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## JUST ANOTHER DAY AT THE OFFICE: MELANIE MARSH AND ROB SYMMONS MEET “MILKSHAKE! MONKEY”



One great thing about working at the Palace is that two days are never alike. This was especially true of a Tuesday in late August when the Palace was visited by **“Milkshake! Monkey”**. Readers without small children or grandchildren may need to be told that Milkshake! Monkey (or simply “Monkey” to his friends, apparently) is a simian puppet who presents a TV series on Channel 5, aimed at pre-school children. We

have since found out that he has quite a following! We are quite used to helping academic researchers and dealing with the mainstream media, but this was something of a new experience for all involved. It's very strange being interviewed by a 4-inch puppet, but probably stranger is how quickly it started to feel normal!

Rob, the Curator, was given the honour of talking to Monkey. He says that this was the pinnacle of his career so far, not least because he is a huge fan of Jim Henson and the Muppets. Slightly alarming was that Monkey's arms and legs were detachable and frequently had to be removed or swapped around, depending on the needs of that cameraman. (Surely, enough to give the average pre-schooler nightmares!) Strangely, Monkey also stayed in character throughout the day, occasionally complaining that he was hungry or that the sun was in his eyes. To be honest, Monkey was a bit of a diva. The episodes were broadcast on 22 October (at 06.50!) so, if you would like to see Rob explaining to a large furry waistcoat-wearing Monkey that the Romans didn't eat bananas, go to My5. ■

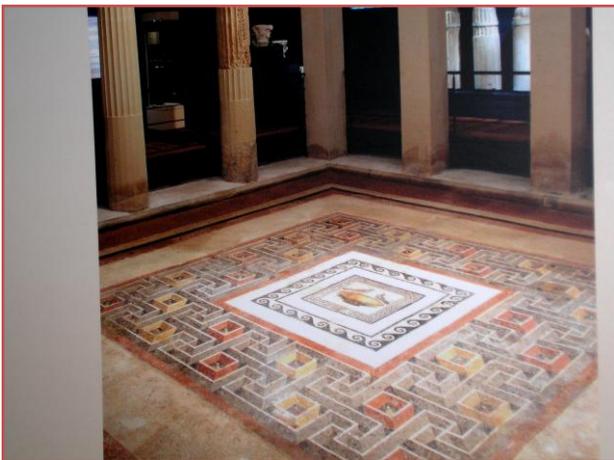
## A ROMAN HOUSE IN RABAT

Keith Lawson

We had been exploring the walled fortress of Mdina on the island of Malta and strolled out into Rabat (the mostly modern town outside Mdina) when we saw "Roman House" advertised, so we obviously went to have a look.



The remains are quite small as the majority of the Domus had been destroyed by more recent drains, roadworks, etc. and it only survived in the basement of a small house – but the one complete mosaic on show was stunning.



It was made of the smallest tesserae we had ever seen and showed a three dimensional pattern which looks as though it really was deeply three dimensional. The mosaic appeared to be in near perfect condition and the central picture is of 2 doves drinking at a fountain. The remains of 2 marble statues were also found at the site - believed to be of the Emperor Claudius and his daughter Antonia.

The mosaic and the statues were described as the finest in Malta and among the finest in the Mediterranean. The Domus in which they were found was built around the middle of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC and was in use for at least 100 years.

Dorothy Lawson commented: "The quality far exceeded what we have here on the far edge of the Empire..." ■

## CHAIRMAN'S THOUGHTS

Pam Crowe



After bouts of summer heat and periods of drenching rain, Autumn has descended upon us. Initially resisting it, I have now capitulated and turned on the central heating, in contrast to my teenage days of waking to a cold house at this time of year and dressing quickly. I can imagine the inhabitants of Fishbourne Roman Palace doing the same – but at least I had grown up with our weather. For them it must have been doubly chilling, so different from their homes in Italy. How did living in our climate in Roman times compare with modern life?

Firstly clothing: For cold weather I have jumpers and a nice warm coat – what did the Romans have? Whilst the lightweight robes depicted in many wall paintings were popular, silk imported for them from China was expensive and would not have given protection from the cold winters of Britain. The addition of linen (the whiter the better) or wool was common to reduce cost. Being the softer, wool would have felt pleasant to the skin and kept out cold better than other fabrics.

People working outdoors in all weathers, such as farm labourers, needed further protection from the elements. They wore long-sleeved garments often of leather or patchwork, perhaps with the addition of shoulder capes for extra warmth. Trousers had been ▶



*A familiar figure models high-status Roman attire*

part of pre-Roman local dress and continued to be worn especially in rural areas where one-piece capes were also common. Those of higher status would also wear long sleeves in winter, sometimes using layers of long tunics to defeat the cold. New clothing was costly so older, badly-worn garments were utilised by everyone to patch those in better condition. It is no surprise that in urban areas people who owned slaves tasked them to ensure their clothes were not stolen from changing rooms at the baths.

What about living conditions indoors? In my lifetime houses have gone from having only an open fire in the main living room and perhaps gaining heat from a cooking range in the kitchen to enjoying various forms of central heating available at the flick of a switch. Wealthier Romans were able to install *hypocausts* for underfloor heating but, as at Fishbourne, these were not found throughout a property. A household would require a large number of slaves to have serviced these systems in every room. Sufficient wood needed to be collected and constantly stoke fires to maintain heat to numerous rooms and, possibly, provide hot water to a bathhouse as well. Even Fishbourne had to make do with only a bathhouse initially. It was not until the middle of the second century AD when fewer rooms were needed and refurbishment of the North Wing was being undertaken that some underfloor heating was installed. It has been speculated that the original use of the room containing the 'Cupid on a Dolphin' mosaic may have been for dining, serviced by the two narrow areas on either side. Following the refurbishment it then appears to have become the principal room of the house and *hypocausts* were installed under the two side areas. The inhabitants must have enjoyed the luxury of this heating as further updating of the property in the third century gave rise to construction of an additional *hypocaust* in the room at the western end of the North Wing. This work ceased when the Palace was not rebuilt after being destroyed by fire.

Of course, it was only the wealthy who benefitted from such embellishments but even they were susceptible to the effects of our climate. The inhabitants of the Palace would have been prone to many of the ailments which affect us nowadays and the

Palace garden grows some of the plants which would have been used by Romans to prevent or remedy illness and diseases. It must be said that some illnesses first occurred in Britain during the Roman period when urbanisation and increased travel facilitated by their construction of a network of roads contributed to the spread of diseases. Despite a generally healthy high-fibre diet with plenty of vegetables and fruit, the use of lead water pipes and containers, especially for preparation of *sapa* (a syrup used to sweeten sour wine) commonly resulted in a range of problems caused by lead poisoning including anaemia and kidney damage in children and muscle and joint problems in adults. It was only in the past century that the dangers of lead contamination were fully recognised and steps taken to eliminate its use. There are similarities between keeping healthy in the Roman era and the present day, such as bathing, exercise and attention to diet.

Herbs, spices and minerals all played a part in Roman remedies. A derivative of arsenic was used as antiseptic for wounds and ulcers and arsenic was still used medicinally in Victorian times. However, a blend which included white pepper, opium, zinc oxide and shoemaker's blacking was applied to a range of eye problems (*lippitudo*) such as conjunctivitis would certainly not be recommended today! Without modern medicines, the herb horehound was a popular remedy for chest complaints and is still in use for (among other things) an expectorant to relieve chesty coughs. The Roman writer Celsus suggested that imported figs cooked over charcoal were used for coughs and sore throats – a tasty remedy whether or not it was effective. Religion touched on all parts of Roman life including illness and prayers would often be said and votive offerings made to Apollo, Aesculapius, Minerva or some other god in hope of healing. Today, the gods may be different but people of many religions still continue to pray for healing.

My own way to counteract the approaching winter weather will be not to go out in it! However, if you need to go anywhere then wrap up warm and keep safe. ■

## SATURN – (THE BRINGER OF OLD AGE!)



Remember this rather morose looking gent from our piece last February about the House of the Planetarium in the Roman town of Italica? We asked who the portrait represents. We received just one reply, for which we are most grateful:

*“Dear Fishbourne Friends,  
“On page 6 of the February edition of your newsletter, you ask who the cloaked figure is on this mosaic. Just in case nobody else has replied, I see that <http://etc.ancient.eu/travel/mosaics-roman-baetica-route-italica/> identifies it as Saturn.*

*“The iconography seems similar to that shown on [https://iconographic.warburg.sas.ac.uk/vpc/VPC\\_search/subcats.php?cat\\_1=5&cat\\_2=182&cat\\_3=648&cat\\_4=5058](https://iconographic.warburg.sas.ac.uk/vpc/VPC_search/subcats.php?cat_1=5&cat_2=182&cat_3=648&cat_4=5058).*

*“Best wishes, Andrew Todd”* ■

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## WHERE IS YOUR MONEY GOING?

The Friends' website carries a partial list of the projects on which we have been able to assist the Roman Palace in the past. Your committee are now in discussion with Palace staff about two new projects: a vegetable garden and a second-hand bookshop.

Melanie Marsh, the Fishbourne Property Manager, has outlined a project to turn an old office no longer needed by staff, into a second-hand bookshop to stock all categories of books and be run by volunteers as a fundraiser and additional attraction. Some fittings and, of course, bookshelves will be needed. And the Palace will be looking for books!



*Phil Davies's former office next to the Osborne Room*

Stuart Clarke, Head of Maintenance and Custodian at the Palace, showed the committee and some of the Fishbourne staff part of the bungalow garden which has been fenced off, and an access created from the West Wing area. ▶





The proposal is to create a produce garden with a Roman theme. The fruit, vegetables and plants raised there will be used in the café and sold to visitors. The area will become part of the tours offered to visitors. Items of infrastructure needed are a polytunnel, a potting shed, raised beds and a fruit cage.

The Friends will not be in a position to finance the whole of these projects but we shall gladly contribute. Future newsletters will bring more details of progress.



*The proposed vegetable garden looking south*



*Photos: Richard New, Anne de Potier*