

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

PROJECT NEWSLETTER 2: SUMMER 2013

Welcome to our second project newsletter. The project has been running for over one year 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 carried out 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 is progressing extremely well, owed in no small part to the enthusiastic responses from the HERs. Collection of the grey literature resource (unpublished evaluation reports, interims, post-excavation assessments, etc) is now complete for the East of England, East Midlands, South-East and London regions (except for Buckinghamshire where consultation is on-going). This has involved consultation with 36 separate HERs. The project team are extremely grateful for the support provided, and well over 1,100 grey literature reports have been collected to date.

Data collection is now well underway in the West Midlands and South West regions, and this is expected to be complete by September. Data collection will commence in the autumn in Yorkshire and Humber, North-East and North-West regions. Well over 2,000 grey literature reports are expected to have been obtained by the end of the project.

Perhaps the biggest success of the data collection element of the project so far has been the extensive production of high quality PDF/A OCR documents of formerly paper-only reports. Of the grey literature reports collected so far, well over 500 have been digitised from paper-only copies (typically these comprise older reports that were only provided to HERs in paper format).



The digitisation of these reports has resulted in the increased interactivity of the grey literature resource (with the capacity for internal searching) as well as significant HER enhancement benefits. The reports collected as part of this project (including existing digital copies of grey literature reports obtained direct from the HERs) will be accessible through the project website which will go live in 2015.

Progress on Data Analysis

Analysis of the mass of data collected is progressing well, with exciting results starting to emerge. The East of England (defined as the counties of Cambridgeshire, Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire, Essex, Suffolk and Norfolk) has been the first region to be completed, with a total of 625 records of Roman rural sites entered into the project database. Provisional results of the analysis of these records were presented at the first regional seminar at Cambridge. This highlighted significant new insights into the Romano-British countryside in terms of the agricultural economy, settlement patterns, burial practice, religious expression, industrial activity and many different elements relating to material culture. Over half of all data collected so far and used in this analysis have derived from 'grey-literature' reports which have ably demonstrated their value as high quality research material.

The data collection for the East Midlands (Northamptonshire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire) has now also been completed (550 separate site records) and analysis is underway. Provisional results will be presented at a regional seminar in June at Leicester. Data analysis is also on-going for the South-East, which is expected to be the largest regional dataset, with 850 site records entered so far. Analysis will take place over the summer in time for the seminar in London in October. All of this work will hopefully add to the growing picture for regional and intra-regional diversity in the Romano-British countryside

Engagement and Dissemination

A crucial element of this project is concerned with disseminating emerging results to a wide constituency of interested people, and capturing local knowledge and views. We also want to open a debate on the methodologies currently adopted to investigate Romano-British rural sites, and the ways in which these sites are published. We are therefore holding meetings in each region of England, as well as presenting at a variety of other events. We held our first regional meeting in March in Cambridge, where we discussed the results from the East of England and debated the way in which sites in the region are examined. In excess of 50 people attended the meeting, and feedback was overwhelming positive (the presentations delivered by the University of Reading team can be viewed at the Cotswold Archaeology project web page). As we move around the country we are keen to hear a variety of views (academics; curators; consultants; contractors; local groups etc), so each meeting will have a slightly different feel. The dates and venues for the remaining meetings will be posted on the website, or contact Nathan Blick and you will be put on our mailing list.

In addition to the regional meeting, Michael Fulford also delivered a paper on the project to the Institute for Archaeologist's annual conference in Birmingham in April.

The Romano-British Towns Project

This module is funded by English Heritage and is being led by Michael Fulford and Neil Holbrook. Our aim is to make an assessment of the contribution of commercial archaeology to the study of Romano-British towns. This will be achieved by case studies and review of



published outputs; consideration of the grey literature lies outside of our current scope. The project has two principal outputs: a one-day conference at the University of Reading on 30 November 2013, and a volume of conference papers which will be published by the Roman Society as a Britannia monograph in 2014. See below for links to the conference web pages.

Events

Sunday 13 October 2013. “Developer Archaeology and the Romano-British Countryside: a Revolution in Understanding?”. Talk by Neil Holbrook at a weekend conference sponsored by the Royal Archaeological Institute entitled *The Impact of Rome on the British Countryside*. University of Chester. Further details at <http://www.royalarchinst.org/conferences>

Saturday 19 October 2013. Talks by Neil Holbrook and Alex Smith at *New Approaches to Roman Archaeology*. Day conference in Bath organised by Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society. Further details at <http://www.sanhs.org/News%20and%20Events.htm>

Wednesday 30 October 2013. *Roman Rural Settlement: London and South East Regional Seminar*. Society of Antiquaries, London.

Attendance at the regional seminars is by invitation only. If you are interested in attending please contact Nathan Blick. Further seminars covering the West Midlands, South West and Yorkshire regions will take place during 2014.

Saturday 30 November 2013. *Assessing the Contribution of Commercial Archaeology to the Study of Romano-British Towns*. Day conference at the University of Reading in conjunction with the Roman Society. For further details and links to booking visit <http://www.cotswoldarchaeology.co.uk/roman-towns/>

Saturday 29 March 2014. *New Approaches to the Romano-British Countryside*. Double session at the Roman Society's biennial Roman Archaeology Conference, University of Reading, featuring presentations by various members of the project team. For further details visit <http://www.romansociety.org/events/rac-2014.html>

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ENGLISH HERITAGE



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