

Assessment of the ceramic finds from Granary Farm, Tilsworth, Bedfordshire (GFT-1-6)

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Eleven ceramic finds from an archaeological excavation at Granary Farm, Tilsworth, Bedfordshire undertaken by Network Archaeology Ltd, were submitted for identification and assessment (Table 1).

The finds ranged in date from the medieval period to the 19th century but are too few in number for a detailed interpretation.

Description

Ceramic Building Material

Two fragments of flat roof tile and one fragment of brick were recovered from context 004. The flat roof tiles have a sandy fabric with inclusions of a mixed origin: calcareous clay pellets from the Kimmeridge clay; rounded, polished iron-stained quartz grains from the Woburn Sands; white angular flint fragments from the Chalk and a cracked sandstone pebble, probably of Triassic origin (e.g. the Sherwood Sandstone). These characteristics suggest the use of a fluvio-glacial sand or a sandy boulder clay.

The brick fabric, by contrast, contained moderate inclusions derived from the Woburn Sands. These are coated with haematite, indicating that they have not been subjected to mechanical erosion. The groundmass is fine-textured with a low iron content and probably indicates the use of a Jurassic clay, probably the Oxford Clay.

Fired clay

A single fragment of daub was recovered from context 006. The fabric was examined at x20 magnification and has an off-white colour with sparse unidentified calcareous inclusions up to 0.3mm across and sparse unidentified organic inclusions (perhaps roots). The groundmass consists is a calcareous clay with moderate quartz and muscovite silt inclusions.

The characteristics of this clay suggest that the parent clay was a calcareous, organic marl, probably a facies of the Kimmeridge clay.

The fragment has a flat surface, with no sign of a final plaster or lime wash, and a wattle impression. It was probably used in a wattle and daub panel in a medieval or early post-medieval building.

Pottery

Medieval

A sherd of medieval shell-tempered pottery, of the type produced at Olney Hyde, was recovered from context 004. The sherd is the rim of a large bowl or pancheon and has slight traces of sooting on the edge of the rim. Such vessels, when found in quantity on rural sites, have been linked with the separation of cream and, thus, butter production. These medieval shell-tempered wares were current from the mid 12th to the mid 13th centuries.

A second sherd of medieval pottery comes from a sandy whiteware jar, of unknown origin. The vessel has widely spaced wide horizontal grooves on the exterior together with a splash of plain lead glaze. A broad later 12th to 15th century date is likely.

Early Modern

A sherd of a glazed red earthenware vessel was recovered from context 006. It may have come from a jar or a chamber pot.

Sherds of refined whiteware, some decorated with light blue lines and others with sponged decoration, were also recovered from context 006. They are probably of mid 19th century or later date.

Assessment

The finds from context 004 include a fragment of brick of late medieval or later date and those from context 006 include finds of mid 19th-century or later date. However, both contexts contain finds of mixed date.

Tilsworth lies in an area with varied and distinctive geology and there is potential for determining where the fired clay and ceramic building material used originated. Should larger archaeological projects take place in this area this would be a good line of enquiry to pursue, since in much of midland England the geological background is too bland for such studies to produce useful results.

The finds should be retained for potential future study but no immediate further work is recommended.

Table 1

Context	Cname	Subfabric	Form	Part	Description	Nosh	NoV	Weight	Use
004	OLNEY HYDE	S R FOSSILIFEROUS LST;A BIVALVE;M ECHINOID;S PUNCTATE BRACHIOPOD	BOWL	R		1	1	18	SLIGHT SOOTING EXT RIM
004	MEDX	A SA Q <0.2MM;OFFWHITE INCLUSIONLESS GROUNDMASS	JAR	BS	PLAIN GL SPLASHES	1	1	5	

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006	FCLAY	OFFWHITE FINE CALCAREOUS;S QUARTZ/MUSC SILT;S ORGANIC	DAUB	BS		1	1	19	
006	GRE		JAR/CHP	BS	INT AND EXT PLAIN GL	1	1	15	
006	WHITE		PLATE	R		1	1	7	
006	WHITE		BOWL	B	SPONGED DEC INT	2	1	7	
006	WHITE		JUG	H		1	1	3	
004	MTIL	CRACKED BUNTER SST PEBBLE;ANG WHITE FLINT <2.0MM;A RQ INC RED-STAINED GSQ;CALC LIGHT-COLOURED MARL PELLETS	FLAT	BS		2	2	45	
004	MTIL	WOBURN SANDS (HAEM- COATED GSQ) IN LIGHT- COLOURED GROUNDMASS;INCLUSIONLESS RELICT CLAY	BRICK	BS		1	1	5	