

Jigsaw Cambridgeshire Best Practice Users' Guide

Medieval Pottery Identification

Carole Fletcher



April 2013

The number of fabrics identified in Cambridgeshire assemblages has increased in the last few years. These will be fully described in the forthcoming publication *Production and Distribution of Medieval Pottery in Cambridgeshire* (Spoerry forthcoming). All photographs are copyright of OA East and the text is by Dr Paul Spoerry with interpretation by Carole Fletcher and copyright OA East.

1 LATE SAXON

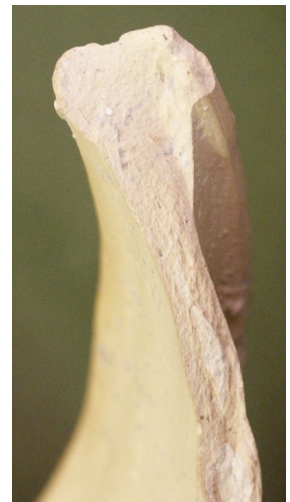
Thetford Ware (c.840-1150)

- A hard reduced grey fabric, mostly fine quartz sand tempered ware.
- Main centre of production was Thetford (THET), but also manufactured elsewhere including Grimston (GTHET). Recent excavations suggest it may also have been produced in Huntingdon (HUNTHET).
- Wheel-made jars, bowls, spouted bowls and other forms, including lamps. Only the large storage vessels are handmade.



Stamford Ware (c.875-1200)

- A hard fired, light firing fabric, off-white in colour, wheel-made and fired in kilns. The first appearance of glazed indigenously produced pottery since the Roman period. Stamford Ware is glazed from the late ninth century.
- It is produced at kilns in Stamford, Lincolnshire.
- Vessel forms include cooking pots, bowls, jars and spouted pitchers which later develop into jugs.



St Neots Type Ware (c.875-1100)

- A soft fired pottery with crushed shell temper, usually wheel thrown but some large vessels are hand built. The fabric is common in Cambridgeshire assemblages.
- Vessel types include jars, small rim sizes tend to be earlier, and inturned bowls. Rarer forms include lamps.



2 EARLY MEDIEVAL

Developed St Neots type ware (c.1050 to 1250)

Developing from St Neots, the shelly inclusions are less well-sorted and present in larger fragments, with the surfaces of the vessel not smoothed but left rough to the touch. Although some sherds are still dark there is much more pottery with orange-pink, light grey and buff surface colouration.

Huntingdonshire Early Medieval ware (c.1050-1200)

- Thin-walled vessels, hand made but wheel finished, with wheel made rims. Vessels are mostly oxidized, although colouration varies widely across the surface, commonly called fire clouding suggesting that simple clamp kilns were used.
- Vessel forms present include jars, both small and large, often with a thumb-piecrust rim. Spouted pitchers, including a multi-handled example are relatively common however, only a small number of bowls have also been recorded.



Early Medieval Essex Micaceous Sandy ware (c.1050-1225)

- A large number of early medieval sherds found in South Cambridgeshire fall within the broad range of variation encompassed by the Essex type series Fabric 13. The fabric is sandy, some relatively coarse and pimply to the touch, and micaceous, although the micaceous element of the fabric varies. The fabric tends to be mid-brown, grey when reduced.
- Like other early Medieval wares the vessels tend to be hand built and wheel finished.
- Forms present include jars. Bowls, spouted bowls and curfews.



3 HIGH MEDIEVAL

Huntingdonshire Fen Sandy ware (c.1175-1300)

- An oxidised sandy ware fabric, tempered with a fine to medium quartz sand, with rounded calcareous inclusions giving it a white speckled appearance. Brown surfaces sometimes tinged with red, orange or buff.
- Vessel forms include jars, some with thumbled rims are similar to the Huntingdonshire Early Medieval Ware from which this fabric develops. Jugs are also present, and low numbers of bowls. A small amount of curfew sherds have also been identified.



Colne Medieval ware (c.1200-1350)

- An oxidised fabric, normally red-brown colouration. Reduced examples are mid to dark grey. Contains fine quartz sand and variable quantities of calcareous inclusions.
- Vessel forms identified include jugs and bowls.



Medieval Ely Ware (c.1150-1350)

- Quartz-tempered, the fabric appears very grainy and the matrix has a high organic content, often exhibiting a black core, offset by the characteristic white calcareous inclusions. Surface colour, normally oxidised, is usually buff to brown, but is very variable.
- Vessels present include jugs, often green-glazed, with stabbed decorated handles, large flared bowls with stabbed rims or incised decoration and jars in various sizes useful for both storage and food preparation.



East Anglian Redwares (c.1200-1400)

A generic term that can include Colchester-type wares amongst its products. Relatively fine red, oxidised fabrics, principally used to manufacture jugs in 'highly decorated' styles, including much use of white slip painted designs, applied pellets and strips and green glaze.

Brill/Boarstall ware (c.1200-1500)

- Hard buff, orange, pale pink, wheel-made fabric. Mottled pale to dark glossy green exterior glaze, often with copper mottles.
- Vessel types include jugs, often with slashed or stabbed strap handles, jars and bowls.



Grimston ware (c.1250-1500)

- Dark grey sandy fabric, usually with grey surfaces, occasionally orange-red and buff surfaces. Plain and highly decorated jugs are produced, the former 13th century, the latter 14th century.
- Face jugs are highly decorated vessels and have painted and applied strips and scales with iron-rich slip. Glaze is thick, glossy and olive green (no copper colourant).



Lyveden-Stanion glazed ware (c.1100-1400)

- A coil-built, wheel-finished oolitic glazed ware produced at numerous kilns in the villages of Lyveden and Stanion in north-east Northants.
- Jugs, often with off-white slip stripes and/or stamped pads, with external dull olive-green glaze.
- The ware is easily recognised by ill-sorted moderate to dense limestone ooliths; The picture shows the small round holes left when the ooliths have been leached out.



Mill Green Fineware (c.1250-1400)

- Fine brick-red earthenware usually with a grey core, with a white slip coating and green glaze from kilns in and around Mill Green, Essex.
- The forms are mainly jugs.



4 LATE MEDIEVAL – EARLY POST-MEDIEVAL

Bourne 'D' ware (c.1430-1650)

A fine, smooth orange wheel-made fabric produced in Bourne, Lincolnshire.



FURTHER READING

General Reading

Draper, J.	2001	<i>Post-Medieval Pottery 1650-1800</i> . Shire Archaeology.
Gaimster, D.	1997	<i>German Stoneware 1200-1900</i> . British Museum Press.
Haslam, J.	1984	<i>Medieval Pottery</i> . Shire Archaeology.
Kennett, D.	1989	<i>Anglo-Saxon Pottery</i> . Shire Archaeology.
McCarthy, M. and Brooks, C.	1988	<i>Medieval Pottery in Britain AD 900-1600</i> . Leicester University Press. Leicester.

Local Studies

Jennings, S.	1981	<i>Eighteen Centuries of Pottery from Norwich: The Norwich Survey</i> . East Anglian Archaeology Report No. 13.
Kilmury, K.		<i>The Pottery Industry of Stamford, Lincs. c. AD 850-1250</i> . BAR British Series 84. Oxford.
Spoerry, P.	2008	<i>Ely Wares</i> . East Anglian Archaeology 122. CAM ARC. Cambridgeshire County Council.
Spoerry, P.	forthcoming	<i>The Production and Distribution of Medieval Pottery in Cambridgeshire</i> . East Anglian Archaeology.
Walker, H.	2012	<i>Heddingham Ware: a Medieval Pottery Industry in North Essex; its production and distribution</i> . East Anglian Archaeology 148. Essex County Council.

Medieval Pottery Research Group: www.medievalpottery.org.uk