

It is made clear that things that were important to the conduct of daily living in a mid-Saxon port should be revealed and understood. Lighting must have been important and it is good to see it discussed. In that sense the book is a triumph, because all the strands of evidence are woven together, by multiple authors, to produce a proper synthesis in a sure-footed search for meaning. Specific sections include: hearths and ovens; wells and water supply; horticulture; agricultural equipment; fish; drink; evidence for the processing, transport, storage and cooking of foodstuffs; smithing; antler working waste; woodworking tools; coinage; burial practice; clothing. There is plenty more too, covering most aspects of mid-Saxon life.

Pottery crops up throughout but it figures most prominently in the chapter entitled 'Trade and exchange', where regional and international trading networks are considered separately. The discussion of the pottery is centred mainly on characterising the fabrics that typify each period of the settlement in an attempt to establish their likely places of origin. The picture seems to be one of regional types being brought into the town from some distance away, or at least that pottery was not made within the town.

In terms of regional trade, Ipswich ware is an interesting, consistent presence, while there is new evidence to help clarify the international picture. ICPS analysis has shown, for instance, that what are known here as North French white wares are comparable with products from La Londe and Rouen, which are also quite separate from Rhenish types. As the authors note, there is still much work to be done and the problem facing all of us is the continuing lack of published comparative evidence from Ipswich and Quentovic, two similar port towns that were probably regular trading partners with Lundenwic. This work is therefore somewhat isolated as we await publications from those other sites but it does set the benchmark high. Even well-published sites such as Hamwic or Dorestad lack this sort of overview, while those that need much more work now have something to aspire to.

This is a model work of synthesis that shows how full use of the evidence can enable the construction of a detailed and thoughtful interpretation. It is surely no coincidence that a finds specialist is one of the principal authors, supported by co-authors with extensive artefactual and environmental expertise. This is how it should be, for many of us have, for some years, been arguing that finds are central to understanding people and their places, while the mud from which they are recovered is, on its own, insufficient to illuminate very many aspects of past lives. Even here, people are not explicitly referred to in the text and their presence is reflected in the discussions of the material evidence rather than brought out in terms of their actions, needs and aspirations. That, though, is outside the scope of

this monograph and as it stands, all the authors deserve high praise for producing such a fine consideration of all the evidence. The legacy of the late Alan Vince has been honoured in a work he would have not only have approved of but surely enjoyed.

Duncan Brown

Ben M Ford and Steve Teague
with Edward Bidulph, Alan Hardy and Lisa Brown
Winchester

A city in the making

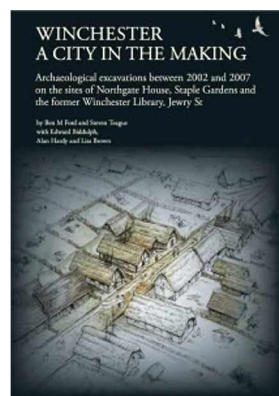
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Despite being one of the most important medieval cities in the country and having been subjected to decades of excavation, publication of archaeological sites in Winchester has been all too sparse, particularly in recent years. This is changing however, as Winchester Museum Service have undertaken to publish a number of

volumes on material excavated at suburban sites and the publication work of the Winchester Excavation Committee, led by Martin Biddle, is ongoing.

There has yet to be published a definite statement on medieval pottery from Winchester, however as part of the museum publication programme a volume is forthcoming. The volume under review here is somewhat exceptional therefore, in providing an integrated report on the stratigraphy and finds from large-scale excavations in the centre of Winchester, undertaken by Oxford Archaeology in 2002 and 2007. Although Iron Age and Roman levels were investigated, the majority of the evidence is of medieval (9th–14th century) date and the site itself is exceptional in an urban context, as, despite being in the centre of the town, the land functioned as a market garden in later periods, meaning that there was minimal disturbance to earlier deposits. In general terms the introduction to the book provides a useful and concise overview of archaeological research in Winchester.

The book then follows a conventional format, detailing the stratigraphic evidence for the Roman, late Saxon and Anglo-Norman period before a discussion

chapter. There are then a number of specialist finds and environmental summaries, with fuller reports being provided in a digital format. The stratigraphic and discussion chapters do suffer from a problem which is inherent within medieval urban archaeology – a focus on structural remains and urban topography at the expense of discussion and interpretation of the ‘stuff’ of medieval life. In contrast with integrated reports published by other contractors, the potential of finds is not met either in the presentation of stratigraphy or in the subsequent discussion. Pottery is presented as a (in this case fairly convincing) indicator of chronology, alongside scientific and numismatic evidence, however there is no discussion, for example, of the waste disposal practices through which these deposits were created (although middening is argued for on the basis of gnawed bone). The presence of madder stained pottery is taken as an indicator of textile dyeing, which is discussed in greater depth later in the report. If a focus on features can be forgiven in a summary of stratigraphy, the omission of detailed discussion and integration of finds and environmental evidence in the discussion chapter is more serious.

A discussion of the contribution of the findings to an understanding of Winchester’s topography is, of course, important, especially as the evidence suggests that the street plan pre-dates AD 890 and, in fact, dates from earlier in Alfred’s reign. There is, however, a detailed discussion of industrial activity and of particular interest to ceramicists is a discussion of madder stained pottery. Intriguingly, it appears that re-used cooking pots were being used in the dyeing of textiles, probably on a small scale basis. A general discussion of economic status and trade follows, in which pottery does receive some mention. However, diet is discussed only through the food remains, with no consideration of the vessels used to cook these foodstuffs.

It is established that through ceramic evidence little variation in social status can be identified, or that pottery is not a sensitive indicator of social status, something which will be of little surprise to the majority of readers. The authors do question however whether glazed Winchester Ware was a high status product as it was found at the majority of tenements, albeit in small quantities. An interesting correlation is observed between the presence of balances and imported pottery, which is taken to indicate the possible occurrence of traders. This discussion does seem somewhat unsatisfactory. We are left wondering about the experiences of daily life and greater integration of the various strands of evidence would prove illuminating.

The excavations produced a substantial assemblage (21,222 sherds) of post-Roman pottery, which is reported on by John Cotter. A sample of 50–60% was recorded in detail, with a particular focus on the late Saxon and Anglo-Norman periods. A summary is provided in print, with additional material being provided in a digital appendix. The printed summary is however of considerable use. Ceramic phasing in Winchester

is a key issue and one which Cotter deals with pragmatically. Ceramic phases have traditionally been termed in reference to a key characteristic ware which, in reality, is rare and often residual. Cotter therefore has adopted a number-based phasing system, which will be of considerable use to scholars working in the city going forward. An important contribution is the identification that late Saxon ‘organic-tempered’ wares are actually sandy wares with voids caused by the presence of selenite (gypsum) inclusions.

A brief outline of the fabric codes used (the Winchester Museum fabric system) is of use, as this has not been published previously (a complete list will be published in the volume on pottery from the suburbs; Holmes and Matthews forthcoming). Like phasing, this system is unnecessarily complex and Cotter shows further pragmatism in grouping these fabrics into 8 general groups based on their characteristics and date. This is a system which works well, particularly for the general discussion of pottery by phase and tenement which follows.

A discussion of the glazed wares does little to improve our understanding of their chronology, although Cotter does consider the circumstances of their development, chiefly in relation to greater prosperity. A comparison of the occurrence of small quantities of glazed wares at each tenement demonstrates some to have potentially been more affluent than others, the most convincing case being a tenement where ceramic evidence is integrated with faunal remains. A consideration of the other vessel forms across the site is a noble effort, but a general lack of formal variability coupled with low vessel counts has somewhat limited the conclusions which have been reached. One form picked out for particular focus is oil lamps, which are an unusual occurrence. These are particularly prevalent in one area of the site and it is suggested that they relate to the presence of a particular industry which required greater illumination, an argument furthered through a consideration of craft evidence from the excavations. The presentation of form as well as fabric quantification is useful however and will provide a valuable resource for comparisons across the city once other assemblages are published to a similarly high standard (indeed Cotter highlights this as a limiting factor in his discussion). Indeed, in his conclusions, Cotter identifies that the key contribution of this work is the presentation of a dataset and that what is required in the city is a programme of scientific analysis to better understand supply patterns, particularly in the late Saxon period, when ceramic types are fairly ubiquitous. The report is well illustrated with coloured digital drawings. Medieval ceramic building materials are not abundant on the site, but a useful printed summary is provided by Cynthia Poole.

In contrast to the printed summary, the digital pottery report stretches to a mammoth 208 pages. This includes brief fabric descriptions and detailed discussion of the occurrence of each fabric type, as well as a summary of the forms which occur in them. This is a valuable

resource and one that would never be published in a general site report. Therefore, the presence of a digital report must be seen as a positive step, almost allowing Cotter to produce a monograph on the pottery from the site. The remainder of the report duplicates that published in the printed report, with the addition of a discussion of the madder stained dyepots and a short characterisation of Winchester Ware by Alan Vince, adding to an increasing corpus of scientific data on late Saxon glazed wares. The text is followed by a series of data tables and graphs referenced in the text. One niggle is that these are only available in PDF format, meaning that the data will be difficult to extract for future scholars, however the benefits of its publication far outweigh this.

In summary, this report is a major contribution both to our understanding of the archaeology of Winchester and of its medieval pottery. It is unfortunate that the pottery (and other finds) are not as well incorporated in general discussion as they might have been. This complaint should not however be directly targeted at the authors of this monograph. This is a problem which is present in much medieval archaeology and will remain prevalent for as long as archaeological briefs and research agendas focus on the reconstruction of topography and the interpretation of structural remains on their own terms. It is down to finds specialists to push the interpretive value of their research and to demonstrate that urban archaeology is about more than buildings and roads, but about understanding the multiple experiences of life in medieval towns, which can only be fully understood through the integrated study of space and the things (both artefactual and environmental) which inhabited them.

The pottery report itself is a masterful presentation of data and the appendix in particular will be a valuable resource for specialists working in the city, particularly without any other definitive statement on the pottery being present. Whilst one gets the impression that the need to provide interpretation within the project design somewhat stretched the current potential of the evidence, Cotter's insights provide a basis for future research designs and crucially are backed up by the presence of a strong and accessible data set. As the first modern, integrated report on large scale medieval excavation in Winchester, one senses a missed opportunity to fully integrate the findings of finds and environmental specialists with the stratigraphic evidence. As stand alone pieces of work however the report is exemplary, providing a solid basis on which our understanding of medieval Winchester can only flourish.

Reference

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Ben Jervis

Bridget Ann Henisch

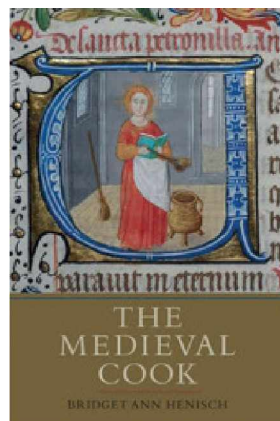
The medieval cook

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Food preparation and eating were an important part of medieval life, yet there is surprisingly little evidence that survives from the Middle Ages about cooks and their techniques. Many medieval writers simply assumed their readers already knew how to prepare certain dishes and considered details of everyday life too

mundane to record. To rectify this, Bridget Henisch has gathered together a range of sources, including manuscript illustrations, inventories and letters between husbands and wives, to reanimate the kitchens of both the humblest cottage and in the feasting halls of kings. The result is an engaging read about the organisation and production of food across social classes in northern Europe during the Middle Ages.

The role of food in society has changed little over the millennia; not just for sustenance, it has been one of the main components of hospitality and displays of wealth and power. In this volume, the author illustrates the complex role food can play with a host of paradoxes created by medieval society for consumption. The sin of gluttony, for example, was pitted against the desire of hosts to outdo one another in both food and entertainment. Feasts were planned despite church rules governing the consumption of meat and dairy products on fast days, with cooks creating clever alternative dishes. As people, cooks were both appreciated and reviled by society – occasionally they were portrayed as agents of the devil or as the character representations of the uncouth, yet sources also record instances of cooks being treated as family in wealthier households, sometimes receiving a pension and place to live in their old age in appreciation of their years of service.

In addition to examining the cooks themselves, *The Medieval Cook* also delves into misconceptions of food and the home. Contrary to what we might think today, even wealthy men were known to enjoy cooking from time to time, even passing on tips on food preparation and entertaining to their cooks or wives when they married. Even then, people understood the value of quality ingredients and suitable working conditions. Despite the reputation (due at least in part to films) of the Middle Ages as a dirty place, many recipes demanded clean tools, a clean counter and diligence in preparation. Additionally,