



October 2018



SO THAT'S HOW THEY DID IT!

Dorothy Lawson

We have always wondered how ancient jewellers were able to do such minutely detailed work - during a recent visit to Rhodes we discovered the answer. We went to the palace of the Grand Master of the Knights where there was an exhibition of Hellenic items from all over the island. In one of the cases were some strange objects - strips of bronze in varying sizes up to 1.5 inches wide which had been bent round into a circle and pinched together, with the ends forming a kind of handle. Inside each ring was a beautifully polished lens made of rock crystal! Each bronze ring was a slightly different height with the size written on it, allowing for different magnification. They dated from the 4C BC but must have existed before then for items such as the carved warrior gemstone recently found in a grave near Pylos in the Peloponnese.

We spoke to the official in the room who told us that these were unique objects; only one other has been found and this is in the Louvre in Paris. Sadly there was no provenance on them; they had all been gathered together in the 1930's when the Palace had been renovated prior to a visit by Mussolini (Rhodes had been taken over by Italy a few years before) and objects from all the Greek island had been brought to the town to beautify it. There were some magnificent mosaics flooring several of the rooms and many statues but apart from one or two notices saying the island from which they came there was no further provenance.

One mosaic was Roman but the central figure, a comic theatrical mask in very small tesserae, had been cut from a Greek floor so was an antique even in Roman times. We have always thought the Romans accomplished in technical matters, but are realising more and more how much they owed to Greek ideas. Their genius was to take the best ideas from the countries they conquered and develop them.

Unfortunately photography was not permitted and the museum had no illustrations of these magnifying glasses.

An example from Fishbourne is this Intaglio showing a victorious racehorse with behind it a palm of victory. Professor Martin Henig comments that "it is of superb quality, cut in an assured classicising style typical of the mid-1st century". It may originally have been mounted in a gold ring. It was discovered in a context associated with the infilled stream on the west of the Palace site, probably deposited in the late 3rd century. It hints that the very Roman sport of chariot racing, not previously attested at Fishbourne, may have taken place somewhere in the area. The intaglio may therefore have been kept as an heirloom in the Palace, lost only when the Palace burnt down and the site was abandoned.



Letter from our Chairperson

Chris Medlock



Dear Friends,

Autumn is a time for reflection and as I look back over this year I am encouraged by the hard work the staff at Fishbourne have carried out to present the site to the visiting public. Many of our Friends also volunteer in various ways, helping to make the site such a success; and I am sure the staff will join with me to offer our thanks for ensuring everyday activities, special event days and evenings are such a success. As

Friends I am sure you have enjoyed many visits over the summer months (despite the beach being such a draw!) and found time to relax in the beautiful gardens and grounds.

Indeed it was a superb summer evening when staff, Friends, benefactors and Trustees of The Sussex Archaeological Society gathered together to celebrate 50 years of Fishbourne Roman Palace being open to the public as a heritage site of some distinction and importance. Sir Barry Cunliffe entertained and informed us with his stories and memories of those days back in the 1960s when Fishbourne was uncovered to such acclaim; and Katrina, our Property Manager, thanked all those who made donations towards the north wing viewing platform which was opened to great applause by Sir Barry and I am proud to say myself, as Chair of the Trustees. The viewing platform provides a combination of visuals and narratives which highlight aspects of the 1960s dig. If you have yet to visit and listen in I recommend you do so, it adds yet another dimension to our knowledge and understanding of the history of Fishbourne in its Roman and more recent contexts.

I mentioned Katrina and it is with regret that we learned of her impending departure. On behalf of all Friends your committee wish her every success in her new role and I would like to personally add a note of thanks for her tireless support and dedication. I will of course keep you all apprised of efforts to appoint a new member of the staff team here, and your committee will work hard to make sure we can continue to support their good work.

As half term approaches I am sure many of you will take advantage of the exciting events on offer. Better still, join us in supporting these events, and if you haven't done so to date do try out volunteering; it's fun and you get to engage with visitors of all ages as well as make a substantial contribution to the success of the day. My particular fondness is for helping with Roman Food, you also get to sample some great tastes too! Look out for Roman Army week and come and enjoy the day, maybe we can get to meet and have a chat whilst I offer you a taste of Roman cuisine! Enjoy the closing of the year and I look forward to meeting you and thanking you all personally for your continued support of The Friends of Fishbourne Roman Palace.



As Chris Medlock says, Katrina Burton, Head of Education and Property Manager at the Palace, is to move on from Fishbourne at Christmas to be the Museums Development Officer for Hampshire. We congratulate her on the new job and thank her on behalf of all the Friends for the help and advice she has given us over recent years. We are all sorry to have to say goodbye, but we send her our warmest wishes for the future.

NEWS FROM THE PALACE

Beyond the North Wing

Anne de Potier



The Palace is not just a building, as we know. The outside spaces are every bit as relevant to the understanding and enjoyment of the Palace as the walls and mosaics. Recently I had a chat with Ian Lansley, the Head Gardener who began at Fishbourne some 6 months ago, about plans and ideas for the future. He's very enthusiastic, and has been researching horticulture in Roman times. His main passion is trees, but he enjoys all aspects of gardening, and is a great fan of colour. You can see this in the beds by the buildings around the carpark. The recently planted lavender bed is doing well – last summer's weather suited it just fine (after watering to establish it). However, the plants are never going to be tall, and Ian wants to add others to improve the look of the brick wall behind them.

Ian has been working hard tidying and reshaping the box hedging, planted in convoluted patterns as it would have been in Roman times. It often receives admiring pats and strokes from visitors. However, a long-standing problem has been the single Italian cypress in the formal lawns within, which is not well. The tree there now is not the original. David Rudkin remembers that being replaced



some years ago.

There is no archaeological evidence that the Roman tree was a cypress, and horticulturally it makes sense not to replace like with like, but it is yet to be decided how to proceed, and what to do about the associated interpretation board.

Another issue nearby is the acanthus bed at the east end – it looks great for a few weeks,

but decays into tattiness later. Ian has ideas on what could improve that bed...

The demonstration garden in the south-east corner of the site was started over 20 years ago to grow examples of plants cultivated in Roman Britain and explain their uses. The beds were recently rejuvenated, but the trees have not fared so well. One of the difficulties at Fishbourne is that nothing can be planted into the ground which might harm the archaeology of the Scheduled Site, so the trees are in huge buried pots, and consequently have restricted roots, and restricted access to nourishment from the soil.



Some have given up and been removed. Ian is mulling over ways of restoring this tree collection, but realises it will not be an easy fix.

Something he is looking forward to being able to start soon is an Edible Arboretum. This will be on land near the Collections Discovery Centre, outside the Scheduled Site, so the trees can be planted

conventionally. His ideas include fruit such as Quince, Medlar, Mulberry, Bullace, Greengage, and *Malus* – but a crab rather than a Cox. Also on the list are Cobnut and Walnut – and no, there are not (yet) hordes of squirrels. As well as being interesting in themselves, these trees will improve the landscape of that area, encourage visitors to explore and in due course provide shade for picnics etc.

We the Friends have indicated that as these ideas become definite plans, we may be able to help with making them happen – bringing them to fruition is perhaps the right expression.

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New Ways of Viewing the Palace

Rob Symmons, Curator



Arriving at work at 4:30am on a Monday is not something any curator likes to do on a regular basis, but a couple of months ago this is exactly what I found myself doing. You would be forgiven for assuming that there must have been a pretty good reason for such an early start. And you would be right.

By 5am I was standing in the North Wing with Lee Fisher Jones, the director of 3D Media Solutions, and a very clever bit of camera equipment. The camera was not dissimilar to one of the type that sits on top of the "Google cars" as they drive around the country gathering data for *Google street view*.

In Lee's expert hands, the camera is capable of taking 3D scans of the insides of buildings and in just a few hours we had produced a scan of the entire North Wing, the museum and the Palace's shop.



The North Wing as you have never seen it before: an aerial view made by digitally joining dozens of separate 3D scans.

You can view the scan by typing the following link into your search engine:
<https://3dmediasolutions.co.uk/3d-model/fishbourne-palace/fullscreen/>

The scan itself is a great resource for the site. Not only can it give potential visitors a sneak preview of the Palace before their visit (or refresh their memories afterwards), it is useful in conservation, disaster planning and education. We have the ability to add virtual "hotspots" anywhere within the scan, which, when clicked on by the user, will show extra information, like dates, historical background or even relevant videos.

Users can even leave the walkways and explore the palace at mosaic level: an impossibility for the average visitor previously.

This is certainly just the start when it comes to the potential of this cutting edge technology. Next we hope to produce a scan of the Bulk Store, so that visitors can explore behind the scenes of the Collections Discovery Centre without having to be on one of our daily tours. In time it should be possible to click on individual boxes to find out what treasures are hidden within.

Who knows where this technology will take us in the future?

Local and exotic

Rob Symmons

For the last 15 years the Palace has been working very closely with Professor Naomi Sykes, a zooarchaeologist from Nottingham University (and since January 2018 Lawrence Professor of Archaeology at Exeter University).



Naomi and her teams' work has unearthed many secrets about the animals from Fishbourne and what they can tell us about this fascinating site at a crucial part of our history.

Many of you will know about her research into fallow deer and how Fishbourne was home to the first herds of this species in Britain, imparked in an informal garden, perhaps to the south of the Palace*. But she has more recently been analysing the remains of our chickens, rabbits and hares, cats and many other species.

As with any specialist research, it can all seem a bit niche and the relevance to the wider world might not be obvious. That is why I was recently delighted to hear that Naomi gave a presentation in London late last year that synthesised much of her work so far. Only with the overview that she provided in this talk does it become clear how vital work like this is to understanding the impact of the Roman invasion on the local culture. By drawing together the threads of information from many different projects over the last decade or more we can even start to get a real insight into the Roman psyche.

You don't have to take my word for it. The lecture can be found on YouTube. So, give yourself 30 spare minutes, click on this link and be prepared to discover that Fishbourne Roman Palace is an even more amazing site than you originally thought.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z_vsGsihXlq

ERRATUM

In our June newsletter we used the headline 'Dr Neville Haskins FRCS'. Mary has kindly pointed out that our much-missed colleague was a Fellow of the Royal Society of Chemistry – FRSC. Our apologies to Mary.

Coming events at the Palace

Soldiers & Civilians

Saturday 20-Sunday 21 Oct, 10am-4pm



Local re-enactors from the Butser Ancient Farm IX legion are visiting Fishbourne Roman Palace for a weekend in October to share their skills and enthusiasm with our visitors. Join them for a weekend of hands-on demonstrations and talks by this enthusiastic and knowledgeable group.

See some of the weapons the soldiers used, play some games to find out more about Roman daily life, explore Roman styles of dress and discover the secrets of ancient Roman cuisine.



Roman Army Week

Monday 22-Friday 26 Oct,
10am-4pm

This October half-term there's a chance to experience life as a soldier in the Roman Army.

Sign up with the recruitment officer and write your name in Latin before completing a range of tasks to earn a day's pay. Soldiers will have to fall into line under the watchful eye of the Drill Officer and parade around the formal gardens of the Palace. You will also be challenged to master sword and spear practice, learn

about the medicines used 2,000 years ago and see how soldiers relaxed by playing board games.

During the event, there will be Roman-style food to taste and the opportunity to acquire your own SPQR 'tattoo' and a fake wound if you are brave enough! Once you have completed certain activities, you can return to the recruitment officer, who will issue you with a certificate and a (replica) Roman coin as your first day's pay!

Fifty Years of Fishbourne

Throughout 2018 the Palace has been celebrating fifty years since the site opened to the public. As part of these celebrations the Palace has held a number of celebratory events, featured in local and national publications, and installed a new projection telling the story of the excavations. There are also some 50th

anniversary limited edition items for sale in the shop and a fundraising campaign is under way to develop and improve the care of the standing archaeological remains.

This year has also given the opportunity to highlight key areas of the site and the collections in a new way. There's a 50th anniversary trail for children to follow and for adult visitors there are regular *Fishbourne in Fifty Objects* talks, focusing on individual artefacts that might otherwise get overlooked.

Star objects for these pop up talks have included animal bone, ceramic tile, Roman glass, a coin of Septimius Severus, bronze tweezers, wall plaster and much more. Look out for details of future talks on the Palace's facebook page – and if you have a suggestion for an object you think should feature, then please let them know!



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