

# Community Archaeology Study Days 2008/9



## Technology of Medieval and Post-Medieval Ceramics

With John Hudson

21<sup>st</sup> February 2009

Pottery is one of the main materials to survive in the archaeological record. Archaeologists commonly use it to date sites, but much more can be learned from pottery. The design and decoration of pottery can sometimes tell us about the aesthetic, social,



and spiritual aspects of a culture. We can even discover what past people ate by examining residues on the pottery. Making pottery is an ancient technology and represents the lives of real people in the ways it was made. Studying the way people made pottery in the past allows us to see how technology was used to provide necessary items to a community.

John Hudson, a specialist in making pottery and replicating Medieval and post-Medieval styles, provided this day's instruction. He began by talking about how clay is processed, including its extraction from the ground, the removal of impurities and excess moisture, and the different characteristics of different types of clay. He also discussed how pottery was fired in kilns. After lunch, John gave us a demonstration using his potter's wheel, which is modeled on the types of wheel used in the era. He made several different types of pottery, including bottles and handles. He demonstrated how to decorate pottery in various ways, including "painting" with a different colour of clay and inscribing lines and patterns

into the wet clay. John also showed us how Medieval roof tiles were made with a frame. He even provided us with instructions on how to process clay and build a kiln in the back garden! It was a fascinating glimpse into how pottery technology developed in the Medieval and post-Medieval periods.

First picture: [http://www.le.ac.uk/ulas/services/ceramic\\_analysis.html](http://www.le.ac.uk/ulas/services/ceramic_analysis.html)

