Silchester 2015
Archaeological Excavations at
Insula III - Silchester & Pond Farm Hillfort
17th Aug-13th Sept

WHO CAN VISIT AND WHAT IS THERE TO SEE?
Everyone is welcome! You can visit us Monday to Friday on either of the sites between 10am and 4.30pm. We are not open weekends except Sunday 13th September. If you intend to come in a larger group please let us know in advance:
ereeaton@reading.ac.uk so we can welcome and accommodate everyone. Please be aware that parking at Little Heath car park for Pond Farm is severely limited so do share a lift or arrange drop offs there or at Little Cottages (marked on the adjacent site map). Access to Pond Farm is on foot via permitted paths (shown on the map) by kind permission of the Englefield Estate. It’s a pleasant and relatively easy, approx 10 minutes walk within Benyon’s Enclosure up to the hillfort but may not be suitable for everyone. Cycling is not allowed. For Silchester Insula III please park in the public car park and follow the footpath to the Roman town and the excavation. For directions to Silchester Roman Town public car park visit: reading.ac.uk/silchester
You will be able to see our archaeologists at work on both sites but there will also be finds and environmental processing going on at Insula III. For safety reasons there will be strictly no access to the trenches themselves but you will be able to see them being excavated.
There will also be a Public Open Day at the end of the dig at both excavations, on Sunday Sept 13th 10-4.30pm.

ABOUT INSULA III – SILCHESTER
Insula III is located in the centre of the Roman town, adjacent to the forum basilica. The antiquarian excavators could make little sense of what they found here in 1891 and a two year project in 2013-14 re-examined a supposed bath house in the SE corner of the insula. The remains proved to be not of a bath block but of a large house flanked by a colonnade whose foundations could be seen to extend beyond the excavated area. Finds, including fragments of Nero tiles, suggested an early Roman, 1st century AD date for it.

WHAT ARE WE LOOKING FOR AT INSULA III?
We are excavating two new trenches, respectively at the NE and NW corners of the insula, to see if there is evidence for the continuation of the building to the south and its colonnaded façade. Was there a coherent plan for the development of the insula in the 1st century AD? What evidence survives of the later occupation of the insula? In 2013 we found early medieval pottery dated between the 5th and the 8th century AD.

ABOUT POND FARM HILLFORT
The summit of the hill at The Frith was once protected all the way round by a huge man-made bank and ditch. Today areas of the bank still rise 2.5 metres above ground but were likely much higher in the past. The southern portion of the hillfort defences have been levelled in recent centuries and can no longer be seen on the ground. However, traces of the bank and ditch there are still visible occasionally as cropmarks and using geophysical surveys. You could only once have entered the interior through one or two restricted and probably fortified entranceways. It is believed to have been built in the Iron Age, around 2000 or more years ago but there is no firm evidence yet to confirm this.

WHAT ARE WE LOOKING FOR AT POND FARM?
By undertaking small scale and targeted archaeological trenching at the hillfort site we hope to find evidence to date and understand this monument better. With permission from the Englefield Estate and under Scheduled Monument Consent from Historic England, we intend to dig down through any man- made layers and features in the areas shown on the site map, above. We have chosen these through careful preparation including earthwork surveys, fluxgate gradiometer and Ground Penetrating Radar geophysical surveys plus coring of deeper sediments. Together these indicate we may encounter a second, now buried, entranceway, structures, pits and evidence of how people used and lived at this site. Importantly, we’d like to know the relationship of this site with other possible Iron Age ones in the area.

WHAT IS THE SILCHESTER ENVIRONS PROJECT?
The work we’re undertaking here follows on from many years of excavation at Silchester Roman town and forms just part of a new five year project run by the University of Reading. The project aims to examine the origins of the Iron Age oppidum and Roman town at Silchester (Calleva Atrebatum). We are assessing the 100km² of land surrounding the town using existing archaeological records, LIDAR, aerial photos, geological, topographic and OS mapping data, geophysical surveys and coring to examine aspects such as the agricultural landscape, distribution of settlement and industry in the 1st millennium BC. We are now looking to back up our ideas with small scale, targeted excavation at key sites. This site at Pond Farm is the first to be investigated.

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