

# Deva Victrix

## Roman Chester Re-assessed

Papers from a weekend conference held at  
Chester College 3–5 September 1999



Supported by

Chester Archaeology

Edited by  
PETER CARRINGTON  
Chester 2002

© Chester Archaeological Society  
and contributors 2002 unless otherwise  
stated

ISBN 0 9507074 9 X

**Abbreviations**

The abbreviations used in this volume follow  
the system laid down in BS 4148: 1985, as  
recommended by the Council for British  
Archaeology in Signposts for Archaeological  
Publication ed 3, 1991, Appendix A

**Notes for contributors**

The Society welcomes articles about the  
architecture, archaeology and history of  
Cheshire in its Journal. If you are interested  
in contributing, please contact the Editor at  
the following address for further guidance on  
the scope of the Journal and for notes on  
style and layout:

Chester Archaeology  
27 Grosvenor Street  
Chester CH1 2DD  
Tel: +44 (0)1244 402028  
Fax: +44 (0)1244 347522  
E-mail: p.carrington@chestercc.gov.uk

For more information about the Society, see:  
<http://www.chesterarchaeolsoc.org.uk>

Designed and produced for the Society  
by Aquarium Graphic Design 01244 398004

## Foreword

---

The Chester Archaeological Society has a long tradition of producing publications of this sort. In the nineteenth century it initiated the debate on the date of Chester's walls. More recently it organised the conference which gave rise to the Rows Research Project. It was therefore appropriate that it should use the occasion of its 150th anniversary celebrations to refocus attention on Roman Chester, to see what all the work of the past generation or so amounted to and, just as important, where future priorities should lie.

It has to be admitted that the active role of the Society declined during the 1970s and 1980s — perhaps inevitably as the scale of 'rescue' fieldwork grew — and there are now other major players in the local archaeological arena, including a variety of commercial organisations as well as universities and local authorities. However, the Society has continued to fulfill an important function in keeping an independent and knowledgeable eye on the city's heritage and encouraging public appreciation of it. It is also now once again, especially through its fieldwork section, increasing the opportunities for local people to get involved in archaeology. Finally, as the conference that gave rise to this volume proves, it still has a role in initiating archaeological debates.

In recent years, proportionally the greatest advances have been made in our understanding of the archaeology of Saxon and medieval Chester, albeit bringing our knowledge of these periods from a very low base. However, it is concerning Roman Chester that most new data has been gained, and it is now time to summarise what has been learnt and begin to analyse and present it in the light of advances elsewhere. As we move out of the long shadows cast by the nineteenth-century European empires we are able to take a more detached view of the Roman world and apply more sophisticated approaches to its study. This volume represents a start in that direction, but there is a long way to go: it is to be hoped that future steps will be marked by contributions to the Society's journal.

The City Council's Archaeological Service is happy to have been associated with the conference and to support this publication. It recognises the value of the Society's civic role of constructive criticism and active participation and hopes that this volume will be the starting point for the open construction of a rolling research programme on Roman Chester.

It remains to thank the Society's Honorary Secretary, Dr David Mason, for his hard work in organizing the 1999 conference; Professor Bill Manning for his able chairmanship; the staff of Chester College for their hospitality; and the speakers for their lively contributions. Unfortunately this volume does not reflect the valuable contributions made by Dr Vivien Swan and Mr Tim Strickland, but relevant publications by them are noted below.<sup>1</sup>

**G Storey**, *Chairman, Chester Archaeological Society, 1998–2001*

**M N Morris**, *City Archaeologist*

<sup>1</sup> V G Swan, The Twentieth Legion and the history of the Antonine Wall reconsidered. *Proc Soc Antiquaries of Scotland* 129, 1999, 399–480;

T J Strickland, What sort of community existed at Chester during the hiatus of the second century? In: Goldsworthy, A & Haynes, I eds. *The Roman army as a community.* (*J Roman Archaeol suppl ser* 34, 1999), 105–10

## Contents

Foreword	iii
List of illustrations	vi
List of tables	viii
<b>I Roman Fortress Studies</b>	1
Present Questions and Future Trends	
<i>Professor W H Manning</i>	
<b>II The Exploration of Roman Chester 1962–1999</b>	7
Retrospect and Prospect	
<i>P Carrington</i>	
<b>III Chester</b>	25
Early Roman Occupation	
<i>D C A Shotter</i>	
<b>IV The Foundation of the Legionary Fortress</b>	33
Deva, The Flavians and Imperial Symbolism	
<i>D J P Mason</i>	
<b>V The Town and Port of Roman Chester</b>	53
<i>D J P Mason</i>	
<b>VI Tales from the Tomb</b>	75
Sculpture in Roman Chester	
<i>M Henig</i>	
<b>VII Where have all the Soldiers gone?</b>	79
Some thoughts on the Presence and Absence of Soldiers	
in Fourth-Century Chester	
<i>B Hoffmann</i>	
<b>VIII The Construction and Operation of a Legionary Fortress</b>	89
Logistical and Engineering Aspects	
<i>D J P Mason</i>	
<b>IX Deva Victrix Restored</b>	113
The Application of Computer 3-D Modelling Techniques in the	
Reconstruction of Roman Chester	
<i>J Baum &amp; D J Robinson</i>	
Council and Officers for the Year 1999/2000	118
Index	

## Illustrations

II.1	Roman Chester: plan after Newstead 1948	9
II.2	Roman Chester: plan after Thompson 1965	10
II.3	Roman Chester: plan after Petch 1969	11
II.4	Roman Chester: plan after Mason 2000	13
III.1	Find spots of pre-Neronian <i>aes</i> coins: map	26
III.2	Copies of <i>asses</i> of Claudius from Walton-le-Dale and Barrow in Furness	27
III.3	Initial routes of military penetration into north-west England: map	28
III.4	Early Flavian sites in north-west England: map	29
III.5	Southern gateway of the earliest fort at Carlisle	30
IV.1	The primary fortress, c AD 75: plan	34
IV.2	Pre-fortress ditch and other features beneath Elliptical Building: plan	35
IV.3	Diagrammatic reconstruction of rampart	36
IV.4	Layout of Flavian barracks: plan	37
IV.5	Flavian fortress baths: plan	38
IV.6	Drawing of marine-tableau mosaic floor, <i>frigidarium</i> of fortress baths	38
IV.7	Primary timber headquarters building: plan	39
IV.8	Courtyard building behind headquarters: plans	40
IV.9	Flavian Elliptical Building: restored and corrected plan	41
IV.10	Lead water pipe serving fountain at centre of Elliptical Building courtyard	42
IV.11	Foundation for fountain at centre of Elliptical Building courtyard	42
IV.12	Second Elliptical Building, erected c AD 230: restored plan	43
IV.13	Massive masonry and elaborate cornice of fortress curtain wall	45
IV.14	Area of fortress reserved for offices and accommodation of the provincial governor and his staff: block plan	47
IV.15	Examples of two types of antefix possibly associated with Legion II <i>Adiutrix</i>	49
V.1	Extent of <i>canabae legionis</i> c AD 100: plan	55
V.2	Stone legionary amphitheatre c AD 100: plan	56
V.3	<i>Mansio</i> c AD 180: plan	57
V.4	Head of well under portico on south side of <i>mansio</i>	58
V.5	Altar found in <i>mansio</i> dedicated <i>numinibus Augustorum</i>	59
V.6	Western sector of the <i>canabae</i> c AD 200: plan	60
V.7	Baths in Lower Watergate Street	61
V.8	Location of Heronbridge and Saltney settlements: plan	62
V.9	Heronbridge: plan showing layout of stone strip buildings c AD 130	63
V.10	Tombstone of <i>optio</i> who died in a shipwreck	65
V.11	Best preserved section of the so-called 'quay wall' beside the Roodee	66
V.12	Iron shoes from timber piles found in 1885 during construction of a gasometer	67
V.13	Possible condition of harbour area in late first century AD: map	69
V.14	Western sector of <i>canabae</i> with 'quay wall' re-interpreted as part of late defensive circuit	71
VIII.1	Lead ingot typical of those found at Chester	93
VIII.2	Source of fortress water supply and course of aqueduct: map	99

VIII.3	Water distribution system within fortress: plan	101
VIII.4	Fortress drainage system: plan	102
VIII.5	Main outflows of fortress drainage system: plan	103
VIII.6	Remains of exercise hall of fortress baths	104
VIII.7	Close-up of column base and fallen column drum	105
VIII.8	Fortress baths as built c AD 75: plan	106
VIII.9	Concrete bases which supported the main reservoir for the fortress baths	107
VIII.10	Concrete floor of <i>tepidarium</i> of fortress; lines of <i>tubi fittili</i> clearly visible	110
VIII.11	Close-up of <i>tubi fittili</i>	110
VIII.12	Examples of <i>tubi fittili</i> in position used as inner lining of vault at Bulla Regia	111
IX.1	Barrack block: computer reconstruction	114
IX.2	Barrack block: computer reconstruction	114
IX.3	North-eastern corner of the Chester fortress: computer reconstruction	115
IX.4	Centurion's quarters: computer reconstruction	116
IX.5	Centurion's quarters: alternative computer reconstruction	116
IX.6	The 'Elliptical Building in the third century: computer reconstruction	117

## Tables

VIII.1	Flavian fortress construction: timber requirements	90
VIII.2	Flavian baths construction: material requirements	92
VIII.3	Severan fortress reconstruction: stone requirements	95
VIII.4	Severan fortress reconstruction: roof tile requirements	96
VIII.5	Severan fortress reconstruction: other tile requirements	97
VIII.6	Minimum fortress and official building water requirement per 24-hour cycle	108
VIII.7	Fortress baths: water requirement per 24-hour cycle	109