

The Second June Lloyd Lecture – Professor Sir Barry Cunliffe

A packed Winchester Conference Centre at the Guildhall saw Sir Barry Cunliffe give the second June Lloyd lecture in February 2009, entitled “Roman Rural Settlement on the Hampshire Chalklands”. An illustrious career which saw him holding several prestigious academic posts, and since 1972 the Professorship of European Archaeology at Oxford, is only surpassed by his immense written output in both academia and for the general public.

Fired from an early age (7 is quoted) by the discovery of a farmer’s field full of *tesserae* he is perhaps best known for his work on the Danebury hillfort and the surrounding area, and for its popularising on television in the seventies and eighties in such series as the BBC’s Chronicle.

Describing the changing aspect of his work in the Hampshire chalklands, the original Iron Age Danebury work had been succeeded by the Danebury Environs Iron Age project which examined the landscapes around the hillfort. From 1997 until the final dig season in 2006, attention had turned to the Roman age remains, as the end of a continuum of development in rural settlement. During these years a series of plough-threatened villas, farms and more functional buildings had been excavated which, far from just creating a set of plans, were able to reveal a landscape of people and their daily lives.

Focussing on the excavations at Grateley, Thruxton, Abbots Ann and Fullerton, the differences between these sites said something of their function and status. First, though, Rowbury Farm had revealed a rural landscape of small settlements and fields from c.1300 BC to Roman times showing continuity of use over 2000 years, a pattern likely to be seen across the whole area.



Grateley (above) was a late 2nd or early 3rd century complex of aisled hall, courtyard and farm buildings, one of which contained an initially enigmatic double corn-drier. Each side of the drier producing different intensities of heat, analysis of grain residues showed the cooler side dried germinating grains for producing beer, and the hotter dried corn for flour. The complex had many uses therefore, pointing to self-sufficiency.

The aisled hall and villa complex at Abbots Ann (below), dug over two seasons, illustrated how sites had developed, usually as aggrandisement, over time, with one aisled hall replacing another, on a different alignment and using recycled material. Later infilling of the aisled hall to give grand colonnaded and floor-heated rooms attested to the richness of the estate. At right angles to that complex, an earlier villa showed similar developments to the extent of a massive, possibly even three storey, fine stone building.



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Less grand but as interesting, the Fullerton villa was revealed as a comfortable 2nd or 3rd century house with a water mill. This is very rare in Britain and excavation enabled reconstruction of how the mill leat led from the River Anton, past the villa to a double undershot water wheel above which the corn would have been ground. The villa, well appointed with mosaics, became grander, possibly as a result of wealth generated from the milling of flour of local producers or to supply centres like Winchester.

The Thruxton villa (below) had its own enigma. Originally an aisled hall, it too had infilled rooms, one of which contained a curious extension, in fact the

foundations of a 19th century “museum” surrounding an antiquarian exposed mosaic.



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The mosaic (below) is now in the British Museum. More curious still was the inscription on the mosaic which appeared to include a Celtic reference. Further discoveries of an early 1st century grave with diagnostic brooches lead to the possibility that this was the revered shrine of an ancestor (*in memoria*) a reverence which continues with later 4th and 5th century graves nearby.



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A picture had been painted of a productive landscape, self-sufficient in skills and resources, whose wealth may have been generated by the export of surplus. Over time larger buildings for residence and industry grew up. The aisled hall was a major feature of the landscape of Roman Hampshire, used for the conduct of legal and commercial business as well as residence. Its successors are perhaps seen in the Medieval hall, the position of an aisled hall at Fishbourne, on the boundary of the property, and not related to the inner sanctum, attesting to a potentially public function.

After Barry took questions from an appreciative audience, Chairman Dick Selwood was able to present a copy of Proceedings of the Hampshire Field Club with an early article by Barry (a copy lost to him). This was together with some rather pleasant Sancerre which, it is hoped, will enable him to pamper his recreation, professed in *Who's Who*, of "mild self-indulgence".

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