

FISHBOURNE TRIP



A model of Fishbourne Palace as it would probably have looked at its greatest extent. Laid out as granaries in 43, the palace construction started in 73-75.

This was the first U3A coach trip that's been available since I joined and I can't thank Lynne enough for organising it. What a shame circumstances then dictated she was unable to join the excursion.

If ever a place owes its existence to serendipity Fishbourne does. None of those snooty Romans, like Suetonius and Tacitus, bothered to recount that the biggest building outside Nero's somewhat kitsch Golden House was being built in the furthest flung outpost of empire so no one ever thought to look for Togi's little seaside retreat. It was only discovered at all because twentieth century builders wanted a water main laid to their proposed new housing development. Actually, more than half the palace was already under housing and High Street at that time.

It was doubly lucky that the mosaic exposed by that digger in 1960 was one of the finest to be found anywhere in the Roman world (and they were good at mosaics, so ours is not to be sneezed at). I doubt the local millionaire would have been quite so forthcoming with the sponsorship deal if the find had been a bit on the naff side. He bought the site, the new houses weren't built and the site was saved for posterity. Hooray!

We watched a film about the site then had some lunch and explored the palace, saw lots of children 'engaging' in history being hoards of barbarians and then hoards of Romans... but the aim still seemed to be to kill their teachers. I wish it had been like that when I was in school.

I love Fishbourne: it's all about local boy 'does good' and buys into the ruling elite (maybe not so good). It's our history, warts and all, and I'd thoroughly recommend anyone who hasn't been there yet to visit. Thanks once again to Lynne for organising the trip. If anyone wants to read a wonderful novel about the palace, please refer to Lindsey Davies' *The Body in the Bathhouse*, she has such a wicked way with history.

Cher Palmer