

ROMAN FINDS GROUP : ANNUAL REPORT

2019/2020



Your Committee 2019/20

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This annual report would have been delivered at the RFG Meeting in Glasgow, scheduled for April 3rd and 4th. As you all know, because of the covid-19 virus we have had to postpone this meeting - which we hope to re-arrange later in the year. This was to have been RFG's 54th meeting (our first was held in Leicester in 1988), but only our first in Scotland. We have just nine members in Scotland (3.6% of our membership total) so we were hoping this would spur a membership drive there. This report is based on contributions from members of the committee, so although it is my name which appears at the bottom of this report it should really be edited by....

In this, my first annual report, I've also tried to give you a bit more 'background' information about what we are doing or have done and how we are trying to support members as well as those who support us. We asked you all to complete a questionnaire on the role of RFG only three years ago. While we don't wish to repeat this exercise (just yet), we are always keen to hear members views about what we are doing (good and where we can improve) and what more we can do. Members of the committee are working very hard on your behalf, but its your group, so let us know your views.

Its been another good year for RFG. There have been two issues of *Lucerna* published, edited and distributed by Matt Fittock assisted by Emily Blanchard (volumes 57 and 58) . Matt is always looking for more contributions, so please support *Lucerna* and continue to make it the growing newsletter it is. Whilst there hasn't been any datasheets published this year (the last was datasheet 10 earlier in 2019, but there are a number in the pipeline.

We'd welcome more datasheets as well feel these are really valued by members. Please contact the datasheet editor Gillian Dunn.

During the year and we have held two meetings. The first, a major conference held in June in collaboration with Instrumentum, Kings College London, the Finds Research Group and the later Prehistoric Finds Group, 31 papers on the theme *Hoarding and Deposition in Europe from Later Prehistory to the Medieval Period – Finds in Context*, which attracted over 100 delegates during its three days. RFG (our Treasurer, Jenny Hall) handled the accounts for the joint conference and the small surplus made will be going towards the publication of the papers. Summaries of all papers were published in *Lucerna* volume 57.



Philip Crummy at Colchester town walls

Our second meeting was a day at Colchester Museum in November, held in association with the Colchester and Ipswich Museums Trust, entitled *Finds from Roman Colchester*, timed to coincide with their excellent Adorn Exhibition. The meeting was preceded by a guided tour of Roman Colchester with Philip Crummy (ending with a rather nice cream tea at the Roman circus site and the Colchester Archaeological Trust HQ).

Apart from the exhibition members were treated to a visit to the Castle Vaults and a personal explanation of the little visited the monumental arcade in front of the Temple to Claudius by Philip Crummy, over lunch on the day of the meeting. Eleven papers on finds from the area were listened to by 45 delegates and speakers. Grants were made to both the Colchester Museum and the Colchester Archaeological Trust to thank them for their help. A full report on the meeting and its papers was published in *Lucerna* Volume 58.

We have maintained the same pricing structure for our meetings for the last six years. Our meetings strategy has always been to ‘break even’, providing interesting meetings for members at an affordable price, and while meetings which have attracted a big attendance have produced a surplus over the last the last seven years we have made ‘grants’ of £1,700 to hosts of our meetings, usually in the form of support for book purchases or attendances for staff to attend RFG meetings. In this way we try to thank hosts who normally provide free admissions and no charges for room or equipment hire—let alone all the effort put in on our behalf for meeting organisation. In order to better ‘badge’ our meetings and presence we are producing a RFG banner and some bookmasks (courtesy of Barbara Birley).



Under the guidance of Nicola Hembrey our online presence continue to grow and impress; it remains a key means of communication for members of the public with Roman Finds Group, and has continued to encourage new members to join. Statistics show strong and consistent visitor numbers, and overall growth; over 3,700 users visited the site in 2019. Most popular pages included the Meetings, Conferences and Events pages, with interest in the finds, Datasheets, and scrolling tweets. The majority of visitors to the site are from the UK but are also worldwide. 60% of the site traffic originated from searches on major search engines. The RFG website remains on the first page of Google for various search terms, thanks in part to last year’s SSL Certificate installation. Alacrify continue to assist RFG with support, website administration and advice on digital issues and GDPR obligations; this remains free of charge. Im-

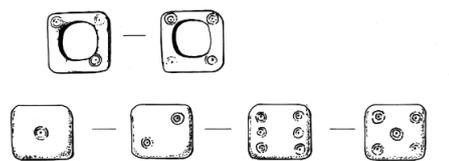
minent updates are planned, to facilitate event bookings, new memberships and membership renewals.

The RFG Twitter account, run by Nicola Hembrey and Edwin Wood, has resulted in almost 185,000 impressions (views) of tweets this year, with ‘drum-beat’ tweets through the year about how to join RFG and the benefits of membership, news about Roman finds, as well as engagement with followers. Strongest interest focuses on live-tweeting of papers from our conferences. Follower numbers continue to rise, with 2,919 followers at the time of writing.

The film project, led by Jenny Hall, is progressing and will be completed in the current financial year. Some 23 films have been made (in addition to the 12 filmed by Newcastle University and online) and are currently being edited. A lot of people have put a tremendous effort into their production, and we have benefited from Jenny raising £4,500 in grants (from the Roman Research Trust and Haverfield Bequest) towards the project, which has now been running for three years. All will be freely available to members through the RFG web site.



Our membership secretary—still from her ‘household’ video



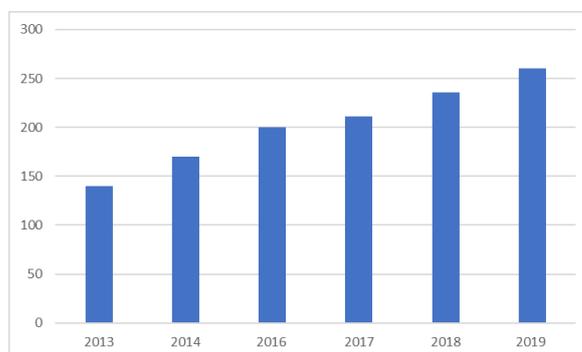
Composite dice from Venta Icenorum

Since the grants scheme was established in 2016 we have awarded nearly £3,000 in grants. During 2019 grants were made to Natasha Harlow towards illustrations on work on the finds from *Venta Icenorum* (an example copied herebelow); to Tim Penn and Summer Courts towards travel expenses for their work on gaming boards (an article on which was published this year in *Lucerna*, 57); and Matt Fittock towards publication costs for a paper on pipeclay figurines of Venus from Britain. As I write we have just awarded a grant to Philippa

Walton and Hella Eckhardt towards illustrations on material from Piercebridge to aid the final Piercebridge publication.

There was only one application for funds from the bursary scheme so we shall review this during the year. Since the instigation of the grants scheme we have made 11 grants, but have also rejected some. RFG grants are available only to RFG members (its your money!). Some of the reasons for rejection of grant applications have been funding to attend or support non RFG meetings, towards non member projects or retrospective applications for funds already spent. Notwithstanding this, we want to actively encourage members to apply for grants (and bursaries) as we feel this is a significant way that RFG can provide benefit to its members as well as furthering our aims.

Membership numbers have continued to increase. A look back over time shows that our membership has continued to grow. In the 1990's it was fairly consistently in the 80's, rising to 140 in 2003 where it remained until 2012. There are currently 260



members of RFG. While much of this increase is probably accounted for by the introduction of the PAS scheme and FLO's (although the PAS scheme started in 1997 and the big increase in membership only started in the last six or so years), it also represents an increasing in interest in finds study and the activities of the Group. Over 20 members continue to take benefit from reduced subscription to Instrumentum. Sadly in 2019 the study of Roman Finds lost one of its best known members, Jenny Price, in May. A tribute to Jenny written by Justine Bayley was published in Lucerna 57

RFG AGM Financial report for 2019

	£ TOTAL 2019	£ TOTAL 2018
INCOME		
Income from subs	2730	2719
Income from grants in	-	3000
Income from conferences	225	1747
Money held for publication of Instrumentum proceedings	454	-
TOTAL INCOME	3409	7466
EXPENDITURE		
Lucerna Issues and datasheets	1347	1346
Website hosting and licensing	312	264
Film project	1161	1062
CBA subs	64	64
Docklands study day 2018 catering	798	-
RFG grants out	451	650
Conference donations	200	150
Committee travel (2 meetings)	518	391
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	4851	3927
Total funds at Dec 31 2019	£12551	£14281

Increasing membership, popular meetings, Lucerna, datasheets, grants and bursary schemes, finds videos, web and twitter accounts as well as reduced subscription costs to Instrumentum. All for just £12 a year. I'm sure you'll all agree this is a bargain. The Treasurers report above continues to show a very healthy balance (there are approximately £2000 of commitments not shown on the accounts), but the overall level of money we have in the bank has remained fairly static for the last three years. Members will be pleased to know that there will be no increase in subscriptions this year. Subscriptions have remained unchanged since the 2015 AGM.

The RFG Committee continues to meet just twice a year (copies of our minutes are available in the members area of the web site) keeping costs for members attendance as low as possible. Thanks to the Institute of Archaeology (courtesy of Sally Worrell) and the Petrie Museum (courtesy of Edwin Wood) our meeting rooms have been provided free of charge.. We should also record our thanks to Alacrity who keep our web and twitter accounts running free of charge (although we necessarily pay a hosting fee for our web site). I end with a huge thank you to everyone who has contributed to the work of RFG this year. In particular I should like to pay tribute to Angela Wardle who is stepping down as Membership Secretary after a very long stint on RFG committee – 25 years as membership secretary. On behalf of all members we made a small presentation to Angela at our last committee meeting. Everyone who is, or has been, a RFG member owes Angela a huge thank you for everything she has done for the group. As there has been no AGM this year (so far) we will be seconding Barbara Birley as membership secretary until she can be formally elected.

Stephen Greep (sjgreep@gmail.com)
Chairman, Roman Finds Group

