

FRIENDS OF FISHBOURNE ROMAN PALACE



NEWSLETTER

Issue 18: February 2013

OUR NEW WEBSITE IS NOW ONLINE



Acting Chairman Anne de Potier

Greetings to you all, and best wishes for the New Year. The start of the year is traditionally a time for looking forward and making plans. Of course this happens throughout the year as well, but as we read of the financial and other constraints faced by the Palace and the Sussex Archaeological Society, we need not only to react, but to be positive in our support. So we have continued to work on ways of increasing the number and the influence of the Friends, which we hope will bring good results in 2013. But we need your help.

Our new **website**, <http://www.fishbournefriends.org.uk/> is launched this month. It was masterminded by Guy Lockton, and created by his son Alex, who has also organised the hosting very economically. I am hugely grateful to them both. We want it to be an interactive site, so please visit it regularly for news. It is likely that the 2013 Events programme, already shaping up nicely, will be on the site before we mail out to you. The website is also a useful recruitment tool, so get your friends to have a look too. Be sure also to check the active and varied events organised by the Roman Palace on their own website www.sussexpast.co.uk.



Renew your membership

A vitally important thing you can do is remain a member of the Friends. The new subscription year starts on 1 February; you will find a renewal form with this Newsletter for use unless you pay by Standing Order. Please renew your membership, and enjoy another year's activities as well as supporting the Palace. The subscription rates remain unchanged from last year as shown on the form. Please use it to let us know of any changes to your postal or e-mail address so that we can ensure you continue to receive our material. If there have been no changes you could simply send the Membership Secretary your cheque, or if you have internet access use the new easy-payment **PayPal** facility on our website and save the cost of postage. If you have a Standing Order you will not be sent a form, but please tell us if any of your details have changed. Also extremely useful is recruiting somebody else to be a member. If you don't want to ask outright you could make it a gift!

As I said in the last Newsletter, we are focussing on funding to help deal with the flooding in the North Wing of the Palace and its effects (further details below). This is vital, as the mosaics are such an important part of the Palace. Having this focus should help with recruitment. We hope also to be able to respond favourably to other requests. But we cannot do any of this without the income and support of members.

Annual General Meeting

We shall be in touch with members nearer the time about the Annual General Meeting on Saturday 27 April at the Roman Palace (where else?). One of the items will be to adjust the Constitution in advance of applying to become a small charity. Charitable status will enable us to claim Gift Aid, and we feel it will also help attract more members and donations, so we need you to attend if at all possible.

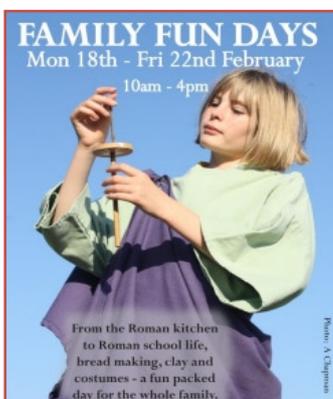
Committee members needed

Finally, the Friends need helpers to keep going. Several of the current members of the Committee will be retiring. We need more people to help, particularly with organising events. If you live reasonably close to the Palace, as two-thirds of members do, please think how you can contribute. The Committee meet only 4 times per year, and the jobs are not technical, so don't be discouraged! Thank you. ■

NEWS FROM THE ROMAN PALACE

Volunteers sought for half-term event

This year the Palace are looking for more volunteers to help at the Family Fun Days during half-term week, 18 to 22 February. The activities are targeted particularly at children 6 to 12 years old, though all ages are welcome and will find things to instruct and amuse them. If you could spare a day or two to help children fashion clay pots and oil lamps, make Roman bread, try on costumes, play Roman games, or attend a Roman school, the Palace would welcome your help. Have a word with Betina Blake at adminfish@sussexpast.co.uk or by phone at 01243 785859 for details. If you cannot be a volunteer but you have children or grandchildren, bring them along and perhaps spend a little extra in the shop or the café to help the finances of the Palace. ■



museum. The metal finds and site records, however, were sent to the Palace.

Rob has spent several years attempting to reunite the two parts and was delighted when the transfer was finally agreed. All of the finds and paperwork from the site are now part of the Fishbourne Roman Palace reserve collection, in whose collecting area the site falls. It is now being worked on by volunteers to bring it up to the Palace's high standards before being shelved. It will then be much more accessible to anyone wanting to see it.

The location of the site makes it particularly important. Excavations to the east of the Palace in the late 1990s showed that the area between Fishbourne Roman Palace and Chichester was potentially extremely interesting and certainly little understood.



Westward House offers researchers the opportunity to understand this area better, and perhaps get a glimpse into the activities of the artisans and traders who served the Palace and those visiting it. The site has not yet been published in full so it should prove to be a rich seam of new knowledge! ■

A small lead figure, about 3cm tall, recovered from Westward House and now part of the Fishbourne Roman Palace collection. This figure is thought to have been used in magic rituals and is one of only two or three yet found in Britain. (Photo – Rob Symmons)

Westward House arrives in the collection



Rob Symmons, curator at the Palace, recently took receipt of a large and important collection of artefacts that will doubtless become the focus of a great deal of research in years to come. The material is from a site called Westward House, located just to the east of the front entrance of the Flavian palace. It was excavated in 1992 but when the excavators later were declared insolvent most of the finds were transferred to Chichester District

Problems with the mosaics in the North Wing



The mosaics in the North Wing of the Palace are under threat from flooding, temperature and humidity fluctuations, and algal growth. An 18 inch water main running just to the north has often caused flooding. It is now due to be moved or lined, which should remove the danger. The



Algae growing in the North Wing

floods seemed to have little impact on the mosaics since hardly any obvious damage was observed, but a recent report from Chris Cleere, a conservation professional, found that the effect was cumulative, causing deposition of



Monitoring the environment

salts which will gradually obscure the mosaics. He recommends installing an automatic pump and keeping a careful record of events so that preparations can be made for any future flood. Some of the problems may in part be due to groundwater travelling up through the archaeological features and evaporating. This water is forced through the archaeology since the surrounding areas are impermeable, creating a focus for damaging salt growth on the more permeable surfaces.

Algal growth may not damage the surface but could lead to the growth of higher plant forms that do cause damage. Closely controlling the environment in the heavily-used North Wing to counter temperature and humidity variations is unrealistic so localised intervention will be studied. ■

Information screen installed in the Palace

The Friends' most recent donation to the Palace is an information screen in reception on which notices of the day can be displayed, removing the need for the staff to repeat the same message to every visitor or hand out large numbers of pieces of paper. ■



Book review

Handbook to Roman Legionary Fortresses

M C Bishop

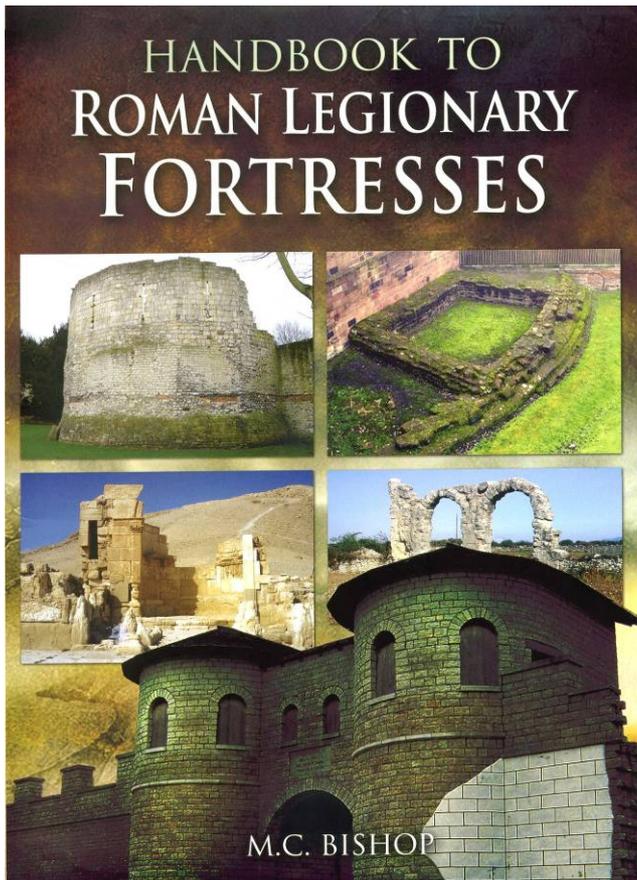
Pen & Sword Books Ltd, Barnsley

209 pp £19.99

The author of this impressive book, Dr Mike Bishop, is a respected freelance archaeologist, writer and publisher specialising in Roman militaria. He is a Visiting Lecturer at the School of Classics of St Andrews University and founder of the Journal of Roman Military Equipment Studies. His printed works include Roman Military Equipment co-authored with J L C Coulston. The Handbook is a reference guide to 103 legionary fortresses scattered around the frontiers of the Roman Empire, 11 of them in Britain. The author has chosen as his definition of these fortresses "the winter headquarters of a legion that

housed the eagle standard", though he points out the many variations in size, nomenclature and purpose of such bases which make classification difficult.

The bulk of this minutely researched volume consists of detailed plans, measurements and geographical data of each fortress with literary references. A number of large colour photographs, mostly taken by the author and his collaborator Jonathon Coulston complement the descriptions. There are informative appendices including a timeline of legionary



movements, and an exhaustive bibliography, and the book is linked to a website – www.legionaryfortresses.info – containing further detailed information and maps. The Handbook would be an asset to any serious library of Roman studies.

Pen & Sword Books have kindly offered to send us relevant publications to review in the newsletter. This is the first. ■

British Association of Friends of Museums

This year's area conference is in Abingdon on 10 September.

The national conference is in Aberdeen from 27 to 29 September

The 2013 **Museums + Heritage Show** will be held at Earl's Court on 15 and 16 May. It is described as "the UK's most comprehensive and exciting trade event for the cultural sector. It brings together all of the latest technologies, services and thinking for anyone working in museums, galleries, heritage and cultural visitor attractions. It's the only sector event which offers an entirely free-to-attend programme of inspirational seminars, on hot button topics, plus the very latest in new technologies, innovations and market insight. This, together with live discussions, special features and new product launches, makes The Museums + Heritage Show a 'must do' for anyone looking to stay one step ahead."

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