THE MONMOUTHSHIRE ANTIQUARY

PROCEEDINGS OF THE MONMOUTHSHIRE ANTIQUARIAN ASSOCIATION

CAERLEON MUSEUM PAPERS

VOLUME XVII (2001)

CONTENTS

The cover illustration of John Edward Lee (1808-87) appears by kind permission of the Torquay Natural History Society. *(Plate: National Museums & Galleries of Wales).*

ISSN: 1359–9062.

Designed – Printed by: Cambrian Printers, Llanbadarn Fawr, SY23 3TN.

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VOL. XVII. 2001.

FOREWORD

On 2 August 1850, the newly-constructed 'Museum of Antiquities' at Caerleon opened its doors to members of the public as well as to members of the Caerleon Antiquarian Association that had founded it. This remarkable achievement, 'at a time when local museums were considered to be unjustifiable extravagances' was but the prelude to even more exciting developments over the next 150 years. The museum became the focus for the work of 'giants' of archaeology, pioneers whose excavations have advanced our knowledge of the Roman fortress of Isca, to the point that it has reached today.

During the year 2000, a series of events was held to celebrate the one hundred and fiftieth birthday of what is now called the Roman Legionary Museum at Caerleon. Not least among these events was a Day School organised jointly by Cardiff University Centre for Lifelong Learning, the National Museums & Galleries of Wales, University of Wales College Newport and the Monmouthshire Antiquarian Association. Held on 7 October 2000 at Caerleon Campus, the Day School, chaired by Jeremy Knight in the morning and by Professor W.H. Manning in the afternoon, was attended by about eighty people. The papers given by a series of distinguished speakers, all of whom have close connections with Caerleon, not only reviewed and assessed all the work done at Caerleon and its impact on the national consciousness (both English and Welsh!), but also asked searching questions about its future.

The publication of these papers, in this special issue of *The Monmouthshire Antiquary*, is the Association's lasting commemoration of 150 years of the museum at Caerleon. It also brings to a wider audience, the achievements celebrated and the issues debated, in the lively and stimulating papers that participants in the Day School enjoyed last October.

A.M.B.

EDITORIAL

This edition of *The Monmouthshire Antiquary* has been edited jointly by Annette Burton, the Association's 'new' Honorary Editor and David Williams, who decided, after ten years as editor, that it was 'time to hand over the reins'. The Honorary Editor is extremely grateful, though, that his withdrawal has proved premature and she would like to acknowledge the invaluable, practical support that David Williams has given her, especially in the final stages of preparing the volume for the press, when she was unwell.

It remains an objective of the Monmouthshire Antiquarian Association to publish annually articles of a high academic standard relating to the history, archaeology and architecture of Gwent/Monmouthshire. Intending contributors to *The Monmouthshire Antiquary* should submit their articles to the Honorary Editor by 30 September, to be considered for publication in the following year. Further *Guidance for Contributors* is available from the Honorary Editor.

The Editor and the Association are grateful for a contribution made by the National Museums & Galleries of Wales towards the publication of this issue.

A.M.B.

JOHN EDWARD LEE AND ANTIQUARIANISM IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY CAERLEON

By Gwenllian V. Jones

In 1850, the Museum of Antiquities was opened in Caerleon, home of the Second Augustan Legion. In the year 2000, the Roman Legionary Museum, as it is now known, celebrated its one hundred and fiftieth birthday. To find out more about this remarkable achievement, we must go back in time to 28 October 1847. On that day, a local industrialist called John Edward Lee, invited 'friends to the formation of a Museum of Antiquities' to a meeting at his home, The Priory in Caerleon and on that day, the Caerleon Antiquarian Association was born.

Its objects were 'first to form a Museum of the Antiquities found at Caerleon and the neighbouring districts and secondly the furtherance of any antiquarian pursuit, whether by excavation or otherwise'.[1] A patron, president, secretary and six committee members were chosen and the newly-formed Association set about its task with great determination and enthusiasm. Three years later, the museum was complete and the Caerleon Antiquarian Association, the earliest county antiquarian association in Wales and only a month younger than the Cambrian Archaeological Association, set about fulfilling its other aim: the furtherance of other antiquarian pursuits.

Isca Bowen, in his presidential address to the Cambrian Archaeological Association in 1970,[2] being also at the time the president of the Monmouthshire and Caerleon Antiquarian Association (as it had become known), suggested that John Edward Lee had the idea of forming the Caerleon Antiquarian Association after joining the Cambrians in September 1847,[3] promptly rushing home to summon his friends to The Priory a month later. It is far more likely that the seed had been sewn many years before when, as a young man of nineteen, Lee had joined the Hull Literary and Philosophical Society in his home town in 1827.[4] At that period of his life, Lee was passionately interested in science, particularly entomology and spent many hours at the end of the day, arranging and re-arranging the specimens in the society's museum. We know that Lee arranged the specimens in the museum at Caerleon and wrote the labels for them.

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[1] See Minute Book of the Caerleon Antiquarian Association, in the possession of the Monmouthshire Antiquarian Association.

[2] *Archaeologia Cambrensis,* 120 (1971).

[3] The first meeting of the Cambrians took place in Aberystwyth in Sept. 1847. Then as now, many people were members of both associations.

[4] The society was founded in 1822 and Lee's uncle, Avison Terry, was a proprietary member. Gifts for its museum were donated by the townspeople; Lee donated a geological model of Nettleton Dale in Lincolnshire. Lee became a close friend of John Phillips, Professor of Geology at Oxford and curator of the Ashmolean Museum, when he lectured to the society in its early days.

John Edward Lee was born in Hull in 1808 into a prosperous family with shipping and whaling interests going back over several generations. When his father died, he was provided for by his mother's brothers, John and Avison Terry, prominent Hull businessmen, who were involved in many aspects of civil life. Supposedly delicate of constitution, Lee travelled widely in his youth and all his life, in Britain and abroad, where he met and corresponded with such famous scientists and archaeologists of the day as Professor Roemer of Breslau, who stayed with him in order to attend the Monmouthshire and Caerleon Antiquarian Association's meeting in 1880 and Professors Huebner and Mommsen. Lee spoke French and German fluently, which enabled him to translate several important texts into English.[5] He was a superb artist and draughtsman and sketched avidly everywhere he went.[6] He was, in fact, a typical product of prosperous Victorian Britain and of the early nineteenth-century Hull merchant families in particular, moderately wealthy, landowning and part of county society.

When Lee left Hull, in 1841, for the sake of his health, he joined as a partner the Newport firm of J.J. Cordes and Company, nail, spike and rivet makers at the Dos Works, most likely through business connections of his uncles in Hull.[7] He settled in the small town of Caerleon, renting The Priory, an attractive house set in large grounds and overlooking the Roman amphitheatre, from Sir Digby Mackworth of Glen Usk. So it was that John Edward Lee found himself living among like-minded people, with the time and the means to pursue his antiquarian interests.

Lee was horrified at what he saw around him when he came to live in Caerleon. Long after the departure of the Second Augustan Legion from their fortress, travellers had been visiting the town to marvel at the romantic ruins of a vanished civilisation, but by the beginning of the nineteenth century, a more enlightened note of concern had set in. In fact, as early as 1587, Thomas Churchyard, in his long poem *The Worthines of Wales*, said of Caerleon 'Thou hast bene great, though now but little worth', although he may have had in mind the legendary splendours of the court of King Arthur, rather than the Roman fortress.

Nevertheless, when Archdeacon William Coxe visited Caerleon on his journey through the county in 1798 and 1799, in preparation for his book, *An Historical Tour in Monmouthshire*, which appeared in 1801, he saw

> the remains of the walls and amphitheatre, the numerous sculptures, altars, pavements, inscriptions, coins and other antiquities discovered within the town ... and the immense quantities of Roman brick, stamped with the impression LEG II AUG.

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[5] The major translations were of Ferdinand Keller, *Lake Dwellings of Switzerland* (London, 1866); Conrad Merck, *Excavations at the Kesserloch* (London, 1876); and Ferdinand Roemer, *Bone Caves of Ojcow in Poland* (London, 1884).

[6] For a select bibliography of Lee's work, see *The Monmouthshire Antiquary*, XIII (1997).

[7] Lee had family interests in a tar and turpentine distillery in Hull. His input at J.J. Cordes was mainly financial and the country air of Caerleon was clean.

Pigot's 1835 *Directory for Monmouthshire* said of Caerleon that 'remains of Roman armour, coins, stone coffins, sepulchral stones, rings etc, are often dug up here'. We can imagine John Edward Lee's distress (the word he used), when he moved to Caerleon and saw the situation for himself. He saw the neglected remnants of Caerleon's past lying all around him and from his home at The Priory, he saw the ancient stones of the amphitheatre being quarried by the labourers of the town for re-use. He saw the ground being cleared of old buildings to make way for new ones and interesting remains being destroyed by exposure to the weather. His scholarly book, *Delineations of Roman Antiquities found at Caerleon and the Neighbourhood*, published in 1845, only four years after his arrival in the town, arose out of his distress. In it he says that

> it is most mortifying to state that by far the greater part are lost, scattered or destroyed. Caerleon may have possessed a far more excellent collection of Roman antiquities than is now to be found there, but the opportunity was lost and probably may never occur again ... Probably, few places in England (*sic*) can boast of so many interesting antiquities in the neighbourhood where they were discovered.[8]

Lee rescued for posterity some of these antiquities and recorded them in accurate drawings in his book. He also drew the collections of some of his friends and in time, persuaded them to lend or donate specimens for the new Museum of Antiquities.

We do not know how many people attended that first meeting at The Priory, but there were obviously enough to elect officials and a committee of six local worthies. The bishop of Llandaff was to be invited to become patron, Sir Digby Mackworth, who was so generous to the new society, agreed to become its first president and Lee became secretary and treasurer. The Revd Daniel Jones of Caerleon, the Revd William Powell of Llanhennock, John Jenkins of The Mynde in Caerleon, proprietor of Ponthir Tinplate Works and Henry Montonnier Hawkins, were among the committee members.

The first step was to attract as many members as possible, to bring in sufficient funds to build the museum. In a very short time, there were eighty subscribers, among them representatives of all the oldest families in the county and some from as far away as Hull. Not surprisingly, these included John and Avison Terry! Sir Digby offered a lease of ninety years on the Town Hall and Market House, which stood in the middle of the High Street, but local residents demanded its demolition and paid £80 for the site. Sir Digby then offered a prime site near the church on the same terms of one shilling per annum. He also donated the £80 that he had received for the Town Hall, together with £130, being the value of its building materials, to the museum building fund. Mr Lockwood of Hull, an architect friend of Lee, donated the building plans and Mr James, a local builder, was asked to undertake the construction. It was to be a simple building, lit by a roof light and fronted by four pillars. The cost was estimated at £470. In June 1848, the foundation stone was laid by Miss Mackworth and a bazaar was held in the grounds of The Priory to raise more funds. It brought in £172. The wives of all

[8] Lee walked the fields and hills around Caerleon, recording the Roman features and finds, which were placed in the museum.

the important landowners in the county ran the stalls, a rare appearance of women in the records.

Bad luck dogged the building of the museum. Poor workmanship led to expensive repairs over many years. Many of the bills survive in the Monmouthshire Antiquarian Association's archive. Yet the building served its purpose well and attracted many visitors to its collection of Roman antiquities.[9]

Who were, apart from John Edward Lee, the 'friends to the formation of a Museum of Antiquities'? Monmouthshire was fortunate in the number of learned and cultured men (and one or two women) living in the county, who supported the venture with money and specimens. There was Sir Digby Mackworth, the first president, who conducted several excavations on his land in Caerleon; his collection of antiquities, 'though not large', was very fine. Octavius Morgan, son of Sir Charles Morgan, who succeeded to the presidency in 1853, on the death of Sir Digby, was not only a Member of Parliament for the county, but a well-known collector of clocks, watches, china and glass. A Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries, he conducted a number of small-scale excavations, served on the committee and collaborated with Thomas Wakeman, of The Graig, Monmouth, on a number of papers on the architecture and history of the county.[10] They frequently shared the job of conducting members of the Association around the castles of Monmouthshire, where the annual general meetings were usually held. F.H. Mitchell, also a partner at J.J. Cordes, was one of the first to contribute to the building fund. His son, F.J. Mitchell of Llanfrechfa Grange, and his wife, Elizabeth, contributed articles and sketches respectively. F.J. Mitchell succeeded Lee as secretary in 1886, having shared the post since 1871, after Lee and his wife had settled in Torquay.[11] John Jenkins of The Mynde, whose improvements on his land led to the excavation of a Roman villa and the publication by the Association of a paper by John Edward Lee on the excavation, generously donated all the finds to the museum. The Vicar of Caerleon, the Revd Daniel Jones, kept a vigilant eye on work going on in the churchyard and saved several valuable altars and inscriptions from destruction.

True to the Association's intentions, the first excavation took place at the first annual general meeting in July 1848, when a tessellated pavement was uncovered and donated to the museum by its owner, Mr John James of Pillbach Farm.[12] At each annual general meeting, John Edward Lee, as both secretary and treasurer, delivered a concise report to the membership on donations to the museum, or lack of them; funds, or lack of them; thanks to those who had worked so hard for the Association; a reprimand for those who did not take as active a part as they might have done. In his report for 1860, he complained that

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[9] All the details are carefully recorded in the Association's Minute Book, in Lee's neat hand.
[10] For a list of these publications, see Eric Wiles, 'Publications of the Caerleon Antiquarian Association ...', *The Monmouthshire Antiquary*, XIII (1997) 59-62.
[11] Lee died in Torquay in 1887. He had spent the last few years of his life actively engaged in geology, in the company of William Pengelly and the Torquay Natural History Society.
[12] A sepulchral stone found nearby was also donated. See J.E. Lee, *Isca Silurum*, plates I, fig.1 and XXVI.

> many of them have both time and opportunity for investigating antiquarian subjects and communicating them to the general meetings or to the publications of the Society. A Society, to be useful, ought to include a number of working members.

The business meeting was always held in the morning and after lunch, which was often provided by the genial host and served in a marquee, the members heard the history of the particular castle at which they were meeting. These visits formed an important part of the Association's activities, though they were often badly attended because of bad weather, in spite of being held in July. The proceedings were published by the Association for distribution to the members, as were the books written by Lee, usually at his own expense.

John Edward Lee constantly rebuked those who were hoarding antiquities in private collections, when they should be on display in the museum. It is undoubtedly thanks to his perseverance that so much ended up there. He acknowledged warmly several good friends who were vigilant on his behalf and who donated many items to the museum. Lee himself gave many specimens. Mrs Pritchard, a 'neighbour' and an antiquarian, rescued many important Roman pieces, often in dramatic circumstances. Memorable are the samian dish, used as a soap dish by a labourer's wife, broken and discarded and the funerary glass vessel thrown into the river in case the bones inside brought bad luck, which she retrieved. Mr Edmund Jones of Little Bulmore Farm, was careful to preserve all antiquities on his land and donated eight funerary inscriptions found in his orchard.[13] Sir Digby Mackworth donated many items, including a fine amphora from the Amphitheatre field, on display at the present museum.

For advice on coins and inscriptions, Lee frequently turned to a close friend, the Revd C.W. King, Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge, who had been born in Newport. Lee also wrote to well-known experts in Britain, on the Continent and even in Canada, for their advice and interpretation, so that items in the collection could be displayed accurately.[14] In 1930, the Association gave its museum into the care of the National Museum of Wales. The Keeper of Archaeology, Dr Mortimer Wheeler, considered it to be 'a collection entirely without parallel in Wales'.

Some of the original gifts to the museum are on display and some are not. One tiny item, a dolphin ring, is in the reserve collection, but a recent find of correspondence dating from 1901, bridges the years between Lee and the foundation of the Museum of Antiquities and the present day. The ring had belonged to Lee's friend, the Revd C.W. King. The writer of a letter to F.W. Mitchell, the Association's secretary at that time, told how he, a certain A.T. King, had given the ring to an old friend of the Revd C.W. King and that it was now to be sold at Christie's in London. A.T. King had discovered that the ring was illustrated in Mr Lee's book, *Isca Silurum* and felt that its rightful place was in the museum in Caerleon.

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[13] See Lee, *Isca Silurum*, plates V-VII.

[14] Lee consulted, apart from his friends in the Association, such men as Charles Roach Smith of London, who had been recording and rescuing the remains of Roman London, Prof. Mommsen and Dr Huebner of Berlin and the Revd Dr McCaul of Toronto.

Consequently, it was purchased at a cost of thirty shillings and presented by him to the museum, where it is to this day.[15]

In the porch of The Priory Hotel in Caerleon is a plaque, placed there by the Monmouthshire Antiquarian Association and the Caerleon Civic Society, on 28 October 1997, to honour John Edward Lee's achievement one hundred and fifty years earlier.[16] The Association still publishes learned articles and counts distinguished antiquaries and archaeologists among our members. We do not carry out many excavations these days (at least, not in our own name), but we still grumble about shortage of money and the need for more working members. More importantly, the Monmouthshire Antiquarian Association, as it is now called, and the museum that it built, go from strength to strength.

Note: many of the topics touched on in this article are discussed in greater detail in The Monmouthshire Antiquary, XIII (1997) - Papers to mark the 150th Anniversary of the Monmouthshire Antiquarian Association (1847-1997).

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[15] The ring, found in the Broadway, Caerleon, by the writer's great-grandfather, Mr King of Newport, was in the possession of Mr King's son, T.J. King, when Lee drew the wax impression in the museum (which does it no justice at all). The exact relationship to the Revd C.W. King, has not been established. See Lee, *Isca Silurum*, plate L, fig. 3.

[16] The plaque was unveiled by Lord Raglan at a celebration dinner at The Priory Hotel on that date.

CAERLEON AND THE ARCHAEOLOGISTS: CHANGING IDEAS ON THE ROMAN FORTRESS

By Richard J. Brewer

Vegetius, writing probably at the end of the fourth century, stated that 'It was not by human counsel alone but by divine inspiration as well that the Romans organised the legions'.[1] Archaeologists and historians have long realised the importance of the study of the legions in our understanding of the history of the Roman Empire. An important element of this study relies on archaeological facts; in other words evidence from excavated legionary fortresses. Of some sixty-five legionary fortresses in the Empire, only about twenty have been archaeologically investigated to any degree,[2] while in Britain, Caerleon is one of only three legionary fortresses to have been occupied beyond the first century A.D. Obtaining these archaeological facts is hindered because most legionary fortresses were built in locations that developed later as important cities and are still thriving today. The construction of medieval and later buildings has impeded archaeological research at many fortresses and it has proved extremely difficult, if not impossible, to obtain reasonably complete ground plans. Even where a legionary fortress has not been built over, like Caerleon, the site is so large (each legion required an area of 18-25 hectares for its fortress) that in most cases the plan is still incomplete.

The scale of work and resources required have in most cases proved prohibitive and many years, indeed decades, of excavation pass before even an understanding of the plan emerges. As a consequence, there is only a relatively small number of fortresses for which we have a reasonable idea of their plans including, for example, Haltern (Gemany), Vindonissa (Switzerland), Nijmegen (Netherlands), Carnuntum (Austria), Neuss (Germany), Lambaesis (Algeria), Lauriacum (Austria), Inchtuthil and Caerleon. Even where substantial programmes of excavation have taken place, many were undertaken when archaeological techniques were still developing and the historical sequence is often incomplete and uncertain.

The importance of Caerleon, or Isca as it was known to the Romans, cannot be overstressed in the opportunities it offers for the study of a legionary fortress *(Fig. 1)*. In all, since the 1920s, some forty excavations have taken place within the walls of the fortress and fifteen outside, many of them directed by distinguished Keepers of Archaeology at the National Museum: Mortimer Wheeler, V. E. Nash-Williams and George Boon. More recently, the Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust has conducted a number of excavations, some in conjunction with the National Museum, in and around Caerleon.[3]

What is the purpose of reviewing past work and tracing how ideas have evolved? In examining any earlier work or evidence, we should be aware of what influences and parallels

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[1] Vegetius, *Epitoma rei militaris* 2.21.

[2] von Petrikovits, H., *Die Innenbauten römischer Legionslager während der Principatszeit* (Opladen, 1976), p.26, Bild 1.

[3] See *The Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust. The first twenty-five years* ... (Swansea, 2000).

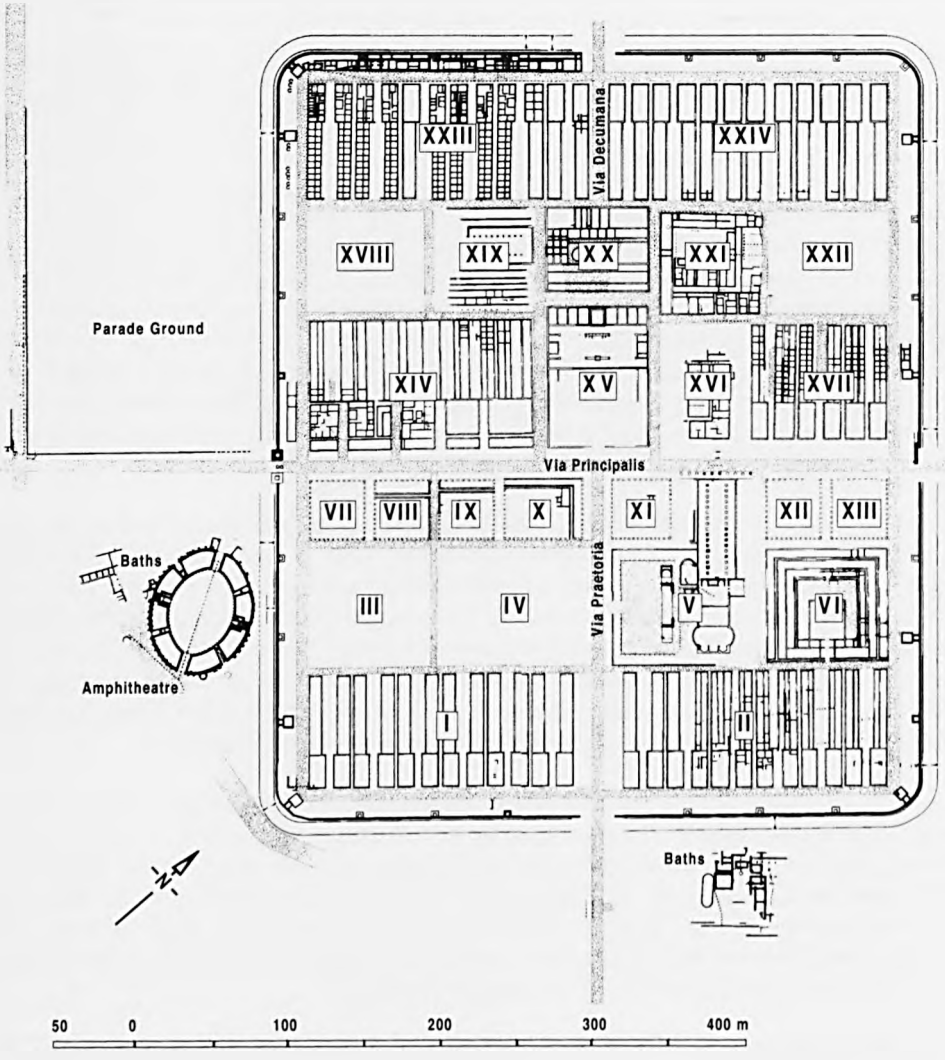

Fig. 1 The legionary fortress of Isca; detail of stone structures. Key of areas cited in the text. *Illustration: National Museum of Wales.*

from other fortresses were available when ideas and theories were being developed. Also, it is important to have a clear understanding of what methods of excavation were current and their limitations. Such an historiographic approach can often serve to demonstrate how shallow are the foundations on which some long-accepted notions are based. If old theories sometimes die hard, it is also too easy to ignore past ideas even where there is still merit in them. This review of excavations at Caerleon covers the internal buildings of the fortress and the civilian settlement, but generally excludes work on the defences and cemeteries.[4]

There is one fact on which virtually all Roman scholars from the later nineteenth century onwards agree and that is the foundation of the fortress at Caerleon in A.D. 74/75, when the Second Augustan Legion moved forward to a new base from where they subdued the Silures. These scholars include E. Hubner and E. Ritterling, who drew their evidence for this date from the ancient texts, while those coming later, R. G. Collingwood, I. A. Richmond, S. S. Frere and G. Webster had the benefit of archaeological evidence as well.[5] The only person to diverge from this view was Theodor Mommsen who, writing in 1885, suggested that Caerleon was founded in A.D. 48 citing Tacitus, who stated in his *Annals*, that the 'Silures had to be kept in check by a legionary camp'.[6] Mommsen assumed that such a base had to be within the territory of the Silures rather than a site, such as Gloucester, near the border of their territory. Needless to say, no archaeological evidence of such an early foundation for Caerleon has come to light, as yet!

The Liverpool Committee

The first 'scientific' excavations at Caerleon took place in 1908. They were instigated by the Liverpool Committee for Excavation and Research in Wales and the Marches.[7] Established in 1907, one of the aims of the Liverpool Committee was to undertake a minute scientific and up-to-date enquiry into the character of the Roman occupation of Wales. Liverpool was thought to be a most suitable base of such operations, not only because within its university there was a strong and growing School of Archaeology, but it also included in its population a very large number of Welsh people. It was intended 'from the outset that any such work must be carried on in as close co-operation as possible with the University of Wales, with the Cambrian

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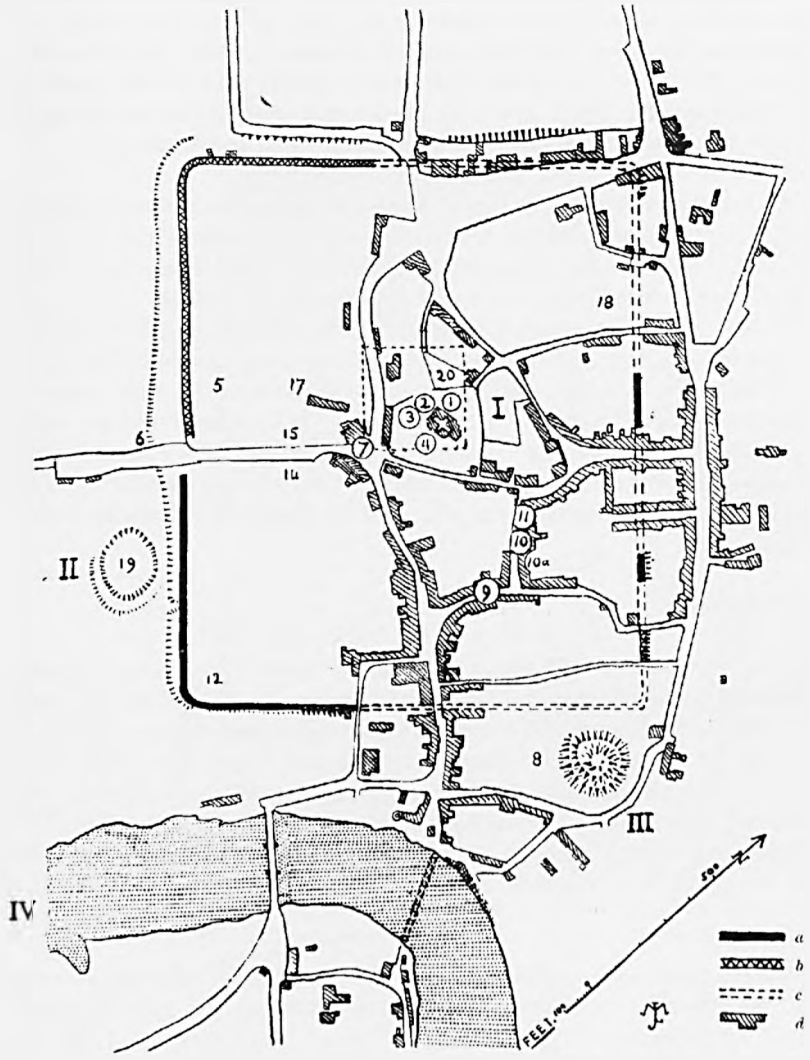
[4] For a recent discussion of the Flavian defences, see Zienkiewicz, J.D., 'Caerleon: the Flavian Defences' in LeQuesne, C., *Excavations at Chester. The Roman and Later Defences, Part 1, Investigations, 1978-1990* (Chester, 2000), pp. 126-36. The fortress had two important cemeteries, the first on the lower slopes of Lodge Hill and extending beyond the Afon Lwyd to the east (see Evans, E. and Maynard, D.J., 'Caerleon Lodge Hill Cemetery: the Abbeyfield Site in 1992', *Britannia*, 28 (1997) 169-243). The second was on the valley-side between the Usk Bridge and Bulmore.

[5] For an overview, see Hassall, M., 'Pre-Hadrianic legionary dispositions in Britain' in Brewer, R. J. (ed.), *Roman Fortresses and their Legions* (London, 2000), pp. 51-67.

[6] Mommsen, T., *The Provinces of the Roman Empire from Caesar to Diocletian*, trans. by W.P. Dickinson from *Römische Geschichte*, V (Berlin, 1885), (London, 1886), p.178.

[7] *Liverpool Committee for Excavation and Research in Wales and the Marches, First Annual Report 1908* (Liverpool, 1909).



CAERLEON: SKETCH PLAN OF THE WHOLE SITE.

I. *Site of Excavations, 1908.*
II. *Roman Amphitheatre.*
III. *Castle Mound.*
IV. *River Usk.*

a. *The Roman masonry is preserved.*
b. *Only the Earthen Mound.*
c. *Only slight traces of Mound.*
d. *Modern Buildings.*

The numbers 1, 2, 3, . . . 20 mark the find spots of the Roman Coins (pp. 78, ff.)

Fig. 2. Sketch plan of Caerleon, 1908. The numbers refer to casual discoveries that had been recorded. *From Liverpool Committee for Excavation in Wales 1, Plate XIV.*

Archaeological Association, with the district or county archaeological societies, and with such local committees as it might be found desirable to form from time to time'.[8]

Little was known of the plan of the fortress at Caerleon at that time, other than its outline and records of some casual discoveries, such as the observation of walls, hypocausts and floors as a consequence of ground disturbance *(Fig. 2)*. It was, however, possible to suggest the location of the headquarters building (*principia*), near the centre of the fortress (lying in large part beneath the churchyard) opening on to the *via principalis*, by comparison with the then known fortress plans at Neuss (Novaesium) on the Rhine and Lambaesis in North Africa. Shown at a similar scale to that at Neuss, the proposed footprint of the *principia* has proved to be relatively accurate. This was an achievement in itself, especially since no visible remains, other than a few glimpses during grave-digging, had been recorded at that time.

The excavation of the ground that had been recently added to the churchyard was carried out under the auspices of the Liverpool Committee and the Monmouthshire and Caerleon Antiquarian Association.[9] Work commenced on 17 August and continued until 12 September 1908 and was supervised by Mr H. G. Evelyn-White,[10] while Mr F. King undertook the planning.[11] The site lay at the centre of the fortress (XVI) flanking the headquarters building to the north-east. Excavations revealed part of a large building and the smaller part of a second. The method of excavation generally adopted was to drive a trench along the line of a wall, revealing both faces and following up any cross walls thus revealed. In most places the walls had been badly robbed, which had presumably occurred when the church was built. The larger Roman building comprised three blocks, the southern block being separated from the rest by a narrow passage. The rooms were floored variously with concrete and slab paving and in some cases decorated with painted wall plaster. One or two of the rooms had been heated by hypocausts. The central space in the south wing, paved with a gutter on the north side, was probably an open courtyard.

Although the investigation revealed the plan of this building, few rooms were opened and no light was cast on its function. The building did not resemble anything in the other legionary fortresses known in 1908, though it was suggested that it may have been the quarters of officers, because of its location near the *principia*. The history of the site was likewise uncertain, though slight traces of occupation prior to the construction of the stone building were noted and coin evidence suggested that occupation continued to about 350. No further light was thrown on its identification until 1972, when George Boon in his *Isca*, suggested that

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[8] Ibid., pp. 11-15.

[9] Evelyn-White, H.G., 'Report on Excavations at the Roman site at Caerleon, Monmouth, 1908' in *Liverpool Committee*, op. cit. n. 7, pp. 53-82.

[10] Evelyn-White also supervised excavations at Castell Collen in 1913. See *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, series 6, 14 (1914) 1-58.

[11] Frank King was a junior partner in the Bristol surveying firm of Parfitt and King. From 1903 onwards, he spent long periods as 'clerk of works' on the excavations at the Roman town of Caerwent.

it had been the stables housing the 120 *equites* attached to the legion.[12] This was based on comparison with a building at Lauriacum (Austria). However, by 1987 Boon had moved away from this idea, pointing out that the original excavators had recorded a step of nearly half a metre from the yard to the adjacent covered area, a situation which is hardly conducive to its interpretation as a stable. Boon on comparison with other similar structures within the fortress suggested in 1987 that it was a *fabrica* or workshop.[13]

In the following year (1909), the Liverpool Committee, again in co-operation with the Monmouthshire and Caerleon Antiquarian Association, undertook the examination of the south corner of the fortress, opposite the amphitheatre.[14] The main objective was to obtain particulars of the wall and ditch for comparison with those of the fortress at Chester. A report was prepared by Professor R. C. Bosanquet,[15] who directed the work and Frank King, as a communication to be read to the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion, but was neither presented nor published. This was almost certainly owing to the authors' realisation that the construction of the fortress wall required an explanation other than that which they had suggested in their text. In 1962, the opportunity came to re-examine the wall from the outside and then in 1982, a thorough re-excavation was undertaken in advance of a programme of consolidation.[16] The 1908 and 1909 excavations were not followed up for many years.

The Amphitheatre

In 1920, Mortimer Wheeler *(Fig. 3)* took up the appointment of Keeper of Archaeology at the National Museum of Wales and embarked on an extensive programme of excavation in Wales.[17] He undertook excavations at Segontium in North Wales[18] and then at

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[12] Boon, G.C., *Isca. The Roman Legionary Fortress at Caerleon, Mon.* (Cardiff, 1972), pp. 15, 59 and n. 214.

[13] Boon, G.C., *The Legionary Fortress of Caerleon-Isca. A Brief Account* (Caerleon, 1987), p. 54.

[14] Bosanquet, R.C. and King, F. (edited with an appendix by G.C. Boon), 'Excavations at Caerleon, 1909', *The Monmouthshire Antiquary,* 1.3 (1963) 1-10.

[15] Professor Robert Carr Bosanquet (1872-1935), occupied the chair of Classical Archaeology in the University of Liverpool, 1906-20. While at Liverpool, he undertook much work on the Roman archaeology of Wales, excavating at Caersws and other sites. See obituary notices in *Antiquaries Journal,* 15 (1935) 397-8 and *Arch. Camb.,* 90 (1935) 167.

[16] Mason, H. and Macdonald, P., *The Roman Legionary Fortress at Caerleon. Report on the Excavations of the Southern Defences carried out in 1982* (forthcoming).

[17] Wheeler's duties at the National Museum of Wales were combined with teaching at Cardiff University College. See Hawkes, J., *Mortimer Wheeler. Adventurer in Archaeology* (London, 1982).

[18] Wheeler, R.E.M., *Segontium and the Roman Occupation of Wales, Y Cymmrodor,* 33 (1923). Segontium is rightly claimed as the early laboratory for the development of excavation techniques and procedures that were to prevail for many years. Wheeler in his *Still Digging* (London, 1955), remarked that 'this was the first serious work of the kind that had come my way, and the chance was gladly seized to deal with the historical problems of [the] site ... and to evolve the necessary techniques for doing so'.

Fig. 3. Dr R.E.M. Wheeler (1890-1976), taken about the time of his excavation of the amphitheatre. *Photograph: National Museum of Wales.*

Y Gaer Roman fort, near Brecon.[19] His great energies were recognised and in 1924, he was appointed as Director of the Museum, during a period of extensive building work and the need for rapid fund-raising. Archaeologically, Wheeler determined that the next strategic advance must be 'the examination of the great legionary fortress from which the Gaer and its fellows had depended; as it were the prehensile fingers of a strong hand'.[20] Caerleon had an obvious appeal for Wheeler; it was large and offered the opportunity of adding to recorded history by archaeological explanation. Outside the walls of the fortress lay a well-preserved oval amphitheatre, known to local folklore as King Arthur's Round Table.[21] Wheeler decided to begin his campaign at the amphitheatre, since it was well-known, free of later buildings and 'likely to attract the considerable funds required for a long-term programme of work'. This magnetic quality, he saw at once, would owe much to the fortuitous connection with King Arthur and he was accused of shameless exploitation.[22]

Wheeler announced his project to the press and the bait was snapped up: the *Daily Mail* sent their man immediately to Cardiff and within moments, around midnight, an agreement was made that the paper should provide £1,000 for exclusive rights and daily reports on the uncovering of King Arthur's Round Table. In the event the *Daily Mail* eventually trebled its original offer.

At the beginning of 1926, Wheeler gave notice that he was leaving for the post of Keeper of the London Museum. This came at a time when he was drawing up schemes not

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[19] Wheeler, R.E.M., *The Roman Fort near Brecon, Y Cymmrodor,* 37 (1926).

[20] Hawkes, op. cit. n. 17, p. 95.

[21] In 1405, a French expeditionary force in support of Owain Glyndŵr, may have diverted to see the amphitheatre, by then 'King Arthur's Round Table'. See Lloyd, J.E., *Owen Glendower.* Owen Glyn Dŵr (Oxford, 1931, reprinted 1966), p. 104. According to Monstrelet, a French source, the French passed by the 'Round Table' and 'Noble Abbey' of Arthurian legend, but whether this refers to Caerleon and Llantarnam is not certain.

[22] Hawkes, op. cit. n. 17, p. 96.

Fig. 4. Mrs T.V. Wheeler standing in entrance B of the amphitheatre during its excavation. *Photograph: National Museum of Wales.*

only for Caerleon, but also for an Institute of Archaeology in London. It was evident that he could not direct the excavations scheduled for the summer and autumn, but the sponsorship from the *Daily Mail* made the project irrevocable and urgent. His wife, Tessa *(Fig. 4)*, took on the advance preparations for the dig and the crucial first season was supervised by Nowell Myres, who had recently graduated from Oxford.[23] Wheeler himself masterminded the excavation in the background and Tessa rushed down when she had spare time from moving her household to London. To redeem Wheeler's pledge, every evening Myres had to supply the *Daily Mail* with a newsworthy story on the day's discoveries, with headlines such as 'Where Gladiators Fought'. When Myres was obliged to quit Caerleon, Tessa Wheeler assumed direction. It was apparent by this stage that the task was going to take very much longer than anticipated. She had to toil for a further eight months and she only returned to London when the history of the amphitheatre had been elucidated and it was ready to be handed over to the Office of Works for consolidation. Photographs and sections of the excavations reveal that all effort was devoted to emptying and investigating the arena, the entrances and exterior wall. It is recorded that the examination and cartage of nearly 30,000 tons of soil cost a total of two shillings a ton.[24]

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[23] It took considerable pressure from Tessa Wheeler to persuade Myres to take on the role. Myres, then aged 23 and between his finals and an Oxford fellowship, took successful charge of the operations.

[24] Wheeler, R.E.M. and Wheeler, T.V., 'The Roman Amphitheatre at Caerleon, Monmouthshire', *Archaeologia*, 78 (1928) 111-218.

In 1801, William Coxe had reported that 'within memory of persons now living stone seats were discovered on opening the sides of the cavity'.[25] The Wheelers, in their report, reconstructed the amphitheatre as an earthen and masonry structure; the auditorium was supported by a bank of earth retained by inner and outer walls of masonry.[26] The outer wall was supported by external and internal buttresses, alternately spaced. The original height of the whole structure could be determined with some accuracy, for the remains of the arches and the actual vaulting in the main entrances gave the rake of the vaults, which would have carried the seating over the entrances. From this it was estimated that the arena wall must have risen to a height of 4 metres while the external wall must have reached a height of about 10 metres. It was concluded that the seats were almost certainly of wood, for no vestige of stone seat, despite Coxe's observations, was found during the excavations. The closest parallel noted was the corresponding structure at the legionary fortress at Carnuntum (Austria), which seated 8,000 compared with Caerleon's estimated 6,000.

In 1962, George Boon excavated a small trench in the bank between entrances D and E of the amphitheatre, which led to a fundamental reappraisal of its superstructure.[27] The excavation revealed the metalled surface of the original bank not far below the turf. Cut into the surface of the bank were pits, a metre square and deep. Boon concluded that these pits had held the vertical members of an openwork timber grandstand and this is how the amphitheatre has been reconstructed ever since.[28] He also suggested that this was intended as a temporary measure, as perhaps is the case of a similar amphitheatre depicted on Trajan's Column at Dobreta, the Roman base on the Dacian side of the Danube bridge: the realisation that the lowest storey of this structure contained arched entrances (and in the centre there is the larger arch of one of the main gates) and was therefore of stone has helped in the elucidation of the Caerleon building.[29]

The Caerleon Excavation Committee

Lying on the outskirts of the growing town of Newport, Caerleon was under threat of becoming a suburb. At the end of 1925, events moved with unexpected rapidity when land in the centre of Caerleon (and therefore in the centre of the Roman legionary fortress) changed hands for immediate development and urgent action was required. As a consequence Mortimer Wheeler called a conference of delegates representing the Caerleon and Monmouthshire Antiquarian Association, the Newport Corporation and the National Museum of Wales. At a meeting held on 23 January 1926, it was decided to establish a Caerleon Excavation Committee under the presidency of Lord Treowen and the chairmanship of Dr C. A. H. Green, then bishop of Monmouth.[30] Mrs Wheeler was honorary secretary, a role she continued in until

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[25] Coxe, W., *An Historical Tour in Monmouthshire* (1801), p. 84.

[26] Wheeler and Wheeler, op. cit. n.24, Plate XVIII, from a drawing by J.A. Wright.

[27] See Boon op.cit. n.12, pp. 93-5.

[28] See the reconstruction by R. Anderson, in Boon op. cit. n.13, p. 65.

[29] See Lepper, F. and Frere, S., *Trajan's Column* (Gloucester, 1988), Plate LXXIII, and Boon op. cit. n.12, p. 95, n.330.

[30] The meeting took place at Bradawel, Caerleon, on 23 Jan. 1926. See Minute Book, N.M.W. Archive.

1931, despite having to travel from London. The committee, which frequently met at the Training College, Caerleon (now UWC, Newport), was to be strong and authoritative, to include among its members local residents, representatives of local societies and institutions throughout the country and others who were closely concerned with the investigation of Roman Britain. It was the task of the Caerleon Excavation Committee to explore sites before their history was destroyed by building operations. It was recognised that Caerleon alone offered the opportunity to study a Roman fortress with any completeness and that it ranked as one of the most important sites in north-western Europe. Two-thirds of the fifty-acre fortress were yet unharmed by development, but with the spread of Newport, Roman Caerleon was doomed. The committee was active from 1926 until 1939, during which time sufficient funds were raised to enable fourteen sites to be excavated.

The person responsible for most of the excavations before the war was Victor Earle Nash-Williams, a native of Fleur-de-lis, Monmouthshire.[31] Having obtained first class honours in Latin at Cardiff University College, he was appointed Assistant Keeper of Archaeology in 1924. He succeeded Cyril Fox as Keeper of Archaeology in 1926 and held the post until his death in 1955.[32]

The first appeal, supported by the presidents of the Society of Antiquaries, the British Academy, the Classical Association and the Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies, raised sufficient funds from sources in England, Wales, Scotland, Ireland, France and Italy to enable the excavation of the area near the centre of the fortress (XXI), designated by the field name committee as Jenkins's Field.[33] Nash-Williams was charged with the excavation, north of the headquarters building, beginning in January 1926. Excavations revealed the foundations of part of a single stone building.[34] Traces were found of an antecedent timber phase, but they were not thoroughly investigated. The stone building was of courtyard type with ranges of large and small rooms. It was identified in the published report of 1929 possibly as a hospital on analogy with a similar building at Neuss, though it was also noted that a comparable building at Carnuntum had been interpreted as a training-establishment.[35] Subsequent excavation of the site in 1936 *(Fig. 5)* revealed a further portion of the courtyard building, with

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[31] See obituary notice by Randall, H.J., 'V.E. Nash-Williams 1897-1955', *Arch. Camb.*, 105 (1956) 150-1.

[32] He was also concurrently a lecturer at Cardiff University College. These commitments were too great to permit him to publish all his many excavations, especially at Caerleon; Jenkins's Field and Prysg Field were the only two sites to be published fully. He also excavated at and published Llanmelin Camp, Sudbrook Camp and Llantwit Major Villa. Of his two chief works, *The Roman Frontier of Wales* (1954), was of great value and is still regularly cited, while *The Early Christian Monuments of Wales* (1950) is a splendid memorial.

[33] At the meeting held on 16 June 1926, a small sub-committee was established to investigate the whole question of names for the area of the fortress and beyond. See Minute Book, N.M.W. Archive.

[34] Nash-Williams, V.E., 'The Roman Legionary Fortress at Caerleon in Monmouthshire. Report on the excavations carried out in 1926', *Arch. Camb.*, 85 (1929) 237-307.

[35] Ibid., 249-50.

Fig. 5. Jenkins's Field excavations, 1936, showing the trenching of the courtyard building (Area XXI) identified as a *fabrica*. *Photograph: National Museum of Wales.*

large halls on two sides, a subdivided space on the third side and further structures in the courtyard.[36] Iron slag and charcoal deposits found in the courtyard suggested that the building was a *fabrica* (workshop). A steeping tank for leather preparation, excavated in 1926, and evidence for lead-working on a large scale from excavations carried out in 1959, confirmed this likely indentification.[37] Neuss, Carnuntum and Lauriacum contain similar courtyard buildings in the central range of the fortress, which may also have been *fabricae* as at Caerleon: their main feature being a number of large rectangular halls.[38]

Before the completion of the Jenkins's Field site, a further large tract of land in the western corner of the fortress was to be sold by Miss Boulton on 12 May 1926. Owing to the prevailing economic conditions, the Office of Works was not in a position to exercise the full powers of the Ancient Monuments Act to secure the site. In order to rescue it for adequate investigation, the Caerleon Excavation Committee decided to purchase the site and a loan of

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[36] For a summary report on Jenkins's Field, see Nash-Williams, V.E., 'Caerleon excavations, 1936', *Arch. Camb.*, 91 (1936) 320-1.

[37] 'Roman Britain in 1959', *Journal of Roman Studies*, 50 (1960), 213.

[38] See Boon op. cit. n.12, pp. 82-5.

£2,500 was obtained from Lloyds Bank, raised on the deeds and the guarantee of eighteen Monmouthshire people, Newport Museum and Art Gallery and the National Museum of Wales.[39] The field name committee recommended that the site be known as Prysg Field. Work began in 1927 and continued through the summers of 1928 and 1929, under the direction of Nash-Williams.

The Prysg Field campaigns are the most famous of the Caerleon excavations. The remains uncovered included: stretches of the south-western and north-western defences; a series of ovens and cook-houses; a row of rampart-buildings inserted in the north-west defences and a row of ten barrack buildings (XXIII). Only one of the barrack blocks was totally cleared and even here the rooms were not stripped beyond the latest Roman levels. The other barracks were trenched only, on the whole, to reveal their plans. The earliest phase identified, at the time, on the site was a series of 'pre-stone' floor levels associated with slight cobble footings to support a framed timber superstructure. Nash-Williams proposed that these timber barracks were replaced in stone during the first decade of the second century and remained in continuous occupation until about 200. Three substantial reports on the excavated remains and finds were published promptly in *Archaeologia Cambrensis*.[40]

On completion of the excavations it was intended that the field should be sold, if necessary for building purposes, in order to repay the bank. However, the excavations uncovered a series of buildings against the ramparts, which were without parallel in Europe and, as a result, the Office of Works would not remove the Schedule to permit the sale of the land for building. The committee also considered it desirable, if possible, to preserve a pair of barracks for display and decided to try and purchase the entire field to protect the remains. Individual members of the committee were urged to raise sufficient funds before their claim on the ground lapsed at the end of 1929. By the end of that year, only £275 had been collected towards the bank loan of £2,500, so the public appeal in 1930 was devoted to raising money for preservation rather than excavation. The Chief Inspector of Ancient Monuments, Charles Peers, gave his assurance that, if and when the field could be handed over to the Office of Works, the remains would be preserved for the nation. Subscriptions raised less than £1,000, and in light of this difficulty the Treasury bought the land on a valuation of £1,350, thus wiping out the loan and saving the field.[41] Four barrack blocks, though only one is of original Roman

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[39] The guarantors comprised Sir Joseph Bradney, Sir Humphrey Mackworth, William Stewart, Mrs E. Edmonds, Alfred Williams, Lt-Col. Morris, William Williams, David Buck, J.R. Gabriel, H.M. Bythway, Iltyd Gardner, Douglas Joyce, Godfrey W. James, A.E. Bowen, J.H. Canning, Mrs Elizabeth Phillips, John Barnes and W.J.T. Collins. See Minute Book, 16 June 1926, N.M.W. Archive.

[40] Nash-Williams, V.E., 'The Roman Legionary Fortress at Caerleon in Monmouthshire. Report on the excavations carried out in the Prysg Field, 1927-9. Part I', *Arch. Camb.*, 86 (1931) 99-157; 'Part II. The finds', *Arch. Camb.*, 87 (1932) 48-104; 'Part III. The finds (continued)', ibid., 265-349.

[41] 'No archaeologist could have contemplated the obliteration without shame even if they had not then come within the scope of the existing Ancient Monuments Act. Such, indeed, was their importance that the Chief Inspector of Ancient Monuments caused the diversion of the

masonry, as well as the defences, cook-houses, ovens and a latrine were preserved; all of which are still visible.

Accommodation for the legionaries, numbering well in excess of 5,000 men, occupied a large area of the fortress and several further excavations on the sites of barracks were to take place during the late 1920s and 1930s. Before the work at the Prysg Field was completed, an area in the eastern corner came on the market.[42] A local benefactor secured the site for investigation and placed it at the disposal of the Caerleon Excavation Committee. Since Nash-Williams was fully occupied at Caerleon, the committee invited Christopher Hawkes,[43] then of the British Museum, to assume responsibility for the excavation, which was carried out in August 1929. Work was undertaken on the defences, the rampart road, two barracks and corner buildings (II) and a number of trial trenches were also dug across the bath building, lying outside the south-east corner of the fortress, partly explored in 1849 and later.[44] The report concluded that the stone barracks were built in about 115 and refurbished in 200 or thereabouts, but no certain traces of earlier timber structures were found.[45] Nash-Williams undertook further work on three barracks in 1936 at Vine Cottage Garden, which was sited in the central division of the fortress (XVII).[46] Interestingly they had thirteen *contubernia,* compared with twelve in all the Prysg Field barracks. It was again suggested that the barracks were constructed in about 110, having superseded a single stone building, which itself had replaced timber structures. The excavation also revealed traces of occupation in the fourth century.

Returning to 1928, the Williams Charity Trustees announced their intention to extend their school buildings. The site lay in the central division of the fortress, to the west of the headquarters building. Considering the importance of the School Field site the Excavation Committee diverted funds to this emergency work. Nash-Williams uncovered parts of two building blocks, separated by a metalled street. To the south-east of the street were the ends of a row of barrack buildings (XIV). To the north-west was a large building (XIX), then thought to comprise a spacious peristyle courtyard flanked on both sides by parallel ranges of

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proposed arterial road and gave his assurance that, if and when the field could be handed over to the Office of Works, the major remains therein would be preserved as a National monument'. See Minute Book, 11 July 1931, N.M.W. Archive.

[42] The area known as 'The Mynde' came onto the market owing to the death, in 1927, of Alfred Williams, a guarantor of the Prysg Field loan and was at risk from development. Fortunately, a benefactor, Mr Attwood Thorne, came forward with an offer to acquire the property for excavation. See Minute Book, 4 Feb. 1928, N.M.W. Archive.

[43] Bonakis Webster, D., *Hawkeseye. The Early Life of Christopher Hawkes,* (Stroud, 1991) makes no mention of his excavation at Caerleon.

[44] Hawkes, C., 'The Roman Legionary Fortress at Caerleon. Report on the excavations in the Eastern Corner in 1929', *Arch. Camb.,* 85 (1930), 144-96.

[45] Ibid., 195-6.

[46] For a summary report on Vine Cottage, see Nash-Williams, V.E., 'Caerleon excavations, 1936', *Arch. Camb.,* 91 (1936) 318-20.

rooms with intervening corridors. It was suggested that these smaller rooms had served as residential quarters.[47] The discovery of a fine silver standard head, then thought to be of a type used by officers on the personal staff of the Provincial Governor, led Nash-Williams to propose that it may have been the residence of the commander and headquarters staff.[48] The 1928 excavations also revealed a handsome marble dedication to the Emperor Trajan in his third consulship, A.D. 100, found re-used as paving.[49] It is undoubtedly one of the finest inscriptions from Roman Britain. Nash-Williams suggested that it may have adorned the headquarters building itself and its discovery, in part at least, gave rise to the hypothesis that there was a complete reconstruction of the fortress in stone between 100 and 110. In the 1960 edition of *Isca,* George Boon proposed that the large building (XIX) may have been the legionary hospital.[50] By 1967, however, it had become apparent from the plan that there were two distinct buildings in this block, the larger of which consisted of an aisled hall flanked by long undivided rooms. Boon now identified this *basilica* building as a drill-hall *(basilica exercitatoria)* and cited a similar building at Inchtuthil in Scotland as a parallel.[51] In 1985, David Zienkiewicz, then curator of the Roman Legionary Museum, and the Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust excavated an area adjacent to the School Field site. The excavation showed that the large *basilica* had been constructed in stone from the outset and probably dated to 75. Deposits of ash and slag attested extensive iron working in all phases and indicated a function as a *fabrica* rather than a drill-hall.[52]

In 1930, the only land required for development was a small plot next to Caerleon's town hall. Mr W. F. Grimes, Assistant Keeper in the National Museum of Wales, was invited to undertake its investigation under the general direction of Nash-Williams.[53] The excavation, which was conducted over four weeks only, revealed a building of considerable size (XX) lying immediately behind the headquarters building. One of the main features of this complex was a sunken courtyard, which took the form of a narrow rectangle with rounded ends. A double range of rooms behind a corridor lay on the north-west side, while on the western side was a triple range of rooms. These rooms had only slight floors and provided little evidence of occupation debris. A contemporary search of plans of other legionary fortresses yielded little, though it was noted that a similar round-ended courtyard existed in two buildings at the double legionary fortress at Vetera. These had been identified as the legates' residences, but they

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[47] For a summary report, see Nash-Williams, V.E., 'The Caerleon excavations', *Arch. Camb.,* 84 (1929) 140-5.

[48] Nash-Williams, V.E., *The Roman Legionary Fortress at Caerleon, Monmouthshire,* (Cardiff, 1946), p. 18, Plate VIb. Probably the tip of a *vexillum*, see Boon op. cit. n. 12, pp. 67-8, fig. 38 and n. 13, p. 68.

[49] Nash-Williams, op. cit. n. 47, pp. 141-2. *R.I.B. I, 331.*

[50] Boon, G.C., *Isca. The Roman Legionary Fortress at Caerleon, Mon. A Guide* (Cardiff, 1960), p. 35.

[51] See Boon, G.C. and Williams, C., *Plan of Caerleon* (1967). The Inchtuthil *basilica*, originally identified as a drill-hall by Sir Ian Richmond, is now also thought to have served as a workshop and store, see Pitts, L.F. and St Joseph, J.K., *Inchtuthil. The Roman Legionary Fortress Excavations 1952-65* (Britannia Monograph 6, London, 1985), pp. 121-8.

[52] Frere, S.S., 'Roman Britain in 1986', *Britannia,* 18 (1987) 307.

[53] Grimes, W.F., 'The Roman Legionary Fortress at Caerleon. Report on the excavations carried out in the Town Hall Field', *Arch. Camb.,* 90 (1935) 112-22.

were bigger than the Caerleon building and Grimes discounted this interpretation.

Further work was undertaken in 1936 by Nash-Williams (his third excavation of the year at Caerleon) on an adjacent site adding to the plan of this building which was now known to cover more than an acre. The cleanliness of the rooms, as similarly noted in 1930, and the lack of finds pointed to an administrative purpose rather than residential use and Nash-Williams tentatively suggested that it had served as the *quaestorium,* used for the disposal of prisoners, hostages and booty.[54] By 1960, with a growing number of comparative plans available, it became clear from its position and general character that it was indeed the legate's residence. The design centred upon a paved area containing a round-ended pool and similar features occurred in both *praetoria* at the double legionary fortress at Xanten on the Rhine.[55]

Between 1931 and 1933, an area on the Broadway, Golledge's Field, was threatened with development. The site flanks the *via principalis* and abuts the south-western defences (XIV). The excavations revealed a stretch of defences and one of the towers of the south-west gate, part of a rampart building and three stone buildings aligned on the *via principalis.*[56] Nash-Williams suggested that the buildings were residential in character and represented the centurions' quarters of paired barracks. Some of the rooms were equipped with hypocausts. As usual, it was proposed that these barracks had been constructed soon after 100, replacing earlier timber buildings. In the 1960 edition of *Isca,* George Boon suggested tentatively that this area of the fortress might have been the site of the accommodation for the first cohort, which was nominally of double strength.[57] It is difficult to interpret this accommodation without further excavation; three out of the five centurions' houses (twice the size of those of the centurions' quarters in the other cohorts, which would reflect their status), but only small areas of the men's quarters have been revealed. Consequently, the structure and size of the first cohort cannot be inferred from this evidence.[58]

At the end of 1938, the Excavation Committee was given notice that an area of nearly 2 acres (1 hectare) in the north-east angle of the fortress (II) was required for housing. The site, known as Myrtle Cottage, was excavated by Lady Aileen Fox *(Fig. 6),*[59] for Nash-

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[54] Nash-Williams, V.E., 'Caerleon excavations, 1936, *Arch. Camb.,* 91 (1936) 321 (Broad Towers).

[55] Boon op. cit. n. 50, p. 35. For comparative plans of legionary fortresses, see Boon and Williams op. cit. n. 51 including a plan of Xanten.

[56] For a summary, see Nash-Williams, V.E., 'Further excavations within the Roman Legionary Fortress at Caerleon, Monmouthshire', *Arch. Camb.,* 87 (1932) 394-5; *idem, Arch. Camb.,* 88 (1933) 111-14.

[57] Boon op. cit. n. 50, p. 35.

[58] Baatz, D., 'Vegetius' Legion and the Archaeological Facts' in Brewer, R.J. (ed.), *Roman Fortresses and their Legions* (London, 2000), pp. 149-58, esp. p. 153.

[59] Aileen Henderson went up to Cambridge in 1926 to read English Literature. Whilst at Cambridge, she was introduced to field archaeology when on holiday in the Maritime Alps, and after completing her degree she went to work at Richborough under Mr Bushe-Fox. She married Cyril Fox, Director of the National Museum of Wales, in 1933 and settled in Cardiff. See *Aileen - A Pioneering Archaeologist* (Leominster, 2000).

Fig. 6. Lady Aileen Fox, 1933, who undertook the excavation of Myrtle Cottage Orchard in 1939. *Photograph: courtesy of Mr. George Fox from the family archive.*

Williams was preoccupied with writing up his earlier work and committed to the excavation of the Iron Age promontory fort at Sudbrook. The excavation of this large site was to take eight weeks only and a dozen local workmen were employed, with the help of students in supervising and recording. It was considered that since the work of Nash-Williams at Prysg Field and elsewhere and Dr and Mrs Wheeler at the amphitheatre had established the main history of the site, any new excavation could only hope to fill up some gaps in the story. As a consequence, it was decided that the excavation should be selective to avoid duplication of previous work.[60] Excavation was, therefore, largely restricted to three long parallel trenches, which were driven right across the site in order to demonstrate the position of nine stone barracks. No attempt was made to clear any one of the barracks in their entirety.

Throughout, particular attention was directed to all deposits which might throw light on the later occupation of Caerleon. In two of the barracks the centurions' quarters were also cleared as well as four of the men's cubicles. In both there was clear evidence for third-century refurbishment of the earlier second-century originals. There was also evidence in one barrack for occupation well into the fourth century. The earlier history of the site was generally considered to be the same as encountered elsewhere in the fortress. A notable find from the site was that of a hoard of five gold *aurei*, the latest of A.D. 74, probably from a timber building that went undetected.[61] In retrospect, though

[60] Fox, A., 'The Legionary Fortress at Caerleon, Monmouthshire. Excavations in Myrtle Cottage 1939', *Arch. Camb.*, 95 (1940) 101-52, esp. 102-4 (aims and method of excavation).
[61] Lady Fox, in her recent autobiography, admits that the most exciting find she ever made was the hoard of five gold coins, the latest of A.D. 74, from Myrtle Cottage. 'It was a chance discovery: I was about to draw a section across the rampart and adjoining barracks, so I asked a student, a cheerful Scotsman from Aberdeen, to go and give the side of the trench a final scrape. Soon he came running to the hut announcing he had found gold coins; I guessed it was one of his jokes, and collecting my gear, I slowly walked across the site to inspect. To my

a competent piece of work for its time, Lady Fox admits to missing the significance of some of the cobble foundations as being evidence for earlier timber barracks.

The Second World War then intervened, but before Nash-Williams was called up in January 1940, he completed the first comprehensive guide to Roman Caerleon providing a record of discovery and excavation down to the end of 1938. Remarkably, in little more than ten years, substantial areas of eight building blocks of the fortress had been uncovered and from this it was possible to elucidate the character and history of Isca. A new edition of the guide, updated to 1945, was produced in 1946 and reprinted in 1952.

Civilian Settlement

For several years after the war little work was necessary, but in 1953 the site of the disused racecourse was bought by the Caerleon Urban District Council for development. The land lay opposite the amphitheatre and was known to cover part of the civilian settlement *(canabae)*. Indeed, there had been a long-standing assumption that the extra-mural development at Isca was restricted to this area.[62] Nash-Williams *(Fig. 7)* was again placed in charge of the programme of excavations and work was concentrated on the extra-mural area for several years.[63] In 1954 and 1955, a number of buildings were excavated to the south-west of the bypass road, which ran beside the walled parade ground. Six or seven rectangular houses or workshops, probably constructed in about 140, were set obliquely to the road. A short distance away lay a large courtyard house, constructed in the middle of the third century, at the corner of two streets. For no compelling reason, other than its size, it was identified as a *mansio* for official travellers using the *cursus publicus;* indeed, it even lacked the customary bath-suite.

Slightly further to the north-west lay a 'corridor-type' house, with a single range of rooms, flanked by a colonnade and projecting wings at either end. On the south-east side of the Broadway, near the amphitheatre, Nash-Williams revealed the portico of a large building, just a few weeks before his death. It was thought at the time that these last two buildings probably lay within the military zone and did not form part of the *canabae*.

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amazement, there they were, five of them lying in a hole in the trench, as fresh as the day they were buried, for gold never decays. They had been hidden beneath the earth floor of one of the early timber barracks, presumably by a soldier killed in action'. See Fox, op. cit. n. 59, p. 87.

62 'The civil settlement (*canabae*) lies mostly south-west of the fortress, being no doubt attracted thither by the existence of docking facilities by the Usk, which seem to be the reason for the direct extension of the *via principalis* thither'. (Boon, G.C., unpublished paper written in 1959). See also Alan Sorrell's 'Bird's eye view of the Roman fortress', painted in 1939, which shows the civilian settlement restricted to the south-west. He worked on the painting in close consultation with Nash-Williams. See *Alan Sorrell: Early Wales Re-created* (National Museum of Wales, Cardiff, 1980), pp. 28-9.

63 A summary of these excavations is included in Boon op. cit. n. 12. For a general discussion on the Caerleon *canabae,* see Evans, E., *The Caerleon Canabae. Excavations in the Civil Settlement 1984-90 (*Britannia Monograph 16, London, 2000), pp. 459-505.

Fig. 7. Dr V.E. Nash-Williams (1897-1955). He is seen here at work on the civilian settlement in 1955. *Photograph: National Museum of Wales.*

One of the surprises of the 1954 excavations was the apparent absence of stone buildings over most of the first 150 metres outside the fortress. The traces of occupation encountered in this area were early and Nash-Williams believed it marked the site of a bivouac connected with the construction of the fortress. However, when this land was levelled in 1962 for a sports ground, the position turned out to be much more complex than had been realised in 1954 on the basis of a few narrow trenches. Although the nature of this salvage work meant that the full complexity could not be recorded, the timber buildings fell into distinct groups. The earliest series were constructed on sleeper beams and probably comprised a number of sheds, which formed part of a supply base. These were demarcated from a large building (60 by 20 metres, with gravel foundations) nearer the defences by a small ditch. Later buildings had timber uprights set into individual pits and were on the same alignment as persisted in the case of the row of stone shops fronting obliquely onto the bypass road. These post-pit buildings would appear from their alignment to be connected with the purely civilian development.

On the basis of this, it is likely that this area was used initially for military purposes and then afterwards let for use as part of the *canabae*. Subsequently, the military authorities were able to recover and clear the land about 140 for use as the legionary parade ground.

A considerable body of evidence and finds had been built up during this period of work, but the excavations did not reveal a clear sequence or secure dating for some of the structures. Small-scale excavations in the late 1950s and early 1960s, undertaken by George Boon, were designed to resolve some of the stratigraphic problems, but although casting some valuable light on the history of the *canabae*, the work still remains unpublished.

Caerleon enjoyed advantages of communication and supply by sea, which also applied to the other legionary fortresses at Chester and York. In 1963, an excavation was undertaken about 500 metres to the south-west of the fortress.[64] Here a stone quay, built soon after 205, was revealed, which, no doubt, was one of a series of moorings. Later in the third century the quay had to be rebuilt and the new arrangement incorporated the construction of a timber stage in front, in an attempt to overcome silting. Areas of hard standing and the remains perhaps of a boat-house were also uncovered.

Nash-Williams initially suggested that the *canabae* amounted to a complete Roman town of 100 acres or so. This was far from the case and George Boon, writing in 1972, maintained on the evidence available that the extra-mural settlement was largely restricted to the south-west of the fortress and did not grow to the same extent as outside other legionary fortresses, of which York is the prime example. It was concluded that the proximity of Caerwent and the commitments which took detachments of the legion to northern Britain and elsewhere stifled the development of a full township outside the fortress. More recent work, undertaken between 1984 and 1990 by the Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust, again in advance of development, has shown that there was a considerable civilian settlement on the north-east side bordering the marshes through which the Afon Lwyd made its way to a confluence with the Usk.[65] This has led to a reassessment of the evidence for the *canabae*. These extensive excavations have uncovered twenty-two buildings, ranging from 'cottages' with two or three rooms, to strip-buildings (workshops) and larger buildings. Some were associated with small-scale agriculture on reclaimed marshland and others produced evidence for craft activity, especially iron-smelting. It is perhaps worth noting that, even in these more recent times, it was still only possible to excavate about 11% of the threatened area to the latest

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[64] The excavation was undertaken at the point where the road, visible as a mound, leading from the south-west down towards the river, came to an end. See Boon, G.C., 'Excavations on the Site of a Roman Quay at Caerleon & Its Significance' in Boon, G.C. (ed.), *Monographs and Collections. I Roman Sites* (Cambrian Archaeological Collections, Cardiff, 1978), pp. 1-24.

[65] Evans, E., op. cit. n. 63. Work on the Mill Street sites commenced in 1984, in an area previously thought to be archaeologically sterile.

Roman phase and 1.5% down to the earliest levels.[66] A bath-house between the east corner and the south-east gate of the fortress, investigated in 1849 and later (the 'Castle' baths, so called because it lay within the grounds of the medieval castle) probably formed part of the *canabae*.[67] Traces of further buildings have also been found on the southern approaches to the Usk bridge.[68]

Further afield at Great Bulmore, 2 kilometres to the east of the fortress, on the left bank of the Usk excavations have revealed an extensive roadside settlement.[69] Here, some thirteen strip-buildings have been identified so far, some of which have produced evidence of metalworking and glass making, but other structures are known to exist. As at Caerleon, the excavations at Bulmore since 1976 have been of a rescue nature. The relationship of this settlement with the fortress is uncertain, but the inhabitants would no doubt have played a role in providing services and goods to the legion.

Back to the Fortress

The archaeologist most closely linked with Caerleon in the 1960s and 1970s was George Boon *(Fig. 8)*, who worked at the National Museum of Wales for thirty-two years, between 1957 and his retirement in 1989.[70] He had held the post of Archaeological Assistant at Reading Museum from 1950 to 1956. It was during this time that his name became closely associated with the Roman town of Silchester, well-known from his comprehensive treatment of the site first published as a book in 1957 (*Roman Silchester*) and in an expanded and revised edition in 1974 (*The Roman Town of Calleva*). George Boon took up the post of Assistant Keeper with responsibility for Roman Archaeology at the National Museum of Wales on 1 January 1957. In Wales, Caerleon was to replace Silchester as the main subject of his studies; within a few days of his arrival, he was conducting an emergency excavation on the site of barrack buildings within the Roman legionary fortress. The conditions were far from ideal, and the published report records that certain features 'may have been obscured by mud and snow'.[71] His next excavation at Caerleon, perhaps not surprisingly, took place in the

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[66] Ibid., p. 459.

[67] Lee, J.E., *Description of a Roman Building and other Remains lately discovered at Caerleon* (London, 1850); *idem*, *Isca Silurum* (London, 1862), pp. 85-93; Boon op. cit. n. 12, pp. 102-05.

[68] See *Archaeology in Wales*, 24 (1984) 57 (Isca Grange).

[69] The rescue excavations undertaken at Great Bulmore in 1983-84, were directed by David Zienkiewicz, see Macdonald, P., 'The Roman Road, Settlement and Cemetery at Bulmore in Gwent: Report on the Excavations carried out in 1983-84' (forthcoming); also *Arch. in Wales*, 39 (1999) 103. A large-scale evaluation for a new development, conducted in 2000 by the Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust, has confirmed the probable extent of the settlement.

[70] For further details of George Boon's career, see Brewer, R.J., 'George Counsell Boon, 1927-1994' in Brewer, R.J. (ed.), *Roman Fortresses and their Legions* (London, 2000), pp. 1-4.

[71] Boon, G.C., 'Three small excavations at Caerleon', *Arch. Camb.*, 113 (1964) 16 n. 2.

Fig 8. George Boon (1927-94). He is seen here recording a section during the excavation of the Fortress Baths in 1965. *Photograph: National Museum of Wales.*

month of June. Within a few years he had produced a completely revised third edition of the handbook, *Isca. The Roman legionary Fortress at Caerleon,* incorporating details of research down to 1959, followed by an updated reprint in 1962. Soon after, a new *Plan of Caerleon* (1967) was produced by George Boon (commentary) and Colin Williams (illustration) and included very valuable comparative plans of eleven legionary fortresses at a common scale.

As we have seen, the recovery of Roman Isca from modern Caerleon had for many years been the fruit of a long partnership between the National Museum of Wales and the various predecessors of Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments. During the 1960s, however, it was the people of Caerleon who were to play a leading role. George Boon persuaded a number of inhabitants to allow excavations in their back gardens, which led to some significant discoveries. Between 1957 and 1969, he undertook eighteen excavations both inside and beyond the fortress and spent many long and happy hours studying at Caerleon. Excavation standards had by now advanced, with a greater acuteness of stratigraphic observation and an increased precision of recording which allowed a depth of interpretation not previously possible; though the opportunities for excavation at Caerleon allowed only for the opening of comparatively small trenches or areas. The light thrown on the history and development of the fortress by these investigations and his re-evaluation of earlier evidence culminated in the writing of a much-enlarged edition of *Isca* published in 1972.[72] The detailed account differed greatly from earli-

[72] Boon op. cit. n. 12.

er editions, for in the previous decade such notable buildings as the legionary hospital, the Fortress Baths and a substantial part of the headquarters building had been added to the fortress plan.

With little doubt, the most significant investigations that George Boon undertook were those which identified the Fortress Baths (V). Between 1964 and 1969, a series of small key-hole excavations gradually pieced together the plan of this building which covered over a hectare of the fortress. Much of the available area for investigation at that time lay over the large *basilica,* which functioned as a covered exercise-hall. Trenching in gardens in 1965 exposed one end of the *basilica,* part of the cold hall *(frigidarium)* and a heated changing room. In 1966, excavations in the Bull Inn Car Park uncovered the long, open-air swimming pool (*natatio).* Then, in 1969 there came an opportunity to explore the portico of the exercise-yard *(palaestra)* in which the swimming pool lay. What was exposed by George Boon, was later remarkably developed, with infinite pains and enthusiasm, by David Zienkiewicz during his large-scale excavations conducted between 1977 and 1981.[73] The remains of both the *frigidarium* and *natatio* are now permanently preserved beneath a cover-building. Sufficient details of the *tepidarium* and *caldarium* were also recovered from beneath established houses and gardens to complete the plan. The detailed constructional sequence was also revealed; being built in stone and concrete *c.* 75, as part of the original Flavian fortress, the baths continued to serve, with various modifications, down to *c.* 230. The main bath block, with its cold, warm and hot halls, had a vaulted superstructure which was still fairly novel at the time. It is clear that this building had a place in the gradual development of the concrete vaulted architecture which was to reach its zenith in the second-century buildings of Rome itself.

In 1968 and 1969, a plot became available on the site of the headquarters building *(principia),* at the centre of the fortress (XV). Most of the *principia* lies beneath the churchyard, where past finds include the mosaic of labyrinth design, discovered in 1865 from a room 'in the *forum*'. The excavations revealed part of the great hall *(basilica),* with its massive foundations and column bases, a raised tribunal at one end, where officers heard criminal cases and at the rear of the *basilica* lay a row of chambers, with the *aedes,* the chapel of the standards, at the centre.[74] Although begun in the later first century, it was thought that work was stopped and that the complex was not completed until the later second century. In later years Boon became less satisfied with the late dating of the *basilica principiorum* and in 1987, he suggested that the great hall may never have been completed to its intended elevation, though other parts of the building complex certainly were.[75]

The final building to be located during the 1960s was the legionary hospital *(valetu-*

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[73] See Boon op. cit. n. 12, pp. 77-82, for a summary of what was known of the Fortress Baths after the excavations conducted by George Boon in the 1960s. For the 1977-81 excavations, see Zienkiewicz, D., *The Legionary Fortress Baths at Caerleon* (Cardiff, 1986, 2 vols.).

[74] Boon, G.C., 'Excavations on the Site of the *Basilica Principiorum* at Caerleon, 1968-1969', *Arch. Camb.,* 119 (1970) 10-63.

[75] Boon op. cit. n. 143, p. 28.

dinarium), uncovered in the *praetentura* (VI).[76] Leslie Murray-Threipland, who had been an able assistant of Wheeler's during the late 1930s, undertook the excavation in 1964, again in advance of a housing development. The nature of the plot restricted the work to trenching and the building was only slightly explored. This is the third building, over time, to be identified as the legionary hospital at the fortress. It took the form of a double range of paired ward-cubicles separated by a wide corridor around three sides of a large courtyard. A reception hall or treatment area was located in part of the courtyard. At Haltern, Lauriacum and Vetera, the hospital is similarly located in the *praetentura*, whereas at Carnuntum, Neuss and Bonn they are sited in the *latera praetoria*. In most instances, as at Caerleon, they are sited adjacent to the Fortress Baths. The hospital, initially of timber framework constructed on cobble foundations, was part of the original Flavian fortress and was rebuilt, again in timber but on stone footings, in the earlier part of the second century.

A reappraisal of earlier excavation results was undertaken by George Boon in advance of writing a new edition of *Isca* in 1972. More was known of pottery-dating than when the original work had been carried out; consequently the modern researcher, using the same material as the original excavators, could reinterpret the evidence and reach a different chronological result. The original Prysg report suggested that the barracks were rebuilt in stone *c.* 105 and as we have seen, that date was later applied to all the barracks and stone buildings in the fortress. However, the reassessment of the dating evidence by George Boon seemed to indicate that many of the barracks were not rebuilt until the mid-second century or later. He argued that this replacement throughout the fortress of solid, stone-based timber buildings was a more gradual process than previously envisaged and depended entirely on the state of repair and garrison strength. By 1987, however, Boon acknowledged that these re-datings themselves may be erroneous.[77] Indeed, we should perhaps question the validity of reinterpreting results based on stratigraphical observations of sites dug many years ago.

Recent Work

The introduction of 'area' excavation at Caerleon from the late 1970s onwards has led to a greater yield of information from sites. The technique entails completely removing the overburden layer by layer, so that each period can be studied in full, instead of merely glimpsed at depth in narrow trenches. The results have been predictably complex and have encouraged a start on the reconsideration of the evolution of the fortress, especially with regard to its original foundation. From these more recent excavations it is now realised that over large areas of ground the earliest buildings have probably eluded detection. Such a conclusion can be clearly demonstrated, for example, from the officer's house on the Museum site (X), where the framework of the original house of about 75 was entirely of timber *(Fig. 9)*, [78] as well as from the excavation of three barracks in the *latera praetoria* on the Roman Gates site (XVII)

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[76] Murray Thriepland, L., 'The Hall, Caerleon, 1964: Excavations on the site of the Legionary Hospital', *Arch. Camb.*, 118 (1969) 86-123.

[77] The arguments were based, in part at least, on the dating of Black Burnished Ware 1, which is now known to appear earlier.

[78] Excavated in advance of the construction of the Roman Legionary Museum by David Zienkiewicz for the National Museum of Wales, see Zienkiewicz J.D., 'Excavations in the

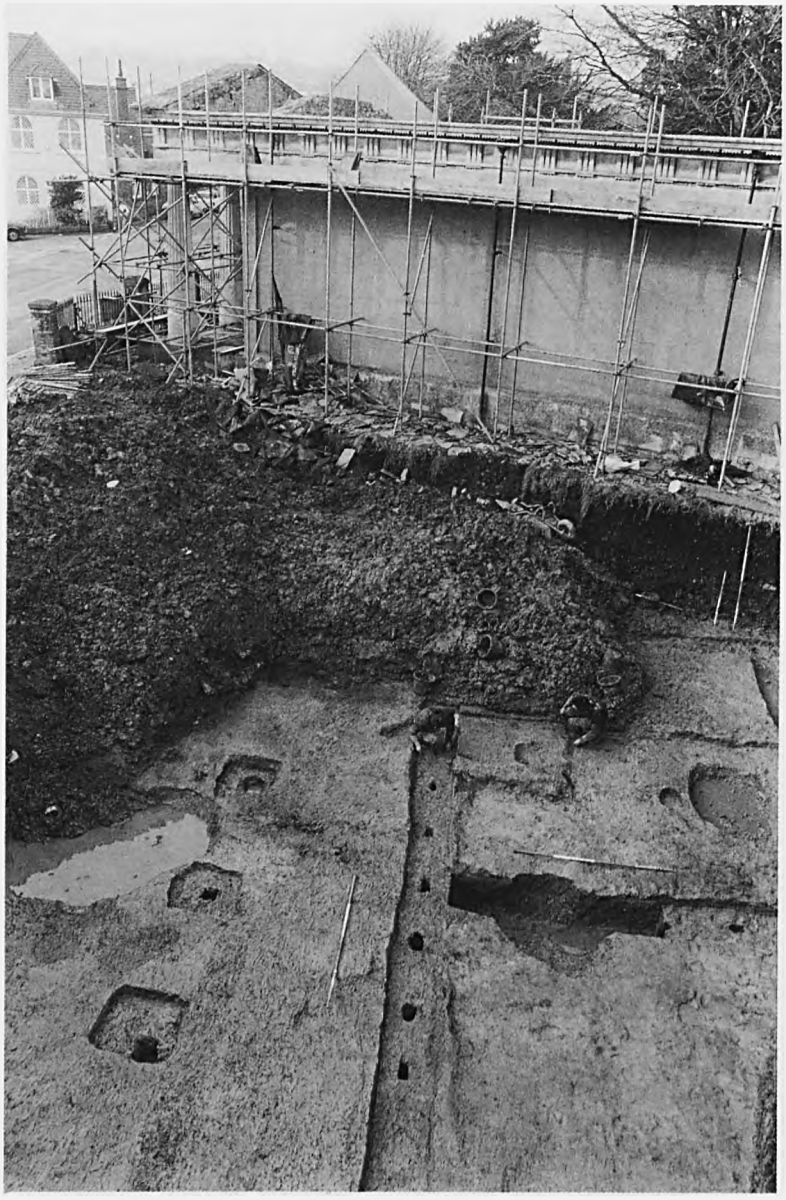

Fig. 9: A general view of the primary, timber-built officer's house (Area X), constructed *c.* A.D. 75, on the museum site, 1985. The oak uprights were set in pits and trenches. *Photograph: National Museum of Wales.*

Scamnum Tribunorum at Caerleon: the Legionary Museum Site 1983-5', *Britannia*, 24 (1993) 27-140.

and a barrack in the Prysg Field series (XXIII).[79] This new evidence calls for a reappraisal of findings on many previously excavated sites, where the earliest structures may have escaped notice below the clean clay that had fallen from their walls and soil brought in later to raise floor-levels. What had previously been identified as primary occupation took the form of cobble foundations for a framed superstructure, but recent work (in X, XVII and XXIII) has shown that this type of construction was introduced no earlier than 85-100. Also, it now appears that many of the barracks, officers' houses and other buildings were replaced in about 100-120. The cobble foundations had proved inadequate and a few courses of masonry were substituted to carry the entire framework of these new buildings clear of the ground. The mid-second century dates indicated by the 1972 study of the original excavation records *(see above)* must concern further changes to those buildings, if they are correct.[80]

Some buildings, such as the hospital (VI) and main workshops (XXI), never progressed beyond the timber-framed, stone-silled design, whereas others were constructed, or at least planned, in masonry throughout. These include the headquarters building (XV) and the legate's residence (XX), though the latter was not the first building on the site and may well overlie primary timber remains. Two other buildings, the large hall beneath the School Field (XIX) and the elaborate Fortress Baths (V), were constructed in masonry from the outset.

We have come a long way over the last ninety-two years, but there is still much to glean and learn about the fortress and those who inhabited it. Although the plan of Isca might, at a quick glance, appear to be relatively complete, it is worth noting that several areas still retain their secrets. In particular the granaries remain to be located, while little is known of the tribunes' row and the accommodation for the first cohort. From the above survey, it will also have become apparent that those sites that have been investigated by trenching will merit further excavation using modern techniques. Virtually all excavations at Caerleon have been conducted as a response to a threat from development. With the protection rightly afforded the legionary fortress and its environs, our hope is that future advances will be the result of a focused research strategy. To sum up, I can do no better than to cite George Boon's words from his 1987 edition of *Isca*: 'Each generation builds its own fortress, and each builds it differently'.[81] These words admirably reflect the position outlined above and the aspirations that we have.

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[79] Excavations by the Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust. See Evans, D.R. and Metcalf, V.M., *Roman Gates Caerleon* (Oxford, 1992); and Evans, E.M., 'Excavations at 'Sandygate', Cold Bath Road, Caerleon, Gwent', *Britannia,* 22 (1991) 103-36.

[80] Dr Peter Webster *[in litt.]* is struck by the apparent absence of post-Trajanic coins from the evidence presented (Boon op. cit. n. 12, pp. 116-21). Omitting Black Burnished Ware 1 as possibly Trajanic and some obvious intrusions, one is left with only a few barracks that might be of Antonine date. This in itself is not improbable if Trajanic rebuilding was interrupted by the departure of significant numbers of legionaries during the construction of Hadrian's Wall.

[81] Boon op. cit. n. 13, p. 25.

Acknowledgements

I am very grateful to Professor W. H. Manning, Dr P. V. Webster and E. M. Besly for reading and commenting on an earlier draft of this paper and to Tony Daly for preparing the illustrations.

MUSEUMS ARE ABOUT PEOPLE: FINDS FROM ROMAN CAERLEON

By Peter Webster

Museums have changed a good deal since the days of John Edward Lee. Many will remember the vestiges of the Victorian museum 'style', still current well into the second half of the twentieth century, with cases crammed with what seemed like every single find from the site. The Caerleon Museum, at least as arranged in 1931 *(Fig.1)*, was a fairly uncluttered example and appears, from the start, to have had the benefit of labels with (sometimes) lengthy explanations of the items on view. Visitors to other museums were not always so lucky and were sometimes simply presented with a mass of the objects to wonder at.

Fig. 1: The Caerleon Museum in 1931. This photograph, taken shortly after the Museum passed over to the National Museum of Wales, gives something of the appearance of the Victorian Museum. *By permission of the National Museum of Wales.*

For the finds specialist the Victorian museum style of display had its benefits, for what you saw was what there was. The basement 'reserve' would not yield much more information. This was, in some cases, just as well, when basements still retaining their nineteenth century earth floors were not unknown. Apart from the problems involved in actually handling

items (sometimes only resolved by the curator attacking the cases with a screwdriver), a perusal of the cases enabled one to see a large sample of what the site had produced.

However, despite the impression sometimes given by specialists, museums do not exist solely for them and the public were not always served well by serried ranks of objects presented for their gaze. There is, of course, always the tingle obtained when seeing or handling an object of antiquity last used by someone nearly two thousand years ago. But most of us relate not so much to the object itself but to the people who used it. We want, if possible, to be put in touch with the people of a long-gone generation. This communication with past generations is what can be seen happening in the Caerleon Museum on a morning in term-time when Year 5 of a Valleys Junior School visits the Capricorn Centre's reconstruction of a Roman Barrack Room or races around the exhibits with clip boards and questionnaires. It may not be possible here to return to the wonder of first discovering the Romans at age ten, but it is the aim of this short excursion to use the items in the museum as a means of getting closer to the people of Caerleon in the period 75-400.[1]

One of the many surprises about the contents of the Caerleon Museum is the enormous range of people that it represents. Here we can select just a few. As the museum title proclaims, this is a Roman Legionary Museum, so reconstructions of Roman soldiers, both in model and pictorial form, will be expected. Such reconstructions are backed by a good deal of hard evidence, only some of which is either archaeological or to be found directly at Caerleon. The cases will, indeed, yield a small number of items of arms and armour and much more is to be found in the reserve collection and in published reports.[2] Of course, many more such items are to be found on other legionary sites, but we also have a good deal of pictorial evidence. It is no accident that the soldiers brought back to life by the museum displays or by re-enactment groups such as the Ermine Street Guard are, for the most part, those of the early second century. Trajan's Column with its vivid scenes of the army in action[3] casts a long shadow over re-enactment groups. Because re-enactment is more fun (both for participant and onlooker) if it shows warfare or drill, it is perhaps rather too easy to forget that Trajan's Column is not all battles and marching about. The column certainly shows what the Roman legionary of the early second century looked like in his *lorica segmentata* and this is supported by site finds, both of small fragments of armour as at Caerleon or of entire *lorica* as in the famous Corbridge find;[4] but the column also shows just how many tasks the army was expected to perform once encased lobster-like in *lorica* and this too is confirmed by our museum material.

One of the most important functions of the legion was as a repository of building skills. The inscriptions displayed on the Walls of Hadrian and Antoninus in Britain demon-

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[1] Wherever possible, items on display in autumn 2000 will be used as examples.

[2] For a representative selection of the wealth of material housed in the museum see Nash-Williams 1932a and Manning Price & Webster 1995.

[3] The most accessible pictures taken from the column, or from 19th century casts of it, may be found in: Richmond & Hassall 1982 and Lepper & Frere 1988; casts may be found in the Victoria & Albert Museum.

[4] Allason-Jones & Bishop 1988.

strate the point.[5] Trajan's Column tells the same story. There are many scenes of camp construction ranging from ditch digging, presumably by the unskilled, through to carpentry and joinery.[6] Such work will have been intended to produce camps with a limited life, but the building of all military camps will have required the skills displayed. Thus, on view in the museum we find a chisel,[7] a gouge[8] and the blade from a carpenter's plane.[9] From the start, Caerleon itself would have required both carpenters and masons and both undoubtedly resided in the Legion. The Headquarters and the Baths appear to have been in stone from the start and one suspects that other buildings such as the commanders' house may also have been similarly stone-built from scratch. Evidence for masons is clearly visible with trowel,[10] hammers and chisels.[11] Related are measuring devices such as the ferrule from a surveyor's pole[12] and a folding rule,[13] while a number of pieces such as a square[14] might have belonged to either masons or carpenters. Similarly the several plumb bobs from Caerleon might have had several uses in surveying or building, although a small example on display[15] might plausibly be placed in an A-frame, that simple device which uses an equal-legged A, a horizontal bar marked in the centre and a plumb-bob suspended from the apex of the A to provide a means of establishing a level. This device appears to have been sufficiently common for it to have been used as the badge of the builder as both Roman and Medieval illustrations show.[16]

Roman illustrations of the mason are, however, mainly restricted to tomb reliefs and show people rather than building work. A better representation of what it must have been like to watch Caerleon rise from a greenfield site can probably be gauged by looking at the many pictures of masons found in the late Middle Ages.[17] These often not only show the master mason but also the masons' lodge (work shelter) and the wooden scaffolding and hurdling of the building site. One suspects that these scenes differ only in clothing from their Roman counterparts. Other medieval representations show the use of cranes, winches and scissor

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[5] *E.g.* RIB. 1634, 1638, 2012, 2016 (Hadrian's Wall); 2139, 2171, 2180-1, 2186 (Antonine Wall).

[6] *E.g.* scenes XI & XVIII-XX; Lepper & Frere 1988, pls. 11 & 15; Richmond & Hassall 1982, pl.5.

[7] Museum Accession No.31.78.

[8] From the Fortress Baths, Zienkiewicz 1986, ii, fig. 68, 23; Museum No. 65.170.

[9] From the Amphitheatre, Wheeler 1928, Fig.16, 51; Museum No. 35.119. For a reconstruction of a plane from which an item such as this would have come see Liversidge 1968, Figs. 85-6.

[10] From Jenkins's Field II, unpublished; Museum No. 36.470.

[11] Hammers from the Amphitheatre, Wheeler 1928, fig.16, 50 (Museum No. 35.119) and the Prysg, Nash-Williams 1932a, Fig. 25, 3 (Museum No. 32.60). Cold chisels from the Vicus, publication pending; Museum No. 53.389A.

[12] Of unknown provenance.

[13] From the Castle site, Lee 1862, pl. 35, 11, Museum No. 31.78.

[14] From the Prysg, Nash Williams 1932a, Fig. 23, 1; Museum No. 32.60.

[15] From the Eastern Corner, unpublished; Museum No. 46.1.

[16] There are several on sarcophagi in the Alyscamps, Arles.

[17] Coldstream 1991, 10, 45, 51 & 53.

grips all of which are derived from the classical world.[18] Indeed, one of our relatively few Roman reliefs showing building operations, that from the tomb of the Haterii, now in the Vatican Museum,[19] shows a crane very similar to that in medieval illustrations. Such a device has been reconstructed at the Limes Museum at Aalen but is little different from a device which has survived in use until very recent times.[20] One has only to contemplate the sheer scale of the Legionary Baths to realise that such devices must have been commonplace. Furthermore, they are implied by the Lewis holes seen on stones from Caerleon.[21]

If we take the building process further we can infer the presence of skilled plasterers and wall-painters. We have evidence for their activity in the Fortress Baths[22] and one would expect other examples in the Headquarters, Commander's House and perhaps in the large halls found elsewhere in the fortress and even from the barracks.

This range of building skills is well evidenced at Caerleon, but it was not, of course, meant to be restricted to the one site. We have already seen that there is ample epigraphic evidence for the Second Legion's building activities on the Hadrianic and Antonine Walls. It also seems likely that the reservoir of building skills represented by the Legion was utilised elsewhere. One would expect legionary building at forts within its command area and the appearance of its tile stamps at a variety of, mainly military, sites in South and Mid Wales (Usk, Brecon, Caerwent, Cowbridge, Kempsey, Loughor, Risca, Abergavenny, Llandovery as well as Sea Mills) supports this view.[23] The stamps imply tiles supplied in bulk, probably from the Legionary tileries (presumably somewhere in the Usk valley near Caerleon). We may assume that they are the one traceable element of a range of builders' supplies provided mainly for auxiliary sites. It is highly likely that such supplies followed the skilled labour of the Legion and that we should be regarding the Caerleon Fortress, not only as a military camp, but also as a military works depot for the whole of South Wales. If the Nash-Williams plan and identification of the *Fabrica* is accurate,[24] we can imagine that the really large hall-like sheds on the west side of the building are for storage, perhaps of raw materials, but more probably of prefabricated elements for use both in timber buildings and in places like the roofs of stone structures.

It is very easy to forget just how dependent the ancient world was on individual craftsmen. We have absorbed machine-made, mass-marketed items to an extent which we

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[18] For example, Coldstream 1991, 54-5.

[19] Strong 1976, pl. 76.

[20] *Cf.* Adam 1999, 46-7 & pl. 97.

[21] For Lewis holes see Adam 1999, 49. This type of hole is to be seen in stones from the area of the Amphitheatre presently stored in the Museum Garden. See also Adam 1999, 50 for scissor grips.

[22] Zienkiewicz 1986, i, 280-302; in addition to material on display at the Baths themselves, the Legionary Museum currently displays *op.cit.* Fig. 90, 4; Museum No. 81.79.

[23] RIB lists stamps which will not all be of Caerleon manufacture. However RIB 2459.4, 6-13, 17, 21, 36 & 54-6 appear to be Caerleon 'exports' within a 50 mile radius of the Legionary Fortress. See also Boon 1984.

[24] *Cf.* Richard Brewer in this volume p. 19.

probably do not realise. Virtually no western community has to be self-sufficient these days. This was not the case with Roman Caerleon, but the mix of imported items and locally produced ones is of interest. This article has emphasised the building skills of the Legion because that was clearly a local 'industry'. A good deal of the Legion's arms and armour were probably not produced locally. However, maintenance of such items must have been a local requirement as it would have taken an impossibly long time to return items to a central workshop. We may also note, on the one hand, the considerable variety of such items as belt plates found on a site like Caerleon, and on the other the occurrence of some closely similar designs.[25] In combination this could well point to some locally commisssioned and produced equipment. Whatever, we have evidence for blacksmiths in the form of tongs[26] and sledge hammers[27] and bronzesmiths in the form of crucibles and moulds.[28] The former would certainly have produced the mass of nails and other fittings needed by the Legionary builders, but they are also likely to have repaired armour and weapons. We have already suggested that the bronzesmiths played a part in producing some equipment. They were also, presumably, responsible for the supply and/or fitting of spare attachments (e.g. hinges, buckles) which must have been a constant requirement for those maintaining *lorica segmentata*. Some of these items will have been supplied centrally.[29] Others could well have been made locally.

Legionary building implies the supply and use of tiles and bricks made locally but the range of items produced was wider than this and includes column drums (in segments) and corbels.[30] Wood for building will also have been produced locally[31] and some stone quarried, though the Bath Stone (and indeed the marble) found in inscriptions and tombstones will have travelled further.

Roman trade is, however, a mixture of the local and the international. The idea of the Roman Empire as the first common market is hardly a new one and a concept best approached with some caution, if only that the restrictions imposed by the use of carts and sailing ships are very different from those imposed by lorries and jet aircraft. There is no doubt, however, that Roman Britain was locked into a system of Empire-wide trade and few parts of it more so than the Legionary camps. Our most accessible evidence is ceramic but of two types - pottery as containers and imported pottery vessels.

Of the two, ceramic containers are the most important for they are the evidence for bulk transport of commodities. The disregard of early excavators for amphorae has ensured

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[25] *Cf.* Evans & Metcalf 1992, 123, no. 88 for further discussion of local manufacture.
[26] From Myrtle Cottage, Fox 1940, pl. 8, 38; Museum No. 39.386.
[27] From the Prysg, Nash-Williams 1932a, Fig. 25, 2; Museum No. 32.60.
[28] From the Museum Garden site, Zienkiewicz 1992, Fig.46, Museum No. 84.43H.
[29] E.g. rosette studs, *cf.* Ulbert 1969, 42, Taf. 29, 5-7; Manning, Price & Webster 1995, 12, no.19.
[30] *Cf.* Lee 1862, Pl. 22, 5 (Museum No. 31.78) and Zienkiewicz 1986, i, Fig.107, 1 (Fortress Baths, Museum No. 81.71H).
[31] *Cf.* Richard Reece on the management of woodland, Reece 1997, 18-19.

that the museum's holdings in this area are restricted but they do include three complete vessels now on display (*Fig. 2*). Among these is a large globular amphora[32] (Dressel form 20) which was used as a container for olive oil from the Guadelquivir Valley of southern Spain.[33] Such amphorae appear in large quantities on most Roman sites and held around sixty litres each. The oil merchant or the stalls selling oil must have been a constant feature of the local market. Such amphorae must really represent a revolution in living habits locally, providing the basis for cooking, lighting and (through perfumed oils) bathing. When one considers the present day contrast between a heart-disease beset, fat-using northern Europe and a healthier, olive oil using Mediterranean, one cannot but wonder what effect this sudden influx of olive oil had. Did the well known Caerleon resident Julius Valens who lived to be 100[34] or Julia Secundina who lived to be seventy-five[35] owe their longevity to what they ate?

Other amphora-born commodities are probably less important, but wine certainly arrived in significant amounts. As amphora shapes, like present day wine bottles, differ according to the area of their origin, it is possible to state that Caerleon was getting wine from Italy[36] and South Gaul[37] and even that there was the occasional import from the eastern Mediterranean including an example with the characteristic peaked handles of the Aegean which most probably contained Cretan wine[38] *(Fig. 3)*.

At least when originally 'bottled', the Cretan wine was sweet. We can only guess at the effects of long distance travel on Roman wine but both public sale of wine at Caerleon and private consumption of it are likely, even if, one suspects, some vintages will have been an acquired taste by the time they reached Caerleon. The long route to the north taken by such products can be seen both through site finds and in sculpture. We have long known that amphorae were moved about by ship and the numerous wrecks discovered in the shallow coastal waters of the Mediterranean bear this out. We can, however, follow amphorae off the sea-going cargo boats and into the major river systems. The actual transfer of cargo onto barges is shown on a well known mosaic from the Piazzalle della Corporazione at Ostia.[39] Another from near Avignon[40] shows amphorae apparently on a quayside awaiting loading. The Chiante-like jackets around some of these are also seen in tomb sculpture now in Trier[41] which shows amphorae being unloaded from a barge. It is a scene which could as easily apply to the quayside at Caerleon as to one on the Moselle and it is indicative of a transport system

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[32] Provenance unknown. A composite reconstruction from several amphorae is possible.

[33] *Cf.* Peacock & Williams 1986, 136-140 for a summary of the evidence concerning this class of amphora.

[34] From Great Bulmore, RIB 363; Museum No. 31.78.

[35] Also from Great Bulmore, RIB 373; Museum No. 31.78.

[36] Fig. 2 *right*; Dressel form 2-4 from Myrtle Cottage, Fox 1940, Fig. 13; Museum No. 39.386.

[37] The reserve contains examples from Usk and Caerleon.

[38] *Cf.* Brewer 2000, 22; Hassall & Tomlin 1994, 310-312.

[39] Meiggs 1969, Pl. 25a.

[40] Esperandieu no. 6699 from Cabrières d'Aigues; see also *ibid.* no. 4072.

[41] Schindler 1980, pls. 127 & 342 (Esperandieu no.5148 from Neumagen).

Fig. 2: Labyrinth mosaic from the Headquarters Building, alongside three complete amphoræ: *left*, a Spanish oil amphora; *right*, an Italian wine amphora, *centre*, a small amphora presented by J.E. Lee. *By permission of the National Museum of Wales.*

dominated by river barges and coastal craft. Such a system is most likely to have functioned efficiently if goods were, as a general rule, moved relatively short distances at a time.[42] If this is so, then the 'luggage label' which so clearly identifies the destination of Caerleon's Cretan amphora *(Fig. 3)* as **LEG II AVG** is more likely to have been placed there by a middleman than by a vintner in Crete.

The amphora-born commodities which reached Caerleon were not restricted to wine and oil. They certainly included the various fish sauces which are evidenced by the presence of the characteristic South Spanish amphora, Camulodunum 186.[43] The small amphora above, identified by Gwenllian Jones as being a gift of John Edward Lee, suggests yet another import although neither the source nor contents of this class of vessel are known.[44]

Space precludes a detailed survey of other ceramic imports but they illustrate clearly the far-reaching nature of Roman trade. Finewares are dominated by samian from South and Central Gaul. The former will have been imported from the conquest up to about A.D. 110. The latter largely dates to the period from 100 to 190. Of interest is a significant (though small) amount of the orange micaceous samian associated with Lezoux in Central Gaul before

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[42] The point is argued more fully in Webster forthcoming.

[43] Peacock & Williams 1986, 120-3.

[44] From a well, Lee 1862, Pl.19, 1; Peacock & Williams 1986, 200-1; Museum No. 31.78.

Fig. 3. A Cretan amphora. The contents will have been sweet wine. This was possibly a special order from a merchant, as painted on the neck is the destination: **LEG II AVG.** *By permission of the National Museum of Wales.*

Fig. 4. A butcher's cleaver from the Museum site. A fragment of the wooden haft remains in place. *By permission of the National Museum of Wales.*

its main exporting period (*c.*120/5 to 190/200). By contrast, samian from East Gaul is extremely sparse. This may well imply that Central Gaulish samian was imported directly into the Bristol Channel and that even minority wares from this area were thus readily available. The lack of East Gaulish wares suggests a different route of importation, presumably via the Rhine and the eastern seaboard of Britain and that supplies were sufficiently small to ensure that little reached South Wales.

Other ceramic imports include fine thin walled pottery from Lyons, Köln, Central and North Gaul, and slightly less exotic items such as mortaria from the Pas de Calais, Verulamium and Oxfordshire, Black-burnished ware from Dorset and colour coated fineware from Oxfordshire.[45] Even this list is not complete but the tally is certainly impressive. The pottery seller on Caerleon market could tap sources both near and far. Such trade in durable goods which survive to leave a trace in the archaeological record must surely have been matched by

[45] For a review of pottery reaching Usk see Greene 1979 and Manning 1993. The pottery imports to Caerleon will have been broadly similar.

trade in more perishable items which do not. In this category fall not only the purveyors of food but also those selling cloth, leather goods and wooden objects.

We have some indication of the presence of such people. Caerleon yields evidence for the making of braid[46] which presumably provided coloured borders for dress such as is seen on the figures on the Ravenna mosaics or on the Fayum portraits. This type of item is close to that which would be classed as a luxury and one wonders if Caerleon had any counterpart to the lady recently excavated in Spitalfields,[47] London who went to her grave shimmering in a silk and gold dress which must once have marked her out as one of Roman Britain's conspicuous consumers.

It is just possible that we can identify a counterpart to the Spitalfields lady in Caerleon. The evidence lies in two ivory plaques which have been a familar part of the museum from the start.[48] They are usually claimed to be from a box but they might equally well fit at the top of the leg of a couch such as the one restored in the early 1970s by the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.[49] If we were to restore the Caerleon plaques thus, then they can reasonably be supposed to derive from a funerary couch and allow us to conjure up the picture of a Caerleon resident reclining in life on a couch of similar magnificence to the Cambridge one and, finally, being laid to rest on it in an act of conspicuous consumption very like that of the Spitalfields burial. However speculative this may seem, there is no denying that the Caerleon plaques imply wealthy members of Caerleon society, well able to afford luxury goods.

So the dealer from afar was present in Caerleon. What about more local craftsmen? They were there, too. The market or High Street will have revealed (among others) the butcher *(Fig.4)*,[50] the baker,[51] and even, if one may regard the pottery stick from the western civil settlement as local,[52] the candlestick maker. The latter, if indeed local, would, of course, have been the product of a potter for whom candlesticks were probably a very minor part of his total range. The making of pottery for the Legion has been looked at by George Boon and others[53] and we need only draw out a few points here. The main kiln sites are probably yet to be found.

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[46] The distinctive pierced bone plaques used in tablet weaving; *cf.* Wild in Strong & Brown 1976, 173; examples from the Fortress Baths, Zienkiewicz 1986, ii, Fig.73, 12-13; Museum No. 81.79.

[47] Maloney & Holroyd 2000, 60; interim comments from specialists were broadcast as 'Meet the Ancestors: Princess in the City', BBC Science, 13 Jan. 2000; also www.bbc.co.uk/history/programmes/ancestors/princess.shtml

[48] *Cf.* Lee 1862, pl.29; from the castle site; Museum No. 31.78.

[49] Nicholls 1979. See particularly the plaques restored at the corners of the main frame where it joins the legs.

[50] A cleaver, from the Museum Garden site, Zienkiewicz 1993, Fig.41, 1; Museum No. 84.43H.

[51] Bakers' stamps from the Prysg, Nash-Williams 1932, Fig.3, 4-5; Museum No. 32.60.

[52] Museum No. 54.389A.

[53] Boon 1966; see also Manning 1993, 255-264, Webster & Webster 1998.

The small kiln found recently at Abernant Farm[54] appears to be one of a number on a small production site. Its location, on a hillside, is unusual and one is tempted to see the present tree cover as being also part of the Roman landscape. If so, then one might suggest that groups of potters moved around local woodlands rather after the manner of charcoal burners firing their wares wherever suitable fuel was to be found.

The range of pottery produced locally is considerable and too great to consider here. We may note, however, some elements which distinguish Caerleon pottery from that produced elsewhere in South East Wales. The Caerleon taste was definitely for oxidised red and red-buff pottery. There was also a ready market for vessels which took their inspiration from imports such as roughcast beakers (from the Argonne region of northern Gaul), imported Gaulish samian and even metal vessels. The local craftsman could presumably undercut ceramic imports rendered more expensive by travel costs, an interesting reversal of the present day tendency for cheap foreign imports to drive out the work of the local craftsman.

The potters were probably typical of most local craftsmen in that their main market will have been Caerleon itself. Many of their products will, nevertheless, have found their way out into other areas of South Wales. Here we might select just one item, the Caerleon Ware roughcast beaker[55] to illustrate how objects and people are interlocked. The beaker is an imitation of a class of object imported into Britain from the late first century from areas of north Gaul which certainly included the Argonne.[56] The Caerleon version appeared from about 110 A.D. and was produced in large numbers completely driving its continental original from the local market. It occurs in such considerable quantities in the Fortress Baths[57] that it must have been used there. It is not hard to envisage, therefore, the drinks salesman plying his trade in the baths along with the hair plucker and the food salesman described in a well-known passage by Seneca.[58]

One further point may be made from examination of the roughcast beakers. They are so small that it is hard to see them as the products of a man's hand. Smaller hands and, therefore, female or child potters seem more likely. It is a salutary reminder that twentieth and even twenty-first century gender biases are not necessarily transferable to the past. Many of the merchants and craftsmen will have been men but that does not mean that all were. Women potters are known from the Middle Ages[59] but have rarely if ever been suggested as part of the Romano-British scene. Female artisans and shop keepers in Roman Caerleon are not unlikely.

An article such as this can do no more than begin to populate Roman Caerleon. Museums are, of necessity, full of objects and it is very easy to see them as no more than display cases for such items. It is, however, much more interesting is to try to move from the objects to the people who made or used them. In the 150 years since the foundation of the

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54 *Britannia* 28 (1997) 410-2; *Archaeology in Wales*, 36 (1996) 74-5.
55 *Cf.* Webster in Manning 1993, 262-3.
56 Symonds 1990.
57 Zienkiewicz 1986, Fig. 28.
58 Seneca, *Epistulae Morales*, 56.
59 See for instance Gaimster 1997, pl. 2.1.

Caerleon Museum we have moved some way towards achieving that. Just as the museum was founded for the people of Caerleon, so it is, or should be, about the people of Caerleon, Roman Caerleon.[60]

Fig. 5: The Museum as arranged in the early 1990s. By late in the decade the rear wall contained the entrance to the Capricorn Centre. *By permission of the National Museum of Wales.*

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[60] Photographs have kindly been supplied by the National Museums & Galleries of Wales. I am most grateful to Richard Brewer for arranging this and to Evan Chapman for providing access to the photo-archive. This article has been read by Janet Webster to its great benefit.

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CITY OF ARTHUR, CITY OF THE LEGIONS: ANTIQUARIES AND WRITERS AT CAERLEON

By Jeremy Knight

When a Welsh poet[1] visited Caerleon in the sixth century (the date seems to have been around 540 A.D.) he found that it was still recognisably a Roman city.

> The rapid Usk flowed then, as now, under the walls. The high wooden bridge, with its slender piles, was then much the same as it is at this day: it seems to have been never regularly rebuilt, but to have been repaired from time to time, on the original Roman model. The same green and fertile meadows, the same gently sloping wood-covered hills, that now meet the eye of the tourist then met the eye of Taliesin, except that the woods on each side of the valley were only the skirts of an extensive forest, which the nobility and beauty of Caer Lleon made frequently re-echo to the clamours of the chase.

Arthur's steward, Bedwyr, had taken over the disused temple of Diana as the wine cellar for Caerleon 'under the judicious and experienced superintendence of Dyfrig, the Ex Archbishop of Caerleon'. The new religion had abolished the 'ferocious sports' of the amphitheatre and as Taliesin passed, 'it was pouring forth a ... multitude who had been enjoying the pure British pleasure of baiting a bear', whilst King Arthur's hall was heated by a Roman hypocaust.

Taliesin was in the 'insignificant little town' of Caerleon, the court of King Arthur, to win the freedom of his lord, Elphin ap Gwythno, who had been imprisoned by Maelgwyn Gwynedd in the castle of Deganwy and for himself, the hand of Elphin's daughter, Melanghel. Elphin, though he gave his name to Thomas Love Peacock's novel *The Misfortunes of Elphin*, published in 1829, spends most of the plot in prison in Deganwy, but Taliesin finally wins his freedom and the hand of Melanghel and their wedding was 'the most splendid that has ever been seen in Caerleon'.

Caerleon, as it happens, chose to remember Arthur not by this Regency romp but by an altogether more serious-minded mid-Victorian Arthur, as we shall see later. However, Peacock has a lively picture of Caerleon and combines more successfully, I think, than any other writer the two rival versions of Caerleon's past, the Roman version and the Arthurian. These two themes are often seen as rivals and indeed enemies. However, from the historian's point of view it would be possible (and perhaps one day I will) to write a history of Caerleon on these two themes, almost in the manner of a concerto. On the one hand, the massed violins

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[1] For Taliesin, see Jenkins, R. (ed.), *The Dictionary of Welsh Biography down to 1840* (The Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion, 1959), p. 930.

and brass of the Second Augustan Legion, on the other the plangent notes of the soloist, King Arthur. This in effect is the theme of this article.

It all started with Geoffrey of Monmouth and his historical novel, or 'Hollywood Epic', which first associated King Arthur with Caerleon. Geoffrey was born in about 1100 in Monmouth, the son of a man named Arthur who seems to have been of Breton stock. His *History of the Kings of Britain*, dedicated to Robert, earl of Gloucester, appeared in 1138-9. He told how Caerleon had been founded by King Belinus, conqueror of Rome itself and the founder of many cities, one on the Usk 'that was long called Caerusk, the mother city of south Wales. But after the Romans came The City of the Legions'. Much later, Arthur held his great Whitsuntide crown-wearing there, just as the English kings of Geoffrey's day held their solemn crown-wearings at Westminster, Winchester or Gloucester on the great Christian feasts. Indeed, the ruler of the Angevin Empire, King Henry I, who could claim to be Arthur's successor in title, would have been gratified to learn that the crown-wearing was attended by Arthur's feudal vassals, including the dukes of Normandy, Anjou, Maine, Poitou and Britanny, the king of Flanders and the earl of Boulogne, all major European potentates at that time.

However, not everyone was equally impressed. Giraldus Cambrensis (Gerald of Wales) had a story of a Caerleon man named Meilier, who had long fancied a particular young lady. However, when he had at last got her into 'a comfortable and convienient place', she turned into a hairy demon in his arms and he went mad.[2] Meilier may have been suffering from epilepsy, but, says Gerald, 'If the evil spirits oppressed him too much, the Gospel of St John was placed on his breast, when, like birds, they immediately vanished'. However, if 'the History of the Britons by Geoffrey Arthur was substituted ... they came back in greater numbers and remained longer than usual on his body *and on the book*'. Despite this adverse academic review, Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Kings of Britain* was one of the most successful best-sellers of all time and Caerleon appears as Arthur's seat in, for example the medieval French Romances and in the prose tale 'The Lady of the Fountain' in the *Mabinogion*.

> The Emperor Arthur was at Caerleon on Usk. Sitting one day in his chamber, with him were Owain ap Urien and Cynon ap Clydno and Cei ap Cynyr, and Gwenhwfar and her handmaidens were sewing in a window. And Glewlwyd mighty grasp was there as porter to receive guests and far comers ... and to make known to them the ways and customs of the court ... And in the middle of the chamber floor the Emperor Arthur was seated on a couch of fresh rushes, with a coverlet of tawny brocaded silk under him and a cushion and cover of red brocaded silk under his elbow.[3]

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[2] Cambrensis, Geraldus, *Itinerarium Kambriae*, ch. 5.

[3] Jones, Gwyn and Thomas (trans.), *The Mabinogion* (Everyman's Library, 1949), p.155.

Before leaving this medieval idyll, we should return for a moment to Meilier of Caerleon, the one who had been driven mad by his distinctly Freudian experience with the young lady. Oddly enough, he seems to have been a real person and indeed a Welsh poet of some repute, Meilyr Brydydd or Meilyr Awenydd (the visionary), the bard of Hywel ap Iorwerth, lord of Caerleon. A poem, which survives in a manuscript written in about 1300 at Strata Florida Abbey, was identified by two eminent Welsh scholars, Professor Caerwyn Williams and Professor Geraint Gruffydd, as his work. It is a poem on the Battle of Mynydd Carn, fought in north Pembrokeshire or Cardigan in 1081, in which Hywel of Caerleon's predecessor, Caradog ap Gruffydd, was killed. So, amid all the flummery of Geoffrey, we gain a perfectly genuine Caerleon writer of the twelfth century.[4]

From Meilyr, I am going to jump almost half a millennium to another writer on Arthur and Caerleon, indeed perhaps the last to see Caerleon almost wholly in medieval Arthurian terms, before the new learning of the Renaissance made people aware of its Roman past:

> Caerleon now, step in with stately style,
> No feeble phrase may serve to set thee Forth
> Thy famous towne was spoke of many a myle
> In thee hath bene, King Arthur's golden hall.

Thomas Churchyard was born about 1520 in Shrewsbury and entered the household of the poet and soldier Henry Howard, earl of Surrey. When Surrey was executed for treason in 1547, Churchyard followed the only trade he knew. In the preface addressed 'to every loving and friendly reader' in his book *The Worthines of Wales* he writes, 'it may seem strange (good reader) that I have chosen in the end of my daies to travail and make description of countries, whereas the beginning of my youth (and a long while after) I have haunted the warres'.[5]

In later life then, he scraped a meagre living as writer and journalist. There can be little doubt that his real motive in writing his versified tour was the hope of a pension from Elizabeth I, who made much of her Welsh and indeed Arthurian ancestry. Churchyard, however, gives a slightly different reason. He looked where he could

> his labour best bestowe.
> To Wales (quoth wit), there doth plaine people dwell,
> So mayst thou come, to heavan out of hell:
> For Fraunce is fine, and full of faithlesse waies,

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[4] Jones, Nerys Ann, 'The Mynydd Carn prophecy: a re-assessment', *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies*, 38 (Winter 1999) 73-92.

[5] Churchyard, Thomas, *The Worthines of Wales, a Poem: A True Note of the auncient castles, famous monuments, goodly rivers, faire Bridges, fine townes and courteous people that I have seen in the noble Countrie of WALES* (London, 1587), second edit., 1776, p. xi.

Poore Flaunders grosse, and far from hapie dayes
Ritch Spayne is proude, and sterne to straungers all,
In Italie, poysning is always rife:
and Germanie, to drunkennesse doth fall,
The Danes likewise, doe lead a bibbing life.
The Scots seeke bloud, and bear a cruell mynde
Ireland grows nought, the people ware unkind:
England God wot, hath learned such leudness late,
That Wales methinks is now the soundest state.[6]

For Churchyard, Caerleon was the city of King Arthur and the amphitheatre his round table:

In Arthur's tyme a table round,
Was there wherat he sate:
As yet a plot of goodly ground,
Sets foorth that rare estate.

A marginal note adds 'A deep and large round peece of ground shewes yet where Arthur sate'. Similarly, Churchyard's perceptive account of the Iron Age hill-fort at Lodge Farm, seen through the eyes of a professional soldier, has the marginal note 'a very high hill of a marvellous strength, which was a strong fort in Arthur's daies'.[7]

Ten thousand men, may lodge them there unseene,
In trebble dykes, that gards the fortresse well:
And yet amid, the fort a goodly greene,
Where that a power, and mightie campe may dwell ...
It seemes it stood, farre off for townes defence
And in the warres it was Carleon's hope.

The remains of Roman Isca were still very evident, however:

There are such vaultes and hollow caves,
Such walles and condits deep,
Made all like pypes of earthern pots
Wherin a child may creepe
Such streates and pavements sondrie waies
To every market towne...[8]

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[6] *The Worthines of Wales*, pp. 1-2.
[7] Ibid., p. 23
[8] Ibid., pp. 24, 49.

Though Churchyard was to live for some seventeen years after the publication of *The Worthines of Wales* in 1587, the book is clearly unfinished. It breaks off after a brief introductory verse on Flintshire with the note 'the author fell sick here' and the text, which may have been published to pay his doctor's bills, has a series of marginal notes intended for an enlarged edition.

Churchyard makes no reference to any Roman inscriptions at Caerleon and probably would not have been particularly interested, unless they bore the magic name of Arthur. In this, he contrasts with a much younger contemporary, bishop Francis Godwin of Llandaff (1562-1633), the first person to take a sustained interest in the Roman archaeology of Caerleon. He represents the new scholarly world of the Renaissance as against the traditional historicism of the Middle Ages. The son of bishop Thomas Godwin of Bath and Wells, he entered Christ Church, Oxford, in 1577 and in 1590, accompanied his friend William Camden on a tour of Wales in search of antiquities and inscriptions. He was made bishop of Llandaff by James I in 1601 as a reward for his *Catalogue of Bishops of England,* published in the same year. A revised edition, the fruit of his Llandaff years, appeared in 1615 with a dedication to James I, who translated him to the see of Hereford two years later.[9]

Godwin made a collection of Roman inscriptions from Caerleon in his episcopal palace at Mathern and they moved with him to Moynes Court, which he rebuilt, the present house bearing his arms and a date-stone of 1609. These were to form the core of the epigraphic collections of the legionary museum, including the celebrated one recording the restoration of the Temple of Diana by the legionary legate Titus Postumius Varus, whose survival we owe to Godwin. His notes on a number of Caerleon inscriptions survive in the British Library manuscript Cotton Julius FVI, a mass of historical and epigraphic notes which Haverfield showed had been assembled by Camden, bequeathed by him to Sir Robert Cotton and finally bound together after Cotton's death. It contains over sixty inscriptions from Hadrian's Wall and the northern frontier, collected for Camden by the Westmoreland schoolmaster, Reginald Bainbrigg and also Godwin's notes on his Caerleon inscriptions. A scrap of vellum with Godwin's notes on another Caerleon inscription, survives in another British Library manuscript, Royal C1, used as binding material.[10]

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[9] Foster, J., *Alumni Oxoniensis II, 1500-1714* (Oxford, 1891), p. 584; *The Dictionary of National Biography* (1908), vol. 8, pp. 56-8. For the background, see Piggott, Stuart, 'William Camden and the Britannia', *Proceedings of the British Academy,* 37 (1951) 199-217; Mendyk, S.A.E., *Speculum Britanniae: Regional Study, Antiquarianism and Science in Britain to 1700* (Toronto 1989); and Knight, J., 'Welsh Stones and Oxford Scholars: Three Rediscoveries', *The Afterlife of Inscriptions: re-using, reinventing and revitalizing ancient inscriptions,* Cooley, Alison (ed.), (*Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies, London*, supplementary volume, forthcoming 2001) 91-101.

[10] Haverfield, F., 'Cotton Julius FVI: Notes on Reginald Bainbrigg of Appleby, on William Camden and on some Roman inscriptions', *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmoreland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society,* new series 11 (1911) 343-78. For the Caerleon inscriptions, see Collingwood, R.G. and Wright, R.P. (eds.), *The Roman Inscriptions of Britain, Vol. 1: Inscriptions on Stone* (Oxford, 1965), nos. 316, 326, 331, 335, 352-3.

Had it not been for Godwin, these inscriptions would have been destroyed, probably without record. When a fine inscription to Jupiter Optimus Maximus was found at St Julians, Newport, in 1654, it was only recorded because John Aubrey happened by chance to arrive on the scene just as the workmen were breaking it up for scouring powder.[11]

I am not going to write much about the tourists (Henry Wyndham, William Coxe, Richard Colt Hoare and the rest) central as they are to my story, if only because they really need a whole article to themselves. They all came to Caerleon for a few days at most, usually a single day. They all stayed at the Hanbury Arms, they all heard the saga of Mrs Williams and Caerleon bridge, they all inspected the stamped tile preserved by an intelligent cobbler on Goldcroft Common and called on Mr Nicholls to see the gold ring with an intaglio of Hercules strangling the Nemean lion. Nor am I going to say a great deal about the next major figure in Caerleon archaeology, John Edward Lee, for obvious reasons.[12]

I have to mention, however, a rather neglected pioneer woman archaeologist Elizabeth Pritchard (1780-1849), the first of a distinguished line which includes Tessa Wheeler, Leslie Murray Thriepland and Lady Aileen Fox. She was the widow of John Hamman Pritchard, himself with a sufficient reputation to be mistakenly identified in a sale catalogue as the original owner of some ancient Greek vases, which were then given to Caerleon museum as local finds.[13] She had a fine collection of decorated samian ware; some other pottery; stamped tiles; bronzes and over 100 Roman coins from Caerleon. We get glimpses of Elizabeth Pritchard rescuing a samian bowl from builder's trenches at the Red Lion, salving the fragments of another decorated samian bowl which a local woman had used as a soap dish and then broken and even rescuing a glass cremation urn which the finder had thrown, with its contents, into the mud of the River Usk.[14]

Arthur, however, was not dead, even if he were sleeping with his knights under The Mynde. When a gold coin of Hadrian covered in mortar was found by workmen robbing stone from the amphitheatre (an important piece of dating evidence), it was at first identified as a

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[11] Aubrey, John, *Monumenta Britannica,* Fowles, John (ed.) (Sherborne, 1982), p. 452; *Roman Inscriptions of Britain*, no. 320.

[12] On Lee, see Jones, Gwenllian V., 'John Edward Lee, a Monmouthshire Antiquary', *The Monmouthshire Antiquary,* 13 (1997) 4-12 and her article in this volume.

[13] Lee, J.E., *Isca Silurum: An Illustrated Catalogue of the Museum of Antiquities at Caerleon* (London, 1862). The vases were still in the museum in 1909 (see n. 19 below). There is a memorial to John Hamman and Elizabeth Pritchard in Caerleon Church (see Bradney, Sir J.A., *A History of Monmouthshire ..., Vol. 3, Part 2, The Hundred of Usk (Part 2),* (Merton Priory Press, 1993), p. 211.

[14] Lee, J.E., *Delineations of Roman Antiquities found at Caerleon* (London, 1845) *and Isca Silurum.*

coin of King Arthur, before being cleaned up and identified by the vicar's wife, who ultimately carried it off to Dorset.[15]

On the evening of 15 September 1856, a bearded and by Victorian standards somewhat unkempt man, descended from the horse bus from Newport and booked incognito into the Hanbury Arms. 'At the time he asked for accommodation, no-one knew who he was', recorded the daughter of the landlord many years later.[16] At first his identity remained a mystery, but as anyone who knows Caerleon will not be surprised to learn, it was the post office that had the best intelligence. 'Do you know who you have got staying with you?' the postman asked the landlord. 'That is the famous Lord Tennyson'. He had been travelling in North Wales with his wife, but left her to spend a few days in Caerleon, collecting local material for his *Idylls of the King*. The day after his arrival he wrote to his wife, 'The Usk murmurs by the windows, and I sit like king Arthur in Caerleon ... This is a quiet half ruined village of about 1,500 inhabitants, with a little museum of Roman tombstones and other things'.[17] The next day he wrote again:

> The people here (Mr Jones the vicar, and Mr Lee, a landed proprietor [he was nothing of the sort of course] who lives in a large house near the amphitheatre - the round table of the king - are exceedingly kind. I am going to drive with Mr Lee today, and he has given me his book about Caerleon. I suppose they have found me out, though they have never alluded to my status.[18]

One evening, Tennyson caused some alarm to his landlord by staying out until midnight with John Edward Lee at The Priory. He climbed the tower of Christchurch, ascended the castle mound and according to local tradition used to sit on the brick surround of the mosaic pavement in the basement of the museum, deep in thought. He made expeditions with the Lees to Usk, Caerphilly Castle and Raglan, but sightseers were now arriving to see this celebrity 'some driving up in carriages, but he kept very close ...'

Tennyson worked on the *Idylls* cycle for a number of years and at the time of his visit, was writing the Vivien and Enid episodes. For those who had not read the lengthy and solid

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[15] *Transactions of the Dorset Natural History and Field Club,* XIX (1898) xiv. The coin was a gold aureus of A.D. 134-8, *Cos III, P.P. Iovi Victori.* See Mattingley and Sydenham, *Roman Imperial Coinage Vol. 2, Vespasian-Hadrian* (London, 1926), no. 251.

[16] Interview with Mrs Howard of Pontypridd, daughter of Rees Morgan of the Hanbury Arms, quoted in Roderick, A., *The Pubs of Newport* (1997), p. 137. For Tennyson and Arthur, see Simpson, R., *Camelot Regained: the Arthurian Revival and Tennyson* (1990).

[17] Letter to Emily Sellwood Tennyson, 16 Sept. 1856. See Lang, Cecil Y. and Shannon, Edgar F. (eds.), *The Letters of Alfred Lord Tennyson Vol. II 1851-1870* (Oxford, 1987), p.158.

[18] Letter to same, 17 Sept. 1856. Ibid., p. 159. There were further letters on 18 and 19 Sept., listing visits to Usk, Raglan and Caerphilly. From Caerphilly, Tennyson went to Merthyr and on 22 Sept., he took the 'Tuesday coach' from Merthyr to Brecon.

cycle of poems, there was *In Memoriam*, much admired by Queen Victoria and of course no smoking party, penny concert or regimental entertainment could go by without someone getting up and reciting 'The Charge of the Light Brigade', whilst the companion piece on the siege of Lucknow, recounted an event described by one enthusiastic Victorian as 'the *Illiad* of our Race'.

Many of us will remember with affection the old museum that Tennyson describes. By the early years of this century, however, it had become the repository for an astonishing, if not always relevant, body of material. Three sizeable lumps of an Egyptian temple in black syenite covered in hieroglyphics, sat on the steps, providing the inspiration for Arthur Machen's story *The Black Seal*. Inside were such things as a brick from the Great Wall of China, a Burmese sword, a human jaw from a Wiltshire barrow, John Pritchard's collection of ancient Greek vases, a photograph of St Amphibalus (presumably of a statue), said to be an eminent native of the town and a mysterious object described as an 'alabaster fragment of the tomb of Morgan King (died 972) found under the museum railings'.[19] More worrying for this Association, the museum had been poorly built and now needed frequent and expensive repair. Eventually in 1930, the care of the museum and its collections passed to the National Museum of Wales.[20]

Late in 1925, the Jenkins's Field site was sold for development and in the following year, at the initiative of the National Museum of Wales, a Caerleon Excavation Committee was set up under the presidency of Lord Treowen, with the bishop of Monmouth as chairman, Mrs Tessa Wheeler as secretary and a list of members that was a virtual 'Who's Who' of Monmouthshire and of Romano-British archaeology.[21]

Soon, shopkeepers and hotels were beginning to realise the potential of the tourists who were now flocking to see the excavations being carried out by the young and energetic Mortimer Wheeler and his wife. Caerleon, 'splendidly served by the G.W.R', had a growing tourist trade and the Angel Hotel, 'Proprietor Arthur Woollen, late His Majesties Indian Army', offered 'motor accommodation' and advertised itself in military style as 'Headquarters, Caerleon Excavation Staff'. A teashop 'At the Sign of the Round Table', opposite the war memorial, boasted that it was 'close to the amphitheatre and the present excavations, and almost next to the prospective dig of 1929'.[22] The archaeologists and the tourists had arrived, there was a newly reorganised museum to greet them. Soon afterwards, when the archaeologists had finished with Prysg Field and the amphitheatre, the Office of Works moved in. The rest, as they say, is history.

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[19] Monmouthshire Antiquarian Association, *Catalogue of Exhibits in Caerleon Museum* (Newport, 1909).

[20] Knight, J.K., 'The Caerleon Museum and the Association', *Mon. Antiq.*, XIII (1997) 11-14.

[21] Appeal pamphlet of the *Caerleon (Monmouthshire) Excavations Committee* (*Western Mail*, Cardiff, undated). Author's collection.

[22] From a Caerleon guide book in the author's collection.

ROMAN SURVIVAL, WELSH REVIVAL: THE EVIDENCE OF RE-USE OF ROMAN REMAINS

By Raymond Howell

In recent years, I have become increasingly interested in evidence of the survival of Roman remains in Caerleon and the ways in which the Roman past shaped the medieval present in this place. For some time, it has been recognised that the fortress baths survived into the medieval period, probably being demolished in the thirteenth century. Other structures also survived and their demise raises interesting questions regarding the attitudes of those responsible for their demolition. Excavations in the Legionary Fortress Museum Garden directed by David Zienkiewicz in 1992 indicated late survival of one of these structures at the centre of the fortress – a tetrapylon, a four-way triumphal arch which presumably provided an imposing approach to the headquarters building.[1] There are a number of examples of these structures including a particularly impressive surviving example, the arch of Septimus Severus at Leptis Magna in Libya.[2] What is very interesting about the Caerleon tetrapylon in terms of my own research interests is the evidence that it, like the fortress baths, survived well into the medieval period.

At some point in the Middle Ages, this structure was pulled down. Demolition pits were dug to undermine the structure. As David Zienkiewicz noted at the time, 'the impression is of a building very precisely robbed out ... we are dealing with the destruction of a standing structure'.[3] In order to better understand this event, pottery associated with the demolition horizons was assessed during the summer of 1999. The assemblage was an interesting one with a range local, i.e. South Wales wares, examples of Bristol fabrics, and a few Saintonge sherds. This assemblage seems to date from the thirteenth century with a demolition date in the first half of that century being more likely than one in the second.[4] The suggestion is that demolition of the tetrapylon took place at much the same time as that of the fortress baths; both demolition events employing similar techniques. Questions inevitably arise concerning the destruction of what, in the context of their time, seemed large and imposing buildings. It seems perfectly reasonable to assume that the tetrapylon is the 'giant tower' described by Gerald of Wales after his visit to Caerleon in 1188 and the baths may, at least in part, account for his description of 'immense palaces imitating the magnificence of Rome in the gilded gables of their roofs'.[5]

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[1] Zienkiewicz, D., 'Excavations in the *Scamnum Tribunorum* at Caerleon', *Britannia,* XXIV, 140.

[2] Raven, S., *Rome in Africa* (Evans Bros. Ltd., 1969), p. 84.

[3] Zienkiewicz, D., Context Records, Roman Legionary Fortress Museum.

[4] The pottery was assessed by the author and Mike Anthony, University of Wales College, Newport.

[5] Gerald of Wales, *The Journey through Wales.* See Thorpe, L. (tr.) *The Journey through Wales/the Description of Wales* (Penguin, 1981), p. 114.

In order to provide a context for the demolition of apparently imposing survivals, probably within fifty years of Gerald's visit, it is useful to review the historical development of the lower Usk valley in the late eleventh and twelfth centuries. In pre-conquest Welsh society, kingship had been an important factor and David Crouch has argued convincingly that the institution died very much more slowly than has widely been supposed.[6] The last king of Gwent was Caradog ap Gruffudd, a man powerful enough to attack and destroy the 'hunting lodge' erected by Harold Godwinson at Portskewett in 1065. After the Norman conquest of England and subsequent incursions into Wales, Caradog seems to have reached an understanding with the invaders. He sustained his position and in 1072, defeated Maredudd ab Owain of Deheubarth, significantly in the words of *Brut y Tywysogion* 'with the assistance of the French', *i.e.* the Normans. He retained both his land and his status until his death in 1081.[7]

Caradog's death seems to have provoked a more forward Norman policy in the region, which may previously have been seen as a stable client kingdom. William the Conqueror himself appeared in the southern marches and castles were constructed including the castle in Caerleon. Caradog's son, known to history as Owain wan (Owain the weak), was only able to retain much-reduced upland holdings in Gwynllwg.[8]

This situation changed dramatically, however, in 1136. After the death of Henry I there was widespread revolt in Wales and the grandsons of Caradog ap Gruffudd, Morgan and Iorwerth, embarked on a guerrilla campaign in which they succeeded in ambushing and killing Richard de Clare, the Norman lord of Ceredigion. No doubt emboldened by this success, they subsequently struck down the Usk, seizing the castles at Usk and Caerleon. These Welsh 'lords of Caerleon' were soon in control of virtually all of their grandfather's lands with the exception of Newport which was held by Earl Robert of Gloucester. Robert was under pressure in England at the time, but rather than force a confrontation, Morgan offered an alliance which Robert was happy to accept, recognising Morgan's conquests and ceding additional lands on the Wentlwg levels. The understanding reached by the two men seems to have suited them both very well. Certainly, Morgan provided Robert with Welsh troops during the Anarchy. Morgan seems not only to have been a competent military leader but also a consummate diplomat. He was also acutely aware of his position among the *uchelwyr*, the Welsh aristocracy of south-east Wales. As David Crouch succinctly puts it, 'Morgan knew whose grandson he was'.[9] Earl Robert died in 1147, but Morgan was happy to transfer his alliance to Earl Roger of Hereford. A particularly interesting, and I think significant, piece of historical evidence survives from this period. A charter of Earl Roger relating to the priory of Llanthony Secunda survives. The first, and presumably most important, of the four witnesses is styled as

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6 Crouch, D., 'The Slow Death of Kingship in Glamorgan, 1067 – 1158', *Morgannwg*, XXIX, 20 - 41

7 *Brut y Tywysogion*

8 Crouch, 21 – 30.

9 Ibid, 35.

Morganno rege, Morgan the king.[10] It would appear that in the mid twelfth century there was once again a Welsh king in Caerleon!

There is good reason to believe that this assertion of kingship struck a responsive chord. It may also have provided a context for one of the most influential literary efforts of the Middle Ages. It was against this background that Geoffrey of Monmouth penned his *History of the Kings of Britain*, the work which launched the Arthurian legend. Geoffrey was precise in his location of the king, whose court was placed in Caerleon. Still impressive Roman remains may have made Caerleon seem an attractive location for the court. John Gillingham, however, has argued in the journal of *Anglo-Norman Studies* that Geoffrey may also have had compelling contemporary political reasons for wishing to place a Welsh Arthur in Caerleon.[11] As we have seen, Robert had reached an accommodation with Morgan which produced an alliance valuable to him not only in his role as lord of Glamorgan but also in his campaigns in England during the Anarchy. At the battle of Lincoln, for example, Robert made good use of Welsh infantry, which was described as a 'fierce mob of Welshmen'.[12] Robert profited from Morgan's support and presumably was happy enough to support his claims of kingship in Caerleon. It may be highly significant that Geoffrey's patron while writing his 'history' was none other than Robert of Gloucester!

Clearly, it is beyond the scope of this short article to consider the wide influence of Geoffrey's tale, but it is important to pursue briefly subsequent political developments in the area. Morgan died attacking Senghenydd in 1158, to be succeeded by his brother Iorwerth who, we are told, 'ruled the land of Caerleon and all the territory of Owain'. Iorwerth continued to exercise considerable influence in South Wales despite growing tensions in his relations with Henry II and the then earl of Gloucester, which resulted in a brief loss of control over Caerleon in the early 1170s. At times tensions exploded into full-scale war with Iorwerth and his son Hywel ravaging 'the king's territory as far as Hereford and Gloucester, slaying and burning and plundering without mercy'.[13] Sometime before 1184, Hywel succeeded his father and began to style himself Hywel of Caerleon. He was eventually followed by his own son, Morgan ap Hywel, probably in 1210.[14] During this period, while claims to kingship were moderated, claims to Welsh lordship were not.

The lords did not lose control of Caerleon until 1217 when, after a siege, the castle fell to William Marshal, lord of Striguil, modern Chepstow.[15] Throughout this period, the lords of Caerleon maintained a Welsh court and to a greater or lesser extent, nurtured Welsh tradition. Bards such as Gwrgant ap Rhys who died with Morgan in Senghenydd were pro-

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[10] Walker, D. (ed.), Charters of the Earldom of Hereford, 1095 – 1201. *Camden Miscellany*, XXII, 1964, 28.

[11] Gillingham, J. 'The Context and Purpose of Geoffrey of Monmouth's History of the Kings of Britain', *Anglo-Norman Studies*, XIII, 99–118.

[12] Ibid., 104–105.

[13] *Brut*

[14] For a summary of the family history, see Jenkins, R. (ed.), *The Dictionary of Welsh Biography down to 1940* (The Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion, 1959).

[15] See Duby, G., *William Marshal, the Flower of Chivalry* (London, 1986).

vided with patronage and Caerleon provided a focus for their poetry. When Llywarch ap Llywelyn, Prydydd y Moch (poet of the pigs) penned a love song for Gwenllian, daughter of Hywel of Caerleon, he placed her in 'the dales of Caer Llion' where 'white is the gleam' of Gwenllian's ramparts.[16] Probably not surprisingly, sources such as the tales of the Mabinogi portrayed Caerleon as the worthy location of a court. The later romances in the tales are clear in placing Arthur himself in Caer Llion on Usk.

As has been seen, Welsh control over this bardic focus of Caerleon ended in 1217. William Marshal, the great soldier and castle builder, held his conquest tightly as did each of his sons in turn.[17] A consistent policy of the Marshals, which at times led to open warfare, was to prevent the lords, who had removed themselves only as far as the nearby castle at Machen, from re-establishing control over Caerleon. When the last of the Marshal sons died in 1245, Caerleon passed into the hands of the de Clares, lords of Glamorgan and among the most powerful of the English baronial families. They continued the implacable opposition to the recovery of Caerleon by Morgan or, after his death in 1248,[18] by his heir Maredudd.

The picture which emerges is one of assertion of Welsh lordship and indeed at times kingship, in Caerleon for much of the twelfth century and the first decade of the thirteenth. Caerleon became a bardic focus, which was presented as a court of Arthur and consequently a symbol of Welsh lordship/kingship. In contrast, for much of the later thirteenth century, a succession of powerful baronial magnates worked energetically to prevent claims to Welsh lordship in general and to Caerleon in particular. It is, I think, in this context that we should consider the demolition of surviving Roman structures. It is worth reminding ourselves of the view of David Zienkiewicz during the excavation of the fortress baths. He wrote:

> The demolition of so massive a structure ... cannot have been lightly undertaken in medieval times. This was not the casual grubbing-up of buried walls which has been a profitable source of building stone at Caerleon in more recent times, but rather the co-ordinated destruction of a high edifice of concrete and stone.[19]

Because the three main vaults in the baths would have been mutually supportive, it is likely that the building was levelled as a single, labour-intensive operation. Similarly, with the tetrapylon the demolition pits were not dug in such a way as to remove foundations but rather to undermine a structure presumably standing to some height. The techniques employed in both demolition events were similar and dating evidence suggests that they occurred at much

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[16] Clancy, J., *The Earliest Welsh Poetry* (MacMillan, 1970), pp. 152 –153. See also Jones, R., *Ysbryd y Cwlwm: Delwedd y Genedl yn ein Llenyddiaeth* (University of Wales Press, 1998), especially p. 63.

[17] See Duby

[18] For background, see Penrose, R., *Urban Development in the Lordships of Glamorgan, Gwynllwg, Caerleon and Usk under the Clare family, 1217 – 1314 (Ph.D. University of Wales, 1997).*

[19] Zienkiewicz, D., *The Legionary Fortress Baths at Caerleon,* Vol. I – *the buildings* (Cadw/National Museum of Wales, 1986), p. 264.

the same time.[20] We must accept that it is unlikely that we will ever be able to demonstrate the motivation behind these events fully. It is perfectly possible that the buildings were razed simply to provide building stone for conversion of the castle from earth and timber to masonry. Acceptance of this supposition would point to demolition at the behest of one, if not both, of the William Marshals. There are, however, reasons for caution. In the case of the fortress baths, for example, the process of demolition was complex and labour intensive and much of the resulting debris would have been unsuitable for building purposes. It is difficult not to think that if building stone was the only objective, it could have been obtained more easily elsewhere. Of course other considerations such as safety in the proximity of collapsing buildings could have been a factor.

Nevertheless, given the political sensitivities of the time and the apparent symbolic significance of Caerleon in a Welsh context, it may be that any one of a sequence of baronial magnates would have considered it prudent to remove structures which, despite their Roman origins, may have become associated in the native mind with Welsh authority and kingship. Providing useful building stone would no doubt have been a bonus but the principal motivation may have been removing physical symbols of an embattled but still potentially dangerous earlier Welsh tradition. Elsewhere, I have suggested the possibility of what might best be described as architectural ethnic cleansing in the southern march. This seems an apt description of the demise of the baths and the tetraypylon in Caerleon.[21]

Clearly, these suggestions are speculative. Nevertheless, they offer an interesting explanation for the destruction of surviving Roman structures and emphasise the importance of Caerleon in the sometimes turbulent southern march. They also raise other related questions. It has always been interesting, for example, to speculate about how and why the medieval street pattern in Caerleon departs from the ordered street grids of the Roman fortress. In several instances it seems likely that ruins, rubble or even reorientation to accommodate surviving Roman features were contributory factors. A case in point is Backhall Street which, as the name implies, runs behind the fortress baths which, as has been seen, survived into the thirteenth century. There seems to be, as well, a defined precinct around the church, a precinct which could have incorporated the tetrapylon. It would be interesting to know when this area took on an ecclesiastical role and to at least consider the possibility of an early *clas* church here. Such an entity could explain the apparent precinct and might also have been a factor in the preservation of the tetrapylon.

Even in a speculative article such as this, the bounds of prudence set limits. In the aftermath of this summer's excavation of the hillfort on Lodge Hill conducted by University of Wales College Newport with funding support from the Williams Trust, we now have evidence that this site was re-occupied, presumably in the late Romano-British period. We are, however, far short of being able to propose any sort of llys and llan on the Dinas

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[20] Zienkiewicz, D., Context Records and pers. comm.

[21] Howell, R., 'Architectural Ethnic Cleansing? – the demise of the Roman tetrapylon in Caerleon': a paper for Theoretical Archaeology Group, 1999. See also, Howell, R., 'The demolition of the Roman tetrapylon in Caerleon: an erasure of memory?' *Oxford Journal of Archaeology* 19, 4, 2000.

Powys/Llandoc model. Nevertheless, such a model would certainly be interesting and, in many respects, quite appealing.

I think that the main point which arises, and one point on which we can be certain, is that the medieval development of Caerleon is complex, challenging and very interesting. A Roman past, demonstrated by surviving Roman structures of some importance, provided an ambience of antiquity. That ambience may have been embraced quite early and by the twelfth century skilfully used by Welsh leaders and their bardic supporters. Perhaps we should not be overly surprised if invading barons chose to attempt to erase the cultural memory wrapped up in such structures.

Last October (2000) we met to celebrate 150 years of archaeology in Caerleon. Hopefully we also came to initiate the next 150 years of work in this fascinating place. Caerleon is a site of immense interest in terms of medieval Welsh history given its inherited and apparently still visible Roman past, its volatile yet pivotal position as an objective for Welsh lords and marcher barons alike, its almost mythic place in the folklore of the March, and, it would seem, to relationship between Roman survival and the Welsh revival of the twelfth century. It is important that our research designs for the twenty-first century should take this importance on board and assure that medieval Caerleon receives the investigative emphasis which the site deserves.

'STANDING ON THE SHOULDERS OF GIANTS': THE FUTURE FOR CAERLEON'S ARCHAEOLOGY?

By Peter Guest

There is no better time to reflect on Caerleon's past and look forward to its future than the beginning of a new millennium that coincides with the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the Roman Legionary Museum. It is testimony to the success and continued popularity of the museum that the event, organised to round off the year-long celebrations, was so well attended, while it gave me the opportunity to consider the next 150 years. It was also an occasion to celebrate the museum's birthday and I am pleased to record that it continues to look extremely fit and well. But will Caerleon be as well-known in 150 years time as it is now?

The importance of Caerleon is recognised today for the simple reason that it is one of the most extensively investigated military sites in the Roman Empire. Unlike other legionary fortresses in Britain, notably at York and Chester, the remains of the Legio II Augusta's base are not completely buried beneath medieval and modern urban archaeology. This gave John Edward Lee the opportunity to explore Caerleon's Roman past with relative ease and many of the objects that Lee first recovered from the site remain on display in the museum. During the twentieth century, a succession of talented archaeologists made Caerleon their own, especially with the close involvement of the National Museum of Wales which assumed responsibility for the Roman Legionary Museum in 1930. Mortimer Wheeler, Victor Nash-Williams, George Boon and David Zienkiewicz, between them undertook the extensive excavations that are such a feature of Caerleon today. The amphitheatre, the Prysg Field barracks and the Fortress Baths complex all combine to create a feeling of historical proximity in Caerleon, a feeling that is enjoyed each year by many thousands of visitors, both foreign and home-grown.

Excavation has played a major role in creating the reputation enjoyed by Caerleon, and the publication of excavation reports spreads this reputation further still. During the twentieth century the rate of excavation was hardly constant; some decades were periods of intensive fieldwork, while others saw barely any excavation at all. On one hand this is because the archaeological cycle follows the development/construction cycle, but on the other hand it is also true that periods of activity inevitably are succeeded by digestion and reflection. Most archaeological sites in Britain experience the same pattern of peaks and troughs in the frequency of excavation, though Caerleon's current phase of relative inactivity is approaching its tenth anniversary!

There are some healthy signs, however, that archaeological research in Caerleon is about to experience an upsurge in its fortunes. First of all there are these proceedings in which contributors discuss how little we still know and how much more there remains to understand, including obvious topics such as the overall plan of the Roman fortress and the functions of many of its buildings. Coincidentally, the last decade or so has seen new questions being asked of Roman archaeology as a discipline. Whole new areas of study have been highlighted as deserving more active research and this includes looking at well-known sites from different

perspectives. The second indication that Caerleon's past is about to become the focus of more active attention, is the continued success of the Roman Legionary Museum in attracting thousands of visitors each year. Caerleon's appeal is not solely limited to the museum and the combination of attractions of all sorts means that the museum and Fortress Baths are both approaching their capacities in terms of visitors. Some months are busier than others, but the number of people passing through the museum's doors is unlikely to grow much more within the existing infrastructure.

The National Museum and Cadw (Welsh Historic Monuments), have a long tradition of using other means to communicate with the general public; Mortimer Wheeler's agreement with the *Daily Mail* to provide exclusive updates from his excavation of the amphitheatre is well-known to us all. The popularity of archaeology remains as great today, if not greater, than in the 1920s. Moreover the growth and variety of the media now available enables institutions like the Roman Legionary Museum to communicate with more people in more places than ever before. The National Museum and Cadw have yet to take full advantage of this combination of increased popularity and improving access, while some other historical sites, that have been rather more active in this respect, have built up their own reputations to rival Caerleon's. Undertaking archaeological excavations in Caerleon would benefit not only the National Museum and Cadw, but everyone by increasing interaction with the public and also improving our understanding of the past. Archaeologists ought to be used to reach a wider audience and improve product recognition at the same time. After all, we love a good detective story! Excavation is a cost-effective way of generating public interest and participation, increasing the exposure and reputation of the organisers, as well as providing a clearer picture of the past.

The National Museum, like all museums, is dominated by the need to communicate historical and cultural messages, though inevitably these will change and develop as time goes on. New generations need histories to explain the past and make it relevant to their lives. It is not that previous histories are necessarily wrong and in need of updating, but rather more that society views the past as a reflection of itself. Contemporary society therefore demands relevant history, which means expanding research to topics and themes that would not have been considered forty or fifty years ago. The opportunity to communicate with people of all ages and backgrounds is an attraction of working in a museum and it is understood that there is an obligation to educate and entertain while telling new and interesting stories.

Recently I happened to see a beautifully filmed children's television programme about Roman Britain in which the narrator's last sentence went something along the lines of: 'The Romans arrived in Britain in A.D. 43, they romanized the Britons before the legions left the island in A.D. 410'. Although these were the closing words of a thirty-minute programme, they typify the approach taken to communicating the Roman past to people today. Unfortunately, the popularity of history and archaeology tempts commissioning editors into describing the past in absolute terms, with archaeological detectives sifting through masses of evidence to reveal the truth. Finding answers to old questions is much easier, it seems, than asking more difficult questions.

On the other hand, people, understandably, do not want to be presented with a series of historical caveats, or archaeologists sitting on fences, though neither does this mean that

well-trodden history should be repeated time and again. Perhaps this occurs because it is considered 'safer' to continue looking at the past from the same basic level, since otherwise it might be too confusing, especially for children. Unfortunately, we are beginning to realise that history is far more diverse and complex than was imagined even a few years ago. But isn't this the past that people should be exploring even if it is complicated? The Big Bang and evolution are difficult concepts to grasp, yet they are taught to children and adults because they better explain the existence of the universe and the proliferation of species than the Genesis and Creation myths. Today's society is more diverse, complex and dynamic than ever before and needs history to reflect this fact.

We all have questions that interest each of us about Caerleon's past and many of mine look back to the Roman period. I would like to ask how common were slaves at that time and where did they come from? How many people spoke Latin and how did monoglots manage to interact? Did legionaries spend most of their time in the fortress or with their families in the *canabae* and where did old soldiers spend their retirement years? Over how many generations did identities change and in what ways? Was inter-marriage a significant mechanism for the spread of Roman culture in the surrounding tribal society? For that matter, how effectively did Roman culture penetrate the indigenous community around Caerleon? These are only some of the topics I personally would like to pursue when thinking about Caerleon's past, but the fundamental issue is that archaeology needs to be targetted if it is to become a research tool rather than merely a part of the planning process. These proceedings are a good place to start looking for directions in which to focus research. Ray Howell makes the important point that Caerleon has existed for some 1,600 years since the Legio II Augusta left its fortress. Other contributors have identified aspects of the Roman period that remain unresolved, of which there are many.

Beyond this, there needs to be a strategic approach to development control and management of the historic resource in Caerleon, in which areas of archaeological interest are identified in order to further future research strategies and to inform the local authority's planning strategies. An assessment of Caerleon's archaeology would measure the relative 'worth' of different parts of the town while anticipating change in the future. The limits of the assessment should not be confined to the walls of the legionary fortress, or, indeed, the Roman period. Caerleon's fortunes in the centuries since the fortress was abandoned will also have value in any historic environment assessment and investigation of the medieval and early modern periods should be a central objective of the exercise.

The question of continuity, or lack of it, from the Roman period, is an interesting topic for further research and the assessment area should include as much of the Roman settlement and its immediate environs as possible. A good idea of the extent of the *canabae* eludes us still, while identifying the nature of the peripheral zone between military/urban and rural landscapes is more complex than just locating cemeteries. Furthermore, the process of evaluating the level of archaeological potential for an area as significant and large as Caerleon, is one in which questions are prioritised; a positive step away from serendipity. Comparable surveys have been undertaken in the 1990s for several towns in England (funded by English Heritage and local authorities). The intention was to develop and succeed these assessments with strategies for urban archaeologies, a successful approach that certainly would transfer to Caerleon and be of great benefit to its archaeology.

Caerleon's future as a site of international and national significance is closely linked to how the archaeological resource is valued and treated. If the past is anything to go by then the tradition of historical research will survive happily for some time to come, although the challenge will be to stand beside the giants of the past, rather than on their shoulders.

REVIEWS

Stephen K. Roberts, ed., *The Letter-Book of John Byrd Customs Collector in South-East Wales 1648-80*, South Wales Record Society No. 14 (Cardiff, 1999). ISBN: 0 9525961 4 8 (hard-back), 16 x 22.5 cm., 286 and xlvii pp., £20 (£15 to members of the Record Society).

Both the editor, Stephen Roberts and the South Wales Record Society, deserve to be warmly congratulated on making this important text from the Glamorgan Record Office more readily available. The manuscript comprises some four hundred and forty-seven letters and self-addressed memoranda written by John Byrd between 1648 and 1680. Letters were sent to friends, relatives and officials and contain detail on Byrd's everyday business and family life as well as on the working of the customs in South Wales. The usefulness of this edition is greatly enhanced not only by the obligatory index but also by the presence of a glossary and detailed textual notes. Especially useful, is an excellent biographical dictionary.

A thirty-six page introductory essay prefaces the volume, discussing the life and career of Byrd, his politics and public service. Customs administration, locally and nationally and the Severn trade, are also examined. His success was by no means assured from birth, as he was the third son of the youngest son of a Bristol wool draper. He gained his position in South Wales through his step-father, a Bristol customs officer. He also gained lands in Newport, Caerleon and Christchurch by his marriage to Margaret Seys and the inheritance of her father. Byrd added to these further freehold and copyhold lands in the south of Monmouthshire. Like the Seys family, he appears to have been bound to the patronage of the Pembroke family. This does not appear to have impinged on his customs duties for the Crown, although the Pembroke connection may have influenced his support for Parliament in the 1640s. Nevertheless, Roberts demonstrates how even an honest and conscientious official like Byrd found it necessary to mix his private and public spheres on an everyday basis.

The South Wales Customs Commissioners had to cover an area stretching from Burry Port to Chepstow. This extensive area and the low level of foreign trade (monopolised by Bristol) meant that receipts were low compared with expenditure. Byrd's response to criticisms from London of his staffing levels, was the need to prevent merchants fraudulently taking advantage of gaps in the customs surveillance. The reality of customs evasion is illustrated, for instance, by the recorded seizure in 1649 of about 2,000 pounds of tobacco, which Bristol merchants had attempted to smuggle through Redwick Pill in Monmouthshire. In his introduction, Roberts also stresses the role in political surveillance the customs provided for the state. Byrd's relationship with his London superiors was often strained and the appointment of a separate official for Swansea in 1652, almost led him to resign. Despite his Parliamentary background, Byrd initially managed to retain his post after the Restoration in 1660. However, he was now politically marginalized by the unchallenged dominance of the Worcester influence in South-East Wales and was dismissed from the customs in 1662.

The reviewer can only end by encouraging the readership of *The Monmouthshire Antiquary* to go out and buy this volume both for its own virtues and to support the continued publication of future editions by the Record Society.

Paul Courtney

John Newman, *The Buildings of Wales: Gwent/Monmouthshire*, Penguin Books/University of Wales Press, 2000; ISBN: 0 14 071053 1; 22.5 x 12.5 cm., 662 pp. (including glossaries and indices), 35 figs., 128 plates, £35.

From 1904 onwards, in a task completed more lately by Madeleine Gray, Sir Joseph Bradney drew up his painstaking review of the parishes of Gwent in his several-volume *History of Monmouthshire*. Mid-way in the last century, C.J.O. Evans (1953) published his *Monmouthshire: Its History and Topography*, a parochial survey which was the *vade mecum* of my youth. Now, in a magisterial survey worthy of the new millennium, John Newman has accomplished for the old Monmouthshire a very comprehensive review of the county's buildings, as he did in his like work for *Glamorgan*. In the lengthy and valuable Introduction, he is aided by essays from the pens of three notable experts: Frances Lynch, describing the Prehistoric Remains, William Manning regarding the Roman Remains, and Stephen Hughes examining the Industrial Structures. More than that, in his Foreword, John Newman readily acknowledges the assistance and advice of numerous scholars and residents of the county.

This new volume comprehends buildings both old and new, edifices ancient and modern, in an exhaustive study, parish by parish. The 'perambulation', for example, of Pontypool, takes in not only the churches and chapels, but also the architecture of Barclays Bank, and the history and construction of the Engine House at Glyn Pits. The very detailed consideration given, in Newport, to St Woolos' Cathedral, is balanced by an appreciation of its many other buildings, like the Westgate Hotel with its Chartist memories, as well as of the Halifax Building Society offices (with 'double Tuscan columns fronting the banking hall'), and Ye Olde Murenger House ('a most unexpected survival of an early C17 timber-framed house'). The same span of time marks the rural entries in the Gazeteer. The section on Magor, for instance, moves from the medieval to the 1970s Chestnut Close ('a more extrovert cluster of local authority housing'), and the 1979 Whitbread Brewery (pleasingly arranged with 'in front an enormous breadth of greensward'). Even the nearby Motorway Service Station merits a mention.

An integral component of this history and guide are the diagrams. The major monuments are very well served. Chepstow Castle is allocated not only a plan emphasising its riverine location, but also 14 pages of text; Tintern Abbey – 1 plan and 2 drawings as well as 22 pages of text. The wide variety of figures include in Dyffryn, Newport, a plan of its comprehensive school and adjacent housing, and a Section of the Inmos microchip factory. There is an engraving (taken from Coxe) of Blaenafon Ironworks around 1800, but also an axonometric of Brynmawr (Dunlop Semtex) rubber works – now closed but, the author asserts, 'still, for all its dereliction, an impressive sight'. It is in the description of the rubber works, as throughout the volume, that one sees modern as well as medieval architecture brought alive.

The author occasionally casts a critical eye. Dealing with Newport Civic Centre (1937-39, 1964), he writes: 'The style is the ghostly classicism thought appropriate for public architecture of the period, influenced no doubt by Percy Thomas' Swansea Guildhall, but entirely lacking in the panache which infuses that building'. At Llanddewi Skirrid church, the writer observed: 'Recent injudicious colouring of reredos and pulpit'. Your reviewer, (rector there, 1980-83), confesses (without regret) this to be his own personal handiwork, designed to bring warmth to a somewhat gloomy chancel.

In the Foreword, John Newman asks for 'corrections and supplementary information'. In a work of this scale there are bound to be minor errors and omissions, but they are as nothing compared to the great breadth of coverage and immense depth of scholarship which this volume contains. One might mention the omission of the hamlet of Six Bells in Abertillery (where your reviewer was parish priest, 1970-76) and very occasional slips, as when Grace Dieu Abbey is referred to as a 'Priory', which it never was. The fact is that this is a moderately-priced book which should appeal to local people interested in a variety of disciplines; it is hard to imagine a cultured Monmouthshire household without it.

David H. Williams

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Richard J. Brewer is Keeper of Archaeology and Numismatics at the National Museums & Galleries of Wales. His main area of research is the Roman-British town of *Venta Silurum* (Caerwent), where he excavated between 1981 and 1995. He is the author of the *Corpus Signorum Imperii Romani* (Corpus of the Sculpture of the Roman World) and of numerous publications on Romano-British artefacts.

Paul Courtney is a free-lance archaeologist and historian based in Leicester. He was awarded his Ph.D. in 1984 from Cardiff University on the medieval and early modern landscape history of Gwent. In the 1980s, he did sterling work excavating buildings in the Outer Court at Tintern, and he is the author of *Medieval and Later Usk* (University of Wales Press, 1994).

Peter Guest teaches Roman archaeology at Cardiff University. Prior to this, he was manager of the Roman Legionary Museum at Caerleon from 1995 to 1997, and has been involved in the excavation of the forum-basilica at Caerwent.

Raymond Howell is senior lecturer and head of History at University of Wales College Newport, where he lectures on Celtic-Roman studies, medieval archaeology and medieval history. For over a decade, he has conducted annual research excavations in Trelech, a decayed medieval urban site. Dr Howell's latest book, co-authored with Professor Miranda Green, is *Celtic Wales*, published by the University of Wales Press in 2000.

Gwenllian V. Jones read Modern Languages at the University of Manchester, and trained as a teacher at Liverpool University. Many years later, she graduated in archaeology at Cardiff University, where she also gained an M.A. in local history. She has been Honorary Secretary of our Association since 1986, only the ninth Secretary in its 154 year history!

Jeremy Knight read archaeology at University College, Cardiff and was for over thirty years, an Inspector of Ancient Monuments, whose area of responsibility included his native Monmouthshire. He has undertaken a major excavation at Montgomery Castle, written several official guide-books to monuments, contributed numerous articles to periodicals and was editor of *The Monmouthshire Antiquary* from 1980 to 1988. His book, *Archaeology, Society and Religion in Early Medieval Western Europe AD 235-700*, was published in 2000.

Peter Webster was born in Loughborough and brought up in London and Bath. He studied at the University of Manchester and the Institute of Archaeology, London. From 1969, he has been on the staff of Cardiff University (in its several guises). He has excavated extensively on Roman and Medieval sites in western Britain, but is probably best known for his work on Roman pottery, particularly that found in Wales.

David H. Williams studied at Trinity College, Cambridge, specialising in Historical Geography. He was Rector of Llanddewi Skirrid from 1980 to 1983, and Guest Master of Caldey Abbey from 1983 to 1987. His chief interests are sigillography and Cistercian studies. His updated, recast and revised *The Welsh Cistercians* will appear in July this year.

FIELD EXCURSIONS AND OTHER ACTIVITIES, 2000

Day Outing: 13 May, to Aberglasney and Dryslwyn Castle, Carmarthenshire

On a perfect Spring day, we visited the 'Garden lost in Time' at Aberglasney. Rescued from sad decline in 1995, the house and its gardens, made famous by the Welsh poet Lewis Glyn Cothi in 1471, are being researched, excavated and restored. We were shown the recreated garden, the enigmatic cloister garden, said to be unique and the subject of much controversial interpretation, the 'ancient' yew walk (which turned out to be much younger after all), the excavations around the handsome gatehouse and much more.

This is probably a site worth re-visiting over the years as the story unfolds. After lunch, taken in the restaurant or sitting among the wild flowers in the wooded garden, we made our way to Dryslwyn Castle, sitting high on its eminence overlooking a river crossing in the Tywi Valley. A stronghold of the medieval Welsh princes of Deheubarth, its principal remains date largely from the thirteenth century and include the medieval town and defences. Ray Caple shared with us his immense knowledge of the castle's history and excavation, evoking memories for some members of happy times spent as diggers there many years ago! The heat of the afternoon finally drove us down in search of cooling drinks, a treat which the castle's medieval inhabitants would have savoured.

Day Outing: 9 September, to Thornbury Castle, Iron Acton and Acton Court, Gloucestershire

This was a day of architectural contrasts, ably led by Mr Mike Ponsford of the Bristol Archaeology Unit. Thornbury Castle, built in 1509 for Edward Stafford, 3rd Duke of Buckingham, was one of the most ambitious building projects of its time. Sadly incomplete at the time of his execution in 1521, it was only finally completed in the 1850s. At Iron Acton, a village rich in attractive houses of all periods, we visited the fourteenth century church of St James the Less and lunched at the Lamb Inn, dating from 1690. William and Mary were entertained here and their coat of arms survives in an upper room. Acton Court, built around the same time as Thornbury Castle by the powerful Poyntz family, whose memorials we saw in the church, is one of the best preserved Renaissance-style houses in the country. Rob Bell of the Bath Archaeological Trust, conducted us around this wonderful house, recently restored by English Heritage. This is another memorable site to re-visit as excavation and restoration continues.

Evening Visits:

This year produced a crop of memorable evening visits virtually all well attended. At the Hetty Engine House at Hopkinstown near Pontypridd, Brian Davies, curator of the Pontypridd Heritage Centre, showed us the very fine steam winding-engine, dating from 1875, inside the now disused engine house at Tymawr Colliery. Unfortunately, the generator kindly lent for the occasion to operate the machinery was not powerful enough, but we could still enjoy the beautifully restored and maintained machine, the only one of its type remaining in Europe and the stories of the men who had worked it.

At Chepstow, we walked the upper part of the town (having walked the lower end a few years ago with Eric Wiles) with Keith Underwood and Linda Waters, taking in the Town Gate and walls, the High Street and much more. Their great knowledge of their town revealed much that we would otherwise have missed.

At Patrishow and Llanbedr, we looked with Liz Pitman at monuments executed by and for the Brute family of stonemasons, as a follow-up to her popular lecture to the Association in 1999, ending with a determined search in the graveyard at Llanbedr for 'one that Liz may have missed'. She knew about them all of course!

At Millbrook, Llanfihangel Crucorney, Mr Robin Alldred showed us virtually every inch of the early farmhouse he has so painstakingly restored and staggered us with his knowledge and expertise. We shall remember the visit too for the tantalising smells of roasting duck and fresh bread wafting from the kitchen.

We visited the important early industrial landscape of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries at Clydach and Gilwern under the expert guidance of Jeremy Lowe. So much remains, but undervalued and overshadowed by the larger site at Blaenavon. Sir Richard Hanbury-Tenison, a member of the Association, contributed additional information on the site, built by his forebears.

At Sudbrook, on a wet, cold and blustery evening, we visited the little village built to house workers constructing the Severn Tunnel. Sian Rees of Cadw spoke at the Iron Age hillfort, now partially destroyed by erosion and overlooked by the Second Severn Crossing, but still impressive and the ruined Holy Trinity Chapel within, currently being restored by Cadw. Medwyn Parry discussed the twentieth-century wartime defences also within the hillfort. Peter Strong took us around the village, which dates from 1875, explaining the early buildings: houses, chapels, pumping station, hospital and post office. It is a small place, yet with a long and interesting history.

Annual General Meeting: 18 March 2000

After the business meeting, Dr Josh Pollard of University of Wales College, Newport, spoke of his recent excavations at Avebury and the re-discovery of the Beckhampton Avenue, discussed by William Stukeley in the eighteenth century, but doubted by some later authorities – until now.

Day School: 7 October 2000, 'Caerleon and the Antiquaries: a day to celebrate 150 years of the Caerleon Museum'

Replacing our annual October lecture, the Day School was organised jointly by Cardiff University, the National Museums & Galleries of Wales, UWCN and the Monmouthshire Antiquarian Association. After a most enjoyable day of lectures, the texts of which make up the present volume, the Association entertained the participants to tea in the museum.

G.V.J.