

# Brislington Community Museum News

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## News & events

Our previous newsletter focussed on the medieval and earlier heritage at the site of the Brislington Meadows housing development, this time we're taking a look at some of our other medieval exhibits from around Brislington.

We expect to return to our investigation of the meadows site in our next issue, when aspects of its post-medieval existence will be in the spotlight. The parish boundary will also feature later.

Ken Taylor, chair

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## Contact us

Email us - [secretary@brislington.org](mailto:secretary@brislington.org) - to enquire about any of our community museum's exhibits, or to suggest ideas to add to or improve them. Please use the same email address to contribute feedback or items for inclusion in this publication.

We aim to produce this quarterly, but our schedule is flexible so we can react quickly to inform our members of changes or important events. It also means during quiet times we can focus our attention on other matters such as out-reach activities and sourcing and researching new exhibits.

# The Chapel of St Anne in the Wood

The chapel was situated in the aptly named Chapel Way area of St Anne's. (Ordnance Survey reference ST620728). It was uncovered by W J Pountney during his excavation of pottery manufacturing remains at the site Chapel of St Anne in the Wood, in 1914.

## Carved finial

This piece of carved stone (probably Bath stone) was found in a vault by Pountney. He considered it to be a finial or miniature ornamental spire from the chapel's shrine. The design is the same on each of the four faces, and the base is pierced to allow its positioning on a metal spike that would hold it firmly in position.

There are tiny traces of gilding, gold leaf, still adhering to some surfaces around the finial, and some specks may be seen around the middle of the top-right photograph (enlarged from the one below).

Jon Cannon, author and lecturer at the University of Bristol, has in 2012 kindly commented on this artefact: "This finial could have been part of any of a variety of structures inside the chapel, such as a screen, a tomb, a reredos (the decorative screen behind the altar), a piscina (a basin often set into the wall near the altar, in which the priest would wash his hands prior to performing the Eucharist and the communion vessels would be rinsed), or a sedilia (a set of seats for those who will perform the service, often positioned immediately south of the altar). It appears to be typical of 15th-century work."

Exhibit contributed by Bristol Museum and Art Gallery (reference number: Q1573).  
Acquisition number: 120322b2



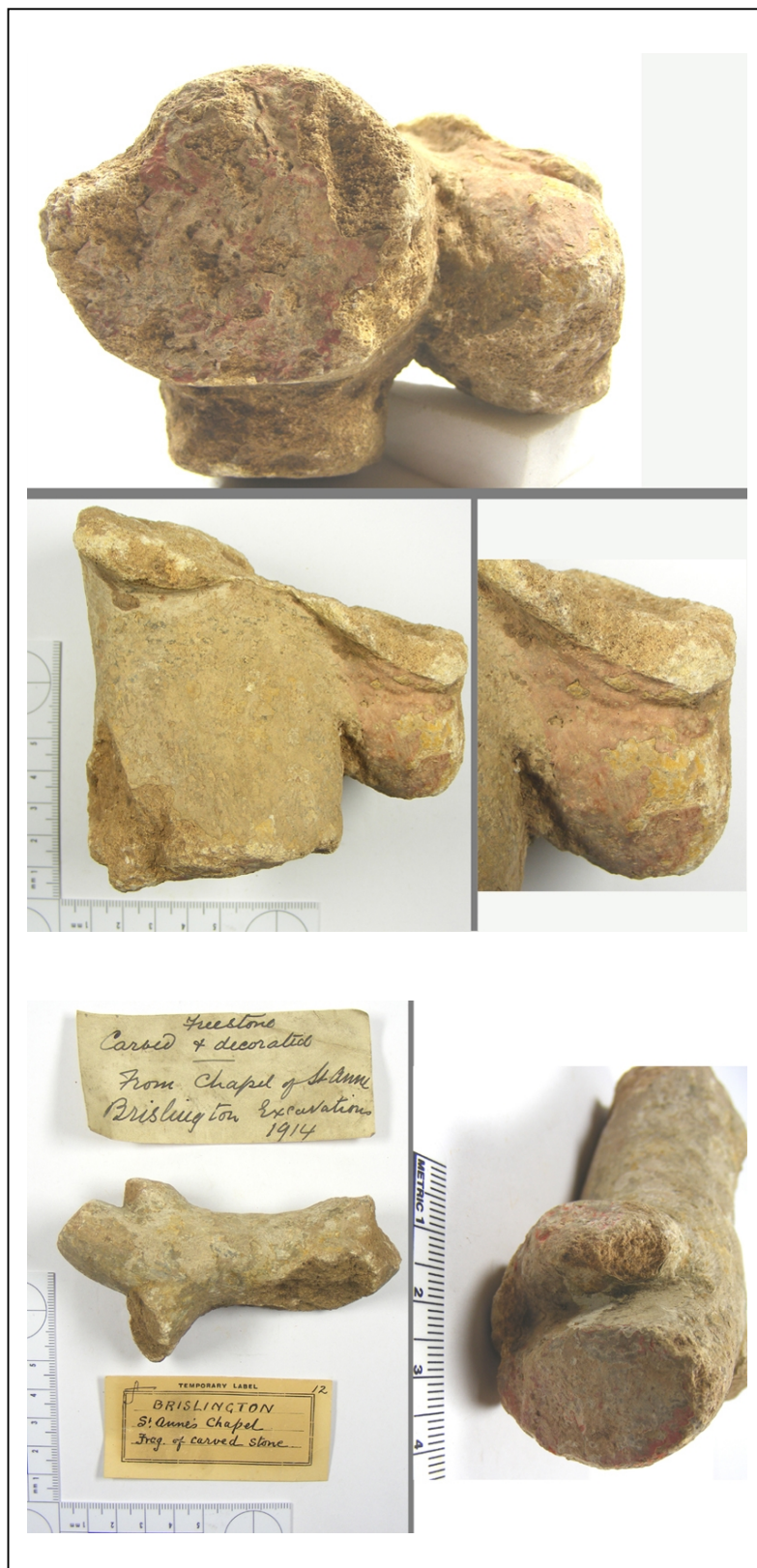
## Rood screen

These are two of six preserved fragments of carved stone (probably Bath stone) that was found in a vault by Pountney. He considered it to be part of the chapel's rood screen (an ornamental partition between the nave and chancel, and which housed a large crucifix - the rood).

Inspection of the surviving fragments reveals a sinuous design that Pountney thought represented the True Vine (a metaphor for the spiritual body of Christ, the holy church, being part of which a person would flourish and be fruitful, but when cut off, would wither and perish - see the gospel of St John chapter 15). And here we can see the vine painted in flesh tones, with traces of blood red where a branch has been pruned by "the gardener" - God. The bloody stump is the flat surface shown at the bottom of the left-hand of the lower photographs.

Exhibits contributed by Bristol Museum and Art Gallery (reference numbers:  
Upper Q3947  
Lower Q3946)

Acquisition numbers:  
Upper 120322b5  
Lower 120322c3





the Archaeology departments of the University of Bristol).<sup>3</sup> Hanham and Bitton, on the north side of the River Avon, are immediate neighbours of Keynsham, on the south, which is the site of the chapel's mother house - Keynsham Abbey. There was even a bridge there in the medieval period, connecting Somerset with Gloucestershire.

This new insight offers an attractive local solution to the question of why this particular heraldic device is on these tiles, and it also invites further research into the connections between the local manors and Keynsham Abbey. Now this possibility (perhaps probability) has been raised, other evidence may be seen in a new light, and more old assumptions reviewed and revised.

## Notes

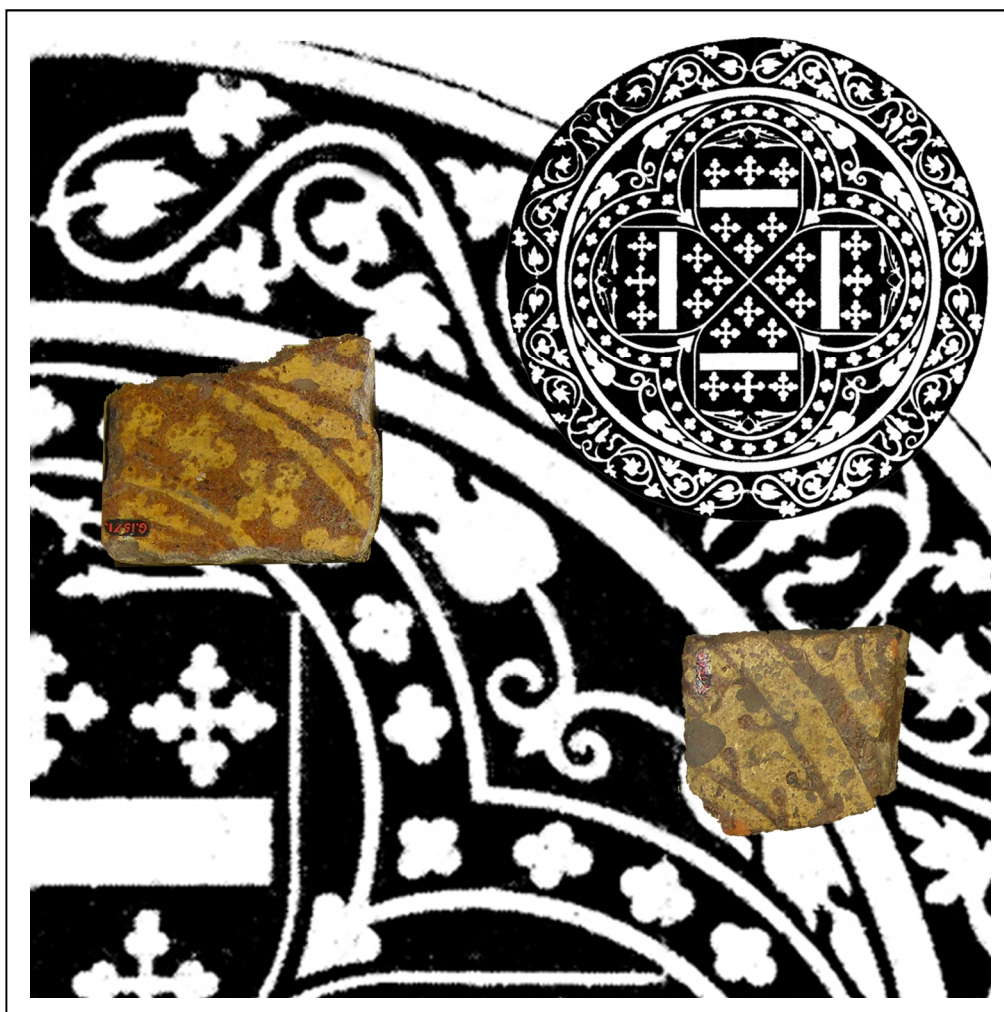
<sup>1</sup> Pountney, W J 1920, *Old Bristol Potteries*, Bristol, J W Arrowsmith, page 289, and monochrome illustration on Plate LV.

<sup>2</sup> Email 20 November 2017, St Anne's Chapel.

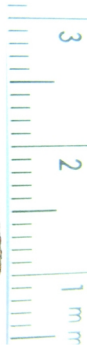
<sup>3</sup> Taylor, Ken 2014, *The holy well and the Chapel of St Anne in the Wood, Brislington, Bristol*, Bristol, Archyve, page 101.

Exhibits below contributed by Bristol Museum and Art Gallery (reference numbers: Left G1571  
Right G1568)

Acquisition number: 171122a1



## Bristol Pottery Type (BPT) 46



This small fragment of pottery (top left), a potsherd, measures less than 2cm along its longest edge, and even when clean still looks a muddy brown on one side and almost black on the other (presumably it was part of a cooking pot blackened through use on an open fire). That it was noticed at all, and retrieved from the soil, is a remarkable thing.

It has been identified as Bristol Pottery Type 46, with tiny chips of flint among other minerals in the clay, and it dates to the 13th century. It is a reminder that sometimes the least attractive and most easily overlooked objects can have some of the most interesting stories to tell.

Find spot: Hampstead Road, Brislington, Bristol.  
ST 612710

Exhibit contributed by Ken Taylor

Acquisition number: 110521a4

This sherd of a cooking pot of Bristol Pottery Type 46 has tiny mica inclusions, and dates to the 13th to 14th centuries. Its small size (no more than 2.5cm), dark colour and sandy appearance make this sort of artefact particularly difficult to spot in the local soil.

Find spot: Hampstead Road, Brislington, Bristol.  
ST 612710

Exhibit contributed by Ken Taylor

Acquisition number: 110618a8

## Midland Purple (or Cistercian) Ware

While similar to the type of pottery from Falfield, Gloucestershire, there are distinct differences. This sherd is likely to be Midland Purple Ware, which was manufactured between 1450 and 1600. The pottery was particularly hard, and used for a wide range of vessels such as jugs, jars and bowls. However, this sherd, which includes part of the rim, has been described as a cup and may actually be Cistercian Ware (1475-1700, the pottery was not actually made by the monks) which is well known for its thin-walled cups with purplish-black glaze inside and out.



The dark purple glaze on this example is somewhat iridescent (the thumbnail shows the outside of the vessel), and the edge view shows the clay to contain some sandy inclusions. The walls of this sherd average 2.5mm thick.

Find spot: Hampstead Road, Brislington, Bristol. ST 612710

Exhibit contributed by Ken Taylor

Acquisition number: 100825a1

## Malvernian ware

This sherd or fragment of pottery dates from the Late Medieval period (e.g. probably 13th-14th centuries). The incised grooves are on the outer surface of the vessel.

One of the diagnostic features of this source of pottery is the presence of relatively large inclusions of igneous rock in the clay fabric. The view of the edge shows just such a piece of granite grit (white and pink). Granite is still quarried in the Malvern Hills.

Find spot: Hampstead Road, Brislington, Bristol. ST 612710

Exhibit contributed by Ken Taylor

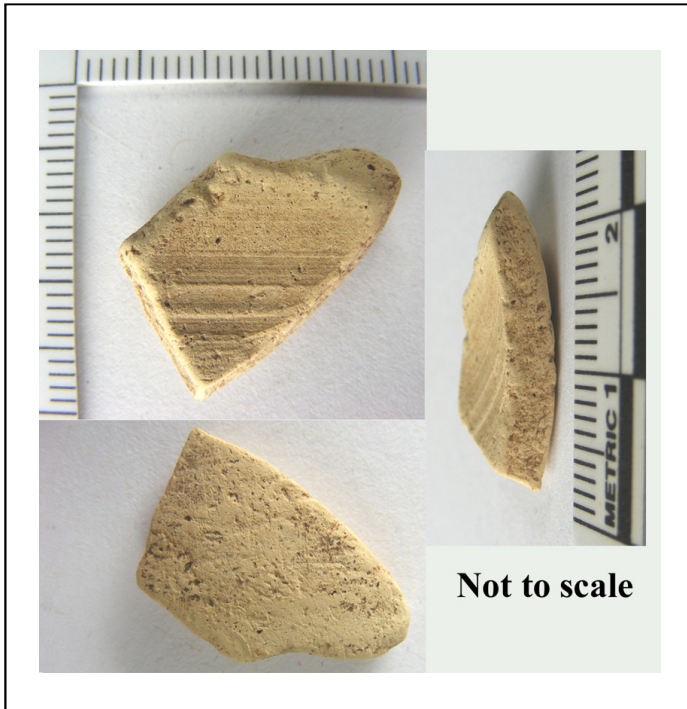
Acquisition number: 100817a1



## Tudor green

Tudor Green is a form of Coarse Border Ware which was manufactured in Surrey and Hampshire from the end of the 14th century until around 1700. It has a distinctive rather thick green or yellow glaze over a light coloured body. Glazed internally all over and externally on the rim only. Glaze style possibly due to the firing being done in the inverted position in the kiln. Fabric is fine grained, with smooth surfaces and with no decoration.

This example dates to the 15th or 16th century, and has lost its glaze due to abrasion (note the rounded edges). Common in urban areas, but rare in the countryside, this was fairly high status tableware such as cups, drinking bowls and jugs.



Find spot: Hampstead Road, Brislington, Bristol. ST 612710

Exhibit contributed by Ken Taylor

Text written by Dawn Witherspoon, in 2011

Acquisition number: 111105a2

## Whetstone

Before the throw-away culture took hold, a wide range of everyday items ranging from penknives to tools such as sickles would be sharpened using a grindstone small enough to be carried around, a whetstone. These have been in use since the Bronze Age, and were often traded over considerable distances, which makes identification easier because this sort of stone is not indigenous to Brislington. The flat surfaces are another key characteristic, which would be used to rub along the blade, with the abrasive stone scraping away a little metal with each stroke, until the edge was again thin and razor sharp.

Period: Post Medieval (or Medieval)

Find spot: Hampstead Road, Brislington, Bristol. ST 612710

Exhibit contributed by Ken Taylor

Acquisition number: 120302a6



## Carved stone



Carved from Bath Stone in the form of foliage, this leaf tip is almost certainly from a medieval church. It was found with a dozen other pieces of architectural stone including mullions and window surrounds. The blocks were used by a house-builder as hardcore in the 1950s and was probably rubble left over from the Bristol blitz.

Find spot: Hampstead Road, Brislington, Bristol. ST 612710

Exhibit contributed by Ken Taylor

Acquisition number: 120301a1

# Coins from the wishing well



These were among the medieval coins and tokens excavated in 1878 from St Anne's well and collected from beneath the stone bridge that stood nearby. These artefacts have been widely cited as evidence establishing the veneration of the well in the medieval period, but serious doubt has been cast on this claim due to the stratigraphy of these finds. In contrast to the wealth of documentary evidence of the medieval Chapel of St Anne in the Wood, the well does not enter the historical record until 1885.

The items illustrated are, from left to right: Edward IV halfgroat, French jetton or counter

(1461-1497), Henry VII halfgroat, a coin said to be from Portugal, and another medieval French jetton.

The illustration is from Bishop, Charles 1891, *St Anne's Ferry*, privately printed; in 1891, *The Bristol & District Footpath Preservation Society*. Reproduced with kind permission of Bristol Reference Library.

Find spot: St Anne's well (ST 62177250) and adjacent bridge.

Acquisition number: 100808a6

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