



Early 18th century pottery from pre Lowland Clearance sites in Scotland.

by Tam Ward 2018.

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Tam Ward

Abstract

Several excavated sites in southern Scotland have produced assemblages of early 18th century red earthenware and other types of Staffordshire type slip ware pottery. The sites are known to have been abandoned before 1760 and furthermore much of the pottery is tightly dated by direct association with glass bottle assemblages.

Introduction

The author is the director of the Biggar Archaeology Group (BAG) which has been responsible for numerous excavations of pottery assemblages dating from pre-historic times to the 19th century. He is also the fieldwork co-ordinator of North Clyde Archaeological Society (NCAS), which in its infancy, is producing significant pottery collections from a variety of sites. This report concerns relatively rare archaeological pottery in Scotland; that from the first half of the 18th century.

Most of the pottery comes from secure archaeological contexts and is nearly all dateable by the inclusion of significant glass bottle assemblages which are tightly dated on stylistic shape and type (Murdoch 2006 & 2016), this was especially true of the Smithwood and Millbrae sites, however while the ages of the glass items are securely fixed to within a decade or so, the pottery is only positively dateable across the *first* half of the 18th century.

All of the assemblages had green and salt glaze pottery included, which in the case of the BAG sites certainly predated the pottery discussed here, while that at Millbrae (NCAS) may be contemporary with the earliest slip wares from there.

The sites by BAG are reported on www.biggararchaeology.org.uk and those by NCAS on www.spanglefish.com/northclydearchaeologicalsociety.com. This report concerns only the 18th C pottery, which has never been ‘expertly’ examined and reported, the opinions expressed here must therefore be taken as ‘non-specialist’.

The sites

The BAG sites are all pre Lowland Clearance sites (Ward 2012/1) and include the only examples of excavated bastle houses in Scotland (see Ward refs below), and they are also uniquely the only archaeological evidence for the less well known Lowland Clearances in Scotland. The NCAS site is an abandoned early 19th century double cottage but which also had an earlier settlement as shown by a 17th/18th century midden/s (McIntyre & Ward 2016). The sites where such pottery and glass was found are listed below; all by BAG excepting the last which is by NCAS:

Glenochar bastle and fermtoun.	Clydesdale.	NS 946 139.
Smithwood bastle and fermtoun.	Clydesdale.	NS 959 093.
Wintercleuch bastle.	Clydesdale.	NS 980 114.
Chapelgill deserted settlement.	Peeblesshire.	NT 081 301.
Logan deserted settlement.	Peeblesshire.	NT 1085 2958.
Millbrae Cottages.	Argyll.	NS 25018 81654.

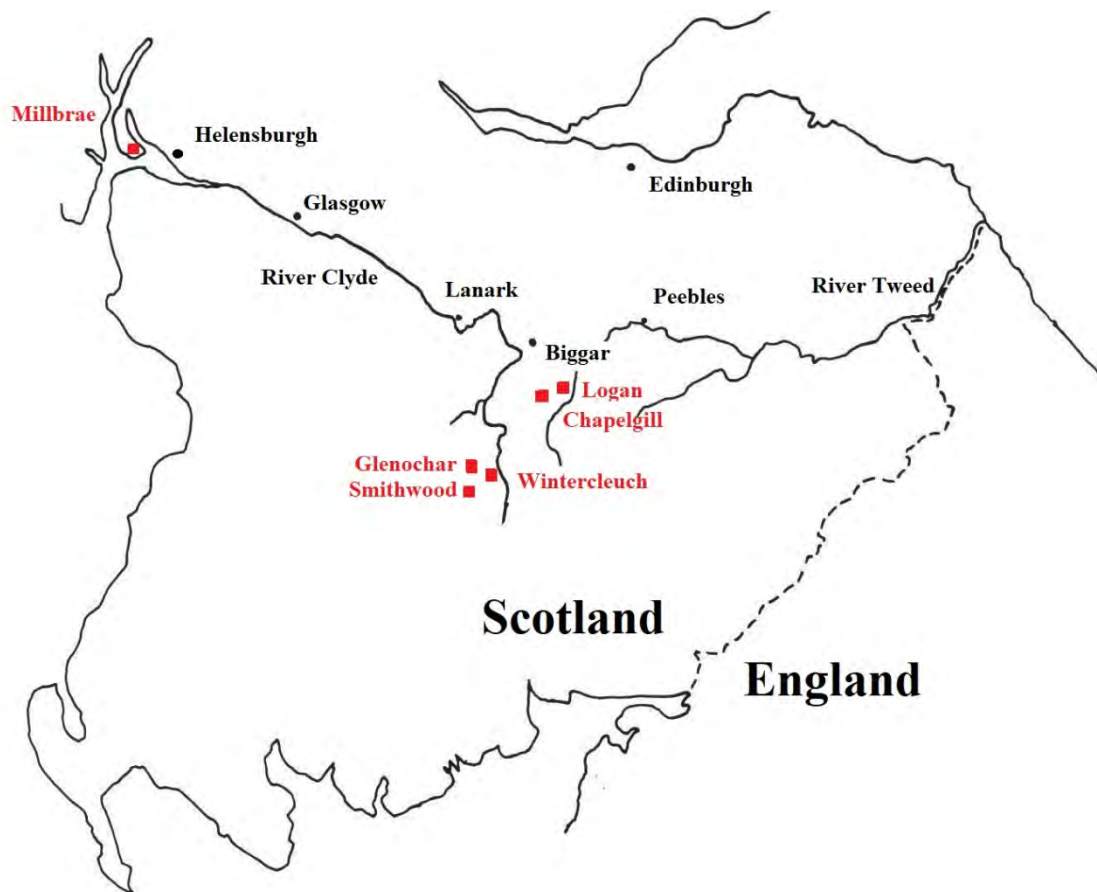


Fig 1. Showing sites given in the text.

The pottery



Perhaps the single major problem with these assemblages is the lack of comparable material from archaeological excavations in Scotland. Experts on such material also seem to be ‘thin on the ground’, nevertheless the collections by BAG and NCAS surely have a lot to be learned from, given their quantities and associations on sites. Unfortunately, neither voluntary group have ‘in house’ expertise on the subject, the author is not competent to express opinion as would meet academic criteria.

Therefore, this report will rely upon illustration of the sherds to demonstrate aspects such as colour, fabric, shape and slip designs to make a meaningful presentation. It is hoped that the report will be informative enough to attract the attention of more knowledgeable pottery enthusiasts.

Glenochar.

The Glenochar pottery is mostly coarse wares such as green and salt glaze and are likely to be 17th century in date. A significant number of later slip ware types and brown glazes are represented in the overall assemblage, but unfortunately much of the material had been dispersed from the site leaving only small sherds, nevertheless a large collection of early 18th

century bottle glass was recovered here. The sherds illustrated (Pl 1) are part of a buff fabric beaker? with fine slip trail in zones.

 <p>GO.P.452</p> <p>GO.P.452a</p> <p>0 3cm</p>	 <p>30mm SM.P.67</p>
<p>Pl 1. Glenochar. GO.P.452 & 452a.</p>	<p>Pl 2. Smithwood. SM.P.67.</p>

Smithwood. Plates 2 – 11.

Much of the pottery from Smithwood was found in a midden against the bastle wall, presumably having been ejected from an upper floor window at that point. Here the pottery and bottle glass have the best associations indicating the last phase of occupation of the house, it is likely that material from earlier middens there would have been spread on nearby cultivation areas as fertiliser. The fresh breaks in much of the pottery indicated it had not travelled about the site and lay much as it was discarded from the building. Because of the quality and size of some of the sherds it was possible to reconstruct some vessels on the Photoshop computer programme to show their likely original appearance.



Pl 3. Smithwood. SM.P.71



Pl 4. SM.P.71 – reconstruction.



Pl 5. Smithwood. SM.P.72



Pl 6. SM.P.72 reconstruction.



Pl 7. Smithwood. SM.P.90



Pl 8. SM.P.90 reconstruction.

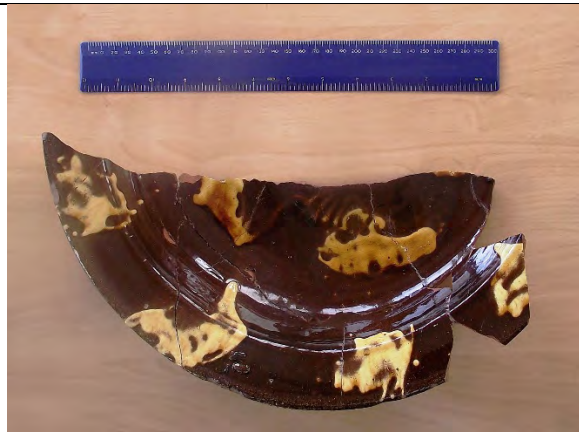


Wintercleuch.

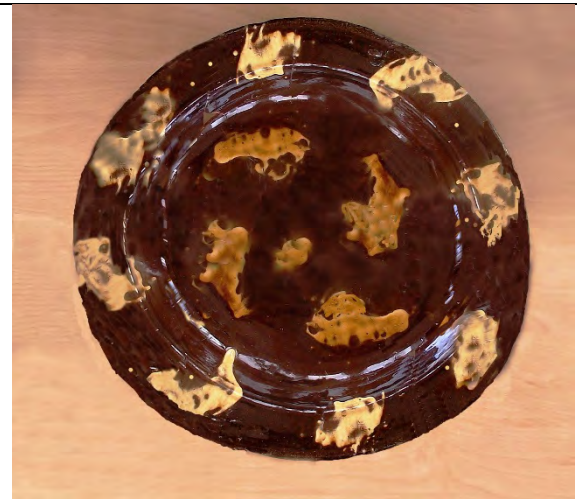
Wintercleuch bastle had much less 18th century pottery than other sites. The sherd of the slip ware plate (Pl 12) does show such pottery existed there.

Chapelgill.

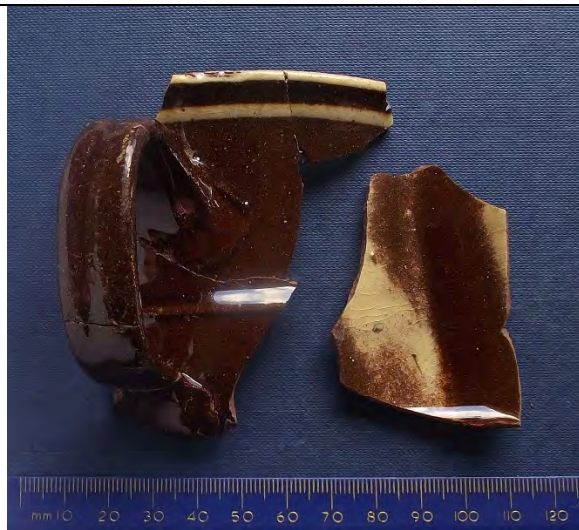
Chapelgill was a deserted settlement which produced a large assemblage of glass bottle sherds ranging from c1700, however, parts of the site were occupied in the 19th century and finds of pottery and glass from that period were also found. The earlier pottery shows occupation from 17th to mid-18th centuries.



Pl 13. Chapelgill. CG.Ce.25



Pl 14. CG.Ce.25 reconstruction



Pl 15. Chapelgill. CG.Ce.26



Pl 16. Logan. L.Ce.100



Pl 17. Logan. L.Ce.62
Logan.

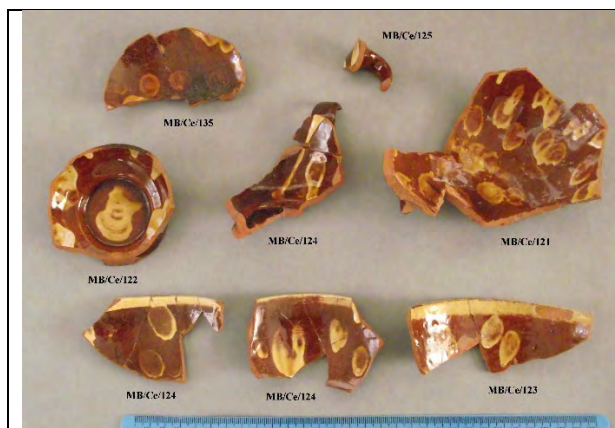


Pl 18. L.Ce.62 reconstruction

Logan was a deserted settlement with occupation of the 17th – mid 18th centuries only. 19th century pottery resulted from the construction of the nearby Talla pipeline and was not associated with the settlement of the site.

Millbrae.

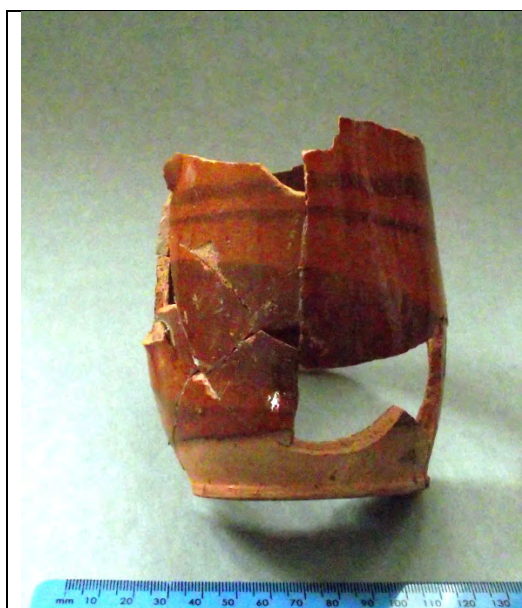
Millbrae Cottages were occupied during the first half of the 19th century as attested by the finds including a large assemblage of pottery of that period. However, documentary evidence shows the site occupied back to 1752 but nothing of an archaeological nature from the late 18th century was found, including building evidence. A discrete nearby midden of course green glaze pottery was overlain with Staffordshire type red earthen ware with slip decoration, clearly of 18th century date. Debate could exist that this pottery is evidence of the second half of the 18th century and corroborating the historical records, however the pottery was directly associated with a large number of *early* 18th century bottle glass with one example of bottle neck possibly dating to the 17th century (Pl 26). No glass of the second half of the 18th century was found in the deposit, or for that matter, anywhere else on the site. The conclusion drawn by the author is that the slipware pottery and glass found together date to the first half of the 18th century on the basis of the glass typology (Murdoch 2016, *ibid*).



Pl 19. Millbrae. Slipware examples.



Pl 20. Millbrae. Slipware examples.



Pl 21. Millbrae. MB.Ce 120



Pl 22. Millbrae. MB.Ce.119



Pl 25. Millbrae MB.Ce 118 interior.



Pl 26. Millbrae bottle examples. Left late 17th C? others = early 18th C onion bottle necks.

Discussion

It is fortuitous that both types of finds; glass and pottery have been found together on several sites, since the pottery cannot as yet be as accurately dated as the bottle glass. The overwhelming evidence of the BAG sites is that they were abandoned by circa 1760 giving credence to the pottery being early 18th century. The fact that the Millbrae pottery, not only being associated with early 18th century glass, but was also found beside green glaze pottery more likely to be 17th century in date, helps with the authors interpretation of age as being very early 18th century.

Much of the pottery (e.g. Pl's 19 & 20) has clear affinity in appearance with that derived from excavations at Morrison's Haven, Prestongrange (Cressay *et al* 2012). However, at Morrison's Haven the pottery has been attributed a *late* 18th century date. Most of the current research on the potteries in the Prestongrange area show that they began around 1750 and later (e.g. Shirlaw 1998 & Bonnar 2000). The present writer therefore wonders if the styles may have a longer history, pre-dating Morrison's Haven and post-dating the sites given above, in effect being produced throughout the 18th century.

In the discussion of Morrison's Haven pottery, G Haggarty describes the pottery there as "the two assemblages of late 18th century locally made pottery which are as yet unparalleled anywhere in Scotland --", is surely now out of date in light of the above assemblages.

This report is not meant to be controversial other than to move forward a discussion of the date of the pottery in question, and perhaps that from other places; e.g. Cressay *et al* 2012.

While the place of manufacture of both the bottles (for the most part as some may be French) and the pottery from the BAG/NCAS sites is unknown, it seems likely that a Scottish source is probable for most. Scientific analyses of the pottery could tie it to known potteries such as those on the east coast.

As stated above neither voluntary group have the in-house expertise or resources for scientific analyses and dating of their pottery, but it can be made available to anyone who expresses an interest in it.

The work of BAG and NCAS in this respect provides a platform from which better-quality research can spring, the author will be happy to enter discussions with others who may have an interest in the subject.

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