



Secretary's Notes

While we currently swelter in temperatures in the low thirties it already seems a long time ago that the group gathered in a rather soggy Douglas on the Isle of Man at the end of June. While we might have hoped for better weather we would not have wished for a more interesting and engaging range of papers at the conference – papers spanning from Greenland to Afghanistan must be a first for us. It was good to see so many people make their way across the Irish Sea for the 3-day conference. I would like to thank George Haggarty, Peter Davey, Harold Mytum and Liverpool University for organising another excellent conference.

For those who were not able to attend it is anticipated that several of the papers will appear in *Medieval Ceramics 34*.

The latest edition of *Medieval Ceramics* should by now be with you all. For more recent members it is worth noting that back copies of *Medieval Ceramics* including and prior to Volume 27 are now available for £5 (please contact Lyn Blackmore).

The AGM was held during the conference. Jenny Vaughan, who stood down this year as Treasurer after 5 years, was thanked for all her hard work over the last five years to successfully improve the group's finances. Imogen Wood was elected to replace Jenny and we wish her luck. Also elected were Anne Irving as Regional Groups Officer and Gareth Perry as an Ordinary Member. Can I thank them for volunteering to give up their time to help the group work towards its ambitions.

Andrew Sage Secretary

Mystery Pot from Filey Brigg

This pot was found by a member of the local research group (Robert Briggs) a year or so ago out on Filey Brigg (North Yorkshire, between Scarborough and Flamborough head) well below the high water mark. It appears to have been broken *in situ* - it is almost complete and there is no water erosion. From its location it could have washed up here from a near-by wreck, or come down the cliff and floated along in the water until breaking on the rocks.

The vessel is in a gritty, well-fired fabric with some 'splashed' glaze and a white brush stroke (visible on the picture). One suggestion is that it is a Frisian Kugeltopf - this type of pot appears to have a wide date range. Another that it is late medieval/early post medieval Iberian. Has anyone any other ideas as to its origins, purpose or dating?

Please pass on any ideas to johnbuglass@yahoo.com



Conference and Publication in Honour of Sarah Jennings

Don't forget to book for the conference in memory of Sarah Jennings which is being held in London on Friday 16th November 2012 (see website for details); profits from the conference will go towards a publication in Sarah's honour which will be published as a MPRG Occasional Paper.

The day will consist of papers on the theme of 'Recent Research and New Discoveries in Glass and Ceramics' and will end with a wine reception. The Wallace Collection, London have kindly made available their lecture theatre for the event which will be on Friday 16th November 2012.

Jennifer Price of the AHG has volunteered to handle bookings and a booking form is available on the AHG and MPRG websites: <http://www.historyofglass.org.uk/>; <http://www.medievalpottery.org.uk/>. The final programme will be available later in the summer.

Following on from the conference the theme of the publication will be 'Recent Research and New Discoveries in Glass and Ceramics' and contributions will be welcomed from Sarah's friends and colleagues. A submission deadline in the summer of 2013 is envisaged. If you would like to contribute a paper please send a provisional title and a brief outline to Julie Edwards (ceramics) or Sarah Paynter (glass Sarah.PAYNTER@english-heritage.org.uk) by 16th November 2012.

Julie Edwards

julie.edwards@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

Weapon of Mass Destruction? A fire-pot from Corfe Castle

Excavations took place at Corfe Castle in Dorset between 1986 and 1995, under the aegis of the National Trust. Post-excavation work on the project has continued intermittently since then, but most recently Wessex Archaeology has been carrying out analysis on various categories of material, including the pottery. The assemblage ranges in date from the 12th century through to the modern period; the castle was the site of a siege during the Civil War, and was slighted by Cromwell in 1646.

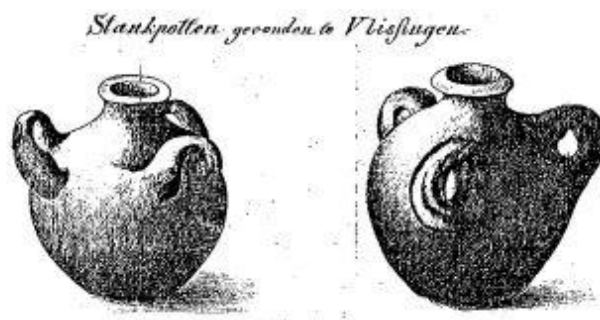
The vessel in question relates to the Civil War period. It is a small, unglazed, narrow-mouthed vessel with three equally-spaced, vertically looped handles. As I had no idea what it might be, I put it up on the MPRG Facebook page – many thanks to Nina Jaspers and Paul Courtney for their help with identification, and for pointing out useful parallels. It is in fact a fire-pot or grenade, of a type known on the Continent.



Ceramic fire-pots have a long history, and explosive hand-grenades were in use on the Continent by the 15th century. There is a useful discussion of the use of grenades and fire-pots in the 16th and 17th centuries with reference to examples of hand grenades from the Civil War siege of Leicester (Courtney and Courtney 1992, 69-76), and I've summarised the following from this work. According to documentary sources, grenades, for use in mortars and for hand-throwing, were being made in metal, ceramic and glass in the 16th and 17th centuries. An early 17th century treatise describes and illustrates ceramic hand-grenades with three or four handles - fuses were hung from the handles, to ignite the contents on impact, and the grenade was thrown by attaching a rope to the neck. The incendiary contents are listed as including gunpowder, sulphur, camphor, pitch and linseed oil; similar recipes are given in other 17th century sources.

Three-handled vessels identical to the Corfe example were found at Vlissingen in the Netherlands in the 19th century. Analysis of the preserved contents revealed pepper seeds, charcoal, pitch and sulphur, amongst other substances, and led to them being identified as 'stinkpots', to spread noxious fumes. Stinkpots are described in 1697, but as an item no longer in use, and there is no known evidence of their use in Britain. Grenades were certainly made in Britain; examples from Basing House in Hampshire are in

the local Surrey Whiteware, and there are examples from Basing House in Hampshire, and from Leicester. All these grenades, however, and other 17th century British examples cited by Courtney and Courtney (*ibid.*, 74, figs. 16-17), are of a relatively simple, globular form, possibly mould-made, with a hole in the top for the insertion of a fuse. No British parallel for the Corfe three-handled form has been found, and this could therefore be a Continental import, perhaps Dutch. From the documentary records of the supply and use of hand-grenades during the Civil War, one from Oxford in 1643 lists hand-grenades amongst supplies landed from the Netherlands, although these were of metal (*ibid.*, 75).



Reference

Courtney, P. and Courtney, Y., 1992, A siege examined: the Civil War archaeology of Leicester, *Post-Medieval Archaeol.* 26, 47-90

Lorraine Mephram

Conference Review: MPRG Annual Conference 2012

The theme of this year's conference was 'Ceramics on the Edge', a topic that lent itself not only to geographical peripheries but also to marginalised fields of study. Peter Davey set the scene for the conference in the Gerald Dunning Memorial Lecture by discussing the ceramic history of the Isle of Man, suggesting that throughout history the island has not only absorbed the material culture of the mainlands surrounding the Irish Sea but has created a ceramic heritage that is distinctly its own.

In the following two days, Derek Hall began the discussion of regional wares with his discussion of recent developments in the study of Scottish organic-tempered pottery. Alison Kyle highlighted the potential of studying the continuity and changes in medieval hand-built coarsewares from Ireland and western Britain in response to episodes of colonialism throughout the area. Beverly Ballin Smith introduced her work on The Udal, the site excavated by Iain Crawford several decades ago but never comprehensively studied or published. Although Ballin Smith has only recently acquired the site archive, she has shown that The Udal's material will allow scholars to study a full sequence of locally-made and imported pottery from prehistory through to the Middle Ages.

The Irish Sea region was well-represented in the proceedings, with Clare McCutcheon talking about Saxo-Norman wares in Dublin, Niamh (Doyle) Curtin presenting on pottery production in Ireland from the 12th to the 15th centuries and Alice Forward studying changes in local fabrics in South Glamorgan, Wales after the Norman Conquest. There was also a strong Scandinavian showing on the topic of urban ceramics, with Vibeke Vandrup

speaking about Scanian Black Earthenwares from Lund; Sonia Jeffery introducing the ceramic assemblage from excavations at Lödöse; and Lyn Blackmore turned her attention to the ceramic imports and redwares of Trondheim from the Viking Age to the 17th century.

The scope of research was not limited to Britain, Ireland and Scandinavia, however. In the east, Ben Jervis told the group about his work on medieval assemblages in Romania and Alison Gasgoigne told about the challenges of doing field survey and pottery collection at Jam, Afghanistan. To the west, Elizabeth Pierce surveyed the small medieval ceramic assemblages from across the North Atlantic.

The conference highlighted the potential for research using lesser-studied and often overlooked regional materials - such as hand-built wares and regionally-produced coarsewares - to add to the archaeological dialogue of areas often considered peripheral by scholars. During their presentations, several of the delegates invited colleagues and students to use their museum collections for research since funding cutbacks and a shortage of time means that curators themselves are not always able to do justice to their collections.

It was heartening for an archaeologist to see pottery specialists following the trend of British archaeologists toward more theoretical approaches to material culture, no longer simply counting the sherds and discussing mechanisms of trade but rather using assemblages to pursue discussions of identity and agency in material culture. This is something that is essential if we are to attempt to use ceramics, often the most plentiful finds on medieval sites, to better know the people from the past.

Following the conference, Peter Davey guided delegates on two days of field trips to a variety of sites across the Isle of Man. Among the highlights were a visit to Peel Castle on St Patrick's Isle, The Braaid, the medieval meeting site of Tynwald and the early medieval chapels and carved stones of Maughold. Many thanks are due to Peter, George Haggarty and Harold Mytum for their hard work organising the conference and bringing the delegates to the Isle of Man.

Elizabeth Pierce

Southampton Ceramic Research Group Conference: In Honour of Professor David Peacock

This conference will take place on 19th-21st October at The University of Southampton. The conference theme, Insights Through Innovation, reflects the enormous contribution made by Professor David Peacock to the scientific study of archaeological ceramics. The conference

will open with a plenary session on the Friday afternoon, in which Professor Mike Fulford, Dr Roberta Tomber, Professor Simon Keay, Dr Peter Day and Dr Ian Whitbred will share their experiences of working with David and reflect upon his impact in various fields of archaeological research. This will be followed by a wine reception and conference dinner.

The remaining 2 days of the conference will see papers with a broad regional and temporal scope presented on a range of innovative approaches. Of particular interest to MPRG members will be Yvonne de Rue's study of finger prints on Siegburg Stoneware vessels, Rebecca Bridgman's discussion of the display of medieval Islamic pottery, Joanitta Vroom's paper on food practices in the medieval Mediterranean and David Dawson (and collaborator's) presentation of cutting edge ceramic provenancing techniques. More exotic topics include hunter-gatherer ceramics from the Asian steppe, petrological approaches to Mediterranean prehistoric pottery and an exploration of the potential of phytoliths (plant microfossils) in ceramic studies. The broad topics to be covered include dating techniques, provenancing and new approaches to the display and interpretation of ceramics. The conference will also feature a paper presented by representatives of MPRG, the Study Group for Roman Pottery and the Prehistoric Ceramic Research Group, exploring common themes and challenges in pottery studies. The conference is generously supported by all 3 societies.

Details of the programme and booking information can be found at www.soton.ac.uk/innovationconference
Note – there is an early bird registration discount, valid until the end of August!

Ben Jervis

Additional Information on Medieval Pottery from Skegby

In the previous newsletter we publicised a publication on medieval wasters from Skegby in Nottinghamshire. Further information on this material is available in a paper published in *Transactions of the Thoroton Society, Volume 114, 2010* in the "Archaeology in Nottinghamshire 2010" section. A full report including thin section analysis is in preparation by the present writer and will be published in due course.

David Budge
david.budge@nottsc.gov.uk

Conference Calendar

7th-9th September 2012: Routine and Ritual in the Post-Medieval Home. Society for Post-Medieval Archaeology Conference. University of York.

15th-16th September 2012. Society for Clay Pipe Research Conference. The 28th annual SCPR conference will be held this year at the Vine Baptist Church hall, Park Lane, Sevenoaks, Kent, TN13 3UP. The Saturday programme of lectures will focus on the Kent clay tobacco pipe industry and will be complemented by displays. In the evening there will be the optional conference dinner at a local restaurant. A visit to a local historical attraction is to follow on the Sunday morning. Non-members of the Society will be very welcome to attend.

Further information is available on the Society website (<http://scpr.co>) or from Brian Boyden (email: brian.boyden@dsl.pipex.com) or Chris Jarrett (email: cjarrett@pre-construct.com)

19th-21st October 2012: Southampton Ceramics Research Group Conference in Honour of Prof. David Peacock.

16th November 2012: 1 day conference in memory of Sarah Jennings.

17th-19th December 2012: Theoretical Archaeology Group Conference, University of Liverpool. Featuring a session on contemporary approaches to material culture, organised by Paul Blinkhorn and Chris Cumberpatch.

MPRG Publications

Anna Slowikowski Festschrift

MPRG are producing a monograph of papers in memory of Anna Slowikowski. Anna tirelessly organised meetings of the South East Midlands Pottery Research Group, one of the few regional groups to meet on a regular basis and it is themes discussed at these meetings, often inspired by Anna's own work, which will form the basis for the monograph. Such themes for papers could concern pottery manufacture and technology, a tradition (e.g. shelly wares or greywares), its distribution (particularly concerning the influence of roads and rivers), the symbolism of decoration or an interesting assemblage/vessel.

One possible avenue of Anna's intended future research, to follow on from the publication of her (2011) 'Genius in a cracked pot', late medieval reduced ware: a regional synthesis', MPRG Occasional Paper 4, was the counterpart late medieval Midland's oxidised ware. A short paper discussing this pottery type would certainly be welcome. Already progressing is a multi-author paper, very much relevant to Anna, which concerns the organisation of regional groups and their meetings. Short (even anecdotal) contributions to this paper, from either past local group organisers – who so far have been failed to be contacted – or delegates to such events would be most welcome.

If you are interested in presenting a paper (c.4000 words) for Anna's festschrift, please contact Chris Jarrett

(cjarrett@pre-construct.com). It is hoped to publish the monograph within the next two years.

New occasional paper – The Ipswich ware project

The Editorial Committee is very happy to announce that MPRG's seventh occasional paper has just been published. 'The Ipswich ware project: Ceramics, trade and society in Middle Saxon England' is written by Paul Blinkhorn with major contributions by Stephanie Dudd, Richard Evershed, Nick Walsh and David Williams. Ipswich ware, produced in Suffolk in eastern England, was the only indigenous Middle Saxon pottery to have had a widespread distribution outside its production hinterland; it thus presents an excellent opportunity for enhancing our understanding of the political, economic and social systems of the period. Moreover Ipswich ware was radically different from other pottery produced in England at this time; this important study, funded by English Heritage, examines its manufacture, decoration and distribution in order to achieve a clearer understanding of its origins and use.

'The Ipswich ware project' is available to UK purchasers for £16 including postage and packing, please see the order form circulated with this newsletter for further information. Details will shortly appear on the MPRG website: www.medievalpottery.org.uk/occpap.htm

MPRG Contacts

President Duncan Brown

13 Southcliff Rd, Southampton
e-mail: duncan.brown2@english-heritage.org.uk
Telephone: 02380 915728

Treasurer Imogen Wood

e-mail: mprgtreasurer@gmail.com

Secretary Andrew Sage

e-mail: andrew.sage@dunelm.org.uk

Assistant Treasurer Lyn Blackmore

MoLA, Mortimer Wheeler House, 46 Eagle Wharf Road, London N1 7ED
e-mail: lblackmore@museumoflondon.org.uk
Telephone: 0207 566 9312

Assistant Secretary Ben Jervis

e-mail: bpjervis@googlemail.com

General Medieval Pottery Research Group, c/o MoLA,

Mortimer Wheeler House, 46 Eagle Wharf Road, London N1 7E

Find us on Facebook – search for Medieval Pottery Research Group.