

Assessment of the Ceramic Building Material from the Sproatley to Aldborough Pipeline Watching Brief (SPA-66)

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A small collection of ceramic building material was recovered from the archaeological watching brief carried out on the line of the Sproatley to Aldborough Pipeline by Network Archaeology Ltd (Site Code: SPA-66).

The material consists mainly of standard rectangular bricks and flat roof tile fragments but includes a possible fragment of pantile and three moulded window mullions. The latter are of late medieval or early post-medieval date and come from a high status structure.

Description

The fabric of the brick and tile was not examined in detail but it was noted that no examples with fabrics known from the medieval tiler at Beverley were noted. Furthermore, two of the flat roof tiles had a variegated fabric containing lenses of light-firing clay. Visually, these did not appear to be calcareous clay and the only other option is that they are kaolinite-rich clays, which do not outcrop in East Yorkshire either in the "solid" geology but conceivably might be present in boulder clays containing middle Jurassic material derived from the North Yorkshire Moors.

A number of fragments have a calcareous body, clearly visible at x20 magnification, and/or salt-whitened surfaces. These features suggest the use of marine clays, such as occur in the Humber estuary. Untempered calcareous fabrics appear to be characteristic of the later post-medieval and modern periods. One of the three mullions also has a salt-surface, however, and this feature is therefore not a reliable guide to age.

Bricks are the most common form present in the collection. They include two with complete widths 105mm and 115mm. The latter is a calcareous, salt-surfaced brick. Thicknesses were present on eight fragments, ranging from 51mm (the calcareous brick just noted) to 75mm.

Flat roof tiles are the second most common form, represented by four fragments.

Three brick mullions were present, two being large enough to illustrate. They have a rough diamond shape and have no rebate for inserting glass. These were made in a purpose-build mould rather than being shaped using a knife after moulding, or sawn or abraded to shape after firing. The use of these moulded bricks is limited to the late medieval to early post-medieval periods and they are found solely on high status structures, where brick was sometimes initially used for features such doors, windows and chimneys.

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

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<http://www.avac.uklinux.net/potcat/pdfs/avac2006107.pdf>

A single possible pantile fragment was present (in might be a warped fragment of flat roof tile).

Assessment

The brick fragments come from 18 separate contexts and form no significant assemblages, apart from those from context 1001, which include the three mullion bricks and one rectangular example. These bricks presumably are derived from a high status structure, the likely status of the structure being higher if they are of medieval date than later.

The flat roof tiles could be of medieval or early post-medieval date and the calcareous bricks are probably of 18th or 19th-century date.

Retention

Since the bricks fabrics have not been recorded in detail, they should be retained.

Further Work

Two of the mullions should be illustrated. Thin section and chemical analysis of the four bricks from context 1001 would also determine whether they were made locally, come from the Beverley tiliary or were imported. The illustration would be carried out by Network Archaeology and the thin section and chemical analysis by AVAC. The thin sections would be produced at the University of Manchester and chemical analysis would be carried out at Royal Holloway College, London, using Inductively-Coupled Plasma Spectroscopy.

Costing

Illustration of two bricks – not estimated (presumably in-house Network Archaeology illustrator)

Thin section analysis of four bricks at £24.00 plus VAT per sample: £96.00 plus VAT

Chemical analysis of four bricks at £24.00 plus Vat per sample: £96.00 plus VAT

Appendix 1

Context	Action	Cname	Subfabric	Description	Form	Part	Nosh	NoV	Weight
1001	DR1	M/PMTIL			MULLION	BS	1	1	764
1001	DR2	M/PMTIL		SALT SURFACING	MULLION	BS	1	1	877
1001		M/PMTIL		SALT SURFACING	BRICK	BS	1	1	523
1001		M/PMTIL		SALT SURFACING	MULLION	BS	1	1	536
1017		MTIL		FRAG	FLAT?	BS	1	1	5
1034		M/PMTIL	CALCAREOUS	FRAG	BRICK	BS	1	1	45
1038		MTIL	WHITE STREAKS		FLAT	BS	1	1	44

AVAC Report 2006/107

1039	MTIL	WHITE STREAKS		FLAT	BS	1	1	76
1040	PMTIL		FRAG	BRICK	BS	1	1	73
1047	M/PMTIL			BRICK	BS	2	1	1651
1048	MTIL			FLAT	BS	1	1	28
1068	M/PMTIL	CALCAREOUS	FRAG	BRICK	BS	1	1	68
1074	M/PMTIL	CALCAREOUS	SALT SURFACING	BRICK	BS	1	1	474
1090	PMTIL		FRAG	BRICK	BS	1	1	9
1095	MTIL			FLAT	BS	1	1	45
1102	PMTIL			PANT?	BS	1	1	24
1105	PMTIL			BRICK	BS	1	1	326
1108	PMTIL		FRAG	BRICK	BS	1	1	18
3503	PMTIL		FRAGS	BRICK	BS	2	1	10
8006	M/PMTIL		WORM IN BASE	BRICK	BS	1	1	347
17009	PMTIL		FRAG	BRICK	BS	1	1	9