

Study Group for Roman Pottery 2021 Conference Programme



Timings are approximate and titles and speakers are subject to change. Please check our Eventbrite page for updates!

Friday 2nd July 2021

Session 1: 50 Years of the SGRP

Session chair: Rob Perrin (SGRP President)

9:15-9:30

Registration

Eniko Hudak (PCA) and James Gerrard (Newcastle University)

9:30-9:40

Welcome *Rob Perrin (SGRP President)*

9:45-10:15

Fifty years (or perhaps 49) of the Study Group for Roman pottery *Christopher Young (heritage consultant)*

10:20-10:50

Roman Pottery? Surely the men have done it all?

Kayt Hawkins (UCL ASE)

This paper draws on recent sector wide surveys and a survey of the SGRP membership to explore gender divisions within Romano-British pottery studies. Aspects that will be covered include specialist demographics in relation to the wider UK archaeological profession and visibility of specialists in terms of outreach and publication.

Coffee Break

11:15-11:45

Article 3: Reflections on the past and considerations for the future *Fiona Seeley (freelance)*

This paper is a personal reflection on the support and strengths of the Study Group as I have experienced them since I joined in the early 1990's and how I see this aligns with its objectives, in particular those of Article 3. With an emphasis on the open and inclusive nature of the organisation this paper will demonstrate its importance for the future especially in regard to people entering the profession.

11:50-12:10

Conference maketh a ready pottery specialist (not Francis Bacon): Reflections on SGRP weekends *Louise Rayner (UCL ASE)*

A nostalgic (and light-hearted) look back at SGRP conference weekends – where we've been, what we do, why these weekends are such an important part of the SGRP and what they mean to members who attend.

12:15-12:35 **SGRP: the next 50 years** *Michael Fullord (University of Reading)*

Lunch Break

Session 2: Early Career Researchers

Chair: Eniko Hudak (PCA)

14:00-14:30 **How effective are different Roman pottery sampling strategies? The A14C2H case study** *Lanah Hewson (University of Reading)*

The aim of this project is to use recorded pottery data from the A14C2H improvement scheme to critique an experimental purposive sampling method and assess its potential to relieve pressures on professional units when processing bulk finds. This project involves the recording and analysis of LPRIA and Roman pottery from Targeted Excavation Areas (TEA's) 14, 15, and 16 of the A14, and comparison of the sampled wares to a full dataset. Should the sampled wares be representative of the full dataset, the sampling strategy should be deemed a success and may improve the ways in which bulk finds are processed.

14:35-15:05 **Navigating the past in the present – The successes and difficulties of entering Roman pottery studies in the 21st century** *Megan Tirpak (Newcastle University)*

Coffee Break

15:30-16:00 **Late Roman Pottery imports from Oxfordshire and the Nene Valley in Britain north of the Humber: Significance and Distribution** *Ben Lee (Newcastle University)*

This paper is based on work carried out for my undergraduate dissertation in 2019/20 at Newcastle University. The project aimed to establish quantified distributions for Oxfordshire ware (OXF RS) and Nene Valley Colour Coated ware (LNV CC) in Britain north of the river Humber and to explore how, and potentially why, these wares were arriving in the north. Overall, data was gathered from more than 100 sites across the north of Britain, strong patterns in both distribution the composition of assemblages were identified, and some tentative conclusions have been drawn regarding these wares' method(s) of arrival in the north.

16:05-16:35 **A review of the dating and distribution of a late Roman pottery fabric – Portchester D** *Katie Mountain (Newcastle University)*

Portchester D (also known as Overwey White Ware) is a distinctive late Roman pottery fabric, most commonly used for large cooking vessels with rilled decoration. A product of the Alice Holt pottery industry, it is said to have a scant distribution in fluctuating quantities across south-east England. I have reviewed this distribution and will show this fabric is found across a much wider area. I will discuss the use and function of this pottery type, and consider the problems with quantification and the dating of Roman ceramics and the implications these issues have on our understanding of the late Roman pottery industry.

Discussions in breakout rooms and *Surprise evening social at 5pm*

Saturday 3rd July 2021

Session 3: Recent Research

Chair: Jane Evans (Worcestershire County Council)

- 9:30-10:00 **Means to an end: some analysis of average sherd weights and rim percentages**
Edward Biddulph (Oxford Archaeology)
- Mean sherd weight – a measure of pottery fragmentation – is well-known and frequently used by researchers to address questions of pottery deposition, residuality, site formation, zonation and so on. Mean rim percentage is perhaps less widely applied but offers similar information. Rarely used together, the measures, when combined, provide a tool for characterising assemblages, sites and features that is more powerful than either of the measures alone. In this paper, the value of using both measures together is demonstrated by case studies. The chief output of the analysis is a scattergram that is simple to produce and provides a visual representation of the data that allows us to make better sense of our pottery.
- 10:05-10:35 **From Cradle to the Grave: Romano-British infant feeding cups** *Kayt Hawkins (UCL ASE)*
- This paper focuses on a specific vessel form, a distinctive small spouted vessel often found in association with infant burials. These vessels occur across the Roman Empire and have been subject to a range of interpretations including infant feeding bottles, breast pumps and lamp fillers. Work by the author to compile a database of all known examples of this form in Britain will be viewed alongside results from recent osteological studies exploring weaning practices and lipid analysis on vessels from the continent (both prehistoric and Roman in date).
- Coffee break*
- 11:00-11:30 **A second century AD mortarium and colour-coated production site in the Newport suburb of Lincoln** *Ian Rowlandson (Ian Rowlandson Archaeological Consultancy)*
- This excavation has helped to locate a previously unknown 2nd century AD pottery workshop producing a range of specialist wares. The range of products mostly consisted of mortaria, flagons, and colour-coated beakers with examples of more unusual vessels such as tazze and a costrel also present. Many of the vessels were similar in both form and fabric to those produced in the nearby South Carlton workshop and one potter, Crico, appears to have worked at both sites. The stamps of four further potters, previously considered to have been working in Lincolnshire, have been retrieved from the Newport site thus locating their workshop near Lincoln. It is known that mortaria from this workshop reached northern Lincolnshire, Yorkshire, Lancashire, Hadrian's Wall and the Antonine Wall in Scotland.
- 11:35-12:05 **A walk on the wild side? Bronze vessels and their ceramic cousins in Roman Britain** *James Gerrard (Newcastle University)*
- It is well known that there was a hierarchy of vessels in the Roman world based on materials: at the top were gold and silver plate, then glass, non-precious metal vessels, then pottery, followed by wooden vessels. Non-precious metal vessels were often recycled and, when they survive, are often poorly preserved. As a consequence they are uncommon objects, yet they played an important

role in the preparation of serving food and drink and ablutions. In this paper I will offer a review of some recent (and not so recent) discoveries of metal vessels in Roman Britain and explore which vessels seem to have generated imitations in pottery and which did not.

12:10-12:40

Flavian Pottery from Exeter and the South-West in northern Britain: Trade or the Movement of Personal Possessions? *Paul Bidwell (retired researcher)*

Some 25 years ago Vivien Swan and the author identified examples of Exeter Fortress Wares at Flavian sites in Scotland and in York. At the time they were thought probably to have been the personal possessions of soldiers in units sent north to take part in the conquest of Scotland. Much more is now known about the Fortress Wares and their extensive markets in the South-West, not all of which were military. It seems likely that there was an attempt to market these wares and other Exeter products such as mortaria to the army in northern Britain, possibly alongside the re-export of pottery from northern (and western?) Gaul. A later episode when South-Western BB1 was exported to the north will also be briefly discussed.

Lunch break - AGM (SGRP members only)

Session 4: Collaborative Projects

Chair: Professor Ian Haynes (Newcastle University)

14:15-14:45

The Medway Ceramics: new observations on assemblages under threat *Jo Ahmet and Jane Clark (Portable Antiquities Scheme)*

The Medway Ceramics: new observations on assemblages under threat – Since the 19th century a vast array of Roman ceramics have been recovered from the mouth of the River Medway, Kent. Investigations over the 20th century identified a number of kilns sites, burial landscapes and a number of distinct ceramic wares known as the Upchurch Wares. In recent times investigations into the ceramics of the Medway estuary have, barring some committed locals, faltered. Now, as many sites within the estuary face erosion, looting and loss we wish to highlight this unique artefactual landscape to our more learned ceramic specialising colleagues.

14:50-15:20

National Initiatives in Archaeological Archiving (please dispose of responsibly) *Duncan Brown (Historic England)*

Since the formation of the Archaeological Archives Forum (AAF) in 2002, the issues around archaeological archiving have become well-known. Inconsistent practice standards, variable monitoring and museum stores becoming unmanageably full have all been highlighted as issues that all archaeologists should be concerned about. Some of those have been addressed, while initiatives are in place to resolve the others. This paper will summarise the current position, describing in particular the work of Historic England's Future for Archaeological Archives Programme, the board for which includes a range of interested organisations, such as ALGAO, CIfA and FAME. The talk will conclude with a consideration of what that all means for pottery studies, homing in on particular issues around selecting for archive and the demands of, and on, museum curators. With any luck, some of this will be of interest. In a year when the SGRP celebrates its 50th year, as the conference programme shows, it is important to look forward.

Coffee break

15:45-16:15

Meals for the Dead? Organic residue analysis of funerary vessels from two Romano-British cemeteries *Julie Dunne (University of Bristol)*

Accessory vessels are often found in Romano-British burial contexts, together with other evidence for the consumption or deposition of food and drink as part of various processes and rituals relating to funerals in Roman Britain, including animal sacrifices as part of pyre-side rituals, the placement of food offerings during burial to feed the dead and the consumption of food during commemorative visits to the deceased. The presence of these accessory vessels raises question as to how pottery was acquired for funerary use and why specific vessels were chosen? For example, were they recycled from the domestic sphere or made specially for funerary purposes? Furthermore, what was the pottery used for, did the vessels contain foods for the deceased, possibly for their final journey, or did they simply represent a symbolic meal? Here, we carry out lipid residue analysis of two pottery assemblages, comprising complete and partially complete vessels, from two Romano-British cemeteries, to investigate their possible use. The first, found at Rhodaus Town, Canterbury, was a small, probably high status, family cemetery (dated between AD 270 to AD 420) linked to a near-by shrine, and the second was a mid to late 1st century Roman military cremation cemetery at the Lunt Fort, Baginton, which included at least one individual, buried accompanied by 23 vessels laid out across the base of the grave, that can confidently be described as a high-ranking officer. The lipid residue results provided valuable insights into the variability of use of Romano-British funerary vessels.

16:20-16:50

Introducing the Lower Ouse Valley industry: collaboratively characterising a major new early Roman pottery industry in southern Cambridgeshire *Adam Sutton (MOLA Northampton)*

Excavations on the A14 Cambridge to Huntingdon Road Improvement Scheme (A14C2H) in Cambridgeshire have uncovered some of the most extensive evidence for Roman pottery production to have been found in recent years. This includes more than 40 early Roman pottery kilns and ancillary structures linked to a single industry, newly defined as the 'Lower Ouse Valley' industry. This paper will introduce the audience to this industry, presenting some preliminary results of post-excavation analysis being conducted collaboratively by specialists working in a variety of fields and from numerous different organisations.

Discussions in breakout rooms and conference close

