

Ancient Monuments Laboratory  
Report 109/90

PETROLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF MEDIAEVAL  
POTTERY FROM BEVERLEY AND GRIMSBY,  
HUMBERSIDE.

D F Williams PhD FSA

AML reports are interim reports which make available the results of specialist investigations in advance of full publication. They are not subject to external refereeing and their conclusions may sometimes have to be modified in the light of archaeological information that was not available at the time of the investigation. Readers are therefore asked to consult the author before citing the report in any publication and to consult the final excavation report when available.

Opinions expressed in AML reports are those of the author and are not necessarily those of the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England.

Ancient Monuments Laboratory Report 109/90

PETROLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF MEDIAEVAL  
POTTERY FROM BEVERLEY AND GRIMSBY,  
HUMBERSIDE.

D F Williams PhD FSA

Summary

Fabric analysis was undertaken on a group of likely 'wasters' from a suspected twelfth century kiln site at Grovehill, Beverley and a comparison was made with the fabric of similar forms and dated material from River Head, Grimsby. The result was a very close textural match, and it seems highly likely that this pottery from Grimsby originated from Beverley.

Author's address :-

D F Williams PhD FSA

Department of Archaeology  
University of Southampton  
Highfield  
Southampton  
SO9 5NH

PETROLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF MEDIAEVAL POTTERY FROM BEVERLEY  
AND GRIMSBY, HUMBERSIDE

D.F. Williams, Ph.D., FSA

(HBMC Ceramic Petrology Project)

Department of Archaeology, University of Southampton

Introduction

A small programme of petrological analysis was undertaken on some forty Mediaeval sherds, both glazed and unglazed. Half of these sherds were selected from a large group of cracked and distorted Mediaeval pottery recovered from what appears to have been a twelfth century "waster" dump found on the site of Albion House, Grovehill, Beverley (*Humberside Archaeology*, no. 10). A pottery kiln is suspected of being located nearby but is as yet undiscovered. The main object of the examination was to try to characterize the fabric of this pottery and compare the results with a similar looking fabric recovered from recent excavations at River Head, Grimsby, for which another twenty sherds were supplied (*Humberside Archaeology*, no. 24). In this way it was hoped to see if it is possible, or indeed likely, that the Grimsby vessels might have originated from the suspected Beverley production centre. Both Beverley and Grimsby are situated on Upper Chalk and alluvium, capped by drift deposits of

Boulder Clay (Geological Survey 1" Map of England Sheet nos. 72 and 80). Also included in the analysis were three sherds from twelfth century contexts in York, which in the hand-specimen were thought to have similarities with the Beverley pottery.

### Petrology

#### Albion House, Grovehill Road, Beverley (BGR 85)

The majority of the sherds examined appear to come from jugs or cooking-pots and have been defined by the excavators as *Beverley 1(A) Type*, and tentatively dated c. A.D. 1100 to c. A.D. 1175 (together with the material below from River Head, Grimsby). In the hand-specimen the fabric is uniformly hard, thin-walled, slightly rough on the non-glazed areas and somewhat sandy. The colour of the external glaze varies amongst the sherds from a lightish green (Munsell 5Y 6/6) through darker shades of green to more of an olive brown (2.5Y 4/4). The body is invariably oxidized from light red (2.5YR 6/8) to reddish yellow (5YR 7/8), occasionally with a thin grey core sandwiched between the latter colours.

Thin sectioning and study under the petrological microscope shows a reasonably homogeneous fabric in which the principal non-plastic inclusions are composed of a groundmass of frequent subangular quartz grains generally under 0.15mm in size, together with a scatter of larger quartz grains ranging up to 0.60mm across, set in an

isotropic matrix of fired clay. Flecks of muscovite mica are common and each sherd sampled normally contains a few discrete grains of feldspar, mainly plagioclase but orthoclase and microcline have also been noted, little bits of chert, sandstone, siltstone, a few irregular-shaped pieces of limestone, iron ore, the odd grain of pyroxene and occasionally small sparse fragments of metamorphic, igneous or volcanic rock. Some of the sherds are slightly more sandier than others. The variety of the inclusions present in these sherds strongly suggests that the clay used for the pottery was obtained from the local Boulder Clays (Kent, 1980).

River Head, Grimsby (N2 89)

In the hand-specimen, the group of sherds examined from Grimsby appears very similar to those described above from Beverley. Thin sectioning confirms this view, for the range and texture of the non-plastic inclusions in the Grimsby sherds closely matches those noted in the Beverley material. Grimsby lies on similar geological formations to Beverley, and so theoretically any potters from there may well have had available locally much the same raw materials for pottery making. However, taking into account the similarity of fabric and the typological features of the pottery shared by both sites, it would appear in this case highly likely that the suspected

Beverley kiln was responsible for the pottery from Grimsby examined here.

York

1) 1989.9 5518/5551 Dr 161

2) 1989.9 4676 Dr 229

3) 1986.9 5196/5131 Dr 189

Although the fabric of these three sherds is a predominantly sandy one, in thin section the texture of the quartz grains does not sufficiently match the Beverley material to be confident of a shared origin on this evidence.

Bibliography

Kent, P. (1980) *Eastern England from the Tees to The Wash*, British Regional Geology, London.