

Part 3, *Spanish medieval ceramics in the British Isles* — opens boldly with a *Guide to Spanish Medieval Pottery*, by the editors abetted by John Hurst. This examines wares from the principal production areas, here defined as Andalusia, Valencia and 'Others', and presents fabric descriptions (AGV), backgrounds and distribution maps for the main types of Spanish medieval pottery found in the British Isles. This guide, at least for British workers, ought to be the keystone for the whole volume and set out the guidelines for all future research, but it is badly flawed and likely to cause confusion. The Andalusian wares are divided into Early Andalusian Lustrewares, Late Andalusian Lustrewares, Seville Tin-glazed wares, *Cuerda Seca*, Seville *Morisco* wares, coarsewares (a catch-all category), large green-glazed *lebrillos* and *Melado* dishes. No satisfactory explanation for this division is given; indeed references to other works are often employed in order to avoid having to engage in further discussion. Surely a guide should give all information available and not send the reader to many other publications, some of them very out of date, for the details. Thus the background section to *Cuerda Seca* simply states that an 'introduction to these wares is to be found in Hurst 1986 and Pleguezuelo and Lafuente (Chapter 18, this volume)' (p 284). The Seville *Morisco* wares create an even worse dilemma, both for the authors and the reader. It is shown that several different terminologies exist, including those of Goggin, those of Spanish ceramicists and an English one which is somewhere in between. The guide recommends (p 284) that Goggin's terminology is retained by British analysts. Why? In the light of recent Spanish research the use of terms such as Isabella Polychrome must surely be now untenable (for those without access to Goggin, Isabella is a site in the Dominican Republic). One suspects that the authors have left us with Goggin's terminology to extricate themselves from the morass that is its legacy. The dilemma that faced them is further evidenced by their table (Fig. 20.1) which presents 'correlations between different nomenclatures of some pottery types' (my italics). This clarifies nothing except the need to establish a more coherent terminology that has universal validity and acceptance. Remarkably this is not among the *Future directions for research* put forward in the final chapter of this book.

The guide is followed by a series of regional reviews which summarise recent work in Ireland (Rosanne Meenan), South-west England (John Allan), Bristol (Mike Ponsford and Rod Burchill), Southampton (Duncan Brown), London (Alan Vince) and the remainder of England and Scotland (John Hurst). These add detail to the distribution maps of the previous contributions but show that many of the dots-on-maps are only single sherds. It is difficult to understand what these distribution patterns actually mean and until the material is quantified and compared with other types of imported pottery, it is impossible to assess the relative importance of the Iberian trade. Only Brown (Chap. 24) gives any form of quantification and shows the Iberian wares as a percentage of total imported pottery through time from c. 1100 to c. 1550 for nine Southampton sites. He is confused with the use of the term *Morisco* wares, however, and includes *Cuerda Seca* among them. Allan (Chap. 22) is similarly confused as he includes both *Cuerda Seca* and *Melado* dishes in his *Morisco* wares. His *Melado* dishes have 'a hard granular brick-red sandy fabric' (p 311), whereas the guide includes them in the fabric group described as having 'off-white firing bodies' (p 283)!

Bruce Williams offers an interim note on his research on imported Spanish tiles which hints at a specialist pre-Dissolution distribution and Tim Wilson draws attention to

the collections housed in the British Museum. Colin Martin contributes an update of his important 1979 paper on Armada pottery and emphasises the significance of groups of material from wreck sites but again, without the essential common terminology. The scientific work carried out by the British Museum, Department of Scientific Research is crucial in many cases for the sourcing of Iberian pottery, and Michael Hughes's survey gives a précis of the recent on-going chemical analysis programme using neutron activation, and the setting up of a comprehensive ceramic database. Hurst closes Part 3 with a brief overview of Iberian and other Mediterranean pottery found on the mainland of north-west Europe.

Gerrard and Hurst bring the volume to an end and 'treading somewhat fearfully' offer ten points for consideration for future research. This is very laudable but it is not a programme of work. Before we look at *Status* (point 5), *Symbolic Meaning* (point 8) and the various documentary sources we must know the extent and identification of the available material.

How many Iberian sherds lurk in unpublished site archives? How many sherds have mistaken attributions? How much of the Merida-type micaceous wares . . . and so on. There is a role here for future local meetings of the MPRG in conjunction with the proposed English Heritage Imported Pottery seminars.

This important work lays foundations, albeit some of them a little shaky, for all future studies on the subject of *Spanish Medieval Ceramics in Spain and the British Isles* but, until mutually accepted definitions, characterisations and terminology for the various wares are established, the subject will remain confused. Does the term *Morisco* ware really mean pottery produced by a 'Muslim or Arab converted to Christianity and living in Christian-ruled territory'? (Glossary p 377).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Davies, J. S. 1883, *A History of Southampton*, Southampton.

Bob Thomson

Deborah A. Ford, *Medieval Pottery in Staffordshire, AD800-1600: A Review*. Staffordshire Archaeological Studies No 7, City Museum & Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent, 1995. 62pp., 22 figs. (including 204 pots) and 7 plates. ISBN 1 874414 08 4 paperback.

This work can be divided into two main parts; the first third provides an introduction to and discussion of the medieval pottery of Staffordshire and the second two-thirds describes the major ware types found in the county and provides an illustrated catalogue of them. The 'exotic imports', which so often disproportionately dominate reports, are rare in Staffordshire and have been deliberately excluded from this study.

The first part is very wide ranging, covering topics such as the landscape, geology and history of Staffordshire as well as the technology of pottery production and methods of analysis. It discusses too the potential of documentary evidence for locating production sites and is well illustrated with maps showing relief, solid geology, towns, roads, kiln

sites and pottery findspots. There are also some good plates illustrating the various features of the pots under discussion, and a period-by-period summary of Staffordshire pottery from AD800-1600.

The second section starts with a list of all the known findspots and/or references to medieval pottery in the county and goes on to give a detailed description of the five principal ware types found. The description of each ware type includes sections on fabric, typology, dating, kiln types, ancillary structures and distribution. The catalogue which concludes the work illustrates examples of each ware at a scale of either 1:3 or 1:4.

This work is very neatly set out and produced with good quality line drawings and photographs. There are, however, some frustrating points about the layout and labelling which results in the reader constantly trying to keep the booklet open in two or three different places. For example, an endnote system has been used for the whole work and this appears on the final two pages. The bibliography, however, to which the endnotes invariably relate, has been placed in the middle of the work. There are similar problems with the illustrations. The production sites and findspots are shown on page 2, while the key relating to them is on pages 24-28; and nowhere does there seem to be an explanation of the different sized dots on the map. Likewise, figure 2 shows the county's rivers which are named in the text but not on the map. In this case some light relief is provided by the fact that the Flora of Staffordshire is cited in support of the assertion that the rivers in the south-west of the county flow south to join the Severn (page 5, endnote 9).

With regard to the text, the first part of this study is divided into ten sections. Unfortunately these have been omitted from the contents page where the first twenty-one pages are simply lumped together as 'main text'. In attempting to cover so much ground in the main text there are inevitably some weak spots where points are generalised or thinly presented. There is also a slight tension in places, between the text being descriptive of what has been done or prescriptive of what could be done. But these are minor points when compared with the usefulness of a single work, which not only draws together all the evidence for medieval pottery production in a county, but also provides a description and illustrated catalogue of the principal wares. The structured layout for each of the main wares in the second part is easy to follow and will provide a useful benchmark for future studies.

All too often excavation report follows excavation report with little opportunity to draw together the evidence for a town or region as a whole. The typological, chronological and distributional evidence provided in this work provides an excellent synthesis for Staffordshire which should be repeated for each of the other counties of Britain. Two of the stated aims of this work were to 'combine analysis of the pottery with an examination of the potential of documentary sources' and to create 'a framework within which finds analysts can operate'. In both of these aims it has succeeded. This is a most welcome publication which will make an invaluable reference work for years to come.

David Higgins

Sarah Jennings, *Medieval Pottery in the Yorkshire Museum*. 1992, The Yorkshire Museum. 56pp., 45 figs. and pls., 24 line drawings. ISBN 0 905807 04 9. Price £5.95 pb.

Sarah Jennings's attractively produced book is both a catalogue of the extensive collections of medieval pottery in the Yorkshire Museum, and an introduction to the medieval pottery sequence of York and the surrounding region. The book comprises three main parts. The first is a general introduction to medieval pottery. This section is aimed at the non-specialist, and explains clearly the information which may be derived from the analysis of medieval pottery. There are sections on *Pots in medieval households, Changes through time, Manufacturing, potters and production centres, Technology, Clays, fabrics, wares, traditions and names, Shapes and forms* and *Distribution*. A map of the region shows the various production centres and provenances of the pots in the collections, and a diagram illustrates the chronological lifespans of the main pottery types covered in the book, from the 11th to the 16th century.

The second section is a chronological account of the various types of pottery in the collections, describing source, appearance, form and function. Complete vessels in almost every fabric are illustrated both by colour and black-and-white photographs. The majority of wares are products of industries in the Yorkshire region, and there is also a section on the continental imports in the collections — Low Countries Redwares and Rhenish stonewares.

The third section of the book is a catalogue of the collections in the museum, preceded by a brief summary of the history of the collections over the last 150 years. The catalogue lists over 200 pots, most of which are jugs. It is arranged by ware, with a brief fabric description of each type, and a short description of each vessel, most of which are illustrated.

The high quality, not to mention quantity, of illustrations throughout this book contribute to its appeal. Almost every page is illustrated with either colour or black-and-white photographs, line drawings of vessels or details, or scenes from manuscript illuminations showing pots in use. That the text might have benefitted from more extensive editing and proof-reading is a minor point which detracts little from the content. The fact that this large museum collection of medieval pottery has been published is to be welcomed. The book will not only be of value to those with an interest in the archaeology of the region, and to those who teach it, but will also enable pottery researchers working in other areas of the country to gain a good impression of the Yorkshire sequence.

Beverley Nenck