



**This could  
be the site  
of Roman  
Cowbridge**

**THE first definite evidence that Cowbridge was the site of a Roman settlement—with a substantial road leading to it—has been uncovered on the site of a building whose demolition recently aroused controversy.**

Over the years, Roman relics have often been found in the area, but now a team from the Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust have located the foundations of two, and possibly three, fairly large buildings on the site at 75 High Street, Cowbridge.

"It is an extremely exciting discovery," said Mr. Graham Dowdell, director of the trust.

The Roman occupation lasted, apparently, from the time of the Emperor Hadrian, in 120 A.D., to about 350 or 370 A.D. Half a dozen coins and some pottery have been found and yesterday members of the team were still working on the site.

**Handbills**

A small notice informed passers-by of what was happening and invited them to take handbills describing it. A great deal of interest has been aroused because of this.

Demolition of the former building on the site caused controversy when some members of the Vale of Glamorgan Borough Coun-

cil condemned it. Efforts are still being made to agree on a new planning scheme which would lead to a replacement building being put up, reflecting the old structure.

This has given the archaeologists additional time in which to carry out their work, but they have to finish in about two weeks.

**Wall safe**

What attracted them to the spot were the two "very fine" windows, an arched doorway and an aumbry—a type of medieval wall safe—that were uncovered when the old building was being knocked down.

Since then they have excavated the remains of a 14th Century town house, probably belonging to a prosperous medieval merchant, and beneath this the Roman structures.

"There is a substantial Roman road, made up of limestone rocks and rubble leading directly north from the site. This has never been suspected before so all in all the excavation has yielded some invaluable information," said Mr. Dowdell. It was clear corroboration of the earlier finds.

"We have had the utmost

co-operation from the owners, Ivor D. Morgan and Partners, of Cardiff, and have also been helped in the excavation by pupils of Cowbridge Comprehensive School and members of the public who have worked under our guidance."

He said there was evidence of iron working having been carried out there by the Romans and also evidence which suggested that at least one of the wooden Roman buildings had burned down at some stage.

THE GLAMORGAN-GWENT ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST LIMITED

Excavation of Roman and Medieval Cowbridge - First Bulletin

In advance of redevelopment, the Trust is currently undertaking the excavation of a Roman and Medieval site in Cowbridge in an attempt to determine the type of occupation present on this site during the above periods. The Trust is one of four established in Wales over the last few years whose job it is to undertake rescue excavation in advance of various forms of development.

The site currently being excavated is known from observations made during 1973 when an electricity cable trench was cut across the site to have been occupied during the Roman period and pottery and other finds dating from the 2nd century A.D. have been found. In addition, during the course of the demolition of the 18th century building which formerly stood on this site, it was discovered that part of this building incorporated the remains of a very substantial late 13th century or, more probably, early 14th century stone building. It is not clear exactly what type of building this was. However, the indications are, from the surviving architectural fragments, that it was a building of some importance, perhaps the home of a Medieval merchant.

With regard to the Roman occupation present in Cowbridge, it has long been known, from chance finds made during the course of earth-moving activities, that some form of occupation took place within the general area of the Medieval town from at least the 2nd century onwards. When the above cable trench was cut across the site in 1973, the Roman occupation was shown in a layer approximately one metre deep underlying the later Medieval and Post-Medieval levels. Recently, the contractors' trench showed the existence of metal working on site in the form of iron objects and slag recovered from a layer which contained substantial quantities of crushed Roman roof tiles and brick. Other finds noted during this work include Samian ware, a high quality type of pottery manufactured in what is now France and Western Germany and exported all over the Roman empire.

At present, there are two main objectives of the excavation now being conducted, these being the recovery of the ground plan of the Medieval building and also an attempt to determine what type of occupation was present here during the Roman period. The owners of the site have kindly consented to this excavation taking place and we have to finish our work by Christmas in order that their redevelopment programme can proceed. The Trust welcomes your interest in our work and if you would like to assist, please ask the site supervisor for details. If you feel that you cannot help in this way, the excavation fund is in need.

G. Dowdell  
Director

## THE GLAMORGAN-GWENT ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST LIMITED

### Excavation of Roman and Medieval Cowbridge - Third Bulletin

The Trust is one of four established in Wales over the last few years whose job it is to undertake rescue excavation in advance of various forms of development. The Trust is currently undertaking the excavation of a Roman and Medieval site in Cowbridge, in an attempt to determine the type of occupation present on the site during these periods.

#### Medieval Period

During the course of the demolition of the 18th century building it was discovered that the west wall incorporated the remains of a substantial early 14th century structure. Excavation revealed that both side walls were re-employed in the 18th century, but that the later building extended further to the north and south than its Medieval forerunner.

The Medieval house measures nearly 15 metres in length and 5.5 metres in width. Recognisable features include doorways to both front and rear and probably partition walls running east-west and north-south. Finds consist, in the main, of sherds of green-glazed pottery, but a fragment of decorated bone knife handle may also belong to this period.

#### Roman Period

Stratified beneath the Medieval foundations is a whole complex of Roman structural features, which suggest at least four main phases of activity. These include spreads of rubble and cobble, a road (leading north from the main Roman road buried beneath High Street), postholes, pits and ditches, and a layer of burning. This latter material has produced several dozen iron nails, and the indications are that a substantial timber building burnt down at some stage.

Large quantities of pottery have been found, including Samian ware imported from Gaul. Animal bones (domestic refuse) also occur in abundance. Metal finds, generally in a poor state of preservation, include a few 3rd century coins, bronze pins, a bracelet terminal, a finger-ring, and iron nails. Several objects of worked bone have been discovered as well as fragments of glass vessels.

Viewed overall the Roman evidence suggests large scale occupation spanning two or three centuries. The main objective of the excavation now is to determine the nature of this occupation and the date at which it was first established.

The owners of the site have kindly consented to this excavation taking place, and we have to finish our work by mid January.

THE GLAMORGAN-GWENT ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST LTD.

EXCAVATION OF ROMAN AND MEDIEVAL COWBRIDGE - FINAL BULLETIN

The excavations at 75 High Street, Cowbridge, are now drawing to a close. The work has proved very fruitful, and the results can be summarised as follows.

Post Medieval Building c.1770-1977 A.D.

The ground plan of the recently demolished 18th century building was surveyed and found to have employed much of the pre-existing medieval fabric. At the front, where it extended further into the pavement than its medieval predecessor, a George III halfpenny was found just below floor-level. To the rear of the building a well and small furnace were located.

Medieval Building c.1300-1770 A.D.

Much of the ground plan of the medieval townhouse wall was revealed and surveyed. Details such as the front and rear entrances and internal partition walls were recorded. A number of rebuilds are suggested by the fact that the wall-footings vary considerably both in character and the depth to which they were founded. Finds of the medieval period were few, consisting mainly of sherds of green-glazed pottery.

Thus a stone building occupied the site with much the same plan for almost 700 years. By contrast the two or three centuries of Roman rule saw the site used for a variety of purposes.

Roman Period C.100-300 A.D.

A timber building, with walls founded on horizontal beams existed on the site. This burnt down and was followed by another substantial building, the wall-footings of which were constructed of stone. Both structures had floors of clay. When the later building was abandoned, its remains were sealed by a road which ran north from the main Roman route buried beneath the High Street. Subsequently this road fell into disrepair, and was cut by an east-west ditch. To the rear of the site several large pits of various shapes were located.

Large quantities of pottery, tile and animal bone have been found. Other artefacts include coins, bronze pins, a bracelet, finger-ring, bone pins and roundels, and fragments of glass vessels. Two pieces of rotary quern have been discovered and also a roof-tile stamped LEG II AVG, the product of the 2nd Legion Augusta, the military unit stationed at Caerleon.

The Trust would like to take this opportunity to thank you for the interest shown in our work.