Dear Member,

Welcome to the sixteenth edition of the ARA Newsletter.

As those who attended the AGM in November already know, our current very able Honorary Treasurer has decided to hang up his abacus and retire from the position at the end of March 2005. This will give us a little under a year to coerce or co-opt a replacement so any member who may wish to volunteer would be very welcome – please see following page.

We have looking forms for our summer excursions, which have become quite ‘bunched’ this year. The two day tours are on consecutive weekends. They both coincide with the closing stages of the current season’s excavations, which are due to be backfilled during the following week.

The Annual Dinner in June will be a very convivial affair I am sure, and the setting, in Fishbourne Roman Palace, will add a real authenticity to the proceedings. I suggest members book promptly – numbers are limited – and it is likely to be as popular as the Hadrian’s Wall weekend, now fully booked and with a waiting list!

Your Board have decided that we should honour our late President, Dr. Graham Webster, by setting up a Research Fund for Roman Archaeology in his name – a quite exciting prospect, I think you’ll agree.

The remainder of the Newsletter has a number of announcements on various Roman subjects, and the usual round-up of ‘Snippets’, which keep us up to date on the more important discoveries.

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**Snippets**

**ROMAN INSCRIBED STONES RESURFACE**

Two inscribed centurial stones from Hadrian’s Wall recording the building of stretches of the structure by Julius Janalis, a centurion responsible for that section, and men from the *civitas Dumnonii*, the area around Exeter, have been rediscovered after twenty-seven years. Although the Dumnonii stone had still been visible by the side of a kitchen door in a house in Greenhead, the second’s whereabouts had been lost. It was rediscovered in the wall of a byre during work to turn it into a bunk house. Holmhead Guesthouse was built about 1800 from stones removed from Hadrian’s Wall and possibly Thirwall Castle.

*Hoxham Courant. 27.02.2003*

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**EXCITING ROMAN COIN FIND**

A Roman coin, two thousand years old, has been uncovered during excavation work on the Taylor River bank, in Blenheim, near Christchurch, New Zealand. The coin, stamped Caesar Augustus, is believed to date from 7 BC.

Marlborough District Council’s Reserves and Amenities Supervisor, Russell Montgomery, said it was an “exciting find” although it would never be known how the coin got there. “It could have been flicked off a bridge in 1940 or dumped in ballast in 1840 – we will never know.” he said.

The coin was found by Picton archaeologist Reg Nichol, who was employed by the council when workers uncovered piles. Work was halted when what was obviously a wharf or bridge structure was uncovered.

Nichol said that the coin was “a fascinating find” but it did not mean that the Romans were in Marlborough. The coin possibly came to the area in the nineteenth century, when the wharf was in regular use.

*New Zealand Press Association / Christchurch Press 27.12.2003*
A ROMAN GILT SILVER PARADE HELMET DISCOVERED AT IRON AGE SHRINE

A Roman parade helmet has been discovered at a newly located Iron Age religious centre in Leicestershire along with over 3,000 gold and silver coins. The first of the coins were discovered by Ken Wallace whilst field-walking on the hilltop site. Most of the coins were minted by the Coritani, the wealthy tribe spread across the area now encompassing Lincolnshire, Leicestershire, Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire and Northamptonshire, and were deposited as offerings before the Roman conquest. A huge quantity of animal bones was also found in the excavations following, which were conducted by Leicester University, backed by English Heritage and the British Museum. It is suggested that this was perhaps the most important religious site in the East Midlands at the time of the conquest. The helmet was found in many pieces and it is hoped to rebuild it. Parade helmets in precious metals were worn by cavalry officers for the *hippica gymnasia* (cavalry displays) which were glamourised versions of training exercises performed in precious armour. A partly-silvered bronze helmet of this type was found in Ribchester, and is now at the British Museum. At the present time it is being suggested that the new helmet was buried before the invasion and was perhaps the treasured offering of someone who had served in the legions and then returned to Britain to dedicate it to the gods of his homeland.

DIANA MEMORIAL MOVED TO SAVE ROMAN REMAINS

Kathryn Gustafson’s ‘moat without a castle’ which will be a memorial dedicated to Princess Diana in Hyde Park, has had to be moved 80 metres to the east from the intended position in order to safeguard significant remains of a Roman settlement. The remains are thought to be those of a large farm and to be important for understanding the history and development of Roman London.

SEVERE DAMAGE DONE TO THE MURALS OF THE HOUSE OF THE CHASTE LOVERS AT POMPEII

Italian police have discovered two frescoes which had been stolen for export from the House of the Chaste Lovers in the Street of Abundance, Pompeii. Thieves had caused severe damage to other frescoes in the House, which has been under excavation since 1987. The floors of the building were found covered in fresco fragments and the two recovered pictures, one of which was a still life with a cockerel pecking at a half eaten pomegranate, had been hacked out of central panels in one room. A still life of sea produce was also badly damaged by the attack.

CONCERN OVER THE CONDITION OF COLCHESTER’S ROMAN TOWN WALL

The Essex County Standard has raised concerns over the neglect of the Roman town wall at Colchester. Lumps of *septaria* stone have fallen out of it whilst other parts, such as the remarkable Duncan’s gate, are overgrown. Colchester’s MP, Bob Russell, has joined the campaign and requested that the government put aside a sum of money to assist towns with historic walls in need of preservation. Colchester Council, who are responsible for the condition of the walls, which are a remarkable survival (and one that they should promote), have pleaded lack of funds to explain the neglect.

SUPERB ENAMELLED PATERA FOUND IN STAFFORDSHIRE

A metal detectorist, Kevin Blackburn, has discovered a superbly decorated bronze patera or pan, whilst scanning a field in Staffordshire. The small bowl, which has lost its base and handle, is inscribed around the rim with the names of four of the western forts of Hadrian’s Wall as well as the name of its maker, Aelius Draco. The forts named are *Mais* (Bowness), *Coggabata* (Drumburgh), *Uxelodunum* (Stanwix) and *Camoglanna* (Castlesteads). Drumburgh has previously been known as *Congavata* from its mention in the *Notitia Dignitatum*, but this new version appears to be the correct form of the name.

The body of the bowl is decorated below the inscription with a wonderful series of Celtic roundels giving the appearance of a running vegetal scroll. This band of decoration is heavily enameled in colours and, when new, must really have glowed, next to the polished bronze of the body.

The patera is believed to have been made in the second century AD possibly as a good quality souvenir of the frontier. Until now Britain has only produced one other such object. This is known as the ‘Rudge Cup’ after the place of its discovery in Wiltshire in 1725. Unlike the new vessel, this is decorated with fort names and a crenellated design reminiscent of the wall itself. A third example was discovered at Amiens in 1949 but this retained its handle.

The new discovery is currently on display in the British Museum.

THIRD CENTURY VILLAGE FOUND AT HIGHAM FERRERS

A two hundred yard stretch of a village high street has been uncovered
on farmland in Northamptonshire, in advance of a new housing estate. The site is so large that archaeologists have still to uncover many of its secrets, but the finds have been plentiful. The site is said to be unusual and exceptionally well preserved, giving us an excellent picture of a Roman roadside settlement. Only about half of the village has been excavated, as a 1950s housing estate covers the rest, but at least eighteen buildings have been found. These appear to be homes, shops and workshops. In addition, two shrines have been located; one is surrounded by walls whilst the other later, and stone built temple, stood in the middle of what is described as a ‘village green’. Hundreds of items have been found within the walls of the earlier shrine, some of which appear to have been ritually broken. What may be curse tablets of lead have also turned up, and these may give us the name of the deity who was honoured there. The settlement appears to have lasted from the second to the fifth century but there are also remains of some Saxon structures.

Box containing Roman cream found at Temple site in Southwark, London

Excavations on the site of a recently discovered temple complex at Southwark have uncovered a round box of copper alloy in a timber-lined drain, containing what may be a Roman cosmetic cream, imprinted with the finger prints of the last user 2,000 years ago.

The cream may have been face paint or cold cream. If the former, it may have been used during religious ceremonies at the two temples found on the site, where a possible guesthouse has also been identified. It should be remembered that some temples were places for healing, so the cream might equally have been medicinal.

The eleven metre square stone temples are Romano-Celtic in design and are believed to date from the mid second century AD. Several fragments of stone and bronze sculpture were found including a larger-than-life bronze finger and a sandalled foot. The latter has been tentatively interpreted as wearing a sock or leggings. An inscription found on the site dedicated to Mars Camulos suggests that he may have been one of the deities honoured at the precinct. The discovery of the wealthy temple complex at the point where the Roman roads from Dover and Chichester meet, is yet another clue to the importance of Southwark in Roman times.

LARGE ROMAN FORT DISCOVERED AT LLANDEILO IN WALES

A resistivity survey of the parkland at Dinefwr Park carried out by Cambria Archaeology for the National Trust has discovered the buried remains of two forts. It had been suspected that a fort would be found somewhere in the area, as a staging post between those at Carmarthen and Llandovery.

The first and largest fort was built about AD 70, but had a short life. The site was later re-occupied and a smaller but substantial fort erected. This may be seen to have been packed with buildings whilst a bath building also has been tentatively identified.

Evidence for the export of dried fish from Egypt – found in Turkey and Scunthorpe

Excavations at Sagalassos, Turkey, a city on the Anatolian plateau about 68 miles inland from Antalya, have uncovered spines from the Nile catfish. The export of sun-dried and presumably filleted Nile fish was an important item of trade. Fish were exported to Rome along with grain from Egypt. According to Jeffrey May of the Department of Archaeology at Nottingham University, a spine from a second- or third-century Nile catfish was likewise discovered during excavations undertaken by him at Dragonby, Scunthorpe, some years ago, suggesting an astonishingly long journey for the product.

Excavation of a new mosaic, found in Lincoln

A small excavation on part of the site soon to be occupied by Lincoln’s new City and County Museum has uncovered a mosaic in a building which may have been a Roman town house dating to the third or fourth century. The mosaic from Flaxengate is a simple design of red and white squares. It has been lifted and the intention is to display in the new museum. The site has also yielded fragments of painted wall plaster.

Lincolnshire Echo. 15.07.2003

Excavation at Michaelgate, Lincoln, yields traces of substantial buildings

An archaeological excavation in advance of a new housing development on Michaelgate in the city’s uphill area, has uncovered a Roman road leading off Ermine Street, the major route which ran through the colonia. The area seems to have been a busy part of the Roman city and there is evidence that the road was lined with impressive buildings. Thousands of artefacts have been discovered, from carved stonework to writing implements. Much of the archaeology of the area has been saved as the houses have been built on special foundations to raise them above the remains.

Lincolnshire Echo. 22.09.2003
A LOST GODDESS ATTRAITS NEW WORSHIPPERS

Offerings dedicated to a previously unknown goddess named Senua have been unearthed in a field near Baldock in Hertfordshire. Twenty-six pieces of gold and silver were discovered, ranging from dedicatory plaques to superb jewellery. Amongst the latter is a spectacular cameo of a lion trampling an ox skull, which was already an antique when it was set into a brooch. Several of the plaques show an image of Minerva, but when Ralph Jackson of the British Museum x-rayed them he discovered inscriptions indicating that they were in fact of a previously unknown deity called Senua. Like Sulis at Bath she was probably a Celtic goddess who was Romanised. Senua may also have presided over a sacred spring at Baldock and the finds may have been cast into it as offerings. A badly decayed silver statuette of the goddess with an inscribed base was found. Unfortunately, the face and breast of the figure have been lost, but the back shows that it was once a graceful and artistic piece. The finds are currently on display in the British Museum, having been purchased for the nation.

Guardian. 01.09.2003

ROMAN MOSAIC DISCOVERED NEAR COBERLEY, GLOUCESTERSHIRE

Two amateur archaeologists have discovered a mosaic pavement at Coberley, near Cheltenham, after fieldwalking following ploughing. The pair have found various artefacts on the site previously, but this time tesserae appeared on the surface.

Excavations subsequently undertaken by the Gloucestershire Archaeological Unit uncovered a large but damaged mosaic. The design comprised between nine and fifteen decorated panels, each 1.4 metres square, surrounded by diamond pattern borders. One of the panels held a depiction of a cantharus or wine cup. Dr. David Neal has now drawn the mosaic for a forthcoming edition of the Corpus of Roman Mosaics in Britain. Fragments of wall plaster show that the room was brightly painted. Finds of tesserae from another part of the field suggest that the building was substantial.

Western Daily Press. 03.12.2003 (late city edition)