

Impact case study (REF3)

Institution: University of Cambridge		
Unit of Assessment: Classics		
Title of case study: Capitalising on the Heritage of Aldborough Roman Town		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: Since 2009		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Prof Martin Millett	Laurence Professor of Classical Archaeology	Since October 2001
Dr Rose Ferraby	Research Associate	January 2017–June 2019
Period when the claimed impact occurred: Since 2009		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words) Since 2009, research on <i>Isurium Brigantum</i> (Aldborough, North Yorks), a key Roman administrative and economic centre, has greatly increased knowledge and understanding of the site. Engaging the local community in this work has increased their appreciation of the heritage, stimulated community activity, and enhanced individual well-being. A new guidebook, new on-site sign boards and an innovative art exhibition have shared this knowledge, contributed to increased visitor numbers to the village and the site, and influenced English Heritage's local strategy. Input to the local planning process has directly impacted the allocation of land for housing development in the vicinity of the site.</p>		
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words) Since 2009 we have thoroughly re-evaluated the Roman town of <i>Isurium Brigantum</i> (Aldborough, North Yorks), reassessing its development in the context of the growth of Roman imperialism in northern Europe, and effectively rewriting the history of Roman occupation of NE England. <i>Isurium</i> was the capital of an administrative unit (<i>civitas</i>) encompassing most of what is now Yorkshire, County Durham and parts of Northumberland and Lancashire, and one of the principal centres of civic administration in the province. However, it had been little explored since the 1930s. Our research has integrated evidence from:</p> <p>(a) a complete re-examination of all past antiquarian and archaeological research at Aldborough, including accurate mapping of past interventions ([R3] and [R4]);</p> <p>(b) a large-scale survey of the Roman town and its environs (covering more than 100ha) using fluxgate gradiometry, topographical surveying and selective ground-penetrating radar survey, with a full and detailed interpretation and accurate mapping of the results ([R3] and [R4]);</p> <p>(c) full analysis and publication of the results and material from a previous, unanalysed and unpublished, large-scale field-survey of the environs of the Roman town ([R2], [R3] and [R4]);</p> <p>(d) selective re-examination of past excavation trenches in order to complement the survey and provide evidence for the chronology and character of the site ([R4]);</p> <p>(e) cataloguing and analysing key categories of material from past work on the site (coins, monumental stonework and architectural fragments) ([R4] and [R5]);</p> <p>(f) geoarchaeological coring in the flood plain between the town and the river Ure in order to map the ancient landscape buried beneath alluvium (laboratory analysis in progress).</p>		

This work has transformed understanding of the physical form and historical development of this important Roman town. Not only was the Roman town considerably more extensive than previously understood (extending significantly beyond its 21.6ha walled enclosure), but analysis of the different strands of evidence has demonstrated that the town was founded as a trading centre in the wake of Roman annexation around AD 70 and thoroughly replanned at the same time as a new bridge over the Ure was built c. AD 120. We have revealed that the town was subsequently densely occupied by a cosmopolitan population, developed in the later Roman period as a major tax-collection centre, becoming heavily defended, and continued as a major centre into the early post-Roman period. Finally, we have achieved a much better understanding of the history of the archaeology, revealing how exploration of the site in the 1830–40s was linked with the development of an antiquarian garden at Aldborough Manor (now part of the English Heritage site). Our research has been incorporated in the presentation of the site to the general public both through our academic input into new interpretation boards (installed in April 2020), and through our new guidebook (published in 2016 [R1]).

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

[R1] M. Millett and R. Ferraby 2016. *Aldborough Roman Town: English Heritage Guidebooks*. London

[R2] C. Dobinson, R. Ferraby, J. Lucas, M. Millett and L. Wallace (2018) 'Archaeological Field Survey in the Environs of Aldborough (*Isurium Brigantum*)', *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal*, 90, 29-58, DOI: [10.1080/00844276.2018.1457615](https://doi.org/10.1080/00844276.2018.1457615)

[R3] R. Ferraby and M. Millett (2019). Aldborough Roman Town Layered Plan with site gazetteer [Dataset]. <https://doi.org/10.17863/CAM.39574>

[R4] R. Ferraby and M. Millett (2020) *Isurium Brigantum: an archaeological survey of Roman Aldborough*, Society of Antiquaries Research Report [Output in REF2] 10.26530/20.500.12657/37741

[R5] R. Brickstock (2019) 'Roman Coins from Aldborough: A Re-assessment and Overview', *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal*, DOI: [10.1080/00844276.2019.1607672](https://doi.org/10.1080/00844276.2019.1607672)

[R2, R4, R5] have all been peer reviewed, and [R3] represents the data produced by the excavations. [R1] distils the research for a popular audience. The above items, therefore, meet the 2* minimum requirement.

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

A small part of the Roman town beneath the village of Aldborough has been open to the public since the 1950s (now English Heritage). The area within the Roman walls is a Scheduled Ancient Monument. Our work has revealed the importance of the site to an increasingly wide range of visitors, helped to increase visitor numbers, and changed the relationship of local residents to their Roman heritage, contributing to community identity and enhanced well-being. We have provided key new information to the local planning authority, protecting the heritage.

(1) Impact on Local Residents

Our research has renewed residents' awareness of archaeological potential of Roman Aldborough: "This has increased the interest in the site by the local community, neighbouring communities and the archaeological community" [E1]. Consequently, in March 2012 the Friends of Roman Aldborough (FORA) were formed: 140 members now raise funds, run lectures, lead school visits, organise tours of the English Heritage site, and volunteer on

excavations (<http://romanaldborough.co.uk/>) [E2]. This has directly impacted on individual well-being: *“I can honestly say that my time with FORA and Martin and Rose’s Aldborough Project has been a life changer for me. It has really had a huge impact on myself and others that I know and have observed”* [E1]. As a result, residents now urge English Heritage to increase visitor access and improve signage, leading to English Heritage and the Aldborough Manor Estate agreeing to allow an extended tour across the Manor Garden, making the site more intelligible and facilitating better appreciation of the relationship between Roman site and 19th-century garden [E2]. FORA have contributed to the funding of new interpretation boards. Increased awareness of the extent and importance of the Roman site contributed to the campaign to limit new residential development immediately south of the town.

A “remarkable and deeply thoughtful piece of work” [E6], created by Ferraby with Rob St John, with Arts Council funding (<https://soundmarks.co.uk/>) innovatively explored the soundscapes of the Roman town and its archaeological investigation, allowing *“Isurium to be appreciated on yet another level and many visitors were further inspired not only by the content of the project but the way it was presented through modern technology”* [E1].

(2) Impact on English Heritage

Our research has enhanced the site presentation, placing the limited remains on display in the broader context both of the Roman town and of local antiquarian research. A new guidebook to the site ([R1]) sold 752 copies in 2018–19, the latest year for which data are available (being purchased by 29.4% of visitors), transformed visitor understanding: *“This is simply the best guide book (and best value for money) I have bought in years. The right level of detail, informative without being condescending and beautifully produced”* [E4(b)]. Our briefings allow FORA to run informed guided tours enhancing visitor experience: *“Having the guided tour supplemented by the guidebook gave a good insight into the sort of society which the Romans established here”* [E4(b)]. Our text and artwork inform new interpretation boards [E5], which the Senior Interpretation Manager notes has become *“the model for future English Heritage partnerships with academic organisations.”* We have significantly influenced English Heritage’s strategic plans. Their Senior Properties Curator, states [E3] that our work *“has also been a profound impact in terms of how English Heritage regards the site and the plans for its future”*, leveraging £20,000 investment in the site: *“with the renewed interest in the site brought about by the project, Aldborough will remain as a charging site ensuring both the continuation of access to the museum, which without an English Heritage physical presence on site would have been closed and the continued employment of a member of staff.”*

(3) Impact on Local Planning

Our survey of Aldborough with its full gazetteer and georeferenced maps of past work, together with the results of our geophysical surveys ([R3] and [R4]), have provided a key tool for the local planning authority (North Yorkshire County Council = NYCC) and the government’s statutory advisors (Historic England). Our data as a Geographic Imaging System is directly drawn upon in NYCC evaluation of planning applications [E7]. Our work has assisted in the sustainable development of land around Aldborough and Boroughbridge in the Harrogate Local Plan. In a dispute about allocations of land around Aldborough the Planning Inspector dealing with the Draft Harrogate Local Plan used information from our research on the likely impact of development [E8], to limit development immediately south of the Roman town. The Inspector of Ancient Monuments, Historic England, reports: *“On the basis of your report he [the Planning Inspector] was able to reach a decision and found that the proposed development would be unsustainable and should be deleted from the draft allocations”* [E9].

The Inspector's letter wrote: "*Having read the letter from Professor Millett, which indicates that the archaeology is more likely than not to be of national importance (being "a unique record of the functions of a major town in the hinterland of the Roman frontier") it seems to me that a precautionary approach is highly appropriate here*" [E8 (e)].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

[E1] Friends of Roman Aldborough pack including letters

[E2] Letter from a FORA trustee – impact on local knowledge/understanding

[E3] English Heritage – letter from the Senior Properties Curator on impact on English Heritage site

[E4] English Heritage – material providing feedback on guidebook

[E5] English Heritage – letter on contribution to the design and delivery of sign-boards

[E6] Report to Arts Council on Ferraby's "Soundmarks" project and exhibition

[E7] Letter from the Principal Archaeologist North Yorkshire County Council regarding input to improving planning control

[E8] Letter from and evidence to Planning Inspector regarding Draft Harrogate Local Plan

[E9] Letter from Inspector of Ancient Monuments, Historic England, regarding input to planning process