

Assessment of the Roman and later pottery from Nosterfield, North Yorkshire (NOS'03)

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One hundred and sixty-five sherds of pottery, representing no more than 128 vessels and weighing 1.860kg from an excavation at Nosterfield, North Yorkshire, carried out by Field Archaeology Services were submitted for identification and assessment.

The pottery consists of a group of Romano-British date and a small number of medieval and later sherds. The Roman material is moderately abraded but includes several groups of sherds from the same vessel (sherd families). It is likely that the occupation which gave rise to this debris was situated on or close to the site. By contrast, the medieval and later sherds are smaller, more abraded and include no cross-fitting sherds. It is likely that these came onto the site with manure and that the settlement they originated in could be some distance from the site, although two small sherds (one broken into three post-burial) were recovered from occupation features – a well and a pit/kiln complex (cuts 202 and 102 respectively).

Description

Roman

The Roman pottery fabrics were recorded according to the system employed at York (Table 1. 1993; 1997).

One hundred and forty-seven sherds of Romano-British pottery were recovered from the excavations. Ninety-five of these were greywares of various sorts (a number of which appear to have been made at York, Eboracum wares) but there were also sherds of amphora, mortaria and samian ware. In total, 22 sherds were imported, 15 came from other British provinces, 7 were of York origin and the remaining 103 were of unknown but probably northern origin.

Table 1

cname	Narrow cname	Imported	Regional industries	Unknown British?	York	Total
AP25	Amphorae	10				10
B0	Grey B.				5	5
B0?	Grey B.				5	5
B1	BB1		14			14
B2	BB2		1			1
B6	BB2				68	68
E1?	Ebor				3	3
G0	Grey				13	13

G1?	Grey			1	1
M0	Mortaria			6	6
M3-6?	Mortaria			2	2
M14	Mortaria		1		1
O0	Misc. oxid			4	4
P0	'White'			2	2
S1?	SGS	1			1
S2?	LMDV samian	1			1
S3	CGS	7			7
S3?	CGS	3			3
W1?	Ebor white			1	1
Total		22	15	103	7 147

Although a number of the imported sherds did come from sherd families, there were still 15 separate vessels represented and so this high non-local and imported pottery frequency cannot be explained as being an accident of recovery.

The amphora sherds are all of Dressel 20 type (AP25). This type was produced in southwest Spain and used mainly for the transportation of olive oil.

The black burnished wares include unidentified examples (B0), Dorset Black-Burnished ware (BB1, York B1), and Black-Burnished ware 2 (BB2, York B2 and B6). B2 is the wheelthrown BB2 fabric produced in Essex and Kent.

Only one standard Ebor ware (E1) was tentatively identified but two of the mortaria sherds (M3-6?) and one white-slipped vessel (W1?) were found. This suggests that the site relied on other, more local, sources for its coarse cooking pottery but still acquired finer vessels from York.

Fourteen sherds of unidentified greyware (G0) and one sherd of a local greyware of a type found at York (G1) was tentatively identified.

Six unidentified sherds of mortaria were recovered (M0). These should be submitted to a specialist (Kay Hartley) for identification if the material is to be published.

There were four sherds of miscellaneous oxidized wares (O0) and two sherds of whiteware (P0).

The Samian wares include one example of a South Gaulish Samian (S1) form Dr18/31, one extremely abraded sherd, possibly from the Les Matres de Veyre factory, 7 positively-identified sherds of a Central Gaulish Samian ware decorated form Dr37 which includes a mould-makers stamp on the body and 3 possible examples, one from a dish and two from a form Dr18/31 vessel. The Samian ware should also be examined by a specialist should the material be published.

The range of vessel forms present (Table 2) indicates a wide range of functions, using in food preparation and storage (amphora, jars and mortaria) and serving (Flagons, Samian ware, dishes and beakers). The latter vessels are mainly imported and the former mainly local although examples of regionally imported jars are present. There is, however, an absence of bowls, which are normally a common element in Roman pottery assemblages throughout the Roman occupation.

Table 2

FORM	Broad Class	Imported	Regional industries	Unknown British?	York
18/31	Samian	1			
37	Samian	6			
AP25	Amphora	5			
D	Dishes	1	1		
DF	Dishes			1	
F	Flagons			1	
J	Jars			8	2
JC	Jars		3	59	
K	Beakers			1	1
M	Mortaria		1	4	

The Roman pottery indicates a settlement in which food was prepared and served in the Roman manner and this probably indicates that the users were Romanised natives or perhaps members of the administration. Whether there was a difference in pottery supply or use between these two groups would require further research.

The date of the occupation is broadly-speaking late 1st to early 3rd century but there are only 19 sherds which come from contexts which do not also contain early 2nd-century or later wares. These contexts are 1084, 1138, 1199, 1239, 1298, 1349, 1365, 1554, 1698 and 1995. Only one of these contexts produced more than a single sherd (1239) and it is very likely that these contexts too date to the early to mid 2nd century but contained assemblages which are too small to contain the diagnostic, datable types.

A single sherd of Les Matres de Veyre Samian ware was found. This factory was in operation c.100-120 AD but its products may have continued to be stockpiled and sold much later. The Central Gaulish Samian ware dates to 120 AD or later and is present in several contexts. A number of contexts contain either BB1 or other burnished wares, assumed to be influenced by the fashion for BB1 and therefore of similar starting date. These wares first appear in northern England in the Hadrianic period. In total, the following contexts produced pottery dating to the 2nd century or later: 1122, 1128, 1133, 1139, 1148, 1149, 1309, 1367, 1399, 1513 and 1715.

The latest datable type present is a sherd of Mancetter-Hartshill mortaria, a wall-sided mortaria of early 3rd century date. There are no sherds of Dales ware, Calcite-tempered wares, Nene Valley colour-coated wares, Crambeck wares or any other types which might be expected if occupation continued into the later 3rd and 4th centuries.

Medieval

Eleven sherds of medieval pottery were found. All are small and abraded. They include sherds of wheelthrown gritty wares, tempered with fragments of Millstone Grit sandstone and its constituents, North Yorkshire whiteware, either from the Brandsby kilns or other industries using the white-firing clays which outcrop around the borders of the North Yorkshire Moors, a possible sherd of Tees Valley ware, produced somewhere on the south side of the Tees valley, and a sherd of Humber ware, made from a silty clay somewhere in the Humber wetlands. It is unlikely that any of these sherds are earlier than c.1150 whilst most are likely to be high or late medieval (i.e. later 13th to 15th centuries).

Post-medieval

Three sherds of post-medieval pottery were found. One of these, an untempered red earthenware, might be a fragment of tile rather than pottery (PMX). Another is a lead-glazed red earthenware with a white internal slip, of the type produced in northeast England in the 18th and 19th centuries (SUND). The third is a sherd of Reversed Cistercian ware. This type was a minor product of industries such as that at Wrenthorpe where small cups decorated with applied brown clay and covered internally and externally with a thick lead glaze were produced alongside the standard Cistercian ware types, which have a red-firing body and are decorated with white applied slip. The type is of 16th to early 17th-century date.

Assessment

The Roman pottery comes from a settlement of early 2nd to 3rd century date which may have its origins in the later 1st century, although this is doubtful. The range of wares and forms present suggests that the users cooked and served their food in a Roman manner and there is little evidence for the use of handmade 'native' wares (apart from a sherd from context 1391). It is possible that occupation was present on the site before this date but that the occupants continued to use the same pottery types as they had in the Iron Age. The mould-makers stamp on the samian ware bowl is comparatively rare and the sherd should be sent to Ms B Dickinson, who is compiling a National Corpus of samian stamps. The unidentified mortaria and the decorated samian ware, however, only require specialist identification if the collection is to be published since they might aid closer dating and provide more information on pottery supply.

The medieval and later pottery from the site is small and abraded and seems to span a long period of time with no apparent chronological concentrations. This is consistent with the pottery coming onto the site with manure and six of the sherds were found in the backfill of furrows, including the Reversed Cistercian ware sherd.

Appendix One

Context	PERIOD	Nosh	NoV	Weight	cname	Broad cname	Broad source	Narrow cname	Form	description
1001	LMED	1	1	10HUM					JUG/JARGLAZED;BH JOIN	
1001	MED			ZDATE					POSTRO	
1074	MED	1	1	NORTHERN 5GRITTY				JUG	BS GLAZED	
1074	MED			ZDATE					POSTRO	
1084	EROM			ZDATE					CP1B-2	
1084	EROM	1	1	2E1?	EBOR	York	Ebor	K	BS;INDENTED?	
1122	ROM			ZDATE					CP1B-2	
1122	ROM			ZDATE					CP2A-2B	
1122	ROM			ZZZ					SAM FAB AS REST 37	
1122	ROM			ZZZ					SHOW MORT K HARTLEY	
1122	ROM	3	2	222AP25	AMPH	Imported	Amphorae	AP25	BSS; EFAB	
1122	ROM	2	1	23B6	BURNISHED	Unknown British?	BB2	DG1	RIM GIRTH BASAL BS	
1122	ROM	1	1	31M0	MORTARIA	Unknown British?	Mortaria	M	BS; WHT FAB MIX QZITE TRITS	
1122	ROM	1	1	103M0	MORTARIA	Unknown British?	Mortaria	ME	RIM UPPER WALL;Q? TRITS;AS	
1122	ROM	1	1	18M0	MORTARIA	Unknown British?	Mortaria	ME	RIM;Q? TRITS;AS	
1122	ROM	1	1	2O0	OXID	Unknown	Misc. oxid		FRAG	

Context	PERIOD	Nosh	NoV	Weight	cname	Broad cname	Broad source	Narrow cname	Form	description
							British?			
1122	ROM	1	1	19S3	SAMIAN	Imported	CGS	37	BS OVOLO	
1122	ROM	1	1	12S3	SAMIAN	Imported	CGS	37	BS SAME FAB;DIFF OVOLO	
1122	ROM	2	1	9S3?	SAMIAN	Imported	CGS	18/31?	RIMS UPPER WALL	
1122	ROM	1	1	5S3?	SAMIAN	Imported	CGS	D	BS	
1128	ROM			ZDATE					CP2A-2B	
1128	ROM			ZZZ					SAM FAB AS REST 37	
1128	ROM	1	1	22AP25	AMPH	Imported	Amphorae	AP25	BS	
1128	ROM	1	1	S3	SAMIAN	Imported	CGS	37	BS; BODY NAME STAMP	
1133	ROM			ZDATE					CP2A-2B	
1133	ROM			ZZZ					SAM FAB AS REST 37	
1133	ROM	3	1	13AP25	AMPH	Imported	Amphorae	AP25	BSS FRAGS	
1133	ROM	1	1	2E1?	EBOR	York	Ebor	J OR K	BS	
1133	ROM	1	1	2S2?	SAMIAN	Imported	LMDV samian		FRAG SURFS NR LOST	
1133	ROM	1	1	15S3	SAMIAN	Imported	CGS	37	BS OVOLO	
1138	EROM			ZDATE					CP1B-2	
1138	EROM			ZDATE					CP2	
1138	EROM	1	1	40G0	GREY	Unknown British?	Grey	DF	RIM LWR WALL;SOOT/TAR EXT	
1138	EROM	1	1	6G0	GREY	Unknown British?	Grey	J	BASE CF G1 YORK; THIN	

Context	PERIOD	Nosh	NoV	Weight	cname	Broad cname	Broad source	Narrow cname	Form	description
1138	EROM	2	2	9G0		GREY	Unknown British?	Grey	J	BS CF G1 YORK; THIN
1138	EROM	1	1	42G0		GREY	Unknown British?	Grey	J	BS LARGE JAR; CF G1 YORK
1139	ROM			ZDATE						CP2A-2B
1139	ROM			ZZZ						SAM FAB AS REST 37
1139	ROM			ZZZ						SHOW MORT K HARTLEY
1139	ROM	2	1	6B0		BURNISHED	Unknown British?	Grey B.	JC	BSS
1139	ROM	4	1	22B1		BURNISHED	Regional Industries	BB1	DFL	RIM BSS BURNT OXID
1139	ROM	7	1	31B1		BURNISHED	Regional Industries	BB1	JC	RIM BSS
1139	ROM	1	1	4B2		BURNISHED	Regional Industries	BB2	D	BS
1139	ROM	1	1	16M0		MORTARIA	Unknown British?	Mortaria	M	BS; WHT FAB MIX QZITE TRITS
1139	ROM	1	1	15S3		SAMIAN	Imported	CGS	37	BS OVOLO
1139	STONE	1	1	1STONE						FLAKE; WORKED?
1147	MED	1	1	NORTHERN 2GRITTY					JAR	ID?
1147	MED			ZDATE						POSTRO
1148	ROM			ZDATE						CP2A-2B
1148	ROM			ZZZ						SAM FAB AS REST 37

Context	PERIOD	Nosh	NoV	Weight	cname	Broad cname	Broad source	Narrow cname	Form	description
1148	ROM				ZZZ					SHOW MORT K HARTLEY
1148	ROM	1	1	3B6		BURNISHED	Unknown British?	BB2	JC	RIM FRAG
1148	ROM	11	1	122B6		BURNISHED	Unknown British?	BB2	JC	RIMS BSS
1148	ROM	1	1	18M0		MORTARIA	Unknown British?	Mortaria	M	BS MIX R Q TRITS
1148	ROM	2	1	7S3		SAMIAN	Imported	CGS	37	RIMS SAME FAB AS REST 37'S AS
1149	ROM				ZDATE					CP2-3
1149	ROM				ZZZ					FLOT RES;CREMATION
1149	ROM	2	1	18B0		BURNISHED	Unknown British?	Grey B.	DD?	BASES
1199	LIA/EROM				ZDATE					PREH? -RO
1199	LIA/EROM	1	1	3G0		GREY	Unknown British?	Grey	J	BASE FINE SILTY; LIGHT WEIGHT
1199	LIA/EROM	1	1	100		OXID	Unknown British?	Misc. oxid		FLAKE; TILE?
1199	STONE	1	1	12	STONE?					FRAG PUMICE?; POSS PREH POT
1239	EROM				ZDATE					CP1B-2
1239	EROM				ZZZ					SHOW MORT K HARTLEY
1239	EROM	1	1	91M0		MORTARIA	Unknown British?	Mortaria	M	BASE; QUARZITE TRITS
1239	EROM	1	1	25M3-6?		MORTARIA	York	Mortaria	ME	RIM; EBOR? SAME FAB AS

Context	PERIOD	Nosh	NoV	Weight	cname	Broad cname	Broad source	Narrow cname	Form	description
1239	EROM	1	1	1100		OXID	Unknown British?	Misc. oxid	F	BS DK GREY CORE FRIABLE
1245	MED	1	1		NORTHERN 4GRITTY				JUG	BS ROULETTED/COMB
1245	MED				ZDATE					POSTRO
1298	EROM				ZDATE					CP1-2
1298	EROM				ZZZ					DR20 ONLY
1298	EROM	3	1	177AP25		AMPH	Imported	Amphorae	AP25	BSS FRAG;EFAB
1309	ROM				ZDATE					CP2
1309	ROM	2	1	2B1		BURNISHED	Regional Industries	BB1	JC	BSS FRAG;EFAB
1341	PMED	1	1	5SUND					BOWL	WHITE SLIPPED INT; MOTTLED BROWN GLAZE;LATE 18TH/19TH C
1341	PMED				ZDATE					POSTRO
1349	EROM				ZDATE					CP1B-2
1349	EROM				ZZZ					SHOW K HARTLEY
1349	EROM	1	1	111M3-6?		MORTARIA	York	Mortaria	ME	SPOUT; EBOR? SAME FAB AS
1365	EROM				ZDATE					CP1B - 2B
1365	EROM	1	1	20E1?		EBOR	York	Ebor	J	BASE FAB ID EBOR;PROB CP1
1367	ROM		1		ZDATE					CP2A
1367	ROM				ZZZ					SMASHED VESSEL
1367	ROM	54	54	252B6		BURNISHED	Unknown British?	BB2	JC	RIMS BSS; EXT ABRADED

Context	PERIOD	Nosh	NoV	Weight	cname	Broad cname	Broad source	Narrow cname	Form	description
1367	ROM	1	1	11G0		GREY	Unknown British?	Grey	J	BS CF G1 YORK; THIN
1391	LIA/EROM			ZDATE						I AGE - CP1
1391	LIA/EROM	1	1	5G0		GREY	Unknown British?	Grey	B OR D	BS SMOOTH INT
1391	LIA/EROM	2	1	25G0		GREY	Unknown British?	Grey	J	BSS HANDMADE
1399	LIA/EROM			ZDATE						CP2A-2B
1399	ROM	1	1	34B0		BURNISHED	Unknown British?	Grey B.	JC	BS SURFS LOST
1399	ROM	5	1	26B0?		BURNISHED	Unknown British?	Grey B.	JC	BSS SURFS LOST
1399	ROM	1	1	23G0		GREY	Unknown British?	Grey	DG1	RIM LWR WALL;SOOT/TAR EXT
1399	ROM	2	1	12G0		GREY	Unknown British?	Grey	J	BSS
1513	ROM			ZDATE						CP2
1513	ROM	1	1	6B1		BURNISHED	Regional Industries	BB1	JC	BS;SHLDR
1554	EROM			ZDATE						CP1B-2A
1554	EROM			ZZZ						SAM ONLY
1554	EROM	1	1	10S1?		SAMIAN	Imported	SGS	18/31	RIM BASE
1641	LIA/EROM	1	1	3FCLAY						FRAG QUARTZITE?
1641	LIA/EROM			ZDATE						PREHIST?

Context	PERIOD	Nosh	NoV	Weight	cname	Broad cname	Broad source	Narrow cname	Form	description
1670	MED	3	1		0MEDLOC				JUG	
1691	MED	1	1		0MEDLOC				JUG	
1694	MED	1	1		0MEDLOC				JUG	
1698	EROM				ZDATE					CP2+
1698	EROM	1	1		8G1?	GREY	York	Grey	J	BS SHLDR GROOVE CF EBOR
1705	ROM	1	1		30M14		Regional industries	Mancetter- Hartshill	MW	RIM GIRTH;BLK TRITS
1715	ROM				ZDATE					CP1-2
1715	ROM				ZDATE					CP2
1715	ROM				ZZZ					FAB EBORISH; W1
1715	ROM	2	1		1P0	'WHITE'	Unknown British?	'White'	K	BSS
1715	ROM	1	1		33W1?	EBOR	York	Ebor white	F1	BASE;WHT SLIP UNDER BASE
1725	MED	1	1		0TVW?				JUG	
1725	PMED	1	1		REVERSED 0CSTN				CUP	APPLIED BROWN CIRCULAR PAD
1764	MED	1	1		0MEDLOC				JUG	SLIGHTLY SAGGING BASE;INTERMITTENT THUMBING
1995	EROM				ZDATE					CP2+
1995	EROM	1	1		1000	OXID	Unknown British?	Misc. oxid	J OR K	BS FINE SILTY FAB NOT EBOR
US	MED	1	1		27NYWW				JUG	PLAIN BASE
US	PMED	1	1		23PMX				?	MIGHT BE A FLAT ROOF TILE OR BASE OF A LARGE JAR?;FABRIC LOOKS POST-MED

Bibliography

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