Notes from the President

MPRG is pleased to be accepting a long-standing invitation to Belgium and I hope to see many of you at next month’s conference and AGM in Brussels. It is not too late to book - see Lorraine’s notice below.

The AGM sees the retirement from Council of Vice-president Lucy Whittingham, Secretary Andrew Sage, Asst. Treasurer Sian Iles, Asst. Secretary Alice Forward and Regional Groups Officer Gareth Perry. On behalf of MPRG I would like to thank all of them for the commitment they have put into running the Group. MPRG cannot exist unless there are members willing and able to give up some of their valuable free time to run its administration and activities.

This newsletter details new research in ceramics being carried out in or in collaboration with universities; there are many assemblages and topics in the UK and Europe that would benefit from such research projects and we hope that by publicising new projects we can perhaps encourage others to think about undertaking and funding research into medieval and later pottery. So if you are carrying out research please send the Newsletter a note.

This is Alice’s last Newsletter as Asst Secretary - a big thank you to Alice for over the last four years keeping us provided with Newsletters of varied and interesting content that have kept members up to date and connected.

Julie Edwards

MPRG conference 2018, 1st–4th June, University of Brussels:

‘Ceramics in Circulation’

A reminder that our annual conference is rapidly approaching; the draft programme and registration form have already been circulated. We have two full days of excellent papers, plus a day trip to Brugge, as well as a conference reception and dinner. What could be better for a spring break? There is still time to register, but please do so as soon as possible. Send your registration form, with payment (or pay online) to Lorraine Mepham, Midholme, Salisbury Road, Netheravon, Wilts SP4 9RQ; l.mepham@wessexarch.co.uk.

Lorraine Mepham, Wessex Archaeology

PhD research on The Early Medieval Pottery from Lyminge, Kent

Lyminge in Kent is well documented as the site of a Royal Anglo-Saxon settlement site spanning the 5th to 10th centuries. Having been subject to intensive multi-phase excavations from 2008 to 2015 by the University of Reading, the pottery assemblage recovered from Lyminge is now at the centre of a new PhD research project.

The core purpose of the PhD is to maximise the potential of the Lyminge pottery assemblage by undertaking analysis, characterization and interpretation in order to address three key research questions:

1. What are the key transitions in pottery production, acquisition and use over Lyminge’s 400-year occupation sequence and how do these transitions relate to the evolving social role of the settlement?
2. How does the pottery assemblage from Lyminge compare to those derived from local Anglo-Saxon cemeteries and contemporary Anglo-Saxon settlement sites of a similar status from elsewhere in south-eastern England?
3. Can a distinctive Kentish regional cultural identity be identified through the ceramic record, and how does the character and visibility of this identity change over time?

The analysis will be set against a wider framework of research and contextualisation by drawing upon ceramic data from comparative contemporary settlements elsewhere in Kent and south-east England.
Having commenced the PhD in October 2017, the first stage of data collection is currently underway. This initially began during a training placement with Duncan Brown and Historic England at Fort Cumberland, Portsmouth and will continue at the University of Reading. The assemblage is already revealing intriguing information about the nature of the phases of settlement at Lyminge and Lyminge’s relationship with both its hinterland and wider trade networks elsewhere in Kent and the near Continent. Ultimately, the project will contribute not only to the knowledge of the occupation sequence of the settlement, but will also lead to a reassessment of the social and cultural dynamics of early medieval kingdom formation in south-eastern England.

Stop Press!

Medieval Ceramics 37 & 38 has been printed and will be mailed out hopefully before the end of May and Medieval Ceramics 36 will follow in early June.

John Hurst Travel fund. Where could your’s take you?

Maria Duggan, Newcastle University, wanted to pass on thanks to the MPRG, following some recent funding success.

In 2015, in the later stages of my PhD at Newcastle University, MPRG was kind enough to provide an award from the John Hurst Travel Fund to help me attend the 2 week ceramic petrology course at the Fitch Laboratory at the British School at Athens. The intention was that this would help me to develop future research plans. My doctoral research considered Mediterranean and Atlantic pottery of 5th – 7th century date imported to Britain, within a wider study of Atlantic networks in the early medieval period. I have been very happy to share this research with the MRPG at a number of its meetings, and have always been very encouraged by the interest in this work.
As a result of making contacts at the Fitch and discussing the importance of this material, I was able to develop a postdoctoral research project application, which has recently – and very happily – met with success. I was very fortunate to have been awarded a British Academy Postdoctoral Fellowship based at Newcastle, commencing in January 2018. This new project involves a direct collaboration with the Fitch Lab, as well as a year-long placement in Athens. It will provide a new study of the internationally significant assemblage of post-Roman/early medieval imported ceramics from Tintagel in Cornwall – held at the Royal Cornwall Museum in Truro. The collaboration with the Fitch Lab will enable new analysis to determine the Aegean/east Mediterranean origins of pottery found at the site. The wider project will permit new understandings of evolving links between Britain, the Atlantic and the Mediterranean between the late Roman and Medieval periods. The project also connects with recent work at the site, following excavations in 2016 and 2017 commissioned by English Heritage and carried out by Cornwall Archaeological Unit.

The John Hurst Award was extremely useful in getting me to the course – in meeting the costs, but also in providing a successful award that could be shown to my school (School of History, Classics and Archaeology at Newcastle University), which encouraged them to provide the remainder of the costs. The opportunity to attend the course ultimately led to this new project, and provided experience that could be listed in the fellowship application. I am therefore very grateful for the support of the MPRG, and would encourage others to apply to the fund.

Maria Duggan, Newcastle University

Binsted Ceramics Project

Last summer a new collaborative project between Worthing Archaeological Society and Cardiff University (Ben Jervis & Alice Forward) got under way, with the aim of quantifying, cataloguing and publishing the late medieval kiln assemblage from Binsted, West Sussex, as well as providing society members with core pottery analysis skills.

The kilns were excavated by C. Ainsworth in 1967, but the only published summary is that in Ken Barton’s Medieval Sussex Pottery, which provides a brief summary of the forms present and some information on the kiln itself. A series of workshops have been undertaken to, firstly, sort the material into context groups (it was originally boxed by form) and then to sort the material further into fabric groups.

Progress has been rapid, and in the last workshop the first steps were made in creating a quantitative record of fabric, form and decoration of the material from one of the largest dump deposits at the site. It is hoped that the publication of the assemblage will provide a firmer footing for the identification of ‘Binsted-type’ ware from consumer sites in the region; currently the term seems to be used for a range of wares, many of which are unlikely to have
been produced at Binsted. It is probable that the material is of 14th-15th century date, the assemblage being characterised by plain utilitarian wares including a range of deep bowls, plain jugs, jars and tripod cooking pots as well as skillets or frying pans. Work on the assemblage will continue over the coming months.

Ben Jervis, Cardiff University

Gothenburg Ceramics 2019 - Call for Papers

Production, Trade and Cultural Exchange in Europe AD 1000–1850 MUSEUM OF GOTHENBURG, 16–18 MAY 2019

THE LAST 100 YEARS of historical archaeology in western Sweden have resulted in extensive museum ceramic collections. This material reveals a picture of ceramic development and suggests complex European links spanning a period of 850 years. This conference aims to meet and discuss European ceramics from a broad perspective. There will also be an opportunity to view pottery assemblages from the Gothenburg collections. Presentations are invited covering topics such as production, distribution and trade, waste management, contacts and diaspora, cooking and dining habits or other social aspects. The presentations will be a maximum of 20 minutes including questions. Please send a title and abstract (max 1500 characters) to: tom.wennberg@kultur.goteborg.se by 30th September 2018.

Clay Pipe Society 2018

Conference, Cardiff

The 34th annual SCPR conference will be held this year on Saturday, 29th September, at the John Percival Building, University of Cardiff (£18 per person which includes tea/coffee and). The mornings papers will concentrate on pipes from the Wales followed by more general papers with wider themes in the afternoon. In the evening there will be a three course Conference Dinner (costs to be advised). On Sunday there will be a half day visit to Nantgarw with a tour of the china works and reconstructed pipe kiln (£12 per person which includes tea/coffee and Welsh cakes on arrival and lunch). If you have pipes that you would like to bring along for ID or comment - then there will be a captive audience of specialists! Non-members welcome.

For further information, contact conference organizer Susie White on SCPR@talktalk.net
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 (Free excl. P&P This publication has been replaced by A Standard for Pottery Studies in Archaeology see below)

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 (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 Blinkhornet al. (UK £16; Europe £20: All include P&P)


Back issues of Medieval Ceramics up to volume 32 and still in stock are available at £1; out of print volumes are free to download from: www.medievalceramics.wordpress.com. Currently volumes 1-25 are available and more will be added soon. For further information, please contact Sian Iles.

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