

# The RAG

## Underwater Museums —

### *Off Ventotene and Cyprus*

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Ventotene is a very small island just off the west coast of Italy between Rome and Naples. In the waters off Ventotene archaeologists using sonar techniques and the aid of deep sea divers have discovered five Roman cargo vessels 1600—1900 years old at a depth of 100 to 150 metres. It is thought the vessels were attempting to find safe anchorage at the island which served as a safe haven from a turbulent Tyrrhenian Sea. Searches at such depths are unusual and it is thought that there may be many such vessels, perhaps thousands, waiting to be found in particular because at depths of over 100 metres wrecks are safe from destructive currents.



Italian Ministry of Culture and Aurora Trust

The project leading to the discovery is the joint effort of the Italian Ministry for Culture and a United States Group called the Aurora Trust. The photograph above shows amphorae lying on the seabed in association with the wrecks. The amphorae are believed to have originated in North Africa.

At Cape Greco off the east coast of Cyprus an underwater archaeological project led to the discovery a second century CE shipwreck in 2007. A recently completed survey of the Roman vessel's cargo has revealed 130 amphorae of wine and some perhaps of olive oil. Some of the wine is thought to be from the south of France, and the amphorae from south-eastern Asia Minor and the north-east Mediterranean. This find was in shallow waters.

Amongst the possible explanations for the vessel's presence off Cyprus are that it was

heading for Lefkolla and an alternative possibility that it was simply moving goods along the Cypriot coast.

The seabed further off Cape Greco is especially sandy and thought likely for that reason to be a valuable archaeological field. It will be explored by remote sensing techniques.

In 306 B.C.E. the Macedonian Demetrios Poliorketes, infamous for his having taken up residence in the Parthenon with his consorts (or so it is alleged), defeated Ptolemy in a sea battle off Cyprus in which it is thought 100 vessels were sunk. It is for this reason amongst others that the waters off Cape Greco are of great interest to archaeologists.

A number of institutions are involved in this work: the Institute of Nautical Archaeology at Texas A & M University; the RPM Nautical Foundation; and, the Thetis Foundation.

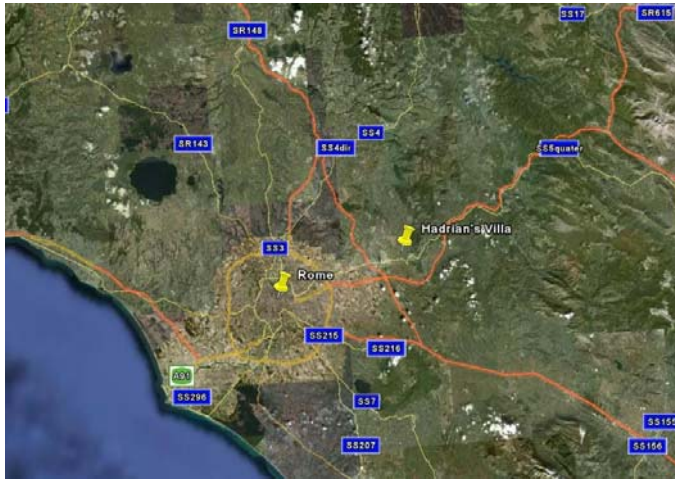
Nautical Archaeology benefits greatly from institutions such as the RPM Nautical Foundation, a not for profit foundation established in 2001 by George Robb, Director for the Institute of Nautical Archaeology. The Foundation has done important work off Albania and Montenegro. The photograph below is by Dr. J. Royal of the Foundation. The picture is of Dr. Adrian Anastasi of the Albanian Institute of Archaeology.



## A Visit to Hadrian's Villa at Tivoli

*Francesca Radcliffe*

In April 2009 I was in Rome to attend a conference on aerial photography, and while there I decided that this was a good opportunity to pay a visit to Hadrian's Villa near Tivoli, which had been on my list of places to see for a long time.



This spectacular site lies some 28 km northeast of Rome (see above) at the foot of the Colli Tiburtini, between two streams and above an underlying geology of limestone, sand and tufa. It was in this idyllic position that the new emperor Hadrian (AD117-138) started to build his magnificent country retreat, away from the bustle of Rome. The natural setting is beautiful with views over the plain and the surrounding hills. Large areas are now covered in olive trees, cypresses and maritime pines planted in the 18<sup>th</sup> century by Count Fede, one of the many owners of the site over the centuries. The site, which today partially encloses the original group of Hadrian's palaces, was bought by the state when the new Kingdom of Italy was founded in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Hadrian had a keen interest in architecture and paid close attention to the building of this imperial, monumental palace. Several ancient writers, Aurelius Victor and Cassius Dio among others, tell us of Hadrian's work as an architect and few doubt his strong influence in planning this 'villa', which must have been of special interest to him.

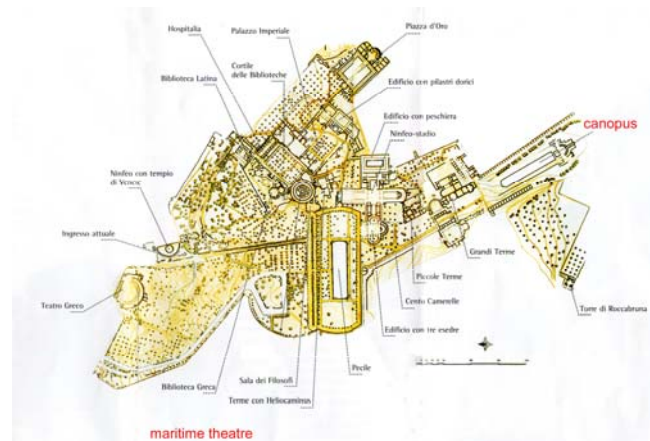
In the words of Aelius Spartianus in the *Vita Hadriani*: "*His villa at Tibur was marvellously constructed, and he actually gave to parts of it the names of provinces and places of the greatest renown, calling them, for instance, Lyceum, Academia, Prytaneum, Canopus, Poecile and Tempe. And in order not to omit anything, he even made a Hades.* (SHA Hadr. 26.5)

The site is huge and one of the first misnomers and misleading names that one comes across is that of 'villa'. The Villa covers an area of 120 hectares - bigger than the size of Pompeii (65 ha) and the 'villa' is rather a collection of villas or even palaces. On this site there was an earlier villa built during the Republican period (c. 1<sup>st</sup> century) and some of these earlier structures survive as they were incorporated into the area of the 'Imperial Palace'.

The story of Hadrian's Villa and its rediscovery is absorbing. The site consists of many monuments and monumental buildings: palaces, temples, gardens, theatres, libraries, barracks, shrines, small and grand baths, official buildings, a network of

underground passages some 4km long, and much more, as outlined in the plan shown below. All this took many years to complete and involved immense earthworks and the construction of suitable terraces; by studying the makers' marks on the bricks archaeologists have found that many are dated from AD117 to 123/124 while others are dated AD 126 and later, suggesting at least two major phases of construction. According to the written records, Hadrian took a close interest in the design of the villa; they even suggest that he drew some of the plans himself: the building of the Villa must have continued under the supervision of architects because of his lengthy absences due to his extensive travelling, some journeys lasting several years. From AD 121 to 125 Hadrian travelled north to Gaul, Germany and Britain and from AD 128 to 134 (when he made his final journey) in southern Italy, Greece, Syria and Africa.

Unfortunately, Hadrian did not enjoy his creation near Tivoli for long: soon after his return, plagued by ill health, he spent the remaining years of his life at another imperial residence on the Bay of Naples where he died in AD 138. His Villa near Tivoli continued to be used as an imperial residence until the early 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD. According to an old tradition, depredations of the villa started at the time of the Emperor Caracalla (AD 211-218) who had statues removed to Rome to embellish his monumental Baths. And so began the slow decline of Hadrian's Villa. However, it was only after being sacked by the barbarians in the c. early 4<sup>th</sup> c. that the buildings were abandoned, became known as 'Old Tivoli', and then used as a quarry of quality materials to be plundered to build '(New) Tivoli' close by on the hills to the north. Knowledge of the origins and ownership of the ruins was forgotten and it was only towards the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century that



Biondo Flavio identified the ruins as the Villa built by Hadrian and mentioned in the 4<sup>th</sup> c. AD *Historia Augusta*. At the same time Pope Alessandro VI (Borgia) encouraged the first excavations near the Odeon. As with all subsequent excavations, these are better described as treasure hunts, because marble statues, mosaics, precious marble floors, and other treasures emerged from the ground. More statues were excavated in the 16<sup>th</sup> century when Ippolito II d'Este, son of Lucrezia Borgia, was Governor of (New) Tivoli and began transforming the old Bishop's Palace there into a Renaissance '*luogo di delizie*' (seat of delights), the delightful Villa d'Este. His architect Pirro Ligorio, an enthusiastic excavator and antiquarian, found many statues in

the ancient ruins in the plain to the south which he used to embellish the interior and the gardens of the Villa d'Este. Pirro Ligorio wrote three Codes (*Codici*)<sup>1</sup> in which he told of his explorations and discoveries. These became very well known among the antiquarians of the Renaissance and in consequence Hadrian's Villa was transformed into a superior quarry: the plundered marble statues and mosaics filled the palaces of Popes, aristocrats, heads of state and not only in Rome and Italy but all over Europe.



At the time of the Grand Tour in the 18<sup>th</sup> century Hadrian's Villa became the 'not-to-be-missed' place to be visited by the young English aristocrats. It is said that some of these gentlemen in search of mementos would take a pot shot at the plaster decorations on the ceiling of the vault in the Grand Baths, photo. opposite, and pocket the pieces of falling stucco while others bought statues and works of art for large sums of money to display in their stately homes.

During the following two centuries, 'excavations' continued encouraged by the different families that owned this huge area, by then split into many properties. One of them, Count Fede, not only planted the impressive number of olive groves and avenues



of dark green cypresses, but also collected the many works of art found on his property; a collection which sadly was dispersed after his death. Only in very recent years have excavations and studies been undertaken using contemporary methods which are beginning to give exciting new insights.<sup>2</sup>

The modern visitor is struck by the amazing size of the buildings, photo. opposite. Some of these have been given names and functions which in most cases do not correspond to the original ones.

One of the most attractive, singular and (to me) unique monuments, is the *Teatro Marittimo*, the Maritime Theatre (photo. bottom right of this page) which puzzled me a lot because I could not see where the audience would sit, but after reading about it, I discovered that it is not a theatre at all, but a miniature *domus* (villa) built on a circular island: a perfect private retreat with bedrooms and dining room in which to enjoy the Roman *otium* (leisure, pleasure). A circular moat surrounds the island and the whole area is protected by a tall circular wall and portico lined with Ionic columns; these once supported a vaulted roof (the small section we see today was reconstructed in the 1950s). The reflections of the columns in the water are pure magic. There are now two cement bridges over the narrow moat, but originally the island was linked to the portico by two removable



wooden bridges; the grooves, which allowed the bridges to slide into place, are still visible on the marble lining the moat. The play of circular and straight lines and the columns - giving rise in such a small space, to a miniature garden, two bedrooms and small baths - add a dramatic quality to the inspiring beauty and tranquillity of the island; perhaps this is why it was called 'theatre' in modern times and 'maritime' because of the sea figures carved on the marble frieze in the atrium!

In contrast, the only feature which can be identified with certainty to a particular area described in an ancient text is the *Canopus*, photo. next page. The name recalled the Egyptian town on the Nile delta bearing the same name and linked by a canal to Alexandria. At Tivoli this part of the villa consists of a central oblong pool, 119 m long by 18 m wide, the *Euripus*, constructed in a narrow, partly man-made, valley lined with marble statues, mostly Roman copies of Greek works. The *Euripus* was revealed during the 1950s excavations. At the southern end, it is enclosed by the monumental *Serapeum*, a name derived from the temple dedicated to Serapis in the Egyptian *Canopus*. The Tivoli Serapeum resembles a nymphaeum - a monumental and ornate fountain (compare the Trevi Fountain) - in the form of an exedra, its dome originally decorated with mosaics, while statues adorned the niches in the walls and water

channels dropped curtains of water from the ceiling. It was used in summer as an “al fresco” grandiose imperial dining room. On the east side, the *Euripus* was perhaps bordered by a double colonnade and a long narrow garden, while on the west side there were caryatids (the female figures acting as columns on a porch at the Acropolis in Athens, a place Hadrian loved), six now remaining. On the north side, the curve is emphasized by three elegant arches and statues: Hermes as a young warrior wearing a tall helmet, and two wounded Amazons. During the 1950s excavations, the archaeologists found a number of fragments which could be interpreted as part of the garden statuary as well as many statues in good condition, among which were a crocodile carved in *cipollino* marble, two old men representing personifications of Nile and Tiber and many others. These are now housed in the small museum, an old farmhouse, on the north-west side of the *Canopus*, (which unfortunately was closed when I wandered past), but modern copies have replaced the originals in the grounds. More recent archaeological trenches were aimed at finding out the disposition and features of the garden and along the eastern side of the *Euripus* a long flower bed was uncovered containing rows of terracotta flower pots and, presumably, after examining the soil contents, more information will be found about the flowers and shrubs which were cultivated there in antiquity. Many amphorae were also recovered and from these it was possible to date the construction of this garden to the first decades of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD. And, so the guide-book tells me, the work has been attributed to a group of workers from Libya!

To be continued.



1. Pirro Ligorio - Codice Vaticano latino 5295 -*Trattato delle Antichità di Tivoli et della Villa Hadriana fatto da Pirrho Ligorio Patrio Napoletano et dedicato all'Ill.mo Cardinal di Ferrara*. Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Cod. Vat. Lat. 5295 fol. 1r – 32v. These Codes are the most ancient description of Hadrian's Villa, which unfortunately do not include the plans of the buildings. They do, however, include many scholarly quotations, descriptions of the life of ancient Romans, and a wealth of information on excavations, on finds - especially sculptures. For further information see: Marina De Franceschini's website [www.villa-adriana.net/](http://www.villa-adriana.net/)

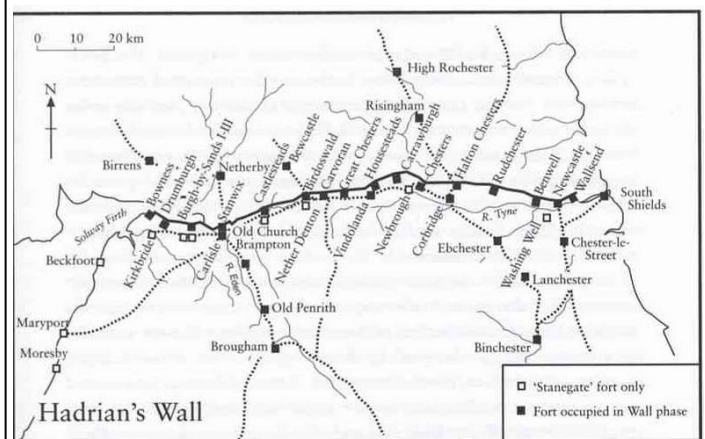
2. Gusman 1904, Winnefeld 1895, De Franceschini 1991, Guidobaldi 1994, MacDonald-Pinto 1995

## Everyday Writing from the Roman Frontiers: 3. Britain

David Kennedy

We are fortunate in the study of Roman Britain. Although its archaeological remains were victims of Britain's early agricultural and industrial revolutions, it has since become probably the most intensively explored province of the Roman Empire. Indeed, the poor survival of remains has forced British archaeologists to develop high standards of methodology and interpretation. In terms of what Roman writers have to tell us about Britain, we are twice blessed: Julius Caesar twice led expeditions (55 and 54 BC) and provided or first detailed eye-witness account of the southern part of the island and its people. A century and half later, Cornelius Tacitus, the greatest Roman historian, wrote a biography of his father-in-law Cn. Julius Agricola, who was one of, if not *the* longest-serving governor of Britannia (AD 78-85) (and a native of *Forum Julii* (modern Fréjus) in Gallia Narbonensis; cf. my other article in this issue). However, both Caesar and Tacitus, while telling us much about Britain, are writing from on high and seldom shed light on everyday life in the province.

There are other sources of evidence fortunately, most notably the surviving writing tablets of people in the province. One of those, from London, was reported in RAG 3.4. Unfortunately, though such finds have turned up in many Western provinces over the years, they have always been rare discoveries. That all changed in the early 1970s when excavation at Vindolanda in the north of the province unearthed the first of hundreds of such tablets and others have been reported – in much smaller numbers – from nearby Carlisle.



Vindolanda in Northumbria lies 2 km south of Hadrian's Wall. It was never a “Wall fort”; indeed, the construction of Hadrian's Wall and the subsequent positioning of garrisons on the Wall itself made many existing forts just to its south, redundant. Not so Vindolanda where at least ten superimposed forts were built and a thriving little military town developed around the garrison. What has made the site so famous is the huge cache of wooden writing tablets from a very brief period in the life of the garrison - c. AD 90-120. A fortunate and very remarkable survival.

Before looking at a few tablets and what they say, it is worth

remembering that prior to the Roman invasion of AD 43, there was no native written information on Britain or its peoples and very little from the pens of Greeks or Romans looking in. The Britons were, in effect, “a people without history”. They were not uncultured – as superb metalwork and artistry attests; but they lacked a vital tool. Edward Gibbon – as so often – articulated a pungent view over two centuries ago in his huge *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*:

“... the use of letters is the principal circumstance that distinguishes a civilized people from a herd of savages incapable of knowledge or reflection. Without that artificial help, the human memory soon dissipates or corrupts the ideas entrusted to her charge; and the nobler faculties of the mind, no longer supplied with models or with materials, gradually forget their powers; the judgment becomes feeble and lethargic, the imagination languid or irregular. Fully to apprehend this important truth, let us attempt, in an improved society, to calculate the immense distance between the man of learning and the illiterate peasant. The former, by reading and reflection, multiplies his own experience, and lives in distant ages and remote countries; whilst the latter, rooted to a single spot, and confined to a few years of existence, surpasses but very little his fellow-labourer, the ox, in the exercise of his mental faculties.”

The Vindolanda Tablets have not turned anonymous Romano-British peasants into men of letters but they have introduced us to similar men in a Roman regiment and occasionally to what those people thought of the Britons.

Most are damaged in various ways, hence the gaps and uncertainties.

Most prominent are military affairs and foremost is the famous comment on the *Brittunculi*:

"... the Britons are unprotected by armour (?). There are very many cavalry. The cavalry do not use swords nor do the wretched Britons mount in order to throw javelins." (TV II: 164)

In another, a man complains of ill-treatment:

"... he beat (?) me all the more ... goods ... or pour them down the drain (?). As befits an honest man (?) I implore your majesty not to allow me, an innocent man, to have been beaten with rods and, my lord, inasmuch as (?) I was unable to complain to the

prefect because he was detained by ill-health I have complained in vain (?) to the beneficiarius and the rest (?) of the centurions of his (?) unit. Accordingly (?) I implore your mercifulness not to allow me, a man from overseas and an innocent one, about whose good faith you may inquire, to have been bloodied by rods as if I had committed some crime." (TV II: 344)

In a third, we hear of a man recently returned from a military ‘shopping trip’ to Gaul:

"Clodius Super to his Cerialis, greetings. I was pleased that our friend Valentinus on his return from Gaul has duly approved the clothing. Through him I greet you and ask that you send me the things which I need for the use of my boys, that is, six sagaciae, seven palliola, six (?) tunics, which you well know that I cannot properly get hold of here, since we are ... ready (?) for the boys' transfer (?). (2nd hand) May you fare well, my dearest lord and brother, and ... (Back, 1st hand) To Flavius Cerialis, prefect, from Clodius Super, centurion." (TV II: 255)

All of these, and many more, can be read on the Oxford University web site where ancient documents are collected and published: <http://vindolanda.csad.ox.ac.uk/>

It is interest now to turn to another feature of the tablets. It begins with a point raised by the principal editor of these documents, Professor Alan Bowman – now Camden Professor of Ancient History at Oxford, but in 1972–4 my undergraduate Tutor at the University of Manchester.

In 1991, when there were still ‘only’ about 800 tablets known – the total is now about 1200, he observed that if every fort in RB produced 800 items of writing as Vindolanda then did we might assume Britain was the most literate in the Roman Empire. Of course, most forts in Britain have produced no tablets at all and even at Vindolanda those we have come from a single short period. But there is every reason to believe that the Vindolanda Tablets were part of a routine generation of written material at Vindolanda in every period of its history and at every military site in Britain. It was not just the single regiment at Vindolanda that produced such documents but all of the unit which at its peak made up a provincial garrison of c. 50,000 soldiers.



Translation: top page 6

## Vindolanda Tablet - TV II: 291 Birthday invitation

"Claudia Severa to her Lepidina greetings. On 11 September, sister, for the day of the celebration of my birthday, I give you a warm invitation to make sure that you come to us, to make the day more enjoyable for me by your arrival, if you are present (?). Give my greetings to your Cerialis. My Aelius and my little son send him (?) their greetings. (2nd hand) I shall expect you, sister. Farewell, sister, my dearest soul, as I hope to prosper, and hail. (Back, 1st hand) To Sulpicia Lepidina, wife of Cerialis, from Severa."

Let us develop this. The Vindolanda Tablets we have now number about 1200 items. They come from a small part of the site and future excavation will doubtless recover more from that area alone. There may be other caches elsewhere on the site. The tablets we have are the survivors of an attempt to burn them. Some may well have been successfully destroyed at that time and place; other tablets elsewhere on the site on different days may have been destroyed *in toto* leaving no evidence. Next, writing on wooden tablets was evidently quite common for high status purposes (e.g. letters from the Prefect, official military records), but it was likely also done on other perishable materials which have not survived; most obviously parchments and papyri. The latter might well be expensive and rare so far from its source of production; skin, however, even in the Near East, was apparently regarded as preferable to papyrus for durable documents. Ostraca, too, may have been a medium for writing at Vindolanda and other British sites even if the availability of wood made them less necessary or common than at the desert fort of Bu Ngem in Libya or in Egypt's Eastern Desert (RAG 4.2 and 4.3). At Vindolanda the potsherders themselves would survive but probably not the painted text. Finally, we should remember the tablets belong to a narrow period of time – c. AD 90-120.

In short, the tablets we have are likely to be a minor part of the total of written items that once existed at Vindolanda for that period and for the much wider period during which it was occupied by the Roman army. For the sake of obtaining some indicator of the order of magnitude let us do a calculation based on the Vindolanda evidence. Let us keep the period of about a generation, update the number to, say, 2000 and apply it to all military sites in Britain of that period. A discharge diploma for Britain of 17 July 122 (*CIL XVI: 69*) lists 13 cavalry regiments and 37 infantry regiments. Most are standard size (*quingenaria* – ostensibly 500-strong), a few are the larger size (*milliaria* – 1000-strong); the list must be an almost complete tally of the auxiliary garrison though there may have been a few others not listed here. There was at that time a force of 3 legions (each c. 5000 strong) and a force of *Equites Singulares*, the governor's guard, at London that was c. 1500 strong. Units were not necessarily up to strength, neither quingenary not milliary units were actually 500 and 1000 strong and there is uncertainty whether even the legions or some of them may not have had 6000 rather than 5000 as their official strength. For present purposes I propose to treat all auxiliary regiments as comparable in terms of production of writing tablets, count the *Equites Singulares* as three and each legion as equivalent to ten.

The resulting calculation is that for the generation c. AD 90-120 the Roman army in Britain generated:

Auxiliary regiments	2000 items x 50	100,000
Equites Singulares	2000 x 3	6,000
Legions	2000 x 3 x 10	60,000

**Total 166,000 items of writing over a generation or c. 5500 per annum.**

The real total on materials of all kinds, for the army, the imperial and local civil administration and private writing, might well be of the order of one or two *million* items for that period, 10-20 million for Roman Britain as a whole over its three and half century history. The later period when the army was much smaller would likely reduce the total significantly. We should nevertheless think in terms of perhaps 30-70,000 items being generated annually.

It makes you think ... and if you would like to read more about these tablets you can turn to:

Birley, A. (2002) *Garrison Life at Vindolanda. A Band of Brothers*, Stroud (Tempus)

Bowman, A. K. (2004) *Life and Letters on the Roman Frontier. Vindolanda and its People*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., London (British Museum Press).

## A Field Season at Roman Silchester

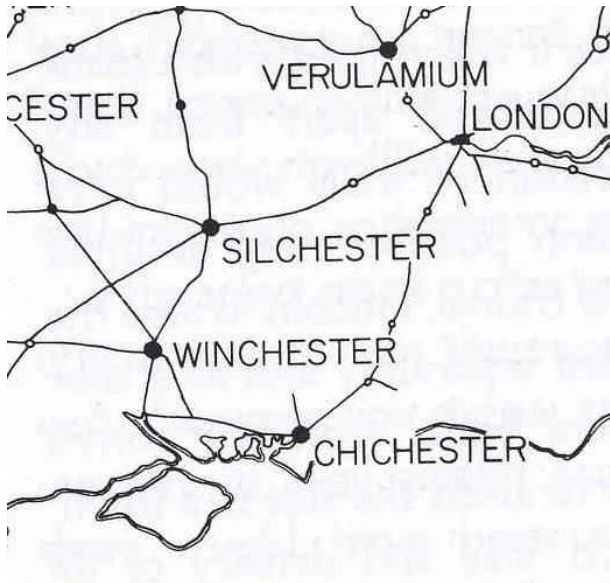
### Ian Gately



**Ian Gately—Roman Archaeology student UWA: Winner Don Boyer Travel Scholarship Roman Archaeology 2009.**

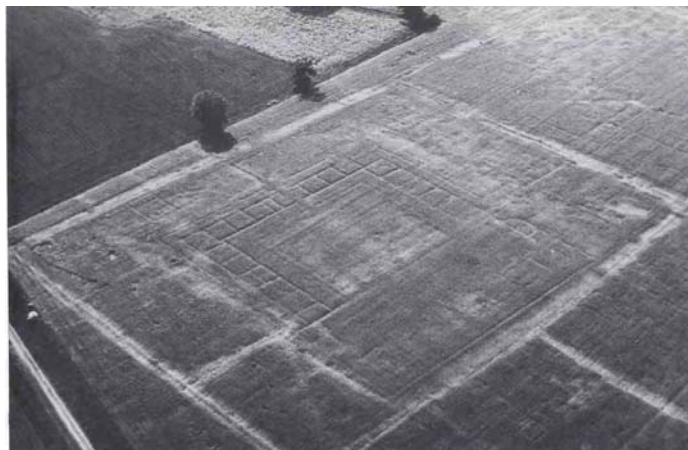
As a student with a passion for the ancient Romans and the archaeology that goes with them, you're faced with something of a problem in Perth. Kevin Rudd's recession payouts aside, it is certainly not within the financial means of most students to be able to 'pop over' to Europe and engage in archaeological excavation.

It was with this bleak reality in mind that I first considered applying for the Don Boyer travel scholarship earlier this year. After a long and fruitless search to find an excavation that was willing to take on volunteers, I approached David Kennedy for some help as to how to find one that would be suitable for me. David suggested the excavations run by the University of Reading at Silchester because, in his own words, “if you have no experience they actually teach you rather than making you a dogsbody.” After this talk with David I applied for, and successfully received a place on the dig for the 2009 season, and not long after applied for, and received word that I had been awarded, a Don Boyer Travel Scholarship in Roman Archaeology for 2009.



Before I relate my own experiences at the dig, I will provide you with a brief overview of the excavation at Silchester. Known as the ‘Silchester Town Life Project,’ it has been run by the University of Reading as a training excavation for students of the university for thirteen seasons; although attendance is also open for international students and enthusiasts. The project is directed by Professor Mike Fulford, while Amanda Clarke, the Assistant Director, runs the excavation on site. Amanda is helped by around 40 staff members, and they in turn oversee the 100 or so students on site.

Silchester is the modern name of the Roman town of *Calleva Atrebatum*, which in turn was founded on the site of the Iron Age *oppidum* of the *Atrebates* tribe. There were some very interesting developments regarding the Iron Age settlement that



were uncovered this season. The site is unique in that, unlike most Roman towns in Britain, there is not a modern settlement on top of it – it is open farmland (photo. below). This means that the archaeology that is there is quite easy to access and relatively undamaged by modern building processes. It often shows beautifully on aerial photographs; see photo. bottom right of this page.



That said, the University of Reading weren’t the first ones to excavate at Silchester. Excavations were undertaken in the Victorian era, with the sole purpose of discovering and mapping large stone-built structures as well as removing anything valuable that they came across. This was achieved through digging huge narrow trenches until coming across a stone foundation, then ‘chasing’ the walls until the structure’s extent was determined. Thankfully excavation at Silchester is now undertaken in a different way! The goal now is to determine, through careful excavation, what day-to-day life was like for the inhabitants of the town throughout its periods of occupation, hence the ‘Silchester Town Life Project.’



For this reason, the area chosen to be excavated by the project

is what is thought to have been a residential area with some workshops, known as *Insula IX*. The *Insula* runs parallel to the main North-South road of the town and - one of the reasons it was chosen by Mike Fulford - is located away from any of the main public buildings of the town such as the *Basilica*. The trench itself is 55 by 55 metres square but actually only covers 0.05% of the town's original extent, which gives some idea of how large the town must have been (43 ha) (photos. above and below). The excavation was divided into four different areas, each with its own Supervisor and Assistant Supervisors. The area I was assigned to was the South East corner of the trench, which contains some of the latest archaeology remaining on the site, with most of the other areas approaching the Iron Age and very early Roman occupation.

What struck me first about being on site was that I was not only *taught* how to do everything, I was also then expected to actually *do* everything as well. While at first this was a little bit scary, especially given my lack of experience, I soon relished the opportunity to take part in every aspect of the excavation, be it planning, excavating or even construction of a photo tower! Although I'm still 'getting my eye in' as regards the identification of different soil types and contexts, I certainly feel like I had improved by the end of the four weeks. One of my favourite moments came upon my excavation of a feature that appeared to be a shallow trench containing a small rubbish pit. My supervisor, Natalie asked me to come up with my own interpretation of what it was (photo. Bottom opposite), and then to go and prove it. While I won't go into the full details here, I decided that the trench represented the floor of a building which had slumped, then been filled in and built over again. In order to prove this I had to go back and make use of digital and hard copies of records, comparing them and 'piecing the puzzle together' to make my point. In the end I was delighted to find out that I had been correct in my inference!



In addition to this I was also given the opportunity to take part in some other activities outside of the excavation. These included experimental archaeology with Dr David Sim as well as visiting some Roman sites such as Chichester, the fort at Portchester and the villa at Fishbourne. The experimental archaeology involved a day spent forging a *plumbatum* using the methods the Roman army would have, as well as recreating Dacian battle formations (see photo. top opposite). This was something I would never have been able to do without attending the field school and I am extremely lucky to have had the

opportunity. Another highlight of the trip was a series of lectures put on during the UK's National Archaeology Week, where one of the highlights was a report on an excavation occurring at Wadi Faynan in Jordan, an as yet unpublished excavation of the earliest permanent settlement yet found of the Neolithic period (not Roman related perhaps but nonetheless fascinating).



I could write pages more on my experiences at Silchester, however it still wouldn't do the experience justice, I had an amazing time there and I am hoping to make my way back in 2011 after I have graduated.

#### The Don Boyer Travel Scholarship

To the members of the Roman Archaeology Group I cannot recommend my Silchester experience enough, and would urge fellow-students to apply for the Don Boyer Travel Scholarship and make use of the fantastic opportunities with which it can provide you. Finally and most important - I am enormously grateful to Don Boyer for making this opportunity available through these generous scholarships.

Hopefully I'll see some of you at Silchester in 2011!



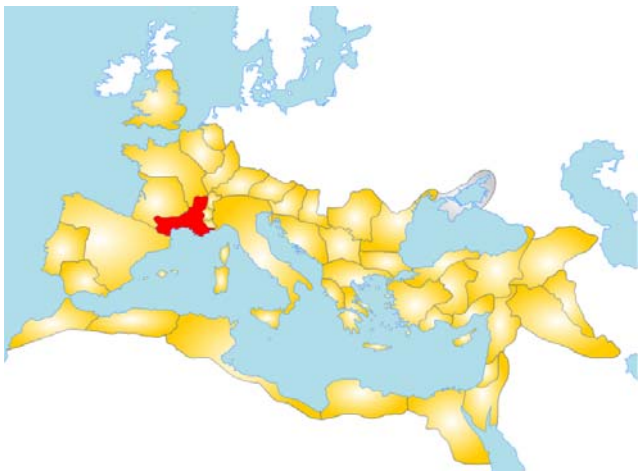
Ian is not the first of our students to work at Silchester - see RAG 3.4—DLK.



## Roman Provence — From the Air

*David Kennedy*

Aerial Archaeology was pioneered by French archaeologists both in France and Syria in the 1920s. Indeed, the successive books on Syria by the tireless Antoine Poidebard in the 1920s-1950s are regarded as classics and collectors' items. In more recent times the great French Aerial Archaeologist Roger Agache established a detailed picture of Roman settlement in northern France from his many flights there. Since his death, the technique has rather faded in France while surging ahead in Britain, Germany, Italy and now many former Soviet bloc countries. Books are now quite common dealing with *Ancient Britain/ Germany/ Italy/ Egypt, Turkey./ Syria ... and Jordan from the Air* but I cannot find one for France. That is certainly not because its ancient places are few, poor or not photogenic. A recent visit to Europe allowed me to arrange a 3-hour flight from the little airport at Avignon. That region is rich in archaeological remains of every period. For present purposes, it was the Roman remains I found most interesting and a delight to see from above.



This part of France started to come under Roman influence then direct control in the 3<sup>rd</sup> c. BC. The foundation of a Colonia at Narbo – modern Narbonne, between Marseille and the Spanish frontier – led to the creation of a province called Gallia Narbonensis in the late 2<sup>nd</sup> c. BC. For several decades it was the only province in the region and came to be known as, simply, The Province. The name survives to this day for the region, modern Provence.

The principal Roman places within the orbit of Avignon are Arles (Roman Arelate), Nîmes (Nemausus) and Orange (Arausio), all of them on or near the great River Rhône which runs south into the Mediterranean. At short notice it was not possible to get permission for relatively low flying over these substantial cities with amphitheatres (Nîmes, Arles), theatres (Arles, Orange), temples (Arles, Nîmes, Orange), arches .... There was plenty to be seen, however, at many other Gallic, Roman or Gallo-Romano sites.

Just 40 km NNE of Avignon lies the beautiful little town of Vaison-la-Romaine, Roman *Vasio Vocontiorum* (Vasio of the Vocontii – the local Gallic tribe whose administrative centre it be-

came under Roman rule). The centre-piece is the heavily restored theatre, much of the gleaming seating cut in recent times. Just to the west are the extensive foundations of a series of rich houses.



**The Pont du Gard**

Sixteen kilometres in the opposite direction is the even more delightful town of St Rémy-de-Provence with its packed terracotta roofs and little courtyards under the bright Mediterranean sunlight. Just south of St Rémy you encounter two impressive monuments, the central span of a triple-ported triumphal arch and just beside it, a tall tower-tomb, both with relief sculpture decoration. Beyond lies the town to which they belong – *Glanum*, with its street flanked by houses, temples, the forum and a Sacred Spring. Tucked into the flanks of the fingers of the hills known as Les Alpilles within which lies a lake formed behind a dam built over a Roman predecessor.

Not far off is the first of two Roman bridges. That at Bonnieux, Le Pont Julien, is complete and had been in use till a new bridge was built in recent times. Though only part survives at the second site, the arch in the middle of the river is more evocative. Originally there were several arches both over the river and carrying the great *Via Domitiana* across the marshy flood-plain beyond. The road survives zig-zagging up the hillside to the west around the site of the Celtic hillfort of *Ambrussum*.

Although there were many more sites in my sights that day, the last one illustrated here is the most iconic of them all – the great aqueduct called the Pont du Gard (photo opposite). The water originated at a spring at Uzès (Gallo-Roman *Ucetia*) and was destined for the new city of Nemausus (Nîmes) with its growing population and voracious demands for water for drinking, hygiene, recreation (baths and pools) and its ornamental fountains (*nymphaea*). The city is only 20 km from the





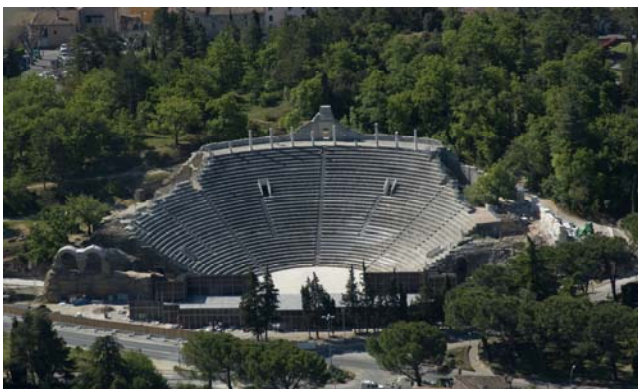
**The Castellum Aquarum in Nîmes**

spring ... but the aqueduct snakes along for 50 km between the two. Part of the explanation is the terrain – the rocky Garrigues cleft by the gorges of the River Gardon lying in between and part is in the need to build the water channel on a shallow gradient over a vertical difference of just 17 m! For both reasons it was necessary to take a line following gentlest contours and evading high intervening ground. Long stretches of the aqueduct can still be seen and followed on foot all the way to the Castellum Aquarum – the distribution pool – at Nîmes.



**St Rémy (Glanum) arch and Tower tomb**

The River Gardon could not be avoided, however ... fortunately for us. It might almost have been with the beautiful aqueduct bridge in mind that led the Roman writer Frontinus to declare: *With so many indispensable structures carrying so many aqueducts you may compare the idle pyramids or the other useless, although famous, works of the Greeks. (On Aqueducts I.16)*



**Vaison-le-Romaine (Vasio) theatre**



**St Rémy (Glanum) the town**

The modern French historian Jullian called it “a divine thing”. The triple stack of arches rise up 50 m to carry the water channel across the river then onwards on bridges and channels to Nîmes. Although it has been strengthened and repaired in modern times it is a testament to its solidity that when the great floods of 1958 pushed the river level up over the entire lower tier, the aqueduct bridge survived while more recent ridges along the river were destroyed.

If you are in Provence and the aeroplane is not an option .... canoeing down the Gardon and under the Pont du Gard is a fine alternative.

There is a rich literature in English about Roman Gaul and Provence. The standard text is A. L. F. Rivet, *Gallia Narbonensis*, 1988 (London). H. Cleere, *Southern France. An Oxford Archaeological Guide*, 2001 (Oxford) is a useful guide but meatier and better is J. Bromwich, *The Roman Remains of Southern France*, 1993 (London). Greg Woolf's *Becoming Roman*, 1998 (Cambridge) explores the process by which “the Gauls came down from the hills, shaved off their beards and learned to bathe themselves”.

## Via Appia sine culices

### Rodney Greaves

Horace relates in his fifth Satire that he travelled the Via Appia from Roma to Brindisium in about fifteen days, or something over 40 kilometres a day. He even remarks that the first two days could have been achieved in one, but adds “minus est gravis Appia tardis.” (The Appia is less hard on the slow.) (line 6) My recent visit to sections of the old road in October 2009 made clear to me how uneven the tuff or volcanic rock surfaces often were. Perhaps those on foot, then as now, used the tracks to each side of the 4.2m carriage-way?

The journey south from Roma took Horace and his friends past the tomb of Caecilia Metella, a well-preserved mausoleum on the Via Appia at the 11<sup>th</sup> milestone. The tomb is in the form of a cylindrical tower and, located on rising ground (overlooking the Circus of Maxentius built 300+ years later), would have been visible from the south of Roma. Caecilia was, after all, the daughter-in-law of (probably) M. Licinius Crassus, the wealthy contemporary of and fellow Triumvir with Julius Caesar. Less well publicised, is an exhibit in the basement of the adjacent medieval castle illustrating how the grey basaltic lava from

the Alban Hills was broken into the polygonal blocks, so commonly associated with Roman road construction. Here and further south may also be seen the alternative small square blocks that do seem to offer a more even surface!

Hereafter, the remains of numerous tombs and mausolea may be observed as the Via Appia proceeds south, but regrettably they are poorly signed and often difficult to identify, even with prior preparation. Horace would not have seen, and time did not permit me to visit, the villa of the brothers Quintilius that dates to the time of Hadrian. Along this stretch of the road there is today, as of old, a number of modern substantial villas.

Horace would probably have seen Pompey's villa on the outskirts of modern Albano, but not Domitian's villa or the Castra Albana, established by the emperor Septimius Severus for his Second Parthian legion at the end of the second century AD. Why was the Via Appia taken into the high ground of the Alban Hills and not across the plain to the west? Perhaps a visit to the hills makes the answer obvious!

At ancient Albanum, the emperor Septimius Severus established the Castra Albana as the fortress of his Second Parthian Legion, the first legion to be permanently garrisoned in Italy. The camp covered an area of about ten hectares over four levels between the Alban Lake and the Via Appia. Parts of the Porta Praetoria (overlooking the Via Appia) and the Porta Principalis Sinistra can be seen today.

The cistern built underground at the highest point of the camp is visually impressive. It was and is fed by two conduits that brought water from the springs situated along the crater of the Alban Lake. The outlet from one can be seen at the end of the first aisle, on a prearranged visit with the Museo Civico di Albano, as can part of the 1,436 m<sup>2</sup> subterranean water surface stretching into the distance between the 36 pillars supporting the barrel-vaulted ceilings.

On the other side of the Via Appia, it is also possible to visit a separate museum dedicated to the Second Parthian Legion and housed in part of the building constructed by Septimius Severus' son Caracalla to provide baths for the Legion. The museum contains reconstructions of the Legion's dress and equipment as well as illustrations and texts relating to the camp, together with coins, earthenware and funerary finds.

Horace spent his first and second nights at Aricia and Forum Appii respectively, as the road descends onto the Pontine Plain. Forum Appii was named after the Censor Appius Claudius Caecus, who was responsible for the initiation of the Via Appia as far as Capua in 296BC. From here the road and adjoining canal (where the water still flows) head straight for Terracina across the Pontine Plain. It seems travellers were carried along this stretch by barges pulled by mules, certainly in the company of mosquitoes and probably threatened by bandits, and so without much relief for the weary, if Horace's account is to be accepted.

Terracina divides the Pontine Plain from the Fondi Plain. Annexed as a colony from the Volsci in 329BC, it was known as Colonia Anxuriana. The sanctuary of Jupiter Anxur (or possibly Venus?) was situated at the highest point above the colony, with panoramic views. The location was not only of religious

significance. Behind and above the temple, the Romans established a military camp from which vantage point a visit makes obvious they could observe any adverse activity north and south on the Via Appia. The course of the Via Appia and canal through Terracina is still visible, culminating in the cut of Pisco Montano, where 120 feet of rock was cut away to allow the road to pass. CXX is carved in the rock face at the bottom. There is some debate whether this cut is to be attributed to Nero or Hadrian.

Horace is not very complimentary about his next stop, Fundi. The modern town lies at the foot of the Fosso di San Andrea in Il Parco Naturale dei Monti Aurunci, where several kilometres of the Via Appia rising through the hills may be walked, past the remains of the Temple of Apollo. Retaining walls and bridges necessary for the construction of the road may also be seen.

Before the next town of Itri, it is possible to view the reputed tomb of another contemporary of Julius Caesar, the great orator, politician and thinker, Marcus Tullius Cicero who was murdered at the insistence of Mark Antony in 43BC. If it is his tomb, Horace makes no mention of it in 38-37BC. This area was popular amongst wealthy Romans of the late Republic for country villas and Cicero may have had such a villa here. Ancient and modern Formia and its port are not far away.

It also seems likely this was an area that Cicero was acquainted with, because he mentions the Pons Tirenus that carried the Via Appia across the River Liris, a little to the south, at ancient Minturnae (*Epistulae ad Atticum* 16.13.1). The Via Appia formed the decumanus, one of the two axial streets of the town grid. Its surface here is in remarkable condition (if not subsequently repaired) and in this respect was the most impressive section I saw. To the north of the decumanus lie a small theatre, the Capitolium, the Temple of Augustus, the Temple of Jupiter, and the Castrum tower. To the south are located the Forum (with latrines), the markets and baths. The site is well worth a visit, even though Horace did not see fit to mention it.

From Minturnae, the Via Appia turned inland through the fertile land of Campania towards Casilinum or modern S. Maria Capua Vetere, where the Via Appia intersected the Via Latina. The Arch of Hadrian at the entrance to the ancient and modern town obviously knew better days when Casilinum was the principal town of Campania. Casilinum had two fora, two theatres, a Mithraeum and amphitheatre.

Here, a visit to the Mithraeum and fresco of the Persian god Mithras sacrificing the bull, built at the end of the second century AD, bears witness to the importance of the cult. The amphitheatre, similar in design and size to that at Puteoli (modern Pozzuoli) not so far away, was home to the gladiator school where Spartacus learnt the trade. He subsequently died on the battlefield, while many of his followers who survived were crucified along the Via Appia between Roma and Capua.

As at Puteoli, the underground chambers and passages of the amphitheatre that facilitated staging in the arena may be inspected. They are, of course, better preserved than the superstructure (originally of some four stories) and visually and archaeologically impressive. I hope to join Horace on the second half of the journey to Brindisium on a later occasion.

# Roman Archaeology at UWA

## Notes and News

### Aerial Archaeology in Jordan Project

The 2009 season extended over 6 weeks in September and October and involved – overall – six people. All told we flew for almost 40 hours, photographed c. 1000 archaeological sites and archived over 10,000 digital images.

Most of our time was spent in the north-east in the Basalt Desert. Although it looks – and is – very inhospitable and there is little trace at ground level of archaeological sites, it is in fact one of the richest areas of Jordan. Tens of thousands of archaeological sites survive, mainly only visible and intelligible from the air.

Part of the project involves visiting at least some of the sites on the ground. Twice this year we drove to the Azraq Oasis to establish a base from which we could visit sites in the Basalt Desert. Flitting speedily over this landscape in a helicopter does not adequately prepare you for how difficult ground travel will be. And how slow.

Twice in two days we not only punctured tyres but tore them so badly they were beyond repair. That was worrying enough – we had just the two spare wheels – but on the second occasion it happened while we were at very nearly the point of no return. That made us all a little anxious. We were c. 50 km from Azraq, out of mobile phone range and would have had to appeal via satellite phone for assistance from Amman if we had had a third puncture. Nevertheless, having got to within 1 km of our destination it seemed best to proceed ... but slowly and carefully. We were fortunate. (A few days later close to Amman and on a surfaced highway, we tore a third tyre).

Equally memorable were the flights over ancient Moab and Edom and especially alongside the Dead Sea. The plateau of Moab is about 1000 m above sea level; our visit to one of Herod the Great's sea-side villas at Ain es-Zara (Callirrhoe), a hot sulphur spring, on the Dead Sea, involved descending c. 1200 m. It happens swiftly as you fly at a few hundred feet across the Moab plateau then very abruptly before the helicopter can start to descend as well, the ground falls away

beneath you over some superb ravines running down to the Dead Sea.

Further south we were able to view the Monastery constructed in early Christian times south of the Dead Sea at the spot identified as where Lot's wife was turned to salt near Sodom and Gomorrah. It is built into a near-vertical cliff face and commands superb views.

### RAG Saturday Sessions Summer 2010

Plans are in progress for our next series of Saturday sessions. As always there is a great deal one might offer ... but it is necessary to then find speakers who will be available. The intention is to devote all three sessions to the Cities of the Decapolis.

Despite the implications of the name, we have more than ten city names for the group. Some are hardly known; others are not only familiar but amongst the best-explored in the Roman Empire.

The lectures in January, February and March will range from a general introduction to these cities through to case studies for one or more of the best-known – Jarash, Gadara and Scythopolis.

The programme is as follows:

#### THE DECAPOLIS

##### Saturday 16 January

Social Science Lecture Theatre: 1.30 pm

The Cities of the Decapolis

##### Saturday 20 February

Social Science Lecture Theatre: 1.30 pm

Gadara (Umm Qeis) and Abila, (Qweilbeh), Scythopolis (Beth Shean)

##### Saturday 20 March

Social Science Lecture Theatre: 1.30 pm

Philadelphia (Amman)

Gerasa/ Antioch-on-the-Golden River (Jarash).

## Membership of The RAG

\$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 email address below.

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