



President's Notes

This year's AGM and annual conference at Doncaster Museum and Art Gallery was very well attended, we heard a good range of talks highlighting new information on pottery use over a period of 700 years and we were treated to a wonderful lunch provided by John and Christine Hudson. Five new members of Council were elected - Lucy Whittingham as Vice-President, Ben Jervis: Assistant Editor, Lorraine Mepham: Meetings secretary and Kelly Green and Sarah Newstead as Ordinary Members. Bernie Seddon was elected as Co-Editor after five years as Assistant Editor. On behalf of the Group I would like to thank them all for coming forward to fill the vacancies on Council and to help run the Group. Finance was a key item on the agenda and after a good discussion the meeting agreed to the proposed rise in subscriptions which will take effect from 1st February 2016. Thank you to everyone who contributed to the debate.

Meanwhile MPRG members are continuing to contribute to various initiatives to bring the Group to a wider audience and to promote pottery studies. Everyone on the email list will have received the final draft of the joint standard for reporting on pottery from excavations, your comments were discussed at the recent meeting of the working party representing PCRG, SGRP and MPRG. To encourage and build upon existing European links MPRG ran a successful session at the European Association of Archaeologists conference in Glasgow in September 2015 - *Pottery and the social dynamics of border regions in Medieval Europe*. Next year's MPRG conference is going to be held in Taunton, Somerset and the call for papers is included in this newsletter.

2016 promises to be another busy year for the MPRG and we look forward to hearing your news. If you have anything you would like to share with the group please email Alice Forward (jeepsteralice@googlemail.com) with your article.

We wish you all a very happy Christmas and prosperous New Year

Julie Edwards (President) and Alice Forward (Assistant Secretary)

John Hurst Archive Project

In June and July 2015 a small project, funded by Cardiff University, was undertaken to rapidly assess and inventory the archive of materials left by John Hurst to the British Museum. Only the paper archive was worked on, there is a collection of pottery left to the museum which is still to be catalogued and assessed. The project was undertaken by Dr Ben Jervis (Cardiff University), Beverley Nenk (British Museum) and Ainsley McArthur (a 2nd year student from Cardiff University). The aim of the project was to determine what materials were present in the archive, to re-package it using appropriate materials and to assess its value for future researchers. A full report is available from Beverley Nenk (BNenk@britishmuseum.org) or Ben Jervis (jervisb@cardiff.ac.uk).

The archive principally consists of three types of materials – lists of findspots of imported pottery, card index records relating to the distribution of imported pottery and the pottery types found at particular sites and loose leaf files containing associated drawings, correspondence and notes. As is to be expected, the bulk of the material relates to imported pottery. A range of further correspondence and notes relating to other pottery-related topics, publication drafts (particularly the

publication of the Van Beunigen collection) as well as particular archaeological projects are also present. Card indexes relating to a range of topics including Anglo-Saxon pottery, pottery in paintings, devotional symbolism on pottery and antiquarian finds of pottery (a topic that John was researching at his death) could prove useful to scholars researching these areas. A brief inventory of the sites and pottery types has been produced. John Hurst's collection of books relating to medieval pottery has already been accessioned into the British Museum library and offprints have now been extracted from the archive for cataloguing and accessioning. Many of these are taken from publications which are difficult to obtain, including many French, Spanish, Italian, German and Dutch publications. Duplicates will be made available to MPRG members, as will photocopies from publications already held by the British Museum. Any photocopies not held in other publications have been retained in the archive and filed with the materials relating to the associated sites or pottery types.

It is considered that the materials relating to imported pottery in Britain have the greatest research potential. These offer a valuable starting point for any scholars interested in the trade in ceramics in the medieval and post-medieval periods. Due to the complexity of the filing system and the need for any record to be searchable,

simple scanning is probably not the most effective way to make this material available to researchers. The most appropriate means of disseminating this material may be through the production of a web-based GIS system, which could be used to produce distribution maps of specific types and, eventually, be supplemented by findspots published over the last 20 years or so. Anybody interested in exploring the possibility of developing such a project should contact Beverley Nenck or Ben Jervis. Due to reasons of privacy and copyright, it is not deemed appropriate to scan and make publically available offprints and correspondence, however these can be consulted in the archive. Other notes and materials are unlikely to be of sufficient interest to justify a large programme of scanning, however materials could be scanned on an ad hoc basis for researchers as required. Anyone wishing to consult the archive should contact Beverley Nenck.

Ben Jervis, Beverley Nenck and Ainsley McArthur

MPRG Website

Many thanks to all those who emailed to alert us to the problems the MPRG website was experiencing. We have had a number of problems over the last year and a half with the website, many of which have been out of our control. We are planning on reviewing how we manage the website and this is to be discussed at the next council meeting on 11th February. Updates on this issue will be included in our next newsletter and fingers crossed that it will remain up (as it is at the time of writing this) and working correctly. Thanks for your patience and good to know that people are using the website.

Alice Forward

MPRG 2015 Conference

This year's conference was hosted by Doncaster Museum and Art Gallery on the 6th June 2015. Delegates were invited to present on the subject of early medieval (4th to 11th century) pottery, a theme that encompassed a wide variety of topics from production and trade to social and theoretical considerations. The proceedings began with a focus on Anglo-Saxon pottery, with Ben Jervis reviewing the current state of knowledge and future potential for studies in early Anglo-Saxon ceramics in south-east England, and Gareth Perry speaking on elements of production of Torksey ware in the ninth and tenth centuries. The morning session closed with Mike Brace's musings on aspects of life in a medieval leprosy hospital as seen through ceramic consumption at St Mary Magdalen, Winchester.

Following a lively discussion of the morning's proceedings, the group were treated to a homemade lunch provided by John Hudson – the trifle was particularly commended! There was also an opportunity at this stage to look around the museum displays, which included a variety of ceramics of medieval and post-medieval date, amongst Doncaster's rich collections of art and archaeology.

The afternoon session kicked off with Imogen Wood's discussion of grass-marked wares in early medieval Cornwall, followed by a review of the ceramic evidence for trade and commerce in the Atlantic during the 4th to 5th centuries by Maria Duggan. The European scope of the conference theme was further extended by Yvonne de Rue in her paper on the production and movement of Pingsdorf ware in the Rhine and Meuse Valley. Finally, Paul Blinkhorn brought us back full circle to Anglo-Saxon pottery consumption, with a focus on imported wares in inland settlements in southern central England during the middle Saxon period.

The afternoon closed with tea and a pottery handling session, which gave the group an opportunity to familiarise themselves with Doncaster's medieval and later pottery collections. Overall, the conference was a great success, highlighting the group's engagement with a diversity of approaches to ceramic studies across a wide geographical area. Thanks are due to Ben Jervis and Lyn Blackmore for their hard work in organising this conference, and to all of our speakers for sharing their research and stimulating lively discussions which made the day so thoroughly enjoyable and informative. Our thanks are also extended to the staff at Doncaster Museum, who have hosted several regional meetings in addition to the annual conference, and whose continued dialogue with the MPRG has proven invaluable in attracting local interest in the work being conducted by the group.

Kelly Green

MPRG Conference 2016 Call For Papers

Production and Consumption of Medieval and Post-Medieval Pottery in the South-West of England

20–22 June 2016, Taunton

The south-west of England has long been recognised as containing a number of pottery production centres spanning the medieval and post-medieval periods. As well as satisfying local demand, pottery from the south-west was widely distributed along coastal routes to south Wales, Ireland and across the Atlantic. Recent fieldwork, scientific analysis and the reassessment of existing data has added significantly to our knowledge of the region.

The aim of this three-day conference will be to review the evidence for the production, distribution and consumption of medieval and post-medieval pottery across the region and beyond, and papers are invited on these themes.

A title and short abstract for a paper (to last no longer than 20 minutes) should be sent to the conference organiser Lorraine Mephram (l.mephram@wessexarch.co.uk) by 1st February 2016.

A programme and further details will be released in the New Year.

MPRG session at the European Association of Archaeology Conference, Glasgow

The papers presented at the MPRG session at the 21st Annual Meeting of the European Association of Archaeologists in Glasgow showcased the flourishing field of European ceramic studies. Overcoming the various obstacles fate put in their way, including the 8am start, impromptu session breaks and testing fire alarms, the speakers delivered papers on a range of subjects that demonstrated the variety of interest in this field.

The first paper, by Gabriela Blažková, focussing on the production of Werra ware in Bohemia, discussed the evidence for 16th-century ceramics in Prague and nearby Beroun, as well as a ceramic assemblage from Prague Castle. This was followed by Jette Linaa's paper about Urban Diaspora, a research project examining immigration in early modern Denmark and Sweden. Focussing on the cities of Ålborg and Helsingør, she examined the phenomenon of the 'son-in-laws', sons of Dutch and German merchants who married and settled in Scandinavia. Excavations of son-in-law houses have revealed the rich diversity of imported ceramics during this period, not only from the Netherlands and Germany but also from further afield, particularly Portugal, where the trade might be connected with the import of wine from France and Spain. Scandinavian migration was also the subject of a paper delivered by Sonia Jeffery on pottery from Lödöse, a medieval town in Western Sweden that contains an unusually high level of imported pottery from England. The paper highlighted the difficulties in identifying pottery fabrics by eye alone, as wares identified as Humberware and Beverley ware, when chemically examined using ICP analysis, were clearly seen to have a Swedish origin. As the style of the pots is clearly English, their manufacture within Sweden suggests the presence of an English potter working in Sweden during the medieval period.

Kelly Green's paper on Grimston face jugs in England and Bergen suggested their association with the consumption of alcohol may mean they acted as a metaphor of how not to behave; their presence within towns may also indicate their association with a new form of urban masculinity. The urban consumption of pottery was also the subject of Ben Jervis' paper, which examined ceramics from coastal settlements in Kent and Sussex and highlighted how pottery mediated different maritime networks and forms of identity, not only reflecting trade networks between Yorkshire and the Continent, but also the role of the coast as a gateway for inland communities. Developing this maritime theme, the coastal town of Tétéghem, Northern France, was the subject of a paper given by Vaiana

Vincent that focussed on ceramics produced here during the late 14th century. Despite evidence for reduced and oxidised wares as well as brick production within the town, the distribution of the ceramics appears to have been restricted as none of the objects produced here have been found at the nearby city of Dunkerque.

The final paper, delivered by Marla Duggan, was also the sole paper focussing on early medieval ceramics and examined the trade of pottery during the 4th and 5th centuries. The distribution of imported material in England during this period suggests a divide between the east, which was linked Germany, and the southwest with its Byzantine influences. However, a closer examination of the ceramic material suggests that rather than being direct contact, ceramics in southwestern England were exchanged through coastal contact with Galicia and Bordeaux and were also mediated by local tastes, for example a preference for amphora (and their contents) rather than tableware.

The dominance of trade networks in the papers given was reflected in the subsequent discussion, which focussed in particular on how patterns in ceramic distribution may reflect the geographical distribution of research rather than real historic distribution; for example, there is currently little evidence of English wares in Belgium, but there are no known historic or cultural reasons why they should not be there. Other questions raised were whether ceramic distribution represents the movement of pots or the movement of potters, as seen at Lödöse, and how problems in identification (particularly regarding Late Roman wares) may mean important trading links are overlooked. The range of papers delivered at the session, and the animated discussion which followed it, demonstrated the importance of pan-European conversations regarding ceramics and its role in highlighting the diverse social dynamics in the past. Many thanks to Ben Jervis and Jette Linaa for organising one of the most interesting sessions in the conference and it must be hoped that a similar session can be organised for the next meeting of the EAA in Vilnius, Lithuania, from 30th August-4th September 2016.

Rachel Askew

Buckley Potteries Community Project

The area surrounding Buckley in Flintshire has been associated with the production of pottery for at least 600 years, from the medieval period to the mid-20th century. The scale and location of pottery manufacture during the Middle Ages and through the Tudor period is poorly known, but by the early 17th century a group of cottage potters had settled around Buckley Mountain where they exploited the suitable supplies of clay, coal and, on Halkyn Mountain, lead. Potteries were often established on

encroachments on common land, which can be readily identified in 18th- and 19th-century cartographic sources. The significance of the Buckley pottery industry has been recognised for some time, attracting considerable attention, although it is only relatively recently that a comprehensive review has been conducted (Jones 2014) employing historic cartography and the results of previous work. Currently, some 31 sites have been identified, although several are not well located.

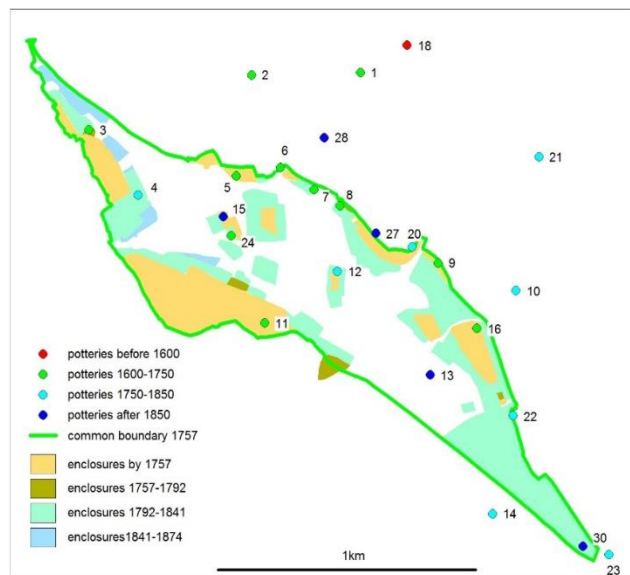


Fig 1. The relationship between Buckley Mountain common, enclosures and the location of potteries. Each is classified according to its earliest known date. (From Jones, 2014)

Despite the extent and significance of the industry there are now few visible surface traces. Although there have been some remarkable survivals, the Buckley area has seen considerable new development in the last 20 years, such that most significant elements of the pottery industry have already been lost. Price's Pottery, the site of which is the subject of this project, is a case in point, having been seriously affected by housing developments and the landscaping of the grounds for Elfed High School. Buckley Mountain, (Jones 2014)



Fig 2. Excavation with the help of students from Elfed High School, 2014

Price's Pottery Excavation with Elfed High School

A pottery was in operation here from the 1780's and possibly earlier. Two rectangular buildings which equate with those of Price's Pottery are marked on the 1757 map of the Lordship of Ewloe, although no kiln is depicted to confirm this as a pottery at this time. The pottery appears to have been operational until the latter part of the 19th century, being disused by the time the 2nd edition Ordnance Survey mapping was produced in 1899.

The project was grant-aided by Cadw and it was conceived as one where the archaeological gains from the excavation of the pottery site would be matched by the value of involving the community in discovering its past. This included liaising with the Buckley Society, a local history group dedicated to recording and transmitting the history of the locality, but the main way in which the project aims were achieved was by involving students from Elfed High School and local primary schools in all aspects of work. This included map regression, finds processing and excavation, tasks which give both themselves and the teaching staff an understanding of the nature of the industry that once provided such a major contribution to the local economy. This was highly successful, as demonstrated by the feedback from the school, but the students also transmitted information about their involvement to their parents and friends, widening the range of contact to the community as a whole; as part of this process one of the students discovered that her family were descended from the original owners of the pottery.



Fig 3. BBC Wales interviewing students busy washing artefacts from the excavation 2015

The excavations at Price's Pottery were carried out over two seasons in the summer of 2014 and 2015 and although the excavations were not successful in identifying surviving structures, sufficient clues were obtained to suggest they may be present nearby. Large quantities of brick, undoubtedly originating from a kiln were recovered along with fragments of kiln shelves, kiln furniture such as stilts and spacers (for separating the pots during firing) and spent fuel.

A possible blunging pit was also identified during the 2015 excavation. Blunging pits were used to process raw clay, reducing it to a liquid slip by the addition of water. This mixture was agitated and then run through a sieve to remove any roots or stones before being fed via a channel or 'goyt' into large, shallow 'clay pans' where it was allowed to stand, possibly over winter, before it could be used from throwing. The pit at Price's Pottery had been backfilled with hundreds of broken pots, saggars and bricks. The vast quantity of pottery we have recovered from this relatively small scale excavation has been remarkable. Preliminary findings suggest that production started in at least the early part of the 18th century, perhaps 50 years earlier than had been previously appreciated. This may be revised further once a detailed examination of the ceramics has been completed by specialists.



Fig 4. A possible blunging pit identified during the 2015 excavation

Over 800 people, including students, teachers, members of local groups and members of the public joined in with the activities and events that were offered during the course of the project including the archaeological excavation, partaking in educational workshops, site tours and talks.

Furthermore, students of Elfed High School entered the 2014 Welsh Heritage School Initiative competition and in July 2015 they were awarded by a panel of professionals in Cardiff for their involvement with the excavations at Price's Pottery.



Fig 5. A small slipware pot found in the pit

Viviana Culshaw, Community Archaeologist (Clywd Powys Archaeological Trust) viviana.culshaw@cpat.org.uk

Glastonbury Abbey Publication

This year has seen the publication of the excavations at Glastonbury Abbey spanning 75 years from 1904 – 1979. As part of this the ceramic material from the excavations has received significant re-analysis and interpretation. The report on the post-Roman ceramics is freely available as part of the site archive through the Archaeological Data Services' Project Archives.

http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archives/view/glastonbury_ahrc_2014/index.cfm

The Pottery and Clay Tobacco Pipe Industries of Rainford, St Helens New Research. Edited by Robert Philpott 2015.

The second of two reports from the Rainford's Roots community archaeology project was published in the summer. The monograph presents the results of archaeological and historical research in the village of Rainford, near St Helens, Merseyside where the manufacture of pottery and clay tobacco pipes was an important cottage industry that supplied a wide area. The HLF funded excavations between 2011 and 2014 have revealed regionally significant groups of 16th- and 17th-century pottery, and clay tobacco pipes dating from the 17th through to the early 20th century.

Available from the Museum of Liverpool bookshop. Price £20 plus £3.50 postage and online.

<http://merseysidearchsoc.weebly.com/publications.html>

MPRG Publications

Details of MPRG publications can be found on the MPRG website <http://www.medievalpottery.org.uk/publi.htm>

Occasional Paper 2: Minimum Standards for the Processing, Recording, Analysis and Publication of Post-Roman Ceramics (UK £4.50 excl. P&P)

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 Chenerey (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)

Back issues of Medieval Ceramics and copies of the guide to Medieval Ceramic Forms are also available. For further information on publication sales please contact Lyn Blackmore (lblackmore@museumoflondon.org.uk)

MPRG Contacts

President Julie Edwards

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

Treasurer Imogen Wood

e-mail: mprgtreasurer@gmail.com

Secretary Andrew Sage

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

Assistant Treasurer Sian Iles

Amgueddfa Cymru-National Museum Wales, Cathays Park, Cardiff, CF10 3NP
e-mail: sian.iles@museumwales.ac.uk

Assistant Secretary Alice Forward

e-mail: jeepsteralice@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 or visit <https://www.facebook.com/groups/201431073234224/>