



Reviews

The Study of Later Prehistoric Pottery: General Policies. Prehistoric Ceramics Research Group, Occasional Paper No. 1, 1991, 15 pp.

The Study of Later Prehistoric Pottery: Guidelines for Analysis and Publication. Prehistoric Ceramics Research Group, Occasional Paper No. 2, 1992, 46 pp.

The first two occasional papers from the Prehistoric Ceramics Research Group (PCRG), which was formed in 1988, admirably outline its intentions and governing principles.

The introduction to Occasional Paper No. 1 establishes the Group's objectives as follows: 'To highlight general principles and promote policies to improve the effectiveness of ceramic research'; 'to provide guidelines on methodological approaches to later prehistoric ceramic studies'; 'to establish standards in the reporting of such studies'; 'to promote wider appreciation of the results of later prehistoric ceramic research'. The body of this document addresses the first of these aims under the headings: Academic Issues; Methodological Principles and Issues; Education; Organisation and Funding of Later Prehistoric Ceramic Research; Personnel. Within each of these sections sub-headings are employed to good effect, making the document clear and comprehensible. A final section summarises the main policies arising from the previous pages.

Occasional Paper No. 2 is devoted to the second of the objectives stated in its predecessor. After a lengthy introduction the recommended methodologies appear under five main headings. The first of these, 'Variables', is split into fifteen subsections which deal with every aspect of pottery classification, from fabric, form and decoration, to residues, perforations and re-use. The following sections: 'What to Quantify, What to Choose, What to Write?'; 'Pottery Illustrations for Archive'; 'Publication'; 'Storage of Pottery', are all much more brief. They do, however, demonstrate a depth of understanding of the aspects of ceramic analysis that practitioners want such documents to address. This is reinforced by the ten appendices, which deal with fabric coding, the identification and categorisation of inclusions, firing conditions and report formats; finally there is a bibliography. This is, therefore, an exhaustive methodological survey, and commendably concise with it, which makes it easy to understand and use.

Both documents are intelligently organised and clearly written, and act as an excellent testament to the well-directed dynamism of the PCRG.

Readers of this journal may be wondering why these publications have been brought to their attention, and a discussion of their contents will probably not have made this much more clear. The MPRG has, of course, produced its own Guidelines. It may seem interesting to compare these with the second PCRG offering, but actually it isn't. The latter document is much the better of the two, as one might expect from something produced nearly ten years later.

Besides this, a much more important and interesting point can be made here. Much of the content of both the PCRG papers appears in the existing MPRG guidelines, or would appear now

in an updated version. Methods of ceramic classification, description and quantification are apparently much the same, whatever the date of the assemblage in question, while the discussion of other methods of analysis (PCRG Occasional Paper No. 2) is equally relevant to ceramicists of any period. For cross-context joins, for example, it is recommended that '*the presence of sherds which join from different contexts should be investigated and recorded to assist in understanding depositional processes and chronological relationships*'.

The same may be said of the objectives presented in the PCRG Occasional Paper No. 1. Take as an example the statement that '*ceramic studies can provide evidence about a wide range of issues including: aspects of manufacture and ceramic technology*'. There is obviously common ground here, which ceramicists of all periods should perhaps be discussing together. It is becoming more and more clear that, especially in artefact studies, chronological boundaries, although once a convenient contrivance, now have less relevance in discussions of the development of aims and methodologies. No criticism of the PCRG is intended here. These publications represent significant progress for the Group, and demonstrate the need for a wider ceramic debate that must include prehistorians, Romanists, medievalists and post-medievalists. Each period group should retain its identity, and this will doubtless be reinforced by the continued publication of documents such as those reviewed here. In this instance however, the principal value of these Occasional Papers, apart from illustrating the vitality of the PCRG, is that they show that there is a need to communicate and co-operate. This may not have been the original intention of the PCRG, but it is hoped that they, and the other period groups, will recognise this opportunity, and take it.

Duncan H. Brown

D. C. Mynard and R. J. Zeevat, *Great Linford.* Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society Monograph Series No. 3, 1992. ISBN 0 949003 01 00. 394 pp, 30 plates (6 in colour), 194 figures, 12 overlays.

In 1967, the Milton Keynes Development Corporation began to absorb several villages in Buckinghamshire into the mass of roundabouts and housing estates that is now Milton Keynes. With the rapid development of the new town, the level of archaeological work increased and, from 1974 to 1977, the Milton Keynes Unit carried out excavations at Great Linford. Further work was carried out in the parish church in 1980. This volume brings together the archaeological, historical, architectural and artefactual results from those excavations.

This review will concentrate on the sections on the pottery, but brief comment will also be made on the rest of the report, especially in its relationship to the pottery.

The layout of the volume follows the conventional pattern: documentary research, structures, finds and pottery are allocated to separate chapters. The detailed historical evidence in the first four chapters gives a useful background to the

excavation findings and sets the archaeology in its context. The description of the structures follows, laid out by croft and separate building within the croft. A variety of structures was examined, including the manor house, parts of the church, and the post mill, in addition to the peasant buildings. There follows a gazetteer of sites and findspots throughout the parish of Great Linford, extracted from the SMR. This leads to the chapter on non-pottery finds. These are laid out in functional categories, a way of looking at finds that is becoming more and more common, and leads automatically to a discussion of function. This chapter includes the non-vessel ceramics, the roof tile, floor tile and brick, with other building materials.

There is nothing innovative about the way the pottery chapter is laid out. The small but well stratified group of Saxon vessels from beneath the church gets specialist treatment, from Terry Pearson, in a separate section which includes discussion on fabric, forms and manufacturing techniques. Quantification is by sherd count and this is tabulated for fabrics and forms.

The medieval and post-medieval pottery is reported by one of the directors of the excavation, Dennis Mynard, and restricts itself to the presentation of the ceramic evidence. The methodology is clearly laid out. Quantification was done by minimum vessel, sherd count and weight, although weights were not used for the statistics published in the report. The fact that all quantification used is available in the archive makes this assemblage comprehensive and comparable with other sites.

The assemblage is large (almost 50,000 sherds) and gives a good idea of what the various classes of inhabitant at Great Linford were using throughout the 900 years of settlement. Like most village sites, the excavations did not produce deeply stratified deposits. The dating for the pottery is therefore based on existing knowledge. However, related contexts were combined, and the pottery from these presented as pottery groups.

The pottery report opens with the methodology and goes on to describe the form, decoration and fabric type series. A description of the ceramic wares follows, using both a common name and an alpha-numeric code. For each ware there is some discussion followed by a tabulation of quantities by form and pottery group. Examples of each ware are clearly illustrated. The ware descriptions are in a consistent format, as follows: common name and code; source, if known, and published reference; fabric description; quantity (including a table); discussion of dating; description of forms and decoration. It is stated that the post-medieval wares are well-known and their descriptions are therefore brief. Newcomers to the subject, however, might have been helped by more consistent referencing. This reviewer wished that the post-medieval pottery had been given equal treatment to the Saxon and medieval wares, particularly in view of the good 17th-century group from the manor house.

A description of the individual pottery groups follows the ware descriptions and is followed in turn by a breakdown of the pottery by group. The descriptions of the groups on p. 286 is very welcome by this time, as the first reference to them occurred on p. 249 — better late than never! This section might have been more appropriately positioned at the start of the medieval and post-medieval pottery report. It does, however, make it easy to link the pottery back to the site, something pottery reports often neglect to do. The groups are described in chronological order and quantities of forms within each ware type tabulated for each group. The particularly good group of vessels, already mentioned above, dating to no later than 1670–1680, is described in detail.

There is no discussion of the pottery as it relates to the village as a whole, nor any distributions or analysis of evidence for use. This is one of the largest assemblages in the region and it is a pity that more searching questions, such as those of status or function, were not asked. If they were, and the pottery failed to

answer them, this is not stated. The pottery is limited to being used solely as dating evidence.

All tables are within the text; there are thankfully no microfiches. The pottery is clearly and well illustrated. This reviewer, however, could not understand why different colour conventions had been used for every vessel, with the consequent need for separate keys each time. Why not stick to one colour convention? At least all the pottery illustrations are referred to correctly in the text — unlike the finds chapter where none of the numbers match those in the text! The coin referred to on p. 79 as number 34, for example, is, in fact, a buckle in the illustrations. There can be no excuse for this failure of editing.

The content is let down by editing errors and omissions. The odd typing error (for example 'Raaeren' on page 354) can be forgiven but there are other examples of editorial carelessness which are more serious. The totals in table 23 do not tally and the misaligned totals in table 25 make a nonsense of the vessel count. There are references missing from the bibliography: at least six were noted in the pottery section alone, such as Mynard 1970, Farley 1979 and Mellor 1984. It is hoped that the statement on page 29 'the success of Henry Tudor at Bosworth Field and his accession to the throne as Henry VIII' is a slip of the Roman numeral. These all add up to erratic and less than rigorous editing.

This is a great pity because, even without the detailed stratified deposits, this is an important assemblage, thoroughly illustrated and presented in a clear, easily understood format. One wonders whether the urgency to bring out this report brought on by the impending demise of the New Town Development Corporation led to a certain haste which might otherwise have allowed more to be done with the pottery. The disappearance of the Milton Keynes Unit and the loss of expertise acquired over 30 years of work in the region, is a tragedy and ought never to have been allowed to happen without wider protest.

Anna Slowikowski

Stephen Moorhouse and Ian Roberts, *Wrenthorpe Potteries*. Yorkshire Archaeology 2. 189 pp incl. 91 figs and 29 pls. Price £12.00 plus £2.25 postage.

This is the second in the monograph series produced by the West Yorkshire Archaeology Service. As its title indicates, this is a comprehensive report on the excavation and pottery from part of the extensive pottery-making industry which pre-dated the existing village of Wrenthorpe. The report is divided into seven chapters covering: The Setting, The Excavations, Synthesis and Dating, The Pottery, Other Finds, Environmental Evidence and Appendices. The latter comprise five appendices, of which the first two pertain to the site which is the main subject of this report. The third is a gazetteer of potting evidence at Wrenthorpe and the last two cover additional minor sites in the vicinity of the main excavations: a 16th-century dump from Bunkers Hill and rescue work at Towlerton Lane.

The formation of the village at Wrenthorpe post-dates the pottery industry, and the area is perhaps better known to some as Potovens, from the publications by Peter Brears in the first volume of the *Journal for the Society for Post-Medieval Archaeology* and elsewhere (Brears 1967; 1971; 1983).

Chapter II, The Excavations, describes the eighteen 'phases of potting' in the 16th and 17th centuries. Detailed site and phase plans are augmented by isometric reconstruction drawings of the different phases of kilns.

Chapter IV, The Pottery, by Stephen Moorhouse and Anna