

NEWSLETTER - JANUARY 2006

Recent Events

Last EDAS Lecture

Our last EDAS lecture of 2005 was "**Shillingstone Roman Villa**", given by Peter Cox of AC Archaeology, who is well known to EDAS. Peter stepped in at short notice for the scheduled lecturer, Jon Valentin, also of AC.

The site was discovered by geophysics in the archaeological survey which preceded the land being converted to housing. AC Archaeology led the dig, and were assisted by some EDAS members. The discovery was important, because it filled a 'gap' in the Roman landscape where some form of occupation might have been expected.

Excavation revealed a long building, which consisted of a single line of rooms with an external corridor. A bath house was also found at one end, which had a furnace room with stoke hole. There was some evidence for, but no actual remains of, mosaics in some of the rooms. Although obviously Roman, the building plan was not very typical of a standard Roman villa. Also, the bath house was thought to be too large for the number of rooms found. Peter discussed the possibility of this being a Mansio, which provided overnight accommodation for Roman officials who were travelling on business. This possibility was strengthened by a very straight trackway nearby, which could have been a minor Roman Road.

The situation was then confused when an additional set of Roman buildings was found nearby by trial excavation; these had not shown up at all on the original geophysics. This opened up the possibility that the villa had a more standard arrangement, with only part of it being seen at first. It was also discovered that the site had been known many decades ago, but the site had not been officially recorded, and was then forgotten.

About 60 people attended the lecture, and afterwards we were treated to mince pies with our coffee. Thank you to all members who brought food along.

Peter prepared his lecture at short notice using Jon's slides and unfamiliar 'high-tech' display equipment. We thank Peter very much for a very interesting and enjoyable presentation.