

Assessment of pottery from Crown Hotel, Knaresborough

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Twenty-nine sherds of pottery were submitted for identification and assessment. All are of medieval date. A few sherds might be of later 11th or 12th-century date but the majority are probably of later 12th to 14th century date, with a single sherd which might be later medieval.

The sherds are mainly fairly small but without any obvious weathering or abrasion and probably originate from occupation on or close to the site. They come from five contexts but the assemblages are too small for the differences between assemblages to be interpreted.

The Pottery

Medieval

The earliest ware present is Yorkshire Gritty ware (YG). Unglazed, wheelthrown jars of this type occur in all but one of the contexts. A single sherd of Hillam ware was found, in context 001. Hillam ware is similar to Yorkshire Gritty ware but produced from a clay with a higher iron content.

The remaining sherds are all classified as 'Northern Gritty' wares. They all contain moderate to abundant coarse sand, composed in the main of lower Carboniferous sandstone fragments or quartz grains derived from such a sandstone. A distinction was made between those produced from a clay with a low iron content and those produced from a clay with a higher iron content. It is likely that the source of both these clays is the Coal Measures and iron content is known to vary considerably with these clays, even within the same clay pit. It is known that potters operated in Knaresborough forest in the medieval period and it is likely that some of the wares found are locally produced.

A single sherd, from context 005, might be of later date than the remainder. It is a 'northern gritty' ware which has been produced from a red-firing clay but fired at such a temperature to start the process of vitrification, causing the lead glaze to appear very dark, almost black. However, such vessels also occur in the 12th century.

Assessment

The pottery all appears to be similar in character and probably represents occupation on or close to the site. There is no indication from size or condition that the YG sherds are any different in date from the remainder and this might suggest that the pottery dates in the main from the period of transition between YG and Northern Gritty wares, in the later 12th or earlier part of the 13th century.