



### President's Notes

As previously announced our AGM takes place on Saturday 6th June 2015 in Doncaster, please find an agenda, minutes, treasurer's report and accounts attached with this mailing. Derek Hall who has been Co-Editor is retiring this AGM having served two 5 year terms in office. Derek has led on the production of *Medieval Ceramics* and has worked hard to ensure we have a journal that is of good quality both in terms of content and appearance. Our editorial team give their time freely to produce *Medieval Ceramics* and the Occasional Paper series and MPRG is very grateful to Derek for contributing so much of his time and expertise over the last ten years. We are also very grateful to David Dawson, who also stands down at the AGM after

several years on Council as an Ordinary Member, Vice-President and chairman of the Editorial Committee. MPRG has benefitted greatly from David's great knowledge and experience, which he has lent to Council discussions as well as various working parties and steering groups most notably in the areas of training and the Research Framework.

As you will be aware from previous AGMs our income from subscriptions has not been covering our outgoings for some time. Council has reduced costs and sought publication grants but reluctantly has decided that such a deficit is no longer sustainable and we will ask the AGM to approve a rise in subscriptions. We hope you will continue to support the Group so that we can continue to promote and encourage ceramic studies.

It was with great sadness that MPRG learnt of the death of Prof David Peacock earlier this year. A great scholar, teacher and mentor to many of our members, past and present, Prof Peacock's immense contribution to ceramic studies, particularly with regard to ceramic petrology and fabric analysis, lives on in the way ceramic analysis is conducted and will never be forgotten.

Julie Edwards, President

### Mystery Object

This curious ceramic object was found recently on an enigmatic site just outside Salisbury, Wiltshire. The site survives only as a rectangular outline (shallow ditch) with 'bastions' at the corners - it looks like a classic fort outline (about 50m square), but was clearly a very ephemeral structure. The ceramic object is the only find from the ditch, apart from a few fragments of abraded medieval roof tile, which are ubiquitous on the fields around here and which are clearly residual here.

The object appears to be a candlestick in a sgraffito-decorated slipware - red body (visible in damage to the left arm) with white slip coating, glaze with green and brown mottling, and small sgraffito rectangular gridded motifs front and back. It seems to represent a female figure in costume - discussion on the MPRG facebook page varies from classical drapery to a waisted jacket and skirt outfit. The figure carries a candle-holder in both arms to the right, while there are traces of another object by the left side, perhaps intended for a 'basket' or similar. There are curious 'winged' appendages at the back, but the whole thing is too incomplete for confident reconstruction.



Given the location, a source for the object somewhere in the West Country slipware industries (Somerset or Devon) seems most likely – import is possible but less likely as we just don't seem to get exotica of any date in darkest Wiltshire. There is a resemblance to 16<sup>th</sup>/17<sup>th</sup> century Saintonge, but the body colour is anomalous. Dating is fairly crucial for the site, which has been interpreted as a possible military practice area (it is too slight to have been a functional defensive site), with dating ranging from Civil War to Napoleonic wars.

To see digital versions of the photos, go to the MPRG facebook page. Any suggestions gratefully received!

Lorraine Meapham  
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## MPRG 2015 Conference

The MPRG 2015 conference is nearly upon us and we have a very exciting programme. It is being held at Doncaster Museum on Saturday June 6th. If you haven't signed up, don't worry, there are still spaces left. We are also providing lunch (catering by John Hudson) and this is included in the cost of the conference.

Further information on the conference can be found on our website: [www.medievalpottery.org.uk](http://www.medievalpottery.org.uk)

## Medieval Ceramics Back-Issues

We have taken the decision to further reduce back-issues of Medieval Ceramics. The recent price system was tiered but now, any volumes up to volume 32 and still in stock are priced at £1. This does not include the Occasional Paper Series.

Out of print volumes are free to download from: [www.medievalceramics.wordpress.com](http://www.medievalceramics.wordpress.com) currently 11 volumes are available and more will appear as we run out of hard copies of later editions.

## Research Framework

In 2009 the MPRG Research Agenda and Strategy (initially developed by Maureen Mellor in 1994) was revised. The updated document was developed through a series of regional meetings. The reassessment of the priorities of the discipline was considered essential in order for future strategies to mesh with present requirements and structure of the profession. It has been 4 years now since the Framework was published and we would like to hear about any developments that you have made, or heard about in this time. We would also like any other feedback you have on the document.

The research agenda document is available online for free. [www.mprgframework.info/](http://www.mprgframework.info/)

Any comments and thoughts should be sent to our Regional Groups Secretary, Gareth Perry at [gareth.perry@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:gareth.perry@sheffield.ac.uk)

## In Print

The Society for Post-medieval Archaeology have just published their ninth monograph, *West Country Households 1500-1700*, edited by John Allan, Nat Alcock and David Dawson, published by the Boydell Press, and inspired by their conference held in Taunton and Exeter in September 2007. Its subject is the home and its artefacts. Of specific interest to pottery specialists are papers on North Devon relief-decorated tiles by Cynthia Cramp,

culinary artefacts by Peter Brears, Portuguese faience by Tania Casimiro and pots and texts: understanding pots in use by Oliver Kent. They are particularly complemented by two further papers on West Country brass founding. 439 pages, lavishly illustrated. £30 from Boydell with 25% discount to SPMA members.

David Dawson

## Work on Medieval Pottery at the Durham Archaeomaterials Research Centre (DARC)

A new research centre for the analysis of archaeological materials is starting work at Durham University ([www.darclab.com](http://www.darclab.com)). The centre specializes in the analyses of ceramics and other finds employing a range of methods such as, ceramic petrography, X-ray fluorescence, X-ray diffraction, and Inductively Coupled Plasma –Atomic Emission Spectroscopy (ICP-AES) and –Mass Spectroscopy (ICP-MS) to gain insight into changing production technologies and trade networks in past societies.

Several projects involving medieval ceramics from the south-west of England are currently being developed at DARC. One project includes samples for analysis by ICP-AES and -MS provided by Michael Hughes from a kiln in Devon. The goal is to better understand the circulation of the material from this production site in south-western England. Another project, involves the analysis of a large group of medieval brown-glazed jugs from Langport, Somerset. For a very long time most, if not all, of these jugs, found at sites in Somerset, Bristol, Devon, Wiltshire and Dorset, were identified by researchers as coming from the large production site at Donyatt in South Somerset. Research led by John Allan, Michael Hughes, and others (1999), using ICP and thin-section petrography, has demonstrated that fabric identification by eye and/or microscope is not reliable enough to distinguish between similar looking products coming from south, west, and east Somerset, including products from less well known centres at Nether Stowey or Crowcombe. For this area, chemical analysis with ICP has proven essential for identifying the production centres. The current research project promises to help advance our understanding of this long-lived industry in the West Country.



Figure 1. One of the slipped and glazed jugs from Langport being analysed by ICP at the DARC Lab.

Analysis by ICP is an important part of the research being undertaken at DARC. ICP-AES and -MS can measure the quantity of major, minor, and trace elements found in a sample, like thorium, uranium, and caesium to concentrations of parts per billion, providing a very precise chemical signature that can be linked back to a kiln site or the clay outcrops from where the materials used to make a ceramic were taken. As all pottery researchers are aware, determining the origin of a vessel is important if we are to understand the breadth and intensity of trade between sites and regions and how they shift with time.

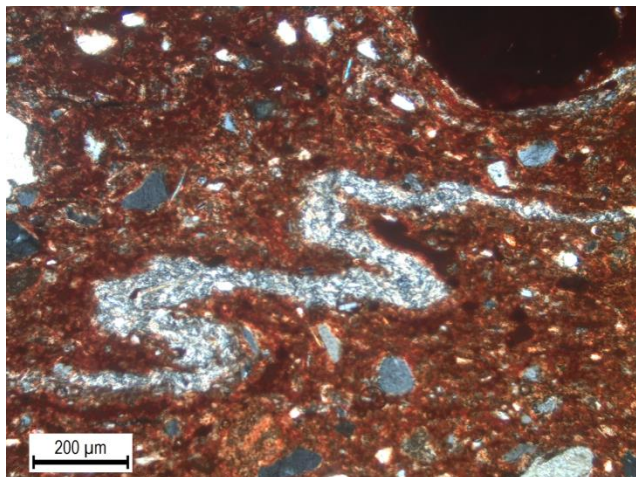


Figure 2. Thin-Section photomicrograph of a Merida-type vessel (crossed polars). The image shows abundant quartz and some mica. The crystalline folded texture in centre likely indicates metamorphic origin for the materials.

Researchers at the DARC lab are also starting to take a closer look at Merida-type wares. Examples from the South-West of England have been thin-sectioned and analysed. ICP analysis will also be carried out on the fabrics in the near future. Given the variety of fabrics, textures, and forms of this well-known import, we hope this long-term study will prove useful in comparing them with material being excavated back in Portugal and Spain. A particularly interesting preliminary result of the petrographic studies shows that the mixing of materials may have been an important part of the production of these vessels (figure 2).

#### Bibliography

Allan, J, 1999 'Cleeve Abbey: the pottery', *Somerset Archaeology and Natural History* 142, 41–75

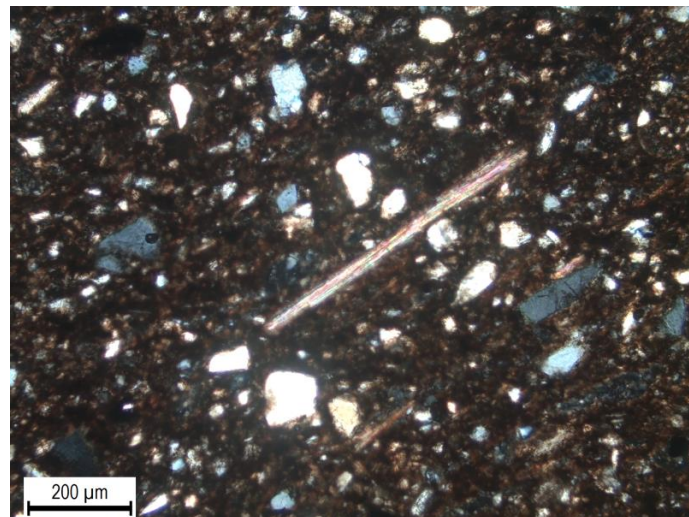


Figure 3. Thin-Section photomicrograph of a Merida-type vessel (crossed polars). The image shows abundant quartz and a large mica lath in the centre.

Kamal Badreshany and Alejandra Gutiérrez  
Durham University

## Dates for the diary

### Society for Post-Medieval Archaeology

The annual conference for the Society for Post-Medieval Archaeology is partnering with the Nautical Archaeology Society and together they are hosting a joint conference in November 2015. The Call for papers and further information on this event can be found at [www.spma.org.uk/events/conference2015/](http://www.spma.org.uk/events/conference2015/)

### Society for Medieval Archaeology

The annual conference for the Society for Medieval Archaeology is being held at the University of Central Lancashire from the 4<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> December 2015. The call for papers is currently open and further details can be found at [www.medievalarchaeology.co.uk/index.php/events/conferences/](http://www.medievalarchaeology.co.uk/index.php/events/conferences/)

## MPRG Publications

Details of MPRG publications can be found on the MPRG website <http://www.medievalpottery.org.uk/publi.htm>

**Occasional Paper 1:** A Guide to the Classification of Medieval Ceramic forms (UK £27.75 excl. P&P)

**Occasional Paper 2:** Minimum Standards for the Processing, Recording, Analysis and Publication of Post-Roman Ceramics (UK £4.50 excl. P&P)

**Occasional Paper 3:** *The Harlow Pottery Industries*, by Helen Walker and Wally Davey (UK £16; Europe £18; USA £21: All include P&P)

**Occasional Paper 4:** *'Genius in a Cracked Pot' - Late Medieval Reduced Wares: A Regional Synthesis*, by Anna Slowikowski (UK £12; Europe £14: All include P&P)

**Occasional Paper 5:** *Sourcing Scottish Redwares*, by Derek Hall, George Haggarty and Simon Chenerey (UK £22.50; Europe: £24: All include P&P)

**Occasional Paper 7:** *The Ipswich Ware Project. Ceramics, Trade and Society in Middle Saxon England*, by Paul Blinkhorn *et al.* (UK £16; Europe £20: All include P&P)

Back issues of Medieval Ceramics and copies of the guide to Medieval Ceramic Forms are also available. For further information on publication sales please contact Lyn Blackmore ([lblackmore@museumoflondon.org.uk](mailto:lblackmore@museumoflondon.org.uk))

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