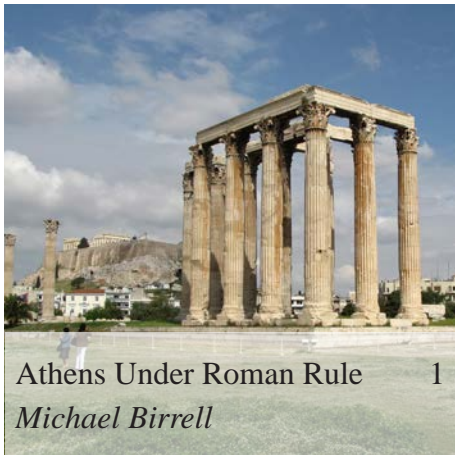
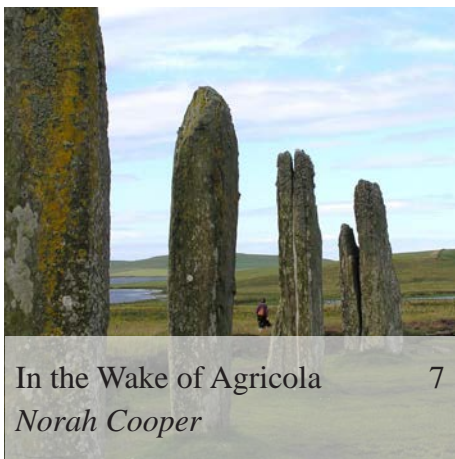


The RAG

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Athens Under Roman Rule

Michael Birrell

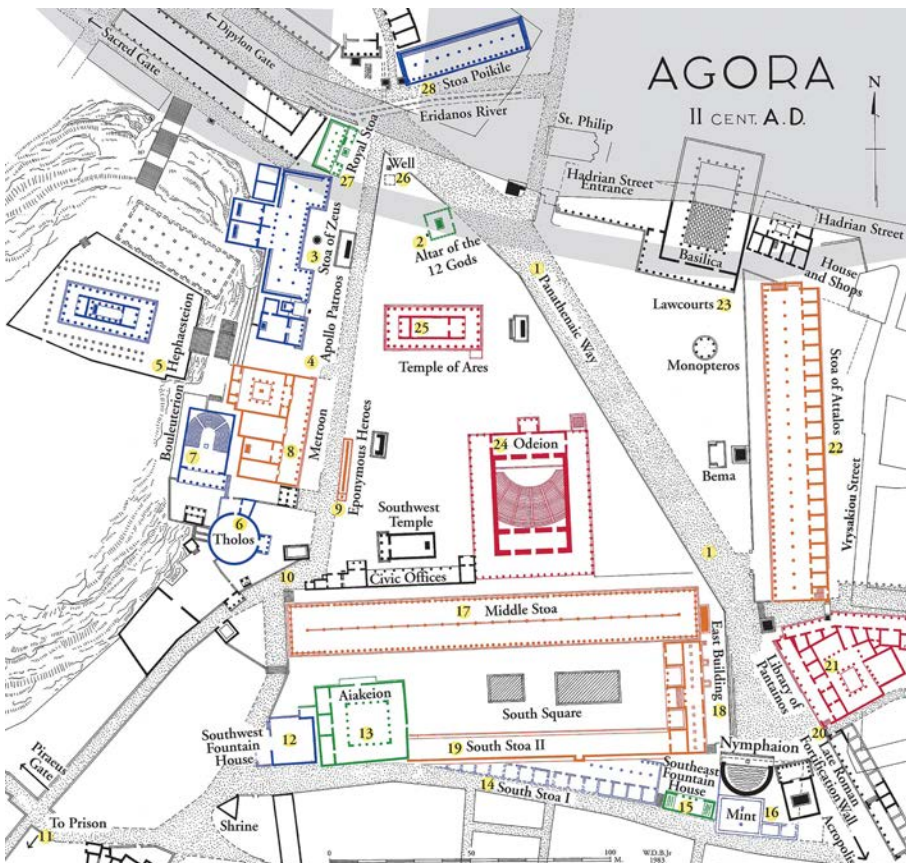
This article is a detailed look at the monuments of Roman Athens, expanding on our first introduction in the RAG to these sites by Kevin O'Toole (Volume 1 Issue 1: 8; Issue 3: 9). Michael Birrell runs a travel company called B.C. Archaeology Travel. He is leading a tour next March-April to Greece which includes an extended stay in Athens: for more information see www.bcarchaeology.com/greece.html, or follow on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/bcarchaeology/>.

The Romans increasingly became involved in the affairs of Greece throughout the 3rd century BC, and by the 2nd century BC had also taken on the Macedonians and defeated them. In 146 BC the Roman general Mummius defeated the Achaean League of Greek cities and viciously destroyed the city of Corinth as a warning to those which might have contemplated throwing off Roman rule. Henceforth, Greece was a province (Achaia) of the Roman Empire.

The subsequent Romanization of Greece was relatively slow. In Athens, Greek always remained the language of the administration. Relatively few examples of Latin in public inscriptions in Athens are known. The city retained its traditional administration with an Archon as chief minister.

For Athens, a major devastating event was the sack of the city by the Roman general Sulla in 86 BC. The Athenians foolishly sided with King Mithridates VI of Pontus (a kingdom in northern Turkey) in a revolt against Roman rule. Sulla's reprisal was ruthless. The old city walls, which had been built in the 5th century BC at the instruction of the prominent Athenian politician Themistocles, were breached near the Kerameikos Cemetery on the west side of the city; some of the stone catapult balls used in the siege have been found in the area. Athens was thoroughly looted of much of its treasures by Sulla's army. Vast quantities of sculpture and valuables were seized as booty, and carted off to Italy. Thankfully there was no systematic destruction of buildings. Only the roofed concert hall (Odeon in Greek) on the south side of the Acropolis, originally built by Pericles in the mid-5th century BC, was accidentally burned down and had to be replaced.

It was the Roman General Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa, son-in-law of the Emperor Augustus, visiting Athens in 15 BC, who arranged for the construction of a new large Odeon in the centre of the Agora. This building was primarily used for musical concerts, and was a roofed all-weather theatre. It was an impressive structure measuring 51 by



43m and rose several storeys above the ground. The internal space was a remarkable 25m across. The Agora had once been an open space where people could congregate, trade and discuss politics, but it was now dominated by this enormous structure. The building was lavish in its use of marble and could seat about 1,000 people. The outside of the building was dominated by monumental columns of the best quality Pentelic marble.

The benefaction of Agrippa was honoured with the rededication of an enormous plinth in front of the entrance to the Acropolis. The previous dedication was to a benefactor of the city, Eumenes II or Attalus II, king of Pergamon, and celebrated a great chariot victory. A bronze of General Agrippa mounted on a quadriga was erected on the plinth with the inscription *'The people set up Marcus Agrippa, son of Lucius, three times consul, as*

Plan of the Agora in 2nd century AD. Plan: The American School of Classical Studies at Athens, <http://www.agathe.gr>.

their own benefactor' carved over the previous.

A further aggrandisement of the Athenian Agora during the Augustan period was the relocation of a temple into the Agora to the north of the Agrippa Odeon (see plan). The temple was originally dedicated in the 5th century BC to Athena and located in the Attic district of Pallene. It was typically Greek in its architecture, with a colonnade around the sanctuary, and made of fine Pentellic marble. It was almost identical to the Hephaesteion, with which it was contemporary. Mason's marks and Roman pottery found in the Agora foundations indicate that it was dismantled and moved in the late 1st century BC. The temple was rededicated to the god Ares (Roman Mars) - one wonders what the goddess Athena thought of this arrangement! An inscription found near the ruins suggests that the move was in association with a commemoration of Gaius Caesar, grandson of Augustus, who was sometimes described as 'the new Ares'.

It was possible for Agrippa to build a Roman Odeon in the centre of the Agora because a new market place was established at this time by the Romans about 100m east of the ancient one. This was designed to replace the ancient with a more modern and ordered shopping complex - it would remain the main market centre of Athens for centuries.

The new Roman Agora consisted of a large colonnaded square about 100m on each side. The columns have Ionic capitals and are of unfluted marble. The eastern side of the new Agora had a row of shops behind shaded arcades, and the southern side had a large fountain in the centre. Roman style latrines were installed for the use of the general public, with flowing water constantly sweeping the waste away. The entrance on the western side of the Roman Agora was built in an old fashioned classicising Doric style, probably because it faced towards the old Classical Agora. An inscription tells us that it was erected by the Emperor Augustus and was dedicated to Athena Archegetis, 'the Leader', around 10 BC.

A local Athenian called Titus Flavius Pantainos constructed a civic complex on the eastern side of the old Athenian Agora. The new complex can be dated to c.AD 100 (the reign of Trajan). It consists of a central courtyard with rooms around three sides, and a large room paved with marble on the east side. It has been identified as a library on the basis of an inscription found at the site that mentions it is against the rules to



The plinth dedicated to Marcus Agrippa at the entrance to the Athens Acropolis. Photo: Michael Birrell.



The Roman Agora. Photo: Michael Birrell.

remove books from the library.

A contemporary Roman monument in Athens is the prominent tomb of a man called Caius Julius Antiochus Philopappus. It was constructed in a prominent location on the Mouseion Hill, a high ridge to the west of the Acropolis. Philopappus - grandson of the last king of Commagene, was consul in Rome under Trajan and became an Athenian citizen and benefactor of the city. The tomb consisted of an elaborate facade facing the Acropolis which was decorated with a relief showing Philopappus taking part in a Roman consular procession accompanied by dignitaries. Niches above this scene held statues of the dead man and his famous ancestors; King Antiochus IV of Commagene (a kingdom in eastern Anatolia), and Seleukos I, the founder of the Seleucid Dynasty in Syria. A burial chamber behind the facade held a sarcophagus for Philopappus. When the 2nd century AD author Pausanias came to describe Athens in his guide to Greece, he was particularly dismissive of the tomb of Philopappus, describing it as ‘the tomb of some Syrian’.



The Philopappus Monument. Photo: David Kennedy.

The Emperor Hadrian was a philhellene, ‘Lover of Greece’, and he had great interest in the culture and language of the Greeks. He spent much of his youth in Athens and visited three times while Emperor. The most splendid monument built in the city during his reign was the Olympieion, a monumental temple to Zeus. The original temple had been laid out long before the period of Hadrian under the Peisistratid tyrants of the 6th century BC but the temple had lain unfinished for centuries. Work had been continued here by King Antiochus IV of Syria in the early 2nd century BC but it too had never been completed. Hadrian organised for it to be brought to fruition as a massive Roman temple and dedicated it to Olympian Zeus.

Not far from the Temple of Zeus is the so-called Arch of Hadrian. The single arch, decorated with Corinthian style columns, spanned the road which led down from the Acropolis. It is topped by a series of columns and pilasters. The architrave is carved with two inscriptions. On the west side, facing the Acropolis, it states: ‘*This is Athens, the ancient/former city of Theseus*’, while the east side reads ‘*This is the city of Hadrian and not of Theseus*’. The arch is therefore thought to represent the point between the Classical city of Athens and the new Roman expansion to the east, or acknowledge the two zeniths of Athenian prosperity



Olympeion Temple with Acropolis in the background. Photo: Michael Birrell.

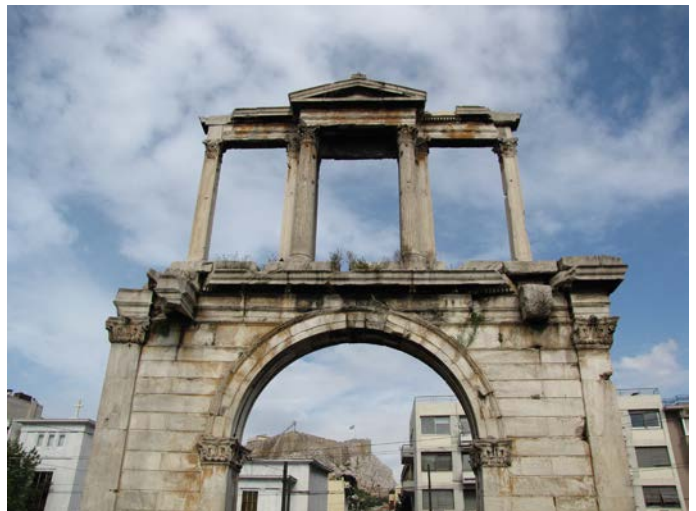
and the men responsible.

Hadrian provided a monumental new complex to the north of the Roman Agora, known today as the 'Library of Hadrian'. It took the form of an enormous colonnaded court measuring 90 by 125m. In plan and design it resembles the great Forum of Trajan in Rome which also contained a library at one end. The Athenian Library (or Forum) of Hadrian contained a monumental entrance on the west side. The projecting propylon, or porch, had four enormous Corinthian columns of marble from Asia Minor. The western wall was entirely Pentelic marble and was adorned with 14 projecting Corinthian style columns comprising of enormous monolithic shafts of green marble from the island of Euboea and capitals and bases of fine Pentelic marble. The peristyle colonnade of the Library court was adorned with 100 columns of fine quality stone from Asia Minor. There were 30 columns on the long sides and 20 on the short sides - unfortunately most of these have since been robbed for reuse. The long sides of the court had a series of large niches which may originally have contained statues.

The eastern end of the library court contained the main rooms of the Hadrianic complex and these are very well preserved, parts standing to three storeys high. The largest room is in the centre and housed the new library which Hadrian gave to the city. Wooden shelves or cabinets around the walls would have contained the scrolls of the collection. On either side of the main hall there are rooms for the administration of the library, while the two large corner rooms in the complex were lecture halls with banks of seats. Philosophers would



The Olympeion viewed from the Acropolis. Photo: Michael Birrell.



The Arch of Hadrian. Photo: Michael Birrell.



The theatre of Dionysos on the south slope of the Acropolis. Photos: Michael Birrell.

have given lectures in these splendid new venues. In the centre of the court was a large pool which provided a relaxing environment for those who were reading books. The shaded peristyle, or stoa, was undoubtedly used for philosophical discussion, perhaps even by the Stoics.

The famous theatre of Dionysos on the southern slope of the Acropolis, built in the Classical period, was added to and improved during the period of Hadrian. A raised stage was added to the complex which suited Roman tastes. The façade of the stage was decorated with superb reliefs showing various events in the life of Dionysos. This includes scenes of the *Sileno*i, the companions of Dionysos.

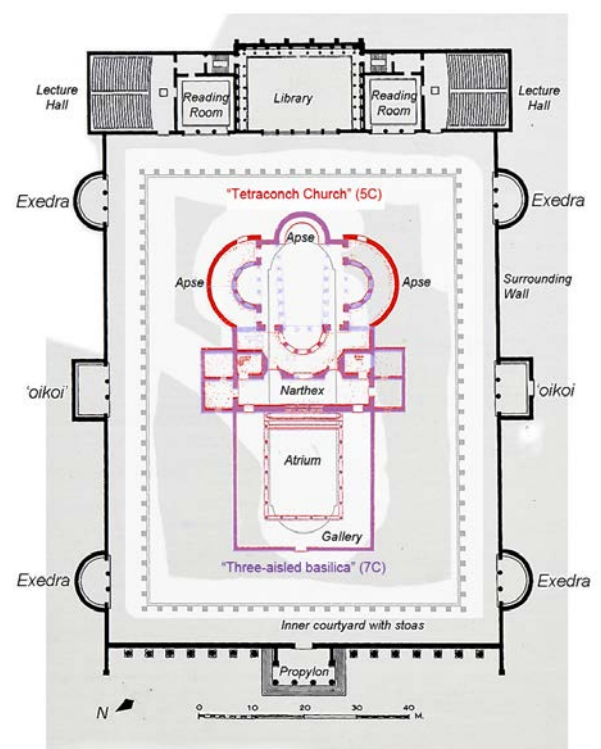
In addition to the benefactions of the Emperor Hadrian and his immediate successors Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius, Athens also had a very generous local benefactor who made significant additions to the city: Herodes Atticus. This local man had an enormous fortune and Herodes became a prominent Roman citizen, being made Consul in Rome and Archon in Athens.

Herodes Atticus built a stadium to the east of the Acropolis where he would later be buried. It functioned as an athletic venue and would be used as the race track in the first modern Olympic Games. The most important monument constructed by Herodes Atticus, however, was an enormous new Odeon or music hall which was constructed on the south slopes of the Acropolis. It was much larger than the earlier Roman one which had been built in the Agora by Marcus Agrippa. It had seating for a remarkable 5,000 spectators



Above: the entrance to Hadrian's Library. Photo: Michael Birrell.

Right: Plan of Hadrian's Library, including the later Tetraconch Church built within the court in the 5th century AD over the original large pool. Plan: Mark Cartwright, Ancient History Encyclopedia, <http://www.ancient.eu>.



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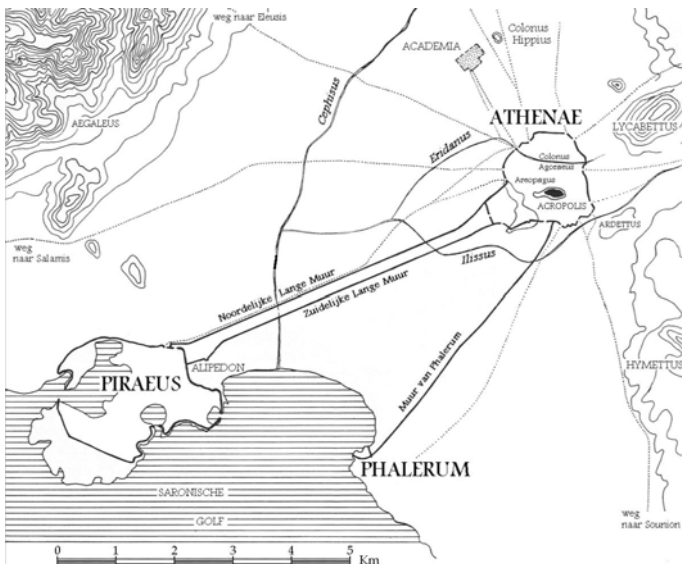
making it one of the largest roofed spaces at the time! The auditorium has a radius of 38m and inscriptional evidence tell us that it was roofed in antiquity, although there is no evidence of any kind of internal support. An inscription tells us that it was erected in memory of Herodes' wife Regilla who died in AD 160. The structure is a marble auditorium in the form of a half circle. The stage is raised and behind it there is a three storey scene building (*scaenae frons*) which is still well preserved. The building was lavishly decorated with marble revetment, columns and sculpture, while the entrance hall on the south was floored with mosaics of geometric and curvilinear design.

The Roman Empire began to go into decline in the late 2nd century AD and Athens also declined in this period. Barbarian invaders were rampaging in northern Greece by the 250s AD and the old circuit walls of the city, dating from the period of the Persian Wars in the 5th century BC, were repaired and extended by the Roman Emperor Valerian (AD 253-260) in case of invasion.

The fears of the city administration were well founded; Athens was attacked during a raid by the Herulian Goths in AD 267. They arrived from the region north of the Black Sea, attacked Ionia in Western Turkey, and invaded the Aegean Islands. These Gothic barbarians then came down through central Greece and sacked Athens, completely destroying most of the lower city. The invaders were driven off eventually by 2,000 Athenian soldiers under the command of the archon Herennios Dexippos.

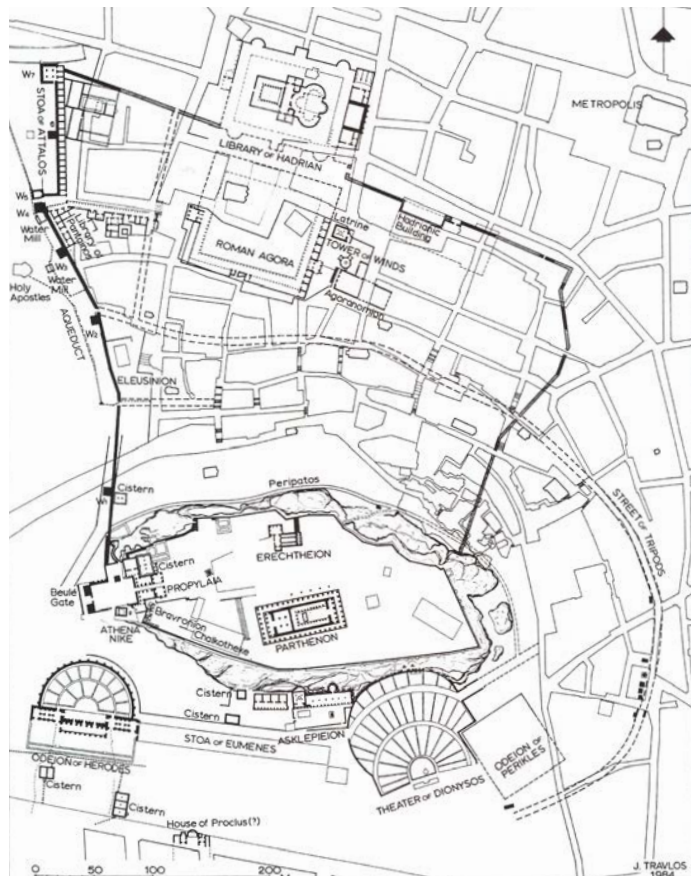
The physical evidence for the attack can be seen in the remains of many buildings. A thick layer of burnt debris was found during the excavations of the Odeon of Agrippa in the Agora. The Dipylon Gate in the city walls, the Stoa of Attalos in the Agora, the Library of Hadrian and the stoa of Eumenes on the Acropolis slope, as well as the remains of numerous houses, all show evidence of a destruction event. This event can be dated to the period of the Herulian invasion. Thankfully it seems that the Herulian invaders were not able to enter the upper part of the Acropolis, meaning the Parthenon escaped destruction.

The defensive walls of Athens that were strengthened in the mid 3rd century AD were too extensive to defend. Within 20 years of the Herulian invasion, the Athenians created a new defensive wall which encompassed only a tiny portion of the original city (see plan). The new wall started at the entrance to the Acropolis and followed the eastern side of Panathenaic Way down to the Agora. The ruined Library of Pantainos and the Stoa of Attalos were used as part of the line of the wall. At the north end of the Stoa, the late wall turned east and incorporated the southern wall of the Library of Hadrian; the library itself projected north from



Above: The original extensive defensive walls of Athens. Map after Maureen Carroll-Spillecke, *KHPIOΣ: Der antike griechische Garten* (Munich: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 1989), 29, fig. 10.

Right: Late Roman Athens 5th century AD, showing the much reduced defensive walls. Plan: *The Archaeology of Athens*, Yale University Press.



the defensive line and was perhaps used as a fort. The wall continued eastwards following the road and then turned southwards to reconnect with the bulk of the Acropolis. The late Roman wall was entirely made up of architectural blocks from earlier ruined buildings. The old Greek Agora, once the heart of the ancient city, now lay outside the circuit of the walls and its ruined buildings were utilised as construction material. A new gate was constructed leading to the Acropolis. It was constructed of two faces of good quality masonry with rubble fill in between - coins accidentally incorporated in the mortar indicate that the gate was under construction around AD 280.

The majority of evidence for late Roman Athens lies hidden underneath the modern city. We do know the city continued to function as a centre for education with an emphasis on philosophical and rhetorical training - scholars and students still came from all over the Empire down to the time of Justinian in the 6th century AD when the philosophical schools were finally closed. This event is often considered the end of Antiquity.

If you wish to know more about the Roman period in Athens, we recommend John Camp (2001) The Archaeology of Athens, Yale University Press. You can experience Ancient Athens in 3D at <http://www.ancientathens3d.com/>.



The Odeon of Herodes Atticus. Photo: Michael Birrell.

In the Wake of Agricola.

A trip to the Orkney and Shetland Islands 2000 years later

Norah Cooper

These remotest shores were now circumnavigated, for the first time by a Roman fleet, which thus established the fact that Britain was an island. At the same time the Orcades were discovered and subjugated, islands hitherto unknown. Thule, too, was sighted but no more.

The Agricola by Tacitus, AD 98.

In the European summer of 2015, Roger and I, accompanied by my sister Marianna and brother-in-law Eldridge, voyaged to the Orkney and Shetland Islands from Aberdeen, in a large, stable and comfortable ferry, quite unlike the ships of Agricola's fleet which circumnavigated Scotland. The Romans reached the Orkney and Shetland Islands in what was maybe the most northerly attested Roman voyage. They would probably have travelled in Triremes, part of the *Classis Britannica* fleet which - despite its name, had its principal base at Boulogne on the Gallic coast.

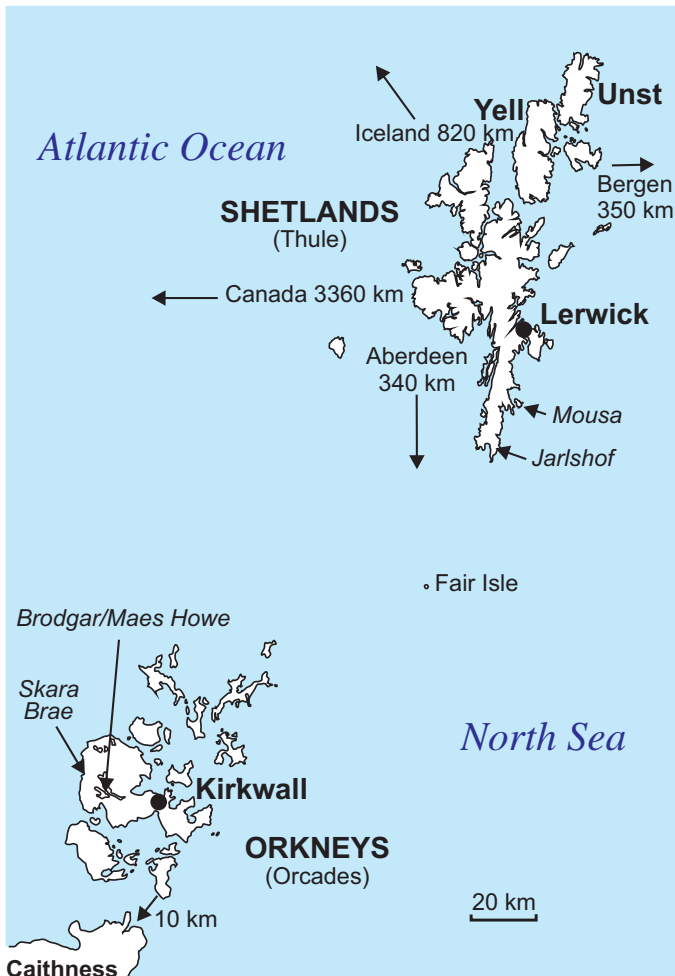
These archipelagos north of Scotland are between Latitudes 59 and 61 degrees north and lie between the stormy Atlantic and North seas, with Iceland 820km to the northwest of The Shetlands; Bergen, Norway



Trireme model. Photo: H. McGhee.



The NorthLink Ferry. Photo: VisitScotland.



Map of Shetland and Orkney. Map: Murray Jones.

Greek geographer and astronomer visited what we now call Britain, describing it as triangular with the northern tip called Orcas (possibly Caithness). In the 1st century AD, the Roman geographer, Pomponius Mela and the naturalist, Pliny the Elder, like Tacitus, called these islands the Orcades. According to the fifth century Gallaecian (northern Hispania) priest and historian, Paulus Orosius, in his *Seven Books of History Against the Pagans*, he made the unproven claim that in AD 43, Claudius conquered the Orkneys and added them to the empire.

Whether or not the Romans actually landed on the Orcades, they certainly regarded them as being conquered and now part of the Empire. This was politically important, as the Orcades and Thule (Shetland) were at the furthest northern extremity of Oceanus, the enormous river circling the world.

Did the native peoples know that they were “conquered”? In Roman eyes, peoples who had submitted in some way - even if just by sending envoys, were deemed to be within her area of authority.

Ultima Thule

This is the name that ancient geographers gave to the Shetland Islands, regarding them as the most northerly region of the habitable world. Pytheas of Massilia was the first to mention Thule as he said it was six days north of Britannia - as a modern ferry from Aberdeen takes 12 hours to reach Lerwick, ancient ships in these stormy seas may have taken 6 days. Pomponius Mela and Pliny the Elder in the first century referred to seven islands as Haemodae and Acmodae and these are assumed to be Shetland. Tacitus writes, “Thule, too, was sighted but no more.” In *The Georgics* (1.30), Virgil wrote:

Thule; insula est Oceani inter septentrionalem et occidentalem plagam, ultra Britanniam, iuxta Orcades et Hiberniam; in hac Thule cum sol in Cancro est, perpetui dies sine noctibus dicuntur.

Thule, an island in the Ocean between the northern and western quarter, beyond Britain, near the Orkneys and Ireland; and in Thule, when the sun is in Cancer, it is perpetual day without night, it is said.

350km to the east and Canada 3,360km to the west. To the Romans these islands would certainly have seemed at the furthest extremity of Oceanus.

There is no archaeological evidence that the Romans landed on these islands. The few Roman artefacts, mainly household wares and jewellery that have been found are evidence of trade with, rather than conquest and establishment by the Romans. The question is, who were the people living there at the time of the Roman invasions of Britannia and in particular Caledonia (as the Romans called northern Scotland)? Did the Roman Empire have any impact on these people? What was the impact on seeing the Roman ships circumnavigating the islands? (For previous articles on the Romans in Scotland: RAG Volume 5, Issue 2, June 2010 *Roman presence in Tayside area of Eastern Scotland*, and Volume 6, Issue 1, March 2011 *The Peoples Present in Scotland during the Roman Period*).

Orcades

In AD 83, after defeating the massed armies of the Caledonian tribes at Mons Graupius in (probably) the area between Aberdeen and Inverness, Agricola who was Governor of Britannia for c.7 years under all three Flavian Emperors (Vespasian, Titus then Domitian), sent the fleet to circumnavigate Caledonia. However, Tacitus was not the first to write about these islands. Between 322 and 285 BC, Pytheas of Massilia, the



Roman artefacts in the Shetland Museum: 8. A Roman brooch from Unst; 9. Roman pottery from Yell; 10. Roman glass from Lerwick; 11. Roman coins, from unknown Parish, Yell. Photo: Norah Cooper.

(In fact, in midwinter there are less than 6 hours of daylight, and in midsummer 19 hours of daylight with the remaining 5 hours between sunset and sunrise locally called *simmer dim* or prolonged twilight, which means it is never totally dark.)

People of the Islands

The Shetland archipelago, with a population of 22,000, has about 300 islands and skerries (reefs or rocky islands) but only 16 are inhabited. The main port and capital in Mainland Shetland is Lerwick, 164km from Kirkwall.

The substantial number of Neolithic sites in the Shetlands show that people have been living in the fertile land of the Shetlands since 3500 BC and there is evidence of continuous habitation at the important prehistoric site Jarlshof from 2700 BC (earlier than the building of Stonehenge), until AD 1600. From the Bronze Age (1900–1700 BC), there are stone-built houses and then in the Iron Age a broch and wheelhouses (AD 100–200) which are distinctive semi-subterranean roundhouses. The famous Broch of Mousa, 22km from Lerwick, which stands 13.3m high and is one of the best preserved prehistoric buildings in Europe, was built around 100 BC, (for a description of a broch see *RAG* Volume 6, Issue 1). These large structures required organised societies probably with an elite class and they demonstrate that large communities of people were living here when the Romans sighted Ultima Thule.

There is no evidence on the Shetlands of Roman settlement, however at the Shetland Museum there are a few Roman artefacts: pieces of horse harness, a brooch, pottery, glass and 2 coins identified as second-century sestertii, probably from the reign of Hadrian (AD 117–138) and Antoninus Pius (AD 138–161). The photo of the coins is not clear and so Guy de la Bédoyère could only make a tentative identification of the emperors on the coins. These artefacts are likely the result of trade with the Orkneys and mainland Scotland.

The Orkneys, an archipelago of 70 islands, lie 10 km from Caithness in the far north of Scotland. Today,



Jarlshof early settlement. Photo: Norah Cooper.



Jarlshof Wheelhouse. Photo: Norah Cooper.



Broch of Mousa. Photo: Norah Cooper.

there is a population of 20,000 and the largest settlement and capital is Kirkwall.

The Orkneys are famous for the numerous prehistoric sites dating from 3600 BC. The Ness of Brodgar (a finger of land between two lochs) has in recent years become historically very important in Western Europe, with one of the largest roofed structures built in prehistoric times. It is 24m long by 18m wide with walls 4m thick. It is referred to as a ‘temple’, though its function is unknown. Dating from 3300 BC the extensive stone buildings here were in continuous use until 2200 BC. We were privileged to have a guided tour by the excavation director, Nick Card, who has been studying the site since 2003. (For a documentary on this important site see Neil Oliver, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AMnNzutU8h4>).

Nearby is the chambered cairn of Maes Howe built 200 years before the famous stone circle, and the Ring of Brodgar, which was built c.2600 BC. These sites dominated the landscape and would have impressed all who saw them. (For further information on excavations in Orkney: www.orkneyarchaeologysociety.org.uk).

Not far from here on the coast are the ancient houses of Skara Brae, discovered in 1850, which were inhabited for about 600 years from 3200 BC. (On a personal note, Skara Brae was the first historic site I heard about in first year at Secondary school in Scotland, sometime later than 1850!)

Both the Orkney and Shetland islands are almost treeless, in fact most woodland areas were gone by 5500 BC before Neolithic farmers started cultivating the land. Being treeless meant that building in stone was the only option. The climate is mild because of the effects of the Gulf Stream and they are fertile islands but have a very short growing season. However, the sea is a major food resource. It is said of Shetlanders that they are fishermen who farm and the Orcadians are farmers who fish.

I have written about the sites mentioned above to give an indication of the extensive record of habitation of these islands from 3600 BC through the Roman period, when the inhabitants of North Britain were referred to by the Romans as Caledonii and then from the early 4th century as Picti (painted people).

Scattered Roman artefacts have been found on the Orkneys, indicating trade. In 2014, a hoard of Roman and Pictish silver was discovered in a field in Aberdeenshire. This is the most northerly hoard of its kind found in Europe. Roman artefacts would have been carried to the Orkneys and Shetlands by trade ships which would have travelled from the harbours in Aberdeenshire and also by land across the top of Scotland to Caithness and then a short sea voyage to Orkney.

The peoples of the Orkneys and Shetlands had a very long prehistory of sophisticated social life centering round stone circles, domestic buildings, brochs and ‘temples’. These would not have been possible without



A Skara Brae house, Orkney. Photo: Norah Cooper.

large populations of organised people. They had no written language but certainly these people were accomplished in many of the basic features of civilisation. (David Kennedy notes that ‘civilisation’ usually relates to a society which has developed two of the following: writing, monumental buildings and concentrated populations of at least 5000. These island peoples had no writing and the population number is unknown). Archaeology has done a great deal to reveal the architecture of the place and time but we know very little about the people.

Three thousand years before the Roman Empire was established, people were settled in these islands. Two thousand years before the foundation of the city of Rome, major stone structures were being built here, and about the time the Roman fleet circumnavigated the north of Caledonia, the Broch of Mousa was already over a century old and two centuries old by the time Hadrian’s Wall was built.

As the people who lived in the islands for thousands of years had no written language, we will never know what they thought if they had seen the ships of Agricola. They may have been astonished and afraid as we know native peoples throughout history have been when confronted by new and different technology. Our historical knowledge of Orkney only begins with the Viking/Norse periods (starting in the 9th century) with the Orkneyinga Saga and the ruinic inscriptions on the island. There is no archaeological evidence of the Romans ever being established here, and the people of the Orcades and Ultima Thule would never have known that they were part of the Roman empire.

Norah would like to thank Murray Jones for the map of the area.



Ring of Brodgar, Orkney. Photo: Norah Cooper.



Ness of Brodgar excavation. Photo: Norah Cooper.



Nick Card of the Ness of Brodgar excavations. Photo: Norah Cooper.

Recent Developments in the Roman World

compiled by Ian Repper



One of the tablets from the Bloomberg excavations.
Image: Museum of London Archaeology.



Bloomberg tablet 30 dated AD 43-53: 'I ask you in your own interest not to appear shabby'. Photo: Museum of London Archaeology.

Earliest British Written Texts

An excavation in London has uncovered some of the earliest written texts ever found in Britain. The wooden tablets from the 1st century AD were preserved in the wet mud of River Walbrook, which ran through central London in the Roman period. They include what is possibly the earliest surviving example of the name London, dated to the first decade after the Roman invasion in AD 43. Another historically significant tablet implies that London, which had been destroyed by Boudica, was up and running again as a city by October, AD 62 - which suggests that Queen Boudica's revolt may have taken place in AD 60, a year earlier than that stated by Tacitus.

Many of the ancient manuscripts refer to loans or debts, demonstrating that London was already a major commercial and financial centre. A preliminary judgment from AD 76 was made by an imperially-appointed judge, whose presence in London demonstrates that the city was directly administered by the emperor (through his provincial governor), rather than through locally-elected magistrates. The tablets were uncovered as part of a Museum of London Archaeology excavation prior to construction of a new building for Bloomberg International.

Keys, David (2016) Ancient Roman texts shed light on earliest Londoners in one of UK's most important archaeological discoveries, *The Independent*, 1 June: www.independent.co.uk/news/science/archaeology/ancient-roman-texts-first-londoners-uk-most-important-ever-archaeological-discoveries-a7059271.html (accessed 22 October 2016).

Kennedy, Maev (2016) Oldest handwritten documents in UK unearthed in London dig, *The Guardian*, 1 June: www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/jun/01/tablets-unearthed-city-glimpse-roman-london-bloomberg (accessed 22 October 2016).

Unexpected Discovery of Statues of Aphrodite in Petra, Jordan

Two well-preserved statues of Aphrodite from the 2nd century AD were recently discovered in Petra, the ancient Nabataean capital city in modern-day Jordan that was annexed by Rome in AD 106. The statues are in a distinctly Roman style, are nearly intact and retain traces of paint.



The statues of Aphrodite found in Petra. Image: Tom Parker.

The statues were unexpectedly discovered on Petra's North Ridge, in a previously unexplored area where it is believed the city's less privileged residents lived. It appears the statues were stored with other debris and damaged structures following an earthquake that struck Petra in AD 363. The tight packing may account for their good preservation.

Also known to the Romans as Venus, Aphrodite was more commonly identified by her Greek name in the eastern half of the empire. The statues were discovered by US archaeologists and students working with the Department of Antiquities of Jordan.

Weisberger, Mindy (2016) "Goddess Alert: Marble Statues of Aphrodite Unearthed at Petra" *LiveScience*, 15 September: www.livescience.com/56100-aphrodite-statue-from-petra.html (accessed 22 October 2016).

Evidence of the Roman Army's Seige of Jerusalem Found

Titus's Roman legions breached the walls of Jerusalem in AD 70 on their way to conquering the city, quelling a Jewish rebellion and ultimately destroying the Second Temple. Historian Flavius Josephus described a battle with Jewish rebels in which Romans used ballistae (catapults) to fire stones at the defenders of Jerusalem's outer, third wall. Once the defenders were forced to take cover, the Roman battering rams could destroy the wall.

Israeli archaeologists have now found evidence of this battle in an area west of Jerusalem's old city, known as the Russian Compound. Among the discoveries were the ruins of the third wall and a watch tower, and considerable evidence of battle, including 82 ballista stones fired from the Roman siege engines. The discoveries help draw a map of Jerusalem's third wall, the location of which had only been hypothesised to date. Construction of the third wall was commenced in AD 40 by Judaeen King Agrippa I, but completed over 20 years later to a much lesser standard. It was the later section that was breached by the Romans.

Hasson, Nir (2016) Uncovered Ancient City Wall in Jerusalem Tells Story of Great Jewish Revolt, *Haaretz*, 20 October: www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-1.748449 (accessed 22 October 2016).

Beaumont, Peter (2016) Archaeologists discover where Titus breached Jerusalem walls, *The Guardian*, 20 October: www.theguardian.com/science/2016/oct/20/israeli-archeologists-discover-titus-breached-jerusalem-walls (accessed 22 October 2016).



Excavations in progress, with the stones clearly evident on the surface. Image: Israel Antiquities Authority.



Cache of lead ballistae being unearthed at Burnswark Hill, Scotland. Image: Burnswark Project.

Tale of Roman Attack on Scottish Fort can be Read from Lead Ammunition

Excavations are ongoing at Burnswark Hill, a small hill fort, in southwest Scotland, just a few miles north of Hadrian's Wall, that may be the location of a vicious assault by the Roman army. A massive concentration of artillery (ballistae) ammunition (over 800) have been located through excavations and a survey. The size of two Roman camps, located to the north and south of the hill fort, suggest that as many as 5,000 soldiers were involved in the attack. It is believed this occurred during the reign of Antoninus Pius (AD 138–161), who ordered the Roman armies to subdue the tribes north of the wall. Some of the ammunition found in previous years have been

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analysed and they are made of the same lead as those found at nearby Birrens, which are tightly dated to the Antonine period.

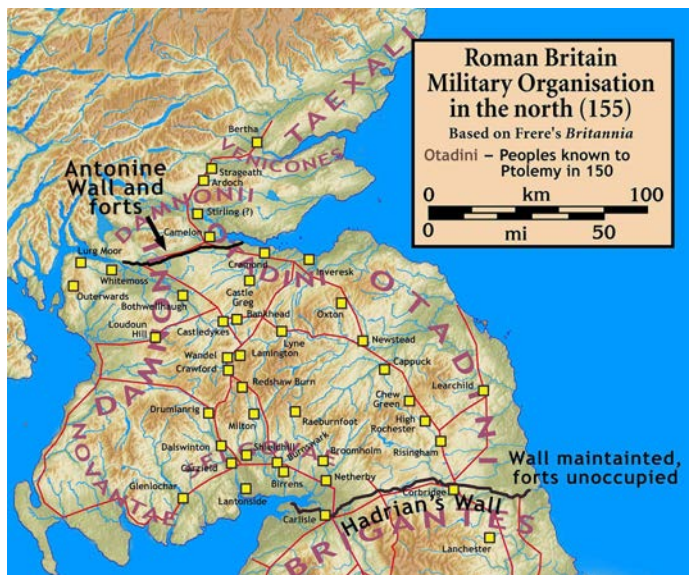
The scatter of ballistae around the hill fort is being analysed in the hopes of being able to understand the progress of the battle. The distribution is able to be accurately analysed because the ballistae are made from lead, which does not corrode like iron, and therefore has survived and can be easily found using metal detectors over the fields surrounding the site. Several different types of ballistae have so far been identified including small bullets with a hole that would whistle when they were flung, large lemon shaped ballistae that weigh as much as 60g, and acorn shaped bullets. It is believed the noise from the former would have had a psychological effect, and these have been found concentrated on the south of the site. The large lemon shaped ballistae would be lethal, and these have been found concentrated in the north Roman camp which may have blocked escape. The acorn bullets are unique to Scotland and it will wait to be seen whether this indicates a specific military unit or use. It is believed that the number of ballistae found is in excess of what would have been needed, and may indicate an act of “exemplary violence” to scare the local tribes into submission.

You can find out the latest on the project by following them on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/The-Burnswark-Project-1480242575606555/>.

Metcalf, Tom (2016) Roman Bullets Tell Story of 1,800-Year-Old Attack on Scottish Fort, *LiveScience*, 4 October: <http://www.livescience.com/56365-roman-attack-on-scottish-fort-archaeology.html> (accessed 26 October 2016).



The ‘football boot’ of Vindolanda. Image: Vindolanda Trust.



Map: Wikimedia Commons, Notuncurious.

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Roman Shoes in Need of Good Home

Archaeologists at Vindolanda, a Roman fort just south of Hadrian’s wall, have uncovered a cache of 421 Roman shoes amongst other debris in a ditch excavated in 2016 - and now they need your help to conserve them.

The shoes date to *c.*AD 212, and were left behind when the military garrisons and their dependants left the Northumberland fort following the war with the northern British tribes. The shoes include children’s and babies’ shoes, ladies’ and men’s boots, bath clogs, and indoor and outdoor shoes - potentially more than one shoe for every person who lived inside the fort at Vindolanda at that time. One shoe even bears a striking resemblance to a modern Adidas football boot!

The shoes were left with other rubbish in the defensive ditches that had surrounded the fort, which were then sealed when a new Roman town and fort were built at the site, preserving the shoes in an oxygen-free environment. Dr Andrew Birley, the Vindolanda Trust’s CEO and Director of excavations described the shoes as providing ‘an unbelievable and unparalleled demographic census’ of the community.

Vindolanda has produced more Roman shoes than any other place from the Roman Empire.

However, each shoe costs the project between £80 and £100 pounds to conserve and the Vindolanda Trust receives no external funding towards its excavation, conservation and research costs. They are therefore asking for help to fund the shoe conservation process - you can sign up to conserve a shoe on their website, and 100% of your £80 (about \$130) donation to 'conserve a shoe' will go directly towards the laboratory costs. After your payment is received, you'll receive in the post a numbered certificate of conservation signed by the CEO & Director of Excavations Dr Andrew Birley.

Sign up to conserve a shoe here: <http://www.vindolanda.com/conserve-a-shoe>

And find out more about the shoes and the excavations here: <http://www.vindolanda.com/blog/press-releases/post/if-the-shoe-fits/>.

Beautifully preserved Roman Villa in Positano now open to the public

The same ash and volcanic stone that preserved Pompeii has preserved a large sumptuously decorated Roman villa. It is situated today eight metres underneath the church of Santa Maria Assunta in Positano, Campania. Part of the villa is now open to the public.

The extensive complex of the *villa marittima*, seaside villa, is believed to stretch at least 2.25 acres under Positano, and believed to have resided on a series of terraces down to the water. Some of the walls still stand 18 feet high, while others have collapsed either from the eruption of Vesuvius or over the course of time. The sections of the villa underneath the church have been excavated on and off over the last 12 years after it was rediscovered by accident during restoration work on the crypt.

The villa's frescoes are brilliantly preserved in bright detail. The decoration of the *triclinium*, or dining room, is described as unique, with delicate relief details provided by stuccoed design. The frescoes feature fantastical architecture, drapery and figures of cupids and dolphins.

The villa will continue to undergo excavation and conservation work, while plans continue to make the site more accessible to visitors through the construction of a transparent footbridge over the site.

Merola, Marco (2016) Romans on the Bay of Naples. *Archaeology Magazine* Issue 226-1609, 30 August: <http://www.archaeology.org/issues/226-1609/features/4758-romans-on-the-bay-of-naples> (accessed 26 October 2016).



Photos of the Positano villa's stunning frescoes. Photos above: Marco Merola; below: L'Espresso.



RAG News

Vale Mike Manley

We are saddened to hear of the death on Thursday 27th October 2016 of Michael ('Mike') Manley, aged 74. Illness had prevented Mike from attending many RAG functions during the last two years but he will be well-known to most RAG members. I knew Mike slightly from his role in the Reid Library but in 2003 he joined 29 others on a Tour of Roman Britain I organized. For three weeks in British summer we travelled clockwise from Canterbury as far north as Aberdeen before finishing in London. Despite his disability Mike joined in everything including the four mile walk along Hadrian's Wall from Steel Rigg to Housesteads. Forever cheerful, we were all treated on our last day which ended with afternoon tea in the British Museum to find Mike had got there first and was already drinking pink champagne.

When RAG was established in 2004 Mike became a founder member of the committee and played a valued role in our activities ever since. His good-natured conversation and happy chuckle will be missed.

Mike's funeral took place at Karakatta Cemetery on Friday 4th November. It was attended by about 100 family and friends, including his ex-wife and both sons.

(DLK)

Vale Professor E. John Jory

Professor E. John Jory, former Chair of Classics and Ancient History at UWA, passed away September 4, 2016. John joined UWA as a lecturer in 1959, but will be known to many of you as Professor, the position he held from 1978. His characterful contribution to the Australian community of Classics professionals will be missed.

RAG Saturday Sessions

The first of the Winter Sessions kicked off on 15th October with two lectures by David Kennedy on aspects of the Roman Army. The second session will also be by David

Kennedy, on Saturday 26th November. Lectures are on the topical themes of a marvellously stable and much admired political system ('The Roman Republic') and the events and people who brought it to an end ('The Roman Revolution'). This session will include the AGM.

Planning is underway for the Summer sessions - probably in February, March and April. So far we have offers from Guy de la Bédoyère (March) and Michael Paige (probably April); David will probably do both lectures in February.

Donations

A big Thank You to the following for their kind donations to RAG 2016-17:

Peter Anstis
Reimar Junkerstorff
Iain & Marlene Carmichael
David & Helen Treloar

A busy year for DLK...

Last we heard from David Kennedy, he was in Athens on his way to Vienna for ICAANE. An extra weekend in Vienna allowed him time to fly over and visit the Roman ruins of the fortress and city of Carnuntum on the Danube together with Don

Boyer. All the photos can now be viewed on the APAAE site (<https://www.flickr.com/photos/apaae/>).

In June, a week of holiday was spent in Istanbul and another period of leave took him to ancient Rome where there is always something new (i.e. old) to explore. David is looking forward to the opportunity at future RAG Saturday sessions or in the *RAG Magazine* of making use of all these visits.

Others, too, have been busy ...

Don Boyer gave papers on Gerasa (modern Jarash) at conferences in Vienna and Oxford. As you may have expected, both were his usual polished, professional presentations. Don was also awarded a prize here in WA for the lecture he gave to the Archaeological Society of WA.

And our own RAG Editor, Rebecca has presented at conferences in Jordan and Lithuania, participated in fieldwork in Lebanon as well as the continued aerial reconnaissance with the Aerial Archaeology in Jordan project. We are happy to say she will be closer to home soon - Rebecca plans to return to Perth in 2017.

The RAG Inc

<http://www.humanities.uwa.edu.au/research/cah/roman-archaeology>
<https://ragwa.wordpress.com/>

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\$25.00 **Standard Membership**

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Membership includes biannual copies of the RAG Magazine, regular email updates on Roman news and reduced cost of afternoon tea.

Annual memberships are from July 1st to June 30th.

Please download the Membership form from the website (see below) or see one of the RAG team at the Saturday lectures.