Project aims and research framework

- A new study of the rural settlement of Roman Britain
- Focus is almost exclusively on the excavated evidence
- Examine temporal and regional variation in settlement evidence from across England and Wales
- Chronological remit covers the later 1st C BC to the early 5th C AD

Roman Rural Settlement Themes

I. Settlement and land-use

II. The agricultural economy

III. Rural industries

IV. Material culture and identity

V. Ritual and religious practice

VI. Death and burial
Recent synthetic work on Roman rural settlement evidence in Yorkshire

J. Taylor 2007

I. Roberts et al. 2010

C. Stoertz 1997
Site distribution and the impact of developer-funded archaeology

c.3300 Roman Rural Settlement Project (RRSP) sites collected so far, 231 from the Yorkshire region

PPG16

number of records

# Quantification of site types recorded from the Yorkshire region

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<th>Major category</th>
<th>Site type</th>
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Organisations contributing to the dataset

Number of records

- Archaeological Services WYAS
- Network Archaeology
- Northern Archaeological Associates
- Oxford Archaeology North
- MAP Archaeological Practice
- On-Site Archaeology
- Humber Field Archaeology
- Other units/consultants

Commercial units/consultants (71.5%)

- Museums
- Yorkshire Archaeological Society
- East Riding Archaeological Society
- Other local society/excavation committee
- English Heritage/Government institutions
- University
- Individuals or antiquarian

Research & rescue (28.5%)
Types of fieldwork

- **79.5%**: excavation
- **14.7%**: evaluation
- **4.0%**: watching brief
- **1.8%**: geophysics/field survey

Sources of information

- **48.2%**: Published sources only
- **39.7%**: Grey literature sources (HER)
- **5.4%**: Grey literature (direct from units)
- **6.7%**: Published & grey literature sources
Spatial relationship between the distribution of RRSP sites and the bedrock and drift geologies of the Yorkshire region
RRSP distribution and comparative datasets

Roman Portable Antiquities Scheme data

National Monuments Record – excavated data
Use of crop mark data

• Allows for more accurate classification of settlement morphology of excavated sites
• Increases understanding of wider landscape use
• However, without excavation we cannot fully understand the dating of many settlements and their chronological resolution

Church Farm Access Track, Darrington, and Knottingly Road, A1(M), Site XX8 (Brown et al. 2007)

Scotch Corner, SCA15 (Zant and Howard-Davis 2013)
Distribution of ‘Roman’ cropmark data, after J Taylor (2007, 15)

- Very uneven distribution of potentially Roman cropmarks across Yorkshire region
- Heavy density in Yorkshire Wolds and Holderness, with a similar concentration on the Magnesian limestone
- Cropmarks comparatively rare in the Yorkshire Dales and North York Moors

Figure 3.3 Distribution map of settlements recorded as cropmarks and solimarks
Settlement morphology

- c.90% of Yorkshire sites include site plans
- c.45% of sites have provided enough information to ascribe a settlement form classification
Settlement forms:

Unenclosed/Open settlements

- Evidence for occupation not obviously contained within a system of enclosure
- Enclosures may still be present on site, but do not bound primary areas of domestic activity
- Large area of excavation generally needed to demonstrate open settlement

High Wold, Bempton Lane (Roberts 2009)
Settlement forms:

Enclosed settlements

- All or majority of domestic activity contained within 1 or 2 enclosures
- Internal space not sub-divided to a significant degree
- Yorkshire examples tend to have external features relating to field-systems and/or animal management

Darrington Quarry northern extension
(Tinsley et al. 2012)
Settlement forms:

Complex settlements

- A complex of conjoined enclosures
- Internal area often extensively sub-divided
- Multiple areas used for domestic activity
- Trackways and field-systems tend to be incorporated within settlement system

Melton A63 (Fenton-Thomas 2011)
Variation in complex settlement forms

‘Ladder’ complexes

Rectilinear complexes

Stile Hill, Colton
(ASWYAS 1995)

‘Clothesline’ complexes

Newbridge Quarry, Pickering
(Richardson 2012)

Wattle Syke
(Martin et al. 2013)
Regional distribution of main settlement forms
Regional variation in settlement distribution

**Complex farms**
- Central band distribution – predominantly river valleys

**Enclosed farms**
- Concentrated clusters – predominantly uplands
Temporal changes in frequency of farming settlement

- % total no. sites in use
- Open (n=13)
- Enclosed (n=43)
- Complex (n=34)

- Frequency of settlement forms identified by phase (n=150)

- Percentage of settlement forms by phase (n=90)
- Complex (n=34)
- Enclosed (n=43)
- Open (n=13)
Strong continuity from the late Iron Age - c.93% of farms occupied in later 1stC AD had Iron Age origins

Height of new farm establishments in 2ndC AD, and period of greatest abandonment in 3rdC and 4thC AD

Proportion of farms which change in form slightly decrease between the early and late Roman periods
Types of changes in farming settlements

Wattle Syke (Martin et al. 2013)
Nucleated settlement

- Nucleated settlements are predominantly roadside settlements, including *vici*.
- Few, however, have been extensively excavated and/or exhaustively reported.
- Concise reporting of datasets from more nucleated settlements is still required.
Generating comparative datasets from roadside settlements

Rudstone Dale site, Ganstead to Asselby pipeline (Wood 2011)

Excavation produced:

- 0.8ha excavated along a strip c.25m wide
- Late Iron Age origins based around a water channel; increased intensity in activity with construction of road
- At least 11 structures, both circular and rectangular, including masonry-built example
- 78 inhumations, including 56 neonates
- Nearly 50 coins and 14000 sherds of pottery
- Numerous animal burials, including semi-articulated deposits
Roadside settlements: form and function

Stamford Bridge roadside settlement, depicted by cropmarks with circumnavigating pipeline excavation of peripheral areas (Parry 2005)
Stamford Bridge: evidence for the centralising of agricultural resources
Distribution of corn-driers and millstones in relation to major towns and military sites

Watermill (Bennett et al. 2010)

Corn-drying (© Anne Leaver)
Increasing use of corn-drying ovens

- Predominance in use between the 2nd and 4th centuries AD
- T-shaped type increasingly used through to the end of the Roman period
- Some have clear evidence for multiple use – pottery kilns being re-used to dry cereal grain
Variation and change in domestic livestock frequencies
Cattle cull profiles from different settlement types

- Generally similar cull profiles between farms and nucleated settlements
- Farms include high proportion of adult cattle, especially elderly, with low proportions of younger animals
- With presence of neonates, the profiles are indicative of breeding herds with little evidence for specialised production
- Predominance of elderly cattle for reproduction and traction
- Rural settlement profiles clearly different to the selective (sacrificial) slaughter of immature cattle at the Ferry Fryston shrine
Sewerby Cottage Farm, Bridlington

- Droveway system, holding pens with funnelled entrances and corn-driers all present – plus evidence for metal-working

- Distinctive use of space linked to an integrated farming economy, mixing animal husbandry with arable production and processing

- Corn-driers dated to late 1st-2nd Century AD by archaeomagnetic dating – early date for T-shaped structures
Villa-type settlement: distribution & dating

• Comparatively few settlements excavated – generally poorly dated

• Apparent absence on the South Yorks Coal Measures and Holderness

• Very poor understanding of wider landscape context
Villa landscapes
Dalton Parlours, West Yorkshire

• To what extent can we understand the wider landscape context of villa-type settlements?

• Dalton Parlours villa is set within a pre-existing late Iron Age complex

• Hiatus in activity prior to villa construction – surrounding field-systems and enclosures are not dated

Artist’s impression of Dalton Parlours villa (by J. Prudhoe, from Roberts et al. 2010, 75)
Villa landscapes
Holme House, North Yorkshire

Villa apparently enclosed with some further land division

Holme House Roman villa, Manfield, North Yorks
(http://www.pjoarchaeology.co.uk/academic-consultancy/roman-yorkshire.html)
Conflating site-based evidence with broad regional trends

- The impact of developer-funded archaeology is allowing the study of Roman rural settlement to beyond traditional dichotomies.

- Identifying the variation across settlement forms allows for a more nuanced understanding, but their reclassification also provides a framework for further analysing their material culture and environmental data.

- A continued emphasis on standardising datasets is imperative, because it allows for more accurate synthesis of data.

- Broad regional- or national-scale data analyses provide a context against which individual sites can contribute towards, and be understood against – ultimately, they can provide us with new questions for the Romano-British countryside and, hopefully, will help inform planning archaeologists, curators, consultants and commercial units with making those all important decisions when it comes to excavating new sites.