

11. Pottery from High Street, Prescot 1986 (Site 27)

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Chance observation of a trench dug by North West Water in High Street, Prescot at the junction with Moss Street in July 1986 revealed a number of sherds of 18th century mottled ware together with many fragments of saggars and a few sherds of other wares (Fig. 1.3). These comprised two body sherds of brown salt-glazed stoneware, a body sherd of self-coloured ware, all probably of 18th century date, and two later, and probably intrusive, cream earthenware sherds. The matrix within which the pottery occurred was dark brownish-grey with a high ash and clinker content, and was almost certainly derived from one of the numerous 18th century pottery factory waste dumps which were consistently exploited for hardcore, in this case for the road foundation, in the town at a later date (Philpott and Davey 1984, 19).

The mottled ware sherds totalled fifty-one, of which all but three were recognisably from tankards, a common 18th century form in this ware. Two sherds are from cups, and another is an undiagnostic handle. Three sherds had turned decoration at the base, which appears to have been common in the early 18th century, as at South Castle Street, Liverpool in deposits sealed in c. 1726 (Philpott 1980a, 51). Others however have plainer bases and may belong nearer the middle of the century. A range of glaze colours and degree of mottling is present, and this variety in the material may indicate that it is derived from a waste dump which was in use over a period of time and was mixed on re-use as hardcore.

Eleven fragments of saggar and one piece of possible kiln floor were also recovered. One complete profile of saggar shows the height to have been about 14.5cm, with a slightly projecting rim, and the base a little wider than the mouth. Another has a diameter of about 35cm. Two saggars have red clay separators adhering to pooled black glaze inside the base, indicating that they had been used to fire black-glazed vessels. Three of the eleven fragments had evidence of holes cut in the side to allow circulation of hot gases around the vessels inside the saggar during firing.

Although unstratified, the finds form a fairly homogeneous group, with the exception of the two later cream earthenware sherds, and are further evidence for the prolific 18th century pottery industry in Prescot.

The finds are in the Liverpool Museum, William Brown Street, Liverpool.

Mottled Ware.

Total number of sherds - 51.

Estimated vessel equivalent (EVE) - 14.

Minimum vessel analysis (MVA) - 2.