

An assessment of the pottery from Foss Islands Road (OSA03 WB01)

Alan Vince

Seventy eight fragments of pottery from a watching brief at Foss Islands Road carried out by On Site Archaeology were submitted for identification and assessment. They range in date from the Roman period to the early modern period with the majority dating from the mid 11th to the mid 13th centuries.

Description

Ceramic Building Material

Roman

Two fragments of tile from context 4029 were positively identified as being of Roman date. Neither was well-enough preserved to identify the form, since one was very abraded and the other shattered through frost action which had removed much of the original surfaces.

Two fragments from contexts 5006 and 4031 are overfired, bloated and warped lumps of tile which might be of Roman date, although in the former case the fragment was found alongside a sherd of post-medieval pottery. Tile production took place on the west bank of the Foss and it is possible that these fragments are stray waste from those tile kilns.

Medieval and later

A tiny sliver of flat roof tile was found in context 3005, associated with late medieval and post-medieval pottery.

Pottery

Roman

Seven fragments of pottery of Roman date were found. Whilst some of these were noticeably abraded others were large fresh sherds. Two of the former came from medieval contexts, one was recovered from a medieval soil level and another was unstratified. A flagon rim and neck from context 805 shows no sign of abrasion at all although it is associated with an Anglo-Scandinavian sherd.

Anglo-Scandinavian

A single sherd of definitely pre-conquest pottery was found, the base of a Torksey ware (TORK) jar, from context 805.

Later 11th to mid 12th century

The site produced a remarkable number of sherds of Stamford ware (STAM). Both pitchers and jars were represented and the sherds certainly came from several different vessels. The sherds came from contexts 4011, 4017 and 7006. The glazed vessels have the thin, drab glaze which characterises Stamford wares of the mid 11th to mid 12th century.

York Gritty ware (YG) jars, which superseded Stamford vessels in the later 11th century in York were not found in either context 4011 and 4017, which may therefore precede the introduction of this ware. Thirteen sherds of YG were recovered, four came from context 1015, where they formed the only pottery finds, but the remainder were associated with later 12th to 13th century pottery and are probably contemporary with those wares.

Later 12th to mid 13th century

Excluding the YG sherds described above, there were 21 sherds of later 12th to mid 13th-century date from the site. Most are from York glazed ware (YORK) jugs and jars with two sherds of Beverley glazed ware jugs (BEVO), two red sandy ware jugs (RED SANDY) and two sherds from miscellaneous York splashed ware jugs (YSPL). A notable find, from context 7007, is from a Seal Jug, a distinctive form decorated with three or four large applied, stamped medallions set around the girth. The design in this case seems to consist of random circular dots.

Later 13th to mid 14th century

Eight sherds of Brandsby-type ware (BRANDSBY) were recovered, from two contexts (1025 and 3005). All were from jugs. Several of the sherds were decorated, for example with an applied vertical strip (context 1025) or with wavy combing on the shoulder. In both cases the sherds were stratified with later medieval types although context 1025 contained a mixed assemblage.

Later 14th to mid 15th century

Eight sherds of late medieval pottery were found. They are of three types: Humber ware (HUM), Hambleton-type ware (HAMBLETON) and Walmgate ware (WALMGATE). All the sherds came from hollow wares, either jugs or jars.

Later 15th and later

Seven sherds of post-medieval or later date were found. They were of four types: Late Humber ware (LHUM), Brown-glazed earthenwares (BERTH), miscellaneous late post-medieval (LPMLOC) and Cistercian ware (CSTN). Apart from the Cistercian ware which might be of late 15th or 16th century-date the sherds are all of later 16th to 19th century date.

Stone

A hone of Norwegian Rag, a grey schist from Eidsborg in southern Norway, was recovered from context 7007. The hone has a square cross section and tapers in both directions from its thickest point. Whether this shape was original or caused by repeated sharpening is not clear.

Assessment

Area A

Twenty-six sherds of pottery were recovered from Area A, from five contexts. The *tpq* of these contexts ranges from the late 11th century (1015) through the mid/late 12th century (1012 and 1027 to the mid 14th century (1017 and 1025). These finds suggest occupation from the later 11th or 12th centuries through to the middle of the 14th century. No pottery was recovered from the agricultural soil.

Table 1

context	BEVO	BRANDSBY	HUM	RED	SANDY	YG	YORK	YSLP	Grand Total
1012							1		1
1015						4			4
1017			1						1
1025	1	5	3			2	4	3	18
1027				1			1		2
Grand Total	1	5	4	1		6	6	3	26

Area A extension

Two sherds of pottery were recovered from context 805 in the extension to Area A. One is a fresh sherd of Roman pottery and the other is the only sherd of definite pre-conquest date from the site. The character of these two sherds is so different from that of the remaining pottery from the site that it suggests that they may have been present in soil originating within the city dumped on the site during the medieval period, or later.

Table 2

Context	TORK	YAT00	Grand Total
805	1	1	2
Grand Total	1	1	2

Trench 3

Eight sherds of pottery were recovered from trench 3, from two contexts. Context 3003 contains a mixed assemblage in which the latest sherds are post-medieval and 3005 has a *tpq* of mid 14th century. The earliest possible sherds from this trench were Brandsby-type ware, but this ware continued to be produced into the late medieval period.

Table 3

Context	BERTH	BRANDSBY	HAMBLETON	HUM	LHUM	MTIL	Grand Total
3003				1	1	2	
3005	1	3	1			1	6
Grand Total	1	3	1	1	1	1	8

Trench 4

Fifteen sherds of pottery were recovered from Trench 4, from eight contexts. The contexts have *tpq* ranging from the Roman period (4009, 4029 and possibly 4031) through the mid 11th century (4011), the mid/late 12th century (4013 and 4017) to the late medieval (4020) and early modern periods (4027). The presence of 5 of the 8 sherds of mid 11th to mid 12th-century Stamford ware in this trench is noteworthy.

Table 4

Context	LPMLOCR/MTIL	RTIL	STAM	WALMGATE	YATE	00YATO	00YATS	0YORK	Grand Total
4009				1					1
4011			4			1	1		6
4013								1	1
4017			1					1	2
4020				1					1
4027	1								1
4029			2						2
4031		1							1

Grand											
Total	1	1	2	5	1		1	1	1	2	15

Trench 5

Three sherds of pottery were recovered from Trench 5, from two contexts. 5004 dates to the later 15th-century or later and 5006 dates to the 17th-century or later.

Table 5

Context	BERTH	CSTN	R/MTIL	Grand Total
5004		1		1
5006	1		1	2
Grand Total	1	1	1	3

Trench 7

Sixteen sherds of pottery were recovered from Trench 7, from two contexts. Context 7006 dates to the mid 14th century or later, but is a mixed assemblage including three sherds of mid 11th to mid 12th-century Stamford ware. Context 7007 produced a single Norwegian Ragstone hone stone. The use of this schist, imported from southern Norway, started in the 10th century and continued to at least the early 14th century.

Table 6

	RED									Grand
context	BEVO SANDY		STAM	STONE	WALMGATE	YATC01YG	YORK YSPL		Total	
7006	1	1	3		1	1	4	4	1	16
7007				1						1
Grand										
Total	1	1	3	1	1	1	4	4	1	17

Interpretation

There is evidence for Roman activity on the site, in the form of sherds of abraded Roman pottery in later contexts and the abraded fragments of Roman tile. Most of this evidence comes from Trench 4 with residual sherds in Trenches 5 and 7. In addition, there was probably some dumping of material containing Roman finds on the site at some later period (Extension to Area A).

There is only one sherd of definitely pre-conquest pottery from the site, in a context which may include dumped material (Extension to Area A). With this exception, the first post-Roman pottery from the site comes from Trenches 4 and 7 and seems to indicate occupation in the immediately pre- or post-Conquest period. This horizon, characterised by high quantities of Stamford ware, is known from within the historic core of York, north of the Ouse and west of the Foss, but is rare or absent elsewhere. This suggests that suburban development in the Walmgate area began in the mid 11th century. There is, however, no particular concentration of mid 12th-century pottery types (mainly splashed wares) and the next main phase of activity is in the later 12th to mid 13th centuries, as on many peripheral sites in York.

There appears to be a major shift in activity in the mid 14th century. Area A and Trenches 4 and 7 produced no finds later than this date whilst Trenches 3 and 5 produced nothing earlier.

Although an agricultural soil was noted on site and dated to the medieval period the only sherds which look as though they might have been subject to ploughing are Roman and all from Trench 4. The remaining finds have the character of primary or secondary rubbish from occupation or refuse deposits.

None of the finds is worthy of further treatment at this stage but all should be retained for future study.

Appendix One

Area	context	name	date	subfabric	Form	Nosh	NoV	Action	Description
A	1012	YORK	emed		JAR/BOWL1	1			MOTTLED CUGL INT;KT BASE ANGLE
A	1015	YG	sn		JAR	1	1		
A	1015	YG	sn		JAR	2	2		
A	1015	YG	sn		JAR	1	1		KT BASE ANGLE
A	1017	HUM	lmed		JUG	1	1		
A	1025	BEVO	emed		JUG	1	1		CUGL
A	1025	BRANDSBY	med		JUG	3	3		CUGL
A	1025	BRANDSBY	med		JUG	1	1		APPLIED VERT STRIP;CUGL
A	1025	BRANDSBY	med		JUG	1	1		CUGL;SLIGHT CORDON AT NECK;WAVY COMBING ON SHOULDER
A	1025	HUM	lmed		JUG/JAR	3	3		
A	1025	YG	sn		JAR	1	1		

Area	context	name	date	subfabric	Form	Nosh	NoV	Action	Description
A	1025	YG	sn		JAR	1	1		
A	1025	YORK	emed		JAR	1	1		
A	1025	YORK	emed		JAR	1	1		
A	1025	YORK	emed		JUG	2	2		CUGL
A	1025	YSLP	emed		JUG	3	3		
A	1027	RED SANDY	emed		JUG	1	1		ROD HANDLE;TWO THUMB MARKED AT B/H;PLAIN SPLASH GLAZE
A	1027	YORK	emed		JUG	1	1		CUGL
3	3003	HUM	lmed		JUG/JAR	1	1		
3	3003	LHUM	pmed		BOWL	1	1		
3	3005	BERTH	pmed		PANC	1	1		
3	3005	BRANDSBY	med		JUG	2	2		CUGL
3	3005	BRANDSBY	med		JUG	1	1		THUMB IMPRESSIONS TO EITHER SIDE OF R/H

Area	context	name	date	subfabric	Form	Nosh	NoV	Action	Description
3	3005	HAMBLETON	lmed		JUG	1	1		CUGL EXT;KT EXT
3	3005	MTIL	emed		FLAT	1	1		
4	4009	YATE00	rom			1	1		
4	4011	STAM	sn		PTCH	2	2		DRAB GL
4	4011	STAM	sn		JAR	2	2		UNGLAZED
4	4011	YATO0	rom			1	1		
4	4011	YATS0	rom			1	1		
4	4013	YORK	emed		JUG	1	1		CUGL;HORIZ GROOVE;ROUNDED VERT APPLIED STRIP
4	4017	STAM	sn		JAR	1	1		DRAB GL EXT
4	4017	YORK	emed		JAR	1	1		MIGHT BE EBOR
4	4020	WALMGATE	lmed		JUG	1	1		OVAL-SECTIONED HANDLE;WHITE SLIPPED;CUGL;FOUR DEEP GROOVES ON BACK
4	4027	LPMLOC	emod		FLP	1	1		

Area	context	name	date	subfabric	Form	Nosh	NoV	Action	Description
4	4029	RTIL	rom			2	2		
4	4031	R/MTIL	rom		BRICK	1	1		BLOATED AND WARPED
5	5004	CSTN	epmed	FINE DK RED FABRIC	CUP	1	1		CYLINDRICAL BODY WITH SLIGHT RIBBING
5	5006	BERTH	pmed		JUG/JAR	1	1		HORIZ GROOVED LINE;EXT BROWN GL
5	5006	R/MTIL	rom			1	1		BLOATED AND SPALLED WASTER
7	7006	BEVO	emed		JUG	1	1		VERT WHITE APPLIED STRIPS;GLOSSY PLAIN GL
7	7006	RED SANDY	emed		JUG	1	1		EXT GL
7	7006	STAM	sn		JAR	1	1		UNGLAZED
7	7006	STAM	sn		JAR	1	1		UNGLAZED
7	7006	STAM	sn		JAR	1	1		KT SAGGING BASE;UNGLAZED
7	7006	WALMGATE	lmed		JUG	1	1		
7	7006	YATC01	rom		BEAKER	1	1		
7	7006	YG	sn		JAR	2	2		

Area	context	name	date	subfabric	Form	Nosh	NoV	Action	Description
7	7006	YG	sn		JAR	1	1		SQUARED RIM
7	7006	YG	sn		JUG	1	1		
7	7006	YORK	emed		JUG	1	1		MOTTLED CUGL
7	7006	YORK	emed		JUG	1	1		PLAIN GL SPLASHES
7	7006	YORK	emed		JUG	1	1		CUGL
7	7006	YORK	emed		JUG	1	1		LARGE CIRCULAR APPLIED SEAL
7	7006	YSPL	emed		JUG	1	1		PLAIN BASE ANGLE
7	7007	STONE	nd	NORWEGIAN RAG?	HONE	1	1	PH	SQUARE SECTION;SLIGHT TAPERING IN BOTH DIRECTIONS FROM A CENTRAL POINT
A	EXT	805	TORK	lsax	JAR	1	1		
A	EXT	805	YAT00	rom	FLAG	1	1		
US	US	BERTH	pmed		BOWL	1	1		LID-SEATED RIM

Area	context	name	date	subfabric	Form	Nosh	NoV	Action	Description
US	US	BERTH	pmed		JAR	1	1		PATCHY GLAZE INSIDE RIM
US	US	YAT00	rom			1	1		
US	US	YAT00	rom			1	1		
US	US	YG	sn	REDUCED GREY CORE AND INT;OXID MARGINS	JAR	2	1		
US	US	YG	sn		JAR	1	1		