



Session Proposals Limes Congress 2021

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Reconstructing the Limes. Roman archaeology as national and transnational heritage

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Session Abstract: This session focuses on the ways the borders of the Roman empire have been brought back to life and appropriated as meaningful cultural heritage in the various limes countries, since the rediscovery of Roman “civilization” in the sixteenth century. Taking the recent “critical turn” in heritage studies (Laurajane Smith, *Use of Heritage*, 2006) as a starting point, the session will reconsider the meaning and value of Roman heritage. The limes is constructed as a living past by the actions and interests of people, rather than on the basis of any intrinsic archaeological and historic value. Limes sites have not only been used as archaeological monuments, but also played significant roles in the construction of broader meta-narratives regarding the historical development of nations, regions and borders. For example, in the Netherlands the “Batavian myth” was invoked to legitimize the Dutch revolt, informed Patriots during the Enlightenment, and fed into constructions of Dutch exceptionalism. In the UK, Hadrian's Wall has been used as an allegory for potential British disunity during the recent debates about Scottish independence. In addition, the Frontiers of the Roman Empire World Heritage Site has been used to communicate ideas about European and transnational identity (Richard Hingley 2018).

We invite speakers from the various limes countries to participate in this session. By exploring examples from different countries, a transnational insight can be gained of how Roman frontier sites influenced our modern perceptions of boundaries, from the deep past to the present.