

# ROMAN FRONTIER STUDIES 2009

Proceedings of the XXI International  
Congress of Roman Frontier Studies  
(*Limes Congress*) held at Newcastle upon Tyne  
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edited by

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## Foreword

In July 1949, Eric Birley hosted the first Congress of Roman Frontiers Studies in Newcastle upon Tyne. The conference had been planned by Birley and his friend, the German archaeologist, Kurt Stade, for 1940, but war intervened. In the event, the first Congress was seen as something of an act of healing following six years of warfare.

The Congress was also carefully scheduled to follow the centenary Pilgrimage of Hadrian's Wall held the previous week. It was felt that the close relationship between the two events would help reduce costs for foreign participants in the austere post-War years. In encouraging foreign archaeologists to participate in the Pilgrimage, Birley was following a long tradition stretching back to the second Pilgrimage of Hadrian's Wall in 1886.

In 1949, only invited participants attended. The number of participants has now risen to over 250 with all five continents represented and over 25 countries. The lectures were also carefully chosen in 1949 to reflect recent work in the study and in the field, with both survey and excavation presented in the latter category. Europe, Africa and Asia were all represented by papers and participants. The slim volume of 11 papers published three years later has been succeeded by a series of massive books, sometimes consisting of two or even three volumes, of 100 papers or more which indicate the progress of work on studying Roman frontiers (see Birley 2002 for a review of the first 50 years of the Congress).

The study of Roman frontiers is wide ranging, including the details of individual excavations as well as the broad sweep of frontier policy. As the pace of survey and excavation increased, the number of individual excavation reports threatened to overwhelm the programme of each Congress. In 1979, the organisers of the Congress held at Stirling sought to address this by inviting papers which would offer an over-view of recent work in each province. This approach has continued intermittently since. Ten years later, while preparing for the 1989 Congress in Canterbury, Valerie Maxfield and I considered a different approach, a series of sessions on the problems associated with different types of frontiers, artificial, deserts, rivers and mountains, and this pattern has also successfully continued.

The idea of thematic sessions was advanced at the end of the Aalen Congress in 1983 as a way of trying to secure a grip on the increasingly diffuse programme. I offered to organise a session on the impact of frontiers. This took place, with invited speakers, at Carnuntum three years later in a session chaired by Willy Groenman-van Waateringe, which was so successful that it extended into a second, evening, discussion. Such thematic sessions have continued since 1986 and have expanded now to embrace much of the programme of the Congress in 2009. It is surely a sign of the success of an organisation that it can find new ways of maintaining the momentum of its core business, in this case the holding of its triennial conference.

One important element of each Congress has been the tours which have enabled participants to see the whole frontier – and its associated museums – from the Atlantic to the Black Sea and Roman military sites in modern Israel and Jordan. A visit to Numidia/Algeria, planned for 1954, had to be abandoned and only a few participated in a curtailed visit. It is clearly essential that future Congresses are held in north Africa and in the Middle East. In the meantime, the handbooks now prepared for each Congress have become valuable tools in their own right, while the conference has often led to the encouragement of additional survey, excavation and publication within the country hosting the meeting.

In organising these ever expanding occasions, the organisational structure has remained small, with a small international committee representing the countries which have most recently organised Congresses, and with the preparation of each new Congress undertaken locally. This framework has served us well. It has enabled us to see the remains of frontiers in many countries and has coped with the increase in attendance and the expansion of our interests. The Congress has become inter-disciplinary with papers by archaeologists and ancient historians, art historians and natural scientists.

One major element of every conference is the informal communication between participants. The connections which have developed at Congresses have become increasingly important within the wider world of the European Union and the Council of Europe. These links favoured the collaboration of the representatives of different countries in various projects financially sponsored by the European Union. On such project, on the Frontiers of the Roman Empire, was closely related to another international initiative, the creation of the Frontiers of the Roman Empire World Heritage Site. This occurred in 2005 when the German *limes* became a WHS and, together with Hadrian's Wall,

were transformed into the Frontiers of the Roman Empire WHS. The Antonine Wall in Scotland/UK joined in 2008 and many other countries round the edge of the former Roman empire are now considering further extensions. A new EU-sponsored project has started in central Europe and further projects are under consideration.

Altogether, Roman frontier studies are in a healthy state. In many ways, we have come a long way from the small beginning in Newcastle 60 years ago. Yet, our success has been built upon the shoulders of those giants who gathered there in the immediate post-war years to re-create international co-operation amongst scholars.

David J Breeze

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# Introduction

The XXI International Congress of Roman Frontier studies was hosted by Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums between Sunday 16 August and Wednesday 26 August 2009 in Newcastle upon Tyne (Great Britain), 60 years after the first *Limeskongress* organised in that city by Eric Birley in 1949. In 2009 the pre-Congress excursion to York was joined by Brenda Heywood, who attended in 1949 and whose presence linked the delegates of 2009 to that very first Congress.

Sixty years on, delegates could reflect on how the Congress has grown and changed over six decades and could be heartened at the presence of so many young scholars and a variety of topics and avenues of research into the army and frontiers of the Roman empire that would not have been considered in 1949.

## Delay in Publication

The organisers of the conference deeply regret the delay of eight years that has intervened between the Newcastle Congress and the final appearance of these proceedings. The administration of the Congress and the initial work on the preparation of these proceedings was undertaken by staff of TWM Archaeology, the archaeological unit of Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums which was heavily dependent on commercial rescue archaeological projects. Between the invitation to the Congress to come to Newcastle, issued in Spain in 2006, and the Congress of 2009 itself, there intervened the unforeseen financial crash of 2008 which led to drastic cuts in the income and staffing of TWM Archaeology. This eventually led to the closure of the archaeological unit in 2013. Of necessity the remaining archaeological staff at Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums have had to concentrate on other income-generating projects, and for many years it was simply impractical to spend time on preparing the Congress proceedings for publication. Since 2013 it has been possible to do some editing work, making the present, belated, publication possible.

We apologise to all contributors who have had to wait so long for their papers to be published. Inevitably, because of the delay between submission and printing, new discoveries have been made, aspects of many of the papers are out of date, bibliographical details will usually only run up to 2009, and no doubt many contributors would now write their papers in a different way.

Understandably, a number of contributors have asked at various times for their papers to be withdrawn from the conference proceedings so that they could publish them more speedily elsewhere. The papers in the session organised by Nigel Mills, *Presenting the Roman Frontiers*, have been published elsewhere: Mills, N. (ed.), *Presenting the Romans: Interpreting the Frontiers of the Roman Empire World Heritage Site* (Woodbridge, Boydell and Brewer, 2013).

A total of 105 papers remain for publication here. The volume editors stress that they take full responsibility for the fact that the papers are in some respects out of date and remind readers that the bulk of these papers are as submitted in 2009-10 and must stand as a record of the state of knowledge and thought *at that time*. More positively, they stand as a record of a happy conference where all who attended agree that important evidence was presented and lively debates conducted. The editors have proceeded in the sincere belief that even after eight years the papers remain a valuable collection which will enrich the study of Roman frontiers in all their aspects.

## Organisation of the volume

The papers are organised into the same thematic sessions as in actual conference, now 18 in all including Miscellanea. Two sessions ('Evidence for functioning or malfunctioning of Roman border defence'; 'Ritual or destruction') are not included here as they only had single submitted papers. One of these, 'Stories and Facts about the Function of Dacia's South-eastern Frontier: Forty Years' of Research', by I. Bogdan Cătănicu, has been moved into the Danubian and Balkan Provinces session, the other, 'Wells and Ritual Deposition at the Newstead Roman Military Complex' by Simon Clarke, into the Miscellanea section.