

“The Search for Mithras in Roman Britain: A Reassessment of the Archaeological Evidence”.

Synopsis

‘The search for Mithras in Roman Britain: A reassessment of the archaeological evidence’ is a reassessment of evidence for the ‘cult’ of Mithras in Roman Britain with the chief aim of finding the likely location of one of Chester’s lost Mithraeums.

The study provides a brief overview of what is currently known about Mithraeism across the Roman Empire along with its iconography. The paper also challenges the current theory that Mithraism was a ‘secret cult’ that followed the Roman military and traders and presents evidence from Britain, Germany, France and Italy to suggest that it should in fact be classified as a religion that does not seem to be secret in any way.

The paper also analyses the location of known Mithraea at London, Housesteads, Carrawburgh, and Rudchester with regards to their corresponding fort, fortress, or city along with the possible Mithraeum at Caernarfon using LiDAR, GIS and historic maps, in order to ascertain if there are any patterns in the location of these temples. Primary research was also conducted by the author for any evidence of Mithraism in Chester utilising the Grosvenor Museum stores along with artefacts located on the PAS website.

Finally, all of the above is then brought together in order to identify the likely location of one of Chester’s lost Mithraeums, and a resistivity survey was conducted on the identified location. The results of the survey are then presented along with evidence accumulated through all of the other study aspects in order to argue a case for there being the remains of a possible Mithraeum underground in Chester.

David James Laverty