

7. MEDIEVAL POTTERY ASSEMBLAGE

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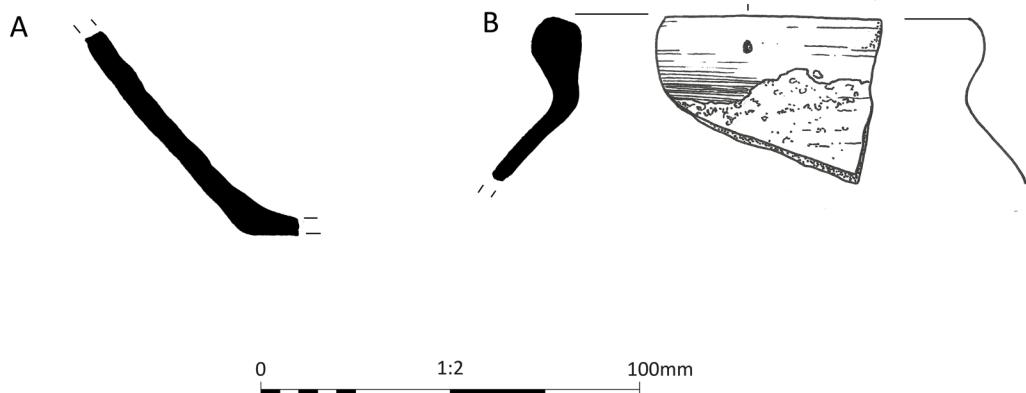
7.1 Description and discussion

The few sherds from the Grantown Road, Forres excavation (Illus 19) belong in the Scottish medieval Redware tradition and could date from the late 12th century but more likely the 13th century. It is now thought that most Scottish East Coast burghs north of the River Tay may have been producing medieval pottery using red firing clays and these early kiln sites may originally have been associated with monastic houses (Haggarty et al. 2011: 8, fig. 8). Recent archaeological research suggests that the Scottish indigenous Redware industry began production in the second quarter of the 13th century and that there were many fabric versions within the industry, although it was a fairly homogenous product. To date, the only archaeological evidence for medieval Redware production in the north-east of Scotland comes from the deserted medieval burgh of Rattray where archaeological excavations recovered a number of kilns, and wasters, and a range of forms in a reddish gritty fabric (Murray 1993). Two probable medieval kiln props in Peterhead Arbuthnot Museum originated from a pottery on the Auchleuchries estate in 1670, just a few miles north of Ellon. Interestingly, just to the north of Auchleuchries and on an adjoining estate is a 'Claypots Croft' which is on the 1st Edition Ordnance Survey map sheets.

As it is almost impossible to tell the kiln groups apart using low power magnification, substantial

amounts of red firing pottery from the Scottish North-East have now been the subject of a very successful ICP chemical sourcing project. Much of this work has been published and it includes data from Caithness, Dornoch, Tarbet, Spynie, Elgin, Rattray, and Aberdeen (Haggarty et al. 2011), while there is recent published data from Portmahomack (Hall 2016). Work on a number of new assemblages using ICP has been undertaken and these results are forthcoming. This includes sampling by both Derek Hall and the author, in association with Mike Hughes on pottery from various sites including Aberdeen, Cromarty, and Inverness. It is also now known that the pottery from the large Burgh of Aberdeen had a wider distribution, especially inland to sites such as the Bishop's Palace at Fetterne.

It is possible that Forres was also served by locally produced pottery, but presently we have no ICP data from the area and the few sherds from AOC's Grantown Road excavation suggest good quality wares were being produced on or near an area of Old Red Sandstone. The soils around Forres are principally derived from sandy glacial sediments laid down by glaciers flowing from the Great Glen and surrounding uplands. Interaction between these glaciers has left behind a complex and often thick sequence of highly permeable sediments, which obscure much of the underlying Devonian sandstone bedrock which stretches between Elgin and Inverness. There are also Devonian age outcrops of Upper, Middle, and Lower Old Red Sandstone around the Dornoch, Cromarty, and Beauly Firths so without chemical sourcing to fall back on, there is no way of identifying a source.



Illus 19 Medieval pottery: (A) V1 basal fragment (SF 22), Context (1011); (B) V3 (SF 25), Context (1064)

7.2 Catalogue

► Context (1011) Basal fill of Pit [1010]; SF 22.

V1 Nine base and body sherds all conjoin to form a large basal angle fragment from a Scottish Redware jug. Patches and traces of a splashed lead glaze on the upper portion of its exterior and runs on its base along with a circle showing that it was fired upside down. The well mixed brick red sandy fabric contains abundant very fine quartz grits and small red sandstone rock fragments along with copious mica flakes and specks (Illus 19A).

V2 One large Redware body sherd from the shoulder and lower neck of what looks like a globular jug. Presumably, the soil conditions were acidic as the exterior lead glaze has been badly pitted. The

well mixed brick red sandy fabric contains abundant very fine quartz grits and small red sandstone rock fragments along with copious mica flakes and specks (not illustrated).

► Context (1064); upper fill of Pit [1057]; SF 25.

V3 Two cooking pot rim sherds almost certainly from the same vessel. Splashed glazed on its exterior and traces of sooting below its folded and rounded rim. The well mixed brick red sandy fabric contains abundant very fine quartz grits and small red sandstone rock fragments along with copious gold and silver coloured mica flakes and specks. This fabric is just a little grittier than the jugs from Context (1011) (Illus 19B).