

**Weoley Castle:
A Reappraisal of and Report on the Pottery,
Appendix 9: Regional Imports**



by
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An Archaeological Overview of Weoley Castle, Birmingham

Summary

Weoley Castle is a fortified, medieval manor-house situated four miles to the southwest of Birmingham city centre in the historic county of Worcestershire (National Grid Reference SP 02158275). The site entered into the ownership of Birmingham City Council in *c.*1930 and thereafter two campaigns of archaeological excavation were undertaken; between 1932 and 1940 and 1955 and 1962. More recently the site has been subject to an ambitious initiative, “*The Weoley Castle Development Project*”, joint funded by Birmingham City Council, The National Heritage Lottery Fund and English Heritage. The aims of the project were to consolidate the surviving masonry, to increase community understanding of and involvement with the monument and to re-assess the finds collection and surviving archaeological archive. The following reports form the third strand of the initiative, “*An Archaeological Overview of Weoley Castle, Birmingham*”. The project was undertaken by Barbican Research Associates, managed by Stephanie Rátkai and monitored by Birmingham City Museum and Art Gallery and was submitted in final form in August 2011, consisting of a series of reports on the archaeological archive, the ceramic finds and the small (portable) finds etc. The reports were presented in PDF format and will be available on-line, hosted by BRA (see www.barbicanra.co.uk for links). Hard and digital copies of the reports will be held by BMAG at selected museum properties. It is intended that the reports will form the basis for a synthesised monograph publication intended to bring knowledge of this important monument and the results of its past excavations to a wider audience.



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Published code	Weoley Fabric	Bull Ring Fabric	Source	Location
Worcester-type glazed ware	Worcester-type glazed ware	Worcester-type glazed ware	Worcestershire	Appendix 9
Malvernian cooking pot	Malvern cooking pot	not present	Malvern Hills area	Appendix 9
London-type ware	London-type ware	not present	London area	Appendix 9
Ashton?	Ashton?	not present	Cheshire	Appendix 9
Brill-Boarstall	Brill-Boarstall	Brill-Boarstall	Buckinghamshire	Appendix 9
WCFabric 15	C	not present	Non-local ?East Midlands	Appendix 9
Potterspury	Potterspury	not present	Northamptonshire	Appendix 9
WCFabric 16	Fine buff ware aka Potterspury-type	not present	?	Appendix 9
Surrey Whiteware	Surrey Whiteware	not present	Surrey	Appendix 9
Malvern Chase ware	Malvern Chase ware	not present	Malvern Chase	Appendix 9

Worcester-type Glazed Ware



Figure A9.1: Worcester-type glazed ware jug handle 13th century
Accession: 2006.0141.3 Provenance: unknown but Oswald's excavations



Figure A9.2: Worcester-type glazed ware jug handle (left) and Malvernian cooking pot rim (right)

A second identical handle sherd ?possibly the same vessel (accession number **2000A2.124** (**Figure A9.2**, left) is marked Tr 5 Fl. 2 WB. There is every chance that this sherd is from the Timber Kitchen. If not it must be from the Timber Hall since Trench 5 did not extend into the Stone Building. This sherd appears to have been cut and polished for thin section at one end.

Malvernian Cooking Pot

The Worcester sherd (Figure A9.2, left) was bagged with a Malvernian cooking pot sherd (**Figure A9.2**, right) with an in-turned rim dating to c. 1250-1300 (likely to be closer to 1300 than to 1250). This sherd is marked but it is rather unintelligible. It reads E 12 C. It seems likely that the sherd is from Area E on the eastern side of the platform. C may stand for cobbles in which case it could be the cobbles exterior to the Stone Building.

Malvernian cooking pot is seldom encountered this far to the north-west. It is interesting to find this and the later Malvern Chase ware both at Weoley.

London-type Ware



Figure A9.3: London-type ware

The sherd (**Figure A9.3**) is burnt. Other sherds from the same vessel were found in the area of the Timber Kitchen, the black marshy deposits and the Stone Building. The sherd has been decorated with roller-stamped bands of white slip (most clearly visible in the centre of the sherd) and applied, roughly circular pellets. The fabric is browner, sandier and less micaceous than Deritend ware and also contains red iron oxide inclusions absent in Deritend ware. The link between the highly decorated Deritend ware jugs and their London counterparts is clear to see. Deritend waster sherds decorated in imitation of London-type ware were found behind the Old Crown, Deritend, Birmingham but the Weoley sherds are the first examples of London-type ware found in Birmingham and help prove a direct link between the two wares.

The jug from which this sherd came may have been burnt in one of the three fires that affected the Stone Building.

Ashton?

Figure A9.4 WC 68A Jug decorated with red and white slips
Accession: 1990A 298 Provenance: pre-War Excavations

The decoration consists of stylised horseshoes, picked out in two lines of red slip, between which a series of white clay circular pellets represent horseshoe nails. The motif is unique in Birmingham, but is known from pottery made at the Ashton kilns, Cheshire, the most likely source for this vessel, and also Lincolnshire. There are also examples of this type of decoration in London-type ware although the jug fabric is inconsistent with this source. The likely date range for this vessel is late 13th-early 14th century.

The horseshoe was a 'canting device' of the Ferrers family (a pun on the word farrier) to whom the Lords of Weoley were related by marriage.

Brill-Boarstall Ware



Figure A9.5: WC1320 Brill-Boarstall Saucer Lamp (heavily restored)

Accession: 2000A2.53 Provenance: The Moat (Oswald's excavations 1962 Fig. 10, 39a). Sherds marked M [2] (4) and M [2] (1). In terms of sequence the vessel should be WC1039a.

Like many of the vessels from Weoley, this form (**Figure A9.5**) is not commonly encountered. The heavy restoration means that it is now impossible to view the fabric of the vessel. It does not appear to be locally made and the glaze suggests that it may be a Brill-Boarstall product. A very similar lamp is illustrated by Mellor (1994, fig 54, 21), which was found in Oxford from a context dating to the mid 13th-15th century. Brill-Boarstall Ware is made in Buckinghamshire.

WCFabric 15

The type sherd has a mid grey finely sandy fabric but the type sherd (accession number **2006.0141.3**), a bowl with an internal olive green glaze, is burnt, so the original clay colour is difficult to gauge. A pale grey margin beneath the glaze may indicate that it was an iron-poor fabric. The sand in the body is fine but the grains are irregularly sized and sorted, although all are <0.25mm. The clay body also contains small rounded voids from calcareous inclusions, generally <0.25mm. A single larger inclusion, c. 0.3mm, appears to be a fine sandstone with a calcareous matrix. The type sherd, the only example of this fabric identified, was found in the Moat fills and possibly dates to the 14th century. The likely source for this fabric is the East Midlands.

Potterspurgy Ware



Figure A9.6: Potterspurgy jug (inset shows detail of fabric)

This fine buff ware (**Figure A9.6**) was made in Northamptonshire and dates to the 14th-15th centuries. It was not common on site. Three vessels were noted; a jug, a jar, and a pipkin.

WCFabric 16 (Fine Buff Ware)

This fabric (**Figures A9.7-8**) is likely to be a regional import. It is similar to Potterspury ware but is without that ware's calcareous inclusions. It has a smooth cream to buff fabric, sometimes with a grey core. There are very few inclusions visible in the clay body. Inclusions consist of rare quartz rounded grains generally c. 0.25mm with occasional grains c. 0.25mm, rare iron oxide. The fabric is very smooth but has a slightly grainy texture (possibly cause by very fine, silt-sized sand) There is one large inclusion c. 3mm which is sub-angular and dark grey (possibly quartzitic). Small flecks of mica are visible on the unglazed surfaces.



Figure A9.7: Fine Buff Ware jug sherds



Figure A9.8: Detail of Fine Buff Ware fabric

Surrey Whiteware



Figure A9. 9: WC17 (bottom) and WC18 (top) Surrey Whiteware saucers
Accession: 1950A106 and 1950A107

These saucers (c.15cm in diameter) can be directly paralleled in Cheam whiteware (Pearce and Vince, 1988, fig. 125, 579-582) but the form is also made in Kingston-type ware and Coarse Border ware. Whitewares of this type are grouped under the generic heading of Surrey whitewares or Tudor Green (although clearly pre-dating the Tudor monarchy). In the late 14th and 15th centuries, Cheam provided London principally with vessels for storing, serving and drinking liquids. The saucers would seem to be broadly contemporary with the Early Valencian Lustreware bowl, WC 994 (above)

The saucer form is influenced by metal flatwares and the similarity between the Weoley whiteware saucers and the smaller pewter dishes is clear. The saucer is designed for a specific function, which is for holding sauces, as the name suggests, into which food consumed at table could be dipped. This is associated with 'courtly' or aristocratic dining. An illustration from *Les Tres Riches Heures du Duc de Berry* (see below) shows several saucer-like vessels on the dining table, although here they are in precious metals, befitting the Duke's station.

Pearce and Vince (1988, 77), however, also note that sooting has been found on the interior of some saucers, suggesting that they were sometimes used as lamps. None of the Weoley saucers was sooted, however.

In the West Midlands Tudor Green has been found in towns and cities such as Birmingham, Lichfield and Coventry. It is particularly well represented in Coventry, a major medieval city, and seems to be associated with the more prosperous sections of society. Nevertheless, saucers are not normally among the repertoire of forms found, drinking vessels and, lobed cups and bowls, being far more common.



'January' Tres Riches Heures du Duc de Berry

Provenance: The two illustrated examples are from the 1950 excavation apparently (marked on the vessels). As usual the relative completeness suggests they were from the Moat. A further whiteware saucer, WC 985 (2000A2.55) is marked NTE (2). A straight-sided Tudor Green mug (WC 984, 2000A2.56) appears to have been found with WC985 since it too is marked NTE (2).

In the register, three saucers are listed (WC16-18) M105 '50, M106 '50 and M107 '50 respectively. On Minisys three saucers are also listed but this time WC17, WC18 and WC985. I believe that WC985 is the same as WC16. In the register the saucers are said to have come from the 1930s excavations. WC16 is recorded as coming from 'the Moat (outside garderobe)'. This would be in the NE corner of the site.

Malvern Chase Ware



Figure A9.10: Malvern Chase Ware jar with thumbbed neck cordon late 15th-16th century

The jar (**Figure A9.10**) is one of three vessels identified as Malvern Chase Ware. The other two examples were the lower section of a small globular jug and a strap handle from a small jug.