

Assessment of finds from Holy Trinity Goodramgate

Kate Steane and Alan Vince

Introduction

A small trench excavated in the churchyard of Holy Trinity Goodramgate, York, produced a large collection of finds, of which the pottery, glass, metal and non-ceramic building materials are considered in this report..

The aim of this report is to identify and catalogue the finds and to assess their potential for being displayed within the church.

The finds include a handful of medieval artefacts: pottery and glass; a large assemblage of 16th-century date which probably includes pottery, some glassware, and a graphite-tempered crucible; 17th and 18th-century pottery; fittings from coffins, probably of 18th and 19th-century date and a number of fragments of flowerpot of similar date. The flowerpots, presumably, were either used within the churchyard or inside the church itself.

Few of the finds are either visually exciting or easy for the lay person to interpret. It is therefore recommended that reconstruction drawings and explanatory diagrams are produced to accompany the finds. Short, simply-written texts or captions are also required.

Some of the finds are stable and robust but the metalwork and glassware require both stabilisation and, if to be displayed, cleaning by a trained conservator.

The finds

Pottery

Two hundred and ninety-five sherds of pottery were present. All of these are fragments of different vessels, none being complete or even a substantial fragment. The pottery ranges in date from the 11th century to the 19th century but there is very little dating before the 16th century and it would seem that 16th-century deposits were the earliest to be disturbed.

Medieval

A single sherd of Stamford ware is the only possible pre-Conquest sherd in the collection. There are nine sherds of York Gritty ware, which dates from the later 11th to the early 13th century, a sherd of North Lincolnshire shell-tempered ware (NLST) of 12th/13th-century date and a sherd of Brandsby ware of later 13th, 14th or 15th century date. All of these sherds are small and likely to have been residual in post-medieval deposits.

16th century

Most of the pottery dated to the 16th or early 17th century. Most of this was Ryedale ware bowls and jars followed by Cistercian ware cups, black-glazed vessels, Midlands Yellow ware and Cologne stoneware. Frechen stoneware, which is first found in the mid 16th century, was present but where the form of the vessel could be seen included narrow-necked bottles or jugs probably of 17th-century date.

None of the 16th-century pottery is displayable individually although it would be possible to display the pottery by ware or date.

17th/18th century

Pottery dating to the 17th or 18th centuries is the second most common group in the collection, with 85 sherds. Glazed red earthenwares are the most common type present followed by tin-glazed earthenwares and Staffordshire slipwares. It is likely that both 17th and 18th-century material is present. None of this material is displayable.

19th century

Sixty-eight fragments of later 18th and 19th-century pottery were present, most of which were fragments of unglazed flowerpots. The collection also includes normal domestic wares: Creamware, Pearlware, Transfer-printed wares and Derbyshire stoneware (a black-leading bottle). None of these is displayable.

Crucibles

Two fragments of metal-working crucible were present. One of these is produced in a distinctive fabric, tempered with graphite. Such vessels were mass-produced in Hesse, Germany, from the early 17th century. The vessel is of some interest but the sherd is featureless and could only be made understandable through the use of a reconstruction drawing or the use of a magnifying glass to view the graphite temper. The other fragment is from a much larger vessel, of unrecognisable fabric. It was probably used to provide a brass or leaded bronze for casting vessels such as skillets, bells, ewers. If so, it may be that mould fragments are present in amongst the ceramic building material.

Glass

One hundred and forty-three fragments of glass were recovered. Almost all of these are of post-medieval date, but there are a small number of medieval or early post-medieval pieces (Table 00).

Table 1

Form	Total
ALEMBIC	1
BEADS	1
BEAKER	1

BOT	131
BOWL	1
PRUNT	1
VESSEL	24
WIND	31
WINE GLASS	2
Grand Total	193

Medieval

A single fragment of painted medieval window glass was present. It is highly corroded and the design is only visible in glancing light. The piece could not therefore be displayed and would, in any case, require stabilisation. A number of unpainted fragments might be of medieval or early post-medieval date. A fragment of lead came from the junction of four pieces of glass is not milled and is therefore likely to be of medieval date.

In addition there are some pieces of vessel glass which are probably of medieval or early post-medieval date. These include:

- a fragment of a beaker decorated with a trailed cane of glass which has then been flattened in vertical lines.
- A fragment from an opaque white vessel
- The flaring rim of a flask
- A prunt decorated with a 'raspberry' stamp from the wall of a forest glass flask.

Medieval and 16th-century vessel glass was not in common use and therefore having four fragments in one moderate-sized collection is a sign of relatively high status. As they stand, none of these glass fragments would be understandable to the public but it would be possible to produce sketches showing the vessels as complete, with the position of the fragments shown. It would also be possible to find illustrations showing these vessels in use or, in the case of the opaque white glass, photographs of comparable vessels.

Post-medieval

Fragments of dark green bottles of late 17th to 18th-century date form the majority of the glass collection. Some of these can be more closely dated by their form. These include no examples of mid 17th century date ('shaft and globe' form), five fragments of 'onion' bottles dated c.1680-c.1720, thirteen examples of 'mallet' bottles, dated c.1720-c.1760, and six fragments of 'tall' bottles of late 18th-century or later date. None of these fragments is complete enough to be comprehensible to the

public on its own but it would be possible to produce sketches showing the development of the bottle form during the 17th and 18th centuries.

Two fragments made in a similar metal to the bottles come from an alembic, used in distilling. This is quite an unusual find and certainly worthy of display. Again, however, a diagram or reconstruction drawing would be required.

Several fragments of light green window glass are likely to be of similar, 17th/18th-century date and some show signs of grozing and so were probably used in diamond pane windows.

A group of 57 light blue glass beads is presumably from a necklace or clothing and in this context is probably from a post-medieval burial. The beads could be strung together without damaging them and would then be displayable.

Two fragments of wine glass, made in a clear glass, probably leaded, are probably of 18th-century date and a fragment of a lead glass bowl with a moulded decoration and probably of 19th century date were also present. Neither is displayable.

Iron

One hundred and thirty nine fragments of iron were present. Most of these are fittings from wooden coffins. They include nails, with preserved traces of the wooden coffin, handles, tinned coffin plates, and iron studs. It might be possible to see detail of the handles and coffin plates through the use of radiographs and these, if successful, would be displayable either as originals or through the production of photographs. The metal finds themselves are too fragmentary to be displayable and would, in any case, require cleaning and stabilisation if placed on display.

Copper alloy

Ten copper alloy dome-headed pins or studs, used to decorate coffins were present. Some had traces of the coffin preserved on them. They are of two sizes, about 5mm and about 14mm diameter. They could be displayed but would require stabilisation and cleaning beforehand.

Lead alloy

Three small rectangular plates may be made of lead. They are uncorroded and therefore almost certainly modern. A small lead alloy object of unknown function was also found. It is a rectangular-cross-sectioned tapering rod which has been bent in a rough right angle, probably as part of its original function rather than subsequently.

Plaster

A fragment of wall plaster was found. It lacks the skimmed surface and is not displayable.

Asbestos

Some fragments of asbestos corrugated sheet are present, evidence that modern material may well be present in the collection.

Coal

A few small scraps of coal are present.