

Initial assessment of the possible Anglian material from Heslington East:

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A rapid assessment was carried out on an assemblage of possible Anglian pottery (approx 450 sherds 7.6 kg) from Heslington East.

Anglian material was identified by characteristic forms, typical styles and execution of incised decoration and, in two cases, distinctive stamp decoration. Its identification as Anglo-Saxon in date is supported by the presence on the site of Anglo-Saxon metal and bone artefacts. Cruciform brooches, of 5th/6th century date were recovered from contexts 676 and 2125 wrists clasps in context 1018 and 1758, and a comb from context 1173 (pers. comm. N Rogers). Comparable Anglian pottery was recovered from nearby at Heslington Hill believed to be associated with 6th – early 7th century Anglian occupation (Mainman et al 2008).

Due to timing and geographical distance it has not been possible for the pre-historic, Roman, and post-Roman specialists to see and discuss the complete assemblage from Heslington East. This report is based on material which was extracted by the Roman specialist as being handmade, and therefore non-Roman, and was selected during an initial viewing on the basis of what *might be* Anglo-Saxon in date.

The challenge, however, lies in the fact that the site had previously been occupied by Bronze Age, Iron Age, Roman and Roman-British peoples, all who used ceramics, at least some of which were made from the same raw materials, using similar technologies and finishing techniques. There is, therefore, the very real prospect of confusion between pottery groups when only body sherds without form or detail are present, especially as this specialist is

unfamiliar with Iron Age pottery in the region, and an understanding of the range of Anglian pottery fabrics in the area is still in its infancy.

A rapid assessment shows that there are distinctly different fabrics present among the material selected, but it is not clear whether these are all distinct Anglian fabrics, or whether some belong to another, earlier episode of activity on site. Having had the benefit of a quick look at Peter Didsbury's report on the prehistoric material, and his conviction that much is of Iron Age date, it is essential that these assemblages be looked at together.

Fabrics

Amongst the assemblage are sherds with calcitic inclusions (often leached out), organic tempering, patinated flint and quartz sand. Some are very coarsely gritted, others are fine, leading to an almost soapy feel and appearance. The fabric of sherds with typically Anglian decoration is a dense gritty brownish fabric and well-burnished surfaces, and many of the examples given as ?Anglian below include this fabric. The concern is that Iron Age potters were producing wares which, when surviving only as sherds, appear the same. Both cultures used comparable techniques to finish the surface of their vessels, and examples were noted which include wiping, burnishing (exterior and interior) and deliberate roughening. Firing in bonfire-type kilns has resulted in patchy oxidised/reduced surfaces. In some cases the surfaces have been lost due to centuries of ploughing, exacerbated by burial in acidic soils which has caused the calcitic inclusions to leach away, and so this information is lost. These fabrics need to be compared with not only the Iron Age material and handmade Romano-British (to be eliminated or confirmed as Anglian), but also with the Anglian pottery from Heslington Hill (ibid) and from other sites in York, notably from the cemeteries at Heworth

and the Mount, material now housed in the Yorkshire Museum, and that from early levels at 46-54 Fishergate (Mainman 1993).

Forms

Amongst the assemblage are characteristic Anglian forms; wide-mouthed, globular jars being the most common but also straight sided vessels and large forms. Rims are flat topped, irregular, clubbed, everted and occasionally flanged. No vessels were complete but in one or two cases profiles would be reconstructable. Some vessels are thin-walled (3-5mm) while others have walls of up to 14mm. thick. The assemblage is domestic in character with forms and sizes presumably relating to differing functions.

Decoration

Very little of the pottery is decorated (c.1%) and this includes typical Anglian incised line decoration arranged in vertical, horizontal and chevron patterns on the upper body below horizontal neck grooves. Two sherds are stamped, one with a simple stamp (800) and the other a more complex example (1005). These need to be compared with stamps in the Anglo-Saxon stamp catalogue, but appear to be unlike the ones recovered from Heslington Hill (ibid, 8). Comparisons also need to be made with stamp-decorated cremation urns from Heworth and the Mount (Stead 1968) cemeteries.

Dating

The presence of decorated sherds supports the 5th/6th century date proposed by the metalwork and bone comb, and although there is nothing to support a date beyond the end of the 6th century, the characteristics of 7th century pottery in York has yet to be established. On first assessment there are no middle Anglian forms and almost nothing which belongs to the Anglo-Scandinavian period.

Recommendations

The first recommendation is that the pottery and the specialists should be brought together to clarify any possible confusion of types, especially between the prehistoric and the Anglian, but also with some of the handmade Romano-British wares. This will allow refinement of any patterning of the wares and an assessment of its significance. Following that, the recommendations for the Anglian assemblage include:

1. establishment of the forms present and representative drawings (approx 40-50)
2. characterisation of fabric groups, and further analysis (including thin-section and IPCS) to compare with the growing body of evidence from Heslington and elsewhere in York.
3. identification of the stamp types
4. a full report and publication

This is a significant assemblage both in terms of its size but also its geographical position on the glacial moraine, and it makes an important contribution to understanding the centuries between the Roman and the Anglo-Scandinavian period in York. Elsewhere it has been

suggested that the abandonment of settlement on the moraine coincides with the establishment of occupation along the River Ouse at Fishergate (Spall and Toop 2008), an important step along the way to the re-emergence of York as an urban centre.

References:

Mainman A.J., Pottery from 46-54 Fishergate AY 16/6

Mainman A. J., Vince A, and Briscoe D 2008 'The Pottery' in Spall C and Toop N J.

Spall C and Toop N J. 2008 'Before *Eoforwic*: New Light on York in the 6th-7th centuries. Medieval Archaeology Vol 52 pp 1-26.

Stead 1958, 'An Anglian cemetery on The Mount, York.' Y. A.J. 39 427-37.

context	no.	description	possible date
us	1	reduced jar rim	Anglian?
Terminus (unlabelled)	2	burnished interior and exterior	Anglian?
machine ITS	2	burnished interior and exterior	Anglian?
US Trench E	1	sandy reduced	Anglian?
metal-detected spoil heap	1	reduced soapy in/ext burnished	Anglian?
009	1	grey hard gritty body sherd, wheel-thrown	9 th -11 th
037	1	clubbed rim jar gritty ware form, fabric pale and unusual	?11 th -12 th
038	7	small grey sandy sherds (5 from one vessel) burnished, slightly micaceous surface, brownish gritty fracture	Anglian
049	1	handmade jar dense grey fracture, 3-5mm cross-section	Anglian ?
088	1	thick-walled (12-14mm) sherds, reduced, handmade with organic temper	Anglian?
120	16	York ware-like fabric but almost certainly RB, late gritty Ebor ware	RB
259	2	reduced, burnished interior and exterior	Anglian?
290	1	soapy reduced with incised parallel line decoration	Anglian?
296 Trench 5 baulk edge clearing	1	thick sandy base	Anglian?
305	1	globular wide-mouthed jar, fine and sandy, roughly finished surface, Anglian form	Anglian
320	1	thick-walled 12-14 mm sandy oxidised surface	Anglian?
320	1	thick-walled 10mm fine tempered and well-burnished interior and exterior	Anglian?
320	2	loosely textured, oxidised surface soapy feel + scrap	Anglian?
325	1	leached oxidised surface	Anglian?
325	1	fabric as for 332 with oxidised surface, faint incised lines of decoration	Anglian
332	10	1 11 th century gritty ware; 1 Anglian rim with two neck grooves and burnished surfaces, rounded quartz sand grains in fracture 5-7mm thick. 8 sherds of similar fabric but thicker, uneven surface colour, sandy rather than burnished	Anglian? 11 th century
397	3	gritty reduced fabric similar to that in 332; 8-12 mm thick, oxidised tan surface patches	Anglian?
397	10	similar to above but reduced surfaces 8-14 mm thick, includes one rounded base and tiny rim fragment plus scraps	Anglian?
397	5	fine reduced fabric with a soapy feel	Anglian?
397	5	fine, thick fabric oxidized surface, thick-walled (up to 20 mm)	Anglian?
397	1	straight small rim with possible neck groove	Anglian?
397	1	?daub – fine sandy lump	

397	2	similar reduced sandy fabric with brown burnished surfaces	Anglian
397	2	finer burnished fabric , includes Anglian jar forms	Anglian
397	1	shoulder from jar form, reduced , heavily leached	?Anglo-Scandinavian
397	1	everted rim jar and part of body, reduced hackly fabric but well-potted	?Roman
397	1	soapy textured grass-tempered	Anglian
399	2	gritty reduced fabric similar to that in 332	Anglian?
442	38	scrappy sherds, thin-walled with large opaque quartz sand grains, brownish silt fracture	Anglian
444	1	sherd as in 445	RB
445	2	wheel-turned everted jar rim and sherd, oxidised	RB
447	4	soft fine, leached sherd	Anglian?
447	1	coarse reduced sherd	Anglian?
450	1	thick-walled 8-12 mm fine tempered	Anglian?
470	2	as 442	Anglian
482	3	distinctive sandy matt 8-12 mm everted jar rim, hard dense well-sorted	Anglian?
496	2	soft fine-tempered with some grass-temper, oxidised surfaces	Anglian?
496	2	scrappy sherds grass-tempered and fine-tempered	Anglian
497	1	1 thick-walled fine grass-tempered sherd + daub	Anglian
568	1	a fine silty fabric, leached surfaces	Anglian?
694	1	coarse tempered ware	Anglian?
705	3	(1 vessel) dense calcitic inclusions, leaching, thin-walled	?
772	4	oxidised surface, sandy fabric, coarse 8-12 mm, abrading interior	Anglian?
772	1	patchy oxidised surface, medium coarse, part of neck and body	Anglian?
772	1	soapy, patchy grass-tempered	Anglian?
772	2	joining shreds, everted jar rim, fine-tempered	Anglian?
772	1	dense gritty brownish fabric, well-burnished surfaces, typical Anglo-Saxon urn form with incised grooved decoration form vertical and chevron pattern under incised neck rings	Anglian?
773	1	coarse reduced fabric with oxidised surface, sandy/gritty	Anglian?
774	18	range of reduced handmade fabrics, forms include everted rims of jars, inturned wide-mouthed bowls, fabrics include soapy, sandy and grass-tempered – 3 are quite hard and	Anglian

		thin-walled	
777	1	coarse reduced everted rim	Anglian?
777	2	coarse tempered ware	Anglian?
781	2	oxidised surface sandy and coarse-tempered.	Anglian?
783	1	wide-mouthed jar rim, burnished surface	Anglian?
785	5	(1 vessel) fine sandy, reduced, matt surface with wipe marks, brownish fracture 5-7mm. Rim of wide-mouthed vessel	RB/IA?
788	1	lower body of urn form with vertical incised lines and groove, fine dense fabric	Anglian?
791	9	thick-walled (10-12mm), oxidised surfaces, brownish fracture, burnished interior (? one large vessel)	Anglian?
792	1	thick-walled soft sandy/gritty reduced base	Anglian?
792	1	fine hard burnished matt rim (see 785)	RBD/IA
792	1	sandy fabric with oxidised surface	Anglian?
795	2	joining sherds of grass-tempered jar rim, straight sided form	Anglian
800	7	reduced coarsely gritted	Anglian?
800	1	square flat-topped bowl rim	Anglian?
800	1	fine silty sherd with stamp decoration and incised horizontal and chevron decoration	Anglian?
879	1	sandy reduced ware	Anglian?
908	1	sandy reduced ware	Anglian?
987	2	hard, hackly fracture, oxidised surfaces	Anglian?
1002	11	thick-walled coarse quartz sand, typical; oxidised ext and reduced burnished interior (1 vessel?), no form	Anglian?
1002	1	similar to others in 1002 but sandier	Anglian?
1002	2	as in 482	Anglian?
1002	10	reduced, both surfaces burnished, soapy laminated fractures, 3 jar rims	Anglian?
1018	2	oxidised with abraded interior, coarse to moderate tempering	Anglian?
1018	4	reduced, fine soapy with burnished interior	Anglian?
1018	1	flat-topped straight-sided bowl with reduced fine fabric	Anglian?
1018	2	very fine reduced flat-topped rim with external bevel, and base – burnished interior and exterior	Anglian?
1018	1	small sandy sherd	Anglian?
1045	65	included 5-6 jar rims, 3 with decoration incised horizontal and chevron lines, one with raised swallow-nest lug, reduced burnished with well-sorted quartz sand grains	Anglian
1052	1	jar rim burnished interior and exterior	Anglian
1063	4	jar with upright neck, coarse reduced fabric	Anglian
1063	1	soapy, burnished reduced fabric	Anglian?

1063	6	1 vessel, smooth soapy, large sherds, large grits	Anglian?
1093	1	hard thin reduced distinctive sherd	?Anglo-Scandinavian
1099	2	thick-walled, coarse tempered, upright jar rim	Anglian?
1099	1	thick-walled grass-tempered sherd	
1099	1	thick-walled sherd with ext sooting	
1106	3	mat sandy body sherd	Anglian?
1145	1	thin hard reduced sandy ware 5mm	Anglian?
1145	4	hard, leached reduced (1 vessel)	Anglian?
1145	1	jar rim burnished int and ext	Anglian?
1173	1	York ware	10 th century
1248	1	wide mouthed jar, harsh sandy ware, oxidised and reduced surfaces	Anglian?
1477	1	leached, long-necked vessel, loose fracture	Anglian?
1477	5	typical coarse fabric, reduced/oxidised patches	Anglian?
1477	1	jar rim with long neck, reduced and well-made	Anglian?
1492	1	reduced hard-firing fabric	Anglian?
1576	1	scrap	Anglian?
1583	1	soft small sherd, leached surfaces	Anglian?
1602	1	interior and exterior burnished	Anglian?
1612	1	interior and exterior burnished	Anglian?
1632	1	coarse sandy, reduced sherd	Anglian?
1633	1	odd thick-walled abraded interior	Anglian?
1637	1	soapy coarse tempered ware	Anglian?
1701	1	reduced medium gritty fabric	Anglian?
1728	2	York ware	10 th century
1839	1	reduced interior and exterior	Anglian?
1904	1	grass-tempered	Anglian?
1915	1	reduced, thick-walled, oxidised internally	Anglian?
1979	2	grey wares	Roman

On-Site Archaeology

context	no	description	date
u/s	1	oxidised sandy sherd, reduced	Anglian?
u/s	1	small flat-topped rim	Anglian or RB?
1005	2	coarse tempered with horizontal line decoration and 2 complex stamps	Anglian?
2010	1	fine tempered internally burnished bowl rim	Anglian?
2038	7	small sherd with leached surfaces and fracture	Anglian?
3011	1	reduced gritty sherd	Anglian?
3016	1	sandy sherd	Anglian?
3026	1	sandy reduced sherd	Anglian?

4002	11	(1 vessel) thick-walled (10-12mm) burnished surfaces but leached out	Anglian?
4003	1	further sherd from vessel (4002)	Anglian?
6000	1	oxidised hard sandy, both surface oxidised	Anglian?
6238	1	coarse reduced, thin-walled sherd 3-5mm	Anglian?
6360	1	thick-walled coarse tempered sherd with pierced lug	Anglian?
6468	11	(1 vessel) hard hackly, sandy wide-mouthed jar, simple upright rim	Anglian
10016	5	reduced sherds, coarse fabric, jar form	Anglian?
10164	1	reduced sandy	Anglian?
10218	1	coarse temper, surfaces lost	Anglian?
10226	1	jar rim reduced, burnished int and ext 5- 8mm	Anglian?
10239	1	oxidized gritty ware – probably gritty Ebor ware	Roman
10246	1	fine-tempered, burnished interior and exterior	Anglian?
10266	1	oxidised surface, coarse temper and incised line decoration	Anglian?
10266	2	thick-walled sherd with solid lug	Anglian?