The nymphaeum at Jerash. One of the marvellous classical sites described in John Bithell’s account of his visit to Jordan (pages 14 to 19). The Association for Roman Archaeology will conduct a ten-day study tour of Roman Jordan in October 2011.

Photo: © John Bithell.
Welcome to the 24th edition of ARA News!

As the new editor of ARA News, I’d like to introduce myself. Like many of the ARA members that I’ve met, I’m a Roman history and archaeology enthusiast with no formal training or hands-on experience.

When I joined the ARA I didn’t realise that, while ARA (The Bulletin of The Association for Roman Archaeology) is written primarily by professional archaeologists, all ARA members are encouraged to contribute to ARA News. It’s the magazine for members, by members!

Have you visited a Roman site abroad? Do you know a local site or museum that gets little attention? Do you know about a Roman excavation, or any experimental archaeology? If so, why not tell other members about it?

ARA members John Bithell and David Sleep have both done just that. John provides an account of the marvellous sites of Jordan. The ARA will tour the Roman sites there in October next year, so I suggest you start saving now!

David gives an account of his experiences when walking Hadrian’s Wall. If you’ve not walked the Wall and get the chance, I strongly recommend it. If you’ve walked Hadrian’s Coastal Route (Ravenglass to Bowness-on-Solway), please contact me if you’d like to tell us about it.

Other members contribute: Brian Philp discusses an octagonal bath-house at Bax Farm, Donald Gordon describes our most northerly partnership venue, Trimontium Museum, and Gordon Taylor details Roman finds made by the Isle of Thanet Archaeological Society.

There’s also news on the ARA website. I suggest you visit the new Research Materials and Opportunities pages if you’ve not done so already.

Anthony Beeson, our archivist, has provided a bumper crop of news items on Roman matters from cuttings provided by ARA members.

I’ve also contributed to the magazine, with items on Newport, Bradly and Combley villas on the Isle of Wight, details of future events and a list of recent publications. But I don’t want to write the articles; I want to hear from you!

That’s why I’ve asked what you’d like to see in the magazine, and whether you’d like to contribute (page 25). If you let me know, you’ve the chance to win English Heritage’s new archaeological map of the Hadrian’s Wall corridor.

Finally, I’d like to thank David Gollins, the previous editor of ARA News (and of Roman Research News before it) for his years of hard work, and for making the magazine what it is today.

Nich Hogben, Editor – ARA NEWS.
NEW FORT DISCOVERED IN EXETER

In advance of redevelopment, Exeter Archaeology is investigating a significant new Roman site at the former St Loye’s College Campus, just off Topsham Road in Exeter (Fig. 1). Two sides to a fort have been exposed to date, with the defences fronted by a pair of parallel V-shaped ditches, the inner of classic Punic profile, surviving in places to over 2 m in depth (Fig. 2). Remains of the rampart have so far been absent, while the ditches display evidence of at least partial deliberate infilling.

At this early stage in the investigations very little has been properly investigated, but a number of foundation trenches for back to back barrack blocks survive. No entrances or interval towers have been exposed, but then only perhaps half of a three hectare site has yet been cleared. It will be some time still before we can establish how much of our fort is available for study, although the suspicion is that much may lie beyond the road in an area developed in the 1930s.

Dating will be crucial of course, particularly with regard to the fort’s relationship with the Second Augustan Legion’s fortress, established by at least AD 55–60 only 2.3 km to the north-west. John Allan’s early observation that the fort is not quite aligned with Topsham Road, with the resultant suspicion that it may predate the Roman thoroughfare, is intriguing. As might be expected, dating evidence is limited, although nothing has so far been recovered that conflicts with a possible early date.

Not content with one fort, it already looks as if we may have a second military establishment, with a third V-shaped ditch cutting through a barrack on a completely new alignment. A very tentative suggestion, based on ceramics including amphora handles and samian ware, is that this latest feature may be of similar date to the fortress, but this perhaps rash comment may well be revised following proper analysis.

Tim Gent,
Head of Exeter Archaeology.

How were Roman villas glazed and vented?
An appeal for advice from Butser Ancient Farm

Butser Ancient Farm plans to make improvements to the site’s Roman villa, a reconstruction based on a villa excavated at Sparsholt near Winchester.

From the archaeological evidence it appears that many, if not all, of the original building’s windows were glazed. Butser Ancient Farm would like to explore any ideas or evidence of how glass was fitted into the window apertures.

They are also looking at how smoke was vented from internal fireplaces (not braziers), and would be grateful for any thoughts, suggestions or evidence on either of these issues.

Please either write to them at Butser Ancient Farm, Chalton Lane, Chalton, Waterloo, Hampshire PO8 0BG, or email admin@butserancientfarm.co.uk
Spotlight on: Trimontium Museum

The three hills

"Three crests against the saffron sky
Beyond the purple plain."

Andrew Lang’s lines, describing what visitors now know as (Sir Walter) Scott’s View, form the iconic backdrop to Newstead-Trimontium, the 1st to 2nd century Roman base in southern Scotland, some 60 miles from Hadrian’s Wall.

The 370-acre complex lies at the foot of the three Eildon (Eel-don) Hills, which dominate the small town of Melrose, one mile’s walk away from the site. The area is a paradise for walkers, cyclists, country sports enthusiasts and lovers of the Scottish Borders countryside.

The Triple Peak tribal capital is visible in the blue distance from the English Border at Carter Bar, as the three were to the Romans. The north Eildon itself has the hollows of 297 Bronze and Iron Age house platforms alongside the ditch, bank and base of the Roman signal station on the western tip, which were excavated by KA Steer and RW Feacham in 1952–53.

![Fig. 1. The entrance to the Melrose Museum. Photo: © Donald Gordon.](image)

If this is beginning to sound like a potted version of a tour guide’s script we haven’t begun to mention the glorious pink-stoned Melrose Abbey; the Prierwood Orchard with its Roman and medieval apple trees bounded by a high wall with insertions of fruit-laden metalwork designed by Lutyns in 1905; and the beautiful modern Melrose garden at Harmony Hall, also run by the National Trust for Scotland.

The core – and corps – of our story is the Trimontium Trust, which since 1988, stimulated by the Melrose bypass inquiries and by dint of a saga of energetic fund-raising and constant drive, has shown dedication, on a voluntary basis, to the promotion of the interest and education of the public in the site. The Trimontium Museum in Melrose Square (a.k.a. The 'Three Hills' Heritage Centre) – professionally designed, enthusiastically run and now an Accredited Museum – is open from 1 April to 31 October each year, seven days per week. The unmistakable voice of Bill McLaren accompanies you on the audioguide. The computer links you to the Trimontium assemblage in Edinburgh.

Housed in a former billiards room, the Centre is in partnership with the National Museums of Scotland. It is celebrating the centenary of the first dig at Newstead by James Curle in 1905–10 with a display, year by year, of some of the iconic finds housed up to now in the Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh. These finds, sensational at the time, were published in his 450-page 1911 book A Roman Frontier Post and its People: The Fort of Newstead in the Parish of Melrose, a collector’s piece, but now available at www.curlesnewstead.org.uk. They included some fine bronze and iron parade helmets and masks and a wealth of military and civilian artefacts from wine jugs to enamelled brooches. A National Museums volume, planned for 2011, will celebrate its centenary.

Since Curle’s time there have been two further excavations (Richmond 1947; Bradford University 1989–98) and a history of local fieldwalking and aerial photography by Professor St Joseph and then the Royal Commission on the Conservation of Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland. Walter Elliot of Selkirk found a 3rd century intaglio of Caracalla in 1998. Five years before that Dr Bill Lonie of Newstead, a retired textiles executive, suggested that the hollow to the north-east of the fort was the site of an amphitheatre. Bradford University (we still await their big report) proved to their satisfaction that it was the second-smallest in the country (Tomen-y-Mur in Wales has the title) but some of the archaeological establishment still seem to have their doubts. (Has one been suggested recently at Inchtuthil?)

![Fig. 2. Inside Melrose Museum. Photo: © Donald Gordon.](image)

Solvitur ambulando*

The Trimontium Walk starts every Thursday afternoon from April to October at 1.30pm from the Museum, and in July and August on Tuesday afternoons as well, with a cup of tea included about 4.30pm in Newstead Village Hall. It’s the Recruiting Station (strictly no press-ganging) for those who wish to apply to join the revived Legio XXV of the Roman Imperial Army, now up to 500 strong, as a Trooper (£5 per annum), or Centurion (£10 per annum) (or further promoted post – at a price, if approved by the Appointments Board) and be outposted to a Roman location near their home, within or outwith the Empire. (There is an Admiral of the Great Lakes in Canada.) At the moment we have four Legati, who hold office for life – for a one-off consideration.

At the start of the Walk the Middle Ages are traversed before we reach the Romans via the Mercat Cross, the south front of the Abbey and the Prior’s Walk to Newstead ("the oldest inhabited village in Scotland"). A circular tour follows round the 370 acre site, unfolding the mysteries of bare-seeming fields, which include the fort, the four settlements, the amphitheatre hollow, the missing bridge and the field system. The 'High Spot' of the Walk is the uninterrupted 360 degree view of the river, the valley, the hills and accompanying features from the lofty, disused Leaderfoot Railway Viaduct spanning the Tweed and accessed only by means of the Trust key.

* In English: "it is solved by walking".
After tea and the Ceremonial Signing of the individual Walk Certificates – and the Gift Aid forms – comes the choice of returning to Melrose by the Prior’s Walk, or the riverside meadow and the challenge of the Cistercian Monks’ ‘Battery Wall’, which keeps the river to the north side of the valley to allow the cultivation of the flat fields between Newstead and Melrose. A public right of way, the Wall is some 400 yards long, two feet wide and eight feet high, without railings. It is bounded on one side by shrubs and on the other by the grassy riverbank and the river, sparkling in the sunshine, with splashing ducks and the odd heron, leaping salmon and darting kingfisher. Vertigo sufferers are advised not to attempt it. Melrose is reached, at the latest, by 5.30pm, after a total of about five miles.

The ‘ploy’ in 2006 for the celebration of the Curle Centenary was the erection of a plaque on the Abbey Street garden wall of Priorwood House, their old home, to local archaeologists James and Alexander Curle and their colleague and mentor George Macdonald. This was preceded by the Curle Plaque Procession from Newstead, headed by three youngsters, two suitably dressed as red-tunic-wearing Roman soldiers and the other as a Roman lady in saffron. It was the beginning of Scottish Archaeology Month in a summer of sunshine – but Jupiter Pluvius attended with reinforcements. It was incredible that fifty people – one party even from Northumberland – should choose to spend a pouring wet Saturday afternoon marching from Newstead to Melrose singing dozens of Roman military verses to the tune of John Brown’s Body and then go round various Curle locations in the town before the plaque was unveiled by Mrs Linehan, Curle’s youngest daughter (died 2008). But they did, and how they deserved their tea afterwards in The Ormiston, the building which houses the one-room Museum.

People come on the weekly Walk from many countries. When we started fifteen years ago we had to have two guides to cover the numbers. These days one guide is sufficient for the usual weekly dozen, although sometimes we have twenty or thirty. We don’t ask people to book because we’re always ready to go.

The other activities of the Trust include interactive Route Marches for schools, past the site, all year; six annual Celebrity Lectures (three in autumn, three in spring); an annual 28-page newsletter, The Trimontium Trumpet; an annual outing (Birchchester in 2010); a Young Archaeologists’ Club (awaiting new leaders); and a Minimus primary school Latin class.

The burning topic for the study of Roman Scotland at the moment is how far did Tacitus overplay (if he did) the role of Agricola in Scotland to the detriment of his predecessor Petillius Cerealis or his predecessor Vettius Bolanus, described by Statius as operating in the Caledonian plains: "quantu Caledonias attollit gloria campos". This hare is running courtesy of Drs Woolliscroft and Hoffmann of Liverpool University. The intricacies of Roman historiographic writing are playing as great a part, if not even greater, as the very interesting archaeological discoveries along the Gask ridge of forts and watchtowers in Perthshire, which is claimed to be the earliest Roman frontier line anywhere.

The Walkers all receive a sheet of Sir Walter’s poetry as our contribution to that little extra for visitors known as ‘The Borders Touch’. Be he ever so little read these days everyone should know his advice for appreciating Melrose Abbey: “If thou wouldst view fair Melrose aright, Go visit it by the pale moonlight.”

Asked for an autographed copy of this passage, Scott confessed that it was pure invention, and altered the ending to: “Then go and meditate with awe On scenes the author never saw Who never wander’d by the moon To see what could be seen by noon.”

(To Bernard Barton, 4 October 1834, Letters, vii, 387.)

Back to basics. The cost of the Walk, which goes to help maintain the Museum, which depends on subs, admissions, sales and donations, is £3 adults and £2.50 concessions (i.e., retires, student, unemployed). Accompanied schoolchildren are free and dogs are welcomed. (Entry to the Museum is £2 adults; £1.50 concessions; £5 family; ARA members free.) Party rates and different days for walking may be negotiated. Sensible shoes are advised for the one path, one field edge and two tracks, the majority of the Walk being hard stand.

The views are wonderful; the history a bonus. At the tea ceremony we thankfully agree with Pindar: "aristamen hudor" – "water is best".

Donald Gordon.

NB: Next year to celebrate the centenary of James Curle’s book, National Museums Scotland intend to publish A Roman Frontier Post and its people 100 years on: Newstead 1911-2011. Allan Wilson should publish Roman and Native in the Central Scottish Borders in December this year (British Archaeological Reports).

Contact details
Trimontium Museum, The Ormiston, Market Square, Melrose, Roxburghshire, Scottish Borders, Scotland, TD6 9PN
01896 822463/822651
www.trimontium.org.uk
JEWRY WALL MUSEUM APPEALS FOR FRIENDS

The Jewry Wall Museum and Roman Baths in Leicester is appealing for more Friends. Given the current financial climate, a rise in the number of Friends will encourage the Local Authority to keep funding this important regional museum.

The Friends were established in 2004 to keep the museum open and promote an interest in the archaeology of Leicester. They hold regular events at the museum (see page 6) and publish a lively newsletter for members three times a year. Their Roman re-enactment group, ‘Ratae Romans’, appears at Museum events.

The massive Highcross excavations (visited by ARA members in 2006) covered 15–20% of the Roman city found evidence for late Iron Age coin production, a massive building of high status demolished before construction of the riverside wall. AD 190, the fallen east gable wall of the Macellum, Roman houses, streets and thousands of finds.

The Jewry Wall Museum, the natural home for Leicester’s Roman heritage, opened a new display on 15th July to show some of these for the first time. Highlights include the two lead curse tablets, which increase the number of Roman inhabitants known by name to twenty-four, and which refer to a possible Septizodium in the Roman City. Also a fabulous Anubis inlay in ivory confirmed as Romano-Egyptian and saying much about high status cult worship within Ratae.

Please seriously consider supporting the Jewry Wall Museum. You can become a Friend for £5, senior citizens, students or the unwaged for £3, households for £8. Membership lasts for one year from 26th September annually (up to 15 months’ membership for those joining after 26th June).

If you would like to become a Friend, please send your name, address (including email if you wish) and a cheque payable to "Friends of the Jewry Wall Museum" to Stuart Bailey, Hon. Treasurer, Friends of Jewry Wall Museum, 48 Meadow Avenue, Loughborough, Leicestershire LE11 1JT.

To contact Stuart, phone 01509 520904 or email equanimity@simurg.co.uk – as always, he will be delighted to speak to you.

ARA GOES DIGITAL – SLOWLY

I thought I would use this opportunity to tell all our members about the proposed plans for our ARA website, www.associationromanarchaeology.org, and E-communications.

I should introduce the people currently working on these aspects: Anthony Beeson, research editor; Colette Maxfield, the webmistress and technical support; and myself, Vix Hughes, writer and compiler of pictures and items.

WEBSITE

The main aim of the website update is to provide a site with information about Roman archaeology which can be used for free by anyone. The level of detailed facts will gradually be built up but one of the main goals is to be a first reliable port of call for members of the public to come to seeking information on the archaeology of Roman antiquity. It is hoped that this will also raise and maintain our profile on the web.

By undertaking this as an organisation we aim to comply with one of the essential tenets of The Association for Roman Archaeology, which is the promotion of research and dissemination of information to the public, achieved through a digital medium. It may also help to encourage more new members, people who might come to the site for information and then see the benefits of being a member and join us!

It will also enable our members to easily access direct information posted on the website; you can browse through the information and check forthcoming events which can be kept up to date and modified more readily than in the newsletter. This would include both ARA listings and others which may be relevant.

The other aim of the website is to have a members’ only area where we will hopefully host a chatroom and a place where your photos and ideas can be posted.

If you go and look at the website at the moment, and have not done so for a while, you may notice some changes in layout, colour and content. As with many new and changing things feedback will be gratefully appreciated, what works what doesn’t, and although all our aspirations may not be possible we can at least try.

Please be assured that more information is going to go up but, as with everything, the work is being done by a few voluntarily, and it is important to try and make it as error free as possible.

To give you an idea of the areas we hope to cover, a draft outline is listed below:

Timeline: emperors, local governors and events; UK vs Empire.

Map: UK clickable showing our partner venues – done!

History of Roman Archaeology: seminal sites; finds; approaches; protagonists; ARA.

More detailed sections: main cities; borders; forts and other military sites; roads and transport, connections to the empire; villas; economies and industrial sites; religion and ritual; landscapes rural and urban.

Finds: pottery; ceramic building material (CBM); bone; metal; coins; burials; wooden; jewellery and gems.

Newsfeed of recent sites and finds in Roman Archaeology.

Members’ Area

Newsletter and bulletin from the last 12 months; monthly or bi-monthly update. Photo gallery. Forum/chatroom.

E-COMMUNICATIONS

We still intend to offer people the opportunity to receive their newsletter by e-mail and for us to be able to send out reminders and information on events, updates and so on. Two aspects require attention at the moment. Firstly, Nich Hogben is just taking over the duties of Newsletter editor and print organiser. This has been done superbly so far by David Gollins, for which he is wholeheartedly thanked for his excellent work.

Secondly, we need to build up a database of people’s e-mail addresses. In order to do this with the maximum of ease and minimum of incorrect entries it is best if those of you who are interested e-mail us! I know many of you have added your e-mail addresses to your subscription renewals and I’m not singling anyone out in particular, but... some of the handwriting would give a GP a run for their money!

The e-mail address to use is ara.enquiry@hotmail.com. Please help us by sending a quick e-mail to express your interest.

Vix Hughes.
A THREE-HORNED SACRIFICIAL BULL FROM HOLBROOK, SUFFOLK

A 60mm long Roman copper-alloy figurine of a three-horned bull has been discovered at Holbrook in Suffolk and reported to the Portable Antiquities Scheme. The tiny figure is broken off at the legs but once depicted an animal in a gentle walking pose with a front leg raised. The animal is shown as being muscular with a thick-set neck and well developed shoulders. Large testicles hanging between its legs convey the impression that this was intended to represent an animal at the height of its strength and fecundity. The tail is wrapped about its body as though it were being vigorously swished. A worn third horn in the centre of the forehead relates this to figures of Tarvos Trigaranus the enigmatic Celtic deity who is depicted as a three-horned bull bearing three crane-like birds or demi-goddesses on its back. In Britain its most famous representation survives in the small tinned-over bronze figure from the temple at Maiden Castle, Dorset, but other figures of three horned bulls have been found at Waddon Hill in the same county, and at Leicester. Also from Willingdon Fen in Cambridgeshire, one can cite the hollow cast head of a three-horned bull and a similar head attached to a ritual bronze club.

The new figure stands alone in bearing around its waist an ornamental band. This represents a dorsuale and it is worn in Roman art by animals that have been prepared for the sacrifice. The figure therefore is extremely unusual in bearing the divine three horns but at the same time in being a sacrificial victim.

http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/Environment/Archaeology/ FindsRecording/RecentFinds.htm

FIGURE OF PRIAPUS FOUND NEAR BURY ST EDMUNDS

A small but complete copper-alloy figure of Priapus has been discovered near to Bury St Edwards. The 4.5cm figure depicts the god wearing a pointed hat which may either be the traditional straw petasos or a hood. With hands in a modern attitude of prayer he gathers his heavy cloak up to his chest displaying his colossal genitalia, his most notable attribute. Depictions of Priapus are relatively uncommon in Britain although they do increasingly occur such as in the stone sculpture from Vindolanda discovered during the 2006 season. Another Suffolk depiction may be seen in the British Museum’s bronze from Pakenham.

From the potency of his phallus Priapus was regarded as a promoter of fertility and also the protector of gardens and their produce. Scarecrows mimicked his form and thieves were threatened with rape as a suitable punishment for abusing his lordship.

http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/Environment/Archaeology/ FindsRecording/RecentFinds.htm

RE-EXCAVATION OF FOLKESTONE ROMAN VILLA

Folkestone in Kent has a large and spectacularly positioned Roman villa overlooking East Wear Bay and the Channel that was excavated on the East Cliff by Samuel E Winbolt in 1924 and was for almost three decades one of the historic sites of the town. The excavation was chronicled in Winbolt’s book of 1925 entitled Roman Folkestone. The Heritage Lottery Commission have now awarded £300,000 to a three-year project entitled A Town Unearthed: Folkestone Before 1500, that will highlight the town’s heritage starting from the Bronze Age and continuing into medieval times. A wealth of material remains buried under the streets and gardens of Folkestone, but much of this important archaeology is little known to the community.

Modern development has covered evidence of the town’s early identity and although the distant past is preserved in tales of St Eanswythe’s miraculous routing of a water course uphill (possibly originating in the re-opening of a Roman aqueduct) and people’s memories of the Roman villa before it was covered up in 1957, much remains unknown or forgotten. There is now an increasing risk to the villa site from coastal erosion. Further excavation work at and around the complex will provide important opportunities to understand this site and its ancient context in the landscape. Nineteenth century discoveries show that the villa was not an isolated structure and test pits are to be dug in gardens in the area.

Excavation started at the beginning of August and will continue until the end of September (see page 6). Volunteers from local organizations, the Folkestone People’s History Centre, Canterbury Christ Church University and Canterbury Archaeological Trust will assist with the project. Members of the local community will have the chance to take part in a professionally supervised archaeological investigation of parts of the villa that have been largely unrecorded in earlier digs. Local schools will also be provided with archaeological research kits (ARKS) containing artefacts and teaching resources as a prelude to guided visits to the excavation sites.

This work will be supported by an oral history project to explore the memories of those who remember earlier excavations in Folkestone.
LARGE HOARD OF ROMAN COINS FOUND NEAR FROME IN SOMERSET

Metal detectorist Dave Crisp discovered an amazing cache of 52,503 Roman coins dating from the 3rd century AD on farmland near Frome in Somerset. Mr Crisp was sensible enough not to attempt to excavate the hoard himself and informed the local finds liaison officer for the area, ensuring the survival of much useful evidence concerning the placement of this, one of the largest coin hoards ever found in Britain. The coins had been placed methodically in a very large, but narrow necked, late 3rd century pot.

Because of its fragility and the weight of the contents this vessel must have been buried before receiving them. This dismises the idea that they were a hurried deposition. It is believed that had a hurried safety deposit been required then the owners would have buried small caches that might have been easily retrieved later. The narrow opening of the pot also would have made swift retrieval of the contents highly difficult. It therefore seems far more likely that the coins were a ritual deposit or offering.

Most of the coins are made from debased silver or bronze; they weigh around 160kg. The pot containing the coins was broken and the coins were removed from it in 12 layers, with each layer containing up to 16 separate bags of coins, a total of 67 separate types. Of the total amount of coins found, 44,245 were identifiable with the remainder classed as undecipherable. It is hoped that study of the contents of the Frome Hoard will shed light on an economic crisis and coalition government in the 3rd century.

The hoard contains over 760 coins of the 'British' emperor Carausius, who ruled the island independently from AD 286 to 293, and was the first Roman emperor to strike coins in Britain. This is the largest group of Carausian coins ever found and includes five rare examples of his silver denarii, the only coins of their type being struck anywhere in the Roman Empire at the time. The interesting, and probably unanswerable, problem concerning the Carausian coins is whether they were deposited during his reign or after it. What did one do with the coinage of a usurper once he had fallen, and was it still considered as legal tender? When the hoard was sorted it was found that the bulk of the Carausian coins formed a single layer and had been deposited in one go. Date-wise they are the latest coins of the collection.

The hoard's contents span the politically stormy and difficult years from AD 253 to 293 and are generally composed of those coins known as 'radiates'. It has been estimated that in total, the hoard is the equivalent of about four years' pay for a legionary soldier. Each of the 67 groups of coins was washed and sorted separately. It is hoped that this hoard will help ensure that Carausian is remembered in the country that he ruled.

The largest hoard ever found in Britain contained 54,912 coins dating from AD 180 to 274 and was found in two containers at Cunetio, near Marlborough in Wiltshire; another hoard of 47,912 coins of AD 251 to 290 was found at Normanby in Lincolnshire in 1983.

A ROMAN VILLA DISCOVERED NEAR ABERYSTWYTH

What is being described as the most north-westerly Roman villa ever found in Wales has been discovered near Aberystwyth and has caused archaeologists to reconsider the nature of Roman influence in the Principality. The winged, south-facing building, discovered during trial excavations of the site, was of local stone and roofed with pentagonal slates. It is described as "well appointed" and had seven rooms and measured about 20 x 7 metres.

The plan is classic and compact with a front corridor or veranda held between projecting tower rooms and with a range of rooms behind. It had a projecting room at the rear that might possibly be a staircase to an upper storey, and was fronted by a cobbled yard. Although there is no evidence yet of mosaics or hypocausts, glass from glazed windows was discovered. Finds from the site suggest that occupation commenced in the late third century and continued until around AD 330 when a fire appears to have ended the building's life. In later times the villa was heavily robbed for its stonework, leaving only the stone and clay foundation trenches and the local name Magwr which means "ruined homestead".

The outline of the estate was identified during an aerial survey in 2006. In 2009 a geophysical survey undertaken for BBC Wales' Hidden Histories programme revealed the existence of stone buildings set within a large rectangular ditched enclosure.

The estate is believed to have occupied a large part of the Ystwyth Valley and may have controlled it through a network of tenant farmers. Finds that include pottery from Dorset, Oxford and Northamptonshire as well as a Spanish amphora suggest it was part of an elaborate trading network.

The discovery of this prosperous Romanised estate in a part of mid Wales, where no such foundations were believed to exist, raises the possibility and sensible conclusion that others must await detection.

After study, some finds from the excavation will be displayed at Ceredigion Museum, Aberystwyth, and further investigation is planned for next year.

http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-mid-wales-10759374

A REMARKABLE ROMAN PENDANT FROM ALTON SELLS FOR £30,000

A unique 62mm high solid gold pendant of the 1st century AD found by a metal detectorist at Alton in Hampshire in 1999 has now been sold at Timeline auctions for £30,000. The jewel was discovered metres away from the find spot of the Alton Hoards of Celtic gold stater coins and other imported Roman gold jewellery that are now on display in the British Museum.

It consists of the finely modelled laurel-wreathed head of an emperor wearing a Julio-Claudian hairstyle that is both backed and surmounted by a backplate in the shape of a pediment, inscribed with TI. CAESAR. This is almost certainly Tiberius Caesar (AD 14–37). Above the pediment is a broad hanging loop formed in the shape of a laurel wreath whilst below the bust is a triangular red cornelian set within a cell. This style of setting is often considered to be provincial and the similarity with the portrait of Tiberius found on Alexandrian coins has suggested that Alexandria may have been the place of manufacture.

Daily Telegraph – 11.3.2010
http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/hampshire/8577019.stm
www.timelineauctions.com/lot/roman-the-alton-jewel-hampshire/370/
ROMAN BATH-HOUSE DISCOVERED AT BAX FARM, KENT

An unknown major Roman site in the parish of Tonge, just east of Sittingbourne in Kent, was discovered in 1986. This discovery followed reports from farmer Garth Doubleday that fragments of ancient tile had been ploughed up on his land. In August 1986, 35 staff and volunteers from the Kent Archaeological Rescue Unit carried out an intensive excavation across the site under the direction of the writer.

Five major trenches and two minor trenches soon revealed about half of a large octagonal Roman bath-house of unusual form. This consisted of a central chamber, flanked by small rooms on all sides. Seven of the eight sides were revealed, though some had been substantially robbed. The rooms were divided from each other by radial walls. At least three of these chambers were found to have the remnants of pillared hypocausts proving that some of the rooms had been heated. In one room two late-Roman ovens had been built over the demolition rubble of the main building. The building was 14m in diameter, the side rooms were about 2.9m in width and the walls mostly 7.0cm wide.

About 200 large red tesserae were found, but no small coloured ones. The large fragments of wall plaster were mostly plain painted red or white, with minimal decoration. None was painted blue.

Bryn Walters, Director of The Association for Roman Archaeology, has kindly provided three further parallels for this type of unusual bath-house which he has identified in north Wiltshire. The first lies roughly two miles south-east of the Roman town of Durocorminium outside Swindon, the second three miles south of the same Roman town and the third lies east of the fortified town of Cunetio, near Marlborough. All three are on north-facing slopes, though the second and third sites still remain to be confirmed by fieldwork. The Wiltshire examples also bear a striking resemblance to the ornate baths at Lufton in Somerset and also Holcombe in Devon. All five sites are composed of an elaborate polygonal suite of rooms attached to a solitary corridor building.

A more recent training excavation on the Bax Farm site (not by the Kent Unit) has confirmed the plan discovered in 1986.

Brian Philp.

ROMAN FINDS IN THANET, KENT

Thanet, originally an island, is situated in the north-east of Kent. In Roman times it was separated from the mainland by the Wantsum Channel, which was nearly a mile wide and protected by the forts of Reculver (Regulbium) to the west and Richborough (Rutupiae) to the south. In recent years Thanet has been shown to have more Roman occupation than previously known.

The Trust for Thanet Archaeology has excavated a small Roman cemetery on the west side of Ramsgate. This is not far from where Roman pottery had previously been found in St Mildred’s Road and Cambridge Terrace by R Hicks (report 1878) and possibly close to the start of the road to Sarre ferry (and thence to Upstreet and on to Canterbury) identified by Dr D Perkins.

In 2004 the remains of a cellar believed to be associated with a Romano-British bakery was uncovered north of Broadstairs, again by the Trust (Moody GA, Iron Age & Romano-British Settlement at Bishop’s Ave, Broadstairs, Archaeologia Cantiana CXXVII, pp197–212).

They also excavated a multi-period site off Vale Road on the western outskirts of Broadstairs that revealed Roman pottery sherds and building materials (Moody, GA 2006, unpublished). This site was alongside a footpath. The author of this article believes it forms a section of a possible Roman period road or trackway that led some 414km between Reading Street (in the north of the island) and the west side of Ramsgate (in the south). It comprises roads, lanes, tracks and footpaths in basically a direct route between the two areas. On the northern stretch of 1km, no less than three farms had ‘street’ in their names on 19th century maps, an indicator according to Ivan Margery of the incoming Anglo Saxons (or Jutes in Thanet) building on, or by, a metalled surface or ‘street’ i.e. a Roman road. A hollow way just 100 metres long leads away from the northern end.

There is an old belief that Ramsgate is a contraction of ‘Roms gate’ but there is no evidence for that apart from Roman timbers in Ramsgate harbour (Arch. Journ., 1845, Vol. 1, p69). An alternative derivation is that given by Rev. Scott Robertson in Archaeologia Cantiana XII.
He says the ancient British name for Thanet was given as Ruim or Ruym – a marsh – in AD 694 and AD 853. Romney Marsh is derived from the same source and is a possible origin of Ramsgate, although it is mostly atop cliffs!

In the summer of 2009 I, alongside other Isle of Thanet Archaeological Society (IOTAS) members, was able to assist the Trust in excavating another Roman site, this time adjacent to Bleak House (once occupied by Charles Dickens) on a chalk cliff overlooking Broadstairs harbour. Once again only cellars appear to have been left. But I had the good fortune to uncover an amphora sherd atop a wall remnant and a few days later helped to excavate what is believed to have been a pottery dump. Many of the items appeared to have been almost complete when they were dumped according to Ges Moody of the Trust (report awaited). They included a four-sided cup, storage jars, a mortaria, dishes, a samian bowl and other pieces. IOTAS members happily helped cleaning the finds, which filled over 40 trays.

For the past three years IOTAS have been trying to identify the exact location of a Romano-British building near Margate. Dr A Rowe, who excavated it in 1922–3, did not leave details of its precise location. Only one piece of samian ware has been found but fortunately it has the maker’s name in the base, interpreted as ‘Lollius’ from the second century. You can find more details about this on the IOTAS website.

Gordon Taylor
Isle of Thanet Archaeological Society
www.iotics.org.uk

More details of Roman Thanet can be found in The Isle of Thanet from Prehistory to the Norman Conquest by GA Moody (see ‘Publications’ on the IOTAS website).

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**THE TALE OF THE EMPEROR’S HEAD**

ARA member David Rider recently heard this account from someone who wishes to remain anonymous: When visiting a house in Wiltshire recently, I came upon the cast of a bronze portrait head of Emperor Augustus. On my enquiring, the owner told me its history.

In 64 BC Egypt was a province of Rome and had established the frontier with Kush (present Sudan) about seventy miles south of Aswan (Syene).

Aswan was an important trading post through which came the riches of Africa, including gold, ebony, ivory, minerals, ostrich feathers and incense. The ruler of Kush at this time was Queen Candace, described by Strabo as “a masculine sort of woman and blind in one eye”.

This Queen of Kush led her Nubians in a raid on Aswan, and at Elephantine had the temerity to defeat three Roman cohorts. Moreover, “they even wrenched from their bases the statues of Caesar”.

This was too much for the new Roman Governor, Gaius Petronius, who pursued the retreating “one-eyed Candace” as he described her, eventually sacking her capital Merœ some 600 miles south, by the sixth cataract.

Some two thousand years later, when excavators under Professor John Garstang were digging in Candace’s royal city of Merœ, they found a magnificent portrait head of the Emperor Augustus, which had been deliberately buried in a pocket of clean sand below the doorway of an important building. The eyes, inlaid with coloured glass and stone, were so lifelike as to seem to glare, reminding Garstang of Pliny’s description: “Augustus had eyes like those of a horse, the eyebrows very white and of more than common size, and that is why he was offended if anyone gazed steadily at them”.

It is possible that this bronze head was part of Candace’s loot. Maybe with those staring eyes the Kushites thought it to be a Roman god, and consequently were careful to conceal it from Petronius. On the other hand, they may have buried it under the doorway of a public building as a mark of extreme disrespect.

Before sending the original to the British Museum, Garstang had three casts of the head made: one for Government House in Khartoum, one for Government House in Cairo, and the third was to be a wedding present for the current owner’s father, who was a friend and at that time worked as head of military intelligence and Minister of the Interior in Cairo. When, a bit later, they met by chance in the lift of Shepheard’s Hotel in Cairo, Garstang seemed distant and unfriendly. When asked if anything was wrong, Garstang said “Did you receive a wedding present from me?” and was given a negative reply.

It turned out that Lord Kitchener had spotted the head in a shop in London. On learning from an assistant that it was being packed up to send to Garstang’s friend in Cairo, Lord Kitchener said, “Oh, I know him and I am going to Cairo next month. Send it down to my place at Broome and I can take it out with my things.” No more was heard of it.

Shortly after this the owner’s mother found herself sitting next to the British diplomat Sir Henry McMahon at a dinner and told him this sad tale. He said “But that is disgraceful! You must take the one from Government House in Cairo.” This she did, and this is the one that has ended up in Wiltshire.

When the present owner inherited it he was doctor to a large boarding school for boys. He placed Augustus in the hall, looking directly into the boys’ waiting room which thereafter became unwontedly quiet: this, together with the fact that on one occasion the head was found to have been turned round on its plinth to face the wall, tempts one to suppose that the authoritative gaze of the emperor has not altogether lost its power.

Above: the original head of Augustus at the British Museum.
© Courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum.

Strabo’s ‘Queen Candace’ (Candace was a title rather than a name) invaded Egypt 25–24BC; he states Petronius razed Napata. Suetonius, in The Twelve Caesars, is more flattering than Strabo to Augustus: “Augustus’s eyes were clear and bright, and he liked to believe that they shone with a sort of divine radiance: it gave him profound pleasure if anyone at whom he glanced keenly dropped his head as though dazzled by looking into the sun” (book 2, 79). The head was buried at the entrance to a ‘victory temple’: “On the steps over the head were paintings of bound prisoners, so that anyone walking into the temple would literally step on the head of Augustus – a supreme insult” (Greek and Roman Portraits, Susan Walker, 1995).

Interestingly, a photo shows Lord Kitchener visiting Garstang’s Merœ excavations (Merœ City, an Ancient African Capital, p148, László Török, 1997). Editor.
ARCHAEOLOGICAL ROUND-UP

AN AMAZING ARCHITECTURAL DISCOVERY AT HERCULANEUM

Archaeologists engaged on uncovering the original beach at Herculaneum, in order to provide visitors with the experience of being able to walk on the Roman shoreline, have uncovered the remarkable architectural survivals of a wooden roof and ceiling that were both destroyed but preserved by the eruption of AD 79.

The find was made during work to enable the laying of pipes to drain excess water from the beach area. A section not thoroughly checked in the 1980s, when much of the beach area was uncovered, soon started to produce evidence for timbers in the shape of heavy beams up to 7m in length and a mass of smaller rafters and timbers. Below these, and resting on the original black sand of the Roman beach, were the tiles that had originally covered them, proving that the pyroclastic flow that had devastated this area had torn it from its building and turned it upside down on the shoreline below.

The position of the structure on the beach shows that it originally covered the so called Marble Room in the House of the Relief of Telephus on the terrace directly above. This room is a wonder for its use of opus sectile decoration in cut marbles, both on the floor and on its walls. Although the roof disintegrated in the catastrophe and is now in pieces, the carbonised wood retains carpentry marks and fresh joints. Clear evidence that the roof was pitched survives in the angles of the joints, and amazingly it appears that nails were not used in its construction, notwithstanding its monumentality. Only a few iron cramps were discovered.

The most exciting discovery concerning this roof is that the panels of the original wooden ceiling also survived. These feature the remains of intricate wooden geometric and floral patterns. Amazingly traces of colours survive, so that we know that some were painted in white, black, blue and red. It is highly possible that the ceiling decoration continued (but aped in paint and wood) the marble patterns on the surfaces below. The roof has been recorded by a laser scanner to enable a three-dimensional model to be made, and conservation will now take place.

This amazing new discovery has also given us additional facts about the eruption’s effects on Herculaneum. It appears that the first pyroclastic flow only destroyed the roof. A second more deadly was to follow that carbonised the timbers and preserved them for posterity.

Current World Archaeology - August/September, 2010

NEW AREAS OF MOSAIC PUT ON DISPLAY AT CHEDWORTH

Large areas of mosaic flooring in the west wing at Chedworth are being uncovered this summer and will be placed on permanent display when a new cover building is erected over the monument in the future months. The mosaics in the front corridor or portico of the wing were uncovered but reburied when the villa was first discovered in the 19th century. These corridor mosaics consist of long geometric panels of red and blue intersecting circles on a white background, interspersed with "woven" mats of guilloche.

In addition to the corridor mosaics, the pavements in rooms 5b, 6 and the latter's ante-chamber will be shown. These three rooms adjoin and are to the north of the famous Chedworth dining room with its beautiful but damaged Bacchic mosaic. They were uncovered a decade ago and were the subject of an article in ARA (issue 9, pp14–15). They are highly interesting for what they tell us of the building's development. Originally 5b formed part of a large chamber floored by an all-over perla or Amazon shield design. This room, however, was then divided by the insertion of walls to form the present arrangement seen today.

The new room 6 was then given a replacement mosaic that was designed by the same mosaicists who laid the Bacchic mosaic of room 5, while a striped threshold mat occupied the area outside its doors. The remains of the original perla floor in 5b were tidied up with white tesserae where the inserted wall had spoilt the design, and it became an ante-chamber to the dining room. A blackened tile hearth in room 6 suggested occupation into sub-Roman times when the hypocausts were no longer in use.

Although on public display during excavation there may be occasions when structural work restricts access to the floors.

BBC (www.bbc.co.uk/news) - 27.7.2010
Excavation blog - http://outedworthexcavations.wordpress.com/

A NEW SECTION OF GLOUCESTER'S ROMAN WALL UNCOVERED

Part of the city wall of Roman Glevum (Gloucester), which once stood some five metres in height and encompassed an area of about 17 hectares, has been uncovered during works for the Gloucester Quays/City Linkage scheme. The four-metre section of wall was exposed during the excavation of foundations for a new 'art wall' at Kimbrose Triangle. The excavation is situated close to the south gate of the Roman city, where the southern defences run along the line of modern day Commercial Road and Parliament Street and then turn on to Brunswick Road to run below Gloucester Museum.

The newly-found wall is constructed of very large limestone blocks, up to 1m by 0.5m by 0.5m, that are thought to have come from quarries at either Painswick, Birdlip or Crickley Hill. They may possibly be reused from an earlier structure. Glevum had several phases in its construction of defences between the 1st and 4th centuries. These unusually large blocks are believed to have been re-used as a foundation for the third phase of development.

http://www.glostershire.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=99730

HINTON ST MARY MOSAIC PETITION

In June 2010 ASPROM launched a petition asking the British Museum to display whole of the Hinton St Mary mosaic. Since 1997 only the roundel with the head of Christ has been on display. ASPROM proposes that the entire mosaic be displayed on the floor so that it can be fully appreciated. As an alternative, they ask the British Museum to loan the complete mosaic to a suitable museum in Dorset, its county of origin. ASPROM considers the mosaic to be of unique importance, possibly containing the only known representation of Christ in an ancient pavement.

www.aspron.org/news/
A LATE ROMAN CEMETERY DISCOVERED AT CAISTOR, LINCOLNSHIRE

A five-week excavation on the site of a derelict public house in advance of building a new Co-operative supermarket in the country town of Caistor, near Market Rasen, has found a Roman cemetery. The cemetery was full of inhumations rather than cremations suggesting that it was late Roman in date. The remains of over fifty men, women and children were discovered with the burials being orientated from east to west. The heads of the skeletons faced towards the west which fits well with Christian tradition. Likewise the absence of grave goods, such as brooches or accessories suggests Christianity and a 4th century dating for the burials. Some of the bodies had once been in coffins as the nails remained in the soil around them. The cemetery is situated about 50 metres north of the settlement.

Caistor is now a Georgian country town but its role in Roman times is enigmatic. It is claimed to have been a small town whilst others see it as a fort. A few fragments of fortification walls that are believed to be of 4th century date survive, for example that visible on the southern boundary of the Parish Church of St Peter and St Paul. The ovoid area enclosed by the walls is now classified as a Scheduled Ancient Monument. A great opportunity to understand the settlement was lost in 1986 when the County Council conducted building operations within the scheduled area without undertaking any archaeological excavations. It does not straddle any known Roman road although there is a theory that it could have been part of the east coast defences in the later years of the Empire and might possibly have been a supply base for a garrison.

KNOWLEDGE FROM DEVASTATION: NEW FINDS FROM PAPCASTLE IN CUMBRIA

The terrible floods of last winter that devastated parts of Cumbria and brought misery to so many were surprisingly useful in uncovering new evidence of the Roman fort of Derwentio (modern day Papcastle) and of its civilan settlement. On the banks opposite Papcastle the River Derwent uncovered carved stone and architectural remains, possible foundations as well as pottery fragments. The new finds have excited archaeologists, who are planning a new and major investigation in order to learn more about the site.

The remains of the Roman fort at Papcastle have been known for years and parts were excavated by Collingwood in 1922 and again by Dorothy Charlesworth in 1961–2. An aerial photograph of 1954 displayed the fort walls and west gate. However, the layout of local road system, the extent of the civilian settlement attached to it and its cemeteries are poorly understood. Stukeley visited the fort in 1725 and mentioned a large vicus outside the walls. Likewise it is not certain where the course of the River Derwent ran in Roman times and where it was crossed.

Now, archaeologists from Grampus Heritage and Training have launched a survey of the land around where the finds appeared, in the hope of finding the remains of buildings, roads, and signs of occupation and evidence of the river crossing. Using magnetometers, exploration has centred on fields alongside the River Derwent and will hopefully provide exciting new information about the settlement.

THE WOODCHESTER ORPHEUS MOSAIC REPLICA SOLD AT AUCTION

The famous replica of the fabulous Roman Orpheus mosaic that lies buried in Woodchester village in Gloucestershire was sold on 24th June for £75,000 to an anonymous private buyer at an auction held at Simon Chorley’s Auction House.

Since 2005 it had graced the Visitors’ Centre at Prinknash Abbey, but the lease had expired so the owner, Alec Lawless, was obliged to sell it. The 47 foot square pavement was the creation of brothers Bob and John Woodward, who spent many years in its completion. When it was first exhibited in the early 1980s it was called the Wotton Mosaic after its original home in the disused congregational church at Wotton-under-Edge, eight miles from Woodchester. Princess Anne attended the official opening ceremony. Bob Woodward’s account of the research behind the mosaic was published in ASPROM’s journal Mosaic (4 April 1981, pp10–15).

The idea to make the replica was conceived when it was decided after 1973 that the original mosaic would no longer be uncovered (as it once had been) every ten years, as too much disruption had been experienced by the villagers at Woodchester owing to the thousands of visitors who had flocked to see it that year. Sadly the plan put forward by present day villagers to purchase the replica floor for the village was defeated, as the price gained for the floor exceeded their funds. It is not known who the buyer is or what their intended use for the pavement, but it is, unfortunately, no longer on public display.

Daily Telegraph – 1.4.2010
http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/10402944
www.thisisgloucestershire.co.uk/news/bought-replica-mosaic/article-3575538-detail/article.html
http://www.bbc.co.uk/locallibrary/gloucestershire/it/gpeopeople_and_places/history/newsid_8596000/8596780.stm

A CHARCOAL BRAZIER AND IMAGE OF HARPOCRATES DISCOVERED AT SILCHESTER

Excavations at Silchester in Hampshire conducted by the University of Reading have uncovered fragments of a unique survival from Roman Britain, a charcoal burning brazier. Such devices are known from finds at Pompeii and provided both heat and light for non-hypocausted rooms. This unique import was an early one for it had been thrown out into a rubbish dump by the first century AD.

The brazier was ornamented with an image of Horus, the child of Isis and Osiris and in Alexandrian cult a personification of the daily newborn sun and the first strength of the winter sun. His representation in Egyptian art as a child with a finger held to its lips actually visualised the hieroglyphic for child, but this was misinterpreted and equated by the Greeks and Romans with the gesture for silence. As a result he became Harpocrates, the god of secrecy and silence. This is being hailed as the earliest representation of an Egyptian deity found in Britain. Pre-conquest Silchester is gradually emerging as a grid-planned town that may have housed up to 10,000 inhabitants.

Guardian – 16.7.2010
http://www.reading.ac.uk/about/newsandevents/releases/PR288260.aspx
Looking at my passport I see that my wife and I visited the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan late in 2006. My brother-in law was due for his 60th birthday on the 1st December, which is also World AIDS Day, but it was the former to be celebrated. My sister suggested that Pat and I might like to join in the fun. Did we fancy a weekend on the Dead Sea in Jordan with spas, pampering and lots of floating about reading newspapers while wearing hats to mimic all the good travel photographs of yesteryear? The answer had to be a resounding “Yes!”

However, we thought a weekend was probably a bit too short and we ought to see a bit of the hinterland and some local colour. Little sister got on with the planning and found an independent tour operator who specialised in Jordan who could put a plan together to cover about a week culminating in our concept of a self indulgent Dead Sea extravaganza.

Security concerns had to be a prime factor on such a trip, especially as we would be a group of four with guide and driver and UK media had highlighted a shooting incident involving a party of British tourists in the theatre at Amman. In the event, any fears proved to be totally groundless. Security at the hotels was first class: solid yet unobtrusive, and quite often almost invisible in the creation of stand off safety zones around hotel entrances. We subsequently discovered that the gunman in the theatre was English, very ill and should not have been on holiday. Our guide informed us that his parents appeared on Jordanian TV while we were there to apologise to the people of Jordan for his actions (these latter aspects were not reported on by the UK TV and press back home).

Flight time to Amman from London Heathrow was five and a quarter hours. We were to have two guides and one driver: one guide for the northern aspects of our tour and the other covering the southern elements. Both spoke excellent English.

Our trip took us to Amman, Ajloun, Jerash, Mount Nebo, Madaba, Karak, Petra, Aqaba and the Dead Sea including Bethany Beyond the Jordan.

We spent our first day in Amman, which was known as Philadelphia in ancient times and was a major city of the Roman Decapolis. These were the ten cities given great self autonomy that effectively ruled the very large segments of the area we now know as Israel, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon. Amman is a thriving capital, with a teeming population and drivers that seem to know only their own individual versions of a highway code; but perhaps we were just bemused by the noise, colour and scents of the Middle East.

Amman proved to be a good starting point, with a theatre, odeon, museum and an acropolis. The theatre, like so very many theatres in the Middle East follows the Greek pattern of using a hillside for seating, thus reducing the civil engineering task of creating great supporting and buttressed walls to house the cavea (the tiers of seating rows). The seating and back drop, like so many others, is much restored to provide a facility for concerts, plays etc for the local population. However most of the reconstruction is with original material. A whispering chamber or passage remains where actors could pass messages from one side of the orchestra to the other. The backdrop to the cavea (stage) is low and reflects little of its former height or glory, just sufficient to provide a view that adds sympathetically to the overall setting (Fig. 1).

The adjacent odeon is small and perhaps best described as cosy. Again it is very much restored using original stone but new ashlers are evident to create a cavea on top of the original stonework. This matches the remainder of the structure for height and gives greater symmetry to the whole building (Fig. 2). A museum of local costume is close by.

The acropolis makes classic use of the topography to provide a well-defended area and displays the many phases of occupation over the centuries. Several rebuilds of the walls are evident (Fig. 3) and the reuse of monumental masonry in later defensive walls can also be seen (Fig. 4).

The acropolis provided the full range of facilities needed for a defended city:
water storage, warehouses, shops, housing, administrative offices, a market place, temples/churches and a Governor's Palace. Water collection may have been primarily through rooftop collection via ceramic down pipes to settling tanks and then into cisterns, the largest system and most readily interpretable, is close to the Governor's Palace (Figs. 5 to 7).

Archaeological digs were in process during our time on the acropolis and much of the site is relatively undisturbed (Fig. 11).

An oversized segment of Constantine's hand is the gate guardian to the Archaeological Museum on the acropolis (Fig. 12). Temples and churches abound on the parts of the acropolis that have been excavated and remain exposed. Several excavated test pits were visible that lacked any form of after care or post-extraction concern, showing signs of long neglect by silting and weed growth. This aspect seemed fairly common on several sites.

The two medieval castles of Karak (Crusader), with its great underground storage works and major stone glacis, and Ajloun, the Saladin stronghold never taken by force of arms or siege, were fascinating but not of significance to this piece, so will be politely ignored.

Jerash proved to be every bit as exciting as we had hoped and offered food for thought reminiscent of the horizontal water turbines at Chemtou in Tunisia. But logic requires this aspect to start at the nymphaeum (see cover). This is a multi-storey structure fronted with apses for statuary and fountain spouts playing into a central pool.

A supply system provided water to street fountains or public collection points, with unused overspill running into a standard Roman centre-line street drain with inspection points and carved drain holes at regular intervals. This central drain is somewhat collapsed and the slabs are not always firmly seated in the road, making the line of waste water flow clearly visible.

It is acknowledged and well-established that Roman water distribution systems were inevitably wasteful, with water being flushed through the drainage systems and rarely used (or perhaps just not identified) beyond city walls. In Jerash a terminal use of the runoff might be attempted. The drain turns in the oval plaza and heads for the south gate and in doing so descends by more than a metre, which could cause a back up or pond within the drain. The drain approaches the west side of the gate...
where two metres or more below ground level is a circular grinding press. The base is partially inset into and too close to the south wall to allow a turning motion by human or animal means of the upper stone that would have revolted on the base stone (Fig. 13). So, from where comes the turning motion? My hypothesis is that this would have come from a horizontal water turbine situated at the end of the drain which is close alongside the base. A curve is visible at the ground surface level that matches a curved ashlars stone in the recess below ground at this point (Fig. 14).

The church mosaics (all open to atmosphere) are late but significantly complete with very legible dedications. In the sanctuary of the Temple of Artemis the pattern of the inner sanctum is clearly visible and stands to a height of several metres (Fig. 15). Be sure to see and feel the rock column in the cluster of five at the temple entrance. The tetrapylon bases are very visible and the butcher's slab supports are self-explanatory in the macellum or market place. As a walled town with temples to Zeus and Artemis, two theatres and a large town bath suite, colonnaded streets and oval plaza, Jerash had the means to display its wealth with a hippodrome that is still in use today for re-enactment displays of chariot racing (Figs. 17 to 20). Shops, which fronted on to the long street between the Hadrianic Arch and the south gate, were positioned in the arches that supported the seating tiers of the stadium. Mount Nebo has wonderful hunting scene mosaics, magnificent views and a splendid milestone with full inscription to Antoninus Pius which includes Britannicus Max- after Parthic Max and before Pontifex Max-Trib Pot XVI- IMP etc. Late mosaics are plentiful in the adjacent Byzantine church with some very good hunting scenes. In the relatively nearby city of Madaba is the map mosaic (Fig. 21). This famous mosaic was designed around AD 570 to decorate the floor of a Byzantine church in Madaba. It shows the entire region from Jordan and Palestine in the north, to Egypt in the south, and depicting in picture form: plains, hills, valleys, villages, and many towns and cities including Jerusalem, complete with walls and pitched roof houses. The mosaic has been damaged and repaired, but also includes the deliberate removal of two figures from a boat on the Dead Sea (Fig. 22).

Petra proved to be that 'Rose Red City Half

as old as time' and the walk through the siq produces the never to be forgotten first view of the Treasury. The siq provides a gentle introduction to this World Heritage Site. A Nabatean-dug
water relief tunnel runs away to the right through the mountain as the siq is approached down through the wadi on foot (or for the more intrepid traveller on horseback, Indiana Jones style). The entrance is narrow and the springing of an arch that spanned the gap is evident above rock-cut shrine carvings, now somewhat wind worn. Carvings in the rock face and strange animal shapes can be found during the descent.

The colours and sheer scale of the gorge is such that it is easy to miss the rock-cut aqueduct on the left hand side and stretches of another on the right. This latter is a series of ceramic pipes that are butt-jointed and cemented at their collars. Sections of paved road also exist on the downward journey (Fig. 23) as well as a worn life-size relief of a camel and its herder which straddles the left hand aqueduct at roughly the mid point of the siq. The Treasury looms out of the gloom, bright and enticing; it is of course empty and only one room deep but, where there has been no wear and tear by the wind, the carvings look pristine: as if the stone mason has put down his tools and gone for lunch (Fig. 24). A recent excavation has opened the basement level of the Treasury, but it was closed and locked by an iron grid.

The road that drops to the lower city passes several tombs showing little more than the door lintel above the present road surface (Fig. 25): whether the road was an incline or a long flight of steps is not known. The architecture of the rock faces is a mix of styles that are seen in Egypt, Sudan, Syria, and Persia with Greek and Roman thrown in.
We also visited Little Petra, not as grand but just as mysterious. Here a siq of about 70 yards opens into a canyon of about 400 yards; a flight of rock-cut steps lead out at the far end. Our guide book indicated that some of the structures contained paintings and our guide was surprised and delighted that we wished to go there. His normal day job was the schoolteacher at the newly built village, and the respect from the local children was obvious in their friendly and willing attitude towards him.

Next day with key to the gate in hand, we arrived at the end of the tarmac and made our way to the gate via a Bedouin encampment, mint tea and a single tourist stall. The entrance to Little Petra is by its own short siq (Fig. 28). The entrance is very narrow and there is no view of the interior, just a pair of rock-cut but very simple chambers at the left hand side of the entrance, little more than guard chambers really. A gate or barrier must have existed in ancient times; it was defended, judging by the holes and slots in the rock walls. Inside, the path opened into a wide relatively level area with rock-cut tombs either side, some of which are raised above the present surface and approached by rock steps.

All these single room cuttings have large doorways and probable water containers just inside the doors (Fig. 29). These containers have drain holes that could have been plugged to hold the water. Many of the rooms have cisterns below them.

The paintings were a disappointment and seen in one room only. It was soot-blackened by fires; its dirty walls have a plaster finish grooved to look like stone (painted white and mortar lines in red), with modern graffiti scratched into the plaster (Fig. 30). At first sight it was a shock and a dismay, but to the rear there was another room not as wide as the first and arched to its full depth of about three metres. The arched ceiling had been plastered and painted but
was again soot-blackened and dirty, parts of the plaster had been broken off and the keying to take the top layer was visible along with part of a square indented frieze.

Access to this space was barred by a square linked metal grill; there being no method of entry I simply poked my camera through the grid and rather dispiritedly took two photographs of the disfigured paintings above and promptly forgot about them (Fig. 31).

Some months later I zoomed in on part of one of the photographs courtesy of this digital world and to my surprise identified leaves and a bunch of grapes. Further more detailed study revealed a small satyr-type boy sitting on a vine with a foot entwined in a tendril shoot, playing a flute-like instrument; in addition there were birds and a stylised pomegranate (Fig. 32).

These rooms along both sides of the street in Little Petra are also tombs, and the fresco dates from the first century AD. In this case it is a vaulted ceiling at the rear of a *bicipinium* or two-couched dining area. It represents an arbour of fruit laden plants and trees, including grape vines, pomegranates, figs and ivy. It is inhabited by birds and there are figures in the photograph. A tiny tendril-trapped foot at the top with a seated figure, either wearing a sheepskin or winged, can be identified as a young shepherd or perhaps a satyr (although without cloven feet), who plays on the *tibia* or double flute, a common instrument used by shepherds to calm their flocks.

There was a common practice in antiquity of people dining regularly at tombs near their ancestors all over the Roman empire, including Petra. Evidence for this has survived remarkably well at the grand mausolea at both Petra and Little Petra. The water cisterns and troughs provided the water for washing and purification rituals as well as, presumably, the washing up afterwards.

Leaving Petra behind we travelled the King’s Highway to Aqaba via Wadi Rum of TE Lawrence fame. The geology is magnificent and the area must surely have been blessed with bounteous products and game in prehistoric times, when the water flowed and the land was green.

We came across a prehistoric site on a shoulder of land overlooking a pair of wadis. Four or five hut circles were evident, each marked by a circle of stones set deep into the ground, and a worked flint scatter close by. Unfortunately it looked as if some private digging had been recently taking place in one of the stone hut circles. The working displayed no signs of an archaeological approach.

Aqaba was an opportunity for retail therapy, lapis lazuli taking the eye in necklace form and Arab dish dash dress.

A day’s journey north to the Dead Sea proved it to be just that, dead and very salty. But the mud and spa treatments were our version of a day in a Roman bath-house with a modern twist and well worth it for the birthday boy. (Remember the prime purpose of the trip?)

The final part of our tour was to Bethany Beyond the Jordan, which is now recognised as the baptismal site where John the Baptist baptised Jesus of Nazareth. The River Jordan is quite narrow here and the viewing point into Israel is a board walk jutting into the river, much favoured as a visiting point by pilgrims, Jordanians, Palestinians and tourists. The river is slow moving, brown and muddy, and the reeds and trees that line the bank on both sides are prone to catching the drifting discarded detritus of modern civilisation (Fig. 33).

Armed military guards observe each other across this very narrow stretch of water. The river that meanders through this valley has changed its course many times and when it breaks its banks occasionally after heavy winter rain a plethora of flood water creates many tributaries on the Jordanian side. These produce water courses through several older assumed Baptismal Sites (Fig. 34), in addition to the Baptismal Pools that have been created by more modern sects of Christianity.

The people of Jordan, both city dweller and Bedouin, were warm and friendly. Our two guides were knowledgeable and ready to share their pride in their country with us, and the driver certainly knew his version of the Jordanian Highway Code.

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John Bithell.