





# **ROMAN FINDS GROUP**

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July 1999

### **Data Protection Act**

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

## Editorial

It is all change at the RFG. The new committee is now in place and details are given on p. 16. Jan Summerfield and Quita Mould have retired to a well-deserved rest, well from the RFG at least. I'm sure both the new committee and all the membership will join with me in thanking them for all their hard work. I recall suggesting to Jan in 1990 that she might care to join the committee. I promised her decent lunches at the committee meetings but was, I fear, a little economical with the truth over the amount of work she would end up doing.

I know that both Jan and Quita were instrumental in setting up the recent joint meeting on the Portable Antiquities Scheme. It is a fitting tribute to their work that the meeting was sold out with people being turned away. Because only a minority of the membership managed to get there, I have devoted a longer than normal section of this *Newsletter* to the Scheme, and I'm very grateful to the authors for responding so promptly to my request for the articles.

Along with the change in the committee, there will also be a change in the editorship of this *Newsletter*. This is my last one and in future it will be edited by Nina Crummy. She would like the copy for the next one by **Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> November, 1999**, and the address to send it to is on p. 16.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank all the people who have contributed articles and notes over the past four years while I've been editor. Many did it voluntarily, and even the ones I cajoled to write reviews of meeting and the like did it with good humour.

Hilary Cool

# The Treasure Act and the Portable Antiquities Scheme

## A Report on the First Year

### Treasure Act

The first anniversary of the Treasure Act in 1998 provides an opportunity to take stock. How effective has it been and what differences has it made? The main purpose of the Act was to replace the old subjective Treasure Trove test (under the old law only those gold and silver objects that had been deliberately buried with the intention of recovery qualified as Treasure Trove) with a new objective definition of Treasure. Thus under the Treasure Act all objects other than coins that are at least 300 years old and have a precious-metal content of at least 10% are Treasure; also all coins from the same find are Treasure, provided they are at least 300 years old (if they are made of copper alloy there must be at least ten of them).

Has the Act deterred finders from reporting their finds, as some said it would, or have there been so many finds that the system has been swamped? Neither has happened. The total number of cases of treasure reported in the first year of the Act was 179, which compares with the prediction that there might be between 100 and 200 cases a year. This is seven times as many as the 25 finds a year that were being declared Treasure Trove, and it means that the Act has passed its first hurdle of ensuring that more finds are reported. Although there have been a number of reports of undeclared treasure, there is no evidence that the incidence is any

higher than before. All but eight of the 179 treasure cases are finds of gold and silver objects that should have been reported under the old law, so the Act does in fact seem to have encouraged finders to report more of their finds. The great majority of the finds came from England (169), the others coming from Wales (9) and Northern Ireland (1), the Treasure Act does not apply in Scotland which has its own treasure law.

These finds fall into the following categories:

Coins:	78
Artefacts, Prehistoric and Roman	23
Artefacts, Medieval and Early Modern:	84

(There is some double-counting because some finds consist of coins and artefacts. Virtually all of the finds of artefacts are single objects.)

One of the most significant benefits of the Act is the requirement that objects found in association with Treasure should be reported as this is producing new archaeological insights. An example is provided by a find recently reported from Berkshire which includes 80 Roman silver *denarii*, 45 bronze coins of the same period together with Roman copper brooches and other objects. Under the old law there was no requirement to report the base metal objects, but they will qualify as Treasure if they are deemed to be from the same find. This in turn raises the question of whether the

brooches are likely to have been from the same find as the coins: very few records exist of such finds from this period but this may simply be because they were not reported in the past.

Of the 77 cases whose disposition has so far been determined, 31 (40%) are being acquired by museums and the remainder have been disclaimed without the need for the coroner to hold an inquest and have been returned to the finders. Of the treasure finds that are being retained, the great majority are going to regional museums: the British Museum is acquiring only two of these 31 finds, while the National Museums and Galleries of Wales is acquiring a third.

There have been a few teething problems with the new system, as the museums and coroners responsible for administering it get used to the new arrangements. There is a continuing need to ensure all concerned deal with cases as expeditiously as possible. The Code of Practice states that it should not normally take more than a year between a finder handing in his or her find and the museum paying the reward. By and large, however, the first year of the Treasure Act has fulfilled the expectations of those who promoted it.

#### **Pilot Schemes for recording archaeological finds**

In parallel with the Treasure Act, the Department of Culture Media and Sport, together with the British Museum, have been funding six pilot schemes to promote voluntary recording of all archaeological objects found by members of the public, including coins. The first six finds liaison officers were based in Kent, Norfolk, north Lincolnshire, the West Midlands, Yorkshire and the North

West. In the first year they rapidly succeeded in gaining the trust of hundreds of detector users, convinced for the first time that this is a genuine attempt to turn over a new leaf, and as a result they were able to record some 13,500 objects from 700 finders. A database has been specially developed for the scheme and the first 3,000 records were made available on the Internet in March *{see p.9}*. At the same time an annual report summarising the results of the first year of the scheme will be published.

Where statistics were kept on the number of finds recorded before the liaison officers took up their posts, they have generally at least doubled the number of finds being recorded and have often achieved much higher increases. It is important to note that the liaison officers record objects made by any member of the public, not just metal detector users, although detectorists are responsible for over 90% of the finds recorded. The liaison officers are also concerned to record all archaeological objects, not just those made of metal, and they have recorded 848 stone and 1,723 pottery objects.

The data so far gathered by the liaison officers has shown that the previous estimate that detector users might have been finding perhaps as many as 400,000 archaeological objects each year is, if anything, too low.

Conservation issues have loomed large in the first year of the scheme as the question that liaison officers are most frequently asked by finders is 'how can I clean my finds?', and it has been a priority for the scheme to develop clear and simple advice on the basics of conservation for finders. Three conservators with experience of providing advice to the public, Sarah

Watkins of the British Museum, Adrian Tribe of English Heritage and Celia Honeycombe of Cambridgeshire County council, have kindly agreed to draft a series of leaflets on conservation which it is hoped to publish in 1999.

In October the Heritage Lottery Fund announced that it would be funding another six finds liaison posts in Hampshire, Northamptonshire, Somerset and Dorset, Suffolk and Wales, as well as an outreach officer, and these posts had all started in March. In December the Government announced its continuing support for the schemes over the next three years. The Museums and Galleries

Commission has agreed to make a second bid for the Heritage Lottery Fund for a national scheme when the pilots end in April 2000. It is of course too early to say whether or not this bid will be successful, but whatever the outcome the pilot schemes have certainly shown how great an addition to our knowledge of our archaeological heritage such finds can bring, if they are properly recorded.

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## **The Portable Antiquities Scheme and the Roman Finds Group**

### **The Portable Antiquities Scheme: the current state of play**

The Portable Antiquities Scheme has now been operating as a pilot project since the end of 1997. There are now 11 regional Finds Liaison Officers (FLOs) covering the North-West (Nick Herepath), Lincolnshire (Kevin Leahy & Marina Elwes), Yorkshire (Ceinwen Paynton), the west Midlands (Angie Bolton), Northamptonshire (Rhiannon Harte), Norfolk (Samantha Hyde), Suffolk (Gabor Thomas), Kent (Catherine Read), Hampshire (to be appointed), Devon & Somerset (Ciorstaidh Hayward Trevarthen) and Wales (Philip MacDonald). There is also myself, the Outreach Officer, who is responsible for publicising the scheme with pieces such as this and

the project co-ordinator, Roger Bland. Roger and I are both based in central London at the British Museum, the Dept. of Culture, Media and Sport and the Museums & Galleries Commission. Complicated stuff! The scheme currently covers about half of England and Wales, but we are hoping that it can be extended over the whole of England and Wales if a bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund at the end of this year proves successful.

What does the scheme mean for specialist finds groups such as the RFG? The first point to make is that the volume of data available to interested parties such as the RFG is going to increase dramatically. The FLOs are very pro-active when it comes to recording material, the

majority of which is found by metal detector users. Rather than waiting for members of the public to bring finds in to their local museums for identification and recording, the FLOs' job is to establish links with all the metal detecting clubs in their areas and run finds surgeries at their local museums and relevant archaeological services. This means that they are actively seeking out new material, the extent and volume of which is huge. It is very hard to estimate the levels of material found by metal detectorists and the general public of potential archaeological interest. Prior to my current job I was the Finds Liaison Officer in Kent, and tried to come up with a figure based on the groups I was in contact with. For Kent alone, I estimated that between 60,000 and 100,000 artefacts from prehistoric to post-medieval times were being found by all the various club members. There were also an unknown number of metal detector users who were independent of the clubs who may find as many objects each year as the clubs I was in regular contact with. So nationwide, we must be talking about hundreds of thousands of objects of potential archaeological value every year.

How are these finds recorded? The FLOs are all using the same Access database developed specifically for the scheme and this has just been updated to increase its power and scope. The main elements of the program are a findspot table which links to all the relevant finds from that particular findspot. The program also allows images to be associated with the finds, and allows reports to be generated (e.g. all the Roman finds on the database from a particular parish). In the future, the program will be linked to the new

Exegesis SMR software which many counties are now adopting. There will also be the facility to link the database to GIS in order that distribution maps of finds can be generated. This is obviously very exciting, as it will mean that our understanding of the historic landscape will be greatly enhanced. I certainly know of two or three sites from my limited time in Kent which have been indicated by the recording of metal detected finds and for which very little previous information has been available.

Aside from the archaeological and spatial aspects of the data, the data gathered will also be of great use to specialists interested in the objects in their own right. A great deal of emphasis is placed on recording as much detail about the objects as possible, with FLOs instructed to photograph and draw finds as appropriate. This takes into account the fact that FLOs cannot be certain that they will ever see objects again, so as good a record as possible has to be made when the window of opportunity appears.

A copy of 'Portable Antiquities: annual report 1997-8' is available free of charge from the address below. Please visit the Portable Antiquities Scheme website at: [www.finds.org.uk](http://www.finds.org.uk)

### **The Scheme and the role of the Roman Finds Group**

The central database of finds, if a national scheme does come in to existence next year, is likely to be a vast and rather untamed resource. If 35 regional FLOs feed 2,000 records each into it annually, then that is c.70,000 records of artefacts every year. In the first year of the scheme,



approx. 27% of the finds recorded by the six pilot schemes were Roman (just over 750 Roman objects from a total of c.2,800 finds). So there are, potentially, at least 18,000 new records of Roman artefacts available to finds researchers. As many as half of these are likely to be records of coin finds.

The RFG clearly has a very important role to play in deciding how the potential of this data can be fully realised. The RFG could, for example, come up with a list of proposals for academic research anchored to the Portable Antiquities database which could then be circulated to university departments.

It will certainly be the case that funding will have to be found to publish these finds for both specialist and popular use (we are always under pressure to demonstrate the benefits of recording this material to Joe Public). I would like to see all these issues discussed at future meetings of the RFG.

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## Recording Our Past

This meeting, held jointly with the Finds Research Group AD 700-1700 and the UKIC Archaeology Section in London in March, was well attended, almost filling the Soc. of Antiqs meeting room. The objective was to examine "the impact of the Treasure Act and the Voluntary Recording Scheme on Small Finds research". Although the Treasure Act and the finds recording scheme are often mentioned in the same breath it is the latter element which will potentially have a significant impact on finds studies and most of the day concentrated on this.

The focus of the morning was on the results of the recording scheme so far, with an introduction from Roger Bland (who initiated and co-ordinates the project) plus contributions from the 6 in-post Finds Liaison officers, whose number have doubled this year with six new 18 month posts funded by the

Heritage Lottery Fund. Alarming statistics included Roger's view that the CBA/EH metal detecting report (Dobinson & Dennison 1995) estimate of 400,000 objects found by detectorists each year may be too low - this would surely leave a national scheme of 30 posts rather badly stretched? The scheme currently involves holding a record at both local (i.e. Sites & Monuments Record) and national level - this consisting of a custom built database, the Portable Antiquities Program. For this basic SMR standards are being applied, such as use of the MDA Archaeological Objects Thesaurus, the OS parish names etc. Furthermore the database incorporates guidelines on how to describe coins and work is planned for other artefacts; an interesting and fraught area this, how many systems can we think of for describing, for example Roman brooches, and which one is the standard?! But this



standardisation is a fundamentally important aspect if we are to cope with large numbers of new finds as the present systems are already creaking. As one might expect the quantity of material varies regionally - Norfolk clocked some 13,000 as opposed to Merseyside's 500 in 1998, and a third of the Merseyside objects were found outside the area.

The National Council for Metal Detecting was represented by Dennis Jordan who, while generally positive about the new opportunities for liaison, had some criticisms of delays in processing finds and providing information under the new Treasure Act.

The finest Roman material was illustrated by Elena Makridou, conservator at Norwich Castle Museum, who showed us details of the vessels from Crownthorpe. The ensuing discussion focused quite heavily on the ethics of conservation in relation to the public sector. The conservation theme was also covered by Celia Honeycombe of Cambridgeshire County Council who described how she educated detectorists by demonstrating in controlled experiments the destructive impact of their favourite cleaning potions such as Steradent.

After lunch the focus shifted to more specific research projects and potential gains, with the emphasis on the post-Roman, such as the classification and discussion of function of late Medieval dress hooks by Marina Elwes, the Finds Liaison Officer for North Lincolnshire. In discussing the contribution of detecting to our knowledge of Saxon coinage Sean Miller of the Fitzwilliam Museum and Mike Bonser pointed out that detector users are often extremely

knowledgeable about their finds. It is in fact on the numismatic side that most previous work has been done nationally to record detected finds, particularly the Celtic coin index and the Anglo-Saxon coin index. Helen Geake of Norwich Castle Museum gave a useful summary of the reasons behind the recording of portable antiquities after throwing in a few more daunting statistics (eg Norfolk produces 5,000 Roman coins a year). The "what is the record for" of course affects the "how do we record it" - at the most basic level objects are identified in relation to their find-spot for development control purposes via the SMR. A more thorough record gives us known parallels and the basis for detailed distributions of specific types and so we move into the realm of serious finds research. Her powerful justification for the process is that what is being done is "preservation by record" of archaeological sites which are very largely or entirely in the plough-soil in south and east England - something brought home to us every time a detector user produces Anglo-Saxon objects clearly originating from inhumation burials.

Other problem areas of metal detecting were touched on in discussion, including the more commercial aspects (rallies, including deliberate "seeding" of sites with finds, treasure hunting holidays, paying farmers for access) and the need to record detected collections amassed over up to 25 years, often with poor documentation, before they are dispersed and all the information lost when the finders die or a local museum receives a large bequest which is difficult to match with existing records.

Altogether a positive day, looking forward to a more widespread application of the scheme. But as one

who has experience of the mountains of backlog which accumulate around the SMR when detector finds are recorded I hope we can contribute to making it easier to do the basic recording by providing guidelines on how to record the essentials of various types of object. And then of course the challenge is to make use of the new data so that real knowledge is gained.....

## Reference

Dobinson, C. & Denison, S., 1995. *Metal detecting and archaeology in England* (York & London)

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## Surfing the Database

The database that Roger Bland and Richard Hobbs refer to in their articles is now available on the Portable Antiquities Web page (<http://www.finds.org.uk>). In a spirit of curiosity I spent a few hours exploring it, to see what sort of research tool it might provide to the Roman finds specialist.

You are given the option of a free text search to identify the sort of thing you are interested in, and a box to specify the date you want. The latter can either take the form of calendar date range or a general period such as Roman. If you put in brooch and Roman, you get 271 records, arranged in pages of 10. Each record consists of the simple name and a description. Clicking on the record will bring up a full screen of information devoted to it. Including name, description, measurements, the county of origin, the date of the item and sometimes additional information such as who recorded it. There is obviously a limit to the amount of the description the database retrieves. Some entries were cut off in mid sentence, and it appeared that only the first 50 or so words were being displayed. I couldn't see any

obvious way of getting the rest of the information.

The simple name tends to be at the level of brooch, trumpet or brooch knee. Occasionally some additional information such as a Collingwood number is included. The depth of the description varies greatly. Sometimes full, sometimes cursory. The cataloguers do not appear to be working to standard guidelines. This variability is going to make the database difficult to use as a research tool. As an example we could consider the Roman bracelet records. I found four. One could rapidly be identified from the description as a glass Kilbride-Jones 2 type. That one could make this identification a great tribute to the whoever catalogued it, as the terminology used suggested that he or she had not dealt with this type of artefact before. The other three were copper alloy. Due to a misspent youth when I was a post-graduate, I've probably handled more of these bracelets than most other Roman finds specialists. I have to admit though, that even I couldn't recognise the types being described with any certainty.

I am not a database expert, so my inability to refine my searches is very probably a reflection on my incompetence as much as on the database. I could not, however, work out why it was retrieving some records but not others if one put in words such as 'enamel' and 'brooch'. It didn't seem to relate to the simple name field, and certainly it was not retrieving all the brooches with enamel that can be identified by going through all the brooch records. At present the database is small enough for it to be feasible to look through all the brooches. As it grows, I doubt this will be an option. Some form of help facility that enables people to structure their enquiries in a more focussed way will undoubtedly be needed. Clearly from Richard Hobbs' description on p. 6, the database can do much more than its public face currently permits, and I wonder when this will be publicly available.

At present this database should be regarded as a pilot project just as the scheme itself is. It could grow up to be a useful finds research tool, but only if attention is rapidly given to guidelines and standardisation of the descriptions.

I appreciate that a balance has to be achieved between speed of recording and sufficient information for the description to be usable, but this need not be too great a problem. At the most basic it could be done by identifying a group of large finds reports and monographs, and including a one line entry in the record to the effect that 'the object is very like fig. x of such and such, but varies in the following way ....'. In *extremis* I did this recently with a group of brooches using the visual catalogue of the final Hattatt report, and it took far less time than one would have thought.

This is going to be a useful tool, I'm sure. In the interim I urge you all to go and play with it. You may find interesting things, and no doubt there is a counter recording number of visits to it. I assume demonstrable usage will aid the organisers in any application for further funding.

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## Gilding the Black Lily

A large number of artefacts made from black shiny materials such as jet, shale, and cannel coal have now been found in Roman contexts in Britain and the Rhineland with smaller quantities from Spain, France, Bulgaria and Hungary. Polished to a shine, these materials look elegant when carved into finger-rings, armlets, hairpins and beads and one might be forgiven for expecting that the customers in Roman times would have been satisfied with the effect. Anyone wishing for colour contrasts could wear the black jewellery with other items made in ivory or bone or string their necklaces with the black beads alternating with coloured glass. However, it has become clear that some Roman jewellers had discovered that the effect of contrasting black with gold was particularly striking.

The number of black objects found decorated with gold is quite small and, so far, confined to armlets. Cable twist armlets of jet are known in Britain but a few examples found in the Rhineland have been found with gold wire still wrapped around the twists (eg Köln: la Baume 1971, Abb.3, no. 11). Gold leaf has been found in the grooves of octagonal armlets (eg Köln: Allason-Jones 1996, fig. 12) although, again, none of those from British sites have revealed any gold. A two-part hinged armlet from York (Allason-Jones 1996, no. 82) has the settings for metal hinge plates but it is only on complete examples from Aquincum, in Hungary (Zsidi 1995, fig. 99), and Ratiaria, in Bulgaria (Ruseva-Slokoska 1991, no. 146) that these elements can be seen to be of gold. It might be concluded that the British products either had less expensive metal additions or that the gold elements were taken off before the artefacts were placed in graves.

In recent weeks, however, the Newcastle team of Lindsay Allason-Jones and Mick Jones were sent some samples excavated by the Oxford Archaeological Unit from a grave at Ashford, Kent, for identification. The first group were taken from an early 4th century beaded armlet of a type which can be paralleled at Silchester (Lawson 1975, fig. 1.4) although it was more popular on the Continent (see Hagen 1937, C45, C47, etc). The analyses showed that some of the beads were of jet whilst others were of lignite. This was very interesting as these were the first objects of lignite which have been identified so far from a Romano-British context, but the main excitement was that, under the microscope, one of the samples seemed to have minuscule traces of gold. The Oxford Archaeological Unit was notified and the presence of gold on some of the other beads was then confirmed by Vanessa Fell. The size of the sample taken from the bead was 1mm across so the odds on any surviving gold showing up must make the odds on winning the Lottery look like a certainty by comparison.

This type of armlet bead has not given any hint previously of having had gold leaf decoration and it is possible that the leaf was only applied in small amounts as dots or in the decorative notches. The discovery, however, does bring with it the worry that quite a bit of Roman black jewellery was decorated with gold but we have all been diligently scrubbing it off when removing the excavation dirt.

If you find black material in the future please take great care when cleaning it and, if possible, check the surface under a microscope. I would also be grateful for news of any other

examples of black and gold jewellery from a Roman context.

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- Zsidi, P., 1995. *Gods, Soldiers, Citizens in Aquincum* (Budapest).
- Lindsay Allason-Jones,  
Museum of Antiquities,  
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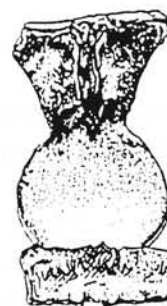
## Lead Brooches from Gloucestershire

The two illustrated brooches are of particular interest not only because of the metal from which they are made but also for the evidence they show of having been finished as dress accessories. Both were recovered by metal detecting and the general location of the find spots is known.

No. 1 is a Rosette brooch of c. AD 50 found in gravel workings at Somerford Keynes, Glos. It measures 36 by 20mm. The head and wings of this brooch show signs of iron staining, presumably from the now missing spring mechanism and there are score marks on the underside of the wings where the spring had bitten into the lead. The chord hook is missing as is the catchplate and staining in both these areas may imply that both these features were originally made of separate iron pieces which would have been set in the mould and cast securely in place. The integral central disc is decorated with a conjoined 'birds head'

motif, whilst the fan-tailed foot features a 'cats face' design.

No. 2 is a disc brooch (25mm diameter) found at Bishops Cleeve, Glos. Within a double beaded border and above a thunderbolt symbol, a celtic-style head with flowing hair and wearing a torc around the neck. The head is surmounted by an owl. To the left of the bust is a leaping hare with faint traces of a wreath held between the forepaws. To the right is a bird with outstretched wings and a long tail with a wreath held in its beak. The bird appears to be hovering above a rayed solar disc. The back of the brooch has a wreathed border and traces of foliate decoration. There are substantial remains of an iron pin. The catchplate is missing and there is again the possibility that this may have been made of iron. Any suggestions as to the possible readings of the iconography of this brooch would be most welcome.



### Acknowledgements

I am most grateful to Hilary Cool and Donald Mackreth for their instructive and stimulating comments on both of the brooches. My thanks also to Elaine Fellows for taking time off to execute the illustrations.

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## SPECTRUM Archaeology Guide

Spectrum is the United Kingdom Documentation Standard for Museums, the second edition, currently in use, was published in 1997. Spectrum defines twenty procedures which provide for the documenting and processing of museum objects, eight of which are classed as 'primary' procedures, their implementation necessary for any museum wanting to apply for MGC registration.

The Spectrum procedures are applicable to all collections and the standards defined in the manual are fundamental to the policies of most museums. There is however, an awareness that Spectrum may not always fully address the needs of some specialist collections. This is particularly true for archaeology. How for example should a backlog collection with little documentation be catalogued, or a current site due to be



deposited in a museum. How should the museum record an item of Treasure Trove, a collection on 'Reviewable status' or a sample sent for destructive investigation? How should a field archaeologist prepare a site archive for transfer? Such questions are more daunting when faced by curators with little or no archaeological experience.

In an attempt to address such issues, a working party was established to consider the creation of a Users Guide to Spectrum, aimed at non archaeological or new curators and field archaeologists. That working party produced an enormous amount of work and many of you will have contributed to its final report. The MDA and the SMA have now committed themselves to the production of a practical guide based upon that report.

This 'Users Guide' is intended to provide a practical guide to which Spectrum procedures can be used to deal with the range of situations in which museums may acquire archaeological collections. It will further refer users to additional standards particular to archaeology.

The main section of the guide will be a series of questions commonly asked of documentation systems. Using flow charts it will highlight the main steps in any process, directing users both to relevant Spectrum procedures and to other standards where necessary. Case studies will give 'real life' examples of forms, procedures and actual events. The guide will also provide a glossary and bibliography.

It is hoped that a draft of the guide will be available for comment in summer 1999, with an autumn publication date anticipated. We would very much welcome comments on the draft, ideas of documentation problems to consider and particularly, more case studies. If you would like to be sent a copy of the draft guide or would simply like to know more about it, please email or write to me at the address below.

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## Training : the response

In the last *Newsletter* I posed the question whether, as a community of finds specialists, we should be taking a more pro-active role in organising training for both existing practitioners and people who would like to become practitioners. I had interesting and thoughtful replies from several people and, as promised, I'm reporting back here.

It is interesting to note that the provision of expertise in finds work is a topic that is gradually being noticed by the wider archaeological world. In the *Frameworks for Romano-British Archaeology* session at the Roman Archaeology Conference in Durham in April, two speakers pointed to the worrying scarcity of new people coming into finds work. It was also a topic that I have heard raised in other venues when archives and their

curation have been being discussed. This suggests that national bodies might be quite receptive to helping sponsor training if we could suggest the courses and other ways forward that would be most attractive and useful.

A recurring thread in the responses I got was how useful a general introductory course on small finds could be early in a persons career. Those who'd had the opportunity to go on one, sang their praises. Those who had not had such an opportunity lamented it, and remarked how much easier it would have made their subsequent development. It was also generally agreed that such a course is most beneficial if it mixes the more formal lectures evenly with handling sessions with the actual objects. In my experience of both teaching and attending such courses, this format is best when the numbers attending are relatively small and the tutor/participant ratio relatively high.

Also on the short course theme, more specialist topics suggested included flint, building materials including tile, glass, a plea to repeat the stone courses of earlier this year and, interestingly enough, animal bone. The latter plea came from an archaeology officer within a museum. If a programme of such courses were to be drawn up, it would probably be wise to liaise with the Society for Museum Archaeologists to see which more specialised areas would be of most practical use. Another constituency to be consulted would be the Portable Antiquities Scheme Officers (see p. 4-7).

So far these suggestions have centred around short courses that fall within the Continued Professional Development area. Another respondent suggested that what might also be helpful would be to have opportunities for graduates to develop better skills at the start of their careers by the provision of studentships in support of recognised MA courses, and/or apprenticeship posts. She suggested that the apprenticeships could be at units with finds sections or with individual specialists. I have long thought that the apprenticeship idea would be an excellent way forward, preferably with a tie in to an academic institution with a decent library. An even better idea might be to attempt to build such training posts into the analysis stage of large post excavation projects with extensive finds assemblages. The apprentice would thus be exposed to the reality of the general finds work associated with such projects, and have the opportunity to work with the specialists who are normally brought in to deal with some aspects of the material. As part of the team writing the site up, the apprentice would develop their academic and analytical skills alongside their finds expertise, and have a publication at the end. Such posts, I think, would be very good investments for the future.

Many thanks to Rachel Atherton, Sue Byrne, Jane Evans, Fraser Hunter and Elaine Morris for responding to my appeal in the last *Newsletter* for views on training.

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## Committee News

The new committee of the RFG met in May and assigned the various duties. Here is the list of who is on the committee, and what they are responsible for.

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## Notes and News

### Meeting of the RFG at Bath

The next meeting of the RFG will take place on Monday 27th September in the Drawing Room of the Roman Baths Museum, Bath. The title of the day will be *Finds from the recent excavations in Bath Spa*. The meeting will start at 10.30 with lectures commencing at 11.00, and the cost will be £5. The details of the day have not yet been finalised. Peter's current plans suggest that there will probably be presentations on excavated finds in the morning, and in the afternoon either a tour of the Museum and stores or more a general finds session. The full programme to be sent out nearer the date. Spaces are limited to 40 people, and will be allocated on first come, first served basis.

### ROMECC XII

The 12<sup>th</sup> international Roman Military Equipment conference will be held this year at South Shields from Friday 24<sup>th</sup> September to Sunday 26<sup>th</sup>. The theme is *Re-enactment as Research?* On the Friday and Saturday morning there will be lectures on this and on more general topics at the Customs House, South Shields, an arts centre with dedicated lecture theatre. On Saturday afternoon the conference moves to Arbeia Roman Fort for a series of practical demonstrations, guided tours of the site and current excavations. On the Sunday morning there will be an excursion to see work in progress at Segedunum, Wallsend Roman Fort. Here they are reconstructing a working Roman Bath house and building a museum. The conference fee is £20.

Further details of what promises to be a fun-filled weekend can be obtained from Alex Croom, ROMECC XII c/o Arbeia Society, Arbeia Roman Fort, Baring St., SOUTH SHIELDS, Tyne & Wear NE33 2BB. Telephone 0191 454 4093. Fax 0191 427 6862. Email: [alex.croom@tyne-wear-museums.org.uk](mailto:alex.croom@tyne-wear-museums.org.uk).

### Meeting of the Finds Research Group at York.

The Finds Research Group AD700-1700 is holding a seminar on *Textile Working Implements* on Monday 25<sup>th</sup> October, 1999. This is being organised for them by Textile Research in Archaeology. It will be held at Queen Anne's School, Bootham, York. The venue provides free car parking and disabled access. For further information contact Penelope Rogers, Textile Research in Archaeology, 8 Bootham Terrace, YORK YO30 7DH. Tel. 01904 634585.

Membership details of the Finds Research Group can be obtained from Katey Banks, The potteries Museum, Bethesda Street, Hanley STOKE-ON-TRENT ST1 3DW. Tel: 01782 202173. Fax: 01782 205033. The annual subscription is £3 (£5 overseas).

### New Books

If you acquired Castleford volume I: the Finds, you may be interested that the site volume has now appeared. *Roman Castleford Excavations 1974-*

85. *Volume II: the structural and environmental evidence* by P.

Abramson, D.S. Berg and M.R.

Fossick is an A4 hardback of 358 pages and costs £26 including postage and packing. Orders to West Yorkshire Archaeology Service, 14 St John's North, Wakefield WF1 3QA. Cheques payable to Wakefield MDC.

A report on one of the large urban excavations at Leicester has also appeared.

*Roman and Medieval Occupation in Causeway Lane, Leicester* by A. Connor and R.

Buckley is an A4 paperback of 385 pages, and contains many finds reports. These include a large one by Nick Cooper on the small finds. The report has a special introductory offer of £25 plus £3.50 post and packing (normal price £30+p &p.). Cheques should be made payable to Leicester University, and you can order it from the University of Leicester Archaeological Services, Leicester University, University Rd, Leicester LE1 7RH.

### **Appeal for help**

I'm currently working on two inter-linked papers on bracelets and on the finds in use at the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, and hope fellow members can help me. I am collating the bracelets from grave groups to see which types were commonly used together. If you know of any unpublished excavated 4<sup>th</sup> century bracelet groups, I'd be most grateful if you could contact me. I'm also very interested in the small finds that are found in contexts where the stratigraphy, coins and/or pottery all suggest activity during the last third of the 4<sup>th</sup> century and beyond, even if those finds appear to be residual. Again any help in directing me towards currently unpublished groups would be gratefully accepted.

If you can help, please contact Hilary Cool, 16 Lady Bay Rd., West Bridgford, NOTTINGHAM, NG2 5BJ. Phone/Fax 0115 9819 065. Email: [hilary.cool@btinternet.com](mailto:hilary.cool@btinternet.com)