

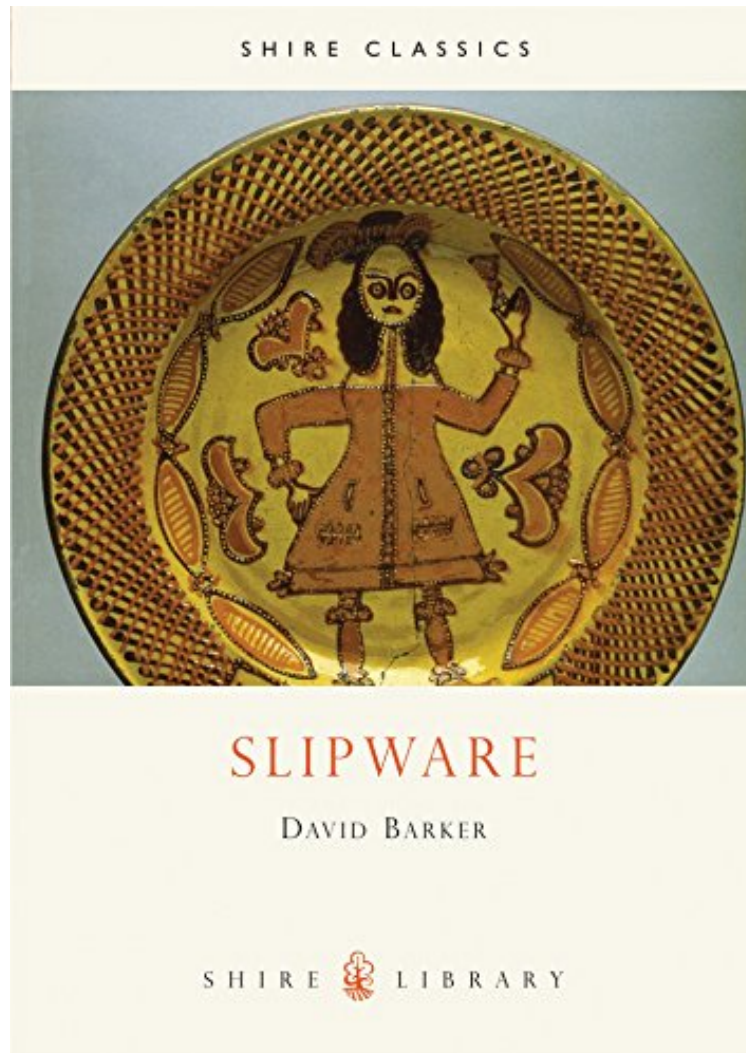
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David Barker

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Slipware (Shire Library)

David Barker : Slipware (Shire Library) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Slipware (Shire Library):

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A good basic introduction, but it really needs more color...By ewomackThis tiny book, barely over 30 pages, gives a good basic overview of English slipware. From its migration to England from Holland and Germany in the 16th century, to its arguable peak in Staffordshire in the 17th Century, to its 19th century decline in the industrial era and eventual revitalization in response to industrialization in the 20th century, this book covers it all. An introductory section even briefly describes the different methods of applying slipware such as trailing, feathering, joggling and sgraffito. That many historical potters unwittingly used easily inhaled and poisonous powdered lead glazes will probably cause shudders in modern readers.The height of slipware seemed to fall in the 17th century when even the not so well to do likely purchased slipware pieces for decoration or

for use on special occasions. Many pieces are elaborate for their time and emanate an addictive, fun folk-art appeal.

Some even included witticisms, such as "The best is not too good for you," which may make such pieces the social ancestors of today's mass-produced "joke mugs." The rise of that same mass production in the 18th century rendered handmade slipware less profitable. But a few centuries later it also stimulated the curiosity of potters such as Bernard

Leach in recreating pre-industrial techniques, which helped spur the modern art pottery movement that still flourishes. Staffordshire produced some of the most popular slipware with names such as Thomas Toft, Ralph Toft, Ralph Simpson, William Taylor and others emblazoned on pottery in prominent thick slip. These expressive, often cartoonish or whimsical pieces have an ineffably rustic yet sophisticated quality that remains intriguing even today. Internet auctions reveal that original Staffordshire slipware can fetch prices in the tens to the hundreds of thousands of dollars. The book includes about five pages worth of discussion on this topic and features a Ralph Toft from 1677 on the cover, probably picturing a cavalier. Many Staffordshire-style pieces date from the time of Charles II and may reflect the spirit of the times following the dissolution of the Puritanical Commonwealth. Though "Slipware" provides a good introduction to its subject, it sadly contains only black and white pictures, with the single exception of the cover photo. This obviously obscures the vibrancy of these pieces, but luckily a quick internet image search will reveal many of these same pieces in their full hue. That and the brevity of the narration make this a book most appropriate for the largely inexperienced. Those already versed in English slipware may not take on much new knowledge.

Nonetheless, for the curious newcomer it provides a more than apt appetite whetting for this fascinating topic.

Slipware has been one of the most popular types of pottery in Britain since its introduction over four centuries ago. By the seventeenth century the decoration of pottery with slip, or clay mixed to a creamy consistency, had become widespread and the technique was perfected by the potters of England and Wales. Although confined largely to the lower end of the social spectrum, their simple but lively decoration, together with their relatively low price, guaranteed their place amongst the domestic wares of families for almost three centuries. This book is the perfect introduction to the variety of slipware designs in England and Wales, explaining the industry by which it is produced, and highlighting some of the most important centers of production in the country.

About the Author David Barker is Keeper of Archaeology at the City Museum and Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent, which houses one of the world's greatest collections of ceramics. He specialises in the archaeological study of Staffordshire ceramics and is responsible for a large collection of excavated pottery from Stoke-on-Trent. He has published many papers and reports on the subject, together with the critically acclaimed book *William Greatbatch - a Staffordshire Potter*.