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# The RAG

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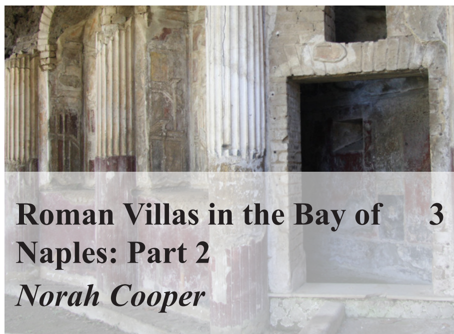

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## Latest news regarding the date of the eruption of Vesuvius

*John Melville-Jones*

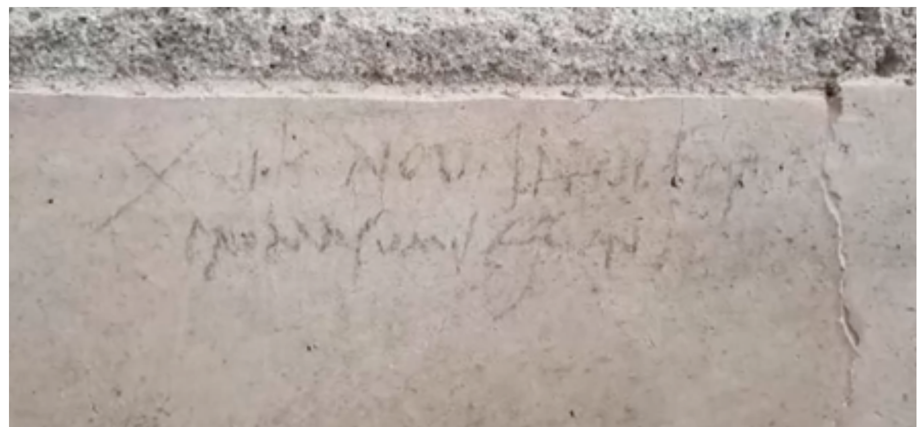

Photo: Parco Archaeologico di Pompei.

Some years ago I gave a talk at a conference saying that a gold coin of Titus discovered in the ruins of Pompeii gave as one of his titles IMP XV 'Commander for the fifteenth time', and that this showed that the eruption of Vesuvius could not have taken place on the traditionally accepted date of August 24, AD 79, because two inscriptions that can be dated to September 8 and 9 show that on those days he was still IMP XIIII, 'Commander for the fourteenth time'.

I and others who believed this were later proved wrong, because a more careful examination of the coin showed that the correct reading was in fact XIIII not XV. The first examination of the coin had been incorrect, because some lines spreading out from the design in the centre which shows a capricorn had been incorrectly interpreted as belonging to this design, not to the Roman numeral.

The traditional date has always been disputed because it is clear that at the time of the eruption the weather in that area was colder than one would expect in August. But now we have another piece of evidence, a graffito (not a graffiti, because 'graffiti' is a plural word) scribbled in charcoal in a Pompeiian house that was being renovated, that seems to support a later date more successfully.

It reads:

> XVI (ante) K(alendas) Nov(embres) in[d]ulsit pro masumis esurit[ioni].

> Sixteen days before the Kalends of November (October 17), he indulged excessively in food.

Casa della Gemma, Herculaneum, Latrine. Photo: Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, *Herculaneum: Past and Future* (London: Francis Lincoln, 2011) p. 294

The fact that the writing was in charcoal, and would certainly have been removed when the job was finished and the owners returned, shows that the eruption of Vesuvius can be dated after October 17, and was perhaps on October (not August) 24 of that year.

The statement cannot be considered a fine piece of writing, but at least it is better than a graffito discovered in the latrine of the Casa della Gemma (so called because of a piece of jewellery found there) at Herculaneum.

It reads:

Apollinaris medicus Titi imp(eratoris) hic cacavit bene

Apollinaris, doctor of the emperor Titus, shat well here.

This could be interpreted in two ways. The words might have been written by Apollinaris, referring to himself proudly in the third person (just as Julius Caesar did when he wrote about his campaigns), or they might have been written by the next person to use the latrine.

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Satellite imagery map of the Villae Stabiae area. Imagery: Google.

# Roman Villas in the Bay of Naples
## Part 2: Villae Stabiae
*Norah Cooper*

View from second villa complex towards Vesuvius. Photo: Norah Cooper.

The village of Stabiae. Photo: Yvonne Broome.

*For a moment my uncle wondered whether to turn back, but when the helmsman advised this he refused, telling him that Fortune stood by the courageous and they must make for Pomponianus at Stabiae.*
(Pliny the Younger Letter 6.16 to Cornelius Tacitus, writing about the death of his uncle Pliny the Elder)

'Where would you like to go?' asked Nando, our Sorrento Taxi driver.

'We'd like to go to Cumae, Baiae and Pozzuoli', I replied.

With a shrug of his shoulders, raised palms and eyebrows, Nando continued, 'aaaaa, I went there on a school trip, but I can't remember where they are.'

'No worries', I replied, 'I have a map.'

Nando's face brightened and he asked, 'Have you ever been to see the Villae Stabiae, near here and next to where I live?'

Never having heard of the villas, we agreed so as not to appear ungrateful or reluctant… Well, how lucky were we? These villas are spectacular and some are open to the public.

Today, the spectacular excavated Roman Villas of Stabiae are on a high cliff above the modern town of Castellammare di Stabia. Originally the villas were strung along a headland 50m above the Bay of Naples, which is now about 1 km distant. Pliny the Elder wrote that Stabiae was a popular resort for wealthy Romans who enjoyed panoramic views of the Bay. In fact, Stabiae, situated 5 km south of Pompeii and 16 kms south east of Vesuvius is famous because Pliny the Elder died on the beach at the port of Stabiae during the Vesuvian eruption in AD 79.

### History

From the archaeological finds of three hundred tombs in a necropolis associated with Stabiae, it is known that the area which includes Pompeii, was settled by Oscans from the 7th century BC. There are remains of an Oscan *oppidum* (settlement) in the area. Evidence of ceramics and inscriptions at Stabiae show that the Stabian people were in contact with Etruscans from the 7th century. Then, in the 5th century BC, Samnites, an Oscan speaking people, took over the town.

There were 3 wars between the Roman Republic and the Samnites during the periods 343-341 BC, 326-304 BC, and finally 298-290 BC, resulting in Roman control over the area of Neapolis. Livy (Titus Livius Patavinus, c. 64 BC-c. AD 12) wrote accounts of these wars. In 89 BC, Lucius Cornelius Sulla destroyed

Stabiae during the Social War (91-88 BC), which was waged between the Roman Republic and other Italian cities which had been allies of Rome, but their inhabitants had not been awarded Roman citizenship. This war resulted in genocide of the Samnites, and Rome offering full citizenship to most of the Italian peoples.

**Villas**

The art and architecture of the villas (houses outside of a town) of the elite Romans in the Bay of Naples allowed the owners to demonstrate their wealth, erudition, dignitas, and sophistication with collections of art alluding to classical legends, libraries, fish ponds, skilled cooks and often resident philosophers and poets. The expansion of Roman villas started in the first century BC but continued over the next two centuries, even after the eruption of Vesuvius.

Some of the villas at Stabiae were excavated originally in Bourbon times (1749-1782) and after furnishings and frescos were removed, the villas were reburied. Excavations recommenced in the 1950s and now are continuing. The villas have been given modern names relating to images, statues or sites associated with them. Many of the fabulous frescos and mosaics are now in the Naples Archaeological Museum. There are five large villas for leisure (*otium*) and nine residential villas with agricultural sections (*villae rusticae*) being excavated today. Below I write about three of the leisure villas. All had the usual Roman rooms, baths, gardens, atria and peristyles. Photographs of the remaining frescos *in situ* give an impression of the grandeur and extravagance of these villas.

**Villa Arianna**

Entering the Archaeological park, from the south west is via a little village and the first villa is called Villa Arianna which has beautiful frescos, some still in situ. The Stabiae villas were either rebuilt or newly built

*Cubiculum* of the Villa Arianna. Photo: Norah Cooper.

*Atrium* of the Villa Arianna. Photo: Norah Cooper.

Fresco from the Villa Arianna. Photo: Yvonne Broome.

*Triclinium* of the Villa Arianna. Photo: Norah Cooper.

after 89 BC and this one was expanded in AD 54-68 adding a triclinium overlooking the sea, with further expansion again in AD 69-79, when an enormous peristyle garden was added. There is even a tunnel linking the villa to the sea shore below. The villa's modifications took place over 150 years. The famous frescoes of Flora and Diana which were originally in this villa, are now at the Naples Archaeological Museum.

**Second Complex Villa**

From the photo of Roger walking through the Second Complex Villa (so-called as it is only separated from Villa Arianna by an alley), the modern town can be seen below, where the port and bay of Naples were 2,000 years ago. This villa is only partially excavated but the remaining frescos on the walls of the rooms built on the edge of the escarpment with panoramic views give an idea of the richness of the original villa.

**San Marco**

This is the largest of the villas with a total surface area of 11,000 m$^2$ which has all of the usual Roman villa rooms, peristyles and gardens, but also has a huge apsidal nymphaeum. In the small rooms on either side of the nymphaeum are beautiful figures including Perseus holding a gladius and lifting the head of Medusa and Iphigenia with a palladium (wooden statue of Pallas Athena) on her shoulder and a torch in her right hand.

We forget that the land around the Bay of Naples has for millennia been highly populated because of the rich volcanic soils for agriculture and the huge Bay of Naples providing safe ports. The Roman towns we

View off the escarpment of the Second Complex. Photo: Norah Cooper.

Plan of the Villa San Marco. Photo: Norah Cooper.

know today are just a tiny fraction of those extant in the first century AD prior to the eruption of Vesuvius and not all the towns were completely destroyed at that time. The modern towns of the Bay of Naples all had their origins in pre- classical times, and the earlier settlements now lie buried by lava or under modern buildings.

On the day we visited Stabiae, we did indeed visit Cumae, Baiae and Puteoli later (with the aid of my map), but they did not compare to the joyful experience of the unexpected visit to Stabiae. I am so grateful to luck (or is it fate?) which brought Nando as our taxi driver that day in Sorrento.

Thanks to Yvonne and Peter Broome and Roger: Peter and Roger were as ever patient whilst Yvonne and I took endless photos.

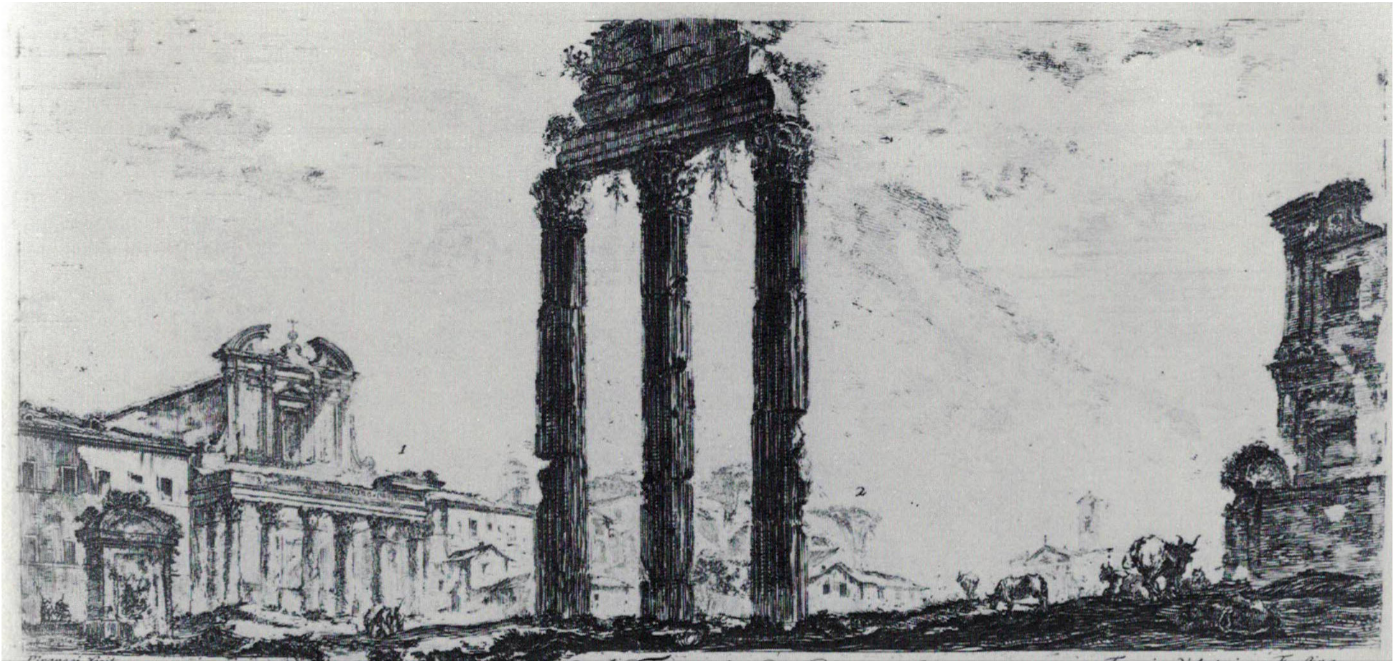
San Marco *Atrium*. Photo: Yvonne Broome.

Frescos in San Marco. Photo: Norah Cooper.
Side rooms of San Marco *Nymphaeum*. Photo Yvonne Broome.

Fresco of Iphegenia. Photo: Yvonne Broome.
San Marco *Atrium* lower frieze. Photo Yvonne Broome.

# Tales from the Forum

*Guy de la Bédoyère*



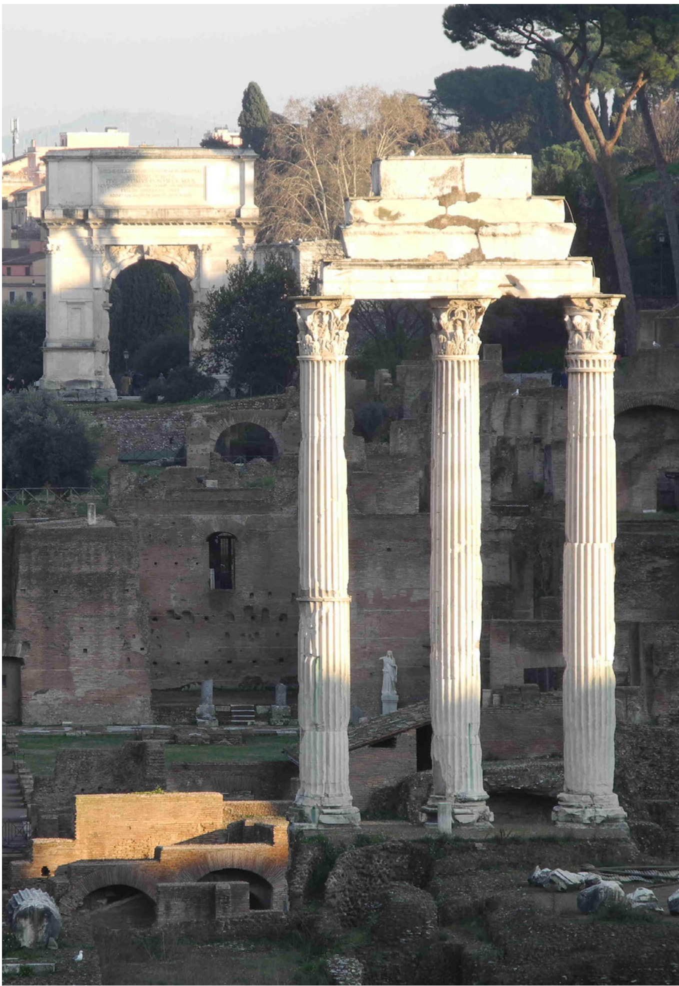
Engraving of the columns of the Temple of Castor and Pollux by Giovanni Piranesi (1720–78). By then the Forum was deeply buried under centuries of debris.

Many RAG members have wandered in the Forum at Rome and no doubt like me been fascinated by the magnificent dereliction that surrounds them. It's a remarkable collection of monuments of innumerable different associations and dates and difficult to make sense of. Does that matter? Not really. Its present state is a thing of wonder in its own right.

When I first visited the Forum it was an April evening in 1975. I had travelled across Europe with a family I was friends with. They had no idea where the Forum was but I had been interested for so long that I was able to walk them through the streets of Rome one evening. It was already dark and Rome in those days had far fewer tourists. It was an eerie traipse along the cobbled alleyways past the crumbling doors to medieval churches and entrances to palazzos and courts that punctuate so many of Rome's alleys and lanes. Easy to imagine a thug in a tricorn hat and cloak emerging from the shadows to mug us as we made our way to the nerve centre of the ancient world.

And there it was. The vast looming black shadow of the Palatine Hill rose up behind the silent, empty Forum that glowed orange under the scattered lights that illuminated the battered and scattered structures. Of all the ruins that struck me the most that evening, the first time I had ever seen the Forum, it was the three columns that remain from the Temple of Castor and Pollux that impressed me the most. They seem so incongruous. How have they survived intact, standing next to each other and still joined by entablature just as they were built two millennia ago, while the rest of the building apart from the core of the podium has all gone?

The columns belong to a rebuilding that Augustus ordered in 14 or 9 BC. A fire, so ever-present a danger in Rome, had destroyed the old temple that had been first dedicated in 484 BC. Augustus spotted an opportunity. He was in the throes of promoting his grandsons Gaius and Lucius as his potential heirs. They were the sons of his only child and daughter Julia and her husband, Augustus' general, Marcus Agrippa. The succession had been a nightmare for Augustus from the start. Since he was not supposed to be a monarch or anything like one, he could not openly establish a line of succession. Yet he could not contemplate letting go his or his family's grip on power. With no son of his own he had turned initially to his nephew Marcus Marcellus, son of his sister Octavia, but he had died in 23 BC soon after being married to Julia. So Augustus



The three columns of the Temple of Castor and Pollux. In the distance is the Arch of Titus, built around eighty years later. The columns belong to the south long side of the temple.

A close-up view of the columns. Note the weight-relieving alcoves between the columns' substructures in the podium. Perhaps the raven lived in one of these.

had married the widowed Julia to Agrippa and hoped for the best.

When the boys arrived in 20 and 17 BC respectively and showed every sign of growing to manhood Augustus decided eventually to start awarding them the privileges that would earmark them as the future of Rome once he was gone. The doting grandfather mollycoddled them and called them his 'little donkeys'.

Augustus decided to identify the rebuilding of the temple and the cult of Castor and Pollux, the Heavenly Twins (Dioscuri), with Gaius and Lucius as their living embodiments. In Roman myth Castor and Pollux had become associated with military success. This neatly skirted round any declaration of living divinities and instead associated the boys with gods. After all Augustus claimed descent from Venus anyway. It was a useful way of marking out the imperial family as something special.

And so the new marble temple was reconstructed. The podium was planned to be around 7 metres high, and the columns (eight at the front and back and eleven down each side) were almost 15 metres high and in the Corinthian style. A speakers' rostrum was built into the front of the podium. It was by any measure a magnificently large temple, though not as tall as the contemporary Temple of Mars Ultor.

The new Temple of Castor and Pollux was dedicated in AD 6 but by then everything had changed. The male heirs of the Julio-Claudians sometimes seemed to die like flies. Both Gaius and Lucius were dead, cut down in their prime. Lucius had died in AD 2 in Marseilles while travelling to Spain to undertake military training. Gaius followed him in AD 4 after being wounded the previous year while on campaign in Armenia.

The distressed Augustus had no alternative but to resort to his stepson Tiberius, son of his wife Livia by her previous marriage, as the next potential heir. Gaius and Lucius had a younger brother called Agrippa Postumus but he seems by all accounts to have been a thoroughly unsatisfactory individual. Tiberius dedicated the completed temple in AD 6 and did so in his name and that of his deceased brother Drusus the

Elder. Eight years later he was emperor, the first emperor to succeed another. Like every other emperor of the Julio-Claudian dynasty his eligibility by blood came down the female line.

There was a raven in the forum that had a more optimistic take on the imperial family's prospects. The bird had hatched somewhere on the Temple of Castor and Pollux and moved into a cobbler's shop nearby, presumably located in one of the alcoves in the podium. Here the bird had the opportunity to listen to people talking and soon learned to mimic what it heard. Each morning it flew the short distance to the speakers' rostra that overlooked the central piazza. Here it called out the names of Tiberius, his son Drusus the Younger and his nephew Germanicus, as well as hailing the public, and then returned to the cobbler's.

The raven continued this morning salutation for many years throughout Tiberius' reign, long after both Drusus and Germanicus were dead. Germanicus died in AD 19, Drusus in 23. Unfortunately, in the year 36 the bird's popularity, or toilet habits, caused a neighbouring cobbler to kill it. This caused a riot and the bird-killing cobbler was forced out, which served him right. A major public funeral for the raven followed with a procession that led two miles down the Via Appia to a chosen burial spot.

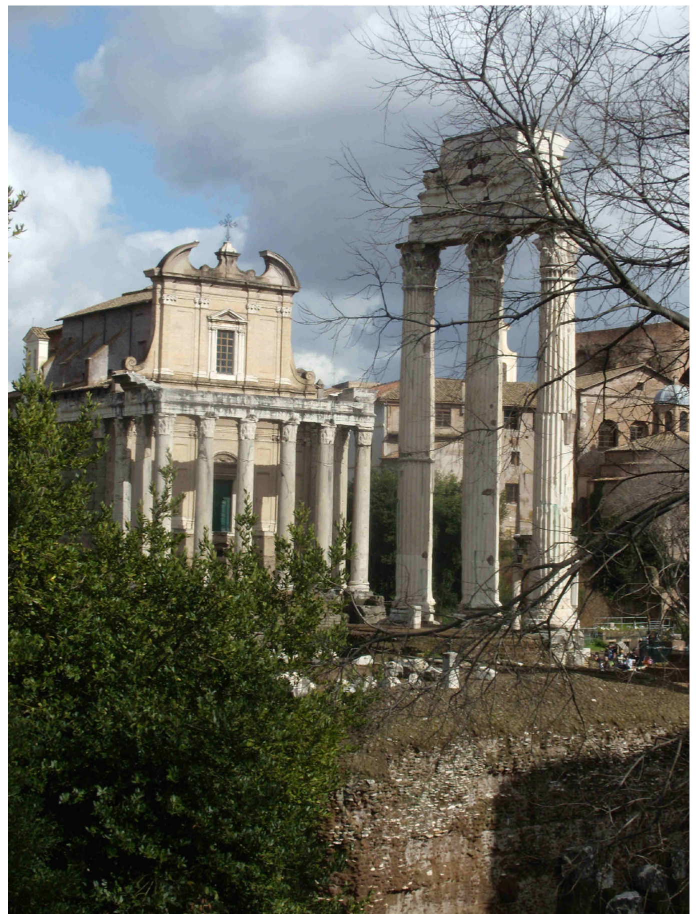
It must have been a curious sight as the grieving well-wishers drawn from all levels of Rome's extraordinarily varied population gathered in the Forum and headed out down the Via Sacra to the Via Appia to the south of the city. Pliny the Elder mused on the irony that many Roman men of note had been awarded nothing like the same degree of honour as the raven at their deaths. Perhaps it was an omen. The following year Tiberius died, only to be succeeded by his great-nephew Caligula (37-41) descended from Augustus through his daughter Julia and his granddaughter Agrippina the Elder.

Caligula decided to split the temple in two down the long axis so that it could act an entranceway to his palace on the hill behind. He liked the idea that the Dioscuri could be his gatekeepers. Despite this affront the Temple of Castor and Pollux remained a great sight in the Forum of Rome. By the third century AD the speakers' *rostrum* had been removed and a conventional staircase installed to lead up to the front of the building.

What happened next is unclear. Early engravings show the same three columns that stand today already alone. As it happens three columns remaining is a modest success. Plenty of temples that once decorated ancient Rome have disappeared completely like the Temple of the Deified Augustus.

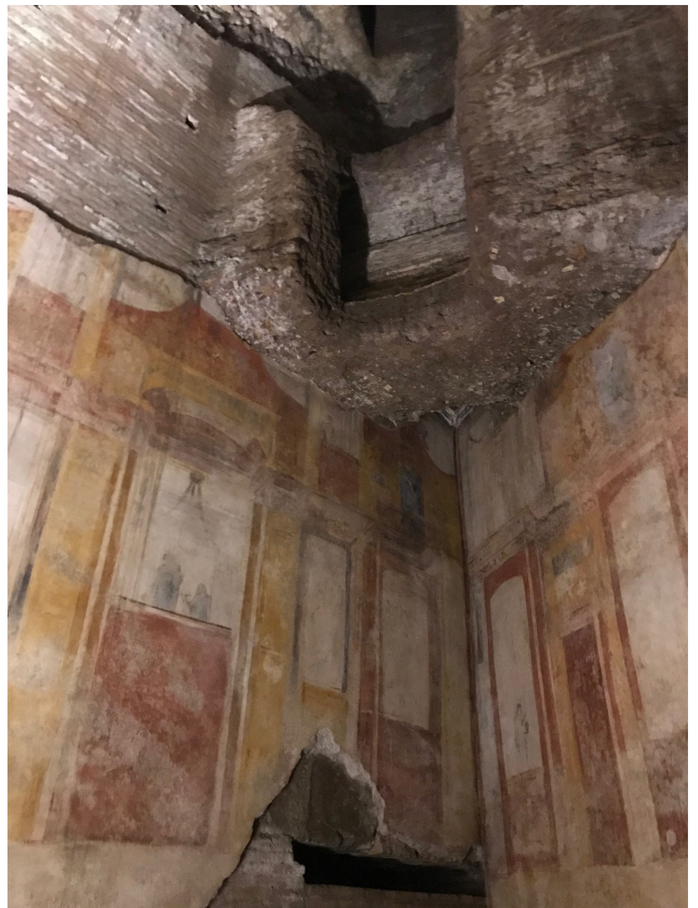
Evidently the temple was robbed out, the marble doubtless being carried off to medieval lime kilns and probably used for the building of St Peter's. But for some inexplicable reason the three last columns were left. Perhaps they should be named for Tiberius, Drusus the Younger and Germanicus, in honour of the loyalist raven that once used to screech out their names to the delight of the crowd and the fury of a jealous cobbler.

*Editor's note: Italy was hit by extraordinary flooding on October 30, 2018, causing the Roman Forum and Colosseum to be closed to the public. Weather events like this are a huge threat to heritage sites across the world, and while this is by no means the first time flooding has hit the site, it is an event that may occur more frequently as extreme weather events become more common. Hopefully the Forum can shoulder these ravages as it has done so for the past 2,000 years, with the help of heritage professionals.*



A view from behind the back of the Temple of Castor and Pollux. In antiquity this view would have been filled with the temple. In the distance is the Temple of Antoninus Pius and Faustina, constructed not long after Faustina's death in AD 140, and now the church of San Lorenzo in Miranda.

Forum General. The Temple of Castor and Pollux in context. At the upper right are the remains of the palaces of the Palatine Hill. At lower right is the Basilica Julia. The prominent single column is the Column of Phocas, a 2nd century column re-erected here in the 4th century and once capped by a statue of the Byzantine emperor Phocas in the 7th century.



# The Domus Aurea

*Rebecca Norman*

The ancient accounts of Nero's Domus Aurea conjure up a palace of mythical proportions. Built in the heart of Ancient Rome in the aftermath of the great fire of AD64 by, arguably, one of history's most reviled emperors, this ostentatious complex, completed in just four years, covered a vast area, touching the slopes of the Palatine, Esquiline, Caelian, and Oppian Hills.

A wonder of marble and gold, lush gardens, mosaics and frescos, the sprawling grounds were scattered with groves of trees, pavilions, courtyards, fountains, nymphaea, banqueting halls, bath houses, vineyards, a huge artificial lake. Of all the marvels, the engineering feat that was the Octagonal Hall was Nero's *pièce de résistance*. This vast central space, which begins as an octagon, rises to become a perfect circle, topped by an oculus in a domed roof; its clever design bringing to mind the Pantheon. Underneath, a ceiling painted with stars and planets – well why not – revolved slowly, from which light fragrances and rose petals showered Nero's guests.

Photographs of the Domus Aurea are by Rebecca Norman.

Until recently, no latrines, domestic areas or obvious sleeping quarters had been discovered, leading archaeologists to presume the Domus Aurea was designed purely as a place to entertain, on a lavish scale – Nero retained his private palace on the Quirinal Hill. This theory may yet be revised as fresh evidence hints at the possibility of some sleeping quarters.

Then, as these things are wont to do, it all went pear-shaped. After Nero's ignominious death, his successors - desperate to disassociate themselves from the excesses of the last Julio-Claudian emperor - systematically removed all traces of the Golden Palace. The Baths of Titus, the Flavian Amphitheatre, the Baths of Trajan, and the Temple of Venus and Rome eventually covered the site, and any remaining areas of the Domus Aurea were buried under the tonnes of earth moved to accommodate the new structures.

For centuries, the Domus Aurea was lost to history until, during the Renaissance, someone fell through a hole – as you do – right bang slap into the middle of the palace – although he thought it was some strange grotto. The frescoes found within were a revelation and became the inspiration to many famous Renaissance artists, including Michelangelo and Raphael. Regrettably the discovery also started the process of decay, moisture seeping into the previously airtight caverns, which archaeologists and engineers are now working tirelessly to slow. Much is still unexcavated and, due to the astronomical costs involved, will likely remain so, thus, its actual size is unknown but estimated to be between 100 and 300 acres.

I was thrilled to read that the Domus Aurea is now open to the public – it has been on my list of must do's, since I watched a documentary about it several years ago. It is only open Saturdays and Sundays, you must pre-book well in advance, especially if you are visiting in high season and, be warned, the entrance fee is one of the more costly, because it is usually part of a longer tour which includes another Ancient Roman site. As I'm writing this, I have investigated further, and believe you can buy a ticket just for the Domus Aurea at very reasonable rate, but don't hold me to it. Hard hats are obligatory and provided, and, as the temperatures within the palace rarely rise above 16 Celsius and it is very humid, a lightweight jacket or long-sleeved t-shirt is recommended.

All that said, however, I would fly to Rome just to see this site, and would happily pay double. After entering along a gently sloping, dimly lit passage, you pause for a short video introduction, before continuing on into the complex itself, whereupon the huge rooms, soaring ceilings, exquisite frescoes, and intricate web of corridors will take your breath away. There are not enough adjectives to describe the astonishing scale of this palace and, because your guide is one of the archaeologists working on the excavations, you are given

expert, first hand, and up to date information.

The experience - because it is far more than a 'tour' - which lasts about 80 mins, is enhanced by digital overlays, and an amazing 3D virtual reality tour, which takes you from ruins and rubble to a shimmering, richly decorated palace and its gardens, and beyond to the Rome of AD 68. The digital artists have created a stunning feast for the senses, its beauty almost reducing me to tears. Despite deterioration over the last few hundred years, the remnants of frescoes are remarkable, and the Octagonal Hall - spectacular. As with so many of the sites of Ancient Rome, the joy for me, was to be able to walk in the footsteps of an emperor and his entourage, and to see something of what they saw every day.

Similarly to Pompeii, the Domus Aurea offers us a snap shot of the extravagance of emperors and their obsession with outshining all who came before. Not to mention giving us invaluable information on their innovative building techniques, engineering masterpieces and artistic styles, the significance of which cannot be underestimated.

Sometimes reality, even in its damaged state, far exceeds the myth!

## Looking for Roman Arabia

*Rebecca Repper*

As I compile the November issue or RAG I am sitting in an office in a remote wadi, just east of the town of Al-Ula in Saudi Arabia. I am of course conducting aerial reconnaissance with Professor David Kennedy for the Aerial Archaeology in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia project. I thought it therefore fitting that I collate together a short introduction to the Roman presence in what is now the modern Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

One of the tomb façades of Mada'in Saleh, showing Classical influences.

Sadly there is not much freely available to collate. Saudi Arabia in the past has been incredibly tight lipped about its archaeological treasures. While there is a dedicated heritage authority, the Saudi Commission for Tourism and Natural Heritage, archaeological work in the country is rarely published, and when it is, it is rarely translated out of Arabic. This is changing however as the country begins to develop its heritage and tourism industry. One example is the 'Roads of Arabia' or 'Saudi Archeological Masterpieces' exhibition that successfully toured through Europe, Asia and North America from 2010 until this year. This has brought information and artefacts from many Saudi Arabian archaeological sites to the world for the first time. We hope to see much more research and communication of the rich archaeology of this country into the future, which will hopefully see its way into the RAG Magazine to share with you all.

Al-Ula, where we are based, was an important location in antiquity because of its oasis along the overland spice and fragrance trading route from Shabwah in modern day Yemen in the south, referred to by the Romans as Arabia Felix. This route ran inland along the west side of Saudi Arabia. The incense route is described by Pliny the Elder as sixty-five days by camel, which would have had watering and accommodation stops along its length (*Natural History* 12.32). The route was so appropriate that it continued in use for the Hajj pilgrimage to Mecca, first by caravans, then by road, and then by rail; today most pilgrims fly direct.

The valley of Al-Ula was one of the major stops along this trade route. Our trusty guide and driver while we are here tells us that Al-Ula is a place of civilisations, because every time one civilisation fell, another arose in its place in the valley. During the Roman era, this city was known as Hegra, and is believed to have been the second major city of the Nabataean kingdom which the Romans annexed in AD 106. The ruins today

are known as Mada'in Saleh, and are being investigated by a Saudi-French team. Although the same geology as Petra in Jordan to the North, the site of Mada'in Saleh differs as it is exposed in a broad wadi with outcrops of red sandstone dotted around it, where the striking Nabataean tombs are carved. Unlike almost every tomb at Petra itself, here many of the most elaborate tombs bear an inscription in Nabataean. The city was defensively walled and the extent of these ramparts can just be seen on Google Earth. Recent excavation has revealed them as Roman and includes Latin inscriptions of the mid-Second Century AD.

The Mediterranean had long had contact with Arabia through trade, but direct Roman involvement in this trade route is believed to have started after Egypt was conquered in 30 BC, giving Rome direct access to the Red Sea route. Berenice was the major port on the Egyptian side, and on the Arabian Peninsula Roman presence was maintained at a Nabataean port called Leuke Kome, or 'White Village'. The Nabataean Kingdom, established from nomadic tribes c. Fourth Century BC, became a client kingdom of Rome in the First Century BC.

Rome's interest was of course mostly prompted by wealth: they needed to make sure they collected tax from the spice and fragrance trades. The exact location of Leuke Kome is not known for certain. Three possible locations have been given on different grounds: the known Nabataean settlement near the Gulf of Aqaba 'Aynuna', the city of al-Wajh west of Al-Ula due to topographical and its correlation with the literary evidence, and the Farasan Islands, due to the presence of two inscriptions associated with the Roman military. The last seems now ruled out as one of the inscriptions tells us the place was Portus Ferresan.

The Red Sea was the primary sea route to Arabia Felix and India, and in the Augustan period Rome attempted to control this trade more directly, as Strabo describes, 'to deal with wealthy friends or to master wealthy enemies' (*Geography* 16.4.22). Aelius Gallus, second prefect of Egypt, launched a campaign in 26 BC. He is reported to have landed at Leuke Kome, and marched overland. Aelius Gallus reportedly had placed his trust in a treacherous Nabataean guide, however, Syllaeus, and the overland route was drawn out over six months, during which disease plagued the army and their supply routes became stretched. They were thus forced to abandon the campaign as they finally reached the wealthy kingdoms which were their primary goal, unsuccessfully besieging the city of Marsiaba (Marib) of the Sabaean kingdom. It may be a leftover of this campaign remembered in a Latin inscription found many years ago in Yemen commemorating a dead Roman cavalryman.

Nabataea was annexed by Trajan after the death of their king Rabbel II Soter in AD 106 and became the Roman province of Arabia Petraea. Hegra was perhaps the south-eastern extent of the annexed territory. Other centres

A map of the greatest extent of the Nabataean Kingdom, with Hegra and possible location of Leuke Kome marked.

included Dumat al-Jandal in the province of al-Jawf (the site of Qasr Marid), and Al-Bada' in the province of Tabuk (the site of Mugha'ir Shu'ayb or Madyan). The extent to which we can consider these former Nabataean settlements as 'Roman' is of course reliant on the archaeological record which remains unknown to me, but the 'soft power' of Rome can perhaps be seen in some of the choices of decoration of their tombs. Hopefully the extent of 'Roman' influence and presence in Arabia will become more apparent as research of Saudi Arabia's archaeology opens up to the world.

Google Earth satellite imagery of the site of Mada'in Saleh/Hegra.

The former Nabataean territories suffered under Rome, perhaps due to the preference given to the sea trade route rather than the overland. The major site of Hegra for example is believed to have been abandoned by the Fourth Century AD. Islamic armies under the Caliph Umar in the Seventh Century took Arabia from the Romans, with the Legio III Cyrenaica destroyed defending Bostra in AD 630.

*You can read about the 'Roads of Arabia' exhibition in Saudi Aramco online, which details some of the amazing archaeology in Saudi Arabia: http://archive.aramcoworld.com/issue/201102/roads.of.arabia.htm.*

# RAG News

### Aerial Archaeology in KSA

Since February, DK has been heavily engaged in directing a programme of Aerial Archaeology in Saudi Arabia – part of a well-publicised project to develop tourism in that country.

Dr Hugh Thomas (a Greek Archaeologist) joined the project in February and is now officially the Assistant Director. Don Boyer and Rebecca Repper joined at the same time, and share a position as Research Assistant. Dr Melissa Kennedy (a Bronze Age Archaeologist with specialised in the Middle East) was appointed as a Research Associate.

Hugh directs the flying season programme and Melissa the ground survey component. The preliminary team of DK, Hugh and Rebecca will have completed the aerial programme by the time this goes to press. Melissa, accompanied by an archaeological assistant, Jane, and Mat Dalton (a former Research Assistant of DK), will be a fortnight into their ground survey. The team had 50 hours of aerial reconnaissance scheduled, and several further flights to ferry Melissa's ground survey team out to remote sites. A very busy 5+ weeks but immensely exciting and encountering such a wonderful and unusual mass of sites.

### Where in the world is DLK

DK once again spent the winter in the UK, which included visits to the remains of the Roman city of Gerunda underlying Gerona and to that under Barcelona (*Colonia Faventia Julia Augusta Pia Barcino*).

He has been appointed as the co-Supervisor of an American PhD student researching the famous Battle of Plataea (resulting in the Greek defeat of the Persians in 479 BC, commonly regarded as a turning point in history). Part of the doctoral research involved spending two weeks in the valley where the battle occurred, making a photomap of the entire area using a drone. The student required an academic to be the official permit-holder but otherwise there was little for DK to do as he systematically and very professionally flew his drone every day. In between, DK had a weekend in Athens, visiting some of the more important monuments, then a trip to Corinth, the Roman city founded by Julius Caesar (the Greek one had been destroyed and de-populated by the Romans decades earlier).

DK even dabbled in the non-Roman, walking The Ridgeway long-distance path which began with a day exploring the wonderful Neolithic and Bronze Age site of Avebury and many other prehistoric sites.

### RAG Saturdays

We have already had the first of our Winter Saturday lectures – by Dr Chris Mallan and Dr Caillan Davenport. The next Saturday is scheduled for Saturday 15th December. In between the lectures will be the AGM.

Lectures for that day have yet to be decided but after recent talks on specific Roman cities (Constantinople, Carnuntum …) it seems to me there is a lot of scope for lectures on some of the other c. 3000 cities of the Roman Empire. Reqeusts welcome: Spain or one of those in northern Italy maybe?

### RAG Scholarships

In 2018 two Don Boyer Roman Travel Scholarships were awarded: Gideon John McDonald applied to attend the Vindolanda Charity Trust Excavations; and Jacob Roosendaal applied to attend the Roman City of Sanisera Fieldschool in Menorca Spain, and to explore archaeology and ancient art in the Louvre Museum. We look forward to hearing about their experiences.

### Thanks

As always, many people have freely and generously given time and enthusiasm to making RAG work. Some have also given generous donations to support the provision of RAG Travel Scholarships: Peter Anstis, Iain and Marlene Carmichael, Dr Reimar Junkerstorff, and David and Helen Treloar. Thank you for your ongoing generous support.

### From the Current Editor

This will be my last RAG Mag. I would like to thank those of you who have contributed your words, thoughts and experiences of the Roman World. You have kept my job interesting and engaging. Please keep your contributions coming for our future Editor (to be announced).

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## 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 above) or see one of the RAG team at the Saturday lectures.