

## THE ROMANO-GERMAN VILLA AT BORG: A CONCEPTUAL CONTRAST

The Roman villa of Borg in Germany, just across the Moselle from the better-known Luxembourg town of Schengen, makes a very interesting contrast to Fishbourne. Unlike the Palace it has been rebuilt.

The villa, one of the largest discovered in the Mosel-Saar region, dates to the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries AD. It was discovered 100 years ago having, like Fishbourne, remained largely undisturbed since Roman times. Archaeological investigations began in 1987 and in 1994, after consultations with experts, the Cultural Foundation Merzig-Wadern decided to “reconstruct the entire complex and bring it back to life”. It claims that this is the only completely rebuilt, full-size Roman *villa rustica* in existence.

The villa’s buildings have been reconstructed on the original foundations using finds from the site and Roman originals to ensure the greatest possible authenticity. The main building (the “manor”) houses a museum of finds from the site and elsewhere in the area. The real difference from Fishbourne comes in the other buildings. The tavern offers visitors a menu of Roman dishes based on the recipes of Apicius and prepared in the fully equipped kitchen, with its bread oven, furnace and grill. (For a small fee diners can put on



Roman costume.) The beautifully decorated bath suite includes a cold pool, a hot bath with hypocaust heating and a separate boiler room. The residential building and workshop mix history and modernity, offering space for meetings, conferences and cultural events. Six gardens, not as authentic as Fishbourne’s of course, display Roman vegetables, herbs and flowers.



The site attracts 50,000 visitors a year despite having no rail or bus service. Single entry is a mere €5 (£3.85). It appears the villa relies quite heavily on group bookings (children’s visits, group tours, meetings and lunches for up to 120 people), and special events organised by the villa staff, such as Celtic festivals, a beer fest (what else?) and cooking courses, and outside events like a food and craft fair, an annual International Reenactment Fair for ‘Living History’ and experimental archaeology (the 5<sup>th</sup> takes places on 25-26 April this year) and even anachronistic car rallies. In February 2013 there was a Roman glass-making exhibition by Mark Taylor and David Hill of Project Workshops, Quarley, near Andover.

The villa thus offers a different perspective on Roman life from sites in the UK where reconstruction is rare. It has, of course, a ‘Friends’ group, the *Förderverein Römische Villa Borg*, which organizes the events in the villa and generally promotes Roman history. One advantage their Friends have and we do not is that their membership fees can be offset against tax!

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