The Roman Finds Group Spring Conference

Verulamium and the Romano-British Southeast

Friday April 21st 2017

The 2017 RFG Spring Meeting is based in St Albans and will be a one day conference on Friday April 21st. It will be kindly hosted by the Verulamium Museum and will take place in Lecture Room 2. The RFG would very much like to thank all those involved with arranging this event.

The conference comprises three sessions of papers with seven talks covering various aspects of finds from Verulamium and the Romano – British Southeast and is an excellent opportunity to hear about recent finds and research in this region, abstracts below. A quick-fire session entitled ‘Small Finds, Short Papers’ including three ten minute talks will take place. If you would like to display a research posters coving any artefact type, please contact the organising committee.

Previous RFG meetings in Newcastle, York and Reading were oversubscribed so early booking is strongly advised. The cost of the meeting is £18 for fully paid up RFG members, £15 for students and £22 for non-members. Attendance applications can be made by filling out the form below and returning it with the required payment to the address stated.

What's included?

- Access to all conference sessions, finds and poster viewings.
- Tea, coffee, soft drinks and biscuits as per the conference programme.
- Visit to the Museum during the lunch break.

Finds Viewing/Poster Displays/Book Sales

There will be space for posters, the finds display and discussion during all breaks. There will also be space for the sale of books should anyone wish to do so. If so, please contact the Committee well in advance by email: barbarabirley@vindolanda.com.

Getting to

To find more information about getting to the museum please visit their website or look at the maps below. http://www.stalbansmuseums.org.uk/verulamium/

Questions and Further Information

Any questions about the meeting can be emailed to the Organising Committee at: barbarabirley@vindolanda.com.

We look forward to seeing you.
The Roman Finds Group Spring Conference
Verulamium and the Romano-British Southeast
Conference Schedule
Friday 21st April

10.00 Registration (with tea and coffee)
10.30 Welcome

Session 1 – Verulamium and surrounds

10.40 Verulamium Revealed: recent geophysical surveys of the Roman town Kris Lockyear
11.10 How Hertfordshire joined the Roman Empire Isobel Thompson
11.40 The Sandridge hoard David Thorold
12.10 Finds from sacred places in the landscape around the Romano-British town at Baldock, Hertfordshire Gill Burleigh
12.40 AGM - Lunch

Session 2 – the Romano-British Southeast

14.10 ‘The Wight Stuff’: Assessing the potential of late Iron Age and Roman period PAS data from the Isle of Wight Stephanie Smith
14.40 The Beginning of the End of Roman Britain – Probably…? But the End…? Probably Not…the Story of a Byzantine Coin Simon West
15.10 A New Spin on Roman Slingshot from Britain John H Reid
15.40 Tea, coffee and biscuits

Session 3 - Small Finds, Short Papers

16.10 Priestly regalia in Roman south-east Britain. Biographies of use and depositional practices Alessandra Esposito
16.20 Putting faces to names Frances McIntosh
16.30 Grave goods and ritual deposition from The Goodmans Care Home and Epsom College sites, Ewell, Surrey Chris Faine
16.45 Closing remarks and departure
Verulamium Revealed: recent geophysical surveys of the Roman town
Kris Lockyear

In 2013, a project funded by the AHRC’s Connected Communities scheme, was initiated to train local volunteers in magnetometry survey and to undertake work at a selection of Iron Age and Roman sites in Hertfordshire, including Verulamium. The group completed the survey of Verulamium Park by the end of funding in early 2014. The group, now called the Community Archaeology Geophysics Group, have continued to prosper and have undertaken surveys on 21 sites in Hertfordshire, Beds, Bucks, Essex and Cambridgeshire. In the summer of 2015 they were able to begin survey of the half of Verulamium that lies within the Gorhambury Estate. The survey continued in the summer of 2016. The group has been able to borrow a GPR (from SEAHA) and a RM85 Earth Resistance meter (from UCL) to complement the magnetometry results. This paper will review some of the major findings from these surveys, and show how the combination of techniques provides a much richer image of the subsurface features than one technique alone. The paper will conclude with some thoughts as to the direction the project should be taking.

How Hertfordshire entered the Roman empire
Isobel Thompson
AD 43 was the year of invasion, not ‘conquest’. The process of transition in Hertfordshire from the ‘late Iron Age’ to being part of the Roman empire was a long one which began in the mid 1st century BC and lasted until the Flavian period. Some idea of this process can be gleaned from information on Verulamium collated for the St Albans Urban Archaeological Database in the mid 1990s, undertaken to establish a sound knowledge base for archaeological advice within the planning system. Verulamium has enough data for the 1st century AD to show how it persisted as a high-status late Iron Age central focus, with a client king, until after the king’s burial c.AD 55. His reign overlapped the foundation of Londinium in AD 48. Evidence of the relationship between Verulamium and Londinium is explored (through pottery supply and other themes), which shows that it was not straightforward or very obvious. The material character of Verulamium’s layout, settlement and burial customs before AD 60 can be seen as a mix of the insular and the continental, but not ‘Roman’. To an extent the same can be said of Londinium at this pre-Boudican date; it was a brand-new frontier town populated by immigrants. Detailed stratigraphy and goods in Londinium and Southwark at this period, when individual building plots could be redeveloped more than once before AD 60, make for interesting comparison with the client king’s power base and the rest of Hertfordshire.

The Sandridge hoard
David Thorold
In 2012 a metal detectorist testing out his first detector within the St Albans district happened upon a hoard of gold coins. Prior to this discovery only one gold Roman coin had been found at Verulamium. The detectorist reported his find to the museum service and we were able to carry out a rescue dig on the site. Eventually 159 solidii were recovered – the largest hoard consisting solely of these coins to be found in the country.
This talk will look at the coins recovered, and consider what the hoard can tell us about coinage in the late Roman empire and how it was transported, stored and spent.

Finds from sacred places in the landscape around the Romano-British town at Baldock, Hertfordshire
Gill Burleigh
A sacred landscape may be defined around Baldock by the presence not only of temples, shrines, elite burials, hoards, and boundary dykes, but also of natural features, such as springs, rivers and dry valleys, some of which appear to be associated with cultic activities. This presentation will define the
area being examined, outline what we know about some of these monuments and natural features, and show examples of a range of finds that have come from them. Notable aspects of these sacred places and the rituals associated with them seems to be continuity from earlier periods, the veneration of prehistoric monuments and artefacts, perhaps connected with ancestor worship.

‘The Wight Stuff’: Assessing the potential of late Iron Age and Roman period PAS data from the Isle of Wight
Stephanie Smith
The Isle of Wight, Roman Vectis, has often been treated as an insular backwater in comparison to well-known Iron Age and Roman period settlements across mainland southern Britain. Explorations on Wight in the late 19th-early 20th centuries failed to uncover evidence of major urban centres from this period and focused almost entirely on eight known villas, with inconsistent recording and retention of the related assemblages. Whilst modern discoveries confirm that the inhabitants of the Isle of Wight engaged in wider Channel activity from early prehistoric times and evidence suggests that this maritime network expanded to increasingly extensive trade relationships by Iron Age and Roman periods, few excavations have been fully published, making an assessment of supporting material culture from the Island difficult.

Within this context, this paper will provide a preliminary exploration of the significance of more than 4,600 Iron Age and Roman period finds discovered by metal detector users on the Isle of Wight and recorded by the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS). Although recent work on Roman coinage has illustrated Vectis’ importance within maritime trade networks, little work has been done to synthesise the wealth of material recorded from the Island. This paper will investigate the potential of integrating PAS data with other available resources to rewrite our understanding of settlement on Vectis and its relationships with the wider Channel zone.

The Beginning of the End of Roman Britain – Probably…? But the End…? Probably Not…
the Story of a Byzantine Coin
Simon West
In March 2012 a Byzantine coin was found by a detectorist in Colney Heath, St Albans. It was discovered in an area which had previously been trial trenched as part of an archaeological assessment prior to development; several archaeological field evaluations were also conducted as part of this planning process. A scatter of prehistoric and Roman material was recovered though the contemporary evaluation produced few archaeological features. The only identified feature which was datable was a narrow gully, crossing the evaluation trench. The gully was possibly Bronze Age, based on a pot sherd and the lack of other later features and finds. It may be that the archaeological features had been truncated or that the level of activity on site was limited, or ephemeral. Apart from the coin, the detectorist recovered twelve metal objects (6 Roman, 2 medieval, 4 post-medieval) and a Palaeolithic flint biface.

The single Byzantine coin from Colney Heath may not appear to be significant, but this one coin fits the distribution of other similar coins and has significance beyond its size. This study would appear to corroborate Pirenne’s view that the Arab invasion had a devastating effect on trade and that from this devastation grew a new network of trading links and that ‘without Islam, the Frankish Empire would probably never have existed, and Charlemagne, without Muhammad, would be inconceivable’. As yet, the precise purpose and distribution mechanism for the Byzantine coinage spread across England is not known. The next step would be to look at non-PAS/HER coin finds and to link these with other classes of Byzantine objects, and together these need to be considered within the wider political, economic and trading contexts of the time.

A New Spin on Roman Slingshot from Britain
John H Reid
It is not an exaggeration to describe the sling as the forgotten firepower of the ancient world. There has been a tendency by military scholars to overlook this weapon yet modern ballistic experiments provide startling evidence of its range and effectiveness.

@RomanFindsGrp
We present a brief review of the ballistics of the sling and its place within the Roman army. By virtue of the finds of distinctive ammunition, we will show something of its distribution in Roman Britain. Stephen Greep first described the important finds of lead sling bullets from St Albans in *Britannia* in 1987 and at that time offered a new typology. Based on his descriptions, we will review the fabric, manufacture and specialised nature of the weapon. We also have pleasure in presenting an updated and expanded typology of lead bullets which includes the recent work from Burnswark Hill.

**Priestly regalia in Roman south-east Britain. Biographies of use and depositional practices.**
Alessandra Esposito
Deposits of objects resulting from religious rituals are known in south-east Britain, but their consideration in the archaeological literature has often been affected by different biases. Greater attention has been given to the typology and iconography of specific objects, particularly the ‘priestly regalia’, less about their performative aspect. This address focuses on deposits that share the common denominator of containing one or more items recognisable as ‘priestly regalia’. These deposits offer contained collections of multiple items selected to be deposited together, thus creating different types of sets and providing a screenshot of ritual depositional practices in the region. After presenting the recently discovered deposit at West Stow, Bury St Edmunds, Norfolk (Worrell 2011; Esposito 2015), I will then consider it together with similar deposits found over the centuries in south-east Britain, to reflect on the physical transformations undergone by the deposited objects and deemed necessary to become part of a deposit. Finally, general considerations about the depositional practices of priestly regalia will be drawn thanks to the analysis of their distribution patterns in the region.

**Putting faces to names**
Frances McIntosh
Within the Clayton collection there are finds from all over the UK, some of these finds have notes to name the donors, but often I have not been able to find out who these people are. This quick-fire paper is a plea to see if anyone knows my donors. Who were they, why were they sending material to Clayton and was he sending them material in exchange?

**Grave goods and ritual deposition from The Goodmans Care Home and Epsom College sites, Ewell, Surrey**
Chris Faine
These 2 adjacent sites, dug in 2015 uncovered features dating from the Late Bronze Age to Saxon periods. Of most interest is a series of Roman inhumations (with associated goods) and a number large quarry pits. From these a total of 53 individual humans and over 70 animal burials, along with 80 Small finds and 59 coins were recovered. The assemblage consisted of a wide variety of material types and objects, many in extremely good condition. The talk will briefly examine the finds from the sites and consider them into a wider context of similar depositions from South-East Britain.
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Booking Form

If you wish to attend the conference please complete the following form and return it with a cheque made out to The Roman Finds Group. Post to Barbara Birley, Roman Finds Group Conference, Vindolanda Trust, Chesterholm Museum. Bardon Mill, Hexham Northumberland NE47 7JN or email: barbarabirley@vindolanda.com.

Name(s):

Address:

Telephone: Email:

Meeting Attendance

I would like the following (please indicate number of attendees):

........ RFG Member £18 ........ Non-Members £22

........ Student £15

Total amount of cheque enclosed: £.................................................................

Total amount to be charged by BACS: £............................................................

We will contact you via email to arrange payment should you wish to pay by BACS.
Map Showing Travel Information or visit www.stalbansmuseums.org.uk/verulamium/

Location Map Showing Proximity of Roman Museum, Theatre and Hypocaust

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