

Assessment of the Pottery from Stafford Castle, Stafford (SCS 08/15)

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A small collection of pottery was recovered from archaeological excavations carried out at Stafford Castle, Staffordshire. The majority probably dates to the late Roman period with a single sherd of late 18th century or later date.

Description

Roman

A total of 53 sherds of Romano-British pottery was recorded. All the sherds were similar in condition and apparent date and probably represent a relatively short-lived occupation in the 4th century.

Table 1

Code	Sherds	Vessels	Weight (gm)
GREY	17	8	117
MOMH	1	1	60
NVCC	9	5	81
OXCC	7	5	36
OXCC?	1	1	6
OXID	16	7	154
STONE	1	1	2
WW	1	1	1
Grand Total	53	29	457

Greyware (GREY)

Sherds of greyware were the most common type present. All have a very similar appearance both in the hand and under x20 magnification. The fabric contains moderate to abundant well-rounded matt-surfaced quartz grains, ultimately of Permo-Triassic origin but quite possibly obtained from Quaternary cover sands. All the sherds probably come from wheelthrown jars. No rims, decorated sherds or sherds with traces of use or surface treatment were present. On their own these sherds are not closely datable but given the late date of the associated finewares a 4th century date is likely.

Mancetter-Hartshill Mortaria (MOMH)

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A single fragment of a red-painted Mancetter-Hartshill mortaria was recorded. Unlike most of the collection it is in fresh condition, despite having a rivet hole in the body.

Nene Valley Colour-coated ware (NVCC)

Sherds of several Nene Valley colour-coated vessels were present. These include at least two dishes and one beaker. No decorated pieces were present but the thickness of the sherds suggests a late date (i.e. within the 4th century).

Oxfordshire Colour-Coated Ware and Mortaria (OXCC and MOOXR)

Sherds of an Oxfordshire colour-coated bowl with a bead rim (Young 1977, C81) and an Oxfordshire flanged redware mortaria (MOOXR; Young 1977, C100) Young 1977 were recorded.

Oxidized wares (OXID)

Sherds of several fine oxidized vessels were recorded. Where large sherds were present they were mainly identifiable as Severn Valley ware types (SVW), including wide-mouthed bowls, a small jar and tankards. Some of the sherds, however, appear to have a less silty, micaceous groundmass and are likely to come from another source. Without large fragments, and especially rims, it is not possible to classify these types.

Misc Whitewares (WW)

A single abraded rim from a small flagon or jug was found. It cannot be attributed to a source but appears to be more powdery in fabric than the other whitewares (Mancetter-Hartshill and Nene Valley).

Early Modern

A single body sherd of a black-glazed vessel appears to have the fine, homogenous, calcareous fabric of Sunderland Coarseware, produced in the Wear valley in the late 18th and 19th centuries (Baker 1984).

Assessment

All of the datable Roman pottery is likely to be of 4th century date and this suggests that the entire collection is late, since these types occur in the majority of the deposits (Table 2). The pottery is by and large quite heavily abraded but this is likely to be due to soil conditions rather than mechanical abrasion, since the sherds are mainly relatively large.

The range of sources represented in the collection is not unusual for the 4th century although the lack of shell-tempered pottery indicates that the local grey sandy ware and Severn Valley ware industries were sufficiently active to offer competition to the south-east Midlands shelly wares, which by the 4th century were supplying much of the lower Severn Valley and are found in Wales.

By the 4th century most of the imported types found in earlier Roman assemblages were no longer being imported but the absence of North African amphorae might be significant. Certainly, however, the inhabitants of the Stafford Castle site were able to obtain finewares from other parts of Britain and were therefore integrated into the wider Roman economy.

Table 2

CUT	TYPE	DATE	GREY	MOMH	NVCC	OXCC	OXCC?	OXID	WW	Grand Total
TRENCH 89	SPREAD /PIT	ROM						2		2
15	PIT	4 TH C		1	5					6
19	PIT	ROM	16					8	1	25
25	PIT	4 TH C				1				1
26	PIT	4 TH C	1		1	2	1	5		10
28	DITCH	4 TH C				3				3
31	DITCH	4 TH C			1					1
42	PIT	4 TH C			2					2
47	PIT	4 TH C				1		1		2
Grand Total			17	1	9	7	1	16	1	52

The single sherd of late 18th or 19th century date is remarkable because of its likely northeastern English source, despite the proximity of Stafford to the Potteries, where similar blackwares were produced.

Further Work

The pottery requires no further study

Bibliography

Young, C J (1977) *Oxfordshire Roman Pottery*. Brit Archaeol Rep 43

Appendix 1

Cut	Layer	Trench	class	Cname	Subfabric	Form	Part	Nosh	NoV	Weight	Description	DN NO	Condition	Use
11	61	48	POTTERY	SUND		BOWL	BS	1	1	13		0		
15	65		POTTERY	NVCC		DISH	R	5	1	34		0	ABR	
15	65		POTTERY	MOMH		MORT	R	1	1	60	WALL-SIDED;RED FINGER-APPLIED PAINT ON RIM	0		HOLE B FIRING BODY
19	69		POTTERY	GREY	RQ SAND	JAR	B	10	1	95		0	ABR	
19	69		POTTERY	OXID	SVW	TANK	BS;H	5	1	38		0	ABR	
19	69		POTTERY	WW		FLAG	R	1	1	1		0	ABR	
19	69		POTTERY	OXID		-	BS	1	1	1		0	VABR	
19	69		POTTERY	GREY	RQ SAND	-	BS	1	1	2		0	VABR	
19	69		POTTERY	OXID	WEATHERED MERCIAN MUDSTONE?	JAR?	B	1	1	16		0		
19	69		POTTERY	OXID	SVW	TANK	BS	1	1	7		0	ABR	
19	69		POTTERY	GREY	RQ SAND	JAR	BS	5	5	18		0	ABR	
25	77		POTTERY	OXCC		-	BS	1	1	3		0	VABR	
25	77		ANBN				BS	1	1	2		0	BURNT	
25	77		GEO	STONE	MERCIAN MUDSTONE		BS	1	1	2		0		
28	80		POTTERY	OXCC		BOWL	R	3	1	10	YOUNG (1977) C81	0		

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31	83		POTTERY	NVCC		BEAK	BS	1	1	22		0	ABR
26	92		POTTERY	OXCC	GSQ TRITS	MORT	R	1	1	21	FLANGE BROKEN;ROULETTED	0	
26	92		POTTERY	OXCC		-	R	1	1	1	YOUNG (1977) C100	0	ABR
26	92		POTTERY	OXCC?		-	BS	1	1	6		0	ABR
26	92		POTTERY	GREY		JAR	BS	1	1	2		0	VABR
26	92		POTTERY	NVCC		DISH	R	1	1	20		0	
26	92		POTTERY	OXID	SVW	JAR	B	5	1	43		0	
42	97		POTTERY	NVCC		-	BS	2	2	5		0	VABR
47	150	86	POTTERY	OXID	SVW	JAR	R	1	1	9		0	ABR
47	150	86	POTTERY	OXCC		BOWL	R	1	1	1		0	VABR
	EAST END SPREAD/PIT	89	POTTERY	OXID	SVW	WMJAR	R	2	1	40		0	ABR