



Study Group for Roman Pottery

Annual General Meeting 2019

ATHERSTONE

Sunday 7th July 2019

Minutes

Committee: President: Rob Perrin (RP); Secretary Jane Timby (JT); Treasurer Diana Briscoe (DB); Journal editor Steve Willis (SW); website manager Edward Biddulph (EB); newsletter editor Andrew Peachey (AP); ordinary members: Jane Faiers (JF), Roy Friendship-Taylor (RFT), Jane Evans (JE)

Present: RP, JT, EB, JF, JE and 41 members

1) Apologies for absence

D. Briscoe, A. Peachey, S. Willis, K. Greene, G. Monteil, J. Compton, K. Hawkins

2) Minutes of 2018 AGM (JT)

Copies were distributed by email. No matters arising. Approved: Louise Rayner; seconded Beth Richardson

3) President's report (RP)

This is the second time I have had the honour of being President. Things have changed quite a lot but the Group has responded in a positive and dynamic way. I am grateful to the Committee for overseeing this. I am quite excited by the next few years and for the projects the Group is involved in. For this weekend I would like to thank the three organisers and it is particularly good to have a local presence including the Mayor.

4) Hon. Secretary's report (JT)

Things have been moving along quite steadily most of which will be referred to later. As you will know we have changed our method of contacting people to using Mailchimp but it seems not all this is getting through. I am not sure how we get around this other than reminding you to check your spam box and making sure we have your most up-to-date email. It is possible some Institutional addresses are blocking mail.

Email traffic has been quite low in terms of enquiries. Other than a couple of pot enquiries there has been one enquiring about the problems of dust in the working environment. Our attention has also been drawn to a recent publication in *British Archaeology*, (Issue 167) on a follow up article to *Big data on the table* conference the papers from which are now published as an internet journal.

Not for in depth discussion now but to think about - Jamie Walker – one of our younger members currently working on material from Maryport requested fabric samples for Holt/Wroxeter/Cheshire Plain to develop a fabric series. This in fact prompted another email from David Griffiths who says he has similar problems and could we think about a workshop based around this material. I throw this open for you to think about and if anyone feels that would like to organise something I am sure the Committee will support you.

Despite my entreaties no one has yet come forward to replace the post of secretary but please think about it

5) **2017-18 Accounts (DB)**

Copies of the accounts were circulated to all members by email before the AGM. DB sent the following report:

As Treasurer, I am pleased to present the final Accounts for 2018. As you will see, the society made a loss of just over £2,000 in 2018, but given the size of our reserves, this does not constitute a problem. We made a loss on the one-day conference at Oxford (we probably should have charged more for a ticket), but a small profit on the Study Day. The printing of the *Journal* Vol. 17 came in under budget, and we made a substantial grant towards the costs of the Mortarium Stamps project, (see the Notes to the Accounts). Our reserves at the end of 2018 stood at just under £17,500, and I consider the society to be in a good financial position.

I would like to say a special Thank You to Louise Rayner, for examining the accounts again this year and for approving them for release. Fortunately this year they were considerably more straight forward than in 2017.

Accounts for 2018 accepted. Proposed: Geoff Dannell; seconded: Amy Thorpe

Membership

On the Membership front, I am pleased to report that we have 161 paid-up members in 2019, including 7 from continental Europe. This is 3 fewer than in 2018, but it is a sad fact that we do regularly lose members, as they retire (or die), although we also gain new ones.

I would like to thank all those who moved their standing order for their subscription to our Community Account or who changed to paying by standing order, rather than by cheque. You have made my life considerably easier. I shall be chasing anyone who is still paying into the wrong account in November and would be VERY grateful if you could revise your standing order before the end of 2019.

We shall be starting a recruitment drive in the Autumn and I would be most grateful if you can bring the leaflet about the SGRP (which will come by email) to the attention of your fellow

workers, academic colleagues and students (not to mention your friends, relatives and anyone else who might be interested).

6) Charity status (RP/DB)

(DB) On the becoming-a-charity front, I am delighted to tell you that if you approve the Constitution to be put before you today, which includes the Charity Commission's specific wording for our objects, they will accept our submission and list us as a charity. I hope everybody will say yes, as this has been a very long and arduous process.

(RP) It will be very good news for the Group to attain charity status. It will improve our image and will help when we are seeking grants for projects etc. Our thanks to DB for dealing with this. One aspect of this will be financial and it will mean that if we accrue funds over a certain threshold we will no longer be liable for tax. I hope everyone is in support of this. Are there any comments?

Question: D. Bird: as a rider to what RP has said we need to be careful about expenditure – there is a level to which you need to achieve.

Question: Can we benefit from gift aid?

Answer/ comments: Subscriptions will be gift aided if individuals are tax payers and if we can attract donations we will get 25%. The rules for gift aid can be found on the web. We also need to put this on the subscription reminder. DB will have to submit all details to the tax inspector. We will have to send out a document for existing members to sign and make sure any new members are also signed in.

RP – Is everyone happy to go ahead with this submission? Show of hands.

RP – Is anyone not in favour? None and no abstentions.

Total number voted in favour 46.

7) Publication (SW)

SW sent in the following report:

7.1. The prospective contents of Volume 18 have been circulated (handout). Papers were slow to come in and so by early February we only had one submission. A minor flurry of papers were offered in the later winter and just recently these have materialized. I imagine this listing is likely to closely approximate to the actual Journal. The contributions are at various stages. If they all materialize there will be sufficient for a lengthy volume; and even if one contribution is does not make it there will be enough for a volume. I plan to spend a block of time in August editing the papers and have asked that remaining contributions be submitted around that time. There will be some wiggle room.

I am looking for a volunteer to review *Links to Late Antiquity: Ceramic exchange and contacts on the Atlantic Seaboard in the 5th to 7th centuries AD* by Maria Duggan. This was sent to us to review by the publishers. Contact me if you are interested.

I cannot say when Volume 18 is likely to appear as that depends on actual submission dates, referee's comments, any updating and amendments arising and Oxbow's timetable and the checking and turn-round of proofs. However, I would hope Vol. 18 will appear by March.

7.2. As previously reported the Journal had needed to make straightforward adjustments to conform to the revised *ERIH plus criteria* (that is the European Reference Index for the Humanities and Social Sciences). In other words, to still be listed as a premier league refereed scholarly publication. For this reason we instituted the Editorial Advisory Board, added abstracts, and abstracts translated into French, etc. Accordingly the Journal meets the criteria and should now be designated amongst the internationally recognized professional and academic periodicals listing. Amongst other aspects this makes it a more attractive publication vehicle for a variety of prospective contributors. However, I could not see that JRPS is *ERIH plus* from their pages so I emailed them ten days ago supplying details. I have yet to receive a reply and will monitor the situation.

7.3. JRPS depends upon the receipt of strong submissions, so do think of publishing your work in your Journal!

8) Website (EB)

As most of you will know the website has been hacked. On the face of it the site is still functioning and we are working on sorting out the problem. In a nutshell the URL address has been hijacked and re-routed. In the longer terms we feel that the security offered by our host GoDaddy is inadequate and we are paying for an outdated word processor package. Our computer advisor has recommended that we change host to one with better security and we are looking into this.

There is the usual plea for more information.

RP – out thanks to Edward and those helping to sort out the hack situation. The website and the journal are ours and we need to use them.

9) Newsletter (AP)

AP sent in the following report:

The Newsletter - continues to appear in Spring and Autumn, and in recent months with fairly ample contributions, although please re-iterate to all that although a few people contribute regularly, there is no need for anybody to be shy in coming forward, and we'd be delighted to hear what members have been doing involving Roman pottery, no matter how big or small. It's been good to hear some gracious thanks and positive feedback from members, but if anybody has anything constructive of how we may tweak things, then again, feel free to contact me. Distribution has continued to be smooth, with the number of postal copies at an all-time low (<10).

10) SGRP and related projects

10.1 Kilns digitisation- current status – (AP)

The Kilns website - has to all outward purposes been fairly static but stable this year, with a minor fix needed after Google tweaked their permissions on maps, but all remains

functional. The most recent batch of nation-wide Historic Environment data has very nearly been entered into the appropriate pro-forma that will allow it all to be uploaded to the website, and while I was hoping to have this done by the time of the AGM, it hasn't quite been possible so will go live 'very soon'. I have discussed options with web-developers on how the functionality and content of the kilns website could be expanded, with mixed results (in my opinion). The potential to upload further content (i.e. fabric details) can be achieved by expanding each entry as it appears in the side bar to link to an individual page; however depending on the availability of material/links, this may result in somewhat inconsistent coverage. Additional material is always desirable, but may also require considerable time to upload, which I'm not sure I alone can commit to just yet. Perhaps the biggest barrier is the cost, which is likely to be £1500+, which although the group had indicated it is willing, within reason, to support over a period of time, I find myself questioning the value of. This is because visitors to the kiln site (web-traffic) have been very low, typically in single figures, and on some weeks none, therefore while it is a valuable resource to have developed and to be at our disposal, I don't currently believe it justifies considerable further investment. It is a double-edged sword - would investment/development increase substantially the number of users; I suspect not as it is too niche, but I would love to hear the member's opinions on potential routes forward.

Comment: JE – development would attract more traffic. Perhaps we need to advertise it better?

RP: we should expand as much as possible and advertise.

Comment: Joanna Bird: with commercial units moving into so many areas it would be a valuable reference point.

G. Dannell: we need to find out how many people are reporting on pottery or at least writing reports – there is a huge impending problem.

Other: As part of the recruitment drive we should contact the commercial units. JE – the bigger units have in-house specialists who are having to diversify making it difficult to keep up with everything.

Other: Suggestion that we have a corporate membership category aimed at commercial units which would mean they get copies of the Journal. D. Hurst – other study groups have a stronger way of involving other organisations and that offering corporate rates is a good start.

C. Young – do we also need to approach units directly or write to companies going through FAME for example, to stress how important it is to support specialisms from their staff?

RP: What is the feeling about enhancing the kiln website?

Show of hands in favour.

Jerry Evans: Do we contact AP to let him know kilns have been published?

RP: It wouldn't hurt to let him know of any current work in connection with kilns.

10.2 HE online ceramics resource development (EB/ Fiona Seeley)

A document has been circulated by Dan Miles (HE) to participants of the workshop for comment with regards standardisation and definitions. Comments have been sent back from

EB, D. Hurst and others and there is now a period of reflection before an updated draft will be circulated for an on-line template.

Comments

D. Hurst – the aim is to try and link up a series of different on-line resources into a single system and make it comparable. It is a goal to aim for. The timetable is unclear but things are progressing.

I. Thompson – the Prehistoric Ceramic Group are not entirely happy with such a prescriptive approach to prehistoric pottery and have concerns that because it is an HE generated project there may be a condition on grants to use their system.

J. Plouviez thinks it is already a condition of grants to use a system that does not yet exist.

N. Cooper – there is a need to promote these resources and the more we can get on-line the better. It costs a lot more money for people to visit the actual resources so a digital form allows better access.

DH - Some of the issues is having a standard terminology.

A. Lyons – the way archaeology is being funded has changed with the large infra-structure projects where part of the aim is to have money set aside to develop methodology.

P. Irving – is there any mileage in telling HE that they should be concentrating on a core to which things accrete rather than things disseminated?

J. Plouviez – it is a strong idea – HE however, needs to wait until the system is fully developed before making it a condition.

10.3 Ceramic typology (EB/ Fiona Seeley)

A proposal is being put together to form the basis of a larger project to develop a National type series for Roman pottery. This will be an expensive project and involve a number of workshops.

11) Mortaria project (Ruth Leary)

Work began in in 2018 with funding from the Haverfield Trust and SGRP to secure a digital archive of Kay Hartley's mortarium index. There are 6718 UK potters' record cards; 911 continental potters' and 1669 site record cards. The scanning of the card index cards is now complete and work has started on scanning the rubbings and entering data. Money has been secured from the Haverfield Trust and Roman Research Trust for the next stage which will be a pilot study of one industry.

12) John Gillam's Prize (RP)

The John Gillam prize has been awarded to Harvey Sheldon and Tony Brown for the long awaited publication of the Highgate Wood kilns.

13) Graham Webster's bursaries (RP)

No applications.

14) Elections for committee (JT)

This year we have two people retiring as ordinary members: Jane Faiers and Roy Friendship-Taylor. We propose their places are taken by Isobel Thompson (Proposer: J. Timby; seconded: L. Rayner) and Adam Sutton (Proposed: R. Perrin; seconded: J. Faiers).

15) Conference 2020 and 2021

Nick Cooper has offered a one-day conference for 2020 based at Leicester. A date of 6th June has been set.

Eniko Hudak and James Gerrard are offering a weekend conference at Newcastle for 2021 which coincides with the Groups 50th anniversary.

16) Any other Business

L. Rayner wished to draw attention to the CifA finds group meeting which is marking its 30th anniversary at Birmingham on the 25th September. This is an umbrella group for finds and environmental material addressing standards, training and career development. It can facilitate access to training budgets and set up training specific events. Everyone is welcome to attend.