

# STUDY GROUP FOR ROMAN POTTERY

## NEWSLETTER 48

November 2009



### **S.G.R.P. Website - [www.sgrp.org.uk](http://www.sgrp.org.uk)**

Remember to use our website for information and queries. If you would like to add an item, or suggest how the website may be developed, please contact  
Ted Connell Tel: 01474 872763 Email: [ted.connell@btinternet.com](mailto:ted.connell@btinternet.com)

### **Other Contacts:**

#### **Membership Secretary: Louise Rayner**

Flat 2, 121 Church Road, Teddington, Middlesex TW11 8QH.  
Email: [louise@lourayner.freemove.co.uk](mailto:louise@lourayner.freemove.co.uk)

#### **Hon. Secretary SGRP: Gwladys Monteil**

21, Wilberforce Road, Wisbech, PE13 2EX  
E-mail: [secretary@sgrp.org.uk](mailto:secretary@sgrp.org.uk)

## Welcome by New President Jane Evans

It is a great honour to be taking on the role of President of the SGRP. In doing so I am very aware of the achievements of former Presidents, most recently Roberta whose valuable contribution steering the Group is evident in the various SGRP initiatives reported on below. My role as president will be greatly supported by the expertise and commitment of the other committee members and SGRP project leaders. Having had a gap of three years since I served as SGRP secretary it is reassuring to see so many familiar faces on the committee! Louise Rayner will finish her second term as Treasurer at next year's AGM! Steve Willis has returned to the committee as editor, and Ted and Pam continue their steadfast work for the Group. It is also encouraging to see new, younger SGRP members getting involved. One member, Alex Beeby, currently holds one of the 2009-2010 IFA Workplace Learning Bursaries.

The Study Group goes from strength to strength. This was reflected in the quality of papers presented at the annual conference in Colchester, some of which are included below. The success of the conference owed a great deal to the hard work of Louise (while, it should be noted, on maternity leave) and Anna Doherty. The 2009 conference seemed to mark a rite of passage for the Group. The retrospective was tinged with sadness as we looked to the past and thought of members we had lost. Yet, from the conference papers and AGM, it was clear that the Group itself is very dynamic. Reading though the obituaries below there are a number of qualities the Group is carrying forward: high standards and scholarship; an enthusiasm to share knowledge; and the warmth/humour that can make us approachable to new students of the subject, and allow them to see the enjoyment of what we do.

The theme of honouring past members while inspiring future studies seems to run through a number of items in this edition of the newsletter. There are reminders for the Graham Webster memorial grant and the John Gillam prize. There is news of a bursary for next year's RAC conference, in honour of Jill Braithwaite, and a report on the Roman kilns digitisation project in honour of Vivien Swan.

The Research Strategy and Updated Agenda for the Study of Roman Pottery, reported on below by Rob Perrin, will determine future priorities for the Group and form a strategic reference point for Roman pottery studies. There is a reminder to respond to the questionnaire sent out by Rob, if you have not already done so, so that the document incorporates the widest range of views. Training will always be an important element of the Group's remit. A number of members, and non-members, benefited recently from the Samian training course, organised by Gwladys Monteil. The course opened with a concise overview of samian studies, covering production centres, forms and fabrics, and including a number of useful tips on 'where to start' with a sherd of samian in your hand. There was access to some of the collections from LAARC, and a practical session on fabric identification. Gwladys, assisted by Geoff Dannell, made the subject very approachable, and demonstrated a remarkable ability to give those present her undivided attention as a teacher while magically producing tea, coffee and a substantial lunch!

Finally, there is information about a couple of funding opportunities that the Group or individual members could be taking advantage of: IFA Workplace Learning Bursaries and the Heritage Lottery fund 'Skills for the future' grants. If you have any ideas for how the Group could be using these opportunities, or any suggestions for items the committee should be considering, we are always pleased to hear from you.

## Presentation of the new Committee

A number of committee members completed their 3-year term in office at this year's AGM (Chichester 2009). Those standing down are: Roberta Tomber (President), Phil Mills (Secretary), Laura Griffin (Ordinary Member), Alan Jacobs (Ordinary Member), Ruth Leary (Ordinary member) and Gwladys Monteil (Ordinary member)

We warmly thank all of them for their work for and on behalf of the Study Group.

Following the elections at the AGM in Chichester 2009, the new SGRP committee is as followed:

**President:** Jane Evans

**Membership secretary/Hon. Treasurer:** Louise Rayner

**Hon. Secretary:** Gwladys Monteil

**Hon. Editor:** Steve Willis

**Ordinary Members:** Jonathan Dicks, Amy Thorp, Jane Timby, Alex Beeby and Ian Rowlandson

**The following members also have active roles:**

**Production Manager:** Pam Irving

**Website Manager:** Ted Connell

## Obituaries

Most of you will know that the SGRP sadly lost two of its most talented and active members in the last 18 months, Vivien Swan and Gillian Braithwaite. Vivien and Jill were very much present in the hearts of all of the members present at the SGRP conference retrospective in Chichester. In their memory, the following tribute assembles a selection of messages received by the President and commemorations published in various media.

### Vivien Swan

*Roberta Tomber writes:*

Vivien was part of many different archaeological worlds. The one that I shared with her, and that connected her many worlds, was that of pottery. Her achievements in pottery are many and difficult to summarise briefly, but three immediately come to my mind: kilns, ethnicity, and Bulgaria were all important long-term research interests.

In the 1980s, while still working for the Royal Commission, Vivien produced the standard reference work on Romano-British kilns. It is a model of clarity and completeness, and marks Britain out as the only province for which such a resource exists. During the 1990s, she began her study that identified the presence of North African troops in northern Britain through their distinctive pottery repertoire. Importantly, this led to a re-evaluation of the dating of the Antonine Wall. A similar methodology and approach was extended to other pottery assemblages and the identification of other ethnic groups. It was in the late 1990s that Vivien began working on pottery from Andrew Poulter's excavation in Bulgaria. Here, in a remarkably short time, she transformed our understanding of a province whose ceramics were virtually unknown by her lucid typology and chronology with many compelling stories to tell. This scholarship provides a legacy that continues to grow with further publications in press.

Yet these achievements are known to the entire archaeological community and have already been mentioned by others. What may not be known outside the pottery circle is illustrated by her lifelong involvement with the Study Group for Roman Pottery, a special interest group established by Vivien and others in 1971. Such was her input and contribution to it that, for me and for many other members, the Study Group, and particularly its annual conference, is synonymous with Vivien: she was its life and soul. Not only did Vivien serve as president and on the committee for most of her life; she organised 6 conferences, advised on numerous others, and, to my knowledge, missed only one — that was in order to meet a more pressing archaeological commitment, but she was terribly upset and sent an apology to those of us at the conference. It was Vivien above all who promoted discussion within the Group with a seemingly infinite range of interests and expertise based on knowledge acquired through personal experience. Vivien always demanded the highest standards of herself; she also demanded the highest standards of us, and could be frank in letting us know when we did not meet those standards. Her tenacity was a defining characteristic we saw throughout her life, it served her and us well, particularly during the last year of her life that she lived with unsurpassed bravery.

Vivien mentored scores of pottery specialists by way of the Study Group and internationally through the Fautores. Her work in Bulgaria led to a host of personal relationships with scholars from eastern Europe. It was not unusual for her to arrive at a foreign conference with sheaves of offprints and photocopies of works that were otherwise unavailable to students and scholars in that region.

But there was another Vivien. She was no bluestocking: she took great pleasure in colour and style and her wardrobe enlivened our Study Group meetings. Her style changed over time, from the Laura Ashley prints she favoured when I first met her, to the more sophisticated and glamorous outfits composed of deep, rich colours that particularly blossomed after her first bout with cancer. Her numerous pairs of red shoes will always be favourites of mine. Her travels in eastern Europe provided further opportunities to expand her wardrobe: I remember several exotic embroidered jackets and wonderful ethnic jewellery. The last time I saw her was in November at the British Archaeological Awards where, despite her advancing illness, she looked glamorous and elegant in one of her beautiful scarves: that vivid image of Vivien is the one I will carry with me.

Roberta Tomber, Spoken at Vivien's memorial service, Flaxton, 21 February 2009

Steven Willis writes

### **Obituary: Vivien Grace Swan (nee Bishop) 1943-2009**

For a quarter century Vivien Swan was the commanding personality in Romano-British pottery studies. She was the first President of the Group, following its formalization, serving a four year term until 1990 and then contributed as a very active Committee member in most subsequent years. The foundation of her authoritative knowledge and presence lay in her research and the documenting of kilns and industries which appeared as *The Pottery Kilns of Roman Britain* in 1984, and through her commitment and drive which lead her to examine material at first hand in collections across the British Isles, from Cornwall to Cramond. In time she was to forge particular spheres of innovative research, based on robust attention to chronology, typology and collections, namely in military supply and distribution, recruitment, ethnicity and frontier studies, linked to her capacity of recall of material. Her perspective and standing became international; she was able to discuss patterns and linkages in ceramics from across the Empire. In many ways she was universal: a great traveller and attender of events, with a wide portfolio of knowledge and contacts.

Born in London, she spent her childhood at Penarth and took her undergraduate degree at Cardiff. This was at a time when artefact studies were being nurtured there by Bill Manning and others. Amongst her contemporaries and near contemporaries at Cardiff were scholars who came to be an influential generation and known as 'The Taffia', many, but not all, Romanists. Jennifer Price advises that it was the custom for Cardiff undergraduates to be sent to the summer training school at Corbridge and this is where she met David Breeze who became a close friend. Thus her interest in military matters and the Northern Frontier was established early in her career. An early interest in pottery studies meant that she formed close and lasting friendships with key figures in our subject such as Graham Webster, Kay Hartley and John Gillam. She remained a strong and loyal advocate of John Gillam's corpus of work and was pleased to see the Study Group acknowledge this in recent years via the annual prize for an original contribution that bears his name.

Vivien was typically forthright and often combative: she argued her case. Behind this lay her concern that the highest standards of study be attended to, and that scholars get their facts straight; balancing this was a generosity of spirit seen very often in supporting and guiding young researchers and people, including amateurs, new to the subject. She was an effective and encouraging face-to-face communicator. She maintained the belief that the Roman army was absolutely fundamental in the development of pottery industries and distributions following the conquest of the North-West Provinces. During the late 20<sup>th</sup> century this was not such a fashionable idea as scholars and the focus of research into the Roman era shifted significantly away from matters military. More recently the significance of the army and of the military in the organization of Britain has come back more towards centre stage, assisted indeed by Vivien's publications. Vivien felt, as did others during the later decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, that the contribution of pottery scholarship to Roman studies was not fully appreciated by the non-specialists and this made her more keen to promote the case. Perhaps too at the start of her career it was more difficult for women working in Roman studies generally since this was a specialism dominated by men, although pottery studies were an exception in this respect. Vivien was an earnest attender therefore of conferences on Roman archaeology and indeed gave a paper at the second TRAC conference (1992); these were vehicles for the continuing momentum of her research and findings in Roman pottery work. In total Vivien organized six of the Study Group's annual conferences with characteristic

attention to fine tuning in timetable, programme content, accommodation and meals, and provided experienced advice to those less familiar with organizing such events. Vivien invariably sat at the front at conferences and seminars (as many members of the Group and speakers will recall); she did not wish to miss the details given by the speaker or the nuances of projected pottery illustrations. A leading member of the *Fautores* gatherings she organized the 20<sup>th</sup> conference at York in 1996 which was a huge success. She was a regular contributor at the *Limes* congress too. Through these connections and in the welcoming of scholars from overseas she built up a wide network of friends and colleagues and established a firm international standing, bolstered by her regular publications, often of international significance. She was at ease giving papers in French as well as English.

In 1965, after graduating, Vivien was appointed as an investigator for the Royal Commission, being based at the Salisbury office, a post of significant standing. Kevin Greene points out that had she been born a few years later she would quite probably have been a beneficiary of the doctoral research grants that engendered a range of pottery industry studies from around 1970. The early years with the RCHM were formative. Her earlier work looked at production and kilns, notably in the New Forest and East Anglia, and there was also an important contribution in *Britannia* (1975) on Oare and Savernake ware. Whilst this work had a southern emphasis her attention to pottery on the Northern Frontier grew, through intellectual interest and via continuing connections with those based in northern Britain or studying the frontier and its pottery. This was, of course, to flourish in her later career. The scope of her interest in Roman pottery, even as a young researcher, made it appropriate that she be author, whilst only at the start of her 30s, of the Shire book *Pottery in Roman Britain* (1975), engendering interest in the topic amongst innumerable readers of this popular guide. The kilns project was supported by the Commission as a result of her advocacy. Roberta Tomber reminds us that Britain is the only province to benefit from such a resource.

Marrying in 1966 Vivien and her husband Tony had two daughters. From 1975 they lived at Flaxton near York and she worked at the Commission's offices in York. Hereabouts were based a number of key Roman scholars, members of the Yorkshire Archaeological Society and this was Vivien's immediate hinterland for 33 years (in addition to her others) and its character, personalities and activities were important to her. Work with the Commission included the publication, co-authored with Humphrey Welfare, *Roman Camps in England: the Field Evidence* (1995).

After some thirty years of service restructuring of the Royal Commission in the mid 1990s saw Vivien take early retirement and the opportunity to develop freelance research and reporting. This period gave her greater freedom and the dozen years from 1997 to the premature end of her life were her most dynamic and productive. This was so in spite of her cancer that first developed early within this phase for her life (1998); throughout her struggle with the disease she continued working. 1997 saw Vivien become an Honorary Research Fellow at Durham University where Martin Millett invited her to become a founder member of the Centre for Provincial Archaeology; this was though only the start of close connections and collaborations with key institutions and projects: with Tyne and Wear Museums, with Andrew Poulter and Nottingham University (again as honorary research fellow) in the study of pottery in Romania and Bulgaria (in particular the fort at Dichin and Later Roman and Byzantine era ceramics), and with Historic Scotland. Important work was undertaken too on Carlisle pottery. This then was a time of dedicated work, but also of recognition as her work reached a wide audience. Her paper 'The Twentieth Legion and the history of the Antonine Wall reconsidered' published in 1999 in *The Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* was both seminal and award

winning, having implications for our understanding of the chronology of this wall. She gained a Doctorate from her home University in 2001 for the sustained calibre of her academic contributions, this being an honour she particularly prized. As David Breeze notes in his obituary in *The Independent*, this reflected the wider recognition her subject, that she did so much to champion, had begun to receive. Late in 2008 she had the accolade of nomination for a Lifetime Achievement Award at the British Archaeological Awards ceremony.

As a founder member of the Study Group in 1971, almost no Study Group annual conference was missed by Vivien. A look back over the annual conferences of the Study Group of the last twenty years shows this record: 1988 organizer (Glasgow), 1992 paper given, 1993 paper (on York head pots), 1995 paper (on kilns research), 1996 organizer (Hull) and paper (on Holt, Chester and the Antonine Wall), 1998 assistant organizer (Arras), 1999 organizer (Carlisle, where she also gave a paper), 2001 organizer and paper (Liverpool), 2003 assistant-organizer (Wallsend), 2006 paper (Gauls in the conquest of Britain: a ceramic perspective), 2007 co-organizer (Cardiff). Hence this year's conference at Chichester was an especially poignant time for reflection. It was 14 years ago that the Group last held its conference at Chichester, a meeting that heralded the composition of the Group's National and Regional Research Frameworks that were published two years later. Vivien was a key contributor to the formative meetings from which the Frameworks took shape (organizing one in York in 1996); she advised me when I was drafting the final national document. Through her influence as well as her own work she steered many publications on production sites and distributions to completion. This was sustained to the end. Her work was invariably related to key questions and particularly latterly related pottery to other spheres of society in the Roman era. The Journal of Roman Archaeology has recently published her volume *Ethnicity, Conquest and Recruitment* (Supplement No. 72). The project bringing the fiche and archive of *The Pottery Kilns of Roman Britain* to availability in the digital age nears completion. It was especially satisfying for her to know last year that this was being undertaken; continuing its value for the future.

Members will recall her striking appearance, not just her flaxen hair, smart style and her flattered smile when praised, but also particularly the brightly coloured shoes, the clothes, bags and scarves, often in later years with an oriental touch. Less well known was her love of music; she was a church organist. Distinctive too was her strikingly elegant voice: she spoke with clarity and emphasis. The Study Group has lost a figure and advocate of great substance. Vivien leaves us having provided some tremendous reference tools for pottery research and with them vivid memories.

(Suggestions of additions to the text, when in draft, received from a number of colleagues are incorporated here).

Steven Willis 2009

#### ***Other commemorations of Vivien***

The tributes to Vivien at her memorial service in Flaxon by William Manning, Humphrey Welfare, Andrew Poulter, Jennifer Price and Roberta's piece (above) are now published in Vivien's recent JRA monograph:

Swan, V 2009 *Ethnicity, Conquest and Recruitment: two case studies from the northern military Provinces*. Journal of Roman Archaeology, Supplementary Series no. 72, Portsmouth, Rhodes Island, 7-11.

An obituary by David Breeze was published in the Independent on February the 26 2009 also appears in the monograph

(<http://www.journalofromanarch.com/supplements/S72.pdf>).

*Messages received by the SGRP:*

- *From Colin Wallace*

Vivien and I did not always get on, latterly. But I want to record that she was one of several Study Group members who welcomed me in and helped me when I was starting out as an archaeologist in the mid 1980s. When someone (Robin?) was encouraging me to give a paper at the Annual Meeting, and I was lamenting my inability to make decent slides, Vivien, characteristically helpful, got straight to the point. 'Well, tell me what you need and I'll get them done', something like that. And she did - I still have the excellent RCHME slides of mica-gilt pots I used at Clacton. I am not alone in being the recipient of help like that and will not forget. More recently, I had the privilege of observing her in action in Bulgaria and learned much from that. Colin Wallace

- *From Dr. Hugo Thoen*

What a sad news indeed, Kay and Roberta, to hear that Vivien died on New Year! I saw her for the last time in October 2008 at the Fautores congress in Cadiz and she told me that it was her last congress, and she cried... She was the honorary speaker on December 6th 2002 at the Royal Academy in Brussels during the congress "Archaeology in Confrontation", a tribute to my scientific career when I retired as professor of Provincial Roman Archaeology at Ghent University. I lost not only a colleague, but a real friend.

Prof. Dr. Hugo Thoen

- *From the LRCW3 Organizing Secretariat and Committee*

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

We are very sad to bring the new that Vivien Swan died some days ago. We lost a highest level scholar and a woman endowed with a great kindliness, heart and joie de vivre. In spite of her illness, she took part in the LRCW3 Conference and then in RCRF Congress at Cadiz. As usual, She was cheerful, with her bright sky-blue eyes and the happy smile : just so we want to recall Vivien.

Gabriella Guiducci, Simonetta Menchelli, Marinella Pasquinucci, Sara Santoro  
Segreteria e Comitato Organizzativo LRCW3.  
LRCW3 Organizing Secretariat and Committee.



## Gillian Braithwaite

*Maggi Darling writes:*

Jill was a person who lifted your day and spirits. Phone calls, emails and letters from her were always good to receive, full of life and jokes, and questions opening new avenues, leading to exchanges of photographs, drawings. It is a very sad task to review the work of an old friend suddenly dead, and in working through her publication, *Faces from the Past*, what is apparent is the breadth and depth of her research, searching into every aspect that could be relevant to the study of Roman face pots. There is a wealth of detailed background information seldom seen in such publications, setting the vessels firmly in context. I first met Jill and Rodric at the start of her interest in face pots in the late 1970s, and nearly forty years on, her dedication to these amazing pots to produce such a comprehensive landmark publication is truly remarkable. If there was a stone to be turned, Jill turned it, exploring yet another aspect. What is a joy in her work is her descriptions of the various types of face masks on the pots everything from 'serene', 'grinning' to 'grotesque' but, needless to say, there is the occasional phrase to describe a truly outlandish face mask, or a wry comment, that creeps up on you to provoke a laugh, so typically Jill.

This is an important work, the first time anyone has surveyed the evidence across most the Roman Empire for these strange pots, and associated vessels and objects, without which foundation little understanding is feasible. And, as Richard has noted, this was the work of an 'amateur', but also work to be fitted into the life of a person involved in the diplomatic world at an exciting and turbulent time, which makes her achievement all the more awesome. In the world of 'professional' archaeology, Jill's work is a timely reminder of another side, not to be neglected.

Reviewing the work of an old friend is difficult – you feel so closely in touch but new theories have nowhere to go, no enjoyable discussions to pursue. Which makes it all the more important that her work needs to be cared for, not merely curated but taken forward. And hopefully arrangements will be made to ensure that new information is added to build on Jill's foundations as she would have wished. Her warmth, enthusiasm and the joy she gave are sadly and deeply missed, but also treasured.

Maggi Darling

*Richard Reece writes:*

Jill Braithwaite, who died on November 10<sup>th</sup>, was one of that rather rare breed – the amateur specialist. Because her study of Roman face pots was at once highly specialised and very far ranging, and she was not employed in the archaeological or academic worlds, the Study Group was a vital link on which she depended for information, help, support and approval.

She first studied languages at Westfield College, London and went into the Diplomatic Service where she was posted as Political Secretary to Warsaw. There she met her husband Rodric and after their marriage she had to give up diplomacy. She then concentrated on raising a family and only when they could look after themselves did she indulge in a long held fascination by doing a second first degree as a mature student at the Institute of Archaeology in London. She had many of what I think of as the typical qualities of the mature student – deep interest, strong application, ability to work to a timetable, and willingness to search widely for information. But like almost all other mature students she had strong doubts about

her own ability and the importance of her work. This is where the Study Group was so important to her for she often tried out her “hare-brained” ideas in meetings and was then delighted when “real specialists” approved of what she had said.

Fascination with face pots started during an after-lunch Roman pottery lecture in her second year. A short nap was often inevitable and one day she thought she was in a nightmare when she saw leering at her a huge misshapen face. This was too extraordinary to be left aside so when she had checked that the odd form of decoration was not easily explained in published works she decided to sort out the British evidence for her undergraduate dissertation. This formed part of her first class degree and was published in Britannia.

She then had the basis for extending her study to the continent where her background in both Romance and Slav languages came in very useful. Because she was moving round with Rodric she registered as an External Student for a Ph D. Times in London made research easier; posting to Washington was within reach of the Dumbarton Oaks library. She mixed in Diplomatic circles but did not talk much about her own research. This could be because of early conversations in Washington which always seemed to terminate immediately she mentioned her research topic of Roman face pots. At first she thought she was transgressing diplomatic rules by talking her own “shop” in the wrong place till an American diplomat, more determined than the others, pursued the conversation by asking “What's with this Roman acne, then?” so that all was revealed.

Posting to Moscow in 1988 meant that research had to be temporarily abandoned in favour of living through interesting times. Her fluency in Russian meant that she could (and did) communicate directly with all levels of Russian society, and the great change of 1989 meant that communication increased greatly in both scope and openness. The attempted coup which threatened to turn the clock back saw her with Russian women friends at the barricades to the consternation (but resigned comprehension) of her husband. Those friendships she made continued when she and Rodric completed their tour of duty and returned to London and she was busy with individual efforts and committees. One phone call which came through when I was strongly pushing her for the completion and publication of her thesis involved attempts to twin an unpronounceable Russian mining town whose mining industry had collapsed with a Yorkshire equivalent which had a few year's extra knowledge of the experience. But this is only one example.

Finally the thesis was completed, examined, and the result, duly updated and edited (BAR Int 1651, *Faces from the past*) was published. There face pots are sorted, for the foreseeable future, from Spain to Bulgaria and Italy to Scotland with a good typology and chronology and a firm discussion of the likely means of transmission of the styles and ideas. Jill wanted to go on examine in more detail the possible links with face pots and military veterans and to explore the possible interpretations of these faces which range from engaging to repulsive. But someone else will have to continue that work on her firm foundations.

Richard Reece (Richard also wrote an obituary for Jill which appeared in the Independent (no 6,944) for Thursday 15th of Jan, 2009, 40-41 and <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/obituaries/jill-braithwaite-archaeologist-who-advanced-the-study-of-roman-face-pots-1366590.html>)

## Announcements

### Roman kilns digitisation project in honour of Vivien Swan

Members who attended the annual conference in Chichester will be aware that our SGRP project of digitising and updating Vivien's *Pottery Kilns of Roman Britain* (1984) is well underway. Phase I of the project focuses on the digitisation of the microfiche gazetteer and the original text and illustrations. To date all the microfiche has been digitised and the text is well in-hand. The "Kiln Working Party" is busy checking the digitised gazetteer against the original print-out for a select number of counties. After this is completed, and we're certain of the procedure for checking, those who volunteered at the Conference will be contacted. **More volunteers are needed**, so do let us know if you'd like to be involved in this tribute to Vivien.

### Jill Braithwaite's 2009 Gillam prize and the Roman Archaeology Conference 2010

This year's winner of the Gillam Prize for excellence in publication went posthumously to Jill Braithwaite for *Faces from the past A study of Roman Face Pots from Italy and the Western Provinces of the Roman Empire*, BAR Int Series 1651. Jill's work on face pots incorporated many facets of Roman archaeology and has a broad application to the field in general. Therefore, in consultation with her family, Jill's Gillam prize will form the basis of a bursary in her honour at the 2010 Roman Archaeology Conference. The conference is being held at the University of Oxford from Thursday 25 March to Sunday 28 March 2010. (<http://rac2010.classics.ox.ac.uk/RAC.html>). The bursary, topped up from other SGRP funds, will cover conference fees and accommodation and is open to members of the SGRP only. Details of the procedure for applications will soon be available by email notification to members and on the website.

### The Graham Webster Memorial Grants for attending the Annual Conference

In commemoration of the substantial contributions to Roman pottery of one of our founder members, Graham Webster, a conference bursary is available to those who would otherwise be unable to attend. The SGRP Committee invites those of limited means to apply for a grant towards the conference fee and travel. A total of £300 will be made available and will be awarded to applicants based on demonstrated need and relevance. The maximum amount available to any single applicant will be one-half of the conference cost and one-half of the travel expenses. The refund will be made at the conference in Nottingham. Applications may be submitted by members and non-members of the Group. Preference may be given to applicants wishing to attend most or all of the conference. A sub-committee of the President and Treasurer, who will seek advice as relevant, will consider the applications with discretion. Applications should be made via a brief statement verifying the limited means of the applicant and their wish to attend the conference. Applications may be submitted by email or letter to the Hon. Secretary (Gwladys Monteil, 21 Wilberforce Road, Wisbech, PE13 2EX, E-mail: [secretary@sgrp.org.uk](mailto:secretary@sgrp.org.uk)). The closing date for applications is the **21<sup>st</sup> of May 2010**. Applicants will be informed of the decision within a week of submission.

## **The John Gillam Prize**

The annual John Gillam Prize, established in 2004, honours another key founder of our Group for his tremendous contribution to the subject. Nominations are now being accepted for the 2010 award. A wide range of work on pottery found in Roman Britain is eligible, including pottery reports (both published and grey literature), synthetic studies, websites, student dissertations, theses etc that were completed within the last two years. Please send your nominations to the Gillam Committee, consisting of the President and Publication Committee at [bibliography@sgrp.org.uk](mailto:bibliography@sgrp.org.uk). It is normally the responsibility of the nominator to make available a copy of the nominated work, but please write before sending the publication as in some cases it may not be necessary. Nominations are open until **11<sup>th</sup> of April 2010**. Works appearing in 2008 and 2009 will be eligible and the winner will be announced at our annual Conference in Nottingham, between the 2nd and 4th of July 2010. The award carries a small financial prize.

## **CONFERENCES**

### **2009 SGRP CONFERENCE**

#### **Chichester**

The annual conference in Chichester between the 3rd and the 5th of July was another great SGRP event! We particularly thank Louise Rayner and Anna Doherty who organised the conference. Highlights included the SGRP conference retrospective on Friday evening, where a selection of SGRP members from different generations shared their memories of past conferences, stories and tributes of Jill and Vivien. The great selection of photos gathered by Roberta Tomber and the various speeches allowed all of us to remember past conferences and to charter the changes in fashion over the years (Rob Perrin's vast collection of stripped jumpers remains a highlight!). The presentation of a copy of Volume 14 of the JRPS to Rob Perrin in advance of publication was another highlight of the weekend. Volume 14 is dedicated to Rob for his commitment to the Journal and his long-standing enthusiasm in Roman Pottery and the Study Group.

On a more academic note, the weekend was filled with lectures of an excellent standard, including background talks on Friday afternoon on the Chichester area and Fishbourne palace by local archaeologists. On Saturday we visited Fishbourne Palace and were split into two groups to visit the Collections Discovery Centre and the Fishbourne Palace. We then went on a tour of Chichester led by James Kenny, Chichester District Archaeologist.





SGRP conference retrospective on Friday evening: Kay Hartley, Ruth Leary, Joanna Bird, Roberta Tomber, Pam Irving and Maggi Darling, all wearing Vivien's scarves (photo by David Bird)



A guided tour of Chichester Roman City led by James Kenny, Chichester District Archaeologist (photo by David Bird)



Visit to Fishbourne Palace (photo by Derek Hurst)

## **Some abstracts from the 2009 conference**

### **The Social Life of Amphorae**

*by Steven Willis*

This paper brought together a number of aspects of amphora distribution noted by Steve through his research and report work over the past twenty years and much of it yet to be brought together in published form. The paper covered early imports into Britain and North-West Europe and how calibration of the numbers by site size and duration can be helpful in gauging the significance of imports. The incidence of certain types was examined. Patterns in distribution and product consumption were noted and specifically how different sites received amphorae types (and hence presumably commodities) in differing proportions, in a patterned way evidently related to site type and status. He looked too at symbolism and the secondary use of amphorae - what might be termed their 'half-life'. He spoke also about the contexts of deposition of amphorae and outlined the interesting work recently undertaken by Jay Ingate, a post-graduate at the University of Kent. The latter's studies included the use of patterns and theory in understanding Iron Age and Roman coin deposition as an analogous way of understanding the contexts of certain amphora finds in the North-West provinces.

### **A group of head-pots with mural crowns from Surrey and Sussex**

*By Joanna Bird*

The five pots discussed all come from sites within Surrey and Sussex, an area which Gillian Braithwaite found to contain no other types of face- or head-pots. One comes from the Fishbourne palace, two from villas at Beddingham and Rapsley, one from a large villa or possible religious centre at Chiddingfold, and one from the roadside station at Alfoldean. The pots are essentially large pear-shaped jars, and unfortunately none of the surviving pieces shows any signs of facial features; it is likely that they were originally present, however, since the rest of the pots are so elaborate. Heavy curls of hair cover much of the body of the vessels, and nail and finger impressions on the interior show how carefully they were pressed on to the jars. The mural crowns were made separately from slabs of clay, and semicircular towers, which were probably thrown in one piece and then sliced in half, were added before the other details were carried out. The towers had conical roofs, and gateways, windows, rows of masonry, merlons and other features were added or incised after the wall and towers were assembled. The walls were fixed to the jars with heavy quantities of clay luting.

The style of the pots suggests a single potter, and one of considerable skill; the successful firing of the jars would also have presented a technical challenge. As Kay Hartley has suggested, the fabric indicates manufacture at the Wiggonholt-Pulborough potteries, which are known to have made samian ware, mortaria and other wares, including vessels of types associated with ritual activity. A date between AD 150 and 250 is likely for these jars. The mural crown is particularly an attribute of Fortuna and of the Great Mother goddess Cybele, and association with either, or indeed aspects of both, would have been appropriate, involving protection and agricultural fertility and prosperity. The presence of terracotta pinecones at Rapsley, though they were not found with the jars, perhaps makes Cybele the more likely, since the pine is particularly associated with her young consort Attis. Such an attribution may also provide a context for a fine Italian lamp, unfortunately a surface

find, from the area of the villa at Beddington in south London; Beddington and Beddingham both obtained tiles from kilns at Hartfield in Sussex.

The jars are published: J. Bird, 'A group of mural-crowned cult pots from south-east England', in *Céramiques de la Graufesenque et autres productions d'époque romaine: nouvelles recherches. Hommages à Bettina Hoffmann* (eds M. Genin and A. Vernhet), *Archéologie et histoire romaine* 7, Montagnac 2002, pp 301-311. Copies of the paper are lodged with the libraries of Surrey and Sussex Archaeological Societies.

### **Copying the typesetter: investigating the accuracy of samian imitations**

*By Edward Biddulph*

British potters, particularly those within the major industries such as Oxford and Caerleon, were influenced by samian, including in their repertoires many of the standard forms of the samian industry. Copies were rarely exact – we would rarely confuse the imitation with the samian produced in La Graufesenque, Lezoux or other centres – but vessels retained enough of the essential attributes to show that they derived from continental prototypes. The attributes that give the vessel shape are examples of memes – units of cultural information that behave in an evolutionary way. Memes, a concept introduced by Richard Dawkins in *The Selfish Gene* (1976), are analogous to genes, and like genes are selected, replicated and modified. Memes can be transmitted vertically down the generations – with, in the case of potters, skills being passed from, say, father to son – or horizontally within generations – a potter sees another potter's work and decides to copy the shapes. If there are mistakes in the copying or innovation in the design, then the memes mutate, potentially leading to new species or pottery types.

In order to assess the relationship between imported samian and their imitations, I first identified in broad terms the diagnostic traits of each samian type. These traits, like the red slip, decoration, or ways of making the base, are some of the memes that determine the appearance of each vessel and can be selected and copied by the British potter. I measured the accuracy of the copy compared with its prototype simply by counting the number of traits that the imitation and prototype shared, expressing that number as a percentage. I trawled through site reports for illustrations of samian-like vessels with whole profiles, deciding to confine my dataset to the Caerleon, Oxford and North Kent industries, giving me a reasonably representative dataset in terms of geography and chronology.

Predictably, Caerleon ware was generally most accurate, followed by Oxford, then North Kent. Looking more closely at the Caerleon industry, some forms were more accurate than others, and some had deviated sufficiently from their prototypes to be classified as separate vessels. For instance, the f79, not a recognised type in Caerleon ware, is probably f18/31R, but it scores higher as f79. Similarly (and as Peter Webster has noted), the f81/f44 range included some rather freer interpretations of the standard Hadrianic prototype. Among Oxford forms, there is a steeper drop in accuracy values, from near 100% for f40 to 50% for f29. For vessels deriving from f37, the accuracy score was variable, since f37 copies continued to develop, for example gaining rounder bodies and necks. North Kent samian imitations are much less accurate than Oxford or Caerleon ware forms, but there was variation too among the industry's standard types. It is unlikely that a vessel that most closely resembles f31 was actually based on that particular samian form, but was rather a variation of the standard platter type that owes something to Drag. 18. However, the vessel scores better as f31. A similar case can be made for the f32 and f42 dishes.

The reasons for producing samian imitations tend to focus on periodic shortages of the imported vessels – the imitations filled a gap in the market – or that, in times of strong importation, British potters wanted to compete and take a share of the lucrative market. A comparison of samian and imitation assemblages suggests something different.

Looking at Caerleon, while it is true that f37 and f18/31 were popular forms in both samian and imitation ware, it is notable that some relatively popular samian types – f27 and f33 cups, were not popular in Caerleon ware, while scarce samian forms – f81 especially – was something of an industry standard. Even with the f18/31, the proportion of samian vessels does not match that of imitation vessels. Assemblage profiles diverged in the Oxford region too. High proportions of the Oxford f45 and f38 imitations are not matched by those of their prototypes. And again, f33 cups are barely represented in the Oxford industry. There is, however, a better match with some dish types and f37. North Kent offers a similar pattern. Its f18 and 37s (and variations) were far more numerous than the samian prototypes. Overall, then, imitation potters did not attempt to replicate standard samian assemblages, but were concentrating on particular forms – f18 and f31 series especially – probably in response to the cultural needs of the consumer. Cups, though acceptable in samian, just weren't required in other wares.

In terms of chronology, most imitations within the three industries were introduced in single period. There is little addition to the repertoires after the main peak. Caerleon potters stopped producing imitations before the samian industry expanded again in the later Antonine period. North Kent did not significantly expand its repertoires after the early Roman period. And Oxford potters had no real appetite to imitate samian until the mid 3rd century, and even then the repertoire was selective and fixed.

There a number of points that emerge from this analysis. Few forms consistently approached the standard of samian, though Caerleon and Oxford industries did produce some excellent copies. But, at the same time, there was a certain coherence within individual industries. British potters were not attempting to replace samian or create British branches of the samian industry by replicating the typical samian assemblages imported into Britain, but instead concentrated on specific types as the cultural landscape demanded. Repertoires were developed within a short timeframe and were largely fixed thereafter. Yet new forms emerged from variations in existing types, independently of development in the samian industry. These factors suggest that *British potters did not imitate samian potters; they imitated themselves*. Samian was, of course, the starting point, but once the imitation forms were introduced, then the knowledge to produce them could be spread among potters within and across generations, allowing the forms and culture of use to evolve along their own trajectories. The memes that formed the imitation, rather than the prototype, were replicated as potters learnt their craft. The imitations were copied with high fidelity in a way that the prototypes weren't. Of course, there were errors in the copying or potters deliberately discarded or changed certain traits, and this led to variation of the form and, if perpetuated, new forms, like we saw with North Kent's Drag. 18 range and Oxford's Drag. 37 range.



## **Roman and Indigenous Interaction in the North: the Ceramic Evidence**

*By Louisa Hammersley, University of Glasgow*

The paper adopted a uniquely indigenous perspective to consider the potential impact of the Roman presence in Scotland. The character of contact in Scotland differs greatly from southern Britain, mainly because of the short timescales and intermittent nature of Roman occupation of the region; however, very little work has been done in Northern Britain to gather and synthesise the evidence to facilitate its deeper interpretation. The Roman coarsewares, for example, have never been subject to reassessment, so that a central aim of the thesis is to conduct a reassessment of the coarsewares and samian recovered from non-Roman contexts in the region using modern methods of categorisation, illustration and analysis.

The research is set within the framework of modern theoretical constructs and a brief overview was provided of the models incorporated into the work, including post-colonialism, identity and agency. More recent studies of materiality and objectification were also presented as alternative interpretive frameworks for the analysis of material culture.

A case study of the coarsewares recovered from Traprain Law, the foremost known civil centre from Scotland, was presented to consider these issues. The Roman pottery assemblage from Traprain is the largest recovered from any non-Roman context in the North and it is the most extensively studied site from the region. A deeper understanding of the types of vessels existing on Traprain will also provide the raw data which will facilitate inter and intra-regional comparisons of the pottery from across the region as the research progresses. Unlike the pattern existing on the vast majority of Scottish sites, the Traprain assemblage is dominated by coarsewares and a comparative study between this site and the nearest Roman military installations at Elginhaugh (1<sup>st</sup> C AD) and Inveresk (2<sup>nd</sup> C AD) has confirmed that patterns of selective adoption were clearly in place on the hillfort at Traprain. The coarsewares also provide evidence for Roman material reaching Traprain in the 3<sup>rd</sup> C and 4<sup>th</sup> C, a full two centuries after Roman withdrawal from the region.

The case study demonstrated that Roman material was being used by some of the existing inhabitants of Scotland and confirmed that practices of selectivity were in place, which may be suggestive of specific vessels which were deemed to be suitable for appropriation into traditional cultural practices, perhaps associated with social feasting and drinking. The adaptation and reuse of Roman ceramics, in particular samian, could speak to us about aspects of resistance to Roman domination. However, in the context of Northern sites, this resistance might be better seen as a nuance of persistence insofar as certain forms of foreign material culture were being deliberately selected for adoption and reuse to fit in with existing social conditions and therefore utilised for the persistence and reinforcement of indigenous cultural identity.

## 2010 SGRP CONFERENCE

### Nottingham

The next SGRP conference will take place in Nottingham on the weekend of **Fri 2nd-Sun 4th July 2010**. We will be staying at Ancaster Hall on the University of Nottingham Campus. The lectures will take place in the Arts Centre Lecture Theatre 15-20 min walk from Ancaster Hall. A full programme will be distributed in the Spring Newsletter.

Meanwhile, if you wish to find out more or offer a paper or poster, please email Gwladys Monteil ([gwladys.monteil@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:gwladys.monteil@nottingham.ac.uk))

## 2011 SGRP CONFERENCE

### Amsterdam

Julie Van Kerckhove has offered to host the 2011 conference in Amsterdam. More about this in a later edition of the newsletter.

## News & Updates

### A Research Strategy and Updated Agenda for the Study of Roman Pottery in Britain –an update by Rob Perrin

As you should all know, the SGRP has been commissioned by English Heritage to compile a Research Strategy and Updated Agenda for the Study of Roman Pottery in Britain. The aims of the project are to produce an updated assessment of the discipline of Roman pottery studies, to review and update the current research agenda and to produce a strategy, agreed by the sector, and containing clear, firm priorities. Two strands of the project are currently underway.

A questionnaire, seeking information from members of the Group, has been circulated, and a search through recent literature to assess reports for their contribution to some of the current research agenda items is on-going. The questionnaire is a key component of members' input into the project and the results will be fundamental to the development of the project. There has been a reasonable response from members so far, but many members have yet to respond. The deadline has been extended to the end of the year **SO PLEASE RESPOND**, even if you do not feel the questionnaire is relevant – a negative response is better than none. For those not working on pottery, any thoughts on aspects of the Roman pottery profession would be equally useful.

Further information will also be sought on the place/role of pottery studies in universities, museums, local government and archaeological units, the attitude of journals to the publication of pottery and the relevance/importance of British pottery

studies to continental colleagues. These aspects will be carried out in association with the Medieval Pottery Study Group which is undertaking a parallel project.

The initial results of the questionnaire, literature search and information trawl will be presented at a series of regional meetings early in the New Year, probably towards the end of February or early in March. These meetings will provide the opportunity for members to discuss certain key issues and input to the development of a draft strategy. The results will also be posted on an internet wiki website to allow for further interaction and information flow. It is also intended that the existence of the project(s) and the interim results will be presented at the IFA and other relevant meetings and conferences.

The project is being carried out by Rob Perrin. Roberta Tomber is the Project Executive on behalf of the SGRP and there is a steering committee comprising Jane Evans, Steve Willis, Louise Rayner, Gwladys Monteil, Ruth Leary, Jude Plouviez, Louisa Hammersley and Ted Connell. Another progress report will appear in the next newsletter.

Rob Perrin-November 2009

## **News from the samian corner**

- **Birkbeck College Course on Samian Ware identification**

A 2-day course entitled "Samian Pottery: An introduction to identifying and recording samian forms and fabrics" took place at the London Archaeological and Archive Research Centre in London on Wednesday, 14<sup>th</sup> October – Thursday, 15<sup>th</sup> October 2009 and was repeated on Friday, 16<sup>th</sup> October – Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> October, 2009. Designed as an intensive introduction to the study of samian ware forms and fabrics, the courses placed emphasis on practical sessions and students handled a large amount of samian material from a range of sites in London. Gwladys Monteil and Geoffrey Dannell were tutors on the course. Both courses were well attended with 15 students on course 1 and another 13 for course 2.

### ***Feedback from attendees:***

Jonathan Dicks who attended course 1 (14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> October) writes:

The course was both educational and fun. It was well organised with a good combination of lectures and 'hands on' sessions. The opportunity to handle such a range of both fabrics and forms was particularly instructive. It was great to have the expertise of Gwladys and Geoff on hand to explain and illustrate the variations in the materials from the different kiln sites. I feel a lot more confident now in handling Samian.

- **Illustrating Samian Ware- towards producing a handbook**

The **Samian Working Group** and the **AAIS** (Association of Archaeological Illustrators & Surveyors) are working in partnership to produce a technical paper on standards of illustration for samian ware. The outline of the book and a provisional timetable were discussed on the 21<sup>st</sup> of November 2009 during the 3<sup>rd</sup> Samian Working Group workshop.

## **Funding Opportunities and other news**

### **IFA Workplace Learning Bursaries**

The IFA will, in the near future, be discussing training priorities for the new round of placements. Once these are decided, Natasha Kingham, Workplace Learning Bursaries Coordinator for the IFA, will send us details of how to apply, which we circulate to members.

### **Heritage Lottery Fund Skills for the Future**

'Skills for the future' is a new £5 million HLF grant programme supporting organisations across the UK to create heritage training placements. It is intended to fund placements that meet a skills gap in the heritage sector, and could include skills to deliver education, community participation or volunteering programmes, or to use new media and technology. Applications could be from partnerships – for example community and voluntary organisations, professional bodies and learning and training providers. The closing date for applications is **19<sup>th</sup> March 2010**, and there will be a number of pre-application workshops for those interested in applying. For more information see [www.hlf.org.uk/skills](http://www.hlf.org.uk/skills)

### **The Research Excellence framework (REF)**

The Research Excellence Framework (REF) will replace the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) as a means of assessing research conducted in UK universities. SGRP members based in university departments will be well aware of the importance of these assessments, which influence the allocation of research funding. The SGRP is included in the list of bodies who can nominate members for the expert panels that will assess research. It is intended that these panels will be made up of research 'users (from private, public and third sectors) as well as academics. Any opportunity to have a voice in this process must be to the advantage of our sector. The new REF will, for the first time, assess research in terms of its wider economic and social impact. It is intended to support a research sector that 'makes a major contribution to economic prosperity, national well-being and the expansion and dissemination of knowledge.' This in itself, I would hope, should benefit commercial archaeology which has an obvious economic and social impact. Arguably there could be more opportunities to fund research that synthesises the results of commercial archaeology, or perhaps research into commercial archaeology itself, which could advance our working practices. These are just my thoughts, and it would be interesting to have some debate about this – perhaps in the next newsletter! JE