

Ancient storage jar discovered under Roman Road

July 27 2015



Danielle Wootton and Dr John Davey at the Ipplepen excavation site.

An archaeological dig in a rural Devon village is yielding more ancient secrets.

Last year experts working on a major field study at Ipplepen, Devon, excavated a Roman road, complete with ancient wheel ruts and potholes.

Now they have uncovered new insights into how the community lived, through the discovery of new archaeological features and pottery, such as a continental food storage jug that would have travelled across Europe before it was used at the site.

The team uncovered a large fragment of storage jar, known as an

amphora, buried under the surface of the Roman road. The jar was made on the continent and originally contained food such as olive oil or wine.

Danielle Wootton, the Devon Finds Liaison Officer for the Portable Antiquities Scheme, based at the University of Exeter's Archaeology Department said: "It's amazing to think the amphora has travelled hundreds of miles across land and sea to end up under our Roman road at Ipplepen. The amphora had lots of 2,000 year old fractures, so we had to lift it very carefully. As you can imagine, it was a relief when we got it out in one piece."

On Saturday 25th July members of the public will have the opportunity to see the results of this year's archaeological finds at the Ipplepen site between 10am and 4pm. In addition to guided site tours, there will be Roman re-enactors, hands-on activities, bush-craft demonstrations, Sam Moorhead from the British Museum with Roman coins from the excavation, a finds identification stall and refreshments available from Hunter's brewery. The event will be signposted from the A381 at Ipplepen.

The archaeological dig, involving experts, students, and local participants, is run by the University of Exeter and is now in its fifth season. Ipplepen has been featured on the BBC 'Digging for Britain' programme several times and is due to be filmed again this year. This nationally important excavation site is supported by the Portable Antiquities Scheme, the British Museum and Devon County Council.

The Roman road revealed last summer forms part of the largest known Romano-British activity in Devon outside of Exeter. A significant number of Roman coin finds, the Roman road and a geophysical survey highlighted the importance of this extensive site and its potential to explore the relationship between the Roman empire and Britain's population at the time, specifically in the West Country. Previous field

studies have revealed an Iron Age ring ditch enclosure and further Romano-British features, along with glimpses of evidence for even earlier Bronze Age and Neolithic activity.

This year, the team of archaeologists are already discovering new information about the site.

Danielle said: "We knew we had a Roman road but previously had no signs of Romano-British occupation to go along with it which was puzzling. So we've been searching for evidence of a settlement in our new trenches, looking for archaeological features- and we are finally seeing evidence for this which is brilliant news."

Professor Stephen Rippon, also from the University of Exeter's Archaeology department commented: "One of the new trenches this year is indicating that there are small structures which could be small rural houses which are probably contemporary with, and roughly in alignment with the road. This is a huge advancement in helping us further understand the interesting site at Ipplepen."

This year the team are also carrying out a comprehensive geophysical survey of the area which will help us understand the extent and nature of this newly discovered site.

Provided by University of Exeter

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