

MIGRATION AND MOBILITY IN ROMAN HISPANIA

On an exceedingly hot day in June, nearly thirty u3a members braved the heat to attend a talk by **Claire Holleran**, Associate Professor in the Classics and Ancient History, whose research interests lie in the social and economic history of ancient Rome. The weather certainly helped us relate to those citizens of the Western Roman empire!

Claire's theme was the movement of ordinary people, small groups and individuals, as opposed to large groups and the military. It was very interesting to learn about an aspect of the Roman empire that affected the everyday lives of ordinary people, at a time when they could travel across the borderless empire, all under the power of Rome. Claire's research examines inscriptions recording events and deaths, which state where the person has come from and where they have died. Getting close to individuals and their personal journeys and lives was very rewarding with the evidence of their epigraphs, making us realise what we have in common with people from the past. For example, the inscription on a tombstone found on the site of the Roman fort of Arbeia on Hadrian's Wall in South Shields tells us that it was set up to honour a woman of the Celtic tribe, the Catuvellauni, called Regina, freedwoman and wife of Barates, a Roman soldier from Palmyra (in Syria). Barates wanted the inscription not just in Latin but also in Palmyrene script, which the sculptor was able to do.

The focus on Hispania (Spain) as the context of migration meant that we learnt a great deal about that area and its industries in the Roman period which few of us had previously known about. Just as today, people had to move to for work, to survive and to maintain their families. Mining was a key industry in Hispania, and the evidence shows individuals and small groups moving to centres of mining from rural areas within Hispania. Inscriptions recorded the deaths of individuals, their wives, and daughters, showing migration also to Hispania from the eastern Mediterranean.

The challenges posed by extensive travel were also examined, the cheapest and quickest route being by sea; some itineraries were meticulously recorded, with each day's mileage and stop-over being noted in the Vicarello goblets for a journey from Gades (Cadiz) in Hispania to Rome.

Claire also explained carefully the process of researching a topic of this nature from ancient history, its challenges and the value of pilot projects. It was particularly interesting to see the role of digital technology in this process and how this can be of greater assistance in future projects.

Claire is hoping that it might be possible to expand the research into migration across the whole of the Western Roman Empire. She also drew our attention to some valuable websites for anyone interested in looking further into this topic:

Roman Inscriptions of Britain <https://romaninscriptionsofbritain.org/>

Mapping Migration in Roman Iberia [Mapping Migration in Roman Iberia](#)

Roman Routeplanner <https://omnesviae.org/nobis>

Trudi Learmouth