

Heroic Age Logo

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Compiled by Michelle Ziegler

Vikings and Picts <#anchor1565102>

Romans <#anchor1611958>

Anglo-Saxons <#anchor1628421>

Romano-British <#anchor1580119>

Vikings and Picts

Leif Ericsson Anniversary Celebrations

October 9, 2000 is the millennial anniversary of Leif Ericsson's foundation of the first European colony in North America at L'Anse aux Meadows in a region that Leif called Vinland (now Newfoundland). Celebrations to commemorate the anniversary are underway on both sides of the Atlantic.

The Viking Network has organized a relay of a case, containing educational information on the Vikings of c. 1000 AD and Leif in particular, to be carried from school to school throughout the areas where the Vikings once sailed. The case will travel from Scandinavia to Russia, Ukraine, Israel, France, Britain, Ireland, Germany, Iceland, Greenland and finally on to North America. You can follow the case online at http://www.viking.no/vnet/projects/leif_2000/casevisits.html. At the time of writing it was just leaving Germany for Iceland after already traveling to Norway, Russia, Ukraine, Israel, France, Ireland and Britain.

The Smithsonian Museum in the US will also offer a traveling exhibit to celebrate the Viking millennial event. The exhibit, called "Vikings: The North Atlantic Saga", will open at the Smithsonian in Washington on April 29, 2000 and run through August 13, 2000. This 3 million dollar exhibit will host more than 200 artifacts from 800 AD to contemporary pop culture items in a 5500 sq. foot exhibit. Artifacts have been collected not only from the United States collections but also from Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Finland, Iceland, Greenland, and Canada. After the close of the Smithsonian exhibit August 13, artifacts will begin a two year tour of North America visiting New York, Ottawa, Los Angeles, Houston, and Chicago.

Living history celebrations marking the occasion will be underway this summer. The replica Viking ship, the Íslendingur ("Icelander"), will sail from Iceland to Newfoundland, recreating Leif Ericsson's 2,600 mile voyage. The ship was built in 1996 by a descendent of Leif Ericsson named Gunnar Marel Eggertsson. The Íslendingur will leave Reykjavik on June 17 en route to Greenland, and Newfoundland to eventually end its voyage along the coastline of New York on July 16. On July 23, 2000 fifteen replica Viking ships will meet at Wonderstands in Canada to make a six day voyage to L'Anse aux Meadows, stopping at various ports in Labrador along the way. The fleet will be led by the ship Íslendingur which will then leave L'Anse aux Meadows for a voyage along Newfoundland. The fleet will arrive in L'Anse aux Meadows during the Grand Encampment held at the nearby village of Grand Point which will run from July 17 to September 8. The Grand Encampment will feature a recreated c. 1000 AD Viking village and 100 re-enactors who will come from both Europe and North America to display Viking crafts and trades, cook Viking food, and stage mock battles.

Sources:

"The Viking Network: Leif Ericsson" <http://www.leif2000.org/> Accessed March 2000.

"The Viking Network" <http://www.viking.no/>

"The Leif Ericsson Millennium School Relay"
http://www.viking.no/vnet/projects/leif_2000/school_relay.htm Accessed March 2000.

"Viking Events"
<http://viking.no/cgi-bin/viking/publisering/arrangementer/index.cgi>
Accessed March 2000.

"A Major Millennium Exhibit: Vikings: The North American Saga"
Smithsonian Institution National Museum of Natural History Web Site.
<http://www.mnh.si.edu/exhibits/vikings/home.html> Accessed March 9, 2000.

Norse Artifacts found in Southern Ireland

A rare Norse hoard of eight Anglo-Saxon coins, bronze and silver ingots and some unique silver objects was recently found in Dunmore cave in County Kilkenny. There are a total of sixteen objects discovered. The Anglo-Saxon coins and some silver ingots have been dated to 940-970. A

Viking presence in this area has been known for some time. One thousand people were claimed to have been massacred in the same cave by the Vikings in 928. This particular hoard appears to have been the personal wealth of an individual that was stashed in a crack in the cave for safekeeping during an emergency. The most unusual artifacts are several conical objects made of silver wire. It is possible that they were fasteners or ornaments attached to the cloth the hoard was originally wrapped in.

Source: "Baffling Viking Artifacts Found in Cave" Reuters. 1/14/2000

Sean Mac Connell (January 14, 2000) "Ancient and unique trove found in Kilkenny cave" /The Irish Times
/ <http://www.ireland.com/newspaper/ireland/2000/0114/hom9.htm>

Viking-Era Harbors on Gotland and the Fröjel site

Through the initiative of the "Harbors and Trading Places on Gotland AD 600-1000" project, a better picture of the Viking-era trading centers in Scandinavia is beginning to emerge. This project was carried out under the direction of Professor Dan Carlsson from 1987-1995. Its specific aims were to discover the number of trading places and harbors on Gotland, along with their structure, spatial orientation, and development from AD 600-1000. The prediction was that there were more trading ports in the early Viking period but that the number declined in the later Viking Age as some ports expanded at the expense of others. Based on this assessment, it was predicted that there would be one port for every Iron Age parish along the Gotland coast. Initial studies based on geography, prehistoric sites, phosphate mapping and minor excavations yielded 50 places along the Gotland coast that were identified as possible trading centers. Five of these sites, at Boge, Bandlunde, Fröjel, Paviken-Västergarn, and Visby, were viewed as possible large harbors due to the variety of artifacts discovered.

From these sites, Fröjel in western Gotland was chosen for further investigation in 1998. The ultimate goal of the Fröjel investigation is to examine its harbor and the surrounding settlement with a plan to develop it as a tourist attraction. The site was abandoned in the 12th century making the likelihood that early remains will be found greater than at other sites. Early phosphate mapping suggests that there had once been a harbor at Fröjel even though today it is far from the coast. During the Viking Age, the harbor was protected by a small island which has now joined the mainland. Some 3 meters of soil has collected on the site since the Viking Age.

Excavations in 1987-1990 and 1998-1999 found a rich mix of objects including bone and antler, iron, bronze, and bead handicrafts. Farmers have found remains of "hundreds" of artifacts dating to the Merovingian period, the Viking Age, and the Early Middle Ages in the region of Fröjel, while the excavations have pushed settlement at the site back to the Iron Age.

The excavators found a 11th century cemetery containing men, women, and children and the remains of a "town-like community". The orientation of the 40 graves and late Viking Age jewelry suggest that this was an Early Christian cemetery. Thirty percent of the graves contained jewelry

including a woman's pendant made from a coin minted by Æthelred of England in c. 1000. The oldest part of the cemetery is believed to date from around AD 1000, making it one of the oldest known Christian cemeteries in Gotland, and was in use for approximately a century. Remains of a wooden fence surrounding the cemetery have also been discovered, but an associated wooden Stave church may, unfortunately, lie beneath the current schoolmasters home. Subsequent excavations found a stone wall and remains suggesting a building built in the 12th century and used until the 17th century, as possibly a vicarage, while records indicate that Fröjel had a church in the 17th century which became an annex-church of Klinte parish. In the area of the oldest settlement coins have been discovered from Arabia (8th-9th century) and Germany (11th century). This older phase was found farther west than was initially believed because the water level was higher in the Viking Age due to warmer global conditions. In the area of the settlement several post holes from large houses have been found with artifacts from household wares such as locks and keys. An interesting brooch was found that showed two snakes or dragons biting a central figure's head, the brooch being similar to a picture stone found in eastern Gotland. To add to Gotland's already impressive collection of silver hoards, over 700, another hoard was found at Fröjel consisting mostly of decorated arm rings and another of Arabic silver coins. One of the biggest surprises was a 8th to 9th century picture stone found in one of the graves, depicting a ship, a figure on a horse, and a Valkyrie with a drinking horn. This and the other stones were placed at the head and foot of the grave in a seemingly purposeful manner. Another grave containing the body of a woman was of a totally different type of circular construction and all the other graves of the period were oriented around it, indicating that it may have held a very important individual, although the only jewelry found in this 9th century woman's grave was a ball of amber. Altogether 3-4000 artifacts had been found by the end of the 1999 excavation season.

From these early excavations it was concluded that the harbor began in the 6th-7th century and continued through the early Middle Ages, peaking in the 11th century. Occupation at the site is estimated to have ranged from 200 to 300 people during the peak summer season with around 50 people in the winter dwelling in 40-50 houses. From the 12th century, activity at the site decreased, probably due to the shallowness of the strait between the mainland and the small island. The harbor was moved to the present coast on the seaward side of the small island. The Fröjel project is projected to continue excavations through the 2001 season.

Sources:

Dan Carlsson. "Fröjel Discovery Programme" Web Pages:

Dan Carlsson "harbors and trade during the Viking Age"<http://frojel.hgo.se/harbour.html> Accessed March 28, 2000;

Dan Carlsson "The Setting of the Project"
<http://frojel.hgo.se/programme.html>. Accessed March 28, 2000.

Dan Carlsson "Excavations 1987-1990 at Fröjel"
<http://frojel.hgo.se/frojel.html> Accessed March 28, 2000.

Dan Carlsson "Reports from the 1999 year's excavation at Fröjel"
<http://frojel.hgo.se/reports.html> Accessed March 28, 2000. The information appears in a new pdf file at

<http://frojel.hgo.se/uppsats/Frojel99.pdf>.

Pictish and Viking South Uist, Scotland

Excavations at Bornish on South Uist, Scotland, are yielding the remains of a village which by the 13th century was largest known settlement in the Western Isles. The village was founded during the Pictish period but reached its height under Viking rule.

From the Pictish period, a large 4th-6th century wheelhouse has been discovered. The building had been destroyed by fire and its turf-covered roof was found on the floor where the smoldering roof beams had been transformed into charcoal. In the remains of the house a whalebone ax, some hammerstones and animal long bones (raw materials for making pins and other items) were found. A later rectangular house was built on top of these ruins.

The best find to date is the discovery of an eleventh century Viking-period high-status home which was abandoned with all its goods intact. The fact that all the valuable goods were left in situ, combined with evidence that the settlement continued to flourish, has led to the speculation that the house had become taboo because of the manner of the owner's death. The large size of the home, a bow shaped dwelling 16 m long by 6 m wide with 2 m high walls of stone, suggests that this was a leaders residence. During this period, the isles were "nominally ruled by the Vikings of Man , but local leaders retained some de facto independence". Even after the leader's home was abandoned, the settlement continued to flourish, reaching its peak in the 12th -14th centuries. The growth of the late settlement appears to be tied to the development of the herring fishing industry that required teams of boats working together to manage the nets and excavations have revealed an abundant collection of herring bones.

Source: "Viking house tainted by unlucky death: did the owner fall in a rabbit hole?" /British Archaeology/ February 2000
<http://www.britarch.ac.uk/ba/ba51/ba51news.html#house>

Continuity in Shetland

Recent Excavations under the direction of Val Turner (Shetland Amenity Trust) and Steve Dockrill (Bradford University) in a village at Old Scatness on Shetland have confirmed continuous occupation from the Iron Age through the Pictish and Viking periods. Although the discovery of a prehistoric "Rayburn" cooker has generated a lot of attention, there have also been interesting finds from the Pictish and Viking periods.

The Pictish period yielded several artifacts of special interest. A 10 cm stone dagger with a trefoil hilt from the 8th -9th century, which may have been a toy discarded because of a broken tip, was discovered along with two Pictish carved stones. One portable stone displayed the broken arrow and arch motifs that are fairly common on Pictish stones. The other stone formed part of a hearth and was inscribed with a "wild boar-like creature thought to resemble the extinct Irish greyhound pig". The Pictish symbols are believed to be "symbolic tokens", so their

discovery on a portable stone and a hearth stone may lead to clues as to their meaning. Another object from the late Iron Age or early Pictish period is a piece of yellow/blue glass believed to be of Roman origin.

The Viking artifacts yield a better picture of everyday life. The remains of a loom was discovered in a manner that suggests it was left in place when the structure was abandoned. This loom was of the "sword-beater" type and was found with a full set of loomweights. A complete Viking soapstone ladle or scoop was also unearthed.

Source: "From Iron Age toilet to early 'Rayburn': all mod cons in prehistoric Shetland" /British Archaeology/ February 2000.
<http://www.britarch.ac.uk/ba/ba51/ba51news.html#rayburn>
<<http://www.britarch.ac.uk/ba/ba51/ba51/news.html#rayburn>>

The Pictish Barrow Cemetary at Redcastle

At Redcastle in central Scotland, near where Lunan Water flows into Lunan Bay, some of the first certainly Pictish barrows have been discovered. Aerial photography identified the site as a cemetery containing both square and round barrows. The site was excavated by Edinburgh University as a field school for their undergraduates with the support of Historic Scotland in 1997 and 1998. These excavations revealed a total of sixteen graves including five square barrows, two round barrows and nine "unenclosed" graves. The excavations at the cemetery also revealed Neolithic and Iron Age activity. The site was excavated just in time as the graves were so shallow that the cap stones on several graves had been broken by ploughing and some of the skeletons had also been damaged.

The unusual barrows caused of the greatest excitement. The large square barrows unusually had open corners suggesting that they could be ditched enclosures rather than true barrows. The largest barrow, square-shaped and 10 m in diameter, was preserved intact with an undisturbed central grave containing the skeleton of a 20-35 old, 5'2" woman. Radiocarbon dating on six burials, including three from the square barrows and two from round barrows, yielded dates from the first to eighth centuries but "focus in 400-700 AD" (Alexander 1999:396). The excavator tentatively suggests that square barrows with open corners such as those found at Redcastle may date to the 400-700 Period and other square barrows with enclosed corners may date to this period or earlier.

The last remarkable feature about this cemetery is the gender distribution. Of the skeletons that could be sexed, a ratio of 5 females to 1 male (2 certain females, 3 possible females and 1 possible male) emerges. These skeletons all came from the prominent barrow graves including, as mentioned above, a woman from the largest square barrow. It should be noted that this sample is too small to allow any firm conclusions to be drawn, in the absence of evidence from other, as yet undiscovered, Pictish cemeteries. However, it contributes valuable evidence to the ongoing debate over the role of women in Pictish society. Bede claimed that Pictish kings were chosen from the maternal line and this is supported by other, less substantial evidence. An interesting comparison to gender ratio found at Redcastle is Ross Samson's interpretation of the Pictish symbol stones. He believes that they either show the name of the person who erected them or else served

as memorials. He believes that 20% of these stones represent female names. While this is an inverse correlation from the gender ratio found at Redcastle, it is an extremely high ratio of women's names compared to other contemporary societies. He cites the stones of Ireland as an example where 2-300 out of 10,000 (2-3%) represent females. He further suggests that the common mirror-and-comb symbol from the Pictish stones may have represented a female name element, although it should be noted that not all scholars agree that the mirror-and-comb symbol refers to females. When the mirror-and-comb symbol appears with a Pictish human figure (as opposed to a Biblical figure), as at Hilton of Cadboll (AD c. 800), the figure is unmistakably female. In combination the gender ratio from Redcastle and the prominence of the mirror-and-comb symbol on Pictish stones imply that women may have played a powerful role in Pictish society.

Sources:

Derek Alexander (Dec. 1999) "Redcastle Barrow Cemetary" /Current Archaeology /166:395-397.

Ross Samson (1995) "Power to the Pictish Ladies" /British Archaeology/ Issue 3
<http://www.britarch.ac.uk/ba/ba3/ba3feat.html#samson>

Other online sources for the Vikings:

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http://www.discover.com/mar_00/featvanished.html

Brian Fagan (March/April 2000) "Slaughter of the Dogs: Crashing Climate Left Norse Settlers in Greenland Few Options for Survival" /Scientific American Discovering Archaeology/
<http://discoveringarchaeology.com/0800toc/8focus1-slaughter.shtml>

John R. Hale (Feb. 1998) "The Viking Longship" /Scientific American
[/http://www.sciam.com/1998/0298issue/0298hale.html](http://www.sciam.com/1998/0298issue/0298hale.html)

The Viking Network Web. <http://viking.no/>

Martin Carver (2000) "Viking Christians & Christian Picts" /British Archaeology /Issue 52
<http://www.britarch.ac.uk/ba/ba52/ba52feat.html#carver>

The Romans

Catterick under the Romans and Early Angles

Catterick has been an important site in the history of northern Britain since AD 80, when the first Roman fortress was founded. /Cataractonium/ guarded an important crossing of the Swale River by Dere Street, and protected the east-west passage from York to Carlisle through the mountains. Later, the Roman presence at the fortress would generate one

of the more important small towns that survived through the medieval period.

The name /Cataractonium/ has been claimed to derived from the "/Cataracts/" or fast moving rapids on the Swale at Richmond. However, it is possible that the name derives from the native British /Catu/ - "battle" and /ratis/ - "rampart, fort, fortification". It is still an open question whether Catterick is the place called /Catraeth/ where, according to the poem /Y Gododdin/, a battle was fought around the year 600. It has been suggested that the Castle Hills area near Catterick was the site of the battle and may have once borne the name /Catraeth/. However, if the British derivation for Catraeth is favored it could represent any number of places or even multiple places lumped together during the poem's evolution.

The Roman fort at Catterick was constructed and rebuilt in several phases. The first phase had an annex that housed the bath house, eventually expanded to a nine room complex. One of the earliest functions at the fort was the production of leather goods, and a surviving letter found at Vindolanda complains about a missed delivery of leather from Catterick. Excavations have revealed that leather working was indeed prominent, although no evidence of a tannery has been found. When Hadrian's Wall was constructed, the fort appears to have been abandoned but the town continued to flourish, acquiring an inn or /mansio/.

After the Antonine Wall was abandoned and the Hadrianic frontier refortified, Catterick once again became a military site and the fort was refurbished. More noticeable is the rebuilding of a larger and more grand /mansio/ and bath house, the later being expanded to 11 rooms. The premier rooms overlooking the river were decorated in painted wall plasters, which are currently displayed in the Yorkshire Museum at York. In addition, a large storage building was constructed and it has been suggested that this may have served as an /annona/ where the corn-tax was delivered and stored. By this period the leather working operations had been shut down and other buildings were constructed over the former industrial sites. Pete Wilson (1999:383) concludes that "from the second century onwards /Cataractonium/ was a defended vicus or civilian settlement focused on Dere Street on either side of the river." A mile south of the town was another settlement on Bainesse Farm that must have been large enough to be considered a village.

By the third and fourth centuries, the town was being remodeled again. Most of the existing /mansio/ was demolished and a new water channel was built. The bath house and the store house were left untouched and new wooden strip buildings constructed. In the fourth century, the defenses were strengthened with a stone wall but no rampart and the bath house was first downsized and then abandoned. By the late fourth century, the area of the bath house was occupied again but as a domestic residence. The function of Catterick during this period of reconstruction is still being debated but suggested uses include the stationing of a cavalry unit or more elaborate town homes for villa owners who wanted the protection of the walls. The outlying areas of the town and the village at Bainesse continued to flourish and a villa may have been located near Bainesse. Previous suggestions that there was an amphitheater at Catterick have now been disproved.

Catterick survived into the post Roman period and the site has the

potential to tell us a great deal about this time. Several buildings have been dated to the fifth and sixth centuries and there are at least three sixth century /Grubenhäuser/ (sunken feature buildings) including one that cut into the remains of a fourth century Roman dwelling. The /Grubenhäuser /may be associated with//evidence of Anglian occupation in the former Roman town: Anglian burials have been found in the area of the village at Bainesse and the villa, the earliest Anglian artifacts found at the site dating to AD 375-425. It is clear that Dere Street and remains of the Roman town, village and villa were observable features in the Anglian Era although it is unclear if the walls were still intact.

A full report of the findings so far will be published in a new monograph entitled /Roman Catterick (Cataractonium): A Roman Town and Its hinterland. Excavations and research 1958 1997/. Publication is hoped for in the year 2000.

Sources:

Pete Wilson (Dec. 1999) "Catterick" /Current Archaeology/ 166:379-386.

P.R. Wilson et al (1996) "Early Anglian Catterick and Catraeth" /Medieval Archaeology/ 40:1-61.

Roman Era Temples

Greenwich, situated on Roman Watling Street running between Canterbury and London, has produced evidence of a Roman temple. The site yielded two partial Roman inscriptions, pottery and over 100 coins. It appears to have been an officially sponsored imperial site as one of the fragments refers to PPBRLON (Provincial Procurator of Britain, London), the Emperor's financial officer. Earlier excavations noted walls and other evidence of buildings at the site, that was recognized in 1978 as a "Roman-Celtic" temple. The recent finds were discovered by a joint team from the Museum of London, Birkbeck College of the University of London, and Time Team.

Wanborough in Surrey has produced evidence of a second Roman temple. The first temple, discovered in the 1970s, was extensively looted and not fully excavated until 1985-6. It was estimated that 10-20,000 Iron Age coins had been looted from it, although the site of the first discovered temple. Yet, the archaeologists were able to discover several ultimately more important finds including 20 bronze tubes believed to be handles for sceptres and 5 chain headdresses, 3 of which were unique with a wheel motif on the ends of the chains. This motif may indicate that the temple had been dedicated to a Celtic wheel god similar to Jupiter. These objects were dated to AD 150-60 while the coin hoard was 100 years earlier, suggesting to archaeologists that there may have been an earlier ritual site located nearby.

In an effort to delineate the site for English Heritage, the Surrey Archaeological Society began excavations on the perimeter of the original temple in 1999. Much to their surprise they discovered a second, older, round temple north of the original one. Underneath this they found the remains of two earlier occupations. This site did not produce the rich deposits found in the first temple but a Colchester-type brooch (cAD 50-70), a group of 5 Celtic coins, a second deposit of 9 bronze coins

(of Vespasian and Domitian), a small paleolith, and remains of two lambs were discovered. Based on these findings the temple's construction was dated to between AD 80 and 100. Ritual deposits were also found on the outside of the second temple in a fashion similar to the first, including a gilded silver plaque with an embossed ear of corn, an enamelled trumpet brooch, and sceptre bindings. The temple itself was built of stone with clay bonding and ceased to function after a structural failure of one wall. Although the failure can't be dated, later building on the site indicates that the temple was out of use by the third century. It has been observed that "there was no demolition debris and it can be suggested that the collapsing building was carefully dismantled and the materials used in the building of the adjacent square temple, its successor in about 150-60" (Williams 2000:437). According to David Williams, this site is remarkable in that it is a rare example of the transfer of power from one temple to its successor during the Roman era.

Sources:

Hedley Swain and Harvey Shelden (March 2000) "Roman Greenwich" /Current Archaeology/ 14(11):440.

David Williams (March 2000) "Wanborough Roman Temple" /Current Archaeology/ 14(11):434 437.

Other online sources for the Romans:

Martin Henig "Great sites: Bignor Roman villa" /British Archaeology/ February 2000 Issue 51
<http://www.britarch.ac.uk/ba/ba51/ba51feat.html#henig>

Christopher Thomas "Laid to rest on a pillow of bay leaves" /British Archaeology/ 50 <http://www.britarch.ac.uk/ba/ba50/ba50feat.html>

"Minerva figure found in Roman well" /British Archaeology/ February 2000
<http://www.britarch.ac.uk/ba/ba51/ba51news.html#minerva>

Lisa Parks (2000) "Nothing Nice About Lice: Pubic Vermin Tortured Brits for Millennia" /Discovering Archaeology
/ <http://www.discoveringarchaeology.com/webex/webex010500-lice.shtml>

Time Team - Channel 4 Television. (January 30, 2000) "2000 series: Birdoswald, Hadrian's Wall"
<http://www.channel4.com/nextstep/timeteam/2000bird.html>

Julian Baum "The Chester Project"
<http://www.julianbaum.co.uk/ChesterProject/TCP.html> *(new url!)*

"The Roman Ships at Pisa" <http://www.navipisa.it/e-index.htm>

Battle of Hastings Re-enactment

One of the major millennial events this year in England is the re-enactment of the Battle of Hastings where Harold Godwinson was defeated and killed by William the Conqueror. The event is planned for October 14-15 at Battle Abbey and is being coordinated by the re-enactment group "The Vikings" on behalf of English Heritage. A battle is planned for both days involving approximately 3000 soldiers chosen, in part, for their high-quality replications of period dress and weapons. Different stages of the battle will be re-enacted. In addition there will be two living history events to replicate the battle camps of the Anglo-Saxon and Norman sides. For more information see the official homepage for the event at <http://www.vikings.ndirect.co.uk/hastings2000>.

Source:

"Viking Events"

<http://viking/no/cgi-bin/viking/publisering/arrangementer/index.cgi>

Updated March 21, 2000.

"Hastings 2000" <http://www.vikings.ndirect.co.uk/hastings2000/> Accessed April 10, 2000.

Update: Lakenheath Cemetary

The Lakenheath cemetary in Suffolk that produced the grave of a warrior and his bridled horse in 1997 has yielded another barrow with a warrior and horse. The newly discovered burial is similar to the 1997 discovery although this horse was not bridled. This grave was found in a ditched barrow, the warrior having a complete set of armaments including a sword, shield, and spear. The horse was approximately 13 hands high and 8-9 years old. It is believed that both horse and warrior graves date to the sixth century. The recent excavations discovered a further 60 Anglo Saxon graves to be added to the 270 found in 1997.

Source: "New Saxon Horse Burial in Suffolk" /British Archaeology/ December 1999 <http://www.britarch.ac.uk/ba/ba50/ba50news.html#horse>

East Anglian Fenland Village Discovered

The Cambridge University Archaeological Unit has discovered a large Anglo-Saxon village in the Fens of North Cambridgeshire near Ely. To date, evidence reveals that the village spanned over 100 acres and was inhabited from the 7th to the 12th centuries. It has currently produced over 50,000 artifacts ranging from everyday items like pottery and beads to the careful burial of several dogs. The area of Ely first became prominent when St. Æthelthryth (Audrey) chose this region for her monastery in 673. The stated range for this village would place its beginnings near the time of Æthelthryth's foundation. The monastery of

Ely was one of the more important monasteries in the region during the seventh and eighth centuries being ruled over by Æthelthryth, a former queen of Northumbria, who was succeeded by her sister Saexburh, a former queen of Kent. Æthelthryth's career and the foundation of the monastery of Ely are described by the venerable Bede in his /Ecclesiastical History of the English People/. According to Bede, the district of Ely comprised about 600 hides and was part of the kingdom of East Anglia. That the newly-discovered village survived to the twelfth century suggests it would have been familiar to Hereward the Wake when he chose Ely, one mile away, as the site of his last stand against the Normans in the early 1070s.

Source: "Saxon Village" British Archaeology December 1999 Issue 50
<http://www.britarch.ac.uk/ba/ba50/ba50news.html#inbrief>

The Romano-British

Post-Roman North Wales and Byzantium

At Cefn Cwmwd on Anglesey, North Wales, a rare Byzantine garnet has been discovered by the Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit. The garnet was originally part of a seal ring and is inscribed with a scorpion. It is believed that the stone was produced in the Eastern Mediterranean in the 6th or 7th centuries. This ring illustrates that the inhabitants of the settlement were literate and that enough of the population was literate for a seal to be required to ensure privacy. The finding of a Mediterranean object is not by itself unique in western Britain since goods from the Mediterranean have also been found at Tintagel and a few other sites, while the Cadfan inscription at Llangadwaladr may have been influenced by Byzantine style (Snyder 1998).

In addition to the garnet, a copper-alloy pennanular brooch with a ring and dot ornamentation was found in the post-Roman levels. It is possible that this brooch once contained an enamel inlay. Similar brooches were produced in Western Britain from the 5th to 7th centuries.

Additional excavations at the site discovered that its origins lay in the Late Neolithic or Early Bronze Age. The Bronze Age settlement yielded a timber circle, a roundhouse, and a cremation cemetery. The late Iron Age is also represented by a roundhouse farmstead. Continuous occupation seems to have occurred through the Roman era, as evidenced by the finding of Roman coins, Roman glass beads, a gaming counter, and 'Samian' dishes at the site.

Source: Simon Denison (2000) "Gemstone evidence for late Roman survival: jewel points to trade between North Wales and the Byzantine Empire" /British Archaeology/ Issue 52
<http://www.britarch.ac.uk/ba/ba52/ba52news.html#gemstone>

Snyder, Christopher (1998) /An Age of Tyrants: Britain and the Britons

AD 400-600/. Penn State Press.

Wroxeter's Roman and Post-Roman Harbor

Today a patch of boggy farmland marks the location of a man-made Roman harbor on the River Severn at Wroxeter. The boggy land has made excavations very difficult but recent rains have turned the area into a pool making the outline of the harbor visible. Although the area hasn't been formally mapped due to the boggy terrain, the rectangular harbor is approximately 150 by 80 meters and fluvio-geologists have confirmed that the harbor wall is artificial. A similar sandstone harbor survives on the River Dee at Chester. River transport along the Severn during Roman times has long been suspected and there were several villas upstream around Oswestry and Berwick that were accessible only by river traffic.

Additional excavations at Wroxeter along a new water pipeline running north-south through the ancient city have found more Roman buildings with artifacts such as glass fragments and a brooch being discovered in stratified layers. These new stratified artifacts suggest that Wroxeter survived into the seventh century. Finds at Dinas Powys and nearby Llandough monastery, Much Wenlock, the newly discovered harbor at Wroxeter, and the Welshpool settlement, which all have yielded post-Roman artifacts, together suggest the existence of an Early Medieval trade route on the River Severn from the Roman period through to at least the sixth century.

Source:

"Roman Harbor found at Wroxeter" /British Archaeology/ December 1999
Issue 50 <http://www.britarch.ac.uk/ba/ba50/ba50news.html#>
<<http://www.britarch.ac.uk/ba/ba50/ba50news.html#harbour>>harbor

Michelle Ziegler (1999) "Archaeology News Briefs: Dinas Powys
Connections" /The Heroic Age/ Issue 1
<http://www.mun.ca/mst/heroicage/issues/1/haanb.htm>

[Return to Table of Contents <toc.html>](#)

[Next <reviews.html>](#)

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