

# newsletter

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## GAG Event, Worcester March 2015

A small select crowd turned out for the Graphics Archaeology day event held at The Hive, Worcester on 21 March. Papers were given on a variety of subjects ranging from copyright to the discovery and depiction of a series of Roman ovens and the graphic challenges of waterlogged wood. Laura Templeton and Carolyn Hunt reported on an experiment to determine the relative cost-effectiveness and viability of photography as opposed to illustration for small finds; see page 2.

## AGM

Only nine members of the Group were present for the AGM, and since no new applications for election to the committee had been received, it fell to the existing committee members, most of whom were required to step down at this election, to simply stand again. In order to have a little variety, in a scene slightly reminiscent of the Mad Hatter's Tea Party we all moved on one place. Steve Allen, formerly Chair, is now Secretary; Laura Templeton, formerly Treasurer, is now Chair, though possibly for one year only. Drew Smith and Tom Small continue in their respective roles as Exhibitions and Website, while Drew is also jointly working on Assessments with Liz Gardner, who was confirmed as the Group's representative on Advisory Council. Jennie Anderson has stood down as Newsletter Editor, so Lesley Collett, formerly Secretary, moves over to take that role. Sarah Lambert Gates agreed to stand as Treasurer.

Minutes of the AGM are appended to this Newsletter.

New blood is desperately needed on the Committee – some of us have been doing this for more than fifteen years and need a break! Volunteers who would like to help run the Group are more than welcome to get in touch and find out what is involved, contact us via the CiFA office at [groups@archaeologists.net](mailto:groups@archaeologists.net).

## GAG Committee 2015–16



Laura Templeton  
MCiFA

Steve Allen  
MCiFA

Sarah Lambert Gates  
MCiFA

Liz Gardner  
MCiFA

Lesley Collett  
MCiFA

Tom Small  
MCiFA

Drew Smith  
MCiFA

## Illustration by photography – a simple trial

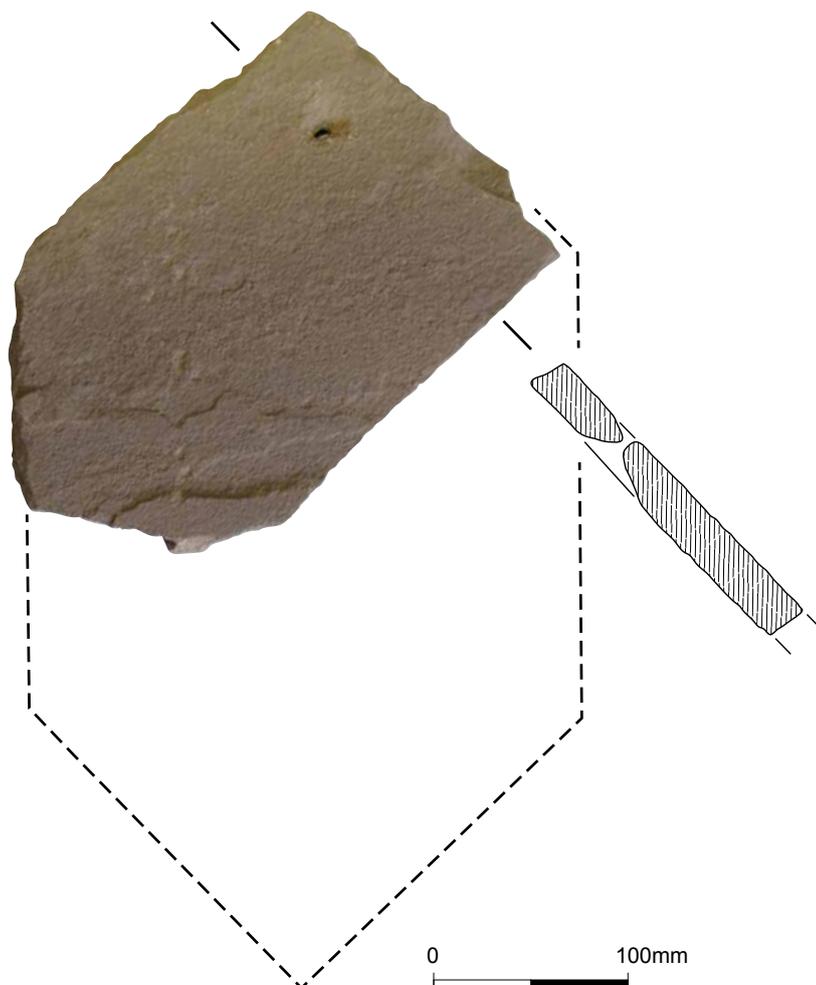
Laura Templeton MCIfA

Advances in illustration software over the years and easier access to digital reports has meant that our illustrators now use vector illustration as the primary drawing method for almost all of our work. At the same time, photography has become easier to include in our reports, and as many others have been doing, we have been trying out ways of using photographic images as part of our illustrations. We wanted to see if we can use photography as an effective enhancement to drawn illustration and if so, whether this would help to improve or make the illustration of finds and pottery more efficient.

Our illustrators currently draw unique or unusual forms which add to the interpretation of a site. The illustrations are measured and selective. We do not illustrate the fabric of a pottery vessel or the surface of a stone object unless doing so would demonstrate a unique aspect of that item's form, manufacture or use. Descriptive, not pictorial illustration is required by this particular target audience.

We began to use photographs in illustrations of large stone objects however to show surface texture and colour, aspects which would take too long to draw. By using rectified photographs

or scans of the items as part of a conventional style of archaeological illustration we have been able to add this type of information to our work and enhance what we do within our illustrations.

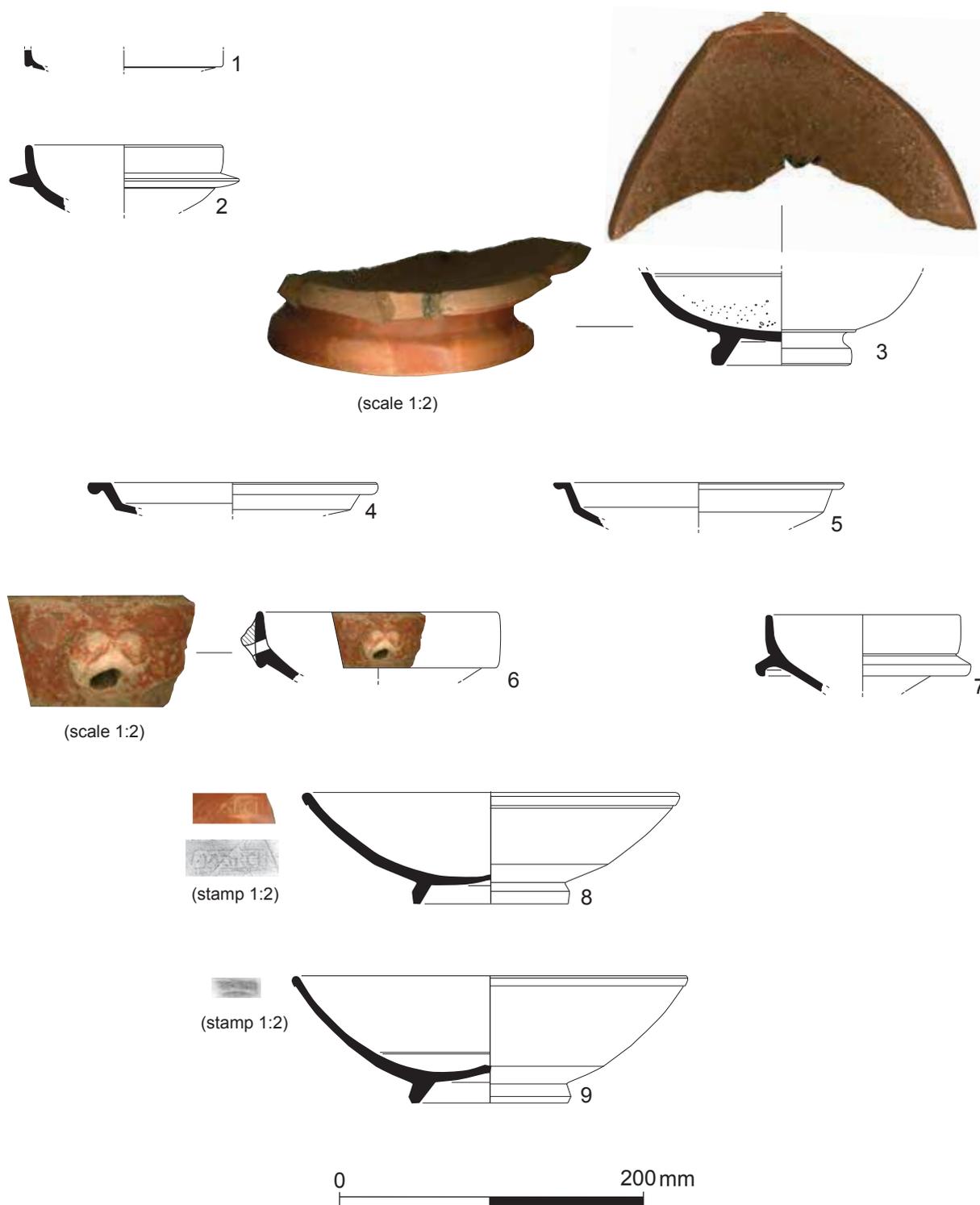


In this example of a stone roof tile, the scan of the flat tile has been checked for scale and any background shadow removed, then laid out as part of the illustration. This approach works well for this type of building material and other large objects such as querns where the stone texture and wear show well, and also for masonry, particularly elements with tooling. Care needs to be taken that photographs are scaled properly and that attention is paid to lighting so that the image shows relevant detail, but on the whole, photography can work well as part of a descriptive archaeological illustration.

In pottery, photographs have often been used to accompany the drawn forms, sometimes alongside and sometimes within the drawing. It can add interest to a standard pottery drawing, or add explanation alongside a rubbing of a stamp or decoration.

Time and financial pressures have made us question whether this use of photography can be taken further, and in three recent very similar projects, we have had the opportunity to measure the success of using

Fig. 1 Stone roof tile: scale photograph augmented with drawn information



1-7 = Lezoux, East Gaul, Late Argonne ware (cat 1-7)  
 8-9 = potters stamps (8= cat 4 and 9= cat10)

Figure J

Fig. 2 Pottery: drawings supplemented by photographic detail

photography to illustrate small finds. We wanted to know whether its use adds value by being more efficient in time spent producing the images, or if it is better or worse at conveying the descriptive information.

The first project was illustrated in a conventional way, with the objects drawn in pencil, then rendered digitally in Adobe Illustrator. As an example from this project, compare the drawn finger ring with its photograph from the illustration instructions (Fig. 3).



*Fig. 3 Finger ring depicted by both photography and drawing*

The drawing shows the features of importance in the interpretation of the object. The section is oval. The hoop flattens out to hold a circular disc. The wire coils around the hoop and holds a bone bead which rests in the smaller disc. The photograph shows the current condition and colour as well as shape. But the detail of the form and manufacture can be lost in the general surface corrosion and lack of tonal contrast. This item had a couple of loose components and the illustrator was able to reposition these easily in the image without physically reconstructing them for a photograph.

In the second project, drawings were drafted in pencil, rendered in ink, scanned at high resolution and then laid out onto the page in Adobe Illustrator (Fig.4). On the recommendation of the specialist, some items which were only partially conserved in order to reveal the section, were represented by photographs and the sections drawn. A few objects were impossible to define except by viewing the X-ray. In these cases, the X-rays were extracted and laid out as part of the illustrated catalogue.

In colour, the photographs work. It is possible to see the break between conserved areas and concretion. The tonal difference isn't good however, and if reproduced in greyscale it may be more difficult to define the detail and the photographs would need to be enhanced with drawn lines to preserve the integrity of the information.

X-rays on film proved tricky to reproduce. The subtleties visible to the eye can be difficult to copy with a desktop scanner. In some cases, scanning just didn't work and a photograph was taken to reproduce the detail. The different styles sit rather awkwardly together on the page. More time spent working out the page layout may have given a more satisfying result.

The third example was an experiment in 90% photography. Rather than selecting items for photography by suitability, the whole collection was photographed and drawings were of sections only (Fig. 5).

The success of this approach relies on the report being produced with reasonably high resolution photographs and viewed digitally in colour. It is possible to zoom into a digital image on screen to view detail, but once printed that ability has gone and detail in the image is subject to the quality of printer, paper and the users' choices.

These photographs have not been enhanced apart from being cut-out and positioned in a conventional illustration style. Some detail which would have been brought out by an illustrator is difficult to distinguish in the background noise of the colour and texture.

So having gone through this opportunity to assess styles – what are our conclusions? Time-wise with all the processes involved, drawing, rendering, briefing, photographing views, checking scale, editing and laying out, the most expensive in project time was the example 1 – drawings alone. The two other projects broke even on time and in success of presentation. Which was the most suitable method of representing the objects in a report format?

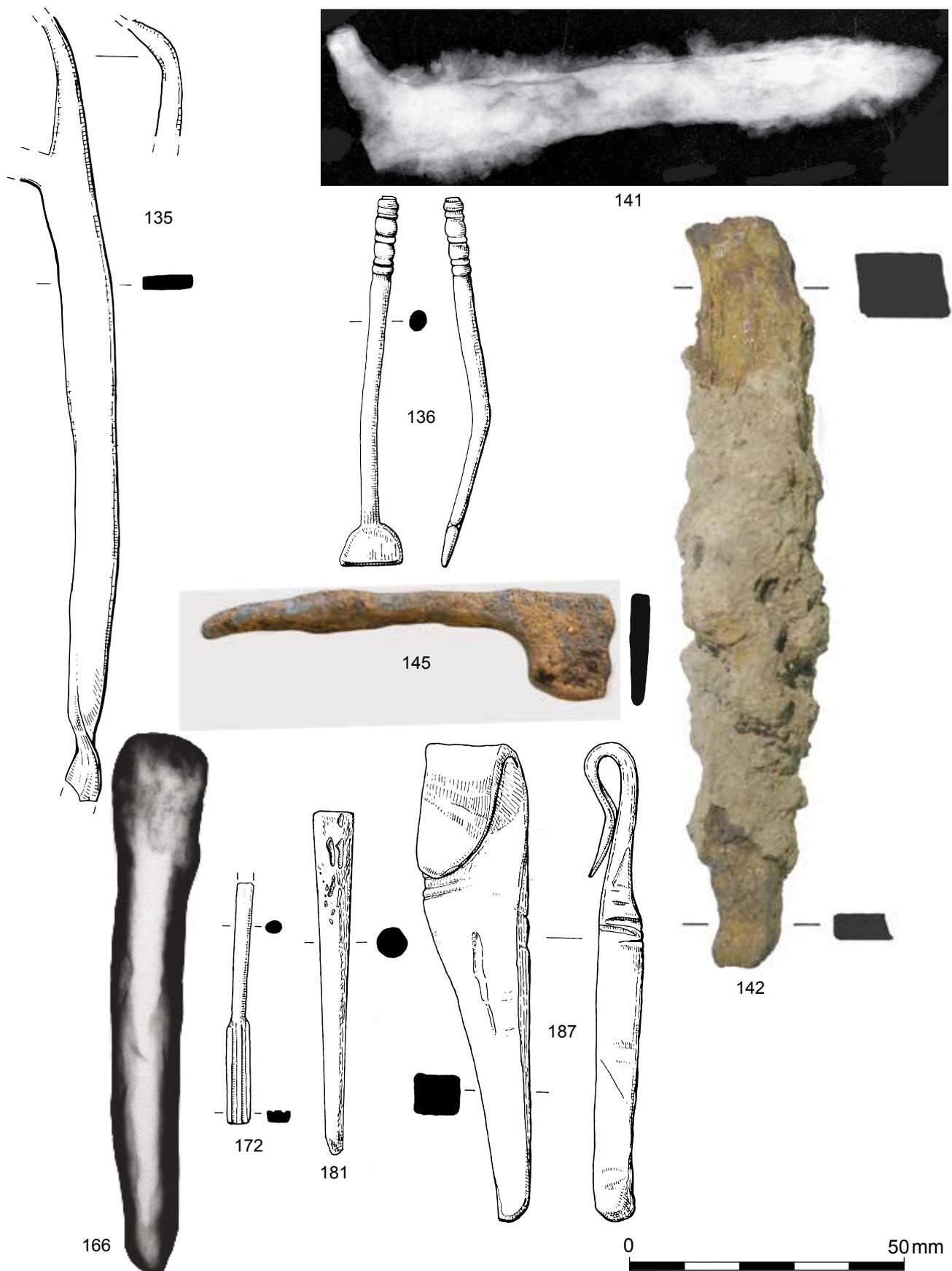


Fig. 4 page from example 2, mixed drawings with photographs and X-rays

Example 2 (Fig. 4) selects the method as to its suitability for the representation of each individual item. Example 1 could have used photography for quite a few objects very easily and would have saved some project time and in example 3 (Fig. 5), although some objects were good for a photographic approach, others required an illustrative treatment in order to demonstrate their unique details.

The opportunity to trial these methods has been useful, and has confirmed that our approach has been an efficient one up to now and I hope to be able to apply this lesson to our future work.



Fig. 5 page from example 3, scaled photography with only sections drawn

## Groups Forum Meeting

This was held in Reading on 22 July. It was well attended with representatives from several groups including one by Skype.

Apart from general administrative business, discussions were on membership and recruitment, and how more archaeologists can be encouraged to join the Special Interest Groups and ClfA. There seems to be a problem recruiting new entrants to the profession, but it's hoped that work by Kate Geary on the Pathways project with New Generation group's assistance may help with this. The ClfA admin have been redesigning the basic forms which help groups organise events (Groups Toolkit: [www.archaeologists.net/groupstoolkit](http://www.archaeologists.net/groupstoolkit)) and this should enable organisers to fit in with the needs of the ClfA's professional development programme and National Occupational Standards. Details about these can be found here: <http://www.archaeologists.net/profdevelopment>.

Another point of discussion was the competency matrices. The Graphics Archaeology Group has already designed this for graphic specialists wishing to join the ClfA and the other specialist groups are being asked to design theirs so that the path to membership can be made clearer for those of us working in specialist areas.

<http://www.archaeologists.net/join/individual>

It is also time to review our three-year business plan – to see where we have succeeded in our aims as a group and where we can improve over the coming three-year period.

As well as the business meeting there were two Continuing Professional Development sessions on ClfA groups and Social Media and Endorsed Training Courses. This added two hours to Sarah and my CPD log. These additions to business meetings are really helpful and there were many interesting issues discussed.

On the subject of social media – don't forget the Graphics Archaeology group Facebook page where ideas or current work can be aired. ClfA have their own Linked-in, Facebook and Twitter pages, and it's worth joining as many events and training opportunities are posted which members could otherwise miss.

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## Conference 2016 : Leicester

A date for your diaries: the ClfA 2016 Annual Conference and training event will be held 20 – 22 April 2016 at the University of Leicester

We are looking for exciting, innovative and engaging sessions for the 2016 ClfA conference. The conference will comprise a three-day programme, with traditional sessions, seminars and CPD workshops. The conference will explore the broad theme **Archaeology in context**. We are hoping to turn the spotlight firmly on archaeology and archaeologists – what is the role of archaeology in society, or within the wider landscape that cultural heritage occupies? How should archaeology be embedded within the teaching curriculum, or within sustainable development projects? We are keen to involve a diverse audience to explore archaeology and its contribution to a whole host of differing contexts...

The Graphic Archaeology Group has run a session at the last few ClfA conferences; if you have an idea for a graphics-based session that will fit the Conference theme, or are willing to help in organising or speak at a session, please get in touch with GAG via [groups@archaeologists.net](mailto:groups@archaeologists.net)

**The deadline for session proposals is Monday 17 August 2015**

# ‘We do not do that any more’: The Future of the Graphics Profession in Archaeology

ClfA Conference, Cardiff 2015

Steve Allen MClfA

This year’s GAG conference session intended to discuss where we think the graphics side of the profession is heading in the immediate future. Four presentations were made in the course of the afternoon provoking much discussion and sending us away with much to think about.

An introduction by Steve Allen, who has after three years stepped down as GAG Chair, set out some of the concerns we have and the need for teamwork and cooperation to achieve the most effective results. The first paper, by Susan Fielding of the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historic Monuments of Wales, reviewed the development of visual dissemination within Wales from early days, the highlight of the isometric cutaway drawing as a tool for reconstructing the past set in the 1970s to the current trend for computer reconstruction and animations, produced by external contractors liaising with a single archaeologist. In part this is due to the exploitation of newer technologies but a significant aspect has been meeting the rising expectations of a public schooled in cinematic graphics without of course, comparable resources.

Our second paper was presented by Drew Smith (Freelance Archaeological Illustrator) and Mikko Kriek (BCL Archaeological Support) showing – almost incidentally – how technology facilitates international collaboration to successfully compete a brief. The methods of research, different types of software deployed, interaction with the client and discoveries made in the course of the work were demonstrated in the case studies presented. How this might be exploited in the future with the potential for immersive virtual hardware was discussed in this context.

After tea, Steve Malone of Trent and Peak Archaeology discussed the use of LiDAR-derived Digital Elevation Models. LiDAR survey may seem familiar territory to some but its application, the availability of open source data, the different methods of processing, presenting and indeed publishing that data may have missed many of us. Case studies from the UK and abroad showed that excellent results can be obtained on a highly cost effective basis and supply new insights into archaeological landscape and topographic modelling.

Rounding off the formal presentations, Garry Gibbons, PhD Candidate, University of Southampton, presented the initial results of a recent survey of eighty specialist graphics practitioners and nineteen senior graphics staff across the UK. Following on from the Visualisation in Archaeology project competed a couple of years ago, this suggests that the numbers of graphics specialists in the discipline has actually increased in these few years and that this increase has not been reflected in a corresponding increase in the membership of professional organisations. A wide ranging and constructive discussion followed and for those who were unable to make the conference, several of the presentations were recorded by Doug Rocks-Macqueen and his colleagues and will shortly be available on YouTube – see what you missed!

So, summing up, a lot to think about. Changes in graphics practice continue apace with potentially fantastic developments in visualisation. Discussion after the session though seems to indicate a worrying trend in that rather than giving existing experienced professionals the chance to learn new skills or enhance existing ones, the trend seems to be to dismiss such people, possibly to be employed on an ad hoc basis when needed, and replace them



*Garry Gibbons presents an update on employment trends for graphics specialists*

with career entry level staff, skilled in new technologies, yes, but often lacking that wider understanding of the discipline which used to be the key to successful collaborations. Perhaps it would be worth establishing how exactly some organisations define a graphics practitioner – full time specialist in several methods of visual presentation or the occasional user of a software package for grey lit reports?

Personally I do not believe the membership issue is specific to the Graphics field alone but relates to the whole of the profession. Within the heritage sector there is a reluctance to join representative bodies, whether professional associations such as ClfA or Trade unions such as Prospect. In part at least there often seems to be confusion between the remit and roles of a professional association and a trade union, and disappointment when the one does not fulfil the expectations placed upon it by those who have not understood the distinction. In part, perhaps there is perhaps a fear to sign up to an organisation which will call them to account if they do not meet the standards and ethics expected of them, which rather begs the question that if people don't intend to meet professional standards or observe ethical behaviour, should they be working within the discipline to start with? Many organisations actively encourage joining and in best practice it demonstrates a commitment to the future of the organisation and to the development of the individual's career. While the structure of the industry and the requirements of a project-by-project funded employment mean we lack a formal career path, the achievement of a particular membership grade is an independently validated qualification that transfers with that individual regardless of whom they may work for later on.

Finally, and I've written and said this enough times over the years, membership of a professional association is not the equivalent of a season ticket to a spectator sport. It requires a personal commitment to join in the first place and a personal commitment to continued participation. At the most basic level this involves actively pursuing your own training and development (which of course should involve long term aspirations, above and beyond the immediate requirements of your current day job). But more specifically, it involves supporting the efforts made by your colleagues to put on day schools and conference sessions. Use these as an opportunity to meet and network with fellow professionals, to seek advice and to discuss common problems and opportunities. Next year the ClfA Conference will be in Leicester so we would hope to talk to some more of you there!

# Advisory Council Minutes

Report from Liz Gardner MCIfA, the Graphic Archaeology Group Representative on the Advisory Council to the Board of Directors of ClfA

The Advisory Council has up to 40 members, 20 of which are elected by the membership and up to 20 filled by representatives from each individual special interest or area group. Elected positions are for a three-year period with the option of standing for a further three-year term. Nominated representatives from Groups are for a one-year period. After the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (ClfA) launched on Tuesday 9 December at the Museum of London, the Council of the former Institute for Archaeologists became the core of the Advisory Council and the IfA Executive Committee became the nucleus of the ClfA Board of Directors.

I have now attended two Advisory Council meetings as the Graphic Archaeology Group representative. I found it a fascinating experience, as I have always been interested in policy and practice and it provided me with a unique insight to the vision and *raison d'être* of the Institute, an organisation which I think is commonly misunderstood. So, I'd like to share with you some of what I have learnt as a representative on the Council on behalf of GAG.

*As professionals we have the opportunity to define and shape exactly what best practice should be.*

## **The difference between a Trade Union and a Professional Body**

ClfA is as a Professional Body not a Trade Union. A trade union is, in its essence, introspective – protecting and guiding the careers of its Membership by regulating the associated pay, conditions and working arrangements. A Professional Body looks outwards at its impact on the public and the transactional commercial market.

ClfA does not represent its members; it is its members. Its work is to protect both the public and the archaeological resource. For it to be an effective organisation, the membership need to take ownership of the Institute to achieve these aims while guarding against unprofessional practice. As professionals we have the opportunity to define and shape exactly what best practice should be. This is a dynamic and evolutionary process.

At its core, ClfA has a process of validation of skills and training to ensure ethical processes, i.e. it creates a regulatory framework for the Membership, who by committing to the Standards and Guidance become self-regulating and achieve the aim of protecting the archaeological resource and the general public.

As a group, professional institutes could be argued to be the successors of medieval Guilds. In a modern transactional marketplace there is no place for secrecy. Guiding principles must walk a fine line between corporate confidentiality and transparency.

## **Stewardship of the Archaeological Resource**

A discussion about inclusion of non-professional archaeologists within the CPD and PCIfA pathway frameworks highlighted a fundamental principle to me. The responsibility of the Institute is not to the archaeologists themselves, but to the archaeology.

Archaeology by its very nature is a destructive process and I care about any destruction of the archaeological record. I care about how archaeology is undertaken. It doesn't matter if you are 12 years old on a training dig or have been a professional for 40+ years, the archaeological record deserves to be treated with the same respect.

The PCIfA standard is one to prove that, whether you are paid or unpaid for any archaeological work, you can undertake it with sufficient knowledge of correct procedures that you do not destroy valuable and irretrievable information, rather collect it and preserve it for posterity.

Several questions were raised in my mind, most notably: what exactly is the public benefit of archaeology as seen by archaeologists (whether academic or commercial)? How does this differ from the non-archaeological public, and our developer client base?

### Where next?

The obvious follow up to this train of thought is: where are we going as a Chartered Professional Body?

There are many excellent archaeological units who produce high quality work and adhere to the highest ethical and commercial standards, but are not Registered Organisations of ClfA. There are also some less reputable units, but curators in local councils apply quality control within the legislative frameworks they have available. However there is no legal requirement to employ a ClfA registered organisation or individual: should there be?

We do not live in a vacuum, we are still (currently) part of the EU. The Republic of Ireland requires all excavations to be undertaken by a state-licensed Archaeologist. Germany adds an archaeological levy to developments and centrally pays for and controls archaeological excavations. However, here I lack knowledge, but it does pose many more questions on funding the profession and models for the future. There is currently no EU directive on Archaeology. What impact would a “Brexit” have on archaeology? A fundamental and effective way of achieving change is through engaging policy makers through advocacy (check out #ClfAadvocacy).

### And Finally...

Great efforts are being made to recruit and train the next generation of archaeologists but the elephant in the room for me is the ‘lost generation’ of archaeologists who have left the profession because for a long time not only was pay low, but due to recession there was no job security and precious little work.

There is so much to discuss and so much idealism and passion even amongst the most gnarled and withered of us, but I have learnt a valuable lesson in why my membership of ClfA matters to me. It doesn’t say I’m an activist, or necessarily that I am part of an archaeological hierarchy; it is far simpler than that. It says that I care about the archaeological record. I care about how archaeology is undertaken. I care about the future of our profession and I am prepared to engage with our Professional Body to be part of how that future is formed.

My aim as a member of the council is not just to attend meetings but also to provide a channel of communication from other members of the Graphics Group, and beyond, back into both the Council and onwards to the Board of Directors.

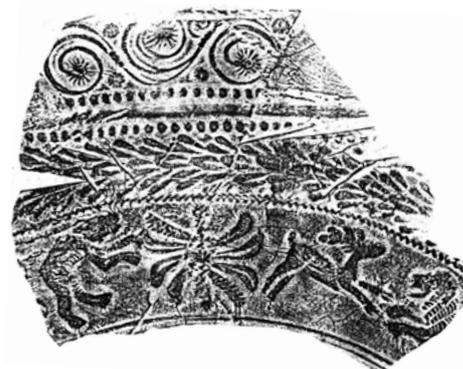
There are still vacancies to be elected onto the Council. If you are thinking of putting yourself forward, please contact Raksha Dave ([raksha.dave@archaeologists.net](mailto:raksha.dave@archaeologists.net)).

## Illustrating Samian

The Study Group for Roman Pottery has just published new guidelines for the illustration of Samian ware, which can be found here:

[http://romanpotterystudy.org/new/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Illustrating\\_Samian\\_Ware.pdf](http://romanpotterystudy.org/new/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Illustrating_Samian_Ware.pdf)

Samian specialists now prefer the use of rubbings to depict decorated Samian; the guidelines include details of how best to produce good rubbings, and there are also some notes on the use of 3D scanning and Reflectance Transformation Imaging (RTI) for recording samian ware.



## Exhibition and Website

The new GAG exhibition panels had their first outing at the ClfA conference in Cardiff in April, featuring some of the work of the Group's members. We hope to build up a large stock of work which can be varied by subject and type, whether artefact illustration, reconstruction art, survey or site plans, photography or information panels.

More members are encouraged to submit work to the exhibition, and we are also hoping to find more venues and conferences at which to display it. Drew Smith MClfA has taken on the responsibility for managing the exhibition. Contact him via ClfA at [groups@archaeologists.net](mailto:groups@archaeologists.net)

*Left: The Group's new exhibition panels, complete with lighting*



The GAG website ([www.gag-clfa.org](http://www.gag-clfa.org)) has now been redesigned and rebranded to match the new ClfA house style, with our new green Group livery. The opportunity to display work in the website Gallery is open to all MClfA-grade members of the Group, and details of how to submit work can be obtained by sending an email to [contact@gag-clfa.org](mailto:contact@gag-clfa.org) (NB this email address is currently for the website only).



## Droitwich Town Mill 3D

Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service recently excavated remains on the site of Town Mill, Droitwich. Five major medieval to later phases of mill construction were recorded, dating from the later 14th–20th century onwards, and could be correlated with the historical records for a mill at this location since at least the 17th century, being variously known as King's Mill (ie owned by the Crown), Frog Mill, and lastly Town Mill. The site was waterlogged and this meant that the timber structures of the earlier mill buildings were also well preserved. Though the floor levels of the earlier mills had been truncated by more modern mill phases, some of the principal components, especially the wheel/cog pits, and, later, the mill pond, were much in evidence. Extensive sampling was undertaken for dendronology and radiocarbon dating, especially given the relative dearth of associated artefacts.

While on site, Adam Stamford of Aerial Cam was commissioned to photograph some of the remains and while there took 3D photos. The photos give an excellent view of the timbers. Here we attempt to reproduce them as a 3D pdf – if you are viewing this Newsletter on screen you should be able to change the viewpoint of the image by clicking on it and dragging. (You will need an up-to-date version of Adobe Acrobat or Acrobat Reader)

More examples of Aerial Cam 3D photography can be seen on the web pages

<http://www.aerial-cam.co.uk/3d-index.html>

# Why I missed the ClfA conference this year...

Sarah Lambert-Gates MCIfA

At Easter I spent 2 weeks in North Sudan on a 'busman's holiday' on an archaeological project with Professor Anna Boozer of City University New York, formerly a lecturer of Roman Colonialism here at the Archaeology department in Reading. I had worked with Anna at Amheida Egypt in 2013, and the original plan for the Easter break had been to go back there for another season of digging and recording at the domestic Egypto-Roman house. Sadly, but unsurprisingly given the political climate, we could not get a permit to work there this year, so Anna quickly organised an alternative season on her other project at Meroe, a Royal City of the Kingdom of Kush on the east bank of the river Nile, four hours' drive north of Khartoum. This project had been conceived by the University of Reading Internationalisation Team, with collaboration with the University of Khartoum.



*In the desert: Sarah with some of Meroe's pyramid tombs in the background*

The aim of the Meroe Archival Project, as it is known, is to record artefacts (and for me, to draw them) excavated by the late Peter Shinnie, in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He published many of his excavations, but being a very prolific excavator, he did not publish everything. Anna is keen to excavate there herself, but feels she must first record and publish what she can from Shinnie's backlog. Other archaeological teams have been excavating there extensively over the years too, and it all comes across as rather ad hoc. Anna is also monitoring Meroe on behalf of UNESCO. The artefacts reside in a crumbling old dig house at Meroe, where we worked and resided for five days, on the edge of the Royal City itself, and also at the Khartoum Archaeological Museum, both on display and in the stores.

*Meal at the dig house*

A few facts about Meroe:

Meroe is an ancient royal city of the Kush Kingdom, 6km North of Shendi, on the East bank of the River Nile. It spanned the period c. 800 BC — c. 350 AD. The culture developed from the 25<sup>th</sup> Ancient Egyptian Dynasty originating in Kush, ruled by the Nubian Kings who conquered Egypt. The art looks very Egyptian but the figures look a little chunkier. The site includes domestic buildings as well as temples. The most famous artefact from Meroe is the head of Augustus (now in the British Museum) which was looted and buried under the temple steps, and was stolen during a series of raids by the Meroites in response to the



Roman colonisation of Egypt. The wealth of the city originated from Iron working industry, as well as textiles, pottery and gold. Herodotus described Meroe as ‘the mother city of the other Ethiopians’. There are about 200 pyramids a few km from our site which are smaller but chunkier than their Egyptian counterparts. They are constructed from red sandstone and usually have a burial at the heart of them. They suffered under the hands of an Italian ‘archaeologist’ Ferlini, who dynamited the pyramids to get to the burials and treasure within. The site has been excavated by many archaeologists over the years, including Sudanese, German, American and British teams, and continues to be excavated on a somewhat ad hoc basis. More info about the project can be seen here: [www.meroecity.org](http://www.meroecity.org)



*Hannah the student*

So, to tell you the story of my adventure ... I had a long journey via Doha where I arrived in the middle of the night with 7 hours to wait for my connection to Khartoum, and chatted to two interesting shop assistants, a young man from the Philippines, and a young woman from China minding a shop selling \$20,000 Chanel watches (yes I tried one on, and it didn’t suit me), who wanted to know about dating (non-archaeological dating) in the UK; who pays for dinner, the man or the woman (in China it is always the man), and we discussed gender issues in general. I had been in the thick of editing videos from a project on ‘Gender and Fieldwork’ for the last couple of weeks so it was a hot topic for me.

Our team comprised of five women. Anna and Liz (Americans) recording small finds; Angela (Italian), also a small finds specialist and specialising in faience; Hannah, a Sudanese student placement learning a variety of tasks and worth her weight in gold for her translation skills, and myself, drawing what was put in front of me. I doubt that there was any deliberate selection of an all-female team by Anna, other than for logistical (room-sharing) reasons, but essentially the team comprised of four friends who had worked together on numerous occasions and were not only a known quantity professionally, but a guaranteed fun social mix. We are all multi-skilled archaeological fieldworkers as well as finds specialists.

I developed a horrendous cold within hours of arriving at the Meroe dig house, which within a week developed into sinusitis. I was given a constant supply of vitamins and drugs, Carcady tea, fresh lemon and sugar, cough sweets, and finally a course of antibiotics by my kind nurses as I drew finds with tissues stuffed up my nose for fear of dripping on my drawings. We worked seriously hard during the day to record as many finds of the categories that Anna aims to publish this year. These comprise Ankh trays, which are crudely fashioned ceramic trays with compartments which are in the shape of an Ankh symbol, and it is thought that they were used for something ceremonial since they are mainly associated with temples. I imagined blood and lambs’ hearts. We also recorded baked clay figurines, again roughly made, including a little camel and a slave figurine, which on first glance looks like a randomly shaped lump. Also, faience objects, some of which are very beautiful, and tiles.

*Site accommodation, with mosquito nets*



We spent five days on site at Meroe recording finds in the old Shinnie dig house, where the original excavator of the



*Anna on the  
sacrificial altar*

finds, Peter Shinnie, had set up his base. The accommodation was very basic, and comprised of mud brick buildings somewhat the worse for wear, but we had electricity from a generator when we needed it, and we had a local man cooking and driving for us, and a couple of Sudanese men were also there as custodians/guardians of the site. The dig house is also right on site of Meroe, which meant it was an easy stroll to go and see the archaeology in situ, and goats and their goat herders were pretty much the only visitors to the site other than ourselves. There is a modern Quatari dig house nearby too, with all mod cons, surrounded by razor wire and a high wall, but I'm generally much

more at home in a simple crumbling mud brick house with the occasional friendly goat visitor. I drew as many finds as I possibly could in the time, with a heap growing next to my desk. After the five days there, we spent the following week in Khartoum Museum drawing the finds in their stores, which one of the team, together with assistants from the museum hunted out for us. When a tray of finds arrived we'd pounce on them eagerly and set to work like overheated small-finds-recording robots. We worked in a strange 80s looking conference room decorated with tired looking but swish beige drapes, with aircon, but we had to have the windows open for the light, so it got pretty warm, with temperatures outside in their forties. There was no inking-up on site, as is very often the case on excavations abroad with a short time frame. Instead I drew them to (hopefully) publication standard in pencil, and I now have a super placement student helping me with the tidying up and paging of the drawings in Adobe Photoshop and Illustrator.

In the evenings we sometimes met up with a few interesting ex-pats working on humanitarian and environmental projects. At these gatherings we gossiped about functions at the various Embassies, discussed the virtues of a good whisky, and talked about our work. The rest will have to be described in photographs. I will just end by saying that the best thing about Sudan is the people. They are so friendly and welcoming to foreigners; they don't get many foreign visitors and look at you with friendly curiosity. My favourite social experience was not the visit to the high security, air-conditioned American Embassy bar on a Friday night, but a street coffee outside the mosque and next to an English language college. Students gathered around eager to practice their English on us, and the coffee was delicious...short, thick and flavoured with ginger and sugar. Sudan is not a place one can go as a tourist normally, so it was a privilege to be able to travel there and experience their archaeology and culture. I guess given the choice to go back again next Easter, I may have to forego the ClfA conference again. This is a pity, but foreign adventure is very enticing! Maybe if there is a good wifi in the desert, I can link up with the Graphics Sessions at the conference! Hmmm.

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Thank you for reading.

The next GAG Newsletter is due in November: please send any news or articles to us via ClfA at [groups@archaeologists.net](mailto:groups@archaeologists.net) by 20 November.