

The ARP ACTA



Aylsham Roman Project Newsletter



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January looks both backwards and forwards, but before we look at what will be in 2026, let's look back to 2016.

Ten years ago, having found lots of pottery, tile, coins etc over the years, and had Britannia Archaeology dig a trial trench in December 2015, Peter decided to hold a community dig. There will be those of you out there reading this and thinking, yes, I was there! Some of us joined in as we'd done a bit of archaeology before, others of us came along because it all sounded rather exciting. We weren't to know then how exciting it would be!

In 2016 with a two week dig and donations gratefully appreciated, ARP was born. Friends were made that year that continue to this day, we were hooked. What a fortnight's experience, especially for those of us who had never done anything like this before. Those two weeks gave the Kiln Field (KF) its name, as two Roman pottery kilns were discovered.

In 2017, Friends of ARP was set up and each year this raises over £1000. We also set up a fee to participate. This year the dig was three weeks, and we returned to KF, totally excavating Kiln 1, named as it was our first discovery. Measuring about 1m in diameter it had a pedestal and radial bars on which pots were placed, covered in a layer of clay and fired.

We also partially excavated, Kiln 2, yes, magically named as it was our second discovery! This, though, was different. Measuring over 2m in diameter, this had a perforated floor, mended when part of it collapsed, with tile, pot and a lovely piece of clay which preserved the potter's finger prints as he spread it into place.

Each year has seen us dig an area of KF and in 2024, we discovered, yes, that's right, Kiln 3, although this one is very fragile and seems to have produced some more high quality pot, different to finds from Kilns 1 and 2.

What great excitement to be part of all this! Many more of you have come along to experience the great feeling of discovery - it is still magical to find yet another piece of Roman pottery and know you are the first to have seen it in nearly 2000 years. As you know, we have continued over the years since, not digging during the Covid year and holding a fortnight's Festival over another year, sharing what we had found and inviting speakers to the field.

During the years we have dug twice an area in the south, discovering a Medieval ladder settlement, a Roman trackway and practically all the pieces from a Medieval flagon that we are hoping to reconstruct.

We had a year on Mary's Beck, by the lake, discovered a Roman ditch crossed by a Victorian one and clay pits, where clay for the pottery made on site would have been extracted.

After two years digging in the Kitchen Garden, in 2025, we finally returned there for our 3 week dig in 2025, only possible because of some very kind donations. Different to usual as for safety reasons we could only have a limited number on site and no visitors. For those of us involved throughout the preceding years, this felt strange - no-one coming to see what we were doing, no-one signing up to have a go, no children sieving and excited when a piece of pot or tile was found and all enjoying the experience.

And what a 3 weeks it was for those of us who were able to participate. Peter was convinced that with everything he had found in over 40 years of collecting items that a Roman building of some sort must be on the site. The previous two visits had thrown up some exciting hints but what we have finally unearthed was beyond all that we had thought it would be.

Not a home, but - a Roman bath house! Revealed as such at the end of week 3 by Martin, director of BA, after three very hot weeks, supervised by BA's Alice. Amazing, parts of floors, long ditches, parts of walls, gulleys for the underground hypocaust, opus signinum a special high quality type of cement used so successfully in many Roman buildings, pieces of Roman glass, Roman coins and, of course, a massive amount of tile.

So, where do we go from here? Well, who knows, we are still absorbing it all and once we know we'll let you know. There's still a lot to find out, what else is going on in the south, plus the million dollar question.....



Where IS the Roman house??

 ARP.....Getting the community into holes 

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