Bradford-on-Avon Roman Villa. Mark Corney describing the construction of the possible baptistry to ARA members. (See article on page 10).

Photo: © Bryn Walters.
An octagonal scatter of stones may not appear enormously exciting, but the stones which partly obscure the fine fourth-century mosaic at the Bradford-on-Avon villa (see our cover picture and Mark Corney’s article in this issue), may be the remains of a structure forming the surround to the largest baptismal font or cistern yet discovered in late Roman Britain.

Late Roman Christianity is an enormous subject, but surprisingly, the archaeological evidence for the earliest baptistries and the rite of baptism in Britain is uncertain. We are reminded of the small brick and stone open-air cisterns at Richborough and Icklingham or the octagonal basin at Chedworth. There are also the relatively small portable lead tanks decorated with the chi-rho monogram and the Welfrey tank with its frieze of standing figures. Were these used for a baptism where water was poured over the head (affusion)? Perhaps the villas of late Roman Gaul will provide a parallel for the sequence and arrangement found at Bradford-on-Avon. In the provinces of western and south-eastern Gaul we have at least octagonal stone baptistries, covering large octagonal stepped cisterns of the fifth and sixth centuries, with good examples at Poitiers (Pictavi), Fréjus (Forum Julii), Riez (Reit) and Albenga (Albingaunnun). These may have been used for rites of total immersion, and are invariably associated with churches. However, in Britain the evidence remains tenuous – as Professor Charles Thomas reminds us in his Christianity in Roman Britain to AD 500, we approach the position defined by Sherlock Holmes when he remarked, “when you have eliminated the impossible, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth”.

The Bradford-on-Avon villa leads us to another important theme in this issue. Over the last few years there has been a plethora of newly discovered villas in southern Britain. Bryn Walters reviews a few examples from Gloucestershire. There are others in Kent, Sussex and Somerset – and in Hampshire the Danebury Environs Project continues to re-excavate and evaluate known villas, examining, among other things, their late Iron Age origins.
The broken fragment of decorative sculpture from Dover which is the subject of this paper was, in its heyday, one of the most beautiful, classical and yet innovative of all the pieces surviving to us from Roman Britain and yet is one of the least known.

Few books on the art of Roman Britain mention it and yet, even in its ruined state, one can visualize how beautiful it must have been when new. It was discovered in 1881 in excavations in Market Square during the construction of the Carlton Club. The building works removed the mediaeval collegiate church of St. Martin-le-Grand. Beneath this, the remains of a Roman building were discovered, with substantial flint walls, *opus signinum* floors and furnished with hypocausts. A few yards away to the south, a tesselated pavement had been recorded on the western side of the square and was probably part of the same complex. Possibly on account of the hypocausts, this new building was believed to be part of a bath suite, and it was suggested that it was connected to the baths identified under St. Mary’s Church in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. This theory has never found much support as St. Mary’s is situated some 130 yards to the north of the 1881 site. The building had stood outside the eastern walls of the Classis Britannica fort, but inside the walls of the Roman fort of the Saxon Shore, which it presumably pre-dated. Whether or not it was demolished or adapted for a new purpose when the latter was built is unknown.

The statue was discovered ‘lying on one of the floors’ of the building, but whether it originally stood in the room or been thrown in there at the time of the construction of the Saxon Shore fort or St. Martin’s is not known. Carved in oolitic limestone, the statue would have been just under life size when perfect and now survives to a height of 3 feet 10 inches (Fig. 1). The subject is an almost totally nude woman. She leans forward and her upper body twists to her left. The tilt of her head indicates that she also looked down in this direction. Her feet and her arms have been hacked off and her face has also suffered the same fate, but here the stone has also been worn smooth, either by some constant rubbing or erosion. One recalls other statues, such as the Wroxeter nymph (or Venus) who ended her days re-used as a doorstep and had much of her decoration worn smooth by the hobnails on sandals (White and Barker, 1998). A singular aspect of the sculpture is the fragment of drapery that survives wrapped about her right leg and below her buttocks and the elaboration and stylization of the folds and creases that the sculptor has portrayed. Her body is beautifully and sensitively carved and has great fluidity of design, with the legs and cascade of ‘z’ folds giving an almost pleated effect to the lower part of the work. Her hair is drawn back from the forehead either side of her face in a series of lush, thick and wavy locks, whilst from the back of the head long strands hang down on each of her shoulders. She wears a great and regal *stephanē* or diadem of lanceolate leaves (which may be myrtle or possibly bay laurel) and which is ornamented with a central rosette. Sometimes described as a water nymph, the other interpretation of her identity, however, as Venus/Aphrodite seems far more likely. Although the style is not attributed exclusively to her, Venus is often portrayed with side strands of hair on her shoulders and wearing a high *stephanē*. The diadem here resembles the bold but more restrained myrtle crown on the head of the goddess found at Vaison-la-Romaine in France and now in the site museum there (Fig. 2). Myrtle was one of the goddess’s sacred plants and adorned the hair of brides on their wedding night. As a marine
goddess, and one associated with safe voyages, the presence of Venus in a port like Dover is only to be expected. Whether she originally stood alone or as part of a composition cannot now be known. The sculpture has been assumed to be part of a fountain on no firm evidence whatsoever. This is not to say that it was not, but that it might equally have been an object of veneration or a purely decorative piece to ornament the inside or exterior of a building. Likewise, it is wise not to forget the role of such sculpture in the Roman garden where the goddess was particularly honoured.

The cross-legged pose is relatively unusual in sculpture. It does occur in all artistic media however, and often when the subject is shown at ease and (more often than not) leaning on a support. The edges of the drapery survive intact and neither they nor the torso show any sign of having been attached to a support. If such existed at Dover then it must have risen independently from the lost base and joined the figure at her left arm (Fig. 3). From a structural point of view the existence in antiquity of an extra support of some kind for the statue, either in the form of a column, fountain-head or more drapery is very likely. Aesthetically, it would also serve to straighten the composition and not detract from the figure. As will be shown below, it seems that the Dover figure crosses her legs for the practical purpose of securing the fabric wrapped about them. Although crossed legs occur on figures of Venus the Sandal Binder, where the deity adjusts her sandal at the heel, this sculpture is not one of these. A torso of Aphrodite in the National Archaeological Museum, Naples, originally had crossed legs. She must have leaned on a support on her right side (the arm going straight down), whilst her left hand rested on her thigh. This is a copy of the pose used for the statue known as The Lansdowne Paris (Furtwangler, 1964), but bears little relationship to the Dover piece.

A figure of Venus from Carthage, and now in the site museum there, is one of the few, traced over a long period of research, that bears any resemblance to the Dover statue (Fig. 4). She has crossed legs but is more heavily draped and stands upright. A solid jug in her hand suggests that she indeed may have been associated with baths or a water feature. Likewise, an Aphrodite now in the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, has some bearing on our figure (Vermeule, 1981, Herrmann and Kondoleon, 2003). She lacks the crossed legs, but has her right leg only wrapped in cloth up to her thigh, whilst holding the remainder of her garment on her left arm. She definitely was a fountain figure as a pierced jug on a palmate column by her right leg indicates. Here again, and unlike the Dover figure, the stance is upright. This Virginian Venus has been said to have been influenced by the Venus of Arles (now in the Louvre) where the goddess studies her reflection in a mirror. It seems more likely, however, that the inspiration was the Venus du Mas, a second century BC Hellenistic marble in the Musée d’Agen, Lot-en-Garonne, which, although again in an upright pose, has only one leg covered by textile (Grigson, 1976). Another version of this sculpture from Ostia, now in the British Museum, does have the fabric around her right leg and is also based on the Venus du Mas (Lloyd-Morgan, 1986). All three examples have the equivalent of the Dover figure’s cascade of folds, but hanging between their legs rather than from beyond the other limb on the outside. Incidentally, nothing but pressure from the thighs and an element of good fortune can account for the fabric remaining in place on these statues of the goddess.

The remaining stumps of the arms on the Dover goddess suggest that the vanished limbs were held out in front of the figure, rather as if she were holding a tray or a shell as occurs on some nymphaeae statues. However, the twisting of the torso suggests that this was not the case. Her right arm could have shielded her breasts in the manner of the famous Aphrodite of Knidos, or the left may have held a hand mirror into which she gazed. There are no indications of supports for the arm at her breast and the fact that she leans forward, twists her body and looks down to the left so markedly, in my
opinion, makes this pose also unlikely. The folds of the material on the sculpture are our only real clue to interpreting the position of the lost arms. At first sight, the drapery appears fantastical and difficult to imitate in reality. Observation over a considerable period has so far not found an exact parallel for the design of the Dover drapery, but a practical experiment by the author, with a bathsheet, has shown that such an arrangement is possible. The material is first draped around the front of the right leg and between the thighs; it is then tucked behind the right leg with a quantity folded back on itself to form the 'Z' shaped cascade. The left leg is then crossed over the right and this action secures the drapery in place. The balance of the material is then drawn across the backs of the legs and pulled up to hang over the subject's left wrist. This produces the folds seen above the 'Z' cascade and pointing up to the viewer's right and the statue's left arm (Fig. 5). However, folds to the lower left of the cascade and continued on the edge and rear of the sculpted fabric show a different direction from these upward pointing channels (Fig. 6). If the body is bent and twisted to its left, and the right arm extended to grasp the material below and in front of the left hand, this action then achieves the second series of upward-pointing folds found on the sculpture. It seems highly probable that the sculptor must have posed a model in order to achieve and copy this effect which is so unusual, and is further proof of the importance of this piece. Pinning of the material behind the right leg would have helped in producing the tightly bound and heavily creased appearance which is impossible without such restraint unless the body of the model was wet and the material thin enough to adhere to it. Indeed, this may well have been the sculptor's intention in order to show that the goddess was drying herself, either after her bath or her birth in the sea. If the idea of the fabric was based upon that used on the Venus du Mas, then our sculptor used it in quite a different way from what had been merely copied before.

The sculpture has been joined and cemented in two places suggesting that either it was found broken in 1881 or that a disaster occurred whilst it was held at the museum. The cement occurs across the waist and at the neck (Fig. 7). A lithograph of 1889 shows no such damage and, interestingly, a much thinner neck and less hair at the nape of the neck (Payne 1889). That this was accurate may be seen by studying the photograph of the statue taken by the energetic local antiquary E. J. G. Amos early in the last century and published by Jessie Mothersole in her book The Saxon Shore in 1924 and by the Victoria County History in 1932. Because of background shadow the damage to the waist does not show clearly on the photograph, but it is worryingly conclusive about the damage to the neck. The same proportions, features and profile around the neck occur on the photograph and the
might be that the lower part was quickly buried and thus saved from the abuse inflicted upon the upper. It would be most interesting to know the source of the oolitic stone from which it is carved. In date she seems most likely to come from the second century. The high *stephane* is reminiscent of examples found in the sculpture of the Hadrianic and Antonine period. If ultimately the model were derived from the Venus du Mas types, then our sculptor was no mere copyist but created a work that was both important and innovative. Notwithstanding her present condition, the Venus of Dover should still attract worshippers in the town museum.

**Bibliography**


Herrmann, John and Kondoleon, Christine (2003). *The Poetry of Water in Roman Imperial Art.* *Apollo,* May, 14 - 19, Fig. 3.


Payne, George. (1889). On a Roman Statue and other Remains in the Dover Museum. *Archaeologia Cantiana,* xxviii, 302 - 3, Fig.

*(The date of the statue's discovery is incorrectly given as 1887 and this was repeated by Mothersole and the recent museum guide. The Carlton Club was opened in 1882 on the site of the discovery.)*


Vermeule, Cornelius C. *Greek and Roman Sculpture in America.* Berkeley 1981, pl. 143.

The first part of this article (ARA 15) dealt with sealstones cut in intaglio. In contrast with intaglios, most people have no difficulty in visualising a cameo, although the object which comes to their minds is generally the imitation cut from two layers of a shell.

These shell-cameos appeared in the nineteenth century and are still manufactured in the Naples region to this day. Roman cameos, by contrast, were normally cut from hard-stones in the same manner as intaglios, though they were frequently imitated in glass. Layered stones (onyx and sardonyx) were the favoured medium, allowing the subject to stand proud from its background. The largest cameos known were employed as ornaments, placed on stands or framed. Many of these were 'State Cameos' handed out by the Imperial Court to favoured friends and clients and frequently depicted the Emperor as a divine or semi-divine being. The most famous of these are the Gemma Augustea now in Vienna and the Cameo, Tiberiana or the Grand Camée de France in Paris, but there was a very fine large cameo kept in St. Albans Abbey in the Middle Ages, drawn by Matthew Paris in the 1250s and venerated as a wonder-working relic, The Great Cameo of St. Albans, which depicted Divus Augustus. Was this magnificent and important stone found in Verulamium? It is possible but on the whole unlikely. All we know is that the gem was donated to St. Albans Abbey in late Saxon times by King Aethelred.

Most cameos (and this goes for all those definitely associated with Roman Britain), were set in jewellery - brooches, pendants, finger-rings or ear-rings - according to size. It is apparent that they had no mundane practical use, as being in relief they were not suitable for seals. They might, on occasion, have functioned as amulets: devices like Medusa-heads, lions, the goddess Minerva or the god-hero Hercules, were effective against malignant powers. Other cameos appear to have been love-charms, frequently gifts to the women who wore them. All would have been enjoyed as a lively accompaniment to the jewellery in which they were mounted.

Compared to intaglios they are rather rare as site finds. Intaglios, with their use as seals, are at least thirty times as common. This is not only true of Britain but is universal, as anyone who has worked with ancient gems will attest. The writer of this paper jumped at the opportunity in 1994 to publish the private Content family collection of about 190 ancient cameos and a few later ones (Henig 1990) and is currently engaged with Helen Molesworth, FGA, in studying a similar number of additions to that collection. Although the total number of cameos here may seem modest, it is perhaps half the size of that in the British Museum. About 30 cameos from the whole of Roman Britain is thus quite a respectable 'haul' amongst site finds of gems from the Province, and displays both variety and interest.

Apart from frequency as site finds one other difference may be noted: the use of intaglios in the Graeco-Roman world has a continuous history going back to Archaic Greek times in the seventh century BC with the numbers tailing off in the third century AD. Cameos only begin in the Hellenistic period, in the third century BC at the earliest and in the Roman Empire are apparently at their commonest in the third century. For the first century, the only cameo that has survived from Britain, as far as I know, is a moulded glass cameo recovered from the Boudican fire level at Colchester and portraying, in white upon a greenish ground, a nereid seated upon a dolphin (Fig. 1). Such subjects are typical of Augustan and Julio-Claudian times and much finer examples of such themes are known. The Colchester cameo is very small and was doubtless worn in a ring.

Most cameos are later and all examples discussed here are cut stones of late second- or third-century date. The most striking is a large brooch-cameo cut in oriental sardonyx from South Shields, portraying a bear, and at its feet the remains of its prey, perhaps a deer (Fig. 2). The bear's shaggy pelt,
contrasting with its sharply defined head, help to make it one of the most memorable of Roman animal studies. There is a temptation to see this fearsome creature as a British bear, for bears still lived in the Caledonian forest. This may be so, but this very fine example of Severan-period art should be attributed to a workshop in Rome or one closely connected with the Imperial Court. Of course, between AD 208-11 Septimus Severus was present in Britain and indeed, campaigning in Scotland. It is very probable that the cameo fell out of the brooch worn by one of the ladies in the emperor’s entourage. Might it, perhaps, even have belonged to the empress, Julia Domna?

South Shields was almost certainly a major supply base for Severus and Caracalla, and it is not surprising that a sardonyx cameo found in fairly recent excavations here, in a Severan layer, depicts a bust of Caracalla, wearing the lion-skin of Hercules (Fig. 3), reminding us of that emperor’s identification with the hero – an identification pursued no less rigorously in fact, than it was by Marcus Aurelius’ notorious son Commodus, immediately before the civil war which brought Septimus Severus to power.

Hercules was the hero who, above all others, could drive away evil forces and preserve the wearer of his image from the Evil Eye. Thus we should not necessarily see every image of Hercules as connected with a ruler. Close in manner of depiction but with a blander, idealised face, is a cameo from Wiveliscombe, Somerset (Fig. 4), now, alas, in private possession abroad, although the British Museum owns good resin copies. The gem is close in date to the South Shields cameos and is technically comparable. Another cameo depicting Hercules (or possibly the Lydian queen Omphale to whom, according to myth, Hercules was enslaved by order of Jupiter to expiate a treacherous murder), was found in Caerleon in 1883. It is unfortunately damaged by fire, but it too is a very notable example of cameo art.

Representations of the goddess Minerva were very popular talismans and she was the subject of many cameos. An example from Old Winteringham, Lincolnshire (Fig. 5), is a typical, if stylised, example. The plume of her helmet seems to run into the goddess’ luxuriant hair which extends down her back to the nape of her neck. The top of her chiton is shown, but not the aegis, or breastplate, where the goddess generally wears the Medusa head. This is a reminder that the most popular cameo-type of all in Roman times was the Medusa mask or Gorgoneion, and a very satisfactory cameo it made. There is an attractive little Medusa cameo set in a gold ring, from the Sully Moor, Cardiff, hoard of the late third century, now in the British Museum, but the largest and best example out of the six known from British sites was excavated at the Roman villa at Wakefords Copse, Leigh Park, Havant in Hampshire (Fig. 6). This is a powerful creation with mask-like visage and staring eyes, a long lock hanging down the right side of the face. On the head are two wings, one each side of the top-knot, and below, a fringe of snakes. Although not fearsome in the manner of Greek Archaic Gorgoneia, and a prime example of the Classical ‘pathetic’ type of Medusa, one can sense that the wearer of this fine cameo would have felt safer protected by the all-seeing gaze of her amulet. The type is also very familiar from jet pendants, some of which were probably carved from Whitby jet.

The choice of a mime actor for a cameo from Barnoldby le Beck, North Lincolnshire (Fig. 7), initially reminds us of the ubiquity of the popular theatre, and indeed, a theatre-stage is attested on an inscription from Brough, on the other side of the River Humber (RIB 707). The bald pate may have had virile connotations, but the phallic imagery is far more obvious on the Barnoldby example, for the actor sports a huge phallus, and in addition is depicted with a very long nose. Clearly the gem, which is to date unique, was a very powerful protection against the Evil Eye.
Another very familiar cameo-type figures a cupid or a winged-genius leaning disconsolately on a torch. Sometimes, as on an onyx cameo from Plummer's Plain, St. Leonard’s Forest, Sussex, found in the early nineteenth century but now lost, the figures are paired (Fig. 8). The type of Attis and of Cautopates (one of the Mithraic *dadothori*), who lean on such torches and symbolise respectively death and night, is familiar. Although we tend to think of Cupid as the son of Venus and so representing joyous, carnal love, we can be fairly sure that the ‘mourning’ cupids had an altogether more sombre meaning. The Sussex cameo is said to have been ‘found in a tumulus’, but if it was associated with a burial, that can only have been a secondary function: it would certainly have been worn in jewellery. There was a morbid side to Roman society – as there was much more recently in the culture of the Victorians – because there was relatively high mortality at all ages and the awareness of death was never far from people’s minds. Indeed, the monotonous fascination of the parvenu Trimalchio with funerary themes and his own death was mocked by Petronius in his novel, the *Satyricon*. The bear cameo (Fig. 2), and another cameo portraying a prowling lion, set, or rather re-set, in a pendant from the late Roman Thetford Treasure may likewise have served as *mementi mori*.

As has been stated above, cameos were especially designed to be worn by women, and several are clearly love tokens. An onyx cameo, found in the region of Hadrian’s Wall (Fig. 9), depicts cupid seated on a frisky horse, here indeed the god of love. To date, only one example has been found in Britain (from Silchester) of a female portrait, a wife or girlfriend. This is a fine second-century example of a girl wearing a necklace: such portraits serving the same purpose of commemorating or preserving the image of a loved one are known in jet. One occasion for manufacture may have been betrothal, and a delicate little cameo depicting the clasped right hands of a man and a woman, the *dextrarum iunctio* (Fig. 10), was found a couple of decades ago by a keen-eyed eight-year old girl whilst playing on the site of the Roman villa at North Wraxall, Wiltshire, and presented by her to the Ashmolean Museum. It is inscribed in Greek with wishes for the ‘Good Fortune’ and ‘Concord’ of the marriage. A similar example of this not uncommon type, not nearly so fine but set in a gold ring, comes from Bradwell near Maldon, Essex (British Museum). A more generalised acclamation, likewise in Greek, is cut in relief on an onyx stone set in a gold ring from Keynsham, Somerset (now in Bristol Museum), invoking ‘Good Luck to the wearer’.

The scarcity of cameos as site finds, and the relatively large proportion of those few which have been found being in gold settings, demonstrates that on the whole we are dealing with an art patronised by people of refined tastes. Those who owned them were surely well educated; the inscriptions imply that they could understand Greek. As a consequence, to hold one of these precious miniature carvings in one’s hand is to make one feel very close to the elegance of the highest provincial society.

**Further Reading:**

Several general books on gemstones are listed in Part I of this article (ARA 15). For a general introduction to cameos and a bibliography, see Martin Henig, *The Context Family Collection of Ancient Cameos* (Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, 1990). A sequel by Helen Molesworth and Martin Henig is currently in progress. In addition, there is a selection of papers on cameos edited by Martin Henig and Michael Vickers entitled *Cameos in Context* (Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, 1993). Studies of individual cameos from...
Between May and early August 2003 a second season of excavations was undertaken on the large Roman villa complex within the grounds of St. Laurence School, Bradford-on-Avon, Wiltshire.

The site is located on a limestone plateau to the north of the Anglo-Saxon and medieval core of modern Bradford-on-Avon and is 500 m north of the early Iron Age promontory fort of Budbury. Evaluation work in 2002 had established the basic layout of the complex, comprising two large houses (Fig. 1, Nos. 1 and 2), 40 m long and 20 m wide, set on an east-west axis. The easternmost building, No. 1, had additional ranges to the south, including a bath-suite excavated in 1976 (Fig. 1, Nos. 3, 4 and 5). It is clear that much of the complex has been covered by a modern housing estate. Surface survey of the gardens of adjacent properties by pupils of St. Laurence School has begun to provide evidence of the full extent of Romano-British activity on the plateau south of the villa. Pottery and building materials, mainly fragments of stone roof tiles, suggest that buildings may have extended for a distance of up to 200 m to the south of the main houses. The core complex may have extended over an area of at least 4 hectares (10 acres).

The site appears to have originated in the Late Iron Age. Finds of Late Iron Age and early Roman material (including late prehistoric ceramics, pre-Roman cultivation marks, two ‘Dobunnic’ coins and a mid-first-century Claudian copy) strongly suggest that there had been a settlement on the site since at least the first century BC. Buildings of this date would have been built of timber, and await discovery.

The 2002 excavations established that the first stone buildings were constructed between c. 160 and c. 230, with further additions being made c. 300. The excavations also established that the main houses (Fig. 1, Nos. 1 and 2) were contemporary and that occupation continued into the fifth century. The ‘double house’ plan of the complex is without parallel in Roman Britain. The easternmost house, No. 1, had an exceptionally well-preserved mosaic floor dating to around 350-360, featuring motifs typical of the Cornelian school. Set within a central, bipartite room with semi-hexagonal apse, the focus of the floor was a cantharus flanked by dolphins (Fig. 4 and Fig. 2). The superb state of preservation of the floor was due to the protection afforded by the collapsed roof and walls of the villa superstructure. The floor was recorded by Dr. David Neal and will feature in a forthcoming volume of the Corpus of Roman Mosaics of Britain.
Building 2

At the end of the 2002 season, excavations on Building 2 examined the south-western corner room and the central, apsidal room. The former area proved to contain a substantial hypocaust system; excavation of this and adjacent areas to the north were completed in 2003, providing a full north-south plan of the western end of Building 2. The hypocaust was created in a pit over 1 m deep (Fig. 5). The stone supports for the floor (pilae) were set in a mortar and limestone rubble slurry. The floor comprised roughly-hewn flat slabs with no trace of mortar or formal upper floor surface. The praefurnium was surprisingly small when compared to other villa praefurnia. The room to the north of the hypocaust had no formal floor surface, the limestone bedrock served as the floor and had been worn remarkably smooth by prolonged use. On the floor of this room the remains of a hearth were found, containing large quantities of charcoal. Radiocarbon samples from this are currently being assessed, and may provide a date for the final phase of activity in this part of the building. Above the hearth and floor were the remains of the collapsed roof and wall tumble. In this was discovered part of a carved limestone roof finial, evidence for the detailed adornment of the building.

Part of the central range of Building 2 was examined, with parts of three rooms exposed, including the porticus which ran the length of the building front, and the central room south of the apsidal chamber. None of the rooms had formal floors. The distribution of large iron nails suggests that simple wooden floorboards had been fixed to cill-beams resting directly on the underlying bedrock.

The central room was found to contain a well-built, stone-lined flue which exhibited clear traces of intense burning. The lower fill also contained a thick deposit of charcoal. The plan of the flue suggests that it is part of a twin-flue drier or malting kiln. The upper fill of the flue contained the capital of a small limestone column and a large quantity of intact Pennant sandstone roof tiles, some still retaining the nails used to affix them to the roof timbers.

A reasonable-sized sample of Building 2 has now been examined, and it is possible to offer an interpretation of its function and status during the fourth and early fifth centuries. Despite the very formal plan of the building and the quality of the construction and appointment, no formal floors have been discovered and there is no trace of internal decoration such as painted wall-plaster. The hypocaust first revealed in 2002 displays some unusual features: the stokehole is remarkably small and the floor slabs had gaps, allowing smoke and fumes to enter the room. It is difficult to reconcile these features with a conventional heated living room. An alternative interpretation is that the room was designed to function as a smokehouse for the curing of meat and fish. The placing of an industrial-type kiln in the central room is also unusual, such an area usually being the principal reception room in a standard Romano-British house. It would appear that Building 2 was designed as a utilitarian working building behind a grand façade, mirroring that of the main house.
Building 1. The agro-industrial interpretation would also explain why Building 2 lacks the side ranges of Building 1. If this interpretation is correct, it demonstrates the scale of agricultural operations within the villa complex and suggests that the site was at the centre of a very large and productive estate.

Building 1

In 2003, excavation was extended to the north and south to provide a complete section across the central range of the house, including the mosaic first exposed in 2002. On the south side of the building, excavation revealed part of the porticus, 3 m wide and with a very worn mortar floor, indicating a long period of use. Many fragments of painted wall plaster were recovered together with fragments of window glass, suggesting that the porticus was fully enclosed. It was entered from an open court to the south of the house through an imposing monumental entrance. The remains of the doorway were marked by a large threshold constructed from two rectangular limestone blocks flanked by a pair of square limestone blocks. These still displayed the faint outline of column bases, each 0.75 m in diameter. The actual threshold is 3 m wide and would have housed a pair of timber doors. Immediately adjacent to the threshold large iron studs were found, which may have been part of the door furniture. The threshold also displayed a considerable amount of wear on the eastern side, indicating that this door was the usual means of access, the pair probably only being used on special occasions.

North of the porticus, excavation exposed the full extent of the main room of the house. This is a bipartite chamber, designed as a single entity but featuring two linked components. The northernmost part of the room was first uncovered in 2002 and contained the well-preserved mosaic and a semi-hexagonal apse. The room was entered from the porticus through a wide doorway of identical dimensions to the main entrance to the house. From this doorway the onlooker’s view would be drawn to the apse at the rear of the room with the mosaic depiction of dolphins and cantharos. The total ground area of the room is in the order of 50 sq m.

Excavation of the room encountered a similar sequence to that recorded in 2002. Immediately below the turf, the thin remnant of a post-medieval ploughsoil was exposed. This covered a spread of limestone rubble and Pennant sandstone roof tiles representing the final ruin and collapse of the Roman building. The rubble was carefully recorded and then removed to reveal a complex sequence of further rubble, occupation debris and spreads of painted plaster which had fallen from the walls of the room. Study of the rubble spread revealed a circular concentration in the centre of the room. Further careful excavation defined a circular kerb of stone blocks, 5 m in diameter, set within the walls of the room (see cover picture). Collapsed wall plaster abutted the outer face of the kerb but did not extend inside the circular structure. The stratigraphic relationship of this feature to the Roman house strongly suggests a post-Roman date, but at a time when the Roman building was still standing and roofed. This is most likely to be within the fifth, or even sixth century. The circular structure had been placed directly onto the mosaic floor and consisted of carefully laid, unmortared, re-used Roman dressed blocks. The spread of collapsed rubble in the centre suggests that the kerb supported a low wall, probably little more than 1 m high. Within the structure, a large part of the mosaic had been deliberately cut away to a depth of approximately 0.2 m. In the south-eastern arc, a rubble-filled pit was probably a drain or soakaway.

Such a post-Roman structure placed within the villa is a remarkable and important discovery. Such features rarely survive post-Roman ploughing and, given the relatively ephemeral nature of the

Fig. 4. Detail of the mosaic in the semi-hexagonal apse, showing a cantharus flanked by dolphins. Photo: © Bryn Walters.

Fig. 5. The hypocaust room in Building 2. Photo: © Bryn Walters.
construction, would not have been recognised on earlier, antiquarian excavations of other villa sites.

The position of this structure, set in the centre of the principal room, is undoubtedly deliberate and it can be demonstrated to have been constructed while the house was still standing. It is clearly intended to surround a centrally-placed feature set into and cut through the fourth-century mosaic. The most likely interpretation is that it was an early Christian baptistry. In form and dimensions, it is similar to other examples of fifth- and sixth-century date known in France and Italy. Within the circular enclosure, a font made either of stone, lead or even wood, would have been set into the floor and would have been of a size to allow initiates to stand knee-deep in water whilst the officiating priest poured water over their heads. Baptismal fonts of brick, stone and lead are known from later Roman Britain. The lead examples are decorated with various motifs, including the Chi-Rho monogram, a symbol in early Christianity. No trace of the font survived in Building 1. It may have been of lead and subsequently removed when the building went out of use.

Although a number of late Roman and early post-Roman probable churches are known from sites such as Silchester, Colchester, Lincoln and Richborough, the Bradford example is the first from a villa. At Lullingstone in Kent, a ‘chapel’ adorned with wall paintings featuring Christian iconography has been proposed but no baptistery recognised. Early baptistries are usually located apart from, but in close proximity to, a church. In fifth-century Gaul (modern France), we have letters surviving from Christian clerics and laity describing baptistries within the homes of wealthy landowners. Here, the pattern suggests that many of the land-owning classes, to maintain their position and status following the collapse of central Roman authority, turned to the Church to legitimise their position. These families would mainly have converted to Christianity in the fourth century, and in fifth-century Gaul a number of leading men became bishops. Many continued to live on their country estates and turn part of the villa into a church to serve the rural community, who were dependent upon the villa and the landowning family. We do not have any historical evidence for such situations in Britain, although St. Patrick, a Romano-Briton, records that his father was both a villa owner and deacon in the Romano-British Church.

It is possible that at Bradford-on-Avon we have, for the first time, archaeological evidence for the conversion of a villa into a Christian centre in fifth-century Britain. As such, the results of the excavation have made the site one of the most important and exciting discoveries in recent years. It is of international significance. It may also give an insight into, and rationale for, the foundation of an important Anglo-Saxon ecclesiastical centre at Bradford-on-Avon by St. Aldhelm in 705.

Future Work
Investigations are scheduled to continue in 2004. In addition to further work on the villa complex, greater emphasis will be placed on other sites in the adjacent landscape.

Footnote:
Bryn Walters has added this comment on part of the mosaic – see Fig. 6 above.

Although damaged by the construction of the possible baptistery, sufficient detail on the mosaic indicates that a very rare cushion pattern graced the four cardinal points of the floor of the central room south of the apsidal chamber.

This pattern is very common in North Africa and occurs in the provinces around the northern Mediterranean, but is unusual in Britain. A crude version encompasses Bellerophon in the centre of the
NEW VILLA DISCOVERIES IN SOUTH GLOUCESTERSHIRE

by Bryn Walters

The following article has been prepared from original information supplied by Richard Osgood, with some additional comments by the author after visiting the Gloucestershire sites with ARA Trustee, Michael Stone.

Over the past few years there has been a spate of newly discovered Roman villas in the West Country. The large mosaic decorating a central hall at Lopen in Somerset received considerable media coverage, as did the triple winged villa at Diddington, which became a Time Team programme on television’s Channel 4. Yet another more recent villa curio was aired by the Time Team from Whistianaunton in Somerset on January 11th, 2004.

More discreetly, three very interesting villas have been identified in South Gloucestershire by a local team of field walkers supervised by Richard Osgood and David Evans, South Gloucestershire Archaeological Officers. Their results have been very rewarding and small-scale evaluation trenching has been undertaken to verify the geophysical surveys and assess the condition of the sites.

The first to be investigated lies near Horton, and consists of a complex series of buildings forming a rectangular enclosure. The buildings, which are well constructed in Lias limestone with Pennant

Fig. 1. Foundation of ancillary building at Horton. Photo: © Richard Osgood.

sandstone roofing, appear at present to date principally from the third and fourth centuries (Fig. 1). Excavation has concentrated on what appears to be one of the ancillary buildings of the villa, where agricultural activity seems to have taken place. Charred grains of spelt wheat in the soil intimate that a malting furnace probably lies nearby. A drainage

Fig. 2. Geophysical plot of villa compound at Hawkesbury. Plot: © A. J. Jackson, M. H. and J. Martin – Sagascan.

ump had also been cut immediately outside the building and contained a large deposit of discarded pottery. Further investigative work is planned for the future.

At Hawkesbury, geophysical survey has indicated a large rectangular enclosure, possibly walled, with one major building in its south corner and a probable gateway north-east of it, at the centre of the south side of the main enclosure (Fig. 2). Excavations at the corner of the south building implied an industrial function until the remains of a rather fine mosaic were revealed (Fig. 3 and Fig. 7). The mosaic has been badly damaged by the later industrial activity in the room, with furnaces and ovens cutting through it.

Obviously the building was originally residential and it appears to have had projecting corner rooms. However, its axial alignment is unusual for a villa house, facing to the north-east. The gateway has a south-east axis, which suggests that the principal residential building may yet be identified further back in the north-west area of the enclosure, just beyond the area of the geophysical survey.

In the seventeenth century, the antiquary John Aubrey reported the

Fig. 3. Mosaic in south building at Hawkesbury. Photo: © Richard Osgood.

Fig. 4. Apsidal mosaic at Badminton. Note surviving party wall and mosaic corridor to the right. Photo: © Richard Osgood.
presence of a Roman mosaic at Badminton, the seat of the Duke of Beaufort. The survey team carrying out the work at Horton and Hawkesbury have also identified the site of a grand villa in a ploughed field not very far from Badminton House itself. A small trial trench immediately located a mosaic floor which was subsequently fully uncovered (Fig. 4). The primary results from the geophysical survey indicate that the principal domus is some 65 m in length and faces south-east (Fig. 5). The mosaic lies in an apsidal-ended room attached to the extreme north-east end of the house, and on stylistic grounds, appears to have been laid at a late date in the fourth century. Details of the mosaic design, though familiar from other

Cotswold examples, are composed in a rather unusual manner, leading Dr. David Neal to propose a date of AD 360–80, suggesting that it may be a late derivative from the Corinium workshops. Excavation of the mosaic room suggests that it had been engulfed by fire. Areas of the floor are discoloured by intense heat, and fragments of charred timbers and fallen roof slabs were discovered across the floor. Fallen blocks of limestone, of voussoir form, indicate that an arch originally separated the end apse from the rest of the room. Adjacent to the mosaic, a cross trench located a corridor with a blue-and-white striped mosaic in perfect condition (Fig. 6), with the party wall between still retaining painted plaster on its surface.

Further geophysical surveying has now confirmed that the villa lies in a slightly trapezoidal enclosure, with two other large buildings forming either side of the main courtyard in front of the villa house, which itself seems to be of a rather unusual plan, no doubt owing to different periods of construction and additions to the original building.


M. Henig and T. A. Heslop, ‘The Great Cameo of St. Albans’, JBA 139 (1986), pp. 148–53 discusses the wonderful lost ‘State cameo’ which just might have come from Verulamium but was more probably brought to St. Albans from Southern Europe in the Middle Ages.

THE ROMAN VILLA AT BRADFORD-ON-AVON continued from page 13.

mosaic at Lullingstone; another exists on the cantharus and dolphin mosaic found in the villa at Brislington, Bristol (now in store at Bristol Museum). A much finer, and closer parallel, was found by B. W. at Manningford Bruce, also in Wiltshire, 20 miles east of Bradford-on-Avon. This floor was recorded by Luigi Thompson and was published in ARA 11, 2001, pages 10–11.
The year’s events started with a tour of Roman Paris (Lutetia Parisiorum) from 21st to 24th March. It was led by Michael Stone, assisted by Bryn Walters and very much enjoyed by the members taking part.

The sites and museums visited included: the amphitheatre and forum area, the Roman remains in the undercroft of the Cathedral of Notre-Dame de Paris, the Musée de Cluny and the Cluny Baths, the Musée national du Louvre and the Musée des Antiquités Nationales, St- Germain-en-Laye. The last of these proved for many to be the highlight of the tour (Fig. 1).

The Annual Dinner and Lecture Weekend took place on 24th and 25th May at Lincoln (Lindum Colonia / Colonia Lindensium) continuing the tradition of holding this event at a major Roman centre. Many members stayed at Edward King House (the bishop’s palace in the episcopate of Bishop King, in the lee of the Cathedral and next to the medieval Old Palace), where the dinner and lecture took place (Fig. 2). The guest lecturer was Margaret Darling, who gave an illustrated account and interpretation of the Roman fort at Caister-on-Sea, Norfolk. The following day, Michael Jones, the Lincoln City Archaeologist, led a tour of the Roman colonia. This included the line of the walls of the legionary fortress and upper town, the East Gate, the site of the water tank near the north wall, the North Gate (Newport Arch) and the West Gate beneath the west gate of the medieval castle bailey. Inside the town, the well-preserved north wall of the basilica (Mint Wall) and layout of the forum were examined, the latter overlain by the foundations of the early church of St. Paul-in-the-Bail, reminding us that Lincoln sent a bishop to the Council of Arles in 314. In the lower town, members visited the southerly West Gate at The Park behind the council offices at Beaumont Fee. Here the excavated and consolidated plinths of the outer towers (originally containing re-used ornamental masonry) are displayed, but appeared in need of further conservation.

Better-preserved and now viewable below modern street level were the Postern Gate and south wall of the lower town near Saltersgate.

The Lincoln weekend coincided with a major scheme by the county and city councils to develop a new City and County Museum at Flaxengate at an estimated cost of £11 m, to house, among other facilities, over two million archaeological artefacts. The site was visited, together with the temporary display at the Lincoln Archaeology Centre. The high point of the tour for many was the guided visit to the Museum Stores, arranged by Thomas Cadbury and Antony Lee. Members were given an exclusive view of an important collection of inscribed stones, mosaics and more portable artefacts, currently not on display to the public, guided by Antony Lee. After this tour, some members visited the site of the large Roman villa at Southwell Minster (Nottinghamshire), 16 miles southwest of Lincoln, where a redevelopment project has highlighted the vulnerability of the archaeological remains.

The Summer Tour was planned as the first of three annual detailed studies of Hadrian’s Wall, from east to west. The Tour of the Eastern Sector took place from 4th to 7th July and members were based at the Holiday Inn, Seaton Burn, just north of Newcastle upon Tyne. The tour was led by Bryn Walters, Dr. Nicholas Hodgson and Grahame Soffe. After-dinner lectures were given by Nicholas Hodgson on recent aspects of the archaeology of the Wall (with a long discussion of cippus) and by Grahame Soffe on the Roman brick and tile industry. Nicholas Hodgson started the tour with a survey of the
Roman fort and supply base at South Shields (Arbeia) where he is now the director of a long-term programme of re-exavagation, consolidation and full-scale reconstruction of the archaeological remains. The survey took in the granaries, one of which was re-used as a shelter for two large brick and tile kilns, and the current excavations of collapsed masonry and other features at the fourth-century commandant’s house (Fig. 3). The reconstruction of two wings of this building is nearing completion and includes the classical triclinium and central garden court (Figs. 4 and 5). Alongside this a reconstruction of a third-century barrack block has been completed. The well-known and impressive reconstructed gateway and the site museum were also studied and members were particularly interested in the display of a well-preserved and conserved iron mail tunic. Nicholas Hodgson then took members to the second major Roman site in the area, the fort at Wallsend (Segedunum), at the east ern end of the Wall, where another massive project to display the site to the public is reaching completion. Here the complete plan of the fort is visible from a 34 m-high viewing tower, part of the new museum, visitor centre and café converted from a large Swan Hunter shipyard building. As Paul Bidwell came a stop at Heddon-on-the-Wall; then along the 1745 military road past the fort at Rudchester (Vindovala) and through Halton Chesters fort (Onnum), members crossed Dere Street at Portgate on the way to the stretch of Wall at Planetrees. The next main stop was the well-preserved remains of Brunton Turret (26b) with its Broad Wall wing wall joining the Narrow Wall curtain. After lunch members concentrated on a tour of the fort, bath-house and John Clayton’s magnificent museum at Chesters (Cilurnum), led by Bryn Walters. The Roman bridge across the North Tyne River at Chesters will be visited on the next Wall tour.

The third day concentrated on Newcastle upon Tyne, where recent excavations in the area of the medieval castle have begun to reveal the plan of the Roman fort (Pons Aelius). Nicholas Hodgson took members to the top of the twelfth-century Keep of the Castle to view the site of the fort, partially marked out below, with fine views across the city and the River Tyne to the site of the Roman settlement at the southern bridgehead in Gateshead. The Keep was opened to members by members of the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle upon Tyne. Afterwards members visited the magnificent collections of Wall antiquities held by the Museum of Antiquities at Newcastle University. The Curator, Lindsay Allason-Jones, gave a short welcoming talk (Fig. 7).

On 3rd August, a very hot day, members visited the site of the great Roman villa house at Keynesham, Somerset, lying under a Victorian cemetery and the present Bristol-to-
Bath road (see the earlier article ‘Keynsham’s Roman art treasures go on display’ by Anthony Beeson in ARA 11, 16-17 (2001)). Anthony Beeson gave an account of the excavations of 1922-4 and the magnificent fourth-century mosaic floors found in many of the rooms. Two small fragments were visible, a range of steps in the north corridor and an area of tessellated floor in a cemetery chapel (Fig. 8). Nearby, the displayed remains of a much smaller Roman house were seen and explained to members by Charles Browne. This had been found in 1922 during work on the site of the Somerdale chocolate factories of J. S. Fry and Sons, and moved to a site 400 m away. Two stone coffins and an inscribed statue base to Silvanus, dated to 155, were also found here and, on the day of the visit, Anthony Beeson found a further sculpture, part of a statue niche. Members are grateful to the Keynsham Heritage Trust for providing refreshments and a temporary exhibition of small finds and photographs of the villa mosaics which now remain in storage. After this, members made their way to Bradford-on-Avon, Wiltshire, to see excavations in progress on the Budbury Roman villa complex. Mark Corney, the project director gave a guided lecture on the site and the ARA Board presented him with a grant towards the work (see ARA 15, 21, and the article in this issue).

Following the success of our summer tour of Roman Dorset in 1997 (see ARA 4, 14-15), it was decided to repeat the event this year from 5th to 8th September. The tour was based at the Carrington House Hotel, Bournemouth, and led by Bryn Walters and Grahame Soffe. The after-dinner lectures were given by Bryn Walters on the tour programme and by Grahame Soffe on air photography and excavations at Maiden Castle (Fig. 9) in the 1930s and 1980s. A highlight was our guest lecturer Lilian Ladle’s illustrated review of her current excavations of the extensive Romano-British potteries (black-burnished ware) at Bestwall Quarry, near Wareham (Fig. 10). The Bestwall Quarry Archaeology Project, directed by Lilian Ladle, has made major advances in our knowledge of the sources and manufacture of this type of pottery, abundant throughout Britain from the second to fourth century.

Maiden Castle the great hillfort (Fig. 9), and Dorchester the Roman civitas capital (Durnovaria), took up the first day. The tour included the Romano-Celtic temple inside the hillfort, Maumbury Rings the Roman amphitheatre and the Dorset County Museum. Members were disappointed to see how the controversial cover-building at the Colliton Park Roman town-house, in
remaining closed, had failed to preserve and display the walls and mosaics to an acceptable standard. The day ended with a visit to the Cerne Abbas Giant (chalk hill figure). Bryn Walters discussed recent research on its origins. Hod Hill’s Iron Age hillfort and Claudian invasion fort was again the focus for the second day. John Smith gave a demonstration of Roman military equipment (Fig. 11) and a discussion of the artillery bombardment of the hillfort. This was followed by a visit to the Iron Age hillfort and Roman road junction at Badbury Rings (Vindoladla) and the Roman collections at the Priest House Museum, Wimborne Minster, especially to see the fine figurative wall paintings from the Tarrant Hinton villa. At the reconstruction of a Romano-British Farmstead at Upton Heritage Park, Poole, Keith Jarvis (Poole Archaeological Officer) gave a talk on the Roman economy of the area, which was followed by a drive around Poole Harbour. The tour ended with a half-day visit to the Rockbourne Roman villa, near Fordingbridge, just over the county boundary in Hampshire.

Nearly 150 members attended the AGM in the Stevenson Lecture Theatre, Clore Education Centre, at the British Museum, London on 15th November. The Chairman gave an illustrated presentation of the year’s events and thanked Board members and also David Gollins (ARA Editor), Sue Jones (Membership List Secretary), Dr. Martin Henig (Research Adviser) and Peter Williams (Web Assistant). David Ridgus (Secretary), Bryn Walters (Director) and Don Flear (Treasurer) gave their reports and Grahame Soffe, Don Flear and Bryn Walters were re-elected to the Board. It was announced that Bryn Walters would no longer receive an honorarium for his administrative duties but would return as a Trustee. Also, David Ridgus stood down as Secretary but would remain a Trustee. After lunch the Symposium was devoted to two lectures, by Dr. Paul Roberts (Curator in the Department of Greek and Roman Antiquities, British Museum) and Oliver Gilkes (Department of World Archaeology, University of East Anglia) (Fig. 12). Paul Roberts gave a vivid account of his excavation of the small town of Forum Novum, just north of Rome. Oliver Gilkes illustrated the long-term project at Butrint (Buthrotum), Albania ‘In the Footsteps of Aeneas’ with archive movie film of excavation in the 1920s, moving digital imagery of a reconstruction of the Triconch Palace, as well as slides. The Board is grateful to its member Sam Moorhead and his colleagues at the museum for helping again to make the AGM such a success.

1 Lines of defence made up of trenches or staggered rows of holes holding sharpened stakes, on the berm on the north side of Hadrian’s Wall and found at Wallsend. A soldiers’ term used in Caesar de Bello Gallico VII, 73.
The book begins with an account of the rather sparse antiquarian and archaeological tradition inherited by contemporary researchers in the area and with a summary of the physical and man-made landscape. The third chapter comprises a summary of the prehistory of the region, an account which is necessarily brief, but which includes the most recent research and discoveries. Our impression of prehistoric activity, and especially of evidence from dated settlement sites, is seen to be very incomplete: nevertheless, the author succeeds in underlining the fact that Cumbria and the Solway region should not be seen as in any way peripheral to the mainstream of British prehistory: there are local peculiarities, as there are anywhere, and a shortage both of excavated sites and of datable material, but what we do have shows that the Roman military occupation was of an area already well-populated and with cultural, economic and social roots reaching as far back as they did anywhere in Britain. It may seem almost otiose to emphasise this point, but the tradition, especially among Romano-British specialists, of regarding parts of the north as in some way backward is a long one, and McCarthy does much to correct this misapprehension.

A brief account of the Roman frontier in the north is useful, and sets the scene for the establishment at Carlisle of the civitas capital of the Carvetti (Carlisle is one place in the north-west to which we may be fairly confident in ascribing a Roman name, Luguvalium). The summary of the development of the frontier, however, lacks any real discussion of the interesting and in some ways problematical coastal defences of the Solway. The relationship between the Brigantes and the Carvetti is considered in some detail: the emergence of the latter as a distinct civitas cannot with certainty be seen before the third century, but the suggestion that it represents an earlier, pre-conquest societal unit is perfectly persuasive. Interesting in this context is the location in Carlisle at the beginning of the second century of a centurio regionaris (centurion of the region). The careers of other known centuriones regionarii, such as of that Olennius who was appointed to supervise the Frisii, suggest that they were despatched to areas of unrest where direct military supervision was seen as desirable: a possible sequence of events might have seen a Roman attempt to include all the lands ruled by the house of Cartimandua within the civitas of the Brigantes, and that arrangement proving so unsuccessful that an eventual arrangement reverted to a previous tribal disposition and the recognition of the Carvetti as a separate entity.

The central chapters of the book describe Roman Carlisle, seen within the populated landscape of farms and ranches, as cantonal capital and as military base (and its importance in the latter role was considerable: it was certainly, with the complex of sites near Corbridge, one of the two great hubs of this great frontier). The reader is almost overwhelmed by the sheer quality of the archaeological remains excavated in Carlisle over the past few decades: the conditions of preservation are an excavator’s dream, and the high standards of excavation are admirably and modestly illustrated by the well-chosen photographs. Here McCarthy is at his best, intimately familiar with all of the evidence and well-equipped to offer a fairly comprehensive account of what is known and what remains to be resolved (the question of whether or not the Roman town was walled is one question which remains unanswered). This section would have been greatly enhanced by the inclusion of a general plan of Carlisle, showing the basic Roman layout and the location of some of the excavated sites referred to in the text. A particular strength of the book as a whole is the author’s success in relating the Roman urban and military activity to the largely rural life of Carlisle’s hinterland. This reviewer remembers with much pleasure McCarthy’s stimulating lecture to the Society of Antiquaries, a few years ago, most of which he devoted to exploring the dynamics of that relationship: much of what he said is now perpetuated in this book.

He ends with an examination of the end of Roman Carlisle, and the emergence of the Dark Age kingdom of Rheged. The historical context of this (such as it is) is familiar and is quickly dealt with. The archaeological evidence, as might be expected, is fragmentary and somewhat ambiguous, but there is a convincing argument for the survival and use of major Roman buildings well into the fifth century, and evidence of sub-Roman activity at the adjacent fort of Stanwix can be put beside similar evidence from Birdoswald. Urian of Rheged is seen as eventually possessing the by now historic central place of Carlisle, and the early post-Roman Christian church, so active in the far north-west, as providing the link between the antique and the mediaeval past.

The book is well-produced and literately if informally written: the fact that the lack of the foot-notes and references associated with more academic publication is an occasional irritant should be taken as a tribute to the stimulating nature of what is written. There are very few typographic or other errors (though on page 54 the Ala Petriana becomes the Province’s only ‘military’ cavalry unit). Roman Carlisle and the Lands of the Solway is essential reading for anyone interested in Roman Britain, and in the relationships between native Britons and the Roman administration.