Excavations on the Site of the Mowbray Manor House at the Vinegarth, Epworth, Lincolnshire, 1975-1976

Colin Hayfield

The small town of Epworth lies in the central part of the Isle of Axholme in north-west Lincolnshire, an elliptical island of Mercian Mudstones and Cover Sands some twelve mile long and four wide; bounded to the north by the old course of the Don, to the east by the Trent and to the south and west by a vast expanse of fen and raised bogs or ‘carr’ which remained undrained until the 17th century (Dunstan 1909, Darby 1971, Thirsk 1953, and Swinnerton & Kent 1976). The settlements on the Isle were therefore relatively isolated during the medieval period (Fig. 1).

The main street of the town lies on an east-west axis with an eastern market place from which a narrow lane leads northwards towards the parish church of St Andrew built upon a small prominence of local marlstone. To the east of this lane and immediately to the south of the church lies the arable field known as the ‘Vinegarth’ (N.G.R. SE 784 040) (Fig. 2).

The ‘Vinegarth’ was suspected of being the site of the ancient seat of the Mowbrays of Axholme. When in 1975 Boothferry District Council published plans for housing development, the Ancient Monuments Inspectorate of the Department of the Environment financed two seasons of excavations on the site under the direction of R. A. H. Williams. Excavation was designed to locate and plan the manorial buildings and investigations were largely limited therefore to the latest phases of constructional development. It became apparent that the Vinegarth was the site of a substantial range of stone buildings of possible manorial character which had been occupied from the 14th to the early 16th century. These were complemented by a contemporary range of ancillary buildings. However, the earliest traces of occupation on the site dated to the early medieval period.

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Fig. 1 Location map of the Isle of Axholme
The discovery, during the 1976 season, of a tile floor in situ in the ‘manorial’ buildings bearing the arms of the Mowbrays of Axholme seems to confirm that these buildings were indeed part of the ancient Mowbray manor house.

In 1976 the proposed housing development was shelved and future plans for the site are uncertain.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

MANORIAL DESCENT

Epworth was recorded in the Domesday Book as part of the lands held by Geoffrey de Wicre where its value in 1086 was reduced to five pounds as opposed to eight in King Edward’s time (Foster & Longley 1924, 191-2). Axholme had been used by the Danes as a retreat in 1069 and had probably suffered from the ‘Harrying of the North’ in that year (Kapelle 1979). The creation of Axholme as a single lordship is thought to have developed as a consequence of the re-establishment of Norman control in the area. Epworth was one of the first manors to be conferred on Nigel d’Aubigny, a close aide of William I, who was granted the Axholme lordship before May 1108 (Greenway 1972, 331). D’Aubigny was later also granted the use of the name and arms of Mowbray.

The Mowbray honour was at its most extensive at the death of Nigel d’Aubigny in 1129; the demesne included thirteen manors, nine in Yorkshire, two in Warwickshire, one in Leicestershire and one, Axholme, in Lincolnshire. Although the demesne had contracted slightly by c. 1170, Epworth and the Isle of Axholme was regarded as the principal Mowbray manor; in 1298 it yielded more than three times the amount of revenue of Thirsk, their next most valuable manor (Greenway 1972, xliv, xlvi).

Epworth and the Isle of Axholme remained in the Mowbray family until the end of the medieval period. In c. 1480 it still formed part of the estate of Ann, the last of the line, who was the only daughter of John Mowbray, the fourth Duke of Norfolk. On her death, the manor passed to the Berkeley family who, by 1506, had sold it to Thomas Stanley, first Earl of Derby (Cal. I.P.M., 2nd series, Vol. 3, no. 29). During the reign of Elizabeth the manor passed to the crown, in whose hands it was to remain until 1649 when Charles II granted it to Sir George Carteret (Read 1858, 129). Ceramic evidence indicates that the site had been abandoned by the early 16th century, suggesting that the manor remained in use during the Berkeley lordship but fell out of use on, or shortly after, its purchase by the Stanleys.

SITE OF THE MANOR

Before the excavation the exact location of the Mowbray manor house was uncertain, although antiquarian tradition had associated it with the Vinegarth. In 1538 John Leland recorded that ‘By Hepworth and joyning to Bellegreave Parke remaynith yet a great parte of the maner place of Lord Mulbray of Axholme, chief owner onyly late dayes of the hole isle’ (Toulmin-Smith 1907, Vol. 1, 37). This implies that the manor, although abandoned, still survived as an identifiable structure. Over a century later, a local antiquary, Abraham de la Pryme, recorded that ‘All on the east end of the Church, and over against the south thereof, stood a famous and magnificent monastery of Carthusian monks . . . in which ground, where it stood, they tell me that there has oft been found several old pieces of English coin, and several gold rings, but they could not shew me any’ (Jackson 1869, 173). It is evident that Pryme was confusing the manor house
with Low Melwood priory some two miles away where Leland recorded that 'one of the Mulbrais dukes of Norfolk was buried in a tomb of alabaster' (Toulmin-Smith 1907, Vol. 1, 37). Nevertheless, the implication is that there were no longer any identifiable standing structures, the robbing process presumably having been completed, but that there was already the tradition of a major range of demolished buildings in the vicinity of the Vinegarth.

A survey of 1749 recorded a 'capital messuage or manor house, consisting of a hall, a parlour, a kitchen with three lofts over them ... the close of arable land, called the Vineyards [Vinegarth], lay on the north and east thereof' (Stonehouse 1839, 126). This presumably refers to a new, post-medieval structure, adjacent to the now cultivated Vinegarth. A later plan of 1787 also showed no structures within the Vinegarth (L.A.O. MCD 851/17/3).

In 1858 Read observed that a 'large portion of the foundations of this mansion still remain; and about eighty years ago a cannon made of bar iron was found a few feet below the surface of the soil ... and very lately, in a field [the Vinegarth] the property of Richard Dawson, Esq., a few tiles, bearing the Mowbray Arms, in encaustic, were found; clearly indicating the site where the mansion stood' (Read, 1858, 108). More recently, in 1964 and 1968, additional tiles were found in the same field along with traces of foundations (Loughlin & Miller 1979, 154).

EXCAVATION REPORT
In August 1975 trenches A, B, and C (Fig. 3) were opened and various ancillary buildings to the manor were investigated; this work was complemented in 1976 when trench B was extended to the south. Most of the work in March 1976 was concentrated on the manorial complex in trenches E and F. With the exception of trench D, which was opened in 1975, all the trial trenches were dug in 1976.

MANORIAL BUILDINGS (Trenches E and F)
Early timber structure
A two-metre wide trial trench which ran north-south across the open area between the hall and the pentice revealed evidence of a range of early buildings. Part of a green marl-clay floor was found together with several shallow gullies and small spreads of rubble. The insubstantial nature of these remains suggests that they may have been connected with timber buildings, perhaps a precursor of the stone-built manor house. These features lay beneath a substantial layer of sand through which the stone-built manorial complex was constructed.

The stone-built complex
Hall (Figs. 3 and 4)
Trench E revealed traces of a comparatively large rectilinear structure tentatively identified as a hall. Only the south wall was fully examined. A section of the western wall, revealed in trench F (Fig. 6), and the robbed-out remains of an eastern wall indicate an overall length of some 16 m. No trace of a floor or internal structures remained. The south wall was constructed of red and green marlstones bonded with a red clay; integral with this was a widening, somewhat four by three metres, which was probably the foundation for an external staircase to an upper chamber.

Kitchen (Figs. 3 and 4)
The kitchen (Fig. 4) consisted of two phases; the earliest building was probably contemporary with the hall described above. This room was rebuilt with the addition of two hearths suggesting that it may have served, in this second phase at least, as a kitchen.

The phase one building was approximately 6.40 m. square; its wide north and eastern walls were built of hard green marlstone bonded in brown clay, whilst the western and southern walls, the latter largely robbed, were narrower and comprised of inferior quality red and green marls bonded with brown sand. Some slight mortar and rubble
remains on the inner face of the north wall may have represented the foundations of a staircase. Whilst the build of the northern and eastern walls resembled the south wall of the hall, that of the southern and western walls corresponded with the remains of the pentic. This suggests that the hall was the primary structure in this sequence of buildings and that the first phase of the ‘kitchen’ block was constructed at the same time as the pentic.

The phase two kitchen building was, with certain modifications, superimposed on the earlier structure. Two narrower walls were constructed along the foundations of the wide, early, northern wall (Fig. 4); the southern of these belonged to the kitchen whilst the northern, if it was not a later reinforcing addition, is of unknown purpose. The eastern return of the north wall, revealed as a robber trench, had been set inside that of the earlier building and at a slightly different alignment to the eastern return of the southern wall (Fig. 4). All the walls of the kitchen were constructed of green and red marlstone, bonded with clay in the northern and western walls and brown sand in the southern and eastern walls.

The kitchen floor was made up of sections of brick and floor tiles, the central panel consisting of re-used tiled floor set in a bed of mortar (Fig. 5). Many of these floor tiles bore the Mowbray arms; this floor is more fully discussed below, p. 27. Surrounding this central panel were three areas of laid brick flooring. Those to the north and west were underfired (11 x 6 x 3 in.) and unbonded, whilst those to the south (Fig. 4), where the floor was badly disturbed, were ordinary bricks (10 x 6 x 3 in.) which had been mortar bonded and can probably be associated with the insertion of a hearth against the southern wall.

There was evidence for two hearths within the kitchen against the eastern and southern walls. Four mortared bricks represented the southern extremity of the eastern hearth, an apparently protruding central portion was suggested by a number of burnt kerbstones and bricks. The principal hearth had been inserted against the southern wall. Most of this feature had been robbed (Fig. 4) leaving only a bed of burnt sand with the exception of a rectangular brick (11 x 4 x 2 in.) platform, bonded with white mortar, in the south-west corner of the room. No identifiable traces of ovens were recovered. Built into the outer face of the east wall of the kitchen
were the foundations of a garderobe shaft from an upper storey, consisting of a shallow stone-lined pit with a stone platform to the east (Fig. 4). A large rectangular cess pit lay alongside, with a chute-like channel cutting into the platform. The fill of this cess pit contained an important artefact assemblage (Fig. 12) dating to the early 16th century.

**Pentice (Figs. 3 and 4)**

To the south of trench E (Fig. 4) were two parallel east-west walls some 2.60 m. apart, enclosing a pathway. There was evidence to suggest that this pathway made a 90° southern turn by the kitchen block, whilst trial trench J (Fig. 3) produced traces of a similar pair of walls on a corresponding southerly alignment. Further west however, excavations in trench K (Fig. 3), though incomplete, had not revealed any trace of this structure. It is likely that this was some form of covered walkway or pentice, possibly similar in appearance to a monastic cloister, which may have faced onto an open yard or possibly a formal garden.

The northern walls of this pentice survive as a single course of red and green marlstone bonded with white mortar. The internal faces of these walls were plastered down to foundation level, whilst traces of plaster were also found in two areas on the outer faces. The survival of the plaster lends support to the interpretation of this feature as a covered walkway.

There were two phases of flooring to the pentice. The first consisted of a mortar surface which changed to an area of worn stone flooring, bonded with clay, to the east at a point where it abutted the southern walls of the phase 1 'kitchen' (Fig. 4) and might represent the location of an entrance or crossing from this early room to the pentice. This initial phase of flooring was sealed by a 0-10 cm. levelling layer of marl-flecked clay into which had been cut a large number of stake holes which may have been used for scaffolding. The second phase of flooring consisted of roof tiles (11 ½ x 7 ½ in.) which appeared to have been laid whole, although most were badly shattered through use and subsequent plough disturbance. A small section across this walkway in trial trench J (Fig. 3) revealed a floor composed of tiles and hard green marlstone.

**Courtyard drain (Fig. 4)**

The open court between the 'hall' and the pentice contained a fine, constructed drain, running eastwards towards two soakaways. Two courses of underfired bricks (11 x 5 ½ x 2½ in.) formed the sides of this drain whilst hard, green marlstone was used for the floor and capping; both bricks and stones were bonded with a white mortar. The west soakaway was filled with a mixture of soil and rubble and the east solely with limestone rubble. The floor of the drain was missing over the western soakaway, resulting in the drain subsiding into it; consequently no water could have reached the eastern soakaway until this one had flooded.

**Trench F**

Trench F (Fig. 6) revealed the west wall of the hall described above. However, this area of the site was dominated by a sunken feature which occurred at the base of a large intruion, loosely filled with demolition material, which cut through both the south-west corner of the hall and pit f 3 (Fig. 6). Clearance of this sunken feature revealed a series of walls enclosing a pit (f 1). The walls were built of marlstone with dressed sandstone facings, bonded with white mortar. This probably represents the base of a garderobe tower serving a room to the west of the hall at first floor level (Fig. 3).

The top of pit f 1, at the base of the garderobe was 2.20 m. square, tapering to a rounded bottom some 0.80 m. below the wall footings and 2.45 m. below ground level. Over twenty randomly distributed circular voids cut both the lower fill of the pit and the surrounding subsoil, descending over 1.20 m. below the bottom of the pit.

West of the 'garderobe tower', immediately below the topsoil, were the remains of a green marlstone floor which had been bedded onto sand. In this floor was a dressed sandstone padstone (Fig. 6) which may have been a post support for a timber building associated with this flooring. The earliest feature in trench F was a narrow, north-south wall of claybound red and green marlstone which was situated between the flooring to the west and the 'garderobe tower' to the east (Fig. 6). The facing of this wall had been cut away by the construction trenches for the walls of the 'garderobe'.
ANCILLARY BUILDINGS (Trenches B and C, Figs. 3, 7, 8 and 9)
Some thirty metres to the west of the manorial complex, adjacent to the graveyard, were the remains of some less substantial buildings. Excavation in this area was more intensive than in the east.

Trench B (Figs. 7 and 8)
The earliest feature in trench B was a quarry dug through the natural marl clay and rock to a maximum of 1.40 m. (Fig. 7). Part of it appears to have been partitioned later to serve as a cess pit with a wall and two stones being inserted to act as a chute. A large pit (b1), some 0.30 m. deeper than the quarry, and a smaller, stone-lined pit (b2) both cut through the fill of the quarry. Overlying the quarry pit fill and pits b1 and b2 were various clay levelling layers, the uppermost of which was cut through by a small pit (b3) which in turn was sealed by the extension to the main building in trench B (Fig. 7).

The earliest part of the main buildings in trench B were
represented by room i, a possible courtyard to the south and a lobby entrance with a porch to the north. The shaded area to the south (Fig. 8) was not excavated but is thought to have been made up of robber material from a drain, lending support to the idea that this area to the south was part of a walled courtyard. The walls of the early building had been robbed heavily but where they still existed, they were built of red and green marlstone bonded with a brown marl clay to the north and east and white mortar to the west. A patchy mortar floor in room i continued into the lobby in the north-west corner. The walls of this room were constructed of large, roughly squared blocks bonded with a pink mortar. Immediately to the north lay a mortar floor footed on a platform of pitched stones in pink mortar, perhaps representing a porch.

The lobby and porch were eventually dismantled, stone slates from its roof sealing the floor of the building. A second phase of building was constructed over this layer of roof slates comprising an additional room (room ii), a passage, perhaps leading to further rooms, and a lean-to. These new buildings were constructed with a mixture of red and green marlstones together with some bricks and sandstone; this was bonded together with red and green marl clay and brown, chalk flecked, clay. Two periods of mortar were found in room ii and the passage. The recess in the west wall may have been intended as a hearth with a possible bread oven to the north, although there was no trace of burning.

The lean-to had a rudimentary clay floor through which had been cut a large shallow pit, backfilled with dark soil containing shells, largely oyster with some cockles and mussels. This pit was then cut through by the construction trench for a sophisticated water cistern which consisted of a clay-lined cylindrical pit some 0.80 m. in diameter. On the surface surrounding the cistern was a stone platform of vertically pitched marlstones, cobbles, and some sandstones. This was interrupted to the south-west by a water conduit constructed of bricks (11 x 5 x 1.5 in.) and pottery roof tiles. This conduit was traced to the side of a brick structure inserted into the north wall of room i which may have supported a tank for the collection of rain water.

A trial trench against the northern side of trench B exposed the northern wall of a timber-framed building, comprising two large, squared, stone post-supported, part of the western sill wall and part of a stone floor.

Trench C (Fig. 9)
The subsoil in trench C was a light brown soil which was distributed by at least five pit and ditch features which represented the earliest activity within this trench. These were not fully investigated and are not shown on plan.

Evidence was found of a possible early graveyard boundary wall (Fig. 9) in the north-west quarter of trench C where traces of two heavily robbed walls were found at right angles. These walls stood to a height of 0.30 m. and were built of uncoursed red and green marlstone bonded with brown clay; the stones in the north-south wall were smaller and more rounded. Leading up to the east-west wall from the south was a single course path of pebbles and cobbles set in a light brown sand. As no floors were found within these walls, they may represent the graveyard boundary.

These possible graveyard boundary walls were overlain by a general levelling layer over which were a series of structures with walls similar of those of the buildings in trench B. These were of a slight and discontinuous nature with insufficient remaining to suggest the plan of any building, although it is likely that they formed part of the same range of buildings as those from trench B. Towards the centre of the trench, in the angle between two walls, were the remains of a flat marlstone floor with traces of mortar.

To the north lay the robber trench of a wide wall with two water cisterns, c1 and c2 on either side. These were fed by brick conduits capped with stone, of which the base only is illustrated in Fig. 9. The western cistern was 1.05 m. deep and had a perfectly circular, clay-packed base, 0.73 m. in diameter. Horizontal grooves in the clay lining suggested that it had been packed around a barrel. The eastern cistern was 1.40 m. deep and roughly lined with stone.

Trial trenching (Fig. 3)
Trench D revealed a massive amount of demolition material some 2.0 m. deep against the track leading up to the church. At one point, a substantial mortar-clad wall was revealed beneath this debris suggesting that there may have been a range of buildings fronting onto either one or both sides of this track.

At the eastern end of trench D, more demolition material was encountered which was also examined in trench H. The general impression was that of a large oval feature filled with debris, perhaps the backfilling of a natural depression or possibly an artificial pond.
DISCUSSION OF THE EXCAVATED STRUCTURES

It is unlikely that Fig. 3 reveals either the full extent or the true structural complexity of the Mowbray manor, nor can it be certain that it even includes the principal buildings. As the Mowbrays were among the more important landowners during the Middle Ages, it would perhaps be surprising if their Epworth manor was not considerably more extensive than the present excavated remains might indicate. The robbed-out remains of walls and footings frequently conceal the original sophistication and grandeur of the associated buildings. Nevertheless, these buildings are relatively small for late medieval manorial structures and the use of dressed sandstone facings for walls was only encountered in the ‘garderobe tower’; such stone would perhaps have been the principal target for the stone robbers. The patch-up walls and reused tile floor seem barely compatible with the buildings of the principal manor of a family which, in 1383, had been raised to Earls of Nottingham and, from, 1392, to Dukes of Norfolk.

FINDS REPORTS

The Level 3 site archive lists all of the finds recovered from each excavated context. Unfortunately at the time of writing, many items, including a number of the small finds, roof tiles and environmental samples, could not be found.

COINS

by Bob Alvey

Four medieval jettons were recovered from the ancillary buildings.

(a) Associated with the construction and use of the ancillary buildings


(b) Associated with the demolition and robbing of the ancillary buildings

Coin no. 3 [SF 26, CG/249] Jetton. Possibly English. Cut to form a rough square. Obv: lion facing left with lion above, within dotted circle. Leg. not complete. Rev: Cross pattée within an inner dotted circle with lollies. Leg. worn and not complete. Measurements across faces 21.4 x 21.9 mm. Thickness 0.8 mm. 13th or 14th century.

(c) Unstratified trench B

Coin no. 4 [SF 1] Jetton. French. Obv: A love-knot between and uniting [—KK]. Leg. JEHAN-DE-SAINT-JOH. Rev: a cross pattée fleuronné contained by trefoil flowers issuing from an inner circle. Leg. GETTES-BIEN—PÂTES—BIEN. Diameter 26.2 x 25.9 mm. Thickness 1.5 mm. Late 15th century. (Barnard 1916, Plate VIII No. 83; Snelling 1769, Plate 3 No. 17.)

SMALL FINDS

with a contribution by John Cherry

(a) Silver

Silver wire ring (Group EB, Fig. 10, No. 1) This silver ring was excavated from feature 47 in Trench E. The ring has been analysed in the British Museum Research Laboratory and the metal is silver of high purity probably in excess of 95%. The metal has a golden appearance and XRF showed both mercury and gold indicating that the ring had been mercury gilded.

The ring (diameter 12 mm.) consists of a thin internal strip of silver some 2 mm. high, only fully preserved in one part of the ring, surrounded by a band of twisted wire. The nature of the metalwork does not suggest that this is a finger ring but is more likely to be a ferrule or hoop for a rod or staff. It is not really possible to give the ring any convincing date but it seems reasonable to accept it as medieval. (John Cherry.)

(b) Copper-alloy objects

The manorial buildings

Only one of the many copper-alloy objects recovered from trenches E and F was available for study at the time of writing.

Bronze candlestick (Group EF, Fig. 12, no. 38 and Fig. 18) A complete bronze candlestick with a strong blackish-green (3Y 2/2) patination, 13.3 cm. high, 12.2 cm. in diameter at the base with an internal nozzle diameter of 2.3 cm. The object was constructed in two sections, the stem being inserted into a conical base with a flanged drip pan. Both sections were cast, then lathe finished with clear traces of turning marks on the inner surface of the base.

The ancillary buildings (trenches A-D, Fig. 10, nos. 2-7) Although excavation of the ancillary buildings recovered a number of copper-alloy fragments, only a small proportion comprised identifiable objects.

Trench C, phase CD

No. 2 Pin, 50 mm. long and 2 mm. in diameter.
No. 3 Cast object with provision for two attachments. Possibly from a set of scales.

Unstratified

No. 4 trench A Small beaten bell of rumbler type. Constructed of two hemispheres joined by a central seam. The upper half had two ends of a small metal strip inserted and splayed internally to form an ‘eye’.

Similar examples have been recovered from Bedford (Baker et al. 1979, 280, nos. 1388, 1389, and possibly 1407) and Southampton (Platt & Coleman-Smith 1975, no. 1728). Apart from human ornament, such bells were also used to attach to the feet of falconry birds or dogs (Moorhouse 1971, 59).

No. 5 trench B Decorative, cast belt buckle.
No. 6 trench C Small plain buckle (Baker et al. 1979, 279, no. 1360).
No. 7 trench D Fragment from a key with traces of ring-tumed, oval stem (Moorhouse 1971, fig. 18, no. 24).

(e) Lead objects (ancillary buildings, Fig. 10, Nos. 8-10)

Two strips of window came were recovered from trench C, one unstratified and the other from CG, a context which also produced the lead plug No. 8. Fragments of lead roofing sheets came from trench B, one unstratified and the other from BI.

No. 8 CG Plug of lead with traces of mortar on the outer surface and the remains of a rectangular socket hole 20 mm. x 7 mm.) This may have come from a stone doorway as a socket for a hinge pin.
No. 9 C+ Small strainer some 34 mm. in diameter with chamfered edges.
No. 10 C+ One of two lead musket balls from the topsoil of trench C. Each was c. 20 mm. in diameter and roughly finished.

(d) Iron objects (ancillary buildings)
The great majority of iron objects from trenches B and C were nails which are fully catalogued in the Level 3 archive. Of the remaining fragments, only two were identifiable; a fragment of a knife blade from trench C and a possible lock fragment from CD, neither of which was sufficiently complete to merit illustration.

Fig. 10 Small finds
POTTERY

with a contribution by James Thorn

Introduction

The vessels from this assemblage have been classified according to their form and fabric type. Individual descriptions of the drawn material are included in the Level 3 archive, whilst the fabric code of each vessel is listed at the bottom of each plate of drawings. Independent dating was limited to the four jettons described above, although provisional dates are given for each group on the basis of the fabrics and forms that they contained. The bulk of the Epworth assemblage comprised a limited number of fabrics originating from kiln sources outside the Isle of Axholme; the characteristics of each are described below. All these fabrics have been more fully examined elsewhere (Hayfield 1983).

1. Coarsewares

Shell-tempered fabric (S3). Oxidised vessels of smooth to rough texture which were widely manufactured in North Lincolnshire and formed the dominant coarseware in 13th-century Doncaster. Vessels were usually a buff/orange or red colour with reduced blue-grey cores. (Moorhouse 1974.)

2. Finewares

Orangewares (01, 03). Orange coloured, virtually untempered, smooth textured fabrics, widely manufactured from the 11th to the late 13th century in Humberside, from urban centres such as Beverley. The 01-fabric derived from North Lincolnshire whilst the 03 fabric represented a harder variant which has not been recognised elsewhere and may originate from an unidentified Yorkshire source.

Doncaster ‘A’ fabric (FD). Orange to red coloured, finely sand-tempered fabric resulting in hard, rough textured surfaces, produced in Doncaster from the 12th to the late 13th century or early 14th century (Buckland et al. 1979, 55-7; Hayfield in prep. 1).

Humberside (H1, H2, OC). Hard, oxidised, sand-tempered fabrics which were produced in the Humberside region from the late 13th to the 16th centuries, from rural potteries such as West Cowick (Mayes & Le Patoirel 1964) and Holme-Upon-Spalding-Moor (Mayes & Hayfield 1980). H1 represented a 13th century transitional fabric which had the smooth texture of the orangewares and the hardness and forms of the Humberside. H2 was the Humberside proper whilst OC represented a finer, orange coloured variety of fabric from the same kiln’s sites, which was used for the production of tablewares including imitations of some of the more successful Cistercian ware forms. The majority of the Humberside from Epworth appear to have derived from the West Cowick potteries.

Coal Measure fabrics (CM1). A very hard, thick-walled, gritty fabric which was either purple or white in colour, often overfired, with dark green and purple glazes. Although first recognised as a slightly softer, white fabric variant in the 13th century, the later, more typical, hard fabrics developed during the 14th century and remained in use into the post-medieval period. The oxidised purple wares usually had characteristic small, matt, purple surface blisters, particularly the inner surfaces. Known production centres include Rawmarsh (Moorhouse pers comm) and Firsby Hall in Conisborough Park (Magilton 1977, 30). It is likely that the bulk of the Coal Measure fabrics from Epworth were made at the Firsby Hall potteries.

Fig. 11 S3, nos. 1, 2, 10; 01, no. 3; 03, no. 4, FD, no. 5; FH3, no. 6; RC, no. 8; WS, no. 7; H2, no. 11; ID, no. 9
3. Regional strays
A wide variety of regional strays was encountered amongst the Epworth assemblage. Where vessels could be provenanced, their codes relate to the regional classification recently devised by the writer (Hayfield 1983).

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<th>Approx. date</th>
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<td>Scarborough II orange wares</td>
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4. Imported fabrics
The various imported fabrics to occur at Epworth are listed in the table below.

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<td>Raeren</td>
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| Low countries |                                |              |                    |
| Low countries | Dutch/Low Countries             | 13th-16th C. | Janssen 1983   |
| LD   | South Netherlands majolica       | 15th-16th C. |                    |
| IM   | Unprovenanced imports            |              |                    |

Pottery from the manorial complex (trenches E and F)

1. Pre-stone buildings (Group EA, nos. 1-9)
This group of material was stratified beneath the stone buildings and may have been associated with an earlier timber phase. Vessels ranged in date from the 12th to the latter part of the 13th century. Amongst the earliest vessels was a splashed glazed jug (no. 7) in the Scarborough white fabric, whilst the Dutch skillett rim (no. 9) and the Hedon ware jug (no. 6) were unlikely to be any earlier than the late 13th century.

2. Contemporary with the construction and use of the stone buildings (EB nos. 10-11; EC, ED, F1, F4)
Despite the complexity of the building remains, the phase group totalled only 22 vessels, represented by small, sometimes abraded sherds dating to the 14th or 15th centuries.

3. Pottery associated with the abandonment of the manorial buildings (EF nos. 12-38; EG no. 39, F3 nos. 40-43)
The abandonment of both manorial and ancillary buildings would seem to have taken place during the early 16th century, resulting in the deposition of some of the most important groups from the site. Chief amongst these was the contents of the cess pit (EP) alongside the kitchen. This pit produced an impressive array of pottery, glass (Fig. 12, nos. 22-37) and a complete bronze candlestick (Fig. 12, no. 38).

Nos. 12-14 represented the only non-tablewares amongst the pottery, in a group that was principally composed of cups and mugs. There was a single Cistercian ware cup (no. 15) with applied white pipe clay decoration, although two Cowick (OC) copies were present, including an almost complete type IV cup (no. 16) with a bright orange suspension glaze covering both surfaces. Like the Cistercian wares, cup no. 16 differed from most medieval vessels in having been fired in an upright position. Three types of imported stoneware mug were included in the group. Siegburg (no. 17), Raeren (no. 19), and Siegburg that had been re-fired with the addition of a green lead glaze (no. 18). The imports also included two South Netherlands majolica vessels: a flower vase (no. 20) and a tazza (no. 21), the latter decorated with blue and orange underglaze designs.

The two other groups in this phase were of similar date to EP, EG represented the contents of a pit situated alongside EP and contained a Cowick (OC) cup base (no. 39) again copying a Cistercian ware form although in this case, fired inverted. F3 represented the deposits recovered from the garderobe tower in trench F and included a near complete Cistercian ware cup (no. 42).

5. Unstratified material (E nos. 50-4; F nos. 55-7)
All the unstratified material from this area dated from the 13th to the early 16th century. It included one of the few coarseware bowls from this part of the site, no. 50, which was probably of 13th-century date, two rather crudely relief-moulded Cowick products (nos. 51, 52) and a further Nottingham jug rim, no. 54, whose black fabric and matt apple-green suspension glaze indicated a 14th-century date. The large size of no. 55 suggests a posset-pot; its crude decoration was unusual as most Cistercian wares displayed very carefully executed designs. Imports included fragments of two stoneware mugs, an unillustrated Langerwehe vessel and a Raeren base, no. 57. There were also three vessels of Dutch or Low Countries origin: a pipkin, a jug, and a third, no. 56, whose harshly textured, unglazed inner surface suggested that it was the base of a mortar.
Epworth Pottery Report: Manorial Buildings

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Fig. 13 S3, no. 50; H2, nos. 44, 51, 52; MN, nos. 47, 54; CMI, nos. 45, 46; CIST, nos. 48, 49, 55; RH, no. 53; ID, no. 56; IR, no. 57

![Diagram of pottery](image-url)
Fig. 15 01, nos. 74, 75, 84, 98; 63, no. 99; OS2, no. 78; RO, no. 89; RC, nos. 79, 91; RM, no. 93; RW, nos. 82, 90, 97; R, nos. 80, 92; FD, nos. 76, 85-87, 100; GD, no. 83; ML, no. 73; H2, nos. 72, 81, 88, 96, 101; CM1, no. 102; RCTST, no. 94; IL, no. 95; 1R, no. 103
Pottery from the ancillary buildings (trenches B and C)

6. Pre-building phases (CA nos. 58, 59)

Sherds of three early medieval vessels came from sections cut through two ditches in a trial trench in area C. The splashed-glazed orangeware jug (no. 59) is likely to have been manufactured before c. 1150 (Hayfield 1983, 389); the two other vessels in the group, including the developed splashed glazed ‘A’ fabric sherd from Doncaster (no. 58), were probably of similar date.

7. Contemporary with the construction and use of the buildings (BA nos. 60–72; BB; BC nos. 72a, 73; BD no. 74; BE nos. 75, 76; BF nos. 77, 78; BG nos. 79, 80; BH nos. 81, 82; CB nos. 83–9; CC; CE no. 90; CF no. 91, and CH nos. 92, 93)

Group BA came from the fill of a stone quarry and represented the earliest archaeological feature to be detected from trench B; its ceramic contents probably belong to the early to mid 13th century. Some vessels, such as the Nottingham jug (no. 72), the sole splashed glazed vessel from the group, the decorated orangeware jug (no. 60) and the white York-type jug (no. 71) could be as early as the late 12th century. However, it is unlikely that the Doncaster ‘A’ fabric jugs (nos. 62–6) date any earlier than c. 1200 (Hayfield forthcoming) whilst the Humberwares (nos. 67–70) are probably no earlier than c. 1250 (Hayfield 1983, 753–4). Probably a mid-13th century deposit with additional, residual material.

BC-BH represent a series of small groups from various locations in trench B (table 2). Some of the pottery, such as no. 75, a 12th-century vessel which sealed the BA quarry pit, was residual; others such as nos. 77 and 78, could be as late as the early 14th century but in general, the material from this phase group appeared to be 13th century in date. Regional imports included Lincoln ware (no. 73) and ‘Scarborough 2’ orangeware (no. 78), whilst the vessel in the rather crudely finished white fabric with the pale yellow-green suspension glaze (no. 82) could be an early Coal Measure fabric, although this particular vessel was not only coil-built but hand-finished.

Group CB comprised a series of vessels recovered from sands overlying the subsoil of trench C and probably spanned a considerable date range. The Doncaster ‘C’ fabric (no. 83) represented the earliest of this material, probably dating to the 12th century (Hayfield forthcoming), whilst other vessels, such as the Humberwares (no. 88), probably belonged to the late 13th or early 14th century.
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Group CE came from a series of yard levels; the illustrated vessel, no. 90 was a Surrey whiteware jug, the only medieval London product to be recognised from the Humberside region. James Thorn contributes the following note on this vessel:

Eleven fragments belonging to a medium-sized jug. These are in a hard white sand-tempered ware. Inclusions are mostly white grits with occasional red ones. The form of the jug and its fabric are very similar to examples found in the Great Medieval Cellar at King’s Langley, Herts. Most of these were found on the floor of the cellar and in one area a jetton of c.1390 was found in association c.f. Neal (1973) Fig. 24-25, 52 and 61.

The white fabric is also comparable to examples commonly found in central London and in the provinces, generally in 14th century contexts. The source of manufacture is in the Surrey region, and in recent years a kiln found at Eden St., Kingston, has confirmed without doubt that this was one of the production centres, c.f. Smith (1969) 286.

Pottery from the other small groups such as CC, CF and CH all belonged to the high-medieval period.

8. Associated with the abandonment of the ancillary buildings (BI nos. 94, 95; BJ; BK nos. 96, 97; CI; CJ)

It would appear from both the archaeological and ceramic evidence that these ancillary buildings were abandoned at the same time as the manorial buildings during the early 16th century and therefore these groups should be regarded as contemporary with EF, EG, and F3.

The comparatively narrow diameter of the Langravehe weim. (no. 95) makes it unlikely to have been a conventional drinking mug form, whilst no. 94 was one of the very few Reversed Cistercian wares recovered from North Lincolnshire.

Group BK from the fill of an abandoned water cistern in trench B (Fig. 8). Amongst the unillustrated material was a sherd of South Netherland majolica with an all-over underglaze blue. No. 96 was probably a urinal from the Cowick kilns; its fabric although not of the OC type, was somewhat finer than that of most of the Humberside. Similar early 16th-century urinal forms were recovered from the Bishop’s Palace at Lincoln (Coppack 1975, 52-53).

9. Demolition and robbing (CD nos. 98-103; CG nos. 104-15 and CK nos. 116-18)

Like their counterparts (EH) from the manorial buildings, these groups probably date to the early 16th century, although they contained a far wider chronological range of fabrics, more typical of the high residual elements usually associated with demolition and robbing material. No. 105 from CG demonstrated the crudity of manufacture now found on Cowick jug forms, with its untrimmed base, untidy handle attachment and patchy and carelessly applied glaze. Jug no. 111, in the Coal Measure fabric, was somewhat better made but its thick, harsh textured, highly fired fabric highlights its practical values rather than aesthetic qualities.
10. Unstratified material (B nos. 119-27; C nos. 128, 129)

A range of imported vessels were included amongst this unstratified material including no. 125 which was the only French 'Blackware' (Barton 1974) to have been recognised from North Lincolnshire. Regional strays included jug no. 120 in the Doncaster 'A' fabric and no. 122 which was from the same Vale of York production source as no. 71.

11. Unstratified pottery from trial trenches (A nos. 130-34; D nos. 135-141; G no. 142 and H nos. 143, 144)

The trench A material, although containing some orange-warees and two Developed Stamford ware sherds, was generally late medieval; most of the illustrated vessels being of early 16th-century date. Trial trench D demonstrated a wider chronological range of ceramic material ranging from the 13th to the early 16th century and included a sherd (no. 139) in a medium sandy fabric which occurs widely across the Trent in the area to the South of Scunthorpe (Hayfield 1983, fabric M1). The numerically more limited pottery samples from trenches G and H were generally of a 13th-century character.
12. Discussion
As the buildings of the manorial complex sealed pottery which was probably of the early 14th century, it suggests that these structures were not constructed until later that century. The general range of pottery associated with the ancillary buildings began at an earlier date than those of the manorial complex, although neither range of buildings represented the earliest occupation on the site as the earliest pottery to be recovered belonged to the late 11th or early 12th century. Ceramically, occupation across the whole site terminated at some time during the early 16th century.

The quality, quantity, and range of vessel forms of the Epworth pottery assemblage were probably influenced by its geographical location, the site function and the socioeconomic status of its occupants.

The isolated position of Axholme has already been described. However, land access was provided along several routes. A ridge of higher land ran along the west bank of the Trent providing an important north-south routeway; several of the settlements along this road also served as ferry points across the Trent linking Axholme to North Lincolnshire. Access from Axholme to the west and south was provided by a road passing through Wroth to the west of Haxey. The natural drainage of the area is illustrated on Fig. 1, although it is uncertain how much was navigable throughout the Middle Ages (Barley 1936, Gaunt 1975). The frequent appointment of Commissioners of Sewers to scour and cleanse several of the rivers suggests that there were continual attempts to maintain their navigability (Dunston 1909, 10). Dunston records that the low-lying nature of the land produced considerable meandering with the constant threat of flooding during the winter season (ibid., 23). Such unstable conditions would have made navigation around Axholme both arduous and unpredictable, and emphasises the remoteness and isolation of the Isle during this period.

It seems unlikely that any medieval pottery was ever manufactured within Axholme and that instead it was bought or traded in from the surrounding region. A considerable number of markets existed both within Axholme and its surrounding locality (Fig. 1) which would have provided the opportunities to purchase domestic accouterments such as pottery (McCuschen 1939, Hayfield 1983). Four principal sources were apparent for the finewares amongst the assemblage. In the high-medieval period, pottery came from the Doncaster kilns (FD, WD, GD) to the west and the orangeroware potteries of East Yorkshire and North Lincolnshire to the east. In the late-medieval period, the principal sources were the Humbershires, notably from the West Cowick kilns, and the Coal Measure fabrics which were largely drawn from the Firsby Hall kilns. Most of the very few medieval coarserwares were in a shell-tempered fabric, obtained from either North Lincolnshire or the Doncaster area.

The vessel forms did not readily lend themselves to a functional interpretation of the buildings that they were recovered from. The description as a kitchen of the room in trench E with the reused tile floor, for example, was based largely on its extensive evidence for hearths; its ceramic debris both from within and immediately without the building would not have suggested such an interpretation. The range of cooking vessels across the site as a whole was remarkably low, but only the remains of two were recovered from the 'kitchen' area. Indeed only some 38 cooking vessels were recovered from the entire assemblage; the majority of the vessels were jugs. With one exception, cups and drinking mugs were absent from all but the demolition and robbing phase of the 'ancillary' buildings, although they were more numerous amongst the 'Manorial' buildings.

The pottery reflected the apparently high socioeconomic status of the site in several ways. It could be suggested that the more wealthy the occupant, the less pottery might have been required for his household; metal vessels might take the place of ceramic ones with cooking being done in cauldrons and pippkins of bronze or iron, drinks being served from metal ewers into glass, pewter, or even silver goblets. Such finery would surely have fallen within the means of a household whose manor was once considered the most important in the Mowbray honour (Greenway 1972, xlvii). In particular the tiny proportion of ceramic cooking vessels compared with most medieval assemblages was most striking (Hayfield 1983, 804). Generally the occupation layers of the site produced very little pottery, the largest groups from the assemblage deriving from the desertion and demolition phases. It is likely that such a manorial site would have been kept clean in comparison with the lowlier peasant tofts, with most of the refuse being disposed of on the village middens for carting onto the field as manure. The excavation produced no deliberately cut rubbish pits, major groups such as BA from the quarry pit representing the deliberate fill of a feature cut for a specific and very different purpose.

It was only amongst the larger demolition and desertion groups that the quality of the pottery in use on the site became fully apparent. These groups contained a wide range of imports from the Rhineland and the Low Countries including fragments of three vessels in South Netherlands majolica; such pottery, generally restricted to high-class sites, was probably acquired largely for its decorative merits and used within the living quarters of the manor.

The Mowbrays, like most wealthy landowners, travelled extensively from one manor to another within their honour (Greenway 1972, xlv and xlvii). Such travelling households probably carried with them a range of domestic chattels, often acquired en route, which may have included pottery (J. Le Patourel pers comm). It may be no coincidence that this Epworth assemblage contained a higher proportion of strays and imports than any other pottery group examined
Fig. 18 Bronze candlestick from Epworth.
from North Lincolnshire. The assemblage included vessels made in London, Nottingham, York, Lincoln, and Doncaster. It is uncertain whether such a diversity of pottery represented trade links or the prestige of the manor occupants, or whether it was acquired through the travelling household or from purchase from the merchants attending the local fairs and markets. Epworth itself was granted a weekly market in 1383 (Cal. Charter Rolls, Vol. 5, 281).

FLOOR TILE
by Glyn Coppack

Excavation of the kitchen in trench E revealed a floor of plain and printed tiles in a bed of mortar within a border of brick (Figs. 4 and 5). The floor had previously been exposed in 1965 by the vicar of Epworth who had removed a number of tiles which remain in the parish church. A total of 354 tiles remained in situ, largely broken up by frost damage and ploughing.

An examination of the remaining floor, which had been destroyed along its eastern edge, revealed that it has been relaid. The overall pattern of groups of nine tiles bearing the figure of a lion rampant enclosed by a shield set within the borders of plain tiles, with further patterned tiles at the intersection of the borders, was only maintained in the northwestern quadrant of the floor (Fig. 5). What had started out as a well-conceived pattern in the northern part of the floor finally degenerated into a meaningless jumble of 'lion' and plain tiles haphazardly aligned. Misplacement was not the result of plough damage, for the tiles were still firmly bedded in the mortar below them.

Five distinct tile types were recovered from the floor: (a) tiles showing the Mowbray crest of a lion rampant reversed; (b) tiles showing a rosette within a circle within a square, with quarter rosettes in quadrants in the corners; (c) a tile with a bell and sword within a square; (d) a tile with lions' heads and fleur-de-lis alternate and interlacing; and (e) plain border tiles with a dark green glaze. Types (a) to (d) are tiles from the Nottingham kilns, first defined by Alfred Parker in 1932, and appear to date from the first half of the 14th century (Parker 1922, 86-99; (a) type 17; (b) type 82a; (c) type 40; and (d) type 62). A further tile, found in a pit to the east of the kitchen, was also a Nottingham product (ibid., type 77) with two birds adored, and may have been derived from the same floor and been used as a spacer tile within the border in the same way as types (b) to (d). The tiles used in the borders clearly come from a separate source, not being made of Keuper Marl with its fine seams of degraded skerry that characterises the Nottingham tiles. The most likely source of these tiles is the kilns at West Cowick which have produced evidence for tile manufacture in the late medieval period (Hayfield in preparation).

The floor was originally of some quality and must be derived from elsewhere on the site. Perhaps its removal from a principal apartment, to reuse in the kitchens, can be related to the manor passing from the Mowbray's whose crest it displayed, to the Berkeley family in the late 15th century (see above).

GLASS

EF Cess Pit group (Fig. 12, nos. 22-37)

The greater part of glass available for study came from the EF cess pit group amongst the manorial buildings. The pottery from this pit (Fig. 12) dated to the early 16th-century with little evidence for residual contamination; the glass described below was probably contemporary.

22 Decorated glass fragment. Very thin clear glass with a little surface opalescence. Applied ribs to upper body. The lower body had patterns of oval and square etched depressions of which the oval ones (in black on the drawing) showed traces of yellow/green enamel.

23 Rim of a beaker with a wrythen neck in a clear glass.

24-26 Bases of flasks or round-bottomed bottles. Each was in a colourless glass with a faint greenish tinge, although they had largely decayed to a sugary crystallised appearance with discoloured surfaces. All three bases showed clear traces of a pontil scar. There was a fourth unillustrated example.

27-28 Rims of bottles of which No. 27 had a wrythen neck. Each vessel showed a colourless core and darker, discoloured surfaces.

29 Rim of a flask, similar vessel to Nos. 24-26. Virtually clear glass with darker, discoloured surfaces.

30-33 Four of six bottle bases recovered, each had an indented pontil scar. Clear glass with a pale sea-green hue.

34 Window quarry. Clear glass discoloured where the glass had started to decay and crystallise. The edges were grazed. The basic floral pattern was executed in a red enamel on the oververse face; the leaves were partly infilled with a golden yellow paint (hatched on the drawing). The design seems to have been retouched with red paint at a later stage, with the addition of the three solid red petals to the stalk.

35-37 Three fragments of window quarry, each in an almost colourless glass with red painted decoration. In each case the surfaces were now largely devitrified and the glass of No. 37 was almost fully decayed. No. 35 was grazed. There were four more plain fragments of window quarry that were unillustrated.

There were 10 further glass fragments which were unidentified.

Trench C, group CG (Plate 10, no. 11)

Two fragments of a colourless glass rim of a beaker or vase with slight surface opalescence. This group was part of the robbing and demolition material, and a later medieval date similar to the EF deposit above can be suggested for this vessel.

Trench B, group BK (unillustrated)

Three fragments of plain window glass, largely devitrified.

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