

Castleton garden yields medieval drinks vessel

A few years ago Ellen Outram brought a shoe box of pottery sherds along to a Pottery Road Show. She and Peter had found them in their garden which lies directly beneath Peveril Castle. Chris Cumberpatch identified the sherds as medieval splash glazed – last made at the end of the 13th century - and probably all from the same vessel. Ellen and Peter have since kindly donated the pottery to Castleton Historical Society, and thanks to a small grant from MDEM (Museum Development East Midlands) the society has had the pot conserved by Alison Wallster from Sheffield. Sadly only about 25% of the pot has been found, but when Alison reassembled what she could, she advised us to contact Sheffield Museums about a nearly complete vessel found at Royston Grange. We (Ellen, Chris and Angela) went to view it in Sheffield last week, where we met Lucy Creighton and Martha Lawrence of Sheffield Museums.

The Castleton sherds came from a larger vessel than the Royston Grange one. Chris thought that both vessels could have come from the same kiln sites, but were finer than that made at Brackenfield or Burley Hill. Apparently, when in use as containers for wine or ale in the 13th century they were treated as almost disposable – easily broken but cheap to make. Our Castleton pot would have been in use when Peveril Castle was in its heyday, and perhaps it was used at formal dinners in the Great Hall (of course we'll never know, but it's nice to speculate!) The conserved pot is now displayed in Castleton Museum.