Welcome to the August edition of the Newsletter.

The Politics of the Wall: National Identities in Wall Studies

The Post-Roman politics of the Wall and understandings of its use and iconography are considered in an article by Richard Hingley and Claire Nesbitt in the September/October 2008 edition of the British Archaeology magazine. The article documents the shifting perceptions of the Wall from the 8th century through to the present and considers how the Wall has been interpreted in many different ways from icon of national pride to soluble border to cautionary reminder of the fragility of empire. The text will shortly be available online on the British Archaeology website.

The identities of people on the Wall are illuminated this month in a paper by Richard Hingley and Divya Tolia-Kelly Travel, race and memory: the Roman Wall as a Diasporic frontier. The paper is being presented at the Diaspora Landscapes session of the RGS/IBG Annual Conference in London.

Visualizing the Wall: Material and Visual Culture on the Wall

Also on the theme of Diaspora, the Archaeology of Race exhibition in Summer 2009 will consider the evidence for the multicultural nature of the Wall. The exhibition will look at the material culture known to us from the Wall which reveals the diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds of the people living there. Alongside this, there will be discussion of the nature of race relations in the ancient world; the exhibition will compare the Roman approach to racial difference with contemporary attitudes to race. Bringing together the material evidence for the ‘foreign’ presence on the Wall the exhibition will explore existing racial taxonomies and challenge categorizations of ‘native’ and ‘non-native’. The exhibition intends to unravel the cultural heritage and history of the North East as an international space of migration and cultural diversity. This exhibition may also have a participatory dimension in the form of linking with schools across county Durham. This additional dimension offers a synthesis between academic research at Durham University and participatory development strategies within education in the county and its responsibilities towards race education and equality.

http://www.dur.ac.uk/roman.centre/hadrianswall/
Experiencing the Wall: Monumentality and Landscape

Despite the summer weather, the publicity surrounding the British Museum’s Hadrian exhibition seems to have boosted visitor numbers to Hadrian’s Wall. The latest phase of Tales of the Frontier is to document the movement and experience of these visitors. The project is inviting the public to go online and share details of their visits – the routes they have walked around the Wall landscape and the photographs they have taken. This will help us to understand why people visit the Wall, what they do when they are on the Wall, and what memories they take away with them. We are particularly interested to investigate the degree to which visitors’ choices are informed by tourist literature, and how their own photographic practices are shaped by the iconic images of the Wall with which we are all familiar. Rob Witcher is leading this research which will use online mapping services such as Google Maps and EveryTrail to understand these ‘ley geographies’ of the Wall. To find out more about how you can get involved, go to http://www.dur.ac.uk/roman.centre/hadrianswall/getinvolved/

Interpreting the Wall: Archaeology and Pilgrimage

Current research on the interpretation of the Wall is focussing on the development of archaeological knowledge. How does Hadrian’s Wall fit into the story of archaeology? Can we see in its archaeological history a microcosm of the history of archaeological development? What were the factors driving the desire for knowledge of the Wall and how are they manifested in the techniques of excavation and investigation that have been applied to the Wall. These are some of the research questions guiding the exploration of the history of archaeology on the Wall and shaping an article which will be developed from this research. Visit the project website for information on new and forthcoming project publications.

Forthcoming Events

Royal Geographic Society (with Institute of British Geographers) Annual International Conference 2008. Project Sessions: Matters of Interdisciplinarity: Archaeology meets Geography; Diaspora Landscapes. See the project website for session outlines.

“The Roman limes and British Imperial Frontier Policy” A conference paper by Richard Hingley for the Empire without End conference to be held at Duke University, Durham, North Carolina on 31st October to 1st November 2008.

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