believed to be the Commanding Officer’s home, the remains of an amphora of fish paste called ‘Tunny Fish Relish’ was found complete with a label which said the delicacy had been shipped in from Cadiz.

The great surprise of the excavation was however the astonishing state of preservation of organic materials in the waterlogged site. It is the extensive wooden and leather remains, amongst which are building timbers, tents and shoes, that are of great interest. The exceptional state of preservation of the building timbers has added significantly to our knowledge of the construction and the appearance of first and second century Roman military buildings. The diet of the soldiers it appears included deer and mutton, to judge by the numerous bones discovered. Carlisle became an important town in the Roman era and was awarded the title of Civitas.

NEW EXCAVATIONS IN CANTERBURY IN CONNECTION WITH THE BEANEY INSTITUTE PROJECT

The amazing Victorian building housing the Beaney Institute Museum and Library in Canterbury’s High Street is to be conserved and enhanced with a new extension in order to transform the range and quality of the displays that it offers, following the grant of £6.5 million from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

This redevelopment has provided archaeologists from the Canterbury Archaeological Trust with a splendid opportunity to investigate the heart of Duovirnum Cantiacorum, Roman Canterbury, as the site is adjacent to the town’s Forum. Although the layout of the Roman town is generally understood, there are still plenty of gaps in our full understanding of it. The excavation has already provided new information.

An instance of this is that one of the principal roads passing through Duovirnum passes the excavation site and has been located. It apparently ran parallel with the north side of the modern High Street and part of one of the timbers forming a revetment on its edge has been located in the basement of a house in Kingsbridge Villas. Layers of gruvelling seal unworn first century pottery fragments that were covered when the streets were laid out at the formalisation of the town. Courtyard surfaces and part of the wall of a substantial building have also been found adjacent to the forum. The gravelled yard may well have extended the forum market with temporary stalls.

A timber-framed Roman building with clay walls has been discovered, dated to around AD 270–350 by the pottery found beneath its collapsed walls. It was destroyed by fire, an ever-present danger in closely-packed ancient towns. Further buildings exist beneath this building, as indicated by a series of clay floors. Some of these floors contain high quality decorative wall plaster in their rubble make-up. A mid to late 2nd century building has also been discovered with a large oven made of clay and brick. Large quantities of animal bones were found scattered about it suggesting that untidy and insanitary conditions prevailed at this business. Strangely, the bones found were predominantly the lower jawbones of sheep which raises the question as to what exactly was being prepared in the oven.

At least two late Roman buildings, constructed using substantial timbers resting on huge stone pads reused from earlier buildings, have also been discovered. They remind one of the similar structures found on the site of the baths basilica in Wroxeter and perhaps suggest the appearance of the sub-Roman town.

ROMAN ALTARS FOUND AT A SCOTTISH CRICKET GROUND

Work to rebuild a cricket pavilion at Musselburgh’s Lewisvale Park was delayed following the discovery of two large Roman altars, said to date from around AD 200, during an archaeological investigation of the site. Both altars are reported to have decoration on one side suggesting that they had originally stood against a wall, although the only published photograph showing the pair during the early stages of excavation shows that one at least was surrounded by a moulded plinth.

The other has a large and singular rectangular niche cut into its waist and appears to have suffered considerable damage in the shearing off of one face. Both appear to have been either deliberately toppled or buried. Initial reports say that one of the altars is
dedicated to Jupiter. The carving is reported as "ornate" but no details or illustrations have so far been issued beyond that showing their initial discovery.

They were discovered lying side by side on the scheduled site that once was the Roman fort and settlement at Inveresk. This is one of the most important Roman sites in Scotland, containing a large second century fort and a civil settlement. Most of the fort is now covered by Inveresk churchyard, from whence Roman material is recovered from time to time. A substantial civil settlement grew up outside Inveresk, and inscriptions indicate the presence there of an imperial procurator. The remaining excavated features on the new site consisted of postholes, perhaps from a building, pits and ditches. Pieces of a lead bowl and of both fine and coarse pottery were also discovered.

The discovery of the altars is claimed to be the most significant find of its type in the last 100 years of investigation at Inveresk.

East Lothian Courier – 22.4.2010
http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/scotland/8640741.stm
UK Wired – 23.4.2010

THE IVORY BANGLE LADY OF YORK

In 1901 a high status stone sarcophagus was discovered in Sycamore Terrace, Bootham, York containing the skeleton of a young woman adorned with jet and ivory bracelets, earrings, pendants and a blue glass jug and a mirror. Also enclosed in the late 4th century sarcophagus was an openwork bone mount, possibly from a decayed wooden casket, that reads "Hail sister, may you live in God". This indicates that she was a Christian, although the inclusion of grave goods is at odds with normal practices at this time. Now scientific research techniques undertaken on the skeleton by the University of Reading have determined that the woman was of mixed race and likely to have been born in one of the wealthy North African provinces of the Empire. The lady was between 18 and 25 years old when she died. Her skeleton showed no sign that she had ever had a strenuous life and is another clue to as to her position amongst Eboracum's resident elite or visitors. It should come as no surprise that people born all over the Empire turn up in Britain, as people were used to travelling vast distances either on business, politics, tourism or through property and family ties. Units and military personnel were drafted to the oddest parts of country from all over the Empire. However the flow of inhabitants was no doubt in both directions, as is the case today, and native-born Britons would no doubt be found in strange parts of the Empire if only more tests could be carried out. York in particular must have had much foreign blood bred into the population especially when one considers that the Libyan-born Emperor Septimius Severus and his court were stationed there in the third century from AD 208–211. This must also have been the case throughout the country, especially in military regions or in major ports. With our modern political sensibilities concerning race and colour and the past horrors of the slave trade, the fact that she is described as "African" in news reports can be seriously misleading. There was a great deal of racial and cultural difference between an inhabitant of the highly Romanised North African provinces in ancient times and those of what would later be called the "Slave Coast". To find an inhabitant of what is now Ghana in a wealthy burial in York would be very surprising indeed.

The Ivory Bangle Lady and her grave goods are exhibited from 1st August in the Yorkshire Museum's new exhibition entitled "Roman York: Meet the People of the Empire".

The Times – 27.2.2010
http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/north_yorkshire/8538885.stm

SOUTHWICK ROMAN VILLA IN SUSSEX COMMEMORATED

Thanks to ARA member and professional archaeologist Giles Standing, one of Roman Britain's earliest and most important country houses has been commemorated with the unveiling of an information board on the site.

Southwick near Brighton in Sussex once had a spectacular 1st century Roman villa that on a reduced scale aped the great house at Fishbourne in its lavishness and appointments. It had four wings arranged around a central courtyard and boasted gilt glass tesserae, polished stone inlays and rich wall plaster. Unfortunately the site, dug by Samuel E Winbolt in 1931, was subsequently built over with houses and a Methodist church and, although later excavations were carried out at the villa, to many in the area the knowledge of the villa's past glories had been lost.

Mr Standing conducted a community excavation project in the grounds of the neighbouring Eastbrook Primary School in 2008 and found further evidence of what appears to be the villa's ancillary buildings. He has been determined to remind local people and those beyond of the area's importance. He and the local Southwick Society approached the Sussex Community Foundation for a grant to erect an information board outside the Methodist Church that straddles the north-east corner of the villa's courtyard. At the same time, postcards of the reconstruction painting of the complex, done many years ago by Anthony Beeson, were produced for sale at Mr Standing's suggestion.

On 24th July 2010 Tim Loughton, local MP and Parliamentary Under Secretary for Children and Families, unveiled the information board in a ceremony attended by local residents, members of the Southwick Society, local councillors and representatives of the archaeological world. After the unveiling, guests attended an exhibition of finds from the villa, mounted by Mr Standing at the Southwick Society's Manor Cottage Heritage Centre.

SOUTHAM HERALD AND GAZETTE – 29.7.2010
WEST SUSSEX GAZETTE – 4.8.2010
Little did I know when I made my first visit to Hadrian's Wall in 1986 that I would write an article in our newsletter and share with you my personal experience of a walk along Hadrian's Wall. Ever since my first visit the Wall has had great appeal, and has been an inspiration for me in my absorbing interest in the archaeology and history of Roman Britain. I've participated in two Hadrian's Wall Pilgrimages, attended all of the ARA long weekend tours, twice walked the new Hadrian's Wall Path, and made other visits to get away from the pressures of London.

I completed the walk along the Hadrian's Wall Path, which opened in 2003, both in 2007 and 2008. In 2007 it was a solo walk, but in 2008 I had the privilege of accompanying our Membership Secretary, Don Greenwood. Well I should say sometimes I had his company, as unfortunately Don succumbed to all walkers' nightmare - blisters! Don impressively persevered, wearing his own version of waterproof sandals, determined to complete the walk. We kept in contact by mobile phone. What makes a successful walk is good company with a hearty meal in the evening, and both were never lacking.

There are no rules about whether to walk the Path either east to west or west to east, but walking from WallSEND in the east to Bowness-on-Solway in the west, a total of 85 miles, seems to be the more popular direction. It's the way the Wall was built, and on both occasions it's the way I have gone. The Roman site at WallSEND (Segedunum) is now a fascinating site to visit with its excavated fort, reconstructed baths and fine views of the site from an impressive observation tower. However, it was not always like that. I remember in the late 80s visiting the site and viewing the sad remains of the Headquarters building, thinking 'this site needs developing!'

From WallSEND the Path deviates from the line of the Wall and follows the banks of the River Tyne with remnants of its shipbuilding and industrial past all the way into Newcastle. I took that route in 2007; but in 2008, with Don holding a copy of the fourteenth edition of the *Handbook to the Roman Wall*, we did it how all Roman enthusiasts should do it and walked as close as we could to the line of the Wall, through Walker, Byker and into Newcastle city centre. Although you get some funny looks from the locals when attempting to trace the site of a milecastle or turret in someone's back garden, there is no doubt a sense of satisfaction that you are not missing anything.

We were surprised to find a newly exposed stretch of Wall in Shields Road, Byker, which had been excavated in 2001. This plaza-style area next to the library also reveals perhaps one of the most important recent elements of the layout of the Wall system: three rows of oval pits were discovered on the berm, which held stakes intended as further obstacles to the Wall.

Attention to follow the route of the Wall as you approach Newcastle city centre can be confusing and difficult. However, as you arrive at the twelfth century Castle Keep, with a layout on the ground of buildings associated with the Roman fort, you are rewarded with dramatic views of a number of bridges across the River Tyne. Newcastle was the site of a Roman bridge and the most easterly part of the Wall before the decision was taken to extend it to WallSEND.

The route west out of Newcastle becomes more clearly defined, with the course of the Wall following Westgate Road towards Benwell. It passes a plaque on the Mining Institute building, close to the railway station, marking the discovery of the south face of the Wall. At Benwell you are rewarded with two unique sites, within a suburban setting, which the Association visited in 2003: they are a small temple dedicated to Antoninus Pius, discovered in 1862, and a Vallum crossing. Many members will recall that these are not immediately obvious, as they are enclosed by semi-detached housing.

It is not every day that you will see a piece of Roman wall at a petrol station, but as you approach Denton at the BP station you will see just that. Denton is also known as the site of the first Turret.
that you will see along the 84-mile walk. As you move into the Northumberland countryside there are a few features of the frontier system through Throckley before you come to the impressive stretch of Broad Wall at Heddon-on-the-Wall, always a good place to finish your first day’s walking – particularly with the welcome of a fine public house, The Swan!

At Heddon-on-the-Wall you begin to get that feeling of the amazing landscape and sites ahead, knowing that now the designated Hadrian’s Wall Path follows in most cases the line of the Wall. After Heddon you reach the site of the fort at Rudchester, split in two by the Military Road (B6318), which has covered so much of the Wall since the 1750s. Rudchester is famous for one of the two Temples of Mithras discovered along the Wall.

The Path alternates on both sides of the B6318 before reaching the hamlet of Harlow Hill and then descends to the tranquil setting of the Whittle Dene reservoirs, a nice place for a break. You can go a bit further for a liquid lunch at the Robin Hood Inn: don’t forget to stamp your Hadrian’s Wall Path passport, as it’s one of several stamping points to qualify for your certificate. There are good glimpses of the North Ditch, and at Down Hill as you look back there are impressive profiles of the Vallum.

It is not long before you come to the site of the fort at Halton Chesters, the subject of excavations in the 1930s, 50s and 60s, and a major geophysical survey in 1995 and 1999 which revealed the existence of a civil settlement. At the Errington Arms public house you cross the site of the Dere Street Roman Road and the Roman gateway, known as Portgate, located in 1966. Dere Street leads south to Corbridge and north to High Rochester and into Scotland.

From the Portgate you begin the gentle slope down to the River Tyne at Chesters, with the Vallum clearly defined and fine sections of the North Ditch visible. A favourite stop for walkers and certainly mine is the St Oswald’s tea rooms, before you come across the traditional site of the Battle of Heavenfield, fought in AD 634 between Oswald, King of Northumbria and King Cadwallon. If you have time, a visit to the Church of St Oswald in Lee is rewarding, with fine views across the Northumberland countryside.

A fine portion of Wall is shortly upon you at Planetrees Farm, an excellent stretch which illustrates the decision taken to reduce the thickness of the Wall from ten to six Roman feet. One of the best preserved turrets is undoubtedly 26b at Brunton, with the Wall still standing eight feet high. The descent down to Chollerford Bridge brings you to the outstanding fort at Chesters, set on the banks of the River North Tyne. With so much to see, including the excellent site museum (an ‘ancient monument’ in its own right), you can get carried away and forget you still have many miles to walk, although the Chollerford area is a good place to end your second day’s walking.

The steep climb from Chesters as you approach the south-eastern extent of the Northumberland National Park really sets you up for the sites ahead. You get a great sense of feeling that you are truly in Hadrian’s Wall Country. You come across Milecastle 29 at Tower Tye, one of only a handful of milecastles protected by a perimeter ditch. After the well-preserved remnants of Wall and Turret at Black Carts you cannot fail to be inspired at Limestone Corner by the sheer enormity that faced the Roman engineers as they attempted unsuccessfully to break the huge stone blocks to create the North Ditch.

It is not long before you come across the delightful site at Carrawburgh. Passing around the earthen banks of the fort you are welcomed to the Mithraeum, one of the great treasures of Hadrian’s Wall. It reminds me of the first time I placed my 10p (I think) in the slot to watch the reconstruction presentation, sadly no longer there, at the Museum of Antiquities in Newcastle; it showed how the interior would have been brightly painted in Roman times.

The next stage of the walk takes in superb stretches of the North Ditch as you approach Coesike where the modern road deviates left and the Wall begins its descent onto the Crags. The section of the Wall from here to Housesteads eluded me before the Path opened, as a lack of parking made it hard to reach. This section contains fine stretches of Wall, Turrets and Milecastle 35 on Sewingshields Crags.

As you come out from the trees on Kennel Crags you are confronted with the ‘Grandest Station’ of them all, Housesteads Fort. The inspirational setting of Housesteads is a highlight of the walk and although the Path runs along the north bank, there is no doubt that time must be given to inspect the interior of the fort, including the famous latrines. Continuing towards Housesteads Milecastle 37, with its fine north gateway, if you look back towards Housesteads you get the iconic view of Hadrian’s Wall on Cuddy’s Crags.
The next stretch of Wall can only be described as outstanding, with stunning views both north and south: all the way to Steel Rigg across Hotbank; Sycamore Gap (made famous by the film Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves); Castle Nick Milecastle 39; and Peel Crags. There is so much to soak up: the beauty and magnificence of this section! A fine end to your third day.

The climb to Winshields Crags, the highest point on the Path, encompasses some excellent stretches of the North Ditch and breathtaking views of the Northumberland National Park. The Path makes several dips before coming to Cawfields Milecastle 42, with outstanding views to the east of the Vallum and Roman marching camps. Sadly much of the Wall here was destroyed by quarrying in the 1930s.

A gradual ascent now takes you to the unconsolidated remains of Great Chesters fort. There is something of great charm about this site, which has had little investigation: you have a feeling it should be left for another generation. The Path westwards is memorable with fine stretches of Wall and a superb viewpoint at Turret 44b before the steep slope down to Walltown Quarry and the Roman Army Museum at Carvoran, which is well worth a visit and has a good tea room!

As you leave the Crags and the Northumberland countryside behind you there is something of a feeling that all the best bits have passed you. However Cumbria and the western section have much to offer, including more muddy fields! It is not long before you come across the twelfth century Thirlwall Castle, and another fine tea room if you time it right! There is now a gentle walk across farmland to the village of Gilsland with the well-preserved Milecastle 48 at Poltross Burn, which shows the base of steps to the top of the Wall.

Crossing the Carlisle to Newcastle railway line you get an excellent stretch of Wall to the village. Gilsland is an appropriate place to stop for the night with a good range of accommodation and of course the Gilsland Spa Hotel, which the Association has made good use of on three of our past Hadrian’s Wall tours.

In some respects the next section of consolidated Wall is as good as any in Northumberland, stretching from the edge of Gilsland village, through Willowford Farm, across the River Irthing and all the way to Birdoswald, passing two turrets, a milecastle and a complex of bridge abutments that supported the Wall across the Irthing. Birdoswald Roman Fort is now a major tourist attraction and has been described as the Housesteads of Cumbria: if full-scale excavations took place there, no doubt the buried buildings would rival those at Housesteads. This is Tony Wilmott country: he’s a great supporter of the Association, and he excavated the granaries and edited the recent excellent publication Hadrian’s Wall: Archaeological Research by English Heritage 1976–2000.

From Birdoswald to Banks good stretches exist of the Turf Wall and two turrets. As you approach Banks East Turret 52a, you have the Pike Hill Signal Station, a remnant of the Stanegate frontier, which pre-dates Hadrian’s Wall. Shortly after Banks is Hare Hill: this short stretch of Wall has the distinction of being the tallest surviving part of Hadrian’s Wall, although it was ‘rebuilt’ in Victorian times.

At Haytongate, close to some unconsolidated Wall, is the first of three refreshment stations along the Path in Cumbria: they have honesty boxes and are provided by local people. There are not many places you can make yourself a cup of coffee at the edge of a field! The Path continues through several villages, across open fields and woodlands, with few features for the Roman enthusiast. Then it enters Crosby-on-Eden, taking you off the line of the Wall, and follows close to the River Eden into Carlisle, an ideal place to take your night’s rest.

Although the last leg of the Path to Bowness may be deprived of Roman remains, it is not deprived of quiet green pastures, wooded banks against the River Eden, isolated footpaths, historical landmarks and villages. There is something of exciting anticipation as you tackle the last day, but it is important to remember there are fifteen miles in front of you – thankfully though, on the flat! One of the first highlights has to be the delightful views of the River Eden, near to the site of Milecastle 70 at Kirkandrews-on-Eden, which flows out into the Solway Firth.

As you enter the village of Burgh by Sands, the site of not one but three Roman forts, you are rewarded with the thirteenth century St Michael’s Church, built almost entirely of Roman stone and a ‘must visit’ site. The church is famous: after the death of Edward I on the Solway Marsh on 7th July 1307 his
body lay in state at St Michael's before its final journey to London. The three mile round trip to his monument on the Burgh Marsh, I have to say, is memorable on a fine day.

After Burgh by Sands you can see why the east to west route is my favoured direction – not that I have anything against Wallsend! You are now entering the Solway Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and you walk along the tidal road all the way to Drumburgh, the site of the next Roman fort. The views across the marshes and the Solway Firth into Scotland as far as the hill fort at Burnswark are spectacular. Another refreshment station awaits you at Drumburgh; again as you drink your coffee there is that anticipation that you have only a few more miles and you must move on.

The Path detours off the line of the Wall and coast until you come to Port Carlisle, the last but one village and site of the last Milecastle. You keep to the coast path and then come into view of the Bowness-on-Solway road sign.

Well, do not expect flags flying, but you are rewarded with ending your eighty-four mile walk at the Banks Promenade, which dates back to Edwardian times, and is now beautifully restored and landscaped as a fitting end (or beginning!) to the Hadrian’s Wall Path. As you take a rest you know that the ‘Greatest Roman Monument north of the Alps’ ended here.

It is not every time that you can say when you had a week away from the stress of London that you had the most perfect and idyllic time, but in the case of walking the Hadrian’s Wall Path I have no hesitation in saying it was just that.

GLOSSARY
Berm – the space between the Wall and the North Ditch.
Milecastle – a small defended enclosure provided at every Roman mile along the Wall, with a gateway to the north and south.
Stane gate – the medieval name for the Roman road between Corbridge and Carlisle that marked the frontier system under the Emperor Trajan, Hadrian’s predecessor.
Turret – a stone tower: bonded within the Stone Wall; initially free-standing along the Turf Wall and subsequently embedded into the Turf Wall.
Vallum – the great earthwork behind the Wall, extending from Newcastle to Bowness-on-Solway. It consists of a ditch and mounds on each side.

BIBLIOGRAPHY
I think all ARA members should have a copy of it.
Richard, Mark, 2008, Hadrian’s Wall Path, A Cicerone Guide. Excellent detailed maps, colour illustrations throughout, the path route described in both directions. What more could you want!
Stedman, Henry, 2008, Hadrian’s Wall Path (British Walking Guides), Trailblazer Publications. A comprehensive guide with detailed practical information and superb maps.

MAPS
Hadrian’s Wall Path (Walker’s Route), 2003, Harvey Map Services Ltd.
An Archaeological Map of Hadrian’s Wall, English Heritage (see below & page 29).
OS maps 314, 315, 316 and OL 43, which cover the entire Path.

WEBSITE
The Hadrian’s Wall Country website at www.hadrians-wall.org has everything to assist you: accommodation listings, baggage transfer, transport and publications to order on-line.
Please do not hesitate to contact me at DavidKSleep@aol.com if I can be of any assistance in planning your walk along the Hadrian’s Wall Path.

David Sleep.
Newport's late third century villa may be smaller than the Isle of Wight's more prominent villa at Brading, but there's a lot to see at the well-presented site.

The villa and museum site is in the middle of a residential area. It was discovered in 1926 during building work, and it would have been destroyed if not for the efforts of local property developer John Millgate and antiquary Percy Stone, whose excavations were funded by private donations. Newspaper cuttings in the site museum record subscriptions, mostly small sums from private donors, totalling £27 4s 6d. A rousing poem written to drum up support calls Stone the 'Duke of Diggers'!

![Model of Newport villa, showing the stone-walled bath-house on the left.](image1.png)

Farm buildings associated with the villa are believed to lie under nearby houses. A hypocaust was found nearby, perhaps part of a bath-house for the villa's servants.

In front of the villa are the remains of a malting furnace, found at Parsonage Farm, Newchurch. To save the furnace, it was dismantled and moved to the villa.

At the counter, for fifty pence, you can buy an informative handout with a plan and good illustrations (three black and white A4 sheets, stapled at one corner). If you can, I suggest you seek out a copy of David Tomalin's out-of-print *Newport Roman Villa* (1977, Isle of Wight County Council) before your visit.

The best preserved feature of the villa is its bath-house. Its superstructure had arches of tufa, a light-weight local stone resembling an earthy limescale; it forms as a crust around springs in the Undercliff (on Wight's south-east coast). Tufa could be cut with a saw.

The lower parts of the walls remain for the frigidarium (cold bath room), tepidarium (warm bath room), sudatorium (sauna) and caldarium (hot bath room). The frigidarium retains some of its original mosaic.

![The frigidarium and cold plunge bath.](image2.png)

The frigidarium and caldarium have plunge baths; there are still box flue tiles in the latter's wall. Pilae (tile stacks) are preserved in all three heated rooms.

Next to the caldarium is a large room. Part of the white and red floor, made from chalk and tile tesserae, has a chequered pattern. The floor sags in one corner: the villa may have been unintentionally built over a well or pit which later subsided. The fireplace at the back of the room may be a later addition to the villa, as it sits on the tessellated floor. Behind it is a modern painted plaster wall, which shows how the room might have been decorated. The design incorporates interesting floral patterns, fruit and peacocks, all gleaned from plaster fragments recovered from this and other Island villas.

The room next door is enclosed and decked out as a kitchen. Along the north wall of the house, the timber stud work has been helpfully reconstructed; substantial wooden timbers were needed to support the heavy stone tiles, made from local Bembridge limestone.

The remaining villa walls were mostly robbed away. These are sited outside the cover building and have been built up. As in the cover building, information boards describe the rooms; one shows where a skull, hairpin and two bracelets (on display in the museum) were found. A small garden has information about the plants grown during the Roman period.
finds from the site and elsewhere on the Isle of Wight. The folder of newspaper cuttings is on display; others are kept behind the counter by Arthur, the villa’s knowledgeable custodian, who was very helpful when I visited.

Practicalities

In the summer school groups often visit the villa. You may wish to check with the site if you want pick a quiet time for your visit.

Suburban parking can be challenging, especially for coaches. (Some dedicated parking would be welcome, perhaps in nearby Wykeham Road, which is devoid of house frontages.) The site does not sell refreshments; Arthur told me that this is being considered. The site has a toilet (key on request). An audio guide is available for visually-impaired people.

The villa is clearly a most valuable and popular educational attraction for a very wide range of Islanders and their visitors. It might be small, but it deserves to be called “Percy Stone’s gem”. I congratulate the Isle of Wight Council and their staff.

Nicholas Hogben.

Contact details

Newport Roman Villa, Cypress Road, Newport, Isle of Wight PO30 1HA
01983 529720
www.iwight.com/museums

THIRD YEAR OF EXCAVATIONS AT BRADING VILLA

The third season of fieldwork in Brading Villa’s five-year ‘Big Dig’ programme took place in August 2010. This year’s excavation, directed by Professor Barry Cunliffe, set out to investigate the Iron Age precursor to the villa settlement.

The North Range was excavated in 2008. It was a grand aisled building with internal divisions and a bath suite at the east end. The North Range was originally excavated in the 1980s; the 2008 dig established its archaeology using modern methods, finding evidence of pre-Roman occupation. The site was conserved and backfilled with support from English Heritage; before the dig, it was being damaged by rabbits.

The South Range was excavated in 2009. It comprises four structures (east to west): an L-shaped bath suite, much damaged after exposure following excavations in 1882; a later building of uncertain date and use, built on the site of the baths; a timber-built hall formerly thought to be a farm building, possibly a precursor to the North Range (to be excavated further in 2010); and a rectangular structure of uncertain date and use. The results of the excavation have yet to be published.

Brading Roman Villa: Interim report on the excavations of 2008 (Barry Cunliffe, 2009) is sold by Brading Villa’s shop (01983 406223, info@bradingromanvilla.org.uk).

NEW DISPLAY AT COMBLEY VILLA

A new interpretative cabinet has been provided at the site of Combley Villa, in Robin Hill Adventure Park & Gardens on the Isle of Wight.

Combley Villa was excavated by the late Laurie Fenelly from 1968 to 1979, when the remains were reburied; a report has yet to be published. The location of rooms are now shown by marker stones and lines of bricks in the grass.

The displays are aimed at general visitors rather than Roman specialists; hopefully they will engage youngsters and encourage them to become the archaeologists of tomorrow.

The display contains a raised relief model of the villa’s walls as they would have appeared when excavated. One cabinet holds Roman artefacts, including Vechtse ware pottery found at the site.

On one wall a three-dimensional walk-through takes viewers around the outside of the villa and through its bath-house. In a side area, a mosaic from the villa is projected onto the floor; if you walk over it you disturb an illusionary image of shifting sand and create ripples in a virtual pool.

Information panels (sadly, with a few mistakes) describe the history of the villa and its excavation.

Other items on display include replica Roman helmets and weapons, and a time line.

Admission to the Park costs £8.95, £6.95 concessions. Call 01983 527352 or visit www.robin-hill.com for details.

Nicholas Hogben.
A NEW ROMAN BUILDING DISCOVERED NEAR TEWKESBURY

A substantial Roman masonry building with plastered walls has been discovered near Tewkesbury by archaeologists excavating in advance of the laying of a pipeline. The structure found in the excavation north of Breton’s Norton in Worcestershire has been claimed to be part of a wealthy villa. A team from Oxford Archaeology, who are conducting the excavation under the supervision of Wessex Archaeology, believe that the building dates to the late third to mid fourth centuries AD.

Although at the moment it is believed that the building is a villa the possibility exists that it is to be interpreted as a temple. It is well preserved with intact flagstone flooring and walls that were plastered with simple designs in red and cream. Hexagonal roofing slates covered the building but only a single tesserae has so far been discovered so mosaics are elusive. The part of the building so far exposed is built on a terrace cut into the hillside and walls survive up to a metre in height. While the site being excavated is only a 15m wide strip, which is being prepared for a pipeline to be laid, the building is thought to extend much further and part of it is likely to be buried beneath the village of Breton’s Norton.

Findings indicate that the site was inhabited throughout the Roman era. Pottery so far discovered on the site originates from Malvern and the Severn Valley whilst coins of the mid 4th century have been discovered. Roman masonry buildings in Worcestershire are thought to be rare so it is speculated that this villa was an outlier of the Cotswold group. Its nearest market town would have been Worcester.

Two burials believed to pre-date the structure have also been discovered. One is an undated crouched inhumation but without grave goods. It is about 150m away from the villa. The second burial is an Iron Age cremation. Settlement on the site may have started long before the Roman period, as sherds of middle Iron Age pottery (dating from c.400 BC to 100 BC) have been found. Traces of a timber-built round house, of late Iron Age or early Roman date, is the earliest evidence for a building so far identified within the pipeline trench.

BOOK REVIEW

Findings from the Frontier: Material Culture in the 4th–5th Centuries

Council for British Archaeology Research Report 162, edited by Rob Collins and Lindsay Allason-Jones


Review by David Sleep

This Council for British Archaeology Research Report complements and reports on the outstanding two-day Finds from the Frontier Conference, held in March 2008 at Newcastle University, which I attended. This provided an opportunity for many leading Roman finds specialists to examine the 4th century material culture beyond the traditional frontier of Hadrian’s Wall, in particular the lives of the 4th century limitanei (soldiers of the limes, or frontier) of Britain in the region from the Humber-Mersey line to the south to the Forth-Clyde line to the north.

The conference included an impressive line up of speakers many of whom are well known to the Association, including Paul Bidwell, Mark Hassall and Lindsay Allason-Jones (former Director of Archaeological Museums and co-editor of the report). Her fellow editor, Rob Collins, is Finds Liaison Officer for the Portable Antiquities Scheme.

The traditional view is that the 4th century was a period of declining standards in the Roman military, and was materially poorer than during the 2nd and 3rd centuries of the Roman occupation of Britain. However, many of the speakers expressed surprise at the quality of materials revealed during the preparation of their papers. As a consequence, the papers generated stimulating debate and encouraged discussion among the delegates, making it a very enlightening and successful conference. Delegates concluded that the period was rich in artefacts and these had much to say about life in the late frontier region.

The intention of the report is to allow the contributors to go beyond the evidence they provided in their conference papers, giving further evidence of the interpretation of finds in the late frontier period of Roman Britain and into the post-Roman period. Epigraphic and structural evidence of the late Roman period is also examined.

Chapters include: the supply and use of pottery on Hadrian’s Wall in the fifth century; military equipment of the fourth century on Hadrian’s Wall; and interpreting the diet of fourth century frontier people from plant and animal remains. A further chapter explores the emergence of Northumbria at the beginning of the Anglo-Saxon period.

A number of sites are examined with the help of modern excavations and re-assessments. Many of the papers focus on key sites along Hadrian’s Wall (including South Shields, Housesteads, Vindolanda, Birdoswald and Carlisle) or sites to the south (including Winchester, Piercbridge, Catterick and York). They interpret key assemblages of ceramics, pottery, coins, glass and items of personal adornment, particularly a detailed examination of brooches.

The area to the north of Hadrian’s Wall, always seen in the late Roman period to be sparse of material culture, was re-examined by Fraser Hunter of National Museums Scotland, including the famous Traprain Law discovery of late Roman coins. Tony Wilmott, though not at the conference, provided an excellent paper examining the structural background of the late Roman frontier.

The report is lavishly illustrated with colour photographs, line drawings of finds, detailed tables of finds and a number of distribution maps, which clearly illustrate the extent of finds from the sites and areas covered in the report.

One of the many impressive aspects of this publication is the comprehensive and extensive bibliography, a welcome aid to readers intending to do further research or study aspects of the subject.

I recommend this book to members: not just those with an interest in Hadrian’s Wall and frontier studies but also those interested in a broader understanding of life in fourth century Roman Britain. The papers in this report advance our knowledge considerably and offer much insight into a dynamic frontier society at the end of the Roman period in Britain.
BOOK LIST

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


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