

Archaeology - Bristol in the Roman Period

The Town of Abona at Sea Mills

In the Roman period Abona was the major Roman settlement in Bristol. It was recorded in the Antonine Itineraries of the early third century AD. Originally of likely military origin, a civilian town had been established by early second century.

Archaeological excavations have found evidence for street patterns and shops within the town and cemeteries outside it.

Abona was linked to Bath by a Roman road, a section of which can still be seen at Durdham Down. This was part of a larger network of roads whose form is still largely conjectural.

Other Roman settlements

Elsewhere in Bristol these seem to have been rural in character. There were villas at Kingsweston and Brislington. At Kingsweston the villa had a bath suite, rooms with mosaic floors and hypocausts - the Roman system of underfloor heating.

Some smaller farmsteads were spread along the border between Kingsweston Hill and the wetlands of the North Avon levels. These may have formed part of the villa estate. The Brislington villa also had mosaic floors and a hypocaust.

There was a large village at Inns Court in south Bristol between the First and Fourth centuries. The site of a small farm was discovered at Upper Maudlin Street in the city centre. Recently a Roman agricultural site has been excavated in Bedminster.

There is, however, much still to learn about Bristol in the Roman period.

