

Institution: University of Oxford
Unit of Assessment: 17A – Geography, Environmental Studies and Archaeology: Archaeology
Title of case study: Bringing the Iron Age and Romans to life in southern Britain: Danebury hillfort and Brading villa
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>Utilising the results of large-scale research programmes by Barry Cunliffe and his Oxford team, the museum facilities connected to both Brading villa and Danebury hillfort bring to life the Iron Age and Roman periods for the general public. In addition, they promote substantial learning into key periods in prehistory, and during Britain’s incorporation into the Roman empire, which are often neglected.</p> <p>Cunliffe’s work has had fundamental impact through first the establishment and then the shaping of two museum facilities: the Museum of the Iron Age in Andover and a Visitor Centre at Brading. The work at Danebury is of long-standing origin, and began in 1968, but has been given significant new impetus since 2011 by a substantial HLF grant, which has created new educational materials, guided site visits and online resources. The excavations at Brading took place between 2008 and 2010 and were fundamental to the development of the new Visitor’s Centre. Both facilities use recent finds and visual representation to give a more enriched sense of community life in these localities over a millennium and a half, starting at around 1000BC.</p> <p>The research has had educational impact on visitors to these two museum facilities, including large numbers of school children, the general public, and archaeology and museum professionals, and on individual volunteers who have worked on the sites. By attracting visitors to the sites and museums, the research has also improved the experience of local tourists.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>The nature of community in the Iron Age and through into the Roman period has long been a focus of research at Oxford. The excavations at Danebury and its surrounding sites (1969-2006) and then Brading (2008-2010) explored issues of architecture, site arrangements and social space. Hillforts such as Danebury represent the first large-scale agglomerations of people in Britain, many living in large round houses. Excavations at Danebury established that the hillfort was built around 550 BC, the defences were remodelled several times, but enclosed a defended area of 5 ha, containing roundhouses and granaries, replaced by storage pits. Excavations also found that the hillfort was then abandoned following a final violent destruction and burning c. 100 BC [R1].</p> <p>Between 1997 and 2006, the Danebury Roman Environs Programme, led by Professor Cunliffe, examined the development of rural settlement into the Roman period looking at the history of vernacular architecture and technologies of agricultural production. Key sites include the villas of Houghton Down (1997), Grateley South (1998-9), Fullerton (2000-1), Thruxton (2002), Dunkirt Barn (2005-6); and the native settlement of Flint Farm (2003) [R2]. These sites demonstrate the variety of rural settlement in the area, in addition to the evolution of the agricultural landscape from the Iron Age onwards [R3]. The research of Cunliffe and his team includes aerial and geophysical surveys, excavation of the sites, recording, analysis and conservation of materials, publication of features and finds (in both scholarly and popular media), and the preparation of artefacts for display. The sequence at Danebury and surrounding sites showed a move from roundhouse occupation in the early Iron Age, with large communal public space in the centre and private space under the eaves, to aisled barns. Starting in the first century AD, aisled barns are rectangular in shape, showing the influence of Roman basilica, but have a congruent use of space to earlier roundhouses, with central public space and more private use either down the sides or at one end. This shift from round to rectangular is a rare instance when changes in form do not indicate changes in function [R2]. Excavations at Houghton, Dunkirt, Thruxton and Grateley were especially important in establishing the nature of the form and its uses [R4].</p> <p>At the second key site, the Brading villa, Cunliffe’s were the first large-scale excavations to take place since the 1880s. Cunliffe’s team’s excavations included the investigation of eight buildings within the villa complex. Over three seasons, Cunliffe and his team established the architectural sequence at the site from a late Iron Age enclosure to an early aisled hall (building 4), constructed in the late 1st or early 2nd century, and replaced by a more substantial aisled hall (building 2) at</p>

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the end of the 2nd century. The winged-corridor house with rich mosaics, which we see today as the villa, was built in the late 3rd or early 4th century. This building represented a major social shift in the use of the site, probably with the elite family moving into the winged-corridor house and those lower on the social spectrum living in the aisled hall [R4, R5]. The discovery of traded pottery and metal shows that widespread trade links already existed in the late Iron Age; these were developed in the Roman period, when the villa enjoyed links with many areas of the Empire [R4].

The historical development in living space and trade has been an especially important link between the two projects, with the development of rectangular forms of architecture in the first century AD being well-evidenced in the Danebury environs and then also at Brading. The emerging importance of the aisled hall from earlier circular forms is a key response of indigenous populations to incoming Roman influence, becoming the basis of the early medieval hall, which then lasted through until the early modern period [R6].

Oxford researchers involved in the programme:

The team was led by Professor Barry Cunliffe (Professor of European Archaeology until 2006, when he became Emeritus Professor based in the Institute of Archaeology). A large team of researchers from Oxford has also been involved in these two excavations including: Cynthia Poole (Researcher – employed 1981-97 through the Danebury Trust and on short term contracts until 2006), Lisa Brown (Pottery Specialist, 1993-6 employed by the Danebury Trust and on short term contracts until 2008), Emma Durham (Research Assistant to Cunliffe, who helped organize fieldwork, employed Oxford University 2000-2006) Wendy Morrison (DPhil Student and Site Supervisor, 2008-10).

3. References to the research

[R1] Cunliffe, B. 2003. *Danebury Hillfort*. Stroud: Tempus.

[R2] Cunliffe, B. 2008. *The Danebury Environs Roman Programme. A Wessex Landscape During the Roman Era. Vol. 1, Part 1, Overview; Vol. 2, Parts 1-7, Houghton Down, Longstock, Fullerton, Gately South, Gately, Thruxton, Rowbury Farm, Wherwell, Flint Farm, Goodworth Clatford, Dunkirt Barn, Abbotts Ann*, Oxford: English Heritage and Oxford University School of Archaeology Monographs 70-71

[R3] Cunliffe, B. 2008. Continuity and Change in a Wessex Landscape. Albert Reckitt Lecture 2008. *Proceedings of the British Academy* 162.

[R4] Cunliffe, B. 2013. 'For men of rank ... basilicas' in *Living and Working in the Roman World*, H. Eckardt and S. Rippon (eds) *Journal of Roman Archaeology Supplementary Series* 95: 95-110.

[R5] Cunliffe, B. 2013. *The Roman Villa at Brading, Isle of Wight: the excavations of 2008-10*. Oxford: Oxford University School of Archaeology Monograph 77.

[R6] Cunliffe, B. 2013. *Britain Begins*. Oxford: OUP.

Research funding: Funds of £1,000,000 have been obtained from a variety of sources, including English Heritage, Garfield Weston Trust, Headley Trust, Wolfson Foundation, Esmee Fairburn Foundation and Gulbenkian Foundation. Specific Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) grants also include:

- Grant of £43,500 to Hampshire County Council for 'Discover Danebury Project', Dec 2011-Jul 2013.
- Grant of £2,056,000 to The Brading Visitor Centre and Museum, 2003-04.
- Grant of £35,000 for The Brading Visitor Centre and Museum, 2008-09.

4. The contribution, impact or benefit

Central to the impact of work on Danebury and Brading has been the establishment of the Museum of the Iron Age at Andover and the Museum and Visitor's Centre at Brading. The archaeological excavations and the research on the inhabitants of the sites, conducted by Oxford researchers, have brought to life the Iron Age and Roman periods. The research has provided the basis for the narrative upon which both museum facilities are based, so as to promote substantial learning of our earliest history. Architectural forms provide key materials and narrative thread in both facilities, showing how family and broader social structures were influenced by the movement from round to rectangular architecture, culminating in the villa complex seen at Brading in the third century AD.

The Oxford researchers have helped to design exhibits of the finds, and develop descriptions of the excavations and modes of life both in the Iron Age and Roman periods. The activities in both

places are run through Charitable Trusts, which have been integral to the research work and its public dissemination. The Brading Visitor Centre, funded by an HLF grant, was based on the findings of the excavation and research. Two Trusts care for the villa, the Oglander Family Trust (run by the family owning the villa) and the Friends of Brading Roman Villa. The Danebury Trust (a charitable partnership between Oxford University, Hampshire County Council and English Heritage) is responsible for the Danebury site and the Andover Museum, and has been funded by grants from charitable and governmental bodies since its inception.

Danebury Hillfort and the Andover Museum of the Iron Age:

In 2013, the Museum of the Iron Age employed three full-time and three part-time employees (one qualified curator) and benefitted from a supportive group of Friends for volunteer activities. Within Hampshire's Museums Service as a whole, five (of 120 employees) are directly involved in caring for the Danebury collections (the Conservator, Registrar, Collections Manager, and Collections Officers). In addition to the new HLF programme, the material excavated from Danebury plays an important part in the cultural programme of Hampshire County Council, and attracts significant numbers of visitors and volunteers. Over 30,000 people per annum (not including school visitors) came to the Andover Museum of the Iron Age and 60,000 people per annum visited Danebury hillfort, with a good number visiting both **[Section 5: C3]**. The Museum has been well received by teachers and members of the general public alike. One teacher stated: 'Organised a school trip here - lovely atmosphere, well led, pacy learning and hands on activities'; while another visitor remarked: 'Excellent to see local history that is well preserved. I was interested throughout and will be back again soon!' **[C5]**

Although the Andover Museum is of long-standing origin, museum and educational activities concerning Danebury received considerable new impetus through a recent HLF grant in 2011, awarded to Professor Cunliffe and the Deputy Head of the Museum Service Learning, Access and Interpretation Team (£43,500) **[C4]**. This funding enabled new resources (based on the research **[R1, R2]**) to be created for use both by schools and the general public. Researchers and museum staff worked collaboratively to produce story podcasts, a film, children's explorer sheets, teacher guidance notes, and activity resources (most of these are accessible through the project website) **[C1]**. Between 2011 and 2013, 760 school children from 21 schools visited Danebury hillfort and the Museum of the Iron Age **[C3]**. The museum also held activity days and guided walks to encourage members of the public to engage with the hillfort (over 700 people attended these over the same period) **[C3]**. Further tools to attract visitor engagement include the construction of an 'earth seat' on the site of an Iron Age roundhouse as a teaching aid and place of contemplation.

The site attracts members of Young Archaeology groups. The North Hampshire Young Archaeologists Club, established in March 2000, and based at Andover Museum, has approximately ten meetings annually. The club has around 40 children registered at any one time, approximately half of which it sees at each meeting. Between 2008 and 2013, these meetings have included regular discussion of Danebury material and visits to the Danebury Project sites **[R1, R2; C3]**. Contact with similar Young Archaeologist groups in Bagshot and Southampton has also led these groups to visit the site **[C3]**.

In addition to Cunliffe's own academic and public lectures on Danebury, Hampshire Museum staff have also given around 200 talks, lectures, and presentations in the period 2008-2013, with the Danebury research material as a core element. Danebury material also continues to be displayed outside the site and museums as part of Hampshire County Council's touring exhibition programme (focussing on Hampshire's main nine sites) and in the smaller *Hampshire's Hidden Treasures* display. Danebury (including the excavation and research material) has also featured in major exhibitions in Winchester and Andover, such as *The Forgotten Emperor* (2010) **[C3]**.

The excavations at Danebury have been the subject of several television broadcasts. The Danebury site was the subject of a *Team Team* special by Channel 4 in 2008, in which Professor Cunliffe was interviewed and provided expertise. Cunliffe also appeared twice in the BBC series *Neil Oliver's History of Celtic Britain* for in 2011, talking on the subject of Iron Age Danebury. The popularity of Danebury, evident in the repeats of earlier programs and the making of new ones, has

brought the site to an even wider audience, and made a significant impact on the wider public's awareness of Iron Age Britain.

Brading Villa and the Brading Museum and Visitor Centre:

The Brading Museum and Visitor Centre was established in 2004, following various sources of funding, including an HLF grant of £2,000,000 with further varied funds of £1,000,000. The new villa complex was built partly to protect the mosaics and fabric of the villa. However, once in place museum staff in combination with Cunliffe and his team realised that new educational possibilities offered themselves, and much work has been carried out during and since Cunliffe's excavations to realise these possibilities. The Visitor Centre introduces the villa complex, including the famous mosaics, and the Museum provides a narrative of life in the late Iron Age and Roman periods from the presentation of the finds and their archaeological contexts. In both cases, the key materials and insights were provided by Cunliffe's excavations. Currently the museum facility attracts 35,000 visitors a year, with more coming to visit the reconstructed Roman garden and landscape [C6].

As with Danebury and the Andover Museum, educational materials [C2, C6] have been prepared for schools and over 100 school visits are made every year, annually reaching over 2500 children on average [C6]. The Centre has won a number of awards, including Green Apple Awards for Architectural Heritage (2009 – Silver Award and 2013 – Green Champion); Tourism South East 2011 Small Visitor Attraction of the Year – Silver Award; and a Trip Advisor Certificate of Excellence 2013. The Museum and Visitor Centre have been well reviewed – 'This museum is a lesson on how to make a potentially dull visit, exciting! The route through the ground plan is carefully constructed to give the best view of the wonderful mosaics, and provides clear and interesting information on the history of the house and it's inhabitants' and 'A fantastic place for adults and children. Loads for kids to do, our 7 year old loved the activities. Staff were very helpful.' [C9].

There is also considerable volunteer activity around the villa complex, and over the last year the Friends of Brading Roman Villa have given over 5000 hours to help with the running of the visitor facilities [C7]. They are also actively engaged in fundraising for the Centre and the site. Volunteering has been a strong feature of the work at Brading, as the excavations were carried out by a team composed of one third each of professionals, students and interested locals [C7].

The Brading Museum has recently become a partner of the British Museum, who will lend 52 antiquities from their collections for a forthcoming exhibition (expected 2014) in Brading on Roman Sexuality. This partnership demonstrates the national importance and appeal of the educational work and research at Brading.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

[C1] Websites for the Museum of the Iron Age at Andover and Discover Danebury project, which credit Cunliffe's research: <http://www3.hants.gov.uk/museum-of-the-ironage.htm>

<http://www3.hants.gov.uk/countryside/danebury/discover-danebury.htm>

[C2] Website for the Visitor Centre at Brading Roman Villa - <http://www.bradingromanvilla.org.uk/>

[C3] Keeper of Archaeology, Hampshire County Council Arts & Museums Service. Held on file - corroborates visitor numbers, and exhibition details.

[C4] Heritage Lottery Fund, £42,000 for new excavations (Prof. Cunliffe's role credited in press release): <http://www.hlf.org.uk/news/Pages/BringingHampshire%E2%80%99sIronAgeToLife.aspx>

[C5] Visitor reviews from the Museum of the Iron Age at Andover:

<http://www3.hants.gov.uk/museum-of-the-ironage/review-ironage.htm#section100586-1>

[C6] CEO Brading Visitor Centre and Museum. Held on file - corroborates visitor numbers, exhibition and grant details.

[C7] Chairman of the Friends of Brading Roman Villa. Held on file – corroborates information on the activities of the Friends of Brading Villa, and anecdotally confirms the experience of volunteers.

[C8] Visitor Reviews of the Brading Villa Visitor Centre and Museum -

http://www.tripadvisor.co.uk/Attraction_Review-g1888239-d1943964-Reviews-Brading_Roman_Villa-Brading_Isle_of_Wight_England.html