Assessment of the finds from East Street, Olney, Buckinghamshire (OES04)

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Summary

The pottery, ceramic building material and plaster from a watching brief carried out by Network Archaeology Ltd at Olney, Bucks were submitted for identification and assessment. The material came from groundworks associated with the installation of a narrow gauge gas pipeline along East Street, in origin a medieval street. The finds include three small abraded sherds of medieval pottery, fragments of medieval flat roof tiles and pottery and other finds of 17th-century and later date.

Description

Ceramic Building Material

Medieval?

Eight fragments of tile were identified as being possibly of medieval date. They include six fragments of flat roof tile, including a piece with round peg holes, one fragment of valley tile (or possibly a post-medieval pantile fragment) and a piece of glazed ridge tile. The fabrics of these tiles were not examined in detail.

Flat roof tiles and glazed ridge tiles were introduced to the southeast midlands in the later 12th century and continued to be used until the 17th century (sometimes surviving later). Gutter tiles, however, were used in the valleys between two roofs at right angles. L-shaped ground-plans were present by the 11th century but specialised hip and valley tiles seem to have been introduced in the later medieval period (the late 14th or 15th century).

These fragments were recovered from contexts 102,103, 108, 126, 149, and 151.

Post-medieval?

Twenty-one fragments of post-medieval ceramic building material were recovered. They represent no more than 17 objects and were identified either by form or by their fabric, which tended to be finer than that of the medieval tiles.

Seven fragments of handmade bricks were recovered. Such bricks were used from the 13/14th centuries into the 19th century but are most likely to be of later 16th to 19th century date.

Five fragments of flat roof tile were recovered and assigned to the post-medieval period on the basis of the fine texture of their fabric.

Seven fragments of pantile were recovered. Such tiles were used from the later 17th century through to the present day.

Modern

Nine fragments of ceramic building material were identified as being of late 19th or 20th-century date on the basis of their fabric or the method of manufacture or the presence of frogging on the bricks. In some cases the frogging was not made with a mould but by pressing the centre of the brick down by hand. This might indicate an early date (i.e. mid 19th century) for these bricks. Others, however, have moulded frogs.

Mortar

Two fragments of lime mortar were recovered. They probably came from the bonding of a brick wall.

Plaster

Five fragments of lime plaster were recovered. One of these (context 102) has the impressions of laths on two sides and flat, skimmed surfaces on the other two sides and is probably from a narrow plaster partition with a lath core. Such panels were used from the later medieval period onwards and were still being used in the late 19th/early 20th centuries, often with horsehair used to bind the plaster (there is no sign of such filler in this fragment).

The remaining pieces (contexts 103 and 149) might be from the plaster covering of a brick wall.

Pottery

Medieval

Three sherds of medieval pottery were recovered. They consist of two sherds of medieval shell-tempered ware of the type produced at Olney Hyde between the later 11th and the mid 13th centuries. The third sherd is of Potterspury ware and is likely to date to the later 13th or 14th centuries.

Post-medieval

Eighty-six sherds of post-medieval pottery were recovered (Table 1). The most common ware present is lead glazed red earthenware (GRE), a type of pottery produced from the late 16th century onwards, sometimes surviving into the 19th century. The second most common ware is Staffordshire coarseware, produced in the Potteries from poorly mixed red- and

white-firing Coal Measure clays. Examples of butter pots were present. These vessels were fired to semi-stoneware temperatures and were used for the transport of butter. Most of the vessels, however, were black-glazed pancheons and bowls, used for a variety of purposes in food preparation and storage. Such vessels were first produced in the 17th century but their market grew considerably during the 17th and 18th centuries. They were still being produced in the later 18th and 19th centuries.

Five sherds of tin-glazed ware (TGW) were present. They are of types probably current in the later 17th to mid 18th centuries.

Two sherds of a local slipware were found. The fabric is essentially untempered but had sparse voids due to the presence of calcareous inclusions (probably fossil shell). The fragments have an internal white slip with brown slip trailing over the top. Stylistically, these vessels are probably 17th or early 18th century in date.

Two sherds of Staffordshire Mottled ware (STMO) were present. Both come from tankards and are likely to be of very late 17th or 18th century date. This type continued in use into the later 18th century.

Two sherds of Staffordshire redware (STRE) were present. Both are from a black-glazed chamber pot of late 17th or early 18th-century date.

A single sherd of an unsourced black-glazed ware (BL) was found. Such vessels were produced from the early 17th century into the 19th century.

A single sherd of Staffordshire slipware was present (STSL). This ware developed out of Midlands Yellow ware in the 1670s and was produced in the Potteries and elsewhere (e.g. Bristol) into the mid 18th century. The Olney sherd has a brown slip inside and out which is typical of early to mid 18th-century vessels, most of which were lathe-turned.

Modern

Fifteen sherds of late 18th-century or later pottery were recovered. They include some types which were exclusively produced in the 18th century (such as Staffordshire/Bristol press-moulded plates, STCO, and Nottingham stoneware, NOTS) but most are probably of late 18th to 19th-century date. They include four fragments of stoneware drainpipe (ENGS) of unknown source and one fragment of locally-produced flowerpot (PMLOC). The remainder are of factory-produced vessels such as Creamware (CREA), Derbyshire stoneware (DERBS), 19th-century buffware (NCBW), Pearl ware (PEAR), and Transfer-printed ware (TPW). No definite late 19th- or 20th-century vessels were present.

Stone

Coal

Five fragments of coal were recovered, from contexts 139 and 151.

Assessment

Chronological interpretation

The medieval pottery consists of small, abraded sheds and is residual in later deposits. It might be evidence for activity on the site, but if so is likely to indicate manuring of fields with night soil or dung rather than occupation, or it might be present as the result of the importation of road metalling or hard core. By contrast, the medieval tile fragments are larger and unabraded. It is likely, therefore, that they come from structures incorporating medieval tile but which themselves were demolished in the post-medieval period.

There is no pottery which can conclusively be dated to the 17th century whilst a number of sherds are of types which were only current after c.1700. Therefore, it is likely that much of the broadly dated late 17th to 18th-century material is actually of early to mid 18th-century date. However, in most cases this 18th-century pottery occurs in assemblages alongside later pottery and ceramic building material and in these cases it too may have been brought to the site with hardcore.

There is also a disparity between the date of the early modern pottery, which includes no examples which are definitely later than c.1850, and the ceramic building material, which includes bricks and tiles which are almost certainly later. This might be due to changes in rubbish disposal and the character of the debris found.

Five contexts, from their finds and stratigraphy, might date to the post-medieval period. These are 103 (not closely datable), 119 (early 18th-century or later), 120 (mid 18th-century or later), 127 (late 17th century or later) and 153 (early 18th-century or later).

The remainder contain at least some material of late 18th or 19th-century or later date. Of these, eight can be dated to the later 19th or 20th centuries on the basis of ceramic building material or stoneware drainpipes (125, 134, 137, 139, 140, 141, 151 and 158).

Retention

It would be possible to identify some of the pottery, brick and tile more precisely with access to a local fabric series and it is therefore recommended that the entire collection be retained for future study, perhaps excluding material from demonstrably modern deposits.

Analysis

No further analysis is recommended.

Illustration

None of the finds is recommended for illustration.

Publication

The material is not worthy of publication for its intrinsic interest but could be published to support the suggested dating of the deposits.

Table 1. Post-medieval pottery by context (sherd count)

cname	102	108	119	120	125	127	129	137	151	153	158	Grand Total
GRE	1		2					21	20	1	1	46
STCOAR	3	1		1	7	1	1		10	1		25
TGW	1	2		1					1			5
SLIP			1							1		2
STMO			1							1		2
STRE									2			2
BL			1									1
STCO				1								1
STSL									1			1
Grand Total	5	3	5	3	7	1	1	21	34	4	1	85

Table 2 Early Modern pottery by context (sherd count)

cname	102	108	120	125	141	151	158	Grand Total
ENGS				4				4
NOTS		3						3
CREA	2							2
PMLOC						1		1
STCO			1					1
DERBS					1			1
NCBW							1	1
PEAR		1						1
TPW		1						1
Grand Total	2	5	1	4	1	1	1	15

context	CLASS	cname	NoSh	NoV	Wt (gm)	subfabric	Form	Description	Part	Use	Condition
158	CERAMIC	GRE	1	1	4		BOWL		BS		
158	CERAMIC	NCBW	1	1	4		PLATE?		BS		FRAGMENTED
153	CERAMIC	GRE	1	1	18		BOWL		R		
153	CERAMIC	SLIP	1	1	26	LOOKS LIKE POTTERSPURY	PANC		BS		ABRA
153	CERAMIC	STCOAR	1	1	7		PANC		BS		
153	CERAMIC	STMO	1	1	2		TANK		BS		
151	CBM	MOD	1	1	112		DRAIN		BS		
151	CBM	MOD	1	1	281		BRICK	FROGGED	BS		
151	CBM	MTIL	1	1	17		FLAT		BS		
151	CBM	PMTIL	1	1	31		PANT		BS		
151	CERAMIC	GRE	1	1	15		BOWL		B		ABRA
151	CERAMIC	GRE	6	5	13		BOWL		BS		ABRA/FRAGMENTED
151	CERAMIC	GRE	4	4	18		BOWL		BS		
151	CERAMIC	GRE	1	1	9		BOWL		R		ABRA
151	CERAMIC	GRE	2	1	10		BOWL		R		
151	CERAMIC	GRE	1	1	16		BOWL		R		
151	CERAMIC	GRE	1	1	18		BOWL	WHITE SLIP DEC	R		ABRA
151	CERAMIC	GRE	3	3	15		PANC		BS		ABRA
151	CERAMIC	GRE	1	1	58		PANC		R		ABRA
151	CERAMIC	OLNEY HYDE	2	2	3		JAR		BS	SOOTED EXT	
151	CERAMIC	PMLOC	1	1	20		FLP	WHITE SLIP OVER RIM	R		
151	CERAMIC	STCOAR	1	1	15		BUTTERPOT		B		
151	CERAMIC	STCOAR	1	1	28		BUTTERPOT		R		
151	CERAMIC	STCOAR	6	6	57		PANC		BS		ABRA

context	CLASS	cname	NoSh	NoV	Wt (gm)	subfabric	Form	Description	Part	Use	Condition
151	CERAMIC	STCOAR	2	2	117		PANC		R		ABRA
151	CERAMIC	STRE	2	1	21		CHPT		BS		
151	CERAMIC	STSL	1	1	3		BOWL		BS		
151	CERAMIC	TGW	1	1	3		PLATE		BS		ABRA
151	COAL	COAL	2	1	6				BS		
149	CBM	MTIL	1	1	108		FLAT	ROUND PEG HOLE (ONE OF TWO)	BS		
149	PLASTER	PLASTER	1	1	11			SURFACE SKIM	BS		
141	CERAMIC	DERBS	1	1	32		BOT		B;BS		
140	CBM	MOD	2	1	359		BRICK		BS		
139	CBM	MOD	2	1	58		BRICK		BS		VITRIFIED
139	COAL	COAL	3	1	17				BS		BURNT
137	CBM	MOD	1	1	88		BRICK	MOULDED - CURVED INNER FACE	BS		
137	CERAMIC	GRE	21	1	86		BOWL		R;BS		ABRA/FRAGMENTED
134	CBM	MOD	5	1	37		BRICK	MOULDED - CURVED INNER FACE	BS		
134	CBM	MOD	8	1	67		BRICK	MOULDED - CURVED INNER FACE	BS		
134	CBM	MOD	3	1	241		BRICK	MOULDED - CURVED INNER FACE	BS		
129	CERAMIC	STCOAR	1	1	6		PANC		BS		
127	CBM	PMTIL	1	1	22				BS		ABRA
127	CERAMIC	STCOAR	1	1	2		PANC		BS		
126	CBM	MTIL	1	1	9		FLAT		BS		

context	CLASS	cname	NoSh	NoV	Wt (gm)	subfabric	Form	Description	Part	Use	Condition
126	CBM	PMTIL	2	2	7		BRICK		BS		
126	CBM	PMTIL	1	1	2		FLAT		BS		
125	CBM	MOD	1	1	62		FLAT		BS		
125	CBM	PMTIL	1	1	24		FLAT		BS		
125	CBM	PMTIL	1	1	10		FLAT?		BS		FRAG
125	CERAMIC	ENGS	4	1	42		DRAIN		BS		
125	CERAMIC	STCOAR	2	1	3		BOWL		BS		
125	CERAMIC	STCOAR	5	1	39		PANC		BS		FRAGMENTED
120	CBM	PMTIL	3	1	25		FLAT		BS	MORTAR ON UPPER SURFACE	
120	CERAMIC	STCO	1	1	22		PLATE	M-L18	R		
120	CERAMIC	STCOAR	1	1	11		PANC		BS		
120	CERAMIC	TGW	1	1	3		PLATE		BS		ABRA
119	CERAMIC	BL	1	1	1		?		BS		
119	CERAMIC	GRE	2	1	3		BOWL		BS		
119	CERAMIC	POTTERSPURY	1	1	1		JAR		BS		
119	CERAMIC	SLIP	1	1	5	LOOKS LIKE POTTERSPURY	PANC		BS		
119	CERAMIC	STMO	1	1	1		PLATE		BS		
109	CBM	PMTIL	1	1	296		BRICK		BS	MORTAR ALL OVER AS WELL AS BREAKS	
109	CBM	PMTIL	1	1	368		BRICK		BS	MORTAR ON BROKEN SURFACES	
109	CBM	PMTIL	1	1	21		PANT		BS		
109	CBM	PMTIL	1	1	101		PANT		BS	SOOTED TOP; MORTAR BENEATH AND OVER BREAKS	

context	CLASS	cname	NoSh	NoV	Wt (gm)	subfabric	Form	Description	Part	Use	Condition
108	CBM	MTIL	1	1	139		GUTTER		BS		
108	CBM	MTIL	1	1	306		RIDGE	GLAZED	BS	MORTAR ON SURFACE; SOOTED UNDERNEATH	
108	CBM	PMTIL	2	1	222		BRICK		BS		
108	CBM	PMTIL	1	1	44		PANT		BS	MORTAR UNDERNEATH AND ON BREAKS	
108	CBM	PMTIL	1	1	48		PANT		BS	MORTAR ALL OVER PLUS EDGES	
108	CBM	PMTIL	2	1	235		PANT		BS		
108	CERAMIC	NOTS	3	1	26		PIPKIN		R;BS		
108	CERAMIC	PEAR	1	1	5		PLATE		BS		
108	CERAMIC	STCOAR	1	1	73		PANC		R		
108	CERAMIC	TGW	2	1	3		PLATE		BS		
108	CERAMIC	TPW	1	1	1		CUP		BS		
108	MORTAR	MORTAR	1	1	4				BS		
108	MORTAR	MORTAR	1	1	11			COMPLETE THICKNESS	BS		
103	CBM	MTIL	1	1	49		FLAT		BS		
103	PLASTER	PLASTER	2	2	7			SURFACE SKIM	BS		
102	CBM	MTIL	2	2	46		FLAT		BS		
102	CBM	PMTIL	1	1	3		BRICK		BS		
102	CERAMIC	CREA	2	1	3		PLATE		BS		
102	CERAMIC	GRE	1	1	1		BOWL		BS		
102	CERAMIC	STCOAR	1	1	3		BOWL		BS		
102	CERAMIC	STCOAR	2	1	21		PANC		BS		
102	CERAMIC	TGW	1	1	3		?		BS		ABRA
102	PLASTER	PLASTER	2	2	15			LATHE PARTITION;	BS		

context	CLASS	cname	NoSh	NoV	Wt (gm)	subfabric	Form	Description	Part	Use	Condition
								BOTH SIDES			