

R. Shoesmith, *Excavations at Chepstow 1973-1974*. Cambrian Archaeological Monographs No. 4, 1991. 174 pp, 15 plates, 81 figures. ISBN 0 947846 02 6.

Chepstow lies on the Wye at the point where it was crossed by an important route between Gloucester/the West Midlands and South Wales, and met another route following the Wye valley to Monmouth and the north. The town is famous as the location of the first recorded stone castle in Britain, built by William Fitz Osbern (1067–71). This monograph reports on the results of excavations undertaken in advance of the construction of a new road through the medieval town as the first stage of an inner relief road scheme. The report was actually completed in 1983 and publication was held up by financial problems. The sites investigated included areas close to the medieval wall, a street frontage site, and parts of the conventual buildings associated with Chepstow Priory, started as a dependent cell of the Abbey of Cormeilles in Normandy, which uncovered a large buttressed barn, parts of the monastic living accommodation and the remains of a 13th-century house.

The report is divided into four sections. The first two cover general background (topography, historical outline, previous archaeological work) and the excavations. The conclusions form the fourth section, and it is the third part on the finds which will be of particular interest to readers of this journal. The reports on floor and roof tile, and medieval pottery are by Alan Vince, whose aims were to establish the sources for the various wares and routes used to distribute them, and to examine the origin and growth of the local pottery industry. Large stratified medieval groups were present only on the three main sites, the Priory having the best sequence. Post-medieval pottery was poorly represented by only one stratified post-Dissolution group, and is only briefly mentioned. The author acknowledges that larger collections of stratified pottery are needed, and points out that the sequence would be improved by a study of the post-medieval pottery in Chepstow.

The medieval pottery was classified by fabric (visually and by thin-section). A coding system for fabrics was used, based on the order in which the fabrics were first defined, and arranged into four main groups based on the areas from which the pottery came. Group 1 comprises local wares; Group 2 comprises Bristol wares; Group 3 comprises other English imports; Group 4 comprises continental imports. Each fabric is described to a standard format, with additional sections on vessel types represented, and date range and frequency. These descriptions are thorough and form the core of the report, which is followed by a discussion of the sequences on the main sites, including tables of frequency (based on sherd count). A discussion of changing vessel capacities and technology leads to one on the evolving patterns of pottery use, interpreted in terms of the origins and development of the industry in the area, and its trade links. The grouping of fabrics by general area of origin means that one passes chronologically from early to later medieval within each Group. The late 11th/early 12th century is represented by one important assemblage from Site 11 (the Priory), containing handmade cooking pot fabrics from Bristol and occasional non-local wares from the Bath and Gloucestershire area, similar in composition to the Bristol Castle sequence. The imported wares of Group 4 are thought to have been shipped direct from Spain and France to Chepstow, which had its own trade with these regions independent of Bristol. Ham Green is the main source in the 13th-century, with wares coming from the locality, Vale of Glamorgan, the Somerset/Wiltshire border, Gloucester, Malvern Chase and Worcester. The late 13th century/early 15th century is characterised by local wares and those from Vale of Glamorgan, Bristol, Malvern Chase and Oxford/Brill.

A few minor omissions occur within the core of the report. For example, there is only a summary description of the forms for fabric Ha.3 (possibly Forest of Dean). The lack of acronyms requires frequent consultation of the initial code concordance, although some (not all) fabric titles are followed by a brief description of source. Illustrations of vessels are incompletely cross-referenced in appropriate sections of the text (such as within a discussion of typology), reference being needed to tables accompanying each figure (it is sometimes unclear which site is involved: such as pages 126–7). The captions list fabrics appearing on each figure, but the use of fabric codes accompanying individual drawings would have made reference easier. The fact that some fabrics have no illustrated examples is not discovered until the end of the fabric entry is reached, after a certain amount of page flicking. None of the stamps occurring on vessels are reproduced at 1:1. Proof-reading could have been better (*e.g.* medieval p. 103).

The delays to the publishing of this report have meant inevitably that some sections may need reassessment in the light of more recent research. M. Ponsford's work on the dating of Ham Green wares, based on the dendrochronological dates from Dundas Wharf, Bristol, has confirmed the establishment of Ham Green 'A' ware by the 1140's, and suggested a date for the Ham Green 'B' wares of *post c.* 1180 (perhaps *c.* 1200). The earliest Ham Green glazed wares reported at Chepstow occur in period 3a on the Priory site (first half of the 13th century), though the red-firing cooking pots are as common as the jugs in periods 2 and 3a on site 11. The reviewer finds the use of the term 'Ham Green A and B' for either fabrics or for styles of jug at times confusing.

This report has provided a much needed foundation on which future, more comprehensive study of the wares and trading patterns of the Chepstow area can be based, and further comparisons made with other towns in the region. It is essential reading for anyone studying pottery around the Severn and in the Welsh Marches, and all contributors are to be thanked for providing new data relevant to Wales, the Marches and the South-West England/West Midlands.

Mark Redknapp

J. E. Pearce, *Border Wares. Post-Medieval Pottery in London, 1500–1700 Volume 1*. Museum of London and HMSO 1992. 137 pp, 66 figures and plates. ISBN 0 11 290494 7. Price £30.

What is Border ware? According to Pearce it is a term used to 'denote the various products of the extensive pottery industry which flourished in the border area of north-east Hampshire and west Surrey during the 16th and 17th centuries'. On receipt of this excellent publication I wondered how many other people knew that. In fact I wondered so much that I asked. I spoke to medieval ceramicists and field archaeologists working outside the London area, and they all said the same thing. Even after being told that this was a London publication, they all thought Border ware was probably pottery produced in the Welsh Marches or the Scottish Borders. With some prompting, one person conceded that another possible border, and one relevant to London might be that between Kent and Essex. Before this book is opened, therefore, there is some confusion, which could have easily been redressed with the addition of a sub-title. Perhaps the obscurity of the title reflects a perception among the producers of this work that the likely readership is limited to those with local knowledge and interests. If this is so, then Pearce's efforts have been undervalued, because this is an extremely well thought out and well-presented volume which deserves a wider audience.

Chapter 1 discusses the production sites and describes the fabrics in a mercifully straightforward fashion. Chapters 2 to 5 form the body of the work, a catalogue description of the Border ware vessel types in the Museum of London collection, accumulated over a period of about 150 years and comprising several hundred complete or near-complete pots. Each of these chapters, enhanced by monochrome plates, focuses on certain form types: in Chapter 2 dishes and bowls; Chapter 3, cooking vessels; Chapter 4 drinking vessels; Chapter 5 other forms, such as costrels, money-boxes and whistles. On the whole this approach is logical and easy enough for the reader to follow. However, Pearce has apparently not always been consistent. For example, it is not clear why condiment and double dishes are dealt with in Chapter 5 rather than Chapter 2. Nevertheless, it is very easy to find the description of any particular form and the text is commendably clear.

It is also easy to relate the text to the drawn catalogue which follows Chapter 5. Within the vessel classes in each chapter, form variants are discussed under separate headings which also list the relevant drawing and plate numbers. The drawings are arranged in vessel type order, each having a unique number and a letter which denotes the fabric type. In this way there are no figure captions and the figures are presented in an invaluable unbroken sequence. The drawings themselves were produced by Pearce in her usual impeccably detailed style. These are followed by eleven colour plates which are of the highest quality in terms of both composition and reproduction.

In Chapter 6 technological evidence is considered, with sub-headings that deal with clay preparation, manufacture, finishing, decoration, glaze and firing. This is detailed and accompanied by well-produced monochrome plates. However, it is also vaguely disappointing, because it is purely descriptive, with no discussion of the possible significance of the characteristics that have been noted.

Chapter 7, 'Chronological Perspective' has more weight, and provides a welcome, in fact essential, archaeological context for the material previously presented. Here, Border ware excavated in the City of London is used to provide a dated sequence for the development of vessel forms and the industry as a whole. The discussion deals firstly with the origins of the industry, before concentrating on separate chronological blocks from the early 16th century to the mid to late 17th century. Within each period heading the text is usefully supported by figures which show the range of forms and charts which illustrate their relative quantities. The final section looks at the end of the industry.

This archaeological discussion is enhanced by Appendix 1, wherein David Lakin summarises the excavations and Julie Edwards the dating evidence. Further appendices comprise a concordance of illustrated vessels, a tabular representation of the quantified data and a presentation of the thin-section analysis.

The whole volume demonstrates an attention, almost a devotion, to detail which sets a fine example, but also suggests a reluctance to interpret the evidence. Interpretation was perhaps never intended, but the introduction claims that 'what is presented is a picture of Border ware as it relates to the City of London over a 200-year period'. This has not been achieved, for this work is essentially a catalogue of, and chronology for, the Border ware forms which survive in the Museum of London's collections. As such it is very good indeed. It is well-organised, clearly written and exquisitely illustrated, making it an invaluable reference work for those of us who work within the distribution area of the Surrey/Hampshire pottery industry. Because she has been so successful in this way, Pearce does not need to attempt any interpretation, but nor should she suggest in her introduction that she will. It is hoped that, after the other principal types of pottery have been described in future volumes, there will be a full discussion of the supply and consumption of pottery in post-medieval London where social and economic issues can be addressed.

The Museum of London has produced an exceptional publication, and one which should have more than local appeal. I commend it to anyone who wants to discover how to organise and present a ceramic assemblage. Unfortunately, the £30 price-tag will discourage any mild interest. This, like the complacency inherent in the title, may indicate the limited perceptions of the publishers. An excellent book it may be, but most of us would think twice before buying it, and that does Pearce a great disservice.

Duncan Brown

Christopher Norton, *Carreaux de Pavement du Moyen Age et de la Renaissance (Catalogues d'Art et d'Histoire du Musée Carnavalet, VII)*. Paris 1992, 160 pp, 138 figures. Price 180F. ISBN 2-87900-048-3.

This important catalogue is one of a series being issued to mark the re-opening of the archaeological galleries of the Musée Carnavalet, the Paris museum devoted to the history of the city. Its paving-tile collection, most of it acquired in the 19th century and remaining for the most part unpublished until the appearance of this catalogue, consists of two elements. The first comprises documented material found in Paris, most of it from the excavations of the archaeologist Théodore Vacquer after his appointment by the city in 1866, and includes material from excavations at the Louvre, the Abbey of St-Germain des Prés and elsewhere, augmented between the wars by material from the abbeys of St-Martin des Champs and St-Victor; the second, mostly unprovenanced in the Museum's records, comprises for the most part a 19th-century collection from various sites and regions of France, which the author's wide scholarship has largely succeeded in tracing to its origins. The collection is thus unusually comprehensive, and most useful as an introduction to the French paving-tile scene.

The scene is set in a valuable historical introduction by Denis Cailleaux in which he emphasises the pre-eminence of Paris in the Middle Ages as a European entrepôt for the building trades, despatching far and wide its skilled craftsmen, but also the wide range of building materials, among them paving-tiles, attracted to its quays from the provinces.

There follows a comprehensive introductory chapter, which begins with an account of the historiography of paving-tile studies in France from the 19th century, itself forming a useful survey of French resources, followed by a full description of tile manufacture and decoration, and ending with a chronological conspectus of Parisian tiles and pavements, and the questions they pose. The Paris tile industry appears to have reached its zenith in the 1270s in magnificent pavements such as that of the Chapter House of the Abbey of St-Germain des Prés, whose rich mosaic panels are among the Museum's collections. These pavements, together with other elements of the Paris style, were widely copied throughout the country and across the Channel at Canterbury, but by the end of the century tile production in Paris seems unaccountably to have waned, and in the 14th century to have been superseded by the products of Champagne and Normandy, which reached the capital in large quantities. The reasons for this decline are obscure, as is the state of the industry in the 15th century and later, for documents are absent and the sites of the industry have not yet been located. The chapter is finely illustrated, notably by many colour plates of complete pavements from 19th-century sources.

The catalogue proper is preceded by a section in which thirty tiles or groups from the collections, each illustrated by a