Correspondence

To the editor:

At last! A credible explanation of how Jewry Wall got its name (Jews, Jurats and the Jewry Wall: LAHS Transactions vol. 82, 2008, p. 113ff). Oliver Harris is to be congratulated on throwing light on this age-old conundrum.

Having read the paper very carefully I was surprised that he omits any mention of Throsby's reference (citing Samuel Carte) to the Wery-wall in Lancaster. According to Throsby, Carte likens this and the Old Works, Wroxeter to Jewry Wall. On a flying visit to Lancaster I was unable to locate the above mentioned feature, although there were plenty of Roman remains in evidence. The Old Work in Wroxeter certainly does bear a superficial structural resemblance to the Jewry Wall. However, I was struck by the Lancastrian nomenclature – Wery does seem to have echoes of both ‘jury’ and ‘jewry’. Perhaps one of your readers could tell us exactly what and where is the Wery-wall or the likely meaning of the word?

I was concerned that the writer, in his introductory paragraph, repeats Kenyon’s failed interpretation of Jewry Wall. This has become the orthodox view and is in urgent need of overhaul. Among the burning questions that arise from her excavations one has to ask, did she really find the *palaestra* to the east of the wall? She certainly declares that she saw *bema* slot stones when trenching across the passageway next to the churchyard. Indeed, what are probably some of these slot stones, which were used along the edge of the tribunal platform, can be seen rebuilt into the lower section of the NE arch. That there was a *basilica* somewhere to the east of the wall therefore seems a sensible conclusion but a *palaestra* is a slightly different type of *basilica* and does not have a *bema* or raised dias. A good example of a *palaestra* is the basilica hall (which is without a *bema*) at Wroxeter which also occupies the same spatial relationship to the Old Work as Jewry Wall does to Kenyon’s hypothetical exercise hall. A better interpretation would have a law-court type *basilica* somewhere immediately to the east of Jewry Wall (but on an unknown orientation) and not necessarily associated with the wall itself which could be of later date.

Kenyon is silent about most of the unusual features associated with Jewry Wall. It can be shown, for instance, that it was built in three distinct phases of which one (but which one in the sequence is uncertain) is more likely to have been the entrance between the *caldarium* and the ambient *tepidarium* of the public baths with the *caldarium* stretching under the present church of St Nicholas.

This is not the place to rehearse the arguments against Kenyon’s thesis but your readers should be aware that the prevailing interpretation needs to be thoroughly re-examined and challenged. So despite Oliver Harris’s convincing argument about the name ‘Jewry’ his bold assertion that the wall itself is ‘firmly identified as ... the *palaestra*, or exercise hall’ is on rather shaky grounds.

Yours sincerely,

Steve Mitchell