



Project Update

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The Townfield Lane Excavation 2022

The eagerly awaited excavation at Townfield Lane in Farndon has concluded. We can now reveal some of our initial findings.

Furthermore, we will discuss what is yet to come!

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A note to all our supporters and contributors who made the excavation possible.

The Townfield Lane excavation

During September 2022, local volunteers under the supervision of professional archaeologists set out to unlock the secrets of a possible Roman enclosure or fortification near Farndon. As is often the case in archaeology, the results were unexpected, and raised a whole new set of questions!

So what did we find? We have identified evidence of a small enclosure, defined by a slight bank and double ditch which were buried under nearly 2000 years' worth of flood sediment, which made them very difficult to spot! If this was military, it was probably temporary and therefore its occupants wouldn't have left much behind. A temporary camp was one of the possibilities we expected, however, we found something else that we didn't expect within the enclosure, clear evidence of Roman metalworking. This was in the form of a bloomery forge, an industrial feature used to process iron ore. It is likely that the ore was being transported from the Welsh hills along the River Dee, processed on site, and then loaded onto boats to be transported to Chester.

Alongside the industrial debris, we also found Roman ceramics, but unfortunately due to the ground conditions many of these were heavily degraded, some having even reverted back to clay. There was however one object that stood out, and that was a small ceramic spindle whorl, which is used for spinning wool into yarn.



Base of bloomery Furnace



Roman spindle whorl

So what's next for Townfield Lane?

The task now falls to the post-excavation phase where we will be sorting through our data, writing up our initial findings and awaiting the conclusions of our specialists who are analysing all the samples and finds we collected. Once that is complete, we will aim to publish all our results in full!

Some of the questions we hope to answer from this process are: When exactly during the Roman period was the metalworking site in use, and what is the relationship between the metalworking activity and the enclosure? Are we looking at the earthwork of a temporary camp established by the Roman Legion, which has then been later reused by locals for iron working, or, are the earthworks part of the ironworking site itself? We have taken samples from within the ditch, as well as material from the industrial features, so hopefully the analysis will help us to better understand their relationship.

What next?

Whilst we piece together the results of the Townfield Lane excavation, we are also planning to set up a 'pop-up museum' in Farndon, which will give people the opportunity to come and see what we have found. We will also be screening a dig documentary that will give a trench-side view of the excavation as it unfolded.

In terms of future archaeology investigations in Holt and Farndon, we still have so many unanswered questions! Firstly, we now have two industrial sites, the tile and pottery works in Holt, and the iron works in Farndon, but where are the Romans who are working at these sites living? Also, why specifically Holt and Farndon, were the Iron Age people of Britain active here first?

Moving forward we will aim to do more non-invasive research, making use of aerial survey data as well as undertaking more geophysical survey (thanks to the gracious support of the Barnston Estate). We are aiming to pin point areas of archaeological potential that can guide us towards more investigations in the not too distant future!



You can follow updates on:

www.roydenhistory.co.uk

www.facebook.com/archaeologicalsurveywest

www.holtlhs.weebly.com

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Want to become a project partner or pledge your support? Please get intouch via:

 thafcap@gmail.com



University of
Chester

