TALES FROM AN ITINERANT TRAVELLER – HA
‘That lone camp on Hardknott’s heights whose guardians bent their knee to Jove and

Fig. 1. View from Birker Fell looking north over Hardknott Fort and Bath House. Photo: © Don Flear.

Following my retirement from the ‘Day Job’ the other year and now, after 16 years, from the role of Treasurer for the Association for Roman Archaeology, I hope to have more time to indulge myself in my ‘Roman studies and travels’. The editor feels that, you, dear reader, may be interested in some of the places that I visit and experiences which I encounter. As such, whilst obviously not pretending to be an archaeologist, I present a few such articles in this and future issues under the above, rather light-hearted, heading.

Don Flear.

INTRODUCTION
I have always believed in ‘safety valves’. No, not the hissing things you get on large steam engines and pressure cookers, but the psychological ones which you need as you go through life. Having lived through a reasonably stressful life as a Bank Manager and Statistician where accuracy was paramount, I have long loved to escape to recharge my batteries, even before relatively recent medical research has backed this up as ‘a good thing’. It might also be down to my Yorkshire background in that I love moorland, mountains, wide open spaces and ‘getting away’.

I first came in contact with the Lake District in the 1950s and fell in love with it. In the mid 60s I went to Newcastle University to take Economics and fell in love again – that time with Hadrian’s Wall and the Romans. The ‘finding’ of Hardknott Fort brought it all together and has definitely served as a ‘safety valve’ for me.

If my career had taken a different course and I had been a bit player in the movies, when John Cleese asked me ‘what have the Romans done for us?’ I would have replied, without hesitation “Hardknott Fort”. In other words I fully endorse Sir Mortimer Wheeler’s quote that “… in truth, I feel closer to the Grandeur of Rome at Hardknott than in that builder’s yard – the Roman Forum.”

ACCESSIBILITY
Even in these days of easy travel, Hardknott Fort, on the western edge
distance between the fort and the upper lay-by is not great.

HISTORY OF THE SITE

I would say at this point that there is no way I can do this site justice in such a short article. If you are an 'enthusiast' you should study the 1999 Bidwell, Snape and Croom report mentioned in the reading list. This superbly pulls all the facts together. However, in the meantime, here is a short chronological précis of the site's history.

The fort is Hadrianic (Hadrian's name and title appear on a fragmentary gateway inscription found near the fort's south-east gateway in 1964). Constructed in the period AD 119–138, the name Mediobogdum means 'Fort situated in the middle of the curve' – a reference to its position in relation to the river Esk.

It was built to defend the road from Ravenglass (Glannoventa) on the coast to Ambleside (Galava) and serve as a secure stopping place before the heavy dray up over Hardknot Pass. Theoretically, it should have had a garrison of 500 infantry, although, in practice, it was probably never fully garrisoned.

Compared with other similar forts in the north of England, it did not have a long active life and it would appear not to have been used during the reign of Hadrian’s successor – Antoninus Pius (AD 138–160). A re-occupation is implied in the 160’s by an inscription found at Hardknot in 1855 whereby the British Governor Sextus Calpurnius Agricola is attested as re-occupying forts along the western gate is now lost but reportedly the inscription read “Agricola Coll”.

1889-October 17. W. G. Collingwood produced handwritten notes and plans – very useful, as these incorporated several details and features overlooked later by Dymond. He also recorded slight ‘building’ remains to the north-east of the fort near the edge of the precipice, as well as some kind of structure on the ‘Tribunal’ mound.

1890. Sir Herbert Maxwell excavated the north-eastern Tower and the two ‘L’ shaped rooms flanking the principia courtyard.

1899-1894. Dymond and Calverley excavated the fort and baths. Supposed hypostyle remains (‘terribly ruined’) north of the granaries were unpublished and remain ‘enigmatic’.

1894. Collingwood continued excavations at Hardknot and at this time produced his romantic painting of Hardknot, now on display at Muncaster Castle, and shown on the cover of the 1999 Bidwell, Snape and Croom report.

1920’s. A local Eskdale antiquary, Miss M. C. Fair, produced reports on pottery found (1923); leather (1927) and, in 1948, made special reference to a burnt barracks building in the praetentura – the gable end of which had fallen outward. Subsequent excavations have not identified these specific remains.

1929. R. G. Collingwood linked Ravenglass and the Wrynose Road with Agricola’s designs on Ireland.

1950’s. Site acquired by the Ministry of Works, who cleared, exposed and consolidated the remains.

1958. G. Jobey re-examined eastern and western angle towers.

1960’s. Dorothy Charlesworth re-excavated the granaries (1964) and trenches in the praetentura area. These revealed the remains of possibly two barracks, one in timber and one (Hadrianic?) in stone. Excavations at the south-east gate also produced a sandstone fragment with a Hadrianic building inscription – now in the Tullie House Museum, Carlisle – which mentions the 4th Cohort of Dalmatians and is dateable to the period 119 - 138.

1993. RCHME (Royal Commission for Historic Monuments [England]) made a detailed ground survey of the fort and bath house to 1:500. The Fort and environs were surveyed to a scale of 1:1000.


VISIBLE REMAINS ON HARDKNOTT BLUFF

DEFENSIVE FEATURES:
WALLS. The three acre fort still has substantial walls remaining although these were rebuilt to their maximum height of 2.2 metres in the 1950s. They would once presumably have been crowned by battlements and an elevated sentry walk. Behind the stone wall was an earth bank, traces of which still remain by the south gate. (See Fig. 6) The fort wall rises and dips, following the irregular contours of the ground.

DITCHES. The defences were strengthened by a single 45 metre length of rock hewn ditch on the north-east corner.

Apart from this, however, outer defences seemed to rely on the superb siting of the fort, probably the bog and, to the north, the almost precipitous drop into the Esk Valley.

GATES. All gates were double portal – except for the north-eastern, which opens out onto the precipice. The gate towers, somewhat unusually, lack guard chambers. A pivot hole block can be seen at the south-western gate.

ANGLE TOWERS. These are to be found on each corner. The north-east corner tower is the highest point in the fort and gives a good view over the internal layout.

INTERNAL BUILDINGS:
THE PRINCIPIA. (B on Fig. 3) standard for a small fort – an open courtyard surrounded by a cross hall and two L-shaped covered wings containing rooms used as stores, armouries and offices. The courtyard had no well and was not paved. At the back of the cross hall are three small administrative rooms, with the regimental chapel in the centre and probably records and pay accounts in the other two.

The area in Fig. 8, between the right hand principia wing and the southern gate is where the barracks remains were found by Fair in the 1940s and Charlesworth in the 1960s.

THE GRANARIES. (C on Fig. 3) These are the most substantial buildings in the fort with walls a metre thick. Flagged floors rested on pillars to lift.
them above damp and vermin. Buttresses run along the outer walls to take the thrust of the heavy roof. The remains of two loading ramps can be seen on the south side.

The bathhouse itself is about 18.2 metres long by 6.1 metres wide with a stoke-hole at the west end. There is also a detached circular Laconicum – a circular, domed, hot sweating bath typical of early forts in Britain, heated from its own stokehole – again a most impressive structure.

THE PARADE GROUND. About 228 metres to the east of the fort is a relatively flat area, artificially constructed beneath the side of the mountain – the best example of a parade ground in the country – known locally as the ‘Bowling Green’ in the 19th Century.

In the middle of the north side can be seen a long ramp leading to what has, in the past, been described since Collingwood as a ‘Tribunal’, for the officer to review training and parades.

Recent comparison with a similar construction at Tomen-Y-Mur, together with the Irton & Sergeant 1792 plan which clearly records a square structure on top of the platform, suggests, however, that there is at least a possibility that this was the podium for a small temple, the ramp being the foundation for a flight of steps leading up to it.

Unlike Ambleside and Ravenglass there is no evidence of a vicus and no Roman cemeteries have been identified.

MY CLOSING FEELINGS ON HARDKNOTT

Over the years, this ruined fort has meant much to me. It pulls together much of what I value in life: long may it continue to do so. As Garlick says “Mediobogdum, with its bathhouse and parade ground indicates military efficiency, discipline, and organisation by an army that had conquered most of the known world.” Yes, all that – but more. Quite simply, with its own special atmosphere, it’s a magic and evocative place. As you stand at that south-east gateway and look over Birker Fell (although the forest line has retreated down the valley since Roman times), you are probably seeing very much what the Roman sentry would have seen an eternity ago – not many sites give you that these days.

So I have no choice but to say, for those who haven’t yet done so, if you have the chance, visit it. Visit it in the pouring rain. Visit it in the height of summer when the tar on the roads is melting. Visit it in the wind, storm, sleet and snow. Look on the bright side. Even if you catch double pneumonia, you will have had an experience to remember on your death bed!

But please – don’t all go there on the same day that I do. I still want to feel that I am the only one who knows about it!

Don Flear

LOCAL FACILITIES

The area, by definition, is somewhat remote. However:

- A quick efficient meal (and toilets) can be had at the station cafe of the Ravenglass and Eskdale Miniature Railway, some 5km down from the fort. As I write, the station is being rebuilt and I understand that facilities there are being much improved. They currently have a noticeboard on display with local B & B details.

- The nearby village of Boot has several good hotels, B & B, good food and facilities.

- The Woolpack Inn, on the main road to Boot, is the nearest hostelry to the fort and has Roman stone from the fort in its construction.

- There is also a very impressive looking Youth Hostel at the bottom of the Esk Valley. It truly could not be in a more convenient place for exploring the Hardknot fells.
ANAMUR / ANEMURIAM

Whilst travelling around southern Turkey last year, I came across the site of Anemurium, near Anamur. Your readers may be interested in a few details, especially as the whole region is so rich in historical sites.

How to get there

Anemurium is on the route of long distance buses between Antalya, Alanya and Mersin, this being the only option for those who do not have their own transport. Direct flights are available in summer from Bristol, Newcastle, Manchester and Glasgow to Antalya. Get a taxi from Antalya airport to the main road and hail your bus to Alanya and beyond there – they do stop! Anamur is about 125 km from Alanya, which is itself about 130 km from Antalya. Allow 5-6 hours for a Turkish bus to take you from Antalya airport to Anamur.

Basic needs

Anamur is a smallish (c.50,000 inhabitants) town a few kilometres inland. There are pensions near the otogar (bus station) and in the town centre up the hill, but it’s probably more attractive to stay in the fast developing beach area of Iskele, which contains an excellent museum and has several hotels. Eser Pansiyon in Iskele Mahallesi would be a good, and economical, choice. A dolmus from the otogar in Anamur should be cheap and easy to find; failing that, a taxi at 2004 rates would cost about £4.00. I was able to decent hotel room in high summer for £7.00 and an evening meal came in at about £5.00. From here, you could walk west along the shore to the ancient site of Anemurium.

Anemurium

Anemurium is worth at least half a day. If you enjoy strolling along the beach at Turkey’s southern most point, picking up sherds of ancient pottery as they erode out of the sand dunes now covering part of the town, or scrambling in and out of the dozens of tombs in the necropolis looking for paintings and inscriptions, this is the place for you. There is a site guardian and a fee of 1,000,000 lire, but the site gets only a scattering of visitors and you may well have it to yourself.

From the road in, the necropolis is above you, on the slope to the right. It is at least as extensive as the remains of the town and contains many well-preserved, two-storey tombs. They are mainly from the fourth to sixth centuries CE, a few still showing inscriptions and coloured paintings inside. The site guardian can guide you to these. Above the tombs run the town’s two aqueducts.

One of the highlights of the town is the public baths. Almost the complete shell of this building is still standing, again on the slope to the right, above the main road through the site. There are mosaic floors surviving in places, as they do in the Odeon on the other side of the road. This I would describe as the other star attraction of Anemurium. Also clear are the town walls, one of which runs away up the hillside to the Byzantine fortress on the summit.

Around Anamur

Antalya museum, out to the west of the city, is one of the best in Turkey. Between Antalya and Alanya are the magnificent sites of Perge, at the village of Aksu, Side, and Aspendos. At Gazipasa, the only town of any size between Alanya and Anamur, are the remains of ancient Selinus / Traianopolis, renamed in honour of the emperor who died there in AD 117. Here there is a monumental building which may well be a cenotaph for Trajan and another interesting necropolis. The smaller sites at Antiocheia ad Cragum and Iotape will require you to hire transport locally.

Don Lear

RARE GOLDEN LAMELLA DISCOVERED IN NORFOLK

A Norfolk gardener unearthed what he took to be a piece of foil from a champagne bottle only to discover that the postage stamp sized piece of gold was in fact a Roman lamella or magical charm. This is only one of five found in Britain and of no more than a few dozen discovered in the entire empire. An inscription scratched on the first or second century lamella invokes the protection of the eastern god Abrasax and carries a prayer for the health of Tiberius Claudius Similis, whose name may suggest a Rhinelan connection.

www.24hourmuseum.org.uk - 26.10.2004

David Pritchard
THE PUZZLE OF THE AMPHORAE

The seemingly impractical shape of amphorae has always puzzled me. Why should those pragmatic and consummate engineers, the Romans, have relied on something so awkwardly shaped in which to store and transport their wine, oil and fish sauce, essential to daily life?

With a pointed and narrow base, wide shoulders and two handles high up on top of the shoulder, amphorae in museums and in illustrations in books are shown either leaning in a precarious way against a wall (and each other) or stacked in some kind of wooden frame. Neither seems to me to be very practical either for transport or use. Nor do these suggestions work with the design. In the one case the slightest knock would send them all falling; in the second, considerable strength would be required to move them at all!

Let’s take the handles. Why are they so high up? Envisage trying to carry a heavy, full-up, nearly man-sized (or slave-sized) amphora by those handles. Two people might just do it but even then they would have to bear the weight on arms bent upwards to keep the jar off the ground. If not too heavy for one person to carry, the logical way would be to hug the amphora around the mid point and position it over a shoulder. Those handles would not be of much use in either case.

How are the handles used then for carrying? A better distribution of weight is achieved if poles are run through the handles. The poles are then rested on the shoulders (or some kind of harness) of two people, one in front and one behind. It might even be possible to carry more than one jar in this way, padding or a baffle preventing the jars banging together. (Fig. 1) It also seems more sensible, when storing amphorae, simply to hook poles holding a number of jars on to a support rather than construct a cumbersome frame and offload each amphora individually. Apart from the inconvenience and time involved in loading and unloading individual jars, the frame would need to reach up to the shoulders of the amphorae if stored upright to be effective in stopping them topping. If stored on their sides, as in a modern day wine rack, the frame would again need to be large and sturdy to accommodate the full length and mass weight of the amphorae.

But why a pointed or rounded end? The Romans were capable of constructing flat-bottomed vessels, although pointed ones are simpler to make. There is a theory that, in the Iron Age, bowls and other containers were deliberately made round bottomed as they rested on uneven surfaces and thus were more stable than flat-bottomed ones (in the same way that three legged stools work better than four legged ones on uneven surfaces). Granted Roman kitchen floors were likely to be uneven if earthen but surely shops and perhaps warehouses had stone or tiled floors so a pointed or rounded end is not at all practical. Perhaps the amphorae were placed in grooves or holes (have any been found?) and secured against a wall by
ropes but then, how would the contents be decanted? When full, it
would be possible to use a ladle, although the neck is quite narrow.
The only way to get at the contents in other circumstances is to tip the jar,
and this would mean lifting it out of
any hole and releasing any retaining
ropes.

Out of its frame or away from the wall, an unsecured amphora is
difficult to control. Balancing on its
narrow end a full, or nearly full,
amphora is too heavy. When tipped,
most of the weight is on the arm of
the person or persons holding the
handle or handles. Any liquid inside
can be expected to slop around when
the amphora is moved, thus shifting the
weight. In order to tip the
contents out, the base rests on the
floor and the neck is lowered. The base
will have a tendency to slip
backwards when tipped. The whole
thing is very unwieldy. When nearly
empty the amphora will have to be
lowered almost to the floor and
possibly up-ended given that
anything remaining will collect in the
wide shoulder. It would probably be
easier to grasp the amphora around
the midpoint to tip it rather than use the
handles.

However, if on each handle there
were a rope which was then fixed to a
beam above, it would be very easy for
one person to grasp the base and lift
the amphora thus tipping the neck
and releasing the contents (Fig. 2).

Being suspended, most of the weight
would be carried by the ropes/beam.
Even when tipped and when any
liquid slops about, the two ropes
would hold the jar steady. As the end
is rounded it would be relatively easy
to grasp the jar, even gripping it
under an arm if necessary. Furthermore
the handles are in just the right
place, either side of the neck and on
top of the shoulder, to hold the
amphora upright when at rest and
provide the pivot when in use. Used
in this way in order to tip the
contents out, the neck remains in
position and the base is raised.

A further refinement might have
been to hold the bottom of the jar in
a loop of rope which was then run up
to wheeled blocks above (or merely
slung over the beam) and down again
in front. The jar could then be tipped
by someone pulling on this – perhaps
using one hand to raise the bottom
of the amphora and the other to
hold the basin to catch the contents?
(Fig. 3).

Looking at the design of amphorae
therefore, and using poles and ropes
in this way, it is obvious why they
should be as they are – logical and
functional.

Has any research been done on this
and are there any other theories and
what, if any, is the evidence?

C. A. Noons.

Fig. 3. A further possible method of support whilst pouring the contents.
Illustration © Bryn Walters working to roughs by C. A. Noons.

ROMAN EVENTS
CONTINUE
DESPITE THE
DARK AGES OF
WINTER

When the Dark Ages arrive after
the AGM in November, fill the gap
between ARA events by attending a
weekend adult residential
course. These can be at a university
or at a Georgian manor house with
five star luxury style suitable for a
Roman governor. They make a
good week end break. Just a few
examples I know of: Dillington
House near Ilminster in Somerset
within sight of the A303 has
weekends on The Romans in the
South-West; Identifying Roman
Artifacts; Reconstructing Buildings
and Roman Britain through
Roman Literature. All are informal,
delivered by an enthusiast, and
suitable for beginners and the
more knowledgeable. There is
plenty of opportunity to continue
the discussion late into the night
over a drink (or several).

Madingley Hall, Cambridge – study
the Boudican rebellion from a
native perspective in May 2006 in a
more collegiate atmosphere –
01954 280399.
www.cont-ed.cam.ac.uk.

More academic are Oxford
University’s weekends at Rewley
House when a panel of academics
share their thoughts with you.
Next April 21st–23rd there is a
weekend on Regionality in Roman
Britain. From the preliminary flyer
this would seem to look at how far
Roman Britain is best viewed as a
series of different regions or tribes
– rather than a country.

Phone 01865 270380 for more
information – or see
www.conted.ox.ac.uk.

Full details of all these colleges can
be found on the Adult Residential
Colleges website
www.arca.uk.net/colleges.html.

Rebecca Newman.
THE TRAVELLER’S ITINERARY

Dear Editor,

My wife and I travel quite often to Germany and always finish our stay with a spell on the River Mosel. We have become friendly with quite a few wine growers in the area; one especially, Klaus Frick, who has extensive vineyards in Mehring. His son, also Klaus, decided to build a restaurant and pension on his land, and upon clearing the site he came across the foundations and remains of a Roman Villa. After notifying the local council in Trier about the find, the council took the site over and rebuilt and restored the villa. Klaus found an alternative plot for his restaurant (next door) and aptly called it the ‘Roemer Villa’.

The rebuilt and restored villa at Mehring.
Photo: © Allen Farnworth.

Just a few of the marvellous sites in this area to visit.
Sincerely yours,
Allen Farnworth.

Dear Editor,

After having explored a lot of the major sites of the Roman Empire, I am now concentrating on the lesser known areas.

Last year I was in Algeciras, Spain,

Some of the Moorish remains at Algeciras, Spain.
Photo: © Allen Farnworth.

and apart from the moorish remains in the town I found two little gems, one just along the coast to the west at Bologna (Baelo Claudia), and the other to the east towards Gibraltar at Carteya (Colonia Libertinorum Cartea).

Hope you find the photos useful; I also have many more along the region of the ‘Limes’ in Germany, and places of interest in Jordon, Tunisia, Italy, France and Switzerland, etc.

Yours sincerely,
Allen Farnworth.

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ROMAN ROOF TIMBERS DISPLAYED

Roof timbers from a structure believed to have been a Roman brewery have been conserved and mounted for display in Ipswich Museum. The timbers are thought to date from about AD 200 and were preserved in waterlogged soil near Oakley in the north of Suffolk. They were discovered in 1994 and sent to Norway for freeze drying and then impregnated with carbo-wax. They are believed to be a unique survival. The structure that they once roofed is thought to have been a maltings or brewery because of the finds discovered on site during the timbers’ excavation.

Evening Star 01.11.2004.
A hoard of silver and bronze Roman coins has been unearthed in a Leicestershire field. The find, of 29 silver denarii and two bronze coins, was made in a field close to Cadby, near Market Bosworth, by metal detecting enthusiast John Liddle.

"This is a really nice hoard. The coins are very pure silver and they are very well preserved. They are about the size of a penny, but very thick. The majority of them would have been minted in Rome, and to put things in perspective they would have probably been worth a soldier's wage for the month. We are not talking about cash which would have just slipped out of a wallet."

The find now has to be independently valued by The Treasure Valuation Committee, but Mr. Leins said similar individual pieces had been worth about £30 each.

Once the hoard has been valued, Leicestershire County Council will have to decide if it wishes to buy the coins for display and the value will be split between Mr. Liddle and the landowner.

Leicester Mercury – 03.12.2004

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THE ROMANS

What drove Imperial Rome?
Was it the constant search for power to win command of other men, controlling them for tunnel purpose of battle, conquest, flow of wealth to feed and fortify a master race?

Was it the growth of empire, the vision of an inland sea surrounded by a wall of rule with evenhanded law that gives its citizens full freedom rights and slaves at least a regulated role?

Could it again have been the search for glory and a name that would bestride the centuries, not for corruption or the vices displayed by some, but for a stage in stately progress to a world at peace?

Were they perhaps inspired by confluence of faint beliefs in all pit gods of peace and war, of fortune, health, fertility, or greater overarching hope of Saviour Man to lift and guide this earth?

Was there a fluid blend, as tributaries to a broadening stream, of hard ambition, visionary justice, unfailing comforts, and the leisured spread of culture with its thousand benefits to the barbarian neighbours of the land?

This is as I perceive it: a favoured race, aware of skills beyond the rest, who, restless, strove to magnify their merit base, achieved, o'erreached, and yet bequeathed their powerful vision to posterity.

David Jardine
1999

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THE STAFFORDSHIRE MOORLANDS PATERA ACQUIRED FOR THE NATION

A Roman patera or pan discovered by Kevin Blackburn, a metal detectorist, in the Staffordshire Moorlands has been jointly acquired by the British Museum, The Potteries Museum and Art Gallery, Stoke on Trent, and the Tullie House Museum and Art Gallery, Carlisle.

The bronze pan dates from the second century AD and is elaborately decorated with Celtic style motifs, enlivened with coloured enamels. The most important feature of the decoration, however, is its inscription bearing the names of four ancient forts from the western end of Hadrian's Wall. Two other such 'Souvenir' paterae or pans have been found previously. These are the Rudge Cup, discovered in Wiltshire in 1725 and the Amiens Patera, that was found in France in 1949. The new pan also bears the name Aelius Draco for whom it was presumably made. His name suggests that he or his family originated in the Eastern, Greek speaking, part of the Empire.

Times – 17.08.2005

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A coin dating from the rule of the emperor Marcus Aurelius (AD 161 to 180). The coin is marked 'Antoninus', the name of Marcus's father, in keeping with customs of the time.