

Assessment of the Pottery from Countess Close, Alkborough, Lincolnshire (CCA2006)

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Introduction and methodology

A total of 106 sherds of pottery, weighing 552.5 grams, and having an average sherd weight (ASW) of 5.6 grams, was recovered. The pottery consisted of Romano-British, late Saxon and early medieval pottery, medieval pottery and a small quantity of post-medieval and later pottery.

All material was attributed to a fabric category, and then quantified by the two measures of number and weight of sherds, according to fabric within archaeological context. Data were entered on an Access database which is supplied as an integral part of this report (Table 1), and which should be consulted where appropriate. Fabric codes employed in the database are listed below.

Discussion

The stratigraphy from the four trenches was capable of being correlated and deposits could be assigned to three Phases: Phase 1 consists of material pre-dating the Countess Close earthwork; Phase 2 consists of material contemporary with the construction and use of the earthwork and Phase 3 consists of material post-dating the use of the earthwork.

Phase 1

Thirty-one sherds were recovered from Phase 1 deposits. The average sherd weight was 6.22 gm and most of the sherds were noticeably abraded. Most of the pottery comes from natural accumulations, 1004 and 4010 or from features which might be natural solution hollows but there are also finds from post-holes (2027, 2029 and 2033), slots (2035 and 3010), gullies (3004) and pits (2031).

Table 1

Context	Description	DWSH	GFIN	GREY	NVCC	OXID	Grand Total
2027	Fill of post-hole [2028]			1			1
2029	Fill of post-hole [2030]	1					1
3008	Fill of post-hole/hollow [3009]	1					1
2025	Fill of post-hole/solution hollow [2026]			1			1
2035	Fill of slot [2036]			1			1
3010	Fill of slot [3011]			2		1	3
3004	Gully [3005] fill				1		1
4010	Natural accumulation	8	1	4		1	14

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1004	Natural accumulation/original ground surface			1			1
2031	Pit [2032] fill	4		2			6
2033	Pit/post-hole [2034] fill			1			1
	Grand Total	14	1	13	1	2	31

The pottery was all of Roman date (Table 1) and consisted of a mixture of oxidized and grey wares which cannot be closely dated and sherds of Dales shelly ware which first appear in the mid 3rd century. Most of the material was abraded or very abraded and the shell inclusions in the Dales ware were leached.

Phase 2

Fifty-eight sherds of pottery were recovered from Phase 2 deposits. Twenty of these were of Roman date, including a spalled sherd of Samian ware, indicative perhaps of occupation prior to the mid 3rd century (although Samian vessels are known to have been curated into the later 3rd and 4th centuries). All the Roman sherds were abraded, or very abraded and the shell inclusions in the Dales ware sherds was leached. These residual sherds come from dump 2016 and the fills of ditches (contexts 2003, 2005 and 4016).

A small quantity of probably pre-conquest sherds was present. These consist of 7 sherds of Lincolnshire Fine Shelled ware (LFS) and 6 sherds of Torksey ware (TORK). LFS continued to be produced after the Norman conquest but Torksey ware probably ceased production at or soon after the Norman conquest (Young & Vince 2006 #44553). These sherds come mainly from the fills of the same ditches which produced the Roman sherds but a single sherd of LFS also came from the fill of a post-hole (2009). Most of the sherds were abraded but one of the Torksey ware sherds was fresh. This may, however, be a function of its relatively high firing temperature.

The remaining pottery is of medieval date and in the main is in a better condition than the earlier pottery but is of a similar size (average sherd weight: 6.45 gm). Several of the sherds come from the same vessels, another sign that these sherds are contemporary with the deposits in which they were found. The pottery consists of sherds of Beverley-type ware, some of which are likely to be of Beverley origin (BEVO2B and BEVOB) and some possibly local copies (BEVO2T), a sherd which might be of late Beverley ware (i.e. late 13th to mid 14th century) or a Humberware and sherds of handmade coarseware of two types: North Lincolnshire Quartz and Calcareous ware (NLQC) and East Yorkshire Quartz and Calcareous ware (EYQC). A Beverley glazed ware jug is represented by five sherds from context 1012 which come from a vessel with applied white strips under a copper-stained green glaze and with sparse thumbing around the base. This type is likely to date to the 13th to mid 14th century. However, a sherd from a jug with a ridged neck and splashed glaze, probably of late 12th to early 13th century date, was recovered from the fill of ditch 2004.

Table 2

Context	Description	BEVO2B	BEVO2T	BEVOB	EYQC	HUM/BEVOC	NLQC
2003	Ditch [2004] fill		1				
2005	Ditch [2006] fill						
2016	Dump					1	
1013	Fill of ?robber trench [1003]			1			
2021	Fill of pit/post-hole [2022]				1		
2009	Fill of post-hole [2010]						
4016	Primary ditch[4017] fill	1					
1012	Root disturbed interface between (1001) and (1013)	5					
4015	Secondary ditch [4017] fill						14
	Grand Total	6	1	1	1	1	14

Phase 3

Nine sherds were recovered from Phase 3 deposits. Seven of these sherds were of Roman date; one was of medieval date and one was of modern date (a sherd of unglazed flowerpot from topsoil 3001).

Unstratified material

Twelve unstratified sherds were recovered. Most of these are of types which occur in the stratified sequence but four were not. These consist of a sherd of Humberware (HUM) ; a sherd of blackware with a variegated body composed of red and white-firing coal measures clays (STCOAR); a sherd from a bowl with an internal white slip, plain glaze and a body of coal measures redware (STRES) and a sherd of miscellaneous refined whiteware (WHITE).

Conclusions and recommendations

The Romano-British pottery forms a sizable proportion of the total collection and some of the sherds, despite their condition, are quite large. They are evidence for significant activity in the area in the Roman period, albeit with no evidence from these four trenches for any definite features or horizontal deposits. The datable sherds include a fragment of Samian ware, which is too small to identify further but must have been made in the early 3rd century or earlier, a sherd of Nene Valley colour coated ware, of late 2nd century or later date and sheds of Dales ware, which must be of mid 3rd century or later date. The Roman activity therefore certainly includes 3rd century material but there is no positive evidence for either earlier or later activity. The greywares and oxidized wares mostly have a silty, micaceous groundmass, characteristic of the estuarine and marine clays which occur along the Humber estuary and Lindsey marshes. Polished quartz grains, which are typical of the lowest chalk (the red chalk) and lower Cretaceous deposits, were notably scarce, only being observed in one sherd. This is consistent with a local origin for most of these vessels. The Dales shelly ware, however, is thought to have been produced in northwest Lincolnshire, with the shell inclusions being of Rhaetic or Lower Jurassic origin (Firman 1991;Loughlin 1977). Definitely non-local sherds

consist of the Samian ware and Nene Valley Colour-Coated ware, both represented by single sherds.

Torksey ware ceased to be produced at or before the Norman conquest and is clear evidence for activity in the 10th or 11th centuries. All of the sherds come from Trench 2 but all are residual. Therefore the nature of the pre-Norman activity is unknown. The LFS sherds, however, have a longer lifespan, from the later 10th to the early 13th century. With their possible exception, the next evidence for activity dates to the later 12th to early 13th century and it is likely that this is the period in which the earthwork was built. Occupation within the earthwork is associated with 13th and 14th century pottery but the only sherd of later medieval pottery from the site comes from a Phase 3 deposit, suggesting that the earthwork went out of use in the early to mid 14th century.

The medieval pottery consists mainly of glazed wares from Beverley, despite the fact that an industry producing similar Beverley-type wares is known to have been located south of the Humber and was supplying Barton upon Humber, and unglazed, handmade wares. Some of these, ELQC, were probably made in the Lincolnshire Wolds area but one, EYQC, contains sparse fragments of oolitic limestone and was probably produced within a narrow strip of land to the west of the Yorkshire Wolds, between Market Weighton and the Humber. This type is present on sites in Beverley and may well have been imported alongside the Beverley wares. However, no sherds of wheelthrown unglazed sandy Beverley wares were present. Since these outnumber the EYQC sherds by a considerable degree at Beverley it is perhaps more likely that this vessel was a direct import from west of the Yorkshire Wolds. Examples of this ware have recently been identified at Doncaster and therefore there is clear evidence that this ware was partially distributed by water, both up the Don and, it now seems, along the south bank of the Humber.

Post-medieval and recent finds are scarce and insufficient to indicate activity on the site itself.

No vessels require illustration and the only sherd which would warrant further work is the single sherd of EYQC. However, this analysis would be destructive and it is probably better to wait for a larger example to be found, from this site or others in north Lincolnshire.

Fabric codes employed in the database

The following fabric codes are used in the database (Table 1). Fabric names follow the Roman pottery type fabric series employed at Lincoln (Darling & Precious unpublished) and the late Saxon and later codes are those used at Lincoln (Young and Vince 2006) with additions to cover wares present in the north of the county but not in Lincoln itself.

Code	Name	Date
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BEVO2B	Beverley ware with a fine fabric and suspension glaze	Late 12 th to mid 14 th century
BEVO2T	Beverley-type ware with a fine fabric and suspension glaze	Late 12 th to mid 14 th century
BEVOB	Beverley type ware with a fine fabric	Late 12 th to mid 14 th century
DWSH	Dales shelly ware	Mid 3 rd century to 4 th century
ELQC	East Lincolnshire Quartz and Calcareous ware	Late 12 th to 14 th century
EYQC	East Yorkshire Quartz and Calcareous ware	Late 12 th to 14 th century
GFIN	Fine Grey ware	1 st to 4 th century
GREY	Grey ware	1 st to 4 th century
HUM	Humberware	Mid 14 th to early 16 th century
HUM/BEVOC	Humberware or high-fired fine Beverley ware	Late 13 th to early 16 th century
LFS	Lincolnshire Fine Shelled ware	Late 10 th to Early 13 th century
LPMLOC	Late Post-medieval Local ware	Late 18 th to 20 th century
NLQC	North Lincolnshire Quartz and Calcareous ware	Late 12 th to 14 th century
NVCC	Nene Valley Colour Coated ware	Late 2 nd to 4 th centuries
OXID	Oxidized ware	1 st to 4 th century
SAM	Samian ware (source unspecified)	1 st to early 3 rd centuries
STCOAR	Blackware with a variegated body	Later 17 th to 19 th century
STRES	Slipware with a red Coal Measures body	Later 17 th to early 18 th century
TORK	Torksey ware	Late 9 th to mid 11 th century
WHITE	Miscellaneous Refined Whiteware	Mid 19 th to 20 th century

Bibliography

- Firman, R. (1991) "The Significance of Anhydrite in pottery as exemplified by Romano-British Dales Ware." *JRPS*, **4**, (1991), pp. 45-50

Loughlin, N. (1977) "Dales ware: a contribution to the study of Roman coarse pottery." in D. P. S. Peacock, ed., *Pottery and Early Commerce*, Academic Press, London, 85-146

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Table 3 Pottery database

phase	Trench	Context	Description	Cname	subfabric	Form	Comments
US	T2	2000	Unstratified	ELQC		JAR	
US	T2	2000	Unstratified	BEVO2B		JUG	
US	T2	2000	Unstratified	HUM		JUG	
US	T2	2000	Unstratified	DWSH		JAR	
US	T2	2000	Unstratified	GREY		JAR	
US	T4	4000	Unstratified	GREY	RQ;MICACEOUS GROUNDMASS	JAR	
US	T4	4000	Unstratified	NLQC		JAR	
US	T4	4000	Unstratified	STRES		BOWL	WHITE SLIPPED INT
US	T4	4000	Unstratified	STCOAR		FLP	RED SLIPPED INT
US	T4	4000	Unstratified	WHITE		PLATE	
US	T3	3000	Unstratified	BEVOB		JUG	NO GLAZE;TOWARDS BASE OF VESSEL
1	T2	2025	Fill of post- hole/solution hollow [2026]	GREY	RQ;MICACEOUS GROUNDMASS	JAR	WT
1	T2	2025	Fill of post- hole/solution hollow [2026]	STONE		GEO	
1	T1	1004	Natural accumulation/original ground surface	GREY	RQ;MICACEOUS GROUNDMASS	JAR	WT
1	T4	4010	Natural accumulation	OXID	RQ;MICACEOUS GROUNDMASS	MORT	WT;BROWN SLIPPED;FLANGED
1	T4	4010	Natural accumulation	GREY	RQ;MICACEOUS GROUNDMASS	BOWL	GROOVE BELOW RIM
1	T4	4010	Natural accumulation	GFIN	SILTY MICACEOUS GROUNDMASS	JAR	

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1	T4	4010	Natural accumulation	GREY	RQ;MICACEOUS GROUNDMASS	JAR	CF DONCASTER GREYWARE
1	T4	4010	Natural accumulation	GREY	RQ;MICACEOUS GROUNDMASS	JAR	
1	T4	4010	Natural accumulation	DWSH	S	JAR	
1	T4	4010	Natural accumulation	DWSH	OVERGROWN QUARTZ SAND C.0.5MM;SHELL VOIDS;MUSC LATHS 1.0MM	JAR	
2	T1	1012	Root disturbed interface between (1001) and (1013)	BEVO2B		JUG	KC BASE WITH SPARSE THUMBING;WHITE TRIAPP UNDER CUGL
2	T2	2003	Ditch [2004] fill	BEVO2T	SPARSE RQ; FINE SALT- SURFACED GROUNDMASS	JUG	RIBBED SHOULDER WITH ?COMBED DEC;GLAZE SPLASHES
2	T2	2003	Ditch [2004] fill	TORK		JAR	
2	T2	2003	Ditch [2004] fill	TORK		JAR	
2	T2	2003	Ditch [2004] fill	LFS		JAR	
2	T2	2003	Ditch [2004] fill	LFS		JAR	
2	T2	2003	Ditch [2004] fill	GREY		JAR	
2	T2	2003	Ditch [2004] fill	SAM			
2	T2	2003	Ditch [2004] fill	NVCC		BEAK	INDENTED;SCALES
2	T2	2003	Ditch [2004] fill	DWSH		-	
2	T2	2005	Ditch [2006] fill	GREY	RQ	JAR	
2	T2	2005	Ditch [2006] fill	DWSH	RQ	JAR	
2	T2	2005	Ditch [2006] fill	CBM			
2	T2	2005	Ditch [2006] fill	TORK		JAR	

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2	T2	2005	Ditch [2006] fill	LFS		JAR	
2	T2	2009	Fill of post-hole [2010]	LFS		JAR	
2	T2	2027	Fill of post-hole [2028]	GREY	RQ;MICACEOUS GROUNDMASS	JAR	
2	T2	2029	Fill of post-hole [2030]	DWSH	S; BELEMNITE	JAR	
2	T4	4016	Primary ditch[4017] fill	GREY	RQ;MICACEOUS GROUNDMASS	JAR	
2	T4	4016	Primary ditch[4017] fill	BEVO2B		JUG	PLAIN GL
2	T4	4016	Primary ditch[4017] fill	STONE	RED CHALK	GEO	
2	T1	1013	Fill of ?robber trench [1003]	BEVOB		JUG	NO GLAZE
2	T2	2016	Dump	NVCC		BEAK	INDENTED
2	T2	2016	Dump	HUM/BEVOC		JUG	
2	T4	4015	Secondary ditch [4017] fill	NLQC		JAR	HM
2	T2	2031	Pit [2032] fill	DWSH		JAR	
2	T2	2031	Pit [2032] fill	DWSH		JAR?	
2	T2	2033	Pit/post-hole [2034] fill	GREY		JAR	
2	T2	2035	Fill of slot [2036]	GREY		JAR	
2	T2	2031	Pit [2032] fill	GREY		JAR	
3	T2	2014	Ploughed bank	GREY	A RQ INC GSQ;FLINT	JAR	
3	T3	3004	Gully [3005] fill	NVCC		BEAK	ROULETTING ON BODY
3	T4	4007	Accumulation over bank prior to ploughing/slighting	DWSH		JAR	
3	T3	3008	Fill of post-hole/hollow [3009]	DWSH		JAR	

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3	T3	3010	Fill of slot [3011]	GREY	RQ;MICACEOUS GROUNDMASS	JAR
3	T3	3010	Fill of slot [3011]	OXID		JAR
3	T2	2021	Fill of pit/post-hole [2022]	EYQC		JAR
3	T3	3001	Topsoil	LPMLOC	SILTY MICACEOUS	FLP