

Assessment of further pottery from the Abbots Mews Hotel, York (OSA04 WB01)

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A further 28 sherds of pottery (together with one piece of burnt bone and a fragment of flat roof tile) were submitted for identification and assessment from the archaeological watching brief carried out at the Abbots Mews Hotel by On-Site Archaeology (Site Code: OSA04 WB01). The sherds come from three contexts each of which can be dated to the late 12th to early 13th century.

Description

Medieval Pottery

The 28 sherds of pottery come from three contexts, 3005, 3015 and 3019 (Table 1). The pottery is fresh and the assemblages include sherd families (i.e. groups of sherds from a single, smashed vessel).

Table 1

Context	Data	BEVO1	YG	YORK	YSP	Grand Total
3005	Sum of Nosh	3.00	2.00	8.00		13.00
	Average of Mean weight	11.33	5.50	20.75		15.31
3015	Sum of Nosh		8.00			8.00
	Average of Mean weight		11.00			11.00
3019	Sum of Nosh	1.00	3.00	2.00	1.00	7.00
	Average of Mean weight	4.00	11.00	13.00	18.00	11.67

The pottery was classified according to a modified version of the system employed by York Archaeological Trust and at York Minster (1978;1987;Holdsworth 1995). Four ware types were present: Beverley 1 ware, a mid 12th to early 13th-century ware produced at Beverley, East Yorkshire (BEVO1); York Gritty ware, produced in the later 11th to early 13th centuries at unknown centres (YG); York Glazed ware, produced from the late 12th to the mid 13th century, again at unknown centres (YORK) and York Splashed ware, a mixed fabric group defined by the use of a splashed glaze. The sherd from context 3019 has a fabric similar to the York Gritty ware, but finer (YSP).

Only three forms were recognised; jugs (JUG), baluster jugs (BAL) and jars (JAR). Two of the jar sherds come from a small externally splash-glazed vessel with a knife-trimmed base which may have had a short handle and thus be termed a Pipkin. One of the York Gritty ware sherds has a squared rim and the remainder probably come from similar near-cylindrical vessels with pronounced thrown ribbing.

Decorative features include a narrow tubular spout (York glazed ware) with evidence for a slab of clay between the spout and the neck. Such slabs were sometimes decorated with openwork. Otherwise, decoration consisted of applied strips of clay. These strips are of two kinds: a) vertical strips decorated with combed strokes and b) curvilinear half-round strips. Both occur on the York glazed ware sherds.

Several of the jar sherds had soot deposits on the exterior and were therefore used for boiling water or cooking food. No deposits were noted on the inside of the vessels. The jugs and baluster jug would have been used for serving liquids at table since none were large enough to have been used for storage.

Ceramic Building Material

A fragment of flat roof tile, probably of Beverley manufacture, was recovered from context 3015.

Discussion

Each of the three assemblages produced artefacts with a *terminus post quem* of mid to late 12th century. The fresh condition of the sherds and the presence of sherd families in each assemblage suggest that the finds are primary or secondary refuse (i.e. they were either discarded where they were broken or, more likely, were carried directly from that place to the findspot. They therefore indicate either occupation or rubbish disposal on the site in the later 12th or early 13th centuries.

Features which might distinguish early 13th-century from late 12th-century pottery were absent. However, no Beverley wares with suspension glazes were present, and York Splashed ware is not thought to have survived long after the introduction of York glazed ware. Some of the sherds from context 3005 indicate the presence of York glazed ware imitations of the Developed Stamford ware tubular-spouted jug, which is a type fossil for the later 12th century. However, such vessels might have been prized possessions and been retained for several years or decades after manufacture. Therefore, on balance, a late 12th-century date for all three deposits is suggested.

Assessment

None of the pottery is of intrinsic interest and all the types present are known from other sites in York. The pottery should, nevertheless, be retained for future study which may reveal further details of the date, source or function of the pottery.

Appendix One: List of recorded finds

Context	Description	Cname	Subfabric	Form	Nosh	NoV	Weight	Part	Use	Condition
3015		MTIL	BEVO?	FLAT	1	1	14	BS		
3015		ANBN			1	1	3	BS		BURNT
3019	CUGL	YORK		JUG	1	1	11	BS		
3019	UNGLAZED	YORK		JAR	1	1	15	BS		
3019		YSP	WHITE GRITTY	JUG	1	1	18	BS		
3019		BEVO1		JUG	1	1	4	BS		
3019		YG		JAR	2	2	2	BS	SOOTED EXT	
3019	SQUARED RIM	YG		JAR	1	1	21	R		
3005	FLAT BASE	BEVO1		BAL	1	1	23	B		
3005	KT BASE;GLAZE SPLASHED EXT	BEVO1		JAR	1	1	8	B	SOOTED EXT	
3005	SPLASHED GLAZE EXT	BEVO1		JAR	1	0	3	BS		
3005	CUGL EXT	YORK		JUG	1	1	17	BS		
3005	VERT COMBED APP;CUGL	YORK		JUG	3	1	17	BS		
3005	NARROW TUBULAR SPOUT;TRACES OF SHEET OF CLAY FROM SPOUT TO NECK;CUGL	YORK		JUG	1	1	53	SP		
3005	HALF-ROUND SECTIONED CURVED APP;CUGL	YORK		JUG	3	1	22	BS		
3005		YG		JAR	2	2	11	BS		
3015		YG		JAR	8	3	88	BS		

Bibliography

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