ARCL0016
ROMAN BRITAIN:
HISTORY AND ARCHAEOLOGY

Year 2/3/Grad Dip option, 15 credits

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Online office hours: Wednesdays 11-1

Coursework deadlines: 13th Nov, 15th Jan
Target return dates for marked coursework: 11th Dec, 12th Feb

Fridays, 11am-1pm, Term I, via Zoom

Please refer to the online IoA Student Handbook for instructions on coursework submission, IoA referencing guidelines and marking criteria, as well as UCL policies on penalties for late submission: https://www.ucl.ac.uk/archaeology/current-students/ioa-student-handbook.

2020-21
1. Module Overview

Short Description
Roman Britain provides an excellent case study of the operation of Roman imperialism and its impact on local societies. In this module, we will pursue both historical and thematic perspectives on the cultural changes that occurred in the province through several hundred years of Roman influence and occupation. Topics covered include the military and social impact of the Roman army, the development of Romano-British towns, the mixing of religious ideas in provincial society, approaches to studying Roman material culture, and the interaction between archaeological and historical sources.

Week-by-week summary
Fri. 9th Oct.:
1. Module Introduction; sources for the study of Roman Britain (AG)
2. Late Iron Age societies in Britain (Isobel Thompson)
Fri. 16th Oct.:
3. The invasions of Britain (AG)
4. Advances and setbacks: from Aulus Plautius to Agricola (AG)
Fri. 23rd Oct.:
5. Establishing frontiers in Roman Britain (AG)
6. Military life in early Roman Britain (AG)
Fri. 30th Oct.:
7. Towns in early Roman Britain (KL)
8. Villas and other developments in rural settlement (KL)
Fri. 6th Nov.:
9. Imperialism & culture change: the problems with ‘Romanization’ (AG)
10. Seminar: What comes after ‘Romanization?’ (AG/KL)

First assessment deadline: Friday 13th November.

W/b 9th Nov. Reading Week

Fri. 20th Nov.:
11. The 3rd and 4th centuries: crisis and recovery (AG)
12. The Roman military in the 3rd and 4th centuries (AG)
Fri. 27th Nov.:
13. Approaches to the Romano-British economy (KL)
14. Coin loss and coin use in Roman Britain (KL)
Fri. 4th Dec.:
15. The religions of Roman Britain (AG)
16. Burial in Roman Britain (KL)
Fri. 11th Dec.:
17. Town and country in late Roman Britain (KL)
18. The ‘end’ of Roman Britain (AG)
Fri. 18th Dec.:
19/20. Course review session (AG/KL)

Second assessment deadline: Friday 15th January
Aims
This module is concerned with the history and archaeology of Britain from the first century BC to the fifth century AD. In general terms the aim of the module is to give students who are interested in the Roman empire the chance to study a single province in depth and to familiarise themselves with the available evidence whether written (limited) or archaeological (relatively abundant). As such it should serve as a starting point for a study of other provinces of the empire by providing a base line for comparison and contrast. For students interested in the subsequent history of Britain, the module also provides the essential background to the arrival of Saxon settlers in England as well as to the introduction of Christianity which survived in areas beyond Saxon control.

Objectives
On successful completion of the module students should have:

1. an awareness of the broad outlines of the political and military history of the province from the later pre-Roman iron age to the collapse of direct Roman control in the fifth century AD

2. an understanding of the potential and limitations of written evidence, both the statements of contemporary writers and information provided by inscriptions

3. a knowledge of the ways in which archaeological data can be employed to complement the meagre textual material available and the dangers inherent in making the one ‘fit’ the other

4. a knowledge of the social and economic conditions obtaining in Britain before the Roman conquest and the extent to which these were subsequently altered and modified under Roman rule

5. an awareness of how archaeological theory is applicable to the period covered by the module

Since the material covered is easily accessible, students may, on completion, have identified possible subjects for third year undergraduate dissertations.

Learning Outcomes
On successful completion of the module students should have developed:

1. observation and critical reflection skills, in lectures and through consideration of readings

2. application of acquired knowledge, through oral contributions and written work

3. independent research skills, through preparation for essays and exams

4. written and oral presentation skills
Methods of Assessment
The module is assessed by means of:

a) A site report review, 1,500 words in length (40%), due 13th Nov.
b) A standard essay, 2,500 words in length (60 %), due 15th Jan.

If you are unclear about the nature of an assignment, you should discuss this with
the module teacher, who is willing to discuss an outline of your approach to the
assignment provided this is planned suitably in advance of the submission date.

Communications
Moodle is the main hub for this course. Important information will be posted by staff
in the Announcements section of the Moodle page and you will automatically receive
an email notification for these.

Please post any general queries relating to module content, assessments and
administration in the MS Teams Module forum. The forum will be checked regularly.

For personal queries, please contact the co-ordinator by email.

Basic Texts
These books are helpful for introductory study and for revision, and contain sections
relevant to most lectures on the module. The books by Mattingly and Millett are
useful as ‘textbooks’ which can be used as companions to the whole module and
which should be frequently referred to; you are advised to look at relevant sections of
at least one of these works as part of your reading each week. Those by Frere, Salway
and Todd are fairly comprehensive but now somewhat dated in approach. If
you buy one book for the module, it should be David Mattingly’s An Imperial
Possession, available in paperback.

DEL].
Bédoyère, G. de la. 2006. Roman Britain: a new history. London: Thames and
Hudson. [DAA 170 DEL].
[DAA 170 CRE].
[DAA 170 IRE; Issue Desk IOA IRE 1].
James, S. and Millett, M. (eds.) 2001. Britons and Romans: advancing the
archaeological agenda. York: Council for British Archaeology Research
Report 125. [DAA Qto Series COU 125; available online at:
http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archives/view/cba_rr/rr125.cfm].
(Reprinted by Oxbow). [DAA 170 JON; <www>].
Mattingly, D. 2006. An Imperial Possession: Britain in the Roman Empire. London:
Penguin/Allen Lane. [Issue Desk IOA MAT 8; DAA 170 MAT; Ancient History:
R30 MAT].

The journal *Britannia* is the main periodical relating to Roman Britain; this is available in the Institute library and online through the Electronic Journals section of the Library website. The *Journal of Roman Archaeology* also contains much relevant material. The series of published proceedings of the *Theoretical Roman Archaeology Conferences* are very useful for getting a flavour of the latest research in the field, as is the brand new *Theoretical Roman Archaeology Journal*.

**Teaching Methods**
The module is taught by 20 contact hours, consisting of 17 lectures and 3 seminars. All classes are delivered via Zoom, from 11am-1pm, on Fridays, and recordings are available via Moodle.

**Workload**
There are 20 contact hours (lectures and seminars). Students are expected to undertake around 70 hours of reading (about 7 hours per week), plus 60 hours preparing for and producing the assessed essay work (two essays). The workload for the module should therefore total about 150 hours.

**Prerequisites**
There are no pre-requisites for this module which is open to all second and third year undergraduates, and Graduate Diploma students.

**2. Assessment**

There will be two assignments for this module. They consist of two essays, the first of 1,500 words (40% of the module mark) and the second of 2,500 (60%).

**Essay 1 is due on 13th November and Essay 2 on 15th January.**
Essay 1:
For this assessment you must write a critical review of an excavation report relating to a key site in Roman Britain. This could be a villa or farmstead, or part of a town or a fort. You will need to examine the evidence from that site in relation to one of the major themes that are discussed during the module. For example, did the military have a role in the foundation and construction of the ‘public’ towns? Or, how did the rural economy develop during the 2nd century? You will need to critically assess the key data presented in your chosen report. Is the dating presented supported by the evidence? Are the interpretations of the evidence open to question or are alternative interpretations possible?

This essay should take the form of:

1. Short introduction to the site and overview of the report.
2. Discussion and critique of the key data presented in the specific excavation report and how it contributes to a wider theme. This should form the bulk of your report. Focus on the main site narrative, as supported by the finds, rather than a detailed discussion of any one finds type.
3. Conclusions.

A detailed list of sites and reports is provided on the module Moodle page; others may be found in the main British archaeology sections in the library, at DAA 410 / Qto.; the Senate House library and the Institute of Classical Studies library (accessed via membership of the Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies) will also have copies of many of these. Many reports from the Britannia monograph series are available online via the Archaeology Data Service. Other bibliography should be used as appropriate in relation to the wider theme; reviews of reports which can be found in major journals like Britannia will also be useful.

Essay 2:
Answer one of the following questions (note that you should choose a question which differs from the theme addressed in Essay 1):

1. What political and social factors have played a part in shaping the history of scholarship on Roman Britain since the beginning of the 20th century?

2. In what ways were British societies engaged with the Roman world before the invasion of 43 AD, and to what extent did this engagement have an impact on their social and political organisation?

3. To what extent was Roman frontier policy in northern Britain between the 2nd and 4th centuries AD driven by local factors versus imperial political agendas?

4. In what ways can evidence from military sites be used to reconstruct the lives of members of military communities on Britain’s frontiers in the 3rd and 4th centuries AD?

5. What does the study of religion in Roman Britain contribute to our understanding of processes of culture change?
6. How has our understanding of Roman rural settlement archaeology changed in the last half-century, and what is the current picture of rural life in the 2nd or the 4th century AD?

7. What contributions can the study of pottery or coins or environmental remains make to an understanding of Romano-British social and economic life?

8. How true is it to say that Roman Britain ended in the first decade of the 5th century AD?

Each assignment and possible approaches to it will be discussed in class, in advance of the submission deadline. If students are unclear about the nature of an assignment, they should discuss this with the Module Co-ordinator in advance (via office hours or class Moodle forum). You will receive feedback on your written coursework via Moodle, and have the opportunity to discuss your marks and feedback with the co-ordinator in their office hours.

For more details see the IoA student handbook: [https://www.ucl.ac.uk/archaeology/current-students/ioa-student-handbook](https://www.ucl.ac.uk/archaeology/current-students/ioa-student-handbook). The marking criteria and IoA writing guidelines are useful guides when writing your essay. Penalties for late submission and overlength work are also covered here.

3. Preparation for class

You are expected to read the two-four essential readings as well as catching up on any recorded lectures you’ve missed, and completing any online activities on Moodle each week. Completing the readings is essential for your effective participation in the activities and discussions that we will do, and it will greatly enhance your understanding of the material covered. Further readings are provided via the online-reading list for you to get a sense of the range of current work on a given topic and for you to draw upon for your assessments.

Online reading list: Link via Moodle.

4. Syllabus

The following is an outline for the module as a whole, and identifies readings additional to the standard general works listed above which are relevant to each session. Copies of individual articles and chapters identified as essential reading are in the Short Loan/Teaching Collections in the Institute Library (where permitted by copyright). The literature on Roman Britain is extensive, and the listings below are necessarily selective; you should be prepared to follow-up further references listed in the bibliographies of works that you consult, where this is helpful.
1. Module Introduction; sources for the study of Roman Britain

Understanding life in Roman Britain is a multi-disciplinary enterprise involving archaeological, literary, epigraphic and documentary sources. This session will introduce the main types of data and their problems of interpretation.

Essential:
Hurst 2016; Mattingly 2006, Ch. 2

References and further reading:


Late Iron Age societies in Britain
The late Iron Age saw the development of large multifocal settlements (“oppida”) in southern Britain and the development of a variety of high status burial rites. These developments will be reviewed along with the arguments for continental influences.

Essential:
Hill 2011; Moore 2011.

References and further reading:


Sealey, Paul R. 2007. *A late Iron Age warrior burial from Kelvedon, Essex*. East Anglian Archaeology No. 118. [INST ARCH DAA Qto Series EAA 118]


A few online resources:

N Mahrer, G Kelly & V Le Quelenec, Torque of the town: conserving the world’s largest Iron Age coin hoard (Le Catillon II, on YouTube)
3. The invasions of Britain
The expeditions of Julius Caesar in 55 and 54 BC may have established new power networks in Britain, but the invasion of Claudius in AD 43 initiated the full incorporation of Britain into the empire. In this lecture, we will compare the course of these different campaigns, and look at some of the problems of historical interpretation surrounding the Claudian conquest.

Essential:
Mattingly 2006, Ch. 4; Ireland 2008, Chapters 3 & 5; Frere and Fulford 2001.

References and further reading:

4. Advances and setbacks: from Aulus Plautius to Agricola

After the capture of Camulodunum, Roman forces moved quite rapidly across southern Britain. By AD 60, they had reached the north-western tip of modern Wales. Then the instability of the conquered province was made apparent by the revolt of Boudicca which, although ultimately unsuccessful, led to a period of consolidation. Subsequently, a series of increasingly aggressive governors finally secured Roman control over western Britain, and then pushed north. These events, and their archaeological consequences, will concern us in this lecture.

Essential:
Mattingly 2006, Ch. 4; Frere 1987, Chapter 4; Ireland 2008, Chapter 6.

References and further reading:


5. Establishing frontiers in Roman Britain

The gradual withdrawal from Scotland under the governors following Agricola culminated in the construction of Hadrian’s Wall from the mouth of the Tyne to the Solway Firth. In this lecture, we will consider the nature of Roman frontiers in the early empire, and the possible functions that the Hadrianic and Antonine installations were supposed to fulfill.

Essential:
Mattingly 2006, Ch. 5; Hodgson 2000; Lightfoot and Martinez 1995.

References and further reading:


Military life in early Roman Britain

In the earlier phases of Roman conquest, the military was quite mobile, occupying temporary camps and short-lived forts and fortresses. As the 1st century AD wore on, and into the 2nd century, more permanent settlements were built, home to soldiers and to the civilians who interacted with them. In this lecture, we will look at the structure of the early Roman army in Britain, and at the different kinds of archaeology these different phases of activity have produced.

Essential:
Mattingly 2006, Ch. 6; Driel-Murray 1995; Hodgson and Bidwell 2004; James 2002.

References and further reading:
Allison, P.M. 2013. People and Spaces in Roman Military Bases. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. [YATES K 82 ALL; <www>].


7. Towns in early Roman Britain

Towns appeared very quickly in Roman Britain after the invasion. This lecture looks at the evidence for the earliest phases of Roman towns and examines the question of who was responsible for their construction and how this was achieved.

Essential reading
Millett 1990, chapters 3–4; Revell 1999; Taylor 2013.

References and further reading


Studies and a Review, pp. 89–100. Journal of Roman Archaeology, Rhode Island. [DAA 170 HUR].


8. Villas and other developments in rural settlement

Alongside the growth of towns, the countryside saw the growth of villas, ‘Romanised’ rural dwellings. What was the pattern of their development, and the cause of their growth? How typical are they of developments in the countryside, and deep was the impact of the Roman conquest in rural areas? What was their relationship with towns?

Essential reading:

Also, look at the Roman Rural Settlement Project websites
(http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archives/view/romangl/; http://www.reading.ac.uk/archaeology/research/roman-rural-settlement/)

References and further reading


9. **Imperialism and culture change: the problems with ‘Romanization’**

A fundamental problem in the study of Roman Britain – implicit in all of the preceding lectures – is the extent to which invasion and occupation initiated a process of cultural change. Was life in Britain fundamentally transformed by Roman conquest? If so, how, through what processes, and with what lasting effects? Different approaches to this problem have defined the different phases of Roman archaeology in Britain, and in this lecture, and the following seminar, we will discuss and debate these.

Essential:
Freeman 1993; Gardner 2013; Hingley 2003; Webster 2001

References and further reading:


10. SEMINAR: What comes after ‘Romanization’?
In this seminar we will discuss the advantages and disadvantages of different approaches to cultural change in Roman Britain. You should come prepared to offer your opinions on at least the essential readings from Lecture 9.

READ WEEK

11. The 3rd and 4th centuries: crisis and recovery
The 3rd century AD was a time of political disruption in the Roman empire, with a great deal of instability. ‘Barbarian’ invasions and civil wars, with a range of economic consequences, affected the continental provinces of the empire. For Britain, after the short campaigns conducted in the north by Septimius Severus early in the century, reliable historical sources dry up, being pre-occupied with events elsewhere. The extent to which the security and economic crises disrupted life in Britain, if at all, must thus be examined largely from the archaeological evidence. The century ends, though, with another event at least partially documented: the rebellion of Carausius and Allectus, which can be seen in the context of the political (but not necessarily cultural) fragmentation in the empire during this period. Despite the re-incorporation of Britain into the empire by Constantius Chlorus, the 4th century saw further break-away movements, most notably that of Magnentius in the middle of the century. There also seem to have been increasing security problems,
culminating in the so-called ‘Barbarian Conspiracy’ of 367. In this lecture, we will look at these events, casting a critical eye over the evidence available for them.

Essential:
Mattingly 2006, Ch. 8; Frere 1987, Chapter 8; Ireland 2008, Chapter 10.

References and further reading:


### 12. The Roman military in the 3rd and 4th centuries

The later Roman military was a rather different organization to that of the 1st and 2nd centuries, but how this change occurred, and how extensive it was, are matters of continued debate. Evidence is rather lacking in the 3rd century, but in the 4th century various new kinds of units appear in the documentary sources, while the archaeology of forts reveals some new developments in both buildings and artefacts used. These will be the subject of this lecture.

**Essential:**
Allason-Jones 1995; Gardner 2002; Mattingly 2006, Ch. 8.

**References and further reading:**


Ferris, I. 2010. The Beautiful Rooms are Empty: excavations at Binchester Roman fort. Durham: Durham County Council (2 vols.). [DAA 410 Qto FER].


13. Approaches to the Romano-British economy
This session will look at differing approaches to ancient economy (modernising and primitive), and at some of the evidence for trade, in particular for shipping and transport.

Essential reading:
Jones & Mattingly 1990, pp. 179–204; Greene 2008; Mattingly 2006, Ch. 16.

References and further reading:


14. Coin loss and coin use in Roman Britain
This session is going to examine the changing patterns of coin loss in Roman Britain, and the implication that has for coin supply and coin use, and our understanding of the Roman economy.

Essential reading:
References and further reading:


15. The religions of Roman Britain
Religion was an important aspect of life in the ancient world, not really separable from everyday activities in the way that it can be for many people today. As such, it provided an important arena for cultural contact and, sometimes, conflict. In this lecture, we will look at how the Classical pantheon of Rome was incorporated into Romano-British life, and at some of the more exotic ‘mystery’ cults imported into Britain, including Christianity.

Essential:
Revell 2007; Smith 2016; Webster 1995.

References and further reading:


Hingley, R. 2006. The deposition of iron objects in Britain during the later prehistoric and Roman periods: contextual analysis and the significance of iron. Britannia 37, 213-57. [INST ARCH Pers].


Webster, J. 1995. Interpretatio: Roman word power and the Celtic gods. Britannia, 26, 153-161. [INST ARCH Pers].
16. Burial in Roman Britain
This session will examine Roman burial in Britain looking at regional and temporal trends. What can we deduce from burial evidence? How can we approach its analysis? How do our preconceptions affect our interpretation. You should have a look at at least one modern cemetery report, examples cited below but others can be found in the library catalogue or via references in other article.

Essential reading:

References and further reading:
Pearce, J. 2015. Urban exits: commercial archaeology and the study of death rituals and the dead in the towns of Roman Britain, in M. Fulford and N. Holbrook (eds), The Towns of Roman Britain: the contribution of commercial
archaeology since 1990, pp. 138–66. Britannia Monograph No. 27. [DAA 170
Qto FUL]
and furnishing AD 43–410. British Archaeological Reports British Series 219,
Oxford. [Issue Desk IOA BRI 219].
Sherratt, M. and Moore, A. 2016. Gender in Roman Britain. In M. Millett, L. Revell
www].
Smith, A.T., Allen, M., Brindle, T., Fulford, M., Lodwick, L., and Rohnbognor, A.
2018. New Visions of the Countryside of Roman Britain, 3: life and death in
the countryside of Roman Britain. London: Society for the Promotion of
Roman Studies. [DAA 170 Qto SMI].
Stead, I. M. & V. Rigby 1989. Verulamium, the King Harry Lane site. English
Heritage, London. [DAA 410 Qto STE].
Weekes, J. 2008. Classification and analysis of archaeological contexts for the
reconstruction of early Romano-British cremation funerals. Britannia 39: 145–
60. [INST ARCH Pers; <www>].
Weekes, J. 2016. Cemeteries and funerary practice. In M. Millett, L. Revell and A.
[www].
Report 128. [DAA Qto SERIES COU 128]

17. Town and country in late Roman Britain
The later Roman period saw changes in urban life, and these are again somewhat
controversial. Many grand town-houses were built and inhabited in this period, but
are these an indication of the prosperity of urban life, or of settlements which had
become ‘administrative villages’ with a small, elite population? Very much related to
what is happening in towns, is the fate of rural settlements in the 4th century. Some
villas became extremely opulent, while others declined in occupancy towards the
end of the century. This lecture will explore these phenomena and the connections
between them.

Essential:
Millett 1990, Chapter 6, 8; Reece 1980; Mattingly 2006, Ch. 11; Smith 1997.

References and further reading:
Collis Publications, Sheffield. [DAA 170 Qto BRA].
Burnham, B.C. 1986. The origins of Romano-British small towns, Oxford Journal of
Archaeology 5(2): 185–203. [INST ARCH Pers; <www>]
Burnham, B.C. 1987. The morphology of Romano-British small towns,
Archaeological Journal 144: 156–90. [INST ARCH Pers; <www>]
Burnham, B.C. & J. Wacher 1990. The ‘Small Towns’ of Roman Britain. Batsford,
London. [DAA 170 BUR].
B.A.R. 169. [DAA Series Qto BRI 169].
170 CLE].


18. The ‘end’ of Roman Britain

The first decade of the 5th century is traditionally considered the last decade of the entity we call ‘Roman Britain’, but what the ‘end’ meant for different groups of people living in the Diocese is hotly contested. In this lecture, we will survey the key archaeological and textual evidence for the processes and events which culminated in Britain becoming detached from Roman rule, and what that meant for Romano-British culture.

Essential:
Esmonde Cleary 2016; Petts 2013.

References and further reading:


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