

# Editorial

Whither Roman Archaeology? This was the title and subject of a day-conference held at the Institute of Classical Studies, Senate House, London, on 16 November 2002, under the auspices of the Roman Society and its Archaeology Committee, and organised by Dr Ian Haynes and Dr Richard Hingley. The event, which some 75 people attended, was initially prompted by the results of a survey which the Committee undertook of university departments, which had revealed a dramatic fall in the number of specialist Romanists, and courses or modules offered, with the likely knock-on effect in the attracting of postgraduates and the training of specialists in Roman subjects. Speakers addressed the future direction(s) of the subject, and how the present community of scholars should react to the challenge or threat to its survival. At least some of the problems seeming to affect Roman archaeology could apply to archaeology as a whole.

The emphasis in the morning was on the breaking down of barriers standing in the way of cooperation within the study of Roman archaeology, whether institutional, cultural, linguistic, national, or professional/public. Some imaginative case-studies were presented. In the early afternoon the emphasis was more on the potential of small finds, and how to engage students of all ages in the subject. We should not underestimate the interest generated by some courses, as the well subscribed modules introduced by the Open University have demonstrated. Roman archaeologists today are to be found not merely (or principally) in university departments, but in units, museums, adult education departments, and as freelance specialists and consultants; a wider range of careers has opened up.

After tea, a total of eight speakers provocatively addressed the strengths and weaknesses of Roman archaeology in the current educational, political, and financial climate. In general it was felt that the subject had a long-term future, but there was no room for complacency, and all needed to rekindle the excitement in school pupils, students, and adults alike, which had formed so prominent an element in the development of archaeology in the middle years of the twentieth century, and inspired many of the people who sat in the room. Professionals working in other archaeological periods needed convincing that Roman archaeology had advanced beyond traditional confines and attitudes.

A consideration of the day's proceedings, by Simon James, designed to bring the day's discussion to a wider audience of non-Romanists, is already in print (*Antiquity* vol. 77, no. 295, March 2003), and an equally valuable assessment by Andrew Gardner is scheduled to appear shortly in the *Journal of Roman Archaeology*.

The Society's Fifth Roman Archaeology Conference, held in Leicester in April 2003, in conjunction with the Thirteenth Theoretical Roman Archaeology Conference, was judged a great success, with sessions appealing to the wide range of upwards of 240 attendees. A splendidly colourful 'conference report' is currently posted on the website of the University of Leicester's School of Archaeology and Ancient History. One highlight was the launch of a *Festschrift* contributed by his friends and colleagues to John Wachter, Professor Emeritus of Archaeology at the University of Leicester and author of numerous works on Roman Britain including the much reprinted *Towns of Roman Britain*. The volume, entitled *The Archaeology of Roman Towns*, edited by Pete Wilson, marked John's 75th birthday which fell in August 2002. The next Roman Archaeology Conference is scheduled to take place at the University of Birmingham in spring 2005.

Lawrence Keppie, Glasgow

July 2003