Heybridge: A Late Iron Age and Roman Settlement
By Mark Atkinson and Steve Preston

Late Iron Age settlement at Heybridge was centred on a shrine, with a series of plots to north and south. In the mid 1st century AD the settlement was remodelled with metalled roads, a new temple on the earlier sacred site and a reworking of the plots into enclosures. North of the settlement were a number of burials, pyre sites and pyre debris dumps, at least one of which may have been 'aristocratic', suggesting the presence of a local elite. A period of stability followed when there was little substantive change to the settlement, except that the temple precinct was remodelled. The settlement seems to have been a large village or small town with a market and a religious function. Gradual decline and contraction is evident through the 3rd and 4th centuries, yet the religious focus remained into the late 4th century, when a substantial building - possibly an early Christian chapel - was placed over the former precinct wall. High-status burial continued at Heybridge into the late 4th century, despite the apparent decline in settlement status. What remained of the former Roman settlement into the 5th century, and whether there was continuity of occupation into the early Saxon period, is unclear. The main focus of early Saxon settlement was on higher ground to the north-east.
The settlement survives differentially as either earthworks or as buried structures and deposits. A series of small enclosures are defined by banks standing up to 0.2m high and one larger rectangular enclosure to the north west has a bank of up to 1m high with an outer ditch of 3m wide and 0.3m deep. This enclosure contains at least two depressions measuring up to 0.7m deep. Nearby cities The name Heybridge came from the high bridge that was built over the River Blackwater in the Middle Ages, at Heybridge Square (the junction of Heybridge Street, Holloway Road, and the Causeway). This was a 5-arched stone bridge and it was replaced in 1870 by a 2-arched brick one. Much of the water flow down this part of the river had, by then, been diverted into the River Chelmer by diversion work done during construction of the Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation. Some people believe that the River Blackwater at Heybridge, near where the "high bridge" was later constructed, was the... "Heybridge: A late Iron Age and Roman settlement. Excavations at Elms Farm 1993-5. Volume 2". Internet Archaeology (40). doi:10.11141/ia.40.1. "The discovery of the underlying Iron Age settlement is extremely exciting. "While there are traces of settlement beneath Roman Verulamium (today's St Albans) and Canterbury and close to the site of Roman Colchester, none of these resembles the evidence that we have here at Calleva of a planned town." The completely new street grid implemented later by the Romans could have been a "thumbs down on the British arrangement", he said. Prof Fulford added: "We now have evidence that the town was burnt down sometime after AD 50 and before AD 80. "The possibilit