



Newsletter

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<http://www.medievalpottery.org.uk/>

MPRG Reg. Charity No. 1018513

Secretary's Notes

The AGM and Council meetings were held during the three-day conference at Chester in June. The group is doing well, with a good profit made at the 2005 conference in London and with finances in place to cover the projected costs for 2005/06. The group's membership stands around 300. New members are now asked to pay by Standing Order, and it is hoped cheque and cash payments can be phased out. This will allow the group to better predict its future finances and prevent non payment of the yearly subscription. Feedback on the release of volume 26/27 of *Medieval Ceramics*, which includes the JG Hurst Bibliography, has been positive. The group was informed that Frans Verhaeghe is standing down as Continental Representative on the council. He is thanked for all his hard work and has been offered an honorary membership, which he has accepted. Further changes on the council see John Hudson and Anna Slowikowski step down from their posts as Ordinary Members. The group would like to thank them for all their hard work

and the valuable contribution they have made to the council. Two new council members have been appointed. Berni Sudds has been co-opted for a year as her nomination for the Ordinary Member position came too late for the group to be notified. Berni will stand for nomination before the 2007 AGM. The council has also gained a Southern European representative in the form of Marta Caroscio.

The June conference on the topic of 'Ceramics Cloistered and Crenellated' was a great success, and thanks are due to those who presented papers on a range of interesting topics and to those who attended the event. Also, many thanks to Duncan Brown and Julie Edwards for their hard work in organising a very successful and thought provoking conference.

The next council meeting is due to be held in October at the British Museum. Any issues to be included in the agenda should be addressed to the Secretary by 30th September 2006.

Anne Boyle, Secretary

THANK YOU FRANS

Frans Verhaeghe is stepping down from the Council of the Medieval Pottery Research Group, and we can't allow that to happen without recording our appreciation of his contribution. Although the earliest published record of his presence as a Council member is dated 1989, his involvement in the Group goes back much further than that. In 1983, in Aberdeen, he delivered the Second Gerald Dunning Memorial Lecture, on the subject of 'Low Countries Medieval Pottery Imported into Scotland: notes on a minor trade'. A year later he was welcoming the Group to Bergen-op-Zoom, where he'd organised an unforgettable MPRG conference that is still the subject of fond reminiscence and wild rumour amongst longer-serving members of the Group. No wonder then, that when Council created the post of European Representative, Frans was top of the list of potential candidates. He readily agreed, and his continued commitment, despite growing professional responsibilities, typifies his hard-working nature, and his enthusiasm for the subject.

Council has regularly benefited from his support, influence and opinions, and although Frans could not easily attend meetings, whenever he was present the discussion took on a wider, better informed dimension, and our deliberations were all the better for it. His

input into the organisation of the Southampton conference in 1992 was invaluable, for instance, as we brought together speakers from all over Western Europe. Always a genial and outspoken, not to say unmissable, presence at MPRG conferences, and of course many others, Frans has been a tireless promoter of the Group. 'Thank you' seems scarcely adequate, but it will have to do until we see him again. We wish him all the best for the future, and trust that in his retirement he will still find time to attend our conferences and other meetings.

Duncan H. Brown

STOP PRESS: THE BICKLEY CERAMICS PROJECT

The Bickley Ceramics Project sets out to explore basic ceramic firing processes. Started by Oliver Kent and David Dawson in 1981, the project grew out of a need to understand the kinds of firings used by potters in this country working in the pre-industrial eras. The main focus has been on updraught kilns for earthenwares. Bonfire-firings are also of increasing interest.

There are two main reasons for doing this. One is to add to our understanding of the way in which pottery was made in the past. Hypothetical reconstructions of

historical kilns by historians and archaeologists are all very well, but do they work to produce the kind of pots required? The other is to contribute to current interest in such technology amongst those working in ceramics today.

In addition, a pile of old firebricks acquired early on in the project, has provided an opportunity to experiment with questions about how kilns do or do not work. These have evolved into a series of cross-draught stoneware kilns firing saltglaze.



Oliver and David are involved with a range of other ceramics and archaeological projects. In July 2005 they built an updraught kiln at the International Ceramics Festival at Aberystwyth. Other projects include building a working 17th century-style kiln for the Plimoth Plantation Museum in Massachusetts in 2001 - Oliver will back there later this year - and advising on archaeological excavations in Devon, Dorset and Bristol as well as Channel 4's *Time Team*. Their work has been featured recently in *Ceramic Review* and in *The Log Book*.

FOR 2006

The focus is on glazes again this year and we will be trying a variety of different types and recording the results. We want to be able to show clearly the range of colour possible from a range of glazes in reduced and reoxidised conditions.

The double-opposed firebox updraught kiln is based on a 16th/17th century one excavated in 1992 at Donyatt, South Somerset has been with us for a number of years now. Such kilns have a long history and would have been familiar in the Roman and medieval periods too. A few were still in use in Britain as late as the early 20th century. In addition our saltglaze kiln will also be fired once.

The Project welcomes willing hands to gather and sort fuel and to make lots of pots. There are also opportunities to learn about the practicalities of wood-firing. Regular short talks will be given on what is going on.

Bickley is located in North Somerset from the on the left of the A370 between Cleeve and Congresbury. from Bristol and the project is running from the 24th July to 5th August and costs £40 to attend. Anyone wishing to take part should contact Oliver at oliver.kent@virgin.net.

Portable Antiquities Goes Potty

A series of teaching days have been held to offer advice to Finds Liaison Officers (FLOs) on how to identify and record pottery. The Portable Antiquities scheme, which employs around 40 Finds Liaison Officers throughout England and Wales, has recorded tens of thousands of small finds recovered by metal detector users, fieldwalkers and members of the public since the scheme started in 1997. The details of these finds are added to the Portable Antiquities database, which can be accessed at www.finds.org.uk. The training days were designed to give the Finds Liaison Officers an overview of the ceramics in their region and to offer tips on how to identify and record pottery from all periods. This will help the FLOs to identify the ceramics brought into them, and encourage users of the scheme to see the benefit of collecting pottery they come across 'in the field'.



Above: Jane Young (far left) introduces the Finds Liaison Officers to 12th century pottery from Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire

At the two-day meeting held in Lincoln, nine members of the Portable Antiquities Scheme were introduced to ceramics dating from the Iron Age to the Post-Medieval period by Maggie Darling, Jane Young and Anne Boyle. During this time, the participants had the opportunity to handle and examine the pottery for themselves and the specialists were on hand to give guidance on identification and answer any questions. It is hoped the training days will encourage further contact between FLOs and Pottery Specialists in the future.

French Pottery in Scotland

George Haggerty in association with Historic Scotland has carried out a survey of finds of French Pottery in Scotland. A CD containing the database is available for those who contact George Haggartyg@aol.com

FOR SALE

Complete set of Medieval Archaeology 1957 to 2005, (vols 1 to 48) including indexes and membership lists, in excellent condition. £250 excluding transport. Collection possible from West Yorkshire or Surrey areas, or may be able to deliver.

For more information email pamirving2@hotmail.co.uk, or phone 01484 879074

'Ou est les dishes de chafing?'

A day school to honour the memory of Bob Thomson

Saturday 7th October 2006

Call for Papers and Open Invitation

Bob Thomson devoted over 40 years of his life to medieval archaeology, and his interests ranged from medieval settlements, buildings and building materials, firearms, trade and especially medieval pottery. He was an immense figure in the archaeology of Southampton, where, at various times, he ran excavations, studied pottery, recorded and managed the ancient monuments, and ran the museum. Bob's energy and commitment took him far beyond Southampton, however, and he made friends and contacts throughout Britain and Europe.

Bob died in September 2005, and this event is our tribute to his life and work, and opportunity to recognise his influence and legacy. The day is organised by Southampton City Council and the Southampton City Museums Archaeological Society, and is open to all who wish to attend. There will be a series of lectures touching on subjects Bob was closely involved with, followed by a more Thomsonsque celebration in a nearby hostelry. There will also be a bookstall, where some of Bob's extensive library will be on sale, all proceeds to go to his widow.

Our aim is to gather together old friends and colleagues but also to attract as wide an audience as possible. Our invitation extends to anybody interested in a wide-ranging and informative discussion of medieval and post-medieval archaeology.

All offers of presentations, or expressions of interest, should be directed to:

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