Introducing the Project…

Welcome to the first edition of the Tales of the Frontier newsletter. This e-news will be published triennially to report news and events from the project between now and the end of our work in August 2009. The project is an interdisciplinary initiative funded by the A.H.R.C under the Landscape and Environment programme. Based in Durham University, the project is a collaboration between staff from the Departments of Archaeology and Geography. We are considering perceptions of the Wall in its landscape by generations of locals, professionals and visitors and will investigate understandings of the role of the Wall as monument, symbol, boundary and as part of the national and world heritage.

Visualizing the Wall: Material and Visual Cultures

Drawing upon the diverse range of material and visual culture depicting and describing the Wall, the project will explore how understandings of the Wall have developed. The methodology assesses divergent individual and group claims, including: scholars, local people and foreign visitors. This research will consider the circulation of the memory and meanings of the monument and its materiality at a local and international level alongside how the Wall’s ‘discourse of dominance’ resonates with postcolonial geographies.

National and Colonial discourses in the history of the Wall

The project will consider interpretations of the nature of the linear monument in the landscape in perpetuating ideas of demarcation of territory, triumphalism and national identity, and the opposing views of the Wall as a symbol of successful resistance to the expansion of the Roman Empire. These conceptions have a long history, but remain relevant today.

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

Who were the early visitors to the Wall? Who visits the Wall today? Why do they visit and what do they do when they get there? These are some of the questions which will be investigated during the project in order to understand popular perceptions and physical experience of the Wall. In particular, research will consider the relationship between the archaeological monument and its broader landscape context. How far is understanding of the Wall and its purpose shaped by perceptions of the modern landscapes in which it is situated? The research will draw on recent archaeological and geographical landscape theory in order to explore the relationship between culture and nature in this iconic archaeological landscape.

Interpreting the Wall: Archaeology and Pilgrimage

The Wall was first explored by collectors and enthusiasts. The project will try to understand at what point this gave way to the emergence of archaeological excavation and recording as a feature of Wall studies. Consideration is also given to the factors driving this development such as the popularizing of the Wall attributed to Collingwood-Bruce, and the Hadrian’s Wall Pilgrimage which nurtured the intellectual interest in the Wall that led to a more structured approach to mural studies.

Forthcoming Events

Classics Seminar Durham University 5th December 2007
Dr Richard Hingley will be speaking in the Department of Classics, Durham University at 17.30. His paper is entitled ‘Creating traditions in the study of Romanization’ and will address the perceived role of the Wall in the 18th century as the boundary to English civility.

TAG07 – York 14th-16th December 2007
Dr Claire Nesbitt will be giving a paper outlining the theoretical Aspects of the Tales of the Frontier Project at the Theoretical Archaeology Group Conference during December 2007.

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