

Assessment of Imported Medieval and Post-Medieval Pottery from Land to the rear of 58 Main Street and Nurses Lane, Wymondham, Leicestershire (XLE MAS 07)

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Archaeological excavations carried out by CAM ARC at Wymondham, Leicestershire, revealed traces of what is interpreted as a medieval and post-medieval manorial complex. Amongst the pottery present were sherds of imported types which were passed to the author for identification and assessment. These finds suggest that the site had a high status from the late 13th/early 14th century to the late 16th century.

Description

Pottery

Medieval

Context 1861. Two sherds from a Saintonge all-over-green glazed jug. These jugs have a glaze coloured by the addition of copper. In contrast to most copper-green glazed medieval vessels (including most from the Saintonge) the glaze was prepared before application to give an even colour. This may have involved the production of a frit (powdered glass) or simply the grinding of the ingredients. The all-over-green glazed jugs were a specialised product of the industry which produced the more well-known polychrome jugs and some polychrome vessels had an all-over-green glaze on the interior. The range of forms apparently copied that of the polychrome vessels closely. The Wymondham sherds come from the body of the vessel from which it can be seen to have had a rounded form, probably with a splayed base and no distinct neck angle (as on Platt and Coleman-Smith 1975 Fig 185 Nos 1022 or 1023) although it may have come from a squat jug (such as Platt and Coleman-Smith 1975, Fig 186 No.1024). The precise date of this type is disputed (it depends on the finding of vessels on Welsh castles constructed during Edward I's Welsh campaign and on the discovery of smashed vessels in the cellar of a merchant's house in Southampton thought to have been destroyed during the French Raid on Southampton in 1338. It is most likely that these jugs, and the polychrome vessels were the products of a very short-lived phase in the years around 1300.

Context 1353. The rim and neck of an Archaic Maiolica vessel, probably a jug, produced in Central Italy in the 14th or 15th century. The vessel has a tin glaze on the exterior and a plain lead glaze on the interior. There is a light green band below the rim and a dark purple band below that.

Post-medieval

Context 203. The rim and shoulder of a tin-glazed albarello. The rim form is triangular and reminiscent of those produced in Antwerp and London in the later 16th century (for example those from Holy Trinity Priory, City of London, Edwards 1999, Fig 8.1 d). The vessel has a tin glaze inside and out and is decorated with bands of cobalt blue paint about 3mm wide.

Sherds of Frechen stoneware, including a *Bartmannkrug* with spots of cobalt glaze, and a Martincamp type I flask (Hurst 1986, 102-4) were also present.

Assessment

The two medieval imports are of types which are rare in England and are usually found either on the sites of medieval ports (such as Hull, Boston or Southampton) or on sites of high social status, such as castles and abbeys. In the land-locked East Midlands, such finds are extremely rare. The post-medieval maiolica is less unusual, since by the late 16th century imported vessels were becoming available throughout England, but the cobalt-decorated Frechen stoneware is a type only seen by the author in the collections of the Museum of London.

Further work

The identification of the archaic maiolica vessel should be tested by thin section and chemical analysis. Similarly, it is possible to distinguish Antwerp from London maiolica using chemical analysis (Vince and Brown 2002).

Retention

All the material should be retained for future re-examination.

Bibliography

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- Vince, A. and Brown, D. H. (2002) "Characterisation and identification of tin-glazed ceramics using inductively-coupled plasma spectroscopy." in J. Veekman, ed., *Majolica and Glass from Italy to Antwerp and beyond*, Antwerp, 465-474

Appendix 1

| DN ID | Action | Context | class | Cname | Subfabric | Form | Part | Nosh | NoV | Weight |
|-------|--------|---------|---------|-------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|------|------|-----|--------|
| | | 203 | POTTERY | SNTG | TRIANGULAR RIM; HORIZONTAL BLUE BANDS | ALB | BS | 1 | 1 | 9 |
| | | 1861 | POTTERY | SAIG | | JUG | BS | 2 | 1 | 23 |
| 3 | DR | 1353 | POTTERY | ARCH | TRIANGULAR RIM; MANGANESE BAND BELOW RIM WITH TRACES OF GREEN BAND ABOVE; PLAIN GL INT; TIN GLAZE EXT | JAR | BS | 1 | 1 | 7 |

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