

## Different Interpretations

Key element 3 of the History National Curriculum, requires pupils to develop the ability to understand interpretations of history.

A programme of work on the reconstruction of the site could be devised to develop this ability. The drawings on the panels at the site and on the home page of this website are an interpretation of history. Is this the only interpretation? Where does it come from? Is it fact or opinion? What are the strengths of this interpretation? What are the weaknesses?

The archaeological evidence for the reconstructions is:-

- Accounts of excavations and early photographs.
- Comparative evidence from Colchester and Silchester.
- Aerial photographs: the grid plan of the Roman town.
- Crop mark evidence on aerial photographs.

From this evidence we can deduce:

**Forum and basilica:** brick and flint for the main walls of the basilica and the north wall of the forum. Elsewhere, a combination of chalk blocks and unfired clay bricks (laid on flint sleeper walls). When the forum was destroyed by fires, a smaller set of buildings were built over the remains.

A hypocaust was used in the forum/basilica.

Also a soakaway.

Steps led to the basilica.

**The baths:** the entrance was from the street to the east side.

Three doors gave access to the frigidarium . The next room was the tepidarium. The circular laconium was on the south side of the building, enclosed in a square outer wall. The frigidarium had a floor made of red brick cubes. Another rectangular room was probably a latrine, or a dressing room.

**The temples:** two of the three temples stood north of the forum. The third was outside the walls (not in the painting). They were built to the standard plan of concentric squares.

**Town defences:** aerial photographs showed three parallel ditches enclosing the grid south of the walled town (originally the plan was much larger than the late Roman town). This might have been an early military fort.

Walls surrounded the town. There is an entrance in the centre of each wall. On three sides these were surrounded by a ditch. The River Tas completed this circuit on the west side. The walls were made of flint, with a bank of earth against them on the inside. Why there is also a bank on the outside of the walls at Caistor is not clear. Excavations of the south gate revealed an entrance passage with an arch at each end, closed by double doors and flanked with square guard rooms. The south ditches were crossed by a wooden bridge to enter the gates.

External bastions (small towers) were built around the wall. Those examined are of a U-shaped or rectangular plan. On the north and east side a causeway covered the ditches with a road on top.

**Domestic buildings:** two stone houses were found. One had living rooms and workshops for glass and metalwork. It also had a mosaic floor of red cubes.

**Amphitheatre:** aerial photos suggest a standard plan.

Pupils could use this evidence to see how the drawings were achieved. They could also use it to produce different interpretations. Other evidence could be drawn on to support or refute their interpretation: roman writings, paintings, sculptures, statues, stone carvings, inscriptions and graffiti on walls.

The reconstructions could be compared with Pompeii. What are the differences in the houses, forum, basilica, temple? How does the selection of sources influence our interpretation?