

## FRIENDS OF FISHBOURNE ROMAN PALACE – SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT

### THE HISTORY OF THE FRIENDS: 2005-2016

Pam Crowe - Chairman



When I joined the Friends the group had already been in existence for a year, since October 2004 (the date mentioned in Issue 2 of our Newsletter), but 2005 was its first full year and, thus, we celebrated its decade in April, 2015. But how did it all start?

In 2002 Sussex Archaeological Society (SAS), which owns the site, advertised for a 'Marketing and Fundraising consultant' whose role was wide-ranging and included 'the origination, launch and ongoing management of the "Friends of Fishbourne Roman Palace". Enter **Tracey Richardson** to whom

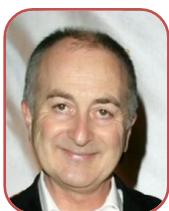


I am greatly indebted for telling me how she undertook the task and allowing me to include that information in this article. She launched the "Million Pound Mosaic Appeal" to raise £100,000 to 'fund match' a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) to protect the North Wing mosaics and to build the Collections Discovery Centre (CDC) to extend the educational and research facilities. She was instrumental in obtaining a significant donation for building the CDC from Topps Tiles.

Previously, Tracey had conducted a research project for the National Trust's Petworth House about the value of a property-specific Friends scheme. A database had already been assembled listing people interested in becoming more involved with the Palace, other than by regular volunteering, and this became the initial membership. (The first official number was in the name of Ronnie Hitchings.) The intention was to 'provide the group with social/educational opportunities and, in the process, raise funds for specific items the Palace required'. The scheme would be administered by Tracey until it was established enough to be run by the members themselves.

Monies raised by the Palace enabled a year-long programme of work to begin in the spring of 2005. Early supporters of the Friends included **Tony Robinson** (of Time Team fame) and it was his colleague on that programme, **Phil Harding**, who broke the ground to mark the start of the CDC's construction. The Museum was also in need of re-display but the £300,000 required was not covered by funds already raised and Friends were called on to help achieve this target also. By the time I joined at the beginning of November 2005 the Friends had raised around £5,000 for the Palace and had almost 100 members. An individual subscription was £15 with £30 for a family, rising to £18.50 and £37 respectively from January 2008 – subscription rates which have not risen again since.

On 18th February 2006 I was among some 220 people treated to a Roman dinner held to celebrate completion of the CDC and I still remember the fantastic taste of the stuffed honeyed dates with which we ended the meal. It took place in the part of the building now occupied by the Bulk Store. This and the adjacent Sensitive Store were both generously sponsored by Topps Tiles. The Bulk Store houses the reserve archaeological collections from Fishbourne Palace and Chichester District Museum. The environmentally-controlled Sensitive Store contains metalwork, organic materials and documentation which need particular conditions for proper preservation. You would have thought that the official opening of the CDC to the public, by **Tony Robinson** on 1st March 2007, would have taken place on a lovely warm, sunny day. Not so. Witnessing him unveiling the plaque to commemorate the event, we were buffeted by a sharp cold wind.



After joining the Palace staff on 31st October 2005 as Curator of Archaeology, **Rob Symmons** took over managing the administration of the Friends and producing the biannual Newsletter.

Early in 2007 it was considered that the organisation was sufficiently stable for steps to be taken to effect the original intention that the Friends should take over running things ourselves. So it was that Issue 5 of the Newsletter in May 2007 contained a request for anyone interested in helping to effect the transition to get in touch. I was interested. Gradually Friends offered to become involved and by late 2008 there were enough to form a Steering Group. Rob called a meeting to get things under way and on 17th February 2009 the Group members met each other. Perhaps being extrovert (or just pushy?) I became its Chairman though my contribution was certainly no more than anyone else's. Work began on drafting a Constitution while we discussed other important details of taking over our own administration.



In our May 2008 Newsletter the new Director of the Palace, **Christine Medlock**, introduced herself and her vision for the future of the site. I recall that she was very supportive of the Friends and our moves to 'stand on our own feet'. We were keen to show that we were ready to do just that and arranged the first visit for members on 8th August 2009 – a self-drive trip to Rockbourne Roman Villa near Fordingbridge. This time the sun shone upon us all day which was fortunate because, after lunch at Cranborne Manor Garden Centre, we drove a short

distance to Cranborne Chase to view the prehistoric site lying on Down Farm.

We were conducted around by the farmer turned archaeologist, **Martin Green**. He showed us the Great Pit, a natural hollow extending to about 25 metres deep containing archaeology going back to Mesolithic times. He then walked us across a sheep field to view the extent of the Cursus running across the hills. Having shown us his latest excavation at a Bronze Age tumulus he led us back to end our day looking round his small but very interesting museum.

Work continued during 2009, refining the draft Constitution, discussing what steps would need to be taken to assume responsibility for managing the Friends and planning for the AGM to be held on 14th November. It was proposed that, thenceforth, there should be a fixed date for memberships to commence / be renewed rather than the existing system of individual renewal dates according to when each member had joined. At the AGM the membership approved our endeavours, the Constitution was accepted and the Steering Group was replaced by our first Committee, comprising some members of the Steering Group (including me) plus other Friends who had been nominated. For my part I must have done something right as I became Chairman again!



So we set about administering our organisation. The Constitution had been written to provide the option of appointing a President and one of the Committee's first acts was to invite **David Rudkin** to step into that role. David had retired as Director of the Palace on 28th March 2008 after 28 years of dedicated service, steering its development, championing its educational activities, co-directing further excavations in the 1990s and spearheading the campaign to construct the CDC. To our great delight he accepted and his knowledge and wisdom still continue to guide us.



Rockbourne



In administering the Friends, SAS had looked after all monies received and made payments as required. An urgent task was to set up our own banking arrangements in preparation for receiving subscriptions for 1st February renewals. **Keith Lawson** had adopted the role of Treasurer and put this in hand. Other responsibilities had been agreed upon and everyone worked with enthusiasm. The redesign of the Friends' leaflet, begun by the Steering Committee, proceeded apace and our new President was called upon to be photographed together

with **Guy Lockton** (who later became the second Treasurer). They were persuaded to pose in Roman costume for the picture to grace the front. It would also bear the Friends' logo which **Karen Newman** had been busy designing.

A programme of members' events for 2010 was formulated and,

once again, we called upon **David Rudkin** to help.

He suggested that he guide us around the area of the old Roman Harbour



and so our first event took place on 17th July. After an introductory talk twenty-four Friends followed David to the Mill Pond whence we proceeded alongside the stream marking the southern boundary of the original Palace and through the reed beds. He pointed out that water levels had been lower in Roman times. We reached the site of two buildings dating from about 68 AD before returning to

the Rudkin Room for a cream tea.

We had unsuccessfully sought to find out the exact date in 1960 on which the Palace ruins had been discovered as we thought its 50th anniversary should be marked. [For any of our new members who are not familiar with that momentous incident, the diagonal strip of concrete at the eastern end of the North Wing indicates the path of the trench being dug in 1960 by the then water board to lay a new water main. Fortunately, the digger driver drew the Chief Engineer's attention to the unusually large amount of tile etc. that he was bringing up. He recognised its importance and contacted the archaeologists at Chichester. Work on the trench ceased (the water main was later laid further over), the land was acquired and excavation began, led by **Barry Cunliffe** (now Sir Barry). The site was first opened to the public in 1968.]

We were obviously on the same wavelength as the Palace staff as they issued an invitation to all staff, volunteers and Friends to a celebration party. So it was in high spirits that we joined together on the evening of 31st July. There had been some rain earlier in the day but as people arrived bearing food and bottles of wine the sun came out. Tables had been set out for the party fare

and everyone helped to carry chairs and benches onto the West Wing grass. The Friends provided a cake bearing a picture of the Palace model photo-printed onto it and decorated with candles saying '50'. As I sat looking across the lawn I imagined myself as the 'lady of the Palace' (what else?) surveying the same garden as she would have enjoyed at a second century party with her friends.

The Committee had been determined to make 2010 an eventful year and a visit to the English Heritage Centre for Archaeology at Fort Cumberland in September gave us a deep insight into how modern technology is enabling non-invasive investigation of archaeological sites. The Friends, both as an organisation and individually,

are members of the British Association of Friends of Museums (BAfM) – through whom we had taken out the insurance necessary for an organisation such as ours. In September I attended their national Conference and AGM weekend on the Isle of Man (not at Friends cost). Speakers' topics ranged from 'Interpreting our Heritage' to the 'Digital Future' – food for thought. My absence meant I missed the Friends' visit to Bignor Roman Villa which, from feedback received, had been



very much enjoyed. Three of the Committee had also attended the regional conference of BAfM which took place at Gilbert White's House at Selborne, Hampshire, which included a guided tour around the enchanting gardens.

Thus the time arrived for the membership to assess our efforts at the first AGM since the Committee was appointed. The appreciation afforded us at that meeting was gratifying especially one comment on a 'feedback' form saying, "Best presented accounts I've ever heard. I was able to understand all of it!" Praise indeed for our first Treasurer, **Keith Lawson**. All members of the Committee were re-elected for another year. Attendees were able to admire the much-needed Finds Trolley purchased for the Palace by the Friends.

We had also promised funding towards the Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP), a government initiative, which would link the Palace with Bournemouth University to support a project to be carried out by a recent graduate. It would look at the presentation of the Palace to the public in order to improve the visitor experience and encourage more people to return again.



The day was completed with a talk by **Dr Andrew Fitzpatrick**, then of Wessex Archaeology, on 'Roman Britain before the Claudian conquest'. He pointed out that there had been abundant trade with the Continent prior to the arrival of the Romans and reactions to them varied greatly in different areas of the south coast.

At the start of 2011 we were sorry to hear that **Christine Medlock** was to step down as Director of the Palace at the end of March. We had developed a close rapport in our working relationship with her and were going to miss her. (I did, however, ensure she took with her one of our membership application leaflets!) A new Director was appointed in due course and on 9th May we welcomed **Jaane Rowehl** who had deserted more northerly counties to take up the reins at Fishbourne.

Early in the year we had received a request for the Friends to fund a £500 bursary to allow disadvantaged children to take part in school visits that year. We considered that this fell within our remit and we have continued to provide the bursary when requested in subsequent years.

We had recently begun our programme of events for 2011 with a talk by **Claire Ryley**.



Mark Taylor and David Hill blowing glass

Whilst Education Officer at the Palace she had set up the Roman Garden (by the 'potting shed') to display a variety of the plants that Romans would have grown for food and herbs they would have used in cooking and for medical purposes. Another three talks were scheduled during the year but the highlight, for me, was the outing to the Roman glassmakers at Quarley about five miles west of Andover, hosted by the artisans **Mark Taylor** and **David Hill**. As well as learning about the tools and techniques employed by the Romans we were given a demonstration of making a piece of glassware and shown the two experimental kilns designed to emulate those used 2,000 years ago. I was not alone in purchasing a souvenir of their handiwork. As part of the Festival of British Archaeology in the summer two of the Friends, **Nev** and **Mary Haskins** (who had been volunteers for some years),

demonstrated that funding is not the only way in which we support the Palace when they supervised a geophysical survey of the West Wing using the multiplex resistivity meter lent by Chichester City Walls Partnership. Together with a survey conducted by a team from English Heritage using ground penetrating radar, their work contributed to a greater understanding of that area of the site.



Anachronistic? Nick Barmby doing geophys

By August, the Knowledge Transfer Partnership project had also produced results and we were pleased to know that our support had helped. The portable PA system which we had funded half way through the year was put to good use by **Stephanie Smith** when she gave us a talk on 20th August on the Portable Antiquities Scheme in Sussex.

For some time we had been producing the Newsletter ourselves. We continued to receive articles full of news from the Palace but, with so much activity of our own to report as well, we expanded to three issues a year. By arrangement with Jaane the third one, in October, was printed at cost on the Palace photocopier thus reducing our costs compared with having it printed commercially. The success of the year was tinged with sadness following the death of one of our Committee members, **Denis Carter**. To mark his contribution to our work, on behalf of all the Friends, we donated a seat to the Palace which was dedicated to his memory at an intimate ceremony in September when his widow, **Pat** (third from left), formally cut a ribbon placed across it.

The 2011 AGM in November secured

members' consent to changes proposed as a result of the misalignment of our accounting year with that of SAS which had been causing a lot of extra work for our Treasurer. With this change agreed, it was necessary to move the date for our AGMs and so there would not be one the following year.

**Keith Lawson** stood down as planned and **Guy Lockton** took over as Treasurer. Guy also took on the mantle of Newsletter Editor. (Though he had to leave the Committee at last year's AGM, he

valiantly agreed to continue with the latter job which he does with great flair). Not to be outdone his wife, **Mavis**, joined us and took over responsibility for catering at events. **Christine Medlock** had taken my hint and joined the Friends and we now welcomed her onto the Committee as well. Another important change was to provide for proxy voting since many members have been unable to attend the AGMs.

We entered 2012 with exciting plans for events during the year beginning with my own talk on the 'older' parts of Leptis Magna in Libya – the sequel to my previous talk on the more 'modern' area (historically speaking).

Unfortunately, due to mounting pressures in my 'other life', I had to leave the Committee after only a few months but **Anne de Potier** gallantly stepped into the breach

and became Acting Chairman until the AGM in April 2013, at the end of the extended year. Although having stepped down from the Committee at the AGM, **Jill Christison** generously opened her beautiful garden (displaying a feast of bearded irises) to the public in May in aid of Friends funds.

As had become the norm, our talks at the Palace attracted a range of high-calibre speakers, knowledgeable and well respected in the field of archaeology although I suspect that the delicious home-made cakes served with the tea and coffee afterwards added to members' enjoyment.



Pat Carter with the committee and Jaane Rowohl



Arch of Septimius  
Severus, Leptis Magna

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Our outing this year was a visit to the Alternative Technology Centre at Cranborne in Dorset where we experienced ancient life in a variety of buildings based on evidence going back 6,000 years. We enjoyed taking turns at the capstan of a Roman water wheel which had been acquired after becoming surplus to requirements at the Museum of London.

As well as our social events providing interest, information and fun, the original idea of the Friends was thereby to provide funds for specific things needed by the Palace. With this in mind, in 2012 we were able to pay for the digital visitor information screen on the wall in reception which is updated with what is happening each day. Another contribution from us helped towards



upgrading the Garden Museum, enabling the faded graphic information panels to be replaced and updated and providing a new external welcome sign to the Museum. The rejuvenated Museum was formally opened on 26th March 2013.

It says a lot for its importance that people are drawn from far afield to come and work at the Palace. After 18 years the Head of Learning, **Suzanne Evans**, moved on and her successor, still with us, was **Katrina Burton** whose previous job had been Audience Development Officer for Tunbridge Wells Museum.

The start of 2013 saw the launch of our own website. Previously we had relied upon mention on the SAS website but this had been unsatisfactory, not helped by problems with its updating and redesign. Guy bravely took on this new venture ably supported by his son, Alex, who created and set up the actual website. (Again, Guy volunteered to continue to look after this when he left the Committee at the 2016 AGM.)

After my year's absence I re-joined the Committee at the 2013 AGM in April. There were more changes to its membership. With **Anne de Potier** again Chairman and Guy continuing his triple role, the important office of Secretary was relinquished by **Anne Wingfield-Hayes** who had worked so hard since the formation of the Committee, not only in meticulously recording Minutes but



acting as our direct link with SAS. Into her shoes stepped **Heather Smith** who has also served us well over the past four years but must now (2017) hand over the reins. Together with Christine Medlock the Committee was completed by **Neville Haskins** whose role became the organisation of our events. The talks he arranged were varied and informative but the one which I think caused most amusement was by **Dr Rob Symmons** – known to us all as the Palace's Curator. You may be aware that his particular archaeological focus is on animal bones. You may also know that he is not averse to a pint of beer. In June he regaled us with a talk on 'The Archaeology of Beer'. It was amusing as well as factual and we even tasted some he made earlier! Beer drinking goes back several thousands of years in some parts of the world and modern practices such as buying a round perpetuate ancient concepts.



Our guide on the visit to the Alternative Technology Centre at Cranborne in 2012, **Dr Luke Winter**, followed up this year with a talk about their work there over 25 years. For our 2013 outing we stayed 'closer to home' with a visit to the Novium Museum in Chichester followed by a guided walk around the city walls. Reading **Karen Newman's** account of the day in the September



Newsletter I regretted not having been able to take part.  
[Incidentally, if you are the proud possessor of a small knitted 'Togidubnus' – as I am – did you know that they were all made by Karen and sold in aid of our funds?]



At the very beginning of 2014 a major change in the management of the Palace saw us saying goodbye to another Director. Removal of this post had been part of cost-cutting measures undertaken by SAS due to the 'continuing difficult economic environment'. Our primary point of contact was replaced with a 'triumvirate' – **Katrina Burton** (learning, events and volunteers), **Phil Davies** (shop, café and operational management of the site) and **Rob Symmons** (collections, the CDC and research). Liaison became more complicated but our existing good relations with all the Palace staff eased the transition.

SAS planned some changes to the reception area which would affect the display of the stone tablet commemorating the supreme generosity of **Ivan Margary** who purchased the field in which the discovery of the Palace had been made, gave it to SAS, assisted with the excavations and made a huge contribution to the cost of constructing the building covering the North Wing mosaics and the Museum. (At this point, I must also mention **Margaret Rule** who was instrumental in persuading the landowner to sell and who took part in

the excavations.) Everyone on the Friends Committee was concerned that SAS's plans should not lessen the prominence of the Margary memorial and we firmly made our views known. It is open to speculation how much our funding influenced the scope of the display in the Museum describing **Ivan Margary's** achievements and his vital role in preserving and presenting the Palace to the world. Coincidentally, the changes in reception did benefit the Friends as we were able to move our display board from the wall by the first exit to the garden, reposition it opposite the model of the Palace and refresh the items presented on it.



**Nev Haskins** had arranged another full year of high quality talks including one on the 'Latest Discoveries on the Chichester City Walls' by **James Kenny**, Chichester District Archaeologist. Nev had also been fostering links with Butser Ancient Farm and arranged for a talk by a Director, **Fergus Milton**, in preparation for a visit and guided tour of their site which was to be our summer outing. When it came the weather was fine and we were treated to a most enjoyable and instructive tour supplemented by refreshments including delicious home-made cakes.



Having been on the Committee for four years, two of them as a most valuable Chairman, **Anne de Potier** had stepped down at the AGM in April when I took up the position again. Turnout for the meeting had been disappointing and, unhappily, we struggled to recruit new members to the Committee. Despite fervent pleas we were left without a Membership Secretary, an essential task though not an onerous one. Our continuance beyond 2014 began to look doubtful. Still without a Membership Secretary and with forever dwindling attendances at events, by October the Committee were discussing the need to cut back on membership benefits. With fewer of us to help it was proving more difficult to put on events, which were becoming a cost to the funds rather than increasing them.

We were spending money as intended, however, in continuing to make donations to the Palace. Among these was to pay for printing a number of guides in languages not already provided. **Guy Lockton** sourced excellent translators, many of whom gave their time and expertise for free, and we were able to extend the range of languages to ten, including Chinese, Japanese, Danish,



Russian, Hungarian and Italian. The Japanese translator arranged a visit to the Palace by her group, which we helped organise. We were always willing to assist the Palace in other ways and some of us who had helped with photographing visitors dressing up in costume at children's events had been frustrated at the slowness of the printer being used. Discussions with Katrina identified a suitable camera and printer combination which would do the job faster and we felt this was money well spent.



In anticipation of the need to manage subscription renewals, **Mary Haskins** had agreed to be co-opted onto the Committee to fill the role of Membership Secretary. When the Palace ruins had been discovered in the 1960s the route of the planned water pipe was moved but only to just outside the North Wing. Over the years there had been repeated problems with water ingress to the building resulting, in large part, from leakages from the water pipe. Long negotiations eventually secured the relocation of the pipe well clear of the North Wing and, the stream at the eastern boundary having been cleared, the beginning of 2015 brought hope that the flooding problem had been dealt with. The Friends had provided the original yellow environmental monitors residing on some of the mosaics as an aid to maintaining a stable environment for the floors. As the monitors had become outdated **Rob Symmons** had asked the Friends to replace them with new ones which would use up-to-date technology to provide better data. In March he was able to report that they had arrived and were being set up. They have proved to be very successful.

Early in April we had been saddened to hear of the death of **Margaret Rule**. As well as her role in helping to secure the site and taking part in the excavations she had been the Palace's first Curator, a post she held until 1979. **David Rudkin**'s obituary piece in the June Newsletter was



complemented by some original early photos taken during excavations, provided by Committee member **David Martin**. At the BAfM Regional Conference at Southampton which I attended that month I learned that, as well as her work at Fishbourne, Margaret Rule had been extensively involved in excavating the wreck of the Mary Rose, Henry VIII's proud ship.



Reluctantly, it had been decided that we could no longer continue with our regular series of talks but would continue to have a speaker on AGM days and try to arrange an annual outing as before. We were fortunate to secure **Professor Sir Barry Cunliffe**'s agreement to give our 2015 AGM talk in April as he would actually be in the country and free on the required date! Plans were well under way for this celebration of 10 years of the Friends. Guy even superimposed a laurel leaf around our logo for use on paperwork during this momentous year (also used on one of the celebratory cakes at the AGM). We anticipated great interest in the talk by Sir Barry and opened that part of the day to a wider audience from Liss Archaeology Group, Chichester District Archaeology Society, Butser Hill project and Petersfield Heath cemetery group and invited them to set up displays about their organisations' work in the foyer of the CDC. As expected, members of these groups hastened to apply for tickets and we soon reached the Rudkin room's capacity of 60. We allowed a two-hour break for lunch after the AGM to allow people to view the displays and talk to the organisations' representatives. I had



never previously had the privilege of meeting Sir Barry and found him to be such a lovely man. The subject he chose for his talk was “*The Danebury Environs Programme: a Wessex Landscape during the Roman Era*”. After so many years in archaeology his enthusiasm for it is undiminished and contagious. In addition to the cake mentioned above we had another one bearing the picture of the model Palace, which he ‘re-excavated’ by making the first cut. During refreshments he happily chatted to the assembled company. Altogether, an inspiring afternoon.

The retirement of **Phil Davies** as Head of Operations in May heralded another change in the Palace’s management structure. His post ceased and, instead, the role of ‘Head of Learning/Property Manager’ was created which **Katrina Burton** took up and still fills. Though we missed having Phil around we did now have a primary point of contact again through whom to channel our thoughts and receive information. We continued to liaise with Katrina and Rob in procuring a number of items on their respective ‘wish lists’ which incurred modest expenditure. With no monthly talks life on the Committee became less active although, together with other Friends and volunteers, those who were able continued to help at Palace events as we had always done, particularly during the children’s half-term weeks and summer holidays. As had been mooted after our visit to Butser in August 2014, we issued an invitation for a reciprocal visit to Fishbourne by Butser Friends which took place in July. After being welcomed over coffee and biscuits they were given a guided tour of the site before being free to wander at will and visit the Museum. Feedback indicated that they had all enjoyed the experience.



As 2015 passed into 2016 and **Mary Haskins** processed the renewal of memberships, our thoughts turned to preparations for the next AGM. We approached the event with some trepidation due to our Treasurer, **Guy Lockton**, having to step down and a paucity of nominees for the Committee generally. Would we be able to continue? Thanks to **Paddy Thomas** offering to take over as Treasurer, **Christine Medlock** volunteering to join us and the rest of the Committee being prepared to continue to serve, the Friends were able to carry on for another year. With easier minds we were then able to enjoy the talk given by **Kay Ainsworth**, formerly Curator of

Archaeology for the Hampshire County Museums Service, who spoke on how Iron Age Wessex had changed with the arrival of the Romans.

In June we heard that the company which hosted our website was going out of business which caused a break in normal service while a new one was set up. It took a few months to get it working satisfactorily but we were then back in the autumn on our new website address. We were excited to hear about the photogrammetric survey in the North Wing which would provide the most comprehensive and accurate picture of the mosaics possible. We were pleased to be able to make a donation from Friends’ funds to this work which will provide a ‘baseline’ for monitoring the condition of the structure and mosaics in future. We also agreed to support updating of the MODES catalogue system containing details of Fishbourne’s collections. This is essential to ensure these records continue to be available when the software provider’s support of the old version is withdrawn.



After a period of semi-hibernation over the Palace’s ‘closed’ season, work begins again to renew memberships and take stock of progress with plans for 2017. Again, the Sword of Damocles hangs over the Friends as both a new Chairman and a new Secretary will be needed in May. I do hope the history of the Friends doesn’t end here.

Pam Crowe, January 2017



Published by the Friends of Fishbourne Roman Palace