

*Pottery and Ceramic
other finds from Clifton
Moor, York
(YORYM:1999.955):
Assessment Report*

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Introduction

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

Sixty-five sherds of prehistoric pottery were found. Most were extremely abraded, so that inclusions which would have been flush with or below the pot surface now stand proud by up to 1 mm from the body. For this reason, there is relatively little that can be said about the function or formation of the pottery vessels.

Several distinct fabrics are present within this collection:

subfabric	Sherds
Calct	4
fine sand	2
iron ore/slag and sst	1
Ool	1
Slag	24
Sst	33

Calcite-tempered (CALCT)

Four sherds tempered with moderate to abundant fragments of calcite were present. Such fabrics were used both in the pre-Roman and Roman Iron Age as well as the late Roman period. In the Clifton Moor context an earlier rather than a later date is likely.

Fine Sand (FINE SAND)

Two vessels tempered with abundant fine sand, consisting of grains up to 0.3mm across, were present. Both were oxidized and are examples of Iron Age finewares. There was no sign of any finer slip or coating but given the poor condition of the sherds this is not proof that the sherds were not once slipped.

Iron ore/slag and sandstone tempered (IRON ORE/SLAG AND SST)

A single sherd contained a mixed sand temper, with some fragments of coarse-grained sandstone and some dark reddish iron compounds. The latter might be a naturally-occurring iron ore but given the frequency of slag-tempered wares on this site the possibility that they are composed of slag should be noted.

Oolitic limestone (OOL)

A single sherd containing abundant voids which appear to have contained oolitic limestone and individual ooliths.

Slag-tempered (SLAG)

Twenty-four sherds were tempered with abundant, coarse, angular fragments of slag. Under the binocular microscope it is clear that these fragments were not formed *in situ* through the reaction of iron ore inclusions with their surroundings. Many of the fragments are vesicular and the fragment edges cut across vesicles. In the better-preserved sherds it is clear that the slag fragments, which could be several mm across, would have been visible as blemishes on the surface of the pot, although mainly covered with clay. A single, everted, rim was present.

Sandstone-tempered (SST)

Thirty-three sherds were tempered with a coarse sand containing fragments of sandstone and quartz grains derived from such a sandstone. The quartz grains are often overgrown, with crystal faces that give the inclusions a sugary appearance. A single rim sherd was present, with a short rolled out rim.

Roman

Three Roman vessels were found, all in late deposits (contexts 1005, 2001 and 3001). The wares present are all types common in 1st- and 2nd-century levels in the fortress at York, where all were probably made:

Ware	Name
E2	Ebor ware
R2	Rustic ware
M3	Eboracum and Local mortaria

Medieval

Two sherds of medieval pottery were found, both in context 2000. One was a sherd of Brandsby-type (BRAN) ware and the other an unsourced North Yorkshire whiteware, with a fine-textured fabric (NYWWF). Both were abraded, although not to the same extent as the prehistoric or Roman sherds. This suggests that they were probably deposited on the site in the medieval period rather than arriving with later debris.

Post-medieval

Post-medieval pottery, dating mainly from the 18th and 19th centuries, was present in contexts: 1000, 1002, 1005, 1006, 1007, 2000, 3000 and 3017. Although some of the sherds are of types which have an early start date there is very little in this collection which could not have been in use in the 19th century. Even Staffordshire White Saltglazed stoneware, whose manufacture ceased abruptly with the inception of creamwares and other refined earthenwares in the mid to late 18th century, is often found in 19th century assemblages and must have regularly been passed from generation to generation. Only one of the sherds shows any sign of weathering, a Ryedale ware bowl.

A notable find was a large fragment of crucible or muffle. The fragment comes from a thickwalled container and its outer wall is coated with a thick purply-brown ash glaze. The inner surface is covered with drips of light green glass. Fragments of glass slag were also recovered from the site.

full name	cname	sherds	earliest date	latest date
Black-glazed wares	bl	7	1500	1750
Ryedale ware	ryedale	1	1550	1700
Unsourced Post-medieval Redware	pmr	7	1600	1750
Chinese Export Porcelain	chpo	1	1650	1900
Nottingham stoneware	nots	4	1690	1900
Staffordshire White Saltglazed stoneware	swsg	1	1700	1770
Black basalt ware	bbas	2	1740	1900
Unspecified English Stoneware	engs	1	1750	1900

Creamware	crea	1	1770	1830
Transfer printed ware	tpw	9	1770	1900
Pearl ware	pear	4	1770	1900
Continental Porcelain	comp	1	1770	1900
Sunderland coarseware	sund	3	1800	1900
Modern whiteware	white	1	1850	1900

Discussion

The prehistoric sherds are likely to be of Iron Age date. The Roman sherds from the site were not found in close association with these prehistoric ones and therefore do not provide clearcut evidence that the Iron Age occupation continued beyond the end of the 1st century AD. Nevertheless, the Roman sherds are larger than those typically found in the plough zone and normally interpreted as being manuring scatter. Furthermore, the degree of abrasion on these sherds is similar to that on the prehistoric sherds and much greater than might be expected if the sherds were brought to the site in more recent times through dumping of spoil from earthmoving works in the city. On balance, therefore, it is likely that the Roman sherds too indicate occupation on the site.

The medieval sherds, by contrast, are most likely evidence for medieval manuring, as is the sherd of Ryedale ware.

The early modern pottery has a very late character and as a group dates to the 19th century. The crucible/muffle fragment, together with the lack of abrasion on any of the sherds, suggests that these finds were dumped on the site as part of a refuse tip rather than being accidentally deposited alongside manure.

Recommendations

The prehistoric sherds are of considerable interest. In particular, the use of slag on such a large scale suggests that some of the pottery may have been produced in a specialised iron-working community. It would be possible to test this hypothesis through the use of thin-sections and chemical analysis. Such an analysis would compare samples of sandstone-tempered and slag-tempered wares to see whether or not the vessels have similar clays but different tempers or whether the wares were produced from different clay sources. Before any such study, the two rims should be drawn.

Acknowledgements

The Roman pottery was identified by Barbara Precious.

Costings

2 prehistoric pottery drawings at £5.00 each = £10.00

12 thin-section samples at £20.00 each = £240.00

12 chemical analysis samples (ICP-AES, carried out at Royal Holloway College, London) at £20.00 each = £240.00

Total = £490.

Contex	Period	Cname	Subfa	For	Sherds	Description
1000	emod	bbas		tpot	1	
1000	emod	tpw		bowl	1	
1000	emod	tpw		bowl	1	light green printing
1000	emod	tpw		cup	1	blue printing
1000	emod	tpw		cup	1	purple-blue printing
1000	emod	tpw		plate	1	
1000	na	cbm		drain	1	extruded
1000	nk	misc	sw	flp	1	central hole
1000	pmed	bl		cup	1	
1000	pmed	chpo		plate	1	
1000	PMED	ctp			5	
1000	PMED	ctp			7	18/19th c
1000	PMED	ctp			1	moulded dec; "DON'T C". On one side and "CADGE" on the other
1000	pmed	nots		bowl	1	
1000	pmed	nots		clos	1	stamped dec
1000	pmed	pmr			1	black glazed
1000	pmed	pmr		bowl	1	black glazed int
1000	pmed	pmr		bowl	1	light brown int glaze
1000	pmed	pmr		bowl	2	white slipped int with brown-streaked glaze
1000	pmed	pmr	sknw		1	white slipped int
1002	emod	tpw		plate	1	red printing
1002	pmed	sund		bowl	2	white slipped int brown dec?;depo on ext
1003	emod	crea		plate	1	
1003	nk	misc		cruc	1	very thick-walled vessel with black slag on
1005	na	cbm		obj	1	chimney cowl? Or flue?
1005	nk	misc	sw	flp	1	
1005	pmed	pmr		bowl	1	
1005	rom	yatm03		ME	1	abraded flang;L1-M2
1006	emod	pear		jug	1	moulded handle
1006	pmed	bl		cup	1	
1007	na	cbm		drain	1	extruded drain with squarish cross section
1007	PMED	ctp			2	18/19th c
2000	emod	conp		cup	1	overglaze lustre
2000	emod	engs		-	1	Burnt
2000	emod	pear		cup	1	
2000	emod	tpw		plate	1	
2000	med	bran		jug	1	rod handle
2000	med	nywwf		jug	1	reduced int
2000	na	cbm	S	drain	1	
2000	nk	misc		rect	1	white slip-trailing
2000	nk	misc	SW	flp	2	
2000	pmed	bl		bowl	3	silty fabric
2000	PMED	ctp			3	
2000	pmed	nots		bot	1	bristol-glazed
2000	pmed	ryedale		bowl	1	soot on base;int glaze
2001	preh	preh	calct	jar	1	
2001	preh	preh	sst	jar	2	
2001	rom	yate02		j-b	2	3C
2002	preh	preh	iron	jar	1	

2002	preh	preh	slag	jar	1
2002	preh	preh	sst	jar	2
2003	preh	preh	slag	jar	7
2003	preh	preh	slag	jar	1 everted rim
2003	preh	preh	sst	jar	3
2004	preh	preh	ool	jar	1 leached and too small to sample
2004	preh	preh	sst	jar	4
2008	preh	preh	fine	jar	1
2008	preh	preh	slag	jar	6
2008	preh	preh	sst	jar	2
3000	emod	pear		bowl	1
3000	emod	pear		plate	1
3000	emod	tpw		cup	1 black printing;brown line around rim,
3000	emod	white		cup	1 painted dec
3000	pmed	bl		-	1 Oval
3000	pmed	bl		bowl	1
3000	PMED	ctp			3 18/19th c
3000	pmed	nots		bowl	1
3000	pmed	sund		rect	1 white slip trailed;clear glaze
3001	rom	rpot			1
3001	rom	yatr02		JR	4 Rusticated
3002	preh	preh	fine	jar	1
3002	preh	preh	sst	jar	1
3017	emod	tpw		bowl	1
3017	pmed	swsg		bowl	1
3023	emod	bbas		tpot	1
3027	preh	preh	calct	jar	1
3027	preh	preh	sst	jar	3
3027	preh	preh	sst	jar	1 int depo
3029	preh	preh	slag	jar	9
3029	preh	preh	sst	jar	9
3029	preh	preh	sst	jar	6 thick walled
3094	preh	preh	calct	jar	2