

Assessment of the Pottery from St John's College, Heworth Croft, York (YHC03)

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The pottery, ceramic building material and clay tobacco pipe from an evaluation at Heworth Croft, York (Sitecode YHC03) was submitted for spot-dating and assessment. A full identification and catalogue was not required.

The pottery was examined by the authors and classified as indicated in Table 1.

Code	Comments
ROM	Roman, probably late 1 st to very early 2 nd century
MED	Medieval, probably in the main late 12 th to mid 13 th century
LMED	Late medieval, probably later 14 th to 15 th century
MOD	Modern. Probably mid to late 19 th century
CBM	Extremely abraded fragments but probably mainly mid 12 th century or later flat roof tiles
CTP	Clay tobacco pipe. 19 th century

The spot dates assigned to the contexts are shown in Appendix 1.

Assessment

Roman

Roman pottery was recovered both from stratified features of Phase 1 and as residual sherds associated with later pottery in Phase 2 and 3 contexts. Both groups of sherds were examined, to ensure that the residual finds did not provide evidence for occupation of a different date or character from that which was excavated.

The Roman pottery is mainly abraded, even from Phase 1 contexts, and this seems to suggest either that the pottery was already abraded before being buried within the Phase 1 features or that chemical weathering continued even after burial.

There are sherds in the collection which probably date to the 1st century AD. However, with the exception of one greyware jar, these are all sherds of Samian. Samian ware appears to have been highly prized and is often found on sites for which other evidence suggests an occupation starting anything up to 50 years later than the date of production of the Samian vessels. There are, however, no sherds of Black Burnished ware 1, or its copies, which became common around 120 AD although there is a

single sherd of Central Gaulish Samian ware, which is likely to be of mid/late 2nd-century date. The pottery therefore suggests a short-lived occupation in the early to mid 2nd century.

The range of vessel types found in Phase 1 is small – there are only 12 vessels represented – but includes Samian table ware, amphorae, jars, dishes and lids. There are no bowls nor flagons or mortaria. The residual Romano-British pottery adds a further 23 identifiable vessels, of which only one is a bowl. Other types not present in Phase 1 are a beaker and a tazza (an incense burner, usually thought of as being for religious use). Thus, the collection appears to be biased towards consumption of food, possibly in a ritual manner, rather than preparation. The exceptions are the three sherds of amphora. These are not of the common types in 2nd-century York but include an extremely rare example of a Peacock and Williams Class 20 vessel (the handle of a vessel with a batch mark “XX” on the side), a possible sherd of Peacock & Williams Class 10 (from the Eastern Mediterranean) and the spike from the base of a Peacock and Williams Class 15 amphora, probably from southern Spain. It is possible that these amphora sherds come from vessels buried as grave goods rather than being used and discarded on site as domestic refuse.

The identification of the amphora types should be tested by the production of thin sections. The Class 20 sherd is of such a rare type that it is not included in Tyers’ survey of amphorae in Roman Britain, although Peacock and Williams note an example from Kenchester, Herefordshire. The tazza is of a type not precisely paralleled in Monaghan’s corpus and should therefore be drawn.

Medieval

Eighteen contexts produced sherds of medieval pottery, typically small and abraded sherds. These include York Gritty ware jars and York Glazed ware jug sherds with no other recognisable types. This suggests a later 12th to mid 13th-century date for the pottery. In one case, the sherds come from a pit (1049). In the main, the condition of the medieval pottery suggests that they were present in manure rather than used or dumped on site and this in turn suggests that the ridge and furrow field system was probably used in the later 12th to mid 13th century. Brandsby-type ware is conspicuously rare from the collection although one would need to undertake a sherd by sherd examination to be certain of this.

Late Medieval

Late medieval pottery was recovered from 10 contexts. The pottery is exclusively Humber-type ware and both large glazed jugs and small unglazed drinking jugs or mugs are present. They can be dated to the later 14th or 15th centuries. In contrast with the medieval pottery these sherds are almost all in an unabraded condition and include larger sherds which would not have survived for long in a ploughsoil. In six cases, however, these sherds come from the backfill of furrows. It is therefore suggested that this pottery is contemporary with the deliberate backfill of these furrows, indicating a change of landuse during the later 14th or 15th centuries.

Modern

There is a complete absence of 16th, 17th or 18th century pottery from the site. Modern pottery was recovered from 15 contexts. This pottery is very fresh and consists of large sherds, some of which are likely to come from the same vessels. This suggests that the pottery was discarded on site, either as domestic waste or as part of levelling operations to prepare the site for building. Types datable to the late 18th/early 19th century are absent, nor is there any pottery which is clearly of late 19th or 20th century date. Therefore, although individual types might have longer periods of use it is likely that the majority of the sherds are of mid 19th century date.

Ceramic Building Material

There were numerous fragments of abraded ceramic building material present, in 18 contexts. Where these came from stratified contexts they were mainly of medieval or later date and this is consistent with the material, although most is too badly abraded to identify the form or date. In two cases, however, pieces were retrieved from pits, 1101 and 1115, which contain no later finds and which have been assigned to Phase 1. The first of these, however, comes from a feature which cuts the Roman ditch, F37. Given the absence of tile from the Roman ditch fills it is likely that these pieces too are medieval. Medieval flat roof tiles were probably introduced to the York area in the mid 12th century although much earlier dates have been claimed from Coppergate, York.

Clay Tobacco Pipe

Two fragments of clay pipe were found. One comes from a decorated bowl of 19th-century date and the other is a stem fragment whose bore diameter also suggests a 19th-century date.

Spot Dating

Most of the excavated contexts produced mixed assemblages. Interpreting these requires a knowledge of the site stratigraphy and a model for the site taphonomy (that is, how the material came to be in the deposits in which it was found). As part of this intellectual process the quantity of material is an important element. The number of sherds assigned to each of the main medieval or later phases was therefore counted (Table 1). York Gritty ware, which might predate the mid 12th century, was counted separately (column 11.2), as was any Brandsby-type ware noted (column 13.2). All ceramic building material was assigned to column 12.2. This data emphasises the high quantity of 12th/13th century material present.

Table 1

Context	Roman	11.2	12.2	13.2	14.2	19.2	Grand Total
1002	Present						1
1008			1				1
1012			3		1		4
1015			1				1

1018	Present					1
1022			1			1
1029	Present		1	1	12	15
1030			2	1	2	5
1032	Present		1		1	3
1033	Present		1		29	31
1035					6	6
1036	Present		2		9	12
1037	Present	2	10	6	8	27
1038	Present	1	9	2		13
1042	Present	3	13	1	1	19
1044			5		5	10
1046			2	1	1	4
1047			1			1
1048					8	8
1049			1	1		2
1050		1			3	4
1052		2	1	2	6	11
1055	Present	5	20			26
1056		1	13		2	16
1058			2			2
1062	Present		2			3
1064	Present					1
1070	Present		2		3	6
1071			3			3
1072	Present					1
1074	Present				3	4
1076	Present					1
1077	Present					1
1078	Present			2	1	4
1080	Present					1
1081	Present					1
1082	Present				2	3
1085	Present					1
1086	Present					1
1087	Present					1
1089	Present					1
1093	Present					1
1094			2			2

1097	Present							1
1098		4						4
1101		1						1
1105				1	2			3
1109	Present							1
1110	Present							1
1115		2						2
1124		8		15				23
1128	Present							1
Grand Total		30	15	114	4	44	90	297

Costing

Further work is recommended on the Romano-British pottery:

Three thin sections of Romano-British amphorae	£66 plus VAT
One illustration of a tazza	£14 plus VAT

Appendix 1

Context	ROM	MED	LMED	MOD	CBM	CTP
1002	Present				Present	
1008					Present	
1012			Present		Present	
1015					Present	
1022					Present	
1029	Present	Present		Present		
1030		Present		Present	Present	
1032	Present	Present		Present		
1033	Present	Present		Present		
1035				Present		
1036	Present			Present	Present	Present
1037	Present	Present	Present	Present		
1038	Present	Present			Present	
1042	Present	Present		Present	Present	
1044				Present	Present	
1046			Present	Present	Present	
1047		Present				
1048				Present		
1049		Present			Present	
1050		Present		Present		
1052		Present	Present			
1055	Present	Present			Present	
1056		Present	Present			
1058			Present		Present	
1062	Present	Present				
1064	Present					
1070	Present	Present		Present	Present	
1071		Present				
1072	Present					
1074	Present		Present			
1076	Present					
1077						
1078	Present		Present			
1080	Present					
1081	Present					
1082	Present					
1084						

Context	ROM	MED	LMED	MOD	CBM	CTP
1085	Present					
1087	Present					
1089	Present					
1093	Present					
1094						
1097	Present					
1098		Present		Present	Present	
1101					Present	
1105			Present	Present		
1109	Present					
1110	Present					
1115					Present	
1124		Present	Present			
1128	Present					