

Characterisation Studies of Roman Pottery from Roxby, North Lincolnshire (RXWH)

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Since the publication of the Winteringham and Old Winterton excavations by Ian Stead and the synthesis of the North Lincolnshire Roman pottery industry by Rigby published therein, it has been recognised that some of the pottery found on sites on the north bank of the Humber (principally Brough on Humber) is likely to have been produced in north Lincolnshire. Rigby published material from kiln sites at Roxby (2nd century); Thealby (2nd and 4th centuries); Messingham (4th century) and Dragonby (Flavian/Trajanic). To test this attribution, and look for characteristics which would allow plain body sherds to be identified, a program of analysis of North Lincolnshire Roman pottery was started.

As part of the post-excavation analysis of material from Melton, East Yorkshire, a sample of products from the Roxby kiln held by Scunthorpe Museum were analysed, using binocular microscope, thin section and chemical analysis.

Table 1

TSNO	Action	Context	Cname	Subfabric	Description	Form	Part
V3772	TS;ICPS	US	GREY	ROXGR		DISH	R
V3773	TS;ICPS	US	GREY	ROXGR	BAND OF CRESCENT STAMPS	JAR	BS
V3774	TS;ICPS	US	OXID	RXOX		BOWL	R
V3775	TS;ICPS	US	OXID	RXOX	INDENTED	BEAKER	BS
V3776	TS;ICPS	US	OXID	RXOX		BOWL	R
V3777	TS;ICPS	US	FCLAY	ROXGR	KILN FURNITURE?		BS

Description

Visual examination

Five samples of pot and one of probable kiln structure/furniture were selected.

V3772. Abundant subangular quartz up to 0.5mm across (some rounded matt surfaced grains); possible fine-grained sandstone <1.0mm; moderate black iron/clay fragments <1.0mm; muscovite laths <0.5mm. Silty micaceous groundmass.

V3773. Abundant subangular quartz up to 0.5mm across; possible fine-grained sandstone <1.0mm; moderate black iron/clay fragments <1.0mm. Silty groundmass.

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V3774. No large inclusions. Silty micaceous groundmass.

V3775. Abundant subangular quartz up to 0.2mm across; sparse rounded quartz (matt surfaced <1.0mm); moderate black iron/clay fragments <1.0mm. Silty micaceous groundmass.

V3776. Abundant subangular quartz up to 0.5mm across; possible fine-grained sandstone <1.0mm; moderate black iron/clay fragments <1.0mm. Silty micaceous groundmass.

V3777. Abundant subangular quartz up to 0.5mm across; sparse rounded, matt surfaced quartz grains; possible fine-grained sandstone <1.0mm; moderate subangular black iron/clay fragments <7.0mm. Silty groundmass.

Interpretation

There is no sign of a difference in inclusion types or groundmass between those sherds which have been oxidized and those which were reduced. The lack of visible mica in sample V3773 is probably due to firing and the alteration of the muscovite. One sample, V3774, a Samian ware copy, contains no inclusions and also appears to have a finer groundmass, although still micaceous. This should be classed as a separate fabric.

The incidence of ironstone appears to vary in tandem with the incidence of quartz sand and probably both were present in the same deposit, used to temper the vessels. The sand inclusions therefore seem to be a mixture of Jurassic (ironstone) and Quaternary (matt-surfaced quartz grains, ultimately of Triassic origin but immediately from the Trent gravels or blown sand).

The origin of the silty micaceous groundmass is less certain. The fine-textured sample, V3774, has a similar appearance to the Market Rasen Parisian wares which were made from Upper Jurassic clay and the groundmass of the remaining samples is similar to that of Dales Shelly ware, Subfabric S, which is either a lower Jurassic clay or estuarine silt from the Humber wetlands (deposits of which extend up the Trent and Ancholme valleys).