

POTTED HISTORY

BARNSTAPLE POST-EXCAVATION PROJECT



North Devon
Sgraffito, 16th c.



Reassembled 17th century kiln, now in
Museum of Barnstaple & North Devon

INTRODUCTION

Potted History is a community-led post-excavation initiative in Barnstaple that aims to catalogue and publish material from a suite of excavations carried out in the 1970s-1980s, including medieval and 17th century kiln contexts and extensive pottery assemblages now subject to professional analysis.

Museum of Barnstaple & North Devon, in partnership with volunteers, frames this work within the broader North Devon pottery tradition, whose distinctive wares were widely traded and exported to Ireland and the early American colonies, converting an overlooked archive into scholarly outputs, displays and educational resources.



METHODOLOGY

The project follows a structured post-excavation methodology to ensure systematic recording, rationalization and long-term access. An initial audit creates a comprehensive digital inventory and guides selection of material for deposit with the museum.

Subsequently, the assemblage undergoes detailed cataloguing, including typological classification and chronological assessment. Concurrently, the site archive- plans, drawings, field documentation and photographic slides- is digitised and integrated with the catalogue to facilitate research, publication and long-term access.

The team of volunteers are provided with specialist training and supervision to undertake the cataloguing and digitisation work to professional standards.

NOTABLE FINDS TO DATE



Spindle Whorl



North Devon
Gravel Tempered Bowl.
16-17th c.



17th century kiln prop



Different North
Devon Cistern
fragments. 15-16th c.



North Devon Sgraffito, 16th c.

ONGOING WORK

Potted History is made possible by The National Lottery Heritage Fund. Thanks to National Lottery players, the project is currently in a pilot phase focused on the analysis of the Library Area site (ND24), excavated in 1985-86; during this phase we are testing and refining methodologies, workflows, and resource frameworks in preparation for a proposed three-year programme covering all 14 sites.

To know more about it visit the website of the Museum of Barnstaple & North Devon or contact Sonia Guerrini (Lead Archaeologist) at Sonia.Guerrini@northdevon.gov.uk

