

of Jingdezhen, had succumbed to the anarchy that prevailed during the Transitional period between the Ming and Qing dynasties.

While mainly concentrating on the influences of Chinese blue and white on Near Eastern earthenwares, and vice-versa, there is a brief section on 15th-century Vietnamese copies. Vietnam was under direct Chinese rule between 1407 and 1427, a possible reason for the flowering of local blue and white production at the time. Korean blue and white porcelains were similarly influenced by Chinese shapes and decoration and, being a vassal kingdom of China at the time, many 15th- and 16th-century vessels were inscribed with Chinese reign marks. In the 16th century Japan imported Chinese blue and white specifically designed at Jingdezhen to suit their own rather unique taste, and not until the 1620s did the Arita kilns in Japan start to produce their own blue and white porcelain. Many Japanese examples reflect the style of earlier Chinese imports but, to quote Carswell, 'Who copied what, it is almost impossible to tell' (p. 159).

A chapter is devoted to celadon and copper red, and Carswell's argument for including them in a book on blue and white is less than convincing. Nonetheless it contains an interesting survey of these two popular Chinese ceramic types. Technical and stylistic details are discussed and archaeological evidence from far-flung sites in Asia and Africa mark the westerly trail of both the celadon and copper red wares exported from China in the Yuan and early Ming dynasties; celadon has been found at almost every medieval site along the sea route west. Production of celadon at Longquan, in Zhejiang Province, began to decline towards the end of the 15th century and was all but finished by the 16th; a similar time-frame can be ascribed to the duration of copper red. Both types crop up again in the Qing dynasty (1644–1911), but under rather different technical conditions.

The Qing dynasty is not covered by the book because, as Carswell explains, during that period 'the production of blue and white becomes another story... it is all together a different game' (p. 167). Thus we are spared having to admire the rather more shaky contributions from European kilns, unable as they were to perfect true porcelain until the early 18th century. The last chapter includes an excellent synopsis of shipwrecks and their ceramic cargoes. Of particular interest is the material from a 14th-century wreck recently discovered in the Red Sea and reported here for the first time. Wrecked relatively close to probable destinations in the Yemen, Egypt and Syria, this shipment of Chinese blue and white epitomises Yuan dynasty trading and seafaring exploits at their most adventurous. Carswell succeeds in holding the reader's attention throughout by combining this sense of adventure with scholarly research, intensified by 40 years' association with blue and white discovered in exotic and varied locations from Beirut to Inner Mongolia.

Jennifer Barry

**John P. Cotter, *Post-Roman pottery from excavations in Colchester, 1971–85*.** English Heritage Monograph, Colchester Archaeological Report 7, 2000. 389pp. 248 illus., 6 colour plates, bibliog. Price: £32.50 hardback.

It was with a sense of relief that I settled down to bedside reading of this traditional hard-backed tome, which presented a well ordered report on pottery. Two tons of pottery requires a sound methodology to combine both

material from excavation (1971–85) and unpublished material in the local Colchester Museum. Documentary work on both published and unpublished sources allows for deeper insight into the social and economic historic environment in which the pottery was used and the community that used it. Cotter ably demonstrates a sense of place: topographical, cultural and political context are all explored, along with economic history, setting local trends against national benchmarks (Colchester also enjoyed a measure of direct sea trade).

Chapters 2 to 6 set out the typology of English wares: local wares of the 11th to early 16th centuries form the core of the work. Chapters follow on French wares, Low Countries wares, German and Rhenish wares, Iberian wares, Italian wares, Far Eastern wares and unsourced imports. These well researched chapters on imports will interest a wider readership.

The stratified groups spanning the 5th to mid 18th centuries are presented next: 32 sites were selected for detailed recording. These represented the largest, best-preserved and most closely datable assemblages. The final chapter draws together the conclusions on the development and supply of post-Roman pottery in Colchester, set out by period, but was a little disappointing in its brevity. Three appendices then follow: a concordance of illustrated pottery, documentary evidence for potters and kiln-sites in the Colchester area, and Neutron Activation Analysis of redware from north-east Essex by Mike Hughes. Appendices are tucked away, but often form the most original part of the report; the painstaking research on the potters and tilers will draw in a wider audience. Mike Hughes' analysis will also interest colleagues in the Low Countries and Scandinavia. Colour plates of decorated sherds and individual assemblages complete the synthesis.

As in many eastern sea-board towns, rubbish/cesspits were the main repositories of discarded pottery from the late 11th to 18th centuries; stone-lined latrines were added in the 15th to 16th centuries, with brick-lined latrines in the 17th century. The Dutch stimulated the development of horticulture at this time and were perhaps responsible for the introduction of brick latrines too, although this is not clear from the report. The town did, however, function as a centre for the consumption and redistribution of Dutch merchandise, much of which it shipped to London and neighbouring ports. Domestic occupation hinted at trades, for instance rubbish from inns and/or taverns, but the material was largely domestic in character.

The author isolates the differing periods using the classic tools of the archaeologist: stratigraphic evidence in combination with architectural, numismatic and external ceramic dating evidence. Thus he locates 11th- to 12th-century urban iron-working (mirrored in Oxford and London at this time), stone houses first appearing in the 12th century and a pottery production centre operating in a northern suburb in the later 12th century.

The mid 14th century saw a flurry of Flemish names in the written record and suggests that foreign expertise may have played a part in invigorating the local industries. By the 1390s the German merchants of the Hanse dominated the Colchester cloth trade and the import of dyestuffs, particularly woad from the Low Countries. Where did inland sites import their woad from or was it grown locally? The late 14th century also saw the importation of 'Flanders tile'. Rhenish stonewares formed the largest class of foreign imports and bears out the documentary sources.

Other interesting snippets include buried pots, a phenomenon noted in central Oxford and Abingdon. A survey of such pots across the country, coupled with documentary references, may reveal some interesting regional patterns.

It is clear that much consultation took place with other colleagues working in the field, and their collaboration enriches the considerable scholarship of the author. This hugely impressive volume, with copious line drawings, maps, histograms, pie charts, simplified matrices, diagrams of vessel forms and black and white photographs, breathes life into the ceramic material culture and the community who used these vessels throughout the Middle Ages. The local industries continued until the mid 18th century, when the products of Staffordshire and other industrialised potteries overwhelmed the local ceramic industries.

Reserve a space on your bookshelf!

Maureen Mellor

**Alejandra Gutiérrez, *Mediterranean Pottery in Wessex Households (13th to 17th Centuries)*. BAR 306, 2000. 257pp, 119 figs. ISBN 1 84171 150 0. Price: £44.00 paperback.**

There has been a long tradition of British archaeologists working in mainland Europe. At worst, this phenomenon reflects little more than the old colonial assumption that less advanced societies require the benefits of our more sophisticated techniques. At best, these travels have been driven by a genuine enthusiasm and curiosity for the past and a desire to expand the horizons of experience and understanding. Within the field of medieval ceramics I count the work of Dunning and Hurst in the latter category. Their pioneering efforts broadened the base for pottery research and inspired many British and continental ceramicists. This traffic, unfortunately, has remained too frequently one way, and it is refreshing, therefore, to find the tables turned by this admirable offering from Alejandra Gutiérrez. She is a Spanish archaeologist who, in 1999, completed a PhD at King Alfred's College, Winchester and this volume is her thesis. Before I commence picking at some of the threads of her argument, I wish to make clear that I consider this to be a very important contribution to English medieval ceramic studies. One reason for this is simply that it does represent a reversal of the trend for British archaeologists to interpret continental archaeology. Secondly, with archaeology in this country in thrall to developer-led projects where time is money and money is everything, this volume provides a welcome antidote. As a freelance pottery specialist it is more than disheartening to be told that the really interesting aspects of ceramic studies are outside the requirements of the project design and I should concentrate on providing more accurate context dates. I sometimes think that archaeology after PPG16 is driving specialist studies backwards and this book is therefore an important reminder that there is more to our discipline than chronology. In this respect, of course, it will probably have little impact, as those people who most need to come under its influence will remain myopically unaware of its existence.

Here are the details. The introduction sets out the aims of the work, the area within which it is based and the theoretical, methodological, social and historical contexts. Part One is a catalogue of the Mediterranean pottery types that occur within the Wessex area. There are separate sections on Spain, Portugal (is Portugal a Mediterranean country?) and Italy, with a few words on the eastern Mediterranean. Part Two discusses the trade and movement of pottery, with sections on contact with the Mediterranean, the archaeological evidence from excavations in Wessex and Mediterranean pottery in medieval and post-medieval Wessex. Part Three considers the use of pottery under the theme

'Consumption and Meaning' before one reaches a brief and pithy conclusion. This line-up should offer something for everyone: the catalogue characterises ceramic types backed up with illustrated examples; Part Two offers data; Part Three is mainly theory. There are also two useful appendices, a list of the medieval and early modern excavations in Wessex up to 1994, and a gazetteer of imported pottery in Wessex. The author's aim is to 'make a solid and rigorous contribution to the identification of particular sherds and to use those data to scrutinise site dating and pottery distributions, [and to encourage] reflection on the meaning of those distributions . . . this book is about people'. My purpose is to consider whether she achieves that.

The first problem for the reader must be one that the author also faced. Doctoral theses are rarely required to be accessible; they are expected instead to be heavyweight demonstrations of the extent and quality of a student's research. The entire thesis is presented here and the result is a volume that would have benefited from rigorous pruning. Gutiérrez, in her preface, writes that 'there has never been any intention of rewriting or converting the original text into a different book: this would have demanded a significant delay in publication as well as changes to the original character and structure of the research'. This is not strictly true. The author herself informs me she did want to publish a different version but the rejections of two other publishers led her to BAR. Anxious to avoid further delay, she offered them her thesis and they took it. Good for BAR, I say, but shame on those others, for they missed a real opportunity. The author's urgency may have been propelled by economic circumstance, but I am not convinced that further delay would not have been beneficial, at least to the work if not to herself. Her haste is in fact, ultimately a shortcoming, and some reconsideration of the text would have benefited the author, the publisher and certainly the reader. The introductory section on the development of archaeological theory, for instance, although probably a necessary inclusion in a thesis, is, in the context of a pottery publication, at best a curiosity, at worst an irrelevance. The central section on medieval and later excavations in Wessex could also have been abbreviated. The author describes and classifies (Castle, Monastery, Town etc) each site in Wessex that has produced Mediterranean pottery and sketches out the level of archaeological investigation carried out thereat. This exercise is necessarily simplistic and useful for little more than to demonstrate that 'overall, the area chosen for study . . . contains a wide [range] of monuments . . . this provides an excellent platform from which to appraise distributions of imported pottery . . .'. In a thesis such self-justification may be necessary; in print it is not. This is no small matter, because £44.00 is a lot of money, and a shorter, cheaper, but no less useful volume would surely have resulted from rigorous editing of the initial thesis. Furthermore, these, and similar, passages slow the reader's progress along the central lines of research that run through this book, although persistence, and re-reading, is rewarded.

In summary, the approach Gutiérrez takes is to describe where Mediterranean pottery was made and what it looked like (Part One), where in Wessex it has been found and in what quantities (Part Two) and finally, why it arrived there and what it might have meant to those who used it (Part Three). Part One will prove invaluable to many ceramicists, although it is perhaps unsurprising to find Spain given the most detailed treatment (over 59 pages) in comparison with Portugal (five pages) and Italy (twelve pages). Her grip throughout is most sure when she is considering Spanish pottery. This is something she obviously knows a lot about, and her discussion of the various pottery-making centres and their products is invaluable. My only gripe here is that we