Fig. 1. One of the two earliest Roman timbers (both from Alchester) ever found in Britain: Hamish Fenton with one of the gate posts. (see article on Page Three).

Photo: © Eberhard Sauer.
EDITORIAL

Welcome to the thirteenth edition of ARA, containing a series of articles encompassing a wide range of archaeological topics – producing something of interest to all. We have a further article by Eberhard Sauer on the continuing excavations at Alchester. The 2000 season produced substantial timbers which have been dated by dendrochronology to the period of the Roman invasion. It also produced a very striking picture for our front cover. A masterpiece of investigation by Grahame Soffe and Martin Henig has given us the detailed background on the Thruxton Roman villa, initially investigated in 1823. The history has been followed through to the present day with comparisons to other, more recent, site excavations, but one of the most interesting aspects is the recent rediscovery of the coins ‘mislaid’ at some point after the original 1823 excavations.

A scholarly investigative article has been produced by Anthony Beeson on a piece of sculpture re-used as building material in a church at Compton Dando, Somerset, which turns out to be a possible section of a much larger monument. The carved figures have also been given an identity, despite the poor definition due to ravages by the weather over the years. Martin Henig has produced the first instalment of a two-part article on the practice of Roman religion in Britain, together with examples and artefacts associated with such rituals. I shall look forward with whetted appetite to its continuation in the next Bulletin.

A review of Roman Clothing and Fashion, by our very hard-working assistant editor, Beth Bishop, proves the subject to be very fascinating, with aspects of style and colour continuing down through the ages. A column by Bryn Walters, our Director, discusses aspects of archaeology in Roman Yorkshire; rather controversial reporting of a burial from Catterick, discoveries from Wheldrake, outside York, and plans, hopefully, for a heritage centre project at Castleford which would allow greater access to the, currently stored, Roman archive. Today we accept glass as a crucial part of our life and give little thought to its method of manufacture but an article by specialist Roman glassmakers, Mark Taylor and David Hill will change your outlook on that! Finally, our backpage offer this issue, courtesy of publishers Constable & Robinson, is a reduced price copy of A Guide to the Roman Remains in Britain by Roger Wilson – a must for all interested in the Roman period of Britain.

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When the last report on our fieldwork at Alchester in Oxfordshire appeared in the *ARA Bulletin* (7, 1999, 4 - 6) which focused on the 1998 season, we had only just located a large compound west of the Roman town through aerial photographs taken by the Royal Commission and a geophysical survey by Patrick Erwin. Could it indeed be true that we had found the only Roman fortress ever discovered in the area? Nobody had yet put a spade in the ground, and there was another year of waiting before we could put the hypothesis to the test in August 1999. Within a few days of starting the last doubts had been eliminated: the wide dispersal of mid-first-century objects, such as fragments of body armour, left no doubt that this compound had once housed Roman soldiers. In the same year we found the first traces of timber ground sills, the typical foundations for wooden buildings of the army at that time. The latest metallising of the east-west road, which divided the complex into two equal halves, was found to date from the second half of the fourth century, but underneath it were the small gullies which are characteristic of early military roads. Two of them must have served for drainage purposes while a third, trapezium-shaped in section, was presumably a once-timber-lined water supply ditch. Its clayey bottom fill, suggestive of flowing water, yielded a coin minted between AD 37 and 41 and still pristine. The ditches surrounding the compound, running 247 m north-south, were filled with stagnant water in antiquity as well as at present and could only be drained during excavations with the help of a powerful pump. The base must have resembled a moated site.

Was it possible that the high water table could have preserved construction timbers which would give a precise date for the arrival of the army? A solid timber gate was most likely to provide us with such evidence, since the gate posts of such installations tended, for reasons of stability, to be thick timbers sitting in deep post-holes; one has to bear in mind that the wooden towers flanking the gate may well have been about nine metres high, similar to their later stone counterparts. No traces of a gate were visible on the aerial photographs or the geophysical survey, yet it seemed a fair guess that the west gate was likely to be just inside the intersection of the road with inner ditch, and we decided to excavate the southern half of this hypothetical gate. It was already quite late in the 2000 season when we discovered, deeply buried in our trench 23, a void with wood towards its bottom. Several days later we knew that there were three such voids with the lower parts of gate posts. Indeed, they belonged to a military gate of typical design for the period. There should have been five out of fourteen posts within our trench, but two were pulled out when a road-side ditch was constructed in the civilian period. The entry consisted of a double gate-way preceded by a three-metre deep forecourt on the outside, flanked by two timber towers. This construction had the advantage that any attackers could have been bombarded with various types of missile from three sides, thus minimising their chance of breaking down the gate.

Enemies who tried to avoid this perilously well-defended gate and storm the compound at a seemingly weaker point in the defences might well have faced a nasty surprise. Excavations in trench 24 proved that between the two main ditches a shallow third ditch was located. It is likely to have contained additional obstacles, such as pointed stakes, and it may well have been a concealed trap. The outer ditch had an almost vertical side towards the enemy, making both attack and retreat more risky, and the inner ditch was particularly deep near the corner. These sophisticated defences suggest that the Imperial power took no chances; the army was prepared for rebellion and hostile attack.

When was this bastion of occupation imposed on the Iron Age rural landscape? In January 2001 the gate posts, after prior conservation by Dr. Graham Morgan, were taken to Ian Tyers at Sheffield University. Two of them yielded identical felling dates.
of between October AD 44 and March AD 45, the earliest tree-ring dates ever recorded in Roman Britain; the third had been squared in antiquity and was thus undatable.

After such a bonus, could the 2001 season be any more than an anticlimax? We knew little yet about the inner buildings even though the 2000 season had unearthed additional timber ground sills in trench 25. Not only did the 2001 excavations indicate dense military occupation throughout the compound, such as in the western part of trench 28, it also yielded better-preserved and more extensive traces of timber architecture than the previous two seasons together. The east-west road was flanked on its north side, in the area of trenches 25,
water basin was dispensable thereafter because the compound was not the main fortress after all, and the latter was also likely to contain such a basin. Probably the most significant result of the 2001 season was the realisation that since 1999 we had excavated the annexe to a fortress, not the fortress itself. The latter is buried beneath the later town. It is possible that the geophysical survey has traced its inner ditch, and trench 28 may have revealed the very bottom of the outer ditch. Excavations in the late 1920s, and in 1974, found a pair of mid first-century ditches on the east side of the town and at its north-east corner. The clearest piece of evidence is provided by parts of the first military building unearthed beneath the town. Regularly-spaced foundation trenches in E. trench 4 in the south-west of the town are likely to belong to a military timber granary. Since the spacing is only about half what one would normally expect for the suspended floor of a granary, we may even be dealing with two successive phases, suggesting a longer military occupation. The combined size of fortress and annexe was c. 14-15 ha, for an estimated garrison of 3,500 - 4,000 men. We also know that Alchester’s garrison contained footsoldiers and horsemen, archers, slingers and artillery. Alchester and other strong bases, like Longthorpe, suggest that Rome depended greatly on strong bases manned by versatile garrisons strong enough to defend themselves, and crush potential rebellions. Alchester’s location at one of the most central traffic junctions made it ideally suited for a variety of strategic tasks.

It seems unlikely that the main fortress and annexe were constructed at once. Since the army campaigned during summer, and normally built its winter quarters before the start of the cold season, an earlier date in AD 44 seems unlikely. Does the main fortress at Alchester date back to the very year of the invasion, AD 43, to be expanded during a phase of consolidation of Roman rule over the Midlands in AD 44? Waterlogged timbers, buried for over 1,550 years beneath the Roman town and yet to be discovered, may well hold the answer.

Acknowledgements:
I would like to thank the landowners, Mr. and Mrs. Miller, Paul and Katie for allowing us to excavate on their land and for their interest and support in many ways.

I am indebted to our sponsoring bodies (1999-2001) the British Academy, the Royal Archaeological Institute, the Roman Research Trust, the Harvester Bequest, the Society of Antiquaries of London and the Roman Society for their generous awards.

All sponsorship would have been in vain without the support of many individuals and institutions, of which space allows me to mention only S. Baker, S. Boscott, T. Bryars, A. Butler, R. Coe, N. Cooper, S. Crutchley, Professor B. Cunliffe, J. De Bono, N. Deeley, Dr. P. Erwin, Professor S. Frere, Dr. A. Grant, C. Green, Dr. M. Henig, B. Jones, K. Martin, Dr. A. MacGregor, Dr. G. Morgan, V. Morton, B. Peacock, J. Potts, Dr. M. Robinson, G. Soffe, P. Sorowka, Dr. J. Watterson, the School of Archaeology & Ancient History of Leicester University, the Institute of Archaeology of Oxford University and the ARA.
Early in 1823 two great antiquaries, Sir Richard Colt Hoare and the Revd. Dr. James Ingram, rushed to Thruxton Farm, 6 km west of Andover, Hampshire to view an incredible mosaic accidentally uncovered by the landowner. The site of the Thruxton Roman villa had been found, but by the end of the century it had been lost to memory. It was rediscovered in 1899 by the Revd. George Engleheart, another local antiquary, who arranged for the by now frost-damaged and fragmentary mosaic to be displayed in the British Museum, where it has remained ever since. Again the site of the villa was lost to memory and little was known of its plan, until the present writers set up the Thruxton Research Project to relocate the site by means of air photography and fieldwork, and to study the morphology and setting of the villa and its Iron Age antecedents in the light of current archaeological research. Included in this was a detailed analysis of the mosaic itself, its religious significance, its relationship to the aisled building it embellished, and a detailed study of work on the site in the 19th century (Henig and Soffe 1993).

Colt Hoare and Ingram published a series of notes about the mosaic in the Gentleman's Magazine (1823) and Archaeologia (1829). A flint and brick cover building was erected over it, similar to those being built over the mosaics at the Bramdean villa, also in Hampshire, and at Bignor in Sussex; but by the middle of the century this had unaccountably been demolished and the foundations of the villa deplorably dug up for material to build a chapel in the village. An account of the 1823 discoveries, with a description of the villa building, did not appear until Ingram’s paper to the 1849 (Salisbury) annual meeting of the Archaeological Institute was published posthumously in 1851. From this we were able to reconstruct a plan of an aisled house (Fig. 1), recognised as similar to numerous other examples known since from villas in central southern Britain, and forming a distinctive vernacular building-type in the Roman period from the 2nd century AD onwards. What appears to have been an open hall had a roof of stone slates supported on trusses of aisle posts standing on stone bases. The flint and mortar walls had fallen inwards covering a chalk floor and subsequently several people were buried in the rubble of the collapsed building. The mosaic was contained in a separate walled room with painted wall plaster situated at one corner, reminiscent of the double-storied wing of a 'winged-corridor house', also typical of many southern villas (Fig. 1).

What could we make of the mosaic itself? Ingram’s 1851 report included a coloured engraving of the mosaic as found in 1823, and we were able to show that this was a reduced copy of one of a series of twelve magnificent, yet unpublished, illustrations made in 1823-4 by John Lickman (Fig. 2), a local schoolmaster and artist. Most of these were preserved in museums and archives ranging from Stourhead...
in Wiltshire, to Oxford, Andover, Southampton and Saffron Walden (Fig. 3). Since 1953, three more have been discovered in Winchester and Salisbury (Fig. 4). Lickman also illustrated other mosaics from the Bramdean and Abbots Ann villas and the quality of his draughtsmanship can be shown to be higher than that of most of his greater contemporaries, including Samuel Lysons (d. 1819).

Lickman illustrated more of the mosaic than survives today in the British Museum. He recorded the central circular emblem which showed Bacchus seated on a small leopard holding his thyrsus and cup, enclosed by vine leaves (Fig. 3). The composition is surrounded by a wheel of eight panels containing heads with ‘phrygian’ caps trimmed with vegetation, presumably representing spirits of nature (the hooded godlings, the so-called genii cucullati come to mind). The outer spandrels figure four busts of the Seasons, likewise trimmed with leaves and tendrils (Fig. 4). Of course the most striking and rare feature of the mosaic is its inscription, one of very few examples from Britain. The upper panel reads in alternating red and bluish letters Quintus Natalius Natailiius et Bodeni with the ‘I’ like a Greek gamma. In the lower panel (now completely lost) we agree with Colt Hoare that the sentence ended EX[V(OT)]O and reconstruct it as probably Promiserunt ex voto. Here then we see the tria nomina of a Roman citizen, the presumably wealthy villa owner who commissioned the mosaic, but with a genticiam and cognomen derived from a British root. The next phrase ‘and the Bodeni’, indicates possibly two brothers, Natalinius’s clients, probably his tenants, owing him obligations in return for protection and succour. So three or more people commissioned the mosaic as a votive offering to the god Bacchus and to floor the dining room (triclinium). Bacchus thus became the patron of the feasts which took place there. The iconography of the mosaic and comparison with Bacchic evidence elsewhere indicates a sophisticated ‘saviour’ cult in 4th-century Britain, a life-giving force, associated with Apolline features such as the rays of the sun, and with Orpheus. Ingram and Colt Hoare at first thought the room was a temple to Bacchus. Although, in the light of more recent research, we cannot agree with this, or the suggestion that it was a ‘house-chapel’, it is clear that it played a significant part in activity related to the cult. An interesting and unique find from within it, was a terracotta candelabrum with painted decoration, no doubt intended to illuminate nocturnal feasts. It has sadly been lost, but a short description and sketch by Ingram in 1823 (Fig. 5) suggest it was made at the nearby New Forest pottery kilns in the early 4th century, from where simpler painted ‘candlesticks’ are recorded. Although broken off at the top, it seems that Natalinius may have commissioned this object as well, a skeuomorph of a type of bronze candelabrum familiar from Pompeii and as depicted in wall paintings at Verulamium.

It is difficult to attribute the mosaic to any one of the so-called schools of mosaicists as it contains elements known from the Corinian and Durnovarian groups with some influences from the Central Southern group, but it clearly dates stylistically to the mid 4th century. Since 1993 additional dating evidence for the villa has come to light in the form of the 40 coins originally found on the site, misplaced, but now rediscovered. Having examined them we can provide, for the first time, the list given below. They range in date from 250 to 353 and it is interesting that there is a good representation of the London mint, if Carausian and Constantinian issues are taken into account. In view of the early date and quality of the 1823 excavations, the number (only 8 coins, and of the same date-range, were recovered from the recent Houghton Down excavations – see below) and relatively good condition of the coins might suggest a scattered hoard. The list breaks off dramatically with Magnentius (Fig. 6), and so possibly

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Fig. 3. The Thruxton mosaic: hand-coloured engraving by John Lickman (1824) with reconstruction of some missing areas. Courtesy of Saffron Walden Museum. Photo © Graham Soffe.

Fig. 4. Head of a Season from the Thruxton mosaic: watercolour over Lithograph by John Lickman (1823). Courtesy of Winchester City Museums.

Fig. 5. Painted terracotta candelabrum, ht. 13 cm. Engraved 'hasty sketch' by James Ingram, 1823.
the mosaic was laid by Natalinus only shortly before his world fell apart in the proscriptions initiated by Constantius II and carried out by Paulus Catena ('the chain') following the failure of the Magnentian revolt in 353. Graham Webster (1983) has pointed out the possible serious effects of this event in large areas of Britain, including Hampshire. Moreover it seems the new regime mounted 'an attack on pagan monuments and practices, which had been tolerated under Magnentius'. Although Natalinus would not have been at risk for pouring libations to Bacchus, as a pagan he is likely to have supported the previous regime.

Of course, a major advance in our survey was the rediscovery of the site by air photography, and following in the tradition of O. G. S. Crawford, who had carried out much similar work in the area (Henig and Soffe 1993, 19-22). The evidence came from photographs taken in the 1920s, 1930 and the drought of summer 1976. It showed the site to be a complex of ditches and pits, together with robbed foundations of masonry buildings, all revealed as crop and parch marks (Fig. 7). The aisled house (at A) and possibly other structures at B, C and D, lie in the centre of a system of paddocks. By analogy with neighbouring sites, these originated in the Late Iron Age and extend into the early Roman period. On either side of the villa compound are two earlier Iron Age enclosures associated with linear ditches of probable late Bronze Age origin. Nearby is 10 sq km of late prehistoric and Roman period field systems probably associated with centuries of agriculture at the villa and the earlier farmsteads from which it developed. Clearly from the aspect of the aisled house, other buildings around a courtyard must lie to the south and southwest, but no crop marks have been recorded here. An analysis of this evidence, therefore, reveals that the focus of settlement shifted within a limited area over a long period, culminating in the villa itself. This work has been enhanced by a comparison with many other sites in the region having elements of a parallel development. It also has important implications for our understanding of continuity of settlement and economy in the region in the late prehistoric and Roman periods. These sites include the neighbouring villas at Redenham, Appleshaw, Grateley, Abbotts Ann, Clanville and Castlefield. Further afield there are parallels with Littlecote, North Warnborough, Finchampstead, Brampdean, Meonstoke, Stroud, Crookhorn, Chilgrove 2, Carisbrooke and Combley. Many of these include aisled buildings and this also gave us the opportunity to analyse these distinctive architectural and functional structures in the economy of southern villas (Henig and Soffe, 1993, 14-19).

This summer there will be an opportunity to investigate the Thruxton villa further, through a modern excavation, carried out as...
part of a series of investigations within the Danebury Environ Programme (DEP), led by Prof. Barry Cunliffe of Oxford University. He has already accumulated a vast database on the Iron Age subsistence economy of the region through his almost-complete excavation of the hillfort of Danebury and a sampling of the settlements, field-systems and linear ditches of the surrounding landscape. The ‘Roman’ element of this project has developed to investigate how several settlements, some starting with round houses in the 7th century BC, show evidence of continued use into the Roman period, as villas, up to the 4th century AD – a phenomenon which we have already shown to have occurred at Thruxton and neighbouring sites. Three villas have so far been excavated: Houghton Down (in 1994 and 1997), Grateley South (in 1998) and most recently, Fullerton. Both Houghton Down and Grateley were known from early 20th-century excavations but the new excavations, supplemented by initial air photography and geophysical surveys, revealed at each site an aisled building similar to the Thruxton example. These formed parts of courtyard arrangements of masonry buildings which include houses with ‘corridors’, representing the final (AD 3rd to 4th-century) phase of a continuous occupation of these sites from the 1st century BC, separated chronologically from earlier occupation in the Late Bronze to Early Iron Age. This Late Iron Age-Roman period activity was also associated with paddocks, which at Grateley may represent gardens (B. Cunliffe pers. comm), and are similar to those we have planned from air photography at Thruxton. Both aisled houses remained as open halls but the Houghton Down building had an inserted bath suite and an oven in one aisle and some evidence of iron smithing. The Grateley building (Fig. 8) was empty apart from a central oven and was shortened by a bay when a gable end started collapsing. It had been longer (31 x 13 m) than Thruxton (26 x 15,25 m) and Houghton Down (27 x 14 m), with aisle trusses set in modular units of 5 and 10 Roman feet with square posts set in holes, whereas at Thruxton and Houghton Down stone post-bases were used. However at neither aisled hall do we find the addition of a prestigious room as at Thruxton.

These recent excavations do much to back-up the results of our survey, analysis and discussion of the evidence for the Thruxton villa and earlier occupation of the site. This summer’s re-excavation of the site is part of this process. Earlier this year the Ancient Monuments Laboratory of English Heritage carried out a magnetometry and resistivity survey, led by Andy Payne, over the area of crop-marks we had located and planned from the air photographic evidence (Heng and Soiffe 1993, 19-22). The results and interpretation of this closely match our earlier air

survey in the location and interpretation of individual features such as ditches and pits. A possible hearth or oven may be detected within the aisled building itself and some wall foundations may have survived the early robbing, excavation, building and removal operations of 1823 and 1899.

The Coins:
The coins from the 1823 excavation, to which Ingram briefly alludes, were not available to us when we published our paper on the villa in 1993, but happily they have been rediscovered in the stores of the Hampshire Museum Service where they were accessioned in 1960, and we are most grateful to Kay Ainsworth for making them available to us. There are forty coins spanning a period of almost exactly 100 years from the reign of Gallienus (AD 253-67) to that of Magnentius (350-355). Apart from the Antoninianus of Gallienus which was struck in billon (base silver) all are of bronze.

The listing which follows is intended to be a final publication as the individual issues will need more detailed study.

**Central Empire:**
1. 1980.104; bill. Antonianus of Gallienus (AD 250-67)
2. 4. 1960.106; ant. Claudius II Gothicus (AD 268-70)

**Gallic Empire:**
5. 1960.10; ant. Victorious (AD 289-71)
6. 7. 1960.109; ant.cheiris of Tetricus (AD 271-4)
8. 1960.111; ant. Tetricus II; (struck late in reign of Tetricus I)
9. 1960.112; ant. Tetricus II; (very barbarous)
10. 1960.118; ant. fragment of barbarous radiate.

**British Empire:**
11. 14. 1960.104; Ant. Carausius; (AD 286-93)
15. 1960.115; Maximian I; struck by Carausius at London

**Constantine (AD 306-377):**
16. 1960.130; Constantine I; 'Vitus Exeritus' type, London mint RIC 191 (AD 321)
17. 1960.129; Crispus, eldest son of Constantine; 'Vitus Exeritus', Lyons mint RIC 116 (AD 321)
18. 1960.128; Crispus, eldest son of Constantine; 'Beata Tranguillitas', London mint RIC 273 (AD 323-4)
19. 1960.131 Constantine II as Caesar; 'Cesareae Notstrorum Vol X', Trier mint (AD 323-4)
20. - 21. 1960.119; Beata Tranquillitas, globe on altar, Trier mint; RIC 368 (AD 322-3)
22. 1960.121; Constantine I; 'Providentiae Aug', city gate, Trier mint, RIC 509 (AD 327-8)
23. - 25. 1960.122; Constantine I; 'Vribs Roma', Trier mint, RIC 322 (AD 330-4)
The block of Bath stone measuring 48” (121.9 cm) high by 16” (40.64 cm) square on which the deity who is the subject of this paper is carved has probably been on public display for at least five hundred years. It is all the more extraordinary then that it has so far defied interpretation. Built into a buttress on the outside wall of Compton Dando church in Somerset, it was, within the last few years, replaced by a facsimile and transferred to Bath for display in the Roman Baths Museum, as it is commonly believed originally to have been part of the great altar set before the Temple of Sulis Minerva. It is indeed a corner block from some Roman monument, sculpted on two faces with images of Apollo and a naked but unidentified deity (Figs. 2 and 5). Ideas as to the latter’s identity have ranged from Hercules to Mercury, but the general consensus has been that the subject is male yet too worn to afford clues to its identification. Neither premise is correct. Careful study of the sculpture shows that in its right hand the deity holds a large dolphin, and in the other, a small shovel-shaped object on a thin curving stem, which is obviously a flower. The dolphin is an unnaturalistic creation as are so many in classical art, where their bodies are often elongated and become almost eel-like in flexibility, as on the recently discovered mosaic at Lopen in Somerset. Although its head has been damaged it retains crest and gill fins, much as one can see on the famous Cupid and dolphin bronze from Ephesus (Erdemgil, 1989, p 20). The dolphin was a friend to sailors and beloved by them, and the deity ubiquitously portrayed as holding one is Neptune. An excellent and typical relief from Mainz portrays the god holding a fin-less but similar-sized animal (Fig. 1). However, as on this German example, Neptune is almost always shown with a trident, which attribute is missing from the Compton Dando block. The flower with its bending stem can hardly be confused with the traditional trident. The most pertinent evidence that this is not Neptune, however, is the fact that the figure sports a bun and curls at the nape of the neck. She is a goddess. The bun has suffered a great deal of damage and one blow has given part of it almost the appearance of a lobster claw. This is purely illusory: even if one tries to equate the figure with Oceanus, his claws protrude from the top of his head, not his ears, and there is no trace on the other side of the head of a corresponding protruberance. The position of the back of the head is quite clearly marked by the curls and proves that the figure looked to its right, so claws could not have broken off on that side without leaving some trace. The goddess to whom the dolphin was sacred and was commonly portrayed with is Venus. Hence the figure’s nudity (Fig. 3).

Although iconographically extremely rare, the image of Venus holding a dolphin in the manner of
display in the museum at Caerleon. As goddess of Spring and renewal, Venus was much involved with Roman funerary practices and hopes for an afterlife. Her scallop shell adorned lead coffins such as that from Spitalfields, and her image in pipe clay was often buried with the deceased. The very worn Caerleon relief showed the goddess seated, within a border of her sacred myrtle sprays, holding a dolphin in her hand. Notwithstanding its condition and the less than flattering surviving illustration left to us, Wyndham was inspired by it enough to remark that in workmanship "when perfect, (it) far surpassed ... the general specimens of sculpture which the Romans left in Britain", (Wyndham 1781, p. 13-14). Although the possibility remains that the Compton Dando relief might have come from a mausoleum, its decoration probably has more to do with Venus's role as a marine deity than that of the afterlife. As a sea-born goddess, Venus/Aphrodite was beloved of mariners and given various titles such as Aphrodite of the Good Sailing and Aphrodite of the Calm, and was invoked along with Neptune for a safe passage. The two deities are shown together with equal prominence on the famous wall mosaic from Herculaneum in the house named after it, traditionally (but erroneously) Neptune and Amphitrite. So attached was Venus to the dolphin that the creature was given the name Venereus in recognition of the fact. It acts as a supporter on many of her statues and was itself a symbol of calm seas and fine weather. In art it can be found on its own, used as an allusion to her. It is only the fact that Venus and not Neptune here holds the dolphin that is at all singular. It may well have seemed a natural progression to have held the creature. Indeed, a dolphin from a wrecked statue found in the Temple of Aphrodite at Cyrene and now in the British Museum retains her hand resting on its tail (Huskinson, 1975, p 6, pl 3).

The flower was one of Venus's favourite attributes and was no doubt included here to elucidate further her identity. Considering the dolphin and the reference therein to her marine status, one might identify the bloom with the lotus, but a rose would be equally likely as both were favourites of the goddess.

Venus's face has been hacked away by iconoclasts but it seems certain that originally she was portrayed in three-quarter profile looking out to her right. The surface of the niche back survives relatively undamaged but there is no trace of any features in the area where they would have been expected had she been portrayed in full profile. The whole front of the face must have sheared off when attacked, and there remain several grooves at the neck, suggesting that an axe was used. The bun has likewise been disfigured, but enough remains to show that, unlike the rest of the head, it was shown more in profile and unnaturalistically prominent in order to emphasize the sex of the deity. Several drill holes at and above the nape of the neck show where curls once cascaded. In addition, the broad hips of the figure are illustrative of femininity and fecundity.

The other decorated side of the block bears the most elaborate sculpture of Apollo to survive from Britannia. Because of the need to include the kitkara (lyre) in the
composition his figure is portrayed on a smaller scale than that of Venus. He is heavily draped, with his head covered as if participating in a religious rite. His torso down to his groin is naked and, although his face has gone, traces of the robe preserved on either side testify that he gazed out to his left (Fig. 6). This is Apollo Kitharoedes (kithara player) and derives from a sculpture now called the Cyrene Apollo, discovered in the Temple of Apollo at Cyrene and now in the British Museum, but also is found in other versions elsewhere (Huskinson, 1975, pl 5, p 6 - 7). Our relief is closer in many ways to a version in the Capitoline Museum, Rome, but differs from other examples in the covering of the head with the garment (which usually rests upon his left shoulder) and in the placing of Apollo's arm across the strings as opposed to resting on his head in the pose denoting tiredness. The god's left arm appears behind the strings. The Apollo Kitharoedes of the Vatican similarly features the god in the act of playing but also moving and dressed in full concert regalia (Fig. 7). At the top of the niche an object which appears to be the serpent Python curls by his temple and seems to have rested on the string bar. On the Cyrene and Capitoline statues a serpent coils below the kithara at his feet. The instrument itself is elaborate, with curving arms. In most depictions it rests on a tree stump or stand, but here the god's foot is raised on a playing box and it is supported on his thigh, while the folds of his garment echo those of the stand's drapes in the version in the National Museum, Naples. (Cantilena, 1989, p 170).

The placing of the stone at Compton Dando may have been the result of a misinterpretation of the identities of those represented. It would have been easy to confuse Apollo with David and his lyre playing before Saul, and the naked Venus with Eve holding the apple. The tail and sinuous body of the dolphin perhaps suggested the serpent's head and winged body as he whispered temptations into her ear, as so often appears in medieval art. Whoever placed the block on the outside of the church considered it important that both sculptures should be seen or it would not have been set at a corner. It is worth remembering that the damage to both deities may be the result of sixteenth and seventeenth century protestant iconoclasts rather than earlier examples of the species. That the block's placement at Compton Dando was medieval is supported by the fact that local antiquarians in the mid-eighteenth century had no knowledge of the date of its arrival.

It has long been thought that the Compton Dando stone originally formed one corner of the great altar which stood before the façade of the Temple of Sulis Minerva in Bath (Fig. 8). Certainly, similarities exist in the size of the block, and in the idea of using two deities to enhance the corners. In the Middle Ages Compton Dando was owned by the Cathedral Priory of Bath which could have supplied stone robbed from the temple precinct. The iconography of the block is sophisticated and would certainly not be out of place in such a cosmopolitan resort as Aquae Sulis. However, one cannot be certain that some sort of religious structure did not exist at Compton Dando itself or
that the stone was not brought from nearby Keynsham or Somerdale, where sophisticated Roman domestic structures are known and religious ones suspected (Beeson, forthcoming). The general similarity of the block to those from Bath should not blind us to several worrying differences between them. The Bath figures stand within square-topped niches whereas those at Compton Dando are curved. Venus and Apollo are portrayed in three-quarter profile whereas the Bath deities all seem to have been depicted full face. Unless it has been severely cut back in medieval times the Compton Dando block’s base retains none of the characteristics of the Bath pieces, most noticeably the two narrow bands of moulding that run in front of and below the figure’s feet and frame them on one side (see Cunliffe and Davenport, 1985, pl. xviii-1). As to the deities themselves there are no sure similarities in the carving of the figures to suggest that they were carved by the same sculptors for the same project. The somewhat unpalatable truth, therefore, is that one cannot rule out the strong possibility that the Compton Dando stone did not originate from the altar in the Temple Precinct but either comes from an unknown location in the village itself or from one of the other Roman sites in the vicinity. If, on the other hand, it did indeed come from Aquae Sulis and the area of the temple it may well have adorned a completely different monument from that to which its similarities have popularly been attributed. Alternatively, the late Tom Blagg once suggested to the author that the great altar (Fig. 8) was not that at all, but was the base of an honorary square pillar like the famous Pillier des Nauves of Paris. If this was indeed the case then the differences in design between the blocks might be explained by consigning the Compton Dando block to a higher register of the monument, as Martin Henig has recently suggested to the author.

References:

Further reading:
For the political situation in the mid 4th century see Graham Webster, 1983, *The Possible Effects on Britain of the Fall of Magnentius* in *Rome and her Northern Provinces*, ed. B. Hartley and J. Wacher, 242-54.
For the work of the DEP see especially Barry Cunliffe and Cynthia Poole (with contributions by Martin Henig and others), 2000, *Houghton Down, Stockbridge, Hants*, 1994, DEP. 2, part 6, English Heritage OUCA monograph 49.
Roman religious experience was very diverse and this article confines itself largely to the everyday religion of Roman Britain. Here as elsewhere in the Empire the gods were manifested everywhere, in myth, nature and in the events of human life. Faith, prayer and philosophical reflection all played their part. However, central to the relationship between man and the divine was the idea of contract. As in their legal transactions, men believed that the goodwill of one party could be secured by the offer of a balancing benefit. Typically the worshipper would go to the temple and record a contract with the priests to the effect that if the god or goddess were good enough to protect him or her, secure a good harvest, cure an illness or punish a malefactor, in return that deity would be given the sacrifice of an animal, a stone altar, coins or some other gift such as jewellery, a figurine or even clothing. This contract was called a nuncupatio (‘an announcement’); it did not bind the god, though the worshipper was under no obligation to give the god anything unless or until some benefit was received. Assuming that this request was answered, as it often seemed to be, the votary was bound to meet his or her obligations. The debt had to be discharged, this being called the solutio; moreover it was important not to grudge one’s obligation which should be undertaken freely (libens), gladly (laetus) and deservedly (merito). So standard was the formula for paying one’s vow to the gods that the phrase votum solvit libens laetus merito so often inscribed on altars and other objects was generally abbreviated to VSLLM (Fig. 1).

For the archaeologist the most characteristic evidence of religious activity consists of the remains of these vows, paid to the gods and deposited in temples. For obvious reasons the nuncupatio itself tends to leave little trace. Even where it was written down, the scrap of papyrus or the wooden tablet has normally rotted, though it has been suggested that some of the seal-boxes recovered from temple sites may have secured the seals which kept these messages private to the gods until the day of reckoning when the votary was prepared to acknowledge the efficacy of divine aid. Special examples of nuncupationes do, however, survive even in some quantity at certain sites. These are tablets of lead containing requests that a wrongdoer should be punished. Over a hundred have been found in the sacred spring of the goddess Sulis Minerva at Bath of which the following is a sample. “I have given to the goddess Sulis the six silver coins, which I have lost. It is for the goddess to exact them from the names written below . . .”.

similar requests are made to that god, while from Lydney comes Silvianus’ request to Nodens that “he does not allow Senicianus health until he returns the ring (he has stolen) to the temple of Nodens” (Fig. 2).

The practice of solutio, the ‘pay out’ to the gods, has left considerably more traces. Often the floors of temple compounds, or pits cut into them, are full of bones, the remains of animals sacrificed and consumed on site, where they were roasted or boiled for the gods – and for their human votaries who shared in the sacrificial feast. Sometimes the types of animals were specific to the deity venerated. At Uley rams, goats

Fig. 1. Altar to Mercury from Castlecary fort, Scotland, dedicated ‘VSLLM’, height 50 cm. (RIB 2148).

Fig. 2. Inscribed lead tablet, 8 cm high, from the Lydney temple (after Wheeler & Wheeler, 1938).

Fig. 3. Deposit of pig mandibles at the Hayling Island temple. Photo: R. Downey, © Hayling Island Excavation Project.
and cockerels were exclusively sacrificed to Mercury whose cult creatures they were; at Bath cows were evidently preferred for the goddess Minerva while at the temple on Hayling Island, Hampshire, whose dedication is as yet not known, pigs and sheep are recorded (Fig. 3).

Objects range from cult images, as represented by the gilded bronze head of Minerva from her temple at Bath, and limestone images of Mercury from Uley and Minerva from Harlow, Essex, to the most modest trinket. Many of these items are portable and include coins, the most obviously convertible gift, jewellery, such as brooches, rings and bracelets, and other objects of daily use. Some were especially made for particular cults: miniature weapons and other attributes of gods and goddesses, sometimes bent or 'killed' so that they could pass through to the other world; figurines; plaques often in the form of palm-leaves, and models of parts of the human body.

It should be obvious that in order to understand the significance of any such religious items their context has to be painstakingly recorded. Removed from a site without record, they lose almost all their value. One is reminded of a famous episode in a Laurel and Hardy movie where the pair are lost in a maze and Laurel finds a signpost pointing to the way out. He pulls up the post and takes it to Hardy but, of course, the detached sign is now useless. The writer is often shown coins, brooches or other objects and asked whether they are 'votive'. The reply has to be that unless they are excavated from a known site where they can be integrated with a great deal of other information, we can have little idea. On the other hand where excavation has taken place to a rigorous standard as at Bath, Lydney, Uley, Harlow, Hayling Island and Wanborough - the last only after severe looting by 'night-hawks' - we can learn an enormous amount about religious practice. This is true even at temples where much less fieldwork has been done but where, in the past, there has been a detailed record of field-walking, recording, and deposition in museums: for example study of the finds from Wood Eaton, Oxfordshire, and Great Walsingham, Norfolk, by Jean Bagnall Smith, has elucidated much about the practice of the cults in these places. We cannot know what was lost at Wanborough, Surrey. Were there votive masks like those from Icklingham, Suffolk (Fig. 4), where a cache of bronze items was dug out by night and smuggled to the USA without proper record of context? There is plenty of evidence of how much can be lost if archaeologists are not vigilant. However beautiful an individual figurine or brooch taken from a temple may be, if it lacks that connection with religious rituals, which may be specific to the individual site, it has little value to us.

In selecting individual items of religious art we are thus overhearing prayers and intercepting messages from people who were sometimes in desperate need, or at least deeply thankful that their needs had been met. There is no space to do more than note a few categories of object, and of course, the choice is further limited because much has not survived: textiles for example and, except in the most favourable circumstances, wooden carvings (notably at the shrine at the Source of the Seine in France, though there is one figure from a waterlogged deposit in a temple at Winchester, evidently depicting a votary rather than the goddess Epona as often stated). Even today people afflicted by disease often take models of afflicted parts of the body or other items to (Christian) shrines in order to effect a cure or as a thank offering for help received: thus at Trelleck in Monmouthshire, pieces of cloth are taken from clothing beside affected parts of the anatomy and tied to the branches of thorn bushes overhanging the Virtuous Well. As these rot, so the sick person will recover. Sometimes there are also drawings of arthritic limbs, reminding us of healing votives. A good example is a miniature arm found at the Temple of Mars Nodens, at Lydney, Gloucestershire. The importance of being able to assign it to this temple is two-fold: first it helps to confirm Nodens as a healing god, which is implied by his cult animal,
the hound (recorded in sculpture, figurines and votive plaques from the site), which he shares with the Graeco-Roman god of medicine, Aesculapius. Second, it was noted recently by Dr. Gerald Hart that the nails of the hand are concave and characteristic of a type of anaemia caused by lack of iron in the diet (Fig. 5). The local waters are iron-rich, and a prolonged stay at Lydney would have resulted in a cure. Other site-specific anatomical votives include legs from Uley, surely connected with Mercury who guards travellers, and at Bath breasts, showing that Sulis Minerva possessed the same healing powers as Minerva Medica in Rome. One of the pairs of breasts was of ivory (Fig. 6) and was originally worn as an amulet, probably by a young mother during lactation, the ivory being of a colour ‘in sympathy’ with that of milk. Only after the child was weaned was this given to the god. Some shrines were quite small, and we have no idea which deity in the vicinity of the Baths Basilica at Wroxeter healed eyes. In addition to a pair of gold eyes (Fig. 7), others were cut out of plaster. The place where they were found may be significant, as oculists often practiced in the vicinity of baths, and a stamp for an eye salve was found nearby. Magic and medicine were not so far apart.

Other models were directly connected with the deity worshipped. At Woodeaton, Oxfordshire, examination of votives of various types, including two plaques depicting the god (Fig. 8), have shown that Mars was worshipped here. Not surprisingly numbers of miniature spears, his principal weapon, have been found mainly bent alongside models of the more suitable caduceus (Mercury’s distinctive serpent-entwined staff), also found here in silver, bronze and iron. Not all models are found at shrines. It is useful to know that an example of a model anchor, no doubt representing a rivergod, perhaps Old Father Thames, was found at Barton Court Farm villa near Abingdon, Oxfordshire as well as at the Woodeaton temple, and little axes representing sacrifices promised or performed are found frequently at domestic sites and temples (Fig. 9). Detailed knowledge of each and every one of these findspots helps in the process of building up an impression of Romano-British religious practice.

However, a quantity of weapons were excavated from the earlier Iron Age levels and one of the lead ‘curse’ tablets from Uley was at first addressed to Mars whose name was subsequently erased and replaced by that of Mercury. Clearly the original Iron Age deity was a warrior, though he may well have looked after animals or aided travellers. During the Roman Empire he was eventually Romanised as Mercury and given a splendid limestone cult image based on a sculpture by the fourth-century BC Greek sculptor, Praxiteles (Fig. 10 on page 18). The giving of votive spears continued however, 

To be continued in the next issue

Suggestions for further reading:

My own book Religion in Roman Britain, (Batsford, 1984, corrected reprint 1995), provides much of the evidence, and can be supplemented by Ann Woodward’s Shrines and Sacrifice (Batsford / English Heritage 1993)

For individual sites see: Barry Cunliffe, Roman Bath Discovered (Tempus, 2000), Ann Woodward and Peter Leach The Uley Shrines, (English Heritage, 1993), Lindsay Allason-Jones and Bruce McKay, Coventina’s Well (Chesters Museum, 1985), Jean Bagnall Smith ‘Interim Report on Votive Material from Romano-Celtic Temple sites in Oxfordshire’, Oxoniensia, 60 (1995),
BOOK REVIEW

Roman Clothing and Fashion
by A.T. Croom.
ISBN 0 7524 1469 0.
Hardback £18.99.
Paperback £15.99.

Review by Beth Bishop

People have used dress and ornament as symbols of status, wealth and power since the first hunter to stick a feather in his hair, or string together the claws of the bear he had just killed to hang round his neck as proof of his prowess. During the Roman period, and much later, this human need for a very visible difference from others – sometimes enforced by law – was far more pronounced than today; we are more relaxed about such things, but even in the Third Millennium we retain recognisable vestiges of the legacy: the Forces wear uniform; the briefcase, bowler and rolled umbrella denote the ‘City gent’ and the rich wear their ‘designer labels’; even T-shirt, trainers and baseball cap make a statement, while the most visible symbols of all are the robes and regalia of the monarchy.

In her fascinating book Roman Clothing and Fashion, Alexandra Croom uses the available evidence to present a descriptive and pictorial overview of the vast subject of the garb of the Roman Empire’s denizens during a period from the eighth century BC to the Byzantine Empire of the Early Middle Ages. Clearly, a fully comprehensive study would call for an enormous tome – even a series of books: the author describes hers as ‘an introduction’. In it she has laid the groundwork for further studies of a largely neglected aspect of the Roman period, and is to be congratulated on having produced a refreshingly unusual work of general interest which is also full of minute detail. The bulk of the book should prove invaluable to anyone concerned with Roman dress or involved with the recreation of Roman-period costume, from ‘living history’ groups to the makers of ‘blockbusting’ epics!

The evidence is taken from three main sources: art – from statues, mosaics and wall paintings to coins and graffiti (!); literature – contemporary descriptions and references by writers of the day; and the material remains themselves, where they survive in the extreme conditions of bogs and deserts. The author, however, begins with an important caveat: the evidence can be misleading. The toga, for instance, was a deeply unpopular and generally disliked garment, being heavy, hot and inconvenient, and as standard garb it had a comparatively short life. Nevertheless, it acquired a symbolic significance far beyond its actual use. This led to its repeated depiction in formal and ceremonial settings, which in turn has led to our idea of the ‘typical’ Roman in his ‘typical’ toga. Furthermore, only the wealthy middle and upper classes could afford to commission works of art depicting themselves, so what we see is really the richest dressed in their ‘Sunday best’, not a true reflection of ordinary everyday wear, even their own. The austerely pale and plain stative with which we are familiar also gives a misleading impression: it was originally brightly coloured, with rich adornment painted on, but all the decorative detail has long since been lost. Even the material remains must be treated with caution: they do show at least some of what was being worn, but it was purely local, so they cannot necessarily be used to make wider assumptions and generalisations. It is with such limitations in mind that Alexandra Croom has written this book.

In chapter two, “Cloths and Colour”, she looks briefly at Roman methods of spinning, weaving, dyeing and cloth-making; the main types of cloth produced (wool, linen and some silk); luxury fabrics stiff and heavy with precious stones and metals and coloured with the costliest of dyestuffs (it took 10,000 shellfish to produce one gramme of dye). She touches on seasonal wear, cleaning, mending and storing, accessories, slaves’ clothes and the use and meaning of colour. The Romans loved bright colours (though not everyone approved of them) and at times certain colours – most notably Imperial Purple – were used officially to denote status; indeed, the illegal wearing of the purple could, and sometimes did, result in the death penalty for treason!

In an age when clothing is relatively cheap, it is difficult to grasp the scale of Roman finished costs, in either modern or ancient terms. Thread was produced manually on individual drop-spindles and was woven on fairly small-scale looms, limiting the size of cloth which could be produced. This, together with the slowness of the processes and the value of very labour-intensive hand-decorated ‘luxury’ garments, meant that prices were staggering: in AD 169 Marcus Aurelius sold “his wife’s silk and gold clothes” to raise money to fund a war; Diocletian’s Price Edict of AD 301 has a section on the prices of various garments. Clothing was a prime target for thieves, by burglary, or theft of unattended garments at the baths; it was not unknown for citizens to fear being mugged in the street – not for their money, but for the clothes on their back! Clothes, therefore, were too valuable to discard, and were used and re-used. Gems and applied motifs were removed to put on other garments, and plainer clothes were cut up to make ‘patchwork’ when worn.

continued overleaf
Patchwork clothes went to slaves and other lower orders. There must have been a thriving secondhand clothing industry. Recycling is nothing new! The bulk of the book forms a chronological catalogue of fashion developments in men's, women's, children's and even provincial clothing, covering everything from hairstyles and hats to shoes and socks, via underwear and nightwear (when worn). It is generously illustrated with line drawings of original sources and some beautiful colour plates, and enlivened with revealing contemporary quotations. This is the section which, with all its detail, will be of most use to anyone needing to know or recreate the styles. Unfortunately there is a failing: some of the multiple illustrations are divorced from their texts by a number of pages, making it impossible to relate illustration to description without flicking back and forth; this is awkward and frustrating. On some pages (of female hairstyles), the individual dates appear in the captions, but with several rows of drawings on the page, this too is confusing: for ease of reference I had to find and pencil in the appropriate date under each head. This is a shame, but, in the overall scheme of things, it is a comparatively minor matter, and it is hard to see how the first point, at least, could be rectified without radical changes to the layout.

The book ends with a glossary, a list of ancient authors quoted, weaving terminology, a select bibliography, and an index.

I found the subject matter fascinating for the light it sheds on an under-represented aspect of Roman life, both economic, social and sociological: if Alexandra Croom were to produce a more detailed book concentrating on the organisation and operation of the manufacturing industry and clothing trade(s), both licit and illicit, with their social and economic ramifications, I should be first in the queue to buy it.


Window glass was used by the Romans as early as the 1st century AD, and is a common find on Roman sites in Britain. Roman glassmakers employed two differing processes for producing window panes. The earlier method is known as 'cast glass', and produces panes of uneven thickness that are fire polished, or 'glossy' on one side, and pitted, with a matt finish on the other.

The later technique is known as 'cylinder glass' and produces panes of even thickness which are glossy on both sides. This method is well-known, being first documented by Theophilus in the 12th century AD, and still being employed on an industrial scale in the 19th century in glassmaking centres such as Charleroi in Belgium. A cylinder of glass is blown, both ends are opened, it is split longitudinally, reheated and opened out flat.

However, the precise technique of making cast glass has been lost since the Romans ceased to use it in the 3rd century AD. It has often been suggested that molten glass was poured into a mould in much the same way as metals are cast. Some of the arguments against such a method are that it would not reproduce both the forms of the edges and corners and the tool marks seen on original Roman glass.

Recently, we were asked to produce a pane of glass for the Museum of London using the earlier technique. Our research and experiments have enabled us to produce such a pane, and also to develop a process which faithfully reproduces all of the marks and idiosyncrasies of original ‘cast’ Roman glass.

We used a blue-green soda-lime-silica glass with a typical Roman composition. We gathered molten glass from a furnace, poured it onto a damp surface – in this case a kiln shelf – and immediately flattened it with a large block of damp wood. This produced a flat disc of glass about 5 mm thick. It also produced lots of steam!

In order to turn this disc into a rectangular pane it had to be continually reheated and worked upon. We achieved this by transferring the disc to another dry kiln batt coated with battwash to prevent it sticking, supported on a long pole, and introducing it into another furnace known as a ‘glory hole’ for controlled reheating.

This was the most interesting phase of the operation, as initially we had no idea what to do other than to pull and stretch the hot disc in order to form a rectangular shape. Our first attempts produced oddly-shaped, but promising ‘panes’.

Several attempts later we were beginning to learn how to stretch the glass in a controlled manner, and discovering the ‘do’s and don’ts’ of making a window pane in this way.

Using this method successfully depends upon various factors. The pane has to be heated in a way that allows one area to heat up whilst the opposite area stays relatively cool. This allows the cooler area to be gripped and pulled using a pair of pincers whilst pinning the hotter area down near its edge using a metal rod. This produces a corner, and subsequent heating and stretching will turn the disc into a rectangle.

This rectangle can be stretched by heating one half and leaving the other half cooler, pinning the hot side down with a long metal rod and gripping and pulling the cooler side with a pair of pincers.

By varying the areas to be heated and stretched, the pane can be enlarged until it is the required size (the size of the initial gather will have a bearing on this – the larger the gather, the larger the pane).

Small adjustments to the straightness of the sides can be made using a metal hook to pull the glass gently where the side is curving inwards.

The tools we used were simple: metal rods, hooks and pincers, and the marks they produced on the finished pane closely resemble those seen on original Roman panes.

The method that we have developed is straightforward and repeatable – an essential criterion for mass production, and it is easy to imagine many glasshouses during the 1st and 2nd centuries AD using this process to produce window panes, until they were superseded by cylinder glass.

Visit our website: www.romanglassmakers.co.uk

This article originally appeared in Glass News No. 9, January 2001.

Mark Taylor and David Hill, Roman Glassmakers, are once again offering their reproduction Roman beakers at a special rate to ARA members, with each sale benefiting the ARA. See the Newsletter included with this bulletin.

Editor
By Graeme Soffe

One of the most important inscriptions from Roman Britain has recently been found in London. It was discovered during excavations by Pre-Construct Archaeology at Tabard Street, on the south edge of Southwark, London's southern suburb on the south bank of the Thames.

The site lies near the probable course of Watling Street, the Roman road running east into Kent. The almost complete stone plaque (Fig. 1), 29 x 31 cms with a well-carved inscription, was found in a pit and appears to date from the late second century AD. The pit was backfilled in the early fourth century and the remains of a stone building, of winged-corridor form, have also been found on the site.

A transcription would read:

NVM(INIBVS) AVG(VSTORUM) DEO MARTI CA MVLO TIBERINI VS CELERIANVS C(IVIS) BELL(OVACVS) MORITIX LONDINIENSI VM [PR]IMVISI . . . . IVAI.

To the Divine Powers of the Emperors and to the god Mars Camulus, Tiberius Celerianus, citizen of the Bellovaci, moritix of the people of London first.

The double G in the inscription, not shown in the transcription, refers the dedication to more than one emperor and so this might place it during the joint reign of Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus or later (i.e. AD 161 onwards), but the lettering style is more consistent with a second-rather than third century date. Mars Camulus indicates a Celtic god identified with the Roman god Mars, popular in Gallia Belgica. There is an altar dedicated to the same god by the Second Legion Augstia, from the Bar Hill fort, Scotland (RIB 2160), but the name is best known from the great late Iron Age oppidum and Roman town of Camulodunum (Colchester) 'the fortress of Camulus'. The monument was erected by Tiberius Celerianus, who regarded himself first and foremost as a citizen of the Bellovaci tribe, also from Gallia Belgica, and so the god venerated here may be the Gaulish one. However, although written in formal Latin and including a dedication to the Emperors, Celerianus describes himself as a moritix, a word of Celtic origin, but what does it mean? Also, if the reading of the missing word primus is correct, does that refer to moritix or some further missing title? An inscription from Cologne refers to Gaius Aurelius Verus, who was a moritex and negotiator Britannicius, while one reading of an inscribed sarcophagus from York (RIB 678) of M Vercundius, describes him as [se]vir col Ebor ibidemque morit[ius].

Philologists seem clear that moritix meant 'sea-farer' or 'sea-traveller'. Francis Grew of the Museum of London suggests it may have had some specialised significance, but whether in the field of 'trade' or more general 'navigation' is unclear. Nor can we rule out the possibility that it was some kind of priestly office, a 'traveller through the spirit world'. The further suggests that 'by pairing the god of his homeland with the city where Celerianus made his money, it may be that he was trying to demonstrate what could be achieved by a successful entrepreneur in the Roman Empire.'

It is the reference to the people of Roman London which is so exciting, and this is our first inscription on stone referring to London as such, although a first-century flagon bearing the name of London (RIB 2503.127) was also found in Southwark in 1912. There are also procuratorial tile-stamps including the name of London (e.g. PP BRI LON, RIB 2485) and other objects such as a writing tablet from the Walbrook inscribed LONDINIO (RIB 2443.7). We also must not forget that the Vinodolanda documents refer to the presence of a centurion of the Tungrian cohort in London and there is a letter from Vinodolanda to the governor's groom in London (Tab. Vindol. I. 154, II. 310). One would normally expect an inscription to refer to the place rather than the people, as in the civitas of the Cornovii in the famous Wroxeter inscription (RIB 288), but here the dedication is by the community, rather than by an individual. It is possible that Celerianus was moritix Londoniensius and so the analogy may be more with an altar from Vinodolanda (RIB 1695) dedicated by curia Textoverdorum. Here the Londoners stand alone, with no reference to the civitas or vicus of London. Perhaps London had no official status, it was not a chartered town but an imperial domain, and remained so until the end when in the fourth century AD it was named Augusta 'the city of the emperor', -... Landiniun, pectus oppidum quod Augustum posteritas appellavit... 'the old town of London, which later times called Augusta' (Annianus Marcellinus 27, 8, 7).

Abbreviations:
RIB: Roman Inscriptions of Britain, 1965 etc.

Acknowledgements:
Thanks to Francis Grew, Roger Tomlin and Felicity Gilmour for information.

Fig. 1. The Tiberius Celerianus Inscription from London.

Photo: © Museum of London.