Foundation trench of the Colchester circus (cavea), on the Cavalry Barracks site (area J, 2004). (See article on page 11.)

Photo: © Colchester Archaeological Trust.
We are certainly going through a period in Romano-British archaeology when some rare and exciting discoveries are being made in the most unexpected places. This issue of *ARA* features two remarkable inscriptions, on the Hawkesbury mosaic and on the Alchester tombstone, the second of which has the potential to change our understanding of the history of the Roman invasion.

Equally intriguing is the inscription on a Roman bronze skulllet or *trulla* found at Ilam, Staffordshire in 2003 and now known as the ‘Staffordshire Moorlands Pan.’ This is a unique find of great significance (see picture below), and there has now been time for the experts to consider it. The pan, 89.5 mm in rim diameter and 47 mm high, is now missing its handle and base, but the outer wall is decorated with eight roundels containing ‘Celtic’ triskeles filled with coloured glass inlay, in turquoise, dark blue, purple, red and yellow. Above this decoration is a band of neatly-incised capitals, filled with turquoise inlay. This is the third such inscribed vessel to be found, the others being the Rudge Cup and the Amiens Patera found in Britain (1725) and in Northern France (1949). These have decoration in the form of a schematic representation of a crenellated wall.

The inscriptions on all three vessels record the names of the Roman forts at the western end of Hadrian’s Wall and so are presumably ‘souvenirs’ of these frontier posts dating to c. 125-140, after the forts were added but before the Wall was superseded by the Antonine Wall. Appropriately, this section of the Wall was visited by the ARA on its study tour in 2005 (see next issue of *ARA*) when Bryn Walters and Tony Wilmott discussed a replica of the Rudge Cup with members attending. The new vessel was discussed at a study day held at the British Museum on 5th December 2005 led by Lindsay Allason-Jones, Roger Tomlin, Martin Henig and Ralph Jackson. One of the conclusions was that these vessels may have been made at Carlisle, although a British manufacture has been suspected for some time (Moore 1978). The fort names also match up to some extent with those given in the Revenna Cosmography and the Notitia Dignitatum. The new inscription reads:

**RIGOREVALIAELIDRACONIS MAIS COGGABATA**

**VXEOLODVNM CAMMOGIANNA.**

This is the letter-by-letter reading, but this has been reconstructed by experts Roger Tomlin and Mark Hassall as: *rigore va(l) (i) Aeli Draconis Mai(s) Co(n)gaba(ta)
Vxelodvnvm Cam(b)og( i) an(na).*

‘On the line of the Wall (or the Aelian Wall), (the product or property) of Aelius Draco (or of Draco) ...’ Then the names of four forts at the western end of Hadrian’s Wall, from west to east, identifiable as Bowness-on-Solway, Drumburgh, Stanwix, and Castlesteads. It is interesting that the Rudge Cup misses out Drumburgh but includes **ABALLAVA** (Burgh-by-Sands) between **MAIS** and **VXEOLODVNM, and ends with BANNA** (Birdoswald). The Amiens Patera has the same names in the same order as the Rudge Cup but adds a further fort (**A)ESICA** (Great Chesters) on the east end of the list. The first part of the inscription on the new vessel is a little more problematic. It seems first to refer to the line of the Wall and makes it clear that the Wall was literally called the *Vallum* and possibly *Vallum Aelium, and we can compare the obvious analogy of Pons Aelius*, Hadrian’s Bridge at Newcastle or his refounding of Jerusalem as *Aelia Capitoline.* But *AELI* may also belong to the personal name Draco. Was it *Draconis* or *Aeli Draconis?* Perhaps this is the name of the maker of the vessel or possibly the purchaser who had his souvenir ‘personalised’. If so, as Tomlin and Hassall have suggested, the owner might have been Aelius Draco, perhaps a recently-discharged auxiliary veteran who wanted a memento of his frontier posting.

**Reference:**


Grahame Soffe, Editor.

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Photo: © The British Museum.
Professor Peter Brown who was successively Fellow of All Souls College, Oxford, Professor of History of Royal Holloway College, London, Professor of Classics and History at Berkeley and now Professor of History at Berkeley, returned to Oxford in his 70th year to be awarded the Hon. D.Litt on 21st June 2006.

Peter Brown is our major scholar writing on Late Antiquity and his book, The World of Late Antiquity has to be the starting point for anyone interested in the Roman World from the third century onwards. His many other books dealing with themes as diverse as St. Augustine, Virginity and asceticism and the cult of the saints have been equally influential. Peter’s erudition is matched by his warmth and humanity. He has that touch of greatness which makes a conversation with him leaving one feeling better about oneself. He is as much at home in Roman Britain as in the Syrian desert, and he reads and appreciates what we have all written. Princeton students call him ‘a god’ and describe his courses as ‘awesome’. An old Oxford student of his can only agree. His work has certainly been a formative influence on mine.

The World of Late Antiquity, from Marcus Aurelius to Muhammad by Peter Brown, Library of European Civilization. 1st ed. 1971, 2nd ed. 1989, Thames and Hudson, Illust. in colour and b & w., paperback. £7.95.

Fig. 1. The walls of Constantinople built by Theodosius II, c. AD 410-15. Exterior view from south-west.

Photo: © Graeme Soffe.
The ARA would like to congratulate Barry Cunliffe, Professor of European Archaeology at the University of Oxford and a Fellow of the British Academy, on his being appointed Knight Bachelor for services to archaeology in the Queen’s Birthday Honours.

His contribution to archaeology ranges from academic programmes based on fieldwork and excavation and the rapid publication of his work to a high standard. He has also written many well-received scholarly but popular works like *The Ancient Cells*, *Facing the Ocean, The Atlantic and its Peoples* and *The Extraordinary Voyage of Pytheas the Greek*. He also enjoys communicating archaeology. His lectures are always stimulating and he makes frequent appearances on radio and TV. He gives his recreation in *Who’s Who* as “mild self-indulgence”.

![Fig. 1. Barry Cunliffe discussing his excavations with Sir Mortimer Wheeler. Fishbourne Roman Palace, late 1960s. Photo: Courtesy of Institute of Archaeology, Oxford.](image)

In the field of Roman archaeology Barry Cunliffe’s great achievement has been to vastly increase our understanding of the earliest period of Roman Britain through his excavation of the Roman palace at Fishbourne when only in his early 20s, which revealed the early military supply base and the imposing *domus*. Also his work at Bath is of great importance, for it allowed us for the first time to understand the workings of the premier Roman religious spa in Britain. Following on from his work at sites such as Hengistbury Head and Mount Batten on the south coast with their evidence for trade with the Roman world before the Claudian Conquest, his work in general on contacts between the Mediterranean world and ‘barbarian’ Europe has been important and influential.

Another of his great achievements has been the Danebury Landscape Project where, following the most complete excavation of an Iron Age hillfort ever in Britain, he has carried out an exciting study of the development of the Iron Age rural settlement pattern, its continuation into the Roman period and its development into a system of farming villas on the Hampshire chalklands. Initially excavating well-known sites such as Grateley and Fullerton he went on, following the work of Martin Hengin and myself at Thruxton, to excavate that site, further augmenting the evidence for Roman acculturation in the villas of southern Britain. At Portchester Castle, also on the south coast, he made one of the most complete investigations of one of the late Roman forts of the ‘Saxon Shore’, comparing it with the evidence from his excavations at the Roman fort at Lyme Castle in East Sussex. Also at Portchester, the many seasons of work which also examined the Anglo-Saxon, medieval and post-medieval evolution of the site led to its being the most completely studied castle in Britain.

Barry Cunliffe has also excavated widely on Iron Age sites in Britain, and more recently in Brittany and Spain. He has produced a prodigious list of publications including the standard work on the Iron Age in Britain. This is an important work which is essential reading for anyone interested in the origins of Roman Britain, particularly in the period of c. 150 BC to the Claudian Conquest in AD 43, the progressions from protohistory to history. Through the medium of archaeology this monumental book (first published in 1971) charts the rapid social changes which took place in southern Britain as ‘Romanisation’ first became a neighbour and then an invader. The book has recently been republished in its fourth edition after considerable labour on the part of the author, bringing it up to date with the latest discoveries and research.


At the age of 26, at Southampton University, Barry Cunliffe became one of the youngest archaeology professors in Britain. Since then he has served as President of the Society of Antiquaries and the Society awarded him its Gold Medal on 22nd June 2006. He has also served as President of the Council for British Archaeology, and as a Commissioner of English Heritage and currently a Trustee of the British Museum he remains a highly influential figure in British archaeology.

![Fig. 2. Barry Cunliffe (left) with Prof. Christopher Hawkes (Professor of European Archaeology at Oxford University 1946-72), at Oxford, 1987. Photo: Courtesy of Diana Bonavis Webster, © Institute of Archaeology, Oxford.](image)
Excavation in the surrounds of Carlisle Castle between 1998 and 2001 has revealed an extensive assemblage of artefacts dating from the medieval period and Roman occupation back to prehistory principally examining the remains of three Roman forts. The preliminary results of the excavation and its analysis were presented at Carlisle in October 2004. The highlights of that meeting are presented in this article.

It had long been suspected that the remains of the Roman military occupation lay in Carlisle under the medieval castle and its surrounds but, as the entire site was protected as a Scheduled Monument, archaeological confirmation was lacking. Dorothy Charlesworth (1978) reported the remains of Roman timber buildings discovered during the construction of the extension to the Tullie House Museum, but there was insufficient evidence to ascribe these to military or civilian occupation. But, then, in the late 70s and 80s, she and subsequently Ian Caruana, for the Carlisle Archaeological Unit, began to excavate the southernmost limits of the Roman fort at Annetwell Street, which yielded a wide variety of both civilian and military artefacts (McCarthy, 2002), including a small number of Vindolanda-type writing tablets, one of which alludes to governor Gnaeus Iulius Agricola (Tomlin, 1998).

There the matter rested until, in 1996, Carlisle City Council decided to mark the millennium by improving access to the castle and constructing a gallery. Once Scheduled Monument Consent had been granted by the government, with advice from English Heritage, the Council commissioned and funded a comprehensive excavation of the various sites to be affected, which was undertaken by Carlisle Archaeology Ltd., between November 1998 and March 2001.

The requirements of the new gallery meant that all levels from the existing surface down to the natural clay needed to be excavated, allowing analysis of an archaeological palimpsest ranging from the medieval, through Roman and to prehistoric occupation. Once the dig was completed, the project entered the assessment, analytical and reporting phases. These were again funded by Carlisle City Council supported by English Heritage, and Oxford Archaeology North was awarded the contract to undertake this work and produce a summary booklet (Oxford Archaeology North, 2004), a schools pack and a full academic report. It was at their initiative that a meeting of the archaeologists and specialists involved was organised on the 16th and 17th October 2004, to allow presentation of preliminary results arising from the Millennium Excavation.

There can be no doubt that this was a seminal meeting. Not only are the organisers, presenters, chairmen and discussants to be congratulated on a uniformly high standard, but the sheer scale and significance of the finds and information generated would excite anyone with even the remotest interest in the northern Roman frontier. The occurrence of waterlogged lower levels proved highly fortuitous in that considerable preservation of both organic and non-organic artefacts was assured, thus extending analysis of more common and robust materials. Precise dating by dendrochronology, ceramics and numismatics was accordingly possible and mutually supportive. Interpretation of the site during its military occupation was therefore considerably enhanced.

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Fig. 1. Location of the Millennium trenches and Annetwell Street excavations, and the outline of the first Roman fort in relation to the modern street plan. © Oxford Archaeology North.
and the emphasis of all speakers on 'putting the people in the landscape' was highly relevant in this context.

The first timber fort was constructed in the winter of AD 72-3 as a result of the conquest of northern Britain initiated by Vespasian. The origin of the garrison is unknown, although there is some evidence that they were a Gaulish or Germanic auxiliary unit. Pottery kilns were erected in the early 70s, manufacturing Rhine-type 'face' pots. Some were of a very high quality, suggesting a legionary presence, although samian ware shipped from Gaul was of a much poorer quality. A major refurbishment occurred in the winter of AD 83-4, possibly as a result of a change in the occupying unit, with the pottery suggesting an origin on the Rhine. There was a less extensive refurbishment in 93-4 and the fort was abandoned around 105, but rebuilt shortly thereafter. More workshops were built during the Hadrianic occupation, possibly representing a change in function, perhaps to a logistics base or a command centre. Thus, there was continual occupation at Carlisle, even after the construction of the Wall and the fort at Stanwix, situated on the northern bank of the river Eden, opposite the Carlisle fort. This again would suggest a wider, possibly strategic role for the occupying unit, perhaps the Roman equivalent of a 'rapid response unit', cavalry capable of rapid deployment along the roads to potential or actual trouble spots. The fort was abandoned around AD 140, probably as the frontier moved to the Antonine Wall. A stone fort was eventually built in the third century by the Legio VI Victrix based in York, possibly assisted by personnel from the Legio XX Valeria Victrix (Chester) and the Legio II Augusta (Caerleon). By the mid-third century, all local production of pottery had ceased and Carlisle depended for its ceramics from kilns in North Yorkshire. There is evidence that occupation on the site extended well into the fifth century.

Garrison life in Roman Carlisle was not, however, a sinecure and several lines of evidence suggest that the troops based there did not have an easy existence. Diet, climate and military action have all left their record of problems.

A meticulous and extensive analysis of discarded animal bones has shown, as expected, that the predominant meat was from cattle, which also provided a source of leather. The animals were slaughtered at an early age whilst a few were retained for breeding and others were employed as draught animals, as indicated by the evidence of arthritis in the older population. There was no evidence for dairy cattle, and it is of note that texts indicate that goat's milk was preferred to cow's milk with pork being preferred to lamb, particularly in the earlier phases of occupation. The distribution of cattle bones also yielded evidence of butchery practice, with the better cuts of meat going to the commandant and his staff such as the remains of a hung shoulder found near the praetorium, with the distribution of lesser cuts such as the limbs, to the barrack areas. It would appear that the Roman army was unaware of the inference of the admittedly more modern cavalry maxim – 'Feed the horses before the men, and the men before the officers'. Analysis of insect types has shown that the most common pests were the ordinary housefly and, not surprisingly in a cavalry unit, the horsefly. There were also problems with the grain supplies as evidenced by the poor quality of grain discovered at discard sites. This was confirmed by the presence of weevils, particular types of which are only present in damp, damaged grain. Estimates of loss are as high as 80% which, if correct, must have been a major headache for the Roman commissariat. This degradation may have been related to storage, as granaries designed to cope with the Mediterranean climate may have been inadequate for the more extreme and damp, northern, British climate. The replacement of early drains with much larger ones in the timber forts may also reflect the deleterious effects of heavy rainfall.

The hazardous nature of frontier life is indicated by the artefacts preserved in the waterlogged levels. These have been cautiously and carefully conserved and two pieces were reviewed in detail, namely a piece of metal armour and some leather horse gear.

The metal armour has been skillfully reconstructed as an arm-guard, a manicae, designed to stretch from the shoulder to the wrist to protect the sword arm. There was much evidence of repair and re-use before its final discard, probably about 125-135. The implication is that of continued use and damage in combat, further suggesting an unstable military period.

Metallurgical analysis of this armour (Reading University) revealed it to be of incredibly high quality which, subsequent to Roman times, was seen only in very expensive and rare armour produced in Europe in late medieval times. The metal was extremely hard and relatively slag free, suggesting much higher working temperatures than could be attained using charcoal. The armour was uniformly thin (c. 0.9 mm) and all attempts to manufacture this by hand, using modern smithy techniques, have failed. Yet this armour was mass produced throughout the Roman Empire; if such armour could not be produced manually, then the Romans must have used other techniques, possibly involving water-driven vertical pile-driver hammers or rolling mills. The archaeologists present were challenged to find evidence of such machines!

A range of leather goods was preserved, including shoes and shoemaker's waste from both the commandant's house area and the barracks, of a construction typical of the northern frontier. Of considerable significance was the survival of a large assemblage of leather dated to the first century AD, and which was reconstituted as a cover of a four-pommel saddle. This is the most complete example of such a saddle-cover known to date and it was found to have free-hanging side panels (not described previously), attached by stitching.

Two papers shed light on other aspects of the lives of the Roman garrison at Carlisle: economy and religion. Over 500 coins were recovered during the Millennium excavations and have provided
functions of the *principium*. The mixed Romano-British cults seen elsewhere on the northern frontiers were also present.

In conclusion, the Millennium Project at Carlisle has provided further insight into the Western aspects of life on the northern Roman frontier of Britain. Maximum involvement of a wide range of archaeological and specialised skills has resulted in a synergistic response in interpreting the evidence to produce a much more rounded and satisfactory picture of military life. Much more detail remains to be reported, and judged on the results of this meeting alone, the final report, due in 2007, will be eagerly awaited.

**Acknowledgements**

I would like to acknowledge the efforts of all the presenters and chairmen for a fascinating and exciting conference and The Association for Roman Archaeology for allowing me to be present. I thank John Zant and Rachel Newman, of Oxford Archaeology North, for stimulating discussions. Rachel Newman also read this review prior to publication and permitted the incorporation of the figures.

**Bibliography**


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Fig. 2. Legionary of the second century AD wearing an arm guard of the type found on the Millennium site; Top right: X-ray of a scale shoulder guard from the second fort, mid-second century AD; Bottom right: Fragmentary arm guard found in a workshop in the second fort, mid-second century AD. © Oxford Archaeology North.

further evidence for dating and occupation, and their denominations support the presence of both legionary and auxiliary troops. The coins clearly support the dendrochronological evidence that Cerialis reached Carlisle. The lack of coins dated to Trajanic times could represent a change in use and function between Hadrian and Severus or, more simply, the effects of inflation. The bulk of the coins found were from the third and fourth centuries, with large numbers being found close to the *principium*. This suggests that this area represented the social centre of the fort for the garrison, with either trade or gambling being undertaken.

And what of religion? Religion was central to the Roman way of life and it is not therefore surprising that an altar dedicated to Aesculapius was found, together with sculptures depicting *Genii* and other deities, probably associated with the sacred
NEW DISCOVERIES AND FURTHER WORK AT PILLERTON PRIORS ROMAN VILLA, WARWICKSHIRE

by David J. Sabin and Kerry T. Donaldson

Part of the Pillerton Priors villa was excavated in late September 2002 by a small team of ARA members in order to record a badly damaged mosaic floor. An interim report by David Sabin was published in ARA 14, 3-4. The area of excavation was limited due to time and resource constraints and little information was obtained about the building in which the floor resides. Geophysical survey carried out at the time of excavation provided a useful plan of the site and subsequent surveys are creating a fascinating picture of settlement and land use in adjacent areas.

The Mosaic

The mosaic floor was laid into a small square room with sides of c. 4.5 m. The design consists of a border of larger tesserae (c. 20 mm square) using white and blue Lias limestone to form a swastika-meander design inset with seven panels of guilloche and a single panel depicting a small drinking vessel (cantharus). Within the border the design is laid out using smaller tesserae (c. 12 mm), again of blue and white Lias with the addition of a creamy yellow Oolitic limestone and red terracotta.

The design is based on quasi-tangent circles set out in guilloche. One complete circle forms a central roundel touching lateral semicircles which in turn are linked to quadrant arcs at each corner. The central roundel contains a large cantharus with a small fountain of wine emerging from the lip of the vessel. Floral stylised designs fill the semi-circular lunettes along each side, the quadrants and the concave square area between the quadrants, roundel and lunettes.

Although the floor has suffered much damage and disturbance due to ploughing, enough has survived to allow a respectable record to be created. Luigi Thompson produced a calibrated photographic record from which detailed drawings can be produced (Fig. 1).

The Geophysics

A rapid resistivity survey carried out prior to excavation using equipment built by one of the authors provided excellent results and gave impetus to further surveying using a variety of complementary techniques (Fig 5). The area of resistance survey was expanded, producing an excellent plan of the villa buildings (Fig. 2), but producing little evidence of features in the immediate vicinity.

A programme of magnetic susceptibility survey followed using a Bartington MS2 with field coil to collect data at 10 m centres over approximately 15 hectares of the surrounding field. The technique is useful for rapid reconnaissance where follow-up detailed magnetometry or gradiometry is intended. Areas of enhanced magnetic susceptibility were located across the villa site and in the immediate vicinity, an extension of enhancement towards the southwest and south offered further targets for detailed work.

Following on from the magnetic susceptibility survey, detailed magnetic gradiometry was targeted upon areas of magnetic enhancement. The work was carried out using Geoscan FM256 instruments collecting data at 0.125 m centres along traverses 1 m apart (Fig. 4). The results were astounding (Fig. 3). Linear and curvilinear anomalies mostly relate to ditch-fills where magnetically enhanced topsoil has in-filled and accumulated providing a magnetic response that contrasts well to the lower level of the surrounding topsoil and subsoil.

Fig. 1. Photogrammetric drawing of the mosaic. © David Sabin and Kerry Donaldson.
Abstraction and interpretation of features has been problematic due to the number of anomalies present within the survey area. These must relate to the development of the settlement over a considerable time, probably since the late prehistoric period. Within the greyscale plot, linear anomalies represent ditches that form small enclosures associated with nearby occupation; a number of curvilinear anomalies are probably caused by ring-ditches associated with round-houses. With continual occupation over a long period the topsoil has become very magnetically enhanced by the incorporation of significant amounts of burnt material and decayed organic matter, which in themselves are good indicators of long-term occupation.

A large ditch discovered 300 m west of the site has been eroded by a small stream. Within the fill of this feature many sherds of Late Bronze Age / Early Iron Age vessels were discovered which also add weight to an earlier prehistoric origin for settlement surrounding the villa site.

Ground penetrating radar (GPR) survey was also carried out using GSSI equipment at frequencies of 400 and 200 Mhz. Unfortunately, due to the nature of the soils, which contain a high proportion of clay derived from the underlying Lias geology, the results of the survey were so poor that no recognisable structural features were located. GPR just does not like damp clayey soils!

**Future Work**

The site is currently in the final stages of being scheduled by English Heritage but it is hoped that further investigation of the surrounding area can be carried out. It is highly likely that further detailed magnetic work
The last issue of ARA carried a survey of the rather small quantity of cameos found on Roman sites in Britain (Henig 2004). It is in the way of such things that when that article was in final proof a new cameo came to light, and it seemed appropriate to add a short appendix here to record it properly and to illustrate it in colour (Figs. 1 and 2). A brief notice by Richard Hobbs has appeared on pages 24 - 5 of the Treasure Annual Report 2002.

The ring was found by Derek Howe using a metal detector in September 2002 in Kettlebaston, Suffolk (NGR: TL 9649). It was promptly handed to Suffolk County Council's Archaeological Service and processed as an item of potential treasure by the British Museum. The ring has now been acquired by Moyse's Hall Museum, Bury St. Edmunds. The find spot was already recorded as a Roman site on the county Sites and Monuments Record because material had been found here by another detector user around 1980 - unfortunately the records for these finds are incomplete. However, they do mention an Iron Age coin and 'miniature terret', 1st- and 2nd-century pottery including samian ware, coins, amongst them a denarius of Septimius Severus (193-211), a copper alloy vessel-fitting and a 3rd-century covered-loopterret, suggesting activity, probably domestic and at least moderately affluent, in the immediate vicinity at the time the ring was lost. The site is on a south-facing spur overlooking a tributary of the River Brett in south Suffolk. It is within half a mile of a Roman road line (route Margary 34a in Margary 1973, 265) which links the small towns (and 1st-century military sites) of Long Melford and Coddenham. In this area of south Suffolk settlements with villa-type buildings are relatively common, for example about every two miles along the Brett valley. This is a contrast to much of Suffolk and Norfolk where Roman artefacts of high quality are equally common but the settlements seem to display little Roman-style architecture.

Returning to the cameo, it is carved in onyx, with a white upper layer on a blueish background. It measures 12 mm by 7 mm and depicts a draped female bust. The facial features are very schematised as is her hairstyle, though the bun at the back relates the image to those of Faustina II (130-176) and Lucilla (149-182). However the hollow gold ring (diameter 22 mm) with tapering sides and a suggestion of keeling at the shoulders points to a somewhat later date and the cameo probably dates to the 3rd century. The 'bun-portraits' evidently remained current alongside the late Severan hairstyle, called *Helmfrisur* in German, though consisting as it does of a mop of hair, curled back on itself at the back, a more appropriate English term, now used by the few people in Britain who work on Roman cameos is 'flopsy' (Fig. 3 and see Henig 1990, nos 74-85). The cameo was probably not intended to show an empress but a private individual, who was copying a fashion of the time. Hairstyles, even when they first appeared in Imperial circles, remained in vogue for a long time and clearly gem-engravers simply mass produced such images to feed a widespread demand. A similar cameo in a private collection bears an inscription in Greek, reading 'to the beautiful girl' (Henig 1990, no. 45). Evidently it was the custom to give jewellery (brooches, pendants, rings, earrings) to one's girlfriend, wife or mistress, set with cameos taken to be portraits of the recipient. Occasionally the low neckline or nude upper torso seems to equate the girl shown with the goddess Venus herself.
cameos are known from Gaul. It may or may not be significant that many more examples come from the eastern Mediterranean. They include a similar one to the Kettlebaston gem, and likewise set in a gold ring, from Aquae Calidae in Bulgaria (Dimitrova-Milcheva 1981, 97, no. 301); and others from Romania (Gramatopol 1974, no. 678); from former Yugoslavia (Popovic 1989, nos. 35 and 41) and from Gadara in Jordan (Henig and Whiting 1987, no. 417). In addition, most of the cameos depicting the type in the Content collection (Henig 1990, nos. 71 and 72 are closest) are probably from the Levant. It is likely, then, the cameo and its ring came to Britain from the Balkans or beyond, possibly on the finger of its original owner. By this time a gold ring would not necessarily have implied that she or rather her husband was not always of equestrian rank, but she was presumably well-to-do, a member of the upper class of honestiores, the better sort of citizen.

References:


Roman buildings in Colchester but is not the best structural material. The significance of this is that the stone was identical on both sites, indicating that the foundations belonged to the same building. Greensand does not occur in the earliest buildings at Colchester, consequently it is tentatively suggested that the structure dates from after the end of the first century.

A further excavation took place near the Cavalry Barracks where one of the 'unattributable' foundations was located in 2002. Two walls were located appearing in composition and plan exactly like those found earlier on the Circular Road North site. When plotted onto an Ordnance Survey map, the foundations on both sites, 230 m apart, aligned exactly with one another. The structure was seen to be enormous and the most logical interpretation was that the building was a Roman circus for chariot racing; the first one to be identified in Roman Britain.

Much of the layout of the Colchester circus can now be reconstructed, following further recent excavations, even though some significant features remained rather elusive until recently, such as the central barrier or spinae in the arena itself. The problem has been that the foundations of the central barrier have been too slight to leave much of an archaeological trace to be picked up in trial trenches. Nevertheless, a foundation has now been found, consisting of mortared greensand rubble about 3.8 m square, at a point almost half-way along the central line. Comparison with other Roman circuses suggest that this would have been the base of a monument such as an obelisk or a statue, as both types of monument were often set up in groups or pairs along the central barrier.

It now appears that the circus was about 448 m. long and 69 m. wide. This is large - most provincial circuses are about 400 to 450 m in
length. The seating stand was almost certainly supported on mounds of earth and rubble retained by the buttressed outer walls and the inner lesser wall enclosing the arena. The space between these walls is 4.7 m. and when compared with other better preserved circuses in other parts of the Empire, this space would have been sufficient to support up to six tiers of benches. On the evidence currently available it can be calculated that the circus could have accommodated up to 15,000 spectators. Individual sections of the stand would have been paid for by wealthy local citizens, each paying for their own section of stand. This would explain some of the irregularities and strange differences in the dimensions of the buttresses on the outer walls.

It was originally thought that the squared off end, containing the starting gates for the chariots, was at the west end of the circus, where a curve inwards of the outer wall was located in an earlier excavation. This has now been confirmed in a series of trial trenches which show the curved corners to be quite ‘tight’.

The semi-circular end where the chariots would have turned lies at the east end. Trenching in the gardens of Flagstaff House has begun to reveal the wider curve of the semi-circular turn.

Another intriguing aspect of the recent work has been the possibility of the survival of part of the circus building into the Middle Ages. Parts of the outer wall of the circus and also the central barrier, at least at the eastern end, may still survive in the still upstanding south precinct wall to St. John’s Abbey, which was founded in c. 1095. Further work may be able to confirm this.

The excavations have been assisted by a number of organisations, particularly Taylor Woodrow and the Colchester Garrison. The Friends of Colchester Archaeological Trust have also made an important contribution and TV’s Time Team helped with some trenches at the west end of the circus.

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THE ARA WEBSITE

by The Website Team

In 2005, the Board of Trustees decided to upgrade its website to reflect more carefully modern and increased usage of the web as a source of information by the public at large. Accordingly, in the latter part of last year, David Evans was asked to address this task as a matter of urgency.

A small team, David, Mike Stone and Colette Maxfield, a graduate archaeology student of Mike’s, was set up to design a new website. It was decided to get the core site up and running as soon as possible, adding further upgrades and enhancements at a later date. The first pilot site was ready in early 2006 and the First Phase went live at the beginning of May. It still needs some work but that is ongoing. Please visit the site at: www.associationromanarchaeology.org

It is being picked up by all the common search engines. We would welcome any comments you might have. We have included a downloadable Membership Application form to attract new members as well as information on the Association and its Trustees and Officers. There are pages on past, current and future events and on the research grants we have recently made. We hope to incorporate the current edition of the Newsletter into the website in the near future. Any of your ideas should go via e-mail to David on:

gunley@hotmail.com

Any technical questions, or problems in accessing, using or navigating the site should go to Colette on:

webmasterara@hotmail.com

We have also considered establishing a chat room or discussion group for members (password protected). Would there be any support for this? Again, let us know. We would also welcome any photographs of general interest as we could easily put up a Picture Gallery. Any format would be suitable, including electronic, negatives, 35 mm slides or black and white images or negatives. Any non-electronic formats we would return after scanning.

Please use our website and let your friends know about it. All publicity is good publicity!

The Website Team

May 2006
Chester is well known for the considerable number of Roman tombstones found there, the largest number from any site in Britain. Some of them are on display in the Graham Webster Gallery of the Grosvenor Museum where they have been returned to an imitation Roman cemetery, situated alongside a somewhat wobbly Roman road (Fig. 1).

It should be remembered however, that the majority of the memorials were not recovered from a burial context, but from the rubble packing of the city’s North Wall while it was undergoing repair in the late 19th century (Fig. 2). The wall was originally built by the Twentieth Legion in the 2nd century, but the gravestones, it seems, were not added to this fortress defence until the late 3rd or possibly 4th century. A medieval date for the tombstones’ re-use has also been suggested (Le Quesne 1999, 121, Mason 2001, 204, 211), but since the stones give little indication of weather erosion, a date in the Roman period is more likely.

The stele (Roman gravestones) fascinated Dr. Graham Webster, Curator of the Grosvenor Museum between 1948-54. Webster arranged the photography of the memorials for Wright and Richmond’s catalogue (1955) and he himself wrote a guide for the wider public (Webster 1950).

Although some of the stelae uncovered from the North Wall, looked as if they had ‘left the hands of the sculptor only yesterday’ (Jones 1888, 3), others had clearly been defaced; the image of one, for instance, being described as ‘so mutilated as to defy description’ (Collingwood and Wright 1965, 188). Generally dismissed as poor specimens of Roman sculpture, the more mutilated stele have, for the most part, been left out of the limelight in the museum’s exhibitions, and are not on display. It is these stones, however, which are the focus of a new paper discussing the corpus (Clay 2004). The paper shows how the damage inflicted upon some of the images cannot be logically interpreted in practical or accidental terms. This may suggest that the gravestones were violated by a group who were bent on abusing the memory of the dead buried at the fortress.

A notable example of this iconoclasm is shown in Fig. 3. The memorial depicts a soldier, carrying a standard representing his legion, presumably Legio XX. When the stone was first discovered, Earwaker (1888, 124) commented that the memorial might ‘have been roughly mutilated into its present form in order to fit into a particular space in the wall’. It seems unclear, however, what practical purpose the removal of the image might have served, when it is considered that the spandrels and lintel (outer edges of the stone) have survived intact, and these would have obducted further than the main relief. The left hand corner of the stone has also been struck off, resulting in the loss of the man’s standard. This might have been attributed to accidental causes, if the man’s pole had not been chiselled down as well. So instead of arising out of practical requirements, it is reasonable to offer an alternative proposal, namely that the damage was intended to degrade the image, and the dead soldier, which it represented.

Another example, of where an image appears perhaps to have been intentionally mocked, is the subject of Fig. 4. The gravestone illustrates two people reclining at a funerary banquet. The frontal image is in commemoration of Caecilius Donatus, a soldier of 26 years’ service, and the image in the background may have been his wife, but of this we cannot be sure, because part of the inscription is missing. The man, in any case, is holding up his cup in a gesture of goodwill to the passer-by who should have been able to look on his gravestone had it still been in public view. Both faces have been cut away however, as has the cup, and hence the man’s affable sentiments have been negated.

When considering this type of mutilation and re-use, it should be kept in mind that the memorials had been intended as permanent markers of the grave. One of the methods in which it was believed an afterlife could be achieved for the dead, was through the perpetual remembrance of others (Davies 1999, 140). This may explain why stele were rarely re-used in the Roman period in such a manner as found at Chester, yet in spite of this, the topic has attracted

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**Fig. 1:** The Graham Webster Gallery, the Grosvenor Museum. **Photo © Chester City Council.**
little enquiry from an ideological stance. It could be said, that if some of the memorials have been defaced, surely this has implications on why they were re-used in this degrading manner? I have suggested (Clay, 2004) that the gravestones were mutilated as a result of the untoward associations which Legio XX incurred on account of its support for the usurpers Carausius and Allectus. As a consequence, the legion was disbanded, and its tombstones violated, in order to erase the memory of its involvement in the

betrayal of what the victors, notably Constantius I, would have seen in its trust.

This, however, is only one possibility, and if the gravestones were not re-used until the medieval period, as some suggest, entirely different conclusions would need to be drawn. At least the publication of Martin Henig’s new fascicule of the Corpus Signorum Imperii Romani dealing with Roman sculpture from the north-west Midlands, launched in June last year, allows us the opportunity to see the defaced stones well illustrated and discussed, but it still seems a shame that many are not on display. Hopefully this problem shall one day be rectified; then the work of the unknown iconoclasts can be finally exhibited.

I would like to thank the Grosvenor Museum, notably Dan Robinson, for organising a viewing of the sculptured stones which are held in the museum’s off-site collection. I am also very grateful for the additional input and ideas of Professor Martin Henig at Oxford University.

References:


MAIDEN CASTLE: THE CASUAL DEAD OR BATTLE VICTIMS?

by Christopher Sparey-Green

One of the most dramatic finds from Roman Dorset remains the so-called 'War Cemetery' discovered by Sir Mortimer Wheeler at the Iron Age hillfort of Maiden Castle in 1937 (Figs. 1 and 2).

The group of burials found in the eastern entrance were claimed as the 'victims of Vespasian' in The Times report on the 1937 season of excavations, whilst the final report describes them, more prosaically, as the result of Roman military assault, by the 2nd Augustan Legion in AD 43. (Wheeler 1943, 116-120).

Over the last few years this identification has been questioned, an assessment of native burial rites in the area suggesting they were part of a regular cemetery, the weapon injuries interpreted as the result of intermittent conflict over a period of time rather than on one occasion (Sharpley 1991b, 124-5, but see also Cunliffe 2005, 187, 559, where the traditional view is taken). If correct, these were native Durotrigians killed in internecine warfare before the Roman Conquest. Other groups of native burials have likewise been drawn into what is ongoing research; the writer can here only comment in general terms as the archaeologist who excavated 57 burials of this date at Poundbury, the major ancient cemetery in the vicinity of Maiden Castle.

The Maiden Castle cemetery is well-known for the injuries to the adult male and female skeletons, which include cut marks to the head and, in one case the apparent Roman ballista bolt in the backbone of one body (Fig. 3). Either the latter would now have to be identified as some form of native spearhead or the casualty would have to have originated from some battlefield elsewhere. Twenty such iron bolts or arrows were found in various contexts in Wheeler's original excavations and several more were recorded from the English Heritage excavations of 1985-6 (Sharpley 1991, 164-5, Fig. 138). Their presence suggests the site had indeed been subjected to Roman assault, such an event providing a context for the burial of dead bearing evidence of weapon injuries. For the burials to have been interred over time would require the stratigraphy to have been drastically misinterpreted, Wheeler being convinced that, as a group, the burials post-dated the burning of round houses (or 'Belgic huts' as he calls them), a single event providing a terminus post quem for the interments. If, however, these graves had been dug over time, then variations in the nature of their fill would have been noted - some graves cut through freshly burnt layers, others through weathered ash and soil. Sharpley (1991, 100) moreover, has claimed that the ash debris interpreted as the burning of the houses was in fact scattered debris from iron working to the west between the outer gate portals. However, this activity was also recognised by Wheeler as just that - iron working. It is hardly likely that he would have misinterpreted a similar deposit nearby as charcoal and ash from burnt structures.

A further detail is worth noting here. The groups of graves may cut through the remains of the houses but they avoid the sling-stone dumps.

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Fig. 1. Plan of the 'War Cemetery' in the East Entrance, Maiden Castle (after pl. XVI, Wheeler 1943). © Society of Antiquaries.
in their vicinity, suggesting that the burials were contemporary with these weapons dumps (Fig. 4).

The date of the burials is obviously crucial. Radio-carbon dating is unlikely to give enough precision (as was found at the hillfort of Cadbury Castle, Somerset), but the stratigraphy of the gateways, road surfaces and inner hornworks could provide a refined dating sequence if the amphorae and samian sherds referred to in the original report were re-examined. It would be a worthy enterprise to study Wheeler's records and the stratified finds stored in The Dorset County Museum.

And, finally, there is the 'skeleton in the cupboard'. Another burial has recently come to light from a museum store in Kent. It came from Wheeler's Site O, 'the long trench' at Maiden Castle, this site probably being a test-trench dug from the gate eastwards toward the inner hornwork. The discovery of this burial may then have prompted the opening up of Site P and the discovery of the 'War Cemetery'.

The burials at Maiden Castle should be seen in the context of not only native Iron Age and early Romano-British funerary ritual, but also the other finds of mass burial or massacre at the hillforts of Cadbury Castle and Spetisbury Ring. The Cadbury finds have been recently published as the debris from the disposal by burning of battle victims, young and old alike (Barrett, et al. 2000). The grisly remains so horrified some archaeologists working on the site as to cause the more squeamish to avoid working on that area, but the proposal that those disposed of in this way included Roman dead is hardly likely. Surely such casualties would have been retrieved, efficiently cremated and interred with greater ceremony at the Roman base camp. The remains here seem to result from the rapid dispatch of young natives, perhaps those not deemed suitable for enslavement. In this context the scattered brooches could be from the disrobingment of enslaved captives led off naked in chains, as depicted in contemporary representations of Roman warfare.

The evidence from Spetisbury was different again. Here, at a small hillfort down the Stour Valley from Hod Hill, a large number of skeletons and fragments of military equipment of both native and Roman origin were encountered in the ditch (RCHME, 1970, 246). From the 19th-century accounts, this could have resulted from the rapid and mass disposal of dead and raises an interesting possibility. Comparison has been made between the Maiden Castle graves and the burial ritual elsewhere in Durotrigian territory. The 'War Cemetery' burials compare well with graves encountered in settlement contexts, as at Poundbury (Fig. 5, and Farwell and Molleson 2000).
undoubtedly represent victims of Roman military activity, but at what stage of the mid-first-century campaigns remains uncertain. Questions of chronology, however, are still important (pace Barrett et al 2000, 116). The initial invasion of AD 43 remains a possibility, the revolt of 47 was at too remote a location, but the aftermath of the Boudiccan Revolt in 61 remains the most likely. For Poenius Postumus, the camp commandant of the 2nd Legion to have refused to join Paulinus in the Midlands was not cowardice but the action of a (temporary) commander unwilling to be caught on the march like Varus in Germany or Sabinus and Cotta in north-east Gaul (Tacitus, Annals 14, 37, Webster 1978, 95). The evidence of slaughter, atrocity and the hasty disposal of the dead would then be consistent with the aftermath of retribution described by Tacitus. Maiden Castle was the Fallüa of Roman Britain; Cadbury Castle its My Lai.

Bibliography:
RCHME., 1970, An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in the County of

will reveal more features and provide further evidence of settlement and land use within the immediate vicinity of the villa.

The villa site has now been seeded with grass and will remain as an unploughed area within a large arable plot. This will help to ensure the long term survival of the site and should be seen as an excellent example of the goodwill and co-operation that can occur between farmers and archaeologists. The advice and guidance from the ARA has provided a large and important contribution to efforts aimed at preventing further plough damage to this site.

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