MEDIEVAL POTTERY RESEARCH GROUP

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Newsletter **91** **October 2020**

Notes from the President

Welcome to MPRG's 91st newsletter which is a bumper issue to compensate for the Covid-related cancellation of the Spring copy, although sadly not all the contents are good news. Hopefully from now on the Newsletter will return to its regular publication schedule. Thank you to everyone who has made time to contribute to this issue; please do contact David Budge if you have any items for the next newsletter.

At the beginning of the year MPRG Council was busy planning a three-day conference and a training weekend as well as re-vamping the website and depositing *A Guide to the Classification of Medieval Ceramic Forms* with ADS. Sadly, the events have had to be postponed and initial ideas of a one-day conference later this year have proved over optimistic. We are now looking at what events may be possible next year; the Baltic and North Atlantic Pottery Research Group have held a socially distanced meeting in Stralsund, Germany this month so perhaps they may be able to give us some tips. Meanwhile MPRG is embracing the on-line world. The new website was launched and whilst some pages are awaiting an update it contains lots of information, the Guide is available on the ADS website and there has been much recent discussion on the Facebook page about discoveries in the UK and elsewhere in Europe. Council has met several times via Zoom and as this has proved a success – saving travel time and costs, allowing attendance by our Irish representative (and potentially in the future our Continental reps) – a decision has been made to hold Council meetings twice a year in London and twice using video-conferencing. This arrangement will hopefully also help us move forward faster on some of our plans and encourage greater attendance. As you will see in Lorraine's note below arrangements are being made to hold the AGM on-line, members will be notified of the AGM date and arrangements by email.

Over the last few months Council has also been: continuing to try to find ways of promoting and encouraging standards in pottery work and have joined in with the consultation on and discussion of the CIfA/HE project to develop a Toolkit for Finds reporting; working to find ways of bringing the Sarah Jennings Bequest Project to completion; chasing up subscription payments; editing Medieval Ceramics 40; mailing publications and drawing up proposals for future Occasional Papers. I would like to thank Council members for continuing to work on behalf of the Group despite the troubles and difficulties the pandemic has brought and everyone else for their support of MPRG.

Hopefully it will not be too long before we can all meet up and discuss pottery that we can hold as well as see!

Julie Edwards

Should we change the Group's name?

MPRG Council has been giving thought to renaming the Group as the 'Medieval **and Later** Pottery Research Group'; this is in order to better reflect the date range of pottery studies covered by the Journal and the membership. The inclusion of '**and Later**' would serve to inform non-pottery specialists such as consultants, project managers and museum professionals that the guidance, advice and knowledge offered by the Group and its members has a wider remit than the medieval period. In addition it may attract new members and contributions to the Journal.

Council would like to put the proposal of altering the Group name to the AGM. The 2010 AGM held in Perth considered and rejected a similar proposal. It would be useful to know members' opinions on this matter before the AGM and if our name were to be altered whether we should keep the initials as MPRG or use MLPRG. Please email your thoughts to president@medievalpottery.org.uk

Julie Edwards

MPRG Annual conference 'Pottery and Religion' - POSTPONED

Members will not be surprised, in these uncertain times, to learn of Council's decision to postpone our annual conference, originally scheduled for June 2020, until 2021. We hope to be able to use the same venue (Durham), and to hold the conference sometime in June (date to be confirmed). We already have a good list of potential speakers, and hope that they will be able to speak next year instead; we thank them for their patience as we make our new arrangements. There could still be a few slots for more speakers, and the Call for Papers will be re-circulated accordingly later this year. In the meantime, alternative arrangements will be made to hold our 2020 AGM online later this year.

Lorraine Mepham

Regional Groups

Regional groups have been an important part of MPRG since the early days. Regional group activity was most prolific in the 1970s and 1980s before the introduction of commercial archaeology. They provided a forum for the exchange of ideas, opportunity to introduce new types and dating frameworks, and many friendly debates. In more recent years it has become difficult to maintain this early level of activity, although in many areas regional groups have persisted with great success. The introduction of a Facebook page has provided an excellent platform for exchange of information and has widened the membership, but nothing can beat actually viewing the pottery in person. Local meetings are also often a great introduction for the many local archaeological groups that have actively become involved in community archaeology and are keen to learn about what they have found.

While it may seem an odd time, during a pandemic, to be concerned with meetings that cannot presently take place, the 'regional groups' section of the new MPRG website needs up dating. If you are a regional or local representative (or willing to be one) please send your contact details (please only use details you are willing to have shared online) to the regional groups officer: janeyoung.pottery@googlemail.com.

Jane Young

From Galilee to Ghent (via London) - the extraordinary journey of a late 14th-/early 15th-century Syrian fritware *albarello*

This note discusses one of a group of late medieval Syrian fritware *albarelli* found in London during excavations in Fenchurch Street between 1997 and 2003 and comparative material found in the Low Countries. One of the London jars was included in an exhibition held in Ghent earlier this year on the work of the painter Jan Van Eyck, while a very similar *albarello* recently discovered in the Netherlands is now on display in a rather different exhibition in Rotterdam.

Background

Fritware pottery consists of ground glass added to clay, sometimes with quartz or other siliceous material; a recipe written in 1301 by Abu'l-Qasim (an official historian from a family of important Persian potters) specifies ten parts silica (ground quartz) to one part frit and one part clay. Fritwares were always glazed, using a recipe combining silica with a flux of either lead oxide or soda/potash, the latter producing an alkaline glaze, which by the 14th century was the more common.

The tradition reached the Near and Middle East around the 9th century AD. Fritwares would appear to have been first used in Iraq, but between the 10th to 12th centuries (Fatimid period) production moved to Egypt, where the main centre was at Fustat (Old Cairo). By c 1150 the technology was spreading to Syria (formerly part of Galilee), also part of the Fatimid empire. Although prompted by the need to emulate the Chinese blue and white porcelain that was imported in the 12th and 13th centuries, new forms and decorative styles were developed to fit the Islamic market.

Following the destruction of the lustreware potteries at Fustat in 1169 and the unification of Egypt and Syria under the Ayyubid dynasty in 1171, some potters may have moved to northern Mesopotamia/Syria, where production developed at Damascus, Raqqa, Rusafa and Hamā, others to Persia/Iran, where Kashan and Rayy were important centres. From 1250 until 1517 Egypt and Syria were ruled by the Sultans of the Mamluks, a military caste whose members came from Turkey. Persia, however, was largely devastated by a series of invasions by the Mongols under Ghengis Khan from c 1220, with a resulting decline in pottery production, and from 1256

until 1353 the Il Khanid dynasty, founded by a grandson of Ghengis Khan, were the Mongol rulers of Persia and central Asia. In 1260, however, their progress into Syria and beyond was halted by the Mamluks in a battle near Nazareth, and in 1263 an alliance was created between the Mamluks and the Il-Khanids that assured the safety of Syria, encouraged cross-cultural links and gave the Mamluks a monopoly on trade between the east and the west. Although the Il-Khanids lost their power in the mid 14th century, the Mamluks ruled until 1517, and while pottery production at Aleppo, Raqqa and Belis Meskene ceased in the 1250s, it continued in Damascus and other parts of Syria until the 15th century.

Two main forms of jar were produced during the period outlined above. The first, of Chinese origin, is of tall-shouldered/high baluster form, flat-based and usually with a long tapering or waisted neck. The second, widely copied across Europe, is the cylindrical *albarello* with footring base, which occurs in both tall slender and squatter, proportionally wider forms. The shoulder can be angled with an upright neck, or concave with no neck; in both cases the rim is slightly beaded.

The fashion for painting in blue/turquoise, or blue/turquoise and black, on a white ground (the Sultānābād style), was one of the main traditions of the Il-Khanid period, produced at Kashan and other centres alongside arabesque and panel designs. The Sultānābād style was also copied by Mamluk potters in Syria and Egypt in the 14th century, and by the 15th century the main influence was Chinese blue-and-white porcelain, which is typically associated with Damascus, although copied across the whole area.

The alkaline-glazed fritwares from Plantation Place, Fenchurch Street, London

Alkaline-glazed wares dating to the medieval period are extremely rare in London, but an exceptional group of eight complete or near complete jars was found in cesspit S118 on the site of Plantation Place, London, the four main fills of which yielded a total of c 1008 sherds of pottery from c 270 vessels, including a number of complete, or substantially complete, reconstructable items and a high proportion of imports, mainly Dutch redwares, but including Saintonge wares. The fritware jars, which are discussed in the publication of the site (Blackmore 2013, 64–71, fig 46) were found in the two uppermost fills; six are decorated in blue only, while two are mainly blue with black details. Two are complete, with Islamic-style decoration (now on display in the Museum of London), while the substantially complete jar which forms the subject of this note has a vegetal scroll, or arabesque, design (Fig 1, right). One has a very loose all-over calligraphic pattern, while another, also substantially complete, has oblique panels filled alternately with broad dark blue lines and narrower grey-black lines (Fig 1, left). One jar has a chequer pattern in blue with hatching and other details in black, while the remaining two have a simple grid pattern in blue.

Fig 1 - The albarello *from Plantation Place, London (height 138mm, rim diameter 100mm, base diameter 88mm), with another from the site. Photo by Lyn Blackmore*

How or why these vessels reached London is unknown, and while they most probably arrived via Venice and/or Bruges as containers for drugs or spices (the site is not far from the apothecaries area centred around Poultry), they could have arrived as personal possessions, as the area also lies on the edge of the part of the city most favoured by Italian merchants in London. The cesspit was located on the western edge of tenement 31, which appears to have been occupied only by Englishmen, but a deed of 1560 shows that until 1541 part of the neighbouring tenement 30 had been tenanted by one Francis Cassedone, merchant stranger of Florence. As 15th-century Italian archives refer to private ownership of apothecary jars from Syria (*alberegli domaschini*), perhaps Cassedone was the owner of the fritware jars.

The London assemblage was studied by LB in c 2008–9, and at that point it was not possible to do much wider research. Around the same time, however, however, research was being carried out in Rotterdam (below), and within ten years two parallels for the jar with vegetal scroll decoration had been discovered in museum collections in Bruges and in The Hague.

The earliest Syrian *albarello* in contemporary European art

In 2011 a new website, known as ALMA, was launched by the Boijmans Van Beuningnen Museum in Rotterdam,

which links pre-industrial objects in the museum collections to pieces illustrated in works of art (https://www.boijmans.nl/en/collections/research/alma).

Fig 2 - Detail of Van Eyck's Three Marys at the Tomb, showing Mary Salome holding a fritware albarello*. Image: Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen Rotterdam*

Among the paintings in the museum collection is that of the Three Marys at the Tomb, by Jan van Eyck (1390–1441), which has a realistic view of the city of Jerusalem in the background. Two of the women are holding ointment jars of brass or wood, but that held by Mary Salome, on the left, is a tall ceramic jar with decoration in blue and white (Fig 2). As the painting is too early for the *albarello* to be of European origin, it was realised in 2012 that it must be from the Near East, probably Damascus. It is not impossible that it was locally acquired by Van Eyck as he had a workshop in Bruges, the centre of world trade in medicines in the first half of the 15th century, to which such jars and their contents were imported from the East via Venice. While no fritware examples have been found in archaeological contexts in Bruges, a complete tall *albarello* is in the collection of the Gruuthuse Hof and now on display there. Alternatively, the very realistic portrayal of the city of Jerusalem in the painting suggests that Van Eyck may actually have travelled there on the instructions of Philip the Good, Duke of Burgundy, his patron from 1425 until 1441, in which case he might have brought the jar back with him, either for himself or for the Duke. Whether by this means or another, the Duke certainly had a pot from Damascus in his collections, as entry 4201 in his will refers to a '*pot de terre, de l'ouvrage de Damas, blanc et bleu*'; however, as this had been fitted with an ornate silver cover and handle, we cannot be sure that it was an *albarello*.

The London *albarello* goes to Ghent

In 2019 a large exhibition of the work of Jan Van Eyck (and his brother Hubert) was being planned by the Museum of Fine Arts in Ghent, titled *Van Eyck – an optical revolution*, part of a larger festival of events focussed on the extraordinary work of the artist taking place in Ghent throughout 2020. It was hoped that the Bruges *albarello* could be borrowed for a room showing a projection of the painting of The Three Marys at the Tomb to show, along with contemporary floor tiles and other artefacts, how true to life the painting was. The Bruges example, however, had only just gone on display in the new Gruuthuse Hof in Bruges, and so Museum of London Archaeology was approached, via Alexandra van Dongen (Rotterdam) and Maxime Poulain (Ghent). The loan was arranged and the Fenchurch Street *albarello* left London on its new journey in early January 2020. The spectacular exhibition, the largest collection of van Eyck's works ever shown together at one time, opened on Feb 1st 2020 and LB attended the opening night (Fig 3).

Fig 3 - The albarello *from Plantation Place, admired by Lyn Blackmore (MOLA) and Maxime Poulain (University of Ghent) at the opening of the Van Eyck exhibition in Ghent*

The exhibition was due to run until April 30th. Sadly it was forced to close on March 12th due to the Coronavirus pandemic, but in those six weeks 130,000 people had already seen it. To help others who couldn't make it, a digital 360° tour of the galleries has now been launched, which can be accessed via: https://www.mskgent.be/en/exhibtions/van-eyck. The

albarello is shown in room six (unfortunately the caption only says fritware, not where it was made).

New discoveries and displays

The latest discovery, made by AVD only this year, is a fritware *albarello* with vegetal decoration similar to that on the London find but denser, found in the stores of the Kunstmuseum in The Hague (Fig 4), which is now on display alongside the Van Eyck painting of 'The Three Marys' in a new exhibition in Rotterdam which opened on 4th September 2020 and will continue until 9th January 2022 (Fig 5). Curated by Alexandra van Dongen and called 'Remix Rotterdam. Boijmans x Wereldmuseum', the emphasis here is on trade connections from Asia through the Middle East to Africa and Europe (https://www.boijmans.nl/en/exhibitions/remix-rotterdam).

Useful literature

The first part of this note was largely taken from the 2013 publication of the site by Ken Pitt, where the medieval pottery assemblage is discussed in full.

Allan, J W, 1971 *Medieval Middle Eastern pottery*, Oxford: Ashmolean Museum

Allan, J W, 1991 *Islamic Ceramics*, Oxford: Jolly and Barber Ltd

Blackmore, L, 2013 The pottery, in Pitt, K, with Blackmore, L, Dyson, T, and Tyson, R, 2013 *Medieval to early post-medieval tenements at Middle Eastern imports. Excavations at Plantation Place, City of London, 1997–2003*, MOLA Monogr Ser 66, 84–92, London: Henry Ling Ltd

Fehérvári, G, 1981 The lands of Islam, in *World Ceramics*, ed. R J Charleston, 70–99 (reprint of 1968 edition), Feltham: Hamlyn

Fig 4 - Alexandra van Dongen (Boijmans Museum, Rotterdam) with the albarello discovered in the Kunstmuseum, The Hague, The Netherlands (jar height 148mm, body diameter 141mm).
Photo: curator Suzanne Lambooy, Kunstmuseum, The Hague

Fig 5 - The Hague albarello *on display alongside the Van Eyck painting in the new Rotterdam exhibition, during a visit by a photographer from the ANP (Dutch Press Office)*

Fehérvári, G, 2001 Ceramics of the Islamic world, in Canusso, L, and Bortone, S (eds) *Ceramics of the world*, 98–149, Milan: MacDonald Illustrated

Gaba-Van Dongen, A, 2015 ALMA, where Art meets Artefacts: a case study of a Syrian jar in the 'Three Marys at the Tomb' by Jan van Eyck, in J Vroom (ed) *Medieval and post-medieval ceramics in the Eastern Mediterranean – fact and fiction*, Proceedings of the first International Conference on Byzantine and Ottoman Archaeology, Amsterdam, 21–23 October 2011, 117–30, Turnhout: Brepols

Lane, A, 1957 *Later Islamic pottery; Persia, Syria, Egypt, Turkey*, London: Faber and Faber

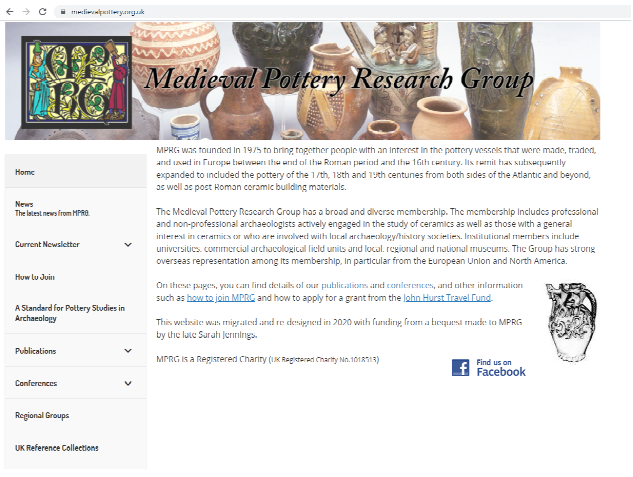
Watson, O, 2004 *Ceramics from Islamic lands*, London: Thames and Hudson

Whitehouse, D, 1997 Islamic pottery and Christian Europe from the 10th to the 15th century, *Medieval Ceramics 21*, 3–12

Lyn Blackmore with Alexandra van Dongen

New MPRG Website

Thanks to a bequest from the late Sarah Jennings, and the skills of Giles Carey, the MPRG website was recently given a much needed overhaul. It has now been re-launched in a new, easy to navigate format, and with updated content. To ensure the website remains up to date Adam Daubney has been co-opted to MPRG Council as webmaster.



Front page of the new MPRG website

As well as a range of information about the Group and its activities, visitors to the website can view or download the current and back issues of this newsletter and back issues of the Journal (currently up to Volume 33 for 2012), as well as A Standard for Pottery Studies in Archaeology. Also notable is the newly updated links section, featuring a wide range of pottery related websites and links that might be of interest.

The address is https://medievalpottery.org.uk. If you haven't visited recently, please point your browser in that direction and take a look when you have a moment. Though the website has been tested there may still be a few teething problems left over from the migration; if you notice any links that are down or other problems please notify the Webmaster so it can be fixed, by emailing webmaster@medievalpottery.org.uk.

David Budge

The Medieval Decorated Roof: ornamental roof-tiles and the Gerald Dunning archive

Roof furniture was one of Gerald Dunning's (the pioneer of medieval ceramic studies) main interests: he published many examples and had intended writing a book on the subject. He drew up an extensive typology of finials, louvers, chimney pots and roof-tile crests, from both excavated pieces and museum collections. Sadly the project was unfinished when he died in 1978. His paper archive was donated to the British Museum, and Beverley Nenk and Barbara Hurman have been sorting and updating it over the years.

Part of 13th-/14th-century roof finial found in Reading. © The Trustees of the British Museum

We are preparing to publish the book, based on an updated version of his pioneering work, as an MPRG Occasional Paper and intended as a tribute to him. Gerald's work was based mainly on examples in the south and south-east. We are keen to include pieces from as many regions of the UK as possible, and to include more recent discoveries. The interpretation of fragmentary sherds can be difficult and they tend to be unrecognised and misidentified as pot or building material. If any MPRG members are aware of any examples in your local collections or museums (published or unpublished), do please let us know. We would especially welcome offers of regional reports to the book from colleagues, so would be happy to hear from potential contributors. Do please let us know if you are able to provide photographs or illustrations. Please contact us if you would like further information:

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Early 14th-century roof finial from London. © The Trustees of the British Museum

Beverley Nenk

The Suffolk and Norfolk Pottery Project

This project, funded by Historic England (HE), was initiated with the aim of creating an Anglo-Saxon and Medieval pottery type-series for Suffolk, to be followed by Norfolk on successful completion of the Suffolk phase. This will help standardise recording and reporting of the region's pottery by providing an online and physical resource for specialists, students, local archaeological societies and others with an interest in the subject. The project is being run by myself (Sue Anderson, Spoilheap Archaeology) in conjunction with Suffolk C.C. Archaeological Service (led by Faye Minter).

A medieval 'Bury Coarse Sandy Ware' jug from Eastgate Close, Bury St Edmunds (Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service) © Suffolk and Norfolk Pot Project

During summer 2018, I visited museums and archives in Suffolk to collect samples of fabrics, look at typologies of vessels, and arrange for their illustration, photography and scientific analysis (petrology and ICPMS). Visits to Lowestoft, Southwold, Dunwich, Halesworth, West Suffolk and Ipswich museums have provided us with lots of great photos of pots for eventual inclusion on the website. Samples of each main fabric group have also been photographed and these should aid non-local medieval pottery specialists in identifying material from this region. The Suffolk part of the project has been completed, although currently we are waiting on Historic England to supply a template for the online database. There is, however, a hands-on collection of sherds at the Suffolk C.C. Archaeological Archive, and this can be used in conjunction with an illustrated database held at the county council offices. Suffolk C.C. briefs will now specify the use of the county fabric series for post-Roman pottery reports on all assemblages excavated in the county.

We moved on to the Norfolk stage of the project in November 2019 and much of the background work had been completed by the time COVID struck, but unfortunately it has not been possible to visit the museum stores in Norfolk to collect samples and study some of the older collections. The aim of this stage is add to the database and produce a separate physical fabric series to be held either at the Norfolk County Council HER offices or Norwich Castle (to be confirmed). A Facebook page provides updates on progress: @NorfolkMedPot. After the completion of the Norfolk stage of the project, and hopefully online publication of the database, we are planning on having a local conference, probably in Norwich – details to follow in due course.

A cross-section of a medieval Hollesley Glazed Ware sherd
© Suffolk and Norfolk Pot Project

If there are any private collections of kiln material or other large assemblages from the region that I might not be aware of (i.e. **not** in the main local museums), I would be very interested to hear about them. Although this year I had hoped to be studying Norfolk pottery as part of the HE project, I am still looking at both Norfolk and Suffolk material for incorporation into my PhD research at the University of East Anglia. Older grey literature reports are also welcome, as many of those are not available online. Please make contact via the Facebook page or email sue.anderson@uea.ac.uk.

Sue Anderson

New website for Gloucester

Paul Tyers and Jane Timby would like to draw your attention to a new website focussed on the Gloucester City Roman and medieval type fabric (TF) series. The fabric series, originally largely the brain child of the late Alan Vince, was initially developed during the 1970s and used in many of the earlier published reports for Gloucester and Kingsholm. Whilst some of the Roman fabrics are now superseded by the National fabric series there are a range of local and regional wares more specific to the City and surrounding area. There has been no further substantial work on the medieval and post-medieval wares which remain one of the best documented sequences for the area. Whilst we are looking for a more permanent home for the site it can be accessed at http://glospot.potsherd.net The City Archaeologist (Andrew Armstrong) will be advising that future pottery work undertaken within Gloucester should make reference to this series to ensure some compatibility between reports.

Jane Timby

Irena Lentowicz

In July this year Jane Evans of the Study Group for Roman Pottery sent the very sad news of the death of Irena Lentowicz. Although Irena had not worked in archaeology for some years, she was still a keen member of MPRG. Many members will remember her fondly from when she attended meetings in the 1980s and 90s. Irena had a wide interest in finds work and worked on both Roman and medieval pottery. She played a key role in establishing the Roman Finds Group, setting up their inaugural meeting at the University of Leicester. She was also active in setting up the CIfA finds group. After work in Leicester, Worcester and Peru and before a move to Durham, following her husband's work, Irena had worked in Norwich as a medieval pottery specialist and in the early 1990s she became the Norfolk Archaeological Unit's Finds Officer working on the Greyfriars and Castle Mall projects. In a recent email to Jane, Irena wrote:

'I now say that in my former life I was an archaeologist, though I've probably worked longer as an administrator than as an archaeologist. I still love pottery and ceramics, and still sometimes get a pang when *Medieval Ceramics* or the Roman Pottery journals come through the door.'

An obituary will appear in a future edition of *Medieval Ceramics*.

Julie Edwards

Nigel Macpherson-Grant (1947-2020), Medieval and Prehistoric Pottery Specialist

Nigel Macpherson-Grant. 1947-2020.

Many of MPRG's more mature members will remember Nigel Macpherson-Grant, and will – like me (John Cotter) – be saddened to hear that he passed away on May 28th of this year at his home in Margate, Kent, at the age of 73. An obituary was published in the Isle of Thanet News on June 16th, and many friends posted affectionate tributes to Nigel on the Trust for Thanet Archaeology website (TTA 2020). I gratefully acknowledge these sources for some of the dates and details mentioned below. Regrettably, my direct contacts with Nigel gradually faded after I moved away to Oxford in 2005, and also due to a mix-up over changing email addresses (neither of us were particularly computer-savvy back then).

Nigel was my immediate boss and mentor when I started work as a medieval pottery specialist at Canterbury Archaeological Trust in 1989, though we had met a couple of years before that. At CAT we worked alongside each other for many years and he guided me through the mysteries of Kentish medieval and post-medieval pottery. Nigel was a gentle soul, a self-confessed old hippie and a bit of a mystic who dabbled with Tarot cards, healing crystals, Tibetan mysticism and the Book of I Ching. He was always in sandals and often seen with a roll-up cigarette, standing in the yard, lost in thought. I was drawn to some aspects of his mysticism, but was far more of a sceptic than he was. Nevertheless, we would often talk for hours about the evidence for mystic forces in the universe and whether something of the spirits of long-gone potters might inhabit the broken sherds of pottery that long outlived them. In fact, it's a wonder we got any work done at all! But somehow we did. No one could ever accuse him of being a slacker – he was a very hard worker, very diligent and meticulous.

Nigel had a softly-spoken, educated southern accent, laced with an impish sense of humour and occasional comical flourishes in a trill Scottish accent probably learnt from his Scottish grandmother. In my early years at CAT we would go through fabric reference collections and pottery assemblages together and he would patiently explain everything he knew about this fabric, or that vessel form, and how the most subtle changes in texture and finish – if observed with sufficient frequency – could provide a date and probable source for that vessel. When shown a small and apparently undiagnostic sherd he would often say something like: 'I feel it's probably late 7th- to 8th-century in date'. I was more sceptical and empirical in my approach and would demand to know the evidence for such conclusions, 'I dunno mate' he would answer 'I just know'. Frustrating though this was at times, I learned over the years that Nigel was nearly always right. His conclusions, though seeming subjective, were nearly always evidence-based – drawn from his vast experience of handling Kentish pottery over several decades - even if he couldn't always remember exactly where he had seen that fabric before, or what publication it was in.

When it came to pottery Nigel was a true polymath – true, he rarely ventured outside Kent – but within this geographical patch he was not just confined to medieval and post-medieval pottery, he was also a leading expert on prehistoric pottery, and, if required, could also write-up Roman pottery assemblages without too much trouble. He could, in fact, deal with the whole range, from Neolithic through to Victorian. He was also a highly accomplished archaeological illustrator. By the mid 1990s, however, Nigel had handed over nearly all things medieval and later to me, and sought to concentrate more and more on prehistoric pottery – which seems to have been his first love. Towards the end of that decade Nigel left CAT and established himself as a freelance pottery

specialist, mainly prehistoric, but anything that came his way really. At around this point his links with the MPRG gradually drifted, although he did offer occasional advice to any colleagues and pottery friends that ventured to visit him at his lodgings on the Isle of Thanet – an area he remained intimately connected with throughout his life.

Nigel rarely talked about his very early life. I know that he was brought up by his red-headed Scottish grandmother who lived in a cottage on the outskirts of Sandwich (Thanet). He seems to have been largely self-taught and fascinated by archaeology and pottery from an early age. He took part in, and later directed, numerous excavations on Thanet. In the mid 1960s he worked for the Powell Cotton Museum, at Quex Park in Birchington, as part of an archaeological team, conducting excavations of the prehistoric and later pits revealed at low tide on the nearby foreshore of Minnis Bay, and also organizing and identifying the archaeological pottery collections there.

The discovery and excavation of medieval wells and pits at Minnis Bay (1969-71), seems to have been the trigger for his growing interest in medieval pottery. He was helped in in his medieval ventures by regular visits from eminent scholars in the field, such as Gerald Dunning and John G. Hurst, who had a keen interest in imported Continental pottery – which is surprisingly common in Thanet (Sandwich being one of the main ports for the medieval wine trade). From c 1969 onwards, Nigel also conducted a few seasons of rescue excavation at the deserted medieval coastal settlement of Stonar (an out-port of Sandwich), which produced abundant evidence of imported French pottery – mainly Saintonge ware jugs (c 1250-1350), from Gascony in south-west France, and which were probably an accessory of the important Gascon wine trade. Highly decorated jugs in 'Aardenburg-type' ware, from Flanders, were another common find here. Dunning and Hurst were also were keen to map the south-eastern distribution of the important late Saxon, wheel-turned, East Anglian wares (Ipswich ware, Thetford ware and Stamford ware) and Nigel soon became adept at identifying these and adding to the growing the list of findspots in east Kent.

Nigel's connection with CAT seems to date from the mid '70s when he conducted parts of the rescue excavation (1975-77) for them at the important Late Bronze Age and Iron Age settlement of Highstead, near Chislet (Herne Bay) along with Paul Bennett – the future director of the company. Nigel spent years of his life poring over the pottery from this site, often in his own time, but, due to other commitments, the pottery report itself was finally completed by Peter Couldrey. The results of all their combined labours were finally published in 2007 (Bennett, Couldrey and Macpherson-Grant 2007), to wide acclaim by Prehistorians. However, it is Nigel's large number of publications on Saxon, medieval and post-medieval pottery in Kent that are best known to people like myself, and other members of the MPRG. These were naturally focussed on the major rescue excavations in Canterbury – with its apparently unbroken ceramic sequence from the late Iron Age to the modern period. Nigel's contribution to medieval and post-medieval pottery studies in east Kent was formidable, and his publications far too numerous to mention here. To many, however, one of his major achievements was the detailed analysis of the large and nationally important sequence of early, middle and late Saxon pottery from the Marlowe Car Park area in the centre of Canterbury, with smaller sections on the medieval and post-medieval sequences thrown-in for good measure (Macpherson-Grant 1995). This gives some idea of the impressive depth and scope of his knowledge.

In more recent years Nigel continued with his long-standing involvement with archaeology in his Thanet homeland, and at the beginning of 2020 was fittingly appointed President of the Isle of Thanet Archaeological Society (IOTAS). Sadly he did not live long enough to fully enjoy this new honour. His friends in east Kent and elsewhere will miss this quirky and gentle individual. The world of pottery studies, too, has also lost someone of unparalleled knowledge and experience. Nigel will certainly be a hard act to follow.

A full obituary will appear in a future volume of Medieval Ceramics.

References

Bennett, P, Couldrey P and Macpherson-Grant, N, 2007 *Excavations at Highstead, Chislet, Kent, 1975-1977*, The Archaeology of Canterbury New Series Volume IV, 101-171.

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Macpherson-Grant, N, 1995 'Post-Roman Pottery' in Blockley, K, Blockley, M, Blockley, P, Frere, S S, and Stow, S, *Excavations in the Marlowe Car Park and Surrounding Areas, Part II: The Finds.* The Archaeology of Canterbury V. Canterbury Archaeological Trust, 815-920.

John Cotter

Call for Papers - Medieval and Modern Mediterranean Ceramics

The XIIIth Congress on Medieval and Modern Period Mediterranean Ceramics of AIECM3, organized by Universidad de Granada, Servicio de investigación de la Alhambra, Unidad de Excelencia de la Alhambra and Fundación Fajalauza, will take place in Granada between 8 to 13 November 2021.

AIECM3 is an international association for the study of medieval and modern pottery in the Mediterranean. It organizes the International Conference every three years and also programs innovative thematic workshops.

The work of the association has been essential for new achievements and significant reflections about history of pottery. The Congress of AIECM3 to be held for the first time in Granada proposes to continue with the lines of research that emerged from previous international congresses, in addition to emphasizing discussion and debate.

Themed sessions will include:

- Ceramic production and technology
- Ceramic consumption patterns.
- Social significance of ceramic productions.
- Theory and method in the study of medieval and modern ceramics.
- New discoveries.

The call for oral presentations (20 minutes followed by a 10-minute discussion) and posters (vertical DIN A0: 1.20 x 0.84 m, integrated into the sessions where they will have a 10-minute presentation and discussion space) will close on 31 January 2021. Further details about the conference and call for papers are available from:

http://www.spma.org.uk/_assets/files/XIII_AICEM3_Call_en.pdf

The newsletter needs you!

If you have any ceramic related information that you think might be of interest to our readers please consider putting it in the newsletter!

The newsletter editor would be delighted to receive contributions about:

- recent discoveries;
- calls for information / assistance with research;
- notes on interesting research you might have been undertaking;
- calls for papers for ceramic related conferences;
- notices of forthcoming ceramic related conferences, meetings and workshops;
- details of exhibitions;
- news and information about new websites relating to ceramics;
- anything else that relates to medieval and later ceramics!

The newsletter is (usually) published three times a year. Copy should be sent to the Assistant Secretary assistant.secretary@medievalpottery.org.uk. Copy is welcome at any time, but if it is time sensitive (for example, notification of a meeting) it should be received no later than the deadlines given below for each of the issues:

1st April for inclusion in the April newsletter;
1st August for inclusion in the August newsletter;
1st December for inclusion in the December edition.

Content of each article should preferably not exceed about 800 words, though if you require more space it may be possible to accommodate this, please contact the assistant secretary beforehand.

Pictures are particularly welcome and the more images of pots (relevant to your article!) that you can include the better!

David Budge

MPRG Publications

Occasional Paper 1: A Guide to the Classification of Medieval Ceramic forms (UK £27.75 excl. P&P)
Online digital version: https://medievalpottery.org.uk/publications/occasional-papers/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 Chenerey (UK £22.50; Europe: £24: All include P&P)

Occasional Paper 6: A Research Framework for Post-Roman Ceramic Studies in Britain
https://medievalpottery.org.uk/publications/occasional-papers/occasional-paper-6-mprg-framework/

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)

A Standard for Pottery Studies in Archaeology - Online Digital Version:
https://medievalpottery.org.uk/home/a-standard-for-pottery-studies-in-archaeology/

Back issues of Medieval Ceramics up to volume 32 and still in stock are available at £1; please contact Lyn Blackmore lblackmore@mola.org.uk to order. Out of print volumes are free to download from: https://medievalpottery.org.uk/medieval-ceramics-online Currently volumes 1-25; 28-31 and 33 are available, and more will be added soon.

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Wondering who to contact regarding your enquiry?

- Membership enquiries or to notify of change of address: Membership Secretary
- Contributions to Medieval Ceramics: the Editors
- Contributions to the newsletter: Assistant Secretary
- Matters for consideration by the Council at Council meetings: Secretary
- Purchase of back issues and Occasional Papers - Lyn Blackmore (lblackmore@mola.org.uk)

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