

WEEK 6 THE ENDING OF THE WALL
ADVANCING THE FRONTIERS OF KNOWLEDGE

Our panel

Dr Rob Collins, Research Associate, Newcastle University. (RC)

Lindsay Allason-Jones OBE, Visiting Fellow at Newcastle University. (LAJ)

Ian Haynes, Professor of Archaeology, Newcastle University. (IH)

Frances McIntosh, Curator of Roman Collections, English Heritage. (FM)

Mike Collins, Inspector of Ancient Monuments (Hadrian's Wall) at English Heritage. (MC)

RC: Thank you for joining us for this final event for the course. We've gathered here a panel of experts today to answer a number of questions posed by you learners, through the course. These have specifically come from 6.15, but they are addressing issues that we have covered through the course. The questions were selected by me, I chose more on the basis of the frequency of questions and how often they were repeated, so that we could cover those hot topics that seem to be of interest to the most learners.

Some of you have very specific questions – which we could address a whole seminar to in fact but we chose not to. What I would do instead, is encourage you to go back to specific books and readings for those issues.

So here with us today, are: our lead educator, Professor Ian Haynes; Frances McIntosh, who is a Curator of Roman Collections for English Heritage; her colleague in English Heritage, Mike Collins, who is the Inspector of Ancient Monuments for Hadrian's Wall; and Lindsay Allason-Jones, who you will be familiar with to the course as well, an Emerita Reader of Roman Archaeology also at Newcastle University.

Thank you, again, for joining us, everyone. Now, I'd like to start with a question from Charles Cook – we're going to address this first to Mike. Can a strategic plan for a period of twenty to twenty-five years or longer be prepared and implemented, that includes annual budgets and estimates and likely sources of funding for the Wall?

MC: In some ways, I'm a bit of an interloper in this discussion because I'm surrounded by proper archaeologists. I used to be a proper archaeologist but now I'm just a Heritage manager so I'm relieved to find that there was a question directly relating to management. It is a really good and interesting question. In many ways I think we do do that through, as you know presumably, from the rest of the course that Hadrian's Wall is a World Heritage site and one of our UNESCO obligations is to produce a World Heritage Site Management Plan. Through that plan, we prioritise not only the short-term goals and try and get by and from the hundreds of interests along the Wall that have an influence on its management – not just on the short-term goals but on those longer-term things. That inevitably means that you are getting some very specific things that we need to do in the next three/four/five years and commitment by – and from – the people responsible for those in the immediate future.

It also means that, looking to the longer-term, we have broad agreement across the board about what we're trying to manage the Wall for, where its significance lies and what those main priorities should be. So although we are inevitably over the next twenty/twenty five years going to be an extraordinarily changed political/economic/archaeological /ecological situation – and none of us can necessarily say what the implications of each of those changes are going to be – as we go through that process, everybody has a clearer idea about what the main focus and the main priorities for managing the Wall are going to be. And also that it doesn't end up with the funding being left to one side. If you have one of these plans, you keep thinking about what your priorities are as you go forward and people have signed up to it at the beginning so it's that much easier to keep people to task and keep them clear as to where they need to put their money where their mouth is and where they need to put help in in kind, to take that forward.

So in a way yes; we do do that already, Rob but at different levels and, in a way, no, we can't necessarily cost it now to know what we're going to be doing in twenty to twenty-five years' time because of those very changed things that we're inevitably going to be dealing with.

RC: **Thanks, Mike. Related to that, Kerrie Armstrong asked a question about the pressures of expanding populations and the need for more housing and infrastructure. Does any of that in the current environment affect parts of the Wall? Do we have to sacrifice any of the Wall zone?**

MC: Crikey! Yes. Another extremely good question to ask. The Wall, as you know, is a living, working landscape. It goes through just about every kind of terrain that England has to offer, including two major cities and it's not divorced – in a metaphorical sense – from the political and development context that surround the area that it goes through. I think if we stood here and said, "We can preserve forever every part of Hadrian's Wall through all the development pressures and changes that the north-east and the north-west of England are going to go through in the next century," we would be lying. It is a living, working landscape and changes will inevitably involve some disturbance to the archaeology of Hadrian's Wall – whether it's formally protected as an Ancient

Monument or generally. Particularly through the middle of Newcastle, we don't know where all the features lie at this stage. I'm comfortable with that because a lot of the major discoveries that we've made on the Wall – for instance, the *cippi* pit discovery in the last fifteen years – have come directly through that kind of disturbance of the ground that comes through development pressures and the need to update infrastructure and change those kinds of things. So I'm comfortable that some disturbance of the Roman Frontier will have to occur and what my job - our collective job – is more widely, is to make sure that what's really of significance of Hadrian's Wall, the main focus and the main significance of Hadrian's Wall can be preserved and - in the marvellous words of government planning policy – we can keep the heart to the archaeology of Hadrian's Wall through this process to less than substantial [laughter].

As long as we're doing that, we're continuing to make positive research gains through that kind of work and that kind of ground disturbance that goes on with developments through time is properly funded and it's properly archeologically-mitigated; it is effectively excavation or it's a watching brief. It's prior archaeological work. As long as that is done, I think we've got – at the moment – we've got a pretty good balance, as far as level of disturbance but it's slightly uncomfortable but it is true to say we can't preserve everything if we're going to have a living working urban and more general landscape.

RC: Thank you, Mike. To go now from modern management, to ancient management. Ian, Michael Penrod asks, how does Roman management of the British Frontier compare to the management of other frontiers in the Empire?

IH: Thank you, that's a very interesting question. I think management covers – as we know – a whole range of different facets and a multitude of sins. What might it, therefore, involve when we talk about Roman management? One of the first things that we perhaps note is that the different stretches on what we think of as the frontier Roman Empire can actually vary quite considerably and not simply in the terrain that they pass through but in their very construction, their composition and their different elements. We're already introduced to the fact that they're having to manage different landscapes and they're doing that with sometimes quite different structures.

If we look at the person management and management of Roman soldiers, at one level we can of course see quite a number of striking similarities across frontier zones; which we see again and again, different aspects of familiar Roman military organisation. We can see auxiliary units being used as frontier troops in many areas, although there are some variations across the Empire, in terms of how legionary soldiers are distributed on the fringes of Empire.

But then we have another layer of challenge with management. It's one thing to look at the formations but how are larger chunks of frontier actually co-ordinated and organised? There, it's quite interesting how little we can say with confidence. We may make assumptions that certain sites and the officers within them had responsibilities for larger areas – larger Frontier sectors – and there have been some interesting, stimulating debates about that. But actually,

it's quite difficult, really, to look at how some of these larger organisational management decisions would have functioned. So I think that's something that we need to be alert to.

Then, I think you've got the issue of logistics, how is supply organised. One has to remember that some of the direct evidence for the organisational underpinning of supplying food, supplying equipment, supplying building materials, that's going to come to a significant degree also from written documentation, if we're looking at the actual minutiae of that. The written documentation that we have from the Frontier – we've looked at some of it from Britain – and we've seen its strengths but we've also seen the caps within it. Many areas of the Empire's frontiers don't have equivalent information or they have information that may actually reflect more specific local practices. So, Rome seems to have used a hybrid array of arrangements to ensure that what the frontiers require actually reached them. Sometimes it was local supply, sometimes longer-distance supply, sometimes elements of self-sufficiency. That will, to varying degrees, operate across different frontiers but not necessarily one particular system. So you've got quite a number of varieties, I think, at a local level. But one thing that is pivotal to management of the Roman frontiers is that it makes use of the written word. It makes use of a revolution – certainly in Britain – in communication technologies and an essential part of thinking about the Roman frontiers and how they worked is not just to think of the Wall or to think of the sword; it is to think of the pen. That is an essential, unifying instrument of management – control of resource – on the fringes of Empire.

RC: We've had a little bit of a hiccup; it looks like we're recording again, after that technical difficulty. You've spoken about the revolution that comes with Roman management or Roman control of the Frontier and that actually leads on quite nicely to a question that I think you would be best suited for, Lindsay. From Shannon Kicza if I've pronounced that correctly? What do you know about the general health of people who lived near the Wall? Unfortunately, I think some of our learners might have the impression that everyone has been killed and murdered, during the course, based on our forensic case studies. But can you speak about health more generally, for the Frontier's occupants.

LAJ: Well this is a topic I actually wrote a paper for in the journal *Britannia* some years ago. Each fort on Hadrian's Wall has a building in the central range that we identified as a hospital and whether this is so or not, the plan seems to fit the general idea of what a hospital should be like, as laid down by the Roman writers. In fact, the healthcare that we know about, for the Roman Empire mostly does come from the writers of the time; a great number of books of which have survived. When it come to the hospitals, though we don't actually know whether it was just for the soldiers or whether people who lived in the area round-about could use the hospitals or not. The hospitals were intended, very much, for dealing with emergencies. If you were convalescent, you would have to leave the hospital and we don't know if the convalescent people went back to their homes or – if they were soldiers – if they were farmed out into the extramural settlement where somebody else looked after them.

Actually on the Wall itself and in the north of England, we can tell a great deal from the medical and surgical instruments that have survived. There are references to people getting cures for fevers in the Vindolanda writing tablets. But then, after that we have to rely very much on bodies being found. I like a good body, particularly if it's broken a limb at some stage. On the whole, they seem to have their limbs very efficiently put back together again. There is a limit to the number of diseases that you can actually identify from bodies, however but every now and again we get some really interesting little insights from unexpected places. In Carlisle, for example, some years ago, when they excavated a cesspit and they analysed the gunge from inside the cesspit, I think we can be fairly confident from the results of that, that the people of Carlisle in the Roman period were riddled with worms. Now you can live with a lot of worms within your body without coming to any grief at all but it does suggest that the hygiene that they're so famous for was not as good as people think it was. In fact, most people were probably feeling fairly ropey most of the time.

RC: Thank you for that, Lindsay. I think I'll be conscious of that the next time I go to Carlisle, I think [laughter]. There are a number of other questions that have come up, actually about some of the specifics of the archaeology. One of the ones that many of our learners picked up has been the Vallum. We don't perfectly understand that and I think that's been made clear through the course but it is a fascinating monument. Ian, Jeff Brawley would like to know if further work on the Vallum would be worthwhile.

IH: I think, even when we have looked again at apparently familiar and well-understood features and one thinks of the some of the excellent work that EH (English Heritage) has done on the ditches of Hadrian's Wall. One thinks of what our friends at TWAM – Tyne and Wear Archaeology – have done looking at the berm in front of the Wall, we found new things. I think it's worth noting that we also gain in sophistication, in terms of what we can do with new methods of environmental archaeology and certain forms of dating that weren't available when some of the early work on the Vallum was conducted.

So I think it could still yield some very important insights but I think the bigger question is that there are only so many resources available for excavation and where should those be targeted? So might further excavation work on the Vallum prove fruitful? Yes I believe it might well. How pressing are our questions about the Vallum, as opposed to some of the other research questions we might ask, is another discussion point again.

RC: Thank you, Ian. There are actually a number of pressing research questions and if I skip ahead to one of the questions we planned for a little bit later...Keith Stephens, amongst many other learners, Lindsay, would like to know how we can find out more about the relationships between soldiers and the local population? Be they in the communities outside the fort walls or even further in the rural communities and farmsteads.

LAJ: Now this is quite difficult to answer and we have to make some presumptions from some of the evidence that we have and I'm always willing to be proved

wrong that the presumptions that we've made so far are not right. The writing tablets – the Vindolanda – give some clues at the use of the word, '*brittunculi*,' which may be a disparaging way of referring to the locals. That suggests that life may not always have been all sweetness and light, between the natives and the Roman soldiers. But when you get down to looking at the actual artefacts – the exchange of artefacts; those made by the locals and those made by the soldiers or imported by the soldiers – that does suggest quiet a lively trade going on. Which again suggests that they were getting on, at least financially. Indeed in the third century, when Scotland- what we call Scotland today – was no longer part of the Roman Empire, they were still importing from Scotland, shiny black material shales that would be used to make artefacts of high status down in York. So it may have been over the border but they were still getting on with people there.

I think, also, you notice from tombstones that we have mixed marriages – we have people coming in with the Roman army marrying locals. And we also see that the locals are sometimes picking up Roman ideas; the idea of having a tombstone with an inscription on it. This is particularly noticeable something like the one from Corbridge, which is the tombstone of a four year old girl called Ertole (RIB 1181), who was clearly a Celtic child and her family have adopted the idea from the Romans of having a tombstone with her picture on it and her name on it.

So I think, on the whole, the relationships probably varied, depending on who was in charge of the local fort and how Draconian he was, who the people were in these local units and whether indeed when you get to the third or fourth century when the local units are coming in from all sorts of places. When you get the *numerus Hnaudifridi* and such like who are moving with their whole families, then the relationship may have changed considerably. But it's an ongoing research topic and I think it'll probably keep me happy for many a long year.

RC: Thank you, Lindsay. So we can see in the archaeological evidence that there's this network as it were that's extending beyond the local community into the broader frontier. How are we seeing that in the present day, Frances? You know, how much are archaeologists and historians at the different sites along the Wall collaborating? What is the role of museums in this?

FM: Well, I'm obviously biased; I think museums have got a really huge role to play in the Wall. Along Hadrian's Wall, there are eleven sites – some are managed by English Heritage, some by the Vindolanda Trust, some by Tyne and Wear or Carlisle – and we all work together. The curators all meet for a bit of a natter (a chat), twice a year. We've also recently worked on a joint project called Wall Face which was funded by the Arts Council, where we borrowed portraits from the National Portrait Gallery of antiquarians and archaeologists who were involved with Hadrian's Wall over the last however many hundreds of years. So that's a real physical indication of the work that we do together but we do all talk and find out what people are up to; we always love to find out what work is happening at sites.

That happens in a broader sense as well, not just on Hadrian's Wall. The Limes Congress – which is the Roman Frontiers Congress – meets every three years and that's archaeologists, curators and heritage management people. They meet at different places along the frontier of the Roman Empire and there are sessions discussing all aspects of work on all of the frontiers and that's a really great opportunity to see who's doing something really interesting, something innovative, something new, get ideas on best practice and be able to compare what they're finding. Does it match? Is the idea of a Roman fort model, with the Roman soldier wearing his set clothing; is that right? And by seeing what other museums have and what people are working with, you get the idea. So, it's really useful.

RC: Thank you. One of the things that have come up, from meeting like the International Congress of Frontier Studies, is this question of extra-mural abandonment in the third century and this is something that many of our learners have picked up on. Peter Clift is one, amongst many of our learners, who would like to know more about why extra-mural communities are declining or possibly being abandoned in the later third century. Would you like to address that, Ian?

IH: Well I think we might start off by just challenging that question a little bit. We need to remember that the coin and ceramic evidence that we have often indeed does point to a diminution in activity in the third century at those sites where we have the data. We also need to remember that for a long time, extra-mural settlements were deemed very much the 'poor relation' of forts themselves. They've been much less-extensively excavated.

We also need to remember that certain interesting things are happening to material culture in the late third century; there are some significant factors going on, in terms of for example, coin supply, that can make things a little bit confusing. We've also re-dated some of the pottery types slightly some of the early reports. So, we - what archaeologists wouldn't make this claim? – we still need to know more. And of course Frances has just declared us all biased, as you're already aware. We're working in an extra-mural settlement while this course is going on. But I think it is actually necessary to get data from larger areas or more extra-mural settlements – no small order there – in order to build that bigger picture. I think that we are unlikely to find that across the frontier zone, someone just suddenly just turns the lights out all at once on extra-mural settlements.

But I think that there are questions, really, in terms of that network Rob was referring to earlier. How are the different spaces outside the four walls being used and how far out beyond the fort walls should we be looking for understanding that, and that takes it to a broader understanding of landscape and settlement. There again, we're finding that we are understanding a great deal more in the last few years about how the frontier landscape and the people in it are changing that I think would have been inconceivable, even half a century ago. That's sort of a plea for more research really and to say yes; the data that we have at the moment may point in certain broad directions indeed

– as we've sketched out for you in the course – but I think that there are bigger stories to be explored, there.

RC: That does lead quite nicely, though into a question raised by Frances Albrecht, Sally Holborn and, again, many more learners, who would like to know a bit more about what happened to the Wall after the end of the Roman period. Actually, this is quite interesting because many of our learners have commented about the Romans leaving and so there's a deeply-entrenched idea here. So I'm deeply sympathetic with this question, Lindsay. I'd see it as a most interesting question selected. I might be biased! What would you advise for our learners?

LAJ: Well, I realise what you would like everybody to do is to send a large cheque so that Rob can run a research project with hundreds of minions for many years to sort this one out. A cheaper and more immediate answer might be to have a read of this little book, *Murus Ille Famosus*, which is by William D Shannon (Shannon, W.D. (2007) *Murus ille famosus (That Famous Wall): Depictions and Descriptions of Hadrian's Wall Before Camden*. Oxford: Oxbow.). It was published by the Cumberland West Antiquarian Archaeological Society and it's a tremendous piece of work. He's pulled together descriptions of Hadrian's Wall before the Tudor period. We tend to always think of Camden being the first person who really got to grips with it all but the people writing about it from Bede onwards and such like, very often give you an idea of what it was like. I personally don't think that the Romans just gave up and left at a certain date, with the last person there to turn the light off as he goes. I suspect that by the time you get to the end of Roman Britain as we know it, the population had become so inter-tangled that I think an awful lot of people who'd been acting as soldiers were related to a lot of the population round about and just sort of, oozed back into the landscape as farmers and settlers. I don't think there was a mass-exodus with people waving handkerchiefs on the Quayside as they went.

But this is a very, very useful little booklet. I recommend it strongly.

RC: Thank you; it is an excellent book. Very highly recommended. In our final question for the session, really it's a shame we have to draw it to a close, but we do. Rachel Jones would like to know how much should we excavate and what are the benefits and challenges of further excavation? Actually, I'll start with you, Frances. But we'll go along to everyone on the panel, for this.

FM: Well, seeing as everyone's going to be giving their two-penneth, I'll talk about it from a museum side – from a curation side. I'm based at Corbridge – I look after other collections, but the Corbridge collection - a huge data-base of thirty-four thousand objects – is material excavated mostly between 1930 and 1970. I'm still dealing with it; they're still trying to catalogue it, still trying to understand its full significance. There are many, many research projects just within that one site's collection. It would be wonderful and exciting to have constant excavations like they do at Vindolanda; Barbara, the curator there, gets some lovely things that she teases me with. But equally, we shouldn't forget the material that we've already excavated which is in our stores, that

isn't fully understood. We need to create lists of projects that MA students/PhD students can do. Open up the stores more for people to work with. It would be very nice to get carried away but we've got some nice stuff that needs work on, still.

RC: Thank you, Frances. So that's a museum's perspective. Mike, do you have a management perspective?

MC: Yes. We can't manage what we don't understand and we can't understand it more if we don't research it. On a more basic level, we're seeking to preserve most of it but a large portion of what we're doing is to preserve it so it can be researched in the future. If we just kind of, stall and don't look into it, what are we doing our management job for? On a more specific level, we do have a recent research framework for Hadrian's Wall which to me, was largely targeted at enabling me to sleep at night by knowing that research projects along Hadrian's Wall had a very good chance of reaching fruition of being properly – post-excavation completed and all the publication done. So on our watch; we were doing the job properly. So as long as excavation and wider research – because we're not just talk about excavation – meets those key research priorities, because archaeology is destruction and excavation and all those kinds of things. As long as it meets those research priorities, as long as it's properly funded, absolutely great. From a management point of view, we'd love to see more of it.

RC: Lindsay, you've already mentioned that you'd be quite happy to keep investigating the relationships between the Wall communities and the broader landscape. Would you see excavation as key to this?

LAJ: It could be key. I'm always reminded – when somebody asks me this kind of question – about Sir Mortimer Wheeler, who many, many years ago said that we knew everything there was to know about Hadrian's Wall and Roman Britain and all we needed to do was to cross the Ts and dot the Is. Every excavation since has proved him completely wrong. Particularly when it comes to the Vallum; I think every excavation of the Vallum in the last twenty years has produced something which we didn't know. I think I would like to have some more excavation in extra-mural settlements but away from the actual fort. We have this idea that the extra-mural settlements declined in the third century; I'm not sure that they may not have just moved further away from the forts, that the commanders may have wanted *cordon sanitaire* around the fort. This we can't prove at the moment because the evidence is all based on settlements which are right up against the fort walls. I think I would plump for something like that.

RC: Ian, how do you see the role of excavation, in the future of Wall studies?

IH: Well I think I would really endorse the comments that each colleague here has made, in their own way. It is important to remember that we have only excavated a very, very small percentage of the Wall corridor. It is equally important to remember that maxim that, "Excavation is destruction" so when we're doing it, we need to make sure that the teams that are doing it are

genuinely well-qualified to do the work. We need to make sure that they have the expertise in place to analyse what comes out of the ground. We need to ensure that they have already organised for the long-term care and access to the material that comes out. So an excavation is not just, you dig out your bucket and spade and away you go on your summer holidays, it is actually a very long-term commitment to you and to the other members of the Wall community.

Frances was mentioning the excellent work that my friends at Vindolanda are doing and there is a case in point. I've just come back from a Trustees' Meeting there this morning, in which we'd been looking at how a whole range of buildings that have recently been acquired by the Trust are going to be used to make finds from the excavations more accessible to researchers. There are huge storage cost-implications. So it's a huge resource but it's something that we have to think about.

I think the other thing is that when people think about questions like this – as colleagues have noted – they often think about research as being people digging sites. That is important because we can dig them better now than we could do before. We can anticipate what we might need in advance, better than we could before. But it is really also vital to think about the body of expertise that continues to work on excavated material to make sure that that is nurtured and supported. Once you make a dig decision, you're actually reliant on the wider archaeological community to make that decision work for everybody in perpetuity. So excavation also requires us to think about the ongoing health of that community and of broader-public involvement in that community. That means that actually, there's a responsibility to all of us – including all of you – in terms of making sure that future excavation in the Wall zone is genuinely fruitful and responsible.

RC: Thank you. So, we're putting the onus back on you. It's up to you to make sure that we don't fail. How's that for pressure? I'd like to thank you all again for joining us today. Thank you all for submitting loads of fantastic questions. I'm sorry we couldn't address all of them; we did have to be selective. But I encourage you: Look back at the course. A lot of the questions can be addressed by reconsidering some of what's been addressed in the course. Also, all those reading suggestions that we made – those books are fantastic. They line almost all of our shelves – I think – at work and we don't usually get royalties for them so it's more for your learning, not for our bank accounts. I can assure you that [laughter].

Again, thank you for joining us through the course and I hope that these lessons that you've learned from the Wall are of use and interest in years to come.