

AMANDA CLARIDGE (1949–2022)



The death of Amanda Claridge on 5 May 2022 has deprived the British School at Rome (BSR) of one of its outstanding figures, whose exceptional knowledge and experience of the city of Rome was of considerable value to the reputation of the BSR during her long tenure as assistant director from 1980 to 1994 and her continuing association with it thereafter. It has also deprived the wider world of Roman archaeology of one of its most distinguished, original and independent-minded scholars, whose generous enthusiasm for her subject transformed the lives of many younger scholars.¹

¹ The photo shows Amanda at the crater of Vesuvius. Photograph courtesy of Boris Rankov.

Amanda was born on 1 September 1949 at a Royal Air Force hospital near Wendover, and had a fairly peripatetic childhood, being educated in Blairgowrie in east Scotland, and then in Wheatly near Oxford. Her fascination with archaeology began from a young age, leading her in 1968 to start the new undergraduate degree in the Archaeology of the Roman Provinces at the Institute of Archaeology in London, where she discovered three of the most important strands of what became a rich and varied academic career: her passion for fieldwork, her abiding interest in the techniques of Roman sculpture, and her love of Rome and Italy. She also proved to be a highly skilled draughtsperson and photographer, to the benefit of her many publications over the years, although her friends and family remember her also for her wickedly funny cartoons.

Her interest in Rome and the BSR was already apparent by her final undergraduate year, when in 1971 Amanda rather precociously applied for a Rome Scholarship, which she was finally awarded at the third attempt in 1973. She was, however, awarded a BSR grant in 1971 for fieldwork at a Roman villa near Melfi (Basilicata), which she co-directed with her fellow student Susan Walker, and a further grant in 1972 to work on her M.Phil. (later Ph.D.) on the techniques of Roman sculpture. This was when she first became a familiar presence at the BSR, even before she became a Rome Scholar. Amanda's referees for these applications noted many traits that all who knew her later will remember well: her persistence; her absolute devotion to her subject; her intelligence and common sense; her enthusiasm and ability to communicate it to others; her application and determination; and her notable independence of character combined with a strong critical streak which gave her little time for conventional generalizations.

All of this she applied to the study of Roman marble sculpture, challenging many long-held beliefs about the nature of Roman 'copies' of Greek 'originals', and the whole process of making replicas in antiquity including the role of plaster casts, hints of which were just starting to emerge in her first publication on the subject (Strong and Claridge, 1976). Many of her theories were highly controversial, and it was unfortunate that she lost the crucial support of her Ph.D. supervisor, Donald Strong, who died in 1973. She subsequently formed a close relationship with the then director of the BSR, John Ward-Perkins, who encouraged her interest in the supply of statuary marble and became her unofficial supervisor until his death in 1981. At that point she assumed his mantle as one of the main experts on the identification of ancient marbles, reorganizing Ward-Perkins's marble collection at the BSR and acting as marble consultant on numerous important Italian excavations and surveys, including San Vincenzo al Volturno (Mitchell and Claridge, 2001), Monte Gelato (Claridge, 1997) and the site of Carminiello ai Mannesi in Naples (Claridge, 1994). Amanda never completed her thesis but still left behind a number of important articles and a rich archive to the benefit of future scholars (Claridge, 1985, 1988, 1991, 2015).

By the time she had finished her first year as Rome Scholar, Amanda was already making a name for herself among senior scholars, including foreign archaeologists. At the end of her tenure, Ward-Perkins took her on as his assistant for the blockbuster Pompeii AD 79 exhibition. During that time Amanda developed her natural gift for getting on with Italians at every level which stood her in such good stead in her subsequent career. The success of the exhibition, and of Amanda's contribution to it, led to the post of lecturer in Roman art and archaeology at Princeton, which she held from 1977 to 1980.

But the appeal of Italy and the BSR soon drew her back. In 1980 she was successful against a strong field in her application for the post of assistant director, which she held for fourteen years (the last four as deputy director). Despite her internationally recognized academic reputation, much of Amanda's time at the BSR was spent in administration and the day-to-day running of the School, her responsibilities ranging from room booking to finance, and from acting as line manager for the Italian house staff to reorganizing the Camerone, the School's archaeological laboratory. The qualities that made her such a great researcher also made her an immensely capable administrator, combining great organizational ability with admirable interpersonal skills (although she would have hated the term) and a very practical hands-on approach, whether conducting a thorough use-of-space survey for the School or organizing the fireworks for the BSR's famous Bonfire Night parties. At the same time she went out of her way to support the scholars, artists and residents, dealing with their varied problems and needs with as light a touch as possible, and always respecting the independence and endeavours of others, not surprisingly forming strong friendships along the way. These skills and her unflagging dedication to the BSR were invaluable in steering the School through a potentially difficult time when the BSR had three directors in two years; Graeme Barker, director 1984–8, still speaks warmly of the enormous support she gave him. It was also Graeme Barker who recognized that Amanda had been carrying an administrative load out of all proportion to what was expected of her at the start, and organized the two short sabbaticals she had during her tenure.

It is for other qualities and other activities, however, that most of us who passed through the School in those exciting times will remember Amanda. The Avellino earthquake of 1980 had led to the erection of scaffolding on many of the major monuments of Rome, which allowed scholars to examine these icons at first hand in a way that had not been possible for generations. Here Amanda was in her element, giving full rein to the natural curiosity which drove her to come to grips personally and practically with the monuments of Rome. It was typical of her inherent generosity that she shared this as much as possible with anyone enthused enough by her vivid dinner-time descriptions to sign up for a trip. I was just one of those who benefited from these apparently impromptu but actually highly organized visits, and indeed I am sure my own academic career would have taken a different course had it not been for the education I received at her hands, often at vertiginous heights. I recall particularly helping her survey the top of the Arch of Septimius Severus in the Roman Forum,

where she had been excavating in order to understand both the arrangement of the crowning sculpture and the post-antique history of the structure. At this time Amanda began to collaborate and make friends with Lucos Cozza, then the superintendent of antiquities for the Comune of Rome, particularly on the study of the Hadrianeum which gave Amanda her first publication on the monuments of Rome (Claridge, 1982). They shared an endless curiosity about the ancient city and its traces in the modern one, and Cozza's position allowed the visits to extend to remains in the back-rooms and basements of the city, and most excitingly to the roof of the Pantheon, where Amanda and Cozza tested the mettle of their companions by encouraging them to look down the famous oculus to the floor below.

One of her lasting legacies, which developed under these rather unusual circumstances, is the BSR taught courses on the city of Rome, originally for undergraduates and later extended to include the separate postgraduate course. Although the original summer school was a collaboration with the University of Lancaster in the summer of 1980 before Amanda's arrival, she took it over as a BSR project and ran it every year except one until she left the School. Her boundless energy, inspiring enthusiasm and inexhaustible knowledge of every corner of Rome, tempered by her no-nonsense approach and lively sense of humour, turned every outing into an adventure, and made it a transformative experience for the participants, many of whom went on to academic careers. The schoolteachers' study programme run by the BSR at that time also benefited from these visits. When Amanda returned to the BSR in 2019 to run the postgraduate course, it seems that little had changed, including the energy to run students 50 years her junior off their feet.

As part of her role of assistant director, Amanda was expected to develop a fieldwork programme. As well as her early field experiences in southern Italy she had already worked as an excavator at Berenice in Libya, but needed a project closer to Rome. She found this in the Vicus Augustanus, a small Roman town just south of Ostia now located in the Castelporziano estate of the president of Italy. Invited in 1983 to form part of a team undertaking a general programme of archaeological research and conservation organized by the Soprintendenza archeologica di Ostia, Amanda began a project of survey and documentation which remained a key part of her research for the rest of her life. It clearly suited her in many ways. It gave her a little-known and barely studied site to investigate according to her own criteria, where there was almost everything still to discover, while at the same time taking her away from the day-to-day demands of the BSR and giving her space to relax within a congenial natural environment (complete with wild boar, which found their way into more than one of her characteristic cartoons). The work of excavation continued after Amanda moved to Oxford, entering a new phase from 2002 which aimed to place the Vicus in the broader context of the Laurentine shore, with its imperial villa and associated estate and a range of other maritime villas, one of which had belonged to the Roman senator Pliny the Younger, who describes it in one of his letters. With the aid of an Arts and Humanities

Research Council major research grant, Amanda was able to combine the archaeological surveys with more general geomorphological, environmental and dune studies, in collaboration with Helen Rendell and the Department of Geography at Loughborough University, producing a holistic study of this important area of Rome's hinterland.

In the late 1980s, while still at the BSR, Amanda began a collaboration with the Royal Library for the publication of the Paper Museum of the seventeenth-century Roman patron and collector Cassiano dal Pozzo, which was to last for the rest of her life. This is a major documentary source for the history of classical scholarship and science, seventeenth-century perspectives on antiquity and the natural world, the archaeology of the city of Rome, and pre-Winckelmann interpretations of Roman art. On the recommendation of Ian Jenkins of the British Museum, she quickly became the series editor for the part of the Paper Museum covering antiquities and architecture, building up an unrivalled acquaintance with the collections as a whole, noting differences in hands, framing, lettering and numbering systems. Her lucid and informative introductory essays have helped ensure that the role of the individual drawings and albums within the Paper Museum as a whole is fully understood. Amanda herself was the main author of two main sections, on sarcophagi and other reliefs (due out in 2022), and on statues and busts, while she co-authored another four, and closely collaborated with other authors to maintain the high standards of editorial cohesion and attention to detail which were one of her great strengths. The eighteen volumes on antiquities will be one of her lasting legacies to scholarship.

In 1994 Amanda left the BSR to take up a post as research assistant to Margareta Steinby, recently appointed to the Chair of the Archaeology of the Roman Empire at Oxford, where typically she contributed much more widely than was expected of someone in that position. Here Amanda's knowledge of the city of Rome was put to good use as she worked mainly on the *Lexicon Topographicum Urbis Romae*, while in her own time she began what became her best-known work, the indispensable and outstandingly successful *Oxford Archaeological Guide to Rome* (Claridge, 1998). Amanda brought everything of herself to it: her deep knowledge of the ancient and modern cities based on her years in Rome; her endless curiosity and observing eye which provided the visual and social detail that brings the city of Rome to life; and her ability to communicate her subject to non-specialists with clarity and enthusiasm, without for an instant losing the intellectual rigour which makes the guide so valuable for scholars as well as tourists. In 2010 she produced a substantially revised and enlarged edition, typically including many new discoveries and based on the very latest scholarship (Claridge, 2010), and she was working on a third edition of what has become an essential classic at the time of her death. Ancient historian Greg Woolf, writing in *The Guardian* in 2021, put it among his top ten books about the Roman Empire, as the essential guide — lucid and compact — for understanding the city of Rome.

The monuments of Rome also provided Amanda with the material for some of her most exciting and controversial scholarly articles. She was particularly

intrigued by the Column of Trajan, developing a theory, based on close observation of the carving of the famed spiral relief of Trajan's Dacian campaign, that it made more sense as a symbol of Hadrian's *pietas* to his predecessor, while she also questioned whether the Column was originally intended to act as Trajan's tomb (Claridge, 1993). This elegant demolition of some of the most strongly held ideas about this iconic monument was typically Amanda, and unsurprisingly raised a storm of protest among more traditional scholars, which found its way into a number of articles and books, in some cases answered by Amanda herself in typically forthright fashion (Claridge, 2007a, 2019). An extension to her argument about Hadrian's involvement in commemorating his predecessor led her to equally controversial views on the location and orientation of Hadrian's Temple of Deified Trajan and on its surrounding structures, based on a recognition of the fragility of much of our reconstruction of Roman topography and how easily new information can — or at least should — bring about a complete re-evaluation of the status quo (Claridge, 2007b). To do this against entrenched beliefs in a particular version of ancient Rome requires that unusual degree of courage backed by meticulous scholarship which was typically Amanda's. More recently she applied the same approach to the Temple of Apollo on the Palatine, arguing that the building faced in the opposite direction from the traditional assumption, with considerable implications for our understanding of the imperial residences (Claridge, 2014). This too was met with considerable scepticism among Roman topographers, which typically led her to seek more archaeological evidence, with the help of the BSR carrying out the first ever ground-penetrating radar survey on the Palatine. When that was inconclusive, she had other ideas and was still seeking permits for further investigations at her death.

Amanda joined the Department of Classics at Royal Holloway University of London in 2000, where she worked hard to enhance classical archaeology provision within the department at both undergraduate and graduate levels, attracting Ph.D. students from across Europe to work in both art history and Roman topography. She was an excellent teacher, enthusiastic but at the same time challenging, holding her students to her own high standards. Many students and several members of staff were also enticed to participate in her excavations at Castelporziano, which often served as an informal training excavation. Her research reputation brought prestige and international recognition, and it was in the light of her whole panoply of research activity, from publications to grants to service to the wider research community, that in 2008 Royal Holloway awarded her a personal Chair. That research included the start of work as editor with Claire Holleran of what might be seen as literally a companion piece to her guide, *A Companion to the City of Rome*, which appeared in 2018 (Holleran and Claridge 2018). By her retirement in 2014, she had made classical archaeology a central and

distinctive aspect of the research culture of the classics department at Royal Holloway and her legacy continues to be felt among her colleagues whatever their discipline.

An important manifestation of Amanda's commitment to Roman archaeology and the high esteem in which she was held by scholars in Italy and worldwide can be seen in her engagement with the wider academic community. From 1984 until she left the BSR, she represented the BSR on the council of the International Association for Classical Archaeology (AIAC) based in Rome, of which Ward-Perkins had been a key founding member, also joining the editorial board of its main publication, the *Fasti Archaeologici. Annual Bulletin of Classical Archaeology*. In 1986, she was elected to the Comitato per l'Archeologia Laziale, part of the Istituto di Studi Etruschi ed Italici, at least in part in relation to her work at Castelporziano. It was in this context that on leaving Rome in 1994 she was appointed as a Commendatore Order of Merit by the Republic of Italy. Already since 1984 a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of London, in 1999 she was elected a Corresponding Member of the Pontificia Accademia Romana di Archeologia, and in 2010 a Corresponding Member of the Archaeological Institute of America, having previously held a prestigious Kress lectureship for the Institute. On her return to the UK, she continued to be active in external committees, joining the boards of the Roman Society, the M. Aylwin Cotton Foundation, the Roman Research Trust, and the Faculty of Archaeology, History and Letters of the BSR. She was on the advisory board of the now renowned *Journal of Roman Archaeology* from its inception, and regularly reviewed manuscripts for a swathe of academic journals and publishers, a task she always undertook with characteristic thoroughness and intellectual rigour. If a manuscript could get through Amanda's scrutiny, even at second reading, it was bound to be a hit.

Needless to say, 'retirement' was hardly in Amanda's character. It merely gave her more time to work on her two big projects, the study of the Vicus Augustanus Laurentinus at Castelporziano and above all the Paper Museum of Cassiano dal Pozzo. She became a fixture at the Warburg Institute, taking up a desk in the Cassiano Project office and devoting her time there to the catalogues in which she was most directly interested, those relating to ancient sculpture. Until just weeks before her death she was still working on a paper about the processes of carving Roman sculpture and the problem of the Baiae casts, while answering questions from colleagues with her typical generosity.

Indeed, generosity was one of her abiding traits along with loyalty, which made her endlessly supportive to others, especially those who, like herself, did not fit into the established mode. She carried her vast knowledge lightly and without presumption and often with a characteristic wry and self-deprecating humour, having little time for unwarranted self-regard in others. She also had a great sense of fun, which manifested itself in both her academic and her private life. She was a dedicated cinephile (she would sometimes fit two films into a day), and a lover of concerts, opera and art, and of red wine and the inevitable gin-and-tonic. She was also devoted to her family. It is no wonder that she was

held not just with admiration and respect but with genuine and lasting affection by those who were lucky enough to know her.

JANET DELAINE²

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