The magnificent remains of the Imperial Baths at Trier, Germany. John Partridge gives us his account of the sites visited on The Association for Roman Archaeology’s 2010 Romans on the Rhine and the Mosel Study Tour (pages 3 to 7).

Photo: © Grahame Soffe.
EDITORIAL

I'd like to thank the ARA members who contacted me and offered to write articles for ARA News. Without their contributions it would be a much slimmer magazine! If there are any more members who'd like to contribute, please get in touch.

My thanks also go to those members who contacted me with their thoughts on the content and presentation of ARA News. Overall your comments were very positive; helpful suggestions included having an article on interpreting Roman inscriptions, and more articles on UK sites. I've made enquiries about the former; if any members would like to write about Roman sites in the UK, I'm especially keen to hear from them!

My congratulations go to Julian Smith of Church Stretton, Shropshire, whose name was first out of the hat and won the English Heritage Hadrian's Wall map.

This edition has an international feel. John Partridge describes his experiences on the ARA's 2010 study tour along the Rhine and Mosel, including visits to sites in Trier, Cologne and Xanten. Gareth Harney takes us to Vaison-la-Romaine and Glanum, two less-visited sites in Roman Provence. Inés Garcia and Bernie Spiegelhalter's account of Roman Spain includes the sites of Mérida and Itálica, Trajan's home town. Martin Elvery shows us the marvellous mosaics in Sousse, Tunisia.

There are also three items from the UK. Keith Parfitt explains what was found during the first year of excavations at Folkestone's eroding cliff-top villa; he includes an offer to ARA members to take part in next year's dig. Stuart Bailey gives us the history of the Jewry Wall Museum's Thurcaston milestone. Martin Elvery's description of the Iron Age Museum at Andover includes the new Fullerton Manor mosaic display; ample reason to visit (or revisit) the museum, which is free to ARA members.

I would strongly encourage ARA members to visit their local museums and sites, especially those run by local authorities. Funding is tight, and low visitor numbers are being used as an excuse to consider closing them, or reducing their opening times. If you don't go now, you might lose the opportunity.

We have two special offers in this edition of ARA News. You can get free delivery and a 10% discount on the new British Museum book, The Frome Hoard, and there are substantial discounts on the four books that make up the Roman Mosaics of Britain corpus, including the new Volume IV: Western Britain.

Finally, in the middle of ARA News we have details of this year's ARA study tours. If you want to book up but don't want to cut out the pages, photocopies of the forms are equally acceptable.

Nich Hogben, Editor.
Romans on the Rhine and the Mosel
ARA Study Tour 2010

The Dover Pharos and the white cliffs below disappeared in the mist of an October morning as a P & O ferry set sail with a party of ARA members. Fleeting thoughts of Hurricanes, Spitfires and Vera Lynn gave way to mental images of a time nearly 2,000 years ago when our shores were less well defended and when Claudius’ legions set sail in their direction. Behind them lay the Roman Empire, and now before us lay the first day of our Romans on the Rhine and Mosel study tour of 2010. The coach journey from Calais soon passed and by early evening we were in Trier, Germany.

Trier (Augusta Treverorum) was founded in 16 BC. Later, under Claudius, it became Colonia Augusta Treverorum. Today there are some wonderful sites to visit, as is to be expected of a city which, in the third century AD, became the capital of Belgica Prima and Northern Gaul and a residence of Maximian and several of his successors.

Construction of the amphitheatre began in 160 (Fig. 1); it held 20,000 spectators. Its west side was incorporated into the city wall. The south portal constituted the outer city gate; entry to the city was through the north portal. Construction was mainly of earthen banks supported by low stone retaining walls. In the arena 13 vaulted cages held, no doubt, animals and prisoners. A vast undercroft, restored with stout timbers, is accessible to visitors (Fig. 2).

Construction of the Imperial Baths began in the late third century under Constantius Chlorus and continued under Constantine. Fifty years after Constantine left Trier to take up residence in Constantinople the baths were still unfinished, and indeed remained so, despite the resumption of building under Valentinian in 367. The unfinished baths probably became a military camp for the imperial guard. The caldarium’s east wall still stands to a height of 63 feet, thanks to its having been incorporated into the medieval city wall (see cover).

It was restored in 1984. Half a mile of underground passages for service corridors and water conduits have been excavated and restored (Fig. 4). The whole complex presents a very impressive sight.

This first full day in Trier was a busy one, with another baths complex to visit. During the construction of WW II air-raid shelters in Cattle Market Square (Viehmarktplatz) parts of Roman walls were discovered. Later building plans in the 1980s included an underground car park. Clearance of the site revealed extensive remains of a huge baths complex which pre-dated both the Imperial Baths and the Barbara Baths. By 1994 the site had been excavated and in 1998 it was opened to the public under a steel and glass protective building (Fig. 5). Over the centuries stone robbing had deprived the complex of most of its structure, but the layout and several features are plain to see, along with part of a 17th century Capuchin monastery which was erected on top of Roman foundations.

We then left the Cattle Market Baths and walked along a bustling pedestrianised street full of shoppers, sightseers and café patrons: Simeonstrasse, whose saintly eponym is mentioned below. Simeonstrasse seemed to be blocked at its northern end, for there loomed an unmistakably Roman building – huge, black and unmissable – the Porta Nigra, or Black Gate (Fig. 6). Built in the last quarter of the second century, this city gate formed part of a four-mile-long wall around the city, no part of which is visible above ground. Its west tower is about 100 feet high, and the whole gate is 119 feet wide. A courtyard separates the outer gates and the entrance on the city side. Strangely, the gate remained...
unfinished, possibly because the city was besieged around 196/7 during the struggles between Septimius Severus and Clodius Albinus. Although the iron clamps binding the huge stone blocks were prised away during the early Middle Ages the Gate survived through the following centuries thanks to Simeon, an 11th century pious recluse. Simeon spent five years occupying the Porta Nigra as a hermitage. After he died a community of priests was established in his honour and the gate was converted to a church. In 1804 Napoleon ordered that all features of the Porta Nigra added after medieval times be removed. Thanks to St Simeon and Napoleon we can still explore the largest and best preserved city gate in the Roman Empire.

Fig. 7. Trier Rheinisches Landesmuseum, chariot mosaic. Photo: © John Partridge.

Back along Simeonstrasse and just off the main market square we came to the Konstantin Basilika, a World Heritage Site since 1986. The basilica, or aula palatina, is a remarkable above-ground survival of the imperial palace, on which construction started in the reign of Constantius Chlorus. It was built of plaster-covered brick, while the interior had marble-covered walls and a marble floor. Over the centuries the building has suffered alteration, part demolition, war damage and changes of use, yet what we see today is fairly close to the original – at least on the outside. It was badly damaged in the Middle Ages, at one stage losing its roof, and in the 17th century the entrance hall was demolished along with the east wall and part of the south wall. In the 18th century it was converted into a Protestant church, using sandstone for the new east and south walls. Restoration following damage sustained during WWII returned the building as nearly as possible to its original Roman state.

Trier boasts several excellent museums. The Rheinisches Landesmuseum, established in 1877, is of the high standard typical of all the museums we visited on this tour. It houses many fine mosaics, including a Medusa mosaic from the Procurator’s palace and another featuring a chariot race (Fig. 7). As well as several timber, metal-sheathed piles from the early Roman bridge there is a fine model of the later wooden bridge resting on its basalt piers (Fig. 8).

Fig. 8. Trier Rheinische Landesmuseum, model of Roman bridge. Photo: © John Partridge.

Fig. 9. Figurine wearing birrus Britannicus. Photo: © John Partridge.

An exhibit that appealed to us was a charming figurine of a man apparently wearing a birrus Britannicus, the famous woollen cloak (normally incorporating a hood), produced in Britain and exported to many parts of the Empire (Fig. 9).

Fig. 10. Trier, Barbarathermen. Photo: © Grahame Soffe.

Fig. 11. Clamps on Roman bridge. Photo: © John Partridge.

Trier, we were to discover, is not short of Roman baths! Later, a smaller group visited the Roman bridge, on the way viewing repair work on the site of what was once the largest bath complex outside Rome, and probably one of the most spectacular (Fig. 10). The Barbara Baths (named after the medieval suburb of St Barbara) measured 792 feet by 568, but only a quarter of it is visible today. The complex was in constant use until the fifth century.

A short walk took us to the Roman bridge over the Mosel. This bridge replaced one that stood a short distance downstream, erected on timber piles, some of which we saw in the museum. The arches of the traffic-carrying superstructure are more recent, but the piers on which they stand are those of the second-century Roman bridge. These mighty basalt piers, founded on bedrock, have withstood ice and floods and eighteen centuries of the unceasing flow of Mosel water. What an amazing achievement! And those iron clamps set in lead appear to be original Roman work (Fig. 11). We stood in wonder on the bank of the river, and then climbed reluctantly back up to the road and returned to the comfort of the hotel Deutscher Hof.

So ended the first full day of the tour. The following day would see us heading for Cologne, where we arrived in the early evening. En route, however, were some fascinating sites which were not to be missed, and the first was in eastern Luxembourg, close to the border with Germany: the villa at Echternach.

The existence of the site at Echternach had been known since the 19th century. In the 1970s it was threatened with obliteration by the building of a motorway but happily the route was changed. This large estate, whose palatial country residence alone, situated next to a lake, measured 387 feet by 203, was not a farm "villa" as is commonly supposed but the sumptuous summer resort of a very rich owner, and the house was for entertaining. The ground floor alone had 40, and later 70, rooms. What have been interpreted as farm buildings were probably stables, and hunting in the spectacular surrounding countryside was no doubt a favourite pastime. A large rectangular pool was colonnaded on one side, leaving the other open for the view to be enjoyed. A colonnaded swimming pool was another attraction for host and guests alike. Another interesting feature was a large cellar with pillars supporting the floor above (Fig. 12).

Fig. 12. The cellar at Echternach villa. Photo: © Grahame Soffe.

We spent an enjoyable time admiring the simulated Roman
garden, in which seventy ornamental and medicinal plants grow today along with vines covering a pergola (Fig. 13). The museum has displays with recreated scenes, figures and models which are commendably designed to interest old and young alike.

Continuing on our way towards Cologne we left Luxembourg, passing through an area of gently rolling hills, fields of maize and sunflowers, and forests displaying all the glorious colours of autumn. Shortly after midday, we stopped for lunch at Bitburg (Bedo). It was a settlement of the Treveri, and excavations have uncovered pottery of the first century AD. It was a thriving market town on the main Roman road linking Trier and Cologne, but suffered destruction during Alamannic and Frankish incursions in 275/6. It was probably during reconstruction in the early fourth century that the town wall and bastions were built. Two of the bastions have been repaired in modern times (Fig. 14). In common with several towns in Germany, Bitburg boasts a reconstruction of a Jupiter column. Such columns often had at their base depictions of Juno, Minerva, Mercury and Hercules.

There was a pattern of imbricated laurel leaves on the column, most examples of which had a height of about 13 feet and were surmounted by the figure of Jupiter. We also saw a replica of a dedication stone (the original is in Trier’s Landesmuseum) commemorating the erection of a fire tower in the year 245. Deliberate damage to the stone in ancient times bears witness to the damnum memoriae of Emperor Philip I (Fig. 15).

We continued to the villa at Otrang. In 1825 a mosaic floor was discovered, and the site was subsequently documented. The site was taken over by Prussia’s government following a visit in 1838 by the future King Frederick William IV. Small protective buildings were erected over the mosaics and other features, and now these buildings are themselves protected. Where no buildings are erected the outlines of rooms are shown on the ground. Set in rich agricultural land near the Roman road linking Trier and Cologne, the villa and its farm prospered over many generations, as is shown by the many extensions which were made and the painted plaster, mosaic floors and evidence of marble decoration in some of the 66 rooms. A quarter of a mile from the villa stood two temples. Sculptures from one indicate that it was dedicated to Juno and Minerva, and a votive plaque from the villa implies a connection with the local healing god Lenus Mars. A highlight of our visit was an explanation of current excavations being carried out some distance from the main building by Dr Klaus-Peter Goethert of the Institute for Classical Archaeology at Trier University (Figs. 16 and 17). It is thought that the building here is possibly the house of the estate’s bailiff.

After refreshments on the terrace, which overlooks the valley and the brook beyond which the temple area is situated, we set off in fine weather. By evening we were in Cologne.

Cologne (Colonia Claudia Ara Agrippinensium) was accorded the status of colonia by Emperor Claudius in honour of his wife, Agrippina the Younger, in AD 50. Agrippina was born there in AD 15. Cologne became the capital of Germania Inferior. The modern city, being the fourth largest in Germany, is a showcase for Roman Germany. Our visit concentrated on two magnificent museums. First, however, we took a short walk to see the Römerturm, the sole remaining complete tower of the city’s four-kilometre wall (Fig. 18). It incorporates some unusual patterned inlays made with a variety of materials. In the 14th century this tower was incorporated into the now-defunct Franciscan convent of St Clara – as a latrine!

Our first museum visit was to the Praetorium Museum. During the building of the city hall in 1953 the foundations of the governor’s palace (praetorium) were revealed. When excavations were completed the city hall was erected above the ruins. The space between preserves the extensive praetorium foundations and forms the museum (Fig. 19). Graphic displays, diagrams and models depict the praetorium and enable the visitor to understand the remains on display. One feature that we enjoyed was a hundred-metre stretch of the ancient city’s main sewer (cloaca maxima) (Fig. 20).

Our second museum, the Roman Germany Museum (Römisch-Germanisches Museum) must rank among the finest in Europe. Opened in 1974, it is perhaps best known for its Dionysus mosaic, but it houses a vast display of artefacts of all kinds – altars, stelae, mosaics, wall paintings, sculptures, lamps, wagon reconstructions, myriad items of daily Roman life and an enormous array of glassware.
interested, "Aachen" and "Aix" are both corruptions of the Latin "Aqua" – "water"). It flourished until the Frankish incursions of the mid-third century.

Our visit concentrated on the chapel of the palace complex built by Charlemagne in the ninth century.

An octagon formed the core building of the chapel, and other structures added in the course of the following centuries created what is now Aachen Cathedral (Fig. 26). The mortal remains of the Holy Roman Emperor are held in the shrine of Charlemagne in an apse at the eastern end of the building. His marble throne is on an upper floor. These are just two of the many historic and priceless treasures housed in the cathedral. The shrine of the Virgin Mary contains the famous four Aachen relics, which are taken out for display every seven years. Many more centuries-old glistening treasures of gold and gilded silver are housed in the Cathedral Treasury (Domschatzammer). As we emerged from the Treasury the sunshine seemed almost dim by comparison.

After a fascinating visit and lunch we set off for the baths museum at Heerlen (Coriovalum), in the Netherlands. The town was, in modern times, the centre of the Dutch coal mining industry. The last mine closed in the early 1970s and Heerlen is now part of a light industrial district. In Roman times the settlement grew at the crossing of two roads: the road from Boulogne to Cologne, and that linking Xanten, Aachen and Trier. The baths were discovered in 1940 and the Thermen Museum opened in 1977. The remains of the baths complex are protected by a large building with a high proportion of glass. We had an excellent view from an elevated walkway, while a recorded commentary in English provided information. A notable feature was a section of floor in opus signinum. The splendid museum, which is integral with the baths building, provides an interesting and varied display. Exhibits included strigils, ointment jars, mirrors, pottery and all the paraphernalia of daily life. The large graphic displays included maps, an explanation of Roman road construction and a funeral. A reconstruction of a Roman kitchen was very well presented, as was a cutaway model of a Roman house displaying furniture, tiny but lifelike figures and even the animals in their stalls.

Returning to the artefacts, among the many altars is one dedicated to Diana by Titius Severus, a centurion of Legio VI Victrix Pia Fidelis. He was responsible for keeping the captured animals caged before combat in the amphitheatre (Fig. 23). The inscription on a tombstone of Calus Aiacius tells us that he was a slave trader (Fig. 24). A beautiful and very lifelike bust of Julia Domna, second wife of Septimius Severus, shows us a woman with a gentle expression, large eyes and lips that could be faintly smiling (Fig. 25). We are told she gained a reputation for adulterous affairs.

If Aachen/Aix-la-Chapelle (Aquis or Aquae Grani or Grannus or Grannum) has difficulty deciding what its name is, it has no difficulty attracting visitors. As the Roman name suggests, in ancient times it was a spa town. (For the etymologically
Three exhibits particularly impressed us. A potter called Lucius had made a storage jar and inscribed on it the name of his beloved – Amaka – along with the alphabet (Fig. 27). Another fascinating exhibit was the cast of the famous stone coffin with sculpted relief on the inside depicting a woman reclining in a domestic scene complete with doors, furniture, jars and even outbuildings. But the highlight of our visit was the identification among the exhibits of a small copper-alloy bust which had been found in a sarcophagus. It was a *balsarium*, but its most striking feature, identified by Bryn Walters, was that it was of Antinous (Fig. 28).

**Xanten (Colonia Ulpia Traiana)** grew up on a site near a double, later single, fortress during the first century AD. At the beginning of the second century Emperor Trajan granted it *colonia* status. At one time home to an estimated 10,000 people, it occupied 180 acres and became a thriving city with all the usual amenities – baths, temples, amphitheatre, etc. – and a network of roads linking it to the surrounding area. The site is now occupied by the Archaeological Park Xanten (APX) and the Roman Museum.

It is a fascinating place, for the buildings are not ruins but reconstructions, erected on the remains of the originals as they are examined in a continuing programme of excavations. The reconstructions range from a crane to part of a temple. There is a *mansio*, complete with fully decorated and furnished rooms and a working bathhouse (Fig. 29). Part of the town wall has been reconstructed using Roman materials and techniques, as has the amphitheatre. Other reconstructions include a working oven next to a corn mill, the three-storey, twin-tower north-west Burginatium Gate (Fig. 30) and the Harbour Gate.

A venture such as APX, if it were not executed sensibly, could seem showy and possibly tasteless, and might even offend purist sensitivities. Not so in this case. The Rhineland Regional Council and its partners have developed an enterprise that is fascinating, didactic and investigative. The *mansio* bathhouse and the Harbour Temple are excellent examples. The bathhouse, with its water supply system, is fired up twice a year and provides data about Roman techniques, design and energy use. The Harbour Temple (whose podium is accessible to visitors) has wisely been only partially reconstructed. Four columns support just one corner of the pediment, while other columns are displayed only to a fraction of their original height (Fig. 31). The Corinthian capital of one column is decorated to show how the originals would have looked to the city's inhabitants (Fig. 32). The overall effect gives an indication of the size and appearance of the temple: the complete picture sensibly relies on the viewer's imagination.

The museum building was erected over the town baths. The spacious main hall houses the impressive museum of Roman exhibits, while the rooms of the baths are protected by steel and glass structures which conform to the layout of the original walls and roofs (Fig. 33). This museum, like all those we visited on this tour, is of the highest order and an example which could profitably be followed in Britain.

The following day some took the opportunity to attend mass at the cathedral of St Victor. Legend has it that Victor and some fellow soldiers who were serving in the Theban Legion were killed because of their Christian faith. Victor was buried within the area where the cathedral, a five-aisled basilican church with twin towers, completed in 1263, now stands. It happened to be the day of the patronal festival, and a procession through the square provided an opportunity for some final photographs.

On our journey home Bruges made a fascinating stop, and after an overnight stay we left for the French coast. Like Claudius' legions before us, we were heading for Britannia – though in greater comfort and in full expectation of a peaceful reception.

All of us who attended would like to thank Mike Stone for the tremendous amount of work he put into organising, conducting and guiding this thoroughly enjoyable tour. Thanks go also to Bryn Walters, Anthony Beeson and Grahame Soffe for enhancing the tour by sharing with us their knowledge and expertise.

John Partridge.
As to whether the statue is actually a portrait of Caligula, and whether it really did ornament his tomb as has been sensationally claimed, is still a matter of speculation. As Caligula was killed and cremated without ceremony in Rome in AD41 at the age of 28, the tomb idea may be wishful thinking on the part of the police. Both Suetonius and Josephus claim that his ashes were placed in the tomb of Augustus which seems far more likely. If it really is of Caligula then it may well have ornamented his villa, which would actually be far more exciting to discover than his mausoleum. The thief has shown the police where he found it, and the site is to be excavated.

Guardian – 17.1.2011
Daily Mail – 19.1.2011

2010 PROVES TO BE A YEAR OF REMARKABLE CROP MARKS

The exceptional early dry summer of 2010, coupled with the free up of airspace usually forbidden to light aircraft by the grounding of air traffic caused by the Icelandic volcanic eruption, resulted in 2010 being a vintage year for aerial archaeology and in parts of the country being photographed as never before. Throughout the summer English Heritage have discovered and recorded hundreds of sites. They have tried to concentrate on areas that generally produce little archaeology and have been well rewarded.

Flights into the West Midlands and Cumbria, together with more local areas such as the Yorkshire Wolds and Vale of York, have all been very rewarding, providing both new locations and additional information about existing monuments. Areas targeted included clay soils, which are more difficult to detect crop marks on, and those where aerial photography is rarely attempted. Unlike jet aircraft, the piston-powered Cessna aircraft used for the job were unaffected by the ash cloud. Flights were made around Gatwick, Stansted, Luton and Bristol airports while they were out of commission.

The Holderness area of the East Riding has proved especially productive with around 60 new sites (mainly prehistoric) being found in just one day’s flying. At Newton Kyne Roman Fort, near Tadcaster in North Yorkshire, the survey produced a wealth of information; photographs show buildings, roads and other activity within the fort. The rectangular Roman fort is known to have an earth and timber rampart; aerial survey this summer revealed a stronger defence built in 290 covering seven hectares, with stone walls up to three metres thick and a ditch 15 metres wide. Photographs show the massive ditches of the defences. More details about the earlier fort enclosed within the later one were also exposed.

Among the new discoveries is a Roman camp near Bradford Abbas in Dorset. This is a lightly constructed structure built for soldiers on campaign or manoeuvres in the first century AD, and is only the fourth such identified in the region.

Daily Telegraph – 30.8.2010

AN EXCELLENT ONLINE TOUR OF POMPEII AND THE VESUVIAN SITES

ARA members may enjoy an excellent website AD79 Destruction and Re-discovery, created by Peter Clements, that is a virtual online guide to the archaeological sites destroyed by the Vesuvian eruption of AD 79. Pompeii, Herculanenum, Stabiae, Oplontis and Boscoreale are just some of the places covered by the website, which has more than 250 pages with more than 1,300 photographs, maps and plans. The website describes over 750 properties and aims to provide a comprehensive overview of these historic Campanian towns and settlements.

The website provides details on the story of the destruction and the rediscovery, the history of the region and the daily life of the people. It also has an in-depth look at what can be seen today and provides links to other related sites. It is an invaluable visual source of information on particular buildings. Herculanenum for instance is covered insula by insula. The site may be accessed at http://sites.google.com/site/ad79eruption/

Additional and related websites that will of interest are Herculaneum Panoramas (http://www.proxima-veritati.auckland.ac.nz/Herculaneum/) and Fasti on line, A Database of Archaeological Excavations since the year 2000 in the Mediterranean (http://www.fastionline.org/).

Fig. 1. Huge crowds viewed Caligula’s two vessels in the 1920s after the draining of the lake at Nemi.
Photo: © Anthony Beeson.
LASERS UNCOVER 4TH CENTURY CHRISTIAN MURAL PAINTINGS IN SANTA TECLA CATACOMBS

Laser technology has been used to clean a crust of dirt and calcium deposit from the surface of murals in a catacomb chamber in Rome’s Santa Tecla catacombs in the Ostiense quarter of the city.

The images, which date from the second half of the 4th century, were discovered on the walls and ceiling of a tomb. They were uncovered using a new laser technique that allowed restorers to burn off the centimetres of thick white calcium carbonate deposits that had built up over the centuries without damaging the dark colours of the original paintings underneath. The Vatican office oversaw and paid for the two-year, 60,000 euro restoration effort, which used lasers for the first time. The dampness of underground catacombs makes preservation of paintings particularly difficult and restoration problematic. The Santa Tecla catacombs were discovered by chance in the 1950s but never opened to the public.

The square ceiling is obviously derived from a mosaic design with a large central roundel holding an image of the Good Shepherd carrying a sheep on his shoulders and with two at his feet. Smaller roundels occupy each corner while the rest of the field is covered with an assortment of geometric coffers, some bearing devices. Other scenes from the Bible appear on the walls and in the arched recesses of the chamber and are also now much clearer and brighter. The subjects include Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead, Abraham preparing to sacrifice his son Isaac, Saint Peter drawing water in the Mamertine prison, Jonah, Daniel, and Mary and the Magi. A noblewoman, dressed in luxurious clothes and standing next to a child and between two saints, is depicted in one of the side arches.

Each of the cornet roundels on the ceiling holds a male bust. Apart from the beauty of the paintings the real reason for the Vatican’s interest is that they claim that these are the earliest known images of the Apostles painted as separate icons that are known. They identify them as John, Andrew, Peter and Paul, although it must be pointed out that there are no attributes or inscriptions on the roundels to support this. Rather like the enigmatic corner figures on the Hinton St Mary Mosaic from Dorset the identifications must be assumed. They could quite frankly also be members of the deceased noblewoman’s family.

Barbara Mazzesi, who is leading the restoration project, says “We already know earlier images of Peter and Paul from group paintings, but all previously known images of Andrew and John date to the mid fifth century. We assume it is them because they were the most important apostles after Peter and Paul and would have found space alongside them here.”

What does not seem to have been recognised in any of the published accounts is that the four busts use the same iconographical root as is often applied in art to representations of the Four Seasons, namely, youth and decay. Therefore all of the men featured are of different ages; the Four Ages of Man no less! There is a young bearded youth “St John”, a lightly bearded young man “St Andrew” and a dark haired middle aged one “St Paul”. Finally, the figure identified as St Peter is old and white bearded. While not claiming that the Vatican’s interpretations of the figures are not accurate, the “four ages” might well account for the choice of these particular Apostles, should that be who they actually are!

Because of problems of conservation, the paintings are likely to be displayed only to specialist groups rather than to the general public.

Times and Star – 25.8.2010
Cumberland and Westmoreland Antiquarian Society Newsletter 65, Autumn 2010

MIRROR FRAMES AND A BRONZE GRIFFIN FROM VINDOLANDA

Among the new finds discovered in the 2010 excavations at Vindolanda in Northumberland are two rare lead frames for hand-mirrors and a bronze griffin. The frames are inscribed with the names of their makers. One called Quintus Lucinius Tinitus was based at Arles in Provence, while the workshop of the other called Venator is currently unknown.

Equally interesting is a small bronze griffin. This has been claimed to be a helmet decoration by the same maker as the griffin used as the crest of the fabulous parade helmet recently found at Crosby Garrett. However, the Vindolanda mount, although attractive, is of inferior quality and has considerable differences. Its limbs, feathers and anatomical features are poorly defined, and it may have had the raised paw resting on a globe rather than a canthus. It also lacks the two loops for possible streamers, which are behind the head and at the front of the curved base of the other. Unlike the Crosby Garrett griffin it also stands on a flat base and rather suggests that it is a furniture mount rather than a cavalry helmet crest.

The Journal – 14.1.2011
Hexham Courant – 24.1.2011

UPDATE ON THE PAPCASTLE EXCAVATION

The Roman remains uncovered by the floods of November 2009 on the edge of a field known as Broomlands, bordering the river Derwent at Dereventio, modern Papcastle, and reported in the last edition of ARA News, have been investigated by a team from Grampus Heritage and Training Ltd. A substantial stretch of wall has been identified as belonging to a Roman water mill and is, apart from one excavated in 1908 at Haltwhistle Burn, believed to be the only other found in the North of England. It adjoins a timber-lined mill-race. It is now some 100 feet from the river, which seems to have changed course over the centuries.
VAISON-LA-ROMAINE AND GLANUM:
OVERLOOKED TREASURES OF ROMAN PROVENCE

The province of Gallia Narbonensis was a much-cherished Roman possession. In the late second century BC it became their first acquisition outside the Italian peninsula and unlike its bigger, brutish neighbour "Long Haired Gaul" to the north, it smoothly embraced Roman customs and values. It was a province of great utility: a lucrative trade route, a valuable land bridge to the Iberian Peninsula and a welcome buffer between Rome and her hairy enemies. The great Via Domitia soon was unfurled across the fertile landscape, and numerous urban centres grew and prospered along its course. By the time Julius Caesar finally pacified the rest of Gaul in 51 BC, the residents of Gallia Narbonensis had been glugging their wine and sweating themselves in the bath-house for over half a century.

Fittingly, the Romans christened their province with a more affectionate moniker: precisely that, Provincia Nostra – “Our Province”. And so it remains today, as you explore the exquisite archaeological sites of Provence.

With evidence of human habitation dating back almost a million years, this patchwork land of vineyards and olive groves is any history lover’s ideal destination. Passed back and forth by many of Europe’s great empires, Provence retains the signatures of them all written across its landscape. Understandably, Roman enthusiasts journeying through the area usually are preoccupied with visiting the elegant sites of Nîmes, the breathtaking theatre of Orange and amphitheatre of Arles, still used for bull running to this day.

This Roman triangle dominates the pages of most guide books to the region and therefore also attracts the crowds: Nîmes’ Pont du Gard aqueduct welcomes 15,000 people daily in July and August.

Yet if you wish to escape this deluge and regain that sense of discovery that comes with a gentle meander through peaceful ancient ruins, there is an alternative itinerary to Roman Provence. On a recent trip to the area in high season, I visited two sites that remain inexplicably absent from the pages of many a tourist guide but arguably have more to offer a curious visitor than many of the heavier-publicised locations. The Roman cities of Vasio Vocontiorum (Vaison-la-Romaine) and Glanum (near Saint-Rémy-de-Provence) are certainly among Provence’s most underrated archaeological treasures.

Straddling the Ouvèze River twenty miles north-west of Orange, Vaison-la-Romaine was once a capital of the Vocontii tribe. It later prospered under Roman rule and Vasio Vocontiorum became one of the province’s richest cities. Canon Joseph Sautel made it his life’s work to excavate the town, revealing two vast areas over 50 years. The sprawling ruins that have been uncovered, still only representing a small percentage of the ancient city, surely make this one of the most important archaeological sites that France has to offer.

The first of these, the Puymiian area, begins with the first-century House of the Messii. Evidence of the luxurious life enjoyed by Lucius Messius (known thanks to a useful inscription found here) is still visible in the under-floor heating systems and monochrome mosaic floors still in situ. A long garden pool and frescoed cult room also add interest to the opulent residence.

A short walk uphill brings you to another even more sizable residential and commercial complex complete with peristyle gardens (Fig. 1), large kitchen ovens and a distinctive trapezoidal communal latrine.

Also found in this area was the famous peacock mosaic, now on display at the site’s museum. This 33 m² ornithological masterpiece (Fig. 2) is just one of many wondrous finds from Vasio Vocontiorum now on show in the well laid out, on-site museum.
Other highlights include imperial portraits of Claudius, Domitian, Hadrian and Sabina found in and around the adjacent theatre and numerous cabinets of small finds revealing aspects of Roman daily life. The most intriguing item for me was a solid silver bust depicting an anonymous patrician (Fig. 3): a truly unique object that must have been fortuitously buried under a sudden collapse or barbarian fire.

The theatre is accessed through an atmospheric ancient tunnel walkway that bores through the hillside. Sadly, it failed to live up to my expectations, having been restored with an unfortunately heavy hand: it retains little of its ancient features save for a few columns around the gallery. Despite its over-zealous reconstruction, the 7,000 capacity cavea still offers a worthwhile spectacle.

A short leafy walk downhill reveals the last of Puymim’s sights, the erroneously entitled Portico of Pompeii. This large open square, which disappears frustratingly under the modern town, was clearly a grand space, surrounded with a lengthy colonnade; the columns, now re-erected, frame a formal garden.

The second of Vasio Vocontiorum’s archaeological areas, La Villa, is situated a stone’s throw to the west. Even more impressive than the first, any ruin-fatigue you may feel at this point will quickly be dispelled when, upon entering, you are faced with the Roman road stretching out before you, still lined with pavement, shop fronts and statuary (Fig. 4). The stroll down its length is rewarded by the tall remains of a basilica and well preserved communal latrines to the east, both likely part of a known bath-house that lies under the modern town.

Rolling scenically west, towards the cathedral, are two grand residences dated to the Flavian era. The first house, now named after the previously described silver bust which was discovered there, has mosaics with geometric designs. Don’t miss the array of doorstep grooves that illustrate the intricate mechanisms of Roman sliding doors. The house backs on to an enormous porticoed gymnasium with bathing pool, perhaps connected to an unexcavated bath-house. The House of the Dolphin could have been taken directly from the streets of Pompeii, built as it is in the classic Pompeian style with an impressive atrium, triclinium and numerous surrounding rooms (Fig. 5). Of note is the long garden pool that retains its marble lining and the adjoining latrine, surely too large for private use. The integration of these residences into the shop-lined streets on either side suggests that their owners may have been linked to local commerce.

After all these sites, there is only one way to complete a visit to Vaison-la-Romaine. A stroll down the modern town’s Grand Avenue will take you to one of Vasio Vocontiorum’s most significant legacies. Spanning the 17-metre precipice of the Ouvèze is a shining example of Roman engineers’ “build to last” ethos. This first-century, single arch bridge is the oldest intact Roman bridge in the world (Fig. 6). Discreetly reinforced because of flood damage, most notably in 1994, it has carried two millennia’s worth of traffic safely over the river; today, horse-drawn carts have been exchanged for wheels of the motorised variety.

The bridge is the perfect last word on this surprising, colourful town but of course, if you have the time, there is much to see around Vaison-la-Romaine from the medieval era.

The next location that I visited is an easy 30-minute drive south of the papal city of Avignon. Nestled under imposing canyon walls, the site, which is a kilometre south of Saint-Rémy-de-Provence, lay unexcavated until the 1920s. In 1889 the unremarkable area, then covered with sun-baked olive groves, was painted numerous times by Vincent Van Gogh on short supervised walks from the local asylum. Yet a vague ancient significance had always been attached to the place, thanks to the two monuments that refused to be consumed by the earth over the centuries. The locals referred to them merely as Les Antiques, and it is here at the foot of Les Antiques that you begin your visit to Glanum.

Easy to spot from the road and free to access, these two extremely impressive monuments are the perfect
introduction to the city. The triumphal arch (Fig. 7), under which the great main highway once passed, is the oldest in Gaul and celebrates Roman subjugation of the region with reliefs of winged victories and Gaulish captives. Alongside the arch, an even older and more curious vestige of the ancient city stands defiantly (Fig. 8). Now identified as a cenotaph to the Julian family, the 18-metre tall Corinthian-style structure from the first century BC survives virtually complete and most likely remembers a soldier who fought under Julius Caesar during his Gallic wars. The four bas-reliefs decorating the pediment compare the deeds of the aforementioned hero with the legends of old, with chaotic scenes of Greeks fighting Amazons and battles of the Trojan War. A four-sided arch makes up the second level and at the monument's pinnacle sits a Greek-inspired tholos (a circular, lantern-like structure). All at once, the three tiers of this unique structure seem to call out in celebration, not only of the 'Great Man' but also the intricacy, inventiveness and diversity of most of the town's houses still lie under the olive groves which stretch away to the north, what has been uncovered here gives a good insight into the domestic lives of the city's most prestigious citizens, with columned courtyards and restrained fresco designs still clinging to walls. Located adjacent to the city's civic centre, properties such as the House of Antes would no doubt have represented the most exclusive of real estate.

As with many other Roman settlements where it is so hard to come by, water obviously held semi-divine significance for the citizens of Glanum. Yet far from mislaidly hoarding the winter rains, the citizens seemed to delight in showcasing their mastery over nature. Celebrated but never wasted, water would dance in the impluvia of the rich before being washed efficiently down into the main water channel of the town that ran under the cardo, as can still be seen today (Fig. 9). This theme continues on the other side of the road in the extensive bath-house and gymnasium. With the usual range of hot, cold and tepid rooms, the large swimming pool (Fig. 10) is a definite highlight, and it was once refreshed by the impressive head of Neptune at one end. Adjacent are Glanum's tallest ruins. The harsh, thick apsidal walls of the curia rise up gravelly 25 feet above street level, along with those of the adjoining basilica. This area, and that of the forum stretching out beyond, was significantly expanded in the Augustan age, hinting at the imperial favour that the newly designated colonia seemingly enjoyed in the wake of the Civil Wars. Today, the open marketplace of the forum stands empty of its Augustan splendours, except for the mouth of the what is the biggest of Glanum's many wells, all harvesting the water seeping down from the surrounding limestone canyons.

Water was also ingeniously channelled to Glanum via an aqueduct from the nearby Les Peioux Roman arch dam, another engineering wonder still in use to this day. This would have fed the large semi-circular triumphal fountain, visible next to the forum, as well as other civic fountains around the town. Here in Glanum's monumental centre impressive remains from all eras of the town's existence can be seen. Most dominant perhaps are the twin 'Gemini' Corinthian style temples, both identical but one larger in size, that watch over the forum area. Likely dedicated to Augustus' grandchildren and intended heirs Gaius and Lucius, in keeping with
The original, worn steps speak of the countless souls that took the same journey over the millennia in search of healing. The stark letters of the temple's dedication nearby reveals its patron to be none other than Marcus Agrippa: Augustus's right-hand man and a prolific builder, also responsible for Rome's Pantheon.

Another equally curious place of worship stands next door, a shrine to Hercules, identifiable by the motley assortment of altars all dedicated to the muscle-bound hero (Fig. 13). Why Glanum became associated with the mythical Greek figure is unclear but this, and the well preserved Gaulish winemaking buildings nearby, are perfect examples of the variety of sights on offer here.

All that is left to do is climb the steep ancient steps to the summit of the canyon wall, worth the effort even in the mid-August heat, in order to enjoy the wonderful panoramic view of the site.

Glanum has all the elements most usually associated with a Roman provincial city but its numerous unique features must set it aside as one of Europe's most impressive Roman settlements outside of Italy. Exploring the city, I was reminded of the Tunisian city of Dougga: the height of the ruins, the extent of the excavated residential areas and the scenic setting all combine to create a truly surprising site that almost seems out of place here in Western Europe (Fig. 14).

Perhaps most importantly, in comparison with the attractions in nearby Nîmes and Orange, the Roman excavations of Vaison-la-Romaine and Glanum remain relatively undiscovered by mass tourism and, even in high season, you will likely only be sharing the expansive ruins with a few like-minded others. Discover them soon, before the hordes realise what they are missing.

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The scheduled Roman villa site above East Wear Bay at Folkestone, Kent overlooks the English Channel, with clear views across to the French coast, some 36km distant. The villa here was first discovered and excavated by Samuel Winbolt in 1923-4 (Winbolt 1925), and remained open until 1957, when it was backfilled due to its poor state and declining visitor numbers.

The complex comprised a large winged-corridor house (Block A) with an adjacent corridor house (Block B) set at a right angle to it (Fig. 1). A bath-suite (Block C) lay immediately beyond Block B. Traces of Iron Age activity were located below the villa remains. The only excavations undertaken since Winbolt’s time were those conducted by the Kent Archaeological Rescue Unit in 1989, when the remains of Block C on the cliff-edge, together with the south-eastern end of Block B, were re-examined, with some useful results (Phillp 1990).

In 1924 about 30 metres of land lay between the north-east wing of Block A and the cliff edge. By 2010 coastal erosion had reduced this figure to 2.25m. Work in 1989 established that part of Block C was already destroyed. The entire villa complex is thus at risk of loss in the short to medium term. Finds previously made on the foreshore below the site have included quantities of Iron Age and Roman coins and pottery (Holman 2005; Weston 2005), together with numerous examples of quernstones, many unfinished (Keller 1988, 59–68; Keller 1989, 193–200).

Taken together, the evidence demonstrates the existence of a highly significant archaeological site on the adjacent cliff-top, which is being steadily eroded by the sea. The Roman villa forms just one element of this site, which clearly has pre-Conquest origins.

In December 2009 the Heritage Lottery Fund awarded grant funding of £298,000 to conduct a three-year community archaeological and historical project entitled A Town Unearthed: Folkestone Before 1500 (ATU). Investigation of the East Wear Bay site was planned as a major component of this project during 2010 and 2011, led by Canterbury Archaeological Trust (www.canterburytrust.co.uk), working in association with Canterbury Christ Church University and the Folkestone People’s History Centre. Additional funding for the project has come from the Kent Archaeological Society and the local Roger De Haan Charitable Trust.

Fieldwork for 2010 began with a geophysical survey, undertaken in June. Excavations started in August and lasted until the end of October (Fig. 2). More than 200 volunteers participated and over two thousand members of the public visited the site, together with around 400 school children. Work focused on the north-east wing of Block A, nearest the cliff, together with a previously undug area immediately to the north-east. Five test-trenches were also cut to the north of the villa. These revealed significant stratified deposits and features, mostly dating to the late Iron Age and Roman periods.

The re-exposed villa foundations were found to be reasonably well preserved. They were confirmed as relating to two successive buildings (Villa I and Villa II, Figs. 3 and 4) occupying the same site, as previously reported by Winbolt. Below these remains were found important pre-Roman deposits and structures, mostly dating to the late Iron Age and largely untouched by the earlier digging. At the base of the stratified sequence, a number of post-holes were found cut into the top of the natural Gault clay (Fig. 6). These must relate to early occupation on the site but none is clearly datable and no clear pattern is discernible. A Neolithic or Bronze Age date presently seems possible.

Above the natural Gault there were successive layers of clay containing archaeological material. The pottery recovered from these layers all appears to be prehistoric in date and includes significant quantities of flint-tempered ware, together with struck flints, animal bones and occasional marine shells. A complete finely-worked early Neolithic leaf-shaped arrowhead, of c. 3000 BC is worthy of note.

The early clay layers were cut into by a number of ditches and gullies. Among these was a late Iron Age curving gully seemingly representing the drainage ditch enclosing a timber roundhouse (Fig. 5). It was overlain by a rough chalk floor, probably relating to a subsequent building (Fig. 7), cut through by the earliest villa foundations.
Substantial quantities of finds were recovered, including some important pottery and flint assemblages. In total 23 coins were discovered, of which thirteen are Iron Age. Among the Iron Age coins are no less than three gold issues, including a Gallo-Belgic E stater (Fig. 8). There are also four potins and a coin of the Durotriges tribe of Dorset. Latest is an issue of king Cunobelin, c. AD 15–30. The Roman coins total just ten, all but one of which date to the fourth century. The latest, copies of the so-called ‘falling horseman’ type, belong to the period c. AD 355–365.

Many fragments of quernstone were also collected, all but one made from the local greensand. Previous research (Keller 1988; 1989) has established that such querns were being manufactured at the site and this was fully borne out in 2010, when two working floors were located in one of the outlying trenches.

Preliminary examination of some of the palaeoenvironmental samples taken from the excavations have demonstrated the presence of useful quantities of charred cereal grain and fish bones. The presence of the fish remains indicates that fishing is likely to have been a key element in the economy of this coastal site, at least during the pre-villa phases.

Winbolt recovered seven Roman tiles bearing the stamp of the Roman fleet in British waters, the Classis Britannica (CLBR).

An additional example was recovered from Winbolt’s backfill in 2010, broken in two. This consists of four raised letters set in a round stamp (Fig. 9). Such round stamps seem to be typical of Folkestone, although they are comparatively rare amongst the much larger assemblage from Dover (Philp 1981, 136). Given the limited number of deposits directly associated with the Roman villa complex excavated in 2010, further stamps may be anticipated in the 2011 excavations, when rather more Roman layers should be examined. The previous discovery of these tiles has led to suggestions that this villa was the coastal residence of the Commander of the Classis Britannica – an idea which will require further consideration once the present project has been completed.

The archaeological deposits present on the site are considerably more extensive and complex than previously realised. The finds suggest that habitation in the area occurred at various times throughout prehistory, beginning in the Mesolithic. The main period of occupation, however, was during the late Iron Age, perhaps c. 150 BC–AD 50. The first of the two Roman villa buildings was probably erected sometime before the end of the first century AD. Whether there was a gap between the final occupation of the Iron Age site and the construction of this villa presently remains unclear.

The pre-Roman settlement clearly covered an area considerably larger than the villa complex; an unknown amount must already have been lost to the sea.

The quantity of Iron Age coins and imported pottery now known, most notably imported Italian wine amphorae of Dressel 1 type, implies that this site was of rather higher status than a simple farmstead. Located virtually at the shortest sea crossing to the Continent, it seems highly likely that this site on the south-east Kent coast was acting as a port of trade with the Roman world during the first century BC.

In terms of archaeological data recovery, the sequence of deposits and features located in 2010 was far more complex than had been envisaged and the quantity of finds recovered is correspondingly much greater. The discovery of undisturbed, pre-Roman stratified deposits and structures below the known villa buildings, is of particular importance. The next season of excavation is being awaited with great anticipation. Finances are only available for two seasons of excavation at Folkestone, to be followed by the preparation of a detailed report on our findings. It is already clear, however, that considerably more fieldwork is going to be required if we are to fully understand such a crucial east Kent site.

ARA members will be most welcome to join in with the 2011 excavations. In the first instance they should contact the Project Manager, Hannah Lewis (hannah.lewis@canterbury.ac.uk) with details of their availability, experience and particular interests.

Keith Parfitt.

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THE THURMaston MILESTONE

In 1771 workmen digging for gravel by the west side of the Fosse Way some two miles north of Leicester unearthed an intact Roman milestone. For twelve years unprotected and uncared for, the stone was left by the roadside for the attention of curious passers-by. In 1783 the Corporation of Leicester decided to take possession of this important relic and re-erected the stone as an object of interest at the junction of Belgrave Gate and Bedford Street, Leicester. The stone was topped by a cone with lamp fitting and as such was drawn by local artist John Flower in 1826 (Fig. 1).

In 1844 the Leicester Literary & Philosophical Society, concerned that the inscription on the stone was starting to weather badly, succeeded in getting the Corporation to move it into the newly opened New Walk Museum. The milestone has been safely inside museums ever since and has been a treasure of the Jewry Wall Museum since its opening in 1966 (Fig. 2).

The Thurmanston Milestone is RIB 2244. The inscription reads:

IMPA CAES
DIVITRAIAN PATR rer DUNIL RIAN
HADRIAN AUG PP TRIB
POT IV COS III A RATIS
M II

In modern English translation:

THE EMPEROR CAESAR TRAJAN
HADRIAN AUGUSTUS,
SON OF THE DEIFIED TRAJAN,
CONQUEROR OF PARTHIA,
GRANDSON OF THE DEIFIED NERVA,
FATHER OF HIS COUNTRY,
TRIBUNE OF THE PEOPLE FOR THE
FOURTH TIME,
CONSUL FOR THE THIRD TIME, FROM
LEICESTER TWO MILES.

Hadrian was consul for the third and last time in 119 and held the power of tribune of the plebs for the fourth time from December 119 to December 120, both prior to his visit to Britain. RIB therefore dates the milestone to 119. However although it was offered, Hadrian declined to accept the title “Father of his Country” (Pater Patriae) until 128, long after his visit to Britain. The milestone therefore correctly dates between 128 and Hadrian’s death in 138.

Some controversy appears to surround the material of the milestone, which the author, being no geologist, cannot resolve. RIB and other authorities usually give “grit stone”, presumably Millstone Grit, widely used as a hard building stone in Roman Leicester and whose closest outcrop is at Melbourne, just over the border in Derbyshire. However Trudie Fraser in Hadrian as Builder and Benefactor in the Western Provinces gives Triassic sandstone from a quarry near to Leicester. The two potential quarries are at Nevanton Road and Western Park, Leicester, close to the Roman road from Leicester to Manchester (and close to where the author was brought up). This local sandstone too is widely used as a building stone in Roman Leicester.

The Thurmanston milestone can be seen if you visit Jewry Wall Museum, St Nicholas Circle, Leicester (open February–October, every day from 11.00 until 16.30). There is also a 1:1 replica in fibreglass enabling you to turn the stone around to read the full inscription. The museum also boasts the fragment of a second milestone from the same section of road. Found near to Six Hills, Leicestershire, this is presumably milestone No. 11 but the surviving inscription only gives us “IMP CAES”, so we shall probably never know.

Stuart Bailey.

AUTHORITIES


Hadrian as Builder and Benefactor in the Western Provinces, TE Fraser (2006), Archaeopress (BAR International Series 1484).
The Museum of the Iron Age at Andover, one of the first museums to offer ARA members grants entry, offers a fascinating insight into that often ignored area of pre-Roman Britain, the society and economy of the Middle Iron Age.

Even today many museums and studies contain at best a sketchy overview of pre-Roman culture. Too many still follow in the footsteps of Victorian scholars and over-emphasise the civilising nature of Rome in the provinces. Quite in contrast to this, the Museum of the Iron Age gives us a glimpse of a highly organised people who were masters of their lands, who developed distinctive forms of art and agriculture, and made significant technological advances. A visit to the nearby Danebury Ring hillfort provides a neat context for the museum and should have even the most ardent Romanist thinking about what preceded the province of Britannia.

The museum is situated in an historic Georgian building, just around the corner from the pleasant town centre, and this itself provides a fine ambience for the exhibits. On entering the Iron Age galleries we pass a two-dimensional image of a Celtic warrior aboard a war chariot. This ties in with Caesar’s descriptions of ancient British warfare and the many items of horse harness found at Danebury and adjacent sites, as well as whetting our appetite for what is to follow.

The theme is then continued with Strabo’s famous quote: “The whole race is war-mad, high-spirited and quick to battle”. While this captures the imagination, the exhibits in the museum do much to show the settled, civilised side of Middle Iron Age life.

The first major information panel details the plethora of Iron Age sites in the Andover region with maps and images of some of the excavations at sites such as Quarley Hill. What becomes apparent is that this was a densely populated area in the Iron Age, with a variety of settlements from hillforts to farmsteads. The area was dominated by a series of large, strongly-defended hillforts which appear to have developed in the 700 years or so prior to the Roman invasion – there were four in the Danebury region alone.

But change was afoot in Iron Age Britain. In the 400 years before Roman rule many smaller hillforts were abandoned; large ones such as Danebury were much more heavily defended, with bigger earthworks and more complex defences. This seems to reflect the growth of larger tribal groups, such as the Atrebates and Belgae, who were well-established by the time of the Claudian conquest.

Leaving aside for the moment the Roman mosaic, which is a relatively new addition to the museum’s exhibits, we can take in the life-sized warrior who is ‘guarding’ a replica section of Danebury rampart (Fig. 1). He carries a sword, scabbard, shield and spear and wears a helmet and torc; in many ways his attire is little different to that of Roman soldiers of the early Republic. We then pass along a passage to a case which displays three male skulls, marked with punctures or impact wounds from sword cuts, spear thrusts and sling bolts (Fig. 2).

There are also weapons capable of doing the damage – iron spearheads and sling bullets of clay, chalk and stone, a clear reminder of how inter-tribal warfare must have been rife in the pre-Roman period. Professor Barry Cunliffe (Danebury, the story of an Iron Age Hillfort) considers the sling to have been the weapon of choice for Middle Iron Age warriors; an ammunition dump of 11,000 sling shot pebbles was found at the site. Continuing the military theme we find artefacts from the Owlsbury ‘warrior burial’ near Winchester, with weapons similar to those worn by the guardian of the rampart.

On the other side of the passage is the cutaway of a typical hillfort defence showing the changes that took place in earthwork design before the Roman invasion. It seems that around 400 BC the timber-fronted ramparts in many hillforts were replaced with a higher bank topped with a steeply sloping flint-work wall, known as a glacis (Fig. 3). This was the case at the Danebury site, where the new rampart was built as a continuation of a V-shaped ditch. It raised the height of the overall defences to 17 feet – tough for even the most professional troops to scale.

The next gallery contains a superbly imaginative reconstruction of a Celtic roundhouse, in the style of those that would have existed at Danebury. It is constructed from a series of thin timber stakes interwoven with wattle hurdlework. The tops of the timbers that create the framework of the walls are gathered together into a conical shape to create the roof – much more efficient than constructing a separate structure. Inside we find displays of pottery – jars, bowls, dishes and straight-sided ‘saucers’ – most of which were produced locally in the Salisbury district, although there are occasional imports from sites like Glastonbury (Fig. 4).
To the right of the roundhouse there is an ingenious three-dimensional display of granaries on stilts, reconstructed from postholes at the hillfort. Grain was also stored in sealed pits, and 5,000 of these were also found at the hillfort. Archaeological experiments have shown that fungus grew inside the pits after they were sealed; the fungus consumed the oxygen in the pit and emitted carbon dioxide, preserving the grain. We also find some superb examples of quernstones, and a reconstructed clay oven, showing how bread would have been baked.

There is a nice display of axes, mattocks, saws and other tools used for shaping wood and other materials. Their similarity to hand tools used today is striking. There is also a display of loom weights and, upstairs, a loom to show how the wool would have been woven into cloth (Fig. 5). What emerges from this part of the museum is just how effective the Iron Age peoples were at utilising the natural products around them: wool, clay, reeds and leather. The impression is that they used every material available to them. The sustainability and self-sufficiency of the culture is a marked contrast to wasteful modern society.

Fig. 5. Loom display. Photo: © Martin Elvery.

Also upstairs there is a wonderful reconstruction of farming life, including comparisons of modern and Iron Age sheep and cattle and a massive hoard of animal bones. Panels explain how they tended their flocks, raised their cattle and tilled the earth. A full-size reconstruction of a type of wooden plough known as an ard, which would have been tipped with an iron share and pulled by two oxen, sits in the middle of the gallery (Fig. 6).

Fig. 6. Iron-tipped ard. Photo: © Martin Elvery.

As Professor Cunliffe suggests in his book, the fort’s inhabitants were experts at balancing cereal growing and animal husbandry for optimum performance, by opening up the stubble fields to be grazed by cattle, sheep and pigs, and by using the excess from the threshing process to create animal feed. The crusts that had formed on top of grain pits could also be used to feed the ewes in spring, and cheese was produced from excess milk.

In a display of finds from the Danebury Environ project, a series of digs on seven sites which followed the main excavations, a couple of items stand out. A beautifully-shaped mirror, found in a burial site near to Silchester, displays all the grace and beauty we have come to expect from Celtic art. It sits alongside spindle whorls of clay, chalk and stone and combs made from bone and antler. These finds indicate that the Iron Age people cared about fashion and appearance at least as much as their Roman counterparts.

It is usual to think of the Iron Age gods as being associated with natural features such as rivers and woods. However, a fascinating display at the museum explains the significance of animals in pre-Roman ritual and religion. It shows that animals such as stags and boars had great ritual significance, and ravens were associated with death, disease and foretelling the future. Early, animal remains such as ravens, horses and dogs were frequently found in Danebury burial pits; Cunliffe states these may have been ritual offerings.

The final display is a reconstruction of burial pits, complete with skeletons (Fig. 7). It seems that at Danebury this kind of burial was not the normal practice; indeed, these skeletons may have been buried in this manner because they were thought to be abnormal or unclean. Cunliffe states that the more usual method of burial used in ancient Wessex may have been excarnation: exposing the body on a platform until the spirit had departed and then disposing of the remains.

In the last room upstairs maps showing the stirrings of Rome and her designs on Britain are accompanied by a small selection of finds from the extensive excavations at Silchester.

For the most impressive Roman exhibit, however, we must return to the first room, where there is a magnificent fragment of mosaic found at the Fullerton villa (Figs. 8 and 9). The villa, sited on the River Anton, had a water mill for grinding the cereal crops grown on the surrounding chalk downland. The mosaic reflects the agricultural focus of the villa, with the main panel depicting the god Mars who – in this context – would have served as a protector of agriculture and cattle.

In hexagonal panels around Mars there are images of satyrs, representing untamed nature. The heads of two of the four seasons are preserved in the corners of the mosaic, perhaps to reflect the various stages of the farming year. The mosaic was installed in the museum in 2009; it was recovered from the manor house of Sir William Cory, who owned the villa site when it was discovered in the 1870s. Cory had the mosaic lifted and laid in his entrance hall, and for many years it lay hidden beneath carpet.
Danebury Hill Fort

A visit to the site, which is usefully furnished with a few information panels, provides a superb counterpart to the museum. You can park near the road and walk up, or drive halfway up before parking. If you do the latter, however, be sure not to leave valuables in your car. The fort is about six miles from Andover, so both sites can be seen in a morning or afternoon. The centre of the fort has been virtually cleared so we get an excellent impression of the settlement area where roundhouses, granaries and shrines would have been sited. The earthworks are extremely well preserved, and the east and west gateways are a marvel of defensive ingenuity.

At the blocked west gate, on the far side, the approach to the fort is mostly hidden in the trees. The east gate, which eventually served as the only entrance to the fort, would have required attackers to fight their way up to a protruding outer gate. There they would have been under fire from an ingenious forward defensive platform of which medieval castle-builders could have been proud. To reach the main gate attackers would then have to pass through a narrow corridor, which made them easy targets from the earthworks on either side. They would then have to somehow breach the massive wooden gate.

The ring of earthworks encircling the hillfort is remarkably well preserved on all sides, and the elevated position still provides superb views across the Hampshire countryside. A visit to the fort makes it clear that it was not just the Romans who were accomplished military engineers.

Viewed overall, the Museum of the Iron Age and the hillfort provide an altogether different experience from that obtained by visiting the remains of Roman forts, villas and towns in the province. They remind us of a time when Rome was a growing force, but still a distant one, and more especially of a time where archaeology, rather than history, provides the evidence.

Practicalities

The Museum of the Iron Age is part of Hampshire County Museums Service and is open Tuesday to Saturday, 10am–5pm, last admission 4:30pm. Admission is free, but groups need to pre-book. The museum is equipped with a café and toilet facilities, free car park, accessible entrances for the disabled and a temporary exhibition gallery. There are also two other floors devoted to Andover’s history, incorporating the Dacre Room, which explores local archaeology, including Roman material from the villas at Abbotts Ann and Thruxton.

Danebury Hillfort, also County Council owned, is six miles from Andover, and signposted from Middle Wallop on the A343 Salisbury Road. The site is open all day, every day. There is free entry with ample free parking, and there are toilets (open from April to October). You may wish to telephone the Museum of the Iron Age to check for occasional closures for essential works or unforeseen emergencies.

Contact details

Museum of the Iron Age (0845 603 5635)
6 Church Close, Andover, Hampshire SP10 1DP.
www3.hants.gov.uk/museum/museum-of-the-ironage.htm
www3.hants.gov.uk/countryside/danebury.htm

Further reading

Cunliffe B, Danebury, the story of an Iron Age Hillfort (a short guide available from the museum).
Cunliffe B, 2003, Danebury Hillfort, The History Press Ltd.

There is also a series of Danebury Hillfort excavation reports, and two series of volumes on the Danebury Environ Project (green for Iron Age sites, red for Roman sites).

Martin Elvery.
(With thanks to Ian Cartwright and David Allen for providing additional pictures.)
Details of the geophysical survey as well as a fly-through reconstruction of the new site and fortress may be found on the university’s website at http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/news/caerleondiscovery/index.html

Guardian – 12.8.2010
http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-10937007
South Wales Argus – 12.8.2010

A MILITARY STORE BUILDING EXCAVATED IN PRIORY FIELD, CAERLEON

Cardiff University and the Institute of Archaeology, University College London undertook a second campaign in 2010 to continue the investigation of the remains of Isca, the Second Augustan Legion’s permanent fortress in Britain. The project focused on the continued area excavation of one wing of a courtyard building in Priory Field that most probably served as a warehouse or store-building. The purpose of the excavation, directed by Dr Peter Guest and Dr Andrew Gardner, was to provide new information about the storage facilities, provisioning and supply of a legion in Britain. This is the first research excavation conducted on a military store-building in the province. Such legionary structures are not well known or understood either in Britain or elsewhere. Those previously located in fortresses along the Rhine and Danube were not excavated using modern techniques such as those employed at Caerleon. The excavation, visited by several ARA members, has produced an important find from one room of the warehouse: a rare suit of iron armour alongside copper and bronze studs and hinges and several weapons.

http://www.britarch.ac.uk/caef/wikki.php?wikka=Caerleon
LegionaryFortress
http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-11288684

LONDON’S COURTAULD INSTITUTE CONSERVES NABATEAN WALL PAINTINGS

It has been announced that the spectacular Hellenistic style ceiling and mural paintings from a tomb in Siq al-Barid in Beidha, otherwise known as Little Petra, that featured in John Bithell’s article about Jordan in the last issue of ARA News, have been cleaned and conserved by specialists from the Courtauld Institute in London. The conservation work by Stephen Rickerby and Lisa Schekede took three years to achieve but has uncovered paintings now described as “really exceptional and staggeringly beautiful”. They are the finest and most extensive of the very rare fragments of Nabataean mural paintings, a unique example in this region and hold importance for the history of art.

The tomb lies some 5km away from Petra itself, and centuries of soot had obscured the quality of the paintings from the viewer. Now cleaned of the grime that masked them, they can be seen to be of exceptional quality and are claimed to be superior even to the best paintings of Herculaneum that drew their inspiration from Hellenistic art. They are believed to date from the first part of the first century BC, although a slightly later date has been suggested.

Few original Hellenistic paintings survive today, so the uncovering of these in Jordan allows us to appreciate something of the masterpieces that inspired Roman artists and artisans to try and emulate them. The Nabataeans had extensive trade and cultural links with the world of Greece, Alexandria and emergent Rome, as is only too obvious in the glories of the region’s architecture. The Nabataeans were said to be a sensible, acquisitive race who were fond of extravagant shows and feasting. They were among the most successful merchants of the ancient world.

The painting covered the walls and ceiling of a bichinium or ritual dining area within one of Little Petra’s rock-cut tombs. Its naturalistic foliage was supposed to represent a garden dining area shaded by vines and climbing plants. Its quality is matched by the luxury of its materials, including gilding and translucent glazes. Three different vines have been identified: grape, ivy and bindweed, which are all sacred to Dionysus, the ancient Greek god of wine and feasting. The flock of birds inhabiting the foliage includes a demoiselle crane and a beautifully coloured Palestine sunbird. The painting is inhabited by amorini, cupid-like figures, who play instruments, harvest fruit or fight off birds pecking at the grapes. Using an extensive palette and luxurious materials, including gold leaf, in their sophistication the paintings are exceptional. The restoration of the murals will surely make this tomb an unmissable part of any future visit to Petra.

Observer – 22.8.2010
http://www.courtauld.ac.uk/news/index.shtml
STRUCTURAL DAMAGE AT AB KETTLEBY PARISH CHURCH BLAMED ON UNDERLYING ROMAN REMAINS

Serious cracks have appeared in recent years in the nave of the 13th century church of St James, at Ab Kettleby, three miles north of Melton Mowbray in Leicestershire. As a result, services had to be suspended in the church three years ago. A fund to raise money for restoration has also paid for various surveys to be conducted within the building by English Heritage. Villagers commissioned underground surveys of the church that have shown that a Roman building and ditch underlie the structure and are the probable cause of the subsidence. General belief is that a Roman villa underlies the site. In the 1930s, during a burial in the churchyard, a quantity of Roman mosaic tesserae were uncovered. Not far from the church is a Holy Well said to cure rheumatic illnesses whose presence may, or may not, have had a similar function in antiquity; it may have had connections with the structure beneath the church, whether it was domestic or religious.

Melton Times – 6.8.2010

RESTORATION YIELDS NEW FACTS ON THE HALLATON HELMET

British Museum restorers Marylin Hockey and Fleur Shearman have been working on the painstaking restoration of the fragile and fragmentary Roman parade helmet discovered a decade ago at the late Iron Age shrine belonging to the Corieltavi tribe at Hallaton in Leicestershire. The helmet is part of the Hallaton Treasure, which is displayed at Harborough Museum. The crushed and broken remains were thickly covered in clay and because of their fragility had to be lifted from their find spot as a plaster of Paris block. X-ray images were made of the mass to elucidate what survives. All pieces have now been removed from the plaster block and kept separately. It has become apparent that the thin beaten silver panels of the helmet were attached to an iron shell or bowl that covered the head. Each fragment of thin, broken silver is caked in mud which has to be painstakingly removed. There was a neck guard and cheek pieces, the best preserved showing an equestrian emperor being crowned by the goddess Victoria while trampling a draped and possibly female figure portrayed in the attitude of despair; it may represent a country rather than a straightforward barbarian warrior as has been claimed (Fig. 1).

It is now known that the helmet had a scalloped brow guard that may have resembled that seen on the Guisborough helmet preserved in the British Museum. The Hallaton brow guard is filled with a yet unknown filler substance that has a sandy texture. This information in itself is fascinating and will yield possibly unique facts on the methods used by Roman craftsmen when creating this display armour, which was never intended to be used in real warfare.

Two curving pieces so far identified appear to fit above the ear. However one seems thicker than the other, raising the possibility that it may come from a second helmet. An enigmatic curved piece with a helmet design at present defies interpretation. Among the caked mass were found four additional cheek pieces; these have caused great speculation. Did cavalrymen carry spares or were these fitted for different ceremonies? A number of hinges were found in the block and attempts are being made to match these to the various cheek pieces.

X-ray images of the designs on the extra pieces show mounted riders and a bearded man (possibly Mars), accompanied by a large cornucopia, with a helmet and shield at his feet.

The decorative work on the silver panels is in the repoussé technique. The helmet bowl is covered with a laurel wreath decoration but without the expected engraved "hair". The fragments of silver are being placed on a former bowl as they are discovered, rather in the manner of joining wall plaster pieces. Below the jutting scalloped brow guard there is a strip featuring animals, while the neck guard (which is itself being reconstructed on a former) has a vegetal scroll. Details of the construction of the helmet have emerged with the discovery of copper alloy and iron rivets. The silver foil of the cheek pieces was crimped around the edges of the iron to hold it in place over a resin-type filler or adhesive. It appears that the filler sometimes holds the shape of the silver decoration.

How the helmet came to be deposited at the shrine sometime in the AD40s or 50s will probably remain a mystery. Was it a diplomatic gift, the offering of a local mercenary, or perhaps part of the stock of an armourer? It is hoped to restore the pieces of the helmet and its silver sheeting for display on a former and to provide a high-quality facsimile helmet to show how it would have appeared when new. The helmet is due to go on display in the Harborough Museum in 2012.

ARA members saw a display that described the restoration procedure during the ARA study tour to see the Hallaton Treasure in 2010.

Leicester Mercury – 23.12.2010


http://www.britarch.ac.uk/news/101222-hallaton

HISTORY OF ROME WINS BEST EDUCATIONAL PODCAST OF 2010

History of Rome, a weekly podcast series, was voted the Best Educational Podcast of 2010 in the 6th Annual Podcast Awards, an online listener popularity poll.

The audio podcast series is composed and read by Mike Duncan, of Austin, Texas. The series started with the mythical origins of Rome; the most recent episodes describe the establishment of the Tetrarchy at the end of the third century. At the time of writing there are 135 podcasts; these can be downloaded for free from iTunes, or from Mike Duncan’s website, http://thehistoryofrome.typepad.com/

Mike Duncan reads his podcasts with a dry wit. He focuses primarily on the lives of the emperors and major military confrontations. Episodes 86–88 differed, in that they considered Roman life and culture; episode 89 described each of the Empire’s provinces. Episode 90, actually the 100th episode Mike recorded, answered questions that listeners had left on his website.

http://thehistoryofrome.typepad.com/
http://podcastawards.com/
THE MOSAICS OF SOUSSE: CULTURAL FUSION IN ROMAN AFRICA

A hidden gem

The archaeological museum at Sousse (Roman Hadrumetum) on the east coast of Tunisia houses a superb collection of mosaics from the second, third and fourth centuries AD which provide a magnificent insight into the fusion of Roman, Punic and indigenous cultures of Roman Africa.

I came across the museum by accident. My guidebook paid it little attention, and it is overshadowed in tourist itineraries by the more obvious treasures of Roman Tunisia such as Carthage, El Djem and Thugga.

After what seemed like many scorching hours of wandering through the winding streets of Sousse’s medina, being harassed by insistent market vendors, I finally stumbled upon the museum. It is located just off a dusty main road in the 9th century Khalef al fata tower, in what was once the old Kasbah (Fig. 1). Three rewards awaited me: peace, shade, and an absolutely fantastic display of Romano-African mosaic pavements.

Following the trend

After the defeat of Carthage in the third Punic war, Rome gradually incorporated north Africa into its empire, eventually creating four new provinces, and defeating major revolts by rebels such as King Jugurtha and Tacfarinas along the way.

After the conquest, many Italian settlers emigrated to Africa in a bid to take advantage of its economic resources. Some of the mosaics at Sousse seem to reflect this Roman domination. One good example of this is the marvellous pavement depicting Medusa’s head (Fig. 2); the elements of the Gorgon’s portrait match those found across the Roman world, but the depiction of the snakes seems to be more accurate and precise than is found in many other Medusa mosaics. Another is the pavement depicting Cupid on a dolphin (Fig. 3) which might be compared with examples such as the famous Fishbourne mosaic. However, once again indigenous influence can be seen in the realism of the creatures depicted. This is much more marked than examples from provinces, where such wildlife could not be observed first hand.

Africa Nova

As the bread basket of the Roman empire and a producer of other lucrative goods, such as olives and the prized yellow Numidian marble – as seen on the floor of the Pantheon in Rome – Roman Africa grew in prosperity and wealth in the second and third centuries AD. One might expect that this prosperity, which was based on the trading links with the rest of the Roman Empire, would lead to the African elite adopting increasingly Romanized forms of art and culture. In fact, however, the mosaics at Sousse reveal that as the African patrician classes grew in power and confidence, so they commissioned their own distinctive styles of mosaic art. These left the restrictions of earlier Italian designs behind and increasingly depicted African themes.

Even the most classical of Tunisian mosaics display a vitality and fluidity that is rarely present elsewhere. A good example of this is the apsidal pavement depicting the classical god Oceanus (Fig. 4). The face is recognisably classical, but the hair is entwined with a tangle of debris from the sea and appears to sway and move amid the waves. The variety of seaweed surrounding the god is unusually rich, including squid, eels and octopus and no doubt came from observing marine life off the coast of Tunisia.
Flora and fauna

The Triumph of Bacchus is another fusion of classical and African influences (Fig. 5). Sometimes the god Bacchus is depicted riding a chariot drawn by centaurs, but here the god in his revelry is chaperoned by a much more dangerous retinue of tigresses, a lion and a leopard; the latter animals being exported from Africa to the amphitheatres of the empire. Around the procession, cupids climb around the vines, picking grapes. This again would not seem unusual for classical imagery, but the depiction of the vines is free and vibrant and the artist seems to portray an abundance of grapes which mirrors the prosperity of Africa in these times. The owner of this mosaic may have wished to display the wealth he had generated on his private estates, making a very clear statement to clients and dinner guests.

A wonderful depiction of Ganymede, that most attractive of mortals, is surrounded by vivid depictions of a lion, bear, gazelle and leopard from the African hinterlands (Fig. 6). There are similar scenes showing these animals being hunted and fishermen trawling for their catch in oceans which teem with life. All of these pavements demonstrate the prosperity of Africa and its abundance of natural flora and fauna. With this kind of economic power, it is little wonder that increasing numbers of Africans achieved the property qualification necessary to sit in the Senate. Rome eventually got an African emperor, Septimius Severus, in AD 193.

Christianity and continuity

The mosaics depicting Christian symbols are another very interesting facet of the museum. These shed light on the development of religious life in the later years of Roman control. On one pavement the Chi Rho symbol is depicted alongside a pair of doves (Fig. 7).

Further evidence of Christian activity are the 5km of catacombs which lie underneath the city of Sousse, containing over 15,000 Christian burials. Only about 100 metres of the catacombs can be visited, but it is possible to look through iron gates to see the network of tunnels disappearing into the darkness beyond. In two places skeletons are exhibited behind glass. The catacombs are an obvious sign of how self-confident the Romano-Africans were in following their chosen religious beliefs despite several periods of official persecution.

In the later years of the Empire, Africa was riven by religious schisms as groups such as Donatists sought to challenge official Christianity. The province was also the base for a series of rebellions and usurpations by men such as Domitius Alexander (AD 308–10) and Heraclianus (AD 413) who sought power for themselves as central Roman authority began to collapse.

Many historians, however, stress the relative prosperity and stability of Africa right up until the Vandal conquest of AD 439, and highlight it as a model of what the Pax Romana could achieve. It is this stability, self confidence and prosperity that is so evident in the treasures on display at Sousse.

Practicalities

Sousse is easily accessible from other popular destinations in Tunisia including Carthage, Tunis, Hammamet and Port El Kantoui. It’s also within reach of other major sites such as El Djem and Thugga, although local tour operators will advise against visiting towns in arid regions in July and August.

Sousse Archaeological Museum: Entrance fee: around two dinars. Open: Tuesday–Thursday 9am–noon and 2pm–6pm; Friday–Sunday 9am–6pm; (closed on Monday, times may vary so I recommend checking before you visit).

Further reading


My thanks go to Stephen Arnold for permission to use his pictures (see more at www.stoa.org/gallery/album21).
BOOK REVIEW

The Frome Hoard

by Sam Moorhead, Anna Booth and Roger Bland

Review by Bryn Walters

On 9 April 2010, Dave Crisp found 21 scattered coins metal detecting on farmland near Frome in Somerset, just inside the border with Wiltshire. Two days later he discovered a massive hoard of over 52,000 coins, all of the second half of the third century AD. Realising the magnitude of his find he immediately reburied it and notified the relevant authorities. Not only did Dave Crisp do the right thing archaeologically, but his prompt action put in motion one of the finest collaborations within the archaeological fraternity, resulting in the primary conservation and analysis of the coins published here. This book has made the information available to the public within five months of the discovery, and there is also a display about the hoard in the British Museum.

This fascinating paperback provides a lavishly illustrated account of the discovery along with the historical importance of the find, providing further evidence towards a better understanding of a significant episode in Romano-British history. The authors are to be congratulated for producing the work in so short a time. Divided into nine short chapters, the text flows magnificently and the accompanying colour plates vividly put the discovery into perspective for the lay-reader.

The hoard, deposited in a large earthenware jar, was excavated in situ in a systematic way not undertaken before with such a discovery. The pottery jar (Fig. 1), being cracked in large sections was dismantled piece by piece, permitting the coins to be excavated in layers. However, it was the fourth layer from the bottom which was the most notable and exciting as it contained the largest number of issues ever found of the rebel emperor Caracitus, who seized power in Britain in 286, including five rare examples of his silver denarii (Fig. 2). At the time of going to press some 766 of his coins had been identified, but after total cleaning and conservation the number is expected to exceed 800; consequently it is to this section of the hoard which a more detailed analysis is given in chapter 5. Chapter 1 covers the ‘Discovery and Excavation’, chapter 2 ‘Conservation and Study’, chapter 4 provides a fuller ‘Content of the Hoard’, listing the emperors represented from Valerian (253-260) to Tetricus II (272-274).

The hoard is the second largest to be found in Britain, being marginally eclipsed by the similarly huge deposit found at Cunetio near Marlborough in 1978, approximately 35 miles to the east. It is beginning to appear increasingly likely that these massive coin deposits did not belong to a single individual, but were a collective deposit made perhaps for sacred reasons by a local community. Chapter 6 examines the other large coin hoards located in Britain, a province of the Roman Empire which has produced the greatest number of coin hoards to date, amounting to almost 600.

Fifty pence from the sale of each book is being directed to the Frome Hoard Appeal Fund, the aims of which is to secure the find in its entirety, complete with its restored urn, for permanent public display in the newly refurbished Somerset County Museum in Taunton, hopefully in time for its official re-opening in 2011. The appeal is also directed to the complete conservation of the coins, over 11,000 of which remain as yet unidentified.

ARA members may acquire a copy of this book at both a 10% discount and free post and packaging (£4.50). This offer ends on 30 June 2011.

To take advantage of this discount either telephone the British Museum (020 7079 0970) or visit their website (www.britishmuseumshoponline.org) and quote the British Museum offer reference ARA 211.

You will also need to provide your credit or debit card number, your name and your address.

BOOK LIST

These are not reviews: the summaries provided for these books were taken from publishers’ descriptions.


A chronological reference, giving a detailed description by year for the entire Roman state and its neighbours, from the foundation myth to 476.


A collection of ‘strange tales and surprising facts’ about the Roman Empire.


An account of the rule of Claudius, focusing on events and the developing political culture of the Roman Empire.


Foreign Cults in Rome: Creating a Roman Empire, Eric Orlin ISBN 9780199731558, October 2010, 240pp, £45, OUP USA.

Anthropology-based study of changes to Roman identity through openness to and absorption of others’ religions.
Roman Britain, Richard Hobbs and Ralph Jackson
A lively guide to the history, society, art and culture of Roman Britain, drawing on recent archaeological finds.

Roman Frontiers in Wales and the Marches, Barry C Burnham and Jeffrey L Davies
Roman military activity and installations in Wales, with a gazetteer of sites.

Seneca, Selected Letters, Elaine Fantham
New translation of a selection of the Stoic’s letters, with advice on moderation and descriptions of his luxurious lifestyle.

The Beautiful Rooms Are Empty, Iain Ferris
November 2010, 605pp, £35 + £8 postage, Durham County Council (0191 370 8712, archaeology@durham.gov.uk).

The Heirs of King Verica: Culture & Politics in Roman Britain, Martin Henig
A revolutionary interpretation of British life from King Verica to King Alfred through the eyes of Roman Britons.

The Planning of Roman Roads and Walls in Northern Britain, John Poulter
Poulter, using methodology he devised, examines the planning of Roman roads and the Hadrian and Antonine Walls.

The Roman Wedding: Ritual and Meaning in Antiquity, Karen K Hersch
Study of Roman wedding ritual (c.200 BC –c. AD 200) and how it expressed the ideals and norms of Roman society.

Woolwich Power Station Site: SE London (formerly Kent), Brian Philp
September 2010, 52pp, £6 + £1 postage, KARU (01304 203279).
Kent Archaeological Rescue Unit report on the 1980s excavation of a major Iron Age riverside fort and Roman settlement.
Our last visit to Spain in 2008 took us through parts of the three Roman provinces of Hispania Tarraconensis, Lusitania and Baetica. We flew into Madrid (Tarraconensis) and after a brief stopover headed on to the main area of our trip, Extremadura (Lusitania). Extremadura is a central region of Spain bordering Portugal to the west. It is away from the usual tourist trail – our travel agent had never made a booking in the region before – because it’s not as easily accessible as other areas. It is probably best visited outside the main season as summers can be scorcheringly hot so we chose to visit in mid-September when it was still around 28°C. This region is known for its acorn-fed pata negra pigs that make the speciality of jamon ibérico (a type of cured ham). Arguably less well-known are the historical architecture and artefacts and there is a wealth of both to see. We have detailed two of the major cities Cáceres and Mérida, the latter being the region’s capital. From there we headed south to Seville (Baetica) stopping off at the site of the Roman city of Italica. For this type of trip, a detailed map and archaeological guidebook plus a hire car with good air-conditioning are a must. To give a sense of the distance, Mérida is some 350 km from Madrid to the north-east and 200 km from Seville to the south. However, the roads were easy to navigate and, for the most part, had remarkably little traffic when we visited.

Cáceres (Extremadura)

Our first main stop was at the delightful walled old quarter of Cáceres which was designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1986. There is evidence of a Roman colony which is thought to have been established by C Norbanus Flaccus. He had been proconsul of Spain in 34 BC, hence the origins of the city’s name of Colonia Norba Caesariana. Little is known about the early history of the city; as there has been continuous occupation of the site up to modern times, very little excavation has been carried out.

Most of this old quarter is a car-free zone but this is definitely a place where walking is the best way to see everything. There is not much to view today of any Roman architecture except for remains of the city wall around the old town and one of the gates, the Arco del Cristo (Arch of Christ) (Fig. 1), which dates back to late Republican times. There are some Moorish influences in the city and many medieval buildings. We stayed in a parador, a type of state-run hotel found throughout Spain. This one, like many, is a converted historic building: a former fourteenth-century palace.

Museo de Cáceres

The Museo de Cáceres was surprisingly modern with its white walls and well-spaced displays. It houses artefacts from the Palaeolithic period through to urban archaeology, and the thirteenth century through to contemporary art. The entrance hall has a large Roman sculpture in marble of Abundancia probably representing the genius of the Roman colony; a copy of this statue can be found in the main square of Cáceres. Gallery 4 is dedicated to Roman artefacts from the Norba Caesariana colony and includes some interesting coins, brooches and pottery from the period. Also included in the collection are finds from one of the earliest Roman Republican legionary fortresses found in Europe, Castra Caecilia. The site, now called Cáceres el Viejo, was destroyed during the revolt of Sertorius in c. 78 BC. It is situated about 3 km north of Norba and was excavated by Adolf Schulten in 1910 and 1927–30 (Ulbert, 1984, Dobson, 2008). Today the site lies under open farmland but the upstanding remains of the defences are clear to see. Numerous finds from the excavations include an array of military equipment and other artefacts such as a bronze vessel with a type of ladle called a simpulum, used in religious ceremonies. It is also worth heading down the narrow steps to the subterranean and impressive Moorish aljibe (cistern) of the Almohad period, still to this day filled with water. In the gardens at the rear of the museum there are a number of tombstones from the Roman period and a milestone of Constantius Chlorus (293–306).

Mérida (Extremadura)

Film fans may recall Maximus Decimus Meridius in Ridley Scott’s Gladiator stating that his house was in the hills above Trujillo. Trujillo is predominantly a medieval hilltop town with a very imposing statue of the conquistador Francisco Pizarro in the main square; we stopped off there en route to Mérida, the capital city of Extremadura. In Mérida the parador is converted from an eighteenth-century convent, which is built partially over the site of the Roman Provincial Forum. This forum was also the temenos of the recently excavated Temple of the Imperial Cult, which stood within it (Cruz, 2006). Other dedications associated with this site are to Concordiae Augusti and Mars. The monumental entrance to the forum was formed by the Arch of Trajan, the central arch of which survives today. Some architectural sculpture from the forum/temple complex is on display at the parador (Fig. 2).

Mérida was founded in 25 BC by Marcus Agrippa as Colonia Augusta Emerita, and we discovered it is currently twinned with Rome. Roman features and sites dominate this small city and we even noticed a couple of streets named after the veteran Roman legions: X Gemina and V Alaudae. Due to the brevity of our stay we were not able to see everything so sadly we missed out on such sites as Los Milagros (Roman aqueduct), the Roman dam of Proserpina, the Roman circus and the church of Santa Eulalia named after the girl who was said to have been martyred in the reign of Decius Trajan (AD 249–251). There have also been more recent and extensive excavations (area arqueológica de Morería) near to the Roman bridge and river. These apparently have revealed the development of the city right through from the Roman period to modern times and finds include more than 200 metres of Roman wall built in the first century BC. The best value for money is to be had by purchasing a multi-pass.
(entrada conjunta) which provides entry to many of the sites. At the time of our visit this was a very reasonable ten euros per person. Almost everything is within walking distance and easy to find so all that is needed is to pick up a map of the city from tourist information.

Theatre, amphitheatre and House of the Amphitheatre
The theatre is well preserved but extensively restored and Collins (1998) argues that it is the “best example of its kind to be found in Western Europe” (Fig. 3). It was built between 16 BC and 15 BC for Marcus Agrippa and a dedicatory inscription to him can be found to the side of the theatre. The theatre comprises three sections, each for a different social class, and it was able to hold around six thousand people. Today it is used to stage plays and concerts and as we strolled around we saw a band setting up for later that evening.

The amphitheatre is surprisingly close to the theatre and dates back to 8 BC. It could hold approximately fourteen thousand people; the corridors and entrances to the seating are the best preserved parts. It was used for gladiatorial contests and beast fights, and the central area under the arena was used to hold animals before such events (Fig. 4).

The Roman city wall encloses the amphitheatre and just outside and beyond the wall is the palatial house named after it – the House of the Amphitheatre. This site actually has the remains of two houses, with archaeological evidence suggesting both were built around the first century AD, although almost all the visible remains belong to just one of these. The site was not covered by the later medieval town; looking across, immediately visible are columns, parts of walls, pavement and the central courtyard garden (Fig. 5). There is a bath complex, kitchen and other rooms including the rooms of the pictures (habitaciones de las pinturas) which have geometric designs in various colours. This house has a large number of high-quality mosaics such as those depicting different types of fish and those showing a vintage scene with men treading grapes (Fig. 6). In some parts of the site visitors may touch and walk on the mosaics. To the east of the complex can be found the rubble from excavations, including bits of columns and decorated stonework which you can go and view and touch.

National Museum of Roman Art, and the Visigothic Museum
The new and outstanding National Museum of Roman Art (Museo Nacional de Arte Romano) was inaugurated in 1986. Excavation prior to its development revealed an aqueduct, necropolis, house and Roman road, and the museum was constructed over these. By heading down to the lower level and the suitably atmospheric ‘crypt’ (cripta) it is possible to view these remains. We saw part of the well-preserved Roman road before venturing into the dark and dank to see the columns and walls of houses, some with frescos, as well as tombs. The museum also has a connecting underground passage to both the theatre and amphitheatre. There are three other floors with much to see; the interior is modern and designed to enable optimum viewing of objects from different levels such as the enormous mosaics set against the walls. Excellent examples include a mosaic of a man hunting a boar, found in the Roman villa in Dehesa de las Tiendas just outside Mérida, and another depicting a victorious Roman charioteer named Paulus, driving a four-horse chariot (see Fig. 7).
On the first floor of the museum, in galleries 2 and 3, can be found a very good collection of coinage from the Republic to the end of Roman rule in Spain. There are silver denarii from the late Republic with the consular names inscribed on the coins, plus four cases containing a chronological outline of the coins from the first to the fourth centuries AD. Particularly impressive are the gold aurei and silver denarii from the Julio-Claudian period and from the reign of Trajan and Hadrian. If you are fascinated by Roman coinage, this is a must-see at the museum. There are some magnificent statues such as the veiled head of Augustus, depicting him in his role as Pontifex Maximus, as well as examples of clipeii (decorative medallions; singular, clipeus) from the portico of the Municipal Forum (Fig. 8). All objects are displayed by themes in the galleries such as 'the Roman house', 'funeral rites', 'religion', 'art and culture' and so forth. There is a wide range of artefacts to view in each section: pottery, jewellery, glass, actors’ masks, craft tools and much more. This museum is definitely worth a visit!

Also worth a visit, if you have time, is the Museum of Visigothic Art. This is tucked away in Calle Santa Julia in the church of Santa Clara conven, close to the Arch of Trajan and close to the main square in Mérida. Entry was free and we visited the museum in the evening and were surprised it was not advertised in all the local guides. It has a good collection of Visigothic sculptures from the fourth to eighth centuries AD and all have been acquired from Mérida and its surrounding districts. You can see some fine stonework from buildings, altars and fonts as well as objects from everyday life in that period. Also included is some good stonework and some steiae from the late Roman period.

**Portico del Foro**

Nearby are the standing remains of the so-called Temple of Diana. Its name has no historical justification and the temple was probably dedicated to Augustus or the Imperial Cult. It originally faced the Municipal Forum, and after recent excavations part of the forum portico has been reconstructed on its original site, decorated with statues and clipeii depicting Jupiter Ammon and Medusa, the originals of which are in the museum (Figs. 8 and 9) (Barrera, 2000).

**Los Columbarios and House of the Mithraeum**

Another incongruous site is that of the Roman funerary monuments in an extra-mural cemetery known as Los Columbarios, which are situated opposite a residential area made up of blocks of flats. Olive trees grow around the site and, on the day we visited, it was very peaceful with barely a handful of tourists. The site is called Los Columbarios but the National Museum of Roman Art states that this is factually incorrect and that these are open-air tombs or busta. They have inscriptions, giving the family names of Julio and Voconio, as well as some frescos (Fig. 10). Although there were actual columbaria tombs elsewhere in Mérida, none remain, so the museum has a reconstruction of one on the first floor.

Very close by is the site known as the House of Mithras/House of the Mithraeum (Casa de Mitra/Casa del Mitreo) which has been given excellent railed walkways to enable visitors to wander around and look down on the site (Fig. 11). Again we were almost alone in looking around this. The house has been dated to around the first or early second century AD and has some brightly coloured and striking mosaicos, which include the cosmological mosaic thought to date to the late second or third century AD (Fig. 12). Collins (1998) argues that this is "still one of the finest Roman mosaics to be seen in western Europe" and it certainly was impressive. Ling (1998, p75) states this is "unique among the pavements of the West" insofar as it
shows personifications such as Nature, Heaven, Clouds, Time and Ocean; in total there are between forty and fifty. Each is named within the mosaic in Latin, as in Fig. 13 depicting Pharos (lighthouse) and Navigia (navigation). There are also the remains of some wall paintings in various colours (Fig. 14).

**Roman bridge**

In the evening, particularly on a Saturday, Spanish families often congregate in the main square. Passing through the Arch of Trajan we wandered to the square, where a group of young boys were having a kick about with fallen unripe oranges while families sat chatting or having a drink and tapas from one of the small bars. Some five minutes’ walk from there is the modern statue of Romulus and Remus and then a couple of minutes further still the Roman bridge (footbridge only) which has sixty arches and spans the River Guadiana (Fig. 15). It is at this side of the city that the original Roman entrance to the city would have been, and this is also the location of one of Spain’s oldest Moorish buildings, a ninth-century fortification: the Alcazaba.
over 20,000 people. Of particular note are the well-preserved corridors and access routes to the seating (Fig. 19). In addition it has remains of a theatre, residential buildings (again with excellent mosaics), thermal baths, other buildings and streets (Fig. 20). We would recommend allowing at the very least half a day for this site.

It is advisable to check the opening times of museums and sites before booking a trip in Spain especially if, like us, you are only able to spend a few days in each place. Most are closed on Mondays and opening hours do vary from place to place and can be subject to seasonal changes.

References
Barrera, JL de la, 2000 La Decoración Arquitectónica de los Foros de Augusta Emerita, (Bibliotheca Archaeologica 25) L’Erma, Rome.
Keay, SJ, 1988 Roman Spain, British Museum Press.
Other sources include information provided at sites and local guide leaflets.

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