



Introduction: the Roman Society and the Study of A.D. 410

By Simon Esmonde Cleary*

It was a fortunate if unplanned coincidence that the Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies was founded in the year that marked the fifteen-hundredth anniversary of the conventional date for the 'End of Roman Britain'. Given that one of the prime movers of the new Society was Francis Haverfield, Britain was from the start always likely to be a province of special interest for a society that was itself based in the former province and diocese. The Roman Society has always proved itself a friend to and supporter of Romano-British studies, most notably after sixty years of existence when it took a rib from the *Journal of Roman Studies* and from it fashioned *Britannia*, the first volume of which appeared in 1970. *JRS* had been the vehicle for a number of articles on Britain as well as reviews of books bearing on the island, but most notably from 1921 with the instauration of the annual report on 'Roman Britain in 19xx/20xx', initially largely under the tutelage of the redoubtable Margerie Venables Taylor, and consisting of notices of archaeological information covering the previous year along with preliminary recensions of new epigraphic discoveries (and originally a list of publications). This section is still going strong in *Britannia*, now with the addition of a section detailing the more notable finds reported in the preceding year to the Portable Antiquities Scheme. As well as through its journals, the Society has also supported understanding of Roman Britain through being the aegis under which the series of *Britannia Monographs* has been published; the first of them, *Roman Mosaics in Britain* by David Neal, being published in 1981. To date some 25 have appeared and when recently the decision was taken to discontinue the *JRS Monograph* series, an emphatic desire was expressed to maintain the *Britannia* series. Moreover, the presidency of the Society has been occupied over the last hundred years by some of the most distinguished names in the study of Roman Britain, beginning of course with Haverfield himself, and one might cite also names such as George Macdonald, Ian Richmond, Leo Rivet, Sheppard Frere and Mike Fulford. The development of 'Romano-British and Kindred Studies', to quote the sub-title to *Britannia*, has always benefited from the interested involvement of the Society over its century of existence, and especially since 1970. So the first thing I wish to do is place on record the immense debt of gratitude the study of Roman Britain owes to the Roman Society and the profound thanks of this little conventicle of the scholarly community to the Society for its involvement in and support of our endeavours.

How then to introduce the papers in this volume, especially since they cover such a wide range both of types of evidence and of approaches? Rather than introduce the various contributions by a thumb-nail sketch, I have chosen to maintain the historiographical tone of the preceding paragraph by looking at how the study of the period around the year A.D. 410 has developed, and in particular since the Roman Society established *Britannia* as a separate journal in 1970, thereby recognising that the quantity and quality of research on that province were becoming so substantial that they merited separate treatment. As I hope I will show 1970 represents the horizon at which late Roman Britain became recognisable as an area of study in its own right. I hope by this approach emphasising the development of the sub-discipline to provide amongst other things a sketch of the intellectual traditions within which the various contributions to this volume are embedded. Academic endeavour progresses not just by new discoveries and new ways of thinking but also by reacting against established intellectual frameworks. The study of the closing decades of Roman dominion in Britain and of what this gave way to has over the past forty years been marked by important examples of this: one, the shift from a study dominated by texts to

* University of Birmingham; a.s.esmonde_cleary@bham.ac.uk

one dominated by archaeological evidence, might even be categorised as a 'paradigm shift'. Be that as it may, new ideas, like new movements in the arts, can often only be fully understood if one also appreciates what it was they were defining themselves against. Thus I want to try to characterise the intellectual climate of the years around 1970, and argue that those years form a base-line for the study of later Roman Britain and its sequels, when many of the approaches that still inform debates were formulated and many of the most significant excavations and other field projects were being undertaken. So whilst not a comprehensive historiography of the sub-discipline, I hope it will serve to introduce many of the topics, approaches and concerns which these papers embody and some of the dichotomies that still structure the subject. Lastly, there is a personal element to this; the forty or so years I shall be dealing with encompass also my own involvement in the study of late Roman Britain from my first experiences of excavation on the exceptional late Roman cemetery at Lankhills, Winchester in 1967 down to the present day. This is accordingly something of a personal perspective, which may account for sins of omission.

If one looks back before 1970 for the period around A.D. 410 as an identifiable period and topic of study, one is hard put to it. To look at the canonical succession of books which for their generations summarised knowledge and understanding of Roman Britain, the period appears as little more than a coda. Haverfield himself in his *Romanization of Britain* had little to say about the end of the Roman period, though in his short final chapter he was interested in what he identified as the recrudescence of 'Celtic' art in the period after the removal of the imperial presence (Haverfield 1912, ch. 9). After the First War the new 'Oxford History of England' (*sic*) interestingly yoked together a 'Romanist' and a 'Saxonist' to cover the period from the Roman conquest to the end of the sixth century. 'Collingwood and Myres' (1936) might then have been expected to regard the fifth century as the pivot around which the whole joint enterprise turned, but the opening sentence of the Introduction to the whole work states 'This volume is not a work of collaboration'. In fact both authors deal with the textual record for the fifth to sixth centuries, and in his concluding ch. XXIV Myres discusses the relationship between the two peoples and periods in ways we can still recognise. After the Second War Richmond published his *Roman Britain* (Richmond 1955) again as the opening to a longer series covering the whole history of Britain. This is a slim volume overall and thematic in its treatment, but even so the lack of space devoted to the later Roman period is notable. Yet only some twelve years later things began to change with the publication of the first edition of Sheppard Frere's *Britannia: a History of Roman Britain* (Frere 1967), with three of its seventeen chapters explicitly devoted to the third to fifth centuries. Frere, himself a distinguished field archaeologist, was then fresh from his major campaigns of excavation at Verulamium from 1955 to 1961, including the renowned late sequence in Insula XXVII (Frere 1983, 227–9), so it was proper that he should pay more attention to the later Roman period. Frere was also, of course, a prime mover and the first editor of *Britannia*, bringing us down to 1970. It is worth looking briefly at why the later Roman period should have received comparatively little attention down to 1970 and why it was at this time, and materialised by the Roman Society's initiative in establishing *Britannia*, that things started to change.

The reasons for the pre-1970 state of affairs may be summarised briefly as the dominance of the textual evidence, which was thought to provide both narrative for and explanation of this period, along with the lack of any definable 'late Roman archaeology'. A cut-and-paste job on sources such as Zosimus, Gildas, Nennius, the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle and other lesser snippets apparently yielded dates, names, places, events spanning the period from the closing century of the Roman diocese to the rise of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms. Though there were sites with deposits and material datable to the later Roman period because of the coins of that date, they were not sufficient to define a distinctively late Roman 'facies' of the material culture. A point worth making here, and it is one to which we shall return, is that of the quantity of archaeological evidence. Up till about 1970 it was tiny; limited in a way that to the modern worker seems barely imaginable. At that time a serious researcher (and again there were very few of them either) could realistically hope to read the majority, even the totality, of the published evidence on Roman Britain, and not just in monographs but also in papers in national and county journals. The 1964 *A Romano-British Bibliography* comprehended all the published material on Roman Britain in the pages of two volumes (Bonser 1964).

Such archaeology as there was by 1970 was largely subordinated to the text-derived narrative and to the intellectual framework derived from that narrative of 'continuity'. That Roman Britain and Anglo-Saxon England were in some way imbricated with each other and that the Roman lay at the roots of aspects of the Anglo-Saxon had been current since at least the days of Myres' 1936 treatment. The question was 'how': what aspects of Roman politics and culture survived long enough to influence the re-establishment of Mediterranean-style urban and Christian culture in England from the turn of the sixth and seventh centuries (a 'mere' two centuries later)? In many ways the years around 1970 marked the high-water mark of this tendency. 'Continuity' was seen as operating essentially in two ways: one the presence of 'Anglo-Saxons' in Britain before the end of the Roman period; the other the prolonging of forms of Roman-ness through the fifth century and on into the sixth and seventh. An example of the former which was very influential was the relatively recent publication by Sonia Hawkes and Gerald Dunning of classes of dress-accessories (principally buckles) of late Roman date but then thought to demonstrate 'Germanic' artistic influence and thus the presence of Anglo-Saxons in fourth-century Britain (Hawkes and Dunning 1961). Noel Myres, after a lifetime's study of early Anglo-Saxon pottery, proposed that the decorative schemes on certain types of pottery from the late Roman wheel-thrown industries prefigured designs found on the hand-made cremation urns of the fifth-century Anglo-Saxons: his 'Romano-Saxon ware' (Myres 1956) again suggesting the presence of 'Germans' in fourth-century Britain. He followed this up in his *Anglo-Saxon Pottery and the Settlement of England*, in which he suggested that Anglo-Saxons had been settled as communities in late Roman Britain as *foederati* or *laeti*, in relation to late Roman centres of power, particularly in eastern Britain, his 'Phase of overlap and controlled settlement' (Myres 1969, ch. V). This tradition sought to establish the presence of Anglo-Saxons in a still-functioning late Roman Britain in order for them to act as a conduit for influence from Britain to England. A complementary position was taken by those workers seeking to prolong the 'afterlife' of Roman Britain beyond A.D. 410, again to juxtapose Roman and Anglo-Saxon in time and space in order for influences to flow from the former to the latter. A good case-study of this is provided by the evidence flowing from the series of major excavations in Winchester in the '60s to early '70s under the inspiration and direction of Martin Biddle. Biddle was well aware of the position on the Continent, especially in the Rhineland and Danube but also Gaul, where 'continuity' from the Roman Empire to the successor kingdoms was essentially a 'given': why should Britain be different? This approach is well encapsulated in the contribution on 'Towns' that Biddle wrote for the volume published in 1976 under the editorship of David Wilson on *The Archaeology of Anglo-Saxon England* where the intellectual framework is expressed tellingly as 'Continuity is inherently more likely' (Biddle 1976, 103). The problem, of course, was what sort of 'continuity'? The answer was what came to be termed 'institutional continuity', with towns serving as centres of power rather than population. Biddle's Winchester served as a good example since it was possible to point to fourth-century 'Hawkes and Dunning' metalwork at Lankhills, very late Romano-British material of the early fifth century from within the walled area, the presence on some of the same sites of fifth-century Anglo-Saxon pottery, other early Anglo-Saxon settlement and burial in the Winchester area, and the emergence of Winchester as an Anglo-Saxon royal and ecclesiastical centre from the first half of the seventh century (Biddle 1973). Another major excavation project in a Romano-British urban centre getting under way at the same time was to be formative in its effects on field techniques as well as on interpretation of the fifth and sixth centuries: the total and meticulous excavation of the baths-basilica at Wroxeter by Philip Barker and his team between 1966 and 1990, Barker being convinced (rightly) that only excavation *in extenso* would reveal the fugitive traces of timber structures that characterised this period (Barker *et al.* 1997). This crucial development in field techniques away from 'Wheeler boxes' to 'open area' excavation had already been gathering pace, for instance with Frere at Verulamium and Biddle at Winchester. What Myres (Collingwood and Myres 1936, viii) characterised as the 'great gulf fixed' between Roman Britain and Anglo-Saxon England was starting to be bridged. Or at least it was in an urban context.

Other aspects of late Roman Britain remained more time-bounded by the barrier of A.D. 410. For instance, the study and archaeology of the Roman army, traditionally a major focus of effort in Romano-British studies, remained largely in thrall to the notion that Constantine III removed

all or a significant part of the remaining forces in Britain to the Continent in A.D. 406, never to return, and that was that as the beacon burned for the last time above *Rutupiae*. Nevertheless, projects under way at the time such as Charles Daniels' 1974–81 excavation of 'chalets' at Housesteads (Rushworth 2009) and later Wallsend were already showing that the late Roman period was there and that it looked different to the familiar second century, as was later to be corroborated at South Shields, Vindolanda and elsewhere. Rural archaeology, still dominated by the study of villas, above all the residential buildings of villas, likewise assumed an end early in the fifth century as Roman civilisation 'collapsed' and villas along with it, though historical geographers such as Finberg (1964) in his particular study of Withington (Glos.) or Glanville Jones in his wider elaboration of the 'multiple estate' model (e.g. Jones, G. 1976) considered whether relict Romano-British landholdings might be implicated in the emergence of later Welsh and Anglo-Saxon patterns of landholding, a sort of rural version of the 'institutional continuity' model. But otherwise the Roman period rural landscape in the South and East was largely a void, both of information and of research, in important part because the large-scale stripping of landscapes, the rural equivalent of the urban 'open area' excavations, had hardly begun. But it was becoming clear that this state of affairs would not last; work such as that by Peter Fowler and others on the corridor of the M5 through Gloucestershire and Somerset had found a far higher incidence of Roman-period rural sites than had till then been thought possible, almost all of them not villas (cf. Jones, B. 1984). In the North and West the picture was starting slowly to change as the traditional stranglehold of the archaeology of the army was loosened by the persistent if unsung efforts of workers such as George Jobey (Miket and Burgess 1984, especially 410–15) on the 'native' settlements and peoples of northern Britain. The same implicit assumptions held also for most of the study of religion, with the 'death of the gods' expressed by the abandonment and dereliction of their temples round about A.D. 400 (cf. Lewis 1965, 139–46). There was, of course, one major exception to that, Christianity. That the Church was present in fourth-century Britain was clearly evidenced. That the non-Anglo-Saxon regions of Western Britain were Christian by the sixth century was clear, not least from the pages of Gildas. What was less clear was whether the religion was really a channel of 'continuity', given the awkward differences in location, forms and structures between the two periods, or whether rather there was a 'Celtic Church' that had taken its own course diverging from that of Rome.

'Continuity' of a rather different sort was also a major concern of those scholars researching and excavating on Western Britain in the fifth and sixth centuries, the 'post-' or 'sub-Roman' period. The archaeology of Christianity in the 'Celtic West' was a major preoccupation of research and excavation (e.g. Thomas 1971). But there was also a wider archaeological perspective being taken by a number of researchers, drawing on the increasing body of excavated evidence, particularly from 'high-status' sites. Foremost perhaps amongst these was Leslie Alcock, whose excavations at South Cadbury hillfort in Somerset from 1966 to 1970 put the area and period on the public map. The title and subtitle of his popular work on the project *'By South Cadbury is that Camelot ...': Excavations at Cadbury Castle 1966–70* (Alcock 1972) show how in large measure this was achieved, but also one of the then dominant concerns of the archaeology of 'sub-Roman' Western Britain: King Arthur and the 'quest for the historical Arthur'. The previous year Alcock had published a scholarly work of synthesis on what we might now refer to as the 'Irish Sea Province' in the fifth to seventh centuries with *Arthur's Britain* in bold on the cover and the subtitle *History and Archaeology AD367–634* not encountered till the fly-leaf (Alcock 1971). Two years later John Morris published his controversial *The Age of Arthur*, with the subtitle *A History of the British Isles from 350 to 650* in a distinctly smaller typeface (Morris 1973). This is not to criticise either publishers for a commercial decision or excavators for a 'spin' that was profitable for funding (see now Halsall 2013 for 'the historical Arthur'). But it does show that the archaeology of this part of the British Isles was developing with different concerns to those current in the areas that were to fall under Anglo-Saxon sway, with an emphasis more on the origins of the polities of these regions in a 'Celtic' context as opposed to the formation of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms further east. These were difficult to reconcile, and to an extent remain so, one of the long-standing disciplinary divisions that hinder a unified vision of the period, the other one being of course between 'Romanist' and 'Saxonist'.

The historiography of early Anglo-Saxon archaeology is not to be enterprised lightly (cf. Arnold 1988, ch. 1; Hills 2003, ch. 2), so it will not be here. I would just like to note that it was again about 1970 that the face of the subject began to alter. In particular the previous almost exclusive concentration on funerary archaeology began to be superseded, with major projects on settlements being undertaken, notably at West Stow (Suffolk) from 1965 to 1972 (West 1985) and Mucking (Essex) where the epic project of what would now be termed landscape archaeology by the Joneses lasted from 1965 to 1978 (Hamerow 1993). Funerary archaeology was not neglected, though, and one might point in particular to the start of another epic project, the complete excavation of the cemetery within its landscape at Spong Hill (Norfolk) from 1972 to 1981 (Hills and Lucy 2013). These three projects, and other later ones, are characterised by the scale of the undertaking. As in other areas of archaeology, including the late Roman, it was felt that only extensive excavation could recover a large enough sample for spatial and chronological patterning to be identifiable. Moreover, they allowed the early Anglo-Saxon phase/s to be related to the preceding Roman-period land-use, starting to break down the period-specialism barriers.

One common theme that deserves to be stressed is the centrality for all the geographical areas or culture-historical periods just discussed of these large-scale and long-lasting excavation projects (cf. Schofield 2010), often overlooked in favour of more intellectualising aspects of the development of research. The projects alluded to above, and others, changed our notions both of what happened in the past and of how it should be approached through field-work. The Roman to medieval transition was, in one way or another, a major research focus of all of them. Perhaps because they have been part of the mental landscape of British archaeology for so long they have become taken for granted. At the time they were of huge significance and they of course profoundly influenced the creation and execution of subsequent projects: would urban archaeology in Canterbury or Exeter or Lincoln or London or York (let alone medieval cities such as Norwich) have been the way it was without the example of Winchester? After Mucking would landscape archaeology and the place within it of field-work ever be the same again? And it was not just the execution of these projects: these long-term enterprises were part of the formative intellectual (and other) experiences of many young workers, some of whom went from one of them to another, and in some cases into academic or field careers and still infest the profession. The artefactual and palaeoenvironmental suites these projects yielded were also central to the career and intellectual development of many specialists in material culture or environmental archaeology. So they as much as, possibly even more than, then-contemporary academic formulations, influenced the next forty years and continue to have influence. The tendency in disciplinary histories to de-personalise and over-reify must be resisted.

There was something of a time-lag between the upward curve in the acquisition of large amounts of new data and their deployment into new models for the later Roman period and beyond. Perhaps the first-fruits of the new evidence was the publication of the 1978 conference on 'The End of Roman Britain', where the bulk of the papers treat of the archaeological evidence (Casey 1979). Famously or notoriously Richard Reece's paper arguing that fourth-century towns were 'administrative villages' eventually had to be published elsewhere (Reece 1980). Stephen Johnson's *Later Roman Britain* was the first attempt to present a book-length treatment of the period, one that concentrated particularly on the military aspects of later Roman Britain and then looked at the period of Anglo-Saxon settlement in the island (Johnson 1980). Chris Arnold's *Roman Britain to Saxon England* sought to use the archaeology of the fourth to sixth centuries to give an account of the period freed of text-derived preconceptions and operating within a broadly processualist framework concentrating on social and economic structures (Arnold 1984), and as such was markedly innovative. My own *The Ending of Roman Britain* sought to emancipate the archaeology from the texts and to demonstrate the shortcomings of the texts, while attempting to open up time and space between the collapse of Roman-style material culture and the arrival of the Anglo-Saxons in any number (Esmonde Cleary 1989). A common feature of these books is by and large their rejection of the texts as the structuring evidence for the period. Another feature, and one where my own book is perhaps most assertive, is in opting for a 'short' chronology, that is that Roman-style political, economic and cultural structures collapsed rapidly and profoundly in the wake and as a consequence of Roman disengagement

from the island around A.D. 410 (the relevant chapter gives a date-bracket of A.D. 380–430). So it sought to promote ‘rupture’ rather than ‘continuity’, certainly as regarded urban and related ‘Roman’ sites; the countryside already showed signs of a different transition. In relation to this it is perhaps worth returning to the point made early on about the ways in which changing ideas define themselves against existing frameworks: partly the ‘short’ chronology or ‘rupture’ model needs to be read as a reaction to the ‘continuity’ school of thought that had been so influential in the ’70s and was still evident in the ’80s. It has recently and kindly been said that *The Ending* ‘garnered something approaching academic consensus’ (Gerrard 2013, 11), an exposed position to be in. This is not to say that there were no more syntheses on the period, but, as James Gerrard notes, not that many. Some of the debate was now shifting to the Anglo-Saxon side, in particular whether the ‘Anglo-Saxon settlement’ was the product of a general movement of population as had long been held (e.g. Welch 1992), or whether instead it should be thought of as essentially an élite phenomenon, with Anglo-Saxon military leaders imposing themselves mainly on a militarily-inept post-Roman population (e.g. Higham 1992), who increasingly assimilated themselves to ‘Anglo-Saxon’ funerary practices and material culture. Moreover, those working on Roman Britain were increasingly drawn into the ‘Romanisation’ debate, which focused on the earlier part of the Roman period in Britain. Nevertheless, there were some works of synthesis of the late to post-Roman period seeking to situate it either in the context of wider imperial trends (Dark 2000) or to analyse what came after A.D. 410 as a period of warlordism reverting to pre-Roman structures (Laycock 2008). One synthesis that argues for a ‘short’ chronology is *The Decline and Fall of Roman Britain*, in which Neil Faulkner, basing himself in part on his analysis of urban building patterns through the Roman period, partly on his own epistemological position, argues for a sudden and catastrophic end to élite (and visible) Roman culture in Britain as the result of a social revolution (Faulkner 2000). In contrast, the most recent synthesis of the period *The Ruin of Britain: an Archaeological Perspective* (note the subtitle) argues more for a ‘long’ chronology, and that much of what used to be seen as a dichotomous period is in fact a matter of the replacement of one set of élite symbols (Roman), by others (Anglo-Saxon, Western British), both of them strongly influenced by the militarisation of élite self-representation in the Western Empire more widely (Gerrard 2013).

The ‘short’ chronology has been vigorously attacked (e.g. Cool 2006, ch. 19) for being too dependent on the ‘end’ date given by the cessation in the supply of coin, our principal dating medium, and thus the temptation to take the end of dating as signifying the end of activity. Hilary Cool had also suggested how to recognise the Roman-style artefact suite characteristic of the post-A.D. 400 horizon (Cool 2000) in the North and elsewhere (cf. Collins and Allason-Jones 2010). In fact, it has long been known that there were sites where activity clearly continued for some considerable time after the introduction of the latest coins and the artefacts such as pottery that depend on them for dating. We have already met two of the well-known cases, Insula XXVII at Verulamium and the Wroxeter baths basilica. There are now many more, from sites such as Birdoswald on Hadrian’s Wall (Wilmott 1997) down to Silchester (another long-running project from the ’70s) in the South-East (Fulford *et al.* 2006, pt. VI) and Bath in the South-West (Gerrard 2007), the latter dated by ¹⁴C. Radiocarbon, in conjunction with Bayesian statistical analysis, which must be an important way forward for a period where the artefactual dating is so problematic; it should allow us to escape the ‘trap’ sprung by the cessation of coin supply. Nevertheless, it is also now clear that some coinage, certainly the silver, probably continued in use for some time after it was last supplied in A.D. 411, as the evidence from ‘clipping’ shows (Guest 2005). As well as the coinage, there is the remarkable spate of precious-object hoarding in Britain, probably in the first half of the fifth century, above all in eastern Britain, suggesting Roman coins, plate and jewellery continued to be a significant presence and resource (Hobbs 2006, 53–8), with the Patching (W Sussex) hoard possibly signifying that sometimes coins remained of value, if only as bullion, down into the second half of the fifth century (Abdy 2013). The ‘long’ chronology has some solid backing, but is it more than a death postponed? Coming at this from the other cultural direction, some of the evidence for the arrival of Anglo-Saxon material culture suggests it may well be significantly earlier than the mid-fifth-century horizon which had long been the working hypothesis. In particular the dating evidence from the Spong Hill cemetery (Hills and

Lucy 2013, ch. 5) argues for the first half of the fifth century for a significant part of the burials in the cemetery. Are we seeing the beginnings of a ‘neo-continuity’ model? In this scenario what we would be looking at is not ‘continuity’ in the 1970s sense of a handing on of power from Roman Britain to Anglo-Saxon England, but rather a ‘continuity’ evident not so much at the markers of Roman culture such as forts and towns and villas, but in the countryside and amongst populations. This is the message of major landscape projects such as West Heslerton (E Yorks.) where the latest Roman-period structures and artefacts are not clearly separate from the so-called ‘Anglian’ cemeteries (Powlesland 1999), or Wasperton (Warwicks.) where the cemetery starts ‘Roman’ and turns into ‘Anglo-Saxon’ (Carver *et al.* 2009). Whereas Spong Hill and West Heslerton are near the east coast and thus in the region traditionally seen as receiving the earliest Anglo-Saxon arrivals in the fifth century, Wasperton is well to the west, in a region not thought to have fallen under Anglo-Saxon suzerainty until the sixth century or later. In his study of western Roman Britain in this period, *Britannia Prima: Roman Britain’s Last Province* (reprinted in this volume) and building on the last forty years of study, Roger White has been able to suggest that this was a region where a devolved, Roman-style structure long outlasted the threshold of A.D. 410 and into which incoming Anglo-Saxon peoples and structures had to fit (White 2007). An even wider perspective on a crucial aspect of continuity or discontinuity will be presented in the forthcoming ‘Fields of Britannia’ project, looking at what the Roman period bequeathed to its successors at the very basic and crucial level of agrarian production (Rippon *et al.* 2013). Forty years on are we coming full circle on the question of ‘continuity’?

I hope that the discussion above has put forward a case that the years around 1970 were the ones in which the study of the archaeology of the period for which A.D. 410 was the hinge came into being as a period with its own particular problems and approaches and its own particular types of archaeological correlates. One index of this might be that in all subsequent synthetic treatments of Roman Britain the later period and ‘the end’ have figured prominently (e.g. Mattingly 2007) as they have in all multi-contributor agenda-settings or compendiums (e.g. James and Millett 2001; Todd 2003), despite the dominance of the ‘Romanisation’ debate over the last quarter-century or so. Another index of the importance of this horizon is the series of major field projects which originated then or not long after and which have now largely made their way into print (e.g. Mucking, Silchester, Spong Hill, Wroxeter) or are heading that way (West Heslerton). Equally, the long-term studies of important classes of artefacts, often enough by one worker or a small group of workers over their professional lifetimes, have now come to fruition. Though often the excavation of particular sites or landscapes or the study of particular classes of evidence were embarked upon for contingent reasons, little realising how long they would take (probably just as well), it is now clear that that was what was necessary for a meaningful conclusion. Their end-products have shown the enormous value of the long-term in an environment where emphasis is increasingly placed on the short-term project.

I would like to conclude with some brief remarks on how the intellectual landscape has changed ‘forty years on’ and the promise that this brings for continued exploration of this period. Compared with forty years ago, the most obvious change is the sheer volume and range of evidence. This is largely the result of two sets of initials, PPG16 and the PAS. The amount of evidence that each scheme has produced is huge in comparison with what went before; for once the term ‘exponential’ might be used in its technical rather than its colloquial sense. PPG16 *et al.* have transformed the place of archaeology from a semi-amateur, poorly-structured activity in the ’70s, largely dependent on government funding, to the present structure of a profession embedded alongside others in the planning and development process, symbolised by the rise of the IfA. This is not to suggest that all is well: in terms of creating a stable, reasonably-remunerated and well-structured profession there is clearly ‘work to be done’ (though that was not PPG16’s intention or fault). In research terms, one of the systemic problems of the PPG16 model (and its analogues in Wales and Scotland and their more recent successors) has been the disappearance of so much information into the ‘grey literature’, there to languish unseen and waste its potential. But the current Cotswold Archaeology/University of Reading project on ‘Realising the Research Potential of Developer-Funded Archaeology in England’, focusing on the Roman period, is now sufficiently well advanced that it is clear that it has the potential to transform our views of

the Roman period, late Roman included, by rescuing and deploying so much information. In conjunction with the OASIS project as it develops this should enable the data so far locked in the 'grey literature' to be released. The success of the PAS has been remarkable, with the total number of records fast approaching the 1,000,000 mark. Of these, some 40 per cent relate to the Roman period, relatively short though it is (Brindle 2014). This astonishing data-base is already starting to transform our perceptions of Roman Britain, for instance in the study of the most prolific class of Roman material, coins (Walton 2012). Some papers in this volume also show its beneficial effects. In the case both of PPG etc. and of the PAS I have used the word 'transform', and I think this is entirely appropriate given the scale of the data-bases involved. But it is not just the quantity of data that is transforming our perceptions of the period, it is also the range of data-types both artefactual and palaeoenvironmental and the range of analyses to which they can be subjected. One of the most important developments of the last twenty years or less has been the development of material culture as a route to understanding the past and the people in it, rather than as a series of appendices to excavation narratives. In fact for Roman Britain it could be argued that this also goes back to the '70s with, for instance, the systematisation of important classes of evidence such as coins (Reece 1972) or pottery industries such as the New Forest (Fulford 1975) or Oxfordshire (Young 1977).

We also now have to hand exegetic frameworks that can do justice to the richness and diversity of the data for the 'long fifth century'. I would like to draw attention in particular to 'identity', which is a powerful complex of ideas in itself and also allows us to escape the 'continuity or rupture' debate, which constrained the whole field to a particular perspective. Because of course most of the debates about the period of A.D. 410 are to do with 'identity'. Traditionally for the fifth century this has been seen in 'ethnic' terms, a reflection of wider debates for the period across Europe (cf. Halsall 2007): 'Romano-Britons' and 'Anglo-Saxons'. But more recent work has emphasised that factors such as gender, age and status were probably more important in structuring identity than peoples' actual or assumed 'ethnic' identity, especially in the rather particular world of funerary practice. To what extent are we seeing the replacement of Roman-derived fashions of self-representation by others, especially ones such as militarisation for males (cf. Gerrard 2013, ch. 5), be it Roman-style or German-style or 'Celtic'-style in the West and beyond the Wall. Women and their roles are clearly visible in Anglo-Saxon cemeteries, much more so than outside the funerary domain and outside 'Germanic' identity. Children are sometimes seen, if not heard, at other times elude us. Social status is also clear in this funerary world, and may increasingly be in other forms of evidence, such as elite metalwork, for instance Quoit Brooch-style objects where we may be seeing people other than 'Anglo-Saxons' (Suzuki 2000; Soulat 2009). One of the most exciting developments of recent years has been the application of new scientific analyses to human bone. The results already derived from stable-isotope analysis have been startling (cf. Eckardt 2010). I started my archaeological career at Lankhills. This late Roman cemetery was to become famous for Clarke's (1979) identification of 'incomers' through burial rite. The stable-isotope work resulting from the work by Oxford Archaeology more recently (Chenery *et al.* 2010) may not have agreed with Clarke's identifications, but what it did do was demonstrate that of the burials sampled, over 20 per cent were of people whose origins lay outside the Winchester area, either elsewhere in Britain, or in a significant number of cases outside Britain with a bias towards more Mediterranean origins. It had tended to be assumed that physical mobility in Roman Britain was not common, the army and certain other groups such as traders apart. To find such a high proportion of the sampled population of an otherwise unexceptional fourth-century *civitas*-capital to be from elsewhere has been something of an eye-opener. It suggests that the population of late Roman Britain may not have been as homogeneous as often assumed; that it was already a cosmopolitan mix. Add to that immigrant populations from north-west Europe who themselves may not have been that homogeneous, and the potential of such analyses to change perceptions is clear. As with fourth-century Lankhills, if for fifth-century burials we place these analyses alongside those from burial rite or material culture, the potential for constructive confusion is enormous. These approaches to the analysis of populations are integrative, rather than dissociative by 'ethnicity'. Moreover, a common aspect of this work is that it compares Britain with the wider Western Empire. How like or unlike what is

going on the other side of the Channel in the fifth century will need to be an important strand in future work, otherwise the archaeology of the island will become insular in the bad sense: ‘what do they of Britain know who only Britain know?’.

I hope that this paper has served to give some context to the contributions to this volume and to allow the reader to identify some of the intellectual traditions that they embody or seek to counter. The roots of these traditions go back at least to the period when the Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies sought to promote Romano-British studies through the foundation of a dedicated academic journal. In a volume resulting from the centenary of the Society we recognise with gratitude that without the support of the Society we would not be in as favourable a position as we are today.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abdy, R. 2013: ‘The Patching Hoard’, in F. Hunter and K. Painter (eds), *Late Roman Silver and the End of the Empire: the Traprain Treasure in Context*, Edinburgh, 107–15
- Alcock, L. 1971: *Arthur’s Britain: History and Archaeology AD 367–634*, London
- Alcock, L. 1972: ‘By South Cadbury is that Camelot’: *Excavations at Cadbury Castle 1966–70*, London
- Arnold, C. J. 1984: *Roman Britain to Saxon England*, London
- Arnold, C. J. 1988: *An Archaeology of the Early Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms*, London
- Barker, P., White, R., Pretty, K., Bird, H., and Corbishley, M. 1997: *The Baths Basilica, Wroxeter: Excavations 1966–90*, English Heritage Archaeological Report 8, London
- Biddle, M. 1973: ‘Winchester: the development of an early capital’, in H. Jankuhn, W. Sclesinger and H. Steuer (eds), *Vor- und Frühformen der europäischen Stadt im Mittelalter*, Göttingen, 229–61
- Biddle, M. 1976: ‘Towns’, in D. Wilson (ed.), *The Archaeology of Anglo-Saxon England*, London, 99–150
- Bonser, W. 1964: *A Romano-British Bibliography*, Oxford
- Brindle, T. 2014: *The Portable Antiquities Scheme and Roman Britain*, British Museum Research Publication 196, London
- Carver, M., Hills, C., and Scheschkewitz, J. 2009: *Wasperton: a Roman, British and Anglo-Saxon Community in Central England*, Woodbridge
- Casey, J. (ed.) 1979: *The End of Roman Britain*, BAR British Series 71, Oxford
- Chenery, C., Evans, J., Lamb, A., Müldner, G., and Eckardt, H. 2010: ‘Oxygen and Strontium isotope analysis’, in P. Booth, A. Simmonds, A. Boyle, S. Clough, H. Cool and D. Poore, *The Late Roman Cemetery at Lankhills, Winchester: Excavations 2000–2005*, Oxford Archaeology Monograph 10, Oxford, 421–8
- Clarke, G. 1979: *The Roman Cemetery at Lankhills*, Winchester Studies 3, Pre-Roman and Roman Winchester, Part 2, Oxford
- Collingwood, R., and Myres, J. N. L. 1936: *Roman Britain and the English Settlements*, Oxford History of England 1, Oxford
- Collins, R., and Allason-Jones, L. (eds) 2010: *Finds from the Frontier: Material Culture in the 4th–5th Centuries*, CBA Research Report 162, York
- Cool, H. 2000: ‘The parts left over: material culture into the fifth century’, in T. Wilmott and P. Wilson (eds), *The Late Roman Transition in the North*, BAR British Series 299, Oxford, 47–66
- Cool, H. 2006: *Eating and Drinking in Roman Britain*, Cambridge
- Dark, K. 2000: *Britain and the End of the Roman Empire*, Stroud
- Eckardt, H. (ed.) 2010: *Roman Diasporas: Archaeological Approaches to Mobility and Diversity in the Roman Empire*, Journal of Roman Archaeology Supplementary Series 78, Portsmouth, RI
- Esmonde Cleary, S. 1989: *The Ending of Roman Britain*, London
- Faulkner, N. 2000: *The Decline and Fall of Roman Britain*, Stroud
- Finberg, H. 1964: ‘Roman and Saxon Withington’, *Lucerna: Studies of Some Problems in the Early History of England*, Leicester, 21–65
- Frere, S. 1967: *Britannia: a History of Roman Britain*, London
- Frere, S. 1983: *Verulamium Excavations Volume II*, Reports of the Research Committee of the Society of Antiquaries of London 41, London
- Fulford, M. 1975: *New Forest Roman Pottery: Manufacture and Distribution with a Corpus of Pottery Types*, BAR British Series 17, Oxford
- Fulford, M., Clarke, A., and Eckardt, H. 2006: *Life and Labour in Late Roman Silchester: Excavations in Insula IX since 1997*, Britannia Monograph 22, London
- Gerrard, J. 2007: ‘The temple of Sulis Minerva at Bath and the end of Roman Britain’, *Antiquaries Journal* 87, 148–64

- Gerrard, J. 2013: *The Ruin of Roman Britain: An Archaeological Perspective*, Cambridge
- Guest, P. 2005: *The Late Roman Gold and Silver Coins from the Hoxne Treasure*, London
- Halsall, G. 2007: *Barbarian Migrations and the Roman West, 376–568*, Cambridge
- Halsall, G. 2013: *Worlds of Arthur: Facts and Fictions of the Dark Ages*, Oxford
- Hamerow, H. 1993: *Excavations at Mucking Volume 2: the Anglo-Saxon Settlement, Excavations by M U and W T Jones*, English Heritage Archaeological Report 21, London
- Haverfield, F. 1912: *The Romanization of Roman Britain*, Oxford
- Hawkes, S., and Dunning, G. 1961: 'Soldiers and settlers in Britain: fourth to fifth century', *Medieval Archaeology* 5, 1–70
- Higham, N. 1992: *Rome, Britain and the Anglo-Saxons*, London
- Hills, C. 2003: *Origins of the English*, London
- Hills, C., and Lucy, S. 2013: *Spong Hill Part IX: Chronology and Synthesis*, Cambridge
- Hobbs, R. 2006: *Late Roman Precious Metal Deposits c. AD 200–700: Changes Over Time*, BAR International Series 1504, Oxford
- James, S., and Millett, M. 2001: *Britons and Romans: Advancing an Archaeological Agenda*, CBA Research Report 125, York
- Johnson, S. 1980: *Later Roman Britain*, London
- Jones, B. 1984: *Past Imperfect: The Story of Rescue Archaeology*, London
- Jones, G. 1976: 'Multiple estates and early settlement', in P. Sawyer (ed.), *Medieval Settlement: Continuity and Change*, London, 15–40
- Laycock, S. 2008: *Britannia: the Failed State*, Stroud
- Lewis, M. 1965: *Temples in Roman Britain*, Cambridge
- Mattingly, D. 2007: *An Imperial Possession: Britain in the Roman Empire*, London
- Miket, R., and Burgess, C. (eds) 1984: *Between and Beyond the Walls: Essays on the Prehistory and History of North Britain in Honour of George Jobey*, Edinburgh
- Morris, J. 1973: *The Age of Arthur: a History of the British Isles from 350 to 650*, London
- Myres, J. N. L. 1956: 'Romano-Saxon pottery', in D. Harden (ed.), *Dark Age Britain: Studies presented to E. T. Leeds*, London, 16–39
- Myres, J. N. L. 1969: *Anglo-Saxon Pottery and the Settlement of England*, Oxford
- Powlesland, D. 1999: *West Heslerton: The Anglian Cemetery* (2 vols), Yedingham
- Reece, R. 1972: 'A short survey of the Roman coins found on fourteen sites in Britain', *Britannia* 3, 269–76
- Reece, R. 1980: 'Town and country: the end of Roman Britain', *World Archaeology* 12, 77–92
- Richmond, I. 1955: *Roman Britain*, London
- Rippon, S., Smart, C., Pears, B., and Fleming, F. 2013: 'The fields of Britannia: continuity and discontinuity in the *pays* and regions of Roman Britain', *Landscapes* 14.1, 33–53
- Rushworth, A. 2009: *Housesteads Roman Fort – The Grandest Station. Excavation and Survey at Housesteads, 1954–95, by Charles Daniels, John Gillam, James Crow and others* (2 vols), London
- Schofield, J. (ed.) 2010: *Great Excavations: Shaping the Archaeological Profession*, Oxford
- Soulat, J. 2009: *Le matériel archéologique de type Saxon et Anglo-Saxon en Gaule mérovingienne*, Tome XX des Mémoires publiées par l'Association française d'Archéologie mérovingienne, Saint-Germain-en-Laye
- Suzuki, S. 2000: *The Quoit Brooch Style and Anglo-Saxon Settlement*, Woodbridge
- Thomas, C. 1971: *Britain and Ireland in Early Christian Times AD 400–800*, London
- Todd, M. (ed.) 2003: *A Companion to Roman Britain*, Oxford
- Walton, P. 2012: *Rethinking Roman Britain: Coinage and Archaeology*, Collection Moneta 137, Wetteren
- Welch, M. 1992: *Anglo-Saxon England*, London
- West, S. 1985: *West Stow: The Anglo-Saxon Village* (2 vols), East Anglian Archaeology Report 24, Ipswich
- White, R. 2007: *Britannia Prima: Britain's Last Roman Province*, Stroud
- Wilmott, T. 1997: *Birdoswald: Excavations of a Roman Fort on Hadrian's Wall and its Successor Settlements: 1987–92*, English Heritage Archaeological Report 14, London
- Young, C. 1977: *The Roman Pottery Industry of the Oxford Region*, BAR British Series 43, Oxford