NIGEL W. JONES, *The Buckley Potteries: Recent Research and Excavation.* Oxford: Archaeopress, 2019. 136pp., illus. £25. ISBN 978-1-78969-222-8.

A growth in the demand for ceramic vessels from the mid-17th century onwards, stimulated by a decline in the popularity of pewter tableware and the high price of glass vessels, encouraged local potteries across Britain to produce a range of relatively cheap and durable earthenware for the table, food preparation and storage. The market for pottery continued to thrive during the 18th century, with a corresponding rise in the number of small-scale country potteries. These were often located in the rural hinterlands to expanding urban centres, with potting typically forming a part-time, seasonal activity. Conversely, several towns emerged as important production centres, where potting was a skilled, full-time occupation. The small town of Buckley in Flintshire is one such example, having been a focus for a pottery industry that served the north-east Wales and Chester region for at least 600 years.

The scale of Buckley's pottery industry during the Middle Ages is poorly understood, but a group of cottage potters had settled around Buckley Mountain by the early 17th century, where they were able to exploit the suite of natural resources required to produce earthenware – abundant deposits of boulder clay, coal to fire the kilns and fireclay for the provision of saggars, whilst the lead required for glazing was available on nearby Halkyn Mountain. This wealth of natural resources also stimulated the development of local collieries, brick and tile works, and a clay tobacco pipe industry. Easy access to the river Dee enabled the products from these industries to be exported by sea to markets in south Wales, the Isle of Man and Ireland, for instance, where significant quantities of Buckley pottery have been found during archaeological excavations.

Despite Buckley's rich industrial heritage, little survives in the modern townscape that testifies to the extent and importance of what were once major regional industries, and especially pottery manufacturing. The town's potteries have been the subject of research since the mid-1970s, but a resultant publication that describes in detail the range of vessel forms and fabrics of the local pottery has hitherto been wanting. This is a particular issue for archaeologists working in the region, often leading to material recovered from excavations being attributed erroneously to Buckley, especially the black-glazed utilitarian earthenware that was produced in great numbers.

In recognition of these shortcomings, Cadw funded the Clywd-Powys Archaeological Trust to carry out an assessment of Buckley's pottery industry, comprising documentary research and a synthesis of earlier studies, coupled with small-scale fieldwork carried out between 2013 and 2017 on targeted sites. The project culminated in the publication of this book by Nigel Jones, with contributions from some of the region's leading specialists in post-medieval ceramics. The net result is a key reference work for anyone with research interests in the post-medieval pottery industry. The book may also be of interest to the general reader, although the appeal may have been

enhanced by a consideration of the social aspects of Buckley's industries, which is not covered.

In his introduction, Nigel Jones provides a succinct overview of the Buckley potteries, some of their distinctive products and the extent of previous research. This includes a useful plan showing the distribution and periods of operation of the 31 separate potteries now known to have been established in Buckley between the mid-17th and early 20th centuries. This is followed by two short sections by Richard Hankinson and Bob Silvester that explain the geological factors and the pattern of land ownership on Buckley Mountain that were fundamental to the town's success as a regional centre for pottery. This is coupled with an account of the history and significance of the Buckley potteries by Peter Davey, who has been at the forefront of the region's pottery studies since the 1970s.

As may be anticipated from a volume released from the Archaeopress stable, a large proportion of the book is given over to presenting the results from archaeological investigations, including excavations of Lewis' Pottery and Taylor's Pottery, carried out by Earthworks Archaeology in 2000 in 2005 respectively, and summarised by Leigh Dodd. The excavation of Lewis' Pottery in particular uncovered significant remains of a kiln and ancillary buildings with a date range spanning the mid-18th to mid-19th centuries, together with an important assemblage of pottery that has enabled the range of vessels produced to be elucidated. An account of the large Brookhill Pottery is provided by Richard Hankinson, who summarises the extensive excavations carried out between 1974 and 1985, together with additional work undertaken by the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust in 2016. The fourth excavation to be discussed in detail concerns Price's Pottery, presented by Sophie Watson, who describes and illustrates the range of vessel types that were made from the early 18th century through to the 1870s.

The final section of the book contains a comprehensive gazetteer of the Buckley potteries, followed by an excellent bibliography and glossary, although the absence of a conclusion that draws together the salient points from the previous sections is apparent. A paucity of colour photographs of the types of pottery discussed is also a little disappointing, especially as there are several blank pages in the book that could perhaps have been given over to additional illustrations, which would also have contributed to an overall more 'polished finish' to the book. Some discussion beyond passing reference to the relationship with the local clay pipe, brick and tile industries would have been useful as a final observation, but these are minor criticisms of what is a most welcome and a long-awaited publication on the town's pottery industry.

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