

Brislington Community Museum News

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Following on...

...from our previous newsletter, which looked at some early modern features of the Brislington Meadows site (including the Enclosure of Brislington Common in 1778), we'll resume an exploration of our archaeological exhibits from the post-medieval period.

This issue focuses on examples of pottery types originating in the 17th and 18th centuries, and from potteries operating at that time

Ken Taylor, chair

Contact us

Email us - 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.

Brislington Pottery

Much has been written about 'Brislington Pottery' which, despite its name, was located in St Anne's and there was more than one pottery site during the centuries in which ceramics were produced. Several types of pottery were manufactured but the term Brislington Pottery refers to delftware, an attempt to replicate some of the qualities of Chinese porcelain (whose production techniques were unknown in the West). These potteries were prolific to the extent that waste material dumped in the River Avon was enough to cause a hazard to shipping, and legal measures were introduced to end the practice.

This delftware fragment of a dish bears the date 1653, and was found during the excavation of St Anne's Chapel, by W J Pountney in 1914. Along with some 450 other pot sherds, it was donated to the British Museum (many other sherds are archived in Bristol Museum and Art Gallery).

The design is painted in blue on a white (tin) glaze. The sherd is about 6.5 centimetres high.

Photograph: © Trustees of the British Museum
Acquisition number: 120224a6



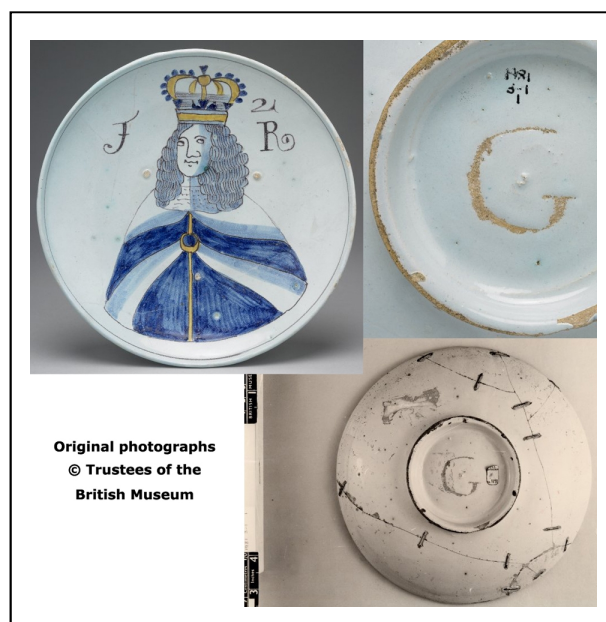
Plate

This delftware plate or shallow dish from Brislington Pottery depicts King James II, who reigned from 1685 to 1688. It was probably produced to commemorate his coronation.

It is 20.7 cm in diameter, and stands on a low base in the middle of which the letter G has been drawn by removing the white (tin) glaze to show the natural colour of the earthenware.

The tin glaze has a faint turquoise tint, and the royal portrait is painted in cobalt blue, with the crown highlighted in yellow. The lettering is drawn in manganese. The underside reveals numerous metal staples inserted to repair cracks.

This item was bought by the British Museum through Sotheby's auctioneers in 1981, and its official registration number is 1981,0301.1. The full-sized montage of images has been produced in accordance with the British Museum's Standard Terms of Use.



Find spot: unknown
Photographer: © Trustees of the British Museum.
Acquisition number: 120223a1

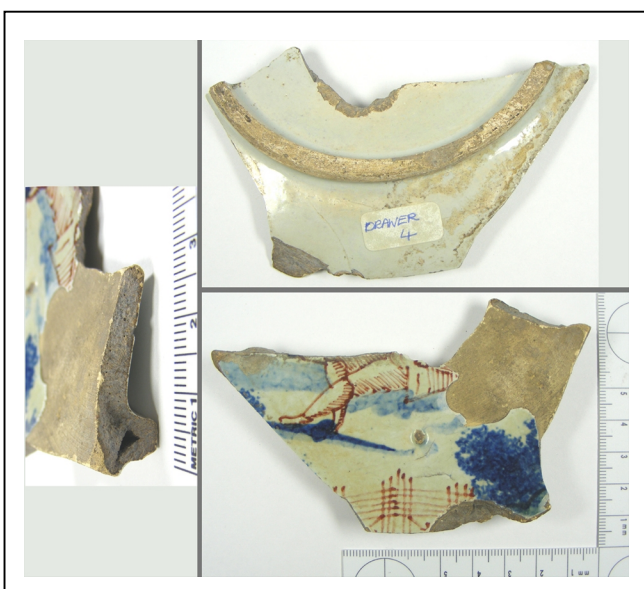
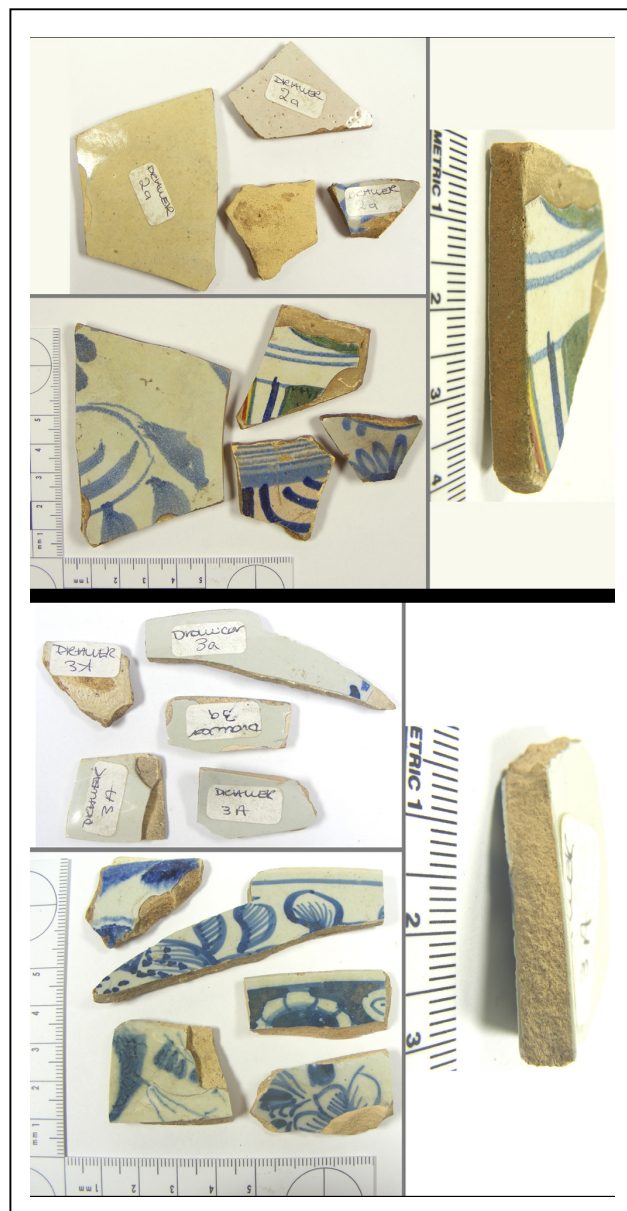
The early 18th century sherds depicted to the right were among a collection of similar, tin-glazed, blue and white pottery donated to Bristol Museum and Art Gallery in 1923. One of these sherds has polychrome decoration including green, yellow and red.

They were all found St Anne's Well, a reputedly holy well in St Anne's Wood, while it was being cleaned in 1923 as part of the restoration work in the valley immediately prior to the valley's opening as a public park in 1924. Incidentally, parts of a wooden pump were found there at the same time, and they too were donated to the museum but, sadly, these fragile artefacts appear to have been lost in the Bristol Blitz of World War Two).

Photographs exhibited with kind permission of Bristol Museum and Art Gallery, which has these in its collection (reference upper: St Anne's Well 1923 - Drawer 2a), lower: St Anne's Well 1923 - Drawer 3a).

All exhibits on this page contributed by Bristol Museum and Art Gallery

Acquisition numbers - upper: 120322b1
lower: 120322b3



This sherd (left) is from a tin-glazed bowl or plate, and appears to show someone's legs (in red), but what the scene originally was, is unknown.

This artefact was donated to Bristol Museum and Art Gallery by W J Pountney following his excavation of pottery manufacturing remains at the site Chapel of St Anne in the Wood, in 1914.

Photographs exhibited with kind permission of Bristol Museum and Art Gallery, which has this in its collection (reference: Pountney 1914 - Drawer 4).

Acquisition number: 120322a6

Falfield Ware

These two examples of thin-walled pottery are glazed on both sides with shades of dark green. Although not clear in the photographs, both have shallow ridges on the outside, these are best seen on the top right image, which has two rounded ridges separated by thin dark bands of thicker glaze.

They have been identified as being from Falfield, Gloucestershire, and dated to the 16th or 17th centuries. Found close together they may be from the same vessel. These two little finds reinforce the message that even small and seemingly insignificant objects can contribute to the study of archaeology and help tell the story of Brislington and its trading connections.

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

Exhibit contributed by Ken Taylor

Acquisition number: 100824a1



Wanstrow pottery



The surface of the inside of this pot is ridged with narrow horizontal striations, less than a millimetre apart, and a corner is covered with a green glaze. The outside has a thin layer of a dark material that in many places is scratched away to reveal the orange fabric. Both the dark and orange areas sparkle with minute inclusions.

This potsherd comes from the Wanstrow potteries, Somerset, around 32km (20 miles) south-southeast of Brislington, and dates to between 1550 and 1750.

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

Exhibit contributed by Ken Taylor

Acquisition number: 110618a7

North Devon GTW

This sherd of North Devon gravel-tempered ware has a dark green glaze (examples of this lead glaze can range from yellow to brown). It was made from a pink or reddish to orange paste and has a grey core resulting from reduced oxygen during firing. The coarse, angular gravel added to the paste is up to 12 mm in diameter giving an obvious rough texture to this coarse earthenware when it protrudes on the surface.

North Devon gravel-tempered ware was produced in potteries around Barnstable and Bideford from the early 17th century onwards. Although the North Devon industry had passed its heyday by the mid-19th century, production is known to have continued at some sites until the beginning of the 20th century.

In addition to local markets, North Devon gravel-tempered ware was widely traded, making it the most common utilitarian and dining ware in many areas along the English and Welsh coasts. Significant quantities were also exported to Ireland and the American colonies in the 17th and 18th centuries.



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

Exhibit contributed by Ken Taylor

Text written by Dawn Witherspoon

Acquisition number: 111105a3

Nether Stowey



This base of a thick-walled pot has an attractive honey-amber coloured glaze on the inside. The clay contains several grains of sand fully 3mm long. The vessel comes from the ancient market town of Nether Stowey, Somerset, located near the coast some 55km (35 miles) southwest of Brislington. The pottery was traded extensively through Bristol. This piece dates to the 17th century.

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

Exhibit contributed by Ken Taylor

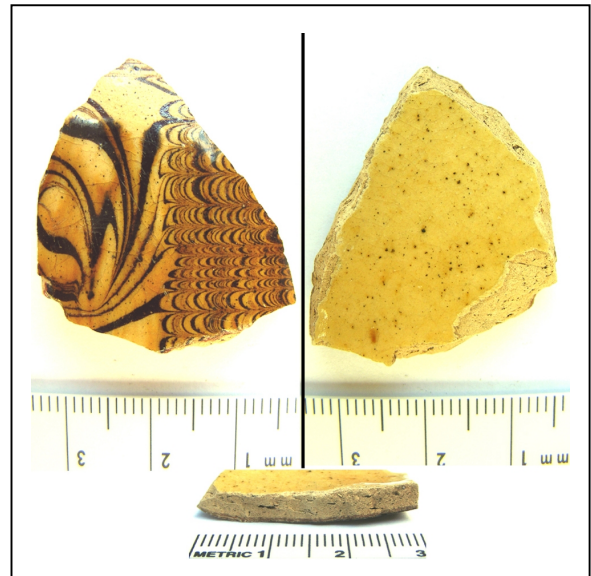
Acquisition number: 110618a4

Feathered slipware

This sort of pottery was popular for hundreds of years and the type of ornamentation varied considerably, with some pieces achieving a high degree of artistry and technical skill.

This sherd has two styles of decoration drawn in a brown slip on the bright yellow glaze: a bold, probably abstract pattern, and a close succession of thin lines that have been turned into graceful waves by stroking a feather across the wet slip.

Find spot: Hampstead Road, Brislington, Bristol. ST 612710
Exhibit contributed by Ken Taylor
Acquisition number: 110522a1



Tiger Ware



Tiger ware is so-called because of its distinctive glaze which has dark stripes of brown on a yellowish background.

The inside of this hand-thrown stoneware pot is speckled. This piece dates to the 17th or 18th century and may have been manufactured in Bristol or Staffordshire.

Find spot: Hampstead Road, Brislington, Bristol. ST 612710
Exhibit contributed by Ken Taylor
Acquisition number: 110618a5

Tobacco pipes

The stems of broken clay tobacco pipes are a relatively common find. The great majority have no decoration and are simply slightly tapering tubes. Some pipes had a stem as long as 400mm, but many were less than half that length.

Wide pipe stems such as three of those illustrated, with an external diameter of 10mm, would come from near the bowl on a pipe with a very long stem. It is practically impossible to tell whether a narrower stem (such as the single example illustrated) came from near the end of a long stemmed pipe, or from anywhere along a short stemmed pipe.

The diameter of the hole through which the smoke was drawn from the bowl can vary considerably - four sizes are illustrated. This hole in the pipe stem would be formed when the clay was still wet, by pushing a rod through it. A strong, thick rod was needed to skewer a long stem because a weaker rod would bend under the pressure of being forced through the clay, and would burst out through the side, ruining the pipe.

As technology improved and stronger rods were developed, they could be made thinner, and this may offer us a relative chronology. In the photograph, the thick stem with the large



diameter hole (on the left) is older than the two other thick stemmed pipes, whose holes are progressively smaller.

The thin stem (pictured on the right) is the type most frequently found, and is unfortunately the most difficult to date using this technique because even early pipes could be made with thin rods if they had short stems. But at least the narrow hole means we can be confident this is not a part of a long stemmed, early pipe.

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

Exhibit contributed by Ken Taylor

Acquisition number: 120302a7



Decoration

Although it is usually difficult to determine much about a piece of clay tobacco pipe stem, they are still worth a second look. This decorative fragment bears an ornate pattern of what may be flowers with four petals, inside a diamond-shaped lattice.

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

Exhibit contributed by Ken Taylor

Acquisition number: 120226a4

Pipe bowls

Generally speaking, the smaller the bowl, the older the pipe, this is because when tobacco was a new product it was relatively expensive.

In 1652 Bristol formed its own guild of pipe makers, with 25 founder members. The earliest record of anyone smoking in England dates to 1556 and relates to a sailor in Bristol (Lloyd, J & J Mitchinson 2006, **The Book of General Ignorance**, Faber & Faber).

In the example illustrated below, the internal diameter of the bowl's rim is 9mm. This example was probably made somewhere between 1625 and 1675 - probably in or around 1650 (identification by Bristol City Museum).

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

Exhibit contributed by Joules Taylor

Acquisition number: 100802a2



In the example illustrated on page 1, the internal diameter of the bowl's rim is 16mm. One side of the bowl depicts the head of Queen Victoria, the other side has an indistinct pattern. The heel has the initials R and T stamped on either sides.

The queen's bust appears to be modelled on the gothic design of William Wyon, which was

introduced on British silver coins in 1847. A representative of Bristol City Museum regards this as a previously unknown type in Bristol.

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

Exhibit contributed by Ken Taylor

Acquisition number: 100802a1

Credits

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