

David Peacock

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by Simon Keay

After gaining his Ph.D. in Geology at the University of St. Andrews, David Peacock held a Research Fellowship in the Application of Science to Archaeology at the University of Birmingham from 1965 to 1968. He was then appointed to a Research Fellowship at the University of Southampton. Drawing upon his scientific training and fascination with Roman trade and commerce, he quickly emerged as one of the pioneers of the burgeoning field of archaeological science, becoming Professor of Archaeology at Southampton by 1990 and Head of Archaeology in 1998-2001 and 2001-3. He also proved an extremely able administrator, notwithstanding his impatience with bureaucratic delays. In a career spanning 40 years, David admirably achieved his oft-stated goal of building a bridge between science and archaeology. He did this by applying his versatile and enquiring mind to draw upon a range of evidence and define the questions.

During the first stage of his career, he drew upon his geological training to focus upon the physical analysis of Roman ceramics. He exploited the application of a range of techniques, particularly petrological thin-section analysis in respect of pottery. This made it possible to trace the origins of ceramics, thereby revolutionizing our understanding of ancient trade and exchange patterns across Europe and the Mediterranean world.

A turning point in his career came with his involvement in the British UNESCO excavations at Carthage, directed by H. R. Hurst. Continuing from his work on Dressel 1 amphoras in Late Iron Age Britain, he began to exploit the rich potential that amphoras offered his new approach for sourcing ceramics. The Carthage involvement was also important for systematic quantification, the characterisation of domestic wares (especially handmade pottery, such as Peacock's Pantellerian Ware) and their widespread trade around the W Mediterranean, and the characterisation of ceramic building material (demonstrating the abundant presence of Campanian bricks in Carthage). The 1980s saw him transform our understanding of N African amphoras. The high point of this work came in the later 1980s when he undertook the first survey of amphora and pottery production sites across a wide swathe of Tunisia from the Mediterranean coast to the Algerian border, culminating in two landmark papers (one in this journal). His restless mind also led him to publish key papers about Early Roman amphora production in S Spain, Italy and other parts of the Mediterranean.

In the late 1970s, he established the Ceramics Research Unit at Southampton with English Heritage funding, which led to the widespread appreciation of the contribution that fabrics could make to our understanding of pottery, its provenance and distribution, in all periods. A particular focus with D. F. Williams was on the reporting of Roman amphoras from British excavations. The work also extended to include stone characterisation, which embraced Roman marbles.

While travelling extensively to undertake this type of research, he noted that traditional potteries were rapidly disappearing, and had the genius to realize that they could illuminate our understanding of ceramic production in the Roman and Mediaeval periods. Sustained research led to the publication of his highly influential study *Pottery in the Roman world: an ethnoarchaeological approach* (1982). It proposed a radical new model for the organization of the production and commerce of Roman ceramics and is still a fundamental text for understanding economic activity in the Roman empire. The final distillation of his work on Roman amphoras is to be found in *Amphorae and the Roman economy: an introductory guide* (1986), co-authored with D. F. Williams. This opened up a complex subject to a very wide audience, enabling much subsequent work by ancient historians and archaeologists.

David's experience of working in N Africa, coupled with a growing interest in the exploitation and distribution of Roman decorative stone, led him eastwards to Egypt, and for well over a decade he was involved in the survey and excavation of two of the Roman empire's greatest quarries. At *Mons Claudianus* (1987-93) he directed the survey of the quarry field in a project led by J. Bingen. It was followed by *Mons Porphyrites* (1994-98), one of the world's most spectacular archaeological sites situated in the remote fastness of the Eastern Desert. Here he co-directed the survey of the quarry field and excavation of the fort and other buildings with V. Maxfield. It was perhaps particularly appropriate that he found an inscription referring to Rome's first known field geologist, Caius Cominius Leugas, who worked at the site in A.D. 18. The results of both these projects, as well as

analytical research into examples of stones from both quarries present in museums across Europe, have profoundly changed our understanding of how Imperial quarries developed and were organized, and how their output was distributed to Rome itself for use in major imperial monuments.

David then turned his attention to the ports of the Red Sea, and in a characteristically brilliant piece of detective work demonstrated that the site of Quseir-al-Qadim was the long-lost Myos Hormos, Rome's chief port for trading with the Arabian peninsula and India. He followed this up with a major field project (1999-2003) largely funded by the Swedish industrialist Peder Wallenberg, in which with L. Blue and S. Moser he traced the layout of the Roman port and its development, clarified the nature of Rome's trade with India, and helped sensitize the local population to the importance of their cultural heritage. His final field project saw him and L. Blue head south beyond the confines of the Roman empire to Eritrea, where, with the support of the British Institute of East Africa, he mapped out the ports of Adulis and Gabeza. David's deep involvement in the archaeology of three of the most important Roman sites in Egypt provided him with a unique standpoint from which he was able to write a highly accessible synthesis of Roman Egypt for the *Oxford History of Egypt* (2006). It also provided him with the opportunity to test the application of non-destructive magnetic susceptibility analysis to a range of ornamental stones. By doing so he was able to learn about the movement of certain kinds of ornamental stone across the Mediterranean, Red Sea and Indian Ocean, and the relationship of this commerce to the incense trade.

In the latter part of his career, David began to work more intensively on millstones. He had long recognized their potential for studying ancient trade as well as for better understanding food production in many different periods. The scope of his research ranged from Britain to Italy and parts of the Near East, involving experimentation with geochemical analytical techniques. He was particularly proud of his *magnum opus* on this subject, *The stone of life* (2013), the summation of this research.

David published some 19 books and monographs, as well as countless articles, contributions to excavation reports and to books of the highest quality, and these and other academic achievements won him the recognition he deserved. His brilliant contribution was recognized by the Archaeological Institute of America in 2012 with the Pomerance award for scientific contributions to archaeology. In 2011 he was awarded the Kenyon medal by the British Academy in recognition of his work in ceramics, petrology and the ancient economy. He supervised the research of a legion of Ph.D. students whose wide range of projects matched his own interests; many of them (e.g., R. Hodges, M. Fulford, J. Timby, R. Tomber, I. Whitbread) have achieved important academic positions. He was a gifted and popular teacher at Southampton, possessing that rare ability of being able to communicate scientific concepts in an accessible and stimulating way. He knew how to help students penetrate the complexities of evidence for Roman production and trade so as to grasp the bigger picture. His most important quality, however, was his great humanity, coupled with his honesty. He always had time to lend support to friends and colleagues, using his many personal skills to help them fulfill their ambitions in research and teaching. He had an engaging sense of humour, being happiest when regaling friends with stories of some of his more peculiar travel experiences, particularly in Egypt.

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