



‘GANT’ / ‘GANTWAY’:

Essex dialect for an alleyway between houses.

GENERAL OVERVIEW

There is immense history in Colchester. The town was a dominant centre of influence and power during the Iron Age, through to the invasion and colonisation of the British Isles by the Roman Empire, their decline, the subsequent rise of an Anglo-Saxon civilisation and their conquest by a powerful Norman elite during the 11th century. These changes in history are all evidenced through archaeology, oral and written history, place names, artifacts, either as buildings or objects and within the landscape.

For this commission I have focused my research on the site and context of the four passage ways or ‘gants’ that lead from the High Street through to Culver Street.

Iron age, Roman and medieval archaeology dominate the centre of town. What is clear is that the High Street follows the original Roman road. According to lead archaeologist Philip Crummy, *“The reconstruction of the whole of Culver Street - High Street area must have taken place by 1076”*. Culver Street is the back lane for the houses on the south side of the High Street, and fits well into an early 10th century plan. In fact early records show that key properties facing the High Street on the corner of the respective passageways ran down their full length to culver Street.

‘White-Hart Inn’ - BANK PASSAGE:

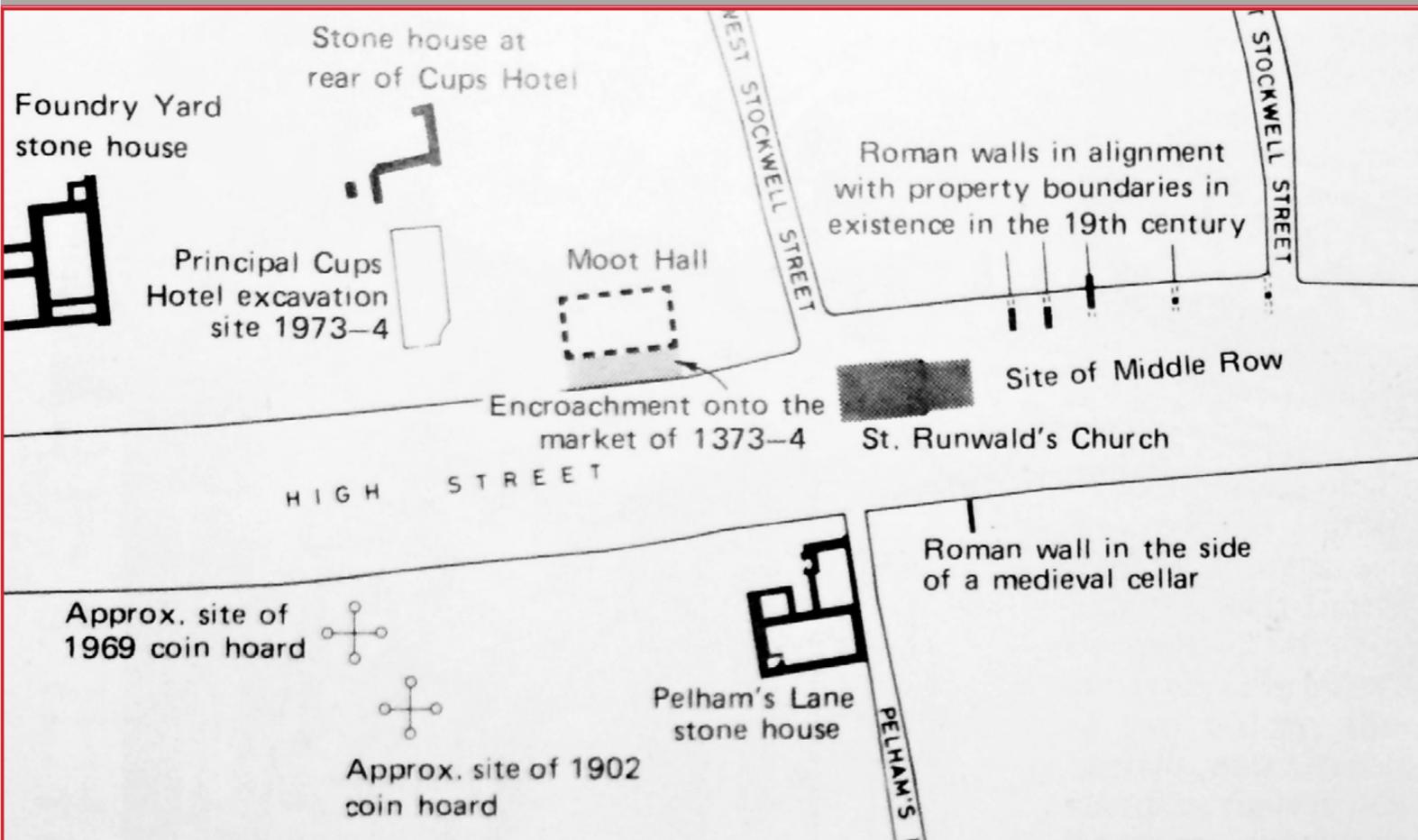
Formally a side passage to the White-Hart Inn, an ancient coaching Inn

“The earliest reference to the inn was in the town records dating back to 1437”. None of the original building has survived but records show that a series of prominent men owned the premises including Richard Cousins and his son Richard both imprisoned, for ‘papist activities’, The White Hart became one of the leading inns in the later 18th century and a contemporary historian, Philip Morant described the inn as having stabling for 60 horses. The Victoria County History states that the inn could accommodate 156 people. It was one of three inns appointed as wine taverns in 1604. It closed as an Inn in 1819 and all traces of its original building demolished in 1961.

Over the last century a number of banking institutions were established on the High Street near to and on the corner of Bank Passage, which accounts for the current name given to this passage.

A relevant fact exists that Colchester, from an early period, was a key financial centre, with its own mint, during the rule of the Trinovantes tribe in AD 5 under the rule of Cunobelin. Coins from this period often have **CUNO**, short for Cunobelin or **CAMU** for Camulodunum (Colchester as it was known). Coin was minted during Roman rule and in the Anglo-Saxon period circa 990 AD. Frequently discovered around Colchester town.





PELHAM'S LANE - 'Whit-fote's lane'

Formally known as Whit-fote's Lane (White-fotes)

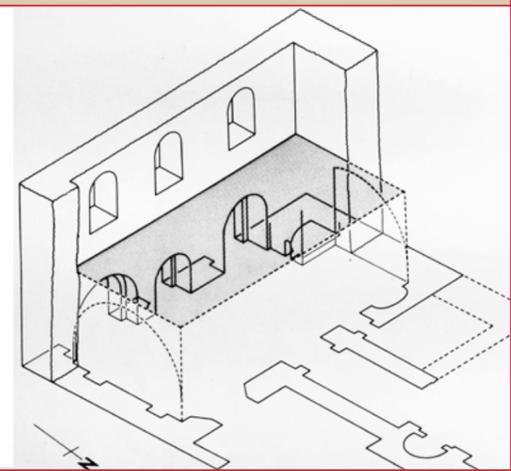
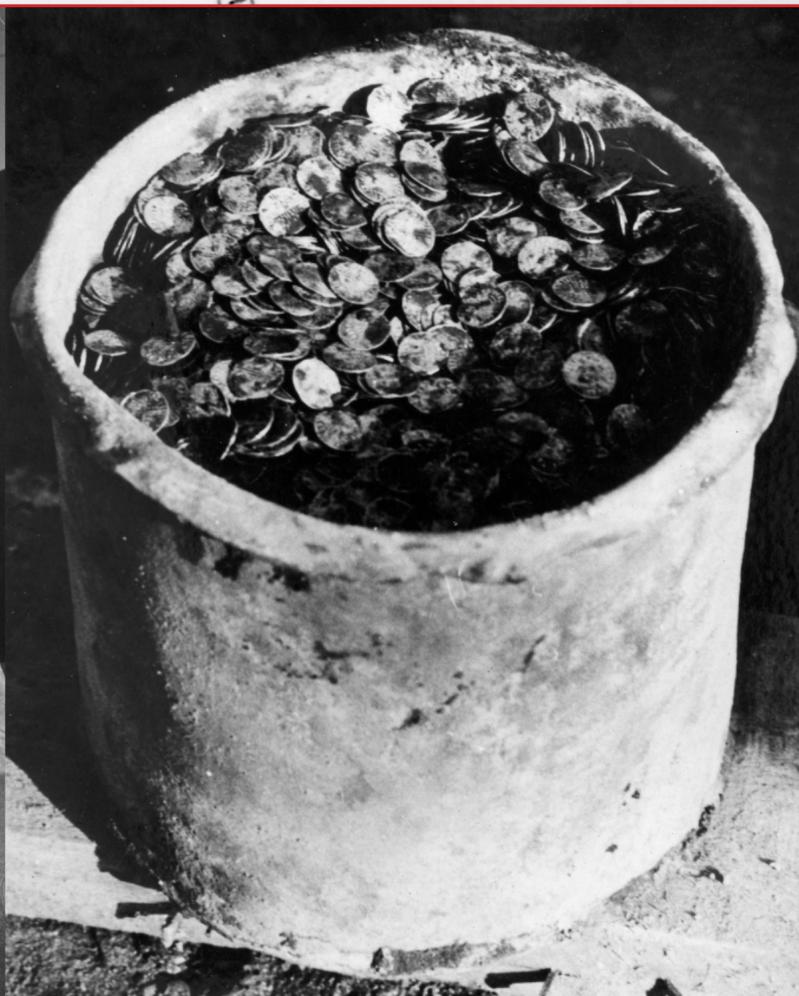
According to Colchester archaeologist Philip Crummy, Pelham's Lane, which divides the area between the High Street and Culver Street existed by circa 1076, redeveloped after the "modular planning" of post Roman period.

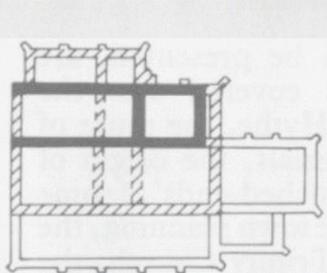
12TH CENTURY STONE HOUSE

The most significant archaeological find in this area is a 12th century stone building, one of seven known to exist from the medieval period in Colchester. "built of a mixture of Roman brick and stone, with arched passages, in the same manner as the under part of the Mote Hall: and according to tradition was built by and the residence of Eudo Dapifer." (1063-1120) one of the most important figures in Norman Colchester. Eudo was high steward to William the Conqueror and to two other Kings of England and responsible for founding the Castle, St John's Abbey and St Mary Magdalene's hospital. The castle is believed to have been built by Gundulph, the Bishop of Rochester, with the same ground plan as the White Tower of London, which he also built. According to the Victoria County History, the house belonged to Joan daughter of Richard Marcian, one of the leading men in early 13th century Colchester.

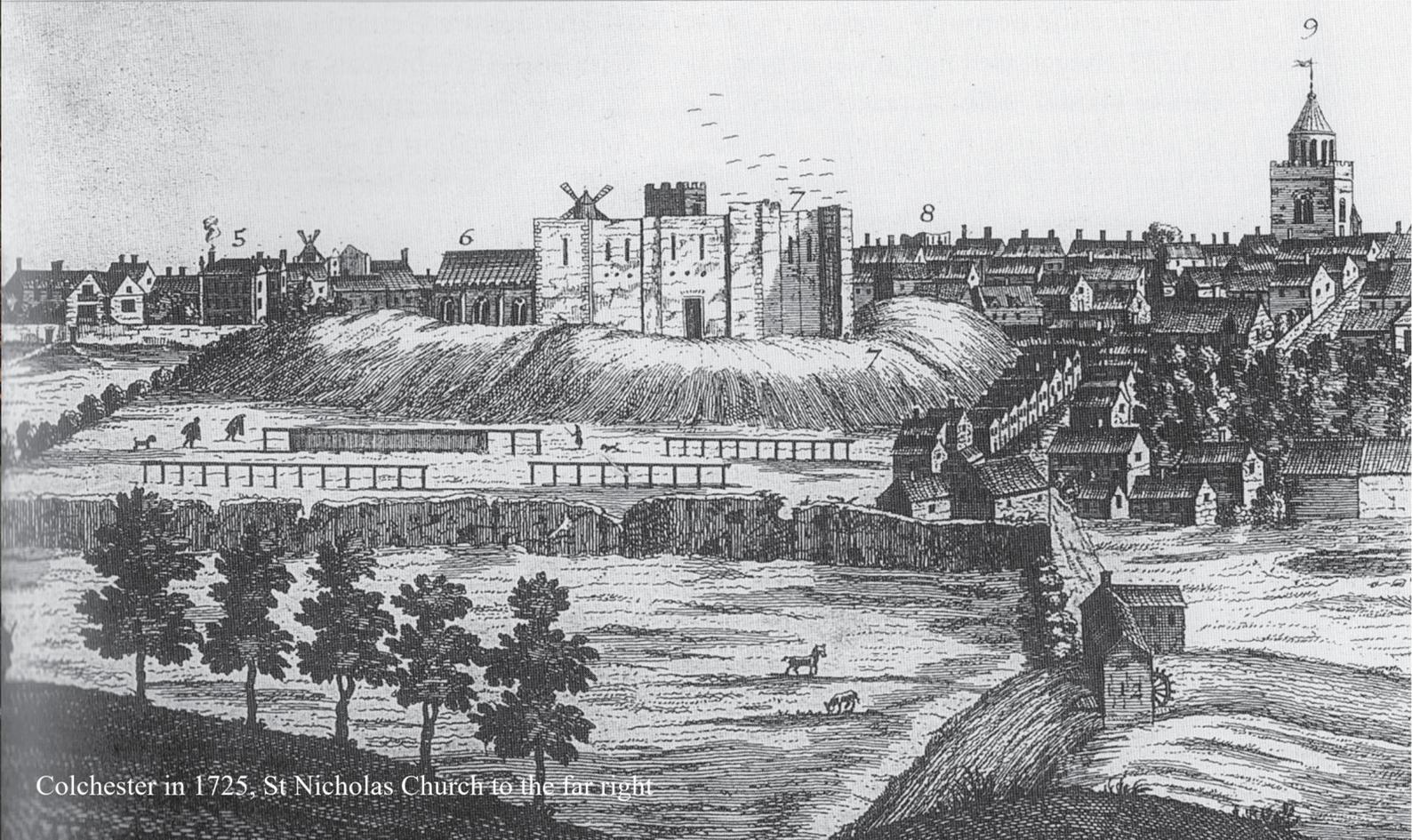
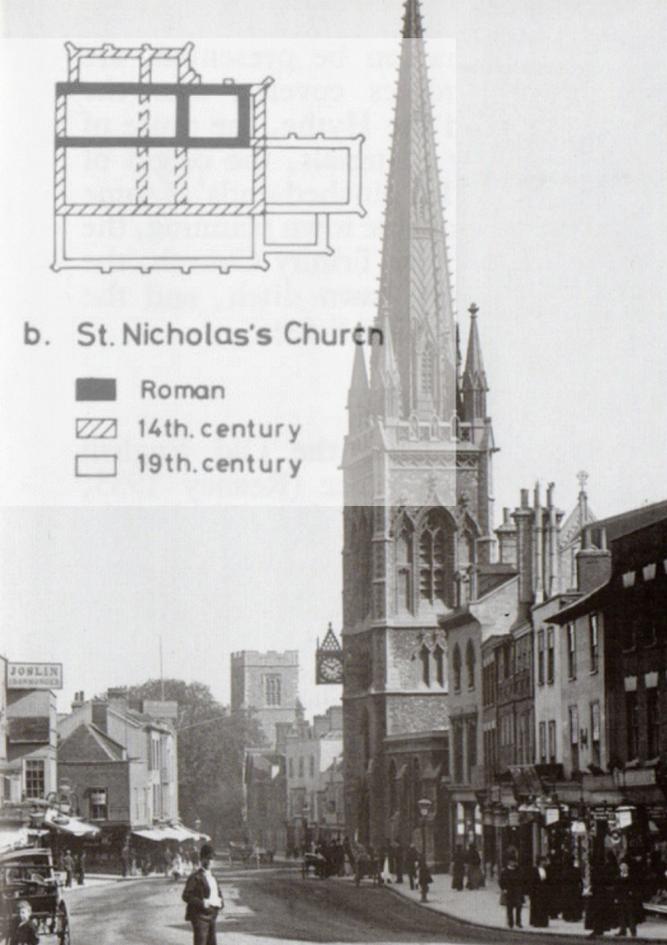
MEDIEVAL COIN HOARDS

In 1902 and 1969 two significant hoards of medieval silver coins were found buried on properties fronting the High Street, only 50 yards from Pelham's Lane. The former hoard was 11,000 short Cross-type silver pennies and the later one 14,076, consisting mainly of long Cross-type pennies of Henry III. One of the most significant hoards of coins ever found in the British Isles. In a contemporary research article published on the hoard, a Dr Stephenson believed that these hoards belonged to Jewish bankers, (Aaron and his two sons Samuel and Joce) who were known to have lived along in this part of the High street near to Pelham's Lane. *"The deposits significantly coincide with periods when the King was putting financial pressure on the Colchester Jews". "In 1290, in common with all the jews in England, they were ordered by Edward I to leave the kingdom, taking only what they could carry".*





b. St. Nicholas's Church
 ■ Roman
 ▨ 14th century
 □ 19th century



Colchester in 1725, St Nicholas Church to the far right

ST NICHOLAS (Nicolas) PASSAGE -

Formally St Nicholas Church, passage leading to the graveyard

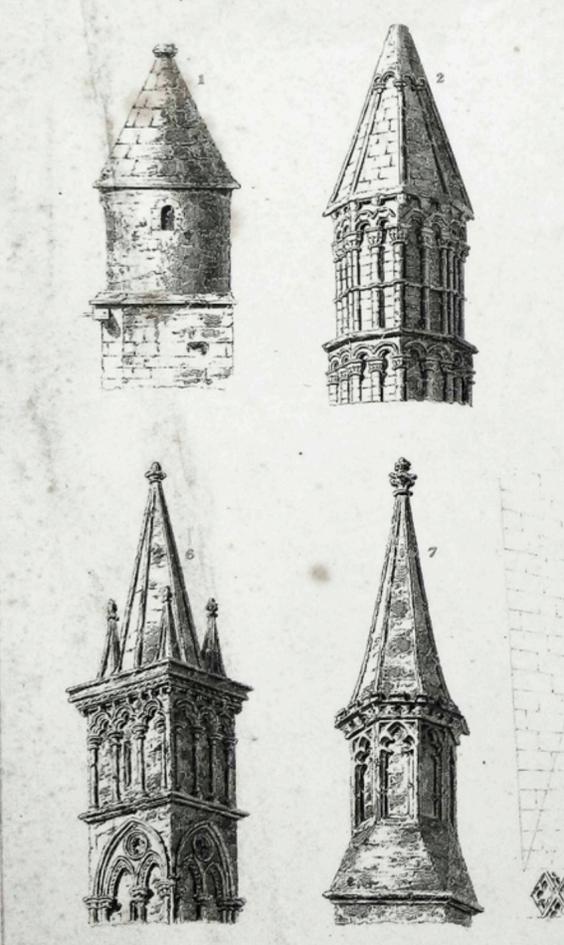
“Both St. Nicholas and All Saints Churches follow the late Anglo-Saxon alignment of High Street and hence to have been built before the street was diverted southwards round the Norman Bailey wall.”

Though no date can be found for the founding of the church, what is certain is that it was one of 18 churches, chapels and abbeys built in and around Colchester during the medieval period.

“By the Terrier taken in 1610, it appears, that there belonged then to this parish above Twenty two acres of land”.

St Nicholas Church was extensively damaged by the fall of its tower in the 17th century whilst undergoing repairs. *“Their ruins gave an aura of decay to the otherwise rebuilt town.”* The building was effectively rebuilt by Sir George Gilbert Scott in 1875-76, a *“masterpiece of Gothic Revival”* but was sold off in 1954 for demolition.

The main portion of the tower of the medieval church is square but atop this is a round tower/spire and in the early style of Norman architecture. In contrast to this Gilbert Scott's tower is very tall and fine with a chevron pattern cladding.



Colchester 1650



RED LION (LYON) WALK

Formally a side passage leading to the stable yard, an ancient coaching Inn. It lead to Cat Lane south of Culver Street but its name changed to Lion Walk.

This property was built as a private residence for the Howard family in 1481-82, whose arms displayed the White Lion and which is believed to have been the earlier name of the house. Sir John Howard (1430-1485) was given the title Duke of Norfolk. After his death, the building became an inn sometime between 1501 and 1515.

“By 1625, it had changed its name to become the Red Lion, possibly in recognition of the accession of James VI of Scotland to the English throne in 1604, an act which added the red lion to the royal coat of arms.”

ROMAN INFLUENCE

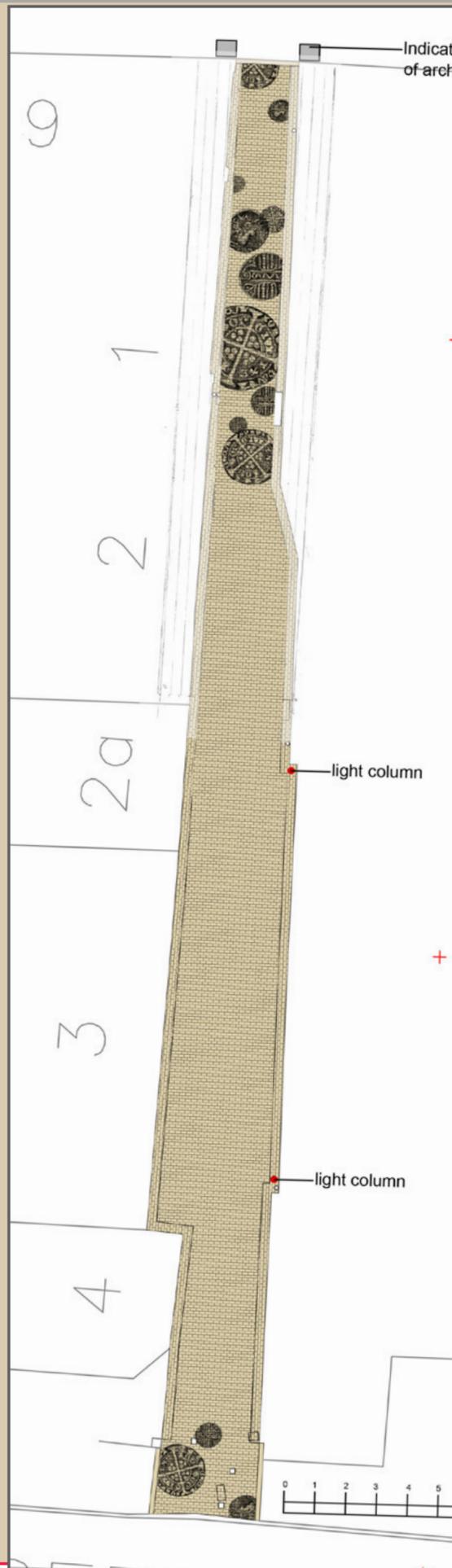
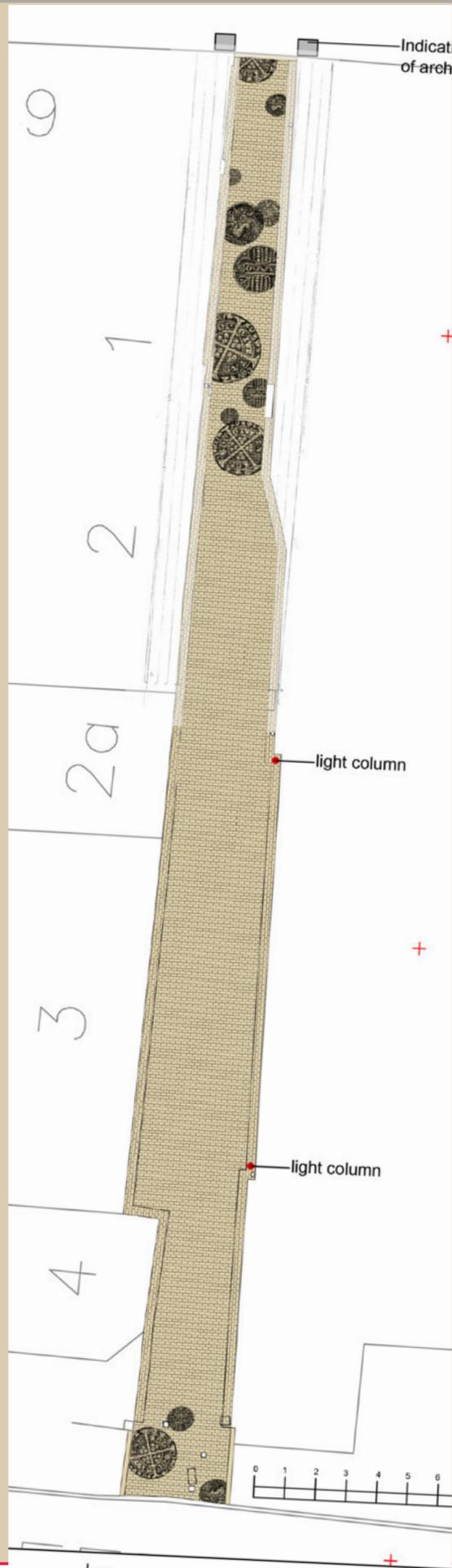
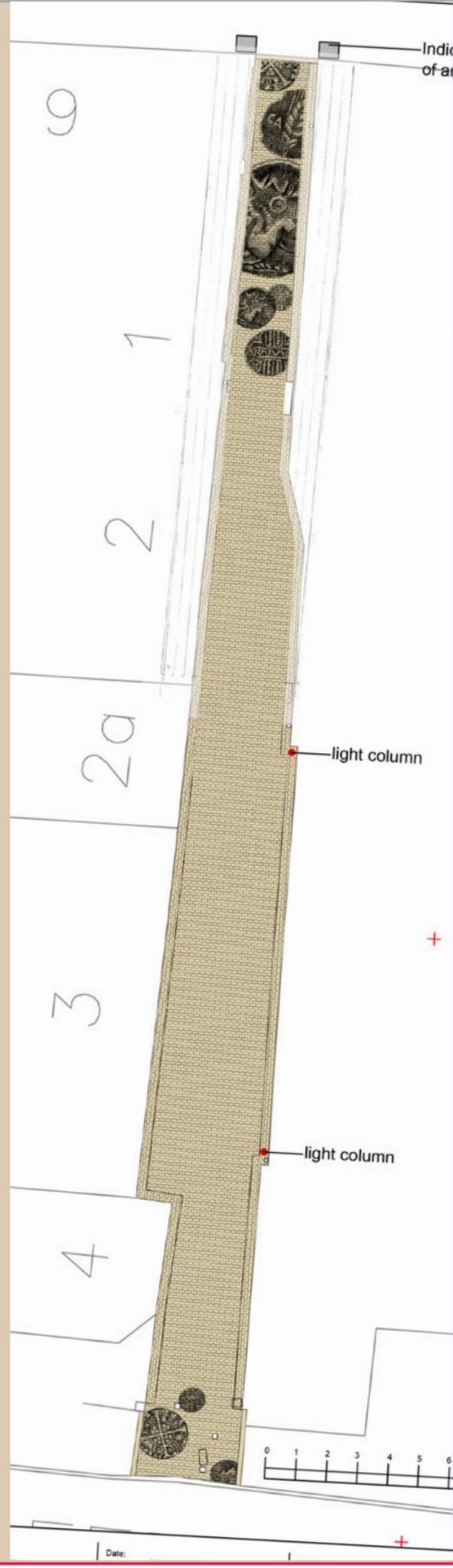
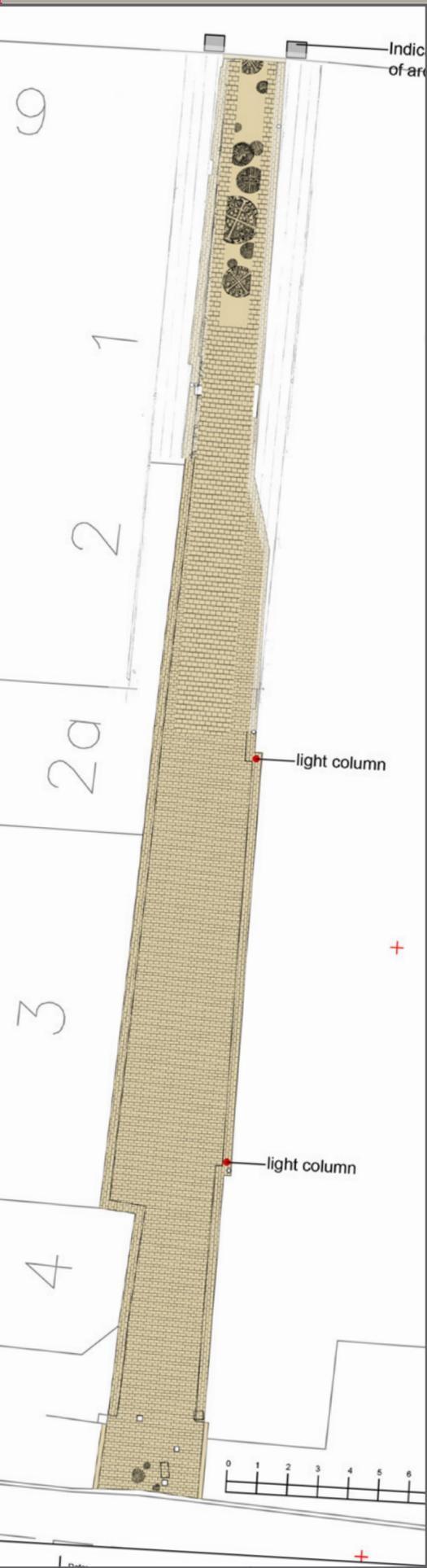
Extensive archaeological excavations were undertaken in the 1970s by the Colchester Archaeological Trust, lead by Philip Crummy on Lion Walk, south from Culver Street. This was a significant excavation and much was learnt about Colchester. Of interest to me here are the remains of tessellated forms, patterns and colours, evidenced in textiles, glass, mosaics and pottery.

“Colchester Museum hold one of the most significant collections of Roman glass in Western Europe.”

MEDIEVAL INFLUENCE

Once again I have focused on tessellated forms, patterns and colours that have been found in Norman and 'Early English' sacred architecture.





BANK PASSAGE OPTIONS

CONCEPT 2

Coins to be sourced for this area would be a variety of coins from different eras, not just from those found in the two hoards. To include coins from Iron age, roman and medieval coins.

