

The Roman Wall

Work is currently taking place in the grounds of the Cathedral to preserve a precious section of the wall that once surrounded and protected the Roman town of Durobrivae. This summer we are doing trial archaeological pits, thoroughly surveying the wall and carrying out emergency repairs.

It was probably in the first half of the 3rd century AD that this current stone wall was built to replace earlier earthen defences. It was a massive structure, 2.5m wide at the base and not less than 6m high. The photograph (right) shows what the wall would have looked like—this is a section of the Roman wall at Colchester. Note the typical Roman tiled courses. The Roman walls were used in Anglo-Saxon times, and still formed the city boundary up until the 13th century, when new walls extended the limits southwards.



This section of the Roman wall is important because it is one of the very few remaining parts left. It is mainly the core of the wall that exists in this section above ground level, and there have been many repairs to the facing over the ages. Our excavations, supervised by Graham Keevill, now indicate that an important building was built into the wall in this section in early mediaeval times, looking into the Priory's infirmary garden. It is likely that this part of the wall owes its survival to the existence of that building.

The work is being generously funded by BIFFA and English Heritage.