

# The RAG

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## Mapping Cultural Change in Roman Egypt *Catherine Arends*



**Dr Catherine Arends: obtained her PhD (With Distinction) from UWA in 2004. She now teaches Ancient History in Sydney**

Recent interpretations of artifacts and documents from the Romano-Egyptian period highlight a convergence in cultural expression rarely seen in any other period of Egyptian history. The Romans assimilated not only the more familiar Hellenistic motifs and art forms, but also many aspects of Egyptian traditions throughout the period of Roman occupation. As late as the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD, for instance, terracotta images of the Egyptian falcon-god Horus show the deity in full Roman military kit riding on horse back (see below). Apart from the head, the figure looks like a fairly standard image of an equestrian emperor or general. It is even more interesting when we consider that figures of Horus represented the king in pharaonic times. In these terracottas, Horus is smiting or slaying his enemy - another pharaonic image that served to illustrate the image of the victorious ruler.

One of the most enduring legacies of modern Egyptian nationalism and independence is the construction of an image of ‘pharaonic’ Egypt. The Cairo Museum and numerous provincial museums, including that at Luxor, showcase collections that highlight the cultural achievements of Egypt’s pharaonic past. These are indeed, what tourists who spend millions of dollars a year in traveling to the land of the pharaohs expect to see.



**Ca. 5th century terracotta—Kharga Oasis**

There are of course, other periods of importance. As modern nations struggle to explore their ‘alternative’ histories through archaeology, anthropology and museum displays, a fuller picture of Egypt’s antiquity is likewise emerging. The 2005 ‘Roman-Egyptomania’ exhibition at the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, illustrates a steadily increasing interest in Egypt’s history as a Roman province. Long-ignored collections are beginning to receive the same attention as artifacts from other provinces including Britain, Germany and the Near East. This is a natural corollary to the exciting finds that are emerging from the survey, excavation and study of numerous post-pharaonic archaeological sites in Egypt.

A number of Roman historians have written on the ideological value of military success to the Roman emperors. It should not be surprising therefore to see hybridized images of victory in Roman Egypt. The value of such im-



**The Witch of Wookey—see pages 9-10**

agery could be understood by both Egyptians and Romans. It was equally relevant to the Greek elites in Egypt, whose vision of Alexander the Great in military attire featured in a great variety of art forms.

This hybridized culture grew over time. It seems that from the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC, Egypt's Mediterranean conquerors gradually introduced Roman cultural forms to the local landscape.



**Late Roman Stele from Alexandria**

The geographer Strabo who visited the new Roman province sometime around 25BC, records that Augustus had a victory city built on the eastern outskirts of the city of Alexandria. It included not only a military camp but other Roman structures including an amphitheatre. Nothing remains of the latter, however 19<sup>th</sup> century records indicate that the remains of the camp (which had grown into a double legionary camp by the reign of Hadrian) had been subsumed into the palace of the khedive. Late Roman tomb stones were located in this vicinity sometime in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and are now on display in the Graeco-Roman Museum in Alexandria (see picture above).



**Roman Fortress at Old Cairo**

Other military remains are mainly dated to the Late Roman period. Fortresses were built from *ca* AD 288-315, and reflect the same architectural features of the Roman military as in other provinces. In Egypt, remains have been located in the Delta, the Nile Valley and in both the Eastern and Western deserts. Today, the visible remains of the fortress at Old Cairo are a vivid reminder of Rome's presence. And whilst additions have been dated to the late Roman period, its origins are likely to be earlier (perhaps Trajanic).

No doubt there were many other military structures from an earlier period that have not withstood the centuries. Fortunately it is the smaller and seemingly insignificant evidence which has survived. Marble statues, bronze and terracotta figurines, as well as terracotta lamps and jewelry created from gold and semi-precious stones, allow us to map cultural change in Roman Egypt. The range of artifacts is as varied as that of other provinces.

A number of headless imperial statues are part of the Graeco-Roman collections in the museums of Alexandria and Cairo (picture below). They reflect examples common to most provinces and probably decorated niches in theatres, sanctuaries and temples in Alexandria and towns such as Hermopolis Magna in Middle Egypt. Coins minted under Hadrian illustrate large cult statues of Roman deities as well as the Romanized gods of Egypt. Smaller figurines in bronze likewise reflect hybridized images based on larger cult models.



**Military Torso—Cairo Museum**

Like the merging of Roman and Egyptian funerary practices illustrated by the Fayyum mummies (see RAG 2.1), bronze figurines from Roman Egypt are indicative of the fusing of beliefs and popular themes. There is a long tradition of bronze religious figurines from the pharaonic period. The Romans too, favored bronze figurines for their household shrines and niches. More expensive than terracotta, bronze figurines were a symbol of social status and prosperity. Most datable Romano-Egyptian examples come from the 2<sup>nd</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries AD, but it is difficult to accept that production did not develop as early as the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD.



**Marcus Aurelius: Graeco- Roman Museum, Alexandria**

Perhaps the most unusual of these provincial examples, are the bronze ‘military’ figurines. The pose of the figurine is clearly that of the emperor, reminiscent of the statue of the Prima Porta Augustus. The figure wears recognizable armor, and is often in a position making an offering with a plate (*patera*) in one hand. Veteran soldiers across the empire would have been highly familiar with this pose. The head of the figurine is of course the most curious part. Examples variously feature the heads of three favorite Egyptian deities – Horus, the falcon; Anubis, the jackal god of the dead and Apis, the Ptolemaic deity worshiped at Memphis. This is the most unusual, as Apis is traditionally represented as a bull (picture below).

German and Gallic frontiers, no doubt carried by soldiers as they were transferred from province to province. Alexandrian manufactured figures of the Romano-Egyptian goddess Isis-Fortuna seem to have been a particular favorite of the military.



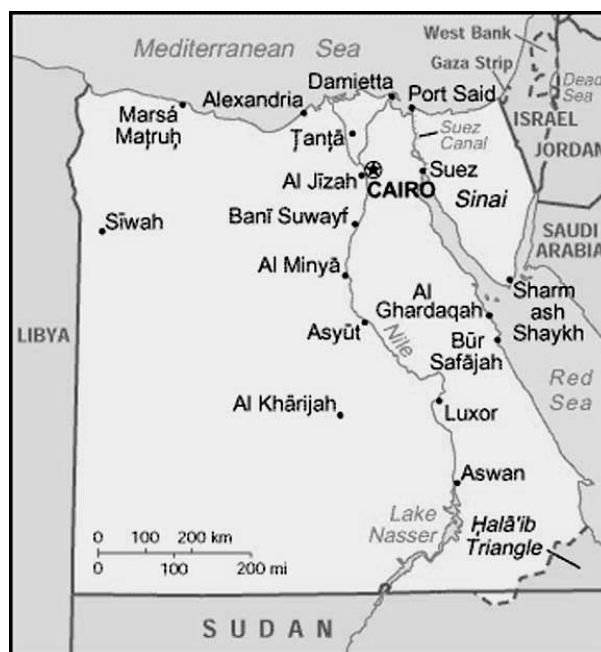
**Isis-Fortuna—hand on a steering oar**



**Bronze figure of Apis in military attire**

Whilst there is little evidence that these figurines were exported, other Romano-Egyptian examples have been found across the

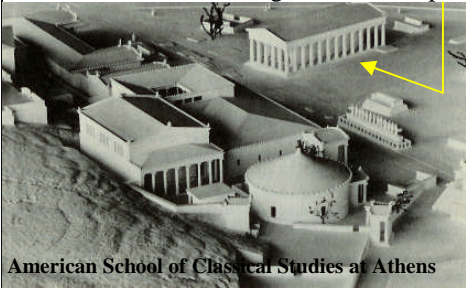
## EGYPT



# Recycling—Some Examples from Athens

*Kevin O’Toole*

One of the construction projects that definitively marked the presence of Rome in Athens was the erection during the reign of Augustus of a canonical (hexastyle peripteral) Greek temple in the ancient Athenian Agora. The temple (indicated here) was



American School of Classical Studies at Athens

erected in honour of Ares, the Greek god of War. It was not however a new temple. It was originally one of the number of temples (in Athens and elsewhere in Attica such as at Sounion and Rham-

nos) built as part of the 5th century BC Periclean building programme. And it was not originally built in the Agora but probably in the deme of Pallene. Hence, this Roman Period temple to Ares was originally a temple dedicated to Athena some 10 kms to the north east of Athens. During the reign of Augustus it was in effect picked up and moved to the Agora in Athens, having (probably) fallen into disuse and disrepair. It was, in short, recycled.

At not too great a risk of indulging in hyperbole it is possible to say that recycling is an almost ubiquitous phenomenon in the archaeological record. Members of the Roman Britain tour of 2003 will recall seeing the sculptural fragment in the great walls of Richborough of the now long lost monumental four way arch at the site (see David Kennedy’s article on Richborough in this issue at page 9). The art of one age can become the building material for another.

There are numerous other examples in Athens. I shall give five additional ones although the fifth is an example of recycling of a different kind.

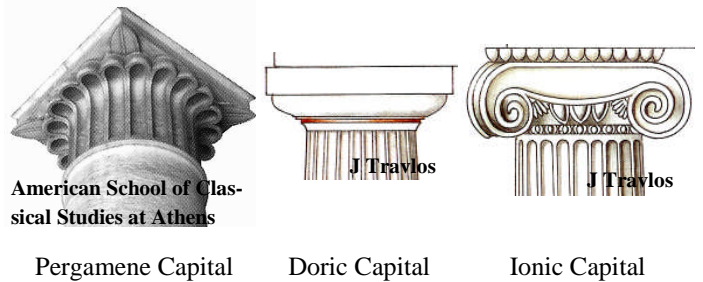
In AD267 Athens was sacked by the Heruli, marauders from somewhere in the region of the Black Sea. The Heruli massively damaged the Parthenon, indeed putting it to the torch. In the effort many years later to repair the damage the Athenians used architectural members from buildings in the Agora, buildings that had also been severely damaged by the Heruli. This resulted in some striking anomalies. Thus, the Parthenon had been a Doric order temple (albeit non-canonical because amongst other things octastyle and strongly reflecting Ionic and Cycladic influences).

In the repair of the Parthenon, the Athenians used a capital from the upper level of the Hellenistic Stoa of Attalos (picture of model at right). On that level of the



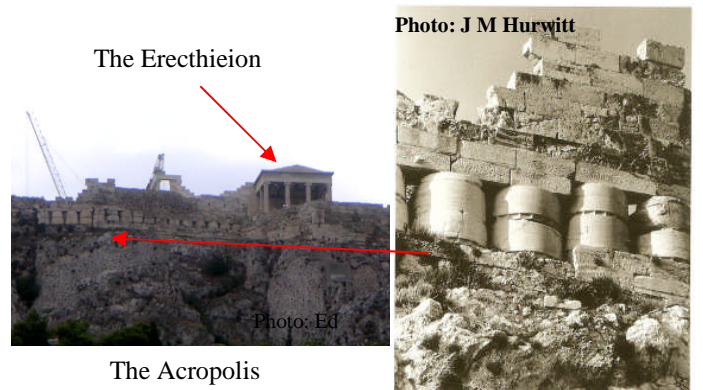
Model: Stoa of Attalos, American School of Classical Studies at Athens

Stoa the columns bore a Pergamene capital, the building having been a gift of Attalos 11 of Pergamon in c.150BC. The Pergamene capital is a distinct contrast to the Doric and Ionic orders.



American School of Classical Studies at Athens

My next example is one in which the Athenians symbolically used their own art as wall building material. When the Persians sacked Athens in 480BC they destroyed the temples on the Acropolis, including the then being constructed, and never to be completed, pre-Parthenon. After the Persians were finally defeated by the allied Greek city states at Plataea in 479BC the Athenians buried the debris on the Acropolis and levelled the site (this left to us a huge legacy of ancient art, albeit fragmented). But in addition, and so to be a reminder of Persian perfidy, the Athenians built column drums from the pre-Parthenon into the walls they constructed around the Acropolis to facilitate the levelling of the site. Those drums can be very clearly seen today on the north side of the Acropolis.



My third and fourth examples are of recycling by way of adaptation to a new use.

One of the fortunate aspects of the Greek temple from the point of view of its physical survival was that of its ready adaptation to use as a Christian church. Just about every one of the great temples built in Athens, the Parthenon, the Erechtheion, the Temple to Hephaistos, the Asclepieion, to name a few, was converted into a church. The adaptation always required some violence to original arrangements however the temple remained recognizable. Thus, in general (there are some striking exceptions) the Greek temple is oriented east/west, and the entrance or front is the east end. The Christian church is also sought to be oriented east/west, however it is the apse that is at the east

end, the entrance from the west. The Temple to Hephaistos (photo below) the Greek god of the anvil, was converted to the Church of St George.

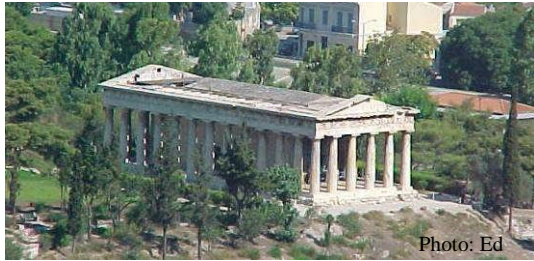
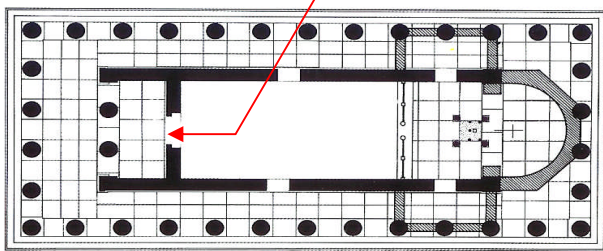


Photo: Ed

As indicated in the floor plan below an apse was constructed at the east end of the temple and an entrance cut into what had been the unbroken west wall of the naos.



5 M Drawing: J Travlos

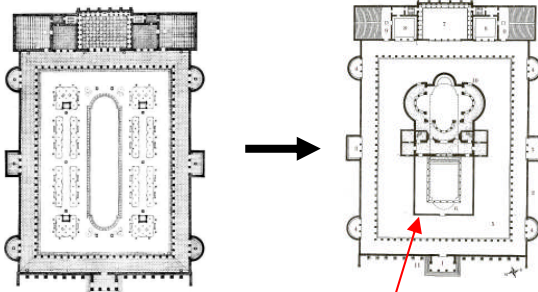
My fourth example is not of adaptation of a building to a new use but the adaptation of a site.

One of the outstanding Hadrianic constructions in Athens was the Library of Hadrian c. AD132 (pictured below).



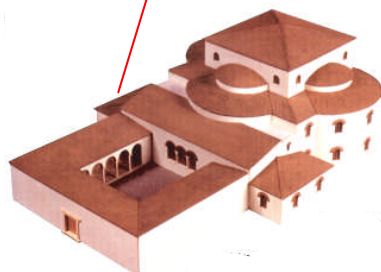
Model: *Civilita Romana Museum, Rome* as reproduced by the Association of the Friends of the Acropolis (Ref below)

The courtyard was a place for peaceful reflection and featured an elongated pool. In the 5th century AD the courtyard was put to service as a site for the construction of a Christian church.



Original ground plan of Hadrian's Library

The church was of a style called "tetraconch".

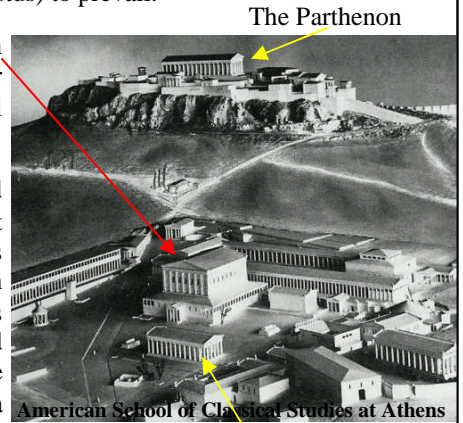


Drawings and model: J Travlos

Another early Roman period construction in Athens was the Odeion of Agrippa. It was built during the reign of Augustus in honour of the Roman general Agrippa most famous as the general who defeated Antony at Actium in 31BC thus allowing Octavian (later Augustus) to prevail.

The original Odeion of Agrippa lasted for 150 years or so until its roof collapsed.

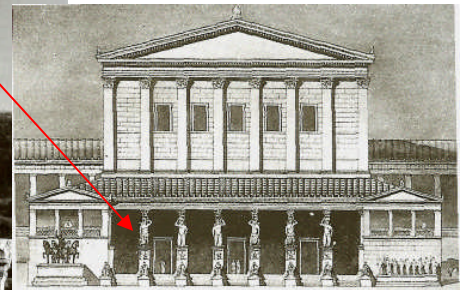
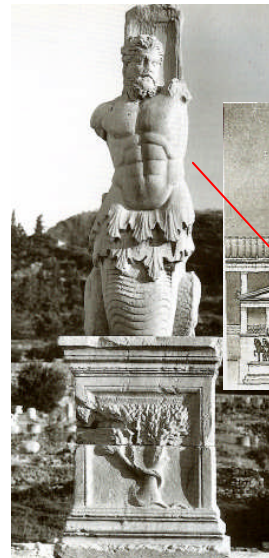
When it was repaired and redesigned it featured six columns across its front and in the form of giants and tritons (pictured below is one of the columns; that of a giant).



The Parthenon

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Temple of Ares (see p. 4)



Restored view of redesigned Odeion of Agrippa as reproduced by the Association of the Friends of the Acropolis (Ref below)

Photo: American School of Classical Studies at Athens

The torsos of the characters comprising the columns bear a striking resemblance to torsos on the sculptures on the Parthenon, the 5th century BC art of the Classical Athenians. Below is a picture of the torso of Poseidon from the West Pediment of the Parthenon.



Photo: J M Hurwitt

Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery and the Roman period sculptors copied the by then some 800 years old Classical Period torsos. This of course is an example of another type of recycling, the recycling of ideas, and that is another very long story.

Further reading: see references for the works of J M Camp RAG Vol 1 Issue 4 Jeffrey M Hurwitt, *The Athenian Acropolis*, 1999, Cambridge Publications of the Association of Friends of the Acropolis, 2004, Athens, Greece, *Archaeological Promenades*

## CONSTANTINE—*Bill Leadbetter*



**Dr Bill Leadbetter: Senior Lecturer in Social Education and History at Edith Cowan University**

When Constantine first became emperor, in July 306, the Roman Empire was undergoing its most profound transformation in three centuries. The reforms of the emperor Diocletian in the army, the economy, administration, taxation, law, and social structures had the purpose and the effect of reconstituting the Roman state on a more durable footing for the troubled years of recession, invasion and plague which had beset the state from the end of the second century. Diocletian's reforms were far-reaching, but conservative in intent and ideology. A natural conservative, Diocletian had no intention of doing anything other than strengthening his own version of the imagined community of Rome. As such, his program was grounded in the traditional ideology of the state. Contemporary rhetoric stressed the close relationship between the imperial office and the gods. Diocletian was *Iovius* Augustus – like Jove, mighty and all-seeing. His imperial colleagues had their own divine companions, most notably Hercules for Maximian, Diocletian's colleague and adoptive brother.

There was a fundamental relationship between politics and religion in Diocletian's new empire, and it was that relationship which made the clash with Christianity inevitable. It was Constantine who was responsible for the critical insight that this clash was neither necessary nor desirable. His father Constantius provided something of a model, inasmuch as his conduct of the persecution had been compliant with Diocletian's orders and no more. Constantine went further. From his nomination as emperor by his late father's army in 306, he let it be known that he favoured Christians and that his court was a place of refuge for them. One celebrated refugee was Lactantius, sometime professor of rhetoric in Diocletian's capital of Nicomedia. Now Lactantius became the tutor to Constantine's son Crispus, and had some leisure to compose the apologetic and polemical works for which he became famous.

The early years of Constantine's rule were marked by rivalry and struggle. When he accepted acclamation as emperor, he became part of a large and unhappy family of rulers. Divided by mutual suspicion, this imperial college no longer had Diocletian to guide it since, in May 305, Diocletian had abdicated and retired to private life. Galerius, Diocletian's son-in-law and adopted son sought

to take his place at the centre of the Empire, but he never wielded the same quality of authority. While Galerius accepted Constantine as his father's successor in Britain and Gaul, that acceptance was grudging and tainted with suspicion. Other claimants and rivals soon crowded the field, most notably Maxentius in the city of Rome itself.

Like Constantine, Maxentius followed a generally pro-Christian policy, but unlike him, his legitimacy was never accepted by Galerius. That made him the most vulnerable of Constantine's rivals and so, after Galerius' death in 311, Constantine marched on Maxentius in the following year. The war on Maxentius has been occluded rather than clarified by the narrative sources since Constantine himself chose to use this conflict to announce his own devotion to the Christian God through his soldiers' recitation of a prayer, and their use of a new battle standard, the labarum, or *chi-rho*. Constantine's propagandists sought to portray this as a religious conflict, and since Maxentius had tended to be pro-Christian, they needed to rewrite his past as a deeply superstitious and fanatical pagan.



**This head of Constantine is on display in the museums on the Capitoline in Rome.**

There is no doubt that Constantine ascribed his victory over Maxentius at the Battle of the Milvian Bridge to the intervention of the Christian God. From the moment of his entry into the city of Rome, he began to lavish property on the church and intervene directly in its affairs. Yet Constantine's apparent embrace of Christianity did not turn him into a practising saint. His family life, in this respect, was a disaster. He ordered the execution of his eldest son, Crispus, and in the following year, his own wife Fausta also met her death at his hands. While there were propagandist explanations at the time, the mystery of these executions has never been satisfactorily addressed, let alone solved. Nevertheless, these executions were the reason that the later, and hostile, writer, Zosimus suggested that Constantine embraced Christianity – since only the god of the Christians could offer forgiveness for such heinous crimes.



**Arrogant, reflective or just bored? The 1998 bronze Constantine outside the Cathedral in York, the Minster.**

It may be that this hideous experience left him less than ruthless in the following years when the time came to organize his own succession. He sought to give something to virtually every male in his immediate family. The result was a bloody massacre of half of his family after his death. Despite such blemishes, it is fair to say that Constantine maintained the impetus of the reform program commenced by Diocletian. Much of his work developed and enhanced measures taken by his predecessor. As a consequence, it can certainly be said that he left the empire stronger than he found it.

His most durable contribution lies in his relationship with the church. Regarding himself as “the bishop of those outside the church”, he supported the church, enhanced the status of clergy, and even went to war to protect the Christians of Persia (which some have argued makes him the first crusader). He also presided over the Council of Nicaea which produced the first draft of the Christian orthodoxies that dominated both eastern and western churches until the reformation. It was only

on his deathbed that Constantine submitted to baptism. Perhaps he was convinced that the many sins which he had committed as emperor could never be forgiven and so waited until the last minute to enter the Christian community formally. His centrality to the history of Christianity can be seen in his veneration as a saint (along with his mother Helena) by Christians of the Orthodox tradition.

Constantine's achievements remain extraordinary. Although he was deeply flawed, he was, above all, successful. Very few figures in history attract the sobriquet “the great”, and none do so without controversy. Yet any sober study of the reign of Constantine, his person and his policies, can only conclude that the Roman world from which he departed in 337 was profoundly different to that into which he had been born nearly seven decades earlier. And that much of that difference can be attributed to the determinations and deeds of Constantine himself.

## Dissertations and Theses in Roman Archaeology in Progress UWA

### Honours Dissertations:

Casey McAllister, *Public Hygiene in Roman Britain*.

Maire Gomes, *Villae Romanas: An examination of the archaeology of Roman villas in Portugal*.

Karen Henderson, *An Archaeological Investigation of Desert Kites near Umm el-Quttein (Jordan) using Photogrammetric Techniques*.

### MA Theses:

Nigel Wright, *Separating the Romans from the Barbarians: Rural Society and Exchange in North Britain*

Anne Poepjes, *Conserving and Managing Cultural Heritage at Jarash, Jordan: A case study for the Middle East*

### PhD Theses:

Andrew Card, *The Roman Frontier in Arabia*

Mike Knowles, *Settlement in the Hauran, Jordan in Roman Times*

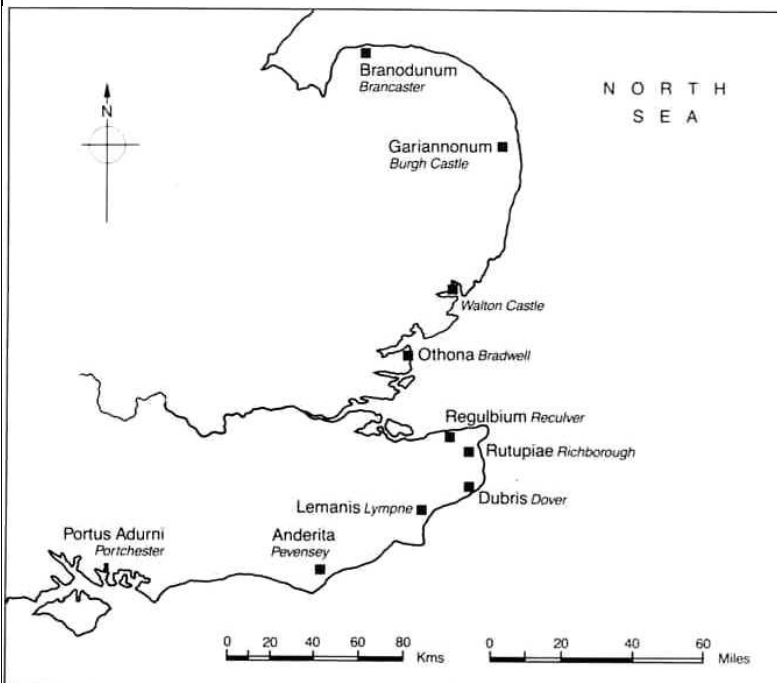
Pam Lynch, *The People of Roman Britain*

## THE DEFENCES OF LATER ROMAN BRITAIN

*David Kennedy*

When the armies of the Emperor Claudius landed in Britain in AD 43 they sparked off a long period of conquest. Much of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD was still marked by warfare on the northern frontier – it was now that, first, Hadrian's Wall, and then the Antonine Wall, were constructed. Finally, the great campaigns conducted in Scotland by the Emperor Septimius Severus in 208-211 ushered in two generations of relative peace in the north.

But it was not to last and there was a new problem opening that was to loom large within a few years. Unexpectedly the new front was in the very part of the southeast where the invasion armies had first landed and which had seemed a peaceful backwater ever since. The new threat to match those of the Caledonians and Maeatae in the North (both subsequently subsumed under the label of "Picti") came from Saxon pirates of North Germany who now found rich pickings in the vulnerable villas along the river estuaries of Gallia Belgica and the opposite coast of Britannia.



The Roman response, in a part of the province whose only garrison was the guards of the provincial governor in London, was the construction of the first of a string of forts along the southeast coast. Ultimately these were to extend from *Clausentum* (near Southampton) right round to at least *Branodunum* (Brancaster, on The Wash in Norfolk). Once the system developed it was placed under a regional commander called the Count of the Saxon Shore (*Comes Litoris Saxonici*) whose name and those of the 9 units and forts under his command, are preserved in a c. AD 400 document called the *Notitia Dignitatum*. Hence the popular modern name for these structures – Saxon Shore Forts (SSF).

Several of these new forts are well-preserved and some look very "modern". By that I mean that they are no longer like the rectangular forts of the earlier period with their rounded corners, relatively spacious layout, moderately tall walls and without projecting towers. Now the visitor confronts structures reminiscent of mediaeval castles. (In fact some of them were re-used as castles in the Middle Ages). The first features to strike the visitor are the great height of the walls, several metres high, and the immense projecting, usually U-shaped

towers on which artillery would have been mounted. They are also usually much smaller than the forts of the Early Empire and most have few traces of internal buildings. These are the compact strongholds of an army on the defensive and investing in bricks and mortar where once the strength of forces in the field sufficed.

The visitor today can see fine examples in swift succession. The best place to start is Richborough, (pictured below) with not just its SSF but the remains of an earlier fort, the supply base of the invasion army before that and the foundation of a huge triumphal arch of the later 1<sup>st</sup> c. AD.

At Dover there is just a rump of the SSF on show, cutting through the remains of the Dover Painted House; the well-preserved Roman lighthouse on the cliff above is the main attraction.

Then on to Pevensey where the oval fort is a startling shape to encounter from the Roman period and the mediaeval "keep" in the interior adds to the impression of a castle of the Middle Ages rather than Late Roman Britain.

Next is Portchester, on a neck of land overlooking Portsmouth Harbour. Here, too, the fort was taken over as a castle in the Middle Ages but the near-square circuit of walls and huge U-shaped projecting towers match in character if not in ground plan those at Pevensey.

All of these were once Roman naval bases. Portchester still has the sea on the harbour side, but at Pevensey the sea which once lapped around the walls is over a mile distant. Even more striking is Lympne (pronounced "Lim"), where the drying out of the Romney Marshes has left it overlooking not a great bay but ploughed fields. And at Richborough the drying up of the chan-





nel between the mainland and the island of Thanet has left the fort in the midst of fields. (Further north the reverse has happened – Reculver on the north Kent coast has been half eaten away by the Thames estuary and Walton Castle (near Felixstowe on the Essex-Suffolk border), which once stood 30 m above the sea, fell off the eroded cliff in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and is now known only from old drawings and descriptions).



**Pevensey: massive Roman towers on the West Gate**



**Portchester: mediaeval "keep" in the corner of the Roman fort**

Reading:

S. Johnston, *The Roman Forts of the Saxon Shore*, 1979, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., London. This is a good but now aging account of the forts.  
V. A. Maxfield (ed.), 1989, *The Saxon Shore*, Exeter. A more recent handbook prepared for the Congress of Roman Frontier Studies held at Canterbury in 1989.

Pearson, *The Roman Shore Forts. Coastal Defences of Southern Britain*, 2002, Stroud.

D. Gurney, *Outposts of the Roman Empire*, 2002. A booklet, well worth a look, though not easily found in Australia outside my office, published by Norfolk Archaeological Trust on three of the SSFs in Norfolk.

On 26 August, RAG will have a lecture on the "British" Emperor Carausius and a video on the SSF at Richborough.

## ALTERNATIVE ACCOMMODATION-*Pam Lynch*



**Pam Lynch is a doctoral candidate in Roman Archaeology at UWA investigating the people of Roman Britain through mortuary archaeology.**

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century caves are not seen as an ideal abode. They are visited for recreational and tourist purposes providing spectacular scenery and awe inspiring adventure. Throughout history though caves are known to have provided a safe and comfortable haven and have been used for domestic and industrial use, for shelter or storage and as a hideaway, shrine or burial

place. Caves provide a relatively constant temperature, being warmer and dryer in winter, and, with often difficult to detect entrances, ensure a secure domicile. Early man is known to have inhabited caves in Africa, China and Europe with evidence of cave habitation in Britain dating to Palaeolithic times, with several caves including Poole's Cavern, Thirst House and Wookey Hole known to have been used by Romano-Britons.

Caves have figured in the world of myth and legend through all periods of history including Greek and Roman and in Britain historical legends abound involving caves, particularly in the Mendip Hills of Somerset. Wookey Hole, renowned for the number of Romano-British skeletons discovered here, is rich in legendary tales. Welsh legend says that King Arthur slew the black witch who lived in the cave at the head of the Stream of Sorrow on the confines of Hell, believed to refer to the River Axe and 'Hell's Ladder', the approach to the first Great Cave. In the eighteenth century it was said that the Witch of Wookey was an evil old woman who lived in the caves with her dog, and that one day while casseroles a child she was turned to stone by a monk who sprinkled her with holy water. Visitors to the cave system today are attracted to the cave formations portraying the witch and her dog. The witch turned to stone or a stalagmite formation?

Cave usage covers the four centuries of Roman occupation in Britain with Fairy Hole in Lancashire, Blackwell Cave, Somer-

set and the cave at Charterhouse Warren Farm Swallet in the Mendips providing the earliest evidence dating to c.AD50-100.

The Wookey Hole cave, Somerset, saw Romano-British occupation from the early second century to the end of the fifth century and is believed to have been used not only for domestic and workshop occupation but also as a burial site.



Somerset



Romano-British finds from this cave have been numerous including coins, jewellery, pottery, bone pins and fasteners and many items of stone. Exploration of the cave for scientific purposes began in earnest in 1912. In the ensuing century advances in diving technology have made it possible to descend some 200 feet into the abyss, with divers encountering underground lakes and subterranean torrents in their attempts to conquer the ultimate challenge to cave explorers. For enthusiasts of Romano-British history though, chamber 4 is as far as we need to go. In this chamber

twenty-eight fourth century burials were discovered in a segregated cemetery area as well as the remains of a further nineteen individuals, washed down the river which are believed to have originated in the cemetery. Of the twenty-eight individuals buried in this cemetery, twenty of them are estimated to have died before the age of twenty. The remaining eight did not survive beyond thirty. A very young cemetery population even in this period.

But what were these people doing in this cave? Wookey Hole appears to have served not only as a place of domestic occupation and burial but also as a workshop. The ‘domestic’ nature of the Romano-British assemblages



The Witch’s Parlour—Wookey Hole

included table and kitchen ware, personal adornments, domestic tools and implements. This community though was also industrious. There is evidence of metalworking with bronze, lead and iron, thirty complete and thirteen incomplete spindle whorls are suggestive of wool production and spinning and an abundance of bone items in the cave also leads to speculation that these items were produced in marketable quantities.

The metalworking comes as no surprise in this area of Roman Britain. The lead mines of the Mendips were well known to the Romans and were utilised as early as the reign of Claudius with British lead ingots, probably from this area, discovered northern France and in the ruins of Pompeii. The inhabitants of the Wookey Hole cave were probably utilising the naturally occurring metals of the area for their own purposes, as there is insufficient evidence for production on any large scale, but the evidence suggests that both wool production and spinning and the production of bone pins and needles could have been carried on for commercial purposes.

The position of the cave on the River Axe, where it emerges from the underground caverns providing an abundant supply of clean water, undoubtedly added to its attraction and suitability during the Romano-British period as a place of habitation, industry and ultimately burial.

## The Mendips and the Wookey Witch

The Mendips (probably from the medieval *myne-deepes*) is a reference to the cave-ridden limestone hills and lowlands of Somerset near the towns of Glastonbury and Wells.



The **Witch of Wookey Hole** is the central character in an old English legend

“The story has several different versions with the same basic features:

*A man from Glastonbury was betrothed to a girl from Wookey. A witch living in Wookey Hole cursed the romance so that it failed. The man, now having become a monk sought revenge on this witch, who frequently spoiled budding relationships (having been jilted herself). He stalked into the cave and, catching her off guard, threw a bucket of water over her head. The blessed water petrified the witch immediately, and she remains in the cave to this day.”*

Ed

## BOOK REVIEWS

### David Kennedy

Some provinces were part of the Roman Empire for very long periods. Syria for almost exactly 700 years still bears the “trace of Rome” in the remains of great cities, towns, villages, roads, forts ... and even in the culture of the Early Islamic centuries that were in many ways a continuation.

In the West, *Gallia Narbonensis* (modern Provence) was Roman for as long, has wonderful Roman archaeological sites ... and its modern inhabitants still speak a descendant of the Vulgar Latin of the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries. Britain was Roman for only c. 360 years, was far less urbanized, far fewer villas, poorer in artefacts, its remains less impressive ... and its modern population speaks a Germanic language. Yet it is one of the most intensely explored of Roman provinces and there is a vast outpouring of books and articles and an entire “industry” of well-presented sites, popular accounts in magazines and the press, web sites and TV programmes.

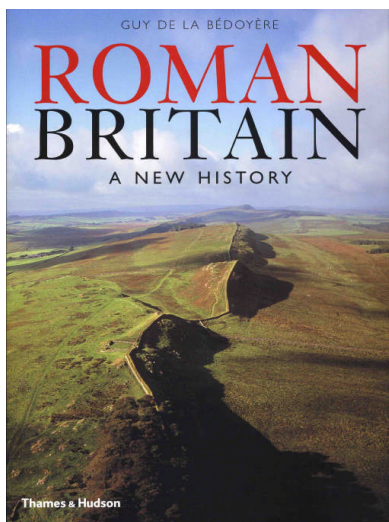
For students and the serious amateur there are numerous books entitled *Roman Britain/ Britannia* or some such to choose from but the “standard” was Sheppard Frere’s *Britannia* first published in 1967 which was not displaced even by Peter Salway’s *Roman Britain* of 1981. Both were revised and updated over the years but are now very dated in a field that generates so much that is new. Relief has come now; indeed, double relief.

Guy de la Bédoyère (DLB), a free-lance archaeologist and writer, will be well-known as an expert “talking head” on numerous TV programmes about Roman Britain, and for almost 20 (sic!) books on RB, aviation archaeology ... and the correspondence of Samuel Pepys and John Evelyn.

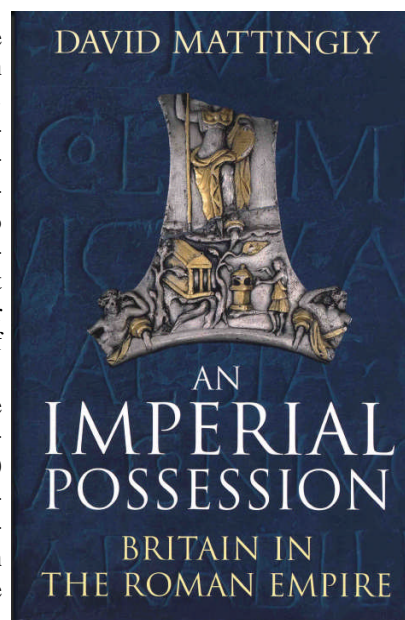
DLB knows his stuff, writes well and the book is lavishly illustrated with in-text illustrations of all kinds, many, including the maps and plans, in colour and with numerous artist’s impressions, reconstructions by the author.

David Mattingly (M), the third generation in a dynasty of Roman historians and now a professor at Leicester University, is equally tireless as fieldworker and author. He has worked extensively in Libya (currently excavating in the Fezzan) and Jordan, but also on Roman Britain, and was the co-author with Barri Jones of the superb *Atlas of Roman Britain* (Blackwell, 1990).

Now he has produced a massive study of the province. In presentation this is a very different book – a scatter of maps and tables but otherwise without photographs or drawings.



Both books provide the chronological narrative in relatively brief form. Unlike an older generation which saw their subject as largely about writing a “history” these two authors, field archaeologists but of a different generation, write their history largely in terms of themes - towns, industry, religion (DLB) and, more interestingly, communities (military, civil, rural) (M). Mattingly also, unusually, includes the entire British Isles with large sections on “Free Britannia” and Ireland.



### Comparison

The books are sufficiently different as not to be competing for the same market.

M is the more “scholarly” and likely to be adopted by university courses but, sadly, lacks the illustrations so vital for a story whose raw data is archaeological rather than the written word.

DLB scores heavily on this latter front but his text is lighter – a quarter the length of M.

Readers of RAG are likely to find DLB their most attractive port of call ... at least at first.

De la Bédoyère, G. *Roman Britain. A New History*, 2006, London (Thames and Hudson): 288 pages; £25

Mattingly, D. *Imperial Possession: Britain in the Roman Empire: 54 BC - AD 409*, 2006, London (Allen Lane/ Penguin): 638 pages; £30

RAG Members: 10% discount if you present a copy of this review at the Co-op Bookshop on campus.



Aphrodisias Claudius and Britannia

# Roman Archaeology at UWA

## RAG Events

It has been a busy year for RAG already.

In April there was a Saturday afternoon session of a video of Time Team (the Hadrian's Wall fort of Birdoswald), another on the bridge Julius Caesar built over the Rhine in 55 BC and a lecture by one of the UWA research students, Anne Poepjes, on her 15 months in Jordan.

On 14 May, 75 people gathered on a sunny Sunday morning in the Sunken Gardens at UWA. After a breakfast of croissants and fresh fruit, 13 "gladiators" put on an entertaining and informative display in surroundings reminiscent of an amphitheatre.

The Winter Programme of three Saturday afternoons began in June with Kevin O'Toole on Roman Athens. There were about 70 in attendance. In July, lectures on "How 'Great' was Constantine?" and another on the buildings of Constantine drew an audience of some 80 people attracted by a controversial but important figure whose proclamation at York in Britain in July AD306 was exactly 1700 years ago. We are hopeful of a turnout of 100+ for the last session.

Each afternoon is a "double bill" of lectures and/or a video. Tea and cakes in between. You don't have to be a member to participate. The final session for the winter series is as follows:

**Saturday 26 August 2006**

**British Emperors and the Forts of the Saxon Shore**

**The Emperor Carausius: Pirate King of Roman Britain  
(Illustrated Lecture)**

*Dr Bill Leadbetter, Edith Cowan University*

**Richborough**

*(Video of work at the Roman "Saxon Shore Fort" in Kent, UK)*

## UWA Extension Courses

The Summer Programme will begin with a course run by University Extension of 4 two-hour sessions on *The Roman Army*. Enrolments for this course are at 45 and rising.

It is hoped to run subsequent courses on such subjects as *The Roman Army at War*, *The Logistical Basis of the Roman Army* and the *Troops in Imperial Italy: The Praetorian Guard, Urban Cohorts, Vigiles, Equites Singulares and the Fleets at Ravenna and Misenum*. RAG Members qualify for a discount on this course - tell Extension when booking.

### Tour of Roman Britain 2007

Professor Kennedy is planning a third tour of Roman Britain in July 2007. As before the tour will run for three weeks, starting at Canterbury and ending in London. Although a few alterations will be required, the programme from the 2004 tour shows the probable itinerary and can be viewed online by going to the RAG website and following the link. It is likely the cost will again be \$A5,500 per head including almost all the costs of the tour, meals, site entrance fees etc. Flights and insurance are not included. If you are SERIOUSLY interested please contact David Kennedy at the numbers or e-mail opposite.

### Other activities in Planning

Before the end of the year we expect to have a lecture by Professor Alan Bowman from Oxford and a Quiz Night is in preparation. In early 2007 there is to be a Summer Programme with Saturday afternoon sessions of a pair of related lectures/ videos.

Possible future afternoon sessions include "Aerial Archaeology", "The Emperor Septimius Severus and Lepcis Magna", "Roman Theatre and Theatres", "Roman Coloniae: Augusta Raurica (Switzerland) and Thamugadi (Algeria)", "The Villa at Piazza Armerina (Sicily)", "The Emperor Trajan and his Forum", and "The Varian Disaster".

The details will be announced in a forthcoming RAG and by e-mail to those who have provided addresses. <http://www.romarchgroup.humanities.uwa.edu.au/>

# Membership of The RAG

Membership of the RAG is open to anyone interested in Roman Archaeology or classical studies generally. There is an annual membership fee of \$25 (inclusive of GST), students \$15.

To apply, complete and post the form with this edition of the RAG or contact the committee members at the addresses below.

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