

A KILN AT CHURCH LANE, TICKNALL, SOUTH DERBYSHIRE

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Pottery production at Ticknall, South Derbyshire occurred between the 15th and the 19th centuries. Documentary evidence for this industry, which has been comprehensively explored by Spavold and Brown (2005), and limited archaeological exploration has revealed the presence of at least 28 potteries operating in Ticknall between the late medieval and early modern periods. Despite a wealth of evidence pertaining to the existence of production sites in the village, not a single kiln had been located by excavation. However, this was rectified in 2006 when an excavation took place in the garden to the rear of a new property which was under construction on the Church Lane frontage (SK 352 239). Permission was given to Janet Spavold and Sue Brown by the landowners Mr and Mrs Gray to investigate the site in advance of landscaping. The excavation was carried out with the assistance of the authors, Derbyshire Archaeological Society, Jane Young, David Palmer and Alan MacCormick.

Two trenches were excavated, one of which (trench 1) revealed a large deposit of *in-situ* saggars and wasters which had been used to backfill a probable kiln chamber. The structure had been disturbed by the digging of pits and little of the kiln fabric remained. Midlands Purple wares and Cistercian wares, of probable late 15th to mid 16th century date, were recovered from the infill of the kiln. This has provided the first excavated evidence of a pottery kiln in the parish.

Around 4,000 vessels were recovered from Trench 1, although over half the vessels are unstratified. Once structural remains were uncovered the excavation strategy was altered accordingly and pottery was recovered by context; this material was the focus for post excavation analysis. Due to the large amounts of pottery present at the site, a selective retrieval policy was put in place to recover a representative range of fabrics and forms. The stratified assemblage includes Midlands Purple ware jars, bunghole vessels, jugs, bowls and cups, although saggars are the most common form. A small amount of Cistercian ware was also recovered. Evidence from other Midlands Purple and Cistercian ware production sites indicate the two were often manufactured together and fired in the same kilns, with Midlands Purple forms evidently used as saggars during firing to protect the more delicate Cistercian ware drinking vessels (Boyle 2006, 44). Examples of kiln props and spacers are also present.

Dr Alan Vince conducted chemical analysis on the Midlands Purple ware and Cistercian ware from Church Lane and the nearby site of Peats Close, which produced a similar range of pottery (Boyle 2002–03). This analysis was funded with a grant from Derbyshire Archaeological Society. Vince concluded that the Cistercian ware and

Midlands Purple wares from the two sites can be distinguished chemically, although the difference was more marked between the Cistercian wares than the Midlands Purple wares (Vince 2007).

Dating evidence from the site was lacking, however Church Lane products have now been identified in assemblages from consumer sites through the paralleling of forms and, in one case, by chemical analysis (Vince 2007). Evidence from these stratified groups suggest the production of pottery at Church Lane may date to between the late 15th and mid 16th century.

As the first kiln to be excavated in Ticknall, the Church Lane site highlights the need for further investigation into the village's prolific pottery industry. This limited excavation has produced new evidence for the activity of potters in the village, as well as providing the first excavated groups of Ticknall pottery to be associated with a kiln. The chemical analysis provides an excellent basis for further work exploring Ticknall pottery. A full account of the Church Lane excavation is forthcoming (Boyle and Rowlandson).

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