

Archaeologists discover unique 'wing' shaped building

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(PhysOrg.com) -- A unique 'wing' shaped building discovered close to the ancient capital of the Iceni in Norfolk is mystifying archaeologists.

A building without obvious parallel in Roman Britain or the rest of the Roman Empire - that is how archaeologists at The University of Nottingham have described the discovery south of the Roman site of Venta Icenorum, which is known today as Caistor St. Edmund, in Norfolk.

Trial excavations suggest the building dates to around the third century AD. The preliminary findings have been published in the most recent edition of the *Journal of Roman Archaeology*.

Dr. Will Bowden, from the Department of Archaeology, said: "This building is a mystery to us. We don't know what function it would have had although a temple seems the most likely explanation. It is of a design that is very unusual for Britain and indeed the rest of the Roman Empire. It is particularly intriguing to find such a structure in the former territory of the Iceni (the tribe of Boudica) as villas and other monumental structures are relatively rare in this area."

The structure, built 1800 years ago, was discovered in 2007 during a particularly unusual spell of very wet then very dry weather. This resulted in a series of crop marks appearing at the highest part of the site. These crop marks indicated the presence of a 'winged' building that had never

been seen by [archaeologists](#) before.

It was first identified through aerial photographs taken by Mike Page who regularly records archaeological sites in Norfolk.

The mystery building is of a particularly unusual design with two angled wings converging on a central structure.

Dr. Bowden said: "The structure has two wings radiating out from a rectangular room. The building appears to have been part of a complex that includes a villa to the north and at least two other structures to the northeast and northwest. The foundations are made of a thin layer of rammed clay and chalk suggesting that the superstructure of much of the building was quite light, probably timber and clay-lump walls with a thatched roof. The minimal quantity of finds from the building could suggest that it was not intended to be used long term. It seems to have been soon replaced by a large aisled building, constructed using massive wooden posts.

Its elevated position would have made it visible from the town of Venta Icenorum. It is possible that it was a temporary building constructed for a single event or ceremony, which might account for its insubstantial construction."

Sometime after the demise of this wing-shaped structure, another [building](#), this one decorated was built over the top of it. Dr. Bowden and his team, from the Norfolk Archaeological and Historical Research Group, found post holes from it with painted wall plaster inside.

The most likely explanation is that it is some kind of temple, although there were very few finds associated with it, suggesting that it may only have been used for a short period.

Provided by University of Nottingham

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