



**EXCAVATION NEWS**

**Roman Bronze Horse Head Recovered from Well-Shaft in Germany**

While excavating a well shaft at the archaeological site of Waldgirmes, located 40km north of Frankfurt, archaeologists have discovered a life-size horse head of cast bronze. With a length of approximately 50cm and weighing 25kg, the impressively preserved bronze casting still retains its covering of delicate gold leaf. The horse's head also boasts impressive craftsmanship and Dr Friedrich Lüth, Director of the German Archaeological Institute's Roman-Germanic Commission, is of the opinion that this sophisticated work of art was made in Italy before being transported across the Alps to Waldgirmes.

The gold leaf adornment, combined with the rich trappings on the horse's head and the horse's halter - which include a depiction of Mars - have led some archaeologists to postulate that the horse was originally part of a much larger statue that depicted an equestrian emperor, possibly Augustus. Although it is currently impossible to prove this hypothesis, it was certainly traditional that important political fig-

*Bronze Roman horse head with gold leaf dating to c. 9 BC. Found at Waldgirmes, Germany. L. 52cm.*

*Photo: courtesy of Associated Press.*

*Ruins of Roman quayside installations at Andriake. The deep natural harbour began silting up in late antiquity leaving a shallow salt marsh and leading to the abandonment of the city*  
*Photo: James Beresford.*

ures would be portrayed mounted on horseback. When combined with the rich adornment found on the horse's head, and the militaristic representations, there is no doubt that the statue originally portrayed a person from the highest rank in Roman society. The assumption that the statue originally portrayed Augustus was reinforced following the discovery of additional bronze fragments from the well-shaft which included one of the heels of the rider wearing a senator's sandal. Furthermore, dendrochronologists have dated the wooden shaft of the well to about 9 BC, midway through the reign of the emperor Augustus.

Historians had previously assumed that the town at Waldgirmes (the Roman name of the town is still unknown), while within the Roman Empire, was too remote to be of any significance. However, the recently discovered bronze statue fragments indicate that Rome may have had grand plans for the settlement at Waldgirmes. Since excavation of the site began in 1993, the footings for five statues have also been found, carved from stones that were transported 300km to Waldgirmes, while about 100 pieces of statuary have been unearthed in what was the large forum of the town. During the press conference held in Frankfurt on 12 August, representatives from the Roman-Germanic Commission, stressed the importance of the finds from the well-shaft. Hessian Science Minister Eva Kühne-Hörmann, stated: 'We've rediscovered the remnants of early European history. The unique horse head is a witness to the broken dream of the Romans to create a united Europe under their rule.'

Whatever the Romans were hoping to achieve at Waldgirmes, their plans for the development of the city were to

be short-lived. In AD 9 three legions commanded by Quintilius Varus were defeated by German tribesmen in the Battle of the Teutoburg Forest, rendering a shocking blow to Roman pride (see *Minerva*, March/April 2009, p.26-29). Friedrich Lüth believes that Waldgirmes, located nearly 200km to the south of the battlefield, was probably abandoned soon after the massacre. 'It would make sense that the troops left in quite a hurry, or we must imagine they would have taken [the statue of] their emperor with them.'

*Georgina Read*

**Find of a Synagogue in Late Roman Lycia**

Summer, excavations in the ancient port city of Andriake, located on the southern coast of modern Turkey, revealed a small building that was used as a synagogue from the 3rd century AD. The archaeologists, led by Professor Nevzat Çevik from Akdeniz University, identified the synagogue from remains of high-quality marble slabs carved with reliefs depicting a variety of Jewish symbols, one of which featured a menorah, the seven-stemmed candelabra associated with Judaism.

Andriake was one of many ports that lined the southern coast of Anatolia. Although rarely mentioned in ancient texts, the large sheltered harbour was formed where the River Myros met the sea, proved highly important for ships seeking shelter from the winds which often blow powerfully down from the Taurus mountains and onto the Gulf of Antalya. The harbour was also sufficiently large and deep that it allowed even the mighty ships of the Alexandrian grain fleet to find a safe anchorage. In the New Testament, Acts of the Apostles, it is there-





fore described how St Paul, on his way to Rome to face trial, was transferred from a small coasting trading vessel that had carried him from the Judean provincial capital of Caesarea. The narrator of Acts therefore notes that 'when we had sailed over the sea of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we came to Myra, a city of Lycia. And it was there that the centurion found a ship out of Alexandria that was sailing to Italy and upon this vessel he placed Paul and the other prisoners' (Acts 27:5-6). While the biblical account makes no mention of Andriake, we know that it was at this port settlement that St Paul changed ships because the harbour serviced the large city of Myra located almost 5km inland.

The ships of the Alexandrian grain fleet, such as that which carried St Paul from Andriake, could be huge vessels of over 1000 tonnes – larger than any sailing ships until early modern times. Although we do not know if the vessel that carried St Paul from Andriake was quite this large, the narrator of the Book of Acts nevertheless states that there were 270 passengers and crew aboard the ship. More importantly, however, the ship's hold was also filled with wheat. It has been estimated that as much as 150,000 tonnes of grain was shipped from Egypt to Rome every year during the Late Republic and early Empire. This was necessary to ensure that the burgeoning population of the empire's capital, which was probably about one million strong, was not threatened by starvation.

The importance of Andriake to the Roman corn supply is clearly evidenced by the large grain storage building that looms over the other ruins of the ancient harbour. Constructed in the early decades of the 2nd century AD,

the solidly built structure still features a worn and partly defaced relief of the emperor Hadrian and his wife Sabina. Carved onto the front of the building the word *horrea* – a warehouse, often used for the storage of grain – proclaims the nature of the structure, and the eight large rooms into which the building was subdivided would originally have held the grain before it was loaded onto ships in the harbour.

The small building recently identified as a synagogue stands in front of the grain store. The position of the synagogue, over-looking the wharfs and quays of the harbour, suggest that the Jewish community played an important role in the commercial life of the city and were an integral part of the society of ancient Andriake. This supports what is known from historical sources. A letter written by the Seleucid king Antiochus III, the Great, in c. 205 BC, refers to 2000 Jewish families that were transported from Sardis to the southern region of Anatolia. The Romans had also granted the Jewish population of Lycia, the area of Asia Minor in which Andriake is located, as well as many other Jewish communities in the eastern Mediterranean, with protection and the right to worship without fear of persecution (1 Maccabees 15:23) in the latter half of the 2nd century BC. However, despite such literary references to Jewish communities in Lycia, the finds from Andriake provide the first archaeological evidence for Jewish worship in this region of the Roman Empire. As Professor Çevik was eager to emphasise: 'It's the first remnant of Lycian Jewish culture we've found.'

It is presently unclear how long the building was in use as a synagogue. However, during late antiquity and the



*Terry Herbert with his spectacular Anglo-Saxon find. ©Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery.*

early medieval period, the large harbour began to silt up and Andriake slowly fell into disuse. Survey work carried out by Austrian archaeologists in 2004 and 2006 therefore established that the port city was abandoned by the 8th century AD. The synagogue was therefore established at the height of the city's commercial activity when Andriake was an important harbour on the busy sea routes that linked the cities of the Levant with those clustered around the Aegean and central Mediterranean.

*Dr James Beresford*

### **Anglo-Saxon Hoard Par Excellence Unearthed in Staffordshire, UK**

When Howard Carter entered the Tomb of Tutankhamen he famously said: 'I see beautiful things,' referring of course to one of the greatest – if not the greatest – archaeological treasures ever found. This has captured the imagination of people ever since and archaeology has become synonymous with the quest for treasure – a fantasy for most metal detectorists. Since the passing of the Treasure Act in 1996, they have been incentivised to report their finds, in the knowledge that they will receive a 50 percent share of the value of their finds, with the balance paid to the landowner. In July 2009, this dream became reality for the Staffordshire detectorist Terry Herbert when he unearthed the largest Anglo-Saxon treasure ever discovered.

The hoard – presently in the safe hands of Birmingham Museum – consists of weapons and helmet decorations, coins, and Christian crosses totalling more than 1500 pieces – an astonishing 2.5kg of silver and 5kg of gold – three times the quantity found in the revered Anglo-Saxon Sutton Hoo ship burial, discovered in Suffolk in 1939. It is thought to date to around AD 700, the same time as the Sutton Hoo treasure. The gold includes exquisite gem-studded objects decorated with tiny interlaced beasts, and a bountiful 84 sword pommel caps, 71 hilt collars, and three folded Christian crosses. The most enigmatic find consists of a folded gold strip with a Latin inscrip-

*The large horrea at Andriake. Built to store grain in eight separate rooms, the early 2nd century building is remarkably well preserved. Photo: James Beresford.*

