

# ***Realising the Research Potential of Developer-Funded Roman Archaeology in England***

## **PROJECT NEWSLETTER 4: August 2014**

Welcome to our fourth project newsletter. The project has been running for over two years now, and this newsletter provides you with an update on progress and information on upcoming events. We welcome feedback and contact addresses can be found at the end. Background information on the project is available on the following websites.

<http://www.cotswoldarchaeology.co.uk/discover-the-past/>

<http://www.reading.ac.uk/archaeology/research/Projects/arch-mf-settlement.aspx>

The project has two principal strands: *The Roman Rural Settlement Project* and the *Romano-British Towns Project*.

### **The Roman Rural Settlement Project**

Data Collection from local Historic Environment Records (HERs) is being undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology with funding from English Heritage. The interpretation and analysis of the data is undertaken by a team from the University of Reading (Dr Alex Smith, Dr Martyn Allen and Dr Tom Brindle) under the direction of Professor Michael Fulford, with funding from the Leverhulme Trust. The creation of a database and web-based GIS interface is being led by Tim Evans of the Archaeology Data Service at the University of York.

#### **Progress on Data Collection**

Data collection has now almost concluded for the project. The previous six months have focussed on the northern regions; Yorkshire and Humber, the North-East and the North-West. Of these, the Yorkshire and Humber region and the North-West region are complete with ongoing consultation with Redcar and Cleveland District only in the North-East region. The HERs have been most helpful and enthusiastic, regardless of the resource pressure that many are facing, which has often restricted staff time for research projects such as this. In many instances, resource issues have been successfully overcome by visiting the HERs and undertaking searches and/or scanning ourselves. HERs have been most accommodating of these visits and highly cooperative. As such, data collection in the northern regions has progressed incredibly smoothly. The project team are extremely grateful for the support provided and in total (so far) over 2,500 grey literature reports have been collected.

Expectations were for relatively low numbers of relevant reports across the northern regions. The project has also included reports relating to *vici* settlements in frontier areas, which have been included as they may have contributed a significant proportion of the Roman nucleated rural settlements. For the North-West and North-East regions numbers of relevant reports have been as expected – fairly low in comparison to the south but consistent across all counties (see Fig. 1). Surprisingly, the Yorkshire and Humber region has produced a far larger resource than



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## Progress on Data Analysis

The University of Reading team has continued to march through the regions of western, central and northern England, collating data from published sources and inputting these onto the project database, alongside the grey-literature reports collected by Cotswold Archaeology. To date we have inputted c 3200 records (each record usually equating to a settlement site or landscape feature) accounting for approximately 80-90% of the expected total, with grey literature reports being utilised in over 40% of all records. Preliminary analysis of the data for the West Midlands culminated in the regional seminar at Birmingham in March, whilst analysis of the South-West data was presented at a seminar in Exeter in June. The South-West region contained the second largest dataset so far (681 records), and is arguably the most diverse, incorporating everything from extensive complex farmsteads in the Upper Thames and Severn Valleys, to the highly distinctive 'Round' settlements of the Cornish peninsular, along with the highest concentration of villas in the country within parts of Gloucestershire, Wiltshire and Somerset. Furthermore, wider regional patterns continue to emerge in areas such as settlement, ritual expression, material culture and landscape exploitation, which bear little resemblance to modern administrative boundaries or even to the perceived boundaries of Roman *civitates*.

The focus has now shifted to the north of England with data collection for Yorkshire almost complete and that for the North-West and North-East well underway. The quantity of records, for Yorkshire in particular, has outstripped initial expectations, with much of the data deriving from grey literature reports. Analysis of the northern English data promises to produce exciting results, forming a fundamental part of the growing national picture of Romano-British rural settlement and land use.

## Engagement and Dissemination

A crucial element of this project concerns the dissemination of emerging results to a wide constituency of interested people, whilst capturing local knowledge and views. Meetings are being held in each region of England, as well as presentations at a variety of other events.

So far we have held regional meetings in Cambridge (East of England), Leicester (East Midlands), London (Greater London and the South East), Birmingham (West Midlands) and Exeter (South West). The presentations delivered by the University of Reading team can be viewed at the Cotswold Archaeology and University of Reading project web pages (through the links provided above). Attendance has been high at all of the seminars, averaging between 60 and 100 delegates. The high level of interest has resulted in a good mix of heritage professionals and other interested parties attending, spawning an atmosphere of open debate and constructive discussion.

Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive with some good constructive criticism that has been utilised to inform and improve our future sessions. The next meeting will discuss the results of the Yorkshire and Humber analysis and will be held on 15th October 2014 in York. Please see the project website for further details, or contact Nathan Blick (contact details below) to book a place.

## Moving Forward

After much anticipation, the project team is delighted to announce that the assessment will be expanded to include Roman Wales. This represents an important extension to the project, which can now truly be considered an assessment of the contribution of developer-funded investigations to our understanding of 'Roman Britain'. The Welsh leg of the journey is planned



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to start next year, with data collection commencing from the 1st January 2015 and running until the 31st December.

The Welsh project will be funded through the Leverhulme Trust. The project team will be working closely with the four Welsh Archaeological Trusts, in much the same way it has done with the HERs in England. Cotswold Archaeology will continue to serve a data acquisition role (working closely with the four Welsh Trusts) whilst the research team at Reading University will continue with the detailed analysis of the raw data.

Dissemination of the project's findings and results will remain a key element of the project, and the Welsh analysis will be supported by a regional seminar(s) (venue and format TBC). We look forward to continuing our success with the project in Wales and anticipate that results will prove highly significant, both in terms of Welsh archaeology and the understanding of 'Roman Britain' as a whole.

In the meanwhile the preliminary results of the English research, 'The Rural Settlement of Roman England: from regional perspectives to national synthesis' will be presented at a meeting at the University of Reading on Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> April 2015 where the project website will be launched.

## The Romano-British Towns Project

Following the conference last November work is now progressing smoothly on the publication. The volume is entitled *The Towns of Roman Britain: the Contribution of Commercial Archaeology Since 1990* and is edited by Michael Fulford and Neil Holbrook. It contains papers by Stewart Bryant and Roger Thomas (planning aspects); Dominic Perring (London); Patrick Ottaway (York); Michael Fulford (towns of the South East); Neil Holbrook (towns of the South West); Paul Bidwell (towns of the Midlands and North); John Pearce (cemeteries and burial ritual); Mark Maltby (zooarchaeology) and Mark Robinson (archaeobotany), with a conclusion by Michael Fulford. The volume will be published in the Britannia Monographs series early in 2015.

## Events

**Saturday 20 September 2014.** *Recent Roman Research in the East of England.* Talk by Alex Smith at the CBA East Conference, Godmanchester

**Wednesday 15 October 2014.** *Roman Rural Settlement: Yorkshire and Humber Regional Seminar.* University of York.

**Wednesday 17 December 2014** *Roman Rural Settlement: North-East and North-West Regional Seminar.* University of Durham.

**Tuesday 14 April 2015** *Roman Rural Settlement: National Meeting.* University of Reading. Conference



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## Contacts

Nathan Blick, Project Manager for Cotswold Archaeology  
E: [Nathan.blick@cotswoldarchaeology.co.uk](mailto:Nathan.blick@cotswoldarchaeology.co.uk)

Alex Smith, Senior Research Fellow, University of Reading  
E: [a.t.smith@reading.ac.uk](mailto:a.t.smith@reading.ac.uk)



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