

Assessment of the Pottery from Blakeney, Norfolk (37793 CLY)

Alan Vince and Jane Young

Excavations at Blakeney, Norfolk, undertaken by Lindsey Archaeological Services PPL, revealed that the standing ruin situated near the mouth of the river Glaven, to the south of Blakeney spit, known from cartographic evidence from the late 16th century onwards, was preceded by settlement associated with Iron Age/Roman and medieval pottery. The standing structure was probably constructed in the late medieval or early post-medieval period (Structure 1, S1) and after a succession of flood deposits had been laid down its ruins were rebuilt (Structure 2, S2), incorporating some of the original structure. Structure 2 subsequently was abandoned, possibly after storm damage, and its ruins were left, being disturbed only by robbing of the structure, rabbit burrows and the development of topsoil. A provisional phasing of the site identified thirteen phases or horizons (A to M, Table 1).

The assessment of the ceramic building material suggests that S1 had a pantile roof for which a 16th-century date is likely and that these tiles were reused on S2, alongside slate.

Table 1

Phase	Description	Date
A	Topsoil	Late 17 th /18 th and later
B	Rabbit burrows/pit	No finds later than the late 16 th century
C	slate/midden	Late 16 th century or later
D	Collapse of S2	Late 17 th century clay pipes, pottery mid/late 16 th century or later
E	Use of S2, reuse of S1	Pottery ranges up to mid/late 16 th century
F	Postholes below S2	Mid 14 th century or later
G	Collapse of S1	Clay pipes later 17 th century or late; Mid/late 16 th century or later
H	Flood #3/gravel	Mid/late 16 th century or later
I	Flood #2	No pottery
J	Flood #1	No pottery

The Alan Vince Archaeology Consultancy, 25 West Parade, Lincoln, LN1 1NW

<http://www.postex.demon.co.uk/index.html>

A copy of this report is archived online at
<http://www.avac.uklinux/potcat/pdfs/avac2005096.pdf>

K	S1 use	Pottery ranges from late medieval to late 15 th century or later
L	Kiln/hearth	Pottery ranges from late medieval to late 15 th century or later
L1	deposits post-dating the Phase N/M ditch and pre-dating S1	Late 13 th century or later.
M	Upper fill of Phase N ditch	Two contexts produced pottery – one of Prehistoric date and the other of 16 th /18 th century date and clearly intrusive.
N	Lower fills of ditch pre-dating S1	A mixture of prehistoric? and intrusive late medieval finds.

Quantity

A total of 1172 sherds of pottery were recovered from the excavations. These were not weighed, nor has it been possible to establish the number of vessels represented. It is clear, however, that there is a high degree of cross-linking between sherds in different contexts, so the total number of vessels represented will be substantially less than 1172.

Condition

The pottery ranges in condition with some abraded and scrappy sherds. However, the majority are large, unabraded sherds with a good possibility of joining and reconstruction.

Methodology

The pottery was assessed by examining each assemblage and counting the total number of sherds, the number of Iron Age or Roman sherds, the number of sherds of imported wares and the number of probably English wares which could not be immediately identified.

Description

Iron Age/Roman

Sixteen sherds of Iron Age or Roman date were identified. Of these, only four come from potentially contemporary deposits (Phases M and N) and the remainder are scattered throughout the stratigraphic sequence. Some of these are flint-tempered and visually very similar to Iron Age pottery from other parts of England.

It is recommended that a specialist on the Iron Age pottery of Norfolk examines these sherds.

Anglo-Saxon

No pottery of pre-conquest date was recognised in the collection.

Early Medieval

A small number of sherds of later 11th to mid 12th-century Stamford ware and Grimston-Thetford-type ware were present, together with early medieval handmade wares were present in the collection. Most of these sherds are residual in early post-medieval or later deposits but include a possible sherd of Stamford ware from a Phase L1 deposit (context 2024). This too is likely to be residual.

Later 12th to 13th century

There is a probable hiatus in pottery deposition on the site in the later 12th to mid 13th centuries, although it is possible that this gap might be filled to some extent through identification of the unidentified English pottery. However, wares such as Developed Stamford Ware and Lyveden/Stanion ware, both common at Kings Lynn, are absent.

Later 13th to 14th centuries

About 300 sherds could be assigned to the later 13th to mid 14th centuries. Of these, a few could be tentatively identified as Toynton and Grimston wares, both well-known coastally-traded wares of this period, but the majority could not be identified and might be locally produced, or traded to the site from other parts of Norfolk or along the coast from Suffolk. Only a small proportion of this pottery is potentially stratified in contemporary deposits, earlier than Structure 1 (i.e. Phases L, M and N) and the majority is scattered through the stratigraphic sequence, including a high proportion from the rabbit burrows, Phase B. Only a handful of imported sherds which could be contemporary with these English wares were present, mostly of Saintonge ware, including unglazed vessels which could easily be of later date and polychrome jugs. It is likely that all these sherds are derived from activity taking place in the area of the site, but not from the site itself.

Late 14th to 16th centuries

The majority of the pottery from the site can be dated between the later 14th and the 16th centuries. This pottery is associated with the use of S1 (Phase K) and the kiln/hearth (Phases L) and is present, probably residually, in later deposits.

There is a high ratio of imported to English wares in this collection. The imports include Dutch Red Earthenware (DUTR); Langewehe stoneware (LANG) and Siegburg stoneware (SIEG). English wares include probable English copies of Low Countries vessels, and local late medieval wares (1981, Late Medieval Transitional ware, LMT).

Full recording and identification of these sherds should allow a closer date to be assigned.

Sixteenth to Early 17th Century

A small quantity of pottery is of later 15th to early 17th century date. This includes Raeren stoneware (RAER), Frechen Stoneware (FREC), local English glazed red earthenwares (GRE) and a few sherds of coastally-traded English wares, such as a slipped vessel paralleled in an early to mid 17th-century kiln group from Boston. All of this pottery comes from deposits later than the third flood (Phase H). There is probably a lower ratio of imported to English pottery in this collection than in the late medieval group.

Potential

Enhancing the Site Narrative (Objective 1)

It is evident from the distribution of sherds by provisional phase that there is a high degree of residuality on the site, despite the condition of much of the pottery. Therefore, it is impossible to date the stratigraphic sequence without some work on the distribution of cross-fitting sherds, which should establish at what point in the sequence certain types first appear and how sherds from these types came to be residual in later deposits. It is also fairly clear that the quantity of pottery discarded on the site in its later phases was much lower than in the period prior to the flooding of the site. There is also a difference in the ratio of imported to English pottery through time.

These features suggest that it should be possible to reconstruct the history of pottery use on the site and the way in which the stratigraphy built up (its taphonomy) through the study of the pottery. It should also be possible to establish more precisely the date of certain stratigraphic events, such as the construction of S1, the date of the flooding and the construction of S2 and its final use.

Elucidating the Pottery Sequence and Supply in North Norfolk (Objective 2)

The north Norfolk coast was not well served by large medieval ports and Blakeney itself is likely to have had at least a local importance in coastal, if not sea-borne trade. It should be possible through studying the pottery from this site, to establish the main centres which supplied Blakeney with pottery and by looking at the imported and non-local English wares, to establish the trading connections of the port of Blakeney. For example, did it have direct contact overseas, or were goods redistributed from ports such as Lynn and Yarmouth? and, was the coastal trade mostly from the west (i.e. from Lynn, Boston and points north), the east (i.e. Yarmouth, Suffolk and points south), or evenly spread between the two? What proportion of the pottery used at Blakeney could have been obtained overland from sites in north Norfolk?

Establishing the Use of Structure 1 (Objective 3)

The pottery which seems provisionally to have been in use in Structure 1 is clearly unusual, in its high quantity of imports. It is possible that it is also unusual in the range of forms used. This could be established by further study of the pottery, and in particular through the reconstruction of this assemblage by cross-fitting sherds from later deposits with those from deposits associated with the use of S1. The most likely interpretation of this assemblage, which has implications for the interpretation of S1, is that it was a high status assemblage, similar to those known from other aristocratic and manorial sites in England (for example, Acton Court, in the lower Severn Valley (Vince and England 2004).

Research Design

To achieve the various objectives presented above, a number of tasks have to be carried out. Firstly, the Iron Age/Roman/Anglo-Saxon pottery should be examined by a specialist to provide a closer date for this phase of activity (Task 1). The results of this task may involve some subdivision of Phase M, with consequences for the archive record (Task 2).

Then, a type fabric series of unknown English wares (local and non-local) should be produced (Task 3) and examples of these types should be examined by Richenda Goffin, a specialist in the local medieval ceramics of East Anglia and author of the report on the pottery from the evaluation (Task 4). Ideally, this would take place in a face-to-face meeting with Jane Young rather than by sending a representative sample by post. Following this, an archive record of the English pottery can be produced (Task 5). The codes employed will be determined by discussion with Ms Goffin, since there appears to be no county-wide fabric series and the material does not fit into the Norwich fabric series (R Goffin, pers comm). This archive will include information on the form and use of the pottery as well as its ware type. Cross-fitting of distinctive vessels from different contexts will be attempted and vessels will be chosen for illustration. There are likely to be a number of wares present which are of local, north Norfolk, origin and these should be fully described for future reference. This should involve characterisation studies (binocular microscope study, thin section analysis and chemical analysis using Inductively-Coupled Plasma Spectroscopy, Task 6).

Meanwhile, the imported pottery will be identified and an archive record added to that created in Task 5 (Task 7). This task will also include attempts to cross-fit sherds from different contexts, which will probably result in the production of vessel profiles requiring illustration. The majority of the stonewares present should be identifiable by eye, or with the use of a binocular microscope. However, it may be necessary to result to characterisation studies to distinguish Low Countries red earthenwares from local copies (Task 8). Comparative data exist from kiln material from Bruges, and material from consumer sites in Belgium and eastern England. Furthermore, a series of analyses exist for Flemish floor tiles, some of which appear to have been made from the same clays as pottery imports.

At least ten vessels worthy of illustration were identified during the provisional dating of the pottery but more will probably be found following the detailed recording (Task 9).

The archive record should then be examined with the provisional site phasing, as a result of which a final phasing will emerge (Task 10). This phasing information will then be used to produce a publishable pottery report, describing the stratigraphic disposition of the pottery and the implications of this for site taphonomy (Task 11). A table listing the various wares present and references to their publication will be produced, together with detailed description of the newly-identified local wares (Task 12). Finally, a discussion of the site status, pottery sequence and its implication for pottery supply and coastal trade in north Norfolk will be written (Task 13).

Table 2 lists the estimated man-days required for each task plus any other costs (travel, analyses).

Table 2

Task	Description	Objectives	Personnel	Daily Rate	Other Costs	Costing
1	IA/Roman/AS pot report	1	SP	£176	£20	£108.00
2	Rephasing of Phase M	1	AGV	£184		£46.00
3	Type Series of English wares	1, 2	JY	£184		£184.00
4	Examination by Richenda Goffin	1, 2	RG; JY	£204.17; £184	£87.28	£475.45
5	Archive record of English pottery, layout and recording cross-fits	1, 2, 3	JY	£184		£920.00
6	Characterisation studies of English wares	2, 3	AGV; RHCL; UoM	£184	£1104	£1,288.00
7	Identification and recording of Imports	1, 2, 3	AGV	£184		£552.00
8	Characterisation studies of potentially imported red earthenwares	2, 3	AGV; RHCL; UoM	£184	£552	£736.00
9	Illustration	2, 3	CB	£150		£300.00
10	Stratigraphic analysis	1, 3	AGV	£184		£184.00

AVAC Report 2005/96

11	Pottery Report	1, 2	AGV	£184	£184.00
12	Documentation of pottery types	2	AGV;JY	£184; £184	£368.00
13	Discussion and conclusions	1, 2, 3	AGV	£184	£184.00
Total					£5,529.00
Total + VAT					£6,497.10

Key: SP = Sarah Percival (Norfolk Archaeology Unit), RG = Richenda Goffin (Suffolk Archaeology Service), AGV = Alan Vince, JY = Jane Young, CB = Charlotte Bentley, RHCL = Royal Holloway College London, UoM = University of Manchester.

Costing

Table 2 presents the costs involved in carrying out the recommended work. The charge-out rates used are valid only for 2005-2006. In the case of Sarah Percival, they are based on a minimum charge.

Bibliography

Jennings, S (1981) *Eighteen centuries of pottery from Norwich*. E Anglian Archaeol 13
Norwich, The Norwich Survey.

Vince, A. and England, S. (2004) "Medieval and later pottery." in K. Rodwell and R. Bell,
eds., *Acton Court: the evolution of an early Tudor Courtier's mansion*, English
Heritage, London, 294-348.

Appendix 1. List of Provisional Pottery Dates

context	period						
		1440	14-17	1643	14-16	1833	14-16
1299	M/L16+ (M17)	1445	L14-15	1645	13-15	1834	14-16
1300	18	1462	14-16	1647	14-16	1836	13-15
1301	14	1469	13-15	1652	13-15	1837	13-15
1303	m/l16	1471	12-14	1654	14-16	1858	13-15
1304	19	1473	14-15	1657	13-15	1864	14-16
1305	L17/18	1482	m/l16	1665	14-16	1867	l15
1308	l15+	1486	13-16	1667	m14	1869	L14-16
1317	m/l16+	1490	14-16	1668	14-16	1875	L14-16
1318	17	1492	L14-15	1674	13-16	1876	13-16
1322	14-16	1494	14-16	1678	14-16	1877	13-15
1325	l16/m17	1503	L14-15	1687	13-15	1885	13-15
1326	L14-15	1504	L13-14	1689	13-15	1888	14-16
1329	l15	1517	13-14	1711	R/11-12	1890	R/IA
1330	l15	1519	11-13	1716	16	1892	16-18
1333	R OR L11- 12	1534	11-13	1717	R/11-12	1897	14-16
1334	14-16	1542	14-16	1718	13-15	1901	11-13
1337	13-L13	1545	14-16	1721	14-16	1909	13-15
1342	13-15	1549	13-16	1725	14-16	1939	14-16
1375	14-15	1556	13-16	1728	14	1980	14-16
1376	14-15	1579	11-12	1732	13-16	1981	14-16
1383	17	1581	14-16	1736	14-16	1988	14-16
1385	M16-M17	1587	14-16	1739	13-15	1999	14-16
1387	l16	1589	12-14	1746	14	2011	14-16
1388	16	1605	15-16	1751	14-16	2013	15-16
1391	m/l16	1610	14	1754	14-16	2024	13-15 OR 12
1392	14	1611	13-16	1770	M/L16-E17	2096	L13-15
1394	M/L16-E17	1612	14-16	1773	14-16		
1395	M-L16	1613	M15-16	1784	13-15		
1399	14	1619	15-16	1785	13-15		
1403	m/l16	1628	14-16	1788	13-15		
1408	16-E17	1631	R?	1789	13-15		
1409	13-16	1635	13-15	1803	14-16		
1410	m16	1637	14-16	1812	14-16		
1412	15	1638	14-16	1815	15-16		
1419	14	1639	14-16	1820	11-12		
1428	l15	1641	14-16	1823	L14-15		
		1642	14-16	1825	13-15		