Welcome

Welcome to the second edition of our Newsletter, which all our members will now receive, keeping you in touch with recent research, excavation, and events organised by ourselves and by other groups. We are happy to consider any article or paper for possible inclusion - please contact the Editor.

In Brief……..

Ivan D Margary Memorial conference - University of Portsmouth

Mike Haken reports back on the success of our first ever conference, and almost certainly the first ever conference in Britain to focus entirely on Roman roads, held in Portsmouth in early September. He then looks forward to it’s sister event, to be held at the Burn Hall Hotel near York on the 12th and 13th November.

Outcomes of the Conference Discussion Groups

The ideas that flowed out of the Discussion groups surprised us all, and provide a deal of food for thought and much to work in the future.

Culver: an intriguing first 7 years

Rob Wallace and David Millum report on seven years of the Culver Archaeological project, at Culver Farm, Barcombe, Sussex

Roman Roads Research Review

A “new” road on the Isle of Wight

Following an observation made by a delegate at our Portsmouth conference that officially there are no roads on the Isle of Wight, David Staveley set out to find one..............

Margary 710b Sheffield (S.Yorkshire)

University of Sheffield / Timetravellers have carried out further excavation at Sheep Hill Farm revealing an even bigger structure than we thought last year.

Hundayfield, Margary 8a (N.Yorkshire)

Aerial photos taken with a drone have revealed that the road from Green Hammerton to Aldborough appears to be of three carriageways.

If you know of any recent work related to Roman roads that you think our members should be made aware of, please let us know.
A Review of the Conference

When organising this conference, our Projects Manager Jayne Knight and myself set ourselves the task of organising an event that not only promoted RRRA, but also commemorated the 40th anniversary of the death of Ivan Margary, a man whose name is synonymous with the study of Roman roads. To this end, from the very beginning we felt that an organised visit to the Roman Palace at Fishbourne was essential, as the site would not have been saved for the nation without the huge part played by Ivan Margary in purchasing the site. Our search for a venue in Chichester right next door to Fishbourne failed, however the University of Portsmouth stepped in, and ultimately proved to be an excellent venue.

As you will have seen from the previous page, our programme of speakers was impressive, although it was regrettable that Mike Turpin couldn’t make it for family reasons, and Prof. Mike Fulford (University of Reading) had to pull out at the last minute due to time pressures - his team only finished this year’s excavations at Silchester the day before he was due to speak! Full details of the speakers and summaries of their presentations are still available on our website. There are also versions of five of the presentations, which are accessible from the main Conferences page with a login - just enter Delegate as your Username and Portsmouth as the password.

Another feature that Jayne introduced, far too often absent from archaeological conferences and day schools, were the discussion groups, which proved to be a major success, both in the ideas that came out of them, and also the feeling of inclusion that they generated, something that Jayne and I were keen to foster from the very start. Indeed, it was clear from the many comments that we received that the whole event had generated this sense of inclusivity which was appreciated by everyone, delegates and speakers alike, and was the key to the success of the event. Our northern conference, at Burn Hall nr York on the weekend of the 12th and 13th November promises to be no different.

Our choice of after dinner speaker at the Margary Memorial Dinner on Saturday evening was a bit of a surprise to everyone. I doubt anyone was expecting a live video link with Los Angeles! After a few technical issues (!?!), Everyone was treated to a demonstration by Scott Vanderbilt of the work he has been doing to digitise Margary’s magnum opus, Roman Roads in Britain, a project he’s been very quietly working on for a few years. It’s impressive to say the least, and whilst not quite ready for public release, I am pleased to announce to members that Scott will be speaking at the York conference and demonstrating his work. If you want to know more, you’ll have to come along to the conference!

Our visit to Fishbourne Roman Palace on Sunday, including a guided tour of the site and a finds handling session, was enjoyed by all, providing a unique opportunity to have a look inside Margary’s archaeology box.

A few of our delegates really got into the spirit of things....
The Ivan D Margary Memorial Conference Cont….
University of Portsmouth, 3rd & 4th September 2016

Results of the Discussion Groups
A Permanent Memorial to Ivan D Margary
Led by Mike Haken

The discussion asked whether we focus on those involved with Roman archaeology, for which Margary is best remembered, or whether we try to use his work to appeal to a new audience. It was generally accepted that we ought to be making a much wider audience aware of his work and his life, and using that to further the aims and attract attention to RRRA.

IDEAS DISCUSSED

● Continue to hold an Annual Conference bearing his name
● Margary Bursary or Award for new research, using the Conference as a platform
● Publish Margary’s diaries, particularly from WW1, as they appeal to a different audience. Possibility this could be done by the Sussex Archaeological Society in some manner.
● Publish a booklet or biography drawing on David Rudling’s recent research – Pen & Sword suggested as a publisher
● Highly visible markers to be erected at key points on known Roman roads. These could incorporate designs, perhaps in tesserae, in which local schools could be involved in the design stage, thus making Heritage Lottery funding a distinct possibility.
● A permanent display on Margary and Roman roads by the RRRA at Fishbourne Roman Palace. Given the vast numbers of tourists and schoolchildren who pass through the site annually, this would potentially give us a huge audience.
● Create an educational pack for schools, which may tie in with both the display at Fishbourne and the road markers

In terms of a permanent memorial, the road markers were generally held to be an excellent idea, the display at Fishbourne, and the preparation of an Educational Pack were held to achieve our goals most readily, however there was no reason why ALL the ideas discussed could not be enacted.

What are the key questions about Roman roads that remain to be answered?
(led by Pete Wilson)

KEY POINTS IDENTIFIED

● Include Roman roads in research priorities. Enlist public in identifying and validating possible roads
● Until database is functioning how do we keep on top of new information?
● Create a typology of roads and road construction and planning
● Why did Roman roads go out of use?
● Does increased knowledge of extent of quantity of Roman roads indicate greater population and settlement?
● Relationship between road network and economic activity, trade, exports etc.
● Resource implications of road building, labour and materials?
● How roads relate to the location and exploitation of natural resources
● How can we try to determine who actually built them ie military, civitates or commercial, and who paid for the maintenance?
● Were slaves used in construction and maintenance as is often assumed?
● Were tolls and taxes imposed?
● Better understanding the non-military functions of roads after the military moved on
● Better understanding of surveying, planning, and long distance alignments
● Dating of roads
The Ivan D Margary Memorial Conference Cont….

University of Portsmouth, 3rd & 4th September 2016

Results of the Discussion Groups

- How the road network integrated with water transportation, river sea and canal?
- How do we focus on filling in obvious gaps in the network?
- How do we identify roadside settlement, missing military sites and other activities along the network?
- Better understand place name evidence, with particular reference to the Devon and Galloway coasts
- Were there potential late stimuli to road building?
- Number, date, and origins of milestones

Margary Numbering – the Road forward to meet future needs

The fundamental question was whether or not we need to do anything?

DO WE NEED A NUMBERING SYSTEM?

Referring to roads by start and end points, whilst more memorable, is very imprecise especially when there are examples of more than one route and many of possible alternative routes. It was agreed however that there are currently many issues.

ISSUES WITH THE STATUS QUO

- Some roads have numbers allocated by Margary.
- Other systems are used for such as the sequential RRX numbers allocated by Ordnance Survey and the RRN numbers in Wales.
- Recently discovered roads are allocated no number at all

ISSUES WITH MARGARY’S SYSTEM

- Built in hierarchy creates a limit of ten for the number of direct branches a road may have.
- Sequential numbering of branches from start point doesn’t accommodate new additions in between.
- The system does give some idea of geographic relationships, but this is somewhat vague.

IDEAL FUNCTION OF NUMBERING SYSTEM:

- an easily recognisable reference
- a geographic identifier.
- reflect changing understanding of relationships between roads

MANAGEMENT OF THE SYSTEM

- Whatever system is adopted for the future, the RRRA should be the managing authority.
- the RRRA database should accommodate all Legacy systems.
- Agreement and cooperation of other organisations to be sought such as Historic England, the Roman Society, Historic Environment Scotland, RCAHMW.

DO WE REPLACE MARGARY’S SYSTEM OR ADAPT IT?

Many suggestions were made.

- Divide the country into geographic chunks, with a geographic prefix added to each number to show which chunks the road passed through.
- Define in quite general terms whereabouts in the country the road was, or perhaps both the start and end regions.
- A postcode type system was suggested, but that falls down because roads pass through many specific areas and regions.
- A nodal system was also suggested. With so many nodes across the country, and even more if extended into the rest of the empire, the numbers would incapable of recognition other than by computer.

All suggestions attempted to address the issue of a Geographic identifier, but not whether we should adapt the fundamental principal of Margary’s system or abandon it altogether.
The Ivan D Margary Memorial Conference
University of Portsmouth, 3rd & 4th September 2016

The Programme

SESSION 1 – Margary and his legacy
The importance of enhancing our knowledge of the Roman road network
Professor Anthony King, University of Winchester
Ivan D Margary and his contributions to archaeology
Dr. David Rudling, Sussex Archaeological Society
Revisiting Margary’s network in Sussex
David Staveley, independent archaeologist

SESSION 2 – Recent Research
Roman roads and settlement at Bridge & Culver Farms, near Lewes, East Sussex; or what did Ivan Margary do for me?
David Millum, the Culver Project
Some thoughts from the north
Dr. Pete Wilson, Royal Archaeological Institute, Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies

SESSION 3 – New Technology, New Approaches
LiDAR – The game changer
Bryn Gethin, Warwickshire Archaeology
Geophysics in Roads Research
David Staveley, independent archaeologist & geophysicist
The RRRA Online Database and Archive – A critical resource for research
Mike Haken standing in for Mike Turpin, Roman Roads Research Association

SESSION 4 – New Thinking on Roman Roads
Medieval Progresses, Military Campaigns, and the Roman Road Network
Dr. M.C. Bishop
Margary numbers – 60 years on, what issues need to be addressed?
Mike Haken, Roman Roads Research Association

DISCUSSION GROUPS
Group 1. What are the key questions about Roman roads that remain to be answered?
Group 2. Margary Numbering – the Road forward to meet future needs (led by Mike Haken)
Main Hall, Discussion Group Leaders report back to Conference

SESSION 5 – Roman Roads Planning and Surveying
Long distance alignments in southern Britain: strategic planning or boundaries?
Rob Entwistle – independent researcher
How was the course of a Roman road in Essex predicted by a land survey hypothesis?
Dr. John Peterson, University of East Anglia
The use of long-distance alignments in Roman planning
John Poulter (presented by Rob Entwistle as John Poulter was unwell)

SESSION 6 – The Road Forward
Towards a coordinated approach
Mike Haken, RRRA
Discussion groups
Group 3. Road Planning Alignments & Their Function (led by Rob Entwistle)
Group 4. A Lasting Legacy to Ivan Margary – a Visible Reminder in the Landscape? (led by Mike Haken)
Culver: an intriguing first 7 years

Rob Wallace and David Millum outline what they have achieved at this Sussex site

From 2005 to 2011 the Culver Archaeological Project (CAP), under director Rob Wallace, has been investigating the historical environment of the Upper Ouse Valley in the parishes of Barcombe and Ringmer. In 2005 Rob had discovered a substantial Roman road running to the east of the Barcombe villa complex, heading north east through the fields of Culver Farm, where CAP’s subsequent fieldwork has been undertaken (Fig 1).

Fig. 1 Map of Culver Farm showing the main features and field locations
In 2005-6 a series of evaluation trenches were dug in Pond Field and its northern neighbour Culver Mead which established the existence and bearing of the road as well as showing roadside activity. In 2007 a larger open area excavation in Pond Field exposed 20m of the road together with an area each side which showed clearly the substantial nature of the road and the intensity of the roadside industrial activity. This area was targeted again in 2010.

In 2009 the main emphasis moved to the south west, to Court House Field, where 50m of closely packed flint road foundations some 400mm deep were uncovered (Fig 2). The area chosen was over a discernible kink in the road noticed from the previous year’s geophysics results. Whilst a fine section of road was exposed and recorded the reason for the changes of direction was not altogether clear, although a series of crossing palæo-channels might have made this area unstable.

Seven years digging had produced over 6000 sherds of pottery that needed specialist analysis and reporting. A substantial Margary Grant from the Sussex Archaeological Society (SAS), plus a smaller sum from the University of Sussex Archaeology Society (USAS), allowed the project to employ Malcolm Lyne to undertake the analysis. Malcolm was the ideal choice as an acknowledged expert on Roman pottery in the area he could coordinate the Culver assemblage with that of his own classification of pottery fabrics for the Barcombe villa.
Culver: an intriguing first 7 years cont…. 

He concluded that nearly all the Roman pottery from Culver was of 3rd to early 4th century date. Over 93% of the sherds came from the excavations in Pond Field with only 382 from Culver Mead and just 19 from the excavation in Court House Field, which unlike the fields to the north showed no road side settlement. 71 different fabrics were present, 29 coarse, 34 fine, 5 mortaria and 3 of amphora.

The trenches in Culver Mead in 2006 had revealed 3 water-logged timbers that were radiocarbon dated to c. cal AD240-430 and Malcolm’s report similarly confirms the pottery assemblage to AD250-400. He also highlights a fragment of a lamp or chimney similar to an example from the triangular temple at Verulamium (Lyne 2012).

The bulk of the Pond Field assemblages were of handmade local East Sussex Wares with the largest derivable amount coming from the nearby Wickham Barn kilns. Other British coarsewares were represented including Alice Holt greyware. The finewares included fragments of beakers in Colchester colour-coat, Oxford red colour-coat, Lower Nene Valley and New Forest. The Samian included both Central and Eastern Gaulish products (Lyne 2012).

One of the most interesting sherds was part of the rim of a late 3rd century carafe in a metallic black colour-coat ware from the Arlon kilns in Lorraine Belge (Fig 3); a very unusual product to find anywhere in Britain (Lyne 2012).

Whilst the road undoubtedly had a far longer period of use, as indicated by the Flavius Honorius silver Siliqua of AD395-402 (Fig 4) found in the corner of Court House Field, the main period of roadside activity in Pond Field would seem to fall into the later 3rd to early 4th century. This presumes that the Samian and some other finer wares were already old, possibly handed-down, items and date from prior to the period of lower class working activity at the site. Two exceptions would seem to be a small pit by the north-west baulk of the excavation which contained an assemblage of 34 sherds dated to the late 2nd and early 3rd centuries and a clay lined pit, also located to the west of the road, which contained pottery dating to mid or even later 4th century. A subsequent magnetometer survey has revealed interesting anomalies to the west of these features which deserve further investigation.

An important aspect of the investigations undertaken by CAP has been the use of geophysical surveys both using electrical resistance and magnetic variation techniques to produce images of the subterranean features. These have been particularly useful in tracing the route of the Roman road and suggesting areas of roadside activity. Major surveys in 2008 and 2011 have highlighted some interesting areas for future excavation as well as suggesting that not all Roman roads are perfectly straight (Fig 5).
Culver: an intriguing first 7 years cont…. 

A great deal of interpretation is still needed to integrate this new information into the excavation reports which are currently under production but the financial assistance of SAS & USAS has allowed an early completion of these documents to become a real possibility.

![Magnetometer survey results from Pond Field (D. Staveley, 2011)](image)

David Millum & Rob Wallace, co-directors of the Culver Archaeological Project

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You may also download a fascinating and detailed pdf account of their work at Bridge Farm, where a defended Roman settlement was discovered, and which suggests that they have a road unusually late date.

**A new road on the Isle of Wight**

During a Q & A session at our Portsmouth conference, it was pointed out by at least two delegates that there are officially no Roman roads on the Isle of Wight. Clearly, this was highly unlikely to be correct, so David Staveley treated it as a bit of a challenge. It looks very much like he’s found one, as shown on this LiDAR image, just to the west of Newport.

The road seems to be coming from a point on the Solent opposite the southern end of Margary 423, and may be heading towards Rock villa.

Given the belt of villa sites running east west across the island, a second road seems very probable, although David hasn’t found it … yet.
Following last years discovery of a huge roadside ditch beside what is thought to be Margary 710, from Brough on Noe to either Templeborough or Littleborough, there has been further excavation by the Sheffield archaeology group Timetravellers in conjunction with Sheffield University. They knew this site was huge, but weren’t prepared for what was found. The photo above shows the south eastern ditch, which appears to have been recut several times, possibly to provide material for road repair. In the distance you can see someone just appearing from the the north western ditch.

Running along the exact centre of this huge road is a small groove, not a wheel rut, and either side of it two ditches have been cut out of the road structure (below left). The current interpretation is that these serve to divide the road into two, a dual carriageway in effect. It gets even more mysterious however, as test pits and probing revealed further road material outside the ditches, possible as much as 10m wide on the SW side. There are also indications of a branch road heading south. More work is planned next year in an attempt to understand this fascinating site.
An aerial photo of Margary 8a near Aldborough, N. Yorkshire, reveals three carriageways

This aerial photo, taken with a drone by Tony Hunt, clearly shows Margary 8a just south of the Roman town Isurium Brigantum (Aldborough, North Yorkshire) heading towards Green Hammerton on its way to York. It appears that the road is divided into three carriageways, and is far from straight, just as it wasn’t when excavated at Green Hammerton by Northern Archaeological Associates, although there it was just a single carriageway. Tony hopes to organise a community excavation on this part of the road next year.

And finally………..

We hope that you have enjoyed reading this newsletter. Our aim is to use each edition as a means of reporting on anything new that relates to Roman roads in Britain, not simply work carries out by ourselves. To achieve this however, we need to be kept informed. If you have carried out research yourself and would like to have a piece considered for inclusion, or if you hear of any excavations, research, talks, exhibitions, discoveries etc, please contact The Editor.