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The honorary arch at Mainz-Kastel

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This translation of the guidebook *Der römische Ehrenbogen von Mainz-Kastel, Stadt Wiesbaden: ein imperiales Monument des frühen Kaiserzeit* apud ripam Rheni (Archäologische Denkmäler in Hessen 76, published by the Archäologischen Denkmalpflege im Landesamt für Denkmalpflege Hessen, Wiesbaden 1988) is presented with permission in order to give it more publicity. See also now Dr. Frenz's "Nachtrag 1989" printed below on p.416 (Ed.).

During excavations for a new building in the Grosse Kirchenstrasse no.5-13 in Mainz-Kastel in the modern district of Wiesbaden (figs.1-2), an unexpected discovery was made in early September, 1986. There were found some Roman foundations, consisting of large squared blocks joined by means of concrete-like mortar for which the Romans used the technical term *opus caementitium*. When the Hessen office for the preservation of monuments was informed, several blocks had already been removed without supervision and had been put in safe-keeping. Digging immediately begun in the excavation itself was expanded by an exploratory trench into the roadway of the Grosse Kirchenstrasse. Since March 1987 it has been able to be completed by means of the total excavation of the foundation in the section under the roadway. It soon became clear that the surviving remains, according to their type and dimensions, were part of a Roman honorary arch with probably three passageways. The best known example of this type is the Arch of Constantine in Rome.

The foundations in Mainz-Kastel had previously been cut into in 1896 when drains were built, but their dimensions and importance remained unrecognized. At that time remains of a large base were found in the immediate vicinity and also two milestones, giving the distance to *Aquae Mattiacae* (Wiesbaden). During construction after the Second World War, the foundation was again partially uncovered, but the office for the preservation of monuments was not informed.

Description of the findings (figs.3-4)

The structure of the foundation is unusually solid. The building process was roughly as follows: in an unpaved pit a levelling platform of *opus caementitium*, up to 2.5 m. thick, was placed on top of a low-lying natural gravel layer. Measuring 20.6 x 12.6 m. the levelling platform is considerably larger than the foundations proper. Upon this platform was laid a rectangular frame, roughly 18 m. long and 9 m. wide, consisting of red sandstone squared blocks 0.55 m. high and connected to each other by means of iron clamps set in lead. The interior of this frame was filled with *opus caementitium* and levelled horizontally. Upon the surface of the squared blocks and set in at a distance of about 0.25 m. from the outer edge a line was traced for the position of a second course of squared blocks. This line created a rectangle of 60 x 30 Roman feet which represents the basic dimensions of the structure. Along the line a second course of blocks of equal height was laid. The frame inside was divided into a larger central and two smaller side sections by means of two cross rows. The frame of the side sections was doubled by means of a second inner row of blocks. The blocks of the second course too were connected to each other by means of clamps, and the frames inside were likewise filled with *opus caementitium* and levelled off. In both courses the blocks on the south side and the adjoining blocks of the long sides are lost, as are those of the second course in the northwest corner. On top of the second course there is another right-angled line tracing the position for a third course of blocks. On the west side there is a clear mark for the central axis of the structure. Of the third course only one sixth of the blocks are preserved, mainly along the central axis and to the north on the east side. Again a frame of the same height but this time made of white sandstone blocks, was laid and clamped with crosspieces; probably it had three rows. The areas in between were no longer covered with concrete but with somewhat thinner slabs without clamps placed on top of a levelling layer of mortar and small stones. Outside the clamped long sides two further rows of slabs were laid. These slabs represent the floor level in the passages and in front of the long sides. On top of this in the region of the central passageway were observed several layers of a later and occasionally renewed road of small stones in a concrete bed.