

ROMAN FINDS GROUP

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Data Protection Act

Under the terms of the 1984 Data Protection Act, The Roman Finds Group is required to ask its members whether they have any objection to personal data about them being held by the Society on computer. The personal data consists of members' names and addresses used for mailing notices of meetings, and will be released only to archaeological organisations. If members have any objections to personal data about them being held by the RFG, could they please write to the editor

Editorial

You may have been wondering why you haven't yet had the normal mailing giving you details of the Spring RFG meeting. The reason is that this year there will be a summer meeting in June at Verulamium, details of which are given on page 9.

The Committee had hoped to organise a session at the Second International Roman Archaeology Conference in April in place of a spring meeting, but unfortunately this offer seems to have been rejected. It does seem to me a pity that the organisers have chosen to be exclusive rather than inclusive. The great delight of the First Roman Archaeology Conference held in Reading in 1995 was that it drew its speakers from all areas of Roman archaeology resulting in an enjoyable and inspiring weekend. The draft programme for the Nottingham conference by contrast, appears to equate Roman archaeology with that carried out in academic institutions. It is to be hoped that the Third Roman Archaeology conference, if there is one, reverts to the model of the first conference and offers an umbrella for all interested parties to offer papers.

The deadline for the next Newsletter will be *June 30th, 1997*. As ever, all contributions gratefully received, no matter how short. If you feel inspired to write more than 1,000 words, I would be grateful if you could contact me first. Please send all contributions to:-

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Panelled Enamel Vessels

The recent publication of a most unusual enamelled vessel from Corbridge (Casey & Hoffman 1995, fig. 3) has enabled me to suggest an interpretation of an enamelled plate that I have been studying from Aldborough. The purpose of this note is to draw attention to an uncommon vessel type of the late first to early second century, and to appeal for information about any similar unpublished items that may be lurking in museums or post-excavation programmes.



The Corbridge vessel, pictured here as fig. 1, was found in a cremation burial belonging to the first half of the 2nd century. It is decorated in blue and green champlevé enamel and consists of separate units soldered together. Each of the six side panels, for example, is a separate unit. The body of what must have been a very similar vessel was recovered from Stein in the Netherlands (Stuart 1986, fig. 122), and there is also a fragment from the upper part of a trapezoidal side plate from Silchester (Jope 1955, fig. 1 no. 6).



The Aldborough plate (fig. 2) was found by Mr. Jon Beavis-Harrison whilst fieldwalking. It had been bent in half but has been drawn flat to show the pattern. It is square (46 by 43mm) and two of the sides terminate in thin narrow flanges. It is decorated with green and blue champlevé enamel, and also shares with the Corbridge vessel a serrated inner margin to the frame around its edge. It is tempting to see this as a side panel of a vessel made in a similar way to the Corbridge flask, possibly even from a hexagonal box or inkwell similar to those decorated with millefiori enamel thought to have been made in the Rhineland (see for example Butcher 1976, fig. 43). The thin side flanges would certainly facilitate this.

These panelled vessels were clearly the products of the same workshops producing the enamelled saucepans and other vessel types in use during the late first and second centuries. The discovery of mould fragments for making enamelled canteens at Castleford, West Yorkshire in a late first century context within the fort (Bayley and Budd forthcoming), has confirmed the long-suspected Romano-British origin of this type of artefact.

Fig. 1. The Corbridge flask
(Scale 1:1)

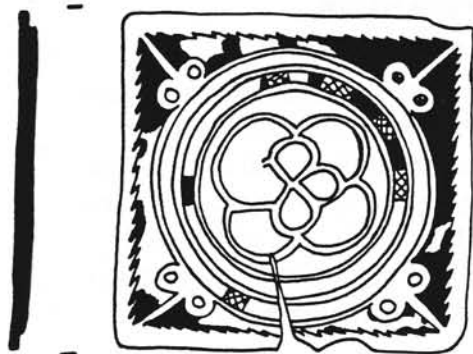


Fig. 2. The plate from Aldborough

(Scale 1:1)

Key

■ Blue
 ▨ Green

It seems likely that there may be fragments of other panelled vessels lurking unrecognised. Those flat enamelled fragments that are clearly not from brooches or seal boxes, and those strange enamelled fittings you can't invent a function for - could they be elements from panelled vessels. As an example, could the ? candlestick also from Aldborough recently published by Mike Bishop (1996, 94 no.605, fig 50) be a base stand from one? Any information will be most gratefully received.

Acknowledgements

I am very grateful to Jon Beavis-Harrison for allowing me to study his copper alloy artefacts from Aldborough, and to John Casey for permission to publish here the illustration of the Corbridge vessel taken from his report.

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Life in *Londinium*

Museum of London, 30th September, 1996

The Autumn meeting of the RFG was an informative and informal series of talks hosted by the Museum of London, centred around an update of finds from recent excavations. The museum has been very busy lately, it seems, and we heard all about the new Roman London Gallery from Jenny Hall, with Trevor Bingham revealing the trials and tribulations of constructing an accurate model of the forum and surroundings to scale, complete with carefully placed animals and passers-by to distract attention from the less well documented features. The model itself, now in position, is a thing of beauty and a joy forever, or at least for a few years... in any case, we are told that the updated galleries have improved visitor understanding no end, and the new galleries have obviously been thought out with care, forming an ideal setting for the many new objects on display.

Some of the new finds were presented by Angela Wardle and Martin Dearne. Angela whizzed us round three London sites, 1 The Poultry, Regis House and Bishopsgate. The Poultry site, in Cheapside, looks set to considerably extend our knowledge of Roman furniture with the recovery of a circular shale table top and leather fragments of what is probably upholstery. A calcite vessel from Regis House was a particularly unusual find. A wide variety of imported objects has been found in Roman London, re-emphasising its cosmopolitan nature. Martin told us a fairy tale, about three little pigs, or rather three not so little pigs. The lead pigs recently recovered from the Regis House excavations (the first known from London) are important finds in the context of Romano-British lead production as a whole. Inscriptions on the pigs show that they came from the Mendips production area. They are thought to have been sent in a single consignment to London. Two were cast in the same mould and the other shared a mould with an extant Mendips pig. Alas, the story didn't have a happy ending: Martin recounted, with tears in his eyes, how the big bad wolf of recycled lead use in London may have vanquished those first tentative forays to the big city, or at least grabbed a large part of the market, leaving the pigs cowering under the floorboards in a Thames-side warehouse⁽¹⁾.

Two other crafts were examined in the afternoon session, again illustrated by recent London finds. John Shepherd told us that there is now glass-working evidence from fifteen sites in London. Experimental work to achieve an appearance on Time Team (sorry John - of course to look at the working and products of a reconstructed furnace) was dazzlingly successful, with the reproduction of a technique for melting large amounts of glass. The Guildhall Yard site has apparently produced a massive amount of glass vessel and glass working debris. By comparing mystery bits of glass found in these and other dumps with the products of experimental

glassblowing, they have been revealed as likely waste products from the production of narrow necked vessels. Staying with the vessels theme, several new casks from the Poultry excavations were the inspiration for Damian Goodburn's contribution. The favoured material for barrels is apparently larch or silver fir, and the wine in the barrels was probably produced on the Rhine. A taste for retsina can be deduced from resin in small crevices on the inside of casks recently found. Tool-marks on the barrels give useful information about construction techniques, found to be significantly different from medieval methods, and prehistoric landscapes can even be reconstructed from the barrels, as the Roman coopers were often using wood from five to seven hundred year old trees.

Catherine Johns finished off the day with an update of Roman jewellery. Skilfully avoiding too many brooches 'enough typology to make you feel ill', her focus was on mainly precious metal hoards. A recent find was a late Hellenistic finger-ring imported into Britain in the pre-conquest era, the earliest such object known in Britain. Some distinctively Romano-British pieces are now beginning to appear, such as 'horse & rider' brooches. The date range of other types of decoration such as pierced work can be pushed earlier with the evidence from dated hoards.

Points emerging from the day. Roman London was fully integrated into the network of Empire-wide trade, with imports from both the adjoining provinces in north-western Europe and from further afield. From a broader perspective, the meeting was particularly interesting in that we saw things from the point of view of the visitor to the museum as well as the specialist. Bridging the gulf between the two is an increasingly important part of the archaeologist's work, as we become more conscious of the need for justification to a wider audience. The Museum of London proved that this can be done without a loss of academic purpose. Finally, if you want a bedtime story told to your children, you could do worse than ask Martin Dearne.

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(1) Editorial note. These little piggies have just been published. See *Britannia* XXVII 1996, 446-8 nos. 11-13

Frameworks for our Past

The following is the text of the response to the English Heritage discussion document *Frameworks for our Past* (See *Newsletter XII* p. 8) sent by the Committee on behalf of the Roman Finds Group

Dr Olivier has clearly identified many problems of which we are only too aware and EH should be congratulated on their initiative in taking on this massive assessment. The initiatives proposed in Section 7 seem sensible, particularly the enhancement of the research frameworks database and Monuments Protection Programme publication. The points about museum collections and archives (p44) are clearly part of a continuing debate. More comprehensive indexing and assessment of holdings is obviously essential but the cost would be enormous.

An index of current research would be very useful and would help to address some of the problems of isolation experienced by freelance specialists. We would be happy to assist with the collection of data if the index of current research is adopted. The Committee has also discussed the possibility of a Small Finds survey similar to those carried out for Roman and Medieval Pottery and feel that any survey should perhaps cover all periods not just Roman.

Artefact studies will always be a service industry to the other branches of the discipline as there will always be a need for "data gatherers" but we must have a greater interaction with the synthesisers so that we know exactly what data to gather. There is an ever increasing need for regional and thematic syntheses which in turn would form the basis for a national research strategy. The issue of fragmentation of specialist knowledge (p32) is particularly relevant to finds research and the various regional fora etc proposed could help to provide a solution.

The Committee believes that the "growing isolation experienced by finds specialists" is unavoidable as our numbers diminish as a consequence of project funding. However the project meetings instigated by MAP2 play some part in counteracting it. To state that "growing isolation can be mitigated by increased education and training" (p40) misses the point entirely - regular informal contact with other colleagues at a regional/ national level is what is needed.

On a practical level, the way to reduce the isolation factor, encourage contact with other branches of the discipline and most importantly, make current and previous work easily accessible to all, would be the establishment of a national archaeological library with conference facilities to act as a hub around which all those involved in archaeology/ history would revolve. Much cheaper and more easily achievable would be the organisation of regular multi-disciplinary conferences on burning topics of the day (and such meetings could also

help to establish what those topics are), with prompt publication of the proceedings.

The Committee believes that the development of multi-discipline regional frameworks is the way forward and we, as a Group, would assist in their development within the regions. We do not feel it is appropriate at the present to draw up research frameworks in isolation. In the future we may produce a national statement drawing on the results of the multi-disciplinary statements and expand it to include more specialist lines of research.

Owmby by Spittal

I would like to hear from anyone who has any information about finds recovered from Owmby by Spittal, especially material provenanced Owmby Cliff. The Central Archaeology Service are currently undertaking a programme of work in the area, and I am trying to get a picture of the range of material recovered from the site over the years. If you know anything about the site, I would be grateful to hear from you.

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Forthcoming Conferences

Science in Archaeology: an agenda for the future

This conference is being held at 23 Savile Row, London from Friday 7th to Sunday 9th February, 1997. It will examine the contribution of the archaeological sciences to archaeology from an archaeological point of view. The papers will include an element of review, but the main aim is to look ahead and identify worthwhile directions for future investigation. The session on the late Iron Age and Roman period is on the Saturday afternoon and includes the following papers.

Martin Millett *Archaeological science in proto-historic societies*

Terry O'Connor & Marijke van der Veen *Crops and livestock: intensification of production and land-use*

Vince Gaffney *The use of geophysics and remote sensing*

David Peacock *Characterisation and trade in ceramics and stone*

Justine Bayley *Metals and metalworking in the 1st millennium AD*

Details from Science in Archaeology Conference, Ancient Monuments Laboratory, English Heritage, 23 Savile Row, LONDON W1X 1AB

New approaches to the art of Roman Britain

This dayschool is being held at the University of Birmingham on Saturday March 1st, 1997. It will provide an opportunity to hear the most recent research on the art of Roman Britain. Papers on sculpture, mosaics, jewellery and decorated metalwork will present new insights into the patronage, production and consumption of art and into the social, cultural and religious contexts of Romano-British art. The provisional programme is as follows.

Jean Bagnall Smith *Votives from Romano-British Temples*

Lynne Bevan *The context and status of recent decorated metalwork finds from the Midlands*

Tom Blagg *The architectural sculptures of south eastern Britain*

Iain Ferris *Reconsidering barbarian images on the Antonine Wall distance slabs*

Martin Henig *The study of Romano-British art: discussion and overview*

Catherine Johns *Jewellery in Roman Britain*

David Neal *The mosaics of Britain*

René Rodgers *Imagery and ideology: female representations
in Romano-British Art*

Sarah Scott *The society and architectural settings of mosaics*

For further details contact Iain Ferris, School of Continuing Studies,
University of Birmingham, BIRMINGHAM B15 TT

Objects from the Mary Rose: personal and Domestic

The Finds Research Group AD700-1700 are holding their Spring meeting on Monday, March 17th 1997 at the Mary Rose Trust, Historic Dockyard, Portsmouth. The meeting will provide the opportunity to hear about and view some of the domestic and personal artefacts recovered from the Mary Rose. Time will be allowed to visit the museum after the presentations and the visit will be partially subsidised by the Finds Research Group. The closing date for booking is at the end of February 1997. For further details contact Quita Mould, Christmas Cottage, Chosely, Docking, KINGS LYNN, Norfolk PE31 8PQ. Tel 01485 512443.

2nd International Roman Archaeology Conference

This is being held at the University of Nottingham from Friday 11th to Sunday 13th April 1997. Lots of sessions about all sorts of things! Details from Andrew Poulter, Dept. of Archaeology, University of Nottingham, NOTTINGHAM NG7 2RD. Telephone 0115 951 4844. Fax 0115 951 4844

RFG summer meeting

This will be held on Saturday June 14th. 1997 at Verulamium Museum, St. Albans. The day will include an opportunity to look around the museum and to hear about recent excavations in the area. Other papers are also invited. Full details of the meeting will be available nearer the time. To offer a paper and/or to obtain further information, please contact Roy Friendship-Taylor, Toad Hall, 86 Main Street, Hackleton, Northampton NN7 2AD