

Report on the expenditure of the grant received from The Roman Society/Roman Research Trust for specialist consultancy reporting on the pottery finds from Hatcliffe Top, North-East Lincolnshire, part of the Central Wolds Archaeological Research Project.

The grant application was made to enable the production of a specialist pottery report on the finds collected via survey and excavation at a rural complex of Roman date, where there was also some subsequent activity in the early medieval period. The fieldwork that had generated these finds had been undertaken as a joint project by The University of Kent and the North-East Lincolnshire Archaeology and Local History Society (NELALHS) under the direction of Dr Steve Willis and David Robinson. The examination of the site and surrounding area, which is mainly under arable cultivation, was undertaken as a research and training initiative over several seasons, free to society members, local volunteers and students from The University of Kent and other institutions. As might be expected for a site spanning these periods pottery was the main artefact type recovered and its potential for elucidating aspects such as supply, functional use and site status is a major feature contributing to the post-excavation analysis and writing up of the findings. In particular though it was thought, in making the grant application, that specialist attention to the types represented would distil and confirm the chronology of use of the site, especially as a sequence of clear phases had been established from the excavation and recording of the site stratification. Equally, a group of unusual handmade and some wheel-manufactured vessels from upper site deposits and topsoil/ploughsoils looked to be either latest Roman or medieval in date and clearly warranted close attention from a regional expert. Accordingly, we were most grateful to the Society and Trust for granting the money that has paid for the report on the Roman and early medieval pottery arising from the fieldwork.

Hatcliffe Top, in North-East Lincolnshire, lies on the eastern fringe of the Lincolnshire Wolds overlooking the Lincolnshire Marsh, and beyond that, to the North Sea, Specifically, it is sited above the point where the Waithe Valley opens from the high land of the Wolds to the essentially flat landscape of the Marsh. This valley mouth is a crossroads point in north-south and east-west movement now, as undoubtedly in the past. Activity at the site begins in the mid-Roman period in the form of a system of ditches indicating a systematically organized landscape, with the features investigated perhaps not too far from occupation, given the finds evidence. A period of intense activity and remodelling then follows through the late Roman period from around AD 330, with widespread crop processing in the form of corn driers and the ovens, within a series of enclosures, surfaces, compounds, activity areas and trackways remodelled on several occasions. A particularly distinctive and important aspect is that the site continues till the very latest Roman period and probably into the fifth century with phases of Anglo-Saxon presence in subsequent episodes.

The pottery had been washed and marked and bagged by context or, in the case of surface collected material, location, in preparation for specialist reporting. A list was drawn up by the present author with quantities of pottery per context and with context details etc. for supply to the specialist. Ian Rowlandson, an acknowledged expert on pottery types on sites in the East

Midlands and especially Lincolnshire who kindly agreed to undertake the reporting. All of the pottery from the excavation works minus the samian ware (see below) was sent for reporting, together with 138 of the most diagnostic pieces from the fieldwalking (with the bulk of the material collected via fieldwalking, amounting to several hundreds of sherds, subject to broad identification, processing, and reporting by the present author, as it did not warrant specialist attention). Assisted by Hugh Fiske, Ian Rowlandson produced a catalogue of the material by context/find location with type identification, quantification, dating and notes on significant points; this catalogue runs to 78 pages of tabulated spreadsheet data. The latter has proved essential in the finalization of the site structural report, as it provides firm information upon dates of finds, etc.; it will be an element of the online archive report, supplementing the main site report. In producing this listing Ian Rowlandson was able to isolate the post-Roman sherds (amounting to 196 items) and it was decided to subcontract the reporting of these items to the appropriate period and regional expert, Jane Young for her confirmation. Jane Young accordingly generated her listing of identifications and dates for this material, together with a report which forms a section in the overall site report (received November 2016 and 13 pages in length in current format, including catalogue). Attention to context indicated that this post-Roman material was almost entirely from medieval rigg and furrow and topsoil deposits. It was, nonetheless, sufficiently numerous to identify significant periods of activity at the site with two vessels of certain Early Saxon date, and probable occupation during 8th to 9th century (with ten certain vessels of the 8th century) a probability supported by metalwork and coin finds recovered from these same levels via metal detecting. As is often the case for the archaeology of this period stratified traces for activity was just about absent from the site, probably as it had not involved deep cut features and employed organic materials, with occupation levels and horizons then lost through incorporation into medieval and modern ploughsoils. Jane Young's fee was met from the Society/Trust grant money paid to Ian Rowlandson who organized this arrangement.

The Roman pottery assemblage of 2884 sherds was reported in full by Ian Rowlandson, assisted by Hugh Fiske. Methods employed used current standards and established quantification methods (count, weight, EVE) in order to assist comparisons and use of the report by others in due course following publication. Data are presented in the report via listing, tables, histograms, photography and illustrations, as well as free text. The report was received in December 2016 and runs to some 42 pages in present format. The work verified that pottery largely dates from the later third century with only a small proportion of the assemblage being earlier, and much of this could be residual. To quote from the text of the Rowlandson and Fiske report, there is: “ good evidence of activity in the 4th century and in the ‘Final Roman’ period of pottery production in the late 4th century to early 5th century AD ... This is an important assemblage of pottery from this period, showing that settlement continued on the Wold-edge until the end of the Roman period. The majority of the pottery present consisted of local grey wares, many probably from the Market Rasen area, and shell-gritted Dales ware from west of the Lincolnshire Wolds. Colour-coated wares are well-represented and the inhabitants of the site appear to have had access to a range of table ware alongside the typical utilitarian wares. The presence of Crambeck Parchment ware and

Huntcliff ware showed that pottery produced in north eastern Yorkshire reached the site towards the end of the Roman period.”

“This is a highly significant site for understanding the end of the Roman period in northern Lincolnshire, particularly for the Lincolnshire Wolds area where published comparative sites are rare. This site provides a good comparison for the growing number of sites that have been investigated to the north of modern-day Grimsby [On the Lincolnshire Outmarsh/Humber Bank]. It also offers a tantalizing glimpse at a site that was occupied both in the Roman and the Saxon and/or middle Saxon periods. This is something we might find in future samples from the region but is certainly evidence we have been lacking to date. It represents a key site for the discussion of the end of the Roman period and what may have happened to the inhabitants of Lincolnshire in the 5th century AD.”

(The samian pottery from the site, amounting to nearly 40 vessels, was catalogued by the author of the present report, who wrote the specialist report on that ware type, and so the reporting of this element made no call on the grant which was paid in full to Ian Rowlandson. Equally as part of the preparation process for publication illustrations of pottery rims from fieldwalking drawn by the NELALHS member Colin Coates have been selected and digitized for publication while pottery from the excavations selected by Ian Rowlandson and Jane Young has been drawn by the specialist illustrator Cate Davies, thanks to a grant for this purpose made by the SECL Research Fund Committee of The University of Kent).

In sum, production of the specialist pottery reports has secured quality insight into the nature of the site through the late Roman era and at times of use through the Saxon/Anglo-Saxon period. They are especially helpful for confirming the chronological framework and complement other evidence types with their specialist detail. The findings of the pottery analysis match the site coin list which includes 17 Roman issues dating to after AD 388 with several having a range to AD 402. Likewise, the trends with the early medieval pottery are consistent with the finds of jewellery and coins. The data are brought together in the overall site report that is now at an advanced stage of collation. The latter will be the second report of the Central Lincolnshire Wolds Research Project reports following on from the reporting of the work at the Roman Roadside settlement and multi-period ritual site at Nettleton/Rothwell (Willis 2013). As with the previous volume the current monograph, entitled *The Waithe Valley Through Time: Vol. 1*, will be published jointly by Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd and The University of Kent.

The overall project has been exploring settlement, economy and landscape in the later prehistoric and Roman era through a swath of the Lincolnshire Wolds. This was very much a hitherto unknown area archaeologically through an absence of previous study or contract archaeology work. Our recent focus has been on the Waithe Valley and the work at Hatcliffe Top has resulted in the collection of a valuable record of occupation, economic and environmental data adding to the picture now building from the area as a result of The University of Kent and NELALHS fieldwork initiative. The vibrancy of the site at Hatcliffe Top at the end of the Roman era with its evidently successful and sustained agricultural

processing activities is a bit of a surprise as it is generally assumed that this area of what was 'frontline Britain' at this time saw settlement abandonment, but here that was not so. On the other hand, use of this Wolds-edge in terms of settlement and burial is better attested for the early medieval period, however, little of that evidence has been brought together for publication. As a consequence of the grant from the Roman Society/Roman Research Trust a major component of evidence arising from the fieldwork at Hatcliffe Top has been reported, advancing the progress of the overall monograph to publication.

Reference:

Willis, S.H. 2013. *The Roman Roadside Settlement and Multi-Period Ritual Complex at Nettleton and Rothwell, Lincolnshire. The Central Lincolnshire Wolds Research Project, Volume 1*, Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited and The University of Kent, Canterbury.

A University of Kent Blog relating to this Project can be accessed via the following link:
<https://blogs.kent.ac.uk/digthewolds/>

Certification of the expenditure of the grant has been sent to the Roman Society and The Roman Research Trust under separate cover.

Dr Steven Willis

On behalf of The University of Kent and the North-East Lincolnshire Archaeology and Local History Society

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