

THE ARP ACTA



Aylsham Roman Project Newsletter



Issue 2 December 2016

Welcome to Issue 2

Happy Saturnalia to you all!

The Romans originally feasted on December 17th, this grew and lengthened to take in the winter solstice. Not Christmas as we know it, but still a festival for eating and entertainment.

Who are we?



This month's focus is on Britannia Archaeology. The company set up in 2012 with people who had worked for other companies but knew each other.

Martin joined in 2013 and Dan 2014, both becoming directors in 2015. With Britannia being the Roman, and Greek, name of the region of Britain, they decided that with so much archaeology coming from this time it was a good choice of name.

One of the best sites they've worked on (except for Aylsham!) was a villa site in Suffolk. One of the worst has to be when an 11kv cable was exposed in wet conditions - doesn't bear thinking about!

Things don't always go well, though, like the time Martin, on a lovely hot summer's day, took home some parsnips that were laying on the field he was surveying to make some soup. The next day he was covered in sores. The sun had helped release an oil which caused parsnip burns. He ended up wrapped like an Egyptian mummy. There's no such thing as a free lunch, stick to canned soup in future!

They are all saving up to buy a special Christmas present for Dan - a belt for his trousers.

Anyone on the summer dig will know why!!

News

Peter has been busy presenting talks in the area about the summer dig. If you haven't managed to get to one of them, here's a short digest.



After thanking many people who have been involved, either in a professional capacity, nursery staff, Civil Protection, volunteers and those who donated, he went on to talk about the December 2015 trench dug by Britannia Archaeology that revealed we really did have a kiln and not just buried tractor wheels. August came and Kiln 1

showed itself to have been fired two or three times with a catastrophic collapse on the final firing.

Kiln 2 initially looked to be in poor condition, but as it was excavated, deeper and deeper, it became apparent that this had a perforated base, a rarity in the UK and, as such, of great interest to Historic England. Hopefully, a



later excavation of this kiln will reveal this completely.

Charcoal, large lumps in particular from Kiln 2, have been sent off for dating and, possibly tree identification.



Several finds were unearthed in the Children's Trench including iron slag, suggesting that iron smelting might have taken place on the site.

The majority of finds, around 27000 at the moment, were kiln material and pottery. There were also some bone fragments, a few coins and metal jewellery fragments. The dates on the coins are mid 4th century.

Let's hope the charcoal dating fits in with this!

Peter also found time to turn on the Aylsham Christmas lights. This was in recognition of the time he had invested in the dig as well as donating the Christmas tree for the past few years.



Cup of tea, please!

What a fantastic group the Civil Protection is! They kept everyone going through the hot two week dig with tea, coffee, water and filled rolls. The smell of bacon wafting across the field meant lunch time was coming, a chance to sit down for a chat, fill up and re-energise for the afternoon. Nearly 40 rolls were regularly made. Hope they can join us again next year, otherwise Peter and Sable will go hungry!!

News...News...News...News...News...News...

Name the Dog Peter thanks everyone who entered. The shortlist included Dirt Digger, Centurion, Vegetalis, Claudius and Mars, but the winner was an anagram of Roman dog - **Gronmoad**. Read on for more about our four footed friend!



Bones and Tiles Julie Curl, our local animal bone specialist, has been to visit us to look at, amongst other things, the few bones we unexpectedly

found and in particular Gronmoad the dog's skull now it has been cleaned. Great concern was raised about the lump of flint sticking out of the side of the skull but Julie assures us this did not cause his death! Romans did have dogs for pets and Gronmoad would have been a small dog living at the time our kilns were being used.



While Julie was with us, she looked at one of the tiles Peter had found over the years - and what a discovery she made!! What we thought was a rat's tail mark turned out to be something very different.



This is the original tile and, although too small an image to see clearly, coming up the centre from the bottom is a tail mark - of a great crested newt. The marks in the centre at the top are fox cub paws - the newt didn't live much longer! Julie has produced

a drawing of what she discovered. So fascinating. Further images and her full report will be added to our website shortly. Julie will be returning in the New Year, and will join us on our summer dig, to do further drawings and see what else she can find among the many finds we have.



Did you know?...Did you know?...Did you know?...

The owl that appears on everything we do was drawn by our very own Teresa Rogers. It became the symbol of Minerva, goddess of wisdom - "wisdom only comes with falling of the dusk" - and a coin with Minerva on it has been found at Woodgate.



Future Events...Future Events...Future Events...

Conference A one day conference is being held on Saturday January 14th entitled A Town of the Iceni covering 10 years of research at Caistor St Edmund. Click [here](#) for full details.

Pottery Talk Its not too late to email us if you are interested in a pottery talk by expert Alice Lyons in the New Year.

And remember our philosophy....Getting the community in holes

Don't forget to check out our [Facebook](https://en-gb.facebook.com/RomanAysham/) <https://en-gb.facebook.com/RomanAysham/> and [Twitter](https://twitter.com/RomanAysham) <https://twitter.com/RomanAysham> links plus our [website](https://aylshamromanproject.com) <https://aylshamromanproject.com>

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