

gave excellent and wide ranging papers. For the future, Scandinavia, with some very intelligent papers showing how we need to look deeper than our general categories (e.g. I. Gustin on Birka) and the Low Countries, have an enthusiastic and articulate younger generation of (English speaking) archaeologists, and it is to be hoped that Medieval Europe 2001, probably in Basel, will encourage more interaction between French- and German-speaking delegates and the English-speaking fraternity. Some serious thought needs to be given to ensure that the selection of papers is more rigorous and that the themes in Basel are not based on the York/Bruges model. Also a half day on the archaeology and historic buildings of Bruges in the middle of the conference would have been refreshing and welcome to many of the delegates, who were fascinated by the visual aspects of the host city.

MPRG delegates owe an immense debt of thanks to the organisers of the Conference, and to our colleagues in Bruges who laid out much local pottery on the last afternoon of the Conference.

H. Blake, C. Gerrard, M. Mellor, D. Whitehouse, A. Vince.

ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE BRITISH
1600-1800: VIEWS FROM TWO WORLDS.
LONDON 1997

This 'Return 30th Joint Anniversary Conference' was organised by the Society for Post-Medieval Archaeology and the Society for Historical Archaeology - the first was at Williamsburg. It was held at two venues, the Museum of London and the British Museum, on 3rd-7th November 1997. Among the papers given, three may be of particular interest to readers of this journal: Beverley Nenck, Jacqui Pearce and Roy Stephenson, spoke on 'Redwares, Border Wares and Tinglazed wares'; Richard Coleman-Smith spoke on 'Excavations at the Donyatt Potteries, Somerset'; and Teresita Majewski on 'Eighteenth-century British ceramics on the American colonial frontiers'. The proceedings of the conference are to be published in a volume edited by Geoffrey Egan.

CONFERENCE REPORT:
CERAMIC TECHNOLOGY AND PRODUCTION

This conference was held at the British Museum, London from 20-22 November 1997, organised by staff of the Department of Scientific Research of the Museum. The aim of the conference was to focus on the technological processes by which pottery was made, and the methods of production, with a sub-theme (evident in a minority of papers) of the use of scientific techniques to uncover details of those processes. Theme sessions were on *Organisation and Production, Raw Materials and Resources, Interpretation of Technological Processes and Technological Innovation and Change*. It was a packed programme, with 37 oral papers, and a further 45 posters presented during a 2-hour session on one afternoon, and attracted c. 150 delegates. One of the evening sessions was held at the Museum of Mankind, Burlington Gardens, where the exhibition *Pottery in the Making* was open to view, before it and the Burlington Gardens site closed at the end of 1997. At the exhibition, the potters John Hudson and Clint Swink gave delegates practical demonstrations of pottery-making. (The book which accompanied the exhibition is

reviewed in this issue by Clive Orton; see p. 123).

The conference seemed to work extremely well, in that the focus was sufficiently well-defined to bring together those with quite common interests in pottery-making technology — archaeologists, potters and scientists. The universality of the problems involved in making pottery meant that specialists from across a wide range of cultures were focusing on common issues, and on solutions adopted by potters in the past. The camaraderie and good humour of the participants was particularly striking. The organisers are to be commended on managing to persuade a quite comprehensive range of well known 'names' in the subject to come and speak at the conference, and this undoubtedly contributed to the numbers attending, and to its overall success.

Readers of *Medieval Ceramics* would probably have found papers of specific interest to them, such as David Barker on 18th-century kiln furniture; Paul Blinkhorn on Ipswich-type pottery; Elaine Morris on salt-making and ceramics. Another group of papers considered tin-glazed ceramics produced in southern Europe; Andrew Watts considered aspects of kilns and furniture in 18th-century Nottingham saltglaze potteries; Richard Wilson spoke on earthenware of the Edo period in Japan; and Rose Kerr described new textual evidence emerging for the kilns and organisation of the workshops in Jingdezhen, China. Posters were presented by John Hudson on the British country pottery (his photos of cheery characters leaning on the fences of their allotments were marvellous — to illustrate groups of people, like potters, who 'operate' on the geographical margins of population); by Maggetti on an early medieval pottery workshop of the 9th century from Reinach, Switzerland; and Clare McCutcheon on ceramic production in Irish cities in the 12th to 14th centuries.

My impression is that the real value of the conference was less in the period-specific interests of the attendees, but more in the common struggle by present-day researchers and potters to understand the processes and the reasons why specific methods or materials were used, which cut across temporal and geographical boundaries. Many of these questions could only be answered by attempts at replication, while the use of scientific methods yielded information which could be obtained in no other way. We witnessed some of the 'struggles' of the speakers: as Sophie Wolf described her investigations into the mineralogy and technology of 13th-century bricks of massive proportions from St. Urban, Lucerne, Switzerland we saw in the background of her slides the beautifully-constructed kiln in which she eventually successfully fired replicate bricks. The bricks required four months of patient waiting for them to dry sufficiently before they were safe to fire, and firing took 12 days . . . Memorable too was the sequence of slides shown (in complete, nail-biting silence) by Clint Swink of his experimental trench kiln of Anasazi-type being fired to produce Mesa Verde Black-on-White pottery. The sequence was brilliant and fully-documented: the preparation of the long trench; lighting; build-up of the fire; the approaching (unscheduled) rainstorm; sheltering the fire from the downpour; covering with soil to render the kiln conditions reducing; and after slow cooling, the triumphant emergence from the soil of rich black-on-white pottery. He got deserved applause for that.

Regrettably, there are no plans for a follow-up volume to collect the papers and posters delivered at the conference, but copies of the abstracts may be obtained from Dr. A. Middleton at the British Museum, Dept. of Scientific Research, London WC1B 3DG.

M. J. Hughes
British Museum