The Pillerton Priors mosaic.  (See article on page 3).

Photo: © Luigi Thompson.
**EDITORIAL**

Once again, welcome to this edition of ARA, another bumper issue of articles, many informative and some thought-provoking.

We have part II of Martin Henig's article on Antiquities and Roman Religion, with some very interesting illustrations. Anthony Beeson has presented an article on a piece of sculpture and its relevant iconography together with a short item on which side of the road the Romans drove – the right or the wrong side – which we hope may provoke some comment, depending on your beliefs!

There are three features on villas. The first is on a new find in Warwickshire – Pilerton Priors – with a rather fine mosaic, which is an important discovery for that area. The second is reporting on the continuing excavations at the Minster Roman villa, on the Isle of Thanet, Kent. Our Director, Bryn Walters, has provided his further thoughts on the Tockenham Roman villa, Wiltshire, which was first introduced to television viewers by the *Time Team* programme.

Bryn Walters has also produced an article on the Shadwell Baths Complex, a very important discovery with regard to late Roman London. Our indefatigable Chairman, Grahame Sofie, has written three articles for this issue; his usual round-up of 2002 events, a short comment on Martin Henig's book – *The Heirs of King Verica* – and details of an important find in the form of a carved inscription. This, too, comes from London, one of very few located in the capital, to date, and Grahame fully discusses the implications of the find. On a personal note, I am very grateful to Grahame for his archaeological advice on the submitted articles and for his efforts to produce a factually correct Bulletin which necessitates him in hours of research and some rewriting.

Last, we have details of an exhibition and reconstruction of a Roman water lifting device. This is experimental archaeology carried out by the Museum of London to test practicality of use of finds from wells found during an excavation in the centre of London. The exhibition is open until 1st June 2003.

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A recently discovered mosaic, badly damaged by recent ploughing, has been recorded from a previously unknown villa site at Nolands Farm, Pillerton Priors, South Warwickshire. The villa is an important find in a region where few high status Roman sites are known.

The mosaic was carefully excavated and recorded with the help of a small team of ARA members in late September 2002. A combination of the shallow depth of the floor and the nature of the local lias clays had left it very vulnerable to agricultural activity and there was evidence of recent plough damage (Fig. 1).

A geophysical survey was carried out over an area corresponding to a concentration of Romano-British potsherds, tile and stone revealed by fieldwalking. Resistivity survey proved to be very successful, using equipment constructed by the author. The survey used the twin electrode configuration over 20 x 20 metre grids with 1 metre sampling. Greyscale plots were created using Sniffer, a dedicated software package designed specifically for archaeologists. The resolution of the building was better than expected probably due to the long dry summer (Fig. 2).

The location to be excavated was chosen to correspond with a concentrated scatter of tesserae located by fieldwalking. Initially two small test pits were used to evaluate the preservation of the archaeology; it was an exciting moment when intact mosaic flooring was found immediately below plough-soil. Favourable weather conditions allowed excavation and recording of the complete floor to be carried out by the team, with Luigi Thompson, within one week (see Footnote).

The villa plan appears to be that of an aisled house on a north-south axis with a wing linked to the north-east corner forming a reverse L-shape. The mosaic floor was located in room ‘M’ on the plan, and has internal dimensions of 4.5 x 4.5 metres. This room appears to lie between a corridor to the south and a series of small rooms to the north which may indicate a suite of baths.

The design of the mosaic is based upon a crater (wine mixing bowl) (Fig. 5) and can be related to the Corinium school of mosaicists. An interlocking Greek key design forms...
towards the south (Fig. 5).

Lying between the roundel and the border are lunettes and pillows defined by guilloche surrounding floral designs with similar quadrants at each corner (Fig. 3).

Tesserae were made of white and blue lias limestone (Mendips), yellow oolitic limestone (Cotswolds) and terracotta. Differing sized tesserae discovered during excavation suggest the possibility of another mosaic in this building.

This discovery was the result of field-work carried out in 1998 for the Edgehill Project, a survey of early settlement in the region, when a surface scatter of tesserae was recorded. Initially focusing on the Edgehill escarpment some three miles to the east of the Pillerton Priors site, a relatively dense pattern of Romano-British settlement was indicated by field-walking collections. With the possibility of the abruptly-changing topography of the Edgehill escarpment influencing the pattern of settlement, it was decided to extend the project into areas well away from the initial survey region. The settlement density and status of the Edgehill scarp slopes may therefore extend well into the fertile clays of south Warwickshire.

**FOOTNOTE:**

Luigi Thompson joined the excavation in order to record the mosaic for the National Corpus Roman Mosaics of Britain being produced by Dr. David Neal and Steve Cosh and it will be published in volume 4 of the Corpus.

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**A NOTE ON THE HEIRS OF KING VERICA**

_by Grahame Soffe_

The Heirs of King Verica: Culture and Politics in Roman Britain by our own ARA Research Adviser, Martin Henig, was published by Tempus last year at £17.99. It has caused quite a stir and it was meant to. For a start, Martin Henig is renowned as a leading academic scholar, with a huge list of erudite published works, replete with references, behind him. This book has no references! Instead it is a refreshing modern epic beautifully drawn from ancient sources: literature, art and archaeology. We learn of the events surrounding King Verica, the Emperor Claudius, and the beginnings of Roman Britain. It then proceeds in a ‘dance to the music of time’ to give a revolutionary interpretation of British life in the first millennium AD, ending with King Alfred. The main point is the continuity of culture and its achievements. Educated Roman Britons, well versed in Ovid and other Roman writers would recognise themselves in its pages.

There have been plenty of reviews: Britannia, Antiquity, The Journal of the British Archaeological Association, Current Archaeology and Choice. Reviewers have found the book informative, imaginative, challenging and even entertaining. They have not only生产总值entastic and well-crafted literary style and fine illustrations – no wonder the book was a runner-up in the 2002 Archaeological Book Awards. A great novelty is that the historical narrative is interspersed with passages of imaginative fiction, printed in a different type-face. Surprisingly, this has confused some reviewers (who should have known better) into missing the point. However, Jeffrey May was taken with philosopher-schoolmaster Strato’s lesson to young Primus (from Rib 106), whom he misreads as ‘Prunus’ (!), in third-century Cirencester, not to mention Candidus and his lover Bellicus dancing and copulating at the Stonesfield villa – “sizzling stuff here” as May observes. Others, particularly Mike Fulford, have finched at the Roman invasion fleet of AD 43 landing in the Solent area, rather than at Richborough, and the importance of the Atrebatic Client Kingdom of Togidubnus. Nevertheless, we now have an army of scholars with Cassius Dio (our only ancient source) behind them, who are returning to that view – see most recently John Manley’s AD 43 the Roman Invasion of Britain: A Reassessment (Tempus 2002) and Eberhard Sauer’s brilliant paper “The Roman Invasion of Britain (AD 43) in Imperial Perspective: a response to Fere and Fulford”, Oxford Journal of Archaeology, 21, 4 (2002). As Manley indicates, it is certainly “time to hitch a ride on the turning tide.”

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INTRODUCTION

On the Isle of Thanet in north-east Kent, a knowledgeable observer scanning the structure of Minster village’s oldest buildings, the abbey and church of St. Mary’s, would deduce the presence nearby of Roman building remains, as the re-use of Roman materials is very evident. Two hundred years ago the ruins were there to see. Ireland (1828) recorded that: “In a field called ‘Twenty Acres,’ about a quarter of a mile eastward of Minster, a variety of foundations are apparent, as if some chapel or oratory had originally existed there.” By the late 20th century these remains had been so denuded that only a stony patch could be seen. The farmer, Jack Clifton, was told by older farm hands, and accepted, that this marked the site of a demolished pig-pen. However, under ideal conditions, this buried structure exhibited an extensive and explicit negative crop-mark of a Roman villa. In 1979 it was photographed and plotted by the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments, from whence the data came to the attention of the Thanet Archaeological Society (Perkins 1996). The site was made the subject of field survey at the first opportunity, and a cluster of c. 40 Roman coins was also found. In 1991 Mr. Clifton kindly gave permission for an evaluation by the Society which indicated that substantial building remains survived but that they were close to the surface and subject to regular plough attrition.

A problem was therefore presented in that to record the remains ahead of their destruction would require a lengthy and extensive excavation. The difficulty was resolved in 1996, when the site was adopted by the Fieldwork Committee of the Kent Archaeological Society as the venue for a series of annual training excavations (Perkins 1996). These have been well attended, both by enrolled trainees, and experienced amateurs, mainly from the Thanet Archaeological Society (patrons of the project) and members of the Dover Archaeological Group. Training excavations took place in the years from 1996 to 1999 (Perkins 1996; 1999), and were recommenced in 2001. Research is ongoing. To date, excavation and resistivity survey have revealed a large villa complex.

LANDSCAPE SETTING (Fig. 3)

Inland from what was once the south-west shore of the Isle of Thanet there are measures of the Thanet Beds Sands, forming foothills to the chalk downland plateau. One such hilltop, now overlooking the village of Minster, had been chosen for the site of the villa complex. The hilltop itself is almost flat and stands at an elevation of about 16 m O.D. Immediately to the west lies a narrow valley. In its bottom, an emerging
spring feeds a stream which supplies a line of fish ponds associated with the nearby medieval grange (now Minster Abbey), originally belonging to St. Augustine’s Abbey at Canterbury. A ridge of chalk downland, forming part of Thanet’s central plateau, rises above the villa site and this is followed by a prehistoric trackway, later known as Dunstrete. Ceramic and lithic evidence obtained during excavation and survey of the villa have established that the hilltop also attracted settlement from the Neolithic period onwards.

If a splendid view was valued by the villa builders, they could not have been better served. West and south-west were the broad waters of the Wantsum sea channel, with, upon an island to the south, the town and fort of Rutupiae (Richborough). Beyond as a backdrop was mainland Kent, comprising the heights of the North Downs from Walmer to Dover. More practical considerations were undoubtedly the proximity of the spring-fed stream and the seashore, with a natural harbour, at the foot of the hill 500 m away.

Other Roman building remains recorded elsewhere on the Isle of Thanet have established that the Minster villa complex was far from isolated. We now know of 18 sites on Thanet that can be positively or tentatively identified as Roman villas.

Details of these have been previously summarised (Perkins 2001, appendix 1). In spite of what might seem an impressive list, the dearth of real evidence about Roman Thanet is best illustrated by the fact that only two of the listed villa sites, the present site (Abbey Farm, Site 1) and Ebbsfleet (Site 3) have been sufficiently investigated to provide stratified dating evidence. It is, however, now possible to refute the long held contention that Roman Thanet was a sparsely populated ‘granary’ for Rutupiae and Regulbium (Reculver), the two forts on the west bank of the Wantsum. Within their protective shadow, the Isle seems to have contained a flourishing community.

**THE VILLA COMPLEX**
(Figs. 1 and 2)

To date, the excavations have succeeded in locating and substantially excavating five separate buildings (Buildings 1-5) and it seems likely that others remain still to be discovered, together with a variety of ancillary structures. The heavily plough-damaged remains of the main villa house (Building 1), was the structure initially revealed on the air photograph. This building comprises an east-west main range of seven rooms. From either end of this, a wing of two rooms extends south, the whole being enclosed by flanking corridors (Perkins 1996). Several phases of additions and modifications are apparent within the surviving structure.

Immediately west of Building 1 lay a detached bath-house (Building 3). This was fully excavated in 1998. Both Buildings 1 and 3 were placed at the north (higher) end of a large walled enclosure. Set on the outside of the west wall of this enclosure, at the north corner, lay Building 2. This small, rectangular structure contained tile-lined channels and has been interpreted as either an elaborate corn-drying oven/malting kiln, or a latrine. Another...
small structure was represented by Building 5, located at the north-east corner of the walled enclosure, but not pre-dating it. Building 4 (Figs. 1 and 4) consists of a stone-built house, situated south of the main villa house (Building 1). It lay immediately outside the enclosure wall, at the south-east corner, and several phases of development are again apparent. A corresponding structure (Building 6) seems to exist at the south-west corner, although this awaits detailed excavation.

The excavations and survey work have produced large quantities of pottery, tile, window and vessel glass, animal bone, finely painted plaster, mosaic fragments, opus sectile, coins and other finds suggesting a degree of affluence. Basic spot-dating of the pottery has been undertaken to allow an outline chronology to be established for the site. From the available evidence, occupation of the villa complex was confined to the second and early third centuries AD.

The excavation of Building 6 is planned for 2003 together with further investigation of the whole infrastructure of the site. The final publication will appear as a series of reports in Archaeologia Cantiana.

IMMEDIATELY WEST OF THE MAIN VILLAハウス BUILDING 1, set neatly in line with the end of the west wing, a detached bath-house was located (Building 3, Fig. 2). There was less than a 2 m gap between the two buildings but no clear stratigraphic relationship between them could be established. There can be little doubt that they were in use at the same time, however, and because of their close proximity, a roofed connecting passage could easily have been constructed. The bath-house comprised a comparatively small, rectangular building, with an external apse on the west side. The pottery and coin evidence suggest that the structure was first erected sometime during the second century and it was probably abandoned in the third century. Subsequently, it was extensively stone-robbed and later suffered from plough damage, so that no upper floors or occupation levels survived, and all the walls had been removed to foundation level. Analysis of the surviving fabric indicated that there were several phases of development to the structure. In its earliest form the bath-house contained seven rooms arranged in two rows on either side of a longitudinal dividing wall (rooms 20-26), with a small externally projecting apsidal plunge bath on the west side (room 27). Phase 2A saw the rebuilding of the hypocaust system and at about the same time, a new external stone-lined drain was added along the north and part of the east side (Phase 2B). In Phase 3 this drain channel was extended to go through the villa boundary wall, but in the process blocked the exit of the drainage channel from the plunge bath in room 27.

In the 2002 season a total of thirty separate trenches was excavated. The bulk of these were aimed at tracing the line of the villa enclosure wall which surrounded the main house and its adjacent bath-building. Three others were designed to examine significant areas located by geophysical survey. In the course of the trenching, Building 6 was discovered outside the corner of the villa enclosure. It seems likely that this mirrors Building 4. Preliminary investigation established the presence of at least two main rooms and a corridor, associated with tesserac, opus signinum and painted wall-plaster. Work on the main villa house was confined to the re-exposure of the central part of the main range to allow wall junctions to be re-surveyed, and to re-examine the problematic D-shaped hypocausted room at the back of the range. Re-surveying confirmed that the house was not precisely laid out, with several corners that are not true right-angles.

Evidence for a gateway was located in the middle of the south side of the villa enclosure wall. This was represented by two large post-pits, each containing traces of a circular/oval post-pipe. A gateway about 3 m wide is suggested. A shallow slot running between the post-pits seemed to represent the position of a timber sill-beam or door-step. Rough metalling extended north and south of the entrance and provides evidence for a road. The metalling produced a rare silver coin of Septimius Severus (dated to 201) and suggests that the road was not laid before the beginning of the third century.

A large shaft was located immediately north of the north wall of the villa enclosure. This was oval in plan, 4.70 m east-west by 2.75 m north-south. It was excavated to a maximum depth of 2.20 m but the base was not reached. The filling produced quantities of late first-century AD pottery, including bowls and flagons; also building debris, including painted wall-plaster. It is hoped to return and complete the excavation of this shaft in 2003. Also in this area of the site a complex sequence of other large pits and ditches was located. The ditches are likely to relate to a more extensive system of fields and enclosures around the villa. The pits were perhaps originally dug as clay quarries. The filling of both the pits and ditches produced significant quantities of pottery, painted plaster and other debris. Geophysical survey of the field continued, under the supervision of Carole and Brian McNaughton.

PARTIAL EXCAVATION OF THE DITCH outside the north boundary wall of the villa recovered a sample from a large deposit of painted wall-plaster fragments, most probably stripped from rooms in the villa during a period of refurbishment – perhaps late in the second century. Most of the fragments reflect the standard mode of decoration: striped borders around large coloured panels, located above imitation painted marble (marble-splashed) dados. However, some fragments imply that elements of the villa’s decoration were more sophisticated, incorporating elaborate foliate borders and figured motifs within the large panels, and there is an indication that other fine figured work and possible
architectural landscape scenes once graced the house’s interior.

Figure 5 is a composite of fragments (not in their correct order here), which are relative to a broad black border with entwining coloured foliage edged with white and yellow stripes. This would have been repeated as the vertical border decoration on either side of the large central panels all around the room. This type of decoration normally springs as tendrils from just above the dado and ascends as far as the upper register or frieze below the ceiling. Dark ground borders of this type are more common at the end of the first century and up to the middle of the second century. A strikingly similar pattern was recovered from the site of Durocornovium (Lower Wanborough near Swindon, Wiltshire), also from a plaster dump with demolition material. The Lower Wanborough plaster was possibly Trajanic in date, (early second century) (Walters, B. 2001).

Other fragments depict a series of decorative images. What appears to be the neck of a vase with protruding flower stems, may in fact be part of a candelabrum, Figure 6 (a). This detail is immediately adjacent to a fragment of green paint, the two forming part of a larger composition, which probably graced the centre of a red panel. Likewise Figure 6 (b), comprising four fragments, is also part of a much larger image added to the surface of a red panel. The convention of depicting a shadow, has been added to it, adjacent to a broader green band, suggesting that it is the base of an undefined object. The fragment shown in Figure 6 (c) is more exceptional, as it appears to represent the upper part of a colonnaded roofscape, not dissimilar to the well-known architectural paintings from Pompeii and Herculaneum depicting seaside villas. With the Abbey Farm villa being sited just

continued on page 17
The millennium exhibition ‘Heritage 2000’ organised by Keynsham Heritage Trust, in the north Somerset town’s parish church, not only afforded the public a rare glimpse of mosaic treasures in store, but also other Roman finds from the vicinity. (ARA 11). Not least amongst these were several small pieces of sculpture found during the building of the Fry’s chocolate factory at Somerdale near the River Avon. A settlement existed here in Roman times which may have been the Traiectus of the Antonine Itinerary. A building described as a ‘villa’ was found on the site of the ‘B’ block factory and was moved and the remains ‘reconstructed’ to the right of the factory entrance after excavation in the 1920s. This building had its own bath-suite, and may have been domestic in character. Some seventy feet south of this structure were found two plain but fine quality sarcophagi of Bath stone, one containing a lead coffin, which hints at a late third or fourth century cemetery.

Perhaps more interesting still was the discovery, in the vicinity of the building, of several pieces of religious sculpture, suggesting the proximity of a religious precinct of some kind. A handsome statue pedestal c. 50 cm high, dedicated to the god Silvanus, and the deities of the deified emperors was found. This splendid piece is socketed on the top to receive the statue and grooved on the left hand side to abut it to a stone screen. Also discovered were an uninscribed altar, the upper left-hand corner from a rectangular relief, showing a woman, possibly one of three mother goddesses, and the piece that is the subject of this paper. The actual find spots of all the smaller Keynsham pieces are uncertain. It seems likely however that both of the latter-mentioned sculptures came from Somerdale and not the great villa on the hillside west of the settlement, as neither is featured in the excavation report published in Archaeologia in 1926, as they surely would have been had they been discovered there. At Somerdale, many small finds were made by the workmen engaged on building the factory and few records appear to have been kept.

The sculpture which concerns us is an unimpressive cylindrical object, hollowed out at the top and with a looped excrecence on one side (Fig. 1). In profile it rather resembles a bier stein (Germanic earthenware tankard). Made of oolitic limestone, it measures 21 cm in height by 11 cm in width. It is incomplete at both top and bottom. An ‘S’ shaped object curls up the front of the cylinder, whilst to its left may be found a chiselled-out kite-shaped device. Both this and the back of the object are roughly scored with cross hatching. There is now no surviving evidence that the left side of the figure had this kite-shaped pattern, but damage may have removed it. If not, this hints that the object was meant to be viewed from the right-hand side. The workmanship is poor, and, even when new and perfect, in artistic terms the object can never have hoped to rise to the level of the mediocre. Although well illustrated in the Corpus of Roman sculpture in Wessex (Culiffe & Fulford 1982, cat. 143, pl. 36), it is there shown upside down. The key to understanding what it represents is the kite-shaped device. This is in fact, a wing, and the sculpture is that of a bird. The same type of wing may be found on a Victorian pewter owl sand-caster (a means of drying ink) here shown, and it is a naïve but effective long term artistic convention (Fig. 2).

The cross-hatching on the sculpture is merely a rough interpretation of plumage. The ‘S’ shaped object is a snake, rearing up against the breast of the bird. All of the sculptor’s limited ability seems to have been concentrated on portraying this animal, which is really out of scale with the bird. As will be shown below, the latter should be identified as an eagle. Unless the existing neck socket was the result of later damage, the heads of both bird and snake would have been carved from a separate block and fixed in place. In whatever manner the base was treated, its loss has deprived the bird of its talons and the snake of its tail (Fig. 3). Like so many ancient
Nabataeans saw the eagle and serpent as supremely enduring and sublime objects of worship. The posture of the serpent in relationship to the eagle represented the creature's adoration and supplication. The serpent represented the movement of the sun across the skies. It also represented the ubiquitous and eternal aspects of the deity it both served and symbolized. In the periodic and miraculous shedding of its skin for a new one it represented immortality and, indeed, the god Baal-Shamin (Zeus Hadad) in human form wore armour of snake scales to allude to its undying state. Sometimes the serpent is held in the eagle's claws but neither animal shows aggression. This is quite unlike the famous life and death struggle portrayed on a Christian sixth century mosaic from the peristyle of the great palace of Constantinople where an eagle, encircled by a serpent, bites at its body and draws blood. The Nabataean images show us what the Keysnham sculptor was trying to represent. Two sculptural examples from Zacharet el Bedd in North Gilead (on the east side of the Jordan) and from the Temple at Khirbet Tannur are particularly useful. The deficiencies of the Keysnham sculptor have given his bird folded wings, but in all other aspects the Nabataean animals adopt the same pose, with the adoring serpent and its placid but superior master. The fact that the serpent's body winds towards the bird's right leg suggests that here also it wound about that, as on the Jordanian examples (Figs. 4 and 5).

Carvings of the eagle and serpent as symbols of the solar deity occur all over the Roman empire. Examples, such as a pediment from Side in Turkey (Fig. 6) and from a colossal pilaster capital in Vienne show the eagle grasping the serpent who stares up at him (Fig. 7). In the west however, the creatures which are most akin to the Keysnham carving appear at the top of the foliate panels of the pilasters of a marble shrine or niche in the Vatican Museum (Fig. 8). This was found in the area of Todi in 1512 and is dated to the second half of the first century AD. Each eagle is faced by a rearing serpent as if in conversation (Fig. 9). The rear outside reliefs have been badly damaged and restored, but two birds are shown either side of a kantharos (drinking cup) with living serpent handles, from which once rose a sacred tree. More serpents coil up to touch the birds' beaks. One of the birds is certainly an eagle, albeit looking more like a great bustard. This particular niche is sometimes described as being funerary. If this is so then perhaps the serpent and eagle imagery has been used to represent the soul's flight to Olympus.

**Fig. 4.** The Nabataean solar eagle. A drawing of the sculpture from Zacharet el-Bedd, North Gilead (east side of the Jordan). Dated to c. 150 AD it represents the Solar Jupiter Hadad. Scale unknown. Drawing: © Anthony Beeson.

**Fig. 5.** A reconstructive drawing of the damaged Nabataean eagle and serpent sculpture from the temple at Khirbet Tannur, Jordan. Height 51 cm. Drawing: © Anthony Beeson.
and the chance of rebirth. Certainly the serpent appears in the sepulchral imagery of ancient Greece, where many gravestone reliefs feature a serpent in the branches of a tree behind the deceased and his family (Fig. 10). The meaning of this is unclear. It may be that the snake appears in his chthonic role as a symbol of the underworld or as a glimmer of the hope of rebirth in an age that saw little prospect of it. Certainly the serpent always points to the deceased with its head so that there can be no doubt as to whom the monument commemorates.

If the Keynsham sculpture once ornamented a mausoleum, perhaps as a finial, then its imagery might be funereal, although few, if any, of the surviving eagle and serpent images elsewhere have this connection. It seems, however, far more likely that it was originally a votive offering at some shrine to Jupiter, especially as it is not the only eagle sculpture found at the site. The 1922 excavations for the factory produced evidence for yet another sculpture of an eagle, but this time one of considerable quality (Fig. 11). All that is left are the grasping talons from the bird's right foot and the springing of his leg. The claws appear to clasp a curved tubular object, perhaps the body of another snake. This sculpture was omitted from the Corpus volume on Wessex sculpture, and apart from the plate given here, has previously only been published in the Fry's Works Magazine (EWH, 1922), in an illustration of finds made in and around the Somerdaile Roman building. Almost 8 cm long and sensitively carved in Bath stone, the fragment must have come from a sculpture of considerable pretension. That two eagle sculptures of such differing quality and both (possibly) connected with serpents should have come from so small an area is remarkable. Together with the statue base, relief and altar, it surely suggests the existence of some sort of religious precinct there. Given the cosmopolitan nature of the population of nearby Bath and the sophistication of the neighbouring great villa at Keynsham, it would not be surprising if all manner of cults were either established in the area or commemorated there. Is it too far fetched to imagine a shrine here to Jupiter with at least one offering alluding to his guise as the Syrian solar deity Jupiter Hadad or Heliopolitanus with the solar eagle and his adoring snake companion?

Martin Henig (pers. comm.) sees no justification in linking the Keynsham sculpture to those of the Nabataeans or eastern religions, but draws analogies with the images of eagles and serpents taken from classical coins and used on Celtic coinage. Most striking for our