

THE MEDIEVAL AND LATER  
POTTERY  
FABRIC SERIES

Monmouth Archaeology  
and  
Monmouth Archaeological Society

Revised in December 2011

## INTRODUCTION

The study of Medieval ceramics in Monmouth was revolutionised in September, 1986, with the discovery of a series of house floors which were rich in pottery dating from the establishment of the Norman town until the decline of the middle 14th century. The pottery assemblages recovered then and during subsequent rescue work and excavations in Monnow Street by the Monmouth Archaeological Society has provided the material for this summary and a key to the understanding of the ceramics of the area. This is, of course, a continuing study and the phases and interpretations offered will need constant revision and refinement as work continues. It is, however, believed that a discussion of the work to date would be useful for other researchers and will provide a framework for several forthcoming articles on archaeological work in Monmouth.

The system used is based on that developed by Dr. Alan Vince in his work on the Medieval pottery from Hereford and it is to Alan Vince that we are also indebted for other aspects of this study. Invaluable help has also been received from Dr. Paul Courtney, Jeremy Knight, John Lewis and Ron Shoesmith.

The pottery is divided into Groups A-D for the most important fabrics and E-G for less common non-local, foreign, and wares of unknown origin. The ceramic phases for Monmouth are mainly based on stratified sequences recovered from Monnow Street but are also linked with material from Hereford and elsewhere.

## THE FABRIC GROUPS

### Group A

#### *Local Wares.*

The Group A fabrics are those that contain inclusions originating in the area of Devonian Old Red Sandstones covering much of Gwent, Herefordshire and Gloucestershire west of the Severn. The fabrics usually contain quartz sand or sandstone but can also include certain limestones or other calcareous fragments; shell; clay pellets; iron ore, etc. Following the Monnow Street discoveries it is believed that pottery was being produced

by a regionally local industry shortly after the Norman Conquest and that production continued (probably with a break from the middle 14th century into the 15th century) in various forms until around 1700 AD when local clays were used mainly for brick and roof tile. There was also local clay pipe production using imported iron-free clay.

### Group B

#### *Malvern Wares*

Pottery containing Malvernian rock is found in Monmouth from the early 12th century until around the middle of the 17th century.

### Group C

#### *Bristol Area Wares*

Pottery from the Bristol area is first found in Monmouth after the middle of the 12th century and is common in the 13th century after which it occurs intermittently to the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Fourteenth century Bristol wares are particularly common in Trellech but seem to be less so in Monmouth.

Bristol/Staffordshire slipwares, iron glazed and other wares are common in the region especially during and after the 18th century.

### Group D

#### *Cotswold Wares*

D1 Limestone-tempered pottery matching kiln waste which has been found in Gloucester is of Anglo-Saxon date. A single rim sherd of a small cooking pot has been found in Monmouth.

Pottery containing oolitic limestone from the Vale of Gloucester (D2) is common in the earliest Norman contexts in Monmouth but was mostly replaced by locally produced wares by the middle of the 12th century. Another Norman Cotswold Ware is Fabric D5 while later wares are D3 from North Wiltshire and D4 from Gloucester.

### Group E

#### *Other Non-Local Wares*

### Group F

#### *Foreign Wares*

### Group G

#### *Wares of Unknown Origin*

## THE FABRIC SERIES

### GROUP A – *Local Wares*

A1 These sand-tempered cooking pots are reduced to a black colour and have a variety of rim forms. They are found in the earliest Norman contexts in Monnow Street and have stylistic and other links with the early Malvernian pottery industry.

A2 These cooking pots are also of Norman date. They are oxidised and tempered with occasional shell. The rims are distinctive, being everted, inturned and sometimes folded over but always smoothly rounded externally.

A3 Quartz sand and sandstone tempered successors to the A1 and A2 wares. Probably middle 12<sup>th</sup> to middle 14<sup>th</sup> century date. Only cooking pots. Various rim forms. Various micaceous. Hand-made to later 12th century and then often wheel thrown. A number of production sites are now known in Gwent. A large sealed group of cooking pots in this fabric has been recovered during 2002 at Monmouth Priory. The assemblage is believed to be dated to the second half of the 12th century and includes Malvernian 12th century tripod pitchers (Monmouth B2), some Ham Green Ware (C1) and a sherd of Hereford A2 glazed ware (E9). The local glazed wares are totally absent. Another large assemblage was found during rescue excavations on medieval iron forges at Goldwire Lane, Overmonnow. In this case the cooking pots were accompanied by the first local glazed ware (A5b) and is dated to the first half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century.

A4 Sand and concretionary limestone tempered. Wheelthrown reduced cooking pots. Late 13th century. Follows trade route, Gloucester (TF110) to at least Tretower along modern A40.

A5 Fine sanded or inclusion free fabric, often micaceous. Middle 13<sup>th</sup> to early 18<sup>th</sup> century. Pitchers/Jugs and other products in 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries. Roof furniture from around the middle of the 13th century. There is a wide variety of post-medieval wares. Distinctive series of decoration and decorative techniques from middle 13<sup>th</sup> century onwards. Provisional dates: Scratch or comb (early 13<sup>th</sup> cent.);

simple rouletting (early 13th cent.); complex rouletting (middle 13th cent.); models (later 13th cent.); applied decoration in various clay and clay mixes (late 13th to middle 14th cent.). Finger impressing and stabbing may occur at any period. The products of the kiln of the Malvernian tile kiln at Cadogan House, Monmouth, are in this fabric. It appears that it was these same potters who, in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, started the local post-medieval pottery industry which was at first urban (PM Group 1) but which later spread into the countryside (PM Group 2).

A5b This is the earliest locally made glazed pottery and is probably confined to the first half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century prior to the appearance of the finer fabric and more evolved decoration of A5. A5b is recognised by its' sand inclusions and rough surfaces. The only decoration is scratched or combed lines. The fabric is mostly found in jugs but there is a tripod pitcher base from Goldwire Lane School. The largest exclusive glazed assemblage of this fabric is one from the iron forges at Overmonnow.

A6 Wheel-thrown cooking pots with inturned rims and a glazed jug? Leached rounded calcareous inclusions with a few quartz grains and mudstones with very fine mica dusting. This fabric was first recognised from several sites in Grosmont but has now been identified at Hay-on-Wye, possibly from a source in the Golden Valley area. Probably of 13th century date.

A7

A8

A9 Probably made in the Forest of Dean. This ware is sand tempered but with a very high percentage of nodular iron ore. The only recorded sherds are single cooking pot examples from The Tanhouse, Newland and from Cadora Wood in the Wye Valley between Redbrook and St. Briavels.

A10 Cooking pots and small tripod pitchers. Late 12th / early 13th century. Distinctive but not common.

A11

A12 Sandstone tempered cooking pots only. Twelfth century. Everted rims.

A13 Sand and limestone tempered cooking pots. Hereford fabric A2. The only example

from Monmouth was found in a late 12<sup>th</sup> century context at Monmouth Priory in 2002.

#### GROUP B—*Malvern Wares*

B1 Cooking pots. 12<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> centuries

B2 12<sup>th</sup> century Tripod Pitchers

B3 Late 12<sup>th</sup>/early 13<sup>th</sup> century Tripod Pitchers

B4 Middle 14<sup>th</sup> to middle 17<sup>th</sup> century oxidised wares

B5 Light coloured late oxidised ware

#### GROUP C—*Bristol Wares*

C1 Ham Green Ware. Pitchers and jugs. Late 12<sup>th</sup> century to middle 13<sup>th</sup> century.

C1b Ham Green Cooking Pots. Less common but similar date range to C1. In Monmouth, mostly 12<sup>th</sup> century

C2 Bristol Redcliffe. Middle 13<sup>th</sup> century onwards. Varying fabrics. Increasingly common close to tidal reaches (ie Tintern & Trellech).

C3 Bristol? Spouted Pitcher. 11<sup>th</sup> century. One example from 22-24 Monnow Street.

C4 Bristol/Staffordshire slipwares, iron glazed and other wares are common in the region especially during and after the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

#### GROUP D—*Cotswold Wares*

D1 Anglo-Saxon cooking pottery made in Gloucester. A single cooking pot rim sherd of this ware was found by GGAT during an evaluation at the Almshouses site off St. James Square.

D2 Cotswold Ware. Norman : Late 11<sup>th</sup>/early 12<sup>th</sup> century cooking pots. Found in Monmouth Phase 1 contexts. Also one example of a hard fired, handled pitcher from 22-24 Monnow Street.

D3 Minety Ware (North Wiltshire). Arrives in late 12<sup>th</sup> century but most common in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Large tripod pitchers; rare cooking pots.

D4 Oolitic limestone and well rounded quartz tempered cooking pots probably made in Gloucester. (Gloucester TF43 : where it is thought to date from the late 11<sup>th</sup> to the early 13<sup>th</sup> century). Found at Monmouth Priory in a late 12<sup>th</sup> century context.

D5 A single sherd of a cooking pot base found in Agincourt Square, Monmouth, in 2006 is in a fabric new to Wales. Alan Vince suggests that it was made no nearer to Monmouth than the Cotswold Scarp and would be contemporary with Fabric D2 – Late 11<sup>th</sup>/early 12<sup>th</sup> century.

#### GROUP E—*Other Non-Local Wares*

E1 Worcester Ware wheelthrown Jugs. Most common in the 13<sup>th</sup> century

E1b Worcester Ware Cooking Pots. 13<sup>th</sup> century, not very common in Monmouth.

E2 Developed Stamford Ware. Rare. Later 12<sup>th</sup> century context at 71 Monnow St., Monmouth.

E3 Suspected Bath Fabric 'A' (Flint tempered) from 22-24 Monnow Street, Monmouth

E4 Post-medieval Wanstrow Ware. Found in Monmouth

E5 North Devon Gravel-Tempered Ware is common in Monmouth and in areas close to tidal reaches of southern Wales and along route to Brecon. Also found in Hay-on-Wye but rarer elsewhere inland (ie Hereford).

E5b North Devon Temper-Free Ware

E6 Post-medieval Donyatt Wares. Found in Monmouth.

E7 Siltstone Tempered Wares (?Shrops. / N. Herefordshire)

E8 Falfield Ware.

E9 This the Hereford A2 Ware. The only Monmouth record was a glazed sherd found in

a late 12th century context at Monmouth Priory in 2002.

E10 St. Neot's type ware; mostly fossil shell tempered (Hereford G2a – in a late 12<sup>th</sup>/early 13<sup>th</sup> century context). A single cooking pot rim sherd from Backhall Street, Caerleon.

E11 English tin-glazed earthenware; mostly 18<sup>th</sup> century.

E12

#### GROUP F—*Continental Wares*

##### *French Wares*

F1a Saintonge Ware

F1b Quartz-Tempered Saintonge Ware

F1c Oxidised Saintonge Ware. Very rare in Britain. Possible example from 61-63 Monnow Street

F1c Martincamp Flasks (Type 1)

F1d Martincamp Flasks (Type 2)

##### *Dutch Wares*

F2a North Netherlands Maiolica.

F2b South Netherlands Maiolica.

F2C Tin glazed earthenware.

##### *German Wares*

F3a Raeren Stoneware

F3b Cologne Stoneware

F3c Frechen Stoneware

F3d Westerwald Stoneware

##### *Spanish Wares*

F4a Colombian tin glazed. Early 15th century. A base sherd was found during Mr. Socket' excavation at St. James House, Monmouth in 1956.

F4b Post-medieval Amphora. 22-24 Monnow Street, Monmouth.

F4c Cadiz 'Goggin' Amphora. Very rare. One from Treowen, Wonastow which is only the second British example.

F4d Medieval Valencian Lustreware. Sherd A sherd was from Pitman's Court, Monmouth was incorrectly identified (see F6a).

##### *Oriental Wares*

F5a Oriental Porcelain

##### *Islamic Ware*

F6a Alkaline Glazed Ware. 15th century. A sherd from Pitman's Court, Monmouth was identified as this ware by Alan Vince. The sherd was previously thought to be medieval Valencian Lustreware

##### *Italian Wares*

F7a Montelupo tin-glazed wares, 16th century. Plate from Treowen, Wonastow, and a ?dish from Abergavenny

#### Group G—*Wares of unknown origin*

G1 West Midlands Early Medieval Ware (Chester Ware/Stafford ware). Saxon. A single rim sherd was found by GGAT during a trial excavation at 83-85 Monnow Street.

G2 From Llandenny, with Coal Measure pellets

#### FLOOR TILES

##### *Malvernian*

A very worn Malvern School Floor Tile in Malvern fabric B4 was found in plough soil at Troy Meadow, Monmouth.

##### *Monmouth Malvernian*

Floor Tiles using Malvern Moulds were made in the middle of the 15th century at Cadogan House, Monk Street, Monmouth. The fabric is finely sanded Monmouth Fabric A5. This was the first Malvernian floor tile kiln to be found outside Great Malvern. It was also producing

spurred ridge tiles in the Malvernian style; well formed bricks and some pottery. The ridge tiles and the pottery has the distinctive green speckled glazing (added copper). These tiles were the ones used in St. Mary's Priory Church.

#### *Wessex Style*

A floor of the 13<sup>th</sup> century 'Wessex' School tiles in a Monmouth borderland fabric, together with the floor of 'Monmouth' Malvern tiles, at St. Mary's Church, Monmouth, was destroyed in the late 19th century.

Amongst the kiln waste from a pottery kiln that was discovered at No. 43 Drybridge Street, Overmonnow, in 2002, was an overfired kiln damaged floor tile of the Wessex style. The fabric of this tile is the same as those from Monmouth Priory. The Wessex school is said to have been in production in the 13th century although the pottery from the kiln is thought to date to the early 14th century. If these datings are correct the tile, which is in a fabric compatible with the Drybridge kiln products, must somehow have been re-fired and damaged during the 14th century. However the fabric still suggests that there was a kiln producing Wessex style tiles at Monmouth. Wessex tiles at Tintern are of a different local fabric to the Drybridge and Monmouth Priory examples – presumably there was also kiln at Tintern.

#### *Droitwich*

A single piece of a Droitwich School floor tile was found during fieldwalking at Troy Meadow, Monmouth; identified by Alan Vince.

## ROOF FURNITURE

### *Early Roof Tile*

Three fragments of what may be unglazed roof tiles were found in a well-sealed 12th century context during mitigation excavations at Monmouth Priory in 2002. The pieces were sanded on the sides and the bottoms and were totally reduced throughout. The sherds are in a local fabric. 2008–these may not be roof tiles after all–investigations continuing.

Ridge tiles, finials and louvers are common in Monmouth and the surrounding villages from the 13<sup>th</sup> century onwards. Very ornate roof furniture such as 'Devil louvers' was being produced in Monmouth by the later 13<sup>th</sup> century.

## BRICKS

Moulded bricks were being produced in the 15th century Malvernian tile kiln at Cadogan House but in what quantity and for what purpose is not known.

In the 17th century bricklayers were brought to Monmouth from London as local builders did not know how to use them (info. Keith Kissack).

A thriving local brick industry continued into the 20th century and a kiln which held 30,000 bricks was for sale at Mayhill, Wyesham in ?1909.