

Consider the requirements of formal publication, including standards for writing, editing and style, for a range of archaeological project outputs

Introduction

This work will examine a range of outputs produced in relation to the project centred on the excavation of the 'Hallaton Treasure' in the village of Hallaton, in southeast Leicestershire (Score, 2013). The uncovering of a few animal bones in the winter of 2000 by members of the Hallaton Fieldwork Group whilst fieldwalking on land overlooking the village soon escalated into the discovery of a cache of hundreds of Iron Age coins (Score, 2013). With the potential importance of this immediately recognised, an agreement was made with English Heritage, the British Museum, and the BBC to fund an investigation into the site, with the fieldwork to be carried by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) (Priest & Clay, 2004). What followed was three seasons of fieldwork between 2001 and 2003 that uncovered 'one of the most important Iron Age sites in Britain' (Harborough Museum, 2024): a Late Iron Age hilltop shrine (Score, 2013). The shrine sat on the top of a hill inside a ditched enclosure with an entrance to the east. Within this entranceway, the remains of two 'guardian' dogs were discovered, just beyond which were found a total of fourteen coin hoards (Score, 2013)(Fig. 1). In the ditch to the south there was a further coin hoard along with an elaborately decorated 1st century Roman cavalry helmet, ritual offerings, and another dog burial (Score, 2013). In addition to these finds, a huge mass of pig skeletons was discovered in a series of pits to the east of the enclosure, thought to be evidence of ritual sacrifice together with waste derived from feasting (Score, 2013). A total of 5,296 coins were recovered from the site, most of which were associated with the local Iron Age tribe the Corieltavi; this far eclipsed the total number of such coins that had been found in the country until that point, making this site incredibly important both regionally and nationally (Leins, 2011; Score, 2013).

Owing to the significance of the discovery, the publication output for this project is one the most comprehensive that ULAS has ever produced, and as such provides an excellent example through

which to assess the differences in approach necessary for the dissemination of results to a wide range of audiences.

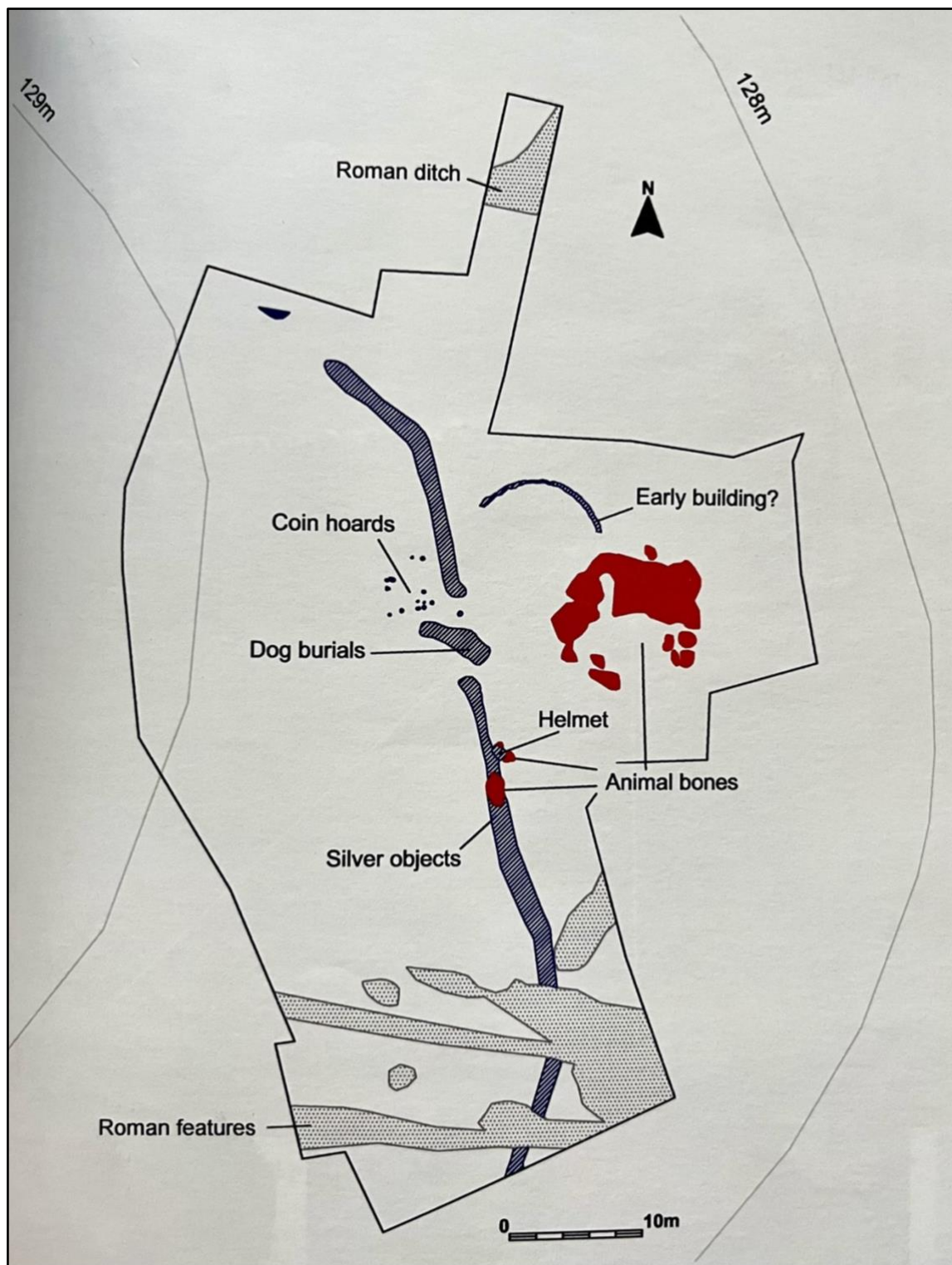


Figure 1. Site plan showing finds locations (Score, 2013)

The publications

There are three core document types that were central to the site's dissemination strategy, all of which were formulated to serve the same purpose but for notably different audiences. These documents consisted of a pair of articles in the local archaeological journal, a monograph, and a short-form book designed for the general public. The site was blessed with a set of results that allowed for the construction of a strong narrative around it. The challenge then was to be able to retain that while adjusting the manner in which it was presented.

The range of publications for the project took on quite different formats and before the content of them is even considered, a clear difference between these main three is in the page count. The two journal articles have page counts of 12 and 14 pages respectively, the short-form book has 64 pages, and the monograph has 302 pages. Each one had to attempt to convey the significance of the site and tell a compelling story of it within that count, and as such there is a necessary level of variation in the detail employed, and choices had to be made on which of the finds groups would take centre stage in each.

The local journal articles

The local journal articles were both published in *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society*, a yearly publication which gives the roughly 400 members of the society (LAHS, 2025a) a way of finding out about the most interesting archaeological and historical work recently conducted within the county. This publication is available in print to members and the back-catalogue is now also available in its entirety on the Archaeology Data Service website (ADS, 2025), with new editions uploaded a year after the date of publication (LAHS, 2025b).

The first of these articles, published in 2006, marked the first in-depth formal publication about the site, with only a brief roughly 400-word summary having been published in 2004, immediately following the conclusion of the excavations (Priest & Clay, 2004). Entitled '*Rituals, Hoards and Helmets: a ceremonial meeting place of the Corieltavi*' the piece provides an overview of the circumstances that led to the discovery, the excavations, and sections on each of the key finds groups, the helmet, faunal remains, and coins, before finishing with a discussion of the current theories around the site (Score, 2006).

As the article is in a local archaeological journal, the tone is less formal than might be found in a publication for a national or international equivalent, but it still contains elements of the structure and referencing that would be expected of a standard academic journal. Articles in the *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society* are not subject to peer-review, but a guidance document is provided for submissions. This document contains criteria similar to those found in the guidance of larger national/international journals (e.g. Journal of Archaeological Research, 2025; Nature, 2025), specifying font usage, document formatting, referencing styles, etc. (LAHS, 2024). What is slightly different is a lack of criteria for aspects such as specific headings or structure that the article must adhere to. Regarding content, the advice is fairly simple; the articles should be kept under 10,000 words, 'Should be original, and bring forward new material or a new interpretation of existing matter', 'Aim for clear, standard English. Avoid jargon and do not take for granted the readers' familiarity with technical terms', and perhaps most notably the specification that 'Academic theses have a particular style generally unsuitable for narrative publication, and are likely to need considerable amendment to make them suitable in whole or in part for the Transactions' (LAHS, 2024, p. 2-3).

This last point is a clear reflection of the journal's intended audience. This is not an 'academic' journal, and instead must cater to a potentially broad audience that will have some level of understanding and interest in archaeological work as members of the society, but will have differing degrees of familiarity with archaeological techniques and historical contexts. The piece on Hallaton was prepared before the site analysis had been completed and was limited in how much detail it could use, but still, the understanding of the purpose of the journal and the audience it is engaging with means the piece on the Hallaton excavations primarily focuses on simply telling an accessible narrative story of the site. Any discussions of the key finds and the site's potential role and significance are largely undertaken without relying too heavily on extensive, referenced comparisons for theories or historical contexts. The narrative is key.

A later 'update' article (Score, 2012), published in 2012 after analysis and publication of the site monograph had been completed has a very similar style and structure to the earlier article, but focuses on providing more detail on the metal finds (excluding the coins) that was absent from the earlier piece. As part of this more detailed approach, the piece makes greater use of comparisons and draws on wider research to substantiate the interpretations of these objects to a fuller extent. This is reflected in a bibliography that is more than four times as extensive as that earlier piece. In many ways though the presentation of this focused writeup is more interesting for how indicative it is of the

knowledge of a fairly static audience. Any prior context of the site provided in the piece is quite limited, suggesting that it is relying on the fact that the audience is a small group with little turnover year on year, and who can be assumed to have read the previous pieces on the site. This is certainly not an assumption that many publications can make but, in this case, that trust in an audience allows for more information to be disseminated within a limited word count.

Outside of the text of the pieces, a decent number of images are included in both articles, with many of them becoming mainstays of publications about the site. A limitation of the journal's formatting, however, is that these are all produced in black and white, and in a number of cases this has a distinct effect on the legibility and 'pop' of the images when compared with later publications of these same images in colour. This will be entirely a consequence of these articles being produced for a local publication with limited resources though, and so the avoidance of costly colour printing is quite understandable.

The monograph

Between the two local journal articles came the release of the official monograph for the site (Score, 2011). This monograph is curated as the definitive version of all available information on the excavations and was prepared over the course of roughly a year and a half (Score, 2025). The title of the first journal article has been refined into the pleasingly alliterative '*Hoards, Hounds and Helmets*', a title which was later also used for the short-form book. All ULAS monographs are published in-house and so there are no strict guidelines that must be met regarding presentation, but there is a definite consistency in structure, fonts, and formatting that has been established over time (Speed & Finn, 2024; Thomas, 2011).

These kinds of documents are primarily intended as a way to provide a more readily available resource for research purposes than, for example, a site report hidden away in the grey literature library (Nottingham Trent University, 2025), and the audience for these kinds of document is limited beyond the archaeological and academic community. As a result, the monograph aims to provide as much information about the findings as possible, highlighted by the fact that roughly two thirds of the main page count is set aside for the specialist reports. The style of language is somewhat varied throughout. The early sections have a narrative focus, though with a staccato feel to the sentences at times, lacking the natural flow of either the *Transactions* articles or the short-form book. Once the introductory section is complete, the tone becomes more technical and centres mostly on straightforward

presentation of information, particularly as it moves into the specialist reports portion. The formal structure and language of these sections is likely a consequence of following the specific guidance documents for their respective fields, such as the *Standards for Pottery in Archaeology* (Barclay *et al.*, 2016), which can sometimes inadvertently stifle more engaging writing styles. The narrative tone returns again though for the discussion sections, and these provide a well-structured, well-written, and comprehensive narrative of the site. In certain respects, in a monograph such as this there has to be an understanding that the discussion sections of the document may be the only parts that are read in full and so there is an expectation of increased accessibility while also needing to be careful to avoid sacrificing any intellectual rigour. With the content of many monographs being adaptations of previous work, such as the site report, it is these considerations and the need to hone the presentation of the information, that is key to the success of such a document.

Concerning images, the monograph contains a wide range of maps, photos, and illustrations. Interestingly, there is noticeable variation in the use of colour and black and white images throughout, with colour photographs generally reserved for key finds, though variation in the use of colour in graphs and site plans feels less specific. When asked about this, the monograph's principal author Vicki Score (2025) explained that individual pages of the monograph had to be wholly either black and white or colour, not a mix, and as might be expected it was cost which was the deciding factor in choosing which images were presented in colour. This is perhaps an issue inherent to the nature of the publication. ULAS monographs are self-published and suffer from a need to reduce costs perhaps more than monographs produced with larger publishers. Self-publishing does however allow for greater control over the content of the document, so a choice has to be made as to what is the most important aspect of the final product.

The short-form book

The short-form book from 2013 was the final one of this group of documents to be published. It demonstrates a clear progression by the primary author, site director Vicki Score, towards a tightly honed and well understood site narrative. The book is a full colour work, and this had a direct consequence on the number of pages on which the information could be presented, with the number of pages that it was affordable to print decided on first and the content then designed to fit that space (Score, 2025). It took six weeks to prepare, mostly in her own time (Score, 2025), and the result is a clear, engaging document which does a great job of presenting the story of the site in a public-friendly way.

A good example of this honing of the narrative is the interesting difference between the order that the three document types considered so far address the key finds from the site. In the initial journal article, the helmet takes prime position, followed by the animal bone, before closing out with the coins. In the monograph, the coins take precedence, followed by the helmet, the offerings, and finally the animal bone. This order is then changed again in the short-form book, with the two main animal bone assemblages bookending discussion of the coins, helmet, and the offerings. In part this could be a consequence of new information coming to light during the analysis phase which enhances or diminishes the relative importance of the findings, but there is also likely an element of considering what an audience will be most engaged by.



Figure 2. The 'Guardian Dogs' portion of the short-form book (Score, 2013)

The short-form book leading with a focus on the dog skeletons is clearly designed to connect the story with a public audience. In the initial journal article the dogs are mentioned in the write up of the excavation but are not granted their own section as other key finds were. In the monograph, despite now being part of the title, it is the large assemblage of pig skeletons which is addressed first when analysing the faunal remains. In the short-form book though, the dog skeletons get a dedicated two page spread (Fig. 2), with an artist's impression of one of the dogs and a description of the role of dogs and their burials in the Iron Age and Roman periods, alongside a theory that aims to tug on the heartstrings as to why these dogs in particular were chosen. This represents a good understanding of how to quickly encourage a reader into forming an emotional connection to a site, rather than simply

presenting a selection of shiny treasures that can be admired without paying too much attention to the context in which they are discovered.



Figure 3. A selection of the images of people in the short-form book (Score, 2013)

What the short-form book also does is to populate the story of the site with people. Just considering the images used in each of the publications, people are almost entirely absent from the images in the journal articles and the monograph, whereas images of site workers, volunteers, and artist's impressions of Iron Age people making use of the site are a prominent and consistent feature of the short-form book (Fig. 3). Again, this demonstrates an understanding of the necessity of connecting people to a site and story through some form of shared humanity. This is particularly impactful when working within a limited number of pages in which to get your narrative across.

The use of images more generally is a simple tool for engagement and the book makes good use of this with much of the content being evenly split between text and images. Although many of the images have been used elsewhere, there are still many new artistic impressions and reconstructions used to supplement these, for which additional costs would have been incurred. The author was clearly aware of the value they added to the ability to tell the site's story though, and they were evidently considered a worthwhile investment.

The grey literature report

An interesting point of comparison to all of these documents, in particular the monograph, is the grey literature report for the site. When compared to the local journal articles and the short-form book, the monograph has a more technical tone, full of context numbers, references, and dense tables. If, however, the monograph is instead compared to the site report, it is evident how much focus has been put into making parts of it easier to digest than the original report. The language of the site

report consists of dry statements of fact until the discussion section and it is not designed to engage the reader, rather to straightforwardly convey the information extracted from the site. It was also prepared in adherence to the ClfA standards for these kinds of publications (ClfA, 2023), and so there are a number of inclusions which are not necessary for the monograph such as research objectives and project aims. Additionally, image selections in the site report are generally included to provide information rather than being edited to be more comprehensible or aesthetically pleasing. This includes the placement of images within the document where the flow of the text is not taken into account in the same way, as such they arbitrarily break up some sections. Although the site report isn't peer-reviewed, it is presented in an unadulterated academic form that ends up inadvertently doing a good job of illustrating the skill that goes into crafting an interesting, engaging narrative out of a body of evidence. Regarding page count, the site report is in fact longer than the monograph when appendices are excluded, some of which will undoubtedly be due to formatting differences, but this also demonstrates the degree to which the monograph represents a honing of many parts of the narrative.

Peer-reviewed material

Notably, very little of the published documentation from the site underwent any form of peer-review. Only one document was found among the ULAS archive which had definitively received any outside feedback, and this was an article for an edited volume on the proceedings of a research seminar on the Iron Age in the East Midlands which took place at the University of Leicester in 2008 (Sterry *et al.*, 2010). The editor feedback for this article is at times highly critical of some of the ideas put forth, but this feedback has been provided with the caveat that the authors should decide whether or not they make changes as a result of it, rather than being an impediment to publication of the piece. Interestingly, the main crux of a lot of the editor's critique is the inability of archaeology to prove or support a number of the suggested theories which underpin the site narrative as presented. For the final version of this article, many of the critiques were taken on board and changes made to remove some elements of conjecture, however, some of these theories are then reintroduced in subsequent publications as they evidently remained of narrative importance to those involved in the project. It would therefore have been curious to see how the narrative would have been presented in a fully peer-reviewed article and whether undergoing that process would have then reshaped the final narrative of the site.

Other publications

The site was also featured in numerous editions of the popular national archaeology magazine, *Current Archaeology*, and although a majority of these articles were written by people with no direct connection to the excavations, a version of the site's story was published in 2003 by site director Vicki Score (nee Priest) and then-ULAS director Patrick Clay before the site's location was revealed (Priest & Clay, 2003). This article bears a strong resemblance to those which would later be published in the *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society*, with a similar degree of trust in the audience's familiarity and interest in archaeological practice. Though owing to both the format of the article and how early into the project it was published, it is limited in the level of detail that can be provided. The article's character and the point in time that it was published mean that it is in large part designed to spark interest in the site. The potential significance of the findings is at the forefront and there is a certain 'mysteries to be solved' angle to the framing of a number of aspects that sets up future revelations down the line. This is an approach that is again illustrative of a firm understanding of the audience being addressed.

Conclusion

The main takeaway from the review of the works published in relation to the 'Hallaton Treasure' is that they were all prepared with a strong understanding of both the narrative that they wanted to convey and how that narrative should best be presented for each distinct audience. Clearly the order in which pieces are published matters and those documents produced later in the publication process benefit from being more refined versions, but the thought processes involved in reshaping the narrative for vastly different audiences also plays a part. In many ways the range of publications examined here illustrate the benefits of having a broad publication and dissemination strategy. By being forced to look at a site from a range of perspectives, the authors are encouraged to explore the information at their disposal more thoroughly, to find the smaller stories within the larger picture, and think more about how the work could be shaped to reach more people, something all archaeological work could benefit from.

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