



ENGLISH HERITAGE

NEWS RELEASE

NOT FOR PUBLICATION OR BROADCAST BEFORE TUESDAY 15 FEBRUARY, 7.00am

NEW TOWN HOUSE BRINGS A TASTE OF ROMAN LIFE TO WROXETER ROMAN CITY

Opens to the public Saturday 19 February 2011

Its construction has been documented by the Channel Four programme “Rome Wasn’t Built in a Day”, and on Saturday 19 February, visitors will be able to walk around the newest ‘Roman’ house in the world, as Wroxeter Roman City’s new Town House opens its doors to the public!

The town house was built by a team of contemporary tradesmen using traditional Roman tools, techniques and materials to a design created by archaeologist, Professor Dai Morgan Evans over a period of six months. The design recreates the look of a typical property that would have stood at Wroxeter Roman City during its heyday in the second century.

“For English Heritage, the opportunity for visitors to be able to see a complete Roman property alongside the ruins of real second century homes was something that we could not afford to miss, especially when it was to be created using the same tools and techniques as were used 1800 years ago,” says Head of Visitor Operations for the West Midlands, Mark Badger.

“Unlike so many recreations that you can see in museums around the country, this is not made of modern materials such as fibreglass to recreate the appearance of a Roman property, but exactly the same materials and techniques that would have been used by the Romans, and this makes it a living property which requires on-going maintenance, just like the properties occupied by Wroxeter’s Roman settlers,” adds Mark.

There are many areas that visitors will find familiar from homes today as they walk around the property – including a bathroom complete with under-floor heating – but also areas that they might find surprising, including a shop that is open to the street and a tiny space allocated for slave living quarters.

“You can’t get away from the continental ‘villa’ feel to this property, with all the rooms connected by a covered corridor which is open to a central garden, but the structure does give you an impression of which parts of the house were considered most important,” explains Mark.

Indeed, the visual highlight of the property is the reception room, which would also have served as a dining room. Frescos on the walls and an elaborate mosaic on the floor show the importance this room would have on depicting the family’s social status. Similarly, an under-floor heating system – a hypocaust system – is a luxurious installation in the family’s private bathing space – which includes a cold plunge pool, a warm room and a hot room.

One room in the house has been left unfinished, so that visitors can more clearly see the different techniques and materials used in building the property. “We want visitors to this town house to understand just how sophisticated Roman properties were, so in this room, you can see a combination of the bare stonework that forms the lower part of the wall, the way wooden posts are joined and the wattling that was used to fill in the frame and give a solid wall.

The Roman Town House opens on Saturday 19 February at 10.00am. Visits to the property are included in the admission price for Wroxeter Roman City, which is £4.40 for adults, £3.70 for concessions and £2.20 for children, or £11.00 for a family ticket (two adults and up

to three children). Wroxeter Roman City and the Town House are open daily from 19 February from 10.00am to 4.00pm (until 5.00pm from 1 March).

For more information, please call 01743 761330 or visit www.english-heritage.org.uk/wroxeter

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For further media information, please contact:

Jay Commins

PRO – English Heritage

Tel: 0113 251 5698

Mob: 07810 546567

Email: jay@fim.org.uk



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NEWS RELEASE

10 February 2011

“AND TO YOUR RIGHT IS THE LIGHT AND AIRY CUBICULUM...”

**Roman guide to lead tours of Wroxeter’s newest town
house**

19 & 20 and 26 & 27 February

A Roman business man will have the pleasure of welcoming visitors to his brand new house on 19 & 20 and 26 & 27 February, when Marcus Iulius Britanicus throws open the doors of his luxury villa to mark the public opening of Wroxeter Roman City’s new Roman Town House!

To celebrate the launch of English Heritage’s newest attraction, Marcus, alias Roman re-enactor Dave Richardson, will play the role of a third century Roman businessman who has just moved into his brand new home, and is only too happy to show visitors around his not-so-humble abode!

“As Roman accommodation goes, this house is very comfortable, with all the latest mod-cons, including underfloor heating to the bathroom, a beautiful mosaic on the floor of the reception room and even a shop from which the owner can sell his wares to passers-by,” explains English Heritage’s head of visitor operations, Mark Badger. “The house is wonderful in its own right, but we’re delighted to have Marcus on board to talk visitors through what life would have been like living in a house like this in Roman Britain!”

Indeed, the house will not only be populated by a Roman trader, but he's also bringing some of his prized possessions to go on display in the house throughout each weekend, from benches to pottery and wall hangings.

Tours will take place on the two weekends each day every hour from 10.30am until 3.30pm, with places allocated on a first-come first-served basis and take around 30 minutes.

Between tours, Marcus will be in the house talking to visitors.

During half term week (Monday 21 to Friday 25 February), visitors will be able to look around the house in its unfurnished state, with children invited to join in hands-on fun in Wroxeter's education room, including the chance to make a Roman helmet of their own! There will also be a Roman trail around the 1800 year-old ruins!

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February 2011

WROXETER'S ROMAN TOWN HOUSE

Fascinating facts

About the building process...

- 26 tonnes of plaster were used on the building, all of it mixed by hand
- 150 tonnes of sandstone bricks were used for the foundation course, all of which were faced by hand
- The sandstone bricks are held together by 15 tonnes of lime mortar
- Over 30 tonnes of oak was used to create the timber frame
- 1500 hand cut joints were required to build the frame
- 2,600 handmade tiles were used on the roof
- Although the house was built in six months, in reality, Professor Evans believes it would have taken around two years to complete a property of this size, allowing wood to be harvested at the appropriate time and plaster and mortar to dry fully.

About the setting:

- Wroxeter (or 'Virconium') was the fourth largest city in Roman Britain
- In its heyday, Wroxeter would have housed 5,000 citizens
- The city is thought to have been vacated in the sixth or seventh century AD, unlike many other Roman cities which still exist today. It is for this reason that the Roman ruins have been so well-preserved.

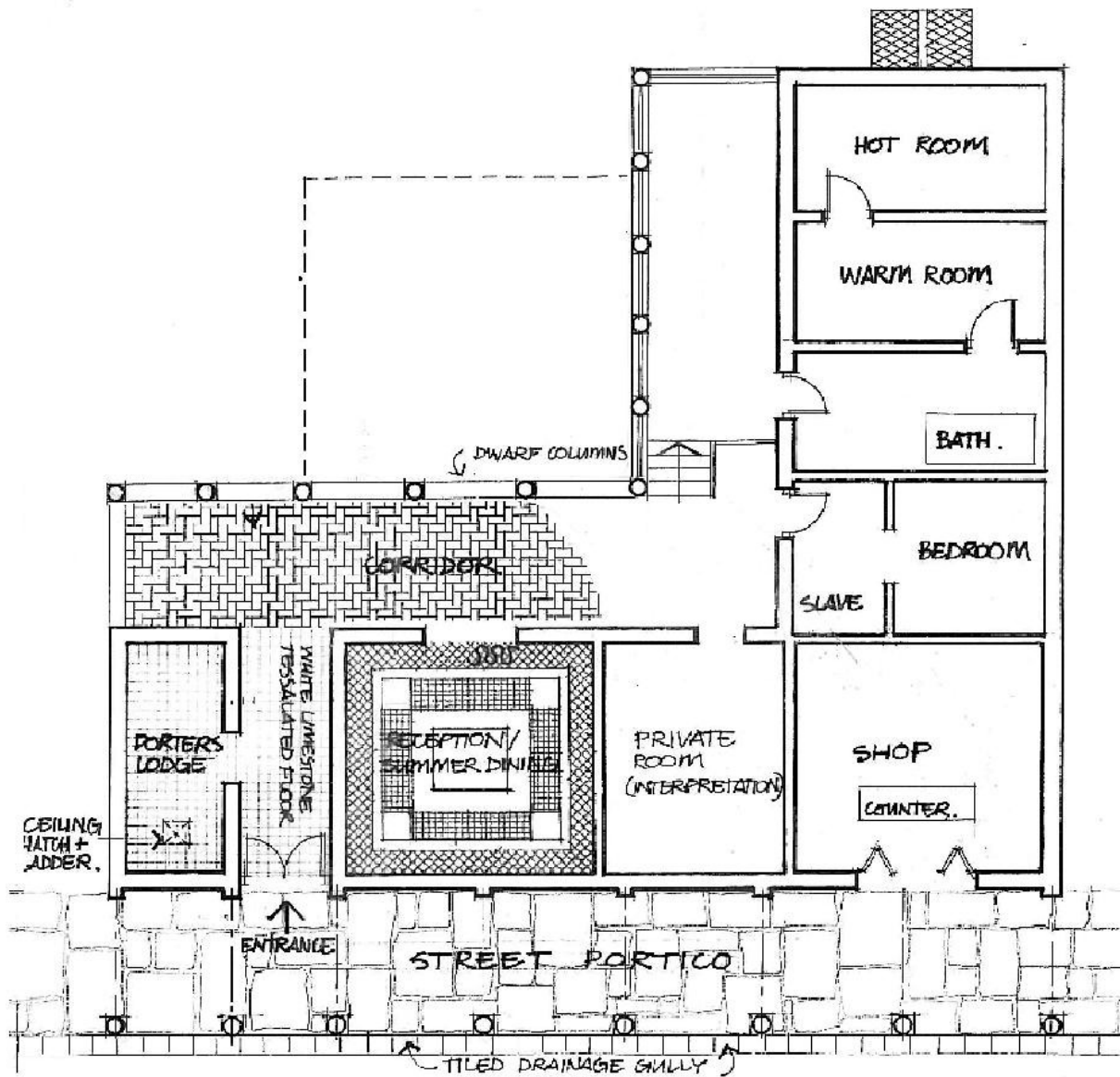
- The Roman baths at Wroxeter were large enough to accommodate up to 1000 people at any one time – up to 20% of the entire city population!
- Wroxeter was thought to have been the seat of King Arthur – defending Briton from the invading Saxons
- Local legend has it that Wroxeter Roman City was carried away overnight by a flock of sparrows!
- Wilfred Owen, Mary Webb and AE Housman have all written poems inspired by Wroxeter

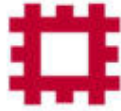


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WROXETER ROMAN TOWN HOUSE

Floor plan





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About Professor Dai Morgan Evans

Dai Evans read archaeology at the University of Cardiff (1963-66), started research on the archaeology of early Welsh poetry and was one of the assistant directors on the excavations at Cadbury Castle, Somerset.

In early 1969, he was appointed to the Inspectorate of Ancient Monuments and Historic Buildings in Cardiff (now part of Cadw). He worked as a casework Inspector in south-west Wales, with a special interest in pan-Wales Industrial Archaeology, and was later moved to deal with North Wales.

In 1977 following a move to the London office of the Ancient Monuments Inspectorate, Department of the Environment, now English Heritage, Dai acted as casework inspector over most counties of southern England, concentrating mainly on earthwork archaeological sites and their protection and management. This included working with Local Authority Planning Departments and National Parks.

In 1992, Dai left English Heritage to become General Secretary of the Society of Antiquaries of London. This post involved being the full-time head of administration for a learned Society. As part of his work the public profile of the Society was raised especially in strategic areas including the signing of a formal agreement with The All Party Parliamentary Archaeology group. He was also required to maintain a personal high academic profile and network across the whole area of the Society's interests which concerned all matters from heraldry to historic buildings (Kelmscott Manor) and archaeology worldwide.

Currently a visiting lecturer at the University of Chester, Dai was approached in late 2009 by Darlow Smithson about a project for Channel 4 to recreate a Roman villa, and the concept of the Wroxeter Town House started to take shape.