



Secretary's Notes

Yet again it seems I start with the news of the loss of another major figure from the world of archaeological ceramics; Walter Davey. I was lucky enough to be billeted with Wally for the Chester Conference in 2006 and I treasure the memories I have of listening to Wally's stories of his long involvement in Archaeology and the establishment of the PMCRG. The loss of three key figures from the MPRG membership over the last year or so certainly presents the group with challenges as we head into the new decade.

Along with this newsletter will be the details of this year's conference and AGM in Perth, Scotland. The conference "Deposits and Dating" will tackle, amongst other issues, the current disparity between recent C14 dating evidence and the accepted London ceramic chronology. This was an issue that Alan Vince had been closely involved with and it was good to see his memorial conference 'Things Medieval' at the Museum of London so well attended and to listen to so many interesting and wide ranging papers, even if pottery studies tried to get in on every act! Alan Vince's archive is gradually being disseminated. Alan's huge collection of thin sections has now been lodged with the British Museum and his digital archive has been lodged with ADS. This still leaves a large collection of books and manuscripts to be dealt, negotiations are currently under way to come up with a very fitting solution!

This newsletter includes details of the English Heritage funded MPRG Research Strategy and Agenda Project that is currently underway. I would urge everyone to please get involved and give as much input as they can. This project will be critical for how the study of medieval ceramics develops over the decade or more. The current economic situation will put huge financial pressures on all sectors of archaeology, curatorial, commercial and academic for many years to come. It is important for us all that we have the tools to make our case for medieval pottery studies to be given the appropriate resources and the results of this project will hopefully be a very large stick for us to use.

As well as giving time to the Research Project I would encourage members to get involved with the management of the MPRG by seeking nomination for council. Council members do a lot of hard work behind the scenes to improve the resources for the study of medieval ceramics and as we head into a new financial and political era we should ensure that council is a strong body that can fight our corner.

Andrew Sage Secretary

Wally Davey: A Tribute

Walter Charles Davey, known to members of MPRG and to all his friends as Wally, died following a long battle with Lymphatic Leukaemia, on 17th January 2010.

Walter was born in Bristol in October 1925. His father, who had been a regular soldier in the first decade of the century, was recalled to the Colours in 1914. After the Great War he became an active trades unionist and it seems likely that Walter's political views had their foundation in the seven short years before his father died. Walter, his mother, sister and brother then moved home a number of times, finally settling in London when Walter was eleven or twelve years of age.

On leaving school Walter was sent to work in a factory, which he hated, but soon found work as a plumber, which better suited his temperament. During this time he became active in politics and joined the Young Communist League which, on one occasion, took him to Spain with a convoy carrying food to comrades fighting in the Spanish Civil War.

When the Second World War broke out Walter twice volunteered to join the Royal Air Force, but was turned down both times. Eventually he was called-up into the Army where he realised his ambition to fly by transferring to the Airborne division where he obtained his pilots licence and became a Glider Pilot. After training, Walter's Army service was spent almost entirely in Palestine during the run-up to the formation of the State of Israel.

On leaving the Army, Walter was awarded a place at Teacher Training College and it was there that he met and

married another student, Enid Hoddy who was to remain his much loved wife until her death in 2007. It was during his time at college that Walter trained as a potter and began to be interested in archaeology. For some years following graduation both taught in inner London schools but, in the late 1950s, moved to take up posts in the "New Town" of Harlow.



When Walter arrived at Brays Grove Comprehensive School, where the playing field was still being levelled by bulldozer, he was amazed when his class began to bring him sherds of Metropolitan Ware which he recognised from excavations in London. The source proved to be the remains of a seventeenth century kiln within the school grounds. In the years following, although he maintained his interest in field archaeology, and other spheres such as gliding, Walter concentrated on his researches into

Metropolitan Ware and carried out much documentary work as well as excavation.

In the late 1950s Walter joined the newly formed West Essex Archaeological Group and participated in many of its excavations, notable among them the years of digging on the site of Harlow Romano-Celtic Temple. He was a founder member of the Post-Medieval Ceramic Research Group brought together by Ken Barton and others in Bristol in about 1962 and in that lively atmosphere began his crusade to teach archaeologists the true terminology and practice of the art and trade of the potter. When the PMCRG metamorphosed into the Society for Post-Medieval Archaeology he continued this task with (especially) art historians but left when "they began to publish too many Victorian warehouses." In recent years he became a member of the MPRG from whose members and meetings he derived much satisfaction.

Walter leaves two daughters Rachel and Miriam, and four grandchildren in whom he took the greatest delight. He will be sadly missed by all who knew him.

Albert Storey

Production and Distribution of Midlands Purple Ware

A project is under way which aims to develop understanding of a major ceramic industry in the west Midlands. Its products are some of the commonest wares on transitional, late medieval-early post-medieval, sites but it is an industry whose origins, dating and distribution are not sufficiently well understood.

The core of this project is the characterisation of the main centres of early production of Midlands purple coarse and Cistercian-type fine wares in the west Midlands (south Derbyshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire, Worcestershire). The results of a variety of characterisation techniques (standard fabric characterisation methods alongside chemical and petrographic analyses) will be compared with data obtained by the same techniques using ceramics from two key consumer sites with stratified early material (Bordesley Abbey, Redditch, and Austin Friars, Leicester) as a test case. It will be the first study of this west Midlands industry on a region-wide basis.

It is anticipated that the outcomes of this pilot study will be capable of informing future curatorial and managerial strategy for both production and consumer sites. The project has the potential to inform further research: it will lay the foundations of a broad knowledge base, and indicate how that might be developed.



A Cistercian-type Ware cup from the Chilvers Coton production site, Nuneaton. Image: D. Hurst.

Results will be disseminated through the Worcestershire ceramics website of the Worcestershire Historic Environment and Archaeology Service (WHEAS), (www.worcestershireceramics.org)

and material archived as a publicly accessible physical resource with WHEAS, currently based on the University of Worcester campus.

This project is funded primarily by English Heritage and partly by the Royal Archaeological Institute. The project is being managed by Dr Susan M Wright (Bordesley Abbey Project CIC; s_m_w@dsl.pipex.com), with Derek Hurst (WHEAS; dhurst@worcestershire.gov.uk), and scientific analysis by Dr Michael Hughes and Dr Rob Ixer.

Derek Hurst and Sue Wright

John Hurst Travel Fund

Thanks, in part, to a generous grant from the John Hurst travel fund I was able to attend the IX Congresso Internazionale sulla Ceramica Medievale nel Mediterraneo in November 2009. I went armed with two papers on my doctoral research into Almohad pottery in South-West Iberia, as well as a large pile of MPRG leaflets which I distributed to many interested delegates.

The conference was divided into six themes, from architectural ceramics to ceramics and society, with each day packed with papers from 9am to 7pm, not to mention the poster sessions that ran concurrently alongside the presentations. The range of speakers was impressive, from the likes of Jacques Thiriot to Cristina Tonghini, Juan Zozaya and of course Chris Gerrard. Papers covered subjects as diverse as Byzantine pottery, Islamic pottery from Syria to Iberia; as well as the range of types recovered at sites from Acre to Morocco. My first paper, on the evening of the first day of the conference, discussed how ceramics inform an understanding of Almohad society in 12th and 13th century Seville. In the face of stiff questioning from an audience, not all of whom were familiar with the implementation of Anglo-American archaeological theory, I defended my paper well. The advantage of this discussion was that I was remembered by many of the delegates and even secured an invitation to dinner as a result of my efforts! My second paper, on the penultimate day of the conference, described the petrological analysis of Almohad pottery from South-West al-Andalus and was included in the session on ceramics and trade.

Aside from all the papers and posters, one of the great advantages of the conference was the chance to meet other delegates and discuss mutual points of interest. Most importantly for me, I was re-united with a colleague from Portugal who is currently establishing a new research group to investigate Islamic pottery in western al-Andalus and asked me to join with her and others in future work into this under-researched subject.

So a successful conference, at which I was one of the few British participants, and one which I would recommend to anyone wanting to improve their understanding of medieval pottery in the Mediterranean, as well as getting the opportunity to speak French, Spanish and even venture into Italian! The next conference is due to take place in 2011 in Mértola, Portugal, which lacks the size and impressive buildings of Venice, but which is equally as scenic.

This fund was established in 2007 to honour the contribution made by John Hurst to the study of medieval and post-medieval pottery in the UK and Europe. It offers travel grants of up to £200 each MPRG members who need financial support to carry out their research. Grants are awarded annually and the closing date for applications is the 23rd of March each year. For more information visit the MPRG website: www.medievalpottery.org.uk.

Rebecca Bridgman

MPRG Council Nominations

At the forthcoming AGM several council positions will be available. There are 5 positions for ordinary members and an assistant editor will also be appointed. If you wish to nominate a candidate for any of these positions please contact the secretary; andrew.sage@dunelm.org.uk.

Medieval Ceramic Reference Collections

I am currently in the process of updating the list of medieval pottery reference collections listed on the MPRG website. This list provides a valuable resource, both for specialists established in a region and for those new to an area. Details of many collections have now been updated and some new collections, particularly from the south west have been added to the list. There are still some gaps, I have been unable to establish the whereabouts of the collections for Norfolk and Nottingham. If you are able to help or hold a collection not currently listed please get in touch. I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has responded to my emails for their help in updating the list.

Ben Jervis
bpj106@soton.ac.uk

MPRG Research Strategy and Agenda: Regional Framework Project

This project will produce a revised research strategy and agenda for the study of post-Roman ceramics in England, Scotland and Wales. In 1994 English Heritage published 'Medieval Ceramic Studies in England. A Review for English Heritage' by Maureen Mellor and this project will build on that important contribution.

The aims of the project are to review of developments since 1994, assess current research priorities and examine the status of the sector. The remit has also been extended to include post-medieval ceramic studies. The project will also extend to Scotland and Wales so that the whole of Britain is represented.

The review stage will lead to the production of a revised agenda for future research and development and a revised strategy for achieving that agenda. The project is being undertaken by Dr Anne Boyle on behalf of the Medieval Pottery Research Group (MPRG) with funding support from English Heritage and Cadw. The Societies for medieval and post-medieval archaeology are project partners.

All those with an active interest in medieval ceramics are encouraged to participate in the project.

Website

A web 'wiki' has been established as a means of making information and participation in the project as easy as possible. The MPRG wiki can be accessed at:

<http://mprg.wikispaces.com/>

Literature review

A page listing published literature for each area is now established and everyone is encouraged to get in touch with further references or any comments about particularly useful or valuable publications.

It is important to account for grey literature as well, so references for reports which are of significance to an area

or region (with brief details of why) are appreciated. Equally, please highlight any internet or digital resources that are available.

Questionnaire

A questionnaire, which aims to gauge the state of pottery research across England, Scotland and Wales, will be released by the end of March 2010. This will be available online, as well as in digital and hard formats.

Consultation meetings

Consultation meetings will be held across England, Scotland and Wales. These will aim to highlight the current state and future direction of ceramic studies in each of the MPRG's regions.

Forum

An online forum is available on the MPRG wiki. It is hoped this will be used by anyone wishing to submit information and ideas and as an area for discussion.

Keeping up to date

Details of the questionnaire, consultation meetings and other information are available via the MPRG wiki. Information will also be emailed to members of the MPRG and those of our partner organisations.

Queries or Information can be submitted via the forum on the MPRG wiki, or by contacting:

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Anne Boyle

Southern Regional Group Meeting

March 20th saw the MPRG southern regional group meeting take place. An array of ceramic topics were presented with lively debate ensuing. The day consisted of a broad sweep of the region; starting with a look into pottery production at Chichester (Ben Jervis) and Portchester (Beth Ricketts), then moving to Egham for an insightful observation of the kiln (Phil Jones) and then back into Hampshire for a comparison of tiles (Katherine Barclay)...and that was only the morning! After a refreshing lunch (where of course the conversation did not stray far from the world of pottery!) we started with presentations focusing upon Winchester (John Cotter), moving to Dorset (Lucy Whittingham) and then Wiltshire (Lorraine Mephram). The main topic of further discussion, spurred by many of the presentations, was into the nature of sandy Saxon wares in the region and whether lumping so many pottery assemblages within this category, where variation does take place, benefits further study of this pottery type...answers on a postcard please! To finish we were treated to looking at some pottery sherds which the speakers had brought along. The day was thoroughly enjoyed by all and all that is left to say is thank you to Hampshire Museum Service for allowing us to hold the meeting at Chilcomb and to Ben Jervis for organising it all.

Beth Ricketts

Things Medieval: A Conference in Memory of Alan Vince

This conference was held on 27th February at the Museum of London and was exceptionally well attended, testament to the influence and popularity of Alan amongst his colleagues. Nine papers were presented on a range of topics covering Alan's broad scope of interests, including trade (Frans Verhaeghe, Maureen Mellor and Mats Roslund), urbanism (David Hinton, Chris Dyer and David

Stocker) and pottery (Chris Gerrard, Paul Blinkhorn and Lyn Blackmore). Thanks go to the organisers, Duncan Brown for MPRG and Dawn Hadley for the Society for

Medieval Archaeology and the Museum of London for hosting the event.

Ben Jervis

Meetings and Announcements

SEMPER REGIONAL GROUP MEETING

SEMPER will be holding a meeting on 17th April at Harlow Museum entitled 'Aspects of Pottery'. It is being held in honour of Wally Davey. The programme is as follows:

10.00 – 10.30	Coffee
10.30 – 10.40	Introduction– Helen Walker
10.40 – 11.00	Wally Davey: an appreciation – Albert Storey
11.00 – 11.20	Pottery kilns in Essex – Helen Walker
11.20 – 11.40	1000 years of pottery in Herts – Alison Turner-Rugg
11.40 – 12.00	Caledonian pottery: a post-medieval production site in Glasgow - Chris Jarret
12.00 – 12.20	Documentary evidence for pottery manufacture and use – Pat Ryan
12.20 – 2.00	LUNCH
2.00 – 2.20	A potter's mistakes – John Hudson
2.20 – 2.40	What's a waster? – Anna Slowikowski
2.40 – 3.00	Black glazes – Mike Hughes (to be confirmed)
3.00 – 3.30	Regional Round-up (or 'Show and Tell!')

For more information contact Anna Slowikowski (anna.slowikowski@albion-arch.com) or visit the MPRG website www.medievalpottery.org.uk.

NORTH AND SOUTH: TOBACCO PIPE STUDIES IN THE WESTERN MEDITERRANEAN AND THEIR NORTH-WESTERN EUROPEAN CONNECTIONS.

The 26th conference of the Académie Internationale de la Pipe will be held in Grasse, Alpes-Maritimes, France from the 4th-7th of November 2010 at the Bibliothèque Municipale. It will focus on the magnificent collection of European pipes of all types made in the late 19th and early 20th centuries by Alice Baroness Rothschild, which was donated to the library after her death in 1922. The collection will be made accessible for detailed study by members of the conference and a number of background papers will be presented about it. There will also be a series of presentations of new archaeological evidence for pipe production and consumption in southern France,

northern Italy, Spain and further afield. Anyone interested in giving a paper or attending the meeting, please contact Dr Susie White (susie_white@talktalk.net).

SOCIETY FOR CLAY PIPE RESEARCH CONFERENCE

The 26th annual SCPR conference will be held this year at Stirling Castle (18th-19th September 2010). The Saturday programme of lectures will focus on the Scottish clay tobacco pipe industry and will be complimented by displays. A guided walk around historic Stirling is to follow on the Sunday morning. Non-members of the society will be very welcome to attend. Further information is available from Dennis Gallagher (email: dq011c0754@blueyonder.co.uk)

MPRG ANNUAL CONFERENCE: Dating and Deposits.

Please find attached a programme for the MPRG annual conference, which will be held in Perth from 14th-16th June 2010.

REQUEST FOR PAPERS ON TEA WARES

By considering foodways, the cultural and social practices relating to the production, distribution and consumption of food, we can gain a fresh insight into the archaeological record. In an attempt to achieve this I am currently researching an essay on tea and gender in Britain and Japan, and would be very grateful to receive references for articles and books surrounding the topic. I am aware of the need to ground the research in archaeology, as such references for assemblages/sites containing tea wares would be especially welcome. Please respond to frazerbowen@gmail.com.
Frazer Bowen

NEW BOOK ON STONWARE IN SWITZERLAND

Steinzeug in der Schweiz by Andreas Heege discusses stoneware imports from the production centres in NW Europe and the small scale produce of Swiss stoneware. Examples come from archaeological excavations and museum collections. The custom made vessels for the 'Eidgenossen' are among the most special find mentioned. This is the first major publication in this field on Swiss stoneware and well worth reading and using in further studies. The book is in German and can be purchased for 30 euros from <http://sunriseishop.ch/rubmedia>.

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