

Pottery from West Lilling (Site BPTSEP 169): Assessment Report

Barbara Precious and Alan Vince

Introduction

Three hundred and twenty sherds of pottery from West Lilling (site BPTSEP 169) were submitted for assessment. Almost all are of late Roman date. The pottery includes a range of finewares and imports which are consistent with the identification of the site as a villa.

A handful of vessels is of very late or sub-Roman type, comparable with the latest types found in Roman York where they are dated to the late 4th or early 5th centuries. This pottery forms a moderate-sized assemblage which, if it can be treated as a single assemblage, is sufficiently large for detailed analysis and comparison with other late Roman assemblages in the north.

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 7 database. The ware, fabric and decoration codes used are based on those being used currently to catalogue the West Heslerton Roman pottery, a large and contemporary collection.

Prehistoric

Although the late/sub-Roman sherds described below have fabrics which are visually very similar to those of Iron Age pottery their treatment and form show that they are not in fact prehistory. No prehistoric pottery was found on the site.

Roman

Wares

The Roman pottery could be classified into eighteen groups (Table 1). Most of the pottery could have been obtained within 30 miles of the site. The Crambeck area, for example supplied 95 sherds (29% of the total) and 149 sherds of calcite-tempered wares, all likely to have been made on the fringes of the Yorkshire wolds in the Vale of Pickering, were present (45% of the total). Most of the remaining sherds were unsourced oxidized and reduced wares. The only non-local wares were from the Nene Valley (5

sherds), the Eastern Gaulish samian factories (2 sherds) and a sherd of mortaria from an unknown source in northern Gaul.

A small number of sherds were tempered with a coarse quartzose sand, including fragments of medium-grained sandstone and sparse shell fragments. These are similar in appearance to both Iron Age and Anglian wares from Yorkshire and were probably tempered with sand derived from the glacial sands of the Vale of York. Their forms (handmade jars with flat bases) are typical of late Roman cooking vessels and it is likely that they are of late Roman date. Nevertheless, the opportunity to compare the fabric with that of earlier and later material would determine whether or not there were any differences in fabric at microscopic level and perhaps elucidate the relationship between this ware and earlier and later types.

Table 1. Roman fabric codes

cname	full name	Sherds	Vessels
CALC	Calcite-tempered	143	55
CALC?	Calcite-tempered?	1	1
CALM	Shell - calcite tempered with minimal calcite	2	2
CALOX	Oxidized calcite-tempered	2	2
CALOX?	Oxidized calcite-tempered?	1	1
COAR	Reduced misc Roman coarsewares	1	1
CRGR	Crambeck greyware	78	62
CRGR?	Crambeck greyware?	7	6
CRGRV?	Crambeck greyware variant?	1	1
CRPA	Crambeck parchment ware	4	4
GREY	Romano-British greywares	42	22
GRFF	Fine greyware	2	1
GRQZ	Quartz-tempered greyware	8	7
GRQZ?	Quartz-tempered greyware?	1	1
GRSA	Reduced version of OXSA	7	5
GRSAN	Reduced sandwich fabric Middleton	3	1
MOCR	Crambeck mortaria	4	1
MOCR?	Crambeck mortaria?	1	1
MONG	North Gaulish mortaria	1	1
NVCC	Nene Valley Colour Coated	5	2
OX	Oxidized ware	10	7
OXQZ	Quartz-tempered oxidized ware	3	2
OXSA	Early Roman oxidized sandy ware	1	1
SAMEG	East Gaulish Samian ware	1	1
SAMEG?	East Gaulish Samian ware?	1	1

Forms

Three hundred sherds could be assigned to a form type (Table 2).

Table 2. Roman pottery forms

Code	Full name	Sherds
	Unidentifiable	30
31	Drag 31	1
37	Drag 37	1
B	Bowl	2
BD	Bowl/dish	1
BFB	Flanged bowl	9
BFB?	Flanged bowl?	4
BFBL	Flanged bowl	3
BFL	Flat-rimmed bowl	1
BGR	Grooved-rim bowl	1
BK	Beaker	3
BKFN	Funnel-necked beaker	5
BTR	Triangular-rimmed bowl	1
BUCKET?	Bucket-shaped jar	
BWM	Wide-mouthed bowl	2
BWM?	Wide-mouthed bowl?	1
CLAD		1
CLSD	Closed vessel	70
CLSD?	Closed vessel?	1
CP	Cooking pot	3
CP?	Cooking pot?	3
DPR	Plain-rimmed dish	3
DPRS	Plain-rimmed straight-sided dish	1
F?	Flagon?	2
FS?	Flask?	1
J	Jar	43
JBK	Jar or beaker	6
JCUR	Jar or bowl with curved rim	4
JCURS		12
JEV	Everted rimmed jar	5
JEV?	Everted rimmed jar?	3
JFL		4
JHUN	Huntcliffe jar	30
JHUN?	Huntcliffe jar?	15
JKNAP	Knapton jar	2
JL	Large jar	1
JLH	Large lug-handled jar	10

JLH?	Large lug-handled jar?	4
JLS	Jar with lid-seated rim	2
JNN	Narrow-necked jar	6
JS	Storage jar	1
JUP		4
JWM	Wide-mouthed jar	12
MBF	Mortarium with bead and flanged rim	5
1		
MWAL?		1
OPEN	Open form	3
OPEN?	Open form?	6
PWAL		1

Trench 2

Five contexts in trench 2 produced pottery (Table 3). All could be dated to the 4th century.

Table 3

cname	Form	2000	2001	2002	2012	2018
CALC				2		
CALC	CLSD					1
CALC	J			1	3	
CALC	JHUN	1	2	11		
CALOX	JS			1		
CRGR	BD				1	
CRGR	BFB?		1			
CRGR	BFBL			1		
CRGR	BWM				1	
CRGR	BWM?					1
CRGR	CLSD			4		
CRGR	JBK			1		
CRGR?	BFB				2	
CRGR?	CLSD			1		
CRGRV?	BFB			1		
CRPA	BFL			1		
CRPA	BGR				1	
GREY				2		
GRSA	DPR					1
GRSA	JCUR			3		

OX		1
OX	F?	2

Trench 3

Nine contexts in trench 3 produced pottery (Table 4). All contexts could be dated to the 4th century. A sherd of early 3rd century East Gaulish samian ware came from context 3018. Very late or sub-Roman coarseware was present in context 3003 and unstratified.

Table 4

cname	Form	3000	3001	3002	3003	3009	3011	3014	3016	3018	u/s
CALC	CLSD						1				
CALC	J								3		
COAR	CLSD	1									
CRGR	BFB		3								
CRGR	BFB?	1				1			1		
CRGR	BWM								1		
CRGR	CLSD						1				
CRGR	JBK	1							1		
CRGR	JEV									3	
CRGR	JLH		8								
CRGR	JNN								1		
CRGR	OPEN							1			1
GREY	BTR	1									
GREY	CLAD					1					
GREY	CLSD								1		
GREY	CLSD?					1					
GREY	CP?				1						
GREY	JBK					1					
GRQZ	BUCKET?										1
GRQZ	CLSD				2						
GRSA	CLSD					1			1		
GRSA	DPR								1		
MOCR	MBF			4							
OX	J			1	1						
OXQZ	CLSD			1							
OXSA		1									
SAMEG?	31									1	

Trench 4

Roman pottery was present in eight contexts in Trench 4 (Table 5). Two contexts produced pottery which may date to the late 3rd century (4007 and 4010) but both were stratified later than deposits producing 4th century pottery. All other assemblages were 4th century whilst contexts 4002 and 4003 produced late/sub-Roman coarseware. Context 4001 produced a residual sherd of North Gaulish mortarium.

Table 5

Cname	Form	4001	4002	4003	4007	4008	4009	4010	4014	u/s
CALC					2					
CALC	CLSD	5				2	7	4		1
CALC	J					1				
CALC	JHUN?			1						
CALM	CLSD							1		
CALOX			1							
CRGR	BFB						2			
CRGR	BFBL						1			
CRGR	BK						1			
CRGR	CLSD	1				2	2		1	
CRGR	CP?						1			
CRGR	FS?			1						
CRGR	J					2			1	
CRGR	JBK						1			
CRGR	JEV					1				
CRGR	JEV?					2				
CRGR	JL						1			
CRGR	JLH					2				
CRGR	JLH?						1			
CRGR	JNN								5	
CRGR	OPEN					1				
CRGR	OPEN?	1					3			
CRGR?	BFBL						1			
CRGR?	CLSD					1				
CRPA	BK						1			
GREY							1			
GREY	BK							1		
GREY	CLSD				2	1		4		
GREY	CP?						1			
GREY	DPRS							1		
GREY	JEV							1		
GREY	JFL		4							

GREY	JHUN?			1
GREY	JWM			12
GRQZ	CLSD	2		
GRQZ?	CLSD		1	
GRSAN	CP			3
MONG	MBF	1		
OX	CLSD		1	3
OX	JEV?		1	

Trench 5

Eleven contexts in trench 5 produced Roman pottery (Table 6). Context 5016 produced only a sherd of East Gaulish samian ware and could date as early as the early 3rd century. Two contexts might be of 3rd or 4th century date (5005 and 5006). The remainder date to the 4th century, except for context 5000 which produced sherds of very late/sub-Roman coarseware.

Table 6.

cname	Form	5000	5001	5003	5005	5006	5007	5013	5014	5015	5016	5023
CALC					1			14				
CALC	CLSD	5						1				
CALC	J							30				
CALC	JCUR							1				
CALC	JCURS		12									
CALC	JHUN	9						6				
CALC	JHUN?							13				
CALC	JKNAP	2										
CALC?							1					
CALM	DPR		1									
CALOX?						1						
CRGR	B							1				
CRGR	BFB		1									
CRGR	CLSD		1					1		1		
CRGR	JBK						1					
CRGR	JLH?		2	1								
CRGR	OPEN?								1			1
CRGR?	B	1										
CRGR?	JLS						1					
CRPA	PWAL								1			
GREY							3					
GREY	CLSD					1						
GREY	JLS	1										

GRFF	CLSD	2		
GRQZ	JUP	4		
MOCR?	MWAL?	1		
NVCC	BKFN		1	4
OXQZ	CLSD			2
SAMEG	37			1

Medieval

No medieval pottery was present.

Post-medieval

[Barbara! Wasn't there a sherd of post-med?]

Recommendations

It seems from this assessment that the pottery from West Lilling is mainly of 4th century date and that each trench has a similar date range. It may therefore be possible to treat the entire assemblage as being representative of the pottery used at the site in the late Roman period and to compare this with other late Roman pottery assemblages in the north. To compare with data published by Dr J Evans the assemblage should be quantified by weight. Time would have to be spent working on the stratigraphic associations of the pottery to test the integrity of the assemblage.

The good condition of much of the pottery enables substantial parts of vessel profiles to be reconstructed and fourteen vessels have been identified for illustration.

A sample of six late/sub-Roman sherds should be scientifically characterised using thin-section analysis and ICPS (inductively-coupled plasma spectroscopy).

Finally a report should be written for publication in an archaeological journal.

Acknowledgments

The Roman pottery was identified and catalogued by Barbara Precious. The data was transferred to Access 7 and the assessment report written by Alan Vince.

Costings

Task	Resource	Cost
Stratigraphic study	BP	£80
Illustration of 14 vessels	DH	£200
Scientific analysis of late/sub-Roman ware	AGV	£240
Report writing	BP	£280
Weighing of assemblage	PH	£80
Total		£880