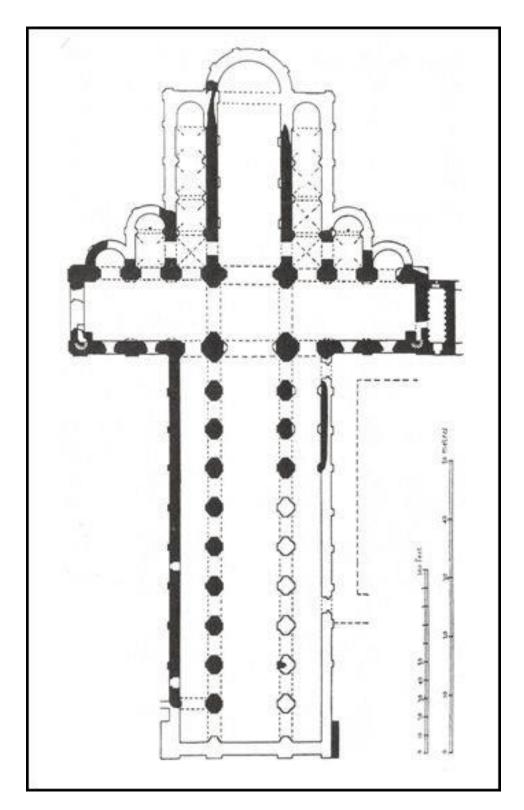


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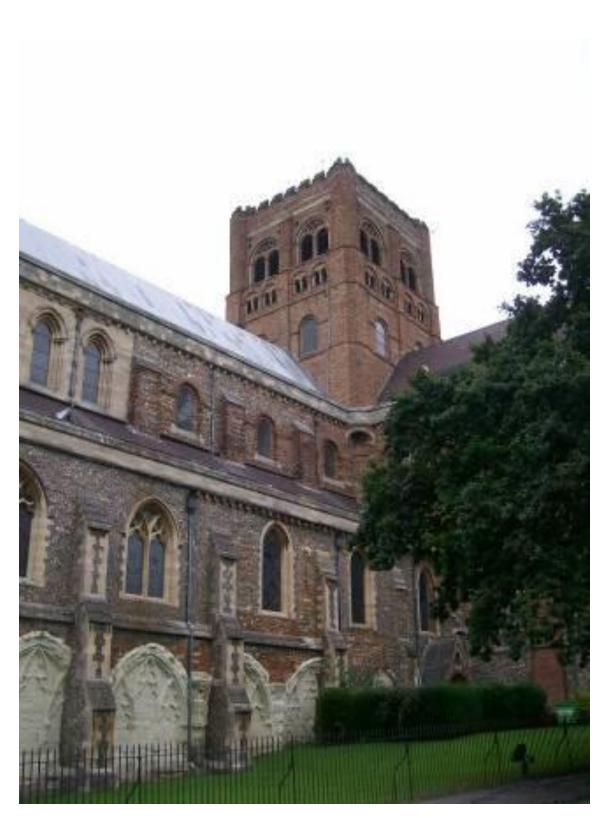


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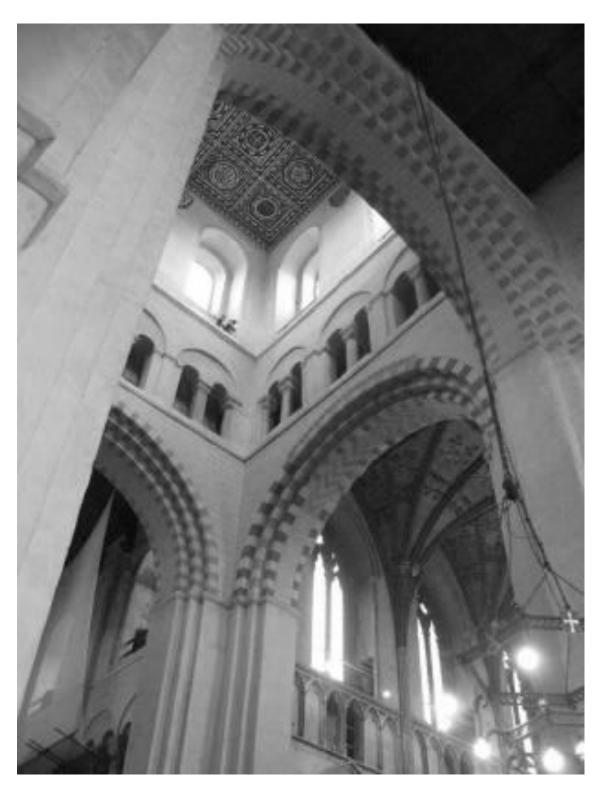


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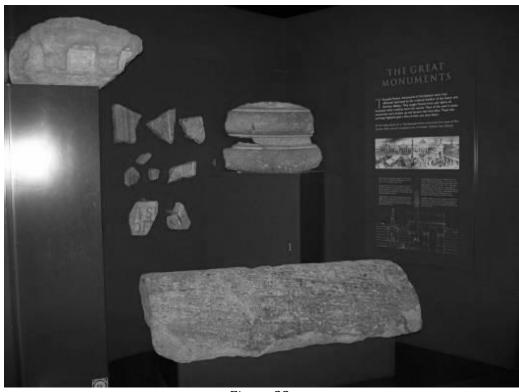


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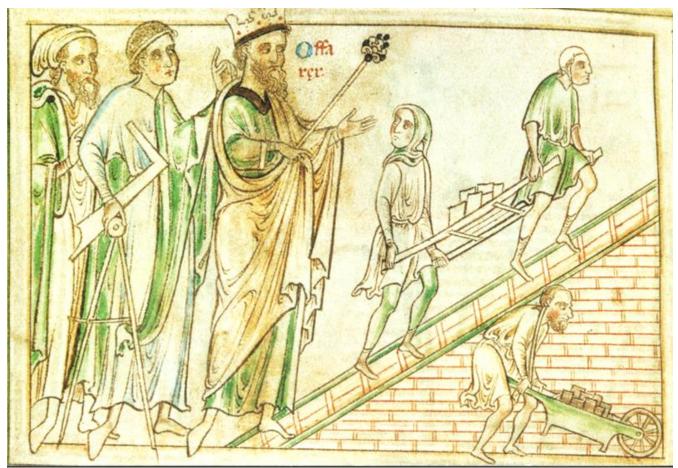


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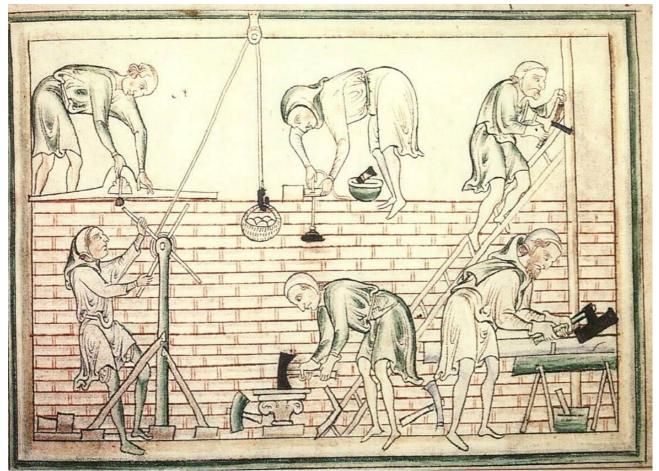


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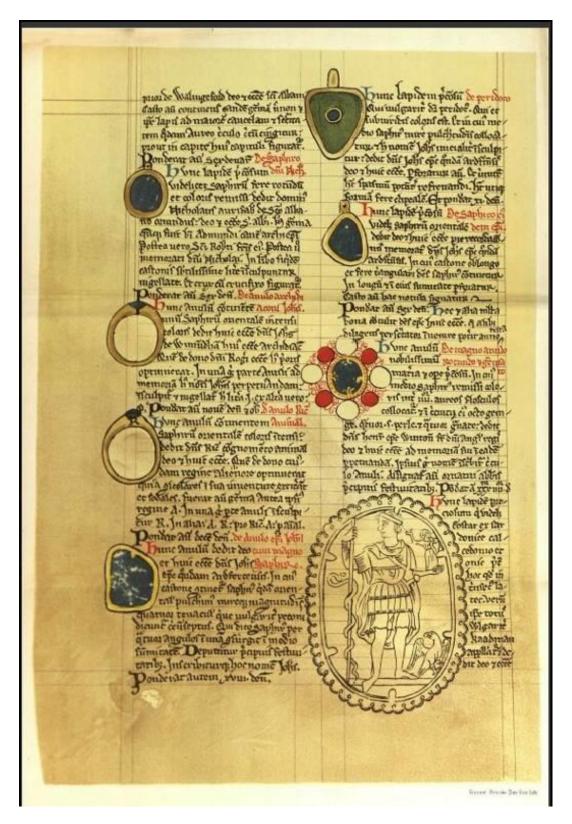
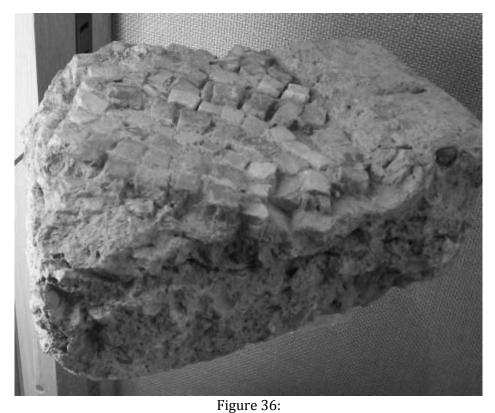


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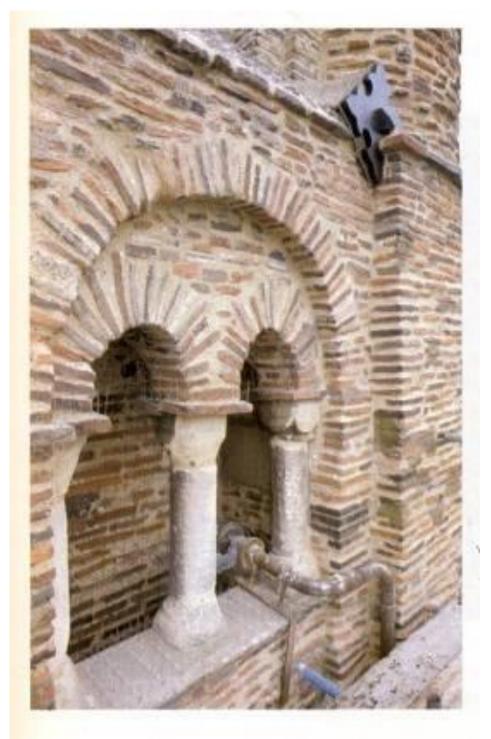


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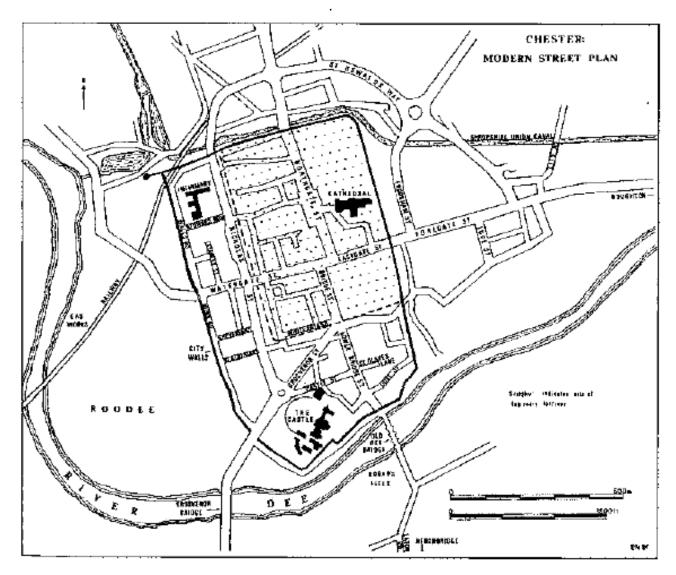


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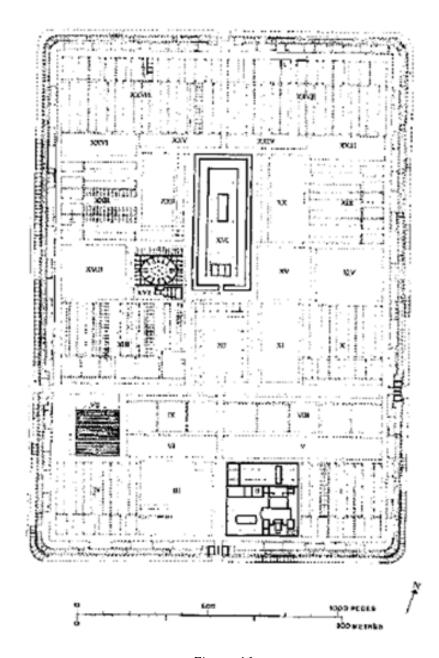


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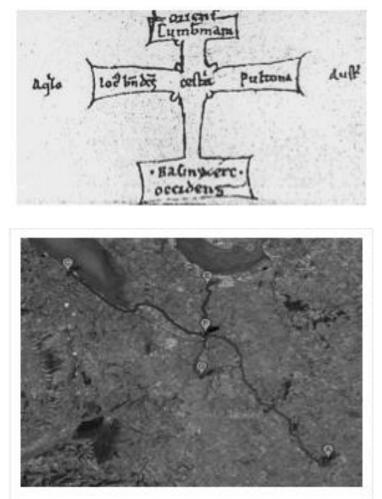


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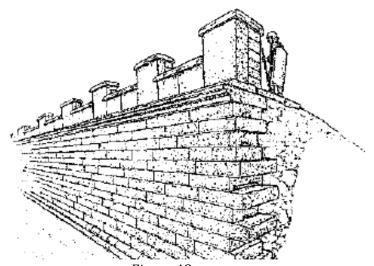


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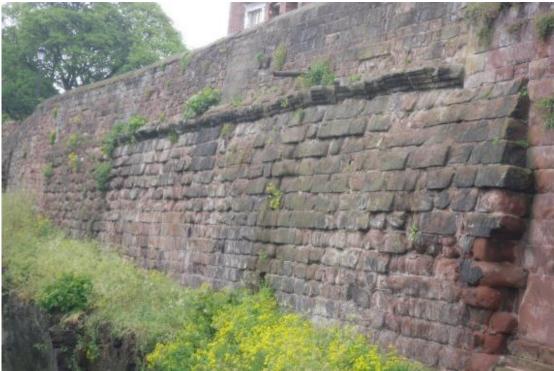


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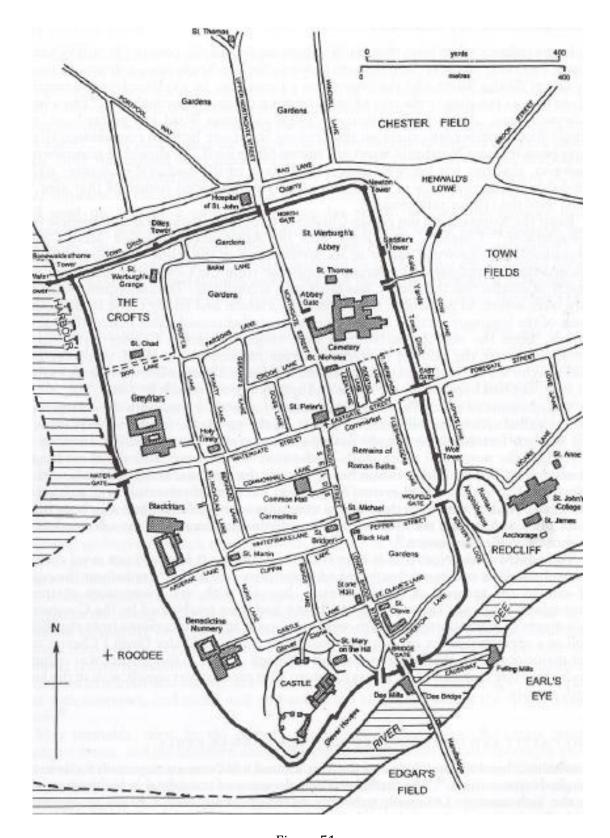


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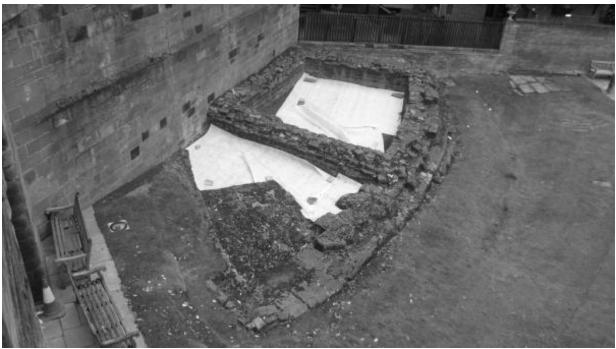


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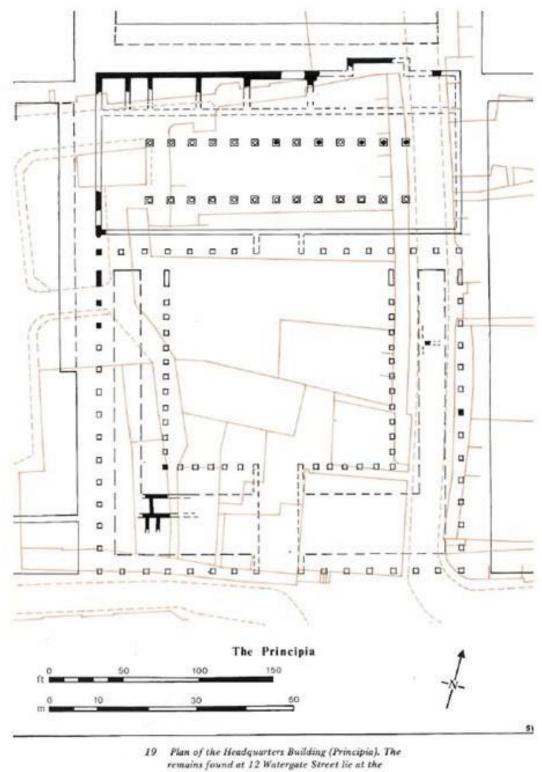
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south-western corner

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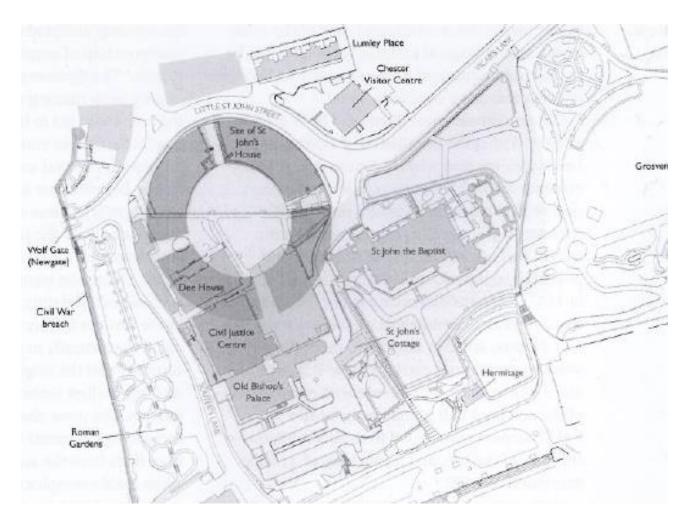


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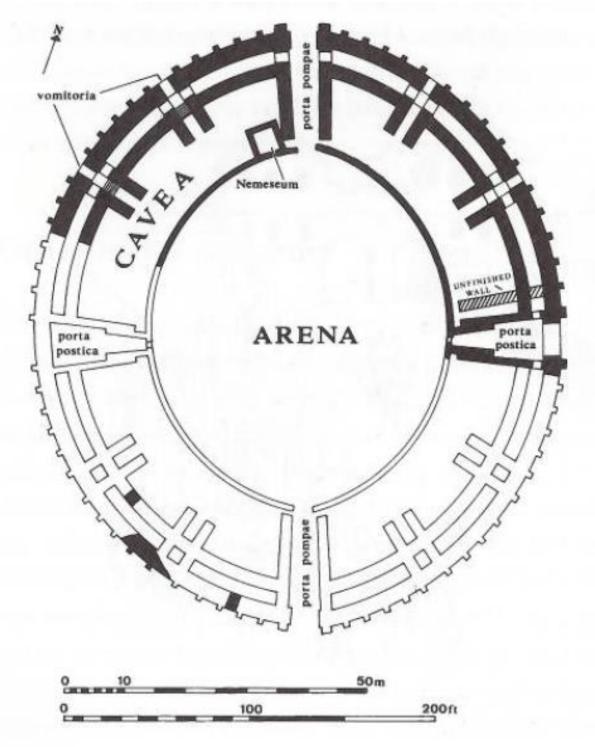


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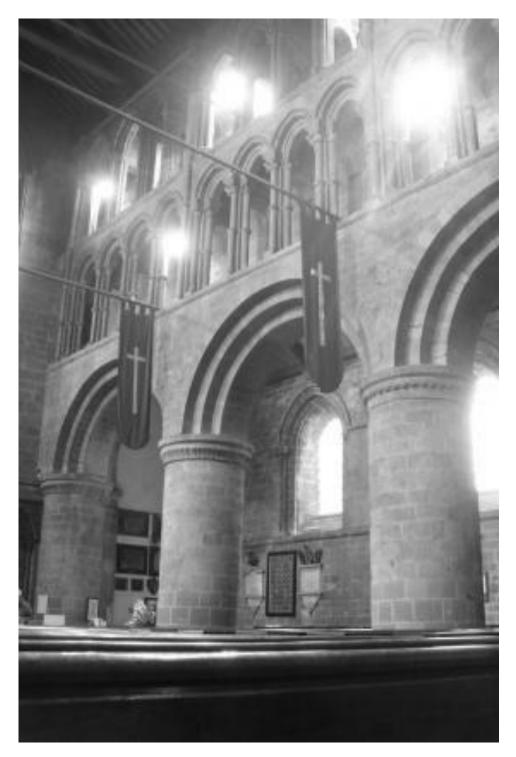


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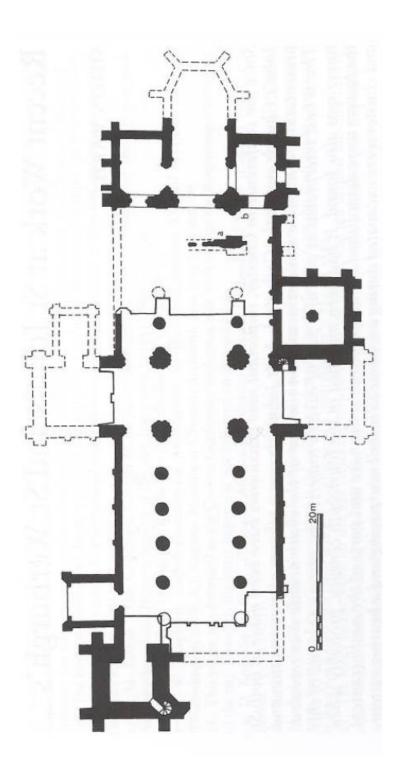


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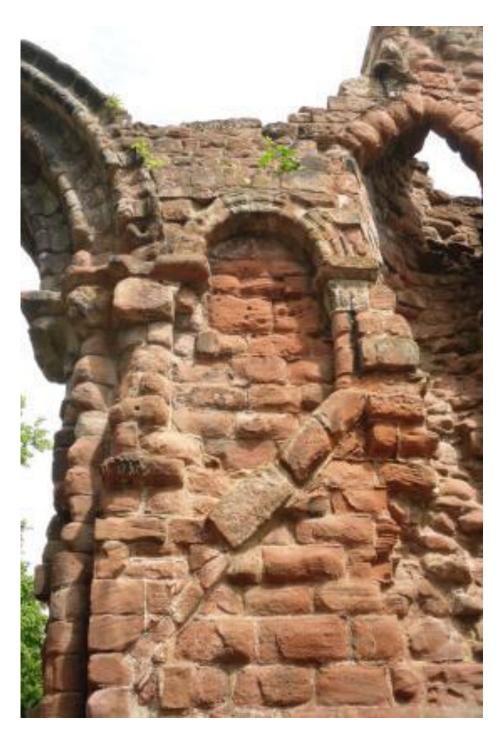


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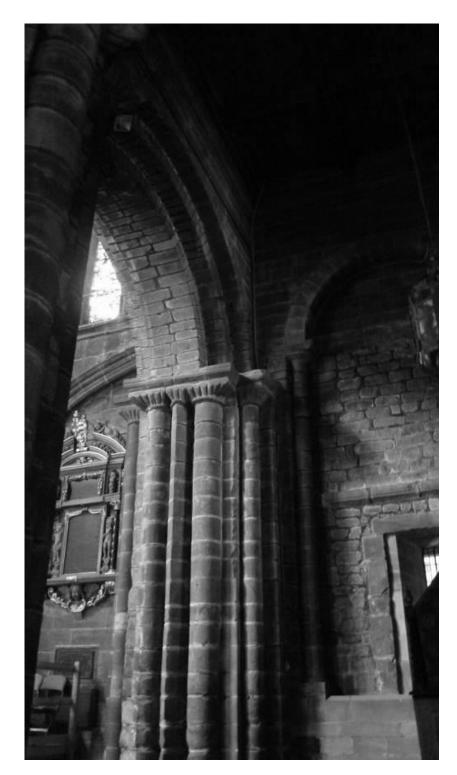


Figure 83: Inside the Romanesque north- west tower, parts of which date from the twelfth century.

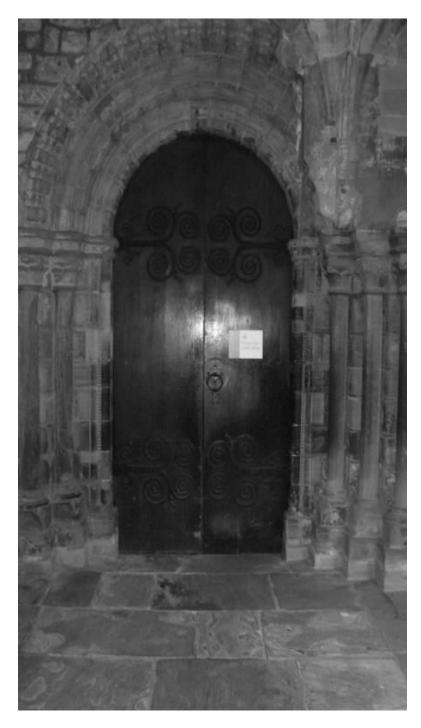


Figure 84: Norman archway leading from the south aisle of the cloister into a blocked entrance in the north transept.

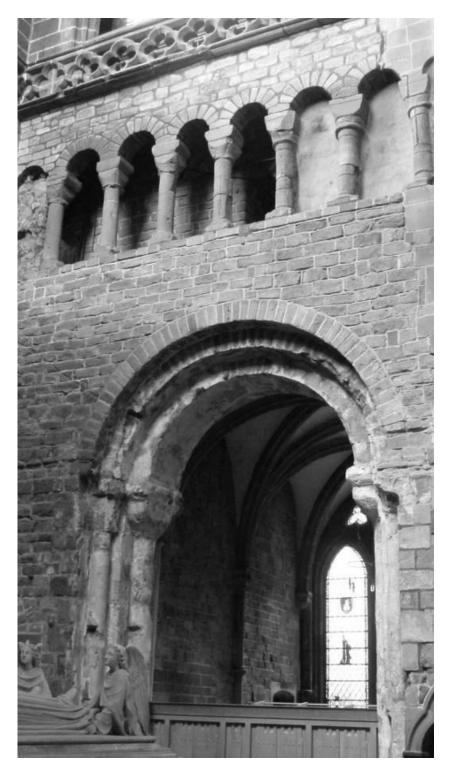


Figure 85: Romanesque arch leading into the apsidal chapel in the east wall of the north transept.



Figure 86: Close up of the triforium gallery in the east wall of the north transept.



Figure 87: The underside of the Romanesque arch in the east wall of the north transept showing the application of plaster.



Figure 88: Evidence of plaster on the right hand columns in the arch of the north transept, east wall.



Figure 89: Close up of the Norman arcading in the triforium of the north transept. Note the composite nature of the column shafts.



Figure 90:

Traces of plaster left on Romanesque stonework above the door in the east wall of the north transept.



Romanesque fabric in the west wall of the north transept, demonstrating several types of masonry tooling. Note the diagonal cross hatching below the commemorative plaque.



Figure 92: Long flat diagonal tooling in the north transept.



Figure 93: Original fourth century stone hypocaust *pilae* from the fortress bath complex excavations, now located in the Roman Gardens at Chester.

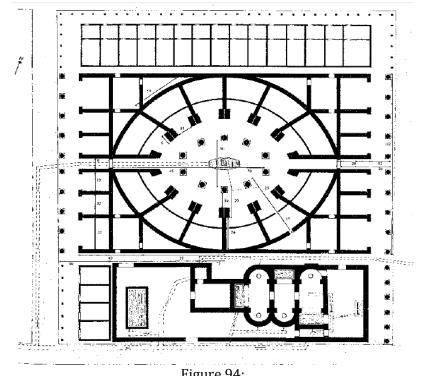


Figure 94: Plan of the Elliptical building at Chester. David Mason, *The Elliptical Building*, p 35.



Figure 95: Three dimensional reconstruction of the elliptical building at Chester. David Mason, *The Elliptical Building*, p 37.

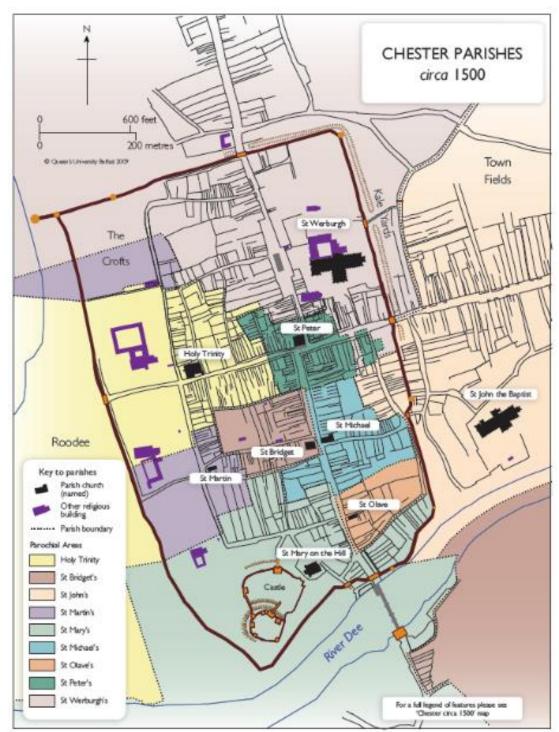


Figure 96:

Parish map from the Mapping Medieval Chester project showing the location of St Michael's and St Bridget's, and the smaller boundary outlines of St Bridget's and St Olave's.



Figure 97:

View of St Michael's church, showing its height several metres above street level. © Copyright John S Turner and licensed for reuse http://www.geograph.org.uk/photo/565749, accessed 14th September 2011.



Figure 98: Western entrance arch of St Michael's church on display in Grosvenor gardens.



Figure 99: Romanesque arch from St Michael's church in Grosvenor gardens. This is presumably an arch from the transept of a crossing tower.



Figure 100: Wall fabric of St Olave's church in Chester. Block size and shape resembles that at St Michael's, most likely salvaged from Roman buildings.



Figure 101: South-eastern corner tower of the Roman fortress showing the probably size of St Martin's parish church, which was built in the corresponding tower on the west side of the town.



Figure 102: Monumental sculpture in the Grosvenor Museum, Chester. Much of this was funerary stonework, but inscriptions and other decorative stonework have also been found at the town.

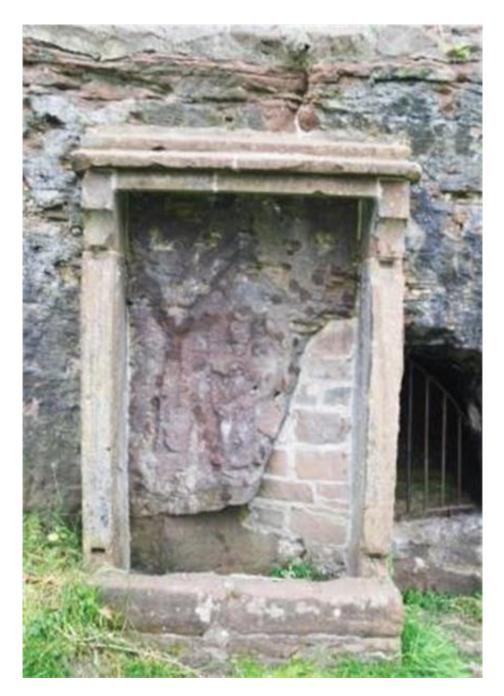


Figure 103: Shrine to Minerva at St Edgar's fields. The surrounding pediment is a modern addition to prevent the further deterioration of the image.



Figure 104:

On the left is a close up of the Shrine of Minerva, note the spear in the figure's right hand running up the left of the picture. The other distinguishable feature is Minerva's head in the top third of the frame. The image on the right is a copy of the shrine in the Grosvenor museum, which is slightly clearer.



Figure 105: A nearby artistic depiction of the Shrine of Minerva (to provide a clearer understanding of what the image on the rock face may have looked like).

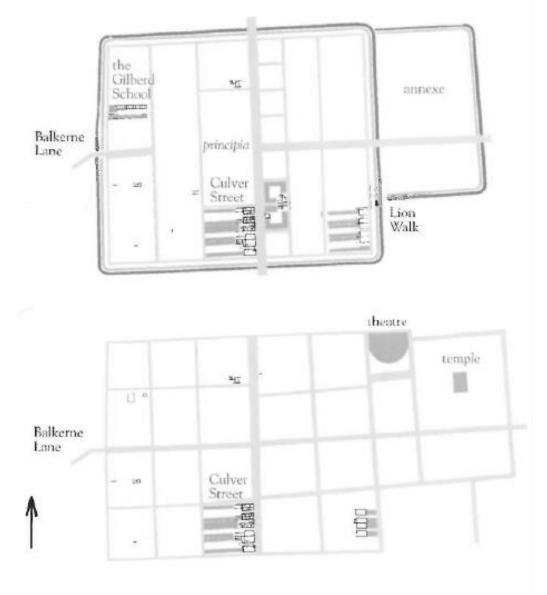


Figure 106: Plans of early Roman Colchester, showing how the fortress and annexe was converted into the civilian town with Roman temple area.



Figure 107:

A section of the Roman wall to the Norman of the Norman keep. There is evidence of several phases of repair, which interrupt the original facing and lines of tile.



Figure 108:

The north-east corner of the town wall. The wall has been completely resurfaced, with buttresses added and Roman decoration removed. This section may have been completely rebuilt.



Figure 109:

A section of the town wall at the north of Castle Park. This part of the wall may have been robbed of its facing material in order to provide decorative elements for the nearby Norman keep.



Section of the Roman walls looking northward to the Balkerne gate on the west side of the town. The tile and flint banding decoration may have provided inspiration for the decorative scheme at the Norman keep.

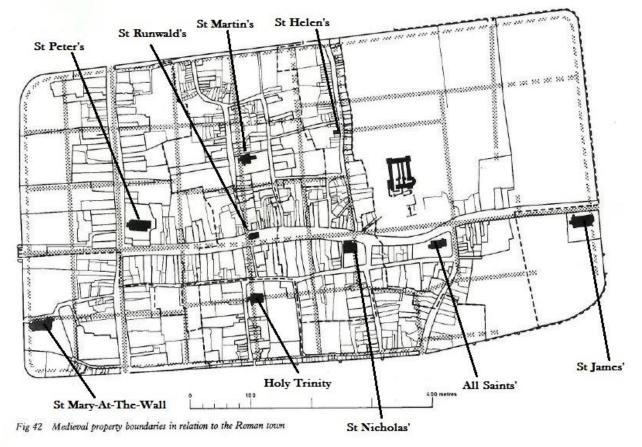


Figure 111:

Location of the medieval parish churches in relation to the Roman topographical layout of Colchester. Adapted from Phillip Crummy, *Aspects of Anglo-Saxon and Norman Colchester*, p 49.

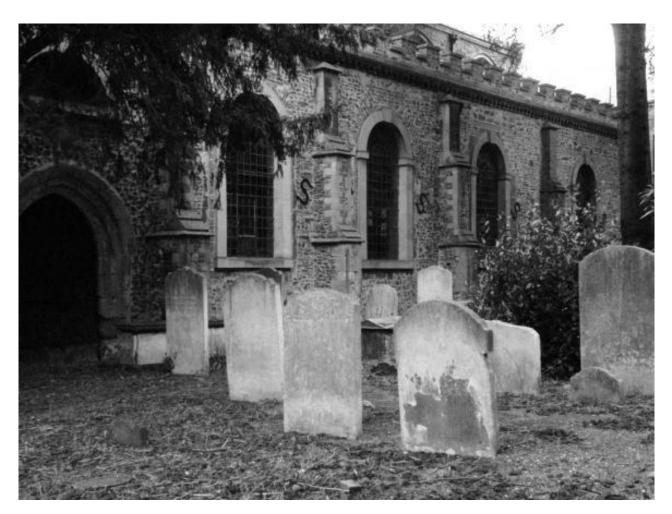


Figure 112: Exterior of St Peter's Colchester, showing extensive re-use of Roman tile and rubble.

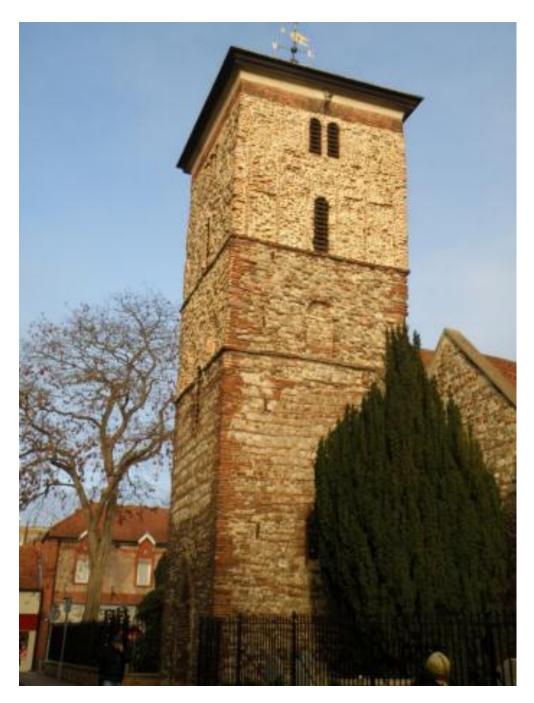


Figure 113: The western tower of Holy Trinity, Colchester.



Figure 114: The lower section of the western tower, Holy Trinity, Colchester showing the use of *tegulae* in the quoins of the tower.



Figure 115: The interior arch of the western tower, Holy Trinity, Colchester.

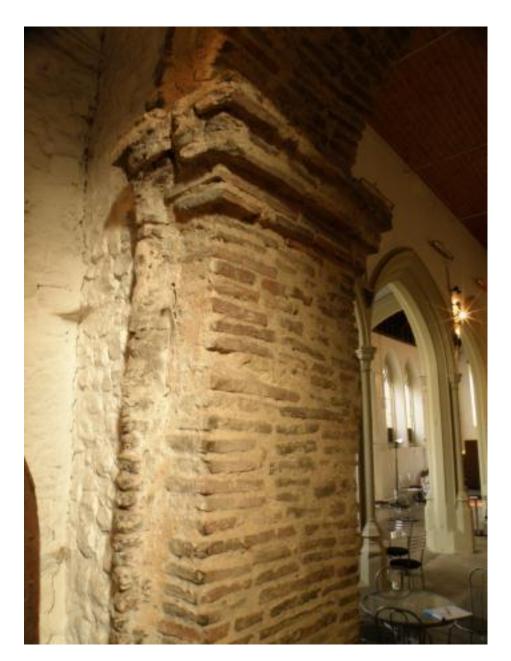


Figure 116: Side of arch in western tower, Holy Trinity, Colchester. Note the ingenious use of Roman tile to create quoins and moulding.



Figure 117: Exterior of All Saints' Colchester, showing extensive re-use of Roman tile and flint rubble.



Figure 118: The exterior of St Martin's tower, from the west. Note the bulkier buttressed masonry and larger proportions, which dates this tower to the Norman period.



Figure 119 :

The interior of the west tower of St Martin's, showing extensive re-used Roman building material (and general spoliated rubble).



Figure 120: The sixteenth century tower of St-Mary-at-the-Walls. Note the neatly laid *petit appareil* blocks and *tegulae* bands.



Figure 121: Section of the Roman walls, just outside the Balkerne Gate, near St Mary-at-the-Walls. The state of preservation of the facing on this section of the wall may explain this decorative style in medieval and later churches.

	Eudo's castle
	Left: Colchester castle—the keep as it might have looked in c AD 1100. Below left: the relationship between the foundations of the Roman Temple of Claudius and the base of the Norman castle.
	Podium of the Temple of Claudius, firmly clasped on three sides by the outer walls of the Norman keep. A Norman well was built between the podium and the south side of the castle, where there were steps leading up to the front of the temple.
Gent	

Figure 122:

The podium of the Roman temple of Claudius lies underneath Colchester Castle. The walls of the Norman castle clasp the podium completely on three sides. Phillip Crummy, *City of Victory*, p 147.



Figure 123: The Roman crypts. The middle west chamber, with modern concrete buttress.



Figure 124: The Roman crypts, the south-west chamber. You can also see the construction of the podium in layers of *septaria* and concrete, as it dried.



Figure 125: Colchester Keep from the south-west, showing the front entrance and south west tower.

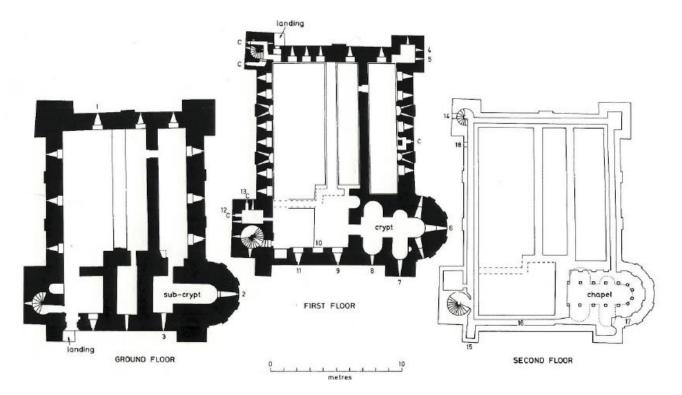


Figure 126:

Plan of Colchester Castle showing how the underlying Roman fourth century 'raft' extension affected the upper floors and layout of the chapel. Phillip Crummy, *Aspects of Anglo-Saxon and Norman Colchester*, figure 67.



Figure 127: Colchester keep from the south-east, showing the south east apsidal projection.

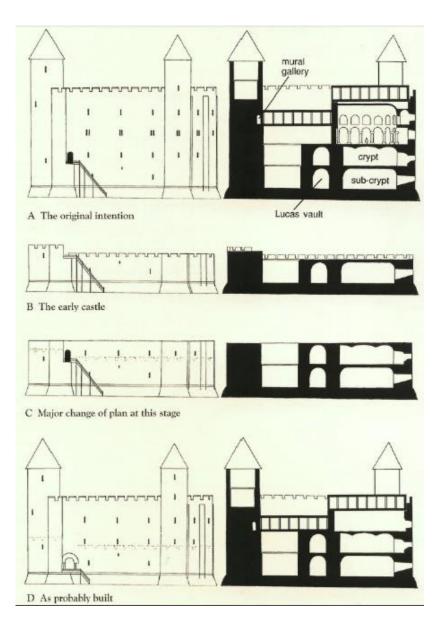


Figure 128:

Elevation of Colchester castle showing the original intention, the early castle, the late eleventh-century change of plan and the castle as it was probably built. Phillip Crummy, *City of Victory*, p 147.



Figure 129:

The front of Colchester keep. Note the line of original crenulation which runs roughly above the main entrance, across the face of the keep, above the top of the small central window, and along the line of bricks about halfway up the projection of the south-eastern tower.

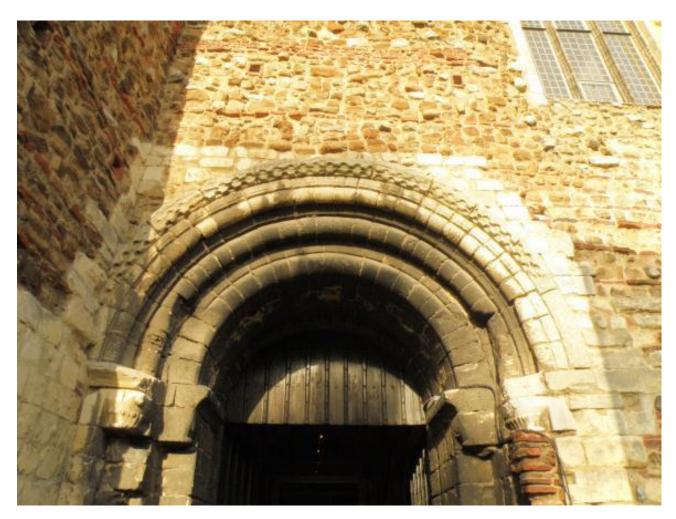


Figure 130: The first floor archway entrance to Colchester keep, built out of Caen stone.

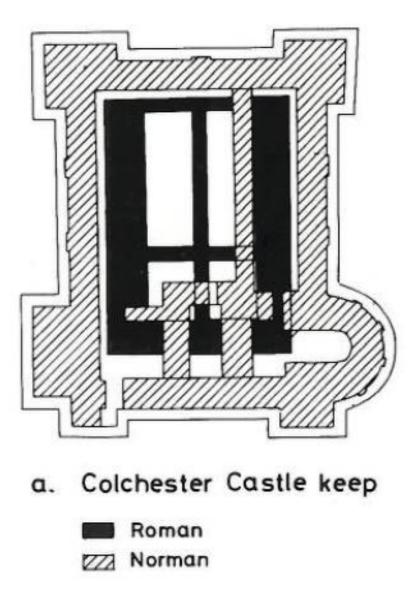


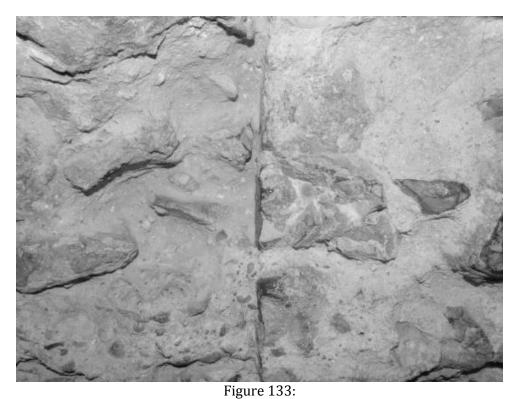
Figure 131:

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.



Figure 132:

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.



Figure 134:

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).

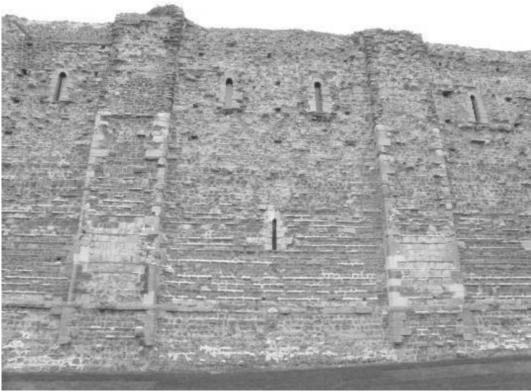


Figure 135:

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.



Figure136:

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.

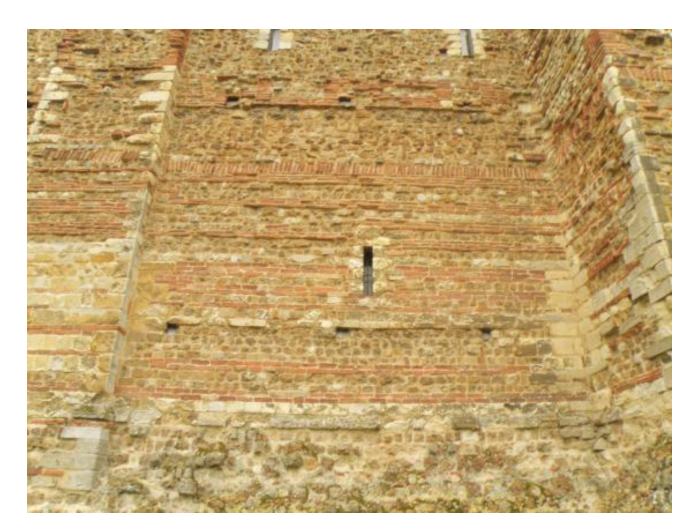


Figure 138:

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.

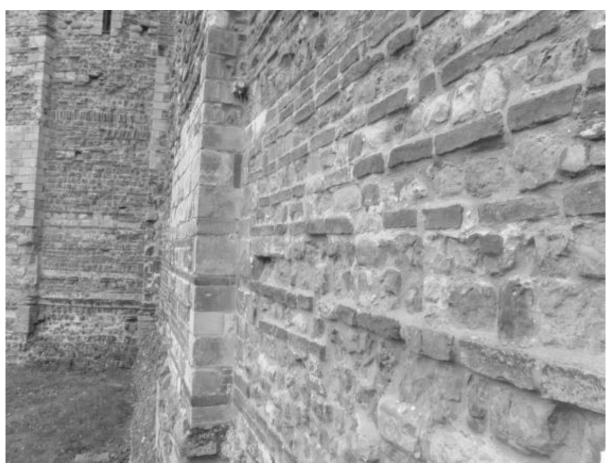


Figure 139:

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:

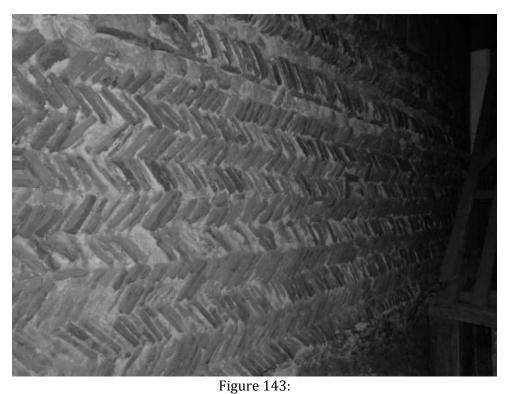
When viewed from further away, despite not precisely emulating the Roman polychromy, the monumental size of Colchester Keep emphasises the banding in the decoration. It may have been this overall decorative effect that the builders were trying to evoke. Colchester Keep viewed from the north-east corner.



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.



Figure 142: 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.



Figure 144: 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.

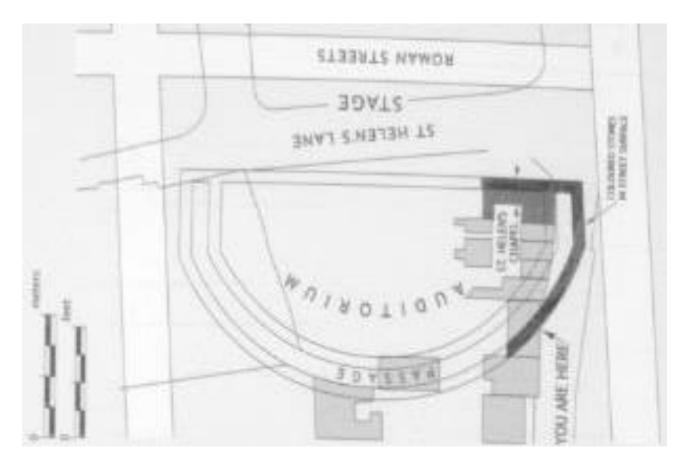


Figure 147: Plan of the Roman theatre of Colchester, with the area of St Helen's and the excavated remains marked in darker shading.

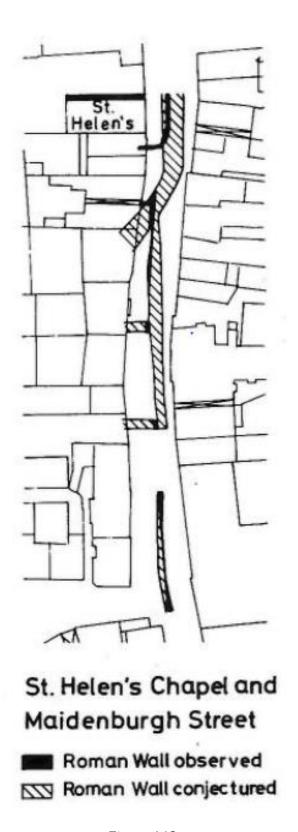


Figure 148: Plan of the observed Roman walls, and the location of St Helen's, Phillip Crummy, *Aspects of Anglo-Saxon and Norman Colchester*, p 147.



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).

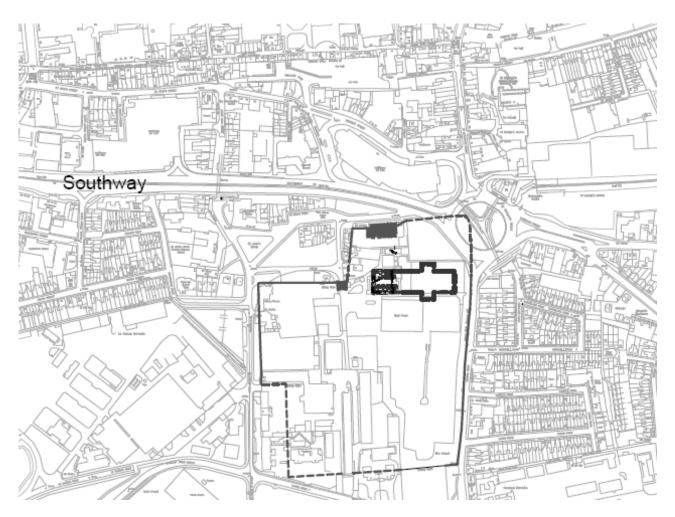


Figure 155: Location and plan of St John's Benedictine monastery, of which nothing now survives. Adam Wightman. *St John's Abbey church,* figure one.

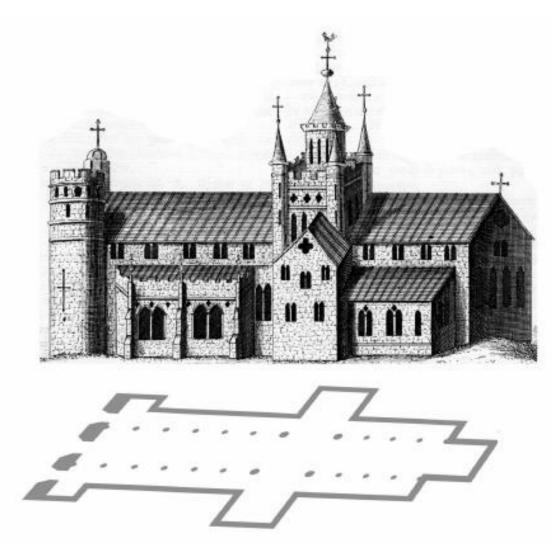


Figure 156: Potential plan of St John's, based on proportions gathered from excavation of the west end and an early drawing of the church. Adam Wightman. *St John's Abbey church,* p 22.

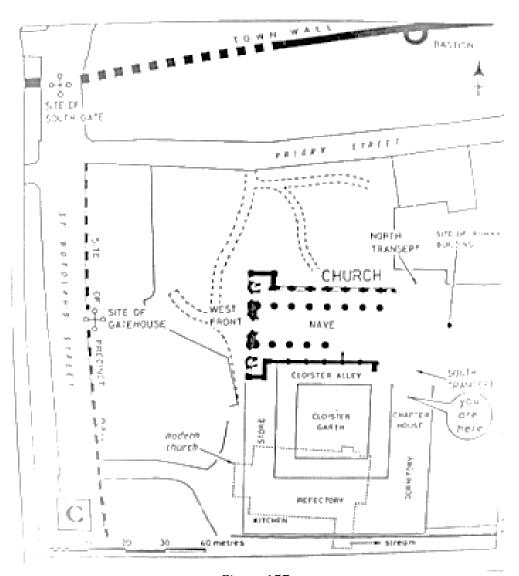


Figure 157: Location of St Botolph's Augustinian Priory to the south east of the Roman south gate and along the Roman route into Colchester.

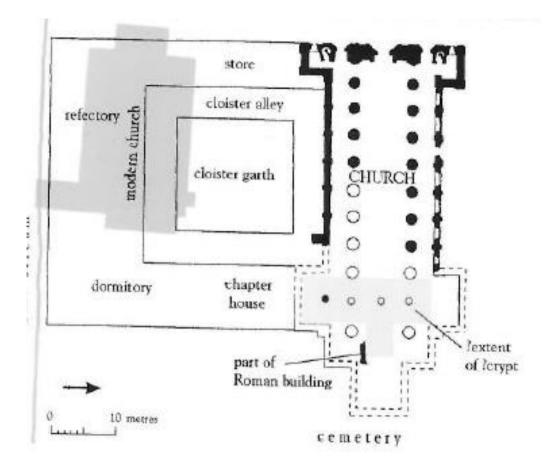


Figure 158: Plan of St Botolph's church and associated monastic buildings. The dark areas are the remaining walls which can be seen today.

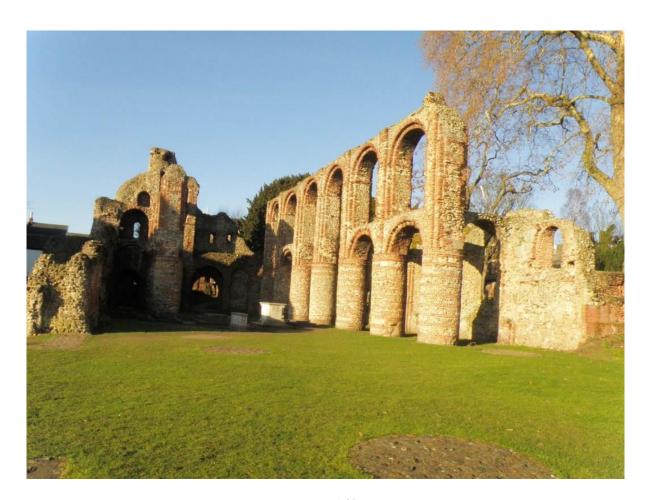


Figure 159: St Botolph's from the south east, the remains visible today consist of the nave. The crossing and east end of the church were destroyed in the English Civil War.



Figure 160: 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.

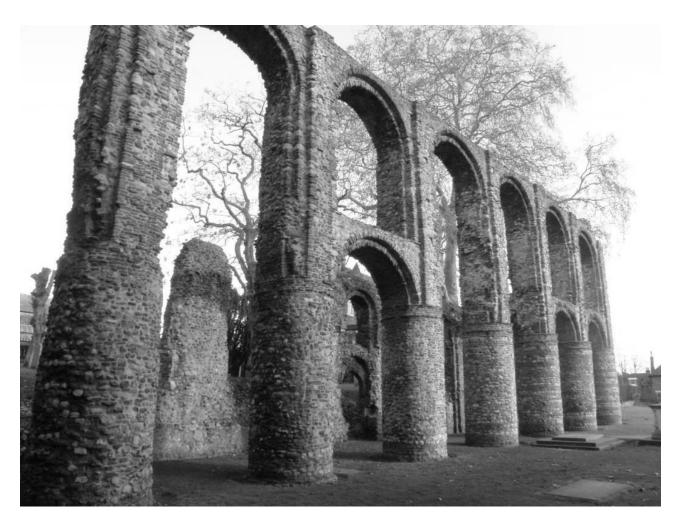


Figure 165: The nave pillars near the west door at St Botolph's show evidence of rubble construction or repair.



Figure 166:

But at the crossing end of the nave, the Romanesque pillars clearly show the rubble and tile polychrome striation reminiscent of Roman buildings.



Figure 167:

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.