

"Is everyone here"?

After rounding up everyone including Anne-Marie, we head for the Roman Amphitheatre which is just 12 (for me, 9 but of course I have to allow extra time) minutes walk back past the post office where as I try to avoid being run over by a passing double decker,



Joan Pype painstakingly confided to me that she had more relatives living in Caerleon. We turn,pay attention please, left



just after the Priory, along a bit more and there it is the largest Roman amphitheatre in Britain. And it's in Wales!



I expect the grass is dry after all the good weather, even though it's a little overcast at the moment. In through the gate, across the field, please be careful the going could be a little rough



We first go down the slope (mind your footing please) and into the arena itself



and see



DON'T PANIC !!!!! That's actually a welcoming party!

Listen carefully as I am going to give you a little background to the site. Lesley, could you pay attention PLEASE! Built around AD 90 to entertain the legionaries stationed at the fort of Caerleon (*Isca*), this impressive amphitheatre was the Roman equivalent of today's multiplex cinema. Wooden benches provided seating for up to 6,000 spectators, who would gather to watch bloodthirsty displays featuring gladiatorial combat and exotic wild animals. But mainly it was used to drill troops and stage march-byes for visiting dignitaries.

Long after the Romans left, the amphitheatre took on a new life in Arthurian legend. Geoffrey of Monmouth, the somewhat imaginative 12th-century scholar, wrote in his *History of the Kings of Britain* that Arthur was crowned in Caerleon and that the ruined amphitheatre was actually the remains of King Arthur's Round Table.

Right, you have just 30 minutes to look around so look lively (pun intended). Cardiff University held an archaeological dig to grounds on the left side of the amphitheatre some years back, the results of which revolutionised the thinking of the Roman occupation of the area. You can not see where they dug as Hadley they covered it up again, however when you get home have a look at the Channel 4 'Time Team' visit and other clips of what was discovered, on YouTube.

As we leave, just a little late at 12.22 we do not have the time to look at the Roman barracks just opposites, perhaps just as well as a Bus Pass Friday had a spot of bother there, but that's another story). Only a few minutes walk and we arrive at the Roman Museum where we are expected for 12.30 and in fact arrive at 12.27.

