Notes from the President

Season’s greetings everyone, I am very pleased to be writing this introduction to the first MPRG newsletter since 2018. We were unable to fill a number of Council vacancies at the 2018 AGM which meant that existing Council members have been unable to cover all the tasks that a full Council usually performs. AGM 2019 however saw the election of David Budge as Assistant Secretary and editor of the newsletter, Sam Rowe as Assistant Treasurer and three Ordinary Members of Council; Chris Cumberpatch, Carole Fletcher and Mike Brace. Since the AGM in October Gareth Perry has been co-opted as Secretary (and was elected at our December EGM) and he brings Council back to its full strength. Thank you to all of the above, to the rest of the current Council and all those who retired at AGM 2018 for volunteering to help run MPRG. Since the last newsletter Medieval Ceramics 36 and the double volume Medieval Ceramics 37 & 38 were published in summer/autumn 2018 both with a new cover design and a new Occasional Paper appeared this summer, thanks are due to the Editorial Committee and Lucy Whittingham, who retired as their chair in 2018, for their hard work.

Medieval Ceramics should be with you soon if not already and the New Year will see our website undergoing a re-vamp and update plus news of a follow up to the training weekend held in Bristol in 2016. MPRG Council next meets in February if you have any matters that you would like Council to consider or discuss please email me.

Julie Edwards

A Christmas 'Spot the Difference'

Hugo Blake noticed this beautiful lustreware dish in a recent exhibition in Assisi, Italy; it is from the collections of the Museo di arte medievale e moderna (Arezzo, Italy) and is dated ‘1521’ on the reverse. A similar but incomplete dish is in the Museum of London (previously in the Guildhall Museum collection and photographed by the late Sarah Jennings); it was excavated in London and the reverse displays the date ‘1532’. They are made from the same mould and attributed to Deruta, Italy. Hugo reports that the exhibition catalogue describes other examples in the Louvre, Paris, the Victoria and Albert Museum, London and one in Braunschweig, Germany; four of the dishes carry dates between 1521 and 1534.
which show that the same mould was used for at least thirteen years.


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Save the date:
MPRG Annual Conference 20th - 22nd June 2020

The 2020 MPRG annual conference will be held at the University of Durham from Saturday 20th to Monday 22nd of June 2020. The theme of the conference is ‘Pottery and Religion’.

Lorraine Mepham

Call For Papers - MPRG Durham Conference 2020

Religion was an integral part of daily life in the medieval and post-medieval periods, and it would be surprising if we could see no evidence of its impact in the ceramic record. That impact could have taken various forms: in the types and functions of pottery used on religious sites (did this really differ from secular consumer sites?), and in the stimulus to the development of ceramic industries to service religious establishments. Religious messages could be overtly transmitted in various ways on vessels (e.g. using painted or moulded decoration), or more subtly through the incorporation of religious symbols in ceramic design. The pots themselves also featured as symbols in religious iconography. High quality ceramics are often found on religious sites, but is this a general pattern, and is it always a straightforward reflection of higher social status? Can religious change be seen in the ceramic record? What were the impacts of religions other than Christianity?

The committee invites 20-minute papers addressing any aspect of the links between pottery and religion in the medieval and post-medieval periods.

Please submit an abstract of no more than 150 words to Lorraine Mepham, MPRG Meetings Secretary, by 1st March 2020 (L.mepham@wessexarch.co.uk).

Lorraine Mepham

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From Chester to Cretteville - Day in Memory of Ken Barton

On Saturday 19 October 2019 the MPRG held a joint Study Day with the Society for Post-Medieval Archaeology and the Society for Museum Archaeology in memory of the late Ken Barton. Entitled ‘From Chester to Cretteville’ (from the starting place of Ken’s museum career to his home in retirement in Normandy), the event was held at Bristol City Museum & Art Gallery and attended by about 30 members of the societies, as well as members of Ken’s family.

David Dawson started our day with an account of Ken’s remarkable museum career, rising from a humble start in Chester and working from 1956-1961 as Assistant Curator (Technical) at Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery, to ultimately become Director of the Hampshire Museum Service and a leading figure of the Museums Association. David emphasised his significant role in various aspects of the development of museums in Britain, such as his strong advocacy for professional training for those who were not museum curators. Mike Ponsford then spoke on ‘Ken Barton, pottery and Bristol’ showing how fundamental Ken’s work remains there. John Allan followed, describing the remarkable find of 13th-century French and English pottery in Tresco Channel on the Isles of Scilly – a find which reflected many of Ken’s former interests, with its interesting implications for trade between the south coast of England and France. In the afternoon Luke Barber gave an excellent paper on the community archaeology programme he has led on the tide-mills at Bishopstone, Sussex.
Over lunch, Duncan Brown led us in drinking a toast to Ken’s memory. During the day tributes to Ken were also given by Marilyn Barton and Jane Evans.

A memorable feature of the day was the opportunity to handle a large selection of the specimens of vernacular pottery from the collection put together by Ken over his working life, which he donated in 1996 to Taunton Museum.

We thank Duncan Brown and David Dawson, who jointly organised the day, the excellent Amal Khreishhe, Curator of Archaeology at South West Heritage Trust, who went to considerable trouble to provide us with vessels from the Ken Barton collection, and Gail Boyle and Kate Iles of Bristol Museum who had retrieved some of the pottery from Ham Green, the Castle Well and the Saintonge jug from Back Hall which set Ken off on his exploration of the origins of French imported pottery.

John Allen

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Early English Porcelain Workshop

Bow porcelain saucer from excavations on the factory site, Stratford High Street (HNB06) © MOLA

MOLA, supported by the City of London Archaeological Trust, are holding a workshop on London’s 18th century porcelain industry on Saturday 15th February 2020.

It is in London that the early English porcelain industry has its roots. This workshop aims to present the archaeological evidence from five London manufactories, located at Isleworth, Chelsea, Vauxhall, Limehouse and Bow, along with the Isleworth porcelain dumps from Hanworth Road, Hounslow. It is aimed chiefly at archaeologists and non-specialists, with a view to opening up understanding of the range and types of porcelain produced in London over a period of some 50 years. Excavated finds from most of the principal sites will be available for handling, and there will be talks on the various factories by acknowledged experts, as well as opportunities to view porcelain in the Museum of London’s Ceramics & Glass Collection. The workshop will also act as a forum for the exchange of knowledge concerning the main factories in question.

Attendance: free, but space is limited, so please book in advance. Lunch will be provided.

To book, contact: jpearce@mola.org.uk

Jacqui Pearce

A Guide to the Classification of Medieval Ceramic Forms Digitisation Project

The Guide provides a definition and nomenclature for ceramic forms made throughout the post-Roman period until the beginning of intensive industrial pottery production in the 17th century, with the aim of enabling practitioners to identify vessel forms, clarify definitions in common usage and standardise the terminology used to describe and record vessel forms in pottery assessments, analyses and reports. As MPRG’s Occasional Paper 1 the Guide has been selling well and is still available to purchase but in order to increase its accessibility as a key research resource (in line with ‘A6 Making key information and resources as widely accessible as possible’ in Irving 2011 A Research Framework for Post-Roman Ceramic Studies in England MPRG Occasional Paper 6) and promote recording standards MPRG approached Historic England for a grant to produce a searchable, interactive PDF. The application was successful and work was completed in autumn 2019. The PDF is available to download at: https://medievalceramics.files.wordpress.com/2019/12/a_guide_to_the_classification_of_medieval_ceramic_forms.pdf

The PDF of the Guide has also been submitted to the Archaeology Data Service and in due course will be available on their website.

Julie Edwards

www.medievalpottery.org.uk
Martincamp Flasks - Not So French After All?

The Ticknall Archaeological Research Group (TARG) has just released a report on their excavations at Staunton Lane End, Ticknall, Derbyshire. Ticknall was a regionally important pottery production centre from the later fifteenth century onwards and many families, both within the village itself and in dispersed settlements throughout the parish, were involved in potting. Documentary evidence indicates that several generations of the Morley family worked as potters in the tiny hamlet at Staunton Lane End during the seventeenth century; TARG’s excavations revealed that they were making the usual range of Ticknall products of this period (Midland Yellow Ware (MY) and Black and Brown glazed (coarse) earthenware (BL / BERTH)) but, unusually, also Martincamp type flasks. Though the kiln itself was not found the evidence for the production of the flasks on the site was unequivocal. Over 60kg of ‘Ticknall bottle’ sherds, representing a minimum of 102 vessels, were recovered; the majority came from a dump of kiln waste also containing MY, BL and BERTH. Many of the bottles were wasted; these included melted examples and vessels that had fused together in the kiln. The above photo shows a small selection of necks, including a couple of fused wasters.

The Morley family appear to have been producing both flattened flasks (type 3.3.1 in the MPRG Guide to Classification of Medieval Ceramic Forms, now available online - see below) and globular flasks (MPRG type 3.3.2); fabrics include grey to purple (near) stoneware; orange to red earthenware and off-white earthenware, though the latter was rare.

Ticknall products were reported to have been distributed throughout all of eastern England by a seventeenth century writer so it is possible that these flasks may have a more than local distribution. TARG’s study concludes that there are some differences in form and fabric that may allow the Ticknall bottles to be distinguished from Martincamp type wares made elsewhere, such as examples found in Southampton and Dieppe.


Sarah Jennings (1947–2009), a past MPRG Secretary and an active and longstanding supporter of MPRG, inspired and encouraged many in the study of ceramics and glass and herself studied tirelessly in pursuit of furthering knowledge. This volume is a tribute to Sarah by some of her colleagues and friends and consists of 12 papers, including some from a conference held in Sarah’s memory at the Wallace Collection and looks at the production and consumption of a variety of glass and ceramic objects over a period of 2000 years, combining evidence from excavations, documentary research and scientific analysis. The volume was produced with funding from Historic England and generous donations from George Haggarty and Stichting Archeologie West-Friesland. Copies are available from MPRG for £20 inc. UK p&p and £26 inc. Europe p&p. An order form is attached with this newsletter mailing.

Medieval Ceramics 39

Medieval Ceramics 39 has been printed and will be mailed out in December and early in the New Year.
Face Pots in Notts...

Anthropomorphic vessel, possibly a finial, found at Parliament Street, Nottingham, in 1874. Image: Nottingham City Museums and Galleries

Anyone near Nottingham may be interested in a special exhibition that the University of Nottingham Museum of Archaeology, in conjunction with Nottingham City Museums and Galleries, has on at the moment. The small but interesting exhibition is entitled ‘Faces from the Past: Images on Medieval Pottery’ and features thirteenth and fourteenth century examples of such vessels that have been found in Nottingham over the years. Pots on display include the famous Scarborough ware knight jug from the Nottingham Moot Hall site (no 650 in McCarthy and Brooks Medieval Pottery in Britain AD 900-1600); the vessel pictured above with simple but expressive faces (one on each side); and an impressive example of one of the female figure salts that the Nottingham potters were making several centuries before the similar, but more widely known, Cistercian ware examples. Several other vessels, pieces of vessels, and individual sherds, all bearing anthropomorphic decoration, round out the display.

If you want to see them you’ll have to be quick; the exhibition runs until Sunday 5th January 2020. The museum is open Tuesday to Saturday 11am to 5pm and Sunday 12 noon to 4pm; admission is free.

Faces from the Past is followed by ‘Peaks and Pots: The Life and Works of Felix Oswald’ from 7th January to 29th March 2020. Oswald was instrumental in setting up the University Museum, though as he was particularly interested in Roman pottery it may be that this exhibition will have less to tempt the medieval ceramic specialist!

Further information can be found at: http://www.lakesidearts.org.uk/

David Budge

John Hurst Travel fund

This fund was established in 2007 to honour the enormous contribution made by John Hurst to the study of medieval and post-medieval pottery in Britain and Europe. It offers a number of travel grants of up to £200 each to members of the Medieval Pottery Research Group who need financial support to carry out their research. Grants are awarded annually and the closing date for applications is the 23rd March 2020. Preference will be given to applicants whose projects help strengthen links between Britain and the rest of Europe and to students or those at the beginning of their careers.

Successful applicants will receive the grant before they travel if required and must provide receipts to cover the amount within one month of their return. They must provide a summary report of no more than 250 words to the Hon Editors within 3 months of the research project being undertaken, and must agree to cite the MPRG John Hurst Travel Fund in any publications resulting from the funded project.

An application form is attached to this newsletter mailing.

Julie Edwards

Newsletter Contributions

If you have any news or information on subjects that might be of interest to the MPRG membership the newsletter editor would love to hear from you! Please send information or copy for inclusion to the Assistant Secretary at the address on the back page: Whether it be information on new discoveries, research, publications, exhibitions, conferences or anything else relevant!

David Budge

www.medievalpottery.org.uk
MPRG Publications

Occasional Paper 1: A Guide to the Classification of Medieval Ceramic forms (UK £27.75 excl. P&P)
Online digital version: https://medievalceramics.wordpress.com/about-medieval-ceramics/a-guide-to-the-classification-of-medieval-ceramic-forms/

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 and Simon Cheneray (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 Blinkhorn et al. (UK £16; Europe £20: All include P&P)

Occasional Paper 8: Ceramics and Glass: a tribute to Sarah Jennings. Julie Edwards and Sarah Paynter (eds). (UK £20; Europe £26: 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.

MPRG Contacts

President Julie Edwards
c/o Grosvenor Museum, Chester, CH1 2DD
e-mail: julie.edwards@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk
Telephone: 01244972122

Treasurer Christine Clayborough
e-mail: potandclay@btinternet.com

Secretary Gareth Perry
e-mail: gareth.perry@york.ac.uk

Assistant Secretary David Budge
e-mail: david@mercian-as.co.uk

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 or visit https://www.facebook.com/groups/201431073234224/