

of a group newsletter, to include news, a report of relevant meetings and small research articles. CPG Newsletter No 1 from 1988 featured an article on the mineral staurolite, written by Ian Freestone and one on computer-aided data collection from ceramic thin sections by Ian Whitbread. The latter is a topic that is still being grappled with by researchers, nearly 30 years later.

In July 1988, an inaugural one-day CPG meeting took place at Leicester University. This was hosted by Ann Woods and cost £5 for CPG members and £2 for non-members. A second meeting took place in December the same year, at Sheffield University. This featured a microscopy session where participants examined glauconite inclusions in ceramic thin sections. Similar workshops on specific microscopic features took place at future CPG meetings, and covered carbonates (British Museum 1989) and lithic inclusions (Leicester 1990). These sessions were important given that very few courses on ceramic petrography existed at the time. They were summarised in CPG newsletters for those who could not make the meeting.

A themed CPG meeting was held at University Southampton in November 1989 by David Peacock and David Williams, focusing on amphorae. In addition to several talks on the petrology of this important vessel type by the two Davids and Roberta Tomber, then of the Museum of London, Southampton's extensive collection of amphorae slides was also shared with participants. Southampton was a leading centre for the scientific study of ceramics in the 1980s and 1990s, due to a succession of research students that included Ian Whitbread, Peter Day, Alan Vince, Roberta Tomber, Hilary Howard, Elaine Morris, and Tim Darvill.

Two years on from its inception, it was decided that the CPG had indeed been a good idea and should therefore continue. In CPG Newsletter No. 4 Ian Freestone reported that the fledgling group had been criticised for its lack of a detailed policy statement. In response, he pointed out that this avoided excessive paperwork. The rather loose and informal character of the group remains to this day and is one of its endearing features.

The idea of putting out a joint newsletter with the Experimental Firing Group and the Later Prehistoric Ceramics Research Group was put forward at a CPG meeting in Cambridge in 1991. The justification was that these UK-based special interest groups had many overlapping members with the CPG. The rather quirky title of 'The Old Potter's Almanack'

A POTTED HISTORY OF THE CERAMIC PETROLOGY GROUP

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The Ceramic Petrology Group or CPG was founded in March 1988 by several British academic and museum researchers using thin section petrology to analyse ancient ceramics. These included Ann Woods of University Leicester, Ian Freestone and Andrew Middleton of the British Museum, Peter Wardle from the University of Bradford and Ian Whitbread from the University of Southampton.

Ceramic petrology had grown in popularity since its initial application in Britain by David Peacock, Henry Hodges and others, with PhD projects being initiated at several departments during the 1970s. In response to this, the British Museum appointed its first petrographer (Ian Freestone) in 1979, followed by Andrew Middleton in 1984, and hosted two meetings dedicated to the approach in 1980 and 1987, which were published in key edited volumes Freestone *et al.* (1982) and Middleton and Freestone (1991). A natural next step was to form a group to bring together researchers applying ceramic petrology in order to share ideas and experience.

A steering committee met on 4 March 1988 at the University of Leicester to initiate and direct the activities of the newly formed group. It was decided to run the group for an initial trial period of two years. An important component was the production

was suggested by Sue Pringle at a wine reception and 'OPA' Volume 1 appeared in March 1993.

At the Museum of London CPG meeting in 1992, a new steering committee was elected, consisting of Ian Freestone as Chairman, Susan Pringle as Secretary, Andrew Middleton as Treasurer, Anne Woods as Publications Officer and Peter Day and Roberta Tomber as Committee members. The Museum of London meeting was the only get-together in 1992, with a move towards annual meetings only in future years. Throughout the eighties and nineties, members of the steering committee would meet informally at Indian restaurant the 'Neal Akesh' on Hanway Street, which was then located just behind the corner of Oxford Street and Tottenham Court Road. The London meeting place was convenient for visitors from the British School at Athens (Ian Whitbread, Louise Joyner and Peter Day) and from further afield such as Rob Mason from Toronto and K. Krishnan from Baroda, India and committee meetings were sometimes timed to coincide with their visits. Policy decisions could be made over a vegetarian thali and a pint of Cobra before retiring to the BM labs to look at any novel or problematic thin sections that members had brought with them.

At the 1995 meeting, John Cooper of the Natural History Museum, London presented on the identification of shell in thin section and kindly wrote this up for publication in OPA 2(3).

The following year witnessed several developments for the CPG. Email address appeared for the first time in the OPA as this new technology started to be embraced by many members. Contributors were encouraged to submit their papers as a 'word processor file' on a 'floppy disk' (an early type of portable electronic storage device). Some members complained that computers were going to take over the world and replace ceramic petrographers. The floppy disk came and went and the petrographer still remains.

The idea of the CPG and the Prehistoric Ceramics Research Group (PCRG) producing a joint research framework was mooted in 1996. The PCRG published its own, but the CPG does not seem to have been included in this. At the 1996 CPG meeting at the British Museum several changes were made to the CPG committee with Louise Joyner, Sarah Vaughan and Alan Vince being elected. The meeting was attended by Patrick Quinn, a fresh-faced researcher from the University of Sheffield, who presented his initial findings on the occurrence and

research potential of microfossils in archaeological ceramics.

In its heyday, the OPA appeared as many as three times a year, but with shorter issues than today. It received an International Standard Serial Number (ISSN) in 1999 and copies were deposited in the British Library. At the Museum of London meeting in that year, Andrew Middleton, who had organised printing and distribution of the newsletters since their inception (including filling envelopes and licking stamps!), committed to editing the newsletter for one more year. To keep Andrew replete with paper and floppy discs the cost of subscription went up from £5 to £7.50, the first increase in the CPG's history at that point! The Museum of London meeting in 1999 was attended by present OPA editor Michela Spataro, who had then began her research on south and south-eastern Neolithic European ceramics.

On the committee front, Roberta Tomber acted as CPG secretary between 1995-1999 and Chris Doherty was treasurer from 1997-1999. Ian Freestone stood down as long-standing chair of the group at the 1998 meeting at the British Museum and was replaced by Peter Day, who was not quite as long standing. Ian became a lowly committee member as did Elaine Morris of University of Southampton.

Abstracts of past CPG meetings appeared in the OPA from 1999, but did not remain a permanent feature. The research article was front-loaded in the 2000 volume at the expense of news and other announcements, thus signalling the OPA as a more serious publication compared to the casual newsletter that it started out as. The group caught up with the modern world in 2001 by setting up its own website. This was painstakingly programmed by hand in HTML by Alan Vince and housed on his own server. It featured a fancy rotating GIF logo, which was *de-rigueur* around the turn of the century/millennium. Alan had taken over from Peter Day by this time and Carl Knappet of the University of Cambridge was on the committee.

Despite embracing technology, the 21st century appeared to leave the CPG behind somewhat. The excitement surrounding ceramic petrography as the solution to the world's problems in the 80s and 90s had waned somewhat. The 2004 OPA was dominated by activity of the Prehistoric Ceramics Research Group (PCRG) with little reference to the CPG.

Meetings nevertheless took place in 2002 at the British Museum and Leicester in 2003. The 2002 PCRG conference at Bradford on 'Prehistoric

Pottery: People, Patterns and Purpose' was organised jointly by the CPG, though the 2004 follow up was a PCRG only affair. Group activity then ground to a halt for the next four years as Ian Freestone, Louise Joyner and then Andrew Middleton left the British Museum and Alan Vince became an independent archaeological consultant with less time on his hands.

Thankfully interest in ceramics and their analysis was reawakened with a realisation of the value of analytical data as a means of addressing topics beyond trade and exchange, which had been the main focus in the 80s and 90s. This led to new appointments at several UK institutions.

The 2008 meeting on 'Petrography of Archaeological Materials' at University of Sheffield captured this new wave, with participants from the UK, mainland Europe and North America presenting over three days. A volume inspired by the meeting, the first since 1990, appeared a year later (Quinn 2009).

The Sheffield workshop was supported by residual funds of the then dormant CPG and it hosted the first AGM for many years. The injection of new and enthusiastic researchers including Michela Spataro of the British Museum (OPA Editor), Alice Hunt from University College London (Secretary) and Edward Faber of University of Sheffield (Committee Member), alongside post-hiatus CPG stalwarts such as Caroline Cartwright (Treasurer) and Roberta Tomber (Committee Member) led to the reemergence of the group.

Annual meetings followed in 2009 (University College London), 2010 (Nottingham) and 2011 (Leicester). The OPA was also relaunched, with Michela Spataro handling editorial duties. She brought the publication up to date with colour figures and the use of pdfs that were emailed to members rather than posted.

Alan Vince sadly died in 2009. An obituary appeared in the 2010 OPA 15(1) to commemorate his contribution to the field. With his passing the CPG website also died, though it had always been difficult to find the resources to keep it updated. Several failed attempts were made to come up with a solution in the late noughties.

Roberta Tomber was acting President between 1999 and 2012 and presided over the change to non-subscription membership. In 2012 she was replaced by Louise Joyner, despite Louise having left archaeology for some years at that point! At the British Museum meeting in 2013, a committee of just two elected Ian Whitbread as President and Patrick

Quinn as Secretary. It was decided to use the social media platform 'Facebook' as a means of communicating with group members and to serve as a sort of website and bulletin board.

With the launch of the Facebook page the CPG was able to reach and connect petrographers and ceramic analysts in all corners of the globe, keeping them up to date with the latest meetings and goings on. Membership fees were rarely collected at this point due to the use of pdf format for OPA issues, so were replaced by Facebook group membership, which rose to a high of 250. Email communication began to be used only for meeting announcements.

In 2013 Michela Spataro was offered the exciting opportunity of launching the OPA online on the website of the University of Heidelberg Library. This widened the distribution of the publication around the world. Nigel Meeks of the British Museum became production editor of the new online OPA.

The 2013 and 2014 CPG meetings at the British Museum and University College London were well attended by researchers from various parts of Europe including Italy, Germany, Spain, Greece, Belgium and Portugal. This signalled a tangible resurgence in the group and the popularity of ceramic analysis as a research tool. At both meetings Andrew Appleby from the Orkney Islands, Scotland entertained participants with his adventures in clay oven construction. A co-edited volume (Spataro and Tomber 2017) stemming from the 2013 meeting is now published as a Special Issue of the *Journal of Archaeological Science: Reports*.

Andrew Appleby was unable to convince members of the viability of a CPG meeting in Orkney, however the 2015 meeting did take place 'up north' in Durham UK, where Kamal Badreshany acted as host. This was followed in 2016 by the first ever non-UK meeting, organised by Natalia Donner and Dennis Braekmans at the University of Leiden, Holland. Taking CPG abroad was an obvious step with the increase in research activity in north-western Europe and Facebook membership around the world.

In 2017, some 28 years after its inception the Ceramic Petrology Group is thriving. Petrographic analysis is generally accepted as the primary analytical method for the study of the materials and technology of early pottery. The group has had to adapt with the times but has not lost its relevance as a means of tying together petrographers and ceramic analysts so that they can share research, information and skills.

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