

## **An Assessment of the Anglo-Saxon and later pottery from the Chalgrove to East Ilsley High Pressure Gas Pipeline, 2003 (CEI03)**

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Three hundred and eighty six sherds of pottery from the Chalgrove to East Ilsley High Pressure Gas Pipeline were submitted for identification and assessment following fieldwalking by Network Archaeology Ltd (Site Code: CEI02).

Two sherds were of early Anglo-Saxon date (from plots 12 and 33) and three were of types which span the Norman Conquest (plots 33 and 47). The remainder were of post-conquest date and span the entire period between the late 11<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Within this broad span there are some points which can be made:

- a) There are more potsherds of later 12<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> century date than of the following century
- b) There is very little pottery at all which might be dated to the late medieval period (although the lack of definition of pottery fabrics in this part of the country limits our ability to recognise pottery of this date)
- c) There is a huge increase in the amount of pottery found in the early post-medieval period, even though there is at present little possibility of dating body sherds of this date closer than to the later 16<sup>th</sup> to mid 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, or even later.
- d) Finewares, which can be dated more closely, indicate that there is certainly 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>-century material present but the majority of these sherds are of 19<sup>th</sup>-century date. However, it must be remembered that the later 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries saw a decline in the quantity of coarseware pottery being produced and the substitution of factory-made products.

There are differences in the distribution of pottery by period and plot, but these probably indicate the proximity of the fields to settlements and the use of manure and night soil on the closest fields. In particular, there is a concentration of medieval potsherds between plots 35 and 39 and a smaller and earlier concentration between plots 48 and 50.

For the post-medieval period the following points can be made:

- e) Only 7 plots produced sherds of definite 16<sup>th</sup>- or 17<sup>th</sup>-century date, each producing one sherd. These are plots 112, 15, 27, 30, 33, 36 and 37.
- f) Only four sherds of 18<sup>th</sup> century pottery earlier than the onset of mass production in the 1760s were found, in plots 27, 33 and 54. These, however, are of white salt-glazed stoneware and

Westerwald stoneware both of which are quite likely to have been curated as heirlooms into the later 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> centuries (indeed, such vessels are still present in the antiques market).

- g) Finally, it is clear that plot 33 lies close to a settlement which appears to have occupation extending, perhaps with breaks, from the early Anglo-Saxon period through to the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

## Description

Most of the pottery consists of small and highly abraded sherds (Fig 1). As Fig 1 shows, there is no real evidence for any difference in sherd size from the earliest to the latest sherds and it is likely that all are present as manuring scatters rather than being dislodged from occupation deposits under the ploughsoil. Despite this, a watch should be kept on those areas where pre-conquest, or potentially pre-conquest, sherds have been found.

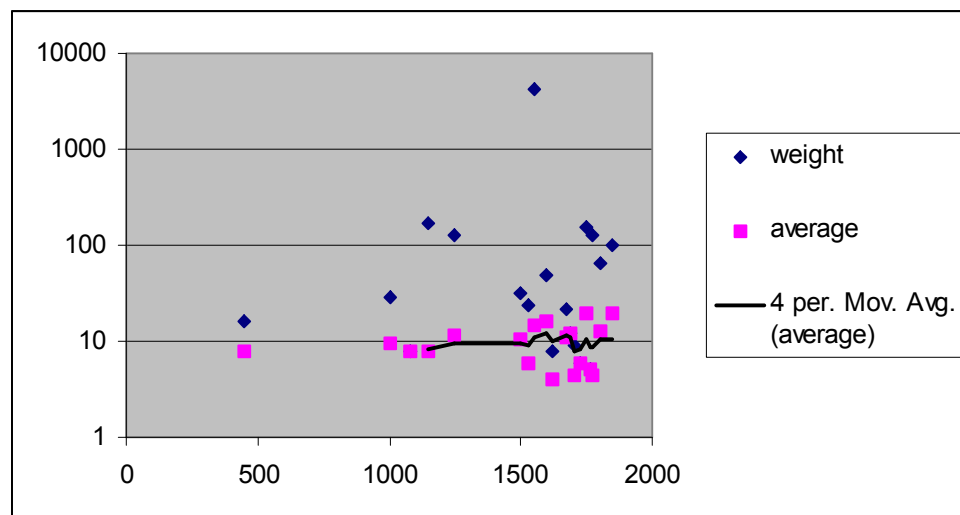


Figure 1

## Anglo-Saxon

Both Berkshire and Oxfordshire lie in areas of early Anglo-Saxon settlement but it has proved extremely difficult to find pottery in either county which dates to the mid Saxon period, despite the definite evidence for the use of such pottery to the south (Southampton) and east (London). This may, however, be because of the essential similarity of pottery of the two periods in this area. Within the early Anglo-Saxon period chaff-tempered pottery appears to become more common with time although at Southampton it was clearly in use only at the beginning of the settlement, in the later 7<sup>th</sup> century. Similarly, it is thought at London that chaff-tempered pottery was used mainly in the early Anglo-Saxon period, extending into the 8<sup>th</sup> century perhaps but out of use by the 9<sup>th</sup> century.

Thus, the two sherds found here must be seen as being most likely to be of later early Anglo-Saxon date but with a possibility of a slightly later date. Away from the Thames gravels it has proved to be

extremely difficult to find occupation sites of either period in either county and thus a watch should be kept on both plots.

The potsherds are both deliberately tempered with chaff and show little sign of finishing. This is typical of the majority of sherds of this period in the area. The two sherds have slightly differing fabrics. One had no large inclusions other than chaff impressions and the other has sparse inclusions of polished rounded quartz grains and possibly lower greensand chert. Both have a silty, micaceous groundmass. These features are similar to those of later medieval and post-medieval pottery from the survey and suggest that the pots were locally made.



**Figure 2**



**Figure 3**

### **11<sup>th</sup> to mid 12<sup>th</sup> century**

Three sherds of pottery of 11<sup>th</sup> to mid 12<sup>th</sup>-century date were found. They can be divided into two subfabrics on the basis of their petrological characteristics. The first (2 sherds, both from plot 47, Figs 4 and 5) has an inclusionless matrix and contains a mixed quartz sand with both white and brown-stained angular flint grit. These features suggest the use of clay-with-flints which outcrops over the chalk on both sides of the Thames. The second subfabric (plot 33, Fig 6) has polished rounded quartz sand and white flint inclusions and a silty micaceous matrix. These features suggest the use of the Gault clay although none of the later locally-produced wares found in the survey have flint inclusions and it may be that angular flint gravel is not available locally. Similar pottery was used in the Kennet valley and further south (for example, at Newbury).



**Figure 4**



**Figure 5**



**Figure 6**

## Late 11<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> century

A single sherd of a handmade tripod pitcher was found, on plot 50. This vessel was decorated with crude horizontal grooves on the shoulder and has a glossy external lead glaze (Fig 7), with dribbles down the inside of the neck (Fig 8). It is similar, therefore, to several early glazed wares of late 11<sup>th</sup> to early 13<sup>th</sup> century date in the south and west of England. However, it does not appear to match any of the known industries and the similarity of its range of inclusions and body colour suggest a local source.



Figure 7



Figure 8

## Later 12<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup>-century

Table 1

Form	MEDLOC	NEWBURYB	OXAM	Grand Total
JAR	16	3		22
JUG	5		6	11
CBM			1	1
HTP	1			1
RIDGE	1			1
Grand Total	23	3	7	33

Thirty-three sherds of pottery datable, broadly, between the later 12<sup>th</sup> and the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century were found. Few of these were definitely attributable to regional industries although a few sherds may be from the Brill/Boarstall potteries. However, many of the vessels of this type were coarser-textured than genuine Brill/Boarstall ware and are probably local copies. These wares can be divided into broad groups depending on their inclusions.

Thirteen sherds have quartz sand tempering and a slightly micaceous matrix. Nine of these sherds contain clay pellets, both of lighter and darker colour than the body as well as rounded red iron ore or clay.

Seven sherds contain rounded quartz sand, angular white flint and have a silty micaceous matrix. They were probably made from Gault clay tempered with detrital sands derived from the chalk.

Two sherds contain a quartz sand with red iron ore fragments, angular white flint and an inclusionless matrix. They were probably made from clay-with-flints, perhaps in the Chilterns or possibly the Berkshire Downs.

**Table 2**

Form	CSTN	FREC	LONS	NOTS	PMLOC	SWSG	VERW	WEST	WEST?	Grand Total
BOWL					220	2				222
FLP					34					34
JAR			2		10					12
PAN					9					9
				1	5					6
JUG					3		1			4
CUP	3									3
DRINKING JUG		3								3
BOTTLE								1		1
DRINKING JUG/BOTTLE		1								1
SELTZER BOTTLE									1	1
Grand Total	3	4	2	1	281	2	1	1	1	296

In total, eleven distinct fabrics could be identified within this collection and although the characteristics of their clay bodies suggests that difference clay sources were used there is a similarity in their colour and the range of inclusions found which suggest that pottery might have been obtained from numerous sources but all quite local. All would probably be classed as Mellor's South East Oxfordshire ware for which sources are known from documentary and archaeological evidence on either side of the chalk scarp.

The majority of vessels were jars with some jugs.

### **16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> centuries**

Most of the pottery dating to this period is lead-glazed earthenware, identifiable as post-medieval through the use of slightly finer-textured fabrics than those used in the medieval period. There are two extremes of fabric, with a silty, micaceous groundmass and a fine-textured groundmass, but there appears to be a continuum between the two. Here too, it seems likely that the pottery was obtained from several sources, exploiting different geological strata for their clays but sharing many features of manufacture and form. Sherds of large conical bowls, or pancheons, were found. It has been suggested that this form might have been used in dairying, for separating cream from milk, and the form generally has a late 16<sup>th</sup> to late 17<sup>th</sup>-century date. Examples were recovered from plots 12, 27, 29, 36, 39 and 48.

The remaining sherds mainly come from bowls and jars which cannot be closely dated and were probably multi-purpose. There are, however, 34 sherds of flowerpot, in exactly the same range of fabrics as the remaining sherds. Some of these have a central hole in the base and were definitely unglazed. This style of flowerpot was in use by the late 18<sup>th</sup> century but before that most vessels were glazed and had holes pierced in the sides close to the base. This is clear evidence that the same clays

were being exploited in the late 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> centuries (or even later) as were being used in the earlier post-medieval and medieval periods.

The post-medieval non-local wares from this survey are few in number and restricted in type. They consist of Cistercian ware cups, of unknown, English, origin, Frechen stoneware vessels, either for drinking or storing wine or spirit, a Westerwald stoneware vessel of similar function and two sherds of white salt-glazed stoneware bowls. These sherds, ten in number, were mainly used for public drinking, a situation where the use of expensive non-local or imported wares might be expected. There are no sherds of slipwares, either of English or continental origin, nor are there any examples of whitewares such as those made in the Hampshire/Surrey borders. This is quite remarkable, especially for the later 17<sup>th</sup> to mid 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, during which time Staffordshire slipwares became ubiquitous throughout England. Since the material is unstratified and the bulk of the lead-glazed earthenwares cannot be closely dated, it is not possible to say whether this represents a dearth of earlier post-medieval manuring or a remarkably limited range of post-medieval wares in use in the area. Two sherds of Chinese export porcelain were probably of 18<sup>th</sup>-century manufacture, although again it is difficult to say how long they remained in use before ending up in the fields.

### Late 18<sup>th</sup> century and later

For the reasons stated above, it is difficult to say precisely how much of the lead-glazed earthenware from the survey is actually of later 18<sup>th</sup>-century or later date. Forty-eight sherds definitely date to this period, however. They include a single fragment of late 18<sup>th</sup>-century Creamware. All the remaining sherds are possibly or probably of 19<sup>th</sup>-century or later date. The majority of these wares were made in factories situated some distance from the survey area and include examples of London stoneware, Derbyshire stoneware, Nottinghamshire unsourced English stoneware (possibly Bristol) as well as whitewares of various types probably in the main made in the Staffordshire Potteries. A single sherd of Verwood ware, a lead-glazed light-bodied earthenware made in Hampshire, is the only example of a non-local coarseware.

**Table 3**

Form	CREA	DERBS	ENGS	NCBW	PEARL	REFR	TPW	WHITE	Grand Total
BOWL				1	3		7		11
JAR			6					1	7
CUP					2		2	1	5
BLACKING BOTTLE			4						4
CHP							1		1
COLANDER					1				1
MARMALADE JAR			1						1
PLATE	1				2		12	1	16
STORAGE JAR			1						1

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TEAPOT						1			1
Grand Total	1	4	8	1	8	1	22	3	48

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### Acknowledgements

The recording of this pottery was carried out by Kate Steane.