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Thin section examination of  
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THIN SECTION EXAMINATION OF SCARBOROUGH WARE AND OTHER  
MEDIAEVAL POTTERY

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INTRODUCTION

A pilot study was recently undertaken to see if it was possible to separate and characterize petrologically, small groups of Mediaeval sherds considered to have been made at Scarborough ('Scarborough ware'), Nottingham and Lincoln (Tomber and Williams, 1980). The thin section results from this small programme of analysis were encouraging, not only did there appear to be fairly distinct textural differences between the sherds from each locality, but Scarborough ware was itself tentatively divided into two fabrics, as previously suggested by hand-specimen study (Farmer, 1979, 28-29). In view of this, it was decided to embark on a larger thin section programme centred on Scarborough ware. The primary objective was to sample a selection of vessels, from widely-spaced find-spots, where there was some doubt as to whether they should be classed as 'Scarborough ware' or not. Further samples of pottery associated with the Scarborough ware kilns were also included, as a check on the original sherds analyzed, together with comparative material of other origins. All the samples, some sixty-five, were chosen and submitted by P.G. Farmer.

All of the samples analyzed contain a range of fairly common inclusions, predominantly quartz grains. This is not particularly

helpful in suggesting likely geological source areas, and by implication the probable production centres involved. However, given kiln material, it can often prove possible to characterize the products texturally, that is by examining the size, shape and frequency of the inclusions present in the clay. Once this has been done for material from known origins, the results can be used for comparison with sherds suspected of being products of the same centre as the samples tested. This method has been applied below to kiln products from Scarborough and certain other centres. The number of samples from known origins used in this way as 'standards' is, however, comparatively small for each kiln site. It cannot be automatically assumed, therefore, that the sherds below which are unallocated cannot have come from one of the named centres, only that the fabrics sampled have not matched up to those sherds submitted as typical kiln products.

## RESULTS

### Scarborough ware Phase I

Five samples were submitted from known locations in Scarborough as representative of Phase I fabrics (ibid.):

- (1) Scarborough Castle: knight jug.
- (2) Balmoral Development: trench II, 73(5).
- (3) Balmoral Development: trench III, 193(4).
- (4) 148, Castle Road: (a).
- (5) 148, Castle Road: (b).

Thin sectioning shows frequent quartz grains, average size 0.05-.30mm, with a few larger grains, together with flecks of mica, iron ore, quartzite, some plagioclase and potash felspar, a little sandstone, siltstone and with the odd grain of pyroxene.

Samples similar to Scarborough ware Phase I fabric:

- (6) Hull: MG76 1524(1).
- (7) Hull: (3).
- (8) Norwich: WN72(327).
- (9) Faversham: aquamanile.
- (10) Raversijde, Belgium: CM/CII/1579; base of jug.
- (11) Raversijde, Belgium: CM/CII/1584; fish dish.
- (12) Raversijde, Belgium: CM/CII/2510; jug handle.
- (13) Stonar: 70 7A L2(3) 9.
- (14) Aberdeen: AE EGC(2) 2035.
- (15) Great Yarmouth: phallic aquamanile.
- (16) 148, Castle Road, Scarborough: brick/floor tile? Used in kiln construction.

Scarborough ware Phase II

Five samples were submitted from known locations in Scarborough as representative of Phase II fabrics (*ibid.*), together with a sample of clay thought to be from a Phase II clay pit.

- (17) Tollergate kiln site: TAI(3)(6).
- (18) Tollergate kiln flue: TBI 168.
- (19) St. Peter's Church kiln site: TRL(7).
- (20) St. Peter's Church kiln site: SKS TRI 166(3).
- (21) St. Mary's Street: D3 1968.
- (22) Clay sample from 148, Castle Road.

Thin sectioning reveals a similar range of non-plastic inclusions to Phase I fabrics, although a few fragments of limestone are also present in sample (21). However, there does seem to be a slight textural difference in the size and frequency of quartz grains between the two groups. In the Phase II sherds the groundmass of quartz grains, average size 0.10mm and below, is more numerous

than for the Phase I sherds, and in addition there appears to be a scatter of slightly larger grains than for the Phase I material.

The sample of clay from 148, Castle Road compared quite favourably to the Phase II sherds, though large, fairly coarse, clay pellets were also present which were not seen in the pottery thin sections.

Samples similar to Scarborough ware Phase II fabric:

- (23) Castle Road, Scarborough: shallow oval spouted dish.
- (24) 148, Castle Road, Scarborough: sherd with applied and stamped decoration.
- (25) Longwestgate, Scarborough: LWG 75(1).
- (26) Joymount, Carrickfergus, Ireland: CF III 3852.
- (27) Kings Lynn: ASA XI 3A; horse aquamanile.
- (28) Probably from Castle Road, Scarborough: 3 39 2; aquamanile.
- (29) Cook's Row, Scarborough: 66 53; aquamanile.
- (30) Stonar: STON 70 10 2A L6(3)6.
- (31) Aberdeen: AA unstrat. 1976.
- (32) Aberdeen: AB unstrat. 1976.
- (33) Aberdeen: AC EGC(163) 343.
- (34) Aberdeen: AD B(38) 2558 E6.
- (35) 148, Castle Road, Scarborough: fragment of tile used for stacking pots in the kiln.
- (36) Noot Hall, Nottingham: knight jug.
- (37) 148, Castle Road, Scarborough: thumbled pedestal base.
- (38) Sleaford: aquamanile.
- (39) Bruges, Belgium: knight jug.
- (40) Rushy Platt, Swindon: aquamanile.

Fabrics different to Scarborough ware Phase I and II  
described above:

Nottingham

- (41) Glasshouse Street, Nottingham: NGL 70/1 NB.
- (42) Glasshouse Street, Nottingham: NGL 70/1 ND.
- (43) Glasshouse Street, Nottingham: NGL 70/1 NE.
- (44) Glasshouse Street, Nottingham: NGL 70/1 NA.
- (45) Glasshouse Street, Nottingham: NGL 70/1 NL.

The first three sherds, no's 41-43, are very distinctive in thin section, consisting of a scatter of quartz grains, average size 0.20-.60mm, with some sandstone, quartzite, siltstone and mica, all set in an almost isotropic clay matrix. Sample 41 was submitted as a 'clear waster', and the group is identical in texture to that of the Nottingham sherds originally examined (Tomber and Williams, 1980). The other two sherds from Nottingham, no's 44 and 45, are slightly coarser than the rest of the group.

Marchants Farm, Street, nr Plumpton

- (46) Marchants Farm kiln.

Thin sectioning shows a fairly clean clay matrix containing some quartz grains, 0.05mm in size, and flecks of mica, with a scatter of larger grains up to 1.20mm across.

Beverley

- (47) Possibly a product from a suspected kiln at Beverley.

Thin sectioning reveals frequent quartz grains, average size 0.05-.30mm, with a few larger grains, flecks of mica and some plagioclase feldspar.

Laverstock

(48) Laverstock kiln 2: aquamanile.

Thin sectioning shows a groundmass of quartz grains 0.10mm and under, with a scatter of larger grains, 0.20-.30mm in size, together with flecks of mica.

Unallocated

The following samples all appear to be texturally different to the various groups of designated sherds described above. Thin section details are given in the form of brief notes comparing individual sherds to those centres thought on typological and on visual fabric grounds to be likely places of origin (for many of the samples see Farmer, 1979).

(49) Exeter: EB 75 CNG phase 96; tubular spout.

Slightly finer-textured than Scarborough Phase I and II fabrics above.

(50) Irish Quarter, Carrickfergus, Ireland: CFV 3208.

More finer-textured and micaceous than Scarborough Phase I and II fabrics above.

(51) Carrickfergus, Ireland: CF VI 1901; anthropomorphic tubular spout.

More coarse-textured than Scarborough Phase I and II fabrics above.

(52) Irish Quarter, Carrickfergus, Ireland: CR V 5496.

More finer-textured than Scarborough Phase I and II fabrics above.

(53) John Street, Drogheda, Co. Louth, Ireland: 1977 2067.

(54) John Street, Drogheda, Co. Louth, Ireland: 1976 518.

There are certain similarities between these sherds and Scarborough ware, but the Irish samples on the whole tend to be slightly-finer-textured.

(55) Cambridge: knight jar.

The groundmass is more finer-textured than Scarborough Phase II above.

(56) Scarborough Castle Hill Chapel: 1503 39: decorated floor tile.

(57) Scarborough Castle Hill Chapel: 1507 39: decorated floor tile.

Similarities with Scarborough Phase II fabric above.

(58) Eastborough/West Sandgate, Scarborough (sealed context pre-A.D. 1135): 576; green glazed with scales.

A quite different fabric to Scarborough Phase I and II above, consisting of frequent well-sorted quartz grains average size 0.10-.30mm.

(59) Eastborough/ West Sandgate, Scarborough (sealed context pre-A.D. 1135): 57; brown glazed.

Similarities with Scarborough Phase I above.

(60) Eastborough/ West Sandgate, Scarborough: 76; Roman tile.

(61) Eastborough/ West Sandgate, Scarborough: 76(33) 5; splashed glazed.

Finer-textured than Scarborough Phase I and II fabrics above.



(62) 148, Castle Road, Scarborough: (87); splashed glazed.

Similarities to Scarborough Phase II fabric above.

(63) Lewes: aquamanile.

Similarities to the sample from Marchants Farm kiln, no. 46.

(64) Harwich: horse/rider aquamanile.

Similarities to Scarborough Phase II fabric above, contains a fair amount of limestone.

(65) Hull: MG 76 1524(2).

Similarities to Scarborough Phase I fabric above.

#### REFERENCES

- |                               |  |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Farmer, P.G.                  | (1979) <u>An Introduction to Scarborough Ware and A Re-assessment of Knight Jugs</u> (Hove, 1979)                              |
| Tomber, R. and Williams, D.P. | (1980) <u>Petrology of Selected Mediaeval Sherds from Scarborough, Nottingham and Lincoln</u> (DOE Ceramic Petrology Project). |