

IV: The Foundation of the Legionary Fortress

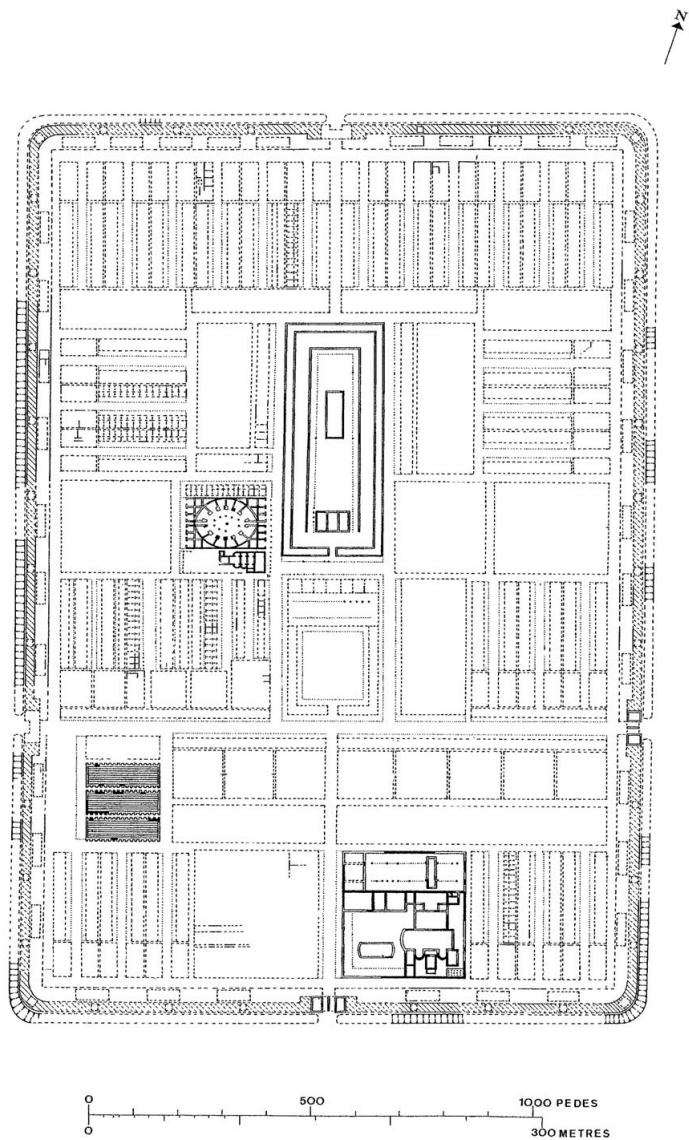
Deva, The Flavians and Imperial Symbolism

by D J P Mason PhD, FSA, MIFA

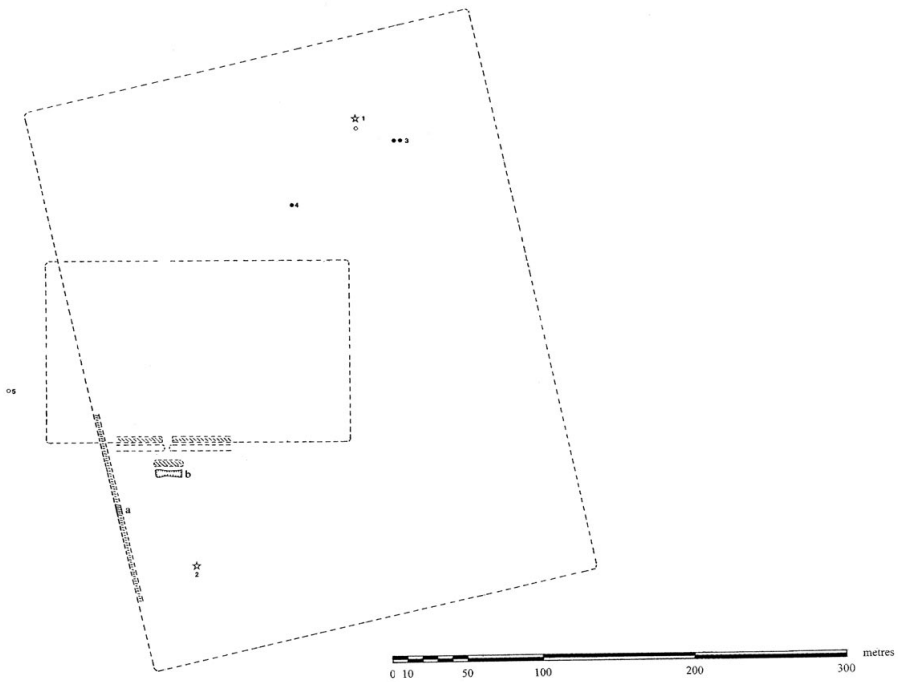
Occasions such as this afford the opportunity to put forward new ideas and hypotheses and sometimes, metaphorically speaking, to ‘put the cat among the pigeons’. The vast amount of new information produced by excavations during the last thirty years, in combination with the ongoing analysis of unpublished investigations conducted earlier, means that at last we can not only discern much of the fortress plan but can also actually reconstruct much of its internal layout at various phases in its long history, including that of the original fortress (Ill IV.1). The installation of a legion at Chester was part of the redeployment of the legions in Britain which took place in the 70s of the first century following the enlargement of the Roman province by the conquest of Brigantia. It is known from a fragmentary inscription that the main internal bath building (*thermae*) had already been completed by the middle of AD 79 at the latest. Given the time needed to construct this large and technically sophisticated building, it is probable that the lead ingots found at Chester datable to 74 mark the beginning of work on the construction of the fortress.

The question of whether there was Roman military occupation at Chester before the establishment of the legionary fortress has been much debated over the years, and in a resumé of recent work on Roman Chester published in 1978 (*New Evidence for Roman Chester*) the impression was given that the defences of a pre-Flavian fort or fortress and one of its internal buildings had been found on the Abbey Green and Goss Street sites respectively (McPeake 1978). However, reassessment of the evidence from both sites as a preliminary to publication has overturned this initial interpretation. The earliest building at Goss Street is now placed in the primary stage of the legionary fortress, while the collection of features at Abbey Green once viewed as a box rampart seem far more likely to have belonged to structures sited at the rear of the fortress rampart.

However, the analysis for publication of the archive of a site excavated even earlier has, paradoxically, yielded incontestable evidence of pre-fortress Roman military activity. The site in question lies at the heart of the fortress and was occupied by the so-called Elliptical Building excavated in the 1960s, of which more in a moment, a structure securely dated to the early Flavian period by an inscribed lead water pipe datable to the first half of 79. Beneath its courtyard was found a 15-m-long flat-bottomed and steep-sided ditch, 4.25 m wide and 1.25 m deep, very reminiscent of the short length of ditch and accompanying



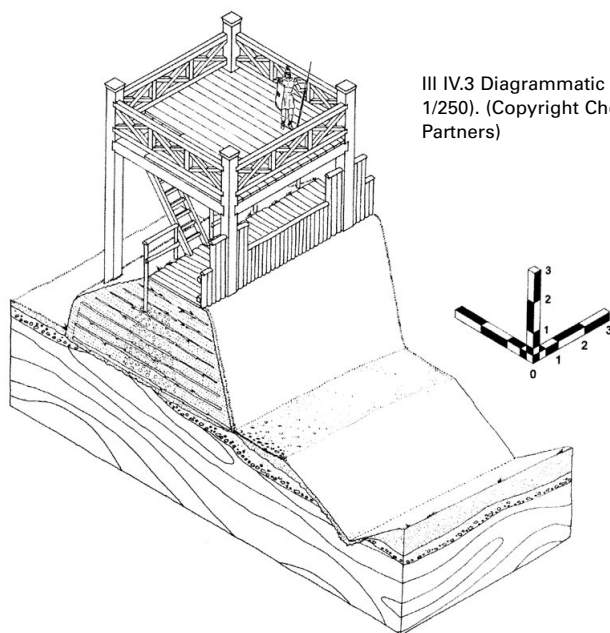
III IV.1 The primary fortress, c AD 75 plan. (Scale 1/5000)



III IV.2 Pre-fortress ditch and other features beneath Elliptical Building: plan.
(Scale 1/5000). (Copyright D Mason and Chester City Council)

bank known as a *titulum* often provided as an additional defensive feature in front of the gates of Roman camps (III IV.2, b). Other early features were found beneath the south-west corner of the same building. These consisted of a foundation trench and a post pit belonging to a substantial timber structure (III IV. 2, a). This could have been a building or, just conceivably, a timber revetted rampart. Whichever, the most notable aspect of this structure is the fact that its alignment, south-east–north-west, is markedly different from that of all known phases of fortress buildings, and it is interesting to note that slight features following a similar alignment have been found underlying the earliest buildings on a number of sites within the fortress. While the restrictive conditions under which the 1960s investigations took place prevented detailed examination of the surrounding areas for further early features, there seems a strong possibility that the remains found below the Elliptical Building belong to at least one phase of pre-fortress, and perhaps pre-Flavian, Roman military activity at Chester.

Returning now to the legionary fortress, this was the usual ‘playing card’ shape and at 24.65 ha (60.90 acres) was the largest by far of the three fortresses constructed in Britain in the early 70s, York and Caerleon both being about 4 ha smaller. The reason why Chester needed to be 20% larger than its sister fortresses is unknown but a possible explanation is advanced below. The primary defences consisted of a 6-m-wide rampart with turf stack



III IV.3 Diagrammatic reconstruction of rampart. (Scale 1/250). (Copyright Chester City Council and Gifford and Partners)

revetments front and rear enclosing a core of sand, clay and rubble with, as recent excavations have demonstrated, layers of logs and/or brushwood at regular vertical intervals of 1 Roman foot to provide structural reinforcement (III IV.3) The corner and interval towers — numbering thirty-six in all — were of timber, each raised on four principal posts. The earliest gateways were also undoubtedly of timber, but the discovery on the site of the south gate (*porta praetoria*) of a mass of very hard concrete of a type which only occurs in the Flavian period implies that a start was soon made on replacing these in stone. There are also hints that the provision of a masonry curtain wall with towers was begun soon after the foundation of the fortress. In front of the rampart and completing the defences was a single ditch approximately 3 m wide and 1.5 m deep.

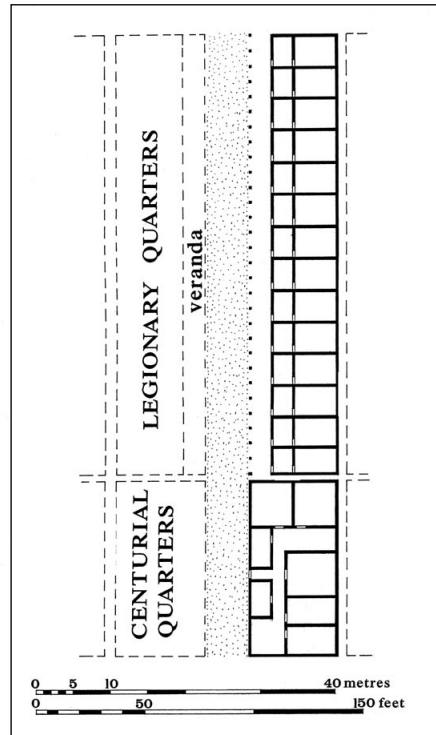
The distribution of the internal buildings in their primary form is shown in III IV.1 and, apart from a few notable exceptions, these were constructed of timber. As usual, the accommodation for the ten cohorts of the legion was placed in the outer plots alongside the *via sagularis*, six barrack blocks per cohort of 480 men, with rather more for the First Cohort which had a complement of 800 or 960. Each barrack was 11.8 m wide and 83–84 m long overall, of which about 26.5 m was given over to the centurion's house (III IV.4). The portion of the barrack housing the ordinary legionaries was sub-divided into thirteen or fourteen *contubernia*. In addition to the barracks of two cohorts, the forward part of the fortress (*praetentura*) contained the houses of the senior officers. Although little explored, these probably fronted onto the main cross-street (*via principalis*), as in other fortresses. At the west end of this street, situated next to the *porta principalis dextra* so that grain brought by ship only had to be transported a short distance from the harbour, lay a group of three, or more probably four, stone granaries. Partly explored in the 1950s, additional information was recovered from an excavation in 1987. No trace of earlier timber build-

ings was found on either occasion and this, together with the fact that the stone buildings had foundations of hard cobble concrete typical of the early Flavian period, suggests that the stone granaries were among the few buildings of the early fortress to be built of masonry.

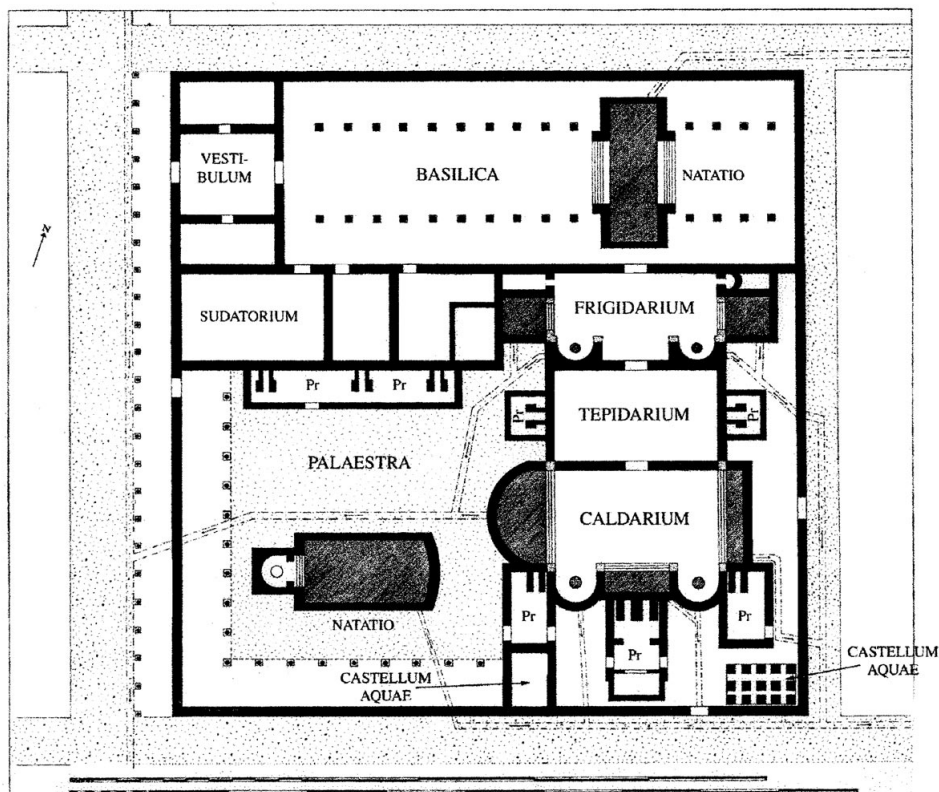
Another structure in the latter category was the main bath building of the fortress, lying beside the south gate (III IV.5). A sizeable portion of this building, consisting of a covered exercise hall of basilical form with a range of heated rooms equipped with mosaics along its south side, was exposed and subsequently destroyed by building works in 1863. Fortunately, a written, drawn and photographic record of the remains was made by Dr Thomas Brushfield, a prominent and distinguished member of the Society in its early days. Further discoveries at the east end of the hall followed in 1909/10 and 1926/7, including a chamber with a fine mosaic featuring a tableau of marine creatures (III IV.6). Another large portion of this complex was exposed, hastily investigated and then destroyed in 1963/4 during preparatory works for the

construction of the Grosvenor Shopping Centre. This revealed that the room with the sea-creature mosaic was in fact the first of three large halls with vaulted ceilings (*frigidarium*, *tepidarium* and *caldarium*) which had formed the main bathing suite. Beyond the south end of the latter lay the principal furnace house with ancillary furnaces to either side, and beyond that again two large water reservoirs (*castella aquae*). The degree of preservation in this part of the complex was quite outstanding, with walls surviving to a height of 3.5 m or more and with hypocaust systems completely intact. The remaining quarter of the building to the south-west was occupied by an open-air exercise yard (*palaestra*), equipped with a large swimming pool. The fortress baths measured 85 m square overall and their completion during the reign of Vespasian is attested by a fragmentary inscription recovered from the exercise hall in 1863. The loss of this archaeological gem will be offset to some extent in the near future by the publication of a definitive report on this magnificent building based on analysis of the archive of information recorded in the 1960s along with all previous discoveries.

The plot opposite the baths has been little explored, and so the nature of the building(s) which stood there is unknown, although this is a likely position for the hospital. The remaining and largely unexplored space in the *praetentura* may have been used to accommodate a unit of auxiliary cavalry, as at Caerleon, but this is pure speculation. Occupying

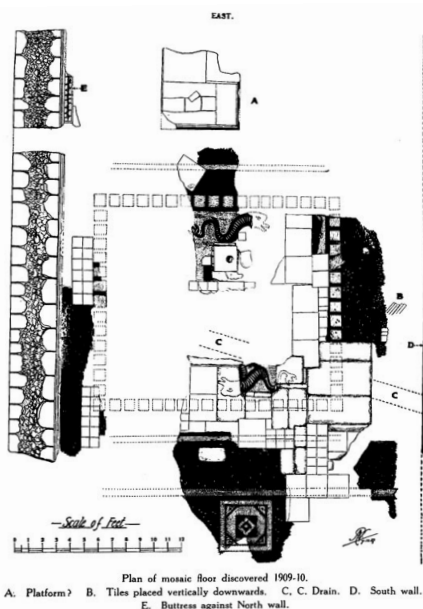


III IV.4 Layout of Flavian barracks: plan.
(Scale 1/1000)

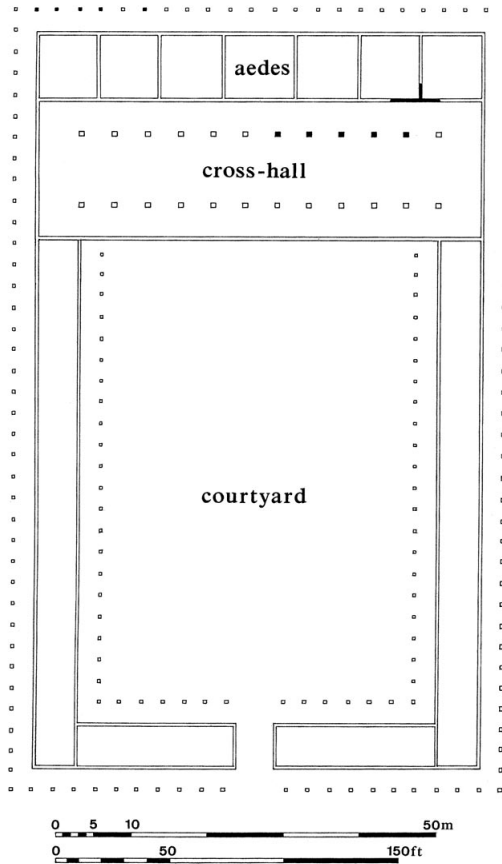


above: III IV.5 Flavian fortress baths: plan. (Scale 1/1000)

right: III IV.6 Drawing of marine-tableau mosaic floor, *frigidarium* of fortress baths, 1909/10. (Not to scale).
(J Chester Archaeol Soc)



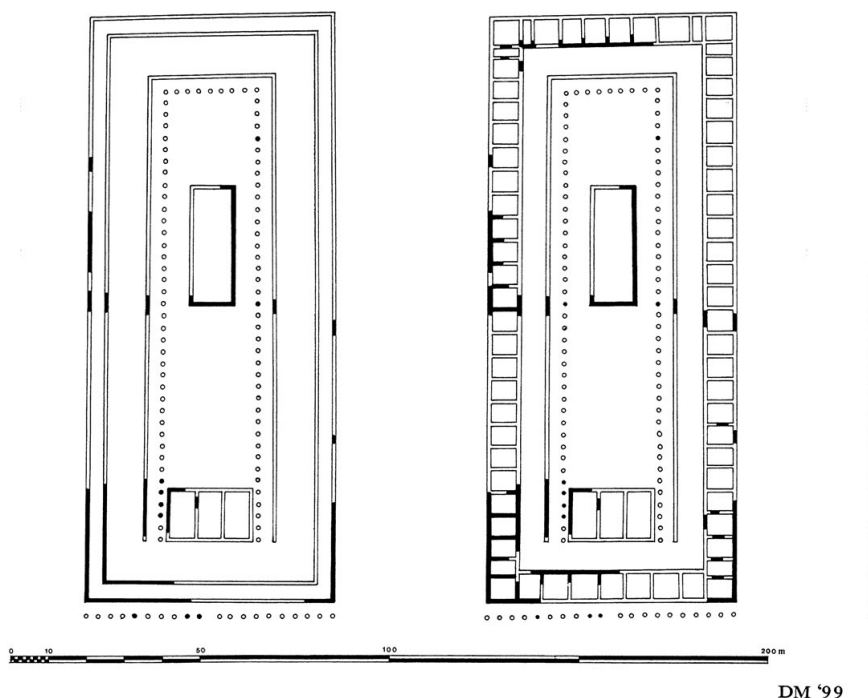
Site XXXVII. S. Michael's Row, p. 117.



III IV.7 Primary timber headquarters building: plan. (Scale 1/1000)

its usual position at the junction of the *via principalis* with the *via praetoria* lay the headquarters building (*principia*). Apart from a minor excavation close to its south-west corner, no other investigation of this building has occurred since the Old Market Hall and Goss Street excavations of 1969 and 1973 respectively. However, reappraisal of the evidence from the second of these as a prelude to publication has resulted in a new interpretation of the earliest phases (III IV.7). As a result the primary, timber, *principia* is now seen as having been *c* 8 m shorter in its east-west dimension than the fully developed third-century building, giving it an overall width of *c* 64.5 compared with *c* 73.15 m. As will be seen shortly, the legionary commander's residence (*praetorium*) at Chester did not occupy its normal position for this period, behind the *principia*, but instead, as had usually been the case in Neronian and earlier fortresses, took up the plot on its sinistral (east in our case) side. Little of this building has been examined methodically, although discoveries of hypocausts and mosaics many years ago attest the quality of its appointments.

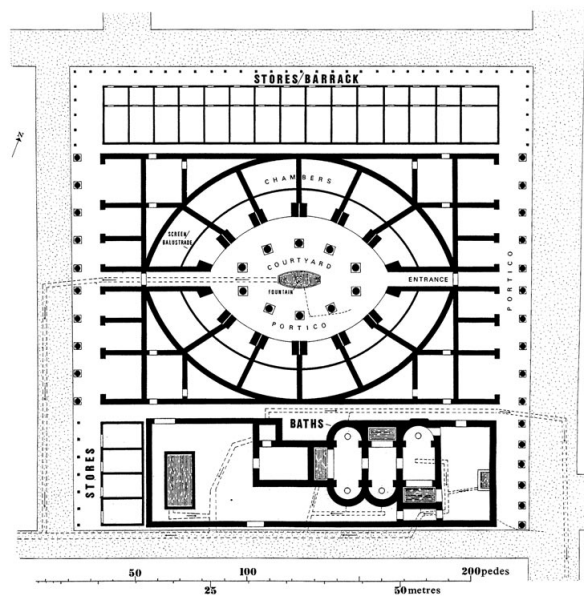
It is the area at the centre of the rear half of the fortress which has been the scene of the greatest advances in knowledge. Two of the buildings here are rather unusual to say the



III IV.8 Courtyard building behind headquarters as originally designed.
(left) and as completed (right): plans (Scale 1/2000)

least, and it is evident that the structures in this area are in some way bound up with the reason for the fortress's unusually large size. Immediately behind the *principia* lay a building of courtyard plan (III IV.8). Its south-west corner was excavated in 1967/8, but it was only with excavations further north in 1979–81 that the enormous size of this building became apparent when it was revealed to measure 60 m in width and 160 m in length and occupied the space equivalent to two full *insulae*. It consisted of a narrow outer range which was separated from an inner free-standing colonnaded portico by an open space. At the heart of the complex was a single, long rectangular structure some 12 by 30 m in size. Another unusual feature was the fact that it was built of stone, not timber. Construction had only got as far as ground level when work stopped, and there was an interval possibly lasting a decade or more before the building was completed, albeit to a modified plan in which the outer range was widened from 6 to 8.5 m and divided up into rooms of regular size with wide doorways. As completed, the building appears to have been used for storage purposes.

To the west of the south end of the building just described lay the so-called Elliptical Building, a structure which has been the subject of intense speculation ever since the final campaign of excavation in the late 1960s (III IV.9). It has been a source of puzzlement because no building even remotely like it has been found in any other legionary fortress anywhere in the empire. Attempts to define its function were hampered for many years by the failure of the director of the 1960s excavations to produce a detailed plan, let alone a



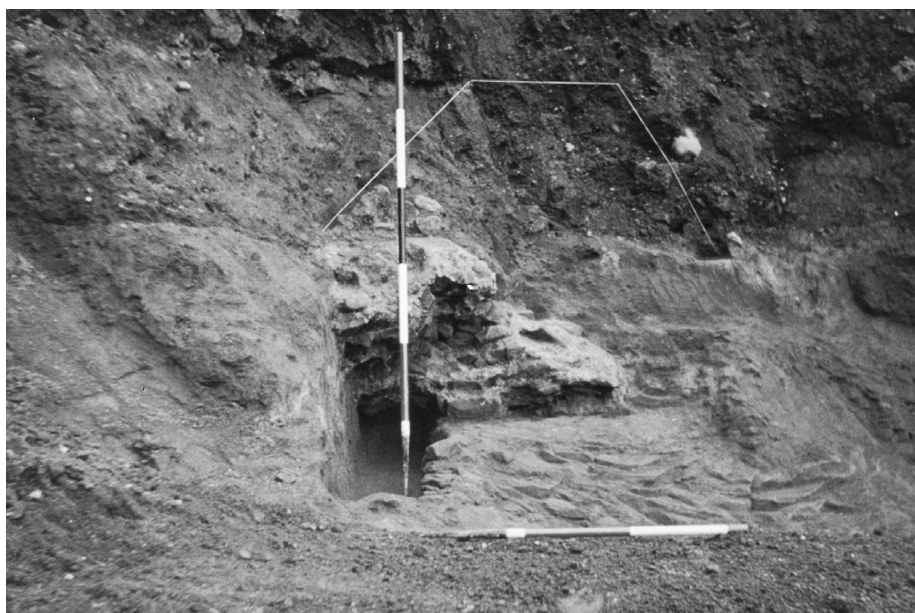
III IV.9 Flavian Elliptical Building and neighbouring structures: restored and corrected plan.
(Scale 1/1000). (Copyright D Mason and Chester City Council)

definitive report. This omission has now been remedied by the recent publication of a comprehensive account of this building. The Elliptical Building measured 60 x 33 m overall and consisted of a central oval courtyard 9 x 14 m in size surrounded by a 4-m-deep colonnaded portico behind which lay an encircling range of twelve wedge-shaped rooms. All of the latter were equipped with monumental-scale arched entrances 4 m wide and at least 5.5 m high which were raised on stone piers 1.8 x 0.90 m in size arranged in pairs and set on very hard cobble concrete foundations 2.5 m square and 1 m thick formed in rock-cut pits. A short way into the interior lay a slight foundation concentric with the other elements which can have supported little more than a screen or balustrade. At the heart of the courtyard lay the foundation for some form of monument which we know was to include a fountain as a lead water pipe was found running up to its base. This bore a moulded inscription recording its manufacture during the ninth consulship of Vespasian and the seventh of his son Titus (AD 79, before 24 June) when Gnaeus Julius Agricola was governor of Britain (III IV.10). Cut into the rock floor of the foundation pit along one side was a small trench which had been filled with clean earth (III IV.11). This seems likely to have been connected with some form of foundation ceremony at the time of the building's inception.

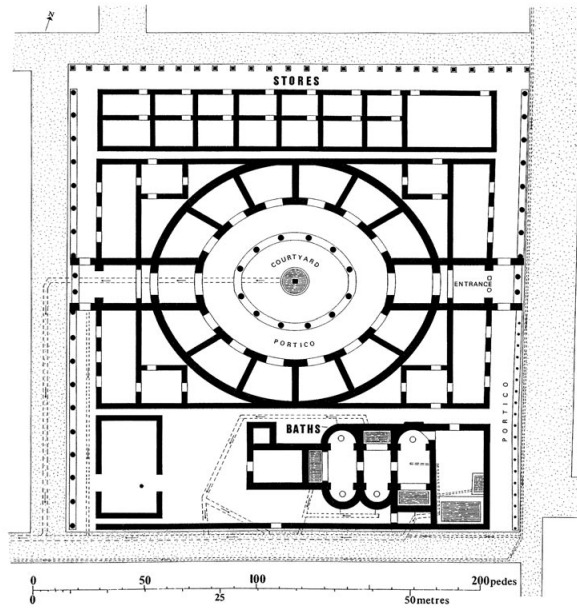
To reconcile it with the surrounding street grid, the main part of the building was enclosed within a rectilinear perimeter wall, and a range of rooms along the shorter sides completed the plan. Access to the interior of the building was limited to a narrow entrance at each end of the long axis. The northern end of the *insula* was occupied by long narrow store building, while most of the southern end was taken up by a bath building. Much smaller than



III IV.10 Lead water pipe serving fountain at centre of Elliptical Building courtyard; the cast inscription mentions the number of consulships held by Vespasian and his son Titus, enabling the pipe's manufacture to be placed in the first half of the year 79.
(Copyright D Mason and Chester City Council)



III IV.11 Foundation for fountain at centre of Elliptical Building courtyard, as revealed by mechanical excavation in 1964. Note the ritual trench cut into the rock floor of the foundation pit along the left side. (Copyright D Mason and Chester City Council)



III IV.12 Second Elliptical Building, erected *c* AD 230, and neighbouring structures: restored plan. (Scale 1/1000). (Copyright D Mason and Chester City Council)

the fortress baths, these are an additional oddity as legionary fortresses normally have only one internal bath building.

Like the enormous building to the east, construction of the Elliptical Building stopped soon after the foundations and footings had been laid. Here, however, the subsequent interval before completion was far longer — 150 years in fact. The site lay largely derelict, used for the dumping of refuse which buried the wall stubs of the building beneath a layer 1 m thick. The project was resurrected when the fortress underwent a comprehensive rebuilding in the period *c* 230 and this time the Elliptical Building was actually finished, though with major modifications to the original design (III IV.12). These included less monumental entrances to the twelve principal rooms and the deletion of the screen wall, a complete physical separation of the oval and street-frontage ranges, a tripling in the size of the two entrances to the building, which also received far grander architectural treatment, and the possible addition of a second storey. It is quite evident from the relationship between the foundations of the original and later buildings that the location of the former was completely unknown to the surveyors who laid out the third-century building. This means that they must have had access to the 150-year-old plans of the original structure which had presumably lain in the fortress archives gathering dust for a century and a half — an interesting insight into Roman military record-keeping.

Because of its uniqueness, and the absence of internal fittings and commemorative inscriptions owing to its unfinished state, the intended function of the original Elliptical Building is problematical. The quality of its construction shows that it was an extremely

important structure, but beyond that one can only study its architectural form to see how it could actually function as a building in order to try and determine its purpose. It was certainly not suitable as a residence, nor was it linked with the neighbouring baths in such a way as to suggest they were parts of a single complex. Similarly, neither the layout of the substructure nor the size and shape of the courtyard support the notion that it was some form of amphitheatre. It does bear a superficial resemblance to a number of market buildings, but it is difficult to see why such a mundane structure would have been given this elaborate architectural treatment, and in any case a market is not the sort of building to be found inside a military base, at least not at this period.

The overall design was clearly intended to achieve an enclosed and quiet atmosphere, while the twelve equal-sized rooms with their open, monumental doorways seem built specifically for the purpose of display. The fact that there are twelve chambers may be important as this number, then as now, possessed multi-faceted significance, not least in both terrestrial and cosmological mapping. The twelve months of the year and the twelve major points on the compass spring to mind, as do the twelve principal deities of the Roman state. The last of these would have been a suitable subject for the contents of the rooms, but there is in fact no evidence from elsewhere of the ‘divine dozen’ being worshipped in a single building. Also, apart from the shrine containing a likeness of the emperor in the headquarters building, temples and shrines were confined to the area outside the defences. The number twelve does, however, occur in the context of the division of the empire into administrative units, and so does its multiple twenty-four in the early first-century descriptive account which accompanied Agrippa’s pictorial map of the empire set up in Rome *c* 5 BC. Then there is the very unusual and awkward shape of the main part of the building, which must be significant as the architect had taken so much trouble to achieve this rather than a simpler design. It is surely no mere coincidence that it is very reminiscent of the shape of the inhabited world — the *orbis terrarum* — as perceived by Roman and earlier geographers. Thus, the Elliptical Building could have been an ‘image of the world’ or *imago mundi*, the fountain and accompanying pool at its centre representing the Mediterranean, with the surrounding rooms containing sculpture, statuary, frescoes and/or mosaics depicting the countries and peoples of the constituent regions of the empire, presided over by the all powerful, semi-divine emperor ensuring Rome did not falter from its ordained destiny to rule the world.

If this were its true purpose, why was such an unusual and extravagant building, more in keeping with the architecture of a major city, or even Rome itself, constructed in a straightforwardly utilitarian establishment like a legionary fortress, especially one at the very edge of the empire? It might be explained by the close link between the legion which founded Chester, II *Adiutrix pia fidelis*, and the emperor Vespasian. The final contest in the period of civil war which became known as the ‘year of the four emperors’ (68/9) was between the forces of Vitellius and those of Vespasian. At a critical moment in the battle for the control of Italy, the section of the Mediterranean fleet based at Ravenna went over to Vespasian’s side, and as a reward the men involved were enrolled in a new legion — II *Adiutrix* — with the higher status and greater privileges this bestowed. Soon afterwards the legion was dispatched to Lower Germany to assist in the suppression of the revolt of Civilis, and thence to Britain in 71, where it took over the fortress at Lincoln from Legion



III IV.13 Massive masonry and elaborate cornice of fortress curtain wall

IX which moved forward to York. Chester was the first fortress that II *Adiutrix* actually built for itself, and this might explain the inclusion of a building which celebrated Vespasian both as Restorer of Peace to the Roman world (just like the first emperor Augustus, to whom he was often compared) and founder of a new dynasty — the Flavians.

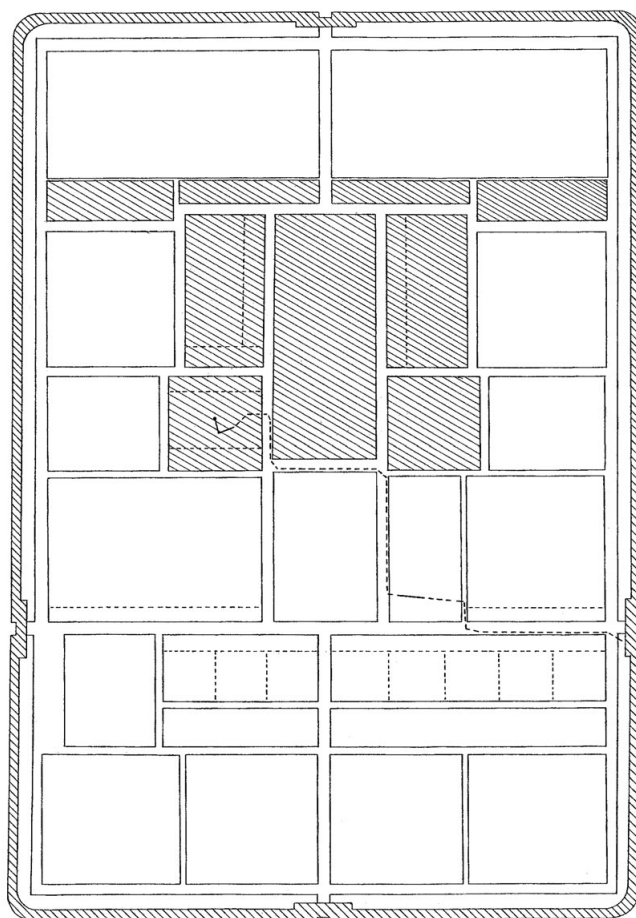
While this might explain the Elliptical Building, it does not account for the other peculiarities of the Chester fortress. The curtain wall of the defences, for example, is unusually grand in that it is built of very large blocks of sandstone laid without mortar in the style known as *opus quadratum* (III IV.13). Requiring much greater skill to construct than the more common double-skinned concrete walls with *petit appareil* facings found at York and Caerleon, this style was already rather archaic by the mid-first century, being reserved for particularly important structures such as city gates, temple podia and the walls of those most Roman of provincial cities — colonies of legionary veterans. The date of the completion of the fortress wall at Chester is unknown but, as described above, there is sound evidence that it was begun in the early Flavian period.

There are also the baths next to the Elliptical Building and the large building behind the *principia* already mentioned, while the early disruption of the construction programme exhibited by both of these also affected the *insula* north of the Elliptical Building. There, whatever structure was intended for the bulk of the plot was not even begun let alone finished, and it remained open ground until the third century. Clearly, there had been some grand scheme planned for the centre of the fortress, consisting of at least three unusual buildings, which had been abandoned at an early stage in its development. That these were not essential to the normal functioning of the fortress is shown by the fact that the sites of

two of them remained largely unused for 150 years, while another was completed but to a modified plan. It is obvious that it was the 'extra' buildings at the heart of the fortress that caused it to be 20% larger than its sister fortresses, and if the three *insulae* just described are grouped together in a symmetrical arrangement with the two on the east side of the large building and the peculiarly shallow plots to the north they total *c* 4 ha, the amount by which Chester exceeds the size of Caerleon and York (Ill IV.14). It is equally obvious that these buildings were rather special and that the extra space was not required merely to accommodate additional barracks or stores. Taken together with the unusual form and architectural sophistication of the Elliptical Building it seems very likely that it was an authority higher even than the legate of the legion that ordered the construction of these extra buildings, in other words it was a decision taken by the provincial governor himself, who intended to make Chester his headquarters and thus the *de facto* administrative centre for the entire province. Thus, the lead water mains at Chester bearing the name of the provincial governor, which are the only examples from the whole of Britain, should perhaps be taken at face value as evidence of buildings under his direct control.

This suggestion might seem outlandish, but Chester had a lot to recommend it as the location for the governor's headquarters in this period. The collapse of the client-kingdom of Brigantia and its annexation by Rome in the early 70s, together with the final subjugation of the Ordovices in north-west Wales, had more than doubled the size of the province. The expansionist policy adopted by the Flavians in Britain, where both Vespasian and Titus had seen action, the former commanding Legion II *Augusta* during the invasion period, required a base for the governor which was closer to the centre of the action than Colchester, the existing headquarters. Chester lay equidistant from the other legionary bases at Caerleon and York, with its rear protected by Wroxeter, had good communications back to the south-east and, very importantly, possessed an excellent harbour well suited to be the base for combined land and sea operations along the west coast. It also faced out towards Ireland which we know Agricola, and possibly his predecessor Sextus Frontinus, had already targeted for future conquest. And what more appropriate place for the representative of the semi-divine being of the emperor to exercise power from than *Deva*, whose very name carried connotations of powerful divinity in both Latin and Celtic?

An additional 4 ha might seem an excessive amount of space merely to cater for the governor, but it must be remembered that he was accompanied by his personal retinue of friends and advisers, a bodyguard of 1,000 troops and a considerable body of officials and administrators. These would have needed offices as well as living accommodation, while an audience hall where the governor could receive and hold meetings with representatives of the British tribes would have been a necessity. Possibly the vast building behind the *principia* was intended to be the principal administrative complex, with the governor's residence occupying one of the plots on its east side. As to the Elliptical Building, the inclusion in the government compound of a monument which celebrated the majesty of Rome and its restored sense of purpose under the founder of a new dynasty would have been especially appropriate given that both the legion in residence — II *Adiutrix* — and the men who held the office of governor during its construction — Sextus Julius Frontinus (74–7) and Gnaeus Julius Agricola (77–83) — had strong ties with the emperor Vespasian. Who among the British delegates visiting



III IV.14 Area of fortress reserved for offices and accommodation of the provincial governor and his staff: block plan. (Scale 1/5000).
(Copyright D Mason and Chester City Council)

Deva would not have been impressed either by the extent and power of Rome as depicted by its contents or by the creature comforts available in the baths next door? Nor were the military successes in Britain used for purely local propaganda purposes. Back in Rome, Vespasian and Titus in 75 presided over the ceremonial extending of the city's formal limits (something which had happened on only two previous occasions: Caesar's conquest of Gaul and Claudius' invasion of Britain), symbolising the extension of the empire based on their conquests in that distant island.

If this indeed was the grand plan for Chester, what caused it to be abandoned? The answer is very probably bound up with the decision to conquer the tribes beyond the Brigantes. Agricola's campaigns in Scotland shifted the focus of activity much farther north. Combined operations by the legions and the fleet featured prominently and II *Adiutrix* may have been heavily involved, given its maritime background, and this may have caused the construction programme at Chester to be postponed. It is also possible that Frontinus' choice of Chester as headquarters no longer suited Agricola. No sooner had Scotland been conquered than it was rapidly abandoned because of Domitian's need to withdraw troops to repel Dacian incursions across the Danube. Thoughts of further conquest in Britain were given up: by the close of the first century the governors of Britain were more likely to be administrators than generals, and London, the commercial hub of the province, had become the obvious location for the seat of the administration.

Amongst the range of decorated antefixes found at Chester there are two types which stand out from the rest, not only because they are comparatively rare and the emblems they bear are different from the ubiquitous boar of Legion XX but also, and principally, because the quality of the moulds from which they were cast is exceptionally fine. One shows a lion's head and the other the face of Jupiter in his guise as the horned god Jupiter Ammon (Ill IV.15). That is the only difference, however, and their shared high quality and common overall design — with the central image framed in an *aedicula* with spirally fluted columns — demonstrates that the two types were contemporary. At what period they were in use is unknown, although I feel their exquisite quality is indicative of an early date. Most examples have been recovered as stray finds, while those found during excavation have occurred as single items in refuse deposits. However, it may be significant that there are no examples in the large collection of antefixes recovered from the site of Legion XX's brick, tile and pottery works at Holt, 12 km south of Chester, which were in use from c AD 90 to c AD 240. They are far too fine to be of local civilian manufacture and the possibility must be considered, therefore, that they were made by Legion II *Adiutrix*. While this cannot be proved the iconography of these antefixes supports that notion.

Amun (also Amen, Amon, Ammon) was the chief of the Egyptian gods. One of the sacred animals associated with Amun was the ram and he was often depicted with a ram's head. His popularity also spread to the tribes of the Libyan desert and one of his centres of worship was the oasis at Siwa. The fame of the oracle at the latter spread throughout the eastern Mediterranean with the growth of major Greek colonies in Egypt from the eighth century BC; and when Alexander the Great put an end to Persian rule in Egypt in the 330s it was the oasis at Siwa that he made a point of visiting, despite the hazardous journey involved. The oracle (of course) pronounced him 'Son of Ammon' and thus the rightful



III IV.15 Examples of two types of antefix possibly associated with Legion II *Adiutrix*.
 One bears the bearded and horned head of Jupiter Ammon, the other the head
 of a lion — the zodiacal sign associated with Jupiter.
 (Copyright Chester City Council, Grosvenor Museum)

ruler of Egypt. The unifier of Greece and Asia, Alexander was referred to by Persian poets in later years as ‘Sikandar Dhulkharnein’ — meaning ‘Alexander the Two-horned’ — because he and his successor Hellenistic rulers were often portrayed on coinage with the horns of Amun, a device meant to convey their divine right to rule. The usual process of syncretism led to Zeus Ammon becoming the chief god of the Hellenistic world represented by an image of the head of Zeus replete with the horns of Amun.

In 30 BC, Octavian (shortly to become the emperor Augustus) became sole ruler of the entire Graeco-Roman world, including Egypt, and for the first time since Alexander all of the hellenised countries of the east were united. A master of propaganda, Augustus used the image of Jupiter Ammon (Zeus having been supplanted by Jupiter with Rome’s mastery of Greece) to promote the image of the universal extent and semi-divine nature of his power. In the Forum of Augustus in Rome, for example, the attic storey of the portico surrounding the Temple of Mars Ultor was embellished with decorated roundels containing portraits of Jupiter Ammon and Medusa, a scheme alluding to his decisive defeat of Mark Antony’s forces at Actium and subsequent conquest of Egypt by evoking memories of Alexander’s hanging of gold shields on the Parthenon in 334 BC in celebration of his victory over Darius. Imitations of this decorative scheme soon appeared in the *fora* and imperial cult sanctuaries at major provincial centres in the west including Arles, Avenches, Geneva, Merida, Tarragona, and Vienne. More pertinent to the present discussion, it was also deployed in the civic buildings of ports in the northern Adriatic such as Aquileia, Concordia, Trieste and Zara, the very region where the section of the fleet from which Legion II *Adiutrix* was raised had its base. The site of early Roman Ravenna has been little

explored and so the employment there of the Jupiter Ammon image in architectural decoration cannot be proved. Even so, it would have been very familiar to the men who were enrolled in II *Adiutrix*.

Furthermore, their allegiance to Vespasian in the civil war of 69, for which they were rewarded with legionary status and the title *pia fidelis*, 'loyal and faithful', may have given them a particular reason to promote this emblem. Although Vespasian was the eventual victor of the civil war of 68/9, he was the founder of a new dynasty and the first Italian (as opposed to Roman) emperor, and as such he needed to generate as much propaganda as possible to demonstrate the legitimacy of his rule to try and deter any further rivals. The similarities with Augustus were heavily promoted, especially the role of 'restorer of peace and saviour of the empire'. Even older parallels were invoked. Vespasian was first acclaimed emperor at Alexandria and like that city's founder, whom Augustus too had been so keen to imitate, was saluted as 'son of Ammon' as well as 'Caesar the god'. The acclamations were led by the prefect of Egypt whose name, ironically, was Tiberius Julius Alexander. Vespasian and his supporters thus had good reasons for adopting and promoting the Jupiter Ammon image with its connotations of universal power and divine protection and this, I believe, explains its occurrence at Flavian Chester. But why, you ask, was the lion's head used as an accompanying emblem? It is true that the lion was particularly associated with Hercules and was thus symbolic of great physical strength, an admirable quality for a legion. However, perhaps even more telling, the lion was also the zodiacal sign of Jupiter.

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