

Pottery from Scarborough Castle (Site OSA99 EV04): Assessment Report

Alan Vince

Introduction

Fifty-four sherds of pottery and fourteen fragments of clay tobacco pipe, dating from the 13th century to the modern period, were submitted for assessment. The pottery was in the main recovered as mixed assemblages but two main episodes of activity were present: 13th to 14th century and mid 17th century.

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.

Prehistoric

None

Roman

None

Medieval

Three main classes of medieval pottery were found (Table 1). A recent study of Staxton-type ware from Hartlepool has shown that it was actually produced locally in the Tees Valley. Consequently, the Staxton ware sherds from this site were examined under a binocular microscope to check their identity. Each sherd contained sparse rounded chalk inclusions and small rounded iron-rich pellets both of which are indicative of an origin in the Vale of Pickering. Staxton ware was produced from the later 12th to the 15th centuries and, although there may well be differences in the range of forms and rim typology through time, at present it is not possible to date examples within this bracket.

Scarborough ware, produced at several workshops in the town, is the subject of much confusion, both as to classification and date. The excavators of the Scarborough ware production sites have divided the products into two fabrics, Phase 1 and Phase 2 which are meant to be sequential. The later fabric is more silty than the earlier one which is said to be pinker in colour. On these grounds the 15 Castle pieces are probably Scarborough Phase 2. The date of these two wares is unclear, except that it seems likely that both Phase 1 and Phase 2 were current in the first phase of occupation of Kingston-upon-Hull, c.1260-1300. The Scarborough Castle pieces are probably of late 13th or early 14th century date.

The third group of medieval wares consists of vessels with white-firing fabrics. This is the standard type of medieval fineware in North Yorkshire and further north in the 13th and 14th centuries. The Scarborough Castle sherds can be divided into four fabric groups, which need not represent different sources. NYWWG is tempered with a coarse sand, consisting of red-stained quartz and some sandstone fragments. NYWWC has only moderate quartzose temper but contains scattered calcareous inclusions. NYWWS is tempered with a quartzose sand and NYWWF is fine-textured. NYWWS might be the same ware as York Glazed ware. NYWWG would probably be termed Brandsby-type ware. NYWWF might be classified as Hambleton-type ware whereas NYWWC does not appear to have been separated as a distinct ware. Chemical analysis is required before it can be accepted that these four fabrics do in fact come from four separate sources, let alone that they come from the traditional sources.

Table 1

CNAME	NOSH	NOV	FULL NAME
NYWWC	2	2	North Yorkshire Whiteware - calcareous inclusions
NYWWF	3	3	North Yorkshire Whiteware - fine
NYWWG	5	4	North Yorkshire Whiteware - gritty
NYWWS	3	3	North Yorkshire Whiteware - calcareous inclusions
SCAR	15	15	Scarborough ware
STAX	10	10	Staxton-type ware

Post-medieval

Nine sherds of post-medieval pottery were recovered. Two of these (PMRED) were unsourced redwares which might be of early modern date but the remainder are likely to be of mid 17th century date. All the clay pipe stems and the single pipe bowl are of 17th-century type. The bowl can be more closely dated to c.1640-60 by its shape and size.

Table 2

CNAME	NOSH	NOV	FULL NAME
TGW	2	1	Tin-glazed ware
RYEDALE	4	4	Ryedale ware
PMRED	2	2	Misc Post-Medieval redware

MY	1	1	Midlands Yellow ware
BL	1	1	Black-glazed wares

Early Modern

Six sherds of early modern date were found. It is likely that all are of mid 19th-century or later date.

Table 3

CNAME	NOSH	NOV	FULL NAME
WHITE	1	1	Modern whiteware
REFR	1	1	Refined Red Earthenware
PEAR	2	2	Pearl ware
DERBS	1	1	Derby Stoneware
CREA	1	1	Creamware

Recommendations

The pottery should be retained for further study. It is likely that more precision as to the dating of the collection will be possible once pottery excavated in the town is studied and published. Chemical analysis of the whitewares might enable the source of the wares to be established and would further the understanding of pottery supply for the castle.

Acknowledgments

The pottery was shown to Jane Young, to whom I am grateful for suggestions as to attribution. The identifications and assessment given here are, however, my sole responsibility.

Costings

The whiteware sherds could be analysed using Inductively-Coupled Plasma Spectroscopy (ICPS-AES) at Royal Holloway College, London, for £240. This would include multivariate analysis of the chemical data and comparison with results obtained from the Hambleton Hills kilnsites, Ruswarp Bank (near Whitby) and Tees Valley A whiteware.

Appendix

Context	cname	NoSh	NoV	Part	Description
1000	CREA	1	1	B	
1000	CTP	3	3	STE M	17TH C BORE
1000	DERBS	1	1	R	BLACK-LEADING BOTTLE
1000	NYWWC	1	1	R	REDUCED INT
1000	NYWWF	1	1		REDUCED
1000	NYWWF	1	1		REDUCED;WAVY COMBED
1000	NYWWG	1	1		SOOTED;REDUCED
1000	NYWWS	1	1		
1000	PEAR	2	2		BLUE PAINTED DEC
1000	SCAR	8	8		
1000	STAX	1	1		SOOTED
1000	STAX	1	1	B	
1000	STAX	1	1	R	
1001	BL	1	1		
1001	CTP	1	1	BOW L	MID 17TH C
1001	CTP	6	6	STE M	17TH C BORE
1001	MY	1	1		OR STSL
1001	NYWWG	1	1		INT GLAZE
1001	NYWWG	1	1	R	RIBBED NECK
1001	PMRED	1	1		
1001	RYEDALE	1	1		
1001	RYEDALE	1	1		LARGE VESSEL WITH LOOP HANDLE
1001	SCAR	5	5		
1001	WHITE	1	1		
1002	PMRED	1	1		
1002	RYEDALE	1	1	R	SOOTED INT
1002	SCAR	1	1		
1002	SCAR	1	1		SECONDARY ROD HANDLE
1002	TGW	2	1		LIGHT BLUE DEC;LEAD BACKED;ML17TH
1003	CTP	4	4	STE M	17TH BORE
1004	NYWWF	1	1		REDUCED
1004	RYEDALE	1	1	R	
1005	REFR	1	1		

1005	STAX	2	2		
1012	NYWWC	1	1		INT REDUCED
1012	NYWWG	2	1	R	STRAP
1012	NYWWS	2	2		
1012	STAX	1	1		
1012	STAX	1	1	B	SOOTED;OBTUSE ANGLE
1012	STAX	3	3	R	SOOTED
