

Chamberlains Factory Higham Ferrers



Archaeological Excavation Interim Report- Supplement-Pottery Assessment



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**Chamberlains Factory
Higham Ferrers, Northamptonshire**

***ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION – INTERIM REPORT
Supplement - Pottery Assessment***

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This document represents a supplement to the interim report on the excavations carried out on the site of the former factory on the northern outskirts of Higham Ferrers Northamptonshire (Chamberlains Factory Higham Ferrers, Northamptonshire Archaeological Excavation - Interim Report OA 2002). The supplement contains the assessment report and proposal for further analysis of the pottery associated with the late medieval pottery kiln revealed in the excavation.

- 1.2 As with the overall results of the excavation, the analysis of the pottery will be incorporated into the post-excavation research and publication programme already agreed (Kings Meadow Lane, Higham Ferrers Northamptonshire. Post-excavation Assessment and Research Design OA 2002).

ASSESSMENT OF THE POTTERY FROM THE KILN (CHAMBERLAINS FACTORY HFCF02)

by Paul Blinkhorn

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The pottery assemblage weighed 443,722 g, with the estimated vessel equivalent (EVE), by summation of surviving rimsherd circumference, being 208.09. All the material from the kiln and its associated feature was in the tradition of late medieval Reduced ware, which is classified in the Northamptonshire County Ceramic type Series as F365, and broadly dated to the 15th century.

- 2.2 The range of vessel forms comprised almost entirely jars, pancheons, jugs and cisterns, although fragments of very few dripping dishes were also noted. All the sherds were unglazed, and decoration was limited to incised cordons on the shoulders of jars and jugs, and stabbing on handles.

3 ANALYTICAL METHODOLOGY

- 3.1 The pottery was initially bulk-sorted and recorded on a computer using DBase IV software. The material from each context was recorded by number and weight of sherds per fabric type, except for featureless body sherds, which were weighed and recorded as one database entry. Feature sherds such as rims, bases and lugs were individually recorded, with individual codes used for the various types. Decorated sherds were similarly treated. In the case of the rimsherds, the form, diameter in mm and the percentage remaining of the original complete circumference was all recorded. This figure was summed for each fabric type to obtain the estimated vessel equivalent (EVE).
- 3.2 The terminology used is that defined by the Medieval Pottery Research Group's Guide to the Classification of Medieval Ceramic Forms (MPRG 1998) and to the minimum standards laid out in the Minimum Standards for the Processing, Recording, Analysis and Publication of post-roman Ceramics (MPRG2001). All the statistical analyses were carried out using a Dbase package written by the author, which interrogated the original or subsidiary databases, with some of the final calculations made with an electronic calculator. All statistical analyses were carried out to the minimum standards suggested by Orton (1998-9, 135-7).

4 THE ASSEMBLAGE

- 4.1 The homogenous and fragmented nature of the assemblage meant that vessel reconstruction was largely impossible, and few profiles were reconstructed apart from some of the pancheons, which are shallow when compared to other vessels. Thus it was not possible to differentiate between jugs and cisterns, as it seems likely that the latter were of the same general form as the former, with the only real difference being the presence of a bunghole near the base. The pottery occurrence by weight of sherds per context is shown in Appendix 1.
- 4.2 The vessel count, by EVE, was as follows:
Jars: 22.35
Pancheons: 90.86
Jugs/Cisterns: 85.22
- 4.3 In addition, four handles and two rimsherds from dripping dishes were noted. The asymmetrical nature of such vessels makes computation of the EVE impossible, but a total of 429 jug handle fragments were noted, which perhaps gives some idea of the relative number of such dripping dishes present in the assemblage.
- 4.4 Decoration was limited entirely to incised cordons on the shoulders of jugs and jars, or stabbing on jug/cistern handles. A total of 10,450 g of incised bodysherds were noted, as opposed to 304,480 g of plain material.
- 4.5 The 429 jug handle fragments were all from single thumb-grooved types, with 46 decorated with stabbing. All spouts (47 examples) were simple pulled lips.

- 4.6 Bases comprised 447 fragments from sagging examples, and 142 flat types, with one fragment of the latter having thumb-frilling.

5 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

- 5.1 There are two references to a pottery kiln in the town in the Higham Ferrers Court Rolls. An entry for 1436 notes that one William Potter 'took a croft where there is a kiln for making pots', and there is also a reference to repairs being made to a kiln in 1467. The archaeomagnetic dates suggest that this kiln may be the one that was in existence when he took possession of the croft.

5.2 *Regional Context*

- 5.2.1 The late medieval Reduced ware industry of the south-east midlands was one of the most important pottery types of the period, and the products of it are found throughout the region. Several kilns are known from Bedfordshire (Anna Slowikowski, pers. comm.), another from Great Brickhill in Buckinghamshire (McCarthy and Brooks, 1988, 435), and another from Higham Ferrers, none have been published in any great detail. The other Higham kiln was partially excavated and published in the 1960s (Hall 1974), but the level of publication is far from adequate. In Bedfordshire, kilns have been found at Flitwick and Everton, but these are at present unpublished, and this particular example also appears to be by far the best-preserved of those known.

6 REPORT DESIGN

- 6.1 The report will concentrate mainly on the typological traits of the pottery. Each vessel type has a range of rimforms which will be illustrated, and the size range and occurrence of each type examined and discussed. The range of types of feature sherds such as handles, bungholes and bases will also be examined and, where appropriate, illustrated, as will all vessels which are reconstructed to a full profile (16 vessels) or show useful typological traits (c 20 vessels).

Analysis of assemblage: 5 days

Discussion of results: 2 days

Catalogue and preparation of vessels for illustration: 1 day

Report preparation: 1 day

General liaison, editing, etc 1 day

Total time required = 10 days

- 6.2 A small collection of sherds demonstrating the range of the fabric will be lodged with the County Type Series for future integration into the resource.

7 BIBLIOGRAPHY

Hall, DN, 1974 Medieval Pottery from the Higham Ferrers Hundred,
Northamptonshire *J Northampton Mus Art Gallery* **10**, 38-58

McCarthy, MR, and Brooks, CM, 1988 *Medieval Pottery in Britain AD900-1600*
Leicester University Press

MPRG, 2001 *Minimum Standards for the Processing, Recording, Analysis and
Publication of post-roman Ceramics* Medieval Pottery Res Group Occ Paper **2**

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Occasional Paper **1**

Orton, C, 1998-99 *Minimum Standards in Statistics and Sampling Medieval Ceramics*
22-23, 135-8

Table 1: Pottery occurrence by number and weight (in g) of sherds per context by fabric type (kiln material only)

Context	Wt (g)
9001	32
9004	326
9010	158
9012	1880
9014	120
9017	89
9022	49
9024	11
9028	8
9032	225
9053	3
9055	11
9071	237725
9073	495
9074	15203
9075	443
9078	726
9083	114638
9084	1248
9085	6932
9086	1535
9088	1122
9093	18706
9095	2893
9098	8099
9099	2181
9114	43
9128	2
9145	1
9153	6
9183	12527
9185	1656
9189	8635
9201	1601
9205	5
9212	2571
9224	1322
9226	33
9338	33
9357	40
9402	283
9403	30
9405	63
9432	13
Total	443722



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