

## Section 55 Pottery descriptions part 4 Medieval mineral-tempered wares C53–C83

A M Slowikowski

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

### C53 Coarse sandy type 55.01/323–327

#### Fabric

Hard fired, rough to the touch due to inclusions protruding through the surface. Light buff-grey to grey surfaces, with a blue-grey core and occasionally light grey-white thin margins. Abundant, rounded quartz, 0.5–1.5mm. Some darker grey patches within the light grey core where organic matter has fired out. No other inclusions visible. Sherds of this type are fairly thin, well-made, and thrown on a wheel.

#### Forms

With one exception, a bowl, all diagnostic vessels are jugs.

#### Date and parallels

There is no dating evidence for this type, although associated pottery ranges in date from the 13th to the 15th centuries. This type has been recognised at the medieval settlement of Stratton, near Biggleswade, but occurs primarily with pottery dated to the mid-12th to 13th centuries. At Bedford, the single example was dated to the 12th to 14th centuries.

#### Distribution on site

Sherds are scattered mainly around the buildings of the south-west corner of the northern courtyard, in particular within S27, S28, and S29, in phases 5.3 to 5.6. It is likely that these plain, unglazed vessels had a utilitarian use in the kitchens and services, and were discarded close by.

### C57 London type 55.02/280, 282–91

#### Fabric

Orange-red, sandy fabric fully described by Pearce, Vince, and Jenner (1985).

#### Forms

The only forms occurring at La Grava are jugs with white slip decoration, sometimes copying Flemish highly decorated vessels C32. Base angles are occasionally incised. The jugs are thinly glazed with a dark green or green-brown watery glaze. They are always wheel-made. One base has a fillet of clay added to the interior angle as strengthening, but this does not appear to be a regular practice. There are occasional impressions of straw on the exterior of bases, indicating that the vessels rested on straw to dry out prior to firing.

#### Date and parallels

This type is closely dated by the presence of a jug at Westminster Abbey within a pit predating 1220–1240 (Platts 1976, 161).

#### Distribution on site

Few substantially-complete vessels were found, and mainly single sherds were scattered over the core area, with a smaller amount in the vicinity of **S9**, **S59**, and **S43**, in the southern court.

### C59A Coarse sandy type

55.03/94-55.07/147

#### Fabric

This type was first recognised at Chalgrave, six miles from La Grava, and is described by Brine (1988, 43). The fabric at La Grava is, however, coarser and quite gritty in texture.

#### Forms

The exteriors appear to have been wiped over with a wet hand to give smooth surfaces through which the inclusions protrude. Jars at La Grava have simple, everted rims and decoration is restricted to incised vertical or horizontal lines or thumbed strips applied diagonally or under the rim. Diameters are large, in the region of 60mm. From the frequent occurrence of sooting on jars it is probable that their most common function was as cooking pots. Jugs also occurred; they were notably absent at Chalgrave. Necks are flaring with heavily-emphasised external throwing lines. Handles are rod shaped with knife slashes down their length and/or thumbing down either side. Like the jars, the jugs are large-bodied vessels. Both hand-made and wheel-thrown jars were noted at Chalgrave, but at La Grava, where full profiles were found, they appear all to be hand-made bodies with wheel-thrown rims, and possibly also their upper parts. Some of the jugs, however, appear to be completely wheel-made. Either different forms were specialities of different potters or jugs were sold at a higher cost and had therefore to be better made. It is possible that the hand-forming of the jar bodies may have been left to the apprentice or assistant, leaving the experienced potter to work on the wheel. The occasional cistern is known but otherwise the form repertoire is very narrow. Few bowls were found.

#### Date and parallels

A source for this type is unknown but is probably local. Vessels of this type have not yet been found in well-dated contexts, although a date of late 11th to 12th centuries is suggested at Chalgrave. Recent finds of this type have been made at Stanbridge only 4km away from La Grava, and at Chelmscote Manor Farm, 5km away. On both these sites the pottery has been given a date within the 11th or 12th centuries (Moore *et al* 2007; Slowikowski 2010, 411). Beginning in Period 4 at La Grava, **C59A** is probably a long-lived type and may have continued into the late 12th century, at which date it occurs in quantity at La Grava.

#### Distribution on site

The earliest context in which this type occurs as a substantial vessel, comprising 41 sherds, is the fill of ditch **CF29**, Period 4, dated mid-11th to early 12th centuries. As may be expected from the proposed dating of this type, most of the vessels come from the south-west corner of the northern courtyard. These service buildings are the earliest on site, so the distribution is likely to be the result of chronology as much as building and pot use. The type is found in contemporary buildings, hall or kitchen building **S7**, and service building **S21**, both in destruction levels and in contexts in the vicinity of these buildings, but un-associated with them. The majority was found residual in later phases.

## C59B Fine sandy type

55.08/69–55.09/93

### Fabric

This type is described by Brine (1988, 43), where it is suggested that both C59A and C59B are part of the same industry. La Grava produced large quantities of both types, with complete profiles and the differences suggest that these two fabrics belong to two quite separate though possibly related types. The fabrics are similar in that both are sand tempered with rounded quartz, ranging in the degree of fineness between the coarseness of coarse sandy C59A and the fineness of fine sandy C59B. This would indicate a local source but the quite different forms indicate a different industry.

### Forms

C59B occurred at Chalgrave, where the predominant forms are jars and small bowls. At La Grava, only jars were found, probably used as cooking pots. Interiors are often sooted or contain black residues. These vessels may have been curfews or ember pots, or contained food, which had been accidentally burnt. The most frequent rim form was rectangular or diamond-shaped, sometimes with finger impressions (eg 55.08/77, 55.09/85). All vessels appeared to be hand-made, with rims finished off on a wheel or added on separately on the wheel. Both coarse sandy C59A and fine C59B were fired in simple clamp kilns; patches of oxidation and reduction on the same vessel indicate an imperfect control of the firing process. There is no evidence of the use of glaze on either type.

### Date and parallels

This type is exactly paralleled by the vessels from Chalgrave, where they are dated to the late 11th to early 12th centuries. This type also occurred at Stanbridge and Chelmscote Manor Farm, 4km and 5km away from La Grava, respectively, where it has been dated to the 11th or 12th centuries (Moore *et al* 2007, 51; Slowikowski 2010, 411). At La Grava, 2% occurs in Period 4, contemporary with the Chalgrave dating, although comprising a total of only ten vessels. The largest percentage, although still small at 3.7%, occurs in Period 5.1, early/mid-12th to mid-/late 12th century.

### Distribution on site

Primarily found in destruction levels and contexts in the vicinity of buildings, rather than directly associated with buildings. The greatest concentration is within the early core of the site, and, as with coarse sandy type C59A, this is due largely to chronology rather than function. Structures which are contemporary with the date of this type, and where C59B has been found, are S7, S17, S20, S21, and S86. Vessels with the most substantial survival were found in the fills of ditch CF29. These fills belong to different phases: Period 4, phases 5.2 and 5.4. The mid- to late 13th century, phase 5.4, is likely to be the very latest date when this pottery was in use. Its occurrence in later phases is residual.

## C60 Hertfordshire-type greyware

55.10/151-55.19/279

### Fabric

This type occurred at Chalgrave where it is described by Brine (1988, 43). There is a wide variation in the fabric, and there are some differences between that found at Chalgrave and the pottery found at La Grava. The La Grava Hertfordshire-type greyware C60 type is a fine fabric, hard and well fired generally, although some softer fired examples occur. It is sand tempered with sub-rounded quartz, 0.2-0.5mm in size.

### Forms

There is a far wider variety of forms than at Chalgrave, with jars predominating, but with the addition of jugs, dripping pans, bowls, and curfews. The jars have a large rim diameter, up to 360mm, and are high shouldered. They are both wheel-thrown and hand-made, some being obviously made in two or three separate parts. This may be of chronological significance or an indication of different potters. Without a long stratified sequence it is impossible to tell; the progression from hand to wheel is well documented, although it occurred at different times in different parts of the country. There was probably a point in time when both methods coexisted. There is a wide variety of rim forms. Jugs are wheel-thrown with distinctive flaring rims and handles decorated by knife stabbing or slashing. No glazed examples were found. Decoration is restricted to thumbled vertical applied strips, although plain vessels are usual.

A harder, thin-walled variant occurs, usually black throughout. Very finely tempered and hard fired to give a brittle break. Only jars occurred in this type.

### Date and parallels

A kiln source for this type is not known but the similarity of both fabric and forms suggests that it is of the same tradition as the Hertfordshire greywares, whose kiln sites are known from the St Albans area (Havercroft *et al* 1987). Recent petrological analysis of samples from La Grava show close affinities with the Hertfordshire kilns at Elstree (Jacqueline Pearce pers comm). With La Grava being so close to the borders of Hertfordshire it is likely that we must look southwards for a source.

There is no firm dating from either La Grava or the St Albans sites; dating is totally dependent upon the sequence at Northolt, Middlesex, where greywares of this tradition are dated to the late 12th-early 13th centuries (Hurst 1961; Havercroft *et al* 1987, 31). A close examination of fabric and form from the closed, sealed groups at La Grava Priory (eg ditch CF29) indicates a comparable date, possibly 12th rather than 13th century. The Hertfordshire-type greyware C60 type at Chalgrave is tentatively dated to the 11th to 12th centuries, possibly a century earlier than the La Grava examples. There is however, a high percentage of this type in Period 4 so dating at La Grava must be regarded with caution. There is a sudden steep upward curve in the quantity of vessels in this type in phase 5.1, early to late 12th century, continuing at this high percentage through phase 5.2, the late 12th century, and phase 5.3, early to mid-13th century. Like the coarse sandy C59A and fine sandy C59B types, Hertfordshire-type greyware C60 is probably a very long-lived type, accounting for the differences between Chalgrave and La Grava, with Hertfordshire-type greyware C60 reaching its peak at La Grava in the late 12th century. The presence of the classic inturred rims of St Neots type B01 wares at Chalgrave supports the early date there; their absence from La Grava (see B01 in [53]) indicates a later rather than an earlier date. The histograms at Chalgrave agree with the idea of an

overlap between Hertfordshire-type greyware C60, and coarse sandy C59A and fine sandy C59B. Hertfordshire greywares occurred at the nearby sites of Chelmscote Manor Farm and Stanbridge where they have a broad date of 12th to 14th centuries (Moore *et al* 2007, 51; Slowikowski 2010, 411).

Hertfordshire-type greyware C60 is also discussed in recent publications by Borrill (2008, 60) and Blackmore and Pearce (2010). C60 was previously described as 'Hertfordshire-type reduced ware'.

#### Distribution on site

This type is the commonest on the site, even in residual contexts, and is therefore spread across the site, with no significant distribution pattern. As with coarse sandy C59A and fine sandy C59B, the core distribution is around the early service buildings and domestic hall in the northern courtyard. For discussion of the distribution of specific forms and attributes pertinent to this fabric type see [57-58].

### C60A Hertfordshire-type greyware (variant)

55.13/180; 55.16/224; 55.18/252, /256; 55.19/274-9

#### Fabric

Varying shades of brown or grey, often a combination of both; usually with a grey core but occasionally the core is totally absent. The fabric is hard, fairly rough to the touch; well sorted, sub-angular to sub-rounded quartz inclusions 0.3-0.5mm. No other inclusions are visible except the occasional accidental red pebble.

#### Forms

These are predominantly thin-walled jars with flat, everted rims. They have been well fired and this, combined with the thinness of the wall, gives the vessel a hollow 'biscuity' ring when tapped. The shape of the jars is usually rounded with a high shoulder. They are frequently decorated with rilling on the shoulder and occasionally wavy or horizontal incised lines. Sooting on some of the jars indicates their probable function as cooking pots. Other forms occurring on the site are one bowl, three jugs and a vessel interpreted as an oven. This latter vessel [54.17/279] is one of three of bowl form, the other two being in unidentified fabric type C (eg 55.11/430). Only the base and part of the wall of each of these three vessels survive. The incised decoration on the base suggests that it was used upside down, possibly buried in embers to bake small quantities of food. Vessels used in just such a way are known in the north of England (Brears 1984); few have been recognised from the south, although examples have been recognised from Coventry and Stamford Castle (S Moorhouse pers comm). The distinctive sooting pattern (externally on the body and part way inside the rim) which occurs on the vessels from Coventry and Stamford is absent from the La Grava vessels suggesting either breakage before a permanent sooting mark was evident, thorough cleaning after use or another use which did not involve heating.

#### Date and parallels

The jar form and rilled decoration is paralleled in Hertfordshire greyware at St Albans (Havercroft *et al* 1987, 42), and it may be that the La Grava examples are a variant of this type. At St Albans this pottery is dated from the 12th to 13th centuries. A similar date was given to the Hertfordshire greyware found at Chelmscote Manor Farm and Stanbridge (Moore *et al* 2007, 51; Slowikowski 2010, 411). The earliest context, which produced this type at La Grava, is phased to 5.1, with the majority of contexts occurring in phase 5.2. This agrees well

with the dating from St Albans. The end date is less easily determined. At Chelmscote Manor Farm Vince gives an end date in the 14th century (Moore *et al* 2007, 51). The type occurred at La Grava in phases 6.1 and 6.2, but by this time may be regarded as residual.

#### Distribution on site

Vessels in this type occurred in the western, service, part of the site. Small numbers also occurred in the area of **S17** and **S19** although it is unlikely that they are associated with the hall and chamber function of these buildings.

### C63 Flint and quartz No illustrations

#### Fabric

A rough, coarse tempered fabric, occurring in small quantities. Comparable to flint and quartz ware **C63** at Chalgrave, inclusions are abundant flint and sparse quartz. Colour is usually grey throughout although red patchy surfaces are known, as are light grey cores.

#### Forms

Few forms were recognised and most fragments were single body sherds, probably from jars. However, a single jug was recognised.

#### Date and parallels

It has been suggested that this is part of the same industry as Hertfordshire-type greyware **C60** (Brine 1988, 43). A flint-tempered fabric type found in St Albans is described by Turner-Rugg as a precursor to Hertfordshire greyware. Although there is little stratigraphic evidence from St Albans, it does occur in levels earlier than greyware at the Chapter House of St Albans Abbey, excavated by Biddle (Alison Turner-Rugg pers comm).

#### Distribution on site

All the sherds were recovered from the south-west corner of the core area of the site. They came mainly from the extraction pit **CF7** and the bridge silts (near **S26**). The extraction pit was filled in the late 12th century, while the silts have been phased to the early to mid-12th century. At Chalgrave it makes its appearance in phase 3A, dated to the 12th century, but is never found in significant quantities (Brine 1988, 45). A date sometime in the 12th century would seem not unlikely.

### C64 Orange gritty type 55.01/315-22

#### Fabric

A hard-fired, fairly rough, gritty fabric described by Brine (1988, 43). This type is usually a bright orange colour, occasionally with a grey core, but reduced examples occur when colours vary from brown to grey. The Chalgrave examples also had occasional black voids, burnt out organic matter. This organic matter was absent from the La Grava sherds, but this may be a result of the addition of this inclusion into vessels used for cooking but not for the storage and transport of liquids.

#### Forms

This type occurs in very small quantities at Chalgrave where jars were the dominant form. At La Grava jugs predominate. They have strap handles with deep knife stabbing and applied vertical thumbled strips, and a good covering of dark green glaze applied externally, a feature that was absent at Chalgrave.

#### Date and parallels

At Chalgrave, this type first occurs in the late 11th century, but the quantity is small (7g) and may be intrusive. It is present in significant quantities only in phase 3B, late 12th or early 13th centuries. At La Grava it occurs mainly in phases 5.2 and 5.3, comparable to the Chalgrave dates.

#### Distribution on site

Sherds are spread widely but sparsely across the site, within both the northern and the southern courtyards. Most, fourteen vessels, come from S23 and its vicinity, but even these are fragmentary and are accounted for by single body sherds.

### C65 Gritty red ware No illustrations

#### Fabric

Oxidised to a bright orange throughout although an occasional light grey core can occur, particularly under glazed areas. Texture is fairly rough; hard fired. Inclusions are moderately sorted, rounded to sub-rounded quartz, usually clear but occasional examples with milky quartz occur, 0.5–0.8mm; sparse rounded red or black grains occur, possibly iron ore, approximately 0.3mm.

#### Forms

Only two vessels were recovered, one of which was undiagnostic of form; the other has an olive-green glaze and may possibly be from a jug.

#### Date and parallels

The phasing on the site does not help in dating these rare examples. Three jugs and an unrecognisable body sherd were found at the deserted medieval settlement of Stratton, near Biggleswade. Here there is a suggested date of 13th or 14th centuries.

#### Distribution on site

The body sherd comes from ditch CF34. Although this ditch fill is phased to 5.6, no other pottery was found with this sherd. Elsewhere in the ditch fills, the assemblage is mixed, and dating from the Anglo-Saxon to the post-medieval periods, with few vessels represented by more than a single sherd. The only other sherd found on the site was from a jug, and was recovered from the fishpond fills phased to Period 7, where it is presumably residual.

### C69 Coarse slip decorated 54.09/314

#### Fabric

Hard-fired, rough fabric, brown or grey-brown in colour; fairly gritty and not very well made. Quartz is the main inclusion, abundant, sub-rounded to rounded, 0.3–0.7mm. Also present are very sparse white inclusions (possibly

limestone) and sparse unidentified rock fragments, too hard to be scratched with a needle.

#### Forms

Only jugs have been found, and in a fragmentary condition. An occasional patchy white slip can be seen, unevenly applied with a brush, cloth, or the fingers. A patchy exterior glaze shows yellow on the slipped areas and dark green on the unslipped areas. Decoration is in the form of *sgraffito* incisions through the slip to the body of the vessel below.

#### Date and parallels

There is some similarity to London wares **C57**, particularly in the use of white slip decoration which may suggest that this is a local ware copying the fine wares of the capital. If so, a possible date of the 13th to mid-14th centuries may be suggested.

#### Distribution on site

Only twelve vessels were found, four around the structures in the eastern part of the southern courtyard, **S43**, **S46**, and **S59**, and four near the smokehouse, **S23**. The remainder was scattered randomly about the northern courtyard.

### C76 Coarse sandy No illustrations

#### Fabric

Coarse fabric, rough to the touch and fairly hard; pink-orange in colour with occasional buff-grey core. Very hackly fracture. Sub-angular to sub-rounded quartz is the dominant inclusion, poorly sorted but abundant, 0.2–1.0mm. Sparse but large red iron ore, up to 5mm, and sparse sub-rounded limestone, approximately 1mm.

#### Forms

Two jugs and an unidentifiable body sherd were found.

#### Date and parallels

The find spots of these sherds do not help in clarifying their date. Both contexts contain a mixture of pottery dating primarily to the 12th, 13th, and 14th centuries.

#### Distribution on site

None were recovered from within buildings; the two jug sherds were found in the vicinity of **S17**, the hall, and **S28**, the grand kitchen.

### C79 Fine slip decorated No illustrations

#### Fabric

Possibly the same type as coarse slip decorated **C69** but distinctly finer fabric, therefore it has been allocated to a separate type.

#### Forms

There appears to be no use of slip for decoration, which is solely in the form of a clear glaze applied to the exterior. Only jugs were found and, like the coarse slip decorated C69 type, in small quantities, 23 vessels in total, in a fragmentary condition.

#### Date and parallels

A source for both coarse slip decorated C69 and fine slip decorated C79 is unknown; a date range of mid-13th to mid-14th centuries is suggested, based on the accepted date range of highly decorated jugs, and the similarity to London-type wares. However, the majority of sherds were recovered from phase 6.1 contexts, dating to the mid-15th century. Vessels with substantial numbers of sherds occur in a phase 5.6 context in the vicinity of S33, the roadway between the northern and southern courts, comprising nine sherds, and another vessel, comprising thirteen sherds from a phase 6.2 context in the vicinity of S16, the chapel. This might suggest a date in the mid-15th to late 16th centuries, but there are too few examples to be certain.

#### Distribution on site

The sherds are randomly distributed around the buildings of the northern court, with no distinct concentrations.

### C81 Unknown type

54.09/306-13

#### Fabric

Hard fired, rough to the touch, buff-white fabric, with light pink surfaces. Small abundant well-sorted quartz (occasionally pink), angular, 0.1-0.3mm. Sparse red inclusions, possibly iron ore, and some organic inclusions appearing as black voids.

#### Forms

Jugs only, identified primarily from the external glaze. One example has a distinctive triangular rim and pronounced ridge immediately below. Spouts are simply pinched; one has clearly been formed with the right hand. Decoration is restricted to horizontal close combing, and an external cover of pale green-yellow glaze. No complete profiles were found.

#### Date and parallels

A date within the late 12th or 13th centuries is suggested, due to the presence of sherds of this type in the fill of ditch CF29. A source for this type is unknown, although it could lie somewhere in the west midlands region (Maureen Mellor pers comm).

#### Distribution on site

There are no significant distributions; sherds are randomly scattered across the site, both the northern and southern courts.

### C83 Laverstock type

54.09/303-5

#### Fabric

Fairly hard, smooth, powdery surface; buff-pink in colour throughout. Fine micaceous background, particularly obvious on the surface. Contains moderate

amounts of ill-sorted, sub-rounded and sub-angular multicoloured quartz, 0.2–2.0mm.

#### Forms

A single jug with sherds from more than one context was found. The jug is glazed externally with a mid-green glaze with darker green streaks. Decoration is applied in a distinctive design, well represented at the kiln site (Musty *et al* 1969).

#### Dating and parallels

There is documentary evidence for the kiln at Laverstock supplying large quantities of pottery for the royal Christmas celebrations at the palace of Clarendon (Le Patourel 1968, 120). The identification of this type, however, is uncertain as the fabric does not correspond to the pottery recovered from the kiln site (Lorraine Mephram pers comm). The external appearance and the decoration suggest a close affinity, if not an attempt to copy the style. A comparable date in the 13th or 14th centuries is therefore likely. The sherds from this jug have been dispersed throughout several contexts, two of which are phased to 5.2, and the third to 6.1.

#### Distribution on site

Although dispersed, the sherds from the same jug have remained within the vicinity of **S7**, **S21**, and **S29**.