

Ceramic views of Scotland and northern England from the Neolithic to the 20th century: issues of method, practice and theory

An inter-disciplinary meeting, Glasgow, July 1-2, 2010

The ceramics from Scotland and northern England have attracted varied research interest, often depending on the quantity and quality of the ceramic materials. Although often thematically linked, few studies have looked at materials across regional or chronological boundaries. This was a starting point for an inter-disciplinary meeting held at the University of Glasgow, attracting participation for a wide range of scholars from Scotland, England and Ireland.

The purpose of this meeting was to examine methodological, practical and theoretical issues confronting current study of the ceramics of northern Britain on a period by period basis. The intention was then to cut across the period divide and consider how practices, approaches and priorities evident in the study of a particular period could benefit those adopted in another period. We wanted this meeting to be a unique opportunity to encourage greater dialogue between period specialists as well as greater coordination in ceramic studies in northern Britain. At the very least it was hoped the meeting would act as a forum and help to raise the profile of this understudied branch of artefact study in northern British archaeology.

We were delighted with the outcome; there were two full days of stimulating talks covering the full time-range from early prehistory to the twentieth century, illuminating the themes of method/theory, chronology, technology, function/use and trade/exchange.

We are grateful to the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland and National Museums Scotland for generously providing financial support.

It was agreed that a record of the meeting could usefully take the form of extended abstracts of the talks. These are presented below, following the meeting's schedule, and we thank speakers for providing us with them, in particular Hugh Cheape for his paper on crogan ware which reflected a number of issues arising during the course of the meeting.

The final discussion and Ian Armit's summing up encompassed several points, both general and practical:

- The *longue durée* of the Scottish pottery sequence offers opportunities for more integrated effort in terms of multi-period work, science-based and experimental work.
- We should be prepared to look at pottery from a wider perspective, one that embraces material culture studies as a whole. We should be more adventurous in adopting

demonstrably appropriate theoretical approaches and innovative concepts relating to material culture.

- The potential of radiocarbon dating programmes of pottery was recognised (see Cook, Hall and Hamilton below), perhaps in tandem with the new technique of rehydroxylation (see Wilson and Carter below). Application to crogan pottery of medieval/post-medieval to recent times would be very valuable.
- Is the aceramic character of the Iron Age in parts of northern Britain more apparent than real? More generally, how did people cook in the absence of pots?
- Guidelines for the policy on the retention of pottery particularly from post-medieval industrial sites require urgent review.
- Guidelines for the reporting of pottery finds (including their science-based analysis) require review, in particular minimum standards require to be formally set. We suggest Historic Scotland could play an active advisory role in this process.
- The provision and curation of databases for radiocarbon and TL dates and science-based data (especially petrographic, organic residue and chemical) is highly desirable. Some databases already exist but they are partial and not adequately maintained or updated. This is a topic under current discussion by the Scottish Archaeological Research Framework's Science panel.
- The multifarious work on northern British pottery that draws on a dispersed group of people operating in different environments calls for the creation of something like The Centre for Archaeological Ceramics. This could provide a knowledge base, act as an informal coordinating body and host occasional meetings. It would also form a very positive outcome of this meeting, and it might help address the issue of training and attracting new people into the field.

Finally, we welcome the recent initiative by Bill Brown and others to develop a new Scottish Institute of Ceramics and Glass (SIGG). The intention is to create a focal point for future projects involving these materials and collaboration between the various specialists working with them, for example designers, individual studio practitioners, technical researchers, manufacturers, archaeologists, collectors, and historians. There have been a number of challenges in recent years, with the loss of some established manufacturers and the closure of art school and further education courses that produced designers and studio-based makers. Since it is important that the skills, knowledge and traditions that surround these materials are retained and developed in Scotland, SICG intends to be a focus for collaboration in research, training and the sharing of knowledge in the future. The organisation will be launched at an opening event at House for an Art Lover on **Tuesday, 30 August, 2011**. For further information please contact: *SICG Working Group, House for an Art Lover, 10 Dumbreck Road, Glasgow G41 5BW*

Richard Jones, Daniel Sahlen and Louisa Campbell

July 2011

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The Lecture Theatre, Department of Archaeology University of Glasgow,
July 1-2, 2010

Thursday 1st July

9.00am Registration

Chair: Richard Jones

- 9.45 Richard Jones, University of Glasgow - *Introduction*
10.00 Hugh Cheape, Research Associate, National Museums Scotland - *'A cup fit for the king': literary and forensic analysis of crogan pottery*
10.25 Miles Oglethorpe, Historic Scotland - *Scottish brick, tile and fireclay industries*
10.50 Julie Franklin, Headland Archaeology - *Beer jugs, wine bottles and coffee pots - a functional approach to changing ceramic use in post-medieval Edinburgh*

11.15 *Tea/Coffee and Discussion Group - Curation and retention of ceramics; Access to grey literature.*

Chair: Chris DalGLISH

- 12.00 George Haggarty, Research Associate, National Museums of Scotland - *Scotland's post medieval and industrial pottery industry: past present and futur.*
12.25 Andrew Sage - *"A trail of tiny breadcrumbs" The Northumbria Medieval Pottery Project*
12.50 Ewan Campbell, University of Glasgow - *A handful of sherds: methodologies for dealing with small assemblages*

1.15pm Lunch

Chair: Ewan Campbell

- 2.10 Derek Hall - *Still in a Renaissance or are we treading water?-Scottish Medieval Pottery Studies*
2.35 Beverley Ballin-Smith, GUARD, University of Glasgow - *Looking for the missing link: Viking pottery on Shetland*
3.10 Colin Wallace, SACE, University of Liverpool - *Don't Panic - confronting ceramics of one period in contexts of another*
3.25 Sophie Blain, Université de Bordeaux, *Luminescence dating applied to ceramic building Materials from early medieval churches*

3.35 *Tea/Coffee and Poster session*

Chair: Fraser Hunter

- 4.10 Louisa Campbell, University of Glasgow - *Theorising ceramics - the social lives of pots*
4.35 Kay Hartley - *Yes, Mortaria were made in Roman Scotland!*

- 5.00 Moira Wilson, University of Manchester - *Rehydroxylation (RHx) dating*
5.25 Derek Hall - *Summing up*

Friday 2nd July

Chair: Melanie Johnson

- 9.30am Roy Towers Orkney College and Orlene McIlpatrick, University of Edinburgh - *Dimpled bases: Iron Age decoration or the cook's delight?*
9.50 David Sanderson, SUERC - *Luminescence dating of ceramics*
10.15 Euan MacKie, Research Associate, National Museums of Scotland - *Atlantic Iron Age pottery c. 700 BC to AD 500: an overview*
10.40 Richard Jones, University of Glasgow - *Northern British pottery: any role for chemical analysis?*

11.00 *Tea/Coffee and Discussion Group - Science-based analyses: a need for standards and recommendations?*

Chair: Alison Sheridan

- 11.35 Daniel Sahlén, University of Glasgow - *Beyond provenance and dating: ceramic technology in late prehistoric Scotland*
12.00 Brendan Derham, University of Glasgow - *Organic residue analysis or rather the analysis of organic residues*
12.25 Ann MacSween, Historic Scotland - *Analysis of large assemblages from multi-period prehistoric sites - a case study of the pottery from Mine Howe, Orkney*

12.50pm Lunch

Chair: Anne MacSween

- 1.45 Trevor Cowie, National Museums of Scotland - *Ceramic material associated with metalworking - a survey of the Late Bronze Age evidence from Scotland*
2.10 Andy Jones, University of Southampton - *Tempering nature and society: theory and methodology in the analysis of pottery tempers, with a case study from Neolithic Orkney*
2.35 Gordon Cook, SUERC - *Dating of Pottery with Particular Reference to the Scottish Medieval Period*
3.00 Alison Sheridan, National Museums of Scotland - *'Do me a pottery report.'* What does that mean?

3.20 *Tea/Coffee*

- 3.45 Ian Armit - *Summing up*
4.00 *Final discussion - method, practice and theory*
5.00 Richard Jones, University of Glasgow - *Concluding remarks*