Pottery and Ceramic Building Material from site 1997.60/61. Water Pipeline, Kexby, York: Assessment Report

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Introduction

All fragments of pottery, brick, tile and daub recovered from the fieldwalking (1997.60) and excavation (1997.61) were submitted for examination. There is a small collection of later prehistoric pottery (ie late Bronze Age to early Roman), some Romano-British pottery and tile, some medieval pottery (and possibly tile) and a quantity of post-medieval and early modern pottery and building material. The prehistoric pottery is potentially of some interest given current uncertainty about its mode of manufacture and source. The later material is in itself of little interest but will eventually help to establish the economic hinterland of York and the relationship of the city to the surrounding countryside.

Aims and Objectives

The aims of the assessment were

- to identify and record all the material
- to provide a date-range for the finds
- to use these to infer previous land use
- to recommend and justify any further necessary work on the finds
- to identify any aspects of the site's archaeology recognisable from the ceramic finds which require further study or preservation

Description

All items were recorded to common name and form level and any significant details of manufacture, decoration or use were recorded as comments. Quantification was by sherd/fragment count alone and the data was entered into a MS Access 2 database.

period	F2	F12	F14	F17	F19	F24	F34	F38	F43	F44	F45	F46	F47	F56
late prehist						2						59		
late prehist/roman												10		
Roman	1					1	1	2				19		
Med	2				2			11				2	1	
Pmed	1			1	2	1		3	4		2	1	1	4
Emod	3	1	3	2	2	10		5	24	2	2	5	4	13

Prehistoric

Sixty-one sherds of later prehistoric pottery were recorded. All but two (which were found in fieldwalking in Field 24) were from Field 46. All the vessels were tempered with moderate fragments of angular rock and were thick-walled and hand-built. The vessels were of several classes: storage jars, jars, bowls and dishes (Fig 1 No 4). The storage jars were represented by thick body sherds from vessels with diameters in excess of 300mm. No rims or bases of this class were present. The smaller jars varied in rim form (Fig 1 Nos 2, 3 & 5) but all had flat bases (Fig. 1 No 6). The bowl may actually be a globular jar, since its original orientation is uncertain (Fig 1 No.1). Study of Iron Age pottery from Easingwold has shown that similar wares were present there, alongside finer, sand-tempered types. A variety of materials were used to temper the coarser fabrics including quartzite, dolerite, granite, sandstone and slag. Similar temper has been identified by Ian Freestone and Peter Wardle on later prehistoric sites on the Yorkshire Wolds and the Vale of Pickering. Their work suggests that the raw materials used to temper these vessels do not occur locally in the sort of quantities found in the pottery but can be found as isolated boulders and pebbles in local boulder clays and glacial sands. They suggest that for unknown reasons prehistoric potters selected rock fragments by hand and reduced them to a suitable size by crushing. As evidence in favour of this hypothesis they give the fact that individual vessels often contain mainly fragments of the same rock type, but that there is a wide variety of rock types present *in toto*. Study of samples of the natural gravel found on the Easingwold site by the author failed to find any erratic fragments and it seems clear that the vessels could not have been made at

Easingwold itself. Similarly, the Kexby site lies on fine sand, totally unlike the temper found in the later prehistoric pottery. It is likely, therefore, that manufacture of this later prehistoric "erratic-tempered" ware took place on supra-site basis and that there was trade, or exchange, of complete vessels.

It is not thought that this tradition survived into the Romano-British period and there is apparently a great deal of conservatism in the potting tradition, so that it is not possible to date vessels closely.

A second fabric, tempered with large fragments of calcite (now leached) also occurs on other later prehistoric sites in Yorkshire. Petrological analysis has shown that the calcite is derived from veins formed within the chalk and typically occurs with other minerals of Cretaceous origin (flint, chalk, glauconite). Several fabric groups are known but it is not known whether they vary in date, source or simply in a random manner. The sherds all all from flat-bottomed jars (Fig 1 Nos 7 and 8). To further the study of these wares it is recommended that a sample is submitted for fabric analysis using thin-sectioning and Inductively-Coupled Plasma Spectroscopy.

Much of this pottery was stratified in the fills of linear features revealed in the salvage excavation and area strip. Ten features produced sherds of either the erratic-tempered fabric (PERR) or the calcite-tempered one (PCALC) and thus might be of pre-Roman date.

Context	Feature	PCALC	PERR
1006	1016		2
1075	1076		3
1074	1077		3
1082	1083	1	
1089	1083		2
1097	1098		1
1092	1101	3	7
1100	1101	2	
1096	1102		2
1099	1102		1
1113	1118		1
1123	1130		4
1114	1141		2

Further knowledge of the manufacture and source of this pottery will only come from more scientific analysis which can be used to confirm the range of temper types used in the Kexby vessels and perhaps establish whether or not the Easingwold, Wolds and Vale of Pickering vessels could have been made utilising the same resources or whether there are differences between the fabrics from site to site. It is recommended that a sample of the Kexby pottery, including all those sherds with typological features, is submitted for fabric analysis using thin-sectioning and Inductively-Coupled Plasma Spectroscopy.

Roman

Two fragments of Romano-British tile were identified by S Garside-Neville (Field 23 fieldwalking and F46 context 1146). A small collection of pottery was present in fieldwalking Fields 24, 34 and 38 and from the excavated area in Field 46. Examination of this pottery by B Precious suggests that is of 2nd to 3rd century date. It includes a sherd of Samian ware and a colour-coated beaker and this, together with the tile, suggests a Romanised settlement.

Code	Full Name	Sherds
CC	Colour-coated	1
CR	Cream-bodied	1
GREY	Greyware	7
OX	Oxidized	15
SAMCG	Central Gaulish samian	1

Medieval

A small collection of medieval pottery was found, probably all of 13th to 14th-century date. The finds were mainly from fieldwalking in Fields 19 (2), 38 (7) and 48 (1). A single fragment was found in the excavation (context 1140). The wares present are all common on medieval sites in York and the surrounding countryside (York whitewares, produced at Brandsby and elsewhere; Beverley Orange ware and Humber-type wares, produced at sites in the Humber estuary and Red Sandy ware, of unknown origin, but found in York). The sites probably looked to York for the supply of pottery.

Code	Sherds
BEVO	1
HUMB TYPE	3
RED SANDY	1
YORK GRITTY	2
YORK WHITE	11

Post-medieval

A quantity of post-medieval pottery was recovered, almost all of 19th-century or 20th-century date. The wares were probably brought onto the fields with manure. The date-range of the wares present is probably mid 19th-century and later (there are very few sherds of Pearlware or Creamware or other distinctive late 18th/early 19th-century types, furthermore, the quantity of red earthenware 'country pottery' is very low, normally a sign of a late date). The earliest datable piece, however, is a mid-18th-century Saltglazed Stoneware plate with embossed border. Three sherds of this vessel were found, all in different fields (Fields 2, 45 and 56). In all likelihood, this was an heirloom when broken and discarded.

Cname	full name	Sherds
CONP	Continental Porcelain	3
CREA	Creamware	3
DERBS	Derby Stoneware	3
ENGS	Unspecified English Stoneware	7
NCBW	19th-century Buff ware	1
PEAR	Pearl ware	3
TPW	Transfer printed ware	28
WHITE	Modern whiteware	28
BL	Black-glazed wares	8
CHPO	Chinese Export Porcelain	3
NOTS	Nottingham stoneware	2
PMED	Post-medieval Red Earthenwares	2
SWSG	Staffordshire White Saltglazed stoneware	4

Recommendations

A sample of the prehistoric pottery should be examined in thin-section and using ICPS and compared with material from other later prehistoric sites in Yorkshire (see **Costings**). The remaining material, including the early modern pottery and tile should be retained in an archaeological repository since it forms a useful sample of local ceramics collected in a controlled manner.

Acknowledgments

The illustrations and computer input are the work of Alison Oliver. Building material was identified by Sandra Garside-Neville and Roman pottery was identified by Barbara Precious.

Costings

Technique	Unit Cost	Amount
12 thin-sections	£25 per section	£300
12 ICPS samples	£15 per sample	£180
Total		£480

Fig 1. Later Prehistoric and ?early Roman Pottery from Kexby, Yorkshire (1997.60/61). 1, YORYM 97.61, F46, 1006, PERR, BOWL OR JAR; 2, YORYM 97.61, F46, 1123, PERR, JAR; 3, YORYM 97.61, F46, 1074, PERR, JAR; 4, YORYM 97.61, F46, 1093, PERR, DISH OR JAR; 5, YORYM 97.61, F46, 1007, PERR; 6, YORYM 97.61, F46, 1092, PERR, JAR; 7, YORYM 97.61, F46, 1082, PCALC, JAR; 8, YORYM 97.61, F46, 1092, PCALC, JAR.