

found in Britain. Other centres are doubly represented, by drawings in the main text as well as the catalogue photographs, but not Langerwehe.

Of great significance in understanding the overall picture, which has been so biased towards the Rhineland, are the 12 surveys of central European German stonewares which, although they rarely occur on British sites, are crucial to the understanding of the development and distribution of stoneware, and make the volume even more useful throughout Europe. Again it is a pity that there are so few examples of each type illustrated: perhaps the author should have ventured beyond the three London museums to fill such lacunae in an otherwise comprehensive work, and cater for the international and not just the British market. Finally, there are important surveys of Belgian, Northern French, Czech and English stoneware production centres to complete the picture. The whole is brought up to date by discussions on Historicism, Jugendstil 19th- and 20th-century wares, and the problem of reproductions and forgeries.

The catalogue is a major achievement in itself, but it is the main text of the volume which makes this the most significant publication ever produced on German stoneware. The outline of the history of collecting and research in the 19th century, as part of the Historicist movement, provides an introduction to the description of how the study of stoneware was placed on a sound archaeological footing during the last 50 years. The chapter on stoneware production includes discussion of the clay, throwing, decoration, firing and glazing; of especial interest is the process of making moulds for the relief decoration, a procedure whose complexity is belied by Gaimster's clear and simple explanation.

An account of the international trade in stoneware shows that it was an index of commercial contact between regionally influenced local markets and industries, and was a medium of cultural exchange. The comprehensive survey covers the Rhineland, Low Countries, Central Europe, the area of the Hanse in north Germany, Scandinavia and the Baltic, spreading out to Britain, the Mediterranean, the Americas and throughout the world by colonisation. Of the very greatest interest is Gaimster's discussion of the eastern Baltic, which has only recently been open for scrutiny and of which he has made a special study in the last few years. There is a useful section on wrecks, which are crucial for providing the absolute dates that are so elusive in many contexts; a list shows the stoneware types found on each wreck.

The final, and in many ways the most important sections, as most of this material is quite new, are the chapters on the functions, uses and social role of stoneware, illustrated from pictorial representations and documents: the growing status of stoneware in the household, amongst the emerging urban mercantile and artisan class of northern Europe, putting utilitarian vessels into a new social and symbolic sphere. The rise of relief decoration, made easier by copying woodcuts of the Little Masters, transformed the previously utilitarian vessels into a minor art, to be appreciated in its own right. There was ample opportunity for religious propaganda in the wake of the Lutheran revolution, with the use of moralising aphorisms urging piety and probity. These incidentally show that not only the mould cutters were literate, but also those who bought the vessels must have had at least a minimal standard of literacy.

In a seminal appendix John Goodall gives, for the first time in a study of European medieval and later ceramics, an Armory and Ordinary of the ubiquitous armorial designs on German stoneware, and discusses the significance of the national, civic, ecclesiastical and personal heraldry. Researchers have always been trying with little success to

identify Bartmann medallions; it is extraordinary that in Germany, where one would expect interest, there seems to be indifference. It is therefore a major breakthrough to have persuaded Goodall to interpret this most complex subject.

In another appendix Duncan Hook reports on the Neutron Activation Analysis which now enables the Rhenish wares to be provenanced to their production centres; earlier petrological studies did not work with stoneware. It will not be economic to test all pieces, but it will be crucial in the future for identifying problem examples, forgeries, and reproductions. Ian Freestone and Michael Tite discuss the technology of German stoneware glazes, but here there are still many problems to be solved. The volume ends with a comprehensive and invaluable 16-page bibliography.

In a book of this size it is remarkable that there are so few errors or infelicities. Only in one place has the careful editing slipped. On p.383, no.190 is oddly placed between 17 and 20, presumably mistaken for 19, or was it decided that 190 was genuine? My only overall criticism is the cross referencing, which is to chapter and section, not page. The complexity of adding and checking in a volume of this size is a problem but it is something which should be done. At the moment it takes ages to track down references in chapters or sections, which are often many pages long. On p. 305 it is a pity that my 1970 list of six Beauvais stoneware sites in England is quoted, when 40 sites at least are now known nearly 30 years later, while the earthenware finds have increased from 50 to more than 70. Admittedly recent lists have not been published. This is difficult as there are so many additions, but lists of sites are readily available for reference for all classes of import. Finally, mineral water bottles are a minefield of complexities, but it is not correct to say (p. 271) that the letters mark the spa where the bottle was filled. The spa is defined by the stamped mark of that spa. The letters denote the kiln where the bottle was made, though in the case of P it is thought more likely to refer to the area, in the same way as the stamp CUR TRIER does; in any case P is not the name of the spa, which is likely to have been Selters at this date in the 18th century.

'Dr Gaimster's book is the definitive work on the subject... This authoritative account is the most comprehensive single volume ever published on German stoneware'. So says the dustjacket. Such statements are often exaggerated, but in this case it is true.

John G.Hurst

**Maureen Mellor, *Pots and People that have shaped the heritage of medieval and later England*, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, 1997, 80pp., 92 figs. ISBN 1 85444 080 2. Price: £7.95.**

The 'people' in the title of this attractive booklet are some of the collectors and archaeologists who have recovered and studied the ceramics excavated in Oxford that are now in the Ashmolean Museum. The way in which interest in medieval pottery has peaked and troughed, the random collection from workmen on building sites, and the first attempt at anything like a systematic retrieval system in the late 1930s are described. The vision of the young Rupert Bruce-Mitford being carried out of Oxford on the back of a lorry while he scabbled through its load is one that gives 'rescue archaeology' new meaning.

The first part of the booklet sets out to explain how the pottery came to be in Oxford — the medieval earthenwares made from the Oxfordshire clays first described by Dr Plot, Keeper of the Ashmolean in the seventeenth century; the

Brill-Boarstall centre in Buckinghamshire, only ten miles from the city; and the more distant north and east Wiltshire sources, on which Maureen Mellor has herself made a distinguished contribution in her recent studies. The early use of Stamford ware, and occasional imports from France, are also described. What are in many ways the most interesting parts are on the later ceramics, however, for the section on manufacturing techniques moves smoothly through the range of new developments from the fourteenth century onwards. Similarly, the chronological section gives equal weight to late Saxon crucibles and early Chinese porcelain.

The text is supported by a generous number of photographs, with some stunning ones in colour. Indeed, anyone who goes to the Ashmolean expecting to see the pots in the full glory of studio conditions will be disappointed to find them still in serried underlit ranks in 1960s showcases — closer to medieval conditions, perhaps. What was the point in a riot of coloured clays if a jug was hidden in a dark and smoke-filled interior? Was polychromy wasted on most people, until chimneys and window glass allowed it to be seen (McNamara 1998)? The author rightly stresses that pottery is a commodity, one which became more important as visual quality became more significant than function alone.

The Ashmolean no longer houses all Oxford's pottery, as most of the finds from systematic excavations of the 1960s onwards are housed in the Oxford City Museum, where there are some very lively post-medieval displays, such as of Frank Cooper's Oxford marmalade jars, illustrated by a trade card in the Ashmolean booklet. It is explained at the start that fabric analysis and chronologies have been

established by work resulting from those excavations, much of it by the author herself, but this gets lost sight of later on. The intention therefore is not to provide a full introduction to Oxford's medieval and post-medieval pottery — the absence of a map to show where it was all made demonstrates that. There are also some infelicities in the writing; I was unsure at first whether 'conventional' was meant to be 'conventional' on page 30, but 'hightened' and 'cleaniness' in the same sentence removed my doubt. The large pot from Swindon described as without an accession number in the caption to Fig. 30 is actually 1955.496 — the showcase is not so badly lit that the labels are unreadable.

Despite these quibbles, this booklet is exceptionally good value and will be widely welcomed. The only thing comparable to it that I know is Sarah Jennings's equally well-illustrated work on the Yorkshire Museum pottery, similarly based on nineteenth-century collection, but not extending beyond the Middle Ages. It would be a pity if Cambridge cannot respond with something similar; is there a reason why Oxford has always fostered so much more interest in its own archaeology?

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY

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David A. Hinton