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PotWeb

Ceramics Online
@ the Ashmolean Museum
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News update

We've gone digital!

A new development since last year has been the facility to produce our own photographic images in-house. This has been made possible because of a substantial donation from the Laing Family Trust which has enabled us to purchase a high quality digital camera. We are very grateful to the Trust for their generosity and know that the camera will prove to be invaluable.

People and their Collections-

The Collectors

Now online in the section People and Their Collections is a case study of the 17th-century scientist and antiquary, Robert Plot. The study was originally carried out by Debbie Ford, who is a Museum Officer at Stoke-on-Trent

Potteries Museum and Art Gallery. Debbie undertook a six-week secondment at the Ashmolean under the Sharing Museum Skills and Millennium Award.



Robert Plot was born in 1640 near Sittingbourne, in Kent. He became a student at Magdalen Hall, Oxford, in 1658, taking a BA in 1661 and an MA in 1664. He was subse-

subsequently appointed as Dean and Vice-Principal of Magdalen Hall (later to be called Magdalen College), whilst teaching and preparing for his BCL and DCL, which he obtained in 1671 (cum laude).

Among his tutors were Robert Boyle, the chemist and natural philosopher, and the philosopher John Locke. With the benefit of financial backing he was able to spend the next two years travelling through the Midlands to study 'all curiosities of both art and nature'.

The result of this was the publication, in 1677, of 'The Natural History of Oxford-Shire', which contains the first modern reference to a dinosaur, although at the time the speculation was that it was the bone of a giant human or elephant rather than the thigh bone of a *Megalosaurus*.

The same year saw Robert Plot elected as a Fellow of the Royal Society.

Upon the completion of the building of the Ashmolean Museum in 1683, Robert Plot was appointed as its first Keeper, and in the same year became the first Professor of Chemistry at Oxford University.

1686 saw the publication of 'The Natural History of Stafford-Shire'. Four years later he became a Council Member of the Royal Society.

Student Presentation

Also, newly online under Student Presentations is a re-evaluation by Carole Wheeler of the New Bodleian site, excavated in 1937 by Rupert Bruce-Mitford.



*A gren-glazed biconical jug
from the 13th-14th century*

Bruce-Mitford's original work on this site enabled him to establish a datable sequence for medieval pottery for Oxford, and this still forms the basis for the Oxford

vessel form sequence today.

It also led to the creation of a National Reference Collection for Dating Medieval Sherds at the British Museum in the 1960s.

The current reassessment of the site has enabled the Medieval Fabric Type Series held at the Ashmolean Museum to be expanded further. This type series will be available to outside parties after the museum's redevelopment and anyone wishing to access it should contact PotWeb directly.

In addition, the analysis of the vessel assemblages has provided an interesting insight into the eating and drinking habits of a section of 12th to 14th-century urban society. Finally, Carole Wheeler, in conjunction with J.R. Thomas, has devised a new spreadsheet which makes it simpler and quicker to apply the method, proposed by Professor Orton in the early 1990s, of calculating the internal volume of a vessel.

Japanese Domestic Pottery

We were saddened by the death of Oliver Impey, the recently retired Curator of Japanese Art at the Ashmolean. You may recall that a

selection of images from his book *Japanese Export Porcelain* was published on PotWeb last year. To continue the Japanese theme, Laurie Loh has placed on the website a number of images of Japanese domestic pottery, the ceramics to the taste of the Japanese themselves.



Satsuma dish

An account of the background to these domestic vessels should be completed shortly. Laurie Loh, with the assistance of members of the Eastern Art Department, has started to put together images of some of the Ashmolean's first-class collection of Chinese ceramics. In this way we hope to extend the publication of the Ashmolean's ceramic treasure-house and make the collection available to our worldwide internet audience.

Memorial Vase Re-memorialised

A recent enquiry to the Museum from Jeremy Morgan concerning an 'Ashmolean Memorial Vase' has led to the identification of a hitherto forgotten object.



The vase was created by Alfred and Henry Hopkins of the Camberwell School of Arts and Crafts to commemorate the tercentenary, in 1917, of the birth of Elias Ashmole. It was due to be presented to the Museum but is not mentioned in the registers or annual lists of donations for the period.

However, due to the searches of a tenacious curator, it was tracked down in deep storage. The vase will shortly be available to view on the PotWeb website.

European Ceramics

In addition, Penny Cookson is working on the completion of different areas and periods of European ceramics. First, the range of Medieval and Post-Medieval ceramics will be expanded during the coming months. After that, items from the Roman and Romano-British pottery collection will be published online.

The long term aim is to make more of the Ashmolean's excellent and varied collections accessible online by demonstrating the full range of European ceramics throughout different periods.

We should like to thank individuals and organisations who have continued to provide PotWeb with financial support

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