

POTTERY FROM EXCAVATIONS IN HULL

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After useful exploratory work in 1964, 1969 and 1971, excavation in the major medieval port of Kingston-upon-Hull was placed on a systematic basis by the appointment of Peter Armstrong as Field Archaeologist, Hull Museums, in 1972. The projected construction of a major urban relief road through the middle of the medieval town led to the formation of the Humberside Archaeological Unit, directed by J.B. Whitwell, which between June 1975 and April 1978, undertook a continuous programme of rescue excavation in advance of the road. Particular interest in the pottery recovered from these excavations stems from the survival of detailed documentary evidence relating to the town in the late Middle Ages. The local inquisitions of 1293 and 1320, and the rentals of 1347 and c. 1440 (Bilson 1929, Horrox 1978) provide an unusually secure chronological framework for the archaeology of the town and hence for the study of the medieval pottery found there. The significance of this study is broadened considerably by the fact that roughly one third of the pottery used in Hull in the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries was imported from Continental Europe, and so the date ranges derived from work in Hull should be of particular interest to archaeologists in other medieval ports, and to Continental archaeologists who are in search of supporting documentary evidence for their dating of locally produced wares.

The usual problems of urban medieval archaeology serve to confuse the picture: well-stratified occupation levels from street frontages contain little pottery in comparison with the pits and dumps in back garden areas, modern cellars remove blocks of stratification, and the compression of the material from seven centuries of continuous occupation into roughly two vertical metres produces highly complicated sequences of deposition. Hull's low-lying position does, however, provide some compensations as the threat of flooding caused the medieval inhabitants periodically to build up the land surface with thick layers of dumped clay, thereby dividing many sites into convenient archaeological phases. The occurrence of coins and other 'datable' small finds has been disappointingly low, but the survival of leather artifacts, particularly shoes, is notable and often supplies corroborative dating.

IMPORTED POTTERY : MEDIEVAL

Of the imported wares of the late Middle Ages French pottery is the most abundant. Northern French products of the thirteenth century, such as Rouen wares, are rare, but the wares of the Saintonge region account for a high percentage of the pottery in deposits of the late thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Three major subdivisions of medieval Saintonge ware are at present recognised in Hull. The most common, referred to simply as 'Saintonge', is a slightly micaceous fabric ranging from cream to buff in colour, commonly 3-4mm. thick. The glaze presents a speckled or splashed appearance and is frequently limited to a bib on the neck and shoulder underneath the spout of the vessel. The centre of the bib is usually copper-green in colour with dark green flecks, but round its edges the glaze thins appreciably and is commonly pale yellow, ending in a band of yellow spots 2-3mm. in diameter with a deep pock-mark in their centre. Kiln sources for this type of ware have been located in the Saintonge and are all dated to pre-1350 (pers. comm. J. Chabelot) but the type persists in Hull into the late fourteenth century and continues throughout the fifteenth. The second major subdivision is the well-known polychrome ware, but more common is the third type,

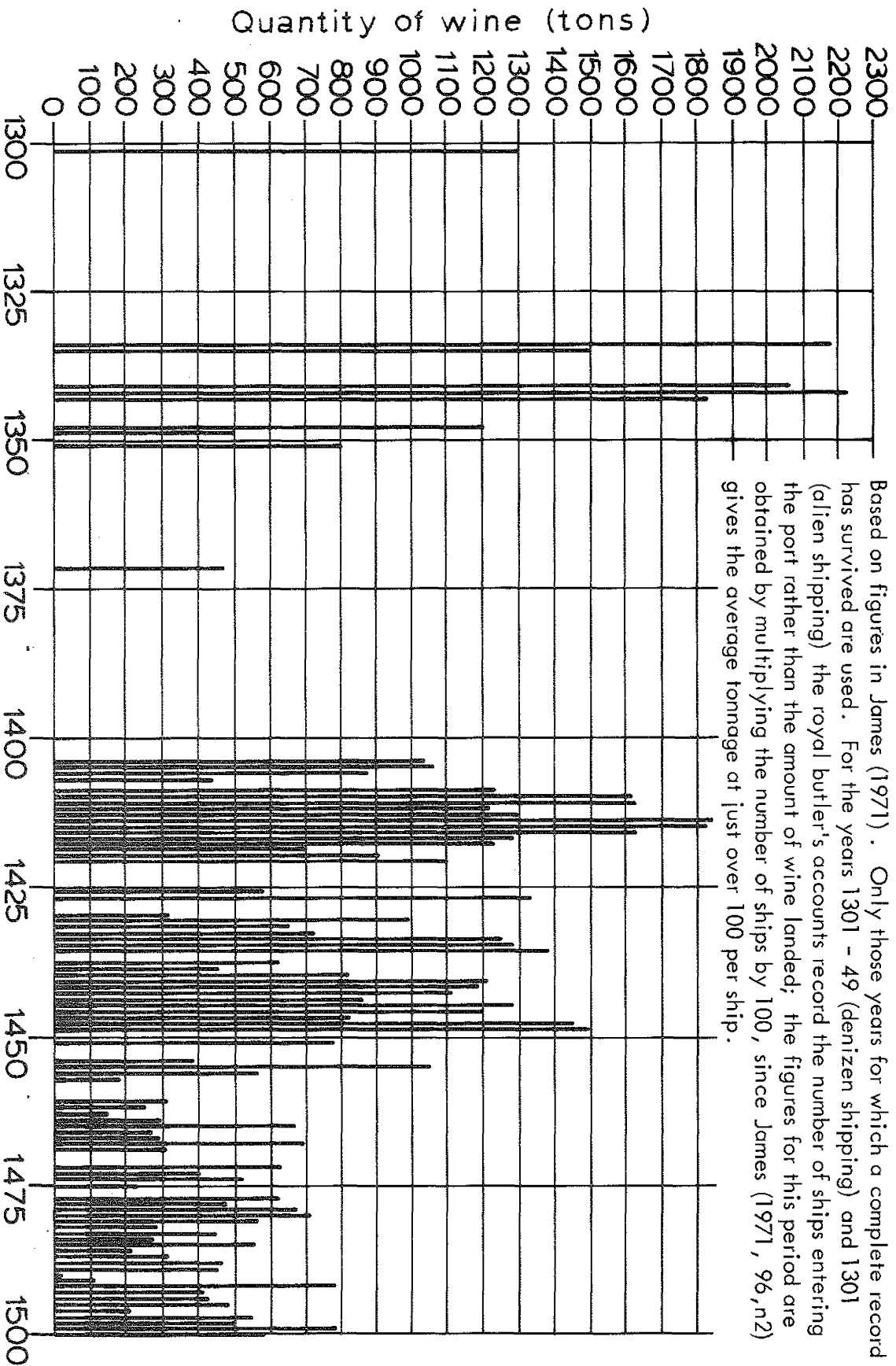
designated 'Saintonge all-over green-glaze ware'. The fabric is, like that of polychrome ware, often pure white in colour (although large red inclusions of haematite are not uncommon) and is usually 2-3mm. thick. Unlike plain Saintonge ware the glaze is applied in liquid form, giving an even rich copper-green glaze all over the rim, neck, shoulder and body of the vessel, except for a band round the basal angle which is left unglazed.

These three Saintonge categories added together account for a high proportion of the medieval pottery found in Hull, ranging from 12% to 32% of the total in pre-1350 levels, and giving an average for the sites so far analysed of 18.5%¹. Layers of the period c. 1350 to c. 1550 have yielded from 7% to 32%, averaging 15%. Although the Saintonge 'industry' was undoubtedly adversely affected by the combined hardships of plague and the Hundred Years War, the latter set of figures argues strongly for a high degree of continuity of production throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. As first suggested by Dunning (1933), the importation of these wares was a by-product of the Gascon wine trade, which has been extensively studied by James (1971). Table 1 shows the amount of wine entering Hull in those years between 1300 and 1500 for which figures have survived, and it can be seen that Hull's involvement in the wine trade in the first half of the fifteenth century was still considerable - occasionally rivalling and even surpassing the peak years of 1300 and 1350. The port sometimes ranked as second or third in the kingdom as an importer of wine in the early fourteenth century, but Hull's share of the trade was proportionately even greater in the first half of the fifteenth century. The involvement of the Hanse merchants in this later period is perhaps a contributory factor, since Hull was at the centre of their English sphere of influence². It must be pointed out that the available figures relate to the total wine imported from all sources, but the trade in Rhenish or Spanish wine was negligible compared to that of south-west France (James 1971, xv). The high proportion of Saintonge wares in fourteenth and fifteenth century levels in Hull is explained by the port's position at the centre of a distribution network for Gascon wines. Inland trade reached down the Trent to Bawtry, Nottingham and Burton (James 1971, 156-7) and from as early as 1204 royal wine destined for York was first unloaded at Hull (Alison 1969, 14). Although Newcastle sometimes traded directly with Gascony, much of the wine destined for north-eastern England was first landed at Hull (presumably with its accompanying Saintonge pottery) and then redistributed by the coastal trade to such places as Scarborough, Newcastle, Durham and Berwick (Alison 1969, 54).

As would be expected from Hull's geographical position, trade with the Low Countries accounted for the bulk of imported cargoes in the late Middle Ages (Alison 1969, 64), a trade reflected in the large quantity of Low Countries Redware (fine sandy orange fabric, orange glaze, usually in the form of tripod pipkins or frying-pans) which is found in the port. This type of ware is often referred to as 'Dutch' but since it is also found in quantity in Flanders (Verhaeghe 1970, 1974) the former term is preferred. Such pottery is rare prior to c. 1325 but averages about 7% of the total in the period c. 1325 to c. 1400. In fifteenth century deposits so far analysed the figures vary from 4% to 23% and average 14%. Low Countries Greyware is extremely rare, whilst Andenne and Aardenburg-type wares have not been identified in Hull.

Rhine Valley stonewares form the third largest category of imported pottery. They are rare in the early years of the fourteenth century but by mid-century both Seigburg and Langerwehe products are contributing on average about 3% to the total, Langerwehe being slightly more common of the two. The appearance of Raeren wares in the last quarter of the fifteenth-century brings the proportion of stonewares up to roughly one tenth of the total pottery.

Table 1 IMPORTATION OF WINE INTO HULL 1300 - 1500
 (full years ending at Michaelmas in the year stated)



In contrast to Southampton, which also produced large quantities of south-western French, Low Countries and German pottery of the period (Platt and Coleman-Smith, 1975, 23-28), Hull's trading contacts with southern France and the Mediterranean were slight. Spanish costrels, olive jars and lusted dishes are occasionally found, but form a very low percentage of the total pottery of the fourteenth and fifteenth-centuries.

IMPORTED POTTERY : POST-MEDIEVAL

Using figures so far available, an average of 37% of the total pottery from fifteenth-century levels in Hull was imported from the Continent. Although the sixteenth-century is undoubtedly a time of general expansion of world trade, analysis of sixteenth-century deposits also reveals an average of 37% imports. Origins are generally the same. The Saintonge region is represented by large numbers of chafing dishes, with occasional jugs and a few examples of polychrome wares. Northern French wares are now more in evidence, particularly Beauvais plates, chafing dishes and green-glazed mugs. Martincamp wares are encountered, and early seventeenth-century Port Books record these "earthen wicker bottles" being shipped to Hull from Caen and Dieppe (Hall 1934, 35). Plain Low Countries Redwares are extremely common in the sixteenth-century, ranging from 9% to 21% and averaging 15%. North Holland slipwares of the seventeenth-century, however, have so far proved to be extremely rare - the seventeenth to early eighteenth-century back garden deposits on the Mytongate 1975 site, for example produced only three sherds of this type, out of a total of over five thousand. Raeren, Frechen, Cologne, Siegburg and Westerwald stonewares represent trade with Belgium in this period, with the addition of Weser slipwares in the seventeenth-century; Wanfried slipwares are much less common.

ENGLISH POTTERY : MEDIEVAL

The dominance of Humberware (hard red fabric, usually reduced internally with an olive-green glaze) amongst locally produced fabrics is unchallenged during the late Middle Ages in Hull. It is present in large quantities in the earliest levels (perhaps by the mid-thirteenth-century on Blackfriargate 1973/4 and 1976), and ousts most other local wares in the late fourteenth and much of the fifteenth centuries, and is still found in quantity in the sixteenth-century. Typical figures are 40% of the total in the fourteenth-century, 60% in the fifteenth and 30% in the sixteenth. In view of the close parallels between the Humberware found in Hull and that from the excavated kiln at Cowick³, the possibility exists that Hull shipped at least some of its 'everyday' pottery from this important production centre situated roughly thirty miles up river. The nearest known kiln is at Holme-on-Spalding Moor (Mayes - forthcoming), roughly twenty miles from Hull by land; this was in production in the sixteenth century, also making a type of Humberware which is found in Hull. Though abundant evidence exists for early brick and tile production in the town, (Brooks 1939) no reference to the manufacture of medieval pottery has been traced. It is possible, as was the case with Scarborough and Nottingham, that any medieval pottery kilns would have been positioned just outside the town walls; archaeological remains would in that case have been destroyed when the immediate extra-mural area was turned into a continuous line of docks in the late eighteenth and nineteenth-centuries.

Of other local medieval fabrics the most common is 'orange ware', a smooth fairly soft orange fabric, usually with a rich copper-green glaze and applied or stamped decoration. Similar pottery is found in North Lincolnshire⁴, but no kiln source has been identified. Its occurrence varies from 9% to 41% in deposits prior to c. 1350, averaging 25% for all sites, but the figures drop

dramatically after c.1350 and may be accounted for by residuality. Fragments of knight-jugs in Scarborough-type wares are found in pre-1347 deposits, as are face-mask jugs and the buff/white fabrics of the York area, but all these are uncommon, rarely contributing more than 5% to the total. Heavily-gritted square-rimmed unglazed cooking pots and pancheons are common on all sites analysed in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries - usually contributing about 8% to the total until c.1400; no kiln source has been located. No Stamford ware has been found in Hull.

ENGLISH POTTERY : POST-MEDIEVAL

After the comparative monotony of late medieval times, the post-medieval period is announced by the gradual appearance of a much greater variety of wares, notably Cistercian, "greyware" (a sandy coarseware reduced to light grey with a pale green pocked glaze), and a number of less common types such as "quartz-gritted white ware", "purple-glazed coarseware", Tudor Green and Midland Yellow. Rawmarsh/Firsby type wares are not much in evidence before the late fifteenth century. Humberware types of vessels are replaced during the course of the sixteenth century by a thicker, cruder reduced green-glazed ware, and during the seventeenth century the dominant English ware is a brick-red earthenware with a brown glaze. Subdivision of this wide category, which predominates until well into the nineteenth century, has not yet been attempted. "Metropolitan" types of slipware are found from the early seventeenth century, and the various Staffordshire types from the middle of the century. The comparative lack of documentary or other independent evidence for the post-medieval period necessitates much greater reliance on external comparisons in order to date the pottery. However, Hull was a major production centre of clay tobacco pipes, and many Hull-made pipes of the period c.1670 to c.1750 have been excavated which bear identifiable maker's marks. A study of this material is in progress and will, it is hoped, establish a firm chronology for the period.

Pottery of the modern period from excavations is recorded by the Humberside Unit, particularly with a view to identifying wares of the Hull Belle Vue factory.

A NOTE ON THE METHOD OF PUBLICATION

The publication of the pottery excavated by the Unit in Hull attempts to follow many of the recommendations of the Committee for Rescue Archaeology of the Ancient Monuments Board (Frere et al. 1975) which divides all information and material derived from a site into four 'levels'. The definitive site reports (published in the Old Town Report Series of the East Riding Archaeological Society) include the description and illustration of selected pits/layers which contribute significantly to the dating and interpretation of the site; discussion of matters of interest arising from such published contexts is included (level IV). Much material which is of interest to pottery specialists but not of particular relevance to the interpretation of the site as such is therefore omitted. This material (level III) will be available from the Keeper of Archaeology, Hull Museums, at cost price. For the Mytongate site level III information consists of (a) a full description of the categories which comprise the type-series employed by both Humberside Archaeological Unit and Hull Museums, (b) a list of the non-illustrated pottery which was associated with that published in the site report, and (c) a number of tables which present the excavated pottery broken down by fabric type, vessel shape and phase. An example of the latter is presented in Table 2.

A volume dealing exclusively with pottery from excavations in Hull is planned

TABLE 2. Example of level III information.

Hull, Mytongate 1975, Area 1, French wares by vessel shape and phase (minimum vessel count).

P O T T E R Y T Y P E

PHASE	1. to 1320	2A. 1320-c.1347	2B. c.1347-c.1440	3A. c.1440-c.1500	3B. c.1500-c.1600	3C. c.1600-c.1750	4. c.1750-date	Not phased
84c. Late Saintonge polychrome, spout.	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2
21g. Beauvais plate, green-glaze, combed.	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2
21c. Beauvais mug, yellow-glaze.	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1
40c. French white ware, skillet.	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
40b. French white ware, chafing dish.	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
4i. Saintonge, tubular spout.	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
4h. Saintonge, ? measure.	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1
21j. Beauvais plate, sgraffito.	1	1	1	1	3	1	1	1
21h. Beauvais plate, yellow-glaze, combed.	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1
21f. Beauvais, chafing dish.	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
21d. Beauvais mug, sgraffito.	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
21b. Beauvais mug, green-glaze.	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
84b. Late Saintonge polychrome, chafing dish.	1	1	1	1	2	5	2	2
84. Late Saintonge polychrome, vessel shape unknown.	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	2
40g. French white ware, bowl.	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1
40. French white ware, vessel shape unknown.	1	1	1	1	5	4	1	3
4d. Saintonge jug, bucket handle.	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
4b. Saintonge jug, bridge spout.	1	1	1	3	1	2	1	1
48. Saintonge polychrome, vessel shape unknown.	1	1	3	1	1	1	1	1
4e. Saintonge, ? small bowl.	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
4c. Saintonge, pègau.	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
49. Saintonge all-over green-glaze, vessel shape unknown	4	3	7	1	1	1	1	3
4. Saintonge, vessel shape unknown.	6	8	19	30	21	18	10	40

for publication in the Old Town Report Series once the excavation reports of Unit sites are complete.

ENDNOTES

1. Sites for which percentages are available are Sewer Lane 1974, (total of 1734 vessels on a minimum vessel count): Scale Lane 1974 sections 1 (537 vessels), 2 (538 vessels) and 3 (448 vessels): Mytongate 1975 areas 1 (4827 vessels) and 2 (2919 vessels) and Chapel Lane Staith 1978 (187 vessels). The Sewer Lane site has been published as volume 1 in the Old Town Report Series of the East Riding Archaeological Society and is available from J.D. Hicks (Hon. Treasurer), 26 Redland Drive, Kirkella, E. Yorks. The Mytongate site is forthcoming as volume 2 in the Series.
2. I am grateful to David Richardson for bringing this point to my attention.
3. I am grateful to P. Maves for a pre-publication copy of his report.
4. Information from G. Coppack and C. Havfield.

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Cet article est un résumé de la céramique médiévale ainsi que post-médiévale recueillie des fouilles de sauvetage effectuées pendant la période 1975-1978 dans l'ancien port de Hull, où, grâce à l'abondance d'évidence documentaire la datation des niveaux archéologiques, et donc de l'échantillon céramique est heureusement assurée. Citant les proportions maxima, minima, et moyennes, de chaque catégorie, l'étude passe également en revue 1) les importations :

notamment la céramique de la Saintonge, sous-produit du commerce de vin, dont trois catégories ont été identifiées: la céramique grès Rhénan, et la céramique à l'engobe des Pays-Bas; et 2) la céramique anglaise: dont celle du valée du Humber est toujours la plus importante au moyen âge, tandis que la céramique post-médiévale est plutôt variée. Comme la céramique importée comprend toujours au moins un tiers de l'ensemble entier, les résultats finaux de cette étude seront de toute première importance pour ceux qui s'intéressent à l'archéologie d'autres ports médiévaux et pour ceux qui cherchent un cadre chronologique pour la datation des produits continentaux.

Dieser Beitrag ist eine Zusammenfassung der mittelalterlichen und nachmittelalterlichen Keramik, die während der Ausgrabungen 1975-78 im alten Hafen von Hull gefunden wurde. Der Verfasser bespricht ausführlich die höchsten, mindesten, und durchschnittlichen Prozentsätze der einzelnen Keramiktypen, erstens der eingeführte Keramik (insbesondere die Keramik der Saintonge, Nebenprodukt des Weinhandels, die in drei Gruppen eingeteilt wird), zweitens der englischen Keramik. Seitdem es in Hull noch viele überlebende Dokumente aus dem Mittelalter gibt, wird die Chronologie der archäologischen Schichten und deshalb der Keramik dieser Stadt ausnahmsweise sicher. Da das ganze Mittelalter über mindestens ein Drittel des ganzen Keramikmaterials aus eingeführte Töpfe besteht, sollen also die Schlussfolgerungen dieser Analyse für alle, die sich mit der Archäologie anderen mittelalterlichen Hafen interessieren oder chronologischen Rahmen suchen, um die Datierung kontinentaler Keramik zu erleichtern, ausschlaggebender Bedeutung sein.