**The Legacy of Arthur Dale Trendall – video transcript 7th Dec 2012**

Dr Gillian Shepherd:

Arthur Dale Trendall was the foremost expert on south Italian pottery, so we’re talking there about pottery that was produced by Greeks who had settled in southern Italy and Sicily, and they produced something called red figure pottery, which is essentially pottery with a black background and red decoration on it. From about the late 5th century BC through the 4th century BC, and Dale Trendall was the expert who really organised and studied this material in detail.

He was originally a New Zealander, but he studied at Cambridge, and then he spent most of his working life in Australia, first at Sydney University where he was Professor of Greek and also Professor of Archaeology, and then he moved to ANU where he was Master of University House and finally, he ended up at La Trobe University as La Trobe’s first resident Fellow.

Dale Trendall’s work was very varied. He taught of course in universities in Australia, but he would also travel very regularly to Italy, especially in his retirement, he would go to Italy in the Australian summer, to avoid the heat, and there he would work mainly in museums. He wasn’t a field archaeologist. He didn’t dig these vases up, but he worked on material that had been dug up in earlier excavations, often quite old excavations, going back to the 19th century, and that work entailed mainly something that we call attribution, which is looking for signs of particular hands, individual artists who decorated the vases, and in identifying these individual artists, Dale Trendall was also able to put these vases into some chronological order, and he accordingly could trace the development of south Italian vase-painting, and he could also identify centres of production as well.

So what he did was, he really systematised a huge body of material – we’re talking about something like 20,000 vases, into a form where we could study it and make use of it, and that was essentially his research, but of course he was also a great teacher. His public lectures in particular were famous. People would queue to get into them. And he was also a great university administrator as well. He was involved at very high-level university affairs, and also even government affairs. He was for example on the committee for decimalisation. So he really had a very wide range of skills and interests throughout his working career.

Dr Ian McPhee:

I came to La Trobe in 1974 and it actually took me about two weeks to get up the gumption to ring Dale up here, and after that, we got on very well because we essentially worked in very similar areas and he was a mine of information because he’d really grown up with his subject and I knew him really very well for something like twenty-one years. He was a mentor, a friend, and a colleague during all of that period. He lived up here and worked here as well. It was probably the first time that he was able to have all of his great library and his photographic archive in one place, and he would work from 8.30 in the morning until perhaps half past five or so in the evening, probably six days a week, or if he was really working on a book, which had to be done, the manuscript which had to be done pretty quickly, then he might work on a Sunday as well. And many was the time that I worked with him pretty much the whole week and in the evening when he stopped working, he would sometimes ask me to have a sherry on the balcony with him, or if it had been a really strenuous day, then he’d mix what he’d called his knockout drops, and you only ever got one glass of those.

He was a very remarkable person, both as a scholar and an extremely educated, erudite man. And it was really just a privilege to know him for the whole of that time.

Dr Gillian Shepherd:

When Dale Trendall died, he bequeathed his library and his collection of antiquities and his archive, to La Trobe University and that’s essentially what forms the Trendall Centre here today, the Trendall Research Centre. Now the library is really quite a substantial library, and it deals mainly with books on the ancient Greeks in southern Italy and Sicily and especially vase painting studies of course, because that was Trendall’s special area of interest. It’s a very big library and he also left some money to continue to buy books, so it’s also an up-to-date library and a very active research resource in that sense.

The thing that really makes the Trendall Centre an absolutely unique resource in the world is the photographic archive that Dale Trendall bequeathed, and that is a collection of something in the region of 40,000 photographs, basically of south Italian vases, which was his area of study, and we’re currently in the process of digitizing these photographs, so that they can be an online resource that can be consulted, not just in the Trendall Centre but all round the world.

He also bequeathed a small collection of antiquities, and that’s mainly south Italian vases, but there are also some Athenian vases and Corinthian pieces in there as well, so it’s a very interesting and very useful collection.

Dr Ian McPhee:

His work was also recognised in Italy for example, and in the 1950s he wrote a multi-volume catalogue of the south Italian red figure vases in the Vatican, and he received the ... he was made Commend tore of the Order of St Gregory the Great and this particular Order, as you can see here, which has on it an image and around it, St Gregarious Magnus. He was also made a Commend tore of the Italian State.

So far as Australia was concerned, the most important honour that he received was one in 1976 and that was the Order of Australia, a Companion of the Order of Australia, which is the highest honour that Australia can bestow. I think that he was particularly honoured, because it was recognition of his achievement within the field of classical scholarship, but also of course his contribution towards education in this country. He obviously thought extremely highly of the award of the AC to him in 1976, I remember him being very chuffed about it when it came through, but he was also very proud of the awards from the Vatican and from the Italian state, because these were not very common for someone who wasn’t Italian.

Dr Gillian Shepherd:

Dale Trendall made many friends throughout his career, and although I myself only met him very briefly once, from all the stories I’ve heard, he had friends from all walks of life, and also from all age groups. So certainly while he was Resident Fellow here at La Trobe, he was well known for inviting students up to his flat for perhaps a dinner party, and they were absolutely intrigued by this much older, very well read, very eminent scholar, who could nevertheless welcome them into his home, and talk to them as friends. And he was also known as a great mentor, really.

He also had friends in very high places. He was for example, friends with Robert Menzies, who was Prime Minister of Australia, and obviously knew other people in government very well also.

And his academic, scholarly contacts are absolutely enormous. The name of Dale Trendall is very well known in archaeological circles all round the world.

Dr Ian McPhee:

I think the library now has about 10,000 volumes and that doesn’t include the periodicals, and I guess there must be something like about forty different series of journals that have been taken over the years. It really is an absolutely extraordinary library, particularly for the study of Greek vase painting and also for the art and archaeology of southern Italy and Sicily, for the Greeks and natives in southern Italy and Sicily. And it has some very remarkable things. It has a copy of the three volumes of Tischbein’s drawings of the second Hamilton collection, the second collection of Sir William Hamilton, part of which at least was sent back to England in 1800 when Napoleon was coming down. And it has many of the old nineteenth and early twentieth century catalogues of museums – Naples, Berlin, Munich – which are very, very difficult to get hold of. So for anyone working in Greek vase painting or in the archaeology of the Greeks in southern Italy and Sicily, this is a very, very remarkable library.

We’ve had, over the years, some four young Italian scholars coming under what we call a Trendall Scholarship, and all of them have just thought this was an amazing place to work. These people are coming from southern Italy, but they don’t have all of this material in one place, and we do, here, and that’s why this Trendall Centre really is of so much importance to the university and, indeed, to the world of classical scholarship.

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