Bideford and America – A Special Relationship
An exploration of the export of Bideford’s pottery to the Eastern seaboard of America and of Bideford’s twin town Manteo and partnerships through the Arts

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Aims and background
I have been increasingly interested in Bideford’s heritage and history since moving to the town in 2005 and getting to know about the natural and built environment and creativity there. In 2008 a community group called Bideford 500 was established to celebrate and promote Bideford’s last five hundred years, of which I became a Committee member and now work part-time for. As part of that experience I became more interested in pottery as, although I am neither a practitioner nor an academic researcher, I have a strong arts and cultural background and was fascinated by the link between the export of pottery to the British colonies on the Eastern seaboard of America, and the import of goods to Bideford’s port, particularly tobacco. I realised that I wanted to see the evidence of this trade activity for myself.

Secondly, Bideford was declared twin town with Manteo, North Carolina in 2008. The two towns share so much history with pioneers who sailed out of Bideford in 1587 to set up a colony. This colony vanished and became known as the ‘Lost Colony’ and the mystery has never been solved as to what happened to the 116 people who had landed, made a settlement and then disappeared two years later. For me it was a natural progression to want to go and visit and make contact with the community there.

I found a way to combine these two interests and an opportunity to spend time researching and travelling by applying for a Winston Churchill Trust travel Fellowship. I applied to the Trust with a project proposal for a six-week fellowship in October 2009 and heard that I was successful at the end of January 2010.
My proposal was to do two things – travel to Virginia and North Carolina to study the export of North Devon pottery to America and its colonies; to look at and hold in my hand pieces of 17th and 18th century pot which were shipped out of Bideford to service the ever increasing numbers of settlers there. The second thing was to make 'first contact' with the arts and local community in Manteo NC, Bideford's new twin town. So, the aim was to go over to Roanoke Island and the Outerbanks region to get to know some of the present day people there and to hopefully ignite a 'special relationship' between the towns. As Chair and founding member of Bideford Bay Creatives, the plan was for me to set up an arts and cultural exchange programme after my visit, to enable artists to travel from their town to the other, bringing their work, making new work and sharing stories about their home town and what inspires them to make the artwork they do. This programme will hopefully enable residents of, and visitors to, both Manteo and Bideford understand about everyday life and culture and encourage relationships to be built.

So where did I go? I put together a detailed itinerary and sent it to the Trust before my grant amount could be finalised and therefore my flight be booked. This focussed my mind, plucked up the courage to call people and talk to them about ideas and establish if they were willing to meet, share what they know and generally be accommodating.

The fellowship was for six weeks. The first stop was Jamestown and Williamsburg VA, to study collections of old pottery sherds (a new term I learnt very early on); then to Raleigh NC to meet with the Arts Council and visit museums and archaeological centres; on to Seagrove Potteries, West of Raleigh, to see contemporary potters in what is an old traditional pottery area. From then on I made my way across North Carolina and over to Manteo and Roanoke Island. I spent four out of my six weeks there - time was spent in Manteo itself making connections with the arts community.

The last week was spent back in Virginia visiting more pottery collections (after receiving invaluable suggestions from two archaeologists I met on Roanoke Island) and meeting curators in Williamsburg, Charlottesville and Richmond.

The last week was the most exciting of all in terms of the collections visited.

Chapter one: The Jamestown Connection
The first day of the Fellowship was spent visiting Jamestown. I had three scheduled visits, firstly to do the 'In the Trenches Tour' with head archaeologist Dr Bill Kelso; secondly to meet with Senior Curator Bly Straube of Preservation Virginia and thirdly to meet with Curator Melanie Pereira of the National Parks Service.

With great excitement and a bit of nervous intrepidation, I travelled from Williamsburg to Jamestown. There are two parts to the Jamestown experience – the Jamestown Settlement (see www.historyisfun.org/Jamestown-Settlement.htm) which is in essence a re-creation of the original settlement and Fort with tours led by costumed characters and reproduction Ships on the river; the second part is Historic Jamestown (see http://historicjamestowne.org) and is the actual site of the original settlement with archaeological digs providing firm evidence of where the Fort was, the church, and other
sites, including the original well. Both places have visitor interpretation and historical exhibits. The latter is owned and run by Preservation Virginia and was where I spent the majority of my time.

The ‘In the Trenches’ tour was very interesting and a real insight into those early pioneers and early life on the Island. I was in a group of only 6 so it felt even more special – Dr Kelso really started off the detailed exploration of the site, keen to find answers to the puzzle. It was fascinating seeing the archaeological digs - when we were in there, one of the team dug up a piece of clay pipe and a black and white glass bead. We were told to look at the different colours of the earth which signified where possible structures may have been. What was incredibly pertinent was viewing lots of black crosses signifying graves – of the 106 original settlers, half died within weeks of arriving. Interestingly, the graves were within the Fort rather than outside it and Dr Kelso wondered if people were buried in the Fort so that the native Indians didn’t see that the Community were sick as that would show a weakness and leave them vulnerable to attack.

After the tour I went to meet Curator of the Preservation Virginia Collection, Bly Straube and she had kindly got some sherds of North Devon Pottery out for me to view – it was so exciting and felt a little weird being in Jamestown and seeing pieces of pot that were made in Bideford or Barnstaple (the pieces couldn’t be pin pointed). There was a large piece of a dripping dish with a green glaze – used to catch meat juices during cooking – and a broken vessel that was vase shaped and Bly thought would have been used to transport dried fish (not a butter vessel as that was wider to pack the butter and layer it with salt to stop it spoiling). I also saw some smaller, but wonderful, sgrafitto sherds, with the yellow glaze that so signifies the North Devon style and is still being produced by veteran ceramicist Harry Juniper. There was an apparently unique small handleless cup that was used as a drugs cup, I held this one in my hand and took a photo of it. I was able to tell Bly about the RJ Lloyd collection of Pottery from the South West, including vessels from North Devon, now housed at Bideford’s Burton Art Gallery, and she was very interested. Later in the Fellowship I was able to re-visit Bly and a colleague and presented her with a copy of the book about the RJ Lloyd collection as I organised a batch of books to be sent to me by the Friends of the Burton Art Gallery so I could disseminate these to my contacts.

The National Parks Service Collection - Jamestown

After meeting with Bly Straube, I then went to meet Melanie Pereira of the National Parks Service (NPS) collection in Jamestown. The NPS collection is “the most significant collection of 17th century North Devon slipware in Britain or America” (Merry Outlaw article, Ceramics in America 2002) and includes collections from other plantations on the James River as well as from the Island itself. It holds thousands of sherds all found on Jamestown Island. I had a tantalising glimpse of a small part of the collection – a small number of vessels were ‘pulled’ for me to see, all exquisite sgrafitto ware, including a rare candlestick as well as a mug, platter and jug. There were 2 complete bowls (of sherds pieced together) with a mix of geometric and swirly designs on and the signature yellow glaze. This collection is amazing in size and sheer numbers – unfortunately there was a
flood there in 2002 and most of the vessels were found separated in water. This meant that they had come apart as archaeologist’s glue is designed to be temporary. Although a large number of pieces have been put back together they are still working on this unenviable task.

What was fascinating was going through a copy of a book by Alison Grant on 17th century pottery that I had with me and looking at the photos with Melanie, a lot of these photos turned out to be those that are part of their collection. Also the visitors centre holds North Devon Pottery examples – this is the first thing you see at the beginning of the exhibition, which is very humbling and exciting to see.

Although I am not researching American or British social history I felt that this is what I was learning a lot about - the amazing resilience of those early British colonists in Jamestown and the kind of vessels that they were importing from North Devon and how they were living their lives.

I was very fortunate at the end of my fellowship to be able to revisit Jamestown, speak to Bly Straube again and to meet her colleague Merry Outlaw. Merry had written an article for Ceramics in America titled 'Scratched in Clay: Seventeenth-Century North Devon slipware at Jamestown, Virginia’ and I was given a ‘Xeroxed’ copy of it. This is a tremendous article and puts in perspective just how much North Devon ware was shipped to and has been discovered in Jamestown, for example at the 17th century May-Hartwell site, and how important the National Parks Service collection is.

... small sherds with green glaze & bags of bigger pieces with browny black lead glaze...at the State archaeology office

Chapter 2 Raleigh
Two productive days were spent in downtown, firstly at the State archaeology office and secondly at the North Carolina Arts Council.

I met archaeologist and Research Centre Director at the office of State archaeology research, Dr Billy Oliver, and colleague Thomas Beaman, to research whether there was any evidence of North Devon slipware in the State. Tom Beaman has spent a lot of time in Brunswick Town on the South East coast of NC. What was immediately interesting was that Tom and Billy referred to the ‘Graveyard of the Atlantic’ on the east coast, so called because of the many shipwrecks - this is the same as the North Devon coast, so there are parallels between the two places. It also helps to explain the lack of trade there as the ships would simply have been unable to stop and deliver goods for purchase.

Tom and Billy took me to see some sherds (pottery bits they told me are sherds and glass and other materials are shards) which have not been formally identified as being from North Devon but possibly could be. There were some very small sherds with green glaze and bag-full’s of bigger pieces with browny black lead glaze. I was unable to identify those. There were also 4 or 5 pieces of sgraffito ware, again not identified as being North Devon slipware, but could be – I was able to photograph some of these to report back in Bideford to see if anyone might be able to throw light on their origin.
Tom gave me a book about the archaeological finds from Brunswick town which contains information about the places where the sherds were found that I photographed – one being the public house and the other being from the Newman Kitchen and Prospect Hall at the site.

At North Carolina Arts Council, I met Sally Peterson, Folk Arts Specialist and also Mary Regan, Director of the Arts Council. Sally and I had a fascinating discussion about pottery - the history of the Moravian people (from Germany) and their pottery trade which travelled from North to South through Pennsylvania, West Virginia and the Shenandoah Valley. Interestingly they made jugs for alcohol, as producing alcohol was the most economical use of all the corn that was growing.

In the mid 1700’s the potters started in North Carolina. Around this time, people were also importing finer wares from Staffordshire and for anyone who was doing this, it helped to confirm their higher status. Sally told me about the Seagrove Potteries to the West of Raleigh and the strong tradition of potters there - that was where I was heading next. We talked about the arts in general and particularly music. I said I would love to hear and see some 'traditional' music – which is Old Time music, pre Blue Grass, played on the fiddle. It would also be interesting from an historical perspective as music would no doubt have been played by early colonists in Virginia and North Carolina and some of these tunes could have survived, particularly from the folk tradition. For further research on this area, Sally pointed me to a couple of websites, one of which is looking at the role of language, and a book 'Traditional American Folk Songs - Anne and Frank Warner Collection', a hefty piece that will need to be looked up on the internet. A hard copy was too big and heavy for a suitcase.

A future arts exchange programme was also discussed and using historical links – we talked about sense of 'place' and identity and maybe to focus on the similar issues and problems between us such as economics; and also to look at similarities overall including the landscape, boats and shipping industry, tourism and creating an identity for locals and visitors. The 'Graveyard of the Atlantic' is a common theme and is a similarity that we share with many shipwrecks on the Eastern seaboard and on the North Devon coast. This was useful in preparation for the later time in Manteo with Dare County Arts Council.

Mary Regan was very helpful and gave some time to discuss ideas about an exchange programme – she suggested that I talk to Laura Martier at Dare County Arts Council and for Laura to talk to them if she feels that they can help or provide any financial assistance. That was great news as I had already arranged to meet Laura when I get to Manteo. Mary gave me a copy of a great book called 'Blue Ridge Music Trails' – about where you can find traditional Mountain music in North Carolina and Virginia.

Chapter 3 - Seagrove and the Potteries

Seagrove is a traditional Pottery area and has been since the 1700s. It is America’s largest community of working potters and according to the map has about 90 potters working in the area. It has a Gallery and Museum dedicated to the history of the Potteries and to showcase contemporary potters in the area.

I visited Seagrove to look for any signs of influence on contemporary work from the North Devon slipware and sgraffito pottery – following leads already given took me to New Salem pottery as they are producing sgraffito style jugs. Also, with no relationship to North Devon style but purely from an historical perspective Westmoore Pottery, as this family have been potting since the 18th century.

First stop though was Mark Hewitt at Pittsborough, just outside of Seagrove. Again most people I had already met suggested to visit Mark. He is British, married an American and settled in North Carolina about 25 years ago. It was fascinating to meet him and to see his
studio, a place he found about 25 years ago, with plenty of acreage to use to build a studio and pottery. Mark trained under Michael Cardew and is internationally known and renowned as a potter and is also very knowledgeable about the history of pottery in NC. He has also just co-written a book called the Potter's Eye and has written for Ceramics in America. He was working on a large pot when I arrived, so carried on talking whilst working at the wheel – at one point he got out a large blow torch and heated up his pot! Looked a bit drastic but it was to stop it getting too moist. Mark had some huge pieces on display outside and I had a look around his 2 wood fired kilns – one of which was the traditional shaped 'groundhog' kiln – its low in the ground one end where the wood fuel is fed and has a low ceiling, nothing like an upright bottle kiln however you can walk into. I had read about these back in Bideford and was amazed to see one in the flesh.

Mark was great, he was also very generous and gave me a copy of his book and pointed me to some relevant copies of Ceramics in America that feature articles on North Devon Pottery. This was something for me to follow up on both during my fellowship and upon my return to the UK.

New Salem Pottery

New Salem Pottery is home and studio of Hal and Eleanor Pugh in Randleman, just outside of Seagrove. This was a real treat; I learned from Hal that there has been a tradition of pottery on the site from the 1766 which was started by the Dennis family from Ireland who travelled across New Jersey and Philadelphia. At some time they started making pottery. Thomas Dennis the 1st was listed as a shoemaker. The question is why did they move here, did they know about the clay beds already or did they find the clay and then start making pots here?

As well as the Moravians there were also the Quakers in this area – English and Irish. Hal was great and a charming host - he dug some clay up from his own back yard to show me how you can test to see if it's a workable clay. You do this by wetting it, making it into a sausage shape and wrapping it round a finger to see if it cracks or not and so how pliable it is – if it cracks its not good enough to use (his didn’t). The Pughs make pots that are based on the old Moravian style and colours, painting on slip. As soon as I arrived Hal was very excited that I was from England and that I was researching pottery exported from North Devon – he showed me 3 trays of sherds that he has found on his property and wondered where they might be from. There were some sherds of decorative pieces and what interested Hal were the contoured rims of the pieces that had been shaped with a tool of some kind and were unusual because of that. Hal called these ridged- pots and wondered if doing something different with the ridged edges was English? The ridged edges are on the early pieces, he hasn't seen this before. There is also a square kiln on site which is a very unusual shape. Where does this shape come from? Quakers perhaps, or something from Pennsylvania? Was it brought with them or did they develop the design here? So many unanswered questions here.

Hal and Eleanor have written 3 articles for the 2010 Ceramics in America and this publication is just about to come out – I was lucky enough to be treated to a preview of the articles on Hal's computer.
Ben Owen and Westmoore Pottery
Ben Owen’s family have been potters since the 1700’s. Ben aged 12 decided he wanted to keep up the family tradition and learnt from his grandfather. There is a museum on site showcasing pieces of pottery from the family history. Ben chatted to me whilst making pots at his wheel. It was a fascinating piece of history, though I didn't find any relationship to sgrafitto ware or North Devon pottery. Ben's contemporary pieces were very colourful – red and blue ceramics. I have since found out that it is extremely difficult to produce a pure red glaze and so his pots are much prized.

Last stop was Westmoore Pottery – I had been advised by a couple of sources to visit the Farrell family as they make reproduction sgrafitto ware. Erik Farrell was in the studio / shop when I arrived which was good fortune because he's a college student for most of his time studying archaeology; but he also decorates the sgraffito pots. It was interesting to see them and Erik's enthusiasm for the technique which he's still learning; it brought home to me just how skilled our Bideford potters are/were. Erik and I swapped book and reference information and he showed me a great book about the De Witt Wallace Collection in Williamsburg – somewhere for me to go back to see at the end of the trip.

Chapter 4 – Roanoke Island and Manteo
I had been planning and getting ready for the ‘welcome reception’ in Manteo throughout the trip and before I left home. I was feeling a little daunted by the prospect of the whole thing as I didn't know what to expect, how formal or informal it would be or how many would be there.

I had been in touch with both local artist and restaurateur Sharon Enoch, and Laura Martier, Executive Director of Dare County Arts Council, http://darearts.org/ before leaving Bideford. Sharon organised the reception for my arrival and the Arts Council agreed to host it at their venue. I arrived earlier in the afternoon to say hello and find out where the reception was and was instantly put at ease. The Arts Council have just moved into the Old Courthouse and is a fabulous space, with a series of gallery rooms and a corridor downstairs and the Courtroom upstairs which will be used for classes and special events.

The reception was from 6-8pm and went very well, there were about 20 people there and we had wine, beer and some food which was wonderful and all catered by Sharon's Full Moon Restaurant. My speech covered why I was there, what I was researching and some key points about the arts connection and future plans, mainly to set up arts exchange activity and in the future a longer term exchange programme between Bideford and Manteo. It was received very warmly and positively. My husband Dave, who was officially visiting as part of a ‘Go and See bursary’ from the Arts Council, presented Bideford Bay Creative’s idea of the Postcard Exchange Project – exchanging handmade postcards between artists and exhibiting them in 2011 and also hopefully in Manteo at the same time.

I met some great people, (lots of artists, the President of the Arts Council Board, the Mayor, someone who works on the replica Elizabeth 11 ship and is very knowledgeable
about local history). I also got a couple of leads to follow up for possible pottery finds, the main one being to go and talk to Scott Dawson in Buxton, on Hatteras Island, he has been involved in an archaeological dig there and has sherds believed to be of North Devon origin.

**Chapter 5 - Dare County Arts Council**

Dare County Arts Council organise an annual extravaganza and art auction called 'Artrageous' and I was looking forward to witnessing this event and getting involved behind the scenes to understand how it all done and exactly what it entails. I learnt that a team of about 20 volunteers, work on this event year round and it culminates in an evening Art Auction to raise money for the Arts Council's Education programme. The most staggering thing other than the $20,000 they raise annually is the amount of support generated through the local community. It takes place over 2 days – the first day being a Childrens' Day, amongst other things such as hands on workshops, there’s a kid’s auction. Goods are donated by local businesses such as bikes and skateboards to be bid for and won.

The art auction took place in the Ramada Inn at Kill Devil Hills on the second day. I helped to put artwork up for both the silent and live auctions. The silent auction had around a 100 pieces donated. This was open all night from 6pm and closed around 9pm. The live auction programme started at 5pm, with food and drink available, browsing the art on show and listening to live music from a band. At 6pm there were speeches from Kitty Dough (President of Dare County Arts Council) and Laura Martier, Executive Director. At the end of Laura's speech she announced that she is working with Bideford Bay Creatives on planning an arts exchange programme between Bideford and Manteo. It was wonderful to have it endorsed in public.

It was very valuable to take part behind the scenes and during the event, giving insight into how it is planned and executed. This is something that we at Bideford Bay Creatives aspire to do in the future, perhaps not as big in scale, but to help raise funds.

**First Friday**

October 1st heralded in the First Friday event in downtown Manteo - the itinerary planning made sure I was there for the first of the month from April to December. It’s an American phenomenon, one I have witnessed in many towns and cities across the States. In essence its a community event, for people to come out into the streets and gallery spaces, to meet people, eat, drink and listen to live music. All for free.

Dare County Arts Council co-ordinate Manteo's First Friday programme and it runs annually on the first of the month from April to December. It’s a very family friendly event and there are activities for kids to keep both them and parents happy. I learnt that the town of Manteo pay for the bands and on this occasion there were three different ones playing. There were also 2 arts openings at the arts council space in two of their galleries.
Despite the flooded downtown streets, being there and taking part was very informative and gave me some ideas for what Bideford could do if we were to start up a First Friday programme in 2011.

Chapter 6 – History and Mysteries
On the recommendation of someone I met at the Arts Council reception, I visited Scott Dawson at his History and Mysteries Museum in Buxton on Hatteras Island. Scott was a great character and gushed forth with information. The Museum was at the back of the office and though quite small was bursting with printed information on the walls and images and had display cabinets full of finds from the immediate area. There were also copies of documents written by the English on their voyages of discovery and an Algonquian dictionary. Scott impressively talked through the history of the English colonists arriving in 1584, 1585 and 1587. His main argument is that the 'Lost Colony' on Roanoke Island is in fact not of Roanoke and that, according to his study of primary sources of writings made at the time, the colonists actually arrived at Hatteras Island, where present day Buxton is.

Scott is a native of the area and his family can be traced back to the 1600’s. He knows the area extremely well and has found sites for archaeological digs to take place - one of which was in November 2009 and was led by Dr Mark Horton (Bideford 500’s patron) and his Bristol University archaeology students. Bideford’s ex-Mayor Andy Powell was also there. Scott showed me some of the finds from that dig and some he had found himself. It was amazing to see, as quite clearly there are small pieces of North Devon Pottery – he showed me and explained how the sherds were found, literally laid on top of each other intermingled with sherds of native American pottery which he suggested proved that English and Native American people were co-existing together. What we don’t know is whether the pottery was brought with the people who lived there or whether the pieces were traded and found their way to Buxton from another place. It was amazing to see these and hold them and bags of sherds were pulled out from a large black lidded box, all of which were excavated from Buxton at only about a foot and a half deep. What struck me is that as well as some sgrafitto-ware, with the tell-tale yellow creamy slip, there were also bagfulls of pieces of browny black glaze, exactly the same as I had seen by the bagful in Raleigh from the Brunswick Town dig. I was frustrated that I am not expert enough to identify the sherds but I may be able to get some identification upon returning to Bideford.

Chapter 7 – Arts Exchange
At the Artrageous Art Extravaganza art auction on October 3rd 2010, Laura Martier, executive director of Dare County Arts Council, gave her public endorsement of our plans to make real arts contacts with our American twin town.

Dare County Arts Council is very enthusiastic about undertaking some arts activity with artists in Bideford. After three very positive and productive meetings, Laura Martier and Fay Davis Edwards agreed to work with Bideford Bay Creatives on a Postcard Exchange
Project as a way of introducing the arts community to each other and also for the local community in both Manteo and Bideford to learn a little about the other town, through the arts. This also marks the first phase of the exchange programme. It was confirmed during the Fellowship that there will be an exhibition of artist-made cards from both Manteo and Bideford (these will be made by artists from both towns who will make a duplicate one and send it to the other town) at the Arts Council’s gallery at the beginning of June 2011 and the opening of it will coincide with the First Friday event in June, on June 3rd. At the same time Bideford Bay Creatives will stage an exhibition of postcards from Manteo and Bideford artists in Bideford in June 2011.

Ben and Kathryn from the Silver Bonsai Gallery in Manteo are also excited about the possibility of an exchange programme and are really keen to get something going, possibly with using a building they have on site. It isn’t ready right now, but could possibly be a studio space for a visiting artist.

The outcome of these discussions and meetings, and from contact made with individual artists and other galleries in the flourishing downtown arts community, is that I produced a 3-year plan for the arts exchange programme, initially between Bideford Bay Creatives and Dare County Arts Council with provision for other partners to come on board from both Bideford and Manteo. This has been formally adopted by both organisations since returning to the UK.

Chapter 8 – the Pottery trail unfurls again
Eric Klingelhofer and Eric Deetz, eminent archaeologists who happened to be visiting Fort Raleigh National Park on Roanoke Island to carry out a dig, were a mine of information and proved to have some great contacts. They were extremely generous with passing on names of people / organisations I should make contact with and places I should visit in the future to follow the North Devon Pottery trail.

Some of these I didn’t get to visit on this trip as they include St Mary’s in Maryland, Newfoundland, Maine, Ireland, the Bahamas and Barbados. It’s such a shame I can only do one travel Fellowship in a lifetime! As a result, during the last week of the Fellowship I met Kelly Ladd, curator at the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation; I also visited the DeWitt Wallace Museum of Fine Arts; Bly Straube (again) and Merry Outlaw at Preservation Virginia in Jamestown; Karen Shriver at the Flowerdew Hundred Collection, as part of the University of Virginia at their study centre near Charlottesville; Contemporary ceramicist Michelle Erickson’s pottery at Period Designs in Yorktown; and The Department of Historic Resources state archaeology collection of the Commonwealth of Virginia, in Richmond.

Colonial Williamsburg Foundation
I met with Kelly Ladd, curator at the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation’s archaeological collections (CWFA). To quote the Foundation’s website:

“……The Department also oversees the largest colonial-period archaeological collection in the United States, consisting of several million objects and fragments recovered during more than 60 years of excavation; extensive comparative historic-period faunal and archaeobotanical collections; and the Martin’s Hundred collection of early seventeenth-century material culture”

It is the last sentence about Martin’s Hundred collection that is particularly relevant to the North Devon pottery finds. Martin’s Hundred was one of the earliest 17th century plantations, located along the James River and was settled in 1619 by the English. Richard Carter bought the land in the early 1700s and built on this earlier site.

Kelly had pulled a lot of finds for me when I arrived and they were split into 2 categories – 18th century plainware and first quarter 17th century sgrafitto ware. The former pottery
sherds were excavated in Williamsburg itself and the latter were found at Carter Grove, Martin’s Hundred. We talked a lot about the plainware sherds and the colouring of them – I learnt that the North Devon plainware having grey in it was the result of the oxidation that occurs during firing (due to the position of the vessel in the kiln and the firing temperature), which gives the red clay a striking grey ‘core’ running through the middle like a liquorice allsort.

The 17th century sgrafitto ware from Martin’s Hundred was beautiful and amazing to be able to hold something that old that came from North Devon – the finds were of the signature yellow colour glaze with both floral and wavy patterns. Interestingly Kelly also identified what the Foundation believes to be local copies of North Devon slipware in amongst the collection, some of which were more of an orange colour glaze. Fascinating to think that in the 1600’s, North Devon slipware was being copied and they liked the sgrafitto so much to create their own version. This visit was extremely interesting as it was a great example of the part played by North Devon Pottery and the functional wares that colonies were using.

Flowerdew Hundred Collection
A fascinating trip to view some of this collection, held by University of Virginia, solidifies exactly the direct link between the tobacco and pottery trade between Bideford and Eastern Seaboard of America. Flowerdew Hundred dates back to c1620, is on the James River and was in essence a tobacco plantation and factory and saw the “transformation of English Settlers into Americans” (from Commerce and Conflict: The English in Virginia, Flowerdew Hundred Foundation). During a time of peace with the local tribes, there was an opportunity for the English to expand their settlements and for colonists to take over the Indian’s abandoned villages. Flowerdew Hundred was established in this way and was “one of the earliest and most important of the large, privately owned plantations established in Virginia during the tobacco boom years 1617-1625” (from Commerce and Conflict).

It also has some of the richest and best preserved English settlement sites in the US. There are many examples of pottery, mainly plainware in their collection. I visited Karen Shriver, curator of the collection near Charlottesville – Karen introduced me to the collection and then pulled a few pieces for me to see and photograph. These vessels included a lovely ballister pot, c1624-28, most likely used to transport butter; a milk pan base with a green glaze and several smaller gravel tempered sherds, some with a lead glaze c1650-1775. All these pieces have been identified as originating from North Devon.

Department of Human Resources – State Historic Preservation office, Richmond, Virginia
This was the last stop of the Fellowship. I met one of the conservators there, Caitlin O’Grady, and between us we spent a good few hours researching, opening and closing the study collection drawers and pinpointing some North Devon sherds from various sites which were carried through from the collection storage, in drawers or in bags.
The sites we were exploring were plantations in Virginia, mostly dating back to 1600 – 1635, using the database of artefacts to find grave tempered sherds and pieces of sgraffito slipware. A few, if small, sherds were discovered at the site of ‘Causey’s Care’ plantation – these include olive green glazed, clear lead glazed and sgraffito pieces. Interestingly there were again the tell-tale red coarseware pieces with the grey core. Sherds have also been found at the site of ‘Nominy’ plantation, again gravel tempered glazed sherds, some of which were found on the surface.

**Back in the UK and dissemination**

![Finding pottery sherds at home in Bideford](image1)

![Giving a talk about my Churchill Fellowship at the North Devon Arts monthly meeting](image2)

**Pottery**

First of all upon my return, all I wanted to do was to carry on with my research. I got really inspired by and hooked on my Fellowship and would very much like to continue to study the export of North Devon Pottery. This I will have to put on a bit of a hold, to any degree, as I have been working full-time since completing my Fellowship.

I literally went on the trail and it was a great adventure – I now know that in the future I need to also go to the Bahamas, Bermuda, Newfoundland, Ireland, Maryland, Maine and Wales. This shows the breadth and size of North Devon Pottery and its trade with a variety of nations and places across the world. This size of project warrants further and deeper academic treatment, a few people have suggested that I need to do a Phd. If I can take the time out to do so I will.

Meantime I have been looking at things a little closer to home and have been disseminating the findings of the fellowship with local potters, arts/cultural organisations, artists and anyone who has shown interest in and enthusiasm for my trip. North Devon potters that I have met with individually are keen to get together and share knowledge and information about their practice and my findings and puzzles (looking at clay colour, glaze) – this I will organise, in conjunction with Bideford’s Burton Art Gallery and Museum and their Ceramics Collection.

The press have printed an article and I have given two presentations – one in February (North Devon Arts) and one in April (AGM of the Friends of the Burton Gallery and Museum) 2011. I have also spent time at North Devon and Barnstaple Museum, meeting with the curator of their pottery collection there and will be spending more time, when I can, in the coming months studying their collection and sherds and discussing some of the finds and piece that I have seen in the States.

The most exciting part since returning home is that I have found a large number of pottery sherds on a local beach and on the tidal river Torridge in the Bideford area. These pieces are exactly the same as some of those I saw during my Fellowship and have been identified by someone at Barnstaple museum as being of the same age i.e. 17th Century.
sgraffito ware and 17th and 18th Century plainware. This is such an amazing find and without my Fellowship I would not have discovered and identified these pieces as I simply would not have known what I was looking for and what I was looking at. These sherds are featuring in my talks and have also been shared with potters and collectors locally.

The Manteo connection and igniting the special relationship

The best outcome of this part of the Fellowship was the relationship developed and contacts made in Manteo and on Roanoke Island. I have been keeping in touch with a variety of people and firmly believe that events and projects will now be going ahead that definitely would not have happened if I had not completed my Fellowship.

One of the most tangible and exciting outcomes is the production of the 3-year Arts Exchange Programme between Bideford Bay Creatives (the group of which I am Chair) and Dare County Arts Council. The first phase is the Postcard Exchange Project, as outlined above, which runs in June 2011.

Also Bideford now has its own ‘First Friday’ programme running from May to September 2011, co-ordinated by Bideford Bay Creatives and working in partnership with the Chamber of Commerce and Bideford 500. This was agreed at a meeting late in 2010, where the Chamber received a report from me on the Fellowship and as a result, some suggestions for town-centre based projects that celebrate the community and the town’s history. First Fridays run monthly in Manteo and I experienced the October event during the Fellowship. In the future this will enable some joint events to happen simultaneously between Bideford and Manteo – for example, our inaugural First Friday was on May 6th 2011 and it was ‘virtually’ opened by the Mayor of Manteo who cut a ribbon via a Skype connection; also a joint opening of the Bideford 500’s Heritage Day celebrations, on the First Friday of July is all ready to go, with a live web linkup set up between the two towns, as well as the opening of the Postcard Project on the First Friday in June. The Mayor, Town Manager and Arts Council in Manteo are all very keen and enthusiastic about these ideas and look forward to it all happening. Of course this relationship and way of working on both sides of the pond will only inevitably lead to further exciting projects and events in the future.

The Director of the Elizabethan Gardens in Manteo is already planning a trip, to visit public Gardens here in Devon for inspiration and research, and he is contacting me for help and suggestions for this trip.
Conclusions – opportunity and responsibility
To conclude, the Fellowship was an incredible and unique experience and opportunity for me, but also for the UK and the USA to form a ‘special relationship’ and, in a sense, re-ignite what is already there and has been there historically for hundreds of years. It has been a great process, increasing knowledge, making new contacts and meaningful relationships and sharing and disseminating information. I have also learned so much more about the place where I live and in essence it is very much a beginning and definitely not an end. I have confirmed the value of making personal face-to-face contact in this digital and global age and I know (because I tried this approach prior to gaining my Fellowship) that without my Fellowship I would not have been able to make and develop the relationships that I now have with artists, curators, archaeologists and arts and cultural organisations in Virginia and North Carolina.

I would not hesitate to recommend the Trust and the travel Fellowship to anyone and have been encouraging others to do so ever since my return.

Useful publications and references:
Alison Grant ‘North Devon Pottery’
Alison Grant ‘North Devon Pottery: The Seventeenth Century’
Ceramics in America – produced annually
Scott Dawson ‘Croatoan: Birthplace of America’
Burton Museum and Art Gallery ‘The RJ Lloyd Ceramics Collection: artist as collector’
Malcolm C Watkins ‘North Devon Pottery and its export to America in the 17th Century’

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- Preservation Virginia, Jamestown Rediscovery Project - http://preservationvirginia.org/
- Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Archaeological Collections - http://research.history.org/Archaeological_Research.cfm
- Flowerdew 100, courtesy of The Rectors and Visitors of the University of Virginia
- Virginia Department of Historic Resources - www.dhr.virginia.gov