



### Secretary's Notes

Council met in September at the British Museum had held some very constructive discussions about the future directions which the group's activities may take. Two topics dominated the agenda, the first of these was training. Alice Forward has undertaken some research into the kinds of specialist and non-specialist training currently available and which might be offered by the group in the future. We welcome any comments from members regarding the kinds of training which you would find useful and any comments on this subject should be addressed to the president. The second issue relates to the maintaining of standards, particularly within reports produced from developer-led projects. Central to this is co-operation with our

Prehistoric and Roman colleagues in the production of joint standards, which can be easily disseminated to local authority curators. A need for non-specialist training into these standards was identified and we will be pursuing this with our colleagues within the curatorial sector going forward.

In November members of the group came together with colleagues from the Association for the History of Glass at a conference held in honour of the late Sarah Jennings. Unfortunately I was unable to attend, but I hear from colleagues that this day was a great success and, more importantly, a fitting tribute to Sarah. Thanks are extended to Julie Edwards and Sarah Paynter for their hard work in organising the conference, and in pushing forward with plans for a festschrift in Sarah's memory. Additionally, Chris Jarrett is continuing to work on a similar publication in honour of Anna Slowikowski. Finally, following the success of the Isle of Man conference, plans are in place to publish a selection of papers from the conference in a forthcoming issue of *Medieval Ceramics*, to be guest edited by Harold Mytum and Peter Davey. Details are attached of the 2013 conference, which will be held in Portsmouth on the topic of 'pottery afloat'

Ben Jervis Assistant Secretary

### A Scottish Redware jug from Loch Leven, Perth and Kinross

This complete splash glazed Scottish Redware jug was recovered from Loch Leven 'before 1831' from an unidentified location and first noted in the Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland for 1932. As part of ongoing research on Loch Leven, St Serfs Isle and environs the author and Dr Oliver O'Grady visited Blairadam House in April of this year to examine and photograph this vessel.

This three handled jug is very well made, splash glazed green and decorated on the front with a distinctive 'tendrill' like pattern, in between the handles there is a 'spray' like design consisting of a vertical line from each side of which are four straight lines which spring obliquely upwards and terminate in round flat discs. All of the patterns are made of applied clay strips glazed dark-brown. At the widest part of the vessel is a metal stud (probably lead) which must represent a repair.

This vessel is a fine example of a jug from the Scottish Redware industry and can probably be dated to the 13th or 14th centuries. Of most interest is the evidence for some sort of reuse as indicated by three grooves that are incised in the top of the rim at each point where a handle joins the vessel. Any ideas gratefully received, I have already considered the possibility that it might help the user to find the handle (s) in the dark!

The author would like to thank Keith and Elisabeth Adam for allowing access to this vessel.



Derek Hall

### Stoke Quay, Ipswich: Saxon Pottery Kiln

Excavation has recently been carried out at Stoke Quay Ipswich by Oxford Archaeology and Pre-Construct Archaeology. The work was managed by Ramboll UK on behalf of ISG Construction and Genesis Housing Association. During the works a remarkably well

preserved kiln, associated with Ipswich ware pottery, has been revealed. Ipswich ware has been the subject of a recent major study of the product by Paul Blinkhorn (2012), but this is only the third kiln to be discovered in Ipswich.

The site lies on the south bank of the River Orwell adjacent to Great Whip Street, which was probably a major route leading into Ipswich from the south via a ford or ferry crossing. An area of early-middle Saxon burials including some enclosed by ring ditches was concentrated to the south end of the site. North of this was an area of dense pits producing Ipswich and Thetford ware and beyond this to the north was an area of Late Saxon burials probably part of the cemetery attached to St Augustine's church. The kiln was found in the central area amidst the mass of pits, one of which had destroyed the stokehole, but leaving the majority of the flue and main firing chamber intact. The excavation and recording of the kiln was carried out by OAE Supervisor Kate Clover.

The kiln is a Musty type 1b (Musty 1974): a single flue updraught kiln with double chamber but with some unusual features. The structure is key hole shaped consisting of a circular firing chamber c. 1m diameter internally with a linear flue c. 0.5m long extending from it.

The flue walls are well preserved with part of the flue vault still spanning the flue at the junction with the main firing chamber. Along the rest of its length the flue vault had subsided to varying degrees. The whole of the lower firing chamber survived intact, together with a substantial part of the upper chamber. The pedestal and suspended floor of the upper chamber in which the pottery was loaded survives complete and appear to have been the first structural element to be built. It is unusual in that they have been built as a single entity forming a mushroom shaped structure. The pedestal was built up as a flaring drum with fluted sides and the core, at least at the top filled with loose gravel before being surfaced to form the floor. This takes the form of a large solid domed circular plate c 0.6m diameter leaving a narrow gap of c 0.15m between its edge and the kiln walls.



Fig 1 The kiln fully excavated with pedestal in position and showing the wattle impressions in the walls.

The kiln and flue walls and floor were built as a single continuous structure with no change in size between lower and upper chamber. The walls survive to a height of c 0.6m about half of this above the level of the suspended floor. They are about 0.15m thick in contrast to the base which is only c 50mm thick and built as a solid clay structure against the cut of the foundation pit. The interior wall face has a series of vertical wattle impressions in the exposed surface running the full surviving height of the walls (Fig. 1). There are about 25 wattle impressions in total, each measuring c 15-20mm diameter but without evidence of any horizontal interwoven wattles to suggest

the framework was of a basketry type. The superstructure is likely to have had a central opening at the top through which the kiln was loaded and it is hoped further analysis of the collapsed debris will elucidate this. The walls are fired dark grey – black to a depth of c 30-40mm, red behind this to a depth of c 50-100mm with unfired yellow clay at the exterior. The most intense firing occurred around the inner half of the flue and at the junction with the main chamber.

Infilling the upper chamber were extensive deposits of unfired whitish clay together with fragments of red fired clay, which appear to derive from the inner wall surface. The deposit of unfired clay continues down the sides between the pedestal and the wall into the lower chamber. This deposit of unfired clay is likely to represent part, or all, of the collapsed dome of the kiln, though an alternative possibility is that a batch of unused potting clay or supplies of clay kept for patching or covering the load was dumped in the kiln upon disuse.

A thin layer of charcoal covered the flue floor from the final firing the kiln. The deposits above this infilling the lower half of the flue appeared more mixed and though containing thin lenses of charcoal and fired and unfired clay this deposit appeared to be redeposited debris interleaving with eroded and collapsed flue vault rather than an accumulation of burnt debris from firing the kiln.

The kiln appears to be a single phase structure though well fired and probably in use for a number of years. The reason for it going out of use may have been the collapse of the flue vault, which has been observed as a weak point in other Saxon kilns. Very little pottery was found in the fill indicating the final load was successfully fired and removed from the kiln prior to its abandonment.

The Musty type 1b is the form most commonly found amongst Saxon kilns, though they exhibit a range of variations in terms of plan and structure. The form of pedestal and suspended floor at Stoke Quay appears to be unique. Other kilns with a circular pedestal such as those at Torksey, Lincolnshire (Barley 1964) and Stafford Tipping Street (Cotter 2009) have a floor formed of firebars arranged like the spokes of a wheel spanning the gap between pedestal and wall. In narrower kilns such as Thetford kiln C (Davidson 1967) the firebars span the gap between the walls or from pedestal to wall in a ladder like pattern as is the case in the Buttermarket kiln from Ipswich (Blinkhorn 1989). A characteristic that the Buttermarket kiln has in common with the Stoke Quay kiln is the inset of vertical wattle impressions in the upper wall face. This is not a feature that has been noted in kilns outside of Ipswich and therefore may represent a local characteristic of kiln construction.

The kiln produced Ipswich ware products. Work on Ipswich ware including the nearby Buttermarket kiln has refined the date of this material to c.720-850AD (the second half of the Middle Saxon period). The Buttermarket kiln has certain structural characteristics in common with later Thetford ware kilns. It is possible that the Stoke Quay kiln, which does not share these features, is an earlier type. Scientific dating will be carried out on the fills and fabric of the kiln to see if further resolution can be achieved.

Barley, M.W. 1964 *The Medieval Borough of Torksey: Excavations 1960-2* Antiq.J. Vol 44, part 2, 165-187

Blinkhorn, P, 1989 *Middle Saxon Pottery from the Buttermarket Kiln, Ipswich, Suffolk* in *Medieval Ceramics* 13 (1989) 12-16

Blinkhorn, P, 2012 *The Ipswich Ware Project: Ceramics, Trade and Society in Middle Saxon England* *Medieval Pottery Research Group Occasional Paper* 7

Cotter, J 2009 *More late Saxon Stafford-type ware kilns discovered at Stafford* in *MPRG Newsletter* 65



Musty, J, 1974 Medieval pottery kilns in Evison, V I, Hodges, H, and Hurst, J G, (eds), Medieval pottery from excavations: studies presented to Gerald Clough Dunning. London: John Baker. 41-65.  
 Davison, B.K. 1967 The Late Saxon Town of Thetford: An Interim Report on the 1964-6 Excavations Med. Arch. 9, 189-208

Cynthia Poole  
 Oxford Archaeology

## Unidentified pottery from the Bala Hissar, Kabul

MPRG-member Alison Gascoigne would like to ask members for help in identifying sherds collected during a brief survey at the Bala Hissar, Kabul, in 2007. They are likely to be recent in date: C20th, or perhaps C19th. The collection from the site of which these sherds form a part includes ceramic material from regions as diverse as China, Iran, India, Russia and Europe as well as local wares. All three sherds have soft-paste porcelain/bone china-type fabrics.



Drawings of sherds 1 and 2 can be emailed if wanted. Any help would be gratefully received: please contact A.L.Gascoigne@soton.ac.uk.

Alison Gascoigne

## Samples of Surrey Whiteware (Kingston-type) Available

Excavations in Kingston upon Thames have produced large quantities of pottery waster material associated with production in the town in the C14. A rationalisation of storage has meant disposal of an amount of undiagnostic material from one site excavated in 1968. This is plain body sherds of KINGSTON type ware associated with the kiln complex excavated by MoL in 1995 and published in MOLAS Archaeology Series 1 1999. If any Museums or other organisations are interested in obtaining a small sample this may be obtained from Steve Nelson c/o Kingston Museum, Wheatfield Way, Kingston upon Thames, KT1 2PS.

Steve Nelson

kingston.museum@rbk.kingston.gov.uk



Sherd 1. Shallow bowl with thick, even white glaze; interior has lines of gold and a transfer-applied motif of fruit and leaves in the centre; under base is the edge of a manufacturer's inscription in red, either an M or an N. Base diameter is 7cm.



Sherd 2. Small bowl with thin, even coat of white glaze, fired to crackled finish; blue-painted (transfer) design. Rim diameter 8cm.

Sherd 3. Body sherd from closed-form vessel, with clear glaze and sponge-stamped design in black and blue.

## Ceramic Code - Mystery, Toad Hall, Cheshire

The illustrated piece of plate/dish was found earlier this year at the continuing dig at Toad Hall in Cheshire. Toad Hall, which is a corruption of 'T'owd Hall' is situated near the village of Blackden Heath, and stands directly alongside the West Coast main railway line from Crewe to Manchester, in the shadow of Jodrell Bank telescope. The property is owned by Alan and Griselda Garner. Alan is the well known author of the trilogy 'The Weirdestone of Brisingamen', 'The Moon of Gomrath', and the final book published in September of this year 'Boneland' (a novel for adults), as well as many other novels and articles. The digs over the last several years have been led by Dr. Richard Morris and ceramic finds have been catalogued and recorded by David Barker. The sherd, as can be seen, is around 5cm long, 3cm at its widest and around 5 to 6cm thick. The body (fabric) is fireclay, probably from either the Stoke-on-Trent area or Buckley, and is of a fine homogenous nature with one or two small inclusions. The foot is knife-trimmed. The top right side of the sherd shows where the wall rises to the rim. The plate was obviously close to the firemouth and the body (fabric) has vitrified to a very pleasant buff colour.

The symbols have been engraved by a very sharp hard pointed tool. Richard Morris has passed on a picture of the sherd to Frances Henderson an expert on C17

ecclesiastical codes, for that is what this shorthand is thought to be. The marks have not been cut on the sherd, but on to the full plate and continue further. There is a vestige of another symbol at the lower end of it but, unfortunately, cannot be seen in the photograph.

When Frances Henderson has sorted out the code, Richard Morris has promised a further article for the newsletter. Alan and Griselda Garner would be very grateful if anyone knows of anything of a similar nature and can be contacted through me at potandclay@btinternet, or via the Blackden Trust. I have made several ceramic strips of the size of the sherd for Alan to have a try at engraving the symbols for himself. Hopefully results to follow later.



John Hudson

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## Medieval Pottery and the Transition to Post Medieval Production

Advance notice is given of a conference on medieval/post medieval pottery studies in Surrey. This follows the Surrey Archaeological Society's recent initiative in developing a greater awareness of post-roman ceramics among society members. The theme of this conference is

the transition from medieval to post medieval pottery production in Surrey. It is hoped to include reviews of the known production sites in the county as well as important, recent documentary work on the later Border Ware industry. This one day conference will be held on May 11 2013 at Surrey History Centre, Woking. Full programme and ticket application form will be available from Surrey Archaeological Society, Medieval Studies Forum, 22 Fairlawn Park, WOKING GU21 4HT or email medforum@hotmail.co.uk

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

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