

# NEWSLETTER 44 - October 2007

## Cardiff Conference Pictures 2007



Conference delegates at Caerleon 2007



At Caerwent with Peter Webster 2007

### **Contents** (click title to go straight there)

#### Annual S.G.R.P Conference Cardiff 2007

Plus ça change? Pottery studies in the West Midlands Region *Jane Evans*

Pottery Production at South Ferriby Brickyard (SFBA), North Lincolnshire *Ian Rowlandson,*

Update on 'samian-on-line project' *Geoffrey Dannell*

What happens in the temple precinct? Recent work at Higham Ferrers, Northants. *Jane Timby*

#### ANNUAL S.G.R.P. CONFERENCE 2008

Links with Universities *Ruth Leary*

Roman Food Day III *Chris Lydamore*

Return of the Mummy *Jane Evans*

Digital images of fabrics update *Phil Mills*

The IFA FG Register of Specialists *Phi Mills*

The IFA Finds Group's survey of finds practice

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### **Cardiff Conference 2007**

**Ruth Leary** - Members enjoyed a stimulating and rewarding conference at Cardiff. Thanks are firstly due to Vivien Swan who organised the venue and set the overall framework for the conference in motion; in the run up to the conference the practical arrangements were overseen by Roberta Tomber and the lecture programme by Jane Timby. The venue at Aberdare Hall, Cardiff was central and convenient and the Cardiff venues all within walking distance. The Group benefited from the scholarship of Professor Manning, Peter Webster and Richard Brewer in both lectures and pottery handling. Thanks are especially due to Peter and Richard who laid out pottery from many Welsh sites including Usk and provided a good range of South Wales and Caerleon wares for inspection as well as giving expert commentary on our strolls around Caerleon and Caerwent. The lectures were of a consistently high standard and the pre-conference seminar on the work and samian web site of Allard Mees arranged by Geoff Dannell attracted a pleasingly large crowd of non-samian specialists. Thanks are due to all those who contributed towards the smooth running of the weekend and the quality of the contributions. A good number of new members attended, who benefited from the varied lecture programme, and it was encouraging to see established specialists arranging to help and mentor new members.

The following are abstracts of some of the papers given at this years' Conference.

## **Plus ça change? Pottery studies in the West Midlands Region Jane Evans**

The paper reviewed the study of Severn Valley ware, in acknowledgement of the key contribution made to this study by Peter Webster of Cardiff University. Peter's 1976 publication began,

'It is now over 30 years since Charles Green published his important discussion of what he termed 'Glevum ware'. The aim of this paper was to review what progress has been made since Peter's work, and consider the direction future studies might take. So, while the initial emphasis was on Severn Valley ware, the paper also raised issues of wider relevance. The paper highlighted the following achievements over the past 30 years:

The excavation and publication of many stratified assemblages of Severn Valley ware (e.g. Alcester, Cirencester, Gloucester, Worcester, Droitwich, Wroxeter etc.).

Publication of detailed fabric descriptions, and fully quantified data as the norm, which has allowed the chronological framework proposed by Webster to be tested, and vindicated.

The publication of major backlog projects. Bays Meadow villa, Droitwich, with a significant late Roman assemblage was published last year. Preparation of the final publication on the 1972-79 excavations at Beckford is moving forward, thanks to a grant from the Aggregates Levy. This site provides a pottery sequence starting in the mid Iron Age (from 6th-5th century BC on), and continuing through the Late Iron Age, early Roman and late Roman periods. It provides a rare opportunity to study ceramic change over this time, and to characterise early Severn Valley ware with detailed quantification and comprehensive illustration. In addition, burnt residues from sherds of LIA and Roman pottery have been included in a programme of C14 analysis, which will hopefully provide more secure dating for this transitional period.

The potential for more consistent approaches to fabric description to be applied, e.g. The National Roman fabric series, which could perhaps be put online, and the Worcestershire on-line ceramic database is. However, the lack of consistency between counties was also noted. It was felt that there was still a need for regional, online fabric series, tied in to the national series and based on a maintained, regional type series. It was noted that some counties in the region have their own fabric type series while others do not, and that specialists may not be required in a project brief to use a specific fabric series, potentially a problem when so many archaeological units can be involved in the archaeology of one county.

The application of new methodologies for characterising Severn Valley ware from different sources. Jeremy Evans neutron activation analysis on Severn Valley wares from Alcester, Worcester and Malvern in the 1980s showed promising results. Jane Evans and Nigel Cassidy of Keele University have more recently collaborated on a programme of XRF analysis, which also showed promising results (though more detailed statistical analysis is required on the data).

Progress with kiln studies, more by serendipity than design: e.g. publication of the Newland Hopfield, Malvern kiln site and smaller Meole Brace site in Shropshire.

The following comments were made on the future direction of Severn valley ware studies

It was noted that various **research framework** documents had been produced and there seemed to be some consensus about what our aims should be.

An obvious change since Peter undertook his study is **the development of IT**; we now take databases for granted (the ease with which we can now manipulate and illustrate data has been brought home to me while reassessing the Beckford data, which Debbie Ford and Helen Rees quantified in the 1980s with only a calculator!!

It is now much easier to share information and digital data: Paul Tyers' 'Potsherd' website illustrates the potential for disseminating information using the internet. Whereas in the past distribution maps were static, they are now becoming an updatable and evolving resource. The EH funded Later Prehistoric Pottery Gazetteer is another good example of an accessible pottery resource.

The development of GIS, in which different data themes can be overlain, provides the potential to analyse pottery distributions in relation to settlements and other landscape features; for example as used by The Wroxeter Hinterland Project. GIS is also becoming a fundamental tool in the curatorial process, with the development of 'Historic Environment Records' (HERs). As preparation for the West Midlands Regional Research Frameworks data from SMRs was collated so plots could be produced by period/material type etc. The data included in the SMRs, however, was very basic, and there were inconsistencies in the way data had been recorded in different counties. The Worcestershire Historic Environment & Archaeology Service has embraced GIS, with new layers of data being added when opportunities arise. They are currently adding finds data from all reports on fieldwork in the county.

There is a need for pottery specialists to engage with these developments. How we can use and contribute to HERs? The advantage of linking more detailed pottery records to GIS based HERs would be that data could be analysed against a wide range of landscape features – rivers, Roman roads, terrain, soils, settlement type etc. However, the Worcestershire HER reflects a particularly imaginative approach. Individual counties are developing their HERs at different speeds, and to meet their own specific requirements. We are a long way from being able to produce GIS based regional distributions based on HER data – though that is perhaps where we should be aiming.

**Conclusions** So, in the west Midlands we have achieved a great deal since Peter wrote his paper in 1976, particularly with regard to the quantity and quality of detailed site reports we have produced. Peter's work has

provided the solid foundation for all of this.

We are defining the research frameworks that we all need to work towards, and developments in IT mean it is much easier to share information and data. There is perhaps a worry that IT is developing faster than we can keep up - how many pottery specialists get the opportunity to use GIS, for example, yet this is the way forward in curatorial archaeology. There is also a worry that while IT and professional guidelines are pulling our working practices together, the structure of contract archaeology in Britain seems to be pulling in the opposite direction.

The period after Peter's paper saw the development of county Units and County fabric series. Specialists tended to be county-based, with a focussed local expertise. In the 1980s and in to the 1990s regional research groups seemed to be fairly active, meeting to share information about work in progress. Even then, however, there were concerns about the careers structure for finds specialists, and how this might impact on the field of pottery studies.

The current structure means that field units can be working anywhere in the country, so in-house specialists have to be more adaptable. There is also an impression that more units are relying on freelance specialists (who have to be equally adaptable) or specialists from other units, rather than maintaining in-house expertise themselves.

If more specialists are freelance, how do they fit into the loop of deciding on site methodologies and project research designs? How do those starting out as pottery specialists gain experience, particularly if they are expected to be able to deal with assemblages from all over the country? And how do we as specialists keep up with all the developments in technology if we are not based at units undertaking state of the art projects? There is a great deal of potential to build on the achievements of the past 30 years, but once again it seems to come down to the need for some sort of career structure...

....The more things change, the more things stay the same  
(Plus c'est la même chose, plus ça change)

**'Roman Wales - A very brief history'** *Bill Manning*

**'Great Bulmore and the manufacture of 'Caerleon Ware''** *Andrew Marvell*

(Chief Executive, Gwent Glamorgan Archaeological Trust Ltd)

**'Pottery from the West Midlands'** *Alan Jacobs* (Worcestershire Archaeology Service):

#### **Pottery Production at South Ferriby Brickyard (SFBA), North Lincolnshire** *Ian Rowlandson,* **North Lincolnshire Museum**

This paper presented preliminary results of the Community Archaeology Project at North Lincolnshire Museum. The scheme is funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and follows on from the success of similar projects at the museum. The funding covers the 'Community Archaeology Assistant' post who leads the project. The core aims are to develop interest in archaeology in the area, organise field walking and the creation of a local Roman pottery fabric series. The paper concentrated on one example of the work undertaken by the volunteers, the investigation of pottery from a potential kiln site.

The volunteers reviewed a group of pottery found in the interwar years by brick makers near South Ferriby Sluice. The finds were chosen because previous research had highlighted the presence of wasters and contemporary accounts mentioned kiln like structures. An assessment of the pottery suggested that the wasters had a distinctive fabric- most notable was the presence of red chalk. This derived from the potters utilising deposits from the Hunstanton series which has a limited outcrop along a small area of the Lincolnshire and Yorkshire Wolds scarp. The potential kiln products were similar to second century AD forms produced at Roxby, to the west of the River Ancholme. The Roxby products could be distinguished from the South Ferriby fabric by the inclusion of brown ironstone supporting the hypothesis of two distinct production centres. Further research has led to the recognition of both fabrics at a number of other sites in the region.

The project has shown that community archaeology research into existing Roman pottery collections offers benefits to all participating parties. The volunteers had fun and learnt new skills in illustration and ceramic research. The museum had the opportunity to develop repeat visits, accessibility, promote life long learning and enhance understanding of their collections. The project also benefits Roman pottery researchers by the development of a local type series which is planned to be available at the museum and in smaller 'take out' copies.

#### **What happens in the temple precinct? Recent work at Higham Ferrers, Northants.** *Jane Timby*

In 2002-2003 Oxford Archaeology undertook a programme of archaeological work on part of the important Roman roadside settlement at Kings Meadow Lane, Higham Ferrers on the eastern side of the Nene Valley. The site lies 2.2 km SW of the settlement at Stanwick and the walled Roman town at Irchester lies some 4.5 km to the SW.

A magnetometer survey revealed the extent and complexity of the Roman settlement showing defined land plots adjacent to a roadway aligned NE-SW. Approximately 2.5 ha of the settlement was excavated revealing 18 buildings along with outlying enclosure systems, small cemeteries and at least two religious foci. Within the precinct of one of the religious centres were numerous metal finds, particularly rings, votive leaves and brooches but also including lead curses, military fittings, coins and a rare ceremonial spearhead. The pottery assemblage recovered from this area

was slightly unusual in composition suggesting some specialized activities taking place.

The archaeological work resulted in the recovery of some 28,574 sherds of pottery, just under half a metric ton documenting a particularly high level of activity between the mid 2nd and 4th centuries. Several unusual features were apparent in the pottery assemblage; the proportion of samian was quite high; there was a high incidence of sherds with post-firing graffiti and an above average number of colour-coated beakers. In total some 33 vessels have been noted as having some form of post-firing graffiti ranging from simple single line incisions across the rim or footrings, crosses or more complex symbols or letters. Sixteen of the vessels, 48% are finer tablewares, either samian, imported beaker or Lower Nene Valley colour-coated wares. The remainder are on coarsewares with 30% on Nene Valley grey wares. In terms of form 27% feature on beakers, 42% on bowls or dishes, 15% on jars, two examples on cups and a single example on a mortarium.

It is suggested that some of the pottery is coming from specialised deposits. The large assemblage from the shrine interior not only included a high proportion of samian but also several other unusual vessels, for example, the only glazed sherd, most of the Moselle ware, a lamp chimney, two unguent jars and a marked high incidence of colour-coated beakers. Various possible explanations could be offered: perhaps there were market stalls selling finewares within the temple precinct for activities linked with religious ceremony or for the hospitality of visitors. May be this involved the drinking of particular brews or potions. Perhaps vessels were available to be deposited or ritually smashed as part of a ceremonial act. Perhaps vessels were available to take away as souvenirs – encapsulations not only of the place but your time at that place much as we buy mementos today. Further work is needed collating evidence from other religious sites to see if they are also producing unusual assemblages and whether different forms of vessel or other artefact deposition can be associated with specific festivals or different deities or cults.

#### **Update on 'samian-on-line project' *Geoffrey Dannell***

Details can be found on the website <http://www.sgrp.org/Links/Linklist.htm#Samian.net> or here <http://www1.rgzm.de/samian/home/frames.htm>

#### **The stone-built hospital at Segedunum *Alex Croom***

The stone hospital was built c.160, and sometime probably in the early third century, the eastern wing was demolished and the building reduced in size. The building was demolished entirely by the middle of the century. Originally there were nine rooms round a central courtyard, including three large rooms, a latrine five smaller rooms. Most pottery came from the courtyard, which was also noticed during the excavation of the hospital at Housesteads, where it was assumed more care had been taken to keep the rooms clean. Only a small quantity of bone was found in the building, although what was there was very similar in make-up to material from the barracks. The specialist suggested they were either extremely tidy clearing up culinary waste (although not pottery), or else they had less access to meat on the bone.

A break-down of the pottery by vessel type was compared with material from the contemporary barracks. Most noticeable was the low quantity of bowls and dishes in the hospital compared to the barracks. Bowls and dishes were perhaps more important for the way food was served in the barracks, which differed to how it was served in the hospital because the patients came from different contubernia. A rampart building near to the hospital was unusual in that it had even less bowls and dishes (2%) than the hospital, almost no samian and a high percentage of flagons. This building may have been a workshop, and the proportions of vessel types reflect what was necessary for a working environment compared to a domestic environment. Flagons were more plentiful in the hospital than in the barracks, again perhaps relating to the use of the building and how water and other drinks were supplied to it. Coarse ware beakers (jars or cooking pots with a rim diameter less than 10cm) were much more common in the hospital.

The assemblage contained the expected range of material from a fort on the east end of Hadrian's Wall. Approximately two-thirds of the assemblage comes from the later phase of the building, when the eastern wing had been demolished. In this period, the first half of the third century, BB2 and its allied fabrics become the major supplier of course wares to the fort and this is reflected in the assemblage. BB2 and allied fabrics make up 64% of the bowls, although the sources of cooking pots were more varied, no source making up more than 20%.

One of the larger rooms, Room 8 in the northern range, produced sherds from three unusual lid-seated jars. Six examples of this type of pot are known from the whole site, with most of the sherds coming from the hospital or near to it. They may perhaps have been related to the use of the building, and had originally contained medicines or their ingredients.

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#### **ANNUAL S.G.R.P. CONFERENCE 2008**

The SGRP 2008 conference will take place on the weekend of the 4th to the 6th of July in Cambridge. The conference will run from 2 pm on the Friday to lunchtime on the Sunday. We will be staying in Memorial Court, one of Clare College's halls of residence. Accommodation will mostly have shared facilities, but a few en suite rooms will

also be also available. On the Friday evening there will be a three-course dinner in the Great Hall of Clare College. Lectures will be at the McDonald Institute, a 15 minute walk from Clare College. The McDonald Institute is located across the court from the Department of Archaeology and the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology.

Provisional arrangements include papers by Jeremy Evans and others involved in recent excavations and research in the region. Anne Taylor, curator of the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, has kindly expressed her willingness to lay out pottery at the Museum.

A trip will be arranged for Saturday afternoon.

Further information will be sent out in the spring.

OFFERS OF PAPERS ARE WELCOME NOW and should be sent to:

Alice Lyons (alice.lyons1@ntlworld.com) or Gwladys Monteil ([gwladys.monteil@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:gwladys.monteil@nottingham.ac.uk))

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### Links with Universities Ruth Leary

As mentioned at the AGM, Ruth Leary is hoping to foster links between the Group and University Departments. Students are sometimes looking for pottery-related projects for dissertations and course work. Unfortunately students and supervisors may not be aware of good ceramics projects which could contribute to current research agendas so these projects are sometimes quite pedestrian and uninteresting - an assemblage from A N Other which has no funds attached. If the Group were to compile a list of potential projects of all sizes, Ruth is willing to contact various University departments to see if they might have any students looking for ceramic related projects. This could include research into an aspect of pottery, pottery reports (perhaps an unpublished Museum group), fabric analysis, GIS analysis of a pottery ware or type within a site or area etc. David Williams of the Southampton ceramics course is willing to look at ideas. If taken up, we would get a copy of the end product for free and as this course includes chemical and petrological projects of both small size and dissertation type, this has obvious potential. A good end product could enrich our work and lead to the student continuing with ceramic studies. The extent to which members get involved with the student would be at their discretion. An ideal time to contact the Universities would be in the autumn so please contact Ruth with any topics you may have as soon as possible.

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### Roman Food Day III Chris Lydamore



On the 15<sup>th</sup> of September the third Roman Food Day (RFD III) was held at Butser Ancient Farm, Hampshire. The day, which was held in the reconstructed Villa, comprised of two main elements; a series of food related talks which ran throughout the day (see below) and a demonstration of Roman cooking techniques by noted historic cooking specialist Sally Grainger. Tea and coffee was served by members of the Friends of Harlow Museum who also

provided financial support for the event.



Unfortunately, as one of the organisers, I spent much of the day running around the site trying to make sure that everything happened as and (roughly) when it was supposed to and so only got a disjointed view of the talks. However, the feedback from the audience, which was at times enthusiastic to the point of effervescent, stood testament to the high standard of the speakers and their talks. In the fullness of time I am hoping to be able to make the proceedings of the day more generally available, however, as a very welcome interim measure, one of the delegates has kindly passed me a link to their own web-based summary of the day, the site can be visited at: <http://exploratio.org/People/roman-food-day-iii> . A number of impromptu informal talks were also given by Sally Grainger to update the audience on the developments in the kitchen.

Sally's cooking demonstration using replica RB ceramic vessels provided an opportunity for audience members to observe (and photograph) the preparation and cooking of authentic period recipes, refined during the research phase of the recently published "Apicius", co-authored by Sally (both "Apicius" ISBN 1903018137 and the more user friendly "Cooking Apicius" ISBN 1903018447 are available from Prospect Books). At the conclusion of the day all of the dishes cooked by Sally were served to the audience in the Villa dining room.

In addition to the main event, held in the villa, an experimental bread oven was fired outside by members of the Welwyn Archaeological Society. The experiment, which looked at the use of "pot boilers" to heat storage jar ovens (as evidenced at Chelmsford, Essex) sought to build upon a previous experimental firing by Grainger and Grocock based upon directly heated storage jar ovens found at Heybridge, Essex. By the end of the day three small but well cooked loaves had been produced, a brief write up of the experiment is forthcoming.

For those of you who weren't able to make it to RFD III (or those that did but want more) never fear; plans are already underway for RFD IV, hopefully to be held late summer/early autumn 2008.

I would like to thank all of the speakers (Jonathan Dicks, Roberta Tomber, Grahame Appleby, Chris Grocock, Roy Friendship-Taylor), Sally Grainger, the Welwyn Archaeological Society, Butser Ancient Farm and finally the Friends of Harlow Museum.

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### Return of the Mummy

Jane Evans writes 'In the 1980s, as a young archaeologist, I had a wonderful experience working on an archaeological excavation in Peru. Next year I will be 50, and to celebrate this will be returning to Peru to take part in UNICEF's 'Trek for the children of Peru' .... in my case better described as 'The return of the mummy'! The trek involves 5, 8 hour days walking in the Andes, at heights ranging from 2,800m to 3,958m. I need to raise a minimum of £1,640 in sponsorship, which will go directly to UNICEF's work in Peru. This will fund a range of projects, for example: providing access to safe drinking water, early childhood development programmes; AIDS prevention programmes, and the provision of basic maternity services. It would be great if some of you would like to sponsor a Roman pottery specialist in her venture into the great outdoors! You can find out more about UNICEF, and the trek on <http://www.unicef.org/> If you would like to sponsor me you can do this securely on-line by going to <http://justgiving.com/cjaneevans>, or send a cheque made payable to UNICEF UK to me at 194 West Malvern Road, Malvern WR14 4AZ. (UNICEF require a significant proportion of the sponsorship by 3 months prior to departure. Gift Aiding will significantly increase the amount of money UNICEF actually receives, this is done automatically if sponsoring online. If you would like more information about sponsorship, the trek, or UNICEF, please contact me on 01684 567131 or [cjrompot@waitrose.com](mailto:cjrompot@waitrose.com). There may still be some places left if anyone fancies joining me!

**Digital images of fabrics update** Phil Mills

Following on from the article in the last newsletter, a number of people have expressed interest in the USB Microscope I reported on. Unfortunately the links I used last time no longer work. You can now find the device (upgraded to 1.2 Mega pixels) marketed as a 'proscope'. Here are some sites selling it:

<http://www.proscopehr.com/>

<http://www.indcs.co.uk/proscope/proscope.htm>

<http://www.indcs.co.uk/proscope/proscopehr.htm>

A map of Roman tile kilns, as discussed in the last issue, is at the Google Earth community site at:

<http://bbs.keyhole.com/ubb/showthreaded.php/Number/866894>

With links to ADS records and fabric photographs at Flickr (for Heckington Fen kiln). This can be downloaded into Google Earth or onto Google maps. You may have to join the Google Earth forum, but it is free to join.

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### The IFA FG Register of Specialists

This is now available on-line at <http://www.archaeologists.net/modules/icontent/index.php?page=202>

If you want to change an existing entry, want to add yourself to it or have suggestions about future developments please contact Phil Mills at [CBMPhil@aol.com](mailto:CBMPhil@aol.com)

### The IFA Finds Group's survey of finds practice

The IFA Finds Group is conducting a survey into current Finds practice. The results of this survey will be presented at the Finds Group's session during the 2008 IFA annual conference in Swansea ( 18<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> March), and a final report will be circulated electronically within the IFA and to all interested parties.

The attached survey is aimed at all organisations that provide some provision for finds work. It is being distributed as widely as possible, but we would ask any individuals working for relevant organisations to check that the survey has been received, and responded to.

Please can you respond by November 30<sup>th</sup> 2007, sending survey forms to Dr Phil Mills MIFA, 28 Park Road, Anstey, Leicester LE7 7AX, [CBMPhil@aol.com](mailto:CBMPhil@aol.com) Thank you.

THE IFA Finds Group Committee

#### **Survey questions: how does this differ from the attached survey, is it needed?**

Responses will be treated confidentially, but we would ask organisations to identify themselves so that duplicate data is not collected.

**1 Organisation name:** Please enter the name of your organisation here

**2. Organisation Type:** Please indicate the type of organisation you are, and whether or not you are an RAO.

**3. No of employees:** Please indicate the overall size of the organisations (including non-finds-workers)

**4. Indicate number of full time equivalent find staff and equivalent level of responsibility:** Please indicate the numbers of finds workers employed in your organisation, whether they are general finds workers, specialists in particular finds types and /or conservators, and at what IFA equivalent level they work at: Finds assistant (PIFA), Finds Supervisor/ officer (AIFA), or Finds Manager/ Specialist (MIFA).

**5. How often do you actively involve finds staff in pre project design?**

Please indicate the amount of involvement of general and specialised finds workers in producing project designs.

**6. How often do you have on-site staff dedicated to finds work?**

Please indicate how often you have dedicated finds workers on a site during excavation, their numbers and levels of responsibility and the types of task carried out on-site.

**7. Please indicate how you provide for the following specialisms**

Please indicate the types of finds specialisms which you meet using in-house specialists and non specialists, or form a regularly used freelance specialist or infrequently used freelance specialist, if necessary feel free to add specialisms not covered in the original list in the space provided.

**8. Do you use specialist finds journal (e.g. Journal of Roman Pottery, Medieval Pottery) to publish relevant reports**

Please indicate if you have published or considered publishing results in specialist journals.

**9. Do you discuss archive requirements with the relevant specialist?**

Please indicate the level of involvement of all specialists with archive provision

**Please remember to keep your contact details up to date, including any new e-mail addresses.**

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