

## HADS FIELD WORK ~ SUNDAY 27<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY

### HAVANT



*Members of HADS outside St Faith's Church*

From earliest times the history and fortunes of Havant have been closely related to its many springs and streams. Some twenty springs rise within the old parish of Havant in the space of two thirds of a mile, along the narrow spring-line formed by the junction of the impervious Reading Clay and the chalk strata which surface here. The source of the water is very deep-seated. It emerges crystal clear and at a constant temperature of 51°F.

The spring water has been used for a variety of industries over the years. For a thousand years Havant was the centre for parchment making. The parchment for both the *Magna Carta* and *The Treaty of Versailles* was produced here. Another, more modern, industry made famous at Havant was glove making, indeed Her Majesty, The Queen Mother had gloves made in Havant. Other industries using the water was brewing, tanning and leather working. There were also several water-mills in the area.

Much of Havant was destroyed by fire in 1760, leaving only the church and the adjacent late 16<sup>th</sup> or early 17<sup>th</sup> century cottages known collectively as "The Old House at Home". Now used as a pub it is claimed that two of the roof beams were recovered from a wreck of a Spanish galleon during the failed attack on England by the Spanish Armada. Also in the bar is the "bear post", said to be where the last dancing bear in England performed!

Havant has also suffered two minor earthquakes, one in 1784 and the other in 1811.



*The Old House at Home*

The place-name Havant is derived from the Old English form *Hamanfunta*, first recorded in 935 AD, meaning “Hama’s Spring”. *Funta* is a corruption of Latin *Fontana*, a fountain, and Margaret Gelling argues that this element probably came into Old English direct from Latin and therefore implies continuity of occupation from Roman to Saxon times.

“Hama’s Spring” is almost certainly the Homewell, a spring which rises in the centre of the town, 40 yards south of St Faith’s Churchyard. The earliest documentary evidence reference to the Homewell occurs in 1301, when it is *Hamwelle*.



*Homewell Spring*



Homewell Spring

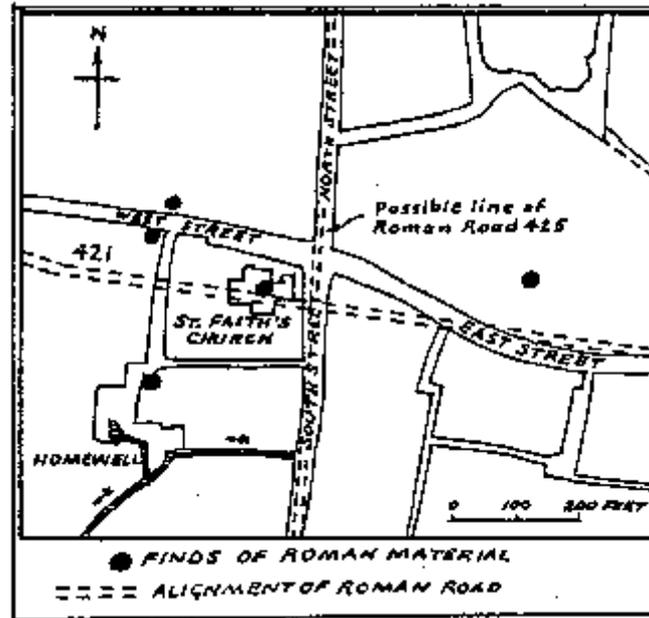
The origins of Havant are obscure, but it is fairly certain that it owes its existence to developments initiated in the early years of Roman occupation. Havant lies on the Roman road from Chichester (*Noviomagus*) to Bitterne (*Clausentum*) half-way between Chichester and the Roman settlement and road junction of Wickham.

It is significant that Havant lies at the intersection of two major alignments of this road laid out in the first century AD, and is likely that the Homewell Spring formed the objectives of these alignments. It is also possible that a road station was set up here, attracting subsequent occupation for which there is plenty of archaeological evidence, from the second century or earlier until the fourth.

At some later date, possibly during the third century, a north to south local road was made to serve the Roman potteries which had started production at this time in the Rowlands Castle area, and to form a link with Langstone Harbour and Hayling Island. The crossroads attracted further occupation, and by the third and fourth centuries a small market had probably formed dealing in pottery, salt, oysters and local farm produce.

The site of St Faith's Church and its immediate surrounding area, including the Homewell, has yielded scattered evidence of Roman occupation. It is always assumed that the Chichester to Bitterne road deviated from its alignment on the east-west sides of town in order to follow the approximate course of the present East and West Streets, but this is only conjecture.

It is equally possible that original alignments continued forming an angle west of the church, in which case the line of the road would have passed beneath the south side of the church. Indeed the present road may be the result of re-routing the Roman road in the early middle ages to avoid the churchyard.



*Junction of RR 421 & RR 425 (John Pile)*

C. J. Longcroft, writing in the mid-nineteenth century recorded the discovery in 1832 of “a solid concrete of Roman brick and cement beneath the tower of the church”. Two Roman coins were found between the foundations of the medieval church and the Roman remains, one dated *circa* 140 AD and the other of 384-388 AD.

A few yards to the west of the churchyard was a Roman well containing some fragments of second century pottery. A Roman occupation layer adjacent to the Homewell included oyster shells and pottery sherds. The overall nature of the occupation can only be guessed at. The sites that have yielded Roman material so far suggest a settlement of timber-framed, rather than masonry, structures strung out along the east-west road, with a hint of a more substantial building on the site of the church.

It is possible, although there is no direct evidence to support the idea, that the Saxon or Medieval church was built on its present site because there was a tradition of religious activity related to the Homewell.

On the scant evidence available we may posit that there was a late Roman Christian church, perhaps with a baptistery, on the site of St Faith’s Church, which in turn may have superseded an earlier Pagan shrine associated with the spring.

Ref: *The Homewell, Havant, Hampshire* by John Pile

Ref: <http://people.bath.ac.uk/liskmj/living-spring/sourcearchive/fs5/fs5jp1.htm>



*Well I never !*

On Sunday morning (27<sup>th</sup> January 2013) members of HADs met at Havant to discover where the junction of the Roman road from Chichester met with that of the road to Portchester. It soon became very obvious that this junction was in the vicinity of St Faith's Church. We managed to follow the road to Portchester quite a distance before returning to the church. Some members were picking up another Roman road to the south of the church and after finding the above article it appears that there are actually three routes meeting at the church site. The present North/South and East/West routes are obviously modern alignments of the Roman roads.

So, there is the Chichester to Bitterne route, the Chichester to Portchester route and the route from Rowland's Castle to Langstone Harbour/Hayling Island all converging at St Faith's Church. There is also a possibility of a Pagan/Roman shrine in the vicinity. Plus there is evidence of further Pagan/Roman activity around the Homewell Spring area.

We obviously will be returning to this site in the near future to carry out further investigations.

Don Bryan  
January 2013