

**Northern Ceramics Society
2006 Summer School**

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The annual Northern Ceramics Society (NCS) Summer School ran from August 8 to 13 at the University of Chester in the U.K. The theme of the conference was "Looking at the Evidence". Various lectures covered topics relating to what documents, archaeology, scientific analysis and connoisseurship can contribute to our understanding of ceramics and ceramic history. The interpretation of such evidence was presented in a variety of contexts. Following are some of the meeting highlights which may be of interest to TCC members, as well as information on next year's Summer School and on the NCS.

An archaeologist working in Stoke-on-Trent spoke about the differences between domestic shards (remnants that provide insights into the use of wares by families and businesses) and the shards found at factory sites that can help to provide information regarding the types of wares and patterns produced by the factory and commonly exported. An American archaeologist reported on the distribution and consumption of British ceramics in North America by investigating specific sites in various parts of the country. Ceramic analysis was discussed using such instruments as the XRF, an x-ray for fluorescence analysis, the SEM, Scanning Electronic Microscope, and the PIXIE, which provides analysis of trace elements found in the ware. Dating can result from such results. For instance it is known that chromium was not used in green glaze until the 19th century.

Staffordshire's trade with the USA from 1806 to 1833 was discussed. There were talks about Scottish Industrial pottery and ceramics in Wales. Geoffrey Godden's topic was "How to Write a Bible" -- how he began accumulating information from the factories that developed into the writing of the *Encyclopaedia of British Pottery and Porcelain Marks*. Probably the most spectacular presentation was from John Sandon (formerly at Phillips for 20 years) of Bonham's auction house. He presented the evidence of blatant redecoration of British porcelains. Dozens of examples were shown of lovely hand-painted patterns on Worcester porcelain that had been painted over simple blue and white patterns after they were no longer selling. He pointed out the features to look out for when examining a piece to determine if it was an original hand-painted piece or if it was redecorated at a later date.

The NCS Summer School in 2007 will be held August 7-12, again at the University of Chester. The Theme next year will be "Blue & White in Context". Topics will include "Victorian Fascination with Blue and White" and "Beyond the Blue Horizon -- 20th century plus" (Paul Atterbury); "Blue and White Transfer-Printed Earthenware" (Robert Copeland); "Always Preferring Blue and White -- Chinese Imports" (Geoffrey Godden); and "Evidence of the American Taste for Blue Printed" (Louise Richardson). Finally, Maurice Hillis will speak on "When, Why and How: an Overview of Blue and White Ceramics" as well as on "Conception and Consolidation: the First 20 Years of English Blue and White Porcelain." Other lectures are planned, but may be less of specific interest to TCC members. A brochure will accompany the fall issue of the NCS Newsletter.

The NCS, through a grant from an anonymous donor, has produced a CD containing seven Exhibition Catalogs that are now out of print. Not only are the catalogs presented in full, but the CD includes the capabilities to search for specific phrases or words, zoom in for close-ups, and print and/or email a photo or page. It was available for sale to members at the Summer School and will soon be offered through their newsletters and/or website.

Membership in the NCS is well worthwhile for the publications alone. Along with four quarterly newsletters with color photos, an annual Journal with informative articles is also published. I have been a member since 1990 and have attended the Summer School, formerly held at Keele University in Staffordshire, for all but three of the years since.

