Assessment of the finds from Methley Primary School, Methley, West Yorkshire (OSA03 EV07)

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One hundred and forty seven artefacts from an archaeological evaluation carried out by On Site Archaeology at Methley Primary School, Methley, were submitted for identification and assessment. They consisted mainly of potsherds, of post-medieval and early modern date, with smaller quantities of ceramic building material, stone and metal finds.

The earliest find was a single sherd of late medieval pottery, from context 108. Post-medieval pottery, dating probably to the 17th century, was recovered from almost all other investigated contexts. Its condition is in the main comparable with that of later pottery from the site and this suggests that it was not subjected to weathering in a ploughsoil. Mostly likely, it was deposited on the site at the time the site land use changed from ridge and furrow ploughing to enclosed pasture.

There is then a gap in deposition, with no material characteristic of the later 17th to mid 18th centuries, and the pottery sequence then starts again in the later 18th to early 19th century, from which point onwards the sequence is probably continuous until some point in the late 19th/early 20th century. Within this late material an unstratified token is an interesting find since it was issued by the company which ran Whitwood Colliery.

Context	Data	CBM	COPP	СТР	IRON	PMGL	POTTERY	STONE	Grand Total
100	Nosh	1				1	5		7
	NoV	1				1	5		7
	Weight	194				3	40		237
108	Nosh	4		1			1		6
	NoV	4		1			1		6
	Weight	22		2			22		46
200	Nosh			5	1	1	6	1	14
	NoV			5	1	1	6	1	14
	Weight			23	26	3	26	3	81

Table 1

201	Nosh	4					3		7
	NoV	4					3		7
	Weight	594					52		646
300	Nosh	2	2	5		7	31	5	52
	NoV	2	2	5		7	23	2	41
	Weight	182	6	8		18	179	28	421
301	Nosh						1		1
	NoV						1		1
	Weight						6		6
400	Nosh	2		3		2	35	3	45
	NoV	2		3		2	35	3	45
	Weight	69		5		23	175	6	278
402	Nosh	2					3		5
	NoV	1					2		3
	Weight	2					49		51
US	Nosh		1				7	2	10
	NoV		1				7	2	10
	Weight		9				84	48	141
Total Nosh		15	3	14	1	11	92	11	147
Total NoV		14	3	14	1	11	83	8	134
Total Weight		1063	15	38	26	47	633	85	1907

Description

Ceramic Building Material

Fifteen fragments of ceramic building material were recovered. Two of these were too small for certain identification and the remainder were of three types:

- a) White-firing bricks and tiles made from Coal Measures whiteware clay. These include a fire brick, used to line the coal box of a domestic fired, and two pantile fragments.
- b) Red-firing bricks made from Coal Measures redware clay with added quartz sand. These are featureless fragments of brick.
- c) Red-firing bricks made from Coal Measures redware clay with no added temper. These are all bricks and include two with stamped frogs incorporating the name "Castleford". They are of later 19th or early 20th-century date.

Copper Alloy

There are three copper alloy finds from the site:

- A halfpenny of Victoria, dated 1861. This has been almost completed sheared in half and then discarded
- 2) A token. OBV: Circular band: Henry Briggs Son & Co Limited. Two line inscription in centre: Whitwood Colliery. REV: E 74. Henry Briggs Son & Co ran the Whitwood Colliery from 1874 onwards. It finally closed in the 1970s but this token must date to the last decades of the 19th century or early in the 20th century.
- 3) A brooch made from a single rectangular strip of metal, twisted twice in the centre. The circular-sectioned spring is missing.

Clay Tobacco Pipe

Fourteen fragments of clay tobacco pipe were found. These include six stem fragments with wide bores typically of early to mid 17th-century pipes. These came from contexts 108, 200, 300 and 400. The remainder all have much narrower bores, typical of later 18th and 19th-century pipes. These fragments are also mainly stems but include one yellow-glazed mouthpiece, one moulded mouthpiece and one fragment of a spurred pipe with a decorated bowl. Later 17th to mid 18th-century pipes are absent.

Iron

A single fragment of slag was found, in context 200. It is probably tap slag from iron smelting.

Glass

Eleven fragments of glass were recovered. All are likely to date to the 19th or early 20th century apart from a thin fragment of light green window glass from context 300 which is likely to be of 17th century date.

The later glass consists of light blue, light green, opaque white and clear vessel fragments, mostly too small for positive identification. They include some vessels with mould-blown bodies and rims added by hand and one fragment of a light green mineral water or ginger beer bottle of late 19th century date.

A glass marble was found. This marble was handmade, with a ground pontil mark, and this suggests a late 19th or early 20th century date. The design is complex, consisting of a central clear glass core surrounded by a layer of opaque white rods, then another layer of clear glass, then four canes. These canes are of two types: one has a central wider salmon pink rod with opaque rods on either side and the other has a wider blue rod with yellow rods on either side. All are then encased in another layer of clear glass.

Pottery

Ninety-two fragments of pottery were recovered. They form two quite distinct groups: the first includes sherds of later medieval and early post-medieval types and the second consists of sherds of later 18th, 19th and early 20th century date. There is a difference in their average fragment weight which is only partially explicable by the thicker, coarser nature of the earlier pottery. The average size of the earlier sherds is 13.65gm and for the later wares is 5.19gm.

Late medieval and Post-medieval wares

This collection consists of twenty sherds. One, from context 108, is of a sand-tempered red-firing earthenware with a reduced body and oxidized exterior. It may be of late medieval date although it might be slightly later. The remainder are all of types which occur in the later 16th and early to mid 17th centuries: Blackwares, Brown-glazed earthenwares, Cistercian-type wares, Midlands Yellow ware, Staffordshire Coarseware and Staffordshire Red ware. It is possible that the Midlands and Staffordshire types are local versions of these midlands types since the same clay beds outcrop in West Yorkshire and slipware potteries are known to have been operating at Halifax, for example. The collection includes no slip-trailed vessels of the types which became increasingly common from the 1680s onwards, nor are examples of late 17th to mid 18th-century stonewares. This suggests a cut-off date for the collection of c.1680.

Early Modern wares

Seventy-two sherds of later 18th, 19th and early 20th-century wares were present, all as small sherds. Many of these sherds were spalled through freeze/thaw action indicating that they were present in the topsoil rather than deeply buried. Apart from a single fragment of flowerpot all of the wares were of mass-produced types, ranging in date from Creamwares, through Pearlwares, Transfer-printed wares to white earthenwares and porcelains. Two fragments of stoneware jars were found. Both are of similar size and shape to Derbyshire stoneware blackleading bottles but neither appear to be Derbyshire products and a more northern source is likely.

A wide range of forms is present with bowls and tea cups being the most common (Table 2). There are relatively few plate sherds and sherds from larger vessels, such as tureens.

cname	BLACK	BOWLCLSDC	UP DISH	DISH/BOWLFLP	JAR	JUG/JAROBJECTPLATETRIVETTURE	ENGrand Total
	LEADIN	G					TOLAI
	ВОТ						
BERTH				1.00			1.00
BL					5.00)	5.00
CREA		2.00					2.00
CSTN			2.00				2.00
ENGS	2.00				4.00)	6.00
ENPO		5.00	8.00 3.00				16.00
LMLOC						1.00	1.00
LPMLO	С			1.00)		1.00
MY		1.00					1.00
PEAR		1.00					7.00
STCO			1.00				1.00
STCOA	R	3.00					3.00

Table 2

STMO									1.00
STRE		1.00	6.00						7.00
TPW		4.00	2.00			1.00	7.00		1.00 17.00
WHITE		7.00 1.00	5.00		2.00		2.00	1.00	21.00
Grand Total 2	2.00	24.00 1.00	17.00 10.00	1.00 1.00	11.00 1.00	1.00	9.00	1.00	1.00 92.00

Of particular note is the presence of a fragment of lead glazed whiteware trivet and biscuit-fired sherds of whiteware bowls, cups and plates. These fragments are debris from pottery production but it is not clear from their typology what date they might be. The moulded trivet has two conical projections at the ends of the arm and was made in a two-piece mould. Similar trivets from Pontefract were dated by David Barker of the Potteries Museum to the later 19th century. The bowls and cups were all thrown on a wheel and their outer surfaces then turned to pare down the wall thickness. The plate, however, seems to have been press-moulded. This technology is typical of the late 18th and 19th centuries.

No pottery is recorded in Methley itself and the nearest appears to be those at Castleford. Dunderdale's pottery at Whitwood Mere, Castleford, is probably too early for their pieces, although only the trivet actually provides this post-1850 date. Other Castleford potteries operated throughout the 19th century/

The Eagle Pottery is recorded as operating in Castleford in the 1850s and 1860s ({Brears 1971 #11803}, 222). The 1852 OS map of Castleford in fact shows several potteries on the southwest approach to Castleford, along the road to Whitwood (White-ware Pottery, Bateson's Pottery, and Mere Pottery). Clearly, if the Methley site was used for the large scale dumping of Castleford waste it would be of some interest to recover and record this waste. However, the evaluation seems to record only a 'background scatter' which, given the output of Castleford might be expected to have ended up distributing waste for some miles around the potteries themselves.

Stone

Eleven fragments of stone were submitted for identification. Of these, six were Coal Measures shale showing signs of burning and are clearly debris from coal burning, probably just domestic waste, whilst the remaining five fragments are unworked fragments of an iron/clay nodule, limonite (x2) and micrite (x2). The latter are likely to be of Permian date. The closest outcrop of rock of this type is just to the east of Castleford and it is doubtful if such fragments occur naturally in superficial deposits in the Methley area, which is located on Westphalian Coal Measures with drainage running from west to east.

Assessment

There is only tentative evidence from the finds for any activity before the mid 17th century, although several of the post-medieval pottery types found were in use earlier, in some cases in the later 15th century. Nevertheless, the finds suggest that there was a brief phase of activity on the site in the mid 17th century including the deposition of 20 sherds of pottery, six fragments of clay tobacco pipes and a single piece of window glass. The presence of window glass suggests that these finds are refuse from a moderately well-off household since it was during the century from c.1550 to c.1650 that window glass came into widespread use in England.

There is then a complete break in deposition until the late 18th or even early 19th century. The earliest of these later finds are two sherds of Creamware. Creamware was first produced c.1765 but continued to be made into the 19th century. Furthermore, it is likely that Creamware vessels were passed on from generation to generation and might not have been discarded until decades after manufacture. With their exception, there is nothing in the collection which is necessarily earlier than c.1850. Indeed, industrial slipware, Creamware and Pearlware vessels decorated with lathe-applied slip decoration and mocha patterns, are absent. These were current and popular in the decades either side of 1800. The character of this later assemblage is interesting. There are no vessels used in the preparation or cooking of food (with the possible exception of the possible tureen, which could have been used for display). The presence of children (or young adults, to judge by contemporary illustrations of marble players) is indicated by the marble and it is possible that the sheared halfpenny is also an example of youthful play rather than a failed attempt to re-use the coin.

We have evidence for waste from a local pottery in this late phase. This was almost certainly one of the Castleford factories although Methley is several miles from the nearest factory, which was probably that at Mere off Whitwood Lane on the southwest side of Castleford. It is possible that waste from Castleford was used in land reclamation or hard core in the Methley area or that biscuit fired vessels were being sold for use having been deemed to imperfect for glazing. The trivet fragment could be part of the same waste although one would imagine that trivets would have been reused as toys.

Finally, we have a reminder of the industrial nature of the area in the late 19th and early 20th century, in the form of a token from the Whitwood Colliery. Such tokens were meant to be redeemable only in shops run by the colliery owners and, unlike their 17th-century counterparts, did not pass into general usage since there was adequate official small change during this period. There is a likelihood, therefore, that this late domestic refuse includes that of people employed in the colliery.

Henry Briggs Son & Co Ltd were remarkable as colliery owners in that they employed architects to design their workers terrace housing and operating a profit-sharing scheme for the miners.

The collection of finds from the evaluation is small and without any archaeological context does not merit further study. However, the finds do indicate that there is potentially some interesting postmedieval archaeology on or near the site and the collection of a larger assemblage from further work

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would both help to clarify some of the interpretations made here and provide material which could add detail to the social history of the area of a type which will not be found in documentary sources.

Appendix. List of finds

Context	t class DATE	E cname	subfabric	Form	NoshN	oV Description	Part
			ABUNDANT CM				
100	CBM	PMTIL	SHALE	BRICK	1	1FROGGED BRICK;RED SLIPPED;MARKED 'CAS' [CASTLEFORD]	BS
100	PMGL	PMGL	CLEAR	TUMBLER	1	1MIGHT BE BOTTLE BUT WALLS SLIGHTLY TAPER	BS
100	POTTERY16.2	BL		JAR	1	1	BS
100	POTTERY18.2	TPW		OBJECT	1	1RECTANGULAR VESSEL; POSSIBLY A TUREEN LID	BS
100	POTTERY19.1	ENPO		CUP	1	1	BS
100	POTTERY19.2	WHITE		CUP	1	1	R
100	POTTERY19.2	WHITE		CLSD	1	1	BS
			SAND TEMPERED)			
108	CBM	PMTIL	VARIEGATED	BRICK	4	4	BS
108	СТР	PIPECLA	Y	PIPE	1	117TH C BORE	BS
108	POTTERY14.2	LMLOC	SANDY	JUG/JAR	1	UNGLAZED;THUMBED BODY/HANDLE JOIN;REDUCED WITH OXID EXT 1MARGIN AND SURFACE	BS
200	СТР	PIPECLA	Y	PIPE	3	317TH C BORE	BS
200	СТР	PIPECLA	Y	PIPE	1	119TH C BORE	BS
200	СТР	PIPECLA	Y	PIPE	1	119TH C BORE;SPURRED;DEC BOWL	BS
	IRON	IRON		WASTE	1	1SLAG	BS
	PMGL	PMGL	CLEAR	JAR	1	1ADDED RIM	BS
			FINE DARK		•		
200	POTTERY16.2	BL	BROWN	JAR	1	1	BS
200	POTTERY18.2	PEAR		BOWL	1	1	В
200	POTTERY18.2	TPW		BOWL	1	1PURPLE INK	BS

Contex	t class DATE	E cname	subfabric	Form	NoshNo	Description	Part
200	POTTERY19.1	ENPO		CUP	1	1SPRIGGED;THIN-WALLED	BS
200	POTTERY19.2	WHITE	WASTE	CUP	1	1UNGLAZED;WHEELTHROWN TURNED EXT;HANDLE JOIN	BS
200	POTTERY19.2	WHITE		BOWL	1	1	BS
200	STONE	STONE	CM SHALE	WASTE	1	1	BS
201	CBM	PMTIL		-	1	1	BS
201	СВМ	PMTIL	ABUNDANT CM SHALE	BRICK	1	1FROGGED BRICK;RED SLIPPED	BS
201	СВМ	PMTIL	ABUNDANT CM SHALE	BRICK	1	1FROGGED BRICK;RED SLIPPED; MARKED 'LEFOR' [CASTLEFORD]	BS
201	СВМ	PMTIL	CMW	PANT	1	1	BS
201	POTTERY16.2	BL	FINE RED	JAR	1	1	BS
201	POTTERY17.1	STRE		BOWL	1	1WHITE SLIPPED INT	BS
201	POTTERY19.2	WHITE	WASTE	BOWL	1	1UNGLAZED;WHEELTHROWN;TURNED EXT;ROUNDED RIM	R
300	СВМ	MOD	ABUNDANT CM SHALE	BRICK	1	10NE KT FACE	BS
300	СВМ	PMTIL	CMW	FIRE BRICK	1	1FROM COAL FIRE?	BS
300	COPP	COPP		BROOCH	1	BODY AND CATCH MADE FROM A SINGLE RECTANGULAR-SECTIONED 1STRIP TWISTED TWICE IN THE MIDDLE;THE PIN IS MISSING	BS
300	COPP	COPP		COIN	1	1HALFPENNY OF 1861 ALMOST COMPLETELY SHEARED IN HALF	BS

Context	class DAT	E cname	subfabric	Form	NoshN	oV Description	Part
300	СТР	PIPECLA	Y	PIPE	1	117TH C BORE	STEM
300	CTP	PIPECLA	Y	PIPE	3	319TH C BORE	BS
300	CTP	PIPECLA	Y	PIPE	1	1YELLOW GLAZED TIP;19TH C BORE	BS
300	PMGL	PLGL	OPAQUE WHITE		1	1THIN-WALLED VESSEL	BS
300	PMGL	PMGL	CLEAR	-	1	1	BS
300	PMGL	PMGL	CLEAR	BOT	1	1MOULDED SQUARE BOTTLE	BS
300	PMGL	PMGL	LTBL	BOT	1	1MOULDED BASE WITH CENTRAL RAISED DOT	BS
300	PMGL	PMGL	LTGR	BOT	1	1MOULDED;LETTERING RUNNING LENGTHWAYS DOWN BOTTLE	BS
300	PMGL	PMGL	LTGR	WIND	1	1	BS
300	PMGL	PMGL	LTBL	WIND	1	1	BS
			FINE DK RROWN				
	POTTERY16.2		FABRIC	JAR	1	1	BS
300	POTTERY16.2	BL		JAR	1	1	BS
300	POTTERY17.1	STRE		DISH	1	1WHITE INT SLIP	BS
300	POTTERY17.1	STRE	FINE SANDY CM RED	DISH	1	1WHITE INT SLIP	BS
	POTTERY17.1		NED .	DISH	1	1WHITE INT SLIP	BS
	POTTERY18.2				1	1	BS
				- CUP	1		BS
	POTTERY18.2				1	1	
	POTTERY18.2			BOWL	1		BS
	POTTERY18.2			CUP	1	1LIGHT BLUE INK	R
300	POTTERY18.2	PEAR			6	1	R

Contex	t class DATI	E cname	subfabric	Form	NoshNo	oV Description	Part
300	POTTERY18.2	STMO		-	1	1FOOTRING	В
300	POTTERY18.2	TPW		TUREEN	1	1	BS
300	POTTERY19.1	ENPO		CUP	1	1	BS
300	POTTERY19.1	ENPO		BOWL	1	1	R
300	POTTERY19.1	ENPO		CUP	3	1	BS
300	POTTERY19.1	ENPO		CUP	1	1	Н
300	POTTERY19.1	ENPO		DISH	1	1	R
300	POTTERY19.1	ENGS	NOT QUITE RIGH FOR DERBS	IT BLACKLEADIN BOT	NG 1	1	BS
300	POTTERY19.1	ENGS	NOT QUITE RIGH	IT BLACKLEADII BOT	NG 1	1	В
300	POTTERY19.2	WHITE		-	1	1	BS
300	POTTERY19.2	WHITE		BOWL	2	1LIGHT BLUE INDUSTRIAL SLIP BANDS	R
300	POTTERY19.2	WHITE		JAR	1	1	В
300	POTTERY19.2	WHITE		PLATE	1	1	R
300	STONE	STONE	CM SHALE	WASTE	5	2	BS
301	POTTERY17.1	STRE		DISH	1	1RED SLIP EXT; POSSIBLE WHITE SLIP INT	BS
400	CBM	PMTIL	CMW	PANT	1	1	BS
			SAND TEMPERE				
400	CBM	PMTIL	CM RED	BRICK	1	1	BS
400	CTP	PIPECLA	YCMW	PIPE	1	117TH C BORE	BS
400	CTP	PIPECLA	Y	PIPE	1	119TH C BORE	BS
400	СТР	PIPECLA	Y	PIPE	1	119TH C BORE;MOULDED MOUTHPIECE	BS

Contex	t class DATE	E cname	subfabric	Form	NoshN	oV Description	Part
400	PMGL	PMGL	CLEAR	JAR	1	1APPLIED RIM	BS
						CLEAR CORE;THEN A LAYER OF FINE WHITE RODS;THEN ANOTHER CLEAN LAYER;THEN FOUR COMPOSITE CANES (TWO WHITE RODS WITH A CENTRAL SALMON PINK AND TWO YELLOW RODS WITH A CENTRAL	
400	PMGL	PMGL		ALLEY	1	1BLUE);THEN AN OUTER CLEAR LAYER;THE PONTIL MARK IS GROUND	BS
400	POTTERY15.2	CSTN		CUP	1	1	BS
400	POTTERY15.2	CSTN		CUP	1	1	В
400	POTTERY17.1	STRE		DISH	1	1	BS
400	POTTERY17.1	STRE		DISH	1	1WHITE SLIPPED INT	BS
400	POTTERY17.2	STCOAR		BOWL	1	1	BS
400	POTTERY17.2	STCOAR		BOWL	1	1	BS
400	POTTERY17.2	STCOAR		BOWL	1	1	R
400	POTTERY18.2	TPW		PLATE	1	1	R
400	POTTERY18.2	CREA		BOWL	1	1	BS
400	POTTERY18.2	TPW		BOWL	1	1	BS
400	POTTERY18.2	TPW		-	1	1	BS
400	POTTERY18.2	CREA		BOWL	1	1	BS
400	POTTERY18.2	LPMLOC		FLP	1	1	BS
400	POTTERY18.2	TPW		PLATE	2	2	BS
400	POTTERY18.2	TPW		PLATE	1	1WILLOW PATTERN	BS
400	POTTERY18.2	TPW		BOWL	1	1LIGHT BROWN INK	R
400	POTTERY18.2	STCO		DISH	1	1LIGHT AND DARK BROWN TRAILING	BS
400	POTTERY19.1			BOWL	1	1	R

Contex	t class DA	TE cname	subfabric	Form	NoshN	oV Description	Part
400	POTTERY19.	1 ENPO		DISH	2	2	R
400	POTTERY19.	1 ENPO		BOWL	2	2	BS
400	POTTERY19.	1 ENPO		BOWL	1	1	BS
400	POTTERY19.	1 ENPO		CUP	1	1	В
400	POTTERY19.	1 ENGS		JAR	1	1BRISTOL GLAZE INT AND EXT	R
400	POTTERY19.	2 WHITE		-	1	1	BS
400	POTTERY19.	2 WHITE		BOWL	1	1DARK BROWN INDUSTRIAL SLIP HORIZ LINES	BS
400	POTTERY19.	2 WHITE		CUP	1	1	BS
400	POTTERY19.	2 WHITE		-	1	1	BS
400	POTTERY19.	2 WHITE		JAR	1	1	R
400	POTTERY19.	2 WHITE		BOWL	1	1	BS
400	POTTERY19.	2 WHITE		BOWL	1	1	В
400	POTTERY19.	2 WHITE	WASTE	CUP	1	1UNGLAZED;SPRIGGED DEC EXT	BS
400	POTTERY19.	2 WHITE	WASTE	PLATE	1	1UNGLAZED;MOULDED	В
400	STONE	STONE	LIMONITE	GEOL	1	1	BS
400	STONE	STONE	LIMONITE	GEOL	1	1	BS
400	STONE	STONE	MICRITE	GEOL	1	1DEPOSIT ON ONE SURFACE - NATURAL OR INDUSTRIAL	BS
402	CBM	PMTIL	CM RED?	-	2	1	BS
402	POTTERY19.	1 ENGS		JAR	2	1LID-SEATED;BROWN WASH EXT;WHITE GLAZE INT	BS
402	POTTERY19.	2 WHITE		CUP	1	1	В
US	COPP	COPP		TOKEN	4	10BV: HENRY BRIGGS SON & CO LIMITED/WHITWOOD COLLIERY;REV: E 74	DO

Contex	t class DAT	E cname	subfabric	Form	NoshN	oV Description	Part
US	POTTERY16.2	MY		BOWL	1	1	R
US	POTTERY16.2	BERTH		DISH/BOWL	1	1	BS
US	POTTERY18.2	TPW		PLATE	1	1MARKED 'II'	В
US	POTTERY18.2	TPW		PLATE	1	1	В
US	POTTERY18.2	TPW		PLATE	1	1	BS
US	POTTERY19.1	ENGS		JAR	1	1BROWN WASH EXT;WHITE GLAZE INT	В
US	POTTERY19.2	WHITE	WASTE	TRIVET	1	1MOULDED WITH CONES AT TIPS OF ARMS;DIAMOND CROSS-SECTION	BS
US	STONE	STONE	IRON/CLAY	GEOL	1	1UNWORKED PEBBLE	BS
US	STONE	STONE	MICRITE	GEOL	1	FLAT SLAB WITH HAEMATITE STAINING ON BOTH UPPER AND LOWER 1FACES	BS