

Ribchester Revisited, UK

Course ID: ARCH XL 159

June 14–July 17, 2017

FIELD SCHOOL DIRECTORS:

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INTRODUCTION

The village of Ribchester is nestled in the heart of Lancashire's beautiful Ribble valley, and dates to the Roman period when an auxiliary cavalry fort was established on the north bank of the river Ribble. It was made famous by the discovery of the Ribchester Helmet, and associated hoard, in the 18th century, one of only three helmets of this type found in Britain and today these objects can be seen in the British Museum. The fort was built in approximately AD 72-3 by members of the twentieth legion, it was then occupied by the *Ala II Asturum* a Spanish auxiliary unit. In the 2nd century the fort was rebuilt in stone and around AD175 it was garrisoned by a Sarmatian auxiliary cavalry unit. From a research perspective this changing origin, changing recruitment and rebuilding of the fort is fascinating, and allows us to explore identity, migration and the intergration of military and civilian life. Controversially, however, popular culture identifies Sarmatians with the legends of King Arthur citing similarities between Arthurian tales and Sarmation myth.

The garrison at the fort was located in an important cross road between east and west, north and south and oversaw the foot and river traffic to maintain oversight of the surrounding area. It is often assumed that Roman forts were organized in a similar way, but Ribchester has an unusually large *Vicus* (the town just outside) and importantly was also a *Veteranorum* for retired soldiers (known as *Bremetenacum Veteranorum*). Unfortunately, most of the archaeological field work that has been carried out in Ribchester was during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, with some focused excavation in the 1980s and a small project by [Time Team](#) in its first TV season in the early 1990s. Our

project revisits Ribchester using the exploration of the previous archaeological archives and this important cutting edge IFR field school. The excavations primary objective is to explore the evolving use of the interior of the fort and its changing relationship with the *Vicus*. In 2016 we found our first evidence of women within the fort – beads and brooches proving how in the latest phases of activity it became a site not just for the army but families too.

The 2017 season promises to be extremely exciting because the project will continue to investigate a large 30m by 10m trench just inside the fort's north gate, opposite the granaries and where it is believed the barracks were located. So far the trench has revealed the remains of a clay floored building, with hearth, kiln fragments, slag, glassworking and metalworking refuse hinting at a *fabrica* or workshop. At the end of its life, the walls of this structure had been pulled down, scattering fragments of wall plaster across two roads: the *Via Sagularis*, which circumnavigates the interior of the fort, and the *Via Principalis*, leading to the center of the site. This demolition across two important roadways points to deliberate destruction, but not, to abandonment. In 2016 we discovered the guardhouse for the northgate, revealing untouched interior floor surfaces that are yet to be excavated. Additionally, we also identified the terminus of the outer ditch system as it meets the north road. There is a strong possibility that organic material will be present in the lower fills of these second century ditches and similar features have contained significant quantities of worked leather including shoes, parts of tents and leather cuttings. In 2017 our primary objectives will be to excavate the guardhouse floor, the outer ditch and the workshop, making this season the most ambitious and promising yet!

The Ribchester project also has a significant focus on the community. The site is classified as a monument at risk by Historic England, and so this project is an important opportunity to engage with heritage in practice. Part of the reason Ribchester is at risk is the neglect that this important site has seen, and so a valuable aspect of this project includes outreach – students and project partners spend a great deal of time communicating with the local population and we expect thousands of visitors with around 20 school visits. The 2016 season saw approximately 2000 visitors to the excavation. The project is also scheduled to take place during the Roman festival (July), an important event in the local calendar when a replica camp is erected and actors dressed in Roman military equipment parade their skills for the public. In 2015/6 these aspects proved very popular, and there will be the opportunity for students to experience this side of community archaeology.

ACADEMIC CREDIT UNITS & TRANSCRIPTS

Credit Units: Attending students will be awarded 12 quarter credit units (equivalent to 8 semester units) through our academic partner, UCLA Extension. UCLA is a top ranked research university and its archaeology program is ranked amongst the best in the country. All IFR field schools instructors and curricula are approved both by the corresponding academic department and the Academic Senate at UCLA. This field school provides a minimum of 192 direct instructional hours.

Transcripts: Transcripts are available through UCLA UnEX and instructions for ordering transcripts may be found at <http://bit.ly/2bDOZ3E>. Grades will be posted and transcript available usually within six weeks after the end of this field school. All IFR field schools are designated XL classes – courses that are equivalent to undergraduate courses offered by the UCLA regular session. All XL courses are transferable for unit and subject credit toward the Bachelor's Degree at all campuses of the UC and CSU systems. Classes numbered 100 to 199 are considered upper division (junior/senior). For more information, go to <http://bit.ly/2bjAqmy>.

UCLA students: Students can take classes through UCLA Extension to complete requirements. However certain considerations must be taken into account. For more information, go to <http://bit.ly/2bJWeHK>.

Credit Units Transfer: Most universities accept UCLA credit units – there are very few exceptions. Students are strongly encouraged to discuss the transferability of the credit units with school officials BEFORE attending the field school.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

This course is a field school, and primarily aims to provide students with a foundation in archaeological methodology. Particularly the project employs a single context recording system designed to deal with the complex intercutting features found in ancient urban settings. This method allows archeologists to explore the key stratigraphic relationships between buildings, pits, roads and so explore industries and activities, the evolution of space, and the experiences and lives of people in the past.

The course has three primary objectives – **1)** to introduce students to archaeological field methods, including excavation, stratigraphic investigation, the written records, the drawn record, as well as providing an opportunity for individuals to conduct survey and finds processing activities. **2)** To introduce students to the intellectual challenge presented in archeological research. Namely the recognition and interpretation of complex stratigraphy. To do this students will begin their work in small teams providing a learning network in which participants can develop their skills and interpret their own features. **3)** Why is archaeology important? With participation in the community heritage aspects of the project this project is the perfect opportunity to explore the value of heritage and explore what archaeology can contribute to modern society.

Excavation: Students will participate in supervised excavations within a large trench exploring Roman and later remains.

Recording: Under supervision students will fill out context sheets, plot small finds, draw archaeological remains to record stratigraphy. It is expected that by the end of the project students will be able to carry out interpretation recording themselves.

Survey: Students will have the opportunity to conduct geophysical survey work within the surrounding village.

Cataloging: Students will participate in processing and recording of finds, including pottery, tiles, animal bones and metal finds and will be introduced to the database management system.

Environmental: A key aspect of Ribchester is the excellent preservation of biological remains in some contexts. Students will have the opportunity to take, record, and wet sieve environmental samples in search of ecological remains such as fish bones, charred seeds and insect remains.

Heritage Outreach: Scheduled tasks will include giving site tours, talking to the public and/or school groups. There will also be a series of key seminars focused on the value of archaeology to modern society.

Teaching begins on Thursday, June 15th with an three day lecture and field trip series. This will provide students with the cultural and archaeological background to the fieldwork and will give them an opportunity to meet the team, and explore the methods to be used before excavation begins. Additional lectures by project specialists will be offered periodically throughout the remainder of the field season.

PREREQUISITES

There are no prerequisites for participation in this field school. This is hands-on, experiential learning and students will study on-site how to conduct archaeological research. Archaeology involves physical work and exposure to the elements and thus, requires a measure of acceptance that this will not be the typical university learning environment. You will get sweaty, tired and have to work in the outdoors.

Students are required to come equipped with sufficient excitement and adequate understanding that the archaeological endeavor requires real, hard work – in the sun or rain, on your feet, and with your trowel.

DISCLAIMER – PLEASE READ CAREFULLY

Archaeological field work involves physical work in the outdoors. You should be aware that conditions in the field are different than those you experience in your home, dorms or college town. This program operates in a typical English summer. During the day, temperatures will be comfortable but may fluctuate between 65-80⁰F, in the evenings 52-65⁰F is common, so appropriate warm sleeping material will help. Longer daylight hours provides lovely long evenings, but the sun comes up early in the morning and so when in a tent some people like to sleep with an eye mask or similar. Rain and the wet can be persistent, and although we don't work if it is too wet you must ensure you have a waterproof, and jumper and that your tent and property are dry or else you will be miserable. Sunburn can be a problem and although the project will provide sun protection at factor 50, you are responsible for making sure you are hydrated and protected.

If you have any medical concerns, please consult with your doctor. For all other concerns, please consult with the project director – as appropriate.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of the project students will be able to:

- 1) Understand the different elements which contribute to an archaeological field project and how survey data, records and artifacts between these elements.
- 2) Apply standard excavation methods to archaeological contexts.
- 3) Comfortably use single context recording techniques to document excavation results.
- 4) Describe the project objectives and interpretations in conversation with the lay community and in written formats. Discuss the relative value of Ribchester's heritage.
- 5) Be able to offer their own preliminary interpretations of archaeological results and explore those within the boundary of their personal project.
- 6) Situate field work within its geographic, period and research framework.

GRADING MATRIX

Excavation 50%: Attend and participate each scheduled day, including: chores, lectures, field and finds work. Grades and feedback will be given at the end of each week and final grade will be a combination of each weeks mark. The criteria for assessment include - Team-working, Commitment, Excavation, Site Recording, Drawing, Survey, Finds, Outreach and Environmental work. Assessors will consider attention to detail, engagement and understanding. Learning outcomes 1, 2, 3 and 4 will be assessed during the excavation. Please see the assessment and feedback matrix at the end of this syllabus.

Personal Project 50%: It is advisable for participants to keep a field notebook that can be used as the basis of a 2,000 word personal project report which will be submitted by email by August 21st. This essay will describe an aspect of the archaeological work carried out but the student, and how it fits into the wider world of Ribchester or Roman/British Archaeology. A project workshop will be provided at the beginning of the field school and examples of previous work will be made available. The site directors will advise students to tailor their project and make recommendations. Learning outcomes 1, 4, 5 and 6 will be assessed using the personal project. Please see the assessment criteria at the end of this syllabus.

TRAVEL & MEETING POINT

There will be two alternative meeting points on June 14th. Meeting point 1) Manchester Airport, opposite *Joels Kitchen*, Arrivals in terminal one at **14:00**. Students arriving by train will be met at Preston train station at **16:00** –please make your way out of the train station side exit by the car park (i.e. not the main entrance with the ticket machines) there is plenty of space to wait under the shelter in the car park.

If you missed your connection or your flight is delayed, please call, text or email a project director immediately. A local emergency cell phone number will be provided to all enrolled students.

VISA REQUIREMENTS

US citizens must have a valid passport for the duration of their stay, a visa is not required. It is recommended that students take their IFR documentation to immigration control to prove they have a place on an archaeological excavation for the period of their stay.

EQUIPMENT LIST

This project will provide students with excavation tools. However, students may wish to bring their own 4" drop forged pointing trowel – either WHS/Spear and Jackson or Marshal Town. Students may also wish to bring a personal first aid kit, a notebook and an inexpensive camera for their assessment work.

The following are mandatory items that each student must bring to this project:

- Tent
- Sleeping bag
- Inflatable mattress or sleeping mat
- Flashlight (torch)
- Working boots
- Digging clothes
- Evening clothes
- Water proof jacket
- Sun cream
- Water bottle
- Something warm like a jumper or hoodie
- Pocket money for snacks and treats (there is a village shop and a pub).

ACCOMMODATIONS

For the initial four nights in Preston students will be accommodated in university dorms. During the excavation students, supervisors and directors camp 50 yards from site in their own tents. Students are responsible for keeping the campsite tidy at all times. The project is very fortunate to have access to the Village Hall for use during the day as the finds processing facility or site office and in the evenings it provides shelter and a communal focus. This includes a fully equipped kitchen with cutlery and crockery, fridges, oven and two sinks. There is access to a washing machine during the project. Showers are hired in on a trailer and are good quality facilities powered from the mains electrics and bottled gas. Every day (except Monday which is the day off) food is provided in the evenings from a local catering business, and their shop, which is five min walk from site, provides the opportunity for people to purchase excellent bacon sandwiches during rest times if required.

Students on the project are organized into rotas and each day a small team will prepare lunch, do cleaning, tidying (campsite and grounds) and washing up. Participation in this is mandatory and will be organized fairly and equally amongst the participants. This is strictly maintained and participation is considered part of the assessment process. This means that the site and facilities are kept to a high standard which is important since we are informally monitored by the parish council and the community.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1 (June 14-June 18):

Wednesday	14:00	Pick up from Manchester airport
	16:00	Pick up from Preston railway station
	18:00	Meet the team BBQ at UCLan
Thursday	9:00	Meet in Archaeology Lab – Informal discussion about acclimatizing to the UK
	9:30	Morning Lecture 1 History of Lancashire and overview of archaeological time periods
	11:00	Morning Lecture 2 introduction to Roman Britain
	12:30	Lunch
	13:00	Introduction to Roman artifacts
	15:30	History of Ribchester
	18:30	Team Dinner
Friday	9:00	Morning excursion to Ribchester with taught Recording and Planning exercises
	12:30	Lunch
	13:30	Afternoon Lecture 1 An overview of British Archaeology from CRM to Research
	16:00	Afternoon Lecture 2 Contexts, Planning and using archaeological equipment
	18:30	Film and Pizza night
Saturday	9:00	Field Trip to North Wales. Visiting archaeological excavation and historic sites including Conway Castle
Sunday		Free to review two days learning, read and explore.

Week 2-5 (June 19th to July 17th):

Monday	10:00	Meet at minibus, pack equipment and tools
	12:00	Arrive at Ribchester, introduction to facilities, set up camp, organize tools
	13:00	Lunch
	14:00	Tour of Ribchester Village and Museum
	16:00	Prepare trench for field work

Daily schedule for the four weeks of field work, Tuesday through Saturday

7:30-8:15	Breakfast
8:15-8:30	Collect tools, excavation begins
10:30-11:00	Morning tea
13:00-13:45	Lunch Stop
15:30-16:00	Afternoon tea
18:00	End of Excavation
19:00	Dinner Arrives

Sunday Schedule

8:00-8:45	Breakfast
8:45-9:00	Collect tools, excavation begins*
12:30-13:30	Lunch Stop
13:30-16:00	Afternoon excavation
19:00	Dinner Arrives

(*Sunday service is open to all at 10:30am-12:00am in the local church)

On Wednesday the 5th July there will be a field trip to Hadrian's wall and Housestead's Fort

Project End 17th July

Monday	7:30-8:15	Breakfast
	8:30	Pack up camp, tidy, clean hall
	12:00	Mini bus leaves for Preston
	12:45	Unpack tools
	13:30	Lifts to Preston Station and Manchester Airport for return home or continued travel in UK and Europe on your own (a 7:00am lift is available).

Every Thursday at 8:30am there is a weekly director's site tour, approximately 1hour.

Every Friday afternoon, groups of students will attend a finds round up seminar.

Roman Festival is the weekend of the 8-9 July. Occasional lectures will take place during the day, or in the early evening depending on the schedule. This schedule of lectures will be produced at the beginning of the project but may be subject to change depending on the weather.

Evening activities:

Each Tuesday evening is 'pub quiz' night in the hall after dinner. Each Thursday is Pizza and film night in the hall.

The local bell ringing group is open to interested parties on Wednesday nights at 19:30, the choir meets on Thursday nights.

Organized sports activities are available on Fridays and Saturdays evenings. In the past these have including cricket, rounders and football.

There are three pubs in the village, the Ribchester Arms, a local favorite with food available. The White Bull, a beautiful building with Roman pillars, a garden and food, rooms are available for visitors. The Black Bull is a beer only pub with a pool table and a good Monday night pub quiz. There is a local small supermarket and post office.

MANDATORY READINGS

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RECOMMENDED READINGS

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Criteria for assessing Ribchester Revisited Written Work

A+ (85-100%)	Written work is directly relevant to the title. The student demonstrates exceptional knowledge and understanding which is thorough and shows ability to critically contextualise knowledge and apply it in a relevant way so as to sustain an argument. Presentation is crisp, uncluttered and highly sophisticated and in an appropriate format.
A (70-84%)	Written work is directly relevant to the title. The student demonstrates excellent knowledge and understanding which is thorough and shows ability to critically contextualise knowledge and apply it in a relevant way so as to sustain an argument. Presentation is crisp, uncluttered and sophisticated and in an appropriate format.
B (60-69%)	Written work is directly relevant to the title. The knowledge base is judged sound and relevant. The student demonstrates an understanding of concepts and of their inter-relationship, but conclusions are sometimes reached on the basis of insufficient factual material. Material is well presented and in an acceptable format.
C (50-59%)	Written work is relevant but (in lower ranges) reflects some conceptual confusion and a reliance on description as a substitute for analysis. Syntax and grammar sometimes unsound. Competent presentation and an acceptable format, although some deficiencies are apparent.
D (40-49%)	Some significant degree of irrelevance to the title is common. Basic understanding of a limited range of material and grasp of concepts is superficial. Written material lacks focus, and is prone to sweeping unsubstantiated assertion. Evidence of reading, but the student is unable to rise above description. Significant deficiencies in expression, format or bibliographical detail.
COMPENSA-TABLE FAIL (35-39%)	At least one third of material presented is relevant but there may be limited reference to the question. A generally poor but compensatable answer with extensive errors and omissions, or a substantial answer on the general topic in which the specific, central question is misinterpreted or avoided, or a very good essay in note form. Presentation is poor and sometimes inarticulate.
FAIL (20-34%)	Less than one third of material presented is relevant. A very weak answer with extensive errors and omissions, or an insubstantial answer on the general topic in which the specific, central question is seriously misinterpreted or avoided, or a weak essay in note form. There is only partial understanding demonstrated. Presentation is poor, often inarticulate and sometimes incomprehensible
FAIL (0-19%)	An exceptionally poor answer with extensive errors and omissions and only a hint of relevant knowledge, or a very weak essay in note form, or an answer that ignores the question to an extent that hardly any of the content can be construed as being relevant to the general topic of the question. Presentation is very poor, often inarticulate and incomprehensible.