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**Roman Dymock: Archaeological Investigations 1995-2002, Future  
Research Directions**

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1st two centuries AD, after which they declined (Hoyle *et al.* 2004, 12), perhaps to be replaced by smaller scale and intermittent production at villa estates and towns. It is also possible that production shifted from centres north of the Forest to sites such as Woolaston (Fulford and Allen 1992) and Blakeney (Barber and Holbrook 2000), utilising the Severn fringes of the Forest and the easier transportation to developed markets that access to the river allowed. The influence of Worcester is difficult to assess as the chronology of the iron industry there is not fully understood. Current evidence, however, suggests a predominantly later Roman industry and that large-scale smelting did not commence until several decades after it had apparently ceased at Dymock (Burnham and Wachter 1990, 232–4; Dalwood and Edwards 2004, 41, 45).

*Ariconium* is the largest of the known centralised centres of the early Romano-British iron industry in the Forest of Dean area. The evidence for the settlement has recently been collected and assessed (Jackson 2003) and there is a strong case that Dymock is similar in many respects, if on a much smaller scale. Jackson argues that indigenous élites continued to control the area, including the iron industry, and that the settlement operated a mixed economy of which iron working was only a part. As at Dymock, there is evidence from *Ariconium* for the production of copper-alloy brooches alongside iron working.

Dymock is not alone as an outlier from the main Forest of Dean centres of iron production. Newent, 5.5 km to the south-east, is known to have ore sources. Ore was mined at Oxenhall near the town in the 19th century and waste cinders from iron production were re-worked from at least the 17th century. The May Hill area, south-west of Newent, is also known as an ore source (Hoyle *et al.* 2004, 89). Unfortunately the only Roman iron-working site so far excavated at Newent was carried out under salvage conditions after a site strip (Erskine 1996) but slag dumps and pits, ditches and gullies containing much slag and Roman pottery were recorded. Presumably much more remains to be investigated in the area.

A potentially interesting parallel to Dymock is *Margidunum*, on the Fosse Way near Bingham, Nottinghamshire, where a series of 1st-century ditched enclosures containing timber buildings and slag filled pits was excavated producing high-quality pottery and metal work (Burnham and Wachter 1990). Both Dymock and *Margidunum* are insufficiently well understood to do more than point out a possibility of a recurring pattern at this stage.

We can therefore see Dymock as one of a group of settlements involved in varying scales of iron production in the Forest of Dean and the surrounding area in the early Roman period. These sites show signs of the trappings of Romanised wealth in their material culture at an early date but, although we now have some evidence that Dymock may have housed a minor establishment of the *Cursus Publicus*, the wider picture on current evidence is that local control over the trade brought high-status items to the indigenous élites, who nevertheless continued their own traditions in many aspects of their lives.

## Future Research Directions

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Much remains to be clarified, not only regarding the early Roman period, about which these excavations have much to say, but also regarding the later phases of activity in the 2nd century

and beyond, about which they have provided only limited information. There is much to discover about the full extent of industrial activity, the reasons why it commenced and ceased, and the true nature of any military/official involvement. Was Dymock a deliberately founded roadside settlement of the type suggested by Black (1995)? Was there sufficient activity at the settlement from the mid 2nd century onwards for Romano-British Dymock to continue to be classified as a small town at that period?

A further subject which might merit investigation is the evidence for re-organisation or other disruption at the end of the 1st century suggested by the possible hiatus in activity from c.AD 100 to 120 at the sewage works site. A similar hiatus noted at Deansway in Worcester (Halwood and Edwards 2004, 43) may indicate a regional pattern or a chance similarity between the two sites. The other excavations at Dymock suggest some re-organisation at this time, although not conclusively.

With the archive from the 1960s Malvern Research Group now available, the contents may add significant detail to our knowledge of Roman Dymock, particularly if clear evidence for activity underlying the Roman road can be examined and understood. There is significant metal-detecting activity in the area surrounding the village, and the reporting of finds via the Portable Antiquities Scheme and the pointing out of the possible presence of mould fragments to known detectorists might produce further useful information as to the products of local industry in the Roman period. It should also be borne in mind that the subsoil at Dymock is not suited to the easy identification of cut features, such as those indicating timber buildings, on aerial photographs or in rapidly excavated and investigated evaluation trenches and there is a case for more geophysical survey as an evaluative technique, particularly as this has proved successful on the Lias clays of the Severn Vale to the east (Holbrook 2006).

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