



Secretary's Notes

In contrast to recent editions it was a great relief to discover when it came to prepare my missive for this edition that there is no bad news to linger on. Instead I find another full Newsletter that shines a light on new developments in the study of medieval ceramics. It is particularly encouraging to see reviews of two conferences from current PhD students underlining that there is still an appetite for the subject amongst recent graduates; I was particularly struck that yet again the demographic of the MPRG conference was younger than I previously recall (I don't deny this observation may relate to my own increasing years). This year's 3-day conference 'Dating and Deposits' took place in Perth and was well attended. The

central debate of the conference was focused on the date of London Shelly Ware pottery, in light of new radiocarbon dates from Perth and Bergen. Both sides of the debate were vigorously argued, both in the conference hall and the pub afterwards. It is refreshing to know that not only is the demographic getting younger but, that there are still new arguments to be had about established dates that had become *de facto*. A range of other papers were also presented covering topics such as depositional processes and dating techniques; the paper on Rehydroxylation left many of the audience salivating over its potential! The Gerald Dunning Lecture was presented by Victoria Bryant. Our thanks goes to George Haggarty for organising the conference and also to Derek Hall who kept us fully informed on the archaeology of Perth throughout the three days.

The AGM was held during the Perth conference. It voted against the proposal to change the name of the group to the *Medieval and later Pottery Research Group* as had been suggested at the previous conference. The Group gave their thanks to those members of council who were standing down. We are pleased to welcome those new members who were elected at the AGM; Bernie Sudds as Assistant Editor and Imogen Wood and Alice Forward as ordinary members. Julie Edwards was re-elected as Vice-President for a second term.

The new edition of *Medieval Ceramics* will be published shortly and will include a range of papers including several that were presented at the 2008 conference in Sienna. The next in the series of the Groups Occasional Papers *Late Medieval Reduced Wares* by Anna Slowikowski will also be due ready for publication shortly. It is anticipated that another two Occasional Papers, *Scottish Redwares* and *Ipswich Wares* will be published within the next twelve months.

Council will next meet on Wednesday 29th September. Could anyone with issues they wish to be raised please contact me by **Monday 27th September**. Please note that the deadline for contributions to the next newsletter is **12th November**.

Andrew Sage Secretary

Research Framework

Work on the Research Framework is progressing well. A resource assessment has been undertaken to identify published works, internet and other resources - this is ongoing and will be added to using information collected during the regional meetings and through the questionnaire.

A questionnaire aimed at those working or with an interest in post-Roman ceramics has been in circulation since April. So far, we've had 48 responses but have decided to extend the deadline to the end of July in the hope more people will contribute. Mini surveys aimed at journals, contracting units, local government archaeologists, museums and universities have also been circulated with good response rates for most.

A dedicated 'wiki' website has been created for the project. This format was chosen as it allows data to be added quickly and easily. This is constantly being updated and contains details of the research, meetings and the questionnaire.

A round of consultation meetings, 6 in England and further meetings in Scotland and Wales, are currently taking place. These will discuss and prioritise objectives for each region and for the group as a whole. Two of these, covering the London/South East and South Central and SEMPER/East Anglia regions, have already taken place. The remaining meetings are:

EAST MIDLANDS & YORKSHIRE

Tuesday 20th July 2010
10:30am to 4pm

Central Library, Free School Lane Lincoln Lincolnshire LN2 1EZ
Places are still available - please contact
Anne Boyle

WEST MIDLANDS

Monday 26th July 2010
Club Room, The Old Joint Stock, 4 Temple Row West, Birmingham, B2 5NY
10:30am to 4pm
Places are still available - please contact
Anne Boyle

WALES

Wednesday 28th July 2010
The Yard Bar and Kitchen, St Mary Street, Cardiff, CF10 1AD
10:30am to 4pm
Places are still available - please contact
Anne Boyle

SOUTH WEST

29th July 2010
The upper reading room
The Devon and Exeter Institution, 7 The Close, Exeter, EX11EZ.
phone: 01392274727
www.devonandexeterinstitution.org
10:30am to 4pm
Places still available - please contact Anne Boyle
A meeting to discuss the SW framework will also be held during the Bickley project on the 27th July 2010. Please

contact David Dawson (davidp@dawsonheritage.co.uk) for details.

Once the consultation meetings are complete, a document will be produced incorporating the information gathered by that point. This will be circulated and a single consultation meeting to discuss it will be held in London - the provisional date for this meeting is the 16th October 2010, venue TBC.

Anne Boyle

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Things Medieval Continued...

In February the MPRG and the Society for Medieval Archaeology co-hosted 'Things Medieval', a day conference in tribute to Alan Vince. Participants paid a tenner each towards the costs with any surplus donated to the St. Barnabas Day Hospice, Lincoln, where Alan received care in his final weeks.

It is pleasing to report that a very well attended conference raised a donation of £526.65. St Barnabas Hospice have replied expressing their gratitude for our gift in memory of Alan, assuring us that 'your gift will be used to help provide comfort and support to those in need throughout Lincolnshire and will stand as a living tribute'.

Cheers (as Alan would have said).

Duncan Brown President

Unusual Pot from Stirling Castle

Derek Hall and George Haggarty recently assessed the excavated pottery assemblage from Stirling Castle on behalf of Historic Scotland and would be grateful for any parallels for the piece of ceramic described below.

Stirling Castle SC/LD 94 (Lion's Den)

This assemblage includes a very interesting shaped vessel in a redware fabric (brick red colour). It is not a British or North European product, possibly being from Iberia or even further a-field? The small vessel has a hole in its base c. 4mm in diameter, and another small hole in its side below its rim 2mm in diameter. It also has scoring on its interior surface. The vessel is 58mm in height and 94mm in diameter. A search through the published literature by George Haggarty did not find any parallels.



Derek Hall and George Haggarty

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Conference Reviews: Ceramic Views of Northern Britain and Early Medieval Students Symposium

Ceramic Views of Northern Britain

The 'Ceramic Views of Scotland and northern England from the Neolithic to the 20th century: issues of method, practice and theory' conference was held at Glasgow University from 1st-2nd July.

The scope of this conference was to investigate the overarching themes which affect the study of ceramics from all periods. Several papers took the form of overviews aimed at addressing the current state of knowledge of, for example, medieval and post-medieval ceramics in Scotland. Methodological approaches relating to attempts to overcome problems of taphonomy formed the focus of a number of papers, whilst the results of experimental work and functional approaches were also presented. The recent application of scientific method to the study of ceramics of various periods also formed a strong focus. These papers included discussions of the development of the rehydroxylation technique, radiocarbon dating, luminescence dating, organic residue analysis, petrology, and the role of chemical analyses in ceramic studies. More detail on individual papers will be available in due course when the abstracts will be made available on the conference website.

In the final summation, Ian Armit noted the conference recognised the potential for scientific analysis, however highlighted the general paucity of the explicit application of theory in the papers given. He particularly noted the need for more nuanced interpretations of the role of gender in the development of pottery production, and the need to reassess the relationship between ceramic and aceramic regions.

The provisioning of a number of discussion sessions benefited the discursive nature of the meeting, with topics raised including the need to address dissemination of grey literature, the future curation and retention of ceramic materials, and importantly the need for skills training for future specialists. The requirement for a framework to address these problems and more was noted by many throughout the course of the conference. The possibility was raised that in Scotland such issues could be addressed through the Scottish Archaeological Research Framework (ScARF), moreover the general discussion seemed timely given the current progress of the MPRG in reassessing regional frameworks.

Ceramic Views was, in all, a positive and unique progression towards recognising the need for multidisciplinary and cross-period interaction, with honest discussions of how ceramic studies in Scotland and northern Britain need to be improved. What remains is to ensure positive action be taken to resolve these identified issues.

Medieval pottery session at the Early Medieval Archaeology Student Symposium 2010

The session entitled 'Making Pots' was presented at EMASS 2010 on the 20th May in University College Dublin, Ireland. Three members of the Medieval Pottery Research Group braved the threat of the ash cloud and travelled safely to sunny Dublin, where their medieval pottery papers were very well received by the symposium. Imogen Wood presented a paper entitled: 'The entwined trajectories of pots and people: social and material culture

change in the early medieval period of Southwest England'. Alison Kyle's paper 'Resistance is futile?: ceramic regionalism and the question of choice' examined the use of Soutterain Ware in eastern Ulster. Ben Jervis rounded off the pottery session with his paper: 'Pottery and the Norman conquest of England. A case study from Southampton'. I was happy to chair the lively discussion that the papers generated, which explored the potential of pottery to tell us about socio-cultural events in the past and discussed themes of identity and agency in pottery studies. These themes resonated throughout the rest of the symposium, which included sessions presenting archaeological research in areas such as landscape, personal ornament, metalwork and the Anglo Saxon World - a session which was chaired by Imogen Wood. Papers from the symposium will be published online on the EMASS website at a later date: <http://emass.group.shef.ac.uk/Publications.html>. Next year's conference will be held at Glasgow University, for further information contact Alison Kyle (a.kyle.1@research.gla.ac.uk).

Alison Kyle and Niamh Doyle

Videos

Members may be interested of a video available through the Yorkshire film archive of the pottery Isaac Button at work. The video is approximately 20 minutes long and can be found at <http://tinyurl.com/isaacbutton>.

Chris Cumberpatch

Aspects of Pottery Meeting

A meeting of the South East Midlands Pottery Research Group was held on Saturday, 17 April 2010 at Harlow Museum. It was a meeting tinged with sadness because we had gathered to discuss subjects close to the heart of Wally Davey who died in February.

One of the most engaging contributions was by Albert Storey, a friend and colleague of Wally, who gave an appreciation of Wally's life and career. Wally had a particularly varied life even before he became a potter and archaeologist. As a youngster, he went with his parents to help out in the Spanish Civil War; he flew gliders in the Far East during World War II, and after the War served in Palestine.

Wally was a long standing and supportive member of SEMPER and the theme of the day was the wide-ranging subject matter in which he was interested. We discussed

pottery from Hertfordshire and Essex; post-medieval pottery from Glasgow and various aspects of pottery technology, from the documentary historian's point of view as well as that of both the archaeologist and the practising potter.

As at all SEMPER meetings, there was plenty of pottery on view, not only examples of wasters and other sherds discussed in the various talks but also pottery not necessarily linked to the theme of the day about which people had questions.

About 15 people attended the meeting - indicative of the high regard in which Wally was held.

Anyone interested in future SEMPER meetings, or in finding out more about their regional group should contact Anna Slowikowski (Anna.Slowikowski@albion-arch.com).

Anna Slowikowski and Helen Walker

Current Work on Saxo-Norman Pottery in Ireland

Extensive excavations were carried out by the National Museum of Ireland in Dublin city centre (1962-1981). Post excavation is on-going and a series of monographs have been published covering (A) the building and topography, (B) the artefacts and (C) environmental evidence: www.museum.ie. With regards to the pottery, three extensive articles were published in 1988: Ken Barton on the assemblages at High Street and Winetavern Street; John Hurst on the imported wares and Alan Vince on the petrology of the English wares. The first in the monograph series, Medieval Pottery from Wood Quay, Dublin (2006) deals with some 85,000 sherds from the waterfront excavations, primarily late 12th-early 14th century in date. The second monograph, Saxo-Norman Pottery from Dublin 850-1150 is scheduled for publication in 2014. So far, c.11,000 sherds from six sites have been sorted, giving an assemblage of c.3,100 sherds of Saxo-Norman pottery for the study. These consist of Andenne-type ware, Ham Green A ware, Normandy ware, and numerous unglazed wares including a baseline group of Stafford-type wares, very helpfully identified by Debbie Ford during the 2002 MPRG conference in Dublin. In addition, there are at least three semi-complete Crowland bowls and it is intended to use 'spare' sherds from these to attempt to define provenance and date. More updates and questions to follow!

Clare McCutcheon
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Meetings and Announcements

DOUAI CONFERENCE

A preliminary programme for the Douai colloquium on early medieval pottery workshops can be found on the MPRG website. The conference will feature speakers from France, Britain, Germany, the Low Countries and further afield and takes place between 5th-8th October. For more information contact Freddy Thuiller (freddy.thuiller@inrap.fr).

SOCIETY FOR MEDIEVAL ARCHAEOLOGY AUTUMN CONFERENCE: MEDIEVAL DOMESTIC CULTURES

The Society For Medieval Archaeology's autumn conference will examine the evidence for the interiors of late medieval domestic buildings. It is jointly organized with the Vernacular Architecture Group and brings together for the first time in recent years, scholars from all the relevant archaeology, history and architectural history to review the latest work in this field in England, Scotland and Wales. The conference will be held between 24th-26th September at Rewley House, Oxford. For further information visit www.medievalarchaeology.org.

SEM AND MICROANALYSIS IN THE STUDY OF HISTORICAL TECHNOLOGY, MATERIALS AND CONSERVATION

The British Museum's Department of Conservation and Scientific Research is hosting a conference on the application of scanning electron microscopy and microanalysis (SEM-EDX) to the study of materials, manufacturing methods and deterioration processes of objects from ancient through to contemporary cultures. The conference takes place between Thursday 9th-Friday 10th September. Tickets cost £190 (£140 for students). Details can be found at <http://www.britishmuseum.org/sem2010>

FOURTH ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORKSHOP FOR YOUNG SCHOLARS: ARCHAEOOMETRICAL ANALYSIS OR PREHISTORIC AND EARLY MEDIEVAL CERAMICS.

This workshop will be held in Hamburg on Saturday 5th February 2011. Papers are invited from scholars working in this area, the deadline for submissions is 30th November 2010.

THE 1ST INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS ON CERAMIC STUDIES

The 1st International Congress on Ceramic Studies, a tribute to Mercedes Vegas will be held in Cadiz from 1st-5th November 2010.

The event is aimed to anyone who is interested in ceramic studies. The congress will be a forum to analyze and synthesise recent advances in the techniques of ceramic analysis, including methodology, morphological and typological classifications, graphical representations, new

technologies in data processing, experimental studies, and scientific techniques. For more information visit www.congresointernacionaldeestudiosceramicos.com

EUROPEAN POTTERY PRODUCTION CENTRES ROUND TABLE

It is intended to hold a round table at this year's EAA conference in The Hague (1st to 5th September) with the aim of reviewing and rejuvenating the Ceramic Production Centres in Europe project which has stalled in recent years. For further details please contact Derek Hall, Secretary, CPCE Derek.hall1@blueyonder.co.uk and check the conference website <http://www.eaa2010.nl/>

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