Two Eighteenth Century Pit-Groups
from Lincoln

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There is a great need to establish a pottery-series for the late-Medieval and post-Medieval periods in Lincoln, periods which have received little or no attention to date. The reason for this is that no stratified groups of pottery later than the late 15th century have been recovered until recently.1 For the purpose of constructing a pottery-series, it is necessary to have groups which contain a variety of forms and fabrics, as well as some material which can be dated externally. Two groups of early 18th century material, recently discovered in Lincoln, are discussed here.

The first group was found in 1965, at the Bishops' Palace, a national monument in the guardianship of the Department of the Environment. Since the Palace passed into guardianship in 1954, considerable consolidation work has been carried out on the standing ruins. This has involved the removal of post-Medieval deposits over most of the site, and the excavation of inspection-pits to determine the condition of foundations in various parts of the building. One such trench was excavated to locate the footings of the northern boundary-wall of the Chapel Court,2 a modern wall for part of its length on Medieval foundations. This excavation cut into a pit which produced pottery, glass, and clay-pipe fragments. The finds from this pit were kept separate from the rest of the material from this trench, and were examined when all the architectural detail and archaeological material from the site were catalogued in February 1972.3

The site of Messrs. Battles Ltd., Chemists, lies directly to the north of the 15th century Guildhall and south gate of the medieval city, itself scheduled as an Ancient Monument. When this site was redeveloped in December 1970 a large circular pit, apparently associated with the Guildhall, was revealed. The pit was excavated by Mr. C. N. Moore, Mrs. C. M. Wilson and the writer, for the City and County Museum, Lincoln. The pit was approximately 10 feet in diameter and 2 feet deep. It was cut into the surface of a small yard, which ran up to the rear wall of the Guildhall. The pit contained a quantity of pottery, as well as glass and organic material.4 The upper part of the pit had been largely cut away for the insertion of a reinforced-concrete floor, although enough of the top remained to establish the point from which it was cut.

I should like to thank Miss D. Griffiths and Mr. S. Moorhouse for their helpful comments on the pottery from both pits, Mr. C. Reynolds, chargehand at the Bishops' Palace, for his assistance, and Mr. C. N. Moore, Keeper of the City and County Museum, Lincoln, for the loan of the material from the Guildhall pit for publication.
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THE BISHOPS' PALACE PIT:

This pit contained fragments of three wine-bottles, two glass phials, one clay-pipe, and at least sixteen pottery vessels, of which fourteen are published below (Fig. 1). The filling of the pit was remarkably homogeneous. With the exception of a fragment from the rim of a late-Roman glass bowl, none of the material need be residual, and must represent a single deposit. Mixed with this material were fragments of lead window-came and heavily corroded iron fragments, presumably derived from the partial demolition of the Palace after its destruction by fire during the Civil War. Demolition continued until the early years of the 19th. Century.5

1. Glass bottle-seal, from the shoulder of a wine-bottle, in a good quality, light green metal, with a few air-bubbles. The seal bears the name Nelthorpe, over a fleur-de-lys, which appears on the City arms.6
2. Base of a phial in good quality, pale green glass.
3. As 2, but with a deeper, more pronounced pontil-mark.
4. Clay-pipe bowl of local, early 18th. century type, with a broad, flat heel. A worn roulette has been run around the top of the bowl, giving a blurred impression. The batch-mark on the heel was made with a finer roulette.7
5. Bowl in a hard, semi-vitrified, fine, brown/purple fabric, with a thick, lustrous black, iron stained lead glaze, a typical Midhope product of the first half of the 18th. century.
6. Base of a chamber-pot in an orange/white ware with a brown, iron-stained glaze. The scar of the handle still remains. This vessel has affinities with wares from the area of the Yorkshire coal-fields, and may possibly be a Halifax product.
7. Sherd from the shoulder of a jar in a hard, sandy, pale grey/off white fabric with a rich copper-green glaze on both surfaces. Although this type of ware is usually associated with the 17th. century, centres in south-west Yorkshire were producing identical wares well into the 18th. century.
8. Small vessel in fine, white, salt-glazed Staffordshire stoneware. The vessel is straight sided and has a carefully moulded base. This vessel is unlikely to be a cup, because of its shape, but may be a small bowl supplied as part of a tea-service.8 Second quarter, 18th. century.
9. Upper handle-attachment of a small jug in Nottingham stoneware. Salt-glazed. Such vessels are thought to be early in the Nottingham series.9
10. Cup in an off-white, lightly sanded fabric. A brown slip has been applied directly to the body, and is turned covered by a white slip, which has been feathered. Staffordshire, early 18th. century.
11. As 10, but with parts of the handle.
12. Three sherds of a moulded, slip-ware dish, circular, with a shell-impressed edge. The fabric is a hard, smooth, pale pink/off-white, and a dark brown, iron-rich slip has been thickly applied over the raised portions of the design. The form of this dish is developed from the Toft tradition, but is moulded, not thrown. Staffordshire, c. 1710 - 1730.
13. Chamber-pot rim in a tin-glazed, creamy-buff earthenware. The tin-glaze is thick and has a blue cast, which would suggest either a London or Bristol product.
14. Tripod cooking-pot, originally with two strap-handles, in a softish, orange fabric. The rim of the vessel is considerably harder, and has been fired almost to the point of vitrification. This is a local ware, developing in the early post-Medieval period from Dutch prototypes, but continuing at least until the close of the 18th. century. There is a plain lead glaze on the inside of the vessel, stained in places by iron in the body-clay of the pot, and a lightly copper-stained glaze on the outside.
15. The upper part of a vessel of similar type to 14, in the same ware and glaze.
16. Straight-sided vessel, in a hard, sandy, orange fabric, with a clear lead glaze, which has in
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places reduced to green. The ware is sufficiently close to be a variant of 14.

17. Lower part of a chamber-pot, ware as 14.

The date of this group is controlled by several factors, not least by the bottle seal. The latest piece must be 8, in Staffordshire salt-glazed stoneware, which on a conservative estimate, would not be dated much earlier than 1740. However, such wares were produced in the period 1730 - 1740, and when the rest of the group is taken into consideration, a date early in the second quarter of the 18th. century is most likely.

THE GUILDHALL PIT:

In the filling of this pit were fragments of at least 49 pottery vessels and the base of a jelly or custard glass. There was also a quantity of animal bone and other organic matter, which was not recovered. The general nature of the filling suggested a kitchen refuse-pit. Notably, there were no clay pipes found. Although other rubbish-deposits of late Medieval and early post Medieval date evidently existed on the site, there was no material in the pit under discussion which need be residual. Neither was there any material later in date than the erection of Messrs. Battles' chemist shop in the mid 18th. Century.

The following vessels represent all types of pottery recovered from the pit. There was some duplication (Figs. 2 and 3)

1. Base of a glass vessel. The plain foot, kick in the base over the pontil-scar, and the good quality clear, white metal would not be in conflict with an early 18th. Century date. Not enough remains of the vessel to be certain of its form, but it could be a jelly or custard glass.11
3. Cup in a fine, white, salt-glazed Staffordshire stoneware, as 2, not unlike wasters from Greenhead Street, Burslem. Second quarter, 18th. Century.
4. Base of a cup or porringer, with traces of a handle, in the same fabric as 3, and presumably from the same factory. Traces of grit on the foot-ring, which are a feature of Staffordshire salt-glazed stonewares.
5. Tankard in salt-glazed Nottingham stoneware. The fabric is the typical orange/brown colour, but is not as hard as is usually the case in this ware. The handle was not recovered.
6. Out-turned tankard rim, as 5, but harder.
7. Rim of a globular cup in salt-glazed Nottingham stoneware, as 5, but rather pale in colour. This form is usually thought to belong to the first quarter, 18th. Century.
8. Porringer or posset-pot in a hard, smooth, cream/white ware, with a thick, iron-stained lead glaze. The glaze has tended to pool around the finely turned foot, a feature typical of the Halifax wares rather than those of Staffordshire.12 Early 18th. Century.
9. Rim of a large jar, fabric and glaze close in comparison to 8, but in this case most likely to be Staffordshire. Early 18th. Century.
10. Chamber pot in fine, tin-glazed, smooth, cream earthenware. There is a faint blue cast to the tin-glaze, which is thick and evenly applied. The handle was not recovered, and the inside of the vessel and some breaks are covered in pitch. The blue cast to the glaze usually indicates London manufacture.
11. Chamber pot in tin-glazed, soft, yellow/cream earthenware. The tin-glaze is a clean white. The glaze is abraded on the inside of the vessel.
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14. Bleeding-bowl in a tin-glazed cream coloured, hard earthenware. The glaze is thick and has a pale blue cast, tinged with pink where it is thin. Bleeding-bowls are common in London, though somewhat rarer elsewhere, and this may be a London piece. The flat handle was originally pierced with three heart-shaped apertures. Early 18th Century. There were 2 vessels of this profile in the group.

15. Bleeding-bowl, as 14, with a deeper profile and more pronounced rim.

16. Small, shallow plate in tin-glazed earthenware, as 14, but with a deeper blue cast to the glaze. *London. This form was common in the earlier 18th Century.

17. Deep plate in tin-glazed earthenware, as 14.


19. Deep plate in tin-glazed earthenware, as 18, with a floral wreath in dark cobalt-blue, some of which has fired through the glaze. Lambeth, c. 1720. 18 - 20 all have a pink tone to the glaze, which may denote firing by coal.

20. Deep plate, as 18, but here the cobalt-blue decoration has been applied too thickly. 18 - 20 all have a pink tone to the glaze, which may denote firing by coal.


22. Finely executed saucer in Bristol tin-glazed earthenware. The fabric is hard, pale cream coloured, and smooth in texture, whilst the tin-glaze has a pronounced bluish cast, perhaps derived from the painted decoration. Early 18th Century.

23. Fragment from the rim of a plate in tin-glazed, softish, smooth, cream/buff earthenware, with painted decoration in a deep, rich cobalt-blue. Rim diameter: 9 inches.

24. Tea-cup in a tin-glazed hard, brittle, yellow/orange earthenware, with a floral design in dark cobalt-blue. An interesting feature of this piece is the dry foot-ring. Lambeth, early 18th Century.

25. Deep plate in a tin-glazed hard, yellow/cream earthenware. The plate is decorated with scrolls and a floral wreath in a medium cobalt-blue. Lambeth, first half, 18th Century.

26. Deep plate in tin-glazed earthenware, as 25. The tin-glaze is thickly applied and has a complicated floral pattern in cobalt-blue (black on drawing), brown/red (hatched), and green (stippled). The footring is pierced for hanging, but the hole had filled with glaze. Lambeth or Bristol, c. 1720 - 30.

27. Bowl in a hard, smooth orange/buff fabric with a clear yellow lead glaze on the inside, and splashes on the outside. Fired inverted. The fabric is not known otherwise in Lincoln, and this may be a South Yorkshire product.

28. Shallow bowl in a hard, brittle brick red/orange fabric, with some large grits included in the tempering. The surface has a tendency to flake away. The inside of the vessel has a black/purple iron-stained lead glaze. Presumably a local ware.

29. Large jar, fabric as 28, but overfired to a semi-vitrified purple ware.

30. Panccheon, the fabric and glaze are as 28.


32. Panccheon, as 28.

33. (See Plate 1). Rectangular Staffordshire moulded, feathered, slip-ware dish in a pale, cream/buff fabric tempered with small brown and black grits. A brown slip has been applied over the inner surface of the vessel, which in turn has been covered with a white slip, which has been feathered. This process was completed before moulding. The rim has been given a pie-crust edge by impressing the finely cut rim with a small shell. The inner surface of the dish bears a moulded number (Plate 2), presumably the mould number. Another feature of this dish is that it was fired standing on edge, a feature usual in 'Toft' type plates, and this would suggest an early date for this piece, as
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later vessels were stacked horizontally. A date early in the 18th Century would be acceptable for this dish.

As with the material from the Bishops’ Palace pit, a date within the second quarter of the 18th Century would seem most likely. Indeed, both pits contained Staffordshire salt-glazed stoneware, which is unlikely to be any earlier than c. 1730, a date which would also fit with the delftware in this group. Further overlap between these two groups is attested by the appearance in both groups of Staffordshire slip-ware\(^3\) and Nottingham stoneware. It would be tempting to think that these two groups were contemporary, or at least almost so.

When both groups are taken together, they must give a fair cross-section of the wares in general use in Lincoln in the decade 1730 - 40. Locally, it is interesting to see the general utility wares, which were hitherto undated, in a context with dateable material, and to see what wares were being brought to Lincoln from further afield. Not only were Staffordshire and Nottingham products common in Lincoln at this period, but tin-glazed earthenwares from London, and possibly Bristol, were also there in substantial numbers, and it would seem that a few vessels from the Halifax kilns were also being used. On a wider level, there are Nottingham salt-glazed stonewares in a dated context, including types which have never been closely dated before. The moulded Staffordshire slip-ware plate is of great importance, such vessels generally being dated a little later than this piece. The technique of production is particularly clear on this piece, too, even down to the mould-number.

It is to be hoped that other groups of post-Medieval pottery from Lincoln can be recovered and studied, so that it will eventually be possible to construct a series of post-Medieval pottery types for Lincoln.
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Footnotes:

1 16th. and 17th. century pottery has been found in association with the robbing of the Roman defences at the Park, whilst Mr. J. B. Whittell recovered 17th. century material from the town ditch at this point. A further group of 16th. century pottery was found in the filling of the north tower of the Roman east gate.

2 For the location of Chapel Court, and a plan of the Bishops' Palace, see Arch. J., 1848, Lincoln Volume, facing p. 18.

3 A full catalogue of this material is held by the Ancient Monuments Inspectorate, Department of the Environment. All material is stored on site.

4 Now in Lincoln Museum, accession number LM129.70.

5 The Bishops' Palace was used as a stone quarry for repairs to the cathedral and other buildings maintained by the Dean and Chapter.

6 Bishop Reynolds leased the Palace ruins to Dr. Edward Nelthorpe of the Close, Lincoln, from 1727 for a period of twenty-one years, during which time Nelthorpe was to build a new residence, or improve that built in the ruins of Bishop Alnwick's tower and chapel by Col. James Berry at the end of the Civil War. A faculty for the demolition of the ruins of the Old Palace had been granted from 1726 - 79, at which time the chapel must have been demolished. Nelthorpe died in 1736, so the group is unlikely to be any later than that.

7 Many of the late 17th. - early 18th. century clay-pipes in the collection of the City and County Museum, Lincoln, have roulettet batch-marks. After the mid 18th. century, it is more common to find knife-cut batch-marks. Makers' marks are almost unknown in Lincoln at this period.

8 This ware is almost identical to wasters from the Greenhead Street site, Burslem.

9 Stonewares were first produced in Nottingham shortly before 1693, in which year, John Dwight of Fulham, who held a patent for the production of stonewares, sued John Morley of Nottingham for infringement.

10 And related to the so-called Tattershall-type wares, found in great quantities at Tattershall Castle, and now being recognised over a wide area of south Lincolnshire. The wares under discussion here are a development of that tradition.

11 I am indebted to Mrs. Lee Coppack for the identification of this piece.

12 This vessel is very similar to the chamber-pot found in the centre of the Orpheus mosaic at the Winterton Roman villa, Lincs. See P. C. D. Brears, Post-Med Arch., 1970, p. 166.

13 Identified by Miss D. M. Griffiths.
Fig. 1 Early 18th c. Pit-group from the Bishop's Palace, Lincoln 1-3 glass (9) 4 clay pipe (5) 5-18 Pottery (5)
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Fig. 2 Early 18th c. pit, Guildhall, Lincoln: 1 Glass (15) 2-23 Pottery (15)
Fig. 3 Early 18th c. pit-group, Guildhall, Lincoln (5)
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