

Assessment of pottery from North Newbald, East Yorkshire (OSA03 EV14)

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A small group of pottery from an archaeological evaluation carried out at North Newbald, East Yorkshire, was submitted for identification and assessment. The collection consists of a single early to mid Anglo-Saxon bowl, represented by three joining sherds, and a group of medieval jar sherds, which are probably locally made and of later 12th or 13th-century date. Both groups of pottery, for different reasons, are of intrinsic interest.

Description

The pottery was examined at x20 magnification under a binocular microscope and a record made of fabric, form and other details (Table 1). All of the sherds are fresh, unabraded fragments which suggest that they have come from sealed archaeological deposits rather than topsoil or ploughsoil and that the activity with which they were associated took place on or close to the site.

Table 1

Action	Context REFNO	Description	Trench	TSNO	Cname	Form	Nosh	NoV	Weight	Subfabric	Part	EVEs	Diam	Sitecode	Use Co
DR	2009	ROUNDED SQUARED RIM			QC	JAR	1	1	15	OOLITHS;RS;FLINT R	0	0	osa03ev14		
DR	2009	SQUARED RIM			QC	JAR	1	1	14	OOLITHS;RS;FLINT R	0	0	osa03ev14		
DR	2009				QC	JAR	12	12	92	OOLITHS;RQ;FLINT BS	0	0	osa03ev14		
DR;TS;ICPS	2009	CYLINDRICAL THICK WALLED BODY WITH ROUNDED RIM;BURNISHED INT AND EXT;BLACK			SST	BOWL	3	1	42	SSTMG;S OOLITHS R	0	0	osa03ev14		

Early to Mid Anglo-Saxon pottery

Three joining sherds from a thick-walled bowl with a cylindrical form were found. The fabric of this vessel (Code SST) contains a mixed sand or gravel composed mostly of Millstone Grit sandstone fragments together with a small number of oolites, individual grains from an oolitic limestone. The vessel is black fired, probably due to the presence of carbon from incompletely burnt-out organic inclusions and a reducing atmosphere during firing. The vessel surfaces are roughly burnished on both the inside and outside of the vessel.

Vessels of this type are found on domestic settlements of 5th to 9th-century date. Where found in graves they tend to be dated to the 6th or 7th centuries, but this may be influenced by the fact that they are not a form used for containing cremated bone but were included in inhumation graves as a container for food.

The presence of oololiths in the fabric suggests that the vessel may have a local origin, since oolitic limestone outcrops along the west side of the Wolds, from just to the south of Market Weighton to the Humber at Brough. The majority of the inclusions, however, are detrital grains of Millstone Grit sandstone, which occur widely in the Vale of York in fluvio-glacial deposits.

In order to determine the origin of the vessel and to compare the fabric in detail with those found in the major cemetery at Sancton, petrological and chemical analysis of the vessel should be undertaken, together with a drawing of the rim.

Medieval pottery

Fourteen sherds of unglazed, handmade medieval pottery were found. They belong to a tradition known as Staxton-type ware, in that they are made without the use of a wheel, have some evidence for the regular finishing of the upper part of the body (on a turntable perhaps) and were fired in an oxidizing atmosphere. However, the detailed analysis of their fabric shows that they are not made in the same clay as those from the Staxton production site in the Vale of Pickering, nor are they similar to the Staxton-type wares found at Beverley or Hartlepool, which in both cases petrological analysis has shown were locally made. The fabric contains fragments of oolitic limestone, some with a sparry calcite cement and others consisting of loose oololiths, and a rounded quartz sand. There are also sparse angular fragments of white flint. The clay groundmass is fine-textured with some mica present. All these characteristics suggest that the vessels were made close to the site since both flint and oolitic limestone occur in local rocks and inclusionless clays occur in the upper and lower Jurassic strata which outcrop in the area.

The sherds include two jar rims and two sagging bases. The rims are of distinctive forms, being typologically devolved squared rims, and should be drawn for comparison with material from other local sites.

This distinctive fabric has recently been recognised at sites in Beverley and Wawne, both to the east of the Wolds, where they were isolated since their petrological characteristics indicate that they were not made in the area. Site contexts suggest that the sherds at those two sites were of late 12th to 13th-century date.

It seems, therefore, that the North Newbald pieces are representatives of a ware which was probably made locally and traded from there across the Wolds into the East Yorkshire claylands. Analysis of a sample of these sherds might allow us to determine where along the outcrop of Jurassic rocks in this area the pottery was made and would allow direct comparison with the Wawne vessels, which have been examined using petrological analysis and Inductively Coupled Plasma Spectroscopy.

Assessment

The North Newbald finds indicate activity on or very near the site in the early to mid Anglo-Saxon period. The nature of that activity is unknown and any opportunity to examine the area further should

be taken. The medieval pottery indicates activity in the late 12th or early 13th century. This activity was probably domestic occupation but somewhere in this area, it seems, should be the production site of this pottery and there are no definite signs of use on any of the pieces from context 2009. With this in mind, it may be significant that late medieval Humber ware wasters have been reported from North Newbald and there is field name evidence which suggests potting was being carried out in the parish (P. Didsbury, pers comm).

It is recommended that samples of both the Anglo-Saxon and medieval pots are taken for further study, principally to determine whether or not they are local products, and that featured sherds are illustrated for comparison with pottery from other sites in East Yorkshire and beyond.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Peter Didsbury for information about the finds of Humber ware wasters at North Newbald.

Costing

Task	Cost
Thin section analysis of Early to Mid Anglo-Saxon vessel	£22 plus VAT
Chemical analysis of Early to Mid Anglo-Saxon vessel	£22 plus VAT
Thin section analysis of six medieval vessels	£132 plus VAT
Chemical analysis of medieval vessels	£132 plus VAT
Illustration of Anglo-Saxon and Medieval pottery	£45 plus VAT
Total	£353 plus VAT = £414.77