

## January 2024 History Report

Our first meeting of 2024 featured a last-minute change. Our member Bill Bartle was unfortunately not able to give his talk on the Durham coal mining industry, so Tim Meacham brought forward his proposed talk setting in context our visit to the Brigantian tribe fortress at Stanwick which we are planning to make later this summer.

We started with some slides of the site today which revealed the survival almost to full height of the great ramparts which enclose an area of some 750 acres (including a smaller central area which was itself further fortified). Here, outside the later church, an aged notice board informs visitors that we are in Stanwick Camp, probably the centre of power for Cartimandua, Queen of the Brigantes tribe at the time of the Roman invasion of 43 AD.

We then set the scene by looking at the Romans' motivation for this invasion which came some 100 years after Julius Caesar's unsuccessful attempt to conquer Britain. To cut a long story short, the period after Caesar's death was a stormy one in Rome, with one Emperor after another suffering an early, violent death. In 43 Claudius, needing a triumph to establish his power (as well as money, slaves and other resources to replenish the imperial finances) sent an invading army to Britain. The Brigantes were far enough north to strike an uneasy peace with the invaders but the southern tribes resisted fiercely. The war leader Caratacus threatened to defeat the Romans but was defeated and fled for sanctuary to Stanwick.

So our local site became crucial to the outcome of the invasion. Cartimandua lost favour with her people by handing over Caratacus in chains to the Romans. Had she acted more defiantly (like her fellow Queen Boudicca shortly afterwards) the history of Britain might have taken a different path. For ten years, however, she held on to power with Roman support and by the time she was ousted the Roman conquest of Britain was all but complete. The great fortress of Stanwick fell into disuse and it was left to 20th century archaeologists to bring the remains to light.

Our March meeting will be at Enterprise house on Thursday March 14<sup>th</sup> when **Christine Price** will speak on '**Compulsory Smallpox Vaccination: A mixed response in 19th Century Keighley, Ripon and Teesdale**'. Further details available from Tim Meacham.