

# Jennifer Price

(January 26, 1940 - May 17, 2019)

by Justine Bayley and Sally Cottam

Jennifer Price, who died in 2019 at the age of 79, holds a special place in the history of glass studies and in the affections of all those who work in the field. Her funeral held in York on June 10 drew well over a hundred friends and colleagues wishing to pay tribute to a fine scholar and to her partner who supported her tirelessly through her final illness. For half a century she made substantial contributions to research in Roman glass not only in Britain but across the Roman world. Roman glass studies have historically been influenced by the work of distinguished scholars such as C. Isings, F. Fremersdorf and D. Harden, and Jenny's work stands alongside theirs, not only because of her own writings but also for the insights she shared with others about their own material and its interpretation. Her knowledge of glass — from many historical periods and geographical regions, not only Roman — was indeed phenomenal.



Born into a family of glassmakers in Stourbridge (Worcs.), early on she excavated local sites under G. Webster. She was called to the bar in 1963 but then spent three years working on excavations in S Italy and at Masada, where she first encountered glass in large quantities as she worked to reconstruct some of the Roman glass vessels. Following her B.A. in archaeology at University College, Cardiff, she worked in 1972-73 at the British Museum with Harden, co-producing an important report on the glass from the palace at Fishbourne.<sup>1</sup> Harden then suggested she should do her doctoral research on the Roman glass of Spain,<sup>2</sup> a vast topic even in those days, but, undaunted, she drove off in an aged camping van that became her home for three years as she collected research data from all over Spain. Her notable discoveries there included the blowing irons from Mérida, co-published with J. Lang.<sup>3</sup> Subsequently, she became keeper of archaeology in the Salisbury and South Wiltshire Museum, before being appointed in 1980 as lecturer in archaeology in the Adult Education Department of the University of Leeds, where she remained for a decade.

Another of her very important contributions to the field was as a member of the Association for the History of Glass (AHG), the British Committee of the Association Internationale pour l'Histoire du Verre (AIHV) from 1979. She remained on the AHG board until her death, serving as president (1996-2003) and helped run the 8th AIHV congress in London in 1979 while overseeing the 16th in 2003. She was a constant supporter of the AIHV, contributing her time and skills to its organization and her enthusiasm to its gatherings, engaging in every aspect of the events. Especially she promoted its rôle as a vehicle to encourage engagement in glass studies. Her 13 presentations to the congresses often focused on glass from Spain or from Roman Britain,<sup>4</sup> but at the 15th she presented work on glass from

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- 1 D. B. Harden and J. Price, "The glass," in B. W. Cunliffe, *Excavations at Fishbourne, 1961-1969*, vol. 2. *The finds* (Soc. Ant. Res. Rep. 27, London 1971) 317-68.
  - 2 J. Price, *Roman glass in Spain: a catalogue of glass found at the Roman towns of Tarragona, Mérida, Italica and Carmona, with a discussion of the vessel forms from these towns and other Roman sites in Spain* (Ph.D. thesis in 3 vols., University of Wales 1981).
  - 3 J. Lang and J. Price, "Iron tubes from a Late Roman glassmaking site at Mérida (Badajoz), in Spain," *JArchSci* 2.4 (1975) 289-296.
  - 4 These include: "Some Roman glass from Spain"; "Late Hellenistic and Early Imperial cast vessel glass in Spain"; Glass from Felmongers, Harlow, in Essex: a dated deposit of vessel glass found in an Antonine pit"; "A survey of the Hellenistic and Early Roman vessel glass found on the Unexplored Mansion site at Knossos in Crete"; "Vessel glass from the Neronian military fortress at Usk in South Wales"; "A ribbed bowl from a Late Iron Age burial at Hertford Heath, Hertfordshire"; [with

Kush (UAE).<sup>5</sup>

A second broad contribution, starting in 1983 and lasting for nearly two decades while she was at Leeds and Durham, was the “Romano-British Glass Project” for English Heritage, by which she simultaneously tackled the backlog of unpublished assemblages of Roman glass from excavations in Britain and trained an assistant in the skills needed to record and publish archaeological glass.<sup>6</sup> Giving her time and expertise entirely free of charge to the project, her scholarly output was nothing short of prolific, extending from Inchtuthil to Trethurgy and encompassing hundreds of glass assemblages from forts, towns, villas and temples. While at Durham (1990-2005), she launched an M.A. program in archaeological glass studies before being promoted in 1999 to a personal chair in Roman provincial archaeology and serving for three years as head of department. To mark her retirement, the AHG organized a conference in her honor, the papers from which were subsequently published as *Glass of the Roman world*.<sup>7</sup>

Her full bibliography up to 2014, conveniently published there (xii-xxvi), includes many publications that will continue to have a formative effect on future scholarship and will remain standard works for years to come. Notable outcomes from the Romano-British Glass Project include the book, co-authored with H. E. M. Cool, on the glass from Colchester<sup>8</sup> and *Romano-British glass vessels: a handbook*, co-authored with S. Cottam.<sup>9</sup> Major works reported on the glass from the fortress at Usk<sup>10</sup> and the fort and *vicus* at Binchester.<sup>11</sup> She edited *Glass in Britain and Ireland, AD 350–1100*,<sup>12</sup> and contributed to *JGS*, for which she was also an editorial advisor. One of her enduring fascinations was mould-blown glass. Frequently cited is her survey of mid- to late 1st-c. A.D. mould-blown tableware, treating the origin and distribution of these vessels.<sup>13</sup> Whenever she encountered mould-blown glass, she took an impression of the design, thereby building up a large collection of moulds, which informed much of her collaborative work with M. Taylor and D. Hill (the Roman Glassmakers).<sup>14</sup>

Jenny’s love of glass was infectious and inspiring. She never passed up an opportunity to explore new ideas or to encourage brave scholarship, being particularly supportive of young researchers. She expressed her opinions with passion, good humour and an individual turn of phrase. Her work will be valued by generations of researchers. But for those of us who had the privilege to know her and work

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S. Cottam] “Glass tablewares in use at Mytilene in Lesbos in the early-mid 1st century AD”; “Glass from the fort at Hod Hill in Dorset and other mid first century hilltop sites with Roman military occupation in southern Britain”; [with C. M. Jackson and C. Lemke] “Glass production in the 1st century AD: insights into glass technology”; [with I. Freestone and C. Cartwright] “The batch: its recognition and significance”; [with C. Jackson] “Analyses of Late Roman glass from the Commandant’s House of the fort at South Shields, Tyne and Wear, UK”; and [with S. Cottam] “Two polychrome mosaic bowls and associated glass vessels from a 2nd century burial at Kelshall, Herfordshire, England”.

5 J. Price and S. Worrell, “Roman, Sasanian, and Islamic glass from Kush, Ras al-Khaimah, United Arab Emirates: a preliminary survey,” *Annales AIHV* 15 (2003) 153-57.

6 The second-named writer of this obituary met Jenny in 1990 through working as her research assistant on this project at Durham University.

7 J. Bayley, I. Freestone and C. Jackson (edd.), *Glass of the Roman world* (Oxford 2014), reviewed at *JRA* 29 (2016) 620 ff.

8 H. E. M. Cool and J. Price, *Roman vessel glass from excavations in Colchester, 1971-85* (Colchester Arch. Rep. 8, 1995).

9 J. Price and S. Cottam, *Romano-British glass vessels: a handbook* (Practical Handbooks in Archaeology no. 14; CBA, York 1998).

10 W. H. Manning, J. Price and J. Webster, *The Roman small finds. Report on the excavations at Usk, 1965-1976* (Cardiff 1995).

11 J. Price and S. Worrell, “Glass,” in I. Ferris (ed.), *The beautiful rooms are empty. Excavations at Binchester Roman fort, County Durham, 1976-1981 and 1986-1991* (Durham 2010) 268-332.

12 J. Price (ed.), *Glass in Britain and Ireland, AD 350-1100* (Brit. Mus. Occ. Pap. 127, 2000).

13 J. Price, “Decorated mould-blown glass tablewares in the first century AD,” in M. Newby and K. Painter (edd.), *Roman glass: two centuries of art and invention* (Soc. Ant. Occ. Pap. 13; London 1991) 56-75.

14 They now curate this collection. See [www.theglassmakers.co.uk/archiveromanglassmakers/beakers.htm](http://www.theglassmakers.co.uk/archiveromanglassmakers/beakers.htm).

with her, it is her extraordinary intelligence, her generosity, her enthusiasm, and her humor that will stay with us always.

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