Assessment of the pottery and other finds from Aylesbury Road, Bierton, Buckinghamshire (ARB04)

Alan Vince

Forty-two finds from four evaluation trenches excavated at Aylesbury Road, Bierton, Buckinghamshire, by Network Archaeology were submitted for identification and assessment (Table 1). The finds ranged in date from the later prehistoric period (i.e. late Bronze Age to Iron Age) through to the 19th century. The prehistoric finds are abraded but from the early Anglo-Saxon period onwards there is a complete sequence of unabraded pottery indicating occupation from the 5/7th through to the 13th/14th century, after which there is a break in deposition until the 19th century.

Table 1

trench	Data	FCLAY	IRON	LEAD	POTTERY	Grand Total
1	Sum of NoV				7	7
	Sum of Nosh				15	15
	Sum of Weight				231	231
2	Sum of NoV	1	2		13	16
	Sum of Nosh	1	2		13	16
	Sum of Weight	11	26		203	240
3	Sum of NoV				6	6
	Sum of Nosh				6	6
	Sum of Weight				30	30
4	Sum of NoV			1	12	13
	Sum of Nosh			1	12	13
	Sum of Weight			7	59	66
Total Sum of NoV		1	2	1	38	42
Total Sum of Nosh		1	2	1	46	50
Total Sum of Weight		11	26	7	523	567

Description

Fired Clay

A single fragment of daub was recovered from context 203. It has a wattle impression and was therefore used as part of a wattle and daub structure, such as an oven, kiln or domestic building. The fabric contains numerous fragments of a distinctive limestone, probably of upper Jurassic origin, and it would be possible to identify this rock through thin section analysis. It is almost certainly derived from a local outcrop, however.

Iron

Two iron objects were recovered, from context 201. The first is a small chisel or similar tool with a narrow blade and an angled back, which might be an ancient fracture suggesting that the tool snapped in use. The second object is a small hobnail. Given the lack of iron from other contexts and the presence of 19th-century material in context 201 it is likely that both objects are 19th-century in date.

Lead

A lead plug was found in context 403. Such plugs were formed by the repair of a ceramic vessel and in this case filled an irregular-shaped hole about 15mm by 5mm, with the lead lapping over the inner and outer faces of the vessel. Such plugs occur in the Roman and medieval periods and indicate that pottery was sufficiently valuable to be worth repairing. In the absence of Roman pottery from the evaluation it is likely that this is of medieval date (the finds in Trench 4 range in date from the later prehistoric to the 12th/13th centuries).

Pottery

Later Prehistoric

Six sherds of later prehistoric pottery were found, coming from Trenches 2 and 4. All the sherds are tempered with angular white, probably fire-cracked, flint up to 4mm across and in most of the sherds rounded dark grains c.0.2mm across were noted in the groundmass. The latter might be altered glauconite or limonite pellets and were clearly present in the parent clay. A recent study of Iron Age flint-tempered pottery from sites in Hampshire has shown that the ware was probably centrally-produced. Given the distinctive nature of the inclusions in the Bierton sherds it would be valuable to thin section a sample to identify the inclusions.

Early and mid Anglo-Saxon

Six sherds of early to middle Anglo-Saxon pottery were found, coming from all four trenches. None of the sherds is large but all are relatively unabraded in comparison to the prehistoric pottery. The sherds were all of fabrics found on sites in the Thames valley. The most common fabric contained large, rounded polished quartz grains, some of which have haematite in veins (ESGS). The most likely ultimate source for this sand is the lower

Cretaceous Woburn Sands of central Bedfordshire, although a closer source, for example in a fluvio-glacial deposit or an alluvial sand from a river draining this area is possible. Two sherds contained a sandstone-rich sand temper (ESST). In one case the sand grains are overgrown quartz up to 1.5mm across and in the other they were a finer-grained sandstone, although also with overgrown grains. Ultimately, the inclusions in the coarser fabric probably originated in the lower Carboniferous Millstone Grit but fluvio-glacial deposits containing similar quartz grains occur over large areas of midland England. The identity of the finer sandstone is uncertain. Finally, a sherd containing abundant organic inclusions and with a silty, micaceous, groundmass was present (ECHAF). A visually-identical fabric has recently been shown to be of mid Saxon date and made in the central London area, supplying the emporium of *Lundenwic* but the groundmass is also similar to that of the Gault clay, which outcrops locally and one would need to examine a thin section and undertake chemical analysis in order to test both this and the other identifications.

Late Saxon to 13th/14th century

Twenty-six sherds of pottery dating between the late 9th/10th and the late 13th/14th centuries were recovered. All are fresh and include large fragments, indicating occupation on the site throughout that period.

The earliest ware present is St Neot's-type ware (SNEOT, 3 sherds) which although possibly produced first in the late 9th or 10th century was still in use at, and after, the Norman conquest.

Four sherds of Early Medieval Chalky Ware (EMCH) were found. This ware is found in London from the middle of the 11th to the middle of the 12th centuries and it is likely that it has a similar currency in Buckinghamshire (although it might come into use earlier and continue later).

Nine sherds of sandy ware(s) were found (MEDLOC). Without closer examination it is not possible to identify them more closely but all come from globular bodied, handmade cooking pots. In London and in Hertfordshire such wares fell out of use by the middle of the 12th century but handmade traditions continued longer as one moves westwards and a later 12th or 13th-century date is possible here.

Three sherds of Brill/Boarstall ware were found. One is of a coarse sandy fabric, used in the later 12th or early 13th centuries (OXAW2) whilst the others are the finer fabric, OXAM, which came into use during the 13th century but continued to the end of the medieval period. However, one of these OXAM vessels comes from a baluster jug, which can be dated typologically to the late 13th or early 14th centuries.

19th-century

Six sherds of 19th-century pottery were found. Four are of transfer-printed ware vessels (TPW), one a sherd of Nottingham stoneware (NOTS) with a feldspathic glaze, an innovation of the mid 19th century, and the last is a sherd from an unglazed flowerpot (LPMLOC).

Discussion

The condition of the later prehistoric sherds may indicate that they do not indicate settlement on the site although it is possible that soil formation processes rather than ploughing are responsible for the condition of the sherds. The early to mid Anglo-Saxon sherds, however are in a less abraded condition but are similar in size to the earlier sherds. Only one of the sherds, however, came from a deposit which did not also produce later sherds and thus the other five are residual.

The late Saxon to 13th/14th-century sherds are in a better condition and certainly indicate settlement on the site. A pre-conquest start to this phase of activity is possible, but it could as easily be post-conquest and one would require either larger stratified groups of pottery or more closely-datable types to refine this starting date. The end date for this phase of activity, however, must be later than c.1250 and there is nothing in the collection which indicates occupation after c.1350.

The final phase of activity recognisable from the finds is clearly dated to the middle of the 19th century or later.

Assessment

Although one could gain useful information from further study of both the prehistoric and early to mid Anglo-Saxon pottery through scientific analysis, the sherds are small, featureless and not stratified in contemporary groups. It would therefore be better to wait until larger, stratified, assemblages of these periods from Bierton are discovered before undertaking such studies.

None of the pottery is worth illustrating, since all the featured medieval sherds are of common types known through numerous publications.

All the medieval and earlier pottery should be retained whilst the 19th century pottery and iron could probably be discarded.

Appendix

trench	Context	date	cname	Form	subfabric	class	potrec id	Project	Weight	Part	Nosh	NoV	Condition	Use	D
1	101	pmed	GRE	BOWL	SILTY	POTTERY	109880		16	BS	1	1			I
1	104	hmed	OXAM	JAR	FINE SAND, SOME MUSC;LIGHT BODIED	POTTERY	109879		84	BS	6	1			U E
1	106	emed	OXAW1	JUG	A RQ (INC MILKY);CLEAN LIGHTCOLOURED MATRIX	POTTERY	109873		88	BS	3	1			M C S
1	106	hmed	OXAM	JUG		POTTERY	109874		29	B	1	1			E
1	106	lsax/sn	SNEOT	JAR		POTTERY	109872		8	R	1	1			E
1	106	sn	EMCH	JAR		POTTERY	109871		3	BS	2	1		SOOTED EXT	
1	106	esax	ESGS	JAR	CHAFF;GSQ	POTTERY	109870		3	BS	1	1			
2	201	emod	IRON	HOBNAIL		IRON	109856		1	BS	1	1			
2	201	emod	LPMLOC	FLP		POTTERY	109888		3	R	1	1			
2	201	emod	NOTS	JAR		POTTERY	109887		14	BS	1	1			E I
2	201	emod	TPW	PLATE		POTTERY	109884		52	BS	3	3			V
2	201	emod	TPW	PLATE		POTTERY	109885		36	BS	1	1			
2	201	lsax/sn	SNEOT	JAR		POTTERY	109886		24	BS	1	1		SOOTED EXT	
2	201	m/pmed	MTIL	FLAT	ABUNDANT LENTICULAR VOIDS;SANDED BASE	POTTERY	109853		56	BS	1	1	MORTARED OVER BROKEN EDGES		
2	201	nd	IRON	CHISEL		IRON	109855		25	BS	1	1			V

trench	Context	date	cname	Form	subfabric	class	potrec id	Project	Weight	Part	Nosh	NoV	Condition	Use	D
2	201	esax	ESGS	JAR	GSQ	POTTERY	109889		6	BS	1	1			
2	203	emed	MEDLOC	JAR	A RQ <0.5MM	POTTERY	109882		1	BS	1	1			H
2	203	nd	FCLAY	DAUB	A ANG FOSSILIFEROUS LIMESTONE	FCLAY	109881		11	BS	1	1			W I
2	203	preh	PREH	JAR	S GSQ;A ANG WHITE FLINT;GROUNDMASS A ROUNDED BLACK FE ALTERED GLAUC?	POTTERY	109883		11	BS	3	3			
3	301	emed	MEDLOC?	JAR	A RQ <0.5MM	POTTERY	109860		2	BS	1	1		DEPO INT	
3	301	EMED	MEDLOC	JAR	FINE TEXTURED	POTTERY	109859		3	BS	1	1			
3	305	emed	MEDLOC?	JAR	A RQ <0.5MM	POTTERY	109877		3	BS	1	1		SOOTED EXT	
3	305	lsax/sn	SNEOT	JAR		POTTERY	109878		6	BS	1	1			
3	305	esax	ESST	JAR	SSTMG?;CHAFF	POTTERY	109876		11	BS	1	1			
3	308	esax	ESGS	JAR	CHAFF;GSQ	POTTERY	109875		5	BS	1	1			
4	403	emed	MEDLOC?	JAR	A RQ <0.5MM	POTTERY	109866		7	BS	2	2			
4	403	nd	LEAD	PLUG		LEAD	109854		7	BS	1	1			I P
4	403	preh	PREH?	JAR	S GSQ;A ANG WHITE FLINT;GROUNDMASS A ROUNDED BLACK FE ALTERED GLAUC?	POTTERY	109868		5	BS	1	1			
4	403	sn	EMCH	JAR		POTTERY	109867		11	BS	1	1			
4	403	sn	EMCH	JAR	FOSSILIFEROUS LST;SILTY	POTTERY	109869		0	BS	1	1			

trench	Context	date	cname	Form	subfabric	class	potrec id	Project	Weight	Part	Nosh	NoV	Condition	Use	D
					MICACEOUS GROUNDMASS										
4	405	esax	ECHAF	JAR	S GSQ;SILTY MICACEOUS GROUNDMASS;A CHAFF	POTTERY	109863		5	BS	1	1			
4	405	emed	MEDLOC?	JAR	A RQ <0.5MM	POTTERY	109865		7	BS	1	1		SOOTED EXT	H
4	405	esax	ESST	JAR	M SUGARY SST;M RQ	POTTERY	109864		3	BS	1	1			
4	407	emed	MEDLOC?	JAR	A RQ WITH FE COATING;LIGHT BODIED?	POTTERY	109861		9	BS	1	1		SOOTED EXT	H
4	407	preh	PREH	-	ANG FLINT	POTTERY	109862		4	BS	1	1			
4	411	emed	MEDLOC?	JAR	A SA & R Q <0.03MM	POTTERY	109858		7	BS	1	1		SOOTED EXT;THICK KETTLE FUR INT	H
4	413	preh	PREH?	JAR	S GSQ;A ANG WHITE FLINT;GROUNDMASS A ROUNDED BLACK FE ALTERED GLAUC?	POTTERY	109857		1	BS	1	1			F C