ARA members assemble at the Roman lighthouse at Dover Castle, 17th August 2009, on the first of at least three tours covering the Roman forts of the Saxon Shore. View looking north with the Saxon church of St. Mary-in-Castro to the right and the great tower of the castle in the distance to the left.

Photo: © Grahame Soffe.
EDITORIAL

Here is the 23rd edition of *ARA NEWS*, just in time for Easter.

The cover picture is of the Dover *pharos* which featured in the Long Weekend Summer Tour – Forts of the Saxon Shore part 1. You can book for part 2 of this tour using the Booking Form on page 15 with the full itinerary on page 27. The other Booking Forms are also in the centre, and, as always, photocopies are quite acceptable if you do not wish to adulterate your copy of the magazine.

There is an article on the Great North Museum at Newcastle, with a number of excellent illustrations. Member Rebecca Newman, gives us a travelogue of her visit to Algeria, again illustrated with excellent pictures.

The Grosvenor Museum at Chester have updated some of their Roman display and cite the original discovery of a cauldron by Professor Newstead during excavations between 1922 and 1935 and how it has been displayed over the years, culminating in its modern display today.

Another member, Nich Hogben, has supplied an intriguing article on the Roman ‘Shore Fort’ of Alderney. It has seen many metamorphoses over the centuries to attain its current form and use, all ably described and illustrated by Nich.

Members will be pleased to learn that the ARA now has a new Honorary President, Professor John Wilkes, and our Chairman, Grahame Soffe, has produced a potted history and introduction for those of us not in the academic mainstream. We welcome such a prominent archaeologist for our figurehead.

The remainder of the magazine contains various reports – The Treasurer’s Report, a report on a Conference which took place in Oxford in February on the Romano-British Countryside, and, most importantly, the Discussion Forum document, where we are endeavouring to cultivate greater assistance for some of the routine jobs currently carried out by a small number of people – generally the Trustees – who work hard to keep the Association afloat.

I hope I’ve said enough to whet your appetite for a good read, but don’t forget to get your Tour Bookings in early, as there is likely to be a big demand, as always.

David Gollins,
Editor – *ARA NEWS*.
The 2009 Hadrian’s Wall Pilgrimage visited the newly opened Great North Museum in Newcastle. It is situated in an impressive building close to the Civic Centre and the shopping area of central Newcastle. ARA members who knew the old Museum of Antiquities will recognise the Roman and Anglo-Saxon material that has been moved to the new museum (Figures 1, 2 and 3).

The museum designers have been given lots of space in which to display the Roman inscriptions and artifacts. The exhibits and the now almost compulsory talking heads, video and computer displays are wrapped around a snake like illuminated track that crosses the display area. Many pilgrims only gradually realised that this snake is in fact a representation of the Wall. I say ‘only gradually realised’ because the labelling on this representation is extremely poor. Information was obviously not allowed to get in the way of design. Few of the forts, turrets and milecastles on the snake are named or numbered. Pilgrims spent a few merry minutes trying to work out which fort was which and we pilgrims were supposed to know the Wall! One of the few forts to be labelled was Carvoran which because of the joys of computer spell check has been labelled ‘Caravan’. Sad that no-one (do they still have curators in new look museums?) seems to have noticed or is bothered enough to make a correction.

In spite of all the space in the new museum the much loved reconstruction of the Mithreum at the Museum of Antiquities has gone to be replaced with an audio-visual display. Sad to see it go – it was a lovely example of an old museum culture which Chesters Museum continues to encapsulate so well (Fig. 4).

Some of the inscription stones are tucked away behind pillars and you
have to do quite a lot of bending down and moving about to match up the (tiny) numbers next to the inscriptions with the panels telling you about the inscriptions and where they are from (Fig. 5). Newcomers wishing to make sense of Hadrian’s Wall would do better to visit the museums just down the road at WallSEND and South Shields.

Some of the stunning Anglo-Saxon stonework is beautifully lit. Not Roman, but it was a wonder to behold. But pilgrims were appalled that even though the Great North Museum has been open for some time the Curators or designers have not labelled any of the Anglo-Saxon stonework (Fig. 6). These items are of British, European and World importance and deserve better. I see from my 1974 Guide to the Museum of Antiquities that some of the stonework comes from the Rothbury Cross. Why no labels for these important pieces of sculpture?

One highlight of our museum visit was our welcome from the University of Northumbria’s Pro-Vice Chancellor who sang for us without a script all the verses of ‘When Geordie built the Wall’. Now there is a topic for a video talking head.

There is a museum shop where you can buy lots of jolly things like toy dinosaurs, but only one book on things Roman – no evidence of the dozens of books available on Roman Britain in general and Hadrian’s Wall in particular. A missed opportunity and a great disappointment for ARA members and pilgrims for whom buying books seems to be an essential part of an ARA visit or the Pilgrimage to Hadrian’s Wall.

Inevitably, I and other pilgrims found ourselves comparing the Great North Museum with other museums we visited along the Wall. For good displays on Hadrian’s Wall you still cannot beat the Senhouse Museum in Maryport, the Tullie House Museum in Carlisle and the museums at Birdoswald, Vindolanda, Corbridge, WallSEND and South Shields – all with clearly labelled displays and all with lots of books for sale. The Pilgrimage also visited Chester’s Museum where the internal walls have been given a new coat of paint so the inscription stones now have a reddish backdrop. There was general agreement that the stones look really good against the new colour.

Anne WOollett.

Further Information appertaining to Figure 3 – the Mithraic Altar.

On the front of the capital is a bust of Sol carved in low relief in a roundel. He wears a radiate crown of seven rays and a cloak, which is fastened on his left shoulder. A whip protrudes from the roundel as though held in his right hand. The inscription reads: D(eo) Soli / Herion / v(otum) l(ibens) m(erito). [To the Sun-god, Herion willingly and deservedly made this vow]. Herion, as his name shows, must have been an oriental, possibly a trader in the vicus, or possibly a freedman, or an army officer or civilian official.

Graham Soffe.

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL ROUND-UP**

**BRITAIN’S OLDEST ROMAN COIN DISCOVERED**

A silver denarius minted by the Roman Republic in 211 BC has been identified amongst the 5,000 coins discovered some years ago during an excavation at Hallaton in Leicestershire. The site of the discovery is believed to have been a Late Iron Age shrine, built by the Corieltavi tribe. As the coin is somewhat worn it has been suggested that it was old by the time it reached Britain, but some specialists believe that Roman coinage was finding its way to Britain before the invasion by way of trade and diplomacy. If this is true it suggests that the East Midlands was not so much of a backwater during this period as is generally believed, but already had contact with Rome. The value of the coin around the time of the conquest would have been about a day’s wages for a soldier or unskilled worker.
ROMANS, POLICE CARS AND FOOTBALL FANS
Incidents of travel in Algeria with Rebecca Newman

Flashing blue lights, wailing sirens, motorcycle outliers and football fans! Wait a minute – what have these got to do with a tour of Roman sites in Algeria? Quite a lot actually. Have you ever been the centre of a police escort? We had one for the whole fortnight. It’s a slightly frightening situation, even though you realise it is the Algerian government’s attempt to make tourists feel safe. Indeed I felt safe the whole trip, except when the coach was following the police car on the wrong side of the road, through a very narrow gap in the two streams of traffic, and often forcing drivers on the correct side of the road onto the hard shoulder. And the football fans? Let’s put football in its proper place at the end, and consider the Roman sites.

A splendid collection of sites in attractive countryside providing a complete range of lifestyles in the Roman Empire – mainly in Numidia and Mauretania Caesarea. There are probably more Roman sites to see than any country except Italy and Turkey. Most of the sites are very extensive with considerable standing remains, but are little-known with few other tourists. The down side is that distances are considerable, and long days on the coach are inevitable. Internal flights are available, but are likely to involve long waits at airports, where there seems to be a relaxed attitude to punctuality. We also visited spectacular sites that remind us of Algeria’s history before and after the Romans – Punic, Berber, Massinissa, Jugurtha, Vandal, Augustine of Hippo, Donatists, Byzantines, Marindits, Almohads, Almoravids, Spanish crusaders, Turks, French. We visited 14 Roman sites. We must have missed at least as many – especially Theveste (Tebessa), and the Fossatum Africanum. This was particularly unfortunate as Theveste is a large and very photogenic site. But unless you are allergic to non-Roman history sites such as Oran and Tlemcen, these can be strongly recommended to give a rounded picture of the country’s history. Did you know Algeria was the venue of the fifth Crusade starting in AD 1505 with a private army organised and paid for by a Spanish Cardinal, which captured Oran in AD 1509?

Fittingly we began our tour with a Numidian tomb, known wrongly as the Tomb of the Christian because of the presence of what seem to be Latin crosses. The person buried there is unknown. Our first Roman site was Iol Caesarea (modern Cherchell), excavated by Tim Potter. Archaeologists’ conclusions are likely to be changed by subsequent excavations. He located the Forum on the seafront, but a more probable site has been found inland. There is also a theatre converted to an amphitheatre. Unfortunately the Museum, which has several splendid mosaics, was closed for refurbishment.

Tipasa has a very photogenic setting next to the sea. It seems photography is not allowed on sites, but our guide had a special Government authorisation. The rules may change, but check this with your tour company if you are going. Individual travel is not really feasible at present. The site is notable for two Punic-Roman temples, a Forum and a Byzantine Basilica both overlooking the sea. There are luxurious town houses closed to the Forum, but also near to a garum factory! – so much for Roman town-planning. We spent so long admiring the site we did not have time to visit the Museum. Time-keeping was not helped by lunches which are inevitably time-consuming. This is perhaps not surprising in an Arab country with a strong French tradition. Our guide knew all the best restaurants, as well as being archaeologically well-informed. Restaurants were generally very good, except that the fresh fish was often too bland. Wines are variable, but usually palatable, but not served in all hotels and restaurants. Mineral water is readily available. Hotels were generally comfortable, usually international in style with very ornate reception areas. But almost all had problems – particularly with the plumbing. We concluded that in Algeria you can’t judge a hotel by its first appearance.

The next Roman site was Hippo Regius (Annaba), after a three day excursion to Oran, Berber and Islamic sites in the west (Fig. 1). St. Augustine of Hippo has an ornate memorial Basilica built in a nineteenth century Baroque style which dominates the view from the Roman Forum. Appropriate, as he bestrides Byzantine religious history in many ways, as a bishop and theologian and is still influential today. He visited most towns in Numidia and Mauretania Caesariensis. Most sites therefore have Christian Basilicas and Byzantine forts. The Romans may have started the fashion for extravagant display in the town where the proconsul C. Paccius Constantinus dedicated the enormous Forum in AD 78 – 76 metres long by 42 metres wide. To record this he carved a dedication in the pavement of the Forum, right across the middle in very large letters (Fig. 2).

The site archaeologist gave us a complete tour of the site and Museum. Like all those we saw, it has splendid collections, particularly the mosaics, and the pre-Roman stelae. Alas, we couldn’t take photos inside this or any other museum. I believe they are worried by the risk of ‘theft to order’ if private collectors know what the museums contain. It was significant that each room of the museum was unlocked for us, and relocked.

Fig. 1. Hippo Regius – villas. Photo: © Rebecca Newman.
afterwards. Calama (Guelma) has a complete small theatre, but almost completely reconstructed. There is also as at most sites many stelae, usually dedicated to Baal (romanised to Saturn) (Fig. 3).

The next day was a long drive to Mascula (Khencela). Our first stop was Madauros (M’Daourouch). This is the birthplace of Apuleius who wrote ‘The Golden Ass’ and of the grammarians Nonius Marcellus and Maximus. It was famous for its schools, where St. Augustine (yes him again) was educated. It is known to have produced many martyrs as well as three bishops between AD 340 and 490. The town was of Numidian origin, but settled by veterans in the Flavian period, and later given the status of a colony. It grew rich due to its location in very fertile oil olive country at an altitude of over 900 m. The remains are very extensive with olive presses in virtually every building. It has two large adjacent bathing establishments – for summer and winter. Nearby domestic houses have been amalgamated and converted into a large baptistery at basement level. The theatre is unusual in several respects. It was built with the stage, requiring masonry support, higher up the slope than the auditorium. No wonder it cost its donor no less than 375,000 sestertes. On the other hand it shared a portico with the Forum. It must have been well built – it was converted into a Byzantine fort (Fig. 4).

After lunch Thuburiscu Numidarum (Khamissa). Another major site – over 65 hectares – but even less well-known than Madauros. Probably originally an indigenous capital it became a municipium by AD 100 and a colony by AD 270. It is where the African chief Tacfarinas was killed in AD 25 by the proconsul Dolabella after a local revolt by, according to a rather disapproving Tacitus, little more than a bunch of Muslim brigands, and he thought it should not have taken the Romans eight years to put down. Not the last to underestimate local resistance to occupation! It contains ‘one of the most beautiful and best-preserved theatres in Africa’ according to the Princeton Encyclopaedia of Classical Sites. Perhaps – but there are many rivals. Not by accident immediately adjacent is a monumental water feature, originally presided over by large statues of Poseidon and Hygeia – now in Calama Museum. This is the source of the local river. It includes a cultic building, and is clear evidence of cultic continuity from Numidian to Roman times. There are two forums – the older one seems inconveniently to be on two levels (Fig. 5). The new Forum, on level ground, also has its quota of Imperial arches, with luxurious town houses not far away. This, like most Roman towns in Algeria, does not follow a standard urban plan. Thamugadi (Timgad) and Lambaesis seem to be the only ones to do so.

A very long drive, so it was after dark that we arrived in Khencela to the most extraordinary hotel. It was formerly a large Post Office regional headquarters, according to the sign on the grand entrance. Few of us believed this and during dinner...
rumours were rife – some kind of party re-education establishment seemed to be the consensus. All previous fixtures and fittings had been removed. Instead, curtains were hung to turn rooms of awkward shape into makeshift bedrooms. The bathrooms were rather wet, and the plumbing worked reluctantly if at all.

But the family who ran the hotel were so enthusiastic and eager to please – "TV doesn't work? Here's another instantly" – that we quickly stopped worrying, and enjoyed its friendly but quaint character.

Next day a visit to the Roman baths of Macula – but these were still used. The locals didn't turn a hair – not even when all of us – even the men – went to examine statues in the Women's Baths. By mid-morning we had arrived at Thamgaudi, described by Hilaire Belloc as the town the Romans built because life further south would be unnatural to their race (Fig. 6). The Romans never fully conquered the land beyond the Aures Mountains – there were Army outposts in the burning desert, e.g. Castellum Dimmidi – but legionary coloniae such as Thamgaudi and forts such as Lambaesis, which are more obviously Roman than other Algerian towns, were clearly intended to demonstrate Roman style civilisation to those beyond the limits. And Thamgaudi demonstrates how luxurious it could be – summed up perhaps in the Forum with a board game carved into the colonnade portico, and nearby the slogan also incised into the pavement ‘Venari, Lavari, Ludere Ridere, Hoc est Vivere’ ['to hunt, to bathe, to play, to laugh – that's life!'].

On to Lambaesis – just like the many pictures you have seen. It couldn't be more like a Roman fort. The museum was as usual fantastic, and there was an outdoor area where photographs were allowed. But to cut down your editor's work I will move swiftly to less familiar but equally picturesque sites. First to Medracen with third century BC pre-Roman Palaeoiberber conical mausoleum (Fig. 7), then onto Dana Veteranorum (Zana), another colony that grew rich on olives, with a splendidly decorated arch of Marcus Aurelius. Our overnight stop was at Cirta (Constantine) where there are few visible remains, as it is a busy modern town, but there is another very good museum. The French built a war monument that looks very Roman. The next morning was at Castellum Tidditanorum (Tiddis) – amazing topography as it was built up the side of a 45% slope (Fig. 8).

It is also vivid red and the local clay made its potters famous. Overnight in Sitifis (Setif) and the whole of the next day at Cuicul (Djemila). This site is well worth a whole day – of course they all are, but this site and Tiddis were the favourites in our party. Cuicul is another irregular Punic design but has virtually everything a Roman city should have – two Byzantine Basilicas side by side, a Baptistery (Fig. 9), a forum, a theatre, several market places, luxury villas, extravagant temples and arches dedicated to Septimus Severus and Caracalla all in a beautiful setting (Fig. 10). The next morning a short visit to Setif Museum which has a splendid Dionysus mosaic, and this has been very well restored. It came back on public display just one week before we arrived. Definitely no photos!

Most of the day was a very long drive to Algiers – including a showing of the classic film 'The Battle for Algiers'. One for the boys; it's definitely not for the squeamish – even the censored version. Happily I slept through most of it. We arrived in Algiers at 5.30 just before the football match. This was a needle match – a play-off to determine if Algeria or Egypt qualified for the World Cup. It caused a diplomatic stand-off, and I believe this was even reported on English news bulletins.
Football is extremely important in both countries. The unemployment rate is so high there's little else to do. Football fever was intense the whole fortnight we were there - we learnt not to say in English or 'Vive L’Algerie'. It worked like a magic spell in making friends. The Algerians won the play-off through, I believe, a disputed goal. The next day was like Carnival in Rio. The entire population of Algiers seemed to be endlessly driving around the city perched precariously half-out of the car window to show off, wearing outlandish versions of the Algerian flag, honking their horns non-stop. We toured Islamic Algiers in the morning but after lunch the traffic was gridlocked. After two hours in the coach we had only covered a mile, and the road to the Museum was impassable even with a police car wailing its siren. So we never got to the Museum. Well, I want to go back soon, anyway - there are so many sites in beautiful or awe-inspiring scenery.

Guides and Picture Books

There is no good modern book in English about these sites. There are several excellent coffee-table guides with lots of splendid colour photographs, including museum exhibits. These are published in France, so written in French. They are not expensive and can be obtained through Amazon. The best in English is a book by Philip Parker called 'The Empire Stops Here' (2009, Jonathan Cape) which contains informative vignettes - but only for a few sites.

Further information can be obtained from: <rebecca_asis@yahoo.co.uk>

I can send details of books by e-mail. If you would like to see more pictures than could be included in the article please e-mail <rebecca_asis@yahoo.co.uk> indicating the sort of photos you want - specific sites, landscapes, building close-ups, stelae, local interest, or a mixture. I can send a selection by e-mail, or on a flash drive (memory stick) or CD if you don't have broadband.

Rebecca Newman.

HAS NERO’S REVOLVING BANQUETING HOUSE BEEN DISCOVERED?

Archaeologists in Rome working in the rooms of Nero's Domus Aurea or Golden House believe they have discovered the remains of his fabled revolving dining room. The Roman historian Suetonius, described the room in his Lives of the Caesars as circular and revolving night and day in imitation of the celestial bodies. The ceiling is said to have had areas of fretted ivory with retractable panels from which flowers and perfumes could be rained on the guests. The present find on the Palatine hill consists of part of a circular room supported by a brick pillar with a diameter of more than 13 feet (4 metres). It is believed that a wooden floor rested on this circular pillar and on several rotating spheres, that were powered by channelled water. This may have been the mechanism by which the room turned. Possibly the central pillar was where Nero's couch was placed. He was like the Sun God found at the centre of mosaics and his guests revolved around him. The dig so far has turned up the foundations of the room, the possible rotating mechanism underneath and part of an attached space believed to be the kitchens.

The Golden House spread over an enormous area of the ancient city, but was either swept away or adapted on Nero's overthrow. The room on the Palatine hill would have enjoyed panoramic views across the city.

Rome's Commissioner for Archaeology has announced that funds would be made available to permit further investigation to assist archaeologists in deciding whether this is indeed the famous revolving room.

NEW EXCAVATIONS AT ARBEIA ROMAN FORT

Excavations in the first new area to be opened up for investigation at Arbeia Roman fort, South Shields, for 25 years have concentrated on a section just outside of the south-west corner of the military base. The aim was to locate the collapsed remains of the fort wall, the defensive ditches and buildings belonging to the civilian settlement.

Archaeological finds reported so far included a Roman 'key-ring', which was literally a finger ring which doubled as a key. A stone wall suggesting the presence of a civilian building outside the fort walls was also unearthed.

Newcastle Evening Chronicle - 18.06.2009
The Shields Gazette - 08.09.2009
TREASURER'S REPORT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2009

BIGNOR ROMAN VILLA

The September issue of ARA NEWS (22) contained a highlighted information panel on page 21 intimating that the Bignor villa may not be re-opening in 2010. The future of the Bignor villa was discussed at great length by the Tupper family, who have maintained the site for 200 years, and the decision was made to bring total management of the villa under family control. The new management will be re-opening the villa on 1st March 2010 and intend to secure the foreseeable future of the site for everybody to enjoy. Several long-term projects are underway to improve conservation, interpretation, educational events and visitor facilities, offering a very exciting future.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Roman Army School
17th to 21st April 2010
held at Durham University

A residential course meeting open to anyone interested in the Roman Army. Non-residential places also available. The theme is: Enemies of Rome. For further details see:

www.hadriansociety.com

GILT GLASS TESSERAE

I am currently investigating the composition and construction of eleven gilt glass tesserae found at the Roman villa at Southwick, Sussex. As far as I know, the only other gilt glass tesserae found in the UK are isolated examples from Lincoln (two), London (two) and Dunadd (one). These were clearly not intended to be walked upon.

Does anyone know of any similar tesserae from elsewhere in Britain? If so, would they kindly let me know how I can obtain information about them by contacting me:

jeffery.leigh@sky.com
The subject of this event at Oxford University’s Rewley House was the new light thrown on the 90% of the population that did not live in villas or towns. The underlying theme was the opportunities provided by recent advances such as aerial mapping, LiDAR, environmental data, the new information from developer funded archaeology and the Portable Antiquities Scheme. Paradoxically the new data raises many new questions and does not answer known problems. The key message of the conference was that we need to write more selective regional histories, and that the search for underlying patterns may be unproductive.

David Mattingly believes Roman rule was as much a burden as a benefit for most non-elite residents. Soldiers may have been frequent unwelcome visitors accompanying the tax-collector. But the consequences of Roman rule differed between regions. Thus the absence of villas in the territories of the Iceni and Silures suggests strict imperial control following rebellions. There may have been imperial interests in the Cotswolds judging from the number of very large villas or estates such as Turwdian and Gatcombe. Cornwall was probably exploited, rather than populated, by the Romans for its mineral resources, and controlled by forts such as the recent discoveries at Restormel and Calstock.

Jeremy Taylor suggested excavations reinforced the old theory of significant Romanisation, and that it is necessary to combine all kinds of evidence. These can suggest regional differences; e.g. the frequency of large regional settlements in Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire, compared with the Solway Plain where there are only a few small settlements.

Cathy Stoertz reviewed the potential, and problems, of aerial mapping using the Cotswolds as an example. She identified many more sites, but interpretation from morphology alone was risky. Thus many banjo enclosures have been found close to Barnsley Park Roman villa, but it is not clear if and how these relate to each other and the villa. Dorn near Moreton-in-Marsh is shaped like a fort but there is no evidence of military activity. It may be an official centre for tax collection.

Paul Booth also stressed the diversity of settlement types in the Thames Valley, which enable a more nuanced assessment of the impact of the Romans on the existing Iron Age landscapes. Many sites continue and some people get rich – the Didcot hoards. Other sites disappear or are replaced; e.g. Thornhill Farm around AD 120 by the Roman villa at Claydon Pike. The fate of the farm workers is unknown.

Mark Hinman noted that new technology had led to the identification of dense development in areas previously considered empty, such as the Cambridgeshire Claylands. Thus at Caldecote Highfields Iron Age banjos were respected by the Romans. Around Cambourne there was a settlement every half-kilometre, but no clear patterns can be identified. Yvonne Boutwood noted that nearly 3,000 new sites had been recorded in the vicinity of Hadrian’s Wall by the English Heritage National Aerial Mapping programme using aerial photography, which also required further study. Roger White summarised the Wroxeter Hinterland Survey. After dinner Barry Cunliffe reminded us of the wealth demonstrated in Wessex villas achieved by Roman advances in grain-drying and water-milling technology.

On Sunday, Mike Fulford provided a review of Roman industry in rural areas. Marijke Van der Veen reviewed the potential and problems of environmental data. She suggested 50 new foods were introduced by the Romans. The military had a predilection for herbs, whereas Londoners were fond of exotic fruit and nuts. In most rural areas new vegetables and wild fruits were popular, but there was no correlation between food consumption and type of rural site. Finally Chris Gosden bucked the trend by seeking – not very successfully – to find parallels between the Bronze and Iron Ages, the Roman era and the nineteenth century. He left us to speculate on the relationship between pre-Roman trackways and nearby parallel Roman roads.

Rebecca Newman.

N.B. This is necessarily a short report. For references and perhaps a fuller report contact the author at: <rebecca_isis@yahoo.co.uk>

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**THE ERMINES STREET GUARD**

For those members interested in Roman military history they might like to know the Guard display dates for 2010.

- **April 18th**: BATH – Displays at the Royal Crescent
- **May 1st and 2nd**: FISHBOURNE ROMAN PALACE, Chichester, Sussex
- **May 30th and 31st**: WROXETER ROMAN CITY, Shropshire (EH)
- **June 25th to 28th**: MARLE, FRANCE (CAV)
- **July 17th and 18th**: KELMARSH HALL – Festival of History
- **July 31st/August 1st**: LOGGERHEADS COUNTRY PARK
- **August 28th to 30th**: HOUSESTEPS ROMAN FORT, Hadrian’s Wall (EH)
- **September 11th and 12th**: GLOUCESTER – (to be confirmed)
- **September 24th to 27th**: AALEN, GERMANY

**KEY:** (EH) = English Heritage Event, (CAV) = Addition of two fully equipped Roman Cavalrymen

Any member requiring further details of the Society should contact

Guard Headquarters on: 01452 862235 or by e-mail: TheESG@aol.com
The Grosvenor Museum in Chester holds a wealth of evidence for life in the Roman fortress of Deva in its collections. There are archives from sites across the city, chance finds by local residents and, of course, the internationally important collection of sculpted and inscribed stones discovered in the north wall of the city in the late nineteenth century. Two galleries in the museum are dedicated to the display of these artifacts – the Newstead Gallery, named after Professor Robert Newstead, the first Curator of the museum, displaying Roman archaeology and the Webster Gallery, named after Graham Webster, another illustrious and well-loved Curator, housing the Roman stones.

Fig. 1. Professor Newstead excavating a trench in Deanery Field. Photo © Grosvenor Museum.

Sadly, due to a lack of space, a common complaint in most museums, it is only possible for a small proportion of the collection to be displayed permanently, though thanks to the generosity of the Association for Roman Archaeology and the expertise of York Archaeological Trust conservators, one fascinating object, a second century bronze cauldron, has been put back on display after a long spell in the stores.

The cauldron was discovered by Professor Newstead early in the twentieth century at Deanery Field. Newstead was a talented Natural Historian and was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society for his work on the tsetse fly, but following his retirement from the University of Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine, he dedicated his spare time to the archaeological excavation of sites across Chester. Deanery Field, in the north east angle of the Roman fortress, was one of his most important and most extensively excavated sites. He worked on site, often alone or with the help of one labourer, between 1922 and 1935 (Figs.1 and 2).

During the excavations, two blocks of narrow buildings with stone walls and massive foundations were uncovered. These remains were still in situ allowing Newstead to document their internal layout and correctly identify the buildings as barrack blocks of the Roman legionaries.

The site yielded, along with the more common pottery, bone and coin finds, a hoard of ballista shot, pieces of chainmail armour and numerous fragments of military metalwork, beautifully decorated wall plaster and a gaming board and 28 counters.

The cauldron was discovered by Professor Newstead in Room 6 of barrack block B (Fig. 3). It was squashed flat and heavily corroded when it was taken from the ground, but large sections of the metal maintained their flexibility and after cleaning it was possible to straighten the folds out and restore the vessel to its original shape.

Formed from a single sheet of paper-thin bronze, the cauldron is hemispherical, bulging slightly below the rim, and has been repaired with rivets and patches 14 times in antiquity, clearly showing it was a valued piece of equipment.

There are few surviving clues as to how the cauldron was suspended. Newstead himself believed that it once had a strong
metal lip around the top which may have held rings for suspension and cited other examples which had recently been found at Wotton and Oxford\textsuperscript{1}. He also noted that there were strong similarities with hemispherical cauldrons from Ireland, though these were always made from several sheets of bronze riveted together.

Newstead wrote in his report: 

"Though our find is sadly imperfect, it seems to belong to the hemispherical class of cauldrons of the Late Bronze Age or Early Iron Age... Whether or not our vessel is a survival of the late Hallstattian or of the La Tene period, to which the majority of the cauldrons found in this country seem to belong, is not quite clear, chiefly because of its association with Roman material finds belonging to the late second century. In this connection the point to emphasise is that similar discoveries of bronze vessels of Early British origin have been found elsewhere in Britain in association with Roman objects".\textsuperscript{2}

The cauldron was sent for analysis at Liverpool University Department of Metallurgy where they found it was 89.9% copper, 9.7% tin and 0.4% lead – practically the same composition as modern-day gun metal.

It was then taken to the Grosvenor Museum where it was fixed onto a metal frame with wire and gaps in the surface of the cauldron were filled in with coloured card. It was displayed in the gallery for some time but was eventually taken from display and replaced with new finds from sites around Chester.

It was put away in the museum stores where it remained until 2008 when an audit of the collection, coupled with work on a new temporary exhibition looking at the life and work of Professor Newstead, brought it back to light.

Though the cauldron was not in top condition – the corroding steel frame had pulled the cauldron out of shape, and the coloured paper had degraded, making the cauldron look shabby – it was swiftly identified as a key object in the collections and one the museum would aim to put back on display following the necessary conservation work (Fig. 4).

Thanks to a grant from the 

Chester. The gallery was originally installed by Dr. Webster in the 1950’s, combining local finds with graphic information on Roman Britain and the Roman army to create an imaginative new type of display. For more than two generations the Newstead Gallery has continued to bring the Roman world alive for visitors to the Grosvenor Museum.

New development plans maintain the original focus of Dr. Webster in interpreting and communicating Roman archaeology to visitors, but are looking to improve the quality of the displays and interpretation by installing new cases and panels. One of our major aims is to enhance the displays by exhibiting artifacts, currently held in storage, which have been uncovered in the many years since the original gallery was installed.

This will all take time and money and additional funding is currently being sought to realize the whole project. In the meantime, thanks to the money given by The Association for Roman Archaeology from the Graham Webster Fund, new artifacts, including the conserved cauldron, are being brought out of storage for display, to add even more to visitor’s experience of Roman Chester.

NOTES:

1. Newstead, R., Excavations at the Deanery Field, Chester, 1928 (1931), p 144.

Elizabeth Royle
Keeper of Early History
Grosvenor Museum
Cheshire West and Chester Council.
ALDERNEY’S ‘SHORE FORT’

The small fort in Alderney, known locally as the Nunnery, is a puzzle. Alderney was inhabited during the Roman period. The Nunnery looks like a Roman fortlet or maybe a signalling tower. But is it a Shore Fort?

Alderney is the third largest Channel Island, three and a half miles long and between half and one and a half miles wide. Strong tidal races separate the island from France, which is only eight miles away. Alderney is 24 miles north-east of Guernsey (Fig. 1).

![Fig. 1. Map of the Channel Islands. Map © Nick Hagben.](image)

Kendrick (1928) recorded many pre-Roman sites in Alderney; few have survived. There is a dolmen at the western, higher end of the island, and a late Bronze Age/early Iron Age pottery-making site near Longis Common. Both were excavated and are well maintained by the Alderney Society, with finds on display in Alderney’s museum.

The island’s strategic value is shown by its history of fortification. Construction of Essex Castle started in the mid-sixteenth century, on a hill which might have been the site of a c.850 BC promontory fort (Johnson 1981, 133; Sebire 2005, 101). Coastal forts were built by the British during World War invasion from France in the 1850s. The Germans built concrete gun emplacements and bunkers during the Second World War occupation of the Channel Islands.

EVIDENCE FOR ROMAN PERIOD OCCUPATION

The Channel Islands were on a trade route between north-west Gaul and southern Britain; bronze hoards in the Channel Islands suggest the route had been in use since the Late Bronze Age (Sebire 2005, 97-8). Roman period evidence for the trade route was found at Fishbourne Roman villa: water-worn boulders (probably ballast) found there include stones from Alderney, Guernsey, Jersey, Britanny and Cornwall.

Excavations in Guernsey suggest that St. Peter Port, Guernsey was an important port from the first to fourth centuries AD. Two Roman period quayside warehouses, with a small smelting complex containing coin moulds (probably for counterfeiting) and a cremation burial, were excavated from 1983 to 1985; substantial amounts of pottery from Gaul, Spain, the Rhineland and Britain were found. Buildings excavated from 1996 at a second site included another smelting furnace; finds included pottery from Gaul and the Rhineland, and amphora sherds from Spain. Remains of Roman shipping, including the substantial Gallo-Roman ship known as Guernsey I (or locally, Asterix), were recovered in and near the current harbour.

On Jersey’s north-west coast is Le Pinacle, a pinnacle joined to the cliff by a semi-circle shaped slope. The land at the bottom of the slope, over which the pinnacle towers, shows Neolithic, Early Bronze Age, Late Bronze Age and Iron Age occupation. There are also the foundations of a rectangular 11 metre by 9 metre Roman period structure with two concentric walls; while no dedicatory objects were found, it is commonly assumed to be a Romano-Celtic temple. An alternative theory, that it was a guardhouse for a signal post on top of Le Pinacle (Hawkes 1937, 171), seems unlikely to me – Le Pinacle is no higher than the surrounding cliffs (from which you descend to reach it) and would be dangerous to climb.

There is substantial evidence for a Roman settlement on Alderney's Longis Common. Guernsey archaeologist John Lukis wrote in 1846 that he was convinced there was a Roman town at Longis Bay (Kendrick 1928, 254). Kendrick also records ‘at the foot of the rising ground facing Longis Bay’ the existence of a 70 foot long, 4 foot thick wall with partition walls running from it at right angles;

in each of the compartments formed were a quern and pottery, including Samian (p.257). Frustratingly, the exact location of this structure, which to me sounds like a barracks, is not recorded. He also describes a Roman cremation burial close to the foundations of The Nunnery, and another on Raz island (pp.247, 258-9).

Baron von Hügel excavated the ‘Longy refuse pit’ to the north-east of the Nunnery (1889-90), and Colonel (then Captain) Durntell excavated a ‘Roman midden’ between the Nunnery and the beach (1930). Durntell also found an iron spear head and iron crossbow bolt heads on the common. Alderney Museum displays these, and finds from the two excavations which include: pottery; iron nails; bottle glass; shells; a piece of flue tile; bronze pins; a bronze thimble; and a bronze, military-type buckle (believed to be third century). In the 1970s, Roman pottery and possibly the foundations of a Roman building or quay were found at The Kennels on Longis Common (the quay interpretation assumes there was a short channel cut to it through the reed marsh). Roman coins have been found on Longis Common and Longis Beach; walking on the beach I have found Roman tile and brick.

THE NUNNERY

The Nunnery is sited at the bottom of Essex Hill and Bluestone Hill, on the edge of Longis Common on Alderney’s south coast, near a fresh-water stream which is now a drain feeding into the island’s sewerage works (Fig. 2). If a travel guide is to be believed, there was once a well inside the Nunnery (Lan-Claire 1851, 34).
The Nunnery overlooks Longis Bay, Alderney's only natural harbour, which is shallow and sheltered from prevailing westerly winds. Longis Common is formed of layers of sand divided by thin layers of soil, resting on top of peat. In the Roman period there was a salt marsh or swamp to the north of the bay; since then Longis Common has formed as a consequence of the build-up of sand blown from the beach. The sand is now held back by a German anti-tank wall (Fig. 3).

Longis was the safest landing place, and the marsh meant that to leave the beach at Longis you had to pass the Nunnery (Fig. 4). The Nunnery could control traffic from the bay up Bluestone Hill to the higher land to the south-west, the location of the island's best farm-land and St. Anne, Alderney's only town. 'Six sherd s of widely ranging dates' suggest there was a Roman presence at St. Anne (Johnson 1981, 49).

The Nunnery's external walls are about 40 m by 40 m, and 5 m in height, with rounded corners and solid bastions (Fig. 5). The bastions appear to have been built at the same time as the external walls rather than having been added later (Fig. 6). The upper courses of the walls include herring-bone work, portions of Roman tile and Roman brick; these are probably repairs re-using Roman and other material (Johnson 1981, 135). Most of the east wall, the south-east corner and its bastion have collapsed and still lie on the beach (Fig. 7).

A wall with two buttresses runs north from the damaged south wall. Sections of what appear to be a tile course run through both this wall and the tops of the buttresses (Fig. 8), although the buttresses appear to have been added after the wall was constructed. A shorter length of wall (probably eighteenth century) runs west from the remnant east wall and joins the buttressed wall; it forms the side of a German bunker. Inside the Nunnery, supporting the north end of the bank of earth that rests against the buttressed wall, is a stretch of wall in which a tile course is also visible (Fig. 9).

There is an eighteenth century gatehouse in the centre of the north wall. An undated map in the Guernsey Museum (Davenport 2009, 7) records a small entrance at the west end of the south wall, which I assume was a later addition. If the Nunnery supervised the bay it would be reasonable to expect the south wall, which faces the beach access, to have a gateway; evidence for this might still be found, although a German structure (now mostly destroyed) covered part of the area. NCO married quarters (now residential), gun emplacements and other modern structures are sited within the external walls, and the German anti-tank wall joins the Nunnery's north-east corner (Fig. 10).

RECENT EXCAVATIONS

In 2002 excavators, led by Heather Sebire and Mark Wood, dug trenches in the area between the buttressed wall and the cliff, the site of Durtnell's 'Roman midden'. On the basis that the Romans wouldn't have built on their own midden, Durtnell had concluded that the Nunnery wasn't Roman. As Peter Arnold of the Alderney Society commented to me, fourth century Romans might have built on the site of a second century midden.

During the 2002 dig, a double-cut ditch was found and interpreted as a foundation trench for the missing eastern wall; the instability of the cliff edge limited how deep it could be excavated. The ditch contained midden material, medieval pottery sherds and one rim sherd of Romano-British BB1. As it seemed unlikely that
Monaghan, a trench was dug at the west end of the north wall; it showed that the Nunnery foundations were built directly on levelled sand. Mortar capped and levelled the foundations; a plinth of squared granite rested on the mortar, similar to Pevensey (Pearson 2002, 69, Fig. 36), with the wall built on the plinth. Neither a construction cut nor defensive ditch was found. The lack of a construction cut raised the possibility that the ditch excavated in 2002, which contained medieval material, was a medieval midden rather than a foundation trench. Investigation indicated that the north-west bastion and wall were constructed at the same time (ASB XLIII, Monaghan 2008).

Jason Monaghan kindly gave me early sight of the draft of his detailed excavation report for the 2008 dig. When the excavators cleared ivy from the south-east corner of the Nunnery, close inspection suggested that the buttressed wall belonged to a structure inside the fort and pre-dated the collapse of the fort wall. It looked as if the short wall that joins the buttressed wall to the remnant east wall was probably built after the east wall collapsed in the eighteenth century (Monaghan, forthcoming).

Excavations in 2009 within the fort revealed, as suspected, that the wall with the tile courses extends into the fort (Monaghan, forthcoming). The wall is very substantial and the excavators believe this supports the idea of a large building, possibly a tower, once existing at the centre of the fort. Dating evidence however, remains elusive. Diggers in the photograph are working on top of this wall (Fig. 11).

The position of Alderney in relation to trade routes, the coastal location of the Nunnery, the method of construction of the outer wall foundations and the style of rounded corners and bastions suggest it could be a late third century shore fort. Kendrick (1928, 256) recounts the appearance of ‘the tops of a double row of ancient wooden piles, seemingly continuing under the Nunnery’ exposed from under sand and shingle on the beach. While Johnson (1981, 49) thought they might have been part of a landing stage, Monaghan (2008, 65) suggests these might have been foundation piles, exposed when the east wall collapsed; if so, for them to have been exposed at beach level they must originally have been several metres long. Timber piles were used at Lympne, Richborough and Pevensey shore forts (Pearson 2002, 68, Figs. 32, 36). The Nunnery is a fraction of the size of the shore forts – it has walls 40 m long, while the shore fort walls are around 180 m long – and the Roman fleet might have found more substantial facilities on the mainland, perhaps at Cherbourg (Corallium).

Because of its footprint, the Nunnery has been compared with the coastal
signal stations in North Yorkshire, which were constructed in the latter half of the fourth century. This could be supported by Francis Chamberlain’s reference to “Longie’s tower”. The stations at Goldsborough, Filey, Huncliffe and Scarborough all have ditches; no ditch has been found around the Nunnery, but this could be because it is built on sand. The buttressed wall might have been the east wall of the ground floor of a tower, with the wall that supports the banked area as the tower’s north wall. However, Essex Hill blocks the view of the Nunnery from the other Channel Islands; indeed, a signal tower would have been more visible, in a better defensive position, and could have had stronger foundations and perhaps a ditch if it had been built on Essex Hill. Kendrick (1928, 238) records that locals believed there once was a beacon at La Houghette de la Taillie, a tumulus in south-west Alderney (now lost); if so, it would have had a good line of sight to the other Channel Islands.

The Nunnery has been compared to Caer Gybi, a Roman fortified landing-place at Holyhead, Anglesey (Wheeler, in Kendrick 1928, 257). While both are sited on low cliffs, Caer Gybi is an imperfect rectangle about twice the size of the Nunnery, with squared rather than rounded corners, and walls extending from the short sides down to the sea to protect ships drawn onto the beach. Kodenica fortified naval base on the Danube is squarer and closer in size to the Nunnery; but it too has squared corners and a walled landing place.

When I discussed the site with him, Bryn Walters made an interesting suggestion: that the building might have been a pharos with which ships could have aligned when entering the harbour. Given strong local currents and the rocky coastline no doubt early sailors would have welcomed a guiding light, perhaps supported by beacons on Essex Hill and Raz Island.

Two suggestions were also made by Peter Arnold: that the Nunnery might have been used for light signals to the nearby coast of Gaul (the signals being more visible against land than sky), or that its functions included collecting excise from trading ships. The latter might have further merit if the Nunnery was on the border of two administrative regions such as the Dux Tractus Armoricanus and the Comes Maritimi Tractus (Mason 2003, 163, Fig. 87), or was the departure point on the trade route for crossing from Armorica to Britannia.

For the moment we can only speculate about the Nunnery’s purpose. It has the style, location but not the size of a later shore fort; the style, size but not the location of a signal tower; the location but not the style of a fortified landing place. My best guess is that the outer structure was constructed in the second half of the third century or later by the Roman navy around an existing combined harbour master’s and revenue office, perhaps to protect it, and hence the island, from the ‘pirates’ that Carausius hunted. We can but hope that future excavations will shed more light on the purpose and history of the Nunnery.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
I would like to offer thanks to Jason Monaghan, Peter Arnold and Trevor Davenport for information they provided (while absolving them of any errors and assumptions I have made).

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Nicholas Hogben.
PROFESSOR JOHN WILKES  
THE ARA’S HONORARY PRESIDENT  
An introduction by Grahame Soffe

In November last year the ARA Board invited Professor John Wilkes to become our Honorary President, succeeding Dr. Graham Webster. Members will be able to refer back to a complete issue of ARA (12, 2002) dedicated to Graham’s life and achievements and will realise that during a long interregnum it has been a difficult task finding a suitable candidate to replace him. We were delighted that John accepted the invitation and that he indicated that he felt honoured to take up the post and succeed Graham. Although John will be known to many members of the ARA, he was formally introduced to the membership at our AGM at the British Museum in December and on that occasion I was able to give a brief précis of his career in Roman archaeology. Following this, at the start of the afternoon Symposium, John gave a splendid acceptance address in which he described his own debt of gratitude to our former President and the importance of Graham’s contribution to Roman archaeology in general, particularly in the field of military studies and his record of inspiration of hundreds of students through his teaching and excavation training schools. We hope to publish a version of this address in ARA, but here I am offering a description of John and his career. I am grateful for information supplied by John himself, his wife Susan, and several colleagues.

John was born on 12 July 1936 at Reigate in Surrey. He was educated at King Henry VIII Grammar School, Coventry, and Harrow County Grammar School. After studies in Ancient History and Archaeology at University College London (BA) and the University of Durham (PhD) he went on to become a Research Fellow at Birmingham University (1961-3) and then took up teaching these subjects. He was appointed Assistant Lecturer in History and Archaeology at Manchester University (1963-4) and then he moved back to Birmingham University where he became Lecturer in Roman History (1964-71) and Senior Lecturer (1971-4). He finally settled at London University where he was appointed Professor of Archaeology of the Roman Provinces in 1974, following the sudden death of Professor Donald Strong. He was based at the Institute of Archaeology, which was eventually to come under the aegis of University College London. In 1992 he was appointed Yates Professor of Greek and Roman Archaeology, University College London, the position from which he retired in 2001. It was during this long period at the Institute that many of us got to know John and there are many of his students, including a member of the ARA Board, amongst the present generation of practicing Romanists. He has a reputation for kindness and encouragement of staff and students, and for his good humour. A friend, Mark Hassall, then a colleague in John’s department at the Institute, has told me that John was very easy to work for and that he only ever gave him one direct instruction, and that was to buy himself a new pair of trousers as the ones he had on were in a terrible state.

John has also served with or been appointed to many other professional institutions. He is a Fellow of the British Academy, and of the Societies of Antiquaries of London and Scotland, and is Honorary Vice-President of the Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies – he was Editor of that society’s journal Britannia from 1980 to 1984. He has also served as Chairman of the Faculty of Archaeology, History and Letters of the British School at Rome (1979-83) and Council Member of the School (1988-96), Member of the Ancient Monuments Board for Scotland (1981-91), President of the London and Middlesex Archaeological Society (1982-5), Corresponding Member of the German Archaeological Institute (1976-), Governor of the Museum of London (1981-95), and Member of the Committee of the British School at Athens (1990-7).

John has undertaken and published excavations in Britain at Housesteads Fort on Hadrian’s Wall, Corgarff legionary base, Perthshire and Wilderness Plantation fortlet on the Antonine Wall. He has also carried out a major excavation project at Strageath Fort, Perthshire with
Professor Sheppard Freere (Strageath: excavations within the Roman Fort 1973-1986, 1989). I occasionally met him on his journey north from London to Strageath and remember being very impressed with the large box in the back of his heavily loaded estate car containing all the 1:50,000 OS maps for Britain. We would talk about the air photographic discoveries and test-excavations of Professor Kenneth St. Joseph of Cambridge (always known as 'Holy Joe'), in Roman Scotland.

Although John 'cut his teeth' on Romano-British archaeology, he is rather exceptional in that he has branched out to undertake historical and archaeological research in several regions of the Roman Empire with his main focus on the territory of the former Yugoslavia, and his principal publications relate to that area. Many of us will be familiar with that big book with an orange cover – Dalmatia (1969) in the 'Provinces of the Roman Empire' series. There is also Diocletian's Palace, Split (Croatia, second expanded edition 1986), The Illyrians (1992) and jointly, Excavations at Sparta (Greece, reports 1994-8), and he has published excavations at Durres in Albania. One amusing story is that when he went to Yugoslavia to work at Split he found an enormous Roman mosaic decorated with swastikas which enraged President Tito when he came to officially view the excavations. Another (no doubt apocryphal) story is of a lost East European at an international conference asking if anyone had seen Ivan Vilkesh! Andrew Poulter (now Professor at Nottingham) was one of John's students at Birmingham and then at the London Institute, and pressed John for advice on his future research. John, pointing at the area of modern Bulgaria on a wall-map of the Roman Empire, directed: "no one has been down there – you'll have to improve your Greek and learn Bulgarian – it's quite easy, it just has a different alphabet, like Russian". Andrew took the advice and thus progressed to becoming Britain's expert in Roman Bulgaria and, recently, the leader of the ARA's successful tour of that country.

In 1980 John married his former student Dr. Susan Walker, who was to become Deputy Keeper in the Department of Greek and Roman Antiquities at the British Museum and readers will be familiar with her books: Roman Art (1991), Greek and Roman Portraits (1995), and her co-authorship of Ancient Faces: Mummy Portraits from Roman Egypt (1997) and co-editorship of Cleopatra of Egypt from History to Myth (2001). Susan is now Keeper of Antiquities at the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford and has played a major role in the recent re-designing and transformation of the museum, particularly the Ancient World Galleries which she will be showing to the ARA in May this year. John and Susan now live in Oxford. Their son Nick is reading International Relations at Reading University.

Of course, John has many other interests. His Who's Who entry mentions 'Recreations: listening to music, watching Association football'. To expand on this one could add that he is a regular concert goer and is particularly keen on jazz and a fan of the Rolling Stones. He is also very interested in politics and current affairs, loves gardening and bird watching and, as far as football is concerned, he is a leading authority on Arsenal Football Club; his London house backed onto the old Arsenal Stadium at Highbury and part of the pitch was visible from the top back bedroom window!

Since moving to Oxford, he has continued to work in Roman archaeology, examining theses for the University and acting as a tour guide. His own studies have been focused on the Danube lands and the Balkans. A survey of recent research on the Roman Danube appeared in the Journal of Roman Studies (pp. 124-225, 95, 2005) and his current project is an epigraphical and archaeological study of the Greek-Latin linguistics and cultural frontiers in the Balkans between the Adriatic and the Black Sea.

I am sure all ARA members will join the Board in welcoming John to his new Honorary Presidency and we look forward to a fruitful relationship and particularly, his wise counsel in the months and years ahead.

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A NEW PROJECT TO DECIPHER AN ALTAR AT ARBEIA

A worn third century altar that was found in the River Tyne sometime around 1672 by Martin Lister, a Fellow of the Royal Society, and has always been thought to commemorate the safe return of Caracalla and Geta to Rome after leaving Britain in AD 211, has been the focus of a new and exciting project. Two German students and computer experts, Bjorn Brecht and Bruno Kessler, who are both studying for their masters in geo-computer programming at the University of Applied Science in Mainz, were invited to Arbeia Roman Fort and Museum in South Shields to help make sense of the now-invisible inscription.

Using high resolution digital camera techniques they scanned the altar with specially designed software. The hope is that this will reveal in its entirety the original inscription.

The results of the scan will be revealed in a free exhibition, Secret Altars, which will be on display at Arbeia from May to August 2010.

The Shields Gazette - 17.12.2009
SUPERB TREASURES FOUND IN A LATE FIRST CENTURY BULGARIAN TOMB

A team of Bulgarian archaeologists have discovered the tomb of a Thracian aristocrat near the southern town of Nova Zagora.

The team led by archaeologist Veselin Ignatov found a tomb of 12 square metres dating back to the end of first century and beginning of second century AD. It is located outside of the village of Karanovo. The tomb contained a treasure of silver vessels and objects that were intended to be used by the occupant in his afterlife. In addition the archaeologists found a chariot and fragments of a shield.

The finds at the lavish Thracian tomb include gold rings, silver cups and vessels coated with gold. These include a pair of lovely two handled silver cups with images of amorini (cupids) dancing as followers of Bacchus and playing on the kithara like Apollo. The decoration appears to have gilded highlights. In addition the treasure also includes a number of other ornate silver and bronze vessels. It has been suggested in Bulgaria that the new finds are sufficiently interesting and rich as to be used as the basis for a new museum dedicated to provincial Roman art. The aristocrat belonged to a rich family descended from the ruling strata in the Odrysian Kingdom (fifth to third century BC).

The previously unknown tomb was discovered as the result of archaeologists starting research in the area in 2008 after it was raided by treasure hunters. They subsequently found a Thracian chariot at a nearby spot and so far a total of six two-wheel and four-wheel chariots have been discovered. It is now planned to create a centre for the study of ancient chariots in Nova Zagora.

Sofia News Agency – 17.11.2009

ARCHAEOLOGICAL ROUND-UP

A FABULOUS CAMEO GLASS VASE EMERGES

Bonhams auction house has announced the ‘discovery’ of a fabulous new and complete Roman cameo glass vase in the possession of a continental collector.

It is in cobalt blue and white glass and is shaped like the famous two-handled Portland Vase in the British Museum. However, unlike the latter it is complete, and is 33.5 cms in height. The Portland Vase is 24 cms high and has lost its lower register of figures giving it a stunted appearance. The new vase is elaborately carved with 30 figures and the staid upper register is counterbalanced by the lower register which has a battle scene of Amazons fighting. This naturally gives one a clue as to how the lost lower register of the Portland Vase may have appeared with perhaps a battle between Centaurs and Lapiiths. The existence of this vase goes a long way to discredit those who in recent years have seen the Portland Vase as a Renaissance production. It is one of only 16 surviving examples of cameo vases and plaques from antiquity and is the most elaborate. The highly skilled technique of combining two colours of glass and then cutting through the top one to reveal the underlying was only employed by perhaps two generations of glassworkers in the late first century BC to the first century AD. The vase was created with the dip-overlay method, which included dipping glass into a contrasting colour, then blowing it to create the body of the vessel. Such productions would have been extremely expensive and articles of high status. The Museum of London has on display a rare fragment of fine cameo glass decorated with vine leaves and grapes found in Borough High Street but that cannot compare with the delicate carving employed on the new vase and its famous partner.

Daily Telegraph – 23.10.09