

The RAG

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Romulus and Remus A Major Discovery in Rome - The Merger of Myth and Reality

The discovery earlier this year in Rome of the Lupercale, the cave of the wolf famous for Romulus and Remus and long thought to be possibly a mythical or at least a lost location, demonstrates a number of things. Amongst these is that archaeological study of the Roman period is still a very active endeavour even in the very heart, the Palatine Hill, of the ancient capital itself. Secondly, it demonstrates that major discoveries are still to be made even in such intensely explored areas as the Palatine. And a third thing that the discovery demonstrates is something that has been recurrent in the history of societies—the importance of foundation myths.

The broad story of Romulus and Remus is well known however it is worthwhile to give an outline here. Plutarch and Livy report that Romulus (c.8th century BCE) was the first king of Rome. He and his twin brother Remus were the sons of a priestess Rhea Silvia and the god Mars. Rhea Silvia was not supposed to have children. She was the daughter of Numitor who was a rival to his brother Amulius. Because Amulius was ascendant and feared that Rhea Silvia would produce rivals to him, Amulius required her to become a Vestal Virgin. When Amulius discovered that Rhea Silvia had given birth to the twin boys he ordered that she and the infant twins be killed. The infants came to be placed into a basket and fell under the protection of the river god Tiberinus (escape in a basket floating down a river of course recalls also the story of Moses). In due course the twins found their way to the Palatine Hill where in the most popular of the various versions of the story they were nurtured by a wolf.

The Lupercale was discovered by chance in the course of archaeological work being done on the House of Augustus. At its location it is some 50 feet below the level of the Palatine Hill. No attempt has as yet been made to enter the cave because of its fragility. Photographic

inspection has identified the site as the Lupercale. There are dramatic paintings and seashell decorations in the site confirming that it is highly likely the place which was central to the annual festival in Rome, the Lupercalia, held on February 15 recalling the story of Romulus and Remus and celebrating the 'actual' cave where they were suckled by the wolf. The Lupercalia had fallen into abeyance until Augustus reinstated the festival. The festival continued thereafter until the end of the 5th century when it fell foul of the wishes of Pope Gelasius.



Capitoline Museum bronze c.500—480BC

Foundation myths go back millennia. The Sumerian/Babylonian foundation myth of Gilgamesh was of the 3rd millennium BCE and the myth of their divine origins was of profound importance to the Classical Athenians.

The desire for meaning and abhorrence for the idea that one's society is the product of random processes or mere contingency is no doubt the basis of the formation of foundation myths. At Rome there was perhaps a further, less profound, motivation: the need to compete with the impressive foundation myths of the Greek cities of southern Italy.

In the next issue of RAG there will be more on recent discoveries in Rome. (Ed)

A TASTE OF ROMAN JORDAN

Don & Ann Boyer

Don & Ann Boyer are members of the Roman Archaeology Group and providers of the Boyer Travel Scholarship in Roman Archaeology. Here they recount some of their experiences on a trip they took to Jordan in April 2007 under the guidance of Professor David Kennedy.

A recent Easter trip to Jordan in the company of David Kennedy turned into an unforgettable smorgasbord of experience – and not just because Jordanian visitor cuisine often favours smorgasbord-type meals. With David's expert guidance, in five days we visited numerous archaeological and historical sites ranging from Petra in the south to Jarash in the north. Roman Jordan was the main theme of the trip, but side visits to Mt Nebo, the Crusader castle at Kerak and a Hajj fort to name but a few demonstrate what a depth of history Jordan has to offer the interested visitor.

You can read about it, and you can see pictures of it, but nothing prepares the visitor for the splendour of the Nabatean-Roman city of Petra, 250 km south of Amman. The city sits in a stunning scenic setting created by strangely coloured and contoured weathered sandstone, with colours subtly changing as the sun moves. The view from ground level does not do it justice but the aerial views in David Kennedy's *Ancient Jordan from the Air* give a better sense of proportion. The approach to the ancient city is generally via the 'Siq', a narrow slot that follows a dramatic 100 m deep fissure in the surrounding sandstone and after a 1 km winding downhill walk opens out into the façade of "The Treasury"; actually a large tomb carved with great precision by the Nabataeans. This is the view that appears on all the tourist brochures and so epitomises the Petra experience.



Photo (c) Don and Ann Boyer

El Kazneh ('The Treasury')

There are many locations to visit at Petra, which offers an interesting mix of Nabatean and Roman structures and more than 800 tombs. We only spent a day there but at least two are probably required to do it any sort of justice. While tourists are numerous, crowding should seldom be an issue as Petra is a very big site.

Current excavation is in progress at several locations, and new tombs have recently been exposed below ground level at The

Treasury by the Department of Antiquities. Brown University has a long term excavation project at the site of a possible temple adjacent to the Roman colonnaded street and the Temenos Gate in the centre of Petra. Referred to as the 'Great Temple' this site has a remarkable lower entranceway (Lower Temenos), paved with hexagonal slabs (and sited over extensive underground cisterns) and bordered by impressive colonnades, which leads via stairways to the Upper Temenos or 'temple' proper. Detailed carvings on column capitals include intriguing elephants' heads.



Photo (c) Don and Ann Boyer

View of the colonnades and entranceway (Lower Temenos)

The long uphill trek to Ed-Deir is worth the effort to see the wonderfully carved "Monastery", which has the largest façade of any tomb at Petra, and also the views of the country to the west from an overhanging precipice – where the inevitable Bedouin trader will be pleased to offer tea and trinkets! Taking our time to return to the hotel meant that we were able to see The Treasury in the late afternoon sun without the tourist crowds, and return (this time uphill) at our own slow pace via the Siq.

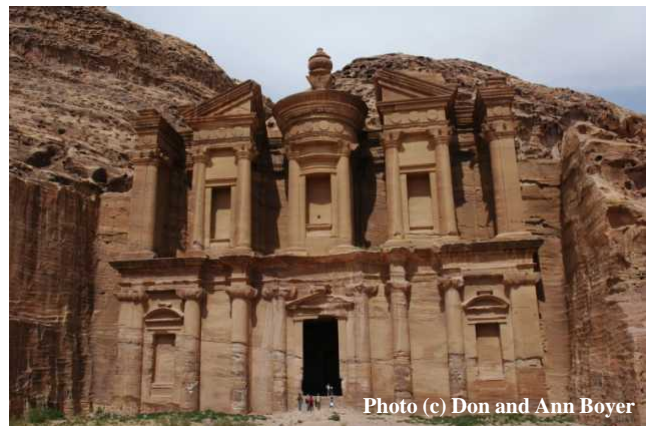


Photo (c) Don and Ann Boyer

The massive 45 m x 50 m carved façade of The Monastery

As if Petra was not enough, the day had actually started with a quick trip to a small Crusader fort (Al Wuayra) on the edge of town. There were no crowds here so we had the view of the quite fascinating remains all to ourselves. The entrance to the fort is quite dramatic, being a narrow bridge over a deep chasm and then through a hole in the rock.



Photo (c) Don and Ann Boyer

Entrance to Crusader fort (Al Wuayra) near Petra

The road trip back to Amman provided an opportunity to visit a number of Roman forts, the first being Muhattet el-Hajj on the southern rim of the Wadi Mujib. En route the road passes by two Roman milestones displaying clear inscriptions relating to road construction and repairs over a period of 200 years. The plateau rim near the small 50 m square fort offers stunning views along the Wadi in both directions.

Time did not permit a visit to the legendary Roman fort at Qasr Bshir - legendary because of its remarkable state of preservation – but a number of other forts were visited including Udruh, Da'ajaniya and el-Hallabat. The late Roman (c.AD300) fortress at Udruh is one of the largest ancient military structures in Jordan and once housed a garrison of up to 2,000 men. In plan its outline is an unusual distorted rectangle shape with distinctive U-shaped towers projecting from the walls. The state of preservation is very good and a recently discovered inscription from near one of the entrances may offer useful insights as to the site's history.



Photo (c) Don and Ann Boyer

Gate in Roman Fort at Udruh – Ann Boyer and David Kennedy inspecting overturned inscription block

Udruh is of limestone construction over basalt foundations that contrasts strongly with the next fort visited, Da'ajaniya, which is almost entirely constructed of black basalt. The natural resistance of this material has aided the preservation of a moderately-sized 100 m square fort, and the dark colour of the basalt means that the site stands out on the edge of flat steppe country.

But even the well-preserved imposing basalt walls of Da'ajaniya do not match the quality of construction or the state of preservation evident at El-Hallabat, 45 km South East of Amman. The external walls are mainly limestone while many internal walls of well finished basalt blocks. The quality of finish

is enhanced by the fact that many bear Greek (and a rare Nabataean) inscriptions, part of a large edict dating to the fifth century. There is much restoration work currently underway at the fort and adjacent mosque in preparation for opening the site as a major tourist attraction.



Photo (c) Don and Ann Boyer

Roman Fort at Qasr el-Hallabat showing finish on interior basalt walls

The final day took us to the Roman town of Gerasa (Jarash), a vast site located within the modern city of Jarash just an hour's drive from Amman. The main access to the site passes the huge Arch of Hadrian, which sets the tone for what can only be described as a total Roman experience that includes a Hippodrome, two very large temples (to Artemis and Zeus), two theatres, two bath complexes and stunning colonnaded streets, the result of a positive orgy of construction that spanned at least three centuries. In places it is difficult to determine what is well preserved original ruins and what is replica due to extensive restoration work. The Triumphal Arch is restored and the North Gate is currently undergoing restoration. One could usefully spend days at such a vast site.



Photo (c) Don and Ann Boyer

Jarash – View of Oval Piazza and colonnaded street from the Temple of Zeus

Jarash is also where David Kennedy is directing the surveying of previously unrecorded archaeological sites outside of the city wall to the west of Jarash. The survey is driven by the need to record these sites before they are destroyed by modern development. Work is incomplete but the survey has already identified 217 sites, including a number of rock cut tombs and a potential cemetery site on land partially owned by the Department of Antiquities.

Our five days were up and we had only just scratched the surface – just a taste of Roman Jordan – but we will return.

Egyptian Granite

David Kennedy

In a recent book, I characterized Northwest Jordan as a “virtual island”, a region cut off from the interior by the sea-like desert, from Edom by the Wadi Mujib, from Syria by the Wadi Yarmuk and from Palestine and the Mediterranean world by the deep slash of the Jordan Valley. Of course the region was not totally isolated and people and goods and ideas moved into and out of it. What is at issue is the extent of that isolation. One way of gauging that is to look at the archaeological evidence for specific items and compare and contrast their presence in Northwest Jordan with the surrounding regions. That in turn means the inorganic materials that survive or the inorganic things that are a proxy for perishable materials. For example, the circulation of wine imported from elsewhere in the Mediterranean may be identified through the survival of the transport vessels that carried it, the large clay amphorae.

ries as monoliths. Several examples are known of in the Jordanian Decapolis.



An aerial view of the Octagonal church at Jarash



16 red granite columns of the Tetrakionia at Palmyra

Another item that survives and can be quantified is the imported decorative stone that was traded all around the Mediterranean to adorn public buildings or pave the floors of wealthy houses. White marble from the Carrara quarries of Northwest Italy turns up in Roman Londinium; Tunisian marble in Libya’s Lepcis Magna; marble from everywhere turns up in Rome; and almost all the main decorative stones of the Roman Empire turn up in the cities of the Jordanian Decapolis. The material is best known from Gerasa (Jarash) where there has been several decades of excavation, but some is reported from each of the other well-known cities, Abila (Qweilbeh), Gadara (Umm Qeis), Pella (Tabaqat Fahl) and Philadelphia (Amman).

I use the term “decorative stone” rather than marble because the Romans used the word *marmor* more loosely than just our marble to include, porphyry, granotidides, alabaster ... and the superb granites of Egypt. The most striking of these latter was the red granite quarried near ancient Syene (modern Aswan), c.900 km up the Nile. It could be utilized in various ways but was especially popular for columns which were carved out of the quar-

ries as monoliths. Several examples are known of in the Jordanian Decapolis. Long before Rome conquered the Mediterranean lands, people had been shifting large blocks of stone. Pharaonic Egypt moved immense obelisks from the quarries of Syene/Aswan down the Nile to Heliopolis, and the Athenians moved marble overland from a variety of locations in Attica and beyond. Rome itself needed huge quantities and made its quarrying, shipping and movement by land a routine and seemingly large-scale activity. Monoliths of 40 Roman feet (RF) were common (the inner porch of the Pantheon) and the red granite column used for the Column of Antoninus Pius (now lost) was one of a pair shipped from Aswan and stood 50 RF high.

Nevertheless, water transport was simplest and cheapest and we need not be surprised that most examples of red granite in the Levant has turned up in the coastal cities. At Caesarea Maritima on the coast of modern Israel archaeologists have recorded 83 examples.



A Red Granite column fragment at Umm Qeis

Stone columns could have of course be transported overland just as earlier empires in the Near East had routinely transported the huge trees of the Levant overland to Iraq. A recent study in Israel found examples of Aswan red granite (and of Egyptian grey as well) at interior sites though they are far less numerous: only Scythopolis (Beth Shean) gets into double figures (16 red granite). The interesting outcome of this survey of seven major sites in Israel is that decorative stone columns are overwhelmingly to be found on the two coastal sites (Caesarea and Ashkelon) - 211 columns from a total of 314: 67%.

Red granite – and other decorative stone columns – could penetrate far into the interior. The great courtyard of the Temple of Jupiter Heliopolitanus at Baalbek in the Lebanon, over 60 km from the sea by a difficult land route, includes at least 188 Aswan red granite columns. Even more striking, at least twenty red granite columns made it over 200 km from the Mediterranean to Palmyra where 16 were used in the Tetrakionia.



Red Granite column fragments at the Propylaea at Jarash

Of course, the distance from Caesarea to the Jordanian Decapolis cities was much shorter than to Palmyra, but the descent into the Jordan Valley then climb on the east side to the various cities scattered throughout the highlands presented major logistical problems. Evidently they could be and were overcome.

Red granite has been reported at Jarash in particular. Some was seen near the South Tetrakionia (paralleling in form, date and – now – material, that at Palmyra). Heading north up the main street one passes an immense basin in the Nymphaeum made of red Egyptian granite. A short distance further at least five columns or parts of columns in red granite can be seen lying beside the Propylaea Church. Several more broken columns are on view at the so-called Octagonal Church c. 300 m beyond the North Gate. I have also seen another red granite column piece at Umm Qeis (Gadara) and more has been reported at Amman (Philadelphia).

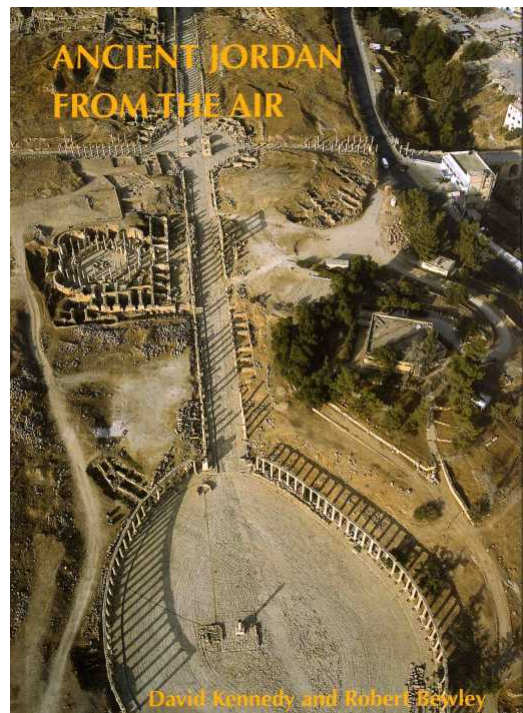
There is, therefore, ample evidence of several columns or parts of column in red granite in at least three of the Jordanian Decapolis cities. However, there is as yet no systematic cataloguing of these red granites in Northwest Jordan, much less the other granites and decorated stones. That could and should be done.

At the same time samples could be taken from the granites to allow the same sort of scientific tests as in Israel to trace the granites to specific quarries – not just the red granites in Egypt but the grey and other granites in Egypt and around the Aegean.

Overall we would like to know the sources of all such decorative stones, their distribution in Jordan (were there any imported to Petra, for example, or to the smaller cities such as Madaba, Rabba and Characmoab), their dimensions and weight (as a guide to logistical problems and possible usage), primary and secondary use (such valuable items were often salvaged and reused both within the Roman centuries and later), the periods they were being imported, the likely routes, etc etc.



Red Granite font at the Nymphaeum, Jarash



The Distributor of David Kennedy's *Ancient Jordan from the Air* is currently offering the book at £15 (instead of £30). You can obtain copies from David Kennedy direct for \$40 (instead of \$80)

Palmyra and the Temple of Bel

Rebecca Banks



Rebecca Banks has just completed her Bachelor of Arts with Honours, majoring in Latin and Ancient History, at UWA. She was the 2006 recipient of the Roman Archaeology Travel Scholarship.

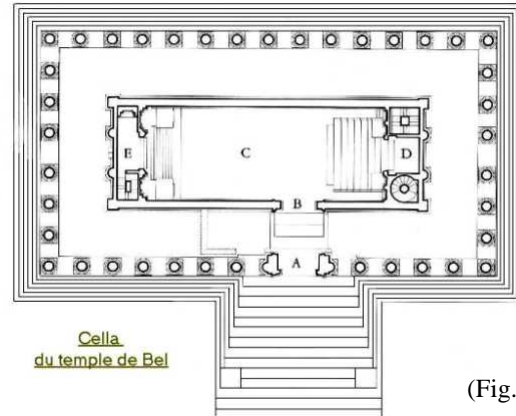
The ancient city of Palmyra commanded a position between the *Orient* and the *Occident* at the peak of the Ancient Roman era. Caught on the threshold of both Roman and Parthian territories, it is unsurprising that the city's main temple complex, the Temple of Bel, should reflect this balance between east and west.

Palmyra, modern day Tadmor, is situated half-way between the Mediterranean Sea and the Euphrates River, roughly 200 km from each. It is an oasis, the biggest in the Syrian Desert, isolated by the expansive desert that surrounds it on all sides. The area was inhabited from the prehistoric era, as evidenced by flints found in the vicinity of the Efqa spring, Palmyra's main water source. It is only in the late centuries BC, however, that Palmyra became a location of prominence. It was at this time that Palmyra became caught between the growing empires of both Parthia and Rome. The population took advantage of the luxury trade between East and West and became an important trading centre. The city also commanded a strategic position in the buffer region between Parthia and Rome. Its situation is well described by Pliny the Elder in the 70s AD:

Though placed between the two great empires of Rome and Parthia, it still maintains its independence; never failing, at the very first moment that a rupture between them is threatened, to attract the careful attention of both. (Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* 5.21)

Syria was made a province by Pompey in 63 BC, but Palmyra was not incorporated into the empire until much later, probably in the reign of Tiberius Caesar. The result was a rapid rise in prosperity, but also a culture that reflects both the local and foreign elements of the city.

The Temple of Bel (see plan view: Fig. 1) was built during this period of transition in Palmyra's history. The largest architect-



(Fig. 1)

tural undertaking of Palmyra, and also the first to be built in hard limestone, the Temple dominates the landscape of the ruined city. The temple is located within a *temenos*, the sacred enclosed space around a temple (see drawing below: Fig. 2). A sacred enclosed space was almost a necessity for temples of this region, and follows the tradition of open areas sacred to certain deities, often associated with high places or water sources. The sanctuary's dimensions are enormous, 205 by 210 m, and large portions of the huge walls and colonnades of the *temenos* still stand. The *tell* upon which the sanctuary is situated has yielded artefacts dated from the pre-historic era.

Isolated in the centre of the sanctuary is the Temple of Bel. The Temple of Bel was dedicated to the divine triad of Bel, Iarhibol and Aglibol in AD32, and the priesthood of Bel is attested in association with this location from 44BC. The complex within which we find the temple was not completed until the late-2nd century AD.



(Fig. 2)

In its ruined state, the contrast of the temple to paragons of Greek and Roman architecture is pointed. The entrance to the *cella* is off centre along the long side of the structure. The opening is made distinct by a monumental entrance, once incorporated into the pseudo-dipteral colonnade, but now standing alone: a sight more familiar in the architecture of Egypt than in the architecture of a temple built during the Julio-Claudian era. Either side of this entrance along the *cella* walls are four windows (see figure 3), a rare feature in temple architecture of the Roman Empire. Restored on the lower cornice above what remains of the peristyle are crow-stepped merlons

(Fig. 3), a typical Syrian architectural decorative feature.

At closer inspection, however, the temple equally reveals elements of Greco-Roman style. The entrance, despite its offside location, is in line with the axial plan of the sanctuary. The temple has a pseudo-dipteral peristyle (8 x 15 columns) (of which only 8 columns remain (Fig. 3) which was originally embellished in the Corinthian order. The decoration of the capitals is not evident today as these were metal attachments, probably bronze, silver or gold, and plundered long ago, along with the metal brackets between the stone blocks, leaving the temple with a pock-marked appearance.

At the north and south ends of the temple exterior are two engaged Ionic columns which give the impression of two columns in antis at the entrance of a traditional Greek temple. The colonnade at the north and south ends also had the widened centre intercolumniation that traditionally would have been used to emphasise the entrance of the temple. These features, in the past, caused speculation that the Temple of Bel originally had an entrance to the South, thus was originally built in the form of a Hellenistic temple.



The superstructure of the temple, which does not survive today, also displayed elements of two traditions. The temple roof was flat, in the Eastern style, and was probably used on occasion for ritual (Fig 2). The roof was reached by three staircases built into the interior of the temple, two at the south end and one at the north (Fig. 1). Religious association with 'high places' is well attested in the East, being part of both Syro-Phoenician and Parthian traditions, and the roof of the temple may have been a part of this tradition. The temple roof also included pediments. As the temple did not have a pitched roof, this would have been in imitation of the Greco-Roman temple style but a completely superfluous decorative feature in this instance.

The monolithic twenty-ton temple beams that supported the roof and portico were decorated with relief. The decoration displays religious scenes and is considered 'Palmyrene' in character (Fig. 4). Moreover, where the sculptural relief is located is unparalleled. In a Greek temple – most famously in the Parthenon – such sculptural decoration would be located on a frieze running around the exterior of the temple inside the colonnade and would be viewed when facing the *cella*. Here, the sculpture could only have been viewed while facing along the colonnade, a unique feature, the reason for which is unknown. One hypothesis is the peristyle of the temple itself was used as part of a religious procession, perhaps akin to that represented on one of the temple beams (picture: Fig. 4).



It is the interior of the temple that reveals the true nature of the temple as that of an Eastern cult. At either end are located two *thalamoi* or *adyta* (Fig. 1). *Thalamoi* are elevated rooms, in this case reached by a ramp or stairs, similar in appearance to a large shrine. A decorated façade framed the opening to the room. Either side of the opening, hidden behind the façades, were the aforementioned staircases to the roof and a room (north *thamos*).

The location of these *thalamoi* would have created a cross-axis to that of the approach to the temple, something opposed to the axial planning of formal Greco-Roman architecture. Furthermore, these inner shrines are a Syrian feature of religious architecture and are also located in the temples of Ba'alshamin and Nebo in Palmyra. Their equivalent in Greek or Roman architecture would be the area in which the representation of the god would be held, usually a statue in the round. Statuary of religious icons is rare in Palmyra, and it is more likely that the gods were represented in bas-relief sculpture or by *baetyli*, stones thought to house the essence of the god. Unfortunately, no evidence in the *thalamoi* remains to verify what exactly they housed.

The north *thamos* is believed to have been the 'holy of holies' and housed the representation of Bel or his divine triad. The ceiling of this *thamos* is decorated with a cupola representing the astral deities and the zodiac. In contrast to their location, the figures are overwhelmingly Hellenic. That this was the main *thamos* is implied by the embellishment of its ceiling and of the larger space before it, created by the off-sided entrance to the *cella*. The south *thamos* is believed to have housed a *lectisternium*, the cult figure of Bel used in processions like that represented on the temple beam relief (Fig. 4), and which is implied by the ramp leading to the opening.

The Temple of Bel clearly had to serve the function of the cult of that deity. The interior of the temple, and certain exterior elements, cater for the requirements of that cult as far as our knowledge can comprehend. These requirements in turn shifted the form of what may have been a Hellenistic style temple into a pastiche of Greco-Roman, Eastern and local styles that were being introduced into Palmyra by its growing cosmopolitan nature as a trading centre of the Eastern Roman Empire. The Temple of Bel is therefore a unique result of cultural influence which continues to elude our complete comprehension, yet continues to fascinate.

Book Notices

David Kennedy

Aerial Archaeology is probably the single most important prospection technique in archaeology. Tens of thousands of sites – often invisible at ground level – have been found from the air. More than “finding”, the aerial view is a superb way of seeing at a glance what an entire site looks like and the context in which it is to be found.

ITALY

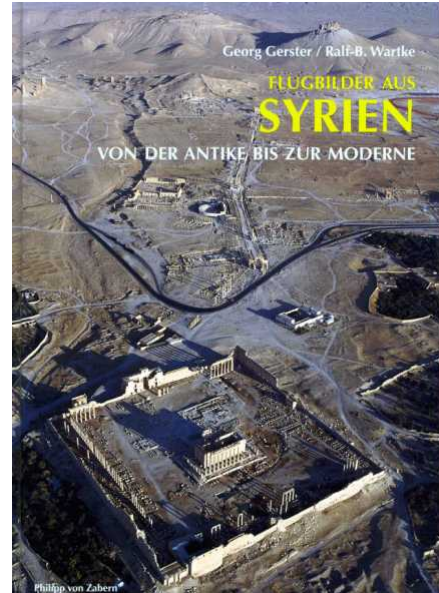
One of the pioneers of Aerial Archaeology was John Bradford. His book, *Ancient Landscapes* (London, 1957) is still a classic guide on “how to ...”. His main love was the archaeology of Italy whose ancient rural landscape in the south (Puglia and around Foggia) he – literally – put on the map. Serving with British military intelligence in Italy at the end of the war he first scrutinized air photos already taken then arranged training flights on areas in which he was interested. He published several important articles on Aerial Archaeology in Italy, mainly in the periodical *Antiquity*. These are well-known to English readers but less so to Italian students. Now Francesca Radcliffe – writing elsewhere in this issue – has put together both facsimiles of the original articles and Italian translations. Equally fascinating she presents the “story” in this bilingual book. A “good read” – but also a sad one. Bradford was a brilliant man and extraordinarily enterprising and far-seeing. But in 1960, aged 42, he was certified and hospitalized for the last 15 years of his life. His wife returned to Italy to her excavations but in 1963, suffered an accident on site and spent the rest of her life (till 1985) in a wheelchair. Francesca’s book is a delightful introduction to the man and his work.



Radcliffe, F. F. (2006) *Paesaggi sepolti in Daunia. John Bradford e la ricerca archeologica dal cielo 1945/1957*, Foggia

SYRIA

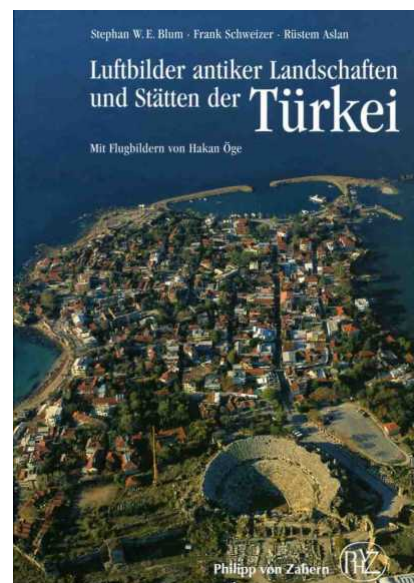
Alongside Britain, the other area in which Aerial Archaeology was pioneered was – surprisingly – the Middle East, specifically Syria. Although that initiative did not survive the upheavals of the Second World War, it is a delight to have a superb book (in German) of stunning aerial photographs of archaeological sites.



Gerster, G. and Wartke, R.-B. (2003) *Flugbilder aus Syrien. Von der Antike bis zur Moderne*, Mainz-am-Rhein (von Zabern).

TURKEY

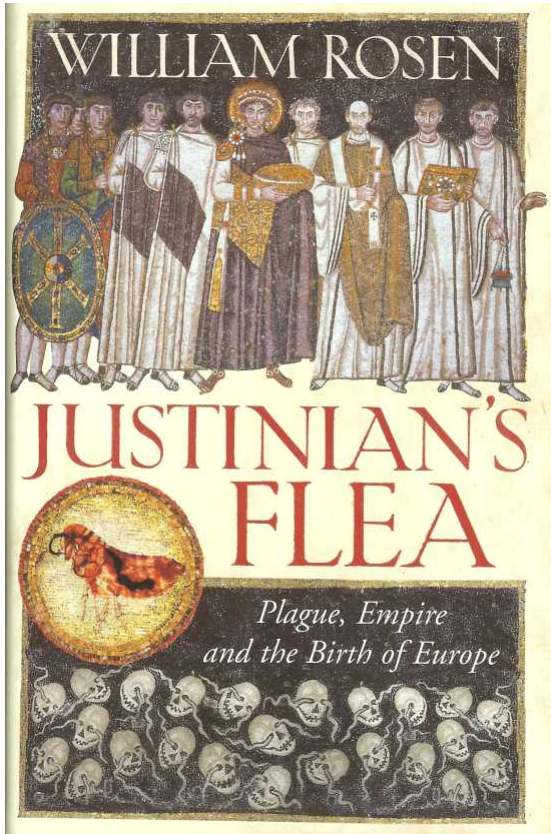
Turkey has long been a black hole for Aerial Archaeology – it is, for all practical purposes, impossible and always has been. It is a pleasure, therefore, to find a book on ancient Turkey from the air. Blum, S. W. E., Schweizer, F. and Aslan, R. (2006) *Luftbilder antiker Landschaften und Stätten der Türkei*, Mainz (Verlag Philipp von Zabern).



A superb book but probably still not as good as Belge, M. and Yerasimos, S. (1994) *Turkey: an Aerial Portrait*, London (Thames and Hudson).

BOOK REVIEW

Marian Cross



Justinian is considered one of the greatest of all Roman Emperors. He ruled first as Regent for his uncle, the Emperor Justin, then in his own right as Emperor from AD527 until his death in AD565. He was both skilful and tireless in his efforts to restore the reach of the empire, which had diminished considerably since its height around AD400. Justinian's military achievements should have positioned the Romans for yet another period of long and strong domination of the Mediterranean region. This didn't happen. Instead modern day Europe soon began to emerge, Islamic armies rose up and overran both the Roman and the Persian Empires and the sleeping giant that would become China was allowed to slumber on.

Within mere decades of Justinian's death the political mosaic around the Mediterranean and across to Arabia began to change irrevocably; and by a means that could never have been foreseen. The tipping point that paved the way for these events was, in the view of author William Rosen, the bite of a hunger-crazed flea infected with bubonic plague.

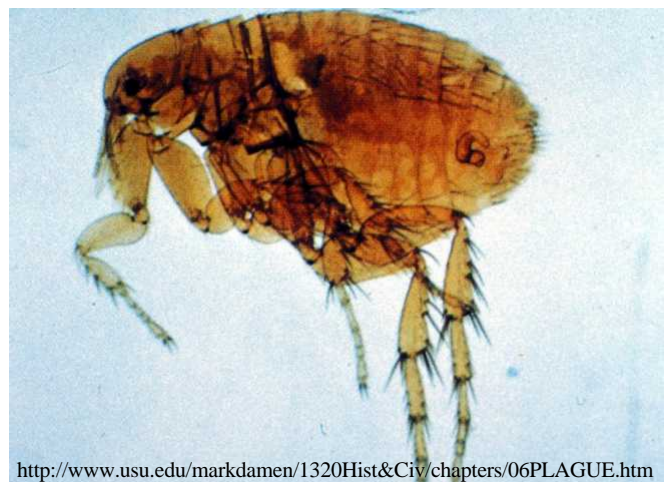
During his reign Justinian applied a steady hand to the levers of power. He so effectively reformed and streamlined the Roman legal system that parts of the framework are still embedded in legal systems today. Justinian also astutely surrounded himself with talented advisors who contributed significantly to

the achievements of the period. Probably the most notable was Belisarius, his extraordinarily gifted general. The role of Theodora, Justinian's wife, who was her husband's confidante and de facto co-ruler is also given some prominence by Rosen. The author however doesn't confine his attention to simply what the Romans were doing. He applies his narrative style to a forensic account of how, at the same time, a particular bacterium carried by the fleas that infest rats was engaging in the kind of genetic engineering that would open the door to the world's first pandemic. The data techniques of modern epidemiology are referenced to draw some credible conclusions as to the ebb and flow of the resulting plague which claimed 25 million lives. Against this background of huge human losses the faltering military might of the Romans is better understood, as are a string of other unintended consequences, indeed the author himself refers to "Justinian's Flea" as a 'book of connections'.

William Rosen has written a very readable book which puts humankind's first pandemic under the microscope of 21st century disease control analysis. He then inserts it back into the Roman world and delivers a fresh perspective on this period. Along the way he offers a delightful architectural expose on the re-building of the Hagia Sophia cathedral in Constantinople, illuminates the most vexing theological questions of Justinian's time, disentangles the complexities of Roman jurisprudence and all with a genuine joy in discovering what lies beneath the surface. Anyone with an interest in the Roman Empire will enjoy this book for its historical content and easy style but there is much else there too that will reward the reader.

Rosen, W. (2007) *Justinian's Flea: Plague, Empire and the Birth of Europe*, London. See also Little L. K. (2006) *Plague and the End of Antiquity: The Pandemic of 541-750*, Cambridge (CUP)

BUBONIC PLAGUE



<http://www.usu.edu/markdamen/1320Hist&Civ/chapters/06PLAGUE.htm>

Xenopsylla cheopis

The bacillus *Yersinia pestis* the pathogen responsible for bubonic plague is carried by rats. It moves from rat to rat via fleas, in particular, the rat flea, *Xenopsylla cheopis*. (Ed.)

Letter from above Roman Dorset/SW England

Francesca Radcliffe



Francesca Radcliffe is a freelance aerial Archaeologist living in Dorset. She has a keen interest in the aerial archaeology of her native Italy and recently arranged the publication of John Bradford's pioneering essays on Apulia (see Book Notices this issue of RAG).

When David Kennedy asked me to write a short piece for RAG with news from Dorset I felt a little apprehensive, so much to tell and so little knowledge!

For inspiration I looked in the latest volume of the Proceedings of the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society, and learnt that in 2004 in North Dorset and more precisely in the southern end of Shillingstone a village west of Hod Hill, was discovered a previously unknown Romano-British villa. The discovery happened prior to the building of a new housing



Photo 1. The Stour Flood plain from the North. Highlighted in red: on the right, South end of Shillingstone and site of the Roman villa, and on the top left-hand corner, just visible is Hod Hill. FR 183/1 - F. Radcliffe © 1995

development in the village, the area outlined in red on the right handside of the photo below. I happened to take it in November 1995 while flying over it, blissfully unaware of what I missed!

The site is on an east-facing slope about ½ a km south-west of the flood plain of the River Stour (see map below).

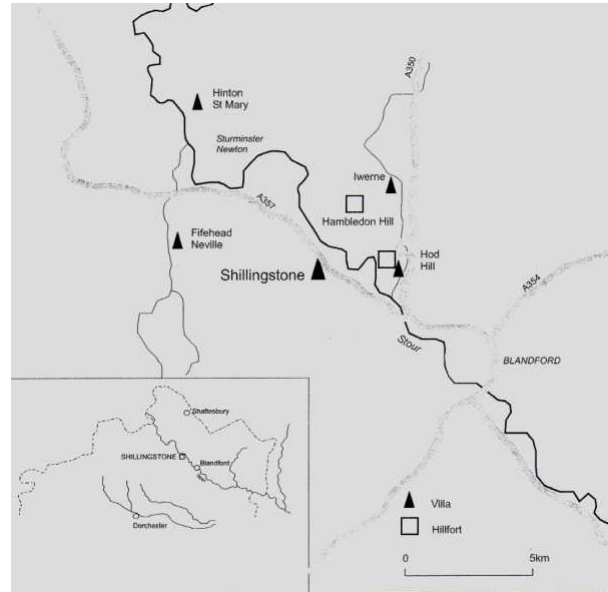


Fig 1 Elworth, Dorset, the Stour Valley, locations of other villas and hillforts around Shillingstone, from Fig 10 of the DNHAS Proceedings

Because of the mixed surface geology, the geophysical survey, as aerial photos probably would have done too, failed to disclose the nature and extent of the archaeology, which

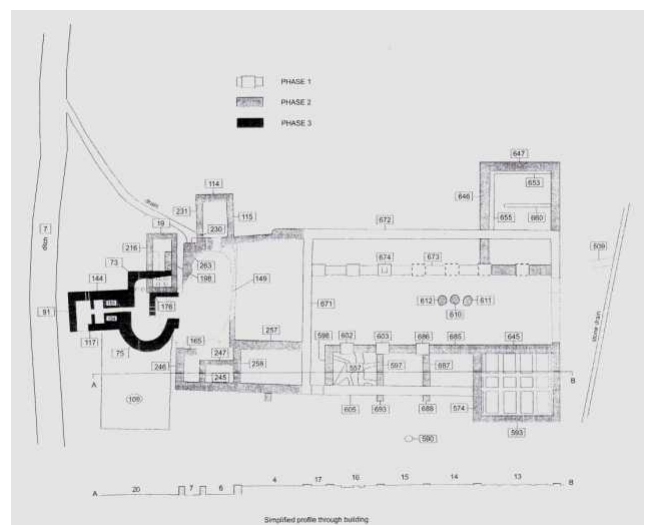


Fig 2. Plan of the building from Figure 12 in the DNHAS Proceedings

became apparent only once the topsoil was stripped at the beginning of the building work. The presumably watching brief became a fully fledged rescue excavation managed by John Valentin of AC *archaeology*. The main discovery was a large Romano-British building aligned South East—North West measuring 45 m x 23 m (see plan view above).

The “aisled” building, comprising at least 20 rooms and a bath complex on the west end, had undergone at least three major phases of substantial additions and alterations during its occupancy. It was a building of a high standard of construction. Fragments of glass for windows, painted wall plaster, ceramic roof tiles and a limestone voussoir and fragments of small columns were recovered during the excavation. Of the finds, for which no detailed analysis is yet available, there were more than 4000 sherds of Romano British pottery dated to the 3rd and 4th century. Of the 28 coins recovered, some dated from the 3rd century and the majority from the 4th century. There was only one item of Roman metalwork identified as a fragment of a pre-Flavian ‘Hod Hill-type’ fibula. Based on these finds, a provisional date of c. 270-400 for the main period of construction has been given.



Photo 2. Hod Hill from the South West. The river Stour is on the bottom left-hand corner. FR 181/22 - F. Radcliffe © 1995

The reason for mentioning this at length, apart for its intrinsic interest, is that it is so near to Hod Hill (Photo below).

This handsome hillfort I have photographed from the air on a number of occasions and this is a photograph I took in November 1995, the day before I took Photo one. In those days, Giles Romanes, an eye-surgeon friend and also a pilot, sometimes would ask me to accompany him in short flights over Dorset. On this occasion his Piper Vagabond was to be taken from its home in the minute Littlebredy air field (and the emphasis should be on the field!) to the more substantial Henstridge Airfield on the North Dorset/Somerset border, to have its annual overhaul. The photo shows clearly the Roman fort built on the North West corner of the square Iron Age hillfort, the ramparts and ditches highlighted by the shadows of the low winter sun. This Roman fort was excavated extensively in the late 1950s by Professor Ian Richmond for the British Museum with spectacular results. It appears that one of the cohorts of the *Legio II Augusta* and a regiment of cavalry

were stationed here, stressing the importance of Hod Hill as a powerful centre of the Durotrigian people, then the local inhabitants of Dorset. The commander of the *Legio II Augusta* was at the time Vespasian, who later became one of the most famous Roman emperors, and who while in Britain fought “thirty” battles against the native tribes, capturing some twenty towns and eventually taming the troublesome Celts, or so he thought!

My thanks to Mark Corney and Stephen Robinson of AC *archaeology* for allowing me to quote extensively and use two of the figures from their paper “Shillingstone Roman Villa: Summary Account and Interpretation”, in Vol. 128, 2007 of the *Proceedings of the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society*.

November 2007

Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences University of Western Australia Prize Giving Ceremony

On the 21st May, 2007 the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences held its annual Prize Giving Ceremony at the Octagon Theatre followed by supper in the University Club.

The prize-winners from the Department of Classics and Ancient History were:

Marco Ceccarelli - Adeste Humaniores Postgraduate Research Grant;

Lara Constant – Rose and Cecil Owen Bequest Prize in Level 1 Latin or Greek;

Maire Gomes - Rose and Cecil Owen Bequest Prize in Honours in Classics and Ancient History;

Angus McLeod - Rose and Cecil Owen Bequest Prize in Ancient History 1102;

Sandra Ottley – Rodney R. T. Prider Travel Scholarship;

Mark Siford – John Antonas Memorial Prize, the Rose and Cecil Owen Bequest Prize in Level 2 or 3 Classics and Ancient History and the UWA Graduates Association Prize (Classics and Ancient History);

David Varne - Rose and Cecil Owen Bequest Prize in Level 2 or 3 Classics and Ancient History;

Miranda Williams – Lady Hackett Prize for Latin 3301 and Latin 3302.

Roman Archaeology at UWA Membership of RAG

Roman Archaeology at UWA

Legions Project

As *afficionados* of the Roman Army will know, German scholars put together comprehensive surveys of the main units of the Roman army about a century ago. Those were published in a multi-volume series called Pauly's *Realencyclopädie*. They are now rather out of date but still form the backbone of much scholarship – the starting point if you want to know, for example, an historical outline of a particular legion together with citation of the evidence. A tireless Dutchman has organized the translation from German to English of the entries for the dozens of legions originally surveyed by Emil Ritterling in 1925. Now three of our RAG Members are at work translating the entries for *Legions III Gallica, VI Ferrata and XVI Flavia Firma*. Before the next issue of RAG we hope to see them on the web site: <http://www.romanarmy.com/cms/content/section/11/113/>.

Translating

Academics and research students regularly find key publications for their research are in languages they cannot read. One Honours student recently found herself having to access the French résumé rather than the detailed article – in Polish! Would it be worthwhile compiling a list of Members who “might” be willing to offer help translating from other languages? Entirely voluntary and no promises ...

Travellers

Our students are on the move. Rebecca McKimmie has recently returned from an extensive trip to Italy and Britain in connection with her PhD thesis. Following hard on her heels was Sandra Ottley in Italy working on her PhD thesis as well (see next issue). Leonard Gould – a prospective Honours student in 2008 – has just returned from a tour which involved looking at replicas of Roman structures in Britain. As I write, Martina

Müller is in Switzerland, Germany then on to Britain researching Reconstruction and Replicas of Roman structures for her doctorate.

Everyday Life in the Roman Army

David Kennedy has arranged to give a course through University Extension on “Everyday Life in the Roman Imperial Army”. That will be on four evenings spread across June 2008. Details in next issue.

Bill Leadbetter

Committee member, Bill Leadbetter, had a recent change of scenery. He has been seconded from his role as Senior Lecturer in Education and History at ECU and is now the Senior Policy Adviser to the (State) Minister for Heritage. He describes his secondment thus: “This means that I wear more suits, go to more meetings, and write speeches to be given by other people. For this, training as a Roman historian has been ideal preparation. Because I am on secondment, sooner or later, I will lose my office with the spectacular view, lose my security pass to Parliament House, and lose my relatively easy access to government, and return to the University sector's corridors of impotence, glum colleagues, and mountains of marking. Carpe diem.”

Teaching Internships

Each year the university offers a small number of Teaching Internships to well-qualified research students. Classics and Ancient History has had a number of successes – Graeme Miles, Pam Lynch and Sandra Ottley. This year we have done even better – two of the four awarded in the School of Humanities went to Rebecca McKimmie and Nathan Leber, both working on PhDs and both now assigned as interns to David Kennedy as mentor for 2008.

Summer Saturday Programme

Saturday 19 January 2008: Septimius Severus
Saturday 16 February 2008: Roman Archaeology
Saturday 15 March 2008: Marcus Aurelius

\$25.00 Ordinary membership
\$35.00 Family membership 1 (2 adults; 1 copy of RAG magazine)
\$50.00 Family membership 2 (4 family members; 1 copy of RAG magazine)
\$50.00 School membership (2 copies of RAG magazine)
\$10.00 Student membership
Complete and post the form with this edition of the RAG or contact The Treasurer at the address below.

The RAG Inc

www.romarchgroup.humanities.uwa.edu.au/

Chairman

Professor David Kennedy
M205 Classics and Ancient History
University of Western Australia
Stirling Highway
CRAWLEY WA 6009

Tel: 08 64882150 Fax: 08 64881182
E-mail: dkennedy@cyllene.uwa.edu.au

Deputy Chairman

Rodney Greaves

Secretary
Michael Manley
M209 Reid Library UWA

Tel: (08) 64882330
E-mail: mmanley@library.uwa.edu.au

Treasurer

Maire Gomes
M205 Classics and Ancient
History UWA
E-mail: gomescm@bigpond.com

The RAG

Newsletter

Correspondence to the Editor:

Kevin J. O'Toole
c/o O'Toole & Oprandi
Level 7, 16 St George's Tce,
Perth, WA, 6000.

Tel: (08) 92214748 Fax: (08) 92213595
E-mail: kjotoole@otooleoprandi.com.au