

Section 58 Ceramics overview part 2

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

Function: Incidence of forms by phase

[58.01] shows the occurrence of the different forms by phase. In the early phases there was little variety but from the early 13th century more specialised forms became common. The commonest forms found are the jar, the bowl, and the jug. The jar was the all-purpose vessel of the medieval period. It was used as a cooking pot leaving sooting as evidence, a storage vessel, an industrial, and a medical vessel. Its use as a cooking pot declined in the late medieval period, with the more widespread use of metal cauldrons. Its use as a storage vessel continued. At La Grava there is a sharp decline in the occurrence of jars from phase 5.4. No more than 30% of the vessels in the later phases are jars, in contrast to phases 5.1 and 5.2 where jars make up 68% and 51% respectively. A single purpose-made ceramic cauldron, a jar-shaped vessel with two side handles for suspension and three feet, was found. Only a fragment of the foot was found to identify it as a cauldron. It was found in phase 5.5, and may have been used for cooking or heating up small quantities.

Form	Periods and phases													
	1	2	3	4	5.1	5.2	5.3	5.4	5.5	5.6	6.1	6.2	7	
jar														
bowl														
jug														
dripping pan														
curfew														
cistern														
lamp														
ladle														
salt														
skillet														
condiment														
lid														
bottle														
cauldron														
oven														
drinking jug														
lobed cup														
pipkin														
watering pot														
cup														
tyg														
dish														
chafing dish														
tankard														
flask														
strainer														
plate														
costrel														
albarello														
warming pan														

58.01 Summary of vessel forms occurring at La Grava. Where the first occurrence spans a wide date range, the latest phase is used. For example, the earliest context with cauldrons spans phases 5.1 to 5.5, so the first occurrence is counted as being in phase 5.5

Fewer bowls were found throughout the phases, no more than 18% and these peaked in the late medieval period, phases 5.4 and 5.5. It is to these phases that Brill/Boarstall (C09/C11) and C10 Potterspury ware can be dated, and there was a high incidence of large Potterspury C10 bowls, possibly indicating dairying activity. Their distribution suggests the presence of a dairy in the vicinity of S59 [58.03]. In the 17th century large bowls of Glazed and unglazed earthenware P01 are found. This form is one of the commonest found in this fabric type and it was a major part of the potter's repertoire. It is found as part of dairy equipment, but was also used by this time as a general-purpose domestic vessel; smaller bowls of the same type may have been used at the table.

Before phase 5.4 jugs occur as intrusive fragments. There are no spouted pitchers. From the 12th century there is an increase in the quantity of jugs, peaking in the late medieval period, phases 5.4 to 5.6, and remaining at a high percentage to the end. Although metal ware would have been used at table by the highest ranks of society, ceramic jugs were the main containers for liquids used by the rest of the household.

Specialist ceramic forms became more frequent from the 13th century and the variety found at La Grava, even if they occur as single examples, can suggest a household of some status. The occurrence of dripping pans, particularly during the early medieval period, indicates the spit roasting of meat, a method used by the wealthy. In the later 14th and 15th centuries, dripping pans became more commonly in use by lower ranks of society. At La Grava they never occurred in high percentages, but they peaked at 2% in phase 5.6. This can be explained by greater meat eating among the poorer classes (Dyer 1982, 36) as well as greater laxity in religious communities in the later medieval period, when the dietary rules were relaxed (Moorhouse and Wrathmell 1987, 152).

Besides the ceramic cooking pot and dripping pan, other equipment directly associated with cooking was found, although only in very small quantities. Skillets, pipkins, and ladles were all used for cooking small quantities of food that needed careful preparation, such as custards and sauces [58.05=9.21]. Two of these, a ladle and a skillet, were found in a late 12th-century phase; the rest were found in the post-medieval phases. Strainers can be indicative of a higher class of cooking and these are only found in the later phases, in 17th-century types P01, Glazed red earthenware, and P57, Midland yellow. In the medieval period, strainers might have been made of materials other than ceramic, and therefore have not survived. Few ceramic lids were found. Two examples of portable ovens were found. Most of the household baking would have been done in the bakehouse (S23) but small, individual quantities could have been baked on the hearth, beneath these purpose-made ovens. This was a common method of baking in households which did not have easy access to an oven (Brears 1984). Although their find spots do not necessarily relate to the function of the building in, or near, which they were found, the three examples from La Grava were found near the chapel S16, the latrine block S27, and the bridge S53. None are associated with the debris dumped near the kitchen area S28 and refectory S29.

The chafing dish was in use either in the kitchen or at the table. In common with elsewhere, the chafing dishes at La Grava occurred in the later periods, mid-15th century onwards, and suggest a more refined way of cooking in the later medieval period [56.07/530].

Other vessels found on the table are salts and condiments, drinking vessels, and plates. Salts and condiments would only be found on high status tables during the medieval period. At La Grava these were found in almost all phases

but were probably intrusive in Period 4 to phase 5.2, and residual from phase 6.2 onwards.

Drinking vessels are rarely found before the late medieval period and purpose-made cups are not common until the 16th century. Cups and goblets in use in the wealthy household were made of precious metal or glass, which rarely survives (but see discussion of post-medieval glass beakers [41, 41.01]); the poorer members of the household would have used wooden drinking bowls. A single lobed cup was found in the quarry CF21 cutting the latrine block drain CF11, dating to the late 14th or 15th centuries. At about the same date, or perhaps a little earlier, drinking jugs occur. These are small jugs without pouring lips, holding about half a pint. They are widespread throughout the country, with production being carried out from the Humber ware kilns in the north (Hayfield 1985) to the Surrey ware P09 kilns in the south (Orton 1982). From the 16th century Cistercian ware P12 and, in the 17th century, Blackware P14, cups and tankards were produced, and became common throughout society. With the exception of a single example in phase 5.5, all the cups of these types occur in phases after 6.1, no earlier than the mid- to late 15th century, and most likely mid- to late 16th century. This agrees well with the accepted dates for the first production of Cistercian ware P12 (Moorhouse and Slowikowski 1992, 107).

Examples of Cistercian ware P12 cups are rare at La Grava; Blackware P14 vessels are more common. Imported stoneware drinking jugs and bottles have been found on the site but in small quantities, mainly in late 16th- and 17th-century phases. Like drinking vessels, purpose-made ceramic plates, platters, and dishes are a post-medieval introduction. Bread or wooden trenchers, pewter, or precious metal plates were in use throughout the medieval period. A single pewter plate was found in the destruction levels of S19. No ceramic flatwares were found at La Grava prior to phase 5.4, when a single example found was probably intrusive. They are commonly found in phase 6.1 and later.

Ceramic vessels were used for the storage of small quantities of goods. They are particularly useful for the storage of fats. Larger quantities of bulk goods, wet or dry, would have been stored in barrels. Cisterns, large jars with bung holes, were used to store liquids, possibly water, but more likely a liquid that threw a sediment such as beer or vinegar. This could be drawn off cleanly through the wooden spigot inserted into the bung hole. Although found rarely at an early medieval date, they are a late medieval form, found countrywide. The pottery industry at Flitwick was producing them as a major part of the repertoire in the late 14th and 15th centuries (Slowikowski forthcoming). It is unusual that La Grava should only produce seven examples. It may be that by the 15th century, when all alien priories were finally expelled, there was less activity at La Grava; with households visiting less frequently there would have been less need for storage equipment.

Other forms, unknown in pottery in the early medieval period, make an appearance in the potter's repertoire and are found at La Grava. Flasks, bottles, and costrels were made of glass, wood, or leather, and although these materials continued in use into the post-medieval period, pottery was added to this list in the late medieval period. Imported German bottles are found at La Grava, as well as six examples of Martincamp Type III P26 flasks, common in the 17th century. Two examples of *albarello* were found. These are tin-glazed ointment pots, found in phase 6.2. A single example of a watering pot, of pressure type, was found in phase 6.1. Holding no more than two or three pints of water, it could have been used to dampen down rushes laid on the floors, or in an ornamental garden with a variety of pots, rather than in the main vegetable plot. The position of such gardens at La Grava has not been certainly identified but was likely to have been Yard 8 next to the cemetery.

Five examples of curfews were found, all occurring in late 12th- and 13th-century phases. Although only fragments survived, they were all of the round, central-hearth type. A curfew would have been an important part of the household equipment, when open fires were a danger to timber and thatch buildings and the difficulty of lighting the fire meant keeping the embers smouldering over night. All the curfews are sooted. Three fragments were found in the fills of ditch **CF29**, a single fragment from sealing layers in the bridge area, **S21**, and nineteen sherds from one curfew were recovered from a context associated with **S27**, the latrine block. This last vessel contains so many sherds, although still incomplete, that it is not likely to have been moved far from the place it was used and, presumably, broken.

Four ceramic warming pans were found, three in phases 6.2 and Period 7, in Glazed and unglazed earthenware **P01**. The single example found in phase 5.2 is also of fabric **P01** but is clearly intrusive.

Distribution of forms

Early bowls **B05, B07, C57, C59A, C59B, C60** (13th century), phase 5.3

[58.02]

There appears to be a concentration near the brewhouse/kitchen **S28** and aisled building areas, with a small amount dumped at the bridge house. See also sooted vessels dumped from the kitchen [58.10]. The concentration of bowls in this area and also near **S43**, suggests the presence of a dairy in the vicinity, possibly **S43**.

High-late medieval bowls **C09, C10, C11, C68, E01, E02** (13th-15th centuries), phases 5.4-5.6

[58.03]

There is a concentration near the putative dairy, **S43**, and around the kitchen area **S28**, particularly the north-west corner of the building. This may have been a particularly wet area with rubbish dumping used to alleviate this. Dumping was between the buildings and the fishpond, but with a concentration closer to the buildings. This could have been used as hardcore on yard surfaces where many feet passed. There was a damp area just north of the retaining wall (**F1025**). Hardcore may have been put down deliberately. Equally, the area may have been used as a rubbish dump prior to disposal on the fields, because it was wet and unusable for anything else. It was round the back of the buildings.

Drinking vessels (bottles, jugs, costrels, and flasks), phases 6.1-6.2

[58.04]

This is a distribution of portable liquid containers, mainly drinking jugs. These are defined as small jugs with a single handle and no spout or pulled lip at the rim. They hold about half a pint (250-300ml). They appear to be grouped in **13/1029**, a spread over a wet area near the reredorter drain **CF11**. The drain had gone out of use by phase 6.1, but it is likely that this remained a wet area, suitable for general dumping. Bottles in particular are spread to the south of the hall **S17**.

Vessels other than jars/cooking pots, associated with cooking (dripping pans, ovens, pipkins, and skillets), phases 5.4-5.6

[58.05=9.21]

The concentration of dripping pans is mainly around the kitchen S28, and the 'smokehouse' S23, which might have been used temporarily as a meat kitchen. The pipkins and skillets are found mainly around the hall S17 and southern cross-wing S54, possibly indicating high class cooking, or, more accurately, heating of food, in these structures. The distribution of the dripping pans, and the pipkins and skillets is mutually exclusive.

Table wares (condiments and salts), phases 5.4–5.6

[58.06]

These are relatively rare but high class vessels, used solely at the high table. They are concentrated around the guest house S29 and the hall S16, and are absent from the general rubbish found around the kitchen S28.

Curfews, lamps and internally sooted vessels, phase 5.3

[58.07=9.20]

These are vessels associated with fire, its upkeep, and transport. The greatest concentration is around the brewhouse/kitchen S28, the place where it would have been most important to keep fires alight, and also the place where there would have been the greatest danger from fire.

Residues on early medieval vessels, phase 5.2

[58.08]

All the residues from 12th-century vessels, from contexts allocated to this phase, are internal and white. They occur south of the pre-smokehouse structure S86, defined as an industrial building. Without residue analysis it is not possible to identify the residue; it may be associated with the industrial processes being carried out in this structure. Its ubiquity, however, suggests that it could be water scale as a result of long term storage of water in the same vessels. Any industrial process involving heat would require a supply of water close by.

Residues on high medieval vessels, phases 5.4–5.6

[58.09]

Internal black residues are found mainly around the kitchen/brewhouse S28. These could be interpreted as burnt on food, or the remains of some substance which was deliberately burnt inside the vessel. Equally these may be internally sooted vessels which can be difficult to differentiate from those with residues. Vessels with an internal white residue occur without any particular concentrations. All these internally residued vessels are spread around the periphery of the main core of buildings. None are found in the southern courtyard.

Sooting type 7 (externally sooted with a clean base) and Sooting types 12–13 (externally sooted all over), phases 5.4–5.6

[58.10]

The concentration of vessels with type 7 sooting occurs not in the general dumping area between the western buildings and the fishpond, but around the north-west of brewhouse/kitchen S28. Other sooted vessels are concentrated south of the guest house S29. The concentration in the area of the bridge S53 has no association with the function of the bridge; the material may have been used as levelling up of soil in preparation for its construction, or the filling in of

a wet area at the entrance to the bridge. The sooted vessels are likely to have originated in the kitchen/brewhouse S28. No other vessels, with the exception of some early bowls, are concentrated to such a degree in the same area.

Phase	Structure	Function	SOOTING TYPE																											
			1	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	12	13	17	18	19	20	21	25	26	27	28	29	30	31						
5.6-6.1	23A	Bake/Smokehouse						1																						
5.6-6.2	36A	Granary										1																		
6.1	16A	Hall/Chapel														1														
6.1	23A	Bake/Smokehouse																								3				
6.1	27A	Latrine block										1				1														
6.1	27D	Latrine block				1																								
6.1	28A	Prior's Kitchen																									1			
6.1	29	Guest hall		1																										
6.1	53	Bridge						1																						
6.1	53A	Bridge				1	1																				4			
6.1	53D	Bridge					1																				5			
6.1	59D	Dairy/Kitchen										1																		
6.1-6.2	19D	Chamber block																									1			
6.1-6.2	23D	Kitchen/Smokehouse																										1		
6.1-6.2	27A	Latrine block																									1			
6.2	1A	Grubenhäus						1																						
6.2	23A	Bake/Smokehouse																										1		
6.2	23D	Bake/Smokehouse										2																1		
6.2	29D	Guest hall																												
6.2	50D	Wellhouse						1																						

58.14 Table showing pottery with sooting by phase and structure

Cooking

Sooting [58.11]

One hundred and sixty eight vessels have sooting marks which could be tabulated [58.11, 58.13]. In addition, 119 single sherds were either sooted internally, externally, or both. None of these body sherds could be allocated to a particular sooting type, and they have therefore been omitted from the tables.

The 28 Anglo-Saxon vessels with sooted rims (Sooting type 1) have been treated with caution as most of them only had rims and parts of the body surviving. Because so few bases survived it is possible that the sooting on the Anglo-Saxon vessels is incomplete, and it has therefore been omitted from [58.13]. The only other vessel with Sooting type 1 is a Hertfordshire-type greyware C60 jar. The clean body and base suggest that this vessel was in use sitting within another vessel, leaving only the edges of the rim exposed to the fire. Related sooting marks are Sooting types 4 and 5, where the bodies and bases are also clean. In addition, the clean rim edge of Sooting Type 4 suggests the use of a cover or lid. This type of cooking is known, certainly at a later date, where there is documentary evidence for ceramic vessels, containing food, being immersed in water within a metal cauldron (Hartley 1969, 38; Brears 1984, 11). The presence of these sooting types only on Hertfordshire-type greyware C60 vessels suggests that this method of cooking may have been in use in the early medieval period at la Grava.

The double-vessel method of cooking was by no means the only method for which there is evidence at La Grava. Two other methods of heating a vessel have left their evidence of sooting. The simplest method was to place the vessel on the hearth near the flames. Depending on the fuel used and the fierceness of the flames, different sooting will be evident. A slow, steady heat would have been desirable, not only to prevent burning of the food, but also to prevent the vessel from cracking.

Sooting type 6, where only the base is sooted indicates that the vessel sat in the embers of the hearth or on purpose-built stoves away from any direct leaping flames.

Where more of the vessel has been sooted, as with Sooting types 12, 13, and 21, it can be suggested that the pot stood further into the fire.

Sooting type 21 has a clean rim and, like Sooting type 4, indicates the use of a cover or lid. Few purpose-made lids were found at La Grava, a situation reflected at other sites (eg Moorhouse and Slowikowski 1987, 100; Mellor and Pearce 1981, 87). The sooting and the wear evidence, however, points to lids being used. They must, therefore, have been made of material other than ceramic, probably wood, stone, or reworked tile.

Sooting types 7, 8, 9, 10, and 26 are related in that they indicate the use of a trivet, or some other holder for the pots, which allowed the soot to penetrate to the base.

Sooting types 8, 9, 10, and 26 suggest the use of charcoal, a fuel particularly suitable for use in a brazier. Charcoal was expensive and used only by the wealthy. Because a charcoal fire does not throw up a flame, the sooting mark has a distinctive edge to it. Pottery with this type of charcoal sooting falls within Hertfordshire-type greyware C60 and Late medieval reduced E01 types. The sooted jar of Late medieval reduced E01 type is the only one of late medieval date.

Sooting type 27 is the most frequently recorded evidence of use. Forty four percent of all sooted vessels had this type of sooting. It only occurred on vessels dated no later than the mid-13th century, with Hertfordshire-type greyware C60 jars and undiagnostic vessels (most of which might also be jars) predominating.

Three dripping pans (Brill/Boarstall types C09 and C11) were sooted on one side only (Sooting type 26). This is to be expected, as the vessels would have been placed under the meat on the spit, with only the one side without handles facing the fire.

A single bowl of Medieval shelly type B07 had a rim that was sooted internally and externally; the rest of the vessel was clean. One explanation for this is the use of the bowl upside down in the embers of the fire, possibly as a portable oven. Other vessels made specifically for this purpose have been identified eg [55.19/279]. These are, however, un-sooted. Either the soot was completely cleaned off during initial post-excavation processing or they were kept clean during use. These purpose-made ovens are decorated on their bases, which would have been on view when the oven was in use. A similar vessel has been recognised from Coventry; it is a jar rather than a bowl shape but also has decoration on its base (Moorhouse, pers comm).

[58.14] shows a lack of sooting on vessels of late medieval date. Excluding the Anglo-Saxon vessels, 74% of sooted vessels occurred in the early medieval period, as compared to 9% during the late medieval period. For example, from 74 vessels with Sooting type 7, only five occur in phases later than 5.6; 60 occur in phases 5.2 or earlier. Most of these are in phase 5.2 (35 vessels in total). The increase in the use of metal vessels for cooking during the late medieval period has been clearly documented (le Patourel 1979, 93). Upper status households, such as has been suggested at La Grava, however, would have used metal cooking vessels at an early date, before their widespread use throughout the rest of society. The high percentage of sooted early medieval types might therefore be regarded as an anomaly. However, it must be remembered, that the

household consisted not only of the royal or monastic element, but also of the servants and labourers who ran La Grava on a day-to-day basis. They were the most likely users of pottery cooking vessels. The high-class visitors would have brought their vessels with them, and these vessels would have been of metal.

The distribution of sooted vessels [58.10, 58.14] indicates a concentration in the vicinity of the latrine block S27, the hall and prior's lodgings S13 and S19, the kitchen S21 and S28, hall and guest house S7 and S29, service S20 and the bridge and gatehouse S26 and S53). In total, 73 sooted vessels (excluding single body sherds) were allocated to a structure or its vicinity. Fifty one (70%) of these vessels were found in the western part of the site. It can be suggested that these sooted vessels were used in the kitchen and disposed of outside the building after breakage. Most rubbish would have been collected in temporary heaps or middens and then disposed of during the process of manuring the fields. Broken pottery, however, is useful hardcore material for laying on frequently trampled and wet land, as the edge of the fishpond was likely to have been.

The eastern part of the site and the southern court produced only fourteen sooted sherds. Even S43, identified as a kitchen, produced only one sherd. This would agree, however, with the suggested later date for the use of this building, (phases 5.3 to 6.1+), when pottery vessels would have been less frequently used for cooking. Most of the other buildings in the southern court have all been identified as having agricultural uses; sooted vessels would, therefore, not be expected to occur. The buildings in the eastern part of the main administrative area, which produced sooted vessels were the hall S63, the chapel S16, and the workshop S65. Only seven sooted vessels were found, reflecting, not only the function of these buildings but their later date of use (phases 5.1-6.2).

Residues

Most residues occurred on body sherds or bases of vessels whose form could not be distinguished, 43 from a total of 70 residued vessels, with the exception of the Anglo-Saxon vessels [58.15]. The black residues found on the interiors (Residue type 1) are found only in early medieval vessels (Late medieval reduced E01, Coarse sandy C59A and Hertfordshire-type greyware C60). They are concentrated in the north-west area of the site, where it has already been suggested disposal of rubbish, including broken pottery, took place. It cannot be certain where these vessels were used, but it is possible that they might be cooking vessels with burnt food deposits, in which case they would have been used in the kitchen S28. Internal residues can occasionally be difficult to distinguish visually from sooting and it may be that some were recorded as sooted vessels.

A single example was found of a black residue on the exterior of a vessel. This was a Stamford ware jar (C12), probably residual, found in the vicinity of the hall S63. It is possible that this residue was the result of boiling over or spilling of the contents of the pot.

		Residue 1	Residue 2	Residue 3	Residue 4
Fabric	Form	Internal black	Internal white	External black	External white
A16	VESS	1			
A18	VESS	1			
B07	JUG		1		
B07	VESS		1		
C	JUG				1
C09	BOWL		1		

		Residue 1	Residue 2	Residue 3	Residue 4
Fabric	Form	Internal black	Internal white	External black	External white
C09	JUG		8		
C10	JUG		4		
C11	JUG		1		
C12	JAR			1	
C57	JUG		1		
C59A	JAR		1		
C59A	VESS	2	2		
C59B	JAR		2		
C59B	VESS		5		
C60	JAR		1		
C60	VESS	5	17		
C60A	VESS	1			
C81	JUG		1		
E01	JUG		1		
E01	VESS		5		
E01D	JAR		1		
E01D	VESS		1		
P01	VESS		1		
Totals		10	55	1	1

58.15 Table showing pottery with visible residues by fabric and form

Heating and lighting

Internal sooting types 17 and 18 were found not only in five curfews, as one would expect, but also in unidentified vessels of fabric types Coarse sandy C59A and Hertfordshire-type greyware C60. These vessels might be jars, although not enough survives to be certain. A single bowl of Potterspurpy fabric type C10 is also internally sooted. These vessels have clean exteriors, suggesting that the accidental burning of food during the cooking process was not the reason for this sooting mark. A variety of reasons for sooted interiors have been suggested, among them the medicinal burning of herbs, the carrying of embers from room to room to light fires, and burning of herbs to sweeten the air (Slowikowski 1991, 240). Any of these could have caused the sooted interiors of the vessels at La Grava.

Two jars of Hertfordshire-type greyware C60 and three bowls of Potterspurpy type C10 are sooted both internally and externally. These could have been used in two ways: first as cooking vessels, and then in one of the ways described above that might cause internal sooting. Vessels used in more than one way would be impossible to recognise because of the obliteration of any distinctive sooting patterns. Sooting type 31, occurring on two Hertfordshire-type greyware C60 jars, may have been caused in the same way, a combination of Sooting types 1 and 7.

Storage

Few vessels had wear marks that could be regarded as evidence of use, 25 in total [58.12, 58.16]. Three different types of wear marks could be identified. Wear mark type 3 was only found on jugs. It was caused by forcing a stopper into the top of the vessel to act as a lid. The stopper was either made of a material harder than the pot, a reshaped stone or tile, or it was made of a softer material such as wood, but frequently twisted forcefully to seat it securely in the pot. As has already been stated above, few purpose-made lids are found on medieval sites. Ceramic lids do not become frequent until the 16th and 17th

centuries, and coverings for pots must have been made in other materials in earlier centuries. There is documentary evidence for coverings of cloth, parchment, leather, or pastry, none of which would leave any trace of their use, except perhaps a luting residue, but all of which must have been in constant use. Because so few vessels were found with this wear mark, it is impossible to say whether a particular pottery type was more frequently worn in this way than any other type. There does appear to be an absence of this wear mark on the 17th-century vessels concurring with the more frequent use of purpose-made lids in this period. Storage vessels of Glazed and unglazed earthenware P01 have lid-seated rims (eg [56.09/553-55, 557-67], made specially to take lids, which obviates the need to force a stopper into the neck. This accords with the absence of Wear mark type 3 on fabric P01.

Fabric	Form	3	5	6	9 ¹
B05	VESS			1	
C09	JUG	1			
C10	BOWL		9		
C10	JUG			1	
C60	JUG	1			
C60	VESS		1	1	1
E01	BOWL			1	
E01	JUG	2			
P01	BOWL			4	
P01	VESS			2	
Totals		4	10	10	1

58.16 Table showing pottery with wear marks by fabric and form

Food preparation

The largest number of residues were of Type 2, off-white, usually flaky and found on the interiors of vessels [58.15]. Fifty two vessels (84% of resided vessels) were of this residue type. Containers for water would have been found in most buildings, and the residue may be water scale, the result of boiling or the long-term storage of water.

A distribution of worn vessels, particularly those with Wear mark type 3, which might indicate areas of storage, showed no concentrations across the site. As relatively few vessels with wear marks were found, their distribution has little significance.

Wear mark types 5 and 6 were found on the bases of fourteen bowls, one jug, and five vessels where not enough survives to distinguish a form [58.16]. Such wear marks would have been made by movement of the vessel across a hard surface. Vigorous stirring or mixing of the contents would cause such a movement; the presence of this wear mark on the bowls would accord well with this.

Industrial/medicinal

A variety of substances can form a white residue, in addition to water scale, among them acidic substances as widely differing as vinegar and urine. Without the analysis results, however, the identification cannot be certain. The predominant form with this type of residue is the jug, either in fabric type Brill/Boarstall type C09 or Potterspury type C10. The concentration of these vessels lies in or near the latrine block drain CF11. A similar situation occurred at Kirkstall Abbey, West Yorkshire, where a large quantity of vessels with similar internal white residues was found in the garderobe drain. Some of the Kirkstall vessels were identified from their forms as urinals, a distinct type of ceramic vessel that appears to be absent in the south of the country but common in the north (Amis 1968, 9). The practise of uroscopy is well documented, as is the collection of urine for a wide variety of purposes, from industrial to medicinal (Ogden 1938, 10). The purpose of these jugs may have been the collection of urine. They may just as easily have been used simply as hot water containers.

¹ Editor's note: [58.12] does not show a wear mark type 9

Unknown use

An external white residue (Residue type 4) only occurred on one example, a jug of unknown type, found in the prior's lodgings S19 and possibly used there. This was a single fragment with clean breaks, indicating that the residue was the result of the use to which the pot had been put, rather than a post-deposition deposit. Without the analysis results it is fruitless to speculate on how the pot might have been used to result in this resided exterior.

Sources of the pottery

The medieval period
Period 4 (late Saxon/early Norman) to
phase 6.1 (mid- to late 15th century to mid- to late 16th century)

The pottery assemblage can be divided into three groups: locally-produced wares; wares brought in from some distance away but still in England, and wares imported from the Continent [58.17].

Phase 4 (late Saxon/early Norman) to Phase 6.1 (mid- to late 15th century to mid- to late 16th century)

As is to be expected, most of the medieval pottery is of local manufacture or from short distances away, less than 50 miles. Unglazed, coarse, cooking and storage vessels fall mainly within the first category. Finer glazed wares, usually jugs or vessels of specialised form, came from further afield. Very few high quality continental imports were found. The number of these imports did increase in the later medieval period, but the quantity was never great. This increase in continental imports throughout all strata of society in the early post-medieval period is a pattern found all over the country, and La Grava is no exception (Dyer 1982).

It is striking that the number of continental vessels should be so low for what purports to be a high status site, visited by royalty, with direct connections with the Continent. Major supplies of finewares appear to have come from regional sources, mainly Potterspury, Northamptonshire, and Brill and/or Boarstall, Buckinghamshire.

Throughout the 12th and 13th centuries, the assemblage is dominated by Coarse sandy C59A, Fine sandy C59B and Hertfordshire-type greyware C60, although their exact sources are as yet uncertain. The major type, Hertfordshire-type greyware C60, has affinities with the kiln products of St Albans, particularly Elstree, and with La Grava being so close to the borders of Hertfordshire, this type can be regarded as local. Coarse sandy C59A and Fine sandy C59B both occur as two of the dominant types on the nearby rural sites of Chelmscote Manor Farm and Stanbridge (Moore *et al* 2007; Slowikowski 2010, 411). One fabric type present in significant quantities at both these sites but absent from La Grava is Early medieval chalky ware. It also occurs in London but the likelihood is that it was made in the south Bedfordshire/Buckinghamshire/Hertfordshire area (Vince 2010, 413 and pers comm).

The absence of Early medieval chalky ware from La Grava suggests different patterns of acquisition. The small rural sites were of relatively low status and acquired their pottery from the local markets and fairs. Although they would have bought in small quantities, there would have been a choice of both local

and more distant goods. La Grava, on the other hand, was a high status site, catering for occasional but large numbers of visiting dignitaries and officials, including royalty. Large quantities of pottery would have been acquired as and when needed, probably directly from the manufacturing site, which need not necessarily have been local; tenorial or other connections were of more importance than distance. It appears that the hand-made sandy types Coarse sandy C59A and Fine sandy C59B were the immediate local wares supplying both high and low status sites but the source for Early medieval chalky ware may have lain beyond the tenorial boundaries and obligations of La Grava, and supplied only the low status sites, including both Stanbridge and Chelmscote Manor Farm.

The main imports of 12th-century date are from within the region, Harrold/Olney Hyde type B05. Of the diagnostic sherds of this type, jugs predominate but the total number of vessels is under 1%. Developed Stamford ware, C12A, appears in the early to mid-13th century, but only in very small quantities, five vessels in total. From the 13th century, vessels with a wider distribution of source are found, but still with regional imports predominating: Lyveden (B09), Potterspury (C10), Brill and/or Boarstall (C09, C11). Smaller quantities came from London (C57), Nuneaton (C21), Laverstock (C83), Kingston (C15) and other, unrecognised, sources. This suggests that jugs, as commodities in themselves, were not brought in, in quantity, from afar, even from well-established royal suppliers such as Laverstock (C83) (Le Patourel 1968, 119).

The sources of the fineware jugs are dispersed widely across the country, from the midlands to the far south. It is probable that these vessels, so few in number, reached La Grava in the household baggage of visiting administrators. Towards the end of the medieval period, phase 5.6 onwards, the number of English imported fineware jugs, never great, diminishes to nil [57]. The eighteen vessels of Kingston (C15), Nuneaton (C21) and London (C57) types found in phase 5.6 contexts are almost certainly residual. The nature of the assemblage becomes that of a domestic household, no longer setting out on frequent visits to manors, but settling in one place.

The percentage of finewares, 9%, mainly glazed jugs, from whatever source, compared to the percentage of unglazed wares, 91%, may also be thought to be remarkably small. The use of other materials must be taken into consideration. The ceramic evidence from an archaeological site gives a biased view of the materials used for various containers, because of its longevity and unsuitability for recycling once broken. Pottery was a low status material for most of the medieval period, regarded as functional rather than for show. In the kitchens, butteries, and sculleries the suitability of pottery vessels to fit the required function would have been more important than the appearance of the vessel. For households of high status, metal would have been in more frequent use both in the kitchens and in the hall. Metals, however, can be recycled and few examples have been found at La Grava. The low proportion of sooted ceramic vessels also supports the idea of metal cooking vessels in use in preference to ceramic cooking pots. The exception to this is the concentration of sooted vessels in the vicinity of S28, interpreted as a kitchen [58.10]. These occurred in phases 5.4–5.6, at a time when the site was expanding, with its handing over to Fontevrault. Cooking may have occurred in large quantities, with ceramic vessels in use at the same time as metal cauldrons, either together or separately, to feed the building workers.

The coarseware assemblage is dominated by pottery whose source is likely to be to the south of La Grava, with finewares coming from the north and west. This pattern continues throughout the medieval period, and, even though Hertfordshire glazed wares come into production in the late medieval period, none are found on the site.

Brill and/or Boarstall, and Potterspur, respectively west and north of La Grava, provided the site with most of the glazed wares from the 13th century. In the late medieval period Hertfordshire glazed wares, similar in appearance to the Brill and Boarstall products, were also in production. It appears that the Brill and Boarstall potteries supplied La Grava, in preference to the Hertfordshire potteries. In the early medieval period the need for unglazed cooking and storage vessels was being met by Hertfordshire potteries. There is, however, an absence of any Hertfordshire glazed wares in the later period at La Grava, and it appears that the pattern of pottery supply changed at this time, from a major source to the south of La Grava, to sources north and west of La Grava. This change occurred even though Hertfordshire was producing much the same in the way of jugs as Brill and Boarstall (C09, C11).

Why this should be cannot be answered for certain. The landholdings associated with La Grava Priory do not appear to be significant for the pottery distributions. None are close to kilns; neither are the kilns or their adjacent markets en route for any other associated land holding. Patterns of markets, however, would have had a major influence on the distribution of the pottery. The major market towns in the vicinity of La Grava, about one day's journey away, are Aylesbury, Buckingham, Stony Stratford, Fenny Stratford, Dunstable, and, of less significance, Amptill and Newport Pagnell [58.18]. Sale of grain or stock from La Grava would have occurred at the local markets as well as at the annual fairs, picking up whatever was needed at the same time. Fairs were large events and drew in traders, including potters, from further afield. The right to hold a fair at Leighton was granted to Fontevrault in 1254 (Godber 1969, 51). La Grava was probably getting most of its pottery supplies, together with other everyday goods, from the local market at Leighton, whose tolls were also taken by the priory. The market town mid-way between Leighton and Brill is Aylesbury, the distance between Leighton and Aylesbury, and La Grava and Aylesbury is about the same, equivalent to one day's journey. The potters from Brill, or their middlemen, would have also marketed their wares at the local markets, nearest the kiln sites, Aylesbury being one of them. Aylesbury is situated on Watling Street.

Stony Stratford had a market charter by 1257, and was en route to Northampton, a major stopping point on royal itineraries. It is also the nearest market to the kiln site at Potterspur, and also lies on Watling Street. It would appear, therefore, that the north-south direction of Watling Street may have had a significant influence on the distribution of the pottery from Brill (C09, C11) and Potterspur (C10), and may account for the dominant quantities of these types at La Grava.

Although royal and other aristocratic households are known to have ordered consignments of pottery directly from the potters, this was certainly not a regular occurrence and may only have been for single occasions. Royal visits to La Grava are known [8.10, 65-67]. La Grava was a stopping place for administrators, both royal and ecclesiastical. The local and more distant markets could have met any additional needs for pottery vessels. The buying in of extra vessels in preparation for these visits could also have been done at markets, rather than directly from the suppliers.

From the mid-14th century, Late medieval reduced ware (E01) dominated the local pottery industry, and production sites are known throughout Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, and Northamptonshire (Slowikowski forthcoming). Production sites within close proximity to La Grava are Flitwick, 16km away; Great Brickhill, 7km away and Heath and Reach, 4km away, all of which could have supplied the site. The proximity of the Heath and Reach kiln would suggest that this would have been the most likely source, either directly or via the market at Leighton.

The petrology, however, suggests otherwise. Despite their proximity, none of the sampled pottery from La Grava was made either at Heath and Reach or any of the other sites known to manufacture this pottery. The wide variety of forms occurring at La Grava also suggests more than one manufacturing source. The samples from La Grava, however, are more similar to the Heath and Reach pottery than to the other sites, suggesting that their source is within the general area (Vince 2008).

The post-medieval period
Phase 6.2 (late 16th to late 17th) to Period 7 (18th century and later)

Local wares and non-local English wares

It is difficult to define the 'local' wares at this time. The dominance of Glazed and unglazed red earthenware **P01** in the post-medieval assemblage would suggest that this was of local production. However, by the end of the medieval period, small, local potteries, although still in existence, had decreased their distribution, and the market was swamped by large scale pottery production, marketed in an organised fashion, using middlemen, and consequently reaching markets further away from the source of manufacture.

In the 16th and 17th centuries, regional production was still the norm. Wares such as Cistercian **P12**, Midland yellow **P57**, Midland purple **P28C**, Blackware **P14**, and Tudor green **P13** still have a regional core, but their products are marketed more widely. It is not until the mass production by factories such as those in Staffordshire that a national distribution can be seen, from the 18th century onwards.

At La Grava the sources of the 16th- and 17th-century wares are widespread, with Cistercian and Blackwares coming in possibly from Huntingdonshire, slipwares and glazed red wares coming in from Northamptonshire, and red wares also coming in from Buckinghamshire. The whitewares, such as Tudor green and the few examples of Surrey whiteware, come from the south, but only in small quantities. As with the distribution in the medieval period, Brill and Potterspury are the major producers supplying La Grava. Further south, the London market seems to be absorbing most of the production from centres south of La Grava.

Continental imports

Continental imports account for 4.9% of the total post-medieval assemblage, by vessel. The continental imports, never in large quantities, rise slightly in numbers; there are only seven Continental vessels found in medieval contexts and 98 found in post-medieval contexts. The latter are accounted for primarily by German stonewares, making up 53% of the imports. These were exported from the Rhineland in large quantities, and, by the 16th century, were used by all classes of society. They are primarily drinking vessels, jugs, or bottles. Smaller quantities come from France, but these are all Martincamp flasks, making up 8.2% of the total post-medieval imports. Dutch wares are even rarer, with only a single slipware vessel, the tin-glazed wares probably being English in origin.