MEDIEVAL POTTERY RESEARCH GROUP

Newsletter **87** September 2017

Notes from the President

MPRG Council are continuing to seek ways of meeting the aims and objectives of MPRG's *'A Research Framework for Post-Roman Ceramic Studies in Britain'* either through our own initiatives or by collaborating with or supporting others. MPRG are pleased to support the upcoming Ceramic Petrology Group meeting on the 'Application of Scientific Techniques to the Study of Archaeological Pottery from the British Isles' and hope members will be able to contribute by attending or submitting a presentation (see details below). The need to promote standards has been emphasised by the recent CIfA report: *A Review of the Standard of Reporting on Archaeological Artefacts in England* http://archaeologists.net/news/cifa-launches-major-new-report-review-standard-reporting-archaeological-artefacts-england which confirms many members' fears regarding poor standards of reporting. Information on how to obtain *A Standard for Pottery Studies in Archaeology* can be found on the last page of this newsletter; we all need to ensure the *Standard* is promoted to everyone involved in the production and monitoring of pottery reports.

Training plays an important role in the promotion of best practice and it is hoped more non-specialist training weekends can be run this autumn and early next year and that the previously successful training courses held in collaboration with the then English Heritage can be re-visited.

Council are also looking at ways of re-designing our website to bring it up to date with modern digital devices. Collaboration with our European colleagues is something to look forward to in 2018 and 2019, dates of conferences to be held in Belgium and Sweden can be found below.

Julie Edwards

SAVE THE DATE: MPRG CONFERENCE 2018

Thanks to an invitation from Yvonne de Rue and her colleagues, next year's MPRG conference will be held in Brussels, over the weekend of 2nd-3rd June - the final schedule, taking in either the Friday before or the Monday after, is still to be fixed. The conference theme, and a call for papers, will be circulated in the autumn, but please put the date in your diaries.

Lorraine Mepham

HISTORIC ENGLAND PROJECT SURVEYING CERAMIC TYPE SERIES

Dan Miles of Historic England is working on a project (Research Frameworks and Reference Resources) to get a strategic overview of archaeological reference resources that are currently used in the sector - in particular for development-led investigations. He is surveying ceramic type series with the aim of gaining a better understanding of the current situation in terms of their coverage, availability, use and gaps. Dan is currently contacting ceramic type series curators with a questionnaire to find out about the state of the physical collections as well as any digital resources and concordances that may exist. It is hoped that this will provide a valuable appraisal of the situation; enabling steps towards formulating a plan to ultimately improve standards of pottery analysis and therefore highlighting the research value of this data. MPRG will be consulted regarding the findings of the project and possible approaches to any issues highlighted.

Julie Edwards

SPECIALIST CERAMICS TRAINING

In the past, a number of training courses were organised looking at specific ceramic studies and wares. It has been suggested that the course on medieval imports could be re-run and a new course covering 17th- and 18th-century imports (e.g. stonewares, tin-glaze wares, porcelains) would be useful. Historic England might sponsor such training if MPRG can present a business case and demonstrate a demand. Therefore if either of these courses would be of interest to you please send an email stating your interest to julie.edwards@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk by **Friday 6th October 2017**.

Julie Edwards

THE RE-EXCAVATION OF THE WOOLWICH STONEWARE KILN (C 1660): AN INTERIM SUMMARY

In 1974 a pottery kiln producing stoneware was excavated at Woolwich Ferry Approach, south-east London. This was dated to c 1660 and is believed to be the earliest evidence for stoneware production in England - preceding John Dwight's 1672 stoneware pottery at Fulham by as much as a decade. A full report on the two kilns found (including a slightly later earthenware kiln), and the 60,000 sherds of pottery recovered, was published a few years later (Pryor and Blockley 1978). Among other things the kiln was notable for the range of brown salt-glazed stoneware 'bellarmine' jugs it produced - many decorated with typical mid-17th century heraldic medallions and grimacing 'bellarmine' masks - stylistically indistinguishable from imported (*Bartmann*) jugs from Germany. Remarkable still, was the evidence for attempts to produce highly decorated, blue-painted, Westerwald-style stoneware - but possibly in another kiln somewhere nearby?

In the hope of future fuller investigation, preservation and eventual display, the stoneware kiln (once emptied of finds) was filled with protective polyeurethane foam, block-lifted in a cage of steel girders and moved to a storage depot two miles away - quite a remarkable feat of engineering for the time. Over the years this 35-ton block, the size of a room, was moved three times and for the last seven years it was stored in a car park behind the Greenwich Heritage Centre where it was all but forgotten. Whether by accident or design the block had conveniently been replaced in its original orientation - with the egg-shaped kiln plan aligned on a north-south axis, with the narrower ('entrance') end pointing due north towards the river Thames, and the rounder (stokehole) end facing south. The western edge of the kiln had been damaged by later rubbish pits while the 1.8m-wide stoke pit to the south had been sacrificed during the block lifting process. Unfortunately, the hoped-for funding for the preservation and display of the fragile kiln remains (held together by the block of soil around it) never materialized, and the landowners, Berkeley Homes Ltd, wished to reclaim their car park for its intended use. As a compromise, the landowners put forward funding for the excavation, recording (including full 3-D photogrammetric survey) and reporting of the kiln.

Figure 1 showing the re-excavated kiln with the locational points for the photogrammetry.

The re-excavation was carried out over a week at the end of March 2017 by a small team from Oxford Archaeology - 43 years after the original excavation. The site team welcomed a number of visitors to view the site including some members of the original 1974 excavation team and also a few members of MPRG. By the end of the week, the kiln had been cross-sectioned (one of the main objectives), recorded and extensively sampled. It was then dismantled and taken away for disposal.

Post-excavation recording of the finds assemblage is now complete while analysis and re-interpretation of the kiln structure is currently in progress. The main academic aims of the re-excavation were to produce a detailed 3-D model of the kiln structure using data from the photogrammetric survey (see figure 1), to produce cross-section drawings (not carried in 1974), and to see if the dating of the kiln could be refined in any way - these aims were mostly achieved. The date of the kiln still largely rests on the clay tobacco pipe dating of c 1660-1680 from the original excavation and the excavator's reasonable argument that the kiln was short-lived and abandoned

closer to c 1660 than c 1680. Others have suggested, on stylistic arguments, that the stonewares produced fit better with a date of around 1630-1650. No direct documentary records linked to the kiln or its owners have yet come to light. The original published finds have not been re-examined. The re-excavation produced only one piece of 17th-century pipe stem and c 100 sherds of pottery. Most of these are from a rubbish pit that appears to be cut by the kiln and therefore earlier than it. This produced (?residual) early post-medieval redwares of c.1480-1650 (including wasters), and a black-glazed redware mug rim which fits better with a general mid-17th-century date. A few small sherds of post-medieval redware from the fill of the construction cut for the kiln also give a broadly mid/late-17th century dating. Thus there is nothing in the new evidence that challenges the accepted published dating of the kiln. The few pieces of stoneware retrieved from the re-excavation were fused to the kiln structure and had to be chipped off. These include a few bellarmine rims, and a few mug rims with characteristic ring stamps on the neck, but no new medallions or new forms.

The kiln furniture was rather more interesting (though of known types). About 80 pieces were recovered - those that could be detached from the fused vitreous crust covering the raised kiln floor. These included many square stoneware pads (separators), up to 65mm square, bearing the rim impressions of vessels stacked upon them or to them (see figure 2). There were also a few wheel-thrown conical stoneware props, and numerous redware 'buns' with square props still attached. The buns were placed unfired into the kiln and squashed and squeezed into place as general props to level-out the base of the firing stack. Potters' fingerprints are clearly visible on many of the buns.

No one knew quite what to expect this time around when the excavation team commenced work; just how difficult would it to be to remove the 43-year old foam that had been injected into the kiln voids? Had the kiln been damaged by all the moves? To everyone's amazement the foam packing (on a layer of tinfoil) came away fairly easily and the kiln structure looked almost exactly as found in 1974. It had been assumed that the five surviving fire bars had been removed before the block-lift but these quite delicate-looking structures were all found still *in-situ*. The exposed structure, with its split pedestal design with knobbly rows of kiln furniture down the 'back', and limb-like fire bars, looked a bit like some strange fossil dinosaur emerging from the ground.

Figure 2 showing the square stoneware pads with rim impressions of vessels

The main, oval, brick-built body of the kiln is about 3.20m long by 2.35m wide. With the (now vanished) stoke pit to the south, and the flared walls of the 'entrance' at the northern end, the structure found in 1974 had a maximum length of c 5.43m. The walls survived to ground level. Evidence from the new dig (and cross-sections) is gradually allowing the construction history of the kiln to be more fully understood (although interpretation is still a work in progress). It clearly started life as a large pit with a sloping base - deepest at the southern (stokehole) end - dug into the underlying natural Thanet sand; the sides were then lined with brick. A brick-framed split- or double pedestal was then constructed down the middle thus creating three flues to carry the heat through the kiln and up through the raised floor of the fire bars. Most of the already damaged western flue has since disappeared, along with a big chunk of the western pedestal. The upper surface of the pedestals was covered with a layer of clay and sand - now a solid fused vitreous crust embedded with kiln furniture and occasional bellarmine rims - and covered with a grey-brown skin of ash/salt glaze. Arched clay fire bars (original number unknown) radiated out from the tops of the pedestals, spanning the flues and fixed to the outer walls. The fire bars were part of the solid structure of the kiln and bonded to it. Examination of these (once detached) showed they were made from solid clay and not formed around a central wooden withy. Together, the upper surfaces of the arches and pedestals formed the raised floor of the kiln on which the pottery load was stacked.

A striking feature of the re-excavated kiln (also visible in 1974) was the sharp boundary between the brightly oxidised (orange), scorched, inner face of the brick kiln wall - facing into the firing chamber - and the reduced

(black) outer face of the wall - set into the surrounding earth. This was most clearly seen in the top course of header bricks (at modern ground level) where the scorched inner half of the brick is also hard and brittle, whereas the outer black half is much softer and often crumbled away.

Figure 3 showing the cross-section of the kiln

The cross-section (see figure 3) shows this colour difference penetrates all the way down to the base of the flues and beyond. Another surprise was that some bricks, in the very lowest course of the outer walls and pedestals, appeared to be of dried but unfired clay - they were probably set deep enough to escape the intense scorching seen on bricks higher up. It now seems plausible that the walls of the kiln were originally made of dried, but unfired, brick and the fire bars were likewise of raw clay when installed allowing them to be moulded into position. Once dry enough, the kiln was given an initial (empty) firing to completely dry it out and turn it into a true brick structure ready to receive its first load of unfired pottery sometime later. This may explain why the outer 'skin' of the brick lining is now black, soft and crumbling - because it was never properly fired in the first place.

Some aspects of the kiln's structure and function are still only poorly understood and may not be answered without a proper reassessment of the original excavation records and site archive. The southern stokehole, for instance, is barely mentioned in the original report and we have no idea what it actually looked like as no images of it were published. It was presumably a brick arch, but this end of the kiln was damaged during the block-lifting process. The opposite end of the kiln, with its bayed opening, is also open to interpretation: did it function as a (rather narrow) loading entrance, or were the pots loaded from above and then covered with a temporary roof or dome of broken tile, as the original report suggests? That it was an up-draught kiln is fairly certain, and with a heat source coming from the stokehole in the south, and passing northwards and upwards through the firing chamber. The heat probably escaped through a vent, or vents, in the roof, but some German kilns had a solid chimney stack or vent at the opposite end of the kiln - could our northern 'entrance' perhaps be the remains of something like this?

A more detailed report on the re-excavation is currently in preparation for The London Archaeologist. No doubt many questions will still remain – not least about who built the kiln in the first place, who operated it (German potters?), why does it seem to have been short-lived, why was it abandoned and why did it disappear without a trace in the written records of the day?

Bibliography

Pryor, S, and Blockley, K, 1978 'A 17th-century kiln site at Woolwich', *Post-medieval Archaeology*, **12**, 30-85.

John Cotter, Oxford Archaeology

SARAH JENNINGS FACTSHEETS: APPEAL FOR COLOUR IMAGES

MPRG are preparing a series of factsheets in memory of Sarah Jennings. They are intended to be guides to the uninitiated and *aides memoires* to experienced pottery specialists especially when teaching others who are assisting in pottery processing or lobbying for attention. We are appealing for colour images of the various stages of processing pottery from as soon as it comes out of the ground to being selected for retention and disposal. This includes marking, bagging, type sorting, calculating EVEs – the lot. We will of course promote application of those standards we have long championed. We also need images of reasonably complete examples of different types and forms of pottery so that we can gather a representative sample from the whole of the UK. At some point, we may expand the series to include pottery from the Continent that is commonly found in the UK. Two conditions apply: the Group would be grateful if the copyright holder grants the MPRG unlimited use of any image submitted (publication will be in print and open access form through our website – due acknowledgement will be given); the image should be submitted as a jpeg or TIFF at 300 dpi. Please accompany the submission with the name of the copyright holder in the form in which they should be acknowledged. Please send your submissions to davidp@dawsonheritage.co.uk On behalf of the editorial panel, Duncan Brown, Ben Jervis and myself thank you in anticipation for helping make the series truly representative of the MPRG and its membership.

David Dawson

ASHMOLEAN

INVITATION

ITALIAN MAIOLICA AND EUROPE

A Two Day Symposium in honour of Professor Timothy Wilson

22–23 September 2017

Ashmolean Museum, Oxford

To mark Timothy Wilson's recent retirement from the Ashmolean and the publication of his catalogue of the Museum's maiolica collection, this international symposium will present new research from leading scholars in the field.

Maiolica was the painted tin-glazed pottery of the Italian Renaissance. Developed from techniques and ideas taken from Islamic and Spanish traditions, it in turn had a crucial influence on the development of other European ceramics.

This symposium will highlight maiolica's unique standing. It will investigate its relationship with Renaissance art in general, its rich and vital connections to Northern and Southern Europe and its long-lasting impact. It will also discuss the enthusiastic collecting of this fascinating medium.

Speakers will include Caroline Campbell (National Gallery, London), Hugo Blake (Royal Holloway, University of London), Alfonso Pleguezuelo (University of Seville), Luca Pesante (Rome), Michael Brody (Philadelphia), Silvia Glaser (Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg), Françoise Barbe (Musée du Louvre), Valentina Mazzotti (Museo Internazionale delle Ceramiche in Faenza), Dora Thornton (British Museum), Elisa Sani (formerly Victoria & Albert Museum) and Raffaella Ausenda (Milan).

£60 for both days to include lunch

To register and for further details please contact Christopher Doogue
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www.ashmolean.org

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

A POTTERY KILN IN NEWPORT, PEMBROKSHIRE: UPDATED NEWS

Last year in newsletter 83, Oliver Kent reported on the re-recording and excavation of a late 15th/early 16th–century pottery kiln at Newport, Pembrokeshire. A free download of the interim report on the survey of the surviving kiln now is available from davidp@dawsonheritage.co.uk. It is hoped that the pottery report by David Dawson and Oliver Kent, including the substantial mass of sherds from Nick Tavener's site watching, will be completed by the end of the year.

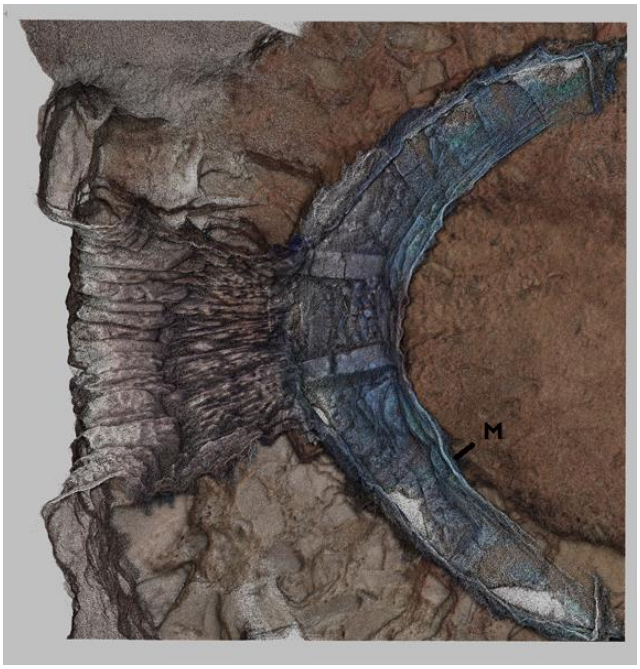

Figure 4 showing the construction of the roof of the western firebox and flues showing the fired clay bars incorporated in the corbelled roof. Imagery from Bill Stebbing of ScantoPlan.

David Dawson

MEDIEVAL AND POST-MEDIEVAL FINDS FROM EXETER, 1971-1980 BY JOHN ALLAN (1984, EXETER CITY COUNCIL AND THE UNIVERSITY OF EXETER)

John Allan's classic study of the medieval and post-medieval finds from large-scale excavations within the city of Exeter has become a much sought after volume that has long been out of print. The University of Exeter Press has kindly agreed that it can now be made available

digitally as part of the *Exeter: A Place in Time* project (http://humanities.exeter.ac.uk/archaeology/research/projects/place_in_time/resources/reports/). This AHRC and Historic England funded project, led by Professor Stephen Rippon (University of Exeter) and Neil Holbrook (Cotswold Archaeology), is writing up a series of the major unpublished excavations, and using modern scientific techniques to analyse some of the key assemblages stored within the Royal Memorial Museum in Exeter.

Stephen Rippon

GERMAN STONEWARE REFERENCES

Following a chat with Dana Piessens and Yvonne de Rue at the Leicester conference, they agreed to put together an up to date reference list for German post-medieval Stonewares for the newsletter and here is the result:

Siegburg

Francke U., 1999 *Kannebäcker in Altenrath. Frühneuzeitliche Steinzeugproduction in Troisdorf – Altenrath.*

Raeren

Kohnemann M., 1982, *Auflagen auf Raerener Steinzeug. Ein Bildwerk*. (for applied decoration)

Mennicken R., 2009 *Schätze aus Raerener Erde. Katalog des Raerener Steinzeug aus dem Hetjens-Museum*.

Mennicken R., 2013 *Raerener Steinzeug. Europäisches Kulturerbe.*

Köln

Unger I., 2007 *Kölner und Frechener Steinzeug der Renaissance. Die Bestände des Kölnischen Stadtmuseums.* (*Publikationen des Kölnischen Stadtmuseums* 8).

Additionally, work has been done on Stoneware water bottles and information on these can be found in the online resources:

www.mineralwasserkruege.homepage.t-online.de/selters_allgemein.pdf

www.mineralwasserkruege.homepage.t-online.de/hejjas_dokumentation.pdf

www.mineralwasserkruege.homepage.t-online.de/karlsbad.pdf

www.mineralwasserkruege.homepage.t-online.de/alte_brunnenkruege.pdf

Dana Piessens and Yvonne de Rue

CERAMIC PETROLOGY GROUP 2017 ANNUAL MEETING: 10-11 NOVEMBER, INSTITUTE OF ARCHAEOLOGY, UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON

This year's CPG meeting will be a two-day event hosted by the IOA. It will consist of a full day's program of talks, open to all aspects of ceramic analysis from any archaeological period and part of the globe, on Friday 1Oth November.

This will be followed on Saturday (11th November) by a special one-day session dedicated to the Application of Scientific Techniques to the Study of Archaeological Pottery from the British Isles. The aim of this focused session will be to assess the state-of-the-art of this well-established topic and identify both directions and priorities for the future It will be jointly hosted by the CPG and the Prehistoric Ceramics Research Group CPCRG), the Study Group for Roman Pottery (SGRP), and the Medieval Pottery Research Group (MPRG).

All interested researchers are welcome on either or both days. Please email patrick.quinn@ucl.ac.uk to register your attendance. There will be a small fee of £10 per person per day to cover lunch and refreshments, to be payable on the day.

If you wish to present, please send a title and abstract of up to 300 words by 1st October to patrick.quinn@ucl.ac.uk noting on what day you intend to present.

Patrick Quinn

CONFERENCE ANNOUNCE-MENT!

GOTHENBURG CERAMICS 2019

Production, Trade and Cultural Exchange in Europe 1000–1850 AD

MUSEUM OF GOTHENBURG, 16–18 MAY 2019

THE LAST 100 YEARS of historical archaeology in western Sweden have resulted in extensive, primarily urban, ceramic collections in our museums. This material reveals a picture of ceramic development as well as suggesting complex European links spanning a period of 850 years. Although there is ongoing research, much of the material still remains unpublished. This conference aims to meet and discuss European ceramics from a broad perspective. There will also be an opportunity to view pottery assemblages from our museum collections.

THE PRESENTATIONS may cover topics such as production, distribution and trade, waste management, contacts and diaspora, cooking utensils, dining habits or other social aspects.

A CALL FOR PAPERS will officially be sent out during the spring of 2018. We are eager to make this conference a top event for 2019 so if you want to be kept posted or have any further enquiries, then please send an e-mail to the address below. Please also advise us if you intend to participate with a paper: tom.wennberg@kultur.goteborg.se

THE CONFERENCE is a collaboration with the Medieval Pottery Research Group (MPRG). Their annual meeting will take place in connection with the conference and be included with this event.

ORGANIZING COMMITTEE FOR THE CONFERENCE

Tom Wennberg, Museum of Gothenburg, Sweden
Sonia Jeffery, Lödöse museum/Västarvet, Sweden
Jeanette Gustavsson, Rio Göteborg, natur- och kulturkooperativ, Sweden
Veronica Forsblom Ljungdahl, Bohusläns museum, Sweden

GÖTEBORGS STADSMUSEUM
LÖDÖSE MUSEUM
RIO GÖTEBORG
BOHUSLÄNS MUSEUM

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 and Simon Chenerey (UK £22.50; Europe: £24: All include P&P)

Occasional Paper 6: A Research Framework for Post-Roman Ceramic Studies in Britain http://www.mprgframework.info/

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)

A Standard for Pottery Studies in Archaeology - Online Digital Version
http://romanpotterystudy.org/new/wpcontent/uploads/2016/06/Standard_for_Pottery_Studies_in_Archaeology.pdf - printed paperback available free please contact Sian Iles

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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