

Obituary

Raymond Anthony Holt Farrar

Ray Farrar, a founder member of the Study Group for Roman Pottery, died early in December 1993; he was in his late 70s. Until the late 1980s, he had been a regular attender at the annual weekend conferences of the group, but latterly had been prevented from coming by the onset of glaucoma.

Ray was born in London, and evidently developed an early interest in archaeology. While studying at Oxford (1936-9), he became an active member of the University Archaeology Society, and it was probably through that society that he gained the opportunity to participate in Mortimer Wheeler's celebrated excavations at the hill-fort of Maiden Castle, Dorset. Thus began a life-long connection with that county. After the War, in 1946, Ray and his wife settled in Dorset, where he started his professional career as a history master at Dorchester Grammar School. In 1949, however, Ray joined the staff of the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments (England) as an Archaeological Investigator, and in 1950 moved to London.

At that period, the Commission was engaged in its Dorset Inventory, and the substantial Roman section of Vol. II, part 3 (1970), which laid the foundations of all subsequent work in the area, was undertaken by Ray. His painstaking original research, which underlay the RCHME published text, was often detailed in the *Proceedings of the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society*, a journal which Ray edited for some time. It was in the course of his work in Dorset, that he discovered, and, through David Peacock's petrological analysis of his samples, was able to demonstrate jointly, the Durotrigan origin of Black-burnished ware (BB1). His paper discussing this and allied material was read at that landmark in pottery studies, the Council for British

Archaeology's 1972 Oxford conference, 'Current Research in Romano-British Coarse Pottery', published afterwards as CBA Research Report No. X (1973). At the same time, Ray also laid the foundations for the subsequent study of south-eastern Black-burnished ware (BB2), made by David Williams. Although his Commission work in Dorset had ceased in the mid 1960s, Ray never severed his close links with the county and continued to publish papers on BB1 and on the archaeology of that region, and was excavating on the Roman pottery production site at Redcliff, near Wareham, well into the 1980s. He was also an active participant in the meetings of the CBA Regional Group for Wessex.

In 1965, when RCHME took the decision to establish the National Archaeological Record, as an adjunct to the existing National Buildings Record, Ray became its first head. Indeed, many of the policies and activities, now central to its role and to that of the Royal Commission, were initiated by him. In the 1970s and early 1980s, his RCHME work involved him in the analytical survey of the earthworks of Roman military sites in northern England. He carried this out largely on his own, and recorded his techniques of single-handed fieldwork in a CBA Handbook (*Survey by Prismatic Compass*, 1980). The results of many of his surveys form a significant part of a RCHME volume on Roman temporary camps in England, now in the press.

Ray's legacy as a communicator also deserves to be remembered. For many years he taught evening classes for adults at the London Institute of Archaeology, including a 20-lecture series on the pottery of Roman Britain, for which he assembled an invaluable teaching collection; he also assisted John Alexander in extra-mural training excavations at

Cambridge. A number of prominent Romanists, both amateur and professional, and including several pottery researchers, were former students of his, and owe much to his early stimulus and continuing encouragement. He was among the first of his

generation to emphasise the relevance of ethnography in the study of Roman ceramic technology, and frequently took his classes to visit traditional potteries still at work.

Vivien G. Swan

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