CULTURAL VALUES – MEDIA AND HERITAGE



Today – lunch in the House of Commons with Alan Campbell MP, a member of the last Labour UK Government, a leading political representative in the north east of England, a historian. Our discussion: local and regional identity, culture and economic development in the region – how these topics inform our excavation at Binchester, our archaeological survey of the Roman borders. How is cultural heritage connected with the politics of economic development?

In a nearby Westminster conference room Rupert and James Murdoch were answering to the Parliamentary Select Committee on Culture, Media, Sport. The issues: phone hacking by one of their newspapers, press standards, the power of the media industry; media barons, their corporations, the subjection of people to powerful corporate bodies and their representatives/agents, ethics and responsibilities around public and private interests. [Link]

The scandal over the Murdoch's newspaper, News of the World, is about the relation

of raw economic interest to personal and private experience. Their reporters invaded private lives to seek evidence that might generate a sensational story. the shape of people's experiences, stories of people's lives, how and what evidence is acquired, what is made of such evidence. It's all about where different cultural values are taking us.

In the Binchester project we are gathering evidence that will be the basis for accounts and models of the Romans in the north. But what kinds of narrative, and addressed to whom? How do we turn raw archaeological evidence into a meaningful account? How do we take the remains of lives long gone and connect them with contemporary interests. Respectfully – without reducing those human experiences to a stock cliché.

A media scandal and the mediation of an archaeological past – this was a provocative convergence for us today in Westminster.



Central Lobby – Westminster Palace – a place to make connections?

[Link] – a report on our conversation with Campbell.