MEDIEVAL AND LATER POTTERY RESEARCH GROUP

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Newsletter **95**

June 2022

Notes from the President

Council met on 15 March with a full agenda. The pandemic has rather cramped our activities for the last two years, but it feels now as though we are returning to some sort of normality. We are still discussing plans for rebranding as MLPRG, and we have exciting plans afoot for the website which we hope will enable us to raise our profile and expand the range of resources we can offer. Our regional groups are starting to meet again, and please see below for the Call for Papers for our annual conference to be held later this year in Chester – it will be exceedingly good to meet again face to face. We are also turning our attention to training, and how to encourage the next generation of medieval pottery specialists. Meanwhile, you should hopefully have recently received Volume 41 of Medieval Ceramics to give you plenty of ceramic-related reading material.

Lorraine Mepham

Call for Papers for the MLPRG Annual Conference

MLPRG Three-Day Conference, 7–9 October 2022

Grosvenor Museum, Chester

The Late Show:

Exploring Pottery of the Early Modern and Later Periods

To celebrate our recent name change, this year's Medieval & Later Pottery Research Group conference will focus on pottery of more recent periods. In the past, pottery of this date has often been overlooked as too close to our own time to be of any significance, but we now recognize that, even when of comparatively recent date, pottery still has the potential to address important questions about economy, technology and social behaviour amongst other things.

We therefore invite papers on any aspect of pottery production, distribution and consumption over the last 500 years and from any part of the world.

Expressions of interest, with a brief summary (up to 200 words) should be sent by 31 July 2022 to Lorraine Mepham (l.mepham@wessexarch.co.uk).

South West Regional Group Meeting, Salisbury

On 14 May the group met at Salisbury Museum to look at the Laverstock kiln material held there. Ten kilns were excavated in the 1960s at Laverstock, which lies roughly halfway between Salisbury (where a new city was founded in the 1220s) and Clarendon, the site of a royal palace refurbished by Henry III at around the same time. There was also a short-lived outlying kiln in Salisbury itself, operating around 1300. The Laverstock kilns would have been the primary suppliers for both city and palace. Their products, which include both finewares and coarsewares, have been published, first in Archaeologia in 1969, and secondly in Volume 3 of the Salisbury Museum Medieval Catalogue (2001), but questions still remain. For example, does the revised dating for the kilns (early 13th to early 14th century), largely typologically based, still hold good? What happened later, given that Laverstock wares were clearly still in circulation in Salisbury well into the 14th century and possibly later? The finewares include both handmade and wheelthrown vessels, but can this be seen as a typological progression? The coarsewares (which to my knowledge are always handmade although some may have been finished on a turntable) form part of a longer-lived and widely distributed ceramic tradition of 'Wessex coarsewares', which may have their origin as early as the

mid to late Saxon period, but their actual source (or sources) is unknown.

Studying Laverstock products at Salisbury. Image: Lorraine Mepham

The Museum displays some of the best examples of the kiln products, which are characterized by highly decorated glazed jugs and scratch-marked coarseware jars – interestingly, highly decorated jugs are relatively rare in Salisbury, and it is likely that much of this output was destined instead for Clarendon Palace. The Museum provided us with a sample of material from each of the ten kilns and also some from the associated pits (some of which pre-dated the kiln complex), and it was an extremely valuable experience to compare and contrast the various kiln groups, and for those less familiar with the wares to get a feel for their defining characteristics. Interaction during the day and a group discussion at the end revealed that we were really no further forward in answering the outstanding questions, but it was so useful to gain more insight into some of the technological features – the possibility was raised, for example, that one of the in situ groups of jugs, published as remnants of the last firing, may in fact have formed part of the kiln structure (the evidence is ambiguous).

SW Regional Group Meeting attendees outside Salisbury Museum. Image: John Allan

Dan Carter from Bournemouth University has already done useful petrological work on some of the kiln products, but further research could include comparative chemical analysis with selected wares from Hampshire (there is a possible link between Laverstock and Southampton in the use of whitewares) and Bristol. It would also be useful to get a better idea of the distribution area of the finewares. All in all, it was a fantastic day, and grateful thanks must go to Salisbury Museum for facilitating the meeting, and to all those who attended and who made it such a stimulating session.

Lorraine Mepham

Evidence of Thirteenth-Century Pottery Manufacture at Peddimore, West Midlands

Sometime between 1213 and 1229 Thomas Newburgh, Earl of Warwick (who was lord of the manor of Sutton Coldfield, situated in north-west Warwickshire), granted Thomas Arden the assart that Roger le Fleur had enclosed in Peddimore, in length from the hedge Roger laid up to the enclosed wood (hay) of Osbert of Wishaw and in breadth between Roger's ditch alongside fossetellos ollatorum and the land Earl Waleran (father of Thomas Newburgh) gave to Thomas's father (Crouch 2015). The words 'fossetellos ollatorum' are translated as 'potters' sheds' by the editor of the document. Ollatororum is literally 'of the pot or jar makers', but another and more likely translation of fossetellos is 'small pits', which in this

context would be the potters' clay pits. This is, as yet, the only evidence for medieval pottery manufacture in Sutton Coldfield and a rare documentary reference to pottery manufacture in the medieval period in the West Midlands as a whole.

The precise location of the pits, and the kilns that they imply, is not known: Peddimore Hall (SP 154937, historically in Warwickshire but now in West Midlands County) is a moated site south east of Sutton Coldfield town centre. Medieval pottery has been found in fieldwalking and excavation in the vicinity of Peddimore Hall but there are no obvious wasters or kiln fragments. Much assarting took place in its vicinity in the thirteenth century and the location of some pieces of assarted land mentioned in a document of 1240 can be identified from nineteenth-century field names, but none of these refers to potters or potting. The underlying solid geological formation of the area, Mercia Mudstone, weathers to a clay which is overlain in places by sandy pebbly drift. Several pits of different sizes that are marked on nineteenth-century maps of the area might include the potters' clay pits but they could have been dug at various times to extract clay for other purposes, such as marling or daubing.

The early thirteenth century potters at Peddimore could have been making mudstone-tempered wares from the iron-rich red clay into which the Mercia Mudstone of the area weathers. They were working during the early years of the Deritend ware industry in Birmingham and at a time when local needs were also met by Coventry-type wares made some distance away.

Medieval pottery found in fieldwalking and in excavation in the Sutton Coldfield area includes mudstone-tempered ware; some Coventry-type ware cooking pots dating from the middle of the twelfth to the middle of the thirteenth century; Deritend ware, which was made in Birmingham city centre from the middle of the thirteenth into the fourteenth century but with production perhaps starting in the twelfth century; and fourteenth to sixteenth century Chilvers Coton products, but the assemblages are dominated by whitewares. These date from c.1250 to c.1400 and include bowls, jugs (some decorated with vertical stripes of red slip), and cooking pots. Whitewares were made in south Staffordshire / north Warwickshire, somewhere between Lichfield and Coleshill, that is, to the east and north of Sutton Coldfield, but no kilns have yet been located. To the north east of Peddimore, John le potter is mentioned in Drayton Bassett, South Staffordshire, in 1269.

Peddimore wares could have been sold at markets or perhaps directly to individual customers living in nearby settlements. The nearest medieval market was in Sutton Coldfield itself, where a market charter was granted in 1300 but the market may have originated in the early thirteenth century, when the town expanded through planned growth along High Street and the parish church was constructed, extended or rebuilt. Further afield, there were markets at Coleshill and Birmingham by the time the potters are mentioned. Peddimore Hall itself is first mentioned in the later thirteenth century, but it and some of the other moated sites in the area could have been established by or during the earlier thirteenth century, along with other individual farms and hamlets known to be of medieval origin. It is surely no coincidence that the Peddimore potters are mentioned at exactly the time that assarting was taking place and new settlements were being established. The Peddimore potters would have met a local demand for their products but they were eclipsed by the middle of thirteenth century by Deritend ware, which included cooking pots and slip-decorated jugs, and perhaps even more so by whitewares, which included a range of vessel forms in an iron-poor fabric.

Bibliography:

Crouch, D (ed), 2015 The Newburgh Earldom of Warwick and its charters 1088-1253. *Dugdale Society Publications 48*, number 195.

I am grateful to Professor Chris Dyer for this suggested translation and interpretation.

Dr Mike Hodder, University of Birmingham

Surrey Medieval Studies Forum Pottery Day, October 2022

Archaeologists, art historians and technologists all study pottery, one of the most commonly found artefacts from the past, to illuminate the culture of the people who used the products and developed the technologies for creating them.

The Surrey Medieval Studies Forum of the Surrey Archaeological Society is holding a Day Conference on Saturday 1st October 2022 at East Horsley to consider pottery from the Anglo-Saxon to the Tudor periods in Surrey. The keynote speaker (Duncan Brown of Historic

England) will provide an overview of Pottery & People in Medieval Society, while other speakers will consider specific fabric types, sites and scientific aspects.

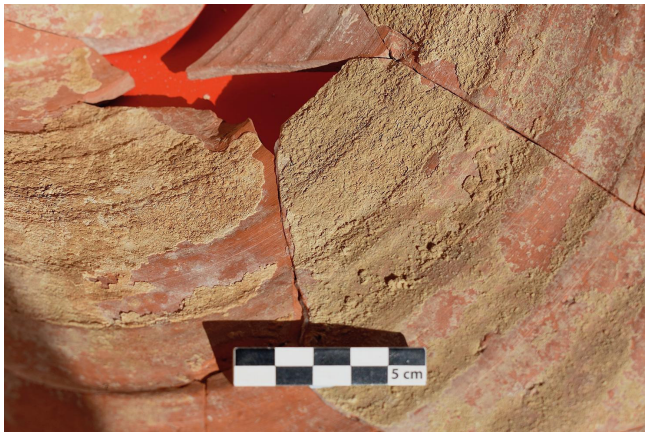
Details will be available on the Surrey Archaeological Society's website: https://www.surreyarchaeology.org.uk/content/medieval-studies-pottery-day

Pamela Savage

Parasite Eggs in Limescale (and other exotic delicacies)…

Ceramic vessel from a villa bath house complex at Gerace, Sicily. Scale bar = 10cm. Image: R J A Wilson, CC BY 4.0

When confronted with a pot of this shape many of us, particularly those used to working with post-medieval ceramics, would probably immediately think 'stool pan' (or technically, a form 5.1.4 Flared Bowl, a.k.a stool pan, according to the Guide to the Classification of Medieval Ceramic Forms). Apparently though, until recently, our counterparts who study the pottery of the Roman world have considered this form to be a type of storage jar. Research just published in the *Journal of Archaeological Science Reports* has examined the limescale deposits present on the interior surfaces of this particular 5th century AD 'storage jar' found in Sicily. The analysis detected eggs of the intestinal parasite *Trichuris trichiura* (whipworm) trapped within the limescale deposits. The authors of the study take this to suggest that the vessel was used as a 'chamber pot' (though they go on to suggest the vessel was probably not sat upon directly but was most likely mounted in a wooden or wickerwork chair for use, so it could be argued that 'stool pan' would be a more appropriate name than chamber pot).



Interior of the vessel showing the limescale deposits from which the parasite eggs were recovered. Scale bar = 5cm. Image: R J A Wilson, CC BY 4.0

This is claimed to be the first identification of parasite eggs from concretions inside a Roman ceramic vessel. The authors of the study suggest that (providing intestinal parasites are endemic in the population in question) the systematic study of parasite eggs from calcified deposits in pottery can help to demonstrate the function of the vessel, or put more simply, indicate whether they were used as chamber pots (or stool pans) or not.

Though the paper describes the application of the technique to Roman ceramics it should be equally applicable to those from later periods. It may well be worth bearing in mind as a possibility when confronted with limescale deposits on sherds in medieval and later assemblages, whether those deposits are found in chamber pots and stool pans or in 'cooking pots', 'drinking' jugs, or any other vessel type!

The open access paper is:

Rabinow, S, Wang, T, Wilson, R J A, and Mitchell, P D, 2022 Using parasite analysis to identify ancient chamber pots: an example of the fifth century CE from Gerace, Sicily, Italy. *Journal of Archaeological Science: Reports vol 42*.

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jasrep.2022.103349

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)

Occasional Paper 9: *Late Medieval Pottery Kilns at Newport, Pembrokeshire, and the Recording and Interpretation of Pottery Production Sites.* David Dawson and Oliver Kent. (Distributed *gratis* to MLPRG members)

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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- 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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