

# NUNTIUS

The Newsletter of The Friends of Brading Roman Villa



## Chairman's Report:

I would like to take this opportunity to wish you a happy and prosperous New Year.

I'm able to report that the first Wendy Cannon Memorial Lecture was a great success. Sir Barry Cunliffe's lecture helped to raise over £800 towards the Wendy Cannon Education Fund.

As I reported in the past, the Friends are sponsoring the replacement of all of the information/signage panels in the museum. To help with the project we have received a grant of £5000 from the 'Down to the Coast' project. The project has been set up with the aim of regenerating the East end of the Island. This grant has enabled an addition to our project. A graphic 3D artist has been commissioned to reproduce the Villa and the surrounding landscape as we think it may have looked in its heyday. You will be able to see the Bath House and Hypocaust working in the North Range, and how we think the mosaics looked in the West Range.

Plus, we have also received a grant of £500 from ASPROM, The Association for the Study and Preservation of Roman Mosaics, towards the signage project.

Winter lectures:

For a number of years the Friends have held a series of winter lectures, and it has been decided that we expand our remit to include a series of 'hands on' workshops. In October last we started with a Treasure weekend to mark the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the UK Treasure act. The weekend saw several hundred people visit the Villa, some bringing along their own treasures for verification.

The idea for the workshops is to hold them over two or three weekends on a Saturday afternoon. In February, Bob Pitts will start with an introduction to Roman Samian pottery.

We have continued to hold a coffee morning on the first Tuesday of the month, where you can come along to the Villa to meet some of your trustees, and catch up with other members of the Friends, while enjoying coffee (or tea) and cake.

Thanks go to all the volunteers for their continuing dedication, enthusiasm and hard work in giving their time and expertise to the Villa, enabling the Villa to remain one of the UK's leading Roman Museums and Island attractions. Thanks must also go to Adam Watson, the Villa CEO, and his team who work with the Friends on a daily basis.

I would like to end by thanking you for your continuing support of the FBRV. Your support is vital to the continuing success of the charity. I look forward to meeting you at the Villa.

David Reeves,  
Chairman: the Friends of Brading Roman Villa.

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## A further attempt to identify the characters in the Brading Bacchus mosaic

Over the years numerous attempts have been made to interpret some of the complexity in the Brading room 3 mosaic. In particular, speculation has centred on the identity of the Cock-headed man. Early on, the favourite suggestion was Abraxas, a solar deity found in Greco- Egyptian magical papyri. The prime difficulty with this interpretation was that there seem to be no other connecting links.

Likewise, the strongest suggestion in the Price Report of 1881, was that the figure could be associated with Mithras, the sun god of Persia and connected with Gnosticism.[1] This was equally hard to connect. There are other suggestions in the Price Report for the symbolism in the Cock-headed man, none of which gained much support. In more recent times the suggestion has been made that somebody named Gallus is depicted here. Often the Emperor Trebonius Gallus AD 251 - 253 has been seen as a possible hate figure, mocked here as being something of a coxcomb!

Some have speculated that the villa owner was rather fond of a certain Gallus and had him depicted because of his affection for him, possibly a Gallic sponsor.

Lady Rosamond Hanworth proposed that the owner of the villa in the late 4th century was Palladius an exiled Chief Minister from Antioch in Syria, who had reason to hate the Eastern Caesar Gallus AD 351-354.[2] Gallus spent a great amount of time at the Hippodrome, which might be relevant for the context in which we see him in the Brading mosaic.

Another recent suggestion has been that the Cock-headed man represents Hermes Trismegistus (Thrice Great Hermes) a Western

interpretation of the Ibis-headed Egyptian god Thoth.[3] This also has not found much favour.

Martin Hennig of the Oxford Institute of Archaeology believes all the panels around Bacchus relate to death. We have the Gladiators, where the likely outcome was the death of one of them: The Cock-headed man can be interpreted as the one to drag dead bodies out of the arena: and the hunting scene with the hound (adapted, he believes in Roman times to look like a fox). He also suggests that both buildings are different types of mausoleum.[3]

The most recent suggestion is that the Cock-headed figure is the symbol of a North African professional Guild of Gladiators and suppliers of wild animals for the arenas of the Empire. They were called the Telegenii and are most commonly represented on figured polychrome mosaic pavements and inscriptions from the Sahil region of Tunisia (the southeastern coastal plain) particularly. They are representative of a large number of such professional, travelling troops of beast hunters.

Each such Guild had its own patron deity, its own unique iconographical symbol, doubtless possessed of magical properties/associations, and even its own ' lucky number'.

The Telegenii especially worshipped the god Bacchus, regarded the millet plant stalks as their sacred totem and believed that the Roman numeral '111' was particularly lucky for them. This last was often found represented in the prongs of a hunting spear or trident. They travelled around from amphitheatre to amphitheatre contracting to perform in the arenas. Leopards were a favourite among the fighting

beasts (our animals in the southern panel of the mosaic are undoubtedly leopards with millet stalks across their bodies. The Telegenii have been assigned a date in the middle of the third century AD.[4]

So the question arises: "Had the owner of our villa a particular connection with the Telegenii? He clearly loved the activities of the amphitheatre and since we don't think there was such an arena on this island, he must have travelled, possibly even to Rome, where the sons of tribal leaders in Britain were often taken to be educated.

The North African Guilds were known to take their acts to Rome and were perhaps the major suppliers of wild animals for the arena sports. There is some evidence to indicate that these guilds engaged in such things as the export of olive oil, which may relate to why there is a possible fig tree in the panel with the hound.

Speculation about the identity of those depicted in the Brading Roman Villa mosaics may well be because that is exactly what was intended by the owner, who would have wanted debate and discussion about his themes and intentions. So perhaps we should not expect any certainty.

[1] Price and Price Report 1881, 8.

[2] Hanworth. *Britannia* 35 November 2004. 240-244.

[3] Hennig. *Britannia* 2013, 260-1.

[4] D L Bomgardner. *The Story of the Roman Amphitheatre*. P. 139.

[5] S R Cosh. *ASPROM Mosaic* 41 (2014). 5-8.

Sent in by:  
David & Shelia Low

## Garden News

As the seasons depicted in the Brading Roman mosaics endure so they also continue to do so in the garden landscape. Behind the West Range careful management of the wild flower meadow has produced a mosaic of glorious colour throughout the spring and summer attracting bees, butterflies and birds. Of particular note was the sight of a Pyramid orchid and also a barn owl perching above the haystack. Pliny the Younger, in his letters, described his country house in the Tuscan hills as surrounded by wild flower meadows. During July and August the meadows were cut in the traditional method using scythes which allows the seed heads to disperse naturally and germinate for next year, so continuing the cycle of the seasons.



The willow arbour edging the meadows has taken shape and is proving to be a popular spot for visitors to sit and absorb the peaceful surroundings. A triangular window shaped in part of the arbour looks out onto the borrowed landscape of Brading Down repeating a style of outward looking views

favoured in some Roman gardens. The Romans were keen on a view of the garden and surrounding landscape and considered that a villa



should be in view and have itself a view. This idea of garden design reappeared 1000 years later in the Italian Renaissance garden and is still popular today with modern garden designers.



Placing statuary in their private gardens was another Roman trend and this theme has been replicated at Brading with stone benches around the fig tree and a Roman figurehead which has

been placed in the centre of a new wild flower border near the sundial.



New planting in the garden in front of the West Range has continued to flourish and there have also been excellent crops of grapes, hops, medlars and quince this year. Two young olive trees are growing well due to a long warm season and should hopefully produce olives in a few years. Interestingly, Tacitus (son-in-law of Agricola) noted that the climate in Britain was too wet and damp for the growing of olives.



The Romans introduced many  
*(Continued on page 5)*

## Tarquinia and the “City of the Dead.”

North West of Rome and by the sea, the city of Tarquinia was an important political and economic centre of the Etruscan League which rivalled the power of Rome up until about the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE.

Some of its rulers even assumed the title “King of Rome”. It was because of this that the Roman Empire gave

the city the name Tarquinia, though after the fall of Rome it was known for centuries as Corneto (not the icecream). It is only since 1922 that it has resumed its former name.



shelves along the sides on which the stone sarcophagi were placed. The ones open to view are richly decorated with frescoes showing scenes of everyday life. Some also have a second level with hidden doors and painted false doors on the walls.



*(Continued from page 4)*

vegetables to Britain and the vegetable plot at Brading reflects that. This year cabbage, beetroot, garlic, carrots and broad beans were grown, despite a constant battle with rabbits. After the fall of the Roman Empire root crops virtually disappeared, but during the Tudor period the English referred to eating beetroot as eating their “Roman beet”.

The hedgerow fruits surrounding Brading Roman villa have been bountiful and this includes the rose hips in the garden. Pliny the Elder recorded more than 30 disorders that could be “cured” with dog rose preparations. He first encountered its use among French tribes in the treatment of dog bites hence Rosa canina.

The winter season now upon us is always an exciting one as it is about reflection of the current year and researching plants and seeds for the following year, ensuring there is always something of interest for the visitors to see in the gardens surrounding Brading Roman Villa.

Barbara Booth  
The Garden Team 2017

The whole area is now a World Heritage Site. On an outing from a cruise ship, not much of the city could be seen since most of the time was devoted to the Etruscan necropolis outside the city.

The museum in the city is well worth a visit as it contains many archaeological finds from the Etruscan era, including frescoes and friezes from the tombs in the necropolis.

The visit to the necropolis was the main object of the shore excursion. The City of the Dead contains tombs from about the 6<sup>th</sup> – 1<sup>st</sup> centuries BCE and gives an insight into the lives of the Etruscan people.



Getting decent pictures of the frescoes is not easy as you are not allowed into the tombs, only to a windowed door at the bottom of the steps; the windows of which can get a little smeary due to visitors placing hands on them and breathing on them. I enclose some of the best of the ones I was able to obtain.



The whole place is well worth a visit, and I should like the opportunity to have a longer stay to explore further this whole area, and the fascinating world of the Etruscans which was overshadowed by the rise of Rome.

Alan Swanborough

The tombs are all below ground and many of them were obviously family mausoleums since they have

## Fact and Fancy by Helen Jackson

We have long known that much of the wealth at our villa was generated from trade, we have historical, geological and environmental evidence for Brading Haven, from which ships could pass through the wide channel, now partially occupied by the Rive Yar, into the flooded basin between the villa and Sandown bay. It is likely that sand and shingle banks restricted access from the Sandown direction.

Sir Barry Cunliffe's excavation in 2010 found evidence that a healthy trade existed for many years before the conquest of AD 43. Our Iron Age farmers appreciated the high quality tableware and luxury foodstuffs that perhaps impressed their neighbours with their sophistication.

Many finds on display in the museum evidence the trade that continued for several hundred years, with pottery, for example, being brought from a range of British and European sites.

Without further archaeological investigation much must be left to the imagination.

We have as yet no evidence for a harbour or jetties and it seems unlikely there will be research into the possible harbour area in the foreseeable future.

Did boats moor in the bay and transport goods ashore on rowing boats or rafts? Did flat-bottomed boats pull on to a sloping beach? Did wooden jetties assist unloading?

Did Roman troopships moor below the villa, stocking up with meat, grain, wool and leather before sailing to campaign on the mainland?



Mike Cahill's vision of Brading about AD 100

Did some of the luxury goods arrive as gifts, as tokens of friendship or appreciation for hospitality?

Did sailors find a safe haven here as relief from rough weather and treacherous seas?

So there is much to imagine but not so much can be proved. We can, however, look elsewhere for some evidence to aid our speculation.

Look at the model trading vessel in the glass case in the reception area. This was made by the late Mike Cahill as a reconstruction of 'Blackfriars 1', the remains of a Roman trader excavated from the Thames mud. Mike even produced his own picture of a possible view of our mooring.

Visit the spot where the old railway line crossed the road to Alverstone. Here you can read display boards about the excavations earlier this century which uncovered timber walkways preserved in

the mud. Whilst the dating evidence gives a history before and beyond the Roman period, enough Roman objects have been found to suggest a wooden quayside could have served boats travelling up and down the Yar close to our site. A walk along the footpath off the main road on the Sandown/ Brading boundary calls to mind the old river bed, easily overseen by our villa's owner.

Or consider the ships that sailed past Brading, round into the Solent and moored between Ryde and Wootton. We know more about these thanks to the intrepid work by the County Archaeological Unit and volunteers, led by Dr, David Tomalin between 1989 and 1994.

Since the formation of the Solent at the end of the last Ice Age the water level has continued to rise, burying successive sites of human activity. Artefacts have been washed ashore by the waves or dredged up by fishermen, but the inter-tidal zone has

proved to be a particularly rich source of evidence. In some cases the mud has preserved organic materials such as wood and leather.

Pieces of pottery are often similar to those at Brading. Remains of late Roman footwear were found at Fishbourne. Also at Fishbourne, numerous cattle bones were found. There were about 50 skulls, one of which was carbon-dated to the Roman period. It is thought that the cattle would have been driven to the beach before being slaughtered, butchered and loaded on to boats. The meat may have been salted; there is evidence for salt-making nearby. Cattle bones and evidence for

salt-making have been found at and near Brading villa. The busy picture drawn by the Wootton-Quarr project of boats and shoreline activity may suggest what was happening at Brading in its heyday.

Whilst I have focused on the Roman period, the Wootton-Quarr project has provided a story from the time of the first farmers in the Neolithic about 5000 years ago up until almost modern times. Anyone who walks this shoreline may be lucky enough to find evidence such as flint tools and arrowheads, pieces of Roman, Saxon or medieval pottery or pieces of burnt flint. At very low tides you may spot wooden posts embedded in

the sand, which could be from fish traps, causeways or boat-building stocks.

If you do find anything that may be of significance it's advisable to contact Frank Basford, the finds liaison officer, at [Frank.Basford@iow.gov.uk](mailto:Frank.Basford@iow.gov.uk), or telephone 01983 821000 ext 5866.

To learn more look for this readable booklet:

*'Time and Tide: An Archaeological Survey of the Wootton-Quarr Coast'* printed by the IOW Council in 1997.

For a more detailed report look for *'Coastal Archaeology in a Dynamic Environment (A Solent Case Study)'* edited by Tomalin; Loader; Scaife and published by Archaeopress in 2013

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## Come and join the guides

“What I love about guiding is meeting people and seeing their faces when they realise that the Villa is a real house with real people living in it”

Can you help bring the Villa to life?

In the last issue of Nuntius I shared with you comments from our team of guides.

Early in 2018 I will be starting a training programme for any Friends who might want to join the team. You might not be able to commit to regular guiding yet but this is a chance to find out more in readiness for the future,

We now have a new guide handbook and an online rota system which makes it much easier to arrange the sessions we want to be on duty.

Training is informal and friendly with plenty of time to build your confidence. You start guiding when you feel ready and there is no pressure.

To find out more please contact [friends@bradingromanvilla.org.uk](mailto:friends@bradingromanvilla.org.uk)

*Helen Jackson, Head of Volunteer Training*

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# ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

## ADVANCE NOTICE

**The next AGM of the Friends will take place on  
Saturday 3 March 2018 at 3.30pm at the Villa**

**Please make a note of this date now and come along on the day to support your Trustees.**

## Ceres, Goddess of the Plebeians

When school children visit the Villa they are offered a puzzle sheet; they have to explore the museum to find the answers which encourages them to take notice of the mosaics and artifacts on display. One of the questions is, "who is the goddess of the harvest"? We are rightly proud of our depiction of Ceres the Roman goddess of agriculture and the harvest, but she is not the only goddess or god of agriculture as many different gods and goddesses were linked to various aspects of agriculture in ancient Roman religions. She is however, the only one to belong to the *Dii Consentes*. The *Dei Consentes* are the top twelve Roman gods and goddesses, there are six male and six female.

This made Ceres an important goddess to the Romans. The group of twelve were also known as *Dii Complices* they were especially honored by the Romans and listed by the poet Ennius about the 3rd Century, BC, in an epigram as: *Iuno, Vesta, Minerva, Ceres, Diana, Venus, Mars, Mercurius, Iovis, Neptunus, Vulcanus, and Apollo*.

As well as agriculture and the harvest she also over saw the fertility of animals and humans. She was concerned in the daily lives of the common people, looking after such things as getting married, fertility and having children. She is the custodian of marriage laws, disrespecting those laws is an affront to her.

Ceres is shown as a human woman wearing long robes, as depicted on the mosaic in room 12 at Brading Roman Villa. She was not considered to be young and beautiful more handsome and motherly. She is almost always holding a sheath of grain. In the room 12 panel she is shown holding out a sheath of grain to Triptolemus, presumably to be used as seed once he has finished plowing the land. Ceres is sometimes depicted with a bare breast, as a symbol of motherhood.



*Brading Roman Villa: Ceres*

### Origins

Ceres was taken from the Greek deity Demeter, who was the Greek goddess of agriculture and the harvest; except for the different names the mythologies of these two goddesses are almost identical. Demeter is one of the oldest Greek goddesses and is a daughter of primordial gods. In the Roman family tree of gods, she is in the sixth-generation following the very first and most ancient gods. In the Greek tradition, these were referred to as Titans.

Ceres is the daughter of the gods Saturn and Ops. Saturn is the god of plenty, wealth, agriculture, time and many other things. Ops is also a goddess of agriculture and fertility. There are a couple of accounts regarding Ceres family life. In one she had a daughter with her brother Jupiter - Gods of the ancient world didn't let such things as close family relationships get in the way of marriage - their daughter's name is Proserpine. Other accounts say that Ceres is also the mother of Libera and Liber; both of whom are fertility gods. It was up to the individual believer to decide which version to follow. Ceres had



## A VERY BASIC INTRODUCTION TO SAMIAN POTTERY WORKSHOP

Have you ever been intrigued by the red pottery that is found on Roman sites and wondered why archaeologists get excited about it? If so, you may be interested in attending a workshop, during February 2018, that will provide a very basic introduction to the Roman pottery known as Samian in this country and as Terra Sigillata on the continent. The following topics will be covered:-

- What is Samian?
- The various types commonly found.
- The forms of Samian.
- Samian production sites.
- Potters and workshops.
- Dating.
- Trade and transport.
- How we record what is found.

There will be an opportunity to handle some Samian to see the different types. It is expected that the workshop will last around two hours with a break for coffee.

**Please Note: unlike our normal lectures you will need to register for this workshop. To do so please reply to: [friends@bradingromanvilla.org.uk](mailto:friends@bradingromanvilla.org.uk) or phone: 07775 606 812.**

The cost of the workshop will be £10 for members of the public, £9 for Friends of Brading Roman Villa, and £5 for full time students

**Brading Roman Villa.  
on  
10<sup>th</sup> Feb 2018 at  
at 2pm**

### Friends' Library

Having moved (or in my husband's case moved back) to the Island last year, a visit to Brading Roman Villa was high on the list of priorities for Bob and me, given our interest in Archaeology in

general and Romans in particular. As a librarian, my eyes were drawn to the book case in the corner of the café and, in conversation with David Reeves, I soon found that I had volunteered to look after the Friends' Library! I have worked in libraries and, for the last 15 years, travelled

around the country training librarians to use library management software, so the task of sorting out the Brading collection was an interesting project and an opportunity to make a contribution to what was clearly an exciting and welcoming organisation.

*giftaid it*

**Gift Aid declaration –for a single donation**

**Friends of Brading Roman Villa, Morton Old Road,  
Brading, Isle of Wight. PO36 0PH  
Charity No: 1110720**

Please treat the enclosed gift of £ \_\_\_\_\_ as a Gift Aid donation.

I confirm I have paid or will pay an amount of Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax for the current tax year (6 April to 5 April) that is at least equal to the amount of tax that all the charities and Community Amateur Sports Clubs (CASCs) that I donate to will reclaim on my gifts for the current tax year. I understand that other taxes such as VAT and Council Tax do not qualify. I understand the charity will reclaim 25p of tax on every £1 that I have given.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Post Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please notify the charity or CASC if you:**

- Want to cancel this declaration
- Change your name or home address
- No longer pay sufficient tax on your income and/or capital gains.

*If you pay Income Tax at the higher or additional rate and want to receive the additional tax relief due to you, you must include all your Gift Aid donations on your Self Assessment tax return or ask HM Revenue and Customs to adjust your tax code.*

(Continued from page 10)

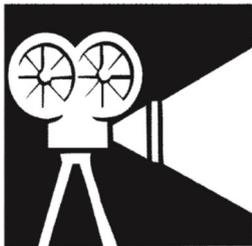
My first task was to do a little judicious weeding and then to reorganise the books into logical subject categories which I felt reflected the core interests of the Villa at the moment. I have now nearly finished re-cataloguing the books using library software and so an up-to-date listing

will be added to the Friends' web-site shortly. I then want to organise some more professional-looking labelling than the temporary handwritten cards you may have seen in the cabinet.

The books are still available for Friends to borrow of course, and there is a signing

out book for that purpose in the cabinet. If anyone has any ideas or suggestions, I would love to hear from you; My email is [catalist@btinternet.com](mailto:catalist@btinternet.com)

Val Pitts  
FBRV Librarian



## FILMS

At the Villa



### My Cousin Rachel

27th January 2018  
at 7pm

Tickets: £5



### DUNKIRK

24th February 2018  
at 7pm

Tickets: £5



### VICTORIA & ABDULA

31st March 2018  
at 7pm

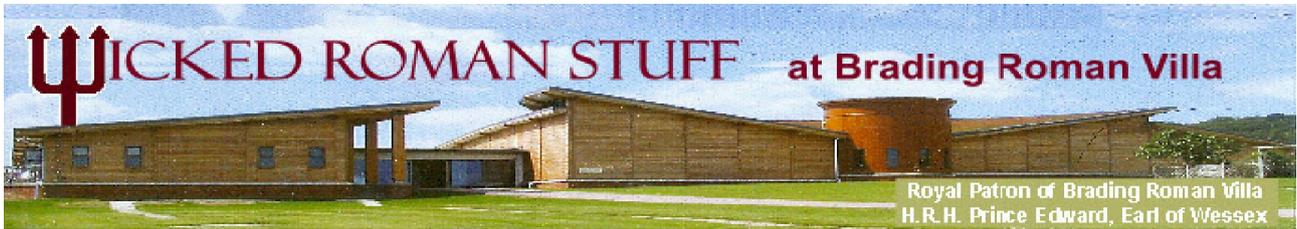
Tickets: £5



### MURDER on the ORIENT EXPRESS

28th April 2018  
from 6.30pm

Tickets: £10  
(includes buffet supper)



Brading Roman Villa 'Attis'


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