



# Editorial

Last year's editorial briefly reflected on the impact of COVID-19, which continues to be felt in ways we did not envisage a year ago. Colleagues in museums with major Roman collections have not been able to welcome visitors and researchers for most of the last year, with obvious implications for learning, outreach, museum finances and new work. Universities have taught Roman archaeology largely virtually, although blended teaching was possible in autumn 2020 and will hopefully take place again in autumn 2021. Almost all research excavations were cancelled in the summer of 2020, but work is resuming in the summer of 2021. By contrast, professional units have worked throughout almost the entire pandemic, with a boom in employment opportunities and the promise of many new Romano-British sites to be discovered during the major infrastructure projects currently underway. An increase in the number of papers submitted by colleagues working in the commercial sector is noticeable in recent years and attests the significance of these new discoveries. Many conferences, local archaeology group meetings and research seminars are now available virtually, increasing accessibility. Of particular interest to readers of *Britannia* are the conferences and seminars run by the Roman Finds Group (<https://www.romanfindsgroup.org.uk/>), the Study Group for Roman Pottery (<https://romanpotterystudy.org.uk/>) and the Theoretical Roman Archaeology Conference (<http://trac.org.uk/2020/11/trac-webinar-schedule/>).

There are some worrying funding trends affecting archaeology generally, notably the government's decision to downgrade the amount allocated to the subject in the Higher Education Teaching Grant. While the sum concerned may be relatively small, this decision has implications for vocational skills training (<https://www.archaeologists.net/news/cifa-statement-ofs-teaching-grant-reduction-archaeology-1612200867>). Not relevant to Roman Britain but part of the general political climate is the reduction in the budget for UKRI's Official Development Assistance (ODA), which has helped support many archaeological research projects abroad. In late May, two university archaeology departments (at Chester and Sheffield) are under threat of closure. It is clearly incumbent on all of us to make the case for archaeology to the wider public and politicians!

This year's report on finds reported to the Portable Antiquities Scheme by John Pearce and Sally Worrell once again raises issues about the still arbitrary character of current legislation. Fascinating and important groups of copper-alloy objects, such as those from Ampleforth (no. 3 in the report), are not protected by the Treasure Act, while groups like those from central Bedfordshire (no. 9) and Hampshire (no. 19) are because of their possible pre-Roman date. Consequently, the Ampleforth hoard was sold at auction for £185,000 in May this year.

This is my last year as Editor, and I would like to thank Will Bowden, who takes over for the 2022 volume, and Michael Fulford for their help and support with the 2021 volume. The Editorial Committee continues to monitor contributor data on gender and professional affiliation, and we are pleased to continue to promote the research of emerging scholars in the 'Spotlight on new research' section, which now forms part of the 'Roman Britain in 2020' part of this journal.

## OBITUARIES

2020 and 2021 have seen the deaths of a number of prominent Romano-British archaeologists.

John R.L. Allen (1932–2020) had a distinguished career as a geologist and sedimentologist at the University of Reading from 1959 to 2001, but also made a substantial contribution to archaeological research from the Mesolithic to the twentieth century with his textbook on *Geology for Archaeologists* (2017), which is relevant to all periods. In terms of Roman Britain he made important contributions to the fields of artefact provenancing, for example *Whetstones from Roman Silchester (Calleva Atrebatum), North Hampshire* (2014), iron-making technology, the building of town walls, for example *The Masonry Defences of Roman Silchester (Calleva Atrebatum), North Hampshire* (2013), and landscape archaeology; his work in the Severn estuary revealed evidence of Roman period drainage, embankment and settlement of saltmarsh, notably the Wentlooge Level between Newport and Cardiff in south-east Wales.

Anthony Birley (1937–2020), son of Eric and younger brother of Robin, read Classics at Oxford. Following research fellowships at Oxford and Birmingham, he became Lecturer and then Reader at the University of Leeds. From 1974, he was Professor of Ancient History at the University of Manchester. Later, he moved to the University of Düsseldorf, before retiring in 2002. Of particular relevance to readers of *Britannia* is his work on *The People of Roman Britain* (1980), *Hadrian the Restless Emperor* (1997) and *The Roman Government of Britain* (2005), as well as *Garrison Life at Vindolanda: A Band of Brothers* (2002).

Ernest Black (1951–2021) studied at Oxford and Keele under A.L.F. Rivet, before teaching Classics to school children. In his spare time, he carried out independent research, producing monographs on the *Roman Villas of South-East England* (1987) and *Cursus Publicus: The Infrastructure of Roman Government in Roman Britain* (1995), as well as papers on individual sites. A particular interest was ceramic building material, culminating in the publication (with Ian Betts and John Gower) of *A Corpus of Relief-Patterned Tiles in Roman Britain* (1997).

David Shotton (1939–2021) read Classics at the University of Southampton, before becoming a lecturer at Lancaster University's Department of Classics (since 1971 Classics and Archaeology). He retired in 2004 as Professor of Roman Imperial History. David excavated in north-western Britain and co-founded the Cumbria and Lancashire Archaeological Unit (1979), which later became the LU Archaeological Unit (1986), the precursor of Oxford Archaeology North (2001 onwards). His publications include *Roman North-West England* (1984), *Roman Coins from North-West England* (1990) and (with Andrew White) *The Roman Town and Fort of Lancaster* (1990).

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