

Roman relics make quest for our past worthwhile

By Christian March

FASCINATING finds have been unearthed at a site near Wycomb as local historians battle to unravel the mystery surrounding a Roman villa.

The story began in the 1950s when a tractor's trailer plough got stuck on what was believed to be a Roman wall.

But it wasn't until 1985 that Melton fieldwalkers undertook a detailed survey of it and found fine and coarse tesserae - small pieces of material used to make mosaics.

Then, in 2,000, Framland Local Archaeology Group was set up following a series of courses in practical archaeology. Based in Stathern, it meets monthly at The Plough pub.

In 2002 the group did a resistivity survey in the area and located the position of what it believed to be villa walls.

Since then further site work has led to the discovery of various exciting pieces including part of a decorated bracelet, pieces of decorated samian pottery and coins including one of Lucilla,



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the daughter of the Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius, who ruled from 161 to 192AD.

The lower part of a skeleton was found. The rest had been destroyed by a plough though a Home Office licence had to be obtained to remove it.

Dedicated group members continue to

piece together the site's rich Roman history, braving the elements, digging with trowels on their hands and knees, washing bits of pottery and logging all finds as they go.

Member and archaeologist Rene Mouraille, who ran the archaeological courses before the group was formed,

said members were hoping to restart work in the spring.

He said: "There's certainly a great deal of interest because very little is known about this area.

"The quality of finds suggest the site became a villa. Most are dated between the first and fourth centuries."

Group chairman David Stanley added: "There was lots of Roman occupation around this area. We could lay a new floor with the amount of tesserae we've found.

"Excavating is only a small part of it. After that we have to write a report, date finds and then all records have to be passed on to County Hall.

"We're a voluntary group and the project is ongoing. We're always looking for more funding and more volunteers.

"If anyone is interested in archaeology and digging we can teach them and if anyone has found something interesting bring it to us."

The group's committed work was acknowledged in 2005 when it received the Leicestershire Museums Archaeological Fieldwork Group's Miss Linford Award - for the best archaeological project in Leicestershire and Rutland.

□ Anyone who would like to join the group or like more information can contact Mr Stanley on (0115) 9892 555.

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