

Assessment of the Fired Clay from Land off Horkstow Road, South Ferriby, North Lincolnshire (SFAG)

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A small quantity of fired clay and ceramic building material from archaeological work at Horkstow Road, South Ferriby, was submitted to the author for identification and assessment (Site Code SFAG).

The finds consist of two fragments of daub and two pieces of Romano-British ceramic building material. There were also a number of fragments identified here as being natural pebbles.

In total the humanly worked artefacts amounted to 7 fragments from no more than 4 objects with a total weight of 83 gm. Two of these were very abraded.

Description

Fired clay

Five fragments of daub were recovered, from contexts 404 and 746. Four of these (from context 404) were part of a single fragment of daub with an oxidized fabric with abundant organic inclusions, up to 10mm long. The groundmass is silty and micaceous and the original surface has a light colouration due to the presence of calcareous matter in the groundmass and brine ('salt-surfacing').

The fabric characteristics suggest that this clay was obtained from a Humber estuarine mud to which organic matter, probably straw, was added to give strength.

The other fragment, from context 746, might be a piece of low-fired ceramic building material rather than daub. The fabric contains only sparse inclusions visible by eye. These include rounded quartz, rounded red ironstone and angular limestone fragments up to 4.0mm across. The fabric also contains sparse organic inclusions, probably also accidental inclusions in the parent clay rather than deliberate temper.

The fabric of this fragment suggests that it may have been made from a Jurassic clay to which superficial sand was added, probably through soil formation processes rather than deliberate addition.

Romano-British ceramic building material

Two fragments of brick or tile, probably of Romano-British date, were recovered from context 601. One of these has a light grey core and oxidized brown margins. It contains numerous calcareous fossils, several mm across, including punctate brachiopod fragments, corals, ostracods and small bivalves with ornamented shells. It also contains nodules of a sparry clear mineral, probably selenite. The groundmass contains quartz and muscovite silt.

These characteristics are very similar to those found in Dales Shelly ware pottery, thought to have been produced in northeast Lincolnshire. However, the calcareous inclusions are larger than those normally found in the pottery and it is possible that identification of the fossils present might provide a clue to the precise location of the source of the clay used for this tile and perhaps also the Dales Shelly pottery.

The second fragment has a rather different fabric and is tempered with abundant rounded and subangular quartz up to 0.5mm across. From a visual inspection it is not possible to identify the source of this sand.

Stone

Small irregular pebbles of pink clay traversed by veins filled with a clear mineral, possibly selenite, were present in five deposits. These are possibly fragments of Triassic mudstone, either from the Mercian Mudstone or Rhaetic deposits, which apparently outcrops in a low cliff along the south bank of the Humber, between Alkborough and the Trent.

Appendix: Catalogue of Submitted Finds

Context	Description	Cname	Form	Nosh	NoV	Weight	Subfabric	Condition
404		FCLAY	DAUB	4	1	40	OXID SILTY MICACEOUS CLAY WITH A ORGANICS <10MM;SALT-SURFACED SURFACES	
601	GREY CORE WITH OXID MARGINS	RTIL		1	1	24	SILTY CLAY WITH ABUNDANT FOSSILS, AND NODULES (SELENITE?);FOSSILS INCLUDE PUNCTATE BRACHIOPOID, CORALS,OSTRACODS;SMALL ORNAMENTED BIVALVES	
601		RTIL		1	1	8	ABUNDANT R/SA Q <0.5MM;OXID	VABR
612		STONE	GEOL	2	2	13	PINK CLAY NODULES WITH ?SELENITE VEINS AND MANG STAINING	
703		STONE	GEOL	1	1	8	PINK CLAY NODULES WITH ?SELENITE VEINS	
741		STONE	GEOL	1	1	6	PINK CLAY NODULES WITH ?SELENITE VEINS	
743		STONE	GEOL	2	2	7	PINK CLAY NODULES WITH ?SELENITE VEINS AND MANG STAINING	
746	MIGHT BE LOW-FIRED RTIL	FCLAY	DAUB	1	1	11	S RQ <1.0MM;S R RED FE <2.0MM;S LIMESTONE <4.0MM;S ORGANICS	VABR
746		STONE	GEOL	1	1	6	PINK CLAY NODULES WITH ?SELENITE VEINS AND MANG STAINING	