



Fig 7: Isometric reconstruction of all phases.

## New Roman Britain room at the British Museum

THE ROMAN BRITISH ROOM, which was reopened in October, contains some of the finest provincial Roman material in the world. Alongside such familiar masterpieces as the Mildenhall Treasure, the Lullingstone wall-paintings, and the Classicianus tombstone, are displayed the Thetford and Water Newton treasures, the Hockwold silver cups, the Icklingham font and the Corbridge lanx, naming only a few. In orbit around these stars are thematic displays — glassware, ironwork, tableware, medicine (especially interesting, this one), organic finds and pottery. Particularly welcome, and of great interest to archaeologist, are displays on the excavations at Stonea and in the Fens, and Uley, and writing tablets from Vindolanda.

A new 'military' gallery shows maps, aerial photographs and reconstruction drawing, as well as armour and other military artifacts. This gallery can be entered from the 'Man before Metals' room, and from it one can descend to the main body of

the Room. I recommend this route in preference to the direct entrance to the Room, since the maps and photographs help put the artifactual and artistic materials in their geographical and historical setting.

To some extent, the British Museum is a prisoner of its own collections. There are so many treasures that must be displayed in a relatively small space, that the scope for interpretation and the more everyday aspects of Roman Britain is rather restricted. The increased emphasis given to excavation, welcome though it is, still leaves a suspicion that excavation is regarded primarily as a source of small finds. As an archaeologist, perhaps, I felt a lack of structural and domestic evidence. However, within the constraints of space, time and the collections, the British Museum has done a very good job, and is to be congratulated. The new display is well worth a visit.

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