

Institution: University of Leeds
Unit of Assessment: UOA 31 (Classics)
Title of case study: 1: <i>Names on Terra Sigillata: an essential practical resource for archaeology</i>
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>The University of Leeds has a long-established reputation for research into the identification of stamps used by potters on <i>terra sigillata</i> ('samian ware'), a key dating indicator for archaeological excavations on sites in the western Roman empire.</p> <p>Publication of the illustrated index of these names in nine volumes, complemented by the ongoing release of the data to an online database, has made this research more accessible.</p> <p>The index has given archaeologists – primarily community and commercial archaeologists beyond academia – a powerful resource for identifying samian pottery and dating the strata where it is found. It has also provided a valuable tool for museums' educational work.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>Leeds's pre-eminence in Samian Pottery Stamps is founded on four decades of research by Dr Brian Hartley (Senior Lecturer at Leeds to 1995). After his retirement Hartley continued, supported by the Department of Classics, to analyse and develop the material until his death in 2005. Leeds colleagues, including his long-time collaborator Brenda Dickinson (Honorary Visiting Fellow in Classics 2006-12), brought the project to fruition.</p> <p>The <i>Leeds Index of Samian Pottery Stamps</i> (as the project is widely known) collects around 300,000 stamp-die records and signatures, the product of over 5,000 different potters creating the fine red ware popularly called 'samian ware', or more technically <i>terra sigillata</i>, which was manufactured in the first to the third centuries by workshops in south, central and eastern Gaul.</p> <p>This is the first catalogue of its type to appear since 1931. The importance of samian as a tool for dating archaeological contexts and the vast increase in samian finds since then prompted the authors to record the potters' work in greater detail, illustrating, where possible, each individual stamp or signature which the potter used, and enumerating examples of each vessel type on which it appears, together with details of where it was found and is now held. Dating of the potters' activity is supported, where possible, by corroborative evidence – the occurrence of material in historically-dated contexts or its association with other stamps or signatures dated by this method.</p> <p>The bulk of the material was examined personally by the authors, from kiln sites and occupation sites in France, the Netherlands, Germany, and Britain, but the catalogue also includes published records, which they were able to verify, from across the Roman Empire.</p> <p>It is a unique resource – distinguished both by its size and its extensive use of images – and illuminates the organisation and distribution mechanisms of one of the major industries of the Roman empire, providing an invaluable supplement to the evidence of coins and other datable material in the construction of excavated site chronologies.</p> <p>The importance of the research is indicated by the level of funding the project has attracted: a British Academy grant of £71,707 (10/2006–9/2007) for the pilot <i>The Leeds Index of Samian Potters' Stamps</i>, followed by an AHRC grant of £408,527 for <i>The Samian Pottery Industries of Roman Gaul</i> (3/2008–2/2012), including two PhD studentships. Prof. Mike Fulford (Reading) is named as Principal Investigator on both grant applications, but all the research was carried out at Leeds, where the project was managed by Dr Roger Brock (1990-present, Senior Lecturer since 2002). Prof. Robert Maltby (1987-2011, Professor of Latin Philology from 2000), and latterly Dr Steve Green (2004-13, Senior Lecturer from 2008), supervised Andreas Gavrielatos' PhD studentship into 'A study of the names on <i>terra sigillata</i> in Gaul from the 1st to the 3rd centuries AD'. A second studentship was held at Reading, under Prof. Fulford's supervision.</p> <p>Rosemary Wilkinson (Research Assistant in Classics at Leeds, 2006-2012) prepared the <i>Names on Terra Sigillata</i> volumes [1] for publication and marked up entries for the ongoing process of integration with the online database in the suite of <i>Samian Research</i> databases at the Römisch-Germanisches Zentralmuseum Mainz [2]. A separately published set of DVDs makes available images of the original rubbings of stamps made by Hartley and his team [3].</p>

Impact case study (REF3b)

Two international conferences have begun to explore the potential of the database as a research tool: the *Mainz Names on Terra Sigillata Workshop* (Mainz 09/09), and *Seeing Red: new economic and social perspectives on Gallo-Roman sigillata* (Reading 04/11). Andreas Gavrielatos (the Leeds PGR) gave a paper at the latter; Dr Penny Goodman (Lecturer in Classics at Leeds from 2006) gave papers at both, one published in the interpretative volume [4] which combines papers from the two conferences.

3. References to the research

1. Brian R. Hartley & Brenda M. Dickinson, Geoffrey B. Dannell [et al.] *Names on Terra Sigillata: an index of makers' stamps & signatures on Gallo-Roman terra sigillata (samian ware)*. London, Institute of Classical Studies, 9 vols 2008-12 (ISBN 978 1905 670 161/178/192/246/260/314/338/383/390). A review of volume 1 in *Britannia* (40 (2009) 385-386) describes the index as 'a major achievement' and 'an enormous boon', which 'makes the matter of identification and dating vastly easier'. A complete set of volumes is available on request.
2. Römisch-Germanisches Zentralmuseum Mainz *Samian Research* database (<http://www.rgzm.de/samian/home/frames.htm>). This database provides additional functionality: it is searchable by numerous parameters including kiln-site, potter, site and form, with various forms of plotting available; it is accessible in the field from Android phones.
3. *The Brian Hartley Archive Collection of Samian Rubbings from UK excavations*, The Study Group for Roman Pottery, 2010 (<http://www.oxbowbooks.com/bookinfo.cfm/ID/90276>) (set of 4 DVDs). The DVD set is sold out.
4. M. Fulford and E. Durham (eds), *Seeing Red: new economic and social perspectives on Gallo-Roman sigillata*, London, Institute of Classical Studies 2013 (ISBN 9781905670475). The volume is available on request.

4. Details of the impact

The key impact of the *Index* is that it puts the expertise of University of Leeds researchers at the disposal of the archaeological community at large, including commercial and community archaeologists operating outside academia, such as those on rescue excavations and in museum and local authority teams. (It is estimated that 90% of archaeological investigations in Britain since 1990 have been undertaken by commercial organisations [A].)

Representatives of this community describe the *Index* as 'indispensable', 'essential', 'unique', 'authoritative' and 'infinitely superior to any previous method of identifying and dating stamps'; one says it 'is a tool which has been needed for decades' [B §§2-5]. 'A number of commercial archaeology units have invested in the *Index* to make their work more efficient' [B §1]; 'it is essential for doing any work on samian stamps and its possession would be assumed by anyone commissioning [commercial] work' [B §3].

The *Leeds Index* enhances professional practice in archaeology in various ways:

- The scale and detail of the data which it makes available increases the precision of the information provided by the widely distributed *terra sigillata* for the western Roman empire. Since pottery is one of the key dating indicators in archaeological investigation, this enhances stratigraphic and chronological analyses of individual excavation sites.
- It allows the archaeological community direct access to the data, enabling them to process material themselves, more efficiently and accurately than ever before. Their comments include: 'for the first time it is possible to quickly and reliably identify stamps' [B §1]; 'I now have a quick and reliable way of identifying stamps, mould stamps and signatures' [B §5]; 'there are no alternative methods of identifying and dating samian potters' stamps reliably' [B §4]. The comprehensive use of images is 'invaluable in making secure identifications' [B §1].
- Practitioners have emphasised the extent to which the *Index* 'speeds up analysis and reporting' [B §6]: 'It has saved an enormous amount of time' and is 'vastly quicker' [B §3], 'probably a 75% saving of time' [B §2]. Efficiency gains on this scale bring obvious commercial advantages since much rescue archaeology is linked to property development.
- The database makes it possible to contextualise finds and assess the significance of patterns of trade and communication revealed by the distribution of the wares of different potters and workshops geographically and across time – not least because owning this fine, decorative and

moulded pottery denoted a certain social status. Commercial archaeologists have recognised that this makes samian ware a tool for addressing broader socio-economic issues: 'It has stimulated me to look at wider questions of dating and trade patterns' [B §2]; 'the index contains a mass of data which can be used to look at wider economic and social questions – how pottery was marketed, who used it etc' [B §3]; it is 'an invaluable tool providing a basis not only for identification and dating, but as a data-source for social and economic studies' [B §6].

The volumes have been distributed in Europe, the US, Australia and South Africa and are already held by university libraries around the world. Sales details from the publishers of both the volumes and the DVDs [C, D] show that their distribution goes well beyond research libraries. Citations of the *Index* in excavation reports also confirm it as a standard work of reference, e.g.:

- the report from a community excavation at Middlewich in Cheshire, which applies the *Index's* dates to stamped samian finds from the site [E(i)]
- the report from excavations at Piercebridge Roman Fort, in the care of Darlington Borough Council, carried out by independent consultants Barbican Research Associates [E(ii)].

Over 3,500 scientific data requests received online through the RGZM database further confirm the *Index's* widespread application [F]. Even so, its full 'impact on the archaeological community ... is just beginning to be felt' [B §1].

By enhancing the identification and social contextualisation of samian ware, the *Index* also opens up new possibilities for museums to use their collections for educational and public engagement. A representative of Leeds Museums and Galleries said the knowledge gained through the use of the *Index* was informing her own work and that of education staff in enhancing information held about the collection to in turn enrich public engagement opportunities. She adds: 'The enhanced cataloguing of the Samian ware will enable the museum service to take fresh approaches to its display and interpretation...not only for KS2 groups studying the Romans, but groups of up to KS4 learning to use objects as historical tools'. 'The improved understanding and knowledge of the Leeds Samian ware collection would enrich and potentially alter interpretation of pieces on display in permanent galleries focused on Ancient Worlds.' [G].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- A. M. Fulford 'The impact of commercial archaeology on the UK heritage'
<http://www.britac.ac.uk/news/news.cfm/newsid/503>.
- B. Report collated from responses to a questionnaire circulated to the Roman Pottery Study Group, November 2012.
- C. Institute of Classical Studies: sales figures and distribution for the *Names on Terra Sigillata* volumes: c.200 copies each of vols 1-9 sold or exchanged, c.100 of vol.10 to September 2013.
- D. Oxbow books: 25 DVDs created and all sold.
- E. Citations in archaeological reports:
 - (i) <http://www.middlewich-heritage.org.uk/the-finds/mnu-samian-pottery/140-summary-of-the-samian-ware-.html>
 - (ii) <http://www.barbicanra.co.uk/shopimages/Documents/Ch9DSamian.pdf>
- F. Römisch-Germanisches Zentralmuseum Mainz: hits on the RGZM website – 3,597 Scientific Data Requests (as opposed to simple hits) received by September 2013.
- G. Statement from Curator of Archaeology, Leeds City Museum.