The Archaeology of the A30 Bodmin to Indian Queens Road Scheme
Specialist Report Archive

The pottery
By John Allan
5724: OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGY A30 POT REPORT

The medieval and later ceramics comprise 417 sherds. The collection was first studied by visual examination with the use of a hand lens. A listing of the number of sherds, minimum number of vessels and vessel forms of each fabric present in each context was then prepared; this is deposited in the site archive. The few gabbroic sherds and a selection of the typical late medieval coarsewares were then examined by Dr Taylor, both under the petrological microscope.

Table 1: Total quantities of medieval and later pottery

	No. of sherds	Min. no. vessels	Forms/comments
Gabbroic, grass-marked (No. 1)	2	1	flat base, burnt
Gabbroic (No. 2)	1	1	featureless bodysherd
Lostwithiel-type Medieval Coarseware, L13-15C	242	*c*. 40+	7 jugs
Lostwithiel-type, Medieval, glazed	1	1	jug
North Devon Medieval Coarseware	1	1	bodysherd
Lostwithiel type, Post-Med.	26	13	1 bowl *
North Devon calcareous, 16-E17C	5	3	
North Devon Gravel-Tempered, 16-18C	6	4	1 sooted bowl
Cornish red coarseware, 18-19C	32	9	2 bowls
Bristol-Staffordshire yellow slipware, 18C	3	2	1 cup
Industrial pottery, post-1780	98	*c*. 30+	not listed in detail
TOTAL	417		

The earliest component of the collection is a series of three gabbroic sherds: a single featureless bodysherd from 4060 and two joining sherds from the flat base of a grass-marked vessel, heavily burnt on its external side, from 4176 (for a discussion of this fabric see Taylor and Allan 1998–9). These sherds could come from a platter, jar or bar-lug vessel; the date could lie anywhere between the 8th and late 11th century – perhaps even the 7th (Thomas 1968; Hutchinson 1979). Petrological examination by Dr Taylor (below) confirms that their minerals come from the gabbro of the Lizard Peninsular of western Cornwall.

The second class of ceramics forms the bulk of the collection: unglazed, hand-made coarsewares characterized by abundant muscovite, offering a good visual match to pottery made in Lostwithiel (cf. Miles 1976; 1979; Allan forthcoming). Recent chemical and petrological comparison of kiln waste from Lostwithiel with samples from Tintagel Castle (cf. O'Mahoney 1989b) and Bunnings Park, St Neot parish (cf. O'Mahoney 1989a), has shown that pottery matching the Lostwithiel kiln waste was widely distributed in east Cornwall. Given the documentary evidence for the importance of the Lostwithiel potteries (Douch 1969) and the accessibility of the various sites along the A30 to Lostwithiel, it is probable that this pottery was in fact made there (cf general discussion of the attributions in Taylor and Allan 1998–9). Dr Taylor's examination of a selection of sherds shows that most

fall broadly within the range of Lostwithiel pottery but two sherds examined are not particularly good matches; they may represent variations on the Lostwithiel fabrics or come from other Cornish sources.

The dating of these coarse Lostwithiel wares is unfortunately broad. Production seems to have begun by the mid 13th century – perhaps as early as *c.*1200, when a potter of some sort, whether making earthenware or metal vessels, is documented (Douch 1969). Elsewhere in south-west England unglazed hand-made jugs seem to have been introduced by *c.* 1250. On the other hand, the fact that most sherds are hand-made shows that the bulk of the collection belongs to the period before the introduction wheel-thrown vessels some time in the 15th century. The Lostwithiel sherds could equally reflect short-lived occupation in the period 1250–1350 or a longer chronology of *c.*1200-1400. The site might therefore have been abandoned at about the time of the Black Death, or, like many settlements, been abandoned some generations later.

Lostwithiel-type ware remains the most important component of the small assemblage of the 16th and 17th centuries, but North Devon pottery forms a noticeably higher proportion of the total of this period (30%, admittedly of a small sample). This accords with the evidence from sites in east Cornwall such as Colliford Mill (Litt and Austin 1989) that North Devon was occupying an increasing share of the early modern ceramics market in much of Cornwall.

The remainder of the collection consists of industrial wares of the end of the 18th century, the 19th and the 20th; details are in the site archive.

DRAWN SHERDS (Fig. 00)
3. [4186]. Overlapping sherds forming much of the profile of an unglazed late medieval jug in Lostwithiel-type ware.
11. [4573]. Wheel-thrown bowl in Lostwithiel-type ware, the rim form and general appearance matching kiln waste from the town but the petrology less certainly matching (see below). Trace of dull mid green glaze on rim top; heavily sooted underside of rim exterior.

The petrology of selected sherds
By Roger T. Taylor

The grass-marked sherds and a selection of ten sherds representing the range of local micaceous coarseware were submitted to the writer for comment. They were examined under the petrological microscope at magnifications of X20–40.

Sample 1: grass-marked ware
A30 BOD 05.3 (4176) Two body sherds with light brown weakly oxidised outer surface grading into reduced inner surface. Inner surface with plant impressions (grass-marked) surface and impressions partially coated and infilled with black residue. Moderately hard fired with slightly abraded edges and eroded outer surface.
Temper: 40% of the fabric.

- Feldspar – Translucent to white hard and cleaved and soft white angular grains, 0.05-4mm, mainly less than 1.5mm.
- Amphibole – Greyish mid brown to grey cleaved and fibrous angular grains, 0.1-2mm.
- Quartz – A scatter of transparent to translucent colourless to white sub-angular to sub-rounded grains, 0.1-0.2mm.
- Magnetite – A scatter of black glossy magnetic, angular to sub-rounded grains, 0.1-0.8mm.
- Composite – Feldspar: amphibole, angular fragments, 1.5-2.5mm
- Mica – Muscovite cleavage flakes in the matrix less than 0.05mm.

Comment: A gabbroic fabric with a particularly abundant and poorly sorted mineral content. A large proportion of the feldspar is quite hard and translucent compared with typical pre-Roman gabbroic fabrics.

Sample 2: grass-marked ware
A30 BOD 05.3 (4060) topsoil. Body sherd with oxidised surface grading into a brown weakly oxidised core and inner surface. Temper: 25–30% of the fabric.

- Feldspar – White soft and some harder cleaved angular to sub-angular grains 0.05-3.2mm.
- Amphibole – Angular greyish to mid brown cleaved angular and elongated grains 0.1-3.2mm.
- Quartz – Transparent to translucent colourless to white, sub-angular to sub-rounded grains, 0.1-1.2mm.
- Magnetite – Sparse Black glossy magnetic, angular grains, 0.1-0.6mm.
- Limonite – Rare soft black glossy rounded grains, 0.2mm.
- Mica – Muscovite cleavage flakes in the matrix less than 0.1mm.

Comment: A typical gabbroic fabric.

Samples 3–9: Lostwithiel-type ware
A30 BOD 05.3 (4181). Miscellaneous jug base angle, body, rim, and handle sherds. Oxidised surfaces with light to medium grey reduced cores. Body sherd thickness 4-8mm. Moderately hard to moderately soft fired with moderately to strongly abraded edges and moderately eroded surfaces. Temper: 10-15% of the fabric, 20-25% on surfaces.

- Quartz – Transparent to translucent colourless to white angular to sub-angular grains, 0.1-1.5mm.
- Occasional sub-rounded quartz grains up to 2.2mm.
- Feldspar – Soft white, and harder translucent to white cleaved grains, 0.5-1.2mm
- Mica – Muscovite cleavage flakes 0.1-1.5mm.
- Biotite as mid to dark brown cleavage flakes, 0.1- 0.6mm.
- Tourmaline – Black glossy angular to sub-angular grains, 0.2-0.6mm.
- Rock fragments – Silvery grey, buff and pink micaceous slate, tabular fragments, 0.4-1.2mm.
- Composite grains – Quartz-muscovite, Quartz feldspar, sub-angular fragments, 1mm.

Comment: This group of sherds, representing at least seven vessels, has granite-derived stream sand temper. It closely resembles the temper of the Lostwithiel, Quay Street kiln wasters.

Sample 10: Lostwithiel-type ware
05.3 [3252] Body sherd, oxidised surfaces light grey reduced core, 9mm thick. Moderately soft fired abraded edges moderately eroded surfaces. Temper: *c.* 10% of the fabric.

- Quartz – Transparent colourless angular grains 0.1-2.5mm and some transparent well rounded and polished grains, 0.1-0.4mm. One white sub-angular vein-quartz grain, 4mm.
- Rock fragments – Silvery grey to buff micaceous slate and fine-grained sandstone, sub-angular to sub-rounded oblate fragments 0.5-3mm.
- Feldspar – White fairly hard angular to sub-angular grains, some cleaved, 0.1-0.4mm
- Mica – Muscovite cleavage flakes mainly in the matrix, less than 0.1mm, rarely 0.2-0.3mm.
- Composite – Quartz-feldspar, quartz-tourmaline and quartz-biotite, sub-angular to sub-rounded fragments, 1-1.5mm.

- Tourmaline – Rare black glossy sub-angular to rounded grains, 0.1-0.2mm

Comment: A probable estuarine sand temper with input from a granitic hinterland and rounded and polished grains derived from a beach source.

Sample 11
A30 BOD 05.3 (4357). Large 16th-century rim sherd with distinctive form, 4mm thick on the body edge. Moderately soft fired pinkish-buff, oxidised with light grey reduced core in the thicker parts of rim. Moderately hard fired with moderate abrasion of edges and moderately eroded surfaces. Temper: 20-25%, concentrated on surfaces, lower percentage in the core.

- Rock fragments – Micaceous slate siltstone and fine-grained sandstone, much is brownish-pink to reddish-brown, tabular to oblate rounded fragments, 0.1-2mm.
- Quartz – Transparent to translucent angular to sub-angular, rarely rounded to sub-rounded grains, 0.1- 3.5mm, mainly less than 1.5mm.
- Mica – Muscovite as cleavage flakes with irregular abraded edges, 0.1-2mm.
- Biotite – Pale brown bleached and dark brown cleavage flakes, 0.2-1mm.
- Feldspar – Soft white and some harder cleaved angular grains, 0.1-1mm.
- Limonite – A scatter of moderately soft mid brown rounded grains, 0.1-2.2mm.

Comment: A granite-derived stream sand temper with sedimentary rock fragments common. The sherd is comparable with Cornish medieval pottery from Lostwithiel, Mawgan-in-Meneage and St Germans, but is not a good match.

Sample 12: daub
A30 BOD 05.3 (4200) Pot or daub from ditch fill. Small irregular oxidised clay fragment, soft fired.

- Rock fragments – Oxidised pink and buff micaceous slate, tabular irregular fragments, 1-6mm.
- Light grey fine-grained sandstone, angular irregular fragment, 2mm.
- Quartz – Sub-angular white/buff vein quartz, 3mm and 1mm. Some fine quartz silt in the matrix.

Comment: Probably burnt local slaty clay daub.

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