

Report on the BES Autumn Colloquium 2013 (16 November 2013, ICS, London)

The BES Autumn Colloquium 2013 followed the pattern of recent BES Autumn Colloquia, with four longer papers, short reports, a 'hands-on-session' as well as a poster session at the end of the day. The meeting took place on November 16, in London, and attracted 46 participants (see List of Participants, and Programme).

The day's programme and list of participants can also be viewed on the Society's website: <http://www.britishepigraphy.org/bes-colloquia.html>

The colloquium was a highly successful event, bringing together a large number of scholars – professionals and amateurs – to listen to and to discuss epigraphic work in the Greek and Roman worlds. The day started with a paper by Prof. Peter Kruschwitz (Reading) on the epigraphic habit, concerning the use of graffiti and 'non-inscriptions'. The second paper was delivered by Prof. Patrice Hamon (Rouen), who presented his ongoing work at Thassos. The 'hands-on-session' in the early afternoon was led by Dr Benet Salway (UCL): this involved the making of squeezes with a newly developed squeeze brush. Dr Ludwig Meier (Heidelberg) gave the first paper in the afternoon, on work in the Kibyrtis. This was followed by a paper by Prof. Henrik Mouritsen (KCL) on his work on social structures at Pompeii. The short report session showcased work in Asia Minor, by Drs Nick Milner (BES) and Ludwig Meier. The day concluded with a poster session.

The meeting was generously supported by the Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies through financial assistance for our student bursary scheme, and a contribution to the travel expenses of one speaker.

The student bursary scheme supported four students and post-docs to attend the meeting (Laura Löser, St. Andrews; Ghislaine Van der Ploeg, Warwick; Tatjana Sandon, and Juan Lewis, both Edinburgh). As in previous years, the bursary awardees were selected, after a publicly announced application process, by the members of the Society's Steering Committee. In the event, all applicants could be offered a bursary based on academic merit, the likely usefulness of the meeting for their academic progress, referees' comments, and consideration of their financial needs/expenses. Two of those supported with a bursary also presented their work in poster form (Tatjana Sandon and Juan Lewis). Three of the reports received to date by the awardees are appended: they demonstrate the benefits perceived by them from attending the meeting.

The Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies is to be thanked greatly for assisting in making this possible especially through its support of our bursary scheme.

Dr Ulrike Roth

BES Honorary Secretary

4 January 2013

Juan Lewis, PhD, University of Edinburgh

At the BES Colloquium 2013, I presented a poster that compared two possible readings of the so called Beryllus' pedestal (IRCPacen 121), which I discussed in my PhD dissertation. Whether the third line of the inscription is to be read as VICAR(IO) or as VIC(es) AG(enti) is crucial for the understanding of the evolution of the nomenclature of Roman officialdom from the late second century AD to the reforms of Diocletian and Constantine. Originally, I intended to present a wider discussion of the semantic evolution of vicarius and vices agens, but then I realized that a poster format required a narrower and more focused approach. The poster was mostly well received. The discussion focused on how previous researchers had interpreted and reconstructed the text of this inscription. It was agreed that the state of the inscription made a definitive solution difficult, and that a new squeeze was necessary. The Colloquium opened with a very interesting lecture by Prof. Peter Kruschwitz on the fringes of the epigraphic habit. Prof. Kruschwitz listed a series of platforms and media with which texts were created in antiquity, such as skin (tattoos), inscriptions on sand, toy letters, etc. Due to the nature of this material, practically no inscription of this type has survived. However, Prof. Kruschwitz suggested that the existence of this material indicates that the scope of epigraphy should be rediscussed. He also wondered to what extent this material implies that we are underestimating ancient literacy rates. During the question session, I asked Prof. Kruschwitz whether he was

assuming too much, as it would be possible that people used the Latin alphabet for pure ornamental reasons, without understanding what they wrote. Although he accepted my concerns, he emphasized the fact that the material he had in mind was written in a common language understood by the producers of such material, from which it could be inferred that texts were used for more than pure aesthetic purposes.

Prof. Henrik Mouritsen's lecture was in my view the other high moment of the Colloquium. He discussed Alföldy's stratification of Roman society and presented new models that could better explain Roman social strata. I thought his model was too simple and left too many aspects unconsidered, and suggested a more complex one.

Acknowledging the possible shortcomings of his model, Professor Mouritsen, however, disputed my suggestion, correctly pointing out that the main virtue of models is their simplicity.

As it was the case in previous colloquia, the poster session had a strong presence of young epigraphists from (or originally educated in) Italy. Nicoletta Balistretti's poster on forged epigraphs was particularly stimulating. Tatjana Sandon's presentation on Roman freedwoman was based on an impressive vast amount of data, constituting a very good example of the advantages that modern computer databases offer to the epigraphist.

Tatjana Sandon, PhD student, The University of Edinburgh

The British Epigraphy Society Autumn Colloquium 2013 is the second BES event I took part in. Like last year, this conference was a great opportunity to meet new people, both scholars and students, discover different aspects of epigraphy, and discuss about ideas and problems that may come up in our researches.

Papers may or may not be related to someone's field of study, but they always give hints to find new topics to read about or show you different ways to interpretate situations. This year I found two papers really interesting, the one presented by Prof. Kruschwitz and the one by Prof. Mouritsen.

The first one concerned ancient writings inscribed in unusual materials, such as bread loaves or sand, and the meaning these writings had for Greek and Roman people, comparing it with similar modern cases. I found this topic really special since we are so used to see writings around us nowadays that sometimes we forget the importance these letters and sentences have; we also forget that ancient people did not use only stone and scrolls to report their thoughts, but also walls, pottery, trees and so on, and the fact that just a very small part of these examples survived cannot make us ignore that they existed, and probably they were more common than we may think.

Mouritsen's paper on freedmen and the social hierarchy in Pompeii proposed a different approach to the definition of classes in the Roman town. According Mouritsen, speaking of a "middle class" is not correct for the Roman world, since we cannot apply modern definitions to ancient societies; however, it is possible to assume that a specific group of wealthy people, not belonging to any senatorial or equestrian families, existed and co-existed with the traditional *nobilitas*. Unfortunately, it is very difficult to prove the role this group had within Pompeii, its administration and social organisation, but Mouritsen thinks that a connection between these people and the important *familiae* is totally undeniable.

At the end of the conference, there was time to look at the posters and talk about them. This year I had the opportunity to present a poster related to my PhD research project on Roman freedwomen. This occasion was important to me not only because I could speak about my work with scholars involved in the study of *liberti* in the Roman world, but also to practice my spoken English and use specific terminology.

I really want to thank the British Epigraphy Society for letting me take part at their events and for the financial aid. I think that what this group and its members are doing to keep epigraphy alive is very important; in fact, unfortunately the fortune of this discipline is slowly decreasing and in many universities epigraphic courses have been sidelined.

This situation does not allow students and young scholars to have access to this basic and very beautiful discipline, a field of study that cannot be disregarded in our attempt to reconstruct ancient history. For this reason, keeping epigraphy alive is more fundamental than ever, and the BES events are really helpful in this.

Ghislaine van der Ploeg, PhD student, University of Warwick

I would like to thank the British Epigraphy Society for their generous bursary with which I was able to attend their Autumn Colloquium 'Epigraphy in Action' on Saturday 16th November. The bursary covered all of my transport to and in London.

After a warm welcome by the colloquium's organisers, the day commenced with a fascinating talk by Prof. Peter Kruschwitz (Reading) on 'Inscribing the Uninscribable: Exploring the Fringes of the Ancient Epigraphic Habit' in which he explored inscriptions which were found on objects which happened to be inscribed. This examination of writings on the fringes of the epigraphic habit raised questions about literary and the definition of writing.

After this enlightening talk Prof. Patrice Hamon (Rouen) presented on 'Re-editing a corpus of the inscriptions of Thasos: late Classical and Hellenistic.' Prof. Hamon and his colleagues are now working on re-editing material from these sites, which will be published in seven volumes.

After lunch, participants were treated to a session on squeeze making led by Dr. Benet Salway (UCL). A new squeeze-brush has been designed and, after explaining the process through which he had sourced a producer for

these brushes, Dr Salway demonstrated the use of the brush and delegates were also able to make a squeeze from one of two inscriptions kept by UCL for teaching purposes. The AGM followed the squeeze making session and then Dr. Ludwig Meier (Heidelberg) provided a detailed analysis of 'The treaty between Rome and Kibyra: new evidence and new interpretations'.

Prof. Henrik Mouritsen (KCL) then presented about 'Status and Social Hierarchies: The Case of Pompeii'. He talked about the way social hierarchies were present in antiquity and how these are presented and viewed by modern scholars. He presented a cohesive study of the social make-up of Pompeii, commencing from the observation that the competition for the aedileship indicates that there were more families who qualified for these positions than there were available. An examination of the size and number of elite houses showed that there were more elite families than the curia could house. No model could ever correctly capture all of ancient society but can only map parts of this, which Mouritsen proposed to represent in a new model.

After Prof. Mouritsen's talk two short epigraphic reports were given by Dr. Nicholas Milner (Beckenham) and Dr Ludwig Meier (Heidelberg). The day concluded with the Young Epigraphy session which showcased a number of interesting posters.

The day was hugely enjoyable and I had the opportunity to converse with a great many scholars as well as gain an understanding of the latest happenings in the field of epigraphy and would once again like to express my gratitude to BES for allowing me to attend this colloquium.
