

## **Project report:**

### **Shining new light on Roman London: Recording the Roman oil lamps in the Archaeological Archive as part of ACE 'Archaeology Online'**

**Institutions: Museum of London and Museum of London Archaeology (MOLA)**

## **Project Summary**

### *Timescale*

This project was carried out between December 2016 and March 2017. The timetable changed slightly from that proposed in the grant application due to a change in staffing at the Archaeological Archive. The new Archaeology Collections Manager (Volunteers) took up post in mid-July and had other project commitments until mid-December which could not be moved. This led to a seven month delay to the start to the project. In addition to this, the number of lamps to be recorded in the project increased significantly from that estimated in the grant application (see below) leading to more work for volunteers and the project managers. Despite this the project has been successfully completed by the end of the financial year and all outcomes realised. The altered timescale however will naturally lead to a slight delay in the publishing of the 'Curated collection' on Museum of London's Collections Online webpage and of the London Archaeologist article.

### *Volunteers*

The volunteer role was advertised on the Museum of London's website and a group of 16 volunteers recruited in December. 13 of these volunteers were new and 3 were returning Museum of London volunteers who had volunteered on previous Archaeology Online projects. Recruitment of volunteers followed the Archive's inclusion model and three teams of volunteers with diverse background, experience levels and motivations were selected. The volunteering aspect of the project ran for 10 weeks from 10<sup>th</sup> January to 16<sup>th</sup> March, with the main period of lamp recording occurring from 24<sup>th</sup> January to 16<sup>th</sup> March, to allow for adequate training from specialists including Dr Hella Eckardt (University of Reading), Michael Marshall (MOLA) and Helen Ganiaris (Conservation Manager, Museum of London). In total for this project volunteers gave 146 days (876 hours) of their time, the equivalent of 125 full working days (based on a 7 hour day).

### *Recording*

550 lamps were catalogued, an assemblage which represents all Roman ceramic lamps in the Archive up to sites excavated in 1992. This was felt to be a suitable cut-off point as many sites after this date are not yet deposited with the Archive. Volunteers successfully recorded all lamps to a very high standard. Using the lamp recording guide produced as part of this project, volunteers wrote standardised catalogue descriptions, took multiple dimensions and gathered typological data in a form that can be used for academic research. Fabric identifications were made for 409 lamps, this total represents all the lamps that could be located and made available based on the original list drawn up for the grant application. 450 new photographs were taken of each lamp to supplement this information. Museum of London professional photographers were utilized to capture images of publishable quality.

## Delivery against project aims

### Recording resources

- A comprehensive lamp recording guide has been produced which provides detailed guidance on how to identify and record Roman oil lamps from London. This has been used as a volunteer handbook throughout the project and will be made freely available online.
- An edited version of the lamp recording guide has been produced and has been offered for publication as a Roman Finds Group datasheet.
- The physical reference collection held in the Archaeological Archive has been audited and updated to make it more accessible for specialists.

### Cataloguing and collections management:

- The 453 lamps identified in the project proposal have been recorded in line with the standards outlined in the lamp recording guide.
- 97 additional lamps, identified through a physical search of the archive, have been recorded in line with the standards outlined in the lamp recording guide.
- Fabric identifications have been carried for 409 lamps and this information added to the object catalogue entries.
- The collections care standards for all the lamps has been improved. Objects have been repackaged and new labels written where necessary.
- Several lamps have been identified for conservation treatment.
- Several fragments have been identified as belonging to the same lamps and their catalogue entries have edited accordingly.
- Lamps have been photographed where necessary.

### 'Curated collection' on Museum of London Collections Online Webpage:

- The fully updated and high quality catalogue entries and photographs for the 550 lamps will be made freely available as an online resource for general public and researchers.
- These records will be grouped as a 'Curated collection' with an introduction including interpretative text and copies of the project resources (see above).
- A blog has been written for the Museum of London's website to publicise the project and the online 'Curated collection'. This will go live in line with the web resource.

### Publication:

A draft article for London Archaeologist has been written by the project team. This article focusses on evaluating the community archaeology aspects of the project, its effectiveness for studying large datasets in the Archive and its impact on the volunteer team. The article also summaries the preliminary findings from the data collected to demonstrate and capitalise on the potential of this approach and highlight future avenues of research. All project volunteers will be given the opportunity to comment on the draft which will be updated accordingly.