

VINDOLANDA

CHARITABLE TRUST

Excavation News 2008

The 2008 excavations are proceeding very well this year, the first season in a five year project aimed at answering the research question; 'was the fort wall the great divide?' Inside the third century stone fort two granaries have been uncovered, and in the extramural settlement a series of industrial buildings/ roadways and some fascinating and sentimental artefacts have come to light, including a beautiful little finger ring, inscribed with the words 'mother and father' (MATRI/PATRI).

Inside the fort *Excavations Sunday to Thursday - September the 4th.*

Inside the fort the excavations have uncovered two very large and beautifully constructed buildings which have had long and interesting lives. Both were probably constructed by the 4th cohort of Gaul's in cAD213, one purposely built as a grain storehouse the other as a warehouse. In front of both buildings a superb section of the via principalis (the main road linking the fort with the vicus) survives virtually intact, laid with massive and well worn flagstones, and the granary excavations can now be view by walking along this road, which was opened to the public at the end of June. As visitors walk through the west gate they will meet a new name from Vindolanda, RIACUS, who left his inscription on one of the roadside stones.

Initial analysis of the granaries suggests that they may have been demolished at the end of the 3rd century and then rebuilt in the beginning of the 4th century. The buildings continued to be used to the end of the Roman period and may have been destroyed by fire during the final withdrawal of the garrison. Evidence of the great fire that took place is still very much visible on the floor of the western most building, its flagstones heavily burnt and cracked by the intense heat of the flames. It is possible that this building (the most westerly of the two) also contained wine and olive oil amphorae, intensifying the flames. Despite this, the end of Roman Britain and Roman Vindolanda was not the end of the lives of both buildings. Evidence of re-use, particularly from the western building, where a post Roman store house was placed on to the southern end of the building survived the ravages of modern stone robbing. Artefacts such as a 5th/6th century penannular brooch and an Anglo-Saxon strap end dating from the 9th -11th centuries have helped to push the post Roman occupation of the site into covering a longer period than that of the Roman occupation of Vindolanda. Who the post Roman people have been remains a mystery, one theory is that the site may have become a monastic enclave in this period.

Outside the fort *Excavations from Tuesday - Saturday - September 13th*

Workshops, cobbled streets and a couple of wonderful inscriptions have marked the start of what will be a very important vicus excavation over the next five years. The excavations are working their way to the north of the Hadrian's Wall replicas on the site and excellent views of the excavations can be taken in from the top of the stone tower next door. Thus far a wonderful portable altar dedicated to a Syrian goddess has been recovered, as well as a small finger ring with the inscription of mother and father. The dating of the portable altar to the goddess of Syria is still to be confirmed but its presence may suggest a link between the personnel of fort /settlement at Vindolanda and Carvoran. It is hoped that further evidence of Syrian influence may be forthcoming as the excavations continue.

Massive Roman Granaries & Superb Roman Road Discovered At Vindolanda Fort

Exciting excavations at Roman Vindolanda are revealing two massive granaries and a magnificent flagged roadway inside the Fort.

"The masonry of these granaries is far superior to that of the nearby commanding officer's residence, and although some of the walls have suffered from stone robbing, others are standing to a height of around 1.5 metres (5 feet in old currency). Samples of material trapped in vents below the flagged floors of the granaries are expected to reveal the nature of the foodstuffs and other goods once stored in the buildings, together with the bones of rodents that attempted to feed upon them.

Archaeological evidence, including a bronze brooch and strap end, has also revealed that people were using the building as accommodation from the fifth to the eighth centuries, proving that Vindolanda continued to be occupied long after the end of Roman rule in Britain.

A magnificent section of superbly flagged Roman roadway has also been discovered next to the granaries and it is probably now the best example to be seen in the north." *Andrew Birley - Director of Excavations.*



A beautiful little finger ring, inscribed with the words 'mother and father' (MATRI / PATRI)



The granary excavations



The granaries



The flagged roadway