

Pottery from Rycote (ACH99 Site 30): Assessment Report

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Introduction

Two hundred and nineteen sherds of pottery were submitted for assessment. They range in date from the later prehistoric period through to the 13th or 14th-century AD. However, the majority were of early to mid Anglo-Saxon date, dating somewhere between the later 6th and mid 9th centuries. The few typologically distinctive sherds point to a date earlier in this bracket.

Several fabrics were present which probably indicate trade or exchange between the settlement and neighbouring communities. Further work is recommended to characterise these wares and to place the Rycote assemblage in a regional setting.

Aims and Objectives

The aims of the assessment were

- to identify and record all the material
- to provide a date-range for the finds
- to use these to infer previous land use
- to recommend and justify any further necessary work on the finds
- to identify any aspects of the site's archaeology recognisable from the ceramic finds which require further study or preservation

Description

All items were recorded to common name and form level and any significant details of manufacture, decoration or use were recorded as comments. Quantification was by sherd/fragment count alone and the data was entered into a MS Access 7 database.

Prehistoric

Nine sherds of probable prehistoric date were found. All but one which came from Trench 13 were from Trench 2. All were tempered with large angular flint fragments and in most cases the sherds were weathered so that the flint grits stand proud of the body.

Roman

Thirty sherds of probable Romano-British date were present. Some were very abraded and have probably been subjected to weathering in the plough zone whilst others are fresher. None, however have the sharp breaks and preserved surface detail that would indicate burial in a ditch or pit soon after

breakage. There is little evidence, therefore, for Roman occupation on the site, as opposed to rubbish disposal or manuring. The sherds were spread across nine trenches (see table 1).

Table 1.

Trench	Sherds	Vessels
TR02	10	10
TR04	1	1
TR05A	10	5
TR05B	1	1
TR05D	1	1
TR13	4	4
TR13A	1	1
TR17	2	2
TR20	5	4

Anglo-Saxon

One hundred and seven three sherds of early Anglo-Saxon pottery were present on Site 30. Although spread across nine trenches they were concentrated in trench 5a, and to a lesser extent trenches 4, 5b, 13 and 20. The sherds from trenches 8, 9 and 20 were abraded but the sherds from the remaining trenches were fresh and were evidently buried below the plough zone soon after breakage.

Table 2.

Trench	Sherds	Vessels
TR02	3	3
TR03	3	3
TR04	17	10
TR05A	100	50
TR05B	22	16
TR08	1	1
TR09	1	1
TR13	9	3
TR20	17	1

Fabrics

As with most handmade early to mid Anglo-Saxon pottery assemblages, there is considerable variation in fabric visible in the collection. Nevertheless, five major fabric groups were present (Table 3). Several of these fabrics are widespread: the ECHAFLM, for example is identical visually to material from sites in the lower Thames valley, such as *Lundenwic* and Barking Abbey. The ECHAFLG is also paralleled at Barking Abbey. The ESST, on the other hand, is a fabric normally found in the midlands. Potentially the most distinctive fabric, however, is ECHAFL which contains limestone inclusions.

This classification is a broad grouping. Further precision can be achieved by the use of thin-sectioning, detailed binocular microscope study and the use of chemical analysis. The objectives of this work would be to establish the reality of the initial fabric groups and to test the similarity of these fabrics to comparative material from other sites (the author has access to petrological data for London, Barking Abbey and Brixworth, Northants). The results would then be used to further knowledge of the local and regional contacts of early Anglo-Saxon communities in the south midlands.

Table 3.

Code	Description
ECHA FM	Abundant organic inclusions, including chaff, in a fine-textured, silty micaceous matrix.
ECHA FG	Moderate organic inclusions, including chaff, plus rounded quartz sand including polished grains originating in the Lower Greensand or similar deposit.
ECHA FL	Sparse organic inclusions, including chaff, plus limestone and sandstone inclusions in a fine, micaceous matrix.
ESST	Moderate to abundant fragments of quartz sandstone and quartz grains derived from a sandstone.
ECHA FS	Abundant quartz sand temper.

Forms

Almost all the sherds came from jars of various shapes and sizes. These jars also varied in the degree of surface treatment they received and were probably used for a variety of functions. Detailed study of the sherds would allow a more precise description of at least some of these sherds, especially where sherd families from a single vessel which might reconstruct to form large fragments of vessel are present. One vessel noted during the assessment had a narrow base and globular body typical of vessels found in 5th to 6th-century cemeteries.

In addition to jars, a sherd from a hollow ware with holes pierced before firing was found. Such vessels are known in the archaeological literature as woolcomb warmers. It was suggested that they were used as small braziers to heat carding combs before use, to make the yarn easier to work.

Medieval

A rim sherd from a sand-tempered cooking pot was found in trench 10 and an abraded scrap of glazed jug, possibly from the Brill or Boarstall kilns, was found in trench 20. Its size and condition suggest that the latter sherd had been in the plough zone for a considerable time.

Post-medieval

No post-medieval pottery was present

Recommendations

The early Anglo-Saxon pottery from Rycote is a moderately large collection for this period and the sherds are well-preserved. Further work is recommended in order to fully catalogue the material, to illustrate the rims and decorated body sherds, to examine the fabrics using chemical and petrological analysis and to produce a report for publication in an archaeological journal.

Costings

Table 4.

Task	Duration/quantity	Cost
Detailed recording of Early Anglo-Saxon pottery assemblage	2 days	£320
Illustration	16 sherds	£80
Thin-section analysis of sample of early Anglo-Saxon pottery	12 samples	£240
Chemical analysis (ICPS) of sample of early Anglo-Saxon pottery	18 samples	£360
Production of written report	1 day	£160
Total		£1160

Appendix

Trench	Context	Code	Form	Sherds	Vessels	Description
TR02	14	ECHAFM	JAR	1	1	
TR02	14	PREH	JAR	1	1	FLINT TEMPERED
TR02	14	PREH	JAR	1	1	FLINT TEMPERED
TR02	16	PREH	JAR	1	1	FLINT TEMPERED
TR02	8	RPOT	-	5	5	VERY ABRADED
TR02	9	ECHAFL	JAR	1	1	
TR02	9	ECHAFM	JAR	1	1	
TR02	9	PREH?/RPOT?	-	5	5	
TR03	19	ECHAFG	JAR	1	1	
TR03	19	ECHAFM	JAR	1	1	
TR03	19	ECHAFS	JAR	1	1	
TR04	22	ECHAFG	JAR	1	1	
TR04	24	ECHAFM	JAR	1	1	
TR04	24	ECHAFM	JAR	8	1	
TR04	24	ESST	JAR	1	1	
TR04	27	ECHAFG	JAR	4	4	
TR04	28	ECHAFM	JAR	2	2	
TR04	28	RPOT?	JAR	1	1	SST AND SHELL TEMPERED;ABRADED
TR05A	30	ESST	JAR	2	1	
TR05A	36	ECHAFG	JAR	14	14	
TR05A	36	ECHAFG	WOOLC OMB WARME R	1	1	
TR05A	36	ECHAFL	JAR	1	1	POST-FIRING DRILLED HOLE
TR05A	36	ECHAFM	JAR	26	1	
TR05A	36	ECHAFM	JAR	2	1	
TR05A	36?	ECHAFL	JAR	1	1	IN BAG MARKED 'FROM 1 POT'
TR05A	36?	ECHAFM	JAR	6	1	IN BAG MARKED 'FROM 1 POT'
TR05A	37	ECHAFM	JAR	1	1	
TR05A	37	ECHAFM	JAR	1	1	
TR05A	37	RPOT-GREY/GROG	JAR	1	1	
TR05A	37	RPOT-SHEL	JAR	6	1	ONE POST-FIRING HOLE
TR05A	39	ECHAFG	JAR	9	9	
TR05A	39	ECHAFG	JAR	1	1	
TR05A	39	ECHAFG	JAR	1	1	
TR05A	39	ECHAFG	JAR	1	1	STAMPED BODY SHERD
TR05A	39	ECHAFL	JAR	2	1	
TR05A	39	ECHAFM	JAR	1	1	
TR05A	39	ECHAFM	JAR	2	1	
TR05A	39	ECHAFM	JAR	1	1	RED SURFACE AND EXT MARGIN
TR05A	39	ECHAFM	JAR	1	1	

TR05A	39	ECHAFM	JAR	16	1
TR05A	39	ECHAFM	JAR	1	1
TR05A	39	MISC SY	DAUB	2	2 QUARTZ SAND AND LARGE ROUNDED QUARTZ GRAVEL
TR05A	43	ECHAFIG	JAR	1	1
TR05A	43	ECHAFIG	JAR	1	1
TR05A	43	ECHAFM	JAR	1	1 BURNISHED
TR05A	43	ECHAFM	JAR	2	1
TR05A	72	RPOT-GREY	JAR	1	1
TR05A	72	RPOT-SHEL	JAR	1	1
TR05A	78	ECHAFIG	JAR	1	1
TR05A	78	ECHAFIG	JAR	1	1
TR05A	78	RPOT-GREY	JAR	1	1
TR05A0	30	ECHAFIG	JAR	1	1
TR05A0	30	ECHAFM	JAR	1	1
TR05B	48	ECHAFIG	JAR	8	8
TR05B	48	ECHAFL	JAR	5	1
TR05B	48	ECHAFM	JAR	1	1
TR05B	48	ECHAFM	JAR	1	1
TR05B	48	ECHAFM	JAR	1	1
TR05B	48	ESST	JAR	1	1
TR05B	48	MISC MY	?VESSE L	2	1 POSSIBLY A SQUARE CORDON OR RIB ON A LARGE VESSEL;SILTY FABRIC
TR05B	48	RPOT?	-	1	1 VERY ABRADED
TR05B	49	ECHAFIG	JAR	3	1
TR05B	52	ECHAFIG	JAR	1	1
TR05B	52	ECHAFM	JAR	1	1
TR05D	34	RPOT?	-	1	1
TR08	132	ECHAFM	JAR	1	1 ABRADED
TR09	116	ECHAFIG	JAR	1	1 ABRADED
TR10	111	MISC SY	DAUB	1	1 SCRAP
TR10	111	MISC SY	JAR	1	1 EVFT FABRIC CF LMK FABRIC M3
TR13	150	ECHAFIG	JAR	2	1
TR13	150	ECHAFM	JAR	6	1
TR13	150	ECHAFS	JAR	1	1
TR13	150	RPOT	-	4	4
TR13	168	PREH?		1	1
TR13A	153	RPOT-GROG	JAR	1	1
TR17	180	RPOT-GREY	JAR	1	1
TR17	181	RPOT		1	1
TR20	172	RPOT-GREY	JAR	1	1
TR20	173	ECHAFM	JAR	17	1 ABRADED
TR20	173	OXAM	JUG	1	1 GLAZED SCRAP
TR20	173	RPOT-GREY	JAR	4	3