

medieval ceramics **Reviews**

Hugh Borill

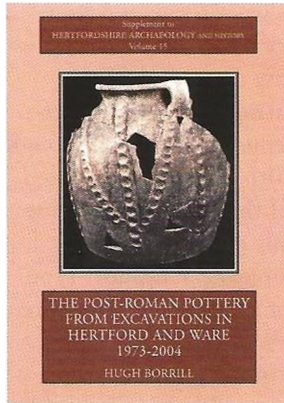
The post-Roman pottery from excavations in Hertford and Ware 1973–2004

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It is pleasing to finally see these important collections of post-Roman pottery from south-east Hertfordshire in print. The assemblages considered here not only provide an overview of the pottery used in Hertford and Ware between the 9th and 16th century but have been used to generate a catalogue and type

series for pottery of this date in the East Hertfordshire–Essex border region. The corpus is of inestimable value as one of the first large medieval urban stratified assemblages to be studied in the area.

The volume is divided into two main sections, followed by a short appendix. The first section deals with the Saxo-Norman, medieval and post-medieval pottery from excavations in Hertford between 1977 and 1980 (Hertford Central Sites). The second looks at the Saxon, Saxo-Norman and medieval pottery from Ware, excavated between 1973 and 1998, and Appendix 1 presents a summary of the pottery from a rescue excavation undertaken in Crib Street in Ware following the completion of the main report in 2004.

The two main sections follow a similar format with an introduction to the sites discussed, an outline of the method of study and a description and discussion of each industry represented, including fabric, colour, form, surface treatments and method of manufacture. This is then followed by an illustrated type series. For Hertford this is first presented by site and closed group and then by form and fabric. A small number of sites excluded from the type series are then catalogued and illustrated, including the glazed medieval pottery from Honey Lane and a couple of post-medieval groups from Honey Lane and the Museum car park. The pottery catalogue for Ware is organised by fabric and then by form.

The volume is clearly laid out and easy to access as a reference guide with concise and informative discussions of the main local industries. The nature and development of the Saxo-Norman and early medieval pottery sequence is particularly well characterised, as is the ubiquitous medieval greyware industry and associated form developments. The publication of a sizable urban assemblage of St Neots-type ware is good to see and includes a discussion of vessel size and

chronology. The 13th and 14th centuries are not as well represented for Hertford as few groups of this date were recovered and unfortunately very little material of post-medieval date is included.

There are, however, a number of problems with the volume that largely stem from the fact that much of the analysis and text was completed over 20 years ago. More worryingly, one only has to look at the bibliography to see that, even with the more recent additions and revisions made in the last decade, there has been little referral to key publications within the region that have taken place over the last 25 years. Moreover, although quite beyond the authors' control, it reflects the limited funding that was available for analysis at the time.

It is unfortunate, as the author points out, that the publication does not include the large corpus of pottery excavated from Millbridge in 1990, located in Hertford's northern *burh*. Indeed, substantial funding was provided by English Heritage to publish this site together with those discussed in this volume but despite the passing of nearly a decade this has not yet been achieved. It should be pointed out at this juncture that part of the work for which funding was provided by English Heritage, and in which this reviewer was involved for a time, was for the reappraisal of the typology created by Hugh in conjunction with the more recent material excavated from Millbridge.

As touched upon above the bulk of the analysis was completed on the Hertford Central Sites pottery under adverse conditions and before the minimum standards for studying post-Roman ceramics were published (MPRG 2001). Accordingly a number of problems were identified and it was decided the most practical way forward was to re-analyse the entire ceramic corpus from Hertford again in order to produce a comprehensive type series for the town (Sudds 2001). This is not the place to reiterate the finer details of why this decision was made but some of the more notable issues are discussed below, with additional comments on the more recent work undertaken on the Ware corpus.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the time that has elapsed between the analysis of the pottery from Hertford and Ware, the quantification of the latter assemblage is far more comprehensive with weight and estimated vessel equivalents recorded as standard, in addition to sherd count. With the Hertford type series very little quantification is presented and there are also some fundamental issues with the inaccuracy of the illustrations.

There is also a concern over nomenclature. This is not so much a problem with the main local industries, although the common names given are a little misleading, but a bigger issue with the regional finewares. At Hertford 'Glazed Gritty Wares', 'Sandwich fired Red Gritty Wares', 'Glazed Red Wares' and 'Buff Evenly-Textured Sandy Wares' are listed under glazed medieval pottery. Only in some cases these are equated to known

types in the discussion, namely late medieval Hertfordshire Glazed Wares and Surrey Whitewares. This is even more apparent with Ware, given the recovery of a larger corpus of 13th to 15th-century pottery. Here 'Glazed Sandy Wares', 'Fine Glazed Silty Wares' and 'Fine Brown Sandy Wares' are described amongst others. 'Essex Redwares' and 'Essex Glazed Sandy Redwares' are also present and discussed at some length but despite being analysed more recently no reference has been made to the key publications in this region by Cunningham or Cotter (1985; 2000). There also appears to be little consistency in nomenclature between the two sites with the possible Late Medieval Hertfordshire Glazed Wares being variously termed 'Glazed Gritty Wares' at Hertford and 'Glazed Sandy Ware' at Ware.

With the local coarsewares the 'Medieval Sandy Wares' are largely contemporary and technologically very similar to the 'early medieval wares', representing local variants of the early medieval sandy ware tradition seen across the region (Hurst 1961; Biddle 1964; Turner-Rugg 1995; Sudds forthcoming a). The 'early medieval wares' have a higher content of calcareous inclusions and appear to be more common early in the sequence, with the 'Medieval Sandy Wares' dating from the same period but becoming more significant as the 11th century progresses. Both, however, pre-date c. A.D. 1200 and should be termed early medieval. Finally, the South Hertfordshire greywares, a broadly recognised term for the ubiquitous and regionally important local greyware industry, are referred to as 'Hertfordshire Reduced Wares'. This might seem like hair-splitting but consistency amongst regional specialists facilitates comparison and contextualisation. As with the Essex redwares there is a failure to refer to important and relevant publications within the region, even retrospectively with the more recent revisions, leading to two further concerns regarding dating and affinities.

The dating suggested for the early medieval chalky and sandy coarsewares at Hertford is early and perhaps somewhat questionable. The 'Hertford Chalk Tempered Wares' were recovered from the earliest stratigraphic phases and are dated from the 10th to early 11th century, despite being paralleled to early medieval Chalky ware from St Albans and the City of London, dated from the late 11th to early 12th century (Turner-Rugg 1995, 46; Vince and Jenner 1991, 70). Other than being recovered from the earliest deposits it is not clear how this date was arrived at. Examples of the same fabric recovered from excavations at Dolphin Yard in Hertford were stratified with both early medieval sandy wares and South-Hertfordshire greywares and were consequently dated to the 11th to 12th century (Sudds, forthcoming a). These sherds were not considered to be residual, although with so few sherds it is difficult to be certain. Of course the author would have had no knowledge of these but clearly there is a need for larger groups and possibly some independent dating before it is possible to be so definitive (p.9).

A mid 10th century inception date has been put forward for both the 'Early Medieval Wares' and the 'Medieval Sandy Wares'. The former industry again appears to have been dated on stratigraphic grounds but the latter through association with the supposedly early 'Hertford Chalk Tempered Wares', St Neots-type ware, 10th-century Stamford wares and a Pingsdorf-type pitcher base recovered from Railway Street (p.10). Only six Stamford Ware vessels were recovered from Hertford, mostly of 11th century date, with the only possible 10th century vessel being recovered from a different site (p.7). The early dating of the Pingsdorf-type pitcher base is also rather tenuous. Indeed, although production began in the early 10th century and ceased sometime during the first half of the 13th century, due to a lack of typological work only general dating is possible (Keller 1995, 22-4). Moreover, Pingsdorf-type ware represents a very infrequent find in London before the early to mid 11th century (Vince and Jenner 1991, 102). On balance a later 11th century origin for the early sandy coarsewares seems more likely and would tie in with developments elsewhere in the region.

More recent work in the town would further suggest that the early medieval sandy wares were in production until the end of the 12th century, rather than terminating c. A.D. 1150/75. They occur alongside South-Hertfordshire greywares and a brooch pin dated to the second half of the 12th century (Sudds, forthcoming a). The dynamics of the transition from a dependence on the early medieval coarsewares to the South-Hertfordshire greywares is not clearly understood but there is perhaps not so much a hiatus between the two traditions as suggested (p.12), but a period of crossover and co-existence as the technologically superior product asserted its place in the market.

Finally, the apparent diversity in ceramic composition between the towns is worth mentioning, with Hertford supposedly looking westwards to the Hertfordshire hinterland and London for pottery and Ware eastwards to Essex and East Anglia. It is suggested that the overriding reason for this, surmounting any practical issues, is a strong rivalry between the two towns that promotes material diversification (p.84). Some differences are apparent but the situation is not so clear-cut. The picture is somewhat confused by the apparent economic decline in Hertford during the high and late medieval period, at a time when the regional glazed wares reached their zenith, and by the fact that a number of the regional wares remain unsourced. Essex redwares are also present in the Hertford corpus (p.47-8), and more recent excavations have identified both Mill Green-type ware and London-type wares (Sudds forthcoming a). Recent work at Ware has also identified London-type ware and Medieval Harlow ware in addition to a significant quantity of redware of the Essex/ East Anglian tradition (Sudds, forthcoming b). Surrey whitewares also occur in both towns. Local greywares still remain central to supply in Hertford and Ware but evidently the focus for glazed wares

is primarily to the south and east, with the location of both towns on the River Lea facilitating closer connections with Essex and London.

Unfortunately, the Hertford and Ware type series does not 'provide a yardstick for pottery studies of these periods in the East Herts-Essex border areas' (p.2) and the danger is that anyone new to ceramics may pick this up and assume it is the current state of knowledge. Whilst the analysis of the additional material from Hertford remains entirely beyond the authors' control, it is a shame that the opportunity to update the text with more recent research was not fully exploited. On balance, however, it is much better to see something in print and accessible, even if with some problems, than to languish unpublished in perpetuity. With this volume we have an important and up till now missing piece of the nations ceramic history published in detail for the first time and, as the author claims, it does indeed represent a framework for future work. Issues of illustration aside, the main value of this work is in the publication of closed groups and a type series of form by fabric for Hertford and Ware. If the dating is not relied upon to heavily, it forms a useful body of work and is a welcome addition to researchers involved in the study of pottery. Hugh Borrill is to be commended for his patience and perseverance in bringing this volume to fruition.

Berni Sudds

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Marta Caroscio

La maiolica in Toscana tra Medioevo e Rinascimento: il rapporto fra centri di produzione e di consumo nel periodo di transizione Tin Glazed Pottery in Tuscany from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance: The Relationship between production centres and settlements in the transition (1350–1600)

Contributi di Archelogia Medievale 4 Premio Ottone D'Assia e Riccardo Francovich

Edizioni All'Insegna del Giglio s.a.s, via della Fangosa, 38; 50032 Borgo S. Lorenzo (FI)
Price €28

The author of this work first became known to the reviewer and members of MPRG following her involvement in the Ceramic Production Centres in Europe project. Since then Marta has become a strong ally of the Group, particularly in a European context and especially with relevance to the European Archaeological Association (she won the EAA student prize in Cork in 2005). It is a pleasure to finally be able to review this book.

This publication is essentially based on research undertaken for her PhD, Marta focuses on the production of tin-glazed pottery in Tuscany from the late medieval to Early Modern Period. She uses a multi-disciplinary approach comparing archaeological finds with documentary and iconographic sources and sets out to try and understand how the pottery workshops functioned at various periods in time and what the costs of making various products were. Although written wholly in Italian there is a very good four page summary of the publication in English supplemented by a very full bibliography. The book opens with a section that considers methodologies of study of the subject that have been used in the past and discusses problems of chronology (a familiar story!). This section is complemented by a series of tables that show how the accepted dating of the various types of maiolica has changed over the years.

