

Possible Anglo-Saxon Pottery from Worcester

Alan Vince

Nine sherds of pottery were submitted for identification. They had previously been tentatively identified as being of early to mid Anglo-Saxon date by Paul Blinkhorn.

1) HWCM 3899 17110 Fabric 601 (769) Form 302 D?

The rim of a thick-walled vessel with a flat-topped, inward-facing rim and traces of a handle join immediately below the rim.

The vessel contains abundant rounded quartz sand in which most of the grains have a high sphericity and a dull surface. These characteristics are typical of Triassic deposits (and indicate exposure to desert conditions) and are common in the detrital sands of Worcestershire. The groundmass contains specks of muscovite, mostly less than 0.1mm across.

The fabric is hard, with a dark grey core and light brown surfaces.

Although I am unfamiliar with this form, the overall appearance of the fabric suggests to me that it is a later 12th or 13th-century Worcester area sandy ware.

2) HWCM 3899 16901 <>5673. 601

A body sherd from a closed vessel, probably a jar. The vessel is hard fired with a dark grey core and lighter grey margins. The fabric contains similar quartz sand to that seen in (1).

3) HWCM 3899 16903 <>5674 CHANGE ON D BASE. EMSAX/RB? 601

A body sherd from a closed vessel, probably a jar. The vessel is hard fired with a dark grey TO black core and margins. The fabric contains similar quartz sand to that seen in (1).

4) HWCM 3899 16903 <>5697 FAB 200 CHANGE ON D BASE EM SSAX/M 601

A body sherd from a closed vessel, probably a jar. The vessel is hard fired with a light brown core and dark grey margins. The fabric contains similar quartz sand to that seen in (1).

5) HWCM 3899 16903 <>5697 FAB 200 CHANGE ON D BASE EM SSAX/M 601

A body sherd from a closed vessel, probably a jar. The vessel is hard fired with a dark grey core and external margins and dark brown inner margin with a dark grey inner surface. The fabric contains similar quartz sand to that seen in (1) but with a smaller grain size, with few grains larger than 0.5mm across.

6) HWCM 3899 16903 <>5697 FAB 200 CHANGE ON D BASE EM SSAX/M 601

A body sherd from a closed vessel, probably a jar. The vessel is hard fired with a dark brown core and external margins and dark grey surfaces. The fabric contains similar quartz sand to that seen in (1) and has a fine-textured groundmass containing muscovite up to 0.1mm across.

7) HWCM 3899 16691 <>5560. EARLY/MID SAX ? 601

A body sherd from a jar. The vessel is hard fired with a dark grey core, brown margins and a black outer surface. The fabric contains rounded quartz sand of the type found in (1) to (6) ranging up to 1.0mm across.

8) HWCM 3899 16691 <>5560. EARLY/MID SAX ? 601

The base of a handmade jar. The outer surface is smoothed or burnished and the inner surface rough. The vessel is hard fired with a dark brown core, brown margins and a black inner surface. The fabric contains abundant angular fragments of igneous and metamorphic rock, almost certainly from the pre-Cambrian core of the Malvern Hills. Sparse rounded quartz grains similar to those in (1) to (6) were also present, ranging up to 1.0mm across.

9) HWCM 3899 16691 <>5560. EARLY/MID SAX ? 601

A body sherd, too small to guess at the form. The vessel is hard fired with a light grey core and dark brown outer margin. The fabric contains abundant angular fragments of igneous and metamorphic rock, as in (7). There is no sign, however, of any rounded quartz.

Discussion

The fabric of nos (1) to (7) contains rounded quartz sand of the type found in the Severn valley around Worcester and the groundmass, where it can be seen is fine-textured and slightly micaceous. These characteristics, plus the hard firing and general character of the vessels suggests to me that they are handmade Worcester-type sandy unglazed ware (WOLFTS Fabric 55).

The remaining two sherds both contain fragments of Malvernian rock but neither appears to be typical of the medieval Malvernian unglazed ware (WOLFTS Fabric 56). No.8 has a completely flat base and a smoothed or burnished outer surface, neither of which are characteristics of that ware. No.9 had no distinguishing typological features and might be of Fabric 56. However, both of these vessels look more like Romano-British Malvern area greywares, for which kilns are known at Malvern Link.

Bibliography

WOLFTS *Worcestershire On-Line Fabric Type Series* (<http://worcestershireceramics.org>.)