

Second Report on Pottery from the Eardisland Project, Burton Court, Herefordshire

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Sixty-eight of pottery discovered by the Eardisland Project at Burton Court, Herefordshire, were submitted for identification. They include sherds from three post-medieval vessels found during the digging of a trench in the gardens and a collection of material from excavations carried out by the Eardisland project. The latter dates to the 12th to early 13th centuries.

Description

The submitted medieval pottery all consists of handmade medieval cooking pot fragments, some of which are large and of fresh appearance. They were examined at x20 magnification and the rock and mineral inclusions present were assigned to four groups, all of which occur at Hereford (Vince 1985 and 2002).

Hereford Fabric A3

Two sherds of this fabric were present. Its distinguishing features are the presence of rounded fragments of fine-grained grey sandstones and fragments of rounded quartz up to 1.0mm across. The groundmass is silty and micaceous.

These features all indicate a source in Herefordshire: the silty micaceous clay is probably either Devonian Marl or boulder clay derived from this marl whilst the sandstones and quartz grains are probably derived from outcrops of Silurian rocks and Old Red Sandstone.

At Hereford, this ware first appears in assemblages dating to the later 12th or early 13th centuries and is one of the earliest wares found there to be locally-produced. No production sites are known, but a source in or close to Hereford is likely.

Hereford Fabric B1

Eight sherds of this fabric were present, some of which may come from the same vessel, which has thick walls and an interior which has lost its surface (spalled). This is likely to be due to the nature of its use, perhaps prolonged boiling or the boiling of a reactive liquid. The distinguishing features of this fabric are numerous angular fragments of acid igneous rock, which come from the Malvern Hills and form a spread of gravel at the foot of the hills on the east side. The potters of this area, the Malvern Chase, are known from archaeological and documentary evidence to have been working from the early 12th to the early 17th centuries. This particular fabric was produced in the 12th and 13th centuries. One of the sherds is a rim

whose form indicates an early 13th-century date and the remaining sherds are probably of similar or earlier date.

Hereford Fabric C1

Eighty-two sherds of Hereford Fabric C1 were present, all from cooking pots. The distinguishing characteristics of this fabric are the abundant well-rounded, matt-surfaced grains of quartz, up to c.1.0mm across. These are typical of Severn Valley sands and are derived from the Triassic sandstones which outcrop, for example, in Staffordshire and Worcestershire.

Documentary and archaeological evidence suggest that this ware was produced at Worcester from the early 12th to the 13th centuries. In Hereford, it is much more common in the 12th than the 13th centuries.

Staffordshire Coarseware

Three sherds of Staffordshire Coarseware were recovered from the Garden Trench. All come from large, thick-walled vessels. Two of the vessels had an internal black glaze whilst the third was unglazed. It is likely that the unglazed vessel was a flower pot. It has a lug handle attached at the rim and would have been 30-40cm in diameter.

Staffordshire Coarseware is rare in Herefordshire until the collapse of the local post-medieval earthenware industry in the late 17th century. These Staffordshire vessels would have been traded alongside the slip-decorated earthenwares and, later, stonewares and refined whitewares, for which the Staffordshire Potteries are famous.

Discussion

This second batch of pottery from Burton Court is similar in composition to the first (Table 1). In both, the majority of the sherds found were handmade cooking pots of Hereford Fabric C1, from the Worcester area. The first batch of pottery included two wares of later 11th to mid 12th-century date: Hereford Fabrics D2 and E1. In Hereford, pottery assemblages of late 11th century date contain mainly D2 vessels with a few sherds of Stamford ware (E1). If the Burton Court finds included a large proportion of pottery of this date one would expect a similar assemblage with much higher quantities of Fabric D2 than are actually present. It is likely, therefore that the occupation of the site started in the early to mid 12th century. The sherds of Fabric A3 and the B1 rim in this second batch, indicate that occupation continued into the later 12th or early 13th centuries. However, in Hereford it would be unusual to find a large assemblage of this date which contained no glazed wares. If the submitted sherds are typical of the pottery used on this site, then it probably dates to the mid/late 12th century. This early date would also explain why the collection includes no North Herefordshire/Lugg Valley wares, which have fabrics containing rounded mudstones and siltstones. These occur

in assemblages in Hereford dating to the early 13th century. Even so, the relative proportions of B1 and C1 vessels is unusual and it may be that this reflects differences in supply routes between Hereford and Eardisland, with the latter obtaining pottery directly from Worcester, via the Teme Valley, rather than fabrics D2 and B1 via Hereford.

Table 1

batch	A3	B1	C1	D2	STCOAR	E1	Grand Total
one		10	27	1		1	39
two	2	8	55		3		68
Grand Total	2	18	82	1	3	1	107

Bibliography

- Vince, A. G. (1985) "Part 2: the ceramic finds." in R. Shoesmith, ed., Hereford City Excavations: Volume 3. The Finds, CBA Research Report 56 The Council for British Archaeology, London.
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