

Secretary's Notes



The last council meeting was held at the British Museum on the 27th June 2008. It was reported that an application to the J. G. Hurst Travel Fund has been received and is currently being assessed. The fund is now advertised on the Medieval Archaeology website and other organisations are also interested in promoting the fund. The editorial committee reported that volume 29 of Medieval Ceramics is ready for release this summer and will contain seven papers and seven reviews; volumes 30 and 31 are well underway.

The 2008 conference was held in Siena, Italy between the 7th and the 9th of July. The event was well attended, with over 50 attendees from the UK alone. The three-day event examined the theme of ceramics from the European Mediterranean states. At the AGM held during the conference, several members of council retired: Victoria Bryant stood down as president and is replaced by Duncan Brown; Beverley Nenck has handed the role of Regional Groups Secretary to Anna Slowikowski and Chris Jarrett has been co-opted to cover the Meetings Secretary position. Nigel Jeffries also stepped down as Assistant Treasurer. Unfortunately this position, Co-editor and Assistant Editor are now vacant. It is hoped these roles will be filled shortly. The website will now be maintained by Maggi Noke and Oilly Russell of Worcestershire Archaeological Service. Those members retiring from council are thanked for their input and hard work over the last few years.

The next council meeting will be held in September at the British Museum. Items for inclusion on the agenda should be addressed to the Secretary.

Anne Boyle Secretary

Regional Groups Questionnaire

Last year it was decided that a concerted effort should be made to try and revive the regional groups. However, to do this, we needed to know what the real situation was, and why and how it had come to such dire straits.

To this end, questionnaires were sent out to all members, including overseas members - 38 were returned. Separate questionnaires were also sent out to all Regional Group Organisers, asking different questions, and requesting that they complete both the members' and the organisers' questionnaires - 5 were returned. There are 12 regional groups, of which only 3 are in any way 'active': SW, SEMPER and Scotland.

The answers to the questions and the additional comments were somewhat predictable. It should be noted that the IFA regional groups are in the same situation, with many of them as moribund as the MPRG groups. We always knew or suspected what the reasons were for the demise of the regional groups but at least

this questionnaire has provided us with something concrete to work on.

The active groups hold meetings either yearly or twice yearly, usually held at the weekend. The question of weekdays v. weekends was discussed at a recent SEMPER meeting and it was decided to continue meeting at weekends because there is unwillingness on the part of some employers to allow time during the working week for these. This means that weekend meetings can eat into people's family lives, and are part of the reason for their demise. However, it would seem that the major problem lies with the lack of time to organize meetings, not with the attendance. Freelance specialists may be more likely to attend meetings during the week, but are no more willing than anyone else to give up their own time to organise a regional group on a regular basis.

Other suggested reasons for the demise of regional groups are:

- The competitive tendering situation works against any sharing of knowledge;

- The tendency to do post-excavation analysis on the cheap means that only the bare minimum ever gets done, leading to an absence of new research/synthetic work and therefore stagnation;
- The funding emphasis on projects of national and international significance means that regional studies have taken a back seat;
- Problems finding suitable venues;
- Fewer young people coming in therefore no demand for meetings where they could expand their experience;
- Fewer people generally working within a region, so few specialists now work in this area and much of the work is so bitty that it would always be a struggle to keep numbers up sufficiently to justify holding meetings
- We're all getting older with less time and energy to spare!
- Some members did not know that there was a group (even if inactive) in their area; neither did they know whether they were on a mailing list or not!

Cost has little relevance. Charging for a day meeting to cover room hire and refreshments does not seem to put people off. Most (all?) people are happy to attend meetings but few wish to involve themselves in their organisation. One of the questions I wish I had asked was whether people would be willing to contribute to meetings rather than just attending them.

All is not doom and gloom, however, and several people have offered to help with organising/reviving a regional group (see note on West Midlands group in this newsletter!!). The fact that everyone said they would attend meetings if they were organised is heartening.

Some positive suggestions were made:

- Museums should be more involved;
- Meetings should be advertised more widely to reach other audiences;
- Meetings should have a mixed focus, encouraging participation from other heritage bodies (SMR/HER, Planning archaeologists, local archaeological societies, other period based groups etc);
- Regional groups should concentrate on training/practical experience;
- Regional groups should be more involved in campaigning to get pottery into the forefront.

There does seem to be a feeling that regional groups still have a role to play and that meeting in smaller more informal settings can be very useful. Much depends on the organiser and the task can be somewhat onerous, but

this task can be shared with people taking it in turns to organise or host a meeting.

The next step, therefore, will be to contact all the Regional Group Organisers in the near future to confirm first of all, if they are still willing to act in this capacity and secondly to confirm mailing lists and contacts. Hopefully we will be able to revive at least some of the groups.

In the meantime, any other suggestions and/or comments will be not only gratefully received but very welcome! Please contact me on a.slowikowski@albion-arch.com

Anna Slowikowski

Ben busy at Southampton

Ben Jervis reports on his progress over the last few months as a trainee with Southampton Museum, his position is funded under the IFA workplace bursary scheme and supported by the MPRG.

Since I last wrote just after my appointment I have been very busy acquainting myself with Southampton's pottery, working on several projects which will (hopefully!) have reached completion by the time my placement finishes in November. The first of these was recording and writing up a huge backlog assemblage from York Buildings in Southampton (excavated in the late 1980's). Working on this multiperiod site was an excellent opportunity to familiarise myself with Southampton's type series and tap Duncan's knowledge. Following this I decided to research some other backlog assemblages in order to broaden the comparative dataset within Southampton, looking at material from more recent excavations in Southampton High Street. I have just started to work on material from another 1980's excavation at Southampton Friary. All this has meant I have had to jump in at the deep end, learning about Southampton's Saxon, Medieval and Post Medieval pottery as I have gone. Hopefully much of this work will appear in future editions of Medieval Ceramics. In addition to this I am grateful to the IFA for funding my attendance at the IFA conference and the IFA finds group training day on 'Slags and Wasters' where it was great to hear Jacqui Pearce discussing the waster material from the Bow Porcelain factory excavations. The MPRG also funded my attendance at the ceramic petrology group conference in January where I gave a paper on Saxon pottery from Chichester as well as the excellent conference in Siena where it was fantastic to meet so many members of the group in such a beautiful setting. Finally I look forward to seeing many of you at regional group meetings (including one in Southampton!) in coming months as my placement draws to a close.

Ben Jervis

Medieval London-type Ware Kilns Discovered at Woolwich

London-type ware is one of the best known types of medieval pottery found in southern England and is best known for its series of plain and highly decorated jugs. In its hey-day, between the 12th and the 14th centuries, it was arguably the most important and influential medieval pottery industry in south-east England. Although its main distribution area was London and the south-east of the country, London-type ware was traded as far afield as Ireland, Scotland and Norway. Despite the fact that it is one of the most familiar types of medieval pottery known to researchers in England, and has even been the subject of a highly acclaimed monograph (by Jacqui Pearce et al. 1985), the whereabouts of the London ware kilns has never been discovered - until now, that is.

Between November 2007 and February 2008 Oxford Archaeology investigated an area of land known as the 'Teardrop' site immediately to the west of the Royal Arsenal, Woolwich, in south-east London and lying little more than 100 m. south of the Thames. The site takes its name from the teardrop-shaped piece of land bounded on the west by Beresford Street and on the east by the curve of Warren Lane. It is located on a natural sand and gravel terrace (Palaeocene Thanet Beds) but not on any immediately useful clay deposits, although the London Clay lies not far away. About 150 m. north-west of the site two 17th-century pottery kilns had been discovered at Woolwich Ferry Approach in 1974 (Pryor and Blockley 1978), one of these a redware kiln and one an important early stoneware kiln.

When Trench 27 was marked-out and machining began in November 2007 the digger bucket clipped the top of an oval tile-built structure barely a couple of feet under the floor level of the recently demolished Victorian housing. This was cleaned back and the cavity within the structure was found to be packed with reddened pottery wasters - including many near-complete vessels. Clearly a pottery kiln had been discovered. Although the excavators were quite pleased by the discovery (and their massive Iron-age ditch elsewhere on site) it was only when the first samples of pottery came back to the office that they were recognised as London-type ware and the alarm bells began to ring that something really very significant (and exciting!) had been discovered - they had found the London ware kilns. Now it has to be admitted that, technically, this is not the first time a London-type ware had been discovered and recognised but very few people were aware of the earlier discovery. The first kiln, which was also double-flued and very similar in design to the

2007 kiln, was discovered in 1999 on an earlier excavation by Oxford Archaeology within the grounds of Royal Arsenal approximately 120 m. north-east of the 2007 kiln, just in front of the Royal Laboratory. The significance of the 1999 kiln was not fully recognised at the time and in the prevailing conditions of rescue archaeology and client confidentiality very few pottery specialists were made aware of it. The only 'published' references to it were in the 'grey literature' of the client report and a passing mention in the Greater London Industrial Archaeology (GLIAS) newsletter around the time (Dec. 2000). The discovery of the 2007 kiln is effectively the first time these discoveries have been made public and their full significance realised.



Jacqui Pearce, one of the authors of the London-type ware monograph, was the first person invited to visit the site in December 2007. On 28th February 2008, by which time the full plan of the kiln had been exposed, a larger group of MPRG members, and representatives of local archaeological societies, were also invited to view the kiln before it was reburied. I think it is true to say that everyone was impressed by what they saw, particularly the excellent state of preservation of the kiln. A small display of pottery from the kiln, and from the later kilns found on site, was made available for examination.

The main medieval kiln, Kiln 2706, was a substantial structure built of coursed peg tile bonded with fine clay. It was of double-flued updraught type with an oval firing chamber and a central pedestal, which was perhaps

originally elliptical with a median channel on top, but which had later been modified into a tongue-like structure. The stokeholes were orientated WSW-ENE and were fully arched over and integral to a pair of very neatly constructed tile-built walls or 'fascias' at right angles to the long axis of the oval firing chamber. These contained the oval wall of the firing chamber within a roughly rectangular box-like structure. Overall the dimensions of the structure were approximately 3.4 m. x 2.5 m, although the internal length of the firing chamber was only around 2.2 m. What surprised visitors was the apparent depth below the original medieval ground surface that the kiln had been dug into the 'natural' sandy soil – a factor that undoubtedly contributed to its excellent state of preservation – the eastern tiled fascia with its neatly-arched stokehole survived to an impressive height of around 2.11 m. Within the kiln the sandy clay floor sloped steeply downwards from east to west although this may have been one of the later modifications, as probably were a pair of tile-built 'cheeks' or baffles on the sides of the firing chamber which may have concentrated or redirected the flow of heat within the kiln. At some point the kiln owners blocked off the eastern stokehole and fascia with pottery wasters and rubble and shortened the length of the firing chamber by adding an internal curved wall at its eastern end. At the same time they truncated the original shape of the central pedestal by bonding it to the new back wall. All this appears to have been with the intention of turning the original double-flued kiln into a single-flued kiln. Clearly this was quite a complex structure showing several phases of modification and experimentation. How successful these modifications were we may never really know. No obvious evidence for how pots were stacked in the kiln, such as firebars, was discovered.



When found the kiln was packed with pottery wasters in a loose sandy soil containing much burnt clay or daub. These appeared to have been back-filled into the open-topped kiln when it was abandoned, probably from a spoil

heap to the east. At the base of the fill several complete baluster jugs were found lying on their sides parallel to the walls of the firing chamber and at the lower western end of the kiln there was a concentration of complete small drinking jugs. The upper fill contained more broken vessels of various types. The limited range of vessel forms produced in the kiln, mostly fairly plain types, almost certainly date its period of use to the 14th century – towards or at the end of the medieval London ware production period. Most common were tall tulip-necked baluster jugs with a plain allover white external slip under a patchy clear or slightly greenish glaze. Next were small unglazed drinking jugs. A small number of rounded jugs had simple linear decoration in white slip. Non-jug forms were considerably less common but included unusual bowl-shaped skillets with a pouring lip and solid tongue-like side handle. These do not occur in the published London ware catalogue and Jacqui Pearce suggested they may presage early post-medieval forms and perhaps indicate a production date well into the 14th century. Long oval dripping pans were another minor product. The most surprising and decorative piece from the kiln backfill was a finely modelled horse-and-rider roof finial with complete horse's head, forepart of the body and rider's torso. The backfill of the eastern fascia also produced a substantial part of a louver and a similar louver fragment was found elsewhere on site. All in all several thousand sherds of pottery were recovered from the kiln infill.

The kiln products therefore, would seem to indicate a date of perhaps c. 1300-1350 for the operation of the kiln – and perhaps towards the middle of the century? Archaeomagnetic samples were taken but initial results from these are a little perplexing and may need to be re-examined. Two samples from the clay lining gave a last-firing date of AD 1217 (95% confidence interval AD 1159-1267). This, however, seems much too early. However, nine tile samples from the kiln showed a range of dates due to incomplete re-firing and three of these gave a date of AD 1400 (95% confidence interval AD 1267-1425). It may be that this last date is closer to the truth even though it seems just a little bit too late. The dating of London-type ware is sufficiently well established to cast doubt on these archaeomagnetic dates and, for my money, I would rather trust the pottery dating for the time being. Hopefully samples taken for radiocarbon dating (but yet to be tested) will eventually resolve this issue. The 1999 kiln produced a much smaller assemblage but the range of forms was similar to the 2007 kiln.

Immediately next to Kiln 2706, at its north-west corner, the considerably damaged remains of another kiln (Kiln 2741) were revealed on more of a north-south axis. This

appeared to be of similar construction and basic plan. Indications are that it predates Kiln 2706 but not perhaps by very much. In the last days of digging and recording of Kiln 2706 what appeared to be the natural sand below the kiln surprisingly proved not to be so, as several waster pits were found within it. These, and some enigmatic tile-built features at the base of the kiln suggested to the excavators that it may have been built on top of an even earlier kiln. Unfortunately there was no more time left. The kiln has since been covered with protective materials and reburied. Most of the site is destined to become a temporary car park but there may be a chance to investigate the kiln further when the site is redeveloped for housing in 5 or 6 years time. Elsewhere on the site sherds of highly decorated, possibly 13th-century, London-type ware jugs have been discovered and some of these appear to be wasters too.

Pottery production appears to have continued on the site for several centuries. In the northern half of the site the damaged remains of two brick-built kilns (Kilns 3500 and 4635) dated to c. 1480-1550 were revealed. These produced redware pottery of a type formerly known as 'Guy's Hospital ware' including unglazed, often reduced, vessels with simple white slip painting (cisterns, jugs etc) and vessels with an allover white internal slip under a clear or green glaze (wide bowls, tripod pipkins etc). Near these the remains of a circular tile-built kiln were also found. This produced common post-medieval glazed redware pottery datable to c. 1575-1650. These remarkable discoveries testify, perhaps, to an unbroken tradition of pottery production at Woolwich from at least the 14th century until the 17th century.

Literally crates and crates of pottery were recovered, and washing and processing of this has barely begun, although most of the medieval kiln material has at least been washed. Sadly this processing has had to be temporarily halted as the developers of the site have withheld essential funding due to the current threat of economic recession. When this will be resumed we cannot say. One thing is for certain, however, that when analysis and publication of this large and varied assemblage is finally complete the history of medieval and post-medieval pottery production in south-east London will have to be re-written.

Bibliography

- Pearce, J.E., Vince, A.G. and Jenner, M.A. 1985, A dated type-series of London medieval pottery, Part 2: London-type ware, Trans London Middlesex Archaeol Soc, Special Paper 6.
- Pryor, S., and Blockley, K. 1978 'A 17th-century kiln site at Woolwich', Post-med Archaeol, 12, 30-85.

John Cotter, Oxford Archaeology

Meetings and Announcements

MPRG SOUTHERN REGIONAL GROUP MEETING: Call for Papers: Understanding the end of Medieval Ceramics in Southern England

Current research in Southampton is aimed in part at understanding the pottery of the 15th-17th centuries and the transition between what we recognise as Medieval and Post Medieval wares. This definition is patchy across southern England. Whilst excavations in Poole, Portsmouth, Reading and other towns have identified Medieval and Post Medieval pottery this has largely been in relation to their presence alongside other datable wares. Away from the Surrey-Hampshire border and Verwood, little is known of the production sites which served Southampton and other settlements during the early Post Medieval period. Papers are invited which will address some of these problems or disseminating new research. Potential themes may include:

- Analysis of Late Medieval, Post Medieval or transitional assemblages from the region in relation to production or consumer sites.
- Papers addressing the continuity and change occurring in ceramics during this period.
- The effect of the historical/social/economic context on pottery production and consumption in the region.
- The relationship between local wares, non local wares and imports.

A selection of 14th-16th century pottery from excavations in Southampton will be on display and attendees are invited to bring along any groups of significance if they wish. A programme of speakers will be posted in due course.

The meeting will take place at Tudor Merchants Hall, Southampton on **Monday 20th October 2008**. If you would like to present a paper or bring some pottery please contact Ben Jervis at :

ben.jervis@southampton.gov.uk

MPRG WEST MIDLANDS REGIONAL GROUP MEETING

A meeting of the West Midlands regional group will be held at Gloucester Museum on **Saturday 27th September 2008** between 10.30am and 4.00pm. The meeting will have mainly Roman focus however other periods will be discussed. Anyone interested in attending should contact Derek Hurst (01905 855456/dhurst@worcestershire.gov.uk).

**MEDIEVAL POTTERY REGIONAL GROUP MEETING:
YORK 2008-2009: Some 17th – early 19th century
pottery from Hungate in its historical setting.**

This meeting will be held in the Meeting Room and Pottery Research Room, York Archaeological Trust, 47 Aldwark, York, YO1 7BX on **Saturday 15th November 2008**. The cost will be £5.

Programme:

10.00-10.30 Coffee and registration

10.30-10.45 Welcome and introduction to the work of YAT
(Ailsa Mainman)

11.00-11.30 Overview of the excavation work at Hungate
and tour of the site (Pete Connelly)

11.30-12.00 "Landowners, Residents and Businessmen;
Some background details to the development of
Hungate across the 17th – 19th centuries". (Jayne
Rimmer)

12.00-2.00 Lunch (not provided)

2.00-3.00 Pottery viewing (Anne Jenner and Ailsa
Mainman)

3.00-3.30 Tea

To register please contact Anne Jenner 01904663023/
ajenner@yorkat.co.uk

**THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE SOCIETY FOR
CLAY PIPE RESEARCH: Clay Tobacco Pipes in the
North-West of England (Liverpool University and
Norton Priory, 20th-21st September 2008)**

The main theme will be pipes and pipe production in the North-West, particularly in light of discoveries from recent excavations in Liverpool. As well as the formal papers there will also be displays, handling sessions and an opportunity to see the finds from Norton Priory and neighbouring sites. Non-members welcome but advance booking (conference fee £10) is necessary by **Monday**

7th September 2008. For further details and bookings contact Peter Davey (email pjd1@liverpool.ac.uk or phone 01624 897215).

**THE ACADÉMIE INTERNATIONALE DE LA PIPE
ANNUAL CONFERENCE: The Pipe in its Socio-
Economic Context - A Symposium (Liverpool
University, Friday 19th September 2008)**

The Académie Internationale de la Pipe is holding its annual conference in Liverpool this year and is pleased to invite members of the public to attend a symposium at the Victoria Gallery & Museum at Liverpool University on Friday 19th September 2008, from 2.00-5.30pm. There will be a series of papers on pipes in their social context from around the world with speakers from as far afield as Japan and Argentina. Admission is free but it is necessary to book a place by Monday 7th September. Please contact Dr Jenny Woodcock for further details and/or to book a place (email iolanthe@onetel.com or phone 0151 727 8243).

PIRATES OF THE EAST END

A special exhibition of artefacts recovered from the Limehouse residences of known privateers recovered during excavations at Narrow Street and the adjacent Victoria Wharf sites (PCA Ltd and MoLAS excavations). The exhibition will be hosted by Sampson and Horne Antiques, 120 Mount Street, London from the 1st October to 19th December, Monday to Friday 10.00-5.30. For more information visit www.sampsonandhorne.com

MPRG Contacts

President

Duncan Brown
13 Southcliff Rd, Southampton
e-mail duncan@potboiler.fsnet.co.uk
telephone 02380 915728

Treasurer

Jenny Vaughan
4 Pelton Mews, Pelton Lane Ends, Chester Le
Street, County Durham, DH2 1QG
e-mail jen.ncas@virgin.net

Secretary

Anne Boyle
7 Oakleigh Drive, Lincoln, LN1 1DG
e-mail Anne.Boyle1@ntlworld.com

Membership Secretary

Nigel Jeffries
MoLSS, Mortimer Wheeler House, 46 Eagle
Wharf Road, London N1 7ED
e-mail njeffries@museumoflondon.org.uk
Telephone 0207 566 9312

Assistant Secretary

Andrew Sage
23 Mill Plat Avenue, Isleworth, Middlesex, TW7
6RD
e-mail andrew.sage@dunelm.org.uk

General

Medieval Pottery Research Group, c/o MoLSS,
Mortimer Wheeler House, 46 Eagle Wharf
Road, London N1 7ED