

## Fanum

[Fanococidi](#) is mentioned in the Ravenna Cosmography among a sequence of Roman place names that appear to date from the initial Roman push into Scotland associated with governor Agricola around AD 80. Most authors repeat the suggestion, originally made by Eric Birley of *Vindolanda* fame, that *Fanococidi* was the Roman fort at Bewcastle, which was a hotspot for altars to a god called *Cocidius*. However, that fort was not built until decades later, and was way off the epicentre of epigraphic evidence for that god; see [Charlton & Mitcheson](#) (1983). *Cocidius*, whose name is plausibly related to [κόκκινος](#) 'scarlet', was much venerated by Roman soldiers along and near Hadrian's Wall.

Placing *Fanococidi* at the mouth of the Annan into the Solway estuary, instead of Bewcastle, unlocks a plausible path across the map for a sequence of 26 Cosmography names, but there is no obvious archaeological evidence there for the sort of stone building that one might naively expect. Latin [fanum](#) is dictionary-defined as 'a place dedicated to some deity by forms of consecration, a sanctuary, temple', variously translated into Latin as [templum](#), [aedes](#), [delubrum](#), [cella](#), [sacellum](#), or [sacrarium](#).

Modern thinking about pre-Roman shrines is neatly summarized in this text taken from Charlton and Mitcheson. "Celts ... neither needed nor desired houses for their gods or images of them... They worshipped where natural features suggested to them the presence of a god: pools, springs, the sources of rivers, wells and, of course, the sacred grove or *nemeton*. Cemeteries and grave-mounds were also considered sacred, as were the *temenoi*, ditched ritual-enclosures which rarely show evidence of internal structures. There may have been some insubstantial shrines of wood or wickerwork within the *temenoi* or erected over the foci of ritual practice."

It follows that *Fanococidi* might have had no substantial building(s), at least before the Romans arrived, but only some sort of wet, open-air site. Beside the mouth of the river Annan, south-east of Annan Hill several streams run into the main estuary, through peatbog into saltmarsh, where there could formerly have been a site for votive offerings. The notion of sacrificing something to the gods by throwing it into water seems to have been universal across the ancient Indo-European world, as shown by finds of valuable metalwork (countless swords, Gundestrup cauldron, Battersea shield, etc) and by [bog bodies](#).

Linguists confidently trace the etymology of *fanum* to PIE [\\*dhes-no-](#) 'gift to the gods', whose initial DH changed to F in Latin, Θ in Greek, or D in some contexts. That F/D exchange shows up elsewhere, such as between the Latinate and Germanic parts of English vocabulary, in forum/door, fountain/dene, etc. That directs attention to PIE [\\*danu-](#) 'river', discussed under [Dano](#) (Doncaster). *Fanum* and [\\*danu-](#) might be cognates, or at least confusably similar, via a common link to sacred water. Also to fen (peat-accumulating wetland fed by fresh water), which is said to derive, via Frankish [\\*fani](#) and/or Latin [fania](#), from PIE [\\*pen-](#), via the P/F exchange seen in many Germanic words.

The number-one reason for epigraphic mentions of *fanum* was [Fanum fortunae](#), modern [Fano](#), in Italy, at the mouth the river Metaurus into the Adriatic. Trying dig deeper into uses of *fanum* ends up just showing how much superstition there was in the ancient world.

[Fano carisi](#), on the Antonine Itinerary in Sardinia, is modern San Giovanni de su 'Anzu, which has a [hot spring](#) cavern. The *carisi* part referred to the ship ([carina](#)) or chariot ([currus](#)) in which the huntress nymph [Cyrene](#) travelled.

[Fano minervae](#), on the Antonine Itinerary in Lorraine, is modern La Cheppe, with a Gaulish oppidum said to be where Attila camped before the Catalaunian Plains battle. There is nothing to explain the *fanum*, except a small stream called La Noblette.

[Fano martis](#) was a Roman fortress at modern Famars in northern France (Nervian territory in *Belgica*) at a crossroads, with nothing to explain the *fanum* apart from a Roman bath house.

[Fanum Voltumnæ](#) was mentioned by Livy as a main sacred place of the Etruscans, but has never been located. [Voltumna](#) was the chief god of the Etruscans, who became Roman [Vertumnus](#).

[Levefanum](#) (*Levefano* on the Peutinger Map) was “almost certainly” [Arnhem-Meinerswijk](#)” Roman fort in the Netherlands. That location is best known from the film *A Bridge Too Far*, when the 1944 Allied armies’ push to relieve the paratroopers at Arnhem got held up in flat wetlands of the Rhine delta. The Rhine delta has changed greatly over the centuries. See [here](#) for an informative map of the present distributaries of the Rhine, and [here](#) for what areas were flooded when Germans destroyed Dutch dikes in 1944. Current thinking is that the river IJssel branched off near Arnhem after Roman times.

In AD 710 Bede clearly understood *fanum* to be a pagan site, as he reported the destruction of a temple at [Goodmanham](#) in East Yorkshire, which would then have been near the apex of an inlet off the Humber. He did not describe its structure, which was most likely an open-air enclosure with wooden idols.

[Leviodanum](#), probably the Roman fort at the confluence of the Almond and the Tay, at Bertha, near Perth, Scotland, differs by only key letter from *Levefanum*. *Lev-* probably came from PIE [\\*leb-](#) ‘lip’ (as in Latin *labia*, *labrum*), as discussed for [Levioxava](#) (Perth).

Relevant shrine sites in Britain that can readily be looked up on the Internet include [Wanborough](#), [Springhead](#), and [Needingworth](#), which support the general idea that the central essence of a fanum was water, notably river sources. Bath shows how a monumental Roman building could obscure any pre-existing, pre-Roman shrine, while at [Uley](#) Roman buildings lie uphill, away from any spring or pool.

Roman soldiers best attested around the west of Hadrian’s Wall came from around the lower Rhine (in *Belgica* or *Germanica*), which may explain the Germanic tinge to so many place names, in an area whose indigenous people might have spoken forms of Celtic. At least, we should list fort names on the Roman [limes](#) along the lower Rhine:

<u>Roman name</u>	<u>= Now</u>	<u>Notes</u>
?	Randwijk	
<i>Carvo</i>	Kesteren	cf <a href="#">*kerbang</a> & carve
<i>Mannaricum</i>	Maurik	<a href="#">mannus</a> ‘small horse’
<i>Fectio</i>	Bunnik-Vechten	compare <a href="#">Vectis</a>
<i>Traiectum</i>	Utrecht	<a href="#">trajectus</a> ‘crossing’
<i>Fletio</i>	Vleuten	cf <a href="#">*fleutang</a> & fleet
<i>Laurium</i>	Woerden	<a href="#">laureus</a> ‘laureate’
?	Bodegraven	
<i>Nigrum Pullum</i>	Zwammerdam	<a href="#">niger</a> ‘black’ <a href="#">pullus</a> ‘darkish’
<i>Albaniana</i>	Alphen an der Rijn	<a href="#">albus</a> ‘white’
<i>Matilo</i>	Leiden	<a href="#">*mad-</a> ‘flowing, well fed’
<i>Forum Hadriani</i>	Voorburg	Latin
<i>Praetorium Agrippinae</i>	Valkenberg	Latin
<i>Lugdunum</i>	Katwijk	see <a href="#">here</a>

Watch out that old maps wrongly show *Levefanum* at Rijswijk, with Arnhem-Meinerswijk said to be Roman *Castra Herculis*.

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