The Excavation of a Medieval Bastion at St. Nicholas's Almshouses, King Street, Bristol

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SUMMARY
The paper describes the discovery of the lower portion of a bastion of the late 13th century, its construction and destruction. This monument remains to a height of 8 ft. and has three arrow-slits and standins remaining. The bastion was at one time part of the Marsh Wall defences of Bristol. A small but interesting group of pottery including south-western French types is associated with its construction. The method of construction of the Almshouses, which were built above the bastion, required the deposition of considerable domestic rubbish including a large quantity of pottery types, many of which were previously only loosely datable. The opening of the Almshouses in 1656 provides a firm dating for this large and varied collection.

THE EXCAVATION
During the renovation of St. Nicholas's Almshouses in King Street, Bristol, in July, 1960 (Nat. Grid. ST/58857274) the opportunity was taken of examining the line of the Marsh Wall which was thought to run under the yard of the Almshouses (FIG. 61; PL. XVII, A). The initial phase of the excavation revealed the end of a curved structure and not the line of the city wall as expected (FIGS. 62–63). This proved to be the ground floor of a semicircular bastion (PL. XVII, B), 28 ft. in diameter, 15 ft. wide and 6 ft. thick.

Contained within the thickness of the wall are three standins, two of which retain their arrow-slits but the third has been completely altered. All had been damaged when demolition occurred. Each standin is 6 ft. long and 5 ft. wide, and has a V-shaped slit which is 4 in. wide on the outside of the wall and 1 ft. at its widest opening on the inside of the wall. At this point there is a step, in plan, of 3 in., after which the opening widens further to 3 feet. These openings were constructed 3 ft. above the floor of each standin (PL. XVII, B). This would give

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1 The excavation was promoted by the City Museum, Bristol (of which I was at that time Conservation Assistant) under my direction, and all the finds are now deposited there. The initial cost of the work was borne by the Museum excavation fund and the final uncovering was undertaken with an anonymous grant of £200, and grants of £50 from the Ministry of Works (Inspectorate of Ancient Monuments) and £25 from the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society. The bastion as finally uncovered was such an impressive structure and in such good repair that it has been preserved as an open monument and can be seen by special permission from the Trustees of St. Nicholas's Almshouses.
FIG. 61

MAP OF MEDIEVAL BRISTOL SHOWING POSITION OF BASTION (marked B) ON MARSH WALL. (p. 184)

After Bristol and its Adjoining Counties (ed. W. F. Whittard, 1955), fig. 23, by permission of the University of Bristol.
protection up to the waist, and provide two corners in which a defender could get protection from missiles. The facing stones of the arrow-slits and the plinth string-course which connects their bases are of Dundry Oolite.

The bastion itself was constructed mainly of Millstone Grit with some Pennant Sandstone, laid dry in sand except for the outer stones, which were grouted with a pink cement that had become very soft. There was no evidence to suggest that the bastion had been pointed during use, and by the time it was covered by debris it had so deteriorated that there were in most places gaps between the stones of up to 6 in. deep and some of the stone-work had fallen out. The Oolite at the bottom of the arrow-slits had nearly all gone, probably because water accumulated at this spot and the stone was eroded by frost. This bastion would have caught the full brunt of the prevailing winds.

The bastion stood on a large platform built into the marsh clays. As the water-table is now higher than when the bastion was constructed, since it rose when the harbour was locked off in 1809, it was not possible to excavate this fully. The platform is irregular in shape and does not appear to have been built to any specified plan, although the finished bastion was laid out in a regular form. The bastion is 7 ft. thick at the base and rises battered at the front and straight at the back for $5\frac{1}{4}$ ft. to the string course and then vertically on both sides for a further $2\frac{1}{4}$ feet. The base is 10 ft. below the present ground level. Near the western standin is a beam slot at floor level which is 9 in. square and recedes $4\frac{1}{4}$ ft. into the wall. It could have been a beam slot to carry an internal stairway.

The evidence of the stratification (FIG. 63) suggests that after the marsh had been stripped of all its peat covering and overlying material a deep trench was cut to take the footings of the wall. Before the wall itself was built a layer of red sand (FIG. 63, N 7 and S 8) similar to that used in the core of the wall was spread over the clay, both inside and outside the bastion. That on the inside contained some clay and also fragments of pottery including some French wares (FIG. 65, A, C, E, F, H).

From this juncture the sequence of deposition inside and outside the bastion is different.

Within the bastion, on the north side, patches of grey clay seem to have been trodden into the upper sand layers (N 6), perhaps to consolidate the floor for its subsequent use; for it was here that mortar was mixed and stored in a small stone-lined tank, some being also stacked against the wall, marking it. Waste wood was burnt against the lip of the eastern standin, and Oolite, Pennant and Millstone Grit were dressed here. The sand, with which the core of the wall was filled, was also much in evidence. As the tower rose, the floor ceased to be used as a working-place and became instead a pit for builders' rubbish into which mortar boards were emptied and waste plaster thrown. This filling (N 5) also contained fragments of pottery, including some French wares.

Over this rubbish there was a layer of brown earth containing food bones, stones and plaster, undoubtedly tipped in at one time and not accumulating over a period. The bones were large and had not been deposited in layers but were

**St Nicholas Almshouses**

*Detail and location of a bastion on the Marsh Wall*

*Fig. 62*

_ST. NICHOLAS’S ALMSHOUSES, BRISTOL_
Location and plan (with section A-B inset) of bastion (pp. 184, 186)
jumbled in all directions; the plaster, too, provided similar evidence, as there were large pieces with clean breaks. This layer had probably been deliberately dumped here to fill the pit up to floor level.

On the outside the sand layer was covered with clean blue clay (S 7) banked up against the bastion to a height of 2½ ft. above the footings, where the bank was one foot broad at the top and then sloped away to the south.\(^3\) The angle of this bank had stones set in it at many places.

There was no way of telling whether the bastion was contemporary with the Marsh Wall or later, although the pottery associated with the bastion, and the known date of the expansion of the city into the marsh, would suggest that it was built later. The Marsh Wall was removed during the 18th century, and about the same time a complete rebuilding of neighbouring property removed half the eastern standin, so that the line of the wall was lost at this point. It is possible, however, to follow its line in the cellars of the fruit warehouse that now stands behind the Almshouses.

After the bastion was built the ground-floor area does not seem to have been used, for no evidence of occupation was found and the brown layer remains undisturbed, which would suggest that means of entry was barred.

Shortly before 1650, as the pottery suggests, the bastion was abandoned as a military installation and became a civilian dwelling. This probably took place because a major crack developed later in the western standin (FIG. 63). The position of the crack across the standin floor suggests that it had risen through all the western arrow-slits, this being the weakest point, and since at basement level it was 9 in. wide at its widest point, it could have been up to 3 ft. wide at the top of the wall, which was probably c. 25 ft. high. When it was abandoned the bastion appears to have been partially demolished or slighted, for there was evidence that a certain amount of damage occurred at this time, and there was also insufficient material deposited from the tower during the final demolition (p. 190) to account for a three-story structure, such as the bastion would originally have been.

At the time of this conversion the wall of the western standin was removed to make an entrance and a Pennant slab floor was laid all over the area within the bastion. This floor was skilfully laid in the local tradition,\(^4\) the areas within the standins rising in a gentle batter from a central drainage gutter; there was also a sand-filled sump at the western end of the room. The slabs were laid on coal ash and in putting down the irregular lengths of stone the brown medieval layer had been disturbed; the ashes contained 17th-century pottery and in this brown layer (N 3) there was a mixture of 17th-century and medieval wares. This floor showed some wear, but how long it took to create this wear would depend upon what kind of use and footwear it was exposed to, and is, therefore, hard to estimate. The end of its period of use is known, for in 1650 five houses were built against the Marsh Wall, one of which (Balch’s Café in King Street) still stands. The eastern end of these buildings stood against the west side of the bastion. A wall built over the

\(^3\) Under the floor of the cellar of the Almshouses the bottom of the ditch was found at a depth of 3½ feet.

\(^4\) Op. cit. in note 2, fig. 2.
Section across Bastion

Above, section across bastion showing stratification inside (N. side) and outside (S. side) (pp. 186, 188 ff.). Below, plan of part of bastion showing crack in floor of western standin (p. 188)

stone floor sealed the entrance cut in the western standin and ran in line with this along the flank of the bastion towards the south. This wall and the Almshouses, whose footings cross it, appear to be contemporary. The blocking of the entrance to the west meant that the use of the room inside the bastion had to be modified and it became a coal store; slack coal covered the floor to a depth of 3 in. and had been stacked against the central arrow-slit.
In 1652 the parish of St. Nicholas received a grant of land amounting to a 100-ft. frontage of the Marsh Wall from the Back Gate to the new houses. But the new houses had taken more than their allotted space (Fig. 62), for the wall of the Almshouses is built across the end wall of this property. This grant of land would include not only the bastion but also one of the round towers of the gate, so that the space at the rear of the property would be very restricted. The Almshouses were opened in 1656, as is attested by documentary evidence and by a dated commemorative plaque worked into a fine plaster ceiling in the present committee room.

There must have been some edict that required builders to effect an 8-ft. rise in the level of the ground, for the whole of the marsh area from Baldwin Street to the south is built up in this manner. This levelling was achieved at the Almshouses by constructing a three-story building above the existing ground level with the lowest story wholly in stone and the upper two in wood-frame and stone (Fig. 64). The basement was then buried under rubble from the demolished bastion and domestic ash. The rubble occupies no more than a sixth of the internal space, so that the quantity of domestic ash was obviously very great.

The Almshouses were constructed by digging out the footings on each side of the ditch and packing the clay against the bastion wall (Fig. 63, S 6) after a spread of freestone chips had been laid on the bare clay to give a purchase. As soon as the wall rose a couple of feet ash was spread, to give dry conditions underfoot. This ash layer (S 5) contains mortar droppings. A line of scaffold-poles was then driven through the ash into the clay close to the wall, with another line 12 ft. out. Layer S 4 was a parcel of wall-plaster which, although showing as a layer here, proved to have been deposited with the ash. The ash layer (S 3) is therefore virtually contemporary with S 5. Beyond the drawn section the rubble layers fade away and layers S 1, 3 and 5 were seen to be homogeneous. The top of the ash layer is level with the ground floor of the Almshouses, and at some time was covered with a cobbled yard, which remained in service, though disturbed by the construction of Coopers Hall to the west in 1744, until the late 18th century, when extensive alterations were carried out. At this time a wing was added, the rear wall of the premises was constructed, and a hall was built in the yard. The footings for this hall were cut into the ash layer and a shuttered, cast, lime-mortar foundation was laid. The cobbling was replaced by a lime-mortar floor and a fireplace built into it on the north side. At this time also the cellar lights were filled with rubbish and blocked. In the late 19th century there were further alterations to the hall, but this time the ash layers were not disturbed.

During the second world war (1939-45) the building received a direct hit from a 250-lb. bomb, which pierced the concrete floor just above the bastion at its western end. The bastion remained unharmed, although a large part of the Almshouses was extensively damaged.

THE DATING OF THE BASTION

The date of the construction of the bastion is not recorded. We know, however, that Bristol expanded into the marsh after the major reconstruction
work in the harbour that was finished c. 1247, and we have seen (p. 186) that associated with the building-levels there were many fragments of French wares, which it is believed had a very short period of currency. Indeed G. C. Dunning believes that they were in manufacture for only 25 years, c. 1275-1300. If so, and considering that their deposition here was contemporary with the construction of the bastion, we must assume that the bastion was built about then. The earliest record of its existence is the description by William of Worcester in 1460.

THE MEDIEVAL POTTERY (FIG. 65)

N 7. A. Fragments from the wall of a vessel in a very smooth, pink paste covered with a decoration formed by trailed black slip. The patterns are filled with black slip. The rest of the body is dark green. Probably south-western French.

b. Face mask of local type, cf. examples from Chew Valley Lake (H.M.S.O. report, forthcoming) and Back Hall (op. cit. in note 2, fig. 6, nos. 11-12). This example was well worn before deposition.
A. Fragment of side of vessel in grey sandy ware with an orange finish and covered with a dark grey lustrous glaze. Decorated with an applied slip on which have been pressed two ring-and-dot ornaments. The base of the strip has been fanned and slashed. The paste resembles that of ware from Ham Green (a recently-discovered Bristol kiln).

D. Fragment of rim with heavy thumbing along the lower edge. A black trailed slip starts below the thumbing. Coarse grey paste and thin orange-green glaze.

N 4. H. Fragments from side of vessel in thin creamy, orange-coloured paste covered with a dark red slip in alternating straight and wavy decoration. Dark green glaze giving a black under-glaze colour. This is in every way similar to a piece which I found at La Chappelle des Pots, Saintes, Charente, France.

G. Rim and handle of vessel in Ham Green ware.

S 7. E. Base in coarse grey paste with yellow internal finish, and coarse grey glaze on exterior. Base concave, walls slope inwards. Very like Ham Green ware in paste and glaze but not in shape.

E. Rim of western French type. White body under sparse bright green glaze.

F. Fragment of black trailed slip-decoration of strips and dots on a hard orange body.

F. Handle of western French type. Unglazed white body.

C. Rim of western French type. Smooth creamy body covered outside only with a painted under-glaze pattern in white, black and green. The edge shows that a bridge spout had been added. (Another imported rim-fragment not illustrated here has the bridge cut away, a typical product of the La Chappelle des Pots kilns.)

C. Hammer-rim. Sandy body, very hard and covered with iron-green glaze up to the edge of the rim.

J. Fragment of neck. Fine orange-coloured paste, decorated on the outside with applied strips and black-brushed slip all under a coarse green glaze.
INTRODUCTION

The pottery from the ash layer, sealed by the construction of the Almshouses in 1656, is a most important group, since it was deposited between 1652 and 1656. A great deal of post-medieval pottery found elsewhere comes from mixed levels which makes it very difficult to define in any detail the length of use of any particular type of pottery. Here, however, a very large assemblage closely datable within a period of about fifteen years in the middle of the 17th century shows the types that were then being produced locally or imported. The imported pieces include not only German stoneware, Netherlands majolica and Hispano-Moresque wares, which are now being increasingly recognized in 16th- and 17th-century levels, but also some of the more uncommon examples of Italian Montelupo majolica and of Hamburg faience, a ware which has not yet been recognized on any other English site. It is of the very greatest importance, too, to have a collection of coarse native wares so closely dated, for our knowledge of the development and date of such pottery is sadly lacking for most of the country during the 16th and 17th centuries. Other important results of finding this sealed deposit include evidence that marbled posset-pots of Staffordshire type, which had previously been thought not to start before the 1660s, were clearly in production before 1650, and were already being made in Bristol at this time; and that the manufacture of north Devon sgraffito, which had previously not been found in contexts earlier than 1650, was in full swing before 1650, despite Watkins's suggestion, from American evidence, that it did not start until 1664.

DISCUSSION

The ashy layers contained considerable quantities of domestic ware and it is, therefore, possible to present only the outstanding examples of each type of vessel. As has been stated (pp. 190) the upper parts of the ashy layers had been disturbed in one or two places by building operations during the 18th century. None of the material associated with this disturbance was retained and only that found in deep and undisturbed deposits is presented here.

The firm date of 1656 must be the terminal date for a period of use for these vessels that cannot have exceeded about 15 years, i.e., c. 1640–56, for, as we have seen, the deposits must have taken place during the period 1652–6, and since in several instances fragments of the same vessels occurred at all levels, the deposits must all have been made at the same time.

The following varieties of ware are found in this group: polychrome and blue-and-white tin-glazed earthenwares; fine unslipped white-bodied yellow wares; coloured lead-glazed earthenwares; salt-glazed and unglazed stone-
wares; manganese-slipped earthenwares and other coloured slipped earthenwares; coarse earthenwares including yellow, sgraffito, painted, and trailed slips; undecorated brown lead-glazed wares, brown-glazed quartz-gritted wares, and unglazed wares.

These wares come from several sources and include a large number and variety of imported vessels (Figs. 66–72). Spanish wares are represented only by the fragments of two vessels in copper lustre (Hispano-Moresque) earthenware, one of which is no. 4. No. 2 and possibly no. 5 are Netherlands wares. It is possible that no. 1 is from the kilns at Brislington, Bristol, as it has the characteristic profile and leaded back of that pottery, but I cannot find this design among published Brislington types and the nearest parallel is published as Netherlands ware. No. 3 has the leaf treatment, colour-zoning of rim and colour-layout seen in the so-called English majolica, products of the Southwark kilns. However, it is most likely that it comes from the Montelupo potteries, for the leaf and fruit designs, brushwork scrolls and swags of blue, including the blue dash technique, are to be seen on a vessel from this source.

No. 6 is in a speckled purple glaze similar in all respects to that on a mug from Southwark dated 1628. Undoubtedly of English manufacture, this vessel could be a product of the Bristol kilns.

Of 73 fragments of blue-and-white tin-glazed earthenwares only 10 are illustrated. No. 7 has the special characteristics of Hamburg faience and carries the date 1652. On the coarser delft-wares the predominant designs are the blue dash and heavy freehand brush-work of the Brislington wares. This is to be seen especially on no. 14, and nos. 15 and 17 are also strongly akin. Nos. 11, 12, 13 and 16, and many of the other fragments, bear similar forms of decoration and are also probably of local manufacture. Nos. 18, 19 and 20 are probably not from the Brislington potteries, but appear to be imports, no. 18, for instance, having strong resemblances to Hamburg faience, while the other two fragments could be Netherlandish.

The fine yellow wares represented by nos. 21 and 23 have distinct characteristics in that the body, glaze, colour and form of decoration are constant in all the fragments available for study. The paste is white and not slipped. Several of the fragments not illustrated carry peg feet and the glaze is always a chalky-yellow. The form of decoration seen on nos. 21 and 22 (right) seems to be the forerunner of the type I have described elsewhere as a Bristol product of the late 17th and 18th centuries. This decoration takes the form of trailed slip in blobs or lines in reds, browns, or black, this last being the predominant colour.

10 Cf. B. Rackham, Early Netherlands Majolica (1926), pl. 34.
11 Ibid., pl. 44.
12 B. Rackham and H. Read, English Pottery (1924), fig. 5; F. H. Garner, English Delftware (1948), pls. 4, 5, 7, and 8, b.
13 B. Rackham, Catal. of Italian Majolica in the Victoria & Albert Museum (1940), ii, pl. 83, c.
14 Garner, op. cit. in note 12, pl. 3.
15 As suggested to me by Mr. R. J. Charleston, Keeper of the Department of Ceramics in the Victoria & Albert Museum, to whom I am grateful for supplying a list of appropriate literature to cover the exotic wares in this group.
16 W. J. Poulteney, Old Bristol Potteries (1920), pl. 7.
The bellarmines, nos. 26–28, are already sufficiently described by M. R. Holmes although he does not deal with the body plaques. The mask on no. 27, although not fully paralleled by his type v, has affinities with it. The plaque on no. 28 also occurs on a similar vessel in Jamestown, Virginia. Over 40 fragments of these brown 'tiger-skin' wares were found many of which are of early 17th-century form. One of the fragments not illustrated is not washed over with iron, but is decorated on the grey body with a criss-cross decoration in iron wash. There is also a fragment of a flagon in a basic grey colour which bears a moulded mask relief over turned lines and has blue splashes over the body, as well as remnants of a vessel in blue-grey stoneware in the form of an albarello, no. 31, which Mr. J. G. Hurst suggests may be French, possibly made at Ger.

The flagons, nos. 29–30, are a special type of which many examples were found. Their body is covered with a very thin white slip, and glazed, and the whole has been reduced. Sgraffito decoration also occurs on all these vessels. All the fragments that had this kind of paste and glaze were of this form. They are probably of English manufacture and from one particular source. Nos. 35–36 have the same form of thin, coarse, lead glaze over a brick-red body, but their glaze is oxidized to a bright orange and the body is of coarser texture than the flagons.

Nos. 32–34 show several examples of a fine group of vessels. Although bases and uppers were present there was no base to fit an upper. All the bases were of the pedestal type, except one, in a semi-stoneware covered with a thick manganese glaze, which belonged to a cylindrical vessel of the Cistercian type. This example is probably earlier in date and tradition than the rest of the group which, although retaining the manganese glaze, has a soft body. The colour of the paste is very bright, and the glaze colour shades through light brown to almost black. Several of the fragments are decorated with quartz chippings. This is a parallel to the types found in the kilns at Leintwardine, Herefordshire, although no. 32 has some features in paste, glaze and finish which are sufficiently different from the majority of this group to suggest that it could be from another source. The pedestal bases which are characteristic of these vessels are also to be seen in the Herefordshire types, and would further suggest that this is the place of origin of this material. Mr. J. G. Hurst, however, believes that these cups are closer to material found in the south of England, ranging from Exeter to Wiltshire and Sussex.

No. 37 is not paralleled by any other material in this collection, and is not so far traced to a source, either in form, paste or decoration. It is presumably an import.

Nos. 39–41 and the cup handle, no. 43, illustrate a form of drinking vessel common in this group. No. 9 is of similar form. There is great variety in the shapes of the handles. Cups nos. 9 and 42 have lug-handles, whereas nos. 40 and 41 have

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21 They were certainly made at Graffham, Sussex; cf. *Med. Archaeol.*, iv (1960), 164.
horizontal strap-handles, nos. 33 and 66 a standard loop-handle, and no. 11 has two lug-handles. This would suggest that the handle attachments of cups were being experimented with in these forms, which were, at the time, comparatively new.

Nos. 44–58 are all wares with yellow slip on a relatively coarse body. Nos. 44 and 45 are pie-dishes, of which there were very many examples, although only no. 44 was hexagonal. The yellow-slip ware with sgraffito cut into a brown body forms a very large group with many variations in technique, all of which are illustrated. These small internally-decorated dishes were probably platters, for no plates, as we know them today, were found. They are all decorated on the inside only. Two types can be distinguished by the glaze and decoration:

1. A dull red-paste ware that takes a sheen in the firing. The decoration is always executed either with a single fine flat-ended tool, or with a comb of three, four or five teeth. The motifs are numerous. They are mostly confined to the rims of the vessels, but occur on the inside of the body in one instance. The edge of the rim is usually bulbous. With one exception the glaze is thin and not lustrous, though shiny owing to a 'fat' slip underneath.

2. Ware with very coarse pink body and very thin slip under a thin coarse glaze. The rim-flange in these types is upstanding and prominent. The decoration is executed with a round-ended tool in the form of scallops, always on the inside of the vessel, or in the form of semicircles filled with vertical stripes, as in no. 49. Some of these vessels bear a mottled green glaze, a type apparently used in the Herefordshire kilns, as is also the rim-decoration of nos. 51 and 57. However, these yellow-glazed wares, especially group 1, are so common on this site that they are most probably local.

The unslipped yellow-ware vessels, nos. 59–62, have a white paste similar in every way to the pastes of nos. 21, 23, 39 and 40. Thus this small but select group, whose origins are probably the same, is tied by paste and form to a group believed to be of Bristol manufacture (p. 194). The use of an iron-free clay in this ware is a clue to source, although the importation of such clays to Bristol is not unknown. The other item in this group, no. 63, is in slipped ware mottled in the Herefordshire tradition.

Nos. 64–73, although considerably diverse in pattern, are all interrelated. They are decorated by painting or trailing slip on to a red body under a lead glaze giving a yellow-on-red finish. Some have painted slip in patterns or designs, others trailed slip in patterns or trailed-slip patterns broken to differentiate the pattern; and others show combinations of all three methods. The trailed designs in all these groups are quite pronounced. A considerable quantity of this ware was found, which can be classified into three groups:

a. Disturbed-pattern ware, as no. 72. This is mainly on a hard brick-red paste that takes a sheen in the kiln. Some of these vessels have been stacked in the kiln in such a way that their insides are reduced, giving the glaze a green finish.


b. Trailed-slip ware with two kinds of paste: the first is as described above and occurs only when the types of decoration are combined as on no. 70; the other is very hard and smooth, and dark red in colour like that of the so-called ‘metropolitan-ware’ types. This is seen here in the bright yellow finish of the slip and the bright orange finish of the body-colour.

c. Painted ware of which some, painted with small regular patterns, as no. 64, have similar features in paste, glaze and form to group a, but other examples, though less prominent, are seen in the trifoliate designs which are borne mostly on a distinctly ‘flower-pot’ paste which fires unglazed to a buff-red finish. This ware is probably of west-country origin; it has strong regional associations and is common in the museums of the Bristol-Taunton region.

A common feature of the trailed-slip, painted-slip and disturbed-slip wares are the floral designs in the base of the vessels. In the trailed-slip ware these are always surrounded by dots, in the painted wares never, while the disturbed patterns are always just a floral outline. Although cups occur in this group, dishes predominate.

Nos. 74–94 are of brown-glazed coarse ware and represent about three-quarters of the total finds. The first four vessels illustrated, although belonging to this class, are examples of a numerous group of distinctive quartz-gritted pottery, known to have come from Barnstaple, Devon. The majority are bowls like no. 74. All have thumb-pressed strips under the rim. On no. 75, of which several examples were found, the strapping does not go below the shoulders. Small bowls like no. 76 were also common but there appears to be only one example of no. 77. This quartz-gritted ware fires unglazed to a pale buff colour, and is without doubt the same as that referred to as ‘gravel-tempered ware’ exported from north Devon to the north American colonies.

The rest of the examples of brown-glazed coarse ware are notable only for the variety of products in one ware. The body is coarse red earthenware of a type common from the 17th century to the present day. The three-legged pipkin, no. 81; the meat pan, no. 88; the jugs, nos. 89 and 90, and the four bowls, nos. 91–94, are prime examples of this group, in which the most common vessel is the large bowl with a rim like that of no. 93. There are 20 jugs, some virtually complete, some represented by fragments only. No. 95 is an example of the small group of fragmentary Spanish oil-jars. They were all without handles and all in a cream-coloured sandy paste.

There are two types of vessel not susceptible of illustration which are not included in this group. First, eleven pieces of the so-called ‘Tudor Green’ wares, seen in two distinct pastes: (a) grey-white paste, (b) soft, pink paste, both with a white unglazed finish. The glaze is a bright copper-green in both groups. Group (a) is similar in all respects to vessels manufactured at La Chappelle des Pots, Saintes, Charente, SW. France, during the 16th century, as I have myself noted. Some of

the fragments are from an oval fish dish and from the handle of a vessel. Several are decorated with rosette stamps similar to those seen on no. 43.

The other type not illustrated here is a group of vessels covered with mottling, which is on a white slip under a lead glaze and is practically always manganese, giving dark brown, black and sometimes purple finishes. This is common on the wares of Beauvais from which this group certainly originates. The ware is always coarse red earthenware. One vessel is a close copy of a bellarmine; small bowls and a cup with a lug-handle are also included. These last items are not illustrated as they were found during building operations and do not, therefore, qualify for inclusion in this group, although from their shape and form and (probably) provenience, they can be accepted as contemporary with it.

This range of imported wares stemming from all the important potting centres of Europe and of English wares from several different sources is a reflection of the state of trade in Bristol during the Commonwealth. It should be noted, too, that many of the types discussed are found in the north American colonies, especially at Jamestown, Virginia, and may thus be an indication of oversea trade through Bristol.

It is well known that there were kilns operating in the Bristol area in this period, as well as at Donyatt in the vale of Taunton Deane and at several other local sites. It is to Bristol that we should look for the origin of the brown-glazed coarse wares, and also probably the painted, sgraffito, trailed, and combined yellow-slip patterns, although the subtle difference of the wares with trifoliate design (p. 197) suggests a different source which may be in the vale of Taunton Deane. There was no evidence for the type of broad-bladed cutting seen in the Donyatt pieces and for the similar treatment and typical whirl pattern of the north Devon kilns, although the importation of the quartz-gritted Fremington wares is a pointer to such a trade, which is backed up by the recently-published indications of the export of quantities of slipware to Bristol and other places at this time, suggesting that some of the types illustrated may be from north Devon, unless they came from the Wye valley. The green splash wares are also found at Exeter. These may have a French origin, although this cannot yet be confirmed. The evidence for the origin of this ware is slender and much work requires to be done before specific origins can be determined. The two groups represented by the flagons and the white bodied yellow-glaze wares are both of interest. The flagons in particular have a medieval feel about them in finish and manufacture. The shape and colour imitate the finer Tudor wares and these are probably in the tradition of late Elizabethan potting.

There are several forms in this group which appear to begin or to end in this period. The flagons just discussed do not appear in deposits of 1680 nor do the coarse-ware jugs. The bowls and dishes flourish, as do the cups, although their handles become modified and they soon lose their pedestal bases. The small yellow bowls with brown slip-decoration apparently initiate a type that develops later into the posset-pot.

EXCAVATION: ST. NICHOLAS'S ALMSHOUSES, BRISTOL

CATALOGUE OF POST-MEDIEVAL FINDS

A. FINE DOMESTIC POTTERY

1. TIN-GLAZED EARTHENWARE (FIG. 66)

a. Polychrome

1. Fragments of a plate: on the inside, a polychrome design over a white ground; on the outside, a thick, heavily-blistened, buff lead glaze. The foot-ring pierced to take a string. Decoration of a stylized four-petalled flower with large leaves between the petals; petals blue with yellow centres, flourishes at each side blue, leaves green with blue edging. Central motif in alternating bands of brown-white-blue-white-brown. Rim-ring blue. Soft-textured, buff paste. Cf. Rackham, *op. cit.* in note 10, pl. 44, for parallel decoration.

2. Dish of Netherlands majolica: on the outside, three pink trailed lines; on the inside, a large webbed design of blue lines with four small circles filled with green and four semicircles with orange. The web is a nine-piece design of four ellipses coloured orange and five large diamond-shaped designs with nine small diamonds in each; within each small diamond are set, four-square, two dashes of dark brown and two of orange. The rest of the meshes that fill the area are hatched with abstract freehand strokes in blue. The inside ground is pure white, the outside is off-white as it lies very thin on the body. Soft, chalky, buff paste. The vessel appears to have been thrown on a mould. Cf. Rackham, *op. cit.* in note 10, pl. 44, p. 109, for an exact parallel.

3. Fragments of vessel of Italian majolica: both outside and inside, a pattern of alternate leaves and flowers, the space between being filled with scrolls and flourishes. On the rim (inside and outside), the external basal curve, and what was probably a pedestal base, are zones of colour. On the inside of the base, a multiple leaf decoration. On the outside of the vessel the ground is white; the leaf is outlined in black and filled with orange; the 'flower' has a brown stem, outline, swags and scrolls; the blossom is orange, the upper and lower leaves green, the middle leaves orange; the double circles above the flower are black with orange centres; the odd flourishes that fill the vacant spaces are blue. At the rim the colour zones are alternately blue and orange. At the base a blue zone lies above an orange one with black lines within; below this is a blue zone with strokes of blue diagonally across the middle; the next zone is brown and the next blue. The external design is repeated inside except that the leaf is half orange and half green. Soft body in very porous, buff-coloured paste. Cf. Rackham, *op. cit.* in note 13, pl. 83, e (Montelupo ware). There are fragments of two other vessels in this ware.

4. Fragments of a small bowl of Hispano-Moresque ware: inside, and in part outside also, a painted metallic copper floral design. Very soft, pink paste, glazed all over.

5. Corner of a tile: three blue and two red fleur-de-lis picked out in blue lines on a white ground, and on the edges of the tile small blobs of orange similarly picked out in blue. Soft, coarse paste, cream in colour. This tile has had much wear. For the colouring cf. no. 2. There are several fragments of this type.

6. Fragments of a half-pint tankard of English delft, glazed inside and outside, except on the base; on outside (only) a sponged manganese slip giving a purple speckled finish all over. Smooth, cream-coloured paste. Broad horizontal groove below rim. Cf. Garner, *op. cit.* in note 12, pl. 6. There are fragments of several vessels in this ware.
ST. NICHOLAS'S ALMSHOUSES, BRISTOL
Post-medieval fine tin-glazed pottery (pp. 199, 201)
b. **Blue-and-white**

7. Fragment of base and side of vessel of Hamburg faience. Soft, creamy paste covered all over with thick, lustrous glaze of highest quality. Under the glaze, a dark blue pattern of scrolls (one bearing the date 1652) and shields.

Nos. 8-20 are English delft-wares:

8. Saucer: white-based ware covered with a roughly-executed design in dark blue. Pale buff paste, soft in texture. The whole is rough in finish.

9. Bowl showing traces of a plain lug-handle: the inside washed with tin and painted a pale blue under-colour; the outside glazed to a light brown finish in a clear colour over a khaki body. Buff-coloured, soft paste.

10. Bowl: similar characteristics to those of no. 9, but design deliberately allowed to become fuzzy.

11. Fragments of a small two-handled vessel with foot-ring and segmented lug-handles. The decoration (on the outside only) is a four-part zonal pattern: the two parts under the handles are in the form of a large flower, the other two take the form of radial spokes at random. The handles decorated on top and underneath with lines. Soft, buff-coloured paste.

12-17. Fragments of plates: similar characteristics to those of no. 11.

18. Fragment of side of vessel painted in a well-executed design on a body and under a glaze that have a strong affinity with Hamburg faience.

19. Fragment of a small vessel bearing a direct copy of a Chinese design.

20. Fragment of a vessel of very high-quality paste, glaze and brush-work.

ii. **LEAD-GLAZED EARTHENWARE (FIG. 67)**

a. **Fine yellow wares**


23. Fragment of body of cup with plain rim: dabs and strips of manganese slip giving a dark brown finish under a thin glaze. Coarse, white paste.

b. **Moulded fine yellow wares**

24. Bottom of a dish or plate moulded in the form of a peacock and bearing the initials I (or J) H built up of rings: coarse, white paste. Over this and filling the vertical tail strips and the major part of the body is a dark brown slip, which also fills the eyes and one of the crests. The wings, chest-patch and eyes of the feathers are filled with orange. The ground and all the other features are in yellow. Most of the linear features have tasseled edges. The wing is made up of raised rings to simulate pinions. Four of the fan feathers have ring-and-dot motifs attached to them. The rear of the vessel was knife-dressed when in leathery state.

25. Two rim-fragments of moulded plates with coarse, white bodies. The upper one has a notched edge and is moulded in light relief, one portion being coloured dark brown. Notches formed with a tool. The lower one is decorated in black and red. The edge has been dimpled.

iii. **SALT-GLAZED STONEWARE FLAGONS (FIG. 67)**

26. Fragmentary flagon of bellarmine type with the grey-beard missing, but bearing a plaque in the form of a flower backed by a leaf: fine, grey-coloured paste. The vessel has been washed in iron, the inside being rich red in colour and the outside having a light brown ‘tiger-skin’ finish.
FIG. 67
ST. NICHOLAS'S ALMSHOUSES, BRISTOL
Post-medieval fine (21–31) and coarse (32–44) glazed and unglazed pottery (pp. 201, 203, 205)

28. Plaque with heraldic device from the body of an iron-washed salt-glazed flagon with a 'tiger-skin' finish.

iv. **LEAD-GLAZED EARTHENWARE FLAGONS** (*fig. 67*)

29. Flagon with globular body, tubular neck and strap-handle: coarse, hard paste, reduced to a grey-red colour. The whole vessel is covered with a very thin wash of white slip under a coarse galena glaze. The reduction has rendered the body a pale iron-green, although the top of the vessel has been oxidized bright yellow. At the base of the neck and across the body is a sgraffito design in the form of initials.

30. Three fragments similar to no. 29, bearing sgraffito design in the form of letters (a, b) and of a bell (c).

v. **UNGLAZED STONEWARE** (*fig. 67*)

31. Unglazed albarello: reduced stoneware, dark grey in finish. The paste is thrown very thin and bears writhe marks within. Perhaps a French import from the Ger factory which specialized in drug-pots.

B. **COARSE DOMESTIC EARTHENWARES**

i. **MANGANESE-GLAZED** (*fig. 67*)

32. Fragment of cup: hard, brick-red, sandy paste, slipped with manganese to a shiny brown finish; glaze mottled with an 'oil-on-water' fleck; decoration an overglaze white quartz scatter. Some handle-fragments probably also belong to this vessel.


34. Pedestal base of cup and fragment of side showing lower point of attachment of handle: brick-red paste covered with thick, lustrous, dark brown glaze. The bases of these vessels do not show marks of wire-cutting.

ii. **ORANGE-COLOURED, LEAD-GLAZED** (*fig. 67*)

35. Albarello: very thin glaze, coarse in texture, on a brick-red body.

36. Shallow bowl: pinky paste covered with very thin, coarse glaze.

iii. **GREEN-COLOURED, LEAD-GLAZED** (*fig. 67*)

37. Fragments of small butter jar: very pale green glaze, inside and outside, on hard, pink body. On outside, a series of rings of raised dots in white slip thinly covered with glaze to give a white finish. In the centre of each ring is a rectangle of black slip with white central dot.

iv. **LIDS, UNGLAZED** (*fig. 67*)

38. Two lids: the upper, overfired, with a kiln sheen, hard, grey paste; the lower, hard, red paste.

v. **CUPS, COLOURED SLIP, LEAD-GLAZED** (*fig. 67*)

39. Fragment of cup: cream-coloured, soapy, smooth paste covered with patchy, highly lustrous, yellow-green glaze on inside only. Horizontal strap-handle, round in section.
FIG. 68
ST. NICHOLAS'S ALMSHOUSES, BRISTOL
Post-medieval coarse glazed pottery (pp. 196, 205)
40. Fragment of cup: brick-red paste, covered with thick white slip under a coarse, green glaze containing small inclusions. Vessel washed on inside only. Strap-handle rectangular in section.

41. Small, handled cup: hard, dark red paste with, on inside only, a creamy slip over all and an orange-coloured glaze. The remnants of the handle suggest that it was a horizontal strap-handle.

42. Three-thumbed segmented lug-handle of cup, covered in a highly glossy, dark green glaze on a dark grey, smooth paste.

vi. JUG HANDLE, LEAD-GLAZED (FIG. 67)

43. Handle: green-glazed, bright finish on a white paste. Down a central groove are stamps in the form of seven-lobed stars with a central dot.

vii. PIE-DISHES, LEAD-GLAZED, WITH COARSE, YELLOW SLIP (FIGS. 67, 68)

44. Small dish: thick, red body covered with white slip under a yellow glaze. Hexagonal shape, created by pulling the side out into six spouts: cf. parallels at Jamestown, op. cit. in note 19, p. 37.

45. Fragments of small dish: on inside, thick, yellow glaze on a white slip over a coarse, red body.

viii. DISHES, LEAD-GLAZED, WITH COARSE, YELLOW SLIP AND SGRAFFITO DECORATION (FIG. 68)

Nos. 46–58 are all of a definite type and form, and their decoration is restricted to this form of vessel. They bear sgraffito designs executed through a white slip into the underlying red body, all under a lead glaze which changes the ground to yellow and the patterns to brown. This description covers all the vessels illustrated except the following:

46. The body is reduced, altering the colour to a green glaze with dark grey patterns.

49. This has a deeply incised, hatched semicircular pattern on a wide rim-flange. Very coarse, brick-red paste. The thin, very coarse glaze is mottled with copper-green.

55. Rim-fragment in a superfine paste and glaze, with deep incisions. Smooth, hard, deep pink paste.


ix. UNDECORATED, YELLOW-GLAZED (FIG. 68)

59. Jar with external flange to carry a lid: canary-yellow glaze on inside only, on a hard, creamy-white paste.

60. Very thin glaze on inside only over a heavy slip covering a coarse, red paste.

61–2. As no. 59, but without slip (see p. 196).

63. White-slipped, with green-mottled yellow glaze on inside only. Very hard, red-grey paste.

x. PAINTED AND TRAILED SLIP ON A PLAIN BODY, LEAD-GLAZED (FIG. 69)

64. Painted white slip under lead glaze giving a yellow-on-brown finish. Coarse, red paste. On the base, inside, a central device with radial arms, a common design in this form of decoration.

65. Bowl: hard, brick-red paste. Painted design on inside only, under a glaze giving a red-and-yellow finish.
FIG. 69
ST. NICHOLAS’S ALMSHOUSES, BRISTOL
Post-medieval coarse glazed pottery (pp. 205, 207)
66. Painted design under a glaze giving a brown-and-yellow finish. Body with a reduced paste containing some fine white grits.

67. Fragment of cup: hard, brick-red paste. On inside only, a trailed and slightly raised white slip under a glaze giving a brown-and-yellow finish.

68. Fragments of cups, as no. 67. On the base is the radial-arm device surrounded by a ring of dots.

69. As nos. 67–8.

70. Fragments of dish: trailed white slip around the rim and the walls, inside, above a trailed bull’s-eye pattern filling the base, this pattern being broken with fingering in a series of radial loops. Hard, sandy paste.

71. Fragment of base bearing a similar design to that of no. 70 and a trailed radial arm-and-dot design.

72. Part of flanged bowl: coarse, brick-red body. Glazed, on inside only, over a trailed slip-decoration on the base and a painted slip-decoration on the sides. Finished in brown and orange.

73. Flanged bowl, paste and glaze as above. Trailed slip on rim and around inside of vessel, the pattern broken with the finger in an undulating fashion on the rim and on the upper wall inside.

XII. BROWN-GLAZED, COARSE WARE (FIGS. 69–72)

Nos. 74–7 are all ‘quartz-gritted ware’, of very coarse paste filled to over 50% with a finely-graded quartz grog, water-worn and probably extracted from a sand. The grains are about the size of a pin-head and fairly regular in shape. This filling gives the vessel a texture similar to that of a large-grained glass-paper after much use. The unglazed finish is pale buff, the glazed finish always a treacly dark brown. Fractured edges are often red. The ware is nearly always very thick, although it can be quite the reverse.

74. Large wide-mouthed bowl with heavy rim under which a thumbed strip has been added.

75. Rim and upper part of handled jar with narrow neck: heavily decorated with applied strips under the rim and around the shoulder, to which are attached vertical thumbed strips. Parts of a thumbed, round-sectioned handle are extant.

76. Fragment of wide-mouthed bowl.

77. Bed-pan: thin-bodied with a well turned-down rim. The spout is thrown in one piece and keyed into the vessel on the outside.

Nos. 78–94 are all of coarse, red paste and have a dark brown glaze. On open vessels the glaze is usually confined to the inside and on large narrow-necked vessels to the outside.

78–80, 83. Wide-mouthed bowls.

81. Pipkin: with three legs and a strap-handle extended and folded back, fastened with a thumb-press to the body.

82. Water-pot: with remnants of a ‘bucket’-handle and a pulled spout.

84. Small dish.

85. Fragments of a folded ‘bucket’-handle: thumb-pressed on one side, semicircular in section.

86. Large jar: well turned, and decorated with fine turned grooves.

87. Horizontal strap-handle: semicircular in plan, folded-in section fastened to the vessel with four thumb-prints.

88. Double-handled meat dish: glazed on inside only, the four corners pulled into spouts.

89–90. Wide-mouthed jugs: no. 89 having a folded handle of circular section and a pedestal base, no. 90 having a folded handle fastened to the body with two thumb-prints.

91–4. Four bowls: nos. 91–2 having thumbed strips under the rim.
FIG. 70
ST. NICHOLAS’S ALMSHOUSES, BRISTOL
Post-medieval coarse brown-glazed pottery (p. 207)
ST. NICHOLAS’S ALMSHOUSES, BRISTOL
Post-medieval coarse brown-glazed pottery (p. 207)
Post-medieval coarse brown-glazed bowls (91–4), unglazed Spanish oil-jar (95), glass (96–9) and 17th-century clay pipes (100) (pp. 207, 211 f.)
95. One example of several fragmentary Spanish oil-jars: small handleless vessel with a cup-shaped rim, fired on the outside to a chalky-white finish. Pink paste, micaceous in fracture.

96. Stem of wine glass, colourless. Base, bowl and hollow stem in three sections. Probably Venetian.

97. Fragment of hollow stem of wine glass, colourless, with applied blue rosettes.

98. Neck of bottle, brown, crudely blown.

99. Lower part of goblet, brown, with folded foot-ring and bubble baluster stem.
CLAY PIPES (FIG. 72)

100. E.L. with swags } Edward Lewis, 1631–1650.
    E.L. plain
    R.B. within two crimped semicircles topped and bottomed by clusters
    R (vertical cross) B. and RB within a plain circle
    W.C. in a plain ring—William Chessington.
    W.C. with swags over and under—William Cissol.
    F.H. within a circle of dots and dashes—Flower Hunt, 1651.
    P.E. within a heart—Phillip Edwards, 1650.
    Two other pipes of similar form but with the incised letters I and I(?)—unidentified.

SLATES, ROOF-TILE, AND ROOF-CRESTS (FIG. 73)

101–103. Blue roof-slates of Welsh origin, exactly parallel to the slates found at Hen Plas which are dated 1290 (cf. Flints. Hist. Soc. Publins., xvii (1957), xi, fig. 54).

104. Old Red Sandstone roof-tile showing a mark on the surface where it was protected by the upper tile; an eaves-tile, as can be seen from the straight edge and the fact that the overlying tile was pointed. From the destruction-layers of the bastion, and so probably medieval.


107. Fragment of pierced cocks-comb from a medieval roof-crest.

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