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East Dorset Antiquarian Society

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INTERIM NEWSLETTER 4 – June 2020

As you can see, this is the fourth of these interim newsletters dedicated to more topical items. Thankfully, we are seeing easing of the lockdown now and some semblance of a return to normality. I re-start the second of my voluntary 'jobs' on Monday, and we can even walk into Wimborne and get a coffee; perhaps the various missing benches will return so we can actually sit somewhere to drink it.

Hence, this will be the last of these 'Interim Newsletters': I need a break and so does Peter Walker, who sends them out (including having to print and post some), I've pretty much run out of topical items and am not seeing much that's really fun or interesting in the newspapers and online. If things change and we start again, they'll be 'Bulletins' (thanks to Peter's suggestion).

Also, **the next 'full' Newsletter will be the midsummer one during July**, once we can be clearer about the new season's lecture meetings.

Thank you very much to all those who have sent articles or items to include; I'm grateful that you took the time to provide things for our members to read or do. Please don't stop sending contributions, whether topical or antiquarian; I'll use them when I can.

In this issue, amongst other things:

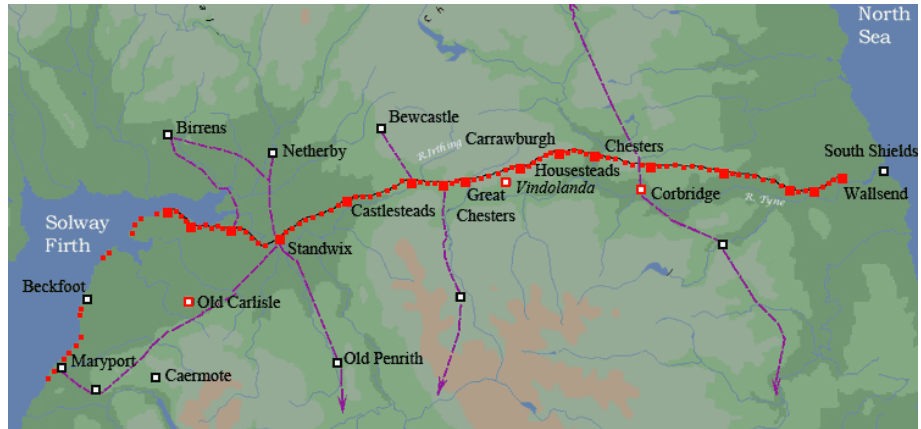
- Gill Broadbent has provided a long follow up to 'Walking with the Past' in the May newsletter: **Walking with the Romans in Cumbria**. She assures me that there's lots more of interest from their walks, so we'll look forward to reading about it in future newsletters. I'm sure she is really missing the Lake District now, so fingers crossed that a trip will be possible soon.
- There's a short but (to me at least) difficult challenge from Vanessa Joseph, brought about by her **Badbury Rings nature ramble**.
- Alan Dedden has sent an interesting article on wildlife seen during lockdown, i.e. **Birds and Other Animals**. Clearly, watching the wildlife isn't all that he's been doing, as he has also very kindly provided a short piece on a **Lockdown Archaeology** find (further down).
- Many thanks to Keith Allsopp, not only for his article **From the Bookshelves...**, but also for the record 4 field trips that he and Denise have organised over the years.
- Robert Heaton tell us of a **Poole Bay wood sample...** with an unexpectedly early date.
- And then there's some items from me for a further Roman fix: news about **Improvements to the Roman Townhouse in Dorchester**, plans for work at **Magna Roman Fort on Hadrian's Wall** and a page of **More online resources** that I'm sure some will find of interest.

**Please send any contributions to geoffnsue@hotmail.co.uk
NOT TO THE EDAS ADDRESS OR BY CLICKING 'REPLY'**

Geoff Taylor

Walking with the Romans in Cumbria

The best-known extant monument in Cumbria, testament to the Roman conquest and occupation of Britain, is Hadrian's Wall. The Wall, built between AD 122 and 138, connects the Solway coast in the west to the Tyne in the east, and has been the focus of a number of EDAS field trips. However, impressive as it is, there are many other interesting remains of the Roman occupation existing in Cumbria in the form of forts, roads and milecastle fortlets, with two turrets between each of them.



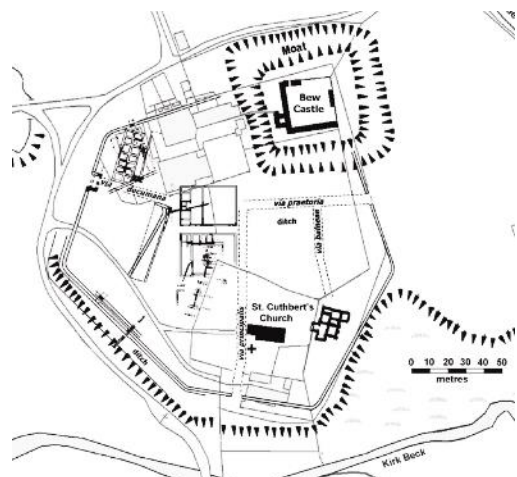
Although the Roman conquest began in the south of England in AD 43, it was not until later in the century that the push to conquer the Brigantes, the tribe that inhabited what are today's most northernmost English counties, began. It was during Agricola's governorship in AD 79 that the first permanent forts and roads were established in Cumbria. The 20th Legion (*Legio XX Valeria Victrix*) advanced through north west England, up the Lancashire coast, through Cumbria and on to Carlisle with forts being established at Watercrook (Kendal), Brougham (Penrith), Brough, Ravenglass, Old Penrith and Carlisle.

Later, under Emperors Trajan (98-117) and Hadrian (117-138), the domination and control of Cumbria increased, and forts were constructed at Ambleside and Hardknott, while the fort at Ravenglass was rebuilt. A series of defensive forts and mile fortlets were also constructed along the Solway coast. In total the sites of 29 Roman forts have been recorded in Cumbria. Few of the forts have been excavated but the grass covered banks and ditches of many are still visible. Some sites, such as Brougham and Bewcastle, saw the building of castles within the old Roman fort boundaries in the medieval period, and over time the plentiful supply of stone from the forts has also been used in the construction of other buildings such as Drumburgh Castle, a fortified manor house built in 1307.



The following are brief descriptions of three of our favourites, starting with one of the more unusually shaped forts at the isolated village of Bewcastle. This is situated north of Hadrian's Wall in an area designated in the 13th century as the English West March, the land of the Border Reivers. This wild scenic area is well worth a visit, not only for being part the Roman story of Cumbria but also for the interesting history that followed the end of Roman rule.

The Roman fort at Bewcastle, 6 miles north of the Wall, was built around AD 122 as an outpost fort guarding the road north from the fort of Birdoswald. Dedicated to a local deity, Cocidius, and garrisoned by the First Nervian Cohort of Germans, it is an irregular shaped fort of 6 sides covering an area of 6 acres on a plateau overlooking the Kirk Beck.



Originally constructed from turf and timber, the turf ramparts were faced with stone during the Antonine period and were later completely rebuilt of stone. There were four gateways, with the west gateway being the main one. The *praetorium* (commandant's house) was in the approximate centre of the hexagon, with the *principia* (headquarters) to the north of it. A bathhouse was situated in the south-east section of the fort, near the current church. The fort was abandoned in the 4th century.

The grassy ramparts can be seen today, and within them stand three later monuments. The earliest of these is the beautiful Anglo-Saxon Cross erected in the late 7th century, dedicated to Alcfrith, son of Oswiu, King of Northumbria, who ruled 641-670.

A Norman castle was built in the north east corner of the fort in 1092 using stone from the fort. Rebuilt at the end of the 13th century, the castle is said to have been sacked by Cromwell in 1641. St Cuthbert's church and churchyard also lie within the boundary of the fort, but the church seen today is an amalgam of a series of rebuilds, with only the east end a survival of the original building constructed around 1277.



Further south, in the foothills of England's highest mountain, Scafell Pike, is Hardknott Pass at a height of 800 feet above sea level. This is the site of the remains of one of the most impressively sited Roman forts in Cumbria, if not in Britain, and one that the EDAS field trip visited in 2005.

The fort controls the road between the fort at Ambleside (*GALAVA*) and the naval port of Ravenglass (*GLANNOVENTA*). From the fort there is a superb view over the Eskdale valley but the drive to it is not for the faint hearted, as some EDAS members found in 2005, as it involves negotiating the high, steep single-track passes of Hardknott and Wrynose – but it is definitely worth the trip.

Hardknott Roman fort looking west.



The fort itself was built between about 120 and 138, and housed a cohort of 500 men, the fourth Cohort of Dalmatians – infantry soldiers from Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Montenegro. It was abandoned during the Antonine advance into Scotland during the mid-2nd century, but then reoccupied around AD 200 and continued in use until the last years of the 4th century.



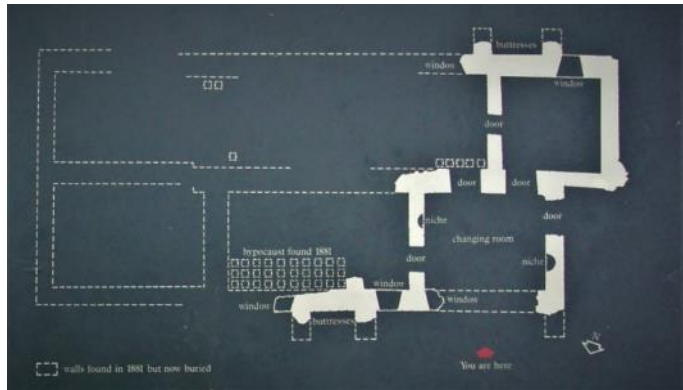
Lunch time at Hardknott for EDAS members (2005).

The fort is square with the usual rounded corners, 114 metres long externally and with a rampart wall about 1.7 metres thick. The low walls of the fort were "restored" some years ago, a slate course showing the height of the walls before their rebuilding.

The outer wall has four gates, one at the centre of each side, and lookout towers at each corner. Within the walls are the remaining outlines of several buildings: two granaries, the garrison headquarters building and garrison commander's *praetorium*.

Outside the square of the fort are the remains of the bath house and the levelled parade ground.

The narrow road from Hardknott eventually winds down, reaching the coast at Ravenglass and the estuary of the rivers Esk, Mite and Irt. Although today it is little more than a sleepy hamlet, better known as the end of the line of the Ravenglass and Eskdale Railway, in the 2nd century Ravenglass was an important Roman naval base. The small earth and timber fortlet that had been built around AD 122 was demolished in 130 and replaced by an Auxiliary fort named *GLANNAVENTA*. The infantry unit of the Roman army, the First Cohort *Aelia Classica* is associated with the fort. Unfortunately, although some of the fort has been revealed by the recent clearance of trees, the exact details of the fort are uncertain due to coastal erosion and disturbance caused by the construction of the railway. Excavations that were carried out in the 1970s showed that the original turf wall had been strengthened later by the addition of a fronting stone wall.



Plan of Ravenglass Bath House.



Visit by EDAS members 2005.

Today the impressive remains of the bath house, which was situated just outside the north east corner of the fort, can be seen. The remaining walls, which have survived to a height of almost 4m, are thought to be the west end of the building which is estimated to have been about 12m wide and 27m long. Two of the rooms contained hypocausts. Excavations were carried out in the late 19th century and survey work conducted in the 1980s.

Ravenglass Roman Bath house in 2019



An excursion out to this area cannot be complete without a ride on the Ravenglass and Eskdale railway, nothing to do with the Roman occupation of Cumbria but a lovely way to spend an afternoon. The last picture is for the railway enthusiasts among the EDAS membership. It shows an engine on the turntable at Ravenglass station being made ready for its trip back up the line.

Gill Broadbent



Badbury Rings nature ramble

A couple of weeks ago, Sara (Marshall) and I did our first walk together since self-isolation. We wandered around the Iron Age hillfort and its environs, enjoying the archaeology and the weather, and admiring the views. The white orchids were just about finished but the pink orchids were coming into bloom. There was a glorious field of red poppies in the distance. I took our little AA Walker's Handbook (published in 1975 so it must have belonged to Dave) and we tried to identify the wildflowers.

This brings me onto a little challenge - what is the link between the two photos below? You can find the answer on the last page.



Vanessa Joseph

Vanessa needs you:

- Is there anyone with experience of deciphering old wills - in this case from the 1760s?
- Does anyone still possess a proper old-style thick telephone directory they don't want, perhaps found in a clear-out during lockdown? The Priest's House Museum is looking for one to go with its telephone box in the new Travel and Communication gallery.

Vanessa will very grateful if you can help: vanessaa.joseph@gmail.com

Slavery connections close main roads

Highways England have confirmed that the A5 will be closed in its entirety from North Wales to Bedfordshire and dug up. A department spokesman said that these essential works had to be carried out as this old Roman Road, known as Watling Street, had been built by slaves and the realisation of this fact has really, really, really upset some over-sensitive people who can't put history into context. The A2 in Kent will also be removed in due course.

Spokesman for the halfwits-against-reality-snowflake group, Plantpot Tenderfoot, said "I'm really, really, really upset and so is my friend Diva Muffin. How could those symbols of oppression be allowed in this day and age?"

Watch out for more news about the Fosse Way and Ermine Street.



Birds and Other Animals

One of the other things I do in 'normal' times is bird watching with our local U3A group. Obviously, that has stopped and prevented us going out and looking for all the migrant birds that either return to this area or pass through during spring. Instead, I have been watching the birds in my garden somewhat more closely than I usually would. We do not have a vast range of exotic birds in our garden, in fact it seems that, for some reason, we have fewer of the typical garden birds than might be expected in a large (about half an acre), fairly natural, garden (I find it difficult to grow many of the plants I would like as we are on Dorset heath soils – i.e. sand). This limited bird range is perhaps even more surprising, given that I put out bird food every day, and keep two bird baths topped up. Despite this, the blackbirds, robins, starlings, wood pigeons, blue tits and jackdaws keep us entertained, and it is a joy when the less frequent visitors such as great tits, dunnocks, house sparrows, goldfinches, crows and nuthatches stop by. Of course there are also those we hear which are not often seen, such as the nuthatch, wren, song thrush and chaffinch. Then there are the other animals, but more of those later.



A bird we have been keenly following is one of our resident blackbirds. He is easy to spot because he has a displaced feather in his right wing, so has acquired the name Wonky Wing. This is his second season (that we have noticed) and he has fledged a single chick this year. You can see in the photo that the displaced feather is quite prominent, but does not seem to affect his flying ability. Could it be the result of a close encounter with one of the local felines? This was our first thought, but then in the early part of the lockdown I had email correspondence with another of the bird watching group who lives about a mile away on the other side of Verwood, and he has seen a blackbird in his

garden with a displaced wing feather. Then recently I have noticed another male blackbird in our garden with a displaced wing feather, but in his left wing, so I am beginning to think this is perhaps a local genetic feature. Strange that it is so far limited to the males.

You may be surprised that house sparrows have only been infrequent visitors to our garden. We have lived here for 35 years and, up to this year, we have only seen them very rarely. We know they are plentiful along our road, but they did not seem to want to colonise our garden. But this year is different because there is now a small flock of daily visitors, so they must be nesting close by. Similarly, we have not heard chiff chaffs in our garden before, but this year their distinctive onomatopoeic call has been heard every day following their migratory arrival in early March. Another first in our garden this year was this gull (herring or lesser black backed?) who landed for about 5 minutes and then flew out.



A rather more unusual bird - at least for the centre of Verwood - was a male pheasant that briefly perched on the logs at the bottom of the garden one morning in early March. He then hopped off into the dense undergrowth on the adjacent small area of open ground and has not been seen since. The nearest shooting estate is Somerley Estate, and that is about 2 miles away on the other side of Ringwood Forest (North), so wherever he came from he'd travelled further than most pheasants.

Birds are not the only things flying around our garden. At this time of year we regularly see stag beetles (and naturally we report these sightings on The People's Trust for Endangered Species website). They seem to have a death wish as they frequently try to climb a wall or other vertical surfaces, fall off and

end up on their backs, unable to right themselves. Seems sad after spending between 3 and 4 years as larvae underground. [What I believe to be stag beetle larvae, large and white, love our compost bins. I'll often find up to half a dozen when I'm moving the completed compost into the 'for use' bin – dropped on the surface they soon burrow down. But I've only actually seen two stag beetles in the garden in 15 years – *ed.*]

I have in the past seen a fox wander through the garden in broad daylight, but I have not seen it for a year or so. Recently I bought a camera trap to see what might be around when I am not watching. The first position I set it up only caught the rear end of me or Lindsey as we took rubbish or recycling to the bins! So I moved it and soon caught the fox at night. There are two areas of copse behind the houses on the opposite side of the road and I think that is where the lair is.



The evenings bring another visitor - bats. At one time they roosted in our loft, which has a small access hole on the lower edge of a ridge tile, but they have not roosted there since we have lived here. But we still see them flying around the trees in the garden at dusk. Not good for getting a picture of them, but the camera trap caught this visitor, which I can only assume is a bat. If you have any other ideas, please let me know: alan.dedden@gmail.com

Alan Dedden

The Finns have taken well to social isolation, having practised it for years anyway – perhaps not so difficult in a country with 50% more land than the UK but only 5.5 million population. The first step is to choose a place to live where no-one else would want to live, then don't tell anybody where you are. Don't go outside unless really necessary, and certainly don't visit pubs, restaurants and so on. It helps to speak a language that no-one else understands. They even have a word for partying alone in just your pants (that means underwear) – *pantsdrunk*, i.e. lay in stocks of alcohol, drink most of it, pass out on the couch.

It seems to work, though, as they've only had just over 300 coronavirus deaths (or is it the alcohol?).



With the continual confusing changes in the rules, does anyone know if we can take showers yet, or should we just keep washing our hands???

From the Bookshelves (and some musings on field trips)

Anyone who has been on an EDAS field trip knows that they are convivial social events, as well as being a great way to find out about different areas of the British Isles. Quite an effortless jaunt unless you are the organiser! I have organised and led four trips to different areas now. The 2001 trip to the Forest of Dean and the Marches was particularly troublesome because of the foot and mouth epidemic. I ended up rewriting the itinerary three times as more and more areas were closed down.

In those far off days of dial-up internet and ancient computer with tiny memory, nearly all of my research was done using books. I've just been re-reading a book I purchased at that time to find places of interest: *Welsh Border Country* by P. Thoresby Jones (Batsford 1938).

It gives a very detailed description of the by-ways and settlements in this area, and is lavishly illustrated with some 180 black and white photographs. The descriptions are detailed and the prose is engaging. I hope you enjoy this delightful passage taking us back to a truly eccentric vicar of the mid-19th century:

"Some forty years have passed since the death of the saintly but eccentric John Price, who became vicar of Llanbedr-Paincastle in 1859. The stipend was meagre, and there was no vicarage. Price lived in three old bathing machines which served respectively as kitchen, study and bedroom (after these accidentally burned down he moved into a brick and slate henhouse). The parishioners, mostly dissenters, did not find their way to his church. Interpreting literally the Parable of the Marriage Feast, he went out to the highways and hedges to procure guests for his spiritual banquet; and soon an offer of sixpence per head per service began regularly to fill his pews with unwashed tramps and their raggle-tailed doxies (later, when he lost his tiny private income, it was agreed at a meeting in the churchyard of his 'Tramps Union' that this could be reduced to fourpence).



The Church of St Peter's, Llanbedr Painscastle, relatively simple but with much remaining from the medieval period.

For the comfort of his flock in winter he provided oil stoves, cooking was also allowed during the sermon. Price further offered five shillings to each pair of vagrants "living in sin" who would consent to let him join them in Holy Wedlock. As his sight was very weak, several business-like couples let him marry them half a dozen times. Having sunk into a very neglected state, he was taken by friends to Talgarth, where it was found necessary to cut his clothes off his skin. He did not survive the bath which followed."

Keith Allsopp

Alan tells me that he and Lindsey have been exchanging emails with Julian Richards during the lockdown and sharing what they have been doing. Julian has been doing a lot of gardening and has now moved on to painting the house. We have been clearing out, as you see further down, so he asked if we had got to the Neolithic yet. No, not yet, we replied, but we have seen evidence of the distinctly medieval, though no sign of the Roman so far as its all far too disorganised!

Poole Bay wood sample gives unexpected C14 date

Several EDAS members are actively involved with Poole Maritime Trust and its archaeological group, called Poole Harbour Heritage Project. We meet at the Harbour Master's office four times a year, and if you have stories or finds of interest then please let me know. We do have some funds and this allows us to commission research and pay for occasional laboratory testing.

It was as the result of this financial support that we were able to reveal an interesting radio carbon result at our last PHHP meeting. This was for a sample of wood found about two miles off Bournemouth beach. Archaeologist and diver Mike Markey was out with his team last summer, when he spotted some timber exposed by bream nesting activity. He carefully took small samples of the timber for analysis, which you can see in the photo.

The radio carbon results from the laboratory were far older than expected. The timber dates back 55,000 years, to an ancient period called the Devensian Glacial Period. It was an interesting time between major ice ages across the south. In fact, it pre-dates the arrival of modern humans in Britain.

We look forward to learning a great deal more from Mike in due course and we will be using our new remote underwater camera to search for more sites this summer. Who knows if there could be sites out there with freshly exposed Neanderthal flints?



If you like seeing interesting old pictures of Poole Harbour and Poole Bay then do follow the Facebook site for Poole Maritime Trust. There is a constant flow of historic photos being donated to the trust every week, as well as interesting books, documents and objects.

Robert Heaton

Giving handshakes the elbow

Why has it taken so long to give up shaking hands, especially with people we don't know? It would probably reduce flu cases (and coronavirus) massively. And if we're going to do away with that, please let's get rid of potentially embarrassing pecks on the cheek and the difficulty of knowing whether it's one or two (or even three). Oh, and it would be really good to stop air kisses from celebrities going 'mwaah'.

Handshakes seem to have been a sign of mistrust originally. Ancient Greek (or Roman?) men would clasp hands or forearms as a way of checking the other person wasn't armed. It is said that in the Middle Ages the handshake developed as a way of dislodging concealed weapons (really?!). I guess we do it right handed because most people are that way inclined, but I'm left-handed so presumably could have got away with murder, literally.

But what to replace it with? Most of the alternatives are rather unnatural, such as elbow or fist bumps, and still involve contact. Curtsy's and bows? Perhaps the Hindu *namaste* – palms of hand together as if praying and dip the head. I quite like that (but, then, so does Prince Charles).

Lockdown Archaeology

Many of you will have taken the opportunity of the lockdown to "excavate" the far reaches of your cupboards, lofts and garages, and we have been no exception. We long ago realised we were both 'squirrels' who found it hard to discard items that still work, or can be worn, or paperwork that just might be needed at some point – and just don't ask about books! And then there are the items that have a sentimental value for any of the many reasons that accumulate over the decades. From this you will realise that there was vast scope for freeing up space around the house.

It long ago got to the point where we appropriated that line from *Star Trek* - "Space, the final frontier" - and applied it to our house. We started with an 'easy win' – the cupboard under the stairs – and now have a large bin bag full of old shoes and boots, and a crate full of old saucepans. This in addition to a variety of other items that created sufficient room in the cupboard for Lindsey to walk in and bang her head on the underside of the stairs, which she could not do before. We then moved to a cupboard in the second bedroom and there we found a tobacco tin. This did not surprise us as these get used to store all sorts of things, but when we opened it we were surprised to find three clay pipes (one with a broken stem) complete with tobacco in each bowl. Neither of us could remember where this tin came from.

Closer examination revealed something moulded into the sides of the stems - 'Gore Hotel London' on one side and '1587 - 1953' on the other. This at first puzzled us, as 366 years is a long time but not a special anniversary. Then we realised it must have been some sort of commemorative item for the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II, but why did we have it? The only idea we could come up with was that it came from Lindsey's father who worked in the London Post Office at that time. I tried emailing the Gore Hotel (it still exists, facing the Royal Albert Hall on Kensington Gore) but so far no reply. The other possible connection is that Lindsey's father was a Freemason, and they held various meetings in locations other than their lodge - could this be from one of those meetings? We may never know, but meanwhile its back to the clear-out.



Alan Dedden



Working from home but missing the train trips.



Improvements to the Roman Townhouse, Dorchester.

During lockdown, work has continued on changes to the Dorchester Roman townhouse, built in the late-3rd and 4th centuries and the only house of its kind completely on display to visitors in Britain. The first photograph shows the house before work started but, thanks to a £248,000 grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, improvements are now being made to preservation, access and interpretation.



Construction company Westmade Ltd. have been working with Dorset Council officers and Context One Heritage & Archaeology on providing easier access. Trees have been cleared (as shown below) and the former entrance, blocked since County Hall was opened in the 1930s, has been re-opened (including removing a very thick layer of concrete). New ramp access has been built, cut into a bank that was part of *Durnovaria's* defences, and a new pathway will connect existing pathways at the site. A new parking area now exists, new fencing hides less sightly areas and a planting plan is being drawn up.



There will be multi-tiered stone-effect amphitheatre style seating to accommodate visitors of different abilities and be usable for school groups and theatre productions. A range of new interpretation boards will tell the story of the Roman Town House as well as linking to other ancient Dorchester sites. Work is also start this month on the inside of the house, to clean the ancient mosaics and to make it safe for visitors to enter, including work on lighting, the steel frame, loose mortaring and broken floor tiles. The Roman coffins that were not originally part of the Roman Town House site will be moved to the top of the site.

The planned design for the project is too large to include here but can be found at: <https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/image-library/libraries-history-and-culture/local-history-heritage/roman-town-house-site-plan-2019.jpg>, or keep up-to-date with progress at www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/roman-town-house.

Once the project works are complete, the Council is looking for volunteers to help in guiding visitors and interpreting the site, as well as for basic maintenance and cleaning inside the house. If you're interested contact Bridget Betts, Environmental Advice Manager at bridget.betts@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk.

Geoff Taylor

If you're missing your foreign holidays, why not go to Romania then come back as a fruit picker?

Quarantine has turned some people into dogs. They roam the house all day looking for food but are told "no" if they get too close to strangers. And they get really excited about car rides.

Magna Roman Fort, Hadrian's Wall

Climate change is drying out peaty layers at the site of Magna Fort, adjacent to the Roman Army Museum at Carvoran, putting the remains at risk.

The site, about 10km west of Vindolanda and under the care of the Vindolanda Trust, may hold the key to understanding more about the frontier and its people. It spans the frontier's chronology from the pre-Hadrianic Stanegate road to the Wall's abandonment and re-use. It is where 3 Roman roads meet – the Military Way, the Maiden Way and, of course, the Stanegate. Roman Magna is the site of a sequence of timber and stone forts like Vindolanda, it incorporates the Wall and a milecastle, and even a reasonable sized town. As shown at the top of the photograph, it also includes the Vallum ditch, in itself something of a puzzle as this is the only place where it diverts around a site. The fort held about 400 soldiers and was the home to both Dalmatian mountain soldiers and Syrian archers, a very long way from their homes.



A good deal of the overall site is within or lower than a marshy bog but, as seen in the photograph, that is drying out quite quickly. It has never been properly investigated, but it was expected that excavations could wait for many years. The excavations at Vindolanda are already a huge enterprise, attracting 440 volunteers every year and 'selling out' within 20 minutes of places being made available. Work at Magna is expected to require another 160 volunteers for 2 months each year, and now needs to be done before the organic remains dry out and are mostly lost. First, though, a forensic survey will be done to better understand the site and the impact of climate change, something that is being seen along the Wall.

The Vindolanda Trust began in the spring of 1970 with assets of a 13-acre field, a garden shed for tools and £21. Now Vindolanda attracts 100,000 visitors in a normal year, and 55,000 visit the Roman Army Museum. But the Magna excavations will still stretch resources, with an estimated cost to the Trust of £50,000 each year. Andrew Birley, the chief executive, and one of the other trustees had intended a 50th anniversary sponsored ride to help raise funds, but no ordinary ride – they were planning to ride Vespa scooters to Rome and back, a journey of 3,500 miles. The Roman Imperial postal service, the *Cursus Publicus*, could carry a letter from the Wall to Rome in 13 days but the scooter riders were aiming to take the same time to do the return journey. Of course, Covid19 put paid to the trip, and I don't know if it will go ahead later, with work at Magna now postponed to 2021.

However, the Vindolanda Trust are starting to gradually re-open the two sites and museums from this month – see their website for information: <https://www.vindolanda.com/>.

Geoff Taylor

This just in from the 'leader of the free world': the orange one said that "the only reason the US has so many Covid cases is because they test too many people; if they didn't test anyone they wouldn't have any cases"!

More online resources

These come from *Epistula*, the newsletter of the Roman Society, so are a bit Roman biased. It's possible that some have appeared before; I've not checked. I hope some prove of interest.

- The first page includes courses on Hadrian's Wall and Rome: a virtual tour of the city. The second is a course on ancient health and medicine:
<https://www.futurelearn.com/subjects/history-courses/archaeology>
<https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/ancient-health>
- 'Potted History' are running a series of online courses beginning with Roman Pottery, which will cover Samian, Barbotine, Black Burnished & Grey Wares, Wheels, Moulds, Kilns, Tools & more:
<https://potted-history.co.uk>
- The Council for British Archaeology are temporarily making all of their publications available to download for free (you might consider making a donation if you use this resource):
<https://new.archaeologyuk.org/news/all-cba-publications-free-to-download>
- *Archaeology on Furlough* is a newly launched website listing projects 'designed to be completed in 2–3 weeks with a team of 5–10, just requiring a computer, internet access, and basic software.' The first 6 projects are all full, but more are being developed:
<https://www.archaeology-on-furlough.com/>
- The Society of Antiquaries (London) have added more information to their Online Resources List, with over 70 publishers worldwide having temporarily made their content available for free:
<https://www.sal.org.uk/2020/04/online-resources/>
- The National Archive is making digital records available on their website free of charge for as long as their Kew site is closed to visitors. There is a slightly complex registration process, but it's a great resource for research:
<https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/about/news/digital-downloads/>
- The French Ministry of Culture's online Museum of National Archaeology has some really interesting items, with the Lascaux Caves virtual tour highly recommended (you can choose English language):
<https://archeologie.culture.fr/fr>
- The Society of Antiquaries of Scotland (SoAS) has hundreds of free-to-view recordings of lectures to browse and view on their website, as well as free-to-read articles and books:
<https://www.socantscot.org/>
- A dozen '3D models' made by public British museums and heritage organisations that you can move around and look at from whatever angle you wish (quite fun in itself):
<https://museumcrush.org/ten-of-our-favourite-museum-models-on-sketchfab/>
- And more Roman 3D models with 10 finds scanned from Corbridge:
<https://sketchfab.com/EnglishHeritage/collections/corbridge-collection-highlights>
- 'British Museum at home' is what it says on the tin; different ways to explore the museum:
<https://blog.britishmuseum.org/how-to-explore-the-british-museum-from-home/>
- This is a link to the digitised collections of Historic Scotland, which contains some beautiful pieces as well as some 3D scans:
<https://www.historicenvironment.scot/archives-and-research/archives-and-collections/properties-in-care-collections>
- English Heritage has a podcast series, *Speaking with Shadows*, with presenter Josie Long talking about 'the people that history forgot'. The first is about *The People of Hadrian's Wall* and features the cremation cemetery from Birdoswald. More podcasts are on the second link:
<https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/inspire-me/speaking-with-shadows/>
<https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/inspire-me/podcast/>
- English Heritage has also pulled together all their 'stay-at-home favourites' in one place to help pass the time whilst learning about the history of their sites and collections:
<https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/history-at-home/>

And the 3rd quiz on Wessex places from CBA Wessex can be found at
<https://dmtrk.net/1OVB-6WOJX-F3237AREBB/cr.aspx>

Nature Ramble Challenge

The connection between the flowers and cows is, perhaps surprisingly, **roast beef**:

THE FLOWER

It's *Iris foetidissima*, also known as Stinking Iris and the Roast Beef Plant. Apparently, its evergreen leaves are unpleasantly aromatic when cut or bruised, giving off a scent of fresh meat. It is one of two iris species native to Britain, the other being the yellow iris. In the autumn, the flower heads will be transformed into three distinctive green pods, each of which splits to reveal a line of bright red berries.

The fact that it is not a familiar and popular plant may have something to do with unflattering descriptions in old herbals. Nicholas Culpeper, calling it 'Stinking Gladwin', described the leaves as having "a strong, ill scent". In his English translation of Rembert Dodoens's *A New Herbal*, Henry Lyte, calling it 'Stinking Gladin', pulled no punches. He said that the leaves were "of a loathsome smell or stinke, almost like unto the stinking worme, called in Latine Cimex". Despite this rudeness, the plant was highly valued as a medicinal herb, especially for making poultices for drawing out splinters and the odd arrowhead.

THE COWS

Walter Ralph Bankes (father of Henry John 'Ralph' Bankes who gifted Kingston Lacy to the National Trust) introduced North Devons (also known as **Ruby Red Devons**) to Kingston Lacy in the 19th century. Since then, they have remained a cherished part of the estate and an important feature of the landscape. The cattle are still used to graze the parkland and are key agents of estate management. The rich ruby red of their coats inspired the use of 'Bankes red' paint. You will see this colour on buildings everywhere across the Bankes estate; it's an important reminder of its scale, but also of the herd's significance.

(Information from National Trust web site.)

Vanessa Joseph

A few 'final' lockdown projects

My friend Colin from the Ancient Technology Centre, where we can start volunteering again next week, very kindly made a new number 'plate' for my entrance pillar. As you can see, he couldn't resist adding a bit of wordplay.

And my sister in Australia, who is becoming famous through these newsletters, has adopted the old philosophy of 'make do and mend', which I hope is starting to take hold again. Her daughter's house is being renovated, so old wardrobe doors have been made into a shoe rack and planters made from leftover bits of wood (still to be painted and varnished).

