

Assessment of Pottery from Abbey Retail Park, Barking (ARP97)

Alan Vince

The pottery from ARP97 has been viewed twice, firstly to provide a "spot date" during the progress of the excavation and as a guide to initial post-excavation work, and secondly to provide a basis for the assessment of the potential of the pottery assemblage for archaeological research. 1009 fragments were identified, together with fragments of bone, daub, Roman tile and medieval tile (none of which is assessed here).

The pottery spans the Roman to modern periods and the 82 sherds of Roman pottery have been separated and assessed by B J Precious (Precious 1998). The post-Roman pottery is assessed by broad period.

Phase II

See Precious 1998.

Phase IIIa: Mid Saxon period

There is no pottery from the site which need date between the 3rd and the 6th century and the site was therefore probably not occupied in the late Roman or early Anglo-Saxon periods.

One hundred and seven sherds of mid Saxon pottery were found, mostly in later deposits. Some of this pottery might, however, be stratified, although none of the assemblages is large (Table 1). Chaff-tempered pottery was present in two features: [481] and [110] although the latter feature is part of a Group from which post-medieval finds have been recovered and these sherds may therefore be residual. The remaining deposits mainly contain single sherds of Ipswich-type ware, apart from [157] which contains ten sherds from the same imported Grey Burnished Ware vessel. Parts of the same vessel were found in contexts [77], [118] and unstratified above [118].

Table 1 Mid Saxon Pottery in potentially Mid Saxon deposits

Group	Context	Earlier	Later
	157		10
	385		1
	455		1
	481	2	
	489		1
1000	234		

1000	417	
1003	277	1
1007	110	6
1007	320	1
1012	580	

Thus, no more than 23 sherds of Mid Saxon pottery might have been recovered from deposits of this date. The remaining 84 sherds were found in association with later wares. Given that elsewhere in the Thames basin it is extremely rare to find mid Saxon and later deposits on the same site, each of these assemblages was considered carefully to determine whether or not there might be some evidence from ARP97 for the transition from mid to late Saxon ceramics, which took place in the later 9th century. In each case, however, the evidence is fairly clear that the mid Saxon pottery was residual and that a break in ceramic deposition took place in the later 9th and 10th centuries. Thus the entire mid Saxon assemblage has been assessed as one collection.

Dating: The low quantity of chaff-tempered pottery suggests that there was little occupation on the site in the 7th century whilst the Grey Burnished ware vessel is probably of early 8th century date. On mid Saxon sites in *Lundenwic* the latest assemblages include shell-tempered and grit-tempered wares. Two sherds of probably mid Saxon shell-tempered ware were found, and no grit-tempered wares. There is thus no evidence to show that occupation continued to the end of the mid Saxon period and it is possible that the entire assemblage is of 8th-century date.

Function: few of the mid-Saxon vessels show signs of use in cooking and several of the Ipswich ware sherds definitely come from spouted pitchers. The Grey Burnished ware vessel is probably a bottle, since some of the neck sherds have a narrow diameter. The potential quantity of serving vessels and the lack of definite cooking vessels marks out this assemblage.

Source: although a range of fabrics are present in the Ipswich ware collection from ARP97 there is no reason to doubt that the vessels were Ipswich products. The chaff-tempered wares appear to have been made from two different fabrics, although both contain the muscovite-rich silt typical of *Lundenwic* chaff-tempered wares and thought to indicate an Essex source. The Grey Burnished ware vessel cannot be sourced visually, but chemical analysis of comparable pieces from London, Ipswich, York and elsewhere suggests that there are at most four separate sources for this type represented on mid Saxon sites in England (Mainman 1993).

Potential: An assemblage of over 100 sherds of mid Saxon pottery is unusual in the Thames basin outside of central London, although equally large and apparently more varied assemblages have been excavated from other sites in the Retail Park (Redknap 1992). The latter material is at present unpublished, although reports have been prepared and illustrations completed. Ideally, the ARP97 pottery would be published alongside these

earlier collections and the classifications used for the two groups of pottery would be correlated to provide a coherent picture of mid Saxon pottery use at Barking. In particular, the relative proportions of wares and forms should be compared, for which quantified data from ARP97 is required.

The fabrics of the chaff-tempered and shelly wares from ARP97 should be described in detail to aid comparison with *Lundenwic* and published, as should all illustratable material (15 sherds in total).

Recommendations: the ARP97 pottery should be quantified (EVEs and weight) and the illustratable material should be catalogued and drawn. Photographs are required of the two stamped Ipswich ware sherds. The chaff-tempered and shelly wares should be described in detail. Finally, a report suitable for publication should be prepared, describing the assemblage, comparing it with previous finds from Barking and placing the Barking assemblage in its regional setting (see *Appendix One* for costings).

Phase IIIb: 10th to 12th century

Twenty six contexts contained sherds of ?10th to 12th century date without any later material and 128 sherds of this date were recovered in total. None of the assemblages was large, the largest being 13 sherds from context [60] (Table 2). Clearly, given the amount of residuality on ARP97 not all of these deposits need date to the 10th to 12th centuries and the assemblages are far too small for refined dating within this period to be carried out on a deposit by deposit basis. Much of this pottery comes from the various ditches found criss-crossing the excavation area. Some sherds are fresh-looking but much of this pottery is covered with cassy concretions.

Table 2

Group	Context	10 th to 12 th C Sherds
	34	8
1003	60	13
1002	65	1
	69	2
1002	70	1
1003	77	2
1000	81	5
1002	97	1
1003	120	4
	121	1

1003	160	3
1002	193	2
1000	236	1
	256	1
1010	321	1
1010	322	3
	328	1
	334	1
	390	1
	400	2
	443	1
1007	475	3
1012	494	4
1000	1001	2
	1003	1

Source: Of the ten wares identified at ARP97 all but three have been found in the City of London (Vince & Jenner 1991). However, over half of the sherds have a fabric not noted in the City and here termed SESH (South Essex Late Saxon Shelly ware). Superficially, the ware is very similar to that of London's LSS (of which only one sherd has been positively identified at ARP97) but closer examination reveals a medium textured quartz sand and micaceous silty matrix. Furthermore, the identify of the fossil shell is different. Two other possibly local wares were noted, a sandy ware (SEEMS) and a sandy variant of London's EMSH (here termed SHELS). Whilst there are points of comparison between the Barking and London ceramics it is clear that the majority of the wares used at Barking come from a different source (Table 3). The absence of imported wares is striking in comparison with London.

Table 3

Cname	Sherds
EMCW	1
EMGR	1
EMS	9
EMSH	25

EMSS	6
LSS	1
SEEMS	1
SESHL	72
SHELS	8
THET	4

Dating: The SESH L sherds are mainly similar in manufacturing technique and typology to London's LSS and probably therefore have a similar date range. The remaining wares can be dated by comparison with the City of London to the later 10th to mid 12th centuries and it is likely that this assemblage includes material ranging in date throughout this period.

Function: Almost all of the sherds of 10th to 12th-century date were from cooking pots, jars, storage jars or dishes, all types used in food preparation. The absence of spouted pitchers is noteworthy and shows a complete reverse of the pattern found in the mid Saxon period. This may be due to a change in function of the area from which rubbish was derived between the two periods or to a change in status of the settlement itself.

Potential: The recognition of a previously unrecognised late Saxon ware is of some significance - there are in total less than two dozen recognised late Saxon wheelthrown wares known from the whole of England. Comparison of the range of coarsewares found at Barking and London also helps to refine knowledge of trading patterns in the Thames estuary during this period.

Recommendation: The three newly-recognised local wares should be fully described, illustrated (6 sherds) and published whereas the remaining wares should be correlated type for type with the London corpus and a report prepared for publication (see Appendix One for costings).

Phase IIIc: Late 12th / early 13th century

In the late 12th or very early 13th century a large quantity of material was deposited on the site, including large fragments of pottery vessels (358 sherds, representing no more than 116 vessels, and quite probably considerably fewer). The majority of these vessels were of locally manufactured shelly ware (SESH and SESHS) with a small quantity of London area vessels (LOND and SSW), which provide the dating. Sherds of possible Hedingham ware were identified (HEDI) but were found in later deposits (Table 4).

Table 4

CONTEXT	Sherds	Comments
	40	2

48	1
94	1
114	13
126	1 (SSW)
186	36 (LOND)
212	185 (LOND)
226	4
251	9
313	1
338	5 (SSW)
372	3
451	1
530	1
573	4
591	9

Source: The similarity in appearance of the two local fabrics suggests that they may be variant fabrics produced by a single manufacturing centre, which accounts for about 90% of the pottery used. In addition to the sherds of London-type ware a few sherds of London Shelly-Sandy ware (SSW) and Hedingham ware (HEDI) were found. There were no sherds of imported wares.

Dating: If the dumps are part of a single event then the date comes from the latest sherds present, which are North French style London-type wares of the early 13th century. Since both SSW and early Standard London-type ware jugs are also present, and these types ceased to be used in London before the early 13th century, it is possible that the entire dumping episode dates to the very end of the 12th or very beginning of the 13th century.

Function: Cooking pots predominate in these dumps with a small number of jugs, one pipkin and one bowl. Many of the cooking pots were coated externally in soot, confirming their use. In comparison with contemporary assemblages from the City of London glazed wares are very scarce.

Potential: The dumped deposits include large fragments of contemporary pottery, with little evidence of residual material. They therefore form a solid rung for the ceramic chronology for south Essex.

Recommendation: The two local fabrics should be fully described and a selection from the 21 illustratable sherds drawn and published, together with a report placing the material in its local setting.

Phase IV: Later 13th to early 15th century.

Ten sherds of Mill Green ware (MG) and 19 of Mill Green Coarseware (MGCOAR) were found, mostly demonstrably in later deposits. Similarly, 26 sherds of Coarse Border Ware were found (CBW). These, by contrast, include substantial fragments of vessels, as well as abraded body sherds, a total of no more than 11 vessels. It is likely, therefore, that some of the CBW vessels were contemporary with the deposits in which they were found, which can be dated by associated pottery to the later 15th or early 16th century. No other later 13th, 14th or early 15th-century wares were present (apart from a single sherd of Kingston-type ware - KING) and the implication is that very little deposition took place on the site after c.1200. The only deposit which contains solely material of later 13th to 15th century date is spread (243), which would be dated to the later 13th or early 14th century if found in London. There is, however, some indication that Mill Green wares continued to be produced and used in Essex after they ceased to be traded to London.

Source: Mill Green ware was produced at Ingatestone, in central Essex (Pearce *et al* 1982). CBW was produced in the Surrey/Hampshire border but was the main ware used in the City of London, from where, no doubt, the Barking vessels were obtained. There are no sherds of imported vessels from this period.

Recommendation: little further work is recommended on this material except for quantification.

Phase V: Late 15th to early 16th century

157 sherds (no more than 91 vessels) of late 15th or early 16th-century date were recovered. Most came from a series of intercutting pits (Group 1008) and to judge by the presence of parts of the same vessel in several pits it is likely that the pottery can be treated as part of a single deposit (Table 5). The largest group, and the one with most imports, was 252. Two final contexts may or may not be of this date: [338] contained a single Tudor redware sherd in an otherwise earlier assemblage and [596] is also dated by a single sherd. 53 sherds of Tudor date were found in later or unstratified deposits.

Table 5

CONTEXT	Sherds	Comments
	49	5 gp 1008
	57	20 gp 1008
	74	25 gp 1008
	187	17 gp 1008

189	10 (RAER; DUTR)
252	65 (RAER; DUTR;SAIU;SNTG;SIEG)
338	1 single intrusive sherd
596	1 single sherd

Sources: Most of the red earthenware is of Tudor redware types, some of which are probably London products (TUDB) but the majority of which are Essex wares. A distinction was drawn during recording between silty micaceous fabrics (TUDFR), sand-tempered, silty micaceous fabrics (TUDES) and calcareous silty micaceous fabrics (TUDC). Several production sites are known in Essex at this time and the source of these three groups might be determined by comparison with kiln waste and the Chelmsford type series. Surrey whitewares, from Cheam (CHEA) and the Surrey/Hampshire border (CBW) form a minor element in the assemblages, alongside Tudor Green ware vessels (mainly lobed cups) from the same area (TUDG). Imports include Low Countries red earthenware (DUTR), Siegburg stoneware (SIEG), a South Netherlands Maiolica (SNTG), a sherd from an unglazed Saintonge ware vessel (SAIU) and Raeren stoneware (RAER). The latter includes a very unusual costrel spout. In comparison with the medieval pottery from the site, this phase is marked by a significant increase in the quantity of imports. Nevertheless, in comparison with material previously recovered from the abbey's main drain the assemblage appears less exceptional. However, no quantified comparison of the two assemblages has been made.

Function: Very little of the pottery found was used in cooking or food preparation. Instead serving and drinking vessels were very common, including types probably used in formal, social display (lobed cups, costrels, drinking jugs). The South Netherlands sherd is from a vase, probably also used as an ornament, for display. A single fragment from a candlemaker's trough (if this is indeed the function of this vessel) is an unusual type, not in place with the rest of the assemblage.

Potential: the assemblage clearly points to the high status of Barking Abbey in the century before the dissolution. The imports are, in the main, of wares that are already well-known in the Thames valley, although the precise types found are of some interest, especially since they have both historical associations, with the abbey, and form part of a stratified assemblage. Of even more interest, however, is the potential for comparing this assemblage with that from the main drain, which includes a much wider range of imports, including Spanish lustrewares.

Recommendation: although an interesting assemblage, this material pales by comparison with that from the abbey main drain, excavated to the west of the ARP97 site in the 1980s. This material has been analysed, illustrated and a report prepared. It is recommended that the ARP97 assemblage be published together with the abbey drain group, as a contrast. At some stage, analysis of the sources of red-firing wares should be carried out but the ARP97 collection includes few illustratable pieces, despite the substantial nature of some of the sherds. It is recommended, therefore, that a summary report is published, illustrated solely

by the unusual, imported vessels and attention is drawn to the potential for synthesis of all Tudor period pottery from Barking.

Phases VI and VII: Later post-medieval

A scatter of later post-medieval wares was present at ARP97 but no coherent assemblages (Table 6). The pottery dates to the later 16th, 17th and 18th centuries and includes local Harlow and Stock wares (METS, PMBL, PMFR), Surrey Border wares, London stoneware (LONS) as well as Chinese porcelain (CHPO). Of particular note were sherds of Martaban stoneware (MARTABAN), Weser ware (WESE) and North Italian Marbled Slipware (NIMS). Given these imports, the lack of Rhenish stoneware is remarkable but in such small groups its significance is uncertain.

Table 6

CONTEXT Comments

14 17 th C
118 17 th /18 th C
217 17 th /18 th C
220 18 th C + (CHPO)
259 18 th C + (with earlier 17 th -century wares - WESE)
276 17 th /18 th C
574 18 th C (CHPO)
593 17 th C (NIMS)

Recommendation: The Weser ware bowl and lid should be drawn and a summary report prepared.

Phases VII and VIII: 18th-century and later

Later 18th-century, 19th-century and, probably, 20th-century wares were present on the ARP97 site, either in the fill of late features or in unstratified deposits (Table 7). This material includes Sunderland coarseware rectangular dishes (SUND), part of a grey stoneware Selzer bottle (SELZ). Some of the six sherds of Chinese porcelain from the site are probably of this date too.

Table 7

Context	Early Modern Pot	Post-med Comments pot
0	1	8

2	3	2 Includes 20 th C material
21	54	15 Includes 20 th C material
43	26	13 Includes 20 th C material
218	1	2 Number not used (i.e. mistake). Late 18 th C or later
595	1	Late 18 th C or later

Dating:

Recommendation: No further work

Bibliography

Mainman, A J 1993 *The pottery from 46-54 Fishergate*, The Archaeology of York **16/6**

Precious, B J 1998 Assessment Report on the Roman pottery from the Abbey Road Retail Park, Barking, Essex - ARP97

Redknap, M 1992 The Saxon pottery from Barking Abbey: part 2, the continental imports, *London Archaeologist* **6 No 14**, 378-81

Pearce, J E, Vince, A G & White, R 1982 A Dated Type-Series of medieval pottery in London, Part 1: Mill Green ware, *Trans London Middlesex Archaeol Soc* **33**, 266-98

Pearce, J E, Vince, A G & Jenner, M A 1985 *A Dated Type-series of London Medieval Pottery: Part 2, London-type Ware*, London Middlesex Archaeol Soc Spec Pap **6**

Vince, A G & Jenner, M A 1991 The Saxon and Early Medieval Pottery of London, in Vince, A G (Ed) *Aspects of Saxo-Norman London: 2, Finds and Environmental Evidence*, London Middlesex Archaeol Soc Spec Pap **12**, 19-119

Appendix One

Table 8: Costing for further recommended work (red = completed)

Phase	Quantification	Cataloguing	Description/microscope study	Report preparation	Total
IIIa	£10	£10	£120	£160	£300
IIIb	£10	£10	£120	£80	£220
IIIc	£10	£10	£80	£80	£180
IV	£10	0	0	0	£10
V	£10	£10	0	£40	£60
VI	£10	£10	0	£40	£60
VII	£10	0	0	0	£10
VIII	£10	0	0	0	£10
Total	£80	£50	£320	£400	£850

Notes:

- *Quantification* would be by EVEs (rim percentage) and Weight, to the nearest 5 gms, in line with draft Medieval Pottery Research Group minimum standards.
- *Cataloguing* includes selecting and re-bagging chosen sherds, assigning drawing numbers, adding these to the primary record and production of an excel spreadsheet containing catalogue entries for final publication
- *Description/microscope study* includes visual examination under a x20 binocular microscope, aided if need be by thin-section or chemical analysis, in line with publication standard used for the London Saxon and Medieval pottery corpora.
- *Report preparation* includes library research, discussion with other ceramic specialists and production of report text on disk in Word 97 format with full bibliography and captions for illustrations.

It is assumed that both illustration and photography will be supplied by TVAS and no estimate for these items is included here.