

Section 54 Pottery descriptions part 3 Medieval mineral-tempered wares C02–C42

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Cross-references to Digital Supplement in red
Cross-references to Printed Synthesis in brown

C02 Red quartz-tempered type

55.07/148–49

Fabric

Described by Baker and Hassall (1979c, 171). A hard, pimply fabric with brown to dark grey-black surfaces and brown-grey core. Characterised by abundant, well-sorted, sub-rounded red quartz 0.3–1.2mm. Also contains occasional black iron ore, 0.2–1.0mm.

Forms

Of the eleven vessels in this type occurring on the site, only a bowl and a jug were identified.

Dating and parallels

At Bedford this type was dated to the 11th to 13th centuries and was presumed to be a type local to the town. This cannot be confirmed, however, as few examples have been found elsewhere. A single example occurs at Stratton, near Biggleswade.

Distribution on site

Single sherds occurred sparsely across the site, mainly in the vicinity of structures. Structures are S83 and S7, both timber structures phased to 4.1–4.2 and 4.2–5.2, and destruction levels of S23, with a wide date range of 5.2–6.1.

C03 Fine sandy ware

55.07/150

Fabric

Described by Baker and Hassall (1979c, 171). Hard, with dark grey surfaces and core. Frequent, well-sorted, sub-rounded and sub-angular clear and milky quartz, 0.2–0.5mm, but occasionally up to 2mm.

Forms

Eight fine-walled vessels, of which two were jars, the rest were undiagnostic body sherds.

Dating and parallels

At Bedford this type is dated to 12th–13th centuries. Together with the shelly wares, this type made up the largest quantity in the town.

Distribution on site

The majority of this type occurs in phases 5.2–5.4, in S7, S18, S20, and S21, the early core of the northern courtyard.

C04 Coarse sandy ware

No illustrations

Fabric

Described by Baker and Hassall (1979c, 172). Hard, rough fabric mid- to dark grey throughout, occasionally with buff-brown margins. Frequent, ill-sorted, sub-rounded quartz, 0.3–1.2mm, and sparse ill-sorted organic matter.

Forms

Five body sherds were found.

Date and parallels

In Bedford this type is dated to the 13th century. On the basis of such a small quantity as that found at La Grava this cannot be confirmed, although four of the sherds were found in late 12th to late 14th century contexts.

Distribution on site

S7, phased to 4.2–5.2, produced a single sherd; the rest came from the vicinity of S16 and S17.

Brill/Boarstall wares

Products from the kiln site at Brill were described by Ivens (1982). Since then, other kilns have been found at the neighbouring village of Boarstall. The fabrics are indistinguishable and the type is now defined as Brill/Boarstall type. Two distinct fabric types were found at La Grava, C09 and C11.

C09 Brill/Boarstall type

54.01/328–54.05/378

Fabric

Fine, smooth, usually pink in colour, this fabric equates to Ivens' Fabric 2 (1982, 144).

Forms

Jugs are the predominant form in this fabric, among them baluster and tripartite shapes; one example of a tubular spout was found. Both plain and decorated vessels were found. Applied and rouletted strips in self-coloured or contrasting red clay are the commonest motifs, although there are some applied red scales and horizontal combing in bands. Handles are consistent: they are either rod-shaped with stabbing as decoration, or strap-shaped with knife slashes diagonally down the back. Glazes vary in colour from yellow to green, often flecked with dark green, resulting from the addition of copper filings to the lead glaze. Other forms also occur in this fabric, in greater variety than fabric C11, but nevertheless in small quantities [54.06].

Note that C10 Potterspury type has been moved after C11 in order to keep the Brill wares together

C11 Brill/Boarstall type

54.05/379–393, 54.07/394–402

Fabric

Gritty, coarser than C09, white to buff in colour, this fabric equates to Ivens' Fabric 3 (1982, 145).

Forms

Bowls and dripping pans are relatively common in this fabric type. Jars are rare in either of the Brill/Boarstall-type fabrics and it must be assumed that other sources of supply were used for cooking and storage vessels, possibly Hertfordshire-type greyware C60. Rims of both jars and deep bowls are rectangular and sharply undercut, formed with a template, although there are variations within this general rim shape. Shallow bowls tend to have a simple everted rim. Both deep and shallow bowls are glazed internally but not externally. The jug predominates within this fabric, but not to the same extent as type C09. More of the large-bodied, rounded-shaped jugs and fewer of the tripartite or baluster jugs occur. The most common form of jug decoration is the red-painted lattice pattern beneath a clear glaze. This motif also occurs in fabric Hertfordshire-type greyware C09 but rarely. Jug handles are as for type C09.

Forms	C09	C11	Total
Jar	5	4	9
Bowl	72	13	85
Jug	1056	171	1227
Dripping pan	8	16	24
Lamp	1		1
Salt	7		7
Skillet	3		3
Lid	1		1
Bottle	2		2
Drinking jug	2		2
Unrecorded	4		4
Vessel	59	8	67
Total	1220	222	1442

54.06 Table showing the variety of forms in Brill/Boarstall type (C09 and C11)

Date and parallels of both C09 and C11

Most of the vessels at La Grava are oxidised although very hard, reduced jugs have been found. These are of a purple-brown colour, almost vitrified, with a purple external glaze. Although the fabric borders on the late medieval midland purple-type ware (P28C), the forms are of the Brill/Boarstall tradition. The traditional, and still accepted, dating for the occurrence of highly decorated jugs is mid-13th to mid-14th century. An archaeomagnetic date of 1300–1350 was obtained from one of the kilns at Brill, and the earliest documentary evidence for the potting industry at Brill is 1254–5 (Ivens 1982, 151), suggesting that the pottery at La Grava might date from the late 13th century (or slightly earlier) to the late 14th century, although pottery continued to be made at Brill into the 17th/18th century (see below). This dating coincides with phases 5.3–5.6 on the site. Eight percent of vessels in either fabric type are intrusive in earlier contexts, while 39% occur in post-phase 5.6 features and are residual.

Techniques of manufacture are the same for both fabric types. All vessels are good quality, competently thrown and well finished. Some bases, particularly on the larger vessels, appear to be attached separately. They have come away clearly from the walls, and are very thin in comparison with the rest of the vessel. It is likely that large vessels thrown in one piece would have a base too thick to dry and fire evenly; it therefore needed replacing. The handles are

applied in one of two ways; either the handle was pushed through the wall and smoothed out on the interior (eg the lower handle joint of [54.02/344], or the wall was pushed into the handle and the resulting hollow plugged with a ball of clay [54.03/352]. Unless the handle has actually come away from the vessel, it is often difficult to tell which method was used [55.08].

Distribution on site of both C09 and C11

Most of the type C11 diagnostic vessels, other than jugs, occur in the core area of the site, in the vicinity of S27, S28, and S29. These vessels are predominantly bowls and dripping pans, confirming the function of these buildings as kitchens and services. Outside this core area a bowl, jar, and dripping pan were found in the area of S43; this also functioned as a kitchen. The jugs in this type have a wider distribution. Small numbers of single sherds have been found in agricultural buildings in the southern court but these were probably deposited here in soil and are unrelated to the function of these buildings. In contrast to the distribution of the bowls and dripping pans, less than a quarter of jugs were found associated with kitchen structures. Sixty-eight percent of jugs were found associated with, or in the vicinity, of halls or services, with just over half of this number found in halls.

Unlike the non-jug forms in type C11, C09 diagnostic vessels, other than jugs, are scattered about the core area of the site with small concentrations only in S23 to the north of the core area, and S43 and S59, the kitchen/service area in the southern court. Only salts were found in the hall/chapel area, S17 and S16. The eight dripping pans in this type were found distributed randomly over the core area, with three in S20 and S29. Seventy-two percent of jugs in type C09 were found in hall or service contexts, with over half coming from services.

C10 Potterspur type 54.07/403-54.08/418

Fabric

Fairly smooth, pink-buff fabric with a characteristic dark grey or black core. This type has been fully described by Mynard (1970, 49-55).

Forms

At La Grava these are primarily jugs and large shallow bowls, although some examples of jars and bottles have been found. Jars are undecorated; the only decoration on the jugs is a thin olive-green glaze on the upper part; the bowls have simple decoration in the form of stabbed rims. Certain similarities in technique may be seen to the Brill/Boarstall jugs (C09 and C11), especially in the treatment of handles, which are strap and slashed with a knife. The Potterspur handles are, however, never attached by pushing through the wall. Bowls are glazed internally and have distinct knife-trimmed bases. They are large in diameter, up to 520mm; their size and shallowness suggests a possible use as milk pans.

Date and parallels

The pottery industry began at Potterspur some time before 1287, when it had grown important enough for the village to change its name from Eastpine (Mynard 1970, 49). The date range for this pottery is from the mid-13th century, throughout the 14th and possibly into the 15th, centuries. The same industry produced roof tiles and furniture, examples of both being found at La Grava, presumably of the same date. The potting industry at Potterspur continued in production well into the 17th century (see types glazed and unglazed earthenware P01, slipware P06, Potterspur slipware P53 and midland yellow

P57 below). The largest quantity, 54 vessels, comes from contexts with an end date in phase 6.1, mid-15th to mid-16th centuries, suggesting that, although the pottery reached La Grava in smaller amounts in the 13th and early 14th centuries, most of the wares were being bought and used at the tail end of the date range for the production of this type.

Distribution on site

A large quantity of the wide diameter, shallow bowls were recovered from the structures in the south-west corner of the northern courtyard, and from **S59**, just beyond the wall in the southern courtyard, suggesting that one of these structures, perhaps **S59**, might have functioned as a dairy, with the rubbish being discarded along the edges of the fishpond.

Note that **C11** has been moved before **C10** to keep the Brill wares together

C12 Stamford ware No illustrations

Fabric

Fully discussed by Kilmurry (1980, 12).

Forms

La Grava Priory produced a single jar and the body sherds of five unidentifiable vessels in this type. All the sherds are sparsely glazed. Two of the vessels are in the developed Stamford category (**C12A**).

Date and parallels

Fabrics are of types A and B, and the glazes are types 1 and 2, pointing to a date in the 11th, possibly late 11th, century (Kilmurry 1980, 130). The developed Stamford ware (**C12A**) vessels are dated to the 12th -13th centuries. It is perhaps surprising that more Stamford ware was not found at La Grava. It is a high quality ware with a wide distribution, from London to Perth, in Scotland. There are hardly any fine wares of the 12th-13th centuries on the site, with the exception of a small quantity of Nuneaton (**C21**) and London-type wares (**C57**). There are no tripod or spouted pitchers. The few jugs of this date that are present are mainly in unglazed wares, coarse sandy ware **C59A** and Hertfordshire-type greyware **C60** (see below).

Distribution on site

The sherds are scattered without any concentration although only one was found in the southern courtyard, **S38**. The rest originated in the vicinity of **S30** and **S63**; in destruction levels of **S28**, and within **S27**.

C15 Kingston-type (Surrey) ware No illustrations

Fabric

Described by Pearce and Vince (1988).

Forms

A single jug sherd was found, glazed but otherwise undecorated.

Date and parallels

Late 13th century.

Distribution on site

The sherd was found in the ditch [CF34](#).

C21 Nuneaton type

54.09/295-302

Fabric

The pottery from the Chilvers Coton kiln at Nuneaton is fully described by Mayes and Scott (1984, 40-41).

Forms

Small quantities of this type occurred at La Grava, usually single glazed body sherds, probably from jugs. Some more complete jugs were found and these are illustrated. All the vessels present were in Mayes and Scott's fabric A, a white-firing, sandy fabric, most with a good external cover of green glaze although there is one example of yellow glaze. Decoration is sparse; there is one example of applied rouletted strips in a curving motif [54.09/298].

Date and parallels

Fabric A is dated to the 13th century, with most elaborate decoration occurring at this date. The 13th century would seem to be the date at which this type was being used at La Grava Priory. However, a jug comprising ten sherds was found in the mid- to late 12th century levels of ditch CF29.

Distribution on site

There does not seem to be a pattern to the distribution of this type, with a general spread throughout the phases and across the site.

C31 Saintonge polychrome

No illustrations

Fabric

This fine white import from south-west France has been described fully by Barton (1963, 201-214) and more recently by Brown (2002, 26).

Forms

Few continental imports were found at La Grava, and only two examples of Saintonge polychrome.

Date and parallels

Dating for this type is in the late 13th century.

Distribution on site

Two single sherds of Saintonge were found. One was found in Area 4, well away from the domestic buildings, and may be regarded as the result of rubbish disposal and manuring out on the fields. It was found in the fill of ditch CF34. Other ceramics found in the same ditch are equally fragmentary, no vessel having more than one sherd. The only other sherd of a Saintonge vessel was found in an unphased context, in the vicinity of S16. The Saintonge sherd adds weight to the interpretation of these buildings as high status living quarters.

C32 Flemish highly decorated (formerly called Aardenburg ware) No illustrations

Fabric

A bright orange, fine sandy fabric, this fine continental import has been described fully by Trimpe Burger (1962-3, 12-13) and by Dunning (1976,184) as Aardenburg Ware.

Forms

Three vessels of Flemish highly decorated ware C32 were found. The sherds found at La Grava are all from jugs. The most complete jug, consisting of ten sherds, is plain and decorated only with a bright green glaze over a thick white slip. Flemish highly decorated jugs were often copied in London fabric (C57) and can be difficult to distinguish.

Date and parallels

Flemish highly decorated vessels are found mainly in the south and east of the country, in coastal regions, and only occasionally further inland; a single vessel was found in Bedford (Baker and Hassall 1979c, 176). The bulk of the vessels in this type appear to be imported into this country in the late 13th century, but they continued in use into the 14th century (Dunning 1976, 186).

Distribution on site

A single sherd came from 13/1051, an external spread, possibly a yard surface, near S27, Yard 1. The yard was in use from phase 5.3 to 5.6. Another single sherd was found in the vicinity of S19, in the fill of ditch CF44. A date in the late 13th to 14th centuries agrees well with the date of the filling of this ditch in phase 5.5, during alterations to S19. The third vessel is a jug, consisting of ten sherds, not all of which join but which come from 7/694, 13/328 and 13/383, dating to the period of destruction of S16 and S54. The occurrence of these three vessels in the vicinity of these buildings (S27, S16, S54, and S19) confirms the interpretation of high status living quarters in this part of the site.

C42 Unrecognised fineware No illustrations

Fabric

Described by Baker and Hassall (1979c, 177)

Forms

Single sherds from two jugs were found. One had a mottled light-dark green glaze but was otherwise undecorated, the other had applied vertical strips in a dark red slip.

Date and parallels

Date and source are uncertain, although it was suggested that the three sherds found in Bedford may be imported from France with a possible date in the 14th century. The La Grava examples were found in a context phased to phase 6.1-Period 7, late 15th to 18th centuries, in a mixed assemblage, but they are likely to have been residual by this date.

Distribution on site

Found in the top of a rubble spread in the vicinity of S23.