

## **Fishtoft pottery assessment**

### **Assessment**

#### **The Early to Mid Saxon pottery**

Only four sherds of handmade black-fired vessels of early to mid Anglo-Saxon date were recovered from the site. Such vessels could be of early Anglo-Saxon date and evidence for 5<sup>th</sup>- to 7<sup>th</sup>-century occupation in the area or they might have been produced in the later 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> centuries in continuation of earlier traditions. If the wares come from the core area of Maxey ware production then it is more likely that they pre-date the Mid Saxon period but if they come from peripheral areas then it is possible that they may actually have been contemporary. It is clear from excavations at Flixborough that such wares did continue to be used into the later 7<sup>th</sup> century since there are at that site smashed vessels of ESGS (tempered with a quartzose sand derived from the lower Cretaceous rocks which outcrop along the western and southern flanks of the Lincolnshire Wolds) and CHARN (tempered with biotite-rich acid igneous rock fragments).

Three of these sherds are too small for destructive analysis, and each appears to be of a different fabric. It would, however, be worthwhile examining these three sherds at x20 magnification using a stereo-microscope to amplify the evidence gained from the assessment.

TASK Examination of early to mid Anglo-Saxon sherds

The fourth sherd, however, could be sampled for thin section. Initial visual examination indicates that it is tempered with organic matter (ECHAF) together with fragments of possible basic igneous rock and sandstones. Such inclusions suggest a source in the boulder clay to the east of the Wolds, some of which probably underlies the Fishtoft site itself. Similar inclusions, however, would be found in beach and river sands in the Lindsey Marshes.

TASK TS and ICPS analysis of ECHAF

#### **The Mid Saxon pottery**

Six hundred and seventy eight sherds of definite mid Saxon date were recovered. The size of this collection distinguishes it from most previously known collections in the county. Flixborough produced over 5000 sherds, which places it in a category of its own, but Fishtoft is the second largest collection, followed closely by Quarrington, which produced 628 sherds and Riby Crossroads with 317 sherds. Only two other collections of mid Saxon pottery in the county have more than 100 sherds: Gosberton (242 sherds) and Normanby-le-Wold (217 sherds).

Given the rarity of collections of this date the opportunity to study the pottery in some detail should be taken since it is possible to establish the sources of supply of the pottery and to compare this data with that from other moderately large collections, and then to use data from the smaller collections to provide a regional context.

Five major fabric groups were recognised at Fishtoft (Table 00). Although Northern Maxey-type ware (MAX) was the most frequent type measured either by sherd count or weight, followed by Southern Maxey-type ware (RMAX) and Ipswich ware (IPS), the relative frequency of the Ipswich-type wares was much greater by weight than count. This is due to a considerable difference in mean sherd weight. This difference could be interpreted in several ways: thicker walled vessels tend to form heavier sherds; Ipswich ware is less susceptible to mechanical weathering, since the shell inclusions in the other wares tend to leach out and allow groundwater and roots to penetrate the fabric. All other factors being equal, a higher mean sherd weight would suggest that the larger sherds had undergone less recycling in the ground than the smaller sherds.

*Table 1*

cname	Sherds	Weight	Mean Weight
IPS	49	1031	20.60
MAX	487	3760	8.89
MAXQ	4	37	9.25
MSAXX	6	57	10.3
RMAX	132	2134	9.52
Total	678	7019	10.32

The source of Ipswich ware seems to have been conclusively and finally established through the Ipswich ware survey, which examined sherds of Ipswich ware from sites throughout England. No regional fabric groups were recognised, either using thin sections or chemical analysis and the range of fabrics found in the ware were seen to reflect the use of varying proportions of a small number of sand and clay outcrops in the Ipswich area. The sherds from Fishtoft are identical under x20 magnification with those from Ipswich itself and contain the same range of fine quartz sand/silt, a sand containing moderate amounts of polished quartz and rare angular flint. Little would be gained from further analysis of this group.

Northern Maxey-type ware, however, appears to have been produced from outcrops of Jurassic clay on the eastern, dip, slope of the Lincolnshire Jurassic ridge, tempered with a sand composed of shelly limestone, probably from the Great Oolite outcrop. An obvious source for this ware would be the Witham Gap, and it is unlikely to have been made as far south as Sleaford, since at the Quarrington site, immediately to the south of Sleaford, MAX

is rare. A source, or sources, to the north of the Witham Gap is possible, however, and further work is required to establish the similarity of the Fishtoft Northern Maxey-type wares to those found elsewhere.

With this in mind, Jane Young has identified a number of subfabrics within the Maxey-type ware group. Most of these reflect differences in texture (A, B and C), which themselves are likely to reflect the way in which the clay was prepared as much as the use of different raw materials. However, there are in addition a number of sherds where inclusions additional to the shelly limestone were noted. These include echinoid spines (Sub-fabric E), and sherds with these present do tend to be more common in northern Lincolnshire than in central Lincolnshire.

*Table 2. Northern Maxey subfabrics*

Subfabric	Sherds	Vessels	Weight	Mean Weight	TS and ICPS
-	64	26	25	0.39	
A	1	1	1	1.00	
A/B	1	1	3	3.00	
B	303	178	2379	7.85	11
B + clay pellets ?	1	1	4	4.00	1
C	13	6	185	14.23	3
E	9	6	44	4.89	3
Fabric 1	48	15	210	4.38	6
U	1	1	63	63.00	1
U + quartz	13	7	108	8.31	4
U + rounded quartz	3	3	95	31.67	2

A total of 30 sherds have been selected for further analysis. These are a mixture of typical examples (including examples of subfabrics B, C and E, all of which have some typological features present) and atypical ones (Fabric 1, U, U + quartz, U + rounded quartz).

A considerable body of petrological and chemical data now exists to compare with these sherds, but most comes from northern Lincolnshire, since it was collected as part of the Flixborough post-excavation programme. This collection would provide a good opportunity to study samples which might be expected to come from the Witham gap or thereabouts.

Four sherds of a variant fabric recognised at Quarrington, MAXQ, were present. Two examples of this fabric from Quarrington were analysed as part of the Flixborough project and were shown to be quite distinct from the Northern Maxey wares. Three of the Fishtoft examples are large enough to sample and their analysis would provide a test of whether this group is indeed distinct or whether the difference was simply due to an abnormal

composition of the samples. Assuming that the group was produced in the Sleaford area, then it might provide evidence for the use of the Old Slea during the mid Saxon period.

#### MSAXX

Six sherds (from five vessels) have a shell temper, broadly similar to Maxey wares, but do not share the same typological characteristics. At x20 magnification, some of these are quite distinct and in one case the sherd may contain an erratic basic igneous rock which suggests a coastal origin whilst the texture of the fabric is similar to Roman Dales-type shelly ware, possibly made on the south bank of the Humber to the north of Flixborough. It is suggested that all five of these vessels are analysed using thin section and chemical analysis as they may provide evidence for coastal trade.

*Table 3*

sub fabric	analyse	analyse ?	Grand Total
?		1.00	1.00
light firing shelly	1.00		1.00
shell	1.00		1.00
shell + erratic ?	1.00		1.00
shelly	1.00		1.00
Grand Total	4.00	1.00	5.00

#### RMAX

Southern Maxey-type ware is recognised by the presence of punctate brachiopod shell and has a much more varied shell fauna than Northern Maxey ware. It is suggested that unlike northern Maxey-type ware this fabric was produced from naturally shell-tempered marl. Similar shelly marls have been exploited in Bedfordshire in the Roman period and in Northamptonshire in the medieval period. In both cases, it is likely that an upper Jurassic clay was the source. Although upper Jurassic clays occur in Lincolnshire they are mostly obscured by fluvio-glacial deposits (in the central clay vale) and by holocene silts and clays in the fens. Nevertheless, there are exposures of Oxford Clay, for example in the Silk Willoughby area to the south of Sleaford. However, there is no evidence that shelly marls occur this far north. Analysis of the distribution of Southern Maxey ware suggests that it was probably produced to the southwest of the county and distributed via the fen river systems to the Wash. Thus, the Fishtoft finds were probably coastally traded from one of the more southerly river mouths, such as the Welland, rather than the Witham.

Eighty nine sherds of Southern Maxey-type ware were present, representing no more than 60 vessels. Ten of these vessels were chosen for thin section and chemical analysis. The purpose of analysing these samples is to confirm the presence of punctate brachiopod shell,

to test for the presence of limestone matrix (present in Northern Maxey-type ware but absent in Southern Maxey-type ware) and to see whether the chemical composition indicates a single source or several groups.

There are no definite imported wares present (but see below) but the English wares indicate that the site was probably supplied from inland potteries in the Lincoln and Sleaford areas as well as with pottery produced to the southwest of the county, probably in Cambridgeshire, Northamptonshire or Bedfordshire), which probably arrived through coastal trading, and with pottery produced at Ipswich, also coastally-traded. Although this degree of sophistication in the 8<sup>th</sup> century is no longer surprising it still requires confirmation and elaboration through further analysis.

### Anglo-Scandinavian pottery

Although there is a scatter of pre-conquest pottery on the site, including Lincoln-made wheelthrown shelly wares (LSH) which ceased to be produced at the beginning of the 11<sup>th</sup> century, there is no evidence for a continuity of settlement from the mid Saxon to the Anglo-Scandinavian period. In fact, the most common ware in this collection is Stamford ware, which outside of the immediate Stamford area, is particularly common in conquest period 11<sup>th</sup>-century assemblages.

Various diagnostic 9<sup>th</sup>- to mid 10<sup>th</sup>-century wares (such as ELFS, LG, and LSLS, together with the earliest types of LKT and TORK) are absent. There are two sherds which might be of late 9<sup>th</sup>/early 10<sup>th</sup>-century Lincoln sandy ware (LSLS) but these are also quite possibly of later, early to mid 11<sup>th</sup>-century, date (SNLS). There are, however, three sherds of wheelthrown greyware which are not recognisable as Anglo-Scandinavian Lincolnshire products (LSAXX). These may be non-local Anglo-Scandinavian wares or they may be mid Saxon continental imports. One of these has been selected for analysis and comparison with mid-Saxon imported wares from various sites in Eastern England.