

The pottery, tile and clay pipe from Sigginstown Castle, Co. Wexford (16E0519)

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Introduction:

A total of 33 sherds of ceramic were presented for study. One of these was an undecorated and undiagnostic clay pipe stem (137:3). A further five sherds are of structural ceramics and are discussed below. Following identification and some reassembly of the 27 sherds of domestic pottery, this was reduced to 25 sherds of which three sherds are medieval in date.

Methodology:

The material was identified visually and the information is presented in Table 1 showing the quantity of sherds in each fabric type and the minimum number of vessels (MNV), an objective number based on the presence of rim/handle sherds in the assemblage. The more subjective minimum number of vessels represented (MVR) is also listed and is based on the numbers of diagnostic pieces such as differently shaped rims, quantity of handle etc. The most likely form of the vessels represented by the sherds and the known date of distribution of the fabric type are included in the table.

Following the discussion of the fabrics, the pottery recovered in each context is listed in chronological order with descriptions from the site matrix provided (Table 2). The quantity of sherds listed is based on the count post identification and reassembly and therefore the number listed in the site report will be reduced.

Fabric	Sherds	MNV	MVR	Form	Date
Leinster Cooking Ware	1	-	1	Cooking jar	L12th-M14th
Wexford-type ware	1	-	1	Jug	13th
Saintonge green glazed	1	-	1	Jug	13th-M14th
Total medieval	3	-	3		
North Devon gravel free	1	-	1	Bowl?	17th
North Devon gravel tempered	4	-	2	Pancheon, jug	17th
North Devon sgraffito	1	-	1	Plate	17th
Black glazed ware	4	-	2	Jar, bowl	18th-19th
Creamware	3	-	1	Plate	18th
Glazed red earthenware	4	-	2	Plate, bowl/chamberpot	18th-19th

GRE: slip decorated	2	-	2	Plates	18th-19th
Unglazed red earthenware	2	-	1	Flowerpot	19th
Transfer printed ware	1	-	1	Saucer	19th
Total post medieval	22	-	13		

Table 1: Pottery identification, Sigginstown Castle, Co. Wexford (16E0519).

Leinster Cooking Ware:

Leinster Cooking Ware was originally defined by Ragnall Ó Floinn in 1976 and subsequently published in 1988. Leinster Cooking Ware is the single most widespread medieval pottery type in Leinster (Ó Floinn 1988, 340). The ware is very distinctive, containing as it does visible silver coloured mica platelets and white quartz stones along with feldspar. The choice of clay, while appearing coarse and crude, is actually an excellent choice to withstand the contraction and expansion of temperature variations. The distinctive feature of Leinster Cooking Ware, apart from the micaceous clay denoting a volcanic/granitic source, is the method of construction. The vessels are hand built and place on a bed of sand to facilitate construction. The sand, embedded but not incorporated into the base of the vessel, leaves a very rough sand pitted surface on firing (Ó Floinn 1988). This technique is distinctively different from Souterrain ware and is not known in prehistoric wares (R.M. Cleary pers.comm.). The characteristic sand-gritted bases are present on all vessels, including the jugs and cisterns.

The sherds are from cooking jars with everted rims, ovoid bodies and a slightly sagging base. The minimum vessels represented are indicated by the various pieces of rim present. The difficulty with Leinster Cooking Ware rims is that some can be partially or intermittently pinched or thumbbed with other parts undecorated. A single body sherd (109:1) was recovered.

Wexford-type wares:

The designation of a ware with the suffix *-type* is standard practice in ceramic studies. This is used as an indication that fabrics are consistently found in a particular area although the production site has not yet been located (Blake & Davey 1983, 39-40).

A group of glazed wares are most likely to be locally made and are styled Wexford-type for convenience. The main fabric resembles Sweetman's Group B from Ferns Castle (1979, 228-9) and differs from other wares of the region such as Waterford-type (Gahan & McCutcheon 1997, 323-8). Some of the sherds in this fabric are very micaceous and others have a significant calcareous content, similar to some of the wares found at Kells Priory, Co. Kilkenny (McCutcheon 2007). It is very probable that the larger towns in Wexford such as Wexford town, New Ross and Enniscorthy at least would have had a local production site at an early stage following the Anglo-Norman invasion because of their proximity to the Bristol Channel area and the lack of indigenous pottery production. Dublin is recorded as having a street of potters (*vicus pottorum*) by 1190 AD (Brooks 1936, 22). In the case of Wexford, as

yet no medieval pottery kilns have been located in the urban areas primarily associated with the Anglo-Normans.

Wexford-type ware: These are wheel-thrown, with external glaze and a cleaner fabric than the coarsewares. The form is generally of a globular jug with a strap handle, a pulled or applied spout and a slightly sagging base sometimes decorated with thumbing or pinching. A single undiagnostic body sherd (115:2) was recovered.

Saintonge mottled green glazed:

The term Saintonge has been used as something of a catchall term in Irish ceramic studies. It is becoming increasingly apparent, however, that a number of production centres in the wider Bordeaux area shared similar clay and forms, thus making it difficult to distinguish on the basis of chemical analysis. It may be that certain vessels will be recognised by their individual decorative motifs as coming from a particular area.

The mainstay of the Saintonge wares are tall standard jugs with minimal decoration, flat splayed bases, strap handles and applied spouts. As with the majority of the French wares, the clay is off-white, micaceous and containing quartz and haematite. The application of a lead glaze containing copper filings leads to the mottled effect that constitutes the primary decoration. Vertically applied thumbed strips, usually only three or else lightly incised horizontal lines are the only other decoration. While the height and width of the jug varied at times, the size of the bases and rims is very standard so it is often impossible to be certain as to exact shape. A single sherd (116:1) from the unglazed base of a jug was recovered.

North Devon wares:

The production of these wares was centered on the towns of Bideford and Barnstaple in North Devon with a large-scale export trade in the 17th century to Ireland in particular. The pottery trade developed in Ireland from 1620 with peaks in the early 1680s and in 1699 (Grant 1983, 109). The same basic fabric and glazes are used but the addition of gravel temper and slip and sgraffito patterns enhances a wide variety of vessels.

North Devon gravel free: This is the basic fabric, clean pink and grey firing clay, with a clear lead glaze that appears green/brown on firing. Vessels are generally jugs, bowls, chamber pots, lids etc. A single sherd(137:5) was recovered, possibly representing a bowl.

North Devon gravel tempered: The basic fabric is strengthened with a fine water-rolled quartz gravel to assist in opening out the thicker bodies to allow for complete and consistent drying. Larger vessels for the kitchen and dairy were made in this fabric, but the lead glaze reacts in the same way as the North Devon gravel free wares. These tripod pots were made in imitation of metal pots but with a rod handle projecting at *c.*45° from the rim, probably to assist in steadying the pot on the fire. Four sherds were recovered, the largest of which (115:1) is the rim of a pancheon.

North Devon sgraffito: Decoration on these vessels consisted of a white slip with combing or scratching (sgraffito) leaving a yellow and brown finish. The single sherd (14:8) from this site is the base of a plate decorated with a four-pronged tool.

Creamware:

In c.1760, Josiah Wedgwood developed cream coloured earthenware with a transparent lead glaze to compete with the large quantities of porcelain imported from China. In fact, it was so successful that it went on to become a substitute for tin glazed earthenware and also affected porcelain production on the continent, being known variously as *faïence anglaise* or *terraglia* (Savage & Newman 1985, 88). Three sherds were recovered from a single context (C130:2-4), two of which are base fragments from a plate.

Black glazed ware:

Black glazed wares are most commonly found in Dublin and the east coast, originating from Lancashire and north Wales i.e. the so-called Buckley wares. Both black glazed and glazed red earthenwares (below) are the successors of the North Devon gravel tempered wares, large vessels used for the dairy, kitchen and toilet. Some tablewares such as cups and jugs are also made, but equally, roof-tiles are also made in these wares. In contrast, the industrial production of tablewares in Staffordshire supplanted the corresponding 17th century North Devon sgraffito wares.

Black glazing results from the addition of iron to lead glaze on the red earthenware fabrics. The fabric is often highly fired to a near stoneware purple, although other varieties have a white marbled appearance. The fabric of the black glazed wares made in Ireland appears to be a less highly fired red earthenware (Meenan 1997, 349). A portion of the base of a jar (10:7) with a diameter of *c.*350mm, contained a considerable quantity of limescale build-up, indicating possible use as a chamberpot. This vessel was unglazed on the exterior. A further body sherd (10:3) with some limescale most likely is part of this vessel also. The other two sherds (14:7 & 101:3) were glazed on both surfaces and were also both ribbed horizontally, although from different pots.

Glazed red earthenware:

Glazed red earthenware was the more commonly used dairy and kitchen ware in the Cork area as distinct from the black glazed wares (above). The fabric is generally sandy earthenware, usually oxidised buff to light orange through to brown. The clear lead glaze takes its colour from the fabric with variations due to firing conditions (Jennings 1981, 157). These are also known as brownwares and were made widely in England and Ireland in the later 17th and 18th centuries (Dunlevy 1988, 24-5). Three sherds were recovered, a large body sherd (16:5) from a bowl or chamberpot; a rim sherd (16:7) from a plate and a portion of a handle (122:1), possibly from the bowl or chamberpot already noted.

Two further sherds, both representing plates, were decorated with slip. The first (101:4) is the base of a press-moulded plate with trails of white slip appearing yellow beside the dark brown speckled with flecks of yellow. The second (101:4) is the rim of a plate, with the glaze almost entirely worn off. It is clear, however, that the rim was decorated with a wavy line of white clay, firing yellow. The final sherd (10:5) in this group is the rim of a possible bowl, with a yellow firing slip over the rim and present both inside and on the exterior.

Two sherds of unglazed red earthenware (16:4 & 6) were also recovered, most likely representing a flowerpot.

Transfer printed ware:

Wedgwood's development of creamware was further refined as pearlware, with a harder-fired clay and a blue rather than a green tinge in the collected glaze (Savage & Newman 1985,

216). This formed the basis for many decorative forms of the later 18th and 19th centuries such as shell-edged, mochoware and transfer printed wares. Commonly associated with the so-called 'Willow pattern' the variety of patterns is wide with landscapes, particularly English and Italianate very popular as well as many varieties of Chinese style or Chinoiserie. While the principal colour used is a deep blue, decoration also comes in red, grey, brown, purple, green and black. The decoration consists of the application of a coloured tissue paper design. Two sherds reassembled (9:1+2) is the rim of saucer. The edge is decorated with brown-gold paint while the end of the blue transfer pattern is visible to the left side of the sherd. The outer side is undecorated.

Structural ceramics:

Wall tile: Tin glazed earthenware was brought into Europe from the Near East, beginning in Italy in the 12th century and reaching the Netherlands in the late 15th century. Dutch delftware producers are known to have set up production in Norwich and London late 16th century (Draper 1984, 25). Many of the Dutch patterns were carried over into English tin glazed earthenware and it is often difficult to distinguish between English Dutch and the occasional Irish made piece.

This ware was used for table vessels but also for decorative wall, stove and furniture tiles and is widely recovered on Irish excavations. A single sherd (130:1) from the central portion of a tile was recovered. This shows a possible tree but without the distinctive corner motifs it is virtually impossible to assign a date.

Ridge tile: A single sherd (119:1) is most likely from a ridge tile because of the thickness (13.56mm). These were typically made in North Devon gravel tempered ware and were used in conjunction with glazed red earthenware roof tiles.

Roof tile: Three sherds in glazed red earthenware were recovered, the largest (119:3) is the edge of a roof tile (Th.9.77mm). Two further small sherds (116:2 & 119:2) are unglazed but certainly part of the same roof tile.

Context	Context description	Pottery
9	Test Pit 4	Transfer printed ware x1
10	Test pit 5	Black glazed ware x2; GRE: slip coated x1
14	Test pit 6	North Devon sgraffito x1; Black glazed ware x1
16	Test pit 6	Glazed red earthenware x2; Unglazed red earthenware x2
101	Trench 9	North Devon gravel tempered ware x1; Black glazed ware x1; GRE: slip decorated x1
109	Trench 3	Leinster Cooking Ware x1
115	Trench 5	Wexford-type ware x1; North Devon gravel tempered x1
116	Trench 6	Saintonge green glazed x1; Glazed red earthenware roof tile? x1
117	Trench 6	GRE: slip decorated x1
119	Trench 6	North Devon gravel tempered ridge tile x1; Glazed red earthenware roof tile x2
122	Trench 7	Glazed red earthenware x1
128	Trench 9	North Devon gravel tempered x1
130	Trench 11	Tin glazed earthenware wall tile x1; White earthenware x2
137	Trench 14	North Devon gravel free x1; North Devon gravel tempered x1; clay pipe stem x1

Table 2: Pottery identification by context, Sigginstown Castle, Co. Wexford (16E0519).

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