

A Bronze Age Pottery Firing Experience

Finding myself unexpectedly in Perth, Scotland, I wandered into the Tourist Office to see what was going on. I discovered that it was Perthshire Archaeology Month. I had missed the talk on Bronze Age Pottery at the museum but noticed a Sunday event called "Making the Bronze Age" in a local park. There were practical demonstrations of Bronze Sword casting, Ancient Wood-working, Spinning, dying and Weaving and Making and Firing Bronze Age Pottery. I was straight down there.



The event was lead by Graham Taylor, a potter/experimental archaeologist helped by Sarah Winlow of the Perth and Kinross Heritage Trust. Sarah had brought along copies of Bronze Age urns and food vessels based on surviving examples from Tayside, bags of clay and tools for decorating.



The workshop participants sat on animal skin rugs. Graham explained that the first pots in Britain did not appear in the archaeological record until about 6,000 years ago when the hunter/gatherer lifestyle of the Mesolithic gave way to the settlements of the Neolithic. This new way of life demanded ways of storing and preparing food. Pottery emerged as the solution. Pots were made by hand building using the pinch and coil techniques. Firing took place in open fires probably in the domestic hearth as one of the household chores.



A new pottery style arrived in Britain along with flat axes and inhumation burial practices, as part of the Beaker culture around 2700BC, and by the Late Bronze

Age, distinctive burial urns had developed. In Britain, pottery making methods changed little from its introduction until the arrival of the Romans.

Graham then demonstrated how to make a pinch pot and everyone had a go. Meanwhile a shallow pit had been dug and a fire started. The finished pots were placed around the fire to dry out. Later the pots were carefully pushed further into the flames and left to fire. When Graham thought they were ready they were pulled out to cool down.

A very enjoyable afternoon was had by all.

Jane Gibson

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