



Editorial

This edition of *Britannia* continues to showcase the variety of research coming from the commercial, academic and museum sectors of archaeology in Britain and beyond. I am often struck by the paradox that a province that lay on the far fringes of the Roman Empire should continue to produce some of the most exciting new research on the period. Scholars (and the broader public) interested in Roman Britain also have the advantage of an ever-increasing range of datasets that are freely available to use. Of particular importance in 2023 has been the arrival in online form of the second volume of *Roman Inscriptions of Britain (RIB)* (<https://romaninscriptionsofbritain.org/rib/vol-II>) and records from the round-ups in *Britannia*. These join the records from *RIB* volumes I and III, and the Bloomberg and Vindolanda tablets, creating a set of over 16,000 items, allowing wider access to the variety of inscribed objects and writing present in Roman Britain and also informing a fundamental rethink of the sources used for teaching ancient history and Latin in schools.

Archaeological research on Roman Britain has benefited enormously from advances in the application of scientific analyses in recent years and it is in this area that some of the most significant developments have come, exemplified in this volume by the paper of Greenwood and colleagues on the analysis of isotopes from lipids, allowing further understanding of dietary variation in Roman Britain. We also feature a correction (by Redfern *et al.*) of an analysis of aDNA from a skeleton from Harper Road in London. The original publication caused significant excitement (and some media attention), when DNA analysis suggested that a skeleton, which appeared female on the basis of skeletal morphology and grave goods, was chromosomally male. This discovery had obvious resonance with current debates on gender identities that are taking place across a range of media. New DNA research, however, indicates that the Harper Road skeleton is genetically female, corresponding with the skeletal morphology and the interpretation of the grave goods.

The fact that the original DNA analysis has been challenged may come as a disappointment to those who wish to highlight the undoubted complexities of gender identity in the Roman past or alternatively embolden those who suggest that such discussions risk anachronism. However, when one (as an author or a journal) publishes research that represents the cutting edge of the technologies that are available, there is always a possibility that the picture may change and Redfern and colleagues are to be applauded for continuing to test their results. As ancient DNA analysis matures into a more mainstream archaeological technique, we will come to realise that the absolutism that often characterises popular perceptions of scientific methods is often misplaced. After all, when new interpretation of stratigraphic evidence requires the re-dating of a previously published fort, we accept that simply as part of the archaeological process.

Britannia continues to publish work from scholars at all stages of their academic careers, and this edition of the journal features papers from established scholars, emeriti, doctoral students and one deriving from an undergraduate dissertation. Continuing to attract submissions from early career scholars is key to the journal's vitality and to this end I was very pleased to be asked, alongside the editors of the *Journal of Roman Studies* and *Antiquity*, to contribute to a session at the *Theoretical Roman Archaeology Conference* taking place (virtually) in Exeter aimed at

demystifying the process of submitting to journals. It was intriguing as an editor to gain insight into the differing process of other journals. *Antiquity*, for example, is able to fund its editorial office, whereas *Britannia* and *JRS* rely on editors and editorial boards undertaking the work alongside their jobs in universities, museums and professional archaeology units. As editor, I remain enormously grateful to all who contribute their unpaid time to production of the journal, for example through membership of the editorial board and peer review. I am also particularly grateful to Anne Chippindale who patiently copy edits and marshals the contents through production.

The past year was a challenging one for the *Britannia* editorial board as we lost two highly valued members to cancer within the space of a few days. Paul Bidwell and Lisa Lodwick (obituaries below) contributed significantly to the running of the journal and we miss their expertise, wise counsel and friendship.

OBITUARIES

Paul Bidwell OBE was one of Britain's leading experts on the Roman military and the archaeology of the northern frontier. His excavations at South Shields (*Arbeia*) and Wallsend (*Segedunum*) were milestones in the study of Roman forts and their communities and he contributed enormously to the discussion on the nature of barrack blocks in the late Empire. He was head of archaeology at Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums and did much to bring the Roman frontiers to life for schoolchildren and the general public, for example through reconstructions of the commander's house and a barrack block at South Shields. Paul's interests, however, were far from purely northern and military. He was a leading scholar of pottery in Britain and also maintained an active interest in the Roman south-west, where he started his career. His publications were extensive and most recently included editing the collection of papers commemorating Hadrian's visit to Britain published in this journal (2022). He was also the editor of the *Britannia* monographs series.

Geoffrey Dannell was an authority on samian ware who did much to drive forward its study in Britain, alongside work at the production site of La Graufesenque as part of the 'black hand gang' who recorded almost 30,000 examples of potters' stamps. He was a major contributor to the nine volumes of *Names on Terra Sigillata* and the author of multiple specialist reports as well as encouraging and mentoring younger samian scholars. He was also an indefatigable leading member of the Nene Valley Archaeological Trust, responsible for multiple projects in the area, and was its Chair at the time of his death.

Brenda Heywood (*née* Swinbank) carried out key research on Hadrian's Wall, with a 1954 PhD that reassessed the Vallum, written alongside a career as a schoolteacher. She continued her work in archaeology during the 1970s, excavating at York Minster and publishing her work on the Vallum.

Lisa Lodwick was an archaeologist and archaeobotanist who carried out significant research on cereals in Roman Britain and whose expertise contributed much to the Rural Settlement in Roman Britain project. She was also a strong advocate for greater representation of women in archaeology and was passionate about open access in publication. She was due to take up a lectureship at Cambridge at the time of her death.

Ross Thomas was the curator of Roman Collections at the British Museum and was a trustee of the Roman Society, Brading Roman Villa and the Palestine Exploration Fund. His research interests lay in the Red Sea and the Eastern Mediterranean as an active underwater researcher and expert on ceramics and he was a field director of the Naukratis Project, bringing the celebrated hunter statue to the UK for a touring British Museum exhibition.

Will Bowden
Editor, *Britannia*