

Assessment of Pottery from Station Road, Soham, Cambridgeshire (SSR08)

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A small collection of pottery was recovered from archaeological fieldwork at Station Road, Soham, Cambridgeshire, undertaken by Lindsey Archaeological Services (Site Code: SSR08). The finds range in date from the prehistoric period to the post-medieval, but are mainly of medieval date.

Description

Pottery

Prehistoric

A single sherd, from context 406, comes from a straight-walled vessel with a wall thickness of c.6.0mm. It is fresh condition with no signs of abrasion but some thin light-coloured concretions on the surfaces. The fabric is black throughout and is tempered with angular flint fragments (Fig 1). At x20 magnification, these can be seen to be calcined and were clearly produced by fire-cracking. This is a common technique in the Iron Age over much of midland and southern England.



Figure 1 Close-up photograph of broken edge of prehistoric sherd (Field of view approx 3.4mm wide).

Medieval

Twenty sherds of medieval pottery were recovered. All were abraded, some heavily. The sherds fall into two fabric groups.

The first group contains a mixed, rounded sand including quartz, shell, limestone (?chalk), rounded red iron ore and flint, in a groundmass of light brown fine-textured clay (Fig 2). The core of the sherds is sometimes reduced and light grey but very rarely black. This fabric is very similar in appearance to Hunts Fen Sandy ware (HUNFSW) and the lack of black-cored vessels argues against an Ely source (Vince 2007b).

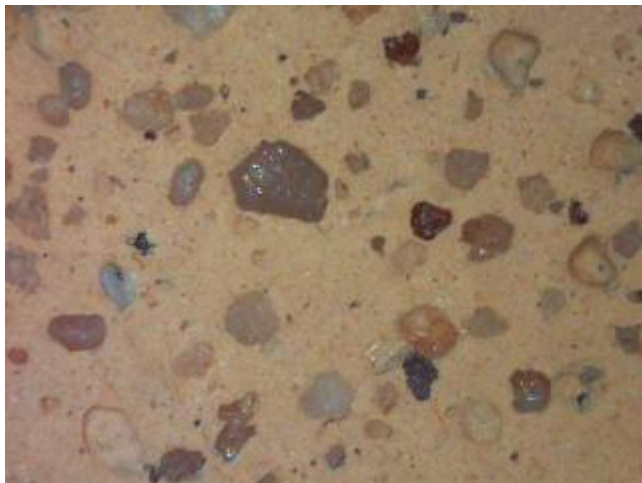


Figure 2 Close-up of surface of medieval pot, first group, sample.

Some of the sherds definitely come from unglazed vessels, although in the majority the surfaces are too abraded to be certain, and some of the sherds are definitely handmade. One sherd comes from the neck of an unglazed jug with close-set horizontal grooving on the exterior. The sherds probably date between the 12th and the 14th centuries.

The second group consists of only two sherds. The fabric has a micaceous, silty groundmass, with variable quantities of rounded quartzose sand. Wares of this type have been given various codes by Dr P Spoerry depending on the size and quantity of inclusions and the prominence of white mica in the groundmass (Vince 2007a). The group was probably made in north Essex although a southeastern Cambridgeshire source is also possible. One of the examples comes from the rim of a large wheelthrown pancheon with traces of glaze on the interior and is probably of late medieval date (i.e. 14th to 15th centuries).

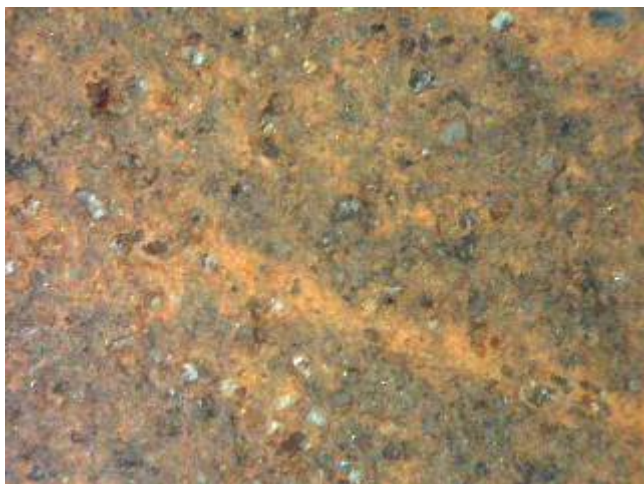


Figure 3 Close-up of medieval pottery, second group, sample

Post-medieval

A single sherd from a large glazed red earthenware bowl with plain lead glaze inside and out was recorded from context 101. Very similar vessels have been seen in Cambridge but analysis has failed to pinpoint their source (Vince 2008).



Figure 4 Close-up of broken edge of post-medieval red earthenware.

Assessment

The single sherd of prehistoric pottery appears to have been discarded close to its place of use, to judge by the lack of abrasion. By contrast, the medieval pottery is all abraded and could have arrived on the site with manure/night soil. The post-medieval sherd is also fresh and may indicate activity on the site during the 17th or 18th century, and probably indicates that any ploughing had ceased.

Retention

All of the finds come from stratified deposits and should be retained.

Further work

No further work is recommended at this stage.

Bibliography

- Vince, Alan (2007a) Characterisation Studies of Anglo-Saxon and Medieval Pottery from Cambridgeshire: South Cambridgeshire and Essex wares. AVAC Reports 2008/041 Lincoln,
- Vince, Alan (2007b) Characterisation Studies of Hunts Fen Sandy Ware (HUNFSW). AVAC Reports 2007/088 Lincoln,
- Vince, Alan (2008) Characterisation Studies of Late Medieval and Later Pottery and Ceramic Building Material from Cambridge. AVAC Reports 2008/055 Lincoln,

Appendix 1

Context	class	Description	Cname	Subfabric	Form	Part	Nosh	NoV	Weight	Condition	Use
400	POTTERY	INT GLAZE SPLASHES	MICFS		PANC	R	1	1	18		SOOTED EXT
101	POTTERY		GRE	CF CAMBRIDGE	BOWL	R	1	1	29		
308	POTTERY		HUNFS		-	BS	4	4	8	ABR	
301	POTTERY		HUNFS		-	BS	1	1	1	ABR	
301	POTTERY	DEFINITELY HM	HUNFS		JAR	B	1	1	12	ABR	
306	POTTERY		HUNFS		-	BS	1	1	3	ABR	
102	POTTERY		HUNFS		-	BS	5	5	25	ABR	
102	POTTERY	CLOSE-SET GROOVES AROUND NECK	HUNFS		JUG	BS	1	1	5		
102	POTTERY		HUNFS		BOWL	R	1	1	55		
113	POTTERY		HUNFS	BLACK THROUGHOUT	-	BS	1	1	3		
305	POTTERY		HUNFS		-	BS	3	3	8	ABR	
400	POTTERY	FLAT-TOPPED RIM;POSSIBLY WHEELTHROWN OR WHEELFINISHED	HUNFS/MEL	BLACK CORE	JAR	R	1	1	25	ABR	
406	POTTERY		IAFLINT	ANGULAR FLINT <3.0MM	JAR	BS	1	1	2		
400	POTTERY		HUNFS?	BLACK SURFACES;LIGHT GREY CORE AND LIGHT BROWN MARGINS	BOWL	R	1	1	12		
100	POTTERY		MICFS	V PROMINENT MUSCOVITE	-	BS	1	1	2		

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