A rare Quinarius of Allectus (AD 293 – 296), minted in London, depicting either the god Tamesis or Oceanus above a Roman galleys.

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This has been a very full year for the ARA. The Annual General Meeting in August concentrated on the constitution with no afternoon symposium. John Hyams and Beth Bishop stood down, having completed their term. In the absence of other nominations both were re-elected, though Beth wished to relinquish her post of secretary to the board. Member Dorothy Lawson generously offered her services, and the board are delighted to welcome her as minute secretary. Bryn Walters guided the meeting through the proposed amendments to the constitution, ensuring that the rationale behind each one was clearly explained and fully understood. The Board is most grateful to all members who took part in the debate, both in writing and from the floor.

Our summer excursion to Dorset was a resounding success and is reviewed by the Chairman in this issue. 1997 has been quite a year for Roman conferences: The Coloniae at Gloucester, The Nottingham Roman conference and of least the Association's first national conference at the Museum of London, two of which are reviewed here.

Among our reports we have an update from Bryn Walters on the DART project with an unexpected and exciting discovery, and a review by Tony Wilmott of his recent work on Hadrian's Wall for English Heritage. Large Roman villas have been the thing to find this year, with the one at North Swindon, identified by Bryn Walters; that in Gloucestershire featured on Channel 4's 'Time Team Live'; one discovered near Faversham, Kent, which aroused much media excitement earlier in the year, and another large and rare example located in Norfolk. This features in our 'News' section; Paul Wilkinson gives a report on his extensive work around Faversham; we consider a previously unrecorded structure at Caerwent, and our president, Dr. Graham Webster, adds to our understanding of the Newton St. Loë pavement.
**A CRITICISM FROM THE MASTER**

by Martin Henig

Anthony Beeson and I recently published a paper on the Orpheus mosaic from Newton St. Loe and its significance ('Orpheus and the Newton St. Loe Pavement in Bristol City Museum' in *Almost the Richest City* Bristol in the Middle Ages (British Archaeological Association conference Transactions XIX, 1997, pp. 1-8). Here it was suggested that Orpheus was identified with a local hunter-god known from sculpture and perhaps from the Nettleton Shrub inscription to Apollo the 'hound-prince', and that the mosaic symbolised the control which the local gentry exercised over their estate-workers and clients.

We sent an offprint of our paper to our President, Dr. Graham Webster, who added some pertinent observations. He agrees that Orpheus is surrounded by seven animals, four of them carnivores (a lion, a leopard, a panther and a boar) which are prevented from killing their prey (a stag, a hind and a bull) and that through his power he prevents the former from attacking and killing the latter. However, he goes on to suggest that far more than simple control of nature was intended: 'The role of Orpheus was to charm the wild beasts into a sleepy lethargy when they could be easily approached and slain by the human huntsman. One has a strong feeling that the basic concept here is that animals are easily available for slaughter and consumption so that human beings do not starve'.

This seems to me to be an important qualification which I am happy to take on board. Whatever symbolic and mystical ideas are present in Orphic floors, and in some (notably Littlecote) they are paramount, there are elements of primitive hunting magic here, just as there are on palaeolithic wall-paintings. As Dr. Webster rightly concludes, 'At some point the hunter must be allowed to fell his prey or starve'. That, after all, is why the hound is so expectant, leaping up toward Orpheus as though anxious to be given the order to pursue the deer. Other mosaics, such as the well-known fragment from East Coker in Taunton Museum, showing two huntsmen carrying back a large deer slung from a pole, portray the practical end of the process.

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**THE SECOND INTERNATIONAL ROMAN ARCHAEOLOGY CONFERENCE, 1997**

by Grahame Soffe

Nottingham University hosted this prestigious conference over the weekend of 11th – 13th April, incorporating TRAC '97, the Theoretical Roman Archaeology Conference. It was organised by the university, under Professor Roger Wilson's leadership, on behalf of the Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies. A rich variety of 71 papers was given in three parallel sessions to nearly 250 delegates from all over the world, and a huge book fair was mounted by Oxbow Books and other sponsors.

As at the first conference, sessions were divided into sections devoted to specific themes. In *Villages in the Roman World*, the importance of ground fieldwork and mapping air photography was at last realised in relating settlements to an established geographical and political framework. In *Romano-British technology: social and economic aspects*, metalwork, glass, pottery and textiles were all covered. The TRAC contributions concentrated on dynamics and social change, particularly in landscape studies, with several student papers. Colin Forcey's on *Whatever happened to the heroes? Temples, mortuary cults*, etc., and Keith Matthews' on *Britannus/Brito: Roman ethnographies and native identities* were particularly stimulating. *Roman Egypt* dealt with the mummy portraits (Dr. Susan Walker), textiles (Dr. John Peter Wild) and architecture (Don Bailey). Several important papers came under *Urbanism in Italy* and *Material Culture*, and here Dr. John Creighton's paper on *The native interpretation of Roman imagery*, mythology and ideology was for the writer, and many others, the best contribution. This told a new history of the iconography of British Celtic coins being carefully used to relate back to the events of the Augusto-Tiberian court. Dr. Martin Henig chaired a weighty session on *Provincial art and Roman Imperialism*, and there were others on the Imperial Cult and Roman Germany.

An excellent excursion to Lincoln was organised by Michael Jones, the Director of the city's Archaeology Unit, where delegates were given a tour of Roman parts not normally reached, such as the forum colonnade on Bailgate excavated over a century ago.
While Channel 4's Time Team were screening their latest Roman villa project live recently, the Swindon Police Delta Archaeological Research Team (DART), on their evaluation dig in the Og valley south of Swindon, were making a surprising double discovery. What appears to be a Romano-Celtic temple-like building has been identified over the demolished remains of the Roman villa house partially revealed last year (ARA II, p. 13). What was originally thought to be the corner of an Italic-style atrium, inserted into a late phase of the villa, has been totally exposed this summer and has produced a series of foundation stones for internal timber columns. These would have supported a tower-like projection above the main hall. A rear chamber, open at both ends, and screened from the main hall, contained a large foundation pit which may have held a votive totem or cult figure. Construction of this chamber had cut through two mosaics belonging to the earlier Roman villa house.

A number of local ARA members also assisted on the site this year, as did a contingent of students from Chippenham College, undertaking a field experience project as part of their archaeology course.

If this is a temple, it is a very exciting discovery especially as it appears to be constructed at a very late date, somewhere around AD 390. (A worn coin of Gratian c. 380 was found beneath the floor packing). This is the period when the Emperor Theodosius outlawed pagan practices and ordered the demolition of temples or their conversion to the Christian faith.
However, a number of late Roman sanctuaries in the south and west of Britain suggests that pagan beliefs survived far longer, despite Imperial demands.

The Roman house beneath the structure was being expanded and embellished with mosaic floors at the turn of the 3rd and 4th centuries. Last year the team uncovered a suite of house baths with hypocausts, a hot bath and a well-preserved cold bath with a tiled floor. In the 4th century the house appears to have suffered from water rising from underground springs. This resulted in the hypocausts flooding and becoming choked with silts and clays leading to the abandonment of the baths and eventually the whole building. On the evidence of very fine unused mosaic tesserae, found in the rubbish at the back of this house, it is suspected that the inhabitants moved to a new house on slightly higher ground just to the rear of the old one. This is supported by an aerial photograph taken by the police crew, which shows the faint outline of a large building.

The temple-like building which was then constructed on the site utilized two of the major foundations of the demolished villa house, but two other substantial foundations were cut, which had deep sarsen boulder footings. The upper parts of the walls were then constructed in fine blocks of Purbeck limestone from the Roman quarries on Swindon Hill. (This is the only known source of this type of rock apart from Purbeck in Dorset.) The lower roof over the hall was tiled with slabs of purple Pennant sandstone from the Forest of Dean and the upper pyramid roof may have been capped in cream-coloured limestone slabs from the Cotswolds, several of which were found lying around the sides of the building. On entering this structure, from a supposed doorway in the south-east wall, (the foundations had been robbed at this point), the celebrant or worshipper would have stepped into a hall fifty feet square, with timber columns supporting the corners of a central tower with windows on all four sides. To the rear of the hall was a substantially-built timber and stone screen which probably contained a central arch, through which an image of a deity or sacred vestments could be viewed.

There may of course be an alternative, more interesting interpretation for this building as no obvious votive offerings were found. As there is an open hall of columns where one would expect to find four internal walls of a temple *cella*, the structure may possibly be a Christian church built within the grounds of the replacement villa. There was no formal architectural design for churches at this time, and it is very conceivable, especially in a rural context, that the layout of a traditional pagan religious building was being adapted here to accommodate the services of the new Imperial faith. If this interpretation is the right one, this building would be one of the earliest churches yet found from Roman Britain.
BLACK CARTS:
RESEARCH AND MANAGEMENT ON HADRIAN'S WALL

by Tony Wilmott (English Heritage Central Archaeology Service)

In 1987 Hadrian's Wall was designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The subsequent production of the Hadrian's Wall Management Plan provided a basis for management and conservation strategies for the World Heritage Site as a whole. The Management Plan stresses that a research strategy is an essential pre-requisite to a proper understanding of the World Heritage Site, and that the results of new work will have a direct bearing upon the way in which Hadrian's Wall is curated and managed for the future.

All elements of the surviving remains of Hadrian's Wall have the potential to contain significant information which can assist our understanding of the monument, but the basis for our knowledge is dubious, due to the limited amount of modern scientific archaeological investigation which has actually taken place. This is nowhere truer than in the earthwork elements of the frontier system. The impressive remains of the Vallum, the Turf Wall, the Wall ditch, and the countergarrison bank to the north are landscape features familiar to the visitor, but their variations in original form and dimensions are very poorly understood. Despite extensive work in the 1920s and 30s, recent examination and modern understanding of these features has been rare, amounting to only eight excavations within the last thirty or so years.

One of the more important outstanding questions concerning the Wall zone is the potential for the survival of evidence for the pre-Roman environment within buried soils sealed beneath the upstanding earthworks.

The earthworks of the World Heritage site present a considerable problem for management. Although survival is good there are significant threats, arising from arable agriculture, natural erosion, and forestry. Even where under pasture, stretches of earthwork are damaged by the passage of stock, and of agricultural vehicles. At many places the activities of rabbits are extremely detrimental. The problem in attempting to manage the earthworks is that we lack direct evidence to assess the degree of continuing damage, and therefore the correct mitigation steps to take.

During June/July 1997 a project was mounted by English Heritage to characterise the state of preservation and the archaeological potential of the earthworks of the Wall in an area where stock and rabbit damage was a problem. The site lay at Black Carts, in Wall-mile 29, between Chesters and Carrawburgh, and access to the site was kindly granted by the Chesters Estate. In the project design particular emphasis was placed upon the recovery of samples for environmental analysis, the establishment of the original profiles of the earthworks, and whether the Wall itself survived at all, in an area where it was marked on the surface only by the spoil banks of stone robbers. The project took the form of a staggered transect through all of the works, excluding the north Vallum mound along which the modern B 6318 runs. To the north of the road a trench near the site of Turret 29b covered the Wall, ditch and countergarrison bank, while to the south, a trench nearer Turret 29a examined the Vallum.

In the northern trench excavation of the spoil banks clearly showed that they comprised a history of the destruction of the Wall, beginning with dereliction and collapse, followed by two phases of robbing. The final phase was almost certainly connected to the building of an adjacent north-south drystone field wall of 18th or 19th-century date. Of the Wall fabric, a single course of split Whin boulder footings survived; enough to show the classic pattern for this sector, of Narrow Wall on Broad Wall footings. To the north a surprise lay in store in the dimensions of the Wall ditch. This was only 3.5m wide and 80cm deep, contrasting with the usually recorded dimensions of 8-9m wide and 3m deep. Though the ditch was cut into the solid Whinstone bedrock, it contrasts sharply with the impressive rock-cut profile less than 1km further west, at Limestone Corner. Furthermore, the lack of anything but recent silting and the waterworn condition of the bedrock within the ditch suggest that it was, until recently, little more than a gully down which to channel run-off water. The contrast between the ditch profiles at Black Carts and at Limestone Corner have implications in the study of the sequence and planning of the construction of the frontier.

The countergarrison bank to the north of the Wall ditch is a little understood feature of the Wall system. In the Black Carts area it comprises a bank on the ditch edge, with an extensive area of low mounds beyond to the north. Excavation showed that all of these were formed of piles of split Whin boulders and stone chips. Conventionally these have been interpreted as ditch upcast, but the ditch is far too small to have produced so much material. Perhaps it derives from quarrying for Wall building stone further north. It is also possible that in this area, the bank on the ditch edge was deliberately constructed to make the
countsarcarp, a substantial, intact soil horizon existed. This stratum has the potential to contain in situ pollen evidence for the nature of the pre-Roman landscape. This was intensively sampled, and the samples are currently undergoing assessment.

In the southern trench, even before the analysis of pollen and soil samples, evidence was recovered concerning the environment of the locality before the Frontier was built. The sub-soil beneath both the south vallum mound, and the so-called marginal mound was scored with ard marks – the traces of early ploughing. Similar plough-marks have been found in many excavations on both the eastern and western sides of the central crags of the Whin Sill.

On the eastern side, ploughing is attested in excavations from Wallsend in the east, to Carrawburgh in Wall-nure 31. This does not necessarily mean that the whole of the eastern one-third of the Wall was built upon plough-land, or that the land was under the plough immediately before the frontier was built. However, the possibility that a considerable part of the frontier may have been built upon requisitioned agricultural land opens up questions of the native response to its imposition on the landscape. The Vallum ditch showed a classic section. It was 2.8m deep from its contemporary ground surface, and 6m in width. It was uncompromisingly straight-sided and flat-bottomed, despite the fact that the bottom 1.3m were cut through the solid Whinstone bedrock. The contrast between the depth and size of the Wall ditch on the one hand, and the (later) Vallum ditch on the other invites comparison in terms of the perception of their relative function and importance.

As always on Hadrian’s Wall, this excavation has opened up new questions, and allows known detail on the frontier to be looked at in a new way. In addition, the work begins to demonstrate the archaeological importance of those parts of the World Heritage Site which survive as earthworks.

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**ROMAN NEWS UPDATE**

**Abstracts – Anthony Beeson**

**Traces of a palatial building have been discovered east of Faversham in Kent.** Small fragments of very fine mosaic were discovered, which led English Heritage to conduct a geophysical survey. Results indicate a building stretching for over 175 metres, with at least forty rooms and probably more beyond the limits of the survey. Marble fragments and pictorial wall plaster hint at a splendidly decorated complex.

*Daily Mail 25.04.97; Telegraph 25.04.97; Guardian 25.04.97*

**A small coin hoard, probably dating from the reign of the British usurper Carausius, has been discovered five miles from Andover in Hampshire.**

*Andover Midweek Advertiser 06.05.97*

**An extensive cobbled courtyard has been located in Lancaster near Caton Road at junction 34 of the M6 motorway.**

*Lancashire Evening Post 12.05.97*

**The Roman site at Scole in Norfolk has been badly damaged by ploughing, notwithstanding the fact that it is registered as an Ancient Monument. The owner of the land, Sir Rupert Mann, may face legal proceedings.**

*East Anglian Daily Times 08.07.97*

**A hoard of 22 gold coins and 27 silver coins, 50 pieces of silver bullion and two gold rings have been found on farmland near Littlehampton, West Sussex.** The coins, in mint condition, date from 340 to 461 AD and cover seven emperors. All were minted abroad. This is said to be the latest Roman coin hoard ever found in Britain and dates from a time when there is no evidence of coins being used in this country.

*Daily Telegraph 09.07.97*

**Remains of over 100 circular huts discovered at Vindolanda in Northumberland have been interpreted as an interment camp for hostages of the Scottish campaigns of Septimius Severus.**

*Daily Telegraph 02.08.97*
BRITANNIA: THE MARITIME LINKS
CONFERENCE REVIEW

O

n the weekend of the 4th-
5th October the
Association occupied the
lecture theatre at the
Museum of London for our first
National Conference. Britannia: The
Maritime Links was an adventurous
and innovative project for the
Association. To step into the
precarious environment of estuarine
mud flats and the murky depths
beneath the waves was, without
question, taking a plunge into
uncharted seas! Nevertheless, the
risk proved extremely worthwhile:
most of the principal British maritime
researchers were present and gave
excellent, stimulating and thought-
provoking papers on a variety of
related subjects. Unfortunately, the
contingent of Romano-British land-
based researchers was not great and I
suspect that in time ‘gentlemen in
England then abed shall think
themselves accurs’d they were not there’
(and ladies, too! With apologies to
Shakespeare).

The purpose of the conference
was to emphasize the point that
Britannia as an island relied on its
maritime connection with the greater
Empire, for without it there would
have been no Roman Britain. It began
with an overview of water transport in
the Roman Empire from Dr. Anthony
Parker, Director of the Centre of
Maritime Archaeology & History and
senior Lecturer in Archaeology at
Bristol University. He emphasised the
importance of waterborne
transport by sea, by river, lake and
canal – all essential methods of
conquest and exploitation. Looking
principally at the Mediterranean,
where most of his research has been
undertaken, Dr. Parker illustrated the
variety of sea-going vessels in a social
context, using known examples of
wrecks and epigraphic evidence. He
cited one wreck off southern Italy, the
cargo of which had contained very
precious high-status material and
personal effects, implying that the
ship may have been carrying a rich
person in transit perhaps to either a
new home, official posting or distant
estate. Based partially on this
evidence, he pointed out that it was
also very likely that the élite of
Roman society may in fact have
owned their own ships, which would
have been used for trade as well as
personal transport. The evidence
would suggest that such vessels were
in general quite small but that there
were probably many of them plying
the coasts around the Mediterranean.

Dr. Parker also discussed the
extensive management of rivers,
canals and lesser channels. He
pointed out that towpaths were
operational in Gaul and such
evidence should be widespread in
Britain. He suggested that there had
been two classes of vessels, first, the
military class, which provided troop
transport, supplies for campaigns,
and transit vessels for government
officials. Second, there were privately
owned merchant ships, operated
from among the social élite.

The conference then turned its
attention to Britain with Gustav
Milne, Lecturer in Maritime
Archaeology at University
College, London. He gave his
consideration on the Classis
Britannica and its association with
Londonium. He argued that the British fleet had more
roles to fulfil than has been
previously considered, and had
been under the control of the
Procurator of Britannia, whose
office was based in Londonium

He suggested that the Fleet was built
by its own troops, with timber and
iron from the Weald. Among the
fleet's tasks was troop-transport,
coastal map-making and passage for
the Cursus Publicus (the Imperial
postal service) using the mansions at
Dover and Richborough. Other
functions included stone quarrying
and transit at Folkestone and Benwell
plus harbour design and
development. Gustav suggested that
the waterfront installations of
1st-century London were possibly
the work of the fleet. The Classis
Britannica disappears from the
epigraphic record by AD 240-50, a
date which coincides with the decline
of London's waterfront and the
termination of development of their
fort at Dover.

We then looked through the
experienced eye of Professor Sean
McGrail at British ship construction
in a lecture entitled 'Celtic
Shipbuilding and Seafaring'. The
Celts were very competent ship-
builders with a long maritime

Speakers at the Conference, from left to right – Gordon
MacDonald, Dr. Colin Martin and Tim Strickland.

Photo: Grahame Soffe

Dr. Peter Marsden, director of the Shipwreck Heritage
Centre, Hastings with iron nail from the Blackfriars
ship.

Photo: Grahame Soffe