

Assessment of the Pottery from Heworth Court, York (YHC'04)

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Following an archaeological evaluation at the former site of St John's College, Heworth Croft, carried out in 2003 by Field Archaeology Specialists (site code YHC'03), archaeological excavations were carried out of which three, interventions 12, 13 and 14, produced pottery.

Roman pottery ranging in date from the later 1st to the early 2nd centuries was recovered followed by a collection of medieval pottery, probably mainly of later 14th century date but including a few earlier, late 12th to 13th-century, sherds. Finally, there is a small quantity of early modern pottery, all of it flowerpot sherds.

Description

Most of the pottery recovered was very abraded and soft. This suggests that burial conditions were harsh and have chemically altered the sherds. The only exceptions are the early modern sherds which are hard and have fresh edges. This is unlikely to be a true reflection of the firing temperature of the Roman and medieval pottery, which is usually much better preserved on sites in York.

Roman pottery

A total of 292 sherds of Romano-British pottery were recovered from the excavations. They were classified using the system adopted by York Archaeological Trust (Monaghan 1993; Monaghan 1997). Twelve different wares were recognised (Table 1) but the overwhelming majority of the pottery was of Eboracum 1 ware. Furthermore, both the few sherds of mortaria, greyware and rusticated ware present are also likely to have been produced at York. The remainder consist of unidentified oxidized and white-firing wares, sherds of Dorset Black Burnished 1 ware, sherds of burnished sandy ware which might be either Dorset products or copies (e.g. from Rossington Bridge, near Doncaster), two sherds of amphora and a number of sherds of samian ware, all of which are tentatively identified as South Gaulish in origin. One of the greyware sherds, the rim of a possible *unguentarium*, contains sparse polished quartz grains, of the type found in lower Cretaceous strata but absent from such deposits in Yorkshire where the only outcrops of this age occur in the Vale of Pickering and consist of glauconitic clays. Thus, this vessel is likely to have been a regional or continental import, which might suggest that it was imported with its contents as a container.

This range of sources is typical of later 1st and early 2nd century assemblages in York.

The range of forms recovered is low, because the majority of the sherds are too abraded to be identified to form level (Table 2). They include large and small flagons, used for communal drinking, bowls, mainly of types likely to be used for dining, platters, also used for dining, jars, some of which were definitely used for cooking and have soot coating, the *unguentarium*, and two amphora sherds. There is perhaps a higher concentration of drinking and dining vessels in the assemblage than might be found in assemblages of this date from within the fortress (e.g. from the Minster Library or Blake Street, Monaghan 1993) but the size of the identifiable assemblage is perhaps too small to support this statement.

Medieval pottery

Forty-nine sherds of medieval pottery were recovered. They were classified according to the system used by York Archaeological Trust (Holdsworth 1978; Brooks 1987; Mainman 1990, Table 3).

Nine sherds of York Gritty ware were present (YG), all from jars used for cooking. This ware was introduced in the later 11th century but continued to be used for much of the cooking pottery used in York into the 13th century. Four sherds of York Glazed ware were identified (YORK). This ware was produced from the later 12th to the mid 13th centuries, probably in the same area of north Yorkshire which supplied Brandsby-type ware (BRAN), which is the second most common ware present in the collection. One of the York Glazed ware sherds is decorated with horizontal grooves. The Brandsby-type ware sherds include jars and jugs. The jug sherds include a rod handle and two sherds with rectangular roller stamping. Twenty-two sherds of Humberware were present (HUM). This ware is first found in York in the early to mid 14th century and during the later 14th century supplied an ever-increasing proportion of the pottery used in the city, at the expense of Brandsby-type ware.

Post-medieval pottery

Three sherds of Ryedale ware were present. All come from bowls. This ware was used in York mainly in the 16th century but may have been current in the later 15th and early 17th centuries as well.

Early Modern pottery

Three sherds of flowerpots were recovered, all produced in a fine red-firing earthenware, probably of local origin (PMLOC).

Assessment

Intervention 12

Pottery was recovered from the topsoil, the buried soil, two furrows (F55 and F56) and a scoop (F57). Sixteen sherds of Roman date were recorded. They are mainly from the buried

soil and the topsoil and eight sherds from one of the furrows (F56). They include no definite 2nd-century pieces.

The pottery from the scoop, F57, consists of a single sherd of York Gritty ware, suggesting a later 11th to 13th-century date, whereas the assemblages from the two furrows, the buried soil and the topsoil all include Humberware sherds. These include sherds of unglazed drinking jugs from the soils, suggesting a later 14th-century date.

Intervention 13

One hundred and thirty-four sherds of pottery were recovered from Intervention 13. All but three of these are of Roman date. They come mainly from Pit F63 and are likely to form an early 2nd-century assemblage, dated by the presence of black burnished wares (but no definite Dorset sherds) alongside types current only the later 1st to early 2nd centuries (e.g. Rustic ware jars and South Gaulish samian ware).

Layer 1070 and context 1169 both produced sherds of Roman date of similar character to those recovered from the pit.

The non-Roman sherds consist of flowerpot sherds, which include one from Pit F63, one from layer 1070 and one from the fill of the modern sewer pipe trench, F64.

Intervention 14

One hundred and seventy-four sherds of pottery were recovered from Intervention 14. Of these, one hundred and fifty-nine were of Roman date. Five features produced assemblages containing only pottery of Roman date. These are F73, F76, F77, F79 and F80. However, most of the sherds from these deposits are very small and abraded although they do include large sherds of mortaria and amphora.

The fill of furrow F75 produced a small assemblage datable to the early 2nd century or later whereas the fills of putative Roman ditch F74 produced sherds of Roman pottery mixed with later 14th-century or later sherds (contexts 1188 and 1189). The latter were, however, small and few in number and may therefore be intrusive. However, it is possible that in fact F75 is of Roman date and F74 is a medieval furrow.

The overburden, layers 1157 and 1213, produced sherds of Ryedale ware, dating the deposit to the 16th-century or later.

Chronological interpretation

The Roman pottery from all three interventions, both in stratified Roman deposits and residual in later features and layers is consistently of later 1st to early 2nd-century date. The latest sherds found are probably the Gauloise amphora sherd and the Dorset Black

Burnished ware jar rim, both of which came from Intervention 14. However, this is unlikely to indicate a difference in the date of the Roman activity present between the various interventions. There is no obvious difference in the density of Roman pottery found on the three interventions.

Interventions 12 and 14 both have similar assemblages of medieval pottery, which include York Gritty ware, York Glazed ware and types current in the later 14th century. These are absent from Intervention 13, however. Given the long period of currency of York Gritty ware it is probable that the sherds from Heworth Court are of later 12th or 13th-century date and contemporary with the York Glazed ware, although scoop F57 might indicate an earlier date.

There is a lack of pottery dating later with any certainty to the 15th century and only three sherds of 16th-century date, all from Intervention 14. Similarly, there is no pottery of early modern date except for the sherds of flowerpot, all of which came from intervention 13.

Site Function

It has been suggested that the Roman pottery from the site might be associated with disturbed cremation burials. Much of the pottery can indeed be paralleled in later 1st and early 2nd-century cremation burials from York: Eboracum ware jars, and flagons, and Rustic ware jars, for example. Similarly, the Samian bowls and cups and the Eboracum ware platters are types which could have been present in such burials. The possible *unguentarium* is also a type which according to Monaghan is found in bathhouses and cremations. The size and nature of the sherds is also supportive of this interpretation, in that there are several examples of smashed vessels (sherd families) which either indicate that the site was used for primary refuse disposal or for burial, since in any other circumstances the sherds from a broken vessel would become dispersed and separated before burial. The only pottery which is not consistent with this interpretation, perhaps, is the mortaria, all three sherds of which came from Intervention 14.

The medieval pottery includes some examples of large sherds which do not fit the suggested interpretation of the site as being under the plough. The twelve sherds of medieval date from Intervention 14 are small and consistent with night soil being spread onto the fields (mean weight 10gm) but those from Intervention 12 include joining sherds and are larger, an average of 20gm for the Brandsby-type ware and 16gm for the Humberware. It is possible, therefore, that the medieval pottery, especially that from Intervention 12, represents refuse from occupation on the site which pre-dates the ridge and furrow agriculture.

Retention

The majority of the pottery comes from stratified deposits and should be retained for future study.

Further analysis

The *unguentarium* is an unusual vessel and it would be possible to pursue the suggestion that it is a non-local vessel, brought to York as a container. No other sherds require further treatment, although it would be possible to date the decorated samian ware more precisely through submission of the sherds to a specialist.

Illustration

The *unguentarium* rim should be illustrated.

Publication

The pottery does not require publication in its own right but a report could be produced summarising the conclusions of this assessment if the site itself is to be published.

Bibliography

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Tables

Table 1

cname	Broad cname	broad source	Narrow cname	source area	full name	COMMENTS	NoSh	NoV	Wt (gm)
YATAA	AMPH	Imported	Amphorae	imported	Unidentified amphora		1	1	3
YATAP27	AMPH	Imported	Amphorae	Western Mediterranean	Amphorae - Peacock & Williams (27) - Gauloise 4		1	1	33
YATB00	BURNISHED	Unknown British?	Grey B.	Unknown British?	Misc Burn	Unknown burnished ware	5	3	75
YATB01	BURNISHED	Regional industries	BB1	Dorset	Black Burnished ware 1	Dorset BB1	2	2	31
YATE01	EBOR	York	Ebor	York	Ebor 1	Eboracum 1	231	225	1851
YATG00	GREY	Unknown British?	Grey	Unknown British?	Misc grey		2	2	60
YATG01	GREY	York	Grey	York	Local grey ware		32	31	303
YATM03	MORTARIA	York	Mortaria	York	Eboracum and local mortaria		3	3	208
YATO00	OXID	Unknown British?	Misc. oxid	Unknown British?	Pentice-moulded beakers		2	2	24
YATP00	'WHITE'	Unknown British?	'White'	Unknown British?	White	Misc white, off-white and cream fabrics	1	1	8
YATR02	RUSTIC	York?	Rustic	York?	Rustic 2	Local rustic ware	7	7	39
YATS01	SAMIAN	Imported	SGS	South Gaul	SGS	South Gaulish (mostly La Graufesenque)	19	18	136

Table 2

Form	Description	NoSh	NoV	Wt (gm)
?	Unknown	209	207	1032
27	Dressel 27 cup	1	1	2
27?	Dressel 27 cup?	2	2	5
37	Dressel 37 decorated bowl	10	9	104
AMPHORA	Amphora	2	2	36
BOWL	Bowl	4	3	42
BOWL/PLATTER	Bowl or platter	1	1	15
FLAGON	Flagon	19	17	399

FLAGON/JAR	Flagon or jar	2	2	79
FLANGED BOWL	Flanged bowl	5	1	115
JAR	Jar	28	28	499
JAR/FLAGON	Jar or flagon	1	1	88
MORT	Mortaria	3	3	208
PLATTER	Platter	1	1	24
REEDED BOWL	Reeded rim bowl	3	3	29
UNGUENTARIUM	Unguentarium	1	1	18
Grand Total		292	282	2695

Table 3

cname	full name	earliest date	latest date	NoSh	NoV	Wt (gm)
YG	Yorkshire gritty ware	1050	1250	9	9	40
YORK	York glazed ware/York White ware	1150	1300	4	4	26
BRAN	Brandsby-type ware	1250	1350	8	8	138
HUM	Humberware	1250	1500	22	19	333
RYEDALE	Ryedale ware	1550	1700	3	2	30
PMLOC	Post-medieval local	1550	1750	3	3	35

Table 4 Catalogue of recorded pottery

trench	context	cname	Nosh	NoV	Wt (gm)	subfabric	Form	Description	Part	Use	REFNO	Condition
12	1154	HUM	1	1	15		DJ		BS		119	SLIGHTLY ABR
12	1154	HUM	1	1	17		JUG/JAR		BS		119	SLIGHTLY ABR
12	1154	YATE1	2	2	19		?		BS		119	VABR
12	1154	YATE1	1	1	19		FLAGON		BS		119	VABR
12	1154	YATE1	1	1	56		FLAGON	THICK EXT BEAD; INTURNED LIP	R		119	VABR
12	1154	YATE1	1	1	49		JAR		B	SOME SOOTING EXT	119	VABR
12	1154	YATS1	1	1	1		?	FRAG	BS		119	VABR
12	1155	HUM	1	1	34		JUG/JAR		B		110	ABR
12	1155	HUM	1	1	4		DJ		BS		110	FRESH
12	1155	YATE1	1	1	34		JAR		R		110	VABR
12	1155	YORK	1	1	3		JUG	HORIZ GROOVES	BS		110	ABR
12	1158	BRAN	1	1	8		JAR		BS	SOOTED EXT	120	ABR
12	1158	BRAN	1	1	3		JUG	HORIZ ROULETTING	BS		120	ABR
12	1158	BRAN	1	1	36		JUG		B		120	SLIGHTLY ABR
12	1158	BRAN	1	1	20		JUG/JAR		BS		120	SLIGHTLY ABR
12	1158	HUM	1	1	11		JUG		BS		120	SLIGHTLY ABR
12	1158	HUM	3	3	14		JAR		BS		120	VABR
12	1158	HUM	2	1	102		JUG	HANDLE AND PART OF HANDLE TO BODY JOIN	H;BS		120	VABR
12	1158	HUM	3	1	34		JUG	PART OF HANDLE TO BODY JOIN	BS		120	VABR
12	1158	HUM	1	1	13		JUG/JAR		B		120	VABR

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trench	context	cname	Nosh	NoV	Wt (gm)	subfabric	Form	Description	Part	Use	REFNO	Condition
12	1158	YG	6	6	30		JAR		BS		120	ABR
12	1159	BRAN	1	1	35		JUG	ROD	H		121	ABR
12	1159	HUM	2	2	19		JUG/JAR		BS		121	SLIGHTLY ABR
12	1159	YATE1	8	8	34		?		BS		121	VABR
12	1159	YATE1	1	1	7		JAR		R		121	VABR
12	1159	YG	1	1	3		JAR		BS		121	ABR
12	1159	YORK	1	1	10		JAR		R		121	ABR
12	1160	YG	1	1	5		JAR		BS		111	ABR
13	1167	YATE1	3	3	22		?		BS		112	VABR
13	1167	YATG1	4	4	11		?		BS		112	VABR
13	1169	YATE1	1	1	6		BOWL		R		122	VABR
13	1169	YATE1	2	1	49		FLAGON		R;H		122	VABR
13	1169	YATE1	1	1	30		FLAGON/JAR		B		122	VABR
13	1169	YATE1	1	1	18		JAR		R		122	VABR
13	1169	YATE1	2	2	23		REEDED BOWL		R		122	VABR
13	1169	YATS1	1	1	22		37	DEC	BS		122	VABR
13	1170	PMLOC	1	1	3		FLP		R		123	FRESH
13	1170	YATE1	15	15	57		?		BS		123	VABR
13	1170	YATE1	1	1	10		BOWL		R		123	VABR
13	1170	YATE1	2	2	113		FLAGON		H		123	VABR
13	1170	YATG1	1	1	49		FLAGON/JAR		B		123	ABR
13	1170	YATG1	2	2	20		JAR		R		123	VABR
13	1170	YAT00	1	1	21		?		BS	SOOTED INT/EXT	123	ABR
13	1170	YATS1	1	1	2		27		BS		123	VABR
13	1170	YATS1	2	2	18		37	DEC	R		123	VABR

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trench	context	cname	Nosh	NoV	Wt (gm)	subfabric	Form	Description	Part	Use	REFNO	Condition
13	1171	PMLOC	1	1	7		FLP		BS		113	FRESH
13	1172	YATE1	1	1	3		?		BS		114	VABR
13	1172	YATE1	1	1	4		FLAGON		BS		114	VABR
13	1172	YATR2	6	6	31		JAR		BS		114	VABR
13	1173	PMLOC	1	1	25		FLP		R		124	FRESH
13	1173	YATB0	1	1	34		?		BS		124	ABR
13	1173	YATB0	2	1	26		BOWL		BS	SOOTED EXT	124	ABR
13	1173	YATE1	32	32	183		?		BS		124	VABR
13	1173	YATE1	3	3	24		FLAGON		R;BS		124	VABR
13	1173	YATE1	5	1	115		FLANGED BOWL		F;B;BS		124	VABR
13	1173	YATG1	10	10	52		?		BS		124	ABR
13	1173	YATG1	1	1	11		JAR		B		124	ABR
13	1173	YATR2	1	1	8		JAR		BS		124	VABR
13	1173	YATS1	1	1	3		27?		BS		124	VABR
13	1173	YATS1	6	5	61		37	DEC	R;BS		124	VABR
13	1174	YATB0	2	1	15		?		BS		125	ABR
13	1174	YATE1	12	12	25		?		BS		125	VABR
13	1174	YATE1	4	3	80		FLAGON		R;BS;H		125	VABR
13	1174	YATE1	2	2	15		JAR		BS		125	VABR
13	1174	YATG0	1	1	18	M GSQ	UNGUENTARIUM		R		125	SLIGHTLY ABR
14	1157	HUM	1	1	3		JAR		BS		115	ABR
14	1157	HUM	1	1	39		JUG/JAR		B		115	SLIGHTLY ABR
14	1157	HUM	1	1	15		JUG		H		115	VABR
14	1157	RYEDALE	2	1	22		BOWL		BS		115	ABR

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trench	context	cname	Nosh	NoV	Wt (gm)	subfabric	Form	Description	Part	Use	REFNO	Condition
14	1157	YG	1	1	2		JAR		BS		115	SLIGHTLY ABR
14	1157	YORK	1	1	4		JAR		BS		115	SLIGHTLY ABR
14	1187	YATE1	14	14	72		?		BS		126	VABR
14	1187	YATE1	1	1	44		JAR		R		126	VABR
14	1187	YATE1	1	1	24		PLATTER		B		126	VABR
14	1187	YATM3	1	1	100		MORT		R		126	VABR
14	1187	YATS1	1	1	4		?		B		126	VABR
14	1187	YATS1	1	1	19		?		B		126	VABR
14	1187	YATS1	3	3	1		?	FRAGS	BS		126	VABR
14	1188	BRAN	1	1	5		JUG	HORIZ ROULETTING	BS		127	ABR
14	1188	HUM	1	1	3		JUG		BS		127	ABR
14	1188	YATE1	13	13	61		?		BS		127	VABR
14	1188	YATE1	1	1	15		BOWL/PLATTER		B		127	VABR
14	1188	YATE1	1	1	21		JAR		BS	SOOTED EXT	127	VABR
14	1188	YATE1	2	2	33		JAR		R		127	VABR
14	1188	YATM3	1	1	41		MORT		R		127	VABR
14	1189	HUM	1	1	4		JUG/JAR		BS		128	SLIGHTLY ABR
14	1189	YATE1	7	7	27		?		BS		128	VABR
14	1189	YATE1	1	1	24		JAR		R		128	VABR
14	1189	YATG1	1	1	22		?		BS		128	ABR
14	1189	YATM3	1	1	67		MORT		B		128	VABR
14	1189	YATS1	1	1	3		37	DEC	R		128	VABR
14	1190	YATB1	1	1	5		?		BS		129	ABR
14	1190	YATE1	5	5	28		?		BS		129	VABR

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trench	context	cname	Nosh	NoV	Wt (gm)	subfabric	Form	Description	Part	Use	REFNO	Condition
14	1190	YATG1	2	1	9		?		BS		129	ABR
14	1191	YATAP?	1	1	3		AMPHORA		BS		130	VABR
14	1191	YATE1	3	3	13		?		BS		130	VABR
14	1191	YATE1	1	1	11		FLAGON		R		130	VABR
14	1191	YATG1	1	1	4		JAR		BS		130	ABR
14	1192	YATE1	19	19	94		?		BS		131	VABR
14	1192	YATG1	1	1	7		?		B		131	ABR
14	1193	YATB1	1	1	26		JAR	EARLY 2ND CENTURY	BS		132	FRESH
14	1194	BRAN	1	1	18		JAR		R		133	ABR
14	1194	BRAN	1	1	13		JUG		BS		133	ABR
14	1194	HUM	1	1	6		JAR		BS		133	ABR
14	1194	YATE1	11	11	42		?		BS		133	VABR
14	1194	YATE1	2	2	25		FLAGON		H		133	VABR
14	1194	YATE1	1	1	4		JAR		R		133	VABR
14	1194	YATE1	1	1	6		REEDED BOWL		R		133	VABR
14	1194	YATG1	3	3	48		JAR		R;BS		133	VABR
14	1194	YORK	1	1	9		JAR		R		133	FRESH
14	1195	YATE1	6	6	37		?		BS		116	VABR
14	1195	YATE1	1	1	88		JAR/FLAGON		B		116	VABR
14	1196	YATE1	11	11	44		?		BS		134	VABR
14	1196	YATE1	1	1	11		FLAGON		H		134	VABR
14	1196	YATE1	1	1	34		JAR		R		134	VABR
14	1196	YATG1	2	2	34		JAR		B;BS		134	ABR
14	1196	YATPO	1	1	8		?		BS		134	VABR
14	1198	YATE1	13	13	38		?		BS		135	VABR
14	1198	YATG1	2	2	16		JAR		R;BS		135	VABR

trench	context	cname	Nosh	NoV	Wt (gm)	subfabric	Form	Description	Part	Use	REFNO	Condition
14	1199	YATE1	1	1	1		?		BS		117	VABR
14	1201	YATAP27-30	1	1	33		AMPHORA		BS		137	VABR
14	1201	YATE1	8	8	45		?		BS		137	VABR
14	1201	YATE1	1	1	7		FLAGON	PLAIN FLARED RIM	R		137	VABR
14	1201	YATE1	1	1	7		JAR		R		137	VABR
14	1201	YATG1	2	2	20		?		BS		137	VABR
14	1201	YAT00	1	1	3		?		BS		137	VABR
14	1201	YATS1	1	1	2		27?		B		137	VABR
14	1213	RYEDALE	1	1	8		BOWL		BS		118	ABR
14	1213	YATG0	1	1	42		JAR		R		118	ABR