

Ipswich Ware : A Preliminary Report

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Twelve sherds of Middle Saxon Ipswich ware were submitted for petrological examination. In the hand specimen the sherds show little variation in colour, and are usually a darkish grey throughout. Preliminary examination under the binocular microscope showed that all the sherds are sand tempered, containing quartz and quartzite. In the case of the samples from Rickingham and Vernon St., Ipswich, the temper protrudes through the surface of the ware, giving rise to the term 'pimply' Ipswich (Dunning, Hurst, Myers and Tischler, Med. Arch., 1959, 14).

Examination by thin section of the twelve sherds allowed a division into three distinct groups:

Group One

Ipswich: CarrSt. (IBM 1935-74A : No. 755626). Part of Ipswich ware waster (complete pot.) from 'kiln or kilns' on site of Co-op extension on south side of CarrSt. in 1935 (Hurst, Proc. Camb. Ant. Soc., 1957, fig. 1, No.5).

Ipswich: St. Helen's St. (IAS 36010003 : No. 755628). Part of complete Ipswich ware cooking-pot, unstratified.

Ipswich: Lower Brook St. (IAS 45020001 : No. 755629). Part of Ipswich ware sherd, unstratified.

London: Treasury, Whitehall (78-50 : No. 755922). Part of Ipswich ware sherd from floor of Saxon Hall dated c. A.D. 800-1000.

The predominant temper is made up of subangular quartz grains, with some quartzite, of a uniform size, average grain size about 0.15mm., set in an optically anisotropic clay matrix. Also present are moderate amounts of muscovite and flint, and small quantities of plagioclase, microcline and rutile.

Group Two

Ipswich: Cox Lane (IBM 961.5.D : No. 755627). Part of a large Ipswich ware waster sherd.

Ipswich: Vernon St. (IAS 74020090 : No. 755630). Ipswich ware sherd from Middle Saxon ditch.

Ipswich: Vernon St. (IAS 74020090 : No. 755631). Ipswich ware sherd from Middle Saxon ditch.

Rickingham, Suffolk (No. 755619) Ipswich ware sherd.

Rickingham, Suffolk (No. 755620) Ipswich ware sherd.

The predominant temper is again quartz, with a little quartzite, set in an optically anisotropic clay matrix. Unlike group one, the quartz grains are usually well rounded, the majority being below 0.05mm. in size. In addition, there are a significant number of large quartz grains ranging in size up to 1.3mm. which clearly represent an admixture

of coarse material to the matrix. All the samples are heavily charged with muscovite. Flint and plagioclase are present in small amounts.

### Group Three

Waltham Abbey, Essex (B.28.16 : No. 756261). Part of Ipswich ware sherd found in a wall foundation dated c. A.D. 800-1000.

Blythburgh, Suffolk (1965-28 TN/451756 : No. 755612). Part of Ipswich ware sherd.

Tattingstone, Suffolk (1970-26 TN/146377 : No. 755621). Part of Ipswich ware sherd.

Like the other two groups, quartz, with some quartzite, is the predominant temper, in an optically anisotropic clay matrix. However, the average grain size at about 0.1mm. tends to be larger than those in group one, excluding the large coarse additions, while at the same time smaller and more angular than those in group two, indicating a much finer-grained mix. Also present is a plentiful amount of muscovite, and small amounts of plagioclase and flint.

### Discussion

At the present time two kiln sites are known in Ipswich for the production of Ipswich ware: Carr St. (Hurst and West, Proc. Camb. Ant. Soc., 1957, 30) and Cox Lane (Smedley and Owles, Proc. Suff. Inst. Arch. 1963). Significantly, a waster from Carr St. falls into group one and a waster from Cox Lane falls into group two. It is likely, therefore, that the other sherds which make up these respective groups were also made at the above two centres. Thus the markedly 'pimply' Ipswich ware from Rickinghall in group two appears also to have been made in Ipswich (*ibid.*, 246); while the sherd from Treasury, Whitehall in group one points to the possibility of a wide distribution for Ipswich ware products from Ipswich.

Although group three does not include any vessel from Ipswich, given the rather ubiquitous nature of the inclusions in thin section, it is not possible at this stage to rule out entirely an origin in or around Ipswich for this group. All that can safely be said is that on present evidence the temper employed in these three vessels is not similar to known Ipswich ware vessels from Ipswich.