

peasantry — they can show short-term changes while historians focus on long term trends. Simon Thurley considered transition as it affected the most excavated of England's historic royal palaces, Whitehall, and concluded that the palace defies neat divisions, transcending both medieval and modern concepts. Its evolution and structure shows the innovation of new ideas and organisation, but these had yet to be reflected in the architectural unity of the whole.

Nicholas Cooper broadened the architectural approach by investigating the pattern of function and occupancy of a house, for instance where the lord slept, focusing on sixteenth century houses of the gentry. Inventories show a certain flexibility in function existed — the owner's sleeping arrangements migrated from the high end of the hall to the low end of the house by the late sixteenth century — a substantial change in two generations. A similar flexibility of outlook was to be found in religion as demonstrated by Richard Morris. References from Shakespeare showed that despite the social metamorphosis of the Reformation, ordinary people were still familiar with Catholic belief fully fifty years later. Jonathan Coad concluded the first day by considering the changing technology of warfare. In this field he demonstrated a radical period of innovation and change which was to be unparalleled again until the mid-nineteenth century.

On the second day Martin Biddle presented a golden oldie, Nonsuch Palace. Addressing the spatial patterning of finds, he set out to establish who had cleaned out the twenty garderobes, and why eleven of them still contained their rubbish. This material could be attributed to the occupation of a middle ranking family in the 1670's–80's but raised interesting questions relating to the use, longevity and heirloom nature of the finds. Philip Lindley addressed the transition theme, and stressed that 'antique was fashionable' on tomb sculpture, whether the craftsmen were French, Netherlandish or Florentine: here the essence of transition was 'disruption rather than continuity'.

In considering civic buildings and courtier houses Maurice Howard noted how archaeology has changed our perception of the great house — architectural decoration here was inspired by the royal palaces, which were often elaborately but transiently decorated with superficial materials for visual impact. When trade was depressed the same styles were adopted in civic buildings when a town needed to find a new identity. Local traditional methods of construction affected the way architectural decoration evolved but it was towards the end of the sixteenth century before a real change could be observed. At that point a growing confidence in the architectural unity of a building and the permanency of its construction superseded the tradition of superficial decoration.

On a broader plane John Schofield explored residential patterns in London over the transition period. In central London by the end of the fourteenth century the living room tended to be on the upper floor with an undercroft shop, so we should be looking for artefacts associated with the living quarters upstairs. Matthew Johnson moved into the country to consider the evolution of vernacular buildings. He hoped to see 1400–1600 studied as a period in its own right, with the evolution from open halls to private rooms mirroring changes in social structure and organisation. The buildings survive as cultural documents around which new frameworks and theories need to be built.

In the specific field of ceramics, David Gaimster and Beverley Nenk argued that pottery and tile were mirrors of social change: new commodities, new communities, the rise of imported ceramics — there was both continuity and discontinuity. From the early fifteenth century an expanding

variety of ceramic utensils was in use in the home, new modes of interior decoration — lighting and heating technology and tile floors, ornamental brick hearths and ceramic tile-stoves. Meanwhile the exceptional survival of archaeological evidence from London was compared by John Giorgi with inventories, custom accounts and documentary evidence to illustrate the very diverse range of vegetables and fruits available to London consumers, some grown locally, others imported.

Turning to new concepts of design, John Cherry stressed that heraldry had been a vehicle for the display of magnificence from the twelfth century. Following a long period of continuity, the iconography did change with the adoption of Renaissance motifs about 1520. Later sixteenth century dress accessories were illustrated by Geoff Egan and Hazel Forsyth, rescued from the few deposits at the top of the archaeological sequence which survived the introduction of cellars. The final paper by Kay Staniland outlined how fashion and clothing were continuously changing during the medieval period, beginning about 1330 AD. For the period 1400–1600 there were many changes for both sexes, and the sixteenth century saw a new sector of the London textile industry emerging — the knitted silk stocking.

A number of themes recurred through the conference, perhaps the most important being the way that topographical, architectural and iconographical studies can fill out the artefactual and documentary record. The conference may not have reached any conclusion about the validity or otherwise of an age of transition. But in many ways this was not the point. The object was to place the period 1400–1600 centre stage rather than having it fall at the margins of two adjoining chunks of history. Period boundaries are a convenient product of historians and, at times, can obscure the social and cultural links which bridge them. This conference has shown that societies evolve as a complex web of interrelated strands, each of which can move at a different rate. To understand the past is to understand each of these strands and to formulate models which are sufficiently sensitive and complex to explain them and their relationship to the whole. The 'age of transition' is as valid a period as any other and the challenge is to explain it rather than argue over its existence. This was a stimulating two days with a high quality of intellectual content.

Maureen Mellor and David Higgins

CONFERENCE REPORT: WORCESTER 1997

The annual residential conference of the MPRG was held at Worcester from 12–14 May 1997. The Conference theme was *Pots in Use*, a departure for the group, which normally examines a particular period or locality. The papers took a varied approach to the topic, but were consistent in not being simply a list of the various functions of ceramics attested through documentary sources or contemporary illustrations.

The theme was set by M. Mellor who presented a masterly synthesis of ceramic use in the British Isles from the 9th/10th century to the 18th. Her sources were both archaeological and pictorial; the value of paintings and manuscript illuminations to study pottery use (and the role of alternatives) formed a lively sub-theme in several papers and discussions.

A gratifying aspect of the conference was the broad chronological scope of many of the papers and the realisation that pottery use fluctuated and was sometimes rapidly transformed as a result of changes in diet and custom. Wine, beer, tea and coffee drinking were all discussed in detail,

supported by the traditional practical exploration of this aspect of culture.

A session on taphonomy, and the implications of site formation for the study of pot activities was extremely stimulating. It was good to see that with careful thought and adequate resources, it is possible to study site activities despite the wholesale movement of material from site to site, demonstrated by the Shapwick project, and from toft to toft, as shown at Burton Dassett. At Raunds, by contrast, it was possible to reveal the function of a building complex, and confirm the economic strategy of the settlement, through a study of material from midden deposits.

The conference was treated to a guided tour and tea by the Royal Worcester Porcelain Company, and saw displays of local medieval and post-medieval pottery by Worcester Cathedral and Hereford and Worcester County Archaeology Unit.

Alan Vince

OBITUARIES



GROUP CAPTAIN ALAN FRANCIS BRITTON
17 AUGUST 1908–11 JANUARY 1996

The death of Frank Britton will be deeply felt in the world of London post-medieval archaeology and in the field of English delftware studies, where he was appreciated as a delightful colleague, an indefatigable author and a master of documentary research. He was born at Stony Stratford in Buckinghamshire and went to school at Haileybury in 1922, transferring to Blundell's on his father's death two years later. Having worked for a short while as a clerk in a stockbroker's office (1926–27) he joined the R.A.F. to train as a pilot, but soon moved over to the engineering side, for which he had an outstanding aptitude. After a period in this country he was posted to Egypt and the Sudan where he married Nancy Pence, daughter of Professor W. D. Pence of Evanston, Illinois in Khartoum Cathedral on 21 December 1936. In 1938 he returned to Britain and was then promoted to the post of Director of Aeronautical Engineering at the Headquarters of the R.C.A.F. in Ottawa in 1941. He spent the latter part of the war in North Africa and then in Italy where he flew Hurricanes. In *Some*

Recollections of Travels with a Hurricane Frank graphically describes this period of his life. He had an aircraft for his own use and was able "to fly down and visit the temples at Paestum". He recalls "sitting under an almond tree cracking the nuts between two stones" while staying under canvas in Sicily and hearing, for the first time over the radio, the strains of "Lily Marlene" and a German news bulletin to the Afrika Corps. After the war he was posted back to England, later going out to Singapore and ending up in 1953 as Deputy Director N.A.T.O. Affairs at the Air Ministry.

When he left the R.A.F., he joined Bristol Aero Engines Ltd and stayed with the company after the take-over of Bristol Siddeley by Rolls Royce. It was during this period, when he was living at Pucklechurch in Gloucestershire, not far from the aircraft works at Filton, that he first got to know the ceramic collections at the Bristol City Museum and acquired his particular affection for delftware. He began to collect and was already very knowledgeable by the time he retired in 1973, a year after his wife's death (he remarried, to Emma, in October 1986). In the autumn of 1973 he began work on his catalogue of the Bristol delftware collection which was published by Sotheby's in 1982. In a number of ways this book broke new ground. It had long been realised that the types of decoration used on the backs of plates were of relevance for attribution, but Frank was the first to classify them in a methodical manner. In 1977 he gave a paper to the English Ceramic Circle on these "under-rim marks", as he called them, and went on to use his findings in greater detail in the Bristol catalogue. He also applied this analytical approach, which perhaps reflected his training as an engineer, to the technical aspects of the manufacture of delftware. This was to bear further fruit in his quest for the origin of the clay used in England. Not content with identifying the precise clay-pit at Boyton in Suffolk and the dock from which the clay was shipped to London, he also visited the site, brought away samples, had them analysed and persuaded Alan Caiger-Smith to make some pots out of them. His discovery of this site and others from which the potteries obtained their raw material was largely due to Frank's exceptional skill in documentary research. Anyone who has seen his notes in a very small precise hand, most of which are now deposited at the Museum of London, will be aware of the sheer quantity of material he examined and sifted. His tenacity and flair for knowing where to look achieved spectacular results in the records of the "Hand in Hand" Insurance Company at the Guildhall Library. Here he found a treasure trove of information on London potters which he deployed in his second book *London Delftware*, based on the delftware collection at the Museum of London and published by Jonathan Horne in 1987.

Frank's interest in manuscript records and his skill in using them was far greater than any work he did on attribution, to which he was comparatively indifferent. He also applied his archival sleuthing to remarkable effect in the field of genealogy. It is not uncommon to find English delftware pieces bearing dates and the initials of the husband and wife for whom they were made. Frank was able to identify many of these owners, their occupations, where they lived and other personal details, thus supplying a social historical context for the items they had commissioned. In some cases he was even able to associate individual objects with particular potteries, a remarkable achievement in a field where precise connections are extremely difficult to make. Unlike some scholars, Frank was always generous in sharing his discoveries and I owe him a personal debt of gratitude for the genealogical research he carried out on all the inscribed delftware in the