The recent excavations at Caerleon are producing exciting results. Here, the directors of the project provide a summary account of work on buildings inside the fortress and the preliminary excavations of 2011 which investigated the tremendous find of a previously unsuspected range of huge buildings beneath the meadows outside the fortress walls between the amphitheatre and the River Usk. Hopefully, these excavations, which have raised so many questions, will be continued in future years.

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Archaeological Research at Isca

The Roman legionary fortress of Isca, which lies beneath the town of Caerleon near Newport in South Wales, is one of the most continuously-researched monuments remaining from Roman Britain. Yet, as the work conducted by archaeologists from Cardiff University and UCL over the last five years has shown, there is still an enormous amount to be learnt about this site. The significance of the fortress has been understood for centuries; Isca’s ruins were conspicuous enough in the medieval landscape of South Wales to merit comment in the work of writers such as Gerald of Wales and Geoffrey of Monmouth in the twelfth century (Knight 2001, 48). The first antiquarian excavations were recorded by J E Lee in the 1840s, but the modern framework of understanding of the site really began to be established during the course of a long series of work by the National Museum of Wales which commenced in the 1920s, beginning with the clearance of the amphitheatre by Mortimer and Tessa Wheeler in 1926-7 (Wheeler and Wheeler 1928). Excavations across the fortress continued up until the Second World War (e.g. on the Prysg Field barracks, now on public display; Nash-Williams 1931), after which the focus of the Museum’s work returned to the extra-mural area. Then, from the 1960s, more of the excavation undertaken took on the character of rescue work, particularly inside the fortress, and was increasingly conducted by the Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust (GGAT). The Fortress Baths within the defences, and the Mill Street extra-mural settlement on the eastern side of the fortress, constituted the largest areas explored in the 1970s and 1980s (Evans 2000; Zienkiewicz 1986a, b).

All of this work produced impressive results. The outline chronology of the fortress could be established from the sequences across a number of sites within the walls. Isca was constructed by its garrison legion, II Augusta, in the 70s AD. There followed a long process of conversion of what were initially mainly timber buildings to masonry in the second century, and then episodes of rebuilding in the third century. The occupation of the fortress was evidently subject to the vicissitudes of the legionary garrison being deployed elsewhere in Britain, particularly during campaigns in the north and building operations on Hadrian’s Wall. The layout of the fortress could also be fairly comprehensively established, and George Boon, of the National Museum, synthesized much of the evidence for its plan in his several books about Isca from the 1960s to the 1980s (esp. Boon 1972, 1987). However, there were still areas of both chronological and spatial uncertainty in the understanding of the fortress in the 1990s and early 2000s. In terms of the history of the fortress, the ‘end’ of legionary occupation had never been fully understood, with signs of dismantling activities towards the end of the third century suggesting abandonment and redeployment at that point to some scholars (e.g. Boon 1972, 66-70), but equally evidence of fourth-century inhabituation hinting at some continuity to others (e.g. Davies 1991, 54-5; cf. Fulford 1996, 24). There also remained some quite large areas of the plan of the fortress which were blank, even where overlying buildings did not exist – as in Priory Field, in the southern part of the fortress enclosure.

Both of these challenges figured prominently in the Research Framework for Caerleon’ which GGAT produced on behalf of Cadw in 2004 (GGAT 2004). This Framework, which also highlighted the continuing dearth of knowledge about much of the hinterland of the fortress, particularly in areas beyond the immediately extra-mural canabae, set in motion a number of research initiatives at Caerleon, including the establishment of the Caerleon Research Committee. The
potential for work in Caerleon, and for discoveries made there to contribute not only to understanding of the site itself, but also to new questions about Roman Britain, is enormous. Compared to the two other long-term legionary bases in Britain, at York and Chester, Caerleon is relatively open to further archaeological work, and indeed this makes the site of international significance. It is within this context that the projects described in this article took shape, beginning with a programme of geophysical survey undertaken by Cardiff University and GeoArch. This was initially targeted on spaces within the fortress but then encompassed substantial parts of the extra-mural area. Campaigns of excavations by Cardiff University and UCL followed, with trial work in 2007 leading to a large-scale open-area excavation of a legionary warehouse building in 2008 and 2010. Finally, further trial work in the southern caanae took place in 2011. Altogether, the discoveries from this series of interventions have transformed our understanding of Caerleon and much beyond.

Geophysical surveys within the fortress, 2006-2008
Approximately 15% of the interior of the fortress at Caerleon has now been surveyed by magnetic gradiometry and resistivity. This work was concentrated in the western, or dextral, side of the fortress which today lies beneath open fields between the modern town and the amphitheatre. The surveys were undertaken by Dr Tim Young of GeoArch and undergraduate archaeologists enrolled on the Surveying and Prospection course at Cardiff University over three short field seasons between 2006 and 2008. At the time there was some doubt that geophysical techniques would work in Caerleon, but it soon became clear that the surveys had produced important results. In fact, thirteen previously unknown buildings were located, including barrack blocks, granaries, a store-building and a very large metal workshop (Fig. 1).

The first surveys were in Priory Field, at the front of the fortress and on the right-hand side

Fig. 1. Overall plan of Caerleon, with recent geophysical discoveries highlighted in red.
of the main *via praetoria* leading towards the front gate or *porta praetoria* (Roman fortresses were viewed from the headquarters building looking towards the front gate). Here the teams discovered a row of eight centurial barracks blocks along the front wall, separated by a road from a block containing three long rectangular buildings and a courtyard building on opposite sides of an extensive yard. The resistivity survey imaged these buildings very clearly – the rectangular structures, each 42m long and 15m wide, are almost certainly military granaries with raised floors, buttressed walls and loading bays, while the courtyard complex is similar in plan to warehouses known from Rome and Ostia. No building like this has been investigated in any legionary fortress under modern conditions before, and subsequent excavations showed that this was *Isca*’s main store.

Elsewhere, the surveys located another complex beneath the playing fields of the Caerleon Endowed Schools consisting of buildings, including a large aisled basilica with towers at each end, around a central courtyard. This complex produced very high magnetic readings and it seems likely that this was one of the fortress’ main workshops where metal items – primarily of iron – were produced and repaired. If this turns out to be the case it would be one of several workshops arranged in a row at the rear of the fortress behind the headquarters building. The surveys of Priory and School Fields suggested that neither of these areas of the fortress had been much occupied after the Roman period and that these legionary buildings might survive largely intact and undisturbed by later activity. Overall, the surveys have added significantly to our knowledge of the layout of *Isca* and the site is now one of the most completely understood legionary fortresses in the Roman Empire in terms of its plan.

**Excavations in Priory Field, 2007-2010: the legionary warehouse**

The very successful geophysical surveys within the fortress answered several questions, particularly to do with the locations of the main legionary workshops and granaries, but also raised all sorts of new ones. Foremost among these was how well-preserved the structures and associated stratigraphy might be. The next stage of research at Caerleon was therefore initiated to examine a selection of the newly-discovered buildings by trial excavation. In 2007, Cardiff University and UCL came together to spend a month digging six 2 x 2m test-pits in Priory Field, and one longer trench (20 x 2m) in the small paddock alongside the Broadway, Golledge’s Field, which had previously been examined by Victor Nash-Williams in the 1930s (Nash-Williams 1933). The purpose of the latter trench was to see whether the building outlines which still appeared to be present on the geophysical survey might yet yield further information about the barrack blocks of the First Cohort, which were present in this part of the fortress. The test-pits in Priory Field were located to examine the survival of archaeological remains in the area of the granaries, the large yard, the barracks, and the rampart behind the fortress wall.

The 2007 season produced promising results of well-preserved archaeology, even in the Golledge’s Field trench, where substantial deposits (including part of the internal courtyard within a centurion’s quarters) survived between Nash-Williams’ own trenches. In Priory Field, the tile rubble on top of one of the ruined granaries was particularly striking, while the test-pit in the yard area near to the putative warehouse structure produced some late Roman finds. These formed part of the justification for a full open-area, research and community excavation of this building. As noted above, initial analysis of the plan seemed to make it a likely candidate for a store building. However, compared to the other buildings in Priory Field, this was a relatively unknown kind of structure in a legionary context, and thus it seemed the most worthwhile to examine further – particularly given the hints of late Roman occupation in the vicinity, thus addressing chronological as well as spatial questions about the fortress. The university collaboration was thus continued.

![Fig. 2. The trench in 2010, viewed from the north-west, with the main wall-lines of the Roman warehouse highlighted by members of the team.](Photo: © Cardiff University/UCL.)
with support from Cadw and the National Roman Legion Museum, to conduct a research and training excavation, with a high degree of public involvement, over two seasons in 2008 and 2010.

The initial area examined in 2008 was approximately half of the one full wing of the building that lies entirely within Priory Field. This 20 x 25m trench was extended by 15m to the north-west in 2010 to encompass much of the rest of this wing. In total, four main rooms and an entranceway with two side-chambers were excavated in this part of the building (Fig. 2). Plentiful finds evidence confirming that it was a storage building or warehouse was recovered (on which more below), and a good deal of material relating to the problematic fourth-century phase of the fortress was also discovered. Along with indications of later medieval activity on the site, a sequence of three main phases could be discerned, which will be briefly outlined in turn. The store building appears to have been constructed in masonry from the outset, which might suggest that the plot was vacant for some time before the building was erected, during the general conversion of the fortress to masonry from the beginning of the second century. Once built, the layout was not significantly altered during the life of the building. There was, though, evidence for the passageway running through the width of the wing being resurfaced with flagstones, perhaps indicating heavy use. Internal surfaces in the storerooms proved more elusive, but there were at least numerous finds supporting our interpretation of the main function of the building.

These included a wide variety of metalwork, including items of military equipment such as a shield grip, fittings from more substantial items of furniture, and also more personal objects such as brooches. Whether items were stored here on a routine basis, and if so how they fitted into the supply chain of the legion, is a question to explore further as we examine the finds in detail, but there are clues from items like an inscribed lead tag that personal kit was held here (Fig. 3). It is also possible that the building’s main use was when the legion was posted elsewhere in Britain. The most significant find also offers tantalising hints about.

Fig. 3. Inscribed lead tag, reading ‘Centurion Maternus, property of Aurelius Severus. Smoothed and for (?) damning’, (see Tomlin 2011, 459-460).
Photo: © Cardiff University/UCL.

Fig. 4. Elements of elaborate Roman armour, including studs aligned to produce a scale effect and a piece decorated with a small human head, found amidst fragments of corroded lorica segmentata in Room 2 of the warehouse.
Photo: © Cardiff University/UCL.

Fig. 5. The 2008 trench viewed from the south-west, with exposed walls of the ‘intermediate’ structural phase visible in the foreground and in the centre of the trench.
Photo: © Cardiff University/UCL.
wider questions to do with the life of the legion. The discovery of numerous fragments of armour, including substantial pieces of *lorica segmentata*, in Room 2 of the warehouse is interesting both as a further discovery of a type of armour rarely preserved in archaeological contexts, and for what it indicates about the later phases of the warehouse (Fig. 4). This armour seems to have been deposited as scrap in the warehouse in the later third century, and not recovered, perhaps confirming that there were changes in – if not the cessation of – the garrisoning of *Isca* at this time.

Continued occupation is certainly attested by the evidence of fourth-century coins and pottery, and perhaps by the next structural phase, although the dating of this is imprecise at present. This phase consisted of a series of lengths of masonry, preserved as short segments only a couple of courses high, and generally running perpendicular to the main warehouse wall (Fig. 5). These were un-mortared, and seem to have been built at a time when at least some of the internal partitions of the warehouse had disappeared, though not the main outer wall. They obviously represent a conversion of some of the fabric of the warehouse to another purpose (and indeed seem to have incorporated fragments of reused building material; Figs. 6 and 7), but they also betray some level of organisation. This phase might fit with other fourth-century evidence from the fortress, when people were maintaining some of the main streets, and dumping rubbish and perhaps holding markets in the shell of the fortress baths (Gardner 1999), none of which is inconsistent with some element of the legion remaining at least until the mid-fourth century (late Roman legions were frequently split into multiple units; Casey 1991).

Whether or not this interpretation is correct, the third phase of building activity in this part of Priory Field certainly seems to have come much later than the first two, and followed a period when the site was largely abandoned, except for the purpose of stone-robbing. Overlying the previous structural phases and the areas of rubble surrounding them, as well as the main robber trenches, we discovered a very broken-up flagged area, associated with a slab-lined pit. These clues hint at an agricultural function for the structures here, perhaps there was a barn or stable, but the date is hard to pinpoint as finds are generally lacking for this period in South Wales. The building does seem to have been cut by a fourteenth-century saw-pit, though, giving a possible end-date for its use. Apart from a small number of later features, little else occurred in this part of Priory Field that left any archaeological trace. The results from the excavation thus shed light on the transition of this part of Caerleon from fortress building to farm, and offer many insights into the life of soldiers living within the walls of *Isca*. These soldiers also spent much of their time outside the walls, though, and recent research has generated much new knowledge about these areas of Roman Caerleon.
Extra-mural surveys and excavations – the southern canabae

Between 2009 and 2011 further geophysical surveys were undertaken outside the walls of the fortress on its western and south-western sides. The most remarkable results were obtained from the fields between the amphitheatre and the River Usk where a complex of large public-style buildings was identified extending over an area of about five hectares (Fig. 8). Previous work in the 1950s hinted that this part of Caerleon was the location of large Roman buildings, including a bath-house and a building with a monumental entranceway, yet the scale and nature of the newly-discovered complex was nevertheless surprising. It includes one of the largest buildings known from Roman Britain. It fronted onto the river itself and probably included Isca’s port; the courtyard alone enclosed an area of about 1 hectare (the amphitheatre would have fitted into this space with room to spare). Other buildings extending northwards from the river included further courtyards and possible basilica-like buildings. This complex was orientated on a different alignment to the fortress and appears to have been built as a single entity. Elsewhere on this side of the fortress, civilian occupation seems to be confined to fairly rural-looking structures along either side of the main road leading out of Isca’s west gate. Large extra-mural courtyard buildings similar to those newly-discovered at Caerleon are known from several legionary fortresses on the continent (though only at Nijmegen in the Netherlands has one been excavated), yet Isca seems to be unusual in not otherwise having developed a significant civilian settlement outside its walls. The immediate questions were concerned with the dating and function of the monumental complex — was it associated with the military occupation of the site, or was the intention for Caerleon to become a centre of administration for western Britain like York in the north?

In order to provide answers to these and other questions, nine evaluation trenches were excavated across the complex in 2011. These showed that there had been little medieval and modern activity in this part of Caerleon and, as a result, the Roman buildings lie only a few inches below the ground and survive in remarkably good condition. The excavated remains included standing walls still bearing decorated wall plaster, tessellated floors, a hypocausted room, barrel-vaulted corridors, and quite astonishingly — an intact lead water-pipe supplying fresh water to the main courtyard complex (Fig. 9).

The trench closest to the river showed that this area of the complex had been very intensively used in the Roman period and we believe that this included part of the fortress’ port — possibly quayside warehouses and roads. The discovery of a fragment of a monumental inscription bearing the letters AVG suggests that at least this part

Fig. 8. Interpretative plan of the recent geophysical discoveries in the southern canabae.
Plan: © GeoArch.

Fig. 9. Intact lead water-pipe discovered in trench 6, in 2011, with a branch from it visible at the top of the photo (scale: 30cm). Photo: © Cardiff University.
of the complex was an official foundation constructed by Legio II Augusta in the name of the emperor, probably towards the beginning of the history of Roman Caerleon. The coins recovered during the excavations included an unusually high proportion of first and second-century denominations, though we will know more about the date of this complex when the analysis of the pottery is completed. Of the many thousands of finds recovered during the 2011 season, perhaps the most extraordinary is the intaglio engraved with a capricorn – Augustus’ birth-sign and the emblem of Legio II Augusta – combined with a cornucopia, symbolising abundance and plenty, a dolphin and a cockerel (Fig. 10).

The architecture of parts of the complex appears to support an early date for its foundation. The use of brick and tile in the construction of some walls, and in particular the discovery of bricks specifically for colonnades, is extremely unusual in a British context and is more reminiscent of buildings in Rome itself, as well as other Italian sites such as Pompeii and Ostia. Large quantities of rubbish had been dumped into several of the rooms we excavated and the southern canabae seems to have been abandoned during the Roman period. In fact, late Roman material, including coins, was recovered from the trenches that robbed the stone from the buildings’ walls and this, combined with the general absence of later material, suggests that this extra-mural complex had been demolished during the fourth century. Overall, the southern canabae complex is a fascinating addition to our knowledge of the fortress at Caerleon. The surveys and evaluation trenches have answered the initial questions about these buildings, but only further excavation will provide the evidence necessary to completely understand their significance for the understanding of Isca and its importance in the history of the conquest, subjugation and assimilation of the native peoples of western Roman Britain.

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Amongst the most fascinating historical characters is the early second-century Bithynian youth Antinous; a seemingly ordinary young man from a Greek colony in Asia Minor (modern Turkey) whom fate would elevate to immortality. Through the influence of, and an undefined relationship with the most powerful ruler in the world, he was destined to be the last to sit among the ancient gods.

At the age of sixteen – an early stage in my life-long interest in ancient Egypt, I purchased a Victorian ormulu statuette of a man in a formal Egyptian pose. At the time I was unaware that it represented Antinous in an Egyptianised style. This was later followed by the discovery of the fine Roman bronze bust of Dionysus-Zagreus-Antinous (Fig. 1), when excavating at the site of the Roman villa at Littlecote, Wiltshire (Walters and Henig 1988). Consequently, over the years, an interest developed to research into the background of the Antinous story and to try to understand the fate of this intriguing individual from Roman history. As one known for challenging conventional theories, I am offering here some thoughts on this enigmatic episode in Roman history, to encourage readers to familiarise themselves with the conclusions of other scholars.

For centuries writers and historians referring to the commentaries of late Roman biographers have perpetuated the story that Antinous had been the paramour of the emperor Hadrian, and had committed suicide by throwing himself into the River Nile. A number of accounts relate that this was a calculated self-sacrifice to the gods in order to spare the life of the emperor, whose health was deteriorating. It was considered essential that Hadrian survived in order to maintain stability within the empire. The story of their intimacy has been fuelled by the subsequent deification of Antinous, and by the extensive proliferation of statues and busts of him that have survived (Figs. 2–3, 10–11, 16), along with Hadrian’s directive for the construction of a magnificent city bearing Antinous’ name on the banks of the Nile where his body had been recovered. The city, Antinoopolis (Figs. 4–6), became the principal centre for the cult of Antinous-Osiris which was encouraged to spread throughout the empire. What is not always related however, is that it was not Hadrian who deified Antinous, but the priests of Egypt, who also identified a new star in the night sky, naming it as the immortal spirit of Antinous. It must be said, however, that Hadrian did not object to their actions. It is also important to understand that in Egyptian religion it was deemed that anyone casting themselves into the Nile as an offering to the gods would automatically achieve immortality. I have come to suspect that it was by gaining knowledge of this ancient belief, that a catalyst for a conspiracy developed among members of the imperial court, who were not
enamoured with Antinous’ influence with the emperor, and who were becoming highly suspicious and concerned about his possible future station in society and how they themselves would ultimately be affected.

Hadrian was one of the most politically efficient and certainly the most culturally talented of the Roman emperors. According to some late Roman biographers, he was also a very complex personality, expressing different reactions and emotions to different people. Kind and considerate to some, violent and menacing to others, multi-talented artistically, but when a particularly unsettling political situation presented itself, he could be brutal and savage. Culturally he was very much a philhellene and was indeed the first Roman emperor to wear a beard in the Greek style (Figs. 7–8). This considerably influenced his lifestyle. Even before he became emperor he had a number of powerful senatorial enemies. Consequently his elevation to become supreme master of Rome was not an easy one. From an early age he had been fostered and educated for eventual high office by his kinsman the emperor Trajan, but it was not until Trajan was on his death-bed in AD 117, that he formally adopted Hadrian as his heir to the empire, even though it had been generally expected, and among his enemies, feared. His reign lasted for twenty-one years and was mostly spent touring the provinces, frequently accompanied by his wife the empress Sabina. Whilst on these progresses he reconstructed civil authorities, initiated major building programmes and, most significantly, redrew the frontiers of the empire, withdrawing from uneconomic conquered territories, much to the anger of leading generals and expansionist senators in Rome. In 122 he initiated his great times in northern Britain between the Solway Firth and the estuary of the Tyne.

The year following his British visit saw him in Asia Minor restructuring the provinces of that part of the empire, including the Greek cultured Bithynia. There Hadrian appears to have met the young Antinous, who is believed to have come from the town of Mantinium, near the city of

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Fig. 4. Antinoopolis, Egypt: View south across the site of the city along the line of the colonnaded street towards the site of the theatre. Broken column drums and heaps of pot-sherds and rubble can be seen in the foreground. Photo: © Grahame Soffe.

Fig. 5. Antinoopolis, Egypt: View of the River Nile (looking north) and the modern village of el Sheikh Iliada beside ancient Antinoopolis. Somewhere near here Antinous drowned in AD 130. Photo: © Grahame Soffe.

Fig. 6. Antinoopolis, Egypt: View of the now destroyed west gate of the city as seen by Edmé Jomard in 1798–1800. Copper engraving, Antiquités, vol. IV, pl. 57. From Description de l’Égypte...publié par les ordres de Napoléon le Grand, Paris, 1809. Photo: © Grahame Soffe.

Fig. 7. Head of Hadrian from a marble bust with cuirass and paludamentum. From Italy (Evers 18), c.AD 130. Ht. of bust: 95.2cm. Blenheim Palace. Photo: © Grahame Soffe.
Bithynion-Claudiopolis. We know virtually nothing of this boy’s background - his precise age, the status of his family, or how he came to meet the emperor and become part of his entourage. The volume of literature and scholarly commentaries over the centuries has continued the belief that the relationship between Hadrian and Antinous had been purely physical. This notion has been based on salacious gossip, perpetrated by later historians and biographers, who recorded that Hadrian had a liking for attractive youths and would write poems to them. However, there are no contemporary literary accounts to support the suggestion of any such relationship with Antinous, but unfortunately, this unsubstantiated myth persists as a vulgarism among writers to the present day. Even Suetonius, writing in this period remains vague and ambiguous on the subject of Hadrian’s sex life, whilst he goes into much greater detail on the proclivities of other emperors, including Hadrian’s mentor Trajan. Antinous only appears in literature, sculpture, coins, medallions and gems, after his death in Egypt in 130 (except possibly the hunting relief and poem referred to below).

One of the most significant contemporary references is the famous obelisk, 9.4m in height and covered with an Egyptian hieroglyphic inscription. Sometimes called the Barberini obelisk, it stands today on the Pincio Hill in the centre of Rome, but this was not its original location (Fig. 9). The monument is a memorial to Antinous, the inscription implying that Hadrian set it up originally somewhere close to where his body had been laid to rest. This stone has been studied and argued over by scholars, and understandably so, as it unquestionably holds the key to locating the tomb of Antinous, at least for the subsequent years of Hadrian’s lifetime. What happened to the tomb after the emperor’s death is another matter.

On a much damaged section of the obelisk’s north face, the inscription appears to give details concerning Antinous’ background, to the effect that — (the preceding phrase is lost here) ...of his mother; he was lifted up at the place of his birth by... (the passage breaks off again). This extract seems to imply that his mother willingly allowed her son to be taken into the imperial circle to be nurtured for greater things, in the Greek manner. The references to the boy’s mother on the obelisk and on later coins issued in Bithynia support the idea that Antinous’ family were probably well established and reasonably prosperous before he departed. The respectful references to his mother along with Hadrian’s considerable patronage bestowed on Bithynion-Claudiopolis shows that an enduring relationship continued between the emperor, Antinous’ family, and his birthplace. Would such imperial honours and benefactions have been instigated if Antinous had been nothing more than an erotic playmate?

What is of especial interest here is that there is no reference to Antinous’ natural father on the obelisk, or elsewhere. Are we to assume that he had died, perhaps during some service to the empire, and that Antinous, now without a father to raise him into Bithynian (Greek) society, had been taken into a form of fosterage by the emperor? As mentioned above, Hadrian was a devoted philhellene and it was very common in ancient Greek society for a well-born man of some influence to take a youth from another privileged family, with that family’s support and encouragement, and bring him up almost as a son and educate him in all manner of subjects and protocol to prepare him for privileged and high status in later life. Such a relationship between a youth and an older mentor was generally associated with considerable affection for each other and may have on occasion included some form of sexual activity; indeed, in the Greek world this would have been expected. This custom of adoptive patronage extended into some aristocratic Roman families, who, nevertheless, never fully embraced all the customs of Greek society. These simply maintained the system of tutorship, preparing the young man for future
Osiris and Dionysus (Figs. 1–2, 10–12) as saviour and redeemer gods associated with resurrection and immortality, consequently this was seen as a direct challenge to Christianity.

Indeed the legendary colossal gilt statue of Antinous-Osiris which stood in his principal temple in the city of Antinoopolis was smashed by early Christian iconoclasts. Incidentally, the only depiction of this cult statue known to me is unquestionably that on the Roman circular painted portrait found at Antinoopolis (Fig. 12 and see figure on p. 40 and cover photo, Soffe 2009). Although this painting is now known as the ‘Tondo of the Two Brothers’, there is, of course, no evidence that the two young men depicted on it were brothers and it is far more likely in my opinion that they were priests of the cults represented by the gilded statues behind them. The younger Greek-looking man on the left (with a red swastika, the Greek symbol of eternity, on his tunic) must be a priest of Antinous-Osiris, as indicated by the statue behind him. The older, darker-skinned (more Egyptian looking) man on the right must be a priest of Isis, as indicated by the gilded statue behind him – almost certainly of the goddess, in this instance she is consort to Antinous-Osiris.

Later medieval and renaissance writers, having no other source of information, continued to propagate the idea that Hadrian and Antinous were lovers, notwithstanding there being not a scrap of reliable contemporary evidence to support the story. To a degree this myth was further perpetuated by the large number of nude statues and busts with portrait heads of Antinous, which vindictive writers could have regarded as erotic and therefore provocative. But all the gods of the classical world and quite a number of emperors were depicted in exactly the same manner. All statues of Antinous were executed after his death and deification, as the god Antinous-Osiris. As a deity he became

privileged status in civic life, in the same way as Trajan had fostered the ten-year-old Hadrian on the death of his father.

As I have said, it has been widely claimed that the relationship between the two was purely erotic and sensual. This interpretation was probably initiated by scandal-mongers in Alexandria, a city not enamoured of Hadrian, and where rumours were spread concerning Hadrian’s intimacy with both Antinous and Lucius Ceionius Commodus, who was nine years older than Antinous. Lucius would, six years after the death of Antinous, be adopted by Hadrian as his son and heir, being renamed Lucius Aelius Caesar, only to die within two years in January 138, just six months before Hadrian.

Unquestionably the most critical commentaries regarding Hadrian and Antinous have come from the pens of early Christian writers, who saw it as their task to denigrate the memory of Antinous as a philanderer and catamite. His cult, established after his death, was closely affiliated to those of Apollo-Lykaios. The head is Antinous'; the wreath and gathering of the hair at the back are attributes of Dionysus. The pose of the body and the attributes of the Oracle of Delphi (the Delphic tripod, laureate sphere, laurel tree entwined with the python and the eagle) are those of Apollo. Excavated from the Hadrianeum Baths at Lepcis Magna, Libya in 1924 and 1925. Inv. no. 12. Dated soon after AD 130. Ht. with plinth, 2.24m. National Archaeological Museum, Tripoli, Libya. Photo: © Graeme Soffe.

Fig. 11. Statue of Antinous-Dionysus in the guise of Apollo-Lykaios. Greek marble. The head is Antinous'; the wreath and gathering of the hair at the back are attributes of Dionysus. The pose of the body and the attributes of the Oracle of Delphi (the Delphic tripod, laureate sphere, laurel tree entwined with the python and the eagle) are those of Apollo. Excavated from the Hadrianeum Baths at Lepcis Magna, Libya in 1924 and 1925. Inv. no. 12. Dated soon after AD 130. Ht. with plinth, 2.24m. National Archaeological Museum, Tripoli, Libya. Photo: © Graeme Soffe.

Fig. 10. Greyish crystalline marble bust of Antinous in the guise of Dionysus, wearing a bronze wreath. Acquired in 1862 from the Campania Collection, Rome (inv. no. A431). Second cent. AD. Ht: 62.7 cm. State Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg, Russia. Photo: © Graeme Soffe.

Fig. 11. Statue of Antinous-Dionysus in the guise of Apollo-Lykaios. Greek marble. The head is Antinous'; the wreath and gathering of the hair at the back are attributes of Dionysus. The pose of the body and the attributes of the Oracle of Delphi (the Delphic tripod, laureate sphere, laurel tree entwined with the python and the eagle) are those of Apollo. Excavated from the Hadrianeum Baths at Lepcis Magna, Libya in 1924 and 1925. Inv. no. 12. Dated soon after AD 130. Ht. with plinth, 2.24m. National Archaeological Museum, Tripoli, Libya. Photo: © Graeme Soffe.
representations of Antinous made during his lifetime (Fig. 13).

In the summer of 130 the imperial entourage, including Antinous, arrived in Egypt, having travelled from Judea. A poem by the Alexandrian Greek writer Pankrates has survived on a much damaged papyrus and commemorates the tale of a lion hunt in the Libyan desert, just west of Alexandria, in which Hadrian and Antinous are hunting together (Fig. 14). Hunting was a favourite pastime of the emperor and the evidence shows that Antinous hunted with him. This single document is the only surviving text recording a joint activity between them. What we see here is an aspect of Antinous as an athletic and vigorous young man—"...First Hadrian his brass-fitted spear wounded the beast / But slew him not, for of purpose he missed the mark, / Wishing to test to the full the sureness of his aim / Of his beauteous Antinous, son of the Argus-slayer..." The poem continues to describe the aroused lion raging and rushing upon them both, and then "In such wise he came against the glorious god ["Hadrian", upon Antinous / Like Typhon of old against Zeus, slayer of giants..."].

At this crucial instance the papyrus disintegrates into fragments but Lambert suggests that "we can, however, tell that it was Antinous who bore the brunt of the charge, that Hadrian had to intervene to save him and to give the beast the coup de grâce 'with his own hand'") (Lambert 1984, 119–120, Oppen 2008a, 172–3).

After staying in Alexandria, the imperial party embarked on a voyage up the Nile (Lambert 1984, 121). The entourage had increased from the intimate group which had accompanied the emperor in Judea. Hadrian was now surrounded by a larger court, including Sabina, the Prefect of Rome, major officials, army and naval commanders, the heads of the divisions of Egypt, and his great-nephew Pedanius Fuscus the Younger, who was his closest blood-relative and who already held the office of Pontifex. A young contemporary of Antinous, he was seen by many as being groomed for the succession. Apparently precocious and over-ambitious, he may have seen Antinous in an unfavourable light (Lambert 1984, 101). Why did the imperial party include so many illustrious officials? Had the emperor invited them on this part of his expedition for some specific purpose? If so, the records have not survived, possibly due to the events that would shortly occur.

Hadrian was inclined towards the supernatural and mysteries of the occult, a fact that was well known to his courtiers, and the party were now travelling in the most religiously mystic province of the empire. It had long been believed that should Pharaoh travel along the Nile when it was in flood it would be a portent of evil and severe retribution would befall both king and country. The inundation of the previous year had fallen short of the capacity to ensure a full harvest and now, in 130, the river had again failed to reach a satisfactory level. The surrogate Pharaoh, Hadrian, was travelling on the waters and the populace would have held him responsible for their desperate
own assessment. However, it is up to the individual to form their own opinion of what may have occurred at this fateful time. In the years immediately following 130 there is a distinct literary silence as to what actually happened. Of the thirty or so ancient writers who discuss Hadrian and Antinous, only three actually try to form an opinion of how Antinous met his end. The first, Dio Cassius, wrote his History eighty years after the event and implies that Hadrian was complacent in a sacrifice, but Dio had little affection for Hadrian’s memory and is frequently hostile towards him. A major reference is in the Scriptores Historiae Augustae, written at the end of the fourth century, 265 years after the event although deriving its material on Hadrian (said in the text to be by one Aelius Spartianus) from sources written about the same time as Dio’s original work. In recent years it has become increasingly accepted that this source originated from the hand of a single author, who used his vivid imagination to supply false and unsubstantiated “facts”. This led Sir Ronald Syme, the eminent classical historian, to declare that “the Augustae is a fraud” (Syme 1986). It ridiculed Hadrian’s reaction to Antinous’ death, perpetuating the ‘paramour’ rumours further. A further source which continued the rumour is Sextus Aurelius Victor, again writing at the end of the fourth century. Ancient biographers were notorious for sensationalising and exaggerating accounts in order to popularise their histories for a fickle readership.

The literary accounts are all ambiguous and written long after the event, yet they all seem to concur that Antinous died by drowning in the Nile — but how? He was young, presumably fit and healthy and a swimmer, and on the evidence of the Lion Hunt Poem, agile. There is one piece of evidence, albeit obscure, which may have a bearing on the story. Lambert relates in his analysis of the events that one of the districts of ancient Naples was named jointly as Antinous and Eunostos. Eunostos was a mythical figure from Boeotia who is said ‘in the bloom of his youth free-willingly to have gone to his death’ and to have been made a hero and honoured with a shrine as a consequence (Lambert 1984, 138). However, another tradition claims that Eunostos died the victim of assassination. Is this strange linking of Eunostos with Antinous because of the latter’s similar end? The problem remains — which tale is the more reliable, self-sacrifice or homicide? Ever since the formal announcement from the imperial court of the death of Antinous, it has been generally held that he committed suicide by drowning in the Nile. But there is another explanation, not readily accepted by most writers, and that concerns a conspiracy to remove Antinous permanently from the emperor’s inner circle and the self-sacrifice story, on or around 22–24 October, was used as a cover to appease the emperor’s mystic beliefs and gullibility. But why should anyone wish to remove Antinous? From the surviving accounts he was relatively innocuous and unimportant in the court hierarchy, and as the later chroniclers sardonically suggest, was simply Hadrian’s playmate — or was he?

Could there have been an underlying fear among high ranking courtiers that Hadrian was preparing Antinous to succeed him? As previously stated, Hadrian took on the education of the youth with the willingness of his family, in the Greek manner. Lambert implies a role for him as an adoptive son, and that such an understanding was shared by Sabina, adding that ‘Antinous’ name had been integrated with those of the imperial family, including Sabina’s, in the list of district names compiled by Hadrian for the city of Antinopolis” (Lambert 1984, 73). Did Hadrian have something specific in mind, and had he gathered around him in Egypt important civil and military officials as witnesses for the ‘graduation’ or more importantly perhaps, the adoption of Antinous?
In this context it may be significant that a colossal bust of Antinous has been recently recovered from the vicinity of Hadrian's Mausoleum in Rome (Fig. 16), where one would expect only images of the imperial family, whose ashes had been interred there (Oppen 2008a, 215–16). The head is not as well finished as more famous examples, and a massive hand clapping what appears to be a scroll rests on the rear of the head, suggesting it acted as a support for another unidentified colossal figure, almost certainly Hadrian himself. The scale of this sculpture and its less refined finish might suggest it had been one of the external figures placed high on the entablature of the pillared drum of the mausoleum. If indeed the piece belonged to a lost monumental statue of Hadrian, the attached hand clapping a rolled document on Antinous' head could have been highly symbolic, signalling their true and now forgotten relationship.

There must have been certain members of court who had an inkling of Hadrian's intentions, but certain high-born Romans would never have accepted a lowly Greek from Asia Minor ascending to the highest office. Consequently, it is not inconceivable that a plot was hatched by resentful courtiers, perhaps while in Alexandria, and what better time and place to act than when the court was gathered at Hermopolis for the festivals of the Nile and the Death of Osiris. Roman politics and high-ranking society was beset with intrigue and many an emperor, senator or courtier came to a violent end. To assume that Antinous had rivals and may have fallen as a result of court intrigue is not at all far-fetched. The official explanation that Antinous sacrificed himself for the sake of the emperor at the time of the Osiris festival was probably nothing more than a well monitored and obviously successful subterfuge.

Hadrian's reaction to the death of Antinous was phenomenal and in many respects he appears to have never overcome his grief. But is this not possible for any father who has lost a devoted and loving son, even an adopted one? Such an interpretation has also been advanced by Kiefer (1934, 336–341). If Hadrian had been planning to adopt Antinous, it is highly improbable that it would have been in order for him to succeed as master of the empire. Hadrian would have foreseen that elevating a Greek to that status would have been extremely dangerous. Hadrian's health was already deteriorating and he could have been contemplating what might become of Antinous in the future. Being childless, it is not improbable that Hadrian had planned for him to become an adopted son in order to be the heir to his personal property, his extensive estates and fortune, and even to appoint him to some form of civil office, possibly in the relative safety of Greek dominated Bithynia, to which Hadrian had already bestowed considerable benefaction. This may have been the real intention in Hadrian's mind, but it was misinterpreted by rival or jealous courtiers, and certainly by the Roman biographers and historians. It is very much up to the individual to consider all the available evidence and to read between the lines of the historical biographies, remembering that they are notoriously unreliable and often vindictive. They resemble the sensationalist features of our modern press, which still adhere to Mark Twain's maxim—'never let the truth stand in the way of a good story'.

(Part 2 in ARA 22 will suggest a political reason for Antinous' cult, a location for his tomb and the obelisk.)

FURTHER READING


The purpose of the following paper is to alert archaeologists and restorers to the possibilities of upper storeys on Romano-British buildings and not to be misled by the paucity of foundations or preconceptions of what they might represent. One should always question and not simply accept what has been written before.

Our western society is now so used to such things as Building Standards and Building Regulations that it is easy to forget that up until recent times such things rarely bothered the domestic builder. Fire regulations for crowded cities existed in Roman times as did the 20 to 25 metre limit set on the height of the insulae or blocks of flats following the collapse of poorly-constructed examples built in the capital, but these dictates were often ignored and the Oxyrhynchus Papyri indicate that in the third century AD seven-storey buildings could even be found in Roman provincial towns such as Hermopolis in Egypt (Lembke 2004, 29). The first century BC Roman architect Marcus Vitruvius Pollio gives some basic advice in his Ten Books on Architecture but, as with much good advice, his was often ignored by builders even on important public projects.

The writer has for a long time been troubled by the readiness of archaeologists, and through them, their reconstructive graphic artists to seemingly use modern ideas of building construction in interpreting the height and number of storeys that an excavated foundation might have borne. Although matters are gradually improving there is still a historic bias to imagine the Romano-British towns and countryside dotted with single storey dwellings and half-timbered buildings resembling Edwardian cricket pavilions. Why Britannia should have been so unusual in the Roman Empire as to have rarely ventured above bungalow status is not explained. Some blame must be placed on the shoulders of the late Alan Sorrell who, no doubt after taking advice from archaeologists, generally dressed his wonderful reconstructions of towns with single storey shops, whereas existing examples from Pompeii and Herculaneum show that two storeys was the norm, sometimes with balconies providing shelter for the pedestrian beneath and extra living accommodation above. Recently, whilst attending a congress in the city of Bursa in north-west Turkey I noticed and inspected an old and ruinous house next to the venue, the Ordekli Hamami cultural centre. The house was built in the traditional north Turkish vernacular style that is believed to be identical to that used widely in antiquity, the region around Bursa being noted for such surviving examples (Adam 1994, 286). It had obviously been empty for some years and a prey to vandalism and dumping and was awaiting demolition in a forthcoming urban regeneration scheme. It was a reasonably substantial two-storeyed property with a tiled roof and probably dated from the nineteenth century as much of Bursa was devastated in an earthquake in 1855 (Fig. 1). Part of it appeared to have been converted for use as a shop at some stage, although the doors and windows were now missing. The abuse that the house had suffered in recent years enabled one to see its fascinating construction details, which bear comparison with wooden buildings constructed in Roman Britain and elsewhere in antiquity, and as such raise intriguing questions as to how one should interpret the traces of them remaining in the archaeological record.

The house was half-timbered but without the use of the heavy beams often used in construction in Europe during the Middle Ages. The Romans called this timber-frame construction opus craticum. Vitruvius devotes his Chapter 9 of Book 2 to an evaluation of the properties of the different timbers available for building, although one suspects that what was most readily to hand determined what was most often used. The infilling between the studs timbers on the external walls and between the upper storey floor-joists on this Bursan house was a nogging of sun-dried bricks and the occasional stone that were angled like herringbone work and cemented into place with clay (Fig. 2). In Roman buildings this infilling was called opus incertum, and at the highest level of construction was composed of stone and mortar, but over the provinces this varied with the availability of materials as it did in later ages. It would have been strong but lightweight. Although not unknown, the use of diagonal braces within the framework of a wall does not appear to have been commonplace in surviving examples from the first-century AD buildings of Pompeii and Herculaneum where the posts and bonding strips form a grid pattern (Adam 1994, 122–124), although preserved timbers from Londinium show that diagonal timber braces were used there to strengthen the frame (Hall and Swain 2000, 9–10). Mud-brick infilling was certainly found in Roman Britain and is often preserved as a result of destruction by fire as at Plantation Place, London (Thomas 2003, 80–82). Often wattle and daub (a graticcio) would be used as a cheap alternative filling to opus incertum. The House of Wattlework (Casa a Graticcio) at Herculaneum is a wonderful example where the impression of
reeds or withies remains in the plaster of the upper storey’s walls (Fig. 3) (Wallace-Hadrill 2011, 261–271). Vitruvius despaired wattle and daub, pointing out its inflammability and the fact that it would swell and contract beneath a plaster covering causing cracking. If not raised above the soil on a stone base then the wattle and daub wall had a tendency to rot from inside. Both exterior and interior faces of the walls at Bursa had been thickly plastered with clay over which a further layer of lime-washed clay or plaster had been added to seal the construction. Evidence from excavations of Roman buildings at Suffolk Street, London, show that the exterior timbers were plastered over like the Bursan house, which of course not only disguised the building technique but also provided additional protection to the fabric. One is mindful of how timber framed houses were often given a new ‘stone-built’ and classical appearance in the Georgian era through the use of stucco. Roman exterior plaster could often be painted with false masonry joints to give the appearance of being something more expensive. Reconstructions of timber-framed Romano-British buildings with exposed ‘Tudor-behan’ timbers are almost certainly erroneous as at the least these would be limewashed as an additional protection. The plastered surfaces were protected from water erosion and splatter by overhanging eaves. Evidence from Cannon Street, London suggests that some timber buildings employed weatherboarding in part, a vernacular technique that at least from the Middle Ages, if not before, would become commonplace in the city (Hall and Swain 2000, 10; Davies 2009, 230). It was perhaps a coincidence, but it was astonishing to find that like many Roman buildings the lower part of the Bursan house’s external walls and originally also those of its neighbour, had had a painted dado of Pompeian red to disguise mud splashes. One wonders if this was a traditional thing in Turkish vernacular architecture inherited from ancient times.

What I found particularly fascinating and thought provoking of the derelict Bursan building however was the evidence of its actual foundations (Fig. 4). It was quite clear that this large building with its heavily tiled roof was founded solely on a series of relatively minor posts, measuring between 10 and 15 cm in diameter driven into the soil. I was unable to ascertain if these were spaced or driven in a continuous line along the walls. Neither was it possible of course to ascertain just how deep they went. On to this piled foundation a horizontal sill-beam about 10 cm square had been nailed, that in turn supported the building’s uprights. The latter were even less substantial at around 9 cm square and in the shop section of the building relatively few and far between. What this of course illustrates is that modest foundations in vernacular building construction cannot be used as a guide to a building’s original height and appearance. What archaeologist excavating a 15-cm wide foundation trench of decayed posts would postulate a two-storeyed building capable of bearing a heavily tiled roof? In the case of half-timbered structures it is surely the stability of the house frame itself that is the most important feature rather than the depth of the foundations? Given a strongly braced but light-weight framework then the building should survive even with modest foundations. In most cases a row of excavated postholes may simply
represent the foundation for a horizontal sill-beam as in this building upon which the real framework of a structure is constructed, rather than that we should imagine that those same posts continued upwards, above ground level, to form the actual walls as has been the general supposition. The excavations at Drapers’ Gardens and at Poultry in London have produced a variety of wooden buildings preserved in the wet ground of the banks of the Walbrook (Butler and Ridgeway 2009, 20–29; Rowsome 2000, 24–31). These were constructed on wooden sill beams resting on timber piles in exactly the same manner as the Bursan house. One must also recall the stone sill-beam found at Ower, Hampshire and now displayed outside the reconstructed Romano-British farmstead at Upton Country Park, near Poole, Dorset (Fig. 5). This surely copies in a more durable material the same wooden construction as seen in the Turkish house and, before the recent discoveries in London, was indirect proof that this sort of sill-beam technique that survives in Bursa was used for timber-framed buildings in Britannia. The 2011 excavation at the Roman legionary fortress at Caerleon, South Wales, disclosed that the tegula-built quayside wall fronting the river had been constructed on a wooden sill-beam no doubt resting on driven piles. On the Ower stone sill-beam, the corner post fitted into a slot cut into the sill, whilst the wooden sill-beam for the walls rested upon a groove cut into the top surface of the piece, and presumably this thus formed a double wood on stone sill. This refinement of a carved stone sill-beam seems to be so rare as to be unique in Britain or else the evidence has gone unrecognised elsewhere. We know from surviving remains at Pompeii that the external half-timbered walls there were founded on wooden sill-beams but generally given a stone base to prevent rising damp. Shallow masonry foundations in Britannia may be instances of such construction and again give no indication as to what was constructed above them. Internal Roman half-timbered walls generally rose directly off of the house floors and had wooden studs and posts again about 9cm square as in the College of the Augustales in Herculaneum. In the northern provinces however, oak was often the most readily available material and, being easily replaced, was used, as on the Walbrook sites, directly on the ground for exterior walls (as at Bursa), with internal floors often consisting of thick, wide boards laid across floor joists or directly onto beaten earth floors.

Fig. 3. Left: The façade of the House of the Wattlework (Casa a Gratriccio) at Herculaneum that provides a perfect illustration of how some extremely jettied Romano-British shops and roadside properties must have appeared. The façade that has a stone opus incertum filling between half-timbering would have been plastered in antiquity. Photo: © Anthony Beeson.

Fig. 4. Right: A detail of the base of the main supporting corner post of the Bursan house showing the top of the foundation pile, sill beam and the post. The corner post is only 8.9cm square. Photo: © Anthony Beeson.

Fig. 5. A stone sill block from a Romano-British half-timbered building at Ower, Hampshire as preserved at Upton Country Park, Poole, Dorset. This appears to be a unique survival and preserves a corner post slot and a channel for the wooden sill beam to sit upon. Photo: © Anthony Beeson.
That floor boards were used in many buildings in Londinium is proven by the survival of examples in warehouses found in Pudding Lane and the Courage brewery site in Southwark and also in buildings at Drapers’ Gardens and Plantation Place (Milne 1995, 65; Sidell 2008, 67). Jean-Pierre Adam conjectured that these floors, having slowly decayed and carbonised, were the source of the dark earth layer often noted in Roman towns (Adam 1994, 196). Bursa has a borderline Mediterranean/humid and subtropical climate with cold wet winters and warm summers, so this kind of timber building construction is capable of surviving ample rainfall especially if oak were used for the foundation piles.

In half-timbered structures the timber wall frames of the ground floor were topped by beams called heads and it was on these that the ceiling joists were laid. These were commonly projected beyond the ground floor to form jettied upper storeys that in towns overhung the streets (Fig. 3). Jettying structurally strengthens the walls below and ties the construction together. In Pompeii and elsewhere surviving evidence shows that such jettying was commonplace, just as it is in the surviving vernacular architecture of the Bursa region today. Again in the Vesuvian towns (and no doubt elsewhere) stone built lower floors were often completed by upper floors of lightweight half-timbering. The jettying of course afforded the householder or shop-owner more living accommodation for the family or for renting and, in a town context, the pedestrian was provided with a covered walkway to help avoid sun and rain.

Population estimates of Roman towns often forget that in much of the empire many people lived in flats above the ground floors of commercial buildings. Sometimes if jettied upper floors at the front of a building projected too far, they would need support from piers or columns founded on the pavement below. Evidence for such piers or turned wooden or stone columns is found by the roadside in many Romano-British towns, an excellent example of which is to be found in the colonnaded street fronting a row of shops in Borough High Street, Southwark, interpreted as a shopping arcade (Museum of London Archaeology 2011, map reference C). Surely this is how we should interpret the appearance of the numerous shops and other buildings that line many of the streets in Romano-British towns – two-storied facades rather than single-storied shanties? Whereas commercial premises will have required more security and smaller windows on the ground floor the examples surviving from Campania show that upper apartments could be pleasant and airy, especially rooms at either end of a building that incorporated verandahs. Most of the timber buildings excavated at Poultry, London, had timbers equal to, if not more substantial than those in the Bursan house, and would have been capable of supporting an upper storey perhaps reached by ladders or stairs. Although providing a wonderful illustration of building techniques, the cautious shed-like reconstructed structures made for the Museum of London’s excellent exhibition High Street Londinium in 2000–2001, and especially those in its accompanying video, were visually misleading as to how the wooden buildings might have appeared, although the exhibited shop did include a staircase to another storey or attic (Hall and Swain 2000, 14–15).

Also in the case of Romano-British structures one is reminded of the rectangular houses so prevalent in villages that denote Romanitas and the acceptance of Roman culture (Fig. 6). Was one of the desirable features of this kind of building the fact that the householder was able for the first time to easily have an upper storey or loft, generally believed to have been denied by the traditional round-house? Although single-storied may indeed have been the case for the average round-house, Dr Fraser Hunter’s recent excavations of a huge round-house
rooms of a permanent and substantial fortress? The question of the possibility of one or two storeys in barracks of Roman auxiliary forts has been discussed by Hodgson and Bidwell (2004, 140–1). Commentators often remark on the crowded conditions of these rooms and imagine the legionaries cramped into billets that artists in their reconstructions often show provided with bunk-beds in order to accommodate the numbers of men believed to be using them. I am not aware that there is any evidence for such pieces of furniture in antiquity. In the recent physical reconstruction of barracks on the site of the Roman supply base at Arbeia, South Shields, communal eight-sleeper bedding is exhibited, not the bunk-beds usually depicted. An alternative sleeping arrangement is shown in the next-door room (separate beds) to make the point that no really clear evidence has ever been recovered for furniture in barracks (Hodgson and Bidwell 2004, 146–7; Kenrick, et al. 2012, plan of supply base barracks in Fig. 13).

The moral of this paper is, of course, that we should be wary of prejudging the appearance and height of ancient buildings in Britain by what has always been believed in the past. Not every building in the Roman world ventured above the ground floor but most did and Britain would not have been an exception. Equally we should be careful not to judge ancient buildings by today’s rigorous building construction standards, but should look at them with an open and questioning mind and consider what might have been possible.

REFERENCES


Ancient Source:

Previous work on and in the vicinity of a newly-discovered Roman building at Truckle Hill in north-west Wiltshire, culminating in the excavation of 2007, uncovered a particularly well-preserved detached bath-house, almost certainly associated with the North Wraxall villa, which lies about 100m to the south. Subsequent conservation work was followed by further targeted excavation in 2008 that revealed additional details of the bath-house and a sequence of deposits probably derived from lime/mortar preparation. However, the most significant and unexpected discovery in 2008 was elements of an earlier building, of high status but uncertain function, beneath the bath-house. The results of the 2007-9 work have appeared in previous issues of ARA (Andrews 2009a; 2011; Sabin and Donaldson 2009). This article continues the story of the project to the end of the 2011 season.

The Period 1 Building – A Nymphaeum?
Excavations in 2009, 2010 and 2011 revealed more of the early building’s extent and layout (Fig. 1), though it became clear that much of the eastern half had been lost to a landslip, almost certainly through settling of the ‘cut and fill’ terrace on which it was built. The building appears to have been rectangular, aligned east-west, and measured c. 12m by 9m. Internally, what has been recorded suggests that the building was divided into two equal-sized rooms. Little survived of the northern room, which may have contained a bath, but the southern room comprised two areas, the smaller area at the west end with the remains of a mosaic and high-quality wall plaster, found in situ, and painted to resemble Italian marbles (see Andrews 2011; Davey and Ling 1982, 46). The larger area to the east, apparently more plainly decorated, was lit by two finely formed south-facing windows (Figs. 2 and 8) and had a floor (not surviving) at a lower level than that at the west end.

Work in 2010 focused largely on the area immediately to the west of the period 1 building. This revealed an evenly sloping, paved corridor roofed with polygonal stone tiles which extended upslope to the west and overlooked a courtyard to the south (Fig. 3). What is now thought possibly to have been a statue base (rather than a column base) lay in a central location within this courtyard, and comprised two large blocks of

Fig. 1. Plan showing details and projected extent of the period 1 building. Key: green – period 1 building; pale blue – period 3 bath house; W – window. © Wessex Archaeology.

Fig. 2. Western window opening in southern wall of period 1 building, viewed from the east. Scale 1m. Photo: © Wessex Archaeology.
dressed stone (Figs. 4 and 5). A second possible base, re-used in a period 2 wall, may have come from this courtyard or perhaps another situated upslope, and there is also a fragment of carved stone probably from a small votive-type shrine or niche intended to be set into a wall (pers. comm. Bryn Walters). The paved corridor is likely to have linked the period 1 building with the villa site, and limited investigations in 2011 have gone some way to confirm this arrangement. Because of the landslip, it is unclear where the doorways, which linked the corridor, courtyard and rooms within the main part of the building, were precisely located.

The period 1 building is likely to have been constructed around the end of the first century AD and subsidence was the most likely cause of its abandonment probably in the middle of the second century. Following this, most of what remained of the building was demolished and re-usable stone, including some of the paving, was removed, and much of the wall plaster and other debris disposed of down the slope to the east.

Despite the results of the 2009-11 investigations, the function of the period 1 building remains open to interpretation, and the virtual absence of finds provides no assistance in this respect. A bath-house appears unlikely, as does the possibility of a detached summer dining room associated with the villa. However, the location and setting in a narrow, secluded valley close to springs and the villa site lend support to the interpretation that it was a temple or shrine of some sort, with a nymphaeum (consecrated to water nymphs) being a likely candidate. The quality of the structure and the internal decoration, as well as its late first/early second-century date, suggest that it was associated with an early phase of the North Wraxall villa, together representing a complex of regional importance. That this relatively restricted and artificially terraced site was rebuilt on, following a catastrophic landslip, further suggests that its location was important, particularly in terms of the function(s) of the buildings that were constructed there.

The Period 2 Building – A Replacement Nymphaeum?
The most significant discovery in 2009 was that the period 1 building was not directly replaced by the bath-house excavated in 2007, but by a substantial and hitherto unsuspected stone building which pre-dated the bath-house (Fig. 6). This newly discovered building, possibly a nymphaeum like its predecessor, measured c. 13m square, and had relatively broad, deeply founded walls, the builders presumably having learnt from the structural problems encountered with the period 1 building. The internal layout remains somewhat uncertain though it included at least two tanks or baths with associated large drains (Fig. 7). The central room, flanked by two further rooms, contained a mosaic of which small areas of white tesserae survived, but other aspects of the internal decorative scheme remain speculative, as
does the location of the entrance to the building which may not have been in the west side as anticipated.

At the south-east corner of the building was the rectangular base of a large ‘platform’ or tower (Fig. 8), which possibly supported a water tank that may have acted as a reservoir for water piped or channelled from a spring higher up the slope, and then released when required for use in the internal tanks or baths. Further down the slope, water from the drains may have been channelled via terraces and water features into the stream below.

The reason for this building having been abandoned and levelled is unclear, for no evidence of major subsistence was apparent. The precise dating for its construction and demolition is also uncertain, largely because of the paucity of pottery and other datable finds, though construction in the mid-second and demolition in the late second/early third century is suggested as most likely. Furthermore, as a result of the work in 2009, it is clear that most of the principal walls of the period 3 bath-house had been built directly on the levelled walls of the period 2 building, re-using them as convenient foundations.

The Community Project and Future Work
The discovery of the bath-house in 2004 had created a problem and an opportunity – how best to conserve the exposed remains and what could be learned from them. Initially, a partnership involving English Heritage, Wiltshire County Council, Wessex Archaeology and the landowner led to targeted excavation of the site in 2007, followed by definitive publication (Andrews 2009b). Subsequently, Wiltshire Council Archaeology Service (with special thanks to Melanie Pomeroy Kellinger), Wessex Archaeology (Margaret Bunyard, Darren Baker and Alison Marcucci) and the landowner (Antony Little), with substantial support from the Association for Roman Archaeology (particularly Mike Stone, Grahame Soffe and Bryn Walters) and the Heritage Lottery Fund, have successfully continued the project, which is staffed almost entirely by volunteers. The four two-week-long seasons of further fieldwork, detailed in annual interim reports (available on the Wessex Archaeology website), have unexpectedly revealed an early sequence of well-preserved buildings preceding the bath-house, which are provisionally interpreted as nymphaeae and are of at least regional significance.

Following completion of the excavations of 2010, all trenches were backfilled and all exposed walls, now consolidated and re-pointed, with funds provided by Wiltshire County Council and English Heritage, were covered with plastic membrane and banked with soil to protect them from frost damage. Wall tops have been soft-capped with turf, and within a year or two the entire site will be covered with re-generated grass that will ensure long-term preservation of the remains, though the broad
The main focus of work in 2011 was the investigation of selected features revealed by geophysical survey (Sabin and Donaldson 2009; Archaeological Surveys Ltd 2008) on the top of Truckle Hill. This has provided more information about the setting and sequence of use of the villa complex as well as revealing something of the pre-existing Late Iron Age landscape, and a final season of fieldwork will be undertaken in September 2012 to answer a small number of outstanding questions. The results of the 2011-12 work in this area will be summarised in a future issue of *ARA*.

A post-extraction programme has commenced, involving specialist staff as well as volunteers, which will bring together the results of the 2008-11 investigations (including a study of the wall plaster by Mel Barge and Jayne O'Connell), briefly review the results of the published 2007 excavation of the bath-house, re-examine the evidence from the nineteenth-century excavations of the Truckle Hill (North Wraxall) villa (Poulett Scrope, 1862), and place the whole in its context of Late Iron Age and particularly dense Romano-British settlement in this part of the Wiltshire Cotswolds and the surrounding area. It is anticipated that the results will be published as a final report article in *The Archaeological Journal*, published by the Royal Archaeological Institute.

**REFERENCES**


