

# Roman Woodchester

## Joyce Adamson

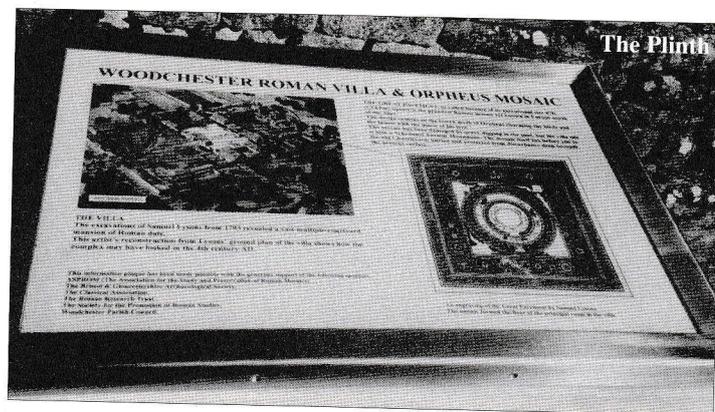
The Gloucestershire village of Woodchester lies to the east of the River Severn, overlooking the Nailsworth Valley. It is a sylvan landscape well endowed with streams and hills encompassing everything needed for maintaining a comfortable standard of living. Small wonder then that the Romans in the early fourth century, built here, a large villa whose principal great hall is paved with a magnificent mosaic dedicated to the Greek god Orpheus. Without doubt, it must have belonged to a person of great wealth and influence, not only because of its magnificence, but also because of the significance of its position, lying equidistant between the Roman army headquarters at Glevum (Gloucester) and the civil administration centre at Corinium (Cirencester), with Aquae Sulis (Bath) less than 30 miles to the south.

The Woodchester Orpheus mosaic is worthy of all the superlatives – The Great Pavement – The largest Orpheus mosaic yet discovered in Europe, north of the Alps – A magnificent example of Roman mosaic art – The work of a master mosaicist . . . Surely enough to fire the imagination and enthuse us, so that when we were searching for a suitable subject to commemorate the New Millennium the choice was simple, we must commemorate our Roman heritage – but how?

The mosaic was last uncovered in 1973; the logistics of hosting the event in which 141,000 visited the site in fifty days, were huge and complicated, a feat which is not likely to be repeated. The mosaic is now a registered ancient monument, which comes under the auspices of English Heritage. It has been damaged in the past, and remains covered for its protection. How then could we share our buried treasure with the many visitors who come to Woodchester? We live in an area of outstanding natural beauty and there are many points of interest identified by English Heritage with an information board; therefore, this was an excellent way with which to identify this most important Roman site.

We will not go into the detail of the many endeavours and trials we went through, to get permission for what seemed to be a simple but splendid idea, first from English Heritage, then from the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, then from the Church – for the mosaic lies buried in an ancient Churchyard.

At last the licence was granted and the real work of raising the necessary funds began.



Many learned Societies were approached, as well as our own Parish Council, and it is with their generous help that we were able to erect a splendid stone plinth and information panel in time for our Millennium Celebrations in May/June 2000.

The information panel, of necessity, gives only a brief description of the mosaic and villa, together with an illustration of the Great Pavement from the original engraving by Samuel Lysons 1797, and the artist's reconstruction of the villa complex.

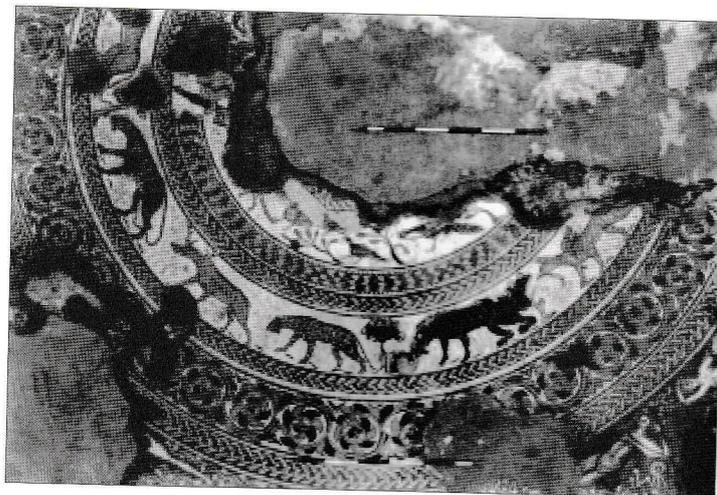
It is twenty-seven years since the Great Orpheus Pavement was last uncovered, and it is highly unlikely that it will be open to public view in the foreseeable future. These two facts present a timely reminder of the

existence of this world famous 4th century Roman masterpiece, and of the work of the master designers of the Corinium School of Mosaicists at Cirencester.

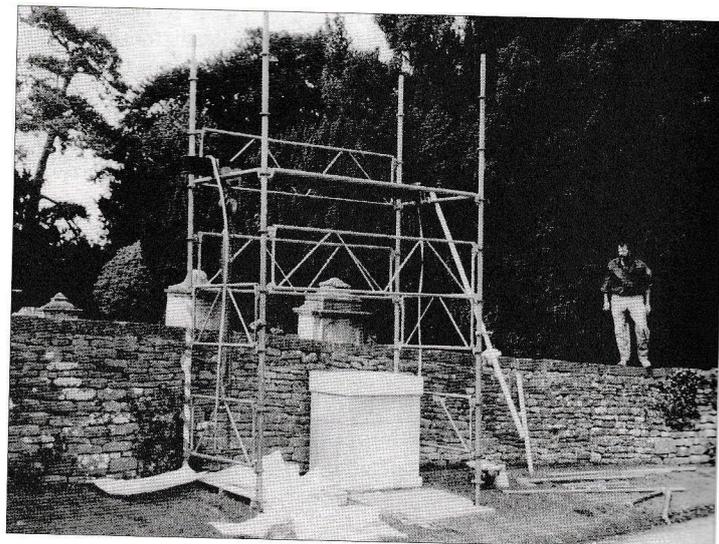
For those who wish to know more, we have produced a book written by the Reverend John Cull, a former rector of Woodchester, and an acknowledged expert on the subject of the villa and its mosaics. The book is a successor to Dr DJ Smith's *The Great Pavement and Villa at Woodchester* published in 1973. The book begins with a brief historical outline of Roman discoveries at Woodchester, and the work of Samuel Lysons, who has been described as the father of modern archaeology. His excavations of the site in the 1790s made it obvious that Woodchester was a site of palatial proportions and of major importance in Roman Britain.

It has to be said that this guide is not merely a text with illustrations, but a book full of beautiful pictures with a text. This is really demanded by the subject and was the objective of the author, whose aim was to write for the enjoyment of the lay reader whilst presenting the facts with accuracy for the scholar and the student. So far the response is that the objective has been achieved.

We invite you to visit Woodchester Old Churchyard; walk on the buried mosaic and pace out its size – 47ft square, and marvel at the Romans' ability to choose the very best places in which to settle. This is a truly rewarding and worthwhile experience.



Above: Mosaic Detail  
Below: Raising the Plinth



# Samuel Lysons, FRS, FSA (1763 - 1819)

## Catherine Johns

Samuel Lysons was born in Gloucestershire in the year 1763, the son of the rector of Rodmarton and Cherington. His family was an old and distinguished one and he was educated as befitted an eighteenth-century gentleman, studying Classics and then Law, which was to be his profession. Although he practised as a barrister until 1804 when he was appointed Keeper of the Records of the Tower of London, his real interests lay elsewhere, in the field of antiquarian research.

Lysons moved in exalted and influential social circles, and this, together with his distinguished scholarly achievements enabled him to play a leading role in the Society of Antiquaries of London and the Royal Society, organisations which were in the foremost of academic research. His artistic gifts, too, were relevant to his work; he was a trained artist who had studied under Sir Joshua Reynolds and exhibited at the Royal Academy.

His excavations at many Roman sites in Britain, including Woodchester where he dug in the 1790s, led to the fine publications by which we now remember him. The vast project on which he and his brother Daniel embarked, a county-by-county history of England to be entitled *Magna Britannia* never came to full fruition, but it took up a great deal of his time in his later years as it entailed personally visiting sites all over the country and examining and recording visible monuments. Samuel Lysons' contribution to the history of scholarship in Britain was immense. He never married and died in 1819 at the relatively young age of fifty six.

### *Lysons as an archaeologist*

Samuel Lysons was one of the founding fathers of archaeology in Britain. The standard of his excavations at Woodchester, Bignor and other Roman sites was not equalled, let alone surpassed, for well over a century, and his sumptuous publications, valued today for their great beauty and rarity, are serious archaeological reports which can be used with confidence by modern scholars as accurate factual records.

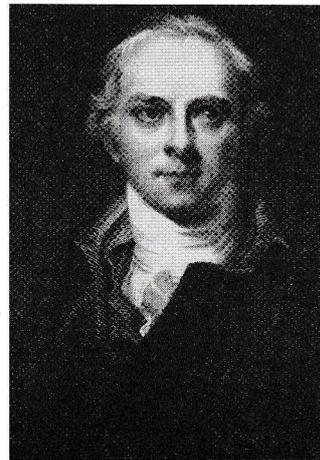
An examination of his books such as *As Account of Roman Antiquities discovered at Woodchester in the County of Gloucester* (1797), or the three-part work *Reliquiae Britannico-Romanae* (1813-1817) dealing with the number of important Roman sites in England, is easily side-tracked into an appreciation of the sheer physical beauty of the volumes. Hand-made paper, imposing size (*Reliquiae* is a large folio measuring 59 x 43 cm) and superb landscape drawings of a tranquil eighteenth-century countryside seem enough in themselves to justify the existence of the books. But in order to produce these reports, Lysons did all the practical things that modern archaeologists do. He carefully measured walls and floors, drew vertical sections of architectural features, accurately copied inscriptions, and reconstructed the appearance of ancient buildings. His restoration of the facade of the Roman temple of Sulis Minerva at Bath is still considered correct today.

The exact drawings of Roman mosaics, including the great pavement at Woodchester, are perhaps the most eye-catching plates in the books, but the numerous plans of various villas represent equally dedicated work and they are invaluable records of details which have often been lost or damaged in later times. Many of Lysons' finds from Roman sites in Gloucestershire were presented by him to the British Museum, where they form an important element in the founding collections of national antiquities. The Museum's own system of recording objects was far from perfect in the early years of the nineteenth century, but we can identify items easily from the beautiful and accurate plates in Lysons' works. He may well have been the first scholar to appreciate the importance of section drawings both of structures and individual objects: the plates of the *Reliquiae* include one showing in section the layers forming the foundation of the mosaic at Frampton, and a very precise cross-section of a Samian ware dish from Gloucester.

Lysons was one of the most forward-looking and imaginative scholars of his day. He already understood and practised the principles which still guide archaeologists today, two hundred years later.

It is appropriate that his memory should be honoured, not only in his native Gloucestershire, but wherever people are eager to learn more about the heritage of our past.

Dr Catherine Johns – Curator, Department of Prehistoric & Romano-British Antiquities, The British Museum



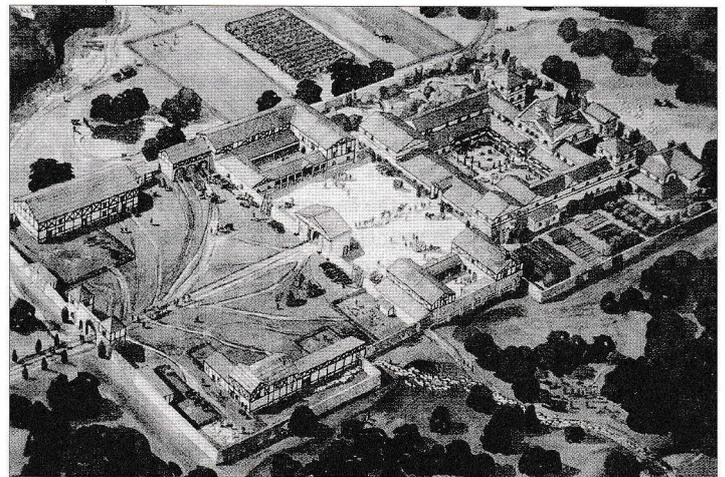
Samuel Lysons

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*It was originally published in the Commemorative Brochure Year 2000. Illustrations from that brochure are also reproduced by permission.*

*Early in 2000 the Woodchester Village Hall project received a grant from the Classical Association to erect a plinth about the Roman Mosaic situated in Woodchester. Sadly, the original mosaic is badly damaged and lies underground again. In her review of The Rev. John Cull's book, for the Bulletin of the Association for Roman Archaeology, Beth Bishop writes,*

*explaining the latest state of play: "Readable, and lavishly illustrated in full colour, the book is a timely reminder of what we have lost: the original mosaic, in the Old Churchyard, is too badly damaged to be uncovered again (quite apart from the cost of so doing) while the Replica, now in private ownership, is soon to be packed away for good - or possibly even sold - a sorry state of affairs for such a stunning piece of craftsmanship." (quoted by permission)*



Above: reconstruction of Roman Woodchester

### *Further reading:*

**ROMAN WOODCHESTER, ITS VILLA AND MOSAIC** by The Reverend John Cull. Available from: R F Ludlow, Woodchester Village Hall, 'Long Reach', South Woodchester, Stroud, Gloucestershire, GL5 5NZ – Telephone: 01453 872340. PRICE £4.00 incl. P&P – Please make cheques payable to: *Woodchester Village Hall Trust No. 2 Account*

# Education and Assessment; Two Processes in Conflict

## Gordon Lloyd

In 1951 I was due to sit the new-fangled O Level examination. Unfortunately it was introduced with a regulation that it could not be taken by anyone who had not reached his 16th birthday. In my school this applied to the whole of the top stream. Not that it mattered. We went into the Sixth Form regardless and embarked on our A Level studies without a paper qualification to our name. Of course I had to fit in a period or two a week in English, Maths and French (and my friends who were not offering Latin at A Level had to do that too) in order to be eligible for a good university. My meagre collection of O levels has never been a problem or an embarrassment, and it is no reflection on the quality of my education.

Further back in time, when the Oxford and Cambridge Schools Examination Board was formed in 1873 its primary role was inspection. Its work consisted of validating the work being done in the schools. As the published history of the Board records, 'Schools would be examined at the request of their headmasters on the internal work which boys were undertaking . . . Internal examinations might happen at any time in the year, for which the Board, if asked, would prepare papers and send examiners . . . The Secretaries stressed that there was no intention of directing the ways in which schools should study . . . They hoped that interference with schoolwork would be minimal.' It was only later that the Board began to develop its own syllabuses and to issue certificates.

How different today, as yet another examination, AS, hits us to join Key Stages 1, 2 and 3, GCSE and A Level. How different from the present syllabuses (or specifications, as we must learn to call them) which are spelled out in almost every detail and give minimal flexibility in teaching to a profession which has no choice but to use them.

Let us consider the costs and benefits of the system as we have it. First the cost, of which I think there are six.

**I. Time** This is lost partly by time taken from teaching while students are sitting examinations (January as well as May/June) and partly by time devoted to pre-exam revision, when one could very well have been covering fresh work. Even students not taking an examination in your subject will be taking one or two more – and wanting revision time for them – for someone else. The new AS examinations will presumably begin no later than mid-May, which not only takes most of the summer term from teaching but will also make it very difficult to use effectively the two or three weeks remaining when the examination is completed. Candidates for A Level leave when their examinations are over, candidates for GCSE normally have the fag end of the summer term off. What about AS candidates? They may be in your classroom, but will they be motivated to work? About a quarter of them will probably be giving up the subject (unless a poor result is expected, necessitating a re-take) and you will have to find a very brief element of the subject, which can be covered in that short time and not forgotten in the long summer holiday.

**II. Opportunity cost** The addition of a fourth subject must mean that something will have to be dropped. This may be non-contact time or non-examined cultural or physical activities, which indisputably have their own value. (If not, why have they been a part of school life for so long?) Or perhaps some schools will attempt to teach each A Level subject in fewer periods per week, which ought not to be possible, and must mean that the subjects are not taught so well. They will become an exercise in examination passing rather than an element in education.

**III. Money** The cost of examinations for an average school runs into many thousands of pounds, and will inevitably go up with an additional layer of examining, more components for many subjects, fees charged per module rather than per subject, and extra costs incurred by what will probably become an increased tendency to take AS at the *éproperi* time and re-take it at the end of the course. What could your school do with that money if it did not have to spend it on examination fees?

**IV. Loss of innovation** Specifications are now so tightly written that it is hard to see how a new innovative syllabus could ever be launched. Moreover, Boards are restricted in the number of syllabuses they are allowed to offer per subject. Which Board is likely to drop an established syllabus to create space for a new one which may or may not prove a success? In Classics the Ancient History and Classical Civilisation syllabuses sponsored by JACT transformed the teaching of those subjects (while SMP in Mathematics and Nuffield syllabuses in the Sciences were at least as revolutionary and have now become mainstream). It will be a disaster if such innovation is stifled.

**V. Interference with good practice** Students entering the Sixth Form need a transition period. Teachers of Latin and Greek, for instance, do not normally begin with deep and serious reading of an examination text, but rather read widely, freely and quickly, to accustom students to a range of literature in the language. Now they will have to tackle an examination text in the first year. Less will be read, and it may become very hard to reach the level of fluency that we ought to expect. No doubt teachers in many other subjects will face similar problems.

**VI. Distortion of the subjects** Who says that a six-module structure is the best for every subject? I have no doubt that subjects which went modular some time ago (primarily Maths and Science) went for six modules because there were six terms to the course. A module a term seemed logical at a time when one virtually had six terms. Now we shall be hard pressed to fit in more than four terms work on the full A Level course. The number has been imposed without thought for the natural structure of the subjects, and the number of different elements which each contains. I should not presume to say how many modules are appropriate to subjects with which I am unfamiliar, but I know that Maths and Art are different, as are Physics and Geography, English and Music. The writers of the various Classics syllabuses did not want six modules, but had to have them, and to force the elements of the subjects into that straightjacket.

Nor must one forget key skills. I do not count these as a cost, since development of key skills is clearly a vital part of education. But what I fear is that if they are delivered by the medium of AS/A Level syllabuses they will be another factor distorting teaching. Even if they can be delivered by best practice, which I can envisage, they will take an unreasonable amount of time. If each student is to make an individual presentation (a feature of the communication skill), if the solving of problems is to be tackled systematically and the procedure fully recorded (as the instructions say, "Recognise, explore and describe the problem and agree standards for its solution. Generate and compare at least two options, which could be used to solve the problem, and justify the option for taking forward. Plan and implement at least one option for solving the problem, and review progress towards its solution. Agree and apply methods to check whether the problem has been solved, describe the results

and review the approach taken.”), if working with others is to be achieved with the requisite planning, co-ordinating and liaising, and of course if records are to be fully kept, where will the time come from? It doesn't sound much like the way in which pupils of mine tackled unprepared translation!

In my view key skills are best inculcated by out-of-class activities, the very elements likely to be cut out by ever-increasing time pressure. What better way to develop problem solving, working with others and communication than the school play, whether as an actor or working back stage? What better range of activities than those provided by scouts, guides and the cadet force, in schools still having such organisations? Almost any school club or society gives opportunities for students to do things for themselves, to co-operate, experiment, make their mistakes and find their solutions. Formal preparation in examination subjects must be more closely directed by the teacher if the ground is to be covered and the deadline met.

This enormous cost may be worthwhile if examinations delivered something of real value. So what do they deliver? Do they record something definitive, justifiably accepted as a benchmark deciding which subjects will be studied at the next stage, whether the student will progress to university, what the ideal career choice would be? Of course not. They tell you what the candidate did on that particular day, in those particular circumstances, and nothing more. Whether that result was typical of the candidate they cannot show. Yet every school receives results every year which it says it *knows* to be wrong. What this means is not, of course, that it knows that the examiners have made mistakes in marking, or that the Board has made an error in processing the result, but that the result does not reflect what the school has seen as the candidate's normal standard over the two years of the course.

Many factors can affect an examination result, not merely illness or permanent handicap, which the Boards try to allow for. On the evening before the examination a candidate may revise the very topics which come up, or none which come up. During the examining period at least a twelfth of the candidates will celebrate their birthday. Will they all do so cautiously, bearing in mind the next day's examination, or will some perhaps drink a little too much, and go to bed unwisely late? And for all those celebrating birthdays there are many more who are their friends and will be invited to join in. Weather conditions can affect a result. Was it a particularly hot or cold day? What about an examination in the afternoon following a demanding one in the morning, or one in the morning for which preparation had been skimmed because of a challenging one coming in the afternoon? What about social events in the school? The end of the summer term can be a time for a concert, sports day, speech day and the like. Small wonder if some candidates fail to do themselves justice, quite apart from those who are just bad examinees, whether from nerves, family pressure or similar factors.

Moreover examination results cannot be as precise as one would like to think. The instrument of measurement is human judgement. Someone must decide on the difficulty of the questions (how confidently could you agree upon the relative difficulty of two passages of Latin of similar length?), someone must decide how to reward partially correct answers, and someone must decide where to place the grade boundaries. With what confidence could you say that a script carrying 71 marks is grade A and one carrying 70 marks is only grade B? Do you think you could actually tell the difference?

This last point is particularly important in view of the weight placed upon examinations. Candidates who have different grades may be only one mark apart, or they may be a whole grade band apart, but a user cannot tell. The result may be untypical of the candidates, the one mark separating them may be debatable and yet it will decide the future of those candidates to the extent, possibly, of shaping their whole lives: which universities they attend, who they meet and become friends with, perhaps the activities in which they become involved, and possibly even whom they meet and marry. There must be a better way of deciding such things!

I do not, of course, deny the importance of examinations entirely. In life we may all have to react instantly to a pressure situation. The surgeon faced with a road accident victim whose foot is hanging off must deal with it at once without mistake. It cannot be dealt with by course work! But most of life for most of us is not like that. A record of steady work over time is more realistic. If examination results were just one element in a student's record they would be viewed by students and public alike in their proper context.

Education has been hijacked by those with a passion for measuring everything. (Measure the candidates in order to league table the schools and pay the teachers in a performance related way.) “If it can't be measured it isn't worth doing” seems to be the motto. But the teaching profession has the scope to fight back. They provide the examiners, they prepare the candidates, their representatives are involved in the consultations (admittedly perhaps rather pseudo) which lead to these policies. If the education of their pupils is actually being harmed, as I believe it is, they should say so and do whatever they can about it.

As a first step I should strongly argue against students being entered for the new AS examination at the *proper* time. If entered at the end of the course they will almost certainly do better. Who can doubt that a candidate for an AS Latin translation will do it better after a further twelve months of study? Who can doubt that a student of History will have a better grasp of historical principles, and a better capacity to write a well-structured essay, after another year's preparation? And by delaying for that year some of the costs listed above will have been recouped too.

No doubt it will be impossible to follow this recommendation. Universities will presumably begin to use AS results after one year as a yardstick for their offers; parents and governors will wish to see the students entered for the examinations which the media persuade them are so important. But if you must enter your students at that time you will then have a duty to enter them again for a re-take, because you will know that by doing so you will improve their mark. Even a candidate who scored 80% in AS could fall one mark below a key grade at A Level, when by converting that 80 to 81 the necessary ambition would have been achieved. There is a duty to enable candidates to achieve the best of which they are capable.

We have become the slaves of assessment. Assessment should be the servant of the education process, and it is high time that teachers said so and treated it in that light.

*(This article is based on the talk given at ARLT Summer School, Plymouth 2000. A sample of the outstanding range of material at each ARLT Summer School. Do come this summer, to Cheltenham – Ed.)*

Gordon Lloyd