

## VARIA

The Society is pleased to announce the publication of Richard Grasby's *Processes in the Making of Roman Inscriptions: Introduction to the Studies*, together with his four studies examining in detail the processes by which Roman inscriptions were made.

R.D. Grasby, *Processes in the Making of Roman Inscriptions: Introduction to the Studies* (Oxford: CSAD, 2009). Pp. 16, figs 28. £6.00.

Idem, *RIB 2110. Fragments of a Dedication Slab, Birrens, Dumfriesshire*. The Making of Roman Inscriptions, Study 8 (Oxford: CSAD, 2009). Pp. 24, figs 5, diags 7. £5.00.

Idem, *CIL VI. 40310. Fragments of a Dedicatory Inscription, Forum, Rome*. The Making of Roman Inscriptions, Study 9 (Oxford: CSAD, 2009). Pp. 28, figs 4, diags 14. £5.00.

Idem, *CIL VI. 36908. Fragments of a Senatorial Inscription, Forum, Rome*. The Making of Roman Inscriptions, Study 10 (Oxford: CSAD, 2009). Pp. 16, figs 3, diags 6. £5.00.

Idem, *CIL VI. 37077. Sepulchral Inscription, Forum, Rome*. The Making of Roman Inscriptions, Study 11 (Oxford: CSAD, 2009). Pp. 16, fig. 1, diags 10. £5.00.

In this set of five booklets, available via the British Epigraphy Society from the Centre for the Study of Ancient Documents, Richard Grasby continues his series of examinations of the processes in the making of Roman inscriptions. This began with R.D. Grasby, 'A comparative study of five Latin inscriptions: measurement and making', *PBSR* 64 [n.s. 51] (1996), 95-138, followed by 'Latin inscriptions: studies in measurement and making', *PBSR* 70 [n.s. 57] (2002), 151-176, and 'The sepulchral monument of the procurator C. Julius Classicianus', *Britannia* 33 (2002), 43-75 (with R.S.O. Tomlin). It is planned that these original studies will also be republished as individual booklets in this series in 2010 in revised form to include recent research findings. A particularly delightful aspect of each of the newly published studies is that the author's own exquisite original drawings of each stone adorn their covers.

The overall aim of Grasby's project is to recover the processes and principles of planning by which Roman stone-cutters produced geometrically constructed monumental capital lettering, of which the finest example is often claimed to be the dedication to Trajan's column (*CIL* VI 690), itself the subject of Grasby's first case-study (*PBSR* 64 [1996], 98-103). While these classic letter-forms derive their design from the brush and ink letters of signwriters, Grasby argues that the spacing of this very regulated style of lettering cannot be attributed solely to supreme hand-eye co-ordination on behalf of the craftsmen. Of the eleven case-studies now published, with the sole exception of Study 6 - *CIL* XII 3261 from Nemausus (Nimes) in Narbonese Gaul (*PBSR* 70 [2002], 157-164) - all are drawn from either Rome and its immediate environs or Britain.

The chronological range that the studies cover extends from the first century BC to second century AD. Most, but not all, the examples were commissioned

by various Roman state organs (the senate, emperors, the army). The inscriptions covered by the four newly published studies can all be considered official in one sense or other. The one provincial example here, *RIB* 2110 (Study 8), was dedicated by an auxiliary military unit, the *cohors secunda Tungrorum milliaria equitata civium Latinorum*, to Antoninus Pius *trib. pot. XXI cos. IIII* (i.e. in AD 157/158); *CIL* VI 40310 (Study 9) is a dedication to Augustus by the *plebs omnis XXV tribuum* (i.e. by all the people of the thirty-five tribes [not 'thirty-fifth tribe' as G.]); *CIL* VI 36908 (Study 10) was dedicated to Lucius Caesar by the senate c. 2 BC; and *CIL* VI 37077 (Study 11) is a statue base erected *ex senatus consulto* to the consul C. Vibius Pansa (43 BC).

The general introduction to the studies describes the working method and draws together observations and conclusions appearing sporadically throughout the individual case-studies. The surfaces of the stones are minutely examined for evidence of the plotting of the lettering in advance of carving. For this, as well as autopsy of the stone, Grasby bases his analyses on various types of 1:1 record (traced drawings made on clear film, rubbings on paper, squeezes). In each case-study Grasby applies his expertise as a draughtsman and letter-carver to working out the modules of measurement underlying the construction of the letters and demonstrates through his own diagrams how the letters may have been plotted using straight edge, ruler, square, and compass. Against the traditional perception that the early second century AD marks the high point in the production of lettering of this type, he argues that the same skill and fine execution can be found already in the Augustan age (e.g. Studies 9 and 10) and even in the statue base to Pansa of 43 BC, despite the compromise of its final execution on a re-used base, and the disfiguring effect of modern rubrication (Study 8). Grasby's conclusion as to the mathematical underpinning to this genre of lettering is that the basic module was a square of 10 x 10 equal units (or 20 x 20 half units). The decimal basis of this system is initially surprising given Roman unit conventions in other spheres. However, the methodical nature of the presentation (particularly notable in Study 11) and the authority of his personal experience as a letterer ought to be enough to dispel the doubts of sceptics.

The author hopes that these studies may provide epigraphists with methods by which to supplement the lacunae of fragmentary texts, or at least control supplements proposed for them. Whatever view one takes, these studies are certainly a valuable contribution to our knowledge of the technical aspects of monumental Latin inscriptions of the early imperial period. It would be interesting to see whether any evidence for similar working methods could be found in monumental Greek epigraphy of the Roman period.

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Those who wish to view a sample extract or to obtain copies should visit the Centre for the Study of Ancient Documents: <http://www.csad.ox.ac.uk>. Copies can also be ordered using the form on the following page of this Newsletter. We look forward eagerly to Richard Grasby's next set of studies.