

Assessment of Pottery from Spencers, The Pound, Cookham, Berkshire (SCB 08/93)

Alan Vince

A small collection of pottery and fired clay was recovered from a watching brief carried out at Spencers, the Pound, Cookham, Berkshire, undertaken by Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd (Site Code SCB 08/93).

The finds range from the Neolithic period to the late 19th or 20th century and include sherds of early to mid Anglo-Saxon pottery whose condition suggests that they come from occupation nearby.

Description

Fired Clay

Six abraded fragments of fired clay were recovered from the fill of feature [3]. All have a similar fabric containing abundant rounded quartz, some polished, and sparse angular flint. The groundmass is silty and the overall texture is similar to the London brickearths. The similarity of the quartz/flint sand to that adhering to some of the finds as concretions suggests a very local origin. One of the fragments has a flat surface and all might be daub from a wattle and daub structure.

Pottery

Neolithic?

Five sherds of pottery are identified here as being of Grooved Ware dating to the Late Neolithic period (NEOGROG in catalogue, App 1). This identification should be tested by submitting the sherds to a specialist in pottery of this period.

The sherds all have a similar fabric but probably come from four separate vessels. The fabric is soft and contains sparse rounded quartz, angular flint and grog inclusions. All the sherds have a dark core.

The sherds all come from vessels of similar wall thickness and curvature, apparently being cylindrical in shape. Two vessels (three sherds) are decorated with shallow, u-sectioned grooves. In one case these appear to be associated with raised cordons and are diagonal to the cordon (Fig 1) and in the other they are widely spaced parallel lines (Fig 2).

All the sherds are abraded, some quite heavily.



Figure 1 Possible Grooved Ware sherd. Context (52)



Figure 2 Possible Grooved Ware. Context (52)

Early to Mid Anglo-Saxon

Eight sherds of early to mid Anglo-Saxon pottery were recovered. All have a similar fabric and come from a vessel or vessels with similar wall thicknesses and curvature.

The fabric (Fig 3) contains moderate burnt-out organic inclusions and abundant rounded quartz grains, some of which are polished and probably originated in Lower Cretaceous deposits.

The vessel(s) were probably enclosed and have a rough scratched exterior surface and a scraped interior surface. The latter is particularly characteristic of 6th to 9th-century pottery in the Thames valley.

The pottery is probably similar to that recovered from the nearby site of Wexham Park, Timby 2008, which is dated to the later 6th or 7th centuries through C14 dating of the associated ground-level post-built structures.



Figure 3 Close-up of Early to Mid Anglo-Saxon fabric. Context (55). View 3.4mm across.

Saxo-Norman to medieval

Sherds of two wares were identified as being probably of 11th to 12th century date. One of these contains abundant grog fragments (EMGROG) and comes from a handmade jar. Similar vessels occur in very small numbers in the City of London in 12th-century deposits (Vince and Jenner 1991).

The other ware is tempered with abundant, fine sand (grains mainly c.0.2mm across) with probably some angular flint of similar size (Fig 4). Eight sherds from a single vessel were recovered. This vessel was a small jar with a flat base and rounded body. Prominent horizontal finger marks are present on the interior and the exterior shows faint vertical lines, which may be traces of decoration which was more prominent on the upper half of the body or simply part of the finishing process. The fabric has been classified as M40 ware (a product of the Chilterns, including production sites at Denham), based on the possible vertical decoration, but pottery production took place at Camley Gardens, Maidenhead, which is another possible source.



Figure 4 Close-up of fabric of ?Medieval jar. context (56). Field of view 3.4mm wide

Early Modern

Six sherds of pottery of types dating to the mid 18th century or later were recovered. The majority are of types present in the mid 18th to very early 19th centuries. They consist of a sherd from a white stoneware plate (SWSG), produced in the mid 18th century; Pearlware vessels with industrial slip and mocha decoration (PEAR) and a transfer-printed plate (TPW).

The sixth sherd, however, comes from a Derbyshire stoneware bottle which is stamped (Fig 5). This stamp includes the patent date of 1870, which gives a *tpq* for the production of this vessel. Derbyshire stoneware bottles of this size were often made as containers for blackleading (graphite).



Figure 5 Derbyshire Stoneware bottle. Context (51)

Assessment

Chronology and Interpretation

The earliest sherds from the site may date to the late Neolithic period. However, the identification of these should be checked with a specialist on late Neolithic pottery. If so, however, these sherds seem to indicate activity on the site at this period. The sherds come mainly from the subsoil, context 52, together with two sherds from the fill of pit [5], which is probably of medieval date.

The early to mid Anglo-Saxon sherds are less heavily abraded than the Neolithic sherds and all come from the fills of features ([2], [3] and [4]). Of these, [2] and [4] contain no later finds and might be of early to mid Anglo-Saxon date. Similar sherds were present at Wexham Park, Slough, where they were dated to the later 6th to 7th centuries, and the sherds are similar to those from the mill at Old Windsor, excavated by Brian Hope-Taylor and dated to the 7th century by dendrochronology. There are hints that this part of the country (especially

further up-river, in Oxfordshire) became aceramic in the mid Saxon period (although chaff-tempered pottery of broadly-similar character is present in mid Saxon deposits in Lundenwic, although it may be more common in the earlier part of the settlement's occupation, in the late 7th and early 8th centuries (Blackmore 2003).

The sherds, however, are all quite small and do not have the appearance of freshly broken vessels. It is possible, therefore, that they are residual in all three features. Nevertheless, they would not have survived for long in a ploughed or gardened soil and must indicate occupation on or very near to the site, probably in the 6th or 7th centuries.

The Saxo-Norman sherds, however, include eight sherds from the same vessel, all looking fresh, from the fill of feature [3]. They probably date the filling of this feature to the 11th to mid 12th centuries and are the first definite evidence for occupation on the site itself.

The early modern finds come from two contexts. Context 53 is the fill of feature [1] and the sherds form a small group probably to be dated to the late 18th or very early 19th century. The other context, 51, produced the sherd of Derbyshire stoneware which is clearly of late 19th century or later date.

Retention

All the finds should be retained.

Further Work

The possible Neolithic pottery should be shown to a specialist on Grooved Ware pottery (such as Ros Cleal, Avebury Museum). None of the other pottery requires further study.

Bibliography

- Blackmore, L. (2003) "7.8 The Pottery." in G. Malcolm, D. Bowsher, and R. Cowie, eds., *Middle Saxon London: Excavations at the Royal Opera House 1989-99*, MoLAS Monograph 15 Museum of London Archaeology Service, London, 225-241
- Timby, J. R. (2008) "The Pottery." in S. Ford, ed., *An Early/Middle Iron Age enclosure, Saxon halls and Roman features at Wexham Road, Wexham, Slough, Berkshire: An Archaeological Excavation for Care UK Community Partnerships*, Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd, Reading,
- Vince, A. G. and Jenner, M. A. (1991) "The Saxon and Early Medieval Pottery of London." in A. G. Vince, ed., *Aspects of Saxo-Norman London: 2, Finds and Environmental Evidence*, London Middlesex Archaeol Soc Spec Pap 12 London Middlesex Archaeol Soc, London, 19-119

Feature	SF No	Context	class	Cname	Subfabric	Form	Part	Nosh	NoV	Weight	Description	Condition
		51	EMOD	DERBS		BOTTLE	B	1	1	106	STAMPED "BOURNE & SON/PATENTEES/JNBY POTTERY/NEAR DERBY/1870"	
[5]		58	SN/EMED	EMGROG	MOD GROG;S SAQ;S ANG FLINT	JAR	BS	1	1	2	IDENTIFIED AS MED BY THICKNESS AND HARDNESS COULD BE WRONG	
[3]	<2>	56	EMSAX	ESAXRQ	ABUNDANT RQ (INC GSQ);MOD ORGANICS	JAR	BS	1	1	2	FETTLED EXT;SCRAPED INT	
[3]	<2>	56	EMSAX	ESAXRQ	ABUNDANT RQ (INC GSQ);MOD ORGANICS	JAR	BS	1	1	0.5	SCRAPED INT	
[2]		55	EMSAX	ESAXRQ	ABUNDANT RQ (INC GSQ);MOD ORGANICS	JAR	BS	2	2	15		
[4]		57	EMSAX	ESAXRQ	ABUNDANT RQ (INC GSQ);MOD ORGANICS	JAR	BS	1	1	10	FETTLED EXT;SCRAPED INT	
[3]		56	EMSAX	ESAXRQ	ABUNDANT RQ (INC GSQ);MOD ORGANICS	-	BS	3	3	10	FETTLED EXT;SCRAPED INT	
[3]		56	FCLAY	FCLAY	A SAQ;SILTY GROUNDMASS;OXID	-	BS	2	2	5	ONE FLAT SURFACE	ABR
[3]		56	FCLAY	FCLAY	A SAQ;SILTY GROUNDMASS;OXID	-	BS	4	4	14		VABR
[3]		56	SN/EMED	M40	A WELL-SORTED SAQ AND RQ;PROB ANG FLINT	JAR	BS	5	1	55	SAGGING BASE; FLATTISH BASE AND FAINT TRACES OF VERTICAL LINES EXT	FRESH
		52	NEO	NEOGROG	MODERATE RQ (INC GSQ);SPARSE GROG;SPARSE ANG FLINT;BLACK CORE	JAR	BS	2	1	23	BROAD GROOVED DECORATION	ABR;CONCRETIONS AND MANG STAINING
		52	NEO	NEOGROG	MODERATE RQ (INC GSQ);SPARSE GROG;SPARSE ANG FLINT;BLACK CORE	JAR	BS	1	1	6	THREE BROAD GROOVES	ABR
[5]		58	NEO	NEOGROG	MODERATE RQ (INC GSQ);SPARSE GROG;SPARSE ANG FLINT;BLACK CORE	JAR	BS	1	1	3		VABR
[5]		58	NEO	NEOGROG	MODERATE RQ (INC GSQ);SPARSE GROG;SPARSE ANG FLINT;BLACK CORE	JAR	BS	1	1	3		
[1]		53	EMOD	PEAR		BOWL	BS	2	1	5	BROWN SLIP BAND;MOCHA DEC ON LIGHT GREY SLIP BAND	
[1]		53	EMOD	PEAR		CUP	BS	1	1	0.5	LIGHT BLUE AND DARK BROWN SLIP BANDS	
[1]		53	EMOD	SWSG		PLATE	BS	1	1	2		
[1]		53	EMOD	TPW		PLATE	BS	1	1	1	WILLOW PATTERN	SPALLED

The Alan Vince Archaeology Consultancy, 25 West Parade, Lincoln, LN1 1NW
<http://www.postex.demon.co.uk/index.html>
A copy of this report is archived online at
<http://www.avac.uklinux.net/potcat/pdfs/avac2008112.pdf>

