Imbriogon, Turkey – the Corinthian temple tomb from the south.

Photo: Anthony Beeson.
Welcome to the second issue of ARA where we have an interesting cross section of material and reports. You will also see that this edition is enlarged to 16 pages and is in full colour throughout. This has been possible due to the large influx of new members over the past six months, so we feel justified in producing this extended issue. We may only be able to produce one full colour edition a year at present, with the second ARA being a two colour version. However, we must see how things develop.

In this issue we have the opening of the new Roman Gallery at Devizes Museum; Anthony Beeson reports on the little known, but spectacular, tombs at Imbriogon in Turkey. Following his excellent report on the Hinterland Project at Wroxeter at the AGM, Dr. Roger White has sent us a précis of the new villa discovered last year at Whitley Grange, and our Chairman reports on the Annual General Meeting at Oxford.

In response to the Director's candid opinion on a Roman invasion of Ireland in ARA 1, we have received from Tom Condit in Dublin an excellent in-depth appraisal for extensive Roman links with the Emerald Isle. John Manley and David Rudkin report on the significant discoveries which are being made at Fishbourne, whilst Association member Mike Astill communicates personal observations on the possible cause of destructive fires in Roman villas.

A new fort and villa site is located in Norfolk, and the Director brings us up-to-date with DART and the villa being excavated near Swindon. We have a detailed description of the amazingly preserved board game found in a grave near Colchester and finally the Chairman assesses the highly successful summer excursion along the Antonine Wall.

Our membership drive has proved quite successful and is still progressing. Nevertheless, we would like to double the present membership during the next two years, which would then enable us to produce more colour Bulletins—but we need your help. There are two ways to achieve this: by visiting local tourist information centres and other suitable venues in your home area to distribute enrolment leaflets for the public—several members have already started helping in this way—so if you feel you can also offer such assistance please contact the Director, who can advise and supply the appropriate literature. The other alternative is to recommend to friends, family, or colleagues at work, the positive benefits of belonging to the ARA and encourage them to join. By far the best form of advertising is personal recommendation.

At a recent meeting of the Board it was suggested that one of the Trustees become the Association's Press Officer. This post has now been taken on by John Hyams. John will be responsible for informing the press, both local and national, of Association events in order to help promote information about the Association and its benefits to a wider public.

Please remember that this is your Bulletin. The editor is very happy to hear from you—we want to maintain a 'Letters' column in each issue of ARA—so if you have a comment or a controversial thought to expound, then please put pen to paper and send it in!

David Gollins
Editor.
THE NEW ROMAN GALLERY OPENS AT DEVIZES

On 16 August the much awaited refurbished Roman gallery at Devizes was formally opened by Sir Derek Jacobi who so memorably portrayed the Emperor Claudius in the brilliant and popular television production of Robert Graves' novels on that emperor. The gallery is designed to show aspects of life in Wiltshire through the four centuries of Roman occupation, which began with the Claudian invasion of AD 43. Included among the many newly acquired objects is the superb Hattatt Roman Brooch Collection, which was bequeathed to the Museum by Richard Hattatt, along with votive offerings from a temple at Winterbourne Monkton near Avebury. Fittings from Roman military equipment have enabled the museum to mount a display on the Roman army in Wiltshire. Other objects from the museum's collection include pewter platters from Manton Down near Marlborough, a silver spoon from Burderop near Swindon and a reconstructed bronze hanging bowl from Westbury.

The displays are mounted thematically and include: the Roman army, gods, goddesses and worship, games and pastimes, literacy and writing, industry, including the production of pottery, which was plentiful in Roman Wiltshire. A feature is made of the Littlecote Roman villa, one of the most significant and best known Roman sites in the county. A series of graphic panels provides information on villas, farms and towns, including the most up-to-date insight on the town of Cunetio.

Some ARA members who stayed over after the Annual General Meeting at Oxford on September 7 were given a private view of the gallery by the curator Dr. Paul Robinson on the following day. Many ARA members will probably recall that a substantial grant of £4,000 was made by The Roman Research Trust to equip the gallery from funds raised by the former Friends of the RRT.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Congratulations on your excellent first issue of ARA. I was especially intrigued by Anthony Beeson's article on the 1827 mosaic found at Wroxeter and would like to point out that a full archaeological consideration of this important pavement, with a gazetteer of Wroxeter mosaic compiled by Steve Cosh, will be appearing in due course in a special Wroxeter monograph volume of the Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological and Historical Society.

Yours sincerely,
Roger White

THE MOST NORTHERLY AMPHITHEATRE IN THE ROMAN EMPIRE LOCATED

In August, Dr. Simon Clarke and the Bradford University Archaeological Studies Department announced that the Leaderfoot Brae Hollow at Newsstead was the site of a Roman amphitheatre of the first and second centuries AD. This discovery marks the latest finding of the Bradford Studies group which has been working at the Trimontium site, originally under Dr. Richard Jones, since 1987 (see RR News 6 1993, pp 4-5). Their report on the site is expected some time next year.

The amphitheatre is the first to be discovered in Scotland and, so far, is the most northerly in the Roman Empire. It is not surprising that a fort and complex as vast as Trimontium should have had an arena for weapon training, displays and gatherings of the troops for salutation ceremonies to the Emperor. The amphitheatre lies near the north-east corner of Newsstead Fort, is aligned NNW-SSE, and is ovoid in form. The central arena is 40 metres across and is surrounded by a cobbled bank forming the spectators' area.

Information from The Trimontium Trust.

THE FIRST PUBLIC SHOWING OF A FAMOUS MOSAIC FOR 150 YEARS

Panels from the famous Romano-British Orpheus mosaic discovered at Newton St. Loes, four kilometres west of Bath in 1837, during the construction of the Great Western Railway, have been put on display in Bristol City Museum for the first time in one hundred and fifty years, in a small exhibition entitled 'Orpheus Rising'.

Anthony Beeson's full story will be published in a forthcoming issue of The Bulletin.

PUBLICATION NEWS

Anthony Beeson's paper, which he delivered at last year's Annual General Meeting at the St. Cross Lecture Theatre in Oxford, entitled 'Pegasus the Wonder Horse' and his portrayal on Romano-British mosaics is to be published in Mosaic: Vol. 23 for 1996. (Mosaic is the annual journal of The Association for the Study and Preservation of Roman Mosaics).
Southern Turkey is famous for the great number of ancient mausolea that can still be found scattered throughout its countryside, dating from all periods and ranging from the rock cut façade to the fully ashlar-constructed temple tombs. Few, however, are so exciting or make such an impression on the western traveller as those at the little-known site of the ancient city of Imbriogon in Cilicia. Situated about ten kilometres from the town and port of Silifke (ancient Seleucia) on a plateau surrounded by pine trees, the scattered remains of the ancient site now surround the small village of Demircili. The road from Silifke to Uzuncaburc (ancient Diocesarea) winds upwards through the scattered and meagre ruins of the second and third century AD city. However it is the abodes of the dead that are the glory of Imbriogon. Six great mausolea are grouped either side of the road, and are remarkable both for their grandeur and their state of preservation.

**THE LOWER TEMPLE TOMB**

This is the first encountered to the right of the road as it turns sharply to the left. It is an almost square ashlar building some 6.25 metres high, the corners clasped by Corinthian angle pilasters. The two columns that once held the fallen architrave block in position (bearing the name ‘Papylos’) now lie in pieces in front of the façade, which still retains its pediment bearing a shield, perhaps once ornamented with a Gorgon head. The rear pediment retains its shield also but here it is merely ornamented with a boss. Level platforms above the corner angles of the pediments strongly suggest that both were formerly ornamented with acroteria. No trace remains in situ of the apex stones but these are likely to have supported such decoration as well.

Only the two-storeyed building at the Double Temple tomb may have the remains of such features surviving. Inside the cella wall, as in all the tombs, pilasters support an arch on which rest the great slabs of the roof. These are carved on their outside in imitation of roof tiles and give a marvellous idea of how a temple roof must have appeared. Rain water drained into the sima which is ornamented with lion head spouts. Inside the tomb, a console on the back wall probably once held a bust of the deceased above the now-missing sarcophagus.

**THE DOUBLE TEMPLE TOMB**

Higher up the hill to the left of the road are the two spectacular mausolea known as the Double Temple Tomb. The more important is a two-storeyed structure some 7.5 metres high. Its lower chamber is rock-carved and entered by a side door. Four Ionic columns support the balcony of the second storey with its taller and fluted Corinthian columns. A pediment crowns the entablature carved with two busts. Through an archway on the first floor one reaches the burial chamber. The singular interest of this tomb is that it is the only one to retain its sarcophagi, three of which line the walls of the chamber. Tomb robbers and earthquakes have left a scene of disorder. The sarcophagus to the right has lost its lid completely, whilst that of the opposite one, ornamented with the curved body of a lion, lies between them. Two of the great roofing slabs have fallen in, smashing the corner of this left-hand sarcophagus and wrenching one of the four carved consoles from the walls. Presumably two busts originally ornamented each of the side walls on these consoles. The arch of the rear wall is completely filled with a huge sarcophagus still retaining a battered lid ornamented with two resting lions and lunar crescents, a popular local symbol. The front of this sarcophagus is carved with a male head flanked by draped female heads and small reclining full length figures. Corinthian corner pilasters decorate the outside of the cella and the frieze and cornice are richly carved with leaves. Remains of a rock-cut wine press in what must have been the tomb’s garden hints here, as
elsewhere on the site, at ceremonial feasting in honour of the dead.

The companion tomb stands close by, and like the other structures, faces south. This single-storeyed and lavishly ornamented building retains much of the grandeur of a small Corinthian temple, notwithstanding the ruination of its tetrastyle portico and loss of part of the roof. Pilasters form antae which frame a richly carved doorway to the cella. The latter is now devoid of all furnishings apart from a long console on the back wall. The ornament of the frieze and cornice matches its neighbour's for richness.

THE UPPER TEMPLE TOMB
This mausoleum lies some 200 metres north of the double tomb, and to the right of the roadway. Thought to be the earliest of the structures, it is again two storeyed, with an Ionic colonnade surmounted by a Corinthian. Both the outer columns of the lower portico and the chamber itself are carved from solid rock. The burial chamber of the upper floor is empty and devoid of decoration, as indeed is the rest of the architecture, with the corner pilasters here being capped only by a simple moulding. Most of the pediment has fallen and remnants lie about.

THE THREE-STOREYED TOMB
This structure lies some 200 metres south of the Double Temple Tomb and is clearly visible west of the road from Silifke. Unlike the other tombs of Imbriogon, this is in a spectacular state of disrepair. Its most prominent feature is the gap-toothed state of its great ashlar blocks, which were shaken apart by an earthquake, for the tremor that dislodged the roof blocks of the Double Temple Tomb here wrought great devastation. The pyramid roof and the north and east sides collapsed completely or remain bowed outward. Its height in ruin is about seven metres, whilst the sides of its square base are some five metres in length. Set like the other tombs on rising ground, it looks even more impressive when seen from below. The lower chamber occupying the podium is paved with stone blocks and windowless. Access was gained to this underground room via a doorway at ground level on the southern side. Above a simple moulding capping the podium rises the burial chamber. Shallow corner pilasters topped with Corinthian capitals ornament each outer corner of this great room. Its doorway retains the shattered lintel block, tilted and jammed at a terrifying angle and yet somehow supporting the weight of the superstructure above. The body of the chamber is filled with those remains of the pyramid roof that did not fall outside the building. This roof rose above a dentilated cornice resting on the plain frieze and architrave above the Corinthian capitals of the main chamber.

THE MAUSOLEUM TOMB
Some fifteen minutes walk to the east of the village, by a path which leaves the road near the village spring, stands the Mausoleum Tomb, a square structure some 8.40 metres in height. It still retains its pyramid roof with a base for a lost statue of its occupant. Designed as a single chamber, the room contains two balconies, on its north and south walls, each supported by an arch, whilst the roof rested on another arch which sprang from the middle of each balcony. The chamber is empty but the tomb is quite well preserved apart from the southern face of the pyramid and the lower south-west corner of the structure.

The tombs of Imbriogon, with their double storeys and embellishments allow us to appreciate the grandeur to which the buildings of an unimportant city could aspire. With their 'tiled' roofs mostly intact they are an excellent illustration of how the buildings of the period must have appeared, and for present day Romano-Britons, used to ground plan sites and dislocated architectural components, a tantalising, if distant, vision of what might have been seen in Britannia itself.
WHITLEY GRANGE VILLA

by Dr. Roger White – University of Birmingham

Shropshire is not a county noted for large or impressive villa establishments, despite boasting the fourth largest Roman town in Britain at Wroxeter. This anomaly has for a long time puzzled archaeologists; Sir Ian Richmond speculated in the 1950s that this was because the ruling classes of the local tribe, the Cornovii, felt threatened by the native population and opted to live within the relative security of the walled town. Nearly forty years of discovery in Wroxeter’s hinterland has not really altered this impression. The only major villa excavation in the intervening years was at Yarclester, at the foot of Wenlock Edge, which was excavated in the late 1950s by a schoolmaster and his pupils. Although never fully uncovered or published, one of its rooms included a very fine Corinium Saltire mosaic which hinted at the splendidly which might lurk beneath the Shropshire soil.

In 1994, a Leverhulme Research Trust-funded project was started by the University of Birmingham to try to discover more about Wroxeter’s hinterland. It was designed specifically to address such issues as the apparent lack of villas in the hinterland and accordingly we began to look afresh at possible villa sites. Two sites were known in the Rea Valley, which lies west of Shrewsbury, but both sites (at Lea Cross and Cruckton) were known to have been badly damaged by earlier excavation and later buildings. A third site, closer to Shrewsbury, lay at Whitley Grange and, being unprotected and uninvestigated, was ideal for the Wroxeter Hinterland Project.

After intensive fieldwalking and geophysical work had pinpointed the site in early 1995, a small scale excavation was carried out as part of the University of Birmingham’s departmental student training programme. This rapidly uncovered the well-preserved hypocaust of a bath-house and two adjoining rooms, one a small plunge pool and the other a roughly-floored but impressively large room, 6m (21ft) square. There were also hints of more rooms, so another season was undertaken this summer to try and recover the full plan of the villa. At this stage, we still believed that the plan was of a simple cottage-style villa with a small baths suite at one end and a row of rooms fronted by small wings and a corridor or veranda between. As we extended the area of excavation further to the west, however, it became apparent that there was only one further room, the base of a large pool, in the series of rooms seen the year before and that the villa then extended at right angles to form a range aligned north-south (see plan). This new range was unusual in that it consisted of only one massively constructed main wall. To the east, a short stretch of stub wall parallel with the main wall hinted at a porticus, while to the west at least two rooms were tacked onto the main wall. One of these, 6m long and 3m wide had a hearth constructed against its west wall. The second room, to the south, was 6m square and was floored with a substantial mosaic.

After consultation with the farmer, the county archeologist and English Heritage, it was decided to fully expose the mosaic since it was clearly of a rare type. Although slightly damaged by the plough, it survived in remarkably good condition despite the loss of nearly all the white limestone tesserae due to acidic soil leaching. Once fully exposed its pattern was clear (see fig.) The design consisted of a framework of two-strand guilloche forming four panels on each side. The corner panels were identical,
consisting of a two-strand guilloche loop within a chequerboard roundel. Single fruit and leaf motifs filled the spandrels of these panels. On the north and south sides, the middle panels consisted of a roundel of heart (or ivy leaf?) motifs and a complex panel consisting of a cantharos with five heart-shaped leaves intertwined with the handles. On the east and west sides the middle panels consisted of four leaf or heart shaped motifs arranged points inwards to form a subsidiary maltese cross pattern and a panel formed of multiple peltae (curved shields) and interlocking circles. In addition to this splendid and imaginative design, the central panel, which was four times the area of the other panels, consisted of concentric rings of different patterns including alternate step-pyramids in red and white, chequerboard, three strand guilloche, and a plain blue band. In the very centre was a roundel containing a Medusa head outlined in blue and blue-green and with blue wavy hair.

Clearly, this is a substantial and important villa, even more so when you consider that we have yet to uncover the residential rooms and ancillary buildings. And yet the material from the villa is unbelievably poor. Only a scatter of sherds have been found over the whole site, only four coins, and only one or two items of personal jewellery. Why this should be so is not at all clear. Were the inhabitants remarkably tidy? Did they spend so much money on the building that they had nothing left to spend on objects? As yet we cannot answer these and other questions. One exciting conclusion that has emerged is that scientific dating tells us that the villa site was occupied into the second half of the fifth century. We hope that one final season at Whitley Grange will answer some of these questions, and perhaps will help us to address the wider problem of the visibility of these sites in the Shropshire countryside. The discovery of Whitley has certainly opened our eyes to the rich potential of Wroxeter’s hinterland.

THE 1996 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AND SYMPOSIUM, OXFORD

by Grahame Sothe

The first AGM of the Association for Roman Archaeology took place at Rewley House, Oxford on Saturday 7th September. We are very grateful to the Oxford University Department for Continuing Education for providing such splendid facilities in the form of the lecture theatre, buffet lunch and other refreshments. After a false start caused by an evacuation of the building due to a fire alarm, the Chairman, Grahame Sothe, welcomed the members in a packed lecture theatre. After stressing that we were turning over a new chapter with the dissolution of the Friends of the Roman Research Trust and the formation of the new Association, he congratulated the Committee of the Friends and the ARA for their hard work, time and tremendous esprit-de-corps in overcoming the problems of transition encountered over the past year. It had been a very difficult year, working towards the development of the ARA without direct access to our own (i.e. the Friends’) funds, which could not be released by our bankers until we had full charitable status. There were also the difficulties in transferring our funds from the Friends’ account to that of the new body.

The Chairman then introduced the Committee officers individually, thanking particularly Beth Bishop, the Secretary for her sterling efforts; John Hyams for his wise counsel and for often providing a central venue for meetings to minimise the great distances members had to travel to serve the Friends and ARA members; Don Flear for his continuing tireless work as Treasurer, David Collings for his Editorship of the Friends’ Newsletter and now this Bulletin, Anthony Beeson for providing refreshing new insights and help in solving innumerable problems; and finally Bryn Walters, the ARA’s first Director and founder, and former Founder/Director of the Roman Research Trust, for his considerable efforts in the initial stages of setting up the new organisation. He also thanked the former Friends, now the new Members, for their loyalty and continued support, particularly in the form of financial donations.
The Secretary presented the minutes of the fifth and last Annual Open Meeting of the Friends of the RRT, held in Oxford in September 1995. She pointed out that although the present Committee officers had been working substantially longer than one year; 1996 was the first full year of operation for the ARA and the Committee felt that in the interests of continuity and stability the stand-down re-election procedure should not be initiated until next year. The minutes and the election procedure were agreed. David Gollins, although no longer serving as a Committee officer would continue as editor of this Bulletin.

Don Flear, the Treasurer, presented a healthy and encouraging set of accounts but pointed out that in order that the Committee could function and implement the necessary expenditure on publication and events, following final consultation with the Charity Commission, we had registered the Memorandum and Articles of Association as a Charitable Company Limited by Guarantee. Our Charity Number is 1056599. The Memorandum and Articles were discussed and the Committee agreed to look into a few minor points which would be finalised at the next AGM. A letter from Hamish Orr-Ewing, the Treasurer of the Roman Research Trust, addressed to the ARA in August was presented. It confirmed the RRT’s ‘donation’ of £4,548.28 from the former Friends’ account to the ARA. This meant that the ARA had in fact paid for the final edition of the RRT’s Newsletter Roman Research News.

After the presentation and discussion of the new Constitution, our new Director, Bryn Walters, gave an encouraging report on our activities so far this year, including the Annual Dinner at Newport, Gwent, and the Tour of the Antonine Wall and Roman Scotland (see page 15). Provisional plans for an exciting series of events during the coming year were also reviewed, together with a summary of the increasing number of Roman site venues now available to ARA members and the steady increase in membership numbers through our advertising campaign. Finally, the Director proposed to the assembly that Dr. Graham Webster OBE be invited to become the Honorary President of the Association. This proposal was unanimously and warmly endorsed.

The afternoon Symposium provided an extremely interesting update on two highly significant research projects in Romano-British urban archaeology. The speakers, Richard Brewer, Acting Keeper of Romano-British Archaeology at the National Museum of Wales, and Roger White, Lecturer in Archaeology at Birmingham University (see photo), gave important illustrated papers on long-term major projects they are personally directing. Now in the final stages of his excavations, Richard Brewer spoke on ‘Recent Research at Caerwent – Venta Siburum, the Cantonal Capital of the Silures’. Roger White’s paper, ‘The Hinterland Project and recent work at Wroxeter – Uriconium Cornoviorum, the Cantonal Capital of the Cornovii’, gave an insight into a variety of modern survey techniques and work on a villa just beyond the urban area. The Chairman thanked the speakers for donating their fees to the ARA and the members showed their warm appreciation.

On the following day, a significant number of members took part in a field excursion to the DART excavations of the Roman villa near Swindon, Wiltshire. This was led by Bryn Walters, who described the significant structural evidence revealed by work on the site since the article in Roman Research News 10. Afterwards members attended a special private view of the new Roman Gallery at Devizes Museum. The Curator, Paul Robinson, welcomed members. This was particularly appropriate since the former Friends of the RRT, who in fact made up most of the members present, had contributed indirectly to the significant RRT grant towards the gallery which also incorporated the Roman villa at Littlecote Park, excavated by Bryn Walters and the RRT, as part of the display.

This article is prompted by Bryn Walter’s recent comment on the Drumanagh ‘Roman Fort’ concept in Issue One of ARA. His statement that the newspaper article is the ‘best piece of traditional journalist Irish blarney for many a year’ is somewhat disingenuous when one bears in mind the cryptic nature of the archaeological record for the period in question. His preference for a more logical explanation may be prejudiced against ‘illogical’ explanations, thus bringing opprobrium to scholars who present less obvious but equally possible hypotheses.

The catalyst for the public interest in ‘Roman Ireland’ has been the recovery of artefacts from Drumanagh promontory fort and the publication of an article in The Sunday Times which goes on to interpret the fort as a Roman military outpost. The artefacts are currently the subject of litigation and cannot be discussed, while the context of the promontory fort as one of over 300 examples in Ireland was not addressed, as Walters has pointed out. We do know, however, that coastal promontory forts in Ireland may have been constructed at any time from the late prehistoric period through to the medieval period, and display wide variations in morphology of ramparts and areas enclosed.

The subsequent controversy over the Drumanagh ‘Roman Fort’ has revived academic interest in the relationship of Ireland to the Roman Empire in the early first millennium. The focus of the argument is a number of different but apparently reconcilable points of view. The strict academic view states quite correctly that archaeological evidence does not support an invasion (with many scholars believing that the Romans would certainly have recorded any such invasion somewhere in the historical record). Richard Warner, the principal proponent of the other side of the argument, suggests that the Romans or Romanised Britons did at least have substantial contact with Ireland.
Some scholars assume that the question of a Roman connection with Ireland concerns a formal invasion, some entertain the idea of informal military expeditions, while others are happier to explain Roman material in Ireland as imports. At once we are confronted with the semantic point as to how to define the nature of the phenomenon in question. Is ‘invasion’ the appropriate word? Perhaps ‘expedition’ would be preferable. Trade could explain most of the Roman material in Ireland. Or should we accept as fact total Roman uninterest in the presence of the island of Ireland on the western fringes of the empire? If we accept the latter, the matter is closed. If we choose to address the former questions we have to tackle the problem intelligently despite all the semantic discomfort which will no doubt arise.

The evidence for Roman material in Ireland is by no means overwhelming. Objects of Roman provenance include coins, jewellery and pottery. Very little of the evidence involves material from specific archaeological contexts. For example, the Stoneyford burial, which had all the characteristics of an authentic Roman burial, was found in the last century; no record of the find was made at the time and its original location is unknown, although some of the objects survive. The burials and finds from Lambay Island, not far from Drumanagh, are currently interpreted as belonging to Brigantians fleeing Roman oppression at home. The east coast counties of Wicklow, Dublin and Meath have been the location of a number of burials considered by Professor Barry Rafferty to be those of ‘provincial Roman intruders’.

Rafferty in his most recent book has used the word ‘enigma’ to characterise the general archaeological background to the later part of the first millennium BC and the early first millennium AD. The scarcity of archaeological evidence could lead more pessimistic scholars to believe that Ireland was virtually uninhabited at that time. Recent dating evidence for linear earthworks such as the Black Pig’s Dyke, Co. Monaghan, and the Doom of Drumsna, Co. Roscommon, and the temple-like ‘Forty-metre Structure’ at Navan, Co. Armagh, and a similar structure at Dun Ailinne, Co. Kildare, indicates significant ritual and defensive activities in the later centuries of the first millennium BC.

Thus we can say that in the period immediately before the first Roman military incursions into Britain Ireland was populated by groups with allegiances to large territorial units. Furthermore, excavated Roman material has been recovered from the Rath of the Synods on the Hill of Tara, Co. Meath, Dun Ailinne, Co. Kildare, and Clogher, Co. Tyrone. While in most cases the Roman finds would belong to secondary later phases of activity at these prestigious sites, there is no doubt that such sites would still have had territorial, ritual and political significance at the time of the Roman Empire – a strong hint here that the upper echelons of society were in contact with Romans or Romanised groups.

Traditionally in Ireland the received wisdom from historians does not tell us much about contacts with ancient Rome in the first three centuries AD. This is likely to be due to the lack of any detailed documentary sources and the cryptic and ambiguous nature of the references which do survive in Classical literature. Without the safety net of documentary evidence to reinforce the interpretation of archaeological findings, confidence in proposing strong contacts with the Roman Empire is lacking. To date there are no explicit statements in the historical record which clarify the problem and make the archaeologist’s task any easier. It looks as if the archaeological record will be the only form of evidence which will provide an image of Ireland at the height of the Roman Empire.

In the absence of detailed assessment of the Drumanagh evidence it must be asked whether the whole question of Ireland’s connection or relationship with the Roman Empire could or should be decided on the presence of any one site in Ireland. The answer is surely no. The way forward is to investigate and re-evaluate the evidence as it stands, to carry out targeted investigations and eventually to arrive at a position where the enigma of Ireland and its relationship with the Roman Empire in the early first millennium will be resolved.

The writer is one of Ireland’s leading archaeologists specialising in aerial archaeology and is on the editorial board of Archaeology Ireland.
When in 1995 the Sussex Archaeological Society decided to become active once again in the field of archaeological excavation, it was a foregone conclusion that the site of the new excavations would be Fishbourne Roman Palace, which they have owned and administered since the early 1960s.

Since the end of the main campaign of excavations in 1969 and the publication of the definitive report by Barry Cunliffe in 1973, several smaller excavations have been carried out on and around the site. In particular, those directed by Alec Down in the 1980s produced some surprising and puzzling new information.

At the same time, others have been looking at, and questioning, the interpretation of the evidence, postulating alternative functions for some of the pre-Palace buildings and suggesting alternative dating for the periods of activity on the site.

Clearly, the time had come to attempt to elucidate some of these problems.

Unfortunately, opportunities to excavate on the site of the ‘Palace’ itself are now almost exhausted but the field immediately to the east of the Palace site offered considerable potential, especially as this was where Alec Down had found part of a third pre-Palace masonry building in 1983.

The excavation’s aims were to answer a number of specific questions:

1. What was the nature, extent and date of the initial military occupation of the site? Cunliffe suggested a military supply base for the Second Legion with a fairly short operating life. This was based on the discovery of military style granaries and a small amount of military material. Some would argue that the amount of this material was insufficient to represent anything other than an insignificant military presence. Conversely, others would like to see Fishbourne as one of the major bridgeheads for the invasion of AD 43.

2. What was the nature, extent and date of the pre-Palace masonry buildings? Was the proto-Palace a domestic residence with a very large bath complex, or a public baths with exercise hall? What did this expanding harbourside settlement represent? What were the dates for the period: AD 65/70-75/80 as suggested by Cunliffe, or AD 75/80-90/110 as suggested by Black?

3. What was the nature of the landscape to the east of the ‘Palace’. Was it gardens as suggested by Down? If so, was there any chance of recovering pollen or plant remains that might indicate what was growing there?

A campaign of five seasons of training/research excavations began in July 1995 with the Sussex Archaeological Society’s new President, Professor Cunliffe, as overall Archaeological Advisor and John Manley and David Rudkin as co-directors.

An area of c. 400 sq. m. was opened up to the east of, and slightly overlapping Alec Down’s trial trench of 1983. The latter had revealed the foundations of a N.S. wing approximately 7m wide containing what appeared to be an entrance flanked by two small rooms, but with its western wall appearing to extend further in both directions. There was also a wall extending eastwards beyond the edge of the trench.

The 1995 excavation demonstrated that this wall continued for at least a further 20m and that there was a second wall running parallel to it 2m to the north. This more northerly wall did not join onto the N.S. wing, but was separated from it by a gap of 5m.

Both walls’ foundations consisted of flint nodules, but the more southerly foundations were more substantially built, in a wide foundation trench and with clear evidence for the use of mortar. They were 1.2m deep and on their top, a single course of dressed greensand facing stones survived. At the time, these walls were interpreted as belonging to an ambulatory on the southern side of an enclosure.

In the enclosure to the north of the walls were the remains of a pit, which, after the building was demolished, had been drained into the stream via a gully which cut through the ambulatory wall foundations.

The 1996 excavations extended eastward from those of the previous year. This confirmed that the wall foundations did indeed represent an ambulatory and that there was a matching ambulatory on the northern side of the enclosure. Both ambulatories entered a large N.S.
wing which defined the eastern side of the enclosure. (See photograph). The wing was 22m long by 8m wide and was sub-divided by cross-walls forming a large central room with smaller rooms to north and south. However, the most remarkable feature of the central room was a sunken floor of massive greensand slabs, forming a pit approximately 3m x 3m with a depth of 0.5m. (See photograph). The gaps between the slabs had been carefully blocked with flint nodules and with re-used or rejected blocks of dressed building stone, then sealed with clay. No trace could be found of any stone or timber walling to support the sides of the pit.

Sections through the walls of this wing showed that the N.S. walls had been constructed in foundation trenches of the same width as the foundations themselves, whereas the north and south walls were constructed in wider foundation trenches that had subsequently been backfilled. In the south-east corner the foundations were considerably more substantial with a wider foundation platform descending to a depth of 1.35m.

The plan of the building, if one discounts the extensions to the western façade wall, was rectangular, approximately 34m E.W. x 22m N.S. It is strikingly similar to the plans of military principia, e.g. the Roman forts of Hod Hill and Baginton. Indeed, it is difficult to think of any other context in which the sunken floor feature might appear. In a principia it would represent the strongroom beneath the sacellum, where the pay chests would have been kept. The fact that the feature was quite shallow need not pose a problem, as it could have been covered by a raised timber floor with trapdoor access. Its shallowness may be a reflection of the high water-table in the area.

There is clear evidence for stone robbing, either at the time the building was demolished or later. This was inconsistent over the site but appeared to be concentrated on the easternmost side of the structure. The pit in the enclosure and the 'strongroom' were allowed to silt up and eventually three post pits were cut into the edges of the latter.

Although relatively shallow, they contained substantial stone packing for timber posts, the function of which remains enigmatic.

The masonry building was not the first structure on site. It was preceded by a timber-framed building, of which two beam slots were discovered. These appear to represent a building aligned E.W. with a probable width of 5m.

The dating of the construction and demolition of the building is still somewhat speculative as more work has to be done on the fairly small amount of pottery and other artefacts from the site. So far there is nothing to conflict with Alec Down's dating of the construction of its western wing to about AD 60 and its demolition to the time of the construction of the adjacent palace, when the area was planted as semi-formal gardens.

The interpretation of the building as a principia also needs testing by further excavation. Although it fits well with the plans of other principiae, there is still the problem of the extension walls on its western façade. It is possible that these represent a fore-hall as seen at Brecon Gaer fort, but the space available would have been considerably restricted by the presence of a re-routed stream which ran between this building and those discovered in the 1960s.

There are also the questions as to why a principia should have been built of stone at such an early date and why such a significant military presence was required in the territory of what was apparently a friendly client kingdom.

Excavations often succeed in raising more questions than they answer, and this is no exception. A fresh look has now to be taken at the whole of the military, pre-Palace and Palace developments at Fishbourne and at how these relate to the new evidence.

Further excavations in 1997 will uncover the remainder of the building and look for others that one might anticipate in close proximity to a principia. These will be supplemented by a more extensive geophysical survey than those undertaken in 1995-1996.

The excavations in 1997 will run from 14th July until 25th August; ARA members will be very welcome to visit and, of course, it's free!
referred to as possible chimney pots. One from Norton is integrated into the ridge-tile. So was it used as a vent for a hypocaust at the ridge line, the ridge being the highest and more efficient point to extract the gases? At points below this line, back draught can occur. Gaps at the eaves would pull in air over the thick walls to ventilate the roof void, and would also allow birds to enter for nesting. If the terracotta box-shaped tubuli or soubors carrying the hot gases were not heavily rendered with mortar in the roof void, over the passage of years fissures and cracks may have opened between these box tiles during gradual subsidence of the structure. Tubuli have small 'window' vents on their un-scored narrow sides; if these were to become exposed through the decay of inferior rendering then a potentially serious fire hazard would undoubtedly exist.

Drawing on my own experiences of renewing old roofs, I have frequently noted the amount of nesting material deposited by birds entering through the eaves over a long period of time and just how far from the eaves it would spread as fresh material was brought in each succeeding Spring. In some cases the spread was as much as four feet. So we have the combination of the combustible material, the heat source, and time.

Is it possible to have a fire in the roof area under these conditions? I needed more information on the impact of these circumstances, so I turned to an expert in the subject of fires and their causes. I consulted with Mr. M. Stone, the ADO of the Nottinghamshire Fire Service. With over twenty seven years' experience, he agreed that under the not-so unusual conditions as described above, with hot gases passing over and through the deposited tinder, making it increasingly drier over time, it is more than possible that eventually: (1) the gases could cause friction to take place within the tinder and eventually ignite it, and (2) a sudden increase in the heat from the furnace gases could also ignite the tinder. These effects, called 'pyrophoric', are much the same as heath and grassland fires in a dry summer. With the large amount of timber and boards involved in the roof construction, plus the fact that the fire would burn quite rapidly across the whole length of the ventilated roof void, by the time it was detected it would be too late to extinguish with the methods available, i.e. hand-carried buckets.

Along with fires on domestic sites there is another possible answer to the fires noted in some ancient granary buildings: when grain is stored incorrectly and with the moisture level at a critical point, heat is generated to such an extent that spontaneous combustion can take place and quickly spread through the warehouse. Consequently, fire damage to Roman buildings may owe more to inadequate domestic maintenance than to the vagaries of brigandage.

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NEW DISCOVERIES FROM THE AIR OVER NORFOLK

Norfolk is not renowned for producing many stone-built villas, but has this year revealed an interesting set of crop-marks for a villa type site in the west of the county. A small wing-fronted house with a large central room fitted with what is interpreted as a rectangular grid channelled hypocaust has been recorded by Norfolk's air photography officer Derek Edwards, along with a possible shrine structure aligned on the central axis, and a small group of possible mausolea. It has been a puzzle why Norfolk does not produce more evidence for stone villa foundations, as chalk and flint are readily available.

During some 42 flying hours this summer between 15th and 29th July, a considerable number of other sites were recorded with the east of the county producing the best results. The most spectacular was an early Roman fort of some 16 hectares (40 acres) spread over four adjacent fields. Remarkably, for aerial reconnaissance, one field contained a potato crop, usually not favourable for revealing archaeological features. The fort is surrounded by three defensive ditches, the outermost being around 10 metres in width (30 feet). Two internal streets can be clearly discerned along with some possible internal structures and an outer enclosure suspected to be a corral for cavalry horses. The fort, lying within Iceni territory, may have been imposed on the natives in the reign of Nero, following the defeat of Boudicca's uprising.

THE DART PROJECT 1996

by Bryn Walters

Former RRT Friends will recall the editorial feature article on the Delta Archaeological Research Team in the final edition of RR News (No. 10, Autumn 1995). This project, south of Swindon, has continued this year by examining a building which appeared as a parched outline in the grass adjacent to last year's malting furnace. The exercise was planned as an evaluation of the remains and to estimate how much of the structure had survived centuries of ploughing.

The initial trench revealed that serious damage had occurred to the front section of the building over many years, partly by stone quarrying, but predominantly by plough erosion, which had totally removed the upper foundations of a forward-projecting wing and most of the front wall at ground level. Plough marks were clearly visible in two directions cutting through the uppermost surviving Roman surface and into the underlying clay soil. Nevertheless, a sequence of structural phases has been identified, owing to the buildings' having been constructed on a terrace which had been levelled into the gentle slope of the field. This afforded the rear of the building greater depth and consequently more protection from erosion by ploughing.

Although late Roman stone quarrying had removed large tracts of masonry from the walls, a reasonably well preserved suite of baths has survived in the upper south-west corner of the building, where its deep hypocaust, baths and stoking areas were cut into the slope. These appear to have been constructed over the site of earlier baths, part of which were located passing beneath the foundations of the rear wall of the main building.

What has proved to be of particular interest is the emerging plan of the late 3rd to early 4th century building, which does not conform with the pattern of Romano-British villas in general. One usually expects a forward corridor or porticus flanking a range of south facing residential rooms. This is not the case here however, as the house appears to have been fronted by a solid wall with, at its centre, an entry into an integrated porch. This leads through to an enclosed open court, where a fall of stone roof slates suggests that a roof projected around the sides to provide a covered walk, the rooms being ranged around it on three sides, in the fashion of a town or Italic atrium house.

The rooms seem to have been rather plain, there being almost no evidence of internal elaboration apart from lumps of terrazzo-like opus signinum (concrete flooring) and a few pieces of striped painted wall plaster from the baths. At present, the evidence recovered suggests that the building had been dismantled around the middle of the 4th century.

As mentioned in RR News 10, the site lies adjacent to the now dry upper reaches of the river Og, on the 500 foot contour, where a broad and straight section of the ancient stream bed fronts the site, suggesting canalization for water transport in the high chalk downs. The land immediately surrounding the villa rises to 600 feet above sea level. The river flows due south through the valley for 5 miles to its confluence with the Kennet at the Roman town of Cunetio near Marlborough. As if to support this theory, a well preserved iron implement was recovered from the baths which is suspected to have been a boatman's hook and thrust, used to assist in the berthing and launching of shallow-draught boats from a landing stage. The grass parch-marks in 1995 also revealed what are thought to be foundation supports for garden pergolas leading across the field from the house towards the river.

In order to support the police team with this project and to fulfil the objectives of the Association, the Board of the ARA has recommended a small grant to DART for 1996. Two local archaeological and historical societies from Chiseldon and Wroughton are also participating in the project. Any member of the ARA interested in taking part should contact me at the Swindon address.
ROMAN GAMING BOARD

by Philip Crummy, Director of The Colchester Archaeological Trust

The discovery in a Romano-British Cemetery at Stanway, near Colchester, of a unique game board set up ready to play attracted much media interest throughout Britain and beyond. Many Roman game boards have been found before, and gaming pieces in various materials commonly occur on Roman sites, but this appears to be the first found with the pieces in position. There are various snippets of information about Roman games in the ancient literature, but there is no list of games and nor is there a complete set of rules for any single game. The Colchester example provides new and vivid evidence, since it was set out by somebody who knew how to play it. In a way, this is the most direct and intimate sort of evidence that you can get.

The board was made of two pieces of wood, hinged so that it folded inwards lengthways. Its corners were strengthened with right-angled metal strips. The wood had rotted away completely apart from where it was in contact with the metal corner pieces and hinges. The overall proportions of the board (3:2) and the positions of the pieces suggest that it was marked out as a grid to form 12 by 8 squares, and the absence of dice shows that the game was one based purely on skill.

The pieces are of opaque glass in the shape of thick chocolate drops. They lay on the board as if at an early stage in a game. There are twenty-six in all, thirteen white and the rest dark blue. Each layer seems to have had twelve standard pieces, plus a thirteenth which was of different rank. White's thirteenth piece was much smaller that the others, whereas Blue's differed solely by being placed upside down on the board.

The most obvious candidate for the game from those that are known is ludus latrunculorum, meaning 'game of little soldiers'. The aim was to capture your opponent's pieces one at a time by sandwiching them between two of your own. The 'soldiers' could move forwards, backwards and sideways, like rooks in chess, and there were higher ranking pieces which could move in more powerful ways.

Regardless of whether or not the game was actually 'soldiers', the play represented by the pieces on the Stanway board might have been along the following lines. Each player sets out his twelve standard pieces in a line down one side of the board. Each then places his thirteenth piece on a vacant square of his choice. Blue decides to play defensively and places his extra piece close to the left-hand corner of the board (as he sees it). White is bolder and puts his extra piece in the middle but in his half of the board. Play starts in earnest with blue advancing his third piece in from the right one square. White responds by doing the same with his facing piece. Blue then advances his piece second in from the right by two squares. The game, which had barely begun, then goes no further. The dead person's cremated remains had been placed on the board (perhaps in a bag). Other items (including possible medical instruments) were placed in the burial box and its lid shut, thereby protecting the contents from the soil that was soon to be shovelled into the grave.

Board games were popular in the Roman world among adults and children alike. The grave was of a British person; the game therefore may not be Roman, though the pieces were certainly of a standard Roman style. Information about the games favoured by Britons is even sparser than for the Romans. However later Celtic histories which survive in Ireland and Wales suggest that skill in board games among the Britons could have been a highly-rated personal accomplishment, and that even important matters amongst the nobility might occasionally have turned on the outcome of a game. Of the eight richest graves found at the Stanway site, three contained gaming pieces, which clearly indicates the popularity of board games among these high-ranking Britons. Moreover, burial practice was itself very ritualised, so that the Stanway game may have been part of an elaborate graveside ceremony full of meaning for the living participants.
THE ANTONINE WALL AND ROMAN SCOTLAND TOUR

Nam et Britannis per Lollium Urbicum victi legatum alio muro cespiticio summotis barbaris ducto: 'For he (the emperor Antoninus Pius) conquered the Britons through Lollius Urbicus the governor (of Britain), and after driving back the barbarians, built another wall, this time of turf'.

Following the success of last year's tour of Hadrian's Wall under the aegis of the FRRT, members of the ARA made their way this July for a long weekend on the Antonine Wall, the most north-westerly frontier of the Roman Empire, running from sea to sea across the narrowest part of Scotland. Accommodation and base-camp headquarters building, re-excavated in 1979-82, and the bath-house in the fort's north-west corner were the main structures examined. Further east again we reached the fort of Rough Castle attached to the south side of the Wall. Although small in area this fort has well preserved defences and traces of buildings excavated in 1902-3, such as the headquarters, the commandant's house, a granary, and in an annexe, the bath-house. The Wall itself here is particularly well preserved with a substantial ditch to the north and beyond that a system of ten rows of oblong pits which probably held upright sharpened stakes. Caesar's soldiers called this situation resulting from successive reductions in fort area, as the garrison was cut back. Other features explored were the annexe to the north of the fort and a huge overlapping system of temporary camps, one 130 acres in extent. The slight ramparts of some of these were traced in the heather-covered landscape. Further north two of the Highland Line Forts were visited. The site of the Fendoch fort, excavated by Richmond in the 1930s, closed the mouth of the Sma' Glen, preventing access to Roman-held territory by the warlike peoples of the mountains beyond. Further north again, the kingpin of the whole Flavian system in Scotland, was the legionary fortress at Inchtuthil. The excavations of 1952-65 gave us the most completely known ground plan of a legionary fortress anywhere in the Roman Empire. The defences around its huge area of 53 acres stand on a windswept plateau close to a bend of the River Tay at Caputh. The occupying legion, probably the Twentieth, abandoned it while it was still under construction in about AD 86/7, when the garrison moved to Chester. Again surrounding this site were a number of compounds and temporary camps.

Two of the sequence of watch-towers which formed a defensive system along the Roman road along the Gask Ridge, Perthshire, were visited in a modern landscape of dense woodland and scrub. These were at Muir O'Fauld and Kirkhill. Each tower, consisting of a tall timber building constructed on a square plan of four corner posts, was surrounded by a rampart and ditch.

The final day concentrated on a view of the major Roman collections in the Hunterian Museum, Glasgow University. These included the great series of inscribed and sculptured stone distance slabs from along the Wall, several fine inscribed altars and gravestones and other finds including spectacular objects in wood, leather and metalwork from sites such as Bar Hill and Inchtuthil. The tour ended with a visit to the Burrell Collection.

ARA members standing in the Lilia on the north side of the Rough Castle fort on the Antonine Wall.

From the left: Anthony Beeson, Byn Walters, Margaret Harris and John Hyams.

Photo: G. Soffe

facilities were provided in relative luxury at the Glasgow Hilton, with sherry receptions, dinners and evening lectures, the latter given by Dr. Nicholas Hodgson, who magnificently served as guide to all sites on the tour.

The itinerary took us east along the Wall to the fort of Bearsden where, following the excavations in the 1970s, we examined the extensive stone bath-house situated in an annexe in the west side of the fort. We then approached Bar Hill, a spectacular fort on a summit just south of the Wall where the stone form of defence lilia (see photo). Along the Wall to either side of this fort we were able to study the system of berm, ditch and outer mound on the north side of the Wall rampart, and the military way on the south. Also, the substantial traces of a signal-platform or 'expansion' could be seen attached to the rear of the rampart at Bonny Side East.

To the north of the Wall a highlight of the tour was provided by the great fort of Ardoch, one of the most impressive in Scotland because of its well preserved multiple rampart and ditched defences, a
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