

Dewlish Roman Villa: post-excavation report 2014

This will be the final post-excavation report for the excavation of the Dewlish Roman Villa. The first was authored by the late Bill Putnam in 1970 for 1969. The process of assessing and interpreting the evidence from the villa has now reached a point whereby the next publication relating to it will be of a more substantial nature, bringing details of the site's origin and development into the public domain for the first time.

Since 2013 additional funding for the research has been forthcoming from the Association for Roman Archaeology and the Faculty of Science and Technology at Bournemouth University. This financial support has made it possible to achieve the following in 2014.

Digitisation of site plans and sections

The Dewlish villa was excavated using the box-grid system. One of the many disadvantages of this is that each box in the grid was drawn on a separate sheet of A2 paper. As a consequence, the measured visual record for individual rooms became divided making it difficult to understand how they developed and how any one room related to its neighbours. The process of conflating the individual box plans into an overall plan of the villa buildings was started by Emily Rhodes in 2013. Since that time Bournemouth Archaeology has scanned all of the plans and downloaded these into a computer-aided design programme (CAD). This has produced a coherent plan of most of the buildings of the villa but in particular the principal north range which included the bath-house (Buildings 2 and 3 respectively). The consequence of doing this is that subtleties in the layout and redesign of the villa have become apparent, and it is likely that some sub-phases will need to be added to the five major building phases currently proposed.

Work has also commenced on digitising the section drawings and these are being downloaded into CAD also, but the task is not at an advanced stage at present.

Pottery and other small finds

Rachael Seager Smith recommended 67 examples of pottery for illustration as a result of her report on the Dewlish assemblage submitted to her for examination. These illustrations are being carried out by David Watt in addition to bone hair pins many of which are normally on display at the Dorset County Museum. The bone pins have been made available for illustration by the courtesy of the Director, Dr Jon Murden. Other small finds sent for illustration include a crucible, a jet bead and some stamped Samian ware pottery. All of this work is nearing completion.

In general, the iron work is not in a good state of preservation and this is being illustrated by Tilia Cammegh at Bournemouth University along with the shale objects and some architectural stone fragments. The copper objects are being drawn by Jon Milward of Bournemouth Archaeology. Bill Putnam's original photographs will be used as appropriate.

Report text

This has reached *ca* 50,000 words in draft form but work remains to be done on Building 6 (Putnam's 'Priest's House') and there are several revisions and amplifications to be made. The author hopes that he can do justice to this very important site.

Acknowledgement

Maureen Putnam has been the stalwart of the project in so many respects. The project would not have reached this stage without her input.