

SHARDS

A Newsletter of the

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China Students' Club of Boston

April 2005

A Message from Our President

Dear members,

The China Students' Club has had several wonderful programs this year. The programs are the backbone of the club and for many, the primary reason to join the club or to continue to renew their membership year after year. For members who are not able to attend meetings on a regular basis, *Shards* has continued to improve with every issue. The meeting reports are comprehensive, the information is timely, and for those who choose to receive it electronically, the color pictures are splendid.

The CSC Board is committed to maintaining the quality of the programs and to continue to do our business in as cost-effective a way as possible. Fortunately, our new location at the College Club has proven to be a less expensive meeting space. However, we do have increased costs due to the number of outside speakers that we now engage. Club membership is also in a slight decline, a trend that we most certainly want to reverse

as we approach our 75th anniversary in 2009.

In order to keep the programs exciting and fresh as well as to build our financial base in order to prepare for the 75th anniversary, the Board voted last November a modest increase in the dues. It has been some time since the last increase and it was felt that this was the most appropriate means to cover our costs. Please be assured that we are evaluating a number of fundraising strategies and I would certainly welcome creative input on the part of all club members. The best strategy, of course, is to spread the word about the club to anyone with an interest in ceramics, let them know what we have to offer, invite them to a meeting, and encourage them to become members.

Thank you for your help and I look forward to seeing you at a meeting sometime soon.

Best wishes,
Carolyn Roy

The 2004 American Ceramics Circle Conference Report by Louise Richardson

The 2004 meeting of the American Ceramics Circle was held at the Mint Museum in Charlotte, NC on November 4-7. The Mint Museum is known for the Delholm Collection of ceramics, mainly English, given originally by Melanie Delholm, and augmented by other donors. Participants were given ample opportunity to explore the galleries, which house some rare pieces of pottery and porcelain, including Limehouse, Elers, and Francis Place. The lack of cafeteria facilities led to a unique experience, the opportunity to eat a box lunch in the Delholm Gallery. Just imagine eating lunch with fellow ceramic enthusiasts, surrounded by beautiful pots.

The ACC schedules short lectures on a variety of subjects, ranging this year from Mayan ceramics at the Mint to modern Catawba Valley stoneware. Two of the speakers were from continental Europe: Andreina

d'Agliano discussing Doccia porcelain, and Chantel Perrier on Felix Bracquemond. Jonathan Gray from England reported on his research into the Philadelphia connection with the Swansea, Wales, potteries. The quality of the presentations was excellent.

Another feature of the symposium is an optional trip to other local sites. This year the destination was the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts in Old Salem. In addition to superb collections of southern furniture, ceramics, and needlework, the museum now houses a toy museum given by Tom Gray. A reception for the group was held at his house, where, in addition to champagne and tea cakes, we enjoyed seeing his personal collection and talking with our host.

In 2005, the ACC will meet at the Peabody-Essex Museum in Salem.



**Robert Mowry on
Song Dynasty Ceramics and the Problem of Jun Ware
Report by Yon Bard**

Jun wares (*Junyao*) are Chinese gray stoneware objects with a robin-blue glaze and dashes of lavender, dating mostly from the Northern Song and Jin dynasties (960-1234). For many years, the Imperial Palace in Beijing housed a collection of Jun-like flowerpots (probably meant for use as planters for miniature, bonsai-like, trees) and matching basins. The pots have small drainage holes in their floors, and both pots and basins have numerals from one to ten impressed in their bases. The numerals are related to the vessels' sizes: one for largest and ten for smallest; matched pots and basins bear the same numerals. In the early 20th century the Imperial household pledged these "numbered *Jun* wares" as surety for a bank loan, and they had to be forfeited because the debts couldn't be repayed. The bank, in turn, sold the wares to interested collectors. About 70 out of a total of 200 or so objects ended up in the possession of New England collector Ernest Dane, who (with his wife Helen) eventually donated them to Harvard University's Sackler Museum. It should be noted that only a handful of the extant numbered Jun wares constitute matched pot and basin pairs; the others are either one or the other. An impressive example of a no. 3 pot and its matching basin have recently been on display at the Sackler Museum (see illustration at right).

In the 18th century the Quianlong Emperor, an avid collector and connoisseur, pronounced what seemed obvious: that these wares were crafted during the Song dynasty. However, once the objects became available for examination by scholars, this attribution began to attract doubts. Professor Mowry, as curator of Chinese art at the Sackler Museum, is in a unique position to participate in such studies, and he was kind enough to share his conclusions with us. He listed three important characteristics of the numbered Jun wares that are not generally observed in other types of dishes until the Yuan or early Ming period in the 14th century. These are:

1. Areas of purple glaze
2. Barbed rim shape in most of the pieces, i.e., a sharp point at the apex of each lobe.

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**Above: Junyao shallow dish, Song Dynasty,
Christie's New York, 9/21/04
Below: "Numbered Jun" no. 3 flowerpot and basin,
Yuan or Ming Dynasty
Diameter of pot 10"
Sackler Museum, Cambridge**





Song Dynasty Ceramics and the Problem of Jun Ware

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3. Press-molding, i.e., the dishes were shaped by the clay being pressed between two molds, one on the inside and one on the outside. Song-era dishes may have been molded on the inside, but the outside was shaped by hand on the wheel.

Conclusive determination of these wares' dates is unlikely to be made until the kilns in which they were produced are located and excavated to yield archaeological evidence. At present, Professor Mowry's arguments appear quite persuasive, although auction houses like to assign the earlier date on the rare occasion when a piece of this family comes up for sale, as shown by the following examples:

- Christie's NY 3/30/05, "Rare 'numbered' Junyao hexagonal tripod 'narcissus' bowl, Song/Jin dynasty, 12th-13th century." A no. 7 basin, sold for \$396,800 (!)
- Sotheby's London 6/12/03, "Barbed hexafoil Junyao flowerpot, Song/Yuan dynasty." A no. 1 pot, sold for £173,600 (see picture at right).
- Christie's NY 3/26/2003, "Numbered Junyao foliate rim tripod bulb bowl, Northern Song dynasty, 960-

1127." A no. 7 basin, sold for \$164,300.

We thank Professor Mowry for giving us an insight into the process by which the historical background of antique wares is elucidated.



**"Numbered Jun" no. 1 flowerpot
View from top showing barbed rim
and drainage holes
Diameter 11"
Sotheby's London, 6/12/03**

Louise Richardson on 17th Century Ceramics in Newfoundland Historic Sites Report by Jeff Brown

The CSC had another good turn-out at the College Club, this time to hear a presentation by fellow member and past president Louise Richardson who spoke to us on the subject of 17th century ceramics at Newfoundland historic sites. Louise became interested in the island when she started to do some family research and discovered that she had ancestors from the area dating back to 1595. While visiting and doing some archaeological research she became so enamored of the place that she and her husband purchased a summer home there. CSC members were warmly invited to visit her on this beautiful, historic island.

The settlement of Newfoundland was a direct result of the European market for fish. Dried and salted, it was an excellent source of protein, valued throughout England and Europe. The trade was dominated by Breton, Norman, and French Basque fishermen, with a minimal presence by the English and Portuguese. Many

of the present Newfoundland communities were initially migratory fishing stations that came and went with the season. Micaceous Breton coarseware cooking pots and storage vessels date to this period. Later in the 1560s, when the English began to frequent the waters, North Devon and Border Earthenwares appear in the archeological record. Though competition was fierce, the English eventually gained control of the island's eastern shore. By the end of the 16th century, fishermen from Dorset and Devon began to establish year round illegal residency despite periodic efforts by the King's soldiers to burn them out. A legitimate settlement was created on Conception Bay in 1610 when a group of London and Bristol entrepreneurs received a charter to create the Newfoundland Company. There are no records of this settlement after 1690 when it was most likely destroyed by a French assault. The ceramics re-

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17th Century Ceramics in Newfoundland Historic Sites

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covered from this site are primarily from England, Spain and Portugal. There is evidence of Totnes ware from South Devon, North Devon sgraffito, London and Dutch Delft, Merida ware from Portugal, Spanish and Portuguese tin glaze, clay pipes, German Bellarmine and Werra slipware, small amounts of French Saintonge ware, and North Italian sgraffito. What a remarkable international mix for such a remote corner of the world!

Land speculation in Newfoundland was popular with the English nobility in the early 17th century. Unlike most of North America, however, much of the land ultimately remained a crown possession and is so today. One of the early speculators was George Calvert, Lord Baltimore. As Secretary of State to James I, he acquired the Ferryland area from other investors who were suffering financial set-backs. In 1621, he sent a Captain Edward Wynne and eleven workers to start construction on his Colony of Avalon. Fragments from this early area show German brown stoneware, borderware pipkins, and Spanish luster. A forge and brewhouse have been excavated and have yielded North Devon wares and Bellarmine stonewares. An unusual feature from the bakery was a clay oven manufactured in North Devon and obviously shipped to the location. Lord Baltimore was so pleased with the progress of his colony that he moved his family and servants there in 1628. Rosy expectations were soon dashed by an unfortunate combination of a miserable winter and hostilities with the French. The Lord and his family decamped to the warmer climes of Virginia and left an agent to run Avalon.

In 1637 the King gave the rights to the Newfoundland trade to a group of his favorites, one of whom was Sir David Kirke. The Kirkes took possession of the colony and renamed it Pool Plantation. Sir David was an excellent businessman and the colony thrived. Unfortunately, his politics were his downfall. After Charles I died, George Calvert's son, Cecil, sued Kirke, who was not favored by the new government. Sir David

died in prison in London and Pool Plantation was governed by a Parliamentary commissioner. After the Restoration in 1660, Sir David's sons and his widow regained control of the colony and remained there in spite of Calvert's legal victory. Many of the 17th century artifacts have been recovered from a midden adjacent to the Kirke's house. More than five hundred tin glazed vessels are represented, including a white puzzle jug, salt cellar, candlestick, a set of white plates and blue and white marriage plates from Portugal used to present the rings at a wedding ceremony, and lobed dishes as well. The most astonishing finds were several examples of a highly decorative ceramic, terra sigillata, a red earthenware made in Portugal in imitation of Roman Samian ware. Popular in Europe in the 16th and 17th century, terra sigillata has been excavated in Amsterdam, which may suggest a Dutch route to Newfoundland. Its presence there remains a mystery since it seems to have little useful function. Obviously, the colony was wealthy enough to support purchases of purely decorative items.

In addition to these finds, a tavern site has revealed combed slipware and Westerwald mugs as well as Bellarmine and glass bottles. Surprisingly few plates have been recovered, pewter having most likely been used instead. Artifacts discovered below the fill of a wharf that predate the Calvert period include North Devon tall butter pots, Saintonge earthenware and Rairen stoneware.

**From top: Terra sigillata ware
Batavia ware cup
Earthenware mug with
Queen Anne seal**



Shards contributors and helpers: Yon Bard (editor), Jeff Brown (contributing editor), Dora Bard, Louise Richardson, Carolyn Parsons Roy

Please send comments/contributions to: Yonathan Bard, 6 Holland Street, Newton, MA 02458; telephone (617) 244-7688, fax (617) 965-2897, e-mail (the preferred venue!) doryon@rcn.com



Bits and Pieces

On February 24, intrepid CSCers braved the wintry weather to show and discuss some of their treasures with our panel of experts, whose members this year in-

cluded Karina Corrigan, Louise Richardson, and Tracy Wiggin. We show below some of the pieces that were brought.



Wedgwood jelly mold



House shaped majolica panel,
Staffordshire, 19C



Creamware teapot,
Staffordshire, ca. 1770



Chinese Export clobbered chocolate pot,
ca. 1740



Pennington Liverpool
teapot, late 1770s
inscribed "This is the first
piece bought by Tatu when
she was 17 years old"



Pair of small butter boats, perhaps Bow



Ko-Imari bottle
Japan, ca.1700



Chinese double-gourd
pitcher, made for South-East
Asian market, 13-14C



Dutch Delft plate
rim ground off



Chelsea raised-anchor
octagonal plate,
deaccessioned from
Williamsburgh



Green salt-glazed
tortoiseshell dish
Staffordshire, ca.
1760



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The 2005 New York Ceramics Fair Report: Yon Bard; pictures: Jeff Brown

The New York Ceramics Fair (late January) was notable for its prices (\$175,000 for a Chinese Export platter depicting two dancing kilted Scotsmen!) and for the threatening snowstorm that sent many out-of-towners scurrying home earlier than planned. Among novelties were dealers in antiquities (Greek and Etruscan amphorae and the like) and modern Iznik imitations.



Left: Nottingham bear jugs,
ca. 1745

Center: Minton majolica
masterpiece, ca. 1870

Right: Attic black-figure
amphora, ca. 500 BC



Upcoming Ceramics Events

CSC Meetings (*All events at The College Club*)
4/28, The Vivian Hawes Memorial Lecture: Tracey Albainy on *A decade of ceramics acquisitions at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 1996-2005*; 11 AM
5/26: Annual meeting and tea, plus Amanda Lange on *The Canton connection: Chinese porcelain at Historic Deerfield*; 1 PM.

Auctions

Asian:

5/2, Sotheby's Hong Kong (Chinese)
 5/2, Sotheby's Amsterdam
 5/3, 9/27, Christie's Amsterdam
 5/30, Christie's Hong Kong (Chinese)
 7/12, 7/15, Christie's London (Chinese)

British and/or continental:

4/12, Sotheby's London
 4/14, 6/27, 6/30, Christie's London
 4/20, 4/21, 5/19, 9/29, Christie's London (19th C)
 6/2, Sotheby's London

Miscellaneous:

4/23, Skinner Boston
 4/26, Christie's London (Iznik pottery)
 6/5, Sotheby's Milan
 6/6, Christie's Milan (majolica, porcelain).

Exhibitions

Made in China: Export Porcelain from the Lew and Doris Hordroff Collection, Winterthur Museum, Winterthur, DE, until 5/15.