



## Session Proposals Limes Congress 2021

17

Dress to impress. Dress and identity on the frontiers in the late 3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> centuries AD

**Philip Smither**

*Affiliation:* University of Kent/English Heritage, United Kingdom

**Session Abstract:** In the Roman world dress was an important to demonstrate identity. In 2000 Ellen Swift published her PhD thesis on Regionality in the Roman West which investigated different objects of dress from the late 3rd-5th century AD. Since then there have been many studies on these objects, such as crossbow brooches (Collins@), belt fittings (Leahy 2007, Carr 2018, Smither forthcoming), bracelets and beads (Swift 2003). Our understanding of these objects has improved in the last 20 years and through new archaeological investigations and the use of metal detector finds from Britain and now The Netherlands we can begin to build on our interpretation of these objects with much more data. There is still more to understand about the spread of dress objects and styles along the entirety of the Limes, as well as in the hinterland on either side. Were some styles specific to military personnel and/or were these styles ubiquitous? Furthermore, what features, and styles were brought in by those recruited from outside the Empire borders, those who moved from province to province and how did this affect transmission? In terms of objects types, many have been studied in-depth, however several studies need updating; for example, belt fittings. Regionality is important to this, and while many dress objects might look similar, subtle differences in form and decoration could point to local styles and workshops. Finally, there is a need to think beyond the male sphere on the limes and thing about women's dress. Swift (2000) looked at regional patterns of bracelets and beads but more detailed provincial and site studies might indicate how similar or different are the patterns of male and female dress which could suggest the movement of people or adoption of non-local styles. This session invites papers from all parts of the Empire focusing on dress in the late 3rd-5th centuries AD.