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**East Oxford Archaeology Project Bartlemas Chapel Excavations (BC11)  
Medieval and post-medieval pottery report**

*John Cotter*

***Introduction***

A total of 1711 sherds of pottery weighing 8.672kg was recovered. These totals include 22 sherds of residual Roman pottery which comprise 1.3% of the entire assemblage (by sherd count). The post-Roman (medieval and post-medieval) pottery comprises 1689 sherds weighing 8.584g. Excluding the small Roman element, medieval pottery (up to c 1480) comprises a little over one quarter (26.4% ) of the assemblage by sherd count (or 28.5% by weight), and post-medieval pottery comprises nearly three-quarters (73.6%) of the of the assemblage (or 71.5% by weight). The pottery came from a total of 81 contexts - mostly layers, spreads and a few pits, graves and posthole fills. Many of these also produced pieces of clay tobacco pipe (c 1600-1900) and miscellaneous scraps of medieval and post-medieval roof tile, floor tile and 'Victorian' drainpipe.

The general condition of the entire pottery assemblage - it must be said - is very poor. The average sherd weight (including Roman) is only 5.1g which is remarkably low for an assemblage of this size and date-range (c 15-20g. would be normal in a stratified assemblage). Of the 1689 post-Roman sherds the medieval element has an average sherd weight of 5.5g and the post-medieval element just 4.9g. The latter figure is especially surprising as post-medieval wares (to c 1900+) are generally more robust and usually survive better than more fragile medieval vessel forms. The fairly large assemblage of mainly 17th-18th century clay tobacco pipes (345 pieces) is in equally poor condition. All of this suggests the bulk of the pottery assemblage has been redeposited - perhaps in a few cases several times over. This is only to be expected from an excavation in a medieval/post-medieval chapel graveyard later given over to agricultural use and levelled during the reinstatement of the churchyard. Most of the pottery - even 'Victorian' pottery - has the crushed and abraded look of spade- or plough-damaged pottery typical of 'manuring' scatters seen in cultivated fields or of pot sherds used as metalling for trackways. It is quite likely that most of the sizeable assemblage of later 18th-century and 'Victorian' pottery was never used on the site but dumped here as 'manuring', perhaps in loads of soil brought here from elsewhere in the vicinity, and some of the medieval and Roman pottery may likewise have arrived here. On the other hand it is highly likely that at least some of the medieval and earlier post-medieval pottery found on the site must have been used here as pottery of some sort would have been needed in the medieval hospital and later chapel/storage room here - but exactly how much of this is present cannot be determined due to the 'fog' created by later disturbance, continuous redeposition and addition.

Surviving vessel profiles are confined to just a few 'Victorian' saucers and plates and one or two post-medieval dish/bowl forms of common type. Even robust forms like 16th-17th century German stoneware 'Bellarmine' bottles survive only in a very fragmentary state. Two fresh sherds from the rim and base of a delicate Tudor Green ware lobed cup have somehow survived well enough to make a near-complete profile - probably because they came from a grave fill (2038). A single small medieval

(OXY) jar/cooking pot has also survived as a near-complete profile, again because it came from a grave fill (2051). These however are the exceptions as the remaining collection is generally very fragmentary and worn. This limits the amount of information that can be extracted from them, particularly with regard to vessel forms, whereas the redeposited and undiagnostic nature of much of the material limits its use as a reliable dating tool. In the case of some worn medieval sherds dating to within two or three centuries is the best that can be provided in the circumstances. These factors have determined the recording and reporting strategy adopted here and restricted the number of items suitable for illustration (see below).

Aside from the small collection of residual Roman sherds a range of pottery probably from the later 11th century through to the early 20th century is present at Bartlemas chapel. A small number of St Neot's-type ware (OXR, c 850-1100) and Cotswold-type ware (OXAC, c 1050-1250) sherds could potentially include pieces of Late Saxon date, but this cannot be proven, and given the broad date range the fabrics in question they could equally be late examples of their type - perhaps even as late as the foundation of Bartlemas Chapel in 1126? There is also the possibility that some of the earliest pottery on the site may have arrived in cartloads of soil brought from elsewhere in the town to level up and drain the marshy ground before construction. This appears to have happened during the construction of other religious houses in low-lying parts of Oxford (e.g. Rewley Abbey) although there is no definite evidence however that this also happened here. Equally, some of the earliest pottery - scant though it is - might derive from human activity on the site prior to the construction of the chapel.

Despite its location south-east of the town the range of fabrics and vessel forms present here is fairly typical of sites in central Oxford with the Late Saxon (or Saxo-Norman), medieval and post-medieval periods all well-represented. Ordinary domestic types of household pottery predominate. In this respect the Bartlemas assemblage provides a useful snapshot of the post-Roman ceramic composition to be found in the eastern suburbs, confirming, it would seem, that it is basically the same as the intramural city though lacking in anything out of the ordinary or remotely luxurious. Most of the types present here also occurred in a smaller assemblage excavated at Queen's College in 2008 (Cotter 2010), though in very different quantities. Other sites along the High Street with a comparable range of Late Saxon to post-medieval material include 113-119 High Street (Timby and Underwood-Keevill 2000). Other comparable medieval/post-medieval assemblages of note (but greater size and range) include those recently published from Merton College (Blinkhorn 2006) and the site of Rewley Abbey (Cotter 2007). The typologies of Late Saxon to early post-medieval wares - including all the types present from Bartlemas - are fully discussed in Mellor's detailed study of Oxfordshire pottery (Mellor 1994). Similarly, a wide range of post-medieval types up to the 19th century is covered in the St Ebbe's excavation report (Mellor and Oakley 1984). Given the availability of good published parallels for all these types in the city, coupled with the poor condition of the present assemblage, what follows is a simply a quantified table of the various fabrics present and a summary report focusing on its more significant or notable aspects.

## ***Methodology***

An intermediate level catalogue of pottery types was constructed (in Excel spreadsheet), following standard procedure, for the whole assemblage and spot-dates produced for each context. The catalogue includes, per context and per pottery fabric, quantification by sherd count and weight. In view of the poor condition of the assemblage no systematic quantification of vessel forms was attempted. In many cases however, particularly for the medieval pottery, details of vessel form, rim or handle form, decoration, condition, evidence of use, and any other features of note were recorded in a comments field. Dating provided by clay tobacco pipes was also presented alongside context spot-dates derived solely from pottery. A total of 411 records was generated. Full details remain in archive. As better parallels exist elsewhere, only a handful of more interesting items was illustrated.

## ***Pottery Fabrics***

Medieval pottery fabrics were recorded using the system of codes developed for the Oxfordshire County type series (Mellor 1994). Post-medieval pottery fabrics were recorded using the codes of the Museum of London (LAARC 2007) which can be applied to most post-medieval types in south-east England. One or two irregular group or 'bracket' codes have also been used to avoid over sub-division of the numerous 'Victorian' wares - particularly as these are in such poor condition. These include the code 'CHINA' which covers a range of closely related refined whitewares including Pearlware (PEAR) and transfer-printed (or plain) whitewares - such as the ubiquitous blue 'Willow Pattern' wares (mainly from c 1830: TPW, REFW). It also includes English porcelain, bone china and a few very minor types. Modern English stonewares with characteristics indicating a date after c 1820 have also been lumped together under the code 'MODS'. The types and quantities occurring at Bartlemas Chapel are summarised below in Table 1.

<b>Fabric</b>	<b>Common Name</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Sherds</b>	<b>Weight</b>
Roman	Roman pottery (residual)	43-410AD	22	88
OXR	St Neot's-type ware (SE Midlands)	850-1100	4	16
OXAC	Cotswold-type ware	1050-1250	9	42
OXY	Medieval Oxford ware	1075-1300	103	599
OXAQ	East Wilts ware (Newbury/Kennet valley B)	1150-1350	36	183
OXAG	Ashampstead-type ware (Berks)	1175-1400	2	2
OXAW	Early Brill ware (Bucks)	1175-1400	2	16
OXBB	Minety ware (Wilts)	1225-1525	6	18
OXAM	Brill/Boarstall ware (Bucks)	1225-1625	158	621
TUDG	Tudor Green ware (Surrey/Hants)	1375-1550	2	30
OXBC	Brill/Boarstall 'Tudor Green' copies	1375-1550	1	2
OXBX	Late med Brill ware (Bucks)	1400-1625	123	918
RAER	Raeren stoneware (Germany)	1475-1550	2	33
PMRE	Early post-med redwares	1480-1600	3	13

FREC	Frechen stoneware (Germany)	1525-1750	31	250
BORDG	Border ware, green glazed (Surrey/Hants)	1550-1700	4	11
BORDY	Border ware, yellow glazed (Surrey/Hants)	1550-1700	10	69
BORDB	Border ware, brown glazed (Surrey/Hants)	1600-1700	2	2
PMR	Post-medieval red earthenwares	1550-1900	178	1939
PMBL	Post-medieval black-glazed redwares	1580-1750	20	100
PMR FLP	Post-medieval redware flowerpots	1650-1900	57	317
TGW	English tin-glazed earthenware	1575-1825	10	38
WEST	Westerwald stoneware (Germany)	1590-1750	1	19
CHPO	Chinese porcelain	1600-1900	8	20
STCO	Staffs-type coarse earthenware	1650-1800	4	81
BRSL	Brill post-med slipware	1650-1800	10	61
LONS	London (salt-glazed) stoneware	1670-1850	22	165
ENGS	English stonewares (misc sources)	1670-1900	1	1
STMO	Staffs-type mottled brown glazed ware	1680-1800	5	27
STSL	Staffs-type combed slipware	1680-1900	1	15
NOTS	Nottingham stoneware	1700-1800	6	45
SWSG	Staffs white salt-glazed stoneware	1720-1780	8	16
STBL	Staffs fine blackware (Jackfield-type)	1740-1780	4	25
CREA	Creamware (Staffs/Yorks)	1760-1830	216	404
BBAS	Black basalt stoneware (Staffs)	1770-1900	5	13
CHINA	Misc transfer-printed whitewares and English porcelain etc	1780-1900	540	1647
YELL	Yellow ware (Staffs/Midlands)	1790-1900	45	274
MODS	Modern English stonewares (incl Bristol glazed)	1820-1900	50	552
<b>Totals</b>			<b>1711</b>	<b>8672</b>

*Table 1. Pottery types and quantities in roughly chronological order*

### *Site Distribution*

The 1,711 sherds of pottery are unequally distributed across the site. This however undoubtedly relates to the size and the depth of the three excavated trenches. Trench 2, to the west of the chapel, easily has the largest quantity of pottery - 77% of the site assemblage (1323 sherds, 5.948kg, with an average sherd weight 4.5g.). Trench 1, around the chapel has 17.4% (298 sherds, 2.397kg: average sherd weight 8g.). This relatively low amount - in spite of the fairly large size of Trench 1 - is probably due to the amount of masonry encountered around the base of the chapel. Trench 3, the smallest trench, lying to the south of the chapel, not surprisingly has only 5.2% of the assemblage (90 sherds, 0.327kg: average sherd weight 3.6g.). Trench 2, probably by virtue of its much greater share of the site assemblage, has some concentrations of material including 17 of the 22 Roman sherds from the site and all four of the St Neot's-type ware sherds (c 850-1100) as well as most of the Cotswold-type ware (OXAC) and Medieval Oxford ware (OXY) sherds. The larger average sherd weight of pottery from Trench 1 (8g.) might suggest that it has not been redeposited quite as

much as the pottery from the other trenches - although all the medieval Brill/Boarstall ware (OXAM) from Trench 1 appears to come from post-medieval contexts. It may be, however, that the stony ground around the chapel made it less attractive for later cultivation purposes.

### *Summary by period*

#### **Roman**

The 22 sherds of Roman pottery recovered are all quite small and mostly very worn and all residual in later contexts. These include examples of Oxfordshire colour coated ware and fine greywares (further details in catalogue). This is a much higher number of Roman sherds than would normally be encountered from a larger excavation in central Oxford (a Saxon foundation) and possibly reflects the fact that Bartlemas Chapel is closer to known Roman pottery production sites in south and east Oxford. These include kilns excavated at Churchill Hospital around a mile to the east, in the grounds of Oxford Spires Academy less than a mile to the SE, and other kilns at Cowley and Rose Hill (Paul Booth, pers. comm.).

#### **Saxon-Norman/early medieval (c 850-1225)**

Four small sherds of St Neot's-type ware (OXR, c 850-1100) are the earliest type of post-Roman pottery from the site. These probably represent three vessels including a jar rim (all residual in post-12th century contexts in Trench 2). There is unfortunately no way of ascertaining whether these are of pre- or post-conquest date. Similarly, there are nine small worn sherds of 'Cotswold'-type ware (or Early Medieval Oxford ware, OXAC). This has a broad dating in Oxfordshire and the Cotswolds area of c 875-1250 but in Oxford is more typical of the period c 1050-1250. The sherds here, probably all from jars/cooking pots, are probably all residual in their contexts.

Medieval Oxford ware (OXY, c 1075-1300) is the commonest early medieval fabric from the site (103 sherds), just as it is from sites in central Oxford. There is enough of it from the site to assume it was used here - although much of it is probably redeposited. Apart from the illustrated cooking pot (Fig. 00.1) the assemblage is very fragmentary. This light grey or cream wheel-thrown sandy ware is present both as unglazed jars/cooking pots (Fig. 00.1), a single wide bowl rim, and as several yellow-glazed pitchers. Many of the sagging-based cooking pot sherds show external sooting from use. Layer (2056), in Trench 2, produced only OXY sherds (and one OXAC) including tripod feet from two separate tripod pitchers and a jar/cooking pot rim. This context - datable c 1075-1250 - has been interpreted as part of the fill of a semi-sunken building overlying natural clay and appears to be the earliest stratified group of pottery from the site - although none of the six OXY sherds is very big. Glazed pitcher rims from other contexts include an example with typical rouletted decoration on the lip (2018). There is a modest assemblage of flint- and limestone-tempered East Wiltshire/Kennet Valley B ware (OXAQ, c 1150-1350), also in very poor condition. This mainly comprises cooking pots (including a couple of sherds with combed decoration) and possibly a bowl. These are more likely to be contemporary with the Brill/Boarstall ware glazed jugs (after c 1225) rather than much earlier. Other wares up to c 1225 have a very minor presence.

### **High medieval, late medieval and post-medieval (c 1225-1900)**

The high medieval pottery assemblage here (c 1225-1400) is dominated by products of the Brill/Boarstall ware industry (OXAM, 158 sherds). This is nearly always the commonest medieval glazed ware from excavations in the city and mainly occurs in the form of decorated and highly decorated green-glazed jugs with incised or applied coloured strip decoration which often bears rouletting. The later products of this industry (OXBX, c 1400-1625, 123 sherds) are not always easy to distinguish on the basis of fabric alone but tend to be much plainer, thicker-walled and less competently made with an increased output of heavier utilitarian forms such as bowls, storage jars and drinking jugs. These often have a minimal glaze or none at all. The assemblage of earlier (OXAM) jug forms from Bartlemas is very fragmentary but most of the main decorative types can be recognised as well as plainer types. No face jugs were present. Less common OXAM forms include sherds from two or three small slender bottles (possibly for oil or vinegar etc) and three jar/cooking pot rims (OXAW and OXAM). No characteristic Brill/Boarstall lamps were noted and, in general, nothing really out of the ordinary. The largest single context assemblage of OXAM is the 30 sherds (107g.) from Trench 1 (1004 Sector D). This has been interpreted as the backfill of the construction trench for the 14th-century chapel. Although the context is spot-dated to c 1650-1750 by a few small post-medieval sherds, the medieval Brill/Boarstall ware from the same context includes both fresh and worn sherds mainly from a single thinly-potted jug with 'metal copy'-style horizontal grooved cordons with an all-over external pale green glaze. This could well be of 13th/14th-century date and might therefore date from the 14th-century construction, although it must either be redeposited or the context perhaps disturbed by post-medieval activity?

The late medieval/early post-medieval Brill/Boarstall ware (OXBX) assemblage comprises a few bowls, jugs and jars including a side-handle from a small pipkin or skillet (saucepan or frying pan). More unusual pieces include a dish/bowl of c 1575-1640 with a rare piecrust-decorated rim (Fig. 00.3). Trench 3 produced an unusual spherical costrel or flask in an unglazed orange-buff fabric which appears to be an OXBX copy of imported Martincamp flasks from Normandy (c 1550-1700). The latter (from Contexts 3000, 3002 and 3003) occurred as 49 crushed sherds. It is not impossible the flask is actually a post-medieval Brill redware (PMR) rather than a late example of the Brill OXBX fabric - if so it might date as late as the 1640s and therefore perhaps from the Civil War occupation of Bartlemas Chapel? A single example of a Tudor Green ware (TUDG) lobed cup, probably of 15th- or early 16th-century date, was recovered from a grave fill in Trench 2 (Fig. 00.2). It is surprising that this delicate thin-walled vessel survived as two fairly large sherds. This would have been a relatively luxurious item in its day and one might speculate as to whether its survival here indicates that it was used as a grave good?

The earlier (17th/18th-century) post-medieval assemblage is dominated, as usual, by post-medieval red earthenwares (PMR, 178 sherds). By c 1625 these had replaced the lighter-coloured medieval Brill/Boarstall fabrics and forms in Oxford and become the dominant post-medieval ware tradition - as in most of south-east England. Much of this glazed redware was still produced at Brill (as late as c 1900) but it was also produced at many other regional centres. Most of the PMR assemblage here appears to be of late 17th- and 18th-century date and comprises a fragmentary collection of

bowls, jars, pipkins and cups/mugs. A few black-glazed drinking vessels or 'tygs' (PMBL) might be as early as the Civil War occupation of the site and perhaps derived from the ale house that stood nearby? Two fragments of imported Raeren stoneware mugs with frilled bases belong to an earlier period (RAER, c 1475-1550). In general the post-medieval assemblage is a remarkably fragmentary one. The thirty one sherds of German Frechen stoneware (FREC) come from a fairly high number of very crushed vessels - nearly all 'Bellarmine' bottles or jugs of the late 16th and 17th centuries. These include a vessel with part of a highly decorated heraldic medallion of c 1600-1630 (Fig. 00.4). Other wares present are all fairly typical of Oxford assemblages but none occurs in great quantities.

Late post-medieval pottery here (c 1780-1900) is dominated by the mass-produced refined tablewares of the Staffordshire and Midlands potteries (CREA, CHINA) - mainly plates, dishes, bowls and a few cups. Transfer-printed whitewares and related English porcelains (CHINA, mainly c 1830-1900) comprise the largest single fabric group from the Bartlemas excavations (540 sherds). Most of these were probably dumped on the later 19th/20th-century farmland and probably have little or nothing to do with the site. At least three dishes have partial inscriptions on their undersides suggesting they originated from the dinner-services of Oxford colleges. These include a small basal Creamware sherd with a black transfer-printed inscription in lower case lettering '[E]xeter [College]' (Context 3005), and another with only '---er' surviving (2018) - again perhaps for Exeter? A small sherd from the rim flange of a Pearlware dish/plate has a trace of a neat freehand inscription in blue on the underside which includes the letters '---rdu' or '---rdw--' (2003) - possibly part of a personal name or surname? This seems to have been something of a university tradition in the 18th-19th century as similarly marked dishes and bowls, with the names of owners and sometimes colleges, are known from several Oxford college sites and from domestic sites such as St Ebbe's - where several examples have been recovered (Mellor and Oakley 1984, Pl. 4). It is fair to assume that some of the 57 sherds of red terracotta flowerpot (PMR FLP), recovered were probably connected with the latest horticultural use of the site.

### **Illustration catalogue**

Fig. 00.1. Medieval Oxford ware (OXY). Rim and near-profile from a small jar/cooking pot. Rim diam c 146mm. (24%). Thickened flat-topped/internally bevelled rim. Pair of decorative horizontal grooves on shoulder just above the maximum girth which is slightly angled/carinated and sooted below from use as a cooking vessel. Dark grey sandy fabric with thin pinkish-brown film of discoloured ?limescale internally. Slightly pinkish-brown externally too. Clearly wheel-thrown. Fairly fresh condition but broken edges slightly burred. Context (2051). Trench 2, SF46. From layer associated with disturbed medieval graves in the south of Trench 2. Context spot-date c 1075-1300.

Fig. 00.2. Tudor Green ware (TUDG). Fresh rim and base from lobed cup together forming a near-profile. Rim diam c 150mm. (c 4% ). Complete narrow vertical strap handle with thumb impression at base to secure handle. Fine white fabric. Glossy mottled copper-green glaze all over internally and partly externally. Splayed pedestal base (diam c 58mm.). Context (2038). Trench 2. Fill of grave containing skeleton SK5. Context spot-date c 1380-1525.

Fig. 00.3. Late medieval Brill/Boarstall ware (OXBX). Dish/bowl rim with rare piecrust decoration. Diam c 340mm. Fine orange-pink fabric with clear brown internal glaze. Rim triangular in section with series of pinched or thumb impressions. Probably copying dishes in Surrey/Hampshire border whiteware (BORD), c 1575-1640 (Pearce 1992, fig. 4, figs.19.17 and 20.31). Context (2004). Trench 2. SF32. Residual in 19C layer. Worn.

Fig. 00.4. German Frechen stoneware (FREC). Two joining body sherds from 'Bellarmine' jug with part of heraldic medallion showing pointed base of shield with central vertical band or pole with diagonal ladder-like bands within (possibly wrapped-around it like a barber-surgeon's shop sign). Flanking the shield are very debased or stylised squiggles and spirals in place of heraldic beast supporters. So far the heraldry has not been paralleled (probably a German town or merchant?). Good quality brown salt glaze externally, pinkish internally. Date probably c 1600-1630? Context (2004). Trench 2. SF33. Residual in 19C layer. Max length of sherd 64mm. Fairly fresh.

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