

The Orpheus Pavement Replica

Following an investigation by the BBC, Woodchester Parish Council understands that the current owner of the replica Orpheus Pavement may consider loaning it back to the community.

The Orpheus Pavement was made in 325AD by craftsmen from the Corinium School of Mosaicists in nearby Cirencester and was the floor in the main reception room of the Roman villa at Woodchester. This was one of the largest villas in Roman Britain, boasting 64 rooms and thirteen mosaics of which the Orpheus Pavement was the largest and most intricate. First uncovered in 1793 by Samuel Lysons, it is considered to be the finest Roman mosaic floor in Britain, and the largest and most complicated yet discovered in Northern Europe. Historians have called it 'one of Britain's greatest historical treasures', and it is of international significance.

The replica, made by local builders Bob and John Woodward following the last uncovering of the pavement in 1973, took ten years to construct, used 12 tons of clay and 1.6 million tesserae, and measures 14.5 metres square. It was offered for sale in 2010, and although Bob Woodward stated at the time that he hoped it would "come back to Woodchester", a community group hoping to display it locally was outbid at the auction.

"Woodchester Parish Council is very interested in opening discussions on this possibility, and would like to explore the opportunity of having the replica displayed in an appropriate location in the area, which we believe would be strongly supported both by the Parish Council and the residents of Woodchester. A Working Group has been formed, headed up by Councillors Hamilton and Dunbar and preliminary discussion are being carried out with the current owner of the replica to confirm his intentions. If a suitable site for displaying the replica can be negotiated, the group will provide a proposal to the current owner for consideration as soon as possible. Although we realise that finding and funding a suitable accessible site for display will be a major challenge, and at this stage cannot guarantee the outcome, we will ensure that all interested parties are involved at an early stage with the aim of achieving a positive conclusion".

Any local resident who would like to discuss the project in more detail can contact Councillor Iain Dunbar at iaindunbar29@gmail.com

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