

From the Archives

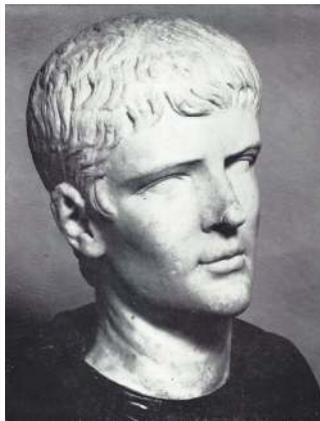
In the February 2014 edition of *Bosham Life* I wrote about the very large head that had been found near Bosham Church in the early 19th century. Here is the story:

'THE OTHER BOSHAM HEAD'

The other Bosham head first came to public notice in 1910 when a Miss Patterson showed it to the Vicar of Bosham, the Reverend Kenneth MacDermott and he, in turn, brought it to the attention of the British Museum, stating in his letter that at present it is 'standing in a flower pot surrounded by pebbles'.

Bosham has long been traditionally associated with Vespasian, particularly as being the landing place and the headquarters of his expedition in the Claudian invasion of AD43. In view of this perhaps it was not so surprising that in 1832, in a field in the area known as Broadbridge, the foundations of a Roman building were discovered (*see Bosham Life, November 2013, page13*). It comprised a square room with a piscina in the centre with three rooms on either side of the same size. From coins found embedded in the mortar the building was dated to the middle of the 2nd century AD. To the south-west of this building a large excavation was also found, said to have the remains of tiers of seats and at the same

time, Roman foundations were found in land near the Swan Inn. It was in this same area of Bosham that this other head was found, later in the 19th century. The more recent history of this head is quite convoluted, but thanks to the research done in 1980 by the past Archivist, Geoffrey Marwood, and a paper by KS Painter in *The Antiquaries Journal* of 1965, I have been able to piece the story together.



The head was originally discovered some time around 1850, during the digging of the foundations of a house for Mr Gatehouse, the miller at Broadbridge. Not realising its importance, Mr Gatehouse placed it in his garden. His son, JC Gatehouse, known as Sam, remembers seeing it there and on one occasion actually gave it a coat of paint. It remained there for some 50 years or so, disappearing under vegetation, until it was unearthed by a gardener. He gave it to Miss

Patterson. When the head arrived at The British Museum, it was pronounced to be a portrait of a young man, probably the work of a Roman sculptor after a Greek model, of a member of the Claudian family, not improbably Germanicus and it was dated 1-50AD.

Back in Bosham, a dispute had broken out about the ownership of the head, and thanks to MacDermott's correspondence with the British Museum, all the details were recorded. The miller's son, Sam, claimed that it belonged to him and that Miss Patterson had no right to it at all. His claim proved to be correct. The head remained in the British Museum until 1914, when Mr Gatehouse retrieved it and sold it to Edward Heron-Allen, a well known Sussex archaeologist. Heron-Allen's restoration of the head included cleaning it and mounting it in a modern green marble draped bust. Mr Heron-Allen died in 1943 and in 1944 the head came into the possession of Captain AWF Fuller, an enthusiastic collector of historic items relating to Sussex. In 1961 he gave it back to the British Museum through the National Arts Collection Fund, where it still remains. This is the description of the head as described by KS Painter in his Paper, 'The Roman Marble Head from Sussex' which appeared in *The*

Antiquaries Journal in 1965. 'The head is of white marble about 43cms high. The tip of the nose has been restored and a section of the back hair has been broken off and replaced with a patch. There seems to have been an attempt to clean the stone down to a fresh surface; but in spite of the fresh appearance of much of the stone some pitting still remains, for example on the cheeks.' He also wrote in defence of some differing opinions about the date of the head: '... there is no reason to suppose that it is a Grand Tour import...and there is no obvious reason for supposing that the head was imported to Broadbridge at any other time than in antiquity'.

In the 1980s, however, the attribution of the head came into question again, and the British Museum in a reply to an enquiry by Mrs Angela Bromley-Martin stated that 'the consensus of modern expert opinion is that the Bosham head is not antique' and referred her to an article in '*The British Museum Quarterly*' written by the same Mr Painter. In it he stated that after reviewing the opinions of various authorities of the day he had now changed his mind and wrote, 'The Broadbridge piece must therefore be held to be of doubtful antiquity... The history of the head may well begin with its being carved in the 17th century...' As a result of this 'change of mind' the Bosham head was probably relegated to a basement store.

But in 1999 Grahame Soffe and Martin Henig spoke out in defence of the Bosham head. In their article in *The Bulletin of The Association For Roman Archaeology* they stated that there were '...no grounds for the suggestions that the head was a Grand Tour import that had strayed from a country house in the neighbourhood and that close scrutiny of the evidence and a study of the photograph of 1909 before it was restored shows that it is indeed an antiquity and it is almost certainly the head of Germanicus, made shortly after his early death in AD19'.

So in spite of the fluctuating history of both the Bosham heads perhaps the statement made by SE Winbolt in the section on Roman History in *The Victoria History of Sussex* in 1935 is once more relevant. He concluded, after taking into account the Roman foundations at Broadbridge, the life-size portrait head, together with the other very large head found near Bosham church, '...it is, generally, safe to infer that Bosham was a place of some importance during the whole of the Roman period'.

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