Welcome to the May edition of the Newsletter.

The Politics of the Wall:
National Identities in Wall Studies

Richard Hingley has been continuing his analysis of political uses of the Wall by considering accounts that emphasise the ruination and restoration of the monument. At certain times, proposals were made to rebuild, or refortify the Wall as a defence against the Scots. When England was under threat from the Scots in the late sixteenth century, a proposal was made to build a fortification along the border to protect the English from Scottish invasion. Although this fortification was never built, the Jacobite invasion of northern England in 1745 led to additional proposals to refortify the line of Hadrian’s Wall. In such contexts, the English drew upon the idea of a direct inheritance of their civilization from the Romans of lowland Britain, viewing the Scots as comparable to the barbarians who lived in northern Britain in Roman times. Poets, political writers and scholars used the ruination of the Wall to emphasise the growing unity of Great Britain as a united kingdom, which removed the need for a defence against invasion from the north. The growing debate about the relationship of the two countries today may, perhaps, have some role in the increasing visibility of Hadrian’s Wall in academic agendas and the media – an issue that the project will explore further.

Visualizing the Wall:
Material and Visual Culture on the Wall

An exhibition is currently being organised by the project team led by Divya Tolia-Kelly entitled ‘An Archaeology of Race’. The exhibition will consider the cultural identities bound up with the materiality of the Wall that are less well known than those of the military legions. The exhibition will be held in late summer 2009 to coincide with the end of the Tales of the Frontier project and the Hadrian’s Wall pilgrimage. It is envisaged that the exhibition will be mobile and will travel to various sites along the Wall offering access to as many people as possible. The exhibition is being organised with the generous co-operation of Paul Bidwell & Alex Croom, of Tyne & Wear Museums, Lindsay Allason-Jones of Newcastle University and Tim Padley of Tullie House.

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

Rob Witcher and Divya Tolia-Kelly are submitting a paper entitled ‘Archaeologies of landscape: excavating the material geographies of Hadrian’s Wall’ to an international journal. The core of both popular and scholarly reflection on the Wall has been to pursue notions of civility and barbarianism; a monument to military artifice and Romantic historiography. This singular physical landscape has generated multitudinous materialities often contrasting and ambiguous, where scholarly and popular material cultures are foundational to encounters with this monument. The paper thinks materiality through the cultures inspired by and of the Wall, integrating the strong tradition of Romano-British frontier studies with the developments in landscape research within geography in order to formulate an interdisciplinary methodology and praxis.

Interpreting the Wall: 
Archaeology and Pilgrimage

Research continues on the development of archaeological knowledge on the Wall and experiences of the pilgrims and other travellers. The project team have now visited the archives at Swindon, Oxford, London, and the Northeast and Northwest. Research will now focus on the Museum of Antiquities archive before it is closed for relocation. The paper that Claire Nesbitt delivered at the TAG2007 conference has now been written up by her and Divya Tolia-Kelly and submitted for publication. Watch the project website bibliography page for news of publications. Richard Hingley’s new book The Recovery of Roman Britain 1586-1906 will also be available next month. This includes a chapter dealing with antiquarian perceptions of the Wall.

Forthcoming Events

Reviving Classical Knowledge while writing about Globalization
A conference paper by Richard Hingley for the Classical Empires in Contemporary Culture conference to be held at Gordon House, University College London on 23rd May 2009

Tales of the Frontier
Richard Hingley will be speaking at the University of Campinas, Brazil on 12th August 2008

Royal Geographic Society (with Institute of British Geographers)
Annual International Conference 2008, Project Sessions: Matters of Interdisciplinarity: Archaeology meets Geography; Diasporic Landscapes

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