Assessment of the Anglo-Saxon Pottery from Horkstow Road, South Ferriby (SFAG04)

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A number of sherds of handmade pottery were submitted for identification and assessment. Some of these were identified by the author as being of Iron Age or Roman date and are not considered here. The remainder, 46 sherds, from no more than 42 vessels, weighing in total 802gm are of early Anglo-Saxon date and are assessed in this report.

Description

Fabric

The potsherds were all examined at x20 magnification using a stereo-microscope. They were then assigned to eight different groups, based on the nature of the inclusion types present (Table 1). However, it was noted that minor inclusion types, visible in most of the sherds, were useful in determining the source area of the parent clays and inclusions.

Table 1

cname	Sum of Nosh	Sum of NoV	Sum of Weight
CHARN	1	1	4
ECHAF	8	8	82
ERRA	1	1	7
ESGS	18	17	469
FE	3	3	23
ROUND	2	1	6
SST	9	7	166
SSTMG	4	4	45
Grand Total	46	42	802

Biotite Granite Temper (CHARN)

A single sherd contained solely angular fragments of biotite granite. A major source of pottery of this type was located in Leicestershire ({Williams & Vince 1997 #44813}) but occasional fragments of biotite granite are present in north Lincolnshire boulder clays, from where they occasionally end up in Anglo-Saxon pottery fabrics. However, it is also possible that larger pebbles of biotite granite were found locally and disaggregated (e.g. by fire-

cracking) and used as pot temper. Otherwise, a source for this vessel in Leicestershire is the most likely option.

Chaff Temper (ECHAF)

Eight sherds contain mainly voids which once contained organic inclusions. These inclusions are probably cereal chaff and could have been added directly to the pot or through the medium of animal dung (a practice still in operation in some communities today).

In addition to the chaff temper, five of the sherds contain inclusions of shell and angular quartz grains, probably derived from the Millstone Grit sandstones of the Pennines. These quartz grains are the main component of several fluvio-glacial sands in Yorkshire and the East Midlands and are of little use in determining the source of the fabric (although they are unusual to the east of the Ancholme). However, analysis of the shell potentially could be used to narrow down the source of this fabric.

Mixed Erratic Rock Temper (ERRA)

A single sherd contained fragments of biotite granite, angular flint, rounded micrite (probably chalk) and shell inclusions. These suggest a source to the north or east of the Lincolnshire Wolds (i.e. quite possibly not far from South Ferriby).

Lower Cretaceous Quartz Temper (ESGS)

Eighteen sherds contained water-polished rounded quartz grains of lower Cretaceous origin. These do occur in lower Cretaceous clays and limestones (such as the Red Chalk) but are particularly common in Lower Cretaceous sandstones, such as the Spilsby Sandstone. These sandstones outcrop along the western side of the Lincolnshire Wolds from just south of Market Rasen southwards. Since they do not occur further north (e.g. in the Yorkshire Wolds) where the Chalk rests unconformably on Jurassic clays, they do not occur in boulder clays north of this outcrop, although they probably occur in river gravels associated with the Ancholme.

The minor inclusions in these sherds include biotite, indicative of a boulder clay, as well as chaff, shell and Spilsby Sandstone. These probably indicate that at least some of these sherds come from an area at least 20 miles to the south of the site. Analysis in thin section might establish the origin of the shell.

Ironstone Temper (FE)

Three sherds contain mostly angular fragments of ironstone, mostly of a dark red colour. Such material occurs in the Jurassic (the Frodingham Ironstone and the Northampton Sands, both outcropping to the west of the Jurassic scarp) and in the Lower Cretaceous (the

Claxby Ironstone). In one case, the minor inclusions consist of Spilsby Sandstone and biotite granite and these indicate a source in boulder clay in an area to the south of Market Rasen.

Rounded Quartz Gravel (ROUND)

Two sherds from the same vessel contained inclusions of rounded quartz, up to 3.0mm across in which the grain surface is not polished together with chaff. This gravel is likely to have come from either the recent Humber foreshore or earlier raised beach deposits around the Yorkshire or Lincolnshire Wolds.

Unidentified Sandstone Sand (SST)

Ten sherds contained mainly fragments of sandstone or quartz which had clearly been derived from such sandstone. In four instances the sandstone was identifiable at x20 magnification as being Millstone Grit but other inclusions were noted (such as chaff, and limestone or shell fragments). In five cases, however (representing no more than 3 vessels), the sandstone is finer in texture and has an iron-rich cement. In these cases the sandstone might be of lower Cretaceous origin, although it is finer than the Claxby Ironstone.

Millstone Grit Sand Temper (SSTMG)

Three sherds contained solely fragments of Millstone Grit derived sandstone. Vessels with this fabric are common in the Vale of York and progressively less common as one moves in any direction from that area. It is therefore possible that these are indeed Vale of York products although it is equally possible that they were made from a similar sand deposited closer to the site by the Humber.

Form

Most of the sherds could be identified from their wall thickness and curvature as being globular jars, several of them being of considerable size (i.e. a girth diameter in the order of 400-500mm and a similar height). This form is the most common Anglo-Saxon pottery form and becomes uncommon in the mid Saxon period, when bag-shaped vessels with everted rims, and vessels with almost cylindrical walls occur instead. No examples with decorative bosses were found and only one sherd had traces of decoration (finger-nicking).

Three bowls were identified. These had a hemispherical form and two had surviving rounded rims. This is the second most common form in the early Anglo-Saxon period. It survives into the mid Saxon period, but alongside almost cylindrically-walled bowls.

Use

Only three sherds showed traces of use. The first is a bowl (SST) with a black deposit internally and sooting around the top of the body externally, up to the rim. The lack of soot on the lower body may indicate that it was set in embers. The internal deposit is probably carbonised food.

The remaining two vessels are both jars (ECHAF and ESGS) which have soot on the external surface.

The low incidence of sooting and food debris is typical of early Anglo-Saxon pottery from domestic occupation sites and probably indicates that the vessels were used for storage as well as cooking.

Condition

Only a few of the sherds could be assigned to the same vessel and these probably represent sherds broken after burial or during excavation rather than the deposition of sherds of a broken vessel in the same deposit. This suggests that the sherds do not represent primary refuse and could therefore have been redeposited following their original breakage and disposal. Their presence in a deposit therefore only indicates a date after which deposition took place.

However, some of the sherds are quite large and all are fresh, with unabraded edges. They therefore do not look like material which has been subjected to ploughing and probably indicate settlement somewhere on the site during the early Anglo-Saxon period.

Assessment

The Early Anglo-Saxon pottery was recovered from one horizontal deposit (068, thought to be of post-medieval date) and seven features: F22, F40, F145, F169, F264, F325, and F372. By far the largest collection comes from F145 (29 sherds) and all the rest contain five sherds or fewer.

Individually it is difficult to date the early Anglo-Saxon sherds. However, taken as a group it is likely that they belong to the early or middle part of the Early Anglo-Saxon period (i.e. mid 5th to mid 6th centuries) because of the predominance of the large globular jar form and the lack of demonstrably late types.

Northern Lincolnshire is well-served for excavated Anglo-Saxon cemeteries (for example the unpublished sites of Elsham and Cleatham and the published cemetery at Castledyke, Barton-upon-Humber) but not for domestic occupation sites (the only examples known to the author are Riby Crossroads, Nettleton Top and St Peter's Church, Barton-upon-Humber. Of

these, only the Barton sites were studied using thin sections to characterise the pottery). There is, therefore, a case for studying the Horkstow Road pottery in order to establish the sort of distances that early Anglo-Saxon settlers in this area were prepared to travel to obtain their pottery. It is therefore recommended that thin section analysis, augmented by chemical analysis, is carried out on a minimum of ten sherds (covering all the major fabric groups and the main variations within these groups).

Five rim sherds were found, all of which should be illustrated, including on the drawings the location of sooting and food deposits.

A revised version of this report should be prepared, for publication, once the results of the fabric analysis are available.

Costing

The recommended further work consists of 10 thin sections, 10 chemical analyses, five illustrations, and a publishable report. Thin sections are produced at the University of Manchester and analysed by the author. The unit cost is £23.00 plus VAT. Chemical analyses are analysed at Royal Holloway College London, following initial sampling and preparation in Lincoln. The unit cost is £23.00 plus VAT. Illustrations could be undertaken by Charlotte Bentley at £15.00 plus VAT each and the report would be written by the author in an estimated 2 days (£184 plus VAT per day).

Total cost: £903 plus VAT = £1061.03.

Appendix 1

Context	Cname	Subfabric	Form	Nosh	NoV	Action	.Description	Part	Weight	Use
23	ESGS	GSQ;SPILSBY SST;CHAFF	BOWL	1	1	DR	ROUNDED RIM	R	9	
23	ROUND	RQ <3.0MM;CHAFF	BOWL	2	1	DR	ROUNDED RIM	R	6	
146	SST	SSTMG;SHELL;CHAFF	BOWL	1	1	DR;TS;ICPS		R	47	BLACK DEPO INT;SOOTED EXT AT RIM ONLY
326	SST	SSTMG;CHAFF	JAR	1	1	DR;TS;ICPS	GLOB BODY;ROUNDED FLATTENED RIM;BURNISHED INT AND EXT	R	22	
146	SSTMG	SSTMG	JAR	1	1	DR	ROLLED-OUT BEADED RIM	R	9	
23	ECHAF	CHAFF	JAR	1	1	TS;ICPS	GLOB BODY;WIPED EXT	BS	28	SOOTED EXT
146	ESGS	GSQ	JAR	4	4	TS;ICPS		BS	22	
146	ESGS	GSQ;SHELL	JAR	2	2	TS;ICPS	GLOB BODY	BS	21	
146	SST	SST (OVERGROWN GRAINS, RED CEMENT, POROUS)	JAR	5	3	TS;ICPS		BS	34	
372	CHARN	BIOTITE GRANITE	JAR	1	1	TS;ICPS		BS	4	
168	ERRA	FLINT;BIOTITE;MICRITE;SHELL	JAR	1	1	TS;ICPS	EXT BURNISHED	B	7	
146	FE	FE;BIOTITE GRANITE;SPILSBY SST	JAR	1	1	TS;ICPS	GLOB BODY;EXT BURNISHED	BS	15	
41	SSTMG	SSTMG	JAR	1	1	TS;ICPS	INT SCRAPED	BS	19	
146	ECHAF	CHAFF;SHELL;SSTMG	JAR	3	3			BS	13	
146	ECHAF	CHAFF	JAR	2	2			BS	7	
146	ECHAF	CHAFF;SSTMG;SHELL	JAR	1	1		SCRAPED INT	BS	29	
265	ECHAF	CHAFF;SSTMG;SHELL	JAR	1	1		OR IA	BS	5	
146	ESGS	GSQ;SHELL;SST (OVERGROWN POROUS)	JAR	2	2			BS	8	
146	ESGS	GSQ	JAR	1	1		GLOB BODY;BURNISHED EXT	BS	38	

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http://www.postex.demon.co.uk/index.html

A copy of this report is archived online at http://www.avac.uklinux/potcat/pdfs/avac2005077.pdf

Context	Cname	Subfabric	Form	Nosh	NoV	Action	.Description	Part	Weight	Use
146	ESGS	GSQ	JAR	1	1		BURNISHED EXT	BS	28	SOOTED EXT
146	ESGS	GSQ;BIOTITE	JAR	1	1		GLOB BODY;BURNISHED EXT	BS	107	
265	ESGS		JAR	2	2			BS	3	
265	ESGS		JAR	2	1			BS	190	
372	ESGS	GSQ;CHAFF	JAR	1	1			BS	38	
372	ESGS		JAR	1	1		BURNISHED EXT	BS	5	
146	FE	FE		1	1		BURNISHED EXT	BS	3	
170	FE		JAR	1	1		OR IA	BS	5	
146	SST	CHAFF;SSTMG;SHELL	JAR	1	1		GLOB BODY	BS	13	
146	SST	SSTMG?	JAR	1	1		FINGER-NICKED DEC	BS	7	
326	SST	SSTMG;CHAFF;LST	JAR	1	1		GLOB BODY;BURNISHED EXT	BS	56	
146	SSTMG	SSTMG	JAR	1	1		GLOB BODY;SCRAPED INT	BS	4	