

## **Assessment of the Pottery from Nelson Street, Otley (OSA04 EV06)**

An archaeological evaluation carried out at Nelson Street, Otley, by On Site Archaeology Ltd produced a small assemblage of medieval and later finds. These finds are mostly medieval potsherds but include fragments of ceramic building material, fired clay, copper alloy, clay tobacco pipe, lead, and glass. The finds range in date from the 12<sup>th</sup> century to the 20<sup>th</sup> century but are mostly probably of later 12<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> century date.

### **Description**

#### **Ceramic Building Material**

The site produced two fragments of brick, from contexts 1014 and 1016. That from context 1014 contained numerous large angular fragments of shale/mudstone and fine-grained sandstone, presumably derived from the local Millstone Grit, in a red groundmass. That from context 1016 has a gritty fabric with lenses of white-firing and red-firing clay and is probably made from mixed Coal Measures red- and white-firing clays. Given the location of Otley in Wharfedale, and the probable origin of the local boulder clay further west in the Pennines, it is likely that the brick from 1014 is locally made and that from 1016 was imported from outside the valley.

#### **Copper Alloy**

A single copper alloy artefact was found, in context 1003. It consists of a circular disk of sheet metal which has been stamped into a concave mould bearing a design of a spring of foliage. The edges of the disk are slightly downturned.

It is likely that this disk is the top part of a composite button, in which the back is made from iron, or copper alloy, which holds a loop fastener.

#### **Fired clay**

Four fragments of fired clay were recovered from the excavation. They come from contexts 1013 and 1028. The fragments show no evidence for wattle impressions and might be either from a wattle and daub structure or the superstructure of an oven.

#### **Glass**

A fragment of clear bottle glass was recovered from context 1016. The vessel was cylindrical and probably a 20<sup>th</sup>-century milk bottle.

## **Lead**

A hollow lead pipe from context 1016 was recovered from the site but not submitted for study. From its description it is likely to be a gas pipe of later 19<sup>th</sup> or 20<sup>th</sup>-century date.

## **Pipeclay**

A single fragment of clay tobacco pipe was recovered, from context 1002. The pipe has a moulded seam, in the form of leaves, and has two raised sun or flower symbols on either side of the spur. It is of 19<sup>th</sup>- or 20<sup>th</sup>-century date.

## **Pottery**

### **Medieval**

One hundred and twenty nine sherds of medieval pottery were recovered from the excavations. Few of these are of well-known and well-dated types. Most were made from off-white firing clays and tempered with coarse sand composed of sandstone fragments. Following work on the medieval pottery from A1 in the Wetherby area excavated by Oxford Archaeology North, they have been termed "Northern Gritty" wares (NYG) and it is likely that they were made from Coal Measures white-firing clays at numerous centres in west Yorkshire, from at least the mid 11<sup>th</sup> century onwards. It should be noted, however, that both Otley and Wetherby are situated on boulder clays which would have produced red-firing clays and that the underlying solid geology consists of sandstones and mudstones rather than white-firing clays. A few examples could be classed as NYG but are visually similar to the gritty ware found in York, YG, and dated there to the late 11<sup>th</sup> to mid 13<sup>th</sup> centuries. It is not clear without further work whether they are just examples from the earlier part of the NYG production or come from a different source. A single sherd of Beverley glazed ware (BEVO) was found. This ware was produced from the mid 12<sup>th</sup> to the 14<sup>th</sup> centuries, although excavations in York suggest that most of the examples in the Vale of York are likely to be of late 12<sup>th</sup> to mid 13<sup>th</sup>-century date. Two sherds are of Staxton-type ware, a handmade ware, sometimes with wheel-finished rims, produced in a number of centres in northern England from the middle of the 12<sup>th</sup> century onwards. The Otley examples have a visually distinct fabric but cannot be attributed to any particular production centre without further work. Five sherds with sand-tempered fabrics and red-firing groundmasses were found. They are of unknown origin (MEDLOC).

A single example of a midlands purple (MP) vessel was found. This ware was produced using Coal Measures white-firing clays, fired to temperatures at which any iron-rich inclusions or iron-rich slip blister. The ware was produced in the midlands (i.e. Warwickshire northwards) in the later medieval period.

### **Early Modern**

Six sherds of pottery dating to the late 18<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> centuries were recovered. They include sherds of black-glazed ware (BL), Creamware (CREA) and transfer-printed ware (TPW).

## Assessment

The pottery all comes from a stratified sequence, of which the earliest finds are associated with a post-hole structure and a hearth. These finds, from contexts 1022, 1024 and 1027, consist of two sherds of NYG (one jug and one internally-glazed jar) and three sherds of YG. The presence of the glazed vessels suggests a mid 12<sup>th</sup>-century or later date.

The remains of this activity were then partly cut away by pit digging and it is these pits which produced the majority of the medieval pottery, 98 sherds in total and including the BEVO and STAXT sherds. The only find which does not indicate a late 12<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup>-century date is the brick, from context 1014. This brick may therefore either be of medieval date or perhaps a residual Roman brick.

The layer of soil overlying these pits, interpreted as being a garden soil, 1005, produced a similar range of pottery to that in the underlying pits and is probably of similar date, perhaps disturbed from earlier deposits.

The foundations of one of the walls of the early modern terrace, 1003, produced a sherd of Creamware, which indicates a date later than 1765, and the copper alloy button, which could probably be more closely dated with further work. Both are consistent with the late 18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup>-century date assigned to this terrace.

Finally, contexts 1002 and 1016 are associated with the demolition of these cottages and produced finds of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>-century date, consistent with the 1960s demolition date assigned to the structures by local inhabitants.

The pottery therefore suggests that the site was occupied first in the later 12<sup>th</sup> or 13<sup>th</sup> century and that this occupation lasted perhaps into the 14<sup>th</sup> century. A single sherd of late medieval pottery, MP, was recovered in context 1016 and this suggests that there may be late medieval activity in the area but not represented in the excavated sequence.

The medieval pottery suggests that in the 12<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> centuries little, if any, of the pottery used in Otley was made there, most apparently coming from sources further to the southeast, in the Aire valley and around Leeds.

Stratified medieval pottery of late 12<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup>-century date is not common in Wharfedale and the Nelson Street collection could prove valuable in future studies of the medieval pottery of Yorkshire.

Table 1

Context	Date	Cname	Subfabric	Form	Description	Nosh	NoV	Weight	Part	Use	Condition
1002	emod	BL		CHP		1	1	6	BS		
1002	emod	PIPECLAY		PIPE	19TH CENTURY; MOULDED SPUR WITH SUN/FLOWER MOULDED ON EACH SIDE; LEAF DEC ON SEAM	1	1	3	STEM;SPUR		
1002	emod	TPW		BOWL		1	1	3	BS		
1002	emod	TPW		CUP/TANKARD		1	1	5	BS		
1003	emod	BL	CMR/CMW	JAR		2	1	31	BS		
1003	emod	CREA		BOWL		1	1	3	B		
1003	emod	CU ALLOY		BUTTON	MOULDED BUTTON FRONT; ROSE WITH FOLIAGE DEC	1	1	4			
1005	emed	MEDLOC	SANDSTONE	JAR		1	1	4	BS	SOOTED EXT	
1005	emed	MEDLOC		JAR		1	1	18	BS	SOOTED EXT	
1005	emed	MEDLOC	SANDY	JUG		1	1	13	BS		
1005	emed	NYG		JAR	GLAZE INT	1	1	10	BS	SOOTED EXT	
1005	emed	NYG		JUG	FLAT TOPPED RIM, THICKENED INT	1	1	3	R		
1005	emed	NYG		JAR		4	4	33	BS	SOOTED EXT	
1005	emed	NYG		JAR		14	14	74	BS		
1005	emed	NYG		JAR	FLAT TOPPED EVERTED RIM WITH TRIANGULAR PROJECTION	1	1	13	R		
1005	emed	NYG		JUG		5	5	28	BS		
1005	emed	NYG		JAR		1	1	2	BS	BURNT	
1013	emed	BEVO		JAR		1	1	1	BS		
1013	emed	NYG		JAR	GLAZE INT	1	1	1	BS	SOOTED EXT	
1013	emed	NYG		JAR		3	3	12	BS		

AVAC Report 2004/106

Context	Date	Cname	Subfabric	Form	Description	Nosh	NoV	Weight	Part	Use	Condition
1013	emed	NYG		JUG		1	1	1	BS		
1013	sn	YG		JAR		2	2	5	BS		
1013		FIRED CLAY				2	2	7			
1014	emed	NYG		JAR		2	2	5	R		ABRADED
1014	emed	NYG		JAR	GLAZE INT	1	1	12	B	SOOTED EXT	
1014	emed	NYG		JUG		8	8	45	BS		
1014	emed	NYG		JUG	FLAT TOPPED RIM WITH EXTERNAL THICKENING; PULLED SPOUT	1	1	8	R		
1014	emed	NYG		JUG	CORDON ROUND NECK	1	1	8	BS		
1014	emed	NYG		JAR	EVERTED RIM	1	1	11	R		
1014	emed	NYG		JAR	HANDLE	1	1	10	H		
1014	emed	NYG		JAR		29	28	119	BS		
1014	emed	NYG		JAR		8	8	69	BS	SOOTED EXT	
1014	emed	NYG		JAR	FLAT TOPPED EVERTED RIM	1	1	27	R		
1014	emed	STAXTT		JAR	FLAT TOPPED EVERTED RIM	1	1	28	R		
1014	emed	STAXTT		JAR		1	1	1	BS		
1014	emod	PMTIL	FINE SANDSTONE/MUDSTONE TEMPER	BRICK		1	1	66			
1014		ANBN				1	1	0	BS		
1015	emed	NYG		JAR		1	1	13	BS		
1015	emed	NYG		JUG		1	1	3	BS		
1015	emed	NYG		JAR		1	1	1	BS	SOOTED INT	
1016	emod	LEAD		PIPE	HOLLOW PIPE, PROBABLY MODERN GAS PIPE	1	1	0	BS		

AVAC Report 2004/106

Context	Date	Cname	Subfabric	Form	Description	Nosh	NoV	Weight	Part	Use	Condition
1016	emod	PMGL	CLEAR	BOTTLE	MILK 20TH CENTURY	1	1	4	BS		
1016	emod	PMTIL	STREAKY	BRICK		1	1	47			
1016	lmed	MP	NORTHERN VARIANT	JAR	BROWN SLIP	1	1	14	BS		
1016		ANBN				1	1	0	BS		
1018	emed	NYG		HANDLED JAR	GLAZE INT	4	1	30	BS	SOOTED EXT	
1018	emed	NYG		JUG		2	2	15	BS		
1018	emed	NYG		JAR		4	4	18	BS		
1018	emed	NYG		JAR		4	4	14	BS	SOOTED EXT	
1018		ANBN				1	1	0	BS		
1020	emed	NYG		JAR		1	1	4	BS		
1022	emed	NYG		JUG		1	1	2	BS		
1024	sn	YG		JAR		1	1	7	BS		
1024	sn	YG		JAR		2	2	16	BS	SOOTED EXT	
1027	emed	NYG		JAR	GLAZE INT	1	1	3	BS		
1028	emed	MEDLOC	SANDY	JAR		1	1	2	BS		
1028	emed	MEDLOC		JUG		1	1	4	BS		
1028	emed	NYG		JAR		1	1	4	BS	SOOTED INT	
1028	emed	NYG		JAR		1	1	4	BS		
1028	emed	NYG		JAR		5	5	123	BS	SOOTED EXT	
1028		FIRED CLAY				2	2	14			
1031	emed	NYG		JAR		1	1	11	BS	SOOTED EXT	

AVAC Report 2004/106

Context	Date	Cname	Subfabric	Form	Description	Nosh	NoV	Weight	Part	Use	Condition
1031	emed	NYG		JUG		1	1	17	BS	SOOTED EXT	
1031	emed	NYG		JAR		1	1	3	BS		