

Assessment of Ceramic Building Material from Healing School, Healing, Grimsby (HHS 08)

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A single piece of ceramic building material from an archaeological excavation at Healing School, Healing, Grimsby, undertaken by Lindsey Archaeological Services, was submitted for identification and assessment.

Description

Ceramic Building Material

A single complete object from context 202 was submitted for identification. At first glance it appears to be a brick of standard late medieval or later dimensions. However, on closer examination it is clear that the two long sides (stretchers, in brick terminology) are bevelled and that this was achieved by using a bevelled mould rather than knife trimming. The two short sides (headers, in brick terminology) are vertical. The upper surface shows signs of wear absent on the sides and base.

The fabric was examined at x20 magnification and contains sparse straw impressions and rounded quartz sand. The straw appears to have been present throughout the clay and was not used to line the mould, as is often the case in late medieval and early post-medieval bricks. The base has a moulding sand which contains mainly well-rounded quartz grains of Triassic origin but also some well-rounded, polished grains with a red haematite coating. The latter probably originated in the Red Chalk, which outcrops as a thin band at the base of the chalk on the north and west sides of the Lincolnshire Wolds (and as an even thinner band on the south side of the Yorkshire Wolds). Such grains are not present in samples of sandy boulder clay and fired clay objects produced from this clay from Barton-upon-Humber or Grimsby examined by the author (Vince 2008; Vince 2004b; Vince 2004a) but do occur in clays from South Ferriby and sites on the western and southern sides of the Lincolnshire Wolds. The groundmass of the brick fabric, however, is fine-textured, silty and micaceous and probably obtained from the estuarine clays which fringe the southern bank of the Humber. Together, these features suggest that this object may have been produced at the Barton-upon-Humber brickworks, or another brickworks located nearby.

If the object was made as a floor tile, then it is an unusual shape. However, the brickworks at North Hykeham was producing unglazed floor tiles with similar bevelled sides and thicknesses, but with a square quarry (Vince 2005). This brickyard is thought to have been operating in the 16th century, at a time when in the Lincoln area brick was used mainly as a

secondary building material rather than for walling, a change which took place in the second half of the 17th century (2003).

Assessment

The Healing School object may be a brick, reused as flooring, or a purpose-built floor tile. Should further ceramic building material be found on the site it will probably become clear which of these options is correct. A late medieval or early post-medieval date is likely.

Retention

The object should be retained.

Further Work

No examples of bricks or other ceramic building material from the Barton brickworks have been studied using thin sections or chemical analysis but a large body of data exists for floor tiles and roof tiles from St Peter's Church, Barton-upon-Humber, and therefore analysis of the Healing School object would be able to determine whether it was made from similar raw materials to those tiles.

Costing

At 2008-9 rates a thin section and chemical analysis (Inductively-Coupled Plasma Spectroscopy) plus report comparing these results with those from Barton would cost £52.00 plus VAT.

Bibliography

- Jones, M. J., Stocker, D., and Vince, A. (2003) *The City by the Pool*, Oxbow Books, Oxford
- Vince, Alan (2004a) *Assessment of Stone from Land off Wellowgate, Grimsby (WEGY04)*. AVAC Reports 2004/053 Lincoln, AVAC
- Vince, Alan (2004b) *Assessment of the Fired Clay from Land off Falkland Way, Barton-upon-Humber (BNAF)*. AVAC Reports 2004/022 Lincoln, AVAC
- Vince, Alan (2005) *Characterisation Studies of Post-medieval Ceramic Building Material from North Hykeham, Lincolnshire*. AVAC Reports 2005/137 Lincoln, AVAC
- Vince, Alan and Kate Steane (2008) *Assessment of the Fired Clay from Barrow Road, Barton-upon-Humber (BHBR07)*. AVAC Reports 2008/068 Lincoln, AVAC

Appendix 1

Context:	Cname:	SUBFABRIC:	Description:	Form:	PART:	Nosh:	NoV:	Weight:	Length:	Breadth:	Thickness:	USE:	Class:
202	PMTIL	SILTY MICACEOUS WITH STRAW IMPRESSIONS ON UPPER SURFACE;MOULDING SAND INCLUDES MILLET GRAIN AND GSQ	BEVELLED LONG SIDES/STRETCHERS;VERTICAL SHORT SIDES/HEADERS	FLOOR?	BS	1	1	1800	250	95	45	POSSIBLY WORN UPPER SURFACE	CBM