

Monmouth Archaeological Society may be the only organisation in Britain to have received four British Archaeological Award Certificates. The Society won the *Pitt Rivers Award* (and £2,000) in 1988 and was Runner-Up for the same award in 1992. However, the Society's supreme triumph was receiving the 1988 *Silver Trowel* – the award for the greatest initiative in British archaeology – for its rescue work in Monnow Street.

Monmouth Archaeologists' International Award

Monmouth Archaeological Society has been awarded £1,500 as finalists for the International 2004 Pitt-Rivers Award for the best work by independent archaeologists. The grant will go towards the Society's publication fund for a book on the archaeology of the town which it hopes to publish next year – the fiftieth anniversary of the first modern excavation in Monmouth which was conducted by Mr. A.L. Sockett (President) and the founding of the Society in 1956.

The Awards ceremony was held in Belfast, Northern Ireland, where it was announced that the society's rescue work in Drybridge Park – on a unique medieval pottery kiln – was one of four projects from across Britain chosen as finalists for the *Pitt Rivers Award*. The winner of the award was Rugby Archaeological Society which had been working on a Roman site adjacent to Watling Street for forty years.

Adventure

The Society's publication fund is for a book, '*Monmouth – an Adventure in Archaeology*', which covers the work of the Society and its professional wing, 'Monmouth Archaeology'. It is intended that the book will be of interest to other archaeologists while being exciting to the general reader. It will tell the story of Monmouth and its archaeologists, of their discoveries and of their struggle to rescue unique remains prior to Government planning guidelines to protect such archaeological remains.

The Award

The Drybridge Park rescue project was carried out over the Easter Bank Holiday 2003, following the discovery of kiln waste during excavations by Monmouthshire County Council for a road through the park. The County Council supported the Society by suspending the road-works while the site was totally excavated. The excavations revealed the remains of an early 14th century pottery 'clamp' kiln, which had been set up on a spot in the centre of the new road. The discovery has since been published in various journals, including the journal of the Council for British Archaeology '*Archaeology in Wales*'.

Before the discovery of the Drybridge kiln, it was thought that medieval potters were unable to produce high quality lead-glazed wares in simple clamp kilns which were little more than holes in the ground covered in potsherds or turf. However, Monmouth archaeologists had long suspected that it was possible and that small production centres, possibly worked by itinerants, would have been an ideal way of catering for the limited markets of small and often remote Welsh towns.

An important aspect of the Drybridge kiln is that the jugs were decorated with different coloured applied clays. These have become markers for the early 14th century which was a disastrous period of floods and famine, culminating in the Black Death of 1348. Many local medieval houses and hamlets which were abandoned at this time have Drybridge pottery in their final layers while the same pots are also found beneath the silts left by the great 14th century floods in Monnow Street. This type of

pottery is especially common in the ruins of houses in the lost towns of Trelech, Grosmont and Skenfrith.