

## Bathurst's Uncovering: Charles Bragge Bathurst, First Excavator of the Lydney Park Roman Temple

By CHRIS SULLIVAN

Lydney Park, uphill from the River Severn on the southern edge of the Forest of Dean (Fig. 1), has its own Roman temple. Almost all discussion of this site has been based on the 1928–9 Wheeler and Wheeler re-excavation,<sup>1</sup> the limited third excavation in 1980–1 by Casey and Hofmann,<sup>2</sup> or on sources secondary to the original excavation,<sup>3</sup> which was by Charles Bragge Bathurst (henceforth 'Bathurst') after 1805. Bathurst was a politician at county and national level, a significant landowner and curious enough to investigate a site whose Roman artefacts were disappearing. To him we owe most of Lydney Park's special finds. He recorded mosaics which were fragmentary even then; yet he gets very little credit for what he secured. Surviving at Lydney Park are two notebooks, several other writings and a number of illustrations, described below. They show a gentleman antiquary two centuries ago; how he worked and what he thought he had found. Other sources tell us who he was. This paper goes beyond his son's compression of the notebooks, published in 1879,<sup>4</sup> to give some picture of the man, with facts and pictures previously unpublished.

### Who was Charles Bathurst?

Bathurst was baptized Charles Bragge on 28 February 1754 but changed his name to Charles Bathurst in 1804. For simplicity, I shall call him 'Bathurst' irrespective of date. He had a classical education at Winchester College. A schoolbook with a Charles Bragge bookplate survives at Lydney Park, with Greek and Latin copies of text from Sophocles, Quintilian and Demosthenes. At Winchester, he made a friend key to his future direction. This was Henry Addington, a son of leading doctor Anthony Addington and Mary Hiley. Bathurst went to Lincoln's Inn in 1772 via New College, Oxford, and was called to the bar in 1778. He stayed a fellow of New College until 1789. Minor judicial appointments followed,<sup>5</sup> and he practised at the Gloucester Quarter Sessions. On 1 August 1788, when he was 34, he married Henry Addington's youngest sister

1. R.E.M. Wheeler and T.V. Wheeler, *Report on the Excavation of the Prehistoric, Roman and Post-Roman Site in Lydney Park, Gloucestershire* (Rep. Research Cttee of Soc. of Antiquaries of London 9, 1932).
2. P.J. Casey and B. Hoffmann, 'Excavations at the Roman Temple in Lydney Park, Gloucestershire, in 1980 and 1981', *Antiquaries Jnl* 79 (1999), 81–143.
3. Principally W.H. Bathurst and C.W. King, *Roman Antiquities at Lydney Park, Gloucestershire, being a posthumous work of the Rev. William Hiley Bathurst, M.A. with notes by C.W. King, M.A.* (1879). This is now available in monochrome facsimile. Described further below.
4. *Ibid.*
5. His cousin Henry Bathurst was Lord High Chancellor.



Fig. 1 Extract from Bathurst's Plate 2, showing Lydney and Staunton.

Charlotte (1762–1839), then aged 27. Two sons, Charles and William Hiley, and three daughters, Charlotte, Mary and Anne, survived to adulthood.<sup>6</sup>

#### *As an MP and Government Minister*

Bathurst was MP for Monmouth (1790–5), Bristol (1796–1812), Bodmin (1812–18) and Harwich (1818–23).<sup>7</sup> In the Commons he was a regular speaker, if not an orator, on a wide range of governmental and Commons committee matters. In 1797 he was Counsel for the Board of Control for India, and in 1799 he was the first paid Chairman of Ways and Means in the Commons.

6. Mary was taken ill and died aged 27 in 1822. She was buried where her sisters were baptized – St George, Hanover Square, Mayfair.
7. This section based mainly on: *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, s.v. Chas Bragge Bathurst, Ant. Addington, and Hen. Addington (1st Viscount Sidmouth); *History of Parliament [Hist. Parl.]*, s.v. Chas Bragge (afterwards Bragge Bathurst), Chas Bathurst (formerly Bragge), and Hen. Addington. Both accessed online in Mar. 2021.

Bathurst's political fortunes were, for good or ill, linked to Addington's. Addington's political rival George Canning marked Bathurst as 'Brother Bragge', as did cartoonist Gillray.<sup>8</sup> When Addington became both Prime Minister and Chancellor in 1801, he appointed Bathurst as Treasurer of the Navy. Bathurst joined the Privy Council. In 1803 he was moved to the Board of Trade and Secretary at War (which ran the War Office). The Napoleonic Wars started that May. When Addington's government fell in 1804, Canning became Navy Treasurer.

Bathurst was Master of the Mint for some months in 1806–7 and Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, a cabinet-level post, between 1812 and 1823. Canning's attack on this Chancellor, then in his 60s, was as the '*Venus aux belles fesses*', perhaps consistent with the portly fellow in (Fig. 2).<sup>9</sup> Bathurst reluctantly replaced Canning as President of the Board of Control from January 1821. He took ill-health retirement in exchange for pension provision for his daughters. In January 1823 he retired from London life for his antiquarian researches.

### *Lydney and Gloucestershire Affairs*

The first Bathurst to own Lydney Park was Benjamin Bathurst. Benjamin's children included Thomas, Poole and Anne. Daughter Anne married Charles Bragge of Cleve Hill, Mangotsfield. One of their children was named Charles, after his father. When Benjamin died in 1767, Lydney Park passed to son Thomas (d. 1791), to son Poole (d. 1792), and then as a life interest to Poole's wife, also Anne. On wife Anne's death in 1804, Lydney Park passed to their nephew Charles Bragge the younger, who changed his name to Charles Bathurst on 11 May 1804.<sup>10</sup>

Bathurst had the usual administrative and legal responsibilities of a landowner.<sup>11</sup> He continued the family businesses of coal, iron works and fisheries. He was active in the proposals for the horse-drawn Severn and Wye Railway linking a new Lydney docks and canal with the Wye at Lydbrook, selling land in 1811 to the railway company.<sup>12</sup>

Around 1804, Bathurst returned to the Gloucester Quarter Sessions, this time as chairman for many years.<sup>13</sup> This role was disrupted by his time in London office. In his 70s he returned to the magistrates' bench.<sup>14</sup> Magistrates ran prisons, agreed county finances, set local taxes and ran some of the infrastructure: for example, Bathurst was among those deciding that the Over bridge should be to Telford's stone design, rather than his much cheaper iron one.<sup>15</sup> Fellow magistrate the Revd F.E. Witts described Bathurst as 'a laborious, indefatigable man, a sound scholar bred up in the legal profession, and of a disposition closely to follow out any subject which engaged his attention'.<sup>16</sup> People with Roman remains on their estates were likely to be magistrates. Witts'

8. G. Canning, '*The Ode to the Doctor*': *Poetical Works of the Rt Hon George Canning* (1827), 50; 'The Wounded Lion' by James Gillray in the National Portrait Gallery, London.

9. 'fesses' = 'buttocks'. 18 Jun. 1816 entry in *The New Tory Guide* (1819), 112. Notably not in *Poetical Works*.

10. *Victoria County History of Glos.* V, 46–84.

11. On 3 Oct. 1811 the petty constable of Awre was required 'to summon all freeholders and Resciant to the Plume of Feathers to do their suit and service And be you then and there present with your Presentment ... Hereof fail not at your peril.'

12. Lydney Park Estate Papers [LPEP] contain letters and Benjamin Outram's 1801 booklet of proposals for railways from collieries in the Dean.

13. F.E. Witts (ed. A. Sutton), *The Complete Diary of a Cotswold Parson*, V (2008), 184.

14. *Ibid.* II (2008), 377.

15. *Ibid.* III (2008) 157.

16. *Ibid.* V, 184.



Fig. 2 Rt. Hon. Charles (Bragge) Bathurst, from a portrait at Lydney Park Museum.

diaries show interest by magistrates in each other's excavations, suggesting 'county business' as an informal route for spreading archaeological information.<sup>17</sup>

On 30 November 1827 Bathurst's relative Thomas Estcourt reported to Bathurst's brother-in-law Lord Sidmouth (as Addington had become) on a recent 'satisfactory' visit to Lydney, where:

we found Mr. Bathurst looking particularly well ... On ... two ... days ... we walked about the park, scaling the hills and botanizing, and enjoying and pointing out the fine views with as much acuteness and ardour as I ever saw him evince ... He declared himself free from all pain in the side and from

17. Ibid. II, 444; X (part 2) (2010), 416.



Fig. 3 The River Sever behind the entrance into the Lydney Park Roman Temple. Photo © Rupert Bathurst, 4th Viscount Bledisloe. Reproduced with kind permission.

rheumatic aches ... On the wet day we went through the whole of the antiquities contained in the cabinets, and in short passed three most agreeable days according to the style of former times.<sup>18</sup>

Bathurst died on 13 August 1831 and was buried in the family chapel in Lydney church. By the time he died, Lydney Park's Roman assets were secure in cabinets or recorded in artworks.

### Lydney Park Roman Temple

Lydney is on the north side of the tidal River Sever, where it starts to narrow and curve. Lydney Park lies west of the modern Lydney town edge, to the north of the present A48, and the Roman temple is some 0.9 km north of Bathurst's house, where outbuildings remain at the Taurus Crafts site, and up a hill behind the present house, built from 1875 by his son William. The temple site is at the southern end of an Iron Age promontory fort,<sup>19</sup> whose location is visible from many miles away.<sup>20</sup> Bathurst's view from the promontory fort was 'from near Gloucester, down to the lowest shore of Somersetshire' (Fig. 3). In Roman times, the site may have been remote, but not inaccessible. Minor roads are thought to have run in higher ground further inland to the present

18. *Hist. Parl.* s.v. Chas Bathurst (formerly Bragge).

19. National Heritage List for England [NHLE], No. 1017373.

20. G.B. Witts, 'Sodbury Camp', *Trans. BGAS* 8 (1883-4), 74-8. The Lydney Camps were two of the 15 'camps' visible from this site near Chipping Sodbury.

coastline.<sup>21</sup> Boat access, particularly from across the Severn, must have been important, with some evidence of wharfage nearby.<sup>22</sup>

Bathurst was aware of the main Roman towns, though excavation even of Roman Bath was limited in his time. Villas were also coming to light. He compared the dimensions of the Lydney site and buildings against Bignor (Sussex), North Leigh (Oxon.), and in Gloucestershire ‘Great Witcombe’ (Great Witcombe), ‘Rodmanton’ (Rodmarton), Withington and Woodchester.<sup>23</sup> He used his copy of Samuel Lysons’ *Woodchester* as a comparator with Lydney,<sup>24</sup> and drew archaeological comparisons with Great Witcombe and places overseas. He was also aware of the ironworking site of *Ariconium* in the parish of Weston under Penyard (Herefs.).<sup>25</sup> Many other Roman sites have been found in the local area since Bathurst’s time,<sup>26</sup> such as the buildings at Park Farm below the site and at Chesters in Woolaston, midway between Lydney and Chepstow.<sup>27</sup>

### *Pre-Bathurst Site History*

The Lydney site was subject to sustained pilfering before Bathurst imposed some order, although I have found no record that previous owners were aware of Roman material on part of their land. Sir John Wintour, Catholic Royalist and Henrietta Maria’s secretary, lost almost everything he had, including his Lydney house and perhaps his records, in the Civil War. His son’s wife sold a reduced, debt-encumbered estate with a replacement house to Benjamin Bathurst,<sup>28</sup> who could move his enormous family to Lydney Park. He set a labourer to clear the grounds, by then ‘a Wilderness’.

Late in her life the labourer’s daughter, Anne Smith, recalled that as a little girl she went with him to ‘the Dwarf’s Hill (always so called) where she remembers what she calls the Dwarf’s Chapel of which the Walls were then standing of about three feet high composed of small bricks ... which people were in the habit of stealing.’ Note the tradition of odd architecture and religious significance. ‘When she attended her Father he found many large Coins – & little Horses & Cups’ which he passed to owner Benjamin. From Benjamin, the estate passed to eldest son Thomas, whose mother-in-law was Mrs Fazakerley. Anne continued: ‘when she was some years older she used to attend on Mrs Fazakerley with other Girls when she went on the Dwarf’s Hill to collect Roman antiquities, which she did by poking on the ground with her Cane & making the Girls pick them up – which ... she took away with her & gave to a Lady whose name she did not recollect in

21. e.g. Margary 60a, in I.D. Margary, *Roman Roads in Britain*, II (1957); cf. G. Ormerod, *Strigulensia: Archaeological Memoirs relating to the District Adjacent to the Confluence of The Severn And The Wye* (1861).
22. M. Fitchett, ‘Excavations at Park Farm, Lydney’, *New Regard of the Forest of Dean* 2 (1986), 25. The scale of iron-making at Chesters implies water trade: C. Scott Garrett and F.H. Harris, ‘Chesters Roman Villa, Woolaston, Gloucestershire’, *Archaeologia Cambrensis* 93 (1938), 93–125; M.G. Fulford and J.R.L. Allen, ‘Iron-Making at the Chesters Villa, Woolaston, Gloucestershire: Survey and Excavation 1987–91’, *Britannia* 23 (1992), 200, 206.
23. LPEP.
24. S. Lysons, *An Account of Roman Antiquities Discovered at Woodchester in the County of Gloucester* (1797). The mosaic in his Room XIV ‘nearly corresponds with one of the rooms at Woodchester, PL XIII in Mr Lyson’s work’. Bathurst’s bookplate is pasted over the previous owner’s identifier – George Watts 1819.
25. R. Jackson, *Ariconium, Herefordshire: An Iron Age Settlement and Romano-British ‘Small Town’* (2012).
26. J. Hoyle, *Hidden Landscapes of the Forest of Dean* (2019).
27. Fitchett, ‘Park Farm’; Scott Garrett and Harris, ‘Chesters’; Fulford and Allen, ‘Iron-making’.
28. He was the youngest son of Sir Benjamin Bathurst, who was a royalist, a merchant in Seville, a stalwart of the charter monopoly companies, a City financier and in charge of household finances of James, Duke of York, of Princess then Queen Anne, Anne’s husband and son, and of one of Nell Gwynne’s children. Son Benjamin had 36 children.

London. That at this time the Walls were not half so high'. Most finds 'in all her experience were found near the Dwarf's Chapel under the brow of the Hill & none on the side toward Plane Tree Bottom ...'<sup>29</sup>

Antiquarian Major Hayman Rooke sent a letter with illustrations of 'two Roman camps or forts' at Lydney Park to the Society of Antiquaries of London in 1777,<sup>30</sup> in Thomas's time. Rooke was, in Charles Bathurst's words:

frequently at Lydney Park, & was allowed to dig wherever he was inclined & some others were also in the habit of searching for coins, & other antiquities, and taking them away. The quantity of stone, easily found among the remains of the buildings, afforded a temptation to destroy what remained of the Walls; which, in some instances, are taken up from the foundations, in the search for which, many of the Pavements have been entirely destroyed, and others considerably damaged, and an Iron Mine has been worked in different branches, under various parts of the buildings. In consequence of some of these searches, a collection of coins, and other curiosities, was made, and preserved by the Family, but as no great anxiety was, at different times, felt about them, probably as many have been carried away...

Samuel Rudder confirmed that great quantities of Roman coins had been carried away, yet still lay plentifully, and he himself had 'found many pieces of urns and fine pottery'.<sup>31</sup>

This history confirms that much of the financially valuable and nowadays archaeologically interesting material had gone when Bathurst started work. In 1805 he was looking to replace some 'Scotch Firs' with a new plantation on the Dwarf's Hill. He found that the Scots Pines were in holes made through buildings or 'actually growing upon a tessellated Pavement'. This was the trigger for his excavation, lasting 'for several years, one workman only being usually employed upon it'.<sup>32</sup>

### Bathurst's Excavation and his Working Methods

Bathurst's working methods were imperfect, but much better than the 'digging for potatoes' that Mortimer Wheeler accused other archaeologists of a century later:<sup>33</sup> 'in clearing this ground it was determined to excavate to the bottom of the Foundations, till the natural soil was discovered, and this practice has been uniformly persevered in, except where pavements have been found'.

His starting point were two 'termini', the statues of 'Adam' and 'Eve', now at the entrance to the Spring Garden. He wrote: 'there seems no doubt of their being antiques ...'<sup>34</sup> There is no tradition as to the spot, in which they were found; about the year 1740 they were lying down in the Park, and were used as common stones to keep down flax, while it was drying'. Uncle Thomas Bathurst moved them to the ridge of the hill. 'The commencement was thus made on the spot where the Termini, just mentioned, now stand; and both sides of the outer wall having been progressively cleared, the progress of the excavations, in a direct line, across the Camp, has been regularly laid down in [Plate 6]<sup>35</sup> which, with the following references, will best explain the construction of the

29. The most complete version of this 'Information' by Smith is in LPEP, but still a torn page. Some is in the notebooks, and less in Bathurst and King, *Roman Antiquities*.

30. H. Rooke, 'Description of Two Roman Camps in Gloucestershire', *Archaeologia* 5 (1779), 207–8, on which Bathurst commented disparagingly.

31. S. Rudder, *A New History of Gloucestershire* (1779), 525.

32. Bathurst and King, *Roman Antiquities*, 4.

33. Mortimer Wheeler in J. Hawkes, *Mortimer Wheeler – Adventurer in Archaeology* (1982), 81.

34. 'Possibly C16 or C17' in the listed building description: NHLE, No. 1186597. Wheeler and Wheeler, *Report*, 137, describe them as of local stone, clearly of late 17th- or early 18th-century date.

35. The Museum copy is a folded very large print that does not photograph well. I give an extract later. Bathurst and King, *Roman Antiquities*, plate 4, reworked it.

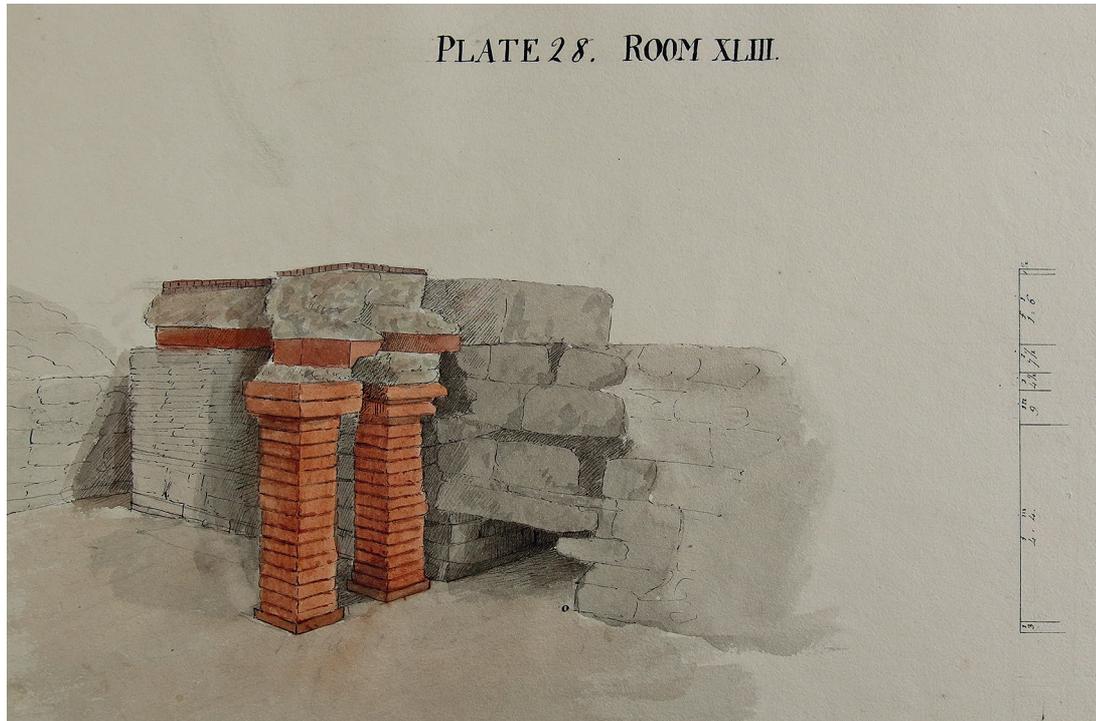


Fig. 4 Bathurst's Plate 28, from the bath-house. Note vertical scale.

whole'. Measurements from the termini proceeded in three dimensions. The illustration (Fig. 4) from the bath-house shows his vertical measurements there.

Bathurst's Plate 5 (Fig. 5) shows how remarkably awkward the Roman site was in its angles, and how cramped its layout was in a large Iron Age space. The worm-like tracks were iron mines, not water supply or drainage. He recorded that the northern area of the hillfort appeared to have been opened for stone, or iron ore. He did not comment on whether the mines were pre-Roman, and hence perhaps a known reason not to build there, or post-Roman and disturbing unknown and now-unrecognizable Roman buildings. Geophysics of this iron-bearing rock suggested that new late Roman masonry was unlikely, but was inconclusive on dates of likely mines.<sup>36</sup> Covid-19 has to date scuppered Professor Mark Horton's thoughts of adding ground-penetrating radar. More on mines later.

Bathurst's large Plate 6 was a more detailed plan than Plate 5, with the rooms numbered to aid his room-by-room commentary. His numbering persists to this day. He marked Buildings as follows:

- A: the villa in his eyes; Wheeler and Wheeler's guest-house.
- B: the bath-house which he thought was later, numbering Wheeler and Wheeler's 'abaton' with it.

36. J.A Rawes and J. Wills (eds), 'Archaeological Review No. 23', *Trans. BGAS* 117 (1999), 167-8; Cardiff Geoarchaeology, *Lydney Park Geophysical Survey March/April 1998 Interim Report* (Report 98/01, 1998). I gather that there were reasons for no final report.

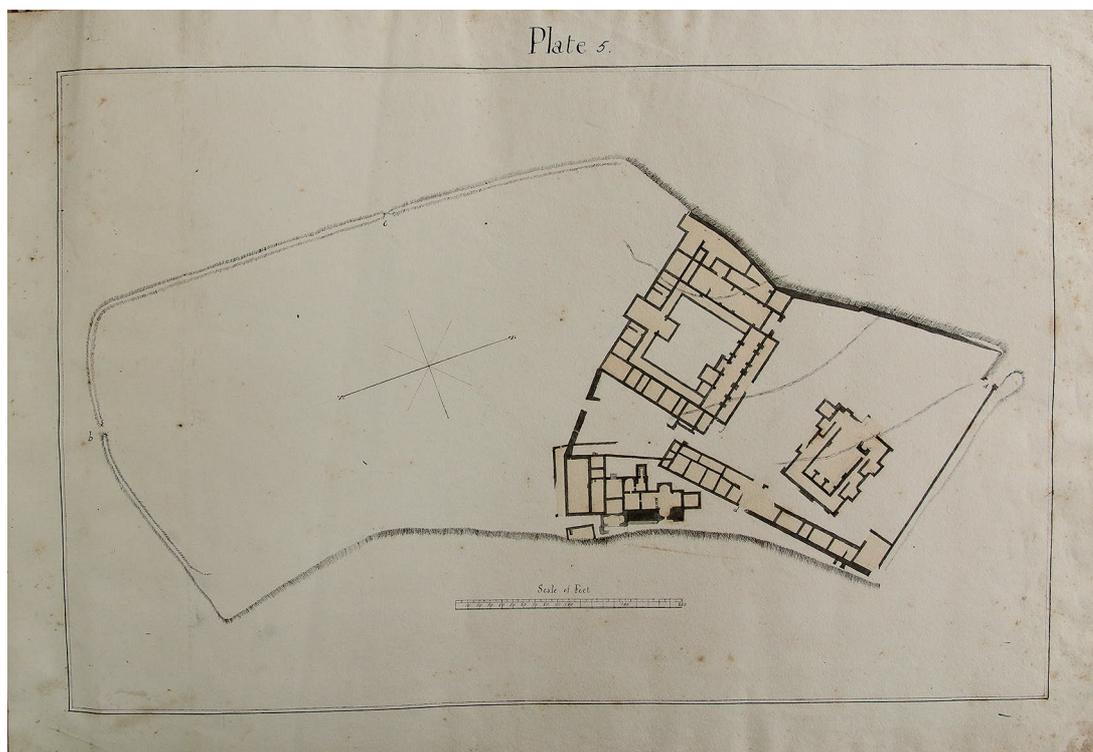


Fig. 5 Bathurst's Plate 5 depiction of the cramped Roman buildings within a large hillfort. The worm-trails are iron mines.

C: still later, what he and everyone since has assumed is a temple.

D: a large (5.8 m) cistern with, 'it is singular', no water supply to it or outlets beyond a drain. If solely supplied by rainwater, it would seem wholly inadequate for a significant continuing population, whether as Bathurst's villa or the current orthodoxy that this is a healing site for visiting pilgrims.<sup>37</sup> Bathurst speculated whether springwater might have been brought in through the north ramparts from a mile away. However, he did not find the path of a leat. One of his possibilities was Old Blackbird's Nest Pool. This is now marshy, but was supplied with copious springs in Bathurst's day. The area has since had 200 years of leisure and working forest use. There is a potential route with a 1% gradient but some sharp inlets for a leat or channel to negotiate. Onsite, it is heavily overgrown, disturbed and crossed by channels, with no obvious track.

Bathurst did not tell us what he did about site spoil or reinstatement. Some mosaics were opened for visiting societies in 1870,<sup>38</sup> 1874,<sup>39</sup> and for the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological

37. Wheeler and Wheeler, *Report*, 51–2, 60–3; Hoyle, *Hidden Landscapes*, 71.

38. *Monmouths. Merlin*, 20 Aug. 1870, contained a remarkably lengthy account of the annual meeting of the Monmouths. and Caerleon Antiquarian Society at Lydney Park on the 16th, with the Revd W.H. Bathurst reading a paper onsite.

39. *Trans. Woolhope Naturalists' Field Club* (1874), 32–40.

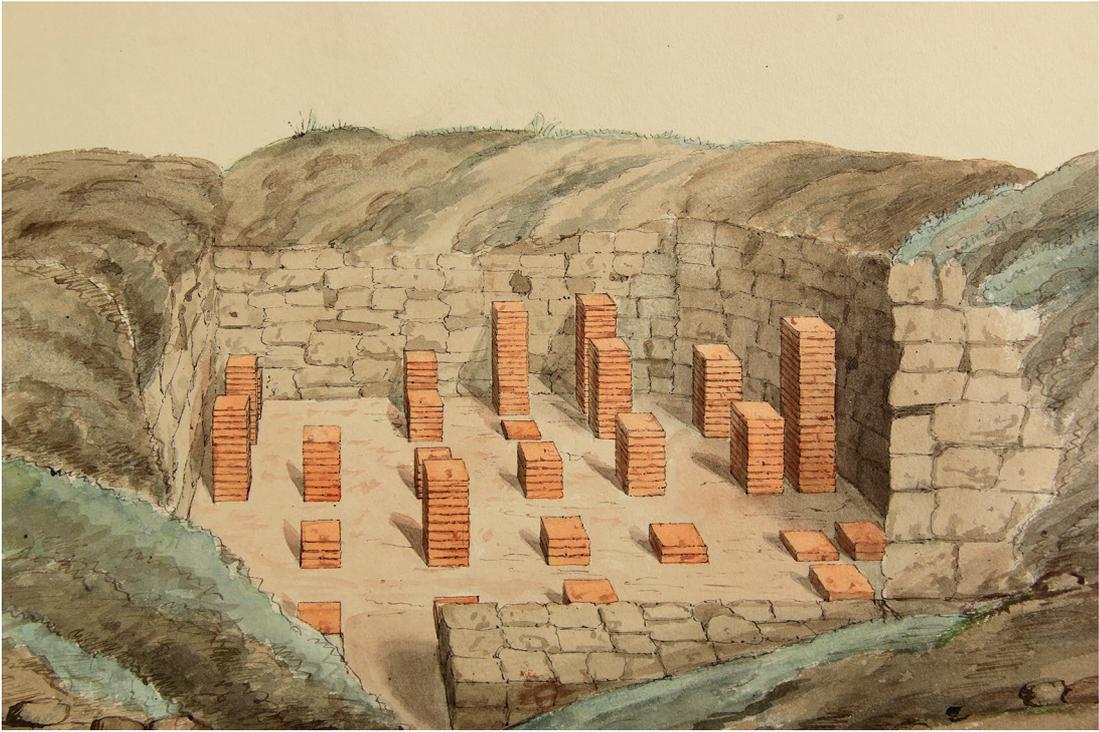


Fig. 6 Bathurst's depiction of the bath-house hypocaust and a retaining wall.

Society in 1893.<sup>40</sup> Casey and Hoffmann said: 'the 1805 excavation had been tidied up when the site was opened to visitors by capping the backfilling of individual rooms with freshly dug clay. This now gives every appearance of forming part of an untouched ancient surface'.<sup>41</sup>

Gloucestershire Archives holds a draft of Bathurst's letter of 14 June 1825 from Lydney Park to Lord Colchester:<sup>42</sup> 'it has often occurred to me that it would be extremely desirable if the Antiq Society could find the means of becoming regularly acquainted with such discoveries as they occur in various parts of the Kingdom ... I say nothing of my own discoveries because I make a point of having every thing drawn upon the spot'. Just two days later, Lord Colchester replied: 'many thanks for your obliging letter upon Roman Antiquities. I have discussed upon the subject with many of our principal Antiquaries & they all accede to your suggestions which I hope will be carried into effect'. On 4 July 1825, Colchester followed this with: 'Lord Aberdeen has signified much satisfaction in receiving the information which you allowed me to communicate to him: and he hopes also that you will give to the public the advantages of your accounts of the discoveries made under your inspection in Lydney Park, – by enabling the Society of Antiquaries to invest in the publication of their *Archaeologia* ...'.

If this was a prompt to Bathurst to publish at his own expense, it did not bear immediate fruit. However, at least some plans were afoot. The Lydney Park Museum cupboards contain two large folders of artwork, and some individual prints, in variable condition. The folders house Plates 1–37, with four missing. Two lithographs are dated 1825, one 1816, whilst others are undated. Bathurst's first notebook, left incomplete as described later, refers to Plates up to 34, suggesting that at least 34 (and probably all 37) plates existed at the time he wrote. Some unnumbered landscape images (two at Figure 6) are quite homespun. Cosh and Neal suggest that Bathurst created some images himself.<sup>43</sup> Bathurst's various artworks show a wide range of artefacts, some reworked in Bathurst and King. Figure 7 gives two colour examples, never printed.<sup>44</sup>

### Bathurst's Notebooks and Other Writings

Two fragments in Bathurst's writing survive in the estate papers. Both are on paper watermarked 1819. One is the fullest version of Anne Smith's 'Information', given in part above. The other is entitled 'Brazen Arm'. Modern thinking has this little bronze arm as a healing votive, perhaps after anaemia.<sup>45</sup> Bathurst considered this, but 'as the hollow of the hand seems to have contained some other substance which was fastened to it by a pin, the remains of which are still visible, it seems more probable that it was intended to be fixed to a small wand, & borne in some procession, the hand containing an egg': Figure 8 shows the pin mounting. Neither Bathurst and King nor Wheeler and Wheeler commented on this.

The Bathurst family papers at Gloucestershire Archives (D421) barely help us, so the two notebooks are our mainstay. They are little bound books of blank unlined paper, watermarked 1820 (Fig. 9). From the visibility of the writing on the next page, the paper is thin. They are titled in later hands. One has 66 pages used and three pages free. The other 88, then two blank pages, then an appendix on pages 92–122 and the last 12 pages free. Both stop in mid-page and in mid-flow: they are parallel works with different titles, written long after the excavations. The appendix

40. *Trans. BGAS* 18 (1893–4), 3–18.

41. Casey and Hoffman, 'Excavations', 112.

42. Glos. Archives [GA], D421/X17.

43. S.R. Cosh and D.S. Neal, *Roman Mosaics of Britain Vol IV: Western Britain* (2010), 47–8, 412.

44. Wheeler and Wheeler, *Report*, fn. 2, feared that the original drawings had been burnt.

45. For example, koilnychia, from severe tissue anaemia: see G.D. Hart, 'Descriptions of blood and blood disorders before the advent of laboratory studies', *Brit. Jnl Haematology* 115:4 (2002), 719–28.



to the second reproduces a letter of 1826. A Bathurst annotation dates Anne Smith's 'Information' to *c.*1829, so an early part of the first notebook was at least annotated less than two years before Bathurst's death aged 77. The whole text shows an inquisitive, classically-conscious mind ferreting away at problems by looking for analogues abroad. I have deposited photographic records as three bound volumes at Gloucestershire Archives for readers interested in exploring more than the selection of quotations given here.<sup>46</sup>

The books appear to have been written mainly in a copyist's hand with some in Bathurst's own hand, the left pages left blank for his annotations, often extensive and in Latin or Greek. They are not excavation field notes, nor an account of the findings. Rather, they are Bathurst's musings about his researches as to comparators of the inscriptions he found, and of the nature of the god Nodens. The copyist's hand of the right-hand pages suggests that an earlier manuscript may have existed: if so, I have not found it.

46. GA, D421/F46.



Fig. 7 (opposite and above) Some of Bathurst's unnumbered artwork showing artefacts in colour.

### *Notebook 1*

This started with some scene-setting. Bathurst was unconvinced that *Abone* of the Antonine Itinerary was nearby, as Camden and Rudder claimed. Marks of an ancient road could be 'observed down the hollow way in front of the Park, and across the fields under the [old] house, down a lane towards the Severn'. He saw the smaller hill, by the current house and across Hope Valley, as a 'Camp of Observation from the larger Station', describing defensive ditches. Some traces of a building, hardly more than a watch-tower, had not been opened. The capital of a small pillar was found and 'the remains of a tessellated Pavement were once exposed to view ... but no excavations have lately been made on this Hill'. Figure 1, an extract from a much larger Bathurst map, shows little locally beyond a small enclosure at 'Stanton', later also claimed as a signal station,<sup>47</sup> and the Uley Bury ramparts.

He described the size, defences and ancient approach to the larger camp. He saw the site as having developed from merely a camp or military station to the 'regular habitation of some military

47. J. Maclean, 'History of the Manor and Advowson of Staunton, in the Forest of Dean', *Trans. BGAS* 7 (1882-3), 227.



Fig. 8 Part of the bronze 'votive arm', just showing a pin attachment in its palm.

Governor of rank', with signs that old works had been destroyed by new. Given that his political years were formed by the Napoleonic Wars, even when he was not running the War Office, it is unsurprising that he saw the site in military terms.

Bathurst listed the coins he found across the whole site, ranging from Claudius (pre-54 AD) to Theodosius and Arcadius (after 395 AD). He inferred that the site 'probably was occupied during all the continuance of the Romans in Britain'. His daughter Charlotte catalogued a selection of coins found onsite, starting with Augustus who died in 14 AD. Her catalogue, on paper watermarked 1821, is off-display at the Museum.

He said, from the great number of coins discovered and 'from the marks of fire and the melted lead observable amongst the ruins, it may also be inferred, that the whole was suddenly destroyed, and never again occupied ...'. He thought 'it not unlikely that some of the Rooms may have been used as manufactories even upon a large scale'. Iron *scoriae* (smelting waste) were in considerable quantities in some rooms adjoining a deep excavation. He did not address whether this was contemporaneous to other uses. He identified a blacksmith's workshop from large iron tools found in another part, and an iron mine under intact floors of his 'villa' (Wheeler and Wheeler's 'guest-house'), so predating their building, Ore, he said, 'abounds all over the hill'.

The last 30 pages of the first notebook gave a room-by-room account of the site, recording finds such as coins and plaster. He included the construction of floors, object such as burnt bones, and the state of repair of any mosaics found, which were possibly also drawn. Bathurst thought his mosaics not so fine as those at other villas.

Very frustratingly, the first notebook finished in mid-page, just as it was starting to describe his 'temple'. Earlier he had said that 'a particular description will be given hereafter ...'. This means we do not have Bathurst's account of the north-east side of the *cella* wall, to compare with the



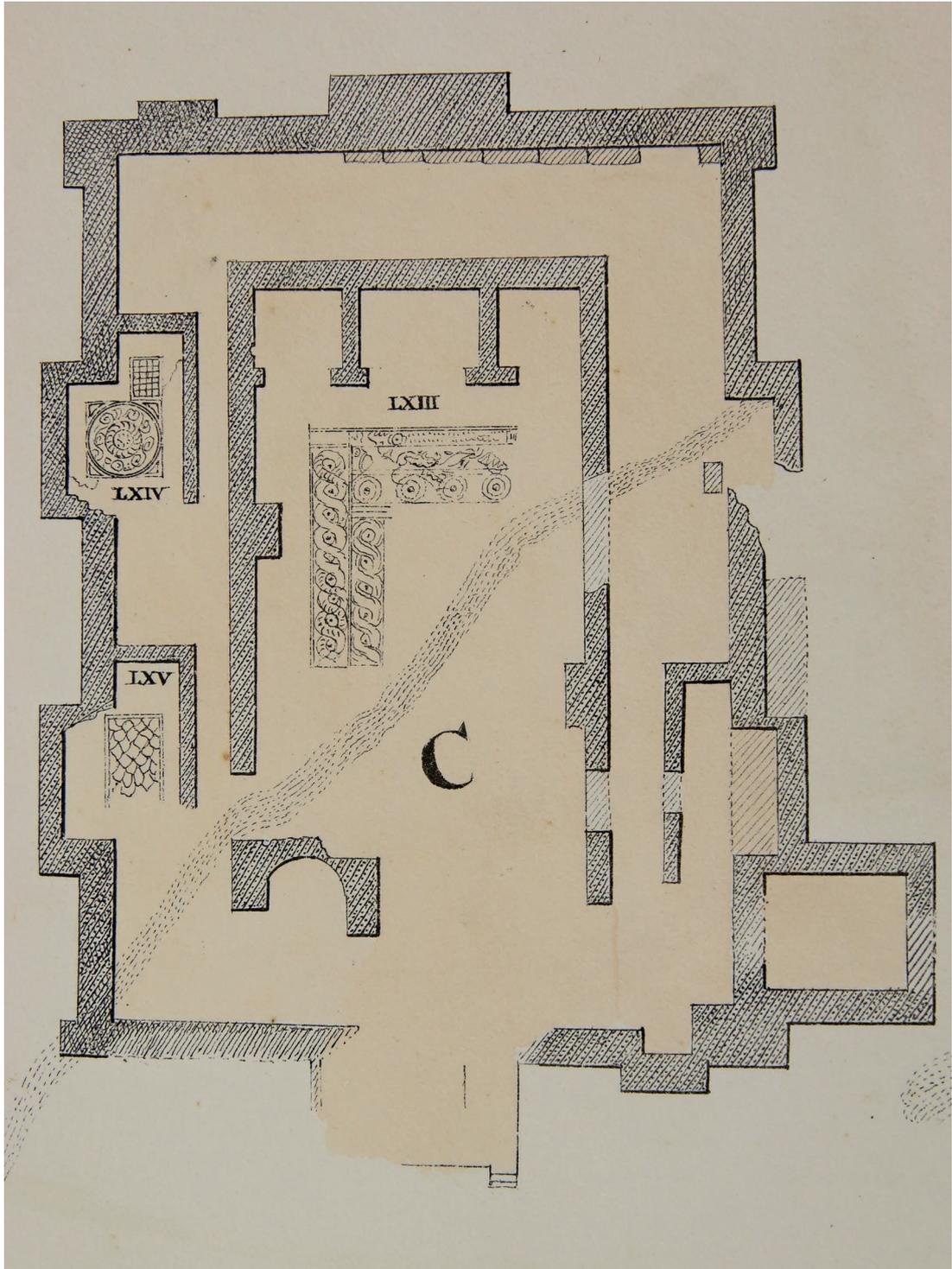




Fig. 10 (Opposite and above ) The *cella* mine. Parts of Bathurst's Plate 6 and of a Wheeler-era photograph.

Wheeler story of almost immediate collapse of a pier and replacement with a solid wall on the *original* sleeper-foundation.<sup>48</sup> Bathurst's second notebook did say:

The whole of the Cella, at least, was paved with Mosaic, small fragments appearing in different parts, and a large portion still remaining nearly perfect at the upper end, and of which, more might probably have been preserved, if an iron mine had not subsequently been worked, in a diagonal direction through the whole building, which must have destroyed whatever came in its way, and occasioned a sinking of the ground near it.

Bathurst found what he saw as pre-temple mines, such as under his 'villa'.<sup>49</sup> Yet he saw the temple mine as *subsequent*, implying that he was confident he had the evidence for the distinction.

Figure 10 shows the *cella* mine track and part of an unpublished variant of Wheeler and Wheeler's plate 10. The latter shows Bathurst's gap in the *cella* wall and subsidence outside it. Wheeler and Wheeler's figure 2 has no trace of his mine, while giving dates from prehistoric to modern for items shown near its track. Asserting a post-AD 364 start for a pagan temple, they contemplated

48. Wheeler and Wheeler, *Report*, 26.

49. Neither Wheeler and Wheeler (*Report*, 18–22) nor C. Scott-Garrett ('Roman Iron Mine in Lydney Park', *Trans. BGAS* 78 (1959), 86–91) give evidence of post-Roman mining at two locations north of the temple.

the temple becoming a mystery cult with not a little in common with Christianity.<sup>50</sup> Casey and Hoffmann challenged much of the Wheeler dating evidence, contending for inception in the second half of the 3rd century. Casey and Hoffmann's longer Roman-era timeframe would allow for the wall to be rebuilt, producing a much darker interior, on *liturgical* not structural grounds. As already noted, backfill of Bathurst's work elsewhere onsite was indistinguishable from untouched surfaces. Bathurst's confidence in what he saw at least raises the question of whether he, as first excavator, was right about a subsequent, not pre-existing, mine in this temple location. Knowing more about the mine date might help us better understand how Nodens was worshipped. It might be worth getting support for a new look at the soil profile of this part of the *cella*.

### *Notebook 2*

This started completely afresh, with musings on the inscriptions found. It discussed five pieces of Latin, three hand-written. For anyone such as Bathurst, immersed in classical documentation, these scraps must have been something to cherish.<sup>51</sup> The five items were three votive tablets, the temple mosaic inscription and an oculist's or *collyrium* stamp. Bathurst sought the meaning of these inscriptions from overseas contexts and known classical sources. These items securely give us the local god Nodens and establish a link between the site and healing.

Three items, found within a few yards of the temple walls, indisputably refer to the god Nodens. Two were fixed by nails and one 'from the manner in which the edge was moulded, must have been attached to some other substance'. These are the votives from:

*Flavius Blandinus, armatura* – a military man, confirming Bathurst's assumption of a military site – to *D M Nodonti*. Now *Roman Inscriptions of Britain* [RIB] 305.

*Pectillus to Deo Nudente*, with a little dog picture. RIB 307.

*Silvianus to Devo Nodenti*, the first curse tablet found in England. RIB 306. Bathurst knew what this was and did a fair translation. This curse, of ring-thief *Senicianus*, later launched a wave of speculation about one ring, one thief.<sup>52</sup> Bathurst knew that *Senicianus* was a common name.

Bathurst thought that the writing was best in the Nodons inscription, so it was probably the best spelling. Nevertheless, Nodens is the version that has stuck.

Bathurst was the first of many to struggle with the temple inscription, looking for clues overseas. Problems of interpretation include that the mosaic was fragmentary even in Bathurst's time and lost by the Wheeler excavation; that the spelling was non-standard, casting doubt on whether abbreviations used were standard; and that the illustration of the inscription used by commentators is mildly corrupt. RIB 2448.3 documents the struggles by later commentators, but not what Bathurst himself saw. RIB gives the inscription text as DMNTFLAVIVUS SENILISPRELEXSTIPIBUSPOSSVITO [...]LANTE VICTORINO INTERP.TIANTE, expanded as *D(eo) M(arti) N(odonti) T(itus) Flavius Senilis pr(ae)positus rel(igionis) ex stipibus pos(s)uit o[pitu]lante Victorino interp(r)[e]tiante*, and translated as: 'To the god Mars Nodens Titus

50. Wheeler and Wheeler, *Report*, 38; also Sir Mortimer Wheeler's talk to the Forest of Dean Local Hist. Soc. (13 Jun. 1953) introduced by Viscount Bledisloe and chaired by Scott-Garrett.

51. The large-scale handwriting samples from Bath, Uley, London and Vindolanda all came to light some 150 years later.

52. This started with the Revd J. James in 'On a Roman Ring', *Trans. BGAS* 6 (1881–2), 75–9. Francis Haverfield squashed this in 'Further Remarks on the Ring of Senicianus', *ibid.* 13 (1888–9), 203–4, but the story is too good to die and persists to this day. The appendix in Wheeler and Wheeler, *Report*, on the philology of Nodens by J.R.R. Tolkien added a new layer about the origins of Gollum, even before Senicianus turned up, still thieving, in much later curses at Bath.

Flavius Senilis, superintendent of the cult, from the offerings had this laid, with the assistance of Victorinus, interpreter (of dreams)'. The RIB illustration, from Bathurst and King and used by Wheeler and Wheeler, nevertheless clearly shows 'RIL' not 'REL'.

Mommsen, and Collingwood in Wheeler and Wheeler, read 'PR RIL/REL' as being 'officer in charge of a supply-depot of the fleet'. Evidence is still lacking of a depot anywhere near Lydney.



Fig. 11 The original watercolour of the temple *cella* mosaic.

Since everyone from Bathurst has assumed that the building was a temple, it is a short step to read ‘PR RIL/REL’ as something priestly. Building on the Wheeler and Wheeler analogy with Epidaurus, Hassall proposed Victorinus as an interpreter of healing dreams, rather than being a military interpreter.<sup>53</sup>

With the *cella* mosaic long lost, text and artwork from Bathurst-era eyewitnesses are the best evidence we can ever have of what the letters were on the inscription. Figure 11 shows the original watercolour at the Museum, never before given in its (rather washed-out) colour, and showing the bottom-left of the whole mosaic. This shows the presumed ‘PRREL’ not ‘RIL’. The inscription is blue on a white ground, so what the inscription shows is determined by which tesserae were coloured blue by the modern artist. The absence of two blue tesserae in the Bathurst and King engraving is sufficient to turn ‘REL’ into ‘RIL’. One of two versions of prints drawn by R.B. Stothard in the Museum is an intermediate, with one of the two cross-bar tesserae coloured. Both Bathurst and his son recorded the next part of the inscription as ‘EXSTEPIBUS’, not the conventional ‘EXSTIPIBUS’, ‘from small money offerings’. There, the watercolour and later versions show the conventional version, with the cross-bar coloured, not Bathurst’s text.

Eyewitness Bathurst described the text thus: ‘the first line may probably be read thus – *Decius Antonius Flavius Senilis Praefectus Religiosis ex stipibus possuit*’, citing precedents, as he also did about Victorinus after: ‘the second line exhibits nothing perfect but the name “Victorino”...’. Near neighbour, fellow antiquarian and fellow magistrate George Ormerod thought it read: ‘DS.... FLAVIUS. SENILIS. PR. REL. E. STIPIBUS. POSSUIT. OPITULANTE. VICTORINO. INPERATORE’.<sup>54</sup>

At the start of the inscription, the watercolour well matches the RIB 2448.3 source engraving. Bathurst and Ormerod had seen the actual mosaic and Bathurst had known of Nodens for some 20 years. Yet neither considered that the start of the inscription referenced Nodens, let alone Mars Nodens.<sup>55</sup> Bathurst’s idea of a listing of Roman finds would have helped him, if it had existed a century earlier. His Society of Antiquaries contacts had not alerted him to their record of what is now RIB 616, a now-lost statuette from Cockersand Moss (Lancs.). Stukeley recorded this with an inscription to Mars Nodens.<sup>56</sup>

53. M.W.C. Hassall in R.J. Dodwell, *Temples, Churches and Religion in Roman Britain* (BAR Brit. Ser. 77(i), 1980), 82. G.H. Renberg, ‘Was incubation practiced in the Latin West?’, *Archiv für Religionsgeschichte* 8 (2006), 135, is a challenge to the idea of ‘holy sleep’. However, H. Ascitopoulou et al., ‘Surgical cures under sleep induction in the Asclepieion of Epidaurus’, *International Congress Series* 1242 (2002), 11–17, remind us that many of the Epidaurus inscriptions were around clearly medical procedures, with opium poppy illustrated in the *Tholos* carvings. I assert that those carvings also show mandrake as well as peony; so tropane alkaloid anaesthesia too, turning painful reality into strange dreams. In modern terms, Senilis as Lydney Hospital CEO and Victorinus as Consultant Anaesthetist?
54. In LPEP, 29 Jul. 1826, from Barnesville, later Sedbury Park. When George Ormerod published his *Strigulensia* in 1861, he had moved to Bathurst’s ‘D A’. Ormerod’s revised version, including that ‘REL’, appeared in the *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* (VII (1873), 42) account of *Fanum dei Nodontis*. Ormerod was a magistrate from 1827: Witts, *Complete Diary*, X (part 2), 329.
55. R.P. Wright, ‘A Revised Restoration of the Inscription on the Mosaic Pavement found in the Temple at Lydney Park, Gloucestershire’, *Britannia* 16 (1985), 248–9. Wright had seen a monochrome photograph of the watercolour. RIB 305 and 307 have their Ms interpreted as ‘Mars’ rather than Bathurst’s ‘*merito*’ for RIB 305. RIB 306 gives no opportunity for Mars.
56. R.P. Wright, ‘Inscriptions’, *Jnl Roman Studies* 47(1–2) (1957), 227. Wright’s source, via Sir Ian Richmond, is Society of Antiquaries of London Archive, MS 265, f. 43; MS 264, f. 8. The Society’s catalogue gives these respectively as ‘Inscriptions Modern’ in the Society’s Minute Book, written by co-founder and first Secretary Stukeley, and ‘Roman Antiquities. Accounts of finds, with locations and pen and wash drawings 1713–22’ from a book of ‘Transcripts, notes and extracts by early officers’.

The text of the inscription is interrupted by an oddly-positioned bullseye. At its centre was 'a funnell of earthenware 3 3/8 In in diameter and 4 In deep'.<sup>57</sup> Bathurst put a hand into the funnel,<sup>58</sup> and found a further 8 inches (20 cm) of loose soil with a dog and some coins that had fallen in rather than been deposited. Bathurst spent 14 pages looking for analogues and eventually concluded that it was for money offerings, more easily retrieved from 'a bag, previously let down'. He wondered whether the offerings would be stored 'in a room over ... which would account for the unusual number of Coins found in this spot, which seem to have fallen from some room above.' He recorded 531 coins<sup>59</sup> here 'of different Emperors from Antoninus to Arcadius'.

Having established a god Nodens, albeit in variant spellings, Bathurst sought a derivation for his name:

... and it can only be from some incidental circumstances that a conjecture can be formed, of his Nature, and Attributes. The principal of these was the discovery of the Figures of Dogs, wrought both in Stone, and Brass, in such numbers in, and about this Temple, as to lead to the conclusion that they must have had some appropriate connexion with the Object of Worship there.

One was the famous Lydney Dog, 'a Greyhound, quite perfect, of superior workmanship ... found at a very small distance from the wall of the Temple'.<sup>60</sup>

Bathurst knew his Pausanias and its description of the Epidaurus sporting, theatre and healing site;<sup>61</sup> so he knew that Greek healing god Aesculapius was fostered by a dog, that the cult figure at Epidaurus had a dog by the god's side, and that the site had inscriptions of patient testimonials. He noted that the link to Aesculapius receives 'some confirmation' by the curse on Senicianus *denying* him health. He did not follow the gout-stricken<sup>62</sup> Sir William Drummond in deriving Nodens from the Greek for 'pain-free', or being a god of joints. Bathurst copied a four-page letter from Sir William in Rome<sup>63</sup> dated 1826 to the Revd Daniel Lysons (illustrator Samuel Lysons' surviving brother, fellow antiquarian and another magistrate).<sup>64</sup> Here Sir William had been thinking further on the name found 'in Mr Bathurst's neighbourhood'. He recorded Mr Bathurst as thinking 'that the deity in question could be no other than Aesculapius. The emblems said to have been found along with the inscription, Serpents, Cocks, and Dogs, seem strongly to confirm, nay even to prove the truth of this supposition'.

Bathurst devoted the remainder of Notebook 2 (pages 96–122) to the context of the *collyrium* stamp 'found within a small distance of the Temple of Nodens, which possibly might have some connexion with it, if it is rightly supposed to belong to Aesculapius' – now RIB 2446.9.<sup>65</sup> He identified what it was, and from Pliny what medicines were used by Iulius Iucundus. He noted that this precursor to printing would not have been used unless there were significant demand for eye-healing onsite.

57. RIB 2448.3 metricates this as 85.5 mm and 102 mm.

58. Wheeler and Wheeler, *Report*, 24 inflates this into 'dug deeply into the floor of the *cella*, in the hope of finding an underground cavity'.

59. Which is very few a year over any reasonable cult lifespan.

60. I have not illustrated the dog in the Museum, since it is a replica of one in secure storage. Why? The dog reported by P. Coombe and M. Henig in *Britannia* 51 (2020), 225–64, sold for £137,500.

61. Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, 2.27.1–2.28.1. Written mid 2nd cent. AD.

62. Witts, *Complete Diary*, II, fn. to 398.

63. Diarist and magistrate Witts had worked for Drummond in 1801–2 with Vansittart, who replaced Bathurst as Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster in 1823: *ibid.* 342, 346.

64. Samuel Lysons' brother Daniel worked with him on his antiquarian publications and was another fellow magistrate with Bathurst: *ibid.* 392; *ibid.* X (part 2), 224–5.

65. RIB 2446.9 in R.G. Collingwood and R.P. Wright, *The Roman Inscriptions of Britain Volume II Fascicule 4* (1992).

### What Happened to the Notebooks?

Bathurst died with neither text nor plates published. His son Charles had some interest in Roman matters. On a trip with his sister Charlotte to Rome,<sup>66</sup> they had sent their father four pages of Greek and Latin inscriptions to add to his comparators. Son Charles took over his father's role as chairman of the Gloucestershire magistrates,<sup>67</sup> and became friends with fellow magistrate and profuse diarist the Revd F.E. Witts of Upper Slaughter. In July 1836, Witts read 'two rather elaborate MSS' at Lydney Park, devoting some four pages of his diary to a summary.<sup>68</sup> In 1863 this Charles died. He was succeeded by his brother the Revd William Hiley Bathurst, then a retired rector near Matlock in Derbyshire. William started to edit his father's notebooks and the Society of Antiquaries published an abbreviated version of his compression.<sup>69</sup>

On his own death in 1877 William left what became a 15-page start to Bathurst and King. The manuscript survives in the Museum. William's son, a third Charles, entrusted this to C.W. King, a Newport-born fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge. King was active in what was then the Caerleon Antiquarian Society. He had examined the Lydney remains when they were opened for that society and William had read a paper.<sup>70</sup> King printed William's compression as a preface to his own extensive text, which he followed by Charlotte's coin catalogue. William's factual compression inevitably lost some findings, and much of the sense of how a gentleman antiquarian worked, now two centuries back. Bathurst and King contained prints, fewer, and more in monochrome, in a different numbering from Bathurst's. Prints with printer's directions in King's handwriting survive in the Museum, at various enlargements.

In 1928, a fourth Charles, at the time Baron Bledisloe, asked the Society of Antiquaries to re-excavate the site: Mortimer and Tessa Wheeler led the team. Their 1932 *Report* said that the notebooks had been found in 1929 in the archives of the Monmouthshire and Caerleon Antiquarian Association and returned to Lydney Park.<sup>71</sup> It also footnoted three quotations from the second notebook – the dimensions of the temple bullseye, the number of coins found there and the location of the Lydney Dog.<sup>72</sup> The team were aware of the first notebook because D.A. Casey noted its comments about the Little Camp. His 1929 excavation found not just some tesserae and hypocaust bricks, but the remains of a 12th-century Norman castle.<sup>73</sup> P.J. Casey and Hoffmann were aware of the notebooks, which are now in a relatively new envelope. Otherwise, the notebooks seem to have slept in a drawer in the Lydney Park Museum until the author went looking in 2019.

66. GA, D421/F20.

67. 'Unanimously appointed' in 1833: Witts, *Complete Diary*, X (part 1) (2010), 324.

68. Unpublished for many years: *ibid.* V, 184–6.

69. *Proc. Soc. Antiq.* 5 (1871), 96–101.

70. *Monmouths. Merlin*, 20 Aug. 1870.

71. Wheeler and Wheeler, *Report*, 2, 28. Dr Mark Lewis, Curator of the Caerleon National Roman Legion Museum and formerly Chair of the Monmouthshire Antiquarian Association, has told me that the Association holds no further Bathurst material.

72. Notebook 2, pp. 28, 33 and 40.

73. D.A. Casey, 'Lydney Castle', *Antiq. Jnl* 10 (1931), 240–61.

### Bathurst's Legacy

We must not judge Bathurst with hindsight when many questions remain poorly answered at Lydney.<sup>74</sup> Instead, we should recognise what he has given us, in addition to his public life. This article's revisiting of his notebooks tells us of the disappearance of the 'little horses and cups', and about the extent of coin loss. If Bathurst had not taken charge of the site, it is fair to assume that more and more of the portable artefacts and the mosaics would have gone unrecorded. He worked out sensible ways of excavation and recording. He mixed practical archaeology with desk-based antiquarianism and drew on a wide range of classical literature, as well as the knowledge of fellow antiquarians. He was cautious and did not leap to conclusions beyond his evidence. Bathurst's other writings tell us of the bronze arm's pin insertion. The notebooks give Bathurst's excavation-based thoughts on finds locations, on the sequence of building, on adequacy of water supply and a *possible* divergence with Wheeler's reason for the *cella* wall rebuild. In the notebooks, Bathurst set an agenda (that the site is a temple, with links to healing, dogs and Epidaurus) still followed to this day.

### Acknowledgements

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74. Links into the Irish Nuadu fertility legends, the rest of the Epidaurus package of fertility treatment and surgery under opiates and tropane alkaloids, and the relationship to the Voorburg dog, would be on my personal list, in addition to the water supply and 'liturgical temple rebuild' points made above.

