

MINUTES OF THE 2009 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE PREHISTORIC CERAMICS RESEARCH GROUP

Held at Oxford Archaeology, Janus House, Oxford on Saturday 16th May 2009

Present: Elaine Morris (Vice-Chair, ELM), Ina Berg (Treasurer, IB), Grace Jones (Secretary, GPJ), Derek Hurst (Committee, DH), Alistair Barclay (Committee, AB), Lisa Brown (LB), Janice Kinory (JK), David Knight (DK), Phil Jones (PJ), Peter Couldrey (PC), Isobel Thompson (IT), Stuart Needham (SN), Emily Edwards (EE), Cynthia Poole (CP).

1. Apologies

Apologies have been received from: Nigel Brown (Chair, NB), Lorraine Mephram, Alex Gibson, Andrew Fitzpatrick, Anna Slowikowski, Kasia Gdaniec, Liz James, Matt Leivers, Paul Sealey, Terry Manby, Jane Timby, Ann McSween, Henrietta Quinnell, Sarah Percival and Dave Mullin.

2. Minutes of 2008 AGM

The minutes of the 2008 were circulated. ELM made several small amendments, these were then accepted as a true record.

3. Matters arising

2007 Autumn meeting: GPJ contacted David Knight to see if there had been any subsequent take-up on microanalysis. Although there was interest from the membership there has not been any use of the facilities yet, a result of cost. However, a link to the Microanalysis Research Facility has been included on the website.

Future of the PCRG conference

ELM contacted the IFA and they would be delighted for us to organise a session and felt it was absolutely the right thing to do. ELM and NB have talked about this but have not been able to organise anything immediately due to work commitments. AB said he would be happy to organise this with someone else. ELM and AB to look into this, perhaps to discuss minimum standards, or ideas and new discoveries. Ina enquired about the EAA: the EAA chairman said this was a great idea and we could do focus on what we wanted but Ina pointed out we would have to hold it in conjunction with another country, preferably an Eastern country, that would benefit from this. So, we could do this for 2010 if we wanted. ELM asked for a show of hands, would people be prepared to travel? General feeling was that this would be too expensive in the current economic climate and the IFA conference would be preferable.

Date of next meeting

The Autumn meeting took place in Cambridge, organised by Mark Knight and Matt Brundell.

Web page

Grace contacted Derek Hurst who was willing to contact the membership to ask for contributions for the website. Derek has been in contact with ELM about this and will ask membership. Ina had suggested asking for short contributions for the website, *British Archaeology* would also be prepared to take contributions. DK asked if the Group would be interested in on-going projects and we are.

4. Chairman's report

The main objective since the last AGM has been to make the Guidelines available through our website, and as the meeting will hear we are close to achieving that and we should be able to set in motion a programme for completing that task work.

Getting that done will be a really useful achievement in itself, and once the Guidelines are more readily accessible that will provide a bit of a platform for us to pursue the issue of reporting/assessment standards. You may recall quite a while ago I wrote to ALGAO on behalf of PCRG about those issues. The midst of a particularly severe recession may not seem an ideal point to raise such issues once again, most of us will be more concerned about any kind of work not necessarily its quality. However, it would be wrong for us as a group to put off considering our next move with regard to quality issues around assessment and reporting. Maybe a discussion session at the Autumn meeting would be a sensible next step to gauge the range of opinions amongst PCRG members. That might form the basis of a renewed approach to ALGAO and others.

On the issue of conferences we probably need to bite the bullet and decide whether we are going to resurrect the PCRG conference, or get a slot in one of the regular annual events, such as the IFA conference. Whatever we decide on that, I thought the idea that Ina has floated of a session at EAA is a good one, it would probably be far too late now for this September, but perhaps this is a possibility for 2010. Whilst our discussions about the possible future of our conference have led us to agree, quite rightly, to focus on British issues of pressing concern to the working lives of most of the members, we should not lose sight of the importance of seeing our work in an international, particularly European context. Elaine's notion of a dating programme is well worth considering, and seems like it could work really well, especially given the current focus on absolute dating and the critical role that pottery studies have long played.

Following up these two or three key issues will give us a pretty good route to pursue the group's aims of promoting research, understanding and standards, and we should be able to make progress on at least some of these points over the coming year.

5. Secretary's report

Membership now stands at 97. I have removed 14 members from the membership list who last paid their subscription in 2006-2007, despite a number of reminders. However we have been successful in recruiting 12 new members: Teresa Gilmore, Julia Hamilton, Lee Joyce, Sally Rodgers, Andrew Appleby, David Mullin, Paddy Thomas, Andrew Peachey, Ian Rowlandson, Elizabeth Freshwater, Emilie Sibbesson and Helen Swaffer. New members have found the group from a Google search or by word of mouth. Peter Lorimer has spent a lot of time creating a great new website which has been very well received.

Many members are still in arrears with their subs, in spite of reminders asking for payment by the end of April 2009. I will send out one last reminder to those members owing for last year and this year, but will then return to the policy set out in the Constitution of removing members with 12 months outstanding from the membership list.

Subs for 2009-2010 are now due and stand at £8 or £5 for students, and have been at this level since May 1998. I would encourage members to pay by standing order and I will send more frequent reminders to members paying by cheque.

Committee and Group correspondence has continued to take place via e-mail. This means a large saving in time and expense. Correspondence still takes place by post with those members without email addresses, which is now down to only seven members.

Secretary's report accepted as true.

6. Treasurer's report

Balance of the Accounts

The balance of the Community Account is now £3809.06 and the Business Reserve Account stands at £2239.12. This gives an end balance of £6048.18. This shows a decrease of c. £1300 over last year's account, but includes the payment for the Guidelines revision which had been budgeted for.

Income

Members' subscriptions received since the last AGM total £445.00. Many are still outstanding and we would be grateful to all members if they could pay their subscription fee for 08-9 and 09-10 as soon as possible. Thanks to the efforts of Grace Jones, we now have a much higher uptake of standing order mandates (currently standing at 16 and growing). I would encourage all members to think about setting up a standing order mandate as it reduces costs and insures that everybody is up-to-date with their payments at all times. Our income for publications was £0.00. Interest from our business account was £40.38. The decrease in interest is due to drop in interest rates by the Bank of England.

Expenditure

This year, our expenditure was exclusively linked to the revision of our Guidelines and stands at £1795.40. As no newsletter went out this year, we did not incur any expenses in relation to this budget item.

Checking the Accounts

The accounts have been prepared by the Treasurer and will be checked by the Chairman.

Treasurer's report accepted as true.

Comments about subscriptions:

ELM said that it is important to get these subs in. SN has reservations about the standing order as there may be a rise in subs and new forms would then need to be completed. Unfortunately it has not been possible to set up a direct debit as this would cost around £1000 and Ina does not feel this would be a good use of the Group's funds. ELM said that we don't have the income from the Guidelines now so we need to push for the subs. Subs are due 1st April each year. GPJ to send out a reminder to

say that April has come and gone and it is time to pay. Our expenses are very low, the web hosting every few years and a small amount of postage. SN suggests we hold the subs at a certain amount for X number of years to encourage people to fill out the form. There was a discussion about raising fees, but the general consensus is that in the current climate a rise would not be appropriate, especially as IT pointed out, our expenditure is quite low. Ina confirmed that the group probably could hold the subscription at £8 for 5 years but as Treasurer she would like to be able to raise it if necessary. There is also a consideration of the admin involved in fixing fees for those on standing order. There was a proposal by SN that those who already are on Standing Order or who now take one out, 'will be exempt from any increase in fees for the next five years'. This was seconded by JK and accepted unanimously. As ELM pointed out, this will still give us the opportunity to raise the subscription for the rest of the membership if we feel this is necessary.

Action: Grace and Ina to work out the best way to co-ordinate those who are already on standing order and those who will now take one out.

7. Election of Ordinary Member to Committee

Trevor Cowie is due to stand down as Ordinary Member of the Committee. No nominations have been received from the membership. AB asked if it is appropriate to have two committee members from the same organisation and there is no problem with this. No nominations submitted therefore SN nominated Alistair Barclay, IB seconded, accepted unanimously. Alistair Barclay was welcomed to the committee. However, it was noted that the Treasurer and Secretary are both due to stand down at the next AGM, and GPJ thought the Vice-Chair may also, there was uncertainty about the terms of office for the other committee members.

Action: GPJ will check when all committee members are due to stand down. NB and ELM to look for prospective members for committee.

8. The future of the PCRG conference

Ina said that the publication from the 2006 conference is now available. Ina would be happy to organise another conference if there was demand, probably a British one, perhaps for new discoveries but it would be entirely up to the membership. She could host it in Manchester in 2010 with a visit to Stoke on Trent. There was a good deal of interest from those present, JK has said that she will probably have completed her DPhil by then and may be able to present her results. IT might have something to offer on identifying the MIA in Hertfordshire. PJ could offer a review of his work in the West London gravels. ELM suggested regional survey updates for one day, perhaps another on methodologies or techniques. SN added on the regional front someone may be able to offer a final perspective on sites such as Springfield Lyons and Mucking. DK may be able to speak on microprobes if they can secure funding for their work. IT said there were a number of projects on the boil that should be ready by Autumn 2010. Absolute chronology could be a highlight as some projects are focussing on this. Those present were delighted Ina has offered to do this. A conference was therefore proposed for Autumn 2010 in Manchester.

Action: Committee to seek funding, we need to be aware of personal financial constraints. Will try English Heritage to argue this will make a considerable

contribution to regional frameworks. SN said we can emphasis links with absolute chronology. Approach the Prehistoric Society too, although Ina said that last time they didn't offer any funding but did advertise the conference on their website.

9. Dates for the next meetings

There has been an offer of a meeting in Orkney by new member Andrew Appleby. The Group thanks Andrew for this offer but feel that in the current economic climate travel to Orkney would be too expensive for most members but hoped this would be possible in the future. ELM proposed that we don't have an autumn meeting and asked for comment. SN said that he may be able to organise another meeting, perhaps on refractories, in a few years time but is currently unable to due to work commitments. DK feels that we should have an autumn meeting. AB and GPJ are able to offer a meeting at Wessex Archaeology but felt this might be too far south for many members. Ina has offered to contact the British Museum to ask about holding a meeting there, SN suggested we contact Gillian Varndell and may be able to see the Ringlemere assemblage. For the Spring Meeting JK has offered to contact Kellogg College and the Ashmolean Museum. The Ashmolean are currently revising their displays and will have thematic galleries. These will be open by next year.

Action: Autumn meeting: Grace to email membership for offers of venues, Ina to contact Andrew Middleton and Gillian Varndell to ask about a meeting at British Museum. Failing this, AB and GPJ to host at Wessex Archaeology. Spring meeting: Cynthia Poole offered to check the date of the Hillfort Studies Group, JK will then ask Kellogg College and the Ashmolean to see if we can hold our Spring Meeting and AGM at these institutions on 24th April or 8th May, depending on date of Hillfort Studies Group.

10. Web Page

Website is looking good and attracting new members. GPJ wondered if it would be possible to have a page where members could update their personal details, perhaps just a link to email the secretary.

Action: Derek Hurst to ask for short contributions. GPJ to ask Pete about a link for members to update their details.

11. Occasional Papers 1 & 2 revisions: update

A draft of the revised Occasional Papers 1 and 2 is now complete. The figures have been scanned and digitised. ELM expressed concern these were quite faint, GPJ agreed. The possibility of an additional figure to illustrate form types was discussed but dismissed due to the variability of prehistoric forms and the wide range that would need to be shown on a period by period basis. The draft document can now be sent out to the membership for comment, with a deadline for replies of 16 July 2009. The final document will be freely available on the PCRG website but should also be emailed to all the Units, advertised in Current Archaeology, British Archaeology and the Prehistoric Society. Users can print out the document if they wish, laminate it and so forth. ELM suggested adding codes to sections 2.7 and 2.8 and used a fabric recording system that allows for two letters (appendix 1).

Action: GPJ to email document to membership for comment. After 16th July 2009 the final document can be edited and be put onto the website.

12. Later Prehistoric pottery survey: update and next steps

ELM has contacted English Heritage to see if they would be interested in a 12 year update and if they would be willing to fund it. She has suggested linking sites to Google Earth and said that several members have said they would be willing to cover a county or two, for only honorarium acknowledgement and expenses. Any members interested in doing this can contact Elaine. ELM expressed concern that she had not been able to find the survey on the ADS or through Google, only the original work on the Gazetteer was shown. There was no link from the University of Southampton website and the PCRG link was incorrect. These links are now working.

13. Minimum standards in pottery recording

It was decided to start the ball rolling on this once the Guidelines are complete. Isobel Thompson and Stuart Needham offered to contact ALGAO.

Action: GPJ to find out where next IFA conference is and ask Nigel Brown if we are going to have a session on Minimum Standards.

14. Formation of a sub-committee to look at links between chronological developments across the country.

ELM decided to postpone this discussion until the 2010 AGM due to time constraints. Members can think about how to get a project organised or regional lines to explore regional chronologies.

The meeting closed at 12.25pm