

Anglo-Saxon and Medieval Pottery from Tallington, Lincs: Draft Publication Report

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Introduction

The pottery from the 1997 excavations at Tallington includes three vessels included as grave goods with Anglo-Saxon inhumations (not described here as they are still awaiting conservation), a small collection of fragments of early Anglo-Saxon pots, mostly found in later deposits alongside medieval wares and an assemblage of Anglo-Scandinavian, medieval and later wares. The latter consists of a scatter of 10th/12th-century material, all small fragments and possibly brought onto the site as a manuring scatter, an assemblage of later 12th and 13th-century pottery which includes large sherds and sherd families (with more than one sherd per vessel), and another scatter, of later medieval and post-medieval wares.

The pottery was identified mainly by Jane Young (medieval and later) and Alan Vince (Anglo-Saxon and medieval form identification) using the common name classification developed at the City of Lincoln Archaeology Unit (Young & Vince forthcoming), which is based on an intensive study of the finds from the city of Lincoln, augmented by Anglo-Saxon pottery from the east midlands (Table One).

Table One: List of wares present and the codes used

Common Name	earliest date	name	Period	broad source
CHARN	450	Charnwood-type fabrics	esax	reg
ESGS	450	Anglo-Saxon greensand-tempered fabrics	esax	reg
FE	450	Ironstone-tempered fabrics	esax	reg
LIM/SST	450	Oolitic limestone/sandstone tempered fabrics	esax	loc?
SST	450	Sandstone-tempered fabrics	esax	reg
LKT	850	Lincoln Kiln-type Shelly ware	lsax	linc
LSH	850	Lincoln Late Saxon Shelly Ware	lsax	linc
ST	1000	Stamford Ware	sn	reg
BOUA	1150	Bourne-type Fabrics A, B and C	med	reg
DST	1150	Developed Stamford ware	emed	reg
EMHM	1150	Early Medieval Handmade ware	emed	loc
EMLOC	1150	Local Early Medieval Fabrics	emed	loc
MEDLOC	1150	Medieval local fabrics	med	loc
MEDX	1150	Non Local Medieval Fabrics	med	reg
STANLY	1150	Stanion/Lyveden-type Ware	med	reg
NOTG	1250	Nottingham glazed ware	med	reg
BERTH	1550	Brown-glazed earthenware	epmed	reg
BL	1550	Blackware	epmed	reg
BOU	1550	Bourne D ware	epmed	local
CIST	1550	Cistercian ware	epmed	reg
PMED	1550		pmed	nk
STMO	1690	Staffordshire mottled glazed ware	pmed	reg

Anglo-Saxon pottery

The fragmentary early Anglo-Saxon pottery consists of 22 sherds which were of several distinct fabrics and probably came from 21 separate vessels. Only two sherds, from the same vessel, appeared to be unweathered and likely to have come from disturbed burials, or rubbish deposits (context 201). The remainder are all small sherds, all less than 50mm across, and are probably evidence for ploughed-out occupation deposits rather than more burials.

The sherds mostly fall into fabric groups recognised from other sites in the east midlands and include examples which must have been made in the Leicestershire area, since they contain abundant fragments of granitic rock (code: CHARN). This rock has been identified in thin-sections from other sites in the fens as being Mountsorrel granodiorite, which outcrops in the Charnwood Forest area. Sherds with a sandstone-derived quartzose sand temper (SST) are also found at Tallington. The distribution of this fabric is similar to that of the granitic ware and it is believed that the two wares were distributed along the same networks, although in the absence of further petrological or chemical analysis it is not possible to say more about the relationship of the two wares.

The distribution pattern of finds of some of the other fabrics present at Tallington suggest that these too were not locally made. Several sherds were noted with abundant angular fragments of a dark red iron compound (code: FE). Sherds with this characteristic are most common on sites in north-west Lincolnshire, are present but not common on sites in the Lincoln area and until now not found on sites in the south of the county. Without further scientific analysis of their fabrics, it is not possible to say for certain that the Tallington sherds are imports from the north rather than another ware which just happens to share the same feature. Two sub-groups are present within this general fabric, one with quartzose sand and the other without.

A single sherd was found containing moderate quantities of rounded quartz grains with a distinctive polished surface, quite distinctive under the binocular microscope (code: ESGS). This variety of quartz originates in Cretaceous deposits and is a notable feature of Anglo-Saxon pottery fabrics found on sites in the Lincolnshire Wolds. Similar wares are found, however, further to the south and east of Tallington, reflecting more southerly outcrops of Cretaceous strata, in Norfolk or Bedfordshire, for example. The Tallington vessel is undoubtedly not locally-made but could have come to the site from the south or the north-east.

Two sherds, possibly from the same vessel, contain inclusions of oolitic limestone, and individual ooliths, together with fragments of a fine-grained white sandstone (code: LIM/SST). Similar vessels have been noted on other sites in southern Lincolnshire but not further afield. These two sherds are therefore most likely to have been locally-produced, although this should not be taken to mean produced within the community, since even they could have been carried some distance from their place of manufacture.

Only two of the sherds had any distinguishing typological features: a simple rounded rim (CHARN) and a body sherd decorated with grooved lines (FE). So far as can be seen all of the sherds came from medium-sized jars of roughly globular form whose surfaces, both inside and outside, were finished by smoothing (probably burnishing, but without the high gloss and individual burnish marks noted on the most proficiently-made vessels).

Once the three pots from the burials have been conserved and studied it should be possible to compare their fabrics, forms and manufacturing methods with these loose fragments. At present, it seems unlikely that the sherds are from disturbed burials and they are most likely to be either domestic refuse, or possibly associated with feasting or other activity taking place at the graveside. The small size of most of the sherds suggests that they have been subject to weathering, perhaps including ploughing or perhaps simply caused by exposure and gradual incorporation into the topsoil.

Medieval pottery

Twenty-one sherds of Anglo-Scandinavian date were found (LKT and LSH). All were of shell-tempered types, mainly cooking pots and jars, produced in Lincoln during the late 9th to late 10th centuries (Contexts 201a, 220, 243, 261, 276 and 286?). The low quantity of early Stamford wares, particularly unglazed jars and cooking pots, is notable, considering that Tallington is much closer to Stamford than Lincoln. Ten of the sherds are of type LSH, for which a mid-late 10th-century date is likely and there is in fact nothing from the site which need date earlier than the later 10th century. None of the sherds is fresh or large and whilst they indicate activity in the area they do not necessarily indicate occupation on the site itself.

Late 11th or early 12th-century activity is indicated by 19 sherds of Stamford ware (ST), but with one exception (unstratified), these are of both glazed and unglazed types which date from the mid 11th to mid 12th centuries (contexts u/s, 200, 201, 201a, 220, 259, 286 and 286?). These too are single, relatively small sherds.

The majority of the medieval pottery dates from the later 12th century until some time in the 13th century and consists of large, fresh sherds of a variety of wares and forms. The latest type present, of Nottingham green-glazed ware (NOTG) is in fact a small body sherd which may have come onto the site after the main period of occupation. The medieval wares form a typical domestic assemblage and indicate activity on the site during this period. The majority of the sherds come from vessels in Bourne wares, in fabrics A to C with a much smaller quantity of decorated jugs in Stanion or Lyveden ware. Cooking and storage vessels occur in Bourne A-C ware and in handmade sand-tempered and shell-tempered fabrics (SLST and EMHM).

Post-medieval pottery

The post-medieval pottery from the site forms a small collection ranging in date from the 16th/17th to the 18th centuries. It indicates activity in the area during this period but probably not on the site itself.

Discussion

The pottery can be divided into two groups: small sherds likely to have been brought onto the site as sherds. Whether these could have been associated with manuring and therefore indicate periods of ploughing or are simply part of the “halo” of rubbish emanating from occupation sites lying near to but outside of the area of excavation cannot be determined from the pottery alone.

The Anglo-Saxon material is of some interest, since it offers the possibility to compare domestic and ritual assemblages from the same community. Binocular microscope study indicates that the collection is surprisingly variable and was obtained from non-local sources to the north and south-west of the site. Further analysis using thin-sectioning and chemical analysis (using Inductively Coupled Plasma Spectroscopy - ICPS) could both check and amplify these results.

The only evidence from the pottery collection for occupation on the site itself appears to be a short-lived episode in the later 12th to mid 13th century. The main conclusion from studying this collection is that Stamford, though by far the closest source of pottery, was not the main supplier, which was Bourne. Little pottery was obtained from any great distance - and none at all from the Lincoln area. Whether this is due to the date of the settlement co-inciding with the decline of the Stamford potteries in the early 13th century, or is simply a reflection of the marketing strategy of the Stamford potters, whose products occur widely but as a low frequency, cannot be determined from one site alone. It does, however, suggest that we are far from understanding the way in which pottery supply operated in south Lincolnshire in the medieval period.

Table 2.

Context	CLAU Ceramic Horizon	Date of latest pottery present
200	PMH 6-9	Post-medieval
201	MH 4-8	Medieval (late 12 th /mid 13 th)
201a	MH 4-6	Medieval (late 12 th /mid 13 th)
201b	ASH1	Early Anglo-Saxon
204	ASH9-11?	?Anglo-Scandinavian
219	MH 3-7	Medieval (late 12 th /mid 13 th)
220	MH 4-6	Medieval (late 12 th /mid 13 th)
224	ASH1	Early Anglo-Saxon
229	MH 3-7	Medieval (late 12 th /mid 13 th)
233	MH 3-8	Medieval (late 12 th /mid 13 th)
243	ASH 7-11	Anglo-Scandinavian
252	MH 1-5	Medieval (late 12 th /mid 13 th)
254	MH 3-4	Medieval (late 12 th /mid 13 th)
259	MH 3-8	Medieval (late 12 th /mid 13 th)
261	ASH 7-11	Anglo-Scandinavian
275	MH 3-5	Medieval (late 12 th /mid 13 th)
276	MH 4-6	Medieval (late 12 th /mid 13 th)
286	MH 3-5	Medieval (late 12 th /mid 13 th)
286?	MH 3-4	Medieval (late 12 th /mid 13 th)